

# CROSSING THE STREET

Building DC's Inclusive Future Through Creative Placemaking



## Crossing the Street: Building DC's Inclusive Future Through Creative Placemaking

is the District of Columbia Office of Planning's biggest and most innovative placemaking program to date.

**Crossing the Street** launched in early 2016 with a focus on creating fun and inclusive experiences in neighborhoods across the city. The projects were designed to build community in areas that are experiencing rapid change, using arts and culture to activate space, foster conversation and collaboration and highlight and support existing neighborhood assets. Each project used arts and culture to build the social capital in communities where projects were implemented.

The DC Office of Planning received a grant from the Kresge Foundation to undertake creative placemaking and civic engagement activities, which built upon recently completed work in planning, design, community engagement, and equity. Each project was led by a project curator, encouraged from the outset to think differently about place and how to engage community. The neighborhood projects followed a similar overall process but with customization to the community context and people. The diversity of communities, curators and planning contexts yielded a range of approaches with a timeframe ranging from a single day to over a month. Each project showcased the use of different types of community infrastructure (ranging from a small park to a wide sidewalk to an entire corridor), community culture and heritage (i.e., Latino, Ethiopian and African American), and design and programming (ranging from hammocks to tea ceremonies to storytelling).

**Crossing the Street** applied an arts and culture-forward approach to engaging communities in the future of the District of Columbia. **Crossing the Street** provided a platform for the DC Office of Planning to reimagine how they engage community and plan by creating moments and experiences that connect people, inspire action and creativity and celebrate the unique and important aspects of neighborhoods.

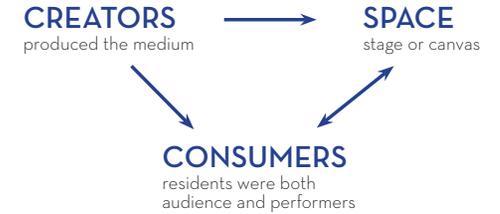


Office of Planning's mission is to guide development of the District of Columbia, including the preservation and revitalization of our distinctive neighborhoods, by informing decisions, advancing strategic goals, encouraging the highest quality outcomes, and engaging all communities.



The Kresge Foundation is a \$3.5 billion private, national foundation that works to expand opportunities in America's cities through grantmaking and social investing in arts and culture, education, environment, health, human services and community development in Detroit.

**“All infrastructure is a stage, all residents are performers”** is the vision of the District of Columbia's Cultural Plan. Crossing the Street tested and affirmed this vision through 17 creative placemaking projects which embodied our history, diversity, and opportunity.



Through **Crossing the Street**, the Office of Planning defined places across the District for the convergence of Creators, Consumers, and Space.

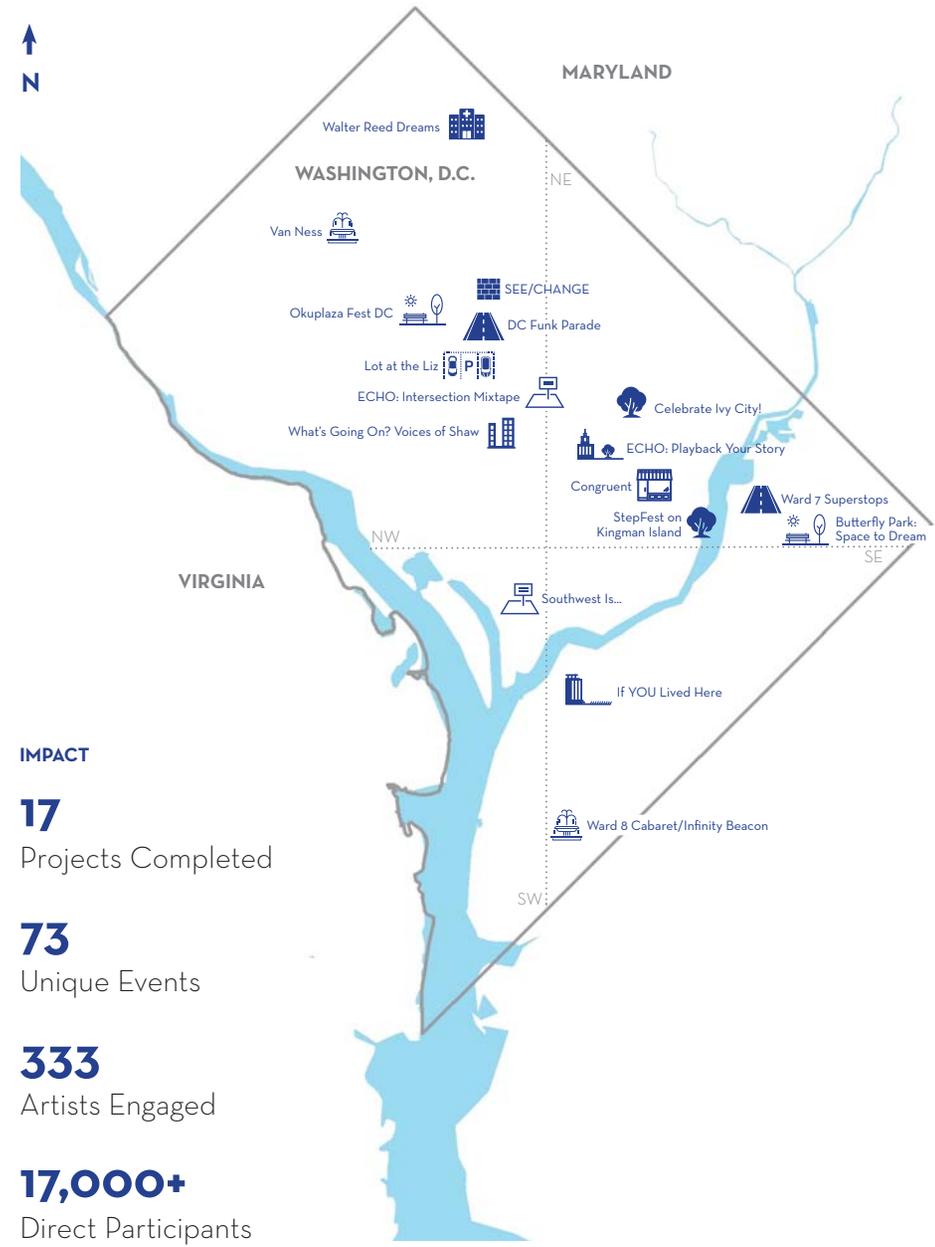
Meanwhile, **Crossing the Street** experimented with a range of performative mediums across various spaces, which acted as stages or canvasses, for creative placemaking projects.

MEDIUM	SPACE (Stage/Canvas)
Projections / Film	Former Hospital Campus
Dance / Movement	Plaza
Light Show	Park
Games	Building Wall
Rollerskating	Green Space
Interviews	Street Right-of-way
Storytelling	Vacant Lot
Drumming	Alley
American Sign Language	University Green
Music	Parking Lot
Tea Ceremony	Museum Lawn
Mural / Painting	Vacant Storefront
Art Party	

Thank you to the Kresge Foundation for their support and trust in the Office of Planning to undertake creative placemaking and civic engagement activities in the District. Thousands of DC residents, business owners, and city stakeholders contributed to **Crossing the Street**, ensuring the production of fun, safe, inclusive, and authentic placemaking interventions in 17 neighborhoods.

In addition to the Mayor's Special Events Task Group and the DC Public Space Regulation Division, **Crossing the Street** was made possible by the team at the DC Office of Planning: Eric D. Shaw, Director, Sakina Khan, Deputy Director Citywide Strategy and Analysis, Tracy Gabriel, Associate Director Neighborhood Planning, Joshua Silver, Lead Planner for Strategic Initiatives and Partnerships, Dan Emerine, Senior Transportation Planner, Timothy Maher, Urban Designer, and all of the individual project managers. Finally, a big thanks goes to the following project curators and their partners who made each project not only possible, but unique and highly participatory.

PROJECT	CURATOR	BASE
DC Funk Parade	DC Funk Parade	Washington, DC
SEE/CHANGE	The Pink Line Project	Washington, DC
Okuplaza Fest DC	Ciudad Emergente Serving the Americas	Santiago, Chile
		Washington, DC
Ward 8 Carabet/Infinity Beacon	Gehl Studio	San Francisco
Ward 7 Superstops		
What's Going On? Voices of Shaw	Pleasant Plains Workshop	Washington, DC
Celebrate Ivy City!	buildingcommunityWORKSHOP Local Initiatives Support Corporation	Washington, DC
		New York City
ECHO: Playback your Story	Van Alen Institute	New York City
ECHO: Intersection Mixtape		
Southwest Is...	Young Playwrights' Theater	Washington, DC
Van Ness	Ward 8 Arts and Culture Council	Washington, DC
Walter Reed Dreams	Cultural DC	Washington, DC
If YOU Lived Here	The Pink Line Project Anacostia Community Museum	Washington, DC
		Washington, DC
Lot at the Liz	Whitman-Walker Health No Kings Collective	Washington, DC
		Washington, DC
StepFest on Kingman Island	Step Afrika!	Washington, DC
Congruent	No Kings Collective	Washington, DC
Butterfly Park: Spaces to Dream	Guerilla Arts	Washington, DC



**IMPACT**

**17**  
Projects Completed

**73**  
Unique Events

**333**  
Artists Engaged

**17,000+**  
Direct Participants

# DC FUNK PARADE



**PROJECT**



This three component project linked DC's disco roller skate culture to pivotal points in city and neighborhood history. Participants were immersed in the historical, social, and cultural significance of style skating, roller rink communities, and artistic expression in DC across the decades with an emphasis on the era of DC Home Rule in 1973. A collaborative art installation consisting of recycled phonebooths equipped with phones that played recorded oral histories were placed throughout the historic U Street Corridor providing an opportunity to connect with the past and contemplate the future of the neighborhood.

**LOCATION**



U Street Corridor: Epicenter of African American arts, music, and culture (NW).

**CURATOR**

DC Funk Parade

**DATE**

May 2016



# SEE/CHANGE



**PROJECT**



Video portraits were used to highlight the effects of neighborhood population change and redevelopment in the Park View and Pleasant Plains neighborhoods. A series of recorded video interviews of both old and new community members in the neighborhood were turned into video portraits and displayed in vacant storefront windows and projected on the walls of neighborhood buildings. The project built neighborhood empathy and inspired an understanding that community members want to be seen, with a realization that many people living in the neighborhood are unseen.

**LOCATION**



Walls of old and new buildings in the Park View and Pleasant Plains neighborhoods along lower Georgia Avenue (NW).

**CURATOR**

The Pink Line Project

**DATE**

September 2016



# OKUPLAZA FEST DC



**PROJECT**



An underutilized public park recreated a Latin American city plaza long identified as a place of connection and pride for Adams Morgan’s Latino population. A unique sensory environment was created using a combination of creative programs and activities to build community and celebrate the neighborhood’s Latino culture. Neighbors enjoyed bright orange hammocks, the sounds of children reading and the taste of tamales, empanadas and pastries. The project literally lifted up the ideas of people using them to decorate the tree tops of the park.

**LOCATION**



Underutilized triangular public park in the commercial center of Adams Morgan (NW).

**CURATOR**

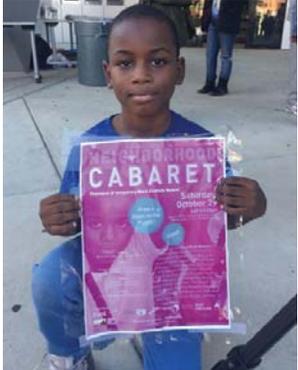
Ciudad Emergente

**DATE**

October 2016



# WARD 8 CABARET / INFINITY BEACON



**PROJECT**



Public art and performance tested the potential for a vibrant local spot to showcase neighborhood pride. The project embraced an existing underutilized neighborhood node, bringing it to life with performances and a neighborhood beacon that signaled arrival into the Bellevue / Washington Highlands neighborhoods. Performances exploring the emotional sides of neighborhood change accompanied the unveiling of the beacon.

**LOCATION**



Large civic plaza in front of Bellevue Library and vacant green space at main point of entry into commercial area of the neighborhood (SE).

**CURATOR**

Gehl Studio

**DATE**

November 2016



# WARD 7 SUPERSTOPS



**PROJECT**



Ephemeral events, long-term art, and play installations activated the public realm and built community cohesion in DC's Ward 7. A musical bench, playable structure, and mobile storytelling porch transformed a wide sidewalk into a fun destination for play, physical activity, and community building. The project provided a space for longtime residents to bring neighborhood stories to life, engaging youth, and to bring public life for morning and evening commuters. The project used a collaborative design/build process to invest in the neighborhood and introduce a sense of place, enhance safety and demonstrate an alternative condition is possible.

**LOCATION**



Wide sidewalk at the intersection of Minnesota Avenue and Benning Road (NE).

**CURATOR**

Gehl Studio

**DATE**

October - December 2016



# WHATS GOING ON? VOICES OF SHAW



**PROJECT**



The micro-communities, cultures, and traditions within the Shaw neighborhood were explored and celebrated through a series of small high-impact events set in public and private spaces that gave voice to residents and empowered community members to think creatively about their neighborhood. The project engaged older and newer residents, passersby and visitors, each highlighting the rich culture that still courses through the neighborhood as new development occurs.

**LOCATION**

Sidewalks, alleys, and local landmarks in the Shaw neighborhood (NW).

**CURATOR**

Pleasant Plains Workshop

**DATE**

September - October 2016



# CELEBRATE IVY CITY!



**PROJECT**



A series of artistic episodes told the story of the neighborhood's identity, from its history into the future. Residents worked with local artists to design and fabricate a large three-dimensional screen-printed plywood sign which was set in a highly visible public space and used as a backdrop to celebrate the neighborhood's rich heritage and identity. The project stirred the soul of Ivy City and encouraged conversations about the neighborhood's future and community needs in the face of development and demographic change.

**LOCATION**



Neighborhood park at the intersection of West Virginia Avenue and Mount Olivet Road (NE).

**CURATOR**

buildingcommunityWORKSHOP and Local Initiatives Support Corporation

**DATE**

November 2016



# ECHO: PLAYBACK YOUR STORY



**PROJECT**



The changing narrative of the neighborhood was captured through film, interviews, and improv, that involved theater, movement, and sign language. Set on the campus green of Gallaudet University (the world's only deaf and hard of hearing liberal arts university), an interactive and improvisational performance accompanied by recorded interviews wove together community connections that inspired residents and university students to interact with one another and understand neighborhood history and cultural differences. The project offered a new understanding of the impact of changing neighborhood demographics and linguistic barriers between the hearing and deaf communities.

**LOCATION**

Olmstead Green on the historic campus of Gallaudet University (NE).



**CURATOR**

Van Alen Institute

**DATE**

November 2016



# ECHO: INTERSECTION MIXTAPE



**PROJECT**



A soundscape was mixed to honor the past, present, and future of three neighborhoods built from interviews, soundwalks, voice messages, and song requests. A celebratory neighborhood listening party held in a vacant lot provided a setting to play the documented sounds and stories of the community. The project aimed to both preserve what is unique about the community and empower residents to communicate their sense of identity and place connecting diverse and local audiences in a way that is both accessible and authentic.

**LOCATION**



Vacant lot at the intersection of North Capitol Street and Bates Street (NW).

**CURATOR**

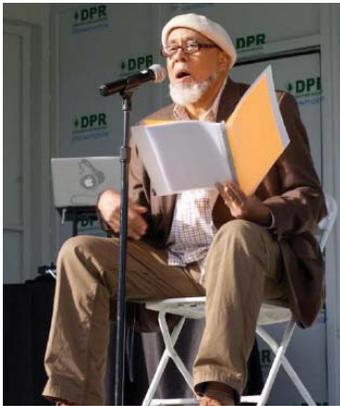
Van Alen Institute

**DATE**

November 2016



# SOUTHWEST IS...



**PROJECT**



Theater and public art were used to give Southwest neighborhood residents a platform to tell their stories as the area enters a period of growth and change. The project featured free, youth-driven theater workshops and interactive art installations to engage neighborhood youth to creatively tell their stories and make their voices heard about the present and future of the Southwest neighborhood. The project culminated with a community event consisting of performances of the youth-created monologues, music, interactive stations, games, and food. Stories and performances revealed a nuanced view of youth highlighting both the advantages and the challenges of growing up in the Southwest neighborhood.

**LOCATION**

Vacant lot at Waterfront Metro Station (SW).

**CURATOR**

Young Playwrights' Theater

**DATE**

November 2016



# VAN NESS



## PROJECT



Light, performance, music, live painting, and a homecoming fashion show were used to bridge communities and strengthen relationships in the Van Ness neighborhood. Using a semi-public space on the UDC campus, sidewalks and commercial storefront windows, the project produced a range of intergenerational social activities connecting people of diverse backgrounds and ages to share and enjoy a single experience. Interactive light art installations grabbed the attention of passersby generating awareness of the project while a community art project, Community Drop Cloth created a unique social experience for friends and strangers to enter each other's personal space to mix, mingle and collaborate on a cohesive work of art reflective of the neighborhood context.

## LOCATION



Large plaza and sidewalks in front of the UDC Student Center and Van Ness Metro entrances (NW).

## CURATOR

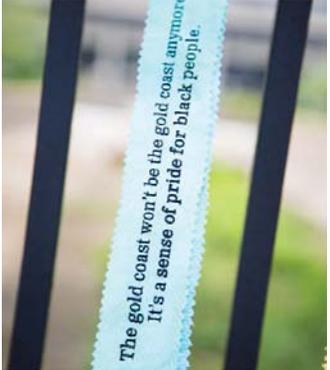
Ward 8 Arts and Culture Council

## DATE

November 2016



# WALTER REED DREAMS



**PROJECT**



An interactive series of events presented shared stories of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center's 100+ year history in NW Washington, DC, from the local community, veterans, and hospital workers. The results of the artist interactions brought forth a film which shared the echoes of Walter Reed's history, through its people's eyes; a tribute to Purple Heart heroes; the visualization of hundreds of stories on colorful ribbons; and the desires for the future, woven into a rich yarn tapestry by Ward 4 residents of all ages. The culminating event occurred on the first day the hospital campus was publicly reopened to kick-start a multi-year redevelopment following the Army's closure and relocation in 2011.

**LOCATION**



Central historic green space and perimeter fence on the site of the former Walter Reed Army Medical Center (NW).

**CURATOR**

Cultural DC

**DATE**

April 2017



# IF YOU LIVED HERE



## PROJECT



A full-scale replica of an 1867 Freedman's Bureau house was the backdrop to guide visitors on a reflective experience on how we live, both in the house and in the broader community. The project commemorated the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Freedmen's Bureau community in the neighborhood, later named Hillside. A series of activities including community gatherings, historical presentations and dialogues helped to spur conversation and self-reflection among attendees who could draw parallels between the past and present. With anticipated development and change coming to this community, the project provided critical insight into understanding how heritage can inform the future.

## LOCATION



Grassy open space in the front yard of the Anacostia Community Museum (SE).

## CURATOR

The Pink Line Project

## DATE

July 2017



# THE LOT AT THE LIZ



**PROJECT**



The project brought meaningful, energized, and safe community gathering spaces to the 14th Street NW neighborhood by creating opportunities to celebrate the LGBTQ communities' contributions to Greater Washington. A large, proud, pop-art style mural covering an entire block of buildings enlivened the street giving visibility to the LGBTQ community and deep connections the Whitman-Walker Health Center has with the communities it serves. Activities and events evoked the spirit of creativity and feeling of safety and acceptance by all participants. The project tested how a range of public space concepts—sidewalk installations, interactive community spaces, window art—could be incorporated into the future redevelopment of the building and creation of the center's new cultural space.

**LOCATION**



Building faces and parking lot of 1701 14th Street NW, between R and Riggs streets (NW).

**CURATOR**

Whitman-Walker Health, fivesquares development and No Kings Collective

**DATE**

July 2017



# STEPFEST ON KINGMAN ISLAND



**PROJECT**



The project raised awareness about Kingman Island, one of the District's premier community and environmental assets, though lesser known and a largely undiscovered part of Washington, DC. Traditional African dance performances and activities engaged a wide range of residents in the natural environment providing opportunities to learn about DC percussive dance traditions and the island's unique combination of trails, water, and wildlife that is rarely experienced by large numbers of Washingtonians. Arriving by foot, bike, car, and transit, visitors were left with a constructive image of the island, Anacostia River and surrounding community and sense of encouragement to become involved in the ongoing preservation and management of the island for future generations to enjoy.

**LOCATION**



Kingman and Heritage Islands in the Anacostia River (NE).

**CURATOR**

Step Afrika!

**DATE**

August 2017



# CONGRUENT



Photo: Michael Kircher

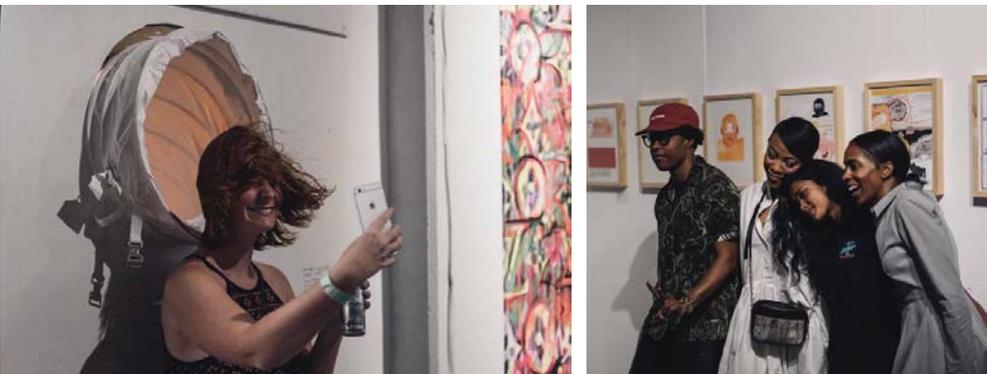


Photo: Michael Kircher

**PROJECT**



Congruent demonstrated how existing vacant commercial spaces can be used for purposes other than traditional retail tenants. The project was a collaboration by local DC artist collectives to showcase and celebrate DC's emerging DIY arts and cultural community. Local arts collectives collaborated to create an immersive arts space using the power of an artist aiding artist support system. A series of programming, including free workshops, panel discussions and community events complemented the arts and cultural components of the project furthering the breadth of DC's cultural ecosystem.

**LOCATION**



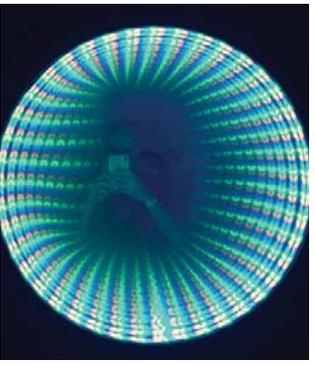
Empty ground-floor retail space in a new mixed use building at the intersection H Street and Florida Ave (NE).

**CURATOR**

No Kings Collective

**DATE**

June 2018



# BUTTERFLY PARK: SPACES TO DREAM



**PROJECT**



Butterfly Park: “Space to Dream” encouraged public safety and community use of vacant or underutilized spaces through art, cultural, and infrastructure investments. Throughout August 2018, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Greater Economic Opportunity, with the Office of Planning, and Guerrilla Arts installed anchoring ‘I butterfly DC’ signage, art murals, hammocks, lighting, and hosted a variety of events at ‘Butterfly Park’. Events included family games, fitness classes, gardening lessons, drum circles, and live performances for residents to gather, create, and be inspired.

**LOCATION**



Underutilized ‘Triangle Park’ in Ward 7’s Central Northeast neighborhood on the 4900 Block of Sycamore and East Capitol Streets (NE).

**CURATOR**

Guerrilla Arts

**DATE**

August 2018



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