

Arts and culture can...





Arts and culture can transform spaces.

Arts and culture are widely understood as tools to beautify, activate, and repurpose shared spaces, from sidewalks to parks to public infrastructure. Such physical changes introduce the risk of social, economic, or cultural displacement, however, so it is crucial to root them in the community's stated needs and desires.

IN AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD SYSTEMS

**Transform
community
spaces and
celebrate identity**

IN COMMUNITY SAFETY

**Transform
liabilities into
assets**

IN ENVIRONMENT

**Enrich and
activate the built
environment**

IN HOUSING

**Nourish
individuals and
communities who
have experienced
housing trauma**

IN PUBLIC SAFETY

**Advance quality
of place**

IN TRANSPORTATION

**Alleviate
disruptive effects
of construction**

IN WATER

**Mitigate the
disruptive effect
of construction
projects**



Arts and culture can reflect community identity.

The built environment sends powerful signals about who belongs in a community, and for whom public amenities are intended. Culturally-specific design elements and programming can honor and stabilize existing communities – particularly those who are marginalized or facing the threat of displacement – as well as include newcomers in the broader social fabric.

The Role of Arts and Culture in Equitable Community Development: A Visual Analysis

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IN AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD SYSTEMS

**Transform
community
spaces and
celebrate identity**

IN IMMIGRATION

**Co-create spaces
that reflect
identity**

IN TRANSPORTATION

**Foster local
ownership**

IN WATER

**Integrate water
infrastructure into
the fabric of a
community**

IN PUBLIC SAFETY

**Advance quality
of place**

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Arts and culture can bridge differences.

Engaging in arts activities and shared cultural practices can create connections among disparate or diverse populations, fostering empathy and understanding of others and creating more welcoming communities.

IN AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD SYSTEMS
**Bridge and
heal divides**

IN HOUSING
**Bridge disparate
neighborhood
residents**

IN IMMIGRATION
**Bridge newcomers
and longer term
populations**

IN PUBLIC HEALTH
**Address social
exclusion and
isolation**

IN PUBLIC SAFETY
**Promote empathy
and understanding**

IN WATER
**Build bridges
across different
sectors and
stakeholder
groups**

IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
**Honor personal
identity and
build collective
belonging**



Arts and culture can ensure cultural continuity.

Creative traditions and rituals are vital to honoring, sustaining, and evolving a community's identity, sense of purpose and meaning, and inherited wisdom from one generation to the next – particularly for those who have been marginalized, oppressed, or displaced involuntarily.

IN AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Preserve and
reclaim food and
farming traditions

IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Catalyze
intergenerational
cultural continuity

IN IMMIGRATION

Elevate cultural
traditions as
assets



Arts and culture can cultivate individual agency.

Creative practices provide important ways of building skills, gaining confidence, and navigating complex systems. Arts and culture programs can also be powerful tools for connecting youth and community members to business development and job opportunities.

IN COMMUNITY SAFETY

Foster
opportunities
for young people
in high crime
neighborhoods

IN PUBLIC SAFETY

Provide career
opportunities

IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Connect workers
to opportunities;
Build technical
and critical skills

IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Cultivate
creativity and
agency in youth



Arts and culture can facilitate collaboration.

Traditional community planning processes focus on engaging stakeholders for input on decisions. Arts and cultural approaches can flip the paradigm, expanding beyond mere outreach and participation to truly collaborative decision-making and cooperation among a broader range of community members, partners, and allies.

IN AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD SYSTEMS

**Ignite creative,
community led
processes**

IN WATER

**Engage
communities in
participatory
processes**

IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

**Facilitate
collaboration
for group
decision-making**

IN COMMUNITY SAFETY

**Redefine policing
around community
building**

IN IMMIGRATION

**Engage newcomers
and other allies in
civic processes**

IN TRANSPORTATION

**Engage multiple
stakeholders
for an inclusive
process**



Arts and culture can advance wellbeing.

As acknowledgement of the social determinants of health grows, so does the recognition that arts and cultural practitioners are key partners in the drive for health equity. Evidence shows that engaging in arts activities and traditional cultural practices promotes direct physical and mental health benefits at both the individual and community levels.

IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Address chronic disease;
Address mental health;
Address social exclusion and isolation

IN PUBLIC SAFETY

Support wellbeing

IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Foster health, safety, and wellbeing

IN COMMUNITY SAFETY

Support justice involved community members



Arts and culture can heal community trauma.

Communities can experience intergenerational or collective trauma tied to disinvestment, environmental disaster, poverty, and more. Arts and culture can shine a light on a community's history or collective experience, confront systemic inequities, and shift the narrative about a community through creative expression and action.

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IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Address
community
trauma;
Address racism

IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Heal individuals
and communities
from extractive
labor and
economic
practices

IN TRANSPORTATION

Heal wounds
and divisions

IN HOUSING

Nourish
individuals and
communities who
have experienced
housing trauma

IN AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Bridge and heal
divides

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Arts and culture can center people.

Many community development systems, institutions, and practices prioritize technical or financial bottom lines while addressing community needs. Arts and cultural strategies invite alternative ways of knowing, seeing, and relating to community residents, shifting the focus to more human-centered and holistic outcomes.

IN COMMUNITY SAFETY

Support
justice involved
community
members;
Redefine policing
around community
building

IN TRANSPORTATION

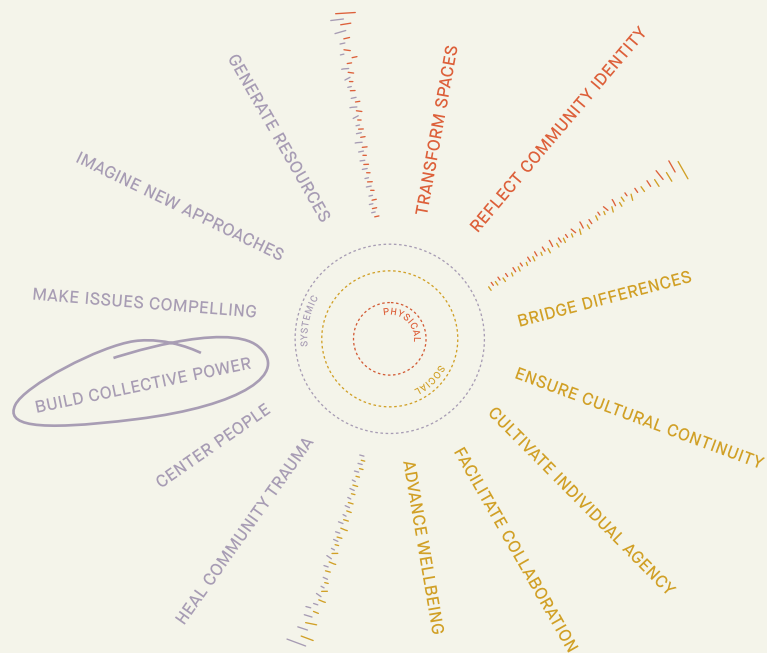
Make streets
safer for all users

IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Improve
recruiting, hiring,
and advancement

IN PUBLIC HEALTH

Address
community
trauma;
Address racism



Arts and culture can build collective power.

Artists have long been activists, organizers, and allies to social change movements. Community organizers, too, rely on arts and cultural strategies to create a shared vision and build the collective capacity of residents and community leaders to advocate for, resist, or effect change.

IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Build power to strengthen movements that shift local economic conditions

IN ENVIRONMENT

Build community capacity and agency

IN HOUSING

Organize housing campaigns

IN PUBLIC SAFETY

Influence law and policy

IN TRANSPORTATION

Organize transportation advocates

IN WATER

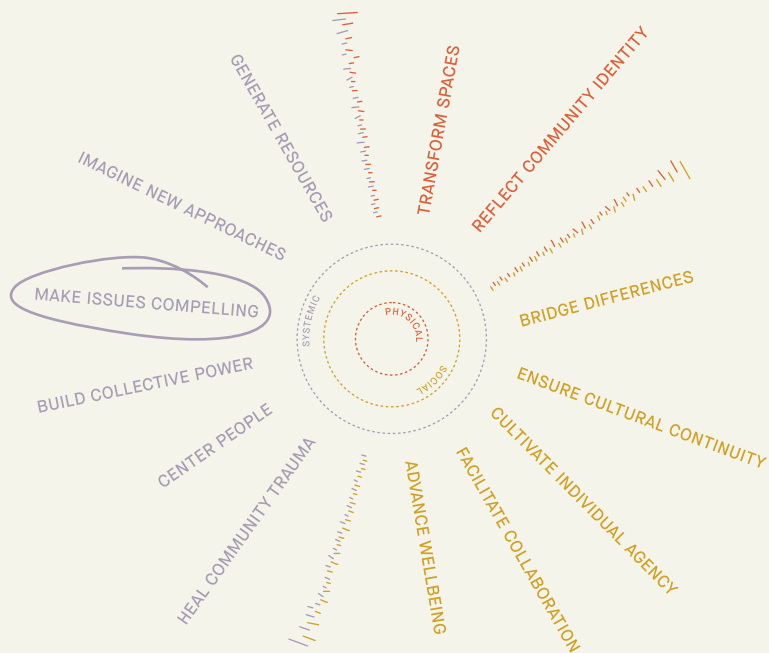
Support community activism

IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Build power and drive policy change

IN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Support more sustainable and responsive communities



Arts and culture can make issues compelling.

Artists can surface what is hidden or overlooked in a community or institution – calling attention to complex challenges or intangible concepts, and making them personal, relevant, and understandable through performance, visualization, or other creative interpretation.

IN AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Promote secure
land tenure

IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Make the case
for holistic,
people-centered
financing

IN ENVIRONMENT

Bridge scales

IN HOUSING

Articulate invisible
housing
challenges

IN WATER

Help people
understand and
connect to water

IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Highlight
the social
determinants
of employment



Arts and culture can imagine new approaches.

Artists are innovators and idea generators. They can bring bold and unconventional approaches to help communities and institutions envision new possibilities, imagine alternative futures, and experiment with entirely new ways of being.

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IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Access
imagination
to bring new
economic
structures
into being

IN ENVIRONMENT

Spark public
demand

IN HOUSING

Stabilize
vulnerable
communities

IN TRANSPORTATION

Generate creative
solutions for
entrenched
transportation
problems

IN WATER

Inform water
resource planning
with new
perspectives

IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Create
regenerative
jobs and firms

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Arts and culture can generate resources.

Arts and cultural strategies are powerful tools for communities working to sustain themselves or to build a more just and democratic economy. Cultural practices can expand our definition of community wealth (beyond financial) and ensure that those who create value are the ones who benefit from it.

IN AGRICULTURE
AND FOOD SYSTEMS

Drive equitable
food oriented
development
and rural vitality

IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Create new and
sustaining existing
forms of resource
generation;
Make the case
for holistic,
people-centered
financing

IN ENVIRONMENT

Nurture
sustainable
economies

IN HOUSING

Generate economic
development

IN IMMIGRATION

Elevate cultural
traditions as assets

IN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Create
regenerative
jobs and firms

IN COMMUNITY SAFETY

Transform liabilities
into assets

IN TRANSPORTATION

Alleviate disruptive
effects of
construction

IN WATER

Mitigate the
disruptive effect
of construction
projects