

Artists Downtown: Capitalizing on Arts Districts in New England

By

Jason S. Schupbach

B.S. Public Health
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1997

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

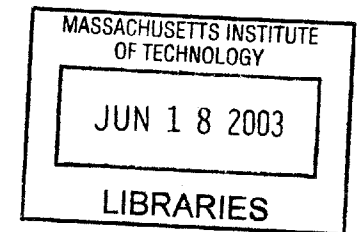
MASTER IN CITY PLANNING
Urban Design Certificate

AT THE
MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

JUNE 2003

©2003 Jason S. Schupbach. All rights reserved.

The author hereby grants to MIT permission to reproduce
and to distribute publicly paper and electronic
copies of this thesis document in whole or in part.



Signature of Author: _____
Department of Urban Studies and Planning
May 15th, 2003

Certified By: _____
J. Mark Schuster
Professor of Urban Cultural Policy
Thesis Supervisor

Accepted by: _____
Langley Keyes
Ford Professor of City and Regional Planning
Chair, MCP Committee

ARTISTS DOWNTOWN: CAPITALIZING ON ARTS DISTRICTS IN NEW ENGLAND

By Jason Schupbach

Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning on May 15th, 2003
in the partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree Master of City Planning

ABSTRACT

From the construction of the Bilbao Guggenheim to the support of grassroots artist housing campaigns, urban planners increasingly look to artists and cultural activity as forces of urban regeneration. In New England, the most visible of these redevelopment efforts are so-called "arts districts." Arts districts seek to promote the revitalization of downtowns or blighted neighborhoods by capitalizing on the development of arts activity and the recruitment of artists. This thesis investigates four such districts (Providence RI, Pawtucket RI, Worcester MA, and New Bedford MA) in order to answer whether or not arts districts are a feasible strategy to achieve economic and community revitalization, and identify the ways in which artists can be proactively involved in the urban regeneration process. Can arts districts be engineered to be successful?

The thesis begins by critiquing the theory behind culture as a force of urban regeneration; it then examines how artists live their lives in the city. Also, it analyzes the history of cultural districts to frame the current efforts in New England. For each of these cases a set of defining characteristics is analyzed.

The analysis of these case studies led to several important conclusions. City officials utilize many different models for arts districts, and because of this all arts districts are not the same. Clear, professional management of a district is imperative to accomplishing local goals. Three different types of artists emerged: "visionary," "participant" and "private" artists, each with a different relationship to planning efforts and each with a contribution to make. The cases revealed a need to find a balance between cultural consumption and cultural production in a district. Finally, in addition to any economic success that a district might enjoy on its own terms, an additional benefit is often the creation of a cultural coalition better able to engage with a city around development efforts.

Arts districts can be engineered; but success is relative — it depends to a large extent on local conditions. For cities considering creating a district, this thesis presents 11 propositions to keep in mind. Finally, the question of whether or not capitalizing on arts districts is a good idea is broached. For certain locales, they are, but they should be considered as only one movement in the complex symphony of urban revitalization.

Thesis Advisor: J. Mark Schuster
Professor of Urban Cultural Policy

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to all of my interviewees who took the time to share their knowledge with me. Thanks and appreciation to Herb Weiss, for taking a whole day to drive me around in his car to talk to artists; to Ann Galligan, whose frank advice steered my thesis in a completely new direction; and to Kerrie Bellasario, for bringing insight to me about the lives of artists.

My deep gratitude to the faculty and staff of MIT with whom I have worked, for all of their encouragement and support: to John De Monchaux and Julian Beinart for all of their generosity and enlightenment, to Susan Silberberg for her enthusiasm and thoughtful contribution as my reader, and especially to Mark Schuster, my thesis advisor, for his respect, creative ideas, guidance, commitment and friendship.

Above all thank you to my family for encouraging me to follow my desires. And to my partner Bob, I certainly could not have made it through these two years without your support and understanding.

PROLOGUE: ARTISTS DOWNTOWN.....	1
OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS.....	3
PROPOSITIONS FOR THE CREATION OF ARTS DISTRICTS.....	4
1 LITERATURE REVIEW + METHODOLOGY.....	7
CULTURE AS A FORCE IN URBAN REGENERATION.....	7
THE ARTIST IN THE CITY.....	18
CULTURAL DISTRICTS.....	26
ARTS DISTRICTS IN NEW ENGLAND + RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	37
2 PROVIDENCE AND PAWTUCKET: DOPPELGANGER DISTRICTS.....	45
PROVIDENCE – THE RENAISSANCE CITY?.....	46
PAWTUCKET – WALKING THE WALK.....	56
ISSUES RAISED BY OUR SISTERS.....	65
3 WORCESTER: ALL IN THE FAMILY.....	71
ISSUES IN THE FAMILY.....	86
4 NEW BEDFORD: JUMPING OFF THE BRIDGE.....	91
CREATING THE ARTS DISTRICT – SOME WARNINGS.....	103
5 ANALYSIS AND LOCAL INSIGHTS.....	111
LESSONS FROM BACKGROUND VARIABLES.....	112
LESSONS FROM EXISTING DEVELOPMENT.....	115
LESSONS FROM INTENT.....	117
LESSONS FROM PROCESS.....	121
THE URBAN DESIGN OF ARTS DISTRICTS.....	130
LESSONS FROM ARTISTS.....	135
LESSONS FROM SUCCESS.....	139
6 PROPOSITIONS FOR THE CREATION OF ARTS DISTRICTS.....	145
EPILOGUE: ARE ARTS DISTRICTS A GOOD IDEA?.....	153
BIBLIOGRAPHY	
APPENDIX A: MASTER PLAN FOR THE WORCESTER ARTS DISTRICT	

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE: ARTISTS DOWNTOWN

This thesis is an exploration into what American cities can accomplish by focusing their urban design and economic development efforts on artists. Using the examples of four arts districts in New England, this thesis provided an opportunity for me to discover what benefits might be gained for blighted downtowns and neighborhoods from the infusion of artists and cultural activity. This document aims to be a working one: I hope that the tools and lessons learned will be able to be used by American cities to achieve positive outcomes by bringing artists downtown.

This thesis is best summarized by its title: "Artists Downtown" implies that something new is occurring; the idea of bringing artists to a downtown or downtrodden neighborhood is a novel development program in American cities. City leaders are realizing that the arts and culture can be of assistance in attracting businesses, workers, and tourists, engendering needed economic stability and growth. Towards this end, many mid-sized cities are taking action and generating urban design and economic policies that support artists and the arts; they are trying to "capitalize" upon culture to reach economic development goals. In New England, this trend has primarily taken its form in "arts districts." The goal of these arts districts is the economic development of a neighborhood; cities hope that bringing artists downtown will create the same environment as well-known, organically grown arts communities.

Arts districts in New England have a diverse range: Woonsocket, RI simply renamed its downtown, while other cities developed a complex set of economic and urban design policies attached to a designated area. This thesis focuses on the latter group and explores whether a city can **successfully engineer an arts districts**. The following questions outline my analysis:

- Can artists be successfully used to regenerate a blighted neighborhood or downtown?
- In what ways can cities act to support the development of arts districts as a strategy for urban regeneration?
- What is the role of planners and urban design in the process?
- What role do artists play in this process?

I found the answers to these questions to be both simple and complex, intriguing and frustrating, and most of all surprising. Artists are not what I initially thought they might be, and in the creation of arts districts they have a reciprocal relationship to the city that carries many subtleties.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

To introduce the ideas behind the notion of bringing artists downtown, Chapter 1 first focuses on the theory behind culture as a force of urban regeneration, reviewing recent policies started in New England. It follows by examining how artists live their lives in the city. Cultural districts as a trend do have a history, and the final part of Chapter 1 traces the history of cultural districts and frames the current efforts in New England. Chapters 2 and 3 examine the first three cases of arts districts in New England: Providence's "Arts and Entertainment District," Pawtucket's "Arts and Entertainment District," and Worcester's "Arts District." New Bedford in Chapter 4 was chosen as the final case for contrast; it does not yet have a district (it is in the process of creating one), but it does have a successful ephemeral arts event which has achieved many similar economic development goals. For each of these cases I examine the general attributes, existing development, intent behind the district, the process of implementation (including tools used), and document the relative success of the district efforts. Chapter 5 compares these attributes against one another to gain insight at the local level. This insight from the cases has led to the creation of eleven propositions for anyone considering pursuing an arts district effort. These are summarized on the following pages and are reviewed in detail in Chapter 6. A short epilogue follows which expresses my personal conclusions as to why cities should consider arts districts as a viable economic development option.

PROPOSITIONS FOR THE CREATION OF ARTS DISTRICTS



MATCH THE PROCESS TO THE PHYSICAL DISTRICT AND ITS GOALS.



IN CERTAIN TYPES OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS CERTAIN GOALS WILL NEVER WORK.



IN PLANNING AN ARTS DISTRICT CONSIDER A STEALTH OPERATION.



CLEAR AND PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT OF THE DISTRICT IS KEY TO SUCCESS.



BUILD ON VISIONARY ARTISTS GROUPS, BUT DON'T LEAVE OUT THE LITTLE GUYS.

CAPITALIZE ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS.



6

UNDERSTAND THAT ARTIST HOUSING WILL RARELY HAPPEN ON ITS OWN.



7

CAPITALIZE ON THE SKILLS OF ARTISTS.



8

PAY ATTENTION TO TIMING.



9

SEED MONEY WILL BE NECESSARY.



10

MAKE YOUR DISTRICT UNIQUE.



11

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

This thesis investigates the role of artists in the process of urban regeneration. It begins by stepping back to examine not only the recent emergence of strategies that seek to achieve economic development through cultural planning, but also the history of artists in the city. Since this thesis primarily focuses on the formation of arts districts in New England, an examination of the history of cultural districts is also provided.

Cities were the first places where complex cultural milieus were created. They have always been the primary centers of cultural production, exchange, and consumption – even before they became the hub of industrial activity. Even today cities “function as arenas in which cultural capital is created and deployed in the furtherance of different social purposes”.¹

Dramatic changes have occurred in the field of cultural planning in the last twenty years, and fundamental ideas about what purposes the arts serve in the city have changed completely. Business leaders, policy makers and urban analysts have been engaged in an intense re-evaluation of the importance of culture in the process of urban revitalization.

In the earlier parts of the twentieth century, the arts were considered a luxury in America. Arts institutions and artists were supported by philanthropy and enjoyed by an elite group of connoisseurs. America’s new millionaires (from booming rail, mining and farming industries) constructed a society of giving in which the support of artists involved purchasing art to be placed in new civic institutions that memorialized the wealth of these same families. These elite families were asked to,

CULTURAL AS A FORCE OF
URBAN REGENERATION

CULTURAL PLANNING HISTORY

¹ Ron Griffiths “Artists Organizations and the Recycling of Urban Space” in *City and Culture: Cultural Process and Urban Sustainability*, Ed. Louise Nystrom (The Swedish Urban Environment Council, 1999), 460-475.

“convert pork into porcelain, grain and produce into priceless pottery, the rude ores of commerce into sculpted marble, and railroad shares and mining stocks into the glorified canvas of the world’s masters”²

in order to stock their new palaces of art. These philanthropists built many of America’s greatest art institutions; but, they were intended to serve primarily an upper class audience. This development typified the use of art in the city into the 1950s and 1960s, as America’s upper class built cultural institutional landmarks for the rich exclusively. Cultural development at this point was not part of city government’s overall development goals (which were generally industrial retention, and commercial and housing development).

It is generally agreed among urban analysts, however, that in the 1970s society and competition between cities changed in fundamental ways that altered the role of artists and art in the city forever. During this time cities moved into a new phase of capitalist urbanization which has been called: the “post-fordist” city (as David Harvey famously defined it).³ While this characterization of the change is criticized for missing some of the subtleties of what occurred in individual cities, it is useful for my analysis, for it frames the current thinking behind using artists as a force in urban revitalization.

CULTURE AS AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY

The “post-fordist” city is characterized by a number of changes in the structure of city economies and societies. In general, it describes the relative and absolute decline of manufacturing employment in older cities, and the expansion of producer and consumer services. These changes culminated in what has been described as the crisis of the “fordist regime of accumulation.” The crisis lies in the fact that corporations were able to globalize corporate profitability strategies. Huge corporations shifted

² Elizabeth Strom, “Converting Pork to Porcelain: Cultural Institutions and Downtown Development” *Urban Affairs Review* (2002): 4.

³ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Conditions of Cultural Change* (Blackwell, 1989).

skilled and semi-skilled large-scale mass production jobs to other countries and created a polarization in urban labor markets; and the economy tended to divide into high paying skilled jobs and low wage service jobs. In the 1980s city decision makers looked to cultural policies as a way to respond to economic and social problems caused by this restructuring. More recently, this globalization of investment and economic power has only been exacerbated by so called "flexible" forms of production, made possible by the spread of digital technologies of communication and control.⁴

At the same time, these "post-fordist" changes were reshaping demand and interaction in cities. The 1950s were defined by "the American Dream," in which the nuclear family with defined gender roles provided the main reference point for cultural production and consumption: everyone (supposedly) knew their place. The civil rights and gender revolutions of the 1960s and 1970s brought new social patterns, and diversity, fragmentation and polarization became prevalent. As we will see, cultural planning has responded to these changes by not only diversifying its appeal, but also by attempting to bring social cohesion to the substantial parts of the population left out of the social mainstream.⁵

This change in societal structure led to a wide shift in cultural consumption and demand. This shift has been characterized as a "post-modern aesthetic," which grew out of the decline in working time and an increase in the proportion of disposable income spent on leisure activities by a large new middle and upper-middle class. This new demand manifested itself not only in the rise of popular culture, but also in a breakdown of the barriers between high art and pop culture. In response city governments

⁴ Franco Bianchini, "Culture, Conflict and Cities: Issues and Prospects for the 1990s" in *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: the West European Experience*, ed. Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson (Manchester University Press, 1993), 199-213.

⁵ Ron Griffiths "Artists Organizations and the Recycling of Urban Space" in *City and Culture: Cultural Process and Urban Sustainability*, Ed. Louise Nystrom (The Swedish Urban Environment Council, 1999), 460-475.

began to increase expenditure on culture and to create specialized bureaucracies and policy making bodies in order to enhance their provision of cultural services and cater to the growing, more sophisticated and differentiated demand. Hence, in the 1970s and 1980s cities went from smokestack chasing to competing for corporate headquarters and producer service firms, trying to retain highly skilled workers, who make up the bulk of the population demanding a post-modern aesthetic, and therefore might choose their workplace based on specific lifestyle choices. The need to attract and retain these companies, coupled with the rise of the importance of tourism to city economies has led scholars to reevaluate what the role of culture should be in the city in the era of the "New Economy."^{6, 7}

RICHARD FLORIDA'S CREATIVE CLASS

The most popular of the new analysts is Richard Florida.⁸ Whether one agrees with its premise or not, his work, *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life*, has been very influential in the last few years in shaping the cultural policies of American cities. Florida believes that there is a new pattern of consumption closely linked to the dominance of certain social groups. He labels this group the creative class: a group of innovative, highly skilled creative workers who drive change and innovation in the economy. He argues that this "creative class," whose definition includes anyone who is

⁶ The "New Economy" in this frame is a global system based on information, technology, knowledge and innovation. This theoretical construct assumes the following: The New Economy has created a new corporate form that is flexible and network-like. Its labor markets are churning and uncertain. It produces well-designed niche-market goods and services whose main value is the intellectual property they embody. It is staffed by hard working and creative people who like to be challenged at work and at play. Karen Healy, "What's New for Culture in the New Economy?" *Journal of Arts Management Law and Society* 32 2 (Summer 2002): 86-103.

⁷Allen J. Scott, *The Cultural Economy of Cities* (School of Public Policy and Research University of California and Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

⁸ Richard L Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class: and How it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (Basic Books, 2002).

in the process of creation (from scientists to computer software engineers to artists), will drive economic growth for American society. Henceforth, he predicts, they will be the most desirable workers for a city to obtain and keep. Using a (highly marketable) ranking system, based on the "three Ts of success to attract creative workers – technology, tolerance and talent," he argues that this social group not only demands diversity in society, but also desires places that are exciting and full of stimulation to live in. In this view, a highly skilled technician will only want to move to a city where he knows he has the *potential* for seeing his favorite indie rock band, etc. Florida also proposes that there is a natural, innovation-stimulating, symbiosis between all members of the creative class, i.e. that a scientist will be inspired by an artist to do better work. His basic message is that with few cultural activities a city will not be competitive in today's society and economy.⁹

The reaction to this work has been large and varied. Indeed, in my interviews when I brought up Florida, artists often groaned. There is no denying however, that his work is having a powerful effect on cities. Florida has successfully toured and spoken in every major city in the US. For the first time ever, city officials are looking at a glass-blower living illegally in a building, and instead of thinking eviction they are thinking celebration. The dominant reason for the success of his work is the fact that cities now are in the process of marketing their image attempting to attract firms and workers. Although there is little actual hard evidence, the general feeling by city officials is that firms will only move to places where their high-level workers will be happy. Hence, the arts are seen to have a growing importance in both economic development and place marketing.

As one would expect, the indigenous artistic and cultural life of American cities has been seized upon by governments who wish to distinguish themselves from their competitors (and to attract investors by stressing

⁹ Richard L. Florida, "Bohemia and Economic Geography" *Journal of Economic Geography* 2 (2002): 55-71.

quality of life for the “creative class”). Cultural facilities and activities are seen as playing a vital role in place marketing strategies by representing the identity of the city (e.g. the Bilbao Guggenheim) and through their expression, demonstrating the city’s qualities. Some analysts have gone further to argue that the groups most important in identifying, creating, or defining these new images and items of consumption for the creative class will be the “new cultural intermediaries” – artists, media professionals or intellectuals – specifically because they specialize in symbolic production of marketable cultural items and tend to be spatially concentrated in areas rich in cultural capital.

NEW ENGLAND’S CREATIVE ECONOMY
INITIATIVE

Florida’s theories and the theory of the “creative economy” have also had direct local effects on the cultural community in New England. He was a frequent speaker in Providence before the announcement of the Arts and Entertainment District there (and still continues to be). His name arose in almost every interview with city officials and with many artists. In 1998, the New England Council funded a new initiative to examine what effect the “creative economy” was having on the regional economy. Driven by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and encompassing six state art agencies and hundreds of business, government and arts leaders, the Creative Economy Initiative was born.¹⁰ It is a partnership that has produced two studies that attempt to reconfigure the region’s understanding of arts and culture and has proposed a regional investment plan for support of the cultural sector. The New England Council claims that the findings of these reports startled even those who have long supported the notion that New England’s rich cultural assets constituted a powerful economic force. In the report they expanded the analysis of the cultural sector to include commercial enterprises as well as nonprofit cultural organizations and individual artists. They found that 245,000 New Englanders or 3.5% of the region’s total workforce are employed in what they also called the “creative economy.” The reports also found that the creative economy was responsible for generating \$6.6 billion in tourism revenue annually.

¹⁰Susan Asci, Beate Becker, and Beth Siegel, *The Creative Economy Initiative: An Economic Development Strategy for New England* (The Northeast Economic Development Assoc. 2002).

Whether the measurement technique they used is sound or not, I believe, is somewhat irrelevant. In brief, what this report did was re-image the arts and culture as an important economic pursuit for the regional economy. This was a major boost for artists, as it raised their status to being a valuable resource in a city. These reports have also led to new initiatives investing in cultural research; supporting "creative industries" (film, design, music, new media, literary arts, heritage and crafts), initiatives to support "creative exchange" (sharing of information between cultural communities), arts education and training services; and (of course) recruiting corporations to invest in culture. For individual artists, the Creative Economy Initiative has meant that now they have an economic argument on which to base their claims for support of the arts and artists.

Is Florida's argument valid? Reports such as those of the Creative Economy Initiative certainly argue that redefining the cultural sector in a much broader way carries great benefit to cities' economies. Some critics see all of this theory as simply a way to "wrap old goals in a convenient new cloak,"¹¹ i.e. as an economic argument to support the same (ol') arts institutions. The truth is that the jury is still out as to whether the concept of a creative class is meaningful. Cultural Analyst Karen Healy, for example, argues that the axial principle of the new economy may not be creativity and innovation, but might actually be concentrated ownership and control of ideas. If that is the case, then the New Economy's goals might not be fostering the creativity of ideas, but rather the ever more fine-grained control of existing goods. Other critics point out that many of these "creatives" that supposedly support the New Economy work very low income jobs for their primary income and that their creative work is very difficult to quantify.¹² What is true is that large structural changes

THE CREATIVE ECONOMY?

¹¹ Karen Healy, "What's New for Culture in the New Economy?" *Journal of Arts Management Law and Society* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 86-103.

¹² Michael Erard, "Creative Capital: In the City of Ideas, the People with Ideas are the Ones with Day Jobs" *The Austin Chronicle* 28 February 2003.

have occurred in our society, and selling an idea such as the "creative economy" as a single explanation of what is going on is nonsense. Healy warns that while it is useful to see the argument as a "bullish defense of the arts in economic terms," arts supporters should be aware that much more is occurring in our society outside of the demand of the "creative classes" and their consequent movement.

AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS STUDY

Another common tool used in the current literature to support the creation of arts districts and arts spending by the government is economic impact studies. One of the most comprehensive of these studies was conducted by Americans for the Arts and published in early 2003. This case study based inquiry is important to this thesis because it includes data from two of my case cities -- Worcester, and New Bedford. Both of these communities are touting these data as economic evidence that their arts districts are a good idea. This study is a typical economic impact study that looks at arts investment and the economic spending by patrons¹³ (the patrons were surveyed in 91 communities after an event). It states that the nonprofit arts industry generates \$134 billion in total economic impact by arts organizations and their audiences in the US, creating 5 million jobs and giving a financial return of \$8 to \$1 to federal and state aid to the arts. Impressive numbers indeed, but what do they really mean?

ECONOMIC IMPACT STUDIES: A WARNING

Economic impact studies, while obviously incredibly useful promotional tools, are far from being accepted as economically sound by theorists. Cultural Economist Bruno Frey, for example, has pointed out that there are significant non-market values (such as the prestige value of building or the educational value of arts activities) that need to be taken into account when undertaking a benefit-cost calculation of whether a cultural activity or a price of cultural property should be supported by the public. Studies that leave this out should be viewed with caution, for they might

¹³ This is estimated by surveying patrons of an event of their spending that night, and using a multiplier to make assumptions about the spending of the populace. These multipliers also measure recycling of the expenditure through the economy.

be missing both cost and benefits.¹⁴ Similarly, Cultural Economist Bruce Seaman, in the most famous call for the ending of impact studies, points out that multiple costs and benefits are left out of the survey process. Furthermore, the multipliers that are used to arrive at an impact are often flawed in many ways.¹⁵

In essence, these types of studies do not fully address the complex impact of art institutions on our society. Cultural Analyst Rosanne Martorella points out that the recent emphasis on arts economic impact studies has resulted in little attention being given to the purely aesthetic, educational, heritage, or civilizing affects that result when societies deem artistic culture and activity as important. Martorella thus feels that economic impact studies of the arts, while seeming to justify public subsidy and private sponsorship, have altered the relationship between the arts and society, changed the role of artists in society, and have promoted the commercialization and marketing of culture to the neglect of aesthetic considerations.¹⁶

Hence, one should be wary of concluding that the economic benefits of the arts are the "real" purpose of developing relationships between artists and the city. Kevin Bassett in his analysis of cultural strategies warns:

1. It is important not to exaggerate the economic impact of cultural strategies as many jobs in the sector are likely to be low-paid service jobs.

¹⁴ Bruno Frey, "Evaluation of Cultural Property: The Economic Approach" *International Journal of Cultural Property* 6, no. 2, (1997): 231-245.

¹⁵ Bruce A Seaman, "Arts Impact Studies: Fashionable Excess Economic Impact of the Arts, A Sourcebook" in *Economic Impact of the Arts*, ed. Anthony Radich (National Conference of State Legislatures, 1987), 44-77.

¹⁶ R. Martorella, "Cultural policy as marketing strategy: the economic consequences of cultural tourism in New York City" in *Global Culture: Arts, Media, Policy and Globalization*, eds. D. Crane, N. Kawashima, and K. Kawashima (Routledge, 2002).

2. Not every city can achieve success as a cultural center as there are thresholds levels in the provision of various forms of high art. Smaller cities without the threshold may have to cooperate with neighboring cities to plan cultural specialization and joint marketing.
3. More fundamentally, the tension between the economic and the socio-cultural goals of cultural strategies needs to be resolved.¹⁷

OTHER ARGUMENTS FOR CULTURAL ACTIVITY

Certainly, I detected this tension in my investigation of arts districts. Artists groaned when I mentioned Florida's name for a reason. Many artists feel that art carries a much higher purpose than the economic redevelopment of a downtrodden neighborhood (and that it gets perverted when it is employed in this way). Cultural Analyst Charles Landry argues that culture should not just be the "lipstick on the gorilla" of the economic development policy of a city, because culture does much more for its citizens.¹⁸ He argues that cultural initiatives can be inclusive of social outcasts or new immigrants and can have an unsurpassed capacity to open dialogue between these people and engage their enthusiasm and commitment to a shared redevelopment process. I heard this call for arts as a method of social cohesion echoed throughout my case studies.

There is a critique of this argument, too, of course. David Harvey views this approach to cultural policy as a "carnival mask"; arguing that the use of cultural policy as a response to the socially traumatic consequences of economic restructuring provides politicians a way to conceal social inequity. In his view, support of local cultural activities is used by the elite as a distraction from not handling other societal problems.¹⁹

¹⁷ K. Bassett, "Urban Cultural Strategies and Urban Regeneration: a case study and critique" *Environment and Planning A*, no. 25 (1997): 1773-1788.

¹⁸ Charles Landry, *The Creative City: A toolkit for Urban Innovators* (Comedia, 2000).

¹⁹ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Conditions of Cultural Change*, (Blackwell, 1989).

Another common argument for support of the arts that arose in the cases is "arts for arts sake," i.e. culture and the arts should be supported because they are "good for the soul" and inform and educate the public. This is a so-called merit good argument, which says, "the arts are inherently meritorious." It is not an economic argument and, unfortunately, it has not consistently been strong enough to convince action on the level of what is occurring in the case study cities before.²⁰

²⁰ J. Mark Schuster, "Arguing for Government Support of the Arts: An American View" in *The Arts in the World Economy*, Olin Robison ed. (University Press of New England, 1994) 42-56.

THE ARTIST IN THE CITY

I have attempted to paint a picture of the changing mood of American cities towards the arts and culture. But who are these supposed saviors of our cities? If the arts and artists truly provide focus, cohesion, economic development, and a sense of identity for a community, who are they? What do they do in the city? What do they bring to the table in order to accomplish all of these tasks? What are their needs? My case studies are intended to reveal the answer to some of these questions, but first let us look at existing research.

WHAT IS AN ARTIST?



Ancient Egyptian artist from the Book of the Dead

Who is an artist? A universal solution does not exist to define what an artist is in a neutral way. Every community in the world has a socio/art/political setting which might define what an artist is differently, and that definition has consequences upon how scarce government resources are handed out to artists. In other words, an artist is a socio-historical construction, as is art. That said, research has occurred into attempting to outline criteria for defining who is an artist. Cultural Economists Bruno Frey and W.W. Pommerehne have laid out eight criteria that might be used to identify an artist population:

- the amount of time spent on artists work;
- the amount of income derived from artistic work;
- the reputation as an artist amount the general public;
- the recognition among other artists;
- the quality of artistic work;
- membership of a professional artist group or association;
- professional qualification (graduation from art schools);
- the subjective self-evaluation of being an artist.²¹

²¹ Sari Karttunen, "How to identify artists? Defining the population for 'status-of-the-artist' studies" *Poetics* 26 (1993): 1-19.

However, it is truly up to the local community to decide how to use these criteria for their own definition.

When do people call themselves artists? Cultural Economists Gregory Wassal and Neil Alper investigated this question and found that there is a greater chance that a person will call himself/herself an artist if:

- they have a high artistic income;
- they work more weeks of the year on artistic work than other occupations;
- they began artistic training at an early age;
- their non-arts occupation is lacking in prestige; and
- they had attended an arts school while undergoing their education.²²

Hence, extent of financial success as an artist and length of time working as an artist are closely linked to self-identification as an artist.

Artists have traditionally played an important role in the development of cities: designing its physical fabric, recording, interpreting, instigating change, and making, selling and exchanging the objects they create.²³ Some (western-centric) history is relevant here: In the Middle Ages artists had limited opportunity to express their craft. They were mostly craftspeople paid by the church or the state. During the Renaissance, however, greater private patronage caused a flourishing in artist activity for 300 years in European cities. The industrial revolution led to a break between artists and cities, a break that is still being felt today. Skilled artists were replaced by machines, and cities became centers of mass

ARTISTS' ROLE IN THE CITY

²² Georgy Wassal and Neil Alper. "When is an Artist an Artist: An Analysis of Factors Related to Claiming Membership in this Profession" *The Journal of Arts Management and Law*. 19, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 37-51.

²³ In the last 15 years the role of artists in creation of art in public places has increased considerably: sculptures, murals, street furniture, sound and light sculptures, interactive installations, paving stones, fences, decorated public utilities, temporary billboards, and poetry trails have become common urban elements.

production. This break has led to two key problems for artists in today's society: visibility and recognition. Artists' lack of both visibility and recognition stems from the fact that the cultural connoisseur only sees the final products of an artists' work and may not realize the hard work and determinism behind a "final" piece.²⁴

Furthermore, in some artists' opinions, cities' cultural funds are spent on urban showpieces to change the city's image and not on the equally important urban cultural asset: the folks working behind the scene. These artists feel they contribute to the urban wealth of cultural activity and should be recognized as part of a vast network in a city. Many of my interviewees here would like me to be an advocate for the funding of artists because of these feelings, but that is a different story for another place.²⁵ This thesis, instead, is built upon an examination of recent changes in the way artists are viewed by the city. With their position having been flipped to one of importance to the city, artists are at a time of unique opportunity in their history. The case studies attempt to examine the import of this moment for artists in New England.²⁶

ARTISTS' USE OF THE CITY

So why do artists come to cities? Some reasons are obvious. They come for education – to be around other artists who can inform them and stimulate their work. The city provides an abundance of raw material for the artists to work with; the city is their inspiration, their canvas, their muse. They also come because the city provides a market for their work. Let me be clear: many artists are businesspeople. As I observe in the case studies, many artists need to be connected to their market in order to survive (this is a key inspiration for the arts districts). But this arts market is notoriously small. Hence, artists often work in other professions

²⁴ The creative economy initiatives have done much to shatter the myth that artists are lazy and not really workers.

²⁵ I have never imagined that this thesis would broach the topic of state cultural funding thoroughly enough to justify it or not.

²⁶ Jennifer Williams, *The Artist in the Changing City* (British American Arts Assoc., 1993).

to support themselves. In a postscript to her classic study of the struggles over New York's living lofts, Sharon Zukin points out the parallels that exist between the institutional position of culture sector workers and the poor:

*"At least at the outset of their careers, they have similar institutional weaknesses to those of the poor: un- or under employment; periodic dependence, either directly or indirectly, on public grants; ambivalence between rootedness in a particular locality with access to jobs and market outlets for their work and their cultural /occupational community and the wanderlust that is always typical of men and women without steady work."*²⁷

However, it is important to remember that artists are not all low-income; many do amazingly well, and others can sustain a comfortable lifestyle on their art.

What do artists do in the city? Artists have different levels of involvement in their surroundings. If artists move into a blighted neighborhood, it might be motivated primarily by cheap property prices. However, they could just want solitude, or they might be purposefully setting up workspace as a community organization. In the 1960s, the art world emphasized the responsibility of artists as social activists, and this led to the development of many community arts education programs and institutions. It is just recently, however, that artists and local authorities have begun to explore the extent to which artists should feel responsible for giving something in return for the support they receive. This issue is especially pertinent to arts districts: How much responsibility should artists using the district for their own ends feel that they owe in return to the city? Most of the planning for these districts has not attached any requirements to artist participation.

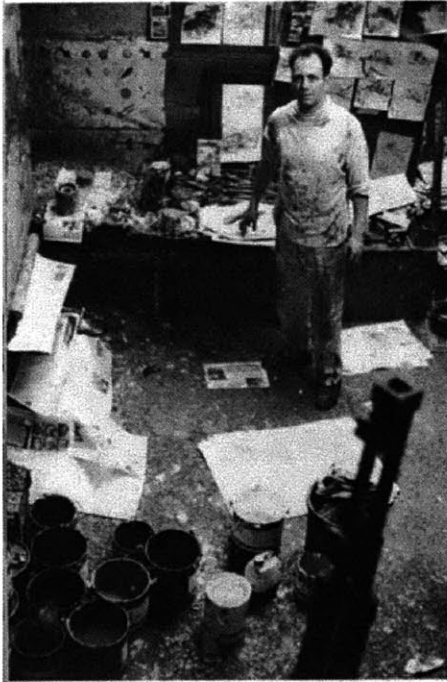
ARTIST RESPONSIBILITY IN THE CITY

Space for artists can be particularly difficult to secure in larger cities. In many cities artists have acted as a catalyst for change. Often that change

ARTIST COMMUNITIES

²⁷ Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

1 Literature Review + Methodology



An artist in his Soho loft workspace in the 1970's

ARTS DISTRICTS: A NOTE

has overcome them, usually due to a lack of an adequate financial base to support ownership of buildings. This process of "gentrification" is well established: many urban analysts see artists as "urban guerillas," willing to move into downtrodden neighborhoods. As the neighborhood becomes safer and trendier, artists get priced and forced out of the neighborhood.

The first person to truly analyze this trend was Sharon Zukin. Her landmark work was one of the first analyses of the role of cultural producers (artists) in processes of urban restructuring. She examined New York's Soho industrial district, where during the 1970s artists led the way for the conversion of former manufacturing space into residential units. The artists' presence eventually contributed to increasing property values and rents, and to the subsequent displacement of lower-income residents (including many of the artists) for a new middle class.²⁸

Zukin was also one of the first to recognize that this regeneration strategy used culture as a political legitimization of urban redevelopment coalitions, i.e. using the arts and culture could quell local resistance to displacement. In the process it could create, for politicians and business owners, a feeling of social responsibility. Hence, many displaced artist communities are frequently referred to as having died under the "Soho-effect," and low-income communities have come to view artists as a virus. These poor communities believe that artists represent the leading edge of gentrification: if artists move in their days are numbered.²⁹

The arts districts I study in this thesis are trying to make economic development happen in blighted downtowns and neighborhoods. For the most part these areas are devoid of the strong grassroots artists community that Soho had. Artists in Boston and Providence are being displaced and pushed out of their homes by developers of higher-income

²⁸ Zukin, Sharon. *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

²⁹ *The Artists Home Ownership Program - If you Lived Here* (The City in Art Theory and Social Activism Bay Press, 1991).

lofts. The arts districts I analyze all have the stated goal of recruiting these displaced artists into their city with the hope that they might bring economic development to the designated areas. The degree of gentrification they are hoping for varies. Some (Providence) appear to want to complete the Soho process (and have openly admitted to it), while others (Pawtucket) wish to create stable and thriving artist communities in their own right.³⁰

The development of sustainable artist housing and live/workspace is a large issue that deserves many a thesis of investigation. For the purposes of this thesis, however, it is important to understand some basic notions of artist housing as it relates to establishing artist communities. Some visual artists express particular space needs: as a practical secure workspace, as a meeting place to mix with other artists, and as a private space to develop ideas on their own. Typically they have the same space needs as light industry users: they desire upper floors of underutilized manufacturing buildings; they work on a fairly large scale, and they need freight elevators and loading docks. Visual artists desire live/workspace where workspace is maximized and living space is minimized. Their work is their life, and the creation of art is intimately tied into every day.

ARTIST WORKSPACE

The United States has a strong tradition of artist workspace ownership. This has been accomplished through many different types of arrangements. Ownership is the ideal for many artists. It insures they will be able to keep their space and not be pushed out (and that they will be able to make a choice when to leave). Boston's current artist housing program is specifically focusing on permanent ownership for artists and nothing else.³¹

DEVELOPING WORKSPACE

³⁰ Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

³¹ Susan Harnett, Economic Development Director for the Boston Redevelopment Authority, personal interview April 6th, 2003.

1 Literature Review + Methodology

The development of many artist lofts is complicated by the fact that often they are not legal under existing land-use regulations; residential uses are typically not allowed in industrial buildings. Also, there often is a lengthy public process prior to changing the law for these spaces; changing zoning can take a very long time.



The BrickBottom co-op in Somerville, MA is one of the largest in the country.

Securing a mortgage is very difficult for some artists because banks and mortgage lenders do not view the profession as stable. Hence, many artists live in rental or co-op ownership situations.³² Furthermore, once artists purchase property, it can be a heavy financial burden. Many artists groups do not realize the financial consequences of environmental laws and have blindly purchased buildings that have bankrupted the organization. This fact suggests the need for better technical assistance to artists getting involved in ownership.

The most successful developments of artist-owned spaces have been partnerships with private funders in which the space development was incorporated into city policies. Funding for such projects can be complex. In the US, borrowing money under favorable conditions from financial institutions for artist housing is an established practice. When constructing live/work space, the main consideration for American artists is price of the redevelopment. Since there is a growing tradition of live/work space, artist groups have managed to present business plans in such a manner to lenders that they can prove credit worthiness. Many of these projects also secure funds through mixing uses across the developed buildings. For example, commercial space can cross-subsidize live/work space. Success, of course, depends on the context and is not always transferable.

Live/work space is a growing trend in many US cities, but success has been patchy. Some artists have set up limited equity co-ops which keep

³² A rental situation is when an arts organization owns the space and rents to artists. A co-op is a group of artists who personally invest in a project and hence have a stake in ownership of their individual space.

rents down, place a ceiling on the resale of the unit, and restrict the sale of the unit to anyone but artists. One of the best examples of this kind of development is in Somerville, MA: the BrickBottom artists' Co-op. It was developed by the Fort Point Community Inc³³ and includes 93 work live units, which were underwritten by sale of space to some non-artists (54 market units). It was further supported by cross-subsidizing with commercial space development in the building. The cost of bringing the buildings up to residential standard was very high, and there were extremely difficult and complex zoning changes. However, with the support of the mayor, the artists, who were being priced out of Fort Point in Boston, were able to establish what is now of the largest artist co-ops in the whole country. In an interesting footnote, over time the artists have disposed of the limited equity arrangement, and many artists have sold their lofts for quite large sums of money.

³³ This powerful artist activist group formed in 1980 in response to artists being pushed out of the Fort Point Area of Boston (which was the largest artist community in the city and continues today to become more gentrified). In 1982 they received a grant from NEA for design demonstration project (the first of its kind) and hired an urban planner to study the possibility of artist ownership. They also started the very successful "open studios" event, which raises awareness, sponsors exhibitions, and has educational programs about the artists in Boston. This group was also able to buy and convert 249 A street in Fort Point (one of the first artist ownership projects in the country). The Morris Nathanson Design group in Pawtucket grew out of this group.

CULTURAL DISTRICTS

In order to understand how artists are being incorporated into the urban regeneration process of cities, I have chosen to examine the growing trend of creating arts districts, and I will focus on the Northeastern United States. Using these districts as a jumping off point, this thesis not only attempts to understand the way in which artists are being folded into the process of urban regeneration, it also examines what role urban design has to play in forming these areas. Before I turn to my case studies, however, it is useful to comprehend what has occurred and is occurring with cultural district planning in the United States (and how the idea of arts districts fits into these current trends).

It is no secret that cultural districts are all the rage in city planning. If historic districts and historic preservation were a major economic development trend for urban revitalization in the 1970s, in the late 1980s and onward cultural development through cultural districts has become the pursuit de jour.

One of the largest comparisons of cultural districts in the United States carried out has been the Americans for the Arts survey of 24 cultural districts, *Cultural districts: The arts as a strategy for revitalizing our cities*.³⁴ This report primarily serves as a promotional piece for the benefits of cultural district planning. However, it is one of the few documents which outlines the basic definitions and issues surrounding cultural district development. I am quite skeptical of certain aspects of the categorization that the report uses for cultural districts, but I do find it useful enough to present some of its information here to guide the reader through what is currently occurring with cultural district planning.

³⁴ Frost-Kumpf, Hillary. *Cultural Districts: the Arts as a Strategy for Revitalizing our Cities* (Americans for the Arts, 1998).

The report defines cultural districts as:

“A well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use area of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as an anchor of attraction.”

The precise meaning of “cultural” varies among districts; for some it defines a space for the viewing of “high art,” for others it might be quite the opposite (e.g. a district purely based around cultural production). Typically, they are geographically defined, usually no more than 100 traditional city blocks (a traditional city block is about 400 ft by 400 ft), and their defining characteristic is a concentration of cultural facilities and related activities. These facilities can include performance spaces, museums, galleries, artist studios, arts-related retail shops, music or media production studios, dance studios, high schools or colleges for the arts, and libraries. Programming can include: arts classes and education, arts creation and rehearsals, arts related street vendors, art sales, craft shows, exhibitions, festival and fairs, film/media screenings, gallery “crawls,” literary readings, parades, performing arts events and public art creation. Many districts are created in central business districts and are often coupled with new corporate office complexes. Also, some cultural districts have been developed with (or containing elements of) large urban precincts³⁵ built for festive activities and leisure time.

Cultural districts have many different names: arts district, arts and entertainment district, arts and science district, artists’ quarter, cultural district, museum district, and some even consider traditional theatre districts as cultural districts. Naming might be done by a government agency, a private development group, a promotional bureau, or a planning group. To further complicate the matter, the naming may vary from one name in planning and promotional documents to a completely different designation in a zoning ordinance. Names obviously carry a symbolic meaning along with them. An “artists’ quarter” implies a much greater

³⁵ Such as tourism and convention centers, gentrified housing for upscale residents, restored historic buildings and heritage districts, reclaimed industrial sites and waterfronts.

DEFINITION OF CULTURAL DISTRICTS

TYPES OF CULTURAL DISTRICT FACILITIES

- Performance spaces
- Museums
- Historical Parks
- Galleries
- Artist studios
- Arts-related retail shops
- Music or media production studios
- Dance studios
- High schools or colleges for the arts
- Libraries

NAMING CULTURAL DISTRICTS

NAMES OF CULTURAL DISTRICTS

- Arts District
- Arts and Entertainment District
- Arts and Science District
- Artists’ Quarter
- Cultural District
- Museum District
- Theatre District

1 Literature Review + Methodology

emphasis upon the development of live/workspace for artists than a "cultural district" does. In my case studies I will examine the extent to which the impression of the name corresponds to reality. In this thesis I use the name "arts district" as a default reference to the districts in my cases. The reason I do this is because it is currently the most common term being used in the literature to describe these more recent efforts.

WHY SO MANY CULTURAL DISTRICTS?

Americans for the Arts has counted more than 100 cities with cultural districts in the US. They are in large cities and in small cities, in Northern Cities and in Southern cities, in all kinds of cities. Why are these districts so popular? Perhaps it is the competitive tradition of mayors; they have a tendency to copy what seem like successful projects into their own city. Mayors have seen the arts in other cities used to fill in brownfield sites, bring back civic pride, bring safety to a region, and seemingly spur economic activity and new jobs. However, it is not only mayors that start these projects: artists and cultural support organizations also see success and believe they can replicate the benefits for their city and its citizens. The general hope is that cultural districts will boost urban revitalization by beautifying and animating cities, providing employment, attaching residents and visitors to the city, complementing adjacent businesses, enhancing property values, expanding the tax base, attracting well-educated employees, and contributing to a creative, innovative environment. Obviously, this is quite a list of goals to achieve; why are city planners optimistic that they will succeed? A closer look at a typology of districts might help us answer this (as will my case studies).

Categories of Cultural Districts

- Cultural Compounds
- Major Arts Institution Focus
- Arts and Entertainment Focus
- Downtown Focus
- Cultural Production Focus

The American for the Arts report introduces a loose categorization of cultural districts that gives a basic awareness of the different types of that are occurring (see box at left). After investigating my case studies, however, it became apparent to me that this categorization is far from catching the subtleties that occur across districts. Therefore, I believe this categorization is useful only in establishing a broad idea as to what has occurred in this field over the past fifty years. I introduce it here, but find that it is not particularly helpful in distinguishing among my cases.

The idea of culture being linked together in one spatial area as an economic development strategy emerged in the 1960s with the building of architecturally isolated cultural enclaves in American cities. Lincoln Center is the prime example of this type of development. Its architecture and urban design separated it from its surrounding environment and is a prime example of the elite building a facility for the elite at the cost of the poor. These “cultural compounds” have few other uses within their boundaries besides cultural institutions. Jane Jacobs, in her classic discussion of Carnegie Hall’s fate with the building of Lincoln Center, had her own view of the motivation of building such cultural centers:

“Carnegie Hall is a vital chessman, working in concert with other chessman. The most ruinous plan that could be devised for this entire neighborhood would be to destroy Carnegie Hall and replace it with another office building. This was precisely what was about to happen, as a accompaniment to New York’s decision to take all its most impressive, or potential impressive, chessmen out of play and segregate them in a planning island called the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts. Carnegie Hall was saved by a hair, owing to stubborn citizen pressure politics, although it will no longer be the home of the New York Philharmonic, which is going to decontaminate itself from the ordinary city.”³⁶

Today, however, most planners agree that constructing a “compound” for the arts does not fit with America’s new diverse culture, and many of these centers are being redeveloped and expanded in an effort to reincorporate them back into the city.

As societal and economic structures changed, it was only natural that cultural planners would begin to think of other ways to involve cultural institutions in the urban fabric. The idea for a different kind of cultural district was born: Instead of being isolated palaces of culture, the institutions would be more incorporated into society. Hence a series of “Major Arts Institution Focus” districts were created across the country.

³⁶ Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Vintage books, 1961).

CULTURAL COMPOUNDS



Lincoln Center is disconnected from the surrounding urban environment

MAJOR ARTS INSTITUTION FOCUS

1 Literature Review + Methodology



Pittsburg has successfully incorporated arts and culture into the urban regeneration process, evidenced here by a street sculpture on a former empty lot.

Often called “Big Bang”³⁷ cultural districts, these districts are anchored by large concert halls and museums (for example), but also contain a number of smaller arts organizations and entertainment venues. They are typically located in or next to downtown. These districts are created by large public investment. They are typically connected by corridors (such as the Philadelphia Avenue of the Arts), or contained in a few walkable city blocks. One of the most successful of these has been the development of the Pittsburgh Cultural District: located just north of the city’s central business district. This decaying commercial, warehouse, and former theatre district has seen major redevelopment since its designation as a district. Primarily redeveloped through the guidance of the non-profit Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, major new performance spaces have been refurbished, and new mixed use development has sprung up on the site. This redevelopment is frequently cited as a prime example of evidence of cultural districts “working,” i.e. that the economic development is measurable. The number of events in the district has jumped from 250 in 1986 to 600 in 1994. The district generated \$33 million in public investment and \$63 million in private funds in its first ten years and has increased real estate tax revenues on district property by over \$10 million a year. The Cultural Trust managed to pass preservation laws affecting many of the historic buildings around the district, preserving assets to the community that were unprotected before.

But there are also failures. In Dallas, which has the largest of these “Big Bang” districts, major arts institutions have been built, but little of the hoped for infill development in the district has happened because of weak inner city office and residential markets.

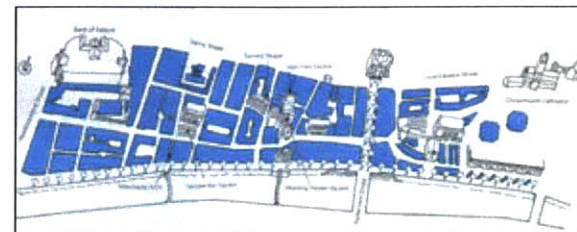
ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICTS

In what might be viewed as “Arts and Entertainment Districts,” cultural planning is focused around appealing to younger audiences. Small theatres, private art galleries, nightclubs, and innovative smaller cultural institutions are the basis for the cultural draw.

³⁷ “Arts Districts: Economic/Community/Urban Form: Roundtable and Fellows Panel” *Institute for Urban Design* (October 2001).

One of the best success stories of a city that led a redevelopment of an area into what can be loosely viewed as an "Arts and Entertainment district" is an international one. In Dublin's Temple Bar district, a 5 hectare commercial and industrial district in the heart of the city has been transformed into a place where artists and art venues abound in a funky vibrant mix (which has taken on a nightlife component as well in recent years). The story of Temple Bar is important to this thesis for many reasons. First, it is an example in which direct government involvement led a successful regeneration of an area through recruiting artists and arts institutions, at times even creating new institutions, very much along the same lines as is hoped for in my case studies. It suggests that such projects can be accomplished. Furthermore, it is the direct inspiration for the first arts-based district in the Northeast in Providence. A trip to Ireland by the mayor's Chief of Administration planted the seed that started the trend of planning for the arts as a part of urban regeneration.

The process that created Temple Bar is also informative to this thesis. Although the area was starting to see signs of interest on the part of artists when the initiative began (expressed in funky restaurants and shops), the government of Ireland took broad steps to accomplish the project. They enacted legislation to form Temple Bar Properties Ltd., a state company, similar to a government-funded community development corporation, which was given the power to buy land, but not to develop it. Also, Temple Bar Renewal, Ltd. was formed to administer financial incentives (tax exemptions provided in Ireland for the arts); to work with the Temple Bar Properties to package, service and sell sites; and to use cross-subsidization between profit-oriented commercial projects and not-for profit cultural projects. These development groups set up a three tier framework for development which included plans for: cultural and community development, property development and financial development. Using this setup, and a 4 million pound grant, they pursued the project as a joint venture between public art institutions, private investors, and the arts community (represented by the Temple Bar



A plan of the Temple Bar district of Dublin.

1 Literature Review + Methodology

Development Council). They ran an urban design competition to create a framework for the future physical form.

The results have been astounding. Temple bar has seen a new children's theatre and the Irish Film Institute built and has become the "hip" cultural center of Dublin. Many artists were subsidized to move into the area and the local arts community is very strong. The lessons to take away here might be the following: The presence of a strong public-private entity certainly led to success in this case. Also seed money appeared to be key to get the project going, as did the tax incentives and other government support. In my case studies I document the governmental funding structure of each arts district to compare it to projects such as Temple Bar. Do you need a strong governmental support system? Do you need seed money and tax incentives to make an arts district work? I hoped I would find out the answers to these questions and more.³⁸

DOWNTOWN FOCUS AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION



The Americans for the Arts report identifies two other types of cultural districts: "Downtown Focus" districts and "Cultural Production Focus" districts. These two are the most poorly defined district types in that study. It is not easy to see how "Downtown Focus" is different from an "Arts and Entertainment District". It appears that this category is supposed to represent a type of district in a smaller city where the Arts and Entertainment district encompasses the entire downtown. The definition gets fuzzy because in many of these districts a city can include quite prominent and well-funded arts institutions (which are not supposed to be present in an Americans for the Arts "Arts and Entertainment District").

One of the more successful of these smaller cities has been Tucson, Arizona. Tucson has set up an active coordinating agency that provides programming for its district, and funds galleries and artists in residence program. Moreover, this organization provides planning support services

³⁸ Helena Webster and Peter Howard, "Dublin's Temple Bar Initiative" *Town and Country Planning* 62, no. 1-2 (Jan 1993): 22-23.

(technical assistance on housing development, etc), and small business loans to individual artists. This district encompasses 70 blocks of the downtown, including many established organizations. It has sparked 26 new businesses and several new galleries (these data are prior to the recent recession, however).

"Cultural Production Focus" districts are also identified in the Americans for the Arts report. These center on arts production and arts education. Production spaces such as film studios, media production centers and dance studios are coupled with large artist housing components to create a different type of cultural cluster. These types of developments have a tendency not to be visitor friendly and do not focus on cultural consumption goods (such as café culture, retail outlets for cultural goods or art stores, or cultural institutions open to the public). These cultural districts are premised on harnessing the possibilities of culture for job growth and economic production. In the case of Sheffield England, however, this type of development did not succeed; not diversifying a district by also focusing on consumption has led to a lot of public money being committed to failing projects.³⁹

Finally the Americans for the Arts report focuses on what it believes to be the important factors to consider when planning an arts district. It claims that the following guidelines are important to keep in mind when a city is choosing the physical location and boundaries of an arts district:

- The extent of investment already occurring near and around the target site
- The number of pre-existing cultural facilities
- The presence of visitor sites in the district area

BEYOND CATEGORIZATION:
WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNED?

³⁹ Other factors, such as poor connectivity to the city and a remote site also led to the Sheffield cultural district's demise. Linda Moss, "Sheffield's Cultural Industries Quarter 20 years on: what can be learned on a pioneering example?" *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8, no. 2 (2002):211-219.

- The extent of current or potential investment in housing, retail and office space
- The level of property values compared with other parts of the city

I decided to test these claims by incorporating these “guidelines” into the analysis of my cases.

Of course, when choosing a site for a district, the above “guidelines” are not without a political setting. The report also claims that for the cities that have built cultural districts, it has been important to coordinate between government agencies, development authorities, downtown business groups, property owners, residents, cultural institutions and artists to achieve the success of the district. A journey into these complex relationships and the effect that they have on individual artists and urban regeneration has been one of the (secret) joys of doing this thesis. Each case study city and its respective district project has a unique set of economic, demographic, and political structures that was fascinating to discover and analyze.

CULTURAL DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

Effective management of a cultural district has shown to be a key to its success as well. From previous case studies, there appears to be an endless variety of management structures. What is clear, however, is that very rarely does one agent completely manage a district’s properties and functions. Any managerial agent acts as a coordinating mediator between all of the parties mentioned above. Furthermore, the effectiveness of such an agent varies by district size, budget, mandated functions, and degree of authority. In the past, such agents have been able to provide support to both arts groups and other groups (business and non-cultural property) in a variety of ways. For arts groups, agents have been able to provide property management and technical assistance, event promotion and publicity, event programming, box office services, and centralized arts support services (i.e. offices of several arts groups in the same office as the coordinating agent). For other interested parties (such as developers of mixed-use projects), the coordinating agents have worked on space and business development, property and facilities management,

constructing an urban design plan (including a consistent streetscape plan, etc.), office and administrative support and security and sanitation. All of these services were detected in one form or another in the arts districts that I studied. What was interesting, and what I will emphasize, is which of these services seemed to have the greatest effect on the success of the districts.

In truth, there has been little research on the creation and impact of cultural districts. Yet, in one recent conference held by the Institute for Urban Design⁴⁰, a roundtable of planners, urban designers and arts activists tried to figure out what could be learned from previous cultural district planning. Their findings are worth reiterating here to give some perspective to the examination of the case studies.

OTHER KEY LESSONS

The roundtable first pointed out that "timing is everything" for cultural districts. It can take decades to build out a large arts campus with government funds, and the impact of arts organizations and artists on a community can take decades to realize. This reality is a very limiting factor in my case studies, as the type of district that I am studying has only come into existence in the last ten years. The roundtable also points out that successful districts should be diverse in use and well integrated into the city, and not stand alone. I do not believe that anyone will be trying to build another Lincoln Center any time soon in America (connectivity to the rest of the city, which is imperative, is lacking in such a form), but there is a subtlety to this advice as I reveal through my Providence case study.

The roundtable also reminded proponents of the fact that successful arts district plans depend, in part, on the local economy. Cities cannot expect a cultural district plan to catalyze the rejuvenation of an area just because it has work in other cities. The city has to have real demand for the arts organizations and for the possible mixed-use infill developments needed

⁴⁰ "Arts Districts: Economic/Community/Urban Form: Roundtable and Fellows Panel" *Institute for Urban Design* (October 2001).

for success. Arts districts will typically require significant investment to develop and sustain. But the benefits of this investment (seen through ancillary spending on commercial activities outside of the arts institutions) might not be visible for many years.

ARTS DISTRICTS IN NEW ENGLAND

The history of cultural districts in New England follows a similar track to that of the U.S. Boston, the largest city, attempted a "midtown cultural district" plan⁴¹ in the late 1970s, which only recently has begun to see some accomplishments. However, what was intriguing is the more recent emergence in the region of interest in the arts as a force of urban regeneration. More and more, I read in the news of smaller, former industrialized cities using the arts and culture as a marketing and economic development tool to regenerate their city. But there was a different element in this trend that I had not heard about before: these cities were trying to attract artists.

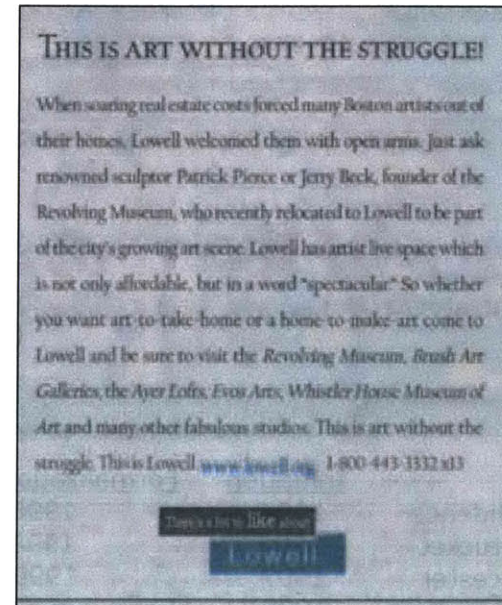
Let us take the example of Lowell, MA. They had famously (and successfully) rebuilt much of their inner core around the historic quality of their manufacturing sites, but I saw their goals and marketing changing. The ad sums it up: this city is aggressively pursuing artists who are being pushed out of larger cities.⁴²

Why are such cities pursuing artists? Because of socioeconomic changes that occurred in the last fifteen years, cultural planners were called upon to brainstorm new ways to think about the arts in the city. The "Creative Economy" fervor has only amplified politicians' and cultural planners' interest in pushing the arts as a economic development policy. Cultural planners have recognized that organically growing artist communities could offer the types of benefits to the city that economic development officers were striving to achieve in blighted neighborhoods. Yet questions emerged: Can you engineer what has occurred organically? Can the city successfully use artists to regenerate a blighted post-industrial downtown

⁴¹ This plan was focused on real estate incentives to rebuild an area of derelict theatres next to Chinatown in Boston.

⁴² Many Northeastern cities and towns originally built their economy around manufacturing, and the remnant buildings of those devoid industries make for perfect visual artists space.

CAN AN ART(IST) DISTRICT BE ENGINEERED?



This ad, which ran in the Boston Metro on 03/13/03, is direct evidence that New England towns are attempting to recruit artists

1 Literature Review + Methodology

or neighborhood? What would be the role of urban designers and planners in this process?

While many cities such as Lowell (and Bellows Falls, VT) are simply trying to draw artists through a series of tools such as city-sponsored artist housing, what sparked my interest were the cities that were creating "arts districts." This rather new occurrence seemed a risky type of planning: Could cities really create a specific place where the arts would flourish through the participation of artists in work and residence? While there is one well-known example of a success story in the creation of an arts district through wooing artists (Peekskill, NY⁴³), I decided to focus instead on the growth of such districts in New England. Observing the process through which these districts were (and are) being created, coupled with analyzing their initial accomplishments and failures would, I hoped, reveal the pitfalls, joys, warnings, and principles of planning and urban designing around artists.

Inception of Case Study Districts		
<u>City</u>	<u>Initiation</u>	<u>Formalization</u>
Providence	1994	1996
Pawtucket	1997	1998
Worcester	1997	1999
New Bedford	1998	Forthcoming

As my initial case study, I choose Providence, RI. Much has been made in the press of Providence's transformation in the last ten years, and its (supposed) Arts and Entertainment District in the downtown was the first district in New England that tried to plan for artists. At the time, Mayor Cianci's idea to bring artists into the downtown was a planning and economic development strategy unheard of in New England, and this district's public relations campaign has been enormously influential on other cities in the Northeast. Several other communities⁴⁴ in Rhode Island have also attempted arts districts⁴⁵. Of these, I chose Pawtucket (just

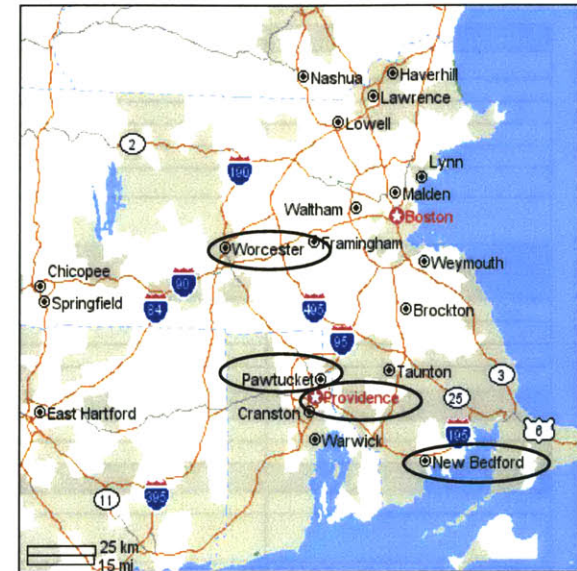
⁴³ Peekskill, the so-called "Soho of the North," in the 1990s successfully attracted over 100 artists into converted loft spaces. City officials helped developers convert space suitable for lofts and studios by adjusting zoning codes, coordinating leases with owners and artists, and providing low-interest loans and advice on renovations. Their arts district also was successful in opening a number of new businesses in the downtown.

⁴⁴ Woonsocket RI and Winchester RI have also declared arts districts.

⁴⁵The naming of the case study districts varies from city to city, which I address in my analysis and local insights; my default name for the districts is "arts district" in discussions.

north of Providence), which is not only the most established, but also offers an excellent comparison to its larger sister to the south. The city of Worcester, MA, my third case study, has also attempted an arts district, which is currently in its nascent stages. Worcester is the only one of my case studies that formalized its idea into an Arts District Master Plan, published this year (and one of the first of its kind in the country). For my final case study, I felt it was important to observe a city that was just beginning the process of forming an arts district. New Bedford, MA has taken a different approach to the development of a home for artists in its downtown. They are growing an arts district out of successful programming as opposed to constructing one using built form, and it is useful in comparison to the more formalized arts districts in the other three cities.

I specifically choose cities of a smaller size that were post-industrial and struggling with their economies.⁴⁶ The exception, of course, is Providence, whose metropolitan area is much larger than any of the other case studies. Providence did, however, have a very similar set of economic and social conditions to the other case study cities when its arts district was founded. There are varying levels of cultural institutions and artists living in each of the case study cities. But what is key to remember is that in none of the districts did large number of artists live or work when the planning was occurring. The basis of all of these plans was to bring artists in, and at the same time create a place where local artists (local to the respective metro area) could be connected to their market.



⁴⁶ In order of largest to smallest the case study cities are: Providence, Worcester, New Bedford, and Pawtucket. Some would consider Pawtucket a suburb of Providence.

METHODOLOGY

I approached each of my case studies from a skeptical viewpoint. I wanted the real story of what had occurred in these initiatives, not a marketing tag-line. In order to develop an in-depth understanding of these case study schemes, I incorporated newspaper articles, marketing evidence, academic theses, and journal articles. However, because of the nascent nature of many of these projects, I found personal interviews to provide the most critical evidence for my investigation. I interviewed city officials, cultural planners, cultural institution representatives, the staff of community development corporations, artists organizations and artists, and urban planners/designers and architects; all of whom lived or were highly involved in the districts. What follows are the intriguing stories of how the ideas emerged, the process of creation (including the involvement of artists and artists organizations in the process), and what has been accomplished so far.

When analyzing the case studies, I looked for certain elements that I expected to be key. Each of these *attributes* of the district is summarized in a matrix which appears empty on the following page, but is complete at the beginning of each case study to provide a series of guideposts for the reader.

TABLE 1.4.1 ATTRIBUTES OF ARTS DISTRICTS MATRIX

VARIABLE	PROVIDENCE	PAWTUCKET	WORCESTER	NEW BEDFORD
GENERAL				
District designated?				
Name of district				
Size of district				
Date initiative began				
Size of city				
Size of existing city wide artist community / size of city				
EXISTING DEVELOPMENT				
Presence of tourists				
Level of property values				
Potential investors				
Degree of cultural institutional presence				
INTENT				
Espoused goal				
Actual goal				
PROCESS				
Key actor				
Coordinating agent (sole task is administer district)				
Services provided by coordinating agent and technical assistance to artists (from any group)				
Tools being used by the city				
Official Arts District Plan?				
Relationship to city government Future security (of political support)				
Extent of Programming of ephemera				
ARTISTS				
Involvement of artists in process				
Importance of housing to plans				
Presence of visionary artist co-op/group				
SUCCESS				
First accomplishment				
Other accomplishments				

GENERAL ATTRIBUTES

The matrix begins with pointing out general attributes of the districts. These reflect the most obvious questions one needs to answer when discussing a district initiative: the name and size of the district, whether or not it is officially designated, the date it began, the size of the city, and the size of the artist population relative to the size of the city. Since I am focusing this thesis on the recruitment and organization of artists, it is essential to have an idea of how strong the existing artists' community is in each case study (although this is somewhat of an estimate number since it would be impossible to truly know).

EXISTING DEVELOPMENTS IN DISTRICTS

In this part of the matrix I have used the "guidelines for successful placement" which I summarized from the Americans for the Arts cultural districts report. The existence of cultural institutions within a district could have a large influence on its potential success. I point out the relative intensity of institutions within district boundary lines in this part of the matrix. I present the level of visitor presence, the level of property values, and the existing potential for investors to seek projects in the district (this is strictly based on interview impressions, so may be of limited use). All of the values in this section of the matrix are ranked on a scale from high to low: with high indicating a very large amount of existing activity and low representing a small amount relative to each of the other cases.

INTENT

What was the intent of each initiative? Every arts district in these case studies was initiated as an economic development strategy for the city, but how did that combine with other desires of the planners?

PROCESS

The most fascinating part of any initiative is the story behind its creation. Who was in charge? In summarizing the key actor I have used metaphors that are explained in each case study. Who was trying to make it happen? What services are being provided by the coordinating agents? And what form did the planning take? What tools or technical assistance were used? What was the role of district wide arts programming, such as festivals, art fairs, or gallery crawls in each of the districts, and how did these change

the planning process?⁴⁷ The answers to these questions make up the bulk of what I wanted to find out from my planning and policy analysis perspective. I wanted to see what was occurring and to try to establish what was working and what was not.

I also wished to discover how artists were involved in the process of creating these districts. What was the role of visual artists in the creation of a district intended to help and support their way of life? Did they have a voice in the process?

ARTISTS

At the bottom of the matrix I identify the first accomplishments each district has achieved. Measuring the success of one district as compared to another ultimately depends on the viewpoint you take. A success to a city official might be completely different than a success for an artist. Hence, I believe it is important to focus on what has been accomplished first. I would like to see artists-based development succeed in cities. However, I do have a great deal of skepticism concerning the "success" of the current projects.

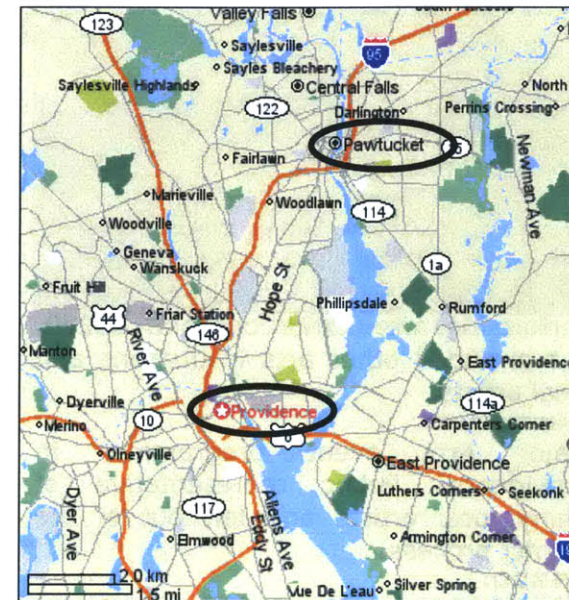
⁴⁷ It is important to note that this type of programming does not include events at a single venue (such as a single gallery opening or performance of a show).

VARIABLE	PROVIDENCE	PAWTUCKET	WORCESTER	NEW BEDFORD
GENERAL				
District designated?	yes	yes	yes	no
Name of district	Arts and Entertainment District	Arts and Entertainment District	Arts District	Arts District
Size of district	10 city blocks	307 acres	10 city blocks	n/a
Date initiative began	1994	1997	1997	1998
Size of city	173,618 1.5 million metro	72,958 Part of Providence metro	172,648 500,000 metro	93,768 200,000 Metro
Size of existing city wide artist community / size of city	very large	small	moderate	moderate
EXISTING DEVELOPMENT				
Presence of tourists	high	moderate	low	moderate
Level of property values	very high	low	moderate	moderate
Potential investors	high	moderate	moderate	moderate
Degree of cultural institutional presence	performing arts: high, other : low	very low	very low, plumbing museum, theatre at gateway	high, art museum and historic park
INTENT				
Espoused goal	economic development	economic development	economic development	economic development
Actual goal	marketing/image change	social cohesion	connect artists to market	develop arts community
PROCESS				
Key actor	the mayor	the middleman	the cultural coalition	the visionary artist
Coordinating agent (sole task is administer district)	no	yes	not yet	not yet
Services provided by coordinating agent and technical assistance to artists (from any group)	marketing, business recruitment	marketing , business and artists recruitment, information center, live/workspace finding assistance (space inventory , artists friendly brokers, moving assistance), cleaning properties, coordination between properties	marketing, arts incubator space provided	marketing, business recruitment
Tools being used by the city	tax incentives, low interest loans, ephemera programming , marketing, debt forgiveness, gap financing for developments, streamlined rehabilitation code	tax incentives, low interest loans, public works assistance, ephemera programming, marketing, public cart purchases, zoning change, space inventory, streamlined rehab. code, revolving loan fund to restaurants, city owned gallery	Current: zoning change, ephemera programming, marketing, safety funds, public art (trash cans) Future: another zoning change, artists housing subsidy, Discover Trail, streetscape improvements, public art funding	Current: marketing for ephemera, wayfinding for event (maps and flags), small grants for safety and concerts. Future: zoning change, artists housing subsidy, streetscape improvements
Official Arts District Plan?	no	In process	yes	in process
Relationship to city government Future security (of political support)	high low	high high	high high	low low
Extent of Programming of ephemera	very little has occurred	just beginning	just beginning	established and successful
ARTISTS				
Involvement of artists in process	many shut out of process	recruited/growing	high	primary force
Importance of housing to plans	low	high	high	moderate
Presence of visionary artist co-op/group	yes	yes	no	yes
SUCCESS				
First accomplishment	public relations victory	artist housing	cultural collaborations	cultural event
Other accomplishments	performing arts enhancement/recruitment	cultural events/business recruitment/ arts institution foundation/social cohesion	cultural event	ancillary activities/ new businesses

PROVIDENCE AND PAWTUCKET: DOPPELGÄNGER DISTRICTS

The Providence and Pawtucket Arts and Entertainment Districts remind one of a pair of very opposite twin sisters. Providence is the slightly older, beautiful actress. She is thin, rich, and generates a lot of excitement when talked about; but when you really get to know her, she is all flash and no substance. Her social-worker younger sister, Pawtucket, is large, messy in appearance and hard working. She is out of the spotlight and likes it there, helping people in her own way to make her bit of society better.

I have chosen to discuss these districts together because like two twins, they are born from the same materials, but show significant differences in the way they act and function. I first analyze the process from which Providence was born and trace the resultant events and discuss the issues that continue to surround it. The same is then done for Pawtucket. Finally, I develop an account to understand what Providence and Pawtucket teach us about creating arts districts.



PROVIDENCE – THE RENAISSANCE CITY?

KEY ACTORS IN PROVIDENCE

MAYOR BUDDY CIANCI:

The “dictator” – former Mayor of Providence

PATRICIA MCLAUGHLIN:

Cianci’s Chief of Administration

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT TASK FORCE:

The initial closed-door taskforce behind the district. Included downtown performing arts institutions and AS220, but excluded other arts institutions and local artists

CAPITOLARTS:

Major Arts event programmer in Providence, Public representative of many local artists and left out of the district process.

AS220:

Successful Artist co-op performance space in the district.

THE PROVIDENCE PLAN:

Public/private partnership that oversees the “Downcity” Project.

ARTS AND CULTURE INITIATIVE:

New organization formalized under the Providence Plan to manage current cultural development in Providence.

In the recent history of decaying New England post-industrial cities, many will tell you that Providence has made the greatest turnaround. Its rejuvenation occurred not only through recent population immigration, but also through twenty years of intense urban investment and, most importantly (to some), image change. Its story of disinvestment is familiar: in the 1960s and 1970s the textile industry by which the city was supported failed, and the population began to leave. These economic forces coupled with poorly planned highway building and a failed attempt at Urban Renewal led to a downtown disconnected from its residential core and waterfront. The city had enormous rail yards that separated the downtown from the State House, and it had decked over most of the three rivers that run through the downtown. Rhode Island was also notoriously overburdened by organized crime, and most of the population believed that nothing could get done without a “payment.”

Organized crime was cracked down upon in the late 1970’s, and a new Mayor, Vincent “Buddy” Cianci, came into power. He would come to be the foremost designer of Providence’s future, and the creator of the arts district. In 1985, a dramatic redevelopment of the rail yards and the rivers began that changed the face of Providence. The rivers were uncovered and moved, and a water park (called Waterplace Park) was created in front of the old train station, which was redeveloped into offices and restaurants. Also, a large upscale shopping mall was built upon the tip of the new Riverwalk. What has garnered the most attention to the redevelopment of the city, besides the mayor, however is the successful WaterFire event by artist Barnaby Evans, whose vision has been a major boost for Providence’s image and redevelopment.

WATERFIRE

WaterFire is an urban sculpture, which draws visitors because of the different levels of experience it allows them. Many feel it has renewed a feeling of safety and confidence in downtown Providence, becoming an icon of the city. Artist Barnaby Evans conceived of lighting what eventually became almost a hundred fires in the river in a ritualistic

manner. Music, fire, water, and the movement of boats entrance the thousands of visitors who visit the city for the event, generating outside benefits to restaurants and stores. Barnaby Evans created First Fire in 1994 as a commission to celebrate the tenth anniversary of First Night Providence. In June 1996, Evans created Second Fire for the International Sculpture Conference where it became the gathering place for thousands of participants from all over the world. Ardent art supporters convinced Evans to create an on-going fire installation and started a grass-roots effort to establish WaterFire as a non-profit arts organization. With the support of hundreds of volunteers, donations from many individuals, and contributions from corporate leaders (and support from the City and State), WaterFire is now performed on regularly through the summer

In 1997, WaterFire expanded to 42 braziers, and attracted an estimated attendance of 350,000 people during thirteen lightings. In response to growing attendance, WaterFire expanded in size to 81 braziers in 1998; and 97 braziers in 1999.⁴⁸ On an interesting side note, Evans now feels that its popularity is the biggest threat to the beauty of the art. He feels that overcrowding brings environmental and safety concerns that break the spell of the fires.⁴⁹ But, the success of this sculpture and the projects of other active artists in Providence caught the eye of city officials and residents and began the process behind creating New England's first arts district.

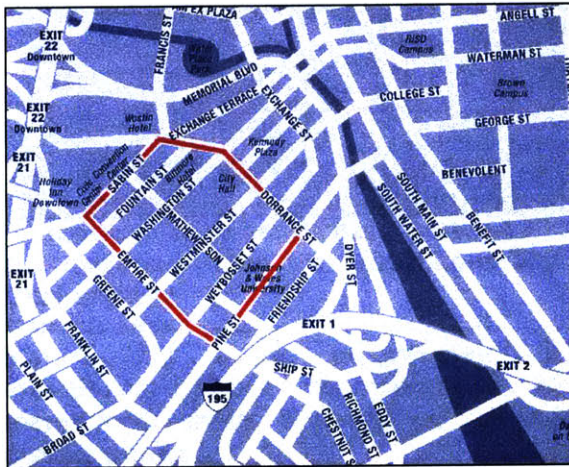


A few of the fires in the WaterFire installation

⁴⁸ "The History of WaterFire" <http://www.waterfire.com/about/index.html>.

⁴⁹ Jonathan Schroeder, "WaterFire Providence: A Case Study of Art's role in Urban Revitalization" Proceedings from 5th International Conference on Arts and Cultural Management, Helsinki, Finland (June 1999).

PROVIDENCE'S
ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT



The Arts and Entertainment District is outlined in red

THE DOWNCITY PLAN

2 Providence and Pawtucket

Right next door to the relocated rivers and new mall lies Providence's downtown historic core, an area that now is now referred to as "Downcity." Downcity is the site of Cianci's major arts effort in redeveloping Providence's struggling core: the "Arts and Entertainment District."

With artists rapidly being priced out of their loft spaces in Boston and New York, it is no surprise that the idea to recruit artists to Providence would emerge. In 1990, a resident returning from vacation mentioned to the mayor that Ireland has an income tax exemption for artists, and that much was being done in the Temple Bar section of Dublin to regenerate the city with artists. The seed for recent efforts at arts districts in New England was planted at this moment. Cianci sent Patricia McLaughlin, his Chief of Administration, to Ireland to examine how Providence could adopt and adapt these ideas for the downtown area.

The ten-block area that was eventually designated the "Arts and Entertainment District" had been the main shopping street of the city, with three large department stores. Typical of American cities, it had been abandoned for the suburbs and shopping malls during the 1960s and 1970s. What remained, and still remains, was a series of empty office and retail structures (many with stunning architecture) that were never intended for residential use. Crime and vagrancy were very common (and still are to some extent). However, several very successful arts organizations were also located in the area: The Providence Performing Arts Center, the Trinity Repertory Theatre (a Tony award winning theater group), and AS220 (a successful artist co-op/performance space).

By 1992, the Mayor was beginning to think that artists might have the potential to rejuvenate the downtown. These beliefs would be cemented in the next year through his interaction with Andres Duany, the founder of New Urbanism, in what was to become the "Downcity" planning process. Johnson and Wales University (the famous culinary institute which is located on the edge of the Arts and Entertainment District) and members

of the private sector initiated the Downcity planning process in 1992. They were concerned that downtown was still failing even after the physical improvements around its edges, i.e. the considerable amount of money put into the river relocation project. So they hired Duany and his firm to devise a plan for the area, which was published in 1992: *Downcity Providence: Master Plan for a Special Time*. This plan addresses many planning recommendations, including improving the poor streetscape and the parking and traffic situation downtown, but it is also the document in which the creation of an Arts and Entertainment District was first suggested to the city:

"[Artists] bring art and life into the decaying parts of old cities. When artists occupy downtown they are followed by galleries, cafes, supply stores and performance spaces... I cannot emphasize enough the tremendous marketing advantage that culture can give Providence...there is nothing better..."- Andres Duany⁵⁰

A bold statement indeed, even for a man who is known for making bold statements. However, as this case study reveals, it is an oversimplified and assumptive one. Cianci took this idea and decided to run with it. According to Cianci, Providence has more artists per capita than any other city in the US.⁵¹ He decided to take advantage of this fact and make the development of the arts one of his ambitions. He became a self-proclaimed Arts Czar.

In order to know the Arts and Entertainment District's history, it is key to understand what many called Cianci's "feudal system of government." The



Street signage indicates the Arts and Entertainment District. Note the for lease sign, common to the area.

TOP-DOWN PLANNING IN PROVIDENCE

⁵⁰ Andres Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, *Downcity Providence: Master Plan for a Special Time*, (March 1992):4, 18

⁵¹It is difficult to know if this is true. Several famous institutions, the Rhode Island School of Design and Johnson and Whales, do provide the city with a large creative base. Also, many local artists expressed to me their pleasant surprise at the number of artists in Providence.

2 Providence and Pawtucket



The Trinity Rep. is highly subsidized by the city to occupy a beautiful old movie house in the district.

Mayor was powerful and well connected.⁵² He controlled Providence with a “closed” government. If you were not friends with Cianci, you were not going to get very far in your projects. It was a top-down system: Cianci set the expectations and local planners did the best they could to make them happen.

This state of planning extended into the creation of the Arts and Entertainment District. Patricia McLaughlin, instructed by the mayor to “make the idea sexy,” put together the Arts and Entertainment District Taskforce. This Taskforce included the mayor, legislators and a few select artists.

“[These Taskforce artists were] directors of successful arts organizations that were located within the district, and through interviews my impression is that they stood to gain the most from a relationship with Mayor Cianci and vice versa. These were artists who were also businesspeople, adding further legitimacy to the prospect for arts as business developer. An example of such an arts organization as a business, and one of the most high profile artist advocates for the district, was the Trinity Repertory Theatre, which as Rhode Island’s largest arts organization, has a significant impact on the community with an annual budget of \$7 million; the theater employs 130 artistic and administrative staff.”⁵³

According to one of the directors who was included in the Taskforce, the general impression of individual artists in the community was that they were left out of the process:

“[Local Artists] had no idea what was going on, so at first they regarded it with doubt. Then when they heard of the possibilities, they got swept up in the

⁵² After 25 years in office, in June of 2002, Cianci was convicted and imprisoned for racketeering involving corruption in City Hall.

⁵³ Jessica Beeches, “Cultural Districts: benefit for artists or under-invested urban communities? A study in policy innovation and policy effectiveness” Masters Thesis for MSC Public Policy, (London School of Economics and Political Science October 2002):34.

PR and got excited. Now they are suspicious of the whole project....there is a healthy skepticism out there”⁵⁴

Basically the Taskforce planned all of the project and its programs without any input from the majority of the local artists in Providence. Hence, the process to accomplish the Arts and Entertainment District may have been stunted by this lack of open negotiation with local artists. Creative ideas were not heard and the local arts community became splintered as those who were not included in the Taskforce planning became bitter at the idea of the District. Furthermore, Providence’s version of top-down taskforce planning could be seen as problematic in other ways. It did little to strengthen the political voice of artists in the community. Also, it showed little effort at involving the broader arts community in a way that could decrease competitiveness (or at least manage competitiveness productively) between artist groups.

Now that the district has “existed” for almost ten years, it has become clear that the primary interest of the mayor was economic development through entertainment and tourism, not the support of individual artists. One can see this emphasis on tourism reflected in the Mayor’s choice of key players in the creation of the district: the performing artist groups. Other major artist groups, such as CapitolArts, a division of the public parks service which supports local visual artists and does large public art installations, were completely left out of the process.⁵⁵

One must recognize, however, that developing an entertainment district for tourism is not an unreasonable priority. The Arts and Entertainment District was a brilliant public relations scheme; one cannot downplay the importance of that in changing Providence’s image into the self-professed



⁵⁴ Bert Crenca, Director of AS220, personal interview March 3rd 2003.

⁵⁵ In an interview with Lynn McCormack Clark (Assistant Director of Capitol Arts, personal interview on March 3rd 2003) I learned that Patricia McLaughlin and the director of CapitolArts have a poor relationship, should something like that stop involvement of an entire group?

Renaissance City. Cianci recognized that the arts could be a significant moneymaker for his city and sought to utilize them as best he could. This priority inevitably made the performing arts the "favored child," as one artist put it, because the theatre and restaurant businesses had the most potential to attract visitors from cities like Boston and New York. Theatres like Trinity Repertory Theatre and Perishable Theatre received intense public relations from the city. But, visual artists ended up feeling that the district had little to offer them and remained largely uninvolved.⁵⁶

At the beginning of the process, however, visual artists did have some excitement about the creation of the district. This enthusiasm came from Cianci's push for a new type of support for artists in America beyond local aid. He brought into Rhode Island the idea for the state level tax exemption for artists similar to the country-wide one in Ireland

PASSING THE STATE LAW

The Arts and Entertainment Taskforce decided to pursue legislation similar to Ireland's tax relief for artists on income and extend it to sales and property taxes. Initially, Patricia McLaughlin, who was responsible for drafting and lobbying for the tax exemptions, was viewed with skepticism by the General Assembly. Since there was no track record for such districts, the legislators had no sense of how much money the State would lose in revenue due to the tax incentives being proposed, or whether the benefits and increased tourism would counter-balance the losses in tax collection. For this reason, coupled with the large amount of land in Providence that is already tax-free⁵⁷ the governor vetoed the first passage of the law. The governor also had reservations around the state legislature passing a set of tax exemptions that would benefit such a small area.

⁵⁶ Jessica Beeches, "Cultural Districts: benefit for artists or under-invested urban communities? A study in policy innovation and policy effectiveness" Masters Thesis for MSC Public Policy, (London School of Economics and Political Science, October 2002).

⁵⁷ This is due to the presence of many non-profit universities.

After the veto, McLaughlin needed to exhibit the support of the city in order to override it. A public-private partnership was developed under the Taskforce (including the aforementioned directors of art institutions, developers, city officials, and administrators from local institutions of higher education) to discuss what the legislation would need to make it appealing to all parties, and how the city intended to classify artists eligible for tax incentives. This partnership helped reach a consensus within the legislature to support an override of the Governor's veto. Roger Mandle, president of the Rhode Island School of Design, testified on behalf of the DOWNCITY Arts and Entertainment District. His involvement was crucial in illustrating the community's excitement about the plan, leading to the law's eventual passage.⁵⁸

In 1996, the Rhode Island Legislature⁵⁹ passed three new tax exemption laws that could be adopted by a community in a specifically zoned Arts and Entertainment District. The Legislature's stated logic closely mirrors Cianci's economic development stance: "the development of an active artist community, especially with the inclusion of artists in residence, in these areas would promote economic development, revitalization, tourism, employment opportunities and encourage business development by providing alternative commercial enterprise."⁶⁰

THE LAW

The first law is a state level version of the Irish income tax exemption for artists. It is a state income tax exemption for writers, composers and artists residing in a designated zone. Income derived from the publication, production or sale of an original and creative work of art created while the artist is in residence can be deducted from the artist's income before calculating state income taxes. Eligible works include a

⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹ J. Mark Schuster, "The Other Side of the Subsidized Muse: Indirect Aid Revisited" *Journal of Cultural Economics* 23 (1999):51-70.

⁶⁰ RI House Bill number 96-H 8206, "An Act relating to Sales Tax – Exemption for Writers, Composers and Artists" Section 44-18-30B, a proposed amendment to charter 44-18 of the general laws Feb 6, 1996.

book or other writing, a play or performance of that play, a musical composition or a performance of that competition, a painting or like other picture, a sculpture, a traditional or fine craft, creation of a film or acting that film, and creation of a dance or the performance of that dance. It was made effective from January 1, 1997 to the end of 2003.

The second law amended the state sales and use tax law to provide an exemption from the state sales tax on sales by writers, composers and authors in residence and doing business in the zone. The sale of works sold by the artists residing in the zone, whose business is also located in the zone, are exempt from state sales tax. It became effective from January 1, 1997 to the end of 2000 (and has been renewed twice, most recently in 2002).

The third law was intended to target buildings to be converted from industrial and commercial uses to residential use. It is a broadly written law; one does not have to be converting to artist housing to take advantage of it, but this was clearly a primary reason for its passage. It allows any RI city or town to discount a tax bill or to exempt in whole or part the assessed valuation of such a property for ten years if it is converted to residential use.

As evidenced in the third law, the primary intent of these laws may seem to be to promote the arts and culture, but in actuality they are intended to promote urban revitalization through conversion of underutilized buildings to residential uses. Schuster makes an interesting point in his analysis of the laws, "to the extent that they are intended to support artists who are struggling economically, these incentives seem to be poorly targeted." Successful artists, who can afford to move into new spaces and have an established clientele that purchase their art, will be able to take more advantage of it and receive further benefit. A struggling artist will have to weigh the benefits of moving into a state with high income taxes. Furthermore, identifying what is eligible for the tax exemption under the first law has become difficult for artists to clarify. For example, selling an original oil painting obviously counts as a sale, but what about selling

multiple copies of photographs? Should the photographer get the exemption only for the first print or for every one? Also, the laws are convoluted and difficult to understand, and the city did little outreach to help artists through the process. This silence further fueled the suspicion by individual artists that the city was only out to assist the large organizations.⁶¹

The City, on its own, also created a system whereby all artists, arts organizations, and restaurants could access low-interest loans and debt forgiveness, but most of the attention was again directed at the arts with the biggest draw. These loans were not a line item in any economic plan of the city, they came directly from Cianci's City Hall. He is known for saying "I own one hundred restaurants in this town."⁶² Also, The Providence Partnership, the institutional home of the DownCity project, offers a Strategic Gap Financing Program of five million dollars for the conversion of buildings. However, any developer can access this money, and the top priority for the program is general housing, artists' live/work space is second.

Because it was the first arts district founded in New England, Providence is a very informative case study as to how artists, or least the perception of artists in residence, might further a city's economic development goal. Cianci clearly stated the city's goals for the district at its inception:

- Enhance the arts.
- Develop upper floor loft housing especially for artists.
- Change the perception of danger and concern for safety in the forefront of potential visitors' minds.
- Improve access and circulation of public transit.
- Locate additional municipal parking facilities.

⁶¹ Only 1 individual visual artist signed up for the program in Providence (15 have qualified in Pawtucket and 3 in Woonsocket)

⁶² Ann Galligan, Head consultant on Providence's new cultural plan, personal interview March 19th 2003.

FINANCIAL INCENTIVES FROM THE CITY

WHAT HAS OCCURRED?

2 Providence and Pawtucket

- Locate a new Downcity cinema.
- Rehabilitate empty commercial buildings.
- Reopen streets, restore two-way traffic, and retain alleys as public ways.
- Recruit tenants, anchor and destination stores, and provide incubator space for start-up businesses.

To artists, the most important of these goals are certainly “enhancing the arts” and “creating artist housing;” but to Cianci the role of artists was to pursue the other points, which represent economic development goals.

ENHANCING THE ARTS: THE PR CAMPAIGN



The Black Repertory Theatre was given a new home in this old commercial storefront through city subsidy

Cianci was able to garner an enormous amount of publicity for his city by promoting the arts. The simple fact that this is one of the few times in American history that a civic leader was such an outspoken defender of the arts makes the Arts and Entertainment District exceptional. All across the country, artists and city leaders were abuzz with what Providence supposedly had to offer artists, and for some organizations Cianci put his money where his mouth was. Theatre attendance went up and a new Black Repertory Theatre occupied a vacant storefront in the district (with a very large amount of city subsidy). In this sense, the entertainment sector of the arts was enhanced, and this general feeling of support from the city has succeeded in attracting new artists to Providence. One young filmmaker from Paris was “amazed” at the number of artists and the strength of the community in such a small city. Richard Florida has repeatedly used Providence as a case study for his creative class work, and cites Providence as a major success story.

It is clear however, that some arts groups were left out of this enhancement. As mentioned before, CapitolArts⁶³ and the artists who

⁶³ Formerly the Providence Waterfront Festival organization, CapitolArts Providence changed its name in 1998 to more accurately reflect its role as the major arts events programmer in Providence. As the waterfront of Providence expanded and changed, so did the programming of CapitolArts Providence. Over the past five years, CapitolArts has partnered with businesses, arts organizations, and the Providence Parks Department to produce a wide array of public arts programming, and hence represents a major local artist community.

they represent, were completely shut out of the Arts and Entertainment District planning process. Interestingly, because this group was disconnected from the mayor's efforts, they were able to create art in an unpoliticized arena, i.e. Cianci did not attempt to censure what they were creating at all. I am not suggesting that attempting to make an Arts and Entertainment District has stunted the creation of art of importance, but CapitolArts strongly feel that they were able to fund much more controversial (and in their mind more successful) works because of Cianci's lack of oversight of them.

Unfortunately, for those artists already in Providence or just arriving, the creation of a new arts district in the downtown area is very far from fruition. The promise of artist housing has not happened, and, from the information I have gathered, is unlikely to happen. Very few property owners have possession of the buildings in the district, and as soon as they heard the interest expressed by the city, they raised the price on the buildings beyond what could possibly be feasible for conversion to artist lofts.

(THE FAILURE OF) ARTIST HOUSING
IN THE DISTRICT

Buff Chase and Cliff Wood, working together with Cornish Developers, are two of the few active developers in the DOWNCITY District. While both were dedicated to the arts community in Providence, their work was also motivated by a desire to preserve the downtown buildings. It immediately became clear to them that the space inside the aging commercial buildings was not ideal for artists. With little natural light in the massive amounts of space at the inner core of the buildings, low ceilings and strict safety regulations, the prospect of developing naturally lit lofts that were small enough to be priced for artists became less and less likely. Also, the cost of bringing the buildings up to code for residential uses forced prices higher than those accessible to artists.⁶⁴ Even, AS220, which has some of the few housing units for artists in the district, was recently shut down

⁶⁴ Jessica Beeches, "Cultural Districts: benefit for artists or under-invested urban communities? A study in policy innovation and policy effectiveness" Masters Thesis for MSC Public Policy, (London School of Economics and Political Science, October 2002).

due to enforcement of fire codes (after the recent fire tragedy in Warwick, RI).

From the artist's perspective, too, the buildings inside the district were far from ideal:

*"We need tall ceilings, we want spaces that are raw, so we can screw up the floors... there isn't any available space downtown. I need a larger space, the buildings are for office workers...I can't put a gas kiln in there"*⁶⁵

Many artists wondered why the district was drawn to include such a small area, and why buildings in the adjacent Jewelry District, which include current artist housing and many usable mill buildings, were not included in the Arts and Entertainment District.⁶⁶ Artists were distressed that there were no amenities in the downtown for themselves or their clients.⁶⁷ Parking spaces must be rented and there was no grocery store. Safety also persisted as an issue.

THE FAST TRACK TO GENTRIFICATION?

In general, implementation of artist housing, work and gallery spaces proved to be more difficult and sluggish than expected. While the district was chosen for its location, more with the hopes of revitalizing a blighted downtown area, little attention was paid to the building stock or the owners' receptivity to development. The city administration realized it needed to convince property and local business owners that creating space for artists would be worth the financial risk. Hence, the city created a taskforce composed of property owners, artists, and developers to clarify the priorities of the district. These meetings, along with the tax incentives for developers, were expected to spark increased interest in projects downtown. The City injected hundreds of thousands of dollars

⁶⁵ Shannon Tan, "Saving 'ProHo'" *Boston Globe* 24 December 2000.

⁶⁶ It is unknown why these buildings were not included in the District; it appears that Cianci was attempting to target regeneration for the downtown only.

⁶⁷ Amenities will not survive without residents, hence a difficulty arises in knowing which to support first: residents or amenities.

into various district projects, from expanding the Trinity Repertory Theatre, to the purchase of land for affordable parking, to providing the aforementioned loans for housing projects⁶⁸.

The cities efforts through funding and PR paid off in some initial excitement. Two new contemporary arts galleries, Gallery Flux and the Full Circle Gallery, opened. However, both failed in 2000, citing lack of foot traffic: "The big picture is not what's happening to my gallery. It's the failure of the arts district. There's nothing happening down here." Shortly after, another gallery, CenterCity Arts in the Arcade, failed, and a new upscale bagel shop and the Groceria (a café and grocery store) failed quickly.⁶⁹

What has occurred, however, is that by using artists as a *potential* community for the downtown, the city has been able to take the fast track to gentrification. Instead of artist housing being built, developers have taken advantage of the third law and developed luxury condominiums in several of the buildings. Many new restaurants have opened. Maybe this was the intention all along:

"Historically, most neighborhoods that have revived were pioneered by artists...ultimately the middle class drives the artists out...There is nothing that can be done, but it is a problem you should look forward to, because it means that your downtown is alive" - Andres Duany, Downcity Plan

Luke Driver, a policy advisor to the mayor, has actually acknowledged the eventual displacement of artists in many formal meetings. To this date only one artist has taken advantage of the sales tax exemption in Providence. Only AS220 has developed artist housing. To a city planner, what is interesting is that the city has received the ancillary activities (the

⁶⁸ Most recently, The City of Providence assisted with the development of the historic Alice Building in Downcity through a loan of \$580,000.00. Upon completion, this project will create 37 residential units, and 5,000 square feet of commercial space.

⁶⁹ Channing Gray, "Gallery Blues – The Providence Arts District, slow to take off, loses two venues." *Providence Journal* 14 May 2000.



Several buildings in the District are being converted into market rate lofts

restaurants and entertainment liveliness) that many cities hope for from an arts district without having any artists in resident. In effect, Providence skipped a step in the gentrification process simply by changing the law and naming the area a cultural haven. Is this the true purpose of an arts district? Surely, the answer is different for every case. In Pawtucket, the goals of the city are shown to be very different, hence the success of the district should be measured in a different way. Yet one wonders if bringing these middle class residents into the downtown will be enough to see the change Providence deserves. Downcity is currently primarily promoting a program to bring retail back to the streets. However, with the new mall in place, it is hard to see what the demand will be.

The city's new public relations campaign promotes the district as: "Proho: dotted with small theatre groups, artists lofts and dance troupes...a ten block refuge for artist gallery owners, and developers."⁷⁰ Yet, when one visits the district, it is very apparent that there is little activity outside of the major arts organizations; what remains is a series of very beautiful, but empty buildings (outside of the few being converted to housing). Even Patricia McLaughlin, the key city manager of the District said there were lots of sexy proposals, but no money behind them. With its new administration, Providence will have to do some soul searching to find a new way of realizing its goals for the district, for surely the "Arts" component of the Arts and Entertainment District has failed.

Perhaps the Arts and Entertainment District project would have been successful if there had been an artists' middleman. As several other case studies show, there is a sense that it is important, when building an arts district, to have someone whose job it is to give "customer service" to artists. Many individual artists need technical support to wade through the availability of resources from the Arts and Entertainment District. In Providence, this support was unavailable: "It took me ten phone calls to

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

get one returned from Patricia McLaughlin, She was the creator and manager of the district!" But Ms. McLaughlin's job description was not primarily to serve the District. There was never a committed cultural development officer in place in city hall in Providence, and the responsibility for the Arts and Entertainment District was never given to the planning department. Planning functions were in fact divorced from the Arts and Entertainment District effort and solely handled by city hall.

Some argue that Providence was treating the arts and entertainment as a backdrop to economic development for a specific area of the city, and not as an embedded permanent industry. Richard Florida and the New England Council have proposed that Providence must instead concentrate on all of its cultural sectors as a coherent development strategy for the local "creative economy" (defined in chapter 2). Florida has spoken at several conferences in Providence, and the reaction among artists has been varied. While they appreciate the Creative Economy Initiative (Providence is currently composing its own initiative similar to the New England Council's), they feel that Florida's creative class thesis is a low-brow way to garner support for the arts, i.e. that an economic argument should not be the primary reason to support the arts. Many of the artists interviewed expressed their feeling that art should be produced not only for arts sake, but for the purposes of education, that it should be about giving insight into one's soul: "Art should inform us about the way we look at the world and ourselves."⁷¹

Providence now has a new organization developing the future of culture in the city through an Arts and Culture Initiative. It is formalized under The Providence Plan, (the organization that funded the Downcity Plan). This initiative has expressed concern about the way Cianci sought to stimulate a cycle of "centrifugation."⁷² Members of the new Arts and Culture Initiative

THE MEANING OF PROVIDENCE'S ARTS
AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT TODAY

BOUNDARY CROSSING

⁷¹ Bert Crenca Director of AS220, personal interview, March 3rd 2003.

⁷² Essentially they were asking artists to begin the process of creating a culturally vital downtown, with the long-term goal of attracting new tenants to the downtown and sustaining a wealthy downtown tax base.

2 Providence and Pawtucket

believe that there has been a lack of attention given to smaller, neighborhood-based artistic and cultural activity and organizations. As a result, they claim, fewer resources (funding, information, and opportunities for partnerships with other organizations) are available to these groups. The Initiative sees that the abundance of arts activity and culture in the neighborhoods is overlooked and disconnected from whatever Downcity renaissance might occur. The Arts and Culture Initiative decided that there was a need to raise the visibility of these neighborhood groups and to develop ways to better measure the presence and vitality of arts and culture activities and organizations in Providence, in order to leverage support and resources.



Many buildings in the District still lie derelict

Under the newly inaugurated administration, The Providence Plan (TPP) is now changing its artistic focus to the role of arts and culture in neighborhood-level community building. No one is going to give up on the Arts and Entertainment District just yet, but there is an issue here with attempting to centralize artists into a district. By that very action, you are asking artists not to function at the neighborhood level and work on issues of education and social cohesion. "Boundary Crossing", therefore, in Providence has a dual meaning: it means not only to cross the boundaries of the district to promote neighborhood level arts communities, but also to use art to cross the boundaries represented by race and income level or educate through a constructive community process. The Providence Plan wants especially to focus on the large new immigrant communities in Providence. In this manner, they wish to explore the issues of boundary crossing by discovering if and how arts and culture can break down social barriers.

THE DISTRICT WITHOUT CIANCI

To the extent that there has been success, it can attributed to the District's Arts Czar. With Cianci in jail, and the majority of the artists in town failing to see the need for the district as a haven for artist housing, there is already evidence that support for the area's development as an Arts and Entertainment District is dropping. Is this a key flaw of the process that set up the Providence District or an inevitable result of forces outside of the planners' control? The fact that its main advocate is now

gone might signal the demise of the initial idea behind the district: to create an artist community. On the other hand, maybe it has already served its purpose. Artists are certainly coming to Providence because of the appeal of the other artists in the metro-wide community. But these new arrivals are settling in different parts of town. In the West End of Providence in a couple of neighborhoods called Olneyville and The Amory District, very strong artist communities have emerged in the past few years. They have revitalized these neighborhoods by having the effect that was hoped for downtown and working on "boundary crossing" issues. New Urban Arts (located in the West End), for example, runs an art mentoring after-school program for Providence high school students called *Urban Build*. The program provides an opportunity to engage, involve, and empower the students in the manner of social cohesion hoped for by The Providence Plan.

Perhaps Providence's net gain of artists is evidence of success with respect to one of the purposes of declaring a specific arts district: to show the city's overall support for artists (see "Bouncing off" in Analysis and Local Insights). Since in some cities (especially those where the property demand is intense) the moment you designate an arts district property prices rise out of reach, a city could declare an arts district in the hope that it will attract artists in general to other parts of the city to assist in the cultural development of the metro area. If you build it they will come; not exactly where you hoped they would, but you might be happy to have them anyway. Fortunately for the younger sister, Pawtucket, you do not always need a major ballpark to attract the best players. She has built a minor league arts district and the players are coming in droves.

PAWTUCKET – “WALKING THE WALK”⁷³ [TO WOO ARTISTS]

THE HISTORY

KEY ACTORS IN PAWTUCKET

MAYOR JAMES E. DOYLE:

Current mayor of Pawtucket

HERBERT WEISS:

The “middleman” – The manager of the district. City official in Planning and Economic Development Department.

MORRIS NATHANSEN (DESIGN GROUP):

First artist to move to Pawtucket with his group and renovate mill building. Major artist advocate for the city.

PAWTUCKET ARTISTS COMMUNITY GROUP:

Newly formed community group of artists in Pawtucket.



The Slater Mill Historic Site

The early history of Pawtucket revolves around the Blackstone River; 45 miles long, it runs from Worcester, Massachusetts through Pawtucket before flowing into Narragansett Bay. The natural course of the river served as a long-standing boundary between the Wampanoag and Narragansett Indian tribes. It was at the falls that major overland trails converged. The Indians called this place "Pawtucket," their word for a larger waterfall. The shallow pools both above and below the falls made this a convenient place to cross the river.

On the west shore of the river, the village of Pawtucket was founded. In 1789, Moses Brown decided to start a textile factory, yet his attempts to operate the machinery were unsuccessful until he employed Samuel Slater. Slater immigrated to America in 1789 in hopes of making his fortune in America's infant textile industry. While others with textile manufacturing experience had immigrated before him, Slater was the first who knew how to build as well as operate textile machines. Slater, with funding from Providence investors Joseph Jencks and Moses Brown, built the first successful water-powered mill which mechanized the production of thread in Pawtucket, at the falls in 1793. Hence, Pawtucket was the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution in America.

The Pawtucket Falls area became the first focus for textile manufacturing in the United States, and the town quickly grew around supplying the needs of workers in the mills. However, as with Providence, the shifting of the textile industry to the South for cheaper labor in the 1960s and 1970s decimated the towns' economies: mills were shut one after another, and the population left quickly. In the 1980s federal funds were used to tear down mill buildings and build large amounts of senior housing in typical slab high rises throughout the downtown.

⁷³ D. Morgan McVicar, "A Work in Progress," *The Providence Sunday Journal* 9 September 2001.

Pawtucket's downtown today is two short blocks and has little activity; there is one restaurant. However, the city does have a huge stock of old mill buildings scattered within the city limits. These buildings have different levels of activity occurring within them; many, until recently, housed light manufacturing businesses (the majority of which were failing). The original Slater Mill is preserved as a historic site and is being converted into a living history museum. Importantly (for artists)⁷⁴, the city is located with direct access to Interstate 95, and has a commuter rail stop which leads to both Providence and Boston. Pawtucket is a blue-collar town with a very large new Latino immigrant community.

Pawtucket's artist community has a long history. In the mid 1970's, a "guild" of artists led by Morris Nathanson sought a space for their interior design firm. The Morris Nathanson Design Group is a team of artists who do interior design of restaurants and buildings (including all the restaurants at Disneyland Paris). They began in the 1960's with Nathanson and his wife in the Soho district of New York. After being priced out of Soho, Nathanson moved to Fort Point in Boston, purchasing two lofts. He then became active in creating a community of artists to work on his projects. As Fort Point became a victim of its own success, Nathanson's group decided to look for space where they could be confident they would not become priced out. A native of Pawtucket, Nathanson was aware that the city was suffering with many old mill buildings sitting empty. In 1988, his group approached the city to see if it would be willing change its zoning code to allow artist live/work space in the Blackstone Mill, which lies in the heart of Pawtucket, across the street from the city's high school. Morris Nathanson received attention and open mindedness from the city. He was able to get Pawtucket to establish a zoning overlay to allow live/work space by permit to exist in industrial spaces *for the entire city*.

PAWTUCKET'S
ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

⁷⁴ In interviews artists repeatedly said that access to the highway was imperative to their jobs. They expressed the needed to be able to get to supplies and to the larger cities as quick as possible for showings and client work.

THE PROCESS



Mill Buildings like this are perfect for conversion to artist workspace

The conversations between Nathanson and the city continued through the late 1990's. In 1995, the city had committed itself to completing an inventory of all of the mill buildings in town. This list, with its quarterly update, ended up being crucial to the success of the district. Not only do city officials know what space is available, but they know the height of floors, condition of spaces and cost for rental or purchase. Creating this list had an interesting effect; it collected together the minds of property owners to start thinking about what they could do with their spaces. It created a conversation: the city realized the potential in its buildings and was (and is) able to focus development appropriately.

The current mayor, James E. Doyle, came into office in 1998 with no particular interest in the arts. Yet these thoughts were quickly turned around as he began to have conversations with enthusiastic local artists and recognized the successful public relations campaign being carried out in Providence. The mayor of Pawtucket runs the city completely differently from the way Buddy Cianci ran Providence. He established an open city hall in which people are free to interact and everyone's opinion is heard and matters. While I visited, he stopped to say hello, and many people from the community walked right in the door and were seen immediately by city hall workers.

Perhaps it was serendipity that Providence pushed the state laws to go through so shortly after Pawtucket had realized the potential in its mill buildings. In 1998, Pawtucket took advantage the same set of laws as Providence had for its district. Implemented in 1999, the state has now waived the sales tax for nine artists in Pawtucket (compared to 1 in Providence and 3 in Woonsocket).

In complete contrast to Providence, Pawtucket's official Arts and Entertainment District is huge: 307 acres, 60 city streets, encompassing 23 mill buildings. This size obviously has intriguing urban design consequences, especially if the city tries to develop a visually coherent district.

For many years it was said, "There is no reason to go to Pawtucket unless to see the Pawtucket Red Sox." The town had a small visitor industry and a very small surviving industrial base. Hence, at the conception of the Arts and Entertainment District, Pawtucket was in dire straits for economic development, and that is exactly how city hall conceives of the district – as an economic development tool:

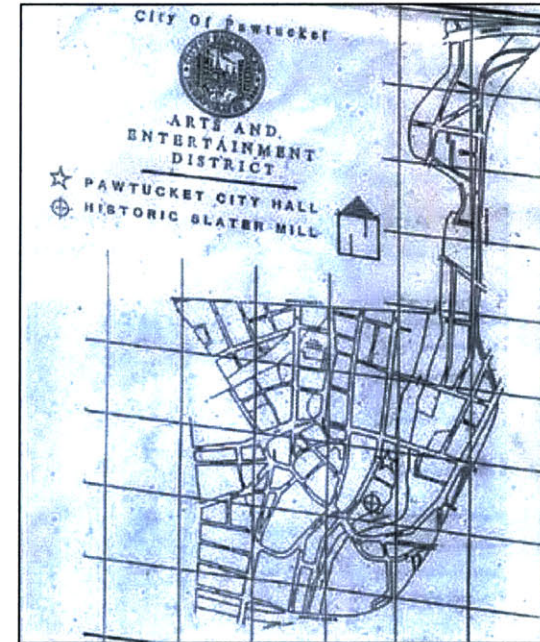
"A picture is worth a thousand words, we know it is worth a lot more...combine this picture with other pieces of one-of-a-kind artwork sold citywide ...and you create a powerful economic engine that can revitalize a city" – Mayor James E Doyle.

It is clear from interviews that the City government hopes that it will be able to define a distinct image from this development. The goal is to develop a cultural district where the arts support many secondary ancillary services such as restaurants and entertainment venues, of which there are currently very few.

Is this an inflated expectation for a town with Pawtucket's blue-collar demographics? What is the proof that bringing artists to a city will spur economic development? While there is a potential for tourism, and renovating mills brings more money to the property tax rolls, consider this: most artists that are attracted to Pawtucket, primarily for the cheaper available rents, are members of a low-income community. How much outside spending will they really engender? While artists have traditionally revitalized neighborhoods, is it not the (much needed in Pawtucket) middle class gentrifying the neighborhood that would tip it into a stable mixed-use community? What kind of community is Pawtucket really trying to create? What happens if you restrict downtown spaces only for artists? Following the future of Pawtucket will hopefully begin to answer some of these questions.

While achieving ambitious economic goals may be difficult for Pawtucket, one goal clearly stated by the *artists* has a much brighter prospect. Many

WHAT HAS OCCURRED?



The Pawtucket District is 307 acres.

2 Providence and Pawtucket

of Pawtucket's new artists are not working only on "art for arts sake" (this takes place mostly in Providence). Instead, some are Richard Florida's creative workers with an inclination to work on issues of social cohesion and education. Several artists interviewed hope that as new facilities come on-line, they will be able to use these spaces to weave the new immigrant community (especially the schoolchildren) into Pawtucket's existing social fabric. These artists are concerned that Pawtucket's traditional aging population has little connection to the growing immigrant one. They foresee arts programs as the way to cross the boundaries and enliven the community.

ACCOMPLISHING THE DISTRICT: THE MIDDLEMAN



Herb Weiss, on the left, with an antiques dealer in his newly converted loft space in Pawtucket.

Why Pawtucket is such an interesting case study lies in the fact that it has undertaken many unique steps in an attempt to create a vibrant arts district. The city hired Herb Weiss, a tenacious fellow, to manage the creation of the district. His position is in the Planning and Economic Development Department of the city government, and he has direct access to any of the other departments through a simple phone call. One cannot emphasize enough the importance of Herb's placement. He can call the mayor at the drop of a hat, ask for advice, and receive it. He can contact the fire department when needed, and, most importantly, an artist can call him with any issue and get an immediate reply. Of course, as compared to what happened in Providence, part of this convenience lies in the fact that the town is smaller. Everyone seems to know one another, and this makes getting things done easier. However, Providence never had someone in a similar position. If an artist had an issue in or about Providence's district, it was rarely, if ever, addressed with speed or care.

For Pawtucket, the benefit of having an identified person in city hall who can act as a middleman between artists, the business community, and government departments has been profound. Herb Weiss is very visible to artists and is an advocate for them. He is able to supply data on available real estate (from the survey) and connect interested artists to an

“understanding” real estate broker.⁷⁵ Furthermore, Herb Weiss is able to assist in the coordination between adjacent property owners. For example, in the renovation of one building, to meet the fire code the building had to have a back exit that would physically impede on the adjacent property. Herb Weiss worked with all parties involved and resolved the issue quickly.

Another important role that a middleman can play is in the clarification and provision of information to everyone involved. For property owners looking to convert their buildings, the state streamlined the process for getting the buildings converted by consolidating building codes into a single user-friendly rehabilitation code for existing commercial and industrial properties⁷⁶. This code is readily available through Herb Weiss in a clear format. Furthermore, he was able to get the city’s Planning Department, zoning board, and fire department to meet and hammer out a document that clearly outlines the fire review process for property owners. He created easy access to the tax discount information, making signing up very easy and providing informational pamphlets to artists and property owners. Providence has had no one performing these functions.

What has been truly exceptional in the creation of the arts district in Pawtucket has been the city’s willingness to use its departments to assist artists. In essence, they are using city property and workers to subsidize artists. For example, when Stone Soup, Providence’s oldest coffee house was looking for a new home, Mr. Weiss coordinated their move into the old Slater Mill:

“We felt we had to leave our place in Providence. We liked Slater Mill, but we were concerned about the rent, which was twice what we were paying. The city [Pawtucket] got us in touch with local businesspeople to subsidize the rent. When we moved, they arranged to provide a truck, a driver and a worker to

⁷⁵ AS220 sent two artists to Pawtucket. Those artists expressed relief to me that they had finally met a broker that treated them with respect.

⁷⁶ Mayor Cianci helped pass these laws through the state for Providence’s district first.



The conversion of this old furniture store to artist lofts was mediated with adjacent property owners by Herb Weiss.

help us. They moved us. They've gone well out of their way to make our stay here financially feasible. In return, we've brought them a lot of publicity." – Richard Walton, President of Stone Soup⁷⁷

Stone Soup was a big initial win for Pawtucket; it is a major stop on the folk singer circuit in the U.S. Still, it took three years of tenacious wooing to bring them to Pawtucket. Herb Weiss very much views persistence as imperative to the creation of a district.

Pawtucket has used public works department trucks and workers to clean up exhibition spaces (sometimes at the cost of upwards of \$5,000) and to move several other artists to the city. At major events in the city, such as the Foundry Artist's exhibit, the city arranges to create banners and expensive steel signs to provide wayfinding for the festival. When visitors started to be ticketed by the police for illegal parking while visiting the event, Herb Weiss immediately called the police and had them remove the tickets. Providence police make a point to ticket more heavily during downtown events.⁷⁸

The city has also created several other programs to benefit the district. They have a program for purchasing public art from local artists. They have also created, similar to Providence, a (\$200,000) revolving loan fund to fund restaurants; the first of which will open soon. And they have created a gallery to display works of local artists, which will have no sales tax on purchases, in the City Hall visitor's center.

RESULTS

Since 1999, 122 artists have come to Pawtucket filling 117,000 s.f. of previously unused mill space. Artists in Pawtucket expressed a variety of reasons for moving there. For the majority of them, cost and quality of

⁷⁷ Cate McQuaid, "Making room for the arts in Pawtucket" *Boston Globe* 20 May 2001.

⁷⁸ Michael Cassidy and Herb Weiss, "Customer Service is Key to Growing an Arts Community" *Arts Culture and Economic Development* (Northeastern economic Developers Association, n.d.), 54-60.

space were the largest attractors. Rental space is only \$5-6 a square foot in Pawtucket, compared to \$10-12 in Providence and \$12-18 in Boston. Also, the artists are getting more for their money – the spaces are much larger and better maintained. Safety and available parking were also key issues. A local print maker, who teaches classes to elderly ladies, clearly expressed her need for ample parking with a sense of security (Providence was noticeably lacking in both in its district). Other artists were excited about the emerging artist community in the town, enjoying their new friendships and especially the promised long-term relationships with their property owners and the city. Perhaps artist Ben Tre summed up artist interest in Pawtucket the best:

"I could never work in downtown Providence. Here, I have easy access, right off 95. There's not the same density issue. Taxes are cheaper. And this is a smaller place. It's much easier getting a problem dealt with through the city. It's the difference between living in a small town and a big city. Plus there are industrial suppliers in Pawtucket – that's great for art makers like me. I don't see any point in living in Boston. Access to foreign films – hardly. It just doesn't make economic sense."⁷⁹

The positive relationship between the property owners and artists is a situation that may be unique to Pawtucket. Because of the overabundance of space in the city's mills, competition keeps and probably will keep rents low for a very long time. Also, property owners know that artists are the best deal to come along so far, i.e. the previous industrial uses paid only \$2-3 dollars a square foot. Is this successful relationship replicable in larger cities (where gentrification is a real issue to consider)? It is hard to say. If Providence had drawn its district over a large mill area

⁷⁹ I would like Richard Florida to read the final part of this statement. Here we have a key "creative worker" who primarily chose his location for economically rational reasons, and not for his ability to be near other cultural resources or creative people. Mr. Tre strongly suggests that the ancillary activities that Florida's creative class supposedly yearns for are far from his key reasons for relocation.



This printmaker, seen here in her studio is new to Pawtucket and is head of the new artist community group.

PROPERTY OWNERS IN PAWTUCKET

2 Providence and Pawtucket

one might be able to do comparisons. I believe Providence would probably still have had issues of property price increase because of the inherent demand for lofts by higher income residents (the gentrification of Fort Point is an example of this).



The Parkin Yarn mill will be sold by the city to a developer for \$1 to convert to 21 lofts (6 subsidized for artists)

A number of other projects are about to occur in Pawtucket. Just a small sampling:

- Two artists purchased vacant commercial properties in the downtown and are converting them to gallery and live/work space.
- The former Lebanon Mill will be converted to 55 live/work spaces specifically for artists.
- The Parkin Yarn Mill will be sold by the city to a developer for \$1 to be converted into 21 lofts with 6 subsidized for artists. The city will also be closing a public street to create parking for the building.
- The Pawtucket Armory, 106 years old, is being converted into the Pawtucket Performing Arts Center.

Pawtucket also has a growing activist arts community group, the Pawtucket Arts Collaborative, which is enthusiastic in trying to get the visitor components of the district up and running (e.g. open studios) and working to create a cogent community voice for the artists. The city also holds and sponsors a yearly arts festival, at which all sales of art have no sales tax for those signed up for the program.

The city is currently developing an Arts and Entertainment District vision plan. So far, this District has been accomplished somewhat by the seat of its pants. It has received relatively little PR across the country, and hence, I am very interested to see how it continues to mature and push itself forward. Will they be able to balance their economic development goals while achieving boundary crossing?

DOPPELGÄNGER DISTRICTS: ISSUES RAISED BY OUR SISTERS

Clearly the older beautiful sister Providence is not really who she says she is, and the younger sister is not quite who she wants to be. Providence has the ancillary activities typically associated with artist's districts (restaurants and entertainment) without the artists, and Pawtucket has the artists without the ancillary activities. Providence has been able to supply other spaces in the city for their artists, will Pawtucket be able to support the proposed restaurants?

From these case studies, it is obvious that not all arts districts are created with the same goals. Not surprisingly, not all arts districts achieve the same results. As these case studies show, one should not expect that just because the districts have the same name that they will actually be the same type of project. What makes an Arts and Entertainment District? Do artists have to live there? How many? For how long? Providence has very few artists in residence in the district, and most visual artists, I think, believe that it is not a project for the support of individual artists. Of course, this gets into a conversation about what type of artists *should* be in an arts district: Are performing artists not artists? However, even if the overall intent of Providence was a public relations image change leading to economic development, originally a major goal of the district was to provide housing for visual artists. Should all arts districts seek to provide affordable housing for visual artists? Does this make Pawtucket more of a success than Providence? Again, we must look at the intention behind the creation of the district to measure its success. Was Providence's true intention to provide a home for artists over the long term? No. If its true intent was to gentrify the area and provide a visitor attraction, then one could conclude that it has succeeded at least partially.⁸⁰

Pawtucket, has also had economic development as a goal, and it has been mildly successful. It is unclear, though, that housing artists and art organizations will have the full economic effect hoped for, but Pawtucket

⁸⁰ Many of the buildings in the district still lie empty.

GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS



A piece of public art in the Pawtucket District

2 Providence and Pawtucket

also has social cohesion and education as goals of the district, goals which it is just starting to achieve. This "boundary crossing" has been missing from Providence's goals until recently. I feel, as do many artists, that their social responsibility should be tied to any artist community, especially one that is subsidized by the state.

PROCESS: DICTATOR VS. MIDDLEMAN



Another difference between these cases is the manner in which the districts were put together. For artists of all types, an open accepting process, such as the one that has occurred in Pawtucket, creates a more comfortable environment. Cianci pitted artists groups against one another and created a state of animosity and competition between groups. That has not been the case in Pawtucket. Even though it is a much larger city, Providence could have done much more to create an environment in which artists were listened to and assisted. I cannot stress enough what a benefit to artists having a "middleman" has been for the artists of Pawtucket. Having access to the right people (businessmen, city workers) has opened doors for artists in Pawtucket that were shut for many in Providence. In the long run what attracts artists to a district will be the community and the long-term relationships that are built with local government.

PLANNING WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF ARTISTS

I encountered many different types of artists in these interviews. Some wanted nothing to do with being part of a city planning effort. Absolute resistance was seen in several cases. These artists were primarily mature in their business development, wanted nothing to do with the local arts organizations or activities, and just wanted a cheap, safe and usable space to work from. I found it especially intriguing that these artists had no need to be visible to be connected to their market (which we will see as a major goal of the Worcester district). The Internet serves that purpose.

Other artists were interested in the benefits of an arts community not only to form such a community but also because they believed that their art served a purpose to society. These were the members of the local arts

organization; these were the “boundary crossers.” In both districts, I found a mature guild of artists who were not only businessmen and politicians, but were also mature developers of property for artists. These are the artist co-operatives such as AS220 and Mr. Nathanson’s group. They view themselves as having completed the transition from reactionary artists to successful artists. Both of these groups voiced the opinion that their grassroots efforts were the real inspiration for the districts, and that no successful artist community could exist without arts that are willing to “put on the suit.” Whether this is generalizable has not been proven.

From these two case studies it becomes obvious that answering the key research question of this thesis has many subtleties. As these two arts districts remind us, when choosing which sister to date, each has her benefits and liabilities.

CAN YOU ENGINEER AN ARTS DISTRICT?



AS220 is an important artist co-op in Providence’s district. They house visual artists, a local theatre troupe called the perishable theatre and a funky café.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM PROVIDENCE AND PAWTUCKET

CLOSING THE PROCESS MIGHT BE DETRIMENTAL TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF A DISTRICT

- Mayor Cianci's top down planning chose favorites and destroyed local artist "buy in" to the district idea.

FIND A BALANCE BETWEEN CULTURAL CONSUMPTION AND CULTURAL PRODUCTION

- Concentrating efforts on institutions of cultural consumption has *not* achieved a cohesive district that supports local visual artists and provides an exciting place for visitors in Providence.

KNOW THE PHYSICAL AND ECONOMIC REALITIES OF AN AREA BEFORE DECLARING A DISTRICT

- Doing a building inventory and developing relationships with property owners benefited artists in Pawtucket. Understand the limitations of certain sites.

UNDERSTAND THE DIFFERENCE AMONG ARTISTS

- From a planning perspective, some artists are much more willing to become involved in economic and social development.

SUBSIDIZE ANCILLARY ACTIVITIES

- Neither case saw the occurrence of businesses in the districts without city assistance.

PROVIDING "CUSTOMER SERVICE" MIGHT BE THE KEY TO BUILDING AN ARTS DISTRICT FROM THE GROUND UP

- Herb Weiss was able to woo artists based upon his multiple techniques that assist and subsidize artists.

VARIABLE	PROVIDENCE	PAWTUCKET	WORCESTER	NEW BEDFORD
GENERAL				
District designated?	yes	yes	yes	no
Name of district	Arts and Entertainment District	Arts and Entertainment District	Arts District	Arts District
Size of district	10 city blocks	307 acres	10 city blocks	n/a
Date initiative began	1994	1997	1997	1998
Size of city	173,618 1.5 million metro	72,958 Part of Providence metro	172,648 500,000 metro	93,768 200,000 Metro
Size of existing city wide artist community / size of city	very large	small	moderate	moderate
EXISTING DEVELOPMENT				
Presence of tourists	high	moderate	low	moderate
Level of property values	very high	low	moderate	moderate
Potential investors	high	moderate	moderate	moderate
Degree of cultural institutional presence	performing arts: high, other : low	very low	very low, plumbing museum, theatre at gateway	high, art museum and historic park
INTENT				
Espoused goal	economic development	economic development	economic development	economic development
Actual goal	marketing/image change	social cohesion	connect artists to market	develop arts community
PROCESS				
Key actor	the mayor	the middleman	the cultural coalition	the visionary artist
Coordinating agent (sole task is administer district)	no	yes	not yet	not yet
Services provided by coordinating agent and technical assistance to artists (from any group)	marketing, business recruitment	marketing , business and artists recruitment, information center, live/workspace finding assistance (space inventory, artists friendly brokers, moving assistance), cleaning properties, coordination between properties	marketing, arts incubator space provided	marketing, business recruitment
Tools being used by the city	tax incentives, low interest loans, ephemera programming , marketing, debt forgiveness, gap financing for developments, streamlined rehabilitation code	tax incentives, low interest loans, public works assistance, ephemera programming, marketing, public cart purchases, zoning change, space inventory, streamlined rehab. code, revolving loan fund to restaurants, city owned gallery	Current: zoning change, ephemera programming, marketing, safety funds, public art (trash cans) Future: another zoning change, artists housing subsidy, Discover Trail, streetscape improvements, public art funding	Current: marketing for ephemera, wayfinding for event (maps and flags), small grants for safety and concerts. Future: zoning change, artists housing subsidy, streetscape improvements
Official Arts District Plan?	no	in process	yes	in process
Relationship to city government Future security (of political support)	high low	high high	high high	low low
Extent of Programming of ephemera	very little has occurred	just beginning	just beginning	established and successful
ARTISTS				
Involvement of artists in process	many shut out of process	recruited/growing	high	primary force
Importance of housing to plans	low	high	high	moderate
Presence of visionary artist co-op/group	yes	yes	no	yes
SUCCESS				
First accomplishment	public relations victory	artist housing	cultural collaborations	cultural event
Other accomplishments	performing arts enhancement/recruitment	cultural events/business recruitment/ arts institution foundation/social cohesion	cultural event	ancillary activities/ new businesses

WORCESTER: ALL IN THE FAMILY

If Providence and Pawtucket are twin sister districts, Worcester is the huge family of cousins just over the state line. Most of these cousins are younger and just getting to know one another. They look up to Providence and Pawtucket for examples of how to live their lives, what mistakes not to make, etc. However, as with any large family, there is a lot of love, but getting everyone to work together has its troubles.

Worcester, MA is the state's second-largest city after Boston. It lies on a series of hills overlooking the Blackstone River. In the region's early history, the native Nipmuc people occupied the area. The first European settlers arrived in the 1670s and created a community they called Quinsigamond Plantation. The community was renamed Worcester in 1684, possibly for Worcester, England, as an angry gesture at King Charles II of England, who had suffered defeat at the Battle of Worcester in 1651. Hostility from the Nipmuc twice forced the abandonment of the settlement; and the first permanent colonization came in 1713. Incorporated as a town in 1722, major industrial development began after the opening of the Blackstone Canal in 1828, linking Worcester with Providence, RI. Similar to both Providence and Pawtucket, Worcester has consistently lost manufacturing jobs over the last 10 years. Factories that were once fueled by waterpower from the Blackstone River have all been boarded up, and the canal has been covered over and filled in at certain points. The city has moved on to other forms of economic activity such as biotechnology, medicine, and higher education leaving the old mill buildings and much of the old manufacturing districts in disrepair.

It is well known that many in Massachusetts view Worcester as a second-rate city. For years it has had to fight its image of abandoned buildings and urban planning mistakes. More than once an artist or civic official said to me that "Worcester has a tendency to shoot itself in the foot." What did they mean? Basically, Worcester's populace feels that city hall has done poor planning and has missed many opportunities at

KEY ACTORS IN WORCESTER**MAYOR RAYMOND MARIANO:**

Mayor who began the formal process through forming an advisory committee on the arts.

ARTSWORCESTER:

Private arts agency that advocates for individual artists in Worcester. Main proponent of the District.

WORCESTER CULTURAL COALITION (WCC):

Recent coalition of 30 cultural organizations, funds cultural development officer of the city.

ARTS DISTRICT TASK FORCE:

Taskforce, headed by ARTSWorcester and including WCC, WART, the neighborhood and the Main South CDC, which oversee the creation of the district.

WORCESTER ARTISTS REALLY TRYING (WART):

Recent local artist activist group.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS CONSULTANTS:

Private planning/design consultant firm who completed the Arts District Master Plan.

THE ARTS IN WORCESTER

3 Worcester

redeveloping Worcester's downtown core.⁸¹ What is surprising then about Worcester is the strength of its arts community. Worcester actually has a wonderful collection of cultural institutions and fine architecture in the historic downtown. Furthermore, as the planning of the Arts District revealed, it has some two thousand active artists in the community. Until recently, however, little was done to attempt to bring these artists and institutions together. Before the efforts behind the Arts District, most of these institutions and artists saw themselves as competing for funds at the local level and rarely thought about collaboration or organized competition at the regional level. It appears that the city is now beginning to take a serious look at developing its cultural resources as a factor in its competitiveness with other cities.

ARTSWORCESTER



ARTSWorcester made a symbolic move to the Aurora Hotel soon after the district was declared.

Different from Providence but similar to Pawtucket, the idea for the Arts District in Worcester was not conceived by a politician, but by an artist group. What is interesting, however, is that this group was not a mature guild of artists (who had developed property) as in Pawtucket, but rather an artist community activist group. ARTSWorcester is a twenty-year-old private non-profit founded on the local need for a private arts agency to serve as an advocate for individual artists in Worcester. This organization provides an intriguing contrast to the artist guild groups in Pawtucket and Providence. In both of the Rhode Island case studies (and in New Bedford as well), the major artists organization representing the artist community in the process of the creation of the district was a co-op that had experience in developing properties for artists. ARTSWorcester does not have the capacity to develop artist housing, and no other kind of co-op has emerged in the Worcester process. No artist co-op group actively occupying and using live/work space exists in Worcester.⁸² Will the Worcester effort suffer because of this? If a goal of an arts district is

⁸¹ The largest mistake usually cited is its fortress-like downtown mall, Worcester Commons, which all but killed downtown retail in the 1980s.

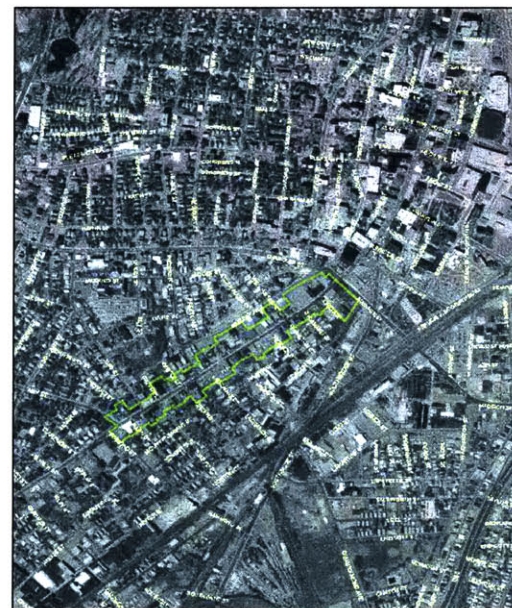
⁸² The local CDC, Main South CDC was involved in trying to acquire some buildings and develop them for artists, but little was accomplished.

creating artists' live/work space, history has shown that the most successful model is when a group of artists comes together to develop the property.

Instead of concentrating on development, ARTSWorcester focused on the needs of artists in the community and conducted an extensive artist survey to define their housing, studio, marketing, and financial needs. Completed in 1994, this survey showed that there was a demand for low-cost artist housing and work space that was not met in the city. In 1997, the possibility of a cultural district was formally introduced to the people of Worcester during a candidates' forum for the arts hosted by ARTSWorcester. As this was an election year for city councilors and forums were held in a number of issue areas, community members were given the opportunity to voice their concerns and hear candidates' proposals for improving them. The arts forum turned out to be the most well-attended that year; it was particularly highly attended by local artists. With the knowledge that cultural districts were a growing trend in the country (Providence's Arts and Entertainment District public relations campaign was in full swing by this time), at this meeting city councilors affirmed that the idea of an arts district was worth pursuing. The Mayor of Worcester, Raymond Mariano, inspired by this forum, took several actions to start the process of the creation of the district. The first step was to create a Mayor's Advisory Committee on the Arts, which was made up of city official and the heads of several key arts institutions (including ARTSWorcester). The Mayor also used his office staff to start researching arts districts nationwide. This research was funneled into the Committee, which then launched a chain of events that would change the face of the cultural field in Worcester.

Under the Mayor's advice, the City Manager and the city's Director of Development (who sat on this committee) recognized that the arts community could gain significantly in the political world of the city if it had a unified voice. Hence, city officials challenged the splintered cultural community to come together and form a coalition. The impact of that

THE BIRTH OF THE ARTS DISTRICT



Community Partners aerial shot of the district outlined in yellow. Downtown Worcester lies in the upper right-hand corner of the picture.

Worcester Cultural Coalition

challenge was enormous. For the first time ever, thirty⁸³ cultural institutions and organizations started meeting once a month to discuss collaborations and the future of an arts district. The creation of this coalition, the Worcester Cultural Coalition, is one of the greatest accomplishments that Worcester has seen out of its recent efforts. Groups representing a wide range of arts and cultural venues and media, who had previously been working in isolation and focused on their own survival, were now working together to build a better cultural future for all of Worcester. This coalition is a major boon to the city and to artists: not only does it set up the opportunity for synergy between the groups to create even better art, it creates a clear political voice for the city to interact with. Furthermore, it provides artists and arts organizations with a political venue that can lobby in their favor. Marion Attwood, Executive Director of the Worcester Center for Crafts, expressed some of the enthusiasm that has been produced by this coalition. She commented that her involvement with the Cultural Coalition has been the most empowering experience of her career. She said she has,

⁸³ The Worcester Cultural Coalition includes: African Heritage Institute, American Antiquarian Society, American Guild of Organists, Antioch Association of Worcester, ARTSWorcester, Audio Journal, Central Massachusetts Symphony Orchestra, Centro Las Americas, EcoTarium, First Night Worcester, Henry Lee Willis Community Center, Higgins Armory Museum, International Center of Worcester, Italian-American Cultural Center, Joy of Music Program, Massachusetts National Guard, Military Museum & Archives, Master Singers of Worcester, Massachusetts Audubon/Broad Meadow Brook, Mechanics Hall, Music Worcester, Opera Worcester, Performing Arts School of Worcester, Preservation Worcester, Salisbury Mansion, Salisbury Lyric Opera Guild, Salisbury Singers, Salisbury Singers, Inc., The Oaks/Col. Timothy Bigelow, DAR Chapter House, Tower Hill Botanic Garden, Tuckerman Hall, Very Special arts of Massachusetts, WCCA TV13, WCUW Public Radio, WICN Public Radio, Worcester Art Museum, Worcester Arts & Humanities Educational Collaborative, Worcester Center for Crafts, Worcester County Poetry Association, Worcester Cultural Commission, Worcester Foothills Theatre Company, Worcester Historical Museum, Worcester Women's History Project.

“finally realized the power that the arts community can have when it stands as a unified force. Additionally, joint-programming efforts across the media presented a potential wealth of new creativity that was exciting.”⁸⁴

Since the Worcester Cultural Coalition (WCC) had been set up in response to a challenge from city hall, they decided that their first mission would be to get a cultural development officer in city hall. They believed this to be critical to the future of the Arts District as Worcester’s city government was notoriously difficult to navigate for the cultural institutions. They felt such an officer would be able to assist in shaping future policies and funding for the arts. This was an interesting decision, and the complete opposite of New Bedford, which found itself in a similar place in its planning process and chose instead to develop a recurring ephemeral event. I revisit this difference more thoroughly in the following chapters.

The WCC raised funding for a cultural development officer through grants and membership fees and was able to place Christine Proffitt into the administrative structure of the city. Her placement there has been very valuable to the efforts of the arts district. She is able to cut through the red tape of city hall and negotiate between different city boards and committees. Simply having a person in the governmental structure to constantly advocate for the arts to the city has to be a benefit to artists. But, her primary objective is *not* to see the Arts District brought into fruition. Her job description is more similar to Patricia McLaughlin’s in Providence than to Herb Weiss’s in Pawtucket. She has the development of the entire cultural field in Worcester on her plate; she does not have the time to perform the everyday functions of running an Arts District.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Jessica Beeches, “Cultural Districts: benefit for artists or under-invested urban communities? A study in policy innovation and policy effectiveness” Masters Thesis for MSC Public Policy, (London School of Economics and Political Science, October 2002).

⁸⁵ Christine Proffitt is funded at least partly by the WCC, hence she has to support a multitude of organizations.

The Worcester Cultural Coalition was initially reluctant to pursue an arts district, for they felt that they needed to address other issues of cultural development first: marketing, collaboration, and streamlining and ensuring funding. However, ARTSWorcester was persistent in pressing the creation of a district. Using the argument that an arts district could solidify the cultural visitor base for marketing purposes, ARTSWorcester convinced the WCC to change its priorities in favor of the creation of a district. Naturally, they chose ARTSWorcester to spearhead the Arts District effort. Ruth Benka took over as head of ARTSWorcester for Eva Robbins in 1999, and the first item in her job description was to develop and advocate for the District. ARTSWorcester at this time had not set specific goals for the Arts District. The city's goal was certainly to foster economic development. For ARTSWorcester, it appears that their goals for the District were different. They followed the results of their artist survey, which stated that local artists needed to be connected to their market, and that affordable artists live/workspace was needed.

FINDING A PLACE FOR THE DISTRICT

With these goals in mind, ARTSWorcester went about trying to find a place for the Arts District. Their first choice for the District was a neighborhood called Green Isle. This area of Worcester was a "natural" choice since it contained not only suitable building stock, but it already had a manufacturing building converted into artist lofts and a few major design businesses. However, ARTSWorcester was literally (forcibly) pushed away from this idea: manufacturing property and business owners thought the new residential units in this neighborhood would inch them out. Ruth Penka, director of ARTSWorcester summed it up, "I don't know what they thought artists were...the largest factory there has since closed." The owners initially claimed they were afraid of children being around heavy machinery, however many others suspected that the businesses had badly polluted the sites and did not want to be held responsible.

When hopeful artists inquire property owners about an arts district and get kicked out, it raises interesting issues for the planning of arts districts. Fear of the unknown seems to be a challenge for anyone approaching property owners in what might become an arts district. Perhaps what

needs to happen is for an outside actor to come between artists and property owners. This is exactly what happened in the Main South neighborhood of Worcester, where the Arts District eventually landed. Barbara Heller, a city councilwoman for the area, invited the district to her neighborhood.

Main South is a neighborhood that is perceived as blighted, low-income, and dangerous; it is just south of the downtown central business district (it is also a neighborhood with many immigrants). ARTSWorcester was welcomed with open arms to Main South, and in January of 1999⁸⁶, the City approved a zoning overlay that established new provisions within its Zoning Ordinance that would allow artist live/work space, gallery and exhibit space, and performance and rehearsal space in a new use designated as "Commercial Artist Lofts."

Some artists and planners immediately saw a problem with the location of the district in the Main South neighborhood. First of all, no cultural institutions existed in the district (except for the American Plumbing Museum — a museum on the history of the flush toilet), and very few established artists lived within it. Second, the city established zoning overlay boundaries that did not include any buildings that could feasibly be changed into artist studios. This problem was twofold: not only were there no opportunities for artists to move into the district, no group of artists could afford to purchase any of the buildings to convert them. As in Providence, as soon as the district boundaries were chosen, all of the property owners of suitable buildings raised their prices beyond the grasp of artists. Currently several key buildings are being converted into market rate housing instead of into artist housing.

It seems then, that Worcester made a familiar mistake. If one is to pursue an arts district, strategic care should be taken in the manner in which the city or planner of the district establishes relationships with

⁸⁶ The city also kept the initial boundary lines outside of the large manufacturing buildings so there would be no dissent like what was experienced in Green Isle.

THE WRONG PLACE?



Much of the Main South Neighborhood has the appearance of a lower income immigrant community.

property owners of key buildings before the district is declared. Of course, to accomplish this, planners need to know which buildings are available for conversion. Pawtucket performed a building study before the declaration of the Arts and Entertainment District there. Worcester would have benefited from the same.

It appears from this case study, that planning to put an arts district in an area should be a stealth operation. The city or developers of artist housing should try to purchase buildings *before* the district is declared publicly; at the very least willing property owners should be part of the conversation for possible developments. Worcester jumped the gun and neither completed a building study nor attempted to build relationships with property owners before declaring its District. Perhaps this is related to the fact that ARTSWorcester is not a developer of space and did not have the foresight necessary to take this step.

THE ARTS DISTRICT TASK FORCE

In what might seem an unusual choice, a taskforce to work on the development of the district was not formed until a year *after* the zoning ordinance had been passed.⁸⁷ This "Arts District Task Force" was a volunteer group headed by Ruth Benka. It was comprised of twenty-one members including Christie Proffitt and other political, cultural, foundation, educational, real-estate, and neighborhood leaders. Its goals became:

*"to create a vibrant mixed community of artists of all disciplines, students, residents, cultural organizations, and businesses by fostering sustainable creative, cultural and economic revitalization while supporting history, heritage, and multicultural nature of the existing neighborhood and to create a strong cultural identity for the arts district within the geographic framework provided by the Arts district Zone Overlay"*⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Which is more important, developing the relationships first or winning a zoning change? Worcester certainly looks like it could have used more planning in the beginning.

⁸⁸ *Master plan for the Worcester Arts District* Community Partners Consultants (City of Worcester, December 2002).

With these ambitious goals, the Taskforce set about building the district.

The Arts District Taskforce was able to bring about some early wins for the district. However, it is difficult to determine how influential this volunteer taskforce is regarding recent accomplishment. At the very least it can be given credit for overseeing and monitoring the progress that has been made, but it has no official power, the Taskforce really has functioned as a consultant to development.

The first accomplishment is actually due to the actions of ARTSWorcester itself. Taking the lead on the Arts District, ARTSWorcester moved its headquarters into the Aurora Hotel building in the District, opening an office and a gallery. They completed this purposefully symbolic move just as the Taskforce was being formed. The Main South neighborhood is a very depressed with deep problems of public safety and public health; crime and drug-use riddles the neighborhood. ARTSWorcester moved in order to let the city know that the prospect of creating the Arts District was to be taken seriously. However, many in the neighborhood have felt that the move has had minimal impact beyond publicity. Several local artists complained to me that the office and gallery are frequently closed.

Many arts districts are attempting to restore blighted or abandoned neighborhoods or downtowns, but Worcester's neighborhood is seen as a special challenge. Not only was the Arts District attempting to grow in a neighborhood with no existing arts institutions, it also found itself in a neighborhood that was not amenable to visitor safety.⁸⁹ Hence, another early win of the District was improving the policing in the area. Persuaded by city officials, police officers agreed to increase their presence in the District. The District also received a Local Law Enforcement Block Grant to establish an Arts District Alert Center, and held "Crime Watch" meetings with representatives from the City's Community Police

⁸⁹ This was mostly because of the "wet" homeless shelter located on Main Street just a block from the ARTSWorcester offices and gallery

EARLY WINS



In the foreground are the Odd Fellows Building and Santiago's Supermercado. The Aurora Hotel is adjacent.

SAFETY AND TRASH

Department, the District Attorney's Office, and other City Departments, chaired by City Councilor Barbara Haller.

Safety has continued to be an issue in the development of the District; in what would have been a major win, a major local institution turned down an offer to move into the District specifically because it felt that the District continues to be unsafe. This issue is obviously a serious one: if one of the purposes of an arts district is to work on the economic development of blighted neighborhoods, how do planners get the neighborhood developed to the point where people feel safe and visitors could arrive? It is a bit of a chicken and egg situation, suggesting that there is even more reason to concentrate on specific early wins for the housing of a population that might care the least about safety: the artists.

Trash collection also needed to be addressed in the District, and the Taskforce suggested an innovative way to deal with the problem which incorporated the creativity of the local artist community. They decided to fund a public art project, the "Trashcan Art Project". Through a public-private partnership, donated trashcans from the Department of Public Works were painted by local artists and maintained by volunteers from the local businesses community, hence the issue of litter was solved creatively (assuming the locals use the trashcans and the city empties them). More importantly, this project became a symbol of what the district could achieve through the participation of artists in a city government function. It represents a small beginning for a possible new way of thinking in which city governments become involved in the creative process.⁹⁰

□ OTHER EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

Other physical restoration projects did occur in the early stages of the Arts District. Mr. Santiago, a local community member, developed a local "Santiago's Supermercado" supermarket in the spirit of supporting the Arts District and his neighborhood's revitalization. This supermarket provides much needed inner-city amenities and has a gallery inside.

⁹⁰ See the urban design of arts districts in Analysis and Local Insights.

Santiago also owned the adjacent Odd Fellows Building and invited Community Builders Inc, a private non-profit organization specializing in affordable housing, to invest. Through federal, state and local money available as affordable housing grants, Community Builders is renovating the mixed-unit building. \$4.4 million dollars was secured and the building is currently 35% converted. The city also donated funds to convert the basement of the building into an arts incubator space. The catch to this development is that under state law the housing space must be available to anyone who applies. Because it is impossible to define all artists as being in need of affordable housing (many are not), the state legislature has not allowed any affordable housing development to be restricted to artists. It is doubtful that the space developed in the Odd Fellows Building will be completely suitable for artists in any event.⁹¹

It is important to remember that the city of Worcester has done little beyond the zoning change. Worcester has very little in the form of city funding to offer: no low-interest loan offerings, no tax incentives for artists or developers, and no city-funded grants for artists.

In order to push forward the goals of the district, in October 2001 the Arts District Task Force decided to send out an RFP for a master plan for the district. In taking this unique step, Worcester became the first city in the Northeast to develop a plan specifically for an arts district. They chose Community Partners Consultants to develop this plan. This was an interesting choice, for Community Partners includes not only a consultant who is experienced in developing cultural plans, but also a planner/urban designer. As a result, Worcester is the strongest of the cases in its urban design analysis and recommendations.

While much of the plan, like any plan, is visionary in its goals, i.e. a bit "pie in the sky" in its suggestions, the process of creating this plan

⁹¹ Jessica Beeches, "Cultural Districts: benefit for artists or under-invested urban communities? A study in policy innovation and policy effectiveness" Masters Thesis for MSC Public Policy, (London School of Economics and Political Science, October 2002).



The sign on the side of the Odd Fellows Building captures the spirit of the Arts District effort

CREATING THE ARTS DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

3 Worcester

reveals important lessons for other cities who might wish to undertake an arts district. Community Partners brought to the table the attitude that Worcester should develop a unique district, and that they should capitalize on some of the successes from other cultural districts to guide it.⁹² As they moved through the process of developing the plan, they worked with artists in a unique way and conceptualized how to work with artists to develop a district.

ARTISTS AND THE DISTRICT



The ARTichoke food co-op is a new arts-based business in the district.

First, artist breakout groups were very angry that they had not been included in the same room with business owners. Worcester artists wanted to be viewed as businesspeople. They wanted a way to be easily connected to their market and wished to recruit artists fleeing from Boston's high prices in order to increase their number and profile. Also, they were very skeptical about being forced to live in a specific area of town. The recommendations of the plan reflect these requests. For example, the District Master Plan clearly states that the Arts District will be a place to celebrate and sell art and where its local production might take place, but it is *not* to be a place of concentrated residence for artists. What Community Partners felt was most unique about the process, was that there was a remarkable consensus between the artists and community stakeholders and that there was general excitement behind the plan. However, Community Partners did find that it was hard to get the mostly minority residents of the neighborhood involved. They had to have translators; notices were put out in other languages, and still very few neighborhood people wanted to participate. From others in the community, I heard that they felt the whole process was very politicized, and that there was a lot of nay-saying. Some felt this was a bigoted reaction to a downtrodden neighborhood, stemming from people's resistance to recent immigrants. Obviously, this is one of the pitfalls in planning a district: if you are proposing to promulgate change, some will not want that change to happen. However, almost everyone agrees that

⁹² The district has drawn on the experiences and met with representatives from communities such as Providence RI, New Haven CT, New Orleans LA, Peekskill NY, Poughkeepsie NY, and specialists in areas of live/work space for artists, in the development of the City's Master Plan.

starting a conversation about the benefits of the arts was very exciting and necessary. New conversations, creative ideas, and general excitement filled the air in the planning process.

The Worcester Arts District Master plan was officially published in December of 2002. While it is impossible to detail the entire plan here, because the Worcester Arts District Plan is one of the few arts district plans created in this country, for the purposes of this thesis it is useful to outline the more original ideas, so that they may be carried over to futurdistricts (and possibly my other cases).

One of the major goals of the Master Plan was to redefine the District's boundaries. After discussing its feasibility with developers, it became evident that the building stock on Main Street was not ideal for artist live/work space, but that abandoned mills bordering the current district would be a much better fit. The plan suggested that Worcester expand the boundaries of the district to include more old factory buildings (Junction Shop Manufacturing) in order to incorporate the possibility of creating more housing and creative anchors. The buildings were chosen for their image, visibility from major access road, low acquisition cost and space suitable for artists. Also, expanding the boundaries could add gateways to the district with a strong image and presence in the community. Community Partners also propose that artists need to have access not only to housing, but also to the public. They need an audience if a district is to succeed. Cities should be careful when zoning to include not only suitable buildings for redevelopment but also opportunities that make the area more accessible to artists both in image and pedestrian and vehicular access.

The plan recommends that the interior of the district be broken up into zones to allow artistic, business, and municipal efforts to focus on developing themed areas. In this plan the zones include one that focuses on major cultural institutions, one that identifies a niche opportunity for selling art, and one that establishes gateways to the district. One way the Worcester plan attempts to overcome its lack of institutional presence is

THE PLAN

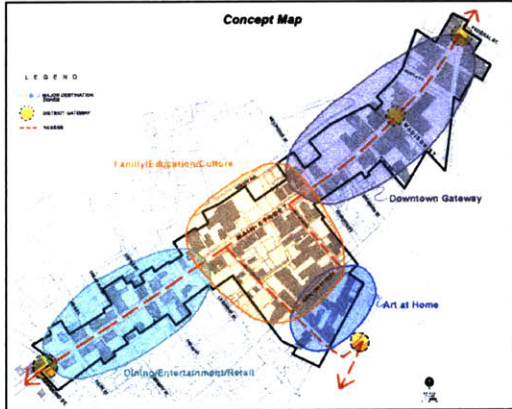
THE RECOMMENDATIONS



The Junction Shop Manufacturing Buildings are perfect for redevelopment into artist space, but are currently not included in the district boundaries.

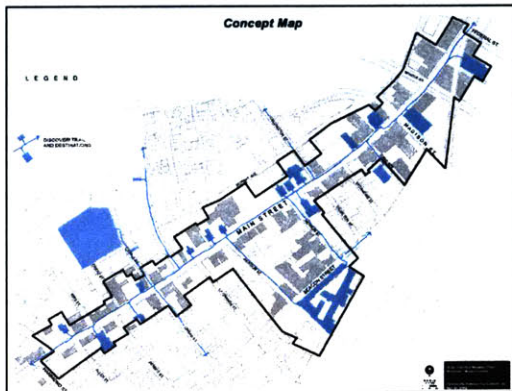
UNIQUE OPPORTUNITIES

3 Worcester



Community Partners recommended the district be broken up into different zones to develop.

THE DISCOVER! WORCESTER TRAIL



Community Partners map of the potential trail.

to access a much needed regional upper income niche market through the creation of one of these zones into a project called "Art at Home." This project envisions the Junction Manufacturing Shops buildings as a place where individual artists could create unique handmade home furnishings for sale. This showcase (and artist recruitment tool) could also be connected to an educational program for the city. The success of this will depend on business recruitment and incentives, a management or oversight organization, physical design improvements, excellent access and visibility, recruitment of artists, and city support for the project. This project is currently batting zero on its needs; neither developers nor artists groups have shown an interest in the project and the city has put no funding behind it. The idea really represents a hope more than a feasible project, but it does suggest an interesting way to incorporate artists into the urban regeneration process. More importantly, it recognizes that every arts district will have to find an original idea to attract visitors and produce a district with a strong cultural consumption component. Artists provide the window to creating these unique opportunities.

Where the plan is perhaps most innovative is in its suggestions to use artists as providers of the creative input for future design components of the District. Taking what occurred with the trash cans as a jumping off point, the plan suggests that there are many more opportunities to encourage artists to get involved in changing the physical design of the area. It envisions artists, architects and landscape architects working with city government to incorporate local art in five ways: streetscape improvements (street signs, trees plantings, furniture), surface parking screening (sculptures, plantings, kiosks), façade and minor building improvements, at the district gateways (through establishing public design competitions for the gateways to the district), and in public art/landscaping opportunities.

One of the specific ways the plan begins to envision the process of coupling artists with the city is with a corridor project called the Discover! Worcester Trail. The Discover! Worcester Trail, similar to the Freedom

Trail in Boston, would lead visitors through the district to historic and other interesting sites. Again, the plan sees that creation of such an urban design element would rely on heavy involvement from artists in the design of markers and promotional materials. Although this project is not the most feasible of the recommendations to begin with — for right now, the safety concerns of visitors appear to be too great for it to succeed — it does represent another opportunity for artists to take ownership for the area and become involved.

The plan is interesting in how it addresses the extent to which zoning can affect the success of a district. First of all, it recognized that zoning enforced parking requirements can greatly affect the type of development that might be desirable. It suggested setting parking maximums (to support district wide lots), restricting parking to the rear of lots, allowing art installations within parking buffer zones, and restricting curb cuts along main streets. The plan also suggested other zoning changes including addressing the dimensional requirements of new buildings, and controlling signage within the district.

Other recommendations were made in the plan for the future of the project. Obviously, marketing will be imperative to the district's success, and the plan stresses the importance of trying to get some cultural anchors to move into the district. Also the plan suggests that programming might take on a greater role in the district, pointing out that programming gets people to the area and can be very effective in changing its public image. Finally, the plan also points out that public incentives would be helpful to the development of the district and strongly recommends the creation of a public-private partnership to act as a middleman to run the everyday development of the district.

ZONING – MORE IMPORTANT THAN YOU THINK

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS



Community Partners imagined the redevelopment of a manufacturing building into a new contemporary arts museum.

WORCESTER: ISSUES IN THE FAMILY

The Worcester Arts District Plan was officially published in December of 2002. Hence, there has been very little time to see the plan come into fruition. However, in my interviews and research some early signs have emerged that might be indicative of the Arts District's likely future.

WART

According to Christine Proffitt, the greatest accomplishment so far for the Arts District has been the creation of WART. WART (Worcester Arts Really Trying) is an artist community action group that was formed during the process of the creation of the master plan. A group of about 200 artists coalesced and decided to produce the first cultural event in the district. Their first project was a successful art street festival called "stART on the Street," in which they partnered with the multicultural neighborhood, and the city (who closed off the street). Five thousand people attended the event. This in itself is a major accomplishment: bringing so many people to what is considered a dangerous neighborhood. Since that time WART has remained active, and it is planning another festival this summer.

THE PROBLEMS



The Burwick building will be developed into market rate housing and not artist space.

Unfortunately, not much else has been achieved for the arts or for artists in the District. ARTSWorcester repeatedly has to turn away artists looking for housing in the District because they have nothing to offer them. The major problem is the restrictive zoning lines that were originally drawn for the District. As mentioned before, the majority of the new affordable housing has to be available to all lower-income residents (some artists even went as far to accuse the District of being a cover for building affordable housing). Moreover, the largest potential building for artist studios within the District, the Burwick Building⁹³, is being converted into market-rate condos because the property owner decided to wait and sell at a much higher price. While this is still something of a victory for the

⁹³ "Boost for Main South; Burwick building conversion a sensible plan" *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, 4 October 2002.

District, it does little to support the arts. However, the real problem may be with the city itself. When I inquired at the city zoning office if they thought they would redraw the lines (they are rewriting the zoning), the employees seemed not even to have seen the plan nor to really care about it. This is where having a cultural development officer in city hall should come into play. Christine Proffitt has promised that she would see the lines redrawn. However, if she yields sufficient power to influence the decision is not known.

The other major hurdle for the district is in establishing leadership. As was pointed out in the plan and evidenced in Pawtucket, Worcester should try to find a way to establish a person or entity whose sole job it is to see the district developed. One can imagine that this person would have to be both sophisticated in dealing with artists and property owners and experienced in development. Worcester's lack of ability to bring such an entity into being provides an interesting twist to this Arts District's history.

While the District planning process has been very successful in building cultural coalitions and artists' groups, which one would think would only have the positive benefit of ensuring the future political stability of the projects. There may be a catch to planning in this way. Because so many groups are involved in the creation of the District, the Arts District Task Force has been unable to come to any consensus on who should manage it. What they are now contemplating is to actually create *another* taskforce to manage it. However, in their proposed model, no specific person will be hired to run the district, no individual will be responsible. Surely other examples suggest this will not benefit the district as much as a manager would.

TOO MANY COOKS IN THE KITCHEN?

What does this case say about building cultural coalitions? Will this district end up with too many cooks in the kitchen and be paralyzed and unable to move forward? How does one find the balance between extreme top-down planning (Providence) and a bottom-up approach (Worcester)? Perhaps what Worcester teaches us is that having a method to build consensus built into your planning structure is imperative,

for alienating groups surely is more detrimental in the long-run for the survival of a district.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM WORCESTER

PERFORMING AN ARTIST SURVEY CAN BE USEFUL TO JUDGE POTENTIAL DEMAND FOR ARTIST HOUSING

- ARTSWorcester has repeatedly shown that an arts district that included housing would be in demand.

STARTING CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS CAN HAVE GREAT BENEFIT

- The Worcester Cultural Coalition has produced positive benefits for its members and for the arts district effort.

BUILD A METHOD TO INCORPORATE CULTURAL COLLABORATIONS INTO YOUR PLANNING PROCESS, BUT BE WARY OF HANDING OVER TOO MUCH POWER

- Worcester currently finds itself in a highly plural planning process which is leading to difficulty in making decisions.

PERFORMING AN ARTS DISTRICT MASTER PLAN CAN REVEAL IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITIES, ESPECIALLY IN URBAN DESIGN

- A master plan can assist a city in developing unique cultural consumption components and can also create a forum to begin the process of involving artists in the designing of a district.

VARIABLE	PROVIDENCE	PAWTUCKET	WORCESTER	NEW BEDFORD
GENERAL				
District designated?	yes	yes	yes	no
Name of district	Arts and Entertainment District	Arts and Entertainment District	Arts District	Arts District
Size of district	10 city blocks	307 acres	10 city blocks	n/a
Date initiative began	1994	1997	1997	1998
Size of city	173,618 1.5 million metro	72,958 Part of Providence metro	172,648 500,000 metro	93,768 200,000 Metro
Size of existing city wide artist community / size of city	very large	small	moderate	moderate
EXISTING DEVELOPMENT				
Presence of tourists	high	moderate	low	moderate
Level of property values	very high	low	moderate	moderate
Potential investors	high	moderate	moderate	moderate
Degree of cultural institutional presence	performing arts: high, other : low	very low	very low, plumbing museum, theatre at gateway	high, art museum and historic park
INTENT				
Espoused goal	economic development	economic development	economic development	economic development
Actual goal	marketing/Image change	social cohesion	connect artists to market	develop arts community
PROCESS				
Key actor	the mayor	the middleman	the cultural coalition	the visionary artist
Coordinating agent (sole task is administer district)	no	yes	not yet	not yet
Services provided by coordinating agent and technical assistance to artists (from any group)	marketing, business recruitment	marketing , business and artists recruitment, information center, live/workspace finding assistance (space inventory, artists friendly brokers, moving assistance), cleaning properties, coordination between properties	marketing, arts incubator space provided	marketing, business recruitment
Tools being used by the city	tax incentives, low interest loans, ephemera programming , marketing, debt forgiveness, gap financing for developments, streamlined rehabilitation code	tax incentives, low interest loans, public works assistance, ephemera programming, marketing, public cart purchases, zoning change, space inventory, streamlined rehab. code, revolving loan fund to restaurants, city owned gallery	Current: zoning change, ephemera programming, marketing, safety funds, public art (trash cans) Future: another zoning change, artists housing subsidy, Discover Trail, streetscape improvements, public art funding	Current: marketing for ephemera, wayfinding for event (maps and flags), small grants for safety and concerts. Future: zoning change, artists housing subsidy, streetscape improvements
Official Arts District Plan?	no	in process	yes	in process
Relationship to city government Future security (of political support)	high low	high high	high high	low low
Extent of Programming of ephemera	very little has occurred	just beginning	just beginning	established and successful
ARTISTS				
Involvement of artists in process	many shut out of process	recruited/growing	high	primary force
Importance of housing to plans	low	high	high	moderate
Presence of visionary artist co-op/group	yes	yes	no	yes
SUCCESS				
First accomplishment	public relations victory	artist housing	cultural collaborations	cultural event
Other accomplishments	performing arts enhancement/recruitment	cultural events/business recruitment/ arts institution foundation/social cohesion	cultural event	ancillary activities/ new businesses

Because the New Bedford Arts District has not been born yet, let us look at her (future) mother. New Bedford is a young lady, dating all sorts of different arts partners, trying to see what fits. Fortunately, she is excellent at promotion of her assets, and has her family of districts nearby to learn from. She's been jumping off the bridge alone into the world, trying all sorts of different things out, and it is time to settle down and find someone to love.

I came to New Bedford as a case study from hearing repeatedly about the recent success of its monthly cultural event program called AHA! — Art, History and Architecture. It struck me that the planning (and outcomes) of this grassroots volunteer event might reveal a different way to incorporate the arts and culture into the process of urban regeneration. What I found, surprisingly, is that New Bedford, too, was planning to designate an arts district as an economic development strategy for its downtown. It provides a wonderful juxtaposition to the other cases: here is a city that is in the process of creation of an arts district. Yet, New Bedford has already developed interesting differences in its process.

The settlement of New Bedford began four centuries ago predating the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth by eighteen years. English explorer Bartholomew Gosnold investigated New Bedford's harbor on May 31, 1602, and a small colony began. By the middle of the 18th Century a series of large farms with water frontage was built up the hillside on the western bank of the Acushnet River within the present area of downtown New Bedford. Joseph Russell owned one of these widespread tracts. He conceived the idea of selling house lots and establishing a village. New Bedford's official town charter was granted in 1787.

Among other ventures Joseph Russell engaged in offshore whaling. Under his leadership the inhabitants of Bedford Village became whalers and shipbuilders. Around 1780, William Rotch, a Nantucket Quaker, moved to Bedford Village. Rotch was a third-generation whaling merchant and

KEY ACTORS IN NEW BEDFORD

REGIONAL COMMUNITY CONGRESS:
Beginning in 1996, monthly regional planning meeting of government, religious, cultural, educational and tourism leaders for Greater New Bedford area (ceased 2001).

ARTS AND CULTURE NETWORK:
Volunteer subsection of Regional Community Congress created in 1998 to address making New Bedford a cultural hub (ceased 2001).

KERRIE BELLASARIO:
Visionary artist who is director of the Arts and Culture Network and the ACPC. Founder of artist co-op ARTWorks.

ARTS AND CULTURE PLANNING COMMISSION (ACPC):
Cultural Collaboration formed in 2001 to continue the work of the Arts and Cultural Network. Head of Arts District effort.

OF ARTISTS AND WHALES



An aerial view of downtown New Bedford

4 New Bedford

banker. He immediately set about focusing his great capital resources developing the whale fishery here. Rotch gave whaling a substantial impetus, and it continued to be New Bedford's chief industry for more than a hundred years. During this time New Bedford gained a worldwide reputation as the greatest whaling port on the globe. In 1841, Herman Melville shipped out aboard the whaleship, *Acushnet*. His experiences inspired him to write *Moby Dick*, in which New Bedford is featured.

In the 1800s, New Bedford's prosperity continued to grow, based on three major industries in each of which the community attained preeminence: whaling, the manufacture of fine cotton goods, and general fisheries. Of these original three, only the commercial fishing industry continues as an economic engine, generating approximately \$800 million annually to the local economy.

In the full glory of the days of whaling prosperity, New Bedford sent out more whale ships than all other American ports combined. In 1857, when the population was about 22,000, the peak was reached, with 329 vessels engaged in whaling, representing an investment of \$20 million and a yearly catch of \$10 million. At this zenith, New Bedford was the richest city per capita in the world (however, from that year onward the industry steadily declined). As a result, a rich society of philanthropists was developed in New Bedford. New Bedford's rich Victorian society supported the fine arts, and a large arts community flourished in and around the thriving port city. Artists such as William Bradford, Albert Pinkham Ryder and Clifford Ashley lived and worked in the New Bedford area. Albert Bierstadt, one of 19th century America's greatest landscape painters called New Bedford home.⁹⁴

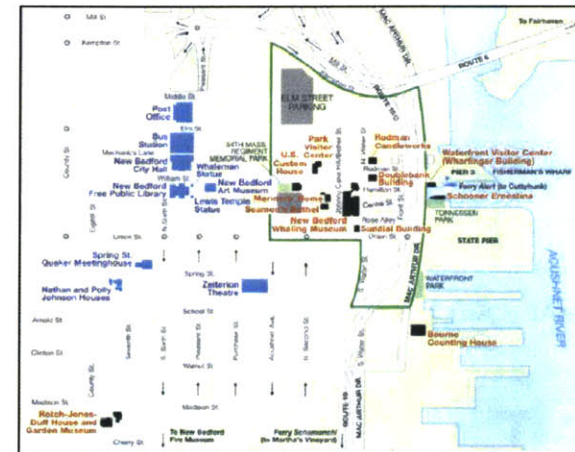
⁹⁴ "A history of New Bedford" <http://www.ci.new-bedford.ma.us/DestinationNewBedford.htm>

The presence of this wealth also brought about the creation of several strong cultural institutions. In 1903, the Old Dartmouth Historical Society was organized to perpetuate the lore and tradition of the old township. Their central accomplishment was the creation of the Bourne Whaling Museum. The Whaling Museum is the largest of its kind in the world, with more than 150,000 objects in its collection; it was made a National Historical Park in 1996. The Swain Free School, established under the will of William W. Swain, was opened in his former residence in 1882 for general higher education, but later was transformed into an art school of national acclaim, the Swain School of Design. This school was later incorporated into the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth and today is highly involved in the rejuvenation of downtown New Bedford. Also during this wealthy period New Bedford saw the construction of the New Bedford Art Museum and the Zeiterion Theatre, which was recently restored as the city's performing arts center. All of these cultural facilities are important to the current cultural developments.

After the turn of the century, many cotton mills were built, with construction ceasing in 1910. New Bedford became one of the largest producers of cotton yarns and textiles in the country. Around 1920, at the height of prosperity, there were twenty-eight cotton mills; all of these have now closed. Many have now been colonized by artists. Most of the artists in residence in these buildings live and work there illegally, but the municipal government has a tradition of "turning a blind eye" to these artist communities. Recently, however, the cultural community has sought ways not only to legalize the occupancy of these buildings, but also to incorporate these artists into a future arts district in the downtown.

Similar to the other cities I consider, New Bedford's downtown saw major disinvestment from the 1970s to the 1990s as the cotton mills closed and the fishing industry began to fail. In the 1980s the last major department store (the Star Store) closed and downtown retail all but died. Until recently, New Bedford's downtown image was one of abandonment and danger at night.

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS



The National Historical Whaling Park (outlined in green) encompasses a large portion of the downtown

4 New Bedford

ARTISTS IN NEW BEDFORD

The large artist colony that grew during the whaling era of the city established itself and never really left. In the 1970s, as many of the richer residents of the community moved out with the failing economy, artist groups moved into the large Victorian mansions and mills and took up permanent residence. New Bedford is one of the smaller cities among these case studies, comparable in size to Pawtucket. The presence of this artist base makes for an interesting contrast to Pawtucket. Where Pawtucket had little of artist base before the 1970s pioneering groups, New Bedford's recent artist organization efforts have grown more from what was already present. This base of artists has been very politically active in influencing redevelopment projects through the mayor's office and has assisted the city in recent efforts of revitalization.

AHA! – ART HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE

It was the action of these local artists that brought about New Bedford's success with AHA! AHA! is a truly volunteer effort that grew out of the vision of several key artists and historians hoping to revive downtown New Bedford. What is AHA!? The promotional materials describe it as follows:

"A downtown arts night, AHA New Bedford!, occurs every second Thursday of the month from 5-9 PM. AHA stands for Art, History and Architecture and is a collaboration of the city's museums, galleries, theatrical groups and retailers. AHA New Bedford! attracts thousands of visitors to the downtown for a broad range of cultural events and activities geared to the season. AHA! events include concerts, dance, exhibitions, lectures, tours, culinary events, theater, and opening receptions at more than 14 sites in the downtown. Venues include: New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, New Bedford Whaling Museum, the Rotch-Jones-Duff House & Garden Museum, New Bedford Art Museum, John Magnan Sculpture Studio, ArtWorks! At Dover Street, Arthur Moniz Gallery, Artisan's Cooperative Gallery, Duff Gallery, Gallery X, Wing Pinske Gallery, Spinner Publications, Schooner Ernestina Museum, New Bedford Free Public Library, White Knight Gallery, Art Lofts on William Street, Whale's Tale, Freestone's City Grill, Ambience Design, Wics & Balms (a candle selling store), the Zeiterion Theatre, and the New Bedford Preservation Society. Admission to all AHA sites is free on these monthly arts nights."⁹⁵

⁹⁵ "AHA! – Art History Architecture," www.ahanewbedford.org.

AHA! and New Bedford's broader efforts are most interesting to compare to the Worcester Case. Not only are both cases in Massachusetts (and hence have no tax exemption to offer artists), but they also have a similar sized artist population and local cultural institutions. Furthermore, both cases have built a cultural coalition behind their recent efforts. However, in contrast to the Worcester case, New Bedford decided to develop an extensive cultural programming project *before* undergoing the process of creating an arts district.

The AHA! program⁹⁶ grew out of regional partnerships that began in 1996. In that year, government, religious, cultural, educational and tourism leaders and participants met in what became the Regional Community Congress. The intent of this meeting was to create a grassroots effort in the Greater New Bedford Massachusetts region (which includes the towns of Acushnet, Dartmouth, Fairhaven, Freetown, Mattapoisett, Marion, Rochester, Wareham, and Westport) to involve citizens in the ongoing improvement of the region. This congress established visions and plans for a variety of topics, including the arts and culture.⁹⁷

THE PROCESS BEHIND AHA!

During this planning process, the role of the arts and culture as an economic engine boiled to the surface: people had heard of what was (at least what they thought was) occurring in Providence and wanted to focus a section of their efforts similarly. Hence, in 1998 the Arts and Culture Network was founded as a subsection of the Regional Community Congress to address creating an arts hub in New Bedford:

⁹⁶ "Painting the Future: Arts and Culture in the City of New Bedford: A Report prepared by the Arts Coalition Planning Committee, a sub-committee of the AHA! Project" (AHA! Project, 2001).

⁹⁷ The RCC ceased meeting after establishing a regional vision, published as "On the Region's Aspirations" in 2001.

4 New Bedford

*“The Arts and Culture Network envisions New Bedford as an art and culture hub known both regionally and nationally as an exciting, creative place to live, work, shop and visit.”*⁹⁸

Like the rhetoric of the other case studies, this quote is pretty standard promotional material from a group hoping to create a cultural district. But what is significant in this case is the make-up of the group proposing it. Similar to Worcester, but more regional in base, New Bedford already had a diverse arts community network of civic leaders, university and cultural institution members, and this initiative involved all types of artists (including high school art teachers).

THE VISIONARY



Kerrie Bellasario was able to convert this industrial building into a successful artist workshop: ARTWorks.

One of the important leaders of the Arts and Culture Network was Kerrie Bellasario, who I consider to be a major driver of the whole AHA! project. In my discussions with her, she expressed a very interesting viewpoint about the role of artists in the process of urban regeneration. In her studies at arts school, she focused on the work of Joseph Bueys, a contemporary of Andy Warhol. Bueys, in her view, believed that artists have a responsibility to society to shape it for the better. He viewed economic and social activity as a type of “social sculpture.” Bueys especially emphasized the need to rebuild not only community but also structures. What is interesting about this description of Bueys’ teachings is that I have heard it echoed in various forms from other artists. There appears to be an interesting underlying — I do not know quite how to put it — *feeling*, in some artists, that art should carry a “higher” purpose for society.

Ms. Bellasario came to New Bedford on a whim out of school: armed with Bueys’ inspiration she started to work on becoming an arts activist. She immediately began the process by starting an artist co-op similar to AS220. In 1998, she was able to acquire 15,000 s.f. of space in an old downtown building and convert it into artist work studios and a revolving

⁹⁸ “Painting the Future: Arts and Culture in the City of New Bedford: A Report prepared by the Arts Coalition Planning Committee, a sub-committee of the AHA! Project” (AHA! Project, 2001).

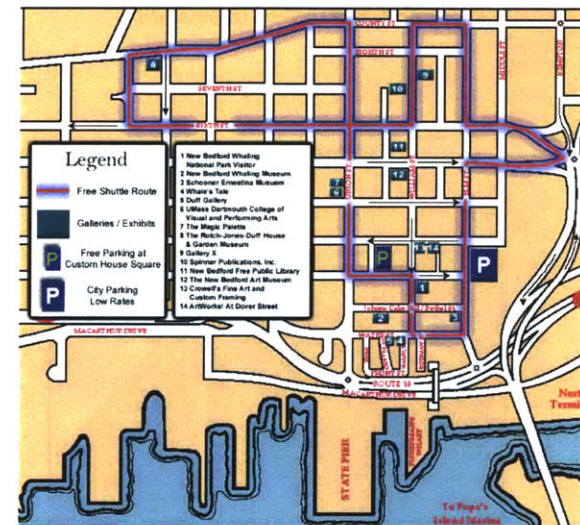
contemporary gallery which she called ARTWorks. She claims she met with resistance from all corners, including city departments, lending institutions and other artists in the community. However, six months after opening her building was filled with artists who had moved from Providence and Cape Cod. ARTWorks was the spark that started the fire of interest in downtown as a place of arts and culture. Her role in the New Bedford process is very similar to both The Morris Nathansen Design Group in Pawtucket and AS220 in Providence. As in the other cases, ARTWorks demonstrated to the community not only that there was interest on the part of outside artists in these type of projects, but also that the image of downtown as a derelict place could be easily overlooked by them. Kerrie called her first residents her "Urban Guerrillas."⁹⁹

The process of building ARTWorks brought Kerrie Bellasario to the forefront of the active arts community, and she was chosen as the head of the Arts and Culture Network by the members of the Regional Community Congress. The idea for AHA! originally emerged in one of the meetings of the Arts and Culture Network. The idea was to copy Providence's successful gallery crawl night, in which visitors are carried by trolley to different parts of Providence to visit various galleries and open studios. Realizing that there was not a critical mass of galleries or artists in downtown New Bedford, Ms. Bellasario, who was chairing the Network, suggested that they include the other cultural institutions (the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, the New Bedford Fine Arts Museum) in the area and create a themed night that celebrated some aspect of the art, history, and architecture of New Bedford: AHA! At the time, the Massachusetts Cultural Council had just begun a new economic development grant program.¹⁰⁰ One of the first awards given out was to

⁹⁹ ARTWorks was accomplished through a private partnership with donors who bought the building and then rents back to artists with low rents. These donors were subsidized with historic tax credits and Massachusetts State "Development Loans" program. It is a prime example, like AS220, of an ownership situation that is beneficial to artists in the creation of cheap working spaces.

¹⁰⁰ This has now been abolished as the MCC's budget was cut by 62% in 2001.

THE CREATION OF AHA!



This map identifies the route of AHA! through the downtown.

the Arts and Culture Network, which received a grant of \$22,600 to pursue such a promotion night.

WHAT HAS OCCURRED?

*“AHA is all about street-level programming to ‘connect the dots’”*¹⁰¹

Acting on the belief that they needed to sell a critical mass of art and cultural programs to the public through marketing, the Arts and Culture Network arrived at the idea of a themed night that would guide visitors to various sites through the downtown with festival celebrations present in the streets.¹⁰² New Bedford used the MCC grant to hire performers and safety officers, and to organize the event through maps and colored flags. The first AHA! took place on the second Thursday of July 1999. This was big. Many more than the expected crowds showed up and for the first time in years downtown was not quiet after 5 P.M. AHA! has gone on to stage successful monthly events ever since.

According to planners of AHA!, one of AHA!’s greatest accomplishments has been the change of the image of the city and the downtown. Going there, one notices that many of the buildings are derelict and in need of renovation. But, as with everything in America, there is power in a sellable image. In talking to visitors attending AHA! I found there was a general feeling of excitement about the possibilities of the downtown. Some mentioned they saw downtown as a revived center focused around visitor activity and residential living. The public perception of the image had dramatically changed from derelict to excitement (at least for one night a week).

The program has (supposedly) reaped great economic success also. The MCC economic development grant to AHA! (\$22,600) has seen a return of \$332,905 in increased visitors, retail sales at museums, and business and

¹⁰¹ Kerrie Bellasario, Head of ACPC and ARTWorks, personal interview March 7th 2003.

¹⁰² A local wood sculptor and glass blower named it AHA!

shops participating in the AHA! program.¹⁰³ An economic impact study at UMASS Dartmouth revealed that after one year of the project's operations, it had generated an economic impact of \$13 in spending for every \$1 spent in grant funding, that ratio is now estimated to be \$15 for every \$1 of state support.¹⁰⁴

While these economic impact numbers should be considered with a skeptical eye, some positive developments have occurred that are hard to ignore. New businesses and galleries have opened. The Arthur Moniz Gallery, Artisan's Cooperative Gallery, Dwing Pinske Gallery, White Knight Gallery, and the Art Lofts on William Street are all new arrivals. They all say that business has been steady for their artists. Gallery X, a contemporary art center with a large membership, moved into an old church and is also doing quite well. How has one night a month translated into successful businesses? AHA! promoters believe that overall tourism has increased to the city because of the event, and that they have begun to establish enough of an arts presence in the downtown that it may survive on its own.

The idea of centralizing the arts has also permeated into the institutional structure of the city. The campus of the University of Massachusetts (Dartmouth) College of Visual and Performing Arts (the former Swain School) was looking for a new site in New Bedford. The original designated site was a greenfield site just outside the city. But the Arts and Culture Network members (and the Mayor) were able to convince the school to consider the abandoned Star Store Building in the heart of the downtown at Union & Purchase Streets. This turn-of-the-century Beaux Arts building, which used to sit abandoned, now features state-of-the-art educational facilities and an exhibition gallery.

¹⁰³ Maureen Dezell, "Making A Case for Arts as Economic Engine" *Boston Globe* 11 October 2001.

¹⁰⁴ These economic benefit numbers were included in the aforementioned Americans for the Arts "Arts an Economic Prosperity" economic impact study.



Gallery X is a contemporary art galley that has opened because of AHA!

THE STAR STORE SCHOOL



The old Star department store is now home to the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth College of Visual and Performing Arts.

4 New Bedford



Many buildings still lie derelict in downtown New Bedford.

Accomplishing this transformation was not an easy task. The city had to be convinced this was a good idea. Until recent years, many planners saw students as undesirable to an urban area. The local arts groups had to break through this thought pattern by using examples such as the successful rejuvenation of the Combat Zone in Boston by Emerson College. Once convinced, the local redevelopment authority, which had control of the property, issued an RFP and orchestrated a deal with a specific developer who received a long-term lease on the property.

Having students, especially art students, in the downtown has had both positive and negative effects. Students certainly activate the streets and populate the downtown for many more hours than before. However, extensive tensions have arisen between the students and the traditional shop owners. Some say that the shop owners need to learn to adjust to a funky younger population; others say the students are loitering and disturbing the businesses. The presence of students has also made the market for downtown housing rise. New Bedford is far from being gentrified, but one must wonder if someday the movement of students into future downtown housing will raise rents beyond the reach of artists.

CREATION OF ACPC

With all of the positive arts and culture sector growth occurring, the members of AHA! realized that they needed a strategy to sustain the creative energy and vitality of the arts and culture in New Bedford. Sustaining the excitement of a monthly event can be difficult for any festival or arts event. Although attendance at AHA! has been steady, one certainly must realize that interest will eventually wane if more is not done to create a coherent and legible arts presence. As discussed in my Analysis and Local Insights, maybe this is not true, but evidence from other cultural districts suggests that cultural consumption events are not enough to sustain a district; you must have a balance of cultural production (artists/creatives in work/residence) with cultural consumption.

AHA! originally had no staff, as it was all volunteer work. This situation, coupled with the knowledge that many of the arts institutions in town were new, led to the creation of the Arts Coalition Planning Committee in

early 2001. This committee has much in common with the organizational structure of the Worcester Cultural Coalition, setting out much of the same goals for their city as did Worcester. Of course they had the advantage of building on previous experience where Worcester did not.

What the ACPC did next, more significantly, was to bring together seventy of the region's municipal and cultural nonprofit leaders for a two day symposium (similar to what happened with Worcester) to explore models of "successful arts cities", in which they included Providence, Portland (ME) and Worcester.¹⁰⁵

I have used the metaphor of a family for my cases for a reason. Arts Districts are being considered by many cities in the North East and for every new one, information (or misinformation) about the previous ones is being passed along like a grapevine of gossip in a family. One of the purposes of this thesis is to try to sort through this information and see what is valid.

One of the major suggestions of this symposium was that New Bedford should put a cultural development officer in place in city hall. However, because New Bedford's initial efforts centered around building an ephemeral economic development event *instead* of master planning the arts district, it has been unable to get a cultural development officer hired into the city government. Worcester, on the other hand, because it followed the opposite order and constructed the community planning process first, was able to secure Christine Proffitt's position as a cultural development officer. She is sure that she will not be laid off, because she feels she is protected by representing so many institutions for the city.

In the end, who is going to be better off? Worcester, with its political position secured but very little economic action taking place? Or New Bedford, with its established cultural event? Did New Bedford make a

¹⁰⁵ Whether these cases should be used as models is of course contentious, but the process they undertook speaks to the way that this type of information (or misinformation) about arts districts is spreading.

THE FUTURE



AHA! Manages to draw upon a diverse set of local residents to participate.

fatal flaw in not concentrating on securing a political position, and focusing too much on the early wins? Of course, there are many other factors that will affect the success of both of these districts, but this difference is an interesting contrast in the process of creating a district. Should artist grassroots organizations getting involved in this type of work concentrate efforts on visible early successes or on political wins? Are these mutually exclusive?

CREATING THE ARTS DISTRICT IN NEW BEDFORD – SOME WARNINGS

It is clear from interviews and planning documents that New Bedford is on the cusp of declaring an arts district in its downtown. It is intriguing to me that all of the documents say "arts district" and not "cultural district." Do they realize what great benefit they have in the presence of their historic institutions within the district? Are they going to narrow their focus? One wonders if there might be an over-influence of the Providence and Worcester examples, which were devoid of such resources. Why should they also be careful in the way they shape the district? It is my understanding that, volunteers are now crafting a zoning proposal to change much of the downtown into an artist zone. If passed, the law will probably be similar to Worcester's. If there is anything that the previous case studies have revealed it is that the jury is out on what the effect of such zoning changes will be in the creation of spaces to benefit artists. Drawing the zone too big might dissipate any sense of a legible district and drawing it too tight might cause property owners to raise the prices on buildings beyond any affordable conversion to artist lofts. Perhaps New Bedford should approach the consideration of the district as a "stealth" operation. Perhaps local arts organizations should start attempting to buy up buildings or get the city to secure usable buildings before the designation hits.

But, New Bedford might just be creating an arts district for the PR benefit. Because of the derelict state of much of the downtown, many feel, as Duany did in Providence, that some gentrification would be welcome in New Bedford. I heard that some top members of the ACPC would welcome the new residential zoning overlay even if the consequences were gentrification without artists. They also admitted that any developer would need a subsidy to do artist housing, and that type of funding was scarce. So, while all of the planning groups unanimously felt that legislation should be adopted to establish a downtown Arts District that would hopefully attract artists to live and work; their true intention is not clear. Although they have suggested maintaining a log of available space

for artists, one cannot help but think that it will be hard for artists to find affordable space. I hope that New Bedford will carefully consider the buildings that they are including in the district and make sure that they establish relationships with property owners and identify suitable buildings (large spaces, freight elevators, etc.) beforehand to ensure that space will get developed according to the goals of the district.¹⁰⁶

New Bedford should also be wary of where it draws its district's lines for another reason. Just outside of the Downtown District lie several mills with established artist colonies already in them. Will New Bedford face the same fate as Providence? How will one know the effect of trying to create a new colony in the downtown on the existing spaces? How do you draw the zoning lines (remembering that in those mills artists are already living illegally)? Maybe the solution will be that the centralized district will become the visitor front of the arts community, where wares will be sold, but not an "artists in residence" community (much like the vision for Worcester).

Because of the recent economic downturn, many projects are on hold. In other words, *this is the perfect time to plan to do it right*. New Bedford is in a unique position, after already establishing its success, to keep up the planning and community organization until money becomes available to fund either a cultural development officer in city hall or a public/private cultural development agency. Now is the key time to perform a study of available buildings and establish property owner/city governmental relationships for future developments. The ACPC will also need to carefully consider what type of cultural district it wants to establish. Building artist live/work space, as desirable as permanent housing is to establish, is not easy. Also, we have yet to see that focusing primarily on artists in residence will truly have the extra benefits ones hopes for. Surely, however, New Bedford has not shown evidence that it would take

¹⁰⁶ There is evidence that they do realize this and have begun that process. I was told that one developer is extremely excited about the prospect of artists-in-residence and is looking to convert the building next to the Star Store into 43 live/work units.

a narrow approach; one hopes that it will build off of the institutions already in place and create a diverse district.

"We felt like we wanted to just jump off the bridge...to do it top notch and high quality as quick as possible" – Kerrie Bellasario¹⁰⁷

PROGRAMMING BEFORE THE DISTRICT

The entrepreneurial spirit embodied in the above quote sums up the attitude of New Bedford in its cultural planning. While Worcester was carefully shaping its Arts District in a master plan, New Bedford decided to just "give it a shot." This "let's just do it and see if it works" attitude permeated the air in interviews with arts leaders and artists. Because so much of their work is volunteer, these planners and artists are planning somewhat on a whim, and they are just now, after seeing the success they have achieved, starting to think more holistically about what shaping a sustainable cultural district might entail. Obviously, nothing could be more the opposite from Providence's or Pawtucket's efforts. While New Bedford has had the support of the mayor, he was decidedly hands-off in the beginning of the process. Now he has made some small donations to the AHA! efforts and has participated in the planning process, but he has yet to show the dedication to the project that both Providence's and Pawtucket's mayors have.¹⁰⁸ There has been no middleman or dictator: the ACPC is more like the little engine that could. What this portends for New Bedford I do not know. As discussed above, New Bedford missed an opportunity to establish a position in city hall, but it has been able to achieve great financial and imaging success. It has a base to work from which puts it in a stronger position than Worcester.

Will New Bedford truly benefit from putting programming first? Is programming an event like this the best way to start? How do you take the ephemeral and make it into a sustainable functioning arts district

¹⁰⁷ Kerrie Bellasario, Head of ACPC and ARTWorks, personal interview March 7th 2003.

¹⁰⁸ Maureen Dezell, "Making A Case for Arts as Economic Engine" *Boston Globe* 11 October 2001.

before the fire runs out? ACPC's recent actions represent a good example of attempting to deal with sustaining cultural activity. However, planners must be very observant of the fact that most of the programs and organizations are in a very nascent stage in New Bedford (and were founded at a time of great prosperity). I am curious to see if they are sophisticated enough, or if the support network can supply the technical assistance needed, to achieve further economic and cultural success.

THE ACTIVE ARTIST

Few artists are interested and willing to be activists and do the economic development work. This is a theme repeated over and over again in these case studies. I am intrigued, however, by the recurring presence of a visionary active artist in these case studies. Kerrie Bellasario's ARTWorks' history so closely mirrors AS220 and the Morris Nathansen Design Group I could not help but begin to wonder if Burk at AS200 was right: that the presence of one of these groups is imperative to the success of a cultural district. No evidence exists that any of these groups have brought more or less success to the urban realm, but their presence has always been welcome. When questioned about why some artists follow these pursuits rather than others, Ms. Bellasario again mirrored my description of different kinds of artists at the end of the Providence and Pawtucket cases. She believes there are three types of artists (from an urban regeneration viewpoint):

1. A few "Bueysan" artists who are interested in being social activists (these artists typically have to sacrifice the creation of their own personal art to perform the "social sculpture," assuming that they desire to make art outside of that sculpture);
2. Artists who wish to participate in the process. These artists have an interest in social work and like the benefits of being part of an arts community, i.e. being well connected to a buying market, and not having to sacrifice their own work; and
3. Those artists who have no interest in any of the above (these artists have a basic need for work space and little else; they use the Internet to get to their market).

I believe one must understand these distinctions if analyzing a cultural planning process from the outside. It will be crucial to identify which artists will be the most active and helpful, while not alienating those who want to be part of the community, but may not be present at every meeting. As to the third class of artists, I see no loss in trying to include them also, but one should not expect too much.

While New Bedford seeks out artists to assist in the development of a district, it will have to consider the effect of having the presence of the New Bedford Whaling National Historic Park and its future expanded museum. Will it be a benefit or boondoggle to other artists in the area if the focus swings towards historical preservation planning? Are there already too many competing elements in the cultural plan for individual artists to have any hope of succeeding? Obviously balancing the interests of the large institutions with these of the individual artists will be key for New Bedford. As we have seen with Providence, the individual artist can easily get swept under the rug.

Hopefully, the artist coalitions established in New Bedford will manage the future of their cultural pursuits in the downtown wisely. They have an enormous amount of positive energy that could lead to great success. However, they must be careful in their pursuits and never be one sided in their thinking: arts and culture will not save the entire downtown, a diverse economic and residential plan is needed. New Bedford has jumped off the bridge, now it is time to learn to swim.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM NEW BEDFORD

PROGRAMMING IS A GOOD WAY TO BEGIN TO CHANGE AN IMAGE

- AHA! has changed the image of downtown New Bedford drastically for its residents and visitors.

UNIQUE "THEMEING" IS A POWERFUL TOOL

- AHA! keeps visitors coming back to experience different cultural activities each event.

PROGRAMMING MIGHT ACHIEVE MANY OF THE RESULTS THAT ARTS DISTRICTS HOPE FOR

- New Bedford has successfully opened new business and spurred ancillary activities without designating an arts district.

[BUT] CONCENTRATING ON PROGRAMMING MIGHT NOT LEAD TO POLITICAL SUSTAINABILITY

- The AHA! effort has not solidified a cultural economic development officer position in the city.

CAPITALIZE ON VISIONARY ARTISTS

- Kerrie Bellasario has achieved much in New Bedford; supporting such artists is imperative.

RECRUITING A COLLEGE TO A DOWNTOWN CAN HAVE POSITIVE BENEFITS

- Students at the Massachusetts college of Art and Design are breathing 24-hour life into downtown New Bedford.

VARIABLE	PROVIDENCE	PAWTUCKET	WORCESTER	NEW BEDFORD
GENERAL				
District designated?	yes	yes	yes	no
Name of district	Arts and Entertainment District	Arts and Entertainment District	Arts District	Arts District
Size of district	10 city blocks	307 acres	10 city blocks	n/a
Date initiative began	1994	1997	1997	1998
Size of city	173,618 1.5 million metro	72,958 Part of Providence metro	172,648 500,000 metro	93,768 200,000 Metro
Size of existing city wide artist community / size of city	very large	small	moderate	moderate
EXISTING DEVELOPMENT				
Presence of tourists	high	moderate	low	moderate
Level of property values	very high	low	moderate	moderate
Potential investors	high	moderate	moderate	moderate
Degree of cultural institutional presence	performing arts: high, other : low	very low	very low, plumbing museum, theatre at gateway	high, art museum and historic park
INTENT				
Espoused goal	economic development	economic development	economic development	economic development
Actual goal	marketing/image change	social cohesion	connect artists to market	develop arts community
PROCESS				
Key actor	the mayor	the middleman	the cultural coalition	the visionary artist
Coordinating agent (sole task is administer district)	no	yes	not yet	not yet
Services provided by coordinating agent and technical assistance to artists (from any group)	marketing, business recruitment	marketing , business and artists recruitment, information center, live/workspace finding assistance (space inventory, artists friendly brokers, moving assistance), cleaning properties, coordination between properties	marketing, arts incubator space provided	marketing, business recruitment
Tools being used by the city	tax incentives, low interest loans, ephemera programming , marketing, debt forgiveness, gap financing for developments, streamlined rehabilitation code	tax incentives, low interest loans, public works assistance, ephemera programming, marketing, public cart purchases, zoning change, space inventory, streamlined rehab. code, revolving loan fund to restaurants, city owned gallery	Current: zoning change, ephemera programming, marketing, safety funds, public art (trash cans) Future: another zoning change, artists housing subsidy, Discover Trail, streetscape improvements, public art funding	Current: marketing for ephemera, wayfinding for event (maps and flags), small grants for safety and concerts. Future: zoning change, artists housing subsidy, streetscape improvements
Official Arts District Plan?	no	in process	yes	in process
Relationship to city government Future security (of political support)	high low	high high	high high	low low
Extent of Programming of ephemera	very little has occurred	just beginning	just beginning	established and successful
ARTISTS				
Involvement of artists in process	many shut out of process	recruited/growing	high	primary force
Importance of housing to plans	low	high	high	moderate
Presence of visionary artist co-op/group	yes	yes	no	yes
SUCCESS				
First accomplishment	public relations victory	artist housing	cultural collaborations	cultural event
Other accomplishments	performing arts enhancement/recruitment	cultural events/business recruitment/ arts institution foundation/social cohesion	cultural event	ancillary activities/ new businesses

ANALYSIS AND LOCAL INSIGHTS

When I first approached these cases, I believed that they would turn out to be similar in function, form and process. At the very least, I thought their goals would be the same. A look below the surface quickly convinced me otherwise. To my surprise, these “arts districts” varied widely. From the matrix, it becomes clear that the cases exhibited different inputs for each of the grouped sets of variables: they had different *intentions*, different *sizes*, different *processes of development*, and different *involvement of artists*. The cases also had different outcomes, hence the matrix includes different *successes* to share. In the following I revisit these groups of variables one at a time, deriving lessons from the matrix to impart to anyone considering pursuing similar projects.

5 Analysis and Local Insights

LESSONS FROM BACKGROUND VARIABLES

VARIABLE	PROVIDENCE	PAWTUCKET	WORCESTER	NEW BEDFORD
GENERAL				
District designated?	yes	yes	yes	no
Name of district	Arts and Entertainment District	Arts and Entertainment District	Arts District	Arts District
Size of district	10 city blocks	307 acres	10 city blocks	n/a
Date initiative began	1994	1997	1997	1998
Size of city	173,618 1.5 million metro	72,958 Part of Providence metro	172,648 500,000 metro	93,768 200,000 Metro
Size of existing city wide artist community / size of city	very large	small	moderate	moderate

WHAT A DIFFERENCE A NAME MAKES

On the surface, naming a district should be easy: the name should be appropriate to the development you envision. As the case studies reveal, however, naming might be used in other strategic ways as well. Providence used "Arts and Entertainment District" (or **arts and ENTERTAINMENT**) to enlarge development beyond the realm of just arts institutions to theatres and nightlife. One has to wonder about the motivation behind this: Did Mayor Cianci really believe that he would be able to house artists in the DOWNCITY area, or was including the "arts" in the title just a way to get people to think that it was more than a theatre district? Where he put his money certainly shows that he favored entertainment (and ancillary activities) over assisting individual artists.

It was a surprise to discover that Pawtucket's district was also called an "Arts and Entertainment District." Of all of the cases, it is the closest to being a pure "Artists' District."¹⁰⁹ Pawtucket has achieved considerable success in recruiting artists and very little success in building a visitor industry around the district (this could be related to its nascent stage). Yet, the name does reveal Pawtucket's goals. They want this district to be more than an artist housing effort. Pawtucket wants to see its entire downtown redeveloped as a place with a successful visitor industry¹¹⁰ and as a place beneficial to artists.

¹⁰⁹ Which in my mind is a place where an artist community thrives in large numbers; without as much emphasis on cultural consumption.

¹¹⁰ This may not be a realistic goal that Pawtucket can achieve.

Both New Bedford and Worcester appear to have the same intention and the name reflects this. They seek to create an “Arts District” that balances artist housing and production with cultural consumption. I believe they have left off “Entertainment” for a reason: these communities want the arts and artists to be the primary beneficiaries. From conversations with planners of these districts, it seems clear that the name “Arts District” was chosen to signify what they envisioned: a place for the support of creative works, and not purely for visitor enjoyment.

The variation in size and location of the districts is astounding. Providence, the largest city with the smallest district, could not have chosen more inappropriate buildings to house artists. However, it also could not have chosen a more beautiful collection of streets and buildings that very clearly could work as a district. Pawtucket, on the other hand, is the smallest city with the largest district. Their initiative is less about the creation of a district than about a city-wide initiative to support the arts. Perhaps this is telling: Providence has a more politically complex situation to deal with, and a larger district might have been politically impossible – of course, little seemed impossible for Cianci. Perhaps, these decisions are more related to the available empty building stock in both cities: they drew their lines to include areas where the buildings were in need of redevelopment. Both Worcester and Providence¹¹¹ ran into trouble by not including in their districts building stock that could easily be converted into artist housing. The lesson here is to do a building inventory before declaring the boundary line of the district.

What these extreme differences in size signal for the creation of new arts districts is unclear. If a district gets too big, it becomes difficult for the user or visitor to conceive of it as a “district.” Pawtucket’s district has a deep urban design flaw in this regard: it would be difficult indeed to make it work as a cohesive whole for the visitor. Then again, there is nothing

DIFFERENT SIZES, DIFFERENT GOALS

“The lesson here is to do a building inventory before declaring the boundary line of the district.”

¹¹¹ It is important to note that there could be a district the size of Providence’s that did have suitable buildings within it.

"I believe the key lesson to take away from this comparison of size is that it is incredibly difficult to pick the right place where the buildings are not only suitable for conversion to arts spaces but will also remain affordable once the district is declared."

that says that all of an arts district should be legible to the viewer. It could be conceived in parts, with a visitor center and outlying production facilities in other areas of the district. I believe the key lesson to take away from this comparison of size is that it is incredibly difficult to pick the right place where the buildings are not only suitable for conversion to arts spaces but will also remain affordable once the district is declared (see discussion of "bouncing off" below).

The size of the existing artist community in each city also affects both the purpose and success of a district. In Providence, with its large existing artist community and gallery system, the creation of an arts district carries with it the suggestion and expectation that one is attempting to create a place of centralized arts production and consumption. In this city, the artists are already in place and the creation of an Arts and Entertainment District could be seen as either creating an opportunity for artists to market their work (and places for artists to live), or as an attempt to force people to relocate their lives in the service of economic redevelopment. In Providence, it also can be seen as a centralization of artists to the benefit of the downtown and to the detriment of the surrounding arts community (through centralization of funding and loss of activity throughout other places in the city).

In Worcester and New Bedford, with their moderately size arts communities, the arts district promises to local artists that they will finally have a place that promotes their work to a larger market (and possibly a place to work or live), but it also is built upon active recruitment of artists for economic development. In Pawtucket, however, the Arts and Entertainment District is completely focused on building an arts community from the minimal activity that was occurring before. It is more about creating opportunity than moving around current opportunity.

LESSONS FROM EXISTING DEVELOPMENT

VARIABLE	PROVIDENCE	PAWTUCKET	WORCESTER	NEW BEDFORD
EXISTING DEVELOPMENT				
Presence of tourists	high	moderate	low	moderate
Level of property values	very high	low	moderate	moderate
Potential investors	high	moderate	moderate	moderate
Degree of cultural institutional presence	performing arts: high, other : low	very low	very low, plumbing museum, theatre at gateway	high, art museum and historic park

In this section of the matrix, I focused on “existing development” factors¹¹² which Americans for the Arts sees as affecting development of an arts district. Having examined these factors, it appears that while they might affect the success of the districts in the long run, they have not stopped each case from pursuing its districts. Plus, it is difficult to see the connection between the presence of an existing visitor base and being able to create aspects of the districts such as successful artist housing. In fact, a healthy visitor base may be one of the worst things for creating artist housing, as it might raise property values beyond the grasp of affordable conversion. It is more likely that the inherent property values will shape the probability of getting artist housing and arts institutions built. Having good knowledge about what the desirable properties might be before you declare the district might just be key to success (see “a stealth operation”).

I am unsure as to how significant the degree of institutional presence is to the success of an arts district. Certainly, those districts, such as New Bedford, with a large institutional presence seem to be better suited to creating a cultural district based on consumption in the vicinity. Different institutions have different effects, of course. The excellent performing arts institutions in Providence do much to increase foot traffic, but little to benefit visual artists. It is also difficult to determine the benefits that performing arts institutions provide towards building an arts community, since they might not employ local actors or production staff. However, it

“In fact, a healthy visitor base may be one of the worst things for creating artist housing, as it might raise property values beyond the grasp of affordable conversion. It is more likely that the inherent property values will shape the probability of getting artist housing and arts institutions built.”

¹¹² listed on page 33-34 of Chapter 1.

“The cultural institutions that are most significant to the arts community are artist co-op groups such as AS220 in Providence and ARTworks in New Bedford.”

is clear that institution could bring consumers with disposable income who may be patrons/customers for visual artists.

The cultural institutions that are most significant to the arts community are artist co-op groups such as AS220 in Providence and ARTworks in New Bedford. Although I return to these later, their twofold significance is worth mentioning here. These institutions not only provide an example to the local arts community that there is a place for them in the district, they also do much to support the individual artist through gallery shows and providing workspace (sometimes live-in). The communal feeling when visiting these places is clear: artists are at home and you can feel creativity in every part of the building. I believe these are some of the most valuable institutions to support and locate within an arts district.

A significant type of cultural institution that was missing from all of the districts (although one is planned in Pawtucket) is an arts community center, where arts education could begin to implement some of the socially cohesion ideals of some artists. In the end, the importance of all of these institutions is fundamentally related to the intent behind the creation of the district in the first place. Preexisting cultural institutions may be less important for a city like Pawtucket or Worcester, which are well aware that they are building their districts from the ground up. In other words, the whole purpose of building an arts district could be to build new cultural institutions (as happened, in part in Temple Bar).

LESSONS FROM INTENT

VARIABLE	PROVIDENCE	PAWTUCKET	WORCESTER	NEW BEDFORD
INTENT				
Espoused goal	economic development	economic development	economic development	economic development
Actual goal	marketing/image change	social cohesion	connect artists to market	develop arts community

Can you engineer an arts district? The answer to the central question of this thesis is a qualified “yes,” depending on what the creator’s intent with the district is. What makes an arts district an arts district? How many artists have to live there, and for how long? I believe the answer to these questions lies in intent. Perhaps the question a city should ask then is: Can you engineer *our* arts district?

CAN YOU ENGINEER OUR ARTS DISTRICT?

The general goal of all of the districts I studied was economic development of a blighted area of the city. The means to achieve this end, however, varied considerable across the projects. There is no strong evidence that an arts district *must* include artist housing or institutions (although the lack of both would obviously make the area not an arts district). The idea is so fluid that one could possibly pursue an arts district just for the benefit of cultural community coalition (Worcester) or to attract artists to a city in general (Providence).

Declaring an arts district almost automatically establishes a different attitude and image for your city than was previously the case. If such a PR campaign is run correctly, and if the city has the slack to place the artists in other sections, just naming an area an arts district might end up drawing artists to your city but locating them outside the district. How does one build a vibrant arts community? It is difficult to say. I believe it is based upon building the momentum to attract artists, because once you have an existing community with a minimum critical mass (who knows what that exact size is?), the word will spread and artists will want to come. This is what has occurred in Providence. Providence has much more to offer as far as amenities for artists are concerned, it has several prestigious arts schools, which naturally create a community of artists

BOUNCING OFF

“Because property price barriers set up walls to creating housing in the district, immigrating artists have effectively “bounced off” the district’s fortified boundaries and into other areas of town.”

around them. However, almost every artist I have spoken to believes that the public relations campaign behind the Arts and Entertainment District, which basically declared the city was welcoming to artists across the nation, has led to a net increase in the number of artists in Providence. What is surprising is that none of these new artists ended up in the district. Because property price barriers set up walls to creating housing in the district (prices immediately rose above the level where the building could be feasibly converted to artist spaces on all buildings in the district after the district boundaries were declared), immigrating artists have effectively “bounced off” the district’s fortified boundaries and into other areas of town. In effect, Providence has bounced a whole artist community off of the intended one and created an unofficial, grassroots, urban regenerating arts district in the west-side neighborhood of Olneyville. This is a good thing, and a perfectly acceptable result of an arts district process. Not only is Providence getting the middle-class residences it wants downtown, but has also created a whole arts community also, by default.

Worcester has also shown signs of the bouncing off phenomenon. Its district has little opportunity for artist housing within its current boundaries. Hence, new artists are being sent by the technical assistance group (ARTSWorcester) to another part of town. If these new artists regenerate other neighborhoods, will not the overall effect for the city still be positive? Pawtucket of course has not seen bouncing off because the district is so large. Artists from Providence are bouncing off all the way to Pawtucket.

For Worcester, this bouncing off is problematic because one of the primary intents of their district is to develop housing and a market for artists. The Arts District advocates in Worcester will need to find a way to balance the development goals of district property owners with the desire to develop low-cost live and work spaces for artists, as they are currently completely shut out.

While economic development is the espoused goal of all of the cases, the cases have other goals, *actual* goals, which have also played themselves out in the creation of these districts. In Pawtucket, because the initial idea was not only to bring in artists but also to create a way to bring the aging local community together with a new immigrant population, the creation of the arts district has had a much different evolution. Not only have they been successful at building an artist community through all of their targeted assistance programs, but they are also spending their money on a new arts community center. Artists who strongly believe that this type of "boundary crossing" between populations is the most important aspect of art will find Pawtucket more attractive Providence. To those artists in Providence who believe that that the greatest flaw in its district was the lack of funding for "boundary crossing" activities (created by a centralization of funds to the development of the performing arts in the district), I have one critical factor to point out: the intent shapes the result.

Right or wrong, Cianci never intended the district to be a place where the community came together for social cohesion purposes; it was an economic development policy, period. It may be said however that Providence must now reevaluate its goals for the district, as surely affordable artist housing will never happen there. Yet, redistribution of all of the funds for the arts in Providence throughout the city, leaving nothing for the failed district, would be a mistake. If Providence truly wants a balanced arts community, it should not tip the scales too far in either direction (centralization on one end and "boundary crossing" on the other). Perhaps the arts as a force in urban regeneration should be viewed as part of a continuum between centralization strategies and "boundary crossing" ideals. Politicians or cultural planners would then have the option to pick from a set of projects in order to achieve different goals, all positive and well balanced.

"Perhaps the arts as a force in urban regeneration should be viewed as part of a continuum between centralization strategies and "boundary crossing" ideals. Politicians or cultural planners would then have the option to pick from a set of projects in order to achieve different goals, all positive and well balanced."

For New Bedford, it is obvious then, that this is the time to define as clearly as possible what the intent for the future arts district will be, for it may assist the city in deciding what to pursue and not pursue. New

5 Analysis and Local Insights

Bedford has a unique opportunity to pursue the very real possibility of providing artist housing and developing an arts community.

LESSONS FROM PROCESS

VARIABLE	PROVIDENCE	PAWTUCKET	WORCESTER	NEW BEDFORD
PROCESS				
Key actor	the mayor	the middleman	the cultural coalition	the visionary artist
Coordinating agent (sole task is administer district)	no	yes	not yet	not yet
Services provided by coordinating agent and technical assistance to artists (from any group)	marketing, business recruitment	marketing , business and artists recruitment, information center, live/workspace finding assistance (space inventory, artists friendly brokers, moving assistance), cleaning properties, coordination between properties	marketing, arts incubator space provided	marketing, business recruitment
Tools being used by the city	tax incentives, low interest loans, ephemera programming , marketing, debt forgiveness, gap financing for developments, streamlined rehabilitation code	tax incentives, low interest loans, public works assistance, ephemera programming, marketing, public cart purchases, zoning change, space inventory, streamlined rehab. code, revolving loan fund to restaurants, city owned gallery	Current: zoning change, ephemera programming, marketing, safety funds, public art (trash cans) Future: another zoning change, artists housing subsidy, Discover Trail, streetscape improvements, public art funding	Current: marketing for ephemera, wayfinding for event (maps and flags), small grants for safety and concerts. Future: zoning change, artists housing subsidy, streetscape improvements
Official Arts District Plan?	no	in process	yes	in process
Relationship to city government Future security (of political support)	high low	high high	high high	low low
Extent of Programming of ephemera	very little has occurred	just beginning	just beginning	established and successful

In many ways, the most intriguing of my findings from these case studies was the difference in the way the districts were created by politicians, cultural planners, and artists. If anything can be learned from these case studies, it is that the process by which one approaches an arts district will shape it deep into the future. Each of the protagonists of these districts – the dictator in Providence, the middleman in Pawtucket, the cultural coalition in Worcester, and the visionary artist in New Bedford – shaped the district under very different circumstances and produced very different results for artists.

In Providence, Cianci’s top-down planning approach shut out many artists groups and splintered the arts community during the creation of the arts district. A lot of bitterness and ambivalence still exists towards Cianci because of his exclusion of CapitolARTS from the planning process. His leadership did not attempt to manage the competitiveness of artist groups

PLANNING THE PROCESS

5 Analysis and Local Insights

productively in a way that would benefit the district. Through Cianci's dismissal of most individual artists -- those who were not well-connected to Cianci's regime -- in the closed task-force planning, he lost the chance to create an arena for the sharing of new and inventive ideas. Individual artists never were given a chance to express their concerns or ideas in the planning process.

This stands in stark contrast to the coalition type planning that occurred in Worcester. The mayor in that city challenged local arts organizations to unite behind the idea of the district. His policy led to new conversations among some thirty organizations and provided the impetus to form not only a cultural coalition (WCC) but also an artists' action group (WART). All ideas were heard and new beneficial relationships were formed. Worcester went even further in creating collaborations during the Arts District Plan Master Planning process. Artists were paired up (by their own demand) with local business and property owners.

The possibility of these types of new conversations between groups (which previously competed for funding) is a major benefit that might be gained out of arts district planning.¹¹³ For cities such as Worcester and New Bedford with existing competing cultural institutions, performing arts district planning might just be the perfect way to get conversations going among local groups. In this way, planners can get these arts leaders to understand that what they should be doing is working together to compete on the regional level rather than the local level.

What is better for arts district planning, top down dictatorial planning or coalition building? The accumulated experience is ambiguous. Providence and Worcester provide a classic comparison. Which is better, someone with too much power abusing it to get things done or a coalition with too

¹¹³ David Katz in his MIT thesis *Comprehensive Community Cultural Planning: Towards an Analysis* (MIT, 1990), examined comprehensive cultural plans for cities and came to a similar conclusion. So perhaps arts district planning is not unique in this way; creating a cultural plan will also provide opportunities to create new conversations between local institutions and artists.

many voices unable to get anything done? Cianci made some major mistakes in declaring the district where and when he did, and also by not really doing much to help individual artists, but Worcester has found itself in a different kind of predicament. Because there are so many people involved in the creation of Worcester's Arts District, planners there are currently having a very difficult time deciding who should be in charge of the everyday process of bringing the district into fruition. The master plan recommended that they form a public-private partnership (which was successful for Tucson) to run the district. But the best that the Worcester Arts District Task Force has been able to agree upon was forming another board to manage the district (and possibly hiring a part-time person).

This raises a further interesting question: Who should implement these districts? What is the most effective method for accomplishing their goals? Almost everyone in each of the cases agreed: Arts districts need at least one person whose job it is to see it implemented, day in and day out. This person does not have to be a cultural development officer or a visionary, but a middleman who can "pull the strings of the city" for artists through positive connections to the right people. Surprisingly, the only one of these districts which has managed to get someone in this type of position has been Pawtucket. That case also suggests that the person in charge must be well connected politically, ideally being located in city hall (or having a direct contact to city hall). It is important to remember, though, that while coalition building did occur in Pawtucket, there was not nearly the level of preexisting institutions that had to be incorporated into the process as in the other cases. In a sense, Pawtucket was lucky that it could start from scratch and easily appoint a person to run the district, because few in the town would have a vested interest that could potentially be damaged.

In this regard, Worcester and New Bedford make for an interesting contrast to Pawtucket. Worcester considers one of its major accomplishments getting Christine Proffitt into City Hall as a cultural development officer, and I agree: having her in City Hall has the potential to make the district more successful with her ability to cut through the red

IMPLEMENTATION

Who should implement these districts? What is the most effective method for accomplishing their goals? Almost everyone and in each of my cases agreed: Arts districts need at least one person whose job it is to see it implemented, day in and day out. This person does not have to be a cultural development officer or a visionary, but a middleman who can "pull the strings of the city" for artists through positive connections to the right people.

5 Analysis and Local Insights

tape. However, because her primary task is not to oversee the district and Worcester has not been able to assign someone to that task, I have doubts about the project's eventual success. In contrast, because its visionary artists have been so focused on developing a marketable product for the city, little has been done in New Bedford to place people in positions in city government. Similarly, Providence did not have a manager to implement the district: Patricia McLaughlin had many other items on her plate beyond the district. This lack of this foresight by New Bedford and Providence may eventually lead to the demise of their districts (or for Providence, at least, the demise of the original intent of the district) because of political instability and the currently weak economy.

WHAT THE PROCESS PORTENDS

The future of any district is dependent on the political process that created the district. Because Cianci was so dictatorial in the way he went about creating the district, he may have jeopardized the future of the project politically. He managed to make so many artists angry and exclude enough groups that few in the city currently feel any "buy in" to the district idea. Accordingly, all signs in Providence seem to be pointing away from the idea of a large artist housing district toward a district based on cultural consumption.

Worcester finds itself in a much better position to move forward politically, primarily because Christine Proffitt has the backing of thirty cultural institutions behind her. Her support system should guarantee her position's existence within the city government for many years to come; her political security ensures that the district effort will have a voice in the city.

Because he has already achieved so much success for the city, it would be shocking to see Herb Weiss in Pawtucket lose his position (although if he were to leave I am not sure where that would leave the district). New Bedford seems to have found itself in a difficult place. While the city is very excited at the prospects of developing the area through cultural development, the city has been reluctant to create a new position for a

cultural officer. Does New Bedford have enough momentum to keep the project going without this? It is unknown. Certainly their planning documents make it seem that visionary artists are pushing the project ahead.

The analysis suggests that Pawtucket is the case that has the largest toolbox to draw from to effect change in its district. Part of the reason for this difference in available tools is that Pawtucket has Herb Weiss in a position in which he can provide what he calls "customer service" to artists. Creating a position such as his has allowed Pawtucket to serve individual (especially visual) artists in a more consistent way than any of the other cities have been able to. Herb Weiss is able to help artists meet their space and promotional needs to a large degree and has successfully recruited artists because of the availability of these tools.

THE TOOLS

What is also striking is how similar the tools are between Providence and Pawtucket. Both Pawtucket and Providence can benefit from state tax incentives for their artists and from streamlined development laws, marketing assistance, and a series of small grants to ancillary facilities. What makes a difference between these two is the way that information is accessed by artists and users of the district. In Providence, with no one to call except a very busy assistant to the mayor, artists had great difficulty wading through the language of what was available to them financially. In Pawtucket, the information is available in a centralized source and clearly and precisely presented to artists so that they know what is available.

The actual success of these tax incentives is a difficult thing to measure. While 15 artists in the state take advantage of the incentives, are the incentives really the reason why an artist has moved to a certain area of a city? Pawtucket is quite clear that the tax discount has been a huge draw for artists, saying that you need something to "sweeten the deal." Are those artists really moving there for the tax incentive or because they know they can find space that is secure for the foreseeable long run? This is impossible to know, although in every artist survey I have seen,

5 Analysis and Local Insights

affordable space issues were at the top of the list of needs. I do believe however, that, at the very least the tax incentives are a brilliant marketing tool: showing to artists that you care enough to lower the taxes on their work does a lot to give confidence to the arts community in your city.

In both Worcester and New Bedford, considerably less has been done by the city to assist individual artists. While zoning has been changed for the district and some small grants have been made for public safety, way finding, marketing, and public art, little other assistance has come from the state or city. Signs of these cities wanting to get involved in the creation of artists workspace are emerging though. The city of Worcester has invested in the creation of an arts incubator, and New Bedford assisted through grants in the renovation of the Star Store building. What these cities are missing though, is a person or organization sophisticated enough to engage in the business of developing properties with property owners and to interpret and to utilize the tools available to create guaranteed artist live/work ownership spaces, and a legible district for tourism.

Is having more tools likely to create a better district? If your goal is to attract artists, the tools that one uses to draw artists into the town are not the only reason they are moving there. The availability of large spaces with low rents is a huge part of the draw and not something that can be entirely controlled. It is reasonable to assume that if Worcester or Providence had someone similar to Herb Weiss managing their districts, that that person would have had to find a way to find spaces for artists beyond the tools that Herb Weiss uses now. In those cities they would have needed to develop a more sophisticated way to get artists into permanent residences than just providing customer service to artists (i.e. through the city supporting an artists co-op or buying buildings and selling them to artists).

In order for planners of arts districts to better understand the level of government in which the tools are managed, the following table may be helpful. It enables planners to comprehend which organizations need to be formed or contacted to use certain tools. The table categorizes the tools by type, including information, operation and ownership, incentives and regulation,¹¹⁴ and then by the level of government at which the tool is managed (state, city, or coordinating agent).

TABLE 5.4.1 TOOLS USED IN THE CASES BY TYPE AND MANAGER.

MANAGER OF THE TOOL

TYPE	STATE	CITY	COORDINATING AGENT
INFORMATION		marketing	marketing, business recruitment, artists recruitment, information center, live/workspace finding assistance, coordination between property owners, ephemera programming
OWNERSHIP AND OPERATION		streetscape, wayfinding markers, arts incubator space, public art, safety funds	cleaning properties, public works assistance in cleaning properties
INCENTIVES	tax incentives	artists housing subsidy, low-interest loans, debt-forgiveness, gapfinancing for developments	low interest loans, grants to individual artists
REGULATIONS	streamlined rehabilitation code	rezoning	

¹¹⁴ J. Mark Schuster, et al. in their book *Preserving the Built Heritage: Tools for Implementation* (Salzberg Seminar, 1997) argues government action can be categorized into five types of tools (ordered from heaviest to the lightest government intervention): Ownership and operation, regulation, incentives (and disincentives), establishment, allocation, and enforcement of property rights, and information.

5 Analysis and Local Insights

What this chart makes clear is that different levels of government can be involved in the creation of arts districts through different tools. Obviously, the coordinating agent has a huge role to play in interpreting the information about the district and the available tools to artists and the public, and in providing customer assistance to artists (if your goal is truly to house or provide studio space for artists). The chart illustrates how some responsibilities, such as the redevelopment of streetscape, the provision of wayfinding markers and public art purchases lie more with the city than with the state. It is the city government's job to find a way to incorporate the traditional ownership and operation activities of the city into the district. Also the city is the prime financier of most of the grants and loans that are used for arts districts (although the coordinating agent probably will manage them). It is important to keep in mind, however, that the tools identified here are a finite set found in just four case studies. Casting a wider net would find many other available tools and possibly even some that would change the categorization of the current tools within in the chart.

ROLE OF PROGRAMMING

One tool that I have left out of the previous analysis is that of programming the district. I did so because the role that programming played in each of these districts deserves special attention. Programming can include cultural consumption events, such as festivals, art fairs, or gallery crawls. Programming is much more than an individual event at a single venue (such as a gallery opening or performance of a show). A collection of different events can form visible ephemera that may attract visitors and residents alike. The role of programming in each district was very different, and hence, for some, shaped the process by which the district was created.

Providence has had an existing gallery crawl which takes visitors around the city by trolley to different venues to observe art. It was very difficult for Providence's cultural planners to attempt to justify a Arts and Entertainment District only gallery crawl, as many of the other arts communities in Providence were wary that if the district got going the gallery crawl would cease to exist as they knew it. They have little to

worry about in the near future, but this does bring up an interesting dilemma: How does one incorporate an arts district into existing programming? This question is most pertinent for New Bedford. So far their entire arts development is a monthly one night program. The success that AHA! has had is intriguing in that it has achieved many of the goals of the other arts districts (gallery openings, artists workshops) *prior to designating one*. Does this mean that programming is the secret to a successful arts district? It is hard to know. The consequences that New Bedford will bear for not concentrating on building a larger degree of political support might suggest that planners should see programming as just one piece of the puzzle and not as a solution. It is necessary, but not sufficient to complete an arts district. Developing programming based upon just one night of the month may not be enough to sustain a larger arts community, which is why New Bedford is pursuing a more cohesive district.

*The success that AHA! has had is intriguing in that it has achieved many of the goals of the other arts districts (gallery openings, artists workshops) **prior to designating one**. Does this mean that programming is the secret to a successful arts district?*

Both Worcester and Pawtucket have begun programming events within their districts. Both of these cities believe that these events have been major accomplishments. Arts programming for arts districts where little has occurred gives a first hint to the public that the arts district is a real prospect; image can be everything. Including programming as a piece of the puzzle should almost be automatic because building artist housing (such as in Pawtucket) has little legible effect on the outside community. Events are needed to let people know what is occurring behind the walls of the old mills and to increase the community's understanding of the changes that are taking place.

THE URBAN DESIGN OF ARTS DISTRICTS

Urban design is important to cultural planning because urban design is closely linked to the politics of place marketing and legitimizing entrepreneurial forms of government.

Embedded in the previous discussion of tools lies a question: What is the role of urban design in creating arts districts? That a city can do streetscape improvements, for example, says little about the complexity of trying as a city designer to conceive how urban design can complement cultural planning in an economic development strategy. Urban design is important to cultural planning because urban design is closely linked to the politics of place marketing and legitimizing entrepreneurial forms of government. David Harvey was the first to point out that the trend in design away from modern architectural styles to unique “post-fordist” architectural styles allowed cities to embrace their unique qualities through design (and hence create places that could be marketed by city politicians).¹¹⁵ It follows that cultural districts could be the natural place to build upon unique architecture and design because of the creative nature of the population and the ability of that artist population to fashion and interpret local designs for the area. Because an arts district has the potential to involve local designers¹¹⁶ in the process of its creation, it follows that much of the role of an urban designer for a district should be about setting up a framework for connecting local creative workers to the right projects to make unique places.

If this is correct, then the way in which an urban designer should manage the creation of a district is through a *process* rather than a *design*. Wansborough and Mageen¹¹⁷ see this as a type of “urban stewardship:”

¹¹⁵ Harvey warns that the risk of such unique designing is that it could possibly be used to repress populations because they believe they are getting “buy in” to the proceeds, when in fact they are not. That has not stopped urban designers from actively seeking to negotiate and contest spaces with populations for development. Hence, our cities become places in which individuals articulate a design based on cultural meanings to a diverse local population. These designs then become re-interpreted by users.

¹¹⁶ Of course, there is a problem here: what if your local designers are bad artists?

¹¹⁷ Matthew Wansborough and Andrea Mageen, “The Role of Urban Design in Cultural Regeneration” *Journal of Urban Design* 5, no. 2 (2000): 181-197.

“Helping a place to look after itself, a sort of management by incremental change, coupled with selective strategic interventions to effect wider progress and improvement...not to plan cultural or other activity, but to plan for cultural development and the ebb and flow of activity. In other words, planning for uncertainty.”

They see that integration across policy areas as being key:

“The role of urban design in cultural regeneration involves both the integration of arts policy with more mundane services, such as public transport, crime prevention or street maintenance, as well as the integration of ‘hard’ infrastructure with a variety of ‘soft’ uses, events and activities.”

Involving arts policy in these “mundane services” can actually be quite an exciting prospect for an arts district planner. The Worcester Plan, the most advanced in its urban design planning, includes some suggestions along these lines. Adele Fleet Bacow, in both the Worcester Art District master plan and in her book *Designing the City: A Guide for Advocates and Public Officials*¹¹⁸, makes clear that much can be gained by rethinking the public process of designing streetscape objects (signs, lamps, streetlights, sidewalks, etc.) and other parts of the urban realm. Bacow points out that any public project has a dynamic process that can change at any time. By setting up new relationships between local artists, city engineers and public works designers, a community based design can be put into motion that might just carry with it an import that is lasting. She imagines that a politician will be more willing to carry forward something that has included community input and reflects a uniqueness to the city, than a design that does not. To accomplish these types of design will take some serious thinking outside of the box. City Public Works officials are not used to working with artists and vice-versa, but there is a unique opportunity for arts districts to create a better understanding in city departments of the creative process that will benefit all. The only

By setting up new relationships between local artists, city engineers and public works designers, a community based design can be put into motion that might just carry with it an import that is lasting.

¹¹⁸ Adele Fleet Bacow, *Designing the City: A Guide for Advocates and Public Officials* (Island Press, 1995).

5 Analysis and Local Insights

example of such a project in the case studies is the Worcester trashcans. While a small notion, they signal a new way of thinking for the city that can be beneficial to both artists and planners.

Connectivity, both in how strong the connection of the arts district is to the surrounding community and how strong connections within the district are, appears to be key to the survival and success of a district



Providence's District has a wonderful streetscape: tight streets, great architecture and street furniture

Other lessons can be learned about the process of being an "urban design steward." Connectivity, both in how strong the connection of the arts district is to the surrounding community and how strong connections within the district are, appears to be key to the survival and success of a district.¹¹⁹ The importance of connectivity is evidenced in all of the case studies. Providence's district is highly integrated into the surrounding urban form and it appears that it would, from an urban design perspective, be the perfect place for a cultural quarter (had it not been for the inappropriate building stock and high property prices). A beautiful consistency of urban form exists in both the building walls and streetscape that makes a pedestrian feel welcome on the street. Few holes break up the district, so that when walking you really do feel that you are experiencing a set of blocks that work together. Streetsigns make you aware when you are moving in and out of the district, and it is easy to access the rest of the city from the district.

Worcester, on the other hand, does not have a consistent district. The master plan emphasized the need for the district to find a way for pedestrians to move into and throughout the district more smoothly. The plan suggests that covering the many empty lots with artists stands would be a useful way to correct this. It also recommends creating "gateways" to the district to better integrate it into the city (and to allow pedestrians to know when they are moving into and out of it).

Pawtucket has a similar problem, but on a much larger scale. When visiting the district, it is hard to see how this huge district will ever work as a whole. Pawtucket's district is incredibly spread out and the fabric is inconsistent. Because senior housing blocks set back from the street

¹¹⁹ "Arts Districts: Economic/Community/Urban Form: Roundtable and Fellows Panel" *Institute for Urban Design* (October 2001).

destroy street walls in many places, Pawtucket will find it difficult to develop a coherent visitor centered cultural district. One has to drive to get between many of the district's mills. However, Pawtucket seems to be planning to develop just one section of the district as a cultural consumption quarter in which they must be careful to plan for visitors. Connecting the district to the city will not be a problem, as the district is almost the whole city.

New Bedford, because it is at such a different phase in its creation, is an interesting example of another kind of connection to the city. AHA! is designed around a series of events connected by way-finding tools — (see map): maps and yellow flags that mark events and places as parts of the program with an AHA! symbol. One might see this type of design as more of a "corridor" event than a "district" event. Urban design researchers at MIT have come to the conclusion that corridor or trail planning around information or culture is changing the way in which users of the public realm define that realm itself.¹²⁰

AHA! is a classic example of this new type of public interaction occurring in a city where little did before. Organized around an informational theme — for example "women in culture" or even ones as wonderfully goofy as "bowling for art" — the event creates an opportunity for users of the realm to shop, read, and participate in exchanges of information in a way never before seen in New Bedford. And it works. But will this new type of public realm be easily transformed into a district? Designers and planners of this project must carefully consider the connections and pathways between institutions, future housing, galleries and events in the proposed district. They must consider how people will move throughout the district and which pathways might be more successful at supporting events and retail than others. They must consider if there will be a "memory" effect of the current corridors, i.e. will people continue to move along established routes even though new development is occurring elsewhere?

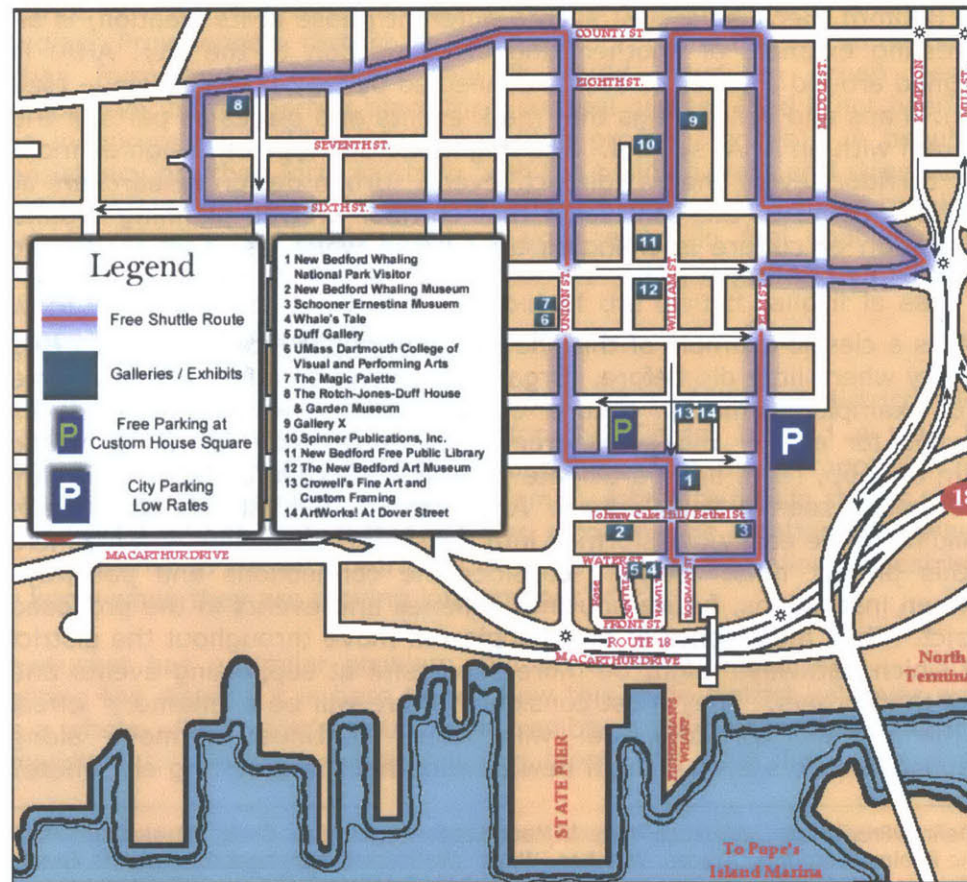


Large senior housing blocks break up
Pawtucket's District

¹²⁰ Dennis Frenchman, Lawrence Vale, J. Mark Schuster, and Lois Craig, "Designing a New Public Realm: Corridors, Traces, Watches, Ways" (National Endowment for the Arts Grants Application, 1993).

5 Analysis and Local Insights

These issues will make the planning of this district both complex and interesting. Perhaps the Worcester plan could provide New Bedford with some guidance. The proposed Discover! Worcester trail is an example of how a corridor event can be incorporated into and enhance a district. Furthermore, planning for such a trail could present an opportunity to incorporate artists into the process of district design.



A map of AHA's corridor reveals a different sort of public realm

LESSONS FROM ARTISTS

VARIABLE	PROVIDENCE	PAWTUCKET	WORCESTER	NEW BEDFORD
ARTISTS				
Involvement of artists in process	many shut out of process	recruited/growing	high	primary force
Importance of housing to plans	low	high	high	moderate
Presence of visionary artist co-op/group	yes	yes	no	yes

How have artists been involved in the planning and construction of arts districts? In the previous section I outlined how artists could be used to design major parts of each district (yet very little of this has occurred in any of the case studies). However, this is just one way in which artists are involved in these districts. As I have outlined before, from a planning viewpoint there appear to be three different types of artists: the visionaries (those who are interested in social and economic redevelopment), the participants (those who want to be involved in a growing arts community), and the private artists (who want nothing to do with the projects but like cheap workspace).

**ARTISTS AND
NEW ENGLAND ARTS DISTRICTS**

In some communities (New Bedford) visionary artists are the primary drivers of the project; they are deeply embedded in the process of creating the district. These artists are the heads of panels and boards that are shaping the districts. Their presence in the process is essential for success because they not only represent part of the larger arts community but they can also bring to the table a sophisticated understanding of economic development from the artists' perspective. The case studies suggest that planners for the districts must be sure that the process of including these arts advocates is inclusive. In Providence, the leaders of AS220 were included in the planning process, but the leaders of other arts groups were left out, creating a schism in the art community itself. The district must be seen as a place open to all artists in the community and not only to a select few.

5 Analysis and Local Insights

While I do believe that visionary artists should be part of the process and would be quite welcome as leaders of the community process, an artist should probably not be the person who takes on the everyday task of bringing the district into fruition. These “middleman” positions should be staffed by a person who has training in running a non-profit development group and has more specific knowledge about housing and building rehabilitation and development. This person needs to have political savvy while understanding the position and needs of artists and ideally would be trained as a planner or economic development officer. Of course, it could be an artist who has special training.

Holding forums with community artists during the planning process was beneficial to some of the districts.

Holding forums with community artists during the planning process was beneficial to some of the districts. Collecting ideas from “participating” artists could lead to better designs and exciting programming ideas. Consider the effect that a simple idea for a public event has had in Providence through WaterFire. In Worcester, bringing artists together and acknowledging their fears and needs assisted greatly in the planning process. Similarly, in Pawtucket and New Bedford, the early planning processes have included an open forum for artists, which has led to an outpouring of many creative ideas. These are the artists you want to get involved in the process so that they will develop an interest in moving to or working in the district (or at least in displaying their works there). Moreover, producing these type of forums might lead to better organization of the artists in a community as in New Bedford and Worcester.

In Pawtucket, visionary artists have been involved from the beginning of the process, as a result, an arts community is just beginning to emerge. As Pawtucket moves into the planning phase, it will have to find the correct way to incorporate these artists into the process so that they not only take a continuing interest in arts development in Pawtucket, but also help to shape it.

ARTISTS AND ARTIST HOUSING

Achieving artist housing in each of the districts has proven to be a challenge that needs much attention. Even in Pawtucket it has taken the

full attention of a city worker and city funding to make the change happen. While the ideal might be that once the project achieves initial success artist groups will come along and redevelop buildings on their own, it is unlikely this will ever happen in any arts district. Because of the complex financing necessary to renovate buildings, every artist housing project will demand attention and support from the city. Even more support will be needed if the intention is to create a sustained artist community. The sustainability of artist ownership (of housing or work units) is a major issue that none of the districts I observed addressed. If gentrification comes to these districts, what will make it possible for artists to stay?

Artist ownership of buildings seems to be the solution, but it is not easy to achieve. The impetus and the organizational skills for artist ownership of buildings really have to come from an active, organized artist group which is interested in development. Private developers have been unable to achieve such developments in any of the districts; there is insufficient profit to be made. Arts districts could be set up to make it easy for such a development group to come forward and develop artist housing in a district. But are any of these districts set up in such a way? I don't believe so. Pawtucket might be the exception. Herb Weiss has the tools he needs to assist property owners and artists in converting buildings into studios. However, so much of what can occur on the grassroots level is dependent on the low property prices in the district. His equivalent might be able to accomplish similar goals in New Bedford, but not in Worcester or Providence. In these larger cities where the downtowns carry higher property prices, an entirely different set of tools is needed to develop artist housing, and it would be very difficult to get the financing to do so. For a place like Providence, perhaps artist housing is simply inappropriate. Perhaps Providence was correct to focus its efforts on the larger institutions that have developed there.

While some change has been seen in all of these arts district due to artistic activity, it seems sophomoric to assume that artists can be made wholly responsible for the revitalization of a district. While there are

Artist ownership of buildings seems to be the solution, but it is not easy to achieve. The impetus and the organizational skills for artist ownership of buildings really have to come from an active, organized artist group which is interested in development.

CAN ARTISTS SAVE THE DAY?

5 Analysis and Local Insights

examples of an individual artist's vision changing a whole community or neighborhood, these artists have always needed the help of people sophisticated in real estate and planning. A more comprehensive strategy needs to be in place to revitalize a neighborhood, and the arts can be used in establishing a framework for this. I am personally skeptical of the claim that "bringing in artists will redevelop the neighborhood — they are our urban pioneers." None of the case studies have shown it to be it as easy as just "bringing in the artists." It takes a much larger effort with everyday attention and coordination between property owners, business people and artists to achieve revitalization. At the same time, the city must be willing to promote programming to connect artists to their market and to support the creation of artist community groups. Through these activities, cities can build relationships with artists that could lead to their beneficial involvement in the urban regeneration process. What is key to remember however, is that artists are still human beings with the same needs as most of us (making a living, etc.) and should be viewed by cultural planners not as tools for revitalization but as just one of the possible actors in a strategic economic development plan for blighted neighborhoods.

LESSONS FROM SUCCESS

VARIABLE	PROVIDENCE	PAWTUCKET	WORCESTER	NEW BEDFORD
SUCCESS				
First accomplishment	public relations victory	artist housing	cultural collaborations	cultural event
Other accomplishments	performing arts enhancement/recruitment	cultural events/business recruitment/ arts institution foundation/social cohesion	cultural event	ancillary activities/new businesses

Judging the overall success of any of these cases is difficult. Because of the recent nature of the majority of these projects, it is almost impossible to forecast future success. And whether or not any of these projects is seen as successful at the present time depends on whose shoes you wear. Should arts districts be judged on their success in building an arts community? Does that community have to include housing? Does that community have to occur within the district’s boundaries?

SUCCESS?

To answer these questions, success should be measured, at least in part, according to the initial goals set forth by an arts district process. In order to structure a summary of the relative level of success of each district as compared to the others, I feel it is only appropriate to rate the case studies against their intent. I have chosen here to use the *espoused* intents, and not actual intent, to judge the case’s success. It is important that a city be judged by its rhetoric and held responsible to it. It is inappropriate to say you are going to attempt to create artist workspace and not follow through. Taken together the espoused goals of the case study districts are:

- changing the image of the city;
- connecting visual artists to their market;
- creating housing/live/workspace for artists to reside in;
- creating new cultural collaborations;
- creating new arts community groups/artists collaboration in the district;

5 Analysis and Local Insights

- spurring ancillary activities or secondary economic impacts for the city; and
- creating successful ephemera.

The following table rates the case studies' success, or "results." If a particular goal was explicitly espoused in a particular case, the cell is shaded gray. These results range from "+++" for high achievement towards the espoused goal to "-", which represents very little achievement towards a stated goal. Note that even if the case did not specifically state one of the results as an intent (cell not shaded), the case has still been rated for comparison purposes.

TABLE 5.7.1 RATING OF SUCCESS OF CASE STUDY DISTRICTS BASED ON INITIAL INTENT

RESULTS	PROVIDENCE	PAWTUCKET	WORCESTER	NEW BEDFORD
Changing the image of the city	+++	+	+	++
Connecting visual artists to their market	-	+	+	+++
Creating housing/live/workspace built artists in residence	-	+++	+	-
Creating new cultural collaborations	-	+	+++	+++
Creating new arts community or collaboration in the district	-	++	-	++
Spurring ancillary activities or secondary economic impacts	+++	-	-	++
Creating successful ephemera	+	+	+	+++

This comparison makes clear that Providence has achieved many of its economic development goals without ever really bringing artists into the district or bringing artists together in collaborations. The city's focus was really on entertainment and ancillary services such as restaurants. However, because of the broad loosening of redevelopment codes, middle and upper-income housing has become a reality in the district. One could say that Providence has almost skipped a step in the gentrification process: You do not need artists, you just pretend that you do. Looking at the overall picture, though, in the end this is not beneficial for artists and may actually be bad for the so-called creative economy in the city.

Providence is now working to build new collaborations to support artists in the district, and there is the possibility of a gallery cluster emerging. RISD will also be building artist studios and a gallery in the near future in the district. But, these efforts will still do little for the overall visual arts community in the short run.

In contrast, Pawtucket has managed to produce a considerable amount of artist housing for individual artists and somewhat of successful ephemera, but this has led to only a smattering of secondary ancillary activities. Although this may be the consequence of the young nature of the project, it may also suggest that building an "artist in residence" community with few preexisting institutions will not have the economic consequences Pawtucket hoped for. Artists are typically low income residents, so what will their overall economic impact be? It is difficult to know. It cannot hurt to be building this kind of artist community; such a community has incredible benefits for the individual visual artists seeking space. But expecting Pawtucket to become a mini-Soho might be a little "pie in the sky." What was pleasantly surprising about Pawtucket was that the artists and planners behind the district actually have other goals in addition to economic development. The leaders of the artist groups are much more concerned about knitting the community together through art. I did not include social cohesion in the analytical matrix because none of the districts have accomplished anything that would count towards achieving it, but Pawtucket was the only case study in which express social cohesion was expressed as a goal.

Everyone in Worcester is pleased with the cultural collaboration that has occurred in that city as part of the process underpinning the arts district. The process created new relationships between institutions and artists, relationships that should have positive long lasting effects on the quality of the arts community in that city. However, the future of the physical implementation of the arts district is uncertain. While some positive developments will assist individual artists in the city, there is a long way to go and many obstacles to overcome. Because the chosen district has few existing institutions around which to build a demand for ancillary

5 Analysis and Local Insights

activities, I doubt that Worcester will be able to “skip a step” like Providence in the near future. Further complicating the situation is the lack of buildings within existing district lines that can be easily converted to artist housing or institutions. Nevertheless, what has been accomplished so far is impressive. Staging an arts event in what is normally thought to be a dangerous neighborhood and having 5000 people attend attests to that. From the political perspective, the district looks to be in a wonderful position to achieve its goals. If the city puts together a good management team for the district and manages not to shoot itself in the foot, it has a fighting chance.

Surprisingly, this comparison suggests that New Bedford appears to be accomplishing the most, even though it has not yet even declared a district. Like Worcester, it has accomplished wonderful cultural collaborations, but, at the same time, by concentrating on its ephemeral event, it has also connected its artist community to their market and spurred ancillary activities in the city. Does New Bedford need to designate a district? One could have the following benefits: First of all, they might in the process of making a district be able to secure a position in city hall for a cultural development officer. Currently New Bedford lacks such a person, and this jeopardizes the future of all of their cultural projects. Secondly, since their poor real estate economy might support it, they could actually achieve more artist live/work space by allowing such uses to occur in the district and supporting its creation through funding and technical support.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the cases achieved little towards goals which were not original intents. What is more interesting, however, is to observe which results all of the cases appear to have achieved. This might suggest that these results are the “easiest” to realize in the short term and might serve as the best way to start a district. Creating ephemera and changing the image of the city appear to be results that can be achieved by any arts district. It is intriguing that this matches so closely New Bedford’s initial successful efforts. Also, the table reveals, as one would suspect, that creating artist workspace is most difficult to

accomplish. Pawtucket has had the most success with this goal. However, while Herb Weiss' "customer service" has been imperative to its achievement, it is important to remember that Pawtucket has a unique set of economic and physical conditions which enabled the creation of workspace. Where the cases were able to achieve the most success, was in building new cultural collaborations. Again this chart suggests that cultural collaborations, and all of the positive effects of such partnerships, may be one of the best reasons to pursue an arts district.

Should the success of a project be judged on its original intent, or on its overall eventual benefit to the city? While the above analysis has focused on the former, it is important to ask the latter. Is an arts district successful if you have positive effects for the city overall? Again, I believe it depends on whose shoes you wear. It can even be complex standing inside just one pair of those shoes: Imagine a visual artist in Providence frustrated that the district effort has not provided housing opportunities in the downtown, but also rejoicing that he/she has more visibility in the city politically. What is important in the end is that the arts and artists not be seen by the city for how they can be "used," but rather that a reciprocal relationship is developed between the arts and the city to achieve urban regeneration.

As the pursuit de jour, the number of arts district projects will only increase in the near future. What has been learned from the case studies that will be useful to city officials and arts organizations about to undertake such ventures? What are the pitfalls and successes that should be pointed out? What is the correct way to do an arts district? More importantly, can cities actually engineer successful arts districts?

To me the answer to this question is “yes”, even though none have yet come to full fruition. These case studies demonstrate that some measure of economic development can be achieved through planning an arts district, even though there are certain pitfalls to watch out for. Hence, for any city pursuing an arts district, I have eleven propositions to consider *before* starting the process.

PROPOSITION #1: MATCH THE PROCESS TO THE PHYSICAL DISTRICT AND ITS GOALS.

If a city is considering declaring a downtown or neighborhood arts district, it is imperative that it first complete a building survey to understand which buildings might be suitable for conversion. Not doing this was a tragic mistake in both the Providence and Worcester districts. A survey of the proposed area should also include documentation of property prices so that buildings can be appropriately targeted for redevelopment. The proposed site should be considered at from an urban design perspective: What are the potential connections inside the district and to the rest of the city? How would visitors use the site? How would residents move throughout the area? What is the parking situation? Which parts of the site are most amenable to visitor activity? And so forth. It is imperative to collect all of this information *before* the boundaries of the district are designated. Not doing this can lead to future difficulties in developing buildings, and hence to problems in the overall design.

6 Propositions

PROPOSITION #2: IN CERTAIN TYPES OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS CERTAIN GOALS WILL NEVER WORK.

The city should carefully consider the balance of cultural consumption and production that is realistic for the area (surveying can help determine this). It is important when making this decision to keep in mind the findings of Linda Moss, who discovered that cultural districts focused more on cultural production development may fail in producing any beneficial ancillary economic activities in the district. The cultural district in Sheffield, UK, for example, simply became a place where people went to work from 9 to 5 and failed to produce the cultural consumption amenities that so many of these projects strive for (i.e. cafes, funky shops, 24 hour activities, etc.)¹²¹ On the flip side of the coin lies Providence: By only concentrating on consumption activities, Providence has done little for individual artists in its district. For an arts district to work as an arts district, a carefully conceived balance must be drawn between production and consumption activities. Establishing this balance is also the point at which a city must consider the importance that programming will play in its district.

When the goals for an arts district are conceived it is important that it be clear for whom the proposed development is intended. What is the ultimate vision for the project? Do the planners see the arts district as sustainable? If the city is envisioning that artists will eventually be displaced from the district and that the district will become a more gentrified neighborhood, then planning should be oriented much more towards developing cultural activities and not so much toward artist housing. The reverse is also true.

¹²¹ Linda Moss, "Sheffield's Cultural Industries Quarter 20 years on: what can be learned on a pioneering example?" *US International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8, no. 2 (2002):211-219.

PROPOSITION #3: IN PLANNING AN ARTS DISTRICT CONSIDER A STEALTH OPERATION.

Before designating or determining the boundary lines of an arts district, planners should understand that the moment the district is declared property prices may rise beyond the grasp of conversion for artist housing. Would it not be much wiser for the city to buy up some buildings it wants to see developed before the district is made public? Or at least broker some prior deals with developers? The city could at least encourage arts groups or community development corporations to look at properties before the district is declared. This is where a building survey would come in very handy. Of course the survey must be done in a way that does not cause property owners to get suspicious and raise prices. Most property owners, no matter how benevolent, will always want to get the highest price they can. Anything that can be done to minimize the high price of property will only make it easier for the creation of artist housing.

PROPOSITION #4: CLEAR AND PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT OF THE DISTRICT IS KEY TO SUCCESS.

A project that has a person in place whose sole role it is to see the district come into fruition is much more likely to be successful. The effect that such a middleman can have is invaluable to the creation of an arts district. All of the successful case studies around the nation have had some sort of public/private agency or middleman present, one that was not only well connected to the political world but also to the business world. Obviously, smaller towns such as Pawtucket might only need one person. However, it appears that in larger cities such as Worcester and Providence, having a cultural development officer in city hall is not enough. There must be some entity willing to do the moving and shaking, working with property owners, artists, art institutions, and the city government day in and day out. Furthermore, having such an institutional infrastructure in place will clarify for interested parties whom to contact for information.

6 Propositions

PROPOSITION #5: BUILD ON VISIONARY ARTISTS GROUPS, BUT DON'T LEAVE OUT THE LITTLE GUYS.

These cases highlight the fact that there are often key artists to seek out when planning an arts district. The supporting and leadership roles that visionary arts groups can play can be very beneficial to an arts district. Not only do these groups have a vested interest in developing properties to house artists and encourage cultural consumption events, but they also can demonstrate to other artists in town that change can happen. However, as Providence has shown us, choosing favored groups and ignoring the rest of the arts community can be a big mistake. All arts leaders and individual artists should be included in the initial planning phases to get “buy-in” for the project. There would also be benefit in starting conversations among the individual artists for the first time. In Worcester a new artists support group grew out of the planning process. Of course, at some point including everyone might backfire with too many competing interests stalling the project’s goals. It is key for a local leader to understand and manage the process of inclusion so that the project gets everyone involved but also allows the project to move forward. This is not an easy task to pull off.

PROPOSITION #6: CAPITALIZE ON RELATIONSHIPS WITH CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS.

One of the great benefits to be gained from pursuing an arts district is starting conversations among local cultural institutions. In Worcester, the cultural institutions were stuck in a phase of inter-competition which did little to support their regional competitive advantage. The planning process for the arts district created a new coalition of these organizations which they all acknowledge has been incredibly beneficial for their future prospects. The Worcester Cultural Coalition now not only guarantees support to cultural organizations from the city (by the appointment of a cultural development officer in city hall), but it also allows them to think about what is best for cultural development’s future. If cities really are in competition with one another, cultural institutions (in smaller cities) must

think about how they can work together to develop competitive strategies for their combined future.

PROPOSITION #7: UNDERSTAND THAT ARTIST HOUSING WILL RARELY HAPPEN ON ITS OWN.

To draw artists to a city it is key to understand why they would want to move there. Artists have basic needs. Beyond large spaces, freight elevators, loading docks, and the like, I discovered that artists also want available parking and a sense of safety. Artists cannot afford expensive parking, and if they are teaching a class in their studio, which many do, there is a need for their customers to feel safe and to have a place to park. The cases made it clear that artists also require amenities nearby (such as groceries, etc.) just like any other human being. Primarily though, most of the artists I spoke to were looking for tenure in their properties. Artists have become jaded by constantly having to relocate. Today's artists — and maybe this has always been the case -- are looking for long term leases and relationships with property owners that are not ephemeral. One of the best ways to meet this need is to work toward property ownership for artists.

If a primary goal of an arts district is to move artists into the district for live/work, it is important to understand that rarely have artist housing projects been easily accomplished. Many artists need low rents to survive. Besides understanding which buildings are appropriate in shape and price for development of this space, Duncan Webb, a well known economic advisor to artist housing developers has the following advice: the city should not give buildings to a group of artists that have limited resources to sustain the buildings, let alone catch up on the capital maintenance of the structures. Instead, he feels that the proper way to ensure that artists will have a sustainable presence in an arts district is to establish a foundation that can raise money from the public and private sectors and negotiate the acquisition of real estate and assume its

6 Propositions

maintenance and management.¹²² In this way, the responsibility of maintaining and developing this housing is put in more able hands¹²³

PROPOSITION #8: CAPITALIZE ON THE SKILLS OF ARTISTS.

If cities are in the process of competing for workers based on quality of life and local amenities, it follows that artists and their creative work have much to offer to a city. While this is the general idea behind arts districts in the first place, within a district it has implications for the involvement of artists in the process. Involving artists in the creation of new public works (such as signage, lighting and sidewalks) will produce places that are unique to a city. While accomplishing this will mean that a new way of thinking will have to be instilled in the city government, it seems well worth the effort. It is important to remember the effect that just one good idea from an artist can have through a piece of public art. WaterFire in Providence, an event and a work of art, captures the benefits of involving artists in the re-creation of a downtown. Artists can create works that become icons for an area, which cause enormous secondary benefits to occur, and can define the city for the outside world.

PROPOSITION #9: PAY ATTENTION TO TIMING.

An arts district will not happen overnight. For any city setting out to do an arts district, it is important to think about which projects and what elements are the most important. I emphasize this because of the dramatic difference in planning I observed between Worcester and New Bedford. While Worcester has concentrated on building relationships and achieved political security for the district, it has not focused enough on economic development programming. New Bedford is the reverse. They have concentrated most of their efforts on economic development through

¹²² This idea is similar to what occurred in Temple Bar.

¹²³ "Arts Districts: Economic/Community/Urban Form: Roundtable and Fellows Panel" *Institute for Urban Design* (October 2001).

ephemera and not enough on political relationships. As a result they have no political representative in the state government. What does this mean for the future of these districts? It is difficult to know what the future of either development will be. What seems to make sense is that future arts districts should consider attempting to ensure political stability *and* programming in their early stages. How this plays out in individual communities is, of course, dependent on the issues inherent to each city.

PROPOSITION #10: SEED MONEY WILL BE NECESSARY.

Simply declaring an arts district and hoping something will happen (which some other towns in Rhode Island have done) does not appear to be enough to get a significant cultural development going. For even a volunteer programming event (AHA!) to get off the ground, an initial grant is needed. However, as New Bedford proves, a little bit can go a long way. The truth is that most arts institutions do not make enough money to survive on their own, and have always needed subsidy. Therefore, for an arts district to be successful there must be a forum for raising funds through private donations or public grants for not only supporting arts institutions, but also for projects such as artists' live/work space, programming, marketing and ensuring public safety.

PROPOSITION #11: MAKE YOUR DISTRICT UNIQUE.

The big question that has been hanging over my head in the process of doing this thesis is: What if every city were to create an arts district? In many ways this is unlikely to be much of a problem. Because of the creative nature of artists, involving them in the planning and design of such a district will allow for each district to be unique to a city. What is important is that what seems like a good idea in one place does not get copied to every city in the country. It would be very sad day for Providence if every city with a river did a Waterfire event (which unfortunately is already beginning to occur). Cities need to be open to tapping into the creative ideas of their local artist populations. Cities could make an effort to stimulate creative ideas through forums and

6 Propositions

design ideas contests. These do not require a lot of funding, and could be the secret to creating American cities with a sense of place.

EPILOGUE: ARE ARTS DISTRICTS A GOOD IDEA?

I came into this thesis believing my central research question was: *Can cities socially engineer arts districts?* I thought I would discover the ways in which city officials can tap into the supposed great well of potential for urban regeneration that is the artist community and present it as a toolset for cities thinking of pursuing such endeavors. While I have made great progress in understanding the methods and tools necessary to woo artists and arts institutions into a cultural district in the city, I think I must now add a second question: *should they even want to?* Overall, I believe that the answer to the latter question is a tentative "yes." The idea of centralizing art and cultural activity, while tasteless to some artists, does have a positive appeal for several primary reasons:

REASON #1: ARTS DISTRICTS RAISE THE VISIBILITY AND MARKETABILITY OF THE ARTS TO THE PUBLIC.

Whether or not the arts district achieves artist residences, workspace, or galleries, the overall effect for artists is a positive marketing campaign that raises the public's awareness of the local arts community and focuses development ideas and funding around creative and cultural activity. It's about time the arts had their day in the life of American cities, and arts districts are one method for achieving that.

REASON #2: ARTS DISTRICTS PROVIDE A FORUM AROUND WHICH CULTURAL COALITIONS CAN COALESCE.

Although not all of my case studies showed that arts district planning will create cultural alliances, the majority of them did. Pawtucket, New Bedford and Worcester, because of their recent pursuits (whether from the top down or bottom up) now have new artist community organizations and arts coalitions occurring.

REASON #3: ARTS DISTRICT PLANNING CREATES OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIAL COHESION.

This I believe applies for smaller cities than Providence. In smaller town and cities, starting the conversation about arts district planning gives arts organizations the opportunity to begin thinking about not only what their role should be in the city as far as economic development goes, but also what their role as "artists who educate" might be. By coalescing the arts organizations in the planning process, many more opportunities for the creation of community organizations that might be interested in education arise.

REASON #4: SURPRISINGLY, FOR TOWNS WITH LOTS OF EMPTY SPACE AND LITTLE APPARENT ACTIVITY, ARTS DISTRICTS CAN STIMULATE VIABLE NEW DEVELOPMENT

Pawtucket is a prime example of how a city with lots of empty industrial space has begun to re-imagine creatively what might occur in those buildings. While artists may not be the complete savior of the town, they are already showing an economic presence that is better than what was occurring before. Artists are the perfect occupants for former mill buildings which have lost their industrial use. And who knows, Pawtucket might just achieve its district goals after all. Perhaps not. Even if they do not, the presence of the new arts community there is hardly a burden. I only see positive benefit coming from Pawtucket's efforts.

These objectives could be achieved without trying to formalize the arts community in one section of a city. Maybe that is what cities should really hope for. In the mean time, however, arts districts and their planning provide a convenient manner for opening up and even possibly achieving these possibilities, especially for smaller towns and cities. Providence, being larger and already having such a large arts community, does not need an arts district to achieve any of the above goals, but there was a positive overall benefit gained through the marketing of the arts district in Providence.

I think it is important to keep in mind that planning an arts district, while it could lead to many positive benefits for a blighted downtown or neighborhood, should not be viewed as the only tool a city can use to bring change. Instead planners should see arts district planning as a layer in a complex process of regeneration for cities. Arts district should be an option, and not a solution.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GENERAL SOURCES

"Arts and Economic Prosperity: the Economic Impact of Non-profit Arts Organizations and Their Audiences" (Americans for the Arts, 2002).

"A Blueprint for Investment in New England's Creative Economy" (The New England Council, 2001).

Asci, Susan; Becker, Beate and Siegel, Beth. *The Creative Economy Initiative: An Economic Development Strategy for New England* (The Northeast Economic Development Assoc., 2002).

The Artists Home Ownership Program - If you Lived Here (The City in Art Theory and Social Activism Bay Press, 1991).

Arts in the Changing City: an Agenda for Urban Regeneration (British American Arts Association, 1989).

"Arts Districts: Economic/Community/Urban Form: Roundtable and Fellows Panel" *Institute for Urban Design* (October 2001).

Bacow, Adele Fleet. *Designing the City: A Guide for Advocates and Public Official*, (Island Press, 1995).

Bassett, K. "Urban Cultural Strategies and Urban Regeneration: a case study and critique" *Environment and Planning A*, no. 25 (1997): 1773-1788.

Beeches, Jessica. "Cultural Districts: benefit for artists or under-invested urban communities? A study in policy innovation and policy effectiveness" Masters Thesis for MSC Public Policy, (London School of Economics and Political Science, October 2002).

Bianchini, Franco. "Culture, Conflict and Cities: Issues and Prospects for the 1990s" in *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: the West European Experience*, ed. Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson (Manchester University Press, 1993), 1999-213.

Cassidy Michael and Weiss, Herb. "Customer Service is Key to Growing an Arts Community," *Arts Culture and Economic Development* (Northeastern economic Developers Association, n.d.), 54-60.

"The Creative Economy Initiative: An Economic Development Strategy for New England" (The New England Council, 1998).

"The Creative Engine: How Arts and Culture is Fueling Economic growth in New York Neighborhoods" (The Center for Urban Future Policy Report, Nov. 2002).

Erard, Michael. "Creative Capital: In the City of Ideas, the People with Ideas are the Ones with Day Jobs" *The Austin Chronicle* 28 February 2003.

Florida, Richard L. "Bohemia and Economic Geography" *Journal of Economic Geography* 2 (2002): 55-71.

Florida, Richard L. *The Rise of the Creative Class: and How it's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life* (Basic Books, 2002).

Frenchman Dennis; Vale, Lawrence; Schuster, J. Mark; and Craig, Lois. "Designing a New Public Realm: Corridors, Traces, Watches, Ways" (National Endowment for the Arts Grants Application, 1993).

Frey, Bruno. "Evaluation of Cultural Property: The Economic Approach" *International Journal of Cultural Property* 6, no. 2, (1997): 231-245.

Frost-Kumpf, Hillary. *Cultural Districts: the Arts as a Strategy for Revitalizing our Cities* (Americans for the Arts, 1998).

Griffiths, Ron. "Artists Organizations and the Recycling of Urban Space" in *City and Culture: Cultural Process and Urban Sustainability*, ed. Louise Nystrom (The Swedish Urban Environment Council, 1999), 460-475.

Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Conditions of Cultural Change* (Blackwell, 1989).

Healy, Karen. "What's New for Culture in the New Economy?" *Journal of Arts Management Law and Society* 32 2 (Summer 2002): 86-103.

Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Vintage books, 1961).

Karttunen, Sari. "How to identify artists? Defining the population for 'status-of-the-artist' studies" *Poetics* 26 (1993): 1-19.

Katz, David. *Comprehensive Community Cultural Planning: Towards an Analysis* (MIT Thesis, 1990).

Landry, Charles. *The Creative City: A toolkit for Urban Innovators* (Comedia, 2000).

Martorella, R. "Cultural policy as marketing strategy: the economic consequences of cultural tourism in New York City" in *Global Culture: Arts, Media, Policy and Globalization*, eds. D. Crane, N. Kawashima, and K. Kawashima (Routledge, 2002).

Moss, Linda. "Sheffield's Cultural Industries Quarter 20 years on: what can be learned on a pioneering example?" *US International Journal of Cultural Policy* 8, no. 2 (2002):211-219.

Peppiatt, Michael and Bellony-Rewald, Alice. *Imagination's Chamber: Artists and Their Studio* (Little Brown and Company, 1982).

Schuster, J. Mark. "Arguing for Government Support of the Arts: An American View" in *The Arts in the World Economy*, ed. Olin Robison (University Press of New England, 1994), 42-56.

Schuster, J. Mark et al. *Preserving the Built Heritage: Tools for Implementation* (Salzberg Seminar, 1997).

Seaman, Bruce A. "Arts Impact Studies: Fashionable Excess Economic Impact of the Arts, A Sourcebook" in *Economic Impact of the Arts*, ed. Anthony Radich (National Conference of State Legislatures, 1987), 44-77.

Scott, Allen J. *The Cultural Economy of Cities* (School of Public Policy and Research University of California and Blackwell Publishers, 1997).

Strom, Elizabeth "Converting Pork to Porcelain: Cultural Institutions and Downtown Development" *Urban Affairs Review* (2002): 4.

Transforming Community Through the Arts (Loeb Fellowship Conference Outline, November 2002).

Wansborough, Matthew and Mageen, Andrea. "The Role of Urban Design in Cultural Regeneration" *Journal of Urban Design* 5, no. 2 (2000): 181-197.

Wassall, Greorgy and Alper, Neil. "When is an Artist an Artist: An Analysis of Factors Related to Claiming Membership in this Profession" *The Journal of Arts Management and Law*. 19, no. 4 (Winter 1990): 37-51.

Webster, Helena and Howard, Peter. "Dublin's Temple Bar Initiative" *Town and Country Planning* 62, no. 1-2 (Jan 1993): 22-23.

Williams Jennifer. *The Artist in the Changing City* (British American Arts Assoc., 1993).

Zukin, Sharon. *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

GENERAL INTERVIEWS

Becker, Beate K. Director of Creative economy Initiative at the Boston Redevelopment Authority, phone interview April 16th 2003.

Beckman, Janice. Artist Technical Assistant at Massachusetts Cultural Council, personal interview February 28th 2003.

Hartnett, Susan. Economic Development Director for the Boston Redevelopment Authority, phone interview April 6th, 2003.

Jenkins, Meri. Program Manager at the Massachusetts Cultural Council, personal interview February 28th 2003.

Ramirez, Josephine. Ford Foundation Arts Grant Manager, phone interview, March 5th 2003.

CASE STUDY SOURCES

PROVIDENCE

Bunnell, Gene. *Making Places Special, Stories of Real Places Made Better by Planning* (Planners Press, 2002).

Duany Andres and Plater-Zyberk, Elizabeth. *Downcity Providence: Master Plan for a Special Time* (March 1992):4, 18.

Gray, Channing. "Gallery Blues – The Providence Arts District, slow to take off, loses two venues" *Providence Journal* 14 May 2000.

"The History of WaterFire" <http://www.waterfire.com/about/index.html>.

Kuehl, Matt, "Boundary Problems: Arts and Culture in Providence Neighborhoods" (The Providence Plan, December 2000).

McVicar, D. Morgan. "A Work in Progress" *The Providence Sunday Journal*, 9 September 2001.

RI House Bill number 96-H 8206, "An Act relating to Sales Tax – Exemption for Writers, Composers and Artists" Section 44-18-30B, a proposed amendment to charter 44-18 of the general laws Feb 6, 1996.

Schroeder, Jonathan. "Waterfire Providence: A Case Study of Art's role in Urban Revitalization" Proceedings from 5th International Conference on Arts and Cultural Management, Helsinki, Finland (June 1999).

Schuster, J. Mark. "The Other Side of the Subsidized Muse: Indirect Aid Revisited" *Journal of Cultural Economics* 23 (1999):51-70.

Tan, Shannon. "Saving 'ProHo'" *Boston Globe*, 24 December 2000.

Vandermillen, James. *Rediscovering Downtown: Strategies for the Future of Providence* (MIT Thesis, 1996).

INTERVIEWS

Armato, Peter, Director of the Downcity program at The Providence Plan, personal interview March 10th 2003.

Artists in residence at AS200, personal interviews March 10th 2003.

Galligan, Ann. Head consultant on Providence's new cultural plan, personal interview March 19th 2003.

Crenca, Bert. Director of AS220, phone interview March 3rd 2003.

McCormack, Lynn. Assistant Director of Capitol Arts, phone interview March 3rd 2003.

Performing artists at Trinity Repertory Theatre, personal interviews March 10th 2003.

Wood, Cliff. Special Assistant to the Providence mayor, phone interview March 17th 2003.

PAWTUCKET

"Affordable Arts Area: Abandoned mills attract artists in Pawtucket, RI" *Urban Land* (January 2002): 32-33.

Bundy, Fish. "Artist-Friendly Pawtucket has a Plan" *Providence Monthly* (September 1999):12.

Doyle, Mayor James E. "Pawtucket's growing arts community" *The Pawtucket Times* 7 September 2001.

Hadden, Douglas. "Art finds a home" *The Pawtucket Times*, 27 February 2003.

McQuaid, Cate. "Making room for the arts in Pawtucket" *Boston Globe*, 20 May 2001.

Morrissey, Tom. "A City in Motion: The Arts in Pawtucket" *Providence Monthly* (January 2002):37.

Pare, Michael. "Pawtucket finds a way to lure artists to its lofts" *Providence Business News*, 14 May 2001.

INTERVIEWS

Ahlers, Gail. President of Foundry Artists, phone interview March 11th 2003.

Artists in the Pawtucket Foundry building, personal interviews March 10th 2003.

Kangis, Gwen and Plato. Artists, personal interview March 10th 2003.

Karzarian, Richard. Artist and Antique Dealer, personal interview March 10th 2003.

Lavoie, Lynn. Artist-friendly real estate agent, phone interview March 11th 2003.

Nathenson, Morris. Artist and Head of Morris Nathenson Design Group, personal interview March 10th 2003.

Weiss, Herb. Manager of the Pawtucket Arts and Entertainment District, personal interview March 10th 2003.

Zacks, Patty. Pawtucket arts collaborative leader, personal interview March 10th 2003.

WORCESTER

"A Brief history of Worcester" <http://www.ci.worcester.ma.us/history.htm>.

"Arts District Update" www.artsworcester.com.

"Boost for Main South; Burwick building conversion a sensible plan" *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, 4 October 2002.

"Arts District Zoning Overlay" City of Worcester Zoning Ordinance, Amendment 7716.

Kush, Bronislaus. "Study shows Arts District could be bonanza for city" *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, 21 November 2002.

"Local Cab Managers Floored" *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, 22 January 2002.

Master plan for the Worcester Arts District Community Partners Consultants, (City of Worcester, December 2002).

Nemeth, Robert Z. "Stagnating Worcester needs leadership and broad vision" *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, 15 December 2002.

Sheehan, Nancy. "Block party planned to promote city Arts District" *Worcester Telegram and Gazette*, 28 August 2002.

INTERVIEWS

Benka, Ruth. ArtsWorcester Executive Director and artist, personal interview February 25th 2003.

City of Worcester Zoning Office assistant, phone interview February 26th 2003.

Dusoe, Gary. Head of Worcester Artists Really Trying (WART), phone interview March 8th 2003.

Heller, Barbara. Councilwoman for the Main South Neighborhood, personal interview March 10th 2003.

Juhl, John. Community Builders Worcester Project Manager, phone interview February 28th 2003.

McTigue, Ann. ArtsWorcester Program Manager and artist, personal interview February 28th 2003.

Proffitt, Christine. Cultural Economic Development officer for the city, phone interview April 15th 2003.

Silberberg, Susan. Community Partners Architecture/Urban Design Head Manager, personal interview February 20th, 2003.

Zitomersky, Frank. Artist space architect, phone interview March 4th 2003.

NEW BEDFORD

"A history of New Bedford" <http://www.ci.new-bedford.ma.us/DestinationNewBedford.htm>.

"AHA! – Art History Architecture" www.ahanewbedford.org.

"AHA! So that's what's new in New Bedford" *Providence Journal*, 10 April 2003.

Bellasario, Kerrie. "Art is transforming New Bedford for all" *Providence Journal*, 30 September 2002.

Dezell, Maureen. "Making A Case for Arts as Economic Engine" *Boston Globe*, 11 October 2001.

"Gallery night kick off in New Bedford" *Providence Journal*, 10 October 2002.

"Painting the Future: Arts and Culture in the City of New Bedford: A Report prepared by the Arts Coalition Planning Committee, a sub-committee of the AHA! Project," (AHA! Project 2001).

Seavor, Jim. "New Bedford's maritime night has a multicultural flair" *Providence Journal*, 14 June 2001.

INTERVIEWS

Bellasario, Kerrie. Head of ACPC and ARTWorks, personal interview March 7th 2003.

Ross, Tom. Director of New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, personal interview March 7th 2003.

Short personal interviews with visitors and artists at the AHA! festival, March 13th 2003.

Breng, Ann. Director of Gallery X, phone interview April 4th 2003.

Sourca, Tony. Historical commissioner of New Bedford, phone interview April 3rd 2003.

Gonzales, Jen. Special Assistant to Tom Ross, phone interview April 7th 2003.

Pensky, Gary. Artist and owner of local gallery, phone interview April 3rd 2003.

Khalife, Ray. City of New Bedford Planning Department, phone interview April 7th 2003.