

ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THE 510 AND THE 93: THE INTERSECTION OF ARTISTS, URBAN EVOLUTION, AND PRESERVATION IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA AND SAINT-DENIS, FRANCE
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Urban areas need artists and cultural assets to thrive, and through adaptive reuse of historic buildings for artists, cities can both retain the histories and cultures of their people and provide solutions to gentrification, displacement, blight, and inequities in how cities develop. While arts and culture cannot mitigate all these issues, they can help to create a connective tissue among people, a connection that can make communities stronger and more inclusive. I found that it is imperative to meet the arts sector's needs for safe, functional, affordable and stable spaces to live and work. Historic building stock (industrial, commercial, residential) can be adapted to meet those needs in an equitable way, while also helping to redevelop underutilized urban neighborhoods.

This treatise examined the intersection of these components in two similar cities on the margins, Saint-Denis, France and Oakland, California, which provided a cross-cultural opportunity to consider new approaches and perspectives to the challenges both countries face at a time of particularly polarizing global unrest. The COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, the

climate crisis, and social justice issues are affecting how we live and how we relate to each other in a civil society, underlining the need to strengthen the places that people gather, a role that arts and culture fulfills. Progress in both countries requires joining financial resources, decision-making power, and the built environment in a sustainable way in partnership with artists and residents. A top-down, bureaucratic approach needs to be replaced by community collaboration.

I made recommendations that address this critical urban need in a variety of ways through real estate and urban development models, funding models, historic preservation policies, and methods to better value the arts in public spaces. For example, cities can provide financial incentives to convert unused office space into artist studios, apartments, galleries, or performing arts venues. They can embed artists in municipal preservation offices so that local preservation policies can account for the needs of the cultural sector. Cities can create cultural/preservation zones to provide equitable capital and operating support for hyper-local arts engagements that revitalize marginalized communities through the built environment. By forging new links with each other while imagining in tandem new ways of equitable and creative city-building, both the French *banlieues* and diverse American cities will thrive.

Subject Headings: Artists, arts and culture, humanities, urban, city, creative placemaking, placeknowing, placekeeping, placetaking, culture-knowing, culture-keeping, adaptive reuse, *banlieues*, suburbs, Saint-Denis, Oakland

THE 510 AND THE 93: THE INTERSECTION OF
ARTISTS, URBAN EVOLUTION, AND PRESERVATION
IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA AND SAINT-DENIS, FRANCE

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PREFACE

The experiences that led me to this treatise are firmly embedded in my past. Growing up in a town of 2,000 people in rural Central Wisconsin, I was fascinated by two things with which I had no personal experience – cities and Europe. A mid-1960s cross-country road trip at age seven with my family of seven in a station wagon, towing an Airstream travel trailer behind us, showed me the open spaces of the United States. I also remember my first experience of the cities we visited on that trip, including Los Angeles and San Francisco – which together with Disneyland comprised my introduction to California. The only foreign language available in my small town's high school was French, which I studied all four years and in which I would also minor in college accompanying my Economics major. At the age of eighteen, I joined a group of students from across Wisconsin on my first trip abroad, a visit to various cities in France plus a week's stay with a family in Colombes, a *banlieue* to the north of Paris. When I lived in England for a decade in the 1990s, frequent trips to Paris solidified my interest in and connection to the city and its environs.

Over the past four years, I have traveled regularly to Paris for both personal and professional reasons. My daughter moved there to live and work in January 2018, and later that year she and I purchased a tiny apartment in one of the three oldest buildings in Paris. This *bâtiment* from the fourteenth century, located on Rue François Miron in the Marais neighborhood and a popular photo stop for tourists, currently provides my daughter with a home and will offer me a perch in the future. On a flight to Paris to see her in 2019, I struck up a conversation with a young woman next to me who turned out to be an intern at the Cultural

Services of the French Embassy in San Francisco. She mentioned a project featuring Oakland, California and Saint-Denis, France, and that was the beginning of a partnership that has become both a deeply personal and professional odyssey. It was as a member of this partnership in October 2019, while I stood on the construction site of what will eventually become Le Pleyel metro station in Saint-Denis (a major hub of the new Grand Paris Express expansion of the Métro commuter rail system) that I envisioned this treatise. I was there as part of a seven-person learning expedition team with the Oakland/Saint-Denis Cooperation Project, a joint project initiated by the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in San Francisco (now Villa Albertine San Francisco) and the French-American Cultural Society, with additional partners including California Humanities, the nonprofit public humanities organization I lead, which makes grants and deliver programs across the state to amplify the ideas, histories, and voices of the people of California.

As part of this expedition, I participated in site visits to cultural venues in Saint-Denis in October 2019. I also visited Saint-Denis on my own in February 2020, and, after the pause in international travel caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, in June and October 2021, and February 2022. I will continue to do so in the future when possible, public health restrictions permitting. In the meantime, I remain in close contact with French colleagues in greater Paris who are assisting with my research virtually, and California Humanities remains a partner of the Oakland/Saint-Denis project as the latter continues to expand.

On the home front, I have lived in the Bay Area since mid-2007 (and in Oakland since 2015) and worked in the cultural sector in the UK and California for twenty-seven years. I have extensive experience of the role that arts, culture, and the humanities play across the state of California and beyond, as well as the funding mechanisms that sustain cultural assets and the

built environment around them, and that experience has helped inform my thinking. The connections that my arts and culture career has afforded me over the years to leaders and practitioners in the cultural sector have also been a critical source of information and guidance.

The melding of the personal and professional in this study has required me to step back from time to time to regain perspective of the bigger picture beyond this treatise. My aim is be a thoughtful and fair interpreter as I share what I have learned and make recommendations, while respecting the efforts of the many artists, community leaders, and residents who help make our cities thrive. What follows are my personal perspectives, and not those of my work institution or the Oakland/Saint-Denis Cooperation Project partners.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us...

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

The famous opening sentence of Charles Dickens's 1859 novel *A Tale of Two Cities* sets the tone for the book's iconic backdrops in Paris and London during the French Revolution. This treatise is also a tale of two cities. Oakland, California and Saint-Denis, France are considered to be on the margins of their more iconic neighboring cities, San Francisco and Paris, and exemplify varied reactions to the intersections between artistic and cultural life, preservation of historic structures, and urban policies and initiatives in response to rapid changes. I believe that the intersection of these three topics is what activates a place, brings a city to life:

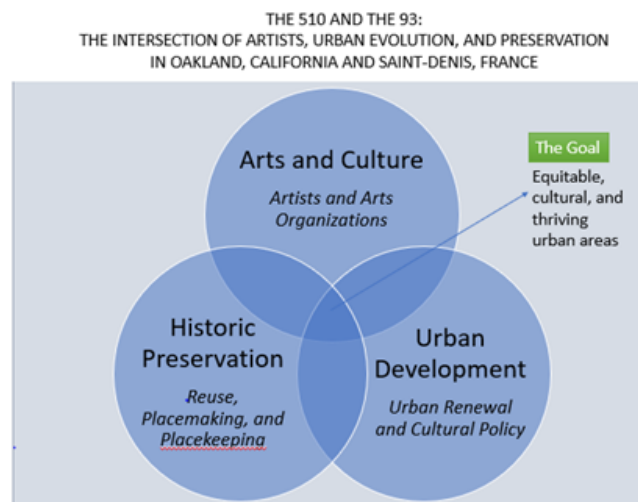


Figure 1: Venn diagram illustrating the thesis. [Source: author.]

My professional career has focused on supporting the arts and humanities as a means by which people and communities express and understand history, culture, and each other. By lifting up the stories of the past and present residents in urban communities, by amplifying the voices that are seldom heard, by connecting those stories and voices to the historic layers of the built environment that evolve and change over time, we can learn how to develop cities that will better serve more people. We are stronger as a society and a democracy when we can live together more equitably and creatively.

This treatise will explore why urban areas (no matter where they are located) benefit from artists and cultural assets, and how, by preserving historic buildings for creative reuse by artists, cities can retain the histories and cultures of their people while simultaneously providing innovative urban policy solutions to gentrification, blight, and rapid urban evolution. In this treatise, the term “urban policy” refers to the cluster of decisions that cities make, based on laws, government policies, and social agreements, with input from its inhabitants and other key players in the development of urban areas.

But why does this exploration matter? I have been deeply cynical as part of the preservation field because of what I perceive as a lack of diversity in who gets to share their histories. Now the critique has shifted somewhat – and perhaps become clearer – in the context of the current COVID-19 pandemic, racial tensions and widespread and sustained Black Lives Matter protests, calls to reform the police in urban areas, and an increase in catastrophic natural disasters like wildfires and hurricanes exacerbated by climate change. The treatise’s two example cities are already seeing the effects of these crises: protests took place in Oakland’s city center in response to a brutal police murder of a Black man, George Floyd, in Minneapolis in May 2020; buildings and vehicles were severely damaged in the melee. This violence gave way to

colorful protest murals with which local artists covered many of the damaged buildings. Thick smoke from the wildfires in Northern California created extremely unhealthy air quality conditions in San Francisco Bay Area for extended periods in the past two years, and experts warn that the fires will be an ongoing problem. Saint-Denis has been grappling with similar issues, experiencing protests against police brutality and racism, with some echoes of the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States. Located in one of the poorest government *départements* in France, the poverty rate in Saint-Denis is at 37 percent, according to APUR, the French urban agency (compared to a 16.4 percent poverty rate in Oakland).¹ The city also lies at the epicenter of the pandemic in Grand Paris, with a high population of essential hospital workers living there and population density and small living spaces making remote work, school and social distancing a challenge. According to Seine-Saint-Denis MP Alexis Corbière “We are locked down in our inequality. The virus has just amplified the problems the *banlieue* has had for a long time. It has revealed how wide and deep the social fracture really is.”²

The roles that race and ethnicity play as these cities continue to develop will require urban policymaking that respects the history of past and current residents but provides a more equitable way of life. The arts are at the center of many of the movements for social and economic justice currently growing and are well-placed to be part of those solutions by “building

¹ “Oakland, California Population 2022,” World Population Review, accessed March 30, 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/oakland-ca-population>.

² Kim Willsher and Caroline Harrap, “In a Paris *banlieue*, coronavirus amplifies years of inequality,” *The Guardian*, April 25, 2020.

a new world within the shell of the old,” as the 1905 preamble to the Constitution of the Industrial Workers of the World states.³

The evolution of the places where we live, both urban and non-urban, is beginning to accelerate more rapidly than we could have imagined prior to 2020. Office buildings in city centers across the world sit empty as employees work from home. People are recognizing that they can eliminate their daily commutes and can work from – and relocate to – places with more space, less congestion, and cheaper price tags. At the same time, cultural institutions are suffering from indefinite closures of their venues, historic preservation appears to be in stasis, arts organizations struggle to bring audiences together safely, and artists are finding it difficult to support themselves through their art.

But, in the end, this treatise’s central exploration is about humanity: how regular people come together to make cities; the ways in which artists activate history, culture, buildings, and place; how the burgeoning equity perspective we are seeing develop in real time amplifies many different voices; and understanding that all of these forces can intersect to, I believe, make our collective lives better.

Treatise Topic

Urban areas need artists and cultural assets, and by preserving historic buildings for creative reuse by artists (placemaking), cities can both retain the histories and cultures of their people (placekeeping) and provide innovative and creative solutions to gentrification, blight, and rapid urban evolution.

³ Industrial Workers of the World, “Preamble to the IWW Constitution,” *Industrial Workers of the World*, 1905, <https://iww.org.uk/preamble/>.

Urban Development and Historic Preservation in the US and France

But first, one must ask, what is a city? The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the term as “an inhabited place of greater size, population, or importance than a town or village.”⁴ In his 1938 book *The Culture of Cities*, American urbanist Lewis Mumford states that a city is “the point of maximum concentration for the power and culture of a community.”⁵ French historian Fernand Braudel considered cities as exchange multipliers, due to competition and negotiation around how space is used, rapid innovation and growth, and the need to adapt behavior accordingly in order to live collectively and in proximity.⁶ While cities throughout the world have arisen in different ways and been affected by a variety of political and economic factors, one can consider each of them in terms of population, the concentration of buildings, labor markets, education, environment, transportation, links between diverse groups, social issues, education, and culture.

Since World War II, cities in the United States have primarily evolved as a result of government influence. Suburban sprawl arose here in large part because of the 1956 Interstate Highway Act and the proliferation of car culture, as well as urban housing policies affecting financing, downtown redevelopment and public housing projects, and the de-industrialization of urban centers. Similar forces have shaped the post-war urban transformation in France, including new freeways to accommodate automobiles, such as the Boulevard Périphérique around Paris in the footprint of the city’s former defensive wall, and the development of new suburbs beyond.

⁴ Merriam-webster.com, s.v. “City,” accessed June 7, 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/city>.

⁵ Lewis Mumford, *The Culture of Cities* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, 1938), 104-107.

⁶ Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th–18th Century*, trans Sian Reynolds (New York: Harper and Row, 1992), 581.

This leads to an additional question: “what is a suburb or *banlieue*?” In both places, the answers revolve around power, race, class, and historical attempts to try to control and isolate “the other”. Bluntly stated, the American suburbs were a way for white middle class America to flee from people of other races and lower classes for neighborhoods that they perceived to be far from the dangers and the industrial noise and pollution of urban life. “No one with options,” according the academic Kenneth T. Jackson, “wanted to live in close proximity to important rail lines or to heavy industry.”⁷ Architectural and urban historian Mitchell Schwarzer articulates this further: “In most places the downtown became a residential zone of last resort, housing the poor and working class (and increasingly Blacks) in cheap apartments, boarding houses, and residential hotels.”⁸ The *banlieue*, as Alain Rustenholz states, is more than just a place on the outskirts of the city center. Over the years, it has been the “other side” of the fortified walls of medieval Paris; it has been where the factories have been built; it has been a place for the underclass; and now it is the place where large immigrant populations live in often neglected and segregated neighborhoods.⁹ It is worth underscoring the contrast here: in the U.S., suburban development patterns abandoned non-whites in urban centers, while in France those patterns pushed people of color to the outskirts of cities. In Oakland, for example, more affluent white neighborhoods have historically clustered “up in the hills”, while the flatter part of the city adjacent to the urban core has been home to “the others”; this remains the case in the current

⁷ Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 69.

⁸ Mitchell Schwarzer, “Downtown: A Short History of American Urban Exceptionalism,” *Places Journal* (February 16, 2016), <https://doi.org/10.22269/160216>.

⁹ Alain Rustenholtz, *De la Banlieue Rouge au Grand Paris: D’Ivry À Clichy et de Saint-Ouen À Charenton* (Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2015), 2-11.

make-up of the city. This treatise treats Oakland and Saint-Denis separate and independent from San Francisco and Paris, with their own histories, identities, and sense of belonging. They could also be considered suburbs or *banlieues*, in similar symbiotic relationships – Oakland and Saint-Denis need their more elite neighbors, and their neighbors need them.

In France, while major rebuilding was required in World War II-devastated areas throughout the country, and the government razed some working-class neighborhoods in urban areas to make way for high-rise housing projects, the government also developed historic preservation policies on a national scale to preserve France’s historic cultural identity. By contrast, the approach towards historic preservation in the U.S. has been more decentralized, with, with most policy unfolding at the federal and local levels and states acting primarily as implementers, with only occasional state-level programs.

Crucially, the historic preservation and creative reuse of older buildings has provided affordable and suitable studio, performance, and living space for artists in urban cores across the globe. One of the tensions that regularly emerges in the wake of rapid urban changes, fueled by rising income inequality, is the shortage of affordable space for artists and cultural organizations. The World Cities Culture Forum has identified this as “one of the biggest threats to culture” in their report *Making Space for Culture*. The lack of viable artist space, the report continues, causes creative people to move to more affordable, less urban areas, and greatly reduces the availability of “performance, exhibition, creation, production and administrative spaces where creative people work.”¹⁰ As an example, *Making Spaces* cites the statistic that London has lost 30 percent of its artist studios in the past eight years.

¹⁰ World Cities Culture Forum, *Making Space for Culture: Handbook for City Leaders* (2017), 7.

Urbanist Jane Jacobs, in her seminal book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, devotes a chapter to “the need for aged buildings.” Jacobs makes the case that not only are cities comprised of only new buildings much more expensive to construct and maintain, but that cities also need a mixture of new and old buildings to cultivate a diversity of use and occupants, including what she calls “the unformalized feeders of the arts” such as studios, galleries, and music and arts stores.¹¹

The Role of Artists in Urban Areas

Every city is made up of people, their stories, and their cultures, and artists and cultural institutions’ penchant for expressing and drawing out those stories is paramount to a city’s identity and ability to attract workers, tourism and economic investment. Richard Florida, author of the 2004 bestseller *Rise of the Creative Class*, identified American cities that had the right mix of talent, tolerance, and technology to attract a creative class of artists, creators, and entrepreneurs who spurred economic growth.¹² Lewis Mumford, more than sixty years earlier, espoused the need to mobilize communal action to create a “sounder human foundation”¹³ on which to rebuild the urban world.

Artists are generally community-builders, helping to promote inclusivity and a sense of belonging, and creating spaces for expression and understanding. They can be catalysts of change, enabling people to envision unlimited possibilities for their world. In October 2019 in

¹¹ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 188.

¹² Oliver Wainwright, “‘Everything is Gentrification Now’ but Richard Florida isn’t Sorry,” *The Guardian*, October 26, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/oct/26/gentrification-richard-florida-interview-creative-class-new-urban-crisis>.

¹³ Mumford, *The Culture of Cities*, Preface to the 1970 Edition, x.

Aubervilliers, France, Plaine Commune (one of ten urban centers created for the development of Greater Paris and made up of nine towns to the north of the city center), convened a conference entitled *Les Rencontres #Culturelaville*. The conference, which I attended with the Oakland delegation, brought together artists, cultural organizations, and urban policymakers to discuss how arts and culture can nourish the fabric of a city. One fundamental concept of the many offered that day was the idea that artistic processes can help to ground an urban project in several ways. For example, art can function as an *ancree* (anchor). It can also:

<i>Laisser une trace</i>	Leave something behind
<i>Mettre la réalité en histoire</i>	Bring history alive
<i>Donner un sentiment de fierté</i>	Provide a sense of pride
<i>Créer des repères</i>	Create benchmarks and points of reference

Table 1: Functions of art in an urban setting. [Source: Author's notes from *Les Rencontres #Culturelaville* conference.]

At the end of the conference, Patrick Braouezec, President of Plaine Commune and former mayor of Saint-Denis, clearly delineated the intersection of arts and urbanism: “I often say that a city must be made up of six areas of expertise: those of the elected official, citizen, designer, manager, researcher, and the artist. I am convinced that the transversality of these approaches is essential, not necessarily in equal parts, because there are primary responsibilities. And I believe in the strength of compromise. The city of tomorrow will be cultural or will not exist!”¹⁴

¹⁴ “Territoire de la culture et de la création: culture la ville!” *Plaine Commune*, October 2019, <https://plainecommune.fr/culturelaville/>. Author’s translation.

Two Cities + Two Artist Venues = Two Case Studies

Oakland, California and Saint-Denis, France: two urban areas 5,550 miles apart, but close in spirit. Granted, the cities' pasts diverge in certain significant ways: one is the birthplace of the Black Panther Party in 1966, the other the final resting place for all but three French kings from the tenth century to 1789. Yet similarities between the two cities abound. Both sit close to, but infrastructurally separate from more iconic cities. A bridge across the San Francisco Bay divides Oakland from San Francisco, and a major freeway (the Boulevard Périphérique) divides Saint-Denis from Paris. These two cities are home to diverse populations, including a large number of immigrants (both can claim 125 or more languages spoken within their borders) that suffer from poverty, violence, and poor reputations, and in both places major gentrification is pushing long-time residents further away. Race, ethnicity, and class are central to the identities of each city and are a source of both pride and social unrest. And, critically for this treatise, Saint-Denis and Oakland are both hotbeds of creativity, with rich artistic communities that draw support from different sources in each country but that in both cases improve the local quality of life. By considering two similar but different cities, how the historic building assets are used in each, the needs of both local cultural communities, and the current cultural sector frameworks of placemaking and placekeeping, we can better understand how urban policy can more effectively reflect local needs.

In order to consider the preservation and political challenges facing artist venues in Saint-Denis and Oakland, I have focused upon two case studies, one in each city, conducting primary and secondary research at each site. These case studies serve as proxies for the challenges that many artist spaces and cultural venues in both countries are grappling with in the

face of rapid urban evolution. Subthemes that are part of this research include the impact of transportation, population and diversity, gentrification, history, government, major planned and unanticipated events (such as the global pandemic and racial justice protests, and 2024's Olympic and Paralympic games in Paris), and community engagement on each venue.

Research into the case studies included site visits, discussions with stakeholders such as venue owners or managers, artists that use – or have used - the venues, and representatives of local government. It also included a review of secondary materials related to the venues and their local areas. I examined each case study in terms of the same set of critical factors affecting these two venues:

1. Each building's history and any significance or major preservation issues;
2. Current use of the venue, including ownership, management and funding models to sustain it;
3. How artists utilize (or have utilized) the venue and have done so in the past;
4. Any restoration or renovations that have been made to accommodate the artists or the general public who want to engage with the artists' work;
5. How each building functions as a space for artists;
6. Plans for future use of the venue;
7. The political milieu in which each building operates;
8. How the global events of 2020 onward are changing the venues and their neighborhoods.

Theoretical Questions and Analytical Methods

Throughout, this treatise provides definitions of key terms and concepts in order to provide boundaries to expansive areas of study and practice. This includes a succinct way of defining terms related to urbanism, suburbs and *banlieues*, and the key tenets of placemaking and

placekeeping; the latter two terms, for example, do not have a French equivalent. English/French translations are included where necessary; some terms have very close counterparts, while others are less directly related.

The cultural sector has produced numerous definitions of placemaking (a practice also espoused by urbanist Jane Jacobs). For example, Artplace, a ten-year, \$150 million now-shuttered consortium of funders in the United States that supported the intersection of artists and urban areas, framed the term thusly: “We believe that traditional community planning and development has not always led to communities being as equitable, healthy and sustainable as they could be. We believe that the arts and culture sector have necessary tools, knowledge, and skills that can be deployed in partnership with the community planning and development sectors to improve community outcomes. We refer to this intersection as creative placemaking.”¹⁵ Artscape in Toronto concurs: “Creative placemaking is an evolving field of practice that intentionally leverages the power of the arts, culture and creativity to serve a community’s interest while driving a broader agenda for change, growth and transformation in a way that also builds character and quality of place.”¹⁶

However, I view this term as potentially culturally tone-deaf. Who gets to decide what is “made” in a place? What if the new things being made are not meeting the needs of marginalized, underserved communities? This brings us to a newer term, placekeeping, which on the surface seems to acknowledge cultural assets and histories that are already in place, without assuming that it’s necessary to remake, expunge, or build something new. Americans for the

¹⁵ “About ArtPlace,” *ArtPlace*, accessed June 7, 2020, <https://www.artplaceamerica.org/about/introduction>.

¹⁶ “Approaches to Creative Placemaking,” Artscape, Accessed June 7, 2020, <https://www.artscapediy.org/approaches-to-creative-placemaking/>.

Arts, for example, considers placekeeping as a tool to use for safeguarding and strengthening local arts and culture communities after emergencies and disasters: “Organizing a self-help emergency action network to supplement and coordinate with the existing disaster management system is a way to foster community cohesion and connectedness—important generally and invaluable when a crisis strikes.”¹⁷ In the words of Roberto Bedoya, head of Cultural Affairs for the City of Oakland, placekeeping is “not just preserving the facade of the building but also keeping the cultural memories associated with a locale alive, keeping the tree once planted in the memory of a loved one lost in a war and keeping the tenants who have raised their family in an apartment. It is a call to hold on to the stories told on the streets by the locals, and to keep the sounds ringing out in a neighborhood populated by musicians who perform at the corner bar or social hall.”¹⁸

In considering placemaking versus placekeeping, I co-opt a term from international adoptions - culture keeping – which is an apt context to draw from in a treatise about urban areas that welcome immigrants from many places. This term is currently used to describe the process by which an adoptive parent, usually a mother, integrates a child’s culture of origin into his/her new life. Perhaps this “both/and” way of thinking – yes, the past was important, and how does it play a central role in the present and future – is where the intersection of preservation, artists, and urban development can most effectively sit. If we consider historic buildings - and their preservation - as the foundation of a framework, and artists as the catalyst that bring urban areas

¹⁷ Amy Schwartzman, *Cultural Placekeeping Guide: How to Create a Network for Local Emergency Action*, National Coalition for Arts Preparedness and Emergency Response, 2017, <https://intranet.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/legislation-policy/naappd/cultural-placekeeping-guide-how-to-create-a-network-for-local-emergency-action>.

¹⁸ Roberto Bedoya, “Spatial Justice: Rasquachification, Race and the City,” *Creative Times*, September 15, 2014, <https://creativetimereports.org/2014/09/15/spatial-justice-rasquachification-race-and-the-city/>.

to life, how do the two forces of place and people work in tandem within this framework? How do they help to define a place, and to inform urban development and policy without getting in each other's way?

And lastly, it's important to mention an additional entry to this lexicon of place. "Placeknowing," a concept espoused by Bedoya to mean a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of a place, marks another intersection between the past, present and future. As he explains, "It's all about creating an agency for the love of the locale, the inhabitants of the locale and place, knowing it's also understanding the politics of a locale. So placeknowing is asking you to really think about that river that runs through the park and why is it there and how many rivers, how many streets are paved over a river? We don't know that. Well, maybe we should know that."¹⁹

A series of interviews that I conducted in both countries provide diverse perspectives essential to understanding the intentions of policy and practice, and the assumptions, tensions and opportunities at play in city-making. In both the Saint-Denis and Oakland regions, the interviewees include real estate developers, artists, cultural leaders and practitioners, city and local government representatives, social entrepreneurs, consulate staff, transportation specialists, urbanists, and scholars. Questions I asked include: why are artist voices important? Are they in touch with the communities in which they reside and work? Are they including and amplifying the stories around them? What are their physical and spatial needs, and do historic buildings meet or hinder them? What must exist for an artists' space to be possible at a given time? How interested are urban planners in actual listening to the interest and needs of local residents,

¹⁹ Anjolie Rao, "To Know a Place: A Conversation with Roberto Bedoya," *Just Place*, accessed January 2, 2022, <https://www.justplace.us/bedoya>.

including artists, and how willing are they to incorporate what they hear in their planning? How will urban developers address the changes that are being accelerated by the events of 2020 and 2021?

Organization of Treatise

The treatise is organized into five chapters. I use a compare and contrast model of analysis in order to uncover effective practices, share lessons learned about the impact of artists on historic preservation and urban development, and consider how key people involved in urban evolution can benefit from listening to diverse voices, particularly at times of global unrest and uncertainty.

Following this first chapter, the second chapter lays out the role of artists in urban environments. They create works of visual and performing art, yes, but they also translate, interpret and express local history, culture, and community voices. They can provide a safe space for residents, but also shake things up, get people thinking, catalyze change. They are storytellers, preserving the past in the face of rapid urban evolution that can obliterate the important context left by those before us. They promote belonging and a sense of community, not unlike the shared community values embedded in popular, long-standing, and recognized historic properties. They activate a spectrum of spaces, from buildings to public plazas and parks, and provide them with a purpose while also connecting them more fully to the communities that use them. Artists are an important part of placemaking,

The third chapter provides an overview of historic preservation policies and practice in the United States and France. Resource allocation is very different in the two places, as is the role of local and non-local governments, as well as the way in which public opinion can sway decision-making around what is preserved and why. In April of 2019 I stood with thousands of

others on the banks of the Seine and watched as the Notre-Dame de Paris cathedral burned before our eyes and heard the stories of the people in the crowd around me. In the aftermath, I also witnessed the huge outpouring of support from the French government and private supporters for this iconic building. What would that same event look like under U.S. policies? This chapter will consider case studies of less iconic buildings in both countries to provide a balanced overview. It also delves into government initiatives and practices that address (or exacerbate) the major development issues in suburbs/*banlieues*. This includes a discussion of redlining in the United States, a practice of discriminatory lending—technically illegal but nonetheless still happening today – particularly in the context of preventing people of color from purchasing homes in suburban neighborhoods, thereby relegating them to live in urban centers. In France, some of the Paris *banlieues* have been labeled “sensitive urban zones” or “priority neighborhoods” and provided with government interventions in housing, education, policing, and other issues for decades. This urban renewal approach has been given some potential new life and new resources by President Macron but is not without its problems.²⁰

The fourth chapter introduces Oakland and Saint-Denis as proxies for other urban areas seeking to connect the dots between historic preservation, artists, and urban development. This chapter also includes an overview of the Oakland/Saint-Denis Cooperation Project, the inspiration for this treatise, and the initial learnings that have come from that partnership project. I conducted research into the past and present of Oakland and Saint-Denis, focusing primarily on two case studies of artist spaces: Le 6b in Saint-Denis and Shadetree in Oakland. The chapter describes the cities’ histories, cultures, and past urban development, while also outlining the

²⁰ Tanvi Misra, “The Othered Paris,” *Bloomberg CityLab*, November 16, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-11-16/the-othered-paris-of-the-banlieues>.

rapid urban evolution that both locations are undergoing due to gentrification, the Bay Area tech boom and the expansion of the Métro and the 2024 Olympics in Paris. The important aspect of this chapter is the exploration of the various lenses that help us better understand the complexity of cities as they change, and the powerlessness that can result when the few make decisions without reference to the many.

The final and fifth chapter offers up recommendations on the variety of ways that the intersection of artists and historic preservation, as part of placemaking, placekeeping, placeknowing, and culture-keeping, can inform and affect urban policy and development, as well as provide leadership and community engagement during times of rapid change. This chapter necessarily addresses the challenges and opportunities of the distinctive period we are in, and considers how the ideas put forth in this treatise will need to be adapted as the global community changes as a result of the world-wide COVID-19 pandemic, an economic recession, civil unrest, war in Ukraine, and the potential evisceration of “normal” urban development, historic preservation, artistic practice, and public use of space.

CHAPTER II

THE ROLE OF ARTISTS IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

A city cannot be a work of art. We need art, in the arrangements of cities as well as other realms of life, to help explain life to us, to show us meanings, to illuminate the relationship between the life that each of us embodies and the life outside us. We need art most, perhaps, to reassure us of our own humanity.

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

Imagine a day without art.

This was and continues to be a common arts advocacy plea to encourage state and federal elected officials to provide increased funding to support arts and culture, and individual donors to dig deeper in their pockets to support the cultural sector. In 1989, a group of nonprofit organizations, led by Visual Aid, introduced Day Without Art, an event that took place on World AIDS Day to mourn the loss of large numbers of artists and creatives to AIDS. Participating arts organizations closed their doors, shrouded their public art, and shared information about the disease. This day of recognition of artists has continued under the updated name Day With(out) Art, with an estimated eight thousand museums, galleries, universities and nonprofits participating. Jane Alexander, Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1993, described the project as a "powerful symbol of the devastating effect of AIDS on the arts community. This day reinforces the vitality and power art brings to our daily lives by showing how the absence of art leaves a void of spirit."²¹

²¹ "Day Without Art Explained," *Everything Explained*, accessed January 30, 2022. http://everything.explained.today/%2FDay_Without_Art/.

Over the years, many books and articles have provided evidence that artists and the cultural sector (made up of nonprofit and for-profit arts and humanities organizations, government agencies, and other cultural institutions) play a significant role in quality of life in cities: they “attract visitors from around the region, provide gathering spaces and encourage social interaction. Furthermore, they facilitate the celebration of unique places through historic preservation, public art, cultural festivals and other community-rooted creative activities.”²² They also can help inform urban development and policymaking, advocate for urban change, provide a feeling of safety and security, help local residents share their stories and voices, and encourage economic investment.

Robert Lynch, former CEO of national arts advocacy nonprofit Americans for the Arts, has articulated the role of the arts is not just one thing, it’s not a monolith, but rather a very broad spectrum that permeates our lives and helps to shape and reflect the urban landscape. Both the more formal ecosystem of artists and institutions and the “for the love of it” amateur creation of culture, are integral to enriching life in a city (and beyond).

Art’s power to express and share the experiences of place and people, of course, can be traced as far back as prehistoric times. This is the case, for instance, in cave paintings like those found in the Chauvet Cave in France, which art historians believe to date from 30,000 BC. More recently, in the United States, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration (WPA) as part of the New Deal, aiming to get people back in the labor force to do public works after the stock market crash of 1929 and the resulting Great Depression led to a

²² Patterson, Grant and Leah Binkovitz. *Artist-Planner Collaborations* (Rice Kinder Institute for Urban Research, 2019), 2, <https://scholarship.rice.edu/bitstream/handle/1911/106161/Artist-Planner-Collaborations.pdf?sequence=1>.

national unemployment rate of 25 percent in 1933²³. A subset of the WPA, the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) as well as three subsequent arts-focused programs funded by the federal government employed visual and performing artists across the country to carry out projects to enlighten, beautify, record, inspire, and – most visibly - decorate public buildings created by other workers as part of the New Deal. The program primarily supported these efforts in two ways: by providing relief for artists without work, and offering commissions to artists who already made a living from their art but who could use further funding to re-energize communities. As an outcome of the former, Time Magazine noted that by 1936 “4,300 muralists, portrait painters, print makers, sculptors, etc., are now at work...on 327 projects that will cost the government \$3 million. Today there exists the greatest official interest in art, the greatest production of paintings the US has ever known.”²⁴ Furthermore, these New Deal programs helped amplify the voices and the artistic legacies of under-represented creatives and their communities. Author Lauren Rebecca Sklaroff states that “the program created needed new opportunities for interracial cultural exchange and allowed artists of color to exercise ‘cultural self-determination.’”²⁵

²³ Roger G. Kennedy, *When Art Worked: The New Deal, Art, and Democracy* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2009), 26.

²⁴ “Art: Government Inspiration.” *Time Magazine*, March 2, 1936, <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/printout/0,8816,847725,00.html>.

²⁵ Marianne Dhenin, “Why Public Art is Good for Cities,” *YES Magazine*, December 6, 2021, <https://www.yesmagazine.org/health-happiness/2021/12/06/public-art-cities>.



Figure 2: Pan American Unity by Diego Rivera, 1940, fresco on panels, funded by the WPA. Currently installed at SFMOMA. [Source: Banco de México Diego Rivera Frida Kahlo Museums Trust, Mexico, D.F. Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.]

In a speech dedicating the National Gallery of Art in 1941, President Roosevelt said “The people of this country know now, whatever they were taught or thought they knew before, that art is not something just to be owned but something to be made: that it is the act of making and not the act of owning that is art. And knowing this they know also that art is not a treasure in the past or an importation from another land, but part of the present life of all the living and creating peoples—all who make and build; and, most of all, the young and vigorous peoples who have made and built our present wide country.”²⁶ Several decades later, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act into law, creating The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Endowment for the Arts

²⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Address at the dedication of the National Gallery of Art,” *The American Presidency Project*, March 7, 1941. <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/documents/address-the-dedication-the-national-gallery-art>.

(NEA) to support America's cultural life through grantmaking. Of course, during and ever since the creation of these new programs and federal agencies, there have been many people who have considered this investment in culture to be a waste of resources, dismissing it as "government art." This criticism has played out in various ways over the years, including the intentional destruction or loss of some WPA artworks, and the very public culture wars of the 1980s and 1990s. During the latter, for example, some leaders of the time objected to the use of federal funds for artworks that they found controversial. This has led, in the years since, to arts advocates in the U.S. continually having to make the case for this investment and importance of arts and culture in American public life. In 2004, The Wallace Foundation commissioned The Rand Corporation to research and publish a report entitled "Gifts of the Muse: Reframing the Debate About the Benefit of the Arts." The report posits that arts advocates' focus on measurable instrumental benefits – those in service of economic, education, health, social, or behavioral goals – omit the equally critical intrinsic (art for art's sake) outcomes. The latter benefits include empathy, pleasure, creation of social bonds, cognitive growth, and the expression of communal meanings.²⁷ This research resonates with this treatise's emphasis on the "communicative power of the arts"²⁸ in helping to make visible and audible the stories that communities value over time, while also introducing new voices and connections in neighborhoods to create social capital and common ground.

In France, support for the arts came much earlier, with the State (the central national government) the primary player. The government established French as the national language in

²⁷ Kevin F. McCarthy, Elizabeth Heneghan Ondaatje, Laura Zakaras, and Arthur Brooks, *Gifts of the Muse*. The Rand Corporation, 2004, pp xi-xviii.

²⁸ McCarthy et al., *Gifts*, 50.

1539 and supported visual and performing arts by the opening of the Comédie Française in 1680 and the Louvre Museum in 1793. In the nineteenth century, the government created a Fine Arts Secretariat as an administrative structure for culture. However, it wasn't until 1959 that the State, operating under President Charles de Gaulle and the Constitution of the Fifth Republic, established a Ministry devoted to arts and culture and installed André Malraux as the first Minister of Culture in France. Malraux's decree about the role of the ministry stated that "the ministry in charge of cultural affairs has the role of making available vital works of humanity, and initially from France, to the greatest possible number of French people, of ensuring the largest audiences for our cultural heritage, and of supporting the creation of the spirit and works of arts which enrich it."²⁹ Since those early days of French cultural policy, subsequent Ministers of Culture have made changes and additions that increase the State budget for the arts, decentralized cultural policies through a network of regional directorates of cultural affairs (DRAC), and expanded the ministry's activities. While the ministers have been the primary decision-makers thus far, this is in the process of changing. The framework through which the government supports arts and culture is now one of territorialized cooperative governance, with cultural policy decisions and financial investments generally occurring through partnerships and agreements between State departments, regional public authorities, and cultural institutions. It is noteworthy that access to arts and culture for all people is enshrined in the constitution as a primary right for citizens to participate, along with the recognition that culture is fundamental to the country's social and economic life. In somewhat of a parallel to the WPA in the 30s in the U.S., the French government created special commissions to support the work of artists. For

²⁹ Council of Europe/ERICarts, "Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends in Europe," 18th edition, 2017, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/compendium>.

example, the *1 percent artistique* initiative (1951) requires that every newly constructed or renovated building dedicate one percent of its space for artwork created for the building. This policy has led to the creation of more than 12,400 pieces of art in sixty years.³⁰ The government at both the State and territorial levels provides grants to artists and arts organizations across disciplines, as well as unemployment insurance for artists. Furthermore, these cultural investments are supplemented by investments from private foundations. Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, amidst the cessation of public performances and participation in the arts, President Emmanuel Macron extended aid to freelance art workers in France, one of the first countries to do so (and a good six months before the U.S. Congress passed a similar relief bill).³¹

While support for the arts in the US has always depended upon private philanthropy, this is a newer concept in France and is continuing to develop. In pursuit of this goal, in 2003, the French government adopted generous tax breaks for charitable giving by private and corporate donors, creating a huge leap in private donations, including many of them to museums and art foundations. From 2006-2009, for example, the world's most visited museum, the Louvre, received triple the private donations it had in previous years. According to François Debiesse, an expert on corporate philanthropy in France, "There has been a realization among companies and individuals that they have a role. There is no going back. The manna from the state is going to go down."³² However, with global economic downturns such as the one that took place in 2008, private donations to arts and culture in France ebb and flow as charitable needs in other sectors

³⁰ Council of Europe/ERICarts, "Compendium," 55.

³¹ Alex Marshall, "How 8 Countries Have Tried to Keep Artists Afloat." *New York Times*, January 13, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/arts/coronavirus-pandemic-arts-support.html>.

³² Celestine Bohlen, "Arts Funding Treads a Delicate Line" *The New York Times*, March 13, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/14/arts/international/arts-funding-treads-a-delicate-line.html>.

such as social services and education increase; this mirrors what is currently happening in the U.S.

The public-private partnership model for cultural support is not going away, though; organizations like Fondation Cartier (funded by the jewelry and watch company) and Fondation Vuitton (created by the luxury goods company) are good examples of how private funds can change a cultural landscape. For instance, the latter built the \$135 million cultural center and contemporary art museum on the edge of the Bois de Boulogne in Paris in 2014, bringing in renowned American architect Frank Gehry to design the building. The Cartier and Vuitton foundations, as well as a number of other corporate foundations, also support high-end exhibits in government-funded institutions. Even crowdfunding, a concept that individual artists have turned to since the 1990s in the U.S., made its entrance into France a decade ago, with the Culture Minister at the time espousing the concept of “participatory financing.”³³ However, the French twist on crowdfunding is that that cultural institutions, rather than individuals, are utilizing this tactic to raise major funds. It is likely that this type of online appeal to individual donors will continue to expand in both countries.

In his book *Living in Wonderland*, British urban development expert David Twohig describes what makes an urban area livable: the fusing of big-city life with centuries-old village culture. He envisions a series of local villages where people feel a sense of belonging, authenticity, and common interests.³⁴ Each village connects to the others under the larger collective umbrella of the city’s diverse populations and broad-mindedness, improving livability

³³ Doreen Carvajal, “In Need, French Museums Turn to Masses, Chapeaux in Hand,” *The New York Times*, December 23, 2012.

³⁴ David Twohig, *Living in Wonderland: Urban Development and Placemaking* (Petersfield, Hampshire, UK: Harriman House Ltd, 2014), 18.

and civic pride within a neighborhood, advantages that then becomes self-perpetuating. Taking this idea of the urban village a step further, research in the U.S. has found that the ideal geographical size in which people most powerfully experience a sense of neighborhood community is between one and three blocks.³⁵

Small units of communal living like villages and neighborhoods evoke the traditional style of Mexico, where every town, no matter the size, has a *zocálo*, or centrally located town square, that is the focus of social, artistic, political, and economic activity. In his 1989 book *The Great Good Place*, urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg famously called intermediate public spaces such as coffee shops, churches, and libraries “Third Places” – beyond home (first place) and work (second place) – where people freely gather to interact. His theory is that these places are essential to local democracy and community health. Economist and urban planner Raphaël Besson has taken the concept further, hypothesizing that some cultural third places (*tiers lieux*)³⁶ are transitioning away from the traditional elitist view of culture as being based in institutions towards emphasizing more informal shared social spaces where the general public can share knowledge and culture. Author Charles Landry writes of the creative milieu, which is “a place – either a cluster of buildings, a part of a city, a city as a whole or a region – that contains the necessary preconditions in terms of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ infrastructure to generate a flow of ideas and inventions.”³⁷ In Landry’s definition, hard spaces (tangible places, such as buildings and

³⁵ Derek Thomas. *Placemaking: An Urban Design Methodology* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 74.

³⁶ Raphaël Besson, “The hypothesis of cultural third places,” *The Conversation*, April 3, 2018, <https://theconversation.com/the-hypothesis-of-cultural-third-places-93509>.

³⁷ Oswald Kyrre, “Creative Scenes & Creative Milieux: How Do They Shape Creative Cities?” *The Urban Condition*, March 9, 2021. <https://medium.com/the-urban-condition/creative-scenes-creative-milieux-how-do-they-shape-creative-cities-83fd10df8665>.

public spaces), engage in a deeply symbiotic relationship with soft spaces (which include culture and social networks.)

The through-line of these various concepts is that artists and culture-focused organizations and practices are essential participants the intersection of the public square, a physical place accessible to all, and the public sphere, the open sharing of ideas, energy, innovation. By serving this purpose, the arts can lead to creative and equitable cities, reaching both those who wish to participate knowingly and those who begin as unwitting passersby and then become participants. By their very nature, publicly accessible squares and spheres can be places of connection, expression, and understanding as well as conflict, disruption, and discord.

A recent example of both types of interaction took place in a very public way in Paris in September 2021. The Arc de Triomphe – the iconic 160-foot Paris military monument, inaugurated in 1836 by King Louis-Philippe as a tribute to the armies of the French Revolution and the Empire – was wrapped by 1,200 workers in more than 270,000 feet of recyclable material for several weeks. The production was the posthumous fulfillment of a project conceived sixty years ago by the late avant-garde artists Christo and Jean-Claude, famous for their large-scale textile wrapping projects, whose other sites have included the Gates in Central Park in New York City and a Roman wall in Italy. The monument looked like a wrapped gift to Paris and was met with both delight and dismay by the thousands who came to see it during the two weeks it was in place. “*J’ai honte. Désolée.* (I’m ashamed. Sorry.)”, said Christine Kelley, a journalist from the news program *Face à L’Info*.³⁸ For the artists, the need to negotiate with

³⁸ Kriston Capps, “In Paris, the Wrapped Arc de Triomphe Is a Polarizing Package,” *Bloomberg CityLab*, September 21, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-09-21/wrapped-arc-de-triomphe-delights-divides-paris>.

federal governments and local authorities to enable their projects has always been part of the creative and civic art process, and this “crazy dream,” as French President Macron said at the unveiling, in his view took the monument back from the *gilets jaunes* (yellow vest) protestors who vandalized it in 2018.



Figure 3: Arc de Triomphe, Wrapped, September 2021.
[Source: photo by Isabel Fry.]

In considering the role that artists – whether they are self-employed, part of a non-profit cultural institution or creative for-profit industries – play in the urban environment, I identify four broad categories within which they wield tremendous power and responsibility, whether they wish this to be the case or not: People, Place, Money, and Advocacy. It is worth noting that artists seem to be drawn to the urban environment, which tends to have well-developed cultural

infrastructures and resources, larger markets and higher numbers of potential audience members, as well as a plethora of people and stories for inspiration.

People: Expressing Equity through Many Voices, Histories, Cultures

Artists can be like magicians in their ability to both reflect and encourage the voices and stories of the people living in a city, to build trust with them, as well as to conjure up new ideas, render people a little uncomfortable, make them think. At *Les Rencontres #Culturelaville* conference in Aubervilliers, France in 2019, speakers talked about how the work of artists creates a sense of togetherness and community but stressed that art is also about restlessness, and often contrary to safety and peace. Art brings up conflict, the friction it creates can inspire us and allow us to envision the infinite possibilities for our world.

JR, the renowned street artist and photographer who grew up in the banlieues of Paris and garnered international attention by winning the TED Prize in 2011 at the age of 27, creates a connection between the voices of residents and the places they inhabit. “Images are not special,” he says. “It is what you do with them.”³⁹ And what he does with them is transformational. By taking black-and-white, up-close portraits of people, blowing them up to giant proportions, and pasting them on buildings, streets, public squares, prison yards and beyond, JR lets people be seen in their milieu, reflecting who they are in what he calls the largest free art gallery in the world, accessible to all. *Visages/Villages*, his 2017 film with legendary New Wave filmmaker, the late Agnes Varda, as well as his subsequent film, *Paper and Glue* (2021), both highlight his approach to participatory work. By involving local residents, often immigrants, in the creation of his art, JR breaks down barriers between artists and non-artists. For example, as part of a project

³⁹ Joseph Remnant and Nato Thompson, *Can Art Change the World?* (London: Phaidon, 2016).

commissioned by the Centre des Monuments Nationaux in 2014, JR photographed Parisians and installed almost 4,000 portraits on the dome and other parts of the Panthéon, an iconic monument/mausoleum in central Paris that was being restored at the time. His stated goal was to “encapsulate the humanistic and universal values” embodied by the monument.⁴⁰ Five thousand members of the public uploaded their photos to the Au-Panthéon website of which JR’s Photo Booth truck photographed 2,500 at nine national monuments across France, including at the Saint-Denis Basilica. Looking at the portraits on the website, one sees *Dionysiens* (residents of Saint-Denis) of all ages who seem delighted to be participating, some striking a pose, some looking seriously at the camera as if for a formal portrait. In December 2021, young people in Saint-Denis had their photos taken by JR’s Inside Out mobile photo booth project, and some of these photos were re-posted in large-scale on the side of the Mairie, the city’s administrative offices, creating an opportunity for people to see themselves reflected in their community, engendering a sense of belonging and civic pride.



Figure 2: #GénérationEngagée exhibit on Saint-Denis Mairie, December 2021. [Source: InsideOut, <https://www.insideoutproject.net/en/explore/group-action/generation-engagée/>.]

⁴⁰ “Au Panthéon! An installation by JR,” Centre des Monuments Nationaux, accessed February 1, 2022, <http://www.au-pantheon.fr/en/portraits/saintdenis/>.

SPACES: Oakland/SPACES: Saint-Denis is a dance and storytelling project Kaimera Productions created to help local residents tell their stories, integrated with professional dance



Figure 5: SPACES: Saint-Denis performance in the Halle du Marché, October 2021. [Source: author.]

performances, in public places that are well-known by city residents but not always welcoming them. In Oakland in July 2021, local storytellers and dancers staged performances throughout City Hall – a historic city building dating from 1914 and America’s first government skyscraper. In September, the same project, once again with local dancers and storytellers, delivered the same powerful performances at Market Hall and the Basilique in Saint-Denis, public spaces that are deeply historic (for differing reasons, as Chapter 4 addresses). I was able to experience SPACES in both places, noting the cultural and language differences, of course, but happy to see that the sense of connection to place and each other remained the same.

Artistic director Simón Adinia Hanukai said this about the goals of the project: “Each iteration of the SPACES project is drastically different from one another, yet there is a thread and a set of goals that remain. A starting point for us is always the space, both the city/village/town/community and the performance venue itself. Reclaiming space, particularly public space, for culture, personal stories, and connection is of utmost importance. This directly connects to the next project goal, which is amplifying local voices, particularly those that may not always have the opportunity to be heard. The following essential ingredient of SPACES is the connection between the magical and the quotidian, which is where the performing arts come in. It is all about weaving everyday stories with the magic of dance, music, and multimedia, all of which are rooted in the local historical and contemporary traditions. And finally, we aim to create a beautifully layered piece of art that reflects the multiplicity of the community that created it, while simultaneously belonging to it.”⁴¹

Place: Providing a Sense of Belonging and Justice

In California’s Bay Area, many see artists and the cultural sector as fundamental to the hip, progressive vibe that is often associated with the Summer of Love in the 1960s, the creativity that has been part of the proliferation of tech firm innovation in Silicon Valley, and the region’s ability to attract tourists from around the world. The nine counties comprising the San Francisco Bay Area are home to more than three thousand nonprofit performing and visual arts organizations, second only to Los Angeles in number. The region also boasts California’s highest

⁴¹ Julie Fry, “Making SPACES for Local Stories,” California Humanities blog, September 27, 2021, <https://calhum.org/making-spaces-for-local-stories/>

rate of public participation in the arts, at sixty-six percent of the population.⁴² The precise reason for this rate of participation is unknown, but the region's reputation as an arts-friendly, creative urban area over many years may have led to the migration of like-minded people to the Bay Area, looking to live in an arts-rich environment. The region is evolving rapidly due to the increasing number of technology firms moving to San Francisco and Oakland and encompasses one of the hottest commercial and residential real estate markets in the country, even in the face of homelessness, increasing gentrification, and burgeoning instability from the global pandemic. Nonetheless, a number of research studies have indicated that "artists have become key social figures in contemporary societies," essentially making them urban change agents. Geography academic Anna-Lisa Müller asserts that "Not only do artists change cities by changing the stages for performance through street art and by enacting urban public spaces as spheres for controversy around, among other things, justice in and of the city. But also, they inspire urban planners to design the cities for diversity and, ultimately, for justice."⁴³

Bay Area artist Matthew Passmore and his partners at Rebar, noting that the city of San Francisco does not have enough green spaces per capita, decided to take matters in their own hands in 2005 by creating Park(ing) Day. This project harnessed the powers of imagination, creativity, and art to improve city life by taking over public parking spaces, laying down Astroturf, and reclaiming the space for passersby to use as green space. The City of San Francisco, at that time under the leadership of Mayor Gavin Newsom, liked the idea but initially did not want to make this usage official. Eventually, however, the Department of City Planning

⁴² Ann Markusen, *California's Arts and Cultural Ecology* (San Francisco: The James Irvine Foundation, 2011), 10.

⁴³ Müller Anna-Lisa. "Voices in the City. On the role of arts, artists and urban space for a just city." *Cities* 91 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2018.04.004>, 56.

developed a parklet program, illustrating the ways that the artists were able to catalyze change by forging “a regulatory pathway from a guerilla project,” in Passmore’s words. Park(ing) Day has since evolved into a global participatory annual event.



Figure 6: Park(ing) Day San Francisco. [Source: Andrea Scher.]

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many cities have created similar parklets, allowing restaurants and coffee shops to use the parking spaces adjacent to their establishments as an extension of their indoor space, so that people may dine safely outdoors. But there are ongoing debates about whether these parklets will be allowed to be permanent in the future in many cities. Passmore has mixed feelings about this. “The parklets were great as they were originally

used, and a godsend for restaurants during the pandemic,” he has said. “But as cities are thinking of extending these “streeteries”, they are taking public space and making it private.” His concern is that there are no critical conversations in progress about either closing off the realm of public space in this way, or about asking private businesses to pay for their newfound ability to monetize public spaces.

While artists are not obligated to make people feel safe or to rehabilitate neighborhoods, they often end up achieving this de facto role by virtue of their hyper-local work in those neighborhoods, work in which residents as well as (eventually) cultural tourists participate. In some cases, this impact on neighborhood safety is very practical. In Cincinnati, Ohio, two local artists working with a nonprofit arts organization, ArtWorks, created a permanent lighted art installation in 2021 to illuminate a neighborhood walking trail.⁴⁴ Bloomberg Philanthropies’ *Asphalt Art Initiative* grant program provides up to \$25,000 to U.S. cities that use art and design “to improve street safety, revitalize public spaces, and engage residents.” A funded project to transform a troublesome intersection with mural-designed curb extensions in Kansas City led to a 45 percent decrease in vehicle speeds and reduced noise levels.⁴⁵ In the South Side of Chicago, the Dorchester Projects, an initiative of social artist and urban planner Theaster Gates’ Rebuild Foundation, takes blighted and abandoned properties, some for as little as \$1, and transforms them into mixed-income housing, libraries, cultural and community centers. These properties include the Stony Island Arts Bank, a former savings-and-loan built in 1923 that is now home to an art gallery and cultural archives, and was converted into a food bank in the early days of

⁴⁴ Dhenin, “Public Art,” <https://www.yesmagazine.org/health-happiness/2021/12/06/public-art-cities..>

⁴⁵ Kate Elizabeth Queram, “An Initiative to Improve Street Safety Through Public Art,” *Next City*, March 17, 2021, <https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/an-initiative-to-improve-street-safety-through-public-art.>

COVID-19.⁴⁶ “What does it mean for land to be vacant? What does it mean for land to be occupied?” he says. “How can art take an abandoned building from being abandoned to being activated and escape some of the political stuff?”⁴⁷ Gates is a recipient of many awards for his art exhibits and urban redevelopment work, including the *Chevalier de l’Ordre national de la Legion d’honneur* from the French Ambassador to the U.S. in 2017.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, there are a large number of historic (but not necessarily significant) buildings that were built for non-arts purposes but have been adapted for use as arts venues. They fall into eight general categories: factory/warehouse buildings, churches, commercial retail space, decommissioned military bases, government (such as post offices), residences, schools, and vaudeville/movie houses. These facilities are located throughout the Bay Area, and, while generally representative, do not paint the full picture of arts and culture venues in the region. Given the region’s ongoing challenges with density and high living costs, coupled with a robust appreciation of Bay Area architectural history, it is perhaps not surprising that a plethora of arts organizations have looked to turn existing, sometimes quirky old buildings into their own facilities, taking advantage of the often favorable economics of reuse and resource conservation.

Adaptive reuse is “the most common form of survival of old buildings into renewed value; when a building designed for one purpose is put to completely different use, its value

⁴⁶ Alex Needham, “‘Clay Feels Perverse’: Theaster Gates on working on Obama’s library and going back to pottery,” *The Guardian*, October 21, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/oct/21/theaster-gates-interview-whitechapel-gallery-white-cube>.

⁴⁷ “‘I Thrive in a Certain Kind of Complexity’: Artist-Musician Theaster Gates on the Transformative Power of Art,” *Time Magazine*, December 2019, <https://time.com/5744412/theaster-gates-interview/>.

deepens,” according to Stewart Brand, author and original editor of *The Whole Earth Catalog*.⁴⁸

Adaptive use converts a building to accommodate new functional requirements, in accordance with the possibilities and the constraints the building offers.⁴⁹

The benefits of situating the arts locally and within neighborhoods are also notable. ArtSpace Projects, a nonprofit real estate developer focused on arts-driven community transformation, has conducted research by indicating that incorporating the use of the arts into urban design has a compelling impact on communities. Arts spaces benefit communities by: 1) animating deteriorating historic structures and/or underutilized spaces; 2) bringing vacant and/or underutilized spaces back onto the tax rolls and boosting area property values; 3) fostering the safety and livability of neighborhoods without evidence of gentrification-led displacement [Author’s note: not all would agree with this statement that there is a lack of evidence]; 4) anchoring arts districts and expanding public access to the art; and 5) attracting additional artists, art businesses, organizations, and supporting non-art businesses to the area.⁵⁰ In 2013, the Bay Area-based Community Arts Stabilization Trust (CAST) was formed for just these reasons, with a mission of “creating stable physical spaces for arts and culture organizations to facilitate equitable urban transformation.” CAST accomplishes this by acquiring underutilized properties in certain neighborhoods for arts and culture purposes, using New Market Tax Credits and philanthropic grants to keep rents below market value, and helping nonprofit arts organizations

⁴⁸ Stewart Brand, *How Buildings Learn, What Happens After They’re Built* (New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 103.

⁴⁹ Ozen Eyuce and Ahmet Eyuce, “Design Education for Adaptive Reuse,” *International Journal of Architectural Research* 4, nos. 2-3 (July and November 2010): 419.

⁵⁰ Ann Gadwa Nicodemus and Anna Muessig, *How Artist Space Matters* (Minneapolis: ArtSpace Projects, 2010), 54.

build capacity to buy the buildings. In this way, the organization helps to preserve and adapt historic buildings and rehabilitate neighborhoods at the same time.

Richmond, California is in Contra Costa County, part of the East Bay region of the San Francisco Bay Area. In 1923, local businessman Adolph Winters constructed the Winters Building in what was then considered Richmond's burgeoning downtown, breaking ground on land he purchased in 1919. Different owners used the building for multiple purposes over the years, including as a series of stores, a World War II bomb shelter, and a venue for boxing matches. The Richmond Redevelopment Agency purchased the property in 1974 as part of a strategy to revitalize the struggling downtown. By 1977 the building was largely vacant, so the agency secured \$525,000 from the city for rehabilitation and occupied the ground floor, providing space for the East Bay Center for the Arts (EBCPA), an arts education organization that had been founded in 1968 and was working out of a local church. EBCPA eventually purchased the Winters Building in 2005 and raised \$16 million in public and private support to finish more effectively the adaptive use project begun in 1978, making this retail building a suitable performing arts education center. EBCPA has always been an important and positive presence in the lives of the disadvantaged young people in Richmond, a community center in every sense of the word. Symbolically, the restoration and re-opening of the building helps the Redevelopment Agency in its continuing efforts to revitalize downtown Richmond, with EBCPA serving as an anchor tenant that brings more foot traffic to the neighborhood. The restoration has also increased students' and families' motivation to use the restored space, providing them with the possibility of dignity and beauty. Located at the center of downtown life, the roots of the organization and the Winters Building run deep in the community.

The ancient city of Marseille on the southern coast of France is a crossroads of immigration and trade, with an old port, a bustling fishing industry, and a thriving cultural scene. It is also a place where communities of origin stick together without mixing with others and where crime is high. Near the central train station is a former Seita tobacco factory that closed in 1990, then was adapted into an expansive cultural campus and heritage site, La Friche de la Belle de Mai (*la friche* means wasteland). The 45,000 square meter industrial complex attracts 450,000 visitors every year, in addition to providing space for the four hundred artists and employees who work there. The seventy structures have been adapted to include artist studios, exhibition space, six concert halls, public gardens, a restaurant, and an enormous rooftop terrace. While this factory was not historically significant, it did serve as an economic hub in the working-class neighborhood that housed it. Although La Friche has been working to transform its surroundings into a vibrant cultural quarter, many locals consider the complex to be a gentrifier and there is a lot of work to be done make the community feel welcome.

Artist Jorge Bejarano's exhibit "Town Landmarks: Abstract Oakland" launched in January 2022 at the historic Camron-Stanford House is an example of an artist illuminating place, history, and local pride. In this case, the work crafts a narrative arc about Oakland through new and historic landmarks, some of which are personal to the artist's own experience from growing up in the city. The house, built in 1871 on Lake Merritt, was the first museum in the City of Oakland. After serving as a residence to five families in succession, the Camron-Stanford House has hosted exhibits since 1907, and as the only Victorian home left on this urban lake, it is a fitting venue for Bejarano's exhibit. His pieces use digital effects and paint techniques to show visitors Oakland past and present in full color next to black and white photos.

According to local journalist Azucena Rasilla, the exhibit asks “How do these landmarks make you feel when you think about them? What do they mean to you and your community?”⁵¹



Figure 7: "Town Landmarks: Abstract Oakland" exhibit.
[Source: Jorge Bejarano.]

Money: Attracting Cross-Sector Investment

The arts mean business, as marketing materials from Americans for the Arts frequently state. This turn of phrase underlines the fact that maintaining a vibrant cultural life in a city, with an active artist base and ample opportunities for residents and tourists to participate in cultural life contributes to the bottom line of city budgets. According to an economic impact study that focused on San Diego in 2017, cultural tourists – people who travel to a city primarily to partake of cultural offerings like museum exhibits, festivals, concerts, and the like – stay longer and

⁵¹ Azucena Rasilla, “See Oakland in technicolor at new Camron-Stanford House art exhibit,” *The Oaklandside*, January 2, 2022, <https://oaklandside.org/2022/01/26/see-oakland-in-technicolor-at-new-camron-stanford-house-art-exhibit/>.

spend more money than other tourists on accommodations, meals, parking and transport, based on data from 2015. The report found that the nonprofit arts and culture industry in San Diego at that time generated more than \$1 billion in annual economic activity and supported 36,000 jobs.⁵² In 2021, the Bay Area Economic Institute conducted a similar study in San Francisco and found that every \$1 million spent by the city had a \$1.7 billion economic impact and \$17.5 million in economic output. As the report states, “[San Francisco’s] vibrant and diversified arts community helps attract technology companies, creative industries and a talented workforce. A diminution of the sector would undermine a key competitive advantage.”⁵³

In the Wallace Foundation’s report *Gifts of the Muse* referenced earlier in this chapter, the Rand Corporation framed the economic benefit of the arts as a multiplier effect with resources flowing through arts and non-arts businesses.⁵⁴ Similarly, a joint report that the French Ministries of Culture and Finance published in 2014 found that arts and cultural activity in France represents 3.2 percent of the nation’s GDP (not including the effects of tourism or festivals), twice as much as telecommunications and seven times as much as the automotive industry.⁵⁵ In any country, artists are part of this multiplier effect, “contributing to regional growth and income to the extent that they draw tourists from other regions, help non-arts

⁵² Americans for the Arts, *Arts & Economic Prosperity 5: The Economic Activity of Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations & Their Audiences*, 2017, https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/aep5/PDF_Files/ARTS_AEPsummary_loRes.pdf

⁵³ Sean Randolph, Estevez Lopez, and Jeff Bellisario, *Arts and the Economy: The Economic and Social Impact of the Arts in San Francisco* (Bay Area Council Economic Institute, March 2021), 71.

⁵⁴ McCarthy, et al., *Gifts of the Muse*, 89.

⁵⁵ Le Monde, "Très chère culture, fer de lance de l'économie française," January 8, 2014, https://www.lemonde.fr/idees/article/2014/01/07/tres-chere-culture-fer-de-lance-de-l-economie-francaise_4343845_3232.html.

businesses to recruit employees, and generate direct sales and incomes through...individual exporting activities.”⁵⁶

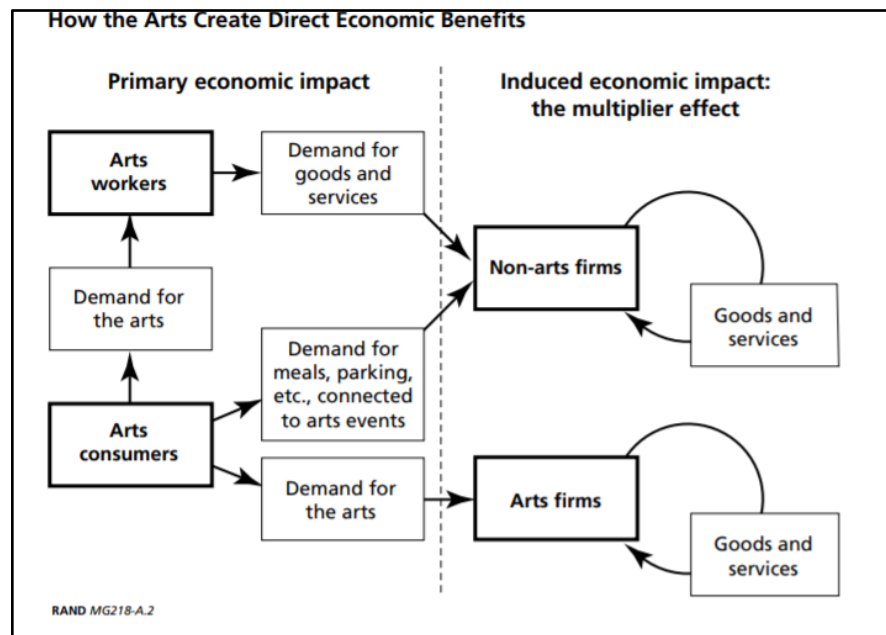


Figure 8: How the Arts Create Direct Economic Benefit. [Source: Gifts of the Muse, 2004, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG218.html>.]

A corollary to art’s tendency to increase the flow of funds throughout the economic life of cities is artists’ ability to boost cross-sector efforts in community and urban development. For example, Artplace America, a ten-year collaboration of foundations, government agencies and financial institutions invested \$150 million from 2010 to 2020 to ensure that arts and culture were at the center of equitable community development as part of a creative placemaking strategy. The collaborative funded demonstration projects, cross-sector research and knowledge, and community-building efforts. In one example, the Community Development Investments initiative partnered with PolicyLink (a national action and research institute based in Oakland) to

⁵⁶ Monica Murzyn-Kupisz and Jaroslaw Dzialek. *The Impact of Artists on Contemporary Urban Development in Europe*. New York: Springer, 2017, 13.

provide six community planning and development organizations with funds and technical assistance to deal with pressing issues in their communities. The overarching goal was to create a stronger social fabric, bolstering people's ability to relate to each other, and then to connect these strengthened connections to community development through arts and culture strategies. For example, the 130-year old Little Tokyo neighborhood in central Los Angeles, rich with cultural tradition and one of three remaining Japantowns in the United States, has been under threat from high real estate prices. As part of the initiative, the Little Tokyo Service Center launched an artist-in-residence program and created a cultural asset archive, among other arts programs, and also purchased a local single-residence occupancy hotel to preserve this housing stock in its original form before it could be turned into condominiums. The Little Tokyo Service Center's focus on underlining the neighborhood's cultural and historical significance while also providing practical community benefit has incentivized residents to participate in planning for the neighborhood's future development.⁵⁷

The City of Minneapolis launched their Creative CityMaking program in 2012 basing it upon an initiative that urbanist Maud Le Floc'h developed in Tours, France (Minneapolis's sister city.) Le Floc'h, founder of POLAU-pôle arts & urbanisme, initiated several cross-fertilization programs. These included *Un Élu*, *Un Artiste*, which brought one mayor and one artist together for a day, in thirteen cities across France, so that they could observe one another in action, explore their city together, and exchange ideas about what their cities could be. As Le Floc'h states, "It was inspiring for both people, putting two different cultures together," and this cross-

⁵⁷ Chang, Lorrie and Rubin, Victor. *Strengthening and Connecting the Social Fabric of Communities*, PolicyLink, 2020, <https://www.policylink.org/resources/social-fabric>.

fertilization has often led to an expansion of cultural urbanism in the participating cities, using the tools of the arts in the public space.⁵⁸

In Minneapolis, by partnering artists from under-represented communities with various City agencies, Creative CityMaking's broad goals are to lessen racial disparities while serving the community and improving agency practices. The initiative started in the planning department and then spread to others, with a core question of "how can bureaucracy be more imaginative?" The project goes beyond a more traditional short-term artist-in-residence approach, with the City's Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy department funding and managing each partnership for a year. The positive results since the inception of the initiative have motivated the City of Minneapolis to continue to self-fund it after initial support from ArtPlace and then a private foundation. According to Gülgün Kayim, Director of the Culture Department, "Artists understand that cities are the source of pain, and they can provide a platform to help communities articulate what they need and want and give them a way to have access to their local government."⁵⁹

One example of the approach in action was a partnership between three theater artists and the Department of Regulatory Services, which had struggled to manage tenant issues with renters. Through interactive theater workshops with department staff (including housing inspectors, the front-line workers), community engagement activities with tenants, and collaborative learning about how to better work together on housing issues, the artists and staff

⁵⁸ Maud Le Floc'h (POLAU) and Fabienne Fendrich (architect and urbanist) in discussion with the author by Zoom, February 16, 2022.

⁵⁹ Gülgün Kayim (City of Minneapolis) in discussion with the author by telephone, January 20, 2022.

developed a new Renters First policy was developed as a result to more fully protect the tenants going forward.⁶⁰

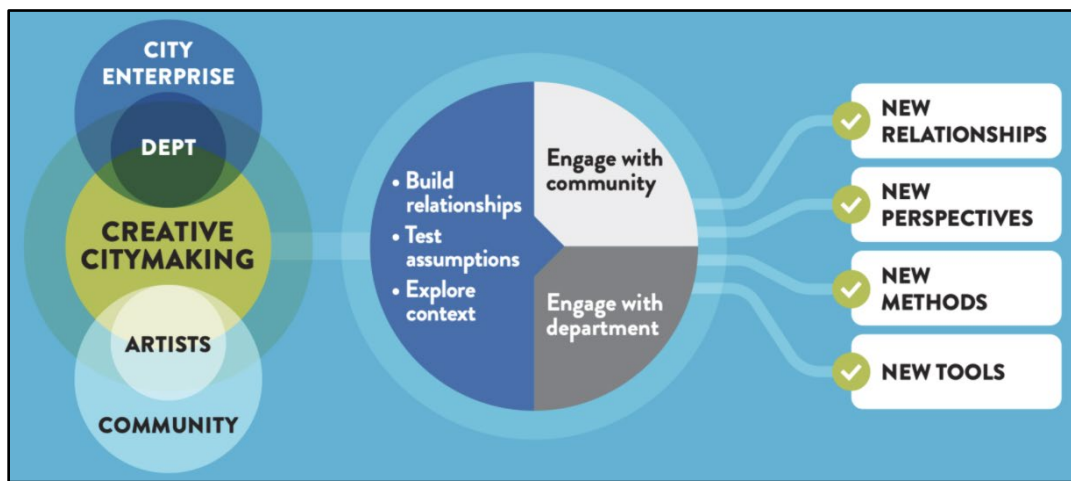


Figure 9: Creative CityMaking Theory of Change. [Source: City of Minneapolis, 2021.]

As a result of its Cultural Development Plan “Belonging in Oakland,” the City of Oakland is expanding a similar initiative, partnering with the Oakland Fund for Public Innovation to support a Cultural Strategists-in-Government Program. The goal of the program is to place transdisciplinary creative strategists in nine identified city agencies, from Community Homeless Services to the Department of Transportation “to discover new ways of fulfilling the City’s aspirations by working with strategists from communities most impacted by inequities and who can bring a new lens to the work of building a just city.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Discussion with Gülgün Kayim.

⁶¹ “Cultural Strategists Sought for City Government Projects,” City of Oakland website, November 15, 2021, <https://www.oaklandca.gov/news/2021/cultural-strategists-sought-for-city-government-projects>.

Advocacy: Catalyzing Change and Civic Engagement

The one thing in life that is constant, the saying goes, is change. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the evolution of cities, with thanks to the dynamism that results from many people living in close proximity and needing to find solutions to policy, economic, social, and racial equity issues.

The insurrection at the Capitol and Congressional buildings in Washington, DC on January 6, 2021 was a terrifying reminder of the loose ties of democracy within which we reside. But, as Robert Lynch points out, the rioters were united by the creativity of their “costumes” – which were very visible as we watched it all unfold on live television broadcasts. So, while we may or may not agree with the insurrectionist’s cause, it is hard to deny art’s power to create bonds between people in civically engaged groups seeking to make political changes. In more positive contexts, participatory art-making and the improved social capital and understanding across diverse groups that it engenders make people likelier to join in community life beyond the art itself, leading to higher civic engagement.⁶²

After a Minneapolis police officer murdered George Floyd in 2021, protestors in Oakland took to the streets in a night of destruction, abetted by outsiders who came to the city to partake in urban violence. The next morning, the sidewalks were littered with glass from broken windows, and the clean-up began, followed by the blooming of hundreds of powerful protest murals on the plywood window coverings that had proliferated throughout downtown Oakland in anticipation of the protests. The mural artists took a moment full of pain and anger and created something beautiful and meaningful in its wake, not to cover up the violence but to explain and

⁶² Ferdinand Lewis, *Participatory Art-Making and Civic Engagement*, Animating Democracy, 2013, https://animatingdemocracy.org/sites/default/files/ParticipatoryArt_TrendPaper.pdf.

reflect it so people could better understand the Black and brown experience in Oakland and beyond. “We’ve never had that much art go up at one singular time and about one specific subject,” activist Aireon Tavarres stated. “The community came together for one cause: Black lives matter.”⁶³ A group of artists and nonprofits, including Oakland Art Murmur and the Black Cultural Zone, have been meeting with the Oakland Museum of California to discuss the future of the murals, some of which have been catalogued and stored at the museum; others have found new homes, including a large piece now installed in Liberation Park in East Oakland. A book about the artworks is forthcoming in 2022.



Figure 10: Street art on Broadway in Oakland, California, December 2021. [Source: Photo by author.]

The war that Russia began in Ukraine in February 2022 has shown yet another part that artists play in society, that of documenting the impact of war and sometimes of serving as visible activists and resisters. Ukrainian artists, some of whose production of work has slowed down but not ceased because they are living in bomb shelters or refugee camps, have taken to their craft to

⁶³ Aben  Clayton, “Open-air Art Museum: Will Oakland’s Protest Murals Have a Life Beyond the Street?” *The Guardian*, June 27, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/27/oakland-murals-george-floyd-protests-street-art>.

tell the stories of their homeland being invaded. As they seek to make the war more visible, the artists are grappling with themes of humanity, identity, civilian resistance, trauma, and a desire to prove that their country has a culture of its own. The international artist community has had their own response, ranging from the creation of new works in solidarity to the preservation and exhibition of the art that their colleagues in the war zones are creating and sharing mostly via social media.⁶⁴

Recognizing cities' evolving need for data about arts and culture in their communities in order to better understand their impact, allocate resources, develop cultural policies, and incorporate the arts into urban development, in December 2021 Bloomberg Philanthropies launched Arts Data in the Public Sector. This new guide aims to help cities leverage data about arts and culture. The questions they seek to address include how to: 1) better serve grantees; 2) promote equity in service delivery; 3) fulfill regulatory requirements for tax-levy funding; 4) track COVID-19-related changes in the local creative sector; and 5) demonstrate the impact of arts and culture across a range of significant policy priorities.⁶⁵ While it is not a new idea for cities to use data about arts and culture to guide urban cultural and civic policymaking, the Bloomberg Philanthropies report's inclusion of changing equity practices and the impact of the global pandemic are necessary and novel additions.

⁶⁴ Svitlana Biedarieva, "The Ukrainian Artists Making Work as an Act of Resistance," *Financial Times*, March 7, 2022, <https://www.ft.com/content/870f753b-2a6a-4dd3-878a-facddda9d8c9>.

⁶⁵ Bloomberg Associates, *Arts Data in the Public Sector: Strategies for Local Arts Agencies*, December 2021, https://assets.bbhub.io/dotorg/sites/38/2021/12/BA_ArtsDataInThePublicSector_12082021.pdf.

CHAPTER III

AN OVERVIEW OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND PRESERVATION POLICIES IN THE UNITED STATES AND FRANCE

To restore a building is not to preserve it, to repair, or rebuild it; it is to reinstate it in a condition of completeness which could never have existed at any given time.

Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionary of French Architecture
from the 11th to 16th Century*

Urban Development in France and the United States

In *Translating Cities and Cultures*, a publication that was created as part of the Oakland/Saint-Denis Cooperation Project, there is a double-page spread of French-English translations of concepts related to culture and urban development. For example, urban planning is *fabrique de la ville* and community needs are *besoins locaux*. The translations are not always straightforward, which makes this type of international exchange both deeply challenging and richly rewarding. Even a single language contains a multitude of terms related to urbanism: urban development, urban design, urban revitalization, urban reform, urban planning...the list goes on. But at the core of such words is the need to make decisions about our built environment, our government and private resources, and the humans who gather together to live and work side-by-side in cities. Further complicating the terminology issue, the manner in which cities have developed in France and the U.S. has also been different, in accordance with the normal economic, political, spatial, and social forces that define and delineate the two countries. I will touch on highlights before turning to historic preservation in each country.

Urban Development in France

France has a tripartite local government system, with twenty-two regions, ninety-six departments, and over thirty-six thousand municipalities or communes, the latter the product of decentralization reform efforts in 1982. It is also worth noting that in France government leaders can hold multiple elected offices at the same time, a policy that leads to overlapping priorities and agendas. Although this policy has been utilized less frequently in recent years, these power networks still intersect.

After World War II, in parallel with a similar period in the United States, France entered its era of *Trente Glorieuses*, thirty years of rapid economic growth and urban development coupled with a housing shortage requiring massive building efforts amidst land scarcity issues. This growth forced the country's infrastructure to modernize rapidly which in turn led to urban development changes that the 1958 Constitution canonized under President de Gaulle, launching the country's Fifth Republic, the current republican system of government. It was during this time that France developed its first *Code de l'Urbanisme*, which espoused a proactive rather than regulatory or reactive approach to urban development. This decree also created opportunities and provided funds to clean up blighted inner-city neighborhoods, leading to some rebuilding decisions that have later been questioned.⁶⁶

Paris, with its beginnings as a Roman settlement in 52 BC, had become the largest and most economically and culturally powerful city in France by the twelfth century, centered in the marshy areas (the Marais) adjacent to the River Seine. The city's great advantages over the centuries eventually ushered in an era of industrialization and urban evolution and growth in the

⁶⁶ Antonella Versaci, "The Evolution of Urban Heritage Concept in France, between Conservation and Rehabilitation Programs," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 225 (2016): 3-14, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.06.003>.

19th century. However, for a period of 100 years starting in 1871 Paris did not have a mayor and was run by a combination of the prefectures and the national government until Jacques Chirac was elected in 1977, although each of the city's twenty *arrondissements* (municipal administrative districts) has their own elected mayor and *mairie* (local city hall).⁶⁷ Mayors have a great deal of power within their own communities during their terms, which last for six years; they can be re-elected to subsequent terms.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Napoleon III selected Georges-Eugène Haussmann to undertake a huge urban renewal project and rectify the unhealthy and unsafe living conditions of medieval Paris, to create roads to unify the city, and to make it a more beautiful and light-filled place. Haussmann's changes destroyed a great deal of Paris's original medieval built environment and displaced many of its poor people, replacing them with the proletariat class and reinforcing the political control of the state through streets too wide for barricades.⁶⁸ The Paris that we know today is primarily based upon Haussmann's design, and urban planners often cite his Paris as a model for other cities because it provides artistic unity and spatial order. The architect Le Corbusier, frustrated by the ways that Haussmann's design ensconced the affluent in the urban core while pushing the poorer working-class residents to the outskirts, developed his own plan for Central Paris, *Ville Radieuse* (The Radiant City) in 1922. Le Corbusier's plan to house three million people in twenty-four skyscrapers, opening the city up to more green space and natural light, situated in a completely abstract setting was, of course, never implemented.

⁶⁷ James F. Clarity, "Paris Debate: First Mayor in a Century." *The New York Times*, December 7, 1975, <https://www.nytimes.com/1975/12/07/archives/paris-debate-first-mayor-in-century.html>.

⁶⁸ Yue Zhang, *The Fragmented Politics of Urban Preservation: Beijing, Chicago, and Paris* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 107.

Apart from its other potential issues, the plan would have required the demolition of Paris's historic core and iconic architecture.⁶⁹

To Le Corbusier's point, however, it is impossible to understand urban development in Paris without considering the importance of the *banlieues*, or adjacent cities, a close but not exact equivalent to American suburbs. As Chapter 1 mentioned, it is the *banlieues* – not the city center (as is the case in the U.S.) – where extremely diverse working class and immigrant populations live, where industry operates, where crime and social unrest are considered the norm, where service workers live when they are not at their jobs in the city center. These Parisian suburbs are often the subject of films set in low-income housing projects (the government's approach to segregation) showing conflicts with police and rampant crime. Local filmmaker Ladj Ly directed the 2019 film *Les Misérables* in Montfermeil which depicts, well, conflicts with police and rampant crime. To be clear, however, this characterization refers primarily to the northern suburbs. Those to the west are affluent, as the below map notes (Figure 11), although some of those wealthier residents, are edging ever closer into the working class *banlieues* as gentrification and outward expansion continue. The stigma of the northern suburbs is palpable, affecting access to good schools and jobs, attracts heavier policing methods, and “creates a positive feedback loop of unemployment, poverty, anger, and political apathy.”⁷⁰

From 1965 to 1970, the city of Paris laid down a framework for its own urban development for the next forty years, including airports, new towns, and a new commuter rail

⁶⁹ Burbano, Lucia. “Ville Radieuse: Why did Le Corbusier's Radiant City Fail?” *Tomorrow.City*, August 24, 2021, https://tomorrow.city/a/ville-radieuse-city?utm_source=ownedmautic&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=37pow150921&fbclid=IwAR2pei mca7K3QBzEglAir6uaytxrSkU75VopaednI0FR-WZas-6RWaMQuH4.

⁷⁰ Misra, “Othered Paris.”

system (the RER). One of these major redevelopment efforts was the construction of the Boulevard Périphérique, a major six-lane ring road built in 1973, in line with the city's administrative boundaries (and military fortifications that stood from 1814 to 1929). *Le Périph*, as it is informally called, visibly and effectively divides central Paris from the *banlieues*, while conversely acting as a transport connector between them.

Since the 1980s, the *politique de la ville* (an urban policy developed in the wake of anti-racist demonstrations) has named priority areas that it considers in need of special attention and resources in housing, education, economic development, and policing. In 2014 the *loi Lamy* was put in place as an urban policy framework to provide concentrated resources in priority neighborhoods based on the single data point of income per inhabitant. More than 1,500 *quartiers de la politique de la ville* (QPVs) across France include over 5 million residents. and in each of these districts more than half of the population lives on 60 percent of the national median income or less.⁷¹ An article in the journal *ZADIG*, published in the September 2021 issue focused on *banlieues*, summarized critical data from 2019: 40 percent of QPV inhabitants are under the age of twenty-four; 42.6 percent live in poverty and 19 percent are from foreign countries. The employment rate is also below national averages, at 55 percent (compared to 81 percent nationally) for those in the 25-54 age range, and 37 percent (compared to 62 percent) from ages 55-64.⁷² Some say that *politique de la ville* has made efforts with QPVs to manage communities in a race-neutral way, although the officially-designated areas don't tend to overlap completely with minority or poor inhabitants. Progress has also been stymied by cuts in the budget of the

⁷¹ Hakim El Karoui, "The French Brief - The Overdue Task of Understanding France's Poor Districts," Institut Montaigne, October 30, 2020, <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/french-brief-overdue-task-understanding-frances-poor-districts>.

⁷² Oriane Raffin, "Des Quartiers Mal Lotis," *Zadig* (Numéro 11), September 2021.

politique de la ville, by stereotypes of “lawlessness” that attach to the QPVs, as well as Paris’s focus on urban renewal —replacing aging housing projects with new apartment complexes— rather than helping inhabitants access opportunities, the original intent of the Lamy law.

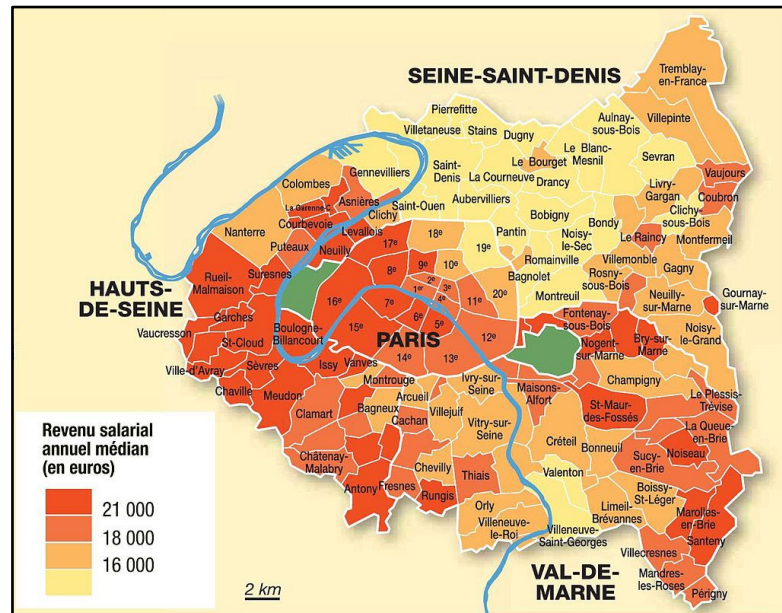


Figure 11: Map of median annual salary revenues (in Euros) in Paris and *banlieues*. [Source: Magicboost, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=3303079>.]

On January 1, 2016, after ten years of preparation, the French government launched a new metropolitan authority called Greater Paris to promote inter-municipal cooperation. To date, its most visible outcome is the Grand Paris Express, a major reworking of the transport system to better serve the suburbs through the doubling of metro lines and addition of sixty-eight stations. It is notable that this new spirit of collaboration between central Paris and the *banlieues* is focused upon creating a “concentrated and competitive metropolis, with enhanced public

transport,” an economic growth plan that has the potential to impact the 7.5 million residents of Greater Paris.⁷³

Urban Development in the United States

Like France, the United States experienced a period of prosperity and growth after World War II, albeit in a larger spatial environment: the US is eighteen times larger, both in terms of square miles and population size. To get a sense of the nations’ relative sizes, France’s population of 67.39 million people (2020) is not quite 60 percent larger than the population of California at almost 40 million (2019). Title I of the Housing Act of 1949 was the first major federal urban renewal program, and it was soundly criticized at the time, never reaching its original promise to revitalize U.S. cities. After decades of trying to incentivize shiny, happy modern cityscapes while focusing on the decidedly complex issue of downtown redevelopment and public housing projects, legislators finally scrapped Title I in 1974. However, the program laid the groundwork for subsequent housing acts and later revitalization programs (such as the Community Development Block Grants) that empowered local authorities to undertake renewal efforts in their individual urban contexts as cities began to age, importantly, de-emphasizing federal efforts. While political conservatives cheered this move from federal to local, progressive voices were aligned against this “bulldozer” approach to urban evolution at the federal level, plagued by delays and top-down heavy-handedness. Urbanist Jane Jacobs stated, “There is a wistful myth that if only we had enough money to spend...we could wipe out all our slums in ten years, reverse decay in the great dull, gray belts that were yesterday’s and day-before-yesterday’s suburbs, anchor the wandering middle class and its wandering tax money, and perhaps even

⁷³ Xavier Desjardins, “Greater Paris and its lessons for metropolitan strategic planning,” *Town Planning Review* 89, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.3828/tp.2018.1>.

solve the traffic problem.”⁷⁴ Urban history scholar John Teaford, looking back, concludes that urban renewal could not create vitality in the city, but rather only “gradual, small-scale investment could nurture the rich diversity essential to a lively urban hub.”⁷⁵

With fewer federal programs leading the way on urban renewal, and federal dollars declining, states and local governments took some of the ideas developed in the 1970s in order to raise their own funds for revitalization efforts, including tax increment funding (putting property tax revenues towards paying off bonds used to fund such efforts). Other vehicles were tax abatements, zoning incentives, and negotiated deals with private developers. Necessity was the mother of invention in finding creative ways to satisfy both local residents and work within the capacity of the local government. Over the past several decades since the cessation of federal renewal efforts, there has been growing recognition that the urban context matters, that preserving and adaptively reusing older building for new functions within cities has a great deal of merit, and that there should be some skepticism towards aesthetic building trends.

One of the other major developments during this period that had a fundamental effect across the country was the 1956 Interstate Highway Act, which made provisions for a 46,000-mile national system of interstate and defense highways to be built over thirteen years, funded by a gas tax of two cents (now three cents) per gallon. President Dwight Eisenhower considered this act to be of national interest in the sense that it would both eliminate day-to-day traffic problems as the number of cars began to increase, and that the highways would provide easy evacuation routes in case of an atomic attack. There were, however, unforeseen consequences. People were

⁷⁴ Jacobs, *Death and Life*, 4.

⁷⁵ John Teaford, “Urban Renewal and its Aftermath,” *Housing Policy Debate* 11, no. 2 (2000), 455, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10511482.2000.9521373>.

not prepared for how the interstate would divide neighborhoods (such is the case in Oakland), cause a great deal of displacement, and create decaying and abandoned city blocks. The first successful anti-interstate effort took place in San Francisco in 1959 when the Board of Supervisors voted to stop the development of a double-decker highway along the Embarcadero's waterfront.⁷⁶

Urban planners were quick to criticize the Interstate Highway system because it did not require metropolitan planning at all, even though such planning was required for urban renewal projects. Those critics were concerned that engineers rather than planners had laid out the routes, which could have adverse effects on urban areas because the perspectives and experience of the two professions were very different. Without comprehensive coordination with urban renewal, the highway system was only solving one problem. Were the engineers paying attention to the needs of urban dwellers that lived in the path of the highway? The displacement of city residents to make way for the Interstate was an ongoing issue, particularly because those city residents were often low-income renters who had trouble finding alternative housing. Other planners foresaw an issue with sprawl, because highways would make it easier to relocate further and further from the city center. Several urban experts were concerned that no one seemed to be paying attention to other forms of transportation beyond the automobile, so there was not a balanced view of public and private transit in the urban setting. Groups of citizens were also vocal in their opposition, echoing some of the planners' criticisms: they feared the highways would disrupt beneficial aspects of their living situations, like historic neighborhoods and

⁷⁶ History.com editors, "The Interstate Highway System," *History*, updated June 7, 2019, <https://www.history.com/topics/us-states/interstate-highway-system>.

culturally specific minority communities and ample green space. Some feared that the highways could act like a barrier between the haves and the have-nots, creating even more social and cultural divisions.⁷⁷

One of the consequences of the rise of ubiquitous ownership of cars and the gradual de-industrialization of the urban core was the rise of suburbs in open areas adjacent to American cities. However, the trek to open areas started much earlier: in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when “streetcar suburbs” developed outside of city limits as retreats for the wealthy. It was after World War II, when roads, transportation, and cheap government mortgages were plentiful (primarily to white people), that there was a mass exodus to those open spaces. This so-called “white flight” from the African Americans who were moving into the urban core is the traditional story of how the American suburb made its name. The word derives from the Old French word *subburbe*, which itself derives from Latin (“below the city”). The suburbs offered middle-class Americans a manicured, homogenic, safe, isolated bubble in which to live.

The more complex and accurate story here is that the outskirts of cities have long attracted those interested in living near the city but wanting to experiment with an alternate “utopian” way of life, or to practice agriculture, build factories, and create communes. The more modern suburb that we recognize now was a specific product of the promotion of post-WWII domestic bliss, far from the grime and crime of the urban center. Laws and unofficial practices alike kept industry and commerce mostly out of these suburbs. Likewise, the divisive practice of redlining largely kept out Jews and people of color as well: banks and the federal government refused to insure mortgages in (or near) African American neighborhoods (marked in red on

⁷⁷ David Karas, “Highway to Inequity: The Disparate Impact of the Interstate Highway System on Poor and Minority Communities in American Cities,” *New Visions for Public Affairs* 7 (April 2015), 12, <https://www.ce.washington.edu/files/pdfs/about/Highway-to-inequity.pdf>.

maps), or to people of color. This segregationist practice began when the Federal Housing Administration (FHA), established in 1934, sought to ease the housing shortage and was exacerbated by the FHA's requirement that none of the new mass-produced homes in subdivisions could be sold to African Americans.⁷⁸ The reasoning? Government employees within the FHA worried that property values would decline with people of color in the neighborhood, and that the loans they had extended there would therefore be at risk. In reality, according to Richard Rothstein, author of the book *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*, values of nearby homes increased when African Americans moved into white neighborhoods because they were willing to pay more in the face of a restricted housing supply and limited options.⁷⁹ Redlining, as well as other discriminatory local practices like racially exclusionary zoning, impacted the demographic makeup and segregation rate of older established cities like San Francisco and Oakland, and the effects persist today.⁸⁰ It is clear post-WWII suburbs developed differently in the U.S. than in France as a result. Although redlining was outlawed by the 1968 Fair Housing Act and the 1977 Community Reinvestment Act, the practice still exists, albeit in a different format. The current version is reverse redlining, by which banks use predatory lending practices and provide subprime mortgages in the neighborhoods that used to be marked in red on those infamous maps. Investigations have also

⁷⁸ Terry Gross, "A 'Forgotten History' Of How the U.S. Government Segregated America," *Fresh Air*, NPR, May 3, 2017, <https://www.npr.org/2017/05/03/526655831/a-forgotten-history-of-how-the-u-s-government-segregated-america>.

⁷⁹ Gross, "Forgotten History."

⁸⁰ The Othering and Belonging Institute at University of California, Berkeley conducts research on the level of residential segregation in the Bay Area and across the country. Its interactive mapping tool enables residents to see how their neighborhood's segregation rate has changed with each decade's census since 1980. "United States Segregation: Interactive Mapping Tool," June 2021, https://belonging.gis-cdn.net/us_segregation_map/?year=2020.

found that banks are continuing to decline mortgages at a higher rate for African Americans and Latino applicants in many U.S. cities.⁸¹

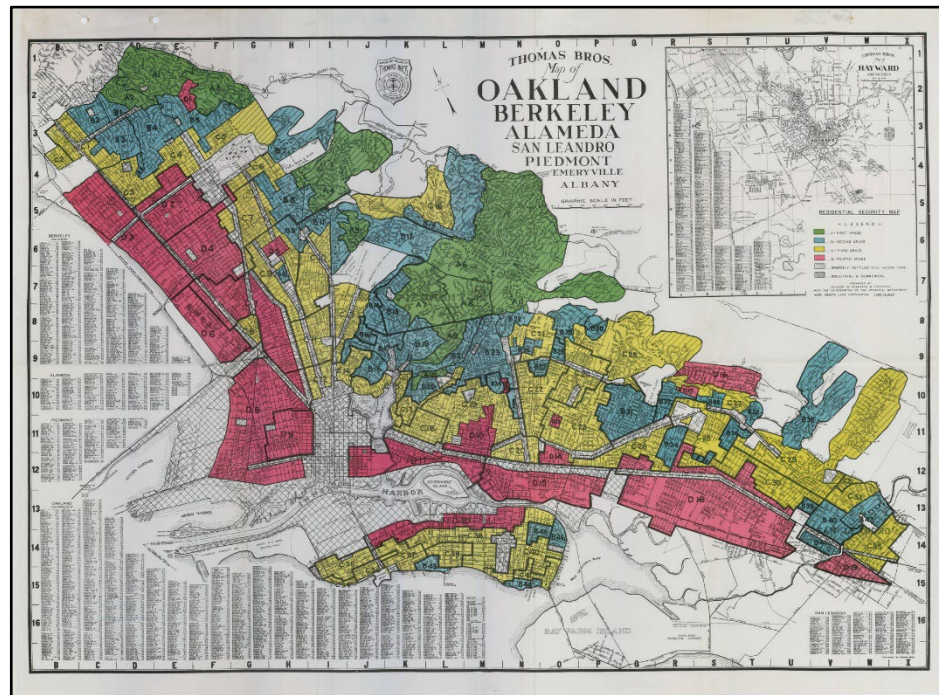


Figure 12: A 1937 Oakland and Berkeley redlining map created by the Home Owners' Loan Corporation. [Source: University of Maryland's T-RACES project and KQED.]

Historic Preservation in France and the United States

In the United States, historic preservation, in its simplest form, is defined as the effort to protect buildings with historic and cultural significance. The National Park Service defines it as “A conversation with our past about our future.⁸²” The National Trust for Historic Preservation

⁸¹ Kristopher C Brooks, “Redlining’s Legacy: the maps are gone, but the problem hasn’t disappeared,” CBS Moneywatch, June 12, 2020, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/redlining-what-is-history-mike-bloomberg-comments/>.

⁸² National Park Service, “What is Historic Preservation?” NPS.gov, last updated May 12, 2021, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservation/what-is-historic-preservation.htm>.

states that it is “leading the movement to save the places where our history happened.”⁸³

Academic institutions such as Goucher College describe it in a broader way: “The Historic Preservation field recognizes enduring values and meanings embodied in the relationships between people and places, heritage and culture, local stories and national narratives.”⁸⁴ Because of the country’s relatively short history, opinion varies widely as to what is “historic” or worth preserving. For example, the fifty-year rule, which is a common historic preservation standard, considers buildings less than fifty years old to be ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and the ensuing property protections and tax breaks unless a property is of exceptional importance. That means that in the U.S., highly praised mid-century modern buildings or brutalist designs that were considered highly innovative at the time, are now being razed to make way for something different. It also limits the consideration of the historic importance of vernacular and industrial buildings, as well as those that reflect newer immigrants. This underlines the need for an overarching review of preservation practices, guidelines and impact metrics so that historic resources that are undervalued now are not lost in the sands of new development.

In France, a country much older than America, the preservation field is called *patrimoine* or heritage, and includes the built environment but also the cultural aspects of monuments, artistic works, and natural conservation sites, constructed within a different cultural and

⁸³ National Trust for Historic Preservation, “We’re Saving Places,” accessed February 20, 2022, https://savingplaces.org/we-are-saving-places#.YhKBAd_MI2w.

⁸⁴ “M.A. in Historic Preservation,” Goucher College, accessed February 20, 2022, <https://www.goucher.edu/learn/graduate-programs/ma-in-historic-preservation/>.

regulatory framework than in the US. *Patrimoine* is a source of French national pride and identity.

Each country's approach to historic preservation reflects its government. The United States, with its network of fifty states, the District of Columbia, eight territories, and 171 tribal governments, emphasizes individual property rights and secularism, with a strict separation between church and state (as the First Amendment of the Constitution defines it). As political and social wedge issues gain ever more prominence, some local and state governments blur that separation. A number of related cases in which this has occurred have found their way to the Supreme Court, with regard, for example, to public funding for religious schools or to regulating private ownership of guns. France has replaced kings and church with a centralized government based in Paris; while *laïcité* (secularism) has long been part of the French Constitution (formally since 1905), it has gained greater media attention in recent years in relation to the rise of Islam in the country and the recent laws that limit religious dress and symbols in schools and the public square. While the State indicates that the intent of *laïcité* is to value equality and minimize separation between people of different religions (originally because of the government's concern about the power of the Catholic Church in the country), the result has been the marginalization of certain groups, especially French Muslims. Hate crimes against the latter have increased by 53 percent in France during 2020.⁸⁵ As Paris-based writer Rachel Donadio states, "At a time when

⁸⁵ Mayela Machribie Lumban Gaol, "Let's Talk About: the problem of *laïcité* in France," *The Daily Free Press*, October 28, 2021, <https://dailyfreepress.com/2021/10/28/lets-talk-about-the-problem-of-laicite-in-france/>.

religion-fueled terrorist attacks continue to traumatize France, *laïcité* has become inextricably tangled with questions of national identity and national security.”⁸⁶

At the international level, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) heads up efforts to conserve cultural heritage sites across the globe. France currently has thirty-three such sites (on the list are Notre-Dame, de Paris, Pont du Gard Roman aqueducts, and the architecture of Le Corbusier), while the United States has twenty-four (including the Statue of Liberty in New York City, Independence Hall in Philadelphia, and the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright).⁸⁷ To be included on this World Heritage List, sites must be of “outstanding universal value” and meet at least one of ten selection criteria listed on the UNESCO website, such as “(1) represent a masterpiece of human creative genius” or “(IV) to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history.” UNESCO was founded in 1945 by the United Nations in the wake of WWII, with the core belief that “the world needs education, science, culture and education.” The Director General of the organization is Audrey Azoulay, who began her tenure after serving as the French Culture Minister from 2016-2017. UNESCO has its headquarters in Paris, (along with ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites), underlining its alignment with France. This is in direct contrast with the U.S., which is wary about others making decisions about their programs and on what is judged historically and culturally significant. America has a complicated relationship with UNESCO

⁸⁶ Rachel Donadio. “Why is France So Afraid of God?” *The Atlantic*, November 21, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2021/12/france-god-religion-secularism/620528/>.

⁸⁷ UNESCO World Heritage Convention, “World Heritage List,” accessed February 20, 2022, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/>.

and no longer pays dues after Palestine was admitted as a member in 2011, although there was a U.S. seat on the agency's board from 2016-2019.

Historic Preservation in France

Traditionally, *l'Etat* (the State, or federal government) controlled historic preservation – as it did many things in France. The goal was the strict protection of the built environment by a group of highly specialized federal employees (National Heritage Architects). The idea behind this centralization, apart from overall control, was a desire to resist economic or historic segmentation within the built environment and preserve banal and “unworthy” buildings and neighborhoods that might otherwise be at risk.⁸⁸

Since 1837, the Commission Supérieure des Monuments Historiques has overseen the selection of monuments of national importance. In the late 1800s, the French government carried on Haussmann's urban renewal and rebuilding program through the concept of *ensemble historique*, or historic areas. This led to the creation of the national preservation framework in the country in the early twentieth century, with new *patrimoine* laws passed every decade or so. These laws included the 1913 *Loi sur les monuments historiques* which remains a primary framework in the *Code de Patrimoine* for preservation of historic buildings. France (and most of Europe) is also guided by the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (1964). It is from this charter that the French Code of Heritage has derived the tenet of designating a 500-meter radius around classified monuments within which any

⁸⁸ Zhang, *Fragmented Politics*, 118.

architectural changes are subject to an exterior design review.⁸⁹ The French Ministry of Culture is the federal agency in which the preservation and heritage departments reside.

In 1962 André Malraux, the first Minister of Culture in France, introduced a law which protects and values historic centers, areas with “historic or aesthetic value or such to justify their conservation, restoration and enhancement”⁹⁰ as a way to slow down demolition and segregation and introduce urban regeneration efforts. This law, implemented by the State as the *Plan de Sauvegarde et de Mise en Valeur (PSMV)* had good intentions but ultimately led to rifts with local municipalities across the country. It furthermore increased social exclusion, changing who could afford to live and work in a given place after urban improvements were completed.

In 1983, as part of a series of decentralization reforms during the 1980s, the State created areas of historic preservation (*zones de protection du patrimoine architectural et urbain*) allowing cities to make their own urban development plans. These zones were, in some ways, a result of the court of public opinion, aided by the media, both of which reacted negatively to the housing estates built across France in the 1960s and other high-profile projects. Among the latter was Montparnasse Tower in Paris, an office skyscraper constructed in the early 1970s that was six times taller than any other building in Europe at the time. It forever changed Paris’ cityscape, an effect not unlike the relatively recent construction of Salesforce Tower in downtown San Francisco. In 2016, the National Assembly passed the most recent preservation-related law, the *loi à l’architecture et au patrimoine* or LCAP, aiming to guarantee the freedom of artistic

⁸⁹ Wendy Hillis, Mary Brush, and Tina Roach, “Preservation in France: Reflections from Three Hunt Fellows,” *Forum Journal, Study Abroad: Global Perspectives*, 28, No. 1, no. 1 (Fal 2013): 22–35. <http://muse.jhu.edu/article/523161>.

⁹⁰ Versaci, Antonella. “The Evolution of Urban Heritage Concept in France, Between Conservation and Rehabilitation Programs.” *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 225, no. 3 (2016): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.06.003>.

creation and to modernize the preservation of French cultural heritage. This law also created a new advisory council within the Ministry of Culture, *La Commission nationale du patrimoine et de l'architecture* (CNPAA), which oversees restoration projects in France.

Historic Preservation in Paris

In 2006, Paris put in place its' first urban development plan (*Plans Locaux d'Urbanisme*, PLU), including preservation policies that designated 5,607 buildings as the *Patrimoine de la Ville de Paris* (the Municipal Heritage of Paris, or PVP). The PVP signaled a major pivot for the preservation field by increasing the autonomy of local authorities with regard to preservation decisions in their districts. The plan aimed to encourage renovation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings in order to guard against the “museification” of Paris. While the preservation sector welcomed the PVP, it initially caused governmental fragmentation between the federal and local decision-makers before becoming, in more recent times, a joint venture.⁹¹

The primary contemporary preservation tools available to the French State are zoning regulations for new developments (including height limits), national monument designation, and safeguarded preservation districts.⁹² Paris's two districts (the Marais and an area with many national monuments in the seventh *arrondissement*), together with the city's 1,900 historic monuments, cover about eighty percent of the city, meaning that much of the city is under State control and that very few parts of the city escape preservation reviews. While elites still oversee

⁹¹ Zhang, *Fragmented Politics*, 120.

⁹² There are two main levels of protection within French preservation policies: *classement au titre des monuments historiques*, for objects and buildings significant at the national level, and *inscription au titre des monuments historiques* at the regional level. Applications can be made for both public and private assets and go through a rigorous historical review that must justify the object or building's historical, technical, scientific, and artistic importance and its evolution over time. More information is available at <https://www.culture.gouv.fr/en/Aides-demarches/Protections-labels-et-appellations/Protection-au-titre-des-Monuments-historiques>.

decisions on monument designation, Paris's city plan is more democratic. There are public hearings on the city's one million historic buildings, and one could say that the preservation process more closely reflects the local community and history.⁹³ Local associations are also more likely to be involved with heritage projects, bringing new perspectives, financial resources, and local support.

Les Halles, located on the site of the central market that has been operating in Paris since the twelfth century, is an excellent example of the tension of contemporary preservation projects within an iconic historic urban landscape. While not a cultural resource of great beauty, the original structure, built in 1853 as twelve market pavilions, became a well-known Paris landmark, and a “node of communication between Paris and its surrounding neighborhood”⁹⁴ of primarily working class and itinerant people. In 1959, however, the de Gaulle government decided Le Halles was an unhealthy area and made plans to redevelop it as part of a slum removal initiative. Despite much public protest against displacement, modernization, and the potential loss of Paris's historic center, the site was demolished in 1971. If any good came out of this, it was a new appreciation of nineteenth-century buildings, a sentiment that led, for example, to the establishment of the Musée d'Orsay in an old railway station. The site remained vacant for a decade, until then-Mayor Chirac undertook the massive construction and neighborhood redevelopment project that resulted in an enormous underground shopping mall and a large underground Métro train station hub. This introduced new tensions to the area between local residents and an increased number of visitors from the suburbs. When the 1977 structure was deemed ready for an upgrade, the locals were most concerned about changes encouraging more

⁹³ Zhang, *Fragmented Politics*, 121.

⁹⁴ Zhang, *Fragmented Politics*, 128.

outsiders to come into their neighborhood (unlike the protests in the 1970s that were focused on the buildings themselves), and in 2010 this renovation and updated design were completed.

A newer example of renovation and reuse is a five-minute walk from les Halles. The Bourse de Commerce, a former commodities exchange, sits on the site of a mansion that noblemen built in the thirteenth century and that Augustinian nuns used as a convent for wayward girls. When Catherine de Medici, the sixteenth-century Queen consort, acquired the property, she had a 147-step tower built, ostensibly so her astrologer could view the stars more easily. In 1748 this tower and its light-filled dome were among the first heritage sites to be preserved, and while the buildings around it changed over the coming centuries, it remains at the center of the Bourse. With the aim of housing his art collection here, French CEO and billionaire François-Henri Pinault funded a five-year preservation effort to return the building to its 1889 condition. This project has culminated in a contemporary art museum that opened in 2021, designed by Japanese architect Tadao Ando who has “proved his talent for inserting ambitious architecture into an existing envelope.”⁹⁵ The architect added a thirty-foot tall concrete cylinder in middle of the building’s existing rotunda under the historic dome to create a peaceful and light-filled exhibition space. Ando describes this recurring design aesthetic: “From Venice to Paris, I have inserted modern interventions into historic buildings. The new structure must be formidable enough to compete with a historical building’s overwhelming and powerful

⁹⁵ Vincent Noce, “The Bourse de Commerce: From the ‘Queen’s Mansion’ to Contemporary Art Museum,” *La Gazette Drouot*, May 17, 2021, *La Gazette Drouot*. May 17, 2021. <https://www.gazette-drouot.com/article/the-bourse-de-commerce%253A-from-the-%2522queen-s-mansion%2522-to-a-contemporary-art-museum/24451>.

presence.”⁹⁶ The goal, he states, is create a dialogue between the new construction and the historic building.

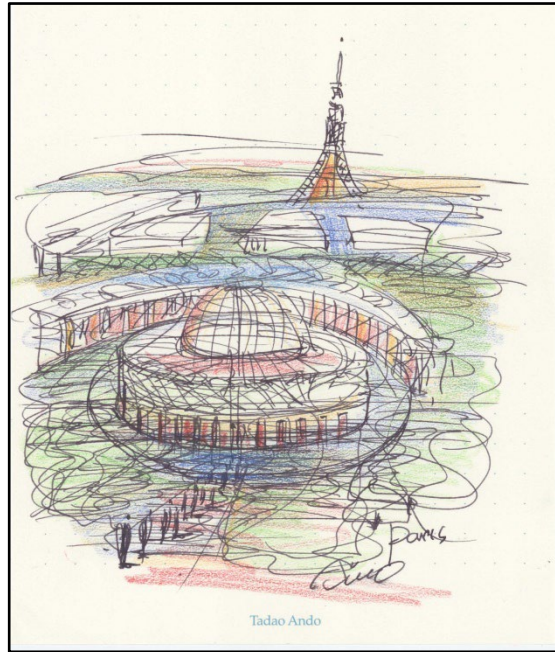


Figure 13: Tadao Ando sketch of the Bourse de Commerce rotunda, 2020. [Source: Tadao Ando Architect & Associates. Courtesy Pinault Collection.]

Considering this example of private investment, another approach to preservation is a competition called *Réinventer Paris* Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo launched in 2010 as a way to incentivize innovative and flexible thinking about the city’s built environment in a densely-populated urban area while also leveraging private investment. During the first phase, the city auctioned off twenty-two under-utilized or vacant sites that it owned, offering the winning proposals the right to redevelop them. These architecture/preservation teams have broadly

⁹⁶ Andrew Ayers, “La Bourse by Tadao Ando with NEM,” *Architectural Record*, May 17, 2021, <https://www.architecturalrecord.com/articles/15124-la-bourse-by-tadao-ando-with-nem>.

benefitted from below-market rental or purchase rates from the city. While most observers thought of the contest as a success in general, especially considering the oddity of a competition of this sort in Paris, author Jean Philippe Hugron voiced some reservations in *The Architectural Review*, citing the Bourse de Commerce as an example of a long-standing partnership between client and architect that has an impact on the public. He concedes that “the business world and adaptive reuse have in common a certain opportunistic approach...[Ando] ensures the building’s best characteristics have not only been preserved but also serve the interests of its new function.”⁹⁷ However, he goes on to say, preservation projects that change public space to private space can also change the fabric of a city and the accessibility of its cultural life to everyone.

There are few historical buildings that are more iconic than the Cathedral de Nôtre-Dame de Paris, constructed beginning in 1163. While it is not necessary in this treatise to write a great deal about the importance of this Catholic monument to the City of Paris and beyond, Nôtre-Dame is a very visible example of the tensions between ancient and recent preservation policy. The April 2019 fire that destroyed the *flèche* or spire added in 1859 by Eugène Viollet-le-Duc – a French architect considered to be the father of French historic preservation (and studied carefully in the U.S. as well). Viollet-le-Duc recreated deteriorated aspects of historic buildings rather than exclusively conserving the existing structure. In his words, “To restore an edifice is not only to preserve it, to repair it, or to rebuild, but to bring it back to a state of completion such as may never have existed at any given moment.” This is what his spire sought to do – complete

⁹⁷ Jean-Philippe Hugron, “Daylight Robbery: Bourse de Commerce in Paris, France by Tadao Ando Architect & Associates,” *The Architectural Review*, September 6, 2021, <https://www.architectural-review.com/buildings/museum/daylight-robbery-bourse-de-commerce-in-paris-france-by-tadao-ando-architect-associates>.

the building. In the present day, the French Prime Minister, in announcing an international competition for the restoration of Nôtre-Dame, stated that it “will allow us to ask the question of whether we should even recreate the spire as it was conceived by Viollet-le-Duc or if, as is often the case in the evolution of heritage, we should endow Notre-Dame with a new spire.”⁹⁸ The former idea would certainly contradict Viollet-le-Duc’s philosophy of restoration, and yet it would completely align with the Venice Charter’s recommendation to “do no harm” by adding new elements to a historic building. In July 2021, the CNPA approved an exact replacement of Viollet-le-Duc’s spire. The CNPA (and then President Macron) also unanimously approved the Chief Architects of Historical Monuments’ recommendation to restore Nôtre-Dame to its prior state.⁹⁹

A third example is more personal. The apartment my daughter and I own is in one of the three oldest medieval buildings in Paris. The half-timbered building in the Marais neighborhood dates from as early as the fourteenth century, and it has miraculously survived Haussmann’s revamping efforts. In fact, the 1925 *Plan Voisin* proposed the demolition of the Marais neighborhood, deeming it outdated and unhealthy and recommending it be replaced by a new business district alongside a residential area. Fortunately, this never happened.¹⁰⁰ Before the advent of numbered addresses, the two conjoined structures at 11-13 Rue François Miron in the heart of old Paris were called *l’enseigne du Faucheur* (House of the Reaper) and *à l’enseigne du*

⁹⁸ Thomas de Monchaux, “Notre-Dame and the Paradoxes of Historical Preservation,” *The New Yorker*, May 13, 2019, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/notre-dame-and-the-paradoxes-of-historical-preservation>.

⁹⁹ Friends of Notre Dame de Paris, “Notre Dame Cathedral Update,” accessed February 22, 2022, <https://www.friendsofnotredamedeparis.org/notre-dame-cathedral-update/>.

¹⁰⁰ Versaci, “Evolution of Urban Heritage,” 8.

Mouton (House of the Sheep), and they still carry those names today. Rare medieval houses such as these, still standing in Paris after centuries, are a testament to the preservation efforts, coupled with modifications, that have taken place over many years. This is particularly notable because these were not homes of the wealthy, which were built of stone; but rather buildings for the poor constructed of wood, straw, and mud.¹⁰¹ The House of the Sheep, for example, had its gable removed in the seventeenth century after successive royal decrees, beginning in 1508, made construction of buildings with projecting elements illegal. The original half-timbers were covered in sandstone and lime in 1607 to minimize fire risk, changing the medieval façade. In 1967, French architect R. Hermann had this plaster removed and the gable rebuilt on the House of the Sheep, returning the buildings closer to their original appearance.

The evolution of *patrimoine* in France has enabled the country to preserve and respect its many historic and often iconic monuments, buildings, and districts at the national level,



Figure 14: Houses at 11-13 Rue François Miron. [Source: Photo by author.]

¹⁰¹ Sabrina, “Les maisons de la rue François Miron,” *Tu Paris Combien?* accessed February 20, 2022, <https://tupariscombien.com/2016/01/15/les-maisons-de-la-rue-francois-miron/>.

upholding its cultural reputation. At the same time, in more recent years this preservation of heritage has also allowed for decentralized decision-making, local community participation, and a historic urban and human landscape approach to “better frame urban heritage conservation strategies within the bigger goals of overall sustainable development.”¹⁰²

Historic Preservation in the United States

The field of historic preservation is often said to be formally begun in the United States with the efforts of the Mount Vernon Ladies’ Association, the first private organization to preserve a historic property. In the mid-nineteenth century, this group began working to save Mount Vernon, George Washington’s home in rural Virginia—along with that of John Hancock in Boston—from demolition. They were successful with the first project, but not with the second; the city of Boston eventually tore down Hancock’s home to accommodate new urban housing. By the late 1800s, the federal government demonstrated its interest in preservation by conserving Yellowstone as the world’s first national park in the U.S., and possibly the world. The government moved on to preserving Civil War battlefields. In 1889 Congress declared and funded first National Monument, preserving native structures in Arizona.

By the early twentieth century, the government made a series of moves to codify the preservation of historic sites across the nation into federal law. The 1906 American Antiquities Act enabled the U.S. President to designate monuments on federal land and represented the first formal historic preservation policy in the country. By 1916, legislators had created the National Park Service as a federal agency within the Department of the Interior to administer the national parks, an agency that eventually came to oversee the implementation of federal preservation

¹⁰² Versaci, “Evolution of Urban Heritage,” 8.

efforts. In 1934, the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration established the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) to document historic buildings of all types. Today, HABS documentation remains as the best record of America's early built environment. The creation of the quasi-public National Trust for Historic Preservation in 1949 provided a point of intersection for the primarily private efforts to preserve national landmark buildings and the federal goal of conserving natural landscapes and parks.

The National Trust's landmark 1966 report, *With Heritage So Rich*, made recommendations for the future of historic preservation, which led to the passage of the Historic Preservation Act the same year. Among the many important tenets of the Act that have created the nation's overarching preservation framework are the recommendation to create State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), the development of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) to recognize, inventory, and consider protections for significant historic and cultural assets, the recommendation to create locally-controlled historic districts, and the establishment of definitions of how the federal government could pursue preservation projects without interfering with private ownership.¹⁰³ The 1976 Tax Reform Act and the 1981 Economic Recovery Tax Act each provided financial incentives for homeowners (charitable deductions for preservation easements) and developers (historic tax credits) to restore and preserve historic buildings. In 1972, the State of California passed the Mills Act, a significant piece of legislation to incentivize preservation of qualified historic properties by private owners. Through the Act, local city and

¹⁰³ Robert E. Stipe, Ed., *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 77-78.

county governments are able to enter into contracts to provide property tax relief to owners for the preservation and restoration of historic properties.¹⁰⁴

One part of the 1966 Historic Preservation Act that affects preservation across the country is Section 106, which “requires federal agencies to consider the effects on historic properties of projects they carry out, assist, fund, permit, license, or approve throughout the country.”¹⁰⁵ A Section 106 review enables the American Advisory Council on Historic Preservation and other interested parties, including the public, to participate in the process, providing a very local perspective on a federal project. The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation are the tool that federal, state and local entities use to evaluate preservation projects, although as a preservation student I understand the challenge of interpreting the standards, which remain a subject of debate within the preservation field.

State and Local Historic Preservation in the United States

Each state (and often county and municipality) tends to have some sort of preservation policy and historic/landmark designation programs, although the approach is not consistent across the country or across levels of government. Preservation ordinances at the local level have become tools for property tax management and to increase land values as well as protecting historic places to varying extents.¹⁰⁶

The role of the California SHPO, established in 1975 within the office of the Director of California State Parks, is to implement the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, develop a

¹⁰⁴ California State Parks Office of Historic Preservation, “Mills Act Program,” accessed April 23, 2022, https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21412.

¹⁰⁵ American Council on Historic Preservation, “An Introduction to Section 106,” accessed February 2, 2022, <https://www.achp.gov/protecting-historic-properties/section-106-process/introduction-section-106>.

¹⁰⁶ Zhang, *Fragmented Politics*, 71.

comprehensive historic preservation plan, and manage a list of statewide historical resources. In addition, California's SHPO oversees a wide variety of preservation activities, including administering federal financial incentives, providing guidance to local government preservation efforts, and developing criteria for local historic district designations. The SHPO developed California's Statewide Historic Preservation Plan, *Sustainable Preservation (2013-2017)* with public input, and is currently in the process of updating. Some of the goals detailed in the plan include fostering a preservation ethic, communicating how historic and cultural preservation contributes to the livability and sustainability of communities, and redefining the public's perception of preservation by involving them more closely in what can and should be protected.

The creation of the SHPOs in 1966 also provides financial support to the states so that they may distribute resources such as incentives, grants, and technical expertise to local governments. This financial structure underlines a key aspect of historic preservation in the U.S., namely that it operates "according to the principal of federalism; local governments have the ability to adopt preservation and planning ordinances in accordance with enabling legislation at the state level or as established by home rule authority."¹⁰⁷ It is at this local government level that preservationists can make far-reaching preservation decisions about such topics as infill in historic districts, prevention of property demolitions, and alterations to landmarks.

For example, as a member of the Santa Clara County Historical Heritage Commission in 2013 and 2014, I participated in the oversight of the county's preservation processes, aiming to "protect, preserve, and promote historic resources within Santa Clara County." The Commission was established by the Country Board of Supervisors, with two members representing each of

¹⁰⁷ Jennifer Minner, "Revealing Synergies, Tensions, and Silences Between Preservation and Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 82, no. 2 (March 21, 2016): 72-87, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944363.2016.1147976>.

the county's five supervisorial districts, and one at-large member. During my time there (in the mid-2010s), two local projects brought to the Commission had met with two different outcomes and entailed the involvement of different regulatory bodies. The first project was a Cold War-era radar tower built in 1962 on top of Mount Umunhum near San Jose, California, nicknamed "The Cube" because of its concrete materials, shape and lack of windows. Once used as an Air Force Station to detect enemy aircraft, the property now belongs to the Midpeninsula Open Space District, which wanted the tower removed so that the summit could return to its natural state. After years of environmental reviews, public comment, and debate within the Commission, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously in 2016 to add the site to the county's Heritage Resource Inventory, making it difficult to demolish in the future. The fate of this landmark, which some consider significant because of its role in military history, was in the hands of local government ordinances, preservationists, and the people of nearby communities.

The second site, not far away, was the Willow Glen Trestle, built in 1922 as a bridge for the Western Pacific Railroad. Once the transport route changed, the trestle was left as a local relic, a reminder of the bygone days of rail. The City of San Jose acquired the site in 2011 with plans to replace it with a pedestrian bridge link to a local trail network. However, California's State Historical Resource Commission ruled in 2017 that the trestle belonged on the state's Register of Historical Resources. The city fought back, but the State Commission did not back down on their decision. After a seven-year legal fight with local preservation groups and a



Figure 15: Mount Umunhum. [Source: KQED.]

decision by the Santa Clara County Superior Court, the city demolished the trestle in 2020. Even though the State Commission had made a ruling to the contrary, the city argued successfully in court that because demolition of the trestle had been approved before the Commission's ruling, the timing was in favor of the city's wishes.

As we have seen, historic preservation in the United States is much more decentralized than in France, which is not surprising considering the countries' respective sizes and governmental regulatory bodies at the federal, state, county, and municipal level. The U.S. approach to preservation is less about national identity and pride, and more about significance and social and cultural values, as well as the efforts of local citizen advocates and nonprofit historic societies and preservation groups. Prior to the early twenty-first century, this value system came from art history, the work of a master, the best representation of a style or time period, or association with an historic event or important person; the modern approach is more complex, entailing questions of who gets to decide significance and value – many diverse voices have been underrepresented over the years, although that is changing – and what structures or landscapes reflect our history and culture. As the late historian and conservationist David Lowenthal states in his seminal work *The Past is a Foreign Country*: “Preservation gives us knowledge of the past, and at the same time, alters that past. Once we make the decision that a certain artifact is worthy of preserving, we alter its future either through benign neglect or, more typically, through some type of intervention (rehabilitation, restoration, preservation and the like).”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 263.

Tension: Urban Development and Preservation

In the U.S. and France, a tension exists between historic preservation's general goal to protect and conserve notable historic properties and urban planning and evolution. On the one hand, there are those who feel that preservation efforts are standing in the way of world-class contemporary architecture, environmentally friendly and sustainable building design, and the natural changes required to be a top-tier city. On the other hand, there are those who feel that the introduction of too many modern buildings and the loss of the tried-and-true historic fabric will remake places like Paris into different city. Architectural historian Michael Allen says it well: "Preservationists are mediators between cultural heritage and economic demands, and they often don't win what they want. Yet what has actually been saved in both cases is invisible: the integrity of preservation laws, the enhanced value of developments that incorporate elements of the past and the continuity of urban character that makes cities continue to be desirable places."¹⁰⁹ Citing Paris as a place where the desire to both modernize and to preserve clash a great deal, Allen uses the example of the historic *La Samaritaine* department store in central Paris, which closed in 2005, leaving a beautiful Art Deco façade (now demolished). The new owners wanted to replace the store with an office complex and the façade with a new design by a Tokyo-based firm, a plan that critics on both sides of the urban development/preservation divide blasted and that courts rejected. The role of preservationists in both countries, Allen argues, isn't to stop change, but to ensure that the legal standards of preservation provide a counterbalance to real estate development and take into account both the public good and the benefits of historic

¹⁰⁹ Michael Allen, "The Paris Debate: Must Preservation Inhibit Urban Renewal? *ArchDaily* (blog), July 7, 2014, <https://www.archdaily.com/524597/the-paris-debate-must-preservation-inhibit-urban-renewal>.

layering—bringing together architecture of differing heights, designs, eras and functions to form an interesting and livable cityscape.

Scholar Jennifer Minner posits that preservation and planning in the US have become more aligned over time. The preservation field identifies historic and cultural assets that are useful for community planning and economic development efforts, although, she says, we need more participatory methods to map historical assets, particularly in suburban and rural areas. The development of an equity preservation agenda, with learnings from equity planning efforts that have been underway for some time, would help to broaden preservation’s engagement with underserved groups, seeding “the potential for greater equity in terms of whose histories are emphasized in preservation.”¹¹⁰

Cultural Planning and Policy: “Eventually Everything Connects”

So, how do artists and culture fit into the mix with urban development and historic preservation? Mid-century designer Charles Eames famously put it this way: “Eventually everything connects—people, ideas, objects. The quality of the connections is the key to quality per se.”¹¹¹ As Chapter 2 covered, the arts bring measurable economic, social, political, and other benefits to the development of cities, and the built environment is another essential element. Historic structures can provide practical benefits as performance venues and exhibition spaces, for example, but artists also help to activate the cultural heritage of a place, illuminate social histories, bring meaning to neighborhoods, summon the past. Cultural planning is the connective tissue between preservation, urban development, and the arts.

¹¹⁰ Minner, “Revealing Synergies,” 80.

¹¹¹ Attributed to designer Charles Eames. See “Charles and Ray,” The Eames Foundation, accessed January 17, 2022, <https://eamesfoundation.org/house/charles-and-ray/>.

Cultural planning, which UNESCO describes as “a proven method for citizen-driven urban social innovation,”¹¹² is often initiated by state, county, and municipal governments. The latter use this framework to work with local residents to consider not only how to develop and sustain their cultural assets—arts venues, public programming, community engagement, arts education in schools, public art, culture tourism—but also how these assets inform town planning efforts and resource allocation across all areas of local government, emphasizing social cohesion and equity, in order to meet community needs. While one major goal of cultural planning is to influence the inclusion of arts and culture in the larger urban policy framework, there are other models of cultural plans that seek information and data to evaluate how to increase public participation in cultural life. Such approaches include a map of local creative assets, an assessment of arts facilities, a cultural district or arts discipline-specific plan, or a deep-dive into a particular strategic issue, such as audience development.

Chapter 4 will discuss the specific cultural plans of Saint-Denis and Oakland. But for any place-based cultural plan to succeed, participants must consider all aspects of urban life. What barriers exist in a city that make it difficult for residents and visitors to participate fully in the arts? Are there mobility/transport/parking issues? In Paris, it is mostly Parisians who attend arts events in the city; one of the byproducts of the Grand Paris Express transportation expansion currently underway will be to mitigate challenges to intra-city cultural participation by “knitting together the French capital’s isolated and troubled *banlieues*, much as the initial Métro construction did for the outlying districts of Paris proper at the dawn of the 20th century,”

¹¹² UNESCO, “Cultural Planning as a Method for Urban Social Innovation (UrbCulturalPlanning),” 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/creativity/policy-monitoring-platform/cultural-planning-method-urban>.

according to journalist Henry Grabar.¹¹³ The construction of sixty-eight new Métro stations across greater Paris – with Saint-Denis Pleyel as a major hub planned in advance of the 2024 Olympic Games – is an interesting case study in an attempt to create a more unified metropolitan identity. The city has hired duos of architects and artists to co-design each station to include permanent works of art. An international call for projects in late 2021 is championing the creation of permanent murals on the new Métro platforms, with the artwork required to represent the local neighborhood. Ongoing cultural programming is also an integral part of the plan to engage commuters and local residents together in the public square.

Do people feel they are safe when they attend an arts event in an historic (and perhaps outdated) venue? The Ghost Ship fire in Oakland was a tragic reminder that we don't always know if buildings open to the public are up to code. Are participation costs too high? The Oakland Museum of California hosts food trucks and live music every Friday night that the community can enjoy for free. Do people feel welcome to participate if they don't understand the event's language or context? Perhaps we need to diversify our ideas of art and who can contribute to it, as a participant at the 2019 *Les Rencontres #CulturaLaVille* urban policy/arts conference in the Parisian suburb of Aubervilliers commented. By the same token, what does a place need to include in its cultural and urban plans to retain artists and arts organizations? At the same 2019 conference, presenters spoke of the need to bring artists in urban renewal and design projects earlier in the process, and to restore the links between artists and architects.

¹¹³ Henry Grabar, "Tying Paris Back Together," *The Atlantic*, February 9, 2016, <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2016/03/tying-paris-back-together/426870/>.

Gentrification and Displacement

Looming across the four ways that artists impact —People, Place, Money, and Advocacy—is the specter of gentrification, a term based on “gentry,” the English root word for the ruling class. According to the Urban Displacement Project, gentrification is a process by which a historically disinvested neighborhood experiences economic shifts (by means of real estate investment and new higher-income residents moving in) as well as demographic change, not only in terms of income level, but also in terms of changes in the education level or racial make-up of residents.¹¹⁴ Gentrification also entails visible neighborhood change, with an upgrade of the built environment via improved housing stock, renovated commercial buildings, and active storefronts. According to a study by the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC), during the period of 2000-2013, gentrification in the U.S. was most likely to occur in the country’s largest coastal cities, and hardly at all in medium to small cities across America.¹¹⁵ In Paris, which possesses a dense population and no available land for constructing new building stock, house and apartment median purchase prices have risen 5-10% per year since 2015, although this has slowed somewhat during the pandemic.¹¹⁶ This dynamic continually pushes lower-income communities outwards towards available space and more affordable housing costs.

¹¹⁴ K. Chapple, T. Thomas, and M. Zuk, “What Are Gentrification and Displacement,” Urban Displacement Project website, 2021, <https://www.urbandisplacement.org/about/what-are-gentrification-and-displacement/>.

¹¹⁵ Jason Richardson et al, *Shifting Neighborhoods: Gentrification and cultural displacement in American cities*, National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC), 2017.

¹¹⁶ Alice Kantor, “Paris Housing: The City of Light Emerges from the Shadow of Covid,” *Financial Times*, September 10, 2020, <https://www.ft.com/content/4def503c-0efa-4bd5-9d3d-b4465155ea51>.

Even within Paris, the traditionally more working classes neighborhoods in the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth *arrondissements* are losing ground to higher costs of living.¹¹⁷

There is also a related and very familiar supply-and-demand pattern, although it does not always occur. Artists and cultural organizations are drawn to underutilized and affordable urban building stock, they move in and practice their craft, they help the local community express themselves and connect with each other, they help create a safer and more engaged public square, reduce blight, tidy the place up. Their work attracts attention and new restaurants and shops and tourists, and before you know it, this newly flourishing neighborhood isn't so affordable anymore, displacing people to further afield, sometimes including the artists themselves. The relationship between artists and gentrification is complicated; some consider them the catalysts, the “marginal gentrifiers,” the gateway drug to the *bobo* (bourgeois bohemian) lifestyles of the affluent. As David Ley from the University of British Columbia states, “The urban artist is commonly the expeditionary force for inner city gentrifiers, pacifying new frontiers ahead of the settlement of more mainstream residents.”¹¹⁸ Artists may also be the driving force behind urban regeneration practices of historic building preservation, renovating or repurposing them in the way Theaster Gates has done in his neighborhood transformations.

The reverse can also be true. Artists and arts organizations may be drawn to do their work in gentrified areas where there are affluent populations, clusters of creative industries, and other aspects of urban life where people live, work and gather, such as restaurants, cinemas, and offices. Arts organizations can have an important impact on the local economy and are a part of

¹¹⁷ Cole Stangler, “The Death of Working-Class Paris,” *The Nation*, November 10, 2020, <https://www.thenation.com/article/world/paris-gentrification/>.

¹¹⁸ Monika Mursyn-Kupisz and Jaroslaw Dzialek, *The Impact of Artists on Contemporary Urban Development in Europe* (New York: Springer, 2017), 20.

urban policymaking. Furthermore, research has found that such organizations are not a predictor of gentrification, which relies more upon the specific urban area, urban and economic development policies in place, art form, and rate of gentrification already underway.¹¹⁹ However, in gentrifying neighborhoods, an increase in arts organizations is often, but not always welcome. In Boyle Heights, historically a Jewish, Japanese, and now Mexican immigrant neighborhood in Los Angeles, a rise in art galleries fueled protests and boycotts by anti-gentrification activists armed with the message “El Barrio No Se Vende, Boyle Heights se Defiende” (the barrio is not for sale, Boyle Heights will be defended). The neighborhood does not need another white-owned art gallery, protestors say. Instead, they contend that the community itself needs to decide what to do with unused spaces in the face of issues of affordable housing and economic access, against the backdrop of a strong participatory street art scene.¹²⁰

Urbanist Richard Florida, of *The Rise of the Creative Class* fame, concedes that twenty years after he encouraged cities to focus on supporting a vibrant, bohemian café culture and arts and music scene to attract hipsters, his push for urban revival fueled gentrification, pushing inner city problems out to the suburbs while benefiting the affluent, white middle class. “I realized that we need to develop a new narrative, which isn’t just about creative and innovative growth and

¹¹⁹ Carl Gordach, “Gentrification, displacement, and the arts: Untangling the relationship between arts industries and place change,” *Urban Studies* (March 2018), <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0042098016680169>.

¹²⁰ Alfredo Huante and Kimberly Miranda, “What’s at stake in contemporary anti-gentrification movements?” *Society+Space*, February 6, 2019, <https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/whats-at-stake-in-contemporary-anti-gentrification-movements>.

clusters, but about *inclusion* being part of prosperity. It was the service class—the class I had forgotten—that was taking it on the chin.”¹²¹

In France, the premise of gentrification is a relatively young one, although the effects of displacement that the concept outlines are not new and have been occurring in the *banlieues* immediately surround Paris, for example, for decades. The concept itself is slightly different in France than in the U.S., with more of a focus on the movement from the center to the *banlieues* rather than the other way around, as it tends to happen in the U.S. Gentrification occurs in three primary ways, according to scholar Edmond Préteceille from SciencesPo: 1) the expansion of upper class areas into adjacent working class neighborhoods; 2) the upward social mobility of working class areas, spatially and socially, and 3) the more common gentrification model of a rise in the professional class.

It is important to note that not all artists are created equal. Stratification in the arts sector means that some artists are highly successful (within their professional field they are considered to be elite and popular, with stronger networks, closer ties to government decision-makers, more money and more power) while others are part of the artistic “underclass” (struggling to make a living, with very little influence on urban policy-making, but an enormous impact on quality of life). The result is that the more prosperous artists in the first group will displace some of their colleagues in the second.

¹²¹ Wainwright, ““Everything is gentrification,”” 2017.

CHAPTER IV

A TALE OF TWO CITIES: SAINT-DENIS, FRANCE AND OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

Arts and culture are a vital part of our city and help create a sense of belonging for all Oaklanders. Oakland's civic well-being is deeply rooted in the expressions of our artists.¹²²

Mayor Libby Schaaf, City of Oakland

Saint-Denis is a land of immigration: 136 languages are spoken here on a daily basis. This diversity is our strength and must be reflected in our cultural and urban policies.¹²³

Mayor Mathieu Hanotin, City of Saint-Denis

Living as I do with one foot in two different places enables me to take a step back from each and regard them with a foreigner's eye, sometimes critically and sometimes naively. When I first lived in Europe, a decade-long stint spent in the Northwest of England in the 1990s, it was the first time in my life that I felt I had a clear understanding and vision of America, my home country—the good, the bad, the banal. Looking at the United States from afar, while learning and absorbing a new culture, made me more keenly aware of each place's politics, culture, and stereotypes, as well as the differences between the two. That experience has certainly shaped how I now move between locales.

¹²² Juliette Donadieu and Laure Gayet, *Translating Cities and Cultures: Oakland/Saint-Denis*, 2020, front cover. <https://www.oaklandsaintdenis.org/new-page>

¹²³ Donadieu and Gayet, *Translating*, front cover.

A Tale of Two Cities: Comparison and Contrast

I first spent time in Oakland professionally when I worked at a private foundation forty-six miles to the southwest in Menlo Park, Oakland was within the geographic reach of the grant portfolio that I managed, primarily making grants to arts and culture organizations in the nine counties of the Bay Area. I attended meetings and performances in Oakland, knew it by reputation, and sensed the rivalry with San Francisco. But my move to Oakland to both work and live in 2015 has made me appreciate all the textures and layers that the city represents.

My first trip to France as an 18-year-old was a mixture of travel to various cities and a week spent living with a family in the Greater Paris area. My host family lived in Colombes, which in 1980 was a Communist Party-run *banlieue* to the Northwest of Paris (its stadium was the site of the opening ceremony of the 1924 Olympic Games). I went to university classes with a family member at Nanterre University in another northwestern *banlieue* three miles from where I was staying. With all of the travel I did throughout France and to Paris during my ten years in England, I never intentionally spent time in Saint-Denis until I joined the Oakland/Saint Denis Cooperation Project delegation in October 2019 and traveled there to begin the exploration that continues today as *In the Banlieues: Oakland/Saint-Denis*, which I will describe later in this chapter.

Saint-Denis, France

Saint-Denis, France is both a historic center of France and an often maligned post-industrial *banlieue*. Located northeast of Paris and separated from the city by the Boulevard Périphérique, it is a place of extremes: it is the poorest city in France (in spite of being located in the wealthiest region), and the census indicates that it also has the nation's youngest residents on average as well as a large immigrant population, representing 136 nationalities. It has high rates

of innovation and is the second largest economic zone in the region after Paris-La Défense. Residents of Saint-Denis are often low-paid health care and service workers and have been disproportionately impacted by the global pandemic. Saint-Denis and its administrative government seat, Seine-Saint-Denis (Department 93), suffer from among the highest rates of violent crime in France; they were at the center of 2005 youth riots caused by in response to unemployment and police harassment, for example. Dionysiens are France's most surveilled population and travel companies routinely warn against spending time in Saint-Denis. The city is very dense, with 112,000 people (per the 2018 census) living in an area of less than five square miles, and government housing estates have a reputation for drug dealing. Saint-Denis is also part of Plaine Commune, a regional authority of nine neighboring municipalities, with a population of 415,000 people, equivalent to the population of Oakland.



Figures 16-18: Saint-Denis city center [source: Lamyne M], Basilique de Saint-Denis [Source: photo by author], Gare Pleyel, Saint-Denis [source: Oakland/Saint-Denis Cooperation Project].

Saint-Denis takes its name from the first Bishop of Paris and patron saint of France. Its Basilique (the current version of which was completed in 1144) is a historic and religious locus in France as the burial place of all but three French kings (forty-three kings and thirty-two queens are entombed there), and pilgrimages to visit it are common. The city has a rich and

dynamic cultural and artistic life, and has substantially shaped the development of both hip-hop and street art. It is home to Stade de France, the national stadium that the country built for the 1998 FIFA World Cup in which the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic games will primarily take place (although the marketing for these events reads “Paris 2024”). Every French presidential candidate is sure to make a campaign stop in Saint-Denis, not only for its historical importance but because the French see it as the quintessential *banlieue*, a petri dish of all the social and economic ills that every politician wants to either solve or exploit. It is a place that enables urbanists to rebrand Paris, often called a “museum city,” as an authentic and multicultural metropolitan area. And it is true that to walk through Saint-Denis feels like being at the center of the world, a world full of an active and bustling street life replete with cafés, music, conflict, love, historic buildings, art, and open-air markets.

Saint-Denis, with its ancient beginnings rooted in the second century AD, was once part of an agricultural plain, dotted with forests and farmland. The location eventually became a religious center when Saint Denis was martyred during Roman emperor Decius’ reign and buried there in 250AD, making it a place of worship for pilgrims thereafter. King Dagobert I had the first religious chapel constructed there, which later became the site of the Basilique, and he was the first of the many kings buried there. During his reign, Dagobert paved the way for Saint-Denis to become a market town, and its importance grew. Religion also remained central to the town’s identity, as when during the French Religion Wars, Catholics and Protestants fought the Battle of Saint-Denis over the course of one day in 1567 (the Catholics won). From 1793 to 1803, during the French Revolution, revolutionaries renamed the city Franciade (which is now the name of a local makers collective and shop), opened the royal tombs and removed the remains of kings and queens, eventually reburying them in a common grave.

Saint-Denis became more urbanized after 1820 when factories began to enter the region, moving from the Paris center further outward. The area eventually became the first industrial complex in the country, with a large manufacturing output including chemicals, metallurgy, energy, and textiles. This growth of industry was further aided by the 1821 completion of the 6.6 km-long Canal Saint-Denis, which Napoleon commissioned at the turn of the century to expedite shipping and divert industrial cargo from traveling the Seine through the center of Paris. Canal Saint-Denis is the largest of three man-made canals in Paris, and it extends from the junction with the Seine at Saint-Denis to the Canal de l'Ourcq at the Bassin de la Villette.¹²⁴ The arrival of an industrial railway augmented the waterways and enabled the growing industrial corridor just outside of Paris to transport more volume. In 1860, the City of Paris began expanding, and annexed the former commune of La Chapelle to the north of Paris. The municipalities of Saint-Denis, Saint-Ouen and Aubervilliers divided the surplus, creating La Plaine Saint-Denis. Interestingly, this heavily industrial area became a center of a socialist movement, and along with other neighboring *banlieues* became known as *les villes rouges*. Even today many of the leaders of these and other *banlieues* are part of the Communist party.

During World War II, the Germans occupied Saint-Denis, freeing it in 1944. After the war, like other parts of Europe, France experienced a period of rebuilding and expansion, and saw many of its rural population move to cities to take advantage of new employment opportunities while also receiving an influx of immigrants from other parts of Europe and post-colonial countries. Paris's housing stock was outdated and not prepared for the effects of globalization and the resulting population growth, and shantytowns known as *bidonvilles* housing many North African immigrants started to develop on the outskirts of the city. The

¹²⁴ "Canal Saint-Denis," Place and See, July 29, 2021, <https://placeandsee.com/wiki/canal-saint-denis>.

federal government eventually took action, and in 1953 quickly built low-cost standardized housing in the *banlieues*, not unlike the projects that the U.S. government was building in inner cities. Saint-Denis's population diversified and grew during this period as a result of increasing industrialization and this rapid addition of new immigrants, many of whom worked in the local factories, creating the varied cultural mix that remains in Saint-Denis today.

The population of Saint-Denis, which was at the 10,000 mark in the mid-nineteenth century, saw its largest increase of 6.72 percent to 22,000 in 1861 as the result of the creation of Plaine-Saint-Denis. That number grew to almost 70,000 in 1946 immediately following WWII and grew steadily over the next decade, staying close to 100,000 ever since.¹²⁵ It is important to note that the French government does not collect racial statistics, so any demographic measures of Saint-Denis include only age, gender and percentage of foreign-born residents (45 percent in 2017).¹²⁶

During the economic downturn that began in the 1970s, local officials launched a plan to grapple with the de-industrialization of La Plaine Saint-Denis. In 1985 they created a new inter-municipal syndicate between Saint-Denis, Saint-Ouen, and Aubervilliers known as Plaine Renaissance with the aim of diversifying economic activity in the region, and this association has continued to evolve since that time. For example, Plaine Renaissance constructed five thousand new housing units (primarily apartments) between 1985 and 2000 in the region, and in 1998 the Stade de France was constructed. Film director Luc Besson created a film and television studio in a former electric power station, and incentives were offered to attract corporations relocating

¹²⁵ "Notice Communale: Saint-Denis," Des villages de Cassini aux communes d'aujourd'hui, accessed March 11, 2022, http://cassini.ehess.fr/fr/html/fiche.php?select_resultat=31120.

¹²⁶ Brinkhoff, Thomas, "Saint-Denis," *CityPopulation*, accessed March 13, 2022, https://www.citypopulation.de/en/france/seinesaintdenis/saint_denis/93066__saint_denis/

from Paris prices, developing 800,000 meters of office space.¹²⁷ Some of the historic streets and neighborhoods across Plaine Renaissance were preserved and adaptive reuse of old buildings is taking place.

Starting in 1998, nine municipalities to the north of Paris joined together to form Plaine Commune, an intercommunal public territorial institution (EPT) for the purpose of pooling resources and capacities for greater municipal health. Areas of cooperation include urban and social development, economic and employment development, public space (including transportation and public health), and culture and sport.¹²⁸

After World War I, the city of Paris started dismantling the historic walls surrounding the twenty arrondissements of Paris and in 1973 opened the Boulevard Périphérique in their place. The boulevard comprises 35 km of administrative, physical, and psychological separation between the city and the *banlieues*, including Saint-Denis, and exacerbates the problems of social dis-integration and economic mobility for the primarily working-class populations that live in these outer districts. As geographer Mike Devereux articulated in 2011, “Inside the line are 2.2 million Parisians – associated by writers...with luxury, arts, culture, and refinement. Outside are 9.6 million *banlieusards*, seen as anonymous, peripheral and remote from the centre.”¹²⁹ Researcher Justinien Tribillon adds more visuals, describing the road as the busiest in Europe, forty to sixty meters wide and with six lanes of traffic. “Cutting across the city, the

¹²⁷ Paul Lecroart, *The Urban Regeneration of Plaine-Saint-Denis, Paris region, 1985-2020*, Planning Sustainable Cities: Global Report on Human Settlements, 2009, <http://www.unhabitat.org/grhs/2009>.

¹²⁸ Seine-Saint-Denis Tourisme. “Plaine Commune.” Accessed January 13, 2022. <https://uk.tourisme93.com/plaine-commune.html>.

¹²⁹ Mike Devereux, *Inverted Peripheries: Le Boulevard Périphérique and the struggle for identity in Paris*, paper presented at the Architectural Humanities Research Association Conference, Queens University, Belfast, Northern Ireland, 2011, <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/output/967962>.

Périphérique's viaduct structure is omnipresent in the working-class neighborhoods of north-east Paris, but in well-off areas...it discreetly passes underground as a tunnel. In the main though, a formidable ring of concrete now stands where fortifications once did. London has its green belt, Paris its concrete one"¹³⁰ Put another way, everything changes once one crosses this ring of concrete, from property values and crime rates to socioeconomic data. One has to question whether it is really the "*périph*" that keeps people apart, or the cultural stigma; the "communitarianism" of people keeping to their own ethnic or religious communities, or purely economics.¹³¹

However, things are going to change rapidly in Saint-Denis, and the transformation is already underway. The 2016 creation of the Grand Paris urban plan, which labeled Plaine Commune as a *Territoire de la Culture et de la Création*", made the district ripe for more urban evolution, similar to Richard Florida's Creative City construct. Plans are underway for galvanizing the city through new housing, an expansion of an existing shopping center, and the development of an eco-housing district.¹³² The Grand Paris plan has also manifested itself in the Grand Paris Express métro expansion, and Saint-Denis will feel the impact of becoming a major regional transit hub. Once builders finish constructing the new Pleyel hub, one of the first of the sixty-eight new métro stations that will be constructed during the coming decade, and the largest, the expectation is that 250,000 people a day will be passing through Saint-Denis. The state-

¹³⁰ Justinien Tribillon, "Dirty Boulevard: why Paris's ring road is a major block on the city's grand plans," *The Guardian*, June 26, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/jun/26/ring-road-paris-peripherique-suburbs-banlieue>.

¹³¹ Stangler, "Working-Class Paris."

¹³² Ian Berman, "Creative Marketing or Creative Placemaking? Culture-Led Revitalization in Paris's Plaine Commune," *The Gallatin Research Journal* (2019), <https://wp.nyu.edu/compass/2019/03/28/creative-marketing-or-creative-placemaking-culture-led-revitalization-in-pariss-plaine-commune/>.

owned Société du Grand Paris is managing and financing this transport project through a mix of property taxes and “green bonds” issued to investors interested in environmental issues on the basis that this project will greatly reduce carbon emissions in and around Paris.¹³³

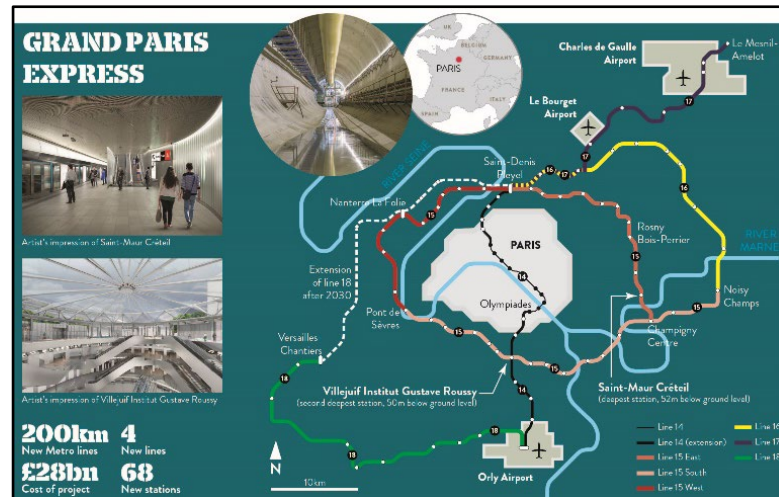


Figure 19: Map of new metro lines as part of Grand Paris Express transport expansion. [Source: Anthea Carter, Technical Illustrator.]

Each of the sixty-eight new stations that the Grand Paris plans is constructing will be designed by a duo consisting of an architect and an artist. Japanese architect Kengo Kuma, for example, is designing the Pleyel station and has stated that "The station will be a new center of the city, and its complementary program will bring about a dynamic social and cultural dimension to the district of Pleyel."¹³⁴ Belgian artist and singer Stromae will create artworks for the station; he and his team have filmed a short video as part of the application that Paris submitted to the International Olympic Committee. The opening of the new Saint-Denis métro

¹³³ Andy Bolton, "Future of Rail | Massive metro tunnelling programme links Paris suburbs," *New Civil Engineer*, March 3, 2022, <https://www.newcivilengineer.com/the-future-of/future-of-rail-massive-metro-tunnelling-programme-links-paris-suburbs-03-03-2022/>.

¹³⁴ Jessica Mairs, "Kengo Kuma wins bid to design station for new Paris Metro line," *Dezeen*, March 24, 2015, <https://www.dezeen.com/2015/03/24/kengo-kuma-train-station-paris-metro-gare-saint-denis-pleyel-france/>.

hub is carefully planned to coincide with the 2024 Olympics and Paralympics that the City of Paris is hosting, although the project is behind schedule and completion dates are not confirmed. Much of the games will take place in Saint-Denis, and the new transit hub will be critical to transporting athletes and tourists.¹³⁵ An astounding 95 percent of the sporting facilities are already in place. Private investors have led the funding for housing for the athletes and an aquatic center next to the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, which are all currently under construction, and which local residents will use after the Olympics. Many see both the Pleyel and the Olympics as a way to repair the historic fragmentation between Paris and the banlieues, regenerate Saint-Denis, and also show the world that terrorism will not stop France from hosting large-scale events in a very symbolic way (in the November 2015 terrorist attacks, the first bombers struck outside the Stade de France in Saint-Denis).

It is important to acknowledge the challenges of racial identity in an officially color-blind country that does not want to talk about race, and yet has faced devastating Islamic terrorist attacks in the last decade. According to academic Jean Beaman, “France is both ‘anti-racial,’ in that the French reject the use of racial terms, and ‘non-racial,’ in that it denies the reality of race. What is clear is that race has been instrumental in defining French identity, both historically and in the present.”¹³⁶ French Republicanism’s denial of race and ethnicity—the government does not use the word “race” in any official documents, and as previously mentioned, does not measure or track it in any way—also denies the reality of systemic racism and exclusion. The

¹³⁵ Angelique Chrisafis, “Paris’s poor neighbour hopes city makes good on Olympic promise,” *The Guardian UK*, September 14, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/14/paris-poor-neighbour-saint-denis-hopes-city-makes-good-on-olympic-promise>.

¹³⁶ Jean Beaman, “Race: A Never-Ending Taboo in France,” *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, April 1, 2021, <https://gjia.georgetown.edu/2021/04/01/race-a-never-ending-taboo-in-france/>.

differences between how France and the U.S. acknowledge their narratives of colonialism are striking. America, as a “nation of immigrants” believes in putting slavery and Jim Crow behind us but is constantly tracking race and ethnicity. The U.S. Congress passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act as a way to recognize the existence of systemic racism, while France prefers to sweep that truth under the rug and focus on community unity rather than amplifying racial differences.¹³⁷ This is a major oversimplification, of course, as racial injustice continues to grow in both countries, whether acknowledged or not.

As Chapter 3 mentioned, what one does hear a lot about is *laïcité*, or secularism, the principle that we recognize in the US as separation of church and state. In France, *laïcité* bans religion from public space, a requirement diametrically opposed to the American approach of stopping government intervention in religion. As political scientist Laurent Bouvet states, “Secularism is our common good; if there is a common French identity, it’s not an identity of roots, it’s not a Christian identity, it’s not cathedrals, it’s not the white race. It’s a political project.”¹³⁸

Between the Grand Paris Express and the 2024 Olympics, Saint-Denis is reconsidering its built environment; the government is razing some existing buildings in the adjacent neighborhoods, repurposing others, and constructing still others from scratch. As all this transformation occurs in Saint-Denis and the neighboring suburbs, there is no question that Dionysiens will struggle to retain their identity while at the same time remaining visible to the people of France, to the State, to the world. At the same time, the city’s residents are grappling

¹³⁷ Beaman, “Race.”

¹³⁸ George Packer, “The Other France: Are the suburbs of Paris incubators of terrorism?” *The New Yorker*, August 24, 2015, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/08/31/the-other-france>.

with the effects of gentrification. As housing and office prices increase in Paris, more people are moving outside of the Périphérique, encroaching upon the already populous *banlieues*, turning them *bobo*, driving up the cost of living and driving the working class further away from the city.

There are debates whether this is actually happening as quickly as it seems. Some observers argue that the narrative about gentrification in Saint-Denis is more of a media story than a reality, and pointing out that residential mobility is also related to normal urban movement, immigration, or the effects of the pandemic as people look for larger homes and gardens not available in central Paris, while lower middle class workers move further away from central Paris because of housing costs or evictions. “For us, the people of Saint-Denis, gentrification is the culture of cafés, it is employment, it is cultural diversity. In the United States, gentrification erases local populations from collective memory,”¹³⁹ according to Lamyne M, an artist in Saint-Denis who has also visited Oakland as part of the Oakland/Saint-Denis Cooperation Project learning expedition.

According to local entrepreneur Julien Villain, there are currently three faces of Saint-Denis: the ancient city center that contains the Basilique; the government-built housing projects in the north and east, and La Plaine Saint-Denis, the most modern part of the city and the location where the growth is happening; the latter even has its own zip code.¹⁴⁰ These three areas are all politically and economically connected to each other, and are still working to solve the historical issue of deindustrialization that first took root in the 1970s and 80s and that remains one of the region’s future urban policy challenges. It may be that the French government’s goal of *mixité sociale*, or integrated communities, can become more possible

¹³⁹ Lamyne M (artist) in discussion with the author, Saint-Denis, France, February 29, 2020.

¹⁴⁰ Julien Villain (entrepreneur) in discussion with the author, Saint-Denis, France, February 29, 2020.

through urban development, economic investment, and a robust cultural life, and Saint-Denis is a city to watch in this regard.

Saint-Denis' Cultural Plan

The City of Saint-Denis has long been a proponent of arts and culture in its policymaking and is home to a number of highly regarded theaters and museums, as well as one of the largest music festivals in France. French laws, most recently in 2015 and 2016, inscribe government support of cultural rights (*les droits culturels*) as human rights, espousing a more accessible, participative, and community-based approach to arts and culture for all. The government also highly subsidizes cultural activities. This concept of *droits culturels* may be the closest French concept to the American term “creative placemaking,” although the latter is more tied to the idea of community and urban planning. In 2016, recognizing that it could use this cultural paradigm shift to better serve the city’s multicultural and evolving population, Saint-Denis created, with input from an interdisciplinary group of stakeholders and participants, a *Cultural Orientation Plan: For an inclusive, collaborative and conscientious cultural policy*. This new approach, based on the concept of *les droits culturels*, has had a significant impact on cultural and urban policy in the region. According to former Deputy Mayor Sonia Pignot, in charge of culture and heritage: “It rebuilds the principles of public action, introduces new styles of participatory and inclusive governance in municipal services and facilities, changes the way in which a project is planned or conceived, questions the content as much as the process and how it is implemented.”¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ City of Saint-Denis and Le Réseau culture 21. *Cultural Orientation Plan: For an inclusive, collaborative and conscientious cultural policy*, 2017, 8.

There are seven major cross-sector orientations in the plan, with details on the stakes of implementing each, and suggested action plans as detailed in the report:

Orientation	Description
Cultivating Democracy	Respect fundamental human rights and be aware of the political aspect of public work while creating a Council of Cultural Rights
Cultivating Diversity in Resources and their Connections	Develop projects that counteract stereotypes and re-energize internal and external diversity of people and resources
Cultivating Common Heritages	Develop heritage-based projects that include local residents; expand the concept and practice of heritage
Cultivating the Region's Variable Geometry	Expand participation across the region; re-imagine public space, consider digital tools to increase accessibility to culture
Cultivating the Time and Pace of Daily Life	Optimize use of facilities to correspond with people's schedules; ensure continuity of public work and respect how much people can participate
Cultivating Information Sharing	Develop and promote access to information
Cultivating Practical Education	Promote variety in teaching and learning methods; encourage the art of creation and the sharing of experiences

Table 2: Orientations from the *Saint-Denis Cultural Orientation Plan*. [Source: City of Saint-Denis and Le Réseau culture 21, *Cultural Orientation Plan: For an inclusive, collaborative and conscientious cultural policy*, 2017.]

The current mayor of Saint-Denis, Mathieu Hanotin, was elected in 2020, taking over from a Communist administration, and has proceeded to work with his cultural team to implement the cultural plan and accelerate the importance of arts and culture on the local, national, and international stage. A project that touches upon several of the cultural plan orientations is the Berges du Canal de Saint-Denis. In preparation for the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the cities of Saint-Denis, Aubervilliers and Paris envision gathering together on bicycles and on foot along the embankment of the six-mile long freight canal in Saint-Denis. Cultural and urbanism organizations Esopa Productions and Éspace Compris brought together local residents and businesses to encourage dialogue and imagine artistic commissions in a participatory approach to center arts and culture in transforming the area. The recommendations from that initial community planning work is being activated alongside the canal by landscapers Gautier+Conquet.



Figure 20 Members of the Oakland/Saint-Denis Cooperation Project at Canal Saint-Denis, October 2019. [Source: photo by Camille Servain-Schreiber.]

Notably, the city is putting in a bid with Plaine Commune, in competition with at least six other French cities, to become the European Capital of Culture in 2028. The group that the cities created to oversee the application, Périphéries 2028, called the effort an opportunity to write “cultural policy in action.” This organization has also created a storefront to promote the region’s candidacy through the arts and to collect ideas from local residents.¹⁴² The press release announcing their bid illuminates their focus: “To make our territories no longer margins but living and attractive spaces, where the future is being built.”¹⁴³ In 1985, actress Melina Mercouri, then Minister of Culture in Greece, and Jack Lang, France’s former Minister of Culture, created the European Capital of Culture title as a way for cities to implement dynamic local cultural programming with international reach for a year. The honor has evolved into a title for two (named) countries per year, and in 2028 will include one French city and one from the Czech Republic. Four French cities have held the title in the past: Paris (1989), Avignon (2000), Lille (2004), and Marseille (2013). In 2023 the European Union will reach a decision on which cities will hold the title next.

An official delegation from the City of Saint-Denis will travel to Oakland in Summer 2022 to accentuate the existing cultural partnership between Oakland and Saint-Denis while considering other points of intersection between the two cities in the realms of education and commerce, followed by a visit to Oakland by Mayor Hanotin in 2023.

¹⁴² Périphéries 2028, “Le Projet,” accessed March 13, 2022, <https://perifeeries2028.eu/la-candidature/>.

¹⁴³ City of Saint-Denis, “Saint-Denis, capitale européenne de la culture 2028,” news release, December 18, 2021, <https://ville-saint-denis.fr/communique/saint-denis-capitale-europ%C3%A9enne-de-la-culture-2028>.

Historic Preservation in Saint-Denis

In keeping with France's primarily centralized approach to the preservation of historic sites, the Centre des monuments nationaux (CMN) restores and manages those sites that the French government owns. It is no surprise that the Basilique Saint-Denis, with its great historic significance, falls into this category. There has been a thirty-year debate over the restoration of the spire that was weakened by tornados, poorly repaired, and ultimately dismantled in 1846. While the project is moving ahead under the current mayor, with the renovation team projecting completion by 2028,¹⁴⁴ controversy hovers around the twenty-five million Euro price tag and the possible damage to historic material that may result from strengthening the foundation of the building in order to add a replacement spire.¹⁴⁵

More locally, and in addition to the State's active conservation of protected heritage sites, the *Patrimoine* department oversees historic preservation within the regional government entity of Seine-Saint-Denis. This oversight includes the identification and preservation of historic sites within both the national and local authority urban policy frameworks that Chapter 3 outlined. The department also issues opinions on urban planning documents related to historic rehabilitation or adaptive reuse projects.

The Ile-de-France region maintains a regional inventory (currently in possession of 16,700 records) according to a national methodology from the fifth century to present day.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Paudal, "In Saint-Denis, the spire reconstruction project is taking shape," December 3, 2021. <https://www.paudal.com/2021/12/03/in-saint-denis-the-spire-reconstruction-project-is-taking-shape/>.

¹⁴⁵ Sage, Adam, "French academics at odds over €25m plans to rebuild spire of Basilica of Saint-Denis," *The Sunday Times UK*, November 16, 2021, <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/french-academics-at-odds-over-25m-plans-to-rebuild-spire-of-basilica-of-saint-denis-5c5dcw7vs>.

¹⁴⁶ Patrimoines & Inventaire, "Les Missions," Région Ile de France, January 10, 2018, <https://patrimoines.iledefrance.fr/nos-actions/missions>.

The regions also employ crowdfunding to leverage private support for preservation projects. The regional government matches on a one-to-one basis every Euro that the Fondation du Patrimoine (created in 1996 to help raise money for preservation projects) raises.¹⁴⁷

Saint-Denis is part of a formerly agricultural, then religious, and ultimately industrial landscape, so there is a great deal of historic layering of the built environment. The *patrimoine* department of Seine-Saint-Denis works to identify these more day-to-day historic sites, *le patrimoine au quotidien*. As its website states, “modest, unique, or internationally recognized, these buildings and places tell the story of the territory and the formation of the suburbs around Paris. They constitute landmarks and historical, urban, and architectural traces to be preserved and made better known.”¹⁴⁸

For example, the Musée d’Art Paul Eluard was originally a Carmelite monastery dating from 1625. In 1770, the seventh daughter of Louis XV saved it from financial ruin by making it her residence. Much later, in 1972, the city of Saint-Denis saved it from demolition, and it has been a museum since 1981.¹⁴⁹ The Maison des Arbalétriers, or House of Rafters, which dates to the late eighteenth century and which textile workers used for many years to dry printed fabric produced in a nearby factory, was adapted for different uses several times during that period. The building was restored in 1985 and has operated as a brewery since 1986. The Maison now

¹⁴⁷ Fondation du Patrimoine website, accessed March 10, 2022, <https://www.fondation-patrimoine.org/recherche-projet?location=Saint-Denis%2C%20Seine-Saint-Denis%2C%20France>.

¹⁴⁸ Le Département Seine-Saint-Denis, “Une politique pilote dans le domaine du patrimoine architectural et urbain,” November 24, 2020, <https://seinesaintdenis.fr/culture-patrimoine-sport-loisirs/patrimoine/article/une-politique-pilote-dans-le-domaine-du-patrimoine-architectural-et-urbain>.

¹⁴⁹ Musée d’art et d’histoire Paul Eluard, “Histoire,” accessed February 20, 2022, <https://musee-saint-denis.com/le-musee/histoire/>.

appears on the Supplementary Record of Historic Monuments, a good example of industrial heritage.¹⁵⁰

Oakland, California

An eleven-hour flight west from Saint-Denis, over Iceland and Greenland leads to another “land.” Oakland, like Saint-Denis, has a notable past and a challenging present. Situated across the bay from San Francisco, it’s iconic urban neighbor, and just up the road from the heart of Silicon Valley, Oakland suffers by comparison, particularly in how others perceive it. According to the preface to Chris Rhomberg’s book about the city, “...the City of Oakland has suffered from a certain image problem. The usual stereotype casts the East Bay hub as a gray, industrial Second City to San Francisco, hardworking but dull in comparison to its more glamorous, sophisticated (and European) neighbor on the western side of the bay.”¹⁵¹ A 2012 New York Times Magazine article called Oakland “Urban, dangerous, and poor – fertile social conditions for inciting revolution...the revolutionary pilot light is always on.”¹⁵² Even the history books that have been written about Oakland tell part of the story in their titles: *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland* (Chris Rhomberg, 2004); *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Robert O. Self, 2003); *Hella Town: Oakland’s History of Development and Disruption* (Mitchell Schwarzer, 2021).

¹⁵⁰ “Atlas de l’Architecture et du Patrimoine,” Département de la Seine-Saint-Denis, Accessed March 10, 2022, <https://patrimoine.seinesaintdenis.fr/Maison-des-arbaletriers>.

¹⁵¹ Chris Rhomberg, *No There There: Race, Class, and Political Community in Oakland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), ix.

¹⁵² Mahler, Jonathan. “Oakland, the Last Refuge from Radical America.” New York Times Magazine, August 1, 2012. <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/05/magazine/oakland-occupy-movement.html>.



Figures 21-23: Photographs of Tribune Tower, Lake Merritt, and City Hall/SPACES:Oakland. [Sources: CBRE, photo by author, photo by author.]

This is a city that consistently appears on lists of the most ethnically-diverse cities in the country; a city that germinated the rise of the Black Power movement in the 1960s to advance civil rights with the home-grown Black Panther Party for Self Defense, and a city whose political and racial justice protests and activism have reached the national stage ever since. The latter interventions have included a major Occupy Oakland movement in Frank Ogawa Plaza protesting the power of Wall Street, and the creation and growth of the Black Lives Matter movement to protest continued police violence against Black people and other people of color. However, this does not mean that Oakland is a post-racial city, free from systemic racism. From 2019 to 2020 there was a 107 percent increase in reported anti-Asian hate crimes in California - and a number of racist incidents against Black residents in Oakland have made the national news.¹⁵³

At one point known as the Athens of the Pacific because of its many educational institutions, in recent years Oakland has instead been called Brooklyn by the Bay, a reference to

¹⁵³ Henry Lee, "Anti-Asian Hate Crimes in California Jumped 107%, Attorney General Says," KTVU Fox 2, June 30, 2021, <https://www.ktvu.com/news/anti-asian-hate-crimes-in-california-jumped-107-attorney-general-says>.

the California city's hipster vibe that resembles the New York borough. In a famous quote (usually taken out of context) about her nostalgia for her quiet childhood home in Oakland, the writer Gertrude Stein's 1937 autobiography remarks that, "there is no there there."¹⁵⁴ This phrase, which Tommy Orange also used as the title of his bestselling novel about contemporary local indigenous communities—underlines the rapid evolution of Oakland from its pastoral beginnings.¹⁵⁵

Oakland's significant struggles range from its crime rates (the City's homicide rate hit a 15-year high in 2021, after a downward trend in prior years, although this is true in many cities across the world as a result of the pandemic), to the sideshows of racing cars in the middle of the night, to its industrial wastelands, to the homelessness that is abundant across the Bay Area. Yet to be in Oakland is to have access to her hilly oak and redwood groves, to experience the beauty of saltwater Lake Merritt and its gardens and birds, to always be a ten-minute drive away from mountains and large lakes and miles-long hikes and the bay. Nor is Oakland's natural beauty its only gifts. These also include the city's energy, the diversity of its people, the art, the scrappiness necessary to make positive changes even in the face of overwhelming odds. Oakland is a city of neighborhoods, each with their slightly distinct features and personalities. I live in a home built in 1924 in the Dimond District, named for Hugh Dimond, who came West during the Gold Rush and purchased the land, including a creek and the land beside it that became Dimond Park. The very diverse neighborhood also holds an annual Oktoberfest to celebrate the area's early German residents. As a 1990 New York Times article states, "Here is a town that isn't given to extremes or pretensions; here is a truly all-American setting, open-ended and perennially unexplored. The

¹⁵⁴ Gertrude Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1937), 289.

¹⁵⁵ Tommy Orange, *There, There* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2018).

rewards of such a place are greater when you have to put in a little work. And this is a place that beckons us to try harder and look deeper. The thereness is there for all who seek it.”¹⁵⁶

Named for the oak groves that it used to encompass, and which provided the lumber that built San Francisco, Oakland sits on native Ohlone land, an expansive area along the coastal region of what is now California. The Ohlone villages functioned as a network, focused upon respect for the land and the resources it provided. In the late 1700s, the Spanish Empire landed in the Monterey Bay area and began its colonization of indigenous land, building a series of missions up and down the state in order to convert the native peoples to Catholicism. What followed was a sad but common tale of colonization: land seizures, cultural suppression, religious domination. In 1820 the King of Spain gave a parcel of 44,800 acres of land (what is now Alameda County) to a soldier name Peralta, which set the stage for present-day Oakland once he opened it up to American settlers. Peralta ceded the land to the Mexican Republic, who sold it to the United States in 1848, when the Gold Rush brought in people from all over the country. California became a state in 1850, and Oakland was incorporated as a city in 1852. Peralta Hacienda, the former ranch house of the Peralta family still exists as a historical museum and education center, and on the grounds is the vestige of the original 1820 adobe.¹⁵⁷

In the following decades, Oakland coalesced into a modern urban area with all the associated amenities. The Port of Oakland was the first major port on the Pacific side of the United States to have terminals to welcome container ships. The arrival of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, with its western terminus in Oakland (you can still see the terminal at Seventh and Broadway)

¹⁵⁶ John Krich, “The Other City by the Bay,” *New York Times*, January 7, 1990.

¹⁵⁷ The Planning History of Oakland, CA, “Overview,” Accessed March 6, 2022, <https://oaklandplanninghistory.weebly.com/timeline.html>.

brought travelers and emigrants to Oakland's door, some of whom stayed. The 1906 earthquake in San Francisco was a major tragedy in the Bay Area, but also the beginning of a more symbiotic relationship with Oakland, as 150,000 moved to the East Bay in the aftermath, catalyzing a building boom and turning Oakland into a city. By 1910, Oakland had annexed more land and its population had doubled from its 1900 number.¹⁵⁸ The construction of the Oakland Bay Bridge between San Francisco and Oakland in 1936, as author Mitchell Schwarzer recounts, came to be because of a bridge rivalry between the two cities. With planning underway for the Golden Gate Bridge that would connect San Francisco with Marin County to the North, Oakland city leaders did not want to be sidelined. The Golden Gate Bridge opened a mere six months after the Oakland Bay Bridge. On a personal note, my great-uncle Edward Schulhauser, born in Wisconsin like me, migrated west and was a lead engineer on the construction of the Bay Bridge.

During World War I, four shipyards were operating in Oakland under forced draft. According to the Works Progress Administration, "following that period the city production increased in automobiles, lumber, and allied products, electrical machinery, canning, and cereal products. The aggregate value of Oakland's industrial output was multiplied five times between 1914 and 1927."¹⁵⁹ World War II was transformational for Oakland, as its plentiful shipyard jobs attracted an influx of people. With this inward migration came music, and Oakland's Seventh Street became nationally known for its jazz and blues clubs, catalyzing a sound called the West

¹⁵⁸ Planning History of Oakland, "Overview."

¹⁵⁹ Works Progress Administration, *California, American Guide Series* (New York: Hastings House, 1939), 240.

Coast Blues.¹⁶⁰ Oakland's place at "the junction of multiple modes of transportation" meant that people immigrated from around the world, including large numbers of Black people from America's South,¹⁶¹ and by 1980, Oakland was majority Black and "one of the centers of black [sic] culture and politics in the United States."¹⁶² It should be noted that Black migration to Oakland began a century earlier, with those in search of gold, a new life post-slavery (although California has its own sad history of slave ownership), and work with the Southern Pacific Railway in a variety of roles.¹⁶³ For people of color, moving to Oakland was not without its problems: Black men were able to get jobs as Pullman porters on the railroad, but faced housing discrimination in the nearby neighborhoods. Chinese workers who relocated to Oakland after working in California's gold mines faced segregation until the mid-twentieth century. An active Chinatown still exists in downtown Oakland.

According to the 2020 Census, Oakland's population continues to grow, having seen an increase of 50,000 people in the past decade. With a population of 441,000 (as of the 2020 census) projected to grow to 445,000 by 2022¹⁶⁴, it is much less dense than Saint-Denis, with an area eleven times the size of the *banlieue*. In broad categories, the demographic breakdown is 28 percent Hispanic, 27 percent Caucasian, 20 percent Black, and 15 percent Asian. Of these, the

¹⁶⁰ Jennifer Soliman, "The Rise and Fall of Seventh Street in Oakland," *Found SF* (blog), 2015, https://www.foundsf.org/index.php?title=The_Rise_and_Fall_of_Seventh_Street_in_Oakland.

¹⁶¹ Soliman, "The Rise and Fall."

¹⁶² Schwarzer, *Hella Town: Oakland's History of Development and Disruption* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2021), 8.

¹⁶³ Dorothy Lazard, "African Americans Establish a Growing Community in Early Oakland," Oakland Public Library, February 7, 2018, <https://medium.com/@Oakland/african-americans-establish-a-growing-community-in-early-oakland-cd946b519aee>.

¹⁶⁴ "Oakland, California Population 2022," World Population Review, accessed March 30, 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/oakland-ca-population>.

Black community is the only one that is declining, a forty-year trend.¹⁶⁵ In 1980, Oakland was 47 percent Black, but gentrification-related rises housing costs, an increase in violence, and a changing job market (in part because of the closure of small manufacturing plants in the region), have accelerated this group's outward migration. However, the Diversity Index in Oakland, which indicates how likely it is that two people selected at random will be of a different ethnicity, has risen from 76 percent to 77 percent in the last decade. California's 2020 Diversity Index is at 69.9 percent, an increase of 2 percent since 2010.¹⁶⁶

With the steady increase in population from the early twentieth century onward came an associated increase in traffic issues. Experts predicted that six million cars would cross the Bay Bridge in its first year. In reality it exceeded this number by 3 million, and continued to increase after World War II as more and more people acquired cars, mirroring nationwide trends.¹⁶⁷ In parallel with the freeway planning that was happening at the federal level, California passed the Collier-Burns Act in 1947 to increase the gas tax to pay for highway construction, and from 1946 to 1985, four major freeways were built in and around Oakland and in 1972, the heavy rail Bay Area Rapid Transit System (BART) between Oakland and other points of the Bay Area began operation, forever changing the city's landscape. According to Schwarzer, "Freeway and BART right-of-ways rode roughshod over cityscape that stood in their path, leading to thousands of buildings moved or demolished, scores of streets dead-ended or diverted, businesses disrupted,

¹⁶⁵ David DeBolt, "Oakland's population grew by 50,000 over the past decade, 2020 Census data shows," *The Oaklandside*, August 18, 2021, <https://oaklandside.org/2021/08/18/oaklands-population-grew-by-50000-over-the-past-decade-2020-census-data-shows/>.

¹⁶⁶ United States Census, "Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the United States: 2010 Census and 2020 Census," August 12, 2021, <https://www.census.gov/library/visualizations/interactive/racial-and-ethnic-diversity-in-the-united-states-2010-and-2020-census.html>.

¹⁶⁷ Mitchell Schwarzer, *Hella Town*, 186.

residents displaced.”¹⁶⁸ That the majority of the people that bisection of downtown and West Oakland displaced were Black and high-poverty residents is something the city is still grappling with. Civic leaders’ early expectation that these new transportation efforts would advance urban development by removing blight, and encouraging more people to come to the city center for shopping and work has long been disproven, even as some tech firms have spilled over to the East Bay in recent years as San Francisco has increasingly become a Silicon Valley satellite. Homelessness has run rampant in the Bay Area, and as UC-Berkeley geographer Brandi T. Summers states, “Across the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, Black people throughout the United States have been targeted by spatial exclusions and dispossessions rooted in racial capitalism. Yet racial disparities in Oakland’s rates of homelessness remain particularly stark, with African Americans comprising an astonishing seventy percent of those experiencing homelessness, while making up just twenty percent of the overall population.”¹⁶⁹

The city-changing impact of gentrification is alive and well in the Bay Area and has been exacerbated by the pandemic as people change jobs and lifestyles, and residential mobility increases. A report that the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC) published in 2020 by put San Francisco and Oakland at the top of its list of the “most intensely” gentrified urban area in the United States from 2013-2017.¹⁷⁰ The Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco published a working paper in May 2021 that pointed out that Oakland has “changed dramatically

¹⁶⁸ Schwarzer, *Hella Town*, 171.

¹⁶⁹ Brandi T. Summers, “Untimely Futures,” *Places Journal*, November 2021. <https://placesjournal.org/article/black-homelessness-in-oakland/>.

¹⁷⁰ “San Francisco, Oakland, Top New Report Listing US Cities Most Impacted by Gentrification,” CBS SF Bay Area, July 6, 2020, <https://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/2020/07/06/san-francisco-oakland-top-new-report-listing-cities-most-impacted-gentrification/>.

by race and class over the past 20 years” and that low, moderate and middle-socioeconomic status residents moved away at or above national rates during that time. Notably, gentrification has affected almost all of Oakland’s lower-income neighborhoods to some degree. The financial instability that the Great Recession of 2008 and the related foreclosure crisis caused has led to neighborhood instability, particularly in Deep East Oakland and parts of West Oakland.¹⁷¹

Oakland’s Cultural Plan

Oakland’s cultural life, while diverse and active, has had inconsistent support from local government over the years. The City of Oakland’s Cultural Affairs Division and commission is now part of the City’s Economic & Workforce Development Department, a change from its beginnings in 1991 in the City’s Cultural Arts and Marketing Division. The commission was folded in 2011 because of a lack of funds, an unfortunate fallout from the Great Recession. In 2020, after a nine-year gap, Oakland’s Mayor Libby Schaaf and City Council passed an ordinance to re-establish the Cultural Affairs commission, an eleven-person advisory committee whose members the Mayor appoints. Their goal is to advise the City on arts and culture policy matters and oversee the implementation of the City’s 2018 cultural development plan, the first that the city has created and adopted in thirty years.

This plan was one of the first tasks that Cultural Affairs Manager Roberto Bedoya undertook after his appointment to the new position in 2016. He and his team developed the plan through individual interviews and small group meetings, surveys, literature reviews, and a series of community discussion events, two of which I attended at small cafés in Oakland. The resulting document, *Belonging in Oakland: A Cultural Development Plan*, has a succinct and

¹⁷¹ Hwang, J, V Gupta, B Patel Shrimali. *Neighborhood Change and Residential Instability in Oakland*. Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco Working Papers, Stanford University, May 2021, <https://doi.org/10.24148/cdwp2021-01>.

powerful guiding vision: “Equity is the driving force. Culture is the frame. Belonging is the goal.” Recognizing that the healthy cultural life of a city is connected to its accessibility, (as Chapter 2 referenced in its examples of the public square), the plan’s first phase of recommendations are focused on five primarily place-based actions summarized below, several of which the city has already achieved or is in the process of executing:

Actions	Description
Cultural Spaces	Maintain a staff position to create and maintain cultural spaces, working with other City departments
Neighborhood Places	Fund neighborhood-based collaborations to strengthen community cultural self-empowerment
Civic Cultural Commons	Build capacity to manage current public art as well as new projects; support public cultural events like festivals, and embed artists in city agencies (the latter is underway, as Chapter 2 noted)
Strengthening the Cultural Ecosystem	Undertake a cultural and racial equity impact analysis of all of the City’s cultural policies and programs
Building Infrastructure for Cultural Equity	Strengthen the operation of the Cultural Affairs Division through increased revenue streams for staffing, reactivation of the Commission, and building a strong foundation to address cultural and racial equity in the cultural sector and the communities served

Table 3: Recommendations for building place-based belonging. [Source: Vanessa Whang, *Belonging in Oakland: a cultural development plan*. Cultural Affairs Division, Economic & Workforce Development Department, City of Oakland, Spring 2018, <https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/oak070756.pdf>.]

The theme of belonging is critical to this treatise, and the report's definition of this term makes it clear that a civil, healthy society is one that helps people feel connected to each other:

People's sense of belonging is tied to their ability to lead meaningful lives, to be connected to the place they live in and the people they live among, and to feel a part of something larger than themselves. To cultivate belonging, there must be more equitable racial and socioeconomic conditions for self-expression, mutual respect, empathy, and acceptance. These conditions cannot be fulfilled without an understanding of the breadth of cultural diversity in Oakland and how different forms of expression have different needs. Fostering belonging in a diverse civic realm is complicated and often contentious, but this is what needs to be done to make the city both equitable and whole.¹⁷²

A handful of local private and quasi-public funders also support the cultural life of Oakland. These include the Kenneth Rainin Foundation, Surdna Foundation, Akonadi Foundation, California Humanities, and East Bay Community Foundation. The Alameda County Arts Commission, which receives funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and the California Arts Council, provides a grants program, arts education, and public art across the county. The support that public and private partners provide is, of course, never enough to meet all of the needs of the cultural sector but makes a critical impact nonetheless. Unfortunately, even with the Bay Area's proximity to the wealth of Silicon Valley's tech firms, artists and arts organizations struggle to find adequate resources to sustain their work. However, other Bay Area cities have provided significant cultural funds on a more consistent basis than Oakland. The San

¹⁷² Vanessa Whang, *Belonging in Oakland: a cultural development plan*, Cultural Affairs Division, Economic & Workforce Development Department, City of Oakland, Spring 2018, <https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/oak070756.pdf>

Francisco Arts Commission, for example, made grants totaling over \$14 million in 2021, deriving some funds from the TOT (Transient Occupancy Tax or “Bed Tax”).

The City of Oakland’s Cultural Arts Commission and the local arts community have tirelessly advocated for additional resources over the years, and in 2021 the City Council voted to allocate a budget of \$5.1 million to the agency over two years, an increase over the previous \$3.9 million budget. These funds support a small staff, a \$1 million grantmaking budget to artists and arts organizations, and the gradual implementation of the objectives laid out in the cultural plan. Bedoya, who has been a leading voice in national placemaking and placekeeping conversations, is expansive in his view of the role of the creative sector: “How people walk through the city, that’s culture.”¹⁷³

Historic Preservation in Oakland

Oakland, perhaps surprisingly to some who don’t consider the city “landmark-worthy,” hosts five National Historic Landmarks, thirteen California Historical Landmarks, forty-six Designated Landmarks (including Lake Merritt, private homes, and the Art Deco Paramount Theater).¹⁷⁴ Many of these are on the list of the fifty-four sites that appear on the National Register of Historic Places, the official federal list of cultural assets and properties that have local or national significance.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Azucena Rasilla, “With new funding and energy, Oakland’s Cultural Affairs Commission is back in action,” *The Oaklandside*, July 23, 2021, <https://oaklandside.org/2021/07/23/with-new-funding-and-energy-oaklands-cultural-affairs-commission-is-back-in-action/>.

¹⁷⁴ City of Oakland, “List of Designated Landmarks and Heritage Properties,” accessed March 5, 2022, <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/list-of-designated-landmarks-and-heritage-properties>.

¹⁷⁵ Oakland Wiki. “Historic Preservation,” accessed February 20, 2022, https://localwiki.org/oakland/Historic_Preservation.

The City of Oakland added a Historic Preservation Element to the city's General Plan in 1994, vowing to use preservation to "foster economic vitality and quality of life" and "to prevent unnecessary destruction of properties of special historical, cultural, and aesthetic value."¹⁷⁶ A Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board makes recommendations to the City Council and Planning Commission on preservation projects.

In the Banlieues: Oakland/Saint-Denis Cooperation Project

On that plane to Paris in April 2019, when I learned about the early seeds of the Oakland/Saint-Denis Cooperation Project, I knew that an immensely crucial global conversation had begun. Convinced that we can learn from each other, the international coalition of partners continues to elevate the central question: how can the arts and humanities help create more equitable cities, with a focus on the suburb/*banlieue* model underscored by the Oakland/Saint-Denis case studies? A corollary question concerns the process of the partnership itself; navigating language and cultural differences, sharing financial and real estate models for activating public places and supporting arts and humanities projects, considering different responses to issues of gentrification and social equity. Developed through a partnership between the Cultural Services of the French Embassy in the US, Villa Albertine San Francisco, Institut Français, the French American Cultural Society, Légendes Urbaines, and California Humanities, this international cooperation project continues to expand and attract interest in both countries and beyond.

In Phase 1, an interdisciplinary group of urban and cultural actors from the Bay Area comprising urbanists, artists, funders, social entrepreneurs, and academics spent a week in Saint-

¹⁷⁶ City of Oakland, "Historic Preservation Element for the General Plan," accessed March 6, 2022, <https://www.oaklandca.gov/documents/historic-preservation-element-for-the-general-plan>.

Denis in October 2019 to explore these questions. The group toured local cultural venues like the 6b and Mains d'Œuvres, met with cultural leaders and artists, and visited the Grand Paris Express construction site in Saint-Denis. The French delegation traveled to Oakland the following month, and conducted a similar exploration, with site visits to Shadetree artist studios, the Oakland Museum of California, and Burning Man Project, among other venues. During this trip, the French delegation also engaged in critical conversations with their US counterparts about gentrification, being on the “outside” in an urban environment, the impact of social inequity, the use of public space, and the similarities and differences between the two cities. California Humanities produced a short documentary film about these learning expeditions, directed by filmmaker Camille Servain-Schreiber, and Juliette Donadieu and Laure Gayet (Légendes Urbaines), published *Oakland/Saint-Denis: Translating Cities and Cultures*, a report outlining key themes. This phase also included Bay Area performances by French artists, as well as the SPACES dance and storytelling project described in Chapter 2 and which took place in both Oakland and Saint-Denis. As Donadieu and Gayet stated in the publication, “Cultural, social, and urban innovations thrive on the outskirts of metropolises. Stirring up fresh ideas, creating links, amplifying under-represented voices, and pioneering new models, cultural players nourish the city in progress.”¹⁷⁷

In participating in both learning expeditions, I was surprised by how easily the two delegations and partners communicated complex ideas, not necessarily from a language point of view, but from a general shared understanding of the role of arts and culture in urban development. Where I found there to be a divergence was in the practical realm. With different methods of governance, urban policy-making processes, and legal and fiscal infrastructure, the

¹⁷⁷ Donadieu and Gayet, *Translating*, 1.

two cities do not share a clear blueprint that can answer the cooperation project's or this treatise's central question around equitable urban evolution. However, both cities have tools and processes that either country can make use of. Donadieu and Gayet, in collaboration with Emilie Moreau of APUR (an urbanism organization), wrote in a cultural urbanism journal from Toulouse, France: "These exchanges made it possible to question the role of culture and artists in the making of the city, to promote a more qualitative and more inclusive urban production. The experiences of the two territories show that solutions exist to include the voices of artists and inhabitants from the project design phase: sensitive diagnoses, artistic commissions integrated into the urban project, facilities designed in a participatory manner."¹⁷⁸

In October 2020, the Oakland/Saint-Denis project launched the City/Cité Conversation Series to expand the conversation to include new voices. Although we initially intended for these events to be in-person, the pandemic moved us to a virtual space for the seven events to date, which in fact enabled us to reach international audiences where they live, whether that was in Europe, Brazil, Egypt or across the United States. The first conversation was focused on key examples from *Oakland/Saint-Denis: Translating Cities and Cultures*; the second was an overview of the initiative that the project partners presented at the 2020 National Humanities Conference; the third included examples of cultural city-building in Detroit and Chicago. In early 2021, the series presented a virtual, bilingual conversation between Oakland's Mayor Libby Schaaf and Saint-Denis's Mayor Mathieu Hanotin. This was a key moment of connection between the leadership of the two cities, which will continue through 2022/2023 when the Saint-Denis delegation travels to Oakland. During their stay, we will organize an in-person/live-

¹⁷⁸ Emilie Moreau, Juliette Donadieu, and Laure Gayet, "Le coopération culturelle au service de la fabrique urbaine à Oakland et Saint-Denis," *Belveder* 9 (November 2021), 20-22.

streamed reconnection conversation between the two mayors.

The Cultural Services of the French Consulate (now known as Villa Albertine San Francisco, part of a network of artist residencies across the world) and California Humanities are co-producing Phase 2 of the initiative, which is currently underway. This stage of the project consists of an international exhibition, the ongoing conversation series, and a cultural exchange between young media artists from both countries. *In the Banlieues: Oakland/Saint-Denis* is an international exhibit that will take center focus at two urban-focused cultural institutes: Pavillon de l’Arsenal in Paris and Saint-Denis venues in June 2022 and SPUR San Francisco in July 2022, followed by portions of the exhibit in Oakland (August 2022). There will also be ancillary activities and events in both Oakland and Saint-Denis. Co-curators from each country (Gayet in Saint-Denis and June Grant of blink!Lab Architecture in Oakland) are developing the exhibition content, with input from an international, interdisciplinary advisory committee. The goal of this phase is to focus on the cultural and urban development stories of Oakland and Saint-Denis, recognizing that “deconstructing the origins of the similarities and differences between these two cities, cultures, and countries will shed light on the issues pertinent to each city.”¹⁷⁹ Ultimately, these efforts hope to open up similar conversations in other parts of the world as a way to share and implement new ideas in city-building.

Although still in development, the exhibition will focus on three main themes: the cultural histories of Oakland and Saint-Denis; learnings about culture and inclusion in urban planning; and the future of urbanism, with a focus on centering equity and the common good. The visitor experience will include artwork from artists in both cities, an immersive multi-media

¹⁷⁹ Laure Gayet and June Grant, *In the Banlieues: Oakland/Saint-Denis Exhibition Concept Paper*, December 10, 2021.

and visual offering of objects, cartography, photos, case studies, textual and recorded narratives, and hands-on activities and discussions. We hope to have a livestream “window” available for people to see each other at the exhibits in both countries, albeit with a nine-hour time difference.

Phase 3, if we raise sufficient funds, will be an international touring exhibition to a number of sites that have urban issues similar to Oakland’s and Saint-Denis’s as well as a strong desire for an international partnership. Cities that have indicated an interest include Detroit, Chicago, Marseille, Nairobi, New Delhi, and Hyderabad.

A Focus on Artist Spaces in Saint-Denis and Oakland

Former Mayor of Saint-Denis and former President of Plaine Commune, Patrick Braouezec, states it simply: “Culture is the center of a city.”¹⁸⁰ Oakland and Saint-Denis, as we have seen, have rich and complicated histories, an aggregation of cultural resources (people, creativity, places) and a variety of voices. They both represent what I think of as a cultural ecosystem: at the individual level, the arts and humanities are, on the one hand, academic disciplines and practical hands-on training, and on the other hand, the stories (and music and movement and...) that we bring to the evening meal with friends or family. At the community or city level, the ecosystem is made up of the artists who are doing the creation, the venues and public squares where art is consumed, the resources and policies that support this, and the audiences and publics that “come to the show.”

In the Bay Area, one of the most expensive property markets in the country, artists and arts organizations struggle to find affordable, consistent and long-term housing and studio space. In 2016, the Mayor’s Artist Housing and Workspace Task Force prepared a white paper based on

¹⁸⁰ Patrick Braouezec (Plaine Commune) in discussion with the author, Paris, France, October 14, 2021.

data from over nine hundred Oakland-based artists. “Strategies for Protecting and Creating Arts & Culture Space in Oakland” laid out eight strategies to do just that, from real estate acquisition and leasing to financial assistance to technical assistance. These tactics were a response to data that showed that 68 percent of the Oakland artists who reported being displaced experienced this due to circumstances beyond their control, such as a large rent increase, eviction, or their landlord selling their building. The guiding principles behind the recommendations are important and evergreen: *permanency* to address the housing instability that many artists experience; *equity* to ensure that underserved communities and a broad group of artists are included; *cultural preservation* to recognize long-term Oakland residents and artists who are part of the City’s cultural legacy.¹⁸¹

One of the examples cited under the property acquisition recommendation was the aforementioned Community Arts Stabilization Trust (CAST), a nonprofit created in 2013 whose mission is “to create stable physical spaces for arts and cultural organizations to facilitate equitable urban transformation.” The organization strives to accomplish this through creative real estate financing (such as New Market Tax Credits) and by acquiring properties and helping the arts community lease or buy them. But even with capital and preservation investments and innovative financial models, the need for safe and functional buildings for creative work outstrips the availability. This has only worsened lately as a result of the global pandemic and changing work patterns and residential needs of the non-artist community, as well as the changing requirements and resources of artists and arts organizations. In Saint-Denis, the situation for surrounding accommodations and workspace for artists and arts organizations is not

¹⁸¹ Kelley Kahn, *Strategies for Protecting and Creating Arts & Culture Space in Oakland*, White Paper, City of Oakland, Spring 2016.

dissimilar to that of Oakland, but the French city's cultural milieu is evolving very rapidly in the face of the major urban changes and events underway, including accelerating gentrification. With the 2024 Olympic Games on the horizon, a full 20 percent of Saint-Denis is being redeveloped, and it remains to be seen whether any of this new building underway will eventually be available to the arts community after the athletes have left.¹⁸² It is also true that using warehouses in previously industrial areas can isolate artists. "The heritage of these industrial sites," according to researcher Ian Berman, "while appealing to artists, has created an area effectively segregated by building usage...businesses are located in one region, shopping is in another, and people live in a third area."¹⁸³

Among the challenges that artists and cultural organizations face in both Oakland and Saint-Denis when owning, renting, managing or performing in a venue are the inherent vulnerability and instability that comes from having limited financial resources and little political power. The following two examples of artists working in historic buildings—not notable or significant buildings, but rather the kind of old structures that are generally the most affordable in the arts sector—underline the random and harmful consequences that can come from that vulnerability.

Mains d'Œuvres, a cultural center in Saint-Ouen, is one of Saint-Denis' nearby neighbors beyond *le périph*. Three cultural leaders founded the center in 2001 with minimal government support in part of a nondescript 1920s-era former Valeo automobile factory's sporting and social center in a primarily residential neighborhood. The sprawling 43,000-square foot building

¹⁸² Keeley Sullivan, "In Saint-Denis, Olympics Stir City in Arrested Development," *Medium*, May 13, 2021, <https://medium.com/@keelyasullivan02/in-saint-denis-olympic-games-stir-city-in-arrested-development-d924a05f58b7>.

¹⁸³ Berman, "Creative Marketing," 14.

focuses on the creation, exhibition, and performance of contemporary art in its public spaces, which include a theater, a restaurant and a cybercafé, workshop areas and artist studios; all are welcome here. Fazette Bordage, one of the founders of the organization, says that “Mains d’Œuvres sees itself as a social sculpture, a unique and unreproducible embodiment of human connections and fluid skills, a work appealing to the emotions. The building is there to give visibility to this architecture of connected perceptions...the place is the hand of the work.”¹⁸⁴

For many years, under various Communist governments in Saint-Ouen, Mains d’Œuvres served the local community and beyond, bringing 40,000 people a year together as art creators and consumers. The Oakland/Saint-Denis learning expedition spent some hours at the venue in October 2019. Five days after the visit, the mayor closed Mains d’Œuvres down, locking the doors without warning at 8 am, surrounding the building with police cars, covering the windows with sheet metal. The 250 people who worked there every day, from artists and teachers to



¹⁸⁴ Encore heureux, “A Public Service for the Senses,” *Lieux Infinis/Infinite Places: Constructing Buildings or Places?* (Paris: Éditions B42, 2018), 83.

nonprofit employees and volunteers, didn't have access either to their workspace or to their tools or instruments, so all production had to cease.

This was not the first time that Mains d'Œuvres had fallen under threat of closure. In 2014, after decades of a Communist local government, a new centrist mayor was elected who promptly cut government funds for the center, planning to convert it to a music conservatory. In 2019, the empty threats became real. As in 2014, the neighborhood and wider general public caused an outcry, a *cri d'amour*, with a petition and daily protests outside of the building, followed by financial donations. Eventually Mains d'Œuvres were successful in winning back their building, and in 2020 were once again able to return.

Our visit to the organization provided us with a new public/private funding model to consider, which made the closure surprising, since the organization raises 60 percent of its own resources, compared to its 40 percent government subsidy.¹⁸⁵ The funding model is based on the idea of a resident-owned cultural property, under the prior leadership of Juliette Bonpoint (she is currently working with *Périphéries 2028* in Saint-Denis). As Bonpoint says, the cooperative, Le SCIC Main 9-3.0, finds cultural centers or buildings and buys them with local residents to “restore the land to their hands, in collaboration with the communities and the artists, and make them benefit from a place of creativity in the image of their district.”¹⁸⁶ There is a very practical side to the cooperative's goal of buying a dozen spaces in the sense that it helps reduce their vulnerability by creating more earned revenue possibilities while also giving them a stronger advocacy voice.

¹⁸⁵ Margaux Dussert, “Mains d'Œuvres, la friche où vous allez aimer passer vos week-ends,” *l'ADN*, May 15, 2018, <https://www.ladn.eu/reflexion/vu-dans-la-revue/mains-doeuvres-a-saint-ouen-friche-culturelle-incontournable/>.

¹⁸⁶ Dussert, “Mains d'Œuvres.”

Like Saint-Ouen and Saint-Denis, Oakland has been in a post-industrial period for many decades, but what remains of its manufacturing heyday is nineteenth and twentieth-century factories and warehouses that have often been taken over by artists as live-work spaces. In December 2016, tragedy struck when the Ghost Ship, a 10,000-foot former industrial warehouse that artists used as their homes, studios, and performance spaces, caught on fire from an unconfirmed electrical problem while an electronic dance party was underway upstairs. With few safety features inside the maze-like structure, little could be done to save the building, and thirty-six people lost their lives, making the fire the deadliest in Oakland history. Twenty-six artists lived there, subletting from a man who leased the building for housing, although it was zoned only for commercial use. This is what is typically called a DIY space, which Safer DIY defines as “commercial, mixed-use buildings occupied for under-permitted live/work or assembly (gatherings), usually built-out [sic] over years by low-income artists, craftspeople or community organizers involved in some consistent form of under-the-radar cultural production long central to the Bay Area’s vitality and diversity.”¹⁸⁷ This nonprofit was one of the positive responses to the fire, and focuses on stemming artist displacement and helping those in similar buildings to conduct safety improvements, obtain legal permitting, find financing for construction projects, and weigh in on public policy. According to Kelley Kahn, Director of Special Project and Public/Private Partnerships at the City of Oakland, “the city has no estimate of the number of unpermitted spaces occupied by artists.”¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁷ Safer DIY Spaces, Accessed December 15, 2021, <https://saferdiyspaces.org/>.

¹⁸⁸ Ruth Dusseault, Kristie Song, “Five years after Ghost Ship: How local organizations are fighting artist displacement,” *Oakland North*, December 16, 2021, <https://oaklandnorth.net/2021/12/16/oakland-arts-displaced-ghost-sh/>.

The Ghost Ship fire made apparent the holes in the city's fire inspection department and caused greater scrutiny of other similar artist collectives in buildings not zoned for residential use. The tragedy has also galvanized the arts community to find other solutions, through public-private partnerships, policy advocacy, business incubators. For example, one of the oldest live-work artist spaces in the city, Oakland Cannery, dating from the 1970s, is losing its battle to retain its space to the cannabis company that purchased it and has other plans for its use. The Cannery is situated in a green zone, that is, a designated area for cannabis dispensaries, and the City Council passed an amendment that prohibited the issuance of cannabis permits in places where there are live-work agreements in place. Although this legislation came too late to help the Cannery, as it was passed one year after the building was sold, it will be helpful for future live-work communities.

Both cities are home to other vibrant cultural organizations that have found their place in repurposed buildings, but as the examples above indicate, there is an inherent tension between artists' resources and affordable spaces, as well as contingency for their long-term use. These more cost-effective options are often likely to be rented out to a higher bidder, deemed unsafe, razed, or lost through other means over time. While older buildings are more often in line with the limited financial means of the cultural sector, they also may require costly renovations for safety and functional purposes. In Oakland, American Steel was an abandoned warehouse that was used as a repair shop for cargo ships before artists turned it into a studio to create large-scale installations. Now two hundred artists use it for a variety of artistic purposes and hope that the new owner, a Portland, Oregon-based real estate investment firm, will continue to support the building's current use. Near Saint-Denis, Fort d'Aubervilliers is a former military defense site that eventually became an abandoned industrial wasteland. However, this changed after Grand

Paris Aménagement, a government commercial and industrial agency, began investing in removing radiation on the site and creating a multi-use campus, with housing, commercial buildings, and space for performing and visual arts. In both cases, artists are at the mercy of those with money and power.

In terms of our two primary case studies, Le 6b in Saint-Denis and Shadetree in Oakland, both organizations have recognized their vulnerabilities as cultural nonprofits in historic buildings that artists have adapted for their own use and discovered ways over the years to keep their doors open and their organizations thriving. What can we learn from these two different models of how the built environment may serve the arts community? In the end, the idealists among us must concede that it does come down to money and good business practices, which give artists a place at the table, and positions them as contributing to the public good and a community benefit, rather than as a luxury item or a fringe element.

Le 6b, Saint-Denis

Between the River Seine and the Canal Saint-Denis, an arrow of land on the western side of Saint-Denis points North. Tucked into a redeveloping residential neighborhood of modern apartment blocks and some industrial wasteland, the 1970s-era Brutalist office building doesn't look out of place. But it has shaped the redevelopment of the neighborhood through a distinctive public-private partnership. The local community is a mixture of families who can't afford to live in Paris, lots of creatives, and many young people.

Architect Julien Beller noted a need and had a vision of how to use underutilized buildings to provide artists and social enterprises with affordable rent and functional space, a vision that he then brought to life by tapping into a collective energy and spirit of innovation. The building, which was built in 1977 and which Alstom, a global transportation company,

abandoned in 1995, remained empty for two decades until Beller identified it in 2007 as a possible place for artists and cultural events. After two years of negotiating with Alstom and the Brémond Group, which was developing an eco-district of housing and office space called Néaacité in the neighborhood, Le 6b Association formed to advocate for low-rent studio spaces in the building and signed a short-term 23-month lease.

In 2010, Le 6b opened, providing affordable artist studios and public space for many arts, culture, and sporting events, plus an annual arts festival, La Fabrique à Rêves. The next step was additional financing, and Le 6b secured an annually renewable loan to Le 6b as the neighboring eco-district was constructed around it. The organization continued to adapt its programming and facilities onsite to meet the needs of both the resident creatives and the burgeoning neighborhood, creating a café, a man-made “beach” on the canal, arts workshops, and a community garden. By 2017, seven years after its launch, and with the approval of Quartus, the newest owner of Néaacité, Le 6b created an SCI (*Société civile immobilière*) for the financial sustainability of the site. This type of non-trading French company is commonly used for joint ownership and management of real estate.

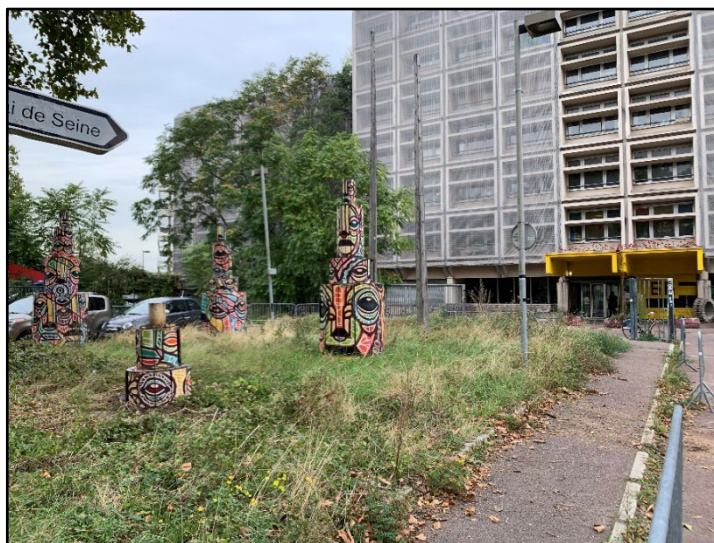


Figure 25: Le 6B entrance, October 2019. [Source: photo by author.]

The data (pre-COVID) is encouraging. Each year the 75,000-square-foot building hosts 150 active studio spaces, 25,000 visitors, and three hundred emerging artists are exhibited. The residents generate over \$6.5 million in turnover annually.¹⁸⁹ But this journey is not just about the numbers, and from the beginning one of the challenges of the project was to create a governance and management model that enabled a few to equitably represent the many in decision-making. Another challenge has been keeping participant energy levels high and momentum going over a period of years, even during setbacks, whether financial or personal. And, of course, there are always problems related to the age and condition of older buildings. As Beller stated, “Receiving the public in a building which has not been certified to receive the public, using the building for purposes other than those originally intended without the means of organizing the requisite technical and administrative changes, obliged us to take risks via compensatory measures. But once the uses had been established and legitimized, and were desired by all, the renovation of the building became possible.”¹⁹⁰ The source of the project’s success, he posits, has been the collaboration and shared governance between the developer, the association, and the artists, and the fact that those roles have been interchangeable at different points in the process.

¹⁸⁹ Encore heureux, *Lieux Infinis*, 235.

¹⁹⁰ Encore heureux, *Lieux Infinis*, 245.

The Oakland/Saint-Denis publication and the graph below summarize the importance of diversifying functions and resources. With a two-pronged organizational structure, the association can do what it does best—program cultural activities—while a cooperative (the association, residents, and local authorities) owns, rehabilitates, maintains, and operates the building. Future sustainability is more likely thanks to this diversified revenue model of remaining open to new residents, including start-ups at higher rents, earning revenue through lodging, music studio rentals, and coworking; and receiving investment revenue from the developers. Together, these various sources of cash ensure low rent for the resident artists and local arts and culture communities.¹⁹¹

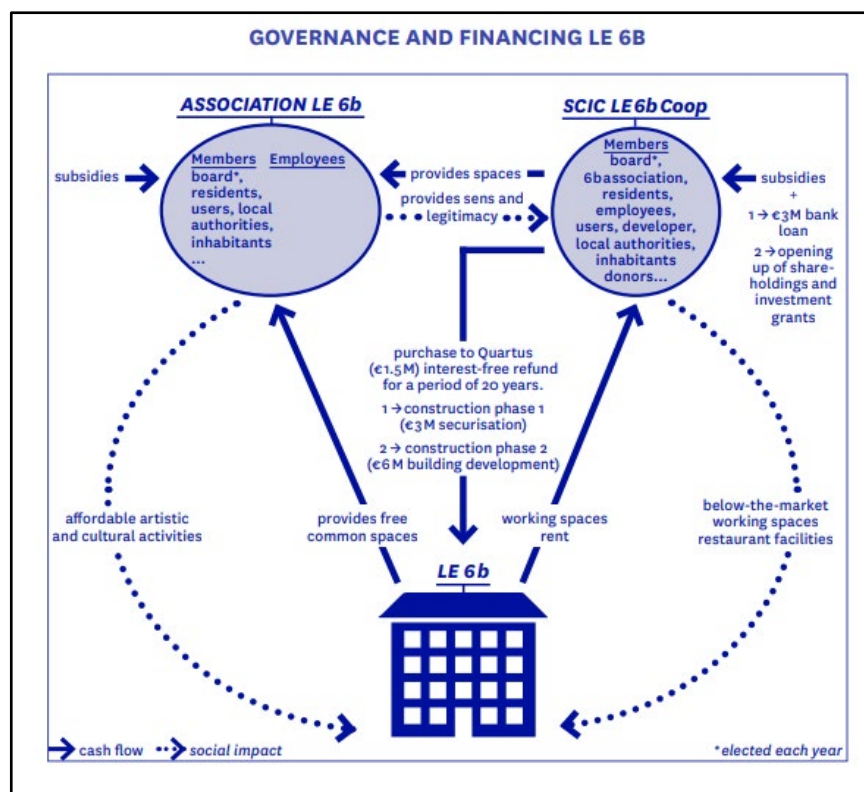


Figure 26: Public-private ownership model of Le 6b. [Source: Donadieu and Gayet, *Translating Cities and Cultures*, 2020.]

¹⁹¹ Donadieu and Gayet, *Translating Cities and Cultures*, 66.

When the Oakland delegation visited Le 6b in 2019, I was struck by the humanity: the hum of activity, the generosity of the people involved in talking about their experiences there, the abundant creativity that is at odds with the angles of its traditional office building corridors. According to Beller, the collective is not a “community” in lockstep, but a place, a project that shares some things, but not everything. For some artists looking for a truly collective model, this has not been a strong enough glue, and there has been turnover in residents. The first and second floors are exhibit spaces and areas for public events that can connect the local community to what the artists are creating. It is clear that the vitality that the building and its residents bring to the local area as it is being redeveloped has been an important addition not only to the local neighborhood, but to Saint-Denis overall. As Beller also stated during our visit, the objective is not only about bringing in the new and innovative, but also valuing what is already there, amplifying many different perspectives, and recognizing that the favorable opinion of the local authority is important for ongoing support. But autonomy is also critical, and the next step is to raise the funds to acquire the building outright.

Shadetree, Oakland

Like Le 6b, the Shadetree artists’ residence and studios, due South from Lake Merritt and downtown Oakland, is tucked away on a side street near to multiple waterways: the Clinton Basin inlet off the estuary that separates Oakland from Alameda Island and connects Lake Merritt to the San Francisco Bay. Like Le 6b, Shadetree is not near the city center or business district, and there is not a lot of foot traffic, and a major nearby redevelopment project is impacting it. But there the resemblance ends. On a short street just south of the bayfront-facing Jack London Square, lined by a rambling collection of wooden structures that once housed shipping businesses related to the Port of Oakland, eclipsed by the always-busy 880 freeway,

Shadetree has a very different history. A plaque mounted on a stone plinth outside of the 22,000 square-foot edifice tells the early part of it:

This bay front site originally bordered Ohlone Indian settlements. In 1820 the Spanish Crown granted it to Luis Maria Peralta. In 1842 it was given to son Antonio Maria Peralta. The area was acquired by Horace Carpentier (first Mayor of Oakland) in 1852. He then founded the Oakland waterfront company in 1892. Carpentier sold the site beginning with Pacific Carbonic Gas Co. in 1893. This site has been occupied by several important industries. In 1979, fortuitously, it was acquired by the Hon. Robert A. Schultz.

Where Mr. Schultz joins the story, so does art. A renaissance man, Schultz was a sailor, sculptor, and a painter, with an artistic knack for restoring vintage automobiles. He at various times worked for the City of Oakland, and the Oakland Museum of California, and was part of the development of Children's Fairyland and the Oakland Zoo. He also collected and sold antiques on the property that became Shadetree and sought to collect around him other artists and creatives in an ever-evolving live-work environment. Over the decades, those very people joined him and created the eclectic community that is mentioned in the Port of Oakland's 1999 estuary plan: "The Fifth Avenue Point community includes a synergistic grouping of artists, artisans, and small industrial business. It should be noted that enclaves such as this are rarely planned."¹⁹²

In 2008, Schultz sold the property to friends in the real estate business in order to keep it an artists' enclave, and the artists continued to rent their studios from the new owners. In 2016, the tenants received a ninety-day "invitation" from their landlords to purchase the property. Reader, they did it! The purchase of the building took tenacity and smarts in order to track down possible sources of funding. As resident writer Benjamin Burke says, no one knows what resources are out there if their landlord is evicting them. They had no money and banks turned

¹⁹² Sam Lefebvre, "With Luxury Development on All Sides, Oakland Artists Buy the Right to Stay Put," KQED, August 18, 2018, <https://www.kqed.org/arts/13838421/with-luxury-development-on-all-sides-oakland-artists-buy-the-right-to-stay-put>.

their loan applications down twenty-two times. Reasons for the rejection included the fact that the structures were risky and unpermitted for residential use, a problem made more glaring by the fact that the Ghost Ship fire happened two months into their process of trying to acquire the building. Resident Donna Smithey, who has deep experience in real estate nonprofit consulting and affordable housing led the effort, and they bluffed when they made a purchase offer with only \$5,000 in the bank. This bold step started the ball rolling, and twenty-two additional donors and a private equity lender stepped up to offer both the purchase price and eventually the \$300,000 needed for renovations and safety upgrades. Shadetree created a nonprofit for this fundraising effort, Shadetree Historical Artisan Development Engine (SHADE).

With the purchase complete, Shadetree then pursued legalization and refinancing, and the bulk of the funds came by way of Measure KK, an affordable housing set-aside for cooperative/residential control from the City of Oakland. The \$2.5 million loan through the fund was approved by the city in summer of 2021, with the parameter that Shadetree repay it over fifty-five years with no interest. This refinancing allowed the residents to pay off the mortgage and keep their thirty-member mixed-income community intact. The downside was that, in 2020, the city placed Shadetree on fire watch, clearly with Ghost Ship in mind. This required the artists living on site to take turns logging data every hour and to complete additional fire-related maintenance with no procedure in place to take them off of the fire watch list (although the latter did occur in late December 2021).



Figure 27: Internal courtyard of Shadetree, December 2021. [Source: photo by author.]

Another positive outcome of Shadetree’s struggle to own their building was the creation of an equity fund called the Cultural Impact Fund (CIF). This fund aims to offset displacement by leveraging federal funds through Opportunity Zones, supported by legislation to incentivize investors to park their funds in redevelopment projects in underserved urban neighborhoods. While there is debate as to whether this tactic paves the way for gentrification, it certainly provides the possibility for community improvements and stability for artist live-work spaces, among other projects.¹⁹³ According to Kelley Kahn with the City of Oakland: “Shadetree is now

¹⁹³ William Fulton, “Opportunity Zones: Gentrification on Steroids?” Rice Kinder Institute for Research, February 20, 2019, <https://kinder.rice.edu/urbanedge/2019/02/20/opportunity-zones-gentrification-steroids>.

an important model for other communities of artists trying to find the wherewithal to buy their building in Oakland.”¹⁹⁴

While Shadetree’s success is a definite win for the cultural community, there may not be smooth sailing ahead. The property is located within one of Oakland’s “green zones” which city ordinance made legal in 2016, and in which cannabis businesses are always on the lookout for property to buy for dispensaries within those zones. As mentioned earlier, the Cannery live/work space displacement experience triggered an amendment to the ordinance in 2018 that forbids this happening in twenty-five recognized live-work buildings in Oakland, including Shadetree, but as cities change, so do urban policies, to this will be a situation that local residents will need to monitor.¹⁹⁵

Adjacent to Shadetree, and threatening to encroach upon it, is a major redevelopment project that has been in the planning stages since 2006. Brooklyn Basin, sixty-five acres of historic port property that were formerly a shipping pier on the Oakland Estuary, is currently under construction and will eventually contain over three thousand apartments and thirty-two acres of public parkland along the shore. At the south flank of the redevelopment, in a 4.5-acre area called Township Commons, one can see a glimmer of what it will become. There, some of the apartments are already built, the 1930s-era terminal has been adapted as a market/café and outdoor plaza, families, roller skaters and dance classes activate the plaza, and music

¹⁹⁴ Shadetree Artisans, “Our Mission,” accessed December 17, 2021, <https://www.shadetreeartisans.org/nonprofit>.

¹⁹⁵ Canna Law Blog, “California Cannabis: Oakland Regulates Against Industry-Fueled Displacement,” March 20, 2018, <https://harrisbricken.com/cannalawblog/california-cannabis-oakland-regulates-against-industry-fueled-displacement/>.

performances occur every weekend. In general, it is good to see this formerly derelict part of Oakland slowly come to life as people come from all parts of the region to an underutilized part of Oakland. However, this shift is not without issues, (unsurprisingly, given that this is the largest new building development in Oakland in 50 years). Recently, the project hit a snag when Signature, the developer, put forward a proposal to Oakland's Planning Commission to line this public shoreline with ten acres of private boat slips. This plan was not in the original 2005 proposal, which had instead placed the marina in Clinton Basin (nearer to Shadetree) with sixty boats. Now Signature wants room for 218 larger boat slips in Clinton Basin and stretching along the shoreline.

As San Francisco Chronicle urban design critic John King states, "The combination of plaza, park and historic preservation opened in November 2020 and was embraced from the start, attracting a heartening diversity of people from different racial and economic backgrounds. And the uncertainty that now clouds the setting points to the challenge of relying on the private sector to create a public landscape that's inviting to all."¹⁹⁶ Any goodwill that the developers have built during their commitment to activating this space could evaporate as they attempt to create a private *périphérique* between the public and the estuary.

¹⁹⁶ John King, "Oakland developers built a popular waterfront park. Now they want to wrap a marina around it," *San Francisco Chronicle*, October 14, 2021, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/Oakland-developers-built-a-popular-waterfront-16531179.php>.

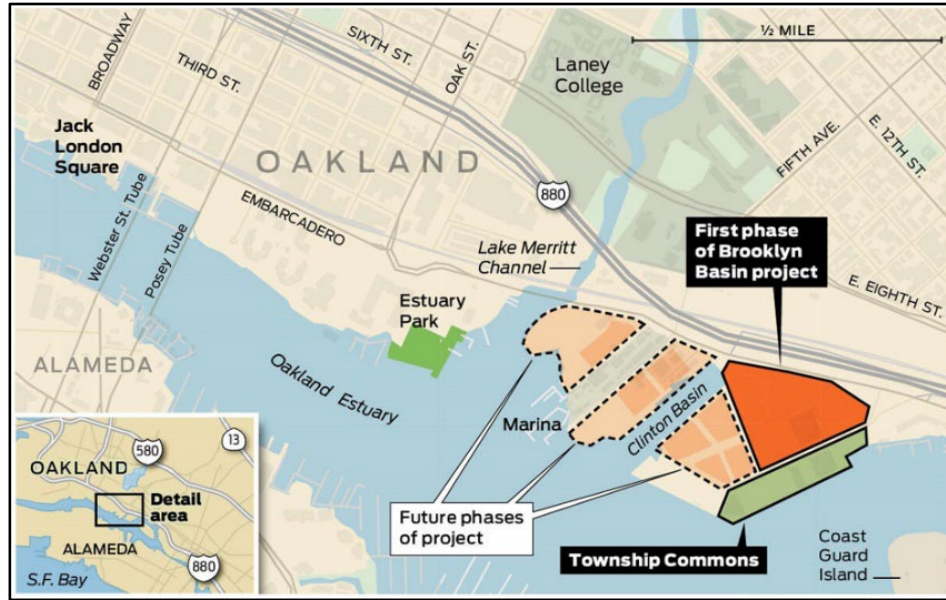


Figure 28: Map of Brooklyn Basin development. [Source: Todd Trumbull, *The San Francisco Chronicle*.]

What is clear in both of these cases is that there is no quick and easy route to adapting and sustaining existing buildings for the use of artists and arts organizations. Public-private partnerships, creative real estate financing, a collaborative spirit, good advice, grit – all these things matter, but most artists and cultural organizations cannot easily access them, creating a grave equity issue. Time is often not on the artists' side when it comes to housing and workspace in a rapidly evolving urban environment.

CHAPTER V: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ENQUIRY

We need to stop being nostalgic for a time that never was instead of preparing for a time that's inevitable.¹⁹⁷

Angela Glover Blackwell, Founder, PolicyLink

The objective of this treatise was to explore the intersection between the arts sector, preservation of the historic built environment, and urban development. How can these three forces work together to help cities become more livable and equitable, retain the stories of their people, and remove the “us” versus “them” tension caused by gentrification and displacement? I explore this through two cities on the margins, Saint-Denis, France and Oakland, California, and this treatise seeks to illuminate how people come together to make cities and how places evolve over time in response to the world around them.

Urban Evolution in Action: What Just Happened?

Everything changed everywhere in March 2020 as the global COVID-19 pandemic took hold in every corner of the world. I was in Paris in late February of that year and sent my colleagues back in America an email with the subject line “Pandemic” to tell them that I had been hearing about a virus that was particularly serious in parts of Europe. Everyone should be prepared to work at home for a few weeks, the email explained. That timeframe estimate seems

¹⁹⁷ Tracey Ross. “Angela Glover Blackwell’s Radical Imagination.” *Essence*, February 25, 2020. <https://www.essence.com/feature/angela-glover-blackwell-black-history/>

naïve now, with all that we have experienced in the two years since. While I was able to travel to England in August 2020, I was not able to get into France again until June 2021 because of travel restrictions.

To briefly recap, the past two years have been devastating, with over six million lives lost to COVID-19 globally (according to the World Health Organization),¹⁹⁸ long-term shutdowns, increases in economic, political, and social divides, and deep inequities in the ways this public health crisis has played out throughout the world. Better-resourced countries, like the U.S. and France, have focused on trying to move the pandemic into a more stable endemic stage with the ongoing pushes for widespread vaccination and masking mandates, even in the face of political and personal opposition to what some see as government overreach. As I write this in March and April 2022, COVID cases are skyrocketing in China and beginning to rise again in Europe—just as daily life in the U.S. had been starting to return to some vestige of normal and pandemic guidelines had been starting to ease. France is seeing a 20 percent rise in cases every week.¹⁹⁹ We have seen this pattern before, with both the Delta and the Omicron variants. Although it is impossible to predict precisely what will happen next, it is clear that, because of their sheer density and population size, cities and their immediate environs will continue to bear the brunt of the pandemic.

One major change that the pandemic brought about pertains to how urban buildings are utilized and activated. As infection rates and hospitalizations increased, “sports arenas and exhibition halls became field hospitals and vaccination sites; homes became workplaces; and

¹⁹⁸ WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard, accessed April 3, 2022, <https://covid19.who.int/>.

¹⁹⁹ Gregoire Sauvage, “Too Soon? COVID cases on the rise as France lifts restrictions,” France 24, March 12, 2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20220312-too-soon-covid-cases-on-the-rise-as-france-prepares-to-lift-restrictions>.

parking lanes became outdoor restaurants” states New York University Professor of Urban Planning, Shlomo Angel.²⁰⁰ As we start to return to something resembling pre-pandemic life, city dwellers are finding that some long-time restaurants and shops have closed in the urban core, and in some cases new businesses have taken their place. In other cases, the buildings remain empty, with shopfronts papered or boarded up. As the workforce slowly starts to return to the office, they are not doing so in the same numbers that commuted to cities for work before COVID. This is partly a factor of the more flexible work-from-home policies that many employers now understand that that they must continue to provide after white-collar workers found that life was easier without a daily commute. It is also part of the Great Resignation, as more people either grappled with elder or child care responsibilities, moved away from more expensive areas or decided to make a break from jobs that they did not like or that did not continue to provide flexible work options; in California 4.6 million employees quit their jobs in 2021.²⁰¹ France is now seeing the effects of a similar *grande démission*, albeit somewhat later than the U.S. In the European nation, the Big Quit is creating many unfilled jobs and, according to the National Association of Human Resource Directors (ANDRH), 80 percent of their members are having difficulty recruiting staff due to reasons similar to those affecting the US.²⁰²

Many states saw their population decline during the pandemic, and California was one of them. The cities of the Bay Area —San Francisco, Oakland, and Berkeley—saw “the second-

²⁰⁰ Shlomo Angel, “The Best Hope for Ukraine Lies With its Cities,” *Bloomberg CityLab*, March 14, 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-03-14/why-ukraine-s-best-hope-lies-with-its-cities>.

²⁰¹ Jonathan Lansner, “Will pandemic rearrange the workplace like Triangle Fire did?” *East Bay Times*, March 25, 2022, <https://www.oregister.com/2022/03/25/will-pandemic-rearrange-the-workplace-like-triangle-fire-did/>.

²⁰² Vincent Meyer et al., “La ‘Grande démission’: comment expliquer les difficultés actuelles de recrutement en France?” *La Tribune*, December 14, 2021, <https://theconversation.com/le-mystere-de-la-grande-demission-comment-expliquer-les-difficultes-actuelles-de-recrutement-en-france-173454>.

highest rate of decline of any metro area in the nation.”²⁰³ Some of this was due to a drop in international immigration into the state during the pandemic, some of it an exodus away from expensive urban cores as people sought more space for home offices and family life. This may change as the pandemic recedes over time, but it has a definite impact on fiscal revenues for each city as demand for suburban and rural homes continues to rise, along with an associated increase in rent and purchase prices outside of urban centers.²⁰⁴ With San Francisco experiencing an office vacancy rate of close to 20 percent (up from 5 percent in 2019),²⁰⁵ and with company headquarters considering a move to the other side of the Bay or much further, urban policy-makers will need to reckon with the question of how to repurpose thousands of square feet of unused office space across the Bay Area. It remains to be seen what the longer-term impact of this shift away from city centers like Paris and San Francisco will be, and how the exodus will affect cities on the margins like Oakland and Saint-Denis in terms of economic, political, and social quality-of-life metrics.

It is also clear that this is a transformational moment for urban life, not only because of COVID but also because of crises that predated the pandemic, and which continue to need our attention. As the effects of climate change seemingly accelerate (one only needs to note the ongoing drought and endless tinderbox wildfire conditions in California and the West) we must find ways to mitigate the problem although global politics stand in the way. The 2015 Paris

²⁰³ Jeremy White et al., “California’s Big Cities Shrink.” *Politico California Playbook*, March 25, 2022, <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/california-playbook/2022/03/25/californias-big-cities-shrink-00020391>.

²⁰⁴ Simon Kennedy, “The Return to the Office is More Slog than Stampede,” *Bloomberg*, March 31, 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/newsletters/2022-03-31/what-s-happening-in-the-world-economy-the-return-to-office-is-peaking>.

²⁰⁵ “Office Vacancy Rate in San Francisco Inches Down, But...,” *SocketSite*, January 12, 2022, <https://socketsite.com/archives/2022/01/office-vacancy-rate-in-san-francisco-inches-down-but.html>.

Accord, an international treaty on climate change, underlines the political nature of the cataclysm: the U.S. withdrew from the Accord in 2020 for a total of 107 days and rejoined in 2021 under the Biden administration. According to U.N. statistics, while cities occupy just 2 percent of the earth's surface, they consume 78 percent of the world's energy and produce more than 60 percent of its total carbon emissions. Urbanist Richard Florida adds "Cities are relics of the industrial age; they have to be redesigned to be healthier and safer."²⁰⁶

Taking advantage of the collective pandemic pause in 2020, Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo altered the center of the city by adding thirty-one miles of temporary *corona pistes*/bicycle lanes as part of her ongoing goal to make the city greener and to make it possible to bike across the city. These bike lanes are now permanent, with three hundred million Euros in government funding supporting the mayor's promise to address Paris's poor air quality and to reduce carbon emissions (in 2015 the city was briefly the most polluted in the world²⁰⁷). Mayor Hidalgo has put this money towards pedestrianization, slower traffic, rooftop gardening, more trees, and a steep increase in bicycle use. She's taken it a step further. The Mayor has announced her plan to ban non-essential traffic from the center of Paris in 2024, cutting in half daily car journeys in the city.²⁰⁸ She even has plans to reimagine *le périphérique* as a slower, greener, narrower beltway,

²⁰⁶ Vivienne Walt, "'We Heard Birds.' Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo on How Lockdown Offered a Glimpse at a Greener City," *Time Magazine*, July 9, 2020, <https://time.com/5864707/paris-green-city-2/>.

²⁰⁷ Louise Nordstrom, "Residents react to Mayor Hidalgo's plans for a '100% bikeable' Paris," *France 24*, March 11, 2021, <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20211103-residents-react-to-mayor-hidalgo-s-plans-for-a-100-bikeable-paris>.

²⁰⁸ Fergus O'Sullivan, "Driving Through Paris? That's Going to Get a Lot Tougher in 202," *Bloomberg CityLab*, February 18, 2022, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-02-18/paris-is-banning-traffic-crossing-the-city-center-from-2024>.

one easier for pedestrians and bicyclists to traverse.²⁰⁹ Her goal is to make Paris 100 percent bikeable by 2026 with a one hundred million Euro investment in more bike lanes. The aspiration is to create a “fifteen-minute city” where everything —work, school, shopping, entertainment— is a fifteen-minute or less walk from home. In Paris, the effects of this will most likely be felt in the nearest *banlieues* as traffic congestion and pollution billow towards them. However, many leaders of first-world countries regard Mayor Hidalgo as a leader on this, with other cities in Europe and the U.S. taking similar steps, emboldened by the pandemic pause, changing the pace of city life and creating safe public areas in where people linger rather than merely working near or commuting into.²¹⁰ Sweden, for example, has condensed this to a “one-minute city.” The pilot version of this focuses attention on the street level, giving residents an opportunity to be co-architects and to determine how the city uses street space outside their front door for parking or other public amenities such as bike racks, planters, or children’s play areas.²¹¹

The newest global conflict, the Russian invasion of Ukraine that started in February 2022, has only continued this worldwide period of destabilization and rapid change, and a condition that has an immense impact on the topic of this treatise. Any conclusions that I draw may be outdated and irrelevant by tomorrow. But according to Professor Angel, Ukraine may benefit from the particular characteristics of its urban areas, which across the globe tend to be places with built-in resilience and adaptability. “Cities work,” he states, “because of their innate

²⁰⁹ Kamdar, Mira, “Paris is About to Change,” *The Atlantic*, September 5, 2020, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/09/paris-not-dead/616099/>.

²¹⁰ Fergus O’Sullivan and Laura Bliss, “The 15-Minute City – No Cars Required – Planning’s New Utopia,” *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, November 12, 2020, <https://www.bloombergquint.com/businessweek/paris-s-15-minute-city-could-be-coming-to-an-urban-area-near-you>.

²¹¹ Fergus O’Sullivan, “Make Way for the ‘One-Minute’ City,” *Bloomberg CityLab*, January 5, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-01-05/a-tiny-twist-on-street-design-the-one-minute-city>.

resilience; they have an inexhaustible ability to reinvent themselves, to regenerate their civic spirit, to fashion and refashion innovative solutions to crises, and even to rise from the ashes.”²¹²

What I hope we have learned over the past two years is that we need to be willing to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances. However, given the current political divide that characterizes both France and the United States (public protests about vaccine mandates were widespread in both) there is no guarantee that flexibility will continue in the future.

However, governments and private companies across the world have made some encouraging urban innovations in the past year in response to the pandemic. In addition to the above-mentioned initiatives working towards the “greening” of Paris, Uber Technologies in San Francisco, in response to the COVID-era need for improved office ventilation, designed its new headquarters with exterior glass panes that open and close throughout the day to improve air circulation. Several cities in the U.S., including Bakersfield in California’s Central Valley, are piloting universal basic mobility to remove barriers to public transport use, such as cost and unreliability, by subsidizing bus rides, e-bikes, scooters, and other shared transportation methods. Miami, Florida and Phoenix, Arizona have created Chief Heat Officers, positions that are focused on solving problems related to the increasing temperatures that climate change is bringing about. Chile has opened Latin America’s first thermosolar plant to generate energy from the sun’s heat. And in Japan, the Toyota Corporation has broken ground on a 175-acre smart city to test how people adapt to fully autonomous transportation.²¹³

²¹² Angel, “Best Hope for Ukraine.”

²¹³ Linda Poon, “10 Ways Cities Came Back in 2021,” *Bloomberg CityLab*, December 26, 2021, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/features/2021-12-27/10-urban-innovations-in-year-two-of-a-global-pandemic>.

An exhibition at the Seventeenth International Architecture Biennale in Venice in 2021 entitled *Imagining New Ways to Inhabit the Future*, a subset of the festival's main exhibition *How Will We Live Together?* provided ideas as to how architecture is changing in response to the times we are experiencing. Speaking to global issues that helped to spread the COVID-19 virus, according to Lebanese architect Hashim Sarkis, the exhibition's curator—"climate change, mass migration, political polarization and increasing social, economic and racial inequalities"—architects explored the connection between nature and technology and considered other life forms. One architecture firm presented a neighborhood redevelopment project in Clichy-sous-Bois, one of the most isolated and underserved of the *banlieues* just east of Paris (and Saint-Denis). Although historically public transport has not served Clichy-sous-Bois, the *banlieue* will gain this infrastructure through the expansion of the Grand Paris Express network that is currently underway. Declaring that "the space needs to belong to the people," the Métro architects are planning collective housing and a marketplace near the new station, which will include decorative patterns from the local African population.²¹⁴

This important populist sentiment connects us back to the idea of the public square, of metropolitan spaces that welcome and connect people, of affordable housing in the face of increasing gentrification, of an equitable quality of life for all residents. It also raises many questions about the future of cities and suburbs/*banlieues*. What will public space look like in the future? How will the built environment evolve, as office buildings remain underutilized and urban housing stock becomes more expensive and less available? Will there be a willingness (and resources) to preserve and adapt older buildings for new uses, including the arts? How can

²¹⁴ Elisabetta Povoledo, "Imagining New Ways to Inhabit the Future," *The New York Times*, June 6, 2021.

we support the critical role that artists and arts organizations play in creative placemaking and placekeeping to help redevelop and enliven urban environments?

Reconsidering Terms of Art: Creative Placemaking and Placekeeping

To reiterate the definitions Chapter 1 detailed, the term “creative placemaking”—the subject of much writing and debate over the years—describes the way that artists, arts and culture help acknowledge and make local histories visible and valued. The new Chair of the National Endowment for the Arts, Maria Rosario Jackson, defines creative placemaking as “the integration of arts, culture and community engaged design into comprehensive community development efforts towards building places where all people can thrive.”²¹⁵ Over time, it has become apparent that this works most effectively and authentically when local residents in partnership with artists and culture bearers are at the helm, rather than funding priorities or arts organization mission statements. As Jackson states, it is important to ensure that people in “vulnerable and often historically marginalized” communities can participate in and benefit from the change being sought. Matthew Clarke, former director of Creative Placemaking at the Trust for Public Land echoes this when he notes that “The arts, in the context of place, can play an outsized role in giving people agency over their environments and building equity into the systems which govern our lives. Creative placemaking’s story fits wonderfully into this frame.”²¹⁶ ArtPlace America developed a series of thirteen research scans before its ten-year run

²¹⁵ Maria Rosario Jackson, “Equity-based Creative Placemaking,” *Artivate: A Journal of Entrepreneurship in the Arts* 6, no. 2 (Summer 2017): 1, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/why-urban-planners-should-work-with-artists>.

²¹⁶ Marshall Clarke, *A Place of My Own, A Place of Our Own: Creative Placemaking in a Transatlantic Context* (The German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2018), 11.

came to an end in 2020, identifying systemic, social, and physical ways that arts and culture impact equitable community development. Relevant issues include water, transportation, public safety, and public space: “Arts and culture are widely understood as tools to beautify, activate, and repurpose shared spaces, from sidewalks to parks to public infrastructure. Such physical changes introduce the risk of social, economic, or cultural displacement, however, so it is crucial to root them in the community’s stated needs and desires.”²¹⁷ Chapter 2 focused on all of the ways that artists can make urban areas more livable, including examples of city departments in Minneapolis and Oakland embedding artists in city agencies in order to add more creative thinking to the process of solving urban issues.

Creative placemaking’s terminological siblings, creative placekeeping and placeknowing, remain crucial to the goal of bringing an integrated equity lens to the field, recognizing the stories that already exist in a place and that bring the past and its cultural and spatial memories to life. This treatise has noted several examples of this in practice, including the Oakland and Saint-Denis case studies, though they illustrate the principle in different ways. Shadetree in Oakland demonstrates placekeeping in action. The current artists and residents are continuing founder Robert Schultz’s decades-long dream of bringing creatives together in historic buildings that were once part of the Port of Oakland’s shipping industry. Le 6B in Saint-Denis illuminates the concept of placeknowing as it connects residents with some of the *banlieue*’s natural landmarks, situated as it is between the river and the canal. Through arts, culture and community gardening, Le 6B helps to foster local pride of place and history while also welcoming new residents as the area undergoes redevelopment.

²¹⁷ Jamie Hand et al., “The Role of Arts and Culture in Equitable Community Development: A Visual Analysis,” *ArtPlace America*, 2020, <https://www.artplaceamerica.org/library/role-arts-and-culture-equitable-community-development-visual-analysis>.

Another challenging but important term has become apparent in the course of my research: place-taking, the practice of developers using the “creative placemaking” terms of arts for their own purpose as they redevelop neighborhoods that artists and cultural organizations have made attractive. This causes the displacement, destabilization, and related inequities within the creative sector, a type of “cultural gentrification” that often disproportionately affects artists of color and ethnic-specific cultural activity, as well as long-time neighborhood residents. This is not new, according to curator Vicki Meek, who observes that “They have been doing that since SoHo was created in New York City over fifty years ago – a place that started out as the land given to freed slaves of the Dutch West Indies Company, and the site of the first free black settlement on Manhattan island [sic]. The arts and their creators are often used as the draw for developing new housing or retail, but rarely do we see artists having the ability to occupy these new developments, nor is the overall community incorporated in the planning for such developments. So, the whole premise undergirding creative placemaking—i.e. the collaboration between developers, community, and city planners—becomes more something of rhetoric rather than practice.”²¹⁸ Artist Julia Cole adds to this criticism: “Let’s begin by giving the majority of Creative Placemaking endeavors their real name of ‘Rebranding Campaigns’ ...let’s struggle harder to find words that reflect respect for the diverse assets communities already possess.”²¹⁹

In 2021, a coalition of place-based funders authored a report called “WE-Making: How Arts & Culture Unite People to Work Toward Community Well-Being” that consisted of case studies of responses to the crises of the past two years. One of the three case studies was an

²¹⁸ Vicki Meek, “Creative Placetaking: It’s a Thing!” *AlternateROOTS*, April 25, 2018, <https://alternateroots.org/creative-placetaking-its-a-thing/>.

²¹⁹ Sean Starowitz and Julia Cole, “Thoughts on Creative Placetaking,” *Lumpen Magazine*, 2015, https://issuu.com/lumpenmagazine/docs/lumpen125_final_web.

exploration of the genesis of the East Oakland Black Cultural Zone, a coalition of nineteen organizational partners seeking to “innovate, incubate, inform, and elevate community driven projects that allow Black residents in East Oakland to THRIVE.” Many consider East Oakland to be “the last frontier of gentrification” in Oakland, according to the report, and one of the early achievements of the cultural zone was the creation of the Black Cultural Zone Community Development Corporation, through which they acquired a public lot to develop Liberation Park, a cultural activation space, with cultural programming for the community. The W E-Making report highlights five strategies to amplify social cohesion through arts and culture: build and share power through community ownership; connect people across difference; include all types of community members; have a consistent presence in the community; and align with community change goals to reinforce desired impacts.”²²⁰

²²⁰ Ann Gadwa Nicodemus et al., “WE-making: How arts & culture unit people to work toward community well-being” (Easton, PA: Metris Arts Consulting, 2021), https://communitydevelopment.art/sites/default/files/we-making_theory-of-change_041321_a.pdf.

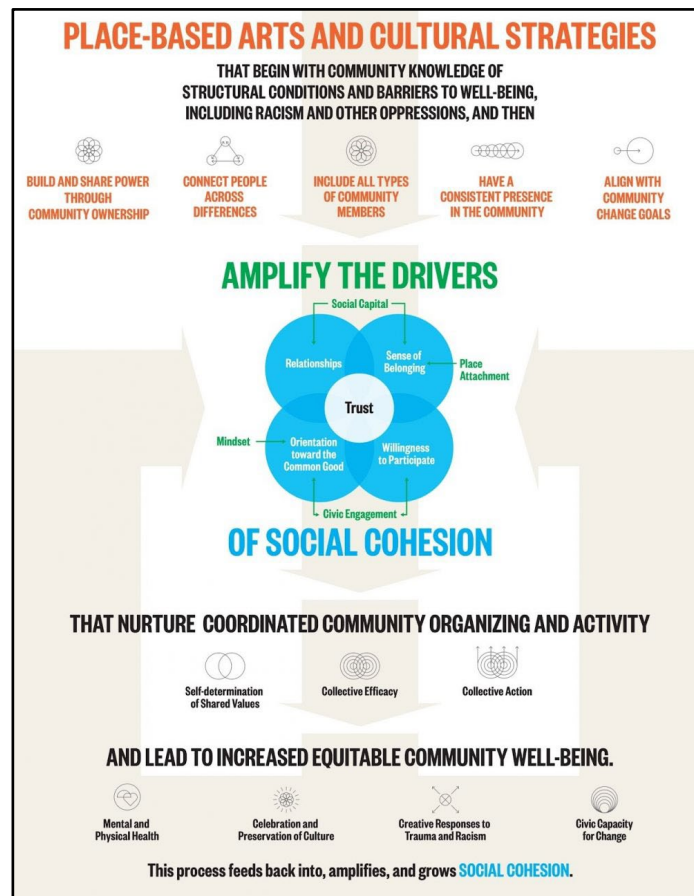


Figure 29: WE-Making Report Strategies, 2021. [Source: Ann Gadwa Nicodemus et al., “WE-Making,” Metris Arts Consulting, 2021.
https://communitydevelopment.art/sites/default/files/we-making_theory-of-change_041321_a.pdf.

And so, I return to the term culture-keeping (which we can consider, perhaps, as WE-making, a phrase that poet Carol Bebelles coined), which is at the heart of the treatise. This concept encompasses the ways in which artists, the thoughtful preservation of historic buildings, and responsive, inclusive urban policy intersect to create equitable cities. Culture-keeping is the recognition that a conversation with our past can inform the future, and that artists and the local community express and interpret both. Culture-keeping is visible in every example in this treatise, and it is a concept that should be at the core of urban evolution.

The pandemic has had a profound effect on the arts and culture sector, from shuttered theaters and museums to unemployed and displaced artists and the resulting pivot to digitization that reduced artist revenues. The multiple shutdowns and safety measures required during the public health crisis that is COVID has affected every aspect of this very public-facing industry. In 2020 ten million jobs were lost worldwide in the creative industries (both for-profit and nonprofit), and the sector's value contracted by \$750 billion, underlying its vulnerability and instability. According to Ernesto Ottone, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Culture, "A basic paradox has emerged, whereby people's global consumption of, and reliance on, cultural content has increased, however at the same time those who produce arts and culture find it increasingly difficult to work. We need to rethink how we build a sustainable and inclusive working environment for cultural and artistic professionals who play a vital role for society the world over."²²¹ Some governments have made federal funds available, depending on the country and municipality, to help keep the industry afloat in the face of financial losses, which one study estimated at almost \$18 billion in America as of July 2021.²²² France, for example, committed two billion Euros to the cultural sector in September 2020, and the CARES Act in 2020 and the American Rescue Plan Act in 2021 funneled millions of dollars to the U.S. cultural sector through the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for the Arts. Research that Americans for the Arts conducted in the U.S. at the end of 2021 indicated that there is cause for some hope: though the employment rate for artists is three times worse than

²²¹ Harriett Sherwood, "UNESCO warns of crisis in creative sector with 10m jobs lost due to pandemic," *The Guardian*, February 8, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/feb/08/unesco-warns-of-crisis-in-creative-sector-with-10m-jobs-lost-due-to-pandemic>.

²²² Randy Cohen, "*COVID-19 Pandemic Impact on the Arts Research Updates: March 14, 2022*" (Washington, D.C.: Americans for the Arts, 2022), <https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/103614>.

other nonprofits, the former is on the rise, although not at the same rate as the overall U.S. job market. There has also been a rebound in attendance at arts events, up to an estimated 69 percent by February 2022, a major improvement upon 38 percent in September 2021.²²³

What does this global crash (and slow recovery) mean for the role of artists in terms of values such as creative placemaking? San Francisco artist Megan Wilson puts it this way: “The ability of artists to become driving forces of culture becomes extremely difficult when economic instability, lack of affordable space, and homogeneous environments threaten our livelihoods and we become creative agents driven by the forces of money and survival.”²²⁴

While the world seems to be shrinking as a result of continually evolving technology and increasing globalization, the impact of the multiple crises around us fuels our need to find remedies that can actually close the distance between us, help us work together rather than against each other to find solutions. From climate change, to ongoing wars, to social justice and public health issues, this seems to be a watershed moment. In 1945, Yale University anthropologist George Murdock explored the concept of cultural universals, recognizing that cultures around the world share common elements in spite of the major differences between them that include geography, origins, and history. While he found that many of the universals revolve around human survival like securing shelter and food, others are associated with shared human experiences such as birth, death, the formation of a family unit. These biological responses also pave the way to sociological ones, such as rituals and traditions passed across generations.²²⁵

²²³ Cohen, *COVID-19 Pandemic Impact*.

²²⁴ Megan Wilson, “Creative Placemaking—A Cautionary Tale.” *Race, Poverty & the Environment* 20, No. 1 (2015): 104, <https://www.reimaginerpe.org/20-1/wilson>.

²²⁵ Murdock, G. P. “The common denominator of culture,” in *The science of man in the world crisis*, edited by Ralph Linton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945), 145.

The concept of cultural universals helps us to comprehend why it is illuminating to undertake cross-cultural study such as the Oakland/Saint-Denis project and this treatise. What can our two cultures learn about each other, beyond the shared biology, that can shine a light on new approaches and perspectives to tackle both the big crises and the mundane quotidian details? How can the past traditions and present practices of two separate places inform the future of both? For example, there are aspects of the French government's centralized support for culture that is appealing to consider through the U.S. lens of diffuse regional and privately arts funders. On the other hand, as public financial support in France ebbs and flows due to political and economic winds, the more prudent the practice in the U.S. of providing private funds that can be more responsive to current needs seems. Both countries would benefit from cross-cultural funding ideas that could help each truly stabilize and sustain support for arts and culture.

This is what the Oakland/Saint-Denis project partners have sought to accomplish in undertaking this international exchange: to share solutions that have proven successful in one place and may (or may not) bear fruit if we attempt to apply them to similar problems in our own place, and that may inspire us to customize or adapt those solutions to meet our community's specific needs and capacities. In considering how to engage in equitable city-building through the cultural and historic preservation sectors in France and the U.S., the goal is not necessarily to duplicate an approach undertaken by the other but to share evaluation, analysis, and dialogue to lead the way forward to greater understanding of what might work in our respective cities.

Considering the Cultural Future of the 510 and le 93

As part of the learning expedition to Saint-Denis in October 2019, we gathered with local artists and residents at La Maison Jaune, a contemporary art space in the heart of Saint-Denis that offers cultural programs to neighborhood inhabitants. One of the group activities in which we participated was a cross-cultural flipchart exercise to share our ideas about Oakland and Saint-Denis. The first prompt, “I wish Oakland/Saint-Denis...” elicited responses such as “will remain a center for cultural experimentation,” “retains its character as it transforms,” and “plus d’échanges, plus d’art, plus de voyages” (more exchanges, more art, more travel). Another prompt, “In the future Oakland and Saint-Denis will...” resulted in “sera un carrefour d’énergies positives et creatives,” (will be a crossroad of positive and creative energies), “show communities of the world how to change with integrity, love, inclusion,” and “be different than they are now.”



Figure 30: Author (far left) at Maison Jaune, Saint-Denis, 2019.
[Source: photo by Camille Servain-Schreiber.]

The Greater Paris region, and the entire country of France, are undergoing tremendous changes, the result of both momentum from urban development already underway and the effects of the past two years. This change will only continue in the coming year, although in the Presidential election in April 2022 French citizens voted to keep President Emmanuel Macron in office for a second five year-term. In any case, Saint-Denis is at the epicenter of the change. Winning the European Commission's title of European Capital of Culture for 2028 (the committee will announce results several years in advance) would solidify the city's existing cultural assets, but the application process and the efforts that have been part of its preparation have already been of benefit in raising the visibility of the arts locally and beyond.

The effects of the 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the Gare Pleyel transit hub are more difficult to predict. It is easy to imagine an acceleration of displacement and gentrification as a result of new economic activity and new jobs, although Pierre Mansat, an advisor to Paris Mayor Hidalgo, states that "Elected officials in Seine-Saint-Denis have an urban vision that is sufficiently inclusive and based on solidarity to prevent that phenomenon."²²⁶ The current mayor of Saint-Denis, Mathieu Hanotin, was elected in 2020 and will serve a six-year term, so there will be continuity of leadership at a very critical moment in the city's history. Certainly, Mayor Hanotin's full-throated support of the Oakland/Saint-Denis project is a good indication of the emphasis he places on arts and culture in his city and on an international exchange with the U.S. As the Mayor likes to say, according to a spokesperson, "Today, many consider it a success if you make it out of the city, and our challenge is to reframe that idea. We want to empower people to choose to stay and pursue success in Saint-Denis."

²²⁶ Chrisafis, A. "Paris's poor neighbor."

While Saint-Denis is undergoing major redevelopment, Oakland is facing questions about its own development policies in view of continuing pressure on a limited housing stock as Silicon Valley tech firms continue to move across the Bay Area in search of more office and residential space for their employees. A hotly debated plan to redevelop fifty-five acres at Howard Terminal, an industrial site adjacent to Jack London Square on the Oakland Bay, has raised questions about displacement. The project, with \$12 billion in private funding, is slated to include three thousand housing units (15 percent affordable), retail space, offices, a hotel, a concert venue, and a new baseball stadium for the Oakland Athletics professional baseball franchise. The current agreement is that the baseball franchise will need to offer \$50 million for the preservation and renovation of existing neighborhood housing units, the construction of new units, and anti-displacement tenant services that the city of Oakland operates.²²⁷ However, the redevelopment would encroach upon nearby Chinatown, affecting an important cultural neighborhood. The site is currently toxic, requiring a major clean-up, and area residents are concerned about increased traffic, pollution, and overall density. The project recently hit a minor hurdle when the statewide Seaport Planning Advisory Committee voted it down, citing increased port traffic, but the Oakland City Council approved the Environmental Impact Report in February ahead of a final vote this summer. More recently, a coalition of Port of Oakland users, including truckers, port workers, and shipping companies, filed a lawsuit to stop the development

²²⁷ Greg Aragon and Erica Berardi, “Oakland’s Howard Terminal Redevelopment Echoes California’s Housing Crisis Issues,” *Engineering News-Record*, January 7, 2022, <https://www.enr.com/articles/53374-oaklands-howard-terminal-redevelopment-echoes-californias-housing-crisis-issues>.

altogether, citing a flawed environmental impact report that downplayed the disruption it would cause to workers and the movement of cargo in and out of the port.²²⁸

Oakland's skyline will continue to change with new planned residential and office developments (including one that will become the tallest building in the city), a major new BART station in the historically Black area of West Oakland, as well as the adaptive reuse of the city-owned 1914 Kaiser Convention Center on the edge of Lake Merritt. Now called The Oakland Civic, the historic Beaux-Arts concert venue was host to Elvis Presley and Martin Luther King, Jr. in its heyday, sat vacant for many years and will now undergo renovations to become a performing arts and commercial venue.²²⁹

With Mayor Libby Schaaf coming to the end of her second and final term this year, a change in city leadership will also change Oakland's political landscape and priorities, which could affect the city's cultural ecosystem. It is the first time since 2010 that the seat is wide-open, with no incumbent on the ballot. There are seven declared candidates and more on the way, three of them currently on the City Council (and one representing the district in which I live). Three City Council seats are also open, and the November election will be the first to occur with new City Council and Oakland Unified School District Board boundaries, which an independent redistricting committee redrew in response to the 2020 U.S. Census.²³⁰

²²⁸ Annie Sciacca, "Coalition of port users sue to stop Oakland A's waterfront ballpark plan," *East Bay Times*, April 1, 2022, <https://www.siliconvalley.com/2022/04/01/oakland-as-howard-terminal-plan-faces-lawsuit-over-environmental-review/>.

²²⁹ Erika Mailman, "A changing skyline: Housing, offices, public space planned with community benefit in mind," *San Francisco Business Times*, September 28, 2021, <https://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2021/09/28/a-changing-skyline-housing-offices-public-space.html>.

²³⁰ David DeBolt, "Oakland's 2022 election season kicks off—ahead of the usual schedule," *The Oaklandside*, November 23, 2021, <https://oaklandside.org/2021/11/23/oaklands-2022-election-season-kicks-off-ahead-of-the-usual-schedule/>.

Since 2015, the city’s Planning and Building Department has drafted its Downtown Oakland Specific Plan (DOSP) with input from a community advisory committee and opportunities for public comment, and the plan continues to advance through the process with final adoption to occur at the end of 2022. The DOSP’s aim, according to the city’s website, is to “ensure continued growth and revitalization to benefit both downtown residents and the larger community. The plan will provide sound policy guidance on development, linking land use, transportation, economic development, housing, public spaces, cultural arts, and social equity.” The current draft has a promising set of goals related to culture-keeping, to “encourage diverse voices and forms of expression to flourish,” including arts and culture preservation and promotion, abundant art and events, and affordable arts space.²³¹ The challenges the plan identifies are a declining share of Black and Asian residents, unaffordable art/artisan small-scale manufacturing space and lack of art space, and the displacement of ethnic businesses and community-based organizations. These struggles are not unlike the challenges that Saint-Denis is facing during its own period of extended redevelopment.

What the two cities will continue to share is a dynamic and diverse population, unique histories that make them stand apart from their more “glamorous” neighboring cities, and an energy for activism. They both continue to grapple with similar issues, as well: gentrification and displacement, migration and immigration, homelessness, transportation density, the effects of climate change. While arts and culture cannot mitigate all these issues, this treatise has explored how they can help to create a connective tissue among people, a connection that can make our

²³¹ City of Oakland Planning and Building Department, *Downtown Oakland Specific Plan (Draft)*. August 30, 2019, https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/FINAL_DOSP-Public-Review-Draft-Plan_082819_Compressed.pdf.

communities stronger and more inclusive. It is therefore imperative to meet artists and arts and culture organizations' needs for a safe, functional, affordable and stable spaces to live and work.

Confluence: Recommendations for Further Enquiry

As we contemplate the major elements of this treatise, we return to the core question: how can the confluence of artists, historic preservation and urban policy help to create more equitable, cultural, and thriving urban areas? How do we continue to adapt while cities evolve, whether that evolution is in response to global crises like a pandemic or war, the effects of global warming, social justice issues, changes in migration patterns, or a change in the local mayor? How can we prepare in advance for the events that we know are coming, such as major transportation systems? There is a plethora of solutions that communities are creating, testing, and modeling in various stages across the world, and an evaluation and analysis of their efficacy would be particularly beneficial to the field of historic preservation as it also evolves. The Venn Diagram in Chapter 1 assumes that when the three areas intersect, there is a possibility of success in achieving the ultimate goal of a thriving city. With appropriate urban policies that financially incentivize or help to underwrite the arts and culture sector's use of historic and underutilized building stock then a city retains an existing built resource, artists are able to remain in place, and the blight and overdevelopment of place-taking are kept at bay.

As I considered the conclusions for this treatise, the thought that came to me again and again was "we just need to find more money, and adapt more buildings for artists, and find a way to transfer ownership to them." Artist Megan Wilson had a similar thought: "What's truly essential for the survival of artists and arts centers is general operating funds, or funds to secure

affordable housing or studios.”²³² And, the bottom line is that we are both right: the capitalist structure within which we operate creates a world of haves and have-nots, in which only those with cash are able to get what they want and need. In considering what he perceives as the government’s waning interest in supporting France’s cultural assets, Jean-Philippe Hugron posits, “Over the past twenty years, successive governments of all political persuasions have staked everything on private investment – and this also extends to the private sector’s particular idea of culture. Through fiscal breaks and other incentives offered to big business, ordinary taxpayers find themselves indirectly financing corporate foundations”²³³ The goal in both countries needs to be valuing both public and private investment in the arts, without a decrease in one or the other.

This leads me to two more Venn diagrams that serve as companions to the original diagram charting my treatise in Chapter 1. The first indicates *what* is necessary, within our current structure, in order to reach our goal of equitable, thriving metropolitan areas full of the benefits of arts and culture. These comprise the intersection of resources (the practical conclusion that both Wilson and I reached) with historic buildings (whether industrial, commercial, or residential), that the cultural sector can adapt for use, and the secret sauce of power and agency that makes so many things possible.

²³² Wilson, “Creative Placemaking,” 102.

²³³ Hugron, “Daylight Robbery.”

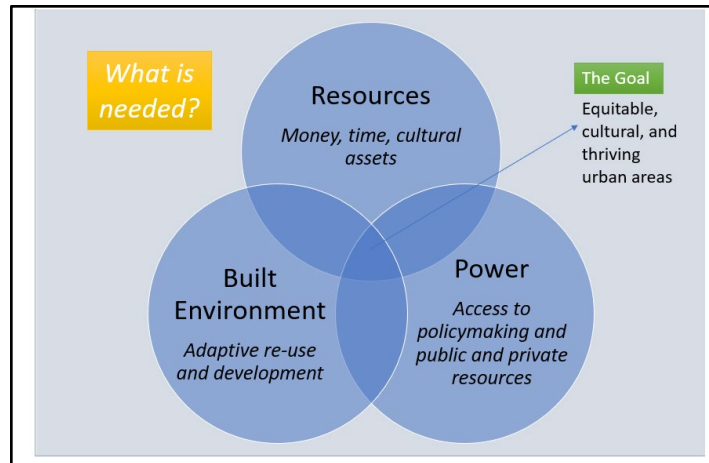


Figure 31: Factors necessary to make cities fertile and welcoming environments for the arts. [Source: author's creation.]

The second diagram recognizes the fact that it is important to chart *who* needs to be involved. The effective reuse of historical buildings is not just about bricks and mortar but about the stories, the ideas, the talent, the humanity. Yes, the elected officials and philanthropists and those with resources are necessary to acquire and adapt a building for cultural purposes. But equally if not more important are the artists and the residents and workers: the people who have a vision for what a place can be and those who know what a place has been.

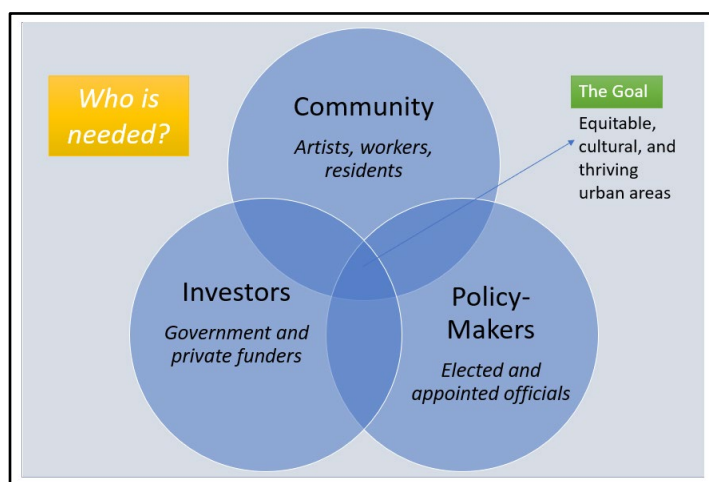


Figure 32: Actors needed to successfully adapt a historic building for artistic purposes. [Source: author's creation.]

Despite the differences between urban development and historic preservation policies and practices in France and the U.S., the opportunities to learn from each other have no limits, as the *In the Banlieues: Oakland/Saint-Denis* initiative demonstrated. Thus, the ideas that the below list lays out briefly represent lessons from both countries, and in some cases represent approaches already underway. In 2017, the World Cities Cultural Forum published *Making Space for Culture*, a Handbook for City Leaders with a robust list of recommendations, from tax incentives to planning tools, for how to ensure that displacement does not take the cultural life of cities with it.²³⁴ With examples from twelve international cities, including San Francisco and Hong Kong, the report is a comprehensive source of ideas to connect artists and the built environment. I found both inspiration for my recommendations and confirmation that an approach of thinking globally and acting locally is sound, enabling nimbleness and adaptability as circumstances shift in varied locations.

With these ideas comes the entreaty that we take this moment of shifting global sands and challenge how things have been done in the past in the arts and preservation sectors in both countries, and who has been included (or excluded). In the words of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's draft National Impact Agenda, *Leading the Change Together*, the field must implement a new equity framework "based on the understanding that many of our existing challenges are structural, and that broad effort involving all aspects of the field are needed to build a more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable future."²³⁵ As Joshua Simon, advisor to

²³⁴ World Cities Cultural Forum, *Making Space for Culture*, 2017, http://www.worldcitiescultureforum.com/assets/others/Making_Space_for_Culture_Handbook_for_City_Leaders.pdf.

²³⁵ Di Gao et al, *Leading the Change Together: A National Impact Agenda for the Preservation Movement*, PastForward Conference, National Trust for Historic Preservation Leadership Forum, 2021,

Community Arts Stabilization Trust (CAST) and SPUR San Francisco board member reminds us, we have assumed that there is a level playing field that does not actually exist in setting up systems.²³⁶

Real Estate and Urban Development Models

Incentivize Homeowners to be Artist-Friendly

Lawmakers passed California Senate Bill 9 in January 2022 in response to the state's housing crisis, allowing up to four residential dwellings on parcels of land zoned for single-unit dwellings. This essentially enables residents to split a given lot. SB9 requires every city in California is required to permit this, except in historic zones, flood or fire zones, or any other environmentally protected region. Under this law, the cost of constructing new dwellings falls to the homeowner, not a developer. While this bill is focused on new construction, the state could provide financial incentives in the form of tax credits for homeowners who build artist live/work spaces or adapt an existing structure on their property for that use.

Transform Unused Office Space and Storefronts

Given the changes the pandemic has brought to office and commercial life, cities can provide financial incentives to convert unused office space into artist studios, apartments, galleries, or performing arts venues. Le 6b in Saint-Denis is a good example of taking a non-traditional arts space (a 1970s office building) and using a public/private partnership to turn it into a cultural center connected to the local neighborhood.

<https://forum.savingplaces.org/blogs/special-contributor/2021/10/26/leading-the-change-together-national-impact-agenda>.

²³⁶ Simon (CAST advisor) in discussion with the author, Oakland, California, April 9, 2022.

Launch a Competition to Redevelop Underutilized and Blighted Sites

In the same vein as the *Réinventer Paris* initiative, which offered real estate incentives for developers with innovative ideas for abandoned buildings and public spaces, create a competition that invites artists to make bids with architects and developers to imagine more functional and affordable spaces for cultural engagement. This competition could include empty storefronts, as U.S. Department of Commerce data indicates a 14.2 percent increase in e-commerce in 2021 from the prior year.²³⁷

Increase New Market Tax Credits and Other Financial Incentives for Historic Preservation for the Arts

Increase the amount of tax offsets incentivizing investment in making older building stock suitable for the arts, including Low Income Housing Credits, Federal and State Historic Preservation Tax Credits, and Community Development Block Grants.

Require Support for Artists in New Developments

Rather than require private developers to include percent-for-arts set-asides for public art to garner project approval, negotiate cash contributions for an artist building fund or require space within the new construction or renovation for artist housing, studio, or performances.

²³⁷ U.S. Department of Commerce, “Quarterly Retail E-Commerce Sales, 4th Quarter 2021,” *U.S. Census Bureau News*, February 18, 2022, https://www.census.gov/retail/mrts/www/data/pdf/ec_current.pdf.

Funding Models

Provide General Support and Capital Grants to Artists

Encourage private foundations to offer more general operating support grant money, as well as grants for capital projects. Both types of funds are currently very difficult to secure. When I worked at private foundation in the Bay Area, we made a limited number of capital grants, but our priority was to support projects addressing the issue of space for artists, such as a grant to The Tannery Arts Center in Santa Cruz. The grant recipients converted this former leather factory with multiple buildings dating from the mid-1800s into an arts campus with a theater, exhibit space, and artist live/work lofts.

Find New Revenue Streams for Arts/Preservation Projects

Many cities, including San Francisco, rely upon a Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) or hotel tax to support arts and culture grants. During an economic downturn (or a pandemic) when tourism decreases, so do the available funds for the arts. Using California Arts Council's arts license plate as a model, designate new funding streams specifically for the adaptive reuse (and operating funds) of historic building stock for cultural purposes. For example, Oakland could garner a dollar for this purpose from every Oakland A's baseball ticket sold.

Revamp Federal Opportunity Zone Funding

The current model benefits a few wealthy speculators. Make it possible for anyone to make an investment, within their means, to historic preservation or adaptive reuse projects for arts and culture purposes, in the way that Shadetree in Oakland is modeling through the Cultural Impact

Fund. Goals include providing opportunities for anyone to invest, regardless of income, and prioritizing resident-controlled ownership of properties to drive systemic change.²³⁸

Historic Preservation Policies

Embed Artists in the Local Historic Preservation Department or State Historic Preservation Office

In both France and the U.S., ensure that, like the artists working on projects in city agencies in Minneapolis (which in turn took its inspiration from the original program in Tours, France), there is an ongoing place for artists to participate in the municipal process of historic preservation.

Minimize Environmental Impact Review Requirements

By reducing barriers in the review process for adaptive reuse projects, we can enable such proposals to secure approval more quickly and without costly reviews.

Hire Artists and Residents as Advisors

As with the Grand Paris Express, partner an artist with an architect/planner and include a community member when undertaking an adaptive reuse (or new development) project.

²³⁸ Cultural Impact Fund, “About Us,” accessed April 23, 2022, <https://www.cultural-impact.org/about-us/>.

Train Historic Preservation Consultants

Create a professional development program to train consultants specifically in how to work on financing preservation projects for artists and arts organizations.

Social Valuing of the Arts in Public Spaces

Simplify Special Event Permitting

Make it easier for artists to make temporary use of historic properties for pop-up arts events, whether it is in an old industrial warehouse or a public square. The closing of the street outside of the Oakland Museum of California on Friday evenings for food trucks is an inspired instance of using public space to engage the community in cultural activities together.

Keep Artists Safe

To avoid another Ghost Ship fire, cities should ensure that their zoning and permitting processes are functional and up-to-date and that there is not a backlog of cases to review and approve. This should also include technical assistance from experts to ensure that artists understand and can meet the legal requirements, (which are complex and rigorous) governing their work and living spaces.

Create Cultural/Preservation Zones

With Oakland's Black Cultural Zone in East Oakland as an example, use public funds (federal, state, local) in a way that ensures equity to provide capital and operating support for hyper-local

arts engagement that revitalize marginalized communities through the built environment or public squares.

From those prehistoric drawings discovered in French caves until the present day, humans have connected art to place to help tell their stories. Los Angeles urban planner James Rojas explains it this way: “Urban planners and artists occupy the same city space. Yet artists take a different approach to exploring, understanding, and presenting urban issues. Urban planners begin their inquiry of place by collecting data in the form of numbers, maps, policy, and maybe a site visit or talking to people. Artists, on the other hand, begin their inquiry by using their body and senses to explore the site and ask a series of questions such as: How does the site feel? What do I see or not see? What are the urban patterns playing out within the site? What are the relics here? The site determines the outcome of the artist's work. When the artist's work becomes site specific, it has the power to engage, educate, and empower the public on urban issues.”²³⁹

Well over two years into the Oakland/Saint-Denis Cooperation Project, with the central goal of expanding the international conversation about how the arts and humanities can help to build more equitable cities, it is clear that the project's momentum is accelerating. This is due in part to both the timelessness and the timeliness of the core question of how cities evolve. Urban areas in all their historical iterations have been in flux for centuries and will continue to shift, while at the same time the pandemic has disrupted the traditional patterns of society and historic preservation and city-building we have been accustomed to. We can reimagine how artists can

²³⁹ James Rojas, “Why Urban Planners Should Work with Artists,” Artbound, KCET, Los Angeles, April 7, 2015, <https://www.kcet.org/shows/artbound/why-urban-planners-should-work-with-artists>.

inform and participate in urban policies and initiatives as societies adjust to the new reality of an endemic in the public square. If anything, our conviction about the essential nature of this international exchange has only deepened since it began, and more people in both countries have become involved in its planning and implementation. Indeed, the most challenging aspect has been the coordination of all the moving parts. It is paramount to ensure that everyone is heard (in their own language), that we practice smart growth of our networks and partners to ensure that we garner an array of perspectives that includes people who understand Oakland and Saint-Denis well, and that we deploy our energy and expertise in the most positive and effective ways. It has been a good reminder of how successful arts and culture are at shapeshifting to be whatever best serves the community. In the most humanistic way, the hard, painstaking work of building effective relationships and communicating across distance, time zones, backgrounds, language and expectations has become a model for what we all should be striving for as we seek to level the playing field. Together we can better understand how to build more equitable cities while honoring the people and history and places that were here before us and who are among us now.

This endeavor of examining the intersection between the arts, the historic built environment and urbanism is one of the most exciting and thought-provoking that I have been involved with during my career. My past experiences of living abroad taught me that when I immerse myself in another place, I understand where I come from much more clearly. And although I am not from “here,” I can do my part to seek out and amplify the many voices who truly own the stories of Oakland and Saint-Denis.

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