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 use 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.

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 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, marked by a toll on sense-of-place, emotional well-being and community support networks. Art is a poignant visual indicator for these neighborhood changes. It is an aesthetic marker of cultural, racial, and class norms.

The role that the arts play in gentrification processes complicates the relationship between cultural corridors and displacement. Still, cultural corridors can be a tool to help combat gentrification by countering its “cultural displacement” effects and uplifting the work of local artists. 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 investments to put towards artistic projects. Cultural corridors are well-positioned to leverage this artistic re-visioning in concert with green infrastructure. Together, cultural corridors and green infrastructure can insist on culturally-significant, historically-aware, and environmentally-healthy user experiences.
CONSIDERATIONS

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 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 large infrastructure projects.

Cultural is Diverse

There is no single “authentic” or “real” cultural identity for any particular cultural group. It is impossible to capture the diversity of ways that people experience, relate to, and celebrate cultural heritage. Still, planners, artists, and participants can keep this challenge in mind while trying to bring a diversity of cultural experiences and representations to the table.

Cultural is Dynamic

The desire to tell a story about cultural heritage can erase the ways that culture takes living, breathing, and changing forms. This is particularly important when considering celebrations of Indigenous cultures that so often get painted as historical, a false narrative that reproduces Indigenous erasure, and ignores contemporary Indigenous communities and cultural expression.

Spotlight on: The Twin Cities Central Corridor Cultural Corridor

Anticipating construction of the Green Line, a new light rail line connecting Minneapolis and St. Paul, the economic development nonprofit LISC-Twin Cities launched an accompanying cultural corridor campaign in 2013. The Central Corridor as Cultural Corridor (C4) Initiative aimed to coordinate and financially support arts and culture organizations who work and serve communities all along the transit path. Under the banner of “beyond the rail,” this effort sought to harness the major public investment in the Green Line to bolster local economic growth, cultural celebration, and ability to stay in place.

LISC’s Initiative was all the more significant because the transit line moves through many neighborhoods facing displacement pressures, bringing heightened investment and development in its wake. Indeed, since construction was completed in 2014, the Metropolitan Council estimates more $5.8 billion in development been invested in areas within a half mile of Green Line stops.