

# Building Arts, Building Community?

Informal Arts Districts and Neighborhood Change In Oakland, California



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# Introduction

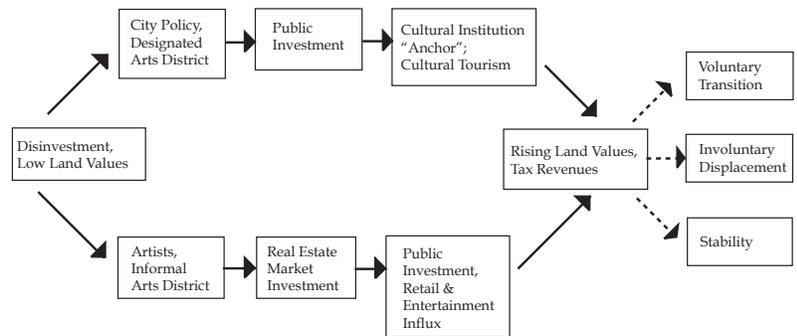
In recent years, there has been growing interest in the relationship of arts and culture to urban revitalization among public officials, city planners, policy makers, and scholars from a range of disciplines. Non-profit arts and cultural organizations are today recognized as a significant industry, generating \$166 billion a year in economic activity nationwide.<sup>a</sup> Many local governments invest in the arts as a catalyst for cultural tourism, business development, and job creation. Cultural amenities are believed to enhance a city's quality of life and help attract young, talented professionals—arguably the bedrock of today's creative economy.<sup>b</sup>

“The arts” not only comprise established non-profits, such as the local opera company, but also for-profit arts-related businesses and community-based or informal arts activities, which involve local community members in the creation or interpretation of different art forms and can take place in a variety of settings, including cafes, parks, and streets.<sup>c</sup> From Williamsburg, New York to downtown Los Angeles, formerly abandoned, reimagined industrial and commercial districts across the country serve as examples of the power of artists and gallery owners to influence public perception and lead the renaissance of a neglected city block as a popular destination—via the emergence of *informal*, rather than planned, arts districts.

Much research has shown that cultural production can spur economic revitalization in a neighborhood.<sup>d</sup> But the arts have also been linked to gentrification, or an abrupt rise in land values, which may make it difficult for current residents and businesses to stay.<sup>e</sup> This raises several key questions. How do we assess the relationship between arts activities and the social fabric of a neighborhood? Are arts districts inherently volatile or can they enhance neighborhood stability? Are grassroots arts organizations and artists effective agents for community building, and if so, how? How does the artist community connect with other regional and local communities? And what happens when government intervention formalizes the informal? Can policy help maintain stability?

## Two Models of the Arts and Neighborhood Change

### 1. Planned Arts District



### 2. Unplanned Arts District (SoHo Model)

Based on exploratory research conducted during the summer and fall of 2007, this report tells the story of two informal arts districts in Oakland, at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street and Telegraph Avenue and in the Village Bottoms in West Oakland. We chose these districts because they represent two evolving clusters of grassroots arts in the city. Our researchers used block-by-block field observations, secondary sources, census data, audience surveys, mapping techniques, and 15 interviews with local artists and residents, non-profit leaders, independent business owners, real estate professionals, and city staff to find out how these districts emerged, how they affect their respective neighborhoods, and what kinds of uncertainties they face.

The case studies underscore the complexity of grassroots arts in an urban setting. They suggest that a narrow focus on quantifiable economic outcomes associated with revitalization can obscure a variety of important ways in which the arts can affect individuals and communities via the physical and social dimensions of community life. Furthermore, the case studies highlight not only the benefits that can accrue to communities that nurture a range of creative activity, but also the challenges involved with sustaining informal arts districts. We would like to engage city planners, policy makers, foundation leaders, and stakeholders from the arts community in a fruitful discussion about the role of the arts in the context of equitable neighborhood revitalization, and look forward to expanding our findings through future research.



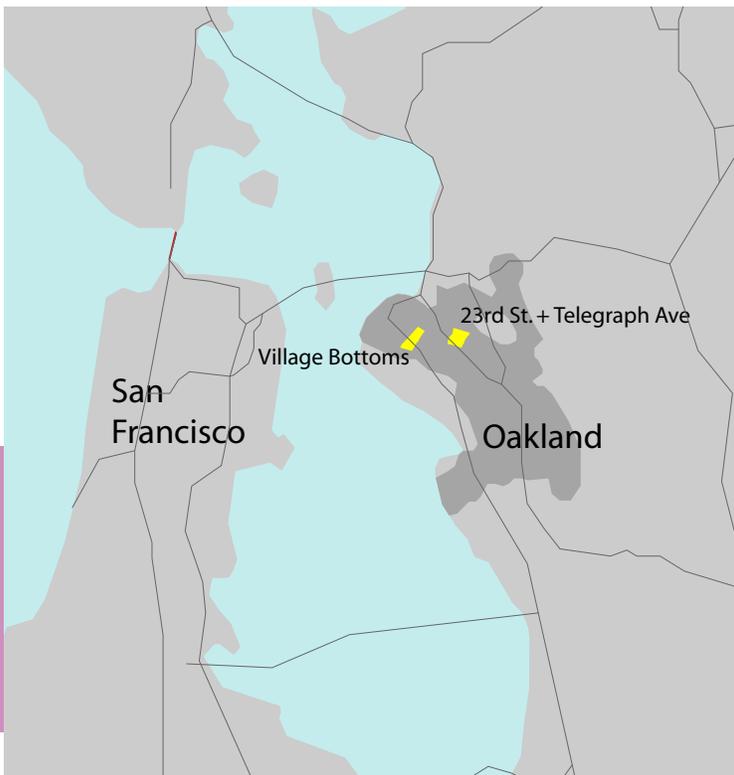
Community-Based or Informal Arts Activities

# CASE STUDIES

## The Regional and Local Context

This report is written against the backdrop of the San Francisco Bay Area, one of the most expensive housing markets in the country, driven by a resilient economy that continues to reinvent itself.<sup>f</sup> The City of Oakland, on the other hand, has been struggling with disinvestment, a lagging retail market, uneven housing development, and high crime rates.<sup>g</sup>

Both the 23rd and Telegraph, and Village Bottoms case study areas each occupy approximately .3 square miles: 23rd and Telegraph is bounded by 28th Street to the north, Harrison Street to the east, 20th Street to the south and I-980 and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard to the west, and Village Bottoms by West Grand Avenue to the north, Peralta Street to the east, 7th Street to the south, and I-880 to the west. The case study neighborhoods also share several key characteristics. Once thriving centers of manufacturing, both neighborhoods today include a mix of light-industrial and residential structures. Both areas show signs of abandonment – vacant lots, boarded-up apartment windows, and empty storefronts. At the same time, the architecture in both neighborhoods is human in scale. Several buildings are of historic value, including storefronts from the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph, and Victorian homes in the Village Bottoms. Both neighborhoods are accessible via public transit, with a BART station in West Oakland and several AC Transit bus lines along Telegraph.



*Regional Context, Village Bottoms and 23rd and Telegraph*

## 2007 Demographics

	23rd St. + Telegraph Avenue	Village Bottoms	Oakland
<b>Population</b>	5,955	2,992	401,097
<b>Family households</b>	23%	66%	57%
<b>Median household income</b>	\$16,670	\$25,565	\$46,536
<b>Households below federal poverty line</b>	31%	46%	17%
<b>Unemployment</b>	3%	6%	5%
<b>Renter occupancy</b>	97%	76%	59%
<b>Average household size</b>	1.6	3.2	2.7

*Source: 2007 Claritas Demographic Data*

Both 23rd and Telegraph and the Village Bottoms are home to a disproportionate number of households in poverty. The vast majority of residents in both neighborhoods are renters, yet the areas are generally less volatile in terms of household moves than other Oakland neighborhoods.

Yet, the neighborhoods also differ considerably. Though the two districts are similar in size, 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph has nearly double the population of Village Bottoms. Households at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph tend to be small, while relatively large families are more common in the Village Bottoms. Despite their differences, both neighborhoods have been fairly stable since 1990, apart from a slight increase in income in the Village Bottoms.



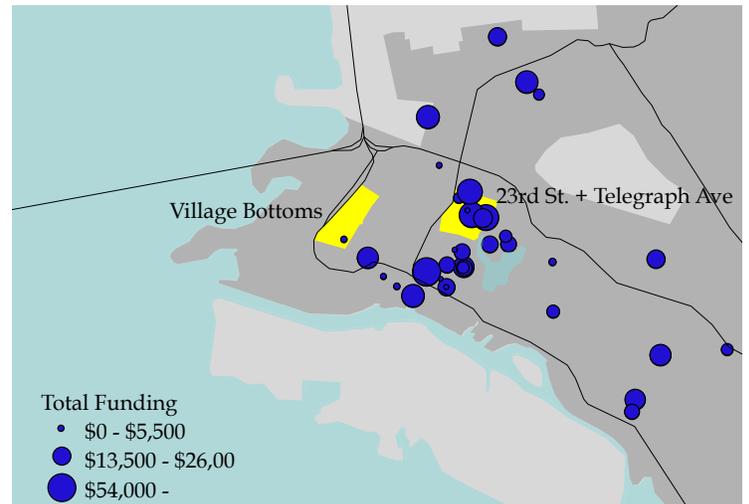
*Both neighborhoods include a mix of aging light-industrial and residential structures that show signs of abandonment – vacant lots, boarded-up apartment windows, and empty storefronts – yet also are of distinctive architectural character.*

## Grassroots Arts in Oakland

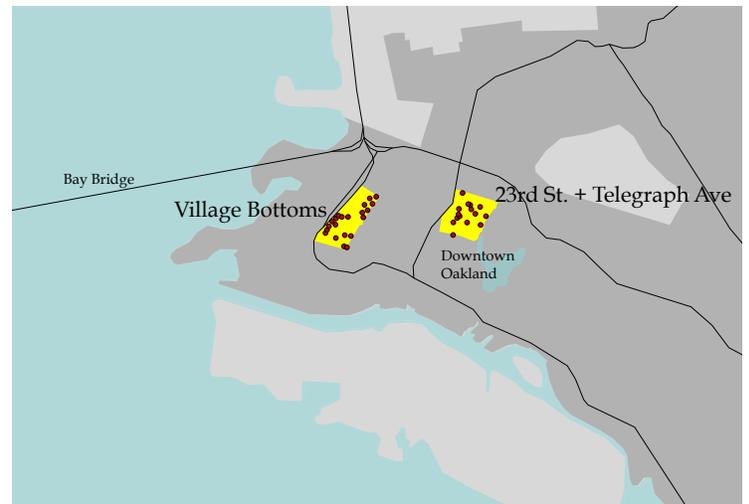
In the midst of these very low-income neighborhoods, hubs of cultural production have been growing.<sup>h</sup> At both 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph and in the Village Bottoms, numerous arts venues and other sites of creative expression have emerged, including artist-run galleries, artist studios, performance venues, after-school arts programs at community centers, arts-related businesses, and public art displays that range from grassroots sidewalk installations to murals and open-air film projections.

Every first Friday of the month, the neighborhood at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph hosts Art Murmur, an event that consists of simultaneous exhibition openings by a dozen participating galleries, and draws hundreds of visitors from the East Bay and San Francisco. The Village Bottoms is experiencing the emergence of a Black Cultural District, including art exhibition spaces and a music performance venue.

As will be discussed in the following section, these informal concentrations of arts activity emerged not out of any plan but as the result of individual agents' decisions to locate near one another—just as many similar districts have appeared across the country.



**City of Oakland Funding to Local Arts Groups 2006-07**  
Source: Cultural Arts & Marketing Division, Office of the City Administrator



**Inventoried Art-Related Organizations and Activities**  
Source: Summer 2007 Field Research



Public arts displays range from grassroots sidewalk installations to murals in and along vacant lots.

# CASE STUDY 1:

## 23<sup>RD</sup> Street and Telegraph Avenue

### An Emerging Arts District

The area around 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph began to change in the early 2000s when artists started to move into storefronts that had been vacant for years. Several key factors played a role in their location decisions.

### Low Rent and Flexible Spaces

A landlord who owns three two-story buildings at the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph inadvertently helped shape the nucleus of the arts district. Providing his own answer to the city's retail crisis, he reconceived the empty storefronts and units above as live/work spaces. He kept rents low, offered flexible leases, and was among the first property owners in the area to rent to artists who were attracted by the combination of cheap rent and convenient and flexible studio and apartment units.

### Personal Beliefs, Neighborhood Perceptions, and Aesthetics

Some artists described how they welcomed life in an "abject" neighborhood as an enriching experience that would be a source of inspiration to them. The neglected urban landscape was like a canvas, a space that offered room for experimentation and grassroots "intervention" in the form of window displays and sidewalk installations. Artists felt that nobody was around to interfere with the creative process, while actually, this area houses approximately six thousand residents.<sup>1</sup>

**Non-profit Leader:** "It was a sketchy residential neighborhood, not really even a neighborhood. We didn't feel as if we were disrupting or displacing an existing population."

### 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph Inventoried Art-Related Organizations and Activities



Source: Summer 2007 Field Research

### A Social Nexus

In January 2003, a café (re-) opened at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph. It was a multipurpose space where people socialized and exchanged ideas and it provided a center of gravity for the emerging arts community.



Unused light-industrial buildings and storefronts have been converted to multi-purpose, art-related venues, cafes, and galleries.

**Artist:** "A tight-knit group formed because there weren't many of us to begin with [...]. The café was really a hub for the community. It was key in creating a scene."

### A Neighborhood in Transition

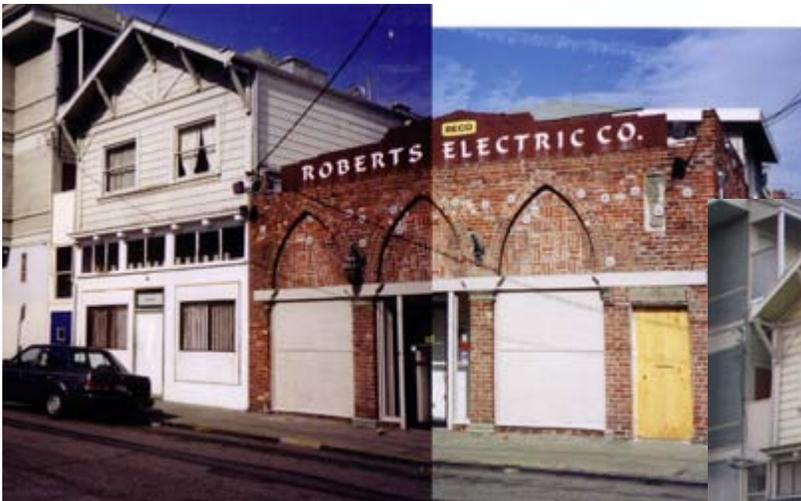
Change in the neighborhood around 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph has manifested itself in a number of ways.

#### Façade Improvements

Upgrades were made to the historic storefronts. Even though the city was not directly involved in fostering arts activity at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph, it provided indirect assistance through the Oakland Façade Improvement Program. The property manager at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph was able to secure a grant through this program to help pay for repairs to the facades of the café and several storefront exhibition spaces.

#### Sense of Community and Entrepreneurial Spirit

Anchored by the café, a community developed that identified itself through creativity. Galleries regularly organized new exhibitions and recognized the potential benefits of collaboration. They invested in a shared website and printed postcards with a map of galleries in the vicinity, promoting concurrent exhibition openings on the first Friday of each month.



1997

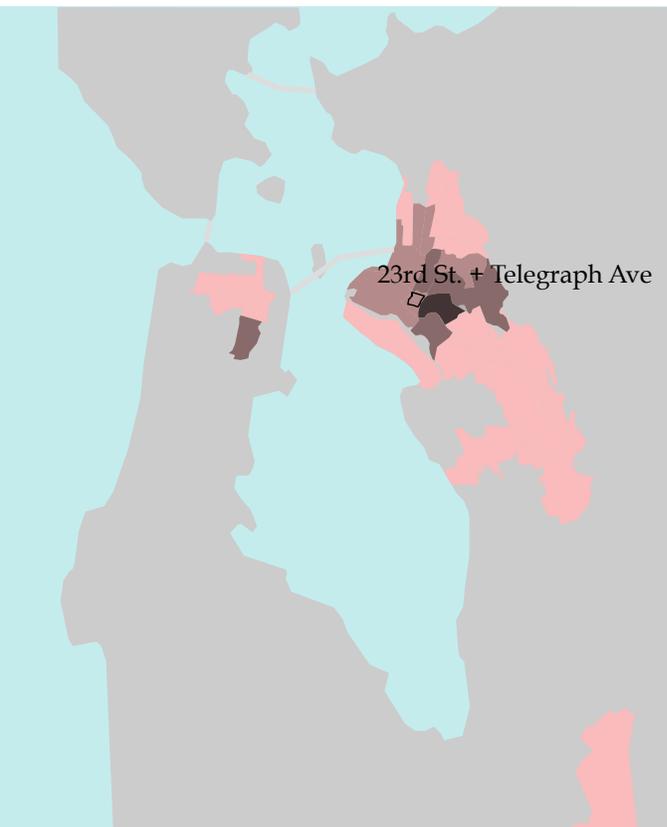


2007 Building upgrades made along 23rd St. with support from the city of Oakland's Façade Improvement Program

Property Manager: "I had this idea. It wasn't a huge vision to create an arts district. It was just 'how do I rent these apartments in a not-so-great neighborhood?'"

*Art Murmur and a New Level of Vibrancy*

Since the launch of Art Murmur in 2006, the monthly event has grown through word-of-mouth and increased media coverage, drawing up to 600 people from the neighborhood, the greater East Bay, and San Francisco to the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph. On the first Friday of the month, the typically quiet block is transformed into a bustling nighttime destination. A permit has been secured to close 23rd Street between Telegraph and Valley for traffic. Sometimes bands perform in this outdoor space as visitors and locals make their way from gallery to gallery and socialize in the street.



**Art Murmur Audience Shed**  
Source: Art Murmur October 2007 Zip Code Survey

Property Manager: "I'm really pleased to see how the whole Art Murmur got organized by commercial tenants who had a stake in it; to see something grow organically by people cooperating. There wasn't a lot of competitive activity."



*Oakland Art Murmur Postcard, produced cooperatively by participating venues to promote the event*



*Art Murmur, transforms the generally quieter block into a bustling nighttime destination*

Café Owner: "None of us could afford publicity on our own, but we felt that if we pooled our resources and promoted each other, it might work."

## An Uncertain Future

The success of Art Murmur, coupled with new large-scale development in the neighborhood and shifting demographics, puts the future of this informal arts district in question.

### City Interest and Increasing Formalization

Public officials welcome the energy that has been created around the arts in Oakland through Art Murmur. In addition to allowing the closure of 23rd St. for traffic during the event, the City began to operate a complimentary shuttle bus in support of Art Murmur in September 2007. The shuttle circulates between arts venues at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph and in different neighborhoods across the city.

The new level of activity at 23rd and Telegraph ties into the City's ongoing efforts to revitalize downtown. In 1999, former Mayor Jerry Brown launched the 10K Downtown Housing Initiative, with the goal of attracting 10,000 new residents to downtown Oakland by facilitating the development of 6,000 market-rate housing units.<sup>j</sup> Downtown and large parts of the Oakland flatlands are also officially designated for redevelopment, a city strategy to stimulate new construction.<sup>k</sup>

While Art Murmur's audience continues to grow, 499 high-end condominium units are nearing completion as part of the Broadway Grand project.<sup>l</sup> Once the new housing units are occupied, more commercial uses are likely to return to the neighborhood, supported by the new population (a Starbucks has already opened). In part responding to these changes, in part adjusting to their own life cycles, some artists have moved on from the neighborhood.

As in so many cities, the arts at 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph have played an important role in the ongoing resurgence of the neighborhood. New arts uses have provided an impetus for physical upgrades to the urban fabric. The arts have also helped foster a new social scene around different art forms and contributed to a more active street life, especially during Art Murmur. Yet, the arts community has remained largely separate from local residents, both longstanding and incoming. With few, if any, community institutions as anchor, the current arts community will continue to transition. Time will tell whether public-private initiatives can mitigate the volatility of this informal arts district or whether formal recognition by the city will change its very nature.

Artist: "As soon as artists start making something, they get raped from it. The City saw something was happening here. Though it was organic in the beginning, the process ended up in a bit of a contrived way. Now it's designed to become Oakland's official arts district and high-end condos are planned. I'm looking at property in Mexico."



The City's growing involvement through 'First Fridays Art Night' and higher-end galleries point to the increasing formalization of the 23rd and Telegraph art district.

Artist: "It's over. There's no longer that abject space. Johansson Projects is the first 'real' gallery that survives by running the gallery and sales. They are more professional, show more top-level artists."

## CASE STUDY 2:

### The Village Bottoms, West Oakland

The Village Bottoms neighborhood derives its name from its location in the southwestern half of West Oakland, near Interstate I-880. The heart of the Black Cultural District, which began to take shape in the Bottoms in the early 2000s, consists of a gallery and café, a store that sells African art, and a music performance venue. Other arts groups and activities are spread throughout the neighborhood.

#### A Neighborhood In Transition

While Oakland was long considered one of the last frontiers in the Bay Area housing market, land values in the city have been rising. Between 1990 and 2000, the median home value in West Oakland increased by 48% compared to 37% citywide, and rapid appreciation continued until last year.<sup>13</sup> In 2000, a developer purchased a 30-acre site at West Oakland's historic Central Station. Construction of the mixed-used project is under way, including more than 1,000 residential units and 13,000 square feet of commercial space, and is scheduled for completion in 2009.

Artist/Community Leader: "We had to own something. Anything."



A view down Pine Street with its mix of light-industrial and residential buildings towards the construction site of the mixed-used project that will include more than 1,000 residential units and 13,000 square feet of commercial space.

#### An Emerging Arts District: Culturally Authentic Economic Development?

The Black Cultural District was born in direct response to the surge in real estate activity in West Oakland and its anticipated effect on this very low-income, predominantly African-American neighborhood. Mounting development pressure galvanized artists and residents into action. They are looking to renew the Village Bottoms' vigor as a culturally and economically thriving community anchored by its black heritage.

Leading the regeneration of the arts on Pine Street is a multi-disciplinary artist and activist, Marcel Diallo. He founded the Black Dot Collective in 1996, a nonprofit arts organization committed to promoting and sustaining black culture and community in the Village Bottoms via its partner agency, the Village Bottoms Community Building and Development Company.<sup>14</sup> Diallo conceives of the Black Cultural District as a focal point for the black community that enhances the stability of the Village Bottoms. Not only does the District expand the neighborhood's cultural resources, but it also serves as an incubator for organizing the community around such issues as local home- and business ownership, education, and health.

#### Village Bottoms Inventoried Art-Related Organizations and Activities



Source: Summer 2007 Field Research

Artist/Community Leader: "The cultural district is about self-determination, staying power, allowing Black people to do it for themselves, gaining control."

### *Why Art? Some Motivations and Beliefs*

Artists and organization leaders interviewed in the Village Bottoms mostly discussed their work in relation to issues concerning the neighborhood, ranging from gang violence, to toxic pollution, to drug abuse. Many believe that art has a transformative quality. There is a shared commitment to art and culture as a way to enhance the individual, improve the neighborhood's quality of life, activate the power of the community, and foster social change.

### *Art Space as Civic Space*

Arts venues in the Village Bottoms play an important role as civic spaces that allow for social interaction and foster dialogue across lines of age, gender and race. Audiences may come together because of their interest in a particular art form. Once engaged in conversation, however, they might discover shared concerns as citizens and neighbors. At times, the Black New World Social Aid & Pleasure Club, a music venue, functions more like a town hall. For example, the Village Bottoms Neighborhood Association, founded in 2007, holds its monthly meetings there. As suggested by its name, the club is based on the model of New Orleans benevolent societies, civic associations with strong neighborhood ties that provide a host of social services to their members. "Black New World is where people meet and discuss their issues," says one artist. "It's a club, but really a community center more than anything else."



*Locals understand art to be part of the area's culture and believe that art can play an important role in rebuilding community cohesion and neighborhood identity.*

### *Arts, Cultural Heritage, and Neighborhood Identity*

In a neighborhood that has suffered from environmental degradation, physical deterioration, and out-migration of residents, the arts can play an important role in rebuilding community cohesion and neighborhood identity. From jazz concerts, to theater, to large-scale mural projects, some arts and community leaders in the Village Bottoms believe that their activities help restore a sense of history, belonging, and civic pride by celebrating a shared cultural heritage. As one artist puts it: "The Black Cultural District is very necessary. A culture that doesn't have its reflection can't survive. [...] Sculptures in a community, for example, are so important. [...] Everybody needs a certain representation of what is important to them."

**Artist:** "I would like to make the gallery a place that becomes an everyday thing that makes people think 'I want to come here and have a dialogue;' that they stop by and bring the children [...] We would like to have a lot of participation from younger people."



*Informal installations outside an arts venue express the area's cultural heritage.*

**Non-profit Leader:** "Art is a form of communication – we can't begin to understand each other if we don't know how to communicate."

## Coalitions to Build Community

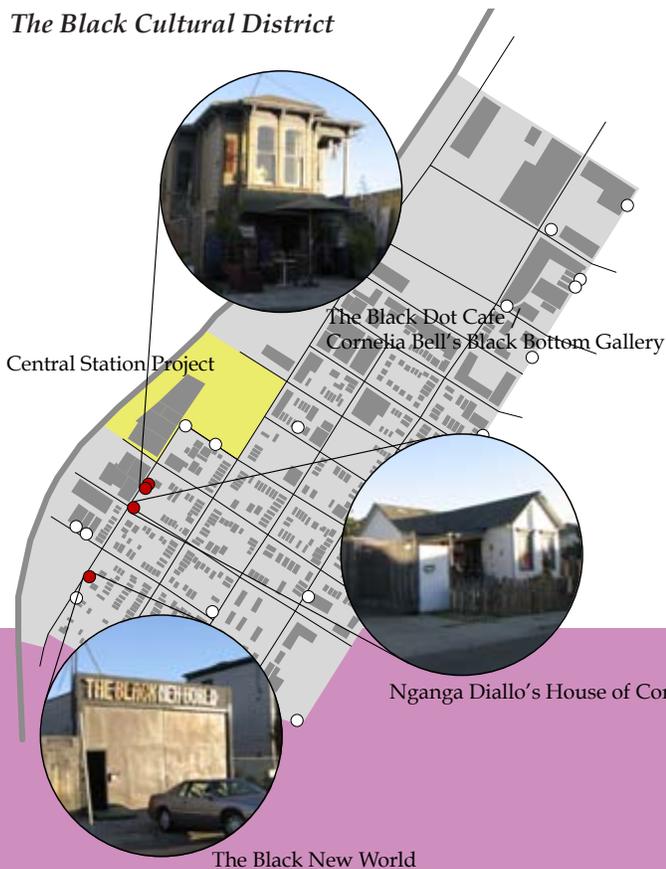
Diallo is building a network of local artists, residents, and businesses to support his vision of community cohesion and black self-determination. His strategy is built around three areas of emphasis: cultural programming and historic preservation; real estate acquisition and homeownership; and local business development.

According to records, Diallo has purchased at least three properties in the Village Bottoms in the last five years, including the Cornelia Bell gallery and Black New World. With the help of the Black Dot Collective, Diallo has also supported approximately 30 Black families to either purchase a home or start a business in the neighborhood, for example, by providing technical or financial assistance.<sup>p</sup> Furthermore, he has reached out to the developers of the Central Station project to set up a program that would allow African American “founding buyers” an opportunity to purchase units in the new development at a discount.<sup>q</sup>

Our interviews found that leaders of organizations in the Village Bottoms that are not directly linked with Diallo or considered part of the Black Cultural District also contribute community service through the arts. Several organizations draw on the arts in their work with work with children who have problems at school or in their families. “Some art forms allow for a high level of involvement with the individual,” said the president of a community center that runs a digital storytelling lab and theater program involving local youth. “For a troubled child, working with art can help uncover the problem.”

One of the challenges facing arts and community organizations in the Village Bottoms is how to build stronger connections among different groups. A circus that occupies a performance space on 9th Street organizes monthly hip hop “dance battles” with teenagers from all over Oakland. However, the arts group has been struggling to establish ties with the immediate neighborhood. One leader said that they are striving to build bridges through collaborations with churches and other arts and non-arts organizations, to provide programming that integrates different cultures represented in the neighborhood, engage the local community, and instill “less fear of cultural diversity in people.” Others echoed the notion that racial tension has been an obstacle to collaboration.

### The Black Cultural District



Artist/Community Leader: “What began as an artist collective 11 years ago has blossomed into an entire village of creative people who share core beliefs about self-determination, land ownership, reparations, right diet, and the importance of creating beauty and culture on a daily basis.”<sup>r</sup>

Community/Arts Organization Leader: “If the organizations that have a similar mission get together, we can become a stronger political voice. But for that to happen, we need to coordinate. Trust has been a problem.”

## An Uncertain Future

It remains to be seen if the Black Cultural District will continue to gain momentum and how it will affect the neighborhood, along with the completion of major condominium developments in the vicinity. Like most non-profits, arts organizations in the Village Bottoms face continuing fiscal hurdles in a competitive funding environment. Some arts and community leaders also see a need for stronger collaborations throughout the neighborhood, yet sense barriers posed by racial differences.

Will a critical mass of African-Americans be able to finance a home or business in the Village Bottoms to help stabilize the neighborhood and bring Diallo's vision to fruition? Even if so, aging renters may not be able to stay due to rising land values, and some homeowners might want to sell their properties to make a profit. Still, in this emergent art district, the relationship between arts and community development institutions is strong, suggesting that the outcome will be different from that at 23rd and Telegraph.



*A positive vision of the future of the Village Bottoms dresses the corner of Pine and 10th Street in this community designed mural.*

Artist: "New money started coming in, people who have the power and energy to change things. Sometimes changes occur if you don't take initiative, they happen from the outside. Can the power of our community be activated?"

## Summary and Conclusion

The case studies of 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph and the Village Bottoms illustrate the potential benefits of grassroots arts to individuals and communities, and remind us that the arts can play a role in the process of neighborhood change. At the same time, the case studies underscore some of the tensions surrounding the arts in the context of equitable neighborhood revitalization and social practices, and suggest that outcomes may vary.

A very low-income neighborhood, 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph attracted artists looking for cheap rent who introduced a new kind of social life to the neighborhood, centered around artists and their work in different mediums. “Adventurous” culture consumers soon followed the artists, along with slow but steady reinvestment in the neighborhood in the form of façade improvements and new businesses. This evolution coincided with the 10K Downtown Housing Initiative. Art Murrmur has created a new level of excitement about downtown—fortuitous timing for the city because the arts scene may help attract new residents to the neighborhood and give further momentum to the 10K Initiative.

At the corner of 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph on the first Friday of the month, the impact of this informal arts district is palpable: hundreds of people are milling about, socializing and patronizing local businesses. While crime remains an issue, it is interesting to note that the overall number of crimes reported in the area between 1996 and 2006, when Art Murrmur began, has declined by 44%.<sup>s</sup>

The news media has contributed significantly to forging a new identity for 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph as a trendy block with a flourishing arts and music scene. A steady stream of articles about Art Murrmur has appeared in major Bay Area newspapers over the past two years and helped move the neighborhood into the public eye. Even national media outlets have caught on, catering to young and trend-conscious professionals.<sup>t</sup> “23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph” has become a destination. In contrast, media coverage of West Oakland remains much more focused on crime than the arts.

While official city recognition is formalizing 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph’s identity as an arts district, the area is increasingly drawing audiences from around the region, and reinvestment has found an anchor. Yet, today’s local art scene may not be tomorrow’s. Ongoing turnover in studio and gallery space suggests that the nature of this informal arts district is tenuous. The young arts community is largely bound by its own common interests and lacking linkages with longstanding community groups, including the faith-based organizations across the street from the café on Telegraph. A stronger network among arts and non-arts organizations throughout the neighborhood could encourage broader participation in arts-related activities among local residents and thus penetrate what seems like a closed community. In turn, this could contribute to a more inclusive sense of neighborhood identity for the area and improve its organizational capacity to voice local interests in future neighborhood development.



*Housing development has begun in both neighborhoods; while arts-related activities have helped to attract new residents to the city, the 10K Downtown Housing Initiative has attracted developers.*

The Black Cultural District in the Village Bottoms, on the other hand, is based on the idea of a coalition with strong neighborhood ties—including artists, organization leaders, local residents, and independent business owners—to help strengthen the area’s social and economic fabric. An integrated concept of community building lies at its very core, rooted in a specific local culture and heritage. In the Village Bottoms, grassroots arts are tools in the quest for self-determination, embraced by a community that seeks a voice to defend its interests. Some local leaders describe the arts as a source of positive energy that gives individuals the strength and the skills to make peace with the past and transform both their neighborhood and personal life circumstances.

At 23<sup>rd</sup> and Telegraph and in the Village Bottoms, informal arts have contributed to changes in both the physical and social fabric of the neighborhood. The arts have leveraged building upgrades and renovations while also bringing people together to socialize and share ideas – sometimes about a work of art, sometimes about the future of the neighborhood. Our findings validate the idea that an assessment of the “value” of neighborhood-based arts that focuses exclusively on economic outcomes misses an important dimension of local arts activity, because it fails to account for social outcomes. This exploratory research suggests that informal arts districts do not always follow the same trajectory, but that they can in fact produce different outcomes. As the Village Bottoms case study illustrates, grassroots arts can enhance a community’s organizing capacity. The outcome hinges on the degree to which artists and arts organizations are embedded in the neighborhood, and on the strength of relationships and networks among various arts groups and other community-based organizations.

From the perspective of city planners, we hope to further explore how cities can work closely with communities to help mitigate the volatility inherent in grassroots arts. Policies to support low-income communities in their effort to build and sustain a range of cultural and economic resources and celebrate their heritage may include zoning ordinances to allow for and protect local art spaces and arts-related businesses; arts organization rent matching programs; or financial support for first-time artist homebuyers.

In order for planners to build the arts—and build communities—we will need to recognize the different communities that informal arts activities touch, and understand better how they complement and conflict with each other. As cities throughout the region designate their own arts districts, we need to develop a better understanding of how the transition from informal to formal shapes the flow of capital in the region and thus redistributes wealth. To provide further insights into these questions, future research should study these and other arts districts as they evolve over time.



*A informal community-based art installation outside a venue in Village Bottoms expresses hope for the future of the neighborhood and Oakland.*

# Notes

- a Americans for the Arts, Arts and Economic Prosperity III, available at [http://www.artsusa.org/pdf/information\\_resources/research\\_information/services/economic\\_impact/aepiii/summary\\_report.pdf](http://www.artsusa.org/pdf/information_resources/research_information/services/economic_impact/aepiii/summary_report.pdf).
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- e Literature addressing issues surrounding the arts and gentrification includes Ley, David. "Artists, Aestheticisation and the Field of Gentrification." *Urban Studies*, Vol. 40/12. November 2003; and Zukin, Sharon. 1982. *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- f National Association of Realtors; National Low-Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach 2006*.
- g A report issued by the Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce, *Taking Stock of Oakland's Economy: Executive Summary* (April 2007) states: "To date, Oakland's traditional core industries [manufacturing, transportation, and health care] have declined considerably and the City has not successfully nurtured new ones. This has led to some unfavorable dynamics among the sectors that make up Oakland's economy today" (3).
- h West Oakland also had a thriving music scene in the 1940s, 50s, and 60s, although many of the venues that were active then have since gone out of business.
- i Based on 2000 Census and 2007 Claritas data. Most of this population is concentrated several blocks north of 23rd Street.
- j More information on the 10K Initiative is available from Oakland's Community and Economic Development Agency (CEDA) or at <http://www.business2oakland.com/main/10kdowntownhousinginitiative.htm>, last accessed October 26, 2007.
- k Both 23rd and Telegraph and the Village Bottoms are in fact located in redevelopment areas.
- l More information on housing built as part of the 10K Initiative is available from CEDA (see above).
- m Based on data from the 2000 Census and [www.zillow.com](http://www.zillow.com).
- n More information on the Village Bottoms Community Building and Development Company is available at the Village Bottoms Cultural District homepage at <http://web.mac.com/marceldiallo/iWeb/Black%20New%20World/village%20bottoms.html>, last accessed November 20, 2007.
- o Additional information on New Orleans Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs is available on-line, for example, at [http://www.bestofneworleans.com/dispatch/2007-02-06/cover\\_story.php](http://www.bestofneworleans.com/dispatch/2007-02-06/cover_story.php), last accessed November 20, 2007.
- p Information quoted from the Village Bottoms Cultural District homepage at <http://web.mac.com/marceldiallo/iWeb/Black%20New%20World/village%20bottoms.html>, last accessed November 20, 2007.
- q --. *San Francisco Chronicle*. January 21, 2007.
- r Quoted from an interview with Marcel Diallo on May 23, 2007 posted in the web-based *Blackdotcafe Magazine*, at <http://blackdotcafe.blogspot.com>, last accessed November 20, 2007.
- s Oakland Police Department Crime Data.
- t The neighborhood was included in a story about the "best, unexpected local music scenes" across the U.S. in the November 2007 issue of *Nylon Magazine*, a New York-based monthly fashion and lifestyle publication with a national circulation of 300,000 readers.



