Local Arts Agencies can work with artists to strengthen the ways the local community connects and solves issues by ensuring artists have opportunities to contribute to local goals and offer social impact. Many artists want to participate in cross-sector work and problem-solving. Creating opportunities for decision-makers, local leaders, funders, and artists to work and live together strengthens the community and removes siloes that limit collaboration.

When artists have opportunities to live and work in places where people from other sectors gather, the community benefits from the possibility of residents collaborating on creative approaches to equitable community-building and problem-solving. Artists want to be able to count on living spaces and studios that connect them to the larger community and communicate that they are an essential part of thriving places.

**What’s the Challenge?**
Too often, policy choices push or leave artists out of the places and programs where they can contribute to civic infrastructure.

- Local governments support **revitalization that leads to higher real estate prices**, effectively removing artists from homes and studios in those places.
- Officials rarely use policies to support **development without displacement** that would protect artists’ homes and studios as prices rise around them.
- **Local leaders fail to include artists** at the tables of planning and decision-making.
- **Consulting opportunities are too limited** because hiring officials for community engagement, planning, and implementation rarely consider artists for these roles.

**Creatively addressing barriers While balancing limited resources**

**What Can We Do? Solutions to Try**

**Consider Reframing Artist Roles**

- Include artists in multi-sector impact work like health, housing, transportation, etc.
- Give artists a role in local organizations’ leadership and priority-setting.
- Design and support policies for affordable creative spaces like studios, workspaces, and storage to be developed.
- Offer training and mentoring for artists interested in developing a social practice.
- Promote artists for consulting opportunities that utilize artists’ expertise in areas like: education on local issues, coaching local leaders, organizing, citizen engagement, etc.
- Provide technical assistance and support for business skills like grant-writing and marketing artistic practice.
Advocate for Local Policy

- Promote the practice of development without displacement to allow artists to remain in communities as the cost-of-living increases. In Englewood (Independence, MO) they have had success in re-zoning to an arts district to attract artists to live and work in an area that had trouble retaining residents. Good Arts located in Seattle WA endeavors to maintain that identity and promote economic and creative vitality through responsible real estate development.

- Consider programs that support development of studio space, like Art Enables (Washington, DC) an art gallery and vocational arts programs for artists with disabilities.

After artists contribute to revitalization of communities, they often cannot afford to live or work there anymore. When they must move out, artists feel isolated and struggle to recreate the space and sense of camaraderie that once existed. Spaces designated for artistic engagement are few and not always the most accessible or welcoming for families or other groups.

- Institute opportunities for relationship-building between artists and community members; emphasize the need for family-friendly meetings with babysitting services and lactation spaces in public buildings.

- Support policies that create incentives or requirements for artist space in new development.

- Back protections for artists who work with local businesses to mitigate exploitation and ensure reasonable compensation.

- Develop artist residencies for artists to focus on community issues by participating in local government. Artists as ‘first-responders’ is a concept that allows artists to contribute in new ways and can change public perceptions of the role of artists in community.

Artist’s residencies were innovative ways to expand artists’ engagement throughout the conversation. We have seen artists residencies like San Francisco Arts Commission’s capturing the experiences of residents throughout the pandemic to artists facilitating a mutual influence campaign in the Minnesota Department of Transportation.

For more information about Americans for the Arts’ Supporting Individual Artists Field Research Project and findings, please read the full report or reach out to services@artsusa.org.