

Arts + Social Impact Explorer Fact Sheet

HEALTH & WELL-BEING

ARTS + LIVABILITY

OVERVIEW

Community livability is composed of economic, architectural, and cultural factors, as well as intangibles like community resilience and levels of citizen engagement. Indicators of livability including things like the capacity for homeownership, the average length of residency, the percentage of housing units that are occupied, voting rates, crime rate, and various measures of economic health and vitality.

The presence of arts organizations, along with opportunities to participate in artmaking, help improve livability immediately. Creative placemaking projects, especially those that involve residents in planning and design, affect livability indicators long term.

For example, participation in cultural activities leads to wider community participation and a greater propensity to volunteer, and creative placemaking projects positively affect residents' feelings about their neighborhoods.

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IMPACT POINTS

50% INCREASE IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Cultural participation leads to wider community participation. One study showed that participants most involved in cultural activities were 50 percent more likely to be involved in other (non-arts) community activities.¹

ARTS HELP RESIDENTS APPRECIATE EACH OTHER

Intra-community trust is a major component of livability. Research shows that by collaborating on artmaking and beautification efforts that benefit a shared neighborhood, residents can increase feelings of trust and appreciation of each other.²

ARTS IMPROVE LIVABILITY

Research from the National Endowment for the Arts shows that increased presence per capita of arts and culture nonprofits and arts and entertainment establishments correlates strongly with increased livability.³

2X AS LIKELY TO VOLUNTEER

Volunteerism within a community is a sure sign of civic pride and engagement, which are crucial to livability. Research shows that arts participants are more than twice as likely to volunteer as those who do not participate in the arts—a trend that holds across artforms and regardless of demographics.⁴

ARTS HELP DEVELOP NEIGHBORHOOD PRIDE

Creative placemaking projects have been making progress in tracking outcomes related to livability. One study found that a majority of residents and business owners felt that the programs positively changed their feelings about the neighborhood.⁵

ARTS ATTRACT RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES

The density of arts organizations and prevalence of arts events plays a role in attracting residents and businesses to (re)locate to a community by improving its image and making it more appealing.⁶



EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

Hennepin Cultural Corridor, Minneapolis, MN



The Hennepin Avenue corridor, designated as a business improvement district, is important for the city's vitality. City officials reached out to neighborhood organizations, businesses, and cultural institutions to be part of a public dialogue about the area's future.

arts.gov/exploring-our-town/hennepin-avenue-cultural-corridor

tio.aiken@artspace.org

image: The City of Minneapolis is investing in improvements to Hennepin Avenue to ensure it is a functional and vibrant space.

Southeast Houston Arts Initiative, Houston, TX



The Southeast Houston Arts Initiative was formed to transform its community through improvements to the physical environment by cultural expression projects. The four guiding principles were personal and environmental health, cultural history, urban connectivity, and community organization empowerment.

arts.gov/exploring-our-town/southeast-houston-arts-initiative

cultural.affairs@houstontx.gov

image: Photo by Patrick Peters

Meeting Place, Portland, ME



As a city employee, artist Marty Pottenger noticed that public meetings were either poorly attended or did not reflect the diversity of residents. Thus, Meeting Place was born. It partners with neighborhood associations and artists to connect with residents who reflect their communities' diversity and to create art that celebrate each area.

artatwork.us/portland.php

marty@artatwork.us

image: Graffiti artist Tim Clorius gathers with Maine Muslim Community Center members before Portland's first Somali Poetry Slam, from Art At Work's Meeting Place project. Photo by Marty Pottenger.

National Cultural Districts Exchange



The creation of cultural districts, which involves the concerted effort to put in place programs, policies, and systems that encourage the flourishing of culture in communities, is a driver of livability. This exchange provides resources, examples, and connections.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/toolkits/national-cultural-districts-exchange-toolkit>

image: Paducah Kentucky's Cultural District featuring The Yeiser Art Center in the historic 1905 Market House is all dressed up for Quilt Show week

top image: The City of Minneapolis is investing in improvements to Hennepin Avenue to ensure it is a functional and vibrant space.

REFERENCES

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READING LIST

Project on Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods (PHDCN)

PHDCN is an interdisciplinary study of how families, schools, and neighborhoods affect child and adolescent development. The first component is a study of the social, economic, organization, political, and cultural structures and the changes that have taken place over time.

<https://scholar.harvard.edu/sampson/content/chicago-project-phdcn-0>

Soul of the Community Report



This Knight Foundation study of 26 creative placemaking projects across the country examines the factors that attach residents to their communities and the role of community attachment in an area's economic growth and well-being.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100974>

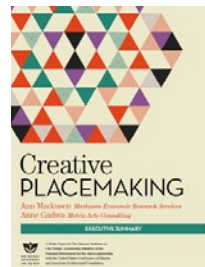
Validating Arts and Livability Indicators Study



The report examines the research on NEA Our Town projects to determine whether proposed indicators were the correct ones for measuring project impact.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100976>

Creative Placemaking



This white paper summarizes two decades of creative American placemaking, drawing on original economic research and case studies of pathbreaking initiatives in large and small cities, metropolitan to rural, as well as published accounts.

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/100977>



ORGANIZATIONS

ArtPlace America

This national funding, research, and service organization for creative placemaking is a clearinghouse for much of the information on current arts-based community development practice.

<http://www.artplaceamerica.org>

Livability

While primarily an online magazine, Livability is also a clearinghouse for a lot of information about what makes small-to-midsize cities great places to live, including aggregated reporting, primary research, and discussion forums on a variety of topics.

<https://livability.com/>

The Creative City Network of Canada

The Creative City Network of Canada (CCNC) is a Canadian national nonprofit organization made up of municipalities, arts organizations, and individuals working to support cultural development in their communities. CCNC facilitates knowledge sharing professional development in the field of local cultural policy, planning, and research.

<https://www.creativecity.ca/>

top image: Baltimore Station North A&E District

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