

## Rebuilding East 9<sup>th</sup> Street Together

How to move forward with the East 9<sup>th</sup> Street project may seem fraught with difficulty due to its contentious past, but what if we viewed what happened as an event that allowed us to see circumstances anew, and act to change them for the better?

Like rebuilding after a storm, or adjusting to an unexpected tragedy, we could see the East 9<sup>th</sup> St. project not only as a failure or loss, but as an opportunity to create new ties, fortify important relationships, and develop more sustainable and equitable planning processes.

Artists like scientists often learn most from experiments or projects that don't go as planned. It is in those moments, when they reflect most deeply and honestly, and open themselves to solutions previously unseen. This also happens in the aftermath of some natural disasters as Rebecca Solnit writes in her book "A Paradise Built in Hell." Communities are often at their most creative, collaborative, and empathetic at times of disaster, she says. Why? Because in order to recover and plan for the future, they need each other. And this can lead to new ways of working together and new solutions to formerly intractable problems.

We are in a similar situation with the East 9<sup>th</sup> Street project. New circumstances provide an opportunity to reevaluate and rebuild – the street, mutual trust, and a measure of shared agency and responsibility. The alternative would be to ignore or try to forget what happened, hiding the wounds but not trying to heal them. Instead we could reimagine this perceived failure as a platform to explore the fundamental issues that bind and challenge us, and then act to address them with new strategies led by artists and neighbors. The process of this work would likely be healing in and of itself. It also might reveal new pathways to more equitable and sustainable solutions to the questions East 9<sup>th</sup> Street has raised.

**By building new more equitable processes, developing better more transparent communication and empowering artists and neighbors to collaborate, this project could become a model for future arts-based cultural development in Lawrence.**

We can do this. The funding already exists. The experience, skill and passion are here. All we need is the will. Here's a rough sketch of what the framework for such a project might look like:

## PROCESS

**Note: Parts I and II will be more clearly defined after the listening sessions are complete, so there is some flexibility in the direction given to artists.**

### **Part I – Listening/Input**

To begin, we could bring folks together for a listening process - facilitated community conversations that would honor the stories and voices of all. This process is meant to add new voices and perspectives, while acknowledging that the previous iteration of this project included community input sessions as well, and those would not be ignored. Documents outlining the earlier input would be provided online and hard copies made available and acknowledged during the listening sessions. Recognizing that some want more reflection and some want to move on, approximately three sessions would be scheduled in order to give people options for attendance. This allows the neighborhood to remind ourselves about what was learned before, and share any new thoughts before diving into the implementation of the project. The Project Facilitator would lead these sessions, report on each session and incorporate previous input.

### **Part II – Research**

This period of reflection could be followed by a broad research project led by Artists\* and neighbors to understand and illuminate the history, culture, economy and social fabric of East 9<sup>th</sup> and the adjacent neighborhood. Using cartography, alley archeology, people's history, documentary sound and image, social gatherings and other creative means, we could bring new understanding to the culture, history and spirit of places in the neighborhood like St. Luke AME church. Seeing the people and place in new, multifaceted ways will be the foundation for this of the project. Artists interested in proposing projects within this phase would come to a training session or meeting. Projects within this phase would try to illuminate the history and environment of East Lawrence. The Project Facilitator would lead a session where the Artists present their ideas to the community. Any ideas that trigger HRC approval would then be taken to the Arts Commission for approval prior to implementation.

\* The five artists selected by Sans Facon in 2015 will be invited to create projects in the Research or Pathways part of the project.

### **Part III – Pathways toward co-creation**

Fortified by new knowledge and understanding, we would then support projects initiated and led by Artists and others that would be designed to elaborate on Part II Research projects and/or model and implement new strategies for inclusive co-design, equitable planning and open communication. This phase of the project would

either build on the research phase or artists could propose another kind of project. . The Project Facilitator would lead a session where the Artists present their ideas to the community. Any ideas that trigger HRC approval would then be taken to the Arts Commission for approval prior to implementation.

#### **Part IV – Reflection and evaluation**

The last part of this project would (after almost two-years of work) be a series of facilitated gatherings led by the Project Facilitator focusing on reflection and evaluation. Documentation of the project will be put together as reference for participants, the larger community and others who want to learn from our example.

This of course is no small task. But imagine the opportunity we have – More than adequate funding. Dedicated and passionate local people willing to step-up. A real chance at healing and growing. Our example (if we choose it) of how we turned a perceived loss into an opportunity to make our city better by building consensus, discovering innovative solutions to old problems, and honoring the community would be a powerful, positive example of the civic work that art and artists can do in the service of a place and the people who live and work there.

#### **References**

Meeting Place – <https://www.arts.gov/exploring-our-town/meeting-place>

Willowbrook – <https://www.arts.gov/exploring-our-town/project-willowbrook>

## Partners

### **Neighborhood Partner** – East Lawrence Neighborhood Association

A paid position will be hired to represent the East Lawrence Neighborhood Association at \$15,000 for the two year period of the project. This position title will be Neighborhood Administrator. Anyone from east Lawrence can apply for this position, and the ELNA Board will work out the hiring process for this position. This position works closely with the LAC Administrator and the Project Facilitator. The primary responsibilities for this position (some done jointly with the LAC Coordinator and the Project Facilitator) are:

- Review artist proposals
- Coordinate with project artists, LAC, assistants, resident specialists, youth corps and project facilitator
- Maintain website/facebook page
- Host meetings
- Participate in input sessions
- Document and help evaluate project
- Communications and outreach with East Lawrence Neighborhood
- Choose facilitator with LAC and selection committee
- Select jurors with LAC and selected experienced individuals

### **Organizational Partner** – Lawrence Arts Center

A representative of the Lawrence Arts Center will be chosen by the Arts Center to serve as the primary contact for the duration of this project. This person's title will be LAC Administrator. Others from the Arts Center will be involved in various aspects of the project, but this person will be the primary contact. The Arts Center will be compensated \$25,000 for this person and other's time. The primary functions of the Arts Center personnel are to:

- Coordinate with ArtPlace
- Administer funds
- Manage contracts with hired artists, facilitators, assistants, youth corps and neighborhood specialists
- Grant reporting
- Coordinate with ELNA Coordinator, Project Facilitator
- Review proposals
- Host meetings
- Choose Project Facilitator with Neighborhood Coordinator and selection committee
- Participate in input sessions
- Overall project management in conjunction with Project Facilitator
- Select jurors with Neighborhood Coordinator and experienced individuals
- Maintain information on website/facebook

**City Role**

Oversight of Street Rebuild

Oversight of Public Art Projects if they trigger review

**Funder – ArtPlace**

Grant guidance

## Participants

**Grant Administration / Project Management** – Lawrence Arts Center Administrator and other staff from LAC

**Communication, Facilitation and Outreach** – Neighborhood Administrator

**Project Facilitator** – Selected by a selection committee of five to seven total people consisting of: Neighborhood Administrator, LAC Administrator, one ELNA Board member, an additional 9<sup>th</sup> Street resident, an additional Arts Center representative, an additional East Lawrence Resident, and either an East Lawrence business or non profit representative. The selection committee would be selected by Dave Lowenstein, Josh Davis and Cindy Maude. This is a paid position receiving \$50,000 for the two- year period. The Facilitator's primary responsibilities are to:

Manage, schedule and coordinate input meetings

Facilitate input meetings, artist presentation meetings and evaluation meetings

Written reporting and recommendations on all meetings

Coordinate timing and communication with ELNA and LAC coordinators

Coordinate timing and communication with artists

Primary Project Management with support by LAC Coordinator

**Artist/Maker Selection Juries** – Five jurors will be selected for each phase (Research and Pathways) by the Project Facilitator, Neighborhood Administrator LAC Administrator and experienced individuals. Three jurors will be from Lawrence (with at least one previous project artist and one from East Lawrence), and two will be chosen from outside of Lawrence.

**Artists / Makers** – Applicants from Lawrence or with roots in Lawrence are eligible to apply for Research and Pathway projects. The original five artists chosen by Sans Facon in 2015 will be included if they choose to participate. They can choose if they prefer to propose projects for the Research phase or the Pathways phase.

**Assistants** – To help give experience to emerging artists/makers/fabricators, etc, assistants will be matched with Research and Pathway Artists.. Applicants from Lawrence or with roots in Lawrence are eligible to apply to be assistants. Assistants will be chosen by the artists.

**Resident Specialists** – Those with special knowledge, unique stories, essential skills or other experience will help with Research and Pathway projects. Residents of East Lawrence or roots in East Lawrence are eligible to apply to be Resident Specialists. Resident specialists will be chosen by the Neighborhood Administrator the LAC Administrator and the Project Facilitator.

**Youth Corps** – To truly represent and understand E.9<sup>th</sup> Street and the East Lawrence Neighborhood, the voices and imaginations of young people are critical. Youth with roots in East Lawrence can apply for project grants as part of a group, through their school, etc. Youth Corps will be chosen by the Neighborhood Administrator, the LAC Administrator and the Project Facilitator.

## **Budget**

### **Neighborhood Partner –East Lawrence Administrator**

For facilitation time and outreach - \$15,000

### **Organizational Partner – LAC Administrator and other staff**

Staff time – \$25,000

### **Project Facilitator**

½ time for two years - \$50,000

### **Jurors**

Lawrence- 6 x \$1000 = \$6,000

Outside – 4 x \$1000 + travel and lodging \$3,000 = \$7,000

### **Artist/Makers/Projects**

Previous selectees 5 x \$13,500 = \$67,500

10 x \$13,500 = \$135,000

### **Assistants**

10 x \$2,000 = \$20,000

### **Resident Specialists**

**5 x \$1,000 = \$5,000**

### **Youth Corps**

5 x \$1,000 = \$5,000

### **Evaluation and Publication**

\$5,000

ArtPlace Funds \$343,000 (rounded up)

**Total Project Expenses \$340,500**

Remaining Funds 2,500

## **Timeline**

### **November - May 2018**

Outreach and development of plan/ArtPlace Approval

### **June 2018**

Proposed plan presented to ELNA

### **July 2018**

Final ELNA approval

### **July-September 2018**

Hire East Lawrence Coordinator, LAC Coordinator, Project Facilitator

### **October-November 2018**

Project begins - outreach, listening/input sessions, training/outreach for project applicants; Jurors selected

### **November 2018**

RFP for Research projects

### **January 2019**

Research projects begin

### **January 2019**

RFP for Pathway projects

### **March 2019**

Pathway projects begin

### **March 2020**

Research and Pathway projects conclude

### **April - May 2020**

Reflection and Evaluation

### **June 2020**

Celebration and Publication of project report

This document was written and edited by ELNA board members, Josh Davis and Dave Loewenstein and Interim CEO of the Lawrence Arts Center, Cindy Maude