

## Category: Community Development

### Project: Shreveport Common and Choice Neighborhoods

#### Project Location: Shreveport, Louisiana

**Status:** Listening Sessions/Visioning/Design Process complete; Implementing Strategic Plan (\$38M complete)

**Cost:** \$1,000,000

**Description:** Shreveport Common is quickly becoming Shreveport, Louisiana's UNcommon Cultural District: a \$100M Arts-driven transformation of a blighted, urban area to a vibrant, creative, sustainable neighborhood. Developed using Creative Placemaking techniques, the process has garnered national attention (MIT Places in the Making) and exemplifies BEST- and NEWEST-practices at the intersection of Community Development and Creative Placemaking.

The Shreveport Common Development – 3 years in the making, 40% complete - is an Arts-led, holistic Community Development initiative based upon an 18-month grassroots Vision Planning and Community Process, comprised of 36 major projects spanning housing, transportation, green spaces, public art, arts programming, and workforce development, within Shreveport's HUD Choice Neighborhood. The 9-block site was chosen for its geographic connection between the blighted Eastern edge of Ledbetter Heights, and the Western edge of the thriving downtown business district. In 2009, at the project's inception, the space between the disparate segments of Shreveport was a desolate expanse of broken concrete, punctuated with deteriorating historic buildings.

The City of Shreveport, Caddo Parish, Shreveport Regional Arts Council (SRAC) and 30 major public and private partners are working together to create community, economic and cultural development, transforming the area and quality of life through the principles of Creative Placemaking; putting the Arts and artists "at the helm" of creating a vibrant cultural hub that is committed to connecting the community, offering surprising public art and cultural programming in formerly un-used spaces, creating workforce development and earned income opportunities while animating and aesthetically enhancing the formerly blighted area. From the beginning of the Vision Plan process, Shreveport Common, SRAC and the City of Shreveport have been dedicated to keeping all neighbors, particularly the underserved, integral to creating an enhanced cultural community.

Now in Implementation Phase, residents, artists and businesses are moving into and thriving in this creative neighborhood.

**Community Needs Addressed:** Residential: Currently, only 800 residents, almost entirely in social service residential for otherwise homeless, or income-restricted affordable housing, remain in Shreveport Common: the area population decreased 78.6% since 1990 with historic homes razed to the ground. The Shreveport Common Vision Plan mixes 4 new market-value, retail/residential developments with 36 – 50 artist affordable units, bringing an additional 250 residents to the area.

Retail: Shreveport Common Vision Plan calls for 17-20 new mixed/retail businesses by 2018.

Transportation: Currently, those desperately relying on public transport have no shelter/shade, with stretches of blight between stops. CommonLink, a striking, artist-designed, transportation, information, transformational substation, part of a major long-range transportation solution will also

attract new audiences, promoting alternative transportation and a walkable neighborhood. \$150,000 technical design complete, construction funding pending.

Green spaces: With no urban park or communal gathering space nearby, adjudicated broken concrete lots are being replaced by artist-designed green spaces: \$4M Caddo Common, now in design development, brings together landscape architects with professional artists to create an unprecedented, eco-friendly, creative common space; \$1.2M Elvis Presley Grand Promenade complete; "Pooch Park" planned with City currently purchasing property; and 2 community kitchen-gardens started at Mercy Center for HIV+ otherwise homeless.

Workforce Development: 1,100 artists reside/work in Shreveport, but fewer than 50 make their living solely in the Arts. Shreveport Common will generate an artist workforce through: Arts Business Resource Center, Emerging Artist Gallery and Performance Venues, and Arts Entrepreneurial Training, currently provided by SRAC with Southern University Business School, and Attorneys for the Arts. The planned Wilsons Studios is a shared "makerspace" for local industrial artists, makers and fabricators to create, learn, and develop to a professional level. Bi-annual Arts market, Public Art commissions, monthly arts festivals, and Arts-in-Education are stimulating earned income opportunities for artists.

**Benefits and Outcome:** Shreveport Common is arts-driven revitalization, through creative, authentic, sustainable community-changing initiatives.

Economic Development:

- \$13M public investment in Shreveport Common has stimulated \$25.5M in private investment totaling \$38M in 3 years
- 27% increase in building occupancy since 2010
- Property values have increased 18.6% over the last 3 years after decades of decline
- Property owners have invested \$21M in restoration of historic buildings
- 19 buildings purchased since 2010, 17 for private redevelopment
- Creative businesses in previously vacant spaces, 35% increase
- 90% of 75 graduates of Arts Entrepreneurial Training report increase in earned income with 40% doubling earned income

Community Development:

- Arts-led neighborhood engagement for a safer, cleaner, more cohesive neighborhood
- Shreveport Common and SRAC develop/maintain relationships with existing social service organizations: dedicated informational/neighborhood events, community supported clean-up days, creating "first voice" listening/input sessions
- Artist affordable housing and studio space (property purchased, schematics designed)
- Plans for daily fresh food and arts/makers' markets
- Artist-designed greenspaces, public art and programming complement Affordable Housing and Social Service residential with Market Value and Artist Housing

## Cultural Development:

- SRAC, dedicated to access to the arts, facilitates programming putting Artists and neighbors together as integral to the creative community. UNSCENE! events bring nationally acclaimed artists with local artists to program the area
- New crowds are drawn to the cutting-edge Arts programming and creation of unique recreational spaces.
- SRAC is committed to artists at the planning and design phase of every project such as Caddo Common Park artist design team
- CommonLink transportation substation includes a high-tech app and info center, cultural content for music, historic, architectural tours, programming, events and ticketing, and gathering spaces
- SRAC Pay-It-Forward program trades artists venue rent and training fees for “same-value” professional arts services with social service organizations

**Project Collaborators:** A devastating fire that destroyed the offices and creative spaces of the Arts Council catalyzed a cadre of more than 100 partners - Dreamers, Planners, Strategists, Funders, and Policy Makers - who have each served an integral role in the development of the Vision and Reality of an Arts based “Uncommon” Cultural Community: Shreveport Common.

Planning and Visioning started with a 50-member Mayor appointed Steering Committee collecting 1,000 discreet ideas, then 10 task force teams comprised of field experts analyzed and prioritized the Vision to a Strategic Plan; a diverse Management Team is implementing the Plan.

Advancing to management, the Shreveport Common Board of Directors is comprised with diverse representation from the City, Arts Community, Downtown, City Parish and Regional Government, Public Transportation, Housing, Developers, Historic Preservationists, Property Owners and representatives from the five Social Service Organizations.

Funding Partners coalesced with a \$6.5 community commitment to restore a 1922 Central Fire Station to become the new home for the Arts. More than 50 foundations, corporations and families donated the cash...no loans were taken. This paved the way for the City and Parish to invest in property acquisition and major renovation projects like the \$7.5 Municipal Auditorium where Elvis “left the building” and the design of the CADDO COMMON greenspace. Now HUD grants, ArtPlace America, National Endowment for the Arts, Educational Foundation of America, and a host of national funders join the effort.

Private Sector Development – More than 15 private developers/building owners/retailers/and enthusiasts have begun and/or completed major projects such as:

- Restoration of McAdoo Hotel for VOA
- James Burton Foundation for Studio and RockNRoll Guitar & Car Museum
- Preservation and repurpose Calanthean Temple and 900 block Texas Artist Studio Space
- 710 Crockett Lofts (Market Value)
- Little Realty, office and townhouse
- Scottish Rite Temple, restorative preservation
- Holy Cross Church, restorative preservation

## What Makes Your Project Unique? :

- 30 public/private partners focused on 36 redevelopment initiatives in a 9-block blighted area, guided by an Arts-led community Vision Plan
- Local, state, and national public and private funders
- Key partnership: Arts Council with City and Dept of Community Development to accomplish nationally noted community planning
- Synergy of Choice Neighborhoods' and Shreveport Common's missions to housing, neighborhood and quality-of-life improvements
- Choice Coordinator and Community Development Director sit on the Shreveport Common Board of Directors; 2 Shreveport Common staff - Project Manager and Administrator - sit on Choice Neighborhood Advisory Committee
- Deep commitment to engaging the mostly poverty-level neighbors from planning and design through implementation
- Commitment to neighbors, social service organizations and property owners who want to stay
- UNSCENE!: 12 months of regular, ground-breaking Arts Programming in spaces throughout Shreveport Common rarely frequented by the public
- \$6.5M restoration of formerly empty 1922 Central Fire Station to Central ARTSTATION, as the first and pivotal redevelopment in the area, one-stop-shop for local Arts: Arts Council offices, Emerging Artists' performance and exhibition venues, Artists' Business Resource Center, Arts Entrepreneurial Training, artist commissioned works throughout
- ART the Dalmatian: 20ft LED-lit public artwork, gift from Academy Award-winning artists, with fabrication from Educational Foundation of America, for opening of Central ARTSTATION
- Ongoing commitment to temporary public art and programming
- CommonLink transportation substation is a functional public artwork, also includes immersive "hub" with cultural content on rich local history, architecture and musicians, plus information on concert times, restaurants, walking tours, bike paths, bus times, and more
- Shreveport Common was one of 10 communities featured in MIT Dept of Urban Studies and Planning's Places in the Making (2013): "Shreveport Common has laid the foundation to become one of the leading examples of Creative Placemaking in the country"

**Organization's Name:** Shreveport Common

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