



## *Cultivate Bottineau: Culture, Community, Commerce* Final Report



**SPRINGBOARD**  
*for the arts*

*Supported by the McKnight Foundation, this project was coordinated by Hennepin County Bottineau Community Works and Springboard for the Arts in partnership with the cities of Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park, and other community partners from January 2018 to October 2019. Cover photo: Art on the Strip in Crystal, from left to right: Crystal Mayor Jim Adams, Springboard for the Arts Community Development Director Jun-Li Wang, artist Nick Knutson in the robot costume, muralist Shawn McCann, artist Geno Okok, Hennepin County Senior Planning Analyst Crystal Myslajek and family, and Hennepin County Commissioner Mike Opat. Photo credit: Peter Jamus.*

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Cultivate Bottineau: Culture, Community, and Commerce** was a collaborative effort to activate spaces, build connections, celebrate diversity, and promote opportunity through local artist-led creative placemaking projects in the Bottineau Corridor where the planned Bottineau Light Rail Transit line will run. Supported by the McKnight Foundation, this project was coordinated by Hennepin County Bottineau Community Works and Springboard for the Arts in partnership with the cities of Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park, and other community partners from January 2018 to October 2019.

## CULTIVATE GOALS AND IMPACTS

### **Goal 1. Build connections among businesses, local artists, community members and community organizations.**

- Over 200 local artists were engaged, from a few hours at an information session or an art activity, to over dozens of hours to create a large commission.
- The nearly 50 lead artists worked with another 50 artists.
- Over 50% of the lead artists are artists of color.
- Nearly 50 collaborators worked with local artists.
- Over 4800 community members attended, participated in, or encountered a local artist-led project activity. This does not include people who view permanent projects (installations, murals) as they pass by.
- Over 85% of the artists reported making new connections.

### **Goal 2. Activate public spaces, creating vibrant places where people want to be.**

- Over 50 locations were activated temporarily to permanently. Memories of temporary experiences live on in participants' minds and in articles/media. Permanent works continue to create sense of place, community pride, wayfinding, etc.
- Over 4800 community members attended, participated in, or encountered a local artist-led project activity in their community, changing or augmenting their experience of the local place. This does not include people who view permanent projects (installations, murals) as they pass by.

## ADDITIONAL IMPACTS

While the primary goals of Cultivate Bottineau were to build connections and activate places along the eventual Blue Line, by strategically focusing on engaging local artists, the impact of the project lives on beyond the funded period. Artists and collaborators reported new connections, new projects together, and artists developed new skills that will increase their short and long-term economic prospects. The act of inviting, welcoming, charging and supporting local artists to engage their creative talents and passions with community collaborators will instigate more arts and culture, community and commerce over time along the Blue Line cities.



# THE STORY

In the spring of 2018, Springboard for the Arts and Hennepin County, the five cities along the Blue Line Light Rail Transit (LRT) extension corridor (Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, and Brooklyn Park), African Career Education and Resource, Inc (ACER), and other community partners began recruiting local artists to bring their creativity and passions to creating a stronger sense of place and community in their own backyards. Called *Cultivate Bottineau: Culture, Community and Commerce*, or *Cultivate* for short, the partners imagined a year-long project that would weave connections between local artists, businesses, community members and organizations and activate public spaces, creating vibrant places where people would want to be.

The intent was to build connections and highlight areas along the proposed line, specifically the station areas, in order to create a support network of businesses and people in advance of LRT construction. The launch of *Cultivate* relied on local media and word of mouth, and promotion of the artist projects was less coordinated through a central hub with a strong brand identity and rather a more “guerilla” style to create a sense of authentic, grassroots, and individual agency.

*Artist Holly Nelson’s Make a Braided Bracelet project at Tater Daze in Brooklyn Park. Photo credit: Brown Eye Lens.*



Following a series of information sessions and trainings for local artists to learn about the LRT, Bottineau corridor, creative placemaking, and collaboration, artists applied to do \$1,000-\$3,000 projects in their own communities with a collaborator. These artists reflected much of the communities and their recent demographic changes – young, people of color, immigrant, and artists working in non-traditional art forms. The selection committees included local artists and were charged with finding ways to approve proposals rather than create more barriers or competition. All projects ultimately were approved, some with minor changes. Not all artists chose to move forward, and some were unable to finish their projects - 26 projects ultimately were completed along the Bottineau corridor in the first year.

These modest projects brought great returns in building connections and activating spaces by tapping into the creativity of artists who were eager to contribute to the growth of their communities and cities. For example, Caron Learned, a mid-career mosaic artist who had recently moved to Crystal wanted to help others in her community discover their artistic voice and to get to know her new neighbors herself. She taught four introductory mosaic classes at the Crystal Community Center that each targeted a different age group. The classes were fully attended and she built great connections with and between her neighbors and with the recreation center staff. These experiences deepen Caron’s commitment to her new home, tap into and support her interests, all whilst bringing other community members together.

Geno Okok, a Liberian artist, proposed an exterior mural on a bar in Crystal. After his project was approved, the bar changed ownership and Geno had to find a new location. One day, Springboard staff unexpectedly receive a message from Geno saying that his mural was finished. Geno’s photos in his final report showed an amorphous, relatively simple color pattern on the side of Value Foods African Market. Technically speaking, this mural, however plain, met the requirements – so it was considered a completed project. A couple of weeks later Geno sent new pictures showing a giant imposing tiger that he had added to the original mural. When staff followed up with Geno he explained he had decided to add more to his mural and the business owner had been so happy with the art that he had hired Geno to do work on the interior as well.

*Geno Okok in front of his mural in Crystal. Photo Credit: Geno Okok.*



Geno's story doesn't end there. By connecting to Cultivate in the first year, he later applied for funding to do a Cultivate Bottineau Art Activities grant. He would share African mask patterns and invite participants to create their own mask at community events. Through participation in the community events, he met staff from the City of Brooklyn Park who subsequently invited him to join the Brooklyn Park City Hall Enhancement Taskforce. The Taskforce's mission is to highlight the multiple cultures and community stories of Brooklyn Park through art and displays at City Hall. As Geno became connected to civic organizations and opportunities, he won a grant from the City of Brooklyn Park's West Mississippi Pollution Reduction Project to work with a group of youth to paint a mural around a storm water drain. While Geno's initial Cultivate project appeared unremarkable at first blush, this story points to how the initial invitation and experience was a vehicle to connect Geno with businesses and city officials – who now know him and see him as a community leader they can call upon.

After completing Year 1 projects, there was still a sizable amount of project funding for artists remaining so Cultivate was extended for a second year. Based on observations, insights and feedback from many of the community partners, plus the numerous new connections to local artists, the second year was designed differently. Two types of artist projects were funded: artist activities at existing organized summertime civic events, and larger commissions for art in the public realm.

Cultivate partners identified 8 community events along the Bottineau corridor that artist activities would complement. In a competitive process, 15 participatory or performative artist activities were selected and each was repeated at a minimum of three events. This took pressure off artists to attract large numbers of participants and they were able to spend time sharing their creative activities with the event-goers. By having multiple artists attend multiple events across the cities and meet event attendees as well as fellow artists, a sense of shared identity around the corridor (versus only one city) emerged.

Each of the city partners chose to commission a more significant single project – under the umbrella term “Art in the Public Realm.” Crystal and Robbinsdale choose murals, Brooklyn Park chose temporary park elements for a pop-up community plaza, and Minneapolis and Golden Valley together commissioned 3 mobile community engagement tools. Each of these projects was designed to address specific interests of each city and the application process was open to all local artists. Ultimately, 4 of the 6 projects were led by artists who had already been connected to Cultivate through earlier opportunities.

One of the most notable stories from Cultivate is that of Nick Knutson, a musician and sculptor. Nick grew up in Brooklyn Park, moved away for college, and had recently moved back home. In the first year, Nick's Cultivate artist project was a video of himself in a large red and black robot costume exploring all the businesses and institutions around one of the proposed LRT stations in Brooklyn Park. The inspiration for his character was an iconic robot play structure that he fondly remembered climbing as a child in his local park in the city. While the structure came down in the 90's, Nick, and as it turned out, many Brooklyn Park residents, remembered that robot fondly. In the charming video, his genial robot ambled along, skateboarded, and gestured at the

library, city hall, a convenience store and other local businesses. In the second year, Nick built a light up dance floor, hired a DJ and took his robot to community events to host dance parties. These projects gave him experience that he put to good use. He applied for the large commission to build temporary plaza elements – and won it. He created a gazebo, a stage, and seating to attract people – all in the form of the robot head, body and hands. More recently, Nick leveraged his track record and won an unrelated grant to create an ice shanty for the Art Shanty project this winter.

For Nick, a gallery-based sculptor, the low-risk and open-ended entry point in Year 1 encouraged him to try a new medium, build a costume and create a video. As he went out into the community in his costume, he met admiring (and amused) community members that made him feel more connected to his old stomping grounds, and a sense of belonging as an artist and resident. For collaborators and anyone who encounters his video, dance party, or plaza furniture (to be unveiled in 2020) – he reminds people of the iconic robot play structure, helps them see their place with pride, and shows them that their own young people move back and do meaningful work that benefits community.

Another example of impact is the simple act of two people meeting over an activity - the Mayor of Crystal attended a community event, Art on the Strip, that included a mural unveiling and artist activities. He did every activity, met every artist, and fell in love with a participatory chalk mandala created by Cultivate muralist Shawn McCann. Based on this hour of interactions, the Mayor later invited Shawn to be part of Crystal Frolics, a larger community festival.

While the primary goals of Cultivate Bottineau were to build connections and activate places along the eventual Blue Line, by choosing to do this by centering local artists, the impact lives on. The act of inviting, welcoming, charging and supporting local artists to engage their creative talents and passions with community collaborators will instigate more arts and culture, community and commerce over time along the Blue Line cities.

*Mural by Lili Payne in Robbinsdale. Photo credit: Lili Payne.*



# YEAR 1

JANUARY 2018 - FEBRUARY 2019

## SUMMARY

The five Cultivate city representatives were given three different potential program models to reach the Cultivate goals, and selected the “Artist Placemaking Program” model for its advantages in working with local artists to create lasting relationships and creative solutions to community problems. Cultivate was promoted as a single initiative with three geographic areas that had different station areas, site foci and community interests.

The five cities agreed to define “local” loosely rather than using formal city boundaries and to consolidate cities, stations and project sites into the three adjacent areas:

**Golden Valley/Minneapolis:** Van White and Golden Valley stations

**Crystal/Robbinsdale:** Robbinsdale and Bass Lake Road stations

**Brooklyn Park\*:** 63<sup>rd</sup>, Brooklyn Blvd and 85<sup>th</sup> Ave stations

In addition to the overarching goals of Cultivate to build connections and activate spaces, each city shared its own community interests to inform and inspire artists as they considered project ideas.

### Minneapolis

- Wayfinding to address isolation
- Build a retail presence
- Build community connections
- Opportunities for residents
- Highlight educational institutions

### Golden Valley

- Wayfinding
- Build connections to the city
- Highlight greenspace
- Pedestrian friendly
- Repair relations with neighbors

### Crystal

- Prepare folks for Becker Park remodel
- Highlight existing businesses
- Beautify the area
- Envision station area as community gathering space
- Make station area more visible





## Robbinsdale

- Wayfinding
- Safe crossing of 81
- Highlight downtown and arts avenue
- Highlight existing businesses
- Civic pride

## Brooklyn Park

- Preparing for 85th Street public plaza
- International marketplace concept
- Visioning for the Arts Center at 85th Street
- Creating welcoming public spaces
- Wayfinding

Local artists were required to attend an informational session or a free full-day creative placemaking training that included information on project parameters and application process if they wanted to apply for Cultivate artist project grants. Artists were encouraged to work together and could apply for \$1000 per eligible artist, up to 3 artists on a team for a project fund maximum of \$3000. Projects were selected by a panel of city staff and local artists on the basis of fit with geographic project area parameters and requirement that the artist work with a non-arts collaborator such as a business, property owner, or local organization.

## ACTIVITIES

### 1. Info sessions/training sessions

#### Information sessions (2 hours)

- May 2, Robbinsdale
- May 16, Brooklyn Park
- May 23, Minneapolis
- May 30, Brooklyn Park

#### Training sessions (5.5 hours)

- May 5, Brooklyn Park
- May 19, Golden Valley
- June 2, Crystal

### 2. Cultivate Artist Placemaking Project Application

- 33 applications were submitted by 41 local artists

### 3. Cultivate Artist Placemaking Projects (see Appendix 1 for list and descriptions)

- 33 project proposals approved
- 30 projects contracted (3 dropped out of own accord)
- 26 projects completed (4 unable to complete due to individual circumstances)



## OUTCOMES

### 1. Information and training sessions

**Information sessions:** 52 artists

**Training sessions:** 27 artists

**Total geographic affiliation** (some individuals had multiple affiliations)

- Minneapolis/Golden Valley: 48 artists
- Crystal/Robbinsdale: 26 artists
- Brooklyn Park: 30 artists

**Total demographics**

- 41 women, 38 men
- 32 Caucasian (40%), 26 Black (32%), 16 Asian (20%), 5 Latino (6%)
- 31 under 30 years old (40%), 33 30-50 years old (41%), 15 50+ years old (19%)
- Proportionally, more of the younger artists were people of color; almost all of the 50+ years older were Caucasian

### 2. Cultivate Artist Placemaking Project Applications

- 33 project applications were submitted by 41 artists; all were approved (some with suggested changes)
- Two of the selection panelists were artists of color serving on their first panel

### 3. Cultivate Artist Placemaking Projects

- 30 projects were contracted with 37 lead artists (3 projects dropped out of own accord)
- 26 projects completed (4 were unable to complete projects due to individual circumstances), \$38,000 total
- 8 projects in Minneapolis, 4 in/immediately adjacent to Golden Valley, 4 in Crystal, 5 in Robbinsdale, 7 in Brooklyn Park
- 36 public activities including 11 art workshops, 8 performance-based
- 7 visual projects
- 22 of the 37 artists were people of color (59%).
- Over 1300 community members attended, participated in, or encountered a local artist-led project activity

## IMPACTS

### 1. Artists

**New connections** (100% of the artists reporting)

- Local businesses (8)
- Local non-profits (7)

- Local government (5)
- Other artists (4)
- Springboard for the Arts (3)
- 3 artists reported that their projects had led directly into new work opportunities (as of survey date)

**New skills** (80% of the artists reporting)

- Networking and collaboration (7)
- Project coordination (3)
- Event coordination (2)
- Marketing and communications (2)
- Grant writing (1)
- Public art approval process (1)
- Research (1)
- Working in a new genre (1)

## 2. Collaborators (see full list in Appendix 2)

One of the few requirements of projects was that artists work with a community collaborator – to practice collaboration and to build relationships that would last beyond the project time period. Collaborators included businesses, non-profits, and government agencies.

**Collaborator survey** (20 of 26 total collaborators responded)

- 80% said the project was valuable to them
- 90% said that they had previous experience with artists
- 90% said they would work with artists again
- 90% said their organization would know how to find an artist

**Projects were valued because they:**

- Increased visibility and/or new visitors (7)
- New or additional programming for community (7)
- Promoting new understandings or new connections between people or between people and their environments/history (6)

## LESSONS LEARNED

- By design, the artist projects in Year 1 were low-risk and low-demand in order to attract local artists from a diversity of backgrounds and creative experience levels - who might otherwise not consider themselves eligible or ready for a grant opportunity. Indeed, many artists who participated had never implemented a project that had a public, community benefit and many came from communities heavily underrepresented in mainstream civic activities.
- Cultivate partners originally chose a promotional approach that emphasized the individual artist projects as grassroots, pop-up or spontaneous in nature, rather than as a

government coordinated initiative. This turned out to be incompatible with City partner expectations and marketing systems that were accustomed to receiving event information months ahead of time – while the artists were never expected to have every detail known months in advance.

- The capacity of the partners was understandably varied and the connection between artists and city staff wasn't as strong in Year 1 as had been hoped. A strong connection between artists and staff helps both parties to understand how the Cultivate goals were being met.
- Ultimately primary measures of success were the diversity of artists engaged, and new relationships created. Initially, for many partners, success was understood to be measured by numbers of people who showed up for events – which in many cases was low because 1) that was not the goal of the projects; 2) unplanned situations such as uncontrollable last-minute changes; and 3) individual artists did not necessarily have well-developed outreach methods (nor were they expected to). Springboard observed in several instances that City partners were disappointed that more people did not attend – and that they missed seeing the excitement and growth of the Cultivate artists, and the connection between the artists and their collaborators.

*Installation by artist Sue Trosvig in Golden Valley. Photo credit: Patrick Casey.*



# YEAR 2

MARCH 2019 - OCTOBER 2019

## SUMMARY

Year 2 was built on the new relationships, feedback and lessons learned from the first year. Cultivate partners were eager to put local artists in front of higher numbers of community members - which became the Arts Activities commissions - artists hosting activities at existing summertime civic events that cities and other entities were already organizing. Those events had built-in audiences and no or few activities that showcased artists or creativity. Secondly, Cultivate partners had further clarified some of their own interests, and wanted to commit to larger site-specific commissions for individual artists. These became Art in the Public Realm projects.

## ACTIVITIES

### 1. Arts Activities commissions (full list in Appendix 3)

- 14 local artists provided at minimum 3 participatory or performative activities at larger civic events in the 5 cities over the summer of 2019. Activities could be newly created or something the artist already did.

### 2. Art in the Public Realm commissions (more details in Appendix 4)

#### a. Mobile Engagement Tools, Golden Valley and Minneapolis (three \$10,000 commissions)

3 mobile artist tools were built to engage residents and businesses around community development and used at community events in the summer of 2019.

##### **ROOTED: Mobile Engagement Stage**, by Marcus Kar and Peter McDonald

- A mobile stage on a boat trailer, equipped with shelter, benches, tables, and a PA system.
- For the required engagement activities, they hosted musicians, poets, storytellers, educators, and activists.

##### **Pop-Up Printshop**, by Amy Sands

- The Pop-up Printshop cart tool attaches to a bike and invites people to come create their own hand made prints from leaves and flowers picked from nature.

##### **Cart of CINEMA (Community Improvement, News, & Engagement through Media Arts)**, by David Kang and Prince-Jamal Mac Sr.

- A mobile tool for people to engage in community projects through media arts and technology. Community members will be attracted to Cart of CINEMA's multiple



screens showing short movies and media arts activities, initially around the theme of Bottineau LRT.

**b. Mural, *Fabric of the Community, Crystal*, by Shawn McCann (\$13,000 commission)**

- Unveiled on September 28<sup>th</sup> at Art on the Strip, this colorful mural painted on the wall facing the city parking lot at Bass Lake Road and Elmhurst Avenue depicts textiles and hands from the local business owners in the adjacent strip mall, representing the many communities that make up the shopping strip and Crystal at large.

**c. Mural, *Robbinsdale 125, Robbinsdale*, by Lili Payne (\$13,000 commission)**

- A 71'x14' mural on the north side of Welna Ace Hardware in downtown Robbinsdale. The mural features a series of elements that speak to the culture and history of downtown Robbinsdale: the Whiz Bang magazine; professional wrestler Verne Gagne; the iconic Robbinsdale water tower; and, nods to the burgeoning restaurant scene on Broadway Avenue.

**d. Community Plaza elements, *Robot Park, Brooklyn Park*, by Nick Knutson (\$15,000 commission)**

- This project was to create temporary built elements to activate the large grass field adjacent to the Brooklyn Park Library. The artist created robot themed functional and playful physical elements that will encourage people to stop, stay, play, relax so that they start seeing this location as a regular community gathering space and to engage them in discussions that will impact the eventual redesign of the area into a permanent public plaza. The elements consist of a light-up head that you can walk inside of, a robot body platform stage and two robot hand seating elements. Because of delays unrelated to the artist, Robot Park pieces were completed in 2019 but will be installed in spring of 2020.

## OUTCOMES

### 1. Art Activities commissions

- 15 artist created participatory/performative art projects (43 separate occurrences) at 8 community events, \$28,500 total
- 7 of 15 artists were people of color
- Additional 40 artists involved in planning/execution
- Over 3500 community members attended the 8 community events

### 2. Art in the Public Realm commissions

- 6 lead artists; 5 additional artists, \$73,000 total
- 2 of 6 lead artists are people of color
- 4 of 6 lead artists already connected to Cultivate
- 8 public activities as part of projects; 4 more will occur in spring 2020
- 2 large murals in Crystal and Robbinsdale
- Community plaza elements in Brooklyn Park to be unveiled spring 2020
- 3 mobile community engagement tools in Minneapolis/Golden Valley



## IMPACTS FOR ARTISTS

### 1. Art Activities commission

**New connections** (70% of 14 artists reporting)

- Local government agencies (4)
- Other artists (5)
- Potential clients (4)
- Local businesses (2)
- Across culture or age groups (5)

**New skills** (100% of 14 artists reporting)

- New artistic skills – i.e. working in or with a new genre, technique, style, or material (5)
- Community engagement and communications skills (7)
- Project and/or event coordination skills (7)

### 2. Art in Public Realm commissions (100% of 6 artists responding)

**New connections:** 5 artists (83%) reported gaining or deepening relationships

- City staff (3)
- Community organizations (2)
- New artistic relationships (4)
- Local businesses (2)
- Deepening existing relationships (3)

**New skills:** 5 artists (83%) reported gaining new skills

- Project management (2)
- Sound engineering (1)
- Construction/engineering (2)
- Working with city government (2)
- Working in community (1)

**Increased Capacity:** 4 artists (67%) reported an increase in capacity

- Used funds to get a bigger studio (1)
- Used funds to get more tools (2)
- Created a team around the project (3)

**Professional Development:** All artists reported professional development

- Gained experience doing art in the public realm (3)
- Led directly to new work (1)
- Gained new skills (3)
- Gained pride/ confidence in their ability to do similar work (2)

### Other reflections:

- 2 of the artists noted how great it was to work in the city where they live or grew up.
- 2 of the artists mentioned leaving a mark on their community.
- 3 of the artists mentioned pride in giving back to their community.

## IMPACTS FOR CULTIVATE PARTNERS

### All nine partner agency contacts responded (100%). Of the nine:

- 5 had previous experience working with artists, four did not. Five developed new relationships with artists due to the project, four did not. *There was no clear correlation between those that had previous experience working with artists or did not and those that developed new relationships with artists or did not.*
- 6 said their agency was MORE LIKELY to work with artists in the future based on their experience with Cultivate. The other three said their agencies were neither more or less likely to work with artist in the future because their agencies already work with artists on a regular basis or were planning to do so prior to their involvement in Cultivate.
- 4 said the project led to changes in the way their agency would approach their work in the future in that their agencies would now incorporate the arts and artists into future projects or events.

### Value of the Project: All nine partners reported the project was valuable.

- Increased awareness of local artist community and new connections between artists and agencies (7)
- Increased comfort level working with artists within their agency (2)
- New opportunities for community building or engagement for residents (4)

## LESSONS LEARNED

### 1. Arts Activities

- Having clearer parameters in conjunction with existing community events for which there was separate publicity helped local artists activate event space and meet community members and civic leaders.
- Not all artistic mediums were conducive to community events – so not all artists were able to access this opportunity for building connections. For example, there were very limited performance opportunities which limited the number and type of performing artists
- The community event coordinators had differing capacities and attitudes towards the addition of local artist activities to their events. Springboard staff filled the gap by providing significantly more support and troubleshooting so that the selected artists could do their activities.
- While the Cultivate artists themselves may have added diversity to events, they did not necessarily “bring” their own community to events. This is not wholly unexpected because that is not their stated role. Nonetheless, over time and deeper investment in



individual artists can lead to their community seeing themselves represented and more welcomed to mainstream civic activities.

## 2. Art in the Public Realm

- Because these were designed following a year of observing and learning, the Cultivate partners had clearer ideas about how more significant projects could support the Cultivate goals AND their own. Cultivate partners decided what they wanted to have happen to animate place and build connections – that also accomplished other city goals (identity/branding, community design engagement, community pride, etc.)
- As with any commission, if the site is not 100% confirmed at time of the call for artists, there may be changes. Unrelated to the selected artists, there were unanticipated location or timing changes in some projects that had to be managed. This introduced delays or modifications that city partners may not have been accustomed to.
- Because these projects took longer, there were more opportunities (or need) for the artists and collaborators to work together and to troubleshoot – giving them a deeper experience of actively working together.

*Pop-Up Print Shop by Amy Sands at the Harrison Neighborhood Association Back to School Celebration in Minneapolis. Photo credit: Peter Jamus.*



# OVERALL IMPACT

## TWO YEARS OF CULTIVATE

### CULTIVATE BOTTINEAU GOALS

#### 1. Build connections among businesses, local artists, community members and community organizations

- Over 200 local artists were engaged, from a few hours at an information session or an art activity, to over dozens of hours to create a large commission.
- The nearly 50 lead artists worked with another 50 artists.
- Over 50% of the lead artists are artists of color.
- Nearly 50 collaborators worked with local artists.
- Over 4800 community members attended, participated in, or encountered a local artist-led project activity. This does not include people who view permanent projects (installations, murals) as they pass by.

#### 2. Activate public spaces, creating vibrant places where people want to be

- Over 50 locations were activated temporarily to permanently. Memories of temporary experiences live on in participants' minds and in articles/media. Permanent works continue to create sense of place, community pride, wayfinding, etc.
- Over 4800 community members attended, participated in, or encountered a local artist-led project activity in their community, changing or augmenting their experience of the local place. This does not include people who view permanent projects (installations, murals) as they pass by.

### ADDITIONAL IMPACTS

- Increased capacity of local artists, businesses, community members and community organizations to collaborate.
- Nearly 100% lead artists reported gaining new connections, and some noted they already led to new projects.
- Supported professional development of local artists.
- Media coverage made thousands more positive impressions of the corridor (see Appendix 5 for list).
- Increased immediate/short-term and long-term economic opportunities for local artists contributing their skills to community building.



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## CONTINUING THE WORK

### **Redefine success from artistic end product and attendance to relationships built**

- Understand that the goal is not necessarily the artistic product or the number of people who attend a public event. For instance, Year 1 projects and processes were designed to create low-risk entry points for local artists who had never done work in community or with non-arts collaborators so that new connections would be created.

### **Have clear project goals and parameters**

- Changes in the timeline for the LRT project created a situation where the messaging and goals of the artist projects shifted, even while they were happening. Keeping the vision, goals, definitions of success, and parameters or limitations very clear is critical for artists to implement projects that matched up with various city partner needs.

### **Make a commitment to actively participate**

- City and organizational staff who attended artist activities or were collaborators were able to quickly observe and understand the value and impact of local artists doing projects in the community. More so, they were also able to meet, talk to, and establish the beginning of a relationship based on understanding the artists' abilities and community. A strong commitment to actively participating in the initial activities (from information sessions to project activities) would result in a faster and deeper connection, leading to greater immediate impact.

### **Take a longer-term view**

- Understand that the modest connections and relationships built through Cultivate will ripple outwards from the artists and their immediate collaborators. Even within 12-18 months, some local artists demonstrated organic professional growth directly correlated to their small placemaking project or art activity.

### **Continually offer small, low-risk entry points**

- Even as connections with Cultivate artists deepens, continue to offer easy, low-risk entry points to engage more local artists. This expands your pipeline; brings in new perspectives, communities and artistic mediums; diversifies your options and allies.

## SUPPORTING LOCAL TALENTS

### **Create opportunities for local artists to meet one another**

- Artists want to meet each other and value individual/small group interaction. Artists are eager to be part of and contribute to their community and place. By creating spaces/activities for them to be together, they will naturally begin to work together, support one another, spread word about each other – leading to greater sense of pride in community/city and economic opportunity.

### **Support development of younger and emerging artists**

- By supporting the emerging artists and artists who are just starting to work in community, you will earn loyalty from your local artists. In addition to creating a larger pool of options to support your community development efforts, these artists and their families will continue to invest in your place – by living there, finding or creating economic opportunities, and creating places others want to be.

### **Put artists in the room with decision makers**

- When decision makers such as political and government staff (who were not otherwise involved in Cultivate) met artists and saw them in action, they quickly saw the value of and opportunity to further engage them. We observed this happen several times – and all indications that the artists will be engaged by those decision makers to collaborate in the future. Project-based (shorter-term) and program-based (longer-term) engagement of artists as Artist in Residence or Artist Organizer will bring innovation, creativity and authenticity to city/county work that can more relevantly address community building issues.

## BUILDING LOCAL CONNECTIONS

### **Use artists to connect you to new (to you) communities**

- Many local artists identify with and did projects in their own cultural, racial, or age group communities – because they were invited and supported to create projects that tapped into their own passions and affinities. These artists and their projects can act as bridges between cities/organizations and communities that are typical less accessed or involved in city/organization structures. Once an artist is recognized by a city/organization, they can act to validate or introduce their community to you if you work with them authentically.

### **Share the artist roster with other departments and organizations**

- During Cultivate Bottineau we found that there were other departments or organizations that were looking for artists and were excited to learn there were “Cultivate artists” from the local area they could easily reach and who were already involved in placemaking and community building. The Cultivate Artist Roster can be shared internally amongst departments as a first stop contact list.

# APPENDIX 1 – Artist Projects

## MINNEAPOLIS & GOLDEN VALLEY

Artist		Project Name	Activity date(s)	Activity Location	Project Description (from proposal)	Partners
Keiona	Cook	Felting Fun Coaster Contest	1/19/19	Homewood Studios 2400 Plymouth Ave. N. Minneapolis	Friends and residents of the community came on over to learn about felting and had fun creating a coaster set for a loved one.	Homewood studios
Nancy	Cook	Writing the Autobiography of a Northside Neighborhood	Oct-Nov 2018	Sumner Library, 611 Van White Memorial Blvd	In this four-part creative writing program, participants experimented with poems and stories to capture the rich history and culture of North Minneapolis neighborhoods. Workshops, geared to all levels of experience, took place at the historic Sumner Library in a supportive, engaging environment.	Sumner Library
Zakara	Cunningham	Rhythm and Vibes	11/8/18	8432 Xerxes Ave, Brooklyn Park	I created a dance and Zumba like routine to get the youth and community up, moving and motivated to live a more active life beyond screen. I did this through dance and Yoga.	Finding Free Initiative
Angela	Davis	Make & Design a Train	10/27/18	Sumner Library, 611 Van White Memorial Blvd	Families were be able to make a paper Light Rail Car from a template and design it any way they want.	Sumner Library
Darren	Isaacson	Innovate	2/24/19	Asian Media Access	We hosted free dance battles to all of the dancers and community to bring people together.	Asian Media Access

Hawona	Sullivan Janzen	Our Lives are on This Line	2/16/19	North Regional Library, 1315 Lowry Avenue North, Minneapolis	"Blue: Our Lives Are On This Line" is a poetry reading and workshop meant to bring people together around the shared spectacle of the lives and story of the Northside community, Hawona engaged with residents then type poems based on stories shared with her about life in North Minneapolis then install those poems on a constructed clothesline for all to read.	North Regional Library
Jila	Nikpay	The Blue Line Conversation	9/16/18	Unity Minneapolis Church	This poetic documentary video explores people's perception about the impact of the Blue Rail Extension on their lives and the natural environment around Golden Valley Station. The video and audio footage were created from the natural resources in Golden Valley and the existing Light Rail in the Twin Cities as well as audio interviews with people affected by the rail. The project was screened at Unity Minneapolis to spark conversation about the impact of construction on the neighborhood.	Jim Nepp, board member, Unity Minneapolis
Amy	Sands	Pop-up Print Shop	Aug-Sept 2018	Homewood Studios - 2400 Plymouth Ave N, Minneapolis	Participants were able to make/take home a stratograph print using found foliage, celebrating the nature that surrounds and connects all of us.	George Roberts/Homewood Studios



Bryan	Thao Worra	Laomagination: Transitions	Sept-Oct 2018	Green space near the proposed Golden Valley station	Laomagination: Transitions project convened a series of performances, workshops and community conversations near the current greenspace close to the proposed Golden Valley station.	Lao Assistance Center
Sue	Trosvig	Roll on into Beautiful Golden Valley	12/9/18	Saint Margaret Mary Church, 2323 Zenith Ave N, Golden Valley	My project involved several bicycle wheels on a framework that allows them to spin freely. Each wheel had colorful stained/fused glass inserts that highlighted some of the wonderful features of Golden Valley.	Saint Margaret Mary Church

*Zorongo Flamenco perform on the ROOTED: Mobile Engagement Stage, commissioned from artists Marcus Kar and Peter S. McDonald, at the Harrison Neighborhood Association Back to School Celebration in Minneapolis. Photo credit: Peter Jamus.*



## ROBBINSDALE & CRYSTAL

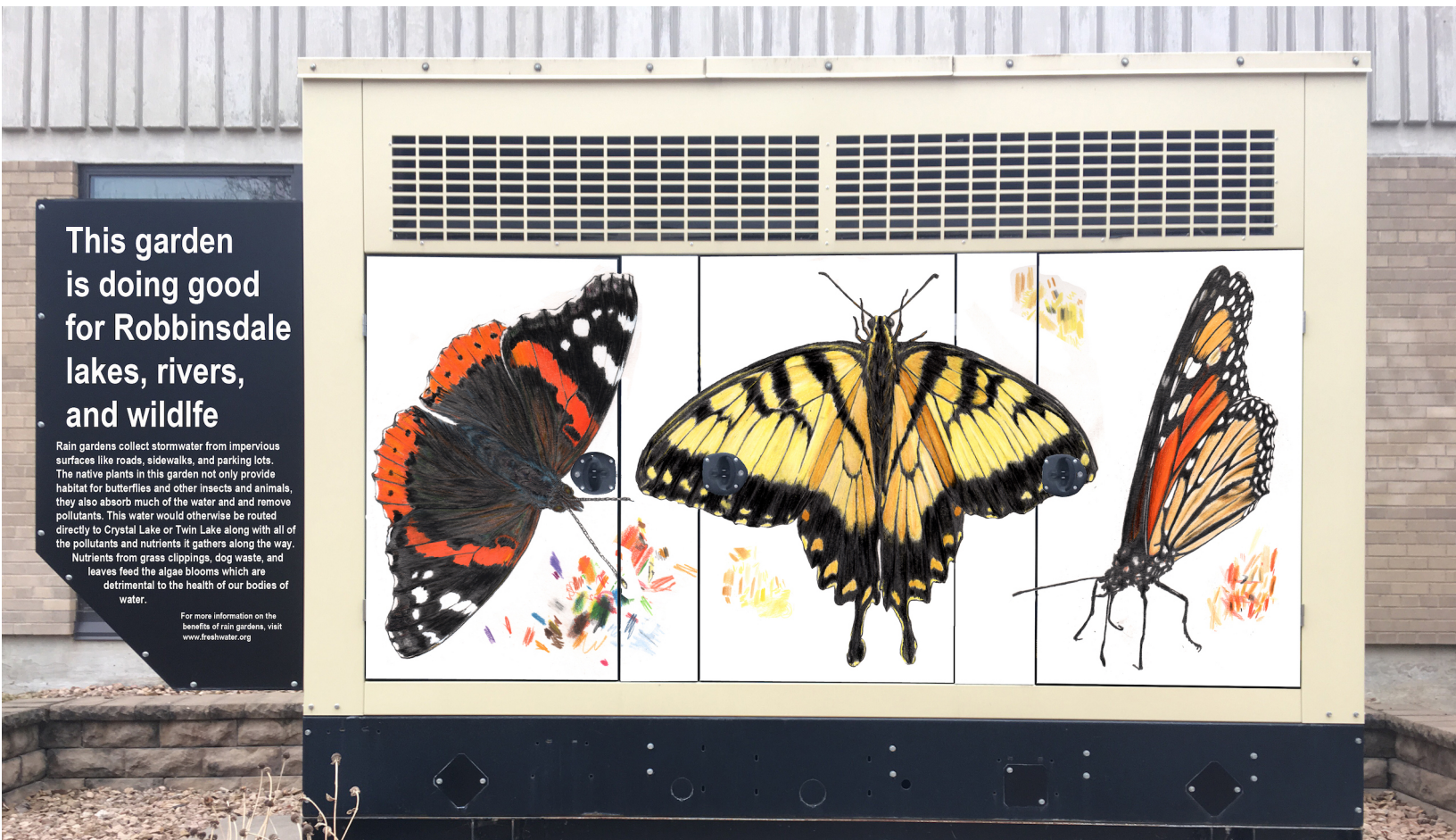
Artist		Project Name	Activity date(s)	Activity Location	Project Description (from proposal)	Partners
Snoti	Jappah	Music in the Park	12/28/18	Rostamo's Bar. 6014 Lakeland Ave N.	"Music in Crystal" was 45 minutes of music performed by me and Abdul Sessay. We performed original music and song request from the audience.	Rostamo's Bar
Josh	Bindewald	Gardens Doing Good	Installed 6/17/19	Generator outside on the east side of Robbinsdale City Hall 100 Lakeview Ave N, Robbinsdale	Design and installation of an artistic and informative vinyl wrap to cover a generator located directly behind a rain garden at Robbinsdale City Hall.	Marta Behling Roser
N'Kol	Imani Dowls	Envision Us Whole	October-December 2018	In a number of businesses in North Minneapolis	Envision Us Whole was a 4-month gallery project open to the public used to foster art for a variety of events, meetings, as well as just an art gallery. We asked community how the art impacted their experience when coupled with other things i.e. meetings, events, or shopping and then we asked them to compare it to just going to art shows. We also asked the community to empower others to challenge the way they feel with art in places outside of the community, to pay attention to how art enhances the space, and how knowing the art is local impacts their experience in public spaces.	Finding Free Initiative



Kristi	Evanger	Get Out and Paint Robbinsdale	Sept- Oct 2018	Robbins Gallery (9/15) South Lawn, Hollingworth park (9/22), Victoria Park (9/29), Lakeview Terrace (10/6), Graeser Park (10/13)	Gather artists young and old to meet and paint outdoors in Robbinsdale	Robbin Gallery
Callie	Kalogerson	Klezmer-Israeli- Russian-Jewish music	11/17/18	Becker Park, Crystal	Klezmer-Israeli-Russian- Jewish Music!	City of Crystal parks and recreation.
Chris	Kalogerson	Music from around the World	11/26/18	Copperfield Hill, 4200 40th Ave N. Robbinsdale	Play music from various countries from around the world: Mexico, Cuba, Columbia, Spain, Italy, Greece, Ireland, Germany, Israel, Russia, Turkey and the Middle East.	Beth Sutton (Director of Recreation and Wellness) - Copperfield Hill
Caron	Learned	Piece It Together	Sept-Dec 2018	Crystal Community Center	"Piece it Together" Introduction to Mosaic Art – There were four Introduction to Mosaic Art Classes taught at the Crystal Community Center.	Scott Berggren, Recreation Services Manager at Crystal Community Center
Shawn	McCann	Art on the Strip	9/28/19	Becker Park, Crystal	Created a large Chalk Mandala that community coming for the "Art on the Strip" celebration could color. Helped create and coordinate Art on the Strip.	City of Crystal
Geno	Okok	African Market Mural	9/26/18	6014 Lakeland Ave N, Crystal	I painted the entire exterior of an African Supermarket in the city of Crystal. Then created a mural of a tiger on the outside.	African Market

Lili	Payne	Visit the Beehive Grill!	Jan-Feb 2019	4915 42nd Ave N, The Robbinsdale Historical Society building	My painting uses the style of a 1940's travel poster to depict a family enjoying a summer's grilling at the "Beehive" in Graeser Park. Bright colors, stylized imagery, and vibrancy are the hallmarks of this piece.	Diane McGee and The Robbinsdale Historical Society
Brittany	Wright	Food, Family and Fun	2/19/19	Calvary Church 7520 Golden Valley Rd, Golden Valley	We partnered with Sweet Potato Comfort Pie, LLC for a pie giveaway during MLK weekend. Each year Sweet Potato Comfort Pies honors the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by giving away Comfort Pies. The number of pies is determined by the age that Dr. King would be if he were still alive. This year Dr. King would be 90, so 90 pies were given away.	Comfort Pies

Artist Josh Bindewald's installation, "Gardens Doing Good," in Robbinsdale. Photo credit: Josh Bindewald.



## BROOKLYN PARK

Artist		Project Name	Activity date(s)	Activity Location	Project Description	Partners
Stayci	Bell	Destination Unknown	3/30/19	CCX Media, 6900 Winnetka Ave N, Brooklyn Park	A community-informed art installation.	CCX Media
Mary	Kalogerson	L'Chaim a Jewish Musical journey	8/24/18	Hennepin County Library, 8500 W Broadway Ave, Brooklyn Park	Performed Jewish music to educate the public about the various styles of Jewish music. [The Jewish people and their music have their roots in Israel. For millennia, Jews have wandered the globe; 'Klezmer' means 'instruments of song' and is from the Hebrew words 'klei zemer' Jewish Music draws upon the resources of the many cultures in which Jewish people have lived. From the Horas of Israel, to the Bulgars of Eastern Europe, and to the Russian Shers from Russia.	Bethany Wagenaar, Service Manager: Hennepin County Library
Mira	Kehoe	Art on the Line!	9/14/19	63rd Avenue Park and Ride - grassy areas near the parking ramp structure	Art on the Line! featured Brazilian music, an African drum circle, visual art created by an artist from the Bahamas hung on a "line" (Art on the Line), children's art activities. We had a way finding scavenger hunt, and tables with visuals and maps of the proposed station area with an opportunity for people to note concerns, ideas, etc.	The African Career, Education & Resource, Inc.
Mike	Klein	Bottineau Canoe Bench	Installati on Spring 2020	Brooklyn Park Community Plaza	This prototype transit bench - in the shape of a canoe - provides seating that allows riders to face each other for conversation, face the same direction (like a typical bench), or lean back on the bow/stern to read or rest. Which way will you sit?	City of Brooklyn Park

Nicholas	Knutson	Northern Explorer	1/16/19	CCX Media, 6900 Winnetka Ave N, Brooklyn Park	Artsy, fun, 5 min. informational video tour of the area surrounding the 85th Avenue light rail station. The video was hosted by the Brooklyn Park Robot, which is based off a robot playground that was found in Central Park on 85th and Noble Ave circa 1970-2007. The project was shot on the premises of the local businesses and community establishments. The video was broadcast on CCX media.	Barbara Clark (CCX Media)
Devonne	Mayweather	R "n" Believe	9/9/19	7500 Brunswick Ave N, Brooklyn Park	We held a full artist showcase for the community and by the community. We wanted to hold space to showcase all of the beautiful talent and business that is in Brooklyn Park.	The Finding Free Initiative
Laura	Stigen	One Mic + One Canvas = Open Minds	2/23/19	Brooklyn Park Library, 8500 West Broadway Avenue- Brooklyn Park Library and Zanewood Recreation Center 7100 Zane Avenue North	The reveal and launch performance were held at the Brooklyn Park library. The artist team designed 2 painted mobile backdrops for community events and as the set to Open Mic performances in the city. This backdrop, the energy and feel of a performance for youth to showcase their crafts, their talents and expertise.	Terrall Lewis, Zane Rec center and Brooklyn Park Library.



# APPENDIX 2 – Community Collaborators

## COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS AND HOSTS FOR ART PROJECTS

African Career Education and Resource Inc.  
African Market  
Asian Media Access  
CCX Media  
City of Brooklyn Park  
City of Crystal  
City of Crystal Parks and Recreation  
City of Brooklyn Park  
City of Minneapolis  
City of Robbinsdale  
Comfort Pies  
Copperfield Hill (senior living)  
Crystal Community Center  
The Finding Free Initiative  
Harrison Neighborhood Association  
Hennepin County Library (Brooklyn Park)  
Homewood Studios  
Lao Assistance Center  
Market in the Valley  
North Regional Library  
Robbinsdale Chamber of Commerce  
Robbinsdale Historical Society  
Rostamo’s Bar  
St. Margret Mary Church  
Sumner Library  
Unity Minneapolis Church  
Youth Farm  
Zane Recreation Center (Brooklyn Park)

## COMMUNITY HOSTS FOR CULTIVATE TRAININGS, INFO SESSIONS, AND CELEBRATIONS

City of Crystal  
Harrison Neighborhood Association  
Harrison Recreation Center  
North Hennepin Community College  
Perpich Center for Arts Education  
Wicked Wort Brewing



# APPENDIX 3 – Arts Activities

## Tater Daze, June 15, Brooklyn Park

Angela Davis (Design a light rail train activity)  
Laura Galaviz (Get your portrait drawn)  
Geno Okok (African mask painting activity)  
Holly Nelson (Make a braided bracelet and “Your Face Here” cut-out)  
Todd Matheson (Jazz performance)

## Whiz Bang Days, July 12, Robbinsdale

Keiona Cook (Felting activity)  
Angela Davis (Design a light rail train activity)  
Susana di Palma (Flamenco dance lesson and performance)  
Laura Galaviz (Get your portrait painted)

## Woody Bat Softball Tournament, July 13, Robbinsdale

Susana di Palma (Flamenco dance lesson and performance)  
Kristi Evanger (Plein air painting activity)  
Ange Hwang (Youth-led arts activities).

## Market in the Valley Family Day, July 28, Golden Valley

Keiona Cook (Felting activity)  
Mia Johnson (Dance charades)  
Nick Knutson (Robot dance party)  
David Kang (Photo competition)  
Holly Nelson (Make a braided bracelet and "Your Face here" cut-out),  
Patti Paulson (Make and take lawn signs)  
Ange Hwang (Youth-led arts activities)

## Community Celebrations, August 24, Minneapolis

Angela Davis (Design a light rail train activity)  
Susana di Palma (Flamenco dance lesson and performance)  
Laura Galaviz (Get your portrait painted)  
Ange Hwang (Youth-led arts activities)  
Mia Johnson (Dance charades)  
Carolyn Sayers (Community painting activity)  
Peter Jamus Holme (Polaroid photo booth)  
David Kang (Photo competition)

## Downtown Meet and Greet, September 9, Robbinsdale

Kristi Evanger (Plein air painting activity)  
Peter Jamus Holme (Polaroid photo booth)  
Mia Johnson (Dance charades)



Holly Nelson (Make a braided bracelet and "Your Face here" cut-out)  
Geno Okok (African mask painting activity)  
Carolyn Sayers (Community painting activity)

Market in the Valley Eat an Apple Day, September 15, Golden Valley

Kristi Evanger (Plein air painting activity)  
Peter Jamus Holme (Polaroid photo booth)  
Geno Okok (African mask painting activity)  
Patti Paulson (Make and take lawn signs)

Art on the Strip Festival, September 28, Crystal

Keiona Cook (Felting activity)  
David Kang (Photo competition)  
Nick Knutson (Robot dance party)  
Geno Okok (African mask painting activity)  
Patti Paulson (Make and take lawn signs)  
Carolyn Sayers (Community painting activity)  
Shawn McCann (Chalk mandala)

*Artist Pacha Galaviz's Five Minute Portrait activity at Tater Daze in Brooklyn Park. Photo credit: Brown Eye Lens.*



# APPENDIX 4 – Art in the Public Realm

**ROOTED MOBILE ENGAGEMENT STAGE** Artists: Marcus Kar and Peter S. McDonald

A mobile stage on a boat trailer, equipped with shelter, benches, tables, and a PA System, hosting musicians, poets, storytellers, educators, and activists at the following events:

- August 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019 - Let the Water Speak
- August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 - Harrison Neighborhood Back to School Celebration
- September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019 - Playing For The Plants (Ep. 3)

**POP-UP PRINTSHOP** Artists: Amy Sands with Gretchen Mathiason (assistant)

A Pop-up Printshop cart tool to attach to a bike. I bike to the various locations and unfold a table with several stations for participants to create their own hand produced prints. We utilized items of nature for our image making such as leaves and flowers. We attended these events:

- August 24<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Community Celebration in the Harrison neighborhood
- September 15<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> Golden Valley “Market in the Valley” events.

**CART OF CINEMA (Community Improvement, News, & Engagement through Media Arts)**

Artists: David Kang and Prince-Jamal Mac Sr.

A mobile tool for people to engage in community projects through media arts and technology. Community members will be attracted to Cart of CINEMA's multiple screens showing short movies and media arts activities we will be hosting around the theme of the Bottineau LRT. Look for Cart of Cinema at Harrison Neighborhood events Spring and Summer of 2020.

**ROBBINSDALE 125** Artist: Lili Payne

A 71'x14' mural on the north side of Welna Ace Hardware in downtown Robbinsdale. The mural features a series of elements that speak to the culture and history of downtown Robbinsdale; the Whiz Bang magazine, professional wrestler Verne Gagne, the iconic Robbinsdale water tower, and nods to the burgeoning restaurant scene on Broadway Avenue.

**ROBOT PARK** Artist: Nick Knutson

Robot themed recreational elements for the community plaza being created adjacent to the Brooklyn Park Library. The elements consist of a light up head that you can walk inside of, a robot body platform stage and two robot hand seating elements. Robot Park will be installed the Spring of 2020.

**FABRIC OF THE COMMUNITY** Artist: Shawn McCann

A mural painted on the wall facing the city parking lot at Bass Lake Road and Elmhurst Avenue depicting textiles and hands from the many communities that make up the shopping strip and Crystal at large. The Mural was unveiled on September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019 at the Art on the Strip event.



# APPENDIX 5 – Cultivate Media

## CULTIVATE MEDIA COVERAGE

ARTWORK PLANNED FOR FUTURE LIGHT RAIL LINE – CCX Media, 4/23/2019

<https://ccxmedia.org/news/artwork-planned-for-future-light-rail-line/>

Art Lands on Robbinsdale City Hall Generator – CCX Media, 6/21/2019

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94ZvU0gjoX0>

Mother-daughter duo to debut community sign project at Whiz Bang Days – Sun Post, 7/10/2019

[https://www.hometownsource.com/sun\\_post/community/mother-daughter-duo-to-debut-community-sign-project-at-whiz/article\\_b88bb446-a26f-11e9-80da-8b1016219dfc.html](https://www.hometownsource.com/sun_post/community/mother-daughter-duo-to-debut-community-sign-project-at-whiz/article_b88bb446-a26f-11e9-80da-8b1016219dfc.html)

ART ON THE STRIP IN CRYSTAL – CCX Media, 9/16/2019

<https://ccxmedia.org/cities/art-on-the-strip-in-crystal/>

Diverse Voices Create the Community – Creative Exchange, 9/20/2019

<https://springboardexchange.org/diverse-voices-create-the-community/>

Using Performance Art as a Means of Engagement – Creative Exchange, 9/25/2019

<https://springboardexchange.org/using-performance-art-as-a-means-of-engagement/>

Teaching Community Changemaking Through Art – Creative Exchange, 9/25/2019

<https://springboardexchange.org/teaching-community-changemaking-through-art/>

Creating Community Ownership of the Bottineau Line – Creative Exchange, 9/27/2019

<https://springboardexchange.org/creating-community-ownership-of-the-bottineau-line/>

Artists Give Future Twin Cities Transit Corridor an Identity – Next City, 12/5/2019

<https://nextcity.org/daily/entry/artists-give-future-twin-cities-transit-corridor-an-identity>

## CULTIVATE ARTIST-CREATED VIDEOS

Robot Brooklyn Park – Nicholas Knutson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvuVPde4Br0&t=3s>

Sweet Potato Comfort Pie – Asata, Brittany, and Toki Wright

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/uutzozifgjh5yj/Wright%20Comfort%20Pie%20Final%20Video.mp4?dl=0>



# CREATIVE EXCHANGE

## POWERED BY SPRINGBOARD FOR THE ARTS

*Artists are everywhere, on every block and in every community. Finding the opportunities for artists to share their creativity and networks can strengthen community bonds, build relationships, and help a community imagine what's next. That is what Springboard for the Arts found from 2011 to 2014, working with the City of St. Paul and Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation along the Green Line light rail construction during the [Irrigate project](#), which trained artists in partnership building, creative placemaking, and funded their creative projects. That model of artist-led community development has now been used in advance of construction for [Cultivate Bottineau](#), a project coordinated by Hennepin County Bottineau Community Works and Springboard for the Arts, partnering with the communities along the proposed Blue Line light rail line. Through training, technical support, and funded projects, Cultivate Bottineau is bringing out the artists in the communities of North Minneapolis, Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Brooklyn Park, and Crystal, to share a vision for their communities, and to cultivate creative people power. During the first year of Cultivate Bottineau over 40 artists participated in the creation of over 25 arts events along the Bottineau Corridor.*

## Diverse Voices Create the Community

SEPTEMBER 20, 2019 | IN [SPECIAL FEATURES](#) | BY [NAAIMA KHAN](#)

### **Making Your Mark on the Community**

What does it mean to contribute to the community that you grew up in? That was the question sitting in [Geno Okok](#)'s mind as he considered how to make his mark on Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, the city where he grew up. From his days attending Crest View Elementary, Okok remembers seeing the corner store turn into a gas station. Then, from a gas station, it turned into a grocery store, Value Foods African Market.

With the light rail transit (LRT) line planned for development in the northwest suburbs of Minneapolis, Okok saw his contribution to the Cultivate program as a way to influence the appeal of the suburbs for people riding the line in the future. Okok said, "most public art is done in Minneapolis and Saint Paul." He wanted to have his suburban community reflect the vibrancy and creativity usually associated with the urban core, and wanted to see more high quality artwork that gave more meaning to its buildings.

Okok's mural occupies an exterior wall at the market, a grocery store that reflects the changing demographics of the Brooklyn Park community. In recent years, the City of Brooklyn Park has seen a rise in residents from African immigrant and African American backgrounds. Okok, who



identifies as part of the Liberian community, was inspired to follow a safari-theme that, to him, seemed true to the grocery store’s African identity.

In addition to a means of contributing to the community, the Cultivate project gave Okok a chance to enhance his own arts business. Many locals shared and liked his work on social media which gained him a new level of visibility. He also received a few offers of business and grew new connections as a result of his work. For a young artist like Okok, the mural not only proved that art creates a pathway for people to apply their talents in a community, it also gave him the opportunity to make his artistic print.



*Geno Okok and Snoti Jappah. Photo by Ernest Norris Jr.*

### **Showcasing community assets**

[Snoti Jappah](#), a resident of Brooklyn Park who is also Liberian, describes herself as a musician, singer and songwriter who focuses on R&B, pop and Afro-pop. Coming from a family with a musical background, Jappah has always dreamed of becoming a full-time musician and is recognized within the Liberian diaspora as a rising star. She works toward that goal now by performing where she sees an opportunity to contribute her unique voice.

For her performance, *Music in Crystal*, Jappah invited a fellow artist to have a live guitar and acoustic session to accompany her singing. “Doing a full acoustic performance was different for me,” she said. The risk that she took in performing differently than her norm paid off. Her interactive performance had pauses in between songs for discussion and questions.

“I wanted it to be intimate and wanted to be able to connect to others over music,” said Jappah, who made new connections with the bar that she performed in. “I became an asset to them and they became an asset for me. If they want a community event again they now have a new pool of artists to tap into.” She sees the bar as a new venue for her and her artist friends to use.

“I was hoping to introduce people to something different that they hadn’t heard of before. I also wanted to learn myself about what others’ music preferences are.” Jappah said that the environment created a dialogue about the issue of transportation development in the area. She sees the project as a means of creating awareness.

She felt that she was successful in creating a unique and artistic vibe that spoke to her creative process. In addition to succeeding as a performer singing her music live for the first time, Jappah’s Cultivate project had somewhat of a snowball effect. She shot a music video for her new single and got many new bookings. She was also invited to perform at festivals and other independent-artist events.

When members of the community are involved in sharing the assets that they have to contribute to development projects, it creates a shared ownership and space where people feel proud of the neighborhood. “When people ride the train through the neighborhood, I want them to see the creativity of the place and that it’s not boring,” shared Okok. What he and Jappah valued about the Cultivate program is its ability to provide people who are within a community the opportunity to celebrate local talent. “It’s not like outsiders coming in and telling a community what it needs.”

# Teaching Community Changemaking Through Art

SEPTEMBER 25, 2019 | IN [SPECIAL FEATURES](#) | BY [NAAIMA KHAN](#)

## Literary Art as Public Art

Each neighborhood has its own story to tell. For [Nancy Cook](#), a teaching artist, writer, and lead artists for the project, *Writing the Autobiography of a Northside Neighborhood*, the story of a neighborhood can be observed if you look carefully. She gained inspiration for the project from a Nigerian writer, Amos Tutuola, who described a village in Nigeria by categorizing things in ways that are not familiar to Americans, which intrigued Cook to explore this style further.

For the project supported by Springboard for the Arts' Cultivate program, Cook decided to conduct a series of workshops based on people writing about their experiences in the Northside in loving and non-traditional ways. Cook had guest teaching artists visit the workshops and provide their expertise on how to create and articulate unconventional insights. One of the poems from the workshop, "5 Haiku" by Denise Alden, illuminates one such insight about North Minneapolis:

Nesting nebula  
of neighbors, near by  
and reaching for North.

Kneeling and knocking,  
our northside neighbors blooming  
in community.

No naysayers here  
on the North Side: not allowed.  
Better to rise up.

The mighty river  
our internal combustion  
engine of the heart.

In Northside's backyard,  
the mighty river our heart,  
internal compass.

Writing since she knew how to hold a pencil, it wasn't until five years ago that Cook decided to focus solely on writing as a career. Dedicating herself to social justice work early in life, she earned a Master in Fine Arts and a law degree. Cook sees her literary work as a contribution to



community-building and community problem-solving. Having taught creative writing in detention centers and prisons, she appreciates the powerful healing that results from sharing stories.

For Cook, one of the benefits of the project was meeting great people. She also saw her Cultivate work as helping surface the needs and desires of the community in light of the big transportation project in the neighborhood. Cook believes that the community ought to have a voice in expressing who they are and how their past, present, and future is defined as the planning for the Blue Line is underway. She says, “People need to take ownership of their neighborhood as a major change is about to take place.”

### **Strokes of Appreciation and Connection**

For Kristi Evanger, resident of Robbinsdale and full-time mother, facilitating art experiences for people to learn from is a passion. “As adults in society, I don’t think we get enough time to pause and engage in art,” she says. Evanger was an arts educator for a few years and, now that she has children, does more projects engaging children in art.

For her Cultivate project, *Paint the Town*, Evanger created opportunities for people to try plein air watercolor painting in which participants paint while immersed in a natural landscape. “When you sit somewhere and paint for some time, you tend to see things differently,” said Evanger. From her perspective, watercolor is more accessible since we all use it as kids. “People feel like they can’t mess up with watercolor paint strokes.” That opens them up to taking more creative risks.

One of the goals of the workshop was to get students to gain an appreciation for the spaces where they paint—in this case, parks within Robbinsdale. Another goal was to connect community members through an experience that would help them bond. Evanger recalls, “In their training, Springboard mentions that there is an artist on every block. I was trying to bring those artists together in a meaningful way.”

### **Poems of Possibility**

Growing up as the granddaughter of farmers who loved to tell stories, [Hawona Sullivan](#) realized early that you can deeply engage people if you tell a story well. A self-identified class clown, Sullivan shared that her teachers helped her appreciate what it means to have the “gift of word.” Over the years, she has honed her talents to become a multidisciplinary artist, engaging in art forms including poetry, composition, and improvisational jazz singing.

Trained as an art historian, Sullivan is a gallery curator at the University of Minnesota’s Urban Research and Outreach Engagement Center (known as UROC). She aspired to work in the field of public relations until she faced the profound loss of her six-year-old son, who was an artist in his own right, having created a few illustrated books. After her loss, she found herself asking, “Am I living the life I want to live?”



She turned to poetry to deal with the extreme grief that she felt. As friends began encouraging her to share her work, Sullivan shifted her focus from doing art for survival's sake to writing with the purpose of creating benefit for the broader community. After a fellowship through the Givens Foundation for African American Literature in the Twin Cities changed her life, Sullivan began teaching art.



*Hawona Sullivan (left). Photo by Patrick Casey.*

Her Cultivate project, *Our Lives are on This Line*, featured poetry based on conversations or experiences she had at various spots along the Blue Line's expansion route. She embroidered the word "poet" on an apron and started handing out small cards—half the size of business cards—inviting people to have a conversation with her. Sullivan spoke with people at bus stops, at the library, at restaurants, coffee shops, and many other places. With the consent of her co-conversationalists, she wrote poetry based on each discussion.

"More people said they would love to be in a poem than the number of poems I could write," Sullivan said. "At first, I thought it was my job to tell somebody else's story, but then I realized that I was telling the story of our encounter and how we changed each other." Sullivan hopes her work will prompt others to reflect on the beauty and importance of building connections with people in the neighborhood.

Given the increasing polarization in our time, these artists highlight how art can be used as a bridging mechanism among different perspectives. From drawing out diverse stories within a neighborhood like Cook, to bringing residents together to appreciate the natural beauty within the community like Evanger, to having conversations with strangers to write poetry like Sullivan, art has the power to create trust that is lacking when people bring their creative energy together. Sullivan imparts, “If we decide to have a conversation with a stranger, something beautiful can come out of that.”





# Using Performance Art as a Means of Engagement

SEPTEMBER 25, 2019 | IN [SPECIAL FEATURES](#) | BY [NAAIMA KHAN](#)

## Sowing the Seeds of Expression

What is possible when young people in a community are engaged to express their talents? Amazingness. That's what resulted when the [City of Brooklyn Park](#) partnered with 14 young artists to create murals and performances through the *One Mic + One Canvas = Open Minds* project supported by Springboard for the Arts. Starting as an effort to lift and activate youth voices, the project created a platform through which young artists in Brooklyn Park's Zanewood neighborhood can have spaces and places to showcase their talent.

With support from Laura Stigen, arts and engagement specialist at the City of Brooklyn Park, youth led the conception, development, implementation, and performance of the project. They created an 8'x16' mural gathering their collective stories into a backdrop used for their stage performances. Stigen notes, "It's incredible for adults in the community to see young people doing such powerful work."



*Open Minds = Laura Stigen, Jason Flynn, Tay Tep, One Mic + One Canvas. Photo by Laura Stigen.*

The young artists also created a second "traveling canvas" which symbolically represents youth voices at community events. The traveling canvas is often present at city council meetings or other public meetings when youth representatives cannot be present. Stigen reflects that having youth-generated art present in a space where adults typically make decisions is an effective reminder that youth are present in the community and ought to have a seat at the table.

The City of Brooklyn Park is invested in creating public art. It has created an art plaza near a hub of the future Blue Line to create a space where the community can proudly display art.



The [Zanewood Recreation Center](#) is the main hub of creativity and arts for youth in Brooklyn Park right now. There were not many other spaces for youth to engage in creative crafts and performance publicly. Springboard's Cultivate project opportunity changed that. The city was inspired to showcase the art at the [Brooklyn Park Library](#). Youth that are involved in the project see this opportunity as the starting debut and are looking forward to continuing performances along different stops that would be a part of the Blue Line.

The collaboration between the city and young artists for the project also created connections. The young artists now see themselves invited to the library's teen technology space and studio. Some of the young artists have gained professional connections. One young person became employed by the City of Brooklyn Park after being engaged in the project. Representatives from various departments within the city, including Parks and Recreation and Community Engagement and Communications, attended the art showcase to support young artists.



*Mira Kehoe's drum circle. Photo by Phil McGraw from Brown Eye Lens.*

### **Celebrating Community Art on the Line**

For [Mira Kehoe](#), there is no question that a core function of art is to celebrate the beauty and vibrancy of life in a neighborhood. Kehoe's Cultivate project featured Brazilian music with Xibaba; an African drum circle with Babatunde Lea; visual art created by Randy Burrows, an artist from the Bahamas; and community art activities. "The main goal was to spread joy," says Kehoe.

An adjunct professor at Hamline University, Kehoe draws from a variety of artistic disciplines to create art. She is a musician and a theater and jazz artist who engages in creative placemaking. With a background of teaching voice, speech, dialects, and acting at the University of Minnesota, the University of Utah, Hamline University, and the Guthrie Theater, Kehoe says she ventured into social justice through public art in recent years.

“One of the things I do is create questions based on community needs,” she says. At each of Kehoe’s public performances, there were tables and easels with visuals and maps of the proposed Blue Line expansion areas with an opportunity for people to note concerns and ideas. The feedback from community members was shared with Metro Transit public officials. Kehoe sees this as a means of drawing out community concerns about the transit project.

Kehoe and her partner artists reached out to two community collaborators, the [Family Partnership](#) in Golden Valley/North Minneapolis, and [African Career, Education & Resource, Inc.](#) (ACER) in Brooklyn Park. Kehoe writes that “by collaborating with organizations that are focused on developing equity and inclusiveness, and educational and economic opportunity, we hoped to encourage connection through arts activities that explored cultures (Brazil, Bahamas, Africa) with a common thread.”

The participatory methods of Kehoe’s work promoted bridging among different community stakeholders groups. She stated, “If government agencies, nonprofits, and businesses don’t think outside the box in terms of how arts can be useful to them in problem-solving, we have some education to do.” Kehoe’s performances demonstrate that collaborative public art provides an opportunity to help people think creatively when obstacles come up and an opportunity to piece together different perspectives that can typically be thought of as representing opposing viewpoints.

Similarly, from Stigen’s perspective, among the most important impacts of the work was the opportunity youth had to reflect on the personal growth they experienced and the connections they developed with each other. “Working together with 14 other people who all have different artistic goals is not easy,” she states. But the youth banded together to create the mural, which is somewhat of a microcosm of what the larger community is—a variety of small images that fold together to create a larger picture reflective of the full community.

# Creating Community Ownership of the Bottineau Line

SEPTEMBER 27, 2019 | IN [SPECIAL FEATURES](#) | BY [NAAIMA KHAN](#)

## Expressing Values Through Community Art

Even if they're creating work for the very first time, community artists have the power to use their art to express their values while transforming their neighborhoods.

For [Josh Bindewald](#), a resident of Robbinsdale, the most mundane space—a plain generator box—presented an opportunity to turn an eyesore into a message of community vibrancy and environmental education. For his art installation, “Gardens Doing Good,” near a stop along the area’s future Blue Line expansion, Bindewald printed a drawing of butterflies that he transformed into a vinyl wrap that accompanies text about the importance of rain gardens.

Bindewald started out with dreams of becoming a graphic designer in high school and eventually decided to pursue a career in printmaking. He now works as the director of artist programs for a nonprofit in the Twin Cities called [Highpoint Center for Printmaking](#). His contributions to the community outside of work include becoming a certified Master Water Steward.

Growing up, Bindewald became acutely aware of how quickly lakes were greening around Minnesota. Bindewald noted, “That’s where my concern for the environment and water quality took root. In the past few years, as I’ve walked my dog along trails in the park, I noticed that Robbinsdale had a nearly unnoticeable rain garden.” “Gardens Doing Good” brought about an opportunity to teach the community about the inherent value of rain gardens while instilling a sense of renewed commitment and order to the neglected rain garden space.

An invitation to the eyes, the art signals how critical a healthy landscape is to the community’s well-being. When asked why he chose butterflies, Bindewald responded, “Butterflies, while beautiful, are also fragile like our water system. They have an important role to play in the ecosystem.” Though they lack the aesthetic appeal of a typical garden, rain gardens play a vital role in maintaining the water quality of local lakes and rivers.

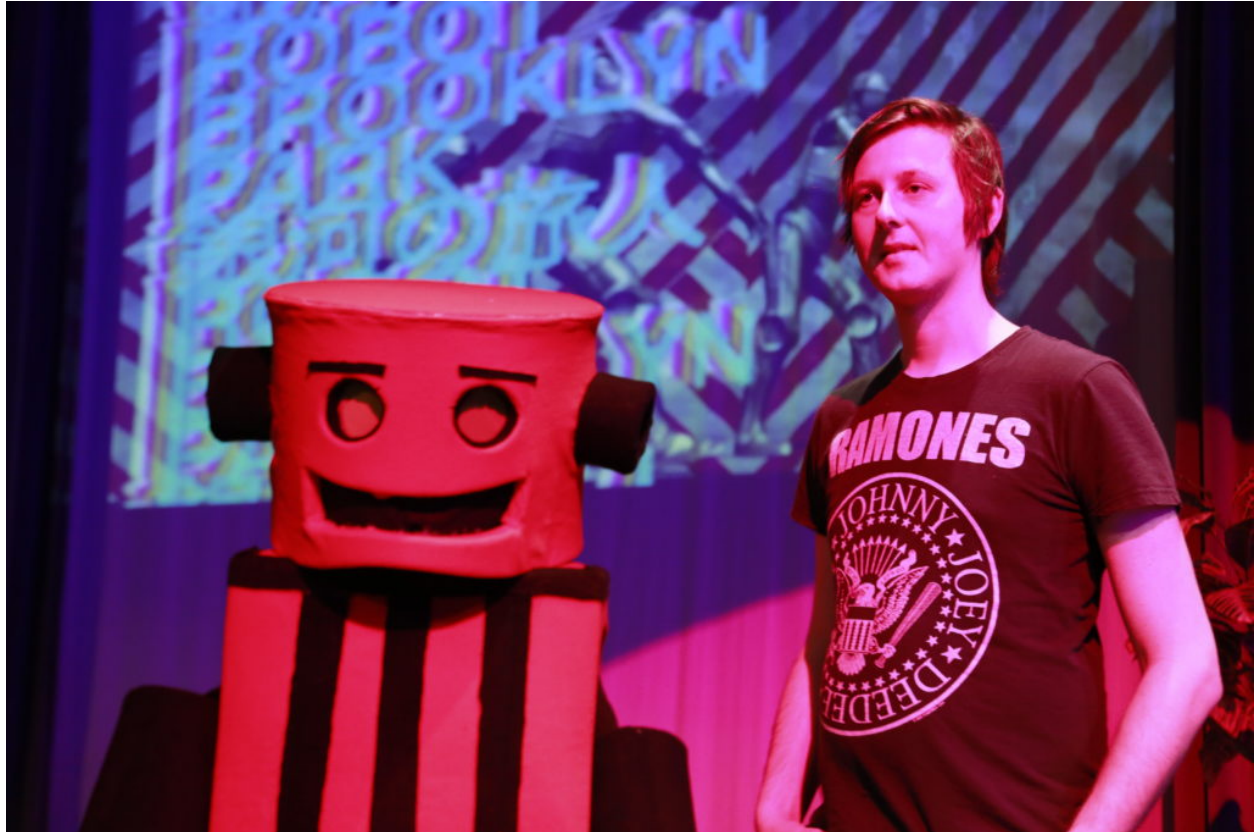
## Giving Back in Optimism

Sculptor, multimedia installation creator, and performer, [Nick Knutson](#) creates a dynamic way for community members to envision the future light rail development by adding a fun twist and donning a big red robot costume. Knutson created an entertaining five-minute information video tour of the area surrounding the 85th Avenue light rail station.



The robot pays homage to a metal robot structure Knutson remembers standing out in the local park where he grew up. “The robot was in Central Park, the largest park in the city,” says Knutson. “I did a lot of work about [the robot] in college, but I didn’t re-visit it for 12 years.”

Knutson saw it as the perfect opportunity to share his artistic voice in a place where he grew up. “I used to want to run away from [Brooklyn Park] as a teenager,” he says. “It was nice to go back to a place that was bland and boring growing up and get to have more of a creative voice about how to represent the city as an adult.” Knutson’s goal was to be informative and fun and embrace the new light rail.



*Nick Knutson’s robot project. Photo by Phil McGraw from Brown Eye Lens.*

In the process, Knutson had a chance to grow his own skills as an artist by collaborating with local businesses, schools, and Hennepin County. “It was a big growth opportunity because I had to connect with people as a project manager, which was a skill that I was lacking.” The new opportunity to get his art in the public realm has been huge for Knutson in his career as an artist. After creating the video tour, Knutson also designed a gazebo and seating apparatus that enlivens the light rail plaza at 85th Avenue.

“Springboard helped us find artists in our community that we weren’t cognizant of,” said Brooklyn Park’s Community Development Senior Project Manager, Jennifer Jordan. “The community is excited about growing an artist base and supporting the artists that we have. We see a lot of opportunity.” Jordan also noted, “Since Brooklyn Park is a majority minority

community, where 20 percent of residents are foreign-born, we are also building relationships with immigrant artists.”



*Nick Knutson’s robot project in progress. Photo by the artist.*

## **Valuing the Diverse Perspectives That Represent the Community**

Since the construction of the Green Line along University avenue in Saint Paul, communities of color have become vigilant about the lack of representation and their voices when it comes to decision-making about transit development. Learning lessons from the haunting past of the I-94 development through what was formerly the Rondo neighborhood, African American and other communities impacted by transit development have organized with the deliberate vision of being included at the table.

Groups like the [Blue Line Coalition](#) represent perspectives from residents of color along the corridor, low-income communities, groups representing people with disabilities, the elderly population, and other transit-dependent communities. Two members of the Blue Line Coalition managed to get a seat at the planning table for the Bottineau Line’s construction. The group created an equitable development scorecard which lays out principles of equitable development.

With progress toward the Blue Line extension’s development stalled due to support needed from critical third parties and federal funding needed to implement current plans, there is an opportunity to better communicate with residents of the neighborhood that don’t have easy access to information. Nearly a fifth of residents living along the Bottineau Corridor are below the poverty line, and 56 percent of non-white residents live in areas experiencing pressure from developers.

Some residents who work multiple jobs don’t have the wherewithal to keep track of opportunities to participate in planning and stay up to date with information about how and when their neighborhoods will experience changes. To live up to the ideals and goals of equity, it will be important to recognize the assets that these communities possess in the planning process.

### **Pursuing More Equitable Development**

[Stayci Bell](#) has had a journey as an artist. Recovering from addiction to crack in 2003, Bell reconnected with theater artists and became a performing artist. She then pursued modeling. Having experienced a variety of careers in the fields of construction and nursing as well as becoming an electrician, Bell recently chose to leave her formal positions to connect to what she really cares about—the social betterment of the community.

When first introduced to the idea that she can contribute to public art through Cultivate, Bell decided to try it out. “I thought I was being brave,” she said. Bell tapped into her poetry skills to write her piece, “Destination Unknown,” commenting on the frustration of not knowing what the planned development of the transit line will look like. “The scope [of the transit project] is so big,” says Bell, “it’s hard to understand how little people will have a voice.”

Bell paired her poetry with a visual representation of changes she saw happening in her neighborhood. On her daily drive, she began to notice town homes being torn down and decided to capture what is happening. “Every time I drove by, I took a picture,” says Bell, “then I wrote a poem and called it ‘Destination Unknown’ [to call questions like], ‘Where will people go? When their houses are being torn down, how will people know?’” Bell wanted to knock on neighbors’ doors to figure out what was happening but was denied permission by the neighborhood association.

Her art has helped her step into her power and pose critical questions about how accessible information about the development is to people who juggle jobs and are not familiar with the jargon of development. Bell hopes that her art will help impact the public conversation in a way that gets people paying attention to how some members of the community are disengaged in the development process. In the neighborhood of Brooklyn Park, where she has lived since 2009, Bell wants a sense of belonging and ownership within the community.



*Stayci Bell. Photo by the artist.*