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★ ★ ★ *New Community Visions* *part of the*  
Transforming America's Communities Through the Arts Initiative

# Arts, Transportation, & Infrastructure

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Excerpted from *Arts & America: Arts, Culture, and the Future  
of America's Communities*

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ESSAY BY

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# An Introduction

*Dear Reader,*

**F**or the last 30 years here at Americans for the Arts, I have had the privilege of visiting and learning about a different community almost every week.

In multiple places in every state, I have witnessed firsthand the magic and majesty of the arts themselves and also their transformative power in helping to tackle social and community issues. Whether in a small town or a major population center, the same breadth of value is present. Magnificent, awe-inspiring performances and museum exhibits exist side by side with arts programs designed to accelerate healing in hospitals; musical performances with the homeless to bring comfort and perhaps new inspiration; hands-on visual and performing arts programs in military facilities to aid returning wounded service men and women in coping with PTSD or recovering from physical injury; or the myriad of other ways that the arts are a part of people's lives.

During my travels, I usually have the honor of meeting hard working local leaders from the government, business, and

education sectors as well as from the arts. When a mayor or county commissioner proudly talks about her home-grown arts treasures—while in the same breath explaining the economic and employment benefits of the arts to her community or the attractiveness of the arts offerings there as a cultural tourism destination—it is clear that the arts are valued as a source of pride and identity and as a positive contributor to growth.

Although the arts have delivered this spectrum of entertainment, inspiration, and transformative value for as long as humankind has existed, they have faced a roller coaster of recognition and marginalization in our country since even before our founding. We are now, however, at a moment where there seems to be an increased recognition of the broad value of the arts. That provides us with an inflection point at which to explore, discuss, and recalibrate what it takes to advance the arts and arts education in America. This book of 10 essays provides an opportunity to look at ideas that might help a community invent or reinvent how the arts fit into it. Our guest authors take a look at the kinds of thinking and mechanisms decision-makers, leaders, and citizens need in order to make the arts more fully part of the quality of experience that every child and every community member gets from living in a particular place.

Americans for the Arts is in the business of helping leaders build capacity for the advancement of the arts and arts education. We work toward a vision that all of the arts and their power can be made available and accessible to every American. The leaders that we help are generating positive change for and through the arts at the local, state, or national levels and across all sectors. Since our founding 55 years ago, we have created materials, management tools, case-making research and data, along with professional and leadership development training to help leaders carry out this important work. About 25 years ago, our publication, *Community Vision*, along with a series of companion pieces, was created to guide the process of expanding capacity for community development through the arts. But a great

deal has changed since then, so we have embarked on the three-year journey to update those tools, look anew at what the arts are doing in communities, and create materials that will help community leaders advance that work today.

In this book, 10 authors focus on just a few of the issue areas that the arts are working in today. These essay topics do not illustrate the only way the arts are working in communities. We are continually looking at other topics in other publications, tools, and discussions to help communities customize their unique approach to involving the arts in addressing their particular needs and goals. Such additional issue areas include: the re-entry of active military service members, veterans, youth at risk, crime prevention, immigration, technology, disease, drug abuse, housing, aging, faith and religion, and perhaps most importantly cross-cultural understanding and equity. This is a partial list of the challenges and opportunities where the arts are playing an important role.

To set some context for the future, we have also included an essay that lays out some thoughts on the history of art in community. My friend, Maryo Gard Ewell, has done more to document the history and sea changes of the last century of arts-based community development than anyone else I can think of. She says that she does it because a field isn't a field if it doesn't know its history. I thank her for her extensive contributions to our database of field knowledge, which Clayton Lord has been able to draw upon for his comprehensive history piece in this book. Maryo is also fond of saying that a field isn't a field without a few heroes in the mix. I count both her and her father, Robert Gard, mentioned in that history, to be among those heroes.

Our field of nonprofit arts organizations and individuals working to advance the arts and to create better communities through the arts is constantly evolving, constantly reinventing an understanding of itself and its role in this great American experiment. But the field

should never waver on the deeply rooted belief in its essential necessity to the world. We are in a period of evolving understanding right now. The broad transformative power of the arts as a means to help create solutions to a broad array of social and economic issues is a big part of the value of the arts in today's American Community.

The rising demand for deeper accountability for what the arts bring to the table in terms of social welfare along with the advent of new sources of data, technology, and processing power to make previously invisible connections visible brings us to a pivotal moment. The arts are poised to be fully integrated into a nuanced, deep, and powerful conversation about who and what is needed to create healthy, equitable communities for everyone.

The arts are valuable. Artists are essential. Arts education is critical to keeping America creative and competitive in order to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The arts are a strong partner in the solution to these challenges and can be even stronger in the future. The arts help transform American communities and the result can be a better child, a better town, a better nation, and perhaps a better world. My hope is that this book of ideas can help in that transformative journey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bob Lynch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bob" and last name "Lynch" clearly legible.

Robert L. Lynch  
*President and CEO*  
*Americans for the Arts*



# Arts, Transportation, & Infrastructure

— by *Constance Y. White* —

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This essay looks at how America's transportation and building infrastructure will shift and transform over the next 10–15 years, as well as the role that the arts may play in positively impacting those changes. In particular, this essay proposes the following trends and associated arts interventions:

- As resources become scarcer, and populations become more aware of their impacts, corresponding rises in technology will encourage infrastructure innovations that improve resource management. The arts will provide creative outlets for such energy management as tools for resource use

mitigation, public awareness, and energy generation.

- Shifts in priorities for consumers, and rising costs of doing business, will drive a new interest in sustainable business practices at airports and other large-scale transportation facilities. The arts will provide innovative opportunities to pursue such sustainability; increase the quality of the core experience; and reduce costs, resource usage, and wear.
- As the country continues to transition to a customized economy, where consumers demand deep, personalized user experiences even in circumstances where utility was previously enough, one area that will be deeply impacted is mass transportation. Art interventions in stations and transportation modalities will help raise the quality of the end-user experience, while advances in design and other creative workforce applications will meld deeper engagement with efficient construction and design.

— *C. Lord*

★ ★ ★

*“If the point of transportation planning is to get people to places where they want to be, then most transportation planning should really start with placemaking.”<sup>31</sup>*

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**T**ransportation modalities in the United States in 2015 are at capacity for meeting the needs of the country's citizens and visitors. Ensuing challenges with infrastructure maintenance, fuel efficiency, energy usage, pollution mitigation, and the capacity to handle the boom in urban population growths are eminent. The residual effect impacts usage, access, and experience for the driver, the rider, the passenger, and the pedestrian. Changes driven by innovations in existing technologies, as well as the development of new technologies, will happen rapidly over the next decade. How we experience and evaluate these changes will determine our success.

What will our future commutes and summer road trips look like? One thing is for certain: in a shift from the more utilitarian nature of public planning prevalent in the second half of last century, public agencies have now started prioritizing user experience in consideration of planning, and are building more livable communities with a focus on improved quality of life. While these priorities have to be vetted through public processes and various regulatory strata, this current mode provides a platform for open dialogue. How do we create better experiences throughout our networks of transportation? The pursuit of answers to this question provides opportunity for creative problem solving through thoughtful design, opportunities for integrated art, and conceptualizing spaces for performances in and around our transportation systems. It's happening already.

This essay presents three trends that contribute to the discovery of changes in various aspects of the transportation industry and discusses how the arts and culture can and do intervene in some of these transit spaces.



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ENERGY MANAGEMENT<sup>2</sup>

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Mechanized innovations introduced during the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century increased the demand for energy generated from natural resources to a rate greater than any other previous era in human history. This demand accelerated innovation in transit-related industries for waterways, rail lines, and road systems to meet that need, leading American society into the technological advancements of the Industrial Revolution.

*“Rapid growth in aviation operations has had a persistent and substantial impact on the environment.”*

The relative lack of energy management practices—particularly related to transportation—in the period between the Industrial Revolution and now has motivated modern researchers to investigate more conservative methods of using and generating

energy. Scientists have communicated concerns about global warming since the 1960s and have concluded that the highest human activity negatively impacting our environment is transportation.<sup>3</sup>

Historically, governments and independent agencies on local, state, and federal levels have taken intermittent measures to encourage the development of more beautiful and sustainable places to live. Organizing art and culture associations, adopting percent for art ordinances, establishing art in architecture programs, and creating other federal incentives have all contributed to the increased tendency for planners and contractors to include art of some form in transportation infrastructure.

Contemporary public art projects such as Robert Behrens’ *Solar Intersections* (located at a UC Davis bus station and rail stop) and Harries and Heder *SunFlowers: Electric Garden* installation (in Austin along I-35) are successfully bringing attention to using

renewable energy in their practice. Since the 1960s, notable artists like Buster Simpson and Joseph Beuys have explored industrial areas and streetscapes respectively as opportunities to bring awareness to resource conservation, the climate, and the environment.

Combating climate change is directly linked to the transportation industry's ability to shift its current methods of energy management and sustainability practices. With advancements in technology and higher demands for conservation and improved living quality, future public art projects have an increased opportunity to become even more integrated into transportation infrastructure. Idaho's Sand Creek Byway project exemplifies an integrated approach to involving an artist from planning through design development. Artist Vicki Scuri's intervention was a 10-year commitment inclusive of community engagement, and resulted in a softer aesthetic, long-term environmental efficiencies, and transformation of a complicated multi-modal system into a civic asset that is now a source of pride for its surrounding community.<sup>4</sup>

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#### SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICE<sup>5</sup>

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Over the past 15 years, the field of aviation has led the transportation industry toward establishing more sustainable practices. This includes modernizing older aviation facilities, building newer efficient facilities, monitoring and regulating air quality, managing waste and storm water run-off, and being sensitive to their immediate habitats and natural environments.

In the 1920s to 1930s, the global fascination and romance of air travel generated enough interest to create a major transportation business. This Golden Age of Flight saw farm lands and open fields leveled and outfitted to host both private and commercial aviation operations. Functionality, style, and comfort were the principal elements that influenced pre-war terminal designs.

Commercial airports built post-World War II used surplus military fields.<sup>6</sup>

When the jet engine, invented during World War II, entered commercial production, world travel was revolutionized, eventually making flight accessible to both affluent and ordinary citizens of many countries.<sup>7</sup>

Rapid growth in aviation operations has had a persistent and substantial impact on the environment. Siting a new airport, or even expanding an existing one, creates major social and political issues. Airport operators have undertaken serious initiatives to implement more sustainable business practices, motivated by an increased desire to be good neighbors, to contribute to their respective communities' living quality, and to improve facilities for their passengers.

Historically, airports designed in the 1930s resembled the Art Deco architecture of the grand railroad terminals. Many of them included some aspect of public art funded through Work Projects Administration (WPA).<sup>8</sup> Currently, there are approximately 100 airports in the United States that have some type of art program or have provisions for art during design and construction of renovated and new facilities generated through earned revenue or percent for art funds. San Francisco International Airport (SFO) is demonstrative of an evolved aviation operator who has exceeded many standard sustainability practices. With its focus on enhancing quality of life, SFO is recognized as an affiliated museum and was the first cultural institution to be located at an airport. Housing a permanent collection of aviation artifacts and contemporary art, SFO has a full museum staff of curators, registrars, and preparators.

Airport operators often list terms such as “mitigating moments of stress,” “creating authentic passenger experiences,” and “contributing to the region’s quality of life” in their purpose, mission, or

values statements. Sophisticated architecture, notable art collections, integrated art programs, curated exhibitions, and the presentation of live and interactive performances are derived from operating agencies at airports making investments in, and creating visions for, art and culture for their communities. Sustainable business practices are not limited to environmental conservation and energy efficiency. They also have social, economic, and experiential implications which collectively contribute to the quality of life ratio for any community.

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#### USER EXPERIENCE<sup>9</sup>

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Pre-Industrial Revolution transportation systems were primitive, heavy, and slow, but had their merits for efficiency. They were designed to transport and connect multiple people and massive amounts of goods to their destinations. The ongoing development of rail systems followed dense populations (analogous to contemporary mass transit practices). What they may have lacked in speed and flexibility, however, they made up for in amenity. Travel by rail in the early 1900s presented riders with clubs, parlors, and specialized observation cars. One could expect to travel through ornate and grand train stations designed and built as hubs of culture through which ran trade and commerce. And while certainly early “mass transit,” these first experiences definitely did not conjure the same notions of personal sacrifice and inconvenience that we often associate with mass transit today. Ultimately, heavy regulations, rising costs, and the Great Depression lead to the eventual conclusion to the glamorous era of train travel, and a shift away from quality user experience to utility and efficiency of cost.

Mass transit (bus and rail) evolved as a need to connect people to places efficiently. Contemporary mass transit systems benefited from the infrastructure that was planned and installed in the early 1900s to 1940s. From that period through the mid 1980s, the utility of form and function took priority from aesthetics,

design, and experience. Changes in population densities, aging equipment and infrastructure, and competition from the nascent ride-sharing industry, however, are now motivating mass transit agencies to modify their approach to planning concerning the user experience.<sup>10</sup> Art in public places and percent for art programs were codified as part of civic government practice in the 1960s and began receiving federal funding through the Department of Transportation in 1977. Mass transit operators began making more prolific efforts to accommodate opportunities and space for public art in the 1980s.<sup>11</sup> Today, many transit stations across the country have an element of public art installed as integrated design or stand-alone features.

Mass transit and arts agencies are increasingly seeking to improve the user experience by inviting their respective publics to explore public transit spaces in ways that go beyond the utilitarian. But because comprehensive planning for spaces in and around our mass transit modalities is influenced by multidimensional factors that must take into consideration old, existing, and new infrastructure; public safety and risk; and often several governmental jurisdictions, progress and change happen slowly.

In spite of the bureaucratic challenges of integrating art into mass transit systems, arts and culture agencies are staunch advocates for the allowance of site-specific art projects—permanent and temporary, visual and performative—throughout our mass transit systems. In recent years, temporary projects and performances have become increasingly popular. Ambience Design’s *Piano Stairs* (2009) was a simple one-day installation in the Odenplan Stockholm subway station that invited subway users to take the stairs instead of the elevator. By transforming the stair steps into piano keys, there was a 66 percent increase in stair usage the day of the installation. *Grand Central Lights* (2013), presented by Improv Everywhere, was a surprise performance sponsored by MTA Arts for Transit for the users of New York City’s Grand Central Station on the facility’s

100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The group used choreography with colored flashlights to activate the upper level of the station during their performance. Transit users slowed down, looked up, and enjoyed the show. The documentation of each work remains as permanent record and becomes transportable through likes and shares in social media outlets, giving each work a different type of permanence. Temporary and improvisational projects like random acts of culture can be planned and implemented quickly and are relatively low in cost but have a high impact on public engagement. More agencies are supporting opportunities for experimental projects such as these.

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Governmental agencies and the cultural sector are not the only change agents interested in investigating energy management, sustainable business practices, and user experiences related to our transit modalities. These two sectors will have to continue to partner with private interests and the general public to propagate effective and sustained changes. But through thoughtful, strategic, and inclusive planning, each sector can contribute the strengths of its individual expertise to positively impact the places where we work, where we travel, and how we live.

NOTES

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3. "Carbon Dioxide Emissions." *Environmental Protection Agency*, accessed February 9, 2015, <http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/ghgemissions/gases/co2.html>.
4. Daniel Jost, "A Green Way Through: How a Public Artist Made a New Highway More Palatable," *Public Art Review*, (Fall/Winter 2013), 56-59.
5. "Sustainability is living your life in a way that uses resources in a responsible way." See "Sustainable Business Practices: IISD's Checklist." *International Institute for Sustainable Development*, accessed February 27, 2015, [https://www.iisd.org/business/tools/principles\\_sbp.aspx](https://www.iisd.org/business/tools/principles_sbp.aspx).
6. Janet R. Daly Bednarek, *America's Airports: Airfield Development, 1918-1947* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001). 179-181.

7. Ibid.
8. Shahan Cheong, “Now Boarding: A History of Airports,” *Not Yet Published* (Blog), July 15, 2013, <https://scheong.wordpress.com/2013/07/15/now-boarding-a-history-of-airports/>.
9. “User Experience (UX) involves a person’s behaviors, attitudes, and emotions about using a particular product, system or service. User experience is dynamic as it is constantly modified over time due to changing usage circumstances and changes to individual systems as well as the wider usage context in which they can be found.” See “User Experience,” *Wikipedia*, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User\\_experience](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User_experience).
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11. David Allen, Peter Albert, Sandra Bloodworth, Maya Emseden, Mary Priester, Pallas Lombardi, and Christof Spieler, “Best Practices for Integrating Art Into Capital Projects,” *American Public Transportation Association*, [http://www.apta.com/resources/standards/Documents/APTA-SUDS-UD-RP-007-13\\_Booklet\\_Version.pdf](http://www.apta.com/resources/standards/Documents/APTA-SUDS-UD-RP-007-13_Booklet_Version.pdf).

## Arts in Healthy Communities: Additional Discussion and Resources

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The Transforming America’s Communities Through the Arts initiative, of which New Community Visions is a part, is an effort by Americans for the Arts and our partners to explore more deeply the important, symbiotic structure of America’s modern communities and to better understand the role that the arts can play in amplifying the positive impacts of the many sectors that exist inside every community.

This book has focused on 10 sectors, but Americans for the Arts generally has identified 30 sectors that we believe need to be considered when talking about creating and maintaining a healthy community, many of which can be aided by arts and culture.

In the efforts encompassed by Transforming America’s Communities Through the Arts, as well as in the day-to-day work of Americans for the Arts going back nearly 60 years, we continue to pursue an expanded, better appreciated, and better understood role for the arts in healthy community development and maintenance.

For more resources related to the varied role of arts in community development, we recommend exploring the following Americans for the Arts resources—as well as the Americans for the Arts website in general—and the many great resources outlined in the endnotes of each essay.

### **New Community Visions**

Keep track of the progress of New Community Visions by visiting [www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions)

### **Arts and the Military**

Americans for the Arts is a founding partner of the National Initiative for Arts & Health in the Military, and hosts the partnership’s website, [www.ArtsAcrossTheMilitary.org](http://www.ArtsAcrossTheMilitary.org), where you can



review full text of reports related to the role of arts in the lives of active military, veterans, and their families along with a list of upcoming events, a national network directory, and more.

## **Arts and the Economy**

For more than 20 years, Americans for the Arts has been at the forefront of measuring the economic impact of the arts on American communities and the United States, most visibly through the Arts and Economic Prosperity reports ([www.AmericansForTheArts.org/AEP](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/AEP)). Americans for the Arts also generates bi-annual Creative Industries reports on all U.S. counties, and is working to launch a new program called the Institute for the Creative Economy as part of the Transforming America's Communities Through the Arts initiative. Find out more about both at [www.AmericansForTheArts.org](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org).

## **Arts and Business**

Americans for the Arts has a robust set of programs and trainings around the role of the arts in the private sector, most notably the pARTnership Movement, which showcases the role that the arts can play in bettering businesses and other private sector organizations ([www.pARTnershipmovement.org](http://www.pARTnershipmovement.org)).

## **Arts and Civic Engagement**

For more than a decade, the Animating Democracy Initiative of Americans for the Arts has been exploring and developing the academic literature, case studies, and general knowledge and vocabulary around arts and civic engagement, social justice, and community health ([www.AnimatingDemocracy.org](http://www.AnimatingDemocracy.org)).

## Arts and Education

Americans for the Arts' arts education programming is a cornerstone of our belief in the role of arts in developing the communities of the future ([www.AmericansForTheArts.org/ArtsEd](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/ArtsEd)). We work with more than 30 other arts education organizations across the country on advocacy, research, policy, and capacity-building. We also implement large-scale programs and partnerships like the Arts Education State Public Policy Pilot Initiative ([www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SPPP](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/SPPP)), which seeks to encourage innovation around the adoption or adaptation of core arts standards in education at a state level, and the Arts Education Navigator series ([www.AmericansForTheArts.org/ArtsEdNavigator](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/ArtsEdNavigator)), which creates easy-to-use advocacy plans and tools for parents, students, and teachers, as well.

In addition to these specific areas of work, Americans for the Arts also houses a trove of research, policy, and practice documents for arts organizations, local arts agencies, and others in the arts sector through our website, [www.AmericansForTheArts.org](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org)

# **Arts and America: Arts, Culture, and the Future of America's Communities**

With contributions from Felipe Buitrago Restrepo, Rosa M. Cabrera,  
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ABOUT THE NEW COMMUNITY VISIONS INITIATIVE,  
PART OF TRANSFORMING AMERICA'S COMMUNITIES  
THROUGH THE ARTS

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The essays in *Arts and America* collectively form the first phase of an initiative called New Community Visions—a national visioning exercise for local arts agencies, arts organizations, artists, and those interested in better understanding the future role of arts and culture in helping American communities thrive.

New Community Visions is part of a sustained, three-year suite of large-scale initiatives from Americans for the Arts that are together called *Transforming America's Communities Through the Arts*. Through those initiatives, we hope to:

- generate dialogue on a national, state, and local level around the creation and sustainability of healthy communities;
- activate a diverse set of programming and partnerships spanning public, private, and nonprofit sectors;
- lay the groundwork for a collective movement forward over the next decade and beyond;
- and help leaders and the public better understand and celebrate arts and culture as mechanisms for creating and sustaining healthier, more vibrant, and more equitable communities in the United States.

[www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions](http://www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CommunityVisions)

This project is made possible through an ever-growing list of funders, partners, and advisors.

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FORUMS CURATOR AND DOCUMENTARIAN

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Michael Rohd and the Center for  
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 **Knight Foundation**



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NEW COMMUNITY VISIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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The New Community Visions Advisory Committee, which has informed the nature and trajectory of the project, includes:

- Jennifer Cole, Metro Nashville Arts Commission
- Deborah Cullinan, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts
- Carla Dirlikov, opera singer
- Randy Engstrom, Seattle Office of Arts & Culture
- Tatiana Hernandez, Hemera Foundation
- Maria Rosario Jackson, The Kresge Foundation
- Michael Killoren, National Endowment for the Arts
- Ron Ragin, composer and artist
- Holly Sidford, Helicon Collaborative
- Nick Slie, performing artist, Mondo Bizzaro
- Regina R. Smith, The Kresge Foundation
- Katie Steger, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation
- Carlton Turner, Alternate ROOTS
- Nella Vera, Serino/Coyne
- Laura Zabel, Springboard for the Arts

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## REGIONAL, STATE, AND LOCAL PARTNERS

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The regional gatherings associated with New Community Visions would not have been possible without the participation of this growing list of regional, state, and local partners who have contributed thought leadership, proposed the names of participants, and assisted in crafting the regional events.

Special thanks to our national funding partners, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts, for their significant support.

### **Regional**

- Arts Midwest
- Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation
- Mid-America Arts Alliance
- New England Foundation for the Arts
- SouthArts
- WESTAF

### **State**

- California Arts Council
- Georgia Council for the Arts
- Minnesota State Arts Board
- New Mexico Arts
- Oklahoma Arts Council
- Oklahomans for the Arts
- Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
- Vermont Arts Council
- West Virginia Division of Culture and History

## Local

- Allied Arts
- Arts & Business Council of Greater Philadelphia
- Arts Council of Oklahoma City
- Burlington City Arts
- Philadelphia Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy
- City of San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs
- City of Santa Fe Arts Commission
- Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences of West Virginia
- Creative Santa Fe
- Cultural Development Corporation
- Flynn Center for the Performing Arts
- Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance
- Macon Arts Alliance
- Metropolitan Regional Arts Council
- Minneapolis Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy
- Norman Arts Council
- Oklahoma City Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs