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**Sent:** Thursday, May 29, 2008 10:12 AM

**Subject:** Gateway Arts and Entertainment District - Prince George's County in Western Maryland

General Plan Task Force Colleagues:

In early May, I attended the annual Council on Foundations (COF) conference just outside of DC. One day of the conference featured a series of off-site tours. I chose to attend a community economic development session called "Gateway to Change: Crossing Racial Divides to Building Community". I was impressed with the community development process and thought you might find the project of interest as well.

**Summary:**

Four towns along three miles of the Interstate Route 1 corridor in Maryland have come together to address their blighted region, forming the Gateway Community Development Corporation (CDC). They saw high visibility potential and used an asset-based redevelopment approach. An asset inventory of the region found that many artists were living in the area because of the low rents and high number of vacant spaces for studios. As a result, the region was designated as an Arts and Entertainment District.

**Background:**

In 1999, a summit was held to bring multiple stakeholders together to discuss economic revitalization for the region. They agreed to focus on the artists in their development planning. They committed to four major anchor projects, one in each municipality. These communities did not have any downtown districts to speak of. This project intended to create an urban setting that did not previously exist. Goals: create a sense of community (housing) and a regional destination (known as arts enclave with studios, galleries, etc.).

A firm called Art Space Projects, a nonprofit real estate developer focused on the arts (<http://www.artspaceusa.org>), was hired to conduct a survey of several thousand artists in the region to gauge market demand for housing and studio space. These artists then forwarded to survey on to others. They received a strong response to the survey - a 3:1 ratio of interest to planned available space. They then conducted a survey of arts organizations and received 53 positive responses from organizations throughout the region who were interested in relocated to the project area.

**Project Highlights:**

To date, they have focused on housing to create a critical mass for commercial development to come and second and third phase.

There is a new fire station serving the four towns. Major public art component was included.

Hyattsville anchor project

- ◆ Hyattsville Arts District will have 12 live/work units, over 500 townhomes & condos, an art gallery and community rooms
- ◆ Completed portion: 44 units for artists with incomes Up to 50% of median income. All rental with rents from \$395-\$900. Tenants have average incomes of \$14,400/year.
- ◆ Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) project. Shared common art spaces with access to a high ventilation space and a graphic design. Green building. Some handicapped accessible.
- ◆ YMCA facility

Hyattsville Commercial plan:

- ◆ Focus on economic revitalization through the arts. Belief that arts will work as a tool if you are consistent in your vision and message.
  - ◆ Conducted planning charrettes in the community to develop broad-based buy-in
  - ◆ This process led to rejection of seven project plans that came forward until finally one came forward that was broadly embraced
- Art is infused into the entire development plan

#### Brentwood anchor project

- ◆ Brentwood Arts Center - 15,000 sf of warehouse space for gallery, classrooms, retail, and studios for 12-15 artists
- ◆ Housing project - artist live/work project with 15 units
- ◆ High tech incubator

#### Mt. Ranier anchor project

- ◆ Artosphere Digital Community Café on ground level featuring live music with artists who live in the building
- ◆ Gallery and shop also on ground level featuring and selling art works
- ◆ 44 live/work units of different sizes. Income capped at \$30,000 per year. Rent of \$300-\$500 per month.
- ◆ 7000 sf of new commercial space
- ◆ Another building with 12 residential units for artists
- ◆ Artists on the Tracks - 3 warehouse spaces that contain 18 artist studios

#### North Brentwood anchor project

- ◆ African American Museum and Cultural Center is in development (land acquired in 2006)

#### Other projects:

- ◆ H&F Fine Arts Gallery
- ◆ Latin American Folk Institute
- ◆ Joe's Movement Emporium performing arts and education center
- ◆ Gateway CDC Office and Nonprofit Incubator
- ◆ Architects office and gallery
- ◆ Nonprofit office building and children's art museum
- ◆ Franklin's General Store and Brewery
- ◆ ezStorage - studios for artists and 10,000 sf of new commercial space
- ◆ Public art throughout

#### **Obstacles/Key Learnings:**

- ◆ Recognition of regional assets and agreement to develop with an overriding focus on artists. Organic process driven by the people representing community assets. CDC believes its role is to strengthen and support the vision that the community creates because it is the people that are the vital infrastructure of the region.
- ◆ Intentional and concerted effort to communicate in order to engage and sustain broad community involvement, particularly amongst those not historically involved.
- ◆ Zoning needed to change to support and encourage desired development. A few examples:
  - there was an issue with operating businesses out of the home that was inconsistent with plans for the district
  - façade regulations needed to be modified
  - they encouraged the relocation of many liquor stores which the blighted region was disproportionately populated with
  - they sunshined out the leasing of prime property along the interstate to car lots, which had previously been a common use

- they had to address the cost issue associated with the lease of billboards along the interstate tied to the buildings on the property
- ◆ They established the Route 1 corridor as a state-designated Arts & Entertainment District, the result of new legislation
- ◆ Tax credits and other incentives are being offered to new business for restoring old buildings
- ◆ Previously disparate and culturally separate communities came together (low income minority communities on one side of the tracks, more affluent white communities on the other). Lots of change in the county in recent years with the influx of immigrants and other new communities. This project encouraged dialogue and promoted a more cohesive sense of community which has, in turned, spawned a verbal history project.
- ◆ New arts programs are connecting with the schools to provide arts education. In addition, they are presenting a voluntary arts curriculum and testing program to the state superintendent of schools for approval.

**Results:**

- ◆ Local housing prices are increasing
- ◆ Economic diversity is developing as new residents are attracted to the area (more higher income people)
- ◆ Arts spaces attract foot traffic which is attractive for commercial uses (previously, cars would whizz by as people went from DC to Baltimore)
- ◆ Regional branding and marketing activities are just getting started

FYI, Teresa

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