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Building Community Through Creativity & Social Practice Arts

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Building Community Through Creativity & Social Practice Arts
by
Saira Siddiqui

An Abstract of a Project in
Creativity and Change Leadership

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Master of Science
Multidisciplinary Studies
with a Certificate in
Creativity & Change Leadership

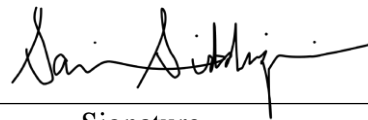
July 2023

Buffalo State
State University of New York
Department of Creativity & Change Leadership

ABSTRACT OF PROJECT

Building Community Through Creativity & Social Practice Arts

Social practice art is an artistic genre aimed to positively affect communities by addressing social and political change. Social practice art is collaborative, participatory, and involves people and places to help address these changes. The focus of this master's project is to engage in a deeper understanding of how creativity and change leadership plays a role in the process of a social practice artist, and their pursuit to use art, culture, and creativity to connect people to each other and their environments. The outcomes of the project include insights into how creativity can be used in action to manage a process with many voices and help shape the artistic visions and outcomes for a shared community mural.



Signature

August 31, 2023

Date

Buffalo State
State University of New York
Creativity & Change Leadership Department

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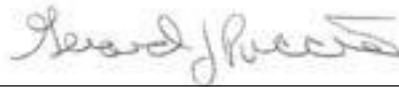
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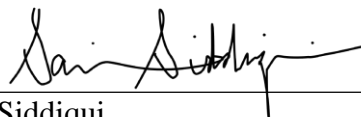
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August 31, 2023



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Student

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Section One: Project Background

Context & History

Imagine you are walking through a neighborhood you've never been to before. Walking down the street, you see cues that pay homage to this place. You may be unfamiliar with this street or location, but you begin to understand the history and aspirations of those who live here. Perhaps you get a sense of who lives here now, what languages people speak, and their values. You look around and see the people walking around you. A young kid picks up some fallen trash and puts it in the nearby garbage can on the street corner. A business owner is outside their place of business sweeping the sidewalk, putting wares out on the street, and getting ready for the day. Their essence matches that of the public space around them. They have a sense of ownership, connection, and belonging to this space.

As an urban planner and artist, I have spent the last 10 years using facilitation techniques for community organizing. My experience using the Main Street Model for economic development, and through the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) has taught me that community engagement in the development process is of utmost importance to create symbiotic spaces where people feel connected to public infrastructure and private developments. When people are involved in designing their public spaces, it creates a sense of ownership and belonging.

I first experienced this when I served as the Director of La Grande Main Street, a downtown association in rural Oregon, where we integrated public art and building improvements into the built environment. I also experienced this when I was Executive Director in Hillsboro, Oregon. In this city, the people struggled to hold onto the historic farm town identity. At the same time, the burgeoning tech industry began to form a new identity and

narrative of the city. Because of this, a community-led event strategy included closing down Main Street and hosting a large-scale 250-person farm-to-table dinner, to honor the community's roots while it underwent significant change.

As I continued my career, I became sensitive to gentrification and anti-displacement work. Though gentrification has negative connotations, it is not always negative. The beautification of public spaces, improvements of buildings, and the arrival of new businesses can bring positive effects if the process allows all community members to be a part of the growth and change.

The issue that can arise with gentrification is the displacement of long-standing residents and businesses. I experienced this to a significant degree in the Portland Metro area. Exponential growth was common, pricing out long-standing residents due to systemic policies and practices in places like the Alberta District, a historically Black neighborhood. The homelessness crisis was spiraling out of control, and by the time I left the city, many areas were difficult to secure housing in if you were a low or middle-wage earner.

After several years away, I moved back to my hometown and saw gentrification starting in Buffalo. Through my work at LISC between 2019 and 2023, I became much more in tune with America's nuanced particularities related to race, income, and socioeconomic status. This complex process deals with workforce integration, economic inclusion, and homeownership rooted in years of redlining and racist policies and practices.

The inequities of these types of systemic policies in the United States became particularly spotlighted after the killing of George Floyd in the summer of 2020. They were also questioned at this time given the COVID-19 pandemic, which was at its height then. Racial uprisings ensued

from the effects of the pandemic compounded by blatant racial inequities. Deep traumas surfaced stronger than years past, and it became clear that this country needs deep healing.

As our nation looks to heal from the impacts of Covid-19, and as America begins to tip to a minority majority country by 2043 as predicted by the US Census (2012), we must find ways to bridge the heavy and complex gaps that polarize our communities. When people are engaged in the future of their neighborhoods, community members will actively support positive developments and neighborhood growth that serves them.

Why Art?

Art has a way of speaking to a broader audience, and allows shared communication with people of all ages, backgrounds, and ethnicities. Artist facilitators have the unique ability to engage residents in the public art process, creating pathways to harness and mold the future identities of public spaces and open up conversations of how neighborhoods can function to best suit the people within them.

Furthermore, the events that occurred in the summer of 2020 led me to realize that public art and the identity of public spaces can bridge or polarize communities. After the murder of George Floyd, people graffiti'd their thoughts on the walls of buildings. Government-erected statues of Confederate soldiers across the county were torn down and tossed into rivers. Narratives of place were changing. The people wanted to voice their concerns, feel heard, and have the authority to shape their futures.

The standard public art narrative involves the commission of artists by a funder or developer. The artists selected do not always engage with the communities they create art in.

When working at LISC, I heard firsthand accounts of residents being unhappy with some beautiful new art, primarily because it did not reflect the neighborhood's identity or narrative.

Rather than development happening in your neighborhood without your involvement, imagine being able to speak with someone about the assets and challenges you're experiencing. What type of businesses would serve your friends and family? What kind of recreational activities or programming would you love to attend? Are your transportation options adequate to get to the grocery store? What type of housing developments would serve those in your neighborhood? Now imagine engaging in an art project that meshed your thoughts and ideas with those around you, to better understand where your perspective overlaps with your neighbors, and where your perspective differs.

I believe participatory public art can help us heal from past events while celebrating a collective future. Therefore, this masters project focuses on co-creating a community mural at the Niagara Frontier Food Terminal (NFFT) in the Clinton-Bailey Neighborhood in Buffalo, NY. I will be leaning into my past experiences and understanding of the public development process, the art-making process, and facilitation experience to create a methodology for public art using the Creative Problem Solving (CPS) model. The project will measure social connectedness, belonging, and ownership of the process and the public art location.

Creativity Skills and Concepts

The lived experience highlighted in the above sections indicates a need for a highly participatory process that engages people in the redevelopment of public space, particularly in a way that makes people feel included in the process. There are several creativity skills and concepts that support this type of process. Project goals include inspiring a collective and shared vision and strengthening social bonds, ownership, and connections. To attain these goals, I will

lean into the FourSight Thinking Skills Model of facilitation and corresponding affective skills (Puccio et al., 2005, as cited in Puccio et al. 2011). I will also explore transformational and authentic leadership in implementing this project (Northouse, 2022).

The Foursight Thinking Skills Model provides a structure for a creative process that allows people to defer judgement and hear other perspectives on a topic. It also provides a structure to create sensitivity to an environment, tolerance for risks, and the ability for people to understand each other’s perspectives, which are all necessary to inspiring a shared vision.

Table 1. Key Cognitive Thinking Skills & Affective Skills Associated with Creative Problem Solving.
Source: Summarized from Puccio et al. (2011)

Step	Assessing the Situation	Exploring the Vision	Formulating Challenges	Exploring Ideas	Formulating Solutions	Exploring Acceptance	Formulating a Plan
Thinking Skill	Diagnostic Thinking	Visionary Thinking	Strategic Thinking	Ideational Thinking	Evaluative Thinking	Contextual Thinking	Tactical Thinking
Affective Skill	Mindfulness	Dreaming	Sensing Gaps	Playfulness	Avoiding Premature Closure	Sensitivity to Environment	Tolerance for Risks

Transformational leadership influences followers to do more for themselves and their communities. This leadership style helps followers feel more connected to friends, family, and community, and instills long-term visions and goals in followers. The Transformational Four I’s as outlined by Northouse (2022) will be used in the following ways:

- 1) *Idealized Influence:* A community art workshop and early invitations and messaging will instill a vision and sense of mission in invitees.
- 2) *Inspirational Motivation:* I will communicate high engagement expectations during the workshop series, aiming for 100% engagement at events.
- 3) *Intellectual Stimulation:* Using the CPS process will be new for most workshop attendees. As such, it will stimulate attendees to be creative and innovative. Invitees will have varying

perspectives about this location based on their past experiences, which may challenge individuals on their own beliefs and values.

- 4) *Individualized Consideration*: My leadership style has always leaned heavily on individualized consideration. Finding ways for everyone to be engaged is important to me. As I come to know the attendees invited to the session, I will better understand how I can provide individualized consideration, allowing everyone to have deeper engagement and commitment to the project.

Finally, authentic leadership (Northouse, 2022) is another creativity-related concept from the field of leadership studies that I will explore in this project. By conducting this project, I am leaning deeper into my purpose, led by my passion to work in the intersection of arts, culture, and community development. I am using my values and lessons learned throughout my career as a compass to dictate my behavior as a leader. I will use my existing relationships and their relationships to build connections. I will exhibit consistency with the group through self-discipline and adhering to deadlines and follow through. Finally, I will lead from the heart with compassion for other people's viewpoints, creating a safe space for contribution and creativity.

The thinking skills model, transformational leadership, and authentic leadership models will help me attain the overall goal of developing a participatory process that engages people in the redevelopment of public space. These skills provide a structure that can be followed, while also providing flexibility in the ways people wish to be included in the process. This is important in these types of development projects because as we know, people have different perspectives and ways of working, which demands a range of structured to flexible options to heighten participation.

Personal Goals and Relation to the Whole

This project also incorporates several personal goals. These goals will help me develop as a change leader. The first goal of this project is to experiment with what works and what doesn't when using the CPS and change leadership process to develop art in public space. I will take the findings of this exercise and use it as the foundation as I take on consulting roles doing similar arts-based community development projects. I view this as a pilot of how CPS facilitation can play a role in public space development further down the line in my career.

A second goal includes learning to represent diverse ideas and perspectives authentically and visually. The themes, perspectives, and ideas that arise in the CPS workshops will inspire the art creation. Finding ways to embrace all the diverse perspectives and make all the voices feel heard while condensing these themes into a piece of visual art will be an exciting challenge.

A third goal is a better understanding of what parts of the process I enjoy most. In this project, I am conducting outreach, managing a creative facilitation workshop series, designing a large-scale public art piece, and organizing a community paint day. These are all varying parts of the same project. I'd like to do this project in total to better understand what gives me the most energy here and where I could tweak the process to better suit my strengths.

Lastly, I would like to navigate having my own sense of self-expression while leading a group art process. In my career, I have become so used to managing volunteers and committees, and I tend to defer decisions to a group while minimizing my voice in the process, leaning heavily towards servant leadership styles (Northouse, 2022). I will need to monitor and balance this throughout this project. Embracing my inner voice, owning my multidimensionality, and balancing my artistic voice and my bureaucratic planning side will be critical throughout the project. Figuring out how to be authentic to who I am, and what I want to express while

embedding, integrating, and uplifting other voices and perspectives into the finished piece is a crucial factor and personal goal of this project.

Overall, this project is an opportunity for me to heighten my ability to be a change leader. I hope to use this project to experiment with change leadership concepts, learn to represent diverse ideas visually as an artist, and learn more about myself in the process. I will overlay these findings in my career as I grow and develop down the road.

Rationale for Selection: Why this Project and Why the NFFT?

Coming from an immigrant family, I often struggled growing up to find a sense of belonging. Living in a traditional Indian household but entrenched in an American upbringing, I never felt I belonged entirely to either culture. My childhood differences led to feeling isolated on the playground and in my classrooms as I grew up in a traditional American suburb. When visiting India, I was unaware of all the Indian customs, and my cultural viewpoints differed from my Indian family members. I never felt like I entirely belonged in either world.

This theme of belonging arose again in college. I was studying graphic design in Chicago when I realized that people are more isolated in larger cities. The pull of this question was strong enough to shift my gaze from graphic design to urban planning with a focus on environmental design. I searched to understand how to create stronger social cohesion and belonging by designing public spaces.

Fast forward a few years - I opened an art studio and started an arts-based business while also being an active and practicing urban planner and community organizer. As someone equally right and left brained, I find myself straddling the lines of being an artist and a bureaucrat. I am the type of artist that relies on spreadsheets. I'm also a planner who pushes for more creative

solutions. Because I do not fit squarely into either category, I struggled with the sense of belonging throughout my career.

Because of this recurring theme, I am passionate about finding ways for people to experience belonging in their neighborhoods through the design and creation of public space. I often explore how neighborhood design offers a heightened sense of belonging to those who live there. How can the design of a place foster more social cohesion? How are people engaged in that design? What creativity tools can promote a stronger sense of social cohesion among people from broad backgrounds, all while coming together around a shared vision to create a welcoming and inviting space?

After years of introspection and reflection, I have found that my strength lies in this ability to bridge opposing sides. Because I never seem to fit squarely in one sector, culture, or even one side of my brain, I have a talent for bringing people together across lines and perspectives. I was born bridging cultures. I bridge my right and left-brain tendencies. I bridge the world of a creative artist and a bureaucratic planner. My career experiences even bridge east and west coasts of the US.

My background as an artist and creative lends itself to using arts, culture, and creativity to connect people to each other and their neighborhoods. This community art project is a pilot initiative to see how creative problem solving can create a stronger sense of belonging and social cohesion. I foresee this pilot project allowing me to experiment with the Creative Problem Solving approach on an actual public space development.

The selected site is the historic Niagara Frontier Food Terminal (NFFT), a complex of architecturally significant historic market buildings in the Clinton/Bailey neighborhood on Buffalo's East Side. After years of struggle, the NFFT is working to reinvent itself as a place for

small, local food and beverage startups, specialty food suppliers, and ethnic food retailers. Most notably, the NFFT is also home to over 25 artists leasing affordable art space. The 92-year-old buildings have critical deferred maintenance, and though the building's interior spaces are burgeoning with vibrant businesses, the exterior façade of the buildings does not reflect that same vibrant rebirth.

Recently, the NFFT received several storefront grants to restore some architecturally significant buildings. One of these buildings will get a newly paved masonry dock and walkway, retail lighting, storefront signage, a new paint job, and a new door replicating the historic character. It is on this repaved dock that the community art project will take place.

Given the location's rich history, some tenants have been in the buildings for decades, and others have been there for less than a year. One of Buffalo's most bustling farmers markets is across the street – the Clinton Bailey Farmer's Market. A business association is down the block representing the Kaisertown commercial corridor. I will invite representatives from all these locations, some residents in the nearby areas, and the NFFT board members and staff to participate in a Creative Problem Solving (CPS) process to identify what type of artwork would suit the future of the site. I will invite them to paint the piece during a community paint day. The process will measure whether there was stronger social cohesion between the disparate parties and whether the parties feel a stronger sense of belonging and ownership of the site after undergoing this process.

This project will increase the quality of life for others because it allows other people to see themselves in their public spaces. It gives ownership to the residents and neighbors of neighborhoods and creates a sense of belonging, social cohesion, and civic engagement. It allows people a vehicle for collective self-expression, to share meaningful history and the future they

want to create together. It will also be my first type of public art of this kind. I expect it to launch me further in my career as a social practice artist and placemaking professional.

Background Summary

In summation, this background provides an overview of the context and history that brings me to this project. My interest in neighborhood development, creativity, and art provides the foundation for this graduate project. I look forward to experimenting and exploring creativity concepts, intersected with art and development initiatives, as a model for other artists and planners interested in creating stronger social cohesion through the development of public space. The next section provides an introduction, history, and overview review of placemaking, placekeeping, social practice art, and its effectiveness on neighborhood development.

Section Two: Placemaking, Placekeeping, and Social Practice Arts. What is it and How it Connects People to Each Other & Their Environments.

This section overviews the evolution of community engaged art over the years. The first theme includes early examples of social engagement with the environment. How has this turned into the buzzword “placemaking” Furthermore, how has this become the newest buzzword, referred to as “placekeeping” The second theme that is explored are examples of art and culture within public spaces and how participatory art engages broader audiences and creates social cohesion between them. The third and final theme ties the prior two together and examines how artists are now moving into the “social practice” sphere. Social practice artists engage people to address or highlight social issues through art. This section explores some modern artists utilizing these methodologies and examples of this work in practice. Finally, the section highlights gaps for exploration and looks at creativity and change leadership methodologies to strengthen and grow the social practice sphere, increasing dialogue around critical issues, and heightening peoples’ sense of connection and belonging.

Early Social Scientists

In the 1960s, "placemaking" entered the urban planning dictionary. According to Project for Public Spaces, placemaking inspires people to reimagine public spaces collectively and centers community participation. Simply put, placemaking uses people's creativity to build neighborhoods that work for them. Research of several early practitioners influenced this work as they researched the intersection of sociology and city planning. In my undergraduate years, I became familiar with and fascinated by this work. Some of these practitioners include Kevin

Lynch, Christopher Alexander, William Whyte, and Jan Gehl – all of whom I would deem to be social scientists and early placemakers.

Kevin Lynch, the author of *The Image of the City* (1960), focused on elements that make up a city and how people connect with them. In this early text, Lynch discussed five elements of a city's physical form (pp. 47-48). This includes paths where people move - like roads and transit lines, edges or boundaries like shorelines and walls, districts or medium to large sections that have identifying characteristics, nodes or points of focus where people converge, and landmarks like the Niagara River in Buffalo, or the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

Lynch (1960) discussed identity at length. For example, when paths lack identity, they are easily confused for other paths, highlighting the need for paths to be recognizable and unique for people to have a sense of direction and bearing of their environment (p. 52). Of particular interest to this master's project, Lynch touched on the *meaning* of these elements for people within a cityscape. He expressed that any of these objects within a city must be identifiable to the observer, have some pattern or spatial relationship to the observer, and have meaning - practical or emotional - to the observer (p. 8). He also posited that "meaning" in the context of public space is complex, as "each individual creates and bears his own image, but there seems to be substantial agreement among members of the same group" (p. 7).

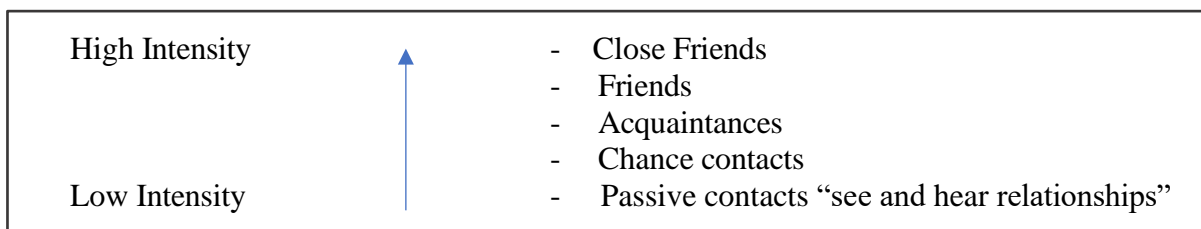
A Pattern Language, written by Christopher Alexander et al. (1977), is a guidebook for anyone who wants to design a space, like a home or a public building, to work with their neighbors to improve their towns or construct new developments. It provides 253 "patterns" that form a common "language." These patterns can be mixed and matched in various ways to build welcoming places and create stronger social connections and viable uses rather than isolated

dead spaces. He believed that people, not architects, should design their own houses, streets, and communities.

William Whyte, a planner at the NYC Planning Commission in the 1960s, differed from the other previously cited. His research focused on people’s behavior toward their environment rather than the environment itself. His classic text, *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* (1980), launched a mini revolution in the planning and public space development fields. Some key themes include the idea that people attract people, and “right-sizing” public spaces to a more human scale to create stronger social cohesion rather than large, isolated spaces that feel empty.

Jan Gehl, a Danish Architect and Professor of Urban Design at The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, focused his research on the intensity of contact levels between people caused by the physical environment around them. In his book *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space* (2011), he identified a common thread that the prior social scientists also discovered – people attract people. He shared how the quality of the physical environment affects necessary, optional, and social activities within the space (p.11). He suggested that every time two people see or hear each other, they interact, but the intensity of interaction shifts based on whether they are already acquainted with each other or if they share a common thread. On page 15, he shares the varying levels of intensity as follows:

Fig 1. Levels of Intensity Between Human Interactions



Gehl shares many examples of how the space between buildings affects these levels of contact intensity and how city planners can influence the integration or segregation of people.

These early social scientists had a great effect on my thinking about public space. These concepts are all relevant to how we build physical spaces today. These concepts are the foundation for this project, and the ability to design places that increase social cohesion and connection between people and their environments.

Placemaking and Placekeeping Defined

The work of these early social scientists influenced the newest urban planning buzzword, “placemaking,” where people's creativity is utilized in creating their neighborhoods. It is a bottom-up rather than top-down approach to neighborhood planning and development. Fred Kent, founder of Project for Public Spaces (PPS), one of the more well-known placemaking-focused organizations, worked as one of William Whyte’s research assistants for the Street Life Project. The organization was founded mainly on Whyte’s principles and research (PPS, 2010).

Though the term “placemaking” has been used in the planning field since the 1960s, the terminology has started to shift. In 2011, there was a big push for “*creative* placemaking” when the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA) issued a white paper. The main difference in this terminology is that it centers creativity in the form of art and culture as a tool to build social connections and boost economic benefits for a neighborhood (McCormack, 2018). Even more recently, in 2017, the US Department of Arts & Culture released a webinar about “Creative Place*keeping*,” a term that builds off placemaking but with an added focus on anti-displacement. It focuses on supporting residents’ and locals’ ability to use placemaking-type strategies while maintaining the way of life they choose (USDAC, 2017).

Though the terminology has shifted over the years, the deeper concept of utilizing people’s creativity to develop their own neighborhoods that serves them remains the same. As the nature of urban planning shifts and changes, slight differences occurred to stay relevant to the

current social and economic landscapes. It is expected that future shifts may occur as the social climate continues to change and evolve.

“Social Practice” Arts Explained

The arrival of creative placemaking shines a new light on the participation of the arts and culture within the public arena. Administrators and artists are now exploring the “social practice” arts and addressing social or political issues with arts and culture in the public sphere. Many examples of co-created and participatory art that break down social, economic, and racial barriers already exist.

Some examples outlined by Lawton (2019) include: 1) The U.S. Federal Government employed 5,000 artists in the early 1940s, post-Great Depression, to create art on public buildings to uplift the country’s morale. 2) Artist Judy Baca, in the 1970s and 80s, hired 450 diverse youth to create *The Great Wall of Los Angeles*, a visual history of the contributions and struggles of minorities in California. This project included math instruction, drug counseling, and job training. 3) The Philadelphia Mural Arts project, founded by the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network in the 1980s, supports people reintegrating from the criminal justice system in celebrating Philly's history and culture while beautifying the city.

Taking this all one step deeper, we explore social practice arts that range from “projects designed by artists to projects created through dialogue and cooperation with participants” (Finkelpearl, 2013, p.4). These examples listed above fall on one end of the social practice spectrum. On the other end are art activists, or “artivists,” community organizers within their art practice.

One such artist is Theaster Gates, known for his big architectural projects, like purchasing abandoned buildings in Chicago and redesigning them as community gathering

grounds. The Stony Island Trust & Savings Bank, now known as the Stony Island Arts Bank, and The Dorchester Project are two of the most well-known (Gates, 2019). Mark Bradford, another artist of this nature, creates large-scale paintings out of paper that unveil a story of social and political systems and race in Los Angeles (Hauser & Wirth, 2023). Rick Lowe, a social practice artist in Houston, Texas, founded Project Row Houses. This organization uses art and engagement as a tool for community transformation, including housing and amenities for the direct residents of the neighborhood, community programs, and art programs (Project Row Houses, 2023).

Now, with a greater understanding of how early social scientists began this work, to the modern terminologies of placemaking to creative placekeeping, we have a stronger understanding of the evolution of building social cohesion and connection in public space. Furthermore, an understanding of social practice artists helps us see how art can play a strong role in breaking down barriers between people. The next section explores the effectiveness of the social practice arts arena on placemaking and connection.

The Effectiveness of Social Practice Arts on Placemaking & Connectedness

In a longitudinal study starting in 2010, a team of researchers explored participatory artmaking as a tool to serve and (re)produce a community. In a less affluent area of Marseilles, France, top-down bureaucratic planning with little connection between spatial and social aspects has led to a dead city in Paris, or an area of low vibrancy and human activity. Researchers explored citizens' ability to mobilize and reappropriate the use of public space, particularly in segregated areas of spatial injustice (Eynaoud et al., 2018).

The TDA, a community service organization, managed a project to co-create street furniture with residents. Ten workshops were organized with architects, residents, and local organizations between fall 2015 and spring 2016. Two green spaces were transformed into shared garden space complete with movable street furniture that could be integrated into the space and support recreational activities. Modules of furniture were adaptable to support many different uses of the space, strengthening social relations among the local community.

The co-creation process highlights socialization and trust created through dialogue and productive conversation. It also implies ownership and value, indicated by the lack of damage inflicted on the street furniture. New forms of social encounters now take place in this co-created garden scenery, further implying cohesion and a strengthened sense of belonging. As Eynaud et al. (2018) described:

The Place Puge´ is highly segregated.... What we see today is different.

There are people from the surrounding apartment buildings going down to care for and water the greenery, moms sit on the street furniture along with the kids, the drug dealers are in the middle of the square, everybody is now blended. (p.10)

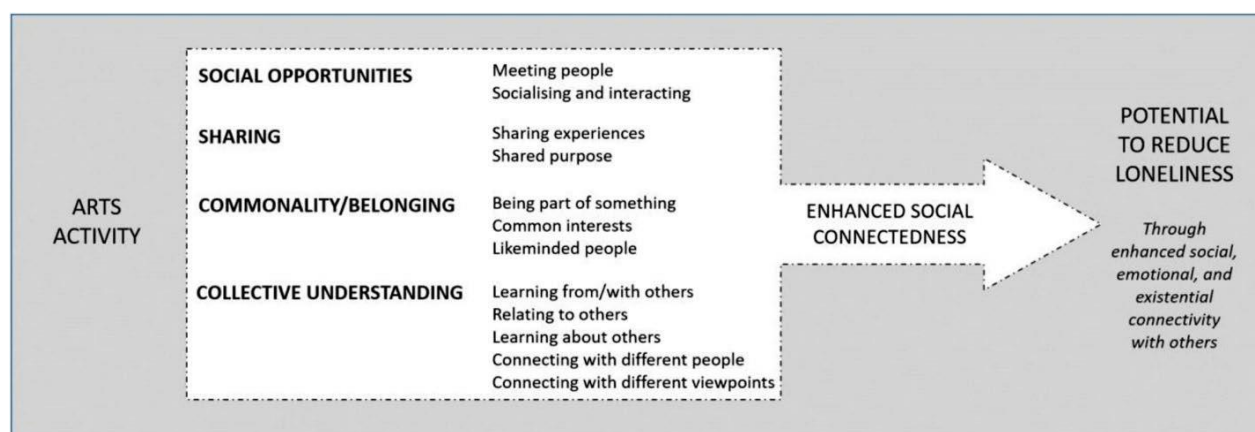
Further supporting the effectiveness of social practice art on placemaking and social cohesion, Lawton (2019) expresses that social interaction and cooperation reside in the intersection of community engagement, social practice art, community art, and education. She suggests recreational art activities geared to the people within a given place builds rapport and trust between community members with varied educational status, socioeconomic backgrounds, and regional, racial, ethnic, and gender identities. These intersectional projects unite people around the need for social reform that benefits varying needs and interests.

Success in placemaking and connectedness, in addition to increased dialogue and awareness of social issues is documented in the Kò, ts'ihłta (“We Light the Fire”) Project, a community-based and youth-led 5-day art project (Fanian et al., 2015). The project, led by the Tłıchq Community Action Research Team (CART) in the Northwest Territories, engaged youth in the community of Behchokǫ to build resiliency and healthy minds, bodies, and spirits with the use of art. At the end of the workshop, one of the outcomes was a collective mural. The brainstorming process brought up significant points of discussion, uplifting youth concerns, hopes, dreams, and visions for their lives and communities.

Though the article did not explain in detail the methodology used for the brainstorming process, the article did uplift four main factors that aided to a positive experience for youth: they developed new skills, had positive experiences with the facilitators, the workshops were designed to be culturally relevant, and the youth had an opportunity to use the arts to talk about community issues and visions for change. I anticipate using these key learnings as I build the process for my community mural workshop.

On the other end of the life spectrum, an article by Perkins et al. (2021) indicates loneliness as a public health challenge, particularly in adulthood and with the elderly. A study surveying nearly 6,000 adults in the UK determined that most respondents (82%) perceive arts engagement to be connected to feelings of social connectedness at least some of the time. This study's themes that facilitate social connectedness include social opportunities, sharing, commonality and belonging, and collective understanding.

Fig 2: How arts engagement is perceived to facilitate feelings of social connection. Source: [HEartS Survey](#)



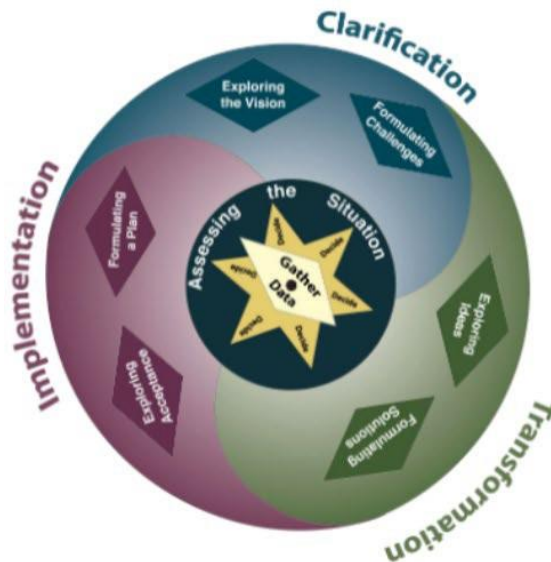
In the article, *Inspiring a Collective Vision: The Manager as Mural Artist*, Jensen (2023) explored how art making can effectively bridge cultural gaps and create connections. More specifically, mural art can support a shared vision and group identity. She summarized the process of mural-making into four key phases. The first phase, or the concept phase, invited a group to discuss values, personal identity, group culture, and social, economic, cultural, or political concerns. The process involved brainstorming and visualizing themes that unite the team around a vision. Next came the Design Phase, intended to develop images and forms based on the themes. Participants played a role in making sketches, layouts, or color choices. This strengthened the group dynamic from a conceptual one to an implementation role. The third phase was the Creation Phase, where the team created the mural together. The team was coordinated while people had their individual role within the full project. Finally, the Reflection Phase concluded the process and allowed for reflection, celebration, and a chance to review the sense-making of the communicated imagery.

When exploring Jensen’s explanation and phasing of mural art to support shared vision and group identity, I sensed strong connections with the Thinking Skills Model and process I undertook. Jensen’s project used the lens of creativity, though it wasn’t spelled out within a

framework. The following framework outlines how creativity is intentionally woven into the process I will undertake for this project.

Fig 3. The Thinking Skills Model. Source: Puccio et al. (2005) as cited in Puccio et al. (2011).

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The process will begin in the Clarification Phase, where we will explore the site's history - past, present, and future - and come to clarity around shared themes among the group. Questions will be posed to elevate personal values, group culture, identity, etc. We will use visionary thinking skills and strategic thinking skills to bridge ideas across varied perspectives. The group will encounter corresponding affective skills of dreaming and sensing gaps when asked to consider the past and the future of the NFFT.

Then, we will move to the transformation phase, where brainstorming and ideation can occur around visualizing the top themes and activating playfulness in the group. Group members will be prompted to draw or write their ideas, using colors, shapes, or designs they prefer. After diverging, we will move into ideational thinking and converge on key visualizations representing the site, evoking evaluative thinking. The group will assess the quality of ideas to develop a good fit for the art piece, bringing the group to consensus around visual artistic depictions.

Finally, the group will have a chance to take part in implementation. After developing sketches, participants will provide feedback based on the initial thematic story we are collectively telling. In this phase, I will have to take the sensitivity of the environment to heart, as I work with board members, staff of the NFFT, and dedicated community members, to find a workable solution sensitive to the needs and visions of these various groups. Finally, I will practice the affective skill of tolerating risk, as I develop and share a few art ideas. It's possible that the final sketches may not hit the mark and will need refining before finalizing the image.

Once an image is selected, I will develop an implementation plan for a community paint day. Workshop participants will be prompted to bring their friends and families to co-create the public art project later in the summer. This will be followed by a debrief and celebration to help connect the dots between the workshop outcomes and the artwork created.

Jensen's four-phased step of using mural art to create shared visions directly correlates to the Thinking Skills Model. As indicated earlier, brainstorming techniques have also been used to create stronger social cohesion. Several other creativity themes arose through these articles that indicate creativity skills are already being used and translated into the social practice arts realm. For example, flexibility arose multiple times. Lawton (2019), Eynaud et al. (2018), and Fanian et al. (2015) all expressed the need to stay flexible, allowing participants to belong to and become one with the project. Fanian et al. (2015) went so far as to suggest re-evaluating agendas and structures daily as part of the lessons learned. Fanian et al. (2015) and Jensen (2023) both highlighted the need for group building and individual growth. This also looked like structured group and unstructured time for autonomous direction.

Another common theme is the need for physical and emotional safety. Fanian et al. (2015) uplifted this by using ground rules and being culturally relevant and respectful. Jensen

(2023) also indicated determining whether goals and objectives are process-driven (ie. The process has value of its own regardless of physical output) or product-driven (i.e., Mural will be put up in the community) as an important step in the process.

Though they may not be phrased or listed as creativity skills in their initial article formats, these various factors are interwoven in the creativity skills and methodologies used for this master's project. This indicates strength in the effectiveness of creativity on social practice arts, social cohesion, and connectedness. I plan to be intentional in using creativity skills in the process I will develop, shining a greater light on the use of creativity in the social practice arena and public space development.

Summary: Using CPS and Social Practice Arts to Further Placekeeping Efforts

In summary, Creative Problem Solving (CPS) strategies are evident in the above outlined methodologies. Overall, using arts and culture to define and shape places is not a new concept, though the way it has been defined and utilized by community over time has shifted.

Placemaking, placekeeping, and social practice arts are effective strategies to help people feel more connected to each other and their neighborhoods. However, creative-thinking skills seem to be an untapped avenue of exploration in these examples. The gap I am exploring through this project is how practitioners might use creative problem solving techniques in social practice art projects to further placekeeping efforts and effectiveness. I suspect more can be done to leverage information from the field of creativity and apply it to social practice art projects in public space.

In my research of finding an art professor or working artist who may act as a mentor, I reached out to multiple local art faculty and the National Director of Creative Placemaking at LISC, where I worked at the time. I was advised to look to Erie, PA, where a City of Erie government official is tackling a similar process. I was also directed to faculty in Arizona. This

indicates that there is an opportunity in our region to develop a system around inclusive public art that centers community-led neighborhood development. The use of Creative Problem Solving and Change Leadership skills and techniques will bolster this effort and provide a replicable methodology for this type of social practice and placekeeping project. Now, after this in-depth review of these important creativity concepts, the next section describes the methodology and process adopted for the project.

Section Three: Process Plan

Goals & Outcomes

This project explores how CPS processes contribute to community engagement in creating a public mural. “Community engagement” is a term that may vary from practitioner to practitioner. In this case, I am measuring participants’ feeling of belonging at the site, and social cohesion between each other. I am also measuring feelings of pride and ownership for the public space itself.

Additional goals include using process-driven CPS workshops to gather broad input to inform the visual design of the public art itself. Once this phase is complete, the next phase is to create a public mural on the dock of the food terminal that features the themes and narrative of place that arise through the CPS process. These two phases together showcase the fully intended outcome of this project. For the purposes of this master’s project, I will be focusing on the first phase of the project, with the knowledge that some fundraising and planning will be necessary to execute the community paint day and mural, likely in spring 2024 after the dock restoration and building renovation project is complete. The following sections outline the process undertaken to accomplish these goals and outcomes.

Outreach

Initial outreach started with the NFFT Board of Directors and management. As the property managers of the site, without their approval, the project could not move forward. The project was brought to the February 2023 board meeting and received approval in March 2023. The board was interested in seeing this beautification project on the loading dock that leads up to the artist studios.

I then worked with the property manager of the NFFT to brainstorm potential attendees interested in attending the CPS workshops and being part of the project. We identified several people and organizations that would add value to the project. We aspired to engage 8-10 participants from the divergent list of participants in Appendix A. We decided on hosting two workshops, allowing time and space for incubation between sessions. The first workshop focused on themes of the NFFT complex. After a week of incubation, the second workshop took place. In the second workshop, we took the top three themes identified the week before and used divergent thinking to brainstorm different ways to visualize these three themes. We did not explicitly state that participants needed to attend both workshops. We felt it would be ok for participants to attend one or the other, allowing heightened flexibility in participation.

CPS Workshops

When solidifying a location for the workshops, I thought it important for participants to come see the actual space at the Niagara Frontier Food Terminal site. Therefore, session one was held at Chateau Buffalo Winery, the tenant on the ground floor of the dock that's being remodeled and painted. Session two was held one week later at Snowy Owl Kombucha & Tea, offering participants a chance to experience another business within the complex, providing participants a more comprehensive understanding of how the terminal functions and whom it serves. I also offered a studio tour of the second-floor art studios for anyone interested in gathering even more background and understanding of the site and its current use.

Fig 4. Community Workshop Outreach Flyer

Thursday, April 27 at 5:30p
Chateau Buffalo Winery [Unit 175]

Thursday, May 4 at 5:30p
Snowy Owl Kombucha & Tea [Unit 156]

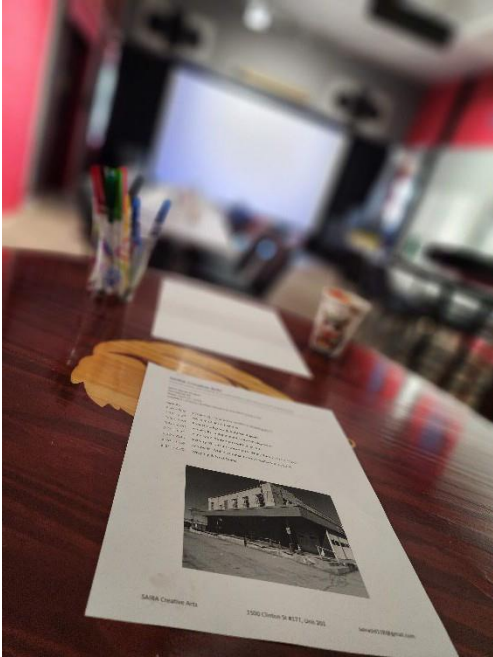
Join us early at 5pm to tour 2nd floor artist studios! Food & Drink Provided

**NFFT
Community
Mural Project**



Workshop Session 1

Fig 5. Workshop Set Up



The workshops themselves were designed to allow people to envision and dream about the past, present, and future, followed by a week of incubation before coming back to brainstorm and develop ideas. The first session started with the manager of the site taking people on a journey, starting with a brief overview of the site's history showcasing historic photos and outlining the unique qualities of the site and its timeline of development.

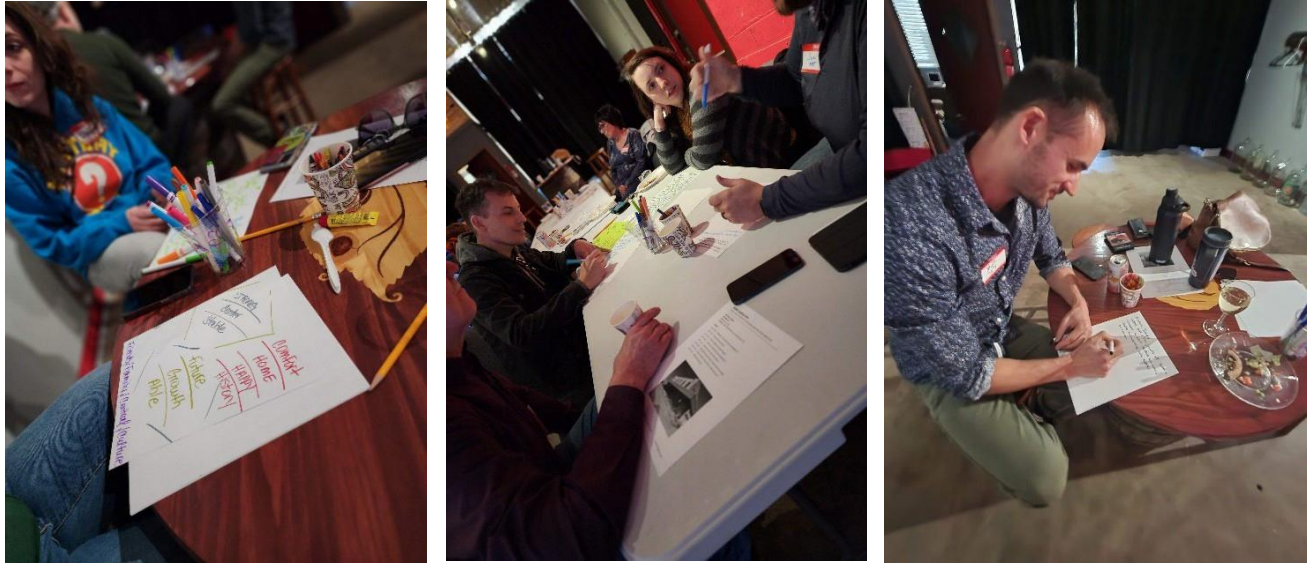
After setting the stage, I provided prompts to participants, who were equipped with papers, pens, markers, crayons, and a variety of tools and utensils to draw or write their experiences individually using the following prompts:

- Think back to your memories about the NFFT complex. What specific memories come to mind? What does the place mean to you?
- What strikes you about the presentation of the NFFT's history?
- What does the NFFT feel like for them now? What emotions arise?
- When you think about this place 10 years from now, what images do you see? What do you feel? What are you doing when you're here?

After the individual exploration, attendees were asked to get into groups of 3 to 4 participants. They shared their experiences with one another and come up with themes in their small group. Each group shared their themes aloud. Based on this conversation, what

emotionally grabbed them? What themes, ideas, or stories gave them goosebumps? An in-depth dialogue ensued allowing people a chance to converse over shared ideas and themes.

Fig 6-8. Participants Engaging in Workshop Activities



Workshop Session 2

After a week of incubation, and letting the themes settle, we regrouped for a second workshop with a goal of working with the top three themes that arose. Participants chose the theme most resonant to them and broke out into three groups for the duration of the 2nd workshop. The group was guided to develop tangible ideas of how these themes might be represented in visual art form. After a brief review and verifying the key themes were accurate, we moved into the brainstorming phase. We used Stick 'Em Up Brainstorming around the top 3 themes, in addition to Forced Connections. Though participants were provided sticky notes and paper, all the participants ended up drawing and writing their ideas on the butcher block paper provided on their tables. This led to a lot of sketches, colors and themes that were embedded in the outcome of the workshop.

Fig 9. Participant Engaging in Workshop 2



After going through the divergent exercise, participants moved into convergence with a dot sticker exercise. Based on the group's number of ideas, each group received stickers in the ratio of 10% of their group's overall ideas. For example, if one group collectively had 100 ideas for the visual representation, each participant received 10 dot stickers. This allowed for group and individual decision-making through the process.

Process Summary

Overall, the process was successful, with full audience participation. People were engaged and curious throughout the duration of the workshop series. Many people wanted to keep going and keep the momentum building. I found some people were more drawn to

the divergent processes and others were drawn to the convergent, but having both in place helped every person find their niche within the process. Evaluation of the workshops follows in section four.

Section Four: Outcomes & Evaluation

Workshop Outcomes

Overall, the project was very helpful in narrowing down a scope for a mural that would be accepted by the NFFT community, while creating a pathway for people to feel more connected to the site, to each other, and to the mural project. Outcomes ended up being both process and product oriented. The workshop series focused on the process of creating the mural, while the ideas generated to help come up with mural design ideas tended to be product oriented. At the time of writing this report, evaluation has been completed for the process portion of this project, but not yet for the product - or mural development - as that has yet to happen.

I had intended for 10-20 attendees per session, which was a success as session 1 had 16 attendees, while session 2 had 11 attendees. Rather than trying to go for a large crowd, I had hoped for people who had a direct relationship and was affected by the future of the NFFT complex. Attendees ranged from tenants of the building – artists and other business owners, architects, NFFT staff, and a few residents of the neighborhood.

In workshop number 1, we had a lot of rich dialogue about what the place meant to the participants. Emotions ran high with excitement, the feeling of surprise and discovery, and the idea of growth for the city. People had a chance to share what the terminal meant to them, and how they viewed it in their eyes, while also connecting with other peoples' viewpoints. Outcomes of this session resulted in the identification of the following three themes: 1) Industrial & Architectural History... Turned Modern, 2) Art & Food, 3) Physical Convergence (of people and food markets, of transportation lines, etc)

Fig 10-12. Three Groups Focused on the Three Themes



At the second workshop, people had fun with the divergent thinking style of brainstorming. The addition of coloring utensils and butcher block paper helped the creative flow of the session and helped make it feel more playful. In the end, we had several butcher block papers covered in drawings, colors, themes, and ideas of how to take these three themes and draw them visually.

Fig 13. Workshop Participants Drawing During Brainstorm Phase



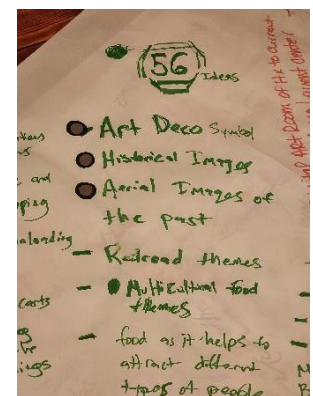
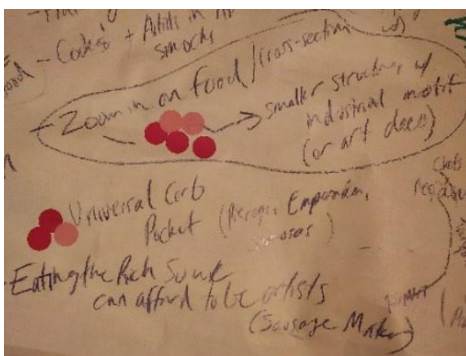
The conversation did not focus solely on this project. Other placemaking projects came up, like hosting a large dinner in the parking lot of the terminal or using large shipping

containers to create art in the less populated spaces of the terminal complex. The divergent exercises opened people up to more than just simply painting something on the dock. It provided some very concrete examples of what made participants excited about activating the space.

After looking at the materials from session 2, it became clear that a few concepts were shared by all the groups:

- Art deco motifs and imagery were the top themes from 2 of the 3 groups.
- All three groups were interested in QR codes being used to showcase more of the site and the project.
- Urban farming and greenery to offset the industrial feel came up a lot in the brainstorming phase.
- The idea of surprise and discovery resonated with all the participants and could be interwoven into the design.
- Creating a feeling of a plaza or an 'old town square' was well supported by participants.

Fig 14-16. Convergent Exercise Outcomes



After converging, one group suggested a zoomed in cross section of a plant using art deco motifs. Another group suggested zoomed in imagery of train tracks or a compass,

done in an artistically intriguing and abstracted way. Paired with a QR code, it could be a directional map for the terminal complex.

After this workshop series, I am now thinking about sketches that use art deco motifs, zoomed in imagery that have a stronger story, and also design the image to invoke the elements of surprise and discovery along with the town square vibe. This could look like taking old art deco inspired motifs and modernizing them, or creating art on the dock that spills out into the parking lot area, indicating life and activity, and symbolizing a plaza, pavilion, or old town square. Other ideas might be hiding images within the art for people to find, or perhaps creating art that is a zoomed in and abstracted view of something related to the terminal that has a hidden meaning or story. Several ideas are now brewing in my mind, but I do have the element of constraint using the themes that came from the workshop, which does help narrow down the scope, and provide stronger meaning to the work.

Evaluation

Though there are both process and product elements to this mural project, I ended up evaluating only the process so far, since the product has yet to be designed and developed. I intended for the process to help people feel more connected to each other and their environment when using creativity tools and the arts. I used a survey to measure connection at the end of workshop sessions 1 and 2. The questions I chose specifically focused on how connected participants felt to each other, to the site, and to the project overall before and after the workshops. Survey questions for workshops 1 and 2 are listed

in Appendix B. The survey answers ranged from 1 to 5, with 1 being least connected, and 5 being most connected.

At the end of workshop 1, 12 people took the survey. At the end of session 2, 10 people took the survey. The connection people felt in week 1 before and after the workshop had a significant increase. Before the workshop, more than 50% of participants chose a 1 or 2, meaning they felt disconnected from participants. By the end of the workshop, all participants chose between 3 and 5, with 5 being the majority at 66%, indicating an increase in participant connection.

Similarly, there was an increase to connection of the site before and after the workshop. Though the majority of people already felt connected to the site, with 50% indicating a level 5, and 33% indicating a level 4 before the workshop. After the workshop, 75% of respondents chose 5 for their connection to the site, and the remaining 25% chose 4.

When it came to connection with the community mural project, many respondents indicated low connection before the workshop, with 41% choosing a 3, and 33% choosing a 1. After the workshop, 50% chose a 5, and no participants chose a 1 or a 2. All three of these indicators show an increase in connection to other people, the site itself, and increased investment in the project.

In response to the open-ended questions, people like the markers and crayons because it made the session feel playful. The environment was comfortable, people thought the session was well organized and many folks appreciated the dialogue, open sharing of ideas, and collaboration. Discussions about the future was another item folks appreciated about the workshop. Some things people wanted to see differently were inclusion of city representatives to be a part of the dialogue and discussion, and community outreach to other cultures, making this

more of an open event, rather than focusing on a targeted audience. Only 4 of the 12 respondents answered the last two questions asking for ways we could do things differently at similar workshops in the future, and the open-ended question asking if there's anything else to share.

When looking at the responses from the second survey representing the second workshop, we found that 70% of participants were returning guests, and 30% were new. Like the first round of surveys, the connection to other participants increased from 50% ranking a 4 or a 5 before the workshop, to 90% selecting 4 or 5 after the workshop. Connection to the site itself rose from 80% of participants selecting a 4 or 5 before the workshop, and 10% of participants selected a 4 or 5 after. Connection to the project also modeled the first session, with 40% selecting a 4 or 5, and increased to 90% selecting a 4 or 5 after the workshop.

People liked the abstract thinking, brainstorming, using butcher paper to draw on, breaking out the themes from the previous week, and converging with the 10% rule. The discussion of ideas was also well supported by survey takers. Participants did share that they'd like to see the conversation steered a bit stronger and provide more structure with shorter brainstorming activities. Several survey takers asked to keep going and do more meetings of this nature.

Outcomes & Evaluation Summary

Overall, I believe the workshop process helped gain the trust of key community members – tenants, management, artists, and residents. The sessions opened-up some additional doors to support and funding, since of the attendees works at a bank on site. Finally, the process provided some very workable constraints to create the art within,

which is helpful in this context. Surveys also indicated an increase in connection between workshop participants, and people's connection to the site and the project itself.

The next section outlines key learnings and takeaways from this project. Key learnings start with process outcomes related to this project specifically, and then move into larger themes in the public development arena.

Section Five: Key Learnings

Process Learnings

There are several key learnings I took away from this project. First, based on the survey findings, I would add more structure to some of the facilitated sessions. Particularly, put less time into brainstorming, and a little more time into convergence. It makes sense that I put more effort into brainstorming since I tend to gravitate towards divergent thinking. But finding ways to focus more on steering the conversation and coming to stronger convergence would be useful for others.

The second big key learning is to figure out how to get all funding for future projects lined up before doing the creative problem-solving workshops. Though I haven't heard any feedback in this regard, the planner in me knows that people are often asked to go through these types of processes and then they don't see changes happen quickly after. I suggest having it all lined up and ready to go to keep the momentum building.

Finally, I would like to add more play and artmaking into the process. The process I went through used a lot of creativity but finding ways to include things like collage making or art making, where people have a chance to create together, could be an interesting addition. This would have to be done in a way that feels low pressure and invites those who don't feel they are "artistic" to find a way to participate.

Overarching Takeaways

Overall, I see a lot of added value in using the creative process as a part of public art development. Some of the qualms we hear in the community development landscape often deal

with people not having a voice in their environments. The ability to engage people in the conceptual creation of public space shifts that narrative.

While the creative process could be used in all kinds of development projects, from building renovations to landscape and architectural changes, I find that art is an avenue that speaks to a broader subset of the general population. People of all ages and backgrounds get excited about seeing positive and physical change. This was something I witnessed firsthand in this project. Some of the workshop attendees were people who just read about an art project happening on this building that they had an emotional connection with. Some of the attendees were tenants in the building who were excited about a visual change occurring on the building that their business was located in. Others were just curious about the process and wanted to be a part of the neighborhood's growth. If I approached the project as a 'development' project, I think less people would think it was for them. They might think that planners, architects, and other "trained" people in the development field would be suited to participate. In this case, I think framing this as an art project, even though it was part of an overall development initiative, helped increase the allure to a wider variety of people with a wider variety of backgrounds.

This is an important distinction because as I move forward into the world as a planner and an artist, finding ways to mask technicalities through fun and engaging practices is part of what makes a practitioner good at community engagement. And community engagement is necessary to build places that instill a sense of belonging and connection with the people that inhabit them. In my time as a planner, I've seen a lot of community engagement practices – some that are very surface level and don't feel fulfilling to the participants, and others that are much more engaging and effective. After going through this process, I do think the creativity elements

added a lot of value to creating deeper and more meaningful community engagement experiences.

This is a major takeaway that I will embed in my consulting practice. Finding ways to make technical developments more fun and engaging using creative processes will be a part of my value proposition in addition to the fact that I'm a right and left brained planner and artist. In fact, the idea that I am a planner and artist with a creativity background also fuels the ability to make a technical project more welcoming to the masses. This is a trait that I believe to be highly valued in this era. With the world in a state of polarization politically, economically, and socially, finding ways to bridge gaps between people, while still honoring each other's values and opinions is a trait that community engagement specialists will need to bring to the table. Using art to bring people together and find common threads around new development initiatives can truly help create pathways forward in this time of polarity.

Through this project, I witnessed how some contentious issues were brought up, but were also discussed with a good deal of dialogue and understanding between participants because the end goal of beautifying this building that everyone had a connection to, was shared. I will be curious to see how creativity tools would work on projects that may be more contentious to start with. There are many developments out there that are not community informed. If creativity tools and artmaking were brought into the fold on those projects, would it allow for people to find a voice and communicate with the decision makers of these such projects? And then it begs the question of whether decision makers are willing to make changes and listen to the people. This question opens up a door for me in my thinking about my future business offerings, and how I might be able to offer course correction for developments that are not community informed or supported.

Another key takeaway that arose for me is the need for community engagement on behalf of artists as well as developers. I know several artists locally who either were put in a tough spot because they were asked to develop a public mural in a place where the community wasn't going to support them, or where contentious issues of the past were left unresolved. In the current landscape, it is not the artists responsibility to ensure the community is involved or supportive of the art. Typically, the building or landowner hires an artist to create something, but that leaves the community out of the discussion entirely. Artists then will sometimes get a bad name for creating art that is not in alignment with the identity of the space, when often, they were simply responding to the call for artists that was designed by the landowner or decision-making body of the project. I personally know artists who created public art, and then decided they wouldn't do it again because they were caught in this type of bind. This highlights the need for community engagement practitioners to partner with artists on public projects. Therefore, a final key takeaway is that there may be an avenue for me to provide community engagement services to artists that may want to partner on public art projects in a socially conscious way through my burgeoning consulting practice.

Key Takeaway Summary

In summary, this project was a great first step and experiment in using creativity tools in a building redevelopment project with a focus on a community led mural. I know there is more to come as the implementation of this project unfolds, and at the same time, the community engagement component was a major part of the journey. I learned a lot of process-focused elements that will support my growth as I build a consulting business focused on arts, culture, and creativity to connect people to their neighborhoods. I also intrinsically learned the value of using creativity in a socially engaged art project and saw the benefits firsthand. Furthermore, I

learned more deeply what my personal value proposition might be as I build this consulting business. Beyond the traditional community engagement for government entities and civic organizations, there may be a niche space to build up community engagement services for artists as well.

Since this project focused on the community engagement and creative process components, the next steps include developing the art and community mural. The process and outline of those next steps is outlined in detail in section six.

Section Six: Next Steps & Conclusion

I am excited to have this project with real experience under my belt as a foundation to my future growth and next steps. New opportunities in the creativity and social practice art spaces have already arisen for me that align with the groundwork of this project and build off the project's processes and successes. I look forward to utilizing similar processes for other developments and will be using lessons learned to interweave into the next project of a similar nature.

As for this project at the Niagara Frontier Food Terminal, participants were informed of the next steps, which would be occurring in the next few months, depending on the building redevelopment timeline. Once the building redevelopment is near completion, I will develop 1 to 3 design sketches for the final mural that align with the new look and feel of the space. These ideas will be shared via email. I will ask the group some questions to help me develop the artwork, like: What do you like about the sketch? What could be improved? Do you see the initial themes exhibited here? How might those themes be strengthened?

Based on email feedback, I will finalize the sketches and gain approval from the NFFT management for the piece. Once the artwork is complete, I will move forward to schedule a paint day for the project, where participants will be invited back to implement the final art. I will likely schedule the paint day on a Saturday when the winery is open and the farmer's market across the street is in full swing and will work with the winery and NFFT to ensure people can access drinking water and bathrooms. Access to a slop sink would be a bonus amenity. This whole portion of visualizing, refining, and painting the

dock will likely occur in Spring 2024. This timeline is contingent upon the dock restoration being completed in Fall 2023.

Outside of the project itself, the process helped me in my development as a change leader. I learned more about staying flexible, honoring my own leadership styles, and learning how to engage others. I look forward to the community paint day, where I can share in leadership and allow others to step forward and help shape how the mural turns out. As I continue to gain skills as a public artist, I aspire to engage others in ways that strengthen my authentic and transformational leadership styles, by allowing people to add their own voices and narratives into the artwork that comes forward. Through this type of participatory process, I believe we can build more authentic public spaces where people feel connected to each other and their neighborhoods.

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Appendix A: Initial Participant Brainstorm List

Business/Organization	Individuals	Relationship to the NFFT
NFFT Reps	Matt Wattles & family	NFFT Management and Staff
	Fran (last name)	
	Michelle (last name)	
	Dolores (last name)	
Chateau Buffalo Winery	Carl (last name)	1 st Floor Commercial Food-Based Tenants
A-1 Vending		
Snowy Owl Kombucha & Tea	Tara & Sister Sasiadek	
Fresh Fix		
Arnie's Flowers	Joe (last name)	
Wildflower Meadery	Greg (last name)	
Building 4 Artists	Chuck Tingley	2 nd Floor Artist Tenants
	Rich Tomasello	
	Katherine Pessacow	
	Alana Adetola	
Building 177 Artists	Mark Lavatelli	
	Karen Tashjian	
	Sara Zak	
	Kyle Butler	
Tarantino Foods		
Desiderio Foods		
Clinton-Bailey Farmer's Market	Sharon Baldy	Farmer's Market Manager
The Sausage Maker	Abby Kylix	Employee of an NFFT anchor tenant
	Barbara Fenski	Neighborhood Resident
	Tina Cintron	Neighborhood Resident
Buffalo Rising	Newell Nussbaumer	Press Relationship
Kaisertown Business Association	Lyn Courtemanche	Closest located business association
Arch & Type Awesome Buffalo	Seth Amman	Architect for the NFFT storefront project & funder connection
M&T Bank	Jonathan Danat	Potential funder

Appendix B: Evaluation Survey

NFFT Mural Project Workshop 1 Survey

Through this process, we are measuring whether the use of arts, culture and creativity increases people's connection to each other and their neighborhoods. The focus of this survey is on feelings of belonging and social cohesion between participants of the group workshops. **Please rate the following questions, with 1 being not connected at all, and 5 being highly connected.**

1a. How connected did you feel to other participants *before* the workshop?

1 2 3 4 5

1b. How connected do you feel to other participants *after* the workshop?

1 2 3 4 5

2a. How connected did you feel to the Niagara Frontier Food Terminal *before* the workshop?

1 2 3 4 5

2b. How connected did you feel to the Niagara Frontier Food Terminal *after* the workshop?

1 2 3 4 5

3a. How connected were you to the community mural project before the workshop?

1 2 3 4 5

3b. How connected are you to the community mural project after the workshop?

1 2 3 4 5

4. What did you like most about today's process?

5. What would you like to see differently in the future?

6. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

NFFT Mural Project Workshop 2 Survey

Through this process, we are measuring whether the use of arts, culture and creativity increases people's connection to each other and their neighborhoods. The focus of this survey is on feelings of belonging and social cohesion between participants of the group workshops. **Please rate the following questions, with 1 being not connected at all, and 5 being highly connected.**

1. Did you attend the first workshop on 4/27 (circle one)? Y N

2a. How connected did you feel to other participants *before* the workshop?

1 2 3 4 5

2b. How connected do you feel to other participants *after* the workshop?

1 2 3 4 5

3a. How connected did you feel to the Niagara Frontier Food Terminal *before* the workshop?

1 2 3 4 5

3b. How connected did you feel to the Niagara Frontier Food Terminal *after* the workshop?

1 2 3 4 5

4a. How connected were you to the community mural project before the workshop?

1 2 3 4 5

4b. How connected are you to the community mural project after the workshop?

1 2 3 4 5

5. What did you like most about today's process?

6. What would you like to see differently in the future?

7. Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Appendix C: Project Timeline

Milestone 1: Explore & Apply for Funding Options		February 28
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Progress</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Erie County Storefront Grant	Funds Committed	Reached out to the program manager in early February to see if partial funds could be allocated to materials for this project. Currently have access to up to \$40k in external building improvements.
Awesome Foundation	Received – Feb 2023	\$1,000 award
Milestone 2: Gain Approval from NFFT Leadership		February 28
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Progress</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Gain approval from property manager	February 2023	Property Manager is on board and will share for approval at Feb board meeting.
NFFT Board Approval	Board meeting Feb 22	Approved and able to move forward
Milestone 3: Research and Qualitative Info Gathering		March 31
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Progress</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Reach out to public artists for feedback	Somewhat completed	Met with Monet, have emails out to Chuck and Tara
Outreach to Aaron Ott, Public Art Director of Albright Knox	February 2023	Chatted in late Feb and received lots of great info for paper.
Research Paper	Completed draft – March 2023	Sections 1, 2, 3 completed by end of March
Milestone 4: Community Outreach for Workshops		April 15
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Progress</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Outreach to Clinton Bailey Market Stakeholders	Complete	Work with property manager
NFFT Board/Manager	Complete	Work with prop manager
Legacy Tenants & Newer Tenants	Complete	Property manager and myself for outreach
Kaisertown Business Association	Complete	Reached out but no answer received
Milestone 5: Host 1-3 Mural Art Workshops		April 27 & May 6 2023

<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Progress</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Host 1 st stakeholder workshop	April 27	Utilize Brainstorming Techniques to identify: a) themes/stories to be shared publicly about the building's history, b) how do these themes translate into visual representation, c) How do stakeholders want to be involved in the creation?
Host 2 nd stakeholder workshop	May 6	Gather survey feedback for research paper on CPS process at this session
Present some sketches based on workshop for vetting	Complete around time of building renovation	Once dock is being restored, develop some artwork that could fit and align with the new build out
Milestone 6: Finish Research Paper		July 2023
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Progress</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Sections 4-6	Completed	
Final Formatting	Completed	
Milestone 7: Create the Art Piece		Spring 2024
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Progress</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Promote the painting day	TBD	
Invite press	TBD	
Prepare materials and prep the surface	TBD	
Host paint day	TBD	
Milestone 8: Debrief the Process		August 2023
<i>Strategy</i>	<i>Progress</i>	<i>Notes</i>
Surveys to participants of the workshops	Completed	
On-site interviews with participants during the paint day	TBD	