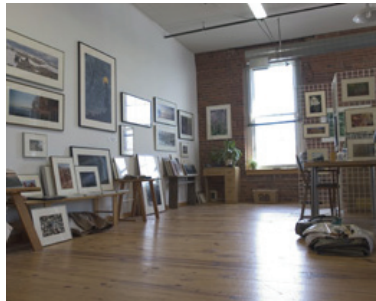
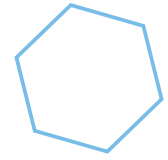


# Artist Space Development: Making the Case



Maria Rosario Jackson  
and Florence Kabwasa-Green,  
Urban Institute, 2007  
Leveraging Investments In Creativity

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# Introduction From LINC

Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC) is a ten-year national initiative to improve conditions for artists in all disciplines which will enable them in their creative work and contribute to community life.

With leadership support from the Ford Foundation, Paul G. Allen Family Foundation, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation, and Surdna Foundation. LINC focuses on three strategic goals:

- Expanding financial supports for artists' work;
- Improving artists' access to essential material supports such as live/work space, insurance, equipment and professional development; and
- Bolstering knowledge, networks and public policies that enhance artists' work and their contributions to communities.

LINC commissioned this research by the Urban Institute to identify key lessons from a review of artist space projects in seven cities across the United States: Detroit, New Orleans, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Providence, Seattle, and Tucson. This work is presented in two companion reports:

## [Artist Space Development: Making the Case and Assessing Impacts](#)

This report explains how advocacy for artist space development is carried out in different realms, the impacts of artist space development, and how to make it a priority within the context of community development and public policy. Based on case studies of 23 projects around the country, this report focuses on how artist space developments are positioned to garner support, the advocacy strategies pursued, and the impacts they claim or anticipate.

## Artists in Community Revitalization:

### Artist Space Development and Financing

This report explores the elements of development and finance of artist space projects, including the types of players, the steps in the development and finance process, including sources and uses of cash, finance subsidies, regulations, and zoning and building codes. The different types of developments are reviewed, including the role of real estate markets and local systems on artist space developments, special risks and challenges faced, and how they were resolved.

This research is part of a broader effort by LINC's National Artists Space Initiative working to identify and create new ideas, strategies, and support for artists, community developers, public agencies, and others to increase the supply of affordable space for artists while helping to revitalize the community around them. This initiative is based on the following efforts:

- Building a clearinghouse of information on models, policies and information related to artist space available at LINC's website at [www.lincnet.net](http://www.lincnet.net).
- Sponsoring research to identify successful models and avenues of learning to share with others. A broad database of artist space projects is available on LINC's website.
- Supporting the early stage of development by working to establish a predevelopment loan fund for artist space projects.
- Identifying stellar projects, programs, or initiatives resulting in affordable space for artists to work and/or live by sponsoring an awards and recognition program that uncovers worthy initiatives.
- Creating a national network of innovators who can help LINC identify new ideas, share lessons learned, and work to develop new solutions to perplexing problems.

We welcome your reactions to this report, your suggestions of ways LINC can assist you in meeting the needs of artists and neighborhoods, and your ideas of successful strategies for finding affordable space for artists to live and work in the context of community revitalization.

- Sam Miller, President  
Leveraging Investments in Creativity
  
- Adele Fleet Bacow, President  
Community Partners Consultants, Inc.  
Coordinator of LINC Artists Space Initiative

# I. Executive Summary

The development of affordable spaces for artists to live and/or work is certainly an important matter for artists, but it can also be an important issue for people concerned with a range of social issues, including economic development, civic engagement, community collective action, and community quality of life. Intended to provide anyone interested in pursuing artists space development (ASD) projects with information about things to consider in making the case for artist space, this report discusses:

- How artist space developments have been positioned and the arguments made to garner support for them;
- The advocacy strategies pursued; and
- The impacts claimed and/or anticipated.

This report was commissioned by Leveraging Investments in Creativity (LINC), a national initiative dedicated to support for artists and is one of two reports focused on artist space development; the other report focusing on financing and development processes.

The material presented here is based primarily on research conducted in 2005 on 30 projects in seven U.S. cities—Detroit, MI; New Orleans, LA; Philadelphia, PA; Pittsburgh, PA; Providence, RI; Seattle, WA; and Tucson, AZ. Of these 27 initiatives, 23 provide examples of instances when the case for artist space development had to be made to a range of gatekeepers. Those 23 initiatives are the focus of this report. This research was not an exhaustive examination of all artist spaces in these cities. Rather, we focused primarily on prominent developments that could serve as examples of a range of approaches. The report is also informed by previous research on environments of support for artists around the country.

## Factors to Take Into Account

Several factors are crucial in politically positioning artist space developments and making the case for their support. These factors have to

do with the features of the specific properties considered for development, any prior history of artist space in the city or community in question, and any special initiatives that target or include artists.



The Spinning Plate Artist Lofts is a 37-unit live/work adaptation of a 55,000 square foot former automobile showroom in the Friendship/East Liberty section of Pittsburgh. Developed by Artspace Projects and Artists and Cities, the Spinning Plate provides rental units for visual and performing artists, as well as ground floor gallery space.

*Photo courtesy of the Urban Institute.*

### *The Building and the Laws That Affect It*

- Location of the space—Is the property in an industrial, mixed-use, or residential zone? Is the area designated for economic development or undergoing planning?
- Nature of the space—Is the construction new? Does the property have historic value or a historic designation? Are improvements, modifications, or rehabilitation required? Does the property require environmental remediation?

### *Artist Space Development History*

- Track record—Do artists, nonprofit and for-profit developers, lenders, funders, and regulatory agencies have experience with artist spaces? Has this experience been positive or negative?
- Advocates for artist space—Are there advocates, such as artists, politicians, funders, or lenders? Are artists organized and vocal in supporting artist space? Does the arts community see artist space as a priority?
- Intermediary—Is there an experienced agency or individual(s) who can help bring all the needed parties together? Can this intermediary effectively deal with the involved parties?

### *Special Initiatives That Include Artists*

- Political climate—Is the city trying to attract artists as residents or business owners? Do artists have financial or other incentives to locate there? Are arts funders focused on artists' space needs?
- Special designations that can include artists—Are other groups that might include artists being targeted for special programs? Small businesses? Low-income populations?

- Policy priorities or programs potentially intersecting with artist space development: Is there commitment to other issues that can be consistent with or enhanced by artist space, such as an interest in the creative economy, creative clusters or historic preservation?

While every city will have its own constellation of impediments to artist space, we identified some general barriers evident in most places we conducted case studies. These include a bias among government funders and foundations toward supporting the presentation of artistic work, vis a vis construction of museums, concert halls, and other presentation venues, with much less attention devoted to spaces concerned primarily with artists' needs for living and working. This is evident in many cities in the distribution of resources from percent-for-arts programs, the lion's share of which typically goes to large venues concerned primarily with presentation of art. It is also evident in the design of cultural districts, which usually feature performance venues and arts retail establishments at the exclusion of spaces for the creation of artistic work. Another barrier to making the case for artist spaces is that not until fairly recently have artists and the arts field in general articulated affordable space as a fundamental need. On a related note, yet another barrier is that in many places, few people in the arts or community development fields know how to do artist space developments.

### Making the Case for Artist Space

People involved in the development of artists' spaces find themselves advocating for these projects to funders and gatekeepers in the arts, community development, and urban revitalization policy realms and sometimes to individual investors interested in viable and profitable business options. Our research suggests that the arguments put forward for support of artist spaces fall into three basic categories:

- Community economic development and social improvements,
- Viable business ventures, and
- Services to artists.

That is, advocates of artist space developments claim and project positive impacts and outcomes related to these three areas.

### *Community Economic Development and Social Improvements*

Of the 23 projects discussed in this report, almost half were positioned primarily as community economic development and social improvement strategies. In these instances, often in community planning processes, town hall meetings and in written documentation about proposed artist space developments, artists were presented as catalysts for economic development and were expected to change the character of neighborhoods and attract new residents or visitors with disposable income. In some cases, artists were presented as providing new and additional community assets, assuming they would put their artistic talents to use in support of community residents. Artist spaces positioned as economic development and social improvement strategies usually involved properties/buildings that included various uses, from housing for artists to multipurpose community spaces as well as arts community programming. Typically, these types of developments required a range of financing sources, as well as a long (several-year) development process.

In some of these developments, community development corporations (CDCs) with no previous experience played leading roles. Challenges faced in this cluster of initiatives included inexperience by the CDCs in communicating what artists have to offer to communities, lack of data about artists' community impacts, and suspicion among residents that artists could spur gentrification. Despite these challenges, CDC involvement proved to be an endorsement for artist space in the eyes of some lenders and funders who have a comfort level in working with CDCs and no or little experience in working with artists. Initiatives that were not led by CDCs, but by arts-based or artist-led organizations typically needed to demonstrate an artist space track record and/or required outside validation to establish credibility in the community development funding world. At times, outside validation and capacity was built through partnerships or affiliation with well-established national entities such as Artspace Projects, Inc.

### *Business Ventures*

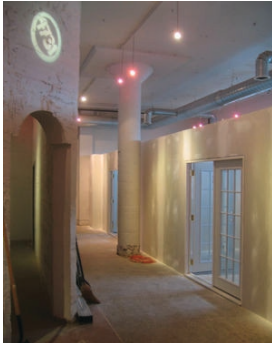
Six of the 23 projects featured in this study were positioned primarily as viable business ventures. For the most part, they sought to attract resources from private investors and commercial lenders. A feature of these initiatives is that artists are presented prominently as com-

mercial market developers. These initiatives, more so than other kinds of initiatives discussed in this report, typically have detailed market research on artists in the area, which is used to persuade prospective investors of the viability of the deal. In several of these cases, the economic potential of “creative clusters” (concentrations of arts and design-related businesses and establishments) coupled with appreciation for artists’ contributions to communities, has been a motivation for developers and investors. The basic premise is that it is possible for artists’ spaces to stimulate economic development, increase property values, and profit from real estate ventures. Emerging research on creative clusters appears to be somewhat useful in pursuing this strategy and helps investors take the risk.

Another feature of this type of initiative worth noting is that some developers involved have created or have an interest in creating subsidiary nonprofit organizations that serve artists and the surrounding community. In this regard, we heard that private developers have a hard time making the case to government funders and to foundations for support of nonprofit subsidiaries. They claim that public and private funders are reluctant to support nonprofits with a commercial parent, questioning the “social-mindedness” of the nonprofit.

### *Services for Artists/Artists’ Needs*

Five of the 23 initiatives reviewed focused on services for artists, or artists’ special needs such as the need for spaces suitable for the type of artwork made (e.g., sculpture, music, dance, etc.) as well as spaces where artists can share equipment and commune to critique work. Advocates for these initiatives maintain that artists are a valid professional working population with specific business related needs. Individual artists have played an important leadership role in these development processes and have often articulated their needs to people who are unfamiliar with their circumstances as artists. Particularly important features of these initiatives are the posturing of artists as a professional population and the investment of artists’ sweat-equity in improving properties. Assertively identifying as a professional combined with evidence of sweat equity bolsters artists’ appeal for other kinds of support, and takes artists out of what could otherwise be perceived as a purely supplicant posture.



Originally a furniture warehouse, 4731 Grand has studios on the second and third floors, and gallery and office space on the ground floor. Part of the space has evolved as an arts incubator with ties to fashion-related businesses, and it will anchor a complex of buildings devoted to arts and arts-related businesses.

*Photo courtesy of the Urban Institute.*

## The Effects of Artist Space Development

With few exceptions, we found little evidence of formal documentation of artist space development on the broader community or on artists' communities. However, we did note that artist space developments that had undertaken cost benefit analyses or had business plans typically had some documentation about projected impacts. Even so, there was little evidence that such information served as any baseline for subsequent measurement of progress despite the fact that regular, formal documentation of impacts or societal contributions is far more persuasive in garnering support than sporadic opinions or "anecdotal" observations. At this juncture, with the exception of some business investors, there was little evidence that funders or stakeholders formally held artist space developments accountable for claimed impacts. (For some projects, it was too early to impose such an assessment.) That said we found that among gatekeepers of resources for artist spaces even informal knowledge of a "successful" development was an important precedent for future projects.

Claimed and projected impacts that surfaced in our research fall into two basic groupings: impacts on artists and impacts on the broader community.

### *Effects on Artists*

The effects of artist space development on artists fell into three categories:

- *Impacts related to artist space availability and development infrastructure*, such as the creation of artist-developers, advocates, and intermediaries;
- *Impacts on artists' careers and professional development*, such as the creation of artists' networks and access to venues for peer criticism; and
- *Impacts on artists' relationships to the broader community*, such as increased interaction between artists and community residents, demystification of artists at work and the artistic process, and increased recognition of artists as workers and professionals.

### *Effects on the Broader Community*

The effects of artist space development on the community included physical, social, and economic impacts.

- Physical impacts included reducing blight, animating vacant property, and preserving historical buildings.
- Social impacts included increasing arts programs for residents, diversifying low-income communities, and developing youth.
- Economic impacts included increasing job opportunities, developing real estate and increasing real estate value, and promoting creative clusters.

### **Conclusion**

This research suggests artist space development has momentum and this is a good time for the field to grow. The number of artist space initiatives is increasing and interest in pursuing projects is on the rise. The capacity to bring efforts to fruition needs to be strengthened through the development of more people who know how to do artist space developments, in its many forms. This can be achieved by cultivating opportunities for exchange among seasoned artist space practitioners to identify fruitful practices, the creation of artist space curricula and mentoring opportunities that enable those interested in artist space to acquire necessary skills. That said there are signs that such practices are already becoming more sophisticated and that artist space developments are benefiting from a broad range of allies. Policymakers, funders, residents, and other stakeholders are interpreting the role and value of artists in society in a more positive light, and artists are becoming increasingly sought after as catalysts for positive community change. It is an opportune time for artists and their advocates to play a more assertive role in encouraging artist space development by strategically cultivating more supporters and building the tools—arguments and evidence—that artist space is a viable investment, for many different reasons. Last, while the focus of this inquiry involved identifying ways in which cases for artist space development support were made, in our research, we also saw evidence of interesting and innovative artist space developments that came to fruition without explicitly having to make a case for support for artists. Lessons from this approach should also be considered and investigated as

another way to grow the field. Furthermore, research into other case making strategies should be considered, such as how the affordable housing community is reframing ‘workforce housing’ as an vitally important economic development strategy for cities and regions.

LINC has launched on its website, [www.lincnet.net](http://www.lincnet.net), a new easily searchable national database of artist space development models. It incorporates the case studies in this report, and lays out essential development data such as total development cost, permitting, soft and hard costs, developers data and much more. Those looking for more detail on the case studies mentioned in this report should refer to this database.