



12-2012

# Cultural Asset Mapping Project: Progress Report


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Stern, Mark J. and Seifert, Susan C., "Cultural Asset Mapping Project: Progress Report" (2012). *CultureBlocks Philadelphia*. 3.  
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# Cultural Asset Mapping Project: Progress Report

## **Abstract**

This report describes SIAP work undertaken from December 2011 to December 2012 as part of the Philadelphia cultural asset mapping project. SIAP research and data analyses underway, in collaboration with Reinvestment Fund, included: a cross-sectional analysis of associations between cultural assets and social and community indicators by neighborhood; a time-series of the geography of cultural assets between 1997 and 2010, using SIAP's historical database; and a Philadelphia livability/social inclusion index that links information on cultural assets with other community indices on neighborhood vitality and social wellbeing.

## **Disciplines**

Arts and Humanities | Public Policy | Social Welfare | Urban Studies and Planning

## **Comments**

This project was a partnership of Reinvestment Fund and PolicyMap; the City of Philadelphia Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy (OACCE) and Department of Commerce; and the University of Pennsylvania, Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) with support by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA Our Town Program) and ArtPlace America.



**Cultural Asset Mapping Project  
Progress Report**

**University of Pennsylvania  
Social Impact of the Arts Project**

**December 2012**

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## CONTENTS

Progress Report

Appendix A—Cross-sectional analysis of cultural assets and social/community indicators  
“Natural” Cultural Districts and Public Policy, June 2012

Appendix B—Research memo on sustaining “natural” cultural districts  
How does the composition of a cultural district influence its sustainability?,  
November 2012

Appendix C—Livability/social inclusion index data grid  
Dimensions of social well-being and data sources, November 2012

Appendix D—Livability/social inclusion index, summary of illustrative findings  
Social inclusion in Philadelphia: A multi-dimensional approach, October 2012

Appendix E—SIAP blogs

ArtPlace Blog re Creative Assets Map, Philadelphia PA:

- “Beyond Livability,” submitted December 12, 2011
- “Three Keys to Creative Placemaking,” submitted April 16, 2012
- “Sustaining ‘natural’ cultural districts,” posted August 11, 2012

Americans for the Arts, Animating Democracy ARTSblog:

- “Rethinking Social Impact: “We Can’t Talk About Social Well-Being Without the Arts & Culture,” posted May 1, 2012
- “The Arts, Culture, & Social Well-Being,” posted May 3, 2012

## **PROGRESS REPORT**

The University of Pennsylvania Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) has been collaborating with The Reinvestment Fund (TRF), PolicyMap, and City of Philadelphia's Office of Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy (OACCE) on CultureBlocks, a project to develop a cultural asset mapping tool for the city of Philadelphia.

SIAP's major contributions to the project are undertaking a set of collaborative research projects and developing a set of databases to identify the city's cultural assets at the block-group level. Specifically, SIAP with TRF are conducting research and data analyses on the relationship of cultural assets to neighborhood vitality and social well-being.

These include:

- Completing a cross-sectional analysis of the associations between cultural assets and social and community indicators.
- Constructing a time-series of the geography of cultural assets between 1997 and 2010, using SIAP's previously assembled cultural asset database, and examining the relationship between cultural assets and community change.
- Constructing a Philadelphia livability/social inclusion index that will link information on neighborhood cultural assets with other relevant community indices on neighborhood vitality and social well-being, including demographic diversity, housing quality, affordability and market vitality, access and quality of public transportation, and environmental quality.

In addition to these analyses, SIAP's responsibilities include:

- Working with PolicyMap to refine the cultural assets database and design template for neighborhood cultural ecology profiles;
- Serving as an editor for TRF's White Paper, designed to lay out guidance for an Arts and Culture Investment Strategy for the City;
- Participating in relevant education and marketing activities, managed by the City, to raise awareness of and engage the public in pilot implementation of the web prototype.

This report is intended to update partners on SIAP's contributions to the project over the past 12 months.

### **Cross-sectional analysis of cultural assets and social and community indicators**

SIAP completed a cross-sectional analysis of cultural assets and a variety of social and community indicators during June 2012 (Appendix A). This analysis includes a description of the methods used to construct the cultural asset indexes and an analysis of the relationship of cultural assets to public health indicators, ethnic and racial harassment, social diversity, and a variety of housing and economic indicators including declines in poverty and improvements in housing markets (using TRF's Market Value Analysis).

The paper goes on to propose two ways of classifying cultural clusters. Classifying cultural clusters by their *composition* highlights the difference between complex clusters—that include a mix of nonprofits, commercial firms, and artists—and single-asset clusters characterized predominantly by one type of asset. Classifying cultural clusters by their *economic and spatial advantage* allows us to view the differences between clusters with high per capita income and a central location from those with greater challenges. The analysis concluded that less-advantaged neighborhoods (identified as *civic clusters*) are associated with several non-economic benefits but not the economic benefits associated with *market* and *high market* clusters. SIAP used recent work in Baltimore and Seattle as comparisons to Philadelphia.

### **Relationship between cultural assets and community change**

The current project benefits from investments made in SIAP's work in Philadelphia over the past two decades. The 2010-12 cultural indexes developed for this project builds on our 1997 and 2004 indexes and provides cultural asset data by neighborhood at three points in time. This geographic time series allows us to examine how the cultural ecology of the city has changed over time.

SIAP has completed preliminary analyses of this question (Appendix B). Using the *composition* typology discussed above, we have examined change in the character of cultural clusters between 1997 and 2010. Our preliminary findings suggest that single-asset clusters are less sustainable than complex clusters that include a variety of cultural assets.

### **Livability/social inclusion index**

SIAP has been collaborating with TRF to develop a census tract level index of social well-being for the city of Philadelphia. The index is based on the model proposed by the Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, (initiated by the French government in 2008), chaired by Amartya Sen and Joseph Stiglitz. The Sen-Stiglitz report proposed an eight-dimensional index of social well-being that could be estimated at the national level.

Mark Stern of Penn and Ira Goldstein of TRF have used this model as the starting point for developing an index for Philadelphia's census tracts. They collaborated with the students in their Urban Studies course at Penn to identify data sources for each dimension of the index and to make initial calculations of a variety of sub-indexes.

Overall, we plan to develop sub-indexes for nine dimensions of well-being:

- Material standard of living: income and inequality
- Health: mortality, morbidity, and access
- Education: attainment, achievement, and access to quality
- Work activity: employment security, satisfaction, safety

- Housing: quality and affordability<sup>1</sup>
- Political voice: voting and participation
- Social connection: institutional structure and face-to-face relations
- Environment: threats and assets
- Insecurity: physical security and crime.

During 2012, we have created preliminary indexes for seven of these dimensions (the exceptions are political voice and environment). The attached table (Appendix C) summarizes both the work already completed and the work still to be completed.

After compiling the data for each index, we've used factor analysis to reduce the data to a smaller number of indexes. For example, we developed four health-related indexes (mortality, morbidity, access, and teen pregnancy/prenatal care) and two for social connection (institutional connection and neighborliness).

During Spring 2013, Goldstein and Stern will again teach the urban public policy research seminar and will continue to refine the analysis. This will include completing the final two indexes (political voice and environment) and studying alternative ways of scaling the data. We plan to have the final version of the index ready by May.

### **Refining the cultural asset database**

As part of the Chairman's Award from NEA that preceded the current project, SIAP provided TRF with four cultural indexes for the city of Philadelphia aggregated to census block groups: nonprofit cultural resources, commercial cultural firms, resident artists, and cultural participation rates.

It was anticipated that SIAP would refine these indexes for the current project. In addition, through consultation with the project partners, it was agreed that the nonprofit cultural resource database would be available at the individual organization level as well as aggregated to the block group and other geographies.

Although we characterized this work as *refining* the inventories, in many ways, the resulting databases represented a new version of them. Because of the interest in having data on individual organizations, SIAP decided to differentiate nonprofits that we could find on the IRS master file from those that we couldn't. For the latter group, we had no direct information on the budget size or age of an organization. This led us, as well, to differentiate commercial firms that we found on the InfoUSA database from

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<sup>1</sup> The Sen-Stiglitz report included housing as part of a personal activity dimension. However, at the tract level, the researchers concluded that it deserved its own index, especially in light of housing's critical role in the recent recession. In addition, another aspect of the personal activity dimension—use of leisure—overlapped with our measures of social connection. As a result, we've renamed this dimension—work activity—with a focus on the security, satisfaction, and remuneration of work and the role of commuting in well-being.

those we did not find. Again, we have data on size of firm for the former, but not for the latter.

We made several additional refinements to the database. We broke out college-based programs, both because they are numerous and because they have a distinctive geography (located at or near campus). We also differentiated arts programs run by non-arts nonprofit organizations. Again, this is an important set of programs, but their organizational data do not accurately reflect the actual size of the arts programs and could distort our view of the sector.

Taking all of these changes together, the new inventory (2010-12) is a combination of five separate databases:

- Nonprofit arts and cultural organizations (present on IRS master file)
- Commercial cultural firms (present on infoUSA)
- College-based arts and cultural programs
- Arts programs run by non-arts nonprofits (present on IRS master file)
- Emerging arts and cultural organizations or groups.

The “emerging arts” database needs a bit of explanation. As noted above, it includes nonprofit arts programs not present on the IRS master file and commercial programs not present on the infoUSA database. Also included are two sets of programs: arts programs run by non-arts nonprofit organizations not found on the IRS master file and artists’ spaces.

These five databases have been geocoded and block group counts calculated for the five databases overall and for subcategories within them. Specifically, we conducted separate counts for the following categories:

***Nonprofit arts and cultural programs (present on IRS master file)***

Type:

- Artist-based organization
- Cultural facility
- Community/participatory program
- Media and media arts
- Cultural resource/artist service program
- Library, archive
- Ethnic-focused program
- Historic site, urban design resource
- Arts training or education program
- Cultural steward or affiliation group

Size (annual expenditures):

- Under \$100,000
- \$100,000 - \$500,000
- \$500,000 - \$3million
- \$3 - 10 million
- Over \$10 million



Ruling year (received IRS exempt organization status):

2000 - current

1990 - 1999

1980 - 1989

1970 - 1979

Before 1970

***InfoUSA listing of commercial arts and cultural firms***

Type of industry:

Advertising

Applied Design

Architecture

Broadcasting

Film and video

Music production

Performing arts

Publishing

Visual arts

Decorative arts and crafts

Other independent artists

Number of employees:

1

2 to 9

10 to 49

50 to 249

Estimated annual sales (location):

Under \$500,000

\$500,000 - \$2.5 million

\$2.5 - \$10 million

\$10 - \$50 million

Over \$50 million

***Non-arts nonprofit organizations with embedded arts programs***

Total number of resources

***College-based arts and cultural programs***

Total number of resources

***Emerging arts and cultural resources (not present on IRS master file or infoUSA)***

Arts/cultural nonprofits

Non-arts nonprofits with arts program

Artist spaces

Commercial arts or culture

For each of the above categories, we calculated two counts: the number of organizations or groups within the block group (point counts) and the number of organizations within one quarter-mile of the block group (buffer counts). Because of the character of block groups (relatively small, 6-8 city blocks, and often without a commercial street), the quarter-mile buffer counts give a more accurate sense of the cultural resources accessible to its residents. The counts of resources within the block group will allow the counts to be aggregated to larger geography. For the larger geographies (census tract and above), these counts provide an accurate sense of accessible cultural resources.

### **Education and marketing activities**

Over the past year, Mark Stern drafted and posted blogs for the ArtPlace grantee blog and for the Americans for the Arts/Animating Democracy blog salon. SIAP blog themes included: the use of cultural asset data and mapping to identify cultural clusters and analyze their ecology and the rationale and approach to development of a livability/social inclusion index.

Blog articles listed below are attached as Appendix E:

#### ***ArtPlace Blog re Creative Assets Map, Philadelphia PA:***

- “Beyond Livability,” submitted December 12, 2011
- “Three Keys to Creative Placemaking,” submitted April 16, 2012
- “Sustaining ‘natural’ cultural districts,” posted August 11, 2012  
<http://www.artplaceamerica.org/articles/creative-assets-map-7/>

#### ***Americans for the Arts, Animating Democracy ARTSblog:***

- “Rethinking Social Impact: “We Can’t Talk About Social Well-Being Without the Arts & Culture”, posted by Mark Stern, May 1, 2012  
<http://blog.artsusa.org/2012/05/01/rethinking-social-impact-we-cant-talk-about-social-well-being-without-the-arts-culture/>
- “The Arts, Culture, & Social Well-Being”, posted by Mark Stern, May 3, 2012  
<http://blog.artsusa.org/2012/05/03/the-arts-culture-social-well-being/>

## Next Steps

During the remaining months of the project, SIAP will focus on the following tasks:

- Revise our analysis of cultural clusters. In particular, we will use the final form of our 2010-12 inventories to refine our definition of complex and single-asset clusters.
- Complete the social well-being index, including developing the final two sub-indexes (environment and political voice) and testing alternative methods for scaling the sub-indexes and a single overall index of well-being. This last task will require us to consider methods of weighting individual indexes. For example, how much weight should we give the educational achievement index compared to those for income, housing, or social connection.
- Revise the cross-sectional analysis of the relationship between cultural resources and various measures of well-being, once the social well-being index work is completed. Because arts resources are incorporated into our index of social connection, this will require examining the relationship between different elements of the well-being index.
- Contribute to TRF's white paper. We will consult with TRF on SIAP's most appropriate role in this process.
- Participate in various educational activities related to CultureBlocks. For example, Stern and Seifert will be representing the collaboration at the Creative Place-making Summit in January 2013 and will make a presentation based on the social well-being index research.

## Appendix A

### “Natural” Cultural Districts and Public Policy

Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert  
University of Pennsylvania  
Social Impact of the Arts Project

June 2012

Since the 1960s, many American cities have focused on developing *cultural districts* as a means of stimulating economic development. This paper examines one particular approach to the spatial dimension of the arts: the emergence of clusters of cultural activity in particular neighborhoods as a bottom-up process. In contrast to classical cultural districts, which are typically initiated by government or prestigious civic institutions (Johnson 2011), these clusters emerge through unplanned, organic processes. Although we recognize that no urban process is truly natural, we characterize these clusters as “natural” cultural districts to underline the grassroots character of this process.

This paper reports on research on the development of “natural” cultural districts in three cities: Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Seattle. It seeks to address five questions:

- What social and economic benefits are associated with cultural clusters?
- What are the social mechanisms that connect community benefits with cultural clusters?
- How do we define “natural” cultural districts? Are there particular neighborhood features that foster formation of cultural clusters?
- Can we distinguish particular types of “natural” cultural districts?
- What kinds of policy interventions are appropriate for different types of districts?

The study of “natural” cultural districts refines the recent interest in *creative placemaking*. “Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces,” according to Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa (2010, 3), [and] “rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.”

Markusen and Gadwa (2010, 6) argue that creative placemaking can occur at many different geographic scales. Based on a review of literature and a series of case studies, the authors find that creative placemaking “can occur at scales as large as a multi-state region and as small as a rural town or city neighborhood.” They demonstrate that building relationships across different sectors in the same locale is critical to arts-based development. Their study focuses on important elements of initiating or sustaining any project, including identifying initiators, focusing on distinctiveness, mobilization, and engaging the private sector and the arts community. Yet, inevitably in trying to demonstrate the connections among so many different projects, the policy implications of such an approach are bound to be limited to broad generalizations.

Even with only one type of creative place—“natural” cultural districts—we have discovered that there is considerable variation in structure and trajectory. Therefore, this paper proposes two ways of categorizing these “natural” cultural districts and a set of policy interventions and investment strategies associated with the different types of districts. First, we suggest that the *composition* of a “natural” cultural district influences its development. Districts dominated by

nonprofit cultural organizations or commercial cultural firms have different needs than those in which independent artists predominate. Second, districts vary by *the economic and locational advantages* they enjoy or lack. Although no cultural cluster has an easy time, some districts enjoy advantages (like a pool of well-off patrons or easy access to public transportation) that improve their chances of succeeding; while other districts lack these advantages and need to “exceed expectations” to sustain themselves.

The evidence in this paper is drawn from a study of “natural” cultural districts undertaken by the authors as part of the University of Pennsylvania’s Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) in Philadelphia with comparisons to two other cities—Baltimore and Seattle. The multi-level study included a citywide examination of the three cities’ cultural assets (including nonprofit organizations, commercial firms, resident artists, and cultural participants).

SIAP developed census block group-level estimates of three types of cultural assets—nonprofit cultural organizations, commercial cultural firms, and resident artists. These three measures were then scaled into a single measure of the block group’s *cultural asset index*—our single best estimate of the level of cultural activity. Cultural asset index scores express the block group’s assets as a percent of the citywide average; a score of 100 is equal to the citywide figure while a score of 200 is twice the average. We were able to use estimates of the cultural asset index in 1997 and 2004 to examine how a neighborhood’s cultural assets at an earlier point are associated with subsequent community change.<sup>1</sup>

### **What social and economic benefits are associated with cultural clusters?**

Most studies of the economic impact of the arts on American cities have focused on the direct economic benefits of cultural organizations with respect to employment and consumption. Often these studies have had methodological flaws, in particular, not accounting for the substitution effects associated with cultural activity (Americans for the Arts 2003; 2007). A more substantive problem arises from the distribution of economic impacts across organizations of different sizes and their relationship to location.

The vast majority of direct economic impact of the arts is associated with a region’s major institutions. A neighborhood theater performance attended by a few hundred patrons pales by comparison to a blockbuster exhibit at a major art museum or gallery. Yet, it is precisely the neighborhoods that house these smaller cultural organizations that are the most distressed and benefit the most from cultural engagement (Guetzkow 2002).

This paper argues that the economic impact of the arts on urban neighborhoods is a result of the social benefits of the arts. It is the arts’ capacity to animate public space and stimulate community engagement that lays the foundation for neighborhood revitalization. The arts’ contribution to economic resilience flows from its role in building the civic infrastructure of a community. In this section, we present a variety of evidence on these social and economic benefits.

### **Public health**

Thanks to a collaboration of the City of Philadelphia’s health department and the University of Pennsylvania, we have access to an index of public health for the city. The index, described as a measure of *social stress*, includes census block group-level data on a variety of conditions,

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the method, see Stern and Seifert (2010b).

including underweight infants at birth, births to younger teenagers, infant deaths, substantiated incidents of child abuse, and out-of-home placements for delinquency and other dependent children (Gross and McDermott 2009).

Not surprisingly, a number of these public health conditions are strongly related to socio-economic status. In order to correct for this effect, we controlled for the relationship of “social stress” to per capita income. The findings of this analysis were striking. The average social stress index in sections of Philadelphia with a low concentration of cultural assets was 0.2 standard deviations above the citywide average, while the index for neighborhoods that were cultural clusters was 0.5 standard deviations below the citywide average. The city’s cultural clusters, in other words, were much less likely to suffer from a variety of social ills that characterize urban neighborhoods, even after we control for the effect of income.

**[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]**

### ***Ethnic and racial harassment***

Philadelphia is in the midst of a major restructuring of its ethnic composition. Immigrants from Latin America, Europe, Africa, and Asia have entered the city in numbers not seen since the early twentieth century. At the same time, U.S.-born Latin Americans and Asian Pacific Islanders have moved to the city in increasing numbers in recent years.

These population shifts have a variety of positive effects. The increased diversity of neighborhoods means that a larger proportion of Philadelphians have learned to live with—even expect—that community life will be characterized by a mix of different peoples. Ethnic diversity often provides a set of crosscutting networks that reduce social isolation.

Yet, the shift of a neighborhood from homogenous to diverse can also carry with it a variety of negative side-effects. In Philadelphia, we identified a strong correlation between a shift to ethnic diversity and the number of incidents of reported ethnic and racial harassment in the neighborhood. Overall, a neighborhood that became ethnically diverse between 1990 and 2000 had more than twice as many incidents of ethnic and racial harassment per capita as the city as a whole in 2001. However, the relationship of increasing diversity and harassment in an area was modified by the presence of cultural assets. A block group that became ethnically diverse and had very few cultural assets experienced more than three times the citywide average number of harassment incidents per capita. In contrast, neighborhoods with many cultural assets that became diverse had only .47 incidents per 1,000 residents compared to a citywide average of .61 incidents per thousand. Culturally-engaged communities develop the capacity to address changing circumstances without resorting to violence and intimidation.

**[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]**

### ***Economic benefits***

In addition to the noneconomic benefits discussed above, we have discovered a set of persistent economic benefits that are associated with the concentration of cultural assets in a neighborhood. Between 1980 and 2000, for example, the presence of nonprofit cultural providers in a neighborhood was a good predictor of changes in poverty and population in Philadelphia (Stern and Seifert 2010b).

For the years between 2000 and 2005-09, we were able to document the relationship between cultural assets and changes in poverty in Baltimore and Seattle, as well as Philadelphia. We discovered that, as in earlier years, poverty declined most quickly in neighborhoods with a high

concentration of cultural assets. In Philadelphia and Seattle, virtually the entire decline in poverty was concentrated in neighborhoods with high concentrations of cultural assets. In Baltimore, where poverty fell more quickly than in the other cities, areas with the greatest number of cultural assets had the largest decline.

**[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]**

In Philadelphia, we were able as to examine the relationship of cultural assets to housing markets. This analysis occurred before the economic collapse of 2007. Given our appreciation of the housing bubble that occurred during these years, we should be skeptical about whether these data reflect real economic improvement or simply speculative activity. Still, compared to other cities, Philadelphia's bubble and bust were both relatively mild. Indeed, according to the Federal Housing Finance Administration, at the end of 2011, the metropolitan area's housing index was higher than it had been in early 2005 (U. S. Federal Housing Finance Administration 2012).

Given these cautions, we discovered that increases in property values during the early years of the last decade were strongly related to the concentration of cultural assets. In most of the city, between 2001 and 2006, median sale price increases average a bit under 40,000 dollars. During the same period, in block groups with the highest concentration of cultural assets, sale price increases were over 80 thousand dollars.

We are able to extend this analysis by using The Reinvestment Fund's (TRF) Market Value Analysis (MVA). TRF used a variety of data to assess Philadelphia's housing markets at the census block group level in both 2001 and 2008. Although the MVA categories used in the two years are not precisely comparable, it is possible to identify parts of the city that had clear improvement or decline in their housing market (Goldstein 2011).

The 2001 MVA used an eight-category scheme for rating a block group's housing market from *regional choice* to *reclamation*. In 2008, the classification had changed somewhat. Three categories of *transitional* markets had been replaced by *steady* and *transitional* markets, while *distressed* and *reclamation* markets had been recast as two strata of *distressed* markets. Because of comparability concerns, we classified a block group as having an improving or declining market only if it changed by at least two categories.

The presence of cultural assets in a block group strongly influenced changes in neighborhood housing markets between 2001 and 2008. Among higher-status block groups (*regional choice* and *high value*), those that remained stable over the seven years had a cultural asset score that was four or five times the citywide average, while those that declined had much lower cultural asset scores. Among middling housing markets, the block groups that improved their status began with much higher asset scores, and those that declined began with much lower scores. For example, among *transitional* and *steady* markets in 2001, those that improved had a 1997 cultural asset index of 362—more than three times the citywide average; those that remained stable had a cultural asset score of 71; and those that declined had a score of 51. Finally, among markets that were *distressed* or *reclamation* in 2001, those that improved had cultural asset scores of 169 and 160, respectively, while those that remained stable or declined had scores well below the citywide average.

**[TABLE 4 HERE]**

### **What social mechanisms generate community benefits via cultural clusters?**

Thus, we find that the concentration of cultural assets has a consistent association with both positive economic and non-economic outcomes in the three cities. Rates of ethnic and racial harassment, indicators of public health, declines in poverty, and improvements in neighborhood's housing markets were all associated with neighborhoods with high concentration of cultural assets. Yet, the range and persistence of these patterns raise yet another question: what are the social mechanisms that connect these community benefits and cultural engagement?

Although cultural engagement has a clear impact on the economic fortunes of neighborhoods, it is hard to see how this impact is associated with the *direct* economic impact of the arts. After all, with relatively few exceptions, community cultural organizations have relatively small budgets. Scholars have made a more plausible case that the economic benefits of community arts derive from their non-economic benefits. The Arts and Culture Indicators Project (ACIP) at the Urban Institute completed in 2006 a long-term investigation of approaches to the study of the arts' impact. ACIP concluded that in order to understand the arts properly at the community level, one needs to use a broader definition of culture that incorporates not only official nonprofit cultural organizations but also more informal cultural phenomena and the work of artists and businesses. The authors suggested that past work had paid too little attention to non-mainstream social groups and their contribution to cultural engagement. They argued that we should move beyond a focus on passive participation to include a more diverse and varied set of indicators, including those that track the presence of opportunities for cultural participation, actual participation, and the nature of cultural support systems. For ACIP, cultural participation incorporates amateur and collective art-making, youth-oriented programs both in and out of school, and public discussion about the arts in different sorts of media, as well as more conventional measures of attendance and visitation (Jackson, Kabwasa-Green and Herranz 2006).

A study of "small budget" cultural organizations in Chicago suggested more concrete strategies for measuring the impact of community-based arts groups on their neighborhoods. Specifically, the authors called attention to three domains of influence: access to resources, collective problem-solving, and building social relationships. Based on fieldwork in Chicago neighborhoods, they suggested that small arts organizations can serve as anchors of local business districts, repurpose older spaces, and benefit local young people by offering programs both in and out of school that provide arts training and access to technological and entrepreneurial skills (Gram and Warr 2003).

The authors suggested that the collective problem-solving dimension of cultural organizations includes helping neighborhoods address local problems through their convening capacity. In addition, these organizations can foster collaboration and provide a safe haven and opportunities to learn new skills. These capacities are particularly important in turning a potential neighborhood problem—under-occupied young people—into a community asset.

Finally, the Chicago study underlined the varied types of social relationships that can flow from relatively small arts and cultural organizations. They can make important contributions to leadership development and provide a structure for meaningful social interactions. Furthermore, they can provide means of incorporating excluded social groups—whether defined by race, immigration status, or other distinctions.



Taking off from this last point, several studies have focused on the role of *informal* social interactions in building the arts community and its connection to excluded groups. Two studies—one in California and the other in Chicago—underlined the role of informal connections in connecting immigrants to institutions in which they might feel marginalized. This last point was reinforced by a study in Philadelphia that found that immigrants are culturally active, but that they rarely channel cultural practices and creative activities through established cultural organizations (Wali, Contractor, and Severson 2007; Alvarez 2005; Stern and Seifert 2010a).

Building on this scholarship, SIAP has developed a model based on community cultural ecology as a social mechanism through which cultural engagement generates social and economic benefits. The ecological approach suggests that, we focus on the range of community assets involved in producing, cultivating, and engaging the arts and culture; as well as the variety of contextual factors, including regional cultural institutions, non-arts community organizations, and policy- and grant-makers. It is the networks developed between and among these different elements, rather than the health of any particular organization, that lay the foundation for the cultural vitality of a community.

**[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]**

### **What is a “natural” cultural district?**

Much of the impact of the arts and culture on community well-being is a result of neighborhoods with a high concentration of cultural assets, what we call “natural” cultural districts. The distinctive feature of these districts is that the initiative for their formation begins at the grassroots. Clusters emerge from the efforts of individual cultural drivers—artists and artisans, nonprofit groups, commercial enterprises, and residents—who are pursuing their own interests.

We use the metaphor of “natural” to distinguish these districts from conventional planned cultural districts, which typically follow a more top-down process of development. As demonstrated by Amanda Johnson (2011), an essential feature of a planned district is the process of *mobilization*, in which different players—typically city government, the business community, or private philanthropy—initiate an effort to gain commitments from other elements of the civic community.

Mobilization is important to “natural” cultural districts as well. Usually, the rationale for planned districts is narrowly economic. In some cases, the fear of disinvestment and decay motivate actors; in other cases, top-down districts arise as a means of cementing a set of anchor institutions to rationalize future development. In contrast, the development interests of “natural” cultural districts are likely to be more varied and less strategic. Clusters often evolve as a result of narrowly artistic decision-making. Depending on discipline or creative output, artists may want to locate near suppliers or audiences. Often artists, musicians, or theater professionals seek out places where other members of their profession either live or work. In other cases, community development concerns that are more about safety and security—like preventing youth violence, reclaiming parkland from drug traffic, or bridging divides between ethnic groups—may spark mobilization.

Eventually, of course, these neighborhood mobilization efforts may turn to systematic community planning processes or the enlistment of outside resources to aid the local effort. Connecting with external resources does not make a district any less “natural” but rather suggests that it has moved to a new stage of development. The bottom line is that local players, because of their own interests, are the drivers of the development process.

Because of the unique trajectory of “natural” cultural districts—bottom-up and inside-out—processes of intervention and investment are often complex. In particular, because these places typically arise out of the *self-organized* efforts of residents and workers, outside interests must *discover* rather than create them. In particular, “natural” cultural districts must be treated as *vulnerable habitats*, a point to which we return later in the chapter. Their success rests on the complex interaction of the elements of their cultural ecology. As a result, policy must be directed at *cultivating* these districts with sensitivity to this ecology.

### **What neighborhood features foster formation of “natural” cultural districts?**

Through our research in different cities, SIAP has identified a number of features that lay the groundwork for “natural” cultural districts. While not all of them are necessary in all cases, their presence increases the odds that a cultural district will emerge. In particular, we have found that geographic location, character of available space, and composition of the residential and working population are predictive of cultural district formation.

#### ***Geography matters***

The cultural ecology of “natural” cultural districts has a complex relationship to metropolitan land markets. Typically, these districts emerge outside of downtowns or city centers because smaller cultural firms and artists can’t afford downtown rents. At the same time, they are sensitive to issues of access for connecting to audiences, patrons, and producer networks. This balance results in the emergence of “natural” cultural districts that are close to, but not in, downtowns (Scott 1996).

#### **[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]**

Seattle provides a particularly interesting example of this process at work. A decade or more ago, several neighborhoods within downtown—Belltown, for example—were centers of cultural activity. In recent years, many downtown neighborhoods have become less accommodating for cultural organizations and artists. Instead, a set of neighborhoods circling downtown has emerged. Beginning in Pioneer Square and SoDo (South of Downtown), the so-called *crescent* arcs through Chinatown/International District to the Central District neighborhoods, Capitol Hill to Lake Union.

This tendency shows up as well in statistics on the concentration of cultural assets by distance from downtown. In all three cities we studied, the average block group with the highest concentration of cultural assets was just under two miles from the center of the city.

#### ***Housing tenure matters***

Generally speaking, in all three cities, there is a strong relationship between economic standing and the percent of renters in a block group. However, parts of the city with high concentration of cultural assets have much higher proportion of rental units at all income levels. In Baltimore, for example, in the average block group in the top fifth of the income distribution, 35 percent of housing units were renter-occupied. If the block group also had a high number of cultural assets, the percentage rose to 49 percent, 14 percentage points higher. The comparable figures for Philadelphia and Seattle were 9 and 26 percent, respectively. Across the three cities, if we control for income, neighborhoods with the highest concentration of cultural assets had a renter percentage that was 21 percent higher than that for comparable neighborhoods without as many cultural assets.

The strong association between renters and cultural districts makes sense. Renter districts are more mobile, providing more opportunities for people to move in and out. The fluidity of the housing market can also indicate more opportunities for businesses to find the spaces they need. Most importantly, however, a high percentage of renters is associated with the most important characteristic of these neighborhoods—social diversity.

### ***Diversity matters***

In recent years, scholars have gained a new appreciation for the role that social diversity plays in urban neighborhoods. For the arts, however, social diversity has long been a crucial dimension of community life. Even in the 1990s, when our image of cities was still dominated by “city trenches” that divided neighborhoods by race and social class, ethnically and economically diverse neighborhoods were at the center of the cultural community.

### *Economic diversity*

We have discovered that three dimensions of social diversity are associated with the concentration of cultural assets—economic, household and ethnic. Economic diversity refers to neighborhoods with higher than average proportions of both poor people *and* professionals and managers than the typical neighborhood. We refer to these as *pov-prof* neighborhoods. As Table 5 suggests, sections of the three cities that were economically diverse in both 2000 and 2005-09 had cultural asset scores that were twice the citywide average. Areas that were diverse in one year or the other had scores that were somewhere between the stable diverse and stable homogeneous parts of the city.

**[INSERT TABLE 5 HERE]**

Pov-prof neighborhoods are not all the same. One type is composed of African American neighborhoods that continue to house both poor and professional populations. Although the economic differentiation of African American neighborhoods has been widely commented on, members of the black middle class continue to be much more likely to live in neighborhoods with high poverty (Sampson 2012). Another type of stable pov-prof neighborhood is composed of funkier districts that are home to a truly diverse set of households. Finally, the less stable pov-prof neighborhoods are more likely districts undergoing change, although the direction of that change may vary. In Baltimore, for example, about three-quarters of pov-prof block groups that became homogeneous saw their poverty rate decline, and one quarter of those that became pov-prof saw their poverty rate decline.

### *Household diversity*

One type of neighborhood diversity that is often overlooked is associated with the composition of households. Here we define a neighborhood as household diverse if it has a high concentration of young adults and of non-family households. Of course, the census definition of non-family household has become more controversial in recent years, because it includes a number of types of households—like unmarried couples—that may consider themselves families.

Parts of the city with high concentrations of household diversity have much higher cultural asset scores—typically three times the citywide average. In Seattle, the difference is not quite as large, but even there household diversity is one of the best predictors of a neighborhood’s cultural asset index.

### *Ethnic diversity*

Ethnic diversity has historically been associated with high levels of cultural assets. In a 1999 study of four U.S. cities, we found that ethnically diverse neighborhoods had a concentration of cultural organizations that was higher than the citywide average (Stern and Seifert 1999).

In recent years, however, the nature of ethnic diversity has changed significantly. Using Philadelphia as an example, at the beginning of the 1990s only about one-fifth of Philadelphians lived in an ethnically diverse neighborhood. By 2010, more than one-half did so. During the same period, the increased Hispanic and Asian Pacific Islander populations have expanded the types of diverse neighborhoods. The one exception to this expanded diversity has been the continuing high concentration of African Americans who lived in homogeneous African American neighborhoods.

Yet, as the number of diverse neighborhoods has expanded greatly, their association with a concentration of cultural assets has declined somewhat. Most notably, based on earlier studies of Philadelphia, we have concluded that the gap between black and Hispanic neighborhoods, on the one hand, and white and diverse neighborhoods, on the other, has increased over the past fifteen years. Furthermore, although in previous decades, the presence of cultural assets in a diverse neighborhood was associated with it remaining diverse; during the first decade of the twenty-first century, that association disappeared. Neighborhoods that are both economically and ethnically diverse, however, continue to be the homes to a large share of cultural assets. These sections of the cities have cultural asset scores that are between 150 and 220 percent higher than the citywide averages.

Taken together, the available data suggest that cultural engagement is a distinctive form of social engagement. Cultural institutions, even those that see themselves as serving a single neighborhood, appear to create networks of participation that cross boundaries of ethnicity, social class, and geography. Consistently over the past decade, we have found that the typical community-based cultural organization draws 80 percent of its participants from outside of its immediate neighborhood. This provides an opportunity for “bridging” social capital that is not associated with other forms of community engagement.

### **Can we distinguish particular types of “natural” cultural districts?**

Not all “natural” cultural districts are alike. Their cultural ecology, economic status, and geography all influence their development. SIAP is in the midst of examining how these districts are differentiated in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Seattle. For now, our results should be taken as preliminary. Specifically, we are investigating two ways of distinguishing different sorts of cultural districts. One—based on composition—examines the balance of different cultural resources within a particular district. The other examines the economic and locational advantages of a neighborhood and how these influence its emergence as a cultural district.

### ***Cultural composition of districts***

As discussed above, we have tracked the presence of three types of cultural assets—nonprofit cultural organizations, commercial cultural firms, and resident artists—in defining “natural” cultural districts. Yet, although we can talk about the aggregate presence of cultural assets in a particular neighborhood, it is clear that the relative balance of these resources plays a role in how a district develops. It may be that an imbalance of resources—a situation where one type of asset dominates a neighborhood—may be more vulnerable to changes in its environment than a more varied district.

As a starting point for differentiating districts by their cultural ecology, we have examined the dominance of a particular resource in a neighborhood by calculating the proportion of all resources that each of our three assets represents. For example, what proportion of all assets do nonprofits, artists, or enterprises make up?

**[INSERT FIGURE 3 HERE]**

In applying this approach, we discovered that the two districts on which we have focused in Philadelphia have dramatically different cultural ecologies. Figure 3 examines these two districts—Callowhill/Chinatown North and South Philadelphia—from the standpoint of commercial culture. As the map shows, Callowhill/Chinatown North has a very high concentration of commercial cultural firms with other types of resources lagging behind. In contrast, South Philadelphia shows a more varied pattern, with some areas having a high concentration of commercial firms and others in which they are much less of a factor.

The map shows, as well, that each district's composition is influenced by its broader context. The strength of commercial firms in Callowhill/Chinatown North reflects a pattern that dominates much of the eastern part of Center City Philadelphia and connects the area to another commercial cultural hub to the north and east. By contrast, South Philadelphia marks a shift from the commercially dominated Center City pattern, to the more varied ecology of outlying neighborhoods to its west and south.

**[INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE]**

The nature of this diversity is underlined by comparing the dominance of commercial firms with that of artists. In this map, we see again that Callowhill/Chinatown North is similar to much of Center City, in which resident artists play a relatively minor role. In contrast, South Philadelphia includes several areas in which the presence of resident artists is quite strong and others in which they are less so.

Is the contrast between a “mono-cultural” district like Callowhill/Chinatown North and a diverse district like South Philadelphia relevant for describing the histories of these areas? Again, our conclusions are tentative, but we have discovered through interviews that cultural workers in Callowhill/Chinatown North express misgivings about its sustainability as an arts district. Its closeness to Center City and, perhaps, the dominance of commercial cultural firms suggest that relatively minor changes in the area—increased property values and rents, improved amenities—might cause a dramatic shift in the gritty character of this former industrial district.

The dominance of a single type of cultural resource may weaken the resilience of the district to external changes. This might explain why a proposal to convert an elevated train right-of-way into an urban park—in an area with limited vegetation and no green space—became a heated and controversial issue in 2011. Its opponents believed that development of the “viaduct” could cause a dramatic change in the perception and economics of the district, which they found threatening.

In contrast, our interviewing in South Philadelphia seemed consistent with our hypothesis that a diverse cultural ecology increases the resilience of a cultural district. Although some of our informants worried that the same patterns—increased competition for space and rising rents—would harm its viability, the tenor of our discussions more often focused on continuities in the area's history. Just as South Philadelphia became home to many immigrant groups and their cultural expressions during the early twentieth century, it has again become a center for the arts and culture of immigrants, this time from Mexico, China, and Southeast Asia. Indeed, some of

the same institutions that supported the incorporation of an earlier generation of immigrants—like the Samuel S. Fleisher Art Memorial—are again playing this role with the newest residents of these neighborhoods.

As we have noted, this research is preliminary. Still, the findings suggest that more attention should be paid to the composition of cultural clusters and its role in building resilient and sustainable cultural districts.

### ***Economic and location characteristics of districts***

Districts are influenced not only by the concentration and composition of cultural assets. Cultural hubs are located in particular social and geographical settings as well. As noted earlier in this paper, the geography and social context of a neighborhood influences the likelihood that it will emerge as a cultural cluster. At the same time, these factors are far from deterministic. On the one hand, across the three cities, we have identified areas that “beat the odds,” that is, they become cultural hubs in spite of economic and spatial disadvantages. On the other hand, we can also use the method to identify neighborhoods that share advantages with existing cultural districts but have not yet attracted significant cultural assets.

In order to test this line of thought, we conducted an analysis of the role of a set of economic and spatial conditions on the likelihood that a neighborhood will have a concentration of cultural assets. Using multivariate analysis, we estimated the impact of three specific variables on the concentration of cultural assets—per capita income, percent renters in a district, and distance from downtown. Because per capita income and percent renters were so highly correlated, we used a measure of renter-occupied units corrected for the income measure. Using these three variables, we were able to “explain” between 32 and 63 percent of the variance in our cultural asset index. We were least successful in Baltimore, where our corrected renter measure had only a minor predictive power and most successful in Philadelphia where all three variables had a robust influence. In Seattle, interestingly, per capita income had a small, albeit statistically significant, effect on cultural assets.

The next step of our analysis involved identifying over-achieving neighborhoods, that is, parts of the cities whose cultural asset index was higher than we would have predicted based on these factors. We then looked at sections of the city based on the contrast between their cultural asset index and this corrected index. Doing so created a typology with three distinct types of districts:

- **High market cultural districts:** “Natural” cultural districts that have higher asset scores than their socio-economic and locational advantages would predict.
- **Market cultural districts:** “Natural” cultural districts with high asset scores that are consistent with their socio-economic and locational advantages.
- **Civic clusters:** Disadvantaged neighborhoods in terms of socio-economic status and location that “outperform” their predicted asset score.

**[INSERT FIGURE 5 HERE]**

Figure 5 shows the relationship of the Cultural Asset Index to a scale of three measures of economic and location advantage—per capita income, corrected renter-occupied percent, and distance from city center—for Philadelphia.

The three types of districts identify three distinctive cultural ecologies. The high market districts identify sections of the city with a vital and visible cultural scene, often located near the city center. Market districts more often than not are adjacent to the high market areas, close in both geography and economic status. Civic clusters are the least visible of the three. The casual visitor will typically question whether these are cultural districts at all. Because their cultural assets (smaller organizations and individual artists) often occupy indistinct or downbeat structures, they usually don't have the street-level "look" of the other districts.

[INSERT FIGURE 6 HERE]

In Baltimore, for example, the high market areas of the city are for the most part located along the central north-south spine. The market areas are often "in-fill" between obvious centers like the Inner Harbor, Mount Vernon, Fels Point, and Johns Hopkins University. Finally, the civic clusters are more scattered. Neighborhoods like Highlandtown—one of our case study areas—lie relatively far from the north-south spine; although, in the case of Highlandtown, it is adjacent to an old industrial district with a number of cultural assets.

#### **What kinds of policy interventions are appropriate for different types of districts?**

Differentiating types of "natural" cultural districts has descriptive and analytical purposes. It allows us to give a more detailed description of the features of cultural clusters and to provide a framework for seeing their similarities and differences. In addition, the typology provides a starting point for policy interventions that might benefit one district or another.

#### ***Cultural composition—complex and single-asset ecology***

It stands to reason that the composition of a cultural district would influence the relative effectiveness of different types of interventions. The types of incentives that might change the behavior of nonprofits are obviously different from those that would motivate commercial cultural firms. Similarly, independent artists would respond to some changes in the social and economic environment that would have little relevance for organizations.

Perhaps the most obvious distinction here relates to *tax incentives*. A number of states have developed mechanisms for establishing designated arts and entertainment districts. In Maryland, for example, such districts provide for three types of benefits:

- 1) property tax credits for new construction or renovation of certain buildings that create live-work space for artists and/or space for arts and entertainment enterprises;
- 2) an income tax subtraction modification for income derived from artistic work sold by "qualifying residing artists";
- 3) an exemption from the Admissions and Amusement tax levied by an "arts and entertainment enterprise" or "qualifying residing artist" in a district (Gillick 2012).

All of the benefits associated with these districts are in the form of tax incentives. Clearly, for districts with a high concentration of *tax-exempt* arts organizations, these benefits are irrelevant. The artists' benefits may be difficult to use because the work must be sold in the district by an artist who also lives in the district.

Districts that are more dependent on commercial firms might be particularly dependent on the quality of city services. Sanitation, streetscaping, zoning, license and inspection functions are notoriously uneven in many cities, yet they both communicate much about districts and

influence investment decisions. For example, the Callowhill/Chinatown North district has currently attracted increased attention as a commercial cultural district, but the experience of walking through the district continues to be characterized by litter and dumping, uneven sidewalks, poor lighting, and barren streetscapes. An effort to establish a *neighborhood improvement district* in the area failed in 2011 but is likely to be revisited in the future.

What to do about artists poses one of the most difficult challenges. There is a widely held perception that artists play a transitory role in cultural district development. They identify undervalued non-residential space and turn it into living and working spaces. Real estate and development interests take note of their activity and bid up prices that eventually drive the artists to relocated elsewhere. In Baltimore’s Station North district today, many residents and organizations accept this scenario fatalistically as the inevitable outcome of current “sweat equity” investment.

If arts districts are to stay artists’ districts, the key appears to be ownership. Cultural organizations and artists who are willing and able to purchase property can stabilize a district and insure their continued presence. Programs that prepare independent artists and nonprofit groups for property ownership in terms of both knowledge and credit could serve multiple roles in helping to sustain cultural districts.

***Economic and location characteristics—market districts and civic clusters***

Categorizing cultural districts by their relative market and location position also poses a set of challenges for social policy. As we have noted, areas of the city with higher concentrations of cultural assets tend to be associated with a set of social and economic benefits. However, the character of these benefits is not uniformly distributed.

In Philadelphia, for example, we have noted the association between the incidence of racial and ethnic harassment and the presence of cultural assets. If we break down these data by our market/civic typologies, we discover that civic clusters demonstrated among the lowest-rates of harassment. Indeed, it appears that the *non-economic* benefits associated with the concentration of cultural assets are present in civic, market, and high-market districts.

**[INSERT TABLE 6 HERE]**

In contrast, civic clusters do not share market districts’ capacity to translate these social benefits into economic benefits. For example, between 2001 and 2008 in Philadelphia, two-thirds of market districts and one-half of high-market districts enjoyed substantial improvement in their housing markets. However, only 14 percent of civic cluster block groups saw their housing markets improve, just slightly above the figure for the rest of the three cities (10 percent)

We can use this analysis to identify one more group of neighborhoods—those that share the advantages of market and high-market cultural districts but do not possess the same level of cultural assets. In many cases, these areas already possess more than the average number of assets, but not the critical mass necessary to transform them into cultural districts. A set of targeted interventions could enable these areas to become cultural districts and potentially enjoy the associated social and economic benefits.

**[INSERT FIGURE 7 HERE]**

Given the current state of the economy and policy-making, the easy path of cultural district development is through market mechanisms. If we could enjoy the benefits of creative



placemaking simply by allowing markets to operate more efficiently—for example, by improving city services—promoting culture-based community development strategy would be easy.

However, these data suggest that advocates of creative placemaking may have a more difficult task than they imagine. Although we can demonstrate strong connections between the concentration of cultural assets and a wide variety of social benefits, economic spillover tends to be concentrated in places that are already advantaged. Thus, if we pursue strategies that promote creative placemaking purely as a market-based strategy, the outcomes are likely to increase the already-growing gap between prosperous and poor residents and between advantaged and disadvantaged parts of the city.

## Conclusion

In her classic work, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs (1961) noted that vital urban neighborhoods thrive on multiple types of diversity. Yet, these types of urban diversity—physical form, social composition, and street activity—are vulnerable. She warned that neighborhood diversity is subject to “self-destruction.” For Jacobs, preserving diversity is a key to maintaining resilient urban neighborhoods.

Among the forces that can destroy diversity, Jacobs (1961, 316) noted, are “the tendency for both public and private money either to glut or starve development and change.” In particular, Jacobs drew the distinction between *gradual* money that allowed a district to develop at a pace that did not destroy the diversity that allowed it to flourish and *cataclysmic* money that drives out diversity.

Jacobs’ insights—although a half-century old—are particularly relevant to today’s interest in creative placemaking. Many “natural” cultural districts are vulnerable. They can fail because they attract either too little or too much public or private investment. As with natural resources, they should be treated as *vulnerable habitats* that require stewardship.

Given the dominant political and economic forces facing many older American cities, it is likely that policy-makers will pursue short-sighted strategies that could undermine the forces of community regeneration. Yet, the evidence suggests that a longer-term strategy would provide benefits that are more widely shared by members of urban communities.

The short-term strategy is clear enough. Cities could focus on supporting and enhancing market and high-market districts, which already enjoy stronger economic status. The “near market” districts that enjoy the economic and locational advantages of these areas but don’t yet possess the same concentration of cultural assets might also be targeted for special attention. These investments are more likely to deliver quicker pay-offs in the form of increased property values and tax revenues.

This approach fits into a variety of trends already present in contemporary urban public policy. It builds on the recent interest in drawing a “creative class” to cities as the key to increasing economic competitiveness (Florida 2002). It is consistent with many philanthropic strategies, which equate nonprofits’ fiscal probity with social effectiveness. A short-term approach also fits into a general “winner-take-all” view of economic prosperity, a tendency that is more present in the arts and culture than in many other sectors (Stern 2005).

The outcome of a market-based strategy would likely fit into our classic model of the transitory arts district. The diverse, funky districts that attract artists and other cultural enterprises will become targets for the cataclysmic money to which Jacobs’ refers. In some districts, high-end

retail, condominiums, and entertainment venues will displace the real cultural assets. Cities will use the array of current policy tools—tax abatements, credits, and improvement districts—to improve some parts of the city, while a majority of neighborhoods languish.

A longer-term strategy would build on the social and economic benefits that cultural engagement generates in all types of cultural districts, including civic clusters. It would define cultural engagement broadly to include both conventional notions of high art, popular culture, and the folk traditions of all groups that inhabit the contemporary city. Rather than using government and philanthropy to reinforce market forces, a long-view policy would compensate for market failure and promote social equity. Over time, the strategy would promote social inclusion and the productive utilization of all of the city's fiscal, human, and social capital.

Civic clusters remain an easily overlooked element of the regional cultural ecology. As we've noted, these neighborhoods often face considerable disadvantages in terms of location and economic standing, but promote community capacity in neighborhoods that often lack it.

Norris Square, in eastern Philadelphia, provides an example of the challenges faced by these neighborhoods. A group of women formed *Grupo Motivos* in the early 1990s to reclaim Norris Square Park from the drug trade. The women have created six community gardens that feature vegetables and flowers, murals, and cultural artifacts representing Puerto Rican and African cultures. To educate the second- and third- generations about their multi-cultural heritage, *Grupo Motivos* runs environmental education and cooking workshops. Facing daunting odds, the residents of the neighborhood have resuscitated the civic life of their community, through a combination culture, horticulture, and community organizing. Yet, despite their success, the residents of Norris Square—like those of many civic clusters---have found it difficult to attract public and philanthropic support, because they are not seen as a “real” cultural district.

Our findings do not provide an authoritative endorsement of either of these approaches to creative placemaking. For cash-strapped cities, strategies that promise a quick fix are likely to carry the day. That victory, however, is likely to be pyrrhic for the cultural community, because it will undermine many of the conditions that have allowed the arts to flourish in urban neighborhoods and will identify the arts with strategies that promote exclusion and privilege over social inclusion and shared prosperity.

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**TABLE 1—Social Stress Index by Cultural Asset Index (quintiles), 2005-06, Philadelphia**

Cultural asset index 2004 (quintiles)	Social stress score
Lowest quintile	0.447
20-39th %	0.153
40-59th %	0.107
60-79th %	-0.035
Highest quintile	-0.656
Total	0.000

Source: SIAP

Notes. For calculation of social stress score, see Gross and McDermott (2009). Scores are standardized with a citywide mean of zero and standard deviation of 1.

**TABLE 2—Incidents of ethnic and racial harassment per 1,000 residents in 2001 by Cultural Asset Index (quintiles) in 1997, Philadelphia block groups**

Cultural asset index 1997 (quintiles)	Became ethnically diverse, 1990-2000	All block groups
Lowest quintile	2.07	1.13
20-39th %	1.79	0.70
40-59th %	1.60	0.56
60-79th %	0.73	0.45
Highest quintile	0.47	0.38
All block groups	1.43	0.61

Source: SIAP

**TABLE 3—Change in poverty rate (2000 to 2005-09) by Cultural Asset Index 2010, selected cities’ block groups**

		City	
Cultural asset index 2010 (quintiles)	Baltimore	Philadelphia	Seattle
Lowest quintile	-1.0%	2.2%	0.4%
20-39th %	-0.5%	3.7%	2.7%
40-59th %	-0.6%	2.1%	2.2%
60-79th %	-4.1%	1.8%	0.7%
Highest quintile	-2.5%	-3.5%	-1.8%

Source: SIAP

Note: General linear model results controlling for per capita income.

**TABLE 4—Average Cultural Asset Index score (1997) by housing market status (2001) and change in housing market status (2001-08), Philadelphia block groups**

Market value analysis 2001	Change in housing market status			Total
	Housing market improved	Housing market remained stable	House market declined	
Regional choice		409	23	394
High value		547	146	484
Transitional Up	384	56	18	78
Transitional steady	362	71	51	100
Transitional down	134	38		50
Distressed, stressed	121	36	52	72
Reclamation	169	42		54
All block groups	160	69	67	86

Source: SIAP, TRF

Note: Citywide average=100.



**TABLE 5—Cultural Asset Index 2010 by change in economic and household diversity 2000 to 2005-09, selected cities' block groups**

		City	
<b>Change in economic diversity</b>	<b>Baltimore</b>	<b>Philadelphia</b>	<b>Seattle</b>
Never economically diverse	86	96	88
Became homogenous	138	110	135
Became diverse	133	108	143
Stable diverse	253	193	210
<b>Change in household diversity</b>			
Never diverse	84	84	77
Became homogeneous	110	252	109
Became diverse	152	172	102
Diverse in both years	329	303	180

Source: SIAP

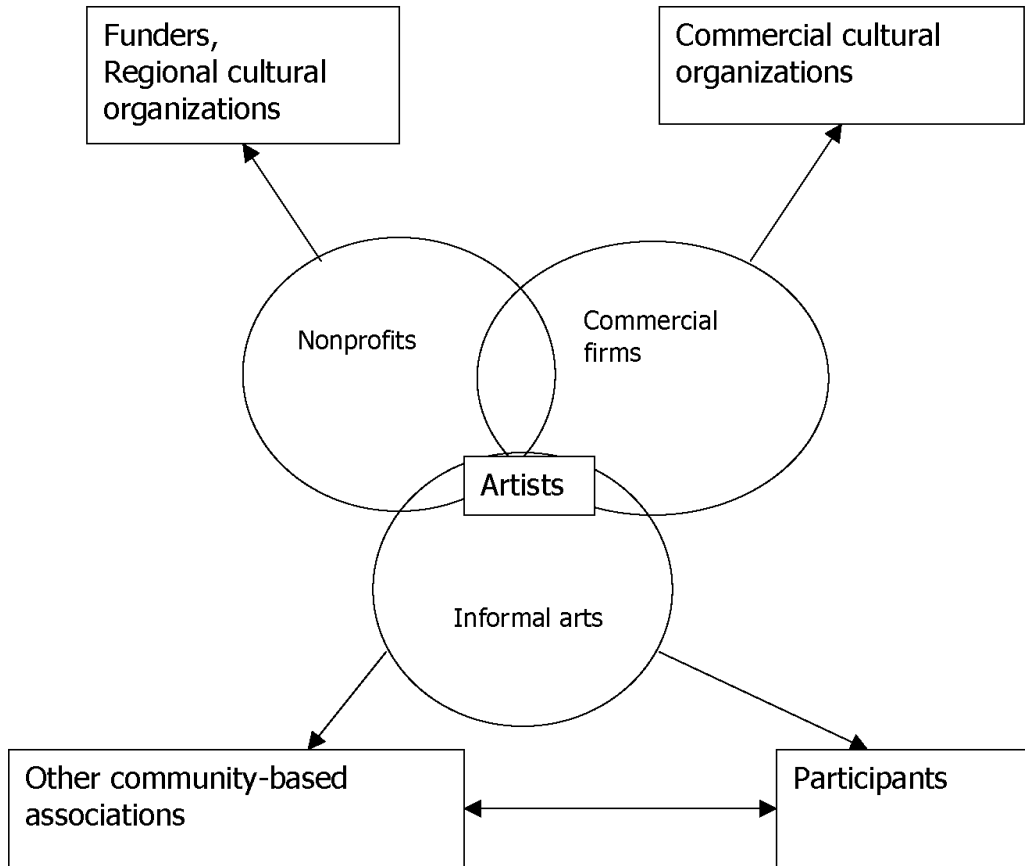
Note: Citywide average=100.

**TABLE 6—Change in housing market 2001-08 by type of cultural district, Philadelphia block groups**

		Change in housing market			Total
Type of cultural district		Improved	Stable	Declined	
<b>High market</b>	N	56	58	2	116
	Percent	48.3%	50.0%	1.7%	100.0%
<b>Market</b>	N	91	42	3	136
	Percent	66.9%	30.9%	2.2%	100.0%
<b>Civic</b>	N	18	110	3	131
	Percent	13.7%	84.0%	2.3%	100.0%
<b>Not NCD</b>	N	119	1013	25	1157
	Percent	10.3%	87.6%	2.2%	100.0%
	N	284	1223	33	1540
	Percent	18.4%	79.4%	2.1%	100.0%

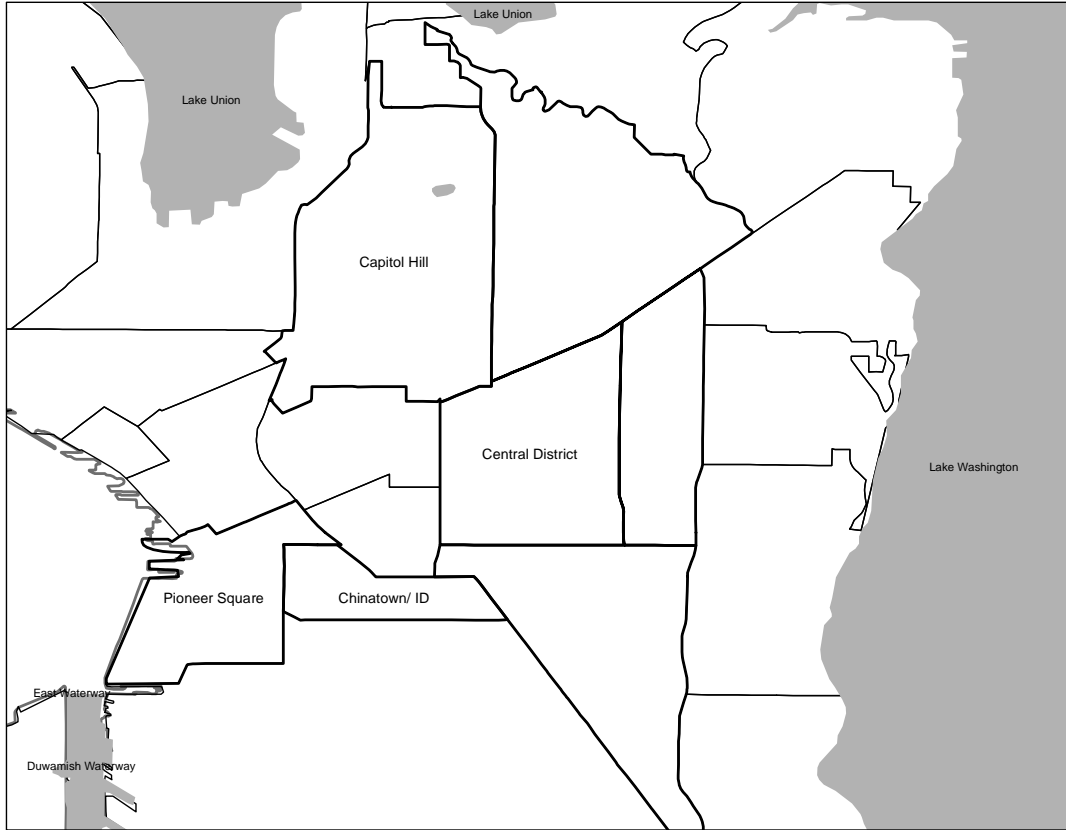
Source: SIAP, TRF

**FIGURE 1—Schematic representation of neighborhood cultural ecosystem**



Source: SIAP

**FIGURE 2—Seattle’s “crescent” of cultural districts surrounding downtown**



Source: SIAP

**FIGURE 3—Commercial cultural firm ratio, Philadelphia**



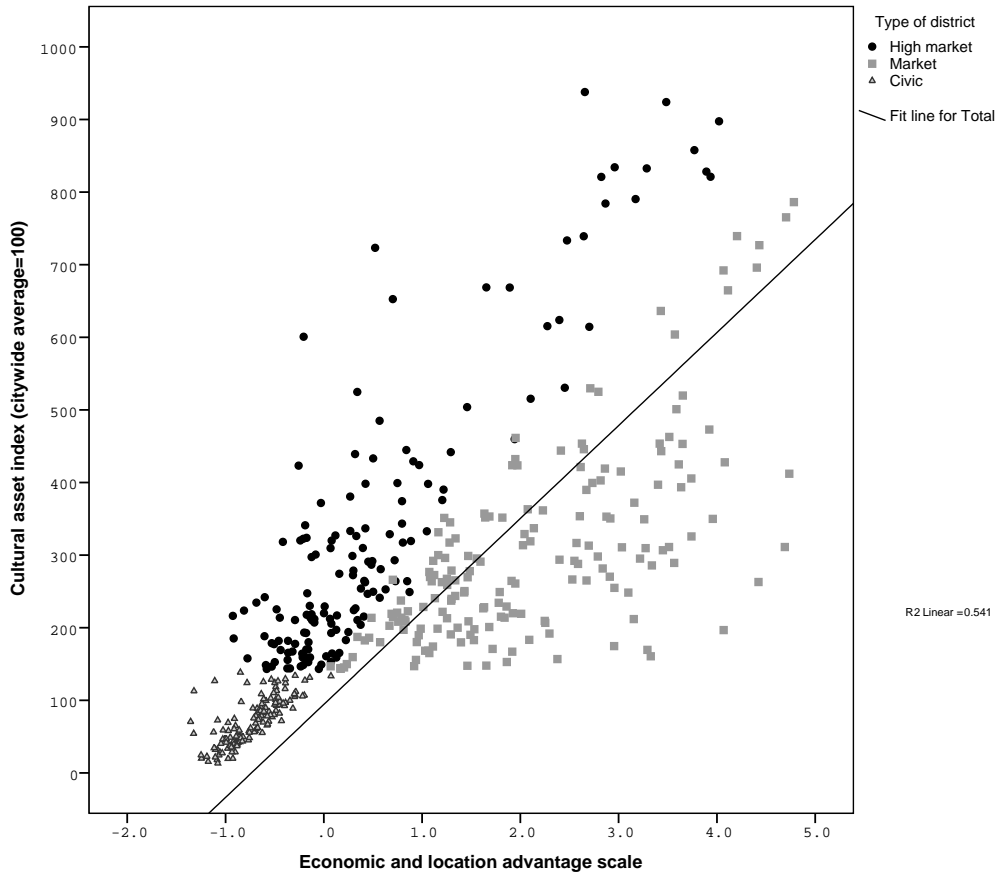
Source: SIAP

**FIGURE 4—Resident artist ratio, Philadelphia**



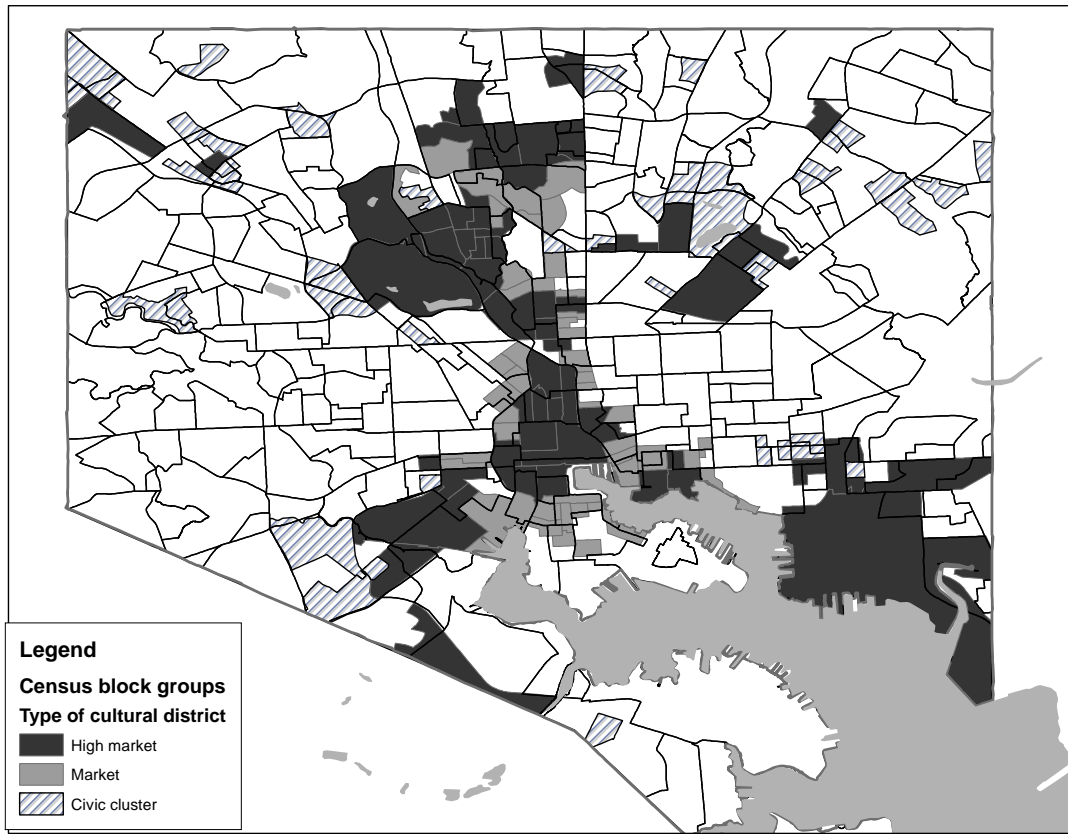
Source: SIAP

**FIGURE 5—Scatter plot of Cultural Asset Index with economic and location advantage scale**



Source: SIAP

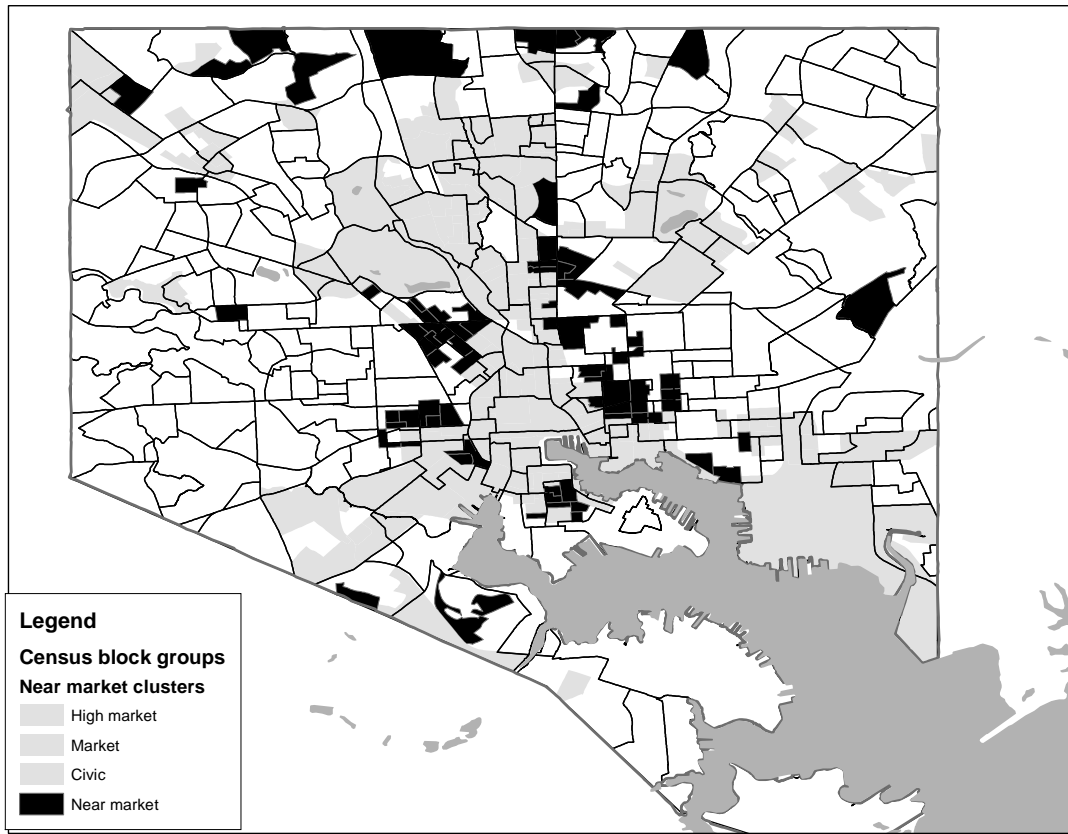
**FIGURE 6—Types of cultural districts, Baltimore**



Source: SIAP



**FIGURE 7—“Near market” districts, Baltimore**



Source: SIAP

## Appendix B.

### Research memo:

#### How does the composition of a cultural district influence its sustainability?

Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert  
University of Pennsylvania  
Social Impact of the Arts Project

November 2012

Our interest in the composition of cultural districts builds upon the emerging literature on the role that clusters play in industry production. Cluster economic theory expands on the literature on post-industrial trends in “flexible production.” This work has demonstrated that in the wake of “vertical disintegration” related producers in particular industries choose to locate near one another. Piore and Sabel, for example, in the first statement of the flexible production paradigm, noted that the industrial districts of Northern Italy were characterized by many small, specialized firms that work together through an intense set of social networks. In Japan, using a slightly different model, independent automobile component producers located near the major assembly facilities.<sup>1</sup>

In the United States, California’s Silicon Valley stands as the exemplar of the concentration of independent firms and provides an excellent parallel for the creative sector. First, the concentration of producers is associated with the availability of trained labor. Stanford and other universities train the computer engineers and other personnel necessary to develop computers. Second, the very concentration of individuals and firms in one location spurs a cross-pollination of ideas and innovation. This leads to the development of “a milieu of innovation,” which allows the initial comparative benefit of a particular place to reproduce itself. “What defines the specificity of a milieu of innovation is its capacity to generate synergy, that is, the added value resulting not from the cumulative effect of the elements present in the milieu but from their interaction.”<sup>2</sup>

Clusters, a dynamic and vulnerable feature of urban form, are characterized by multiplicity and dispersion across a region. Southern California, for example, is composed of multiple discrete industrial districts, each of which contains numerous individual establishments seeking the economic benefits of agglomeration. In the high-technology industrial districts of Greater Los Angeles, Allen J. Scott has documented “a peculiar leap-frog dynamic”—essentially a scenario of growth and decomposition—that characterizes their historic pattern of urbanization. This dynamic is attributed to the interplay of land prices, wages, transaction costs, and agglomeration economies in the growing metropolis.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel, *The Second Industrial Divide: Possibilities for Prosperity* (New York: Basic Books, 1984).

<sup>2</sup> Manuel Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

Emerging sectors of small-scale industries “much given to network forms of interaction” are especially vulnerable and, according to Scott, deserving of policy attention.

[T] heir future success will most likely depend ... on their continued ability to form specialized industrial agglomerations and to reap the advantages of spatially dependent external economies. These external economies constitute an asset that is held jointly by all participants in the local economy. They accrue, of course, from individual efforts, talents, and skills; but they also exist as synergies that grow out of the forms of collective order that always characterize local industrial systems ... They are thus legitimately, if not inescapably, an object of public policy.<sup>3</sup>

The new economics of competition, therefore, suggest that a “supply-side” logic could be integrated into public policy to develop and leverage the creative sector. The focus of current economic development is on “demand-side” strategies—such as cultural facility, cultural district, and cultural tourism development—to stimulate downtown revitalization and regional economies. In fact, as Scott points out, the production of culture has become more and more concentrated in a set of localized clusters of firms and workers, while final products are channeled into “ever more spatially extended networks of consumption.” That is to say, in the cultural products industries, production is increasingly local, while consumption is increasingly global.<sup>4</sup>

Clusters are a form of spatial organization particularly well-suited to the creative sector, which has never been organized either as a single or a vertically-integrated industry. The arts, in fact, are inherently collective enterprises. Each individual artist is dependent on an array of services, personnel, audiences, and colleagues in order to produce his or her work.<sup>5</sup> We still know very little, however, about the geographical consequences of these interdependencies.

If the emphasis on the role of creative clusters in arts production were correct, we would expect that the composition of cultural clusters would have implications for their long-term success. Specifically, we could hypothesize two possible ways that composition would influence success:

- *Single-industry clusters.* In this case, similar producers and perhaps their suppliers would locate in a particular location, fostering growth by reducing transaction costs, disseminating innovation, and perhaps spurring competition.
- *Complex clusters.* In this case, the diversity of a cultural cluster could improve prospects for the long-term sustainability of a particular district. This might be a function of its location or perhaps the character of its built environment that attracts

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<sup>3</sup> Allen Scott, “High-technology Industrial Development in the San Fernando Valley and Ventura County: Observations on Economic Growth and the Evolution of Urban Form,” in Scott and E.W. Soja, *The City: Lost Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the 20th Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996).

<sup>4</sup> Allen Scott, *The Cultural Economy of Cities: Essays on the Geography of Image-Producing Industries* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Howard Becker, *Art Worlds* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982).

a variety of cultural resources. These districts might possess a level of resilience that single-purpose clusters lack. One could imagine a high level of turnover, but because the turnover hits different dimensions of the district at different times, the district survives even as its cast of characters changes.

There are several points to make about these hypotheses. Notably, they produce opposite conclusions. The first suggests that narrowly-defined or homogenous clusters would be more likely to demonstrate success, while the second suggests that diverse districts would be more successful.

Unfortunately, we are not in a position to test these hypotheses definitively. The level of data specificity for defining single-industry clusters, in particular, exceeds the current capacity of our data. However, in the case of Philadelphia, we can at least provide a first approximation of their relative fit with the empirical data. This is possible because in Philadelphia, we have measures of the cultural assets of census block groups that date back to 1997. Using these data, we can answer two questions:

(1) Does the success rate of particular cultural clusters vary with their composition? Here, we are interested simply in whether different categories of composition have statistically significant differences.

(2) Are homogeneous or complex cultural districts more successful over time?

Until now, we have used the term *success* as if it is an obvious concept. A full measure of success would entail a variety of qualitative and quantitative measures of growth, profitability, influence, and prestige of individual organizations and individuals and their aggregate impact.

As a starting point, however, we will examine two measures of the well-being of a cultural district. The first is the change in the density of its cultural resources. If a cluster were “successful,” we would imagine that over time it would attract additional resources.

The second measure examines changes in a block group’s cultural asset index rank. Here, rather than measuring success, we are more interested in failure. We ask whether the composition of a district influences the likelihood that a district will maintain a high asset score or whether it falls below the threshold of being a district.

To summarize, we want to examine whether the cultural composition of a block group has a statistically significant impact over time on its density of cultural assets and its cultural asset index rank. We also want to see *what kinds* of districts—complex or homogeneous—have higher rates of success. That is, how the composition of a cultural district influences its sustainability.

### **Change in density of cultural assets**

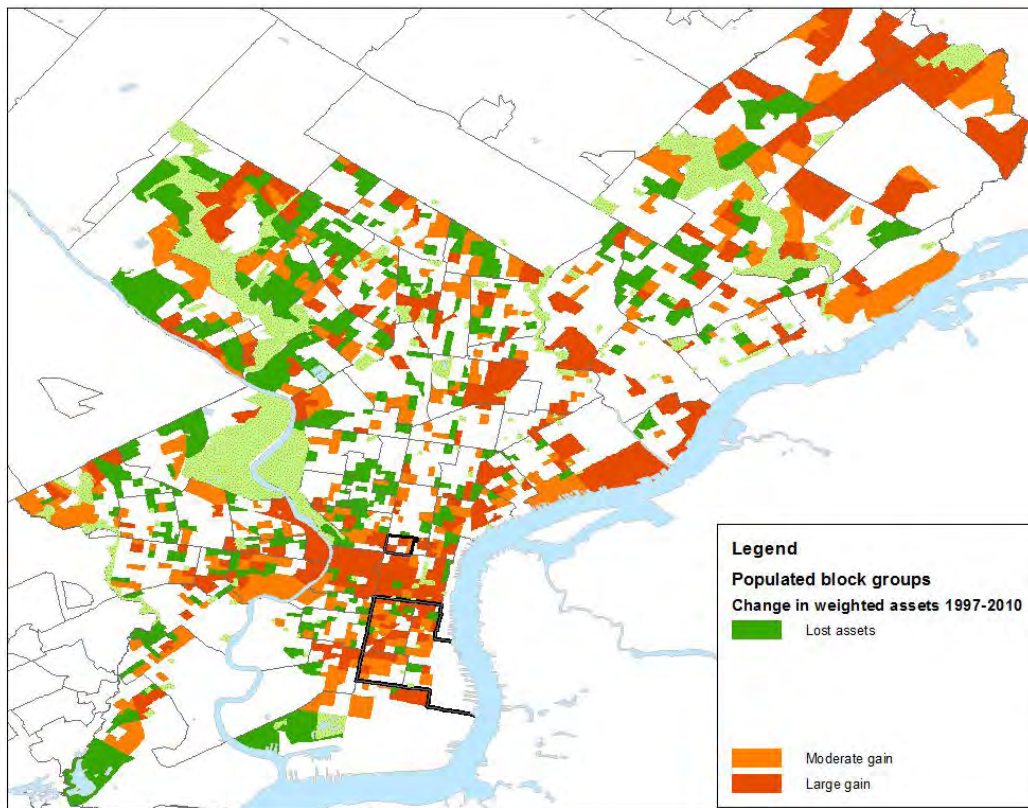
The indicator used here is based on the total number of cultural assets—the sum of all resident artists, nonprofit organizations, and for-profit firms—in a block group.<sup>6</sup> We present two sets of calculations: one is the simple sum of the three, the second is “weighted” to give the commercial and nonprofit firms three times the weight of individual artists. It seems fair that having an organization in a block group provides more of an asset than an individual resident artist. However, with no clear idea about *how* much more, we chose what we consider a conservative weight.

In Philadelphia between 1997 and 2010, complex block groups saw their asset count increase by 134 percent, from 9.4 to 22.2 per block group. If we weight the sum for organizations, the increase was 123 percent, from 24 to 38 assets per block group. Among the single-asset dominant clusters, the fastest growth was among commercial- and artist-dominant areas. The asset count for commercial-dominant areas increased from 1.6 to 3.5 or 114 percent over the period. Weighted, the increase was from 3.8 to 8.6 assets, an increase of 129 percent. For artist-dominant areas, the increase was from 1.6 to 4.0 assets, an increase of 150 percent. However, if we weight these numbers (which disadvantages artists), the increase was only 48 percent.

Nonprofit-dominant areas were the least dynamic set of cultural clusters. Their average number of assets increased only from .62 to 1.3 or 102 percent over the period. Weighted, their increase was only 80 percent.

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<sup>6</sup> For this analysis, we use only the counts of resources within a block group rather than the estimate of assets within one-quarter mile. This measure is more sensitive to changes over time in particular places, whereas the estimate of assets within a quarter-mile buffer is more stable across space and time.



**Change in cultural asset score, 1997-2010, Philadelphia**

Source: SIAP

The map of changes in net assets (weighted) suggests that over this period, areas with already high assets were more likely to gain, with Center City appearing to be the big winner. (In terms of SIAP case study districts, both South Philadelphia and Callowhill-Chinatown North increased their assets considerably during these years.)

In order to judge the unique contribution of composition to the change in cultural assets, we conducted a regression analysis in which the dependent variable was net change in number of assets between 1997 and 2010 (weighted); and the independent variables were the composition category, the cultural asset index rank of the block group in 1997, per capita income, and distance from Center City. All factors but the 1997 cultural asset score were statistically significant. When other variables were controlled, the complex block groups gained more assets between 1997 and 2010. Generally, the conclusions from the uncontrolled data are confirmed. Among the single-asset block groups, high commercial districts in 1997 gained the most assets and the nonprofit-dominant block groups gained the fewest.

<b>Composition 1997</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
<b>High complex</b>	27.949	2.552
<b>High commercial</b>	7.707	2.010
<b>High nonprofit</b>	3.889	1.987
<b>High artist</b>	5.463	1.790
<b>Moderate complex</b>	4.636	1.651
<b>Other</b>	5.366	1.579

**Change in number of cultural assets in block group, 1997-2010, by composition of cultural assets, controlling for other variables, Philadelphia.**

Source: SIAP

The composition of the cultural district clearly influenced its rate of change. Both the raw and weighted averages were statistically different from one another, and the composition of the cultural district in 1997 “explained” 14 percent of the variance in the change in number of assets (10 percent if we use the weighted figures). Most of the difference between categories separated the complex block groups from the single-dominant ones. The differences between the changes of commercial, artist, and nonprofit dominant groups were not statistically significant.

To answer our second question, these data seem to support the case for complexity. The complex block groups, although they began with a much larger number of assets, appeared to increase that gap between 1997 and 2010. Although, far from definitive, these results suggest that a complex cultural ecology with a variety of different assets improves the likelihood that a district will experience robust growth of its cultural sector over time.

**Change in cultural asset index rank**

Our second test of the impact of composition focuses on change in the relative rank of a block group on our cultural asset index between 1997 and 2010. Here, we ask if a block group’s rising or falling in rank is related to its cultural composition at the outset. We divide Philadelphia’s block groups into six equal groups (sextiles) by their 1997 CAI rank and measure their change in rank between 1997 and 2010. For example, if a block group was in the second highest rank and fell to the fourth highest, it would receive a score of -2. In the reverse situation, it would gain 2. Obviously, if a block group is classified in either rank 1 or rank 6, it can move only in one direction. Because of this, we control for a block group’s rank in 1997.

Composition 1997	Cultural asset index 1997						
	Lowest	2	3	4	5	Highest	Total
<b>Complex</b>	--	--	--	--	--	0.00	0.00
<b>Commercial-dominant</b>	--	--	-0.08	-0.60	-0.43	-0.50	-0.47
<b>Nonprofit-dominant</b>	--	--	-0.22	-1.42	-1.31	-0.20	-1.14
<b>Artist-dominant</b>	--	--	-0.09	-1.19	-0.52	-0.39	-0.53
<b>Above average assets</b>	--	--	--	-0.97	-0.77	-0.31	-0.66

**Change in cultural asset index rank 1997-2010, by composition and asset index 1997, Philadelphia.**

Source: SIAP

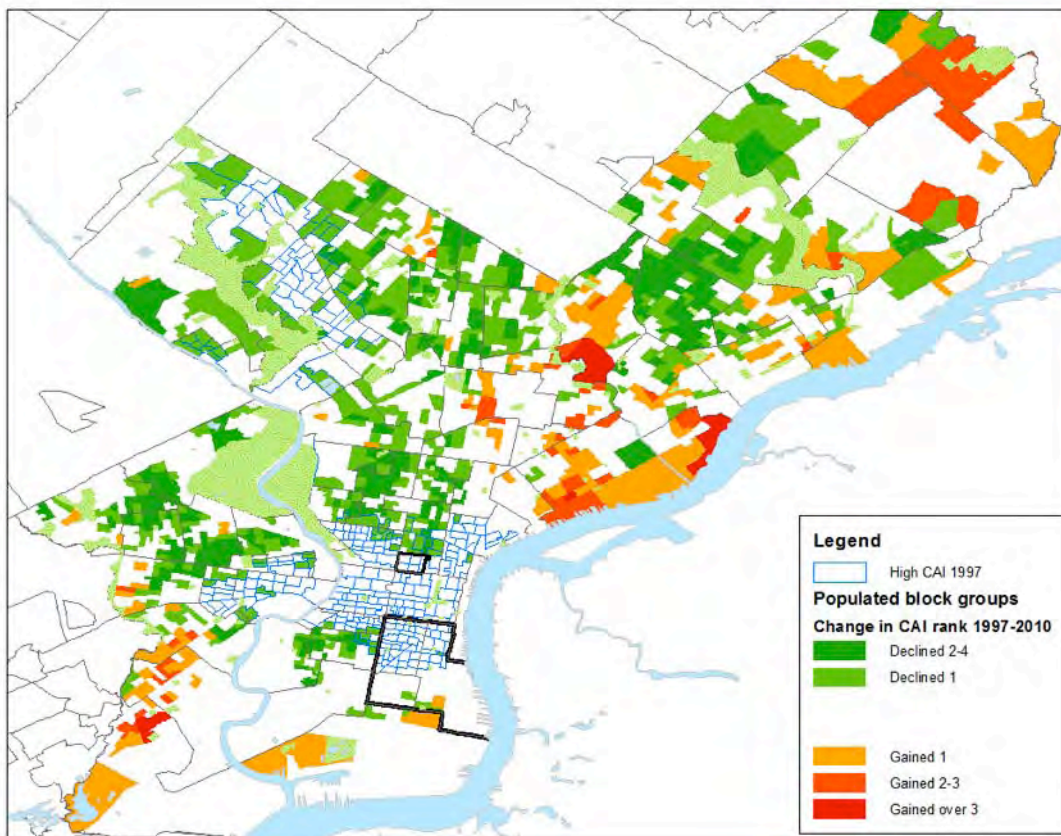
Because complex block groups were all in the top rank, this is our major point of comparison. As the data show, none of the complex block groups in the top 1997 rank declined; all were still in the top rank in 2010. Among the single-asset dominant block groups in the top rank, the declines were substantial. On average, the commercial- and artist-dominant block groups fell one-half rank, while the nonprofit-dominant block groups fell over one rank.

If we look at the data more generally, we see that the largest declines across the city were in block groups in the fourth sextile, that is, those just above the median. Over the 13-year period, these areas on average fell by more than one rank, by far the largest decline. The most substantial declines were among the nonprofit-dominant block groups in this rank.

Indeed, the data underline the two worlds of nonprofit arts during this period. The nonprofit-dominant block groups with the highest asset scores, typically in Center City, gained resources during this period. Those with moderate CAI scores, often in African American neighborhoods, lost resources.

This perception is reinforced by the map of increases and declines in CAI rank. The block groups in the highest 1997 CAI rank are marked in blue. These block groups, literally, could only move in one direction—down. Yet, very few of them did so. For the most part, these sections of the city were much more likely to have a complex cultural ecology and were able to maintain their dominance citywide.





**Change in cultural asset index rank, 1997-2010, Philadelphia.**

Source: SIAP

The areas that suffered the most substantial declines were in North Philadelphia, Germantown, East Mount Airy, West Philadelphia, and Point Breeze. For anyone familiar with the social geography of the city, it is clear that these are predominantly African American neighborhoods. The near Northeast—which experienced the most rapid ethnic transition during these years—also lost a substantial number of resources.

This analysis is consistent with that of net change in assets. Both support the conclusion that block groups with a complex cultural ecology are more likely to retain their status, while those with a single strength are more likely to suffer a loss of resources (or at least a smaller gain) and a decline in overall position in the citywide cultural sector.

This analysis is hardly a perfect test of our hypotheses. It represents a first approximation of the relationship of the composition of a cultural district to its sustainability. In the future, we will test alternative operationalizations of both the dependent and the independent variables. But this analysis has staked out the set of questions that need to be answered as we move forward.

## Appendix C. Dimensions of social well-being and data sources, November 2012

Sources of data	American Community Survey 2005-09	Vital Statistics	PHMC Community Health Survey	Philadelphia Uniform Crime Reports	General Social Survey	Philadelphia School District	IRS nonprofit data	SIAP	BLS	USPS	Phila L&I	Philadelphia Public Library	Philadelphia City Commissioner(?)	PolicyMap
Dimension of social welfare														
Material standard of living	Income measures, wealth, poverty													
Personal security			Risk of violence	Crime rates										
Educational achievement & opportunity	Educational attainment, dropouts					Truancy, proficiency scores								
Work activity	LFP, unemployment, industry and occupation distribution, low-wage jobs, commuting time													
Housing	Ownership, housing costs, age of housing, housing value									Vacancy		Code violations		Percent of properties that is underwater with their mortgage; foreclosure filings
Social connection	Geographic mobility, housing tenure, nonfamily HHS		Neighborliness, sense of belonging, civic participation				Presence of nonprofits	Cultural resources & participation				Library cards		
Health		Birth rate, teen pregnancy, low-birth weight, prenatal care, infant deaths	Health behavior (smoking, obesity, exercise), Morbidity, Access to health care and insurance											
Political voice													Voter registration, turnout(?)	
Environment														Location in/near a flood zone, wetland or water body; located in/near a brownfield or Superfund site

Appendix D

# Social inclusion in Philadelphia: A multi-dimensional approach

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Mark Stern

University of Pennsylvania

October 2012

# Capabilities Approach

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- Social well-being is about:
  - The *opportunity* to pursue a life worth living
  - Actually being able to achieve that life
- Most empirical work has been at the *national level*.
- Increasing attention to multiple dimensions
  - Eurostat report on social inclusion
  - OECD report on social justice
  - Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress (Sen/Stiglitz)

# A neighborhood approach to social inclusion

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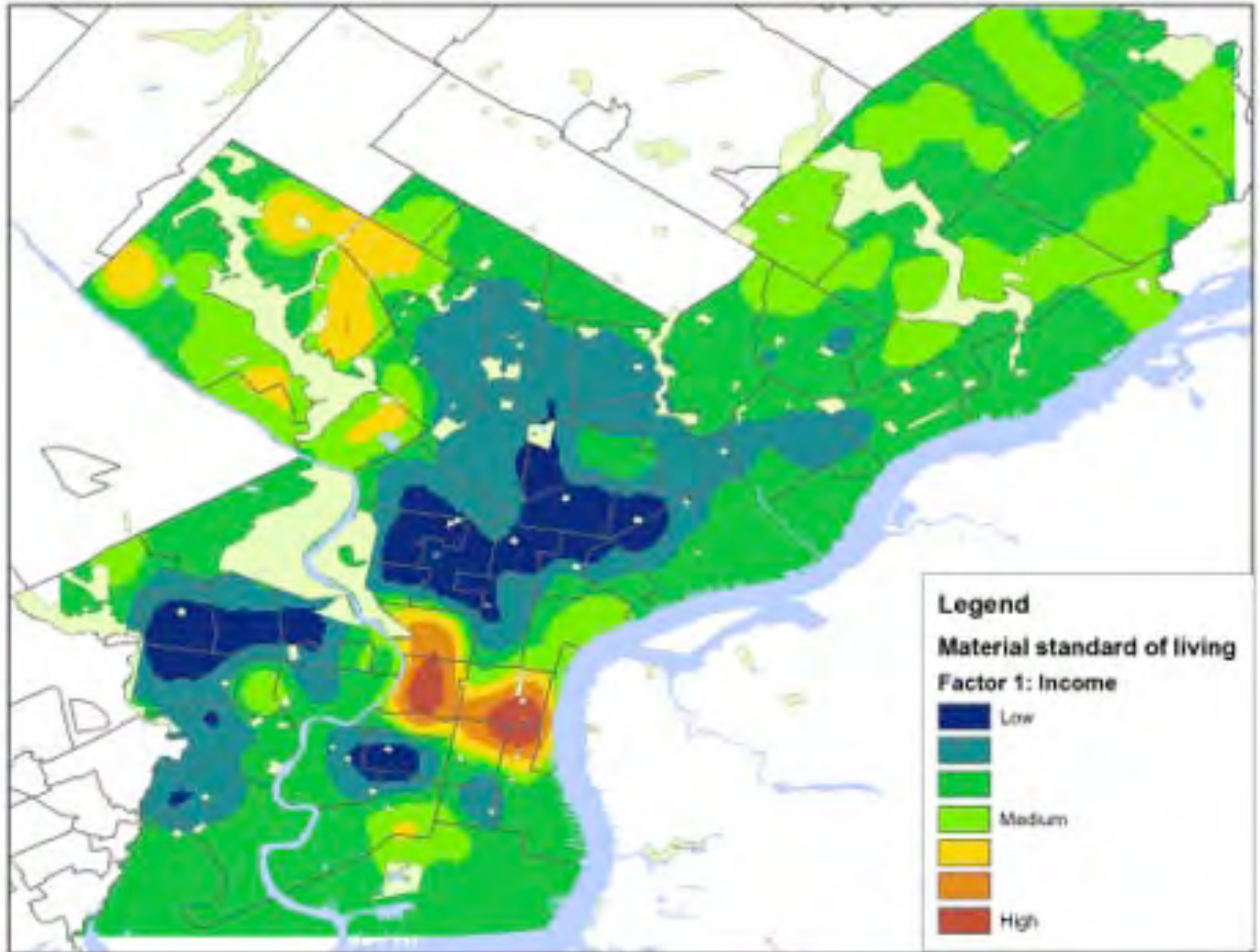
- National-level data tends to focus on government policy and excludes informal and civic conditions
- Neighborhoods matter: the assets and liabilities of one's neighborhood influence one's opportunities and ability to achieve

# Nine dimensions of social inclusion

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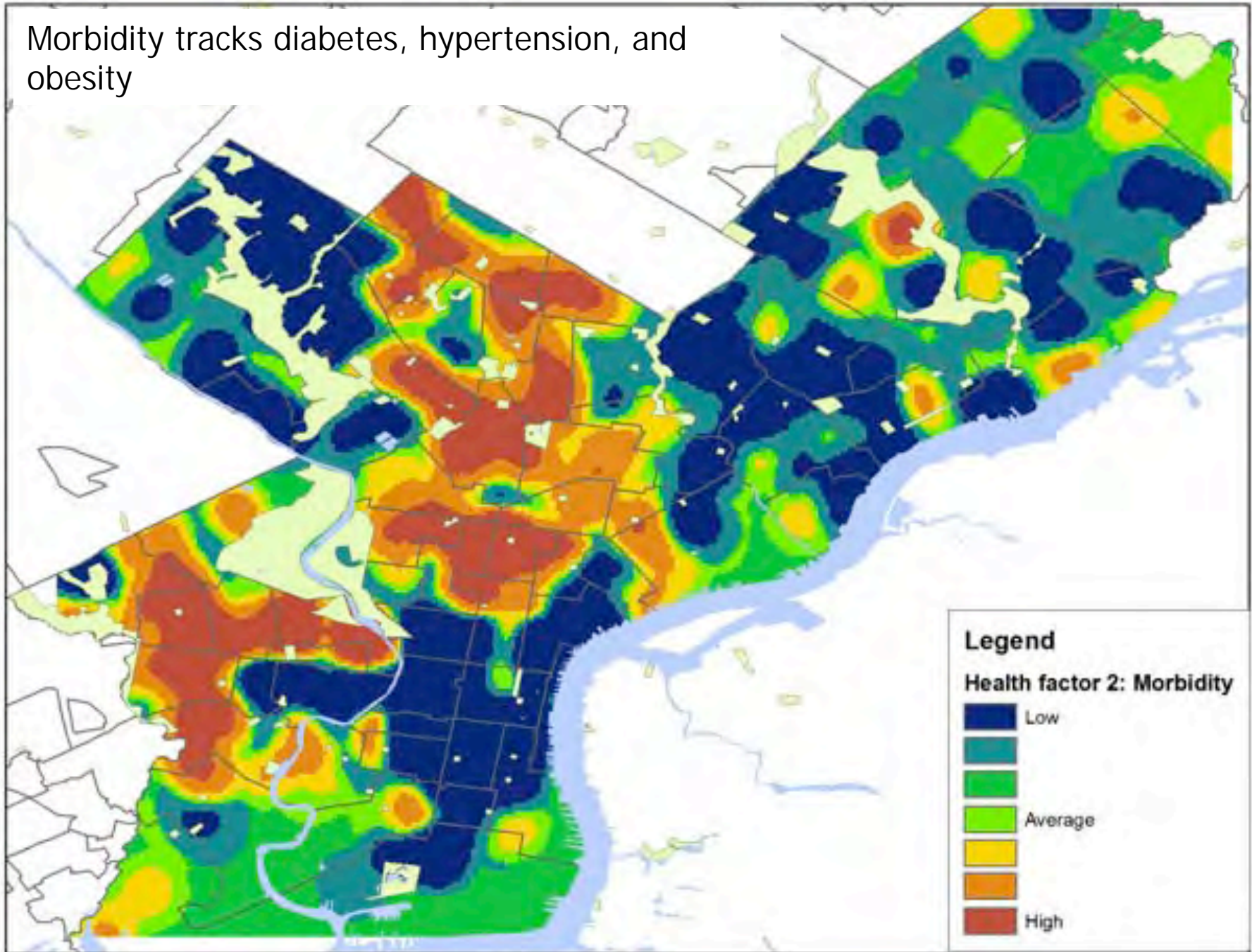
- Material standard of living: income and inequality
- Health: mortality, morbidity, and access
- Education: attainment, achievement, and access to quality
- Work activity: employment security, satisfaction, safety
- Housing: quality and affordability
- Political voice: voting and participation
- Social connection: institutional structure and face-to-face relations
- Environment: threats and assets
- Insecurity: physical security and crime

# Starting point: material standard of living



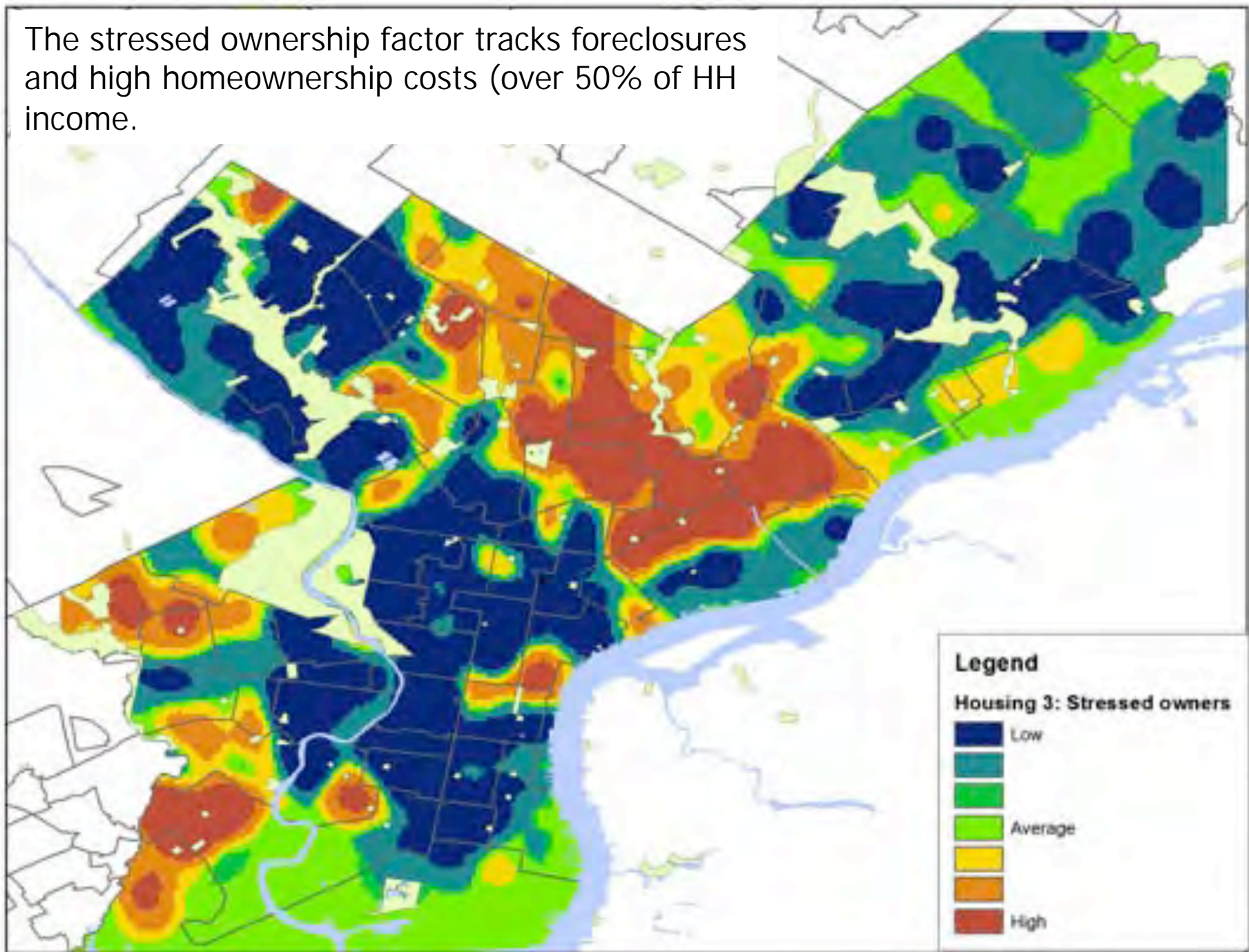


Morbidity tracks diabetes, hypertension, and obesity

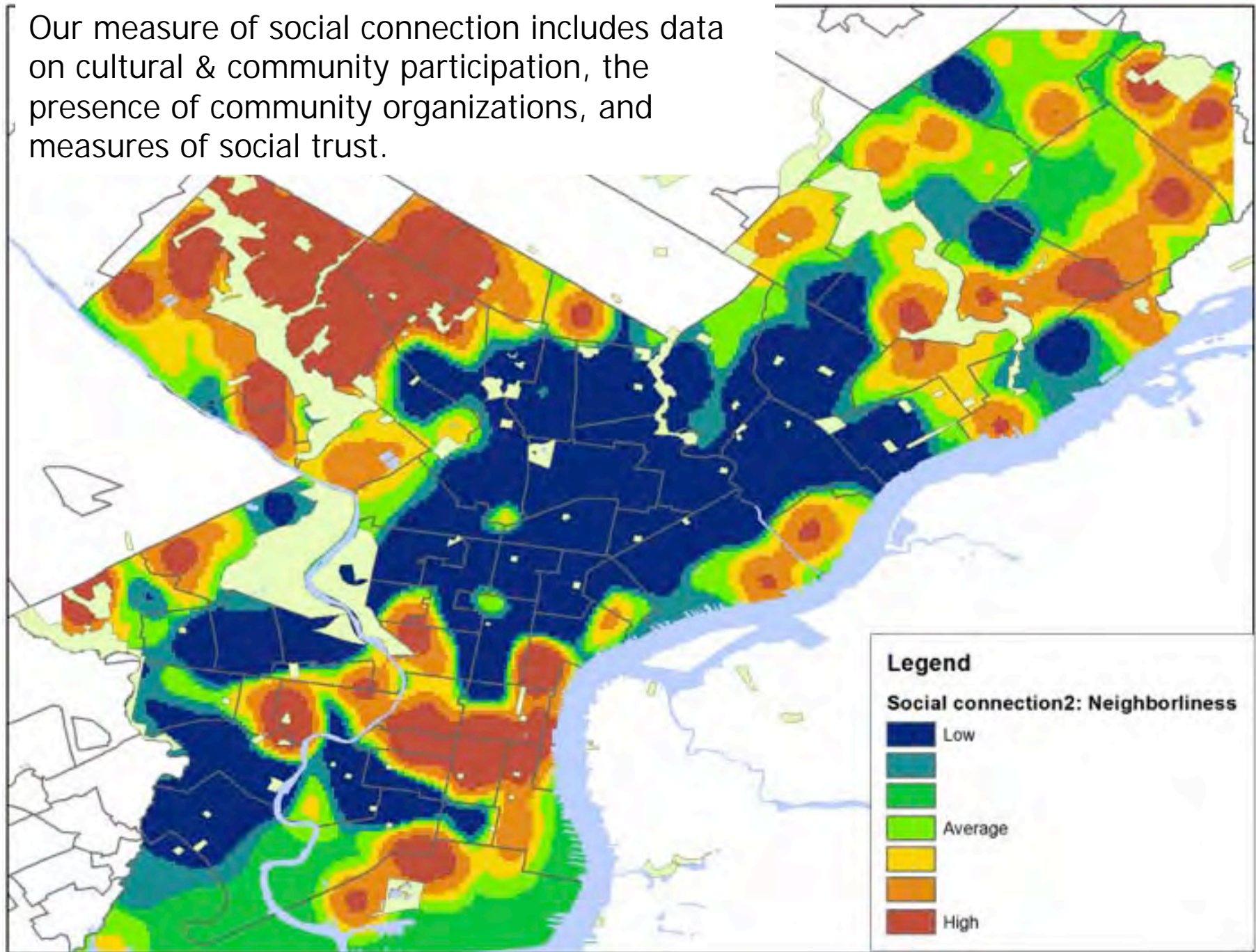




The stressed ownership factor tracks foreclosures and high homeownership costs (over 50% of HH income).

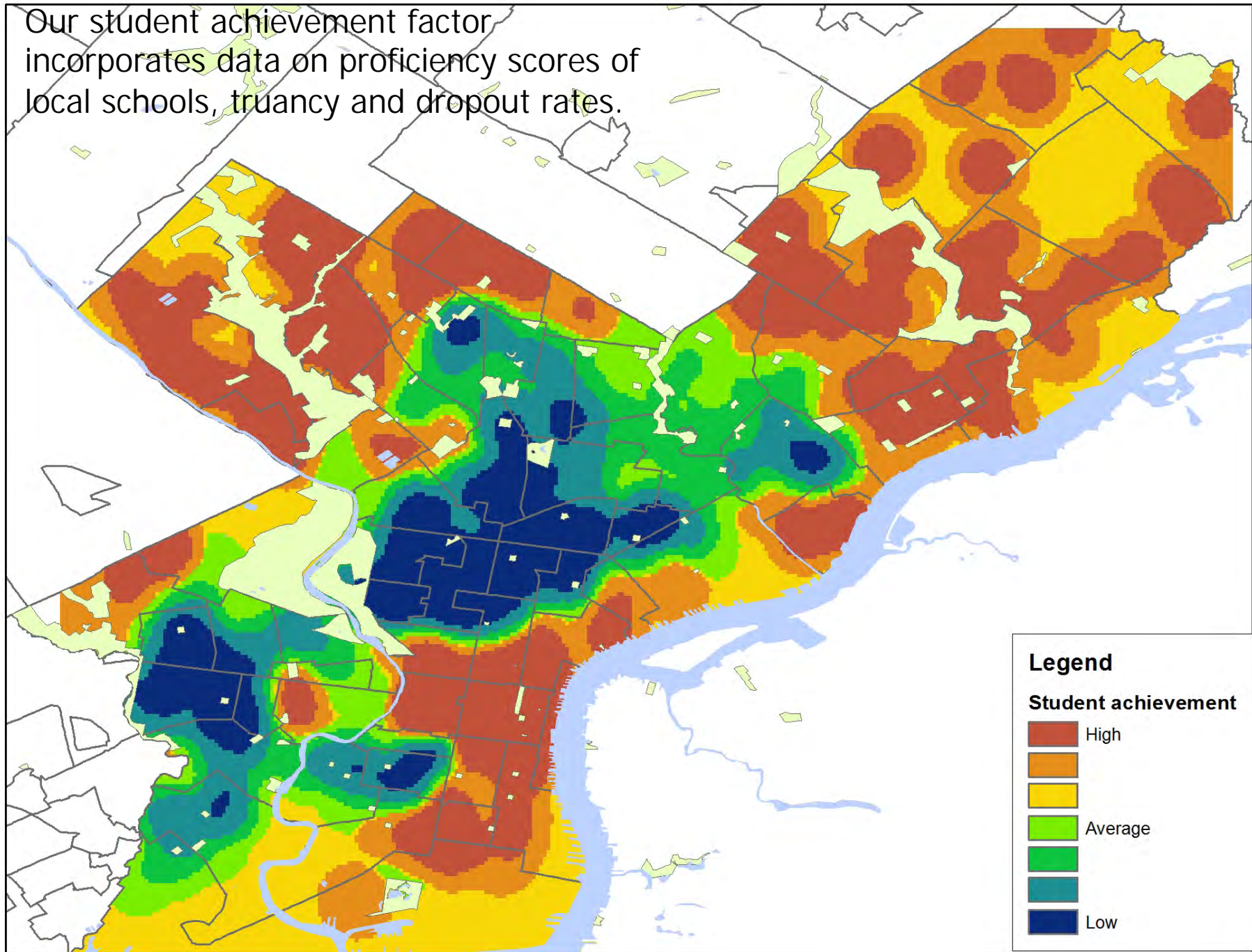


Our measure of social connection includes data on cultural & community participation, the presence of community organizations, and measures of social trust.

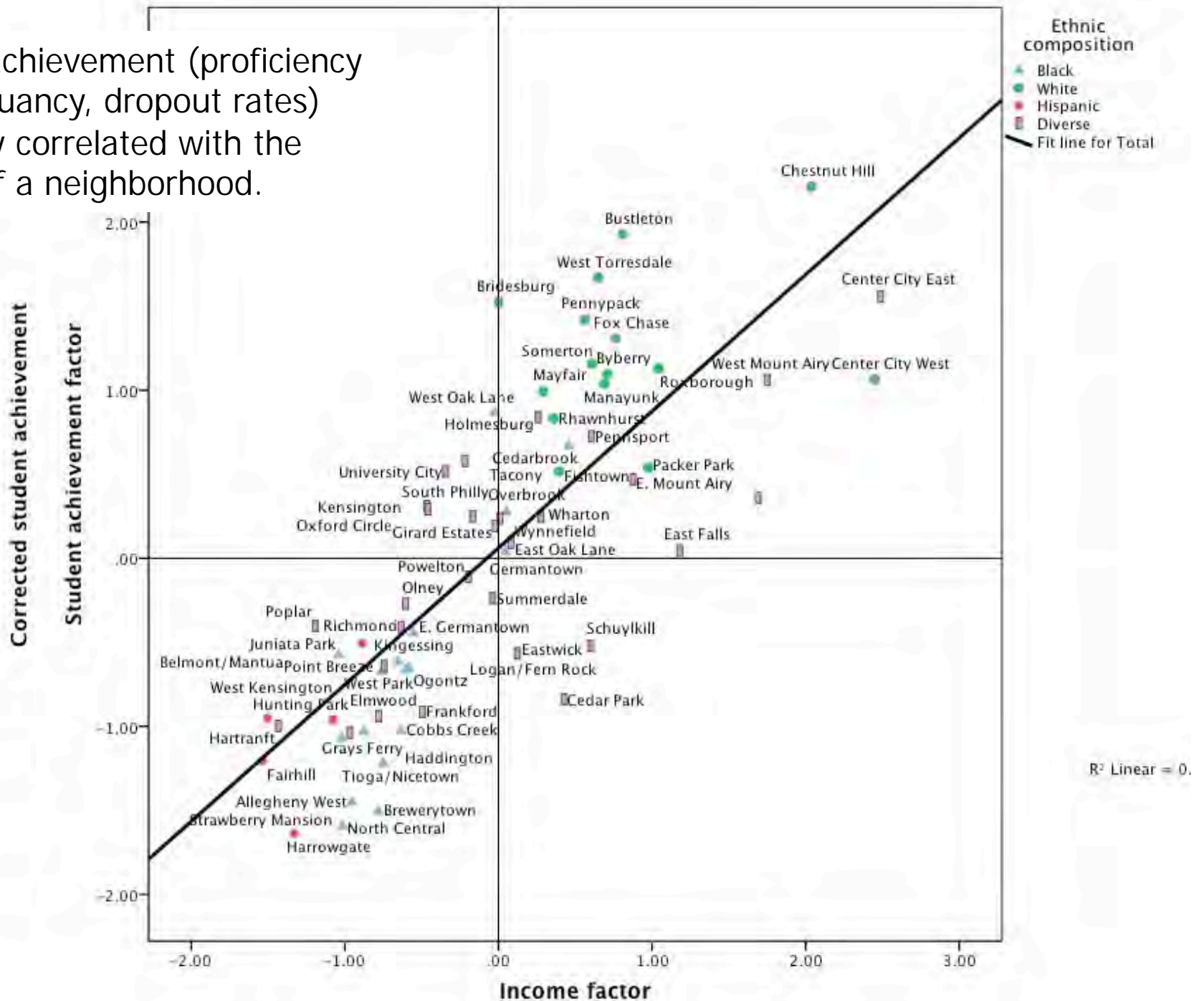




Our student achievement factor incorporates data on proficiency scores of local schools, truancy and dropout rates.

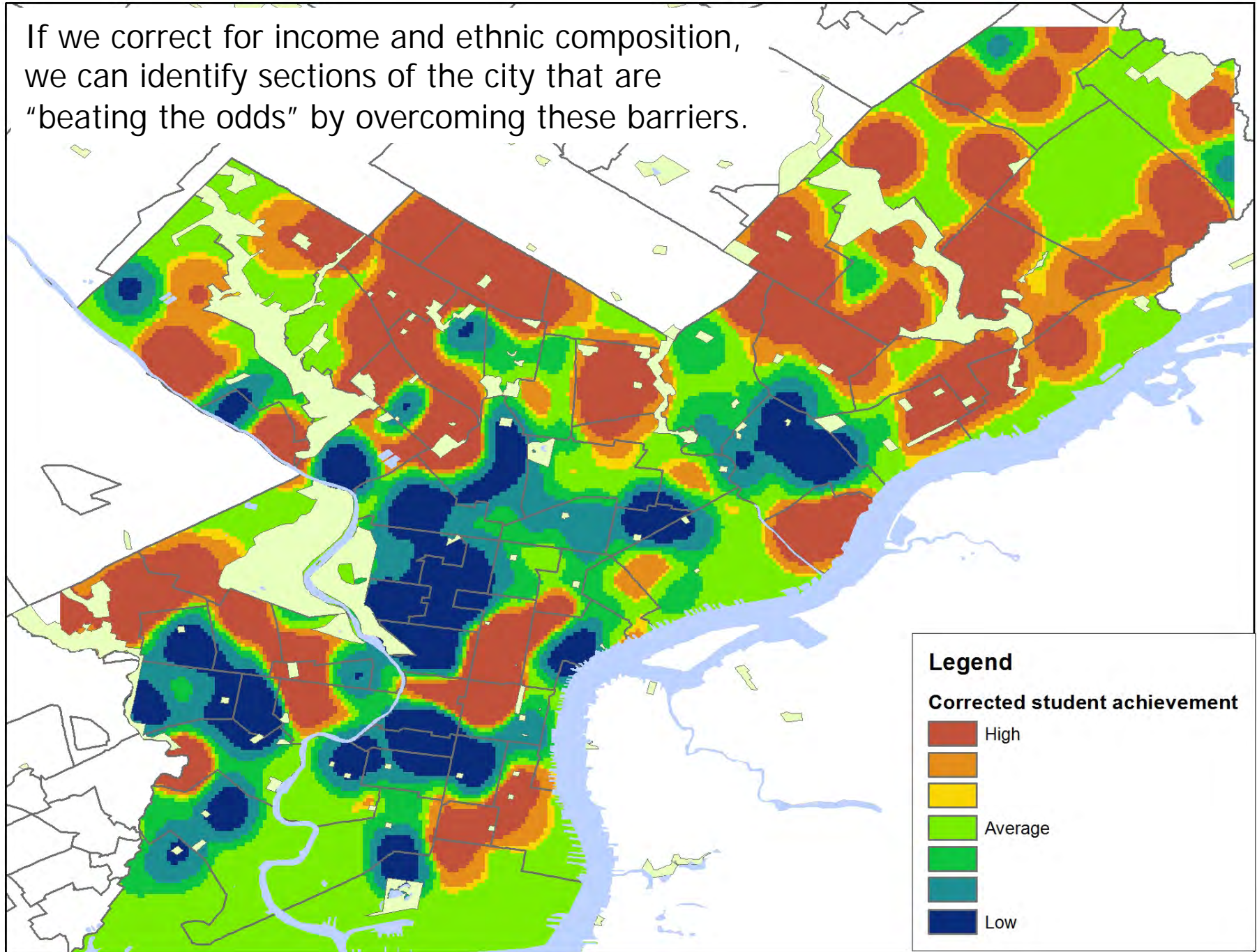


Student achievement (proficiency scores, truancy, dropout rates) are highly correlated with the income of a neighborhood.





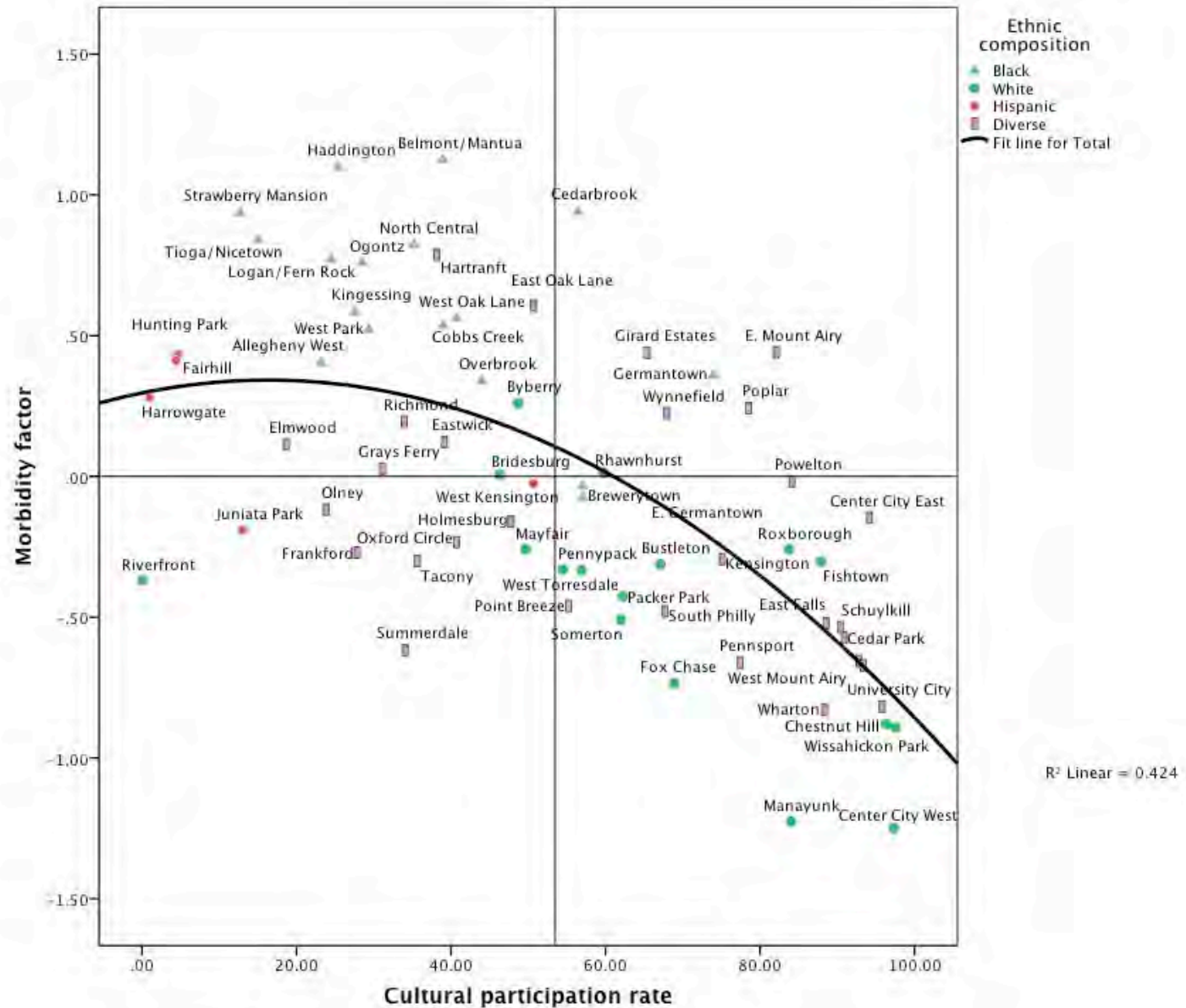
If we correct for income and ethnic composition, we can identify sections of the city that are "beating the odds" by overcoming these barriers.



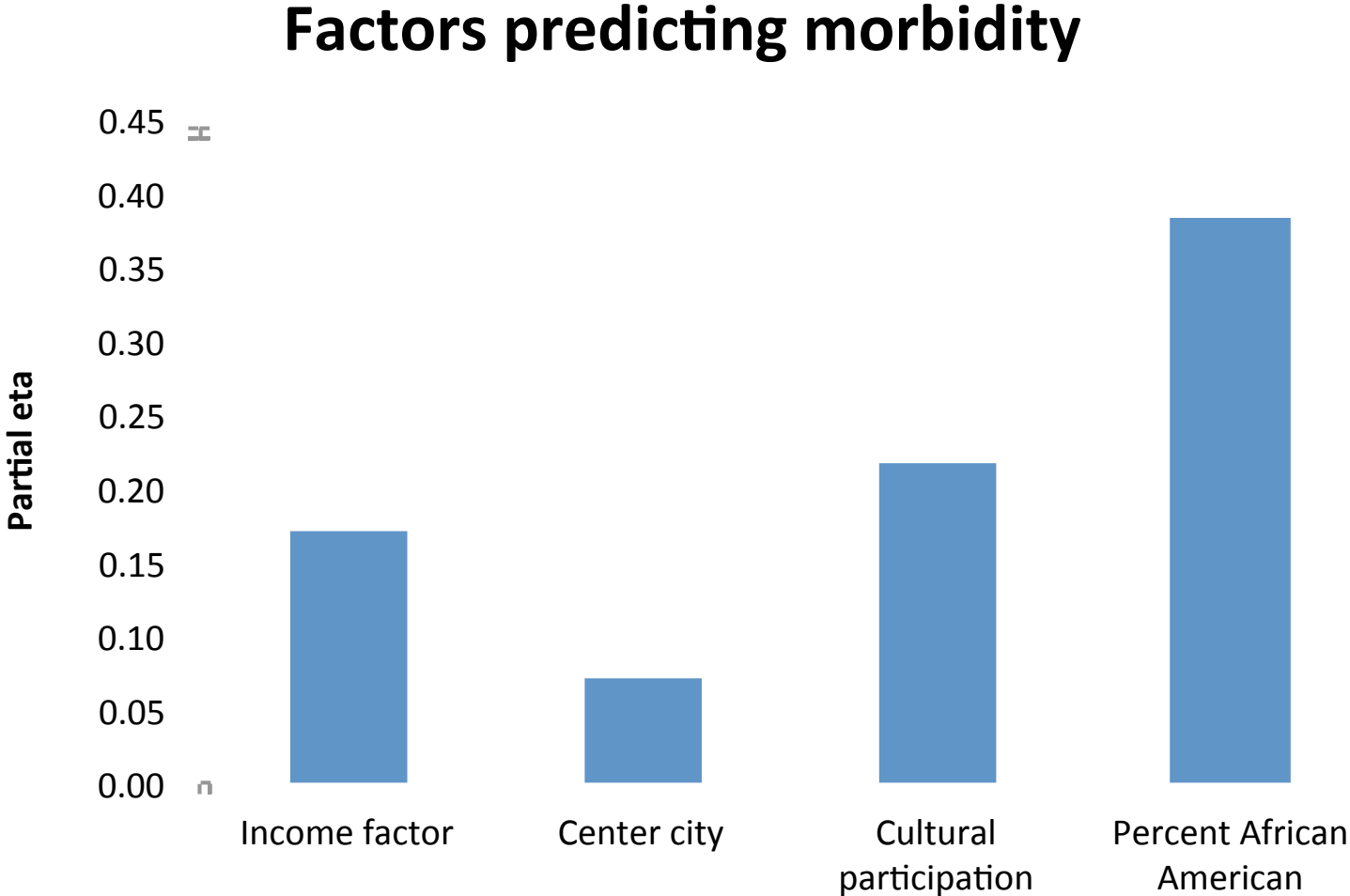


# Morbidity and cultural participation

Morbidity (diabetes, hypertension, obesity) is strongly related to cultural participation



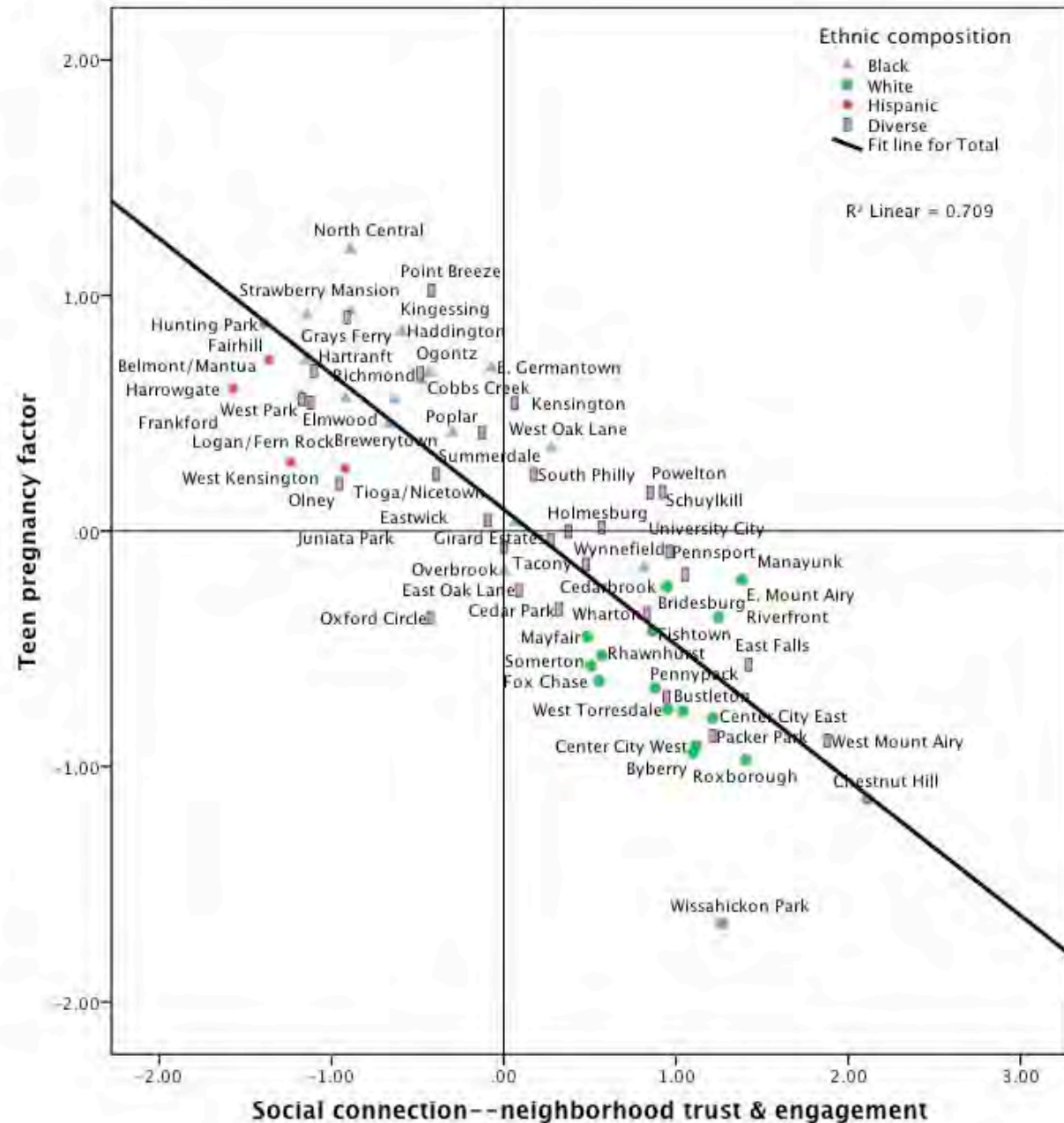
Using multivariate analysis, we found that cultural participation had a strong influence on morbidity even controlling for the income and ethnic composition of a census tract.





# Teen pregnancy and neighborhood trust

Another health related dimension—which focuses on teen pregnancy and lack of prenatal care—is also strongly related to our measure of neighborhood trust and engagement. This relationship is statistically significant even when we control for income and ethnicity



## **Appendix E—SIAP blogs**

### **ArtPlace Blog re Creative Assets Map, Philadelphia PA:**

- “Beyond Livability,” submitted December 12, 2011
- “Three Keys to Creative Placemaking,” submitted April 16, 2012
- “Sustaining ‘natural’ cultural districts,” posted August 11, 2012

### **Americans for the Arts ARTSblog:**

- “Rethinking Social Impact: “We Can’t Talk About Social Well-Being Without the Arts & Culture,” posted May 1, 2012
- “The Arts, Culture, & Social Well-Being,” posted May 3, 2012

## **Beyond Livability (ArtPlace blog)**

**By Mark J. Stern, December 2011**

One of the major inspirations of the Our Town and ArtPlace grants has been the enhancement of *livability*. On a practical level, this focus is part of a strategy to link cultural funding more closely with wider initiatives of the Federal government in the areas of sustainable development, smart growth, and transit-oriented development.

To the extent that livability is a policy perspective, it is anchored in the *livability principles* adapted by Partnership for Sustainable Communities created by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT), and the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 2009. These principles include:

**Provide more transportation choices.** Develop safe, reliable, and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote public health.

**Promote equitable, affordable housing.** Expand location- and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

**Enhance economic competitiveness.** Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers, as well as expanded business access to markets.

**Support existing communities.** Target federal funding toward existing communities—through strategies like transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling—to increase community revitalization and the efficiency of public works investments and safeguard rural landscapes.

**Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.** Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding, and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.

**Value communities and neighborhoods.** Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe, and walkable neighborhoods—rural, urban, or suburban.

Yet, the focus on livability should be seen as a starting point, not the final goal of creative place-making. The most significant shortcoming of livability as a perspective is its relative silence on issues of social justice and inclusion. Although livability should improve the lives of *all* Americans, we must be mindful that for the past generation, private markets and public policy have directed a disproportionate share of social and economic benefits toward a small, privileged part of the population. If livability improves all of our lives without specifically focusing on the harm done to the lives the poorest and socially excluded Americans, it will serve to preserve social injustice and exclusion even if it achieves these goals.

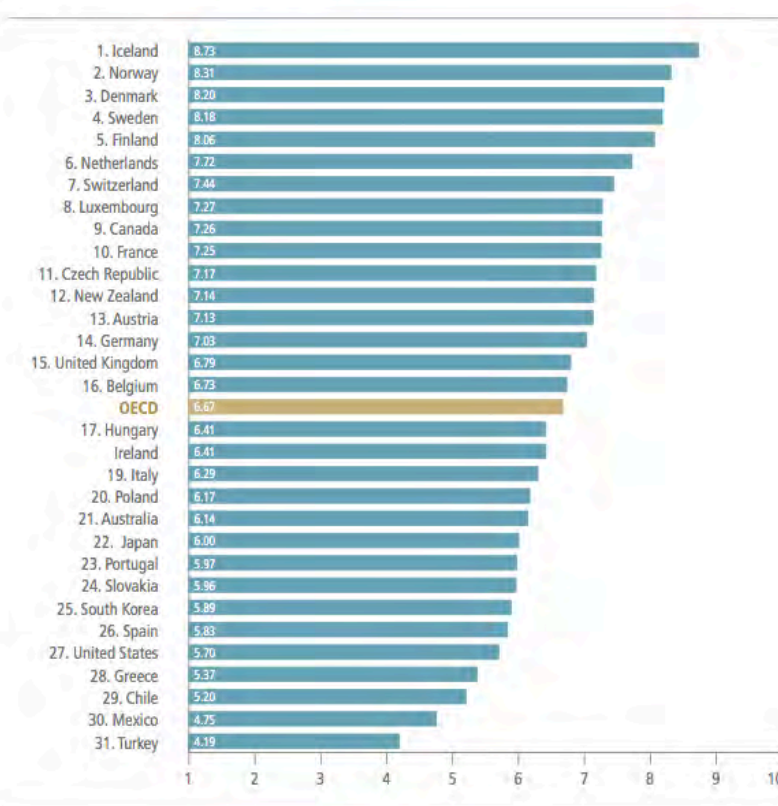
Fortunately, there are many efforts afoot internationally that provide guidance in *incorporating a social justice perspective into livability*. In 2009, the European Commission issued a study of poverty and social exclusion in the European Community based on a multidimensional view of social well-being. This perspective was amplified in the Report by the Commission on the

Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress in 2010. That report identified the following dimensions for inclusion in a more comprehensive measure of social well-being:

- i. Material living standards (income, consumption and wealth);
- ii. Health;
- iii. Education;
- iv. Personal activities including work
- v. Political voice and governance;
- vi. Social connections and relationships;
- vii. Environment (present and future conditions);
- viii. Insecurity, of an economic as well as a physical nature

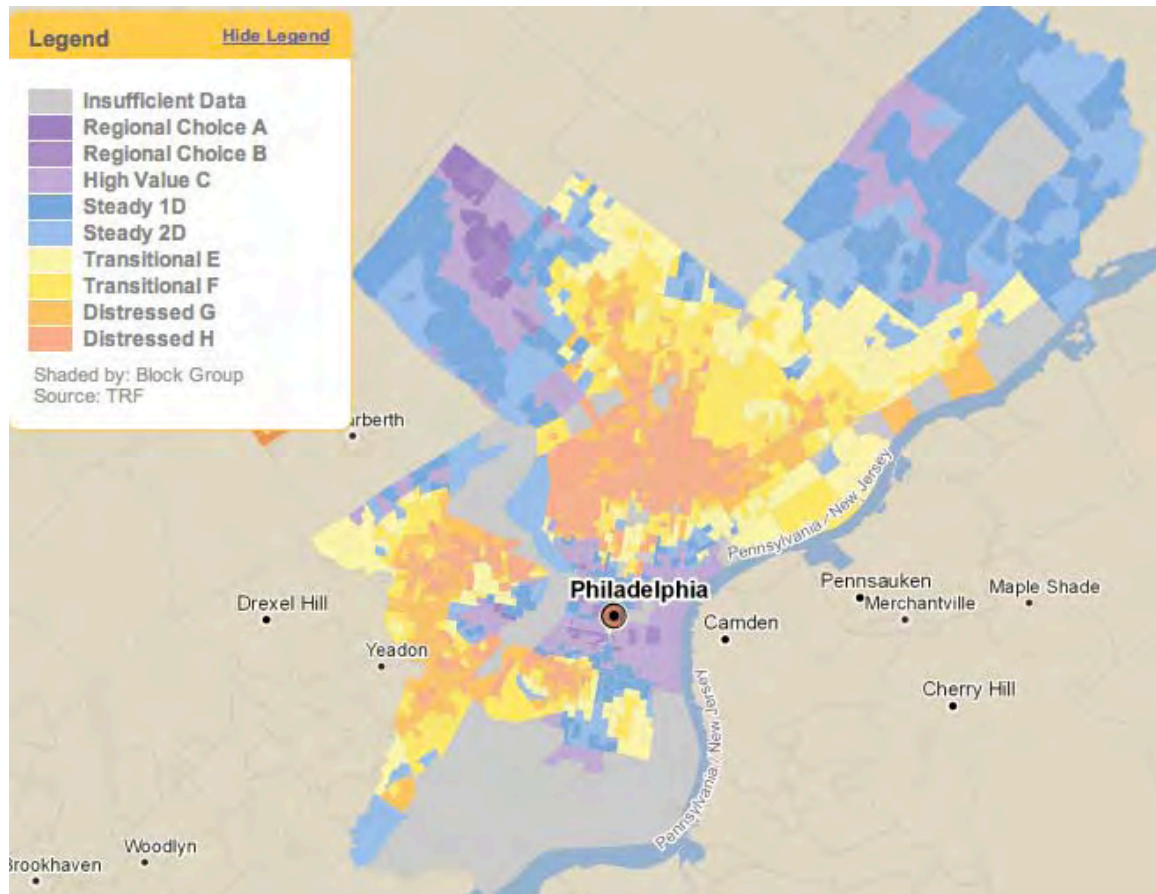
Along similar lines, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recently released a study of social justice in its member nations that underlined the relative failure of the United States. Of the 31 member nations, the US ranked twenty-seventh, better only than Turkey, Mexico, Chile, and Greece.

Figure 1a: Social Justice (weighted index)



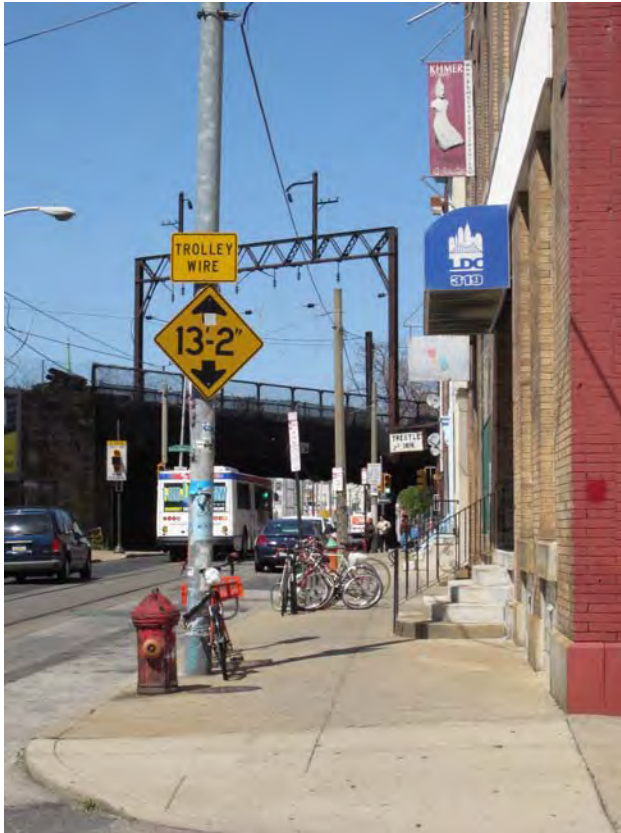
As part of the Philadelphia cultural mapping project—a collaboration of The Reinvestment Fund, the City of Philadelphia, and the University of Pennsylvania—we plan to develop a livability index for the city that goes beyond current scholarship in two respects. First, it will draw on these international examples by using a definition of livability that explicitly incorporates issues of social inclusion and social justice. Second, it will develop these measures not only for the city as a whole, but also for its neighborhoods. During the spring semester, Ira Goldstein of TRF and

Mark Stern of the University of Pennsylvania will be teaching an Urban Studies class at Penn that will develop the first version of this index. Our hope is that we will develop a social inclusion/livability index that will complement TRF's market value analysis (MVA). MVA combines a variety of data on housing markets with qualitative observation to categorize the city's neighborhoods. These data can then be used to identify emerging problems and to match policy initiatives with the specific challenges faced by neighborhoods. We expect the livability/social inclusion index to provide another way of understanding the problems faced by Philadelphia's neighborhoods and the types of efforts by government, business, and civil society that can address them.



## Three Keys to Creative Placemaking (ArtPlace blog)

By Mark J Stern, April 16, 2012



CultureBlocks is a collaboration between The Reinvestment Fund (TRF), the City of Philadelphia's Office of Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy (OACCE), and the University of Pennsylvania Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP). Its purpose is to develop a web-based tool for displaying Philadelphia's cultural assets in ways that is useful to artists and cultural organizations, public officials, philanthropies, development professionals, and the general public. In addition, the collaboration is analyzing the ways in which the arts connect to other dimensions of social well-being in Philadelphia.

ArtPlace asked Mark Stern of SIAP what he thinks are the three keys to creative placemaking. Here are his thoughts:

SIAP views creative placemaking as primarily a bottom-up process in which artists, cultural organizations, commercial firms, and cultural participants focus their efforts in particular neighborhoods. We use the term "natural" cultural district to connote that these processes begin at the grassroots, rather than being imposed on a neighborhood from outside. "Natural," however, can be misleading, because these districts are only successful thanks to the concerted efforts of local residents and workers and their ability to link their neighborhood to the rest of the city and metropolitan area.

Our research has demonstrated three important contributors to successful cultural clusters.

1. *Geography matters.* “Natural” cultural districts are most likely to emerge in neighborhoods near, but not in, downtowns. They need to be close enough to regional centers so that they can benefit from density and transit, but not so close that they have to compete for space with more profitable businesses.

2. *Space matters.* We’ve discovered that the housing market in these districts has a unique set of characteristics. Generally speaking, as neighborhoods become more affluent, the percent of renters drops and the percent of owner-occupied dwellings increases. In “natural” cultural districts, this shift to owner-occupancy is slower. That is, they have more rental housing than their overall socio-economic status would predict. Obviously, these characteristics encourage the flows of people and activity that sustain the vibrancy of these districts.

3. *Diversity matters.* Over the years we’ve discovered that multiple forms of diversity characterize creative places. Years ago, we discovered by chance that concentrations of cultural assets were associated with higher than average poverty *and* higher numbers of professionals and college-educated residents. We call these *pov-prof* neighborhoods. “Natural” cultural districts are also more likely to be ethnically diverse than other parts of the city. Finally, we’ve identified a household dimension to diversity. These districts are more likely to have concentrations of young adults and what the Census Bureau characterizes as “non-family households” (persons living alone, roommates, “persons of the opposite sex sharing living quarters” or POSSL-Q’s, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender couples). These different flows of diversity reinforce and cross-cut one another, encouraging innovation, tolerance, and sometimes conflict.

Many years ago, the urbanist Jane Jacobs noted the importance of diversity for successful urban places. Yet, she worried, as well, about what she called the “self destruction of diversity.” Multi-dimensional diversity promotes our most successful neighborhoods, but their very success increases competition for space and uses. Ultimately, the most profitable businesses and well-off residents tend to drive out the very diversity that made the district successful.

The arts are a critical force for promoting urban vibrancy, but without wise public policies, the vibrancy we see in many “natural” cultural districts today may disappear tomorrow. Thus, as we celebrate the positive aspects of creative placemaking, we need to treat these districts as *vulnerable habitats* that need wise stewardship if they are to flourish.

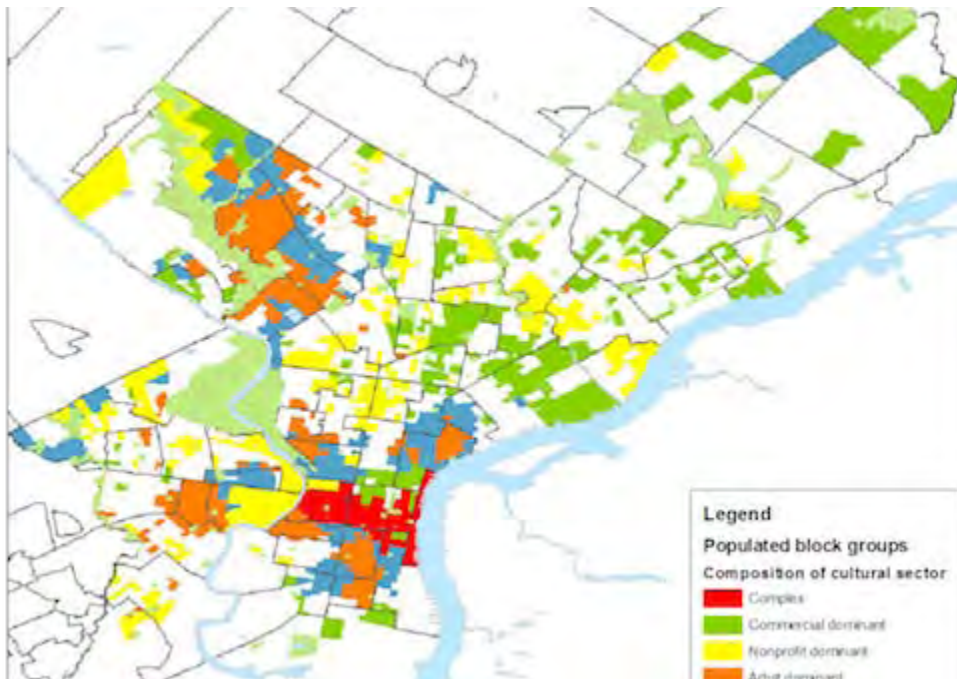


# ARTPLACE

AUGUST 11, 2012

## Creative Assets Map

By ArtPlace  
Philadelphia, PA



CultureBlocks is a collaboration between The Reinvestment Fund (TRF), the City of



Philadelphia's Office of Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy (OACCE), and the University of Pennsylvania Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP). Its purpose is to develop a web-based tool for displaying Philadelphia's cultural assets in ways that is useful to artists and cultural organizations, public officials, development professionals, and the general public. In addition, TRF and SIAP are collaborating on several research projects based on the web-based application.

Katie Nelson, Senior Associate at PolicyMap, explains some of the project's conclusions:

NELSON: One aspect of our research agenda is to use SIAP's cultural database to examine changes in Philadelphia's cultural sector over the past fifteen years. In particular, we are interested in whether the clustering of cultural assets is good for the cultural sector and for the neighborhoods in which they are located.

In order to examine these questions, SIAP developed two ways of classifying cultural districts—by composition and by social and spatial advantage.

### **Composition**

Often implicitly, creative placemaking is based on cluster theory. Most associated with Michael Porter, cluster theory posits that the bunching of firms in particular locations creates efficiencies that can spur economic development. This line of thinking has encouraged several national governments, including France, to use incentives to promote clustering.

Yet, Porter has come in for wide-ranging criticism. As Gilles Duranton of the University of Pennsylvania has noted:

[I]t is unclear what cluster policies should do and how they should do it. This is true even in the simplest setting. Considering richer frameworks of analysis only multiplies the ambiguities. Cluster policies can even turn ugly when implemented by less than perfectly benevolent governments.

Very large economic benefits from clusters might provide a justification for brushing aside these concerns. However, the benefits from clustering on local earnings and local productivity are small. For other outcome measures such as innovation, existing research even suggests that clustering plays a negative role. (Duranton 2011: 4)

This does not mean that clusters are always bad, but it suggests that artificial clusters created through top-down policies are likely to fail. Certainly, the history of planned cultural

districts suggests that these top-down approaches rarely work and—even when they are viable—provide limited benefits for the cultural sector.

This line of reasoning has encouraged us to think about bottom-up approaches to arts-based community revitalization. We use the term “natural” cultural districts to refer to districts in which cultural assets cluster, not because of policy prescriptions, but because it makes sense to the artists, entrepreneurs, and organizations involved.

But not all clusters are alike. We discovered that some clusters are composed of one predominant type of asset; for example, a neighborhood with many artists but few organizations or many nonprofit cultural organizations, but few artists or commercial firms. (We call these nonprofit-dominant, artist-dominant, and commercial-dominant clusters.) Other clusters have a more complex composition, with a concentration of artists, nonprofits, and commercial cultural firms.

We then asked which types of districts are more sustainable and provide a greater probability of growing over time. We found that the complex clusters were remarkably stable. Of the 63 block groups that were judged complex in 1997, 47 (75 percent) were still high complex in 2010. The block groups dominated by a single cultural asset were much less stable.

Of course, the decline of some districts was accompanied by the increases in other parts of the city. Between 1997 and 2010, 134 block groups became commercial-dominant and 136 block groups became nonprofit-dominant. The vast majority of these were located in upper North Philadelphia and the lower Northeast, areas that were attracting both immigrants and African Americans during these years. Artist concentrations emerged in 90 block groups, which included significant clusters in West Philadelphia and adjacent to the existing cluster in South Philadelphia. Artist concentrations also formed in the Art Museum and Brewerytown neighborhoods.

With such volatility in the ebb and flow of cultural assets, cities need to be careful about when and how to invest in them. On the one hand, it suggests that “Good Government 101” — reliable city services and honest government — are a good starting point for encouraging these districts. On the other hand, making investments after people on the ground have committed to a neighborhood seems like smart policy. For example, Maryland has a program of designated arts and entertainment districts, but the proposed district must demonstrate that there’s an existing cultural scene to win designation.

Our findings on the sustainability of complex cultural districts also have implications for

policy. They suggest that the success of cultural districts — and by implication the success of individuals and organizations within those districts — is a function of their ecology. Rather than applying organizational metrics to judging the likelihood of future success, funders and policymakers may choose to encourage the cultural diversification of districts.

### **Economic and spatial advantage**

“Natural” cultural districts benefit from a variety of social conditions. Higher-income neighborhoods, an abundance of rental properties, and distance to Center City all make it easier for a district to emerge. If the arts and culture are to play a role in promoting social inclusion and justice, however, we need to pay attention to neighborhoods that are relatively disadvantaged in these qualities but “overachieve” in spite of these challenges. We call these overachievers “civic clusters” because they usually are inspired by the civic engagement of local residents.

In contrast to a shortsighted top-down strategy of betting on advantaged districts, a longer-term strategy would build on the social and economic benefits that cultural engagement generates in all types of cultural districts, including civic clusters. It would define cultural engagement broadly to include conventional notions of high art as well as the popular culture and folk traditions of all groups that inhabit the contemporary city. Rather than using government and philanthropy to reinforce market forces, a long-view policy would compensate for market failure and promote social equity. Over time, the strategy would promote social inclusion and the productive utilization of all of the city’s fiscal, human, and social capital.

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## [Rethinking Social Impact: “We Can’t Talk About Social Well-Being Without the Arts & Culture”](#)

Posted by [Mark Stern](#)

May 1, 2012

Animating Democracy: Social Impact & Evaluation Blog Salon

Susan Seifert and I began the [Social Impact of the Arts Project](#) (SIAP) in 1994 in response to the attention that *economic impact* studies were gaining at the time.

We felt—in addition to their methodological flaws—that these studies captured only a fraction of the importance that the arts held for society. We committed ourselves to think through the theoretical and methodological issues involved in documenting the contribution that arts and cultural engagement have for community life.

Over the years, we’ve discovered many connections between the arts and social well-being, some of them quite surprising.

It turned out that the arts were associated with preserving ethnic and racial diversity in urban neighborhoods, lower rates of social distress, and reduced rates of ethnic and racial harassment. Perhaps most surprisingly, we found that the presence of cultural assets in urban neighborhoods was associated with economic improvements, including declines in poverty.

We used the concept of “*natural*” *cultural districts* to study neighborhoods where we found unplanned concentrations of arts organizations, cultural enterprises, artists, and cultural participants and documented that it was the *social* and *civic* engagement associated with the arts that seemed to drive these economic benefits and revitalization.

Over the past several years, we’ve been trying to re-conceptualize our findings and their meaning for the cultural community, urban public policy, and scholarship.

We were struck, on the one hand, by the debate over the *instrumental* versus *intrinsic* value of the arts that our work and that of other scholars often provokes. On the other hand, we were uncomfortable with the tendency to see social impact as residing in individual artists and organizations rather than in the *cultural ecology* of neighborhoods and regions.

We’ve been aided in this rethinking by our association with an international group of scholars associated with the *capabilities approach*. The perspective, often associated with the philosopher Martha Nussbaum and the economist Amartya Sen, argues that we should understand social well-being as a product of people’s *opportunities to be and do* in certain ways.

Most importantly for cultural research, it suggests that we must move beyond purely economic yardsticks in judging well-being. In her work, for example, Nussbaum has suggested a list of ten core capabilities that includes: life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination, and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; and control over one’s environment.

There has been a lot of debate over the composition of the list and about whether it’s even a good idea to limit ourselves to a single list.

The capabilities approach has gained wide influence over the past several decades. The United Nations adopted it as the basis for its [Human Development Index](#), and the [European Union](#) and [Organization for](#)

[Economic Cooperation and Development](#) (OECD) took it as the starting point for studies of social inclusion and social justice.

The application of the approach to measuring social well-being was given a huge boost by the 2009 report of the [Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress](#), chaired by Sen and Joseph Stiglitz. The report spelled out in unprecedented detail how one might translate the ideas of the capabilities approach into the actual measurement of well-being.

We've come to realize that the Sen-Stiglitz framework not only provided a practical way of measuring social well-being, but also provided a way out of the intrinsic/instrumental debate. If we use the lens of capabilities, the question is no longer about whether the arts promote social well-being. Opportunities and access to the arts *are part of social well-being*.

Just as we wouldn't imagine talking about social well-being without discussing health or adequate food, housing, and income or the opportunity to pursue meaningful activities, we can't talk about social well-being without the arts and culture.

This conceptual change has implications for studying the social impact of the arts as well. Rather than pursuing a set of separate little studies—the arts and social capital, the arts and public health, the arts and quality of life—we need to place the arts in a frame that includes all of the dimensions of social well-being. The questions become less about *whether* the arts matter to society and more about *how* the arts matter for various dimensions of well-being.

Thanks to grants from the National Endowment for the Arts' *Our Town* initiative and ArtPlace, SIAP—in collaboration with The Reinvestment Fund and the City of Philadelphia's Office of Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy—has been able to begin translating these ideas into findings about Philadelphia.

With a group of Penn students, Ira Goldstein of The Reinvestment Fund and we are translating the Sen-Stiglitz framework into a map of social well-being at the census tract level.

In my next post, I'll give a more detail description of our current work and (if my students turn in their papers on time), some of our initial findings.

## [The Arts, Culture, & Social Well-Being](#)

Posted by [Mark Stern](#) On May - 3 - 2012



Mark Stern

As part of its collaboration with The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) and the City of Philadelphia's Office of Arts, Culture, and Creative Economy (OACCE), Penn's Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) is leading an effort to develop an index of livability/social inclusion for the city.

Our goal is to create a series of maps that identify several dimensions of social well-being across the city and to locate the arts and culture within the broader idea of social well-being. This semester, Ira Goldstein of TRF and I have co-taught an Urban Studies seminar focused of clarifying the conceptualization of social well-being and gathering the data necessary to create the index.

The project was inspired by the federal government's—including the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)—recent interest in promoting *livability*. As we looked at the question, we realized that our measure needed to move beyond livability to include more comprehensive measures of social justice, inclusion, and well-being. Rather than start from scratch, we used the 2009 report of the [Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress](#) as our starting point.

The commission proposed an eight-dimension framework for social well-being that included material standard of living, health, education, personal activities (including work and leisure), political voice and governance, social connections and relationships, environment, and economic and physical insecurity. Our first adaptation of the framework was to add housing as a separate dimension, giving us nine potential sub-indexes.

During the seminar, Ira, the students, and I have been able to develop preliminary version of seven of the nine indexes. Some of them were easier than others.

Material standard of living, which focuses on levels of income and wealth, was the easiest because the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey provided extensive data at the census tract level. All of the other indexes required us to incorporate other data sources, ranging from the city's vital statistics data to estimates of workplace injuries, residents' involvement in their neighborhoods, and reported crime.

In many respects, this preliminary estimate of social well-being is deeply depressing. Although we have a commitment to move “beyond GDP” in estimating well-being, the data demonstrates that other dimensions of inclusion are strongly related to income and wealth.

For example, our measure of education includes broad measures of educational attainment, elementary school’s standardized test scores, and truancy. In an ideal world, educational opportunities would counter existing social inequality by providing a path for social mobility. However, in Philadelphia today, educational opportunity is limited. A neighborhood’s economic status is a very good predictor of its educational opportunity.

From the standpoint of arts and culture, our estimate of social connection and relationships in the city has been most provocative. Here again, we have a dimension of social well-being that is not easy to measure. Ultimately, our index included measures of neighborliness (whether residents feel that they trust their neighbors or feel like they “belong”), civic participation, the presence of social organizations, and some demographic characteristics (percent of single person households, residential mobility).

The analysis produced two sub-indexes of social connection. One index was associated with neighborliness, for example, whether you trust your neighbors or participate in local organizations.

The other index is primarily associated with demographic characteristics like single person households and high rates of residential mobility and with the presence of social organizations in a neighborhood.

Although some measures of cultural engagement are associated with neighborliness, the primary index—what we call the cultural asset index (CAI)—is more closely associated with the second sub-index.

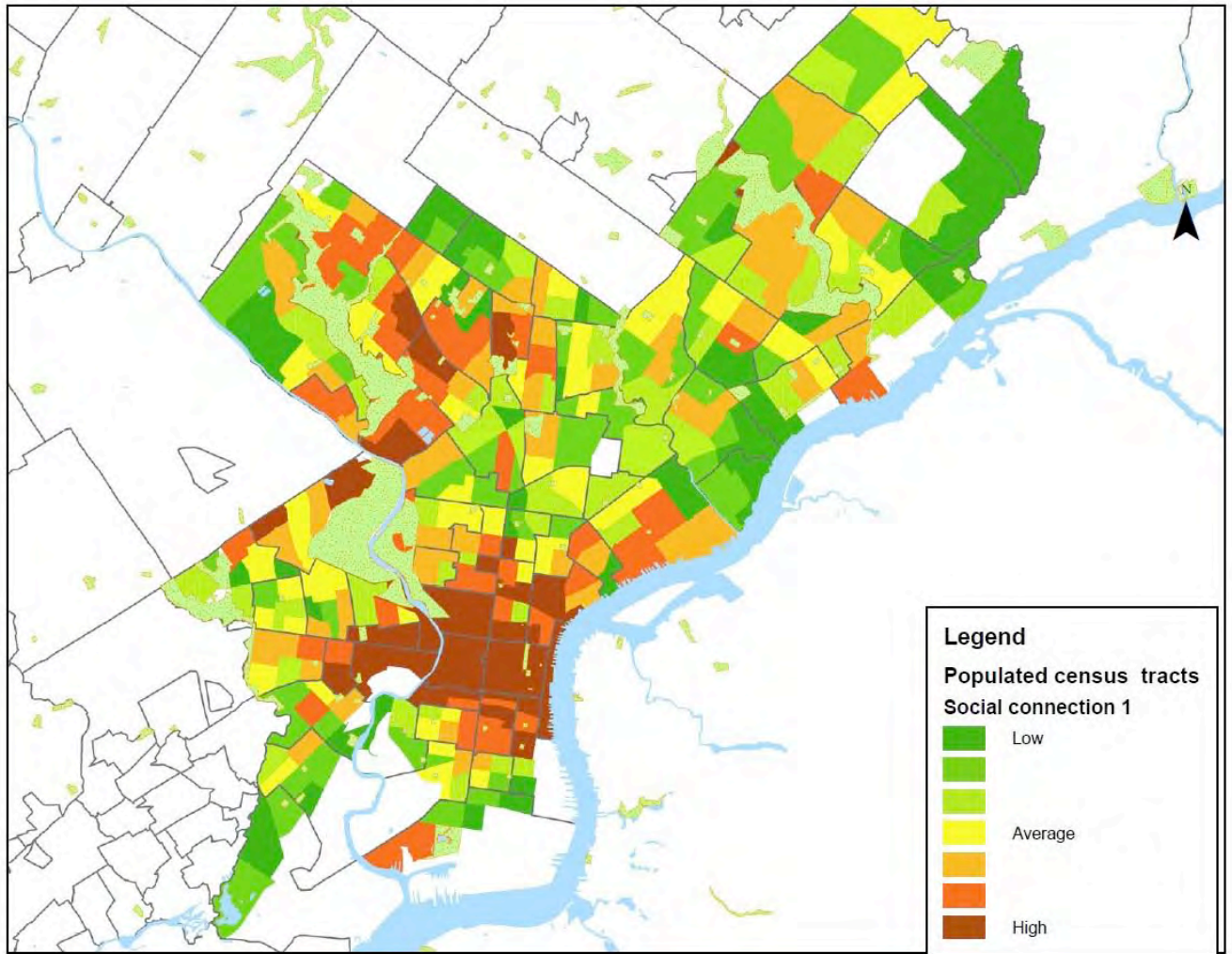
It’s too early to draw definite conclusions from these data. However, these two dimensions of social connection do appear to line up with the classic sociological distinction between *community* (or as the Germans say, *gemeinschaft*) and *society* (or *gesellschaft*), or the distinction between a social order based on face-to-face relationship and one based on a set of institutional intermediaries.

It turns out as well that the social connection index most closely associated with cultural engagement is one of our measures *least* associated with economic standing. This reinforces the idea that the arts and culture’s role in social connection cuts across social class boundaries.

The map of the culturally-related measure of social connection reflects this diversity. Several well-off neighborhoods in Center City have high social connection scores, but so do some middle- and low-income neighborhoods in North Philadelphia, Germantown, and West Philadelphia.

Cultural engagement often reflects socioeconomic standing, but is ultimately much more complicated.





In the months ahead, TRF and SIAP will complete the first version of its livability/social inclusion index. We still need to create sub-indexes for environment and political voice (while our state legislature is trying to suppress voting with an ID law), and we'll certainly want to refine the work that the students have begun.

In the end, we'll provide a solid empirical foundation for looking at the contours of cultural engagement and how it is associated with other aspects of livability and social inclusion in the city.

**Tagged with:** [animating democracy](#) | [Arts](#) | [cultural engagement](#) | [culture](#) | [data](#) | [evaluation](#) | [May 2012 Blog Salon](#) | [Philadelphia](#) | [Research](#) | [social impact](#)