

ART AS

INFRASTRUCTURE

An Evaluation of Civic Art  
and Public Engagement  
in Four Communities in  
South Los Angeles County

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County  
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Commission

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The field of public art has broadened its range of practice from monuments depicting historical figures that dominated the landscape of 19th century and early 20th century cities and the placement of fine art sculptures and murals in public venues. Today's public art includes artistic practices that emphasize community involvement and may not result in permanently sited artworks. Among commissioning agencies, there has been a shift to include members of the community in the early phases of artist selection and artwork development, often with the intention to avoid "failed" artworks that are vandalized or must be removed because of controversy. In addition, public art projects, like other creative placemaking efforts, are increasingly wedded to larger community development goals, intensifying the interest in measuring outcomes. Public art is not typically formally evaluated because of a number of challenges that it poses, but the benefit of developing artworks as part of beautification and anti-blight projects is widely assumed. Using murals and artworks as a graffiti vandalism deterrence mechanism is often mentioned in graffiti abatement programs in particular. Nonetheless, little has been done to measure the effectiveness of artworks as graffiti vandalism deterrence or the outcomes related to temporary participatory artworks.

This report is an evaluation of a range of outcomes at the four sites in the Creative Graffiti Abatement Project in Los Angeles County. The Creative Graffiti Abatement project artworks are examples of artistic contributions to the physical and social aspects of civic infrastructure. In this project, the LA County Arts Commission drew on its experience realizing arts-based solutions that enhance the value of civic spaces, securing grant funding to continue and expand its practice in this area, with the support of the Office of the Second Supervisorial District of the County. The LA County Regional Parks and Open Space District, which funds the development and improvement of parks, recreational, cultural and community facilities and open spaces, approved the project in 2013. The Arts Commission proposed that public art and engagement financed by the grant would increase community pride and a sense of ownership of public assets, which would ultimately lead to the reduction of graffiti vandalism at county properties. The project team designed the project to

- ▶ Ensure that public engagement was integral and ongoing
- ▶ Create new cultural assets that would meet the needs of each site
- ▶ Test a peer-to-peer model to ensure that artists were fully supported to meet the demands of the project
- ▶ Incorporate evaluation as a component of the project design

The Project Coordination Committee selected the project sites from parks and libraries in the Second Supervisorial District based on the high frequency of graffiti vandalism at the sites and opportunities to leverage other county investments for success, such as percent for art funds from renovation or construction projects.<sup>1</sup>

## THE SELECTED ARTISTS AND SITES WERE

- ▶ **Cocina Abierta Collective** for Victoria Community Regional Park
- ▶ **Fausto Fernandez** for East Rancho Dominguez Park and Community Center
- ▶ **Greenmeme** for A.C. Bilbrew Library
- ▶ **Swift Lee Office** for Woodcrest Library
- ▶ **Louise Griffin** for assistance with fabrication and installation elements where needed

Because public engagement was crucial to success, an additional artist was hired early in the process to conduct initial site research, help select appropriate artists, collaborate with the four selected artists in creating public engagement plans and create demonstration programs to model future engagement opportunities at each site. **Sara Daleiden of s(o)ul** was hired in this capacity and as part of her production of engagement programs she worked with director Mark Escribano to create a documentary video that follows the process of artwork development at each site. The final video, titled “Civic Art: Four Stories from South Los Angeles,” is to be used as an engagement tool with community members, government employees and public art administrators.

The artists developed site-responsive artworks to lessen graffiti vandalism using strategies that grew out of their engagement in and with the community. Some of the strategies that they used included

- ▶ Improving the aesthetic appearance of the sites
- ▶ Activating underutilized spaces to increase activity at the sites
- ▶ Creating surfaces that deter graffiti vandalism
- ▶ Building social cohesion
- ▶ Highlighting facility assets and community history

This report evaluates the success of these strategies in shifting perceptions, increasing positive activity, reducing graffiti vandalism, building a sense of community ownership and building capacity for future arts and culture activities at the sites. While this report takes a summative approach to evaluating outcomes, the evaluator was embedded in planning and public engagement activities throughout the project, combining elements of a developmental evaluation approach with strategies from ethnographic inquiry. In developmental evaluation, the evaluator provides real-time feedback to program staff members so that they can adapt programs to complex and evolving situations. Ethnographic research emphasizes data collection through fieldwork methods like participant observation in order to represent and analyze cultural patterns and perspectives. This embedded approach to documenting the process, products and outcomes of this project enabled an evaluation of the factors that contributed to and mitigated success in the development of these complex art projects in public facilities.

## FINDINGS

### ATTRIBUTES OF AESTHETIC EXCELLENCE

To evaluate the aesthetic dimension of the works, the evaluator used the “Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change” framework to analyze aspects of the artworks and the artistic processes that were particular contributors to the success of these projects.<sup>2</sup> Of the 11 attributes in the framework, five emerged as prominent elements in the artworks and artistic processes developed as part of this project:

- ▶ Openness
- ▶ Sensory Experience
- ▶ Communal Meaning
- ▶ Risk-taking
- ▶ Cultural Integrity

## SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS OF PLACE AND ABATING GRAFFITI VANDALISM THROUGH BEAUTIFICATION

Community members interpreted the installation of artwork at these public facilities as positive investment in their neighborhoods and as signs that the government cares about their community. General perceptions of the parks improved dramatically, particularly in the areas of cleanliness and safety. The artworks encouraged new uses of the public facilities as well as supporting the positive activities already happening there. As expected, the role of the artworks in promoting stewardship and reducing the amount of vandalism at these parks and libraries is entangled with several other factors. Insufficient data were available to evaluate graffiti vandalism at the two library sites. Also, the administrative data used to measure graffiti vandalism may indicate changes in staff behavior rather than graffiti vandalism itself. While the community's perception of cleanliness and safety improved dramatically at both parks where graffiti vandalism removal was monitored, only East Rancho Dominguez Park and Community Center experienced a reduction in requests for graffiti vandalism removals. It is impossible to be certain why there was a difference in outcomes at these two communities, but by looking at outcomes at all four sites, the evaluator was able to identify some factors that contribute to successful beautification outcomes:

- ▶ Highly visible artworks may be more effective for graffiti vandalism abatement.
- ▶ Pairing art projects and new infrastructure can increase the impact of both kinds of investment.
- ▶ A well-maintained appearance, through artworks and a lack of graffiti vandalism, and the presence of family-oriented activity can foster the perception that a place is safe and welcoming.

## ENHANCING ATTACHMENT AND A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

It is almost a truism that if people are involved in making an artwork, then they will feel a sense of ownership for the artwork and they will respect it and care for it. Sometimes this involvement is seen to be in tension with the development of professional artwork, but this project demonstrated how different engagement strategies can foster attachment and a sense of ownership through the interaction between communities and professional artists. The following lessons learned about successful engagement strategies across the four sites in this project could be instructive for other public art engagement projects:

- ▶ Involving community members in design or fabrication of artworks builds a sense of ownership.
- ▶ Communication and interaction with artists during the development of an artwork also builds a sense of ownership.
- ▶ Artistic engagement that provides space for social interaction among participants can foster bonds important for social cohesion and civic engagement.
- ▶ Investigating and working with the attachments to place that already exist in a community is fruitful for engagement efforts.
- ▶ The lengthy timeline of physical construction, whether for artworks or other infrastructure investments, is a challenge for meaningful engagement activities.

## BUILDING CAPACITY FOR FUTURE ARTS AND CULTURE PROGRAMMING

The goal that these programs would live on in the form of continuing arts and culture programs at these parks and libraries was perhaps the most ambitious and complex part of this project. The artists worked hard to create programs related to the artworks that could be replicated by staff or

community leaders. Some staff members have expressed their willingness to do so, but by the end of the data collection period, no concrete plans had been made for the programs to be repeated. It is too early to see long-term outcomes in terms of programming at these facilities, but capacity was built for future arts and culture programming by expanding the concept of what art is and what kinds of programming are possible at these facilities. These programs were most effective as “demonstration projects” that were mostly implemented by artists, and the evidence suggests that staff members will need training and other resources if they want to continue any of the programs. This project was a learning process about the possibilities and challenges for further partnerships between the Arts Commission and the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Public Library:

- ▶ As demonstration projects, the engagement programs generated new ideas for programs and strategies to engage the public among the partner department staff members.
- ▶ Staff turnover was a clear challenge in the implementation of these projects for capacity building.
- ▶ There are differences between the two partner departments in terms of capacity for future programming given the different resources and existing structures of these departments.

## TAKE AWAYS

These projects were successful in shifting perceptions of place, supporting existing positive use and encouraging new activity at the project sites. While the data are ambiguous about whether or not the projects were successful at reducing graffiti vandalism, the projects contributed to the overarching goals of improving stewardship and a sense of community ownership of public facilities. The projects also show the promising possibilities for further arts and culture programs at these neighborhood parks and libraries. The report offers detailed recommendations for public art commissioning agencies, arts organizations, artists and evaluators implementing similar projects.

These findings also highlight embedding meaningful engagement activities in public art as an important aspect of government investment in communities. Like libraries, parks and recreation centers themselves, artwork is part of civic infrastructure, understood as physical structures and spaces, as well as social processes of management and use that animate them. Programs offered in these spaces are part of the infrastructure that builds and supports relationships between community members and also between community members and government. **This evaluation demonstrates how physical and social artworks in these kinds of everyday civic spaces can contribute to community development and help to ensure that everyone has access to the benefits of arts and culture.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMISSIONING AGENCIES

- ▶ Approach the development of physical artwork as an opportunity for artistic engagement with the public and staff throughout the process, including installation and post-launch, instead of simply during the design phase as a prophylactic against community blowback.
- ▶ Create a “maintenance plan” for temporary participatory artworks that could involve maintaining contact with the community members involved, specific plans for additional programming or the distribution of documentation materials.
- ▶ Support artist engagement work with a comprehensive communication plan for each project that defines responsibilities for artists and project staff.
- ▶ Clarify documentation and data collection roles and responsibilities within artistic engagement programs.
- ▶ Facilitate the communication of expectations and goals between government agencies and artists at the beginning of a project.
- ▶ Create flexibility within contracting structures for artists who create work based on engagement to design deliverables based on their site research.

## OPPORTUNITIES IN PARKS AND LIBRARIES

- ▶ Create multi-year artist-in-residence opportunities in neighborhood parks and libraries focused on public engagement.
- ▶ Partner directly with a neighborhood association, Parks After Dark advisory council or Friends of the Library group to increase civic engagement.
- ▶ Build staff capacity for arts and culture programming at neighborhood parks and libraries by providing docent training for on-site staff, pairing staff members and artists to co-produce programs or creating cohort programs of staff members to foster a learning community.
- ▶ Increase direct engagement with teenagers and young adults to foster civic engagement and develop young community leaders during fabrication or by partnering with organizations working with young adults.

## EVALUATING PUBLIC ART AND ENGAGEMENT

- ▶ Carefully assess administrative or program data to balance the efficiencies that might be gained by using data that are already being collected with inconsistencies in data collected by non-research staff.
- ▶ Administer surveys orally or conduct on-the-spot interviews in the midst of artistic engagement programs or other events in order to get richer qualitative responses to artwork.
- ▶ Consult an evaluator or researcher to guide the ethical use of data and identifying information about participants.
- ▶ Invite artists to collaborate with research staff on evaluation and data collection efforts, such as embedding data collection in engagement activities or designing collection instruments or protocols. Assess artists’ capacity to conduct data collection tasks and support artists in developing consistent documentation practices.

# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

This report is an evaluation of the Creative Graffiti Abatement Project, implemented by the Los Angeles County Arts Commission from 2013 to 2017 in four neighborhoods in south Los Angeles County. The Arts Commission intended that artworks at parks and libraries in these neighborhoods would increase community pride and a sense of ownership of public assets and ultimately lead to the reduction of graffiti vandalism at county properties. The project team intended public engagement to be present at all phases of the project, from pre-design to post-installation. The project would create new cultural assets that artists designed to meet the needs of each site and test a professional development model that would provide peer support to artists in fabrication and engagement as necessary. The project team also embraced evaluation as a component of the project design.

This approach grew out of a 2012 partnership with the Office of the Fourth Supervisorial District and the LA County Department of Beaches and Harbors, where the Arts Commission's Civic Art Program developed a prototype project for Dockweiler Beach intended to teach responsible public art making, to contribute to the character of the beach and to reduce the occurrence of graffiti vandalism on beach buildings

and structures. Created by artist team Roberto Del Hoyo and David Russell of Mobile Mural Lab, the artwork's design took the extensive graffiti vandalism problem on the buildings and turned it into a solution. Teens under the mentorship of master graffiti artists and the larger public were invited to cover the walls of the building in spray painted words collected during two free community events at the beach held earlier in the summer. Over the collage of words, the Mobile Mural Lab artists painted the name "Isidore Bernard Dockweiler," the 19th century civic leader who advocated for public parks and beaches, for whom the beach is named. Finally, reflecting the fact that this beach is heavily used at night, the artists also painted a fossil image in glow-in-the-dark paint only visible at night over the entire mural. The final 385 linear-foot-long mural visually minimizes any future graffiti vandalism through a multi-layered composition.

For the design of the Creative Graffiti Abatement project, the Arts Commission also drew on its experience leading other artist-driven engagement and creative placemaking initiatives like the "Del Aire Fruit Park" and "Project Willowbook." Also in 2012, the Arts Commission worked with artist collective Fallen Fruit, who through a close collaboration with the Office of the Second Supervisorial District and the Department of Parks and Recreation, planted the "Del Aire Fruit Park," an urban orchard to be sustained, nurtured and harvested by the public. Fallen Fruit hosted a fruit tree adoption, a fruit jam-making event and a tree planting day at Del Aire Park to generate a sense of shared ownership and long-term stewardship of the civic art project among residents, local students and county staff.



**FIGURE 1** Dockweiler Paint Day





**FIGURE 2** “Nite Write” by Roberto Del Hoyo and David Russell

When the Arts Commission was in the planning phases of the Creative Graffiti Abatement project in 2013, the Commission completed “Project Willowbrook: Cultivating a Healthy Community through Arts and Culture,” with the support of the Office of the Second Supervisorial District and an Our Town award from the National Endowment for the Arts. The project consisted of two phases. During phase one, LA Commons and Arts Commission staff conducted stakeholder interviews, focus groups and surveys to discover cultural assets, artists, organizations, venues, programs and artworks that are unique to Willowbrook and adjacent communities. In phase two, artist Rosten Woo engaged the community by going door to door in order to curate a home, garden and vehicle tour of Willowbrook in his project titled, “Willowbrook is...” Information collected through this process and community gatherings was organized as a tool that may be used by planners to understand needs of Willowbrook residents. Through artistic planning tools, Project Willowbrook facilitated dialogue between residents and city planners to create a shared platform for civic development in Willowbrook.

Based on the success of the Dockweiler Beach project and these other artist-led engagement and creative placemaking efforts, the Arts Commission sought grant approval to continue and expand its practice in this area, with the support of the Office of the Second Supervisorial District. The LA County Regional Parks and Open Space District, which funds the development and improvement of parks, recreational,

cultural and community facilities and open spaces, approved the project in 2013.<sup>3</sup> The Arts Commission proposed that public art and engagement financed by the grant would increase community pride and a sense of ownership of public assets, which would ultimately lead to the reduction of graffiti vandalism at county facilities.

As part of the project, two parks and two libraries in the Second Supervisorial District were selected for arts interventions based on the high frequency of graffiti vandalism at the sites and the ability to leverage other county investments for success. Civic Art Program staff facilitated the selection process and conducted initial site assessments to match artists with the needs and opportunities at each site. The artists and artist teams were selected by a committee that included a representative from the Second District, Public Library departmental staff, Parks and Recreation departmental staff, a representative from the Graffiti Abatement Program in the Department of Public Works and arts professionals. Artists and artist teams were selected based on their artistic merit and their experience working with communities and/or government agencies.

### THE SELECTED ARTISTS WERE

- ▶ **Cocina Abierta Collective** for Victoria Community Regional Park
- ▶ **Fausto Fernandez** for East Rancho Dominguez Park and Community Center
- ▶ **Greenmeme** for A.C. Bilbrew Library
- ▶ **Swift Lee Office** for Woodcrest Library
- ▶ **Louise Griffin** for assistance with fabrication and installation elements where needed

Because public engagement was crucial to success, an additional artist was hired early in the process to conduct site research into key community groups and stakeholders and to help select appropriate artists. This public art and engagement consultant would also collaborate with the artists in creating public engagement plans and be tasked to create demonstration programs to model future engagement

opportunities at each site. **Sara Daleiden of s(o)ul** was hired in this capacity and as part of her production of engagement programs, she worked with director Mark Escribano to create a documentary video that follows the process of artwork development at each site. The final video, titled “Civic Art: Four Stories from South Los Angeles,” is being used as an engagement tool with community members, government employees and public art administrators.

The Arts Commission based the overall project design on the hypothesis that when the whole community values an artwork or other cultural asset, graffiti writers will respect that community attachment and avoid writing on that property. The artists developed site-responsive artworks that grew out of their engagement in and with the community in order to foster that sense of community ownership. The resulting artworks used a variety of strategies to increase a sense of ownership and lessen graffiti vandalism:

- ▶ Improving the aesthetic appearance of the sites
- ▶ Activating underutilized spaces to increase activity at the sites
- ▶ Creating surfaces that deter graffiti vandalism
- ▶ Building social cohesion
- ▶ Highlighting facility assets and community history

This report evaluates the success of these strategies for shifting perceptions, increasing positive activity, reducing graffiti vandalism, building a sense of community ownership and building capacity for future arts and culture activities at the sites. This report is situated within discussions about the impact of public art for graffiti abatement and in general, the role of engagement and participatory art in shaping public spaces and concerns about equity and inclusion in creative placemaking. Therefore, the report begins with a brief review of the recent literature discussing these issues and ends with recommendations for others implementing and evaluating similarly complex public art projects. The body of the report includes a section on methods, a description of the project implementation, sections on outcomes for each site and a section outlining overall findings and factors for success.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## THE EFFECTS OF GRAFFITI AND STRATEGIES FOR ABATEMENT

As a general term, graffiti refers to writing or painting illicitly placed on a wall or other surface, often in public view, but it is easy to recognize that there are distinctions to be made in the widely practiced types of graffiti.<sup>4</sup> While there are no universally agreed upon taxonomies, one type of graffiti is commonly distinguished as “hip hop graffiti” in reference to a tagging subculture that started in the 1960s and 1970s in Philadelphia and New York and has spread all over the world along with other aspects of hip hop culture.<sup>5</sup> Another kind of graffiti that seems easily distinguished is “gang graffiti,” which refers to the presence of gang identification or other gang material in graffiti.<sup>6</sup> Besides these two categories, there is little agreement about finer distinctions between types of graffiti and the artistic dimensions of the different types, whether in reference to more elaborate hip hop graffiti like “throw-ups” or “pieces,” unsanctioned street art like stenciling or community-led mural projects.<sup>7</sup> A 2002 Department of Justice guide for police on addressing the problem of graffiti distinguishes six different kinds of graffiti, their features and motivations for writing as: gang, common tag, artistic tag, conventional graffiti (spontaneous), conventional graffiti (malicious or vindictive) and ideological.<sup>8</sup>

**Graffiti Vandalism:** Both the term “graffiti” and how to classify the style of expression it represents are subject to debate and highly dependent on context. Given the lack of consensus about what kinds of graffiti are desirable or undesirable, this evaluation report uses the term “graffiti vandalism” to indicate graffiti that community members and the caretakers of public sites identify as unwanted. Vandalism, understood to mean the deliberate destruction of public or private property, includes other types of actions besides graffiti. Likewise, some graffiti is intended to improve public and private spaces.

Current policy discussions usually situate graffiti within the context of neighborhood disorder and blight and the potential negative effects of physical disorder like litter or property disrepair on a community.<sup>9</sup> These discussions continue to be dominated by the “broken windows theory” that disorder in a neighborhood is a gateway to additional crime and blight if it is not addressed. This theory was offered as an argument for community policing and the enforcement of low-level crimes in 1982 and has been much debated since.<sup>10</sup> More recently, sociologists have been questioning the causal mechanisms assumed in the theory and providing evidence that collective efficacy, defined as the ability of members of a community to control behavior in their community, is more of a determining factor in crime prevention than physical disorder.<sup>11</sup> However, neighborhood disorder has been linked to other public health risks such as psychological distress, depression, substance abuse and post-traumatic stress disorder.<sup>12</sup>

Studies have also confirmed the role of neighborhood disorder in residents’ feelings of safety and neighborhood satisfaction, but whether graffiti alone is negatively perceived by the public is more ambiguous.<sup>13</sup> In a recent study in the Netherlands, more than half the initial responses to graffiti were neutral in tone, and the type, content and physical context of graffiti factored into respondents’ evaluative judgments.<sup>14</sup> A survey about graffiti in the City of Seattle found that 39 percent of respondents did not think that graffiti was a problem, while 40 percent of respondents rated it as a medium-sized or a very big problem.<sup>15</sup> The report suggested that there could be a correlation between those who think graffiti is a problem and those affected by graffiti personally. As in a similar study with focus groups in Britain, the open-ended responses included many attempts to distinguish between different types of graffiti, indicating that unsanctioned street art and other forms of

art graffiti have community support, but the community may be concerned about gang graffiti and other graffiti that they consider to be vandalism.<sup>16</sup> In this way, graffiti seems to be qualitatively different from other types of neighborhood disorder it is often grouped with, such as litter or illegal dumping, and more relevant in discussions about the aesthetics and politics of public space.<sup>17</sup>

Despite these ambiguities in the research, unsanctioned graffiti is illegal in many communities in the U.S., and graffiti abatement programs are common. The City of Seattle found that best practices for cities hoping to reduce graffiti include eradication, enforcement and engagement efforts, with the key element of creating a baseline and measurement mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of programs and progress towards the goals of graffiti abatement.<sup>18</sup> One strategy for graffiti abatement that is frequently mentioned is having dedicated walls or graffiti tolerance zones. Although it was not necessarily begun as a graffiti abatement strategy, one of the most famous was “5 Pointz” in Queens, NY, a warehouse building that was used as a curated graffiti muralist space from the 1990s until the property was demolished for redevelopment in 2014.<sup>19</sup> In Los Angeles, a space called “The Graff Lab” is open to children and adults to do graffiti and aerosol art as an alternative to practicing graffiti on other surfaces illegally.<sup>20</sup> However, as a graffiti abatement method, tolerance zones are not implemented as often as zero tolerance eradication and only have mixed evidence to support their effectiveness.<sup>21</sup> Case studies suggest that dedicated graffiti walls must be carefully monitored and youth leaders should be engaged to manage and self-police spaces to guard against spillover tagging.<sup>22</sup>

Different communities each experience a different mix of types of graffiti, which suggests different approaches for abatement and mitigation. In Los Angeles, both hip hop and gang graffiti are prevalent, but gang graffiti may be more common in a particular location because of the territoriality of gangs.<sup>23</sup> Given the public’s discernment between different types of graffiti and its effects, another approach is to prioritize the

removal and prosecution of offensive or dangerous types of graffiti.<sup>24</sup> Other approaches to graffiti prevention stem from crime prevention through environmental design principles such as territorial enforcement, natural surveillance, natural access control, activity support, image/space maintenance and target hardening through physical security like fences or defensive hedges.<sup>25</sup>

Using murals and artworks as a graffiti deterrence mechanism is often mentioned in graffiti abatement programs.<sup>26</sup> The installation of murals in graffiti hot spots has been done in Los Angeles at Dockweiler Beach by the LA County Arts Commission, in Seattle by Artworks, by the Mural Arts Program in Philadelphia, which grew out of the Philadelphia Anti-Graffiti Network, and by Keep Albuquerque Beautiful’s mural program.<sup>27</sup> In Los Angeles, a region with a rich Chicano/a muralist tradition, the confluence of murals commissioned on freeways for the 1984 Olympics, the rise of a competitive hip hop graffiti culture and a lack of funding for preservation led to a period in the 1990s and 2000s where murals became graffiti attractants rather than deterrents because writers noticed that their graffiti was not removed from murals.<sup>28</sup> Many existing murals entered into a state of limbo when the City of Los Angeles enacted a ban on hand-painted murals in 2002, since their owners were uncertain whether they should invest in restoration.<sup>29</sup> The city reversed the ban in 2013 with a mural registration ordinance that requires all new murals to be treated with anti-graffiti coating that makes them easier to maintain, turning murals into less attractive targets for graffiti.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the recommendations and practice of using murals as an abatement strategy, little has been done to measure the effectiveness of murals as graffiti deterrence. A notable exception is a pair of studies conducted in New Zealand and Perth, Western Australia, where the researchers monitored the walls around murals before and after their installation for instances of graffiti. The first study found a reduction in graffiti on the mural wall, but possibly an increase in graffiti on an adjacent wall that was not being monitored three months after installation.<sup>31</sup>

The second study found a reduction in graffiti immediately after installation, but an increase in graffiti later in the monitoring period.<sup>32</sup> This study also noted factors that possibly deterred the incidence of graffiti on specific walls such as security cameras and the more regular removal of graffiti on public assets. The authors of this second study ultimately conclude that the question of whether public art deters graffiti is much more complex than just measuring the effect of the presence of a mural on the surrounding walls. Given the other literature noting that the public responses to graffiti vary by type of graffiti, content and physical location and the wide range of types of graffiti, presumably with their own subcultures, contextual factors should play a larger role in evaluating the effectiveness of artistic graffiti abatement efforts.<sup>33</sup> Researchers should pay attention to the physical features surrounding artworks and their placement, the content of artworks, the motivations for the prevalent types of graffiti in the area and the process of installation. These findings suggest that murals should be combined with other graffiti abatement strategies in order to be effective.

## EVOLVING PUBLIC ART AND ENGAGEMENT

The field of public art has broadened its range of practice from the representational monuments depicting historical figures and allegorical values that dominated the landscape of 19th century and early 20th century cities and the placement of fine art sculptures and murals in public venues. Today's public art includes artistic practices that emphasize community involvement and may not result in permanently sited artworks. A chapter in a recent edited volume on public art and engagement traces the evolution of Scottsdale (AZ) Public Arts' programs from commissioning temporary participatory artworks to developing art programming aimed at stimulating a business corridor after the recession and transforming public space at the center of community development, which is emblematic of a shift happening in many programs around the country.<sup>34</sup> As part of this shift, public art programs are increasingly seeking to consult with and include community members in the processes of selection and artwork

development, when previously arts professionals had most decision-making power in these processes.<sup>35</sup> For example, the chapter on Scottsdale Public Art highlights how they involve city representatives and community members who feel strongly about the project (either for or against) in their artist selection panels.<sup>36</sup> In the same volume, the City of Los Angeles explains the benefits of community engagement during the development process, profiling projects that build relationships among public art administrators and other city staff and among community members representing different interests, as well as building goodwill between citizens and government.<sup>37</sup>

There is also an increased interest in understanding how a community receives and engages with public art after it is installed. Earlier writing on public art highlighted the critical reception of artworks and if community responses were considered, the goal was to understand why some artworks provoked controversy and some did not.<sup>38</sup> Notably, Steven Tepper found that in a sample of public artworks commissioned by the federal government, abstract artworks placed in smaller cities generated the most controversy, especially when the community was not asked to participate in the artwork development process.<sup>39</sup> Artist Anita Glesta argues that site responsiveness includes the artist's response and engagement with the community and describes her experience of a sense of community ownership of the artwork in the form of notifying her when the artwork needed maintenance.<sup>40</sup> Glesta and K. M. Williamson emphasize the importance of monitoring and observing artworks after they are installed to understand the community's reaction. Williamson provides examples of how communities initiate engagement with artworks, either positively through adding their own decorations and holding events near the artwork or negatively through critical complaints. Williamson argues that indifference is more dangerous than a negative response and that public art programs can stimulate engagement through outreach and redirect negative engagement through programming.<sup>41</sup>

Larger discussions about engagement in the arts have often focused on nonprofit museums and performing arts settings, but the body of literature and writing on social

practice and participatory art forms offers practical guidance to public art programs looking to expand their community engagement.<sup>42</sup> Case studies from the Irvine Foundation's Exploring Engagement Fund provide a number of practical tips for artists and organizations who are expanding their capacity for community engagement that are relevant to public artists. The lessons learned include recommendations for engaging new populations by investing time, building trust, building community partnerships, shifting marketing efforts toward building relationships, going to new places, trying new approaches and aligning your team with the capabilities necessary for this work.<sup>43</sup> An evaluation of the Irvine Foundation's New California Arts Fund analyzed how arts nonprofits made progress in driving engagement to the core of their identity in ways that are also relevant for public art commissioning agencies. The areas of capacity they identified as necessary for placing engagement at the center are engagement practices and programming, community input structures and processes, measurement and evaluation, staff structures and competencies, leadership and governance, and financial resourcing. The evaluators note that accepting engagement "as a contributor to, rather than a detractor from, artistic excellence" appeared critical in making organizational progress in engagement practices.<sup>44</sup>

Public art has not typically been formally evaluated because of a number of challenges that the field poses, including the facts that

- ▶ The term "public art" refers to range of activities
- ▶ The audience is diffuse and therefore difficult to access
- ▶ The outcomes are often perceptual and intangible
- ▶ Many outcomes only reveal themselves after significant time has passed<sup>45</sup>

Also, public art programs usually do not allot resources for professional evaluation. Public art situations vary too much for toolkits to be easily implemented by program staff and most programs prefer to define unique outcomes for each project. One toolkit that was developed specifically for public

art evaluation provides a matrix for articulating the different values and outcomes for multiple stakeholder groups, as well as a framework for a personal project diary.<sup>46</sup> Another challenge is that it is difficult to determine causation for public art even for economic impact.<sup>47</sup> An evaluation of public art projects aimed at raising the profile of communities in the North of England argues for using logic models to map all of the project activities, their expected short term and long term outcomes and data sources for each indicator of success.<sup>48</sup> This approach helps to highlight what can be measured in the short term and which outcomes are outside the scope of an evaluation. Katherine Gressel outlines promising approaches for evaluating public art based on her discussions with practitioners such as mining press coverage including social media, site visits and a "public art watch" that uses students for participant observation of casual use, participant and resident surveys, community-based proxies and surveys within interpretive programming.<sup>49</sup> Particularly as public art programs encourage their communities to engage their collections online, using interactive "smart" technology can become a tool for evaluation.<sup>50</sup>

Attitudes about public art evaluation are changing as artists increasingly produce socially engaged artwork and as arts administrators partner with sectors like public health that do program evaluation as a matter of course. As participatory art forms and public practice artists are commissioned more frequently to spur civic engagement initiatives, evaluators and arts administrators are starting to see the potential of embedding data collection techniques in creative projects.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, as artists are producing more socially-engaged artwork they are also shaping the criteria by which their work should be evaluated. Animating Democracy's conviction that artists should play a leading role in this discussion led to the development of a framework of aesthetic attributes that can be used to describe excellence in civically and socially driven artwork by artists, evaluators and funders.<sup>52</sup> These attributes expand the criteria for considering aesthetics and rigor beyond the traditional Euro-American standards of artistic quality. Furthermore, Kim Babon has tested a framework for

understanding the role of context in how people receive and interpret public art that holds promise for elaborating what “site specificity” means for individual artworks.<sup>53</sup>

Two formal evaluations of the Mural Arts Program in Philadelphia indicate some of the potential and difficulties for evaluating public art programs. The first was done as the Mural Arts Program was shifting its location within the city government structure and developing as a separate nonprofit entity. This evaluation, completed by the Social Impact of the Arts Program at the University of Pennsylvania, focused on developing data gathering capacity within Mural Arts and proposed an economic community investment leverage model to talk about the impact of engaging the community in the mural making process. In addition, it was recommended that future evaluations focus on the potential for murals to build social capital and bridge capacity among community members and organizations.<sup>54</sup>

The second evaluation, conducted by Yale University School of Medicine, focused on a partnership between the Mural Arts Program and the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability, called Porch Light. In this program, public murals were intended to enhance collective efficacy among residents and the aesthetic quality of the neighborhood so that health risks related to neighborhood decay and disorder would be reduced. Porch Light was also expected to have a positive impact on individual health for people with mental health or substance abuse challenges who were involved in the process of making the murals. The evaluation found that murals changed residents’ perceptions about their neighborhood in terms of collective efficacy and aesthetic quality and perceptions about behavioral health when artworks included behavioral health themes. Evaluators concluded that further research was necessary to determine individual health benefits for program participants. Still, evidence suggested mural-making was positive for individuals and that murals may serve as a catalyst for change and mobilize residents for community action.<sup>55</sup>

## INCREASING CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND PROGRAMMING AT PARKS AND LIBRARIES

The role of parks and libraries, along with arts organizations, in serving as community hubs and catalysts for social wellbeing in communities is becoming more and more recognized in the literature.<sup>56</sup> In a recent field scan of large scale investments in park facilities around the country, Elizabeth Greenspan and Randall Mason argue that libraries, parks and recreation centers should be understood as civic infrastructure, defined as “the physical spaces, buildings, and assets themselves, as well as the habits, traditions, management, and other social, political, and cultural processes that bring them to life—two realms that, together, constitute a whole.” Greenspan and Mason note trends such as the shift in attention from centrally located parks to more neighborhood park spaces for everyday use, which corresponds to a shift in the arts and culture sector to providing neighborhood access to arts and culture.<sup>57</sup> They also argue for the importance of building trust and community engagement as well as investment in long term maintenance and programming, since the neglect of facilities in low income neighborhoods has contributed to residents’ mistrust of the government. Many communities fear that new buildings or other reinvestment will lead to displacement through gentrification.<sup>58</sup>

Recent survey research by the Center for Active Design corroborates this association between well-maintained and programmed parks and libraries, and between civic trust and engagement. Controlling for variables like income and race among others, they found that survey respondents who live near a popular park (whether or not they use the park themselves) are 10 percent more likely to report a high level of civic trust, 14 percent greater satisfaction with police and 13 percent greater satisfaction with their mayor.<sup>59</sup> In addition, maintenance of park features for children and families (playgrounds, recreation centers, sports fields, bathrooms) is extremely influential; they were associated with high levels of civic trust if they are well maintained, but low levels of civic trust when they are in poor condition. Notably the presence of public art and other amenities such as fountains, seating and tables also had a positive effect on civic trust if they were well

maintained, but did not have the same negative relationship with poor maintenance. Subtle design features at the entrance to facilities like seating and greenery were associated with survey respondents' saying they felt extremely welcome at public facilities like libraries.<sup>60</sup>

The County has also been expanding their investment in summer programming at parks through a gang intervention and crime prevention strategy that began in 2010 called Parks After Dark.<sup>61</sup> Selected parks schedule programs in the evening hours Wednesday through Saturday for 10 weeks. Each of the Parks After Dark sites has one music concert during the program that is planned at the same time as a resource fair including other county and neighborhood service providers. Many of these concerts have been funded by LA County's Free Concerts in Public Sites program, which also funds concerts in libraries among other venues.<sup>62</sup> A rapid health impact assessment of the pilot phases of the Parks After Dark program showed the program to be effective in reducing violent crime in the surrounding neighborhood and increasing physical activity for participants.<sup>63</sup> These findings were confirmed by an evaluation of the expanded program and added findings of increased access to other county programs and services and increased social cohesion among participants.<sup>64</sup> A similar program has been implemented by the City of Los Angeles and by a public private partnership in Sacramento called Summer Night Lights. The Alameda (CA) County Sheriff's Office was inspired by these projects to spearhead their own initiative called Eden Night Live aimed at reducing crime and spurring economic development by activating a vacant lot through performances and other activities.<sup>65</sup> This initiative is funded as a creative placemaking project by ArtPlace America as the program is looking for a more permanent location.<sup>66</sup> These programs all evidence the potential for significant community benefits from arts and culture interventions in public facilities.

## THE TURN TO CREATIVE PLACEMAKING AND MEASURING ITS OUTCOMES

These areas of policy and activity—neighborhood disorder, public art and public facilities—all overlap with recent cultural policy discussions in the field of “creative placemaking.” The term rose to prominence with a National Endowment for the Arts sponsored white paper in 2010 by Anne Markusen and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus and has been variously defined ever since in an attempt to capture the breadth of the practices that have been placed under term's umbrella.<sup>67</sup> A recent definition by Maria Rosario Jackson describes creative placemaking as “the integration of arts, culture, and community engaged design into comprehensive community development efforts towards building places where all people can thrive.”<sup>68</sup> The term “placemaking” on its own has been used in community planning discourse since the 1970s to refer to designing public spaces around the people that will use them, drawing on the work of Jane Jacobs who emphasized that community design efforts should be “locally informed, human-centric, and holistic.”<sup>69</sup> Soon after the rise of the term, debates about what creative placemaking should include arose, as well as concerns about whether the practice reinforces a problematic emphasis on the built environment or on economic development. Other debates have centered on whether creative placemaking includes a disregard for the cultural and social layers that already exist in a place, prompting further questions about who creative placemaking is for and whether it contributes to gentrification.<sup>70</sup>

Similarly, the struggle to measure outcomes associated with creative placemaking began early and is ongoing.<sup>71</sup> One approach focused on indicators that can be measured at a community level for cultural vitality, such as the number of arts and culture assets and other “quality of life” and economic indicators.<sup>72</sup> The complexity of creative placemaking projects and their sometimes intangible outcomes has militated against a one-size-fits-all approach to measuring the impact of creative placemaking. As a result, some researchers have turned toward developing indicators of success for specific sectors and specific types of outcomes, as ArtPlace America notably has



been doing.<sup>73</sup> Others have turned to the case study approach to document the complex contextual factors that have contributed to success or created challenges for individual projects.<sup>74</sup>

Some formal evaluations of creative placemaking interventions across multiple sites have contributed to knowledge-building efforts in the field. Some of these evaluations have looked at the collective impact of initiatives that commissioned or funded multiple projects in a geographic area, such as Pillsbury House + Theatre's (Minneapolis) Art Blocks and Arts on Chicago programs and the Tucson Pima Arts Council's P. L. A. C. E. (People, Land, Arts, Culture, and Engagement) Initiative.<sup>75</sup> A few other evaluations have looked at the impact of similar projects in different geographic areas. Slover Linett Audience Research evaluated the Levitt Pavilions approach to neighborhood revitalization through establishing outdoor performance venues. Their report emphasized the importance of programming for creative placemaking efforts and reinforced the need for primary data collection in addition to nationally available indicators for measuring outcomes.<sup>76</sup> The Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC) partnered with Metris Arts Consulting to glean insights from arts and culture led economic development projects across the country and to highlight the benefits of artist leadership in community development efforts.<sup>77</sup>

The case study approach to measuring success for creative placemaking projects also has the advantage of enabling critical evaluation of the process of implementation, since creative placemaking advocates champion the possibilities for projects to increase a community's participation in decision-making processes. The emphasis on civic engagement in the process of creative placemaking dovetails with the rising interest in artist in residence programs where artists are placed within city agencies. For example, the Creative CityMaking program in Minneapolis placed artists in city departments to further the city's racial equity goals of engaging traditionally under-represented communities. The evaluation of the first year of the project looked for new models of engagement and lessons for how to foster lasting change in the organizational culture of the host departments.<sup>78</sup>

Creative placemaking also overlaps with and is sometimes seen as synonymous with inclusive community planning processes, especially where cultural planning is concerned. As a result, cultural asset mapping is often invoked as both data gathering strategy and an engagement strategy that can prioritize a particular community's values in the process of determining and measuring successful outcomes.<sup>79</sup> The Expressing Vibrancy project in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada devised an interesting approach to defining cultural vibrancy by combining a quantitative inventory of cultural assets as experienced at the street level with qualitative impressions collected from residents exploring the neighborhoods on foot. In addition to highlighting elements of a definition of cultural vibrancy, the project team found that highly rated neighborhoods excelled in any combination of at least two elements of vibrancy out of eight, indicating that there is no single factor for determining vibrancy and that each neighborhood has a unique combination making it distinct and authentic.<sup>80</sup> Their findings are emblematic of a theme that runs through these efforts at documenting creative placemaking outcomes: even while the cultural landscape of each community is different and documenting the outcomes of such varied, complex projects is difficult, there is much to gain by sharing what is learned across communities.

## A THREAD OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

These policy discussions about graffiti, public art and engagement, civic engagement at parks and libraries and creative placemaking all serve as the context for the Creative Graffiti Abatement project that is evaluated in this report. While it is not always explicitly framed as such, many of these policy areas are also influenced by and responding to a growing expectation that arts and culture institutions will reflect the diversity of their communities, equitably distribute resources and provide structures for participation that meaningfully include people who are not wealthy and white. As part of its Cultural Equity and Inclusion Initiative, the LA County Arts Commission produced a literature review that surveyed how others in the arts and culture sector have addressed diversity, equity and inclusion.<sup>81</sup> Although public art

programs are not mentioned specifically, the sections of the report on increasing diversity in the arts and culture workforce and among audiences and programming are relevant for the kinds of public art projects in this report. The literature review emphasizes the importance of not just creating opportunities for potential arts professionals from diverse backgrounds, but also creating structures for retention and advancement.<sup>82</sup> The Creative Graffiti Abatement project created possibilities for artists who may have been unfamiliar with the processes of creating public art to succeed and build their professional capacity for receiving public art commissions by receiving peer support from more experienced artists. This report does not evaluate the effect of this model for professional advancement, but the success of other dimensions of these projects suggests that this model may warrant further investigation as part of pathway for increasing the diversity of artists who receive public art commissions.

The impetus to increase neighborhood access to the arts, often through public amenities like parks and libraries, is essentially a push for equitable access to opportunities for arts participation.

In her chapter about public art and civic engagement, Felicia Filer argues that one of the benefits of including the community in decision-making processes around public art is promoting equity for lower socioeconomic communities who might not otherwise have access to art in their neighborhoods.<sup>83</sup> One of the aspects of the discussion about how to increase diversity, equity and inclusion among audiences and programming is the shift from thinking about “audiences” to the notion of “arts participation,” which includes activities in “third sector” or nontraditional arts spaces like homes, parks, subway stations, public squares and street corners.<sup>84</sup> The Creative Graffiti Abatement project developed artworks in the “third sector” spaces of parks and libraries with the intention of also increasing capacity for future arts and culture programming in these spaces. This report contributes lessons learned for those seeking to increase equity in the distribution of resources for arts programming and to promote inclusive arts participation in civic spaces, as well as for those implementing graffiti abatement, public art, civic engagement and creative placemaking projects.

# METHODS

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

The Creative Graffiti Abatement project was designed around the idea that better engagement would lead to better outcomes at the project sites. In other words, involving the community in the development of artworks would lead to artworks that are valued by the community. If the community felt a sense of ownership and attachment for the artworks and the artwork sites, there would be a sense of responsibility among neighborhood leaders to keep the artwork and facilities looking nice. In essence, the projects would increase the desire and ability of community members to enforce social norms against graffiti vandalism. Graffiti writers would respect that the community values this space and avoid destroying community assets. Engagement with youth to encourage them to value public assets would reinforce the social norms against graffiti vandalism. However, the overall project intervention was on community-level perceptions and behavior, and any reduction in graffiti vandalism would be an indirect outcome.

Therefore, the evaluation design focused not just on a reduction of graffiti vandalism and an increase on positive behaviors at these sites, but sought to answer the question of whether or not there was a shift in perceptions and attitudes towards the sites. The guiding evaluation questions were:

- ▶ Did the project change perceptions about these sites?
- ▶ Is there increased positive activity at the facilities and specific intervention spaces?
- ▶ Is there a reduction in graffiti vandalism at the sites?
- ▶ Did the project foster a sense of ownership and attachment to these places?
- ▶ What capacity was built for future arts and culture programming among staff and among community members?

The evaluation answered these questions through a mixed-methods approach, using both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods.

## ENGAGEMENT WOULD LEAD TO A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP AND INDIRECTLY TO LESS GRAFFITI VANDALISM



**FIGURE 3** Theory of Change

## QUANTITATIVE METHODS

**Used administrative program data when appropriate.** Early in the project planning phase, research staff investigated how the County tracks graffiti vandalism and the possibilities for using administrative data to answer the question about the amount of graffiti vandalism at the sites. The possible datasets were graffiti vandalism removal work orders tracked by the Department of Park and Recreation and the County of LA Public Library, data from the Graffiti Abatement Program in the Department of Public Works, and reports of graffiti vandalism to the LA County Sheriff's Department. Only the partner department graffiti vandalism removal work orders capture incidents of graffiti vandalism that are located at the individual parks and libraries, so this dataset was chosen for the analysis of vandalism at the project sites. The evaluator investigated additional administrative data collected within the departments: headcounts of program attendance and casual use at the parks, number of reservations made for particular areas at the parks, database of "report cards" submitted by the public about the parks and door counts of people who came to the libraries. All of these datasets presented some issues for reliability in terms of consistency or completeness and were triangulated with qualitative data sources to confirm their usefulness.

### **Compared between pre- and post-project observation periods.**

For the quantitative measures, administrative data were collected for a period of time before the artwork installation and then compared with the data collected for at least one year after the artwork was installed. For all of the sites, the "pre" observation period started July 1, 2013, to include one year of normal use when no part of the facility was closed for construction at each site. The "post" observation period ended on March 31, 2017, 12 months after the artwork completion at Victoria Park and 16 months after the artwork dedication at East Rancho Dominguez Park and Community Center. The artwork for Woodcrest Library was completed in January 2017, and A.C. Bilbrew Library reopened to the public on February 24, 2017. As a result, there was an insufficient "post" observation period for the libraries, and therefore the evaluation does not provide a quantitative analysis for these sites.



**FIGURE 4** Artists Christina Sanchez Juarez and Sara Daleiden conduct a focus group at Victoria Park

### **Compared project sites to similar parks and libraries.**

Comparison parks and libraries were selected as controls for the quantitative measures in the evaluation. The comparison parks and libraries were selected from other locations in the Second Supervisorial District based on similar amounts of graffiti vandalism, neighborhood demographics and types of facilities. Departmental staff members at the parks and libraries confirmed the selections based on their knowledge of the recent programming history for each location. Ultimately, these "controls" were discovered to be of limited utility because too many other factors influenced graffiti vandalism, activity and perception outcomes. For instance, there was a shooting adjacent to one of the comparison parks during the post-project observation period that led to staff turnover and other factors that drove down participation at that park. As a result, the comparison site analysis focused primarily on the graffiti vandalism removals and included a second comparison to the countywide graffiti vandalism removals, since the measures for participation and perception for this particular comparison park were clearly affected by other factors.

## QUALITATIVE METHODS

Civic Art Program staff integrated evaluation activities into the design of the project. As a result, artists and evaluation staff collaborated throughout the project, starting in the design phase. Qualitative data collection continued through planning for the artwork launch and demonstration projects and after the artwork and programs were completed. Community

feedback and perspectives from on-site staff were given priority in this data collection process. In alignment with the LA County Arts Commission's Research and Evaluation Quality Assurance standards, staff collected informed consent forms at focus groups and interviews that included consent to be filmed when necessary. All qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo software.

**Partnered with artists to lead some data collection efforts.**

Where it was relevant, artists collected qualitative data in interviews and focus groups with staff and community members. Evaluation staff developed protocols for these interviews and focus groups, including specific questions about graffiti vandalism. Artists mixed these questions into their own process for soliciting design input and information about each site.

**Embedded data collection in engagement activities.**

The evaluator and artists collaborated to design data collection techniques that doubled as engagement activities. This was an iterative process that allowed evaluation staff to refine survey and interview questions and to field test data collection methods. One example was collecting surveys using the form of a recipe exchange, mirroring a strategy used earlier in the artist-led engagement activities. Another example was an outreach table at a park event, where the tables included a drawing activity and participants were invited to give feedback about the site in exchange for oranges cut into an attractive snack.

**Shifted survey methods from passive instruments to on the spot informal interviews.** The process of gathering community feedback on the artworks began with written surveys distributed at events. Next, a survey was designed in the form of a guest book that would capture feedback from community members who might use the facilities outside of formal programs. However, the guest book turned out to be too passive to be self-administered, and written survey questions elicited only superficial aesthetic responses to the artwork. After receiving much more in-depth feedback during engagement activities, the guest book was discarded in order to exclusively survey using an informal interview method. Evaluation staff orally administered questions to community members at events using a protocol of open-ended questions

and prompts tailored to the event and the site. Where relevant, bilingual research assistants conducted the informal interviews.

**Incorporated ethnographic methods into project evaluation.**

Since an evaluator was embedded in planning and engagement activities throughout the project, the evaluation used an ethnographic approach to document informal interactions with staff and community members. An evaluator trained in ethnography conducted participant observations of engagement activities when possible. In addition, the evaluator had access to the footage collected as part of the documentary project and some of this footage was used as ethnographic data. This ethnographic approach provided an opportunity to document many of the contextual factors that contributed to or mitigated successful outcomes. This approach allowed the evaluator to highlight the aesthetic dimensions of the artworks in the evaluation, including the artistic engagement practices and processes as well as the physical features of the finished artworks. Since these aesthetic factors contributed to project outcomes, the ethnographic approach to documentation allowed the evaluator to consider these aspects in the analysis of the factors that led to successful projects.



**FIGURE 5** Evaluator Susannah Laramée Kidd conducts informal interviews during an engagement activity  
Photo: Sara Daleiden, s(a)ul

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

## ART AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT CONSULTANT AND DOCUMENTARY VIDEO PROJECT

The Arts Commission believes, and prior research suggests, that close coordination and engagement with stakeholders and community members deepens the effectiveness of Civic Art Program efforts and enhances the relevancy of artworks and programming. As part of the contracting process, commissioned artists are required to develop and execute innovative approaches to engaging communities and stakeholders in order create new cultural assets that are designed to meet the needs of each site. The Civic Art Program staff understood engagement to be particularly important for the Creative Graffiti Abatement project and sought to deepen and extend engagement efforts throughout the project timeline. They hoped that more attention to engagement would intensify the effectiveness of the graffiti vandalism mitigation strategies employed by each artist and increase the sense of community ownership that contributes to long-term stewardship of the artwork. To that end, the Arts Commission contracted with artist **Sara Daleiden** as an art and public engagement consultant to partner with each of the artists in developing and executing an engagement plan for each site.

Daleiden directs s(o)ul, a cultural production consultancy focused on creating social interactions and platforms for exchange in development projects. With bases in Los Angeles and Milwaukee, her work encourages the valuing of public space, civic participation, economic sustainability, pedestrian awareness and celebration of difference. Her scope of work for this project included conducting initial site assessments to identify key groups and stakeholders and providing support to artists in navigating government structures and



**FIGURE 6** Video still of a focus group with the Friends of the Bilbrew Library  
Photo: Mark Escribano and Sara Daleiden, s(o)ul

community dynamics. Daleiden worked with the selected artists to develop and execute community- and artist-specific engagement plans, and then she worked with the artists and the partner county departments to develop and execute post-installation demonstration projects. In addition, Daleiden collaborated with the evaluator to embed evaluation activities in each phase of engagement. Daleiden also produced long term engagement plans, encouraging ongoing community engagement around the artwork at each site that the host departments have the option to pursue on their own.

Daleiden worked with videographer Mark Escribano to develop a documentary video chronicling the development of each artwork. The video is intended to serve as a tool to demystify the production of civic art for the public and to increase the capacity of artists and civic leaders in engagement and civic art development.

## SITE AND ARTIST SELECTION

Based on the Civic Art Program Procedures, whenever a new artwork is commissioned a Project Coordination Committee (PCC) made up of stakeholders is convened to select artists and approve designs.<sup>85</sup> For this project, the PCC also selected the project sites and was comprised of representatives from the Second Supervisorial District of the County of LA, the LA County Department of Parks and Recreation, the County of LA Public Library, the Graffiti Abatement Program in the LA County Department of Public Works, and arts professionals.

The committee selected the four project sites from a list of 12 parks and libraries in the Second Supervisorial District. They considered the frequency of graffiti at the sites and opportunities to leverage other county investments for success, such as renovation or construction projects and other community planning efforts. Two of the communities were the focus of other projects being implemented by the LA County Arts Commission. The committee thought the selected sites were likely to be successful considering all of these contributing factors, which are described in the report section for each site. Sites that were not selected were considered as possible control sites for quantitative data analysis, though the selection of controls ultimately considered all of the parks and libraries in the Second Supervisorial District.

The PCC selected artists based on an invitational request for qualifications process that considered artistic merit and experience working with communities and government entities. In this selection process, project staff saw an opportunity to work with artists who were less experienced in developing permanent public artworks by providing additional support to these artists. The committee considered the site research conducted by Civic Art Program staff and Daleiden in order to match the artists with the needs and opportunities at each site. The selected artists are described in detail in report section devoted to each site. The artists and site pairings were

- ▶ **Cocina Abierta Collective** for Victoria Community Regional Park
- ▶ **Fausto Fernandez** for East Rancho Dominguez Park and Community Center
- ▶ **Greenmeme** for A.C. Bilbrew Library
- ▶ **Swift Lee Office** for Woodcrest Library

Artist **Louise Griffin** was selected to provide assistance with fabrication and installation elements where needed.

## YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The project team made a commitment to employ at-risk youth where possible as part of the project design. To that end, the Arts Commission contracted with the Los Angeles Conservation Corps to provide crews to help with fabrication. The LA Conservation Corps provides job skills training, education and work experience to at-risk young adults and school-aged youth with an emphasis on conservation and service projects in the community. Under the supervision of Griffin, crews from the LA Conservation Corps prepared walls, assisted with stenciling and painted mural elements for the projects at East Rancho Dominguez Park and Community Center, Victoria Community Regional Park and Woodcrest Library.



**FIGURE 7** LA Conservation Corps members painting mural elements at East Rancho Dominguez  
Photo: Louise Griffin

# PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES BY SITE

Given the complexity of the projects and the nuances of place that contributed to the outcomes, each site was evaluated individually first, and then the sites were considered together in order to gather the lessons that can be learned by comparing the sites to each other. This report mirrors that process of analysis by describing each site and its outcomes individually before turning to the overall themes. The report for each site is broken into sections for

- ▶ Site and significant contextual factors
- ▶ Artists and artwork
- ▶ Public engagement activities
- ▶ Data sources
- ▶ Outcomes documented for that site

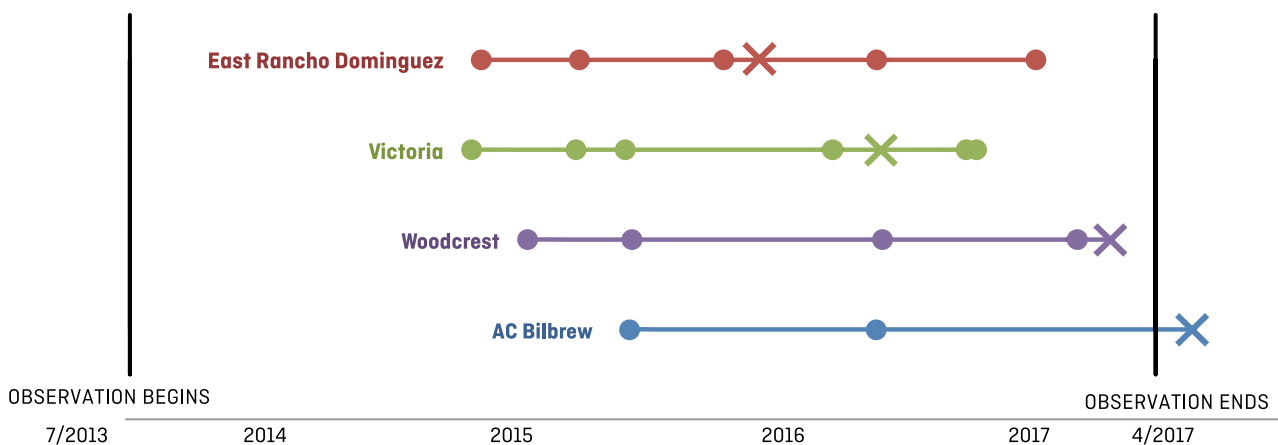
Project sites are presented in the report in the order that the physical artworks were completed so that the projects that were completed first appear first in the report (see the

Project Timeline in figure 8). The Data Appendix provides more detail on the data collection activities that contributed to the analysis presented in this report.

The outcomes for each site are broken down into seven categories: aesthetic, graffiti vandalism and care for physical assets, perception, use and activity, social connection, staff and programs, and attachment and a sense of ownership outcomes. The evaluator developed these categories by grouping together the outcomes identified in the process of qualitative analysis. More qualitative evidence does not necessarily mean an outcome is more significant as it might with quantitative evidence, however qualitative evidence can be stronger or weaker. The outcomes that have stronger qualitative evidence associated with them are presented first in the section for that site, resulting in a slightly different order in the discussion of these outcomes for each site.

## ARTWORK DEVELOPMENT AND ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE

Dots represent public engagement activities and "x" marks the completion of an artwork.



**FIGURE 8** Project Timeline



## EAST RANCHO DOMINGUEZ PARK AND COMMUNITY CENTER, EAST RANCHO DOMINGUEZ, CA

### SITE AND FACTORS

The East Rancho Dominguez Park and Community Center is located in an unincorporated area of the same name in LA County, situated between the cities of Compton and Paramount and north of the city of Long Beach. The community maintains a strong identity distinct from Compton even though there are some areas that are completely surrounded by the city of Compton. Some residents are not aware that they live in an unincorporated area. There is an active East Rancho Dominguez Neighborhood Association that holds meetings at the recreation center in the park.

The artwork development and installation coincided with a construction project that built a community center attached to the recreation center and gymnasium at the park. The project team was able to use the percent for art allocation from this capital project to supplement the grant resources for the artwork at this site. Previously, the community center was located in a leased building across the street and the larger, improved space of the new community center continues to be staffed and programmed by the LA County Department of Workforce Development, Aging, and Community Services. The business district where the park and community center are located has seen a series of developments in recent years, including the East Rancho Dominguez Library in 2012 and a splash pad in a pocket park on Washington Avenue in 2016. The park was also a Parks After Dark site in 2016, a program that has been shown to reduce neighborhood crime by increasing night-time programming at parks in the summer months. Also during the observation period, East Rancho Dominguez was one of five communities included in the Some Place Chronicles project in which artist-led engagement culminated in publication of unique books about each community.

### ARTISTS AND ARTWORK

Fausto Fernandez is a mixed media collage artist whose works include a variety of paintings, public art and community

engagement projects, through which he explores the relationship of nature and technology as they intersect with human behavior. Fernandez was drawn to the history of the Dominguez family, the initial landowners of the area dating back to 1784, and visited the Dominguez Rancho Adobe Museum in his research. There, he learned about important moments in the history of the community, including the 1910 Air Meet that happened at nearby Dominguez Field that was the first major air show in the US. Fernandez held conversations with the community center's architects to understand their inspiration, which came from 1960s architecture, which incorporated wood and bold, colorful graphics.



**FIGURE 9** "Dominguez Field and the Famous Titans of Aviation" by Fausto Fernandez

Fernandez's new artwork for the East Rancho Dominguez Community Center, "Dominguez Field and the Famous Titans of Aviation," is a mixed media assemblage that uses paint, powder coated aluminum, wood and corrugated metal. In the artwork, the mission style architecture of the Rancho is referenced in the shape of the wood and vibrant metal panels throughout. Modern interpretations of the façade and hot air balloons from the 1910 Air Meet are incorporated. A wing-like symbol, painted in the background, is a recurring image in Fernandez's work. The artist hopes that the artwork will serve as a new cultural landmark that dramatizes community history, progress and place.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In **October 2014**, artist Fausto Fernandez gave a presentation during a meeting of the East Rancho Dominguez Neighborhood Association to solicit ideas for what the artwork could include and to learn about the community. Participants in that meeting highlighted that the park serves both African-American and Latino residents and that they would like the artwork to reflect that diversity. Participants also shared that they are proud that Venus and Serena Williams trained at the tennis courts in the park and they are proud of the new library across the street.



**FIGURE 10** Community members with artists Fausto Fernandez and Sara Daleiden at the Dominguez Rancho Adobe Museum

To learn more about the history of the area and to connect with local residents, Fernandez and Daleiden arranged a field trip and free tour of the Dominguez Rancho Adobe Museum in **February 2015**. Only four miles from project site, the Dominguez Rancho is a California Historical Landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. On site at the museum, Fernandez led a focus group to discuss how people currently use the park and the community center and their experiences living in the area. Fernandez introduced the panel shape used in the artwork and collected feedback on the preliminary design for the artwork.

Youth from the LA Conservation Corps helped to complete painted portions of the installation under the supervision of artist Louise Griffin in **September 2015**.

The dedication of the artwork happened simultaneously with the dedication of the new community center in **November 2015**. This was a festive event organized by the office of County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Second District, with a speaker program and performances by a local high school marching band and a line dancing group. Artist Thomas Lawson and his team for Some Place Chronicles ran a photo booth activity and the neighborhood association organized a resource fair for the same day in the park.

Daleiden gathered feedback on the artwork and ideas for future programming at an East Rancho Dominguez Neighborhood Association meeting in **March 2016**. As the community was settling in to the new community center, Daleiden also ran an outreach table at a series of programs at the park and community center, such as the Cinco de Mayo celebration in the park and the senior lunch and family food distribution activities in the community center.

Based on what she learned in her engagement activities, Daleiden produced a Community Storytelling event at the community center in **October 2016** in partnership with artist Thomas Lawson and the Some Place Chronicles project. A meal was served of barbecue and tamales from local vendors. Lawson presented the material from "I'll Make Me A World," his book about East Rancho Dominguez.<sup>86</sup> Past and present leaders of the East Rancho Dominguez Neighborhood Association shared some of the achievements and activism of the group over the years. Younger members of the pool team recently organized at the center shared their own experiences of the area and their pride in their fledging team.

## DATA SOURCES

- ▶ Parks administrative data ("report card" comment cards)
- ▶ Surveys and informal interviews
- ▶ Interviews and focus groups
- ▶ Participant observation
- ▶ Social media

## OUTCOMES

**Aesthetics:** Community members responded to the bright colors in the artwork and they feel that it makes people want to find out what is happening at the park and community center. Several people noted the references to flying and flight in the artwork and that the artwork is uplifting and inspirational. Community members also appreciated that it does not celebrate one racial or ethnic identity over another and that it could be meaningful for people of all ages. Most people did not remark on the visual references to the mission style architecture or the area’s aviation history, but the artwork elicits the memory of the trip to the Rancho Dominguez Adobe Museum and of learning about the area’s history there for those who attended.

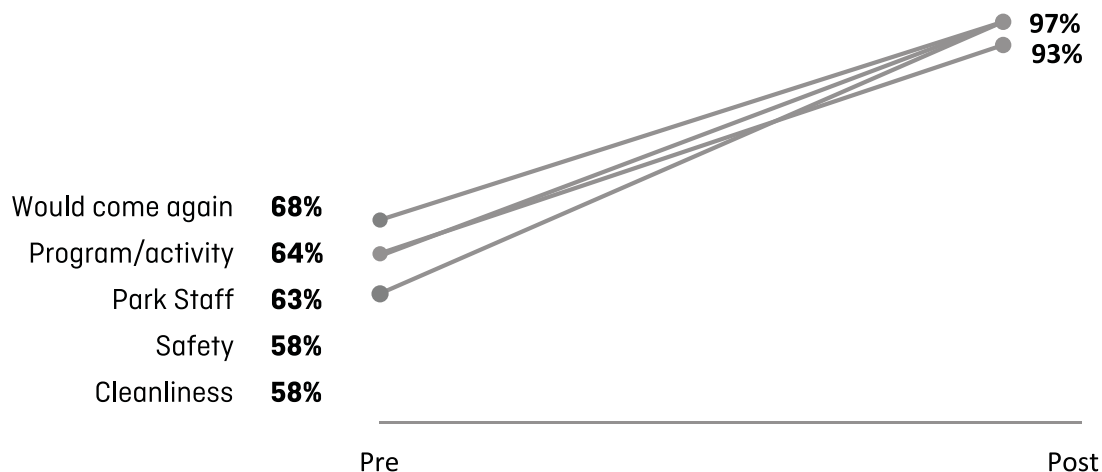
**Graffiti vandalism and care for physical assets:** Community members remarked that they do not see graffiti vandalism at the park and that the lack of graffiti vandalism sends a message that this is a safe environment for children. In interviews, the staff reported seeing less graffiti vandalism, though the quantitative data shows a spike in graffiti vandalism after the interviews. Staff members reported that

the community is taking much better care of the park now compared to the earlier investment of playground equipment, some of which had been broken so badly that the Department of Parks and Recreation decided not to replace it

**Perception:** Community perception of the park has improved across the board in the Parks and Recreation comment card survey (see figure 11). Everyone who was interviewed was enthusiastic about the park and community center and felt like the park has changed for the better. Most community members did not mention the artwork specifically as the cause of their change in perception about the park, but several people associated the presence of the artwork with the park seeming cleaner and better maintained. Notably, a few people drew an explicit connection between the presence of the artwork and a shift in their perception of the government, namely that it made them feel like the government cares about their community. For others, the artwork signals not just that the government cares but that people more generally care for this place and it encourages people to become more active in their community.

### EAST RANCHO DOMINGUEZ PARK RECEIVED AN ALMOST PERFECT SCORE AFTER THE PROJECT

Most respondents gave the park an “A” in all of the survey categories after the project.



DATA SOURCE: Department of Parks and Recreation “Rate Your Park” Report Card Feedback Survey

FIGURE 11 Feedback survey results at East Rancho Dominguez

**Use and activity:** While the new use and activity that have happened at the park cannot be attributed solely to the artwork and engagement programming, the artwork contributed to the energy and dynamism that has brought more people to the park and increased the range of activities that happen there. The placement of the artwork on the new building attracts attention to the fact that there is new investment at this site. Staff members who have worked at the park for a long time have noticed new people using the park. Several community members mentioned how the park used to be full of drug dealers or people drinking and smoking and now families are coming back to the park. While some of the programs and resources were offered when the community center was across the street, the expanded facility and the new energy at the site appear to have led to a significant expansion in activity and programming.

**Attachment and a sense of ownership:** Individuals who participated in the museum visit spoke about having been a part of the development of the artwork and how good it made them feel when they saw it completed. Others who simply observed the artwork developing as it was installed in stages also said that they felt like they had been involved and they had

a responsibility for keeping it nice. Staff attributed a change in the cleanliness of the park specifically to the artwork generating a sense of pride for the park that reduced littering.

**Social connection:** For most of the twentieth century, the neighborhood around East Rancho Dominguez Park and Community Center has been majority African-American, but it is now majority Latino. The neighborhood association leadership has been made up of long-time African-American residents, but has made efforts to get more young people and Latino residents involved. While both African-American and Latino seniors frequented the community center when it was located across the street, the new community center space has become particularly valued as a space where people from the two communities come together and socialize. The engagement activities during the art project contributed to building these social connections by creating opportunities for interaction and sharing stories, especially by including Spanish interpretation when possible. The Community Storytelling event in particular facilitated older and younger members of the community getting to know each other through stories, which creates a social foundation for future civic engagement.



**FIGURE 12** Community storytelling event at East Rancho Dominguez  
Photo: Gina Valona

## VICTORIA COMMUNITY REGIONAL PARK, CARSON, CA

### SITE AND FACTORS

Victoria Community Regional Park is a 36-acre recreational facility located in the City of Carson, a community with a population of 92,000 situated about 14 miles from downtown Los Angeles. The park features a gymnasium, three baseball diamonds, a cricket field, tennis courts, a 50-meter swimming pool and an 18-hole golf course. The facility is heavily used for youth and adult sports programs led by volunteer leaders and partner organizations. The people that use this park also reflect the diversity of the surrounding community, consisting of African-American, Latino, Asian and Pacific Islander participants. The park has a particular strong connection to the Samoan community, who hold a yearly Samoan Festival at the park. Also, the LA County Parks and Recreation district office is located at the park and the staff from the surrounding district organizes a Black History Celebration at the park every year in February.

The large area of this park, while it is an asset for all of the sports programs that use the park, presents a challenge in fostering a sense of community and ownership for the park. Most park users are very attached to the programs they are involved in, but they may only use the area of the park designated for their program and never encounter any of the other users of the park. This sense of distance is exacerbated by the road that bisects one side of the facility from the other. Unlike the other three sites in this project, the building stock at Victoria Park had not been updated recently and there were no immediate plans for renovation when the site was selected. There was staff turnover at this site in the form of a new Recreation Supervisor before “Victoria Park Cooks!” screening event.

### ARTISTS AND ARTWORK

Cocina Abierta is a collective of LA based artists and restaurant workers led by Christina Sanchez Juarez and Cayetano Juarez. They organize food-based interventions such as communal cookouts, DIY cooking shows and recipe swaps in collaboration with diverse community groups.



**FIGURE 13** Video still from the cooking show filmed in the Victoria Park kitchen  
Photo: Mark Escribano

View the videos at [www.lacountyarts.org/victoriaparkcooks/index.html](http://www.lacountyarts.org/victoriaparkcooks/index.html)

To get to know the park, Cocina Abierta attended community programs and observed how food plays a central role in bringing people together. From their preliminary engagement, the artists identified five “community chefs” who were recognized among the park users as accomplished home cooks to participate in the project. In collaboration with Escribano, they filmed each chef preparing his or her favorite dish and reflecting on the importance of family and tradition. The team also produced a series of profiles that show the chefs participating in ballroom dancing, basketball, tennis and softball at the park.

The videos accompany aesthetic improvements that the artists made to the Victoria Park kitchen, multipurpose room and courtyard. Youth from the LA Conservation Corps helped to complete the improvements, which include a new kitchen island and cooking tools, mirrors for dance instruction, cork and chalkboards for notices and picnic tables painted with colorful stencils. Cocina Abierta designed the improvements to increase the experience of the multipurpose room as a community hearth. To that end, they screened the videos in the multipurpose room and courtyard to celebrate the park and provide opportunities for the different groups of park users to connect with each other.

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Starting in **September 2014**, Cocina Abierta attended established community programs to get to know the park and observed how food plays a central role in bringing people together. The artists conducted recipe swaps during evening football practices and community potlucks, where they exchanged recipes with park users and introduced themselves to the community.

In **February 2015**, Cocina Abierta and Daleiden led a focus group with the community leaders of the different park programs and park staff to present the idea of filming a cooking show with community chefs, gather design input about how the park is used and could be improved, and to gather food-related programming ideas that could live on after the project. Community leaders had many ideas for physical improvements to the space and programming ideas that engage youth, and they were excited to make connections with each other. There was interest in wayfinding aids that would help them connect to other activities happening in the park.

Cocina Abierta filmed the five community chefs preparing a dish in the Victoria Park kitchen with members of Cocina Abierta Collective beginning in **May 2015**. The community chefs talked about themselves and their involvement with the



**FIGURE 14** LA Conservation Corpsmembers assisting Christina Sanchez Juarez in stenciling the picnic tables  
Photo: Louise Griffin

park in a “community profile” video, with a backdrop of footage filmed during their particular park programs and activities.

Youth from the LA Conservation Corps helped to complete the aesthetic improvements at the park in **January 2016**. This involvement led to unplanned engagement with the youth when someone from the crew used the project paint to graffiti the bathroom with their fingers. The artist spent some time on their second work day, during which they were working with stencils and spray paint to decorate the picnic tables, explaining the meaning of the project to the Corpsmembers and emphasizing the importance of their role in the project.

Cocina Abierta and Daleiden led a second focus group and series of planning meetings with the community chefs and program leaders leading up to a screening event for the cooking shows and community profiles. They held a community potluck and screening event called “Victoria Park Cooks!” in **March 2016**. Each of the community chefs and program leaders contributed dishes to the potluck and invited family and friends to the event. The community profile videos were screened in the multipurpose room and the newly decorated picnic tables were arranged for a screening of the longer cooking show videos in the courtyard. There was a DJ and the ballroom/line dance class did a dance demonstration, inviting everyone to participate. Cayetano Juarez from Cocina Abierta did a demonstration of a sautéed greens recipe in the multipurpose room.



**FIGURE 15** Ridiculous Recipes cooking class during the Victoria Park summer camp

In **July and August 2016**, Sanchez Juarez from Cocina Abierta conducted two creative cooking programs during the Parks and Recreation summer camp. The children discussed wraps in different cultures and made their own wraps in one class. They were invited to make up ridiculous recipes and were shown how to make pancakes in the second. These classes demonstrated the possibilities for children's cooking classes involving the new equipment purchased for the kitchen and hands-on open-ended creative activities for children.

### DATA SOURCES

- ▶ Parks administrative data ("report card" comment cards)
- ▶ Surveys
- ▶ Interviews and focus groups
- ▶ Participant observation of events and transcripts of community profile videos
- ▶ Social media

### OUTCOMES

**Aesthetic:** This project created several aesthetic or artistic dimensions of experience for community response. The strongest response from the community was to the community profiles and cooking videos themselves. At the screening event, survey responses mentioned appreciation for how the community profiles featured the chefs and the park programs and for the celebration of positive and healthy activities. The community chefs themselves spoke about how meaningful the experience being filmed had been and how the experience had inspired them to talk about cooking with their families and friends.

Another artistic dimension of the work was the production and facilitation by the lead artists from Cocina Abierta. Staff and participants were all impressed by how Sanchez Juarez facilitated meetings and the production of the videos, working with multiple stakeholder groups and making everyone feel comfortable. Additionally, staff and participants appreciated the production of the screening event itself, particularly how Sanchez Juarez transformed the multipurpose room and courtyard to create opportunities for social connection.



**FIGURE 16** Completed picnic table design at Victoria Park  
Photo: Mark Escribano and Sara Deleiden, s{a}jul

Finally, the community's response to the physical aesthetic improvements in the community room has been positive. The ballroom dance class appreciates the new mirrors and uses the cork boards to hang decorations during class birthday parties. The community sees the new bright color of the walls in the multipurpose room as attractive.

**Graffiti vandalism and care for physical assets:** Neither on-site staff nor community members reported much of a change in graffiti vandalism at the park. However, on-site staff and community members attributed an increase in maintenance activity to the attention the park received during the art project. As the physical improvements to the space were completed, staff members highlighted the role of on-site staff in advocating for maintenance and improvements and said that they would endeavor to create a regular maintenance schedule for the new areas. Even more significantly, the improvements as part of the art project seemed to trigger a host of larger overdue maintenance and upgrades completed by Parks and Recreation such as courtyard re-landscaping, renovated bathrooms by the multipurpose room and resurfacing the gymnasium floor.

**Social connection:** At this site, the engagement and creation of social space through the project had the most dramatic outcome of fostering a sense of connection among the participants. At the first focus group, many of the participants who had used the park for years met each other for the first

time and requested more opportunities to get together to talk about the park. By the end of the project, some of the volunteer coaches had formed a warm relationship. Other participants mentioned that meeting other leaders at the park created a foundation for future partnerships. Beyond just having the opportunity to meet, the cooking show videos and screening event provided an opportunity for cultural exchange where Samoan, African-American and Latino dishes were featured and shared. This kind of cultural exchange builds the openness and understanding necessary for ongoing social connection.

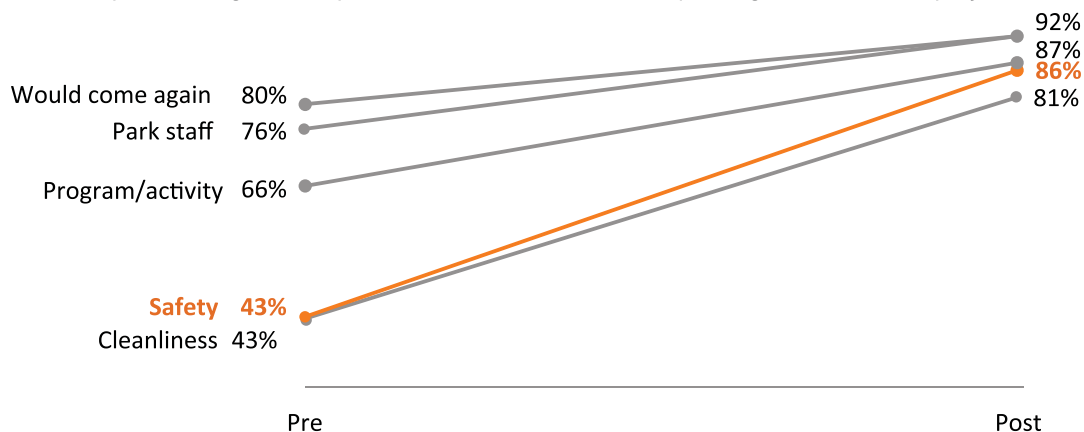
**Perception:** The community perception of the park dramatically improved in the post project observation period, especially in the areas of cleanliness and safety (see figure 17). This increased positive feedback suggests that the aesthetic improvements that Cocina Abierta made and the increased maintenance activity at the site were significant for changing how the community feels about the park. The parallel improvement in the perceptions of cleanliness and safety suggest that these two qualities are associated for park users.

**Attachment and a sense of ownership:** Rather than creating a sense of attachment and ownership, this artwork reinforced and celebrated the affection and commitment that the participants already had for the park. The videos created a vehicle for the featured community members to articulate why they are attached to the park and for the community to communicate their appreciation for the people who give life to the programs at the park. For some participants, the videos triggered a sense of pride in their cultural traditions that were being featured. One chef felt like they had received a gift by being involved and it made them want to give back to the park. Another chef said that the park feels more like home now.

**Staff and programs:** Sanchez Juarez developed the demonstration program cooking classes in close conversation with the park staff in order to make sure that the programs would be replicable, and staff members indicated that they would do some of the cooking class activities again in the context of the summer camp. Staff members also remarked on how this art project modeled a different approach to community engagement for them, including reaching beyond the “usual suspects” when recruiting volunteers and building community over a series of events. This art project

### THE PERCEPTION OF THE PARK AS SAFE DRAMATICALLY IMPROVED AFTER THE VICTORIA PARK COOKS! PROJECT

More respondents gave the park an “A” in all of the survey categories after the project.



**DATA SOURCE:** Department of Parks and Recreation “Rate Your Park” Report Card Feedback Survey

**FIGURE 17** Feedback survey results at Victoria Park



was also particularly effective at demonstrating for Department of Parks and Recreation leadership the possibilities of working with artists to create temporary artworks and programs. A staff member at the administrative level shared the videos from this project at departmental meetings and at a local conference for park advocates.

**Use and activity:** The outcomes in the areas of new casual use and activity at Victoria Park were mixed. The staff reported that the multipurpose room and kitchen area were heavily used for

reservations after the screening event. However, none of the community participants in the project reported new uses of the multipurpose room, though a few had thought about ways they might use the upgraded space. In particular, the artists had hoped that the new chalkboards and cork boards in the multipurpose room would be used for community notices and to share information between programs at the park, but these boards are being kept mostly bare, likely because the room is not a highly trafficked area when it is not being used for a park program or a community reservation.

## WOODCREST LIBRARY, WESTMONT/WEST ATHENS, CA

### SITE AND FACTORS

Woodcrest Library is a medium-sized library in an unincorporated area nestled between the City of LA and the smaller cities of Inglewood, Hawthorne and Gardena in south LA County. The library is used by adults and children who come for books, computer and wireless access, and library programming offered for all ages. The library has one disadvantage compared to other libraries of its size in that it does not have a meeting room where staff can hold events or for community members to reserve. Towards the end of this project, the library had staff turnover in the form of a new Community Library Manager.

Woodcrest Library did not have a Friends of the Library group during the observation period for this project, but the new Community Library Manager began organizing a Friends group in March 2017. The library has potential partners in the West Athens Victory Garden, a community garden located in the next block from the library and the LA County Department of Public Health, which is planning pedestrian projects in the area. During the course of the project, the plaza in front of the

entrance to the library was selected by the LA County Department of Parks and Recreation for the installation of a new parklet.

### ARTISTS AND ARTWORK

Swift Lee Office (SLO) was commissioned to design and install an artwork at Woodcrest Library. SLO's founding partners, Nathan Swift and Gloria Lee, launched SLO as a multidisciplinary design laboratory in 2006. Since then, SLO has transformed into a full service architectural firm with an extensive portfolio of projects built throughout Los Angeles. On one of SLO's visits to the library, they observed a jump rope session with local youth in the library's entry plaza. Their observations of how the space was used led them to design an artwork that would support the plaza being used as a flexible program space. Based on microscopic images of butterfly wings, they created a sculptural canopy made of iridescent panels that provide shade for activities on the plaza. Future plans for the parklet will incorporate the artwork's thematic elements seeking to further transform the plaza into a lively community space. SLO created a corresponding mixed media mural on the Normandie Boulevard side of the library to draw a visual connection that can attract passersby to the library. SLO hopes that the canopy and mural, together titled "Butterfly Wings and Scales," will bring more activity to the plaza and more opportunities for connecting to nature in the community.

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

In **December 2014**, SLO worked with Daleiden to test the idea of the plaza as a programming space by hosting a community workshop with Trash for Teaching on the plaza in front of the library. Trash for Teaching (now merged with the Two Bit Circus Foundation) is an organization that provides recycled materials to educators for use in open-ended hands-on learning activities. At the workshop, families were invited to design canopies for the plaza using these recycled materials. Many of the designs included natural elements, such as trees, flowers and a turtle pond. Residents also confirmed their desire to use the plaza as a place to sit, read, play and have community events that might involve food (a taco truck was specifically mentioned).



**FIGURE 18** "Butterfly Wings and Scales" by Swift Lee Office  
Photo: Elon Schoenholz

With Daleiden's support, SLO led a focus group discussion at the library with library staff and community stakeholders, including a community organizer from the West Athens Victory Garden and Department of Public Health staff working on pedestrian planning in the area in **April 2015**. This was an open brainstorming discussion about programming that could happen on the plaza. The staff members were interested in being able to expand their programs to include an outdoor space, adult programming that can include children and programming that engages the knowledge and experiences of older residents. Community members expressed a desire for more park and open space in the area and programming for youth that helps to reimagine community identity. Some of the program ideas included programming in connection with the community garden and using the plaza as a meetup location for neighborhood bike rides. SLO suggested holding a caterpillar adoption and butterfly release event under the canopy.



**FIGURE 19** Canopy design workshop on the Woodcrest Library plaza  
Photo: Swift Lee Office

SLO presented the designs for the canopy and gathered feedback on potential demonstration program ideas at the end of a story and children's activity time at the library in **March 2016**. Lee of SLO explained that butterflies have scales on their

wings that are visible under a microscope and that they used this scale shape in the canopy and in the mural design. The children were excited about the connection with butterflies in the artwork. Adults expressed enthusiasm for the ideas of having a farmer's market on the plaza or performances under the canopy. The session ended with snack on the plaza where SLO had erected a mock-up of the canopy structure and some of the mural elements.

A crew of youth workers from the LA Conservation Corps helped to stencil and paint the mural on the library facing Normandie Boulevard under the supervision of artist Louise Griffin in **December 2016**.

Daleiden co-produced a launch party for the artwork with SLO and the library staff in **December 2016**. There was a short program of speakers, including County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Second District, Gloria Lee from SLO and a community organizer from the West Athens Victory Garden. A food truck was hired to provide free taco plates for the first 80 guests, a DJ played music, and tables were provided for eating and coloring on the plaza to create a party atmosphere. Other activities included tours of the West Athens Victory Garden, butterfly themed craft and coloring activities and information tables about the artwork and about pedestrian planning in the area. Library staff created decorations and book displays for inside and outside of the library that tied into the theme of butterflies and other pollinators. The community enjoyed the food and the opportunity to hear more about the artwork whose installation they had been watching over the previous weeks. A record winter of rainy weather, among other installation and engineering challenges, meant that neither the canopy nor the mural were completely installed by the day of the launch party.

#### DATA SOURCES

- ▶ Feedback sessions
- ▶ Informal interviews
- ▶ Interviews and focus groups
- ▶ Participant observation
- ▶ Social media

## OUTCOMES

This artwork was completed too late in the observation period to provide time to observe graffiti vandalism or facility usage changes. Likewise, staff and community members did not have enough time to observe many differences in other outcome areas, making the qualitative analysis of outcomes suggestive rather than definitive.



**FIGURE 20** Completed mural facing Normandie Avenue

**Aesthetic:** The community's aesthetic response to the artwork focused on the colors of the canopy scales and their iridescence. The artwork's general aesthetic impact is open enough to invite interpretation and imagination, but the visual reference to a butterfly, which is the most evident in the shape of the canopy's shadow, is accessible when explained and provides a platform for educational programming about pollinators. The visual references in the mixed media mural are less accessible and seem to require more explanation.

**Staff and programs:** Library staff had yet to use the plaza space for programming, but saw an immediate opportunity to hold some of the Summer Reading Program activities outside, especially since there are already jump ropes and other outdoor play equipment available through that program. The launch party generated some new ideas for the staff, such as a yearly party on the plaza and holding simultaneous activities for several age groups. The involvement of people from the West Athens Victory Garden in the launch party has laid a foundation for future collaborations, and the library and the garden are now sharing information with each other about events.

**Use and activity:** Community members remarked about the lack of parks in the area and would be very interested in casual uses of the plaza space, for reading or just sitting. Currently, there is no seating on the plaza and the new park has not yet been installed. Probably, attracting more activity and casual use of the plaza will not happen until the new parklet is completed.



**FIGURE 21** LA Conservation Corpsmember assisting with mural installation  
Photo: Louise Griffin

**Perception:** There is evidence that the artwork and engagement activities have the potential to shift the perception of the library in the community. Several library patrons mentioned the significance of the new investment by the government in the community and how they appreciate having "something nice" in their neighborhood.

**Attachment:** One of the young people from the LA Conservation Corps who grew up in the area reported a sense of pride and ownership as a result of having worked on the installation of the mural. He said that he told his friends about it and that he thinks about it whenever he passes by the library location.

## A. C. BILBREW LIBRARY, WILLOWBROOK, CA

### SITE AND FACTORS

Built in 1974, this library was named after Madame A. C. Bilbrew, a community leader, poet and musician. Bilbrew, a pioneer in radio, was the first African American to have her own radio show in the United States. The building was designed by African American architect Vincent J. Proby and is also famous for housing the Black Resource Center that includes collections relevant to social, historical and cultural aspects of the African American community. The library has an active Friends of the Library organization that supplements library programming with speaker programs, a book club and book sales in support of the library.

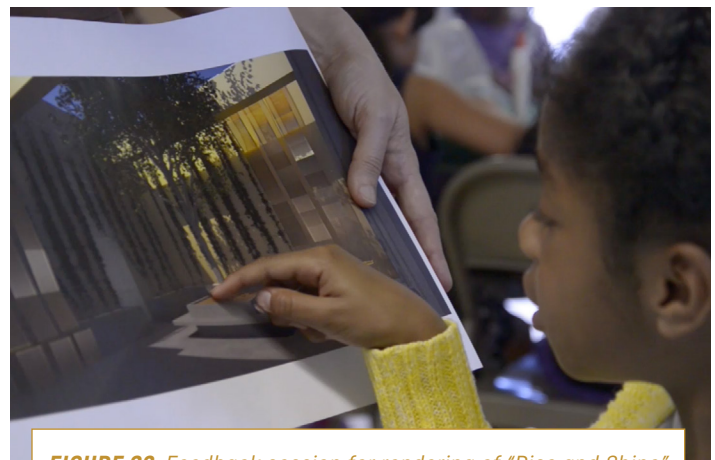
The development of the artwork at A. C. Bilbrew Library coincided with a major renovation, which updated much of the interior and exterior using environmentally friendly materials and sustainable design techniques. The project team was able to use the percent for art allocation from this capital project to supplement the grant resources for the artwork at this site, and the County of LA Public Library also contributed additional funds to realize the project. The library was closed for the renovation in August 2015 and reopened in February 2017 with a mix of new and returning staff members. In addition to the new artwork as part of this project, the renovated library was chosen to house 43 artworks from the Golden State Mutual Art Collection, an important collection of African-American artworks recently acquired by the County. The unincorporated area around the library, Willowbrook, is northwest of Compton and south of the Watts neighborhood in the City of LA. The neighborhood was the site of Project Willowbrook, a cultural asset mapping initiative and art project conducted by artist Rosten Woo, LA Commons and the Arts Commission in 2013 in anticipation of the renovation of the nearby Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital and the development expected to come along with it.



**FIGURE 22** Exterior tiles at A. C. Bilbrew Library

### ARTISTS AND ARTWORK

As part of the renovation, artist team Greenmeme was commissioned to develop an artwork for the library's interior courtyard. Greenmeme, comprised of artists Freya Bardell and Brian Howe, operates in a territory between art, architecture and landscape, taking a process-driven and community-focused approach to design. The courtyard selected for redesign was under-utilized and uninviting, containing one concrete planter surrounded by concrete walls. As part of the renovation, access to the courtyard was improved through installation of new doors and a collapsible glass wall. Staff expressed a desire to integrate native landscaping into the design of the artwork, which led to Greenmeme adding planters and a trellis to the courtyard. Greenmeme also conducted a series of studies documenting the building's architecture and the tiles that are featured on the exterior. The pattern in the tiles became the inspiration for the sculptural ribbons that extend from the top of the wall to the ground



**FIGURE 23** Feedback session for rendering of "Rise and Shine"  
Photo: Mark Escribano and Sara Daleiden, s(o)ul

inside the courtyard, where they provide new seating around the perimeter of the courtyard. The resulting artwork is titled “Rise and Shine,” designed for the new courtyard to serve as a space for indoor-outdoor programming and casual use as a reading room or social space.

### PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

With the assistance of Daleiden, Greenmeme held a focus group with the Friends of Bilbrew Library and teen volunteers in the library meeting room in **April 2015**. Greenmeme gave a presentation of some of their previous work and some of the early ideas they had for the design and for possible programs in the library. The participants expressed their desire for more or better seating in the courtyard that would be flexible for multiple uses of the space. New programs held in the courtyard could be noisier or messier than programs held inside the library. There was a lively debate about the existing concrete planter and its tree and whether the tree should be removed. There was also a discussion about how to make the space more attractive to children by bringing dynamism to the space through rotating content and attractive colors. The participants also shared how they currently value the library and the cultural heritage it represents, but they also hoped that the library’s history could be made relevant to young people and people from multiple cultural backgrounds.

While the A. C. Bilbrew Library was closed for renovation, the artists and Daleiden presented a design for the courtyard at the temporary library location in Athens Park in **March 2016**. The temporary library location contained an express library with computer access, and the library staff held craft activities for children once a week. Children participated in an Easter-themed craft while their parents responded to a rendering of the design for the courtyard and gave feedback on programming ideas. They responded positively to the design and to the idea of a book cart for the space that would feature books selected by library patrons or guest curators on a rotating basis. Parents and a member of the Friends of the Bilbrew Library who attended said that they would be interested in an event focused on the architecture of the library and the new courtyard design. There was no demonstration engagement program after this artwork was installed because of the delay in the library reopening and because a larger portion of the grant budget was needed to complete the artwork installation.

### DATA SOURCES

- ▶ Informal interviews
- ▶ Focus groups
- ▶ Participant observation
- ▶ Social media

### OUTCOMES

This artwork was completed too late in the observation period to provide time to observe graffiti vandalism or facility usage changes. Likewise, staff and community members did not have enough time to observe many differences in other outcome areas, making the qualitative analysis of outcomes suggestive rather than definitive. Furthermore, this site received less engagement programming than the other sites, leading to less data collection embedded in engagement activities for this site.



**FIGURE 24** Artist Freya Bardell with Friends of the Bilbrew Library member  
Photo: Mark Escribano and Sara Daleiden, s(o)ul



**FIGURE 25** A. C. Bilbrew Library courtyard before  
 Photo: Mark Escribano and Sara Daleiden, s(o)ul

**Aesthetics:** The artwork produced a strong aesthetic response among staff, library patrons and the Friends of the Library group. People think that the courtyard installation is inviting and attractive and they particularly responded to the brightness that the installation added to the space. Some individual comments associated the courtyard with a museum or gardens they read about in stories. They also commented that the courtyard seems safe, calm and peaceful.

**Use and activity:** Casual use of the courtyard is happening already. A Facebook reviewer mentioned eating lunch in the courtyard in a glowing review of the reopened library. When the accordion wall is closed, individuals must enter the courtyard through the activity room, so access to the courtyard is not necessarily obvious. Still, staff reported individuals asking permission to go out into the courtyard and teens asking to use the courtyard while working on a school project.



**FIGURE 26** A. C. Bilbrew Library courtyard after

**Staff and programs:** The staff at the library is experimenting with new use of the courtyard for programming. At the grand reopening, the courtyard was used for a children's story time, with the children sitting on a rug in the courtyard and the presenter positioned just inside the boundary in the children's area. Another experiment included setting up a shade tent in the courtyard for a partner organization to staff an information table. Staff members find it challenging to figure out how they can modify programming that they would normally do indoors to be held outside and have concerns about children using the space unsupervised. Nonetheless, the library staff is committed to using the courtyard as a resource to expand its programming.

# CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS IN USING ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

In the process of evaluating this project, the evaluation staff investigated several different types of administrative data in order to analyze change in graffiti vandalism over time and changes in activity at the project sites. Besides the efficiency of using data that are already being collected, tapping this administrative data provided an opportunity to compare data from before the artwork interventions as a kind of baseline. Yet, administrative datasets are not created for evaluation and contain idiosyncrasies related to program needs and the number of people involved in collecting the data. As a result, the analysis of the quantitative outcomes is presented here not as definitive findings but as an exploration of how these datasets might be used and interpreted. A longer period of observation after the interventions at each site would have provided the opportunity to apply statistical methods such as multivariate regression or an interrupted time series analysis to provide more confidence in the analysis. For the libraries, the post observation period was squeezed by the artwork construction timeline, and therefore the administrative data were not analyzed for the libraries for this report. The Public Library has a system for tracking graffiti removal work orders that is similar to the one used in Parks and Recreation and a process for counting the number of visitors to each library branch that could have been analyzed alongside the administrative data provided by Parks and Recreation.

## GRAFFITI REMOVAL WORK ORDERS

In order find a dataset that enabled tracking change over time in graffiti vandalism, staff looked into incidents of graffiti vandalism reported to the LA County Sheriff's Department, tracking of how much graffiti vandalism is removed by the County in targeted enforcement areas, and departmental graffiti

removal maintenance work orders. Since most incidents of graffiti vandalism do not trigger official reports to the Sheriff's Department, this dataset was not comprehensive enough to capture changes in graffiti vandalism at the site. In addition, the number of reports of graffiti vandalism in the Sheriff's Department data decreased over the observation time period, while the number of graffiti vandalism removals increased in all of the other datasets pertaining to graffiti vandalism. Therefore, the Sheriff's Department data were only used at the neighborhood level to contextualize other data and to look for changes compared to the whole County. The Graffiti Abatement Program in the County's Department of Public Works only tracks the number of removals by enforcement zone on a monthly and yearly basis. These enforcement zones are not small enough to connect to changes at the neighborhood or facility level and one of the sites in the project, Victoria Park, is not in a county enforcement zone. The work orders that on-site staff submit for graffiti vandalism removal at each facility provided the most complete and detailed information about graffiti vandalism activity for this project.

The primary difficulty in using graffiti removal work orders to measure changes in graffiti vandalism is that work orders for removal are not monitoring graffiti vandalism itself. If on-site staff does not report graffiti vandalism for removal, then the work orders do not reflect the complete amount of graffiti vandalism. Likewise, if maintenance staff does not remove the graffiti vandalism and the on-site staff reports the same graffiti vandalism more than once, the number of work orders would be inflated compared to the amount of graffiti vandalism. Yet, in our discussions with departmental and on-site staff, it appeared that both on-site staff and maintenance



staff were conscientious about reporting and removing graffiti vandalism. On-site staff are at the facilities every day and are the most likely to notice new graffiti vandalism when it appears. An additional challenge is that the descriptions of the graffiti vandalism and its location in the work order database are not standardized such that one could analyze the types of graffiti or the precise locations at the facility where graffiti vandalism is occurring.

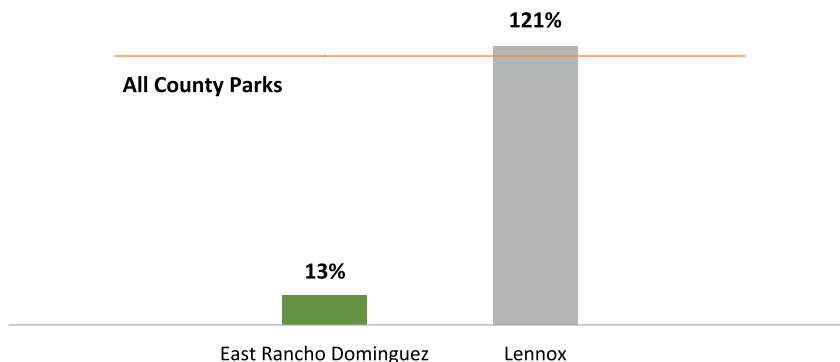
One of the benefits of using graffiti removal work orders to measure changes in graffiti vandalism at the sites was that graffiti removal requests are a common data collection process across all of the facilities within the Department of Parks and Recreation in LA County and across the locations within the County of LA Public Library. This common data collection process enabled a comparison of graffiti vandalism removals between similar facilities in the research design. Nonetheless, real world factors, such as violence adjacent to a “control” site during the observation period, meant that the data for both project and comparison sites needed to be contextualized with countywide averages. Ultimately, having access to all of the graffiti removal work orders for all of the park facilities in the County made this contextualization possible.

## EAST RANCHO DOMINGUEZ PARK GRAFFITI REMOVAL WORK ORDERS

At East Rancho Dominguez Park, there was only a slight increase in the number of graffiti vandalism removals by the end of the observation period. The increase in the average total monthly graffiti vandalism removals at all the parks in the County was much higher than this slight increase at the park and community center (see figure 27). Lennox Park, the comparison park, had an increase in graffiti vandalism removals that was much closer to the county average. With these two data points to contextualize it, the slight increase in graffiti vandalism removals at East Rancho Dominguez Park appears to be a reduction in the amount of graffiti vandalism at the site. There are many factors outside of the artwork that could have contributed to this reduction in graffiti vandalism, including the new building at the site and other investments in the neighborhood. The number of graffiti vandalism reports to the Sheriff’s Department in the Compton area around the park are similar to the rest of the County (a 6 percent decrease), but reports of gang graffiti vandalism in particular in the area are significantly lower than in the larger County (a 48 percent decrease). Gang activity may be diminishing in the larger area and a shift in what kinds of activities that are happening at the park that is described in the outcomes may be a contributor.

### GRAFFITI REMOVALS INCREASED AT EAST RANCHO DOMINGUEZ PART AT A MUCH LOWER RATE THAN THE INCREASE COUNTYWIDE

The increase at its comparison park, Lennox Park, was closer to the countywide average.

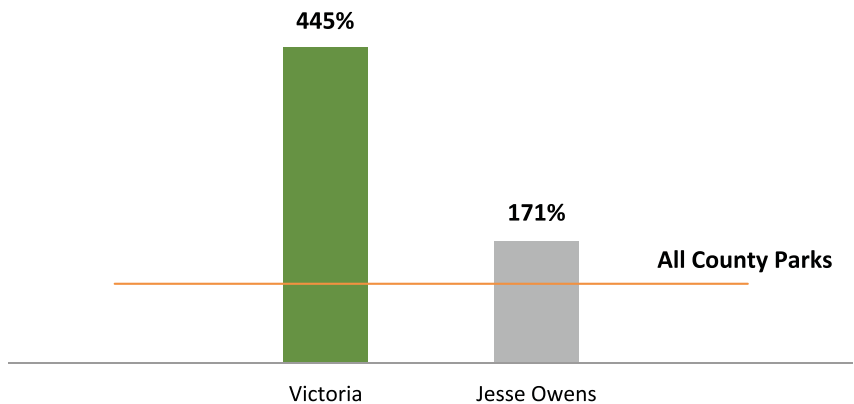


DATA SOURCE: Department of Parks and Recreation Work Orders

FIGURE 27 Graffiti vandalism removals at East Rancho Dominguez

## GRAFFITI REMOVALS INCREASED AT VICTORIA PARK PART AT A MUCH HIGHER RATE THAN THE INCREASE COUNTYWIDE

The increase at its comparison park, Jesse Owens Park, was somewhat closer to the countywide average.



**DATA SOURCE:** Department of Parks and Recreation Work Orders

**FIGURE 28** Graffiti vandalism removals at Victoria Park

### VICTORIA PARK GRAFFITI REMOVAL WORK ORDERS

The analysis of the graffiti removal work orders at Victoria Park is more ambiguous and reflects the challenge of using administrative data that represent staff behavior rather than graffiti vandalism itself. During the post-project observation period, graffiti removal work orders at Victoria Park increased more than three times the increase at county park facilities as a whole and more than two times the increase of its comparison park, Jesse Owens Regional Park (see figure 28).

One possible explanation for this marked increase could be increased gang activity in the neighborhood, which may be causing increased gang graffiti at the park. Compared to the number of graffiti removal work orders across the County, relatively few graffiti vandalism incidents are reported to the LA County Sheriff's department. However, comparing the number of reported graffiti vandalism incidents in the reporting districts adjacent to Victoria Park to the rest of the County over the same period suggests that there was a particular increase in the Carson area. The Carson Sheriff's station saw an increase of 16 percent in total reported graffiti vandalism incidents in the post project period, while the County as a whole actually saw a decline of 6 percent over the

same period. As part of the increase in total graffiti vandalism, reports of gang graffiti in Carson increased by 32 percent in period after the artwork was installed.

Another possible explanation for the marked increase in graffiti removal requests during the post project observation period is that Parks and Recreation staff members could simply be requesting that graffiti vandalism be removed more promptly and regularly. In the qualitative analysis, it was noted that on-site staff members took responsibility for the aesthetic improvements at Victoria Park, communicating that they would set up a regular cleaning schedule for the picnic tables and the multipurpose room. In addition, there was a change in staff at Victoria Park during the project period, which could have resulted in a change in frequency in reporting graffiti vandalism for removal, if there were different reporting habits between the two staff members. Victoria Park covers a wide area and the areas that receive the most graffiti vandalism are at the perimeter of the property, which could easily go unreported if staff members are not patrolling those areas regularly and could lead to a jump in graffiti removal orders if a new staff person started reporting graffiti vandalism in that area.

## PARK ACTIVITY NUMBERS AND RESERVATIONS DATABASE

The administrative data for program attendance, casual park use and facility reservations presented similar challenges as the graffiti vandalism removal data in terms of reliability. Program attendance (like afterschool programs or other events planned by park staff) and casual park use (like pick-up basketball games or children using the playground) are reported to the department on a monthly basis by on-site staff. On-site staff members track the attendance at their programs and keep a daily log of an estimate of the number of “passive” users of the park, meaning those who come to use the park facilities outside of a program. These reports are valuable information about what happens “on the ground” at the parks, but they are also vulnerable to programming changes and staff turnover that is unrelated to the art activities in the project.

Reservations by members of the community for the park facilities are handled by a central reservation office that uses third party software to track availability and reservation permits for all county Parks and Recreation facilities. The third party vendor provided a dataset that included the park name, sales transaction ID, an arrival date, the facility name (e.g. “community room”) and the facility type (e.g. “room – medium”) for the observation period. The dataset does not include the dates that a facility was closed for construction, maintenance or park programming that would supersede a reservation by the public. Furthermore, some of the uses of the spaces available for rental were ongoing partnerships with other organizations, such as the ballroom dance class that used the Victoria Park multipurpose room every Wednesday night. Whether or not these ongoing uses were in the reservation database was inconsistent across locations and partnerships. As a result of these uncertainties, the reservations data available were deemed too incomplete to analyze for this report.

## EAST RANCHO DOMINGUEZ PARK AND COMMUNITY CENTER ACTIVITY

In terms of overall number of people using the park, the monthly activity reports made by Parks and Recreation staff **INCREASED 3 PERCENT** on average in the post project observation period. This increase is a positive outcome, but given the number of qualitative reports about the new liveliness of the park, one might have expected the increase to be even higher. Initially, it appeared that there would be an opportunity for an additional administrative dataset from the Department of Workforce Development, Aging, and Community Services that runs the new community center half of the building. Staff and community members described a significant increase at the new building compared to the attendance at the center when it was in a leased building across the street. However, the department was in the process of implementing a new software system that invites individuals to check in as they enter the community center during the observation period. The numbers from the new system are not comparable to the numbers that the staff was tracking on paper before the software system was implemented. The data from the comparison park, Lennox Park, are also unhelpful in this case in providing context because unfortunately there was a shooting at the park during the observation period and the activity reports there dipped by 16 percent.

## VICTORIA PARK ACTIVITY

In terms of overall number of people using the park, the monthly activity reports made by Parks and Recreation staff **INCREASED 22 PERCENT** on average in the post project observation period for Victoria Park, while its comparison park, Jesse Owens Regional Park, only had an increase of 2 percent over the same period. Since staff and community leaders did not report any significant changes in programming during or after the project, this new attendance at the park could be a positive outcome related to the Creative Graffiti Abatement project. However, like the graffiti removal work orders, this dataset is vulnerable to changes in staff behavior, and

there was staff turnover at Victoria Park during the project. Cocina Abierta's intervention at Victoria Park was particularly aimed at transforming the multipurpose room and kitchen into a more inviting and attractive space. Therefore, it was unfortunate that the unreliability of the reservations database made it impossible to use this dataset as an indicator of whether the new space was attracting new reservations and revenue for the park.

# OVERALL FINDINGS AND FACTORS FOR SUCCESS

The overall findings and lessons learned about factors for success begin with an analysis of the aesthetic attributes that contributed to the success of these projects. The placement of aesthetic outcomes first in the discussion supports consideration of the intrinsic value of the artworks, while also reflecting the fact that artistic elements have a significant influence on the social outcomes. The subsequent sections of the overall findings address the evaluation questions and identify factors that shaped outcomes in the areas of graffiti abatement and perceptions of place, enhancing a sense of ownership of public facilities and supporting ongoing programming at public facilities.

## ATTRIBUTES OF AESTHETIC EXCELLENCE

All four of the artworks that were developed for this project exhibit aesthetic attributes that made them “work” particularly well for the project goals of shifting perceptions, increasing positive activity, reducing graffiti vandalism, building a sense of community ownership and building capacity for future arts and culture activities at the sites. To evaluate the aesthetic dimension of the works, the evaluator used the “Aesthetic Perspectives: Attributes of Excellence in Arts for Change” framework to analyze the aspects of the artworks and the artistic processes that were particular contributors to the success of these projects.<sup>87</sup> Each section opens with a relevant quote from the framework. Within the context of public art, many of these attributes could also be described as expressions of site-specificity or markers of excellence in responding to the particularity of the artwork sites. Of the 11 attributes in the framework, five emerged as prominent elements in the artworks and artistic processes developed as part of this project.

## OPENNESS

*“The creative work deepens impact by remaining open, fluid, transparent, subject to influence, and able to hold contradiction.”<sup>88</sup>*

This attribute was absolutely essential within public engagement processes for designing works that were responsive to community input. Greenmeme and Cocina Abierta discovered the need for openness in the designs themselves when creating work for public spaces that will be programmed in multiple ways. Greenmeme realized that while the Friends of the Bilbrew Library wanted more seating in the courtyard, the space needed to be open for different kinds of library programs that might require different furniture. So they designed seating on the perimeter of the courtyard that keeps the middle of the courtyard open. Cocina Abierta recognized that the multipurpose room needed to be neutral enough to be used as a rental space for the community, so they kept the interior designs in the room minimal and included chalkboards and corkboards so that decorations could be easily put up and removed. All of the sites in this project are used by multiple cultural communities, and the openness of the artwork itself to many aesthetic preferences can allow different groups of people to connect to the artwork. For instance, the fact that Fausto Fernandez’s artwork does not represent one cultural community over another was valued by community center users who see the center as place of cultural mixing.

## SENSORY EXPERIENCE

*“Vivid sensations deepen the experience of the creative work and heighten the power of its messages and the potential for change”<sup>89</sup>*

The visual and experiential dimension of some of the artworks in this project was a contributor to their success, especially in connection with project goals related to beautification.

The community’s aesthetic response to all of the artworks mentioned the colors chosen, but the dramatic colors and the large scale of “Rise and Shine” and “Dominguez Field and the Famous Titans of Aviation” made the strongest impression at their sites. The visual impact of “Rise and Shine” may be the reason that it was mentioned on social media so soon after the library was reopened. In time, the potential for the canopy part of “Butterfly Wings and Scales” to provide shade for casual and programmed use of the plaza may transform how the community interacts with the library. These artworks all had a profound impact on how it feels to be in these spaces and how people experience these public facilities.

## COMMUNAL MEANING

*“The creative work facilitates collective meaning that transcends individual perspective and experience.”<sup>90</sup>*

By telling the stories of individual park users, Cocina Abierta was able to tell a meaningful story about Victoria Park and the people that make the park a community. The excellence in telling that story was complemented by Sanchez Juarez’ excellence in facilitating the leaders at the park to produce an event as a community. Daleiden also exhibited excellence by providing a platform for community leaders, young and old, to tell their stories at East Rancho Dominguez Park and Community Center. Not only were people of different ages invited to share, but the Spanish interpretation provided during the event furthered the identity of the community center as a place where African-American and Latino residents can come together as a community.

## RISK-TAKING

*“The creative work assumes risk by subverting dominant norms, values, narratives, standards, or aesthetics.”<sup>91</sup>*

The artwork at Victoria Park by Cocina Abierta was risky because social practice or participatory art was a new art form for the Department of Parks and Recreation, who had only partnered with the Arts Commission for physical installations and for music programming previously. Furthermore, creating artwork related to food traditions expanded the definition of art for some participants, especially in relation to the goals of reducing graffiti vandalism. Taking these risks paid off in this case since by the end of the project, departmental staff members were convinced of the benefits that resulted from Cocina Abierta’s artwork even though they were intangible in many cases. The physical benefits of an artwork that took a predominately social form were mixed in this case, because while maintenance and perceptions of the park have improved, it is not clear that there is less vandalism at the park. It stands to reason that social and participatory artworks may have more unpredictable outcomes because of the complexity of working with relationships as the medium.

## CULTURAL INTEGRITY

*“The creative work demonstrates integrity and ethical use of material with specific cultural origins and context.”<sup>92</sup>*

The artists commissioned for this project were all outsiders to the neighborhoods where their work was sited, so they collected the stories and knowledge about these places from the community during their engagement programs. The extent of this engagement and how much of this local knowledge was ultimately translated into the artworks themselves varied across the sites, but all of the artists demonstrated respect for this knowledge. At the far end of the spectrum, Cocina Abierta incorporated community members and their food traditions into the videos, and the participants appreciated how their stories were told. Greenmeme developed their artwork for a library that is beloved as a repository for African-American history and cultural materials and was designed by an African-American architect. Greenmeme chose to honor the cultural heritage of the library by creating work that responded to the architecture itself.

## SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS OF PLACE AND ABATING GRAFFITI VANDALISM THROUGH BEAUTIFICATION

The project was successful at shifting perceptions of place through beautification and supporting ongoing and new positive activities at these sites. As expected, the role of the artworks in promoting stewardship and reducing the amount of vandalism at these parks and libraries is entangled with several other factors. While the perception of cleanliness and safety improved dramatically at both parks where graffiti vandalism removal was monitored, only East Rancho Dominguez Park experienced a positive outcome that could be measured quantitatively as a reduction in requests for graffiti vandalism removals compared to the county average. It is impossible to be certain why there was a difference in outcomes at these two communities given the difficulties in using administrative data and the complexities of the projects, but by looking at outcomes at all four sites, the evaluator was able to identify some of the factors that contribute to successful beautification outcomes.

*The visibility of an artwork may affect its role in graffiti vandalism abatement.*

Community members interpreted the installation of professional artwork at these public facilities as investment in their neighborhoods and as signs that the government cares about their community. Teens at Woodcrest Library appreciated that they were receiving something nice by having artwork at their library. In order for artworks to communicate care and investment to the larger community, the visibility and placement of artwork can be crucial to success. The placement of Fernandez' mural at East Rancho Dominguez Park where it is visible from a busy intersection on the new community center building enhanced the message that there was substantial new investment at the site. Fernandez mentioned that he considered placing the artwork at the back of the gymnasium on a residential street where there has been significant tagging activity in the past, but an artwork

placed there may not have had the same visual effect. On the other hand, the physical improvements made as part of Cocina Abierta's artwork at Victoria Park were not visible from the street. While the courtyard is a relatively high foot-traffic area since people travel through there to reach the gym and the multipurpose room, there are many park users who use the space across the street and who never come into the courtyard. It is possible that a more visible artwork may have had a more dramatic effect on graffiti vandalism at Victoria Park.

*Pairing art projects and new infrastructure can increase the impact of both kinds of investment.*

Success in attracting new use and activity at these public facilities was associated with other infrastructure investment, such as the construction of a new building at East Rancho Dominguez Park and the extensive renovation of the interior of A.C. Bilbrew Library. These locations had the most evidence that new use was being generated after the artwork was installed and the facilities were opened. Staff noted the "energy" at East Rancho Dominguez due the new construction and new programming in addition to the artwork installation and engagement. At the sites without concurrent infrastructure investment, there is evidence the artwork contributed to attracting new infrastructure investment, at Victoria Park in the form of renovations and at Woodcrest Library in the form of a new parklet.

*A well-maintained appearance, through artworks and a lack of graffiti vandalism, and the presence of family-oriented activity can foster the perception that a place is safe and welcoming.*

Some community members specifically mentioned that a lack of graffiti vandalism and general cleanliness signaled that a facility was a safe place to bring their children. New artwork can contribute to beautification in a traditional sense by making a place look aesthetically pleasing and well-maintained. Maintenance makes a difference in communicating that someone is caring for a place, and

in these communities, maintenance in the form of graffiti vandalism removal also communicates that gangs are not active in that park. How a space is being used and by whom also signals whether a space is safe. Much of the change reported by community members at East Rancho Dominguez was communicated as a shift from the park being used by gang members or people drinking and smoking to the park being used by families with their children. Besides maintenance, there are other factors that contribute to shifting the perception of safety and shifting the use of public spaces towards family oriented activities, such as when staff enforces rules about acceptable activities in the park and when there are regular law enforcement patrols.

## ENHANCING ATTACHMENT AND A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP THROUGH ENGAGEMENT

It is almost a truism that if people are involved in making an artwork, then they will feel a sense of ownership for it and will respect and care for it. Sometimes this involvement is seen to be in tension with the development of professional artwork, but this project demonstrated how several different engagement strategies can foster attachment and a sense of ownership through the interaction between communities and professional artists. The additional investment that the Arts Commission made by hiring an artist to focus on engagement programs and the willingness to experiment with artworks that took social forms were crucial for success. In some cases, these engagement strategies go hand-in-hand with the attributes of aesthetic excellence exhibited by these projects and artists, especially attributes such as openness and communal meaning. The following lessons learned about successful engagement strategies across the four sites in this project could be instructive for other public art engagement projects.

*Involving community members in design or fabrication of artworks builds a sense of ownership.*

The effect of a straightforward type of involvement was clear in these projects. The contributions of community chefs at Victoria Park shaped the artwork and embedded participants

in the artistic process, creating additional pride in the park even as the videos showcased their existing attachment. The LA Conservation Corps member who expressed a sense of pride about contributing to the mural installation at Woodcrest Library was another example of direct involvement in fabrication leading to a sense of attachment.

*Communication and interaction with artists during the development of an artwork also builds a sense of ownership.*

Being informed about the design for the artwork or watching the installation of an artwork also engendered a sense of ownership and a sense of being part of the process. The community members who came on the visit to the Rancho Dominguez Adobe Museum saw designs for the artwork and gave their feedback, but their feedback did not substantially shift the final design. Nonetheless, these community members felt close enough to the artwork to be proud of it at the dedication of the new community center. Likewise, the Friends of the Bilbrew Library were consulted about the artwork design for the courtyard but the design changed considerably after their feedback in response to engineering challenges. They were still very happy with the final installation and wanted to contribute cushions to be used with the new seating. These kinds of outcomes suggest that being invited into the artistic process and having opportunities to interact with the artists can facilitate a sense of attachment by demystifying the production of artworks.

*Artistic engagement that provides space for social interaction among participants can foster bonds important for social cohesion and civic engagement.*

Another engagement strategy that was effective in fostering attachment was building relationships among participants and staff. Daleiden and Cocina Abierta were especially adept at encouraging interaction by offering food and creating a relaxed atmosphere at every meeting. This worked best in situations where individuals may have already had a chance



to meet in a formal capacity but had not had the chance to interact socially. Also, having a series of events where people could get to know each other while working on a project was especially successful in building the foundation for further partnerships and involvement.

*Investigating and working with the attachments to place that already exist in a community is fruitful for engagement efforts.*

The project participants at these four sites were already attached to the facilities, the programming offered and to the staff working there. In most cases, these were also people who were committed to supporting these facilities through a neighborhood association, an official friends group or in other volunteer capacities. This existing attachment presented a challenge when trying to measure whether attachment has increased in a location, but was also a positive factor for building artworks that connect to community wants and desires. Besides providing an institutional mechanism for communication and outreach, these organizations offered committed collaborators for the artists to learn from and work alongside at each location.

*The lengthy timeline of physical construction, whether for artworks or other infrastructure investments, is a challenge for meaningful engagement activities.*

The lengthy construction timeline that often accompanies the installation of permanent physical artwork poses a challenge for maintaining engagement with the community. It was difficult to engage a stable group of participants over a long period of time, and therefore some of the engagement activities in this project were designed for whoever happened to be at the facility or attending a program that day. These were effective engagement programs for getting feedback and learning about how the community uses the facility, but it is unclear whether these types of casual interactions helped to develop a sense of attachment to the artwork or to the

facility among participants. The presence of an established community group at a facility helped mitigate the challenge of a delayed construction timeline, as it did at A.C. Bilbrew Library, even though date of the reopening of the library made it difficult to produce the planned demonstration program there. At Woodcrest Library, where the construction timeline was particularly long and there was no active friends group during the project, the development of attachment was particularly hard to trace.

## BUILDING CAPACITY FOR FUTURE ARTS AND CULTURE PROGRAMMING

The hope that these programs would live on in the form of continuing arts and culture programs at these parks and libraries was perhaps the most ambitious and complex part of this project. The artists worked hard to create programs related to the artworks that could be replicated by staff or community leaders. Some staff members have expressed their willingness to do so, but when data collection ended, no concrete plans had been made for the programs to be repeated. It is too early to see long-term outcomes in terms of programming at these facilities, but capacity was built for future arts and culture programming by expanding the concept of what art is and what kinds of programming are possible at these facilities. These programs were most effective as “demonstration projects” that were mostly implemented by artists, and the evidence suggests that staff members will need training and resources if they want to continue any of the programs. This project was a learning process about the possibilities and challenges for further partnerships between the Arts Commission and these two county departments. Partnerships with neighborhood parks, libraries and their adjacent community groups to develop arts and culture programming is a promising strategy for increasing neighborhood access to arts participation.

*As demonstration projects, the engagement programs generated new ideas for programs and strategies to engage the public among partner department staff.*

The more that staff members were involved in the production of the program, the more likely they were to be interested in reproducing the program themselves. For instance, the staff at Woodcrest Library created decorations for the launch party and led activities for children and teens during the event. Staff members reported that they had not thought of doing an “open house” style event where several activities were happening at once before, but they could imagine having a yearly party on the plaza near the artwork. Involving staff in the design process for an artwork along with community members can be beneficial as well. In the cases where staff members were involved in focus groups, they were able to hear community members’ concerns and their ideas for new programs. When representatives from other community organizations are also involved, as the West Athens Victory Garden was at Woodcrest Library, groundwork for new partnerships can be established.

*Staff turnover was a clear challenge in the implementation of these projects for capacity building.*

All of the sites had staff members leave and new staff members come on to the project at some point during implementation. At A.C. Bilbrew Library, this turnover was related to the closure of the library during the renovation process, but the staff changed at the other sites as well, so turnover is clearly a normal part of working over the period of time it takes to develop a public artwork. While onboarding new staff can be a challenge, being involved in an engagement project early in a staff person’s tenure can actually accelerate the process of settling in. A new staff member at Victoria Park mentioned that she would not have gotten to know the community leaders at the park so quickly without being involved in Cocina Abierta’s project.

*To implement future arts and culture programs, the Department of Parks and Recreation has capacity building needs around staff and resources and opportunities for new forms of public engagement.*

Parks and Recreation has a smaller staff dedicated to programming and therefore has less capacity for new ventures outside of their established repertoire. New programs tend to be implemented through a partnership model where an outside organization provides the staff and the parks provide the space. For this reason, the parks staff is unlikely to have the capacity to continue new projects over time without a dedicated funding stream. The department does not have friends groups attached to parks, as the library does, but the project at Victoria Park indicates there is potential in creating advisory groups at each park to develop a sense of community attachment and to organize additional volunteer resources.

*The County of LA Public Library has opportunities to build capacity for more arts and culture programming with their existing resources and has opportunities for new forms of indoor-outdoor programs.*

The Public Library does have friends groups at many libraries and more staff capacity for arts and culture programming. The library already implements programs related to arts and culture regularly and, at the sites in this project, has staff dedicated to specific cultural collections and programming for teens. However, both of the artworks at the libraries for this project intended to stimulate outdoor programming to expand beyond the Public Library’s usual programming activity. There is a ripe opportunity for library staff to collaborate on programs related to art installations and evidence that any educational materials provided to library staff would be put to good use. Because library staff members interact with the public in close proximity to the artwork, there is potential in training all staff at a library as docents for art installations.

# RECOMMENDATIONS & OPPORTUNITIES

The evaluation of the Creative Graffiti Abatement project highlights lessons learned about engaging with the community and commissioning temporary artworks alongside physical artworks. First, the additional investment that the Arts Commission made by hiring an artist to focus on engagement programs across sites and throughout the artwork development process was crucial for success. While there were challenges for stimulating ongoing programs, building capacity for arts and culture programming at neighborhood parks and libraries is a promising strategy for increasing access to arts participation. Furthermore, embedding evaluators in complex artistic engagement programs had multiple benefits, creating opportunities for the artists and staff to reflect and improve in real time even as the project progressed. Therefore, this report offers detailed recommendations in three areas: for commissioning agencies, especially those whose project management structures have predominantly facilitated one-time physical artworks in past; for future partnerships between arts agencies and other departments of county government – especially neighborhood parks and libraries; and for those working to evaluate public art projects of similar complexity.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AGENCIES COMMISSIONING PUBLIC ART AND ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS

1. Approach the development of physical artwork as an opportunity for artistic engagement with the public and staff throughout the process, including installation and post-launch, instead of simply during the design phase as a prophylactic against community blowback.
  - ▶ Assess internal program capacity for community engagement and consider adding competencies for engagement among public art program staff.
2. Create a “maintenance plan” for temporary and/or participatory artworks that could involve maintaining contact with the community members involved, specific plans for additional programming or the distribution of documentation materials. Just as physical artworks may require a conservator’s assessment upon completion to ensure proper maintenance of the artwork, the afterlife of temporary social artworks requires planning and resources.
3. Support artist engagement work with a comprehensive communication plan for each project that defines responsibilities for artists and project staff. A communication plan should include maintaining an opt-in contact list of individuals who participate in engagement activities. Include these individuals in plans to update community members and other stakeholders about the project process. Thought should be given to an online presence for the project, and interpretation/translation needs should also be included in a communication plan.
4. Clarify documentation and data collection roles and responsibilities within artistic engagement programs. Key aspects to consider are participation numbers, documentation of feedback or creative input by community members, photo documentation and other elements that might be relevant for a particular project such as curricula. If artists are expected to provide these elements, it is important to clarify copyright for photos and other documentation and permission to use likenesses.

5. Facilitate the communication of expectations and goals between government agencies and artists at the beginning of a project. Help agencies define specific needs and help artists articulate a project or task that responds to that need. This might include specifying the target audience for engagement programs in order to focus artist-driven efforts, whether it is departmental administration, on-site staff, community leaders, facility users, specific demographic groups, community members more broadly or a mix of audiences.
6. Create flexibility within contracting structures for artists who create work based on engagement to design deliverables based on their site research, regardless of whether or not there are articulated desired outcomes for a project.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARTIST-LED PROJECTS AT LA COUNTY PARKS AND LIBRARIES

7. Create multi-year artist-in-residence opportunities in LA County parks and libraries focused on public engagement. Residencies could build on any of the programming ideas that were developed during this project or be generated by other departmental priorities.
8. Partner directly with a neighborhood association, Parks After Dark advisory council or Friends of the Library group to increase civic engagement. Some of these groups are already organizations with 501(c)3 or (c)4 status and could engage in formal partnerships. The Department of Parks and Recreation does not have “Friends” groups attached to each park, but an artist could partner with the department to develop such a group. In particular, the Parks After Dark stakeholder meetings could be expanded into year-round advisory councils.
9. Continue to build staff capacity for arts and culture programming at neighborhood parks and libraries. Site staff confidence in interpreting artwork, running arts

and culture programs and selecting arts partners will create ongoing impact for investments. For example, a commissioning agency or arts organization could:

- ▶ Provide docent training for the entirety of a staff at a site when an artwork is installed so that staff is empowered to answer questions about artwork and to incorporate new artwork into their existing programming.
  - ▶ Create a community outreach and event production training program in which staff members propose an arts and culture program to implement in collaboration with an artist. This program should be designed to give staff members experience developing their own programs rather than simply participating in artist-led demonstration projects.
  - ▶ Pair staff from the Department of Parks and Recreation and the Public Library to co-produce arts and culture programs especially where sites are in close proximity, like at East Rancho Dominguez, or co-located, such as Woodcrest Library and the new parklet to be installed on the same site.
  - ▶ Continue to build capacity by creating a cohort of staff members within a department or across departments who are working on arts and culture programming to foster a learning community or community of practice.
10. Increase direct engagement with teenagers and young adults to foster civic engagement and develop young community leaders.
    - ▶ Expand engagement with youth during the fabrication phase of a project. Whether the youth are employed through an organization like the LA Conservation Corps or directly by the project, an artist could design an engagement program specifically for the individuals who paint or otherwise participate in fabrication. Some possibilities include training youth in artwork fabrication and maintenance techniques or collaborating with youth on the artwork design.

- ▶ Partner with gang intervention organizations and initiatives to target teens with engagement programs. There are particular opportunities to partner with organizations involved in Parks After Dark programming who are already working with youth at parks.

## EVALUATING COMPLEX PUBLIC ART AND ENGAGEMENT PROJECTS

11. Carefully assess administrative or program data to balance the efficiencies that might be gained by using data that are already being collected with inconsistencies in data collected by non-research staff. If evaluators choose to use program data as part of their evaluation, they should carefully investigate how the data were generated and by whom to determine what the data represents. Pay special attention to the relationship between data tracked on paper and data kept in software systems, looking for changes in the way data are input and any paper processes that are not captured in software systems.
12. Administer surveys orally or conduct on-the-spot interviews in the midst of artistic engagement programs or other events in order to get richer qualitative responses to artwork. Each interviewer should have a protocol with questions and follow up prompts and an image of the artwork if it is not in immediate view. Interviewers can be instructed to approach everyone who comes near them (an intercept survey method) and to take notes as they were interviewing or immediately afterwards. In this project, interviewers typed the responses they received into a Google form within 24 hours, translating responses into English if the interview was conducted in Spanish.
13. Consult an evaluator or researcher to guide the ethical use of data and identifying information about participants. Whether or not it is decided that written informed consent is necessary, participants should understand what data are being collected about them and how it will be used. In this

project, a single written informed consent instrument was developed to cover both artist-led and researcher-led data collection activities where audio or video recordings were being made of community members. Notices were posted in the areas where events were being held if those events would be filmed and announcements made that individuals could approach staff if they did not want to be recorded.

14. Invite artists to collaborate with research staff on evaluation and data collection efforts.
  - ▶ Consult artists when designing survey instruments and data collection within engagement activities, in order to elicit quality data and to embed data collection appropriately within activities. This may include enlisting an artist to design aesthetically attractive data collection instruments that double as engagement tools.
  - ▶ Co-develop questions in instruments or protocols to make sure that both artists and evaluators cover the topics that they need and evaluators can make sure that the questions are not leading or otherwise problematic.
  - ▶ Discuss information collection needs with artists and assess which tasks are appropriate for artists to lead. For this project, inviting artists to lead focus group discussions was extremely effective because some of the artists were very skilled in facilitation.
  - ▶ Support artists in developing consistent collection methods and documentation practices. Research staff may need to make their own recordings or notes in order to ensure completeness in documentation.

## CONCLUSION

The findings presented in this evaluation report contribute to continuing discussions about the roles public art and public engagement play in community life. The impact of public art is complex and requires complex approaches to evaluation. Capturing long term outcomes remains a challenge, especially given that many impacts are indirect in the short term and often become more diffuse over time. Participatory artwork and engagement programs have the potential to be “plop” art that does not originate from the community and only provides transient benefits to the communities if the work does not cultivate relationships and partnerships among organizations that continue beyond initial installation and implementation. Embedding evaluation into the project can be one element that supports reflection and improvement throughout the project. Further research and evaluation can sketch the mechanisms and types of engagement that create lasting impact in communities.

These findings also highlight embedding meaningful engagement activities in public art as an important aspect of government investment in communities. Like libraries,

parks and recreation centers themselves, artwork is part of civic infrastructure, understood as both physical structures and spaces, as well as social processes of management and use that animate them. The community members’ responses to the four artworks studied here confirm what the research has been showing, that well-designed and -maintained public facilities are important factors in fostering civic trust, especially in communities that have historically experienced underinvestment. Programs offered in these spaces are part of the infrastructure that builds and supports relationships between community members and also between community members and government. Public art commissioning agencies within governments can play an important role in developing or improving those relationships through arts and culture programming.

Finally, this project explored new ways to promote inclusive arts participation in everyday civic spaces like parks and libraries. This evaluation demonstrates how dispersing arts investment to those kinds of everyday civic spaces can contribute to community development and help to ensure that everyone has access to the benefits of arts and culture.

# DATA APPENDIX

Since artists led some of the data collection activities and the evaluator was embedded in most of the engagement activities described in the report, the data sources used in the evaluation coincide with the public engagement timelines with a few exceptions. Administrative data were collected by Parks and Recreation staff members in the course of their normal duties, and evaluation staff received data extractions for the relevant administrative data from the observation period. Administrative data were provided by the Public Library from the library sites for July 2013 to December 2015, but were not analyzed for this report. Evaluation staff also independently conducted interviews and some focus groups after the engagement programming was completed for each site. Finally, social media data were scraped for the observation period by evaluation staff at the end of the project. What follows is a list of data sources for each project site including the dates covered and a description of the data collection method. Evaluation staff conducted all data collection activities unless otherwise indicated.

## EAST RANCHO DOMINGUEZ PARK AND COMMUNITY CENTER DATA SOURCES AND TIMELINE

- ▶ **July 2013 through March 2017** – Department of Parks and Recreation activity reports, graffiti removal work orders, reservations permits and comment card survey responses
- ▶ **July 2013 through March 2017** – LA County Sheriff Department-reported instances of graffiti vandalism from all areas of the County where the Sheriff has jurisdiction
- ▶ **October 2014** – Artist-conducted feedback session at East Rancho Dominguez Neighborhood Association meeting
- ▶ **February 2015** – Artist-conducted interview with park staff member
- ▶ **February 2015** – Artist-conducted focus group held at Dominguez Rancho Adobe Museum
- ▶ **November 2015** – Participant observation, video footage and surveys collected at community center dedication celebration
- ▶ **December 2015** – Informal interview with community center staff member
- ▶ **March 2016** – Participant observation of engagement strategy meeting with staff
- ▶ **May – July 2016** – Informal interviews conducted at park programs and artist-engagement activities
- ▶ **October 2016** – Informal interviews and participant observation at Community Storytelling event
- ▶ **December 2016** – Semi-structured interviews with park and community center staff
- ▶ **December 2016** – Focus group with engagement participants
- ▶ **February 2017** – Semi-structured interview with departmental staff member (interview covered both East Rancho Dominguez Park and Community Center and Victoria Community Regional Park)
- ▶ **May 2017** – Online reviews from Google, Yelp and Facebook

## VICTORIA COMMUNITY REGIONAL PARK DATA SOURCES AND TIMELINE

- ▶ **July 2013 through March 2017** – Department of Parks and Recreation activity reports, graffiti removal work orders, reservations permits and comment card survey responses

- ▶ **July 2013 through March 2017** – LA County Sheriff Department-reported instances of graffiti vandalism from all areas of the County where the Sheriff has jurisdiction
- ▶ **September 2014** – Artist-collected video footage of engagement activities
- ▶ **February 2015** – Artist-conducted focus group with program leaders and park staff
- ▶ **January 2016** – Artist-conducted focus group and screening event planning meeting
- ▶ **March 2016** – Participant observation and video footage of installation activities and engagement planning with artists and park staff
- ▶ **March 2016** – Surveys collected and participant observation at screening event
- ▶ **March 2016** – Transcripts of community profile videos
- ▶ **April 2016** – Participant observation of screening event debrief meeting with artists and park staff member
- ▶ **August 2016** – Participant observation of summer camp cooking class
- ▶ **November 2016** – Semi-structured interviews with community chefs and program leaders
- ▶ **January 2017** – Semi-structured interview with park staff member
- ▶ **February 2017** – Semi-structured interview with departmental staff member (interview covered both East Rancho Dominguez Park and Community Center and Victoria Community Regional Park)
- ▶ **May 2017** – Email correspondence with departmental staff
- ▶ **May 2017** – Online reviews from Google, Yelp and Facebook

#### **WOODCREST LIBRARY DATA SOURCES AND TIMELINE**

- ▶ **December 2014** – Artist-collected video footage and photos of Trash for Teaching canopy design engagement activity
- ▶ **April 2015** – Artist-conducted focus group with library staff and community stakeholders
- ▶ **March 2016** – Artist-conducted feedback session at West Athens Task Force meeting

- ▶ **March 2016** – Artist-conducted feedback session with children and parents in the Woodcrest Library children’s area
- ▶ **December 2016** – Informal interviews with library patrons at Artwork Launch Party
- ▶ **February 2017** – Focus groups with library staff and teen book club members
- ▶ **February 2017** – Semi-structured interviews with LA Conservation Corps member and West Athens Victory Garden staff member
- ▶ **March 2017** – Semi-structured interview with departmental staff member (interview covered both Woodcrest and A.C. Bilbrew Libraries)
- ▶ **May 2017** – Online reviews from Google, Yelp and Facebook

#### **A.C. BILBREW LIBRARY DATA SOURCES AND TIMELINE**

- ▶ **April 2015** – Artist-conducted focus group with Friends of the Library and teen volunteers
- ▶ **March 2016** – Artist-conducted informal interviews with children and parents at the temporary express library location
- ▶ **February 2017** – Participant observation and informal interviews at library grand reopening
- ▶ **March 2017** – Focus group at Friends of the Library meeting
- ▶ **March 2017** – Focus group with library staff
- ▶ **March 2017** – Participant observation of installation tour for library staff (Golden State Mutual Collection)
- ▶ **March 2017** – Semi-structured interview with departmental staff member (interview covered both Woodcrest and A.C. Bilbrew Libraries)
- ▶ **April 2017** – Informal interviews with library patrons
- ▶ **May 2017** – Online reviews from Google, Yelp and Facebook



# ENDNOTES

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