

# Exhibiting Impact: A Framework for Evaluation of Community Exhibits

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## Abstract

Exhibits bring people together in a space and allows them to reflect on the exhibit objects or content. Exhibits can occur in a variety of ways and in vastly different environments. They can be formal or informal, planned or spontaneous, scholarly or communal. The processes employed by exhibition can mirror the dynamics of identity, social interaction, and experiences that occur in community. In this way, exhibits can influence the way we connect to the people and places around us. Community exhibits focused on community-oriented activities and outcomes can be a powerful tool of development used by museums and community organizations.

As the landscape of public and philanthropic funding shifts, museums and public organizations face increased competition for support. The ability to implement exhibition for community impact can provide cross-sector resources and partnerships potentially attractive to an array of funders. To do so, effective and appropriate evaluation needs to occur of the various ways these exhibits impact community. This work explores cross-sector tools, methodologies, and approaches to community impact evaluation and best practices. A set of four case studies illustrate key impact areas of Social Interaction and Participation, Asset Value, Community Connection, and Community Capacity, as well as themes, modalities, and outcomes that can guide practitioners in the field.

## Introduction

**EX·HIB·IT - \IG-'ZI-BƏT\**

***NOUN***- AN OBJECT OR A COLLECTION OF OBJECTS THAT HAVE BEEN PUT OUT IN A PUBLIC SPACE FOR PEOPLE TO LOOK AT

***VERB***- TO SHOW OR REVEAL (SOMETHING)

**-MERRIAM WEBSTER**

Exhibits bring people together in a space and allows them to reflect on the exhibit objects or content. Exhibits can occur in a variety of ways and in vastly different environments. They can be formal or informal, planned or spontaneous, scholarly or communal. From a small makeshift roadside memorial or 9/11 wall of remembrance of hundreds of individual contributions after 9/11, to an elementary school art showcase— informal exhibition is a means of public expression. Museums, in contrast, have built an entire institution and professional practice on the premise of highly selective displays of objects and information. Regardless of the method, and despite the focus on inanimate objects, the *purpose* of an exhibit is action oriented to designate importance, share information, or reveal meaning behind what is on display.

There is an opportunity for exhibits that focus on community and participation to contribute to important community outcomes. The processes employed by exhibition can mirror the dynamics of identity, social interaction, and experiences that occur in community. In this way, exhibits can influence the way we connect to the people and places around us. Connecting to place and forming a sense of belonging contributes to increased community stability, cohesion, and stronger networks. People developing exhibits can actively focus on these important outcomes. These are also outcomes that can be evaluated, and, in demonstrating successful outcomes can lead to more community support and resources for museums through donors and granting agencies. The goal of this work is threefold:

- explore the types and potential roles of exhibition in the context of community
- provide a general framework of evaluation for community focused exhibits
- assemble a set of related cross-sector concepts and terminology to guide community impact evaluation and implementation

Early shifts in the application of exhibition had far more to do with *how* artifacts were exhibited rather than the artifacts themselves. In doing so, exhibits effectively changed the story being told, presented, crafted for an audience. This set in motion changes within larger institutional establishments, some with far reaching implications. Anthropologist Franz Boas tipped the first domino in 1887 at the American Museum of Natural History by advocating ethnological artifacts should not be classified by the accepted purview of cultural evolution, ordered most primitive to most advanced culture. In what seems a simple act of rearranging a few items in an exhibit, the principal of cultural relativism gained ground by displaying artifacts in context of the culture to which it belonged. This offered a new perspective on cultures altogether. George Brown Goode, assistant secretary of the Smithsonian, continued the chain reaction in 1888, advocating science and art museums had outgrown their original designations. Believing they would be better served by the German conceived notion of *Kulturgeschichte*, exhibiting the natural history of civilization. (Conn 2000, Dall and Boas 1887, Jacknis 1985, Weil 1999)

Since the first ripples almost 150 years ago, an increasing number of exhibits, small and large, have taken a more inclusive approach to both *how* and which artifacts are exhibited in efforts to provide diverse and equitable narratives of history, art, and culture. However, the full potential for leveraging community impact remains largely untapped. The use of exhibits as powerful tools in active community manifests in many forms, such as wayside signs to walking tours. Yet, few of these public initiatives apply decades of scholarly research of what exhibits “do” in terms of engaging the individual and the community. Processes of exhibition including design, installation, and related activities provide mechanisms that can serve as interventions to affect positive community impact. (Alexander and Alexander 2007, Rounds 2001)

Museums and public institutions have increasingly refocused use of both formal and informal exhibits to engage public and cultural activity. Embedded in this is the potential for their community impact. Exhibition is simultaneously a sophisticated, yet scalable, tool. It brings together elements of identity and interaction, as well as fundamentals of knowledge, experience, and meaning- coalescing within some manner of built environment. Constructing a rubric and framework for evaluation of

community impact for exhibits is enhanced by a multi-field perspective that considers how these influence a community. This includes exploring aspects of museum studies, learning pedagogy, place interpretation, and –most certainly- dynamics of community development.

## Exhibits as Crucibles of Community: Space, Place, + Participation

Informal or formal, exhibits are a way to present ideas through the use of objects. The objects and ideas vary with the context of the exhibit and its setting. An exhibit may focus around a collection of objects, as in the example of Boas' cultural artifacts; or the exhibit may function as the object itself, as in the example of the community-created 9/11 Wall of Remembrance, portions of which are now even preserved within a formal museum setting. Goals and outcomes of planned community exhibits are influenced by the mission and role of the organization implementing them. Evaluation of community impact can be useful not only for museums choosing an active role in community, but it is also useful to community organizations using exhibits as development tools. This overlap opens the doors to a variety of partnership initiatives. This can have multiple community impacts and is potentially attractive to an array of funders and partners.

Community focused organizations struggle to define their audiences, as well as differences in engagement, participation, and public programs- particularly when using exhibits. A key challenge is that “community” is a varied and changeable concept, dependent on multiple factors and definitions. Communities can exist virtually on the internet or refer to a cultural group scattered over many locations. Communities can occur over shared ideas and activities, like a professional community or community of hobbyists. Then there are communities where we live, work, and play on a regular basis; shaped by laws, economy, and society. This is the community museums most often find themselves working within, if only because of their location. For this reason, a *community of place* is the context many organizations struggle to negotiate- either by interpreting place history, trying to engage people who live there, or by attracting outside visitors (Del Casino and Marsten 2006, McClay and McAllister 2014).

Like many residents in a community, a museum or other public organization may have little in common with its neighbors except the place it happens to be located. Museums often function in a role of knowledgeable authority, granted through the things they collect, preserve, and exhibit. Similarly, public organizations are seen as more authoritative than community members. However, exhibits

Smith 4

exploring community themes and experience- or even *creating* community experience- can be a powerful tool for these organizations *and* community participation. Integrating the participatory dynamic of community into the processes and components of exhibition allows us to refine the definition of a community exhibit. In this context, a community exhibit can be defined as ***a set of community-oriented activities that produce an exhibit, or occur within an exhibit space, and have community-oriented results.***

The four case studies presented within this work explore a variety of exhibits in both museum and community settings. However, each illustrates a spectrum of potential impact areas derived from the interplay between people, objects, and their environment. This interplay often mirrors community dynamics of how we relate to the world and people around us, and the ways they influence us both individually and collectively. Overlaying aspects of community onto processes of exhibition reveals new dimensions to discuss how we utilize space, form notions of meaningful places, and are motivated to participate in community.

Exhibits provide a unique study of how individuals interact with their environment- natural, built, and experienced. Very often, the content presented in exhibits explores various characteristics of a place's history, landscape, or way of life. This can be done in either a community or museum context. The case study of *Row Upon Row* at the McKissick Museum provides an example of a formal exhibit used to address the socioeconomic challenges faced by African-American traditional basket makers in the growing communities outlying Charleston, SC. In contrast, the Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce exhibits community itself with student created and led neighborhood tours showcasing the lived experience within a community of place.

Not unlike the neighborhoods, urban centers, and parks we encounter every day in our built-environments day, exhibits can create their own manufactured spaces for visitors to navigate and utilize. Also similar to our public spaces, exhibits can influence which people interact with each other, and how. The case study of the UK-based Encounters Arts demonstrates how empty retail spaces are transformed into activity hubs of community exhibits created by local residents sharing stories and exploring community issues. Current research undertaken at Martha O'Bryan Center in Nashville, TN, also highlights the ways exhibit spaces can promote social interaction and alter how we assign value to overlooked spaces.

Each of these examples was selected for the way it employed existing exhibition practices to achieve community-oriented results. In order to understand how to best construct an evaluation tool measuring the efficacy and potentials of community exhibits, it is worthwhile to review

existing frameworks and evaluation models from other fields of community development in addition to museum studies. Some of the key considerations to help us develop a good set of evaluation frameworks includes:

- exploration of existing museum models of participation and evaluation
- selecting a theoretical framework for evaluation
- complimentary models of community development evaluation
- common themes and factors used for evaluation across fields

## Engagement or Participation, what's the difference?

Though often used interchangeably, *engagement* and *participation* address different qualities of interaction. Engagement denotes a single direction of outreach from institution to community to garner interest or support. Participation, however, is oriented in shared action related to a larger whole. In terms of participation, a museum can have more opportunities to impact community by acting as a community member and affecting participation of community members in active process. Engagement might be the mode, but participation is the key to measuring *impact*.

The landscape of museum, cultural, and arts programming has been shifting the last decade to a more “engaged” focus seeking community and individual involvement. Growing out 1800’s Colonialism, the focus of museums in particular has grown from the display of exotic collections, to historic preservation, to a marked emphasis on education and interpretation in the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Bennett 2013, Conn 2000). *Engagement* elevates the passive role of visitor, viewer, or learner to that of active participant and contributor (Borwick 2012, Simon 2010). With the economic decline beginning 2008, an even stronger emphasis on engagement has emerged to compete for highly sought after, and dwindling funding. In efforts to warrant the expense of maintaining collection heavy institutions, as well as ephemeral programs and projects often viewed as optional enrichment, the role of community engagement moved to the forefront.

*Community engagement* can open museum resources to the public and invites *participation in the process* of this work. Community engagement is also often an expectation or requirement to raise funds. Community engagement initiatives have a significant potential to affect the development and maintenance of community vitality. Evaluation is important because it allows funders to compare the

impact of the money they invest in different initiatives. As funding has gotten tighter, funders focus more on outcomes because they want their financial investment to be the most impactful. To evaluate community engagement and more broad based community impact, it often takes time and resources, neither of which most institutions have. The goal of this research is to help make evaluation more accessible for public institutions.

## Models of Contemporary Exhibition Practices

In museums, four common approaches inviting community and visitor involvement include: 1) Interactive, 2) Civic Dialog, 3) Participatory, and 4) Pop-ups. As Boas and Goode helped shift trends in early museums, these practices represent the spectrum of exhibition practices that has emerged since the 1970's. Museum initiatives have transitioned away from strictly display and preservation, to an increased emphasis on education and the visitor experience.

Most museum visitors today take for granted some level of interactivity in their museum experience, a great deal driven by technology. Interactives engage visitors at the exhibit level through a sense of play, providing "opportunities for visitors to learn as they like" (Spock 2004, 69). Interactives represent a process of design seated in learning pedagogy, or the study of how learning occurs. Understanding how individual knowledge and experiences is internally constructed allows for more effective exhibit design. This approach is used to meaningfully engage visitors with content and objects within a physical exhibit space to promote learning. Examples of interactives can include sophisticated touchscreen displays that guide visitors through visual and audio content to simpler displays, like a tactile touch-table of physical objects for guests to explore.

Whereas interactives focus on individual experiences, Civic Dialog is about engaging groups or communities. Civic Dialog is structured to foster public discourse, most often around difficult topics surrounding history and culture. Race, poverty, war, and discrimination are common themes, and programs are most often implemented within a specific physical space of the institution. The Tenement Museum of the Lower East side of Manhattan is a well-documented example of Civic Dialog with its Kitchen Conversations program. In the instance of the Tenement Museum, visitors are led in group discussion in topics of immigration, discrimination, and poverty by trained facilitators while seated at a table in a historically recreated kitchen.

The Participatory model of museum engagement has become a movement of its own in recent years. Encouraging visitor participation is not necessarily a new advent. Examples of participatory

projects include activities that invite visitors to create objects for exhibit display or even provide input into what artifacts or histories a community finds most relevant for exhibition. Defined as places where visitors can “create, share, and connect with each other around content”, the participatory cultural institution can “invite visitor participation while promoting institutional goals” (Simon 2010, ii).

Pop-up museums and exhibits, similar to the Participatory model, emerged as an informal community outreach tool, following other commercial trends of pop-up boutiques and restaurants. Not unlike a mobile museum or traveling exhibit, a pop-up is designed to be temporary and operate off-site. Unlike the other forms of engagement, a pop-up is typically a one-time, temporary and created by those who participate to provide content for display based upon a predetermined theme. Efforts to formalize and *formalize* a Pop-up model of engagement have grown out of the participatory approach (Grant 2013).

## Contemporary Approaches to Exhibit Evaluation

In general, formal evaluation of community impact in each of these approaches is nearly nonexistent. Casual, vague, or a broad basis of evaluation is what is presented by the authors of even seminal works. The Interactive model of engagement is based on a strong theoretical framework related to how an *individual* makes meaning of content and experience which can help in developing an appropriate evaluation. Ted Ansbacher first introduced the concept of *meaning-making* in 1999 and emerges as a key consideration in the creation and evaluation of exhibits ever since. Meaning-making does contribute a great deal of insight into the way an individual experiences interaction with content, place and people, and makes meaning from these sets of experiences. Situated within the model of *experience-based learning*, meaning-making has become the commonly accepted term for what visitors do at a museum:

**It puts a focus on the visitor's active involvement—making—and validates the meaning the individual derives from this, even as that may vary from accepted knowledge (Ansbacher 2013, p. 16).**

While Ansbacher provides a theoretical framework for individual experiences, taking place in the mind of the individual where “social input can be a vital part of the process”, he does not directly address community impact. Similarly, the only suggestion Ansbacher makes of how meaning-making might be evaluated is in observing visitors’ engagement with exhibits and soliciting visitor feedback (Ansbacher Smith 8

2013, p. 18-19). Evaluating communities as a social organisms requires theoretical models that include social input as primary drivers to individual experiences and more sophisticated ways to measure this dynamic process.

Civic Dialog opens a door to evaluating community engagement in terms of social effects. Because the conversation product is social and topical in nature, indicators of success are forced to encompass aspects beyond participant numbers and ticket sales. The goal is the shifting of ideas and the process of working through often challenging conversation (Abram 2007, p. 74). In the case of the Kitchen Conversations, which encourages provocative discussion and differing opinions in an atmosphere of inquiry and understanding, successful dialogs are not always ones rated highest by participants.

Civic Dialog is a well-established model of engagement that formally addresses it as a model not just for community engagement, but also civic engagement. Civic Dialog is framed as a public discussion of related issues and policies “of consequence” to communities, in context of “livable communities” able to leverage local assets and social capital (A Museums and Community Toolkit, AMA 2002, p. 75-76). Evaluation resources for Civic Dialog focus on planning and the process of constructing evaluation- not providing criteria or frameworks for such (Shaping Outcomes 2015, IMLS).

Simon provides an evaluation of the Participatory model that is broad in nature. She offers a variety of evaluation examples, noting “no single set of questions or evaluative technique is automatically best suited to its study” (Simon 2010, p. 310). She suggests partnering with researchers in other fields as the best approach to serve all. Evaluation criteria used by the Santa Cruz museum regarding the Pop-up model of engagement asks questions such as “How did it go?” and “What surprised you?”, focusing on institutional level experience of organizers (Grant 2013, p, 23). Again, evaluation of functionality and effect within the community is not explored.

## A Theoretical Framework of Reciprocal Participation

Good evaluation of community impacts is dependent not only on design and implementation, but is built upon a strong theoretical framework. This is used to set goals, norms, and standards, and develop a body of knowledge about impact areas (Greene, Caracelli, and Graham 1989, Shields and Rangarajan 2013). To establish the most appropriate theoretical framework for the evaluation of community exhibits it is important to consider the dynamic interplay between individual, object, and

environment. Ansbacher's meaning-making considers the role of the individual experience in an exhibit, but fails to explore the influence of social interactions. Civic Dialog presents a platform for community issues, but loses a theoretical foundation for the role of the individual in community. The Participatory and Pop-Up models invite individual contribution and facilitate social interaction, but don't necessarily evaluate longer term impact. However, one museum initiative presents an inclusive theory of reciprocal participation involving individual, community, and development.

*Sociocultural Constructionism* argues that individual and community development are reciprocally enhanced by independent and shared constructive activity that is resonant with both the social setting that encompasses a community of learners, as well as the cultural identity of the learners themselves. In this model, individual skill or knowledge development happens through constructive activity creating a tangible object. The object, or artifact, is a meaningful expression of the person's culture, personal identity, or experience in the place they live. The constructive activity is shared either as a creative group process or making the object accessible to others, like display in a community exhibit. In this action, the creative expression of the individual not only connects them to others, it provides an opportunity for shared experience and multiple perspectives. This can foster a sense of belonging for the individual; it can foster collective tolerance and understanding in community. As these results are absorbed into the cycle, community impact occurs. People and their constructive activity are leveraged as assets. However, the objects themselves can also explore place representing aspects of history, culture, and lived experience.

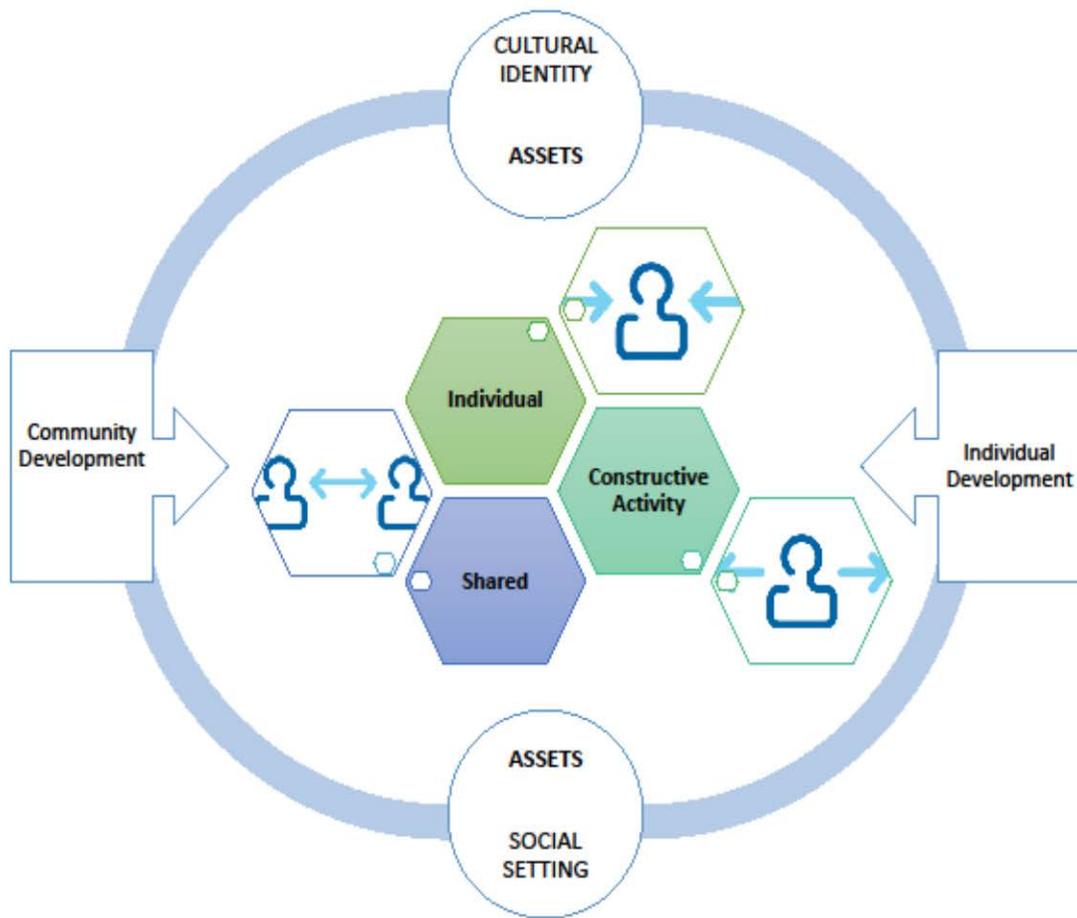
One illuminating example of an application of this is from a community technology and community building initiative intended to address the "digital divide". The goal of the initiative was to make technology relevant through meaningful use in those communities with least access to it. The Computer Clubhouse, a program of the Museum of Science in Boston, engaged students in underserved communities to develop digital artifacts. The artifacts were used to teach basic computer skills that also reflect their cultural identity within the context of community. Engaging existing individual interests creates an increased desire to acquire and apply computer skills in ways relevant to the learner. Harnessing collective interest can mobilize a community of learners creating and sharing a series of artifacts. By finding social and cultural resonance at both the individual and community level, The Computer Clubhouse has grown into a successful international organization with locations across the globe, catalyzing individuals, community, and change (Pinkett 2000).

The 2004 community collaboration exhibit, *Trails, Tracks, Tarmac*, developed in partnership between the Northern Arundel Cultural Preservation Society, Inc. and the Banneker-Douglass Museum

(BDM) in Maryland provides additional illustration of sociocultural constructionism (SCC) as a theoretical framework for community- exhibit development and evaluation. Engaging small, underrepresented African American communities slowly disappearing among urban-sprawl, residents were encouraged to share privately owned items and information for museum display. They were also invited to document their stories using traditional, handcrafted story quilts created in a series workshops. This initiative not only addressed the individual and community in terms of constructive activity leveraging assets of culture and identity, it actively employed meaning-making in context of development to the benefit of the museum *and* community. In 2008, the quilting artist was approached again to document the African American watermen story in Maryland. A similar youth quilting initiative, *Common Threads*, was launched in 2012 in partnership with BDM, Historic Annapolis, Historic London Town and Gardens and Anne Arundel County Public Schools (Gaither and Kaplan 2013). While feedback back from participants is discussed in terms of collaborative learning, it echoes the basic tenets of sociocultural constructionism:

**I think the project will have a strong effect especially for the youth when we share youth to youth, because we don't always like to do so with older people. I feel it will have a strong impact because not a lot of kids like history, but when you say "Oh it's just right around the corner from where you live," then it draws an interest like "I don't live too far away from history." You feel like you are a part of something.**  
(Gaither and Kaplan, p. 33)

Using this framework, we can investigate how meaning-making, participation, and collaboration can create effective and significant community participation. By actively employing these as tools to intentionally work to benefit the community by creating new networks, leveraging existing assets, and increasing capacity for expanded activities, this model offers specific community-based factors for evaluation. Using these measures of success, we can look at these themes in context of community development evaluation.




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### Sociocultural Constructionism

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Individual and community development are reciprocally enhanced by independent and shared constructive activity that is resonant with both the social setting that encompasses a community of learners, as well as the cultural identity of the learners themselves. (2000 Pinkett, 11).

*Figure 1 Sociocultural Constructionism*

## Community Development and Placemaking

Conventional exhibits and contemporary museum practices may highlight social, environmental, or economic issues but rarely do they assess how community is impacted by such initiatives. Even if some community assessment occur, a general framework of community impact evaluation does not exist for community exhibits. Deep evaluation of nuanced community dynamics can compromise already limited time and resources, especially for small museums often dependent on volunteer staff. The relationship between space, place, and participation can help us frame and evaluate community impacts in exhibits. Looking at how these are used in other sectors is a useful place to start.

Facets of place are frequently the subject of exhibits, including representations of a particular historical narrative or culture. Place is also frequently understood as the physical buildings, roadways, and public spaces we encounter. Communities, in fact, are a conglomerate of smaller social and cultural groups that do not always share a common vision of what a place should look like or how spaces should be used. Indeed, they very well may not *experience* place and community the same at all (Boek et al. 2007, Cattle 2001, Cock 2010). Addressing *community cohesion* as an overall “common sense of belonging and identity”, it is acknowledged that separatism frequently occurs within a place, potentially accompanied by aspects of deprivation in one or more group resulting conflict. Community development presents several different approaches that incorporate place as the key factor addressing social, economic, ecological, and community cohesion issues. This includes helping people interpret “places” and develop a connection to the places where they live, work, and play.

### Interpreting Place Experience: Placemaking or making of a place?

**“At its best, [place] is the collective outgrowth of our control over our lives and destinies”**  
(Leach 1999, p. 7)

We live our lives not merely in the places we sleep, eat, work, and play. It is our *living*- our laughter, anger, tears, joy, love- our experiences and attachments to a physical space that animate it. This is the creation of a *place* with which we identify and feel connected. A place can have positive, negative, or even sacred connotations. Usually it is a swirl of all of these experiences; multiple experiences of multiple individuals make up a place. And place, in turn, exerts influence on the people connected to it.

A growing trend in community development is central *Placemaking*, a collaborative approach to planning public spaces. As defined by the Project for Public Spaces website, Placemaking is:

**...how we collectively shape our public realm to maximize shared value. Rooted in community-based participation, Placemaking involves the planning, design, management and programming of public spaces. More than just creating better urban design of public spaces, Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of activities and connections (cultural, economic, social, ecological) that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.**

Placemaking emphasizes “creative patterns of activities and connections”, and focuses on the built environment to influence social behaviors. Applied to parks, streetscapes, or buildings, Placemaking is the intersection of urban planning and public policy. Not unlike, exhibits that are themselves manufactured spaces, good design of public spaces can invite participation at multiple levels. While the built environment certainly influences place experience and activity within, various factors contribute to the experiences and features of our significant places. Placemaking as an intervention, as such, is usually concerned with larger scale building initiatives. However, the day-to-day individual experience of living contributes a great deal to how we experience and interact with place. Community exhibits can be a powerful tool in placemaking.

In efforts to better understand the role of place in our lives, geographer Yi-Fu Tuan describes Place as the familiar and Space as the unknown beyond. And that home, in particular, is “place at its most intimate”. Tuan also argues individual growth hinges upon ability to move outside the home place and connect to a broader experience of space, developing a cosmopolitan worldview (Tuan 2014, p. 104). It is through the cultural, economic, social, ecological activities- often cited as the Four Pillars of Sustainability- that we begin to observe the ways space is transformed into a Place relevant to us as individuals, and collectively as a community (Hawkes 2001). It is the creative patterns of participation and interaction that enliven and shape a community of place, drawing out features that make it unique.

Tuan’s elegant place/space paradigm introduces potential tensions, however, that many communities face. Communities in transition have unique challenges in regards to placemaking, especially when forces of development are in full swing. The upheaval of being disengaged from the emerging creative activities of place, or physically displaced from a home community, is critical in the space/place experience of community members at individual levels. As manifestations of creative and cultural community are increasingly identified as areas for development, it is also increasingly important review how success is evaluated. Examples from field presented later in this work investigate the ways at-risk and vulnerable communities can be edged out of their places and creative activities as new

spaces and social patterns build up around them. The space/place confluence can trigger greater social and economic imbalance. Community exhibits are one way to engage community in the process of change and create new patterns of relationship during transitions. This helps to mitigate and better articulate the issues of community disruption.

## Development, Placemaking, + Change

If Placemaking has addressed the built environment in terms of place, the concept of creative economy and creative class pushed culture as consumerism to the forefront of urban planning in the early 2000's. On the website of the same name, author of *The Creative Economy*, John Howkins explains this development approach as:

**...based on a new way of thinking and doing. The primary inputs are our individual talent or skill... The heartlands are art, culture, design and innovation. The creative economy brings together ideas about the creative industries, the cultural industries, creative cities, clusters and the creative class.**

Positioning arts and culture in terms of creative industry and human capital has gained great momentum as a place-based development approach in both urban and rural areas. The concept of the creative class, in particular, has been used to gauge the attractiveness of a city to creative individuals in terms of the 3 T's of economic development *Technology, Talent, and Tolerance* in a highly data-driven evaluation across several indices. (Howkins 2001, Florida 2002, 2005). A review of how "attractiveness" is measured and what indicators used to gauge success reveals a lopsided perspective what constitutes creative activities and who participates in them.

<b>Indices Used To Evaluate Creative Economy Growth in Areas of 3 T's</b>	
<b>Bohemian</b>	Concentration of working artists, musicians, and creatives
<b>Coolness</b>	Percentage of population age 22-29 (with points given for diversity), nightlife (bars, nightclubs, entertainment), and culture (art galleries and museums). Adapted from POV Magazine "coolness factor" (1999).
<b>Creativity</b>	Includes four elements: "the Creative Class share of the workforce; innovation, measured as patents per capita; high tech industry, using the Milken Institute's widely accepted Tech Pole Index...; and diversity, measured by the Gay Index, a reasonable proxy for an area's openness
<b>Gay</b>	Measure of the fraction of the population that is gay
<b>Inequity</b>	Compares wages of creative sector workers to manufacturing and service sector wages
<b>Innovation</b>	Measures rates of patenting
<b>Melting Pot</b>	Measures relationship between immigration or percent foreign-born and high tech industry
<b>Global Creativity Index- Weighted Average in Areas of 3 T's</b>	
<b>Talent</b>	Measured by creative class, human capital, and scientific talent
<b>Technology</b>	Measured by R&D index and innovation index
<b>Tolerance</b>	Measured by values index and self-expression index

FLORIDA 2003, 2005; MITRA 2013

*Creative Placemaking*, also directly incorporates an economic component and blends aspects of creative economy and Placemaking. Formally introduced in 2010 by the National Endowment for the Arts, it is defined as a partnership from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors working to strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. This in turn is viewed to fuel local economy through the support of decentralized "creative crucibles" supporting a variety of creative industry and workers (Markusen and Gadwa 2010). Like creative economy, Creative Placemaking makes strong correlations between culture, arts, and economic growth. Its approach is different in a more localized focus on partnerships and infrastructure that directly supports "creative patterns and activities" that support creative economy. Absent in these approaches is allowance for individuals experiencing the same place differently or the act of *placemaking*, assigning significant attachment to the place we live our lives, as an inherent construction of home.

A missing piece in Placemaking, Creative Placemaking, and creative economy is acknowledging community as an aggregate of multiple interpretations of place experience. A building may be in severe  
Smith 16

disrepair, but the experience of it might be that of a sense of home. A creative hub maybe humming with businesses and patrons, but the experience might be alienating if one does not fit either of these roles. Another's space encroaching on one's significant place does not forge equity unless connectors are made to provide shared experiences to involve an active participation in both as community. Cities ranking high on the Creativity Index often also score significantly on the Inequality Index (p. 4 Florida 2005). Like Tuan's assertion that everyone should inherit the riches of all human heritage, the creativity/inequity paradigm can be addressed as individuals are invited to explore and share their potential as creative contributors.

In essence, both the creative class approach to development and place-making can be a way a way to move, improve, individual socioeconomic status via cultural conduits with collective community impact. The creative economy approach has been embraced with many professional and academic applications in community and economic development. Creative Placemaking can foster community equity in the arts and cultural participation it often supports. However, there have not been well developed or published guidelines that incorporate ways community organizations or exhibits can be used to promote creative economy or creative placemaking, let alone what an evaluation of those impacts look might look like. There are some frameworks to consider that can help us get closer to reasonable and appropriate evaluation of community impact for exhibits.

## Evaluation in Creative Economy + Placemaking

Like conventional museum exhibits, placemaking shares the idea of using a built environment to positively impact the way people interact with content, activity, and/or each other. Place has the potential to exert influence over lives and destinies, and to provide cultural conduits of socioeconomic access. Exhibit evaluation also has economic and social implications based on how exhibits mimic, interpret, and animate place. As a result, community exhibit evaluation can adopt relevant aspects from placemaking evaluation, incorporating a broader set of social and economic impacts. The 2010 Creative Placemaking white paper co-authored by Ann Markesan and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus provided a government funded platform advocating for the investment in such initiatives as a community development intervention by the NEA.



### CREATIVE MAKING PROCESS- NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

ArtPlace America, a funding collaborative of foundations, federal agencies, and financial institutions founded 5 years earlier had already been working in these in areas. With a mission to “position arts and culture as a core sector of comprehensive community planning and development in order to help strengthen the social, physical, and economic fabric of communities” pursued a strong data-driven evaluation model with its Vibrancy Indicators, similar to the CGI Index. The Vibrancy Indicators were used to direct program funding in communities nationwide and evaluate such projects for success. ArtPlace success indicators very specifically focus on urban neighborhoods, unlike high level indicators utilized in broader creative economy measures.

A criticism of Creative Placemaking is that it has “fuzzy” concepts and successes (Markusen 2012, Createquity). What is needed are causal models that emphasize the timeliness of impact outcomes and frame evaluation in terms of activities, participation, and community dynamics. Issues of inequity and dominate narratives are not necessarily included in outcomes. Similarly, evaluation is not necessarily geared toward shared experience, connection, nor equitability of place either. This is an issue because hierarchies and inequity of heterogeneous groups exist in most communities. Narrow definitions of local assets and community success emphasize industry and business instead of access and equability. This is at the expense of more sophisticated and nuanced definitions of success and vibrancy.

### ARTPLACE AMERICA VIBRANCY INDICATORS

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**Employment Rate:** Vibrant neighborhoods have a high fraction of their residents of working

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age who are employed.

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**Number of Creative Industry Jobs:** Vibrant neighborhoods have higher than average concentrations of workers employed in businesses that involve information, media, arts and creative endeavors.

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**Walkability:** Vibrant neighborhoods have many destinations within walking distance.

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**Cell Phone Activity:** Vibrant neighborhoods have relatively high levels of activity on nights and weekends and are places people congregate away from home and outside of regular 9 to 5 business hours.

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**Number of Mixed Use Blocks:** Vibrant neighborhoods contain a mix of jobs and residences.

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**Number of Jobs in the Community:** Vibrant neighborhoods have abundant local job opportunities.

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**Population Density:** Vibrant neighborhoods contain a density of local population.

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**Percentage of Independent Businesses:** Vibrant neighborhoods have more locally owned, independent businesses.

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**Number of Indicator Businesses:** Vibrant areas have high concentrations of...businesses that represent destinations of choice for cultural, recreational, consumption, or social activity.

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**Percentage of Workers in Creative Occupations:** Vibrant neighborhoods have higher than average concentrations of residents who are employed in the arts, writing, performing and other similar occupations.

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Indicators of both creative economy and placemaking also cast vibrant communities in terms of *destinations*, not as places people live and make their homes. Indicators such as cell phone activity and nightlife options measure specific demographics and types of activity. Historic narratives play just as vital a role as contemporary concerns of social vitality and economy (Borrup 2013). To fully explore how community exhibits can provide models of how different community groups can connect through diverse stories, it is useful to look at Creative Development literature and practices.

## Creative Community Development

The concept of “creative community” has found purchase in fields directly associated with sociocultural studies and development, more so than in strictly economic development approaches.

Creative Community Development (CCD), also known as Creative Community Organizing, can run the spectrum of grassroots community campaigns to higher level development initiatives. However, different from notions of creative economy, the social forces and dynamics at play within community and how these are expressed are viewed as means to catalyze action to address problems and leverage opportunity.

While Placemaking relates itself to constructing environments conducive to vibrant and active places, CCD readily attaches itself to identity and experiences of people within existing and changing places. A theme of equity and social justice also runs through a great deal of CCD work. In issues like civil rights, labor rights, and environmental issues, practitioners take up a range of approaches. Multiple professional fields comprise CCD work, including economic development, folklore, participatory arts, and public history. This can involve the use of storytelling, folk music, historical narratives and other creative expressions of community. (Adams and Goldbard 2001, Borrup 2006, C<sup>3</sup>D 2012, Encounters Arts 2011, Graves 2005, Kahn 2010). CCD about active systemic change in policy and institutions. Honoring historic and cultural aspects of place can be a tool to understand how varied perspectives and experiences influence contemporary challenges communities face. There is room within Creative Placemaking initiatives to use these aspects to contribute to character and consistency of place.

There is also room within CCD to consider economic impact of cultural activities. The Center for Creative Community Development initiated a CCD evaluation toolkit heavily focused on economic indicators gauging broader impact of cultural institutions. Unique to this evaluation, in contrast to Creative Placemaking, is the inclusion of social networks as significant to the impact of cultural institutions (ex. museums and other public organizations). However, evaluation is directed at the institutional level, utilizing a survey to evaluate the board and staff and their individual community connections (C<sup>3</sup>D 2012). While valuable in measuring potential partnerships, it limits the ability to evaluate social network dynamics that occur within or are catalyzed by an exhibition itself. Though acknowledging community identity as significant, the lack of community facing evaluation makes it challenging to measure the institution's ability to foster this within its own locality.

## Asset Based Community Development

As illustrated in placemaking approaches, outcomes and measures focused on economy and narrow social activities do not necessarily consider equity. Developing place only as a destination casts

residents and community interests as less important than what might attract nonresidents. Community exhibits can also involve locality and place, and the ways these concepts converge and diverge. The virtues of place are often leveraged as economic assets attracting outside dollars, but only occasionally is the concept of place actively utilized as a community building tool. Community exhibits are well poised to highlight and engage community assets as they commonly focus on history, features, and experience of place.

Another approach to engaging communities in development is Asset Based Community Development (ACBD). It is within literature outlining the principles of ABCD that the potential of interpretive elements within community begin to fuse into a coherent product of *functionality*. ABCD includes methodologies, approaches, and practices that “considers local assets as the primary building blocks of sustainable community development” (Mathie and Cunningham 2003, ABCD Institute 2009). Central to this is not merely the role individuals and groups play within community, but the *depiction* of how they interact with resources. ABCD makes a clear distinction between community-members depicted as the dependent “client” in contrast to that of active “citizen”, particularly within challenged or poor communities. ABCD advocates an approach of mapping and leveraging local assets, providing positive opportunities of community members to act as engaged citizens and producers of vital forces that drive community. This creates *social capital* that increases productive potential of formal and informal social structures of associations, networks, and institutions.

**“In a literal sense, social capital is the store of good-will and obligations generated by social relations.”** (ABCD Institute 2009)

ABCD has many of the same aims as community exhibits, but it presents tools for creating and evaluating measurable community impact. Exhibition practices cast in a light of ABCD reveal new potentials for outcomes and goals situated in community impact. In context of the client/citizen dynamic, community exhibits can foster opportunity for inquiry, understanding, and contribution of everyone in ways that traditional community development might not. Looking at the ways ABCD defines, achieves, and measures community impact provides a new dimension of the ways exhibits can be used to affect related aspects of community.

## Making Impact: Community Cohesion, Connection, + Networks

When considering appropriate measures, it is also important to consider potential areas of visible impact. Factors of place, experience, and interaction lend themselves to particular features and dynamics of community. In addition to the measures of success suggested by creative economy, creative placemaking, and creative community development, there are other measures that can also be considered when determining the community impacts of exhibits. These include community cohesion,

Demonstrated by place-based approaches of community development, social change, capacity-building, and asset mapping provide areas for potential evaluation. However, community consensus is not always a given. Conflict can arise in communities where members and groups lack a sense of commonality uniting differing perspectives. One way this can be diffused is active encouragement and facilitation of “meaningful contact” between contrasting communities (Cock 2010, p.5-6). As a public policy tool, community cohesion focuses on minimizing sociopolitical tensions (Boek et al. 2007, Cattle 2001, Cock 2010). It is useful for community exhibits as a way to better measure and evaluate their activities in terms of community impact. Meaning-making provides ways individuals can interact in meaningful contact with people and place, and is one way to strengthen community cohesion. Through shared sense of belonging, individuals and groups alike are better motivated to work collaboratively and effectively in matters where consensus is not a guarantee.

Community Cohesion is what must happen in all communities to enable different groups of people to get on well together. A key contributor to community cohesion is integration which is what must happen to enable new residents and existing residents to adjust to one another.

(2010  
Cock, p. 8)

**Our vision of an integrated and cohesive community is based on three foundations:**

- People from different backgrounds having similar life opportunities
- People knowing their rights and responsibilities
- People trusting one another and trusting local institutions to act fairly.

And three key ways of living together:

- A shared future vision and sense of belonging
- A focus on what new and existing communities have in common, alongside a recognition of the value of diversity
- Strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds.

(Communities and Local Government, 2009: 9)

Examining the drivers of community

ity cohesion, such as community networks, provide an opportunity to suss out primary success measures. Literature addressing social networks provides examples of how individual knowledge and experience can be catalyzed into community action. Networks are a vital underpinning of community at all levels, commonly categorized into social, professional, and -with the rise of technology- virtual networks (Ash, Amin, and Roberts 2008, Benner 2012, Haas 1992, 1997, Schuler 1994). Mathie and Cunningham reference networks themselves as community assets in relation to ABCD:

***“Such unrealized resources include not only personal attributes and skills, but also the relationships among people through social, kinship, or associational networks. By mobilizing these informal networks, formal institutional resources can be activated – such as local government, formal community-based organizations, and private enterprise. In fact, the key to ABCD is the power of local associations to drive the community” (p.476).***

Community networks as discussed in this context are most often place-based connections between residents, businesses, and organizations. However, recent scholarship regarding virtual networks helps reveal fundamental forces within informal networks that work to create community. Community separated from the default qualifier of place, then, becomes inherently situated in *participation and interactivity* (Schuler 1994). This comes full circle to the elements employed within community exhibits. They facilitate meaningful contact required for community cohesion. They can invite community contribution creating a forum for all ages and backgrounds. They can provide opportunities for learning and skill building. Like community exhibits, success of informal networks can also be assessed in terms of need, action, and capacity. The following measurable objectives can be used to evaluate how networks promote participation and serve community needs:

- Community-based. Since the systems are community-based, the participants have aspirations, needs, and issues in common. The system promotes participation because everyone has a stake.
- Reciprocal. Any potential "consumer" of information, commentary, issues, or questions is a potential "producer" as well.
- Contribution-based. Forums—both moderated and unmoderated—are based on contributions from participants. Any input to the forum becomes part of the forum itself—a record which can be printed, distributed further, or acted on.
- Unrestricted. Anyone can use the community network. Furthermore, users have freedom from control on their postings, although there are usually limitations on postings that are considered harassing, libelous, or criminal.
- Accessible and inexpensive. The systems are readily accessible from a variety of public as well as private locations. Furthermore, the systems are free of charge or have a very low charge.
- Modifiable. Users can actually design or codesign new user interfaces or services.
- Community Cohesion. Communities need to be more cohesive, safer, healthier, and more caring. Opportunities for participation must be developed for all people, and disadvantaged neighborhoods need improved economic opportunity.

- The informed citizen. People need and want to be well informed. They need high-quality, timely, and reliable information. They are interested in a wide range of opinions from a wide variety sources.
- Access to education and training. People need training to use technology effectively. They need to be able to learn independently over the course of their lifetimes.
- Strong democracy. People need an inclusive, effective, ethical, and enlightened democracy.
- An effective process. People need a process by which the preceding needs can be met.

Compiled from Schuler 1994

Professional networks, too, often exist outside of a single geographic location or physical place, but help highlight ways to foster commonality and catalyze knowledge within a group of people- in essence, developing community through *knowing in action*. They can include communities, networks, and collectives. These vary in degree of formalization, and can be based around long term associations or a short term project, respectively. What they each have in common is a “*high degree of mutuality born out of shared work*” (Amin, Ash, and Roberts, 2008). Whereas networks are frequently born organically to fill community need, it can be argued professional networks in turn give birth to community itself. Looking at characteristics of professional networks provide another set of potential success indicators in evaluating community engagement.

### Key Characteristics of a Community of Practice

- Sustained mutual relationships—harmonious or conflictual
- Mutually defining identities
- Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
- The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
- The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
- Specific tools, representations, and other artefacts
- Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
- Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
- Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed
- Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones
- Substantial overlap in participants’ descriptions of who belongs
- Certain styles recognised as displaying membership
- Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise
- A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world

Compiled from Schuler 1994

Opportunities to engage the community in the context of exhibits to promote cohesion, networks, and practice can happen at multiple levels, including planning, design and implementation required to produce a formal exhibit, or it can be the co-creation of objects for display. Each level presents an opportunity to create and share knowledge, experience, skill, and group membership.

## Evaluating Impact

### Community Cohesion: A common sense of belonging and identity

Evaluation of exhibit engagement models often fail to include a long view of the impact of programs over time; evaluation can also suffer from a lack of identifiable results and success indicators. As community cohesion integrates place, belonging, and identity- the very seat of community experience- framing it as a key *outcome* is one point to develop a community facing tool of evaluation for community exhibits.

Two community cohesion toolkits provide means of evaluation for such an outcome (Boek et al. 2007, Cock 2010). The measures and indicators presented help reposition the earlier question from the Pop-up Toolkit of “How did things go?” to an engagement-focused “How did this affect things?” *Evaluating the Impact of Voluntary and Community Sector Organisations on Community Cohesion* in particular has made bold efforts to provide quantitative measures by utilizing standard social research methods to provide statistical models based on feedback from effective survey designs. Feedback questions exploring cohesion are provided for an array of community questionnaire Strands or categories, including culture and arts:

Measuring Community Cohesion at the Individual Level	Measuring Individual Identity within Community Context
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, how involved do you feel in your local community?</li> <li>• To what extent do you agree or disagree: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I feel more involved in my local community since joining the project.</li> <li>I feel more involved in the X community since joining the project.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I learned a lot about a culture other than my own</li> <li>• I learned a lot about my culture</li> <li>• I learned a lot about the different groups of people living in this area</li> <li>• I learned about the history of my community</li> <li>• I learned about the history of another community</li> <li>• I learned about different people’s experiences</li> </ul>

**(Cock 2010, p.34-36)**

Similarly, the *Leicester Community Cohesion Evaluation and Assessment Framework* document provides a locally developed set of dependent and independent indicators for initiatives measuring community cohesion. Dependent variable measures require that three criteria should be met simultaneously:

- (1) People can trust, help and cooperate with other members of the community
- (2) They share a common identity or a sense of belonging to their community
- (3) The subjective feelings in (1) and (2) are manifested in objective behavior.

Independent variables understand community cohesion as a process and consider factors that explain levels of cohesion. These take into account feelings of exclusion, rights, and power. Taken together, a metric can be formed to measure community cohesion (Cock 2010).

## Community Connection: Building + strengthening community networks and relationships

Communities of knowledge, or epistemic communities, are created for high impact and solution oriented tasks. In general terms, communities of shared knowledge represent “what you know and who you know it with” and is most advantageous when initializing a “broader constellation of community

interests and perspectives” as it promotes “inclusion in knowledge generation and related decision-making processes” (Benner 2012, p. 8). Similarly, communities of knowledge frequently share resources and ideas to the benefit of all. They are most likely to employ creativity and innovation by the sheer novelty of “juxtaposition of variety” and “fusing elements not connected before” (Amin, Ash, and Roberts 1997, p. 17). Such inclusion fosters not only a potential sense of shared purpose between differing perspectives, but also creates a foundation of equity in connected aspects of community represented by the 4 Pillars of Sustainability- social, cultural, economic, and environmental. Again, we are provided examples of ways to measure formation and strength of networks using participant feedback:

- I talked with people whom I did not already know before this event
- I talked with people that I would not ordinarily meet
- I talked with people from a religious background other than my own
- I met and talked with people from social backgrounds other than my own
- I met new people today who I’d like to meet up with again
- I plan to meet again with at least one of the new people that I met at this event
- I made new professional contacts today
- I made new friends today

(Cock 2010)

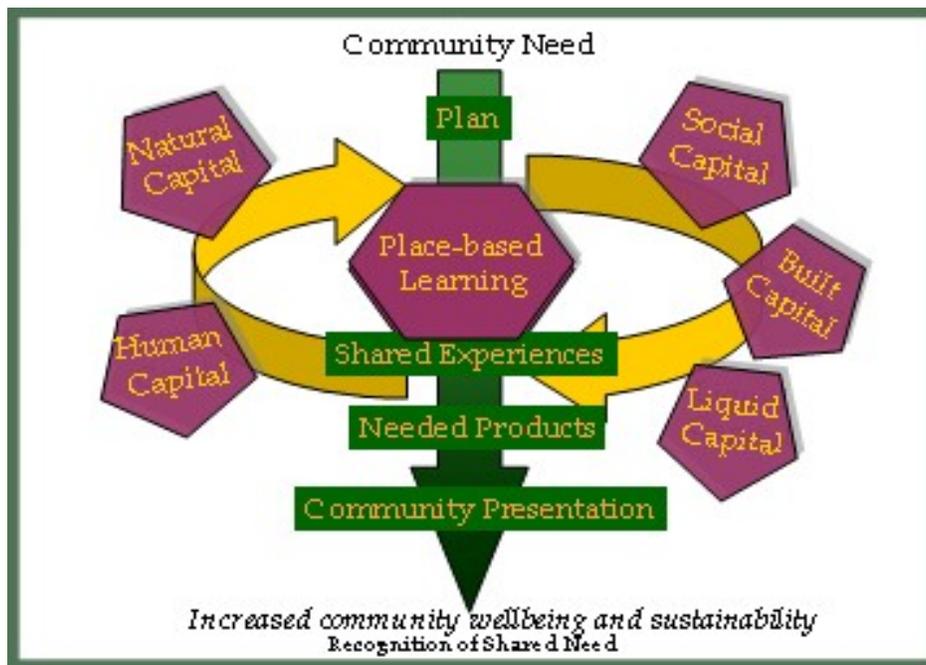
Interaction and participation between different groups is important in connecting communities of knowledge and opening access to the processes and resources they share. What is often overlooked in community building is creating opportunity to invite multiple perspectives to the table, *before* they possibly meet in conflict or deprivation, in order to build community cohesion. The social resilience this creates helps communities work together through issues they face concerning the places they live. Diversity and difference is desirable in communities, but network constriction can negatively impact access to resources and processes that influence decision-making. This can be particularly problematic when the aspects of place vital to belonging and identity are the topic of debate, including preserving historic or significant sites or cultural traditions. Community exhibits are uniquely situated to implement interventions that create an atmosphere of respectful curiosity and shared knowledge, connecting

diverse groups and facilitating inclusive participation. This can result in shared vision, mutuality of experience, and increased involvement in community projects.

## Leveraging Local Assets more effectively for Change

One example that provides an evaluation framework for ABCD approaches is the Evaluation Toolkit for the Community Mapping Program (CMP). This is a product of the programs partnerships that constitute the Place-based Education Evaluation Collaborative. This initiative connects school-based programs with community, using local resources and features specific to location to address community needs. Within these parameters, topics and projects can vary as it is best suited to the local community. This toolkit was selected because it is anchored in a strong working theory of change for communities and how local assets can be leveraged to promote change. CMP is a school and youth based initiative, integrating technology, arts, and presentation as critical components to each project. A key highlight of the CMP evaluation toolkit is that is “NOT used... to assess the performance or worth of individual students, educators, or other participants in a CM project... the purpose here is to learn about CMP as a whole program” (CMP 2004, p. 5).

### **CMP working theory of change of how community assets effect place-based education**



(CMP 2004, p. 11)

A case study featured in the toolkit is the *Critter Control* project in Colorado, involving 54 fourth and fifth graders partnered with the state departments of wildlife and transportation to track wildlife injury and mortality rates along a local stretch of highway to mitigate danger to both animals and drivers. Students utilized GPS mapping and public presentation of data and visual aids to inform local community. While subject matter might differ, comparison can be made to both the *Trails, Tracks, Tarmac* and *Common Threads* exhibits that first mapped aspects of local history and then engaged residents in creating publically displayed visual records in the form of quilts.

The evaluation used in the CMP toolkit echoes forces of individual and shared constructive activity at play in community as illustrated by sociocultural constructionism, as well as involving aspects of change and capacity-building. Student performance is gauged in the effectiveness of community partnerships to support their mapping projects and presentations, as well as applying their resulting data to make necessary changes. *Critter Control* provides an example that casts unlikely partners in an effective, innovative project leveraging local assets to solve a significant community challenge and promoted increased community cohesion.

## Community Capacity Building - making a difference over time and across different issues

The University of Kansas Work Group for Community Health and Development has produced a web based Community Toolbox of resources “for those working to build healthier communities and bring about social change” by “connecting people, ideas, and resources” (UK 1994). This collection of community development resources promotes active community engagement, with a strong emphasis on evaluation. The Toolbox also is based on a robust theoretical framework focused on affecting change by engaging community and leveraging local assets.

Change is identified at two levels, community and system. Community change brings about change in policy, or adjusts practice related to a group's mission by introducing a new program. System changes occur on a broader level with more expansive impact. This toolkit identifies *types* of change affected in community that can be observed and measured (UK 1994, chap. 1, sec.3). This outward

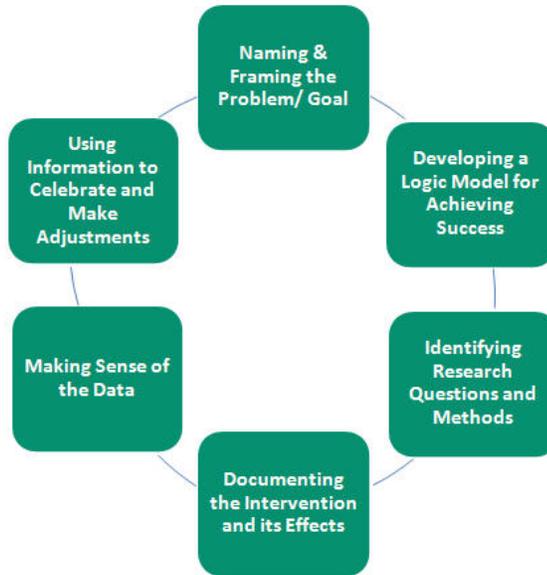
facing perspective invites new potentials as applied to community exhibits. They can be evaluated in terms of local impact, addressing an immediate community concern. Or, reflected in Boas' work at the American Museum of Natural History, exhibits can spur greater systemic change of institutional practice.

Exhibits have the potential to act not only as a catalyst for change, but also to develop the community capacities needed to implement meaningful change. *Community capacity* refers to “the ability of community members to make a difference over time and across different issues” (UK 1994, chap. 1, sec. 3). Community exhibits focused upon factors of place and expression of community- such as history, culture, and the arts- are particularly well positioned to identify and develop capacities related to skills and collaboration required in planning, design, and implementation. Capacity building, like ABCD, can be seen as an *approach* that considers the influence of environment (place) and the existing abilities and aptitudes of a community that are important when designing and implementing programs promoting change (Eade 1997). The focus on capacity building is critical when evaluating participation and change. The next toolkit addresses more specific examples of place-based initiatives and assets as we consider best practices.

## Participatory Evaluation

Since participation is a key feature of community, including it in evaluation and research is important for effective measurement of impact. Participatory Evaluation involves all stakeholders in an ongoing process of feedback and evaluation to gauge and guide success throughout the lifetime of a project. Involving all stakeholders and recognizing the broad aspects of community in evaluation from the start of an initiative can better inform the process to potential blind spots. The UK Toolbox defines this as:

*Participatory evaluation is an evaluation that involves all the stakeholders in a project—those directly affected by it or carrying it out—in every phase of evaluating it, and in applying the results of that evaluation to the improvement of the work.*



A Framework for Community-Based Participatory Research

*(UK 1994, chap. 1, sec. 11)*

Public health initiatives have a strong emphasis on Participatory Evaluation and PAR likely because outcomes are dependent on impact and change. Public health evaluation is also helpful as a resource as it is more prone to track initiatives over time to gauge a fuller picture of community impact. Communities usually have more consensus around what defines good health. This provides a snapshot of what community working well together looks like, providing a study of the dynamics of community cohesion.

The case study of Martha O’Bryan Center in Nashville, TN, provides a methodological example of how Participatory Evaluation and PAR can be used to provide more effective ways to evaluate community impact. The key researcher, and author of this work, was embedded in the development and implementation of exhibit projects as the lead coordinating instructor. This allowed for an “on the ground” perspective of community dynamics, challenges, and opportunities related to exhibits employed in an active community setting. Challenges and feedback were able to be considered as the pilot program progressed through its first year. Opportunities were also able to be maximized in the form of new and unlikely partnerships between organizations, businesses, and community. In this example, project outcomes and research are squarely positioned in the field to ensure community guided impact, action, and access.

## Exhibits That Impact Community: Examples from the Field

Research undertaken at Martha O’Bryan Center illustrates how community exhibits can be designed and implemented with community-oriented outcomes intended for community impact evaluation. Three additional case studies were used to inform the approach to community exhibits used by MOBC. Examples from South Carolina, Chicago, and the United Kingdom explore ways community participation is fostered in community exhibits and specific areas that can be evaluated for impact. *Row Upon Row* at the McKissick Museum used community networks and local assets to make meaningful cultural, economic, and environmental impact in a South Carolina community. The Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce Community Tours introduce ways community exhibits can foster inclusive community connection and shared experience. UK-based Encounters Arts uses co-created community exhibits to facilitate a shared community vision of change and belonging. Each of these outcomes is considered in the goals and processes shaping the use of community exhibits at Martha O’Bryan Center.

### McKissick Museum, SC- *Row Upon Row: Sea Grass Baskets of the South Carolina Lowcountry*

#### Community Context

Traditional sweetgrass basket makers in the long established African- American community of rural McKissick county had used native sweetgrass to weave intricate baskets for generations. Once mostly utilitarian in nature, recent decades introduced basket makers selling these finely detailed baskets along Highway 17 in Mt. Pleasant for supplemental income. As the 1980’s brought increased development and growth in this area outlying Charleston, SC, the basket makers became cultural indicators of unsustainable growth. Impacting both environment and community, one resident stated “we have given up on trying to protect the shrimp and the crab because we, the black native population...have become the endangered species” (Rosengarten 1994, p. 153). Large scale commercial development and privatization of open land for vacation homes both displaced the basket makers from their small roadside retail booths and compromised the availability of the native sweetgrass.

## Use of Exhibit in Community

An unlikely partnership grew out of a small museum exhibit of the lowcountry sweetgrass baskets to eventually tie together local economy, government, environmentalists and traditional artists to address imbalance in social and economic equity. Anthropologist Dale Rosengarten arrived to the McKissick Museum in 1984 as a contracted consultant after cultural decline began affecting the basket making tradition. His approach to the *Row upon Row* exhibit development process had a strong foundation in ethnographic work and participant observation as he sought to build relationships with basket makers. In this effort, needs and opportunities were able to be identified and addressed as new community partnerships were formed.

The exhibition itself consisted of 55 baskets and 34 oral histories, collected over a period of a year, exploring the traditional roots and economic role of basket making in Mt. Pleasant (Rosengarten 1994, see Appendix). During interviews and information sessions with basket makers, two key challenges that arose as a result of increased construction and business development were 1) dwindling access to native sweetgrass and 2) constricted retail opportunities. As community partnerships were formed, large swathes of sweetgrass were identified growing on nearby Seabrook Island, a private large-scale real estate development of vacation homes and condominiums. Basket makers who had been traveling increasingly long distances to gather grasses were granted access to harvest their traditional materials in the developed area. In response to the retail aspect, the museum helped to facilitate an online retail presence for those basket makers wanting to sell their product.

## Individual and Community Development Working Together

*Row Upon Row* also illustrates aspects of sociocultural constructionism in community exhibits: how they can be harnessed for economic and community development, and the way that artifacts can express cultural resonance across heterogeneous communities. In this example, the baskets themselves are the artifacts. The role of the individual basket maker's relationship to the practice of this craft is both a form of self-expression and collective identity. When cast in terms of development, not only is a traditional craft preserved, a new level of economic and professional opportunity is presented.

The individual's negative experience of place, in the context of community, is expressed in the decline of an existing traditional craft. Increased large scale development fueled by tourism highlights

the emerging imbalance of equity and access to resources at micro-levels of smaller cultural enclaves. Providing opportunity for a handful of basket makers to participate in new economic and social structures, greater community vitality is promoted by increased cultural diversity.

## Impact Areas and Themes

***“It will also require a commitment and an analytical stretch by those who have long fought for ‘economic justice’ but have not always thought about how best to promote the economic part of that couplet.”***

**(Benner 2012, p. 2)**

It was in the willingness to acknowledge the value of shared knowledge and resources influencing economic development that positioned what could have been a static exhibit of traditional basketry as an integrated initiative of community impact. In this example cultural sustainability and economic justice were woven together. Shared knowledge and networks help create *community connection*, an important long term impact as a result of exhibition. The exhibit also highlighted the plight of basket makers, value of their craft, and erosion of the natural ecosystem. As visitors and community groups alike engage with exhibit content and the institution of the museum as a steward of knowledge, attachments are formed through meaningful interaction. Through this, new *value* is assigned to people and place previously overlooked as prized assets of community. Shared knowledge and resources allow communities to flex and adapt to changes in the forces that drive them.

## Outcomes and Performance Measures

This case study demonstrates evaluation of both short and long term community impact. The focus on community connection resulted in access to both natural and economic resources that had become increasingly restricted to local basket makers. This is observable in both the museum and the basket makers as new stakeholders in the long term vision of community development initiatives. The basket exhibit continued as a touring exhibition to other museums and galleries as late as 2010. The original Highway 17 basket makers later found new customer base by integrating tradition and technology in an e-commerce website and can still be purchased online today.

Additionally, the value attached to the basket makers and their craft resulted in additional value

placed on environmental concerns. After the *Row upon Row* exhibit, sweetgrass restoration gained momentum in South Carolina, supported in part by a USDA grant funded partnership to establish low country sweetgrass restoration (Burke 2004). Exhibit outcomes like political activism, policy changes, and funding allocations can change the long term prospects for communities.

## Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce- Student Created Community Tours

### Community Context

Inner-city Chicago hosts student-created, community-as-exhibit tours that showcase differing perspectives of experience. The Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce (CGCT) spun out of a social justice graduate course for teachers and now serves a mission seeking to:

***“transform traditional curriculum models by compiling collective knowledge of Chicago’s communities. CGCT seeks to foster intergenerational exchanges by bringing students, their families, community elders and educators to the table. We’re working to compile, publish, and apply critical, justice-centered materials & programs of learning and action in schools and communities.” (CGCT 2015)***

“Fueled by a desire to create curricula that interrogates and challenges traditional perspectives and systemic inequities”, CGCT’s vision incorporates community-oriented critical analysis. Through a variety of modes they seek to emphasize grassroots histories and experiences in efforts to promote justice and transformation. CGCT’s first initiative to broaden perspective of place was the development of the Grassroots Curriculum Toolkit and publication of *Urban Renewal or Urban Removal?* textbook. The Grassroots Curriculum Toolkit includes interpretive tools and strategies for incorporating student voice and civic-mindedness around contemporary issues into an existing classroom setting. The latter is a text presenting a critical perspective of Chicago-area history fueled by the realization that residents know very little of how local history has shaped the present city in which they live and influences their day to day lives. The tours, partnered with community education initiatives, help create and shape residents’ relationship with the neighborhood- both as a place and as a community.

## Use of Community Exhibits

With success of these projects, CGCT launched a model of community and neighborhood tours in 2013 that are created and led by students for benefit of teachers, parents, and community members. The selection of a tour as a type of community exhibit illustrates the scalability of the interplay between people, objects, and environment that occurs within exhibition. Participating schools can also visit and tour other sites, as well as view virtual tours online, to learn about differences, similarities, and various aspects of local history. Tours highlight “stories of historic struggles, sites of cultural upliftment, and locations of current importance from residents across many diverse communities/neighborhoods.” However, they serve a wholly different purpose than conventional walking tours which are often couched in terms of tourist dollars and billable nostalgia (CGCT 2015).

CGCT provides a model of place-based intervention utilizing interpretive tools of exhibition in a community setting for community benefit. Tours have been especially helpful to “outside” teachers and administrators working in local schools to “increase community awareness, encourage curriculum relevance, and transform perspectives” (CGCT 2015). In this instance, tours similarly utilize the exhibition concept of meaning-making to shape individual knowledge and participation to help forge greater community connections between individuals to foster more community cohesion.

## Individual and Community Development Working Together

The evaluation worksheet used by CGCT defines 7 major goals for students participating in the tour project. Of these, a separation can be made between goals that focus on individual development and those that focus on broader community development. Students are evaluated on the number of sites and interviews documented, as well as the quality of work (see Appendix). Of the seven goals, three also focus on individual activities in context of broader community participation and connection to place: Authentic Interviews of Knowledgeable Community Voices, Sites of Community Struggles, and Sites of Current Youth Importance.

These goals highlight the importance of fostering a greater sense of belonging through both social interaction and using diverse narratives as a way to illuminate and strengthen community experience. Intergenerational interaction is encouraged through the collection of oral history interviews of adults living in the neighborhood. The interplay between individual and community is expressed in

the construction of a meaningful artifact in the form of a tour and its collateral materials designed to encourage community action. In the instance of the Roscoe Village Walking Tour created by Alcott College Prep high school students, a set of community action Recommendations is proposed outlining ways the neighborhood and students can work together to improve community challenges (see Appendix).

## Impact Areas and Themes

Similarities can be drawn between the youth quilting project *Common Threads* in Maryland and *Critter Control* mapping exercise in Colorado. What sets CGCT tours apart is the intergenerational exchange and shared knowledge of place. Like *Common Threads*, CGCT tours are intentionally geared toward creating connection to place experience, both positive and negative, and casting youth as viable contributors to community. In these ways, CGCT is creating new value around people and place. Tours highlight the experiences of people from various backgrounds and ages. It creates the space for people with different roles as teachers, students, and residents to find common experience of belonging both in schools and in the neighborhoods. Because the tours are participatory and social in nature, they foster social interaction between these different segments of the school community.

## Outcomes and Performance Measures

One outcome of the curriculum requirements are that a number of sites are documented and interviews collected, which is a way of community asset mapping. As a snapshot, this provides a new and evolving inventory of community cultural assets. In the long term, it provides a baseline of community cultural assets that can be tracked over time to account for community change.

These tours highlight outcomes rooted in belonging and interaction, and a long term vision of stewarding a diverse narrative of place through documentation. Means of measuring impact in these areas can be seen in continued use and development of existing tours, as well as the number of new tours and participating schools. Additionally, activities bringing together people in similar ways at the school or in the neighborhood that might result as an outgrowth of the tours could be used as another measure of impact.

## Encounters Arts- Tooting Transition Shop, UK

### Community Context

With a mission of “inspiring creativity, dialog and change”, Encounters Arts is an organization based in the United Kingdom integrating themed community exhibits within commercial districts. The collaborative exhibits explore a variety of topical themes and animate empty retail spaces in areas with high traffic foot traffic. Encounters’ series of pop-up Shops and Museums projects employ a creative placemaking approach with outcomes positioned within community change and wellbeing. Many of these initiatives are in partnership with municipalities, nonprofit organizations, and public initiatives working to foster community connection and wellbeing. Encounters Arts seeks to engage existing residents and passersby with increased interaction at the local level around local themes.

Place-based collaborative projects provide residents with opportunity to participate in multiple creative and expressive endeavors exploring contemporary community challenges. Encounters Arts project themes have ranged from a focus on intergenerational stories with the *Grandmothers and Young People Talking* projects to the *Little Patch of Ground* gardening series and current *Museum of Now* undertaking in cooperation with the Torquay Museum. The *Transition Shop* is the focus of this case study. This was the eighth Encounters Shop, open for 9 days in May of 2012 in the Tooting area of London, along the high street of an urban mixed-use neighborhood as part of the Wandsworth Arts Festival (Encounters Arts 2011).

### Use of Community Exhibits

For the *Transition Shop*, Encounters Arts partnered with the Transition Town Movement of “community-led responses to climate change and shrinking supplies of cheap energy, building resilience and happiness.” Performance, film, photography, visual art and text were all used to collect material and create interactive and evolving displays within the shop. The Shop hosted multiple stations inviting visitors to contribute “piece of themselves” reflecting on past experience of place, the ways they currently live, and hopes and challenges for the future. Key activities included a Memory Map collecting individual experiences in Tooting, Seeds of Change sharing ways and what the community can grow,

and Future Vision chalk boards capturing written or drawn responses. Small “Happiness Jars” with invitations to visit the Transition Shop and fill the jars were left in various locations throughout the neighborhood to promote visitation (Encounters Arts 2012).

## Individual and Community Development Working Together

The creative contributions of individual expression crowdsourced at each of the stations provide a snapshot of collective community that “amounts to more than the whole”. In this way, *Transition Shop* harnessed the types of individual participation and dynamic interaction that is the “stuff” of community cohesion. In its partnership with the mission of Transition Town, this was further leveraged as a form of Civic Dialog to help build a type of consensus around change and shared vision for Tooting. Local ideas about climate change and addressing energy use were discussed, as well as how to take tangible and practical action. Providing an atmosphere of respectful inquiry and mutual understanding helped develop a community exchange, or forum, of ideas and experiences. This atmosphere also contributed to a sense of shared community concerns, identity, and cohesion (Encounters Arts Video 2012).

## Impact Areas and Themes

The Civic Dialog built into creative activities fostered interaction, understanding, and resulted in strong feedback about visitors’ heightened sense of belonging and strengthened community identity. Mapping local memories, in this instance, built a sense of shared experiences, but was not collected into an inventory of community assets.

Activities such as Seeds of Change fostered an exchange of ideas between individual visitors and groups about their concerns and hopes for the future. Similar to *Row Upon Row* in South Carolina, this provided new conduits for action connecting different aspects of community and greater consensus around community issues and actions.

## Outcomes and Performance Measures

Encounters Arts included “Legacy” and “Next Steps” sections in their final report and evaluation of the Tooting *Transition Shop*. They identified nine separate spin-off or continued projects resulting from the Shop. This included elementary school initiatives, conference activities, and continued arts intervention strategies. An increase in community activities can be attached to both a greater sense of community belonging and strengthened community connection.

Using participation in community exhibits to build a sense of community belonging and identity can catalyze wider spread community participation. The Tooting Wellbeing Walk, for example, culminated in residents scheduling another event to continue celebrating positive change and areas of community strength in Tooting. This type of uptick in civic participation is measured differently, however, than specific development activities emerging out of shared knowledge and resources, such as new Transition Town community engagement strategies and school affiliated classroom initiatives.

## Martha O’Bryan Center, Nashville, TN: “Breaking the Line” with Community Exhibits

### Community Context

The Martha O’Bryan Center was founded in 1894 on a foundation of Christian faith with a mission to “empower children, youth, and adults in poverty to transform their lives through work, education, employment and fellowship”. Located in Cayce Place public housing development in East Nashville since 1948, MOBC connects family, community, and schools to promote better education and employment opportunities for Nashville’s “most vulnerable families” (MOBC 2015). The center’s name sake was a prominent philanthropist in North Nashville in the late 1800’s working within the Lutheran church, providing charity resources to the less fortunate. In the early 1900’s, the efforts of MOBC moved out of the church into the larger community. It was then relocated to East Nashville in partnership with the Department of Housing to assist with the largest public housing development in the city, as it still remains today. Offering “cradle to college” programs and career services in a large community center,

Smith 41

MOBC serves over 6,000 individuals annually at Cayce Place and the CWA Plaza Apartments, with over half being 18 years or younger.

Cayce Place is Nashville's oldest and largest public housing development, as well as one of the poorest with 88% of the population is African American; 89% of households are headed by a single woman; 59% of the residents are children under the age of 18. Families from the CWA Plaza reflect a rapidly increasing immigrant population city-wide with approximately 35% being Somali or Sudanese, according to MOBC's website. The multi-building complex houses classrooms, daycare, kitchen, gymnasium and stage, and a new small library. Programs run the gamut from resume writing, to Meals on Wheels and healthy cooking classes, basketball and after school programs. It is within the after school youth program a neighborhood cultural arts exchange pilot project using community exhibits was developed with 5th-8th grade students. The organization's focus on fellowship and equity as a "creative activist ministry" weaves strands of cultural integrity throughout the many social resource programs they implement. The primary requirement in implementing youth programming is a "voice and choice" self-selection for participation. MOBC recognizes elements of a culturally democratic approach to their services, acknowledging the importance of agency of even their youngest patrons. Additionally, Martha O'Bryan Center's definition of poverty includes a greater vision focused on the vital whole of the individual experience:

***Income poverty means simply the lack of income or a shortage of material goods, but human poverty means much more. It can include the loss of dignity, a sense of powerlessness, a lack of autonomy and control, and the feeling of being marginalized or excluded politically, socially, or psychologically. The deprivation of what most of society considers necessary can result in the diminution of aspirations and achievements, especially for children in poverty who are very aware of what they are missing. (Metropolitan Social Services Community Needs Evaluation 2011 Update, MOBC website)***

As Nashville, and more specifically the neighborhood of East Nashville, continues to grow as a creative economy where "culture is commerce"<sup>1</sup>, Martha O'Bryan Center is increasingly trying to adapt to a new landscape of both opportunities and disparities within its scope of education and employment programs. The Cayce Place homes, physically cutoff by major roads and the Cumberland River, follows a historic trend in public housing policy geographically isolating concentrated areas of poverty (see Appendix). Recognizing a cultural, as well as economic and physical, divide between East Nashville's burgeoning creative business district and residents served by Martha O'Bryan Center, a new partnership

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<sup>1</sup> Time Magazine, "The South's Red-Hot Town" from : [www.time.com/13819/the-souths-red-hot-town](http://www.time.com/13819/the-souths-red-hot-town)  
Smith 42

initiative seeks to further the mission to “break the line” of poverty.

A great deal of rapid growth and change revealed social interaction and participation as a strong factor to strengthen community identity and a sense of belonging of Cayce residents as members of the larger East Nashville community. Not only are the surrounding neighborhoods seeing increased residential and commercial development, the Cayce homes themselves have been identified for a complete mixed-use, mixed-income, high density redevelopment within the next few years. The importance of building community cohesion between public housing residents and surrounding neighbors and businesses that may move into the current location has become paramount, though geographically they are separated by a few short blocks. The redevelopment of the existing homes will displace families and neighbors, disrupting their current social networks and support systems. Fewer number of housing units may be made available in the new development, and the pricing structure may change as well. To establish an empowering cycle of cultural expression and asset-building community exchange between MOBC and neighborhood businesses and residents, Martha O’Bryan decided to use community exhibition as a tool for change.

## Use of Community Exhibits

With a holistic mission to address poverty and vision as an integrated community center, MOBC understands that place dynamics of East Nashville have a direct effect on both the residents it serves and success as an organization. As East Nashville has an increased focus on creative economy and placemaking (Chamber East 2014), MOBC is aware the cultural disconnect between housing residents and the rest of the neighborhood also represents a disconnect from social mobility and economic opportunities. An exhibit based intervention was developed and piloted in 2014-2015 as a response to this.

*Cayce Unbound* utilizes both conventional and community created exhibits in a variety of ways to:

- increase voice of public housing residents as making a contribution to community
- illuminate diverse and contrasting experiences of East Nashville residents, past and present
- expand community networks and increase opportunity for participation
- tap into potentials of creative community and resulting economy

The Martha O’Bryan Center adopted a multiphase approach that sought to make an impact in the following areas: social interaction, community assets, networks, and capacity. In *Cayce Unbound* student created exhibit objects during an after school art program later exhibited in local businesses. Similar to the Tooting *Transition* Shop, project themes focused on place experiences, self-expression, and included sessions led by guest artists from the East Nashville neighborhood.

A companion project evolved through a partnership with Humanities TN as funding for the student-created exhibits was discussed. This involved Martha O’Bryan Center acting as the Nashville host site for the traveling Smithsonian exhibit titled *The Way We Worked*, an interactive retrospective of the ways work has changed in America through industrialization and technology. This use of a formal exhibition in an unconventional setting also included a series of participatory activities and supplemental programming ranging from cultural themes to professional development opportunities.

### Individual and Community Development Working Together

Like the CGCT community tours, *Cayce Unbound* youth projects were designed within a framework of sociocultural constructionism, using hands-on creative student projects to connect larger aspects of place, people, and community. Unlike CGCT, the creative projects focused on both individual expression and characteristics of place. One example of individual expression activities was a series of guest artist led self-portraits representing student interests and future aspirations (see Appendix). History of place and prehistoric peoples of the area were also topics in the construction of clay pottery. All of these objects, as well as others, were featured in community exhibit displays- either in conjunction with *The Way We Worked* Smithsonian exhibit or display in local businesses.

This allowed individual students opportunity work with different art materials, as well as learn about new aspects of their surrounding community. The social interaction of the shared activity of making objects for display spurred dialog about the embedded community themes. The student created work itself, while framed as individual arts enrichment, was also the key impetus to connect to community artists, local businesses, and additional partners through the use of exhibition. The exhibits themselves functioned as community platforms to present varying perspectives of living in East Nashville.

## Impact Areas and Themes

Inviting community in to Martha O'Bryan Center and the Cayce neighborhood through the use of exhibits has provided multiple opportunities and occasions to bridge the divide between these areas. Guest artists leading the development of student projects which were later displayed in local businesses was one way to achieve this; hosting *The Way We Worked* exhibit on site with related programming was another. Opening MOBC to the greater public in this way completely recast the center as a potential asset providing new exhibition and gallery space. Similarly, student work positioned as exhibit content cast students in terms of contributors and their work as objects to spur social interaction.

Community connection through shared knowledge and resources became a vital part of *Cayce Unbound*. Preliminary planning for youth created exhibits identified partnerships with neighborhood partnerships Unbound Arts event and curatorial services, community artists, and local business. In efforts to seek funding for this phase of the pilot program, significant new partnerships were also formed with Metro Arts Commission and Humanities TN to implement additional phases of programming well before anticipated. Martha O'Bryan Center also demonstrated its organizational capacity to leverage existing relationships with Belcourt Cinema, Frist Center for the Visual Arts, and Nashville Rotary Club in efforts to develop further community capacity to maximize opportunities.

## Outcomes and Performance Measures

*Cayce Unbound* provides a snapshot of ways to begin evaluate community impact in the early life of a project. The need to strengthen community networks and cultural capacities at both the individual and community level was identified very early in the development of *Cayce Unbound*. As a result, intentional efforts were made to involve new partners and previously unidentified stakeholders in the community. Similar to Encounter Arts inclusion of "Legacy" and "Next Steps" as outcomes of the Tooting *Transition* Shop, spin-off activities and opportunities can be considered measures for early evaluation.

An immediate success of this approach to developing community exhibits was new partnerships, including Humanities TN, Smithsonian Museums on Mainstreet (MOMS), and Historic East Nashville Merchants Association. While applying for first-time funding through Humanities TN for the student created exhibits, MOBC was encouraged to also apply as the Nashville hos for a Smithsonian traveling exhibit. The host site was awarded to MOBC for exhibition and additional support of collateral activities running May 9th – June 13th, 2015.

MOBC also tapped a prior relationship with the Frist Center for the Visual Arts and Nashville Rotary Club to impact greater community capacity through a series of professional development opportunities for adult community members in the form of paid docent job training. This was the first project of its kind undertaken by MOBC, and wouldn't be possible without the center's community partners. Led by staff of the Frist, leaders with the Rotary Club provided additional coaching in public speaking. As a demonstration of building community capacity through professional development, this also speaks to what can be accomplished with new and invested partners sharing ideas and resources in new ways. Similarly, guest artists leading sessions in the youth project component of *Cayce Unbound* were paid for instruction, not volunteers. For half of the instructors, it was their first professional opportunity as teaching community artists.

Professional development opportunities also continued with demonstrations within the exhibition space from *Piece of Love*, a MOBC Adult Education apprentice program making handmade jewelry for retail. The women in this program worked at hand beading each Friday of the 5 week exhibition, providing demonstration, instruction and information about the program. They used the exhibition space for social interaction, community networking *and* professional opportunity. This led to an invitation to host the Historic East Nashville Merchants Association June mixer event. With arrangements made, several local business owners, candidates for local council, and other business professionals attended a private reception, including docent led tours. Conversation during evening did engage issues of work and employment in the local area between all attendees and docents alike. While the exhibit itself included various interactive components to *engage* visitors with the content, such as audio and video components, a simple participatory activity had been designed by MOBC staff for guests to *contribute* their ideas and experiences. This was in the form of a simple Question & Answer area using the vestibule windows allowing responses to the following questions to be added on post it notes (see Appendix)

- What did you think of the exhibit?
- What exhibit would you like to see in the future?
- What was your first job?
- What different types of work do you do?
- What challenges and opportunities do workers face today?
- What else do you have to say about work?

Simple in design, but the activity provided a mode of participation in a conversation not unlike the concept of Civic Dialog utilized in museums (see Appendix). However, in this setting with this gathering of individuals, the conversation becomes relevant in a very meaningful and immediate way it might not in a more traditional museum setting. It also allowed MOBC, its partners, and community leaders to see a collection of responses over time in each of the question areas.

A participatory arts activity combined *Cayce Unbound* youth projects with the Smithsonian exhibit. Student self-portraits were on display in the exhibition, and coloring sheets had been created from their original artwork. An activity area was set up throughout the day for all ages to color and decorate the student-designed coloring sheets. Students were able to see not only their own work on display, but how others adapted their original designs. An unexpected opportunity of this activity was overlap with the local Black Lives Matters citizen group that was utilizing the adjacent gymnasium as meeting space. The opportunity for interaction between varying individuals and groups that might not otherwise occur spurred new potential collaborations between community partners.

Additional activities ran throughout the dates of the exhibition, including docent led tours and film screenings hosted by the Belcourt Cinema's mobile theater outreach program. What these additional events and the exhibition provided MOBC was a new *venue* for cultural exchange and created a way to invite the community to engage with the housing residents. Most often outside community comes into MOBC in the role of volunteer or charitable giving. The act of creating new value around the physical building and its surrounding housing residents, if even temporarily, flipped an established dynamic of place in the East Nashville community.

Unforeseen benefits occurred within the organization of Martha O'Bryan as well. The large underutilized lobby turned exhibition space demonstrated the versatility of the space itself. Now viewed as an asset for the organization, discussion about ways to continue using it for community exhibits moving forward has occurred. Through the use of exhibition as a creative placemaking tool animating a blank space, the lobby is now viewed as a potential heart of community interaction and participation for MOBC. In preparation for the exhibition, facility improvements were made as well. The lobby restrooms were deep cleaned and repainted, and trash pick-up occurred around the facility grounds the morning before the exhibit opening. Assigning value and generating interest in a physical space can spur further investment of time, effort, and resources. In summary, Martha O'Bryan Center's multifaceted approach implementing community exhibits in a variety of forms has highlighted an array of outcomes and potential measures in four key impact areas illustrated throughout the case studies provided.

## Community Exhibit Evaluation + Impact

Uniqueness and specialness define place and experience, and community can be evaluated for effectiveness along the themes and impact areas previously outlined. Particular museum practices such as Civic Dialog, participatory design, and community-created content can catalyze different aspects of community. As previously illustrated with various models, community impact can be difficult to measure. An understanding of community dynamics and features, as well clearly defining impact area outcomes, can better inform a reasonable and appropriate set of measures.

Positioning evaluation within a theoretical framework of sociocultural constructionism calls for evaluation not only at an individual level, but also a broader community level. Creative placemaking indicators, help us by expanding the scope of what is being measured, and why, is significant to effective evaluation. Benner's *Just Growth* also provides a set of community indicators that might help direct attention to additional features to be considered for measure in terms of equity and access to resources.

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Variable</i>	<i>Years</i>
Growth	Change in earnings per job	1979, 1989, and 1999
	Change in employment	1979, 1989, and 1999
	Change in per capita income	1979, 1989, and 1999
	Change in median household income	1979, 1989, and 1999
Equity	Change in percent below poverty	1979, 1989, and 1999
	Change in the 80–20 household income ratio	1979, 1989, and 1999
	Ratio of principal cities to suburbs poverty rate	1980, 1990, and 2000
	Poverty dissimilarity index	1980, 1990, and 2000
	African American dissimilarity index	1980, 1990, and 2000
	Latino dissimilarity index	1980, 1990, and 2000

**BENNER 2010**

Considering both of these models in terms of overall community wellbeing suggests mutually reaffirming shifts in areas such as local commerce *and* poverty rates. Community exhibits can help create dialog and understanding that act as a mechanism to catalyze action. It can also inform and guide data collection and evaluation. Economic impact is a significant measure import to communities. But equity and community wellbeing is measured by more than economic indicators.

## Social Interaction + Participation- Identity + Belonging

**“...it has become increasingly apparent that economic resources alone do not lead to community sustainability and wellbeing. This re-evaluation has led to the recognition that combinations of resources are needed to foster community wellbeing.”  
(Holdsworth and Hartman 2009, p. 77)**

Diverse sets of resources underpin successful, resilient communities. Social aspects like people getting along, being able to work together, and feeling welcome in a variety of places is just as important as economic indicators to measuring community impact. Exhibits can provide a tool to know each other as neighbors, share stories, and connect to common aspects of place- create a shared experience.

Community cohesion depends on the ability to leverage community to work together toward long term goals and sense of shared destiny. This also builds *social capital*, the social connections and affiliations that produce advantageous social cooperation. Strengthening community cohesion and social capital requires individuals to hold a sense of belonging to a broader community. This can be fostered by the ability to affiliate and constructively interact with various groups. This is readily achieved by opportunities for positive and meaningful shared experiences presented within the context of community exhibits.

A heightened sense of belonging and diverse activity can boost a community's ability to work collaboratively. Exhibits, like CGCT, can provide the type of community project that catalyzes this brand of action. Contributing stories, facilitating dialog, or even creating the display items themselves, strengthens community cohesion through participation and contribution. As individuals participate in the exhibit project itself, they are simultaneously participating in community processes. Over time, continued participation and shared experience can lead to a “citizen” mindset where participation itself is meaningful and significant. The propensity for an increased level of civic participation is also a factor of community cohesion (OECD 2015, Whaley and Weaver 2010).

As *reciprocal participation* has been identified as a key factor of community dynamics, measures can likely include how effectively government bodies, organizations, and establishments assume an active community role. This includes a healthy exchange of services and ideas, understanding their equal role as community members. Citizens are most engaged when they trust the processes shaping their community and feel empowered that their actions can affect the change they want to see. Thus, an

Smith 49

additional area of measure within the aspect of community cohesion may very well include transparency and ease of access at the government level, and opportunity for individuals and groups to engage organizations and establishments in their own community-based initiatives (OECD 2015).

## Asset Value- People + Place

Through interpretation and meaning-making, community exhibits can create a sense of value around people and place that might not previously have existed. Whereas ABCD is an approach that hinges upon mapping and leveraging *existing* community assets to build social capital, the tools of exhibition create new assets altogether. The processes employed by exhibition present a mechanism to create the special attachments to people and place that assign value through meaningful experience. These *new* community assets, both cultural and social, that can then be leveraged in a variety of ways toward community wellbeing.

The expression and interpretation of individual identity and experience, as well as social interaction that exhibits can generate, can create *cultural capital*, wider group affiliations, and stimulate economic opportunity, and generate a new generation of assets. Cultural capital can include resources like museums and historic sites, or cultural values and practices (Bourdieu 2011, Kingston 2001, Mailath and Postlewaith 2006, Throsby 1999).

The impact of asset creation can be seen in the outcomes and performance measures of *Row Upon Row*. As value was created around baskets, basket makers, and their natural material, increased investment was made in stewarding both their cultural traditions as well aspects of the natural environment. This generated economic impact for the basket makers in the form of diversified retail opportunities, a public platform for their work, and publicly funded sweetgrass restoration efforts in the region. Martha O'Bryan and its constituents also enjoyed benefits of economic impact from asset creation related to funding for community exhibit projects, paid instructor positions, and paid job professional development for Adult Education students. MOBC also recognized its own lobby space as a potential place for increased community activity, hosting future exhibits and community events.

## Community Connection- Networks + Knowledge

Shared knowledge and resources are powerful tools in growing resilient, equitable communities. Communities tend to come together in is reaction to problems and conflict. In the case of the McKissick County basket makers, decline in both the natural and cultural environment was identified as a significant problem. Rosengarten’s approach to centering community work around the physical objects of the baskets themselves provided an object of attention that connected not only the basket makers, but eventually commercial developers and environmentalist around a community issue. This opened access to ideas and means across the board to create united action and address multiple interconnected challenges no one group would have been able to resolve unaided.

*Social objects* can be “the engines” of socially networked experiences and the reason people connect with specific others (Simon 2010, p. 127). The shared object itself is the reason for people to interact, develop relationships, form groups, and organize knowledge. An object in common can invite discussion and understanding that might not otherwise occur. Social objects can also redirect dialog and activity around a potentially controversial or derisive issue to a less confrontational object as the focus rather than that specific other person or persons. As occurred in South Carolina with *Row Upon Row*, the conversation became about the baskets and the sweetgrass rather than accusations directed toward specific action as and groups.

Encounters Arts and *Cayce Unbound* also focus on social objects to connect networks, however these approaches were done to stimulate dialog rather than reacting to an immediate problem. In this way, the use of social objects can help foster Benner’s concept of shared Destiny between groups and among networks. Identity and belonging is important in catalyzing overall civic participation. However, it is the application of collective knowledge that results in a community taking action. One result of community exhibits can be an increased number of community dialogs spurred by the use of social objects. Another result can also be an increase in citizen-led initiatives leveraging shared knowledge and resources.

Personal knowledge can be developed into deeper understanding if it is exchanged and compared with multiple sources of knowledge. In this way, Ansbacher’s meaning-making provides a mechanism to challenge “accepted knowledge” of the individual within a social context to nurture understanding of multiple perspectives. As community networks expand and intersect, new stakeholders can emerge as community mobilizes into action. *Row Upon Row* illustrates this best as  
Smith 51

both the basket makers and museum became key actors in community efforts to address challenges presented by growth in business and real estate development (Ansbacher 2013, p. 16).

Community created exhibits lend themselves particularly well to challenging preconceived notions of place or community. They can also help community members form stronger connections and create social networks. Individual expression, as with the *Transition Shop* in Tooting, can illuminate community experiences. Community developed exhibit content cast all participants as contributing members of community.

## Community Capacity- Problem Solving + Opportunities

Martha O'Bryan's use of community focused exhibits demonstrates a particular strength in the area of community capacity. *Community capacity* is the ability of a community to make a difference over time and across different issues through commitment, skill, and resources (Aspen 2004, Mayer 1996). While capacity is frequently discussed in terms of problem solving, MOBC also demonstrates capacity as an equal ability to leverage opportunity at both the individual and community level. Individual skill development was present in hands-on youth projects involving a variety of artistic concepts and materials, as well as communication aptitude, in creative projects. This not only benefited students' capacity to contribute to a local creative community, hosting guest artists and organizational partners increased MOBC's capacity to offer professional opportunities in the creative sector. CGCT also develops student skill sets utilizing documentation and presentation exercises to create community tour projects. Unlike the way MOBC developed a separate tier of professional opportunities and training for adults, CGCT involves adults through intergenerational interaction and shared experience in its approach to youth curriculum.

The docent training at MOBC provided opportunity for both individual skill development and broader community development through professional affiliation of the organizations it brought together. These partnerships were not solely founded to target a specific community challenge or problem, rather they recognized the broader benefit of combining resources. Additionally, increased opportunities for meaningful community participation lends itself to further developing potential community leaders. Hosting the Historic East Nashville Merchants Association allowed not only current candidates for local government to interact at a different level of community participation, but also leaders living in the public housing community. An example of this was observed during the Historic East Nashville Merchants Association mixer hosted at Martha O'Bryan Center. Though work and business

Smith 52

were themes of the exhibit, the event itself brought together leaders of both the business community and the public housing community. One of the trained docents struck up conversation with the HENMA president and publisher of The East Nashvillian, related to her own efforts to organize an informal youth program for teen girls to involve them in positive activities. It was her own effort to improve her immediate community and connect with a broader system of support and resources. It provided a platform for community leaders to engage with council members, candidates, and business leaders to advocate for their work and community.

Community capacity maximizing opportunity can also happen in response to new asset recognition or creation. Small scale, but significant, improvements and beautification efforts were made to Martha O'Bryan facilities and grounds. This included painting and trash pick-up. These efforts illustrate how the ways impact areas can overlap and catalyze further action. With MOBC designated as the Nashville host site for a traveling Smithsonian exhibit, new value was created around the building and its capacity to open to public events. This fueled a greater self-interest in upkeep and maintenance, demonstrating that improvements and beautification can also be indicators of the commitment of time, skill, and resources. Similarly, CGCT Community Tours are designed to recognize challenging histories as valuable assets to promote community investment and attachment to neglected places in a neighborhood.

## Building a Framework for Evaluation

The very foundation of sustainable, vibrant, and vital communities is a dynamic and integrated series of networks, activities and interactions; thus evaluation of community impact should reflect a similar interconnectedness. Community exhibits can provide spaces for people to have meaningful experiences around a variety of topics. Interactions and participation can develop both individual and collective knowledge. In a community context, this can catalyze further participation and engagement.

Effective measurement, first and foremost, is dependent on identifying suitable and appropriate outcomes. Narrow definitions of what success looks like -and what areas of community it may hinge upon- provide skewed data and perhaps unintentional results. The path to effective evaluation begins with outcomes informed by community goals, needs, and assets.

Identifying the impact areas being affected is as important to exhibit development as it is to evaluation. Community impact can be measured by the dynamics of interaction and participation, community connection, social asset value, and community capacity. By considering community goals, needs, and assets, it is possible to develop outcomes that inform the implementation of community exhibits and create the desired community impact. The capability to tailor exhibition around specific activities and subject matter presents themes that can also guide community exhibit development and evaluation. Common themes that occur in evaluation of the case studies include identity and belonging, networks and knowledge, place and people, problem solving and opportunity.

Lastly, articulating “what success looks like” is necessary to identify intended outcomes and resulting performance measures. *Some* measures may include broad economic impact, others may focus on more localized measures of social identity or belonging. Definitions of successful performance are guideposts to what effective and reasonable measures will include. Identification of appropriate outcomes and measures allows exhibition approaches and exhibit activities to be defined as *modalities*, or a method of application, of community intervention.

The following summary chart illustrates how the relevant evaluation themes can guide performance measures and outcomes in each of the four key impact areas identified above. The exhibit modalities that are suited to achieve these impact area outcomes are also identified. Taken together, the elements of the summary chart provide a lens to guide development of community exhibits and evaluate them for effective, measurable community impact.

# Evaluation Framework Summary Chart

## Community Impact Evaluation Framework- Impact Area 1

THEMES	IMPACT AREAS	OUTCOMES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<i>Identity &amp; Belonging</i>	<i>Social Interaction &amp; Participation</i>	Communities collaborating on shared projects	Increased opportunities for shared experience
<b>EXHIBIT MODALITIES</b>			
<p><u>INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT</u></p> <p>Invitation to share accounts of individual experience and expression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Participatory Activities</li> <li>-Community Created Exhibits</li> </ul> <p><u>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</u></p> <p>Group interaction around content and ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Civic Dialog</li> <li>-Participatory Activities</li> <li>-Community Created Exhibits</li> </ul>		<p>A strong sense of belonging to a broader community</p> <p>Increased civic participation</p>	<p>Types and frequency of activities that bring people of different backgrounds, ages, and affiliations together</p> <p>Number of community projects that include diverse stakeholders</p> <p>Increased volunteerism</p>

**Community Impact Evaluation Framework- Impact Area 2**

THEMES	IMPACT AREAS	OUTCOMES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<i>Community Connection</i>	<i>Networks &amp; Knowledge</i>	Foster communities of shared knowledge and ideas	Number of community projects that include new stakeholders
<b>EXHIBIT MODALITIES</b>			
<p><u>INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT</u></p> <p>Interaction within and related to exhibit promotes new introductions and acquaintances</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Participatory Activities</li> <li>-Community Created Exhibits</li> <li>-Use of Social Objects to promote interactions</li> </ul> <p><u>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</u></p> <p>Group interaction with exhibit content facilitates exchange of information and ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Participatory Activities</li> <li>-Community Created Exhibits</li> <li>-Use of Social Objects to promote interaction</li> <li>-Civic Dialog</li> </ul>		<p>Equitable access to community systems and resources</p> <p>A sense of shared destiny</p>	<p>Number of diverse citizen led initiatives that garner public support and resources</p> <p>Community dialogues catalyzed by use of social objects</p> <p>Pre/ post project survey gauging specific knowledge of varying aspects of community</p>

THEMES	IMPACT AREAS	OUTCOMES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<i>People &amp; Place</i>	<i>Asset Value</i>	People working in new ways and in new roles	Increased social asset inventory identified by pre/post mapping exercises
<b>EXHIBIT MODALITIES</b>			

**Community Impact Evaluation Framework- Impact Area 3**

<p><u>INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT</u></p> <p>Casting all residents in role of contributing members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Community Created Exhibits, meaning-making creates value around diverse experience</li> <li>-Participatory Activities, creative collaboration components</li> </ul> <p><u>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</u></p> <p>Exhibit promotes meaningful attachment to people and place</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Community Created Exhibits, utilizing informal and nontraditional environments,</li> </ul>	<p>Places experienced and used in new ways</p> <p>Both positive and negative narratives utilized to the benefit of the community</p>	<p>Place-based projects that respect diverse community narratives</p>
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**Community Impact Evaluation Framework- Impact Area 4**

THEMES	IMPACT AREAS	OUTCOMES	PERFORMANCE MEASURES
<i>Problem Solving &amp; Opportunity</i>	<i>Community Capacity &amp; Goodwill</i>	Shared long term vision	Increased community projects committed to long term strategies
<b>EXHIBIT MODALITIES</b>		Communities work effectively to maximize skills, resources, and commitment	Increased transparency of and ease of access to decision-making processes shaping community
<p><u>INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT</u></p> <p>Skill Development -Community Created Exhibits, design process and implementation (documentation, text writing, professional development, etc.)</p> <p><u>COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT</u></p> <p>Effectively plan and implement community projects - Community Created Exhibits, community led planning and implementation (consensus around content, logistics, trainings, etc.)</p> <p>Long term commitment to community exhibition projects -permanent exhibits, virtual and wayside exhibits, community organized tours</p>		<p>Citizen trust in government, organizations and establishments</p> <p>Expanded community leadership base</p>	<p>Community planning projects are successfully implemented</p> <p>Increased capital improvements and beautification projects</p> <p>Increased professional development opportunities</p> <p>Government bodies, organizations, and establishments function in role of active community members in exchange of service and ideas</p>

# Conclusions

## Defining Success

The process of exhibition has a great deal of power to influence how we understand the world around us. Utilized as a community intervention, the dynamics at work within an exhibit can influence the how we connect to places and people around us. Trends in exhibition approaches, starting with Boas' cultural relativism, underscore the authority exhibits can wield, impacting even large scale systems. As with any social research or intervention, responsible and ethical standards are required for successful initiatives. The potential value of community exhibits has been stressed, even advocated, throughout this work. The potential challenges and detriments are also just as significant.

*Row Upon Row* addresses the imbalance that occurred for a specific minority group as economy and place experience vast change. Poorly planned and executed exhibits can contribute to inequity and imbalance just as readily as it can promote it. When economic and social outcomes are primary drivers of any project, equity is an issue.

Examples of Placemaking, Creative Placemaking, and even tourism development, in the case of *Row Upon Row*, bump into issues of equity. When success is measured in one-dimensional terms of economic and social activity, without regard to greater impact, disparity is more prone to occur. Museums in particular are encountering new territory, needing to be financially viable and socially relevant in ways never previously required. Turning to lessons learned in the sectors of Placemaking, community development, and even social entrepreneurship, introduces a holistic definition of success. Identifying a general framework for evaluation can assist in articulating the goals and measuring the impacts of community exhibits.

## Exhibiting Community: Inviting Community In, Turning Citizenship Out

Exhibits can create opportunities for social interaction and meaningful experience to actively shape community. Vibrant communities can be revealed, even fostered, in participatory exhibits. Exhibition can also create a platform for belonging and participation for groups or individuals who do not find resonance with dominant place narratives. Creating opportunity for belonging can create opportunity for attachment, investment, and sense of shared social obligation. Similarly, creating

opportunities for leadership, and introducing leaders to new ways to serve community, exhibits can raise the profile of individuals and generate a sense of citizenship within the community. Community exhibits can create a platform for community members to rise into roles of leaders, as well as pulling members of community together to work effectively. In this way, exhibition can be an incubator for not only community involvement, but also active citizenship.

## Strategic Visitors Make For Strategic Partners

The visitor experience continues to become a central focus of museums and exhibits. Museums often seek to attract a diverse range of visitors from a diverse number of places. Similar to some approaches of Placemaking, museums often position themselves to compete as an attractive destination. This focus on attracting visitors from outside the community creates a missed opportunity to connect with a local demographic and member base. Community exhibits can be a tool to develop a good place to live, as well as a good place to visit. Even formal exhibits, when placed in a community setting, can invite diverse visitors by virtue of the events and activities in its proximity, as illustrated by Martha O'Bryan Center.

Community exhibits can also serve a variety of organizations or initiatives as a tool of community connection and cohesion. Invitations made to community groups is a means to expand the social reach of an exhibition and its subject matter. Strategically hosting relevant stakeholders and their target audiences can act as a way to “match-make” groups that may need an excuse to connect. Community exhibits provide the invitation to bring together cross-sector partners working together to solve problems or maximize opportunities for community cohesion, meaningful connection, and placemaking activities.

## Sidestepping Community Conflict, Leveraging Community Contrast

Meaning-making and the process of placemaking is an intimate activity. Understanding that value and attachments to Place can happen as individual and collective experiences are shared and cultivated in exhibits and exhibit spaces. As Placemaking seeks to influence collective behavior through the built-environment, community exhibits impact how we relate to people and place and how we assign meaning to them both.

Community exhibits are powerful intervention approaches in *communities of contrast*. Often, difference and contrast in community becomes a source of conflict and confrontation. This is more likely when inequity and disparity occur. Exhibits can frame differences in ideas, customs, lifestyles, and experiences, and create a constructive atmosphere of inquiry and exploration *before* there is conflict. Exemplified by *Row Upon Row* and MOBC, they can also mediate imbalance in each of the areas of sustainability- economic, environmental, social, and cultural- and address communities struggling in transition.

Community exhibits can be tools for mediation. The process of reassigning meaning to negative experience has the potential to reframe conflict as an opportunity to explore difference and diversity. The Chicago Community Tours collect stories of struggle and reposition them as a source of community cohesion to foster understanding. This “assetting”, or casting in a valuable light, holds untapped potential for making a host of neglected spaces and stories as valuable parts of the place we call home.

Community exhibits incorporate many of the same aspects that shape our day to day lives and communities. By attending to the potential that community exhibits have for transforming community relationships and possibilities, we can use them more intentionally as active tools for community engagement and development.

## Areas for On-going Study

The case for importance of effective community impact evaluation of exhibits has been presented. Because of the wide-ranging impacts community exhibits can have, a cross-sector approach is useful in constructing appropriate measures. Literature and resources from museum studies, community development, Placemaking, and other fields have been cited within this work. However, the broader implications of community impact evaluation is worth considering.

## Designing Tools for Evaluation

What is presented here is a general framework to guide more specific impact measures of community exhibits. The task of designing specific tools for quantitative and qualitative foundational criteria should be tied to context, such as organizational goals. Several of the toolkits and evaluation models investigated within this work provide tailored examples of the many ways and types of data that

can be collected to more effectively articulate and evaluate community impact. With a more comprehensive and nuanced framework provided as a standard baseline, better tools can be designed for the evaluation of specific community exhibits.

## Designing Exhibits as Tools of Evaluation

Exhibits can serve as collection points of qualitative data of community impact in the form of individual and community feedback. In the example of the *Cayce Unbound*, Q + A boards and participatory activities were tailored to collect responses from different stakeholders and sets of topics. In this way, partnerships can be made more productive. Community exhibits can also be valuable to these partners because of the ways information and participation is layered for diverse audiences, exhibits are “effective for engaging stakeholders in research and action” (Wali 2015, p. 24). Ongoing research into how exhibits do this would be valuable to future practitioners.

In areas of interaction and participation, focus on strategic invitations and intentional “match-making” between community groups can also happen at the exhibit level. Community impact is driven as much at micro-levels of individual experience and interaction as it is at a broader scope of socioeconomic development. It is within these intersections of individual, social, and place dynamics that community exhibition can make unique impacts. Within the context of participation, an exhibit can be the tool of evaluation as well as the focus of evaluation itself, as we saw in the outcomes of Encounter Arts *Transition* Shop that collected and curated community response to future change. There is an opportunity to continue to gather ways in which community exhibits can incorporate evaluative components into their design.

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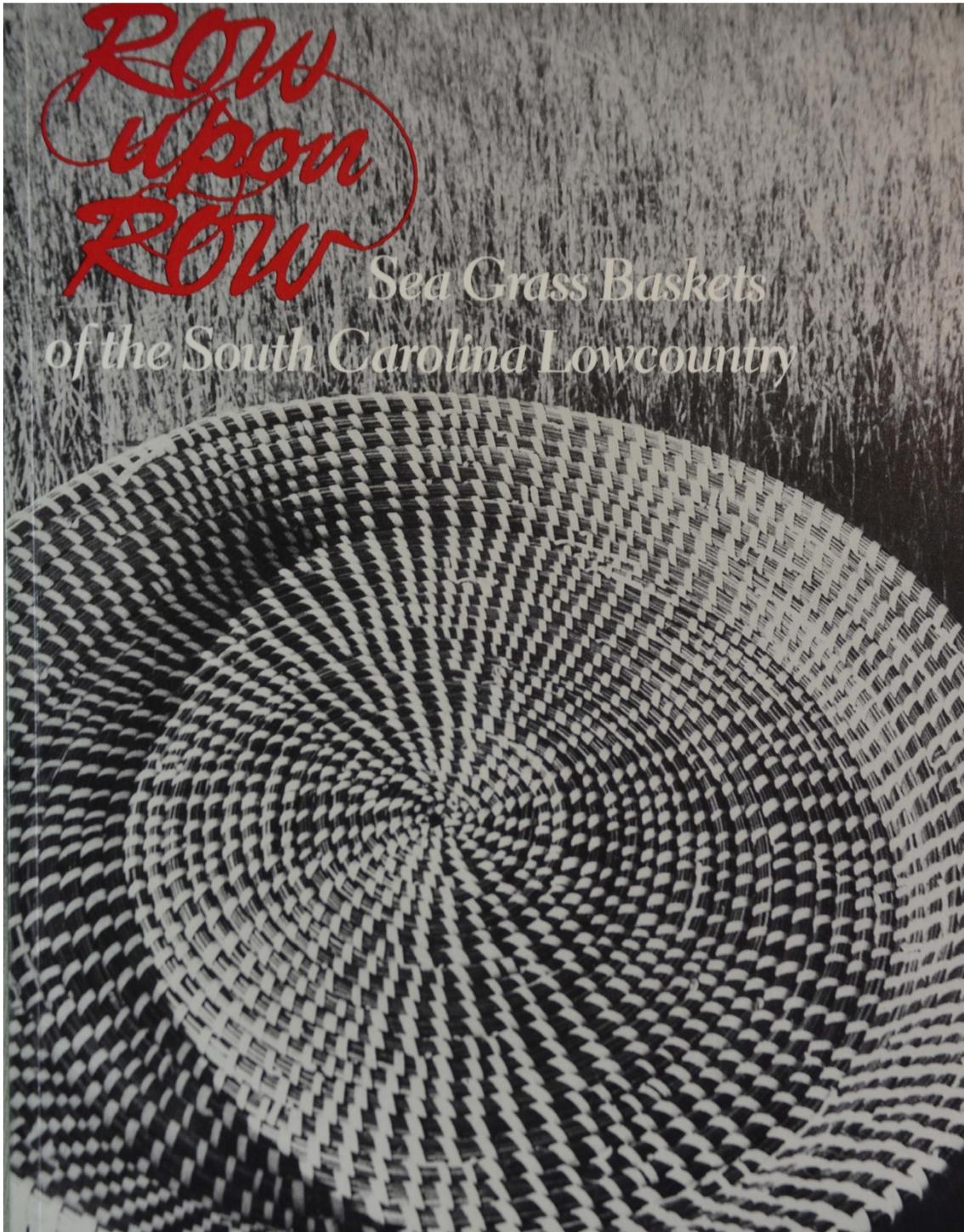
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Resources/Appendix

Appendix 1: Row Upon Row, McKissick Museum



## Basketmakers Interviewed in the Lowcountry Basket Project

ROW  
UPON  
ROW

Mary Jane and Jessie Bennett, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Mae Bell Coakley, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Jannie Cohen, Hilton Head Island, S.C.  
Annabell Ellis, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Evelyina and Joseph Foreman, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Yvonne Foreman, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Florence Frazier, Baltimore, Md.  
Helen and James Gadsden, Awendaw, S.C.  
Laverne Gadsden, Awendaw, S.C.  
Sandra Gadsden, Awendaw, S.C.  
Allen and Annie Mae Green, Sapelo Island, Ga.  
Mary Jackson, Charleston, S.C.  
Frances Jones, Hilton Head Island, S.C.  
Maggie Manigault, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.

Marie Manigault, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Mary Jane Manigault, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Melony Manigault, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Florence Mazyck, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Rosemarie Mazyck, Awendaw, S.C.  
Barbara McCormick, McClellanville, S.C.  
Sue Middleton, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
April Rivers, Charleston, S.C.  
Sharod Carlton Rouse, Cartersville, Ga.  
Latoyana Scott, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Mary Alice Scott, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Meggan Scott, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Michelle Scott, Sumter, S.C.  
Tiffany Scott, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Adam and Lilly Singleton, Frogmore, S.C.  
Henrietta Snype, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Mary Vanderhorst, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Blanche Watts, Mt. Pleasant, S.C.  
Louise White, Awendaw, S.C.  
Mary White, Awendaw, S.C.



CharlestonSweetgrass.com established the largest assortment of hand-made sweetgrass baskets on the internet. 100's to choose from, or [create a custom design!](#)



## TABLET BASKET



### Custom, Hand-Made Baskets

Sweetgrass basket making has been a part of the Mount Pleasant community for over 400 years™. Sure you can go to a store and buy a machine produced basket. But where did it come from, and does it contain chemicals that could cause harm? Our organic approach is simple and has been the same for centuries. Natural Palmetto, Long Pine Needles, Bulrush and Sweetgrass. This tradition was brought to the area by slaves who came from West Africa. Our basket making process is a traditional art form which has been passed from generation to generation. Today, it is one of the oldest art forms of African origin in the United States. Mount Pleasant, South Carolina (Near Charleston SC) enjoys the perseverance of the artisans (and their baskets). Made in the USA is something rare to the growing basket world. However, CharlestonSweetgrass.com offers an innovative approach to this tradition. Mary Alice Venning Vanderhorst (1940-2010) had a long legacy that created the baskets that you see on our website. Customers, Friends and Family who knew her were fortunate enough to have seen her artistic abilities. Some of the best lowcountry basket weavers are a part of CharlestonSweetgrass.com. We are the first to offer [100's of sweetgrass baskets. Browse and buy one Today!](#)



**5in 2 Loop Tray**  
(Approx. 5"W x 1"H)  
\$79.00



**Sweetgrass Clock** (Approx. 9"W)  
\$219.00

### Muhlenbergia Filippae & Sericea

Charleston Sweetgrass is tall, thin, and has a distinctively sweet smell. The baskets were originally crafted for the practical purpose of collecting rice and cotton in plantation fields. Some sweetgrass basket makers insist on using only sweetgrass, because it is soft and easy to work with. However, creative embellishments are now a buyers delight and are available at CharlestonSweetgrass.com.

[...more](#)



**Swan Basket**  
(Approx. 6"L x 6"H)  
\$249.00



**Tea Serving Tray**  
(Approx. 14"L x 2"H)  
\$549.00



**Serving Tray w/holders**  
Six Small Holders  
\$450.00



**Pullin-In Bread Rolls Basket**  
(Approx. 6"W x 2"H)  
\$169.00

## Appendix 2: Community Tours, Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce

The Community Tour Evaluation Rubric is available in addition to a Development Guide, Site Specific Research Guide, and other related documents available through Chicago Grassroots Curriculum Taskforce at <http://grassrootscurriculum.org/community-tours>

### chicago grassroots curriculum taskforce

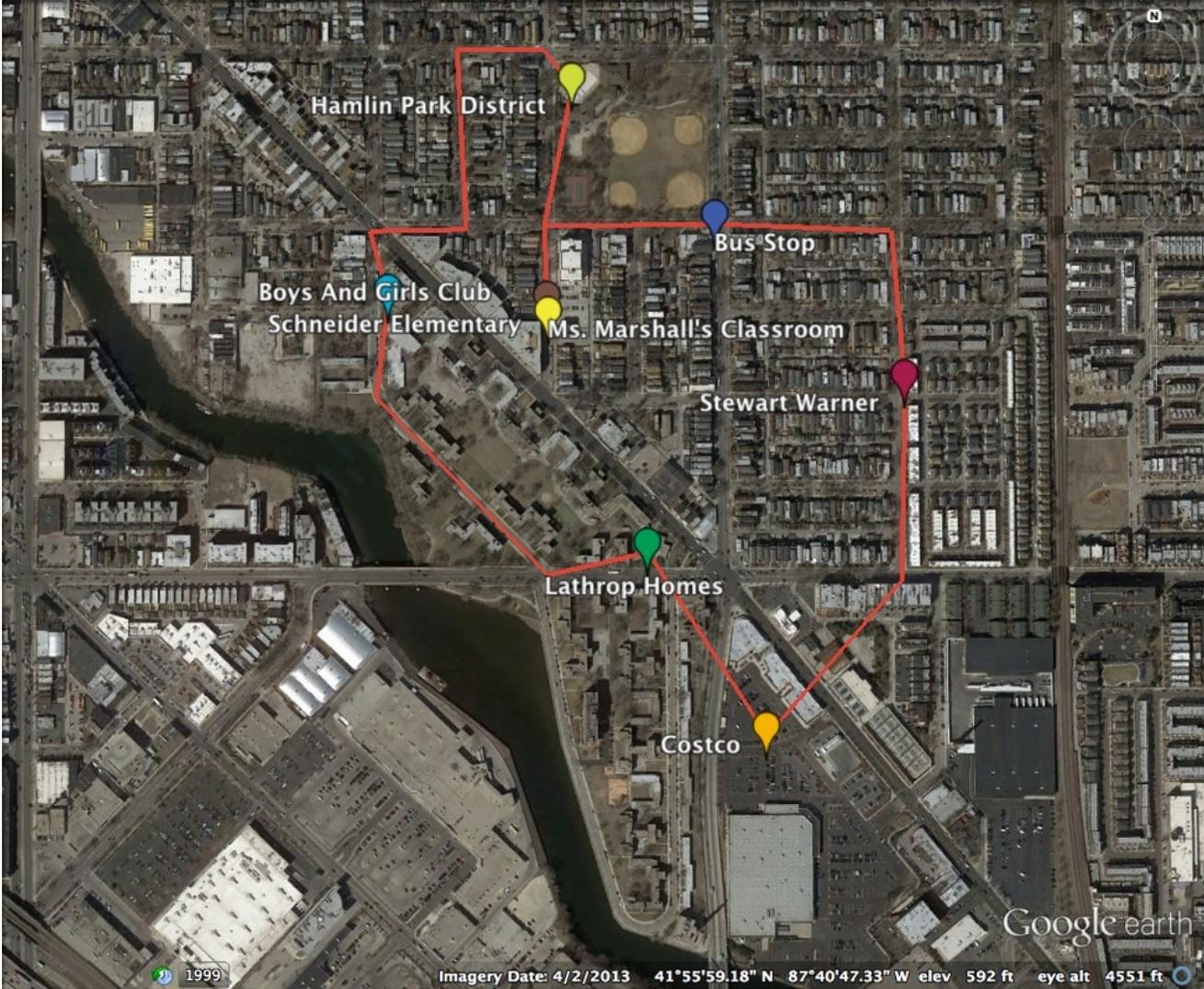
#### Grassroots Community Tour - Evaluation Rubric (high school +)



Major Goals	Highest Quality (3)	Good Quality (2)	Needs Work (1)	Pts.
<b>Authentic Interviews of Knowledgeable Community Voices</b>	Obtained 2-3 interviews that highlight the perspectives of active and relevant community members. Interviews capture clear historical knowledge and urgency of action in the area.	Obtained 1 interview that highlights the perspective of active and relevant community members with a good sense of the historical significance and urgency of action on the issue.	Key aspects are missing and/or there is no sense of the historical significance or urgency of action on the issue.	
<b>Sites of Community Struggles</b>	Produced well-written descriptions of 4 to 6 sites of historic community struggles that transform one's understanding of grassroots movements for social justice in the area.	Produced incomplete descriptions of 4 to 6 sites of historic community struggles with a clear sense of social justice and grassroots movements; or covered more trivial history.	Less than 4 sites are documented. Key aspects are missing and/or there is no sense of understanding of social justice and grassroots movements.	
<b>Sites of Current Youth Importance</b>	Produced well-written descriptions of 4 to 6 sites of current importance to youth that transform one's understanding of youth spaces and issues in the area and how to address them.	Produced incomplete descriptions of 4 to 6 sites of current importance to youth. Or, a clear sense of youth spaces and issues in the area and how to address them is missing.	Less than 4 sites are documented. Key aspects are missing and/or there is no sense of youth spaces and issues in the area and how to address them.	
<b>Image / Video Component</b>	Captured or collected at least 10 quality images/videos that highlight the character (strengths and struggles) of the community and fairly represents local sites, struggles, and people.	Captured or collected at least 7 quality images/videos that highlight the character (strengths and struggles) of the community and mostly represents local sites, struggles, and people.	Captured or collected at least 3 quality images/videos. Key aspects are missing and/or there is no sense of the character of the community.	
<b>Clear Map Design</b>	The map has a logical tour route with clear community boundaries shown. Map clearly designates all the locations of the grassroots events / spaces.	The map has a somewhat logical tour route with clear community boundaries but is lacking a clear sense of the locations of the grassroots events / spaces – or some of these are missing.	Key aspects are missing and/or there is no sense of where the grassroots events took place.	
<b>Community Tour Guide Production</b>	Guide includes all aspects (8 to 12 summaries, map, visuals, and info. on key community resources / organizations. It has a solid aesthetic and design and is simple to follow.	Guide includes most aspects (8 to 12 summaries, map, visuals, and info. on key community resources / organizations. It has a decent aesthetic and design and is simple to follow.	Key aspects are missing and/or there is no information on the locations or community resources.	
<b>Digital Organization of All Files</b>	All documents, PDFs, images, videos, and other digital files you've collected are well-organized in folders and easily accessible for others – esp. in preparation for web designers.	All documents, PDFs, images, videos, and other digital files with tour information are organized in folders with some items missing.	Key aspects are missing and/or there is no organization of digital files.	
<b>(Any other area of importance)</b>				

**Total Score:** /

The Roscoe Village Neighborhood Tour was developed by Alcott College Prep high school students. This tour highlights the struggle of the Lathrop Homes community as it faces forces of development and change. The virtual tour can be accessed via <http://roscoevillageneighborhood.weebly.com>



## **Roscoe Village Community Action Recommendations**

1. This community needs more open communication about community issues between ALL members of the community. Therefore, we recommend a community council that represents all members of the Roscoe Village community that work with one another to solve community issues in an equal way.

2. The Lathrop Homes should be renovated, but units should be reserved for only subsidized and public housing. There should be no market rate units in Lathrop. Furthermore, all current and displaced residents should have a right to return to the Lathrop Homes after redevelopment. Those residents evicted or barred from the Lathrop Homes due to CHA's one-strike policy should have their case reviewed, to see if they should be allowed back as well.

3. The Cotter Boys and Girls Club, which is in jeopardy of closing due to the planned redevelopment of the Lathrop Homes, must be included in the final plan for redevelopment, and must be remodeled.

4. Hamlin Park Community Center and Alcott College Prep should meet to rebuild a bond and relationship. Hamlin could be a wonderful resource for Alcott and a relationship is much needed. In order to show commitment, Alcott students are willing to create a contract that will set guidelines on how students use the community space.

5. Job creation in the community that offers employment to ALL members of the community is a must. There needs to be a collective effort to bring businesses into the community that offer fair compensation and benefits to their workers. A good example of this type of business is the Costco on Clybourn and Damen, which offers fair wages and quality benefits to many community members that work there.

## [Appendix 3: Transition Shop, Encounters Arts](#)

Multiple resources for the *Transition Shop* in Tooting are made available from Encounters Arts, including a final report, image gallery, video, and archived blog. <http://www.encounters-arts.org.uk/index.php/tooting-transition-shop-2012>



**SPECIAL EVENTS - all free. open to all.**

- SAT 12TH MAY 5 - 6PM CELEBRATION**  
TEA AND CAKES TO MARK THE ENDING OF THE TREASURING TOOTING DAY-LONG WALK AROUND TOOTING AND LAUNCH OF THE TOOTING TRANSITION SHOP
- MON 14TH MAY 6 - 8PM THE STORY OF STUFF**  
A FACILITATED CONVERSATION AROUND WHAT WE CONSUME.
- TUESDAY 15TH MAY 7-9PM: WHAT MAKES TRANSITION TOOTING TICK?**  
JOIN A TRANSITION TOOTING MEETING TO FIND OUT WHAT HAPPENS BEHIND THE SCENES.
- WED 16TH MAY 6 - 8PM THE TOOTING POUND**  
A FACILITATED WORKSHOP EXPLORING THE IDEA OF A LOCAL CURRENCY.
- THURS 17TH MAY 6 - 8PM I'LL SHOW YOU MINE**  
SHARE A PRACTICAL OR CREATIVE SKILL OF YOURS AND PICK UP A NEW ONE
- SAT 19TH MAY 12 - 2PM RECIPE SWAP AND FOOD SHARE**  
BRING IN A FAVOURITE RECIPE DISH AND TRY SOMEONE ELSE'S
- SAT 19TH MAY 6 - 8PM HANDMADE IN TOOTING**  
MAKE YOUR OWN SOUVENIR WITH HANDMADE IN TOOTING
- SUN 20TH MAY 2PM AND 4PM TOOTING STORIES**  
THE WORDS AND IMAGES COLLECTED IN THE SHOP PERFORMED IN THE SHOP
- SUN 20TH MAY 3-4 PM ARTS AND CREATIVITY IN TRANSITION**  
ARTISTS AND MAKERS EXPLORE HOW THE ARTS CAN CREATE RESILIENT, SUSTAINABLE LOCAL COMMUNITIES



**TRANSITION TOWN TOOTING** and participatory artists **Encounters** have teamed up to invite **YOU** to take part in re-imagining our world in the **TOOTING TRANSITION SHOP** as part of Wandsworth Arts festival. Nothing is for sale but all are welcome to exchange stories, ideas, skills and food. Add your most memorable moments to the Tooting map, top up your well-being, sow seeds of hope for the future, make your own souvenir of Tooting, and find out when the Tooting bees are coming...

**TOOTING TRANSITION SHOP** brought the Trashcatchers Carnival to the High Street in 2010 and are now setting up shop as part of a year long exploration of happiness and well-being in our lives. Encounters are collaborating to create their eighth shop in the UK, where people of all ages and cultures are invited to share what it's like to live now and imagine positive futures. Tooting Transition Shop has received funding from Wandsworth Council's Big Society and Cultural Wealth Fund and is part of the Wandsworth arts Festival. With special thanks to Shailesh Patel for use of the shop.

[www.transitiontowntooting.org](http://www.transitiontowntooting.org) [www.encounters-arts.org.uk](http://www.encounters-arts.org.uk)  
07970 011748



## Appendix 4: Cayce Unbound, Martha O’Bryan Center

### *Cayce Unbound* –Student-Created Exhibits Materials and Resources

#### **Program Objective:**

Provide cultural arts projects to Martha O’Bryan Center 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade THRIVE students that connect them to the larger creative community of East Nashville through the development of public exhibit projects and encourages exploration of diverse community experiences.

#### **Program Overview:**

Guest Artists, Musicians and Speakers will present creative or cultural content to students during the first session of each exhibit project. In following sessions, students will develop creative pieces exploring a community theme related to content presented in the first session. Exhibit projects will be included in a seasonal showcase at Martha O’Bryan Center, as well as placed on public display in the local community.

Participating students will be split into two groups, 5<sup>th</sup> -6<sup>th</sup> grade and 7<sup>th</sup> -8<sup>th</sup> grade, that will meet once a week for 1.5 hr on separate days. Guest instructors are expected to commit to attending at least 1 week of Cayce Unbound (two paid sessions), providing content to each of the student groups. Additional instruction sessions maybe required dependent on student projects and will be identified ahead of time. Guest instructors are strongly encouraged to participate in the closing exhibit showcase at Martha O’Bryan Center.

#### **Fall 2014 Unit Theme: Me, We & Creativity in East Nashville**

Exhibit projects will concentrate on the role of creativity in a student’s life- as individual expression and as a part of a community. Guest Artists and Musicians will introduce themselves, their work and the role of creative expression in their lives, addressing the following 3 areas:

- What/who inspired you to be creative when you were a student?
- How do you incorporate creativity/art/music into your professional/adult life?
- How does creativity connect you to your community?

## **Sample Session Lesson Plans**

**September : “My Creative Environment” Exhibit**

**Guest Artist: Vicki Terry Jett- visual artist, nontraditional & household items**

**Project: Collage, using Cayce and East Nashville images with nontraditional materials**

15 minutes of transition time is built into each 1.5hr session. Activity blocks reflect actual instruction time.

### **Session 1**

-Introductions (10 min)

-Student introductions (15)

-Guest Artist introduction (15 min)

-Art Display & Discussion -How does she choose items, how are these significant to her, why is it meaningful to her, what story does it tell? (35 min)

-Wrap up, Students instructed to bring in 2 nontraditional items to use in an art piece (this can be anything and selected the day of session (10 min)

### **Session 2**

-Students present and discuss their selected nontraditional materials- Why did you pick these? (15 minutes)\*

-Begin Collage Activity (1 hr)

Supplies: 16x20 canvasses (1 per student), local images, acrylic paints, brushes, mixing pallets, Modge Podge gloss finish, glue, crayons, markers, colored pencils, etc., jumbo index cards

\*students without items will be allotted time to select nontraditional materials available to them in the classroom

### **Session 3**

-Students complete collage projects (30 min)

-Discussion of public display and local host business (15 min)

-Students interpretive text exercise for collage display (30 min)

**CAYCE UNBOUND** is a pilot program at Martha O’Bryan Center connecting the community of East Nashville through cultural arts projects. THRIVE art students in 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades have worked with local artists to create their own art pieces exploring creative expression as individuals and as community.

Fall session was supported by funding from Metro Arts, and partnerships with Unbound Arts, CultureQuest Workshops, and Fannie’s House of Music. Student work will also be exhibited at local businesses.



**Rob Betts** is a spoken word artist. Students created a graffiti banner as a group, inspired by the power of words.



**Vicki Jett Terri** is a visual artist who uses nontraditional materials from nature and her surroundings. Students created canvasses using only glue with items like beads, buttons, chalk, seeds, ribbon, and plants. They used a map of East Nashville as inspiration.



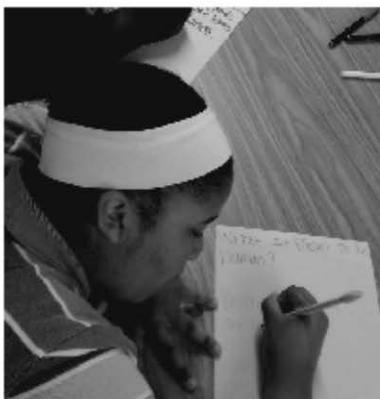
**Matt Moody** is a local musician. **Mandy Peitz Moody** is a painter who bases paintings on his songs. Students created drawings based on music they selected and used paint to interpret moods and emotions on canvasses.



**CAYCE UNBOUND** is a pilot program at Martha O'Bryan Center connecting the community of East Nashville through cultural arts projects. THRIVE art students in 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th grades have worked with local artists and instructors to create their own art pieces exploring creative expression as individuals and as community.

Spring session was supported by funding from Humanities TN, and partnerships with Unbound Arts, The Porch Writers Collective and teaching artist Camilla Spadafino at Nashville School of Arts.

Self-portrait projects represent the interests and aspirations of students– from fashion (MK Michael Kors and Nike) to sports, reading, and desire to study law. Additional student work will be exhibited at local businesses.



STUDENT SELF-PORTRAIT PROJECTS AND COLORING SHEET ACTIVITY CONNECT STUDENTS AND ADULTS IN THE COMMUNITY THROUGH USE OF SHARED ACTIVITY AND SOCIAL OBJECTS



*Cayce Unbound - The Way We Worked* Smithsonian exhibit

“The Way We Worked” Community Announcement

In partnership with The Smithsonian Museums on Main Street program and Humanities TN, Martha O'Bryan Center hosts **The Way We Worked** exhibit May 9th-June 13th. All events and activities are FREE + OPEN to the public.

The exhibit is an interactive retrospective with images and materials from the National Archives of how work has changed, and contributed to our lives and identity. Local stories from Nashville and the community are weaved throughout with the opportunity to share your own!



What was your first job? What is your dream job? What if you *didn't* have to work? What if you *can't* work? What are different types of meaningful work? What challenges and opportunities do workers in Nashville face...?

*Work* makes up a lot of who we are as individuals and a community- join us in learning, and talking, more about it!

**Exhibition Opening Saturday, May 9th, 11 a.m.-3 p.m.**

11 a.m. - Opening Reception

1-2 p.m.- Belcourt mobile cinema screening of Nashville DocuJournal short films followed by Q+A with filmmakers

**Continuing Exhibit Hours thru June 13th**

Mon-Fri 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Sat 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

**Docent led tours for adults and children available, contact [jrye@marthaobryan.org](mailto:jrye@marthaobryan.org)**

Additional events + activities to be announced

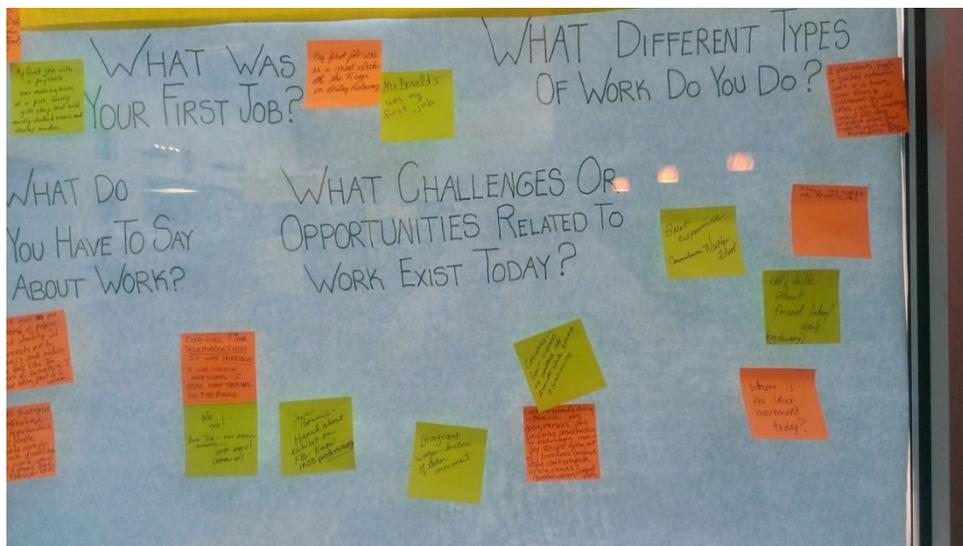




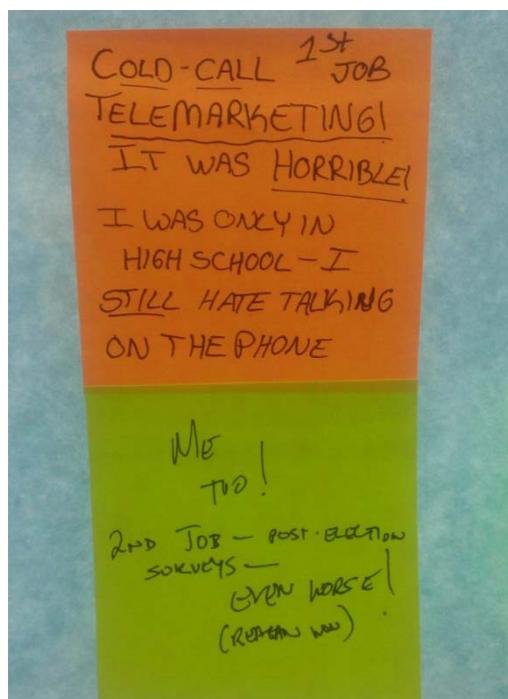
**THE WAY WE WORKED EXHIBIT ON DISPLAY IN THE MARTHA O'BRYAN CENTER LOBBY**



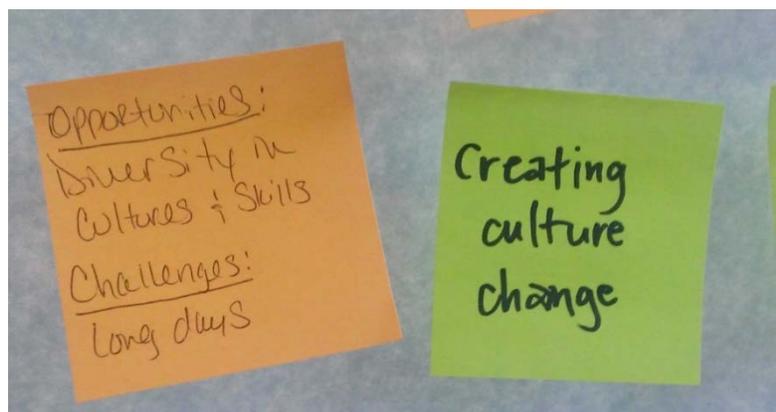
**AN EXISTING MOBC TIMELINE MURAL BECAME PART OF THE SMITHSONIAN EXHIBIT**



**PARTICIPATORY QUESTION + ANSWER BOARDS**



**WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST JOB? ANONYMOUS POSTS FIND COMMON GROUND**



**WHAT CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES DO WORKERS FACE TODAY? CULTURE, CHANGE, AND DIVERSITY WERE COMMON THEMES RELATED TO THE FUTURE OF WORK**



**STUDENT SELF-PORTRAITS ON DISPLAY ADJACENT TO THE SMITHSONIAN EXHIBIT INCLUDE DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES OF “WORK” AND PROVIDE OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUTH TO CONTRIBUTE EXHIBIT CONTENT**