

**STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITIES**



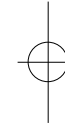
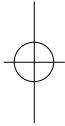
**THROUGH
CULTURE**

Art, Culture & the National Agenda

CENTER FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

**STRENGTHENING
COMMUNITIES
THROUGH CULTURE**

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CENTER FOR ARTS AND CULTURE
Art, Culture & the National Agenda
Issue Paper

ART, CULTURE AND THE NATIONAL AGENDA

The Center for Arts and Culture is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to examining critical issues in cultural policy. The Center initiated, in the Spring of 2000, a project called *Art, Culture and the National Agenda*. With generous support from a number of foundations, the Center solicited background papers on arts and cultural issues from dozens of scholars and practitioners over an 18-month period. The aim of *Art, Culture and the National Agenda* is to explore a roster of cultural issues that affect the nation's well-being -- issues that should be on the horizon of policymakers, public and private, and at national, state and local levels.

This issue paper, *Strengthening Communities Through Culture*, is the third in the Art, Culture and the National Agenda series. Written by Dr. Elizabeth Strom from Rutgers University, *Strengthening Communities Through Culture* looks at the ways culture intersects with civic life in communities. This issue paper, like others in the series, reflects the opinions and research of its author, who was informed by commissioned background papers and the assistance of the Center's Research Task Force. The paper does not necessarily represent the views of all those associated with the Center.

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Additional information about the Center and the *Art, Cultural and the National Agenda* project, as well as resources on communities and cultural policy, can be found on the Center's web site at www.culturalpolicy.org.

Gigi Bradford
Executive Director

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report discusses crucial ways in which America's communities¹ can be identified with, and supported and enhanced by, their art and culture.² Art and culture are intrinsic to nations and to communities within nations. The term "art and culture" encompasses all creative expressions – in support of, or in opposition to, a nation's or a community's flavor and essence, that ally it with and distinguish it from other nations or communities – that can be read, heard, viewed, and/or participated in. Some of this art and culture will be popular; some not. Some will have survived the test of time; some not. Some will be for profit; some not-for-profit. Some will be undertaken by professionals who devote their careers to them; some will be undertaken by amateurs for their own enjoyment, their neighbors, and those people of similar interests across cyberspace.

Some policy makers believe that art and culture serve only a privileged elite. They view support for art and culture as a luxury to be provided by the favored few who

¹ "Community" here is defined primarily by its geography.

² The words "art(s)" and "culture" are used interchangeably in the current document.

participate in them. However, it can be demonstrated that art and culture are intrinsic to communities at all levels. And, art and culture provide for public purposes essential to any public agenda.

Art and culture have long been associated with the development of America's cities and towns and the rich diversity and evolution of neighborhoods and communities. Art and culture are, in fact, often used to help revitalize and improve the economies of inner cities, suburbs, and rural areas. Art and culture are also successfully used to help achieve educational goals and ameliorate some of society's most pressing problems. Although art and culture can be a source of controversy, they are more frequently a force for enhancing community identity and making communities more vibrant and prosperous.

This report suggests:

(A) Community Identity. Public leaders at all levels (federal, state, and local) should strengthen the use of their bully pulpits to encourage cultural activities that build community identity and cohesion. State and federal cultural agencies should fund policy-relevant research and case studies that show the impact (including an increased tax base) of investments in culture on community regeneration. Governments at all levels should consider providing financial

incentives that assist the public purposes of community cultural activities.

(B) Community and Economic Development. The federal government should develop an arts and community-building program in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (for urban areas) and in the Department of Agriculture (for rural areas). These programs would provide grants and technical assistance to community groups seeking to renovate space for arts and cultural projects, and to integrate arts and cultural programming into community development. The Mayors' Institute on City Design, an initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, should be strengthened and receive White House support. The initiative should also be expanded to include a county commissioner component.

State and local governments should foster partnerships among community development organizations, social service organizations, and arts/artist and heritage/preservation groups. They should promote art districts, state trusts, special taxes, and other funding mechanisms that encourage investment in the arts in a community. At all income levels, private owners of older buildings should be provided financial incentives to upgrade them. At the same time, public policies (e.g., sweat equity investment credits and/or guaranteed lease terms at relatively fixed

rents) are needed to protect tenants, individual artists, and community-based cultural organizations from displacement as a result of higher property values associated with cultural improvements.

(C) Education and Cultural Literacy. Arts education should be part of the core of the K-12 curriculum. The U.S. Department of Education should ensure appropriate testing in the arts as in other core subjects. At the school district level, schools should take seriously the federal and state guidelines involving arts education and assure sequential teaching K-12 that results in every student graduating from high school having a substantial degree of cultural literacy and core competencies in the arts. Schools should use the resources of their arts community, including individual artists, as a part of this effort. Institutions of higher education should require competencies in the arts and culture as a condition of admission.

(D) Social Needs. Federal, state, and local governments should strengthen their efforts to use the arts as a way of addressing pressing social problems in communities – to help reduce racial and social tension, to help at-risk populations, and to help those with physical and mental disabilities participate in the mainstream of society.

THE PUBLIC PURPOSES OF ART AND CULTURE IN COMMUNITIES

Culture has long been at the heart of community life and has played an especially significant role in the development of great American cities and towns. In an earlier age, visits of touring performers brought the community together in common purpose, even in far-flung towns and rural settlements. From bustling towns like Natchez and Vicksburg, Mississippi to small communities in the midwest and far west, makeshift theatrical productions were common, a billiard table sometimes serving as a stage. (Levine, 1988) With advancing prosperity, the civic elites of industrializing cities throughout the country invested in museums and performance halls to showcase their wealth and erudition, while providing a public good for their workers. The creation of the St. Louis Art Museum, Art Institute of Chicago, and fine arts museums in San Francisco and Houston represented important civic milestones for these cities and the nation as a whole. Such institutions, along with libraries, symphony halls, ballet theaters, and great parks and zoos, have long served as an indispensable contribution to a community's

social and economic life. They are also a source of local pride and identity.

The value of culture as a way in which communities can define, revitalize, and sustain themselves has become a matter of wide public discussion, planning, and public policy research. Many of the threads that once held communities together have worn thin. Community life, whether rooted in isolated rural regions, in sprawling suburbs, or in dense city neighborhoods, has been increasingly eroded by negative forces such as the concentration of poverty, declining tax-supported public services, middle class flight, commercial disinvestment, *de facto* segregation, mindless development, and endless, solitary commutes.

Investing in policies, organizations, and individuals that promote and undertake art and cultural activities will not solve all the economic, social, and educational problems buffeting communities today. However, a growing body of research and practical experience suggest that investment in art and culture can help address these issues. Art and cultural activities can help:

- give members of a community a positive sense of identity and cohesion while contributing to local democracy;

- revitalize and improve the economies of cities,

- towns, suburbs, and rural areas;

- increase educational attainment and cultural literacy; and

- bridge social barriers and address some of society's most pervasive systemic problems.

BUILDING COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Communities, whether a small village, a city block, or a large metropolis, are held together by multiple, cross-cutting bonds. Social scientists identify social networks (i.e., groups sharing common values or identities and political institutions) as being among the most important bonds promoting social harmony. Participating in cultural activities, whether visiting a museum, singing in a church choir, or joining a street corner drumming circle, can reinforce community connections by generating pride in one's surroundings and attachments to one's neighbors. It has been further observed that people are likely to value and derive satisfaction from the presence of cultural assets in their communities. Recent research demonstrates that residents who frequently participate in cultural activities are generally more satisfied with the quality of life in their communities. In a survey of five neighborhoods in the city of Philadelphia, 20 percent of those interviewed who frequently participated in cultur-

al activities rated the quality of life in their neighborhood as excellent while less than five percent of those with low cultural participation did so. (Stern 2000)

Most of the support for these community cultural activities is derived from the citizens who participate in them – in cash, in kind, and from countless volunteered hours. Local governments have also helped – by donating land or public space, offering services and tax incentives, and/or providing grants and line item allocations. In the late 1930s, the federal government made a large contribution to art and culture at the community level through its support of artists, writers, and theaters under the Works Progress Administration, as a part of its effort to get people back to work during the Great Depression. In addition, it is essential to recognize the continuing role played by the federal government since early in the 20th century -- through tax exemption laws that encourage and support citizen participation in the arts at the community level.

In 1965, the national endowments for the arts and the humanities were established, leading over time to the creation of state arts and humanities councils in all 50 states and the territories. The arts and humanities endowments and state arts and humanities councils add to the support for art and culture at local levels and help catalyze additional funds through matching grant programs. Public support has had a particular impact on

encouraging elite arts institutions to reach out to the community as a whole, beyond their regular participants. By the late 1990s, the American Association of Museums (AAM 1999) could report that 88 percent of all museums offer programs for school children, reaching three million pupils each year. The AAM estimates that one out of every 28 Americans is a museum member, and that there are 2.5 museum volunteers for every paid museum staff member. As volunteers are generally drawn from the museum's surrounding communities, this level of active support suggests how people value their local arts institutions. Another AAM survey revealed that 91 percent of respondents found very convincing the following statement: "Museums provide a common experience that families can share across generations and create memories. They are a national treasure that allow parents and children to see history with their own eyes, touch a fossil, or wonder at a work of art." This study also found broad support for public funding of museums, especially among women. (AAM 1999) Many performing arts institutions also provide extensive opportunities for school and community participation.

Cultural organizations benefit communities even beyond their explicit outreach and educational programs. In one study focusing on Philadelphia, the presence of cultural institutions was found to make a neighborhood less likely to deteriorate, better able to rebound from economic decline, and more likely to remain stable while accom-

modating ethnically and economically diverse populations. “[T]he historical presence of arts and cultural providers, levels of regional cultural participation, and economic and ethnic diversity were all related to the chances that a neighborhood would retain its population and experience an above average decline in poverty during the decade studied.” (Stern 2000) The authors of a Department of Housing and Urban Development study of 14 diverse neighborhoods in nine cities concluded that the mobilization of community organizations, including cultural organizations, was a critical element in preserving their multi-cultural character. (Nyden et al 1998)

Although the arts can foster positive community identity and solidarity, they also can be a source of community dissension. The goal of many artists is to cause an audience to think and question; therefore, art will always arouse disparate responses. A recent cultural policy study of large American cities revealed that most of the disputes deemed “cultural” were in fact about commercial culture (film, rap concerts, rock lyrics) and not about the not-for-profit arts. Almost without exception, these controversies were resolved through consensual, democratic channels. In only 15 percent of the hundreds of cases reviewed for the study did the cultural conflicts lead to court action. (Tepper 2000) If disagreements about culture lead to community debates that tend to be resolved peaceably, it can be argued that debates about the arts are more likely to help nurture a healthy democ-

racy, and contribute to community identity, rather than to cause harm. (Jacobs 2000)

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Art and cultural activities can have major positive impacts on community and economic development. In and of themselves, they can contribute to the viability and enhanced appeal of a community as a community. As agents of historic preservation, they can revitalize a community’s physical attraction. An appealing community will help elicit investment, residents, and tourism.

Community Viability and Enhancement

The importance of art and culture to community building has proven persuasive to the community development field, leading to a growing number of neighborhood improvement programs that include a cultural component. A recent Ford Foundation report found that ten percent of the community development corporations (CDCs) surveyed had ongoing arts programs. Some CDCs, like New York’s Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation and Boston’s Inquilinos Boricuas en Accion, have run their own programs in theaters, galleries, and cultural centers expressly built for that purpose. More recently, a number of CDCs are using their resources to facilitate the expansion of arts programs sponsored by

other neighborhood groups. For example, the Neighborhood Institute in Chicago bought and renovated a vacant commercial building for use by 23 local cultural organizations. Through such projects, CDCs have discovered economic development advantage in partnering with local arts groups to create programs that upgrade the neighborhood's built environment. At the same time, these neighborhood buildings provide a home for cultural activities that engender additional quality of life improvements. (Bowles 1995)

Like the leaders of CDCs, city officials have also discovered the power of art and culture to enhance community development initiatives. In 1994, eight cities were awarded federal Empowerment Zone designations, which carried with them \$100 million in federal tax incentives and subsidies. Of these cities, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and Detroit all included cultural activities as part of their community-building strategy. In some cities, such as New York and Miami, cultural activities were explicitly linked to their economic development goals. In others, such as Chicago and Philadelphia, art and culture initiatives were tied to broader social and community-building efforts.

The currency of this emerging symbiosis between the arts and community development is nowhere better recognized than in the formation of the Institute for Community Development and the Arts by the national

arts service organization Americans for the Arts. The Institute was formed in partnership with several organizations of state and local elected officials for the purpose of both documenting and encouraging a robust and continuing collaboration between community development and the arts. Similarly, the Rockefeller Foundation and Partners for Livable Communities have brought together community leaders to discuss ways to integrate cultural strategies into their activities. (Partners for Livable Communities 1995)

Cultural institutions can make an important mark on a community's landscape by providing attractive, welcoming facilities. In earlier eras, many cultural builders were as unconcerned about making their facilities physically accessible to a non-elite public as were the curators and programmers about sharing the contents showcased in these institutions. Some 19th century institutions were purposely built in remote parts of the city (the city having only later grown up around them), in part to take advantage of park-like settings and in part to control access to them by the working classes. As late as the 1960s, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts was built in a high-rent neighborhood in Washington, DC, with limited access to public transportation. New York City's Lincoln Center, so spectacular and inviting when viewed from the front, was finished off with an impenetrable, four-block-long wall that backed onto a public housing complex of long standing.

In more recent years, both of these government-constructed facilities have embraced more “democratic” programming that has attracted participation by more diverse audiences.

Changing demographics, political shifts, and a new economic reality have moved art and culture planners to rethink the relationship that their facilities should have to their surroundings. The designs of new halls such as the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark and Benaroya Hall in Seattle have been praised for both fitting into and enhancing their environments. (Russell 1999) In addition, a number of cultural facilities have been built in strategic locations, as a major (or even the primary) factor in the transformation of moribund downtowns, obsolete factory districts, and disregarded waterfronts. Throughout the country, in cities large and small, such projects have been undertaken as a means of bringing life — and economic impulse — to areas that are too often deserted after business hours or that have been abandoned altogether.

Large-ticket cultural projects are certainly seen as economic generators by their proponents. Many of the dozens of new performing arts centers and expanded museums have been supported by the public sector as economic development projects. Philadelphia’s Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, and the Massachusetts Museum

of Contemporary Arts are just a few examples of cultural construction projects funded as a part of state and local economic revitalization programs. Miami’s new \$244 million performing arts center has been described by Miami-Dade’s economic development agency as the “key job-creating element in the community’s Empowerment Zone.” (www.beaconcouncil.com)

Seattle has built two major arts facilities including an art museum and a performing arts complex that were originally planned for a site some distance from the downtown. However, these facilities could not muster sufficient political support until they were relocated to the city’s center. Seattle business leaders credit these cultural institutions with the city’s palpable revival, including the establishment since 1990 of several major retail complexes, and a 40 percent increase in the number of people living downtown. (Byrd 1997)

Center city merchants in Roanoke, Virginia began in the late 1970s to seek new uses for an abandoned farmers’ market where drug sales and prostitution had become the dominant activities. Using \$7.5 million in state funds and private donations, they bought and renovated a 1914 warehouse and created the Center in the Square, which is now home to five cultural organizations. In so doing they solved the housing problems of three museums and a theater group, and provided an anchor for the revitalization of their central shopping district that has attract-

ed an additional \$350 million in private investments. (www.brunerfoundation.org)

In Englewood, New Jersey, the renovation of an old movie theater into the John Harms Center for the Performing Arts spurred the development of a half dozen new restaurants. The actor, Jeff Daniels, took the lead in renovating an old garage in his hometown of Chelsea, Michigan, making it into a performance space. The theater showcases the work of local playwrights and has been credited with helping to revive that small town's commercial area. In Albany, Texas, a town with a population of 2,000, the restored Old Jail Art Center attracts 30,000 visitors each year. (Perryman 2000)

An appealing building can itself be a cultural asset with both economic and aesthetic values. Unique and impressive structures, such as the Sydney Opera House or the Guggenheim in Bilbao, Spain, have come to stand as internationally recognized symbols for cities and nations. The architecture of buildings can draw local visitors and tourists, regardless of the cultural offerings within, and stimulate the development of nearby office buildings and residential housing. (Brozan 2000) Likewise, a visually interesting neighborhood, a well-designed plaza or park can become the psychological and physical center of community life. An appealing built environment can be a source of neighborhood pride, part of that which makes people want to stay in and fight for their communities.

Current research has shown that the arts and culture make a major contribution to the economic well being of communities. In California, for example, the commercial and the not-for-profit arts constitute the state's third largest industry sector, generating \$3.5 billion in wages annually. (Cleveland 1992) In Texas, commercial and not-for-profit arts and cultural activities together generate \$63.7 billion a year in expenditures and create 600,000 jobs. (Perryman 2000)

Like for-profit arts businesses, not-for-profit art and cultural organizations are tied in multiple ways to the local economy. For example, theaters and dance companies purchase supplies and equipment, buy ad space in newspapers, and have salaried employees and contractors who pay taxes and purchase local goods and services. The National Alliance of Local Arts Agencies (now merged with Americans for the Arts) estimates that not-for-profit arts organizations alone generate nationally \$36.8 billion of business, resulting in \$25.2 billion in personal income to local residents. Not-for-profit arts spending supports 1.3 million fulltime-equivalent jobs, and generates \$2 billion in state and local tax revenue and \$3.4 billion in federal income tax revenue. The not-for-profit arts sector represents nearly one percent (.94 %) of the total U.S. workforce and is a bigger employer than legal services (.84 percent) or police and firefighters (.71 percent) (National Association of Local Arts Agencies

1994).

Some would say that the most significant economic contribution of artistic activity is not its direct economic impact but rather its ability to induce and enhance other forms of economic activity. Such activity would include product design, advertising, real estate, and multiple phases of television and film production, to name but a few examples. Artists and cultural workers add to the value of products such as clothing and furniture. Without the input of designers trained in a variety of arts, companies would be hard-pressed to create, package, or even publicize their products. While design museums are full of the works of a Charles and Ray Eames and Frank Lloyd Wright, the Walmart or Target customer can also enjoy the work of good design artists. When we buy well-designed clothes or a new car, when we watch a popular film or television show, we are often enjoying the work of creative people who have been trained in the arts and, in more cases than not, they have honed their skills in not-for-profit arts centers. (Perryman 2000)

Art and culture add value to a locality's ability to attract businesses and their employees, as the role played by "quality of life" amenities to plant or headquarter location decisions has increased in importance in the post-industrial economy. Whereas businesses were once tied to places with ready access to ports, train links, and nat-

ural resources, new economy corporations are now foot-loose, choosing localities that attract managers and skilled workers who want the opportunity for an active cultural life. (Kotkin and Moyers 2000)

Real estate developers and corporate leaders value the presence of well-regarded cultural institutions, and are generous supporters of museums and performing arts centers. Ford Motor's marketing director, asked why his company has nearly single-handedly kept Detroit's opera company solvent, noted that the presence of such an institution made it easier to recruit white collar employees (Bradsher 1999). Corporate donors to the New Jersey Performing Arts Center similarly stressed its value to their skilled workforce. (Strom 1999) In addition, commercial creativity-based industries — publishing, advertising, broadcasting, and fashion in particular — are drawn to places with a concentration of artists.

Cultural policy experts agree that arguments extolling the economic value of culture should not be overblown. A rich cultural life does not ensure a city's economic success any more than lack of cultural amenities portends certain economic doom. Of the 19 fastest growing metropolitan areas of the early 1990s, only seven made the *Money Magazine* list of the top 40 arts and cultural centers. (Seaman 2000) However, a clear body of evidence is beginning to emerge indicating that well-conceived cultural investments, made as part of a prudent econom-

ic development strategy, contribute to the success of that strategy. Cultural amenities can provide an important *halo effect* that enhances the appeal of a locality, but they cannot, by themselves, be used as an economic development engine or to revive a flagging local economy.

Revitalization through Historic Preservation

The built environment is of major importance in defining a community's life. It can be especially significant to community life when it has historical value. With the founding of the historic preservation movement, the reclaiming of historic space has become closely associated with community revitalization efforts in which artists and artisans are key players. Spurred by the public backlash against urban renewal schemes of the 1960s and 1970s that razed neighborhoods and historically and architecturally significant buildings in favor of highways, office towers, and development patterns that encouraged suburban sprawl, enlightened planners and developers are moving away from look-alike housing and commonplace strip malls. (Hardy 2000)

Since the 1960s, new federal, state, and local laws and tax incentives have been enacted to encourage the preservation of structures with architectural or historical merit. Economists who have studied preservation believe it functions as an economic catalyst, as improvements

made to one building or one neighborhood encourage investments in neighboring blocks. (Listokin, Listokin and Lahr, 1998) The skills brought by artists and artisans to the preservation process make them important partners in reclaiming and restoring historic spaces where often they have been among the earliest pioneers. Similarly, cultural organizations are often integral to preservation efforts. The establishment of arts districts in Pittsburgh and New Orleans helped secure prime historic areas in both these cities.

Historic preservation, because it has been key to neighborhood regeneration, can make communities more attractive and increase real estate values. Whole districts have been rejuvenated for residential and commercial use by capitalizing on the existing assets of the built environment rather than beginning anew (Hardy 2000). Under the old urban renewal model, much of the character of New Orleans' French Quarter would have been sacrificed to a highway-building scheme. Instead, the city's residents organized to save a neighborhood that defines the city and is the basis for its lucrative tourism industry (Hirsch 1983).

Efforts to spare two old Cleveland theaters from demolition sparked the creation of Playhouse Square, a complex of five renovated playhouses offering everything from Broadway shows to children's performances to opera. Playhouse Square has been credited with

transforming the city's downtown area and improving Cleveland's urban image.

In a poor, predominantly African-American section of Houston, an innovative project used a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts — matched by private contributions (including donations from the city's large museums) — to renovate several dozen “shotgun” row houses. Renovation work depended in part on community volunteers, and local black artists were commissioned to create site-specific work for each house. The renovated buildings now house art galleries, a spoken word arts house, and group living quarters for young, single mothers. (www.brunerfoundation.org)

Historic preservation has made a difference in rural communities as well. Cornerstones is a New Mexico not-for-profit organization that engages local residents, mostly from rural Hispanic and Native American towns, in local preservation projects. The projects serve multiple goals: they restore historic buildings, some several hundred years old; they train local residents, including at-risk youth, in modern and traditional construction methods; and they organize communities, whose volunteer labor makes these projects possible.

It must be noted, however, that historic preservation may not always serve community interests. In some cases, efforts to maintain aging historic structures have hindered economic activity, especially when rigidly

enforced laws prevent renovations that would have rendered a structure more usable. (Listokin, Listokin and Lahr, 1998) Historic preservation — and indeed cultural development in general — can result in gentrification, where low-income residents, and the stores that serve them, are pushed out of improving communities by the higher rents.

Neighborhoods with older housing stock often provide sanctuary for the city's poor, including artists. Historic designations can thus place requirements on low-income homeowners that they are unable to fulfill. The creation of new cultural amenities can improve the reputation and desirability of a community so much that low and moderate-income tenants are priced out by a growing pool of wealthier renters and buyers eager to move in. The solution, however, is not to abandon preservation efforts, but rather to increase the flexibility of preservation laws. Local and state laws are needed that protect tenants' rights and provide preservation grants and low-interest loans that would make restoration efforts affordable to homeowners of all incomes. (Listokin, Listokin and Lahr 1998)

Cultural Tourism

Visitors who are primarily interested in the art and cultural activities of a particular locality spend money in a

variety of ways (resulting in the so-called “multiplier effect”). Such visitors, known as cultural tourists, not only purchase tickets to cultural events and facilities, they are also likely to spend money on hotels, food, parking, and gifts. Research and marketing efforts are increasingly focused on cultural amenities as assets that confer real economic advantage to a city and region. Travelers have long sought out cultural landmarks, but over the past decade, both tourism professionals and public development officials have become newly conscious of the economic importance of these visitors. Special efforts are now being made to understand and appeal to them.

The Los Angeles County Convention and Visitors Bureau pioneered cultural tourism in the United States, creating in 1995 the first official cultural tourism bureau with support from state and local art agencies. Industry groups like the Travel Industry Association of America, as well as cultural institutions, have documented the fact that many people travel expressly to visit cultural attractions. (Balfe and Cassilly 1993, McDowell 1997) These surveys have shown that cultural tourists are wealthier (with average annual incomes of \$48,000 vs. \$37,000 for all other travelers), better educated, and likely to spend more money than other kinds of tourists. Out-of-town visitors to the Cézanne exhibit, held at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1996, each spent an average of \$402, in contrast to the \$168 typical of other overnight visitors

to the city. (McDowell 1997)

The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey surveyed out of town visitors to New York City, and found that one-half had come to the city primarily to visit its cultural institutions and that an additional 20 percent had extended their stay for cultural reasons. The Port Authority study found also that the number of these “arts-motivated” visitors increased between 1982 and 1992 by 2.5 million, and that arts visitors were staying longer and spending more than had arts visitors a decade earlier. This increase suggests that cultural tourism was gaining in importance in the New York region. (Port Authority 1993)

Cultural tourism is important in rural areas as well.

State and local officials supported the creation of a contemporary art museum, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, in North Adams, Massachusetts to lure tourists to a rural area that had once depended on manufacturing (the museum is housed in a defunct factory building).

In rural Washington state, a partnership of public agencies and local and state cultural organizations sought to improve rural cultural offerings to help diversify northern Washington’s economic base by encouraging tourism (Werr n.d.).

Even in areas already identified with other kinds of tourism, the development of cultural amenities is seen as a way of strengthening the tourism economy.

A depressed Pocono county in rural Pennsylvania published a flyer celebrating local arts resources. The resources — a small community gallery and a few gift shops — are not extraordinary, but it is striking to see that county officials are using a diversified marketing strategy that includes culture in a region better known for its outdoor resorts.

In Orlando, Florida, a hotel teamed up with 13 local arts institutions to package and publicize cultural amenities, in the belief that visitors would stay longer and return more frequently if the city offered more than just Disney. (McDowell, 1997)

In sum, art and culture constitute an industry. In some regions, this industry represents an important economic sector in its own right. In others, it is significant because of the other kinds of economic activities it induces. Retail and recreational businesses build on the audiences attracted by cultural producers. Service firms and professionals gravitate toward cultural centers. Business leaders and local officials have come to appreciate that investments in an area's cultural life are good business. And, locally-produced consumer goods are all made more valuable by the contributions of artists.

EDUCATION AND CULTURAL LITERACY

The value of arts and culture to society can perhaps best be appreciated by considering their impact on young people relative to both arts education and participation in cultural activities. After much debate, there is consensus among many educators, psychologists, and social scientists that youth benefit from arts education in more ways than learning about aesthetics. More youth who have studied art score higher on scholastic aptitude tests than those who have not. Youth participating in community-based arts programs are twice as likely to win an award for academic achievement, eight times more likely to win a community service award, and four times more likely to participate in a science or math fair. (Rich 2000)

The positive effects of arts participation hold among all economic groups, according to an eight-year longitudinal study of 25,000 middle school students. Students with high levels of arts involvement in both the highest and lowest socioeconomic quintile have significantly higher standardized test scores and lower dropout rates than those with low levels of arts involvement. Students involved in the arts also watch fewer hours of television and are more likely to perform community service.

(Catterall 1998)

In spite of the compelling evidence that arts education produces multiple benefits for youth, access to high quality arts education is uneven. Few elementary schools provide theater or dance classes. However, some experts think that, after years of being the first to go in times of financial crisis, the arts are increasingly appreciated as core subjects and potential contributors to academic improvement efforts. Large-scale 'arts-based,' 'arts-infusion,' or 'arts integration' pilot and magnet programs are showing promising results, as educators and parents seek alternatives to traditional teaching methods that are not working for a substantial proportion of children. (Mulcahy 2000)

SOCIAL BENEFITS

Local arts agencies and community service groups have become increasingly involved in programs that link the arts to other community improvement targets, such as crime, youth-at-risk, racism, and homelessness. Today, 61 percent of arts agencies have programs that use the arts explicitly to address social problems. Local arts agencies in all 50 of the nation's largest cities have some type of community program. The addition of such programs to the public arts agenda represents a significant change in emphasis. Whereas 82 percent of urban arts

agencies had youth programs in 1997, only 20 percent had such programs in 1986. Local decision makers are discovering that supporting an arts program is more productive and less costly than adding officers to the police force. (Mulcahy 2000)

The success of community-based groups in developing innovative arts activities for at-risk youth has stimulated and responded to new policies and sources of funding at both the federal and local levels. Private foundations have also become increasingly interested in supporting arts programs that serve broader social goals. Foundation support for community-based arts programs increased nearly 50 percent between 1992 and 1996. (Renz and Lawrence 1998) Private funders are particularly interested in programs that treat communities holistically, linking arts resources to other community assets. (Renz and Atlas 2000)

The San Francisco program, Midnight Shakespeare, was so successful in getting young people off the street and involving them in staging theatrical performances that other cities are now replicating it. The Department of Justice has assessed the impact of similar cultural programs serving youth with histories of truancy and delinquency that it funded in Portland, Oregon, San Antonio, and Atlanta. The Justice Department found that participants in these programs were all significantly less likely to become involved in criminal activity – in some cases

by factors of two or three – than members of the control group. (Americans for the Arts 1998)

Recent studies have indicated that one of the best ways to evaluate the role of cultural participation in enhancing a community is to examine what have been called the “informal arts.” In contrast to professional cultural organizations, the informal arts (sometimes called ‘unincorporated arts’ or ‘community arts’) encompass activities that offer people from all walks of life opportunities for creative expression. The informal arts may involve any combination of popular, contemporary, classical, or heritage-based art forms. They can be found in park district facilities that offer painting and folk dancing classes, local branch library poetry workshops and readings, storefront theater groups, and faith-based choral societies. The informal arts may be encountered on the street corner (an impromptu rap performance), on a public beach (an expanding drum circle), or in a private home (a week-end photographer, kitchen quilt maker, or woodcarver of folk objects). (Rich 2000)

The informal arts appear to have real value in helping to bridge social boundaries of age, gender, race, and neighborhood. A recent study by the Chicago Center for Arts Policy found that participants in informal arts projects cultivate social skills that promote tolerance and the ability to imagine social change. (Wali, Severson and Longoni 2000)

Shared participation in cultural activities can strengthen social bonds while simultaneously generating new economic opportunities. Several initiatives have built on traditional regional cultural practices to achieve multiple social and cultural goals.

Among some Native American groups, traditional basket weaving practices had been slowly dying out, shunned by those for whom “basketry was linked with poverty.” (Hoffman 1996, 1970) Efforts in the 1990s to revive this craft spurred cooperation between Maine’s four major Indian tribes, and together they created the Maine Indian Basket Makers Alliance. This group has reinforced interpersonal and intertribal bonds, and has developed cooperative marketing strategies to make traditional basket weaving economically profitable. The Alliance recognized and mobilized to fight the environmental problems that were threatening the brown ash trees from which they harvested their materials. Native American basket weaving cooperatives with similar social, economic and environmental agendas have been organized in North Carolina and California. (Hoffman 1996)

In Claiborne County, Mississippi, local residents used federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities to study the practices of traditional quilt makers. The Cultural Crossroads program brought traditional quilt

makers into local schools and libraries, where they could teach their craft to a cross-racial, cross-generational audience. This program has helped preserve a locally important craft, and bridge an entrenched racial divide. It has also helped quilt makers develop new markets for their products, bringing needed capital into the community. (Boykin 1996)

**POLICY
RECOMMENDATIONS:
USING THE ARTS TO BUILD COMMUNITY**

Strengthening and restoring America's communities will be a difficult task requiring the participation of all levels of government, as well as of the private sector and civic organizations. There is no single policy – public or private – that could be enacted to ameliorate wholesale the pains of distressed and abandoned communities or to reconnect the social ties fraying within communities across the nation.

It would be a mistake to overstate the capacity of art and culture to solve society's economic and social problems. Cultural initiatives by themselves cannot bridge social divisions or assure a path to economic growth and prosperity. However, mounting research and practical experience indicate that, without art and culture, the achievement of social harmony and economic prosperity in post-industrial America will be more difficult and more costly.

Increased support for cultural initiatives, as a part of community building, merits serious consideration. Federal, state and local government are essential parts of the mix, both as a significant sources of funding and

other assistance and as a prod to private entrepreneurs and investors in the direction of the public purposes discussed above. Clearly, there are success stories that can be built on and replicated. At the same time, there will be a need to improve on these successes as well as explore new models.

Building Community Identity. Public leaders at all levels (federal, state, and local) must strengthen the use of their bully pulpits to encourage community activities, including cultural activities, that build community identity and cohesion. State and federal cultural agencies must expand their efforts to show through policy-relevant research and case studies the impact that investments in culture have on community regeneration – with long-term payoffs in community pride, an increased tax base, and greater participation in civic life. And, governments at all levels need to provide financial incentives – such as establishment of cultural districts, tax breaks, and matching grants – that assist the replication of successful projects and encourage the achievement of the public purposes described above.

Community and Economic Development. Local and state government agencies can help build communities by fostering partnerships between community development organizations, social service organizations, arts and artists groups, and heritage/preservation initiatives. Many of these separate initiatives may not be realizable

unless they share goals and benefit from others' expertise. The federal government can catalyze such partnerships by creating an arts and community building program housed in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, and a similar program in the Department of Agriculture for rural areas. Such programs could provide grants and technical assistance to community-based development groups and arts groups seeking to form partnerships to renovate space for arts and cultural projects, and to integrate arts and cultural programming into community development activities. On state and local levels, policy makers could promote cultural districts and state trusts, special taxes, and other funding mechanisms that promote investment in the arts in a community. Cultural tourism, in particular, can be assisted through state level promotion, web sites, and local investment in amenities, signage, and marketing. At the federal level, the National Endowment for the Arts' Mayors' Institute on City Design should be strengthened and receive White House support; it should also be expanded to include a county commissioner component.

Public investments in the arts and culture have been shown to have clear economic benefits, by creating a more attractive local environment for new business investment and by attracting tourists. Public support, especially grants from above the local level, often provides a critical incentive for other funding from local public, private, and earned-revenue sources.

Public officials and private developers can also build on successful models for revitalizing cities and towns. Today, national, state and local programs identify and help preserve important buildings and historic sites. The National Trust for Historic Preservation provides technical assistance and low interest loans that help families and community groups renovate historically significant buildings. These efforts should continue to be supported through enhanced grant and loan programs that encourage private owners of all income levels to upgrade older buildings. At the same time, public policies (e.g., sweat equity investment credits and/or guaranteed lease terms at relatively fixed rents) are needed to protect tenants, individual artists, and community based cultural organizations from displacement as a result of the higher costs associated with improved areas.

Education and Cultural Literacy. Arts and cultural education in both the visual and performing arts should not be treated as a luxury, to be dispensed with when a local school district experiences fiscal problems. It should be part of the core curriculum. The U.S. Department of Education should ensure appropriate testing in the arts as in other core subjects. Some urge that local school districts, with help from state and federal education and cultural agencies, should expand “artists in residence” programs as a way to bring greater opportunities for cultural education to students, while providing employment opportunities to local artists.

Others urge school districts take seriously federal and state standards and guidelines involving arts education and ensure sequential K-12 curricula and teaching that results in every child having core competencies in the arts. Arts education should mesh with history and English, as well as with after-school and community-based programs, and should be designed to encourage interest in life-long participation in the arts and culture. All high school graduates should be required to have some degree of cultural literacy. And, institutions of higher education should require competencies in art and culture as a condition of admission.

Social Needs. Cultural programs have proved their worth as a part of youth and community development programming. The two national endowments, the National Park Service, Department of Transportation, Department of Justice and other federal agencies (such as AmeriCorps) should continue their support of such efforts, along with state and local agencies, by providing grants and loans, technical assistance, and work and internship opportunities.

Finally, culture alone will not bring economic prosperity to a depressed region. Nor can cultural institutions, however successful, singly revive distressed neighborhoods, overcome social dysfunction, revitalize downtowns, end racism, or raise test scores. To suggest that the arts represent a magic bullet that will solve society’s myriad

problems only serves to detract from their many positive contributions. Nonetheless, the arts are, uniquely, *part* of what will enable American communities to overcome a host of social and economic difficulties, and the arts are, uniquely, *present* whenever American communities are thriving.

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The Center for Arts and Culture is an independent think tank which seeks to broaden and deepen the national conversation on culture. Founded in 1994, the Center began its work by establishing the Cultural Policy Network, a confederation of scholars working on cultural policy research at 28 colleges and universities.

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