

REPORT

from the

Arts and Culture Commission

to

Northfield City Council

September, 2009

This report will serve to update council as to our progress, challenges we face, and opportunities we see at this time. This report also contains specific recommendations for the Council's consideration.

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The full report, which follows, is on line at
<http://www.ci.northfield.mn.us/government/boards/artsandculturecommission>

OVERVIEW

Establishment of The Arts and Culture Commission

Ordinance 855, approved by City Council in January 2007, established the Arts and Culture Commission “to advise the city council on the development of arts and cultural activities, organizations and facilities in Northfield.” The ordinance further delineated its purpose and responsibilities, as outlined in the next section.

Council was guided by the results of Arts Plan 06, a year-long, community-wide research initiative funded by a \$20,000 City Council grant. ArtsPlan assessed the strengths and challenges facing the arts and cultural community in Northfield. Its final report made recommendations to the City, to arts and culture organizations, to the private sector, and to the schools and colleges.

Number one in its list of recommendations was that “The City Council should create an Arts and Cultural Commission as part of City Government.”

A copy of ArtsPlan 06’s final report can be found on the city website.

Nine initial Commission members were named by then Mayor, Lee Lansing, and approved by Council in May 2007. The Commission began its work in June 2007.

Purpose of the Commission

Ordinance 855, Sec. 2-357

The **purpose** of the commission shall be to assist Northfield in becoming a community in which arts and cultural activities:

- a) are recognized as vital components of community life that are worthy of investment and support from the public, private and non-profit sectors;
- b) are valued and promoted for their economic benefits and development potential, specially in the downtown;
- c) include new ethnic groups in Northfield’s identity and sense of community.
- d) represent an integral part of Northfield’s educational mission and programs for young people;
- e) engage the talents and involvement of retirees and senior citizens;
- f) develop a wider array of opportunities for collaboration between faculty and student artists at the two colleges and community artists; and
- g) cooperate to enhance the public perception of Northfield’s identity and quality of life in the community itself, the surrounding region, and beyond.

Responsibilities of the Commission

Ordinance 855, Sec. 2-358

The commission shall be advisory to the city council and its **responsibilities** shall include the following:

- a) develop, update, and recommend to the council a city mission, public agenda and strategic mission for arts and culture in Northfield;
- b) provide leadership for completing the comprehensive plan sections regarding civic arts and culture goals and planning, and providing input for plan revisions;
- c) leverage individual, corporate, foundation and city funding for arts and cultural activities;
- d) facilitate collaboration and joint planning among public and private agencies involved with related issues such as economic development, tourism, and arts education;
- e) provide support in the planning, acquisition and/or development of land and facilities by the city as needed to support Northfield's arts and cultural activities and organizations, and the development of affordable studio space and housing for individual artists;
- f) upon request of the city council, develop and advocate design standards for city facilities, public areas, and private development, which represent a coherent image of Northfield as a place of unique aesthetic, architectural, and cultural identity;
- g) plan and advocate funding for the installation of public art in Northfield that enhances the city's appearance and artistic appeal; and
- h) foster inclusive and cross-cultural activities to help build community as Northfield continues to become more diverse.

Functioning of the Commission

The Arts and Culture Commission (ACC) does not exist to make art or to provide programming. Its activities are supported at minimal financial cost by the City Administrative Office. It has no budget.

The ACC acts in part as a catalyst, in part as a think tank, in part as a cheer leader, in part as a counselor, in part as a visionary.

The ACC meets the first Thursday of each month, from 4:30 pm to 6 pm at City Hall. Council Liaison from its inception has been Jon Denison. The Staff representative is Joel Walinski.

Members are appointed by the Mayor with approval by City Council. Ordinance 855 Sec. 2-359 calls for members to be drawn from across broad categories representative of the arts and cultural community as a whole, including the two colleges as well as education and business. There are nine members who serve three full year terms, with the opportunity for reappointment for a second full three-year term. After that members must step down for one year before re-applying for appointment again. Terms are staggered so three members' terms expire each year. A term begins January 1 and ends December 31 of the years in question. The Commission elects a chair, vice-chair, and secretary from among its membership at the beginning of each calendar year following the appointment of new members. The Commission speaks with one voice.

In keeping with the practices of open government, the Agenda is posted on the City's website

several days prior to the meeting, the minutes of each meeting are posted immediately following their approval, and opportunity is provided for public input at the outset of every meeting.

The ACC, keeping its **purpose** clearly in mind, has set out to address and to fulfill its various designated **responsibilities**. The ACC has established a list of priorities, recognizing that some initiatives are more readily accomplished than others, that opportunity presents itself in different ways at different times, and that priorities are integral to the wishes and will of the community and may change and/or be added on to.

RECENT, CURRENT AND PROJECTED ACTIVITIES OF THE ACC AS PER ITS DESIGNATED RESPONSIBILITIES

a) Develop, update, and recommend to the council a city mission, public agenda and strategic plan for arts and culture in Northfield.

- The MISSION of the ACC is to fulfill the mandate given to it on behalf of the City, to pursue the goals of Arts Plan 06 including identifying Northfield as an Arts Town, and to be the voice of and advocate for the Arts and Cultural community.
- The PUBLIC AGENDA of the ACC is to build on the open, inclusive, consultative and collaborative process that led to its own creation, taking into account the community's cultural, social and economic opportunities and realities.
- The STRATEGIC PLAN is to systematically address those goals identified by the Arts and Cultural community, to reassess and update them as appropriate, to work with and along side those involved in and seeking to develop arts and cultural activities, and to make recommendations to Council where specific City involvement may be warranted and beneficial.

b) Provide leadership for completing the comprehensive plan sections regarding civic arts and culture goals and planning, and providing input for plan revisions.

Recent

- At the time that the ACC was constituted, the writing of the comprehensive plan was in process.
- The ACC's first undertaking was to review the previous (2001) Comprehensive Plan in order to assess, with respect to arts and culture, what was valuable to keep, what if anything was no longer relevant, and what needed to be added. We spent our first two months doing that, with special meetings added, and passed our recommendations on to the Planning Commission.
- In follow-up meetings with the Planning Commission and through review of succeeding drafts, we proposed refinements to the new plan as it developed in committee. As the Comprehensive Plan made its way through public hearings, the ACC followed the process carefully and contributed to it all along the way.

Current

- Now that the writing of the codes are being undertaken, the ACC is participating once again by carefully reviewing the proposed codes and making appropriate recommendations where land use and building requirements impact on potential arts and cultural development, most notably with respect to our purposes identified in e) and f) below.

Projected

- As the revised codes make their way through public hearings, the ACC will be following the process, contributing to it as we see value in doing so.
- City Council could make better use of the expertise and focused concerns of the ACC by including the ACC along with other boards and commissions in the review process of projects being reviewed by the city.

c. Leverage individual, corporate, foundation and city funding for arts and cultural activities.

Recent

- Already we have lent support to several arts and culture groups in search of funding through the writing of letters and by making official representation on their behalves (Library Board, NDDC, NAG, Historical Society, Arts Watering Hole, and River Arts Quarter (RAQ)).

Current

- We are currently working with the schools and the NAG by taking the lead to secure funding for a public art project in which they will be involved (see g) below).

Projected

- We wish to develop formal strategies for fund raising in concert with Council and staff, private enterprise, the CVB, the NDDC, the EDA, the schools, and with arts and culture organizations. We see this as a continuing and important ACC objective, both short and long range and would appreciate Council guidance and collaboration in this regard.
- Certainly there will be opportunities from the additional state sales tax revenue that has been designated for arts and culture, as well as from federal stimulus money.

d. Facilitate collaboration and joint planning among public and private agencies involved with related issues such as economic development, tourism, and arts education.

Recent

- The ACC has from the first instance been a consistent and strong advocate as well as acting as a facilitator with such groups as the NDDC, the CVB, the EDA, the RAQ, as well as with a wide array of arts and cultural organizations and other city boards and commissions for greater collaboration in marketing, planning and visioning in all these areas.

In response to requests from the arts and cultural community, the Commission facilitated a series of meetings among leaders of arts and cultural organizations, the colleges, and individual artists to consider ways to provide shared services to its members that, today, have developing outcomes in the Watering Hole for the Arts and the River Arts Quarter.

Furthermore, the ACC through several of its members continues to participate in and earnestly encourages both these developments.

The Watering Hole for the Arts, which includes arts programmers and promoters (non-profit, for-profit, and educational) is in the process of developing a single community-wide arts and entertainment calendar that will serve both as a collaborative planning tool as well as a comprehensive marketing tool with the intention of making Northfield an identifiable arts destination and regional center, thus helping to brand Northfield as the Arts Town that it is.

The Riverwalk Arts Quarter initiative is a business collaboration of gallery owners and visual artists and their supporters which serve their own and the city's same economic and cultural ends. We wrote in support of their application for funding from the Southern Minnesota Initiative Fund (SMIF) and have been party to the process they have been following.

Current

- Active discussion and advocacy continues on all fronts. These initiatives now in process, valuably serve the underlying **purpose** of the ACC and the vision of Arts Plan 06 as well as the City Council's '09 goals. All meld the efforts of artists, entrepreneurs, and arts and culture organizations toward the economic viability of our downtown as well as to the community at large. Still, more needs to be done.

Projected

- Specific proposals will be found at the end of this report.

e) Provide support in the planning, acquisition and/or development of land and facilities by the city as needed to support Northfield's arts and cultural activities and organizations.

Recent

- The ACC has taken the initiative to articulate the vision advocated in Arts Plan 06 for the Library and the ACC to collaborate on the planning of an arts and culture center between the current library and the Grand.

§ An article published in the *Northfield News* in June 2006, affirming this vision, stated:

To realize such a regional center will be a long term process that will reap huge benefits for the City as well as for our citizens and the artists among us, designating Northfield as the Arts Town and cultural mecca that we are.

- Specifically, the ACC has sought to keep open the opportunity for Arts Plan 06's vision of a regional arts and culture center downtown,

§ through contributions to the Comprehensive Plan,

§ by advocating the expansion of the library on its current site,

§ in joining with the Library Board to recommend that the City engage in a long-term planning process on this site in support of this vision.

Current

- We continue to promote this vision as an economic driver through discussions with the Chairs of the Infill Committees of the NDDC and the EDA.
- We are heartened by the NDDC and EDA's hosting the Holland, Michigan delegation recently concerning long term planning. Members attended the public session with great interest. We regret we were not invited to the afternoon session.

Projected

- In order for the ACC to more effectively help fulfill our mandate to "Provide support in the planning, acquisition and/or development of land and facilities by the city as needed to support Northfield's arts and cultural activities and organizations and for the development of affordable studio space and housing for individual artists," the ACC should have representation on all City task forces, study groups, and the like concerned with land and facility acquisition and development, as equal participants. Doing so will best ensure the likelihood of reaching the City's stated goals of seeing arts and cultural activities recognized as vital components of community life that are worthy of investment, are valued and promoted for their economic benefits and development potential, and enhance the public perception of Northfield's identity and quality of life, as articulated among the purposes behind the creation of the ACC.

Concerning **the development of affordable studio space and housing for individual artists**, this aspect is still being addressed.

f) Upon request of the city council, develop and advocate design standards for city facilities, public areas, and private development, which represent a coherent image of Northfield as a place of unique aesthetic, architectural, and cultural identity.

Current

- We await a request from City Council to do so. Collaboration with the Design Advisory Board and the Streetscape Committee would seem appropriate. In the meantime, the ACC has taken initiative of its own by engaging in discussions with the Historical Preservation Commission and the Northfield Historical Society regarding the placement of plaques along the river and in the area of downtown identifying buildings and sites that are of historical and cultural significance, and we will continue to work collaboratively with them and others.

g) Plan and advocate funding for the installation of public art in Northfield that enhances the city's appearance and artistic appeal.

Recent

- In collaboration with the Northfield Historical Society and with City staff and the Department of Public Works, and at the specific request of the sculptor, the ACC organized and conducted the installation ceremony for Ray Jacobson's **Harvest** sculpture in Legacy Plaza along the river walk last October. Members also actively participated in fund raising and encouragement of **Harvest**.

Current

- The ACC is working with City Manager Joel Walinski to find appropriate works to grace several of the already identified locations for additional sculpture installations, and continues to pursue other possible locations.
- We are looking at a program similar to those in Sioux Falls SD, Ames IA, and Grand Junction CO which obtains sculptures from artists which rotate on an annual basis and are placed on designated sites downtown and along the river walk.
- To mark the Northfield Arts Guild's 50th Anniversary and the Carnegie Library's 100th, to overlap in 2010, and to seek to establish an ongoing initiative, we are currently organizing a sculpture contest in concert with the art program at Northfield High School.
 - § To do so, we are seeking outside funding which will enable a professional sculpture mentor to work with the selected student artist and at the same time enhance the school's art program which also overlaps with our responsibility for enhancing arts education (the High School currently has no sculpture teaching program).
 - § The sculpture is intended be placed for one year at 3rd and Division and then be moved to a permanent site at the High School. Meanwhile another will be commissioned to replace the original, to be repeated on an annual basis.
- We are exploring the possibility of the installation of sidewalk art wherever new or replacement sidewalks are to be installed, researching costs involved, potential funding sources, contest regulations, procedures for soliciting community support, and other

factors. Numerous cities around the country, large and small, already serve as models including Houston, Albuquerque, San Diego, Los Angeles, Valencia, Berkeley, San Francisco, Kalamazoo, and closer to home, St Paul and Mankato.

§ Projects can include sidewalk poetry, murals, sculpture, mosaics, and other forms of decoration.

§ Other communities have invited local artists to paint their fire hydrants to look like policemen, ballerinas, cowboys, clowns, and other such characters, to enliven sidewalks and neighborhoods.

§ All that is needed is the willingness to build art into the design process from the start of any project.

- We are investigating the establishment of a means to honor and celebrate Northfield's "Living Treasures" by naming artists or cultural personas of significance among us who have contributed valuably to art and to the community and to permanently install their names and photographs on City property, perhaps in the Library, at City Hall, or both.

Projected

- We will be seeking collaboration from City Council in order for the City to embrace these and other forms of public art to be built into all further civic development in Northfield at relatively little cost.
- We will be seeking assistance from the Northfield Arts Guild, Art Org, and both Colleges to work with us to organize selection processes for public art projects (sculpture, art, sidewalk poetry, living treasures). In addition we will seek the input and support from the Planning Commission, the NDDC, the EDA, the Design Advisory Board, the Streetscape Committee, along with local community service and support groups such as the Friends of the Library, the Friends of Way Park, the Central Park Gardeners, the Northfield Garden Club, the Mill Towns Trail group among others, as well as local businesses and service clubs to help fund and/or place them.
- We are already engaged in discussions as to how to place art in City Hall in order to enhance the halls and meeting rooms, hopefully to be able to achieve the same effect as in Northfield Hospital.

h) Fostering inclusive and cross cultural activities.

- The ACC encourages all those who organize events and who develop programs to reach out collaboratively across traditional boundaries. ArtOrg has been a good model for this.
- The ACC, in continuing to advocate in support of this goal, recognizes that the process of involving ethnic and minority groups and individuals as participants in traditional activities and events, and/or providing access to existing facilities to develop and present non-traditional activities, is best addressed and achieved by and among the various parties themselves.
- The ACC advocates equal access to the use of city facilities according to appropriate and published fair-use, economic, and legal criteria and encourages the City to reach out to ensure such use. The ACC stands ready to assist or, if so directed, to take the lead in articulating this.

CONCLUSION

This report and these recommendations represent but a frame of a motion picture still being filmed. The work of the ACC is yet to more fully unfold.

The ACC does not exist to make art or to provide programming. Its activities are supported at minimal financial cost by the City Administrative Office. It has no budget.

The ACC acts in part as a catalyst, in part as a think-tank, in part as a cheer leader, in part as a counselor, in part as a visionary. It also has proven itself to be an empowerer.

The fact that the City established the Arts and Culture Commission in the first place gave notice that the City considered art and culture to be important. Prior to its establishment, the arts community was all too often at war with itself, each organization vying with the other for the same funding sources, for the same audiences, for the same participants, advertising themselves alone, concerned with individual survival.

Since the considered report of Arts Plan 06 with its findings and recommendations, and since the establishment of the ACC, and due to the ACC's determination to see Arts Plan 06 fully implemented and enhanced, the arts community has found new energy, is working collaboratively, and sees itself linked to the identity and to the economic future of Northfield. It is feeling vitalized and empowered.

Such community energies and resources should not be squandered. They should be fully supported and built upon. The ACC provides Council the means to most effectively ensure that carefully considered, coordinated and collaborative action be taken and sustained.

A 2006 state-wide Minnesota study which measured the economic impact of government investment in the arts through the non-profit sector, concluded that for every \$1 invested, the government reaped a return of \$11. That return came from taxes, directly from the sales of tickets, from spin-off businesses which provided artistic supplies and materials, meals, the provision of subsidiary entertainment, and other spin-off ventures and activities, and from taxes paid on earnings to artists and performers and waiters and sales personnel from increased employment.

If the State can reap benefits from investment in the arts, how might a city like Northfield be able to benefit itself?

RECOMMENDATIONS

Some specific ideas which we believe may have merit are:

Improving the ACC's ability to advise Council and serve the City

We believe that Council, Staff and other bodies can make better use of the ACC by actively seeking ACC input at City planning sessions and giving it representation on Council appointed bodies concerned with City initiated developments potentially relating to the ACC's mandate and mission, and by encouraging other City bodies to consult it also.

The ACC takes its mandate and mission seriously. They include: to help further the public perception of Northfield's identity as an Arts Town and to enhance the quality of life in the community itself, to make recommendations to the council concerning economic development and tourism including land use and facilities, and to develop and advocate design standards for city facilities, public areas, and private development, which represent a coherent image of Northfield as a place of unique aesthetic, architectural, and cultural identity.

The ACC is in many ways the new kid on the block. The City created the Commission in part because it recognized that traditional planning and visioning had not always taken into account the valuable perspectives that such a body can bring to the table. The ACC has sought to make itself known and seeks to collaborate wherever it sees value in doing so. However, for Council to make full value of the potential represented by the ACC it needs to include the ACC as a more central player. We are pleased that the Planning Commission has actively sought our input on several occasions. It is unfortunate, however, that the ACC had no input into the recent CIP deliberations. We hope there may still be opportunity. As well, although members of the ACC took it upon themselves to attend the public presentation by the Holland, Michigan delegation concerning long-range planning, organized by the EDA, we were not invited to participate in the afternoon session. Certainly the ACC can be more effective where it can contribute. Council and Staff should encourage this.

Marketing Northfield

CVB Allotment

Seek public input for ways to help the CVB realize more community-supportive and creative ways to use its funds.

While the arts and culture community, as much as any aspect or demographic grouping, serves to define Northfield and contributes to the quality of life provided its citizens, recognition of its value for tourism, to attract potential residents (young families and retirees) to locate here, and as a potentially significant factor in economic development has traditionally been under promoted, and still is.

The CVB receives money from the City from taxes on lodging fees to promote the City. Questions continue to be asked regarding how its monies might be more creatively used. The

Arts and Cultural community believes that a greater portion of its funding might be devoted to arts and culture and collaborative overtures and initiatives. One such initiative which the ACC supports is the marketing initiative being undertaken by the Watering Hole for the Arts to develop a community-wide planning and marketing calendar and website in order to promote the arts collectively, which can, if properly and cooperatively funded, serve to significantly promote Northfield as an arts town destination. The CVB appears to be uniquely poised to be able to best fund this initiative and to benefit from it.

Alternately or additionally, Cable Fund monies might be considered for this purpose, or the City might directly underwrite it when the economy improves.

Cable Fund

Convene representatives of appropriate parties, including the ACC, to set criteria for the appropriate and meaningful disbursement of these funds within the general guidelines decreed by law in support of initiatives that would serve to enhance Northfield's image and the quality of life.

City Website

Create the sense that Northfield places an extremely high value on arts and culture and considers them part of its identity.

Place arts and culture prominently on the City's home page, actively promoting arts and culture events as part of Northfield's identity, and provide prominent links to the community's arts and culture groups, to for-profit activities and businesses, and to the schools and colleges art and culture activities as part of a concerted city-wide collaborative initiative. Many city websites promote arts and culture far more prominently than does Northfield.

Public Art

Give greater profile to Northfield as an Arts Town by making public art a city priority.

Require that public art be included in every City development and encourage it as part of every significant private construction project. To that end, require that 1% of all capital construction project budgets be allotted to providing that works of art be part of the project. Furthermore, charge the Arts and Culture Commission to propose criteria to Council for consideration.

Such work could be paintings, murals, sculptures, friezes, and the like. If the site is not conducive to the display of public art, an area such as a public park could be designated as the location of the work. Discussions with the Parks Board and the Streetscape Committee would be appropriate prior to placing any work outdoors.

The ACC believes that such a requirement would contribute exponentially to Northfield's identity and quality of life. There need be little and sometimes no extra cost involved accruing to the City itself. A number of other cities who have already engaged in the inclusion of public art in public works projects and who have it as part of their codes attest to that fact. (For examples and further information in this regard see Appendices A, B and C).

The ACC acknowledges that the City already supports Arts and Cultural activities and events by providing like services to a cost of approximately \$40,000 a year, including use of the Showmobile, extra police, street closings, and the like as well as funding the Library as a cultural and educational service at the cost of approximately \$1,000,000 per year.

Potential Consolidation of Boards and Commissions

The ACC respects and endorses maintaining the existing boards and commissions as a first course of action. Each has a unique role to play and together they provide Council with expertise, advice and ideas far beyond the reach and resources of Council's own unique capacities.

Furthermore the various boards and commissions engage, empower and focus the positive energies and aspirations of the citizenry to which Council is accountable. To that end, they provide an invaluable service which may transcend their immediate financial cost as well as staff and council member time that may be required.

It would be simplest and best for Council to help Boards and Commissions to establish means for enhanced communication and for greater and more integrated collaboration.

This can be accommodated in a number of ways: periodic joint meetings, shared reports, and the appointment of board member liaisons between them. The ACC recommends using each of these means, and any others that show themselves to be valuable.

Only if consolidation be absolutely necessary, then the ACC recommends that bodies with like concerns be co-supportively grouped together. For instance, the ACC would welcome the inclusion of the Design Advisory Board into the ACC if that is the City's preference. We have

clearly overlapping responsibilities and concerns.

To achieve co-supportive grouping, input should first be sought from those under consideration of being merged and their opinions most seriously considered. Secondly, input from those most directly served and affected by the work of those boards and commissions in question should also be sought and also seriously considered. Thirdly, but also of value, would be input from the community at large.

In the normal order of things, overlapping goals and interests can be seen as a value. In education, for example, “reinforcement” of similar ideas and concepts from differing quarters and from one discipline to another provides a valuably enriching and informative process. The same is true in business, and also in government. Therefore, where one or more boards and commissions have portions of their mandates which overlap, Council should appropriately consider the actual cost of receiving less “reinforcement” from across the community and how this might impact their ability to best assure wise and effective decision making.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INFORMATION REGARDING PUBLIC ART

cited from http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2002/02/public_arts_cul.php

- An average of 55 million viewers experience public art firsthand every day, approximately 1,000 times the audience experiencing art galleries, museums and theaters combined. The Vietnam Memorial alone is visited by more than 10,000 people daily, and artworks in airports or subways are seen daily by over five million travelers.
- Public art receives ten times the media attention other art forms receive.
- An average public art project provides 50 times the economic impact of arts events in traditional venues, yet the cost to the public for public art is less than 50 cents per taxpayer per year, based on the amount of public funding used to fund public art. In two cases — Christo's "Wrapped Reichstag" for Berlin, which generated more than \$300 million in three weeks for that city, and Chicago's "Cows on Parade," which generated more than \$200 million for that city — no taxpayer's dollars were used.
- Compared to theaters and museums, public art has relatively low overhead, low staffing costs and produces less waste or environmental damage.
- Most public art is not publicly funded. Churches, schools, hospitals, corporations, individuals and private nonprofits support most of the art we see in the public realm.
- More money is spent cleaning up unwanted graffiti than is spent on all the public art in most major American cities.

APPENDIX B: THE VALUE OF PUBLIC ART

Cited from the website of Jack Becker of St Paul, the most respected public art consultant in America:

http://www.communityarts.net/readingroom/archivefiles/2002/02/public_arts_cul.php

PUBLIC ART ADDS VALUE TO YOUR PROJECT + INVESTMENT

Public art can offer many benefits to a project or community

- **Generating Economic Impact**
 - attracting new audiences
 - supporting marketing efforts
 - attracting media attention
 - returning dollars to local economy for fabrication and installation
 - enhancing cultural tourism in your area

- **Establishing Unique Identity**
 - giving character to a setting
 - representing the history and importance of a place
 - creating an iconic image for future generations
 - physically represent your values or aesthetic

- **Building Community, Creating Civic Pride**
 - engaging local stakeholders in planning, design, and execution
 - encouraging community to participate in creating their own public spaces
 - demonstrating the strengths of a community
 - empowering individuals who don't usually have a role in decision-making

- **Supporting Great Art**
 - setting the bar for cultural development
 - demonstrating aesthetic sophistication
 - attracting artists/activity to your neighborhood

APPENDIX C: SIDEWALK POETRY

Two articles regarding sidewalk poetry in Mankato and St Paul:

from <http://mankato-mn.gov/feature.aspx?storyID=13823>

Sidewalk poetry in Mankato's City Center

Poems have been stamped into the sidewalk along Riverfront Drive, between Plum and Rock streets, in Mankato's City Center. "This public art project provides an enjoyable moment of outdoor reading and enhances our city sidewalks," said Shannon Robinson, executive director of Twin River Center for the Arts.

Dozens of area residents entered short poems in the sidewalk poetry contest, WordWalk. Doris Stengel, past-president of the National Federation of State Poetry Societies judged the competition and named the top seven winners:

- Ikars Sarma, Mankato; "Minnesota"
- Marlys Neufeld, Hanska; "Choices" and "Directions"
- Connie Miller, Mankato; "Wedding"
- Susan Stevens Chambers, Good Thunder; "Aging Benignly"
- Yvonne Cariveau, Mankato; "Tuna"
- Tim J. Brennan, Austin; "Still Life #30"
- Shirley Ensrud, Blue Earth; "As We Grow Older"

Eight poems also received honorable mention:

- Heather Elliot, Mankato; "March Rain" and "To Myself"
- Rick Lybeck, Mankato; "Grackle"
- Patti Ruskey, Mankato; "Bluestem Nights"
- Damon Weinandt, Mankato; "The Same Sidewalk"
- Jill Kalz, New Ulm; "That Old Want"
- Susan Steven Chambers, Good Thunder; "I Wedge in at Zero Degrees"
- Shirley Ensrud, Blue Earth; "Sky Fruit"

WordWalk was inspired by a similar project in St. Paul entitled "Everyday Poems for City Sidewalk."

WordWalk is a public art project made possible by Twin Rivers Center for the Arts, City Center Partnership, Southern Minnesota Poets Society and the City of Mankato.

For more information contact Twin Rivers Center for the Arts at 507-387-1008.

Cited from <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/1118/p17s01-hfgn.html>

Sidewalk stanzas

A public arts project in St. Paul, Minn., inscribes poems on neighborhood sidewalks.

By Matthew Shaer | Staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor
from the November 18, 2008 edition

Marcus Young discusses how the sidewalk poetry can be applied just about everywhere and one of the inspirations for the project.

ST. PAUL, MINN. - On a damp day this fall, I drove with Marcus Young to Frogtown, a working-class neighborhood on the outskirts of downtown St. Paul. Mr. Young, who was born in Hong Kong and raised in Des Moines, Iowa, has spent the past year stamping oversized poems into cement across the city – a public arts project he calls, with something less than poetic flourish, "Everyday Poems for City Sidewalk."

The poems are scattered as far as Lake Como to the north and the Mississippi River to the west. But a single Frogtown street plays host to four, and we arrived around dusk, when the shadows were fattening.

"It's a universal thing," Young said, peering down at a pile of russet autumn leaves. "You see wet concrete, and you want to do something to it. You want to write your initials. All we've done is sanction that desire." He pushed aside the leaves, revealing "Second Love," a six-line poem by St. Paul resident Carlee Tressel.

Young read it aloud in a lilting, appreciative cadence:

*He kissed the girl
in the ballerina skirt.
It was a long one –
like the kiss –
drenching her sneakers
in tulle.*

I pointed out that someone had colored in the first few letters of the poem in crayon, and Young smiled. "It will be there for a good number of decades," he said. "If you're a kid growing up around here, maybe you ride your bike by and notice it and say, 'Let's meet near the poem.' Or, 'Let's use the poem for second base.' It gets folded into your life." He continued, "Or maybe there's a word, like tulle, which you don't know when you're in third grade. And then in eighth grade, you learn about the word, and you understand the poem in a different way."

For two years, Young has served as the public artist in residence for St. Paul, a Midwestern city with a serious creative bent. Literature and art flourish here, supported by a network of independent bookstores, coffee shops, and galleries.

One of Young's first goals, when he moved into his office in a dilapidated government building,

was to bring that vibrancy to street level.

"The sidewalk in front of your house is public realm, it's city property, but you feel some sort of part ownership," he said. "I knew I wanted to ask people to make a conceptual leap and to think about their streets as a canvas, or, in this case, as a book. And then I thought, 'Well, if it's a book, who's going to get to write in it?'"

So in February, Young convened a panel of judges and announced that the city would host a poetry contest, open to all residents, young and old, published and amateur. The only stipulation was that entries be kept short and that the material be previously unpublished.

With that, the floodgates opened. The poems came from middle schools and universities, cubicle dwellers and bibliophiles, a radio producer, a former resident of a refugee camp in Thailand, a science-fiction writer, and one particularly poetic retired Chinese opera singer.

From those thousands of entries, the judges narrowed the field to 20 poems. This summer, Young took the winning entries to Themescapes, a Minnesota company that helps produce concrete sculptures for water parks and playgrounds. Twenty stamps were made – with each poem rendered in a different font – and turned over to St. Paul's public works department. Standing in front of a map at his office, Young pointed to a scattershot sprawl of blue pins, each representing a freshly printed and installed sidewalk panel. "Tomorrow, we'll do our 100th installation," he said proudly.

"I see the poems around town," said Sean Fleming, a teacher in the St. Paul public school system. "And every time, because I'm so drawn to words, I stop and I look. We're living these rushed lives, and it's good to stop and ponder a poem."

Earlier this year, Mr. Fleming – along with his students, who were working on a poetry unit in class – submitted a packet of verse for consideration in the contest.

The kids' work didn't make the cut, but the judges liked "Let's Talk," a terse, funny poem by Fleming.

"A public display of literacy and art like this, who knows where it might lead?" Fleming said. One of the most striking poems was written by Margaret Hasse, a recipient of a National Endowment of the Arts fellowship and the author of three collections of verse. Ms. Hasse said she submitted a few poems, but was happy to learn that "Meadowlark Mending Song" had been selected. "As Emily Dickinson wrote, 'Hope is the thing with feathers.' Humanness was really at the heart of the contest. There were a lot of poems, from a lot of different backgrounds, and really only one defining quality."

"Meadowlark Mending Song" sits on the same street as "Second Love," in front of a handsome old Frogtown home. By the time Young and I arrived at the panel, living room lights were flickering to life inside the house.

"I know it's here somewhere," Young said, kicking through a heap of spilled soil. We both knelt down on the pavement, and I spotted the first line, its letters furrowed with dried mud:

*What hurt you today
was taken out of your heart
by the meadowlark
who slipped the silver needle of her
song
in and out of the grey day
and mended what was torn.*

(All the winning selections can be read at www.publicartstpaul.org/everydaysidewalk.)

Some further websites to visit include:

<http://redravine.wordpress.com/2008/12/02/sidewalk-poetry-public-art-at-its-best/>
http://www.publicartinla.com/other_cities/houston/sidewalks.html