



# Cultural Districts

The Arts as a Strategy  
for Revitalizing  
Our Cities

AMERICANS<sup>FOR THE</sup>  
ARTS

## **ABOUT AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS**

Americans for the Arts is the national organization for groups and individuals dedicated to advancing the arts and culture in communities across the country. Founded by the American Council for the Arts, representing a broad network of arts supporters, patrons and business leaders, and the National Assembly of Local Arts Agencies, the country's largest alliance of community arts organizations, Americans for the Arts strives to make the arts more accessible to every adult and child in America. To this end, Americans for the Arts works with cultural organizations, arts and business leaders and patrons to provide leadership, advocacy, visibility, professional development and research and information that will advance support for the arts and culture in our nation's communities.

---

# Cultural Districts

The Arts as a Strategy  
for Revitalizing  
Our Cities

**WRITTEN BY HILARY ANNE FROST-KUMPF**

Director, Community Arts Management Program  
University of Illinois at Springfield

**WITH A FOREWORD BY PAUL HELMKE**

Mayor, Fort Wayne, Indiana and  
1997-1998 President, U.S. Conference of Mayors

*Cultural Districts* is a publication of Americans for the Arts.  
Copyright 1998. All rights reserved.

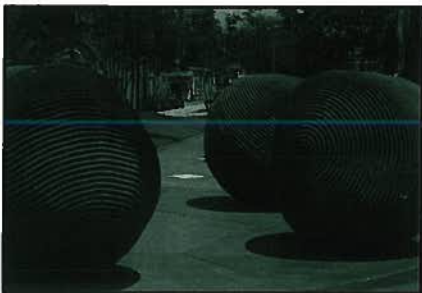
**TEMPLE OF MUSIC AND ART  
TUCSON ARTS DISTRICT**

**SITE OF CLEF CLUB,  
PHILADELPHIA AVENUE  
OF THE ARTS**

**PITTSBURGH CULTURAL  
DISTRICT**

**RIVER STONES  
NEW ORLEANS ARTS AND  
CULTURAL SECTOR**

## CONTENTS



- 5 FOREWORD by Paul Helmke
- 7 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
- 9 URBAN REVITALIZATION AND THE ARTS
- 10 CULTURAL DISTRICTS
- 14 GOALS OF CULTURAL DISTRICTS
- 15 CULTURAL DISTRICT TYPOLOGY
- 18 RELATIONSHIP OF CULTURAL DISTRICTS TO OTHER CITY AMENITIES
- 19 **PROFILE:** New Haven, Connecticut Audubon Arts District
- 20 CULTURAL DISTRICT ESTABLISHMENT: Siting, Facilities, Programming and Management
- 21 **PROFILE:** San Francisco Yerba Buena Center
- 22 **PROFILE:** Pittsburgh Cultural District
- 25 **PROFILE:** New Orleans Arts and Cultural Sector
- 28 CULTURAL DISTRICT FACILITIES AND PROGRAMMING
- 30 CULTURAL DISTRICT MANAGEMENT
- 31 **PROFILE:** Tucson Arts District
- 33 CREATION OF A CULTURAL DISTRICT
- 34 APPENDIX: CULTURAL DISTRICTS IN THE U.S.
- 35 BIBLIOGRAPHY
- 36 ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
- 36 ABOUT THE AUTHOR



## FOREWORD

**A**s a mayor of an American city, I have always believed that change and progress requires effective partnerships between government and local community organizations. The arts groups and artists that make up a community are important players in these coalitions. It is, therefore, a privilege to provide the preface to this book, which profiles a unique type of collaboration between the arts and the local community — the creation of cultural districts as a means by which to revitalize central cities.

In my 1997 inaugural address to the U.S. Conference of Mayors, I noted that one of the most important issues facing American cities is the need for reinvestment in our urban centers. If we want our cities to remain vital, we must not only maintain the greenfields at our cities' edges; we must also eliminate the "brownfields" in the urban core — areas of abandoned buildings and gaping holes that encourage businesses and residents to leave our cities. Nationwide, an estimated 400,000 to 600,000 such brownfields exist, with antiquated infrastructures, poor access to transportation routes, and environmental problems. The public avoids these areas, perceiving them to be at higher risk for crime. These factors are inhibiting the redevelopment of many areas of our central cities. If we want our urban areas to remain vital and healthy, we must reclaim these brown spaces and derelict properties.

Arts organizations have played a pivotal role in the reclamation of Fort Wayne's brownfields. Over the past 20 years, the development of arts facilities in Fort Wayne's urban center has been key to the city's revitalization efforts. The Performing Arts Center, the Fort Wayne Museum of Art, the Hall Community Arts Center and the Embassy Theater are all significant elements in the

effort to reinvigorate our central city with vitality and civic pride. These new and redeveloped facilities for the arts are more than just new spaces in which artists may produce their work and citizens may enjoy cultural activities: Arts development in Fort Wayne has spurred

economic activity, resulting in a significant number of new jobs, an enhanced tax base and a newfound confidence and pride in our city's downtown. Incorporating the arts into our revitalization efforts has essentially launched the greening of our downtown's brownfields.

America's urban challenges can be resolved if citizens and community organizations, together, shoulder the responsibilities of community growth and development. This book highlights the critical role the arts community can play in urban revitalization by describing how a number of communities have involved the arts to breathe new life into their central cities.

PAUL HELMKE

Mayor of Fort Wayne, Indiana  
President, U.S. Conference of Mayors, 1997 — 1998



HILARY ANNE FROST-KUMPF



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**M**ore than 90 cities in the United States have planned or implemented a cultural district—positioning the arts at the center of urban revitalization efforts. This handbook reveals how cultural districts are established, the processes and players in each city that have determined the shape and content of such areas, and how cultural districts reflect the unique strengths of their respective cities and support local artistic and redevelopment goals.

A cultural district is a well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use area of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of attraction. Cultural districts can be found in communities as small as Riverhead, New York (population 8,814) to New York City (7.3 million). Cultural districts boost urban revitalization in many ways:

- beautify and animate cities
- provide employment
- attract residents and tourists to the city
- complement adjacent businesses
- enhance property values
- expand the tax base
- attract well-educated employees
- contribute to a creative, innovative environment

While no two cultural districts are exactly alike—each reflects its city's unique environment, history of land use, urban growth and cultural development—they can be divided into one of five categories:

1. Cultural Compounds
2. Major Arts Institution Focus
3. Arts and Entertainment Focus
4. Downtown Focus
5. Cultural Production Focus

The impact of cultural districts is measurable: The arts attract residents and tourists who also support adjacent businesses such as restaurants, lodging, retail and parking. The presence of the arts enhances property values, the profitability of surrounding businesses and the tax base of the region. The arts attract a well-educated work force—a key incentive for new and relocating businesses. Finally, the arts contribute to the creativity and innovation of a community.

### THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL DISTRICTS IS MEASURABLE:

- The number of events in the Pittsburgh Cultural District increased from 250 in 1986 to nearly 600 in 1994, with audiences doubling to more than one million annually. In its first decade of operation, the district generated \$33 million in public investment and \$63 million in private and philanthropic funds, which in turn triggered \$115 million in commercial activity. Tax revenues in the district from real estate and performances increased from \$7.9 million in 1986 to \$19.1 million in 1994.
- Three years after establishing the Tucson Arts District, 26 of the 112 businesses in the arts district were new, 54% had increased their sales volume, and 53% made renovations, with an average cost of \$105,272 each. Within four years, the retail vacancy rate declined by 50% and city sales tax revenues in the arts district increased 11.7%, compared with a citywide increase of 7.4%.



## URBAN REVITALIZATION AND THE ARTS

During the past three decades, urban planners and developers in the United States have enlisted the arts as a central element in revitalizing declining urban centers. Cultural development, usually in partnership with other strategies, has proven to be one effective mechanism for the restoration of many downtown “brownfield” sites—areas with unused, abandoned and decaying buildings and spaces that diminish the vitality and economic development of our cities.

Since the 1960s, many American cities have rehabilitated older cultural facilities and constructed new ones. During the same period, arts activities taking place in central cities—plays, concerts, exhibitions, dance performances, festivals, public art, plaza concerts, street fairs and gallery-hops—have burgeoned.

The increase in arts facilities and related activities corresponds to the rapid growth of cultural organizations in the United States since the 1960s. Art galleries, museums, theater companies, dance companies and orchestras in the United States grew in number, size and support from the 1960s through the 1980s.

Cultural facilities—concert halls, theaters, libraries, museums and galleries—historically have been urban phenomena. Although some cultural facilities are being developed in suburban areas, most arts facilities and activities in the United States are still located in the urban core, while other traditionally urban functions, such as housing and retail, have moved to the edges of cities.

Cultural facilities, public art, and arts activities can boost urban revitalization in many ways. The arts beautify, enliven and animate an area. The arts and their attendant support services, such as administration and marketing, provide employment. Cultural activities attract residents and tourists, who also support adjacent businesses

such as restaurants, lodging, retail and parking in the city’s center. The presence of the arts enhances property values, the profitability of surrounding businesses and the tax base of the region. The arts attract a well-educated work force—a key incentive for new and relocating businesses. Finally, the arts contribute to the creativity and innovation of a community.

### THE ROLE OF THE ARTS IN URBAN REDEVELOPMENT

- BEAUTIFY AND ANIMATE CITIES
- PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT
- ATTRACT RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS TO THE CITY
- COMPLEMENT ADJACENT BUSINESSES
- ENHANCE PROPERTY VALUES
- EXPAND THE TAX BASE
- ATTRACT WELL-EDUCATED EMPLOYEES
- CONTRIBUTE TO A CREATIVE, INNOVATIVE ENVIRONMENT

In cities as diverse as Seattle, Washington and Fort Wayne, Indiana, the arts have played a central role in urban revitalization efforts that also incorporate high technology centers, sports complexes, education facilities, government offices, housing, historic districts, tourist sites and specialized retail. The overall strategy emphasizes the unique resources of each city.

Innovative public-private partnerships in Seattle have positioned the arts as a central player in the city’s economic redevelopment strategy, investing more than \$240 million public and private dollars over the past decade in cultural facilities that are now among the city’s greatest assets.

## CULTURAL DISTRICTS

Nearly all U.S. cities have areas with cultural facilities and activities. This handbook considers only areas that have been identified as a cultural district, arts district, arts and entertainment district, museum district, theater district or similar designation by a government agency, private development group, promotional bureau or planning authority. The formality of the classification may range from consistently applied nomenclature in planning and promotional documents to a legal designation in a zoning ordinance. This handbook should be useful to communities considering the establishment of a cultural district, whether legally designated or planned and promoted as such.

A cultural district is a well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use area of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of attraction. Typically, the area is geographically defined (usu-

### CULTURAL DISTRICTS: DESIGNATIONS

- ARTS DISTRICT
- ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT
- ARTS AND SCIENCE DISTRICT
- ARTISTS' QUARTER
- CULTURAL DISTRICT
- MUSEUM DISTRICT
- THEATER DISTRICT

ally less than 100 blocks) and incorporates other land uses, but the defining characteristic is the concentration of cultural facilities and related activities.

A wide range of land uses, landscapes and geographic locations within downtowns or at their fringes can reasonably be labeled "cultural districts."<sup>1</sup> The 24 cultural districts examined for this handbook (Table 1, p. 12) are located in cities both large and small. Fourteen of the more developed and better-

known districts are located in the 50 largest cities in the United States; others are more recently developed and located in smaller cities such as Portland, Maine, with a population of 65,000, which proposed its arts district in 1991; Rock Island, Illinois, with a population of 40,300, which developed its Arts and Entertainment District in 1991; and Riverhead, New York, with a population of 8,814, which is in the process of developing an arts district. Communities within larger cities



Audubon Arts District, New Haven, Connecticut

that are also creating cultural districts include the North Hollywood area of Los Angeles, which recently developed the NOHO Arts District.

Cultural districts are specialized landscapes that typically feature "high" culture or "fine arts," although the precise meaning of "culture" varies among districts. Generally, cultural districts support the fine arts (concert halls, theaters, galleries and art museums), as well as libraries, historical museums and educational institutions. Some districts include restaurants, nightclubs and other forms of popular entertainment.

Cultural districts are mixed-use developments that incorporate such other facilities as office complexes, retail spaces and, occasionally, residential areas. Many cultural districts have been created in or near central business districts and are often

#### CULTURAL DISTRICTS: FACILITIES

- PERFORMANCE SPACES
- MUSEUMS
- GALLERIES
- ARTIST STUDIOS
- ARTS-RELATED RETAIL SHOPS
- MUSIC OR MEDIA PRODUCTION STUDIOS
- DANCE STUDIOS
- HIGH SCHOOLS OR COLLEGES FOR THE ARTS
- LIBRARIES
- ARBORETUMS AND GARDENS

contiguous with newly developed corporate office complexes. They are sometimes developed near, or contain elements of, "consumption compounds" — large, urban precincts built for festive activities and consumption of leisure-time goods and services by city residents and tourists. Consumption compounds may include tourism and convention centers, gentrified housing for upscale residents, restored historic buildings and heritage districts, reclaimed industrial sites, and waterfronts transformed into festival retail markets.

<sup>1</sup>While they are important to culture-related development, this handbook does not address cultural/amenity-taxing districts — generally, county or multicounty regions from which a percentage of sales tax is earmarked to support cultural institutions and activities. Montgomery County, Ohio; Allegheny County, Pennsylvania; and the Denver, Colorado region are examples of such districts.

A CULTURAL  
DISTRICT  
IS A WELL-  
RECOGNIZED,  
LABELED,  
MIXED-USE  
AREA OF  
A CITY IN  
WHICH A  
HIGH CON-  
CENTRATION  
OF CULTURAL  
FACILITIES  
SERVES  
AS THE  
ANCHOR OF  
ATTRACTION.



HAROLD SHAPIRO

TABLE 1

## 24 DESIGNATED CULTURAL DISTRICTS IN THE U.S.

| CITY                | POPULATION<br>(1996 est.) | NAME OF DISTRICT                                           | APPROX.<br>SIZE <sup>1</sup> |
|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Cleveland, OH       | 485,600                   | Playhouse Square                                           | 60 acres                     |
| Dallas, TX          | 1,033,600                 | Dallas Arts District                                       | 61.7 acres                   |
| Detroit, MI         | 979,900                   | Heidelberg Project                                         | n.a.                         |
| Fort Lauderdale, FL | 166,900                   | Arts and Science District                                  | 11.5 acres                   |
| Fort Worth, TX      | 462,000                   | Cultural District                                          | 950 acres                    |
| Hartford, CT        | 118,400                   | Downtown Arts and Entertainment District                   | 20 blocks                    |
| Houston, TX         | 1,710,600                 | Museum District                                            | n.a.                         |
| Houston, TX         | 1,710,600                 | Theater District                                           | 17 blocks                    |
| Miami Beach, FL     | 85,100                    | Art Deco District                                          | n.a.                         |
| New Haven, CT       | 116,300                   | Audubon Arts District                                      | 1 block                      |
| New Orleans, LA     | 481,000                   | Arts and Cultural Sector                                   | n.a.                         |
| New York City, NY   | 7,313,800                 | 42nd Street Development                                    | 6 blocks                     |
| North Hollywood, CA | (part of LA)              | NOHO Arts District                                         | n.a.                         |
| Philadelphia, PA    | 1,503,000                 | Avenue of the Arts                                         | 16 blocks                    |
| Pittsburgh, PA      | 351,500                   | Pittsburgh Cultural District                               | 14 blocks                    |
| Portland, ME        | 65,000                    | Portland Arts District                                     | n.a.                         |
| Providence, RI      | 160,000                   | Downcity Arts and Entertainment                            | 1 square mile                |
| Riverhead, NY       | 8,814                     | East End Arts District                                     | n.a.                         |
| Rock Island, IL     | 40,300                    | Arts and Entertainment District                            | n.a.                         |
| San Jose, CA        | 841,300                   | SOFA (South of First Avenue) Arts & Entertainment District | n.a.                         |
| San Francisco, CA   | 749,100                   | Yerba Buena Gardens                                        | 87 acres                     |
| St. Louis, MO       | 355,600                   | The Grand Center                                           | 8 blocks                     |
| St. Paul, MN        | 257,000                   | Lowerton Urban Village                                     | 180 acres                    |
| Tucson, AZ          | 451,500                   | Tucson Arts District                                       | 70 blocks                    |

n.a. = information not available

<sup>1</sup> Many cultural districts do not have official boundaries; their sizes can only be approximated.

<sup>2</sup> See Section on Cultural District Typology, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Cultural districts may be in the planning stage for two to 20 years before they are officially established.

<sup>4</sup> See Section on Cultural District Establishment, p. 20.

| TYPE OF DISTRICT <sup>2</sup> | YEAR<br>ESTAB. <sup>3</sup> | PRIMARY<br>INSTIGATOR(S) <sup>4</sup> |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| major arts                    | 1970                        | arts organizations                    |
| major arts                    | 1984                        | arts organizations/gov't.             |
| cultural production           | 1986                        | arts organizations                    |
| major arts                    | 1990                        | development authority                 |
| cultural compound             | 1930s                       | arts organizations                    |
| downtown focus                | 1994                        | local arts agency                     |
| major arts/specific genre     | 1989                        | arts organizations                    |
| major arts/specific genre     | 1987                        | arts organizations                    |
| arts and entertainment        | 1979                        | downtown businesses                   |
| cultural production           | 1986                        | local arts agency                     |
| major arts                    | 1989                        | arts organizations                    |
| major arts/specific genre     | 1982                        | development authority                 |
| arts and entertainment        | 1992                        | downtown businesses                   |
| major arts                    | 1992                        | arts organizations/gov't.             |
| major arts                    | 1982                        | development authority                 |
| major arts                    | 1996                        | arts organizations/gov't.             |
| arts and entertainment        | 1994                        | arts organizations/gov't.             |
| downtown focus                | 1993                        | local arts organizations              |
| arts and entertainment        | 1991                        | downtown businesses                   |
| arts and entertainment        | 1990                        | downtown businesses                   |
| major arts                    | 1980                        | development authority                 |
| major arts                    | 1987                        | arts organizations                    |
| cultural production           | 1981                        | development authority                 |
| downtown focus                | 1984                        | local arts agency                     |

This handbook examines a particular strategy of cultural revitalization—the development of cultural districts. More than 90 cities in the United States have planned or implemented such districts, positioning the arts at the center of their urban revitalization efforts. This book examines 24 of these districts and reveals how cultural districts are established, the processes and players in each city that have determined the shape and content of such areas, and how cultural districts reflect the unique strengths of their respective cities and support local artistic and redevelopment goals.

## GOALS OF CULTURAL DISTRICTS

IN ITS FIRST  
DECADE OF  
OPERATION,  
THE  
PITTSBURGH  
CULTURAL  
DISTRICT  
GENERATED  
\$33 MILLION  
IN PUBLIC  
INVESTMENT,  
\$63 MILLION  
IN PRIVATE  
AND PHILAN-  
THROPIC  
FUNDS,  
\$115 MILLION  
IN COM-  
MERCIAL  
ACTIVITY,  
AND  
\$19.1 MILLION  
IN TAX  
REVENUES

The primary motivation behind the establishment of a cultural district is urban revitalization. Cultural districts are expected to attract new users and visitors and to spur investment in the area's properties. The goals of cultural districts include increased business activity; enhanced tax revenues; and the creation of safe and clean public areas, comfortable housing and areas for leisure-time activities. In addition, cultural districts offer evening-time activities that extend the hours during which the public may use the area.

Another goal of cultural districts is to provide facilities for nonprofit and commercial cultural activities and to accommodate larger audiences for performances and exhibits. New and enhanced facilities increase participation in arts production and arts education activities, generate opportunities for employment of artists and provide appropriate venues in which they may conduct their activities.

Cultural districts are achieving these goals. The number of events in the Pittsburgh Cultural District increased from 250 in 1986 to nearly 600 in 1994, with audiences doubling to more than one million annually. According to the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, the cultural district's first decade generated \$33 million in public investment and \$63 million in private and philanthropic funds, which

in turn triggered almost \$115 million in commercial activity. Tax revenues in the district from real estate and performances increased from \$7.9 million in 1986 to \$19.1 million in 1994.

Three years after establishing the Tucson Arts District, 26 of the 112 businesses in the Arts District were new, and 54 percent had increased their sales volume. Within four years, the area's retail vacancy rate had declined by 50 percent and city

sales tax revenues from the district had increased 11.7 percent, compared with a citywide increase of 7.4 percent.

Some cultural districts have been developed to address problems associated with arts complexes that were constructed in major American cities during the 1950s and 1960s. Physically and programmatically isolated from their surrounding neighborhoods, these

### GOALS OF CULTURAL DISTRICTS

- REVITALIZE A PARTICULAR AREA OF THE CITY
- OFFER EVENING ACTIVITIES, EXTENDING HOURS DURING WHICH THE AREA IS IN USE
- MAKE AN AREA SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE
- PROVIDE FACILITIES FOR ARTS ACTIVITIES AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS
- PROVIDE ARTS ACTIVITIES FOR RESIDENTS AND TOURISTS
- PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT AND HOUSING FOR ARTISTS
- CONNECT THE ARTS MORE INTIMATELY WITH COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

facilities often feature architectural elements—walls, parking lots and entranceways—regarded by many residents of adjacent, often economically depressed, neighborhoods as barriers that exclude their participation. Such cultural facilities "might as well be boxed and ribboned for all their connection to the urban life around them" (Kay, p. 29). Cultural districts can address the needs of the surrounding community by emphasizing activities that incorporate the interests of local residents, schools, and neighborhood organizations.

## CULTURAL DISTRICT TYPOLOGY

Cultural districts reflect their cities' unique environment, including history of land use, urban growth and cultural development. All cultural districts, then, are unique, with no standard model. U.S. cities incorporate a variety of cultural districts that may be categorized by their most prominent attractions.

Of the five types of cultural districts, only the Cultural Compound existed prior to the 1960s as a designated urban space. The remaining four types of districts, established in the post-1960 era of central city redevelopment in the United States, are characterized by considerably more new development and are more mixed-use than the older Cultural Compounds. Where the newer districts have incorporated elements of the earlier Cultural Compounds — such as old concert halls, movie theaters or Carnegie libraries — they have usually considerably remodeled or converted the old facilities for new uses. Other land uses commonly found in the more modern districts include office complexes, retail space, restaurants, lodging and various kinds of housing.

The modern-era cultural districts tend to emphasize either major fine arts or entertainment, and primary cultural activities in the district may emphasize either arts presentation or arts production and education.

### TYPES OF CULTURAL DISTRICTS

- CULTURAL COMPOUNDS
- MAJOR ARTS INSTITUTION FOCUS
- ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT FOCUS
- DOWNTOWN FOCUS
- CULTURAL PRODUCTION FOCUS

contemporary cultural districts in that their noncultural land uses tend to be limited to parks,

### CULTURAL COMPOUNDS

The oldest cultural districts in the United States are Cultural Compounds, established in many American cities in the late 19th century through the 1930s. Cultural Compounds may comprise major museums, large performing halls, theaters and auditoriums, as well as schools, colleges, libraries, planetariums and zoos.

Cultural Compounds are distinctive from more

### CULTURAL DISTRICTS REFLECT THEIR CITIES' UNIQUE ENVIRONMENT, INCLUDING HISTORY OF LAND USE, URBAN GROWTH AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT.

arboretums, medical centers and housing; very few include commercial uses such as office

complexes and retail space.

Cultural Compounds were built in areas somewhat removed from the city's central business district and typically have the appearance of a university campus, with large, open green spaces between buildings. Many of the cities have grown considerably beyond the boundaries that existed when the Cultural Compound was established, giving the impression,

### CULTURAL COMPOUNDS IN THE U.S.

- UNIVERSITY CIRCLE, CLEVELAND
- FAIR PARK, DALLAS
- CULTURAL DISTRICT, FORT WORTH
- FOREST PARK, ST. LOUIS



from a contemporary perspective, that they are located in the core of the city.

Cultural Compounds remain important to the economic and cultural growth of many cities, which continue to remodel, expand and enhance their facilities.

### MAJOR ARTS INSTITUTION FOCUS

This type of cultural district is anchored by major arts institutions such as large concert halls, playhouses, libraries and museums and may also include smaller arts organizations and entertainment facilities, such as nightclubs and cinemas. The Major Arts Institution cultural district is typically located close to the central business district and often near convention and other tourism sites. Some cultural districts with a Major Arts Institution focus specialize in a particular cultural genre, such as museums or theaters.

Major Arts Institution Districts in the U.S. include:

- Cleveland: Playhouse Square
- Dallas Arts District
- Fort Lauderdale Arts and Science District
- Houston Museum District
- Houston Theater District
- New Orleans Arts and Cultural Sector
- New York City: Times Square
- Philadelphia Avenue of the Arts
- Pittsburgh Cultural District
- San Francisco: Yerba Buena Center
- St. Louis Grand Center

### ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT FOCUS

Arts and Entertainment districts focus on popular attractions for younger audiences and tend to have a more bohemian feel than the Major Arts Institu-



**Fulton  
Theatre**

**Pittsburgh  
Cultural  
District**

tion districts. Small theaters, private art galleries, nightclubs and cinemas are the primary anchors of attraction, but some major arts facilities may also be present in these districts. Like the Major Arts Institution districts, Arts and Entertainment districts tend to be located near the central business district and major tourist sites.

Arts and entertainment focus districts in the U.S. include:

- Miami Beach Art Deco District
- North Hollywood: NOHO Arts District
- Providence (Rhode Island) Downcity Arts & Entertainment District
- Rock Island (Illinois) Arts & Entertainment District
- San Jose: South of First Avenue (SOFA) Arts & Entertainment District

## DOWNTOWN FOCUS

A cultural district that encompasses most of the downtown area, including the central business district, uses most or all of a city's cultural attractions to draw visitors. "Culture" in this type of district is broadly defined to include major arts institutions, popular attractions, restaurants, nightclubs, movie theaters, parks and tourist sites. This model tends to be established in smaller cities, where the downtown can be more easily packaged as a destination. (At least one larger city—Tucson, population 451,500—is using this model successfully as well.)

Downtown focus districts in the U.S. include:

- Hartford (Connecticut) Downtown Arts & Entertainment District
- Riverhead, New York: East End Arts District
- Tucson Arts District

## CULTURAL PRODUCTION FOCUS

The focus is less on the presentation of the arts and more on arts production or arts education in the Cultural Production Focus district. Production spaces such as artist, dance and music studios, as well as media production centers, are the primary cultural facilities in these districts, which may also include arts centers with classroom space for the visual or performing arts, specialized spaces such as darkrooms and ceramics studios, arts-oriented high schools or colleges and presentation spaces such as private galleries and small theaters.

Cultural Production districts generally focus more on inner-city neighborhood development than on attracting visitors. They typically include a significantly higher percentage of residential space—particularly housing for artists—than other cultural districts and are less likely to be established near a city's central business district or major tourist attractions.

Cultural production focus districts in the U.S. include:

- Detroit: Heidelberg Project
- New Haven: Audubon Arts District
- St. Paul: Lowerton Urban Village

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF CULTURAL DISTRICTS TO OTHER CITY AMENITIES

**M**ost cultural districts are built to take advantage of other city attractions such as historic features, convention spaces and parks and other natural amenities.

### HISTORIC FEATURES

Many cultural districts are built near historic sites that are key to the community's heritage and identity. Philadelphia's Avenue of the Arts is anchored at one end by its historic city hall. The Pittsburgh Cultural District is within walking distance of Point State Park, the site of historic Fort Duquesne—the city's earliest European settlement.

Some of the older Cultural Compound districts are themselves considered historic. Many of the cultural facilities in St. Louis's Forest Park are remnants of the 1904 World's Fair, and the structure that houses the St. Louis Art Museum was originally the fair's Fine Arts Palace.

Nearly all types of cultural districts incorporate some element of historic preservation, and actions to nominate buildings or districts for historic recognition at the state or national level are common in their development. In some, the entire land area may be designated a historic district, while in others, one or two structures may be recognized

### OTHER CITY AMENITIES

Cultural districts are designed to take advantage of other city attractions such as:

- HISTORIC FEATURES
- CONVENTION SPACES
- NATURAL AMENITIES

as historically significant. The desire to preserve the 19th- and early 20th-century buildings of an urban warehouse district sparked the development of the New Orleans Arts and Cultural Sector, and in New Haven, Connecticut, the Audubon Street Arts District was developed from the remains of a 19th-century industrial neighborhood that featured

an old foundry structure and a former synagogue.

Rehabilitation of historic spaces for housing is another key feature of some cultural districts.

Philadelphia's Avenue of the Arts includes the adaptive reuse of a number of old warehouses to upscale housing; other old structures in the district

### CULTURAL DISTRICTS & CONVENTION CENTERS

#### DALLAS CONVENTION CENTER

Linked to the Dallas Arts District by a light rail system

#### DAVID L. LAWRENCE CONVENTION CENTER

Directly adjacent to the Pittsburgh Cultural District

#### MOSCONE CONVENTION CENTER

Located in San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center

#### WILL ROGERS MEMORIAL CENTER

Major exposition center located in the Fort Worth Cultural District

#### WITHIN CLOSE WALKING DISTANCE OF THEIR CITIES' CONVENTION CENTERS:

New Orleans Arts & Cultural Sector

Philadelphia Avenue of the Arts

SOFA Arts and Entertainment District, San Jose

have been targeted for conversion to moderate-income residences. Plans for the New Orleans Arts and Cultural Sector include incentives to support the conversion of many of the area's old warehouses into residential space.

## CONVENTION SPACES

Many cultural districts — particularly those that fall into the Major Arts Institution and Arts and Entertainment categories — are built near convention and exposition centers. The goal is to attract conventioners to the district's offerings. Convention center planners and representatives of cultural district organizations may collaborate on events and tourism promotion to effectively market both entities.

## NATURAL AMENITIES

Some cultural districts are located near natural amenities such as parks or waterfronts that are, or are planned to be, a key attraction to the area. Fort Lauderdale's Arts and Science District abuts the New River and includes access to a newly developed Riverwalk. The Pittsburgh Cultural District, flanked on one side by the Allegheny River, includes plans to improve pedestrian access to the river and to connect the district to an esplanade along the water's edge. And the New Orleans Arts and Cultural Sector is set back from, but provides direct access to, the nearby Riverwalk Marketplace on the Mississippi River.

## PROFILE

### AUDUBON ARTS DISTRICT • NEW HAVEN

#### MANAGEMENT

Arts Council of New Haven  
70 Audubon Street  
New Haven, CT 06511  
(203) 772-2788

#### BACKGROUND

In the late 19th century, Audubon Street, located near central New Haven, was an active industrial area with foundries and machine shops located amid housing, retail establishments and places of worship. By the 1960s, the neighborhood had fallen into neglect and the foundries and a local synagogue had been abandoned.

In 1964, then-Mayor Richard C. Lee introduced the concept of the arts playing a central role in the area's revitalization. With the help of Charles Brewer of the Yale School of Architecture, an arts district was planned as a part of New Haven's larger State Street Renewal Project, and the Arts Council of Greater New Haven was created to plan and develop the Audubon Street project.

More than 25 years of effort have resulted in a vital urban area featuring a variety of cultural facilities in mixed use with retail establishments, offices and residences.

#### CULTURAL FACILITIES

Artspace  
Community Foundation of Greater New Haven  
Creative Arts Workshop  
Educational Center for the Arts  
Little Theatre on Lincoln Street  
Neighborhood Music School  
New Haven Symphony Orchestra

#### OTHER FACILITIES

Audubon Court Condominiums  
McQueeney Apartments  
Office Space  
Retail Space

#### DISTINCTIONS

Robert Leery, Editor Emeritus of the New Haven Register, wrote in the 1960s: "As this 300-year-old city's physical center mouldered [sic] with age, simultaneously, our family-built and civically-linked economic and political foundation — our factories, based on Yankee ingenuity, owner-entrepreneurs and neighborhood labor — gave way to diversification from outside. In this many-sided crisis it has seemed that New Haven's strength, its stability, and its future have rested on the arts agenda which kept it pleasant, challenging and inspiring" (Arts Council of Greater New Haven, p. 7).

## CULTURAL DISTRICT ESTABLISHMENT: SITING, FACILITIES, PROGRAMMING

Structural considerations within or near the district, community leadership and social forces all influence the development of a cultural district and the type of district that results.

### Structural Factors

- *Perceived Need:* Most American cities have experienced large-scale disinvestment and decay — brownfield areas — in some part of their

For Hartford, Connecticut, the creation of a cultural district was viewed as a way to recover visitors and investment in a central city that was losing to its suburbs. All of the city's cultural and entertainment facilities are now part of the 20-block Hartford Cultural District, located near the central business district. The district packages and promotes its facilities' events to encourage Hartford residents and tourists to return to the central



urban structure, usually in industrial and central areas. The perceived need for revitalization of an area is a key factor affecting the establishment of cultural districts. All of the cultural districts studied here that were established during the modern era of urban redevelopment (post 1960s) were designed to reclaim a once-vital portion of the city believed to be in decline. The target areas were characterized by vacated businesses, abandoned or blighted buildings, declining property values, falling income, lowered tax revenues and/or increasing crime and vandalism.

city, to spend time and money and to have fun downtown.

- *Existing Investment:* Another structural consideration for urban redevelopment is the degree of investment in properties adjacent to the target site. Extensive redevelopment in neighboring areas may indicate that property owners and developers have an interest in protecting their investment by ensuring that adjacent areas are also revitalized. In Pittsburgh, for example, a declining commercial and warehouse district adjacent to the central business district had a few surviving commercial

lofts and warehouses, an increasing number of pawn and pornography establishments and many abandoned buildings. Concerned about the problems in this neighboring area, key stakeholders in the central business district — who had recently directed a renaissance effort that involved the construction of new skyscrapers and office complexes — established the Pittsburgh Cultural District to revitalize the bordering

area, thereby insuring the recent and significant investment in the city's central business district.

- *Preexisting Cultural Facilities:* The number of preexisting cultural facilities in the target area is another key factor affecting site selection and development of cultural districts. In most of the 24 cultural districts considered in this study, at least two or three important cultural facilities predated the development or designation of the district. The new development was

planned to enhance the preexisting facilities, with the considerable involvement of the leadership of those facilities in the planning, development and maintenance of the districts. For example, the leadership of the Houston area's 11 major museums, most of which are at least 50 years old, recently moved to consolidate and reestablish a Museum District. In Maine, the Portland Arts District was formed around eight cultural facilities that already served as important attractions to the region.

**Morton H.  
Meyerson  
Symphony  
Center**  
  
**Dallas**

HILARY ANNE FROST-KUMPF

## PROFILE

### YERBA BUENA CENTER-SAN FRANCISCO

**MANAGEMENT** Developed by:  
San Francisco Redevelopment Agency  
770 Golden Gate Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415) 749-2506

**BACKGROUND** Following a significant revitalization effort of downtown San Francisco's Financial District north of Market Street in the 1960s, the region south of Market Street remained an area of considerable concern — particularly an 87-acre area near the harbor comprising old commercial buildings, warehouses and tenements. Many of the structures had been abandoned or were woefully underutilized and outdated. A number of retired stevedores and other low-income residents still occupied the area, in substandard housing. The area was regarded as a place of crime, drunkenness and prostitution.

Over the years, a number of proposals had been made for renewal of the area that included construction of office towers, sports complexes and a convention center. The proposals highlighted two controversial issues: the displacement of low-income housing and the construction of more skyscrapers, which were already dramatically changing the San Francisco skyline.

In the 1970s, then-Mayor George Moscone turned to the local arts community for its involvement in the redevelopment effort. Considerable assessment of cultural needs and many years of planning resulted in the Yerba Buena Center, which opened in 1992.

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>CULTURAL FACILITIES</b> | Ansel Adams Center<br>California Historical Society<br>Cartoon Art Museum<br>Center for the Arts<br>(including a 755-seat theater and galleries)<br>Crown Point Press | San Francisco Museum of Modern Art<br><i>Under Development:</i><br>Mexican Museum,<br>Jewish Museum, a<br>Children's Center and<br>an entertainment/retail complex |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                         |                                                                   |                                                                               |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>OTHER FACILITIES</b> | ANA Hotel<br>Moscone Convention Center<br>2,300 Residential Units | San Francisco Marriott Hotel<br>Sheraton Palace Hotel<br>St. Patrick's Church |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**DISTINCTIONS** The Esplanade, a five-acre park atop the Moscone Convention Center, featuring outdoor performance area with a seating capacity of 3,000, outdoor cafes and public artworks that include a memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr.

## PROFILE

### PITTSBURGH CULTURAL DISTRICT

**MANAGEMENT** Pittsburgh Cultural Trust  
125 Seventh Street, Suite 500  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222  
(412) 471-6070

**BACKGROUND** The Pittsburgh Cultural District, located north of the city's central business district, links the interests and activities of historic preservation groups, arts organizations and downtown developers.

The site chosen for the Pittsburgh Cultural District was a decaying commercial and warehouse district contiguous with the GateWay Plaza of office complexes created during Pittsburgh's Renaissance of the 1960s and 1970s and next to the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. The area had a few surviving businesses and an increasing number of pawn and pornography establishments. Many of the theaters that had defined the area as an entertainment district in the 1920s and 1930s still remained, but in a state of abandonment and neglect. The developers of the GateWay Plaza, the Convention Center and other downtown investors considered it to be in their best interest to ensure that the area was put to more productive use.

A 1994 progress report defines the district as "...the development of new, first-class performance facilities as well as renovation and expansion of older facilities make it possible for arts groups to expand their seasons, for new patrons to visit Downtown and for ancillary businesses to grow around arts facilities. This in turn expands the tax base and stimulates further economic development. Arts and entertainment activities, then, are the catalysts for Downtown animation and new business development, at the same time the quality of life for the community is greatly enhanced" (Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, p. 2).

The rehabilitation of the Benedum Theatre in the Pittsburgh Cultural District resulted from a complex agreement to preserve the historic nature of the district, to create a new private office tower and to provide income for the development of arts spaces. By selling the air rights over the Benedum Theatre to a neighboring site, the developers of the district were able to preserve the venerable theater and secure a federal Urban Development Action Grant, which supported the development of a new private office complex. The CNG Tower, in turn, provides land rent for the private, nonprofit Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, which manages the district's arts spaces.

**CULTURAL FACILITIES** Benedum Center for the Performing Arts  
Byham Theater  
Heinz Hall  
Wood Street Galleries

**OTHER FACILITIES** CNG Tower  
David L. Lawrence Convention Center  
Fifth Avenue Place  
Joseph Horne Company Department Store  
Vista International Hotel

By contrast, the Dallas Arts District was formed in an area with no preexisting cultural facilities. Most of the buildings in the target area had been razed as a result of previous urban renewal projects. Several of the few remaining structures, including a school and a church, have since been converted for use by arts organizations. Most of the arts facilities in the Dallas Arts District are newly constructed, including the Dallas Museum of Art, the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center and the Arts District Theater. Similarly, San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center consists primarily of newly constructed cultural facilities such as the Center for the Arts and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

- *Tourist Sites:* Cultural districts benefit from the crossover traffic of convention centers, unique historic or heritage sites and parks or other natural areas that are located close by.

- *Preexisting Land Uses:* The other types of land uses in the area, such as current and potential housing, retail and office space are important to the siting and eventual constitution of a cultural district.

- *Property Value:* If costs associated with property acquisition, construction, taxes, parking and other accessibility issues, regulation and zoning are not competitive with other parts of the city, attracting new investment could prove difficult, unless the district's amenities can be sufficiently enhanced to over-

come these costs. The cultural districts of both Dallas and Pittsburgh, for example, have had considerable difficulty attracting office development because of competition from suburban office complexes.

- *Zoning Restrictions/Incentives:* To encourage the type of growth desired, cultural districts may require modification of zoning ordinances and building codes to, for example, permit housing or develop living or work space for artists.

Zoning issues can lead to creative financing arrangements. Density trade-off zoning in Pittsburgh provided the funding for the development of the Benedum Theater in the Pittsburgh Cultural District. Zoning within the district would have prohibited the construction of a skyscraper within the area (a density factor) unless a neighboring building could be persuaded to sell off its air rights. The district's old Benedum Theater sold its excess air rights to the developer of an office complex, which then constructed the skyscraper it needed to be competitive. The developers of the Benedum used the air rights revenue to renovate the theater.

State legislation permitting development-related tax incentives provides tax breaks to building owners in Providence, Rhode Island's

Downcity Arts and Entertainment District who convert their buildings for use as artists' housing. The legislation also provides exemptions on sales

and income taxes to artists and performers who live within the square-mile zone.

## FACTORS AFFECTING SITING AND DEVELOPMENT

### STRUCTURAL

- perceived need for revitalization
- extent of investment near target site
- number of preexisting cultural facilities
- presence of tourist sites
- extent of current or potential investment in housing, retail and office space
- competitiveness of property values compared with other parts of city
- zoning and other development restrictions

### COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

- arts organizations, artists and local arts agencies
- government agencies
- development authorities
- downtown business groups
- property owners, residents and historic preservation groups
- "competing" cultural facilities

### SOCIAL FORCES

- general economic status
- city demographics
- political forces

### Leadership Factors

Equally important to cultural district siting and development is the organization and political clout of supporting and opposing stakeholders.

Generally, cultural districts are created through partnerships of stakeholders representing four major groups: arts organizations, artists and local art agencies; government agencies; development authorities; and downtown business groups. Representatives from other groups such as developers, banks, schools districts, universities, local foundations, chambers of commerce and other nonprofits may also become involved.

- *Arts Organizations, Artists and Local Arts Agencies:* A demonstrated need for expanded or enhanced arts spaces often triggers the development of a cultural district. The growth in the

**ZONING  
ISSUES CAN  
LEAD TO  
CREATIVE  
FINANCING  
ARRANGEMENTS.**

number of arts organizations and professional artists in the United States over the past 30 years has led to increased demand for performance,

exhibition and production spaces, including new theaters, concert halls, galleries, studios, artists' living and work spaces and arts schools. A cultural district may form where the demand by arts organizations for cultural spaces coincides with an interest in revitalization and where old theaters, schools, other cultural facilities, former department stores, warehouses, factories and other kinds of spaces are available at below-market prices in the central city.

The creation of Playhouse Square in downtown Cleveland provides a good example of arts organizations as the primary instigator behind the development of a cultural district. Several theater groups envisioned the use of the old Ohio, Palace and State Theaters for their productions and organized to save the structures from planned demolition, eventually forming the Playhouse Square Foundation to manage and develop the resulting cultural district, which now features four remodeled theater spaces in downtown Cleveland.

The Heidelberg Project in Detroit resulted from an artist-directed effort to revitalize a declining inner-city neighborhood. Tyree Guyton created his own artistic work—sculptures, murals and found object collections—to infuse the streets with animation and life. He has since recruited others to develop cultural production and performance spaces in the area.

In other cities, the local arts agency has served as the primary instigator in the development of the

cultural district. Local arts agencies generally represent the collective interests of a geographic region's arts organizations and artists and often work closely with local governments, development authorities and downtown associations. The local arts agency is often in a good position to spearhead the development of a cultural district by drawing on these relationships and coordinating mutual interests.

For example, in response to concerns of local artists and arts organizations about the potential loss of performance and exhibition spaces downtown, the Tucson-Pima Arts Council led the development of the Tucson Arts District prior to assisting in the establishment of the Tucson Arts District Partnership, Inc., a spin-off organization that promotes and manages the district.

In Hartford, Connecticut, the driving force behind the Downtown Arts and Entertainment District has been the Greater Hartford Arts Council, which manages

promotion and coordinates programming among the district's cultural organizations.

- *Government Agencies:* The development of virtually every cultural district in the United States has relied to some degree on the cooperation and support of city, county and/or state government officials for funding, planning assistance, favorable zoning ordinances and arrangement for services such as policing and sanitation. Government financing for cultural districts may include grants, loans, bond authority for capital development or tax-based subsidies for operations. Governmental agencies may also provide street lighting, landscaping and streetscaping services for the district.



JERRY FERRIN

**Marimba  
Ensemble**

**Tucson  
Arts  
District**

In some cities, government officials take the lead in the development of the cultural district. City officials in Dallas worked with local arts organizations to create the Dallas Arts District. The city owns the structure housing the Dallas Museum of Art and the Dallas Arts District Theater, and owns and manages the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center.

- *Development Authorities:* Downtown or citywide development authorities may also be instrumental in creating cultural districts. These quasi- or nongovernmental agencies often hold public authority to plan development citywide or in a designated portion of a city, often exercising bonding and condemnation authority to promote the development of facilities and structures perceived to be in the public interest. The support of development authorities can precipitate critical assistance in planning and financing and lead to the identification of private developers and investors.

The efforts of the Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation, which actively encouraged the development of arts spaces in the district –

particularly artists' living and work spaces – resulted in the Lowerton Urban Village in St. Paul, Minnesota. Similarly, the City Center Redevelopment Corporation in St. Louis was formed in 1980 to develop The Grand Center. Led by St. Louis University, the group – including the Third Baptist Church, the Urban League of Metropolitan St. Louis, the Scottish Rite Masons, the St. Louis Symphony Society and two local banks – was charged with revitalizing a declining midtown neighborhood of old movie and vaudeville houses. Today, the Fox Theatre, the Grandel Theatre, the Sheldon Memorial Concert Hall and the Powell Symphony Hall are in active use, attracting more than 1 million visitors each year.

- *Downtown Business Groups:* Property owners and businesses located

downtown often regard arts, entertainment and related facilities as a means by which to promote

## PROFILE

### NEW ORLEANS ARTS & CULTURAL SECTOR

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>MANAGEMENT</b>          | Developed by:<br>Arts Council of New Orleans<br>225 Baronne, Suite 712<br>New Orleans, LA 70112<br>(504) 523-1465                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>BACKGROUND</b>          | The Arts Council of New Orleans initiated plans for the development of the New Orleans Arts and Cultural Sector – located north of the Riverwalk/Canal Place and south of the Superdome/New Orleans Centre – in the 1980s, after the World's Fair had drawn the attention of city preservationists to an area of decaying historic warehouses. The Arts Council published a plan in 1989 that defined the area of the district, focusing on the Historic Warehouse District, the Picayune Place Historic District and the Lafayette Square Historic District. |
| <b>CULTURAL FACILITIES</b> | Confederate Museum<br>Contemporary Art Center<br>Louisiana Children's Museum<br>Private Art Galleries<br>Planned: Louisiana Artists' Guild; Roger H. Ogden Museum of Southern Art                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>OTHER FACILITIES</b>    | Hotels<br>Residential Areas<br>Restaurants                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

a declining urban center and a way to reclaim customers from suburban malls. Most of the cultural districts created under the primary leadership of downtown business groups tend to be of the arts and entertainment type.

The SOFA (South of First Avenue) Arts and Entertainment District in San Jose, California resulted from the efforts of the San Jose Downtown Association, a group of business leaders who wanted to highlight that San Jose's rapidly growing metropolitan center was as vital as that of its neighbor, San Francisco. Similarly, the Arts and Entertainment District in Rock Island, Illinois arose from the efforts of business leaders who believed that downtown arts and entertainment facilities would attract residents and visitors to the city's central areas.

- *Property Owners, Residents and Historic Preservation Groups:* The support of public and private property owners and their cooperation in selling, leasing or developing their properties in consonance with the cultural emphasis and desired image for the area may be key to the cultural district's success.

The agreement of businesses and residents to live and work within an area designated as a cultural district is also important. In one city, resistance to the idea of a cultural district by the residents of the targeted area eventually led to the relocation of the cultural district.

The coordination of the interests of multiple owners and users of the spaces is one of the most complicated issues in developing and maintaining a cultural district. Representatives of cultural districts tend to agree that the diversity of land uses and activities within a cultural district is what makes the area vital and attractive to visitors; but it is that diversity that also requires complex decision making for policies that govern the district's programming and development.

In one cultural district, resident organizations and local businesses are struggling over the

appropriate design and placement of signage marking the district, lacking agreement on the perceived image of the district and its geographical boundaries.

Organized historic preservation interests can also be useful in the development of a cultural district, since most contain properties of historical significance. Preservation organizations can provide support for the salvation of historically



important buildings and counsel for appropriate adaptive reuse by cultural organizations.

- *"Competing" Cultural Facilities:* The number and strength of cultural facilities in other parts of the city can be key to the designation and development of a cultural district. Resistance to the project by nondistrict cultural organizations that regard the development as competition for patrons and funding may impede the successful development of the district.

Nondistrict arts groups organized resistance over development of several of the cultural districts reviewed in this handbook. Fearing that they would no longer be considered for funding and would lose patrons if the city government and local foundations backed the development of the cultural district, these groups cultivated media support and created significant distraction and public relations difficulties for the districts.

## Social Forces in the City at Large

A number of social forces in American cities today—including economic, demographic and political influences—may also have an impact on the development of cultural districts.

- *Economic:* Economic forces at work in many American cities today include continuing disinvestment in the central city, loss of employment in the inner cities and the growing economic impor-

tance of edge cities and suburbs. Cultural districts in central cities must compete for development funding with extra-urban sites that may be perceived to have lower associated costs, fewer logistical hurdles than sites within the city. In addition, a small but growing number of edge cities and suburbs are creating their own

cultural facilities that may compete with central city facilities for funding and audiences.

The general economic status of the city may also be a significant factor in cultural district development. The loss of a major employer, for example, could threaten the viability of cultural organizations or facilities that have relied on private funding; and the growth of a given economic sector could create new opportunities for funding. In New Orleans, new relationships are developing between cultural organizations—including those in the cultural district—and the city's considerable tourism industry, creating opportunities for both interests based on the co-promotion of cultural tourism.

- *Demographic:* The residents of many areas of central cities have lower incomes and are less educated than the population of surrounding areas, placing greater demand on city govern-

ments and social service agencies to provide services. Thus, proponents of cultural districts must consider how the project will serve or detract from city residents' social and educational needs. The planners of the Portland, Maine Arts District are initiating a community cultural planning process to ensure that the development answers the needs of the city's diverse neighborhoods. It is hoped that research into the cultural life and needs of the city's residents will lead to events in the district that celebrate the whole community and create links to the rest of the city.

Undesirable gentrification is another issue to consider in cultural district development. In some cities, arts development has played a role in displacing lower-income residents—and, ironically, artists who had been at the development's vanguard—by raising property values beyond their original living costs. In the Lowertown Urban Village in St. Paul and other cities nationwide, ArtsSpace Projects, Inc., an organization that develops artists' living and studio properties, is working to avoid undesirable gentrification by requiring that all properties it develops include equity ownership for tenants and by working with neighborhood residents to ensure fair development for all.

A growing percentage of central city residents are of African-American, Hispanic, Asian and other non-Caucasian descent. These groups seek cultural events and activities that reflect their experiences and culture. Cultural districts are responding by providing access to ethnically diverse arts organizations and programming.

- *Political:* Declining federal and state funds for capital investment in urban development and shrinking subsidies for social and cultural programs are among the political forces at work in cities today. Citizens in many areas are resisting tax increases for schools and other local services, and the ability of governments to financially support capital development of cultural districts has declined considerably since the 1980s. Proponents of cultural districts must identify new sources of private funding for the development and support of their facilities and programming.



New  
Orleans  
Arts  
and  
Cultural  
Sector

## CULTURAL DISTRICT FACILITIES AND PROGRAMMING

Cultural programming varies widely across the different types of districts, depending on the particular arts development of each city. In addition to the offerings of individual organizations, most cultural districts seek to increase traffic and sales through larger-scale multi-organizational events and activities, usually relying on a volunteer committee or staff for planning, promotion and management and tapping the resources of the district's diverse organizations for assistance and support. In the Hartford Downtown Arts and Entertainment District, for example, the Greater Hartford Arts Council coordinates a monthly "First Thursday" minifestival of cultural attractions, special events, late retail shop hours and restaurant discounts. The Tucson Arts District Partnership, Inc., manages "Downtown Saturday Night," a similar event held in the Tucson Arts District on the first and third Saturdays of the month.

### PERFORMING ARTS AND EXHIBITIONS

Performing arts events may include concerts, plays, dance performances, performance art, film/video screenings and literary readings. Exhibits may include arts, history, science or children's interactive displays.

### FESTIVALS AND FAIRS

Depending on the outdoor spaces available in the cultural district, activities may include street fairs, festivals and outdoor music and dance

concerts. Some districts have plazas and amphitheaters that have been explicitly designed for outdoor events, featuring stages with accommodations for lighting and sound equipment. At the Dallas Arts District's Artists Square, a half-acre site adjacent to the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, the Friends of the Arts District—a tax-exempt, nonprofit organization—offers outdoor concerts and festivals. In Fort Lauderdale's Arts and Science District, the Downtown Development Authority built and now manages Bubier Park expressly as a festival/special events site.

### PUBLIC ART

Most cultural districts feature public works of art—ranging from murals on public and private buildings to freestanding works in plazas and building lobbies—relying on funds from private developers

or from public "percent-for-art" programs (where a mandated percentage of construction costs must be used for art) for their installation in public spaces.

#### CULTURAL DISTRICT PROGRAMMING

Activities within a cultural district may include:

- ARTS CLASSES AND EDUCATION
- ARTS CREATION AND REHEARSAL
- ARTS-RELATED STREET VENDORS
- ART SALES
- CRAFTS SHOWS
- EXHIBITIONS
- FESTIVALS AND FAIRS
- FILM/MEDIA SCREENINGS
- GALLERY HOPS
- LITERARY READINGS
- PARADES
- PERFORMING ARTS EVENTS
- PUBLIC ART

## ARTS EDUCATION

Many cultural districts promote arts education by providing services through the district's various organizations that may include special performances and exhibits for local schoolchildren and hands-on classes in the visual arts, dance, music, theater and media production.

In some cultural districts, the management entity itself provides arts education activities. In the Pittsburgh Cultural District, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust coordinates a series of diverse educational arts programs for area schoolchildren. The Tucson Arts District Partnership, Inc., sponsors artists-in-residence who instruct visitors in a variety of artistic techniques through workshops, seminars and other activities.

In some cultural districts, high schools or colleges focus specifically on arts education. The Dallas Arts District is home to the Booker T. Washington High School for the Visual and Performing Arts, and Philadelphia's Avenue of the Arts includes the facilities of the city's University of the Arts and plans for a high school for the arts. A key anchor of the Portland, Maine Arts District is the Maine College of Art.



Dallas Arts District

J. SEWARD JOHNSON, JR.

## CULTURAL DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

**O**f the 24 cultural districts considered in this handbook, not one has a single entity with complete management control over the district's functions and properties.

This highlights one of the inherent complexities of the cultural district: unlike a cultural center, a shopping center or a mall, a cultural district comprises a large number of property owners, both public and private, who control the various properties involved. They and their designated tenants may determine, within the zoning and other property ordinances of the city, what uses may occur on their property.

To achieve consensus among property owners and renters, cultural districts may establish a coordinating agency to establish and manage the district's management policies and programming.

The effectiveness of the coordinating agency in guiding the direction of the cultural district varies according to its size, budget, mandated functions and degree of authority, resulting in widespread variation in the coordinated cultural programming and administrative services offered by cultural districts.

Houston's Theater District Association, for example, neither owns nor manages property in the Houston Theater District

and serves primarily as an advocacy and promotion entity. The association is a tax-exempt nonprofit that considers itself a downtown civic improvement group, with members representing

arts organizations and businesses in the district area.

Pittsburgh's Cultural Trust, also a tax-exempt nonprofit, is a more complex cultural district organization that owns and manages a number of cultural spaces in the Pittsburgh Cultural District. In addition to renting space to Pittsburgh organizations, the trust plans and manages a number of arts events in its properties and serves as a promoter and fundraiser for the district at large.

### SERVICES

Cultural districts offer two major types of services: One targets the arts community; the other targets the district's business and property owners.

#### Services to the Arts Community

- *Property Management:* The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust coordinates the rental of several of the theaters and galleries within the Pittsburgh Cultural District, including management of the

2,800-seat Benedum Center, a converted movie theater that now houses the Pittsburgh Opera,

### SERVICES PROVIDED BY CULTURAL DISTRICT COORDINATING AGENCIES

#### ARTS SUPPORT

- Property Management, Leasing and Facility Rental
- Event Promotion and Publicity
- Events Programming
- Box Office Services
- Centralized Arts Management Services

#### BUSINESS AND NON-CULTURAL PROPERTY SUPPORT

- Space Development
- Business Development
- Property and Facilities Management
- Urban Design and Streetscaping
- Office and Administrative Support
- Security and Sanitation

the Pittsburgh Ballet Theatre, the Civic Light Opera and the Pittsburgh Dance Council, as well as touring Broadway shows.

Some cultural districts provide development assistance for artists and arts organizations considering renting or buying properties within the district. The Tucson Arts District Partnership, Inc., has an ArtsSpace Development Loan Program and sponsors workshops and networking events to help artists and arts organizations find and rehabilitate properties appropriate for cultural uses. In St. Paul, Minnesota, the Lowertown Redevelopment Corporation provides assistance in developing artists' housing.

- *Marketing/Promotion:* Other services include shared marketing and promotion, program development and event security and cleanup. The Friends of the Arts District in Dallas provides security and custodial services for events held in the Artist Square portion of the Dallas Arts District and assists in events promotion for the Dallas Arts District's various organizations. The Tucson Arts District Partnership, Inc., also plans activities and manages licensing of the district's many street vendors.
- *Box Office Services:* Friends of the Arts District in Dallas, for example, provides support and office space for ArtTix, a nonprofit box office for citywide cultural events.
- *Centralized Services:* A number of cultural districts provide shared office space and administrative support services for cultural organizations. To provide offices for emerging arts organizations and exhibit spaces for local artists, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust leases the upper floors of the Wood Street Subway Station complex in the Pittsburgh Cultural District from the Allegheny County Port Authority.

#### Services for Business and Non-Cultural Property Owners

Cultural districts may also provide services to businesses and other non-arts organizations within the district, or to businesses considering relocating to the district.

## PROFILE

### TUCSON ARTS DISTRICT

|                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>MANAGEMENT</b>          | Tucson Arts District Partnership, Inc.<br>P.O. Box 3009<br>Tucson, AZ 85702<br>(520) 624-9977<br><a href="http://tucson.com/TAD/">http://tucson.com/TAD/</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>BACKGROUND</b>          | Founded in 1984 by artists concerned about the loss of arts facilities in central Houston, the mission of the Tucson Arts District is to "revitalize the downtown and to provide a focused arena for Tucson's rich artistic and cultural heritage so as to re-establish the area as the heart of our community." (Tucson Partnership, Inc., p. 3.)<br>The district's core encompasses some 70 blocks of the city's central business district.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>CULTURAL FACILITIES</b> | El Centro Cultural de las Americas<br>Temple of Music and Art (Home of the Arizona Theatre Company)<br>Tucson Center for the Performing Arts<br>Tucson Children's Museum<br>Tucson Convention Center Music Hall and Lee Rich Theater<br>Tucson Museum of Art<br>Tucson Public Library                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>OTHER FACILITIES</b>    | City Hall<br>Historic Pima County Court House<br>Tucson Convention Center<br>St. Augustine Cathedral                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>DISTINCTIONS</b>        | The Tucson Arts District has one of the most active coordinating agencies. In addition to providing and coordinating arts programming in the district—including the Phantom Gallery and artists-in-residence projects—the district's extensive support services to artists and small businesses in the area include planning services and small business loans.<br>The Phantom Arts Gallery program places temporary exhibitions by local artists in empty storefronts throughout the arts district, creating visual interest in the spaces and providing a bridge between vacancies and active tenants.<br>Just four years after its establishment, the Tucson Arts District is credited with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 26 new businesses</li> <li>• 54% increase in sales</li> <li>• 50% decline in retail vacancies</li> <li>• 11.7% increase in city sales tax revenues (compared with a 7.4% citywide increase)</li> </ul> |

- *Space Development:* The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust actively promotes space within the Pittsburgh Cultural District to developers and businesses interested in a downtown location.
- *Business Development:* The Tucson Arts District Partnership, Inc., works with businesses to help retain and expand the district's extant retail establishments, offering such ameni-

Cultural District has resulted in brick sidewalks, granite curbs with the district name, special lighting and new plantings. In the Tucson Arts District, a series of building guidelines, developed in cooperation with the city planning department, address such issues as compatible functional zones, appropriate use of street-level buildings, enhanced facades

**Tucson  
Museum of  
Art Plaza**



ties as small business consulting services in marketing, financing and financial management.

- *Urban Design:* Many cultural districts become involved with urban design and streetscaping as a strategy by which to enhance the vitality, accessibility and safety of the district's streets and public spaces. Working with city development and zoning authorities, they create land-use guidelines and design elements that highlight and promote the cultural focus of the district. The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's collaboration with the city of Pittsburgh to enhance streetscaping within the Pittsburgh

and storefronts, massing and scale considerations for buildings and environmental concerns such as plantings and shade.

- *Administrative Support:* Some districts provide administrative support to events in the district, handling centralized promotion and marketing or serving as the point of contact for such issues as parking or security.
- *Security and Sanitation:* Some cultural district coordinating agencies provide security and sanitation for the area. The Grand Center, Inc., in St. Louis provides event security, trash pickup, snow removal, landscaping and maintenance for the district.

## CREATION OF A CULTURAL DISTRICT

Every cultural district described here is unique. Each reflects the particular cultural, social, political, economic, and physical geography of its city. Thus, there is no cookie-cutter model for the development of a cultural district. The particular part of the city that might make a good place for a cultural district will depend on those areas most in need of redevelopment and where they coincide with current or potential arts spaces.

Development of a cultural district results best from a coalignment of citywide cultural planning and the planning for the revitalization of specific downtown spaces. Feasibility studies must be undertaken to determine whether appropriate facilities are being developed for the specific needs of locals arts groups and audiences. In addition, arts organizations in other areas of the city may feel threatened by development of new arts facilities if they perceive them as competing for audiences or funding sources. Thus, arts organizations that serve the broad community, such as local arts councils or commissions, should be included in planning processes for arts districts to ensure that the broad needs of the community are balanced.

The layout of the cultural district must be carefully considered. As multiple land uses are developed in and around a cultural district, the walkability and accessibility from one space to

another must be considered. Visitors may not care to walk more than even a half-block from one facility to the next interesting space. Careful planning must be undertaken to ensure that walkways

are well-lit, convenient, and attractive and that area businesses agree on hours of operation, to avoid "dead" spaces between facilities.

The excitement and attraction of a cultural district is a high mixture of interesting things to do, places to see, and places to visit (both cultural and noncultural), across the day and evening. By definition, a cultural district is a mixture of land uses and property owners. This means multiple and potentially conflicting opinions about how the district should be used, marketed, and managed. Thus, the coordinating agency appointed for the district must work carefully to ensure inclusiveness of concerns and to balance competing interests.

Arts cannot work alone as a strategy for city development. Cities are far more than just their cultural elements:

they are also homes, places to do business, places to work, places to shop, places to learn, places to worship, and places for government services.

Cultural district formation must be seen as part of a mixed strategy for urban development. Developers should work to attract a broad array of appropriate uses to cultural districts and surrounding areas. The facilities thus provided must be unique to the special needs of that city and its citizens.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### CULTURAL DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT & MANAGEMENT

- EACH CULTURAL DISTRICT IS UNIQUE AND SHOULD REFLECT THE SPECIFIC CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND ECONOMIC NEEDS OF ITS CITY.
- PLANNING FOR A CULTURAL DISTRICT SHOULD BE PART OF WIDER CULTURAL PLANNING FOR THE CITY AT LARGE.
- CULTURAL DISTRICTS SHOULD BE COMFORTABLY ACCESSIBLE.
- CULTURAL DISTRICT MANAGEMENT REQUIRES CAREFUL COORDINATION AMONG DIVERSE GROUPS.
- CULTURAL DISTRICTS MUST BE PART OF A PACKAGE OF MANY STRATEGIES TO REVITALIZE A CITY.

## APPENDIX: CULTURAL DISTRICTS IN THE U.S.

The following 90 U.S. cities have reported having or planning for a cultural district:

|                    |                     |                   |
|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| Albuquerque, NM    | Houston, TX         | Quincy, IL        |
| Annapolis, MD      | Indianapolis, IN    | Racine, WI        |
| Augusta, GA        | Johnson City, TN    | Raleigh, NC       |
| Austin, TX         | Kansas City, MO     | Riverhead, NY     |
| Baltimore, MD      | Kettering, OH       | Rochester, NY     |
| Bellingham, WA     | Lafayette, CO       | Rockford, IL      |
| Birmingham, AL     | Lafayette, LA       | Rock Island, IL   |
| Boston, MA         | Long Beach, CA      | Sacramento, CA    |
| Buffalo, NY        | Louisville, KY      | San Diego, CA     |
| Cambridge, MA      | Lynn, MA            | San Jose, CA      |
| Camden, NJ         | Manchester, NH      | San Francisco, CA |
| Charlotte, NC      | Marion, IL          | Santa Barbara, CA |
| Cleveland, OH      | Miami, FL           | Santa Fe, NM      |
| Columbia, MO       | Miami Beach, FL     | Sarasota, FL      |
| Columbus, OH       | Milwaukee, WI       | Savannah, GA      |
| Dallas, TX         | Minneapolis, MN     | Scottsdale, AZ    |
| Decorah, IA        | Mobile, AL          | Seattle, WA       |
| Deland, FL         | Newark, NJ          | Sedalia, MO       |
| Denison, TX        | New Brunswick, NJ   | St. Louis, MO     |
| Denver, CO         | New Haven, CT       | St. Paul, MN      |
| Des Moines, IA     | New Orleans, LA     | Tacoma, WA        |
| Detroit, MI        | New York City, NY   | Tampa, FL         |
| Eureka, CA         | North Hollywood, CA | Temecula, CA      |
| Evansville, IN     | Oakland, CA         | Trenton, NJ       |
| Flint, MI          | Philadelphia, PA    | Troy, NY          |
| Fort Worth, TX     | Phoenix, AZ         | Tucson, AZ        |
| Ft. Lauderdale, FL | Pittsburgh, PA      | Van Buren, AR     |
| Gainesville, FL    | Portland, ME        | Ventura, CA       |
| Hartford, CT       | Portland, OR        | Washington, DC    |
| Houma, LA          | Providence, RI      | Willimantic, CT   |

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arts Council of Greater New Haven, 1986.  
*Audubon Arts: Taking Flight*. New Haven: Arts Council of Greater New Haven, New Haven, CT.

Deutsche, Rosalyn, and Ryan, Cara Gendel, 1984.  
*The Fine Art of Gentrification*. October: Vol.31, 91-111.

Green, Kevin W., ed., 1983. *The City as Stage: Strategies for the Arts in Urban Economics*. Washington, DC: Partners for Livable Places.

Kay, Jane Holz, 1983. "Coins and Culture." In *The City as a Stage: Strategies for the Arts in Urban Economics*, edited by Kevin W. Green, 29-35. Washington, DC: Partners for Livable Places.

McBee, Susanna, et al., 1992. *Downtown Development Handbook, Second Edition*. Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute.

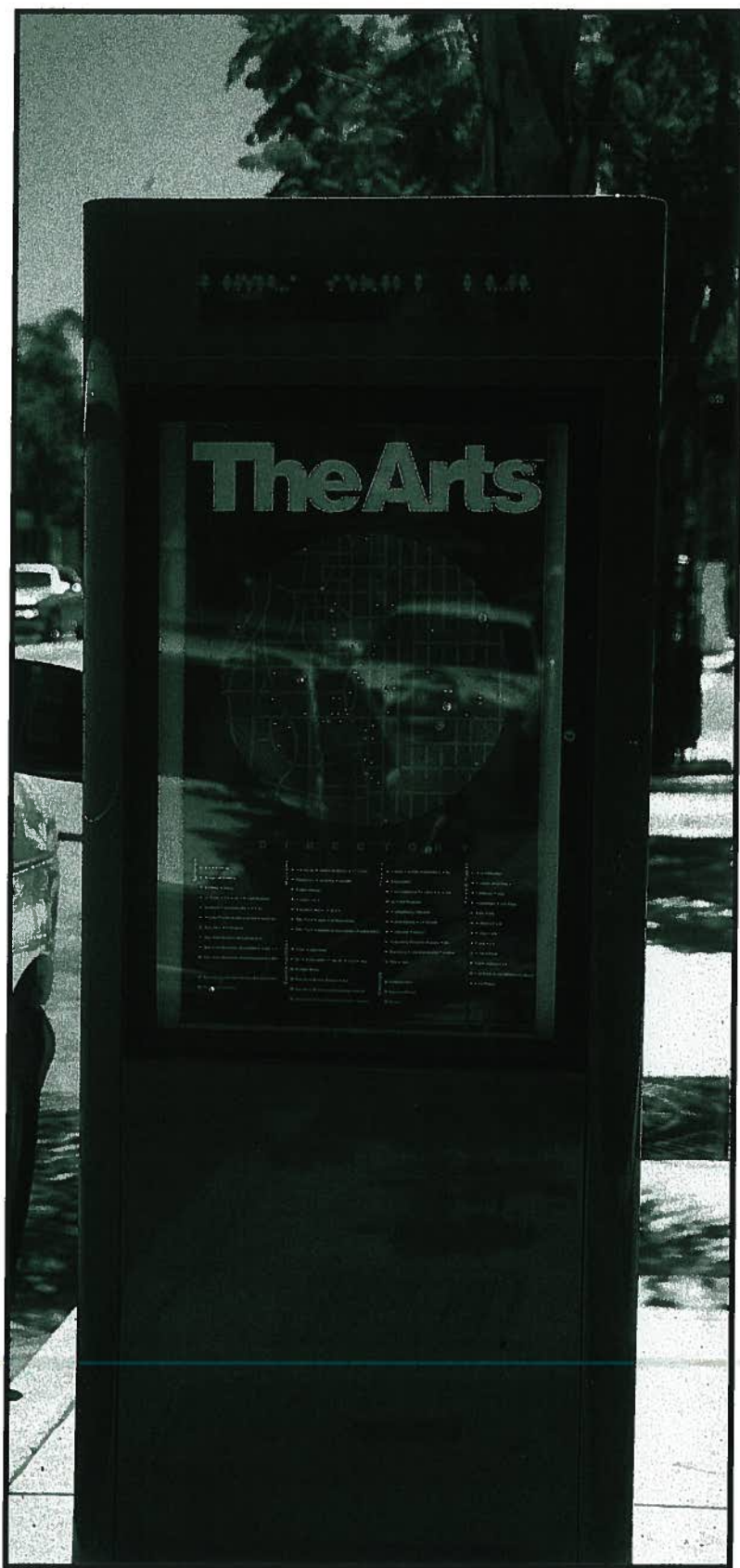
Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, 1994. "The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust: A Progress Report." Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh Cultural Trust.

Snedcof, Harold R., 1985. *Cultural Facilities in Mixed Use Development*. Washington, DC: Urban Land Institute.

Tucson Partnership, Inc., 1991. *Tucson Partnership, Inc. Five Year Plan*. Tucson, AZ.

Weber, Bruce, 1997. "Arts Sapling Bears Fruit in Downtown U.S." *New York Times*, November 18, 1997: 1.

Whitt, J. Allen, 1987. "Mozart in the Metropolis: The Arts Coalition and the Urban Growth Machine." *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No.1, 15-36.



HILARY ANNE FROST-KUMPF

South of First Avenue Arts & Entertainment District  
San Jose

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

My sincere thanks to the many directors of local arts organizations, city and county planning offices, development authorities and downtown business associations that provided information for this project: Your help was invaluable! In addition, my special thanks to Randy Cohen for his encouragement and patience.

—HILARY ANNE FROST-KUMPF

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Hilary Anne Frost-Kumpf is the Director of the Community Arts Management program at the University of Illinois at Springfield. She has served as an arts administrator for 19 years in the cities of Lima and Columbus, Ohio; Bloomington, Indiana; Madison, Wisconsin; and Dallas, Texas. Ms. Frost-Kumpf is currently working on a doctoral degree in geography from The Pennsylvania State University.

---

## ABOUT THE INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE ARTS

The purpose of the Institute for Community Development and the Arts is to promote local public and private funding for the arts. This will be accomplished by educating local arts agencies, elected and appointed municipal officials and arts funders about the important role of the arts as community change agents for economic, social and educational problems. The Institute will also identify innovative community arts programs and nontraditional funding sources to enable local arts agencies, arts organizations and local civic officials to replicate or adapt these programs in their communities.

### **The Institute for Community Development and the Arts will:**

- Examine innovative arts programs and nontraditional funding sources that address community development problems
- Strengthen the leadership roles of local arts agencies
- Build partnerships with local government leaders
- Stabilize and promote local public and private funding for artists and arts organizations

**The Institute for Community Development  
and the Arts' Partnership comprises the  
following organizations:**



U.S. Conference of Mayors



International City/County  
Management Association



National Association of Counties



National League of Cities



National Conference of  
State Legislatures



National  
Association of  
Towns and Townships

National Association of  
Towns and Townships



National Endowment  
for the Arts



President's Committee on the  
Arts and Humanities



Bravo, the Film and Arts  
Network

The Institute is supported in part by National Endowment for the Arts, The Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation, The Pew Charitable Trusts, Emily Hall Tremain Foundation and Robert Sterling Clark Foundation.