



## City Council Report

**Date:** November 5, 2018  
**To:** City Council  
**Through:** Natalie Lewis, Deputy City Manager  
**From:** Cindy Ornstein, Arts and Culture Department Director  
**Subject:** National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Grant for 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation Main Street Prototyping Projects and Community Artist Residencies (District 4)

### Recommendation

Approve Resolution authorizing the City Manager or his designee to accept a \$75,000 grant from the National Endowment from the Our Town Program to directly support the Main Street Prototyping Project/Community Artist Residencies.

The Mesa Prototyping Project (MPP) is the next incarnation of an initiative that included last year's Main Street Prototyping Festival. The MPP is a two-phase project focusing on a group of neighborhoods surrounding Mesa Artspace Lofts that are within walking distance of each other, but isolated by a busy main road and multiple large industrial sites. We seek to expand civic engagement while testing community-informed design solutions to enhance vibrancy on the south side of downtown Mesa.

This grant provides funds in support of Phase I of the two-phase, two-year project, which includes:

**Community Residencies** – Two artist teams will engage the community in art making during a series of workshops at two partner sites, one a combined residency at Mesa Urban Garden and Mesa Artspace Lofts, and the other at CARE Partnership. In addition, the artist teams will facilitate multiple neighborhood walks where residents will identify areas that need improvement--where creative intervention might be used to enhance aesthetics, safety, walkability, or gathering spaces, or to address other needs/opportunities identified by the residents.

The residencies will culminate in an April 2019 community event that will celebrate the ideas and artwork generated by participants. During this celebration, an RFP will be issued that invites proposals for prototype ideas for the sites identified as needing intervention.

**Extended Testing of Second-Generation MSPF Prototypes** – Three prototype teams from the 2017 festival will be selected by a community panel to create second-generation prototypes for a two-month public installation in downtown Mesa beginning late February 2019.

**Not** included in this grant is Phase II of the project, which will support the building and installation of 10 prototypes in 10 locations on the south side of downtown Mesa, identified by community members during Phase I activities.

## **Background**

Mesa Arts Center and its partners planned this project based on the interest our community showed during the process of planning and implementing the Main Street Prototyping Festival.

The grant was submitted in September 2017 and notification of the grant award was received in April 2018. The Main Street Prototyping Project and Community Artist Residencies continue the efforts of implementing a series of temporary, low-cost experimental projects to activate our urban center and nearby areas, and engaging and supporting area residents through cultural activity in and with the surrounding low-income neighborhoods.

Mesa Arts Center is working in partnership with NEDCO/A New Leaf, DMA (Downtown Mesa Association), Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC Phoenix), Artspace Lofts, Mesa Urban Garden and Catholic Charities CARE Campus, will expand the prior efforts by installing, for two months of testing, three 2<sup>nd</sup> generation prototypes based on last year's prototype concepts, selecting artists to engage nearby residents in using the arts to explore aspirations for their neighborhoods and build community ties, celebrating the community artwork in a culminating event at Artspace in Spring 2019, and inviting artists to submit concepts for temporary interactive installations that enhance connectivity, aesthetics, gathering spaces and feelings of security in the target neighborhoods (for installation in the 2019-20 fiscal year).

## **Discussion**

This project is designed to engage the local community actively in shaping their environment by dreaming about and exploring specific interventions to enhance connectivity and activation, and remove barriers. It is designed to increase the community's feeling of ownership in their urban center, to broadly engage people of diverse backgrounds, ages and cultures, and to reinforce downtown Mesa as an arts-centered, friendly and innovative place. It is also designed to strengthen relationships with the neighborhoods south of downtown, seeking to involve those residents and increase their awareness of the resources and family activities available to them in downtown Mesa.

**Alternatives**

The Council may reject the NEA grant. This would result in either needing to cancel the project or seek more funding for its implementation from other sources.

**Fiscal Impact**

The NEA grant award is \$75,000 and is used to directly pay for the artist services and artwork materials for this project. This grant requires a match, which comes from existing staff time, MAC programming funds, and corporate and foundation donations. The City's "match" expenditures for these programs and services have been included in the current fiscal year budget.

**Coordinated With**

NEDCO/A New Leaf, DMA, LISC Phoenix, Artspace, Mesa Urban Garden, Catholic Charities/CARE Campus and Mesa City Managers Office.