Cultural Corridors aim to foster equitable community development through the celebration of local arts and culture in a particular geographic area. Through a combination of public and private dollars, Cultural Corridors are place-making projects that aim to build a sense of place while using cultural heritage as a lever for further economic investment. In a twist on traditional planning models, Cultural Corridors demonstrate the interconnected nature of cultural and physical infrastructure. They are based on the premise that investing in a sense of place is also an investment in the place itself.

**HOW CULTURAL CORRIDORS WORK**

Cultural Corridors work to uplift the cultural heritage of a particular geographic area through artistic celebration. This can include both permanent and temporary installations. Cultural Corridors contribute to “creative placemaking,” or the practice of intentionally shaping the physical and social character of an area.

Cultural Corridors understand that arts-based work can help bring material uplift to under-resourced communities. Through investments in neighborhood cultural infrastructure, they foster community wealth by drawing people and business to an area so that communities can profit off of their own cultural labor.

Cultural Corridors can be established through a combination of public and private investment; their creation often happens alongside with other planned or ongoing development projects.

Cultural Corridors employ a community-rooted and participatory approach to the artistic process, situating culturally-reflective place-making at the center of equitable development processes. Cultural Corridors practice equitable development by investing in artists of color and engaging in authentic community co-creation to make space for institutionally disenfranchised communities to define and celebrate their spaces for themselves.

**ART AND CULTURE AS A GENTRIFICATION-MARKER**

Gentrification is not just about physical displacement; it is about cultural displacement as well – a feeling of not belonging that takes a toll on emotional well-being and community networks of support. Art is a poignant visual indicator for changing neighborhoods; it can serve to uplift local artists while also aesthetically marking changing cultural, racial, and class norms. Cultural Corridors can help combat gentrification by countering its “cultural displacement” effects. In the face of rapid neighborhood change, they utilize community-centered art as a lynchpin for fostering neighborhood pride by grounding community members in a sense of place.

**Cultural Corridors and Green Infrastructure**

New developments are often an opportunity to capture money to put towards artistic projects. In the past, Cultural Corridors have often accompanied major transit investments. Similarly, Cultural Corridors are aptly-suited to accompany green infrastructure developments as well.
Spotlight on the Twin Cities Central Corridor

The 2014 opening of the Green Line established a direct transit corridor connecting Minneapolis and St. Paul. It inaugurated a Cultural Corridor as well. The Central Corridor Cultural Corridor (C4) supported arts and culture organizations who work and serve communities all along the Green Line path, a transit line that moves through many neighborhoods facing displacement pressures. Under the banner of “beyond the rail,” this effort sought to harness the major public investment in the Green Line to promote local economic growth, cultural celebration, and ability to stay in place.

CONSIDERATIONS

Reinscribing Gentrification Potential

Cultural Corridors are public investments that promote neighborhood desirability by growing both cultural and infrastructural value. Property values respond to heightened desirability. Thus, Cultural Corridors are a tool subject to the same forces as environmental gentrification; cultural corridors participate in increasing land values through the commodification of an area’s cultural identity. This relationship is further entrenched because Cultural Corridors are often explicitly paired with other development-inducing large infrastructure projects. For example, in 2013 LISC-Twin Cities launched its Central Corridor as Cultural Corridor (C4) initiative in direct response to construction of the Green Line light rail route at the time.

Cultural Essentialism

Growing the cultural economy depends on producing or performing some sort of “authentic” and “real” cultural identity. When “authentic” cultural heritage gets mixed with city planning in Cultural Corridors, it can lead to a re-shaping of culture around profit, reducing cultural heritage to one monolithic form. While celebrating those who may connect with this particular cultural representation, this can also serve to erase the diversity of cultural identity and experience. In addition, a focus on commodifying cultural heritage can exclude the ways that expression of culture has changed over time or even insinuate that it hasn’t changed at all.

LEARN MORE

Visit the Resources page at create.umn.edu to learn more about how to use the connection between art, culture, and gentrification as an anti-displacement measure.