

From Rust Belt to Artist Belt:

An Analysis of the Challenges and Opportunities Found in Rust Belt Cities

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Community Partnership for Arts and Culture • 1900 Superior Avenue, Suite 130 •
Cleveland, OH • 216.575.0331 • info@cpacbiz.org

Executive Summary

The Changing Times in the Rust Belt

The United States has entered a new economic era that depends on the ingenuity and unlimited resources contained in the minds of its citizens. Today's emphasis on human capital goes beyond referring to the labor force to encompass the ideas, education and experience that each worker possesses.

The nation's knowledge-based economy is yielding to a creative economy, a new economic paradigm that is becoming the rallying point for people and places aiming to be competitive in the 21st century.

At the peak of the United States's industrial dominance in the early 20th century, its industrial cities enjoyed explosive growth and prosperity. From 1900 to 1950, Detroit's population increased sixfold, Cleveland's almost tripled and Buffalo grew nearly twice as large. During this period, each city's infrastructure – from warehouses to homes to roads - grew enormously; the world looked to America's industrial centers for leadership innovation and technological advancement. Each city experienced an artistic explosion as well, as philanthropists encouraged the establishment of world-renowned cultural institutions.

But since 1950, the nation's industrial capitals have experienced an equally fast decline. From St. Louis to Chicago to Pittsburgh, they have seen thousands of jobs disappear and thousands of citizens flee.

Many of these cities are now home to only half the residents for which they were built, and are likelier to be labeled "the Rust Belt" or "Fly-Over Country" than to be recognized for their prominence in research and innovation. And while the Rust Belt's industrial cities still have strong artistic communities, the outside world tends to recognize these urban centers for their problems rather than for their creative workforces.

Rust Belt Challenges

Rust Belt cities face several challenges, including:

Low in-migration / high out-migration: The loss of manufacturing jobs in the Rust Belt has contributed to a decline in population throughout the entire region. Examination of census figures for migration patterns in many Rust Belt cities reveals stagnation or population loss. Especially troubling is the out-migration of younger adults (ages 25-34).

Sprawl: As Rust Belt cities lose population and urban cores empty out, development of new facilities and redundant infrastructure continues in suburban and ex-urban areas.

Entrenched poverty: Rust Belt cities suffer increasingly high concentrations of poverty, which contribute to social ills and quality-of-life losses for the area.

Vacant properties: With declining population bases and aging housing stock, it is not unusual for Rust Belt cities to have thousands of vacant properties on the market. Since these cities already face decline, it is difficult for them to absorb the economic and social costs associated with the vacancy problem.

Foreclosures: Nationwide, the foreclosure crisis has caused significant disruptions in the housing market. Particularly in Rust Belt cities foreclosures are exacerbating vacant-property problems resulting from slow housing markets and subprime lending.

Environmental remediation / brownfields: The intensive steel manufacturing, petrochemical production and other industrial activities that built the Rust Belt have made soil pollution, or brownfields, an especially acute problem in urban core areas. Many developers hesitate to take on the responsibility for cleaning up these sites and so many prime areas in the urban core remain abandoned.

Regional brand Issues: Long labeled decaying and undesirable, Rust Belt cities now face the task of revamping their images to attract creative workers who can spur revitalization.

Rust Belt Assets

All too often, the story of industrial America stalls here. But while the Rust Belt faces significant challenges, it also has a unique opportunity to redefine itself. Other areas in the United States must cope with mushrooming populations and strong market dynamics that can result in overwhelmingly rapid and unplanned growth. But in Rust Belt cities, lower demand for development allows community development professionals to work slowly and strategically to revitalize their cities.

In short, the problems these cities must solve make them the most interesting urban laboratories in American history, with assets such as:

Low cost of living: Due to a number of factors, including the high availability of property, the cost of living in Rust Belt cities tends to be relatively low. Most of these cities have costs of living lower than, or near to, the national average, and are considerably lower than those in comparably-sized, non-industrial cities. Arguably, this low cost of living gives residents the opportunity to live a higher quality of life in the Rust Belt than they could afford elsewhere.

Abundant space, especially large industrial spaces: While the vast surplus of buildings and undeveloped lots presents Rust Belt cities with challenges, it also allows residents to locate affordable space in virtually any neighborhood and to choose where to live based on amenities beyond price availability. A wide variety of low-priced

property is available, including unusual spaces such as industrial warehouses and churches. Moreover, abundant space gives community development professionals the opportunity to undertake large-scale revitalization projects and invest in nontraditional land use such as sculpture gardens, pocket parks and community gardens.

Slow real-estate market: While a slow real-estate market causes problems for community development groups in the Rust Belt, it also gives them opportunity to plan strategically for neighborhood change. Because properties there remain low-priced and do not change hands for long periods, community developers can take time to address potential gentrification by creating permanently affordable housing units or preparing existing residents for homeownership.

Active redevelopment efforts/community development corporations: Perhaps because development has been so challenging for Rust Belt cities for several decades, they tend to have well-established networks of community developers who advocate for the renewal of core neighborhoods and are ready to assist new and existing residents in achieving and maintaining homeownership.

A high quality arts and culture sector: As previously noted, Rust Belt cities have historically built a strong, high-quality arts and culture sector. As quality of life plays an increasingly important role in where workers choose to reside, this group of amenities may be essential in improving the Rust Belt's competitive positions.

Artists and the Economic Development Connection

Given their unique set of amenities and opportunities, today's Rust Belt cities enjoy a special opportunity to recruit and retain artists. Research suggests that where artists choose to live is influenced significantly by affordability of space. Moreover, Rust Belt cities provide artists with a quality of life; access to existing, robust arts and culture sectors; and a unique urban backdrop that may not be found in comparable non-industrial cities. But why artists? While artists cannot serve as a cure-all for the challenges facing Rust Belt cities and their neighborhoods, they can play a significant role in revitalization efforts.

What artists offer Rust Belt cities includes:

Migration to, and reconsideration of, inner cities: Numerous studies have indicated that artists can have a migration effect on additional residents. Because artists are often "early adopters" and embrace the challenges and opportunities of a struggling city prior to its revival, their movement into Rust Belt cities may signal to other potential residents that a neighborhood or city core is poised for revitalization.

Economic impact: In addition to the production of arts and culture, artists have a positive economic impact on the communities in which they live. They contribute to the entirety of the economic base of a community as artists have the versatility to work

across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. As small businesses and entrepreneurs, artists generate tax revenue and have the ability to export their work to the local, regional, national and global markets, importing dollars into their communities. Industries that support the arts and cultural sector can also benefit from an increased artist presence, notably the tourism industry. Well-established artists may even have the possibility of offering jobs to support staff.

Boost to property values: Many examples have shown that increasing the proportion of artists in a neighborhood can lead to a rise in property values. For example, Hampden, a neighborhood near John Hopkins University in Baltimore, has witnessed a renaissance since its steel mills were shut down in the 1980s. Artists and young entrepreneurs have recently discovered the area and moved in, opening art galleries and boutiques and organizing arts festivals. In 2000, the median home-sale price in southeastern Hampden was \$58,000. In 2005 that value increased 196 percent to \$171,750.

Sweat equity: As a class of workers, artists willingly invest a significant amount of their own time and labor -- their so-called sweat equity -- in revitalizing their communities, as well as in creating their art. Since many artists are unable to afford high housing or living costs, they are also willing to settle in struggling core areas—areas that are in abundant supply throughout the Rust Belt. While some individuals view such places as “communities of last resort,” artists often view these areas as “communities of choice” that have an untapped potential for development.

Engaged citizens: Artists often play leading roles in efforts to bring back struggling Rust Belt communities, getting involved in neighborhood affairs ranging from education projects with neighborhood children to public art projects to bringing unique perspectives to programming in libraries, community centers, parks, recreation centers, and block clubs and neighborhood associations. In terms of voting behavior, artists as a group tend to cast their ballots at a higher rate than the general public and are a politically inclined group.

Civic vitality: The civic engagement of artists adds further to the Rust Belt's comeback by increasing civic vitality. Civic vitality refers to the strengthening of the social ties that bind citizens together, resulting in a society that is more open, aware, and inclusive. Strong social ties encourage citizens to work together for the common good and to think in terms of their place within the broader public realm.

Youth development/educational enrichment: The need for an educated and creative workforce has never been greater than in the current economic era. For Rust Belt cities, future successes can be won only by bolstering the educational offerings available for all students. Individual students and the Rust Belt as a whole can reap benefits from integrating the arts into school curricula and/or developing widely available extracurricular arts programs. Both approaches enrich youth educational experiences

and further develop the creative skills that Rust Belt residents and their region need to compete in the 21st-century economy.

What Rust Belt Cities Can Offer Artists

Affordability/low cost of living: For urban-core, Rust Belt communities reeling from the foreclosure crisis and the fallout from long periods of unmitigated sprawl, low property values actually serve as a major asset for attracting a base of pioneering artists.

Active CDEs/CDCs: An active network of community development entities (CDEs), including community development corporations (CDCs), community development banks, investment companies focused on low- and moderate-income communities, and venture-capital firms for new development, make substantial investments in low-income areas ripe for artist-based development. Specifically, the presence of active CDCs in Rust Belt cities signals to artists that a support structure is in place and willing to provide programs and services to individuals wanting to settle in struggling areas.

Existing high quality arts and culture assets: Anyone attempting to launch an artist-based development initiative can benefit from using Rust Belt cities' existing, high quality cultural assets. Such assets offer artists opportunities for collaboration and partnership, helping them develop ties that can unite artists, cultural institutions and, ultimately, the community. Partnering with these pillars enhances artists' professional growth and development.

Openness/connection to networks: Dense urban neighborhoods offer artists access to the networking opportunities and nightlife that are essential for sustaining and advancing an artist commercially. Competition among artists tends to be lower in Rust Belt cities than in places such as New York City and Los Angeles, encouraging artists to welcome newcomers and offer them one-on-one support.

Artist support infrastructure: An established artist-support infrastructure is integral to the success of individual artists, as many of them are actually entrepreneurs overseeing small business ventures. Rust Belt cities have such networks ready to provide assistance and professional development opportunities for artists.

Proximity to other markets: Artists who settle in Rust Belt cities will find themselves near many major arts markets and in the middle of an extensive transportation network that provides easy access throughout the Rust Belt. But in addition to its systems of roads, airports, waterways, and rails, the Rust Belt offers an advanced network of electronic pathways for the exchange of information. Furthermore, strategic investment and revitalization efforts throughout the Rust Belt are developing access to new markets.

Diverse types of spaces: As detailed earlier, the Rust Belt contains a plethora of sites ripe for redevelopment, including large industrial spaces, abandoned churches, airports/airfields, train stations, correctional sites and other facilities of unique character. Many redevelopers think artists have an unmatched ability to make creative use of the Rust Belt's unique spaces, which have the potential to be transformed into one-of-a-kind residential, studio, rehearsal, performance, gallery or live/work spaces.

Recommendations for Future Policy

In order to foster artist-based development, Rust Belt cities must address issues related to:

- Outdated zoning or building codes, which prevent creative and new planning/building models from being implemented
- A lack of market pressure for space in the Rust Belt and of attention paid to developing low-cost spaces
- Decentralization or displacement of artists resulting from gentrification
- Reinvigorating the Rust Belt's brand image to dispel the negatives associated with the region
- The limited number of artist-space development projects currently in the works
- Helping artists develop markets for their work
- Assisting artists in obtaining financial resources and making financial sources more aware of artist-space development

Recommendations for Organizational Action

The following list provides a series of action steps that communities should take in order to make artist-based development a reality:

1. Identify the community's challenges, assets and opportunities by conducting research and completing an in-depth environmental scan.
2. Network with the community's diverse groups to gain broad input and support for the effort.
3. Coordinate with intermediaries to develop ways to work with artists and other groups.
4. Develop plans within all agencies and roles for all individuals who are involved, according to their skills and abilities.
5. Determine the overriding goals for each participant and identify a lead organization to oversee the effort.
6. Define means for measuring success and conduct regular evaluations.
7. Keep the media apprised of actions and progress.

From Rust Belt to Artist Belt

The environmental scan of the Rust Belt and discussion of the benefits that artists can bring to communities show that artists can be major catalysts for economic resurgence in the region and its struggling industrial cities.

Conversely, artists also have much to gain from settling, and being actively engaged, in community development activities in Rust Belt cities. While artists alone are not going to be able to bring the Rust Belt back from decades of decline, they and the cities themselves clearly have a lot to gain from working together, sharing challenges and making creative use of existing assets.

For the Rust Belt, artists have the ability to jumpstart widespread revitalization, reinvigorate communities, build a creative workforce and improve the region's quality of life. For artists, the Rust Belt can provide them with access to affordable space, a strong and supportive arts and cultural sector, professional development and networking opportunities and outlets for engagement in community affairs. While the debate will undoubtedly continue over what components are needed to bring the Rust Belt back from decline, it is evident that artists have a significant role to play in renewing industrial cities and positioning them for future success, moving the region from Rust Belt to Artist Belt.

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Introduction/General Overview

The United States is in a new economic era dependent on the innovations, creativity, ingenuity and unlimited resources contained within the minds of its citizens. Scholars and practitioners alike have developed new ways of thinking about community revitalization and implementing policies to promote widespread economic growth and sustainable development.

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, a place's prosperity was typically predicated on its natural, labor, and capital resources and on the location of these resources. While these largely passive inputs were integral to success in the old agrarian and industrial economic paradigms, today's main economic driver—and sought-after resource—is human capital.¹ Human capital is not merely the labor force or the human resources a company employs, but refers to the ideas, education and tacit knowledge that are possessed by each worker.

An emphasis on this type of human capital has been forwarded by scholars who discovered that ideas have the ability to fuel economic growth, as knowledge allows physical resources to be applied more efficiently and effectively.² Additionally, since knowledge is a commodity capable of being used equally well by many individuals simultaneously and not subject to diminishing returns, it offers the possibility for boundless economic growth.³ Such findings have demonstrated the promise of knowledge-based growth and expedited the shift toward what has been dubbed the post-industrial knowledge economy, which “puts a premium on highly skilled people because they generate, disseminate, and apply knowledge through their labor.”⁴ However, highly skilled people in the knowledge economy have often been identified as those people who have received university training or acquired a great deal of learned knowledge.

This type of knowledge has afforded many competitive advantages to cities but, over time, its ability to be written down and widely disseminated (largely due to advances in communication technology) has undermined its value in an era of globalization. Basic knowledge, in and of itself, is capable of being taught, understood, and distributed to people all over the globe, and today even knowledge-based work is being outsourced, including analytical functions in the software writing, engineering, accounting, law, and manufacturing fields.⁵

As a result, a distinction is now being made between knowledge-based work and the actual generation of knowledge that results from creativity. For example, a company's capacity to innovate or creatively re-imagine products in order to sell new ideas and consumer experiences is now taking precedence over having the ability to simply produce a commodity at the lowest price point.⁶ Taking this reconceptualization a step further, it is also becoming the desired way of thinking about how cities can reclaim competitive advantages and craft public policies that will spur sustained economic growth and development as the creative economy comes to replace the knowledge

economy paradigm.⁷ For this reason, ideas and the creativity required to produce them are becoming widely regarded as “the ultimate competitive advantage” for organizations in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.⁸

Few places understand the challenges of adjusting to these shifting economic eras better than the cities that witnessed explosive growth and peak prosperity in the early 20th century, during the United States’ period of industrial dominance. From 1900 to 1950, Detroit’s population increased sixfold, Cleveland’s almost tripled and Buffalo’s grew nearly twice as large. During this period, these places also saw explosive growth in infrastructure—from warehouses to private residences to roads—and the world looked to these prosperous industrial cities for their unprecedented innovations and technological advancements. Each city also experienced an artistic explosion, as philanthropists encouraged the establishment of world-renowned cultural institutions.

However, since 1950, industrial cities have experienced an equally fast decline because of rapid change and increased competition ushered in by new economic eras. From St. Louis to Chicago to Pittsburgh, centers of industry saw thousands of jobs dissolve and thousands of citizens flee. Many industrial cities are now home to half the residents for which they were built and are more likely to be labeled “Rust Belt” or “Fly-Over Country” than to be recognized for their prominence in manufacturing, research, and innovation. Despite their incredibly strong artistic communities, the outside world is perhaps more likely to recognize these urban centers for their problems rather than their creative workforces.

All too often, the story of the Rust Belt stalls here. But while the Rust Belt faces significant challenges, it also faces a unique opportunity to redefine itself. This paper is premised on the contention that the Rust Belt is actually poised to recruit and retain artists, given its distinct set of challenges and amenities.

But why artists? While they cannot serve as a cure-all for the challenges facing Rust Belt cities and their neighborhoods, artists can play a significant role in revitalization efforts. This paper will argue that supporting these efforts will reap many benefits for individual artists, such as allowing them to obtain affordable space, grow their businesses and become meaningfully engaged in their communities. Furthermore, this paper will demonstrate how the Rust Belt can also benefit from having artists as embedded drivers of economic growth who have a stake in seeing their communities develop and prosper. While much of the United States faces rapidly increasing population and strong market dynamics that overwhelmingly influence how development plays out, the Rust Belt’s lower levels of demand give community developers the ability to work thoughtfully and strategically to revitalize their cities by harnessing the creative talent of artists.

This paper will demonstrate why and how the strategic movement “From Rust Belt to Artist Belt” is desirable and possible by discussing the Rust Belt’s challenges, assets and opportunities. Through an environmental scan of the Rust Belt and a discussion of

the benefits that artists can give communities, it will become clear that artists can be major catalysts for economic resurgence in the region and its struggling industrial cities. Conversely, it will be shown that artists also have much to gain from settling, and being actively engaged, in community development activities in Rust Belt cities. This paper will also identify areas for improvement and provide recommendations for promoting artist-based development in the Rust Belt. Finally, many communities in the Rust Belt are already embracing, and reaping the benefits from, artist-based development projects; these cities' stories will be highlighted later in this paper. The ultimate goal of this paper is to challenge policymakers and development professionals to explore the promise of artist-based development in their communities and realize its associated economic and social benefits.

The Rust Belt

The term Rust Belt has become mostly synonymous with Midwestern towns that experienced their heydays in the early 20th century and, by the century's end, experienced plant closures, widespread unemployment and general decline. Throughout the Rust Belt, industrial cities that were once home to "big factories, big autos, and big steel" now find themselves the reluctant holders of countless hollowed-out factories, the reminders of a once prosperous past.⁹ In this paper, the term "Rust Belt" will refer to the area generally bounded by the cities of Syracuse, N.Y., and Milwaukee, Wis., in the north; Milwaukee, Chicago, Ill., Indianapolis, Ind., and Cincinnati, Ohio, in the west; Cincinnati, and Allentown, Pa., in the south; and Allentown and Syracuse in the east.¹⁰ Of particular interest in this paper are the Rust Belt cities of Buffalo, N.Y.; Chicago, Ill.; Cleveland, Ohio; Detroit, Mich.; Flint, Mich.; Indianapolis, Ind.; Milwaukee, Wis.; Pittsburgh, Pa.; Toledo, Ohio; and Youngstown, Ohio. However, other cities experiencing similar challenges will also be included in this white paper.

Rust Belt Challenges

Rust Belt cities are confronted with several challenges. They include:

Low in-migration/high out-migration

The loss of manufacturing jobs in the Rust Belt has contributed to a decline in population throughout the entire region. Detroit, for example, a hub of automobile manufacturing, saw its population soar from 285,700 in 1900 to over 1.85 million in 1950.¹¹ Since 1950, however, Detroit has witnessed a decline of nearly one million residents -- to a low of 899,387 by 2005 -- according to the Detroit Free Press.¹² Cleveland experienced similar population drops—from a 1950s high of 914,000 to a 2007 low of 444,000.¹³ Overall, U.S. Census Bureau statistics for the period of 1990 to 2004 indicate that there has been a net out-migration of people from the Rust Belt states of Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania (Indiana had a net out-migration of people from 2000 to 2004 only).¹⁴ A closer examination of census figures for migration patterns in Rust Belt cities from 2000 to 2007 reveals stagnation or

population loss among major urban centers in the Rust Belt: Erie, Pa. (0.0 percent population change), Flint (-0.2 percent), Fort Wayne, Ind. (-0.2 percent), Chicago (-2.1 percent), Grand Rapids (-2.1 percent), Detroit (-3.6 percent), Akron, Ohio (-4.2 percent), Syracuse (-5.0 percent), Toledo (-6.0 percent), Dayton, Ohio (-6.5 percent), Buffalo (-6.8 percent), Pittsburgh (-7.0 percent), and Cleveland (-8.3%).¹⁵

Admittedly, out-migration in and of itself is not necessarily a negative. However, when cities lose residents without gaining others, they decline. Chicago is one Rust Belt city that has offset its 2000 to 2006 population decline of about 150,000 people by settling about 170,000 during this same period, but unfortunately such a feat is not the norm in the Rust Belt. Cleveland's experience is typical: From 2000 to 2006, Cleveland lost about 72,000 residents and only settled 24,000.¹⁶

Another problematic aspect of the out-migration from the Rust Belt is that younger adults represent a high percentage of the Rust Belt exodus, especially those that are college educated. This is unfortunate as highly skilled young adults (individuals ages 25 to 34) are credited with keeping cities vibrant and are viewed as a key asset cities must attract and retain in order to meet future challenges.¹⁷ Almost every Rust Belt city has witnessed a population decline of young adults. Cleveland topped the list with a decline of 31.72 percent between 2000 and 2006. Pittsburgh was not far behind with a decline of 29.02 percent. Detroit lost 20.47 percent, while Minneapolis and St. Louis, Mo. lost 20.18 and 13.81 percent, respectively.¹⁸

Sprawl

Rust Belt cities not only suffer from low in-migration and relatively high levels of out-migration, but are also home to suburban sprawl. For example, over 100,000 acres of rural land were developed in the Cleveland metro area between 1980 and 2000, accounting for nearly a third of all land in the region; this figure compares to an average loss to development of only 12.1 percent among the 100 largest metro areas.¹⁹ This suburban growth occurred at a time when the metropolitan population was stagnant, leading to severe population declines in the city proper and increasingly segregated, impoverished populations. This trend is typical for many areas within the Rust Belt and is cited as one of the country's "biggest sprawl problems."²⁰

The Midwest region is roughly the same as the Rust Belt. It experienced a population increase of 4.1 million people from 1982 to 1997 but during this same period, it also urbanized a disproportionate 4.5 million acres of land (urbanized land is defined as any area with a population density of 1,000 persons per square mile.²¹) As an example of an individual Rust Belt city with this problem, the researchers cited Pittsburgh, which lost 8 percent of its population, but increased its amount of urban land by 42 percent from 1982 to 1997.

Such trends are challenging to all cities, but in cities already faced with declining populations and a substantial number of surplus properties, the trends are more alarming and epitomize inefficient land-use patterns.

Socially, sprawl encourages greater isolation among citizens and contributes to erosion of the civic ties that bind members of a democratic society. Solo commutes and a mass exodus of individuals from the urban core at quitting time occur to the detriment of the vibrancy and culture of cities.²² Another problem with sprawl is the inability of most people living in the suburbs to walk or bike to work. This contributes to sedentary lifestyles, which are related to health problems such as obesity.²³

Economically, the associated costs for automobile maintenance, insurance, and fuel strain the wallets of Americans already affected by Rust Belt cities' poor fiscal conditions. Highway construction and maintenance costs also siphon away millions of tax dollars that could otherwise be spent on public services such as public education or police and fire services. Additionally, sprawl contributes to a greater number of vehicles on the road, which leads to traffic congestion and higher levels of air pollution.

Sprawl promotes suburban strip developments, which tend to oversaturate the market with duplicate retail offerings.²⁴ Such redundancy does not expand economic wealth or result in real growth for a region. Instead, economic activity is merely shifted around a region from one locality to another, leaving many communities unable to sustain themselves as businesses depart, leaving empty buildings behind them. For example, in the Cleveland village of North Randall, competition from new mall developments in Beachwood, Strongsville and other Cleveland suburbs, along with the development of so-called lifestyle centers in Westlake and Lyndhurst, have made North Randall's Randall Park Mall obsolete. It sits virtually empty today. Because of this, North Randall is fighting for its very survival.²⁵

Of particular concern to the Rust Belt's rural communities, sprawl often destroys countless acres of quality farmland. This loss is above the national average in major Rust Belt metro areas including Milwaukee, Chicago, Cleveland, Akron, Toledo and Pittsburgh.²⁶ Halting sprawl would boost the prospects for meaningful and sustainable growth in Rust Belt cities.

Entrenched poverty

Poverty in urban cores, a byproduct of sprawl, disproportionately affects the Rust Belt. As of 2006, Detroit; Buffalo; Cincinnati; Cleveland; St. Louis, Mo.; Milwaukee; Philadelphia, Pa.; and Newark, N.J., were among the 10 large cities (defined as those with populations of 250,000 or more) with the highest percentages of residents living at or below the poverty level (the United States' 2006 poverty rate is estimated at 13.3 percent).²⁷ Their poverty rates range from 32.5 percent of residents in Detroit to 24.2 percent in Newark.

When focusing on cities whose populations are below 250,000, even more Rust Belt cities appear, including Camden, N.J.; Bloomington, Gary and Muncie Ind.; and Flint and Kalamazoo, Mich. Many Rust Belt cities also appear on a list of the top 10 places with the lowest median incomes as reported in 2006 (the United States' 2006 median household income was \$48,451.²⁸) Rochester, N.Y., is the best of the worst with an estimated median income of \$27,407; it is followed by Canton, Ohio; Syracuse, N.Y.; Camden, N.J.; Muncie, Ind.; and Youngstown, Ohio, which bottoms out the list with an estimated median income of \$21,850.

High poverty rates contribute to many social ills, from increased crime to decreased productivity, which culminate in associated quality-of-life losses. Cities with lower quality of life have greater difficulty in attracting and retaining the so-called "creative class"²⁹ of workers whose presence is vital for reclaiming competitiveness in the new economic paradigm of the creative economy—and for the ultimate revitalization of Rust Belt cities.

Vacant properties

With declining population bases and aging housing stock, it is not unusual for Rust Belt cities to have thousands of vacant properties on the market. In 2006, the percent of vacant housing units in major Rust Belt cities, including Chicago; Fort Wayne and Gary, Ind.; Detroit and Flint; Buffalo, Niagara Falls and Syracuse, N.Y.; Akron, Cleveland, Toledo and Youngstown; and Pittsburgh, was above the national average.³⁰ Since Rust Belt cities are already facing decline, it is difficult for them to absorb the costs, both economic and social, associated with the vacancy problem.

Studies have suggested that each vacant property can reduce the value of surrounding houses by several thousands of dollars. However, demolishing or renovating these properties is expensive and, despite high municipal investments in addressing vacant properties, many Rust Belt cities find themselves overwhelmed by the scope of the problem.³¹ Vacant properties typically pose threats to public safety and are owned or managed by individuals who fail to pay taxes, default on mortgages, or carry liens against the property.³²

These traits are troubling and, unfortunately, vacant properties tend to multiply and exacerbate the downward spiral of neighborhood disinvestment. As the broken-window theory suggests, one vacant property on a street can lead to a psychological shift among residents and passersby as to the neighborhood's worth. Negative perceptions can increase the likelihood that people are going to devalue all other properties in the neighborhood, even those that are properly maintained. A Philadelphia study found that the presence of one vacant or abandoned property on a city block caused the market value of every other property on the block to be reduced by \$6,500.³³

Vacant properties represent a real threat to safety within a neighborhood as well. They are vulnerable to fires caused by faulty wiring, homeless squatters trying to stay warm

or by arsonists including homeowners looking to collect insurance money on their vacant property. In Flint, 70-90 percent of all fires originate in abandoned buildings.³⁴ Furthermore, vacant properties are popular targets for vandals who will strip out appliances, plumbing, and copper wiring, leaving the properties with thousands of dollars of damage.³⁵ Other types of crime, from illegal drug activity and prostitution to warehousing stolen property increase in areas with vacant property.

Cities are forced to devote costly additional police hours to these neighborhoods. They also spend millions to clean, secure and demolish vacant structures. Between 1999 and 2004, St. Louis spent over \$15.5 million to tear down vacant buildings; Detroit spends \$800,000 to clean vacant lots each year (2004 figures).³⁶ In Cleveland, the city spends \$2 million each year to demolish, clean up, or board-up a portion of over 7,000 vacant homes. These resources could be spent on a variety of other public services. For smaller cities found throughout the Rust Belt (i.e. Muncie; Erie; Saginaw, Mich.) the problem is especially acute and fiscally draining. Since smaller cities have less land area, only one or two abandoned buildings can negatively affect the entire image of a central business district. Similarly, since these cities have smaller budgets, dealing with vacant properties forces them to pay, a steep opportunity cost in lost public services.³⁷ Large and small Rust Belt cities (see examples on p. 9) must find creative ways to use these buildings in a manner conducive to spurring growth.

Foreclosures

Nationwide, the foreclosure crisis has caused significant disruptions in the housing market. But particularly in the Rust Belt, with its slow housing markets and low-income populations targeted by subprime lenders, foreclosures are exacerbating negative trends. A recent ranking of states by their foreclosure rates revealed that of the top 10 states, four were in the Rust Belt— Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio.³⁸ A closer examination of each state's map reveals a concentration of foreclosures around the core urban areas including Flint and Detroit in Michigan; Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati in Ohio; Chicago and Springfield in Illinois; and Fort Wayne and Indianapolis in Indiana.³⁹

Foreclosure legal processes also slow municipalities' and nonprofits' ability to address vacant properties strategically. One of the leading causes of the Rust Belt's vacancy problem is foreclosed homes. In Ohio, at least one in five refinance loans made in 2006 was through a subprime lender.⁴⁰ A Fannie Mae report listing the states with the largest loan losses through the third quarter of 2007 (ending September 30th) shows that the Midwest is the hardest-hit region. Of the top seven states with the largest loan losses, five are in the Rust Belt, with Michigan ranked first, Ohio second, Minnesota third, Indiana fourth and Illinois seventh.⁴¹ These high-cost mortgage loans are the primary cause of the foreclosure problem, because so many of the borrowers default.⁴² A cycle of foreclosures and rising vacancy rates can leave already depressed Rust Belt cities without the civic capacity, that is, the ability to bring citizens together to address public issues,⁴³ or tax base to make meaningful revitalization possible.

Environmental remediation / brownfields

Brownfields are properties difficult to redevelop because they contain some form of hazardous material or contaminant in the soil of the property -- the result of industrial, commercial, transportation and residential activity over the last one-hundred years.⁴⁴ The intensive nature of steel manufacturing, petrochemical production and other industrial processes that historically supported the Rust Belt economically have made the brownfields issue especially acute in cities of this region. As environmental hazards, these properties cost more to redevelop into usable land; as a result, brownfields often sit idle and become eyesores to the communities around them.

These sites may be as large as a multi-acre abandoned steel mill or as small as a corner gas station. The Environmental Protection Agency estimates that the United States has at least 500,000 brownfield sites, with some estimates going as high as one million.⁴⁵ Cleveland is estimated to have 350 brownfield sites encompassing 6,000 acres; Detroit has about 630 sites encompassing 1,300 acres.⁴⁶

Federal Brownfield regulations, specifically the 1980 Superfund legislation, impose further barriers to redevelopment in the form of liability concerns.⁴⁷ For example, some property owners will choose not to sell their properties because of what an environmental assessment may uncover; banks might not foreclose on properties that may be contaminated to avoid entering the "chain of title" and exposing themselves to liability for cleanup costs; banks may "greenline," and refuse to finance the purchase of, sites that are possibly contaminated in order to protect themselves from liability for cleanup; municipalities may not take title to properties with delinquent property taxes for the same reason; and finally, insurance companies may not insure potentially contaminated properties or mortgages on them.⁴⁸ For Rust Belt cities, the hundreds of brownfields and the hesitation by many stakeholders to redevelop them leaves prime land in the urban core vacant and drives sprawl further into the exurban greenfields.

Regional brand Issues

City branding has resulted in place logos, slogans, advertising, public relations, subsidies, tax breaks, "flagship" development projects, architectural and urban design statements, trade fairs, cultural and sporting events and heritage and public art displays.⁴⁹ Cities use these tactics to bolster their branding efforts in a "strategic process for developing a long-term vision for a place that is relevant and compelling to key audiences. . . [the brand] influences and shapes positive perceptions of a place."⁵⁰ Unfortunately, many people perceive the Rust Belt and its economic as undesirable and write the region off. For many Rust Belt cities, revitalization depends on creating a positive city brand.

Rust Belt Assets

Despite the problems plaguing the Rust Belt, opportunities exist to transform the region into a highly desirable place to live and work. Many of the challenges just discussed, from the overabundance of vacant homes and buildings to the loss of jobs and population, position the Rust Belt for drastic, even unique, change and a reversal of the downward spiral that has typified the region for the last 50 years.

Low cost of living

Factors including the high availability of property make the cost of living in Rust Belt cities relatively low. Most Rust Belt cities have lower costs of living than their more service-oriented city counterparts. For example, moving from Milwaukee to Boston (populations roughly 600,000) in the first quarter of 2007 resulted in cost-of-living increases of 31.42 percent for groceries, 53.20 percent for housing, 25.18 percent for utilities, 8.78 percent for transportation and 21.91 percent for health care, according to the American Chamber of Commerce Researchers Association (ACCRA).⁵¹ ACCRA's state cost-of-living indices for the first quarter of 2008 also show that Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin have lower-than-average composite living costs when compared to the national average; Pennsylvania is slightly higher than the national average, but still has a lower cost of living than 22 states (Pa. index=101.7; U.S. index=100.0).⁵² Such lower costs of living give residents the opportunity to live a higher quality of life in the Rust Belt than they might otherwise be able to afford.

Because of the decrease in population and surplus of housing, property is also comparatively inexpensive, thus making it easier for people to purchase or rent property. When considering prices by the square foot for a home in the Midwest, which encompasses a good portion of the Rust Belt, the average is \$100 to \$120 per square foot, compared with \$300 to \$325 on the East coast and as high as \$500 on the West coast.⁵³ Many coastal residents have opted to move to the Midwest for its cost advantages including comparatively lower tax.

Median housing values for representative Rust Belt cities in 2006 were also lower than the 2006 median value of other U.S. homes, which is \$185,200. When compared to the United States' figure, Milwaukee (\$136,700), Indianapolis (\$122,800), Toledo (\$97,600), Detroit, (\$91,700), Cleveland (\$90,400), Pittsburgh (\$76,500), Flint (\$65,100), Buffalo (\$60,900) and Youngstown (\$52,500) have lower median housing values.⁵⁴ A low cost of living, coupled with lower housing prices, gives the Rust Belt a significant competitive advantage in today's economic environment.

Abundant space, especially large industrial spaces

While the vast surplus of buildings and undeveloped lots resulting from sprawl and foreclosures presents Rust Belt cities with challenges, it also provides them with unique opportunity. Residents are able to locate affordable space in virtually any neighborhood, allowing them to choose where they live based on amenities beyond price availability. A wide variety of property types, including unusual spaces such as

industrial complexes and churches, is available at relatively low prices. Moreover, available space gives community developers the opportunity to take on large-scale revitalization projects and to invest in nontraditional land uses such as sculpture gardens, pocket parks and community gardens.

The demise of the manufacturing industry in the Rust Belt has led to an overabundance of vacant industrial space. As factories close, Rust Belt cities are left with large buildings that may occupy acres of land. Many such buildings have long stood vacant. Examples include the Bethlehem Steel Company in Lackawanna, N.Y.; Pabst Brewery in Milwaukee; Youngstown Sheet and Tube's Campbell Works in Campbell, Ohio; and the Highland Park Ford Plant in Highland Park, Mich. (near Detroit).⁵⁵

While such buildings are often viewed as eyesores, some developers have seen these vacant factories as great investment opportunities. Stuart Lichter, of Industrial Realty Group LLC (IRG) has been bringing vacant factories in Ohio back to life. IRG focuses on a concept called "adaptive reuse" that transforms large industrial complexes into smaller units that may be used by smaller industrial companies. IRG has worked to redevelop the B.F. Goodrich Co. buildings in Akron and an 85-acre Hoover Company site in North Canton. Stuart Lichter claims that "the real estate in Ohio has been available at a low enough price and is of a sufficient quality so that we can redo the buildings on a cost-competitive basis."⁵⁶

Other examples of successful renovation and reuse of one-time industrial buildings or sites are the Tower Press Building and Hyacinth Lofts, both in Cleveland, and The Waterfront in Homestead in Pittsburgh. The Tower Press Building was originally built in 1907 as a large industrial space used for clothing manufacturing. Today it has been converted into an artist live/work space of 80 apartment lofts with 20 percent designated as affordable space for visual and design artists. The first floor houses many businesses and is reserved for retail uses.⁵⁷ For the Hyacinth Lofts, an old Board of Education warehouse was converted into 50 loft apartments with the goal of creating an affordable and supportive community for filmmakers and performing artists.⁵⁸ Pittsburgh's The Waterfront in Homestead is a large open-air retail and entertainment complex built on the former 256-acre brownfield site of U.S. Steel's Homestead Works plant.⁵⁹

Access to the Great Lakes

Many Rust Belt cities, including Buffalo, Chicago, Cleveland, Erie, Gary, Rochester and Toledo have ready access to the largest collective source of fresh water in the world, the Great Lakes. As a locational draw, the Great Lakes provide outdoor recreation that landlocked areas seldom can, such as beach access, boating and fishing. In applying what he calls a "squint factor," Adam Sternbergh describes how distressed cities can market themselves as affordable "knock-off" versions of more affluent locales in his article about people choosing to leave New York City for Buffalo.⁶⁰ For many artists, Rust Belt cities on lakes are attractive alternatives to expensive coastal living in Los

Angeles or New York City, offering similar picturesque settings and the same sense of limitlessness afforded by an ocean view, but at a fraction of the cost.

Slow real estate market

Throughout 2007 and 2008, Christine Dugas of *USA Today* has been spotlighting cities in her “Close to Home” series, demonstrating the diverse experiences of cities in the currently challenging housing market.⁶¹ Her reports on Rust Belt cities, in particular, readily illustrate the sustained trend of slowed or stagnant housing markets. For example, in Toledo, Dugas reported that sales volume for September 2007 was down 8.7 percent and median home values were down 7.4 percent. Buffalo and Erie County were shown to have posted a modest rise in monthly sales volume for January 2008 of 3.6 percent, with unchanged median housing values. In April 2008, Dugas noted that Rochester’s sales volume was down 17.8 percent and the median housing price was up 11.1 percent. A similar situation was documented in Springfield, Ill., with May 2008 sales volume down 28.6 percent and median home values up 1.58 percent. Flint has also been experiencing a slowdown. Along with surrounding Genesee County, Flint’s June 2008 sales volume was down 2.46 percent and a glut of foreclosed homes has pushed home values down some 30.6 percent. In Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, sales volume for July 2008 was down 21.2 percent, but median home values have gone up 4.3 percent.⁶²

These figures demonstrate the Rust Belt’s diverse experiences with the foreclosure crisis and a challenging economic period. Cities that were hit especially hard by foreclosures first saw home prices soar with the ballooning housing bubble and are now faced with drops in both sales volume and median housing prices. Other Rust Belt cities are experiencing drops in sales volume due to the general economic climate, but are actually seeing median housing values rise because their home values had not been inflated during the boom. Buffalo has been able to shift to a more service-oriented economy and has posted increases in sales volume while maintaining its housing values.

But fast-growth and extreme housing-value appreciation are not apparent in these spotlighted Rust Belt cities, which illustrates the generally slow real-estate market throughout the region.

While a slow real-estate market challenges community developers it also gives them ample time to plan strategically for neighborhood change. In this view, a slowed housing market is actually an asset that makes Rust Belt cities prime candidates for growth planning and long-term economic-development efforts. Slow growth allows community development professionals to address potential gentrification by creating permanently affordable housing units or preparing existing residents for homeownership. In “strong market” cities, where gentrification may occur more rapidly, community developers may not have opportunity to combat or stave off such displacement. In these areas, infrastructure and other services are often created

without adequate analysis. The Rust Belt has the ability to determine what uses will best serve neighborhoods and what type of residents should be targeted for attraction, both of which are factors in carrying out successful redevelopment efforts.

Active redevelopment efforts / community development corporations

Perhaps because the community development environment has been so challenging in the Rust Belt for decades, cities tend to have well-developed networks of community development professionals. Cleveland, a Rust Belt city commonly recognized for its vast network of community development corporations (CDCs), has over 50 working CDCs.⁶³ In response to the period of decline that started in the 1960s, Cleveland's decision to create a land bank in the 1970s and direct tax-delinquent properties to its CDCs is cited as one of the major reasons for the success of Cleveland's CDC network. Its CDCs are estimated to have rehabilitated 7,600 homes and built 6,300 new ones, which amount to 80 percent of new homes in the city during the last decade. For example, the efforts of Cleveland's Ohio City Near West CDC have brought about commercial and residential redevelopment in the Ohio City neighborhood. This CDC is credited as being one of the first to work with the National Trust for Historic Preservation to discuss ways of turning old properties into affordable housing and developing new properties with the neighborhood's historic character in mind. One such property is Fairview Gardens, which was developed for senior citizens in the historic architectural style of Ohio City, with 28 of its 40 units designated as affordable housing.⁶⁴ Beyond real estate development, Ohio City has witnessed median incomes increase by 65 percent and, in some areas of the city, seen median housing values go from \$20,000 in the 1990s to \$300,000 today.⁶⁵

In Detroit, a CDC called U-SNAP-BAC (United Streets Networking And Planning Building A Community) implemented an initiative in the Morningside Commons neighborhood for new construction, rehabilitation, community organizing, and new homeowner education. In 2002, U-SNAP-BAC completed a mixed-income housing development and sold most of the available units immediately. This effort was recognized by the city of Detroit, which enlisted U-SNAP-BAC to be the first nonprofit developer to do redevelopment work in a major project on the city's east side.⁶⁶

A CDC in Chicago called The Resurrection Project began an initiative to transform Pilsen, a primarily Mexican-American neighborhood, into a community of choice for immigrants by creating a village in the city. The so-called "Quality of Life" plan linked economic, cultural, and social activities together in the neighborhood; residents have seen less gang activity, more retail offerings and greater civic engagement as a result.⁶⁷

The collective efforts of CDCs within individual Rust Belt cities and throughout the entire Rust Belt on projects such as those highlighted above represent an important route to revitalization.

A high quality arts and culture sector

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As previously noted, Rust Belt cities possess strong arts and culture sectors that are of high quality because many wealthy philanthropists lived in the Rust Belt during its period of industrial dominance. The artists who make up these sectors include writers, musicians, visual artists and performing artists.⁶⁸ Artists can also be defined broadly to include animators, graphic designers, photographers, filmmakers, architects and many others who incorporate creativity in their work or whose work supports the production of the arts.

All of these individuals are an integral part of the creative workforce. The presence of a creative workforce can underpin regional development strategies and bode well for a region's success in the current economy as "the share of creative workers in a region's workforce has a positive relationship with future economic growth."⁶⁹

All artists are credited with boosting key indicators of quality of life, including greater innovative capacity, higher regional productivity, increased aesthetic appeal and an expanded regional economic base.⁷⁰ In addition, the arts and cultural sectors have been shown to directly affect the number of jobs, sales and public dollars that can be acquired by a community.⁷¹ Nationally, the nonprofit arts and cultural industry creates \$166.2 billion in economic activity every year, with \$63.1 billion being spent directly by organizations and \$103.1 billion being spent by audiences for event-related activities. The arts and cultural sector supports 5.7 million jobs nationally and accounts for \$29.6 billion in government revenue.⁷²

In the Rust Belt, the arts and culture sector also has a substantial economic impact. In Mansfield, Ohio (est. pop.= 50,000),⁷³ the total economic impact from arts-and-culture organization expenditures and audience expenditures is \$6,207,064, which supports 183 full-time-equivalent jobs and produces \$3,478,000 in household income, \$261,000 in local government revenue, and \$243,000 in state government revenue. In Indianapolis (est. pop.=800,000), the total economic impact from arts-and-culture organization expenditures and audience expenditures is \$468,840,184, which supports 15,088 full-time equivalent jobs and produces \$301,658,000 in household income, \$21,077,000 in local government revenue and \$30,705,000 in state government revenue. In Chicago (est. pop.= 3,000,000), the total economic impact from arts-and-culture organization expenditures and audience expenditures is \$1,091,780,667, which supports 30,134 full-time equivalent jobs, and produces \$628,736,000 in household income, \$58,092,000 in local government revenue, and \$45,005,000 in state government revenue.

At the county level, in Pittsburgh's Allegheny County (est. pop.=1,300,000), the total economic impact from arts-and-culture organization expenditures and audience expenditures is \$341,562,860, which supports 10,192 full-time equivalent jobs and produces \$204,294,000 in household income, \$15,282,000 in local government revenue and \$18,522,000 in state government revenue.⁷⁴ Beyond these economic effects, the

quality of life provided by arts and culture may be a determining factor in attracting workers, thus improving Rust Belt cities' competitive positions and available workforces.

Artist-based community development offers Rust Belt cities a key mechanism for spurring reinvestment and achieving meaningful redevelopment. With their unique mix of challenges and assets, these cities are well positioned to mobilize artists to address endemic problems and foster the growth of strong communities.

Artists and the Economic Development Connection

It is clear arts and culture play an integral role in our society. Arts and culture help define communities, record history and provide a source of entertainment that is both enlightening and mentally stimulating. The arts are increasingly being viewed as an "engine of civic renewal" and have a demonstrated ability to strengthen friendships, help communities understand and celebrate their heritage, provide a safe way to discuss and solve difficult social problems, and help forge shared understandings among citizens.⁷⁵ Localities that are able to provide fertile ground for artists and their creative pursuits will be able to harness the numerous social and economic development benefits artists can offer communities.

What Artists Can Offer Rust Belt Cities

Migration to, and active re-examination of, central cities

Numerous studies have indicated that city residents regard artists as the harbingers of better times for the neighborhoods they move into. Because artists are often "early adopters" and embrace the challenges and opportunities of a struggling city prior to its revival, their movement into Rust Belt cities may signal to other potential residents that a neighborhood is poised for revitalization.⁷⁶ Just as artists can play a key role in making positive impressions about particular neighborhoods, they can also change viewpoints regarding cities and entire regions. Cities from Paducah, Ky., to the Ruhrgebiet region of Germany have received considerable national and international attention following the creation of programs that engaged artists directly in community revitalization.⁷⁷

Not only are artists the creative force behind the production of cultural amenities, they also add value and distinctiveness to the places where they live by increasing quality-of-life measures and making a statement about a community's uniqueness to the rest of the marketplace.⁷⁸ In blighted communities where most people only see social ills, artists often see the potential just waiting to be unleashed.⁷⁹ Artists tend to be the first to make the move back into struggling areas, take on a pioneering role for re-establishing neighborhoods and uncover hidden assets, jump-starting a cycle of reinvestment that would otherwise remain stalled. Research suggests that artists are willing to relocate, assuming that new locations offer them a package of amenities they desire, including low-cost space.⁸⁰ This willingness to locate based on amenities

offered, particularly in areas with a low cost of living, could signify that industrial cities' efforts to develop artist-space projects will garner a high degree of interest from local artists and artists outside of their metropolitan region. This renewal of interest in the Rust Belt can begin to halt sprawl and bring people back to those urban cores.

Economic impact

In addition to the production of arts and culture, artists have a positive economic impact in the communities where they live. They contribute to the economic base of a community. Referred to as the "artistic dividend" by Ann Markusen and Greg Schrock,⁸¹ artists contribute to the regional economy by creating and selling artwork, developing venues in which audiences can view performances and purchasing materials from other vendors in order to create their art. They contribute to the entirety of the economic base of a community as artists have the versatility to work across the public, private, and nonprofit sectors. As small businesses, artists generate tax revenue and have the ability to export their work to the local, regional, national and global markets, importing dollars into their communities. Artists also commonly work as entrepreneurs themselves, being creative, innovative, self-employed and risk-taking. Well-established artists can also create jobs for support staff.⁸² It also goes without saying that artists pay rent and taxes, buy groceries and perform all of the other normal, daily transactions that contribute to the regional economy.

Boost to property values

Examples show that increasing the proportion of artists in a neighborhood can lead to a rise in property values. Hampden, a neighborhood near John Hopkins University in Baltimore, presents such a case. Hampden has witnessed a renaissance since its steel mills were shut down in the 1980s. Artists and young entrepreneurs have recently discovered the area and moved in, opening art galleries and boutiques and organizing arts festivals. In 2000, the median home-sale price in southeastern Hampden was \$58,000. In 2005 that value increased 196 percent to \$171,750. In western Hampden, median home prices went from \$61,900 in 2000 to \$164,450 in 2005, representing a 165 percent increase.⁸³ A similar rise in property values throughout the Rust Belt would significantly increase local community tax bases and subsequently advance the area's ability to be attractive and competitive in a wider marketplace.

Sweat equity

As a class of workers, artists are willing to devote a significant amount of their own time and labor - their so-called sweat equity - not only to their projects, but also to revitalizing their communities. Since many artists cannot afford high housing or living costs, they tend to be willing to settle in struggling core areas—areas the Rust Belt has in abundance. While some individuals view such places as "communities of last resort," artists often view these neighborhoods as "communities of choice" with untapped potential for development. This willingness of artists to support community development

efforts is important because many cities have trouble finding the resources to complete development projects.

Artist participation is often a determining factor in the realization and success of these projects because their sweat equity can leverage other forms of support for a project.⁸⁴ This is especially the case for artist-space projects intended to fill the needs of artists. The development of a community arts space called AS220 and the renovation of an old manufacturing facility into affordable work space called Hive Archive, both in Providence, R.I., and the renovation of a warehouse into artist studio space called Toole Shed Studios in Tucson, Ariz., are examples of projects that required artist sweat equity. Artists initially carried out the physical work to redevelop the AS200 space, took on an active redevelopment role at Toole Shed Studios even though they were not the direct owners of the building, and volunteered their time to be involved in the Hive Archive development process.⁸⁵

Engaged citizens (willingness to participate in civic affairs)

Civic engagement grows when artists join efforts to bring back struggling Rust Belt communities. Research indicates that, in exchange for access to low-cost space, artists have a high willingness to get involved in neighborhood activities ranging from education projects with neighborhood children to public art projects to libraries, community centers, parks, recreation centers and block clubs and neighborhood associations. The artistic activities artists generate promote local civic engagement, as well by bringing people together and helping them bridge conflicts, find common interests and causes and spark community action on issues.⁸⁶

Alaka Wali, Rebecca Severson, and Mario Longoni⁸⁷ have specifically explored the role of the informal arts in “Bridging Differences” and “Building Capacity,” focusing on how social cohesion, civic engagement and stronger communities result from participating in the production of art. Art has the ability to revive local communities by giving residents an outlet for coming together and promoting their shared history or neighborhood’s distinctive culture. Participation in a community effort such as an arts project has been shown to increase citizen awareness of public issues, build confidence to make their voices heard, increase civic involvement, raise volunteerism rates and develop desirable job skills in participants, all of which have positive spillover effects for society and democracy in general.⁸⁸

For example, Wali, Severson, and Longoni⁸⁹ spoke with individuals who became more civically engaged due to their involvement in the arts. A rapper started a petition drive to obtain a hip-hop show on a college radio station; a kindergarten teacher and drummer started a program to help the homeless through her school; a Native American visual artist became involved in efforts to improve neighborhood conditions through political organizing; and a quilting group petitioned and lobbied to have a street become one-way in front of a park where they produced their art. Furthermore, other research

has shown that individuals who read and participate in the arts are more than twice as likely to volunteer in their communities.⁹⁰

In terms of voting behavior, artists as a group tend to cast their ballots at a higher rate than the general public.⁹¹ They also tend to be well-educated (e.g. eight in 10 have a four-year college degree, while only two in 10 have such a degree in the general U.S. population),⁹² those with educations beyond a high school diploma tend to vote at higher rates.⁹³ The aggregate impact of these civic-engagement activities can help reinvigorate Rust Belt communities and rebuild lost social capital.

Civic vitality

Another way through which artists can contribute to the Rust Belt's comeback is by increasing civic vitality, which strengthens the social ties that bind citizens together. Strong social ties encourage citizens to work together for the common good and to think in terms of their place within the broader public realm. Civic vitality creates a society that is more open, aware, and inclusive by strengthening the social infrastructure. A city's social infrastructure includes the existing networks between its public, private and nonprofit organizations, the institutions of civil society, the community's gathering places, the connections between residents, the collective action among citizens and the feelings of political efficacy held by residents.⁹⁴

Civic vitality offers Rust Belt cities a means of confronting their regional brand issues. When asked, most people will describe a Rust Belt city using terms such as hopelessness, stagnation, decay, and depression. But cities can change public perception by focusing attention on city residents who are actively engaged in efforts that improve their communities and raise quality-of-life measures.

This type of activity is taking place in Cleveland through a program called "Sparx in the City," which was founded by Susie Frazier Mueller, a visual artist, and subsequently adopted by a local nonprofit organization called the Downtown Cleveland Alliance. Sparx in the City is really a marketing initiative for downtown Cleveland that seeks to increase the city's livability, promote increased commercial activity for downtown businesses, contribute to job creation, generate more downtown tourism, reinvigorate the city's brand and gain positive national attention for the city. The program accomplishes these goals by showcasing Cleveland's the wide array of local artists to boost the city's civic indicators, ultimately enhancing its vitality through a 16-week sidewalk concert series and the largest art walk in the state of Ohio. Upon its launch in 2003, the city's then-mayor, Jane Campbell, described how "the continued prosperity of [Cleveland] is directly tied to its livability. Sparx in the City brings new vigor to [Cleveland's] downtown streets through live entertainment, and supports the success of our local small businesses."⁹⁵

To date, Sparx in the City is estimated to have produced some 33 million positive media spots; it has even had an impact on businesses' decisions to invest in downtown

Cleveland.⁹⁶ Similar programs implemented throughout the Rust Belt can potentially help end negative perceptions of this region and begin to change the stories being told about its cities by both residents and non-residents alike.

Youth development / educational enrichment

The need for an educated and creative workforce has never been greater than in the current economic era. For Rust Belt cities, future successes can be won only by bolstering the educational offerings available for all students. Individual students and the Rust Belt as a whole can reap benefits from integrating the arts into school curricula and/or developing widely available extracurricular arts programs. Both approaches enrich youth educational experiences and further develop the creative skills integral to the success of individual students and the Rust Belt as a whole. The impact of the arts is not just anecdotal: Many studies have demonstrated that the arts improve educational outcomes for young people and can even influence their lifetime achievement potential.⁹⁷

Such instrumental benefits are important. But the arts also offer many intrinsic benefits by way of increased social capital, improved cognitive development and students introduced to the sheer pleasure of experiencing the arts.⁹⁸

In Pittsburgh, the Penn Avenue Arts Initiative provides several youth-development programs. One program gives young people the opportunity to connect with local artists through free after-school workshops that allow them to tour the artists' studios. The Penn Avenue Arts Initiative also links students with professional artists to carry out arts projects in an informal classroom setting. Grants are made available for artists who develop innovative programs to bring the arts to students, especially to at-risk youth.⁹⁹

In Ohio, the Cincinnati Art Museum designed an arts curriculum for young children called "Through a Child's Eyes" that consists of seven units for children 3-8 years old. Each lesson connects a piece of art from the museum's collection with a children's book and provides supplemental classroom activities. The goal of this program is to engage students in the arts while also improving their literary skills.¹⁰⁰

These types of programs seek to expand students' imaginative capacities. The Lake Research Partners' Imagination Poll reported that nine out of 10 voters think these abilities are essential to spurring innovation and student success.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, 91 percent of these voters think the arts are an essential component to building the imagination.¹⁰² These findings demonstrate that a significant number of voters believes education must go beyond emphasizing only standardized testing and the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), and incorporate the arts in school curricula as part of basic academics.

While STEM fields are important, "the public is seeing that if you don't have a capacity to imagine, you're not going to make anything anyway"; the poll affirmed that the public

wants “schools to inculcate values, and one of these values is imaginative capacity” according to Richard J. Deasy, the director of the Arts Education Partnership.¹⁰³ In the Rust Belt, engaging young people, providing them with the opportunity to develop an appreciation for the arts and developing their imaginative capacities are tantamount to investing in a future class of creative workers, an essential prerequisite to spurring reinvestment in and revival of industrial cities.

What Rust Belt Cities Can Offer Artists

Rust Belt cities are attractive to artists for several reasons:

Affordability / low cost of living

For urban core communities in the Rust Belt that are reeling from the foreclosure crisis and the fallout from long periods of unmitigated sprawl, the resulting low property values are actually a major attraction for a base of pioneering artists. When surveyed, most artists identified low-cost space as the most influential factor in their decision to work in the Rust Belt, specifically the Greater Cleveland area.¹⁰⁴ Affordable housing and an abundance of available properties are also draws for artists, as many highly prefer to own their own home or work space, something easier to accomplish in Rust Belt cities than in others.

Beyond their generally lower costs, Rust Belt cities recognize the positive impact artists can have on growing local economies and are willing to provide many financial incentives for artists as well, including low-interest loans, grants, reasonably priced mixed-use properties, tax benefits, or other incentives specifically tailored for working artists.¹⁰⁵ With fewer financial stresses Rust Belt artists can focus more intently on their work and increase their productivity.

Active CDEs / CDCs

An active network of community development-entities (CDEs) -- including CDCs, community development banks, investment companies focused on low- and moderate-income communities and venture-capital firms for new development -- makes substantial investments in low-income areas, which can include places ripe for artist-based development. Specifically, the presence of active CDCs in Rust Belt cities signals artists that a support structure exists to provide programs and services to individuals wanting to settle in struggling areas. In this sense, CDCs can mitigate some of the risks artists take in moving into a part of town that may need several years to rebound.

CDCs can also offer incentives to artists who are willing to take on pioneering roles and start the cycle of investment in Rust Belt cities. CDCs are also active players in advocating for, and overseeing the production of, affordable housing in their communities. The Collinwood neighborhood of Cleveland has an active CDC called the Northeast Shores Development Corporation. This organization has been instrumental

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in bringing artist-based development to North Collinwood by supporting the growth of the Waterloo Arts and Entertainment District. This CDC also created the Waterloo Village Model Block area, which boasts homes rehabbed to answer the needs of families and artists, with natural lighting and large storage spaces.¹⁰⁶

Existing high quality arts and culture assets

Because Rust Belt cities were centers of manufacturing, many wealthy industrialists became concentrated there. In response to the social ills that arose from the rapid urbanization of these cities, the wealthy classes began to focus their energies and excess wealth on the creation of large-scale, high-quality cultural institutions—museums, concert halls, libraries, and gardens—that still exist today. These cultural assets offer a foundation of experience and established practices for artist-based initiatives to build on and partner with, uniting artists, cultural institutions and, ultimately, the community.

For example, architects and graphic designers may help create interactive museum displays; playwrights and musicians can develop new performances based on museum pieces; filmmakers can capture reactions to the museum's art; and artists themselves can provide insights and narratives on a museum's collection from practical, not necessarily historical, viewpoints. Artists can take pride in adding perspectives that will enhance the public's experience with art and increase their understanding.¹⁰⁷

Artists, too, can benefit from their involvement, enriching their own experiences and understandings of the media they use to create and disseminate their art. In addition, they may find employment in existing arts and culture organizations and opportunities for getting their work critiqued. In Rust Belt cities in particular, the high quality of the arts and cultural organizations makes these opportunities especially valuable to the professional development of artists by giving them ready access to arts and cultural leaders and to the cultural community.

Connection to networks / openness

Dense urban centers offer artists the networking opportunities and nightlife essential for sustaining and advancing them commercially. A series of interviews conducted by Elizabeth Currid¹⁰⁸ with New York artists corroborates how vital artists' social lives are to their ability to find and get jobs, as well as to promote their goods. Artists reported that opportunities to network and attend social gatherings were more than "just fun and games"¹⁰⁹ and provided them with opportunities to cross-fertilize ideas, receive feedback on their work, find new career outlets and foster collaborations. Creative city-planning committees throughout the Rust Belt can support the formation of such social outlets and strengthen the ones that already exist.

Community developers should be aware of these natural clusters of artists as they try to find ways to deal with the glut of abandoned properties and empty spaces found within

the Rust Belt. Developers can provide useful amenities for artists in new developments by mixing live/work space with places to display and present work, including galleries, theaters and parks, or by passing ordinances to allow artists to run home-based businesses. By doing so, community developers can retain existing artists and help them expand their businesses, while at the same time attracting new artists to the area.

Competition between artists tends to be lower in Rust Belt cities than in places like New York City and Los Angeles. Rust Belt artists tend to be supportive of new transplants and welcome them into their networks more readily. Friendly, close-knit communities encourage density and density is key to fostering the social networks artists need to thrive and cities provide it.

As Rust Belt cities strive to create artist networks, they also need to develop distinct cultural brands, which will ultimately be associated with the local artists as well. For example, artists that remain in, or migrate to, Chicago may be attracted to the city because it has a musical heritage -- "Chicago blues," "Chicago soul," jazz, hip-hop and gospel. It's also the birthplace of certain artistic forms ranging from improvisational comedy to Slam Poetry and is home to the renowned Art Institute of Chicago. For Rust Belt cities that do not already have an established brand, the region's slow growth and wealth of space gives them the opportunity to strategically create a brand is best suited to help them reach their development goals.

Artist support infrastructure

Rust Belt cities have networks of support organizations ready to provide assistance and professional development opportunities for artists. An established artist-support infrastructure is integral to the success of individual artists, as many artists are actually entrepreneurs overseeing small business ventures. Artists must, therefore, have avenues to personal and professional assistance. Their needs are similar to those of other businesses and consist of access to capital, financial advice, legal consulting, health and life insurance, retirement planning assistance, training and certification programs, technical assistance and marketing-campaign development. In Cleveland, artists can find numerous types of assistance through organizations such as:

- Art House, Inc., which has a program called the Supporting Educators and Artists Network that connects artists with each other and with professional-development opportunities
- ArtSpace, which is a national nonprofit developer of affordable space for artists and the creative sector
- The Community Partnership for Arts and Culture, which has a specific program for professional advancement of individual artists called the Artist as an Entrepreneur Institute
- The COSE Arts Network, which provides health-care and professional-development resources for artists

- The Lit, which describes itself as “Cleveland’s Literary Center” and promotes writers and their work throughout Northern Ohio
- Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts-Cleveland, which provides free legal advice to artists and arts organizations
- Zygote Press, which provides affordable workspace and exhibition opportunities as a nonprofit cooperative and fine-arts printmaking facility

Countless other support organizations exist throughout the greater Cleveland area. The presence of such networks throughout the Rust Belt bodes well for the promise of artist-based, community development efforts.

Proximity to other markets

Artists settling in the Rust Belt find themselves close to major arts markets, with an extensive transportation network to use. But in addition to its systems of roads, airports, waterways and rails, the Rust Belt offers an advanced network of electronic pathways for the exchange of information. Throughout Northeast Ohio, a nonprofit organization called OneCommunity seeks to promote economic development and civic progress through information technology applications. OneCommunity is expanding its fiber-optic broadband network throughout Northeast Ohio’s 22 counties and is one of the largest and fastest fiber-optic broadband networks in the world. The network provides Northeast Ohio’s public and nonprofit organizations with access to the Internet and with a way to connect and develop partnerships as well as to share services.¹¹⁰ Centrally located in the Rust Belt, this network is a transportation hub for the 21st century and provides ready access to a global marketplace.

Furthermore, efforts are taking place in Cleveland to develop new market access through strategic investment and revitalization efforts. Cleveland’s District of Design project seeks to turn the city into the “product design capital of the Midwest. . . [and is] comprised of wholesale consumer product showrooms, design studios and the infrastructure to support world-class design and product development.”¹¹¹ In this way, Cleveland is attempting to provide existing design and product developers with more direct market access and to create a draw for new business growth.

Diverse Types of Spaces

As detailed earlier, the Rust Belt contains many sites ripe for redevelopment, especially large industrial spaces, but also including abandoned churches, airports/airfields, train stations, correctional sites and other facilities. Many redevelopers recognize that artists have the unmatched creative abilities needed to see the unique character of these old buildings or sites and to fulfill their potential.

One example is the Cleveland’s First Church of Christ Scientist. Built in 1931, it now houses Nottingham-Spirk Design Associates, a firm that invents innovative consumer and business products. The 60,000-square-foot church has been retrofitted with new

heating, cooling, plumbing and electrical systems; 42 miles of Internet cable; and a WiFi tower on the roof of the building, along with a 10,000-square-foot addition. Many of the church's distinct elements have been adapted to fit the needs of the design firm: The church's pipe organ remains functional and can be programmed to play any song throughout the building; a Sunday school has become the firm's prototype lab; and the church's 12 chandeliers have been restored and are used for lighting the design studios.¹¹²

John Nottingham believes that the building is "a metaphor for combining the past architectural heritage with an inspirational environment for creating future projects."¹¹³ Another example of adaptive reuse of a church is the renovation of the St. Josaphat Roman Catholic Church located in Cleveland's St. Clair-Superior neighborhood. Built in 1915, this building underwent major renovation and is now the Josaphat Arts Hall, a community gathering place for celebrating the arts. It also houses an art gallery called the Convivium33 Gallery, as well as many arts-business studios.¹¹⁴ The Rust Belt has a multitude of unique spaces like these with the potential to be transformed into one-of-a-kind residential, studio, rehearsal, performance, gallery or live/work spaces.

Recommendations for Future Policy

Despite the many positives that Rust Belt cities provide for artists, several issues that affect recommendations for future policy deserve attention:

Zoning / building codes / permits

Many Rust Belt cities have outdated building codes and zoning statutes that prevent creative and new planning or building models from being implemented. This inability to adapt to new zoning models is problematic, especially for artist-based development projects: Many artists indicate a desire for mixed-use development, especially live/work space.¹¹⁵ When artists' needs go unaddressed in development ventures and updates of zoning statutes, projects have a higher likelihood of failure and communities of artists are unlikely to grow. Navigating the complexities of the building permit process can also hinder the development of artist space.

Lack of Market Pressure—less attention to low-cost space

The challenges faced by Rust Belt cities have the collective effect of decreasing market demand for space in these depressed areas. The push for immediate and expedient revitalization in many parts of the Rust Belt leads many redevelopers to ignore the need for specifically low-cost space. And even when low-cost space is available, many artists do not know of, or cannot get information about, the space option. Access to low-cost space is also limited by a lack of financial support for it; there is not a huge incentive for property owners to rent or sell below market rates. Linking artists with affordable space and providing incentives for property owners to make affordable space a priority are practices needing continual attention and improvement in the Rust Belt. Both can be

addressed by working with local elected officials, CDCs, and artist-service organizations.

Decentralization / displacement of artists

Throughout the Rust Belt, redevelopment efforts in urban neighborhoods sometimes have the unfortunate side effect of spurring gentrification and displacing the initial group of residents. For artists this problem is acute, since they tend to have modest economic resources, but also great cultural resources that attract amenities and well-off individuals whose presence in the neighborhood boosts property values and the cost of living. While communities benefit from the influx of wealthier residents, the rising costs and values leave the artist pioneers who settled the neighborhood unable to afford living there anymore.

Carole Rosenstein¹¹⁶ discusses the Urban Institute's finding that the displacement and decentralization of artists from their urban neighborhoods is especially problematic because artists' work is heavily influenced and dependent on the place of its production. For many artists, the particular neighborhood in which they live has a particular mix of amenities and services that they need to produce their work; when they are forced to move, they must adapt to another area's system or face professional failure.

But perhaps the biggest challenge for displaced artists is the loss of a social network and sense of community. Most artists tend to access resources through "personal rather than professional networks, and through neighborhood, ethnic, religious, and community connections that have long histories and deep roots."¹¹⁷ When these networks are destroyed, artists can become disconnected from other local artists and the artist-support organizations established in a community. Artists also lose access to a segment of the market for their work because locally owned galleries, cafes, restaurants and bookstores that welcomed and supported artists during the initial redevelopment of a neighborhood may not exist in areas where displaced artists must take up residency.¹¹⁸

Within the Rust Belt, the Detroit-Shoreway neighborhood in Cleveland is an example of a community that has instituted artist-based community- development initiatives while also creating affordable housing options to avoid displacing the artist pioneers spurring revitalization. The Detroit-Shoreway Community Development Organization (DSCDO) has committed itself to maintaining a mixed-income neighborhood and has been active in creating affordable housing through its Gordon Square Homes development.

This development involves rehabbing four buildings that will produce 85 units of affordable housing, with one of the buildings being designated specifically for artists. This development is called Near West Lofts. It has eight live/work spaces for artists; another development called Dorn Lofts will renovate two buildings for mixed uses, including artist live/work space.¹¹⁹ The executive director of the DSCDO, Jeff Ramsey, said the organization joined the Cleveland Housing Network to use its lease-purchase

program, which helps lower-income families become homeowners by allowing them to pay rent for 15 years and then own the property.¹²⁰ Furthermore the DSCDO provides funds for home repairs and home heating and weatherizing, as well as other programs to help residents maintain, improve, and increase the value of their homes (see “Resident Resources” at <http://www.dscdo.org/>).

Regional brand Issues

As mentioned previously, the stigma of decline and decay associated with areas in the Rust Belt must be removed, especially if artist-based revitalization is to take place. Artists in general tend to perceive themselves as being on the cutting edge of innovative ideas, designs and trends. When a region conjures images of abandoned buildings, economic stagnation and “old politics,” artists are not going to want to be associated with it. For a Rust Belt city to benefit fully from its creative community, artists must ultimately “want [the city’s] brand affiliated with their own creativity and cultural goods.”¹²¹

Youngstown is a Rust Belt city in the early phases of breaking its city’s stereotypes. Known more for its past governmental corruption and steel-plant closures Youngstown has come to accept its present reality as a so-called “shrinking city” and its leaders have started efforts to re-brand it. In 2002, efforts began to develop a comprehensive redevelopment plan called “Youngstown 2010” to change perceptions about Youngstown by taking a positive perspective on its historic and current challenges as a onetime steel-manufacturing hub. Jay Williams, the city’s Director of Community Development at that time, became mayor in 2005. Under his leadership, the Youngstown 2010 initiative has received national and international acclaim.¹²²

The initiative’s guiding “Vision Plan” accepts that Youngstown is a smaller city with about 80,000 residents; defines Youngstown’s role in the regional economy; improves Youngstown’s image and enhances its quality of life; and calls the people of Youngstown to action.¹²³ The initiative continually appears in literature on best practices for how cities can coordinate marketing strategies and win widespread participation.¹²⁴ With any revitalization initiative, the challenge is getting residents and other stakeholders to change their ingrained mindsets; a successful branding effort can help. For the Rust Belt in particular, the public’s association of the region’s industrial cities with decline and obsolescence must be changed. Until the entire Rust Belt confronts these negative perceptions and creates a fashionable, modern brand, the region will not achieve full-scale, artist-driven revitalization.

Limited number of artist-space development projects

Artist-space development projects are gaining attention among community development, arts, and urban-planning professionals because they meet artists’ unique space requirements, create artist communities, contribute to the production of artwork, bring reinvestment into distressed communities and give neighborhoods a competitive

edge by boosting quality-of-life measures. But artist-space developments are still neither a common practice nor automatic attractions for stakeholder support.

Funds for the arts are often funneled to arts institutions, rather than to individual artists directly producing art. Funders need to be conscious of their tendency to take a myopic view of what constitutes the arts and pay attention to the needs of artist entrepreneurs and the informal arts sector, including affordable housing. Most significantly, perhaps, the arts sector has very few resources and a low capacity for developing affordable spaces for artists because of the manpower, time and expertise required in real estate acquisition and construction/renovation.¹²⁵

In addition, communities tend to focus their efforts on technology and medical-space development; some stakeholders are suspicious of artist-space developments because they question the validity of artists as economic drivers and are wary of potential gentrification and increased cost of living expenses.¹²⁶

Market development for artists

Marketing can be defined as “a process of exchange in which we exchange something of value for something we want.” It requires an art producer to understand her or his particular skills and products, determine what the public (mass audience or an individual) wants and decide what is needed to communicate a particular message to the appropriate markets.¹²⁷ Rust Belt cities must assist artists in their market-development efforts. Many artists do not have the knowledge or experience to fully assess, strategize and target their markets, and for Rust Belt cities just embarking on artist-based development, the established consumer base for arts products may not exist.

As previously discussed, the access to networks is essential for bringing artists' work to market and efforts need to be made in Rust Belt cities to more fully establish this link between artists, community resources consumers, and support mechanisms. One example of this is the Red Dot Project in Cleveland. The organization strives to connect Northeast Ohio artists with business opportunities, making both on-site and virtual portfolios of artwork available at one source. It also provides “real economic and sales opportunities for artists and arts entrepreneurs by directly linking artists and arts-service providers to potential markets.”¹²⁸

Financial resources

Artists and developers of artist-space projects often have difficulty obtaining conventional financing because of the nature of their work. Many conventional lenders may not be willing to “bet” on an artist's vision that does not have a definitive business plan or a cash-flow statement tied to it, nor to invest in artist-based projects meant to help depressed areas. Often, lenders negatively view and stereotype artists; some may think that artists are inherently “starving,” lack business savvy, need to find a “real” job,

and have unpredictable lifestyles. These views ignore the fact that artists are actually small-business owners and entrepreneurs who have start-up and working-capital needs. Like small businesses in general, artists and arts organizations may not have enough resources for full-fledged marketing strategies, detailed business plans, complete accounting records or strong management guidelines. In addition, artists and arts organizations can have problems getting financing because they have low credit scores, unclear cash-flow projections, or incomplete financial histories.¹²⁹ Nevertheless, even if capital resources are available, many artists and arts organizations are unaware of them and do not know how to access them.

Though artists are attracted to struggling communities like those in the Rust Belt because of their abundance of cheap properties and comparatively low development costs—artists willing to move to these neighborhoods have difficulty getting funds to cover the costs of renovation because financial tools are either nonexistent or have stringent lending requirements attached to them. One reason for this is that the same factors that make Rust Belt cities attractive to artists send up red flags for lenders. Since lenders conduct their business with the goal of making a profit, they often do not view artist-space development projects through the lens of community development, nor do they consider the potential revitalization that can occur from artist pioneers. Lenders view weak markets as negatives because unpredictable cash flow increases the level of risk in an investment.¹³⁰

In the future, Rust Belt cities need to make sure artists are aware of existing programs, and work to develop new financial tools for them. Rust Belt cities should also work to dispel the stereotypes lenders may have about artists as a class of workers and provide incentives to alleviate some of the higher risks lenders face when investing in artists or artist-based development projects.

In one example of a successful program, California's Center for Cultural Innovation responded to its artists' financial challenges by establishing a new grant program in 2007 called "Investing in Artists" that targets funds for two purposes: 1) acquiring artistic equipment and tools, and 2) presenting and marketing artistic work. The presenting-and-marketing grants are awarded first for planning purposes and then for implementation support. Additionally, in 2005, the organization created the Los Angeles Arts Loan Fund which provided business development and bridge loans to individual artists and arts organizations.¹³¹ In New York, Seedco Financial¹³² provides affordable financing and technical assistance to nonprofit and for-profit organizations in distressed or underserved communities. This national nonprofit organization also provides assistance to community-based partners so that they can address local market capital gaps by helping their local organizations develop and operate financing programs.

The Promise of Artists in Rust Belt Revitalization: Stories from the Artist Belt

As the following stories illustrate, artists are already playing a significant role in Rust Belt city redevelopment. Despite the inherent challenges that come with artist-based development efforts and the areas in need of improvement, Rust Belt cities are succeeding. The following stories demonstrate the diverse scope of artist-oriented projects being carried out, while revealing the promise of artists as catalysts for community-wide revitalization.

Mark Barone's Creative Crusade

Town and gown.

It's an age-old phrase. But in Syracuse, N.Y., the traditional relationship between city and university is taking on a whole new character -- one that's changing Syracuse physically, culturally, economically and educationally through effective political alliances and an increased array of resources.

Because Syracuse and Syracuse University (SU) work as partners, a revitalization project such as the city's Near West Side initiative can aim not only to save buildings, foster arts activity and attract business, but also to provide students and policy-center staff with hands-on experience in redevelopment work.

"To me, it's a laboratory for these institutions to come down and be part of it ... creating bridges and partnerships with the assets in your city," says Mark Barone, senior director, Office of Engagement Initiatives at Syracuse University.

Barone understands the value of partnerships. Once an artist living in a rundown part of Paducah, Ky., he had the brainstorm of inviting other artists from around the nation to buy into the neighborhood and fix it up. He teamed with the city planner and city government to create a low-cost home-ownership program for artists that has turned his old section of Paducah into a thriving attraction and a national model of creative urban renewal.

In Syracuse, Barone has both a more complex scenario and more abundant tools with which to work.

But the problems there closely resemble those of Paducah and many struggling Rust Belt cities: a vicious cycle of disappearing manufacturers, job loss, resulting loss of population, growing numbers of vacant, neglected buildings, increasing crime, plummeting tax base, impoverished schools and even more population loss.

Other industrial cities would recognize the desired outcomes, too: economically flourishing, self-sustaining neighborhoods full of creative businesses and diverse homeowners, where handsomely restored architecture, restaurants, unique shops and outdoor events promote bustling street activity and reflect a stable, emotionally invested resident community.

"I've always looked at the Rust Belt cities as tons of opportunity," says Barone.

So how will Barone help Syracuse get from here to there on the Near West Side, a project that's really just beginning?

First task on the list, Barone says, is "to really engage this community in a profound way" and get all the components in place to make it easy for people to move in, fix up homes and start up businesses. "A seamless process is what we're trying to create."

In that, Syracuse has an advantage over other communities because of the active role SU has committed to playing in the city's comeback. For the \$55 million Near West Side initiative, for instance, SU is providing \$13 million in funds created by state loan forgiveness; green housing there will be developed with input from the university's Syracuse Center of Excellence and with the financial aid of state tax exemptions and Brownfield grants.

The students of SU's S.I. Newhouse School of Communications are even developing a marketing plan for an entrepreneurial company - a maker of all-natural soaps that Barone hopes to lure to the neighborhood - helping themselves learn while helping a business succeed.

The university offers its home city a great resource. Still, like everywhere else, Syracuse won't be able to effectively reimagine itself unless its elected officials buy into the idea. Politicians, money, marketing and the workability of the project are the keys to success, Barone says.

Luckily, he and Syracuse already have City Councilor Pat Hogan, who represents the Near West Side. He has embraced both redevelopment and the arts as the way to go.

"The arts community is becoming almost a magnet" in that neighborhood, Hogan says.

The redevelopment plan includes creating an arts hub there. The initiative organization has bought warehouses intended for artist apartments and teaching spaces, Hogan says; he hopes to locate the local Public Broadcasting System station nearby. A children's museum is in the works and he wants to try a Paducah-style tactic to lure nonprofit organizations, offering to sell them houses for \$1 to use for headquarters on the condition that they fix up the places at their own expense.

"One of the problems I have as a council member is the lack of political will on the part of other elected officials," he notes. "You have to go all out, and as part of that, the city's got to be committed to it."

Together, Hogan as part of city government and Barone as a leader of the university provide complementary types of support to the Near West Side project.

Barone "is brilliant and an urban visionary," the councilor says. "What Mark brings is the wherewithal and the knowledge of how to do this."

What Hogan brings is access to government channels and a personal vigilance about the state of his ward.

"We've been very, very aggressive" about cracking down on negligent landlords, he says, even getting rules changed to allow code-violating property owners to be brought up on charges.

"We're, like, nuts," Hogan says with a grin detectable even over the phone. "We're sick of it. It's amazing how a couple of arrests straighten out the housing situation."

For more information, visit www.syr.edu and www.paducaharts.com.

Building the New Economy of Upstate New York

It won't work without the politicians.

That's ArtSpace vice president Wendy Holmes's best piece of advice to anyone trying to revive neighborhoods by making them affordable and appealing to artists.

Bringing about new or renovated buildings for artists depends so heavily on public perception, government policy, private sector involvement and personal commitment that such projects require leadership from someone with influence in all four areas.

"It boils down to the elected officials," says Holmes, who specializes in consulting and resource development for ArtSpace, a Minneapolis-based nonprofit serving artists and communities.

If mayors or council members get behind artist-space efforts, those efforts tend to be successful.

And what persuades the political leaders? Impact studies.

"It helps to give elected officials something concrete to look at," Holmes says.

It was an impact study of sorts that convinced Eva Hassett, who was then chief of staff for the mayor of Buffalo, N.Y., that the arts could help revive her blighted and economically ailing Rust Belt city. What she read was "The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life," Richard Florida's 2002 book about the coming of a new economy based on jobs requiring inventive brain skills rather than strong backs. The cities that could attract creative workers such as software designers, entrepreneurs, research-and-development types and artists, Florida wrote, would be the ones thriving in the near future.

Florida's book ranked Buffalo fairly high on attractions for creative workers. When Hassett also saw a magazine piece that gave the city good grades for arts, Hassett says, "something clicked in my head."

Soon, with help from New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton and the full backing of then-Mayor Anthony Masiello, Hassett got in touch with ArtSpace to see if Buffalo qualified as a good candidate for an arts redevelopment project.

Approved by ArtSpace, the city eventually created Buffalo Artist Lofts, a mix of first-floor arts business space and 36 live/work units in the Midtown neighborhood's historic
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Breitweiser Printing Building. New construction behind the Breitweiser Building added another 24 units.

Since it opened in 2007, the waiting list for Buffalo Artist Lofts has grown to 300; people have begun to buy homes nearby and a performing-arts high school will soon go up in the area.

"In the Rust Belt communities, there's a huge opportunity for artists to make a huge difference," says Holmes.

Though renovating buildings in these cities often does mean having to deal with site-selection problems and environmental complications such as Brownfields, asbestos and lead paint, sites are "inconsequential" compared to the problem of mustering the political will needed for an artist-space project, Holmes adds.

"If there's not support from the local elected officials, then I think the timing is not going to be right" for the project, she adds.

In Buffalo, luckily, Hassett was already convinced of the arts' community value and "the mayor got it just like I got it," she recalls. "He made this his top priority."

Furthermore, "Senator Clinton said to the guys from ArtSpace, 'I will do whatever it takes, but you have to do this in Buffalo.' "

It also helped that the Artist Lofts had at least one person – herself – focused on the project at all times, Hassett says.

Political backing led to successful fund-raising for the \$16 million Artist Lofts from state historic tax credits, grants, banks and from Clinton, who gave \$250,000 in Housing and Urban Development funds, says Hassett.

Elected leaders like to hear that arts-related spaces preserve and restore notable buildings, bring good kinds of activity to neighborhoods and reduce crime rates.

One key to success for project developers lies in figuring out how creating space for artists helps that city solve its problems.

These projects, say Holmes, offer a way to "marry the city's agenda with the arts' agenda."

Hassett agrees. The lofts project helped turn a building that was a barrier to development into a beacon for property buyers. But perhaps most important for Buffalo and other down-on-their-luck cities, she says, "In terms of changing our self-concept, it was a significant accomplishment."

For more information, visit www.artspacebuffalo.org.

Artists Set Up House in an Urban Corridor

“Build it and they will come.” In “Field of Dreams,” the character played by James Earl Jones says that about a baseball diamond, not an arts district.

But lots of people in the arts-space movement base their projects on pretty much the same idea, hoping that by rehabbing old structures or putting up new ones, they’ll attract artists to areas in desperate need of desirable, productive residents.

Pittsburgh, Pa., did it differently. In the city’s East End, community developers took a look at Penn Avenue and realized that the artists were already there. What they needed to do was build things so artists would stay.

The resulting Penn Avenue Arts Initiative (PAAI) was designed to convert renters into homeowners, says PAAI district manager Matthew Galluzzo.

“I think ours started a little more organically,” than some space projects, he says. In 1994, “Penn Avenue was a place you went through to get someplace else.” Now, he says, artists who have bought their own spaces and take part in monthly arts events have turned the street into a destination.

“I do think the initiative is working,” writes ceramic artist Laura Jean McLaughlin in an e-mail. At the monthly events, people “walk up and down Penn Avenue to see what the galleries have going on. I do not even need to advertise and I have a gallery full of people and often sell work.”

“I own the building as well as a house. Penn Ave Arts sold the building to me for \$15,000 and helped with every aspect of financing, etc. They have also provided many grants to help refurbish the building. The initiative has helped me as an artist gain more recognition in the city.”

Fourteen years ago, a local nonprofit development company called Artists and Cities identified the section of Penn Avenue between Negley and Mathilda avenues as home to 400 artists like McLaughlin, trying to live and create in an area blighted by the vacant buildings left behind as industries died and people fled.

To encourage the artists to invest in, and remain on, Penn Avenue, two neighboring community development groups started a commercial-development strategy that would help turn bad rental spaces into artist-owned and –renovated live/work spaces, Galluzzo explains. With foundation and city support, the Bloomfield-Garfield Corporation and Friendship Development Associates worked together to create the PAAI.

The initiative acquired buildings from the city or from landlords, then sold them inexpensively to artists and others or developed them itself. It also established the Artist Loan and Grant Fund to help artists purchase property and make improvements. Loans offered through the fund count as equity with local banks – in fact, the fund’s \$83,000 in grants and \$128,000 in loans have leveraged \$6 million in private investment in Penn Avenue properties.

But PAAI didn't just make the buildings affordable: It also provided artists with guidance from a staff real-estate specialist, created neighborhood programming to showcase the artists' work and then supported its own efforts with marketing that has drawn visitors as well as even more resident artists to the area.

Street events called Unblurred: First Fridays on Penn attract 500-750 people every month, Galluzzo says, and the PAAI has worked to further capture the public's attention by organizing festivals and tours and commissioning public art. Collaborations have developed – Pittsburgh's Society for Contemporary Craft called recently to see if it could dovetail with the Unblurred events.

"That must mean we're doing something right," says Galluzzo.

Despite the initiative's comprehensive efforts to make artists' home-buying and entrepreneurial processes as smooth as possible, participants have hit occasional snags.

"The one thing that failed with me is that I had problems with my contractor and someone should have told me to get a no-lien agreement," writes McLaughlin. "The lawyer that I hired to help with the sale should have told me as well, but it would have been good if [PAAI] would have helped with figuring out the ins and outs of rehabbing the building. I think they may help out with that more now, because I was an early artist and have expressed this to them."

The initiative continues to face bigger, more endemic challenges, such as how to secure property from speculating landlords and what to do about vacant lots, Galluzzo notes. With the latter concern, PAAI has undertaken a "green and screen" program that turns such lots into tiny parks, plazas, private courtyards and the like with plantings and decorative fencing that improve appearance, attract pedestrians and add to the sense of neighborhood density.

"We don't need to build everywhere," he says. "We can't afford to build everywhere."

But Penn Avenue's biggest dilemma may come in the guise of its biggest blessing: A \$700 million children's hospital will soon move to a location on the street along with a Whole Foods store and other amenities, undoubtedly increasing the area's desirability and its property values. What if artists start selling their buildings to cash in on the price rises?

Gentrification "is a real concern," Galluzzo says, "one that we are willing to live with, because we are creating equity for these folks."

Some galleries are already converting their buildings to medical-use space. "There's not much that we can do to control that. We know speculation is an issue," he says, but in the long term, the neighborhood "may not be sustainable as it is."

The initiative currently owns several buildings whose tenants will continue to bring artists to the district, Galluzzo observes. But the fact remains that the PAAI has a

commercial-development mission and its efforts to support the arts have been in service to that mission, he says – adding hopefully that a lifestyle center proposed for the edge of the district, near the Shadyside neighborhood, may draw the medical development over there, leaving Penn Avenue for the artists.

For more information, visit www.pennavenuearts.org.

Theatre Breathes New Life Into Old Square

If the Gordon Square Arts District were a person, it would be the richest one in town – not in money, but in the many elements needed to revive its neighborhood economically, socially and creatively.

Anchored by three significant arts organizations, endowed with a trove of historic buildings and a growing amount of diversified new housing and business, assisted by the local community development corporation, championed by both the local councilman and the mayor and supported by city, state, federal and private funds, Gordon Square may prove to be the successful model of self-reinvention for which Cleveland, Ohio has long searched.

But 25 years ago, the arts district essentially was a person: James Levin. Having returned home from New York City, where he had become an actor and director, the Cleveland-area native moved into a decayed cold-storage space at Detroit Avenue and West 65th Street notable only for its lack of electricity and the crime levels in the crumbling neighborhood outside. Levin was starting a theater company.

“I remember very clearly envisioning back in ‘84-’85 that this was going to be the West Side’s Coventry” – the East Side’s once-thriving center of 1960s bohemian life – “with coffeehouses and bookshops,” he recalls.

Levin thought the neighborhood would turn around in five years, though it actually took 15 years longer than that. Change began after Levin and the still-operating Cleveland Public Theatre (CPT) started presenting cutting-edge stage productions on a city block that few people had any other reason to visit.

CPT, a group dedicated to alternative arts and social activism, is “one of the reasons people choose to live in this area,” says Jeff Ramsey, head of the Detroit-Shoreway Community Development Organization.

As a rebel and artist, Levin says, it took him a while to realize that cooperating with establishment organizations such as Detroit-Shoreway might help, rather than hurt, his efforts to revitalize the area around his counterculture theater.

“It didn’t even occur to me that they’d be welcoming,” he says. But after he added young-people’s outreach programs to CPT’s offerings and needed help marketing them to the neighborhood, he and Detroit-Shoreway realized they could be useful to each other.

Since then, the theater, the district organization and their growing number of partners have made a visible difference in the Gordon Square area. Levin improved the CPT building early on and the theater began attracting artists who wanted to live nearby. He also began purchasing property with his own money, to turn over to the nonprofit CPT. In this way, the company acquired the old Gordon Square Theatre, a historic venue right next to CPT headquarters.

But the space badly needed renovation. To improve the effectiveness of his lobbying for government funds, Levin joined forces with other nearby arts groups and formed the West Side Arts Consortium, an interim association that eventually changed into the Gordon Square Arts District.

While the consortium conducted studies and sought money for capital projects including a hoped-for new venue for the Near West Theatre, a community stage group, Cleveland city and neighborhood officials explored the possibility of renovating old buildings - or putting up new ones – for affordable housing.

The result, says Cleveland City Councilman Matt Zone, has been 600 housing units, 60 percent of them owned rather than rented, with a number of them set up for artists, including eight units in the City Savings & Loan Condominiums.

Aided by the neighborhood's views of Lake Erie and proximity to beaches and downtown Cleveland, young professionals have been buying new Detroit-Shoreway housing before construction is even completed, says Ramsey.

The new residents have created enough population density to support 14 new businesses such as the Gypsy Beans & Baking Co., a material version of the coffeehouse Levin envisioned for Gordon Square a quarter-century ago. Though the neighborhood doesn't have a supermarket yet, "what we do have is the arts and they are the economic engine," Ramsey says.

The Capitol Theatre will stoke that engine further. An old movie house diagonally across from CPT, the Capitol has been dark since 1981, but is on the verge of renovation as the West Side's only independent art-film venue. On April 29, 2008, Cleveland City Council approved a \$1.5 million loan for the \$6 million project; ground was broken May 14.

The Capitol represents an important part of the Gordon Square Arts District's plan to revive the area as an arts-driven, walkable city-within-a-city. It has taken all these years to get the pieces in place for that renaissance, says the district's executive director, Joy Roller, but now Gordon Square and its member organizations have the structure and partnerships they need to raise \$30 million. That amount will pay for redoing the Capitol, adapting a furniture warehouse as New West Theatre's new home, finishing work on CPT's Gordon Square Theatre and completing a streetscape for the Detroit Avenue-West 65th intersection.

Roller, who succeeded Levin as executive director of the district, presided over the district's incorporating as an LLC, with Detroit-Shoreway as fiscal agent and project manager. From Rust Belt to Artist Belt: An Analysis of the Challenges and Opportunities Found in Rust Belt Cities

overseer. She's also been instrumental in attracting private-sector support and building a neighborhood constituency for the Gordon Square initiative, which has already raised about \$12 million.

Success depends on having the right point person and Roller's organizational style and energy were perfect for the district's next phase, says Levin. "I was too associated with just the one organization [CPT]. I couldn't get [major funders] there."

Gordon Square has faced other challenges than winning over influential Clevelanders, including typical Rust Belt difficulties over environmental cleanup and finding all the funds necessary for renovations in an economically troubled city and state. Ramsey says state historic tax credits have helped, as has Zone's political support. But he also thinks that keeping the area affordable has been key to the success Gordon Square has enjoyed so far.

"It's inclusive," he says. "We don't want to price people out."

For more information, visit www.gordonsquare.org.

Artists Set Up House in an Urban Corridor

You'd think an arts-presenting organization would have quite enough to take care of these days, what with programming, marketing, administrative chores, endless fund-raising and community outreach to do. What group would have the guts to add housing development to all that?

As it turns out, it took as much heart and brains as nerve for Michigan's Contemporary Art Institute of Detroit (CAID) to help in creating low-cost homes for local artists. Though not everyone in the organization thought the project was a wise move, the leaders who have seen it through remain enthusiastic about the results and about the partnership with Southwest Housing Solutions that made the whole thing possible.

"The success of this project really did [depend] on this collaboration," says CAID board chair Amy Green Deines. "We would absolutely consider it again."

Southwest Housing, a division of a nonprofit dedicated to improving lives and living conditions in Southwest Detroit, initially approached CAID for aesthetic advice on architectural and decorative elements in the two Hubbard Avenue buildings it planned to turn into general low-income housing, says CAID executive director Aaron Timlin.

But Timlin, whose own home rent was about to go up, had been thinking about how to keep artists from being priced out of improving neighborhoods. He wanted to make homeownership or perpetual low-income rents available to Detroit-area artists.

Southwest Housing liked the idea. The more real estate development director Steve Gabrys talked with CAID leaders about the arts, community space and affordable housing, the more it became apparent that a collaboration was "a natural fit," Gabrys explains.

The two groups decided to work together on the Hubbard Avenue buildings, with Southwest handling the construction and CAID taking care of the design, programming and publicity. Besides offering low-cost apartments to artists and others, The Whitdel Building would contain a gallery and a workshop space where children could get hands-on art instruction.

"It was a great collaboration because they knew their business and we knew ours," says Timlin. "I think each side learned a lot."

Still, it was a stretch for CAID, in philosophy as well as resources. An organization founded by artists and dedicated to promoting the connections between art and society through exhibitions, performances, public discourse and funding of art-related events, CAID had never envisioned itself as a developer and didn't have a lot of staff hours to spare for the task.

"We did lose some board members. I think they just thought that it was a little too much to take on," Timlin recalls.

The project "wasn't strategic in relation to a mission," Deines confirms. But CAID is good at "using art as a catalyst to create a stronger urban fabric."

The remaining members of CAID committed themselves to making the project work. Though the federally-funded low-income housing could not, by law, be reserved exclusively for artists, CAID and Southwest were able to target artists in their marketing of the two buildings. But first they had to learn something about each other's business.

Trying to understand all the requirements for low-income housing proved a challenge, Timlin says, as did getting the Southwest staff to understand what artists need. They also faced the task of introducing the public to the idea of the project and its likely benefits.

But they helped one another and the neighborhood supported the plan, which included architectural preservation and green-housing elements for the two apartment buildings. In the mostly Hispanic Hubbard Avenue area, everyone was excited about the housing and the community arts programming that would come with it, says Deines. Moreover, political support lay close at hand: The local congressman lived in the neighborhood.

The whole project "really became a very efficient machine," she says.

The advantages of a good partnership became clear when the first building opened in October 2007 – an unexpected crowd of 600 showed up for the event. The first tenant was in by November, and the building was fully occupied by January 2008. Sixty percent of the new residents were artists – a rate that would have been even higher if the necessarily bureaucratic, low-income-housing application process hadn't discouraged some artists from acting quickly, Timlin says.

Still, the collaborative effort paid off in artist-community gratitude. "People were just coming up and hugging me at the opening and thanking us for making this happen,"

says Timlin, noting that property owners have begun asking him how to adapt their buildings for arts use.

Their positive experience has left Southwest's and CAID's leaders believing that they can do an even better job next time. Deines, an architect, would like to try creating more aesthetically distinctive housing. Gabrys would like to try a market-rate project with CAID, paid for by grants rather than federal funds so it would be open to a broader mix of residents.

Timlin says working with Southwest has taught him that many resources exist for such efforts and that, if you get good advice and come up with a good pitch, "you can pretty much make [the space] the way you want it."

"Just make sure you have the right players around the table," says Deines.

For more information, visit www.thecaid.org and www.swsol.org.

Recommendations for Organizational Action

After reading these stories of artist-based revitalization efforts taking place throughout the Rust Belt, several common themes emerge that appear to be hallmarks of successful projects. The first is the forging of partnerships through collaboration among public, private, and nonprofit sectors, as well as, among actors that are involved in bringing artist-based development projects to fruition including people in finance, community development, politics, real estate, the arts, and the general public. Notably, citizens are an important constituency that deserve to be given specific attention in the engagement process since their backing is a major precondition for success in promoting widespread civic vitality and engagement. The stories further demonstrate the importance of having dedicated figures playing the roles of advocates and champions for the artist-based development projects. Of these individuals, political leaders are especially important as they have a far-reaching sphere of influence and the ability to craft a supportive policy environment for the arts as well. Finally, each community has built upon its existing strengths in planning its artist-based development projects and did not try to imitate what was happening somewhere else.

Taking into consideration these general themes, the following list provides a series of action steps that communities should take in order to make artist-based development a reality:

1. Identify the community's challenges, assets and opportunities by conducting research and completing an in-depth environmental scan.
2. Network with the community's diverse groups in order to garner widespread stakeholder input and support for the effort.
3. Coordinate with intermediaries to develop ways to work with artists and other groups.

4. Develop plans within all agencies and roles for all individuals who are involved, giving consideration to their core competencies and unique skillsets.
5. Determine the overriding goals for each actor and identify a lead organization to oversee the effort.
6. Define metrics for measuring success and conduct regular evaluations.
7. Keep the media apprised of actions and aware of the effort's progress.

From Rust Belt to Artist Belt

The experiences of Rust Belt cities that have embraced artist-based development projects are instructive for other places that are considering incorporating artists into their future community development policies. This paper has demonstrated why and how the strategic movement “From Rust Belt to Artist Belt” is desirable and possible in the Rust Belt due to its unique set of challenges, assets, and opportunities. Through the environmental scan of the Rust Belt, and the discussion on the benefits that artists can bring to communities, it is clear that artists can be major catalysts for economic resurgence in the region and its struggling industrial cities. Conversely, artists also have much to gain from locating in and being actively engaged in community development activities in Rust Belt cities. This paper has identified areas for improvement and provided recommendations for promoting artist-based development in the Rust Belt. Finally, stories from cities that have already undertaken artist-based development were highlighted in this paper.

While artists are not going to be able to single-handedly bring back the Rust Belt from decades of decline, when consideration is given to the challenges and assets found in the Rust Belt and among groups of artists, it becomes clear that both have a lot to gain from working together. For the Rust Belt, artists have the ability to jumpstart widespread revitalization, reinvigorate communities, build a creative workforce, and improve the region's quality of life. For artists, the Rust Belt can provide them with access to affordable space, a strong and supportive arts and cultural sector, professional development and networking opportunities, and outlets for engagement in community affairs. While the debate will undoubtedly continue over what components are needed to bring the Rust Belt back from decline, it is evident that artists have a significant role to play in renewing industrial cities and positioning them for future success, moving the region from Rust Belt to Artist Belt.

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