

Artists in community  
and civic engagement:  
**THE CREATIVE  
CITYMAKING AND  
CREATIVE RESPONSE  
FUND PROGRAMS**

Highlights from 2021 evaluation report





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## SEE THE FULL REPORT

The full report gives an in-depth program history, more context for the evaluation, and more recommendations from the evaluator, artists and City staff. It points the way toward leveraging artist partnerships to achieve lasting city system change.



[minneapoliscreates.org/programs-overview#reports](https://minneapoliscreates.org/programs-overview#reports)

# TERMS WE USE



Efforts by city governments to connect with and understand a community’s needs, issues and concerns. Engagement should achieve sustainable practices, relationships and outcomes. Efforts should include strategies that acknowledge and honor the community’s context.

The integration of artists and the arts into community and civic engagement efforts.

Individual or collective action by community members aimed at making a difference in the day-to-day life of a community. May include volunteering, getting involved with organizations, or participating in the electoral process. Engaged citizens see themselves as empowered members of a larger community. They’re motivated to more directly address issues or problems impacting the community.



Photo: Kristen Stoeckler



Photo: Pierre Ware



Photo: Nancy Musinguzi



Photo: Leslie Clau



Photo: Pierre Ware

# AN INNOVATIVE ROLE FOR ARTISTS IN CITY GOVERNMENT

The Office of Arts, Culture & the Creative Economy produces two main programs that prioritize and expand meaningful community and civic engagement opportunities: Creative CityMaking and the Creative Response Fund.

Creative CityMaking program

The Office of Arts,  
Culture & the  
Creative Economy

Creative Response Fund program

Each program supports artists in facilitating innovative strategies that can help City of Minneapolis staff improve City processes and outreach. Both programs help the City achieve its stated mission to eliminate racial and socioeconomic disparities.

## The City's mission

To take strategic action to address climate change, dismantle institutional injustice and close disparities in health, housing, public safety and economic opportunities. In partnership with residents, City leaders help to ensure all communities thrive in a safe and healthy city.<sup>1</sup>

## The Office of Arts, Culture & the Creative Economy's mission

To grow social and economic capital in Minneapolis through investment in artist entrepreneurs and the creative sector.

Historically, artists have been critical in showing how discriminatory city governmental policies and practices limit quality of life and opportunities for BIPOC and lower-income communities. Institutional policies and intentions may conflict with community needs; artists draw on unique interdisciplinary skills to interpret and translate the impacts, acting as intermediaries as they seek equitable solutions to pressing community issues.

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITIES, ENGAGEMENT AND THE ARTS

Throughout history, community advocates have pursued engagement strategies that better acknowledge and reflect the context of communities and places.<sup>2</sup> From the start, they've invited artists and culture bearers to play a role.

1800

1900

1910

1920

## Late 1800s – early 1900s CITY BEAUTIFUL MOVEMENT

Early local efforts to create a sense of place, such as the City Beautiful movement, drew upon the skills of community artisans, whose cultural expressions came to represent distinct regional styles. Cultural activities – from dance to murals – also played a part in efforts to integrate growing communities. In contrast, institutional efforts to foster place identity, such as those of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and late-stage City Beautiful projects, took a more top-down approach. They focused on public art that represented the dominant culture rather than the diversity of local community experiences.

Where: Barrio Logan neighborhood of San Diego, Chicano Park

Artists: Toltecas en Aztlán, an artists' group at the Centro Cultural de la Raza

Aztlán (left), Junk Yards No (right)

1970, artist funded

Significance: Chicano artists were reacting to planning decisions that were decimating the Chicano community of Barrio Logan. The artists used the murals to give an identity to this community – their identity.

Photos: Brenda Kayzar



Starting in the late '60s, the NEA sought to counteract the federal top-down approach by encouraging state arts agencies to engage local communities and fund beautification efforts. However, many cities chose to mimic their European counterparts rather than lift up their local communities and tell their stories. Outcomes varied widely.

1930

1940

1950

1960

1970

Early 1930s – 1940s  
**WPA ARTS  
PROGRAMMING**

1967 ●  
**WALL OF RESPECT  
MURAL IN CHICAGO**

1950s – 1960s  
**CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

Late 1950s – early 1970s  
**FEDERAL URBAN RENEWAL**

1960s – present  
**ADVOCACY PLANNING  
MOVEMENT**

Where: Downtown Chicago,  
Kluczynski Federal Plaza

Artist: Alexander Calder

1974, Federal Percent for Art program

Significance: Top-down approach to public art, beautification with little connection to local culture, instead promoting the European movement of Abstract Expressionism.

Photo: Brenda Kayzar



1967 – 1995  
**NEA'S ART IN PUBLIC PLACES PROGRAM**

The NEA began seeding creative placemaking initiatives more broadly with Our Town grants. Historical efforts had shown the potential of these initiatives to successfully navigate the tension between regulatory control and community concerns. This tension naturally arises when city planning practices must be managed and regulated at citywide scale, while arts and culture can flexibly maneuver at the community level.

2010  
**NEA BEGINS FUNDING CREATIVE PLACEMAKING EFFORTS**

2013  
**CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS STARTS CREATIVE CITYMAKING PROGRAM**

Urban renewal programs in the '50s and '60s decimated lower-income and Black and brown communities across the country. Backlash to this destruction coincided with the Civil Rights movement, prompting many city planners to seek more and better community engagement. In response, communities initiated collaborations with local artists and culture bearers to give voice to their identities, needs and concerns.

Where: NE Minneapolis, Solar Arts Building

Artist: Gustavo Lira

2021, building-owner funded

Significance: Private-sector funding of a community mural meant to represent the new but less acknowledged immigrant population in a neighborhood that has historically been an immigrant destination.

Photo: Brenda Kayzar



# ARTIST-LED ENGAGEMENT AT THE CITY OF MINNEAPOLIS

YOU  
ARE HERE

At the Office of Arts, Culture & the Creative Economy, we take our cues from the history of and evolving relationship between the arts and city planning as we conduct artist-led community and civic engagement efforts for the City of Minneapolis.

## CREATIVE CITYMAKING

In 2013 we started investing in the unique skills of artists through the Creative CityMaking program, which we launched through a partnership with the nonprofit Intermedia Arts. Creative CityMaking pairs artists, primarily from BIPOC communities, with City staff on various projects and initiatives that aim to address inequities. Over the years, the program has improved the City's community engagement practices, resulting in tangible shifts in policy and practice that move the City toward its equity goals.

For the first year of the program, we created four artist-City staff teams. The next round of the program saw five teams. After Intermedia Arts unexpectedly closed in 2018, we redesigned the program and formed three new artist-City staff teams.

Creative CityMaking has been funded mainly through grants, starting with an initial grant from Artplace America. In recent years, funding has been provided by the NEA and the Kresge Foundation.



## CREATIVE RESPONSE FUND

In the summer of 2020, a City of Minneapolis police officer murdered George Floyd. The killing and subsequent uprising showed in stark relief the ongoing trauma of institutional racism, and it required a direct response.

At the time, COVID-19 restrictions had limited or halted Creative CityMaking projects, so we repurposed grant funding from Kresge to launch the Creative Response Fund. This program funded 10 artist projects that provided direct healing and support to impacted communities, which began the process of recentering and rebuilding civic empowerment for those harmed by City policies and practices.

In 2021, the Office of Arts, Culture & the Creative Economy budgeted funding for a second year of the Creative Response Fund program, and we selected 15 artist teams. Funding continues to be offered in 2022.

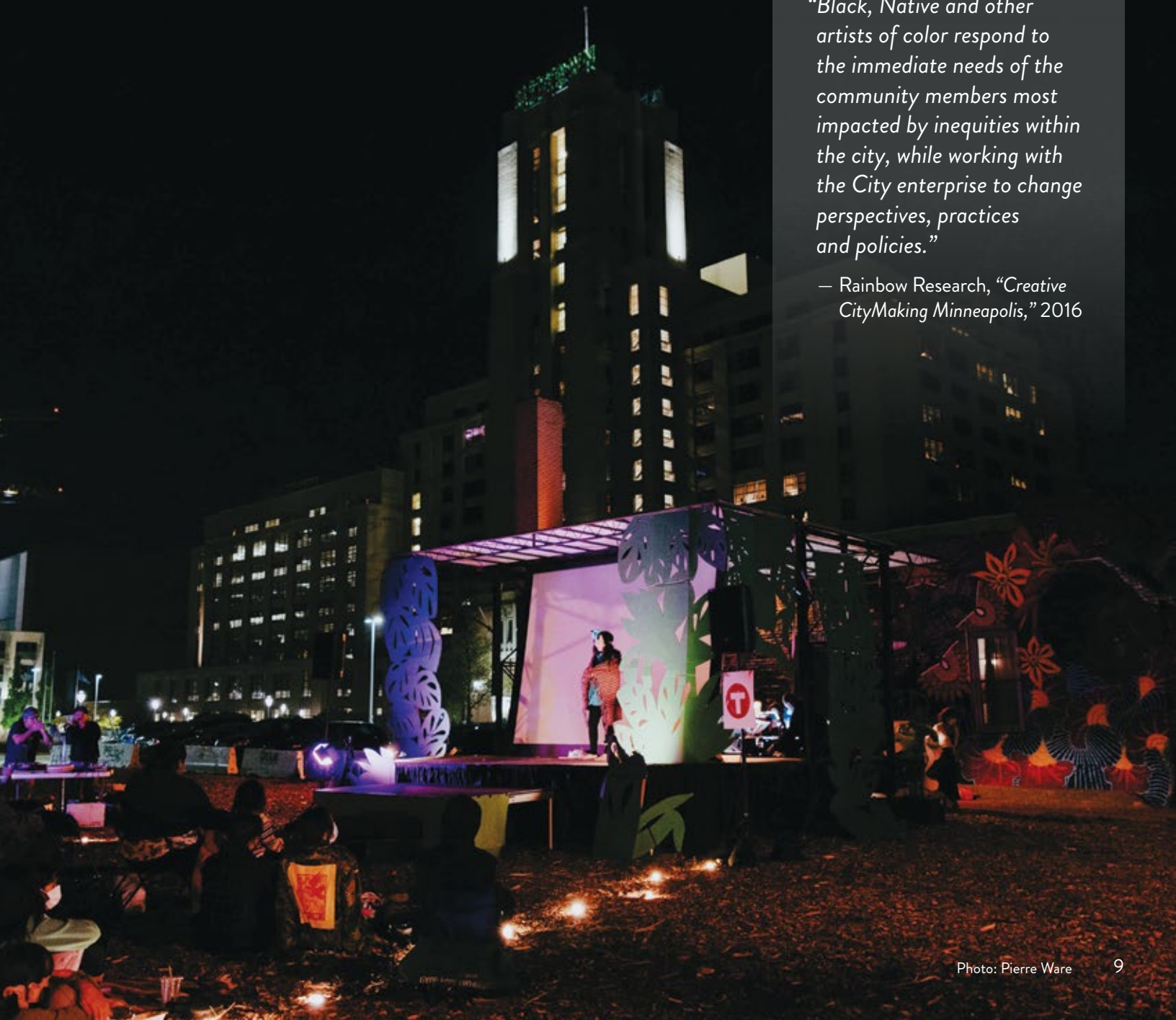
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*“Emergencies not only create new problems, but compound existing issues. They also offer opportunities to create new solutions.”*

— Amelia Brown, “Art Became the Oxygen: An Artistic Response Guide,” 2017

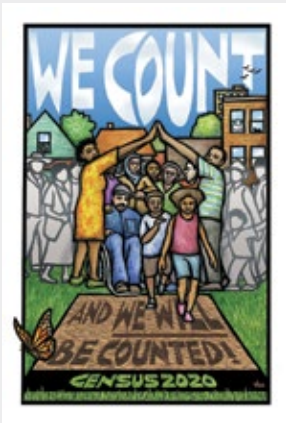
*“Black, Native and other artists of color respond to the immediate needs of the community members most impacted by inequities within the city, while working with the City enterprise to change perspectives, practices and policies.”*

— Rainbow Research, “Creative CityMaking Minneapolis,” 2016



# PROJECT SPOTLIGHTS

## CREATIVE CITYMAKING PROJECTS



### 2020 Census Complete Count (2019–2020)

**Artists:** Roxanne Anderson & Anna Meyer

**City staff:** Karen Moe & Alberder Gillespie in the Department of Neighborhood & Community Relations

Emphasized the value of completing the census for communities that are often underrepresented in decision-making. The artists curated and developed an outreach campaign that included a graphic poster and other communication methods encouraging community members to participate in the census count.



*“We’ve had internal discussions for weeks now about the need for culturally meaningful messaging in culturally meaningful ways. The City government cannot produce this image, this video, this song. Those messages are more meaningful [than their portrayal shows], and the City cannot make them like that. [Creative CityMaking shows how] it can be done differently and should be done differently now in how messages go out.”*

— City staff, 2021 workshop



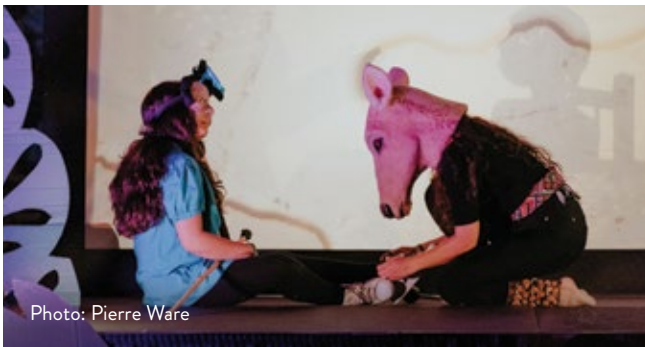
## Hearing Tenant Voices (2015–2019)

**Artists:** Mankwe Ndosi, Reggie Prim & Griffen Jeffries

**City staff:** Kellie Jones, Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, Karen Moe & Rose Lindsay in the Department of Regulatory Services

Explored ways to give Minneapolis tenants a voice around decisions involving housing inspections. The artists conducted interactive theater workshops for Regulatory Services staff to promote deep personal reflection and build intercultural competency. As the artists facilitated tenant-staff collaboration on housing issues, they developed community engagement activities to directly interact with and listen to tenants.

## CREATIVE RESPONSE FUND PROJECTS



### Star Girl Clan (2021)

Lead artists Magdalena Kaluza and Rebekah Crisanta de Ybarra performed with their team at the corner of East Lake Street and Chicago Avenue, an intersection at the site of recent traumatic events. For an Indigenous Peoples Day celebration, the artists used magical realism and a journey into the Maya cosmovision to tell an intergenerational story of emergence and healing transformation. They sought to build awareness around ancient connections to the Maya and Dakota people and spread healing after the trauma of the previous two years.



### Art for Nervous Systems (2020)

Artist Candida Gonzalez and the collective Creatives After Curfew created a series of four instructive healing murals to share information about simple herbal and energetic medicine with the community around George Floyd Square. The murals draw on Indigenous healing knowledge to help communities in a time of change and healing.



*“When we face trauma, pain comes up and we get reactive, but there are still ways to show love for each other.”*

— Magdalena Kaluza, artist, 2021 Creative Response Fund

# EVALUATION OF PROGRAM IMPACTS



The Kresge Foundation grant supported an evaluation of the Creative CityMaking and Creative Response Fund programs.<sup>3</sup>

The Office of Arts, Culture & the Creative Economy completed the evaluation report in 2021 in collaboration with two consulting firms, Rainbow Research and Urbane DrK Consulting. The evaluation examined three Creative CityMaking projects and 10 Creative Response Fund projects from 2019 to 2021 to understand their impacts to community members, artists and artist networks, City staff, and City departments and practices.

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

2013–2019

The Creative CityMaking program created collaborations between

**22** artists + **49** City staff members

who collectively engaged with over

**2,500** residents

2020

In 2020, despite COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns, Creative CityMaking and Creative Response Fund artists engaged

**1,046** residents

through

**39** interactive events + **6** semipermanent art installations

and digital media including

**3** film series + An online multidisciplinary art exhibit + Curated social media

The Creative Response Fund

gave awards to

**10** inaugural artist teams

which generated income for

**65** artists

2021



### Community members

Arts-based approaches to engagement reached and influenced communities often excluded from City processes.

- ✓ Seeing themselves reflected in the art and artist facilitators, **BIPOC residents gained a sense of empowerment and community belonging**
- ✓ Arts-facilitated community engagement supported **ongoing civic engagement and resident leadership** in community development



## Artists and artist networks

Artists awarded Creative CityMaking or Creative Response Fund contracts gained experience in working with institutions, hired and mentored additional artists, and participated in their own healing.

- Both programs prioritized hiring artists from underrepresented communities, **creating more opportunities for BIPOC artists**
- Artists with program experience proactively **recruited less experienced artists** to join their project teams
- New artist networks and **mentoring relationships lasted** beyond the life of the projects
- Artists gained experience that **boosted their professional careers**, strengthened their competency in working with institutions, and introduced them to new creative techniques
- Creative Response Fund artists reported experiencing **personal healing** through their participation

### Creative Response Fund

**13 artists funded** | 92% BIPOC  
77% Black

**52 additional artists** were subcontracted and compensated for their work | 88% BIPOC  
58% Black

### Creative CityMaking

**5 artists funded** | 80% BIPOC  
20% Black

**6 additional artists** were subcontracted and compensated for their work





## City staff

City staff members reported personal and professional growth through their collaborations with artists.

- ✓ The experience influenced how City staff thought about and approached their work, and it **shaped their interactions with Minneapolis residents**
- ✓ Staff members built relationships and networks with artists and grew and **strengthened their relationships with community partners**



## City departments and City practices

Various City departments have participated in a range of projects and initiatives. Department staff have had the opportunity to consider different perspectives and to practice new patterns of community engagement.

- ✓ Three Creative CityMaking projects were so **successful they were extended** for six months
- ✓ At the request of Regulatory Services, the Hearing Tenant Voices Creative CityMaking project ran for four years and **fostered changes to City policy**
- ✓ A Creative CityMaking artist was hired as a **permanent City staff member** and two others went on to **serve on City Council**
- ✓ Creative CityMaking artists have gone on to **win other contracts** with the City

# KEY TAKEAWAY

## ➔ **The Kresge-funded evaluation report offers a critical recommendation:**

The Creative CityMaking and Creative Response Fund programs “should be permanently integrated into how local government addresses racial equity.” By supporting the work of artists as they promote new practices and policies, as well as citywide healing after racial violence and its aftermath, these programs leverage the power of relationships to solve problems and advance racial equity.

Creative CityMaking and the Creative Response Fund give artists a way to use their unique skills to develop innovative engagement strategies for traditionally underrepresented communities. These fresh approaches stimulate new thinking and practices for a government that’s more responsive to the community. Since they began, these programs have paved the way for community engagement that allows diverse voices to be heard and civic engagement that invites residents to influence decision-making.



Get the full report and see more recommendations at  
[minneapoliscreates.org/programs-overview#reports](https://minneapoliscreates.org/programs-overview#reports)



The Creative CityMaking and Creative Response Fund programs cultivate the intersections where artists and City staff come together to address disparities among people who live and work in Minneapolis.

## NOTES

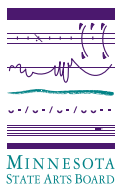
1. City of Minneapolis (2019). City Vision, Mission, Values and Goals, <https://www.minneapolismn.gov/government/city-goals/>.
2. Kayzar, Brenda (2021). "A Review of the Creative Placemaking Literature." *Creative Placemaking in Rail Transit Corridors*, edited by Mark VanderSchaaf and Brenda Kayzar, 20–32. Washington D.C.: American Planning Association, Regional and Intergovernmental Planning Division.
3. ACCE (2021). Creative CityMaking and Creative Response Fund Evaluation. Minneapolis, MN, City of Minneapolis, Office of Arts, Culture & the Creative Economy.



**Arts, Culture & the  
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