

Using a Case Study Approach to Document community+public arts: DETROIT (CPAD) Community Engagement Strategies and Impact within Six Skillman Detroit-based Neighborhoods

Executive Summary



Overview

Founded out of the Community Arts Partnerships office of the College for Creative Studies (CCS/CAP) in 2008, community+public arts:DETROIT (CPAD) brings the arts, communities, and youth together to produce high-quality public art projects and events that allow neighborhoods to express and develop their unique character and potential through the arts. CPAD projects reach beyond the typical arts audience; involve neighborhoods in unique ways; and engage with their sites, taking into account specific communities, the environment, and political and social histories. CPAD is uniquely structured to produce work that is artistically authentic and significant, while being truly community-driven and addressing specific community needs and opportunities.

Working with its partner communities, CPAD placed 22 highly visible, long-lasting public art projects in under-resourced Detroit Neighborhoods. In 2012, CPAD's Performing Arts initiative was developed in partnership with The Carr Center. CPAD brought Michigan performing artists and Detroit communities together in creative partnerships that were linked to CPAD's existing visual arts projects to support on-going engagement in these "art places."

This case study approach was designed to document CPAD's model and community engagement strategies, to describe the process of generating and placing art in the six neighborhoods, and to capture community level impacts of CPAD within each targeted Detroit neighborhood: Brightmoor, Chadsey-Condon, Cody-Rouge, North End, Osborn, and Southwest.

A number of collection methods were used to capture the experiences and perceived impacts of the CPAD led visual art projects and performing art events. Key informant semi-structured interviews were conducted with Art project sites' artists and performing artists, Community and Public Arts Advisory Council members, Community Art Committee members, Youth Development Alliance members and the CPAD project staff. A Community Event Survey was designed and administered to individuals attending events. Evaluators made use of a number of secondary data sources to describe and map the community including US Census data, American Community Survey data, and data from Data Driven Detroit. Evaluators conducted a media content analysis and completed observations of community meetings and events. Pictures included in this report were provided by CPAD staff.

The following themes emerged across all six case studies:

“Everyone wants things to change... the abandoned houses, the crime, and they understand that it can’t all change, but if you bring in good things, it starts spreading.”

Importance of CPAD partnering with a local neighborhood organization

Several community members stated that it was important for CPAD to link with neighborhood organizations when working in the communities. This linking assisted with recruitment, outreach, and community engagement, and most importantly, it would contribute greatly to the sustainability of future projects. A few residents explained that these partnerships helped reduce some of the hesitation community members felt in welcoming CPAD. The link to a community based organization reinforced that the projects were neighborhood-driven. One community member also mentioned that public art and performances are a part of encouraging community change but cannot make change alone. The link to a community partner can transition the project to be locally supported and sustained. Many community members reported that CPAD’s approach to joining forces with established community and neighborhood initiatives was effective and resulted in meaningful and sustainable community change.

Community members appreciated the artistic and community engagement processes led by CPAD

In addition to being exposed to the arts, residents valued being able to participate in both the artistic process and the community building process. Residents stated that participating in the projects reaffirmed their belief in the power and importance of bringing diverse groups of people together. Other community members echoed the sentiment that participating in CPAD gave them confidence in working with people outside of their neighborhood. Many individuals mentioned that being a part of the process from beginning to end was beneficial to them and others in the neighborhood. They said that it showed them that this type of work can be done, and that they can be a part of it.

CPAD met an unmet program need within the neighborhoods

CPAD’s art programs filled a gap within the neighborhoods. CPAD’s involvement in the neighborhoods exposed community members to art in a way that other organizations were not offering. As one resident stated, “there are no resources like this in the community. It’s nice to have a change and get a different way of residents and youth interacting in the community.” Another community member said without “programs like this, kids won’t get the opportunity to do arts and crafts or drama...”

Importance of art opportunities for young people

CPAD provided opportunities for youth to participate in arts projects. Almost every community member interviewed felt that these types of opportunities were important for youth, and some even said that this was the most beneficial aspect of CPAD's work in the community. Community members discussed the importance of providing extracurricular arts programs, particularly given the dearth of arts programs in schools. Several specifically mentioned that most schools in the area have lost all funding for art programs, and even community centers and afterschool programs were losing art funding. Some residents mentioned youth who have been inspired by CPAD in various ways from applying to art school, to joining poetry clubs, to learning discipline from the process of meetings and executing projects. Through participating in the community arts projects, residents have realized their potential and fostered "untapped talent." An Osborn resident claimed, "We've seen kids go off and realize that music is their thing, or grades improve as a result of the discipline, or they realize something inside of them they've never realized before." One youth said that he learned that he can make his dreams come true after being involved with the visual and performing arts projects through CPAD.

CPAD experiences resulted in personal impacts

In addition to improving access to arts throughout the community and increasing community engagement, CPAD has also impacted residents on an individual level. Several residents felt personally impacted by their involvement with CPAD projects. One resident mentioned that long-standing residents of the neighborhood were investing emotional hope again, and others felt similarly, that their experience with CPAD projects reminded them that change is possible. Some residents mentioned personal changes, including a new found interest in art and taking projects that they had been involved in already to the next level. Some described the pride they felt when they drove through the neighborhood and saw the art.

Participants increased community pride and connectedness

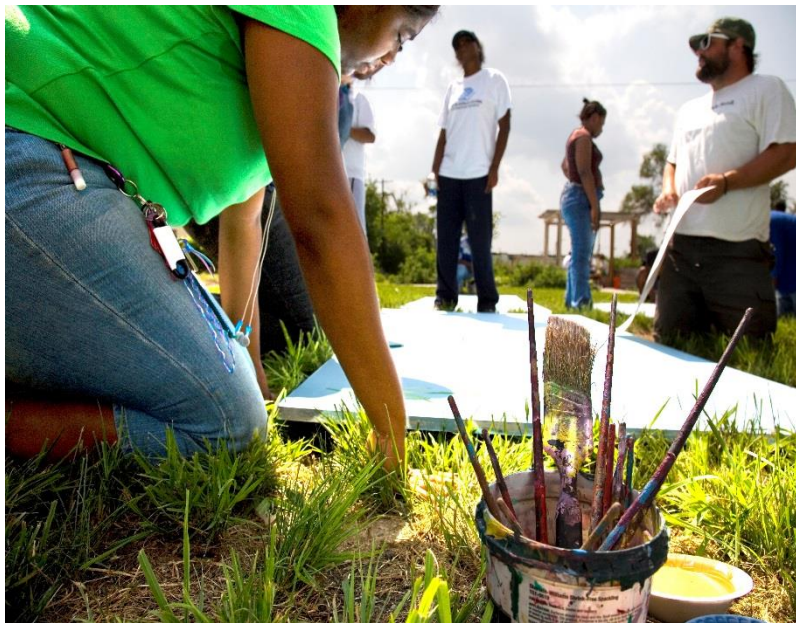
In reflecting on CPAD, residents reported looking forward to seeing the program expand and make lasting change in the neighborhoods. Many residents mentioned that the biggest impacts cannot be seen yet, and that in 5, 10, 20, 100 years is when it will be seen. Some residents talked about how important it felt to have been involved and how they imagined bringing their children and grandchildren to the sites and being able to say "I was a part of that." Other residents emphasized the importance of CPAD's impact on the youth of the community. They mentioned that kids who are growing up now, and have been involved in these projects for four or five years, will remember this as a normal part of their childhood – attending performing arts events and participating in community art projects. Residents felt that this was the real impact.

Hope for the expansion and sustainability of CPAD

Residents discussed how they enjoyed their involvement with CPAD. These residents want to see the CPAD program expand to other Detroit geographic locations. When asked if they had any final thoughts about CPAD or their involvement in the projects, every community member interviewed said they hoped CPAD would continue. Residents stated, “I hope CPAD continues and that it grows. I am glad CPAD came into our community. I will support CPAD one-hundred percent in any type of thing they would bring into the community,” and “as long as CPAD is around and I am around, I will continue to work with them.” The impact of CPAD exceeded residents’ expectations.

Larger neighborhood problems are not within CPAD’s reach

While the majority of the interviewees had positive reflections on CPAD, there were some residents that mentioned that more needed to be done. Some residents reflected on the dire state of the neighborhoods, feeling as though these types of programs are small in comparison to what needs to be done. One resident acknowledged that yes, it is more aesthetically pleasing when you drive down the street and see murals on the walls, but that the murals do not help reduce crime. Others felt that CPAD should be realistic in terms of what it hopes to accomplish. These projects can have an impact visually, but that they probably won’t affect the larger social problems.



Vision for the Future

CPAD's community engagement process empowers community residents and stakeholders to take an active and leading role in making key decisions as to what types of activities will take place in their neighborhood, where and when these activities will take place, and who will be involved. In the six years CPAD has been engaging its target communities, the level of community engagement has continually increased and residents have demonstrated the power of the arts in their communities to make real and positive change. Beyond the arts, these engaged citizens demonstrate a sense of commitment to and responsibility for their communities as engaged, positive change agents with a demonstrable record of success. CPAD has seen remarkable anecdotal evidence that its work with its Community Art Committees has resulted in a strong sense of agency on the part of resident participants.

CPAD has seen the effectiveness of highly visible, long lasting visual arts projects in creating "art places," a concrete infrastructure to support ongoing arts activity, and has seen the role of the performing arts in providing and perpetuating arts activity over time. CPAD projects have provided numerous Detroit and community-based artists with expanded opportunities for development. For many, CPAD provided their first opportunity to execute projects at this scale. Some artists did not fully achieve their goals, but for most, this was a major and lasting career advancement.

As Detroit and its communities begin to interact with the Detroit Future City plan, CPAD sees a need to share its and its communities' successes in a manner that can inspire other Detroit communities to consider public arts as an engagement tool moving forward. CPAD sees a need for an ongoing infrastructure and resources to share successes and support other communities in developing the arts as a tool for community engagement and development into Detroit's future.

~ Mikel Bresee, CPAD Founding Director

Introduction

Program Foundation

In 2006, The Skillman Foundation committed a large portion of its resources to “The Good Neighborhoods Initiative” (GNI), a 10-year comprehensive community development initiative to improve outcomes for youth living in six neighborhoods in the city of Detroit.

Understanding the potential role that community arts could have within the Good Neighborhoods, Skillman was motivated to explore possibilities for community and public arts as part of this program.

With the support and partnership of Skillman, Americans for the Arts (AFA) began research and community meetings in spring of 2007 to discover the existing capacity and possible strategies for “*integrating community arts as a neighborhood development strategy in Detroit neighborhoods*” (AFA Concept Paper). As a part of this process, CCS/CAP participated in community meetings; artist presentations; and targeted, in-depth planning sessions. Through this process, AFA and Skillman identified CCS/CAP as the Detroit arts organization with the experience and resources needed to lead the effort to build capacity for this work – both within GNI neighborhoods and the Detroit Arts Community. Together, AFA, Skillman and CCS/CAP identified challenges, opportunities, and potential program responses to bring community arts to bear as part of this comprehensive community development initiative.

Once this basic framework was developed, CCS/CAP drafted a formal proposal to initiate CPAD as a two-year pilot program. Skillman then approached the Kresge and JPMorgan Chase Foundations, and CPAD was born as a project of the College for Creative Studies Community Arts Partnerships program, supported by a funding partnership of the Skillman, Kresge, and JPMorgan Chase Foundations.

Program Structure

Organizationally, CPAD is structured to share power and decision-making, even to the extent of project staffing and distribution of funds. Working with funders, CPAD reverses the traditional grant-making process by granting communities funds for projects before projects are identified. A city-wide Community and Public Art Advisory Council made up of both arts and community organizations identifies and pre-screens artists, helps set policy, and identifies city-wide resources. Resident and stakeholder-based Community Art Groups meet monthly and are empowered to make the crucial decisions about projects including: project theme, type of

project (media), potential sites, selection of artist(s), and approval of final project design, project celebration, dedication, and events.

Central to CPAD's effectiveness is its community engagement strategy. Through regular community meetings, CPAD supports community research and collaboratively identifies, from a "ground up" community perspective, specific public art projects and events that engage residents and stakeholders in making an impact on their community's development. Rather than starting with art, CPAD begins a conversation about existing community opportunities, resources, and challenges – taking an asset-based approach. Discussion of possible art projects and activities grows out of this community-based conversation.

CPAD applies its methodology as a successful strategy for addressing its core program goals.

- Engaging targeted neighborhoods in building social capital, increasing community identity, vitality, connectedness, self-determination and developing the capacity to influence policies and resources through planning, executing and celebrating neighborhood art projects;
- Improving Detroit and neighborhood appearance and safety by targeting troubled areas for artistically authentic projects and/or highlighting and celebrating neighborhood opportunities and successes;
- Maintaining an ongoing infrastructure in support of the above goals.

In looking to impact Detroit communities, including Detroit's artist communities, CPAD has maintained a focus on Detroit, and where possible, local community artists. Artists are pre-screened through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process and applications are adjudicated by CPAD's Community and Public Arts Advisory Council to form an Artists Roster. Once specific project parameters and goals are set by Community Art Committees, these groups select artists from the roster to be commissioned to develop formal proposals. These proposals are then presented for community vote based on CPAD's formal Voting Policy. In support of the development of indigenous and community-based artists, they are compensated for both proposals and projects.

Program History

Initially, there was a push from funders and sponsors to begin with a program that combined both the visual and performing arts. However, CCS/CAP had already been engaging several of the target neighborhoods in arts programming for several years and recognized that there was a lack of arts infrastructure in many Detroit communities. A focus on highly visible, long-lasting, visual art projects could begin to create a real and lasting arts infrastructure – art places – that were concrete and recognized as such by their communities and that could provide space and inspiration for ongoing arts activities.

In 2008, CPAD's first year, it worked with its six target communities to produce seven small-scale visual art projects with budgets of \$20,000.00 each. These were mostly successful, but on a small scale. In 2009, CPAD increased project budgets to \$35,000.00 and found that projects made a broader impact, but it took two years or more to complete most of the nine projects begun in this second year. Using CPAD's community engagement process to plan and manage projects proved a highly effective but lengthy process. This combined with Michigan's short season for outdoor work, and the substantial logistical requirements for artworks to be able to survive the Michigan climate, clearly demonstrated that effective projects created along this model would take two years or more.

After completing its two-year pilot and based on CPAD's learning, it was granted a two-year implementation grant to execute expanded visual art projects with \$40,000.00 budgets. These larger and more ambitious projects encountered even more challenges as the City of Detroit moved slowly towards operating under a state Consent Agreement to formally being declared insolvent and operating under an Emergency Manager to eventual Bankruptcy. Two of CPAD's year III/IV projects for Detroit Recreation Department parks encountered 14-month delays in permitting and completed only in 2013 & 2014. Still, factoring in these unforeseen delays, actual project execution was completed within two years in most cases.

In 2012, funding from both JPMorgan Chase and Kresge had come to an end. With Skillman's continuing commitment, and still looking to complete most of its year III/IV projects, CPAD sought to continue its momentum with greatly reduced resources. Having now completed visual arts projects and created arts spaces in its focus communities, CPAD hoped to bring in the performing arts through a partnership with the Virgil H. Carr Center. In 2013, Kresge renewed its support through its Detroit Office and CPAD expanded its incorporation of the performing arts.

CPAD has found that combining the visual and the performing arts can be remarkably successful. Visual art projects have created defined "arts spaces" in target communities and fostered a sense of pride in and commitment to their neighborhoods for residents, but these outcomes have tended to fade over time. Placing performing arts events in spaces defined by large-scale, public visual arts projects has effectively "breathed life" into these projects. Performing arts events activate these spaces, creating an opportunity for residents to discover local talent and connect to their neighborhood's visual art projects in active ways. This, combined with CPAD's direct partnership with its Community Art Groups has continued to build target communities' engagement and capacity in the arts.

Beginning in Neighborhoods

As a program partner of the Skillman Foundation's Good Neighborhoods Initiative, CPAD's initial contacts in its target neighborhoods were through the Skillman neighborhood Governance Boards. These are comprised of residents and neighborhood stakeholders that are elected by neighborhood vote. CPAD also selected representatives from several of its target communities to serve on its city-wide Public Art Advisory Council. CPAD continues to operate out of the College for Creative Studies' Community Arts Partnerships (CCS/CAP) office, which had been delivering arts and education programs for several years in several of CPAD's target neighborhoods. Together, these resources assisted CPAD's entrance into these communities.

~ *community+Public Arts: Detroit Staff*

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