Leadership comes from community
process, executive excellence
administration and when
transforming achievement into
ORGANIZATION
Achieving ORG.
Making Citizen Democracy Work
National Civic Review
The Arts, Artists and Community Development

Communities have discovered that the encouragement of downtown arts and cultural districts — consisting of galleries, studios, and mixed-use residential/commercial facilities — offers a unique economic development opportunity based on tourism, historic preservation, and increased downtown residency. Jurisdictions interested in such strategies, however, must be aware of the often unmet needs of the artists who populate these downtown cultural cores. Commitment to arts-based redevelopment requires more than changes in zoning codes.

by EDWARD T. ROGOWSKY

As cities move further along the post-industrial continuum, new strategies for urban growth and redevelopment have emerged from the changing relationships among government, business and arts.

The linkage of the arts to community development is a recent phenomenon, mirrored closely by the emergence of federal, state and local government financial support for arts agencies and organizations. The new linkage in community development is facilitated by several factors: downtown arts and culture centers give cities a competitive edge in the region; arts districts can unite historic preservationists and developers, often in mixed-use projects which help to lessen local opposition; and local governments can claim quality of life/public amenities benefits. The arts/development coalition has become, according to Harvey Molotch, part of the “urban growth machine.”

Systematic study and data about the fate of arts-based redevelopment strategies and the projects they have spawned are lacking. Even less is known about the individual artists whose labors and presence are the basis of the revitalization efforts which are helping to rebuild many American cities.

Although the arts are acknowledged as a key component of community life, especially in urban areas, individual artists — actors, dancers, painters, sculptors, photographers, designers, craftspeople, musicians, etc. — are an understudied group whose needs and attitudes are an important component of the role they play in community development. Although a number of “live/work space” studies have been done in major urban
centers around the country, they usually relate only to the particular city studied—there are no comparative data across a variety of locations. Such studies often deal only with artists in a particular discipline (painters, for example) and fail to look at the artist as a "whole" person, getting caught up instead with questions regarding high ceilings and zoning regulations. These factors often result in artists' being perceived as outside the community, when in fact they are often quite integral to and active in their communities.

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Institutional and policy studies alone will not reveal the underlying individual factors which shape the longer term capacity of "the arts" to sustain urban community redevelopment. Nonetheless, those communities that view a flourishing downtown arts community as an economic development plum will benefit from information on the service needs and demography of the individual who drive arts- and culture-based redevelopment.

Information on Artists

A major national study to determine artists' work-related human and social service needs in ten U.S. cities has been launched by the research Center for Arts and Culture at Columbia University in New York City. Entitled the Information on Artists (IOA) Project, the study covered ten locations in the United States: Boston, Cape Cod, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Minneapolis-St. Paul, New York City, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Western Massachusetts. Using extensive and innovative artists' groups, the study was based on a 102-item questionnaire to identify the work-related, human and social service needs of artists in the ten locations. In addition to a national sample of artists in each location, local lists of artists were gathered from organizations representing a variety of artistic disciplines, and samples of artists were chosen in each location.

In all, 9,870 artists in ten study sites responded to the questionnaire. The overall average response rate was 42 percent, with some individual location rates as high as 48 percent, an impressively high rate for this kind of study.

The findings of the survey provide interesting perspectives for consideration by community-development decision makers:

1. While 92 percent of respondents consider themselves professional artists, 77 percent need to work at other jobs to support their art, and 46 percent work at more than one job.

2. For the 12 months preceding the survey, 27 percent of respondents reported earning their major income as artists, while 28 percent earned their income in non-art related occupations. In all, 85 percent said they earned some money through their art.

3. The level of artists' education is high. 42 percent of respondents reported that they have college degrees, 38 percent have graduate degrees, and another 15 percent said they have some college education.

4. 43 percent of respondents are male, 57 percent are female; their mean age is 39 and the median age is 37.

5. In terms of ethnicity and race, 89 percent of respondents are white non-Hispanic, 4 percent are black, and 2 percent are Hispanic.

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While these data are revealing, they do not permit meaningful conclusions regarding artist ethnicity. Nonetheless, they do provide a basis for comparative analyses of the demography of each location and the "artist population" figures extrapolated from the 1980 U.S. Census by the National Endowment for the Arts.

6. Regarding consultation services, respondents reported their areas of greatest need for legal advice as:

- Taxation — 32 percent
- Contracts — 20 percent
- Copyrights — 16 percent
- Payment for work — 6 percent
- Bargaining and negotiating — 5 percent
- Space and real estate — 5 percent

Areas of greatest need for financial advice were:

- Taxation — 41 percent
- Record keeping — 12 percent
- Financial planning — 7 percent

7. The types of services to which artists have access and use on a regular basis give some clues about artists' service needs and awareness. The most frequent survey responses were:

- opportunities to meet with peers — 53 percent
- Information about financial support for artists — 43 percent
- opportunities to meet with and show work to an audience — 42 percent
• Financial support: grants, commissions, loans, emergency funds — 40 percent
• Career Information — 37 percent
• Help selling work — 22 percent

When respondents were asked to indicate their needs for additional services, the most numerous write-ins were: better, more affordable health insurance and health services; career counseling, guidance and information services; child care; job placement and referral.

8. The questionnaire enabled exploration of issues of artists' relationship to place: why they live and work where they do. Their most important reasons for staying in the area included:
• Personal ties — 63 percent
• Cultural activity — 51 percent
• Network of Peers — 44 percent
• Support systems for their art — 40 percent
• Affordable living space — 31 percent
• Environmental quality — 31 percent
• Good place to exhibit/perform — 30 percent

9. The location of artists' workspaces was a useful source of information on local land use and community development planning; artists' responses indicated:
• 60 percent have their workspace in a building with residential zoning;
• 15 percent in a building zoned for commercial activity; and
• 10 percent in a mixed-use building.

Moreover,
• 57 percent rent their workspace, 32 percent are owners.

Conclusion
The highlights summarized here provide an indication of the range of data gathered in the IOA project. Much more extensive information has been gathered from the survey including income, health care, insurance, art and art-related expenses, dependents and marital status, and education and training. Overall, the profile developed thus far by the IOA project yields the most extensive data about artists for the ten sites studied. More importantly, it provides a model and methodology which can be replicated for other locales.

The Research Center for Arts and Culture will provide nationwide accessibility to information about artists, in part through distribution of Artisthelp: The Artist's Guide to Work-Related Human Social Services (published, Fall 1989), as well as a and continuing flow of data and

Information from the IOA project.4

Decision makers around the nation would do well to seek reliable data as the basis for their decisions on arts-based development and maintenance projects.

During the two years of the IOA project, the Center received many inquiries from other cities that wanted to obtain similar information about artists in their locales. This response pattern underscores both the general and specific needs for data on artists. Decision makers around the nation would do well to seek reliable data as the basis for their decisions on arts-based development and maintenance projects.

Notes
4. To obtain a copy of Artisthelp: The Artist's Guide to Work-Related Human Social Services or for more information on the Research Center for Arts and Culture, contact the Center, Columbia University, 615 Dodge Hall, New York, NY 10027; (212)-854-5869.

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