Creative Community Control:
A Case Study of Creative Engagements in Upham's Corner

A thesis submitted by

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Abstract

This thesis presents a case study of how arts-based creative engagements have enhanced a redevelopment process to create an Arts and Innovation district without displacement in Boston's Upham's Corner neighborhood. Built on decades of community-led work and co-facilitated by a grassroots community control organization, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), and the City of Boston, the Upham's Corner Implementation (UCI) process is an opportunity to do planning differently. This research aims to make sense of the overlapping and complex layers of this case and understand how creative methods have been used to further DSNI and its partners' efforts for community control over the redevelopment process.

The case study draws on sixteen semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders of the UCI process, meeting observations and notes, and planning documents and reports. While the process is ongoing, I found that arts-based creative engagements have enhanced the UCI process in profound ways.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This thesis tells the story of how arts-based creative engagements have enhanced a redevelopment process to create an Arts and Innovation district without displacement in Boston's Upham's Corner neighborhood. Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI), a grassroots neighborhood organization with a legacy of building community control, is partnering with the City of Boston to do planning differently. This effort is called the Upham's Corner Implementation (UCI) process, and it is built on decades of community-led work. The UCI process is grounded in three primary areas: DSNI's work for community control, creative placemaking in Upham's Corner, and the City of Boston's planning efforts (Figure 1).
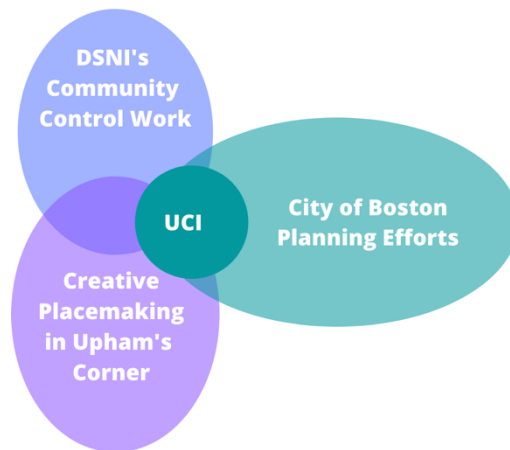

Figure 1: Case Study Context: Community Control, Creative Placemaking, and City Planning

This case study seeks to make sense of the overlapping and complex layers of this work and understand how creative methods have been used to further DSNI and its partners' efforts for community control over the redevelopment process. Incorporating arts and culture into a

planning process is rare, and it has great potential to create transparency, accessibility, and accountability in a field that traditionally lacks those attributes. Additionally, arts and culture can aid in engaging people of different backgrounds to think creatively, spark dialogue, and make their voices heard.

I hope that this research will inform future community organizing and creative placemaking efforts in Upham's Corner and help elevate the work of DSNI and its partners. It may also serve as an example for municipal planners who want to incorporate more art and culture into their field and for those who would like to engage in creative placemaking in their communities.

The Upham's Corner Implementation Process

The UCI process seeks to redevelop Boston's Upham's Corner into an Arts and Innovation district and is currently being co-facilitated by the City of Boston and DSNI. It is the result of decades of city-led planning processes and community-led creative placemaking work in the neighborhood. This unique partnership between the city and a community control organization is notable because DSNI's community land trust, Dudley Neighbors Inc. (DNI), owns one of the key parcels in this multi-site redevelopment. Other critical properties include the former Bank of America building, the Strand Theatre, and a municipal parking lot.

Anchored by the historic Strand Theatre and a new public library, the Arts and Innovation District expects to revitalize Upham's Corner by building affordable housing, affordable commercial space, establishing a new operator for the Strand Theatre, and developing the Upham's Corner Library branch. The UCI process aims to center community

voice and vision and has included an intensive series of community engagement meetings and is guided by a Working Advisory Group (WAG) made up of residents, artists, and business owners. Creative engagements facilitated by DSNI and its partners have enhanced these community engagement methods throughout the process. As of writing this thesis, the UCI process is still underway.

Creative Placemaking in Upham's Corner

Over the last ten years, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) has partnered with other local organizations to empower residents, artists, and business owners to shape neighborhood planning processes for development without displacement, create a vibrant cultural economy, and build community control. Grounded in Roberto Bedoya's (2013) *aesthetics of belonging*, DSNI and its creative placemaking partners have been designing opportunities for residents in Upham's Corner to reimagine what their neighborhood could look like. They have hosted visual and performing pop-up art installations, held arts workshops and residencies, and supported local artists to drive the neighborhood planning processes. This work is about creating or enhancing "places of belonging," by first making sure that people feel they "belong." In the context of the UCI process, this means making sure that existing residents feel represented in the Arts and Innovation district and are not displaced along the way.

Project Outline

The next chapter of this thesis lays out the research methods, including research questions, case study rationale, and interview protocol. Chapter 3 reviews the literature of four

key themes including community control, arts and community organizing, arts and urban planning, and creative placemaking. This chapter seeks to situate the case study in existing research and explore the overlap between these topics. Chapter 4 explains the case study in detail by highlighting key players and activities over the last decade. This includes an overview of DSNI, Upham's Corner, and the UCI process. It then outlines the creative placemaking work in Upham's including a Public Kitchen, the Upham's Corner Artplace Pilot, the Fairmount Cultural Corridor, creative engagement processes about the UCI sites, and the Joy Parade. I analyze key findings from the case study in chapter 5. Important themes emerged around the role of artists in this planning effort, the concept of joy and celebration, the use of creative engagement for helping people think creatively, spark dialogue, facilitate feedback, and feel heard or represented. I also highlight ways in which creative engagements have impacted the UCI process. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of these findings, the implication and questions for further research in chapter 6.

Chapter 2: Methods

Research Purpose

This study was conducted as part of a larger partnership between a research team from Tufts University's Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning and Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI). These two entities have had a working relationship for decades, and most recently have undertaken a Participatory Action Research project about the Uphams Corner Implementation (UCI) process. Since fall of 2017, the Tufts team has worked with DSNI to observe and participate in meetings and conduct interviews related to the UCI process in order to better understand how civic engagement can strengthen capacity for community control over land use and economic development in Boston's Dudley neighborhood. I have participated in this research process since September 2019 as a Graduate Research Assistant at Tufts University. As the project is on its fourth year, this thesis seeks to build on the existing research of the Tufts and DSNI teams.

The primary audiences for this thesis are the stakeholders engaged in creative placemaking work in the UCI process. Those stakeholders include individuals in organizations such as the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Design Studio for Social Intervention, and past, present, and future partners of the Fairmount Cultural Corridor (FCC). It also includes active Upham's Corner residents, artists, and business owners. Secondarily, this thesis may be of interest to communities who want to engage in creative placemaking and/or community control over development, and planners and City staff who are interested in the use of arts and culture in planning.

My hope is that diving more deeply into this case study will allow space for reflection about what has worked well and what has not. This could inform the work of DSNI and FCC organizers moving forward, as well as elevate this unique story of creative placemaking for others interested in community control, creative placemaking, and planning.

Research Questions

Central Question
In what ways has DSNI and its partners used creative engagements to increase community control in Upham's Corner?

Sub Questions
- How have DSNI and its partners exercised community power in the Upham's Corner Implementation process?
- In what ways has arts and culture been used in the Upham's Corner Implementation process?
- Why is arts and culture important to DSNI and its partners? What do they hope to achieve by using arts and culture in the Upham's Corner Implementation process?
- How have creative placemaking activities impacted the Upham's Corner Implementation process?

Data Collection

My investigation used case study research methods due to the nature of the project and the information I had access to. Cresswell and Poth (2019) explain case studies as a qualitative exploration of a "real-life, contemporary, bounded system (a case) over time," in which data is collected from "multiple sources of information." The data should report "a case description and case themes." My data collection fits within a case study framework.

In an effort to better understand the landscape of creative placemaking and the overlap between art and community organizing, urban planning, and community control I conducted a

literature review. This review of literature explored four primary areas: creative placemaking, arts in planning, arts in community organizing, and community control.

The case study was supplemented by a review of articles, reports, and plans about DSNI and its creative placemaking partners in Uphams Corner, as well as the UCI process. As a member of the Tufts UEP research team, I observed both internal meetings of DSNI/DNI staff, internal meetings between DSNI/DNI and the City of Boston, and public meetings relating to the UCI process. I observed these meetings between fall 2019 through spring 2021. I also had access to notes from meetings dating back to the beginning of Tufts' participation in the process in 2018. This data, as well as information from City planning documents, internal reports, and multimedia documentation (photos and video) of the creative engagements was synthesized and incorporated into the case study.

From July 2019 – January 2020 the Tufts team conducted 19 semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from the UCI process. I selected nine of the most relevant interviews to include in this thesis. These interviews all had key themes related to my research questions. Then, I conducted an additional seven semi-structured interviews to further explore my research questions in more detail. Five of the interviews were follow-up interviews and two were with new stakeholders. The sixteen interviews included in my thesis were with a mix of current and former staff from DSNI/DNI, current and former staff from the City of Boston, staff from partner organizations involved in the UCI process, and leaders and volunteers who are either Upham's Corner residents or artists and have been involved in the UCI process. These interviews took 30-60 minutes over zoom and were recorded with IRB approval.

Interview questions from the first nine interviews included:
- How have you been connected to Upham's Corner?
- What role have you played in the Upham's Corner Implementation Process?
- What were your goals and hopes for the Upham's Corner Implementation Process?
- How well is the process achieving its goals and your hopes?
  - What has gone well?
  - What has fallen short or been challenging?
- How did the process shape the request for proposals (RFP)?
- What was the most expected or unexpected in terms of the visions that came through this process?
- How has the process affected relationships among stakeholders?
- What lessons and best practices have you learned from this process?

Interview questions from the second seven interviews included:
- What is your connection to the arts?
- Where has art been used in the UCI process?
- Where have these strategies impacted the UCI process?
- Why do you think it is important to incorporate arts and culture into this work?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the methods?
- Where have you seen arts and culture change or affect relationships of the people involved?
- Can you describe the playback theater engagement at the Strand? What do you think were the impacts of the meeting on the process?

These interviews allowed me to piece together a timeline of events and relationships, and better understand stakeholders' perceptions of their work and their theory of change.

Data Analysis

While my overall research is grounded in a case study model, I used grounded theory in my analytic methods. This approach required that I analyze the history of the case and events as they unfolded (Cresswell and Poth, 2018). I analyzed data in an iterative manner as it was collected and refined my research questions to reflect the findings that were emerging.

Once data was collected, I created codes to categorize the information around a "core" strategy, which Corbin and Strauss (1990) call selective coding. First, I organized themes from each individual interview and then I collected them in one excel spreadsheet and used overarching codes. This allowed me to identify clusters, patterns, and themes from the sixteen different interviews. I created a timeline of key moments and events using the interviews and background data from existing reports, plans, and articles. This process gave me a sense of how arts and culture has been used in Uphams Corner and the UCI process, how key stakeholders view their work, and understand how it can build community control.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to provide relevant context to four themes surrounding my primary research questions. The first section explores the concept of community control as it relates to the redevelopment process and to land. The Upham's Corner Implementation process is both an exercise in community influence over the redevelopment process and in community control over land through the Dudley Neighbors Inc. (DNI) community land trust (CLT). The next two sections seek to establish a rationale for and benefits of using arts and culture in community organizing and in urban planning respectively. These two viewpoints represent DSNI and its partners as community organizing entities and DSNI and the City of Boston as community planning agencies. The final section lays out a definition of creating placemaking and examines some of the critiques and benefits of creative placemaking initiatives.

Community Control

Community control is a term commonly used in association with CLTs like Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative's (DSNI) DNI, but it has different meanings and connotations depending on the context. Williams (2018) defines it as, "a concept mobilized in political, as well as theoretical, discourses to signal a place-based population's decision-making power over local resources." In the CLT context, this commonly translates into direct control over land (local resources) or control over the development process (decision-making).

Community control as influence over process

Influence over decision-making is a phenomenon that can be hard to measure, especially in the complicated and political world of development and municipal government. In a study assessing the effect of community participation in redevelopment processes along the Fairmount Corridor, of which Uphams Corner is a part, Levine (2017) found that increased participation in a process does not guarantee increased influence over said process. He suggests that the nebulous nature of the word "community" can lead to disempowerment of residents and allow public officials to proceed with the status quo without accountability to actual people (Levine, 2017). He concludes that "community processes" obscure what is really happening and have little impact on the outcome (Levine, 2017).

Levine's focus is on community participation in municipal led redevelopment processes. As is highlighted in DSNI's history, there are many ways to influence or exert control over redevelopment processes and neighborhood decision-making. In a critique of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of participation, Bratt and Reardon (2013) suggest that resident participation is not linear and point out various means for participation. Levine (2017) and Arnstein (1969) center "top-down" processes in their discourse, whereas there are also opportunities for "bottom-up", or resident driven, processes that can lead to meaningful resident participation and outcomes.

Bratt and Reardon (2013) propose three approaches to community control of community development initiatives which include direct bottom-up resident strategies, indirect bottom-up resident strategies, and professional roles in support of resident participation. Direct bottom-up resident strategies are methods that result in negotiation between residents and key decision-makers that can potentially lead to a partnership or achieve community control.

The indirect bottom-up resident strategies category are approaches that seek to increase general resident involvement in "civic affairs." These might include volunteering, electoral campaigns, or advocacy campaigns. The final category, professional roles in support of resident participation, can involve both residents and non-residents. People in professional roles can support resident-led efforts for community control by helping arrange partnerships and "promote resident voice and resource control within community development." DSNI utilizes all three approaches depending on the context and opportunities that are before them.

Community control over land

CLTs are one model for how communities can gain control over land. The roots of the CLT model go back to the writing of Henry George in 1879 and to Ebenezer Howard's 1965 Garden Cities vision (DeFilippis et al. 2019). The first CLT was founded in 1969 by organizers of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee with deep roots in the black power and civil rights movements and the explicit goal of community control (DeFilippis et al., 2019). According to the Grounded Solutions Network (n.d.) there are over 225 CLTs in the United States today.

While the CLT structure can be a mechanism for community control (typically community members make up 2/3 of a CLT board), it does not ensure the kind of transformative politics that are associated with movements historically working for increased community control (DeFilippis et al. 2019). Historically, the goal of some within the CLT movement was to use control over land as a means for empowerment and creation of alternative systems that challenge the status quo. Over time the CLT model has been used to advance other goals and priorities that do not always include political transformation, however.

Through interviews and participant observations of six CLTs in Minnesota, DeFilippis et al. (2019) found that while they can be marked with moments of political transformation, most people involved in the CLTs see it primarily as a tool for affordable housing. Out of the six CLTs included in the study, Rondo CLT stood out for its transformative politics because of its focus on community control. They found that community control was central to its formation and continues to be part of how they make decisions and form strategy (DeFilippis et al., 2019).

The history of DSNI will be discussed further in chapter 4, but it is often pointed to as a model for leveraging community control (Medoff and Sklar, 1994). When pressured with outside revitalization plans, the Dudley community created their own plan for revitalization rather than participating in the city's planning process (Sklar, 2009). Shortly following the adoption of their redevelopment plan, DSNI gained eminent domain power to create a CLT, gaining direct control of the land itself (Sklar, 2009). Through what Bratt and Reardon (2013) describe as a direct bottom-up strategy, DSNI successfully shifted the control over development from the City of Boston and real estate entities to residents (Sklar, 2009).

Arts and Culture in Community Organizing

True to its roots, DSNI has explicit community organizing goals that include organizing "campaigns designed and led by youth," resident empowerment that builds "civic engagement and ongoing advocacy efforts," and builds "resident capacity," (DSNI, n.d.). There are many approaches to community organizing in the literature and in practice. Saul Alinsky (1971), considered by some as the founder of community organizing, developed a model that utilized direct action, people's organizations, and agitation as a means to overcome apathy. He believed

that the way to organize communities was to unite around a common vision and build coalitions. Relationship building is key to Alinsky's model.

Paulo Freire's approach (1968) is rooted in his experience with pedagogy. Some of the core elements include praxis, a continual cycle of reflection and action, and conscientization, which is the idea that organizing should include a process of developing and strengthening one's consciousness to lead towards individual transformation. He emphasized the idea that directly impacted communities are experts in the issues that they face and encouraged the leadership of the oppressed in movements for change.

Community organizers have long used arts and culture in their work to strengthen and enhance it. There is a range of terminology to describe the infusion of arts and culture centered work with community organizing. The Arts and Democracy Project (N.d.) describes cultural organizing:

> "Cultural Organizing exists at the intersection of arts and activism. It is a fluid and dynamic practice that is understood and expressed in a variety of ways, reflecting the unique cultural, artistic, organizational, and community context of its practitioners. Cultural organizing is about integrating arts and culture into organizing strategies. It is also about organizing from a particular tradition, cultural identity, community of place or worldview."

Whereas traditional community organizing might focus on policy goals, cultural organizing seeks to also weave in cultural goals which, according to Kuttner (2015), "seek to affect people's ideologies, identities, and/or ways of being together." In a paper exploring the history and details of cultural organizing, Kuttner (2015) explains that it "bridges the worlds of art and organizing," meaning that it seeks to bridge policy and cultural goals, the role of artists and professional organizers, artistic practices and organizing techniques.

Organizers have used arts and culture in their movements for decades. Kuttner (2015) points out social movements marked by cultural organizing, including France's Popular Front in the 1920s and 1930s, and the struggles for civil rights and Black liberation of the 1950s and 1960s. Visual and performing arts, like Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (Sullivan et al. 2008) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's Story Circles (O'Neal et al. 2006), have been key elements of building social movements.

Many community and cultural organizers see the use of storytelling as vital to building community, empowering individuals, and creating shared political and cultural understanding (Fox, 2007; Frasz and Sidford, 2018; Kahn, 2010; O'Neal et al. 2006). Activist and organizer Si Kahn (2010) describes, "one of the most effective ways to create community fabric is through the strategic use of culture in its many modes: music, art, poetry, theater, and the multiple methods human beings use to tell stories." Helping people to tell their own stories is a critical step on the road to individual and collective empowerment. Arts and culture serve as a powerful means for storytelling.

Playback Theater is a form of participatory theater where audience members are asked to share stories about their experiences, from the mundane to the extraordinary, which are then performed back to them on the spot (Fox 2007). This form of theater, which is "by, of and for the people," can increase "meaningful connections and compassionate listening," (Fox 2007). Similarly, story circles, which is a practice where organizers bring out personal experiences of participants, serve to "create collaboration and understanding across groups," (O'Neal et al. 2006). These methods are just two examples of cultural tools organizers might use in their work.

Placemaking, which is explored more fully in the following section, can also serve community organizing goals as laid out by Freire's approach of building conscientization (Kahn 2010; Toolis 2017) and bringing individuals to take collective action (Toolis 2017). Toolis (2017) writes that placemaking has the potential to transform relationships – to place, to other people, and to our "understanding of what behaviors and actions are possible in public places." The perception of what is possible is critical to moving people to think their actions can make a difference and that they hold the power to create change.

Arts and Planning

The urban planning field has not always considered arts and culture as widely relevant or essential. In recent decades, however, urban planners have begun acknowledging the importance of arts and culture through the development of arts districts, and municipal or regional cultural plans. There is also a growing body of planners who are attempting to use arts and culture as a tool for planning. Much like community organizers, these planners see benefits in using creative methods for communication and engagement.

Planning for the Arts

The use of arts and culture in planning can take a few different forms. Cultural planning, as described by Tom Borrup, is a "municipal-level or community-wide endeavor that involves mapping, connecting, activating, and leveraging a city's or community's cultural resources, traditions, and creative activities," (2020). Like other forms of planning, these efforts can highlight cultural work, bringing attention and resources to further their development. Borrup

writes that it also "provides an essential lens through which city planners can better understand people and their concerns," (2020). Ideas around cultural planning have their roots in the City Beautiful Movement (Borrup, 2020). The City Beautiful Movement sprung up in the 1890's and centered aesthetics as a way to improve living conditions (New York Preservation Archive Project, n.d.).

Borrup explains that one of the first surveys of cultural planning was done by Bernie Jones in 1993. Jones found that cultural plans often cover topics such as "resources and facilities for the arts, arts education, marketing and promotion, interorganizational cooperation, and community development," (Borrup, 2020). In a 2017 survey of 200 cultural planning organizations, Borrup found that cultural plans aim to "build connection with the cultural sector," and seek to develop "new ways to add value to communities," as well as organize for greater impact and advocacy (Borrup, 2017).

The urban planning field expanded to include more arts and culturally oriented strategies for redevelopment of cities after the release of Richard Florida's 2002 *The Rise of the Creative Class*. He argued that cities should seek to attract what he calls "the creative class," meaning artists and scientists, as a strategy for growth and revitalization in urban centers. This includes the creation of arts and cultural districts. While they seem to have had a significant impact on urban planning discourse, creative class policies have also been criticized for not taking into account issues of equity and for not necessarily seeking involvement of artists in policy formation or implementation (Frenette, 2017).

Borrup also argues that although there has been more cross-sector collaboration in recent years, there is a divide between urban planners and artists in how they look at their

work together (2017). He says this divide stems from urban planners continuing to "deny the cultural contexts of their communities" and only considering "physical and spatial uses," and from artists only seeing "cultural planning as a way to leverage resources," (Borrup 2017). He suggests that the way forward is by combining more culture into cultural planning to increase "equity and civic engagement". The following section will explore ways in which planners can incorporate arts and culture into their planning practices.

Planning with the Arts

There is a growing body of literature surrounding the ways that arts and culture can enhance planning processes. Jonathan Metzger argues that art can serve as a tool for planning by making the familiar "strange" (2010). By this he means that "art and artist-led activities" have the ability to take topics that are often taken for granted and make them different, helping people to see them in a new or unique light. This serves as a useful tool for planners to communicate and open up dialogue between and within community (Metzger, 2010). Metzger also touches on the ways that "strange spaces" allow stakeholders to engage with controversial issues within planning processes without "losing credibility" (2010), therefore opening up new territory that some may otherwise be reluctant to enter.

In a Finnish study on the use of drama workshops in redevelopment processes, Rannila and Loivaranta found that theater can be used to improve communication, move through disagreement, and dissolve boundaries among different stakeholders (2015). They argue that planning is agonistic in nature, meaning that "spaces of deliberation are always potentially conflictual," (Rannila and Loivaranta 2015). Agonistic pluralism, as described by Rannila and

Loivaranta, does not seek to get rid of all conflict but creates "practices, discourses and institutions that allow adversaries to handle such conflicts in a respectful manner," (2015). Dramaturgy can serve as a vehicle for creating those spaces of healthy conflict.

Creative Placemaking

The work of DSNI in Upham's Corner is a case study in creative placemaking. In order to better understand their use of arts and culture it is important to define what creative placemaking is. Creative placemaking is a term that has many interpretations within the arts, community development, and urban planning fields. In a white paper commissioned by the National Endowment for the Arts, Markusen and Gadwa (2010) explain:

> "In creative placemaking, 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. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired". (p. 3)

In contrast to more traditional urban planning practices, creative placemaking is not just focused on physical infrastructure (Courage 2021; Silberberg 2013). It also takes into account the human activity taking place in public spaces. As Silberberg (2013) explains, "The goals of building social capital, increasing civic engagement and advocating for the right to the city are as central to contemporary placemaking as are the creation of beautiful parks and vibrant squares."

Some practitioners believe that the term placemaking implies that a community does not have an existing culture, or a culture worth preserving (Chang and Rubin, 2020). That with outside resources a place can be "made." Tom Borrup (2020) writes that creative placemaking

can add "a layer of colonial narrative by suggesting creativity and culture need to be delivered or infused as if none existed." In a Policy Link brief, Chang and Rubin (2020) explain "place-keeping" as the practice of a community working to "maintain their local culture when powerful forces are pushing for their dispersal." Examples of such forces could be policies that lead to displacement (gentrification) or extractive industries (coal mining).

The reality is that creative placemaking activities differ widely in terms of how it is defined, who is involved, and what they hope to achieve. There is much debate about its purpose and effectiveness throughout academic and practitioner literature.

In a review of creative placemaking policy, Frenette (2017) explains that the rise of creative placemaking came as an arts-led response to Richard Florida's ideas of the creative class in the early 2000s. Florida (2002) made a considerable impact on the urban planning field as he argued that cities should seek to attract what he calls "the creative class," such as artists and scientists, as a strategy for growth and revitalization in urban centers. Frenette (2017) postulates that the trend towards creative placemaking stemmed from limited funding for the arts nationally. This trend has resulted in over $200 million pledged to creative placemaking programs between 2010-2020 (Frenette, 2017). She argues that the key difference between creative placemaking and creative class policies are that the former tries to take a more extensive policy approach, address inequality directly, and seeks to transform the role of artists (Frenette, 2017). The implication is that creative class policies are more limited in their policy agendas and do not necessarily seek artists' involvement in policy formation or implementation. Additionally, creative class policies may not take issues of inequality into account which may lead to displacement and other negative impacts on local communities.

Creative placemaking programs and policies are not without critique. Bedoya (2013) claims that creative placemaking puts unnecessary focus on the "place" as infrastructure, rather than on ensuring that people feel they belong in a place. The racial and class history and context of a place shape how people relate to it.

Through a series of interviews in Philadelphia, Zitcer (2020) found that creative placemaking practitioners hold reservations about how the term is defined, the role of artists in creative placemaking work, and its relationship with gentrification and displacement. He groups these critiques into three categories including questioning the measurement of creative placemaking program outcomes, the uniqueness and authenticity of creative placemaking, and the potential for exclusion and displacement within the field. Bedoya (2005) also points out the need for more inclusive practices in the creative placemaking world, especially for smaller ethnic-specific arts organizations.

Despite these critiques, creative placemakers and researchers have found many important benefits to this type of work. In an analysis of six creative placemaking projects, Chang and Rubin (2020) identified five key elements that help a community respond to "deeply rooted social problems." Those elements are found in creative placemaking activities and include "social cohesion, social agency, civic and political leadership, civic know-how, and narrative control." Social agency is the idea that a community can acquire a shared ability to "act as a group on significant social issues," (Chang and Rubin, 2020). Similarly, in a case study of the Pao Arts Center's impact on Boston's Chinatown neighborhood cohesion, Rubin et al. (N.d.) found that interviewees brought up themes of cultural agency. The Pao Arts Center

served as a tool for the community to choose the performers and exhibits they invite, building community agency through arts and culture.

Some researchers argue that creative placemaking is a tool for civic and political engagement (Chang and Rubin, 2020; Toolis, 2017). In a theoretical exploration of the impact of the privatization of public spaces, Toolis uses environmental, narrative, and community psychology to advocate the use of placemaking as a way to reclaim public space (2017). She claims that public space can serve as a venue for political engagement by "transforming our relationship with place, our relationships to others, and our understanding of what behaviors and actions are possible in public spaces," (Toolis, 2017).

Creative placemaking can also be used as a tool for community control (Courage 2021; Toolis, 2017). In Routledge's Handbook of Placemaking, Courage describes how, when done correctly, placemaking puts community "front and center of deciding how their place looks and how it functions," (2021). Toolis also describes placemaking as a "bottom-up" process (2017). This focus on community decision-making produces a more distinct process than other forms of development activities.

Toolis describes social capital as, "the social networks, norms, and relationships that link people together, be they formal or informal, that facilitate cooperation, reciprocity, and trust within and between groups," (2017). At the neighborhood or community level, this individual social capital translates into social cohesion (Chang and Rubin, 2020). Creative placemaking activities may increase social capital and cohesion as they can create the opportunity for different groups of people to share space and engage in meaningful dialogue (Thomas et al., 2015).

Bedoya's *aesthetics of belonging* (2013) argues that creative placemaking must take into account the cultural, social and historical contexts that impact how communities view who is included and who is excluded. He writes, "if Creative Placemaking activities support the politics of dis-belonging through acts of gentrification, racism, real estate speculation, all in the name of neighborhood revitalization, then it betrays the ideal of having an equitable and just civil society." The relationship between placemaking and gentrification cannot be an afterthought. According to Bedoya, weaving a sense of belonging into creative placemaking can help realize:

> "how to understand and accommodate social differences in matters of civic participation; how to enhance the community's understanding of citizenship beyond the confines of leisure pursuits and consumption; how to help the citizens of a place achieve strength and prosperity through equity and civility."

The exploration of the relationships and overlap between creative placemaking, community organizing, urban planning, and community control lay the groundwork for understanding the Upham's Corner case. Themes from the literature can be observed in the creative placemaking work in Upham's Corner and the Upham's Corner Implementation process.

Chapter 4: Case Study

This section seeks to contextualize the UCI process and place it within the broader creative placemaking and community control work of Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) and its partners in Upham's Corner. The timeline outlined in Figure 2 displays the overlapping nature of DSNI's work for community control, the creative placemaking in Upham's Corner, the City of Boston's planning efforts, and the UCI process. My findings are focused on the period between spring 2017 and fall 2019 highlighted in grey. The activities at this time were centered around engaging the neighborhood to reimagine Upham's Corner to develop an Arts and Innovation district without displacement. In this chapter I will walk through key moments and players that led up to and rippled out from the Upham's Corner Implementation (UCI) process and outline relevant details of the process itself. The UCI process did not just appear suddenly, but is grounded in decades of community organizing, creative placemaking, and critical partnerships.
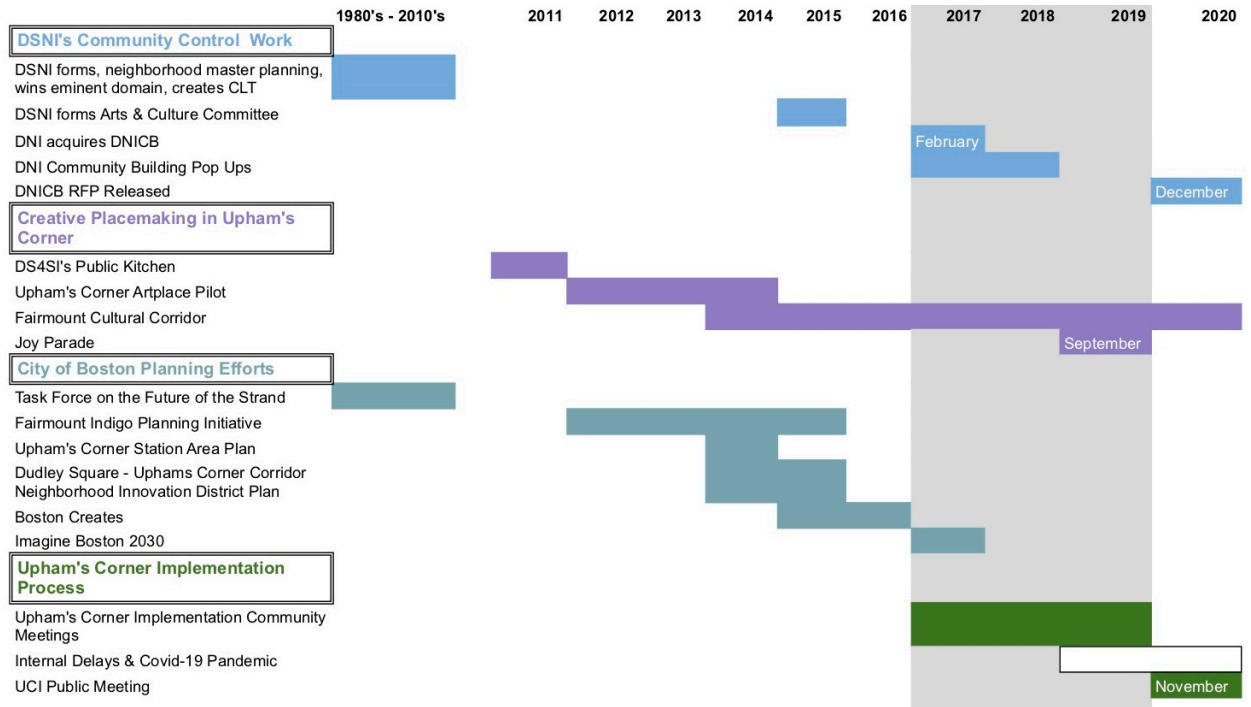
DSNI's Community Control Work
DSNI forms, neighborhood master planning, wins eminent domain, creates CLT
DSNI forms Arts & Culture Committee
DNI acquires DNICB
DNI Community Building Pop Ups
DNICB RFP Released

Creative Placemaking in Upham's Corner
DS4SI's Public Kitchen
Upham's Corner Artplace Pilot
Fairmount Cultural Corridor
Joy Parade

City of Boston Planning Efforts
Task Force on the Future of the Strand
Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative
Upham's Corner Station Area Plan
Dudley Square - Uphams Corner Corridor Neighborhood Innovation District Plan
Boston Creates
Imagine Boston 2030

Upham's Corner Implementation Process
Upham's Corner Implementation Community Meetings
Internal Delays & Covid-19 Pandemic
UCI Public Meeting

1980's - 2010's   2011   2012   2013   2014   2015   2016   2017   2018   2019   2020
February
December
September
November

Figure 2: Case Study Timeline

To better understand how this case study is playing out today, I will begin by briefly describing the history of DSNI's work for community control. Then I will summarize the UCI process, beginning with contextualizing the Uphams Corner neighborhood. Finally, I will outline the ways in which arts, culture, and creative engagement have shown up in DSNI's work in Upham's Corner through the Uphams Corner ArtPlace Pilot and Fairmount Cultural Corridor, their community engagement process around the DNI Community Building, and the Joy Parade.

Introduction to Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI)

DSNI has an interesting history that has shaped it into the organization it is today. It was created in 1984 and has seen many achievements over the years as the result of the critical community organizing by its staff and leaders. According to its website, the mission of DSNI is to

"empower Dudley residents to organize, plan for, create and control a vibrant, diverse and high-quality neighborhood in collaboration with community partners," (DSNI, n.d.).

Dudley is located in Boston's Roxbury and Dorchester neighborhoods. Like other communities of color across the United States, Dudley had seen decades of racialized disinvestment by the city, redlining, and an abundance of absentee landlords which led to widespread vacancy of neighborhood lots. In the early years of DSNI, residents organized to pressure the city to clean up the vacant lots and went on to create their own master plan to revitalize the neighborhood. Their objective was to "have a vibrant cultural, commercial, and residential community," with the explicit goal of development without displacement (Medoff & Sklar, 1994). Most notably, DSNI won eminent domain power to assemble vacant lots for its Community Land Trust.

Throughout every step of its early history, community control has been central to DSNI's strategy. Its bylaws stipulate that the board be governed by a resident majority that reflects the diversity of the neighborhood. There are seats designated for the four largest ethnic groups in Dudley including Black, Cape Verdean, Latinx, and White (Medoff & Sklar, 1994). In *Streets of Hope*, Medoff & Sklar (1994) write that, "Equal minimum representation was chosen to strengthen collective action and underscore the common stake of all people in rebuilding Dudley."

When DSNI members first set out to create the neighborhood master plan, they were invited by the city to participate in its neighborhood process. However, "instead of trying to participate in a top-down planning process directed by city government, Dudley residents and agencies would create their own 'bottom-up' plan and invite the city to participate," (Medoff &

Sklar, 1994). This "bottom-up" process ensured that residents remained in control and helped

them build a "reputation as an independent group that could work with the city without being

co-opted," (Medoff & Sklar, 1994). Balancing their relationship with the city in this way is a

theme that has remained relevant throughout their history and into the Upham's Corner

Implementation process.

DSNI created a Community Land Trust (CLT) to ensure that the community would

remain in control of the land throughout the implementation of the master plan and in

perpetuity. In *Participatory Democracy for Community Control of Development: A Case Study of*

the Upham's Corner Implementation Process, Luisa Santos (2021) writes:

> "The CLT model ensures that, while the buildings on the land can be bought and sold, the community will always own the land. The land is controlled by the CLT's membership, who vote to determine its policies. The governance structure of CLTs represent and balance various public interests. Residents who live on the CLT and in its surrounding community make up the majority of the governing board, so that the community and local residents retain control in decision-making for the land trust."

This focus on community control would remain central to its evolution over the past 37

years. Today, DSNI's land trust, Dudley Neighbors Inc. (DNI), is home to "226 permanently

affordable homes, 3 open space parcels, 3 commercial parcels, 2 urban farms and a community

greenhouse," (McMahon, 2019). In total, "over 400 new homes were built and over 500

rehabilitated on the CLT land between 1985 and 2012," (McMahon, 2019). The power that DSNI

and its partners built for its residents through this history set the stage for the Upham's Corner

Implementation process and the creative placemaking activities of today.

Upham's Corner

Upham's Corner is located in the Dorchester neighborhood, within DSNI's target area but outside of its primary development area. It has a population of about 30,000 and is known for being "one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the nation. 41 percent of residents are black, 26 percent are Hispanic or Latino, and 15 percent are white, with large Cape Verdean and West Indian populations," (Imagine Boston 2030).

Upham's Corner was acknowledged for being a "thriving commercial center for most of the 19th and early 20th centuries," (Santos 2021). It is home to the city's first movie theater, the Strand Theatre, which opened in 1918. "During the 1920's, Cifrino's Market (later Uphams Corner Market and Elm Farm) was the world's first, for many years, largest supermarket" (Medoff & Sklar, 1994).

The residents of Upham's Corner today, however, see lower incomes and "lower educational attainment" than Boston's average (Imagine Boston 2030). They are also more likely to be severely rent burdened, meaning that they must dedicate a higher percentage of their incomes to rent, than the city's average household (Upham's Corner Station Area Plan 2014). According to a report by the Upham's Corner Artplace Initiative, the neighborhood has an "outsized reputation for violence that is both lamented and contested by its residents," (Lobenstine 2014).

The Upham's Corner Implementation Process

The Upham's Corner Implementation (UCI) process refers to the efforts to redevelop Upham's Corner into an Arts and Innovation district. In this section I will summarize key elements of the UCI process in order to better understand DSNI's role and to provide

background to interpret the ways in which arts, culture, and creative engagement has been woven throughout neighborhood planning and creative placemaking efforts.

The UCI process is unique because it is co-led and facilitated by the City of Boston and DSNI. DSNI is not only driving the process, but their CLT arm (DNI) also owns one of the key redevelopment sites. This kind of deep partnership between city and a grassroots community organization like DSNI is rare. Luisa Santos (2021) writes that "DSNI is pushing the boundaries of how communities can assert control over development by working with city government."

This initiative actually emerged out of planning efforts by the city and community groups over the last twenty years. The word "implementation" was carefully chosen by the city to signal that this phase would mean enactment of the plans that had been created already. Santos (2021) chronicles the planning processes that lead to UCI in Table 1. She writes that UCI's:

> "themes and priorities emerged through these previous neighborhood planning initiatives, which included: a task force to figure out long-term sustainability of the Strand Theatre; transit-oriented economic development studies along the Fairmount line and community-based initiatives to reimagine these calls for creative placemaking; and an innovation district committee, an unprecedented citywide cultural plan, and a comprehensive city plan that all advanced the idea of developing arts/innovation districts in Boston neighborhoods and that all coalesced around Upham's Corner as the pilot neighborhood."

Date	Planning Process
March to July 2004	Mayor Menino formed the Task Force on the Future of the Strand Theatre, which convened and produced a report.
February 2012 to 2015	The Boston Redevelopment Authority (now the Boston Planning and Development Agency) began its three-year study, the Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative.
July 2012	A collaboration of nine organizations representing artists, merchants,

	and residents launched the creative placemaking initiative, Upham's Corner ArtPlace Pilot.
April 2014	The Upham's Corner Station Area Plan was released, as part of the Boston Redevelopment Authority's Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative.
2014	The Upham's Corner ArtPlace Pilot expanded into the Fairmount Cultural Corridor, led by the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative. The Design Studio for Social Intervention produced "'Do You See Yourself in Upham's Corner?': A Case Study of Belonging, Dis-Belonging, and the Upham's Corner ArtPlace Initiative."
Summer 2014 to September 2015	Mayor Walsh's administration forms the Neighborhood Innovation District Committee, which convened and produced a report outlining the "Dudley Square-Upham's Corner Corridor Neighborhood Innovation District Plan."
April 2015 to June 2016	The Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture (established under Mayor Walsh's administration), carried out and released Boston Creates, the City of Boston's first cultural planning process.
July 2017	The City of Boston released Imagine Boston 2030, its first comprehensive plan in over fifty years.

Table 1: Planning processes in Upham's Corner leading up to UCI (Santos, 2021)

The vision for an Arts and Innovation district also came from the various planning efforts. Boston Creates, released in 2016, was Boston's first city-wide cultural plan. It sought to align "public and private resources to strengthen cultural vitality over the long-term" by weaving "arts and culture into the fabric of everyday life," (City of Boston, 2016). One of the "tactics" proposed in Boston Creates was the "creation and promotion of arts and cultural districts" across neighborhoods (City of Boston, 2016). It also named Upham's Corner as a place to support an Arts Innovation District through the Imagine Boston 2030 planning effort.

The Arts Innovation district was officially announced in the Imagine Boston 2030 plan that was released in July 2017. Imagine Boston 2030 is "Boston's first citywide plan in 50 years,"

(City of Boston, n.d.). It designated Upham's Corner as the first "Enhanced Neighborhood Pilot,"

meaning that the city planned to dedicate specific resources and actions to neighborhood

development. Part of the investment in Upham's Corner was a commitment of $18 million for a

new library. The city also planned to revitalize the historic Strand Theatre. The plan states that

at the core of these efforts will be "policies to ensure affordability and prevent displacement."

The designation of a district for arts and innovation came entirely from the city and was

a surprise to DSNI and its partners. However, one DSNI staff member described that "we were

moving into the hundred-year anniversary for the Strand Theatre," which is a historical

landmark and an anchor. She said, "I think some of the idea was that we were going to build

around this anchor." There had been community-led meetings about the future of the Strand.

With this plan announced, leadership at DSNI knew that it wanted to be a part of it. One

former DSNI staff member explained, "the fear was that this was going to be the first significant

investment in arts and culture working/rehearsal/performance space in the City in years, and so

who was going to benefit from that? So DSNI's goal was to make sure that the local arts

community and the local residents and merchants benefitted."

Around this time DSNI and other partners proposed a creative community engagement

plan to the city. One interviewee explained that it would "use a technique called productive

fictions… so that people could engage with the Strand in a way that might excite them to

imagine that an art and innovation district was about them and their family, that was about

them as artists." The productive fiction technique involved hiring artists to "do things that could

show what could be possible" in an Arts and Innovation district. The city did not respond to this

offer right away, but in many ways the creative engagement plan that DSNI and its partners first

imagined is what ended up happening. The city ended up approaching DSNI about an

opportunity to acquire one of the key development sites, which positioned DSNI to take a lead

role in the process moving forward.

Another unique feature of the UCI process is that it involves five different city

departments. They include the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA), Office of

Economic Development (OED), Department of Neighborhood Development, Mayor's Office of

Arts & Culture, and the Boston Public Library. While initially led by the BPDA, the department

which typically oversees redevelopment efforts, much of the process has been managed by the

Office of Economic Development. The City's Chief of Economic Development is John Barros,

longtime DSNI member and former Executive Director of 13 years. Barros' involvement with

DSNI goes back to his teenage years when he became the first young person to serve on the

board and then became Executive Director at age 25 (Santos, 2021). This relationship between

Barros and DSNI has allowed the city's focus to remain on the UCI process, but does not come

without its complications. As of the writing of this thesis in March 2021, Barros has resigned

from his position as Chief of Economic Development and is running for Mayor of the City of

Boston. The position is currently filled by an interim chief, and OED's staff is still the lead

department in the UCI process.

There are currently four key sites that are part of the UCI process. The Strand, the

former Bank of America building, and a municipal parking lot are all owned by the city. The DNI

Community Building (DNICB), which was once a Citizens Bank, is owned by DNI. The city had

hoped to acquire at least two other privately owned sites in Upham's Corner as well, but as of

writing that has not come to pass. One city staff member described the amassing of sites for

development as being "about leveraging cultural districts, not in the sense of having a

commercial district that features arts and culture activity, but really thinking about where the

City can leverage City-owned assets to think about arts and culture."

Figure 3: UCAID Sites as Presented November 19, 2020. (2020). City of Boston.

DNI acquired the DNICB with a $1.7 million dollar loan from the city and "took control"

of it in April 2017. The city had approached DNI about the building because due to legal

constraints they were unable to move quickly enough to acquire it on the private market.

Santos (2021) explains that it was beneficial for the city and DSNI in that:

> "This would allow the City to include the building as part of the development process
> without needing to go through the challenges of acquiring it as a public entity.
> Acquisition by DNI would mean that the building would be taken off the speculative
> market to go on the land trust, and that the commercial and housing uses developed on
> that parcel would be subject to the CLT's requirements, including perpetual
> affordability."

Buying the DNICB was significant for DSNI because it will be one of the first commercial sites on the land trust, expanded their territory and carved out a clear role for them in the UCI process.

The Request for Proposal (RFP) delineates what is required to develop each parcel and reflects the community's vision while also soliciting creative ideas from developers. The RFP was informed by a series of community meetings which took place between 2017-2019 and were co-facilitated by the city and DSNI, as well as other key partners. I will describe the community meetings more fully in the next section. One former DSNI staff member explained that the RFP "moved from a very broad statement of concern about gentrification and displacement into some concrete priorities and goals that were listed out in terms of deeper affordable housing, in terms of artist housing, in terms of the community benefits." The hope was that people would see "themselves or the concerns that they had raised" in the RFP itself. In December 2020, DNI released the RFP for the DNICB[1] and as of writing is currently in a process to select a developer.

The UCI process is guided by a Working Advisory Group (WAG), which is city-appointed and is made up of local residents, artists, business owners, and community leaders. Although some of the membership has changed, this group had a major impact on the writing of the RFP and guided the community engagement process. They will be part of reviewing proposals and selecting the developers for the city sites and are expected to be part of the formal city development review process (article 80) in some way to see the redevelopment projects to

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[1] The initial intention was to release one Request for Proposal (RFP) that would include all of the sites, allowing developers to be creative in how they approached the redevelopment and to encourage a holistic and bold view for the district. DNI decided to release a separate RFP for the DNICB after substantial delays in the process. Much of the RFP content remains the same, and the hope is that the DNI RFP and the city's RFPs will remain aligned by using the same language, referencing each other, and encouraging developers to submit proposals for multiple sites. As of the writing, the city has not yet released RFPs for the remaining sites.

completion. When DNI decided to move forward with its own RFP they created an internal

Steering Committee, also made up of residents, artists, business owners, and community

leaders, to oversee the DNICB's process. There is intentional overlap between WAG members

and DNI Steering Committee members.

The UCI process has seen many twists and turns over the years which have resulted in

major delays to the release of the City RFPs. In an effort to avoid possible accusations of conflict

of interest between the city and their partners, they paused the release of the RFPs in summer

2019 to conduct a Request for Information (RFI). This RFI process made public the city's

intentions to engage in cross-sector partnerships. The city also spent time trying to acquire

additional parcels to be included in the RFP. The onset of the covid-19 pandemic also caused

the process to slow between March – November 2020.

Creative Placemaking in Upham's Corner

DSNI and its partners have been using arts and cultural strategies to inform and enhance

community organizing and community development for decades. The UCI process is not only

informed by but made possible by this work. In this section I will outline the ways that arts and

culture have shown up in DSNI's history, including through their partnerships with Design

Studio for Social Intervention (DS4SI), the Uphams Artplace Initiative, and the Fairmount

Cultural Corridor. I will highlight examples of creative engagement throughout the DNICB

process, the UCI process, and in their collaborative efforts to make Uphams feel like an Arts and

Innovation district. This exploration will allow me to answer the research question of how arts

and culture strategies have increased community control in Upham's Corner and analyze the impact it has had on their work.

Underlying all of DSNI's creative placemaking work is the idea of *aesthetics of belonging,* coined by Robert Bedoya. Bedoya (2013) critiques common creative placemaking practices by writing that, "before you have *places of belonging*, you must feel you *belong*." He explains that creative placemaking should not be "a development strategy, but a series of actions that build spatial justice, healthy communities, and sites of imaginations." One DSNI staff member pointed out that Bedoya's philosophy is the "foundation" of DSNI's work and "is part of DSNI's core values." She explained that "this idea of belonging is not only seeing yourself as represented but also your voice is represented, your image." The word "art" or artists does not always leave room for all of the people who might "fit under that umbrella," she explained. "Cultural workers," "healers," "land tenders and keepers of the land, and creatives, and business owners," all have a role to play in DSNI's creative placemaking.

Arts & Culture in DSNI's Early Years

According to one long time DSNI leader, "art and culture has always been part of how DSNI has done planning." Santos (2021) explains that through story-telling, murals, and its declaration of community rights, DSNI has instilled a "sense of identity and belonging... through the arts."

The "Unity Through Diversity" mural, created by DSNI's youth committee in 1993, features people from the neighborhood including elders, youth committee members, and young children (Medoff & Sklar, 1994). One interviewee said that after holding community meetings to learn what residents "wanted to see in those spaces," they worked with a partner organization to "figure out who the artists would be" and select them. This was interwoven into the overall neighborhood development process and resulted in public space that literally reflects the residents. In 2019 the mural received a new name, "Nubian Roots", to reflect the Dudley Square name change to Nubian Square.

Figure 4. Nubian Roots Mural by DSNI [Mural]. Wintersmith, Saraya. (2019).

In 1986 DSNI held its first multicultural festival, a tradition that has continued to this day. Medoff and Sklar (1994) interviewed resident Sue Beaton who described the festival as a "multiethnic celebration." She said, "It's breaking down walls. It's learning to respect the rituals and the values of [other cultures]… It's believing that we each can bring something to the event to make it richer."

Another facet is in using creative methods to engage people in the work of complicated planning processes. One way DSNI did this early on was when they created their neighborhood

master plan. It was important that they did not rely on experts and that residents felt

empowered to contribute to the vision they were creating. They held a series of charettes

where residents were asked what they envisioned for their neighborhood. Medoff and Sklar

(1994) describe how "designers and architects began to sketch out the kind of neighborhood

the residents were describing in words." This creative approach, which used live sketching,

facilitated resident contributions and the gathering and synthesis of information form a range

of people.

DS4SI's Public Kitchen

One of DSNI's key partners in the more recent creative placemaking work, and

throughout the UCI process, is the Design Studio for Social Intervention (DS4SI). DS4SI is "an

artistic research and development outfit for the improvement of civil society and everyday life,"

(DS4SI, n.d.). One interviewee explained that DS4SI emerged from a place of "finding new ways

to solve really complex problems." She described how the "communities most impacted by

injustice are the ones trying to solve it." DS4SI works with those communities to bring in ideas

from the arts and design worlds to "come up with new ideas."

DS4SI began working in Upham's Corner in 2011 on a project they called Public Kitchen.

Public Kitchen was an effort to "imagine new public infrastructure" at a time when "many

things were being privatized". They used the idea of a public kitchen to create a space where

"communities and people could share food or share recipes or share ideas or garden together."

According to DS4SI's website (n.d.), they engaged over 500 community members through

"fresh food, cooking classes and competitions, a mobile kitchen and Hub, food inspired art, and

much more." This "productive fiction" sought to challenge ideas about public infrastructure being "less than private" and "make a case for public infrastructures through creating ones that don't exist," ("Public Kitchen," n.d.).

Uphams Corner ArtPlace Pilot

In 2012 DSNI and DS4SI came together with seven other local partners for the Uphams Corner ArtPlace Pilot (UCAP). This creative placemaking initiative emerged at a time when incredible investments were being made into the Fairmount Indigo Line and its immediate surroundings. The UCAP partners sought to organize residents to influence how these investments might be allocated, to ensure they benefitted local residents, artists, business owners, and community organizations without driving displacement and gentrification. "This moment of possibility —of both opportunity and threat—was a primary reason why community organizations, arts organizations and funders came together to engage local residents, artists and merchants in creative placemaking," (Lobenstine, 2014).

UCAP was funded through a collaboration with The Boston Foundation, ArtPlace America, and the Kresge Foundation. Partners included Artmorpheus, Berklee School of Music, DS4SI, Dorchester Bay Economic Development Corporation, DSNI, Jose Mateo Ballet Theater, Trotter Institute, and Uphams Corner Main Streets. Together these entities represented artists, business owners, residents, and community organizations in the Uphams Corner neighborhood. Their goal was "to create a vibrant livable business district made stronger through an active, local creative economy anchored by the historic Strand Theatre," (Lobenstine, 2014).

Between 2012-2014, they engaged in a range of activities which included supporting and enhancing DSNI's multicultural festival, reviving the Upham's Corner Health Center's Street Fair, hosting community engagement and cultural events at the Strand Theatre, hosting open air markets with over 70 merchants, food vendors, and performers, refurbishing a mural in celebration of the Negro National League, and organizing pop-up interactive art exhibits (Lobestine, 2014). One interviewee noted that it was important to UCAP that these activities be led by residents and local artists, not by the organizations themselves.

The goal was to build "what Roberto Bedoya would call 'civic self-esteem' – that I could say something and that it would matter." Building the "civic self-esteem" of Uphams residents was woven into the Making Planning Processes Public exhibit, which UCAP hosted in late April 2013. They "engaged over 600 community members – families, artists, merchants, elders, and passers-by in thinking about Uphams Corner and the planning processes going on around them," ("Making Planning Processes Public", n.d.). The exhibit included a wood and mirror sculpture commissioned by artist Phillippe Lejuene called the "Tall Mirror," which was installed on the street outside of Upham's Corner Main Streets' office (Lobenstine, 2014). According to one interviewee, the sculpture "helped us get into different kinds of conversations" like "do you see yourself in Uphams?" and "what are your concerns about gentrification here?"

Another feature of the Making Planning Processes Public exhibit was commissioned by artist Cedric Douglas. According to one interviewee he "did a complete redesign of a fake Metro cover," and wrapped a bunch of Metro newspapers in his design which "was all about the exhibit and what planning processes were coming to Uphams." In a report on UCAP's work called "Do You See Yourself In Upham's Corner?", Lobenstine (2014) explains:

"He created giant checks, made out to Upham's Corner for $3 million, the amount the Department of Transportation was spending on street improvements. The checks served as interactive murals that enabled passer-by to exchange ideas about how they would want to see that money spent in Upham's Corner. As Cedric described it, 'People don't have time to go to meetings. They have two jobs, they go back and forth, it's a high traffic area with people coming and going. So how can we get them to give their feed-back and become planners on the go?'"

According to Santos (2021), UCAP's work "increased creative production, the visibility of culture, and influence in planning decisions; stimulated cross-sector partnerships between residents, artists, businesses, community organizations, and public agencies; and strengthened connections with surrounding communities."

Figure 5: Giant Check and Metro Covers from Making Planning Processes Public. Douglas, Cedric. Photo by John Berg. (2013).

The Fairmount Cultural Corridor

In 2014 UCAP's grant was renewed as the initiative evolved into the Fairmount Cultural Corridor (FCC), now led by DSNI. In a pamphlet created for their 2014 Winter Celebration, FCC described itself as "a creative placemaking initiative that combines collaborative efforts of residents, artists, community organizations and businesses to support vibrant, livable neighborhoods along the Fairmount Commuter Line, made stronger through active local creative economies," (Fairmount Cultural Corridor, 2014). FCC partners included Artmorpheus, Berklee College of Music, DS4SI, Dorchester Arts Collaborative, Fairmount/Indigo Collaborative, DSNI, Four Corners Main Street, Greater Four Corners Action Coalition, Jose Mateo Ballet

Theatre, Trotter Institute, and Uphams Corner Main Street. They continued to help organize

events like the multicultural festival and the open-air markets, while also creating an artist

residency program and another artist fellowship and supporting the Fairmount Creative

Industry Lab and Accelerator (Fairmount Cultural Corridor, 2014).

The artist residency program was 14 months and aimed to "design opportunities for

residents, merchants, youth, and other creative practitioners to reimagine public spaces, public

forms of community expression, and social interventions that increase vibrancy and community

connectedness," (Fairmount Cultural Corridor, 2014). They hosted five artists along the

Fairmount Corridor, each with a different focus. Cedric Douglas (of the Metro cover exhibit) was

hosted in Uphams Corner, Risa Horn was located in Dudley Street, Claudia Powers in Four

Corners, Nanci Guevara worked in schools in Dudley, and Aziza Goodnight Robinson actually

created her art while riding the train along the Fairmount Indigo line.

"Moving Colors of Life" is the name of the piece created by the Dudley artist, Risa Horn.

In collaboration with long-time community leader, Che Madyun, they choreographed a dance

that reflected every-day scenes and interactions of the people and businesses along Dudley

Street. One interviewee remembered that the businesses included the "bodega restaurants" as

well as "Davie's Market, Ideal Sub Shop, and Nos Casa." They "hired local folks to dance them,

most of who were not professional dancers." The dances were performed in the spaces they

were about, with the audience members followed from one location to the next. "Mama's

Kitchen" was the dance created about Nos Casa, a Cape Verdean restaurant, because the

choreographers noticed that the owner was "warm and friendly with people" which made "it

feel like home." They saw that "a lot of people would come to her restaurant, especially in their

30's, who maybe didn't have time to cook but who grew up on Cape Verdean food" and "wanted to bring home what they were used to." Each piece was followed by a discussion eliciting what audience members observed.

Figure 6: Moving Colors of Life at Nos Casa [Screenshot by author].Horn, Risa.(N.d.).

As DSNI took a larger role in coordinating the FCC work, they created an internal committee called the Arts and Culture committee. According to one DSNI staff member it was a space for "partners, and some community members" to meet and "look at artistic developments and opportunities." Artists from the residence and fellowship programs would "pitch" their projects and "use that as an opportunity to get community feedback." The committee began taking on other activities like planning the Multicultural Festival, the Dudley Jazz Festival, and thinking about the future of the Strand Theatre. As the UCI process emerged, the Arts and Culture committee became a place where, as one interviewee put it, they could "deliberate on the process without the city being present." At the beginning, this committee served as a driving force to "slow down" the UCI process to ensure there was "community voice" in it.

DNI Community Building Pop-Ups

Beginning in the spring of 2017 and continuing through the summer of 2018, DSNI and DS4SI ran a series of events focused on engaging over 500 community members around the future of the DNI Community Building (DNICB). The DNICB is the former Citizens Bank building in Uphams Corner, which sits on the land trust. Although under the umbrella of the UCI process, these engagements were conducted as a separate DSNI specific program and did not include the city. In total, DSNI/DNI conducted two community meetings, six pop-up events and a text poll campaign asking questions to get at what the community envisioned for the building. The intention for the building is that it will be mixed-use, with community and commercial space as well as affordable housing on the upper floors.

DSNI partnered with DS4SI as they set out to create a community process that would "address community needs and wants," as one interviewee put it. The hope was that they "could reflect the priorities people named into the RFP" for the building. Great care was taken to ensure that these events were accessible by providing childcare, language access, and holding them at a range of times (during the day and at night). One interviewee described how the organizers tried to pay attention to social dynamics asking, "Who shows up to meetings? Who is being represented here?" In a gentrifying neighborhood, "does this actually represent the folks we are trying to represent?"

The activities at the pop-ups were designed to be interactive and engaging. A former DSNI staff member described how people were "building with their hands and constructing things." The "block activity" asked participants to use color coded blocks to communicate the uses they would like to see in the DNICB. Different colors stood for housing, commercial, and creative/artistic uses and builders could use as many or as few of each color as they saw fit. Handouts allowed them to further explain their creations.

Figure 7: Block Activity. Photo courtesy of DSNI.

They used dot voting to gauge people's ideas around the building's community and commercial uses. The dots were color coded based on how each voter chose to identify (Dorchester/Roxbury resident, City of Nonprofit staff, or developer). Then, the top ten ideas were filtered into a second round of dot voting where people could rank them into three categories ("I love this idea," "I'm okay with this idea," and "I do not want this in the building").

In an effort to dig into people's ideas around housing related to affordability, unit size, and building height, they conducted a spectrum activity. After engaging in conversation about these topics, participants were asked to place themselves physically on a line based on statements on either end of the spectrum. The prompts are listed in Table 2.

Prompt	One end of spectrum	Other end of spectrum
1	In this building, we want to have the most amount of rental housing that is affordable to households making under $40K.	In this building, we want to have a mix of housing including middle income and up to households of 2 people making up to $80,000.
2	This building should be primarily smaller units of 1-2 bedrooms for artists, singles, seniors.	This building should be primarily family housing of 3 or 4 bedrooms.
3	We should prioritize staying under 6 floors so it matches the neighborhood and does not add too many people.	We should prioritize putting as many units of housing in as possible and figure out how to build above 6 stories.

Table 2: Spectrum Activity Prompts

Understanding that many residents cannot attend meetings for a range of reasons, pop-ups were held during the day so that people could stop in for as much or as little time as they were able. Then, the findings from the pop-ups were summarized and brought to the two evening community meetings.

Special effort was put in to engage young people in the visioning process for the DNICB as well. Knowing that public meetings are not always welcoming to young people, DSNI organizers attended community events where young people already were, like a cookout at the City School or summer and after school youth programs at the Food Project. A former DSNI staff member described how they were "carting around a poster where youth could actually post their hopes and what they wanted to see." The "Cityscape Activity" utilized a large poster of a city skyline and invited youth (mostly teenagers) to answer a range of questions about what would make them excited about their neighborhood and what kinds of spaces make them feel welcome, or not.

In the summer of 2019 DSNI hosted a six-week summer youth program, which members of the Tufts UEP team helped support. This process engaged neighborhood youth on issues of research ethics and supported them to conduct interviews about the future of the

neighborhood. They ran their own process to envision how the building might be revitalized and "imagined, drew, and modeled designs for their vision for the DNICB," (Santos, 2021). At the end of the six weeks, the program participants hosted their own pop-up, where they invited community to come to the DNICB and tour the building the way they imagined it, with a bowling alley and arcade, a Zen garden, and a movie theater/arcade. The youth had created these spaces within the DNICB using materials to create scenes they constructed themselves. Participants could "bowl" with a kickball and soda bottles, view the "koi pond" made of a kiddie pool and cut-out fish, and enjoy the "movie theater" complete with popcorn and a showing of the movie Moana.

Throughout the entire process, DSNI and their partners started using the DNICB for arts and innovation like purposes. One city staff person explained that they used the building as a "tech shop… for a production by Company One that was going into the Strand." DS4SI also moved their offices into the building. She said, "we've tried to seed all of these other things" that build on "the creative district part of the process." This was all part of the "productive fiction" to turn Uphams Corner into an Arts and Innovation district.

Uphams Corner Implementation Community Meetings

Nine community meetings were held between October 2017 and March 2019 as part of the Uphams Corner Implementation (UCI) process. Like the other activities happening in Upham's Corner at this time, these community meetings ultimately sought to engage neighborhood residents, artists, and business owners to imagine what an Arts and Innovation district without displacement could look like. Community vision and input was collected at this

series of meetings and were later translated directly into the Request for Proposals crafted by

the UCI WAG. Luisa Santos (2021) chronicled those meetings in Table 3. As of the writing of this

thesis, there was a long pause on the UCI process following the March 2019 public celebration

until November 2020, when a public meeting was held via zoom, due to legal complications and

the covid-19 pandemic.

What	When	Activities
Open House	October 4, 2017	A review of previous planning efforts that led up to the UCI process.
Workshop: Library	November 2, 2017	David Leonard, President of the Boston Public Library, presented on the history and present-day features of the Upham's Corner library branch, the design priorities for the new library, and examples of other Boston Public Library renovations.
Workshop: Strand Theatre	November 30, 2017	A community discussion, held at the Strand Theatre, about the Strand's past, present, and future. DNI and ds4si presented a history of the Strand Theatre. A representative of Mayor Menino's 2004 Task Force on the Future of the Strand Theatre presented a summary of the goals and vision of the 2004 RFP for the Strand Theatre. Then City of Boston's Chief of Arts and Culture (Julie Burros) introduced the arts planning conducted through Boston Creates. She also presented on the findings of the Boston Performing Arts Facility Assessment, which recommended the possibility of cutting up the space in the Strand from its historic 1400-seat arrangement to create smaller performance spaces ranging from 150 to 600 seats. The meeting ended with an interactive playback theatre performance by Red Sage Stories.
Workshop: Library & Strand Theatre	January 17, 2018	A community report-back session to present the takeaways from the community discussions on the Library and on the Strand Theatre. The library takeaways focused on a connection to the Strand and to the arts and innovation district concept with collaborative programming. Julie Burros, then-Chief of Arts and Culture presented different scenarios for feedback on the

		Strand renovation. Community members expressed preference for leaving the Strand Theatre in its current configuration as a 1400-seat theatre, particularly if smaller performance venues could be accommodated in other developments in the district.
Workshop: Housing & Commercial Uses in Arts & Innovation District	April 4, 2018	This meeting was a community discussion on how housing and commercial spaces support the Arts & Innovation District. The community expressed interest in new housing specifically for artists. The community also established a strong preference for housing that exceeds the minimum affordability standards, which the City defines as ⅓ low income, ⅓ middle income, and ⅓ market rate.
Workshop: Development Scenarios	May 16, 2018	This workshop included interactive activities that focused on the RFP process, housing, and what makes an Arts & Innovation District: ● The community evaluated different development scenarios, offering feedback on the pros and cons of each scenario. ● Participants collaboratively edited the language of a draft document describing the development and RFP process of the Upham's Corner Arts & Innovation District. ● Community members brainstormed library/Strand shared events by designing public announcements for their event ideas. ● People shared, on separate and anonymous notecards, a desire, concern, or question they have about the UCI process.
Workshop: Draft RFP	June 28, 2018	Community feedback, gathered from the various community meetings that led up to this point, was incorporated into the priorities, criteria, and narrative of the RFP. The Working Advisory Group drafted language for the RFP(s) for City-owned properties (including Bank of America and Strand sites) that was presented at this community meeting. Developers who want to submit bids will have to respond to the criteria in the RFP document. This community meeting centered on gathering feedback on the RFP draft, as well as discussion about preferences and selection criteria for the incoming development proposals.
Workshop: Refine RFP Language	November 28, 2018	The focus of this community meeting was for participants to review the progress made by the City, DSNI, and the WAG to date; to provide feedback on the draft language and affirmed priorities for the RFP(s), which have been shaped by the community process; and to learn about what was next in the process. This meeting was held at the DNICB, so the community

		was able to experience the space. People also had the opportunity to interact with models of parcels. Light refreshments and interpretation services were provided, which up to then was unique for a community meeting carried out by the BPDA.
Public Celebration	March 20, 2019	This public meeting was a presentation of the RFP document, which included sections on housing affordability, development without displacement, commercial support, artist space and housing, the Strand Theatre, jobs and equity, and youth. There were panels throughout the venue describing each development parcel, as well as posters designed by ds4si outlining the various pieces of community feedback that flowed into the RFP language. This public meeting was intended to be a culminating celebration of the community's and City's collaborative efforts on the RFP process. The Mayor publicly and officially announced the forthcoming release of the RFP.

Table 3: UCI community meetings (Santos, 2021)

At the start of the UCI process DSNI and the city engaged in an informal negotiation of

roles and expectations. The city hoped to move more quickly to release the RFP than DSNI

leaders were comfortable with and so they worked to slow down the timeline. Much of this

discussion and organizing took shape within the DSNI Arts and Culture committee meetings.

The first two public meetings, which were led by the city, were more contentious than

the rest of the process turned out to be. One interviewee felt that the city was "totally

unprepared" and gave "talking head" type presentations. After that, DSNI and the city agreed

that DSNI would take a greater role in designing and facilitating the UCI community process.

This meant that in collaboration with the city, DSNI was taking control over details such as

agenda creation, messaging, and communications. They were able to make demands from the

city to include food and language access, trying to limit the barriers to participation for

community members. Flyers were translated from English to Spanish and Cape Verdean Creole.

They also invited key community partners, like DS4SI, into the planning process for these

meetings. One former DSNI staff member reflected that they were

> "able to put a DSNI stamp on a City planning process for the first time, where the way
> the agendas were created, who was involved, having facilitators from the community be
> trained and be present, so it wasn't just City staff running the meetings, food,
> interpretation, pop-ups, playback theater performances – the whole range of the way
> the process went."

Another former DSNI staff member said his goal "was to loosen up the process a bit and

make it at least feel more accessible, more inviting, and more considerate of people who live

here." Another partner described the UCI community meetings as a "civic engagement project"

where they tried to "create spaces that were vibrant and welcoming."

The purpose of the community meetings was to hear from residents about their vision

for the district, which could then be reflected in the RFP. They were able to use "non-

traditional" methods to collect this feedback and to help residents imagine new ideas. One

former city staff member mentioned that they had "stations… where people were asked to

draw… a storefront, or something they wanted to see in the neighborhood." They were asked,

"What are the key elements? Do you see trees? Do you see people? Do you see old people,

young people, people who are reflective of the folks who are already here?" A former DSNI

staff member described one of the stations that engaged residents around their ideas for the

library. Using a "small façade of the library" and "cutouts of books," people were asked to

"come up with a book title" about what they wanted to see in the library.

Playback Theater at The Strand. The meeting that stood out to most was held in late

November 2017 at the Strand Theatre. This meeting, which was centered around drawing out

people's vision for the future of the Strand, was uniquely interactive and collaborative. Knowing that this event would be attended by a lot of "theater folks," including "former tech guys," "two former executive directors," other former Strand employees and others from the theater community, event organizers felt they had to carefully design the meeting to ensure it was engaging. One DSNI staff member noted they "pushed really hard on the city to say this meeting cannot be like a meeting that you often hold." DSNI also distributed flyers and canvassed the neighborhood to boost turnout.

They decided to invite another partner, Red Sage Stories, into the planning process. Red Sage is a local theater company which specializes in Playback Theater, a form of drama that draws on stories and experiences of audience members. Traditionally, playback theater actors ask audience members to share a story. Then, using improv they recreate and perform that story back. One city staff member thought this was "the perfect thing" because it was "interactive," "participatory," and "handled by a third party." This form of theater could distill a range of information in real time without it being "filtered" through the city or DSNI.

The meeting began in the lobby where DSNI staff and leaders had created a large "beautiful timeline display about the history of the Strand." Meeting participants were able to move around to read the timeline and discuss it with the people who had put it together. This was important because there is "a lot that happened in that space that the average person didn't know about." It gave people the context they needed to have a "richer and deeper" conversation about the future of the Strand.

Participants were then brought to the stage of the theater where they sat around tables and were asked to share their hopes and fears about the UCI process and the Strand through

conversation and by writing on note cards. One former DSNI staff member said the discussions

were "really powerful," that people expressed a lot of "frustration, passion… anger, and even

some joy." As people talked, Red Sage actors walked around and listened to the conversations.

After about an hour and a half, participants were asked to move to the theaters' seats and Red

Sage did a short performance echoing what they heard. The four actors were "multilingual" and

a "really local and diverse crew," said one participant who felt "they reflected the audience in a

variety of ways." They wore all black and used "a rolling cart" with "a few simple props… like a

scarf or a box."

Figure 8: Red Sage Stories Actors at Strand Theatre. [Screenshot by author]. Red Sage Stories. (2017).

The themes represented in the sketch were around the history of the Strand and about

people's hopes and fears for the neighborhood, particularly about gentrification. A partial

recording of the performance highlights individual's memories of the Strand including a couple

who was married in the theatre, seeing weekly performances, and a school field trip to see the

Nutcracker (Red Sage Stories, 2017). According to a participant it was so quiet when they

performed that "you could hear a pin drop." Another interviewee described the performance as

very "dramatic and serious." She said that at one point one of the actors "folded up into a ball"

and said things like, "Is this for me? Can I stay here?" She noted that it showed "real fear and vulnerability." According to one of the participants the most memorable stories were the "bravest for them to tell" because they were about "people already feeling pushed out of Uphams and feeling like this was part of a large-scale gentrification" [effort].

The response to the Red Sage performance was mixed. It was very well received by the residents and community members who attended. One city staff member explained that they collected surveys after every meeting and that the majority said it was a "really good meeting," some even felt like it was "the best community meeting they had ever been to." At the same time, the "pressurized," "high-profile" nature of the UCI process and its ties to Imagine Boston 2030 made city staff more cautious of anything that could be seen as a "critique."

This "unique" meeting would actually come to set the tone for the rest of the process. One interviewee said, "a lot of the meetings that followed… had the same type of energy, and a lot of the same people who showed up…kept coming back."

The final meeting in the series of UCI community meetings was framed as a celebration of all that had been accomplished thus far. This was before the legal delays and the onset of the covid-19 pandemic, and the RFP was expected to be released shortly thereafter. It was held at the Cape Verdean Adult Day Center and one interviewee explained that there was "cake and music and stories from people who had been part of the process."

The Joy Parade

In September 2019 a group of local partners including DS4SI, Uphams Corner Main Street, Company One, and Uphams Corner Health Center, came together with Now and There,

a city-wide arts organization, to host the Joy Parade. While not part of the formal UCI process, some of the hosting organizations overlapped with the UCI process and the event sought to activate public spaces that were slated to be part of the Arts and Innovation district. The local partners hosted a series of workshops around Upham's Corner asking people to create collages with the theme of "what brings you joy." Workshops were held at the Cape Verdean Adult Day Center, the Library, local schools, etc. Then, "internationally renowned" artist, Nick Cave, created a wrap around the Bank of America building using the residents' collages. Cave's travelling exhibit of inflatable sculptures were also installed in the building, viewable from the outside.

The exhibit was unveiled via a "three-mile procession…bridging the South End and Upham's Corner neighborhoods," (Now and There, n.d.). The parade ended at DS4SI's InPublic Festival, which was organized in conjunction with the Uphams Corner Health Center's annual Art and Health Festival. According to DS4SI's website (n.d.), the InPublic was a "2-day festival that highlighted the importance of 'public-making'—the collective creation for opportunities for interaction, laughter, dialogue, learning and surprise." The festival included food, music, comedy, performance art, and was "led by local artists, artists of color." One DSNI staff member described a moment during the festival when it "started raining." Although not planned, the crowd was welcomed into the DNICB. The festival continued indoors, complete with ice cream, performances, and socializing. The interviewee reflected, "This is what a community building is for. For people to be together."

The selection of the Bank of America building was significant in that it is one of the primary sites for the UCI process. One interviewee noted that this effort was giving it an "Arts

and Innovation district kind of treatment." The layering of events, the Joy Parade into the

InPublic Festival, into the Uphams Corner Health Center festival, was intentional so that

"ordinary folks from Uphams Corner that are just at a street fair" would have a "chance to be

part of this."

Figure 9. Augment. Collage Building Wrap at 555 Columbia Ave [Photo]. Ninivaggi, Faith. (2019).

Chapter 5: Interview Themes

This section highlights key themes from the stakeholder interviews, which include exploring the ways in which creative placemaking in Uphams Corner has shaped the UCI process, the use of arts and culture as a tool for community/resident engagement, the impact of creative engagement on the UCI process and an initial examination of how arts and culture have aided in the exertion of community power on the UCI process.

Laying the Groundwork for the Uphams Corner Implementation Process

The impetus for the UCI process and the way that it unfolded was made possible by the creative placemaking work that was already happening in the neighborhood. The declaration of an Arts and Innovation district is seen by many of the people interviewed as a "top-down" decision from the city when it was announced in the Imagine Boston 2030 plan. However, that decision was informed by the creative activations of DSNI and its partners and the acknowledgment of the Strand Theatre as a neighborhood anchor. One former city staff person thought that "if we're going to center a development… in this geography, it should reflect what what's already there, and has been there, and what people like about where they live." The creative placemaking activities and partnerships as described in the previous chapter are a visible example of what already exists in Upham's Corner.

The UCI process was also the subsequent stage to the city planning processes that came before it, including the Boston Creates cultural plan. Tom Borrup's (2020) explanation of cultural plans includes highlighting cultural work in an area. From the city's perspective, UCI was a way to add resources and action steps to the cultural planning that had already taken

place. One city staff person talked about the need to create "our own version of cultural districts." The Arts and Innovation district was Boston's own spin on what is otherwise a "state designation" and definition of a "cultural district."

Once the intention to make Uphams Corner an Arts and Innovation district was made public and DSNI and its creative placemaking partners were at the helm, a common theme of their work was centered around simulating an Arts and Innovation district that felt connected to the local community. Many of their activities were part of a "productive fiction" which involves aspirational activation of public spaces in a way that helps people reimagine what they look and feel like. Not only did they want Uphams Corner to become an Arts and Innovation district, but their activities were designed to "get residents to imagine that this might be something for them."

The Joy Parade, in which community art workshops were held to contribute to the wrap of the Bank of America building, was the main example of this. One city staff member who was part of planning the event commented that the Bank of America is a "cornerstone" of the entire Arts and Innovation district. Using that building was intentional as a way to give it an "Arts and Innovation district kind of treatment." Another organizer said the whole event was "a way for Upham's to see itself as having this beautiful piece of art, done by an artist of color, done by an internationally renowned artist." Opening up the DNICB when the festival was rained out was a way to start bringing in the community. A way to show that this building was intended to be a community space.

Even the collage making workshops were carefully designed to not only include residents but highlight their contributions. In addition to being part of the wrap, the locally

made collages were hung up on street banners and in windows along with explanations of "who did them and where they were done," like at the Cape Verdean Adult Day Center, library, or school. The goal of this was so that residents would "feel like they were connected to it. Or that they knew somebody whose work had been up there."

The Joy Parade was met locally by two combined festivals, the annual Uphams Corner Health Center festival and DS4SI's InPublic festival. One interviewee noted that was also intentional so they could say "we as a community are highly present in this event [and] that we're welcoming the sculpture." It allowed "ordinary folks from Uphams Corner" who may have never heard about the organization or the artist to be "a part of this."

Although a distinct goal of the creative placemaking work was to ensure that residents felt reflected in it, one organizer felt like they sometimes missed the mark. She noted how diverse Uphams Corner is, "so robust and colorful." It can make it challenging to make everyone feel included. She thought they needed to always come back to asking the question "Who is the voice of community? Who are we speaking about when we talk about community?" She also acknowledged that it might not be their "space and place to please everyone."

Artists as Planners & Cultural Organizers

A central component of creative placemaking is the role of artists as planners. All of the placemaking activities in Upham's Corner have tried to center artists as key stakeholders, organizers, and planners of the work. More specifically they talk about local artists, artists of color, and artists "of the African diaspora." One of the interviewees talked about the range of identities or labels they tried to include under the artist "umbrella." A DSNI staff member noted

that the "inclusion" of "those who are thought partners" in creative placemaking work in planning processes leads to a "commitment to the inclusion of arts" and to the kind of process that played out with UCI.

Although there was a real effort made to include artists at different levels of engagement in the UCI process, many of the interviewees talked about the challenges that arose with that. The city appointed Working Advisory Group (WAG) for the UCI process had a dedicated seat for an artist. The person filling that role noted that she was "not one-hundred percent comfortable being the only artist speaking for all artists." Bringing other working artists into the UCI process was a challenge because according to one interviewee they oftentimes "have to piece together different projects to be able to just function and live," so they "don't have time to sit around a meeting." However, artists did take part in the UCI community meetings, such as the one held at the Strand Theatre. Participation ranged from "visual artists," to "theater artists," to "musicians."

Artist representation came into play at the City's community meeting held in November 2020. After a year and a half pause on broader community engagement, the City held a meeting to update people on the status of the RFPs, the Strand Theatre, and the Library. Some artists expressed frustration about the process at this meeting. One artist called for the UCI process to slow down even more to accommodate the inclusion of more Black and Brown artists and to ensure community involvement in the midst of the health pandemic and protests against police brutality. She felt that the WAG and the meeting itself were not representative of the community.

Another interviewee noted the ongoing struggle for resources to support artists. Resources include "funding" to pay people, but also the "language," "access and communication." By that she meant that they sometimes strained with the capacity to "explain the importance" of using arts and culture "to then get the funding to pay people" what they're worth.

Arts and Democracy Project (n.d.) describe cultural organizing as "integrating arts and culture into organizing strategies." However, interviewees did not always find this integration between arts and organizing easy. A DSNI staff member noted that "sometimes the length and time organizing takes is not always the same time scale that an artist has." They have to really think about "how long are we engaging them for?" And "how long do they really have time to commit to it?" With the delays in the UCI process, some interviewees noted the loss of "momentum."

One interviewee, who is no longer involved in the UCI process, felt like "one-off" engagements are just "entertainment" and not as beneficial as they could be. In reflecting on the community meeting that used Playback Theater, she thought that creative tools "could make a difference" when used "purposefully and intentionally to take somebody from here to there." While this was not representative of everyone interviewed, she did not see a clear link between DSNI's organizing and the creative engagements that were utilized.

Celebration and Joy

When asked specifically about the creative engagements in the UCI process and what the benefits are, some of the interviewees brought up themes of "relationship-based" planning,

"joy," "celebration," and "wellness." Planning processes can traditionally be very dry and

unwelcoming spaces, especially for groups that have been historically marginalized and harmed

by neighborhood redevelopment efforts. One city staff member described "the standard type

of engagement" the city does as "dehumanizing and one directional." Part of what DSNI and its

partners tried to do was "find some ways to create spaces that were vibrant and welcoming."

One way they did this was through the celebration at the end of the intensive

community engagement period. "The idea of having a good time, having music, being able to

hang out, honoring people…there was a feeling that was actually an important part of the

process," which is "related to well-being," said one city staff member. They were really trying to

figure out "what does it actually take to do something that's going to be a supportive process

and outcome for people, and it has to taking into account a holistic sense of well-being."

Using Creative Engagement as a Tool

The creative placemakers interviewed use arts and culture for many different reasons.

Some of the uses that came up in their work in Uphams Corner focused on using creative

engagement as a tool to help people thinking creatively, spark dialogue, facilitate feedback, and

help residents feel that they had a say and were reflected in the UCI process.

Thinking Creatively

Art and artistic processes have a way of helping people think creatively and imagine new

possibilities. Much of the work by DSNI, DS4SI, and their FCC partners centered on facilitating

environments where residents might imagine something new and feel empowered to co-create

it. One interviewee talked about DS4SI's work to help "communities most impacted by injustices…come up with new ideas." For example:

> "Not just saying we don't want gentrification, but there's a lot of things people don't like about Uphams Corner. What if they had a chance to really imagine what an arts innovation district would look like, or what their community would be like, if it worked in the ways they wanted it to work?"

That kind of imagination can be hard to come by without a little effort and intention. One way to do this is through the creation of "strange spaces." Urban planner, Jonathan Metzger (2010) talks about the ways that art can serve as a tool in planning by making the familiar "strange." He says that "art and artist-led activities" have the ability to take topics that are often taken for granted and make them different, helping people to see them in a new or unique light.

One interviewee talked about how they tried to create "strange spaces" and "contact zones" through their creative placemaking. She explained that "you might come for one thing, and then something totally different is going on over here." The pop-up events used this idea when capturing the attention of people just going about their day by disrupting their normal routine and asking them to think about something new. The street festivals also had this feature. She explained it could be a "block party," with "an indigenous comedy troupe" performing. "Then somebody's doing body alignment and then someone else is doing this little science experiment." People are invited to "do their own thing, but in the coming together you really crate some new possibilities for how people imagine public space."

Creative practices were used in the UCI process to help people think outside of the box by using their "five senses." One interviewee pointed out that "all people don't learn using

visual mode or the listening mode." So if they are "trying to plan something" that only uses those modes, they are "not allowing us to solve and have a complete and total way of looking at something to solve." Visual, auditory, tactile, and movement-based methods were used at different points throughout the process to help people learn and think creatively.

One interviewee expressed that helping people, even artists, think innovatively can be a challenge at times. "Sometimes you have really creative ideas from folks who are not trained in community organizing" and it can "miss the mark." She pointed to playback theater and the Moving Colors of Life dance installation as examples that built on community organizing.

Sparking Dialogue

Many of the creative engagements were used to initiate dialogue among the people participating. At the Strand Theatre community meeting, people were asked to write their hopes and fears about the UCI process on cards and then engage in small group discussions about those same hopes and fears. One participant noted that there was a "little bit of friction" at those table discussions as people had disagreements about the future of the Strand Theatre. As the playback theater actors listened to the conversations, they were able to incorporate those tensions into their performance. Another interviewee thought that process opened people up to thinking about things from different perspectives. She reflected that it helped people realize that "it's not just me who has that fear," or understand "someone else's experience" when maybe they "hadn't even thought of" it.

Finnish researchers, Päivi Rannila and Tikli Loivaranta (2015), argue that "spaces of deliberation are always potentially conflictual," and that theater can serve as a vehicle for

creating space for healthy conflict. Dramaturgy can help improve communication, move through disagreement, and dissolve boundaries among different stakeholders.

Sparking dialogue was also a goal in the Making Planning Processes Public pop-up events. One of the organizers explained that they "could capture people on the street by offering them food or the strange sculpture and then invite them in and really hear some amazing conversations." People did not just talk with the organizers and artists but were invited to really talk with each other and "build on each other's ideas."

The Moving Colors of Life dance also created opportunities for discussion. As the dance travelled from one business to the next, audience members discussed the pieces and what they were observing about the dance, the businesses, and the neighborhood.

Facilitating Feedback

Creative methods were also useful in gathering input for the Arts and Innovation district and the UCI process itself. Not only did they help spark dialogue, but the hopes and fear cards from the Strand Theatre community meeting were also a practical approach for feedback. One city staff member explained that the cards were collected and organized on a "spreadsheet that had every single type of question or fear or hope." They were tracked "meeting by meeting" to see if the questions had been "addressed." Another interviewee said they "got a lot of feedback in the process," which translated into parts of the RFP.
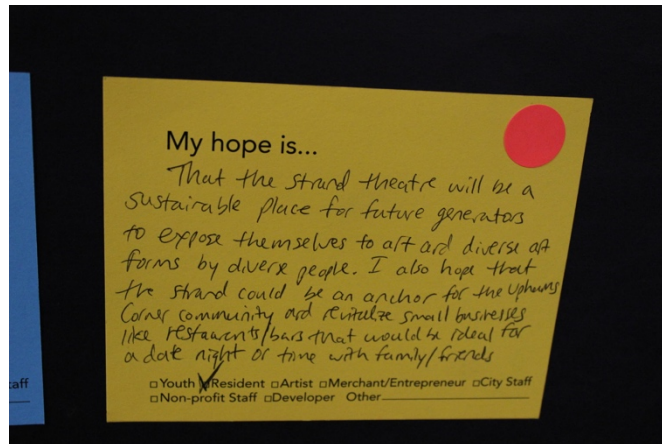
Figure 10. Hope Cards from UCI Community Engagement. City of Boston. (N.d.).

A community partner added that the cards were also organized and displayed "visually" at the next community meeting so that "people could also see each other's hopes and fears and questions." It was important that people "see each other's ideas" and that they continuously find ways to do that. Even the playback theater performance helped to reinforce or add to the feedback. A former city employee noted that the Red Sage skit "captured some of the conversations that did not necessarily make it into the notes that people were taking at the tables." These kinds of methods are more accessible than the typical "public comments" that are gathered during planning processes and often never make it back to the community or outside city walls.

Making Voices Heard and Reflecting Residents

The Red Sage performance at the Strand Theatre was considered so powerful by many of the interviewees because it made people "feel heard and or witnessed." It was a signal that the UCI process might be different than what they're used to, or what is happening in other

neighborhoods. One interviewee expressed that the "arts help to accelerate" a process that builds trust "faster than we would if we were just sitting at a table talking about it." She thought that playback theater was a great tool because people see "themselves" and "their stories reflected back." She said, "it moved some people because they were like 'yes, you heard me.'" Too often the community "doesn't feel heard, respected, valued," and this was helping them feel "validated."

A former city employee thought that creative engagements can make planning more "approachable" and like it is 'being co-created because it is something that is being developed on the spot rather than something that is already prepared." Having the opportunity to co-create something together can make people feel that they have a say in what happens.

The literature points to storytelling as a crucial component of establishing a shared political and cultural understanding, empowerment, and community building (Fox, 2007; Frasz and Sidford, 2018; Kahn, 2010; O'Neal et al. 2006). The use of Playback Theater at the Strand community meeting is a significant example of how storytelling can enhance a process like UCI. People's personal stories were reflected back to them in a way that was validating and also managed to elevate their hopes and fears in a new way.

Impact on the Uphams Corner Implementation Process

As one interviewee noted, using creative methods makes the process "better." It also had a number of "ripple effects" in how things were done and how people perceived UCI. After the playback theater performance at the Strand Theatre, one interviewee explained there was a lot of appeal to the project. She said the event piqued the interest "of people who wanted to

sit on the WAG or wanted to sit on the committees." There were also "artists who wanted to use and create the spaces," in Upham's Corner. She said because the process seemed to be going so "well," there were also "funders" who were interested and DSNI received "a nonprofit award for arts and innovation," from the Massachusetts Nonprofit Network ("2020 Nonprofit Excellence Awards," n.d.).

Creative engagements in the UCI process also had an effect on how things are typically done in City Hall. The fact that five different city departments were involved made it more collaborative than a normal planning process. Like "it wasn't coming from [just] a planning perspective," as one interviewee put it. Having the "Mayor's Office of Arts and Culture represented in the planning process" already made it "a more creative process," than normal.

One of the goals of the UCI process was to use it as a pilot that, if gone well, could be replicated in other parts of the city. Some of the interviewees noticed that the Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) started "taking tips and tricks on facilitation ideas and activities," from the UCI process. While not fully replicating the process, using methods in other settings and contexts could have the ability to enhance other planning initiatives.

At the same time, there was hesitation about mixing and matching methods with other processes. When thinking about using the hopes and fear cards in other settings one city employee reflected that, "the whole point was that we designed that with two local partners who are invested in this space and know the people here." For her, a "toolbox full of creative things we can do," that "you can plop into a meeting structure, format, or goals," are not "collaboratively designed" and are "missing a piece." Collaborative processes with residents

and community members, designed around specific goals, lead to different, perhaps better, outcomes.

Many of the interviewees pointed to the playback theater performance at the Strand as an impactful moment for the UCI process. They thought it helped build trust between the city and the community. One DSNI staff person explained that the city "really wanted to earn trust" and have a process that would help "build it." That community meeting was "illustrative of the city trying to do something different because it really was different," said one former city staffer.

Not only did it help the community trust the city a bit more, one DSNI staffer thought it helped the city "to trust and embrace that there are different routes…to the same goal." By having a "third party" synthesize the conversations and present something unplanned at the meeting, they were giving up a level of control that indicated trust in this different, more creative process.

That did not necessarily sit well with everyone at the city, however. One DSNI staffer said she thought "it was scary for the city to watch because they didn't know which way it was going to go." As one city staff member explained it, having people's fears about the process aired on "the stage of a 1400 seat theater," actually having "people dramatically performing your worst nightmare, that people are critical of this major initiative," kind of "freaked people out." This city staffer explained that in the time since that meeting, she has seen a shift in the city's "perspective in the sense that people feel better being heard, even if it is negative."

Some of the interviewees also thought that the use of creative engagements made the UCI process more accessible. While DSNI really pushed for food and translation at meetings to

reduce the barriers to participation, non-traditional methods also helped people participate in ways that they may not have otherwise been able to. One city staff member thought that the interactive stations at community meetings that asked people to draw or create something they wanted to see in the neighborhood was "more approachable" because it is "being co-created." Generating something tactile like a drawing, or a book for the library, could be seen as "another form of communication," if you "can't put something into words." She thought this was helpful in engaging people for whom "English isn't their preferred language." She also reflected that it was a way to "engage a younger audience," by having something to keep young children "occupied with, which isn't always available at community meetings."

Another city staff person thought that the extra time and intention that went into designing community meetings with creative pieces made the process more transparent. She explained that moving through the city bureaucracy and collaborating with a number of partners made the planning "super time consuming," but that it "made it clear what the trade-offs were because we really designed conversations to get some of those key questions." Even the process of tracking the questions, hopes, and fears that came in from one meeting to the next added a level of transparency that is not always common in city planning processes. She explained that they would try "to just be honest about if we didn't have the answer to something which is not…something that cities do very often." This layer of transparency was something that the community pushed for and DSNI helped to execute.

While interviewees thought there were many benefits to using creative engagements to drive the UCI process, they also held reservations as well. One of the explicit goals of the creative placemaking work was to make residents "imagine" that an Arts and Innovation district

"might be something for them, and not something for gentrifiers and not something that would push them out," as one community partner framed it, "even while we do hold that fear."

One DSNI leader talked about the relationship between creative placemaking and gentrification and displacement. She said, "how creative is it, after you've done the planning, if you push out the people there who have been planning because they can no longer afford to live there." She felt that that conversation is lacking nationally, but that locally they were making an effort to address it in Uphams Corner. The idea of development without displacement is embedded in all of the UCI work, as well as the neighborhood creative placemaking at large.

Some interviewees also worried that their efforts to improve the UCI process might end up being "window dressing" for an outcome that would ultimately be controlled by the city. A community partner explained that "a tension for us as we created processes with DSNI to try and make the meetings as accessible, as highly attended, as possible to say…does it matter? Are their opinions really going to matter? Are we just making something that looks good for the city?" Making people feel like they were heard is only helpful if their opinions and ideas are genuinely going to be incorporated and taken into account. This interviewee thought that they wouldn't have an answer to that question until later in the process when developers are actually chosen.

Arts and Culture to Exercise Community Power

There are two clear moments in which arts and culture helped community apply pressure on the UCI process. The first is that when the city announced their plans to make

Upham's Corner an Arts and Innovation district, DSNI and its partners were successfully able to slow down the process to incorporate more community voice. According to one DSNI staff member, much of that pressure came from their arts and culture committee. The committee was initially formed to steer DSNI's creative placemaking efforts and create space for community participation. However, as many of the members of the arts and culture committee overlapped with the UCI WAG, it became a space for them to discuss what was happening within the UCI process, without the city present. WAG members debriefed the city meetings and strategized together, and with other members of the community, about elements of the process and, more specifically, the RFP. The arts and culture committee made room for key community stakeholders to organize themselves so that they felt confident in the city spaces and could ask for what they needed.

Another key juncture was about the future of the Strand Theatre. One city staff person explained that "originally we were talking about chopping the Strand up," into smaller spaces. However, she said, "we don't talk about it in the RFP because people said point blank that 'this is a historic site for the community, and we deserve to have a 1400-seat theatre, even if it's not full all the time.'" Many of the interviewees felt like the idea to keep the Strand Theatre in its original state came out of the playback theater community meeting that was held at the Strand. One former DSNI staff person said the playback theater performance "sent a clear message to the folks working for the city, who were expecting this to be just another set of meetings that pushes the agenda forward, that this meeting was more like a meeting that showed nobody wants this to go forward – maybe sideways."

Chapter 6: Discussion & Conclusion

This case study illustrated the ways in which DSNI and its partners have used arts and culture in Upham's Corner over time and into the UCI process. Their creative placemaking efforts laid the groundwork for the vision of an Arts and Innovation district and made the UCI process possible. The process was designed to reflect the arts and creative activities already happening in Upham's Corner and hopefully enhance them through the Arts and Innovation district. At the same time, once the intention was to create an Arts and Innovation district in Upham's Corner, the placemaking became focused on simulating an Arts and Innovation district that was rooted in community. A key example of this was the Nick Cave Joy Parade. Figure 11 shows the reinforcing relationship between the UCI process and the creative placemaking work.
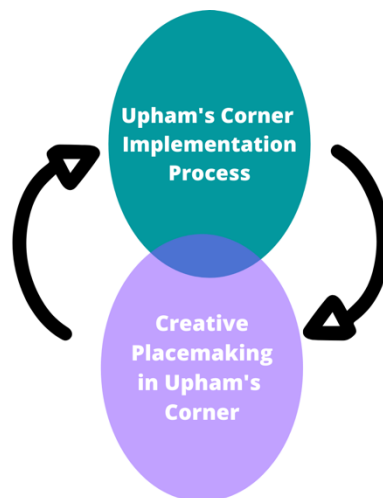

Figure 11: Influence of UCI Process and Creative Placemaking

Ensuring that residents feel they belong in public space and in the UCI process was central to DSNI and its partners as they engaged in the UCI process. They did this through visible community representation in the planning and by working to make the UCI meetings and events accessible. They provided food, childcare, and language interpretation to reduce barriers

to participation in UCI meetings, and they also tried to ensure that local artists, residents, and business owners were at the forefront of welcoming the wider community into these spaces.

Centering artists as organizers and planners, they used arts and culture to help people think creatively, spark dialogue, facilitate feedback, and help residents feel they had a say and were reflected in the UCI process. This case exemplifies the ways the UCI process was impacted by the use of arts and culture, which were that it made it more accessible and transparent. These methods enhanced the UCI process and provided some documentation of the community input as the process unfolded. The hopes and fear cards and the photos from the block activity are just two examples of creative engagements that serve as artifacts of the UCI process. The presence of this documentation not only adds a level of transparency, but also may prove useful in measuring how the Arts and Innovation district lives up to the vision of the community as portrayed in these engagements, or in simply telling the story of how the Arts and Innovation district came to be.

The mutual trust built between the City and community organizations and leaders from the creative methods, like the Playback Theater performance at the Strand meeting, is notable for a planning process such as this. Finding ways for cities to not just build relationships in communities, but also engage in meaningful collaboration is key to increasing community control over neighborhood redevelopment processes. The Strand performance allowed community members to see the city publicly do something different than what they've historically done. It also required that the city trust their community partners in trying different tactics and giving up some level of control over the outcome of the meeting.

Creative engagements also garnered interest in the process by funders and artists, and the city started to use elements in other processes. At the beginning of the process, when things felt like they were moving too quickly, DSNI and its partners were able to successfully slow it down to ensure that community voice was represented. Through their carefully designed community meeting at the Strand Theatre, they were able to convey the importance of keeping the historic theater intact as a 1400-seat theater, rather than breaking it up into smaller spaces.

The UCI process has had multiple phases since it began four years ago. The data indicates that the period of intense community engagement laid out in this case is a moment in which stakeholders felt like the process was going well. While they had areas they wanted to see improved, they found that taking the time and intention to have a collaborative planning process aimed at creatively engaging people led to better outcomes. This is in line with how Courage (2021) distinguishes placemaking from other types of community development in that when it is done well, it can put community "front and center of deciding how their place looks and how it functions." It may be impossible to untangle the delays in the process due to collaboratively planning community engagement from the delays due to the city's legal obstacles. Either way, the UCI process has carried on longer than anticipated and seems to have tested the patience of community members and city staff. Some interviewees have felt that both the trust between city and community and the momentum of the process have been lost due to the long legal delays and pauses between community meetings due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of the behind-the-scenes collaboration has ebbed and flowed depending on the stage of the process in a way that is reflective in the level of community engagement.

Despite all the potential benefits of arts-based creative methods in planning, this case study brings up some remaining challenges and questions. Community participation in a process does not guarantee community control, or even community influence on the outcomes of the process (Levine, 2017). The outcomes of UCI remain to be seen as the process plays out through the designation of developers, and implementation of any longer-term mechanisms for community control. Early in the process it was decided that the city and DNI would release a joint RFP for all of the Arts and Innovation district sites. After many delays, DNI decided to move ahead with its own RFP for the DNICB. This move was one way for DSNI/DNI to re-assert control over the process when it felt like it was no longer being co-created with the city.

Limited time, resources, and staff turnover meant that DSNI and its partners did not always have the kind of community organizing capacity to enhance this effort and tie it into their broader work. The challenges that were pointed out during the interviews about representation and engagement of artists and other groups within the community, as well as in making sure that certain activities were not seen as "one-offs", may have been mitigated with additional resources for community organizing. Many of the twists and turns that have played out throughout the UCI process could not have been foreseen.

The scope of this project was limited by time constraints. A longer timeline would have allowed this research to follow the process to the next phases of developer selection, permitting, construction, and completion. Additionally, most of the individuals interviewed for this case study were active leaders, stakeholders, and city or DSNI staff engaged in the UCI process. It is not representative of the views of people who were on the periphery of the

process, people who chose to stop participating due to criticism or disagreement, or people who are newer to the process.

Additional research is needed to fully assess how DSNI uses arts and culture for community organizing specifically. The scope of this project touched on their organizing within the UCI process, but not on their organizing goals more broadly. Research that follows the process to completion would also be useful in determining the outcomes of this work. Following up with stakeholders after a developer is chosen and the projects are complete would shed light on their perceptions of the overall process and long-term affordability and community control mechanisms. Further, research about the ways that arts and culture are incorporated into the implementation of the Arts and Innovation district would provide additional insight into how this work could evolve and continue to serve the community.

The National Endowment for the Arts (2015) has proposed a set of indicators for measuring creative placemaking initiatives that include "Resident Attachment to Community, Quality of Life, Arts and Cultural Activity, and Economic Conditions," categories. As a case study of process, it was not within the scope of this project to incorporate these indicators. However, a study that looks at these outcome measurements in Upham's Corner could be a useful contribution to the literature assessing creative placemaking.

In conclusion, I hope that this case study will be a helpful reflection of the many layers of work that went into the UCI process for DSNI and its partners. Arts and culture can serve as a powerful tool for communities to engage people of different backgrounds, communicate about important issues, and empower people to take collective action. Through the arts, space can be

made for celebration and joy within community development and planning. It can help people

imagine new possibilities, level inequitable power dynamics, and open up meaningful dialogue.

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