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Public Art and the Central Corridor:
Place Promotion and Creative Placemaking

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The urban landscape is constantly changing, as development and infrastructure alter the built environment. This often causes conflict between development interests and the interests of residents, because with development comes displacement and gentrification. Public art bridges these two interests. It can contribute to creative placemaking, which is the engagement of communities in creating a common vision for livable and inviting urban spaces (Projects for Public Spaces). It can also be a tool for boosting city image and competitiveness, creating an appealing urban environment. These two tensions are complementary: “public art is a contributor, but also antidote, to the conflict that typically surrounds the restructuring of urban space” (Sharp, Pollock and Paddison 2005). How does planning for urban public art initiatives balance or reconcile the conflicting goals of placemaking for citizens and city promotion for growth?

The Twin Cities, in Minnesota, has a vibrant arts scene – a “civic canvas” for public art (Tillotson 2012). Home to the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Walker Art Museum, Saint Paul and Minneapolis are also home for many public art pieces that help shape the character of the city, and devote significant city resources to integrate artwork into city infrastructure and services. An example of this is the construction of the state’s largest infrastructure project, the Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (LRT) line. This light rail line connects downtown Minneapolis to downtown Saint Paul. Upon completion in 2014, the Central Corridor will be an engine for economic growth for the Twin Cities and also will contribute to community

revitalization along the University Avenue corridor, where the trains will run down the middle of the street. Nearly \$3 million of the project funds were allocated toward station art at each of the stops along the line.

The station art plays a dual role of enhancing the image of Saint Paul and Minneapolis as well as creating connections to the neighborhoods where the light rail will stop by reflecting their histories for residents and riders. This will ground the transit corridor in place and in the neighborhoods rather than simply creating a thoroughfare. In order to explore the tensions between these two different roles of the artwork, I examine the process behind the ideas, planning, and implementation of the station artwork along the Central Corridor LRT line. The station art is only part of the public art initiatives along the Central Corridor. I compare the station art plans with another initiative- the “Irrigate” project, which is installing public art projects throughout the corridor, not just along University Avenue but also within the neighborhoods themselves.

Broadly, I examine the role of public art in urban development and how it relates to quality of place both by enhancing city image and social connectedness. Public art is highly desirable for cities - both as an enhancer of city image and because it engages and grounds the public audience in place. As a result, cities have institutionalized public artwork programs and funding through "percent for arts" programs. Examination of the planning process shows that although attempts are made to include the public in the process of planning public artwork, often it is difficult to engage the public until the artwork is in place. Specifically, I examine the planning process of the public artwork on the Central Corridor line in order to see how the perspectives of city personnel, artists, and the public have contributed to the artwork created. I find that public artwork can contribute to quality of place both as a social connector and a place

enhancer, yet examination of the planning process raises questions of about the efficacy of institutionalized public art in engaging and meeting the needs of communities where the artwork is placed.

The controversy over the construction of the light rail process puts social sustainability directly in opposition with economic development, and the arts initiatives along the corridor play a role in reconciling the two. Public input in the planning process is essential to bridging placemaking and city imaging goals for any public art project, and the structure of this planning process shapes whose interests the artwork will serve and how it will shape the urban environment.

METHODS

To examine how the public is being asked to inform and educate the public art initiatives in the Central Corridor, I focus primarily on the station art on the Central Corridor line, comparing it with other art initiatives along the Central Corridor. Because the LRT is still under construction and the station art is not yet complete or installed, I examine the planning processes for various art initiatives. I analyze media coverage over the course of the process, looking at controversies surrounding the light rail project. I also conducted interviews with many different stakeholders in the planning process for the station art, including artists and community outreach organizers. These interviews are anonymous in my paper so that I could get the most unbiased information from interviewees without worry about quotes being attributed to them. Through my interviews and research, I attempt to analyze who was involved in the planning and at what point, and how residents and communities along the avenue were included and engaged in the process of public art.

To focus my analysis, I profile two stations, the Dale Street station and the Victoria Street

station. These stations serve a very diverse community, and this is one of the primary areas of controversy over gentrification as a result of development brought by the light rail, and thus is a neighborhood where engaging the community equitably was arguably of higher importance than other areas where the LRT line was more welcomed. In order to get a closer look at how the public art on the Central Corridor fits in with larger plans for artwork in the neighborhood, I also look at the Irrigate project, which funds public artwork in a different setting and with a different planning model.

There are limitations to my research – the biggest weakness being the lack of interviews with members of the communities served by this artwork. I was not able to get in touch with citizens who sat on committees or were involved with the artwork planning process. This means that the sole perspectives that I have are those of the planning team rather than those they reach out to.

I analyze the public artwork in the context of several theories: first, Logan and Molotch's urban growth theory, which presents tensions between use values and exchange values of land and properties. Secondly, I look at theories of public art in relation to urban growth, and also examine the literature of the role of public art in shaping urban space. I use this theoretical framework on cities and their art to frame my case study of the Central Corridor station art, compare it to other initiatives, and examine how it contributes to urban sustainability in the Twin Cities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Sustainability

Cities are important arenas for implementation of sustainability initiatives, whether initiated by the city itself, businesses, or neighborhoods and communities. Sustainability

initiatives often operate explicitly from a triple-bottom line, addressing and enhancing economic growth, environmental management and protection, and social equity and diversity. There are different models relating these to each other. These sustainabilities are interdependent and all three should be pursued. However, often certain initiatives favor certain aspects of sustainabilities over the others. Although social sustainability is considered important, often economic and environmental sustainability are easier to deal with concretely, and are perhaps more economically feasible.

Social sustainability is much harder to address directly, especially from a top-down approach. Social sustainability, although it is important to a city's development, is not usually a primary goal for urban growth initiatives. Social sustainability efforts often come from grassroots organizing on a smaller scale. However, these efforts are supported by cities because a city's image is enhanced if citizens are heard and taken into account, and cities have an interest in "placemaking" – creating spaces that residents invest in and are connected to.

Steven Moore, in his book "Alternative Routes to the Sustainable City," suggests that sustainability should be defined as an ever-evolving storyline, and that seeking to define sustainability limits it because it is so context-specific (Moore 2007). However, in order to assess steps taken to improve social sustainability, it helps to define it somewhat. One way to look at social sustainability is through the outcomes of any initiative and how it meets basic needs and enhancing quality of life for residents. It involves increasing equity between all groups of people and encouraging diversity and interconnectedness within and without the community in informal and institutional realms (McKenzie 2004). Another important piece of social sustainability is ensuring equity and inclusion in the planning process with an open and accountable government (McKenzie 2004). However, citizen input is not always a primary concern for urban growth.

Urban growth

In order to survive, cities must attract businesses and residents. Much urban studies literature focuses on city growth, what makes a city competitive, and studies who shapes urban growth. Cities are immobile, and they have to compete with each other to attract capital - investments by residents and corporations. This theory of New Urban Politics focuses on how capital has become increasingly mobile, because corporations can just pick up and leave, going to another city rather than being grounded in one place and invested in that place. Thus cities must not only work to please residents already connected to the city, but also must pursue innovative development that would make them attractive in comparison to other similarly sized or located cities (Jonas, Gibbs and While 2011). Cities for this reason are always working to attract and keep capital in their geographic region.

John Logan and Harvey Molotch (1987) discuss the various ways of valuing land. Each place or land has two different values – use values and exchange values. Residents get a “use” value out of land ownership because they can create connections to place though where they live. However, they also get an “exchange” value out of their property. Exchange value is the “rent” value from the commodity of land. Businesses and corporations get exchange value out of land by owning it and leasing, renting, or selling it. Entrepreneurs try to trap “human activity at the sites of their pecuniary interests” (Logan & Molotch 1987). These entrepreneurs form growth machines, which share an interest in developing districts or areas. Those who get use value from properties often try to regulate what is known as value-free development, which is when “free markets alone...determine land use” (Logan & Molotch 1987). This creates an internal struggle of sorts between those promoting land development for economic gain and urban growth and those seeking to protect their properties, communities, and neighborhoods.

Urban planning and redevelopment is growing increasingly complex, with many institutions and actors involved. In his book “What makes a city?” which explores the importance of quality of place in the urban development process, Jan Jacob Trip talks about the various arenas involved in the policy-making process in cities, which often includes non-governmental actors working at many administrative levels and scales (Trip 2007). This multi-actor and multi scalar governance creates a multi-arena policy process. This is a change from previous city decision-making, which was a “comprehensive planning process.” Detailed and comprehensive planning processes can be difficult to implement effectively, and more recent planning recognizes the need to consider the local context (Trip 2007, 51). Although Trip refers specifically to the political economy of high-speed train station development in cities, his assessment of the planning arenas apply also to planning process for the light rail line and its artwork.

Ann Markusen discusses some of the actors present in cultural planning and cultural policy, because different stakeholders have different and competing stakes in the planning process – the cultural sphere is influenced by the commercial sector (for profit), non-profit and cultural sector, community sector, and the local built environment industry (developers and construction industry) (Markusen 2008, 10). She posits that citizen participation in cities is usually very poor, yet neighborhoods that do have many arts projects and lots of participation are more likely to “experience revitalization and [to do] so without clear evidence of racial or ethnic displacement” (Markusen 2008, 15). Citizen engagement in public art planning strengthens social capital.

Public Art

Public art is an arena of city planning and development that has the potential to both engage the public and promote social sustainability, and also create a positive image for cities, and it increasingly tries to serve both of these functions. However, public art has not always been as prevalent in city projects and infrastructure as it is today, and certainly hasn't been as responsive to the public. Miwon Kwon identifies three phases of public art – one beginning around the 1960's, where artwork was simply plopped in public places, rather than catering to the specific site, generating the term “plop art” (Kwon 2004). A second phase saw art as an invitation to public spaces, creating areas that people could interact with and access on a daily basis. Examples of this are decorative park benches or tables – the artwork forms part of the public space itself. Kwon's third phase is “new genre art” or “community art,” wherein “politically conscious artists focused on the socio-cultural dynamics of particular, often marginalized, populations, embracing process-oriented and collaborative methods” (Knight 2011). Cher Krause Knight, in a history of public art, points out that this “community art” has grassroots origins, but can also become institutionalized, which can be seen in the case of the Central Corridor station art.

Public art for social connections and identity

Public art “has as its goal a desire to engage with its audiences and to create spaces—whether material, virtual or imagined—within which people can identify themselves” (Sharp, Pollock, and Paddison 2005, 1001). Art can be a realm where artists invite people to connect with each other, reflect on themselves, and become a part of a larger community experience. Public art can stimulate pride in place and in this way revitalize communities and community identity, often drawing on shared history (Mccarthy 2006). It is a placemaking tool. One of the art projects along the Central Corridor defines placemaking as “the act of people coming together

to change overlooked and undervalued public and shared spaces into welcoming places where community gathers, supports one another, and thrives” (Springboard for the Arts n.d.).

During the 1980s and 1990s much literature was written on the benefits of public art in cities, both for the city itself and as a process of placemaking – creating connections to the places where people live and work. As a result, cities across the United States are reserving portions of their budget for the arts, and most always include a community element. Rather than simply placing art randomly in urban spaces, artists and cities try to connect artists with residents, so that there is community ownership of the art and stronger connections to place. Often this type of art solicits community input and reflects community culture, identity and history.

Public art as boosterism

Although public art connects people to each other and to unique places, it can also be an economic development tool that cities use to attract businesses and people. The reasons for this are twofold: the art itself can be a tourist draw, but the image of a city as a place that fosters art and creativity is important as well. This type of boosterism stems from urban theorists writing about the “creative class” and what draws them to certain cities. Cities in an increasingly service-based economy try to attract intellectuals and service-sector jobs and innovation rather than manufacturing industries (Florida 2004). However, the role of public art in place-imaging for a city inherently contradicts goals of social equality because as cities become more competitive, they become more socially divided.

Culture-led regeneration

The distinction between art intended to drive regeneration and art for the community is teased out by various authors. John McCarthy (2006) writes about tensions between “culture-led regeneration,” which is characterized by promotion of cultural activity as a main driver of

regeneration efforts, and “cultural regeneration,” where cultural initiatives exist alongside other regeneration efforts and are integrated into a broader picture. He points out the tensions inherent in large cultural infrastructure projects because they involve “apparently conflicting aims, such as reflection of local identity versus enhancement of image as part of place promotion” (Mccarthy 2006, 260). However, through his case studies in the United Kingdom, he concludes that these tensions can be balanced and that public art can indeed serve both ends.

Evaluating the interplay between these tensions requires examination of the planning process for the artwork itself. Art that is used as a revitalization tool can be perceived as cultural exploitation, which can lead to “culture wars” (Sharp, Pollock and Paddison 2005). By making the city more competitive, it also increases social inequalities. In this way, public art is “a contributor, but also antidote, to the conflict that typically surrounds the restructuring of urban space” (Sharp, Pollock and Paddison 2005, 1001). The Central Corridor LRT line is the perfect example of such a restructuring: for some it is an economic engine of growth, but for others it brings gentrification and being forced out of neighborhoods and businesses. Public art is an intersection between the community and the city planning teams heading this major infrastructure project.

Sharp highlights the importance of the planning process in assessing how public art contributes to social sustainability, because the benefits of public art are difficult to assess. Essentially, because it is difficult to quantify whether art plays a greater role in promoting economic development or in fostering social inclusion and community identity, the focus of analysis must rest on the planning process rather than on the outcomes of public art. The planning process shows who has ownership of the process, when decisions are made and by whom, and when and how citizens are involved in the planning process. These fundamental

questions assess the extent to which the project is participatory and meaningful to the community (Sharp, Pollock and Paddison 2005). Artist Maria Gee states, “public art in the past has been used to inform and educate the public. Now the public is being asked to inform and educate the public art process” (Knight 2011, 110).

CASE STUDY: Public Art on the Central Corridor

The Central Corridor is the largest public works project ever undertaken in Minnesota history (Roberts 2011). The project incorporates environmental, economic, and social sustainability aspects, but these are also fraught with controversy. Examining the planning around the station art is a window into how these different types of sustainability are in conversation and in competition in a public planning process. Conversations around urban developments and who benefits from them are central to urban planners, and I join this conversation to discussions about public art and the role that public art can play in social sustainability. The light rail, as a permanent feature of University Avenue between Saint Paul and Minneapolis, will play a significant role in changing the area economically and socially. The public art initiatives both on the light rail and in the surrounding neighborhoods contribute to the patterns of economic development, but also attempt to provide a medium for social sustainability through celebration of identity and diversity and creating a sense of pride in place.

Background

The Central Corridor is a light rail line stretching between the two central business districts of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The trains will run along University Avenue, a wide boulevard that used to have a streetcar running along it. The line has twenty-three stops total, eighteen new stations and five that will be shared with the already existing Hiawatha LRT line. The line will facilitate the commute between Minneapolis and Saint Paul, and is touted by the

Twin Cities as an economic engine that will bring transit oriented development to University Avenue.

From the beginning, the Central Corridor has been seen as a mechanism for economic and environmental sustainability, as a public transit alternative to highway driving and as an engine for redevelopment on University Avenue. However, there is controversy surrounding the Central Corridor because the construction has negative impacts on businesses along University Avenue during construction. The area has a lot of ethnically diverse businesses with unique character, and there is fear that they will be put out of business from losing customers during construction (personal communication).

Another fear is that through redevelopment the area will become gentrified, meaning that property values will go up for many residents. Although usually increased property values are seen as a good thing, in lower-income neighborhood this usually translates to increased taxes, which can price residents out of their homes. Increased property taxes could lead to foreclosures and residents moving out, which can blight neighborhoods.

Each of the stations along the Central Corridor has a plan for station art. The City of Saint Paul in collaboration with the nonprofit Public Art Saint Paul requires a certain percentage of funding for each construction project to go to public in some form (City of Saint Paul n.d.). In this case, teams of public artists were chosen for the stations. Because the project was federally funded, the Metropolitan Council had to open up the artist selection process to applicants nationwide. This has been a source of some controversy, because some of the artists chosen are not from the Twin Cities or even from Minnesota, yet they are representing local history and residents. These artists include Nancy Blum, Roberto Delgado, and Catherine Widgery. Artists also had to have a certain number of large-scale projects already on their résumé prior to

applying for the commission. This prevented many artists of color from being considered for the project, simply because they didn't have the relevant experience (personal communication). This raises the barriers to participation.

The artist selections were made by the Metropolitan Council, based off of the criteria including “artistic merit, materials and durability, demonstrated grasp of the work, neighborhood and local identity, public involvement approach, impact on transit customers and successful completion of similar projects” (Metropolitan Council 2010). A diverse committee helped select the artists as well, with community members and other stakeholders giving input (City of Saint Paul 2007). Five teams were originally chosen, designing three stations each.

Once the artist teams were selected, planning began. Metropolitan Council put out a call for applications from citizens to be on committees assisting artists in connecting with the community and facilitating meetings, and advising the artists on the culture and history of the neighborhoods (Kimball 2008). These meetings began in March of 2009 (Stratton 2009). Two additional artist teams were added when three stops were added to the design as a result of community organizing. The Metropolitan Council facilitated meetings between the artists and residents of the neighborhood served by the stops they were designing, and after a period of revision of themes, final projects were submitted in 2010 and then approved by Metropolitan Council, incorporated into the architectural plans put up for bid for contractors, and included in construction specs for each station (personal communication).

Station Profiles

I talked in detail with individuals involved particularly in planning the Dale Street station and the Victoria Street station. I chose these two stations because they serve the Frogtown and Rondo neighborhoods, which is home to some of the residents that are most unhappy about the

Central Corridor LRT line. I chose to look at these stations to see in particular how the themes chosen by the artists addressed the social conflict or inequalities in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Dale Street

The Dale street station art is designed by Seitu Jones, a longtime resident of the Frogtown neighborhood and Twin Cities-based artist. The proposed station design, unveiled in 2009, is based on the idea of cultures that have to cross a river to come to America. The area services the Frogtown, which is home to many diverse cultures including immigrant groups. The station art celebrates both this cultural diversity and immigrant identity: the station art would include four panels inspired by African-American quilts, Asian artifacts, Eastern European icons and symbols, and symbols from indigenous cultures (see Figure 2). Jones also plans to incorporate art on the platform itself, with the design of a river “inspired by people who have crossed a major world river in their homeland to get to Saint Paul” (Metropolitan Council 2009). Continuing the same themes of home, Jones is working with poet Soyini Guyton, who is writing a poem about home and place, which will be featured on the railings.

This is one of the stations that has seen the most controversy. There are tensions over the station artwork because many different constituencies of the diverse neighborhood of Frogtown wanted to make their presence felt in the station artwork – making it the African-American station, the Asian station, or even the library station (personal communication). Community meetings held were well attended, and community concerns about reflecting the identity of various constituencies were voiced. Instead, the artist chose to reflect the broader diversity of the community and honor the changes that the neighborhood has seen and how the neighborhood will change again.

Victoria Street

Victoria Station, at Victoria and University Avenue, is one of the three stops added later as a result of citizen demand and increased availability of federal funding. Residents living in nearby neighborhoods banded together to protest the lack of stops in one of the poorest neighborhoods along the corridor. This was in part because of the history of development in the poor ethnic neighborhood in the area when I-94 came to the Twin Cities, and was routed through the Rondo neighborhood, the historic African American neighborhood on the west side of Saint Paul (personal communication).

Foster Willey, a Minneapolis sculptor, is charged with designing the Victoria street station. Once the station was added, the Historic Rondo Society worked with the artist to reflect the Rondo community in a way that the Dale station never did. There are also four community members on a committee for the station art, including people who work and live in the neighborhood (Metropolitan Council 2012). As a way of honoring the historic roots of the neighborhood, Foster Willey is sculpting historic figures and residents of the Rondo neighborhood. His station is called “Faces of Rondo” (see Figure 4).

After his proposal was accepted, Metropolitan Council distributed a survey asking for nominations for community members whose faces should be placed on the wall. He received approximately seventy nominations, which were narrowed to a final twelve faces. He then went through a process of obtaining consent from the people to be represented, many of whom are still living, or from their relatives if they are deceased. The response from these people was positive, and they were excited to be recognized for their contributions to the community (personal communication).

The Victoria station is a literal and accessible representation of Rondo’s history. He

spoke with community members who were excited about the representation of the old Rondo neighborhood. According to the community outreach coordinator for the Central Corridor project, “people responded very positively” (Metropolitan Council 2012). The faces honor a diversity of community members, including “an activist, a teacher, an athlete, a foster mother, and an officeholder” (Melo 2012a). Also included is a doctor who delivered hundreds of babies in the Rondo community.

The stations and the station artwork are complemented by other public art initiatives on the Central Corridor. Public Art Saint Paul, a nonprofit working with the City of Saint Paul, has developed a long-term plan for public artwork extending past University Avenue into the neighborhoods surrounding the LRT line. The Irrigate Project is another example of public art – one which takes a different planning approach than the station artwork. Its role in creative placemaking and place promotion is worth examining to compare with the station artwork.

Media Analysis

While the light rail line is seen by the city as a center and impetus for growth, some residents worry that the light rail is a project that isn’t meant to help them and is going to price them out of their homes (personal communication). These tensions are consistent with Logan and Molotch’s growth machine theory, which posits that in land development there is always conflict between exchange value and use value, and this conflict shapes the spatial distribution of the city. Exchange value is the value of the land for development usually by commercial interests, whereas use value is the value for residents of living in a place or making it a home.

The Central Corridor line is clearly primarily a tool promoting exchange value. That being said, the Metropolitan Council and Saint Paul have tried to make the stations amenable to the public to increase ridership and help create a sense of place along the corridor. One of the

ways in which this is being done is through the implementation of public art in the stations along the light rail. This serves a dual function of appealing to residents nearby and also making the station unique and heightening the experience of riding on the light rail for commuters.

The media framing around the art frenzy on the Central Corridor, including the station art and other local public art initiatives in the area, centers on the economic gains for the area. The city has realized that the arts play a crucial role in its plans for development: the “economic development game is all about how you deploy local assets to develop, attract, and keep talent.” (Abbe and Olson 2011). Mayor Chris Coleman said that “the arts industry is a huge economic engine,” especially in Saint Paul, and that this is a force to be mobilized to “achieve [the city’s] goals for the Central Corridor” (City of Saint Paul 2011). The Star Tribune paints artists as “urban pioneers who are revitalizing neighborhoods” (Abbe and Olson 2011).

The arts scene in Saint Paul has helped put the city on the national stage, recognized as “an arts community.” (Abbe and Olson 2011). This shows the role of the arts in boosting the place image of Saint Paul compared to other cities. Saint Paul is mobilizing artists not only on the Central Corridor, but also downtown, to make the area “cool enough to attract a ‘creative class’ and ‘digital class’” (Melo 2012c). Having public art on the light rail line creates an aura of uniqueness for the city, which is a draw when many cities are competing for the same businesses and capital. The art enhances the light rail experience, which can help draw residents to the area both because of ease of commute and city commitment to mass transit. Beyond this, however, is the theory that city commitment to the arts and to cultural diversity attract a certain class of professionals that can drive a city’s growth. Highly visible public art with connections to place are thus seen as a complement to the light rail itself as a tool for increasing the attractiveness of the Twin Cities as a place to live and work.

In addition to the goals of revitalization, the art projects are also meant to be a part of the communities where they are located. A spokesperson for the City of Minneapolis, Mary Altman, said “It’s not art for art’s sake...It’s an organic part of the community, meant to be interacted with” (Tillotson 2012). Although she wasn’t speaking specifically about the station art, her statement reflects a facet of public art that is not solely as an image booster. Rather than “plop art” which is placed randomly in a location with little connections to the space, culture, or residents, community-focused art is supposed to be integrated with the history of the area, with current residents, and with communities. The station art on the Central Corridor is meant to be “appropriate to each site,” meaning that it is supposed to connect with neighborhood history and identity (Tillotson 2012). Examples of this are the two stations profiled – Dale Street station and Victoria Street station.

Some representations, however, hint that the station art isn’t truly for the public. When the Star Tribune announced that the station art plans were being announced, they said that “history and a lot of community input have shaped plans for \$2.8 million in art for 15 new stations on the light-rail line,” (Abbe 2009). In the same article, a quote from Metropolitan Council representative Laura Baenen says “We don’t anticipate radical change, but the public is welcome to comment, especially on things like safety.” This implies that once the plans were unveiled there would be not too much further contact with the planning process, but the public was welcome to comment on fringe factors such as safety.

That being said, the article refers to significant involvement with the community prior to the public unveiling of the station art. Certainly more actors were involved than just city representatives. Part of this process involved meetings with community members, which were sited near the stations where the artwork would eventually be located. One artist recalled that it

was difficult to bring people to these events, stating often there will be backlash against a particular project when in reality, community meetings on the topic were publicized prominently and in advance but weren't well attended. It's difficult to get people there to join the conversation (personal communication). This highlights a problem with the institutionalization of "community public art:" when community input isn't organic, or is solicited through formal channels (solicited and facilitated by the Metropolitan Council, for example), it becomes more difficult to genuinely engage community members and build interest in a public art project.

One particularly interesting article stated that the art was there to look at, but "don't touch." The article quotes the head of rail projects discussing the station art, talking about how they are meant to weather wear and tear, and to that end the planners "did not want to install public art where the public could touch it, feel it, and dismember it" (Johnson 2011). This raises questions about who the art is truly meant to serve – the public, or the city through growth? This attitude of "look but don't touch" is almost exactly opposite from the Irrigate project, which invited much community interaction with the art both during planning and implementation.

Project Irrigate

The City of Saint Paul, residents and activists decided that the permanent station art wasn't enough for the neighborhoods lining the LRT tracks. The station art is only one piece of many different art initiatives that are taking place along the corridor. Other initiatives, started by Public Art Saint Paul as well as Irrigate, have committed to installing public art not just along the linear corridor but also into the neighborhoods on either side of University Avenue.

These projects provide a model that is drastically different from the top-down approach of the station art on the Central Corridor. For one thing, the funding for Irrigate is comes from private sources. In the summer of 2011, Springboard for the Arts (a non-profit partnering in

project Irrigate) received hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant money from various private foundations and from national arts funding organizations (City of Saint Paul 2011). Project Irrigate partners with the City of Saint Paul, Springboard for the Arts, Public Art Saint Paul, and Local Initiatives Support Corporation. The project hopes to fund many different public art installations along the Central Corridor, not just along University Avenue, but in the neighborhood as well along the east end of the rail line in West Saint Paul. The initiative is a “creative placemaking” initiative, which connects local artists with their communities through public art projects, both temporary and permanent. This is specifically occurring during the period of construction of the Central Corridor line.

A newspaper article suggests that during the years of construction on the light rail, “bringing people back to businesses and neighborhoods suffering through four years of track, station and road construction [depends] more art than science” (Johnson 2011). The project gives grants to artists, “with the expectation that they’ll partner with a business or community organization to promote and enliven the corridor during construction” (Melo 2012b). As of that article in May 2012, forty artists had been given grants and about 225 had attended training workshops that make them eligible to apply for Irrigate grants.

The focus of the Irrigate artwork is in engaging community members and businesses to engage them in the place and in the present, as examples show. One artist paired with a local school to build a temporary statue of a “Learning Tree” with students. Another set up a month-long conversation station at a bus stop along University, fostering interactions between community members. Pairing with a local bike shop, one promoted workshops for making crazy bikes and then staged a bike ride down University Avenue for all who wanted to join (Springboard for the Arts n.d.). Musicians have paired with various restaurants along the

corridor, giving them a chance to showcase their talents and attract patrons to restaurants.

Virtually everyone who goes through their brief training process is funded, as long as they have a community collaborator and follow basic guidelines – it isn't a traditionally competitive process, and the barriers to entry are low (personal communication).

Irrigate aims to address one of the key contradictions between the dual roles of the station art as the both a tool for economic growth and for community connectedness is that economic redevelopment often entails a pushing out of businesses and residents. Because the artists need to pair with community groups or businesses, they are simultaneously creating a dialogue between residents and businesses, thus getting input on what the community needs, and also creating a draw for the business or neighborhood, inviting interactions that will keep businesses afloat during construction, which was one of the main goals of the project (personal communication). This partnership, created from the proposal phase, is a crucial difference from the station art, which seeks public involvement after the proposal phase.

DISCUSSION

The artists doing the station art along the Central Corridor have tried to make their artwork resonate with the neighborhoods they are a part of. Metropolitan Council has also been anxious to have the artwork be a forum where the public's voice can be heard. One artist stated that the public involvement was overwhelming, pointing out that the public hadn't had as much input in other aspects of planning for the Central Corridor LRT, suggesting that this was perhaps to make up for that. Giving the public opportunities to comment in this case brought many people to the table who were angry about a number of things, and were anxious to have their voices heard at least in some aspects of the project.

The public artwork on the project plays a role both in giving the community input into the process and through beautifying the city and contributing to the economic development.

Metropolitan Council touts the artwork as being reflective of community identity and took care to solicit community input from the beginning of this process, although that may have been a way to cover for a lack of community involvement in other aspects of the Central Corridor process. As one of the interviewees commented, there is no better way to kill a movement than to have too many meetings. The controversies, especially at the Dale stop, may have been muted because outraged citizens were given the opportunity to talk at these meetings.

Whatever their motivations, Metropolitan Council did a good job of bringing community members into the planning process early on and facilitating contact with the community through public forums. The artists went through a process of multiple iterations of their themes until they were finally presented, giving the community time to discuss concerns. The fact that the artwork consciously reflects the identities and histories of the residents and neighborhoods shows an attempt to make the stations places for the residents. In the long run, however, the purpose of the LRT line is to revitalize the Central Corridor, and the public art will no doubt be an attraction for the line and for businesses. Although residents may have been heard now, over the course of the next decades, it is unclear whether those same residents or businesses will be around, or how the neighborhoods will be changed.

In spite of efforts, however, the structure of planning institutions makes it difficult for local governments to enhance a cultural sector. Their “institutional configuration of capabilities” at local and regional levels makes it difficult for them to realize the potential for a cultural planning (Markusen 2008, 15). Cities shape the cultural economy in many ways – through land use, redevelopment, ownership of land, and infrastructure (Markusen 2008). This occurs because

cultural planning is divided across multiple sectors of government operating on a limited budget, and often economic development authorities hold the most power for shaping the urban sphere (Markusen 2008). Hence in the city sector, city initiatives often put economic development goals above other goals, as in the case of the central corridor, where the station artwork wasn't initially a part of the station plans.

The station art by nature is less of a community placemaking initiative than Project Irrigate. For one thing, that station art is permanent, so structural concerns about permanence and maintenance have to be taken into consideration. Also, because the station art is limited in the placement on the station itself (because of the architectural similarity between the stations), there are limited ways in which the artwork can engage the community. In contrast, the Irrigate art installations can be temporary, take many different forms, and by nature must involve collaboration between the artist and the community. This means that the artwork engages more directly with those it is meant for. Interestingly enough, however, this model doesn't detract from the "exchange value" of the artwork, because part of the goal of creating a collaborative effort between artists and businesses is to bring visibility to the Central Corridor during the construction period. One key difference is that the Irrigate project aimed to support current businesses on the Central Corridor, whereas the LRT aims to bring in new businesses, which might force out older, independent businesses or displace residents as housing prices go up.

Another key difference is the audience for the artwork and the way in which people can engage with the art. The Irrigate Project is structured so that the artist has to pair with members of the community in order to get funding for the art piece. This tangibly brings more people into the planning process, but the artwork is also designed to engage community throughout its more transient life span. The artwork physically invites community members to tangibly interact with

it, as in the case of the bike race, bus stop conversations, and live music in restaurants. These kinds of projects foster connections between people and creates connections to place for these residents, which strengthens the social fabric of an area.

CONCLUSIONS

Through forums for citizen feedback in addition to citizen participation on review committees, community voices were heard in the planning process for the station art. However, the institutionalized planning process although it solicits public input at all stages of the process isn't a very organic way of engaging the community with the artwork, and thus by nature is less focused on engaging community into the creative placemaking process than other planning models do. Institutionalized methods of public art planning and promotion necessarily are more focused on long-term city goals, such as promoting exchange values rather than on public use value, although cities also have an interest in strengthening the social fabric of their communities. Because the local government controls the planning process in the case of large infrastructure projects like the light rail, their interests ultimately dominate no matter the effort put into placemaking for residents.

Because of this, public artwork incorporated into infrastructure projects led by city or regional government should be combined with different initiatives operating at different scales to fulfill both placemaking and place image goals. A good example of this would be Project Irrigate, which focused more on immediate and deeper community engagement with the artwork, and worked toward strengthening current ties to place and to community rather than looking toward promoting future growth. Public ownership and engagement is difficult when input isn't made the focus and the public an equal collaborator with the artists.

The station artwork on the Central Corridor speaks to both placemaking initiatives and competitive citymaking. For the present, citizen involvement has resulted in artwork that reflects aspects of the communities that they serve. In the long run, it remains to be seen how the station artwork and the Central Corridor line that it serves will contribute change the neighborhoods surrounding it.

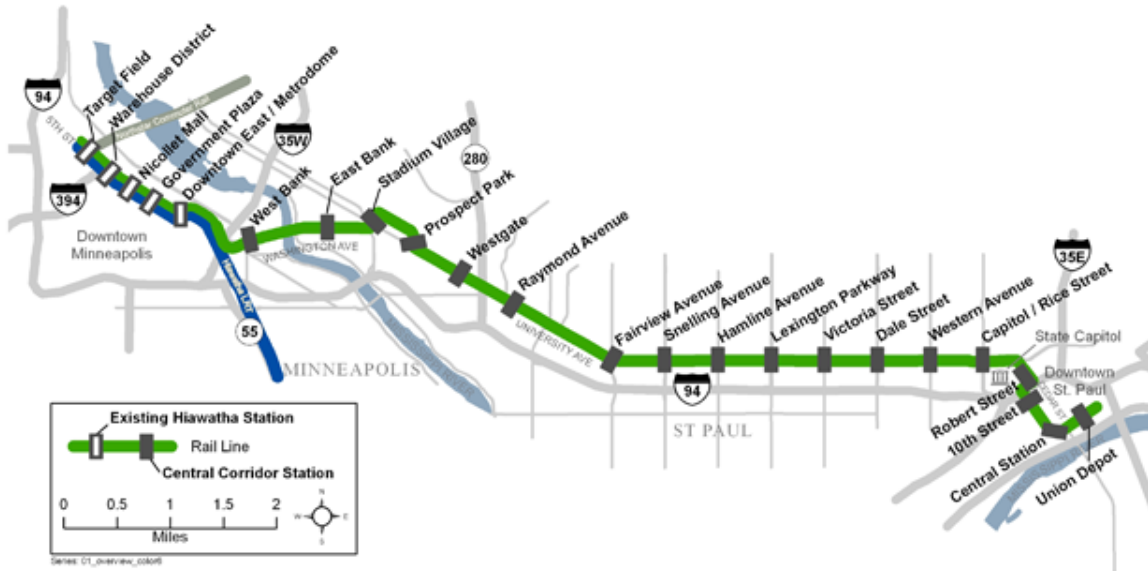


Figure 1. Map of the Central Corridor LRT line, connecting downtown Minneapolis to downtown Saint Paul. The two stations I focus on are Victoria Street and Dale Street (Dornfeld 2012).



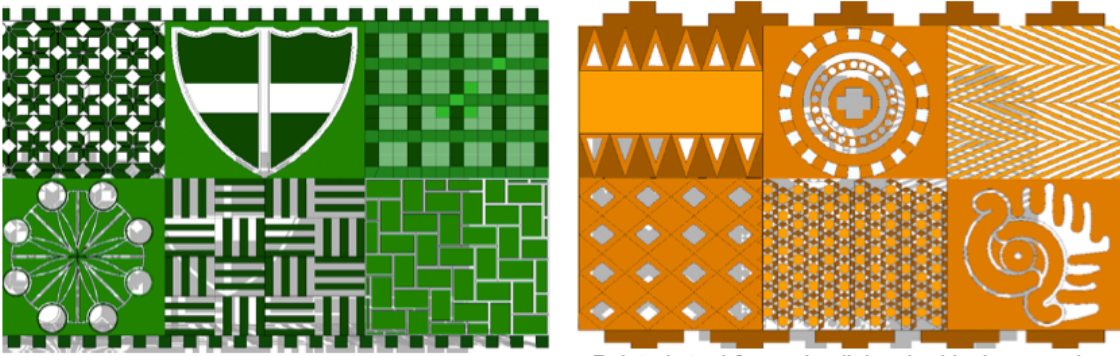


Figure 2. Panels: Dale Street Station, artist Seitu Jones. They are inspired by African American quilts (top left); Asian artifacts (top right); Eastern European icons and symbols (bottom left); and Native icons and symbols (bottom right) (Metropolitan Council 2009).



Figure 3. Flooring: Dale Street Station, artist Seitu Jones. This flowing water motif was inspired by people who had to cross a major world river to arrive in Saint Paul (Metropolitan Council 2009).



Figure 4. Victoria Street Station, artist Foster Willey. The panel to the left shows potential faces (not really the faces that will be portrayed) of residents and activists in the Rondo neighborhood (Metropolitan Council 2012).

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