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Culture and Community Revitalization: A Framework for the Emerging Field of Culture- Based Neighborhood Revitalization

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Abstract

This summary flyer provides an overview of the publications produced as part of the *Culture and Community Revitalization* project. The SIAP - Reinvestment Fund collaboration was undertaken from 2006 to 2008 with support by the Rockefeller Foundation.

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Culture and Community Revitalization

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ABOUT THE PARTNERS

Social Impact of the Arts Project

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The Social Impact of the Arts Project is a research group at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy & Practice. Since 1994 SIAP has conducted research on the role of the arts and culture in U.S. cities with a particular interest in arts-based neighborhood revitalization. SIAP is a recognized innovator in the development of empirical methods to study links between cultural engagement and community change.



Capital at the point of impact.®

The Reinvestment Fund

1700 Market Street, 19th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19103
www.trfund.com

TRF is a national leader in the financing of neighborhood revitalization. A development financial corporation with a wealth building agenda for low- and moderate-income people and places, TRF uses its assets to finance housing, community facilities, commercial real estate and business and public policy research across the Mid-Atlantic. TRF conducts research and analysis on policy issues that influence neighborhood revitalization and economic growth both to help it identify opportunities to invest its own resources and to help public sector and private clients with their own strategies to preserve and rebuild vulnerable communities.

The Rockefeller Foundation

The SIAP-TRF collaboration was supported by the Rockefeller Foundation.

Between 2006 and 2008, Penn's Social Impact of the Arts Project collaborated with The Reinvestment Fund, a community development financial institution, on an investigation of the creative sector's potential contribution to neighborhood economic and community development. The staff of TRF challenged SIAP to identify how its research findings on the role of the arts and culture in urban communities could be applied to the practice of place-making and revitalization, while SIAP challenged TRF to redefine how they think about the creative sector.

Through the collaboration, TRF and SIAP arrived at a common perspective. We agreed that today's urban *policy environment* requires us to consider a wider range of "players" in the development of strategies and that the gap between policy-makers and practitioners has narrowed. We agreed that an ecological approach that focuses on how different elements of the cultural sector interact in the process of place-making is the most productive starting point for the emerging field of culture-based revitalization. Finally, we endorsed the need to integrate policy, research, and practice to advance this field.

The collaboration produced a critical review of the literature on culture and revitalization, a set of policy briefs, and a prospectus for community investment. (*See descriptions on back of page.*)

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Below are descriptions of the literature review, policy briefs, and community investment prospectus produced by the SIAP-TRF collaboration. Copies of these documents can be downloaded from the SIAP website at www.sp2.upenn.edu/SIAP.

A Critical Review of the Literature

Culture and Urban Revitalization: A Harvest Document

Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert, January 2007

This SIAP report serves as the foundation study for the TRF-SIAP collaboration and writings. The *Harvest Document* provides a critical review of the state-of-the-art research on culture and revitalization, in particular, two streams of literature—economic impact and community building. SIAP proposes an ecological model that recognizes the interdependence of the economic and social benefits of the arts as a guide to research, policy, and practice in the emerging field of culture-based revitalization.

Policy Briefs

From Creative Economy to Creative Society

Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert, January 2008

This brief uses a social policy lens to look at the impact and potential of the creative economy for urban neighborhoods. While the growth of the creative sector is helping to regenerate regional economies, it is also exacerbating economic inequality and social exclusion among urban residents. SIAP proposes a new model—a neighborhood-based creative economy—as a way to move the 21st century city toward shared prosperity and social integration.

Cultivating "Natural" Cultural Districts

Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert, September 2007

This brief uses research on urban culture and community arts to make a case for culture-based revitalization from the bottom up. The brief highlights a particular kind of social network—the geographically-defined networks made possible by a density of cultural assets in particular neighborhoods. Because “natural” cultural districts evolve through the self-organized efforts of local players, the challenge for policy-makers is how to nurture these enterprises in a way that maximizes community benefits.

Migrants, Communities, and Culture

Mark J. Stern, Susan C. Seifert, and Domenic Vitiello, January 2008

The brief looks at the role of migrant cultural expression in urban neighborhoods, existing institutional barriers, and how migrants’ adaptation to their social marginality is changing “mainstream” culture. For newcomers and other groups, culture can be an important vehicle for social integration. A century ago, the settlement house movement used culture to link immigrants to opportunities in education, employment, and health care. Can the arts play a similar role today?

Community Investment Prospectus

Creativity and Neighborhood Development: Strategies for Community Investment

Jeremy Nowak, December 2007

This TRF document argues that the intrinsic value of arts and culture can be a key ingredient in neighborhood revitalization by nurturing a wide range of local assets, building social capital, and promoting entrepreneurial and civic growth. Nowak calls for investing in community-based creative activity to enhance its place-making role and potential. He recommends that investment focus on three areas: creativity, development, and knowledge.

The Power of Place-making

Jeremy Nowak, December 2007

This document presents a summary of *Creativity and Neighborhood Development: Strategies for Community Investment*.

Crane Arts: Financing Artists’ Workspace

The Reinvestment Fund, August 2007

One surprise outcome of the collaboration was TRF’s realization that it already had been investing in the cultural sector. In fact, around 8 percent of its total portfolio consists of creative sector projects. This brief discusses the conversion of an old factory into artist workspace and examines the project’s impact on the neighborhood and the arts community.