

# THE ORIGIN STORY OF The Creative City Roap Map

*In 2014, the City Council passed an ordinance defining racial equity as “the development of policies, practices and strategic investments to reverse disparity trends, eliminate institutional racism and ensure that outcomes and opportunities for all people are no longer predictable by race.”<sup>24</sup>*

In the summer of 2014, planning and artist teams set forth a mission to surface the present creative identity of Minneapolis and envision a future where all Minneapolitans can access and benefit from the creative economy. Our work was grounded in the City’s strategic goals and objectives, specifically the One Minneapolis goal to ensure “disparities are eliminated so all Minneapolis residents can participate and prosper.” Planning was also informed by the Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy program’s commitment to racial equity and authentic engagement with the diverse communities that make our city so culturally vibrant. To access and engage many voices in this process, we realized that we needed to remain nimble and demonstrate our core value of equity through our work.

Early in the process, we talked with people involved in Minneapolis’ previous planning process, analyzed the 2005 Minneapolis Plan for Arts and Culture, and researched how other communities undergo cultural planning. Part of our evaluation involved comparing Minneapolis’ arts implementation work with our peer cities and learning what results had been achieved. We then collected data in the community and pulled from relevant media, research and data, such as the Minneapolis Creative Index report. All of these data sources helped us write the Creative City Road Map.

Guided by this commitment to racial equity, we worked on all fronts to include diverse perspectives in the planning process. We collaborated with community artists and

focused our engagement in communities that weren’t responding to online survey methods. We hired creative workers from a diversity of Minneapolis communities and cultures to document our events, design our graphics, cater our large group meetings, provide creative summaries of information and create a welcoming atmosphere at our community Open House events.

We included more perspectives in the form of “Data Jams” that invited work group members and artists to help make sense of the information collected during our engagement efforts. Over an 18-month period, we engaged thousands of people in the planning process. Below are a few ways people participated and made their voices heard.

## Committees

Two committees met throughout the planning process, offering valuable guidance and feedback. The Steering Committee provided high-level guidance throughout the process and was composed of elected officials, City staff, system partners, community leaders in the arts and Minneapolis Arts Commission members. The second committee took the form of work groups comprising a larger group of stakeholders from the City, system partners and creative organizations, as well as individual artists with relevant experience in the fields of placemaking; creative placemaking; creative engagement; arts and the economy; creative lifelong learning and sharing; and artist support.



“For Open Streets Lowry, it was just amazing to be in wide open space on such a beautiful day with such a great turnout of families, kids and community members. There was a good amount of curiosity about the Creative Minneapolis campaign and a number of people who were willing to stop and talk art ideas, outreach and accessibility. This was affirming. It felt good to meet the people where they live!”

— SHA CAGE, CREATIVE CITY ROAD MAP ARTIST ENGAGEMENT TEAM MEMBER ON OPEN STREETS

Originally convening separately around five fields, the work groups met collectively three times in 2015 at cultural venues throughout the City. Local musicians, spoken word artists and chefs brought these spaces to life and inspired work group members.

## Gathering Information & Engaging Community Members

From September 2014 to February 2015, we gathered information from the community in a variety of ways. Usual data collection methods were used – surveying and open houses – but we also infused our outreach methods with creativity. As community members started filling out our online survey, we could tell there were voices missing. Using two Artist Engagement Teams, we used creative methods to reach out to the missing voices, which included communities of color and Native American and new immigrant communities. The Artist Engagement Teams focused on building relationships and collecting information from these specific communities. Through these engagements, they built support for the planning process, collected information that informed the Creative City Road Map, and then

designed a system to loop back and share with communities what we heard and gather their feedback.

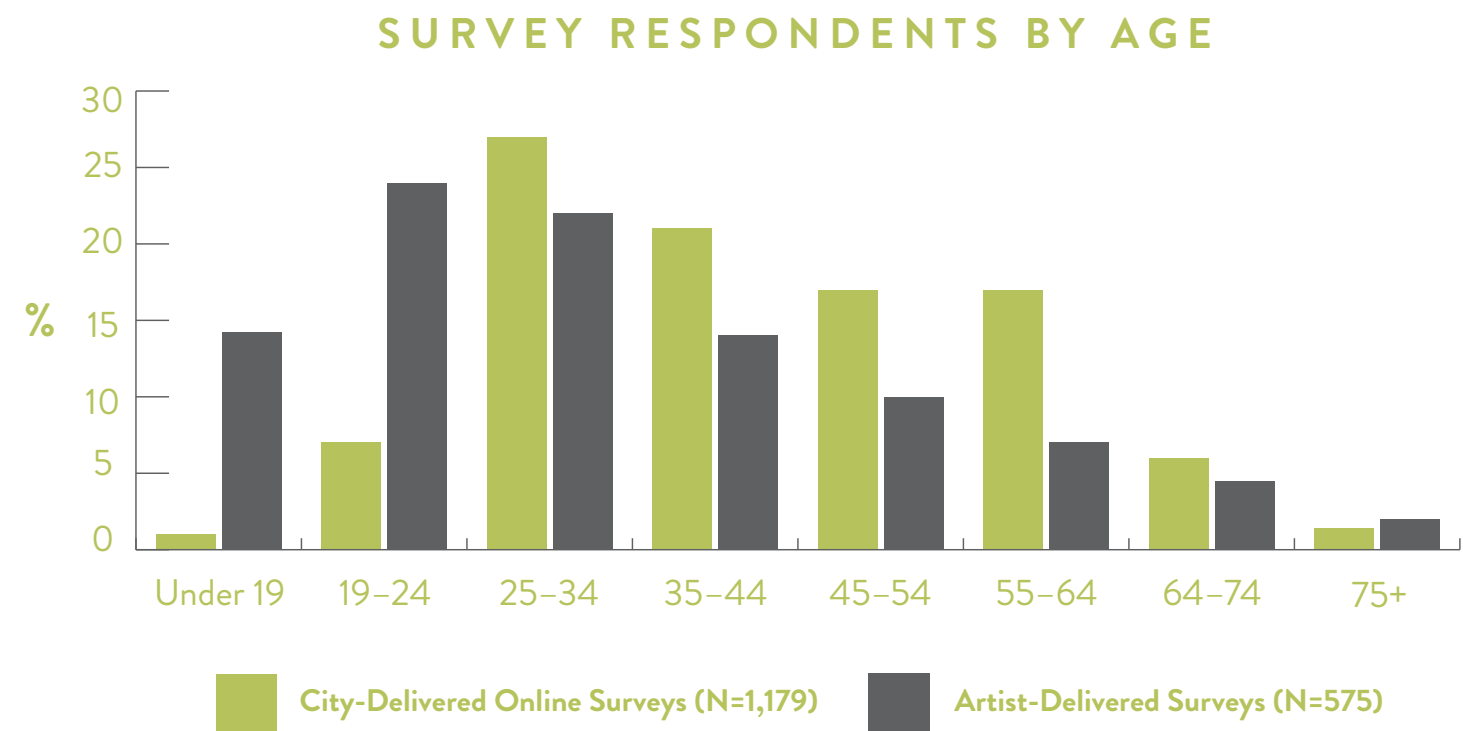
## Engagement Tools

### SURVEY

From the plan questions, we developed a survey to gather information from arts-interested audiences and creative practitioners. The survey was available from September 2014 to February 2015 in both online and paper form. It was also translated into Spanish and Somali.

### OPEN HOUSES

We invited the general public, arts-interested audiences, creative practitioners, work groups and Steering Committee members to three open houses in 2014. The purpose of the open houses was to describe the planning process and topic areas for the Creative City Road Map, gather input through the survey and spark excitement for the process. In September 2015, another open house event served as an occasion to review the draft Creative City Road Map. This open house featured an exhibit designed by local artist Ashley Fairbanks. It displayed key parts of the draft Road Map and projects by the Artist Engagement Teams that visualized the planning process to date.



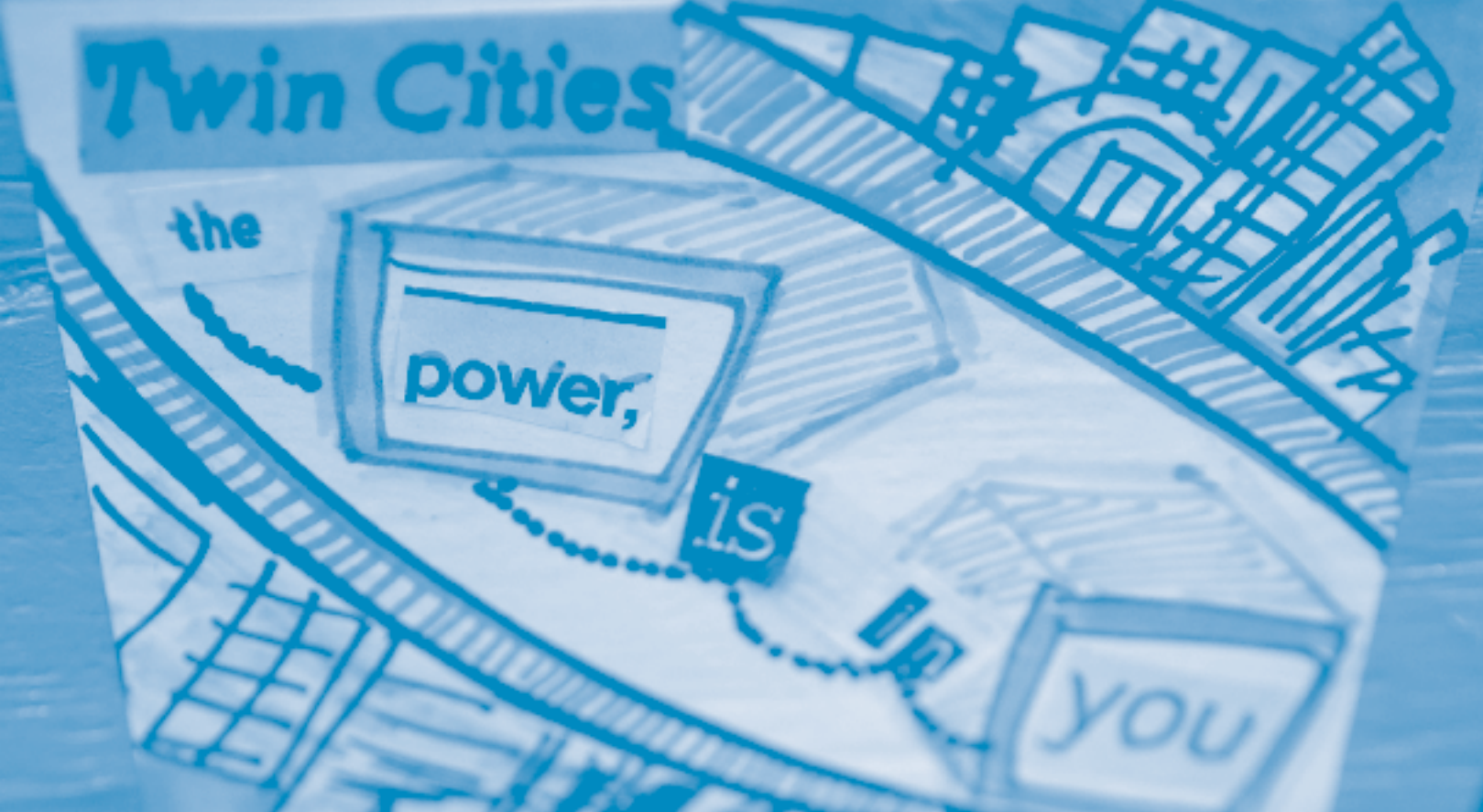
**Figure 1:** Nearly 40% of the artist-delivered surveys were filled out by people under the age of 24 compared with only 8% of the surveys filled out online.

## ARTIST ENGAGEMENT TEAMS IN THE COMMUNITY

The Artist Engagement Teams were core to the success of the planning process. Two artist engagement teams participated in the development of our core research ideas and survey questions. They also created unique activities and piggybacked their efforts onto already planned community events. The artists involved were hired for their community expertise, experience and ability to connect to diverse communities across the city. For over six months, they collected information using surveys, interviews, “What is your creative Minneapolis?” cards and other creative outreach methods.

- **Unique events:** These included performances, food and dancing at Honey, a live music venue, and Hip Hop Caroling at the Brian Coyle Center.
- **Piggybacking on events:** Artist Engagement Teams took part in events already going on in the community at venues such as Café Southside, Lowry Open Streets, Intermedia Arts and the Minneapolis American Indian Center.

- **Community mural:** Using a large mobile mural, Artist Engagement Teams captured personal feelings and images of a creative Minneapolis.
- **Interviews:** Artist Engagement Teams gathered data through conversations with community members.
- **“What is your creative Minneapolis?” cards:** These were developed to capture personal stories, feelings and perspectives on multiple creative realities in Minneapolis. Cards were distributed at events and left at key public places around Minneapolis.
- **Meeting with arts organizations, system partners and community organizations:** A large meeting including organizations and system partners that serve or work with creative practitioners and produce creative products, programs and events was convened in the summer of 2015. Participants discussed activities in their organizations and how they related to the Creative City Road Map goals and objectives. Over 100 people from 70 organizations attended the event at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design.
- **Social media:** E-updates, blogging and other social media outlets were used regularly throughout the process, not only to invite people to engage in the



*"It turned out to be THE highlight of all our engagements.... The best part of the night was about 50 people (mostly youth) outside with music playing and a 7-year-old girl singing into the microphone followed by a teenage Somali male rapping about cultural identity and community. Everyone kept saying 'more of these - more events like this!'"*

— SHA CAGE, CREATIVE CITY ROAD MAP ARTIST ENGAGEMENT TEAM MEMBER ON HIP HOP CAROLING

planning process online and at events, but also to report back to stakeholders throughout the process. On a monthly basis, we sent out electronic newsletters explaining key stages in the planning process and providing updates on how people could get involved.

- **Creatively sharing qualitative data:** For the spring 2015 work group meeting, which involved sharing collected data and analysis, local performance artist A Comeaux was commissioned to create two pieces using qualitative answers to the survey questions: "What is your favorite place in Minneapolis and why?" and "In what ways can the City of Minneapolis help you advance your artistic, design or creative practice?" Through her performances, A Comeaux vibrantly brought the data to life, providing a creative way for work group members to be immersed in the data.

## Making Sense of the Information Gathered

**Voices for Racial Justice:** The staff team and Artist Engagement Teams worked with Voices for Racial Justice, a local community organization working to advance racial, cultural, social and economic justice, to learn how to infuse racial equity into data analysis.

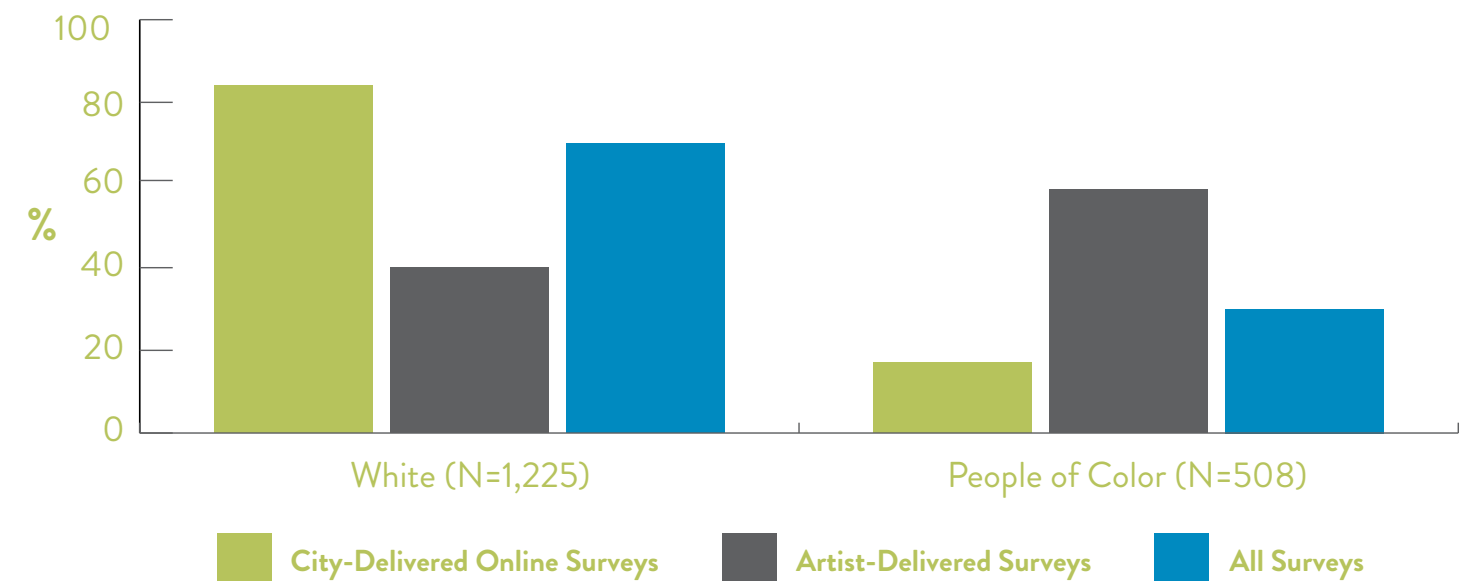
**Data Jams:** As a starting point in the data analysis process, work group members and Artist Engagement Teams were invited to Data Jams, where they "coded" qualitative survey data, looking for patterns and identifying prominent themes. These Data Jams served to bring more perspectives to data analysis, embracing multiple narratives in the data and creating space for those involved at all levels of the planning process to participate. The themes identified through the Data Jams were used by the staff team to code the rest of the qualitative data.



PHOTO CREDIT: BFRESH PRODUCTIONS

Figure 2

## SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY RACE

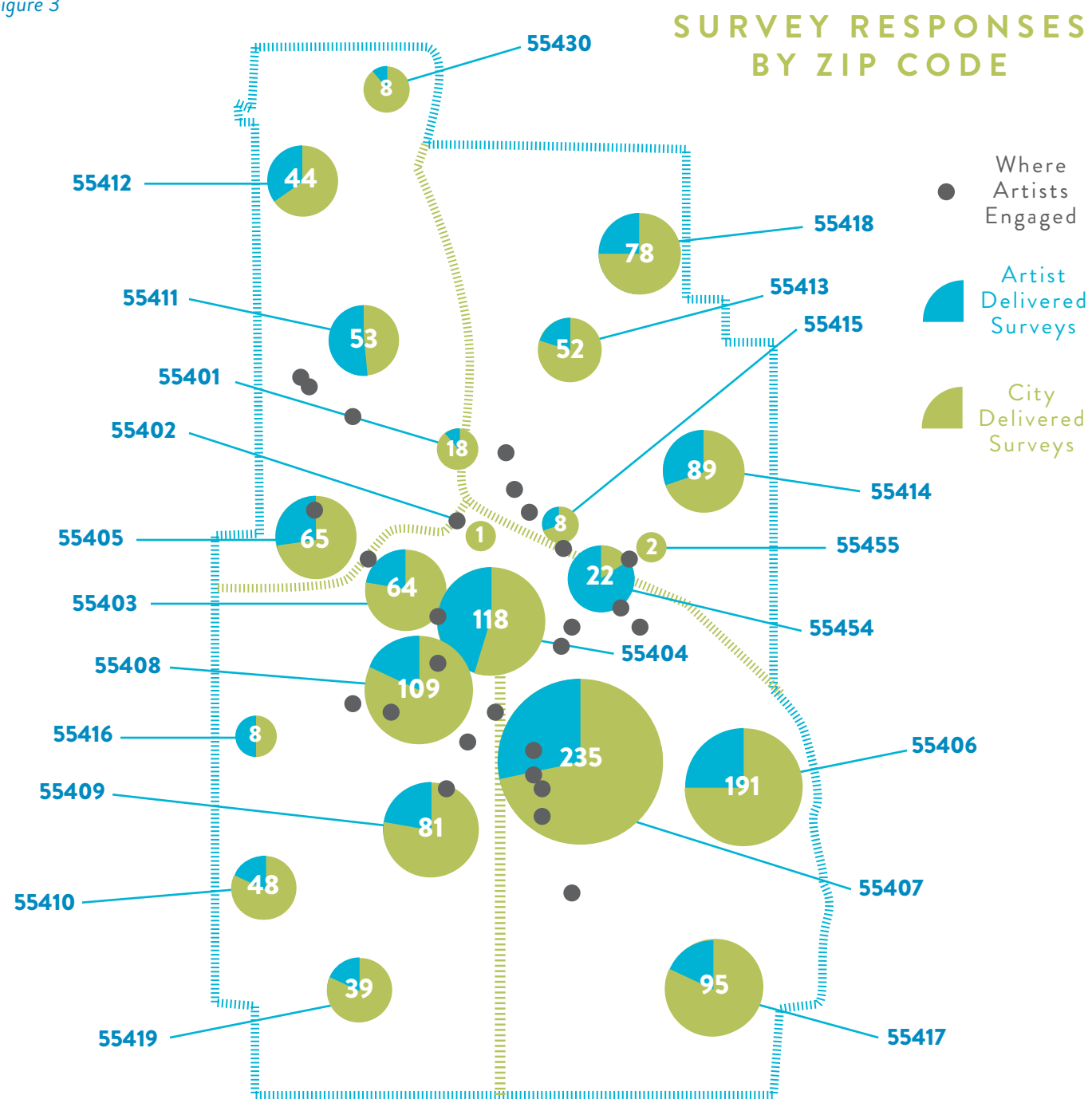


**Figure 2:** The majority of people who filled out artist-delivered surveys were people of color; of the people who filled out the survey online, only 15% were people of color. The Artist Engagement Teams successfully reached populations and communities that were not engaging online.

# Who We Reached

Surveys were collected from residents living across Minneapolis. Because we used diverse engagement methods, we heard from people living across the city, yet these methods still revealed gaps in survey respondents. Underrepresented communities were identified, and the Artist Engagement Teams deployed targeted outreach to these communities, which included Cedar-Riverside, Central and Near North (Figure 3). The majority (69%) of survey respondents filled out the survey online.

Figure 3



The numbers in the circles indicate the number of survey responses from that ZIP code.

# Public Comment Period

After completing the draft Road Map document, it was important to report back to those engaged during the data collection phase of the planning process to share our progress. We asked for feedback using four questions:

- What excites you?
- What would you like to see changed?
- What bright ideas do you have for how to move this vision forward?
- What questions do you have?

**Traveling exhibition:** Local artist Ashley Fairbanks designed a traveling exhibit with key information from the draft Road Map. The exhibit traveled to four locations targeted to reach underserved communities throughout Minneapolis. Each location hosted the exhibit for one week.

**Loop backs:** The Artist Engagement Team developed creative ways to share the draft plan through public Loop Back events. These events occurred at three of the four locations where the traveling exhibit was hosted. They included performances by Minnesota Congressman Keith Ellison and members of Redbone – a group of Native drummers – as well as conversation circles, a radio show and opportunities to provide feedback on the draft Road Map document.

**Online feedback:** The content in the traveling exhibit and the draft Road Map were available online, where the community could give feedback.

## What We Heard

The following themes represent the collective analysis gathered through our Data Jams. These themes influenced the creation of the Road Map goals and objectives.

### ON ARTISTS

Inclusion and accessibility for artists of color depends on institutional actors understanding their basic needs as the starting point for policy interventions: living spaces, working spaces, etc. *Basic needs come first.*

### ON CREATIVE SPACES

People from different backgrounds and communities relate to the infrastructure and public spaces of Minneapolis in different ways, influencing how they access and consume art. *Art creates place and offers opportunities for people and communities to express different relationships with Minneapolis and its infrastructure.*

### ON AUDIENCES

Across the city, people access and learn about the arts in very different ways; understanding the impact of different modes of communication on the consumption of the arts, from social media to the radio to neighborhood newsletters, can help creative practitioners and stakeholders find audiences and grow. *Audiences can't attend events they don't know about, and entire communities can be left without access.*

### ON CIVIC PRIORITIES

Art must be seen as a viable method of community building, particularly as a way for communities to assert ownership and agency over their own physical spaces. *The arts can create stakeholders.*

The City can help the creative economy grow by leveraging its position in different spheres, as a regulator, as a financial supporter, as a function of its City planning powers, etc. Organizing different arms of City government can compel other spheres of the community to organize around the needs of artists and creative practitioners. *Coordination is needed.*