

Four types of arts-based community development

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Summary

This paper identifies four general types of arts-based community development programme: arts business incubators, arts cooperatives, tourist venues and comprehensive approaches. Each is illustrated with a shot vignette from a location in the US.

Arts business indicators

This approach creates spaces or amenities that can be used by new creative businesses in order that they then go on to develop employment, sales or wage growth in the area. In Sneedville, Tennessee the Jubilee Business Incubator provided low-cost office space in a renovated building with shared amenities.

Arts cooperatives

These occur when groups of small-scale artisans, artists and makers come together to develop a platform through which they can sell and promote their work. The Craftmen's Guild of Mississippi began in the 1970s and since developing a number of facilities they have attracted tourists and are home to various projects in the community.

Tourist venues

This type of development places tourism at the centre of its objectives. The author points out that places need to not succumb to over-commercialisation.

Tifton, Georgia built an art museum and a living heritage museum and both served to bring in tourists and revitalize neighbourhoods in the town.

Comprehensive approaches

There is an approach that places the arts at the very centre of a town or city development plan – the logic is that by fostering creativity and vibrancy the economy and community aspects of the location will benefit. In Bellows Falls, Vermont, a post-industrial town was revitalised by the Rockingham Arts and Museum Project, which converted empty buildings and ran events.

A few recommendations

The author has some suggestions for people looking to use the arts to develop a community: recognise that the arts have a role to play, look for non-cash resources such as empty buildings, link arts activity to other social benefits like education, share resources to save costs and foster collaboration, and be flexible.

Keywords

development

USA

community

business

tourism

neighbourhood

Title	Artful business: using the arts for community economic development
Author(s)	Phillips, R.
Publication date	2004
Source	Community Development Journal, Vol 39, Iss 2, pp 112-122
Link	http://cdj.oxfordjournals.org/content/39/2/112.abstract
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By **Culture.Case** | 16 April 2014 | **Neighbourhood impacts of arts and culture** |



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