



INNOVATION FUND PROJECT REPORT

January 2018





Photo via Barram's Gardens

How might programming that attracts a diverse audience be tweaked to **foster connections and trust** across class lines?



Photo via Go Mt. Airy



Photo via The Oval

How can communities let their **identity shine through**?



Photo via Knight Foundation



Photo via Albert Lee, Fairmount Park Conservancy

How might we use the Civic Commons to activate people's **passions** and increase **civic pride/ownership** among **diverse** constituents?

How might the Civic Commons be **radically welcoming** through staffing, programming, and communication?



Photo via The Uni Project

How might we **replicate the diversity** evident daily at Reading Terminal Market in a neighborhood park or library outside of Center City?

ABOUT REIMAGINING THE CIVIC COMMONS

Reimagining the Civic Commons is a national initiative supported by The JPB Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, and The Rockefeller Foundation. The Philadelphia pilot, funded by the Knight and William Penn Foundations (WPF), was managed by the Fairmount Park Conservancy (FPC). PennPraxis served as the local facilitator of the Innovation Fund, which brought partners in the program together to activate the sites prior to the completion of capital improvements, to share skills and assets between site managers, field leaders, and community organizations, and strengthen relationships with surrounding communities.

ABOUT THE SITES



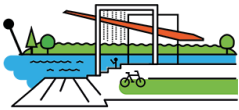
Discovery Center

The Philadelphia Outward Bound School and The National Audubon Society are joining forces to reactivate a century-abandoned water reservoir in East Fairmount Park. The project will provide environmental education and adventure programs that inspire self-discovery, foster personal achievement, and build community across Philadelphia.



The Viaduct Rail Park

Center City District and Friends of the Rail Park will re-purpose a portion of an abandoned rail line as an elevated linear park in a changing, multi-ethnic community.



Bartram's Mile

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation and the Schuylkill River Development Corporation will transform this former industrial waterfront, adjacent to Bartram's Garden, into a greenway that will reconnect the oldest botanical garden in the U.S. to Center City, while reconnecting an isolated neighborhood back to its historic waterfront.



Lovett Library and Park

The Free Library of Philadelphia and Mt. Airy U.S.A. will convert this library and adjoining unused, open space into a new community center.



Centennial Commons

Fairmount Park Conservancy will create three recreational zones bringing much-needed amenities to a 12-acre desolate edge of West Fairmount Park to transform this space into an inviting and vibrant park for residents of the adjoining neighborhood.

ABOUT THE INNOVATION FUND

To garner community excitement and support, funders set aside the **Innovation Fund** to develop **early-action projects** that could be realized quickly and evaluated in the near-term. Projects were meant to be **low-cost prototypes**, exploring innovative ideas while cultivating new organizational leadership and community connections. Reimagining the Civic Commons engaged partners and civic organizations to achieve large-scale, **long-term community benefit**. PennPraxis, FPC, Knight, and WPF worked with partners along the way to share ideas, refine and evaluate designs, define implementation and benchmarking paths, and learn from testing new ideas and approaches through each step.

Innovation Fund projects aimed to achieve:

INTEGRATION: Help integrate diverse users and communities, and encourage greater interaction across socio-economic and cultural spectrums;

COLLABORATION: Promote collaboration across civic assets throughout the city, attract new visitors to sites and neighborhoods, and promote collaboration across field leaders; and

LEARNING: Foster innovation in ideas generation, projects, concepts, gauging impacts, and partnerships, and learning together through the process of prototyping and experimentation.



Photo via PennPraxis

How might the Civic Commons **change the reputation** of these sites and neighborhoods?

How might programming that attracts a diverse audience be tweaked to **foster connections and trust** across class lines?



Photo via PennPraxis



Photo via PennPraxis

How can communities let their **identity shine through**?



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How might we use the Civic Commons to activate people's **passions** and increase **civic pride/ownership** among **diverse** constituents?

How might the Civic Commons be **radically welcoming** through staffing, programming, and communication?



Photo via PennPraxis

SELECTED PROJECTS

On June 21, 2016, PennPraxis conducted the **Innovation Fund Workshop**. Partners from each of the five sites included in the Commons participated to identify projects that would activate sites prior to the completion of their scheduled redesigns and improvements.

Through two working sessions, participants identified several ideas as potential projects to further develop. These include:

1. **Neighborhood Exchange Boxes:** small exhibits or skill-sharing packages to be exchanged between sites to convey the skills and identity of each site/neighborhood
2. **Viola Alley:** an installation and event in Viola Alley to share the history and character of Parkside and include programming similar to the future Centennial Commons
3. **Story Centers:** mini library kiosks at key Civic Commons to serve as locations for reading and storytelling, designed by neighborhood youth
4. **Discovery Gateway:** a temporary art installation to highlight the future project in conjunction with nature-based educational materials and activities akin to the future site

The first projects to launch were **Neighborhood Exchange Boxes** and **Viola Alley**, in the summer of 2016. **Discovery Gateway** occurred in the Spring of 2017 and **Story Centers** in the Fall of 2017. The Viola Alley project spurred an additional project, **Parkside Fresh Food Fest**, a pilot community supported agriculture (CSA) program with additional arts, music and community programming.

ABOUT THE PARTNERS

Audobon Pennsylvania - organization that strives to conserve and restore the habitats shared with all wildlife, focusing on the needs of birds.

Bartram's Garden - a National Historic Landmark in Southwest Philadelphia that serves as an outdoor classroom, living laboratory and membership organization that protects and enhances the Bartram's House and Garden and educates the public about discovery, gardening and care for the natural world.

Centennial Parkside CDC - a community development corporation created to preserve, promote and revitalize East Parkside through partnerships with businesses, institutions and programs that engage residents, increase opportunity and grow a diverse thriving community.

Center City District - works to enhance the vitality and competitiveness of Philadelphia's downtown and provide services to keep it clean and safe for all.

Fairmount Park Conservancy - a non-profit championing Philadelphia's parks leading capital projects, historic preservation efforts, stewardship investment and innovative programming. Served as the managing organization for the Innovation Fund projects.

Free Library of Philadelphia - library network dedicated to advancing literacy, guiding learning and inspiring curiosity to build a community devoted to lifelong learning.

Friends of the Rail Park - non-profit fundraising organization leading the conservation efforts for the Rail Park through engagement, programming and beautification of the park.

Mt. Airy USA - community development corporation whose mission is to preserve, empower and advance a vibrant and diverse Mt. Airy by stimulating development responsive to community needs.

PennPraxis - center for applied research outreach and practice at PennDesign. Organization pursues projects that enhance the built and natural environment and extending public interest design practice research and scholarship outside the classroom.

Philadelphia Outward Bound - premier provider of experience-based outdoor leadership programs for youth and adults, specifically striving to change lives through challenge and discovery.

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation - department responsible for preserving, enhancing and expanding the public green spaces in the City of Philadelphia.

Reading Terminal Market - one of the largest and oldest public markets, housed in a National Historic Landmark building since 1893.

Schuylkill River Development Corporation (SRDC) - a non-profit charged with revitalizing the Schuylkill River corridor.

Strawberry Mansion CDC - community development corporation promoting sustainable revitalization through residential, commercial and economic development, history preservation and empowerment of the Strawberry Mansion community.



How might the Civic Commons **change the reputation** of these sites and neighborhoods?



How can compiling stories and skills from each of the sites and surrounding neighborhoods **unite partners to learn and share**, and invite visitors from both nearby neighborhoods and across the city to learn about civic assets and neighborhoods throughout Philadelphia?



NEIGHBORHOOD EXCHANGE BOXES

Lovett Library to Bartram's Garden

EVENT INFORMATION:

September 28, 2016 at Supper Sessions, Mt. Airy
October 16, 2016 at Harvest Fest, Bartram's Garden

PROJECT PARTNERS:

Bartram's Garden
Mt. Airy USA
Free Library of Philadelphia
MGA Architects (parklet)
Fairmount Park Conservancy
PennPraxis

EVENT SUMMARY:

The project began as a modern-day interpretation of the legendary Bartram's Boxes, which were sent by Philadelphian John Bartram (1699-1777), American's first botanist, to clients far and wide. The simple wooden boxes were filled with seeds, dried plants, and other natural specimens, designed to incite a sense of discovery in its recipients. The boxes brought new varieties of flowers and trees to Europe, which were reflected in its gardens then and today. Bartram's estate is now Bartram's Garden, located in Southwest Philadelphia.

Bartram's Garden is the terminus of Bartram's Mile, the mile-long bike and pedestrian trail that will connect Southwest Philadelphia with Center City, and ultimately the Schuylkill River Trail.

The Lovett Library and Park project brings together the Free Library of Philadelphia and Mt. Airy USA, the local community nonprofit in the Northwest Philadelphia neighborhood, to solidify the library and its adjacent park as a community hub and gathering space, and provide fertile testing ground for the concept of a library without walls.

The sites represent diverse communities across the city, many of whom know little about each other, and rarely visit. The Neighborhood Exchange Box project sought to change that, by collecting stories and treasures about each neighborhood, and sharing them with another site.

Mt. Airy USA kicked off the engagement, asking residents to share thoughts about what made the neighborhood unique. The team posted up at the outdoor dining nights "Supper Sessions" in the neighborhood, and repurposed a parklet (designed by MGA Architects for the 2016 AIA Convention) as the venue for collection. The installation was meant both to draw attention and to invite visitors to share and linger. The outfit also featured a videographer who recorded residents' stories, as others wrote their thoughts on notecards which were then on display. After a few weeks, much input was collected, the box was filled, and was readied to send to the next site.

Several Southwest residents were invited to Mt. Airy for the last of their Supper Sessions and then served as ambassadors for the box at its new location. A number of these residents noted that they had never been to Mt. Airy and greatly enjoyed their visit and learning about its culture and history.

Filled with the contents of Mt. Airy, the box traveled to Bartram's Garden, where it was unpacked at the site's annual Harvest Fest. At this event, the box both shared the stories of Mt. Airy, as the gifts and notecards were displayed for all to view, and shifted to collecting stories from the Southwest Philadelphia neighborhood.

Many Mt. Airy residents made the trip to Bartram's Garden for the festival, bringing diverse Philadelphians together to interact and learn and gain greater appreciation for the city's wealth of cultural assets.

At the project conclusion, both communities were grateful to the project for enabling them to get to know a new part of Philadelphia better, and to see their own community in a new, fresh light as well.



Photo via Mt. Airy USA

How might the Civic Commons **change the reputation** of these sites and neighborhoods?



Photo via PennPraxis

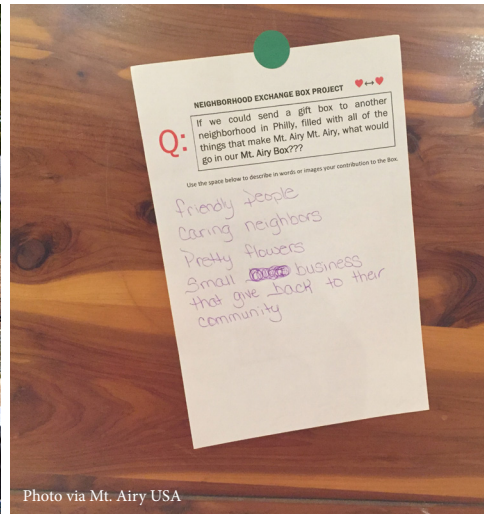


Photo via Mt. Airy USA



Photo via Mt. Airy USA



Photo via PennPraxis

If a Philadelphia neighborhood could **send a gift box** to another **neighborhood**, filled with all of the things that **make its community unique**, what would go in the box?



Photo via Mt. Airy USA

NEIGHBORHOOD EXCHANGE BOXES

Lovett Library to Bartram's Garden

EVENT METRICS:

- Bartram's Garden/ Southwest Philadelphia
 - 750 people attended Bartram's Garden Harvest Fest
 - 87% of the respondents were from a nearby neighborhood.
 - 87% saw familiar faces.
 - Only one person met someone new and hoped to reconnect.
 - 100% of visitors had been to Mt. Airy
 - Respondents said they did not or were not sure if they learned something new about Mt. Airy.
 - 63% did not know about or had visited the Viaduct Rail Park.
 - 25% knew about the Rail Park and 12% had visited.
- Lovett Library/ Mt. Airy
 - 94% of respondents were from Mt. Airy
 - 41% said they have used Lovett Library while open
 - Mt. Airy USA Facebook page – 5,000 interactions, 25 comments

LESSONS LEARNED:

- The videos were a successful way to capture stories and the FLP will host them on their YouTube channel
- Were responses overly skewed positive because that is who participated?
- Getting people out of their neighborhood is a challenge due to significant distance
- The parklet made the event - the visual impact and spectacle drew people in
- Smaller interactions are more manageable and make deeper connections
- Integrating activity into existing event makes for greater attendance and efficiency

FUTURE STEPS:

- Share with General Public
 - Online repository or YouTube channel can be continually added to
 - Displayed on screen at Bartram's Garden
 - Feature in Office of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy
 - Put on website? Media? PlanPhilly, Philly Mag?
 - Share through event at Library or at Center City movie screening
 - Presentation/ conversation at Urban Consulate
 - Invitations to take part in conversations in the other neighborhoods – how can we make the invite personal?
- Deploy in other communities such as South Kensington
- Continue to host dinner dialogues in other neighborhoods and within our own



How can communities let their **identity shine through**?



How do we **heal neighborhood wounds** through finding shared understanding, common goals and **love of community**?



NEIGHBORHOOD EXCHANGE BOXES

Bartram's Garden to Viaduct Rail Park

EVENT INFORMATION:

February 28, 2017 at Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation
March 3, 2017 at Asian Arts Initiative
April 5, 2017 at The Trestle Inn

PROJECT PARTNERS:

Friends of the Rail Park
Bartram's Garden
Asian Arts Initiative (AAI)
Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC)
Fairmount Park Conservancy
PennPraxis

EVENT SUMMARY:

The third destination for the Neighborhood Exchange Box was the Viaduct Rail Park, located in a diverse cross-section of Philadelphia where increased development abuts historically Chinese neighborhoods.

The Rail Park is a long-anticipated project to convert abandoned segments of the Reading Railroad into open space. The "Viaduct" portion of the Rail Park, located in the Callowhill neighborhood immediately north of Chinatown and Center City, is almost fully funded and under construction. The surrounding area is characterized by residential lofts, many converted from historic warehouses, art galleries, ongoing light industrial use, and many still-vacant parcels. Though currently in flux, the residential makeup is among the most diverse in the city.

As the Viaduct Rail Park moves forward, neighborhood community partners are simultaneously leading engagement efforts to ensure that Chinatown's character is maintained and residents' needs are continually met as the neighborhood undergoes change. The Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation (PCDC) kicked off an update to the Chinatown Neighborhood Plan in December of 2016, working with Interface Studio. The neighborhood plan addresses needs for housing, connectivity, and open space, and collect citizen input through a series of public forums. Down the street, the Asian Arts Initiative (AAI), was in the midst of its cultural planning process entitled: *People:Power:Place*, which will create a shared cultural vision for Chinatown North.

Designed to build bridges through the appreciation of shared experience and community pride, the Neighborhood Exchange Box provided the perfect accompaniment for these neighborhood conversations. Led by Friends of the Rail Park's Melissa Kim, the box popped up at the Chinatown Neighborhood Plan forum and again at the cultural plan community event. Kim was joined by representatives of Bartram's Garden in Southwest Philadelphia, the site that previously hosted the traveling collection of stories, in addition to PCDC and AAI staff, and PennPraxis.

Participants were eager to fill the box with messages celebrating the sights, sounds, smells, and experiences of the neighborhood. Food, people, culture, history, family, shared experiences, Reading Terminal, and specific food and drink like dim sum and bubble tea were mentioned several times.

The united themes of these responses indicate that there is a great deal that the community shares and values, despite differences in background or lifestyle. These common bonds will hopefully inspire community members to forge new and more meaningful relationships with one another as the neighborhood grows and develops with the new Rail Park as a shared asset.

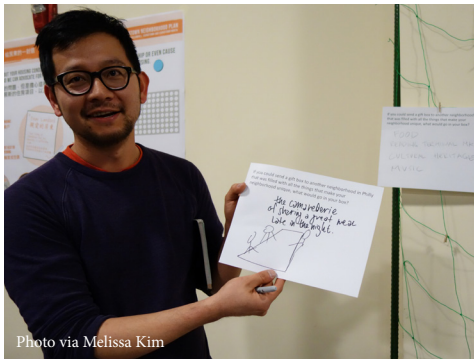


Photo via Melissa Kim

How might the Civic Commons **change the reputation** of these sites and neighborhoods?



Photo via Melissa Kim



Photo via PennPraxis



Photo via Knight Foundation



Photo via Melissa Kim

如果你有機會將一個裝滿了你所在社區獨特元素的禮物盒送給費城的另一個社區，你會在盒子裡放入什麼？

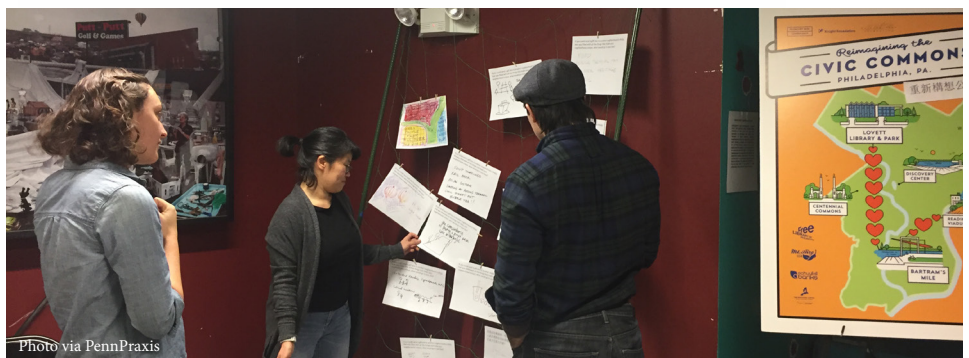


Photo via PennPraxis

NEIGHBORHOOD EXCHANGE BOXES

Bartram's Garden to Viaduct Rail Park

EVENT METRICS:

- 48 attendees (Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation) + 10 attendees (Asian Arts Initiative)
- Attending either Asian Arts Initiative First Friday events or PCDC Neighborhood Plan community meeting
- Location of residency (PCDC): 50% from Chinatown and 50% from elsewhere in Philadelphia
- Mostly Asian American

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Cross promotion of events was key to attendance
- Finding common ground did effectively build trust and make inroads for future conversations
- While event was positive, did not discuss the Rail Park explicitly
- Each neighborhood should determine what the “box” looks like as part of the planning process
- Portability/ simplicity was key in multiple events

FUTURE STEPS:

- Host community dinners to further community engagement goals for The Rail Park
- Integration into future neighborhood events
- Involve other neighborhoods or sites
- Bring event to people where they are, e.g. housing developments, regular meetings, target seniors



Photo via Yusef Dingle

How might we use the Civic Commons to activate people's **passions** and increase **civic pride/ownership** among **diverse** constituents?



Photo via Yusef Dingle



Photo via Yusef Dingle



Photo via Yusef Dingle



Photo via Yusef Dingle

An alley in Philadelphia's East Parkside neighborhood became much more than a narrow passageway; it was **transformed into a lively gathering space** for learning, celebrating, and meeting new neighbors.



Photo via Yusef Dingle

VIOLA ALLEY CONNECTOR

Centennial Commons

EVENT INFORMATION:

September 24, 2016

PROJECT PARTNERS:

Viola Streets Residents Association (VSRA)
Centennial Parkside CDC
Bartram's Garden
Free Library of Philadelphia, Culinary Literacy Center
Fairmount Park Conservancy
Philadelphia Horticultural Society
Metal Incorporated
Reading Terminal Market
Street Food Philly food truck
Philly Teepee
PennPraxis

EVENT SUMMARY:

The Viola Alley Connector began as a vision of the Viola Street Residents Association (VSRA), and was refined by working with other Reimagining the Civic Commons (RCC) partners during the June 2016 kick-off workshop for the Innovation Fund. VSRA and the Centennial Parkside CDC are involved in Reimagining the Civic Commons due to the future development of the Centennial Commons, the plan to build new amenities along the Parkside edge of West Fairmount Park, which is adjacent to their community.

What emerged from the workshop was a plan to make physical and community connection between Viola Street and West Fairmount Park by locating several creative placemaking gestures within the underutilized alley. The project tested the idea of programming an alley and an adjacent empty lot as a venue to tell the story of the historic neighborhood, its residents, architectural history, and provide space for music, food, and community festivities.

The project was led by the Centennial Parkside CDC together with VSRA. Other Civic Commons partners included Bartram's Garden, whose staff brought a farm stand to the alley and demonstrated farming techniques in the Viola Street Community Garden; the Free Library of Philadelphia, whose representatives shared information and led a demonstration of African cooking techniques through its Culinary Literacy Center; the Fairmount Park Conservancy, who brought information about the Centennial Commons, and contributed tables and chairs and other resources to the event. In addition, the Philadelphia Horticultural Society (PHS) created beautiful flower pot displays, in custom metal planters made by Metal Incorporated, and Reading Terminal Market gauged resident interest for a potential subsidized CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) for East Parkside residents. Parkside resident artists and videographers set up activity booths along the alley, which celebrated the history and character of the neighborhood.

The event was topped off by performances by a local drill team, gospel singers, and an African dance ensemble. The Street Food Philly food truck was present to provide free food to all visitors, and encouraged guests to linger and greet one another and stay for the entertainment. Even the Philly Teepee was pitched, providing a welcoming space for neighbors to relax and engage with one another. PennPraxis provided planning, logistical, and physical design support, and an exhibit featuring historic images from the 1876 Centennial which formed Fairmount Park and shaped Parkside's development.

Based on a survey collected at the event in attendance were Viola Street and Parkside residents, with about a third of visitors came from other Philadelphia neighborhoods. Those interviewed were very positive about the experience and enjoyed meeting new neighbors and learning about the neighborhood.



Photo via Yusef Dingle

How might the Civic Commons **change the reputation** of these sites and neighborhoods?



Photo via Yusef Dingle



Photo via Yusef Dingle



Photo via Yusef Dingle

How can **temporary placemaking** permanently change the perspective of place and the way we think about community gathering space?



Photo via Yusef Dingle



Photo via Yusef Dingle

VIOLA ALLEY CONNECTOR

Centennial Commons

EVENT METRICS:

- 49 post card surveys, 32 iPad surveys collected
- Over 500 people observed
- Approximately 50% identified as residents, 40% as non-residents
- Visitors were interacting with others 79% of the time at the event
- Visitors were on their own 21% of the time
- About half of all people surveyed heard about the event by word of mouth
- Most said they met someone new and most said they saw familiar faces
- Favorite parts of the event included the history and historic images and the neighborhood feel and people at the event

LESSONS LEARNED:

- The videos were a successful way to capture stories and the FLP can host them on their YouTube channel
- Neighborhood very energized by event which will translate into better involvement in the CDC and future events
- Community meeting in advance of event (on September 8) was very helpful. Packed room and community really engaged in the planning of the event. Ideally 2 more would be added, for 3 total meetings that allowed residents to conceptualize, plan, and implement the event.
- Having the date set helped: once it was set, had to move forward. More time might have helped, but if too long in the future, no one would have acted.
- Plan a “rehearsal dinner” as a run through the night before the event would be helpful.
- Have a plan to carry energy into future events

FUTURE STEPS:

- Future opportunities for trolley tour, CSA, bike tour, dinners on the alley, movie night, star party
- Create more farmers markets. People were very excited about vegetables, demonstrating the neighborhood already had a high aptitude for healthy eating



Photo via PennPraxis

How might programming that attracts a diverse audience be tweaked to **foster connections and trust** across class lines?



Photo via PennPraxis



Photo via PennPraxis



Photo via PennPraxis



Photo via PennPraxis

How might we **replicate the diversity** evident daily at Reading Terminal Market in a neighborhood park or library outside of Center City?



Photo via PennPraxis

PARKSIDE FRESH FOOD FEST

Centennial Commons

EVENT INFORMATION:

July 6, 2017
July 20, 2017
August 10, 2017
August 24, 2017
September 7, 2017
September 21, 2017

PROJECT PARTNERS:

Centennial Parkside CDC
Reading Terminal Market
All About Events
Viola Street Residents Association
Irvine Brothers Urban Produce Market
Fair Food Farmstand
Fairmount Park Conservancy
PennPraxis

EVENT SUMMARY:

The Parkside Fresh Food Fest was a 6 (six) event series that sought to build community, utilize common public space, and provide fresh food access in the East Parkside neighborhood of Philadelphia. Events were free and open to the public and included chef-led cooking demonstrations with free samples as well as a variety of entertainment, education, and civic engagement opportunities located on Viola Alley.

Each food share included fresh fruit, vegetables, locally-sourced eggs and/or dairy products, and a selection of other grocery items from two well-known partners at the Reading Terminal Market: Iovine Bros Produce and Fair Food Farmstand. Information on each item was included along with a recipe card. Participants were able to purchase a 6-event, 4-event or single event share.

The seed of this food share program emerged from the Centennial Parkside CDC and the Viola Street Residents Association (VSRA) involvement in the local Reimagining the Civic Commons Initiative, specifically resident feedback at the Viola Alley Connector even on September 24, 2016.

The event realized a vision to make physical and community connection between Viola Street and West Fairmount Park by locating several activities and entertainment elements within the narrow alley. The project tested the idea of programming an alley and an alley-adjacent empty lot as a venue to tell the story of the historic neighborhood, its residents and architectural history, and provide space for music, food, and community festivities.

The Viola Alley Connector was a great success, with residents wishing for more events to bring people together, and continue to activate the alley and other communal spaces. Using food as the foundation for community sharing, the idea of the “food share” emerged, which together with active programming, could provide a regularly-occurring event in the alley that would bring residents together to enjoy new foods and recipes, mingle with one another, and strengthen connections to their neighborhood, each other, and other partners.

Some of the original Viola Alley Connector partners returned to participate in the Food Fest, like the Free Library and new organizations, like Indego Bike Share, came to facilitate new programs. The event was also used to jump-start conversations about bringing a mobile library to Parkside, in partnership with Mt. Airy USA. Weekly cooking demonstrations and recipes were provided by All About Events. Residents were able to learn about, enjoy, and subsequently cook with new fruits and vegetables and gather weekly to exchange conversation and good food.



Photo via PennPraxis



Photo via PennPraxis



Photo via PennPraxis

How can food **unite** us?



Photo via PennPraxis



Photo via PennPraxis

How can a **major civic asset** be brought to share its resources throughout the city?



Photo via PennPraxis

PARKSIDE FRESH FOOD FEST

Centennial Commons

EVENT METRICS:

- 47 surveys collected (people were able to complete the survey more than once)
- Most people live in the local zip code (19104), were 50-65 years of age and heard about the event from an organizer
- Most residents were reached by word of mouth, flyers and person to person contact
- Opinions about food
 - 83% said the amount of food was about right
 - 67% said quality was very good or excellent
 - 81% said cost of CSA box was about right
 - Favorite things: food (fresh veggies, variety, chef), the people, music and the atmosphere (festfulness, socializing, message and fellowship)
- Opinions about process and events
 - 51% said online enrollment was very easy or easy enough
 - 96% respondents would participate again and recommend it to friends or neighbors
 - 87% thought Viola Alley was very easy or easy enough to get to for the event
 - 74% reported meeting somebody new at the event
 - People wanted more people, more chairs to make it more inviting to stay, more fruits and vegetables, move to different locations, fewer eggs and make the event longer

LESSONS LEARNED:

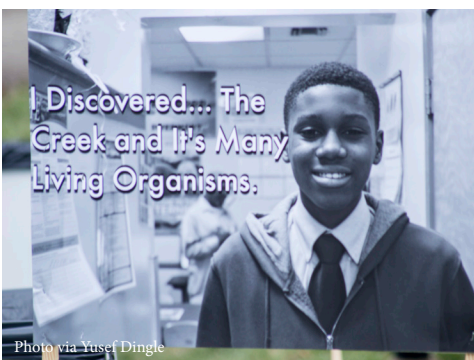
- A lot of start up time/cost to get the price right and figure out the online platform but future events would already have that figured out
- Involvement of SNAP would increase engagement
- More health education as a component would be helpful
- Need strong community advocates/ ambassadors for replication
- Ideal to have recipes come from neighborhood – take a recipe/ leave a recipe (like The Neighborhood Exchange Box)
- Summer was ideal time period. It would be challenging to replicate during the fall/ winter period due to costs, labor and less diversity of produce.
- More diversity of produce desired, especially fruit!
- Food demonstrations and organization of All About Events was crucial

FUTURE STEPS:

- Potential future CSA or food-focused events
- Replicate event and include “Breaking Bread” type programming to include group dinner
- Work with FPC and PPR to expand to other parts of the city
- Partner with Vetri and Carousel House Farm on future events



How can **active learning** be brought outdoors?



How might the Civic Commons be **radically welcoming** through staffing, programming, and communication?



MIGRATE TO ADVENTURE AND DISCOVERY

Discovery Center

EVENT INFORMATION:

April 1, 2017

PROJECT PARTNERS:

Audubon Pennsylvania
Philadelphia Outward Bound
Strawberry Mansion CDC
Free Library of Philadelphia
Amber Arts
Fairmount Park Conservancy
PennPraxis

EVENT SUMMARY:

Audubon Pennsylvania and Philadelphia Outward Bound have been working together, along with other local agencies and non-profits, to transform an abandoned and generally unknown water reservoir in East Fairmount Park, adjacent to the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood, into a new community resource and reclaimed neighborhood asset. While the project has been underway for several years, the neighboring community has not always been a part of the conversation. The daytime event was intended to raise awareness about the project, give a sample of future programming, and engage meaningfully with nearby neighborhood residents as well as Philadelphians from near and far.

Partners brainstormed an event which would serve as a “gateway” to the neighborhood, to East Fairmount Park, and to the Discovery Center, which is anticipated to be completed in 2018.

Using tried and true elements to harness community energy, the event featured offerings from local food trucks, giant games for all ages, welcoming and warming elements like fire pits and hot chocolate (it was still chilly in March!), seating areas, and energetic music. In addition, local arts partner Amber Arts, funded by the Fairmount Park Conservancy’s ArtPlace America Community Development Investments (CDI) grant, created posters placed across the event site, featuring neighborhood histories as told by local residents, sharing their memories of the reservoir and of growing up in Strawberry Mansion. Outward Bound provided a climbing wall as well, mimicking the character of the future adventure programming on site.

This added an element to remind attendees that the park was not only a city-wide recreational resource, but very much a part of neighborhood identity and pride. As community engagement and empowerment is a core principle of the Civic Commons, this was an important role to acknowledge.

Finally, the event included the unveiling of the Free Library of Nature program, featuring the “birding backpacks.” The backpack is part of a new initiative created by the Free Library of Philadelphia and Philadelphia Parks and Recreation to provide birding tools and programming to residents through their neighborhood library. The backpacks are available on loan at select library branches around Philadelphia to be used as part of an organized bird walk or on a solo adventure. The backpacks include maps, a bird guide, and binoculars. Those that attended the event were the first to test the backpacks, and participated in birding tours led by Parks and Rec and Audubon guides.

Migrate to Adventure and Discovery demonstrated the power of nature and outdoor education to bring people together. Philadelphians came from across the city, perhaps because they lived nearby, were bird enthusiasts, urban historians, or just wanted an excuse to be outside despite chillier temperatures. Though not yet complete, the Discovery Center proved to be a true “civic commons,” bringing a multitude of groups together to appreciate and share a community benefit.



Photo via Yusef Dingle

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 these sites and neighborhoods?



Photo via Yusef Dingle



Photo via Yusef Dingle



Photo via Yusef Dingle



Photo via Yusef Dingle

How can **artists, naturalists, and community members collaborate** to develop a **temporary, highly-visible installation** that attracts outside attention and neighborhood support, and is **conveys both the natural essence and community character of a site?**



Photo via Yusef Dingle

MIGRATE TO ADVENTURE AND DISCOVERY

Discovery Center

EVENT METRICS:

- 167 estimated attendees/ 66 surveys collected
- Demographics
 - 82% Philadelphia residents, 15% Strawberry Mansion residents
 - Majority of visitors hailed from Strawberry Mansion, Brewerytown, Roxborough and Fairmount
 - 80% bachelor's degree holders
 - 55% White/ 37% African American
 - Majority of visitors were 35-49 years old
- 77% said they saw new faces at the event and 73% said they met someone new
- 47% said they planned to reconnect with someone they met
- Most common areas of interaction were under the tent, on a bike, at the food trucks and at the fire pits

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Flyers went up week and a half before event – this was good timing but would have been helpful to revise flyers with new design, not just change date. Looked like same poster and some residents thought it was still canceled
- Birding backpacks were a hit! Great for learning and brining people outdoors.
- Weather was tricky! First event canceled due to ice, which tempered excitement
- Include a rendering of the reservoir so people could image its future appearance
- Payment for staff time would have improved organization
- Communication and scheduling is challenging when collaborators are volunteer and have different schedules

FUTURE STEPS:

- Post postcards online for sharing and as repository
- Engage with other neighborhood groups/ community partners as future partners
- Plan similar annual event at Discovery Center once open
- Incorporate Neighborhood Exchange Box into East Fairmount Park events such as Parks on Tap, Mander Rec Center events
- Continue outreach to Strawberry Mansion residents through other community facilities using notecard activity
- Make connection with libraries: display posters at Cecil B. Moore – use as storytelling technique and ongoing connection to Discovery Center/ the reservoir. Show little bird footprints leading to Discovery Center.



Photo via Mt. Airy USA

How can communities let their **identity shine through?**



Photo via Mt. Airy USA



Photo via Mt. Airy USA



Photo via Mt. Airy USA



Photo via Mt. Airy USA

Sometimes things do not turn out as you planned. **Sometimes they turn out even better!**



Photo via Mt. Airy USA

How might the Civic Commons be **radically welcoming** through staffing, programming, and communication?

STORY CENTERS

Lovett Library

EVENT INFORMATION:

October 26, 2017

PROJECT PARTNERS:

Mt. Airy USA
Free Library of Philadelphia
Trades for a Difference
Centennial Parkside CDC
Fairmount Park Conservancy
PennPraxis

EVENT SUMMARY:

Story Centers are mini library kiosks also/better known as Little Free Libraries. These kiosks serve as mini community hubs, inspiring diverse and intergenerational interactions through a collaborative design and building process as well as through their subsequent curation and programming.

While this was not an entirely new idea (the Little Free Library organization is an international nonprofit devoted to building and registering them, and Mt. Airy already had several), the closing of the neighborhood library as it was remodeled, Lovett Memorial, presented the ideal opportunity to take inventory of those existing in the neighborhood and areas in need of more connection to literacy and community. Three additional libraries were planned to fill these existing gaps.

Bringing the concept of Story Centers into fruition took over a year. The idea emerged from a charrette attended by all the partner organizations of the Philadelphia Reimagining the Civic Commons initiative in the summer of 2016 and, since its inception, has taken many forms and iterations. The initial project idea began as a place where neighbors could gather together to share stories, and build mini-libraries together in a collaborative, skill-sharing event that would be reflective of neighborhood character. Books would be chosen by community members, sharing the history of the neighborhood on other topics of interest. Ideally, multiple partners would be involved from across the Civic Commons.

One of the most fortuitous partnerships to emerge was Mt. Airy USA choosing to work with Trades for a Difference (TFAD), an up-and-coming Mt. Airy-based nonprofit dedicated to the mentoring and workforce development of local youth. While the event was smaller than anticipated, the program was great for forging a new partnership with Mt. Airy, and was well attended, despite rain! The end result was a good compromise between the spirit of the original idea and the nuanced constraints of circumstance.

In the Trolley Car Diner Pocket Park, the Free Library, TFAD, and Mt. Airy USA partnered to build three story centers to be installed in various locations in East Mt. Airy. The build day coincided with Autumn on the Avenue, a seasonal sidewalk festival, also taking place on the busy thoroughfare of Germantown Avenue. Despite initial low turnout due to unexpectedly cold and rainy weather, the event otherwise commenced as planned.

As the afternoon progressed, more participants came, and the sidewalks became full of families with costumed children once the rain completely stopped. Folks of all ages came together using power tools, painting shingles, enjoying refreshments, and singing and dancing to oldies. While it was not what was originally conceived, Story Centers and the build day were still a success.

There is no coincidence that Story Centers were funded by the Knight Foundation's Innovation Fund. The essence of innovation is the evolution of an idea. Plans change. Obstacles appear. Problems must be solved. Sometimes in order for things to fall into place, relinquishing control and submitting to some uncertainty are necessary. Story Centers was the ideal project to illustrate and understand these lessons.



Photo via Mt. Airy USA

How might the Civic Commons
change the reputation of
these sites and neighborhoods?



Photo via Mt. Airy USA



Photo via Mt. Airy USA



Photo via Mt. Airy USA



Photo via Mt. Airy USA

How can small, flexible library kiosks assist with storytelling, inter-generational programming and community building while the main library is renovated and after it is open again?



Photo via Mt. Airy USA

STORY CENTERS

Lovett Library

EVENT METRICS:

- Approximately 100 participants, many more observed through *Autumn on the Avenue*

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Being part of *Autumn on the Avenue* was ideal. Were able to connect with people to explain the purpose of the project, about the other LFLs in the neighborhood, get people excited (was pre-library opening) and were able to get a whole list of people who are interested in stewardship
- Finding the right partners was initially challenging due to cost, timing, capacity, vision, and feasibility
- This event and program is something that all partners in RCC could use in their respective neighborhoods
- Collaborations are always interesting – important to know that you shouldn't force things that don't seem to be working, and accept the ones that are (Coalition of the Willing!)

FUTURE STEPS:

- LFL Installation with an opportunity to do additional programming in the spring.
- Future collaborations and projects with TFAD in Mt. Airy and with Mt. Airy USA, Parkside, and West Philly.
- Great lessons learned about future opportunities to work with Lovett and think about seating, programming, etc. and placemaking both at Lovett and around the community. It all translates into how the community thinks about public space
- Put thought into how LFLs will be stewarded and cared for when out in the community.
- Work with Centennial Parkside CDC for a "Story Center" in 2018, which will include larger conversations about libraries in East Parkside.
- Strike ideal balance between working with the Free Library without distracting from Lovett. Great opportunity for wider community impact and engagement.

