CENTER FOR THE STUDY
OF ART & COMMUNITY

A STUDY OF THE SAN DEIGO GATHERING PLACE INITIATIVE
SUBMITTED TO THE SAN DIEGO FOUNDATION

GATHERING.

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A Study of the San Diego Gathering Place Initiative

Center for the Study of Art & Community

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The San Diego Foundation has a long history of support for community cultural development. It has also actively supported the idea that investment in the purposeful growth of civic engagement can stimulate both social entrepreneurship and committed community leadership. Over the past two decades the Pomegranate Center, based in Issaquah, Washington, has become an established leader in the practice of what is now referred to as "creative placemaking," working with "communities to imagine, plan and create shared public places." It is not surprising then, when spurred by the interest of a major donor, that the Foundation enthusiastically joined with the Center in a partnership to stimulate civic engagement and leadership in San Diego neighborhoods using their "gathering place" methodology in the latter part of 2012.

Initiated in the summer of 2012 the San Diego Gathering Place Initiative had two core aims:

- "To implement a demonstration project in San Diego County to train and mentor a nonprofit arts organization and a cohort of fellows to implement community-build projects utilizing the Pomegranate Center's methodology."

- "To test Pomegranate's community-build training and mentoring strategy as a new business model for the Center."

Early on in the process ARTS: A Reason to Survive, a San Diego area arts-based youth development organization, joined as the Initiative's local anchor organization and training partner.

The San Diego Gathering Place Initiative had three distinct phases:

1. A seven-day training program designed to introduce the Pomegranate Center model to 21 local artists, organizers, architects, and planners.
2. A hands-on Gathering Place building project called Butterfly Park, in National City, California, to give the training "fellows" an opportunity to practice implementing the model.
3. An ARTS-led Gathering Place building project, called Manzanita Canyon, located in the City Heights neighborhood of San Diego, designed to give both ARTS and a team of five fellows an opportunity to facilitate a project from start to finish.

This Executive Summary sums up findings from an 11-month evaluative study of the San Diego Gathering Place Initiative undertaken by the Center for the Study of Art and Community. It was designed to provide an assessment of both the conduct of the Initiative and its impact on its participants (training fellows and community members), partnering organizations, and the communities involved. The data-gathering tools employed included one-on-one and focus group interviews, network mapping workshops, and a comprehensive survey instrument designed for this study.

Study participants reflected the broad range of voices and perspectives represented by the Initiative's multiple partners, participants, and stakeholders. Although some Butterfly Park participants were included in the study cohort, the bulk of the data gathering took place in conjunction with the Manzanita Canyon design, and building, process. The Butterfly Park data we did collect has provided a basis for comparing the Pomegranate and ARTS-led projects. Two weeks following the four-day Manzanita building session we also conducted a network mapping exercise to document the less obvious web of partnerships and connections that came together in support of the project.

WHAT WE FOUND

I. THE CONDUCT OF THE INITIATIVE

We estimate that 400[1] people participated in the various activities that comprised the Manzanita Canyon Gathering Place project. The project's support community was a diverse representation of both the surrounding Azalea Park neighborhood and the seven adjoining zip codes. Just over 50% of these participants took part in three or more community meetings and workshops, and 206 joined in during the final four-day building event.



Needless to say, volunteer-intensive projects involving hundreds of people can be chaotic and confusing. Notwithstanding the first-time status of the project's leadership, and a severely compacted design and building schedule, the vast majority of the Manzanita participants said they had a clear understanding of everybody's roles and the project's goals. In the immediate aftermath of the project, many community members said they were less clear about what will happen with the site and the network of support that emerged during the project's short four-month life. As this report was nearing completion we learned that the Azalea Park Neighborhood Association was assuming responsibility for the continuing development of the project.

It is not surprising that the project's truncated schedule took a toll on its rookie leaders, who, nevertheless, persevered and saw the project through to its successful conclusion. For community members, though, the project's rapid pace was regarded as one of its most positive attributes. It is important to note that the active and enthusiastic participation of the leadership and members of the Azalea Park Neighborhood Association was a major impetus for the community's positive embrace of the project. The particularly strong leadership provided by the Pomegranate fellow who worked nearly full-time as the project's manager should also be noted as a valuable contributor to the project's success.

[1] This is a rough estimate based on counts at community events and registrations during the 4-day building event.



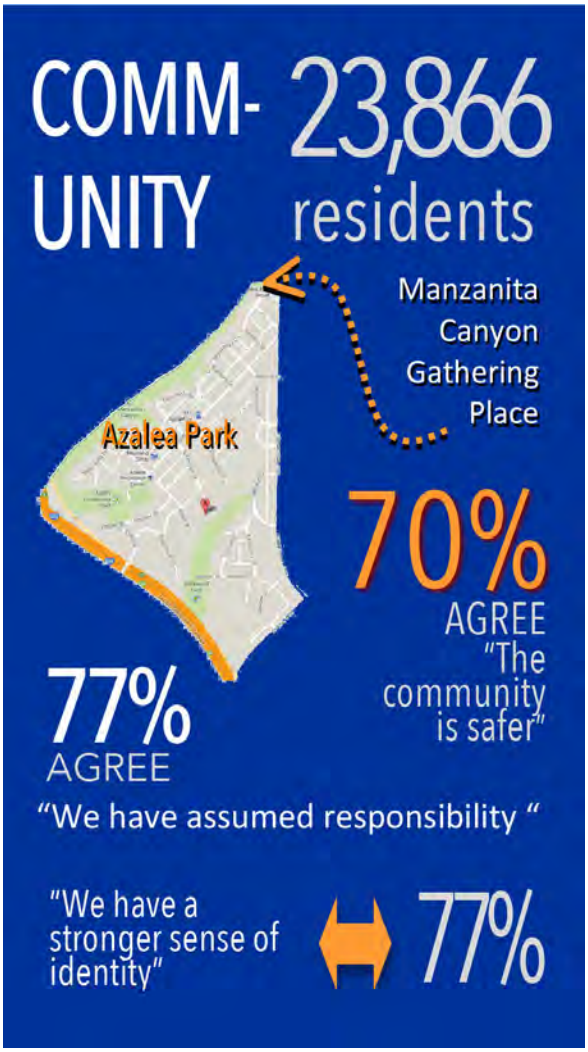
II. IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS

Community members: Most of the community members responding to our survey felt the overall program was effective and reported that their participation had benefited them in some way. A significant majority said that they are communicating and collaborating more with their neighbors since the project's completion. They also indicated that things that they had learned through their involvement had been put to good use in other situations. As for the future, most respondents say that they see themselves becoming more actively involved in community-related activities, and joining in similar projects.

Gathering Place fellows: A significant majority of the 21 Gathering Place fellows were very positive about their training experience. Rating eight core curriculum elements in terms of their "relevance to your work," the cohort averaged 3.5 on a 4-point *relevance* scale (*4 = extremely; 1 = not at all*). Not surprisingly, the hands-on design and building experience at Butterfly Park was regarded as the most valuable aspect of the fellowship. As one fellow make sense." It is interesting to note that the fellows had a slightly more positive take on the building experience than the community members. This is not unexpected, given their significant investment in their learning experience. The one deviation from this pattern was in the area of role definitions, where it is clear that some fellows expected a more active involvement in the second "build" at Manzanita Canyon.

Probably the most significant outcome with regard to fellows is that nearly all report that they are integrating aspects of their training into their ongoing practice. And, notwithstanding the fact that nearly all were active community arts practitioners prior to their fellowship, 80% say that they have a greater appreciation of the effectiveness of arts-based approaches to community development. Another important indicator of the Initiative's simulative impact on the fellows is the volume and nature of their post-training activity. Fully 90% say they are more actively involved in community-oriented work and __% say they have been involved with other fellows in the year following their graduation.

III. IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

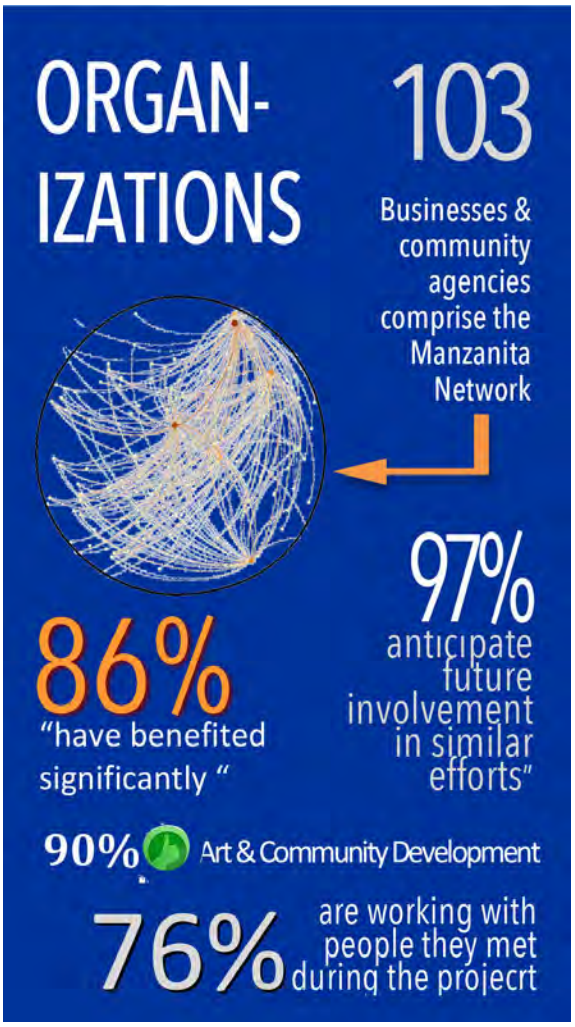


Study participants from the Azalea Park area surrounding the Manzanita site see their community as having benefited in a number of areas as a result of the Gathering Place project. Chief among these are a strengthened sense of *community identity* and a renewed belief in the neighborhood's *resourcefulness*. Another important reflection from community members is the increased feeling of security and safety that they report since the transformation of a derelict road end lot into what one respondent described as a "beautiful and welcoming community gathering place."

When participants weighed in on the community's commitment to the project, 80% agreed that the neighborhood had a "strong sense of ownership" of the Gathering Place collaboration. Just over 77% also agreed "the community has assumed full responsibility for its ongoing development and maintenance." The narrative responses from our interviews also show the strong sense of ownership and pride that the project has engendered among its active supporters. It also points to the importance of continuing to expand the Gathering Place community of support.

Given the complex mix of people, history, and communication that come into play, defining precisely what precipitates a community's embrace of one project or another is difficult. The Manzanita participants responding to our survey felt strongly that direct involvement was critical to the project's success. A majority (68%) indicated that the people who did not participate in some way had "very little understanding or awareness of the project."

The Manzanita Gathering Place project has also generated a high level of positive media about the Azalea Park neighborhood. This coverage has reflected positively on both the project, and the surrounding community. A Nexus search of coverage from the project's inception in September 2013, to March of 2014, shows that 3580 items about the project appeared in various print and digital publications. These ranged from reports on the project at various stages of development, explorations of how creative placemaking might impact cultural and community development policy, to pieces about innovative landscape design and water conversation.



IV. IMPACT ON PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

In this section we focused on the feedback and stories from the Initiative's partner organizations. These included the key organizational players: the Pomegranate Center, ARTS: A Reason to Survive, the San Diego Foundation, and the Azalea Park Neighborhood Association as well as the many community organizations and businesses that participated in the project.

Community organizations and businesses: Local organizational leaders echo their neighbor's feelings of increased safety and sense of place since the project's completion. Interestingly, our data shows that most of the local organizations that contributed to the project also came away with strategies that they view as being useful to their own work. These included strategies for community engagement, civic discourse, volunteer coordination, and education. Fully 90% said they anticipate future involvement in projects that make use of the arts for community betterment.

Another less direct outcome is the small network of like-minded organizations that were introduced through the project that have continued to communicate and work together. Nearly 35% of our organizational respondents report that they have partnered with agencies or businesses they worked with during the design or building of the Manzanita Gathering Place. A much larger 75% said they have continued to work with individuals they met as a result of their participation.

Gathering Place partner organizations: One of the core questions explored by the Initiative was whether ARTS could assimilate and lead the Pomegranate process after a relatively short period of training and the ensuing building experience at Butterfly Park. The Manzanita Canyon build was intended as an opportunity for ARTS to both practice and test its capacity to lead a full project. Based on our review of the survey and narrative data, we believe the ARTS-led Manzanita Canyon project shows that the Pomegranate model can be successfully learned and applied by a team of local organizations and creative leaders. The key contributors to this outcome include:

- ARTS' ability to *adapt effectively* to multiple unanticipated challenges.
- ARTS' ability to work effectively with *local cultural and community development assets.*
- *Flexible support* from both the San Diego Foundation, the project's principal investor.

- *A strong collaborative skill set* from both ARTS staff and the project manager.
- *A learning culture* at ARTS that is comfortable with simultaneous learning and leading.
- The considerable *depth of experience* the project partners brought to the project.

One area that posed a challenge to ARTS leadership was the dissimilarity of the organization's youth development mission and the typically adult-led neighborhood focus of the Pomegranate model. Although young people did play a role in the Manzanita effort, moving forward, ARTS has an opportunity to better integrate their core constituency more deeply into future projects, particularly in the areas of project design and leadership.

The San Diego Gathering Place Initiative cast the Pomegranate Center into a new role as an organizational mentor and community education resource. In the process the Center's staff had to learn how to step back and allow an untested team to finds its way. Ironically, the project's success had as much to do with Pomegranate's forbearance in the heat of the battle as its decades of community building experience.



From its inception the San Diego Foundation made it clear that it had a strong interest in both supporting and learning from its Gathering Place investment. We would observe that the Initiative benefited from the Foundation's patient attentiveness and expertise. This flexibility and responsiveness will be a valuable asset for the Initiative as it moves forward.

Beyond the benefits to individual organizations we see a potentially powerful network of experienced community builders and community-invested organizations emerging from the Initiative. The Gathering Place Initiative has made a significant investment in stimulating these kinds of vital connections among people, places, and organizations in service to building a stronger sense of community in Azalea Park. This network is a powerful representation of how effective community organizing and creative leadership can stimulate neighbors and friends to work together for the common good. It is also evidence of the dynamic community-building potential that has been stimulated by the Gathering Place Initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are provided to inform and guide the San Diego Foundation's future efforts to advance creative placemaking and arts-based community development as viable community development strategies in the San Diego region. As such, our recommendations address two different yet interrelated constituencies; first, what we are calling the San Diego Gathering Place partnership, and second, the individual partner organizations.

1. Recommendations for the San Diego Gathering Place partnership

1.1 Take the steps necessary to strengthen and sustain the collaboration that has supported the Gathering Place Initiative. We strongly encourage the San Diego Foundation, ARTS, and the Pomegranate Center to continue and grow their collaboration. The successful first steps taken by this Initiative provide a promising foundation for advancing the Gathering Place approach. As such, we encourage relatively swift follow-up.

1.2 Commit to long-haul learning. To have demonstrable impact in San Diego, the techniques, skills, and strategies that constitute the Pomegranate model need to be practiced over and over. The aptitudes, awareness, and relationships required to sustain the model can only be developed through collaborative iterative learning. As the San Diego Gathering Place partnership considers its future, we encourage you to make continued hands-on learning and documentation a major priority.

1.3 Convene the Gathering Place community to reflect on what has been learned and consider the next steps. Bring stakeholders together to reflect on the Initiative's accomplishments and potential future. This could provide a forum that would allow the field to learn from itself, promote innovation and self-organizing, and give local practitioners and supporters a chance to weigh in on critical questions facing the field.

1.4 Adopt a regimen of regular review, reflection, and revision for future projects. Even when roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated early on, new initiatives like the SDGP almost always encounter role confusion. This is because of the significant gap between the articulated assumptions and the reality on the ground. Because this is almost unavoidable, regular opportunities for project review and recalibration need to be integrated into subsequent work plans and partnership agreements.



1.5 Promote the use of arts-based community development and organizing approaches among Gathering Place neighborhoods and partnering organizations. It would be unfortunate if this opportunity to insinuate arts-based engagement into the work of organizations like Azalea Park Neighborhood Association or Ocean Discovery Institute were not exploited. Their familiarity with the effectiveness of culturally based organizing makes them ripe for further development in this area.

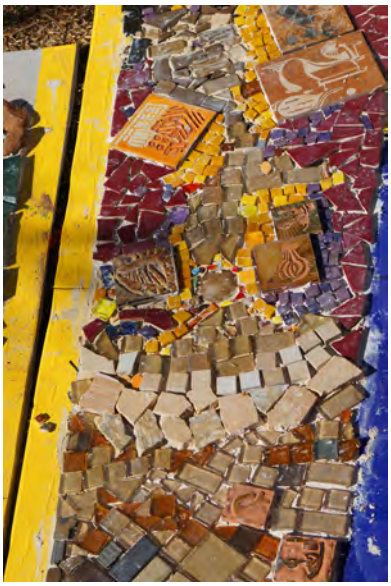
1.6 Invest in the long-term development of the Gathering Place creative placemaking practice and support in the San Diego region. The training of the Gathering Place fellows has established a valuable cadre of potential creative placemaking facilitators and leaders. Given the myriad material, social, and cultural benefits derived from the Gathering Place projects, the return on investment is extremely high. That said, efforts like these still cost money, so we strongly encourage the project partners to place future financing at the head of their list of things to consider in moving forward.

2. Recommendations for individual partnering organizations

2.1 The San Diego Foundation should continue its leadership role promoting creative placemaking in the San Diego region. Given its historic commitment to the development of effective community leaders and healthy communities, the Foundation is well positioned to establish itself as the prime advocate for this burgeoning field in the San Diego region.

2.2 Use this report to stimulate system-wide thinking and action. We recommend that the San Diego Foundation use this report to instigate new conversations in the public, nonprofit, and business sectors about the potential value and application of creative placemaking approaches. A potential goal might be to map and collaboratively invest in the long-term development of a sustainable creative placemaking development fund.

2.3 Recognize and support the role of grassroots community development organizations and community organizers in effective placemaking. One of the most critical elements leading to the success of the Manzanita project was the committed participation of the Azalea Park Neighborhood Association (APNA). Organizations like APNA should be included in discussions about how to best learn from and advance this work.



2.4 Engage the Gathering Place fellows in the development of a Gathering Place learning network. While the project laid the foundation for the development of a potentially robust post-training network, these kinds of enduring connections rarely happen on their own. This will require initial coordination and support to grow the self-organizing capacity that will be needed to sustain a network of Gathering Place practitioners and leaders.

2.5 Take note that free labor can be expensive. It is important to remember that free labor is not only labor-intensive, but for citizen design/build efforts, the quality of volunteer experience will often determine the success or failure of the project. For many successful community development organizations, volunteer coordination has become a full-time job. This is something for ARTS to keep in mind as it calculates the cost of future Gathering Place projects.

2.6 Explore ways to align ARTS' new placemaking capacities with its core mission. A threshold question to consider will be whether ARTS should expand its mission from personal change agent to community change agent. If so, how this happens will be critical. Other questions include:

- What does it mean to be the local translator and advocate for the advancement of the Pomegranate model?
- How can ARTS align its youth and local (National City) priorities with this effort?
- Where will the new resources needed to advance potential new Gathering Place Initiatives come from?

2.7 Include bureaucratic path finding in future Gathering Place training efforts. One aspect of the Gathering Place training encourages the development of a Steering Group that includes relevant municipal officials who can assist with bureaucratic logjams. We recommend that future training enhance this area by including strategies for the successful navigation of specific San Diego area public bureaucracies.

3. General recommendations for building the creative placemaking field in the San Diego region

3.1 Establish an ongoing cross-sector training program in support of creative placemaking practice. Given the success of the Gathering Place Initiative, we would highly recommend the creation of a training and support program to advance the relevant knowledge and skills of the area's significant and growing creative placemaking sector.

3.2 Emphasize the difference between creative placemaking and audience development. Many arts organizations and funders have embraced community engagement as a way to expand audiences. For organizations like the Pomegranate Center, and ARTS, community relationships are intrinsic to both art production and presentation, and community members are seen more as a constituency than an audience. This implies a broad range of responsibilities and obligations that include expectations of openness, accountability, continuity, and respect.

3.3 Educate funders about the complex ecology of community arts development. We encourage the Gathering Place partners and others to explore ways to help increase funder awareness about the complexity, diversity, and effectiveness of the creative placemaking field. Increased awareness of this system among funders and policy makers could ultimately increase the effectiveness of arts-based community development efforts in the region.

3.4 Promote the notion that collaboration is a learned skill. Many of our respondents had a lot to say about partnerships, particularly the new and untested variety. Most comments reflected on the intensely collaborative nature of community art making. Over the years we have learned a lot from our clients about effective collaboration, taking special note of the lessons that seem to be in most need of repeating

DIGEST OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDINGS

I. THE CONDUCT OF THE INITIATIVE

1.1 Participation in the Manzanita project was broad, deep, and diverse.
1.2 Manzanita's compacted schedule was a challenge for the project's first-time organizers.
1.3 Most Gathering Place participants had a clear understanding of the project's organization and intentions.
1.4 The post construction future is somewhat less clear to all participants.
1.5 The fast-track design/build process was both effective and stress producing
1.6 Fellow-led project management was critical to the success of the project.

II. IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS

Impact on community members
2.1 The majority of respondents say they are working more with their neighbors and colleagues.
2.2 New learning has taken place and is being applied.
2.3 Respondents express a greater willingness to participate in similar programs.
2.4 Community members say they will be more actively involved in community-related activities and civic discourse.

Impact on Gathering Place fellows
2.5 The fellowship training was well received by participants.
2.6 Gathering Place fellows reflect very positively on their field experience.
2.7 The fellows' opinions about the conduct of the build process differ somewhat from other program participants.
2.8 Fellows say they are making good use of the things they learned during their training.
2.9 Fellows say they have increased their involvement in community development activities. 2.10 The Gathering Place experience has fostered a new network among the fellows.
2.11 There was some lack of clarity about the role of the fellows for the second build.

III. IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

3.1 Respondents see their community as stronger as a result of the Gathering Place experience.
3.2 The Manzanita Gathering Place project has generated a high level of positive media about the Azalea Park neighborhood.
3.3 Local participants also say their community is safer in the wake of their placemaking effort.
3.4 Community members report a very strong sense of ownership for their collaborative undertaking.
3.5 Most respondents believe the community's commitment to the project will be sustained.
3.6 Participants feel that direct involvement was critical to the project's success.

IV. IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONS

Participating Local Organizations and Businesses
4.1 Participating organizations report multiple benefits from their Gathering Place participation.
4.2 Network building appears to be stronger among individual participants than organizations.

Gathering Place Partner Organizations

4.4 The Manzanita Canyon project was a robust test of the Initiative's principal strategic objective.
4.5 ARTS stewardship of the project should be considered successful.
4.6 The high quality of the organizations and individuals involved was a key contributor to the project's success.
4.7 The ARTS mission and Gathering Place participation posed a challenge.
4.8 Pomegranate Center's initial undertaking as a systemic change agent took an important first step.
4.9 The San Diego Foundation's participation in the initiative has been beneficial on many levels.
4.10 A potentially powerful network of experienced community builders and community-invested organizations has emerged from the initiative.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Recommendations for the San Diego Gathering Place Partnership

1.1 Take the steps necessary to strengthen and sustain the collaboration that has supported the Gathering Place Initiative.
1.2 Commit to long-haul learning.
1.3 Convene the Gathering Place community to reflect on what has been learned and consider the next steps
1.4 Adopt a regimen of regular review, reflection, and revision for future projects.
1.5 Promote the use of arts-based community development and organizing approaches among Gathering Place neighborhoods and partnering organizations.
1.6 Invest in the long-term development of the Gathering Place creative placemaking practice and support in the San Diego region.

2. Recommendations for Individual Partnering Organizations

2.1 The San Diego Foundation should continue its leadership role promoting creative placemaking in the San Diego region.
2.2 Use this report to stimulate system-wide thinking and action.
2.3 Recognize and support the role of grassroots community development organizations and community organizers in effective placemaking.
2.4 Engage the Gathering Place fellows in the development of a Gathering Place learning network.
2.5 Take note that free labor can be expensive.
2.6 Explore ways to align ARTS' new placemaking capacities with its core mission.
2.7 Include bureaucratic path finding in future Gathering Place training efforts.

3. General Recommendations for Building the Creative Placemaking Field in the San Diego Region

3.1 Establish an ongoing cross-sector training program in support of creative placemaking practice.
3.2 Emphasize the difference between creative placemaking and audience development.
3.3 Educate funders about the complex ecology of community arts development.
3.4 Promote the notion that collaboration is a learned skill.

Part One:
Introduction

The San Diego Foundation believes that "everyone needs creative opportunities with which to make meaningful and fulfilling connections."[1] The Pomegranate Center, based in Issaquah, Washington, has been in the business of facilitating creative connections in neighborhoods across the country for the past two decades. They manifest their mission by working "with communities to imagine, plan and create shared public places." One prominent expression of their work is the "creation of community gathering places (parks, neighborhood focal points, community trails, and public artwork) that contribute to community distinction, vitality and social interaction."[2]

In the summer of 2012, as part of a nationwide initiative supported by Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Inc., the Pomegranate Center and the San Diego Foundation began exploration of a gathering place project in San Diego. These discussions led to a partnership among the Foundation, Pomegranate, and the San Diego youth arts organization, A Reason to Survive (ARTS), to work with two San Diego communities to create citizen-designed and -built gathering places. The partners also expressed a strong desire to extend the benefits of the project beyond the initial placemaking effort. As such, the San Diego Gathering Place Initiative also provided mentorship and employment for a

[1] http://www.sdfoundation.org/SanDiegoCenterforCivicEngagement/MissionoftheCenter.aspx
[2] http://www.pomegranatecenter.org/build-places/

cohort of ARTS-sponsored youth and trained local leaders and organizations to implement future projects.

Initiative Summary

The San Diego Gathering Place Initiative activities documented in this report took place from September 2012 to November 2013 as a learning partnership among the Pomegranate Center, ARTS, and the San Diego Foundation. The Rokenbok Educational Foundation, Myron Eichen Memorial Fund, and Green Mountain Coffee Roasters that provided lead funding support for the initiative. The Initiative's goals were twofold:

- "To implement a demonstration project in San Diego County that will train and mentor a nonprofit arts and culture organization and individuals to implement community-build projects utilizing the Pomegranate Center's methodology."

- "To test The Pomegranate Center's community-build training and mentoring strategy as a new business model for the organization."

The Pomegranate Center's principal role was to train and mentor the staff of ARTS in the Center's community-build methodology. This training occurred in conjunction with the implementation of two community-built Gathering Place projects located in National City, California, and the City Heights area of San Diego. Prospective project sites were identified by soliciting proposals from interested communities. The final selection, facilitated by the Pomegranate Center, was made by representatives of the five top-rated community proposals. Each of the selected projects received a full package of design and build services,[3] as well as a $20,000 budget for equipment and supplies. There were also paid learning opportunities for ARTS students to participate.

In addition to working with ARTS staff, the Pomegranate Center also conducted a 7-day training program, from January through April 2013, for 23 local artists, architects, planners, and organizers who were selected as Gathering Place fellows to learn the community-build method. Starting in January 2013, the fellowship included 50 hours of classroom instruction and emersion in the 20-week community design process for the project in National City. The training culminated with the construction of the Butterfly Park Gathering Place over an intense four-day period during the third week of April.



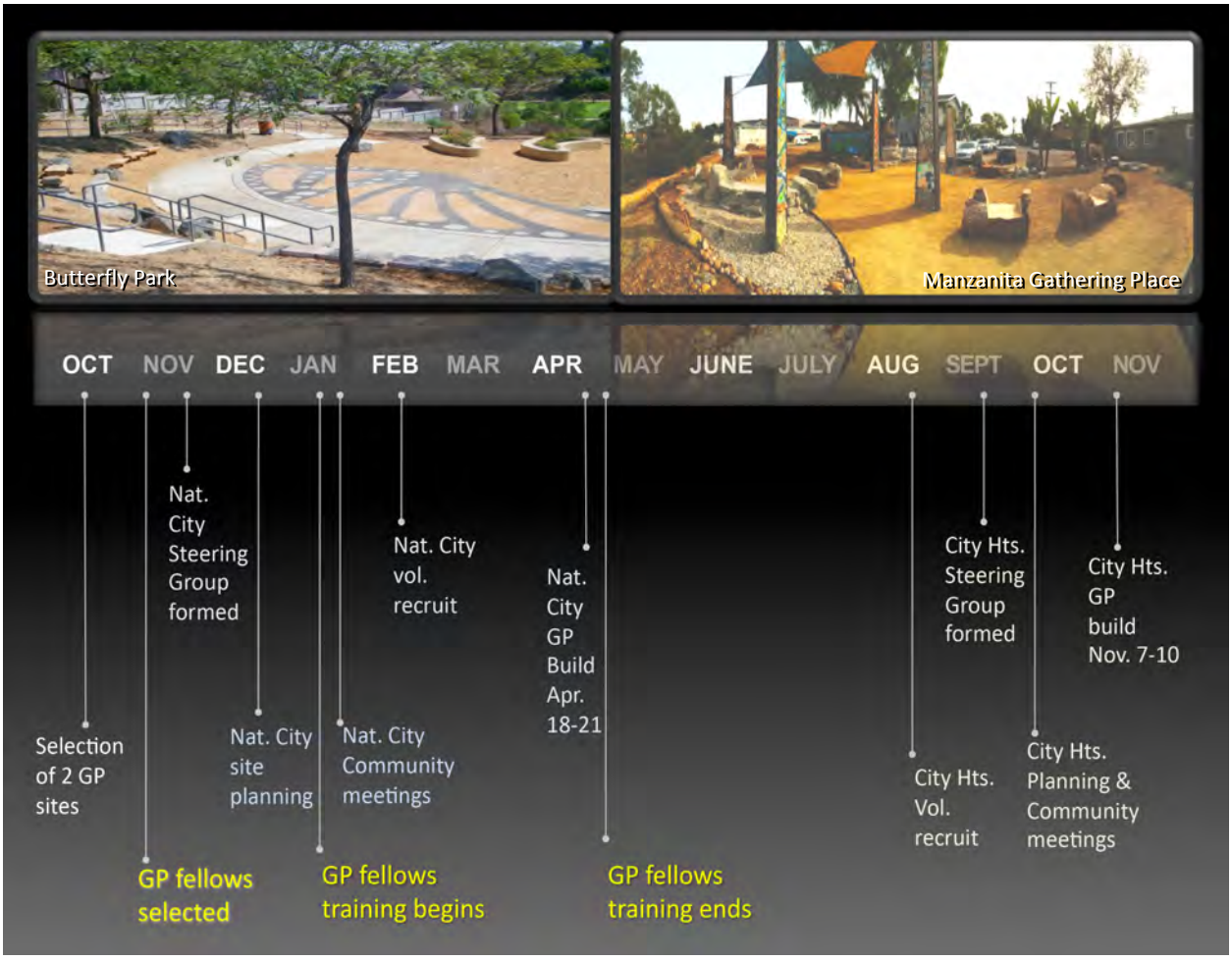
The Manzanita site: "Not very pretty!"

[3] The total cost for project management, materials and supplies was $80,000

The second project was located in the Azalea Park neighborhood of the City Heights area of San Diego. The photo on the previous page shows the Manzanita building site as it looked prior to the building effort. It is a fairly small, 70' by 35', oblong lot located between a road end and the steep edge of Manzanita Canyon that borders the neighborhood. The Canyon is one of many wild and undeveloped canyons that are scattered throughout the San Diego region. Prior to the Gathering Place project, the lot was used frequently by transients for drug use and exchange. For this reason, a fence with barbed wire had been used to separate it from the neighborhood.

For the Manzanita project, ARTS' role shifted from participant-observer to full project coordination. In addition, four Gathering Place fellows were hired to help ARTS with the staffing of the project—three to facilitate the design process, and one for overall project management. The development of this gathering place, dubbed, the Manzanita Gathering Place, was to follow the same 20-week timeline that was used for Butterfly Park. Unfortunately, unanticipated delays, related to City of San Diego permitting process, shortened the community engagement and design aspect of the project by one month, reducing the overall project schedule by a full 20%. Over the course of the one-year Initiative, the San Diego Foundation provided both grant administration and the facilitation evaluation and marketing activities.

San Diego Gathering Place Initiative Timeline



The Purpose of the Research

Evaluating socially engaged public art programs is difficult. Cumbersome and imprecise, the processes and dynamics of art making and social development are difficult to measure, particularly in the short term. As such, their assessment is often given short shrift by both funders and practitioners. This means that very few projects of this type have been studied for their impact on communities or to document best practices.

This evaluation was undertaken as a contribution to both the project's partners and the community at large as they seek to understand how the creation of artistically devised gathering places can best engage and animate the public sphere. It is intended to provide a clearer picture of the Initiative's place in, and impact on, the community cultural ecosystem in which it operates. Through it, we hope the project's local stakeholders will better understand the often-overlooked creative and social dynamics that are so important to the success or failure of community-engaged cultural work. As this knowledge grows, we also hope that these documentary approaches can also be shared with others operating in the growing creative placemaking sector. Considering the influential role the Foundation plays in the San Diego community, we felt this documentation should be approached as both evaluation and ongoing research. Most importantly, our aim was to document the approach that is useful to the Initiative's ongoing work and sustainable for the future.

The Research Process

Approach: From the outset, we viewed our consultant role as investigators rather than auditors. Our inquiry has had three distinct phases. Our first task was to refine and articulate the threshold questions being examined and finalize the study design. Next, we collected, analyzed, and synthesized information needed to determine the degree to which they had been answered. Finally, we here provide our findings and recommendations to give the project's partners a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges the Gathering Place Initiative will face as it steers its future course.

Two conceptual frameworks related to cultural development informed the research design. The first is the idea of a "cultural ecosystem" that views artists, arts organizations, community/audiences, funders, etc., as parts of a system whose interdependent mechanisms are best understood when they are first studied together, and then contextualized by overall social, political, and economic forces. The second is the notion of the "transformational network"[3], which posits that all communities have the potential to organize themselves into "smart networks" that can be harnessed to advance positive change. These frameworks have both influenced the study's design and informed both the collection and interpretation of the data.

To the degree possible, this study was designed to identify causal relationships between the Initiative's activities and their impact on its initiators and the participating communities. To accomplish this, we developed a protocol for data gathering that combined quantitative and

[3] Based on the network-weaving framework described in *Network Weaver Handbook* by June Holley (Athens, Ohio: Network Weaver Publishing, 2012).

qualitative sources. We also worked with the Initiative partners to identify a cohort of participants, training fellows, and partners that accurately represented the breadth and diversity of its constituencies. Our responsibility throughout was to gather data that accurately reflected the broad range of voice and perspective represented by the program's multiple partners, participants, and stakeholders. In doing so, particular attention was paid to soliciting new information and innovative ideas that could contribute to the continuing efforts of the partners to learn from and work with their constituent communities.

***Scope of Inquiry*:** The following are the key questions that framed the research:

The Conduct of the Initiative

- Have the assumptions and ideas that helped to determine the project's design, production, and associated programs proved valid and served their intended purposes?
- What opportunities and challenges emerged that advanced or limited the project's impact?

Impact on the Participants and Their Communities

- What impact has the project had on its core constituencies (site leaders, participants and community members, community and institutional partners, etc.)?
- How has the project affected the patterns and level of public discourse and participation in the involved communities?

Impact on Participating Institutions

- How has the Initiative affected the processes, practices, and perceptions of its initiating partners?
- How is the Initiative regarded within the local arts and community development sectors?

Future Opportunities

- What effective processes and practices developed for the project are applicable to other community development efforts?
- What can the Foundation and other local partners learn from the project that can stimulate similar efforts in the future?

Research Methods

The Initiative partners have identified finding answers to these and other related questions as a central aim of the project. The gathering and analysis of information for this evaluation took place in two phases over an 11-month period from March 2013 to February 2014. A key part of the first phase of the study process was documenting the Initiative partners' definitions of success and the assumptions that informed them. A principal task in the second phase was to test those assumptions against data from the constituencies most intimately involved in the project. Given the San Diego Foundation's concern about how the Initiative might inform future arts-based community-building efforts, our analysis in the third phase has included the identification of strategic opportunities for translating what is learned from the project into sustainable practice. It is also hoped that the product of this effort will help to engage the broader public in a discussion about the value of arts engagement to the quality of community life. Specific methods of inquiry used in the research follow:

Phase One: Planning and Initial Design

1.1 Interviews of project principals. Consultants interviewed key members of the project team and its principal community partners. Through these discussions, we reviewed the history and evolution of the Initiative to better understand the assumptions and expectations that informed its development. Chart 1 shows the core assumptions articulated by the Initiative partners.

1.2 Review of documentary material on development of the project. This included a review of current and past design concepts and work plans, grant applications, and reports. This review will inform the eventual selection of focus group and field interviews.

1.3 Development of a research thesis and logic model. A logic model reflecting programmatic resources, activities, and desired outcomes was devised with all of the Initiative partners. This, in turn, guided the final development of the study protocols and research instruments. (See *Appendix A)*

Core Assumptions Guiding the SDGP Initiative

- Community design/build participation stimulates civic participation and strengthens social cohesion
- There are specific strategies and practices that can increase and sustain the beneficial effects of arts-based community development[1] initiatives.
- There is a synergy between community arts participation and thriving communities where each fosters and sustains the other.
- The Pomegranate Center process and strategies can be learned and successfully implemented by other community-based organizations.
- Those who learn and use Pomegranate Center processes and strategies will be more effective community leaders.
- Gathering Place participation can stimulate the beneficial use of community assets.
- The impact of civically engaged art–making can be amplified through training and participation.
- Community design/build projects can change the character of, and perceptions about public spaces and their uses.
- Regular and sustained involvement with community designed and built public space will increase its impact.
- SDGP will be an effective resource for student learning and civic engagement
- SDGP Strategies will be relevant and useful to other arts based community dev. initiatives.
- Participating communities will derive demonstrable, long-term benefits from SDGP Participation

Phase Two: Field Research

2.1 Field interviews. Individual and small group interviews were conducted with the Gathering Place fellows and San Diego Foundation and ARTS staff to explore the impact and effectiveness of both the training and the Butterfly Park build.

2.2 Field survey. A comprehensive survey instrument was designed to collect comparable data from both of the pilot projects and future build sites. (See *Appendix B.*) It should be noted that the scope of the evaluation did not allow a random survey of the Manzanita neighborhood prior to the project. Therefore, this report reflects data from people and organizations with direct involvement in the Initiative.

• Butterfly Park: Our initial survey cohort was a

representative sample of Butterfly Park constituents who were contacted by mail six months following the completion of the project. Mail-only solicitation was necessary because email addresses had not been collected from participants.

Survey cohort: Our survey included staff from both the Pomegranate Center and ARTS, local partner organization representatives, Gathering Place fellows, design workshop participants, advisory group members, and site build volunteers. These data were used primarily for comparison purposes as a way to measure the differences (if any) between the Pomegranate and ARTS lead projects.

- Manzanita: For the second Gathering Place effort, ARTS assumed the primary project leadership role while the Pomegranate Center provided coaching and mentoring. Given that one of the Initiative's primary objectives was to assess the transferability of the Pomegranate model, this build provided the richest opportunity for our research. For this reason, this report relies primarily on the data collected from the local residents and organizations that participated in the Manzanita site build. The majority of our data comes from three sources: targeted focus groups, one-on-one and on-site interviews, and the comprehensive survey that was also used for the Butterfly Park.

  Survey cohort: Initiative partner staff and fellows were included again along with community participants. The Manzanita site build volunteer registrations provided us with the most complete list for survey outreach within the community. Of the 206 people who participated in the four-day Manzanita building process, 20% responded to the survey and another 50 volunteers were interviewed on-site. The majority of these respondents reported participating in at least two other gathering place activities.

2.3 Network mapping. Two weeks after the completion of the Manzanita gathering place, consultants conducted a network-mapping workshop with core participants. The goal of this exercise was to document the newly connected formal and informal partnerships and networks that had manifested in support of the Manzanita project. We see this web of influence, expertise, and resources as a significant community asset that has the potential for manifesting significant benefits to both the community and the ongoing Initiative.

Report Format: The purpose of this report is to summarize the consultants' findings and present recommendations for short- and long-term responses to the issues identified in the research. The report is divided into four parts:

- This section, the **introduction**, is provided as **Part One**.
- The consultants' key **findings** are presented in **Part Two**.
- Our **recommendations** are offered in **Part Three**.
- An **appendix** of documentary material is provided in **Part Four**.

Part Two:
Findings

This research was initiated to help the San Diego Foundation and its organizational partners learn from their significant investment in the development and implementation of the San Diego Gathering Place Initiative. The study findings are organized in four sections. Each section summarizes our analysis and interpretation of data collected in the following areas:

V. **The Conduct of the Initiative**

VI. **Impact on Participants**

VII. **Impact on Communities**

VIII. **Impact on Participating Institutions**

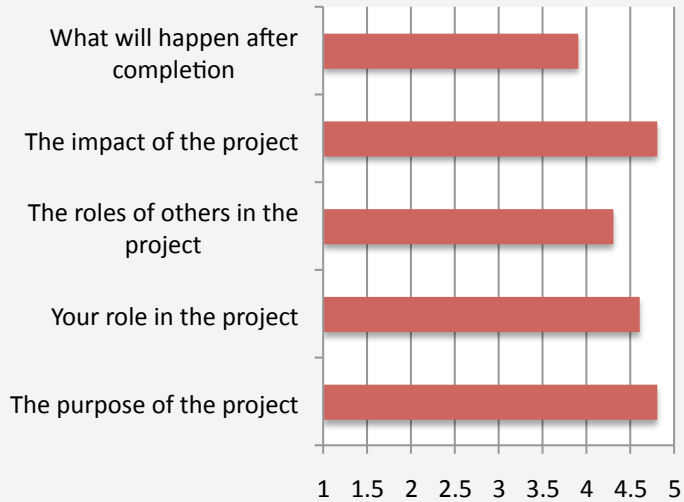
I. THE CONDUCT OF THE INITIATIVE



1.1 Participation in the Manzanita project was broad, deep, and diverse. The community engagement aspect of the Pomegranate model is very intensive. Over the course of the 17-week Manzanita Canyon project, community members had multiple opportunities to participate as active collaborators in the designing and building of the Manzanita Gathering Place. These included two community orientation and design meetings, a youth-focused design charette, five pre-build art-making workshops, and the final, four-day build. Our estimated total for attendance at these events was 400. Extrapolating from our survey data, we estimate that 50% of the project's participants took part in three or more of these events with 55%% joining in at some time during the final building process. About half of these build volunteers came from the seven contiguous zip codes that surround the Azalea Park Gathering Place site. Of the remainder, almost all came from San Diego and nearby cities such as National City, Chula Vista, Oceanside, and El Cajon. While comprehensive demographic data on all participants was not available, based on our review of the site build volunteer roster participant ages ranged from 4 to 79 with a median age of 31.[4]

1.2 Manzanita's compacted schedule was a challenge for the project's first-time organizers. The San Diego Gathering Place Timeline on page 3, shows the schedule and flow of both the Butterfly Park and Manzanita projects. Looking at them side by side, it is easy to see how the loss of a month in a four-month schedule intensifies an already highly concentrated workflow. Needless to say, this increased both the learning curve and the stress experienced by the Manzanita leadership team. Based on their feedback, it is safe to say that this was among the most challenging aspects of the Manzanita experience for them. It is to their credit that they made the necessary adjustments and saw the project through. From our review of community feedback, it is also clear that very few outside the project's inner circle of organizers were aware of the problems affecting the schedule.

Chart 1: Community Member Understanding of the Project *(5 = very high, 1 = very low)*



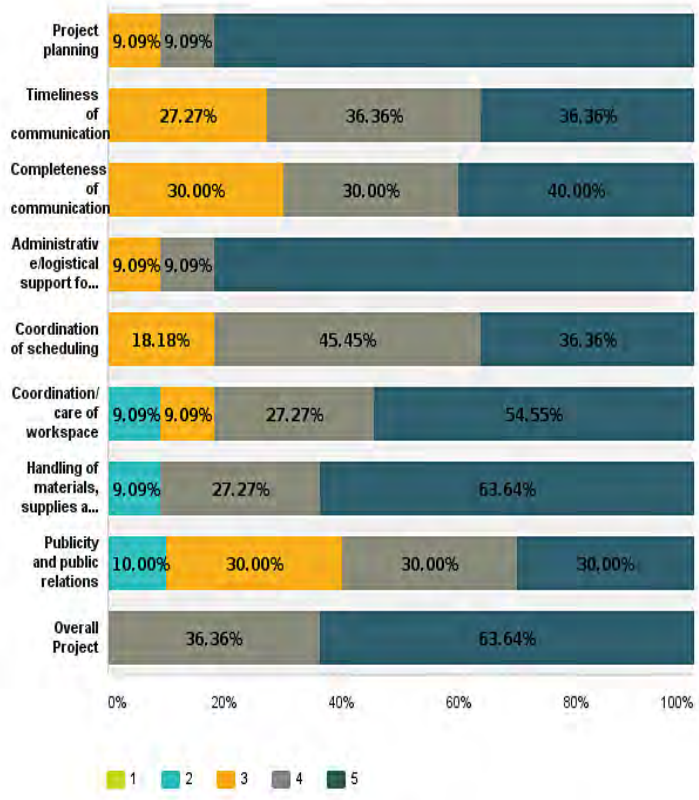
[4] According to 2010 census figures, the median age of City Heights (mid-city) is 29.

1.3 Most Gathering Place participants had a clear understanding of the project's organization and intentions. Our survey participants were asked to reflect on how well they understood the Initiative's intentions and the roles of the people involved. For projects seeking to stimulate civic participation and networking, the continuity of communication is paramount. Given the number and variety of people and activities involved in this project, an inconsistent message could have been damaging, particularly in a small neighborhood like Azalea Park. This did not appear to have occurred. Using a 5-point scale (5 = very effective; 1 = not at all effective), Chart 1 shows that a significant majority of our respondents were very clear about the project's purpose and their understanding of the project's impact, with an average 4.8 in both areas. There also seemed to have been a good understanding of both personal roles (4.6) and the responsibilities of others (4.3).

1.4 The post construction future is somewhat less clear to all participants. While still quite positive, respondents' "understanding about what happens after the project's completion" was a less robust 3.9. It is interesting to note that most of the written responses in this section of the survey also reflected frustration or lack of clarity about the nature of post-build activities and responsibilities. Most mentioned uncompleted build tasks and the need for trashcans. It should be noted that in the weeks following the build, the supervision of the site transitioned from ARTS to the Azalea Park Neighborhood Association, (APNA) who began organizing a series of follow-up events aimed at addressing these issues. (*See Appendix E., APNA Parkster Newsletter*)

1.5 The conduct of the Manzanita project was well regarded by study participants. When asked to rate the effectiveness of the project, 82% said either effective or very effective for the nine specific aspects of rated. (see Chart 2) This feedback also shows that 100% of our respondents felt the overall project was well run with nearly two thirds saying very effective. While still quite positive, communication (*timeliness and completeness*) and publicity are the only areas that reflected some concern by participants.

Chart 2: GP Project Aspects Rated by Community Members
(5= Very Effective, 1 = Not At All Effective)





1.6 The fast-track design/build process was both effective and stress producing. One striking characteristic of the Pomegranate model is its strict adherence to a fast-track design/build process. This typically manifests as a five to seven month start-to-finish schedule. Given the challenges with permitting the Manzanita build, the schedule was further compressed into a four-month timeline. As was indicated above, this brought significant pressure on a project that was led from top to bottom by a team of artists, architects, and organizers who were in essence all Gathering Place rookies. It is also clear that the rapid pace and quick turnaround also contributed significantly to its ability to attract and maintain community interest and participation. Many community participants referenced the speed of the process as particularly impressive. This enthusiasm was reinforced by the active participation of well-developed community-organizing leadership from the Azalea Park Neighborhood Association and the community's long history of collaboration.

1.7 Fellow-led project management was critical to the success of the project. While the original project design envisioned a team approach to project management, one of the four Gathering Place fellows hired ultimately assumed this role. This arrangement benefited the project because the manager was able to devote extensive personal time to the project, and was very well suited for this role. There was a consensus among the project partners that relying on sweat equity for this critical function is not a sustainable approach for future projects.



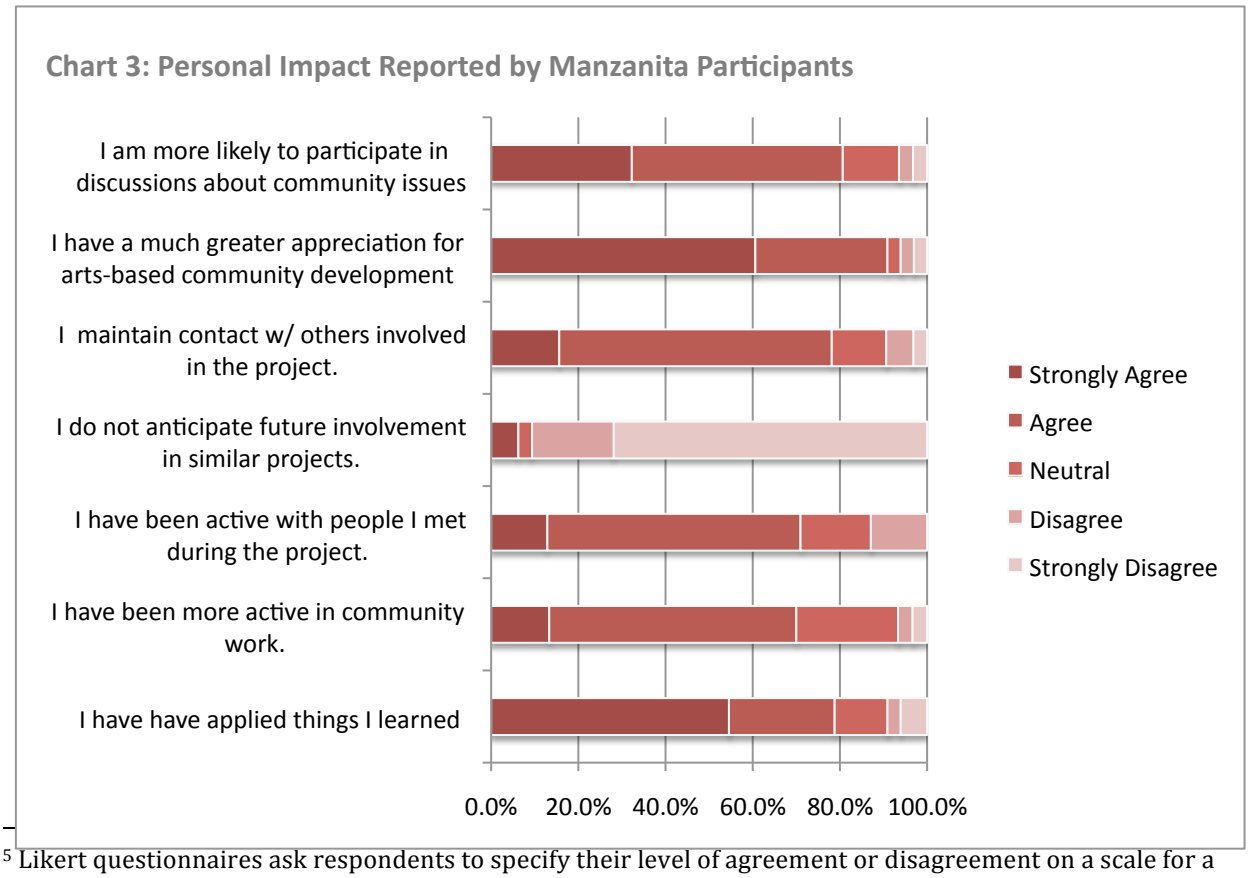
II. IMPACT ON PARTICIPANTS

Our exploration of the Initiative's impact asked respondents to reflect on the project from two different perspectives—first from a personal perspective and then from the community at large. This part of the report reflects individual responses from both community members and fellows.

Also, findings in this section, and the two that follow, are based, in part, on survey questions that employ a Likert scale[5] that asked respondents to indicate the level of their agreement with various statements concerning the program's impact. In most instances, our analysis of this data will compare the combined levels of agreement (*strongly agree* and *agree*) and disagreement (*disagree* and *strongly disagree*) while noting particularly strong sentiments in either direction.

Impact on community members

2.1 The majority of respondents say they are working more with their neighbors and colleagues. Our survey shows that 76% of the community respondents who participated in the project say they are keeping in touch with each other. In terms of community activity, 63% say they have been actively involved with someone they met during the project and 62% say they have been more involved in their neighborhood. (See Chart 3)



[5] Likert questionnaires ask respondents to specify their level of agreement or disagreement on a scale for a series of statements to capture the intensity of their feelings for a given item.

2.2 New learning has taken place and is being applied. While the focus of most Gathering Place activities on stimulating involvement and connection among community members, it is interesting to note that 77% of our respondents also appear to have learned some things through their involvement that have been useful to them in other circumstances. This was particularly evident in comments we received from parents, and particularly young people, one of whom shared, "I never thought all those trashy stumps and rocks and things could end up being so beautiful. Now I see them differently."

The gathering place itself was what I expected. Where I learned the most was how great it is when everyone to works with each other to get stuff done.

Manzanita Community Volunteer

2.3 Respondents express a greater willingness to participate in similar programs. As was indicated the previous section. in Chart 2, community survey participants rated the effectiveness of the overall project highly with 100% reflecting positively on the "overall project". This positive impression is also reflected in the finding that 84% disagree with the "reverse" statement: *I do not anticipate future involvement in similar projects* and the same percentage agree that they *have a better appreciation for how local art and artists can contribute to community betterment.*

2.4 Community members say they will be more actively involved in community-related activities and civic discourse. Perhaps the most important indicator of people's feelings about their community is their willingness to engage their neighbors around common issues. Among our respondents, 69% agreed that they are *more likely to participate in discussions about community issues*. Given that this was a central aim of the project's sponsors, this is a noteworthy finding. It should also be noted that 25% of the study participants chose "neutral" as their level of agreement. This and the small number of "strongly agree" responses is an indication that this increased openness is tentative at best.



Impact on Gathering Place fellows

The artists and community workers who participated in the week Gathering Place Fellows training program have been identified as both stimulus and driver for the spread of the Pomegranate Center methods in San Diego. Given this, the 23 fellows were selected as much for their leadership potential as their creative capacities. And although they joined the cohort as individuals, by the completion of their training, their feedback indicates that most also saw themselves as part of a new learning community. Also, because all of the fellows participated in the Butterfly Park part of the

Initiative (only four had significant roles in the Manzanita build), these findings relied on feedback from both projects along with a post-training evaluation conducted by the Pomegranate Center.

I think building meaningful things with friends and neighbors is the most rewarding experience. I am attracted to the possibility of a gathering place for my own community.

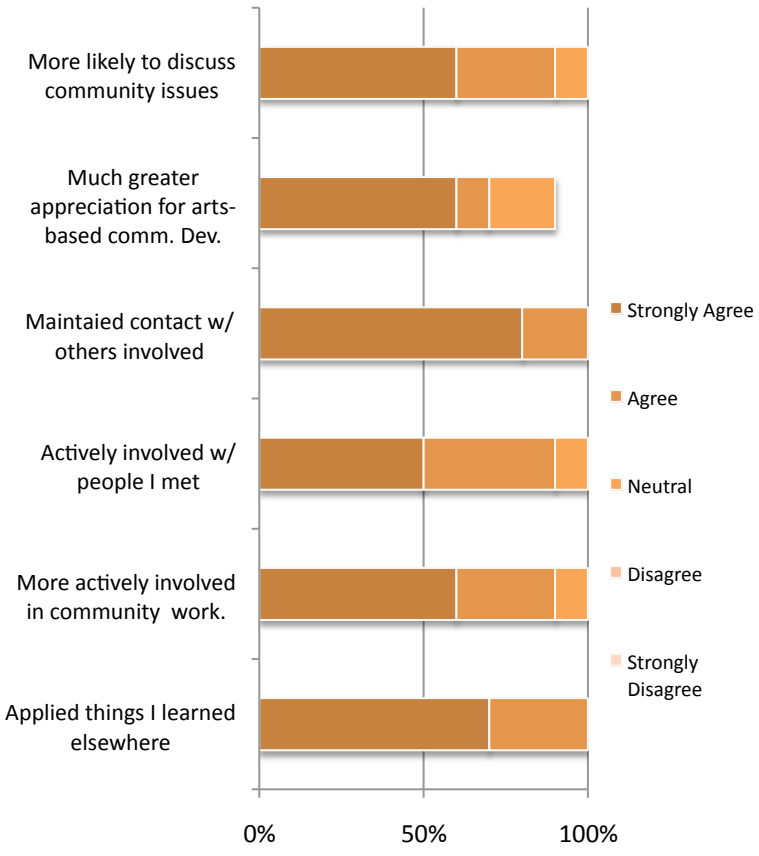
Gathering Place Fellow

2.5 The fellowship training was well received by participants. The Pomegranate Center training evaluation shows that the cohort reflected quite positively on the various aspects of the curriculum. Asked to rate eight core Gathering Place training elements in terms of their "relevance to your work," responses averaged a relatively high 3.5 on a 4-point scale (*4 = extremely relevant; 1= not at all relevant*). It is interesting to note that those fellows who were absent from two or more of the Butterfly Park community-engagement activities rated the training's relevance 15% lower than the rest of the cohort. This is not surprising and reinforces the critical importance of the hands-on field learning aspects of the training.

The following findings are based primarily on feedback contained in the Gathering Place Survey and a focus group conducted in October of 2013:

2.6 Gathering Place fellows reflect very positively on their field experience. Overall, fellows regarded the build process very positively with an aggregate rating of all elements of 4.33 on the 5-point scale (*5 = very effective; 1 = not at all effective*). Interview and survey commentary also point to the building experience as the "place where it all came together and started to make sense." Others described the hands-on community engagement activities as crucial to their ability to both translate and transfer their classroom experience "to the practical realities of the real world."

Chart 4. Impact of GP Participation on Fellows



2.7 The fellows' opinions about the conduct of the build process differ somewhat from other program participants. When comparing fellows with the full cohort of participants, fellows rated the various Gathering Place project aspects slightly higher, with one exception in the area of public relations. Given their intimate connection to the Initiative, this certainly could be expected. Surprisingly, the opposite is the case when it comes to their understanding of the aims and various roles associated with it. (This lack of role clarity is also addressed in finding *2.11* below.)

100% (of responding fellows) say that they have integrated aspects of the training into their work and nearly 80% indicated a greater understanding of the power of arts-based community development strategies.

2.8 Fellows say they are making good use of the things they learned during their training. When asked to reflect on how their Gathering Place experience has affected their professional work and relationships, fellows are almost universal in affirming the positive influence of the training. Chart 4, shows that some of the strongest impact has been on their individual practice where 100% say that they have applied Gathering Place learned practices elsewhere. Given the fact that none of the fellows were newcomers to the community arts field, we find this particularly noteworthy.

2.9 Fellows say they have increased their involvement in community development activities. Another striking indicator of the simulative effect of the training is the 90% of the fellows who report greater involvement in both community-oriented work and issues-based discussions. Whether this increase has been spurred by greater interest or new relationship opportunities is hard to tell.

2.10 The Gathering Place experience has fostered a new network among the fellows. Chart 4 also shows that since the completion of their formal involvement in the Gathering Place program, fellows remain active with members of the cohort and others they met during their involvement. Through interviews and our analysis of the Gathering Place networking activity (see also *4.10* below), we see further evidence of a continuing interaction within the group.

2.11 There was some lack of clarity about the role of the fellows for the second build. As with all learning groups of this sort, there is a range of expertise and capacity that makes it difficult to assure the equitable distribution of opportunity. While a few of the graduated fellows were given an active, compensated role in the Manzanita Canyon project, most of the others were not. Based on our discussions with various fellows, it's clear that some had an expectation of continuing involvement from the fellowship training. The lack of clarity around this issue has generated some resentment within the group at a critical time in the life of the emerging Gathering Place network.

III. IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY



3.1 Respondents see their community as stronger as a result of the Gathering Place experience. The survey asked participants to reflect on how the project has altered attitudes and perceptions about their neighborhood in particular areas, such as community identity and sense of resourcefulness.

Improved community identity is chief among the community vitality indicators identified in the literature on creative placemaking effectiveness. The case made is quite simple: Artistic improvements to the physical character of a place will positively affect perceptions of and attitudes about that place. The supporting research[6] also shows that public space developments (streetscapes, parks, commons, trails, etc.) that incorporate citizen participation have an even greater potential for stimulating these kinds of attitude changes among local community members.

For the Azalea Park community members responding to our Gathering Place survey, this is borne out in the fact that 77% report that *there is a stronger sense of identity and belonging in the community* and 85% feel that they have the capacity to *work together effectively to develop the resources needed for future*. (*See Chart 5, next page*)

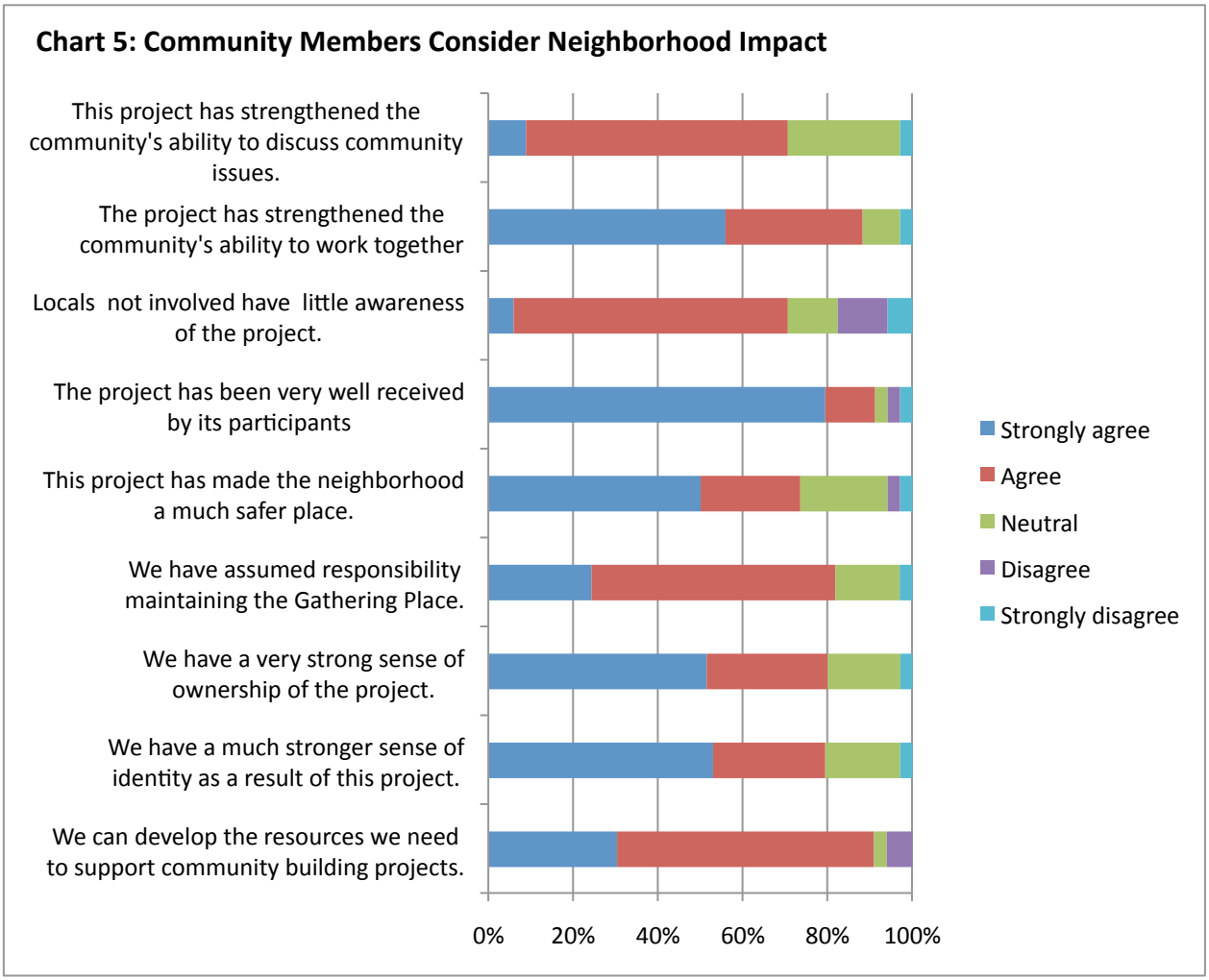
"We really believe that if we increase the arts and increase beautification, it really helps increase the safety of our community,"

Ricardo Moran, president of the Azalea Park Neighborhood Association

3.2 The Manzanita Gathering Place project has generated a high level of positive media about the Azalea Park neighborhood. Media coverage generated as a result the Gathering Place effort has reflected positively on both the project, and the surrounding community. A Nexus search of coverage from the project's inception in September 2013, to March of 2014, shows that 3580 items about the project appeared in various print and digital publications. These ranged from reports on the project at various stages of development, explorations of how creative placemaking might impact cultural and community development policy, to pieces about innovative landscape design and water conversation.

[6] "Creative Placemaking": Ann Markesun, Ann Gadwa, 2012, The Mayors' Institute on City Design, National Endowment for the Arts .

3.3 Local participants also say their community is safer in the wake of their placemaking effort. Another of the more fundamental benefits attributed to effective creative placemaking is improved community safety. This is particularly relevant for the Manzanita Canyon area because of the derelict nature of the road-end property prior to the project. While qualitative evidence of the project's impact on neighborhood security will not be available for some time, 70% of our participants did say that there was an increased sense of safety accruing from the project. Given the growing body of research that correlates perceptions of safety with documented reductions of crime and increased security[7], this should be treated as a very positive early outcome of the Initiative.



3.4 Community members report a very strong sense of ownership for their collaborative undertaking. The community engagement processes employed during the initiative emphasized active listening

[7] Miriam Pfisterer. "Understanding Crime and the Perceptions of Safety in Providence's Parks," Center for Environmental Studies, Brown University, May 2002, http://envstudies.brown.edu/abstracts/2001-2002_abstracts/2002_Pfisterer_abstract.pdf.

Charles C. Branas et al. "A Difference-in-Differences Analysis of Health, Safety, and Greening Vacant Urban Space," *American Journal of Epidemiology*, December 1, 2011, 174: 1296–1306.

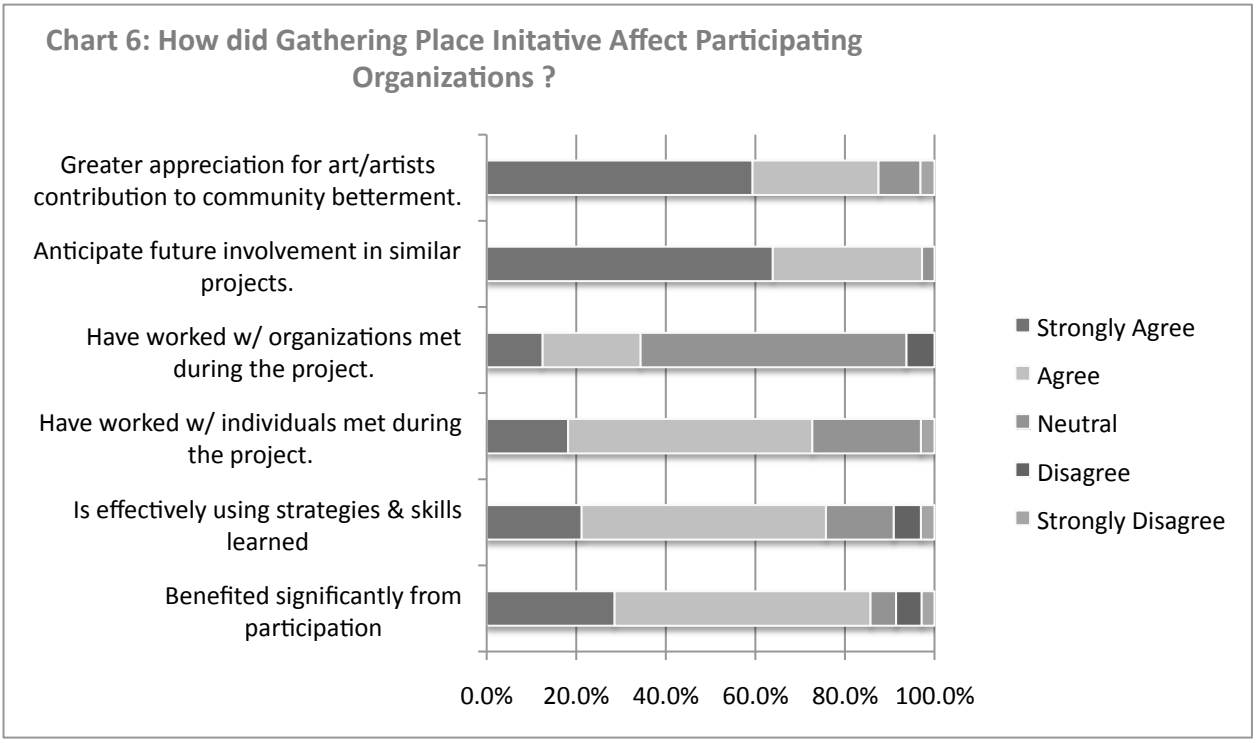
and dialogue. From both their survey responses and their active participation, it appears that community members felt both heard and included in the enterprise. Just over 80% of survey participants agreed that the community had a *strong sense of ownership of the Gathering Place project.* Commentary to our questions about community ownership of the project were also among the most passionate responses in the survey with statements like "this is the first time I have ever really felt a part of any community," and "Azalea Park is becoming a real home."

3.5 Most respondents believe the community's commitment to the project will be sustained. Another significant aim of the Gathering Place initiative was to provoke a sense of ownership and stewardship for the project within the participating communities. In the short term, this seems to have occurred. Just over 77% agreed that the community has assumed "full responsibility for its ongoing development and maintenance."

3.6 Participants feel that direct involvement was critical to the project's success. One of our survey's Likert statements asserted that those who were not directly involved had "very little awareness and understanding of the project." Just fewer than 68% agreed with this contention. Since we could not include a general population sample as a part of our study, we have no way of discerning the veracity of this sentiment. But we do see this is an indirect indicator of the strong sense of ownership and pride that the project has engendered among its active supporters. It also points to the importance of continuing to expand the Gathering Place community of support.

IV. IMPACT ON ORGANIZATIONS

For this set of questions, we focused on respondents from the project's partner organizations. These included the project principals, Pomegranate Center, ARTS, the San Diego Foundation, and the Azalea Park Neighborhood Association, community agencies such as the Clark Middle School and San Diego Planning Department as well as the dozens of small businesses and community-based agencies that pitched in during the build. (See *Appendix C, Manzanita Gathering Place Organizational Participants.*) Our questions for this group focused on how participation influenced their organization in three areas: learning, network development and awareness, and attitudes related to creative placemaking. Our analysis is also presented in two sections: Participating Local Organizations and Businesses, and Gathering Place Partner Organizations.



Participating Local Organizations and Businesses

4.1 Participating organizations report multiple benefits from their Gathering Place participation. The Pomegranate model places a strong emphasis on community collaboration in all phases of the Gathering Place development. Data from multiple study sources[8] show that participating community organizations not only joined in the community engagement process but also came away with strategies and techniques that have been useful to them in their own work. Those cited included strategies for community engagement, civic discourse, volunteer coordination, youth development, and arts-based community development. Chart 6, above, shows that fully 75% of organizational respondents reported "using strategies and skills learned during the project." An even larger group (86%) agreed that their organization had "benefited significantly from their

[8] Interviewees, survey commentaries, and survey data.

participation." This sentiment was personified by one interviewee, who stated that her "staff has grown stronger as a team through our work together during the building phase of the project."

4.2 Network building appears to be stronger among individual participants than organizations. Our continuing studies of effective organizational partnerships show that healthy and sustained collaborations are most often instigated through the development of strong individual relationships. This is certainly borne out in our study data. Since the completion of the Manzanita Canyon Gathering Place, a minority of our organizational respondents (35%) report working with other organizations as a result of their participation. On the other hand, a fairly large 76% of the organizational respondents indicate that they have worked with individuals they met during the project. The jury is still out as to whether these relationships will precipitate new and deeper connections within the nascent network of community-invested organizations that have emerged from the project. The network-building opportunities spurred by the project are addressed in greater depth in finding 4.10.

4.3 Participating organizations view arts-based community development as a new opportunity. Attitudes expressed by organizational representatives about arts-based community building are among the most affirmative in our study. Nearly 90% of these respondents reported a greater appreciation of how arts-centered strategies "can contribute to community betterment." An even larger 97% of this group indicated that they "anticipate future involvement in similar projects." Written comments from community agency representatives mention specific areas where cultural resources could be used to advance their organizational missions. Chief among these were education, economic development, public safety, and civic engagement.



Impact on Gathering Place Partner Organizations

The most important goal articulated in the Initiative's logic model was the establishment of the Pomegranate Center's creative placemaking strategies as an essential community development practice in San Diego. Put simply, the project partners saw the Initiative as both a showcase and a way of transferring the Pomegranate model. The Initiative was designed to give the San Diego partners a learning trial by fire and to see how well Pomegranate's training and mentoring had been assimilated. While it is far too early to draw any substantial conclusions about whether this goal has been achieved, our findings indicate that the Initiative has made a good start.

4.4 The Manzanita project was a robust test of the Initiative's principal strategic objective. As the second of the two builds, the Manzanita project proceeded according to plan with ARTS as the project administrator, with on-the-ground project management and design coordination provided by two of the Gathering Place fellows. With Pomegranate playing an advisory role, the principal responsibility for shepherding the project fell on the shoulders of this untested team of collaborators. This was intended as both a learning opportunity for ARTS and the fellows, and a test of concept for the Initiative partners. The truncated schedule caused by permitting delays only increased the difficult nature of the endeavor. In a true stress-test fashion, the pilot pushed the organizational and individual players into unfamiliar territory under less than ideal conditions.

…the ARTS-led Manzanita project showed that the Pomegranate model could be learned and applied effectively by a team of local organizations and creative leaders.

4.5 ARTS stewardship of the project should be considered successful. For many of the reasons cited in finding *3.5* above, we believe that the ARTS-led Manzanita project showed that the Pomegranate Model could be learned and applied effectively by a team of local organizations and creative leaders. And, despite numerous bumps in the road, the project was completed on time, under budget, and, based on the feedback reviewed earlier in this report, was well received by the Azalea Park community. This is not to say that it was easy. The project clearly took a toll on ARTS, an organization that was in transition physically and programmatically at the time of the Initiative.

Some key contributors to this outcome include:

- *Adaptive capacities*. ARTS and the other Manzanita partners exhibited the ability to improvise and regroup in the face of unanticipated challenges.
- *An asset-based orientation*. Though new to the Azalea Park neighborhood, the ARTS team recognized and capitalized on the community's invaluable indigenous asset base. These included a well-organized and trusted neighborhood association, a neighborhood culture of collaboration, previous public art experience, and a robust local artist community.
- *Flexible support*. Both the San Diego Foundation and the project's principal investor were patient and accommodating over the course of the project.
- *A strong collaborative skill set*. Both ARTS staff and the project manager were well versed in the art and science of give and take.
- *A learning culture*. As an arts learning organization, ARTS showed that it is comfortable with simultaneous learning and leading.

4.6 The high quality of the organizations and individuals involved was a key contributor to the project's success. As we consider the factors contributing to the project's positive outcomes, it is important to recognize that no effort like this starts from scratch. This is certainly the case here. The Manzanita project benefited significantly from the considerable depth of experience and commitment exhibited by its key individual and organizational partners. Given the considerable

attention paid to fellow, partner, and site selection, this should not be seen as just a fortunate turn of events, but rather a successful and intended outcome of the Initiative's design.



4.7 The melding of the ARTS mission and Gathering Place participation posed a challenge. The Pomegranate model is based on decades of experience working primarily with adult leadership and participation. As such, the two Gathering Place projects did not fully align with the ARTS mission-focus on creative youth development and healing. Moving forward, the challenge to ARTS will be to more fully translate and integrate the participant design/build/own model into a program with its youth focus. This is an opportunity, not a barrier. In the future, young people need to be involved in both design and leadership as a basic aspect of the project.

4.8 Pomegranate Center's initial undertaking as a systemic change agent took an important first step. It's important to note that although the Pomegranate Center has over two decades' experience developing and sharing their model, this initiative cast them in a new role as an organizational mentor and community education resource. This manifested primarily through the Initiative's second build where, for the first time in its history, Pomegranate ceded leadership to another organization. Functioning as an observer and coach, the Center's staff had to learn how to step back in the middle of a fast-track building process and allow an untested team to find their own way. This was no easy task, particularly for an artist-led organization that relies so much on its long-learned capacity to recognize and respond quickly to the opportunities and challenges that inevitably emerge in the midst of the creative community-building process.

4.9 The San Diego Foundation's participation in the initiative has been beneficial on many levels. First and foremost the Foundation's steady hand as the administrator and manager of the donor-directed fund that provided the principal support for the project has been essential. We would also observe that the Foundation's leadership and influence has been as important to the project's success as its financial stewardship. From the project's inception, the Foundation thoughtfully sought to balance its need to avoid undue influence with its abiding interest in advocating for and learning from a new project that had the potential to benefit the broader community. While this was not an easy path to navigate, the fact is that the Initiative has established a new community of learning that holds significant promise for the future. This would not have been possible without the Foundation's judicious application of both arms-length and hands-on facilitation. In the aftermath of complex enterprises such as this one, these kinds of relational attributes often go unrecognized. Looking forward, we believe that the flexibility, responsiveness, and respect that characterized the

Foundation's support of this Initiative are valuable assets that should be treated with the same level of stewardship as the Foundation's financial resources.

4.10 A potentially powerful network of experienced community builders and community-invested organizations has emerged from the initiative. Put simply, human networks are sets of relationships and the patterns of interaction they create. These patterns influence the quality of communication, the likelihood of collaboration, and, most importantly, the likelihood of innovation in the network.

The Gathering Place Initiative has made a significant investment in stimulating these kinds of vital connections among people, places, and organizations in service to building a stronger sense of community in Azalea Park. The *Map of the Network Emerging from the Manzanita Gathering Place Project* (Chart 7) on the following page is a graphic representation of the number and diversity of project-related connections made by just six of the core participants working on the Manzanita Canyon project. Over the course of the project's unfolding these six involved over 100 organizations in its development. It's important to point out that all of these people and organizations were active participants who contributed to the project in some way—many in significant ways, like fabricating metalwork, providing expensive construction equipment, or donating meals for 200 volunteers. In many cases, these institutional connections represent relationships with several individuals who, in turn represent even more connections. In this rendering of the map the thicker lines represent more recent relationships so it is easy to see that project precipitated many new associations. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. There is no doubt that a more in depth mapping of this network would reveal an even broader and more diverse web of resources, influence and connection.

Questions for Network Weavers

Communities are built on connections, and better connections usually provide better opportunities.

What are better connections, and how do they lead to more effective and productive communities?

How do we build connected communities that create, and take advantage of, opportunities in their region or marketplace?

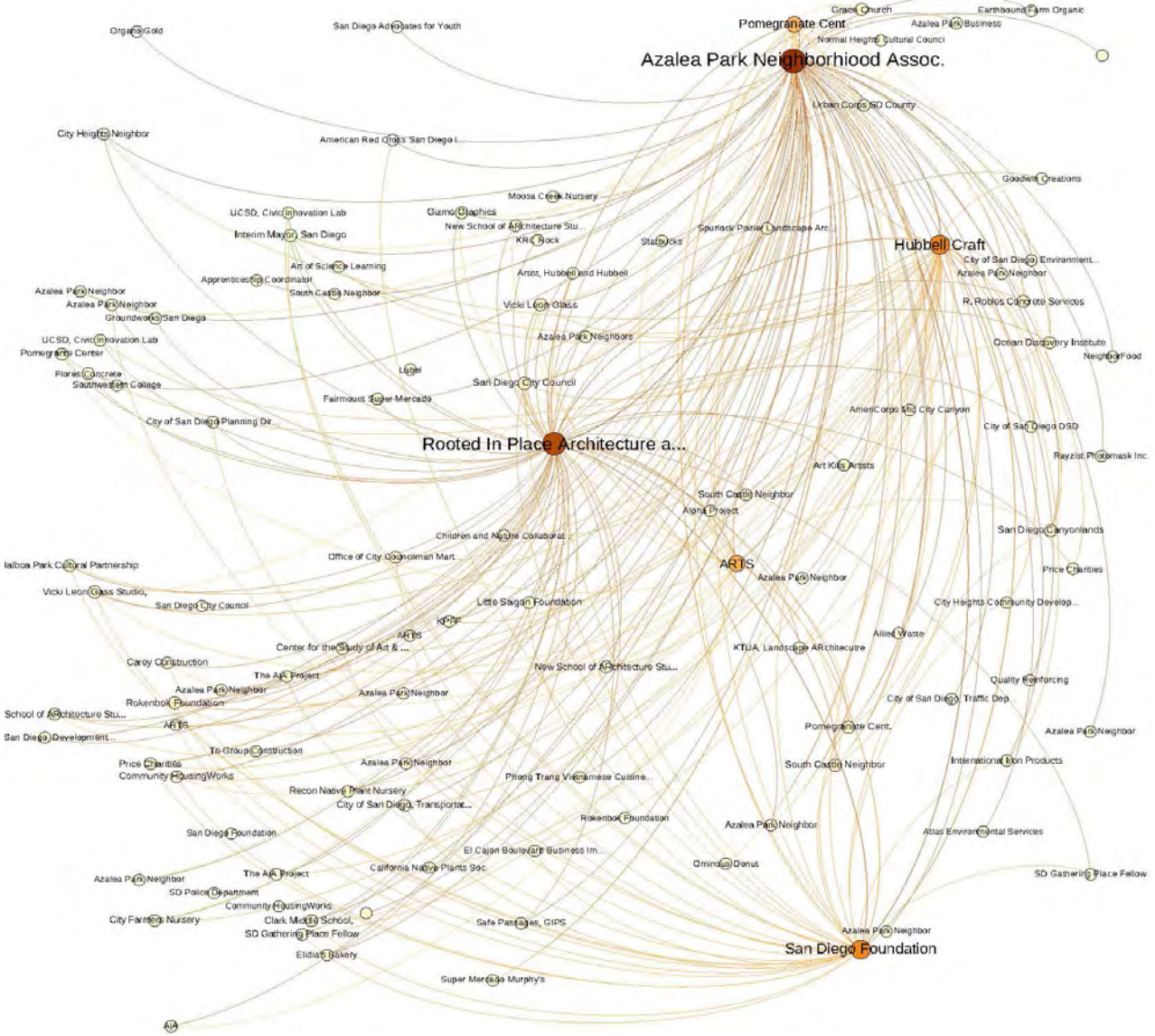
How does success emerge from the complex interactions within communities?

From "Building Smart Communities through Network Weaving" by Valdis Krebs and June Holley, http://www.orgnet.com/BuildingNetworks.pdf

The Manzanita network is a powerful illustration of how effective community organizing and creative leadership can stimulate neighbors and friends to work together for the common good—in this case, to literally turn a blighted spot of land into an inviting, new neighborhood commons. As such, it is a snapshot of a powerful moment of collaboration in support of a very successful onetime event. But it should also be seen as a portrait of the dynamic community-building potential that has been stimulated by the Gathering Place Initiative. Considered in this way, this map is a graphic depiction of a valuable community asset that could be further developed and called upon to advance future initiatives.

From our perspective, we would observe that this nascent network might, in fact, be the most valuable return on the investments made in this Initiative. We would encourage the Initiative's supporters to recognize, though, that to have the staying power needed to fulfill their potential networks also requires continued nurturing and stimulation. Some network experts refer to this kind of support as "network weaving." (Additional information on network development is provided in Appendix __.)

Chart 7: A Map of the Network Emerging From the Manzanita Gathering Place Project



Part Three: *Recommendations*

The following recommendations are provided to inform and guide the San Diego Foundation's future efforts to advance creative placemaking and arts-based community development as viable community development strategies in the San Diego region. These recommendations serve multiple purposes. First and foremost, they suggest ways to advance the Gathering Place model, taking into account the challenges and opportunities that we have discussed previously in this report. We are hopeful that some of the ideas and observations that follow will respectfully challenge some assumptions and provoke further inquiry into the dynamic arts-based community development and its implications for the emerging creative placemaking field. With this in mind, our recommendations address two different yet interrelated constituencies; first, what we are calling the San Diego Gathering Place partnership, and second, the individual partner organizations.

1. Recommendations for the San Diego Gathering Place Partnership

1.1 Take the steps necessary to strengthen and sustain the collaboration that has supported the Gathering Place Initiative. There is a growing understanding among community-invested organizations and leaders that sustained community development requires collaborative efforts that tackle issues systemically. This is because many community issues are diffuse, multidisciplinary, multiagency, multi-stakeholder, and multi-sector in nature. As such, addressing interrelated issues such as education, safety, and community identity requires collective learning and action by the stakeholders who are both involved and invested. This approach to making social impact recognizes the need for building partnerships among community and organizational stakeholders that are accountable for shared objectives.

We see the Gathering Place Initiative as having planted a seed for a partnership in support of growing creative placemaking practices in the San Diego region. We strongly encourage the San Diego Foundation, ARTS, and the Pomegranate Center to explore ways that they can continue to work together and involve others. The successful first steps taken by this Initiative provide a promising foundation for advancing the Gathering Place approach. It is our experience, though, that the window of opportunity for leveraging the learning and excitement rising from this kind of "success" is often quite short. As such, we encourage relatively swift follow-up:

1.2 Commit to long-haul learning. It is important for the Gathering Place partners to recognize that the Manzanita build was a first-time endeavor for everyone involved. Almost every aspect of the enterprise was new to both the leadership team and the community in which it manifested. These included community organizing, partnership development, logistics, finance, communication, project management, volunteer coordination, and most certainly navigating the city permitting processes.

Learning from projects like this requires repetition and the perspective of time.

Learning from projects like this requires repetition and the perspective of time. It is a fact that no two communities are the same. So it goes without saying that no two collaborative community projects are the same. There are common patterns and similarities that become apparent to experienced practitioners over time. But there are no easy formulas or templates that can be effectively applied to these kinds of projects. Successful practitioners instead rely on instinct, training, adaptive capacities, and most importantly what they have learned from previous experience.

To be effective in San Diego, the techniques, skills, and strategies that constitute the Pomegranate model need to be practiced over and over. The aptitudes, awareness, and relationships required to sustain the model can only be developed through collaborative iterative

learning. As the San Diego Gathering Place partnership considers its future, we encourage you to make sustained hands-on learning and documentation a major priority.

1.3 Convene the Gathering Place community to reflect on what has been learned and consider the next steps. If a formal Gathering Place partnership is, in fact, initiated, an important first step would be to bring stakeholders together to reflect on the Initiative's accomplishments and potential future. This could provide a forum that would allow the field to learn from itself, promote innovation and self-organizing, and give local practitioners and supporters a chance to weigh in on such questions as:

Even when roles and responsibilities are clearly articulated early on, first-time initiatives almost always encounter role confusion.

- How can we leverage the Initiative's story to increase awareness of and investment in Gathering Place methods and strategies?
- What new opportunities are there for stimulating GP learning and application?
- Is the development of a GP learning network among fellows and others a priority?
- If so, what steps need to be taken to advance its development?
- What level of local community organizing capacity is needed for future GP efforts?

1.4 Adopt a regimen of regular review, reflection, and revision for future projects. In the aftermath of the Manzanita Canyon Gathering Place effort, project leaders met to consider lessons learned. One major issue that arose in this discussion was early difficulties establishing clearly defined roles and effective lines of communication. This is not at all surprising. This is because of the significant gap between the articulated assumptions and intentions and the reality on the ground in real time. Because this is almost unavoidable, regular opportunities for project review and recalibration need to be integrated into subsequent work plans and partnership agreements.



1.5 Promote the use of arts-based community development and organizing approaches among Gathering Place neighborhoods and partnering organizations. Given the intensity of the Gathering Place Initiative, there is a potential for local community members and organizations to see the strategies utilized in the project as the sole province of organizations like Pomegranate Center or ARTS. It would be unfortunate if this opportunity to insinuate arts-based engagement into the work of organizations like Azalea Park

Neighborhood Association or Ocean Discovery Institute were not exploited. Their familiarity with the effectiveness of culturally based organizing makes them ripe for further development in this area.

1.6 Invest in the long-term development of the Gathering Place creative placemaking practice and support in the San Diego region. The Initiative's initial investment has allowed its partners to begin exploring the feasibility of transferring Gathering Place knowledge and practice to the San Diego community. Specifically, the training of fellows has established a valuable cadre of potential creative placemaking facilitators and leaders. Then the Butterfly Park and Manzanita builds not only produced two new community GPs, they also deepened fellow (and partner) learning by grounding the training in the practical realities of the work.

As we have emphasized above, these accomplishments should be seen as important first steps. From its inception, the project's supporters understood that changing established community development practice would be a challenge. They also knew that to fulfill its promise, the San Diego Gathering Place Initiative would need many more opportunities to put theory into practice and demonstrate the effectiveness of the approach. This, of course, will not be possible without additional commitments of resources.

The material cost of the designing and building of the Butterfly Park and Manzanita Gathering Places is the equivalent of a rounding error for most municipal public improvement projects. Given the myriad material, social, and cultural benefits derived from these projects, the return on investment is extremely high. That said, efforts like these still cost money, so we strongly encourage the project partners to place future financing at the head of their list of things to consider in moving forward.

The material cost of the designing and building of the Butterfly Park and Manzanita GPs is the equivalent of a rounding error for most municipal public improvement projects.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL PARTNERING ORGANIZATIONS

2.1 The San Diego Foundation should continue its leadership role promoting creative placemaking in the San Diego region. Given its historic commitment to the development of effective community leaders and healthy communities, the Foundation is well positioned to establish itself as the prime advocate for this burgeoning field in the San Diego region. In that role, we would also encourage the Foundation to consider joint deliberation, action, and advocacy with appropriate partners in support of the development of a robust creative placemaking presence in its constituent communities.

2.2 Use this report to stimulate system-wide thinking and action. We recommend that the San Diego Foundation use this

report to instigate new conversations in the public, nonprofit, and business sectors about the potential value and application of creative placemaking approaches. We also encourage the Foundation to explore joint program and policy initiatives in support of creative placemaking learning practice among public and private funders in the region. A potential goal might be to map and collaboratively invest in the long-term development of a sustainable creative placemaking development fund.

2.3 Recognize and support the role of grassroots community development organizations and community organizers in effective placemaking. One of the most critical elements leading to the success of the Manzanita project was the committed participation of the Azalea Park Neighborhood Association (APNA). The network map (*Chart 7*) shared in the previous section is a powerful illustration of how effective leadership and networking can activate the people, organizations, resources, and influence that are needed to fuel grassroots projects. As the Initiative moves forward, organizations like APNA should be considered an essential part of the Gathering Place equation. They should also be included in discussions about how to best learn from and advance this work.

2.4 Engage the Gathering Place fellows in the development of a Gathering Place learning network. Network building among the fellows was articulated as a primary aim of the project. Networks thrive on clear and open communication. By all accounts, the training was an intense and effective bonding experience for participating fellows. This likely raised expectations for some kind of continuing engagement. While this laid the foundation for the development of a potentially robust post-training network, these kinds of enduring connections rarely happen on their own. We believe this potential remains but will require initial coordination and support to grow the self-organizing capacity that will be needed to sustain a network of Gathering Place practitioners and leaders.



2.5 Take note that free labor can be expensive. All of the organizations involved in the Initiative had previous experience working with volunteers. Despite this, the volunteer-intensive nature of the project, particularly during the four-day building process, proved to be taxing. Given this, it is important to remember that free labor is not only labor intensive, but for citizen design/build

efforts, the quality of volunteer experience will often determine the success or failure of the project. For many successful community development organizations, volunteer coordination has become a full-time job. This is something for ARTS to keep in mind as it calculates the cost of future Gathering Place projects.



2.6 Explore ways to align ARTS' new placemaking capacities with its core mission. Over the past year, ARTS has been building a new relationship with the National City community. The Butterfly Park project provided an extraordinary platform for engaging the city infrastructure and leadership. They have also expressed a strong need to continue to build on and deepen these relationships. We view ARTS' work with the City Heights, Azalea Park, community as an essential learning experience for both ARTS and the Initiative's other partners. Building on this experience we encourage ARTS to join with the GP partners to discuss how to best advance Pomegranate's placemaking and civic engagement approach as a vital and accepted community-building strategy in the region. A threshold question to consider will be whether ARTS should expand its mission from personal change agent to community change agent. If so, how this happens will be critical. Other questions include:

- What would be the scope of ARTS' Gathering Place work in the San Diego community?
- What does it mean to be the local translator and advocate for the advancement of the Pomegranate model?
- How can ARTS align its youth and local (National City) priorities with this effort?
- Where will the new resources needed to advance potential new Gathering Place initiatives come from?
- Is the development of projects in geographically disparate communities the most effective dissemination strategy for Gathering Place methodology?
- How can the potent arts and environment interaction that came together for the Manzanita Canyon Gathering Place combine with ARTS' youth development focus?

2.7 Include bureaucratic path finding in future Gathering Place training efforts. One aspect of the Gathering Place training encourages the development of a Steering Group that includes relevant municipal officials who can assist with bureaucratic logjams. We recommend that future training enhance this area by including strategies for the successful navigation of specific San Diego area public bureaucracies.

3. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUILDING THE CREATIVE PLACEMAKING FIELD IN THE SAN DIEGO REGION

3.1 Establish an ongoing cross-sector training program in support of creative placemaking practice. There is a strong prospect that arts-based community development activity and investment will increase significantly in the coming years.[9] The growing interest in, and support for, creative placemaking is just one example of this trend. As such, we see a growing need for both better communication and training in this arena. Given the success of the Gathering Place Initiative, we would highly recommend the creation of an ongoing training and support program to advance the relevant knowledge and skills of the region's significant arts community. Building a core network of practitioners and supporters is essential to building San Diego's creative placemaking community. This network would not only provide access to practical resources but also give the field a strong sense of identity as a group that is committed to high standards and mutual support. This is very important because the field, as it is now constituted, does not have the capacity to validate and learn from its best practices.

Building a core network of practitioners and supporters is essential to growing San Diego's creative placemaking

3.2 Emphasize the difference between creative placemaking and audience development. Commitment to community engagement is a responsibility, not a strategy. Over the past two decades, many arts organizations and funders have embraced community engagement as a priority. While the motivations driving these have been varied, the most central goal has been the expansion of their audiences. This makes sense. For organizations whose primary purpose is making and presenting art, finding a public is key. In this regard, the organizations in this report differ significantly. For a community arts organization like the Pomegranate Center, or a youth development organization like ARTS, community relationships are intrinsic to both art production and presentation. In a sense, the work is not complete without the community's involvement. Community members are thus regarded more as a constituency than an audience. This notion of a cultural constituency implies a broad range of responsibilities and, in some instances, even obligations for these programs. These include expectations of openness, accountability, continuity, and respect.

3.3 Educate funders about the complex ecology of community arts development. Within the field broadly known as community arts (which includes creative placemaking), there is a great awareness of the network of artists, arts organizations, local arts agencies, government agencies, businesses, funders, and the public that make up that sector's ecosystem. Nevertheless, neither the geography nor the condition of this creative system has been clearly

[9] "Trend or Tipping Point: Arts & Social Change Grantmaking" (New York, NY: Animating Democracy: A Program of Americans for the Arts, Oct. 2010), https://www.giarts.org/sites/default/files/Trend-or-Tipping-Point-Arts-Social-Change-Grantmaking.pdf.

represented to funders, the arts community, or the general public. We encourage the Gathering Place partners and others to explore ways to help increase funder awareness about the complexity, diversity, and effectiveness of this growing field. The data gathered through this study and similar efforts could be used to illustrate the vital and complex network of people, places, organizations, and stories that allow it to function and grow. Increased awareness of this system among funders and policy makers could ultimately increase the effectiveness of arts-based community development efforts in the region.

Effective partners know that the core driving force in successful partnerships is trust.

3.4 Promote the notion that collaboration is a learned skill. Many of our respondents had a lot to say about partnerships, particularly the new and untested variety. Most comments reflected on the intensely collaborative nature of community art making. Over the years we learned a lot from our clients about effective collaboration taking special note of the lessons that seem to be in most need of repeating. Here are a few of what we feel are the most relevant to the Gathering Place Initiative:

- Good partnerships have long-term goals that are focused and specific, and shared equally by the various partners. These relationships are built on long-term mutual self-interest. Their success depends on leadership that is stable, committed, assertive, and inclusive.
- Good partners know that you don't have to have complete and total alignment of beliefs, values, or needs among partners. Partnerships can share common goals for different reasons, as long as these differences are on the table.
- Effective partners know that the core driving force in successful partnerships is trust. They know that trust is built on a relationship of deeds, not words. They also know that trust-engendering practice is characterized by the consistency and integrity of the work over time.
- Successful community collaborations require long-term commitment measured in years, not weeks or months. Their proponents know the notion of power will need to be reckoned with. They also know that building trust between the more and less powerful is difficult, and that the greater the gap in power, the greater the challenge. Finally, they know that those who wield power are often unaware of their extent of their privilege and power, and thus they have a difficult time understanding and responding to demands to share their power.

In Closing: It has been a privilege working with the San Diego Foundation in this endeavor. We sincerely hope our efforts have been helpful to the Foundation and its Gathering Place partners over the past year. We would like to thank the Foundation's staff for their cooperation, flexibility, and good humor during the research process. We would also like to acknowledge the contributions made by the many people who generously shared their insights and opinions during the course of this study.



PART FOUR:
APPENDICES

Appendix A.

SD Gathering Places Initiative (SPGPI) Logic Model

Assets	Activities	Outcomes	Outputs	Impact
SDGPP funders financial support & influence	PC curriculum development	PC Multiple Victories training program revised & adapted for SD	PC strengthens & hones its capacity to deliver site-specific hands-on training programs that effectively advance community building & civic engagement.	Visitors experience Sites 1 & 2 as safe, civically animated, learning environments. Sites are positive aspect of each community's story.
SD Foundation expertise experience, influence.	ID & secure & train local anchor org. (ARTS)	Partnership established between ARTS (anchor) & PC, SDGPP Anchor & PC roles outlined. Anchor staff oriented, trained, & mentored	Anchor org. staff & leadership learn & integrate the Gathering Places methods into practice.	There are more opportunities for participating artists & fellows to advance their practice with similar programs.
PC 's expertise experience, reputation,	Gathering Place site selection	5 sites. ID'd & representatives participate in the selection of the final 2 sites.	2 sites are selected & make a sustained commitment to the project. Participating community representatives learn from each other. The selection process is perceived as fair & effective.	
PC curriculum & pedagogy	GP Fellows selection & training	*Gathering Places Training:* (Feb-Apr 2013) 17 SDGPP fellows receive 70 hours training delivered in conjunction with the Site 1 design/build project. Some Fellows take lead roles in Site 2 project.	Fellows are able to create & lead future projects using the PC model. Successful projects advance the collaborative capacity of participating SD communities.	The SDGPP anchor org. is established as key a practitioner & trainer for SDGP projects & methods.
SDGPP communities, (people places, resources)	Design & build 1st site-based project (PC led)	*Site 1 Build:* PC, fellow's & Site 1 community create a new local gathering place. **1**. Steering group forms **2.** Steering group host's community meeting **3.** Community design workshop & approval. **4.** Build Preparation. **5.** 4-day build, 250 vols. --2000 hrs	Build community fully participates in both the definition & fulfillment of the project's goals & celebrate the Site 1 project completion. Local community assumes responsibility for ongoing gathering place development & maintenance.	Local policymakers, planners, & community boosters recognize the benefits of creative place making as an effective community development strategy.
ARTS personnel, experience, & leadership as anchor org.	Design & build 2nd site based project. (Anchor led, PC assist)	**Site 2 Build:** With PC help anchor org., (ARTS) & SDGPP fellows, engage site 2 to create a new local gathering place using the same process as the site 1. (June 2013– Oct. 2013)-	Anchor org. (ARTS) completes of 2nd SDGPP project, Local community assumes responsibility for development & maintenance. ARTS uses & teaches the PC methodology in other community settings.	SDGP research & methodology is embraced as a valuable resource for local & national community development.
Diverse/robust SD arts community w' com-engagement experience	Communication & Advocacy	Coverage of the SDGPP advances the SDGPP message with key stakeholders, decision makers, & the general public.	The SDGP Project is viewed as an effective community development initiative & as an exemplar of the effectiveness of Gathering Place methods & strategies for building community & civic engagement.	The project produces the learning, enthusiasm, & resources needed to support future creative place making initiatives in SD.
Donated materials & volunteer experts. (Public space rangers)	Volunteer recruitment & coordination	A min. of 200 local volunteers participate in 2 projects & receive hands-on opportunities to engage in creative community-build activities.	Project participation stimulates cooperation among site community members, fueling new initiatives around common issues . Org.al partners gain new audiences & supporters.	SDGPP practice in SD proliferates. Completed spaces are recognized as valuable contributors to community revitalization
Interested & motivated fellowship participants	Design & deliver youth component	Ten ARTS sponsored students participate in paid learning opportunities through the project	Participants learn from, & reflect on the work of professional architects, planners, artists, organizers, & community members working for the common good.	Policies supportive of neighborhood arts integration are advanced & adopted.
Interested & motivated youth participants	Design & implement evaluation plan	*Evaluation*: An evaluation report is produced & shared with stakeholders & interested other constituencies.	SDGPP Initiative is documented. Assumptions are tested. Best practices documented & shared with the broader community development field. Report advances future efforts.	The SDGP story is seen as a national model.
CSA&C evaluator & evaluation plan	Develop Phase 2 resources	Communication & advocacy efforts are aligned to support the development of resources needed for additional GP projects. Prospective funding partners are identified & engaged.	Resources to support additional Gathering Place initiatives in Dan Diego are secured.	Artists & arts org.s are more valued & supported by the SD community.

Planned Work **Intended Results**

San Diego Gathering Place Survey

The supporters of the San Diego Gathering Place initiative are working to get a better understanding of the project's effectiveness and impact. This documentation will be an important resource for Gathering Place participants and supporters interested in learning from, and communicating about their experiences. Thank you for your willingness to participate. As a part of this effort we invite you to complete the following survey.

DRAWING: We know how busy you are, so as an incentive, we will include the names of all those who complete the survey BY MIDNIGHT FEBRUARY 14TH in a drawing to win one of four, $25 Visa gift card! If everyone in your family worked on the project and completes the survey, you all have a chance to win! All you have to do to enter is click "DONE" at the end when you finish the survey and you will be redirected to the SD Gathering Place Drawing page. Please know that this is drawing site is separate from the survey and that all responses are anonymous.

This survey is being conducted by an independent evaluator working with The Center for the Study of Art & Community. PLEASE NOTE: If you do not finish the survey you can return using the link provided as long as you log on with the same computer. If you experience any problems with the survey please contact William Cleveland at the Center for the Study of Art and Community: bill@artandcommunity.com.

*1. Gathering Place Project: You can only complete this survey for one of the following projects. If you want to provide feedback on both you will need to complete separate surveys.

- ◯ Butterfly Park
- ◯ Manzanita

2. General Information:

Organizational Affiliation (if any):

City/Town:

State:

ZIP:

3. Date:

4. Age:

San Diego Gathering Place Survey

5. What ways did you participate in the project. If you had more than one role (ex., design participant, site build volunteer, Gathering Place fellow, etc) please indicate them all.

- [ ] Community meeting participant
- [ ] Design process participant
- [ ] Site build volunteer
- [ ] Partner organization staff member/volunteer
- [ ] Gathering Place fellow
- [ ] Technical adviser (landscape, engineering, artistic. etc.)
- [ ] In-kind contributor (equipment, supplies, food, etc.)
- [ ] Funder
- [ ] Intern
- [ ] Student volunteer

Other (please specify)

6. Please describe your involvement in the Gathering Place project.

7. Why did you become involved in this Gathering Place effort? What attracted you to it? What did you hope would result?

8. Has the Gathering Place initiative fulfilled your expectations? If so, how? If not, why not?

San Diego Gathering Place Survey

9. Using a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very effective and 1 being not at all effective, please indicate your opinion of the effectiveness of the following Gathering Place project elements

	1	2	3	4	5
Project planning	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Timeliness of communication	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Completeness of communication	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Administrative/logistical support for the project	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Coordination of scheduling	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Coordination/care of workspace	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Handling of materials, supplies and equipment	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Publicity and public relations	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Overall Project	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Comments:

10. Using a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being very high and 1 being very low, indicte your level of undersanding of the following program aspects.

	1	2	3	4	5
The purpose of the project	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Your role in the project	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The roles of others involved in the project	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The impact of the project	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
What happens after the project's completion	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Comments:

San Diego Gathering Place Survey

11. INDIVIDUAL IMPACT: These statements concern the Gathering Place project's impact on you. Please indicate your level of agreement with the each statement using the scale provided. If particular statements are not relevant or applicable to your experience with the project please answer "NA".

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NA
I continue to maintain contact with others involved with the project.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Since the completion of the project I have been more actively involved in community oriented work.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I do not anticipate future involvement in similar projects.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Since my participation I am more likely to participate in discussions about community issues I care about.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I have been able to apply some of the things I learned through this project to good effect in other situations.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I have a much greater appreciation for how local art and artists can contribute to community betterment.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Since its completion I have been actively involved with people I met during the project.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Comments:

San Diego Gathering Place Survey

12. COMMUNITY IMPACT: The following statements are in reference to the community in which the Gathering Place project took place. Please indicate your level of agreement with the each statement using the scale provided. If particular statements are not relevant or applicable to your experience with the project please answer "NA".

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	NA
The project has been very well received by those who participated.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
This project has made the surrounding neighborhood a much safer place.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
This project has strengthened the community's willingness and ability to discuss community issues.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
The community has assumed responsibility for the ongoing development and maintenance of the Gathering Place.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
This project has strengthened the community's ability to work together effectively.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Locals who were not involved have very little awareness and understanding of the project.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
This community has a very strong sense of ownership of the Gathering Place project.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
This community has the capacity to develop the resources it needs to undertake effective community building projects.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There is a much stronger sense of identity and belonging in the community as a result of this project.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Comments:

13. IMPACT ON PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS: These statements are about the impact the Gathering Place project had on the organizations involved. Please indicate your level of agreement with the each statement using the scale provided. If particular statements are not relevant or applicable to your experience with the project please answer "NA".

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	NA
Our organization benefited significantly from its participation in the project.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
My organization is effectively using strategies and skills learned through this project.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
We anticipate future involvement in similar projects.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
We have a much greater appreciation for how local art and artists can contribute to community betterment.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Since its completion we have worked with individuals we met during the project.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Since its completion we have worked with other organizations we were introduced to during the project.	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Comments:

14. Please share any suggestions your have for extending and/or expanding the beneficial impact of this Gathering Place project for you and/or the community.

15. What suggestions do you have for improving future Gathering Place collaborations.

Appendix C.

Manzanita Gathering Place Organizational Partners

Allied Waste
Alpha Project
American Red Cross San Diego Imperial Counties
AmeriCorps Mid City Canyon Apprenticeship Coordinator
Art Kills Artists
Art of Science Learning
Artist, Hubbell and Hubbell
ARTS: A Reason to Survive
Atlas Environmental Services
Azalea Park Business
Azalea Park Neighborhood Assoc.
Balboa Park Cultural Partnership
California Native Plants Society.
Carey Construction
Center for the Study of Art & Community/SD Foundation
Children and Nature Collaborative
City Farmers Nursery
City Heights Community Development Corporation
City Heights Neighbor
City of San Diego DSD
City of San Diego Planning Director
City of San Diego, Development Services Dept.
City of San Diego, Environmental Services Dept.
City of San Diego, Office of the Mayor
City of San Diego, Traffic Department
City of San Diego, Transportation/Stormwater
Clark Middle School,
Community HousingWorks
Earthbound Farm Organic
El Cajon Boulevard Business Improvement Association
Elidia's Bakery
Fairmount Super Mercado
Flores Concrete
Gizmo Graphics
Goodwin Creations
Grace Church
Groundworks San Diego
Hubbell Craft
Office of the Mayor, San Diego
International Iron Products
KPFF
KRC Rock
KTUA, Landscape ARchitecutre
Little Saigon Foundation
Moosa Creek Nursery
NeighborFood
New School of Architecture
Normal Heights Cultural Council
Ocean Discovery Institute
Office of City Councilman Marti Emeralds
Ominous Donut
Organo Gold
Phong Trang Vietnamese Cuisine
Skye Properties -
Pomegrante Center
Price Charities
Price Charities
Quality Reinforcing
R. Robles Concrete Services
Rayzist Photomask Inc.
Recon Native Plant Nursery
Rokenbok Foundation
Rooted In Place Architecture and Consulting
Safe Passages, GIPS
San Diego Advocates for Youth
San Diego Canyonlands
San Diego City Council
San Diego Foundation
San Diego Police Department
Southwestern College
Spurlock Poirier Landscape Architects
Starbucks
Super Mercado Murphy's
The AjA Project
Tri-Group Construction
UCSD, Civic Innovation Lab
Urban Corps SD County
Vicki Leon Glass Studio,

Building Smart Communities through Network Weaving

by Valdis Krebs and June Holley

Communities are built on connections. Better connections usually provide better opportunities. But, what are better connections, and how do they lead to more effective and productive communities? How do we build connected communities that create, and take advantage of, opportunities in their region or marketplace? How does success emerge from the complex interactions within communities?

This paper investigates building sustainable communities through improving their connectivity – internally and externally – using network ties to create economic opportunities. Improved connectivity is created through an iterative process of ***knowing the network*** *and* ***knitting the network****.*

Know the Net

Improved connectivity starts with a map – knowing the complex human system you are embedded in. The Appalachian Center for Economic Networks [ACEnet], a regional economic development organization in Athens, Ohio has long followed the connectivity mantra – create effective networks for individual, group and regional growth and vitality. Recently ACEnet has begun to map and measure the social and economic connections it helped create in the grassroots food industry in Southeast Ohio.

ACEnet, founded in 1985, provides a wide range of assistance to food, wood and technology entrepreneurs in 29 counties of Appalachian Ohio. This region has some of the highest poverty and unemployment rates in the country, and ACEnet works with communities throughout the region who want to improve their support for entrepreneurs as a means to provide more local ownership and higher quality jobs.

Network maps provide a revealing snapshot of a business ecosystem at a particular point in time. These maps can help answer many key questions in the community building process.

- *Are the right connections in place? Are any key connections missing?*
- *Who are playing leadership roles in the community? Who is not, but should be?*
- *Who are the experts in process, planning and practice?*
- *Who are the mentors that others seek out for advice?*
- *Who are the innovators? Are ideas shared and acted upon?*
- *Are collaborative alliances forming between local businesses?*
- *Which businesses will provide a better return on investment – both for themselves and the community they are embedded in?*

These are all important questions that ACEnet wants to answer so that they can help build a more vibrant economy in Appalachian Ohio.

Before you can improve your network you need to know where you are currently – the 'as is' picture. A network map shows the nodes and links in the network. Nodes can be people, groups or organizations. Links can show relationships, flows, or transactions. A link can be directional. A network map is an excellent tool for visually tracking your ties and designing strategies to create new connections. A network map is an excellent tool for visually tracking your ties and designing strategies to create new connections. Network maps are also excellent 'talking documents' – visual representations that support conversations about possibilities.

Transformation that leads to healthy communities is the result of many collaborations among network members. Scientists describe this phenomenon – where local interactions lead to global

patterns – as *emergence*. We can guide emergence by understanding, and catalyzing, connections. For example, knowing where the connections are, and are not, allows a community development organization to influence local interactions. This is particularly important in policy networks where key nodes play an important role in what flows throughout the network. Influencing a small number of well-connected nodes often results in better outcomes than trying to access the top person or calling on random players in the policy network. If you know the network, you can focus your influence.

*Recently ACEnet Food Ventures staff asked area entrepreneurs and organizations, "From whom do you get new ideas that benefit your work?" "From whom do you access expertise that improves your operations?" and "With whom do you collaborate?" The answers to these questions were mapped using Valdis Krebs' **InFLOW**™ social network mapping software into an Innovation Network, an Expertise Network, and a Collaboration Network. Analyzing these networks led the team to realize that there were several entrepreneurs who played a critical role in the food sector, but with whom they had little relationship. The team developed a strategy for more explicitly working with these entrepreneurs, by asking them to conduct workshops for other entrepreneurs and finding out their needs for business assistance.*

What does a vibrant, effective community network look like? Research has been done to discover the qualities of vibrant networks. Sociologists, physicists, mathematicians, and management consultants have all discovered similar answers about effective networks. The amazing discovery is that people in organizations, routers on the internet, cells in a nervous system, molecules in protein interactions, animals in an ecosystem, and pages on the WWW are all organized in efficient network structures that have similar properties.

Five general patterns are observed in all effective networks:

1. Birds of a feather flock together: nodes link together because of *common attributes, goals or governance.*
2. At the same time *diversity* is important. Though clusters form around common attributes and goals, vibrant networks maintain connections to diverse nodes and clusters. A diversity of connections is required to maximize innovation in the network.
3. Robust networks have several paths between any two nodes. If several nodes or links are damaged or removed, other pathways exist for uninterrupted information flow between the remaining nodes.
4. Some nodes are more *prominent* than others – they are either hubs[1], brokers[2], or boundary spanners[3]. They are critical to network health.
5. Most nodes in the network are connected by an indirect link in the network. A-B-C-D shows a direct link between A and B, but indirect links between A and C and A and D. Yet, the average path length in the network tends to be *short*. There are very few long paths in the network that lead to delay and distortion of information flow and knowledge exchange.

Even though we know several keys to building effective networks, this knowledge is rarely put to use. Networks, whether social or business, are usually left to grow without a plan. When left unmanaged, networks follow two simple, yet powerful driving forces:

1. *Birds of a feather flock together.*
2. *Those close by, form a tie.*

This results in many small and dense clusters with little or no diversity. Everyone in the cluster knows what everyone else knows and no one knows what is going on in other clusters. The lack of outside information, and dense cohesion within the network, removes all possibility for new ideas and innovations. We see this in isolated rural communities that are resistant to change, or

[1] Nodes with many direct connections that quickly disperse information.

[2] Nodes that connect otherwise disconnected parts of the network – they act as liaisons.

[3] Nodes that connect two or more clusters – they act as bridges between groups.

in a classic "old boy network". Yet, the dense connections, and high degree of commonality forms good work groups – clusters of people who can work together smoothly.

Instead of allowing networks to evolve without direction, successful individuals, groups and organizations have found that it pays to *actively manage your network*. Using the latest research we can now knit networks to create productive individuals and smart communities.

Knit the Net

A vibrant community network is generally built in 4 phases, each with it's own distinct topology. Each phase builds a more adaptive and resilient network structure than the prior phase. Network mapping can be used to track your progress through these four stages.

1) *Scattered Fragments*
2) *Single Hub-and-Spoke*
3) *Multi-Hub Small-World Network*
4) *Core/Periphery*

Experience shows that most communities start as small emergent clusters organized around common interests or goals. Usually these clusters are isolated from each other. They are very small groups of 1-5 people or organizations that have connected out of necessity, see Figure 1. If these fragments do not organize further, the community structure remains weak and under-producing.

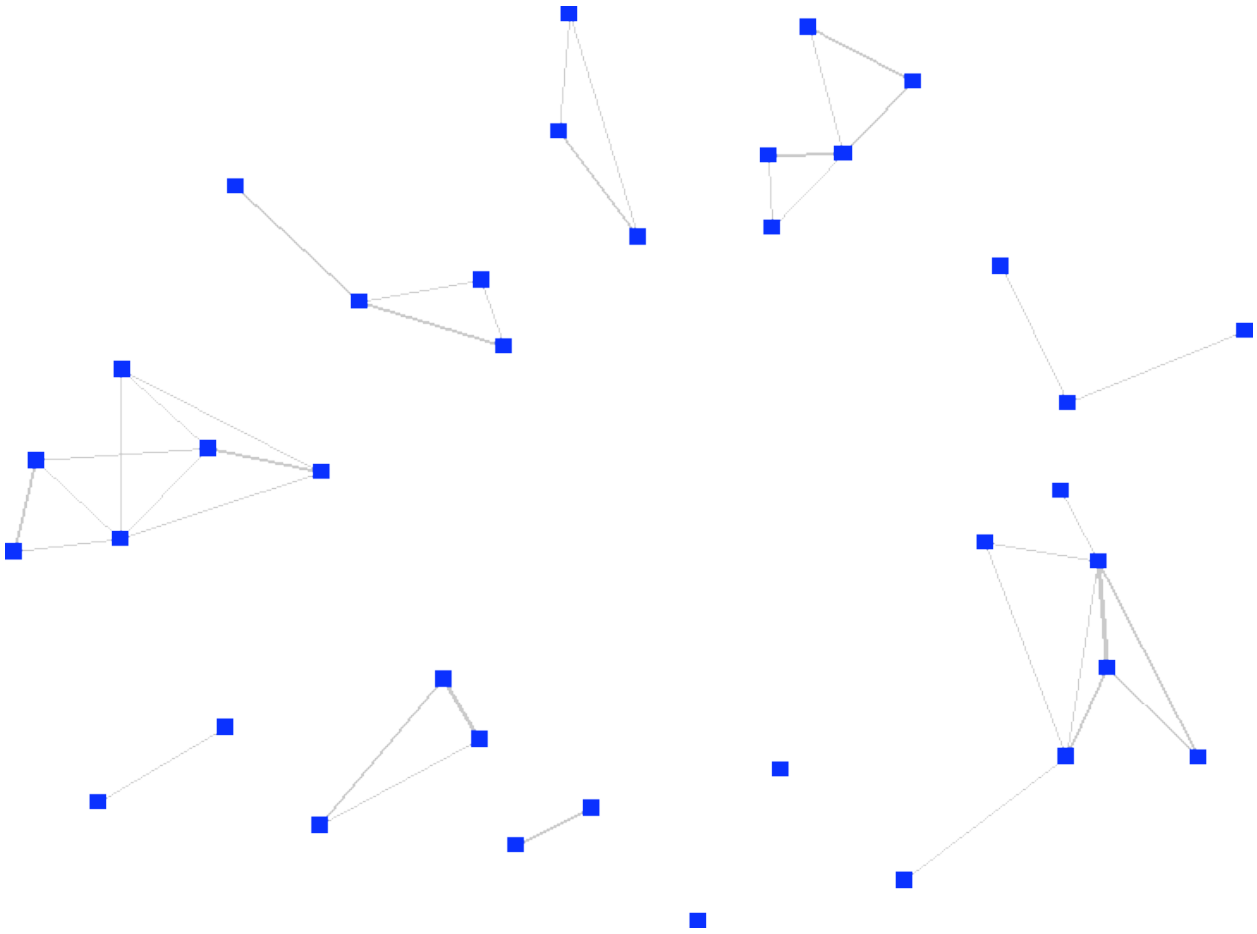


Figure 1 – Scattered Fragments

Without active leaders who takes responsibility for building a network, spontaneous connections between groups emerge very slowly, or not at all. We call this active leader a *network weaver*. Instead of allowing these fragments to drift in the hope of making a lucky connection, network weavers actively create new interactions between them.

Network weavers[4] begin with a hub and spoke network, with the weaver as the hub. The weaver has the vision, the energy, and the social skills to connect to diverse individuals and groups and start information flowing to and from them. The weavers usually have external links outside of the community to bring in information and ideas. This is a critical phase for community building because everything depends on a weaver who is the hub in the network. However, if multiple weavers are working in the same community, we may get multiple hub and poke networks, with some overlap between them. Figure 2 shows a weaver connecting the previously scattered clusters.

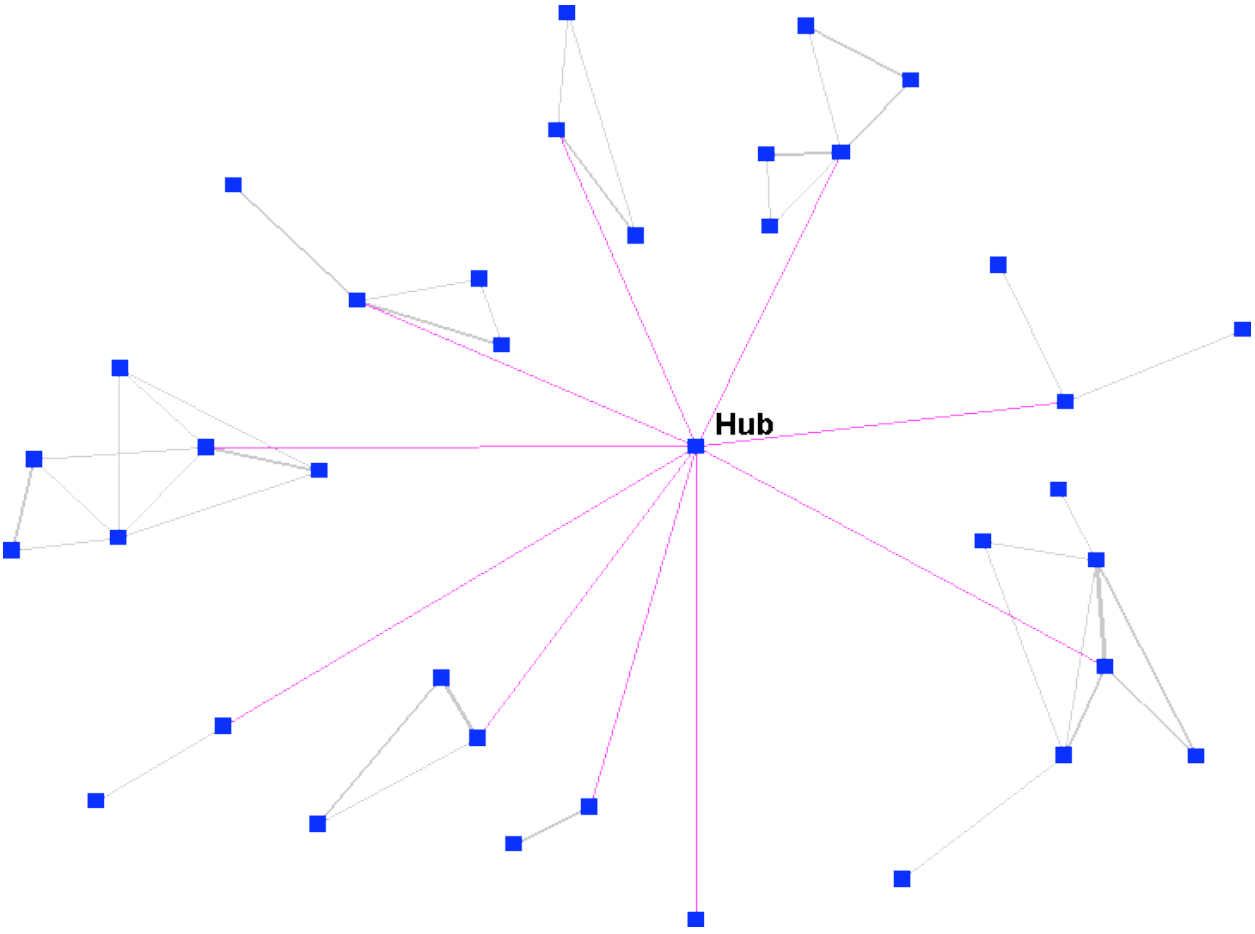


Figure 2 – Hub-and-Spoke Network

[4] While the Athens food network focused on *one* network weaving organization – ACEnet, there were actually several individual network weavers within ACEnet. Each network weaver within ACEnet had a particular focus. They all worked together from a common vision. If several network weavers are present *and* willing to collaborate, increased progress is possible.

Initially a network weaver forms relationships with each of the small clusters. During this phase a weaver is learning about each individual or small cluster – discovering what they know and what they need. However, the hub-and-spoke model is only a temporary step in community growth. It should not be utilized for long because it concentrates both power and vulnerability in one node – the hub. If the weaver fails or leaves then we are back to a fragmented community.

In healthy networks, the spokes of the hub do not remain separated for long. The weaver begins connecting those individuals and clusters who can collaborate or assist one another in some way. Concurrently the weaver begins encouraging others to begin weaving the network as well. Even though it is a temporary structure, the hub-and-spoke model is usually the best topology to bring together the scattered clusters seen in most immature communities.

An organization with a vision, and contacts to external ideas and resources, can play the role of the hub. This is the role ACEnet took up when it saw that SE Ohio was home to many small, uncoordinated food clusters. There was the Farmer's Market crowd, the natural bakery, a worker-owned Mexican restaurant and a few other entrepreneurs creating unique food products. ACEnet brought all of these unconnected groups together around a kitchen incubator – a state of the art facility for preparing and packaging a large variety of food items.

When ACEnet decided to build a Kitchen Incubator—a licensed processing facility where entrepreneurs could rent the use of ovens, stoves and a processing line to produce their products—they used the need to design the incubator as an opportunity to link small clusters. For example, for one design session they brought people from the town's restaurants together with small farmers who wanted to turn their produce into value-added products. Farmers were able to learn about food production safety from the restaurateurs who explained how these procedures could be incorporated into the incubator. Some of the farmers also used the opportunity to sell their produce to the restaurants, who were always on the lookout for unique raw materials. And, an unexpected bonus was that the restaurants realized that they could use the Kitchen Incubator's storage warehouse for large orders they made from their suppliers, and as a result became an important part of the network.

As the weaver connects to many groups, information is soon flowing into the weaver about each group's skills, goals, successes and failures. An astute weaver can now start to introduce clusters that have common goals/interests or complementary skills/experiences to each other. As clusters connect, their spokes to the hub can weaken, freeing up the weaver to attach to new groups. Although the spoke links weaken, they never disappear – they remain weaker, dormant ties, able to be re-activated whenever necessary. In order to accommodate new connections, the weaver must teach others how to weave their own network. Training in network building is important at this juncture. Network mapping reveals the progress and identifies emerging network weavers.

This happened with ACEnet as several of the businesses and small non-profits began to build their own local connected clusters. As the overall network grows, the role of the weaver changes from being the central weaver, to being a facilitator of network weaving in the community – coordinating with, and mentoring of other network weavers.

There are two parts to network weaving. One is relationship building, particularly across traditional divides, so that people have access to innovation and important information. The

second is learning how to facilitate collaborations for mutual benefit. Collaborations can vary from simple and short term—entrepreneurs purchasing supplies together—to complex and long-term—such as a major policy initiative or creation of a venture fund. This culture of collaboration creates a state of emergence, where the outcome—a healthy community—is more than the sum of the many collaborations. The local interactions create a global outcome that no one could accomplish alone.

Network weaving is not just "networking", nor schmoozing. Weaving brings people together for projects, initially small, so they can learn to collaborate. Through that collaboration they strengthen the community and increase the knowledge available in it. After working with the authors, Jack Ricchiuto, a Cleveland-based management consultant and author, created a pyramid of network weaving involvement. Level 1 is a "networking" type interaction, while levels 6 and 7 are highly involved commitments to building community. A majority of ACEnet's larger successes fall under the two top levels [6 & 7] of Ricchiuto's Pyramid[5].

Level	Activity
7	Introducing A to B in person and offering a collaboration opportunity to get A and B off to a successful partnership
6	Introducing A to B in person and following up with A and B to nurture connection
5	Introducing A to B in person
4	Introducing A to B in a conference call
3	Introducing A to B in an email
2	Suggesting A talk to B and calling B to look for a contact
1	Suggesting to A that A should talk to B

[5] http://www.jackzen.com/archives/2006/01/the_7_circles_o.html

This transition from network weaver to network facilitator is critical. The weaver is identifying and mentoring new weavers who will eventually take over much of the network building and maintenance. If the change is not made then the community network remains dependent on the central weaver and his/her organization. At the transition point the weaver changes from being a direct leader to an indirect leader, influencing new emergent leaders appearing throughout the community. This transition is necessary for the network to increase its scale, impact and reach.

Moving from a single hub/weaver network to a multiple hub/weaver network has many advantages. The first advantage of a multi-hub topology is elimination of a single point of failure. ACEnet is still a dominant hub in SE Ohio, and its failure would affect the region greatly – but not as significantly as five years ago when the network was sparser and more dependent on ACEnet. Now ACEnet has the luxury of spending time in new pursuits such as teaching others to knit their nets and expanding the network to other areas inside and outside of Appalachia.

As the weaver connects various individuals, organizations and clusters, these entities connect to each other loosely. A new dynamic is revealed here – the strength of 'weak ties'[6]. Weak ties are connections that are not as frequent, intense, as strong network ties that form the backbone of a network. Strong ties are usually found within a network cluster, while weak ties are found between clusters. As clusters begin to connect to each other, the first bridging links are usually weak ties. Over time weak ties may retain their structure by bridging separate clusters or they may grow in to become strong ties binding previously separate groups into a new larger cluster.

[6] Mark Granovetter

Bridging ties between clusters are also important in innovation. New ideas are often discovered outside the local domain. To get transformative ideas you often have go outside of your group. A successful formula for creating ties for innovation is to find other groups that are both similar and different than your own. Similarity helps build trust, while diversity introduces new ideas and perspectives. ***Connect on your similarity, and profit from your diversity.***

To bring in new ideas from outside the region, ACEnet has developed several "innovation learning clusters" that bring together leading edge organizations from around the country who share their innovations with each other. ACEnet staff who participate then bring information about those innovations back to the region and adapt them to the local environment. For example, Larry Fisher, one of ACEnet Directors, participates in a rural entrepreneurship policy cluster where he learned the basics of building a policy network from organizations with many years' experience. He is now leading ACEnet's efforts to change the policy of local counties so that it is more supportive of entrepreneurship, but he can move forward with a more sure hand since he is building on the experience of others—and can contact them when he has questions.

Now that other hubs [network weavers] are emerging in the network, the various weavers begin to connect to each other, creating a multi-hub community. Not only is this network topology less fragile, it is also the best design to minimize the average path length throughout the network – remember, the shorter the hops the better for work flow, information exchange and knowledge sharing! Information percolates most quickly through a network where the best connected nodes are all connected to each other.

Figure 3 shows a multi-hub small-world network. Here four clusters [designated by the thick red links] have created many weak ties [gray links] to each other. The weak ties may, or may not, strengthen to create one tightly coupled larger cluster. The multiple hubs can be small businesses or other community development organizations.

Initially, the ACEnet Kitchen Incubator was a major gathering place, a physical network hub, where people ran into each other, hung around to talk, and often cooked up some kind of deal: joint orders of jars so they could get a cheaper price, an arrangement to jointly market their products, or an agreement to trade labor on a project.

However, after a few years, many other network hubs popped up. For example, the Athens Farmers' Market hosted more than 90 farmers and local food vendors who networked with each other and their avid customers. Several years ago, 4 local organizations set up a Farmers' Market Café that provides tables and chairs under tents so that people could hang around longer and network with more neighbors.

Casa Nueva, a worker-owned Mexican restaurant, is not only a networking hub, but has played a major role in organizing most of the locally owned restaurants into the Athens Independent Restaurant Association which donates money each month to community non-profits and is increasing the amount of area restaurants purchase from local farm families.

Six miles outside town, more than 200 people flock on Saturdays to enjoy fresh baked focaccia, pastries and hearth bread on the outdoor terrace outside the Big Chimney Bakery. The proprietor is a major network hub himself, who helps new entrepreneurs develop their recipes and learn strategy from a pro.

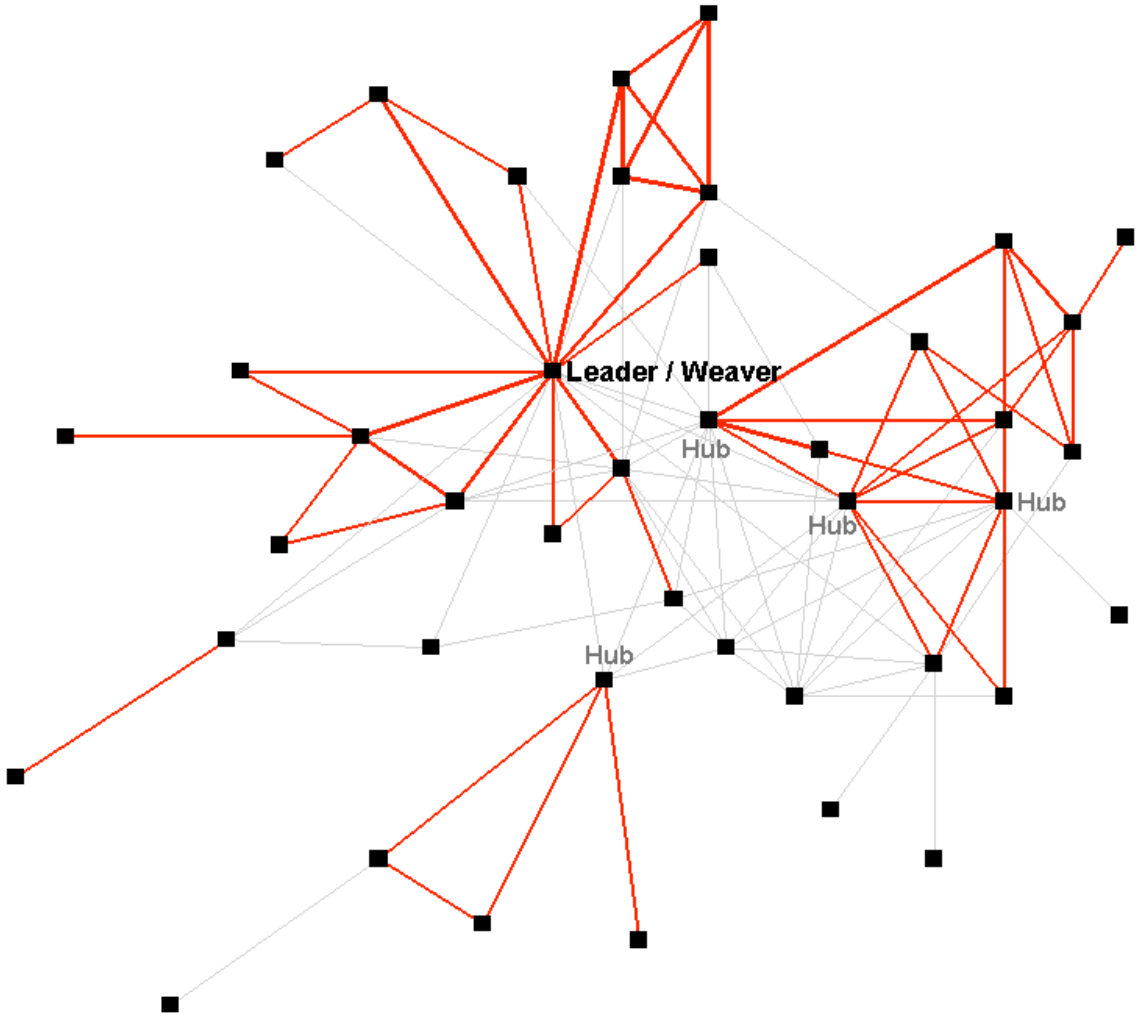


Figure 3 – Multi-Hub Small World Network

The next step is to strengthen the appropriate loose ties in the network so they become strong ties. This happens after turf issues have been handled. A multi-hub network may be difficult to achieve if political and 'turf' issues are raging through the network. If two or more community development organizations start battling over turf and control of the community then the result may be two or more competing, single hub networks that ignore the larger community needs and just focus on survival of their own network.

The end-goal for vibrant, sustainable community networks is the *core/periphery* model. This topology emerges after many years of network weaving by multiple hubs. It is a stable structure that can link to other well-developed networks in other regions. The network core in this model contains the key community members, including many who are network weavers, and have developed strong ties between themselves. The periphery of this network contains three groups of nodes that are usually tied to the core through looser ties:

1) *Those new to the community and working to get to the core*
2) *Bridges to diverse communities elsewhere*
3) *Unique resources that operate outside of the community, and may span many communities*

The economic landscape is full of imperfectly shared ideas and information. The periphery allows us to reach ideas and information not currently prevalent in our network. The core allows us to act on those ideas and information. The periphery is the open, porous boundary of the community network. It is where new members/ideas come and go. The periphery monitors the environment, while the core implements what is discovered and deemed useful[7].

ACEnet has helped form the Appalachian Ohio Regional Investment Coalition (AORIC) which includes another community organization, a regional foundation, the Ohio Arts Council, and an Ohio University based institute. AORIC is now mobilizing a large network of organizations interested in supporting entrepreneurs as a way to create a healthier regional economy. This network is reaching deep into communities to identify barriers entrepreneurs face, and then collaborating on projects that will develop new supportive infrastructure to increase their success.

[7] Influenced by the research and analysis of Ronald S. Burt.

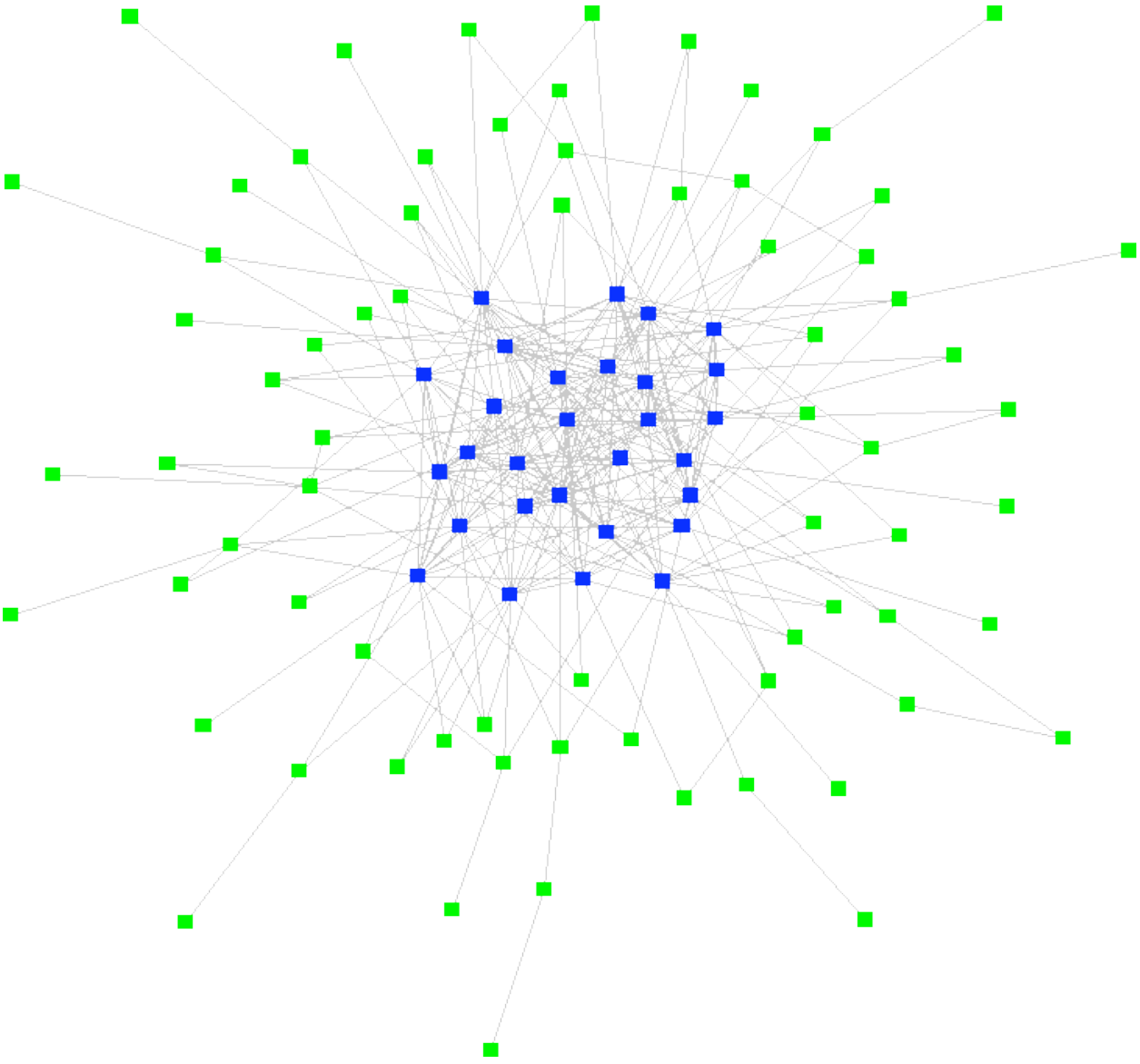


Figure 4 – Core/Periphery Network

Figure 4 shows a well developed core/periphery structure. The blue nodes are the core, while the green nodes reside in the periphery. This network core is very dense[8] -- not all cores will have as high a concentration of connections as this one. Too much density can lead to rigidity and and

[8] Network density is calculated by the number of existing connections as a percentage of the total possible. Any density greater than 50% is very high.

overload of activity. Monitoring your network using social network analysis can help you see where your network needs to shift connections to match the current environment.

At this point the network weavers' initial task are mostly completed. Now, attention turns toward network maintenance and building bridges to other networks. The network weavers can begin to form inter-regional alliances to create new products, services and markets—or to shape and influence policy that will strengthen the community or region. This happens by connecting network cores to each other utilizing their peripheries. The network weaver maximizes the reach of the periphery into new areas, while keeping the core strong. The weavers now focuses on multi-core projects of large substance that will have major impact on the community.

Conclusion

As we have seen weaving a network requires two iterative and continuous steps:

1. ***Know the network*** *– take regular x-rays of your network and evaluate your progress.*
2. ***Knit the network*** *– follow the four (4) phase network knitting process.*

All throughout this process network maps guide the way – they reveal what we know about the network and they uncover possible next steps for the weaver.

Starting with a disconnected community, network builders can start weaving together the necessary skills and resources to build simple single hub networks. This will be followed by a more robust multi-hub network, concluding with a resilient core/periphery structure – maximized for learning and implementation.

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www.acenetworks.org
juneh@acenetworks.org

June and Valdis and Jack have created a training seminar for Network Weavers, please contact either one of them for further information.

Appendix E.



MANZANITA GATHERING PLACE

Manzanita Gathering Place Celebration - Volunteers gather for a group shot at the end of the four day Community Build on November 10, 2013.

Community members have begun to enjoy our new Manzanita Gathering Place near the intersection of Manzanita Drive and Manzanita Place. Many wonderful people contributed time, talent, material and funding to make this project possible. After the holidays we will reassemble to finish the front column with ceramic panels with the names of all who participated sand blasted onto the panel. Let me know if you would like to join us. Linda Pennington gizmopennington@cox.net

PROJECT PARTNERS

- ARTS/Pomegranate Center
- San Diego Foundation
- Rokenbok
- Councilmember Marti Emerald
- Community HousingWorks
- Carey Construction and Design - Jody Carey
- San Diego Canyonlands

PROJECT DESIGN TEAM

- Brennan Hubbell
- Ilisa Goldman
- Vicki Leon
- Milenko Matanovic (mentor)

PROJECT SUPPORTERS

- AjA
- AKA
- Allied Waste
- Alpha Project
- American Red Cross San Diego Imperial Counties
- AmeriCorps, Yen Vu
- Art Kills Artists
- Atlas Environmental Services
- City Farmers Nursery - Bill Tall
- City of San Diego
- Clark Middle School - Rich Del Principe
- David Kachi - Fairmount Super Mercado
- Dennis Wood
- Earthbound Farm Organic
- Elidia's Bakery
- Felicia Shaw
- Flores Concrete - Enrique Flores
- GIPS Dan Tomsky
- Gizmo Graphics
- Grace Church - James George
- Interim Mayor Todd Gloria
- International Iron Products
- International Ironworkers Local 229
- KPFF
- Linda Pennington
- Little Saigon Foundation, Frank Vuong
- Loretta Ebinger
- Lynn Graham
- Maria Vega
- Mark Kassab - Super Mercado Murphy's
- Marsha Lyon
- Matt Collins
- Michael Sprague
- Moosa Creek
- NeighborFood - Deborah Powers
- Ocean Discovery Institute - Carla Pisbe
- The Ominous Donut
- Organo Gold - Demitrius and Gloria Prier
- Paul Davis
- Phuong Trang Vietnamese Cuisine
- Price Charities - Matthew Hervey
- Quality Reinforcing
- Rayzist Photomask Inc.
- Rebecca Margolis and Dale Steele
- Roberto Trujillo
- Recon
- R. Robles Concrete Services
- Rooted
- Samuel Carey Wood
- Sandi Brooks
- Skye Properties - Michael Tu
- Starbucks
- Starr Fortier
- T Herman
- Thomas Herman
- Tri-Group Construction
- Urban Corps - Ty Sterns
- Vickie Church
- Vicki Leon Glass Studio
- Zubin Eggleston - Builder

THE FOUR NEIGHBORHOODS

- Azalea Park Neighborhood
- South Castle Neighborhood
- Fairmount Village
- Swan Canyon Neighborhood

Azalea Park Neighborhood Association

The Parkster

March 2014

NEXT MEETING TUESDAY, MARCH 11, 6:30 PM AT AZALEA COMMUNITY PARK REC CENTER



MURPHY'S MARKET SUPPORTS COMMUNITY

by Linda Pennington

Murphy's Market at 3596 Fairmount Ave. has been a long term supporter of City Heights community events. I recently approached owner Mark Kassab about a donation of bananas for the Manzanita Gathering Place Finishing Up Day. Mark gave us a big box of beautiful bananas for a healthy snack for our volunteers. Mark has also given us donations of beautiful bakery cookies from his Super Mercado Murphys Market at 4580 University.

If you are looking for a place to purchase beautiful fruits and vegetables, as well as meats, cakes, salsa, tortillas and too many other items to mention, I suggest you try Murphy's Market or Super Mercado Murphy's. Their prices are much more affordable and the quality is top drawer. Let's support the business that also supports us!

THE FIRST ANNUAL

AZALEA PARK GARDEN TOUR

SATURDAY, MARCH 15

10:00AM TO 2:00PM

See CHW flyer on page 3 for details!

Photos by Dennis Wood





Brennan Hubbell
Garrett Goodwin

On February 22 volunteers gathered to finish the final work at the Manzanita Gathering Place.



Abigail Lozano, Bonnie Sabb, Rob Tobin, Vicki Leon and Felicia Shaw

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