Nationwide District Phone Survey Report
Compiled by Jessica Ferey

TABLE OF CONTENTS

• Introduction
• Definition
• Types of Cultural Districts
• Survey Methodology
• Questions & Answers from Participants
  1) Describe the District in the community you serve.
  2) Describe your revenue sources.
  2a) If most revenue comes from events, what kinds of events are they?
      What are their budgets and how are they funded?
  3) What kinds of resources do you need most in order to successfully run
     these districts?
  4) Audience: Who visits your District and how do you engage your
     community in general? How do you track this?
  4a) How do you engage the community in your decision-making processes?
  5) Describe your evaluation methods. Which do you rely on most to
     evaluate success?
  6) What kind of partnerships do you have, if any, with your local arts
     council and/or local government?
  6a) Describe any other important partnerships you have with local
     organizations.
  7) If incentives are offered, what have been the most successful incentives
     and why?
  8) What does the success of your district look like from various community
     perspectives? (City manager, arts leaders, artists, etc)
  9) What districts do you compare yourself to?
 10) For a newer District: What were the main challenges when going
     through the process of establishing the district?
 10a) For established districts: what are the main challenges you currently
     face?

• Recommendations
• List of Participants
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

Introduction

In recent decades, cities around the world have turned to creative placemaking as a tool for urban revitalization, economic development, and community engagement. Many of these efforts have involved the creation of cultural districts. In the next 15 years, it is estimated that creative placemaking projects will garner more than $200 billion in investment across the world.¹

Considering the ever-growing interest in these districts and the high level of investment that makes them a reality, Americans for the Arts sought to better understand the needs and challenges of cultural districts in the United States. Efforts to do so began with the publishing of the first-of-its-kind guide, *The Cultural Districts Handbook* in 1998, written by Hilary Anne Frost-Kumpf. Building upon that handbook, Americans for the Arts conducted an online survey in 2012 of some 500 districts in the United States. In the summer of 2014, a more focused phone survey was conducted with 42 cultural districts across the country as part of the National Cultural Districts Exchange, a collection of tools, literature, and more for those interested in starting or improving an arts, entertainment, or cultural district.

The 10-question phone survey revealed the uniqueness of each district, but also shed light on some of the commonalities between them. The results of the survey will hopefully help districts identify others similar to them and create opportunities for further dialogue and collaborative problem-solving or resource-sharing.

Definition

For the purposes of this survey, we use the below definition for cultural district. They are known by many, many names, but all share these similar characteristics.

A cultural district, or an arts and entertainment district, is a well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use area of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as the anchor of attraction and robust economic activity. More than 500 communities in the United States have designated cultural districts.

Cultural districts:

- Are unique to the character, community, and resources available locally.

NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

- Have a significant economic impact on cities—attracting businesses, tourists, and local residents to a central part of the city.
- Can help revitalize neighborhoods and increase the quality of life for its residents.
- Act as a vehicle to assist in the support and marketing of local nonprofit cultural organizations.
- Serve as a focal point to brand a city’s unique cultural identity and embrace its historic significance.

Types of Cultural Districts

Cultural compounds are the oldest districts, primarily established in cities prior to the 1930s. They were built in areas somewhat removed from the city’s central business district and have large, open green spaces between buildings. They often comprise major museums, large performing halls, theaters and auditoriums, colleges, libraries, planetariums and zoos.

Newer districts are most easily categorized by their focal points, or anchoring establishments.

- **Focused on Major Cultural Institution**
  These are anchored by one or two major cultural institutions, such as a large performing arts center, which then attracts smaller arts organizations around it. These districts are located close to central business districts, near convention centers or other large tourism sites.

- **Focused on the Downtown Area**
  These encompass the entire downtown area of a city. Designation is often tied to a tourism focus and is common in small cities with walkable downtowns.

- **Focused on Cultural Production**
  These are comprised primarily of community centers, artist studios, educational arts centers, and media facilities and often exist in areas with affordable housing and commercial space. These districts create a cultural hub and enhance city livability for residents of a neighborhood rather than attracting tourists.

- **Focused on Arts and Entertainment**
  These generally consist of more popular culture and commercial attractions and include more modest size buildings with a bohemian feel. They include small theaters, movie houses, private galleries, restaurants, and other entertainment venues.
• Focused on Organic Growth (called Naturally Occurring Districts)
  These are usually are rooted in community-based cultures and identities building on asset-based strategies. They are holistic and are highly diverse and led by local empowered leadership. Generally, they are neighborhood-based and artist-driven.

Methodology

In 2013, Americans for the Arts conducted an online survey of some 500 cultural districts. From that list, Americans for the Arts identified 93 cultural districts for this phone survey to ensure a broad cross-section of various size and geographic location. Of those 93 identified, 42 completed the survey and are included in this report. Americans for the Arts was most interested in hearing from those districts that completed the survey with extensive comments or those that began filling out the survey but did not fully complete it. The 42 districts that completed the phone survey are those who responded positively to the request to participate.

In addition to the 42 districts that completed the phone survey, many others responded, but because of the unique nature of cultural districts and how they fit within local communities, it was difficult to fit them within the scope of our survey. Some of the more naturally occurring cultural districts do not have a single leader who could answer these questions or represent the district as a whole. Future research in this area could be beneficial for understanding the more organic and grassroots cultural areas of cities as designated cultural districts may have much to learn from them.

The surveys were implemented over the phone and usually lasted between 20 to 60 minutes. The researcher asked a series of 10 questions which each received a wide array of responses.

The following questions were asked:

1) Describe the district in the community you serve.

2) Describe your revenue sources.

2a) If most revenue comes from events, what kinds of events are they? What are their budgets and how are they funded?

3) What kinds of resources do you need most in order to successfully run these districts?

4) Audience: Who visits your district and how do you engage your community in general? How do you track this?
4a) How do you engage the community in your decision-making processes?

5) Describe your evaluation methods. Which do you rely on most to evaluate success?

6) What kind of partnerships do you have, if any, with your local arts council and/or local government?

6a) Describe any other important partnerships you have with local organizations.

7) If incentives are offered, what have been the most successful incentives and why?

8) What does the success of your district look like from various community perspectives? (City manager, arts leaders, artists, etc)

9) What districts do you compare yourself to?

10) For a newer district: What were the main challenges when going through the process of establishing the district?

10a) For established districts: what are the main challenges you currently face?

Survey Responses: Major Themes

For the purposes of this report, sample answers to each question were pulled from each district's responses, showcasing the most interesting or most relevant themes to each question. The responses selected to be included in the survey exemplify the breadth of diversity between each district while also pinpointing some of the commonalities between them. Many of these themes reveal the differences and similarities between all of the districts surveyed and provide examples of various funding models, partnerships, community engagement strategies, and more.
QUESTION 1: DESCRIPT THE DISTRICT IN THE COMMUNITY YOU SERVE

A variety of cultural districts were surveyed, ranging from state-designated ones to districts that are informally managed by ambitious community members. Some districts are run by their local arts council or local arts agency while others are run by a downtown neighborhood association or similar organization. In other cases, individual nonprofits were formed to manage the districts.

The districts included in this report vary in size, ranging from one block to more than 80 blocks. Some districts are anchored by a major cultural institution while others are made up of a community of artists producing work in the district. A wide range of activities occur in each of these districts, including monthly or weekly art walks, small to large festivals, block parties, concerts, and more. Below is the summary of each district surveyed.

RESPONSES

Scottsdale Arts District
Scottsdale, AZ
Surveyed: Ben Morriarty, Downtown Specialist, City of Scottsdale
http://www.experiencescottsdale.com/explore-by-area/downtown/

The Scottsdale Arts District grew organically out of nearly 100 art galleries that make up part of the downtown area and boasts one of the oldest ArtWalk traditions in the country, with a weekly art walk that began 40 years ago. The City of Scottsdale has recognized the success and impact of this area and has put up street poll banners with signage designating the area as an arts district as well as funding infrastructure changes throughout the district so that the area has a more cohesive look. The Scottsdale Gallery Association is a membership-based nonprofit organization that manages the weekly art walks, while the City of Scottsdale markets and advertises the district for tourism purposes.

Escondido Arts District
Escondido, CA
Surveyed: Wendy Wilson, Executive Director, Escondido Arts Partnership
https://www.escondido.org/Data/Sites/1/media/pdfs/EscondidoArtDistrict.pdf

The Escondido Arts District is an example of a naturally occurring arts district that has no official state designation, but is informally managed by the Escondido Arts Partnership. The district is in downtown Escondido and includes the California Center for the Arts, the Escondido Arts Partnership Municipal Gallery, and a plethora of other
galleries and artists’ studios. The district is well known for its Second Saturday Art Walks.

**Gallery Row**
Los Angeles, CA
Surveyed: Nic Cha Kim, President, Gallery Row
http://www.galleryrow.org/

The Gallery Row Creative District in downtown Los Angeles grew organically out of about three galleries 10 years ago and has since grown to include roughly 35 galleries, a few smaller museums, and many public art installations. Nic Cha Kim, president of the Gallery Row organization, realized the need for managing the area, founded the official district, and created an organization to administer it. Monthly art walks have become so popular, attracting 25,000 visitors a month, that a subsidiary organization was created to manage them.

**Santa Rosa Arts District**
Santa Rosa, CA
Surveyed: Tara Thompson, Arts Coordinator, City of Santa Rosa Recreation, Parks & Community Services

The Santa Rosa Arts District was established in 2006 with the goal of building a thriving public art program as well as offering opportunities for community members to enjoy and experience cultural offerings. The district is run by the Recreation & Parks Department as well as an Art in Public Places committee, both of which focus on marketing the district and managing events.

**Carbondale Creative District**
Carbondale, CO
Surveyed: Amy Kimberly, Executive Director, CCAH Center for the Arts
http://www.carbondalearts.com/creative-planning/

The Carbondale Creative District is currently a candidate for official designation from the Colorado Creative Industries Creative District Program. The area being considered covers about one to two square miles of the historic downtown core with more than 18 historic buildings, several art galleries, major arts nonprofits, restaurants, and a brewery.
Art District on Santa Fe
Denver, CO
http://www.artdistrictonsantafe.com/
Surveyed: Jack Pappalardo, President, Denver's Art District on Santa Fe

The Art District on Sante Fe was one of the first creative districts certified by the State of Colorado in 2012. Even before that, starting in 2003, a variety of creative industry members worked together through grassroots efforts to develop a walkable area downtown. The district now boasts a large First Friday art walk, attracting more than 10,000 visitors monthly.

SoNo Design District
South Norwalk, CT
Surveyed: Stephanie Pelletier, SoNo Marketing Director, T.R. SoNo Partners
http://sonodesigndistrict.net/

The SoNo Design District is not officially designated by the city or state, but is managed by T.R. SONO Partners, a property owner company that fueled the revitalization project of an area filled with restored historic buildings, new buildings, restaurants, museums, galleries, movie theaters, and an aquarium.

Village of the Arts District
Bradenton, FL
Surveyed: Nash Amara, President, The Artists Guild of Manatee, Inc.
http://www.villageofthearts.com/index.php

The Village of the Arts is Florida's largest artist colony and is the result of a partnership between the City of Bradenton and local artists who came together to create the Artists Guild of Manatee to revitalize the neighborhood through art. A city-designated overlay district incentivized the refurbishment of residential buildings in the area, which now house artist live-work spaces and other businesses.

Riverwalk District
Bradenton, FL
Surveyed: David Gustafson, Executive Director, Bradenton Downtown Development Authority
http://www.realizebradenton.com/index.php/riverwalk

The Downtown Development Authority and Realize Bradenton partnered together with others to turn 1.5 miles along the Manatee River into an enjoyable, walkable area for the community and tourists. This area includes playgrounds, an amphitheater, open grass
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

areas for festivals and events, a skate park, boating activities, an art center, and residential buildings. Many events take place on the Riverwalk such as concerts, festivals, art talks, educational events, and more.

Downtown Dubuque Cultural Corridor
Dubuque, IA
Surveyed: Dan Lobianco, Executive Director, Dubuque Main Street, Ltd.
http://www.dubuquemainstreet.org/index.html

The Downtown Dubuque Cultural Corridor consists of 90 square blocks, encompassing the entirety of the downtown district. This is exceptionally large for a city of 60,000 inhabitants. The district includes historical churches and theaters, a museum, many galleries, restaurants, businesses, and residences. While the district received official state designation about 10 years ago, it has been considered a cultural district for more than 20 years.

Western Gateway Cultural and Entertainment District:
Des Moines, IA
Surveyed: Glenn Lyons, President & CEO, Downtown Community Alliance
http://www.downtowndesmoines.com/western-gateway-association

The Western Gateway Cultural and Entertainment District is described as a revitalized neighborhood, where empty car dealerships and auto repair shops have been replaced by a sculpture park, an education center, office campuses, residential buildings, and restaurants. Older industrial warehouses are perfect for being converted to mixed-use buildings; one of these has already been converted into an affordable housing building, which many artists qualify for. Depending on the kind of art that is made, many artists are allowed to have their studios there as well.

Fairfield Cultural and Entertainment District
Fairfield, IA
Surveyed: Denyce Rusch, President, Fairfield Cultural Alliance
http://www.fairfieldculturaldistrict.org/

The Fairfield Cultural and Entertainment District is a state-designated district administered by the Fairfield Cultural Alliance. The district comprises about two square miles of downtown Fairfield and includes many historic buildings, a new Convention Center, art galleries, restaurants, and a variety of other businesses.
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

Chicago Arts District
Chicago, IL
Surveyed: Cynthia West, Director, Chicago Arts District Organization
http://chicagoartsdistrict.org/

The Chicago Arts District is a unique form of a cultural district. It grew from the vision of the Podmajersky family, who have not only served as property owners of buildings in the area, but are also passionate stewards for the community, supporting artists and other creative entrepreneurs in growing their businesses in the district. The Podmajersky family has converted buildings into live-work spaces for artists and launched the Chicago Arts District organization to manage the activities within the area, including a monthly art walk and the Pilsen East Artists Open House.

Bloomington Arts & Entertainment District (BEAD)
Bloomington, IN
Surveyed: Miah Michaelsen, Assistant Economic Development Director for the Arts, City of Bloomington
http://visitbead.com/

The Bloomington Arts and Entertainment District (BEAD) covers 60 blocks of the downtown area near Indiana University and includes several established cultural organizations, galleries, parks, restaurants, and variety of retail shops. BEAD is an officially designated district by the Indiana Arts Commission and is a program of Bloomingdale’s Economic Development Department. This department provides programming support, marketing, networking, partner development, sponsorships, and information referral. The department also oversees the public art programs within the district.

Horse Cave Cultural District
Horse Cave, KY
Surveyed: Sandra Wilson, Executive Director, Horse Cave/Hart County Tourist Commission
http://www.kentuckytourism.com/things_to_do/featured_attractions/horse-cave-cultural-district/10966/

The Horse Cave Cultural District was the result of a pilot project implemented by the Kentucky Arts Council to map out cultural activities and create a framework for cultural district groups. The district later received state designation; however, shortly after that time the district’s major theater, the Kentucky Repertory Theatre, closed its doors and the state revoked the certification. Luckily, the designation was a great impetus for the group to organize itself and the district continues to flourish even without an official...
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

designation. The location of the district coincides with a National Register district that includes 50 historic buildings.

Hammond Cultural District
Hammond, LA
Surveyed: Terry Lynn Smith, Executive Director, Hammond Downtown Development District

The Hammond Cultural District received state designation in 2009, allowing artists to sell their work without having to charge local and state taxes. There is also a Downtown Development District which manages streetscape improvements, hosts events, and helps the city with a variety of projects that make downtown Hammond an attractive destination for local residents and tourists.

Charlestown Cultural District
Charlestown, LA
Surveyed: Erica McCreedy, Executive Director, Arts Council of SWLA
http://www.visitlakecharles.org/things-to-do/arts-and-culture/cultural-districts/

The Charlestown Cultural District is a state-certified cultural district encompassing the entirety of downtown Lake Charles, home to a myriad of restaurants, locally owned businesses, boutiques, and mixed-used residential/commercial properties. Additionally, a variety of downtown arts events take place, including outdoor concert series, art walks, and festivals.

Canalway Cultural District of Lowell
Lowell, MA
Surveyed: Susan Halter, Executive Director, Cultural Organization of Lowell (COOL)
http://www.cultureiscool.org/canalway-cultural-district

Lowell’s cultural scene has been thriving since 1998, when the City of Lowell designated the downtown area as an arts district in order to assign zoning that would allow for artist live-work spaces. In 2010, the Canalway Cultural District received official state designation through the Massachusetts Cultural Council’s Cultural Districts Initiative. The district is now a walkable stretch of downtown that includes major arts organizations, artist studios and galleries, performance spaces, and many other businesses. During the process of applying for state designation, many individual organizations came together to form a partnership which led to the creation of the Cultural Organization of Lowell, an umbrella organization that looks out for the needs of cultural institutions in the city, providing funding and marketing support.

Nationwide District Phone Survey Report
www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CulturalDistricts
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

Station North Arts and Entertainment District
Baltimore, MD
Surveyed: Ben Stone, Executive Director, Station North Arts and Entertainment, Inc.
http://www.stationnorth.org/

The Station North Arts and Entertainment District is a 100-acre area comprised of the Charles North, Greenmount West, and Barclay neighborhoods and includes a combination of residential buildings, artist live-work spaces, residential row homes, galleries, music venues, and other businesses. Station North was the first area in Maryland to receive official state designation as an Arts and Entertainment District and continues to be lauded as a national model.

Bromo Tower Arts and Entertainment District
Baltimore, MD
Surveyed: Priya Bhayana, Director, Bromo Tower Arts & Entertainment District
http://www.bromodistrict.org/

The Bromo Tower Arts and Entertainment District is a state-designated arts and entertainment district in downtown Baltimore. This area includes a mix of office and residential towers and historic buildings and is served by many different modes of transportation, including the light rail.

Highlandtown Arts and Entertainment District
Baltimore, MD
Surveyed: Chris Ryer, President, Southeast Community Development Corporation
www.highlandtownarts.com/

In 2003, the Highlandtown Arts and Entertainment District was the second district in Baltimore to receive city designation as an official arts and entertainment district. It encompasses Highlandtown, Patterson Park, and parts of Canton and Greektown. The district has evolved continuously as the neighborhood undergoes demographic changes. A steering committee led by local community members focuses on community arts as a tool for building social capital.

Bel Air Arts and Entertainment District
Bel Air, MD
Surveyed: Angela Robertson, Grants Coordinator, Economic Development, Town of Bel Air
http://www.belairartsandentertainment.org/
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

The Bel Air Arts and Entertainment District is a state-designated district in Maryland and lies in the historic Main Street area, which includes many businesses, a gallery, a community center, multiple parks, and an outdoor band shell where many events are held.

Downtown Frederick Arts and Entertainment District
Frederick, MD
Surveyed: Kara Norman, Executive Director, Downtown Frederick Partnership
http://www.downtownfrederick.org/a_e_district

The Downtown Frederick Arts and Entertainment District is officially designated by the Maryland Arts and Entertainment District program and includes a black box theater, a larger theater, several arts-related venues, and public art on the streets. The District is co-managed by the Downtown Frederick Partnership, which oversees the economic development of the area, and the Frederick Arts Council, which manages the artist registry and other arts-related happenings.

Downtown Minneapolis Cultural District
Minneapolis, MN
Surveyed: Karen Nelson, Communications Director, Hennepin Theatre Trust
http://www.hennepintheatretrust.org/culturaldistrict

Previously known as the “Hennepin Avenue Cultural Corridor,” this area is now called the "Downtown Minneapolis Cultural District" and has undergone significant improvements thanks to an National Endowment for the Arts Our Town grant as well as a cultural plan led by a coalition of organizations including the Hennepin Theatre Trust, the Walker Art Center, Artspace, and the City of Minneapolis. This district is a large walkable center for arts and culture stretching from the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden to the Mississippi River front.

Northeast Minneapolis Arts District
Minneapolis, MN
Surveyed: Alejandra Pelinka, Executive Director, Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association
http://www.northeastminneapolisartsdistrict.com/

The Northeast Minneapolis Arts District is a city-designated district that includes a diverse blend of businesses, restaurants, artist live/work spaces, and a mix of industrial and residential properties. More than 400 artists work within the district and a variety of arts-related events that happen within the district have attracted statewide attention. The creation of the district was the result of a 15-year “Arts Action Plan for Northeast Minneapolis” coordinated by the Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association (NEMAA). The
district is currently managed by the Northeast Arts District Committee while NEMAA organizes and hosts events throughout the area.

Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District
Peculiar, MO
Surveyed: Brenda Conway, President, Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District
http://www.downtownpeculiar.com/

The Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District covers a little under 75 acres of land in the old part of downtown. Unlike traditional downtowns, this area is not made up of blocks and does not include many historic buildings. Instead, it comprises small commercial spaces and many bungalow houses. The city created zoning to turn buildings into mixed commercial and residential use.

Grand Center Arts and Entertainment District
St. Louis, MO
Surveyed: Vincent Schoemehl, Jr., Executive Director, Grand Center, Inc.
http://www.grandcenter.org/

The Grand Center Arts and Entertainment District is a city-designated district encompassing four square blocks, comprised of 40 nonprofit arts organizations and holding more than 1,500 events annually. Over the last 10 years, the arts have transformed the area into a major cultural destination for local residents and tourists alike. Grand Center, Inc. is a nonprofit organization created to manage and coordinate the activities that spur economic growth in the district.

Cary Cultural District
Cary, NC
Surveyed: Lyman Collins, Cultural Arts Manager, Town of Cary
http://www.townofcary.org/Departments/fdts/facilities/Current_Projects/Town_Center_Civic_Cultural_Arts_Study/Cary_Cultural_District_Business_Plan.htm

The Cary Cultural District is an informal district created to boost the downtown area as a cultural destination. The district includes an arts and history center, a main art center, a recently renovated historic theater, artist studios and galleries, and other businesses. A Business Improvement District overlay covers the same downtown area, and the city has hired downtown development managers to work with the cultural division.
Glasstown Arts District  
Millville, NJ  
Surveyed: Marianne Lods, Executive Director, Millville Development Corporation  
http://www.glasstownartsdistrict.com/  

The Glasstown Arts District is a city-designated arts district that has been in existence for about 15 years. A zoning overlay allows for mixed-use properties, encouraging artists to use buildings as live-work spaces. The city first focused on a one-block portion of a six-block area. Success spread quickly and the district now encompasses all six blocks.

Riverhead Arts District  
Riverhead, NY  
Surveyed: Chris Kempner, Community Development Director, Town of Riverhead  

The Riverhead Arts District received town designation that implemented zoning to encourage artists to reside downtown above street-level retail shops while two historic theaters, including the recently refurbished Suffolk Theater, have become the cultural anchors of the area. The East End Arts council resides within the district and works with the Business Improvement District to offer artistic programming in this area.

East 4th Street Cultural District  
New York, NY  
Surveyed: Tamara Greenfield, Executive Director, Fourth Arts Block  
http://fabnyc.org/  

The East 4th Street Cultural District is a one-block area in the East Village in Manhattan, established to preserve the homes of arts organizations that have been there for many decades. While only one block long, this district encompasses many theaters, dance/rehearsal studios, film editing suites, and a large screening room. The area received official designation from the Department of City Planning. Fourth Art Block (FAB) manages the district, providing marketing and promotion for member organizations and leading programming efforts.

Canton Arts District  
Canton, OH  
Surveyed: Tricia Ostertag, Community Arts Manager, ArtsinStark  
http://cantonartsdistrict.com/  

The Canton Arts District encompasses 16 blocks of downtown Canton, OH and includes six galleries, 22 artist studios, 50 pieces of public art, and many other businesses.
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

Signage around this area of downtown labels the Canton Arts District, but the district itself is not officially designated as such.

Short North Arts District
Columbus, OH
Surveyed: Betsy Pandora, Executive Director, Short North Alliance
http://www.shortnorth.org/

The Short North Arts District is Columbus' oldest self-proclaimed arts district, which now comprises more than 255 unique businesses including art galleries, boutique retailers, fashion retailers, restaurants, bars, and a variety of other businesses. The Short North Alliance is a nonprofit organization that operates the Special Improvement District, funds public improvements, a public art program, oversees marketing and communication of the district, and coordinates the monthly Gallery Hop event.

Gordon Square Arts District
Cleveland, OH
Surveyed: Theresa Schneider, Development Manager, Gordon Square Arts District
http://www.gordonsquare.org/

The Gordon Square Arts District (GSAD) is a unique collaboration of three nonprofit arts organizations that employ the arts as a catalyst for economic development through revitalization of the Detroit Shoreway neighborhood including 1) streetscape improvements; 2) parking acquisition and development; 3) restoration and reopening of the shuttered Capitol Theatre; 4) renovation of Cleveland Public Theatre (CPT); and 5) construction of Near West Theatre (NWT). GSAD, LLC, was formed in 2007 by CPT, NWT, and the Detroit Shoreway Community Development Corporation (DSCDO), with a $30 million Capital Campaign goal. The district has attracted more than 75 new businesses and boasts a booming housing market with low vacancy rates. The district includes many artist live/work spaces and the neighborhood has begun attracting and retaining families and young professionals.

Alberta Arts District
Portland, OR
Surveyed: Sara Wittenberg, Executive Director, Alberta Main Street
http://albertamainst.org/

The Alberta Arts District is a neighborhood commercial corridor stretching 22 blocks in the northeast quadrant of the city of Portland. This is a mixed-use area comprised of various types of businesses, galleries, and artist studios. The arts district itself does not
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS
EXCHANGE

have an official city or state designation, but is part of a downtown business district administered by the Alberta Main Street nonprofit organization.

Oil City Arts District
Oil City, PA
Surveyed: Joann Wheeler, ARTS Oil City Arts Revitalization/Artist Relocation program
http://www.oilcity.org/economicbusiness-development/arts-oil-city

The Oil City Arts District is an informally designated district that comprises several blocks of a city that is only four square miles. The ARTS Oil City Artist Relocation program was created in 2006 by the city as a tool for downtown redevelopment, recognizing the important contribution artists and arts-based businesses can have on revitalization. The program offers special financing incentives for artists who wish to live/work within the designated area or for the establishment of art galleries.

Providence Downtown Entertainment District and West Side Arts District
Providence, RI
Surveyed: Lynne McCormack, Director, Department of Art, Culture & Tourism
http://www.arts.ri.gov/special/districts/

Two districts were included in this survey: The Downtown Entertainment District comprises the core of downtown, flanked by a performing arts center, a regional repertory theater company, grassroots arts organizations, and other major cultural institutions. The West Side Arts District rambles through a few different neighborhoods in an old industrial quarter of the city and along Little Italy, a major tourist destination. This district is much more eclectic and is home to many artists. A Downtown Improvement District manages the public space within these areas, where arts and entertainment venues play a key role.

Knoxville Downtown Arts District
Knoxville, TN
Surveyed: Liza Zenni, Executive Director, Arts & Culture Alliance of Greater Knoxville
http://www.moretoknoxville.com/

The Knoxville Downtown Arts District began as a revitalization effort by the city more than a dozen years ago, starting with improving the Emporium Center, a vacant building that was turned over to house many nonprofit arts organizations in the area. The building also houses artist studio spaces and rehearsal, classroom, and meeting spaces. After its reopening, eight new galleries opened up within a few blocks and monthly First Friday art walks began. The city, recognizing the revitalization happening around this area, began infrastructure improvements including building better sidewalks, adding benches, and
planting trees. This success has been the impetus to beautify other parts of downtown, including a local park which will benefit from public art selected by a newly developed public art committee.

Dallas Arts District
Dallas, TX
Surveyed: Catherine Cuellar, Executive Director, Dallas Arts District
http://www.thedallasartsdistrict.org/

The Dallas Arts District is a city- and state-designated cultural district, having been grandfathered in under the cultural district program created by the Texas Commission on the Arts. The district covers 20 contiguous square blocks and houses performance halls, art museums, the Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts, restaurants, residences and businesses, and four historic churches.

Huntsville Cultural District
Huntsville, TX
Surveyed: Linda Pease, Cultural Services Coordinator, City of Huntsville
http://huntsvilleculturaldistrict.com/

The Huntsville Cultural District is a state designated cultural district through the Texas Commission on the Arts. The district is made up of about 80 blocks, includes many cultural entities, a historic cemetery, and the Sam Houston State University with a highly regarded performing arts center.

Richmond Arts and Cultural District
Richmond, VA
Surveyed: Nicholas Feucht, Special Assistant to the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for Economic Development and Planning
http://www.yesrichmondva.com/neighborhood-revitalization/Broad-Street-ArtBiz-District

The Richmond Arts and Cultural District is a city-ordained district that includes some 80 blocks along the Broad Street corridor of downtown Richmond. This area includes several large cultural organizations, many galleries that participate in a monthly art walk, as well as a few mixed-use buildings, restaurants, and other commercial businesses.

Bristol Arts and Entertainment District
Bristol, VA
Surveyed: Brad White, Associate Director, Believe in Bristol
http://believeinbristol.org/arts.php
The Bristol Arts and Entertainment District is city-designated district devised to create a positive environment for people to interact with Downtown Bristol through arts and culture. Bristol's district is unique in that half of the town is in Virginia and half of it is in Tennessee. While the Tennessee side does not have official district designation, activities are spread out throughout the district, including festivals such as the annual “Rhythm and Roots” music festival and a “State of the Arts” Celebration.
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

QUESTION 2: DESCRIBE YOUR REVENUE SOURCES

The districts surveyed described a wide range of revenue sources:
- Federal, state, and local funds
- Grants
- Sponsorships
- Income from special taxes
- Revenue generated from event and fundraisers
- Special funding from Business Improvement District Incentives or Tax Increment Financing overlays
- Membership dues
- And more

RESPONSES

Scottsdale Arts District
The City of Scottsdale’s Tourism Development Program offers grant support for programming and events within the city, and the arts district often benefits from these grants. The Scottsdale Gallery Association, made up of the galleries within the arts district, receives its revenue from membership dues.

Downtown Dubuque Cultural Corridor
The Downtown Dubuque Cultural Corridor’s yearly budget is made up of 20 percent from private sector funding, 20 percent from the City of Dubuque, 20 percent from in-kind contributions, 25 percent from events, and 15 percent from grants and other sources.

Fairfield Cultural and Entertainment District
The Cultural District of Fairfield operates due to a Cultural Trust Fund which started with $20,000 from the City of Fairfield, and now grows steadily to support the district. Additionally, the Cultural Alliance produces a heritage book about the town which is given out for free but generates revenue through the sale of ads in the book.

Chicago Arts District
The Chicago Arts District provides a fascinating example of a privately funded district: all of the funding is thanks to the generosity of the Podmajersky family who are dedicated to the promotion of arts and culture. The family provides all of the funding for the successful management of the district, including operational funding and an annual budget for event support.
Grand Center Arts and Entertainment District
Grand Center receives one third of its earned income from the parking lot it owns. The rest is raised through various fundraising efforts from foundations, corporations, and individuals.

Glasstown Arts District
Glasstown enjoys constant and steady funding from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts and the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation. The rest of the funding comes from a variety of smaller grants and corporate donations.

Gordon Square Arts District
The Gordon Square Arts District has nearly completed a $30 million campaign which includes funds to cover operating expenses for the Gordon Arts District through the end of 2014. The campaign has received funds from foundations, corporations, all levels of government, and individuals.

Knoxville Downtown Arts District:
While the Knoxville Downtown Arts District receives some money from the county, the county does not offer grants, only contracts for services. The Arts & Culture Alliance of Greater Knoxville was concerned and came up with an idea to do contracts for services where the Alliance served as the main contractor to the county and its 26 nonprofit members would be subcontractors. These members deliver 4,200 tourism-g geared events and activities which are promoted by the Alliance. The Alliance then tracks audiences and visitors and reports back to the county to show the county’s return on investment, tracking how much money is spent within downtown when visitors come in.

Dallas Arts District
Funding for the Dallas Arts District primarily comes from dues paid by stakeholders within the 20-block parameter. Additionally, funds come from private sources, including foundation grants and sponsorships. The Dallas Arts District also falls within two Public Improvement Districts which receive various benefits such as augmented sanitation services, a free circulating shuttle which has stops within the district, as well as tax incentives which will begin to benefit the Arts District in 2015. Some events in the Arts District also receive funding from the Dallas Tourism Public Improvement District incentives.

Richmond Arts and Cultural District
Most of the funding for the development of Richmond’s arts district has been provided by corporate donors, Venture Richmond, and funding directly from the City of Richmond. The city receives revenue from the district, including real estate taxes, personal property taxes, sales taxes, admissions taxes, licensing taxes, and meals taxes. These tax
revenues go directly back into the district for general beautification, police protection, and so on. The City of Richmond also offers façade improvement grants to those located within the district.

**QUESTION 2A: IF MOST REVENUE COMES FROM EVENTS, WHAT KINDS OF EVENTS ARE THEY? WHAT ARE THEIR BUDGETS AND HOW ARE THEY FUNDED?**

There is an even mix between districts that program events within their districts and those that do not. Some of these are revenue-generating while others simply break-even and are funded by sponsorships or special grants.

**RESPONSES**

**Escondido Arts District**
The Escondido Arts District is home to many events throughout the year. Two events are specifically put on as fundraisers for the district: The Recycled Materials Runway Event (in conjunction with San Diego Fashion Week) and an annual art auction.

**Western Gateway Cultural and Entertainment District**
The Downtown Community Alliance oversees most of the programming that occurs within the district. The Des Moines Arts Festival has a budget of $900,000; attracts 225,000 visitors annually; and showcases 150 juried artists from the United States and Canada. This event pays for itself, with $500,000 coming from fundraising efforts while the rest is a mix of artist fees, food vending fees, and beverage sales. Many other events take place within the district, but are put on by various other nonprofits.

**Downtown Frederick Arts and Entertainment District**
The Downtown Frederick Arts and Entertainment District holds a variety of events that generate revenue, including “Alive at 5,” an outdoor happy hour with live music, a downtown cooking school, outdoor movie nights, and a progressive dinner. These events are funded by the Downtown Frederick Partnership and revenue generated is poured back into the district.

**Station North Arts and Entertainment District**
The Station North Arts and Entertainment District receives some income from its Community Supported Art program as well as revenue from frequent outdoor concerts and performances through sales of alcohol, t-shirts, and catalogues; however, this revenue is only marginal compared to its overall budget.
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

Grand Center Arts and Entertainment District
Grand Center holds an annual New Year’s Eve festival called “First Night” which is an alcohol-free family celebration that generates revenue through ticket sales. Otherwise, many of the nonprofits within the district generate their own revenue through ticket sales for performances and other events.

Short North Arts District
Short North holds the “nation’s fiercest costume party,” a two-day festival called “High Ball” now in its seven year. The festival closes down four blocks of downtown. Revenue generated from the event goes back to supporting the neighborhood.

Glasstown Arts District
Glasstown Arts District has just implemented a new event called “The Art Bar,” which has proved to be very successful. Tickets to this monthly event in a pub within the district covers two hours of art instruction led by a professional artist, art supplies, a beverage, and snacks. This has brought in significant crowds and generates some revenue for the district. They have recently developed a children’s version with ice cream.

Gordon Square Arts District
While many organizations within the district hold their own events, GSAD only puts on one annual fundraising event called Hip 2B Square, which nets about $50,000-$100,000, primarily from sponsorships. Revenue is also generated by ticket sales, auctions or raffles, and in-kind donations.

Alberta Arts District
Alberta Main Street holds a large annual event called the Alberta Street Fair. This fair occupies a 20-block stretch which is closed to traffic and showcases more than 300 vendors. Total budget is about $55,000 and revenue is generated from vendor fees and event sponsorships.

Knoxville Downtown Arts District
The Knoxville Downtown Arts District produces many events, some of which do generate income that goes back into supporting the district. The Americana music festival “Rhythm n’ Blooms” is a three-day festival that attracts a large audience and generates some revenue. Additionally, because this festival happens in bars, liquor sales go up during this time.

Bristol Arts and Entertainment District
An annual beer garden event called Border Bash generates revenue through drink sales which goes back into promoting the district.
QUESTION 3: WHAT KINDS OF RESOURCES DO YOU NEED MOST IN ORDER TO SUCCESSFULLY RUN THESE DISTRICTS?

Survey participants shared a variety of answers to this question. The most oft-cited answer was the need for general operating support. This is often the case because it is easier to secure project grants and funds for specific programs than for general operating costs. The second most cited answers was the need for paid staff, especially an executive director who can manage the everyday needs of the districts. Or, when a district does have one or two paid staff, more personnel would be beneficial. Operational support would of course facilitate the hiring of such staff.

Another important resource that districts need is marketing dollars. Many districts serve as marketers for events and activities that happen within their districts and funds for this are in high demand. Many districts noted the need for more partnerships and sponsorships as well as public money for infrastructure improvements (such as beautification projects, sidewalk improvements, lighting, etc). In terms of non-monetary resources, many districts mentioned the need for more community buy-in and more institutional and merchant buy-in for the districts to be successful.

Additionally, better data collection tools for tracking the success of districts would be beneficial in applying for grants and proving the economic and social impacts these districts have on their cities. Some districts need more funding from tax incentives (such as Percent for Art tax revenue) or wish to receive 501(c)(3) status in order to apply for grant funding.

RESPONSES

Scottsdale Arts District
From the city’s perspective, more capital improvement funding is needed to pay for infrastructure maintenance in the streets. From the galleries’ perspectives, more marketing funding is needed to bring people to the district.

Gallery Row
Nic Cha Kim, president of Gallery Row, mentioned the challenge of getting people in the district on a daily basis when the art walk only happens once a month. This requires major marketing assistance, someone who is savvy with social media and who can engage with the audience on a daily basis.

Carbondale Creative District
Amy Kimberly, executive director of CCAH, noted the need for data collection tools but that she is lacking the resources and time to collect that data. She also mentioned that
additional funding for way-finding and connectivity would be useful, as well as more human resources.

Chicago Arts District
Cynthia West, director of the Chicago Arts District, reflected on the need for young staff with great marketing and graphic design skills.

Bromo Tower Arts and Entertainment District
Priya Bhayana, director of the Bromo Tower Arts and Entertainment District, acknowledged the need for additional human resources in order to think more strategically about the future of the district. Additionally, she emphasized the need for evaluation but noted that lack of mechanisms in place and the staff to implement it makes this impossible at the moment.

Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District
The Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District (DPACD) is fortunate to have a strong commitment from the city and urges the importance of that partnership for the success of the district. Brenda Conway, president of the DPACD, mentioned the need for a forward-thinking board that can help the district move ahead. She also noted the need for more staff, including a staff member that can be dedicated full-time to coordinating the arts district.

Canton Arts District
Tricia Ostertag, community arts manager of ArtsinStark, discussed the need of marketing in the form of stories and dollars. She noted the challenge of fighting the stigma of what the downtown is perceived to be and needs to market the wonderful things happening in the area through the media so that even local residents can recognize that this area is a fun place to be. She added that a larger marketing budget would be helpful.

Gordon Square Arts District
Theresa Schneider, development manager of the Gordon Square Arts District, discussed the need for community and merchant engagement in order to grow vibrancy. She also noted the need for funding to produce more community events and activities, for cleaning and maintenance, and for providing a variety of entertainment options. Additionally, operational funding for the district’s five theaters and the arts district itself would be very useful.
QUESTION 4: AUDIENCE: WHO VISITS YOUR DISTRICT AND HOW DO YOU ENGAGED YOUR COMMUNITY IN GENERAL? HOW DO YOU TRACK THIS?

Most districts explained that their audiences comprise of a mix of local residents and tourists. These audiences are engaged through events and programming, either district-wide or when visiting the district for a specific purpose (attending a show followed by dinner, going to a gallery, participating in an artwalk, etc). The more informal districts have fewer ways of engaging their audiences.

Since many events within these districts are not gated, it is difficult to track actual attendance figures. Many rely on specific organizations within the district to supply audience information via ticket sales and so on. Often, tracking mechanisms are based on anecdotal evidence.

RESPONSES

Scottsdale Arts District
Downtown Scottsdale, including the arts district, is a major tourist destination. At least 70 percent of visitors to the downtown area throughout the year are tourists. A visitor study was conducted and concluded that the downtown area is one of the top three reasons that tourists visit.

Riverwalk District
The Bradenton Downtown Development Authority along with the Convention and Visitor Bureau, the local Chamber of Commerce, the Economic Development Council, and others work together to benefit from each other by attracting tourists to Bradenton. Recently, the Convention and Visitor Bureau has been focusing on recommending that tourists stay within Bradenton and then go visit the beaches rather than simply drive through the town. This has been a major cultural shift in tourism activity and these partnerships have proven extremely helpful in making this happen.

Chicago Arts District
The Podmajersky family facilitated a major branding project to clearly denote the properties and places within the district and make the area look more cohesive and welcoming. This has led to the successful recognition of the district as a hip place to be and the monthly events attract significant crowds made up of very diverse audiences, from students from area art schools to residents of the surrounding suburbs. The district boasts an onsite information center where visitors are greeted and welcomed during events.
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

Grand Center Arts and Entertainment District
Grand Center attracts about 1.7 million visitors each year, a mix of local residents and tourists. The cultural institutions within the district track audiences via ticketed events; therefore, the total number of visitors is likely higher if non-ticketed events were to be included. Currently, Grand Center is working on adding more residential opportunities to grow its population and feel more like a neighborhood.

Cary Cultural District
While the Cary Cultural District attracts a local crowd, its larger festival brings in a much more regional crowd and benefits from a formal partnership with Amtrak. The “Lazy Daze Arts and Crafts Festival” draws nearly 60,000 people. Posters and other promotional materials are posted in the Amtrak station encouraging Amtrak passengers to enjoy the festivities during their transfers.

Short North Arts District
The Short North Arts District attracts a variety of audiences including the districts’ residents which are taking advantage of new residential/condo developments that continue to grow; thousands of visitors are coming to the area for conferences or conventions and go to the district to enjoy local restaurants and other activities; and finally, the local workforce within the district is another major patron.

QUESTION 4A: HOW DO YOU ENGAGE THE COMMUNITY IN YOUR DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?

Most commonly, districts noted that the boards of directors running the organizations that oversee the districts are made up of representatives from various parts of the community. Others have smaller committees and groups of volunteers that involve local community members. Generally, districts use onsite surveys or electronic surveys to understand what their communities need most. Some districts use town-hall styles meetings to receive community input and feedback.

RESPONSES

Scottsdale Arts District
For larger projects, such as changing the streetscape or updating design guidelines, the City organizes public meetings or open houses in order to garner community input. When redesigning the banners for street lamps within the district, the City worked directly with the Scottsdale Gallery Association. The City will also reach out to other businesses or property owners to help vet decisions. Additionally, Ben Moriarity, downtown specialist of the City of Scottsdale, sends out a monthly newsletter that is distributed to more than
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS
EXCHANGE

6,000 people interested in what is happening in the downtown area. These newsletters update constituents on construction projects, upcoming special events, and other news.

Carbondale Creative District
As Carbondale moves forward with the process of attaining creative district designation, a large group of stakeholders has come together to define the main issues and plan for the future of the district. This group consists of business owners, artists, nonprofits, and government officials. Following these stakeholder meetings, larger public meetings are held to gather input from the community at large. Additionally, Carbondale utilizes surveys, social media, and conventional media to engage with the community.

Art District on Santa Fe
The Arts District on Sante Fe implements quite a few surveys, including surveys of its member organizations, surveys of residents in surrounding neighborhoods, and surveys of visitors to the monthly First Fridays Art Walks.

SoNo Design District
Stephanie Pelletier of the SONO Design District makes it a priority to go out and meet with all of the individual property owners within the district to find out their needs. She stresses the importance of personal communication, meetings and mini-meetings, task forces, and collaborations.

Bloomington Arts & Entertainment District (BEAD)
The Bloomington Arts & Entertainment District stresses the value of partnerships and communication. The district holds a monthly advisory committee meeting which is open to the public. There, the public has an opportunity to bring up particular issues affecting downtown.

Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District
The Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District is run by a board of directors made up of community members from various backgrounds, including artists, business people, retirees, and more. The district hosts a quarterly roundtable event for district businesses to discuss current issues, challenges, and needs.

Canton Arts District
The Canton Arts District boasts a very large social media following which is its main way of engaging with the community at large. Additionally, the district recognizes the importance of local businesses as part of the decision-making process and holds meetings with them twice a year to bring them into the conversation.
Alberta Arts District
During its formation stages, Alberta Main Street held a community visioning session to understand the needs of the community. Now, they offer a variety of smaller interactive opportunities to engage the community and gain feedback. Alberta Main Street hosts bi-monthly mixers and invites business owners, commercial property owners, and local residents to mix and mingle and help build stronger relationships within the district. Every two years or so, Alberta Main Street conducts a survey of business owners and surrounding residents.

Huntsville Cultural District
During the initial application process for becoming a state-designated cultural district, Huntsville was required to have an up-to-date cultural plan. That process was led by a committee made up of community members representing various stakeholders within the district and a public hearing was held to garner wider community input.

Richmond Arts and Cultural District
Prior to the official designation of the Richmond Arts and Cultural District, the city held thirteen public meetings to discuss the creation of the district.
QUESTION 5: DESCRIBE YOUR EVALUATION METHODS. WHICH DO YOU RELY ON MOST TO EVALUATE SUCCESS?

Evaluation is an important way for districts to measure their success, yet many find it difficult to establish formal evaluation mechanisms due to a variety of factors. Generally, lack of human resources and general operational funding are major barriers to implementing evaluation tools. In many cases, there is no central organization overseeing the district and therefore no way to collect data in one place.

This study revealed that each district is unique and may not benefit from a general evaluation tool. Evaluation metrics should be created to conform to each district’s offerings and needs. While this makes it difficult to compare districts to each other, it is important for districts to track success against themselves and those elements they can measure, rather than comparing themselves to districts that function very differently.

While many districts hold events within their boundaries, tracking audience size and composition is deemed nearly impossible since most of these events are free to the public and rarely have physical boundaries or gated entrances. In many cases, districts rely on attendance numbers from the cultural institutions within their boundaries, but these numbers do not account for people eating at restaurants, shopping at shops, or those simply strolling down the street. Often, more qualitative evaluations are done during events, gauging whether attendance is higher or lower than previous years or simply receiving word-of-mouth positive feedback from visitors. Comments on social media sites are also a way of sensing whether or not these events are successful.

Some of the state-designated districts, such as those in Maryland and Colorado, have a set list of metrics they must track and report back to their state in order to continue receiving their designations. Additionally, many districts report back to grant funders with metrics requested, but this varies on a case-by-case basis.

When districts do have evaluation methods in place, they are generally tracking the following metrics: attendance to events, attendance/visitor count to cultural institutions, vacancy rates, employment growth or decline, influx of new businesses, crime rates, building conversions, tracking revenue, increases in tax income, number of artists involved, positive media coverage, and number of grants received or awarded out.

RESPONSES

Scottsdale Arts District
The City of Scottsdale reviews quarterly reports of taxable revenue within the downtown area and tracks the success of businesses in that way. There has been an incremental increase since 2010 and taxable revenue rates are slowly climbing back to pre-recession levels. The city also looks at attendance totals from special events; these are good indicators of success within the district.

**Art District on Santa Fe**
The State of Colorado requires economic data, such as sales tax within the district boundaries, the number of employees, number of visitors, visitor demographics, and number of creative industry workers within the district.

**Western Gateway Cultural and Entertainment District**
The Western Gateway Cultural and Entertainment District implements various evaluation methods for its different events. Most commonly, it tracks attendance and compares those numbers to previous attendance numbers to evaluate the success of its events. While it is difficult to evaluate the quality of artists at the annual Arts Festival, the growing number of artists competing for spots suggests the event is successful and gaining traction. Additionally, they track increase in employment, how much new development is taking place within the district, and how many buildings are being converted to other uses.

**Station North Arts and Entertainment District**
Ben Stone, executive director of Station North Arts and Entertainment District, noted that during the first years of the district’s existence, evaluation focused on indicators such as vacancy rates and crime rates; however, he found it difficult to draw causational relationships between those improvements and the existence of the district. Now, the district is shifting toward a more individual storytelling approach, surveying people to tell their stories about what it is like to live in this neighborhood, or what participation has been like at events.

**Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District**
The Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District relies heavily on qualitative feedback during events as well as tracking attendance at those events. For events that involve artist vendors, surveys are distributed to gather input.

**Canton Arts District**
Canton Arts District’s main evaluation method is through their “Buy Art” promotion where patrons receive $5 cash back for a purchase of art of $20 or more. This enables the district to track how many people are buying art during their First Fridays art walks. Additionally, Canton Arts District administers a survey to local businesses to plan for the future of the district and to find out what is going well and what needs to be improved.
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

QUESTION 6: WHAT KIND OF PARTNERSHIPS DO YOU HAVE, IF ANY, WITH YOUR LOCAL ARTS COUNCIL AND/OR LOCAL GOVERNMENT? QUESTION 6A: DESCRIBE ANY OTHER IMPORTANT PARTNERSHIPS YOU HAVE WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS.

The majority of districts surveyed work closely with their local governments and receive some funding from them. Some districts are run by local arts councils or their local government.

Nearly all cultural districts surveyed rely heavily upon strong partnerships with local organizations. These include formal partnerships with cultural institutions within the districts, sponsorship partnerships with local businesses, partnerships to share marketing services, and so much more. Often, members of various institutions will serve on committees together to advance the arts and culture within their communities.

RESPONSES

Scottsdale Arts District
The City of Scottsdale works closely with the Chamber of Commerce and the Scottsdale Conventions and Visitors Bureau. The City contracts the Scottsdale Cultural Council for cultural commodities such as public art. Major events, such as the Fall for the Arts event, benefit from partnerships between the City, the Cultural Council, and the Scottsdale Gallery Association.

Downtown Dubuque Cultural Corridor
The Downtown Dubuque Cultural Corridor is managed by the Dubuque Main Street program and has a strong partnership with the city government which provides $210,000 to arts organizations for operational budgets. Additional funding is sometimes offered for special project grants. Dubuque Main Street also partners with local businesses such as hotels and banks, as well as smaller arts organizations that have successfully helped to develop the downtown area. Property owners within the district recognize the value of placing art in empty storefronts to spur development as well.

Hammond Cultural District
The City of Hammond is the Cultural District’s fiscal agent. The Hammond Cultural District also partners with the Hammond Regional Arts Center which helps with promotion and advertising.

Charlestown Cultural District
The Southwest Louisiana Economic Development Alliance works closely with the Southwest Louisiana Arts and Humanities Council, the City of Lake Charles, the Parish

Nationwide District Phone Survey Report
www.AmericansForTheArts.org/CulturalDistricts
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

Police Jury, and the Convention and Visitors Bureau to lead the recently established Quality of Life Task Force that is made up of area stakeholders. Its mission is to improve the area’s quality of life by reactivating cultural districts as well as other assets in these districts.

**Canalway Cultural District of Lowell**
In 2008, the local government in Lowell, MA created a new position and an Office of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, which formed a merger with the Cultural Organization of Lowell (COOL). Susan Halter, COOL’s executive director, describes Lowell as “a city of partnerships.” COOL works not only in close partnership with the city, but also with the state, which is involved in their strategic planning process.

**Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District**
The Downtown Peculiar Arts & Culture District serves as the local arts council and is focused on economic revitalization through the arts. Brenda Conway, president of this organization, explained that the organization has a strong relationship with the City and stressed the importance of being aware of City Council term limits.

**Glasstown Arts District**
The Millville Development Corporation, which oversees the establishment and maintenance of the Glasstown Arts District, was created by ordinance of the Millville City Commission. The Corporation is led by a board of directors made up of the mayor, a commissioner, three departmental employees of the City, as well as business owners from within the district. Marianne Lods, executive director of the Millville Development Corporation, also sits on the board of the County’s Cultural Heritage Commission. Additional important partners include other tourism venues and destinations such as the World War II History Museum, the Motorsports Park, the Wheaton Arts and Cultural Center, and others. Together, these partners collaborate, share calendars, promote each other, and do collective advertising in order to have a larger impact.

**Canton Arts District**
The Canton Arts District is officially run by ArtsinStark, the local arts council which also has a formal partnership with the Special Improvement District, run by Canton’s Regional Chamber of Commerce.

**Gordon Square Arts District**
Gordon Square Arts District (GSAD) enjoys a close partnership with the City of Cleveland. Local Councilman Matt Zone has been an active member of the GSAD leadership team from the beginning, and serves as a co-chair for their Community Planning Committee. Additionally, Gordon Square works closely with the State of Ohio as well as with many arts organizations within the district and in surrounding areas.
Alberta Arts District
Alberta Main Street has a strong relationship with the mayor’s office, working closely with it as it pertains to economic development, as well as for the event “Last Thursday” which is run by the mayor’s office. Additionally, Alberta Main Street works closely with the Regional Arts and Culture Council, especially in regard to public art.

Huntsville Cultural District
The City of Huntsville works closely with the local arts council on projects within the cultural district. Linda Pease, cultural services coordinator of the City of Huntsville, serves as advisor to the arts council. The local museum has also been instrumental in the success of the district. The City also partners with individual art groups for various events and programs.
QUESTION 7: IF INCENTIVES ARE OFFEREND, WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MOST SUCCESSFUL INCENTIVES AND WHY?

Officially designated districts offer the most tax-related incentives, including historic tax credits, property tax increments, forgivable loan programs, façade improvement grants, and more. Often, however, these incentives are not taken advantage of due to lack of awareness by community members and businesses that could benefit from them. Many districts pointed to the fact that more human resources are needed in order to help spread the word and manage these incentives.

RESPONSES

Scottsdale Arts District
Funding for events and programs is offered through special grants from the Tourism Development Commission. These are not specific to the district, but many events and programs that benefit from this funding take place within the district. Funding for these grants comes from revenues from the Transaction Privilege Tax on Transient Lodging (Bed Tax) designated for Tourism Development. Façade improvement grants were available at one point, but no longer exist. These were not that successful because often businesses would take advantage of this program by default rather than the program leading to new investment.

Western Gateway Cultural and Entertainment District
In order to incentivize real estate development, the City of Des Moines offers historic tax credits for the reuse and refurbishment of older buildings. The City also has property tax increments to assist in commercial development, as well as residential tax abatement for residential development. While these incentives are applicable throughout the downtown area, a concerted effort has been made to concentrate this development in the Western Gateway Cultural and Entertainment District.

Bloomington Arts & Entertainment District (BEAD):
BEAD offers a rotating series of incentive programs, such as forgivable loan programs for new business development within the district, historic façade improvement grants, and special art project grants. The district overlaps with an Urban Enterprise Zone which offers a rehabilitation loan program for historic structure to attain code compliance.

Horse Cave Cultural District
The most successful incentive so far has been the graduated rent incentive for business owners to help bring in targeted businesses into the district. These incentives are not publicized to the general public, but are targeted to certain kinds of businesses and vary
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

in form. Additionally, the district offers counseling assistance and classes for businesses to create financial plans and remain sustainable.

Canalway Cultural District of Lowell
After the creation of the cultural districts program through the Massachusetts Cultural Council, the City of Lowell developed low income tax credits which have already been utilized within the district. An artist live/work space has been funded by these tax incentives. Additionally, the Massachusetts Cultural Council offers facility grants to improve or build new spaces.

Highlandtown Arts and Entertainment District
The Highlandtown Arts and Entertainment District benefits from the same three incentives as all arts and entertainment districts in Maryland: 1) Income Tax Subtraction Modification applies to qualifying artists who produce and sell work within the district; 2) Property Tax Incentives can be used to renovate spaces for artistic purpose within the district; and 3) Admission & Amusement Tax Exemptions can be for arts and entertainment activities taking place within the district. The Admission & Amusement Tax Exemption is not used often since most arts organizations within the district are already tax-exempt nonprofits. The Income Tax Subtraction Modification incentive is not widely utilized by artists since they do not typically have a high enough income, or are otherwise undeclared, and therefore cannot take advantage of this. Other generous incentives from Maryland and Baltimore supersede these three incentives such has the historic development tax credit, which is much more widely used by businesses in the district.

Station North Arts and Entertainment District
Station North Arts and Entertainment District benefits from the Maryland Arts and Entertainment District program incentives (see above). However, none of these incentives have proven to be very successful quite yet. For example, the Charles Theatre benefits from the Admission & Amusement Tax Exemption, but the theater was already in place prior to the district’s designation. While the goal of these incentives is to drive investment in the district, no new theaters have opened up to take advantage of the incentives. Additionally, since most theater companies within the district are nonprofits, they are already exempt from these taxes. The development incentives are still not well understood by developers; however, Station North is hoping to designate a staff person who will be able to explain these incentives to those wishing to take advantage of them. Finally, the Income Tax Subtraction Modification has not been widely utilized either. Businesses and people seem to find out about the incentives once they have already come to the district. Therefore, the incentives are not yet driving additional development in the district; they are simply helpful for those already there.
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

Alberta Arts District
Alberta Main Street offers small matching mini-grants to businesses or property owners to incentivize improvements to their external environments, such as bike racks, façade painting, or other capital improvement projects. Additionally, Alberta Street is included in the Interstate Urban Renewal Corridor which offers grant funding incentives for green street improvements and storefront improvements.

Providence Downtown Entertainment District and West Side Arts District
Beginning in 1998, the state of Rhode Island provided special live/work tax incentives for artists in specified cultural districts. These incentives includes: 1) art work created within the district is exempt from state sales tax when sold in the district; 2) artists who live and work within the district are exempt from state personal income tax for sale of work they created within the district; and 3) sale of original works of art in galleries within the district, whether or not that artwork was actually created in the district, is exempt from state sales tax. However, in 2013, legislation was passed which extended the sales tax exemption for the sale of original works of art to the entire state, turning Rhode Island into a “State of the Arts.”

Richmond Arts and Cultural District
The City of Richmond offers gap-financing tools which have deemed to be successful since the creation of the arts district. These tools allow businesses to get the money they need to complete a project, such as building restorations. Once the City has helped, these businesses are better able to receive additional financing from banks. Additionally, there is the simple incentive of the cache of being in an arts district which generates buzz and attracts people and businesses to locate within the district. The City is currently working on branding and marketing for the district which will hopefully be an additional draw.
QUESTION 8: WHAT DOES THE SUCCESS OF YOUR DISTRICT LOOK LIKE FROM VARIOUS COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES? (CITY MANAGER, ARTS LEADERS, ARTISTS, ETC.)

Success looks slightly different from district to district, but the overarching indicators of success are:

- a bustling downtown with people walking about at all times of the day and throughout the year.
- a variety of arts-related organizations alongside other types of businesses bringing economic prosperity to the area.
- a community that identifies the benefits of the creative industries for the overall health of its city or town.
- an influx of people relocating to a specific area because of livability factors brought on by the arts district.
- an authentic community where arts take center stage, maintaining the character of a neighborhood through arts and culture.
- offering year-long arts events and programming for residents and tourists alike.

RESPONSES

Scottsdale Arts District
Success from the City’s perspective is downtown being an active place at all times of the day and night, not just during business hours. Success means apartments are being rented, restaurants are thriving, galleries are open, and shops complement each other with various offerings so that people will spend more time in the area. The gallery art walk has been successful for 40 years and the City and galleries are trying to maintain this success by bringing more buzz to the streets. For example, this year, food trucks are now involved in the art walk and have brought additional activity to the area.

Escondido Arts District
Success is defined by “wellness”—a community of people of all ages and ethnic backgrounds that have a place to interact with each other.

Gallery Row
Success in Gallery Row is when 25,000-30,000 people are attending the monthly ArtWalk and the overall perception of the area has drastically improved, attracting more visitors and businesses.

Santa Rosa Arts District
Success to the Santa Rosa Arts District is that residents and tourists are aware that an arts district exists here. Additionally, success is the fact that local businesses and
organizations are recognizing the impact of the district and are helping to market and brand it.

Carbondale Creative District
To Carbondale, success is a lot of participation and buy-in from the community, especially if the community sees it as a part of their culture and their lives. When this comes from the bottom up, with residents and artists putting in the work to make it happen, this creates a stronger, more unique sense of place than if the government is simply doing so to attract tourists. This needs to be a partnership between the government and the community.

Riverwalk District
To the Riverwalk District, success looks like people walking around at all times of the day and any time of the year, attracting people who want to invest in downtown Bradenton and relocate there. A specific story of success is when a restaurant serves 250 on a Tuesday night in July, which is one of Bradenton’s slowest seasons.

Western Gateway Cultural and Entertainment District
Success to the Western Gateway Cultural and Entertainment District is convincing people that downtown is not just for work, but can be for play, too, with options to enjoy a mixed-used cultural district filled with various activities, restaurants, and retail options.

Fairfield Cultural and Entertainment District
Success for the Fairfield Cultural and Entertainment District is not just measured by “heads and dollars” but by getting a feel for the happiness of the community. Denyce Rusch, president of the Fairfield Cultural Alliance, notes the benefits of having a district where the community comes together for outdoor parties on the square, neighbors hang out together, and overall the community finds this a wonderful place to live.

Chicago Arts District
From the district’s perspective, success is when artists are successful because the district created a scenario for them which attracted an audience and led to additional exposure to his/her work. For example, a photographer working and exhibiting in the district now has work in a couple of museums.

Bloomington Arts & Entertainment District (BEAD)
Success to BEAD is having more visible arts production downtown with robust retail and restaurant options.
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

Highlandtown Arts and Entertainment District
Success to the Highlandtown Arts and Entertainment District includes creating a diverse global neighborhood, having a stable operating budget and holding larger events that attract audiences from outside the neighborhood. Success is also when people believe in the mission of the district and want to participate in it.

Station North Arts and Entertainment District
Over a long period of time, success is maintaining the genuine character of the neighborhood. While it is important to be pro-investment and pro-development, this should be done in a sensitive way that acknowledges what has come before and what works well.

Bromo Tower Arts and Entertainment District
For the city manager, success is having more people in the streets and less vacancies in buildings. For many others, success is a more positive overall perception of the district with less crime and more positive media coverage. For arts leaders, success is fusing the different communities through arts activities and offerings, having more artistic production and more artistic products in vacant spaces. To artists, success is being able to maintain sustainable and affordable spaces and have increased opportunities to produce art.

Downtown Minneapolis Cultural District
Karen Nelson, communications director of the Hennepin Theatre Trust, explains that “success breeds success.” The City benefits from being an arts and culture destination, both economically and physically, in terms of beauty and community participation. A successful arts district leads to a better, more cohesive community in a friendly, more beautiful environment.

Northeast Minneapolis Arts District
From NEEMA’s perspective, success is when people are familiar with the arts district and respect the process of how it was formed and when people are familiar with the branding and recognize the district as a place to enjoy arts and culture. For artists in the district, success is maintaining the momentum and energy behind the first few years of the district’s formation, which has begun to fade. Success is the potential for capitalizing on and leveraging the arts district’s name and branding. Overall, success is the fact that the district has become a very popular place, people feel safe being there, and realtors are leveraging the arts district to sell/rent homes.

Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District
The Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District is still relatively young, but has reached its initial vision of attracting many niche shops with arts compatible businesses and a
very pedestrian feel overall. Future success would be to grow the Public Art walk and
attract more residents and visitors to engage with the offerings within the district.

Grand Center Arts and Entertainment District
For the district, success is the fact that it is being nationally recognized as a major
cultural tourism destination along the likes of Time Square and Lincoln Center. This kind
of success is important to the City because it has invested so heavily in the
neighborhood.

Glasstown Arts District
Success for the Glasstown Arts District is defined as cultural awareness, where arts and
culture are recognized as a business and acknowledged as an important fiber of the
community. Success is the inclusion of all demographics into this scene, especially
focusing on youth through programs and scholarships that make these activities more
accessible. Additionally, success is visible through the growing number of businesses
and decrease in the rate of vacancies. Vacancy rates have been reduced from 50-60
percent to 14 percent since the creation of the district. The addition of a performing arts
theater has helped many local businesses thrive, especially restaurants.

East 4th Street Cultural District
From the community’s perspective, success is the ability to preserve the diversity and
creative character of the neighborhood and maintain opportunities for diverse cultures to
have a long-term stake in the neighborhood. For artists, success is having an established
hub for affordable space where they can create and present their work. The district is like
an ecosystem that supports different levels of work and gives artists an opportunity to be
part of a larger community.

Canton Arts District
Success to Canton is all about vibrancy: leaders of ArtsinStark want to see downtown full
of life and fun even after 5:00 p.m.

Short North Arts District
The Short North Arts District strives to promote a vibrant mix of a residential,
commercial, and business in the district where art galleries are successful, but so are
smaller retail businesses, bars, and restaurants.

Gordon Square Arts District
Success to Gordon Square is that the district was an area in trouble that has converted
itself into a successful urban neighborhood. It is recognized nationally as an example of
using the arts to drive economic development and foster change.
Alberta Arts District
Overall success in Alberta is having a low vacancy rate and no empty storefronts. Additionally, success is filling the street with independent locally owned retail businesses, decreased graffiti and theft, and overall a lower crime rate and a sense of safety.

Knoxville Downtown Arts District
Liza Zenni, executive director of the Knoxville Arts and Cultural Alliance asserts that, “This whole place has blossomed,” thanks to the arts district. Since the creation of the district, new galleries have opened up, an art walk was created and remains successful, and improvements are taking place all around downtown. What happened spontaneously is now becoming more intentional.

Oil City Arts District
Oil City measures success by the fact that artists were able to move into a building that was most likely going to be destroyed and now have their studios there where they can be successfully making their art. Since then, two additional commercial buildings have been bought by artists, rehashed, and turned into viable businesses.

Dallas Arts District
The Dallas Convention of Visitors Bureau commissioned research and found that the Dallas Arts District was the single biggest influencer of all audience segments of visitors. When measuring their perception of the City prior to and following their visits to Dallas, their sentiments were 20 points higher if they had visited the Arts District. The Dallas Arts District is the number one asset cited when conferences or conventions plan to meet in Dallas. The Arts District is also helping the Chamber of Commerce attract the best employers and employees to Dallas. In addition, cultural tourism is a major success marker: the Dallas Forth-Worth airport has added more international destinations and connecting visitors can leave the airport during their layovers and visit the arts district.

Huntsville
Success to the district is when private property owners begin to say, “We’re located in the Huntsville Cultural District” and leverage the district to attract new businesses and residents.

Richmond Arts and Cultural District
From the City’s perspective, success is having happy and healthy people enjoying their lives in the city. The City’s responsibility is to provide a good quality of life for its residents, and an arts district can do just that. For the district itself, success is changing the perception of Broad Street, the front door to the city, from a dangerous crime-ridden place to somewhere safe where people can work, live, and be active.
Bristol Arts and Entertainment District
The influx of art galleries, artists, and continuation of festivals and concerts in downtown Bristol has been an encouraging marker of success.
QUESTION 9: WHAT DISTRICTS DO YOU COMPARE YOURSELF TO?

Reading through the descriptions of the districts surveyed, it is clear that each is unique and quite different from the next. When asked which districts they compared themselves to, many responded that they are aware of others doing similar things but do not actually compare themselves to anyone else because each is so unique and different. We hope this report begins to shed light on some of the similarities between districts, especially in terms of visions of success and challenges each face. Some districts did look to others especially during their creation period, but once established, few actually compare themselves to any others.

RESPONSES

Carbondale Creative District
Carbondale is looking at the other creative districts in Colorado to get ideas. Everyone has approached the process very differently, each community finding ownership of it for themselves and how it works for their unique make-up. Carbondale has a large Latino population and they want to ensure this community is integrated into the district.

Village of the Arts District
Early in its creation, Bradenton researched other arts districts to see how they were created and what kinds of incentives they offered. The Village of the Arts District has outlived many of the districts initially looked at, which is a measure of success. The district has major strengths and weaknesses: it is a large district but very much a neighborhood community. It struggles to keep the balance without undergoing gentrification.

Fairfield Cultural and Entertainment District
Fairfield looked at other cultural districts in Iowa when planning their own. Because Iowa is such a rural state, their districts are very different from other states with more urban areas.

Highlandtown Arts and Entertainment District
Highlandtown recognizes Station North as the "poster child" of a successful arts district. However, their districts are very different and they are not in competition with each other. While Station North still has a lot of vacancies, Highlandtown does not; instead it has a vibrant working-class neighborhood. Chris Ryer, president of the Southeast Community Development Corporation, described Highlandtown as a small fish in a big pond whereas Station North is more of a big fish in a small pond.
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS
EXCHANGE

Station North Arts and Entertainment District
Station North is somewhat similar to cultural districts in Providence, RI. Artists who travel up and down the East Coast will go to Providence and Baltimore. In terms of scale and the kind of work that is happening in the district, Station North is most similar to the Gateway District in Prince George’s County in Maryland.

Downtown Minneapolis Cultural District
The Downtown Minneapolis Cultural District compares itself to the Pittsburgh Cultural District and the Cleveland Theatre District.

Grand Center Arts and Entertainment District
Grand Center is similar to Lincoln Center in New York and would like to be between that and the French Quarter in Louisiana. Grand Center is similar to other districts that have a large mix of visual, musical, theatrical arts and a growing food/dining and entertainment aspect.

Cary Cultural District
Cary looks to peer communities in North Carolina, whether they have formal districts or not. Lyman Collins, cultural arts manager of the Town of Cary, stressed the importance of working collaboratively with other cities, such as Chapel Hill, Raleigh, Clayton, and others. He added that it would be a good idea to trade metrics in order to measure success.

East 4th Street Cultural District
The East 4th Street Cultural District is part of the Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts, New York (NOCD-NY), a network of similar districts working to embed themselves in long-term community change.

Canton Arts District
Canton thinks of itself as a smaller version of Short North in Columbus, especially in terms of being very walkable.

Providence Downtown Entertainment District and West Side Arts District
Providence compares itself to the Avenue of the Arts in Philadelphia, as it is in a similar downtown location, although not as urban. They aspire to be like the Avenue of the Arts with a more unified downtown improvement district filled with arts and entertainment and additional public art. Providence is also looking at Station North in Baltimore. They are interested in the programming going on, as it is thoughtfully done with intention. However, Providence has major infrastructural differences.
Dallas Arts District
Size-wise, the Dallas Arts District is comparable to the National Mall in Washington, DC. In regards to the performing arts, DAD is similar to the Lincoln Center in New York City, and in regards to visual arts it is similar to the Museum District in Fort Worth. However, overall, the district claims there is no other district quite like it with such a combination of visual and performing arts at such a large size with about 20 square blocks. DAD does take major inspiration from the Brooklyn Cultural District in New York.

Richmond Arts and Cultural District
Richmond used a few districts as case studies when creating its own, including Portland, ME; Pawtucket, RI; and Miami, FL.
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

QUESTION 10: FOR A NEWER DISTRICTS, WHAT WERE THE MAIN CHALLENGES WHEN GOING THROUGH THE PROCESS OF ESTABLISHING THE DISTRICT? FOR ESTABLISHED DISTRICTS: WHAT ARE THE MAIN CHALLENGES YOU CURRENTLY FACE?

All of the districts surveyed face many challenges and many similar challenges among them. We hope that the National Cultural District Exchange will help with some of these challenges and that a dialogue between cultural districts can help districts learn from one another and overcome challenges that others have found solutions to.

The most common challenges are:
- lack of funding
- lack of staff
- need for consensus-building among board members, community stakeholders, etc
- keeping up the momentum once the district is well-established
- changing perceptions of parts of cities
- maintaining physical infrastructure (streetscapes, etc)
- need for collaboration between districts and government agencies
- need for more collaboration between district businesses
- bigger projects/programs with more impact
- more government support and government buy-in, especially from local governments

RESPONSES

Gallery Row
The main challenge for Gallery Row is keeping galleries in the district despite rental costs continually increasing. Galleries that moved in five years ago and signed five-year leases are now facing rising rental rates and may not be able to stay.

Bloomington Arts & Entertainment District (BEAD)
One of the main challenges noted by the Bloomington Arts and Entertainment District is the fact that as soon as boundaries are set around an area, those outside of the boundaries want to be included. As an entity of the municipal government, they are trying hard to work with those outside of the district without diluting what is taking place within the boundaries.

Charlestown Cultural District
The Charlestown Cultural District identified one challenge being that businesses are not necessarily taking advantage of tax incentives—despite efforts to effectively
communicate these. Another challenge is encouraging district businesses to collaborate and work together. Finally, it is a constant challenge to develop sustainable events and projects that benefit the district’s visibility and marketability.

Canalway Cultural District of Lowell
Lowell is still perceived as an unsafe community, so the district is continually trying to dispel that image. Major challenges include building audiences, marketing, and overall funding for the sustainability of the district.

Station North Arts and Entertainment District
Station North noted that fundraising is always its biggest challenge. Additionally, maintaining the momentum of the district can be difficult, especially when the media focuses on the negative, even when positive things are happening.

Bel Air Arts and Entertainment District
A major challenge for the Bel Air Arts and Entertainment District is the fact that many people within the community do not know that this is a designated district. It is also a challenge to attract more arts-related businesses.

Downtown Minneapolis Cultural District
One of the main challenges facing the Downtown Minneapolis Cultural District is the expectation for immediate landmarks, even though the creation of this kind of district is a much more process-driven development than something that has immediate outcomes. There is skepticism about whether the district will simply be filled with frivolous arts and culture or if it will be useful and functional. Additionally, additional resources and support are needed in order to implement the work that will make the district successful.

Northeast Minneapolis Cultural District
Josh Blanc, interim director of the cultural district, explained that the main challenge for the district is keeping the artists there. The district started with emerging artists who then became more established and now have outgrown the district. The challenge is finding the best way for the district to morph to the next stage.

According to Alejandra Pelinka, executive director of the Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association, a major challenge is securing more funding and buy-in from the community and getting people engaged and motivated. A current challenge is maintaining the momentum that was present when the district was first established, especially in terms of programs and initiatives that happen within the district.

Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District
In the beginning, the main challenge was educating the public and changing the mindset of those within the local community. As a small, rural, Midwest town, there was
a perception that the district was only for the elite. Slowly, the organization running the
district is trying to change that perception through arts festivals where people can realize
there is something for everyone to enjoy. Another challenge is making sure the board is
committed and on the same agenda. It is a challenge to keep the sense of teamwork and
focus on why this district matters. Another challenge is maintaining a consistent level of
quality, no matter how large the audience might be.

Grand Center Arts and Entertainment District
A major challenge for the Grand Center Arts and Entertainment District is the lack of
resources to work on the maintenance and upkeep of the urban infrastructure such as
replacing sidewalks. The other challenge is trying to make the district a place for people
instead of a place for institutions. The area needs additional street activation so that
museums will be open late and there will be things for people to do past a certain hour.

Cary Cultural District
Besides the main challenge of lacking enough staff resources to manage the district,
another main challenge for Cary is to instill a sense of collaboration within the business
community.

East 4th Street Cultural District
An ongoing challenge for the East 4th Street District is the need for a mechanism about
how the shared leadership of the district would be funded and supported. A future
challenge is what comes next now that the initial purpose for the district has been
realized (to save spaces where artists and work). What can they do for the neighborhood
as a whole?

Canton Arts District
One of the biggest challenges is moving from a special-events based district to an
attractive area all month long. In addition, there is a constant battle of perception, where
people still believe that the downtown area has a certain stigma. Canton is focusing on
trying to change that stigma by proving that crime rates have gone down and trying to
attract people to the district after 5:00 p.m.

Short North Arts District
One of Short North Arts District’s biggest challenges is balancing the growth and
development of the neighborhood now that revitalization has been so significant. There is
also a major parking challenge and the need to provide additional public transit.
Knoxville Downtown Arts District
Liza Zenni mentioned that the biggest challenge is “finding the resources to make our dreams come true.” Another challenge is getting the political will behind the visions for the district so they will support it.

Dallas Arts District
Catherine Cuellar noted that the biggest challenge for the Dallas Arts District is finding the equity that is reflective of Dallas’ diversity at every level of the organizations within the district, from the audiences and artists to their staff and board leadership. Another challenge is the fact that arts education funding has been cut from the public education system in Dallas, therefore decimating the future audiences of the arts district. Some of the institutions within the district partner with schools for field trips and other activities, but not enough to turn the tide without more funding from the state.

Richmond Arts and Cultural District
Richmond’s cultural district’s biggest challenge is that organizations and businesses feel like they had been left out because they were not included within the original boundaries of the district. As a municipality, the City of Richmond finds it needs to do more research on what kinds of incentives will be most helpful for the district. Initial branding and strategy for the district should be well planned out ahead of time and have a good marketing campaign to kick it off.

Bristol Arts and Entertainment District
Bristol faces a unique challenge due to the fact that the city is split between two states. A constant challenge is trying to get both sides on board about initiatives.
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

Recommendations

BUILD STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

Successful cultural districts are those that build strong partnerships with their governments and other local organizations, working together as a team to better their communities. These partnerships can be formal or informal, and in both cases, the benefits can be profound. When districts have good relationships with city offices, lengthy processes such as permit-granting or requests for street closures can be expedited. Additionally, leaders of cultural districts are often the first to notice the more infrastructural problems and can work quickly with the local government to improve sidewalks, add lighting, or pursue simple beautification projects.

Partnerships with other organizations within the district can be quite fruitful and can help alleviate some of the funding burdens, such as organizations working together on joint marketing or pooling resources to produce larger events with more impact. Partnerships need not be simply with other non-profit cultural organizations. Many fruitful collaborations can come out of partnerships with for-profit businesses located within a cultural district. The Cary Arts District’s partnership with Amtrak has helped increase the promotion of the annual “Lazy Daze Arts and Crafts Festival.” Of course, partnerships should be mutually beneficial and should not take away resources from either organization.

COMMUNICATE INCENTIVES

While many districts offer a variety of tax incentives and other incentives for businesses and artists to locate within the boundaries of a district, these often go unnoticed or are completely foreign to those they are supposed to benefit. Clear communication of these incentives, either on a website or through other means, is essential for these to be used successfully by constituents in the district. Wider awareness of these incentives could also help drive further investment in the district, attracting new businesses that may otherwise choose not to locate there.
NATIONAL CULTURAL DISTRICTS EXCHANGE

Conclusion

In closing, this survey revealed that cultural districts are increasingly popular tools for revitalizing downtown areas across the country. They vary in size and in management structures, some having grown organically out of the dedication of community members and artists while others were created specifically by a city or state government. The benefits of cultural districts are multifaceted: they can be used to bolster the local economy by driving traffic to businesses and attracting tourists, they can help change an area’s perception from a seedy unsafe location to a bustling fun place to be at all times of day, they attract new businesses and artists, they help foster a close-knit neighborhood feel, and so much more.

At the same time, cultural districts face many common challenges, especially in terms of securing funding and community buy-in in order to continue being successful and maintain momentum. There is, of course, the fear that cultural districts speed up the process of gentrification, where natives of the district and local artists are pushed out because of escalating rental prices and property values. Many districts are trying to find solutions to prevent this possibility, either by establishing zoning ordinances that protect rent prices from increasing, offering affordable housing even in high priced areas, or offering other incentives to keep artists in the district.

Despite these challenges and worries, new cultural districts are cropping up across the country almost daily, and there are opportunities for districts to learn from each other through greater communication and collaboration. The National Cultural District Exchange is here to help get those conversations started as well as offer resources to help each district achieve success.
## List of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District Name</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scottsdale Arts District</td>
<td>Scottsdale</td>
<td>AZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escondido Arts District</td>
<td>Escondido</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery Row</td>
<td>Los Angeles</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santa Rosa Arts District</td>
<td>Santa Rosa</td>
<td>CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbondale Creative District</td>
<td>Carbondale</td>
<td>CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art District on Santa Fe</td>
<td>Denver</td>
<td>CO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SoNo Design District</td>
<td>South Norwalk</td>
<td>CT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Village of the Arts District</td>
<td>Bradenton</td>
<td>FL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverwalk District</td>
<td>Bradenton</td>
<td>FL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Dubuque Cultural Corridor</td>
<td>Dubuque</td>
<td>IA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Gateway Cultural and ...</td>
<td>Des Moines</td>
<td>IA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield Cultural and Entertainmen</td>
<td>Fairfield</td>
<td>IA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Arts District (Pilsen East</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
<td>IL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bloomington Arts &amp; Entertainment ...</td>
<td>Bloomington</td>
<td>IN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse Cave Cultural District</td>
<td>Horse Cave</td>
<td>KY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammond Cultural District</td>
<td>Hammond</td>
<td>LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charlestown Cultural District</td>
<td>Lake Charles</td>
<td>LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canalway Cultural District of Lowell</td>
<td>Lowell</td>
<td>MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Station North Arts &amp; Entertainment District</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bromo Tower Arts &amp; Entertainment District</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlandtown Arts and Entertainment District</td>
<td>Baltimore</td>
<td>MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts and Entertainment District</td>
<td>Bel Air</td>
<td>MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural District Name</td>
<td>City</td>
<td>State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Frederick Arts and Entertainment District</td>
<td>Frederick</td>
<td>MD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Minneapolis Cultural District</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast Minneapolis Arts District</td>
<td>Minneapolis</td>
<td>MN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Peculiar Arts and Culture District</td>
<td>Peculiar</td>
<td>MO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Center Arts &amp; Entertainment District</td>
<td>St. Louis</td>
<td>MO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cary Cultural District</td>
<td>Cary</td>
<td>NC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasstown Arts District</td>
<td>Millville</td>
<td>NJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverhead Arts District</td>
<td>Riverhead</td>
<td>NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Fourth Street Cultural District</td>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>NY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canton Arts District</td>
<td>Canton</td>
<td>OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short North Arts District</td>
<td>Columbus</td>
<td>OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordon Square Arts District</td>
<td>Cleveland</td>
<td>OH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alberta Arts District</td>
<td>Portland</td>
<td>OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil City Arts District</td>
<td>Oil City</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providence Downtown Entertainment District and West Side Arts District</td>
<td>Providence</td>
<td>RI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downtown Arts District</td>
<td>Knoxville</td>
<td>TN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas Arts District</td>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huntsville Arts District</td>
<td>Huntsville</td>
<td>TX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond Arts and Cultural District</td>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol’s Arts and Entertainment District</td>
<td>Bristol</td>
<td>VA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>