

According to a report commissioned by the Mayors' Institute on City Design, creative placemaking takes place when "partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities." Few places exemplify this type of work and partnership-building better than Jeffersonville, Indiana.

In Jeffersonville, the creative placemaking process began with the creation of the Jeffersonville Arts Alliance. The group was formed by local artists, fine arts educators and art supporters who were concerned about the lack of public art and arts programming within the city. Drawing on their skills as artists and educators, and with the support of community sponsors, the group began leading public art events, as part of a new Jeffersonville Art Movement. At these events, called JAM sessions, community members were given the opportunity to contribute directly to the public art being installed within their community.



In the back section of the artist space are puppet heads created for an Indiana Bicentennial Project that is supported in part by the Indiana Arts Commission.

Soon after the creation of the Arts Alliance, the City of Jeffersonville decided to include more creative placemaking in its own decision-making. Thus, the Public Art Commission was created with the stated mission to "integrate art, cultural expression and design excellence into the public space, to provide meaningful experiences that define the City of Jeffersonville's sense of place." Through the work of the Arts Alliance, the Public Art Commission, and other partners, a strong artistic culture has developed within the city, with community members of all ages participating in its formation.

This level of community engagement with public art is a great example of shaping the social character of a city around arts and cultural activities. But in Jeffersonville this is only the beginning; now the city and its partners plan to shape its physical character around arts and cultural activities, by turning a vacant area of its downtown into an Arts and Cultural District.

While much of the Arts District remains in the planning stages, one building (a former auto shop) has already been adapted into artist studios and community art spaces.



There are two JAM session art projects shown: the dragonflies on the table are made from old ceiling fans and the boards in the back are painted coverings for a utility station.



Artist Michael Wimmer in his new studio in the Arts District.

In the spring of 2016, several JAM sessions were held within the new artist space; in addition to working on art pieces, the JAM sessions continue to be used to engage residents in planning for the rest of the Arts District.

Across the street from the art space, another body shop is currently being redeveloped into Maker13, a maker's space that will be stocked with high-tech tools made available to members for a monthly fee. Down the block is the Vintage Fire Museum and the Clark County Museum, both of which hope to use interest in the Arts District to increase awareness of their own exhibits. Art projects are planned to beautify the utilities located within the district, while games, seating and other interactive features will be used to fill the open spaces and parking lots scattered around the area. Linking all of these elements will be a walking path that will connect the Arts District to the rest of Jeffersonville's downtown and to the Big Four Pedestrian Bridge that crosses the Ohio River to Louisville, Kentucky. Eventually, the hope is that the Jeffersonville Arts and Cultural District will receive an official Cultural District designation from the Indiana Arts Commission.

The Jeffersonville Arts and Cultural District is a terrific example of creative placemaking. It started as a grassroots movement, with a few creative initiators trying to promote public art and arts programming throughout the city.

From there it garnered strong support from artists, nonprofit organizations, for-profit businesses, and local officials; this support was so strong that the city created an entire commission dedicated to furthering public art. The Arts District will build on this movement, to include more opportunities for resident engagement, business development and overall improvements to quality-of-life.



Across the street from the artist studios is Maker13, a new makerspace with all the latest technology available for use.

For more information about creative placemaking and the organizations that fund creative placemaking projects, please visit:

Indiana Arts Commission

<http://www.in.gov/arts/>

ArtPlace

<http://www.artplaceamerica.org/>

National Endowment for the Arts

<https://www.arts.gov/>

Creative Placemaking Paper

<https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/CreativePlacemaking-Paper.pdf>

For more information about the Jeffersonville Arts and Cultural District, please visit:

Jeffersonville Public Art Commission

<http://www.jeffersonvilleart.com/>

Jeffersonville Arts Alliance

<http://www.jeffarts.org/>