ARTS INTEGRATION AS PATHWAY TO UNITY IN THE COMMUNITY:
The (Ongoing) Journey of Pillsbury House + Theatre
by Nancy Fushan
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
**Arts Integration as Pathway to Unity in the Community: The (Ongoing) Journey of Pillsbury House + Theatre** is a 2013 study of how a nonprofit theater and a social service agency that happened to reside in the same building rediscovered their shared history as a 19th century Settlement House, and unified operations to become a 21st Century Center for Creativity and Community.

In 2008, Pillsbury United Communities—a network of five community centers, 70+ programs, and 8 business ventures in the Twin Cities—made the unusual decision to hand over leadership of its largest facility, Pillsbury House Neighborhood Center (PHNC), to Faye Price and Noël Raymond, co-artistic directors of Pillsbury House Theatre. The theater had gained acclaim with almost two decades of professional productions reflecting contemporary social issues of relevance to its diverse South Minneapolis neighborhood. However, Price and Raymond had a larger vision to have high-quality arts underlie all of the Center’s services to increase the individual and community creativity needed to tackle serious socio-economic challenges and revitalize the neighborhood.

The journey is told through stories and interviews with more than 30 staff, artists, program participants, community and civic leaders, residents, and funders. It is supplemented by data from independent program evaluations from 2010-2013. The report (by veteran journalist and arts funder Nancy Fushan) documents not only what happens as the staff attempts to embed the arts in almost every aspect of the organization. It explores factors that contribute to success and the challenges that informed further change and evolution.

Pillsbury House + Theatre (PH+T), a center for creativity and community, shares lessons learned that may be of value to other nonprofit organizations that are contemplating a “re-imagination” of their work at this considerable scope and scale. The insights may also be of interest to artists, educators, evaluators and those in the human services and philanthropy fields.

The full report *Arts Integration as Pathway to Unity in the Community: The (Ongoing) Journey of Pillsbury House+Theatre* is available online at: pillsburyhousetheatre.org

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KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PH+T had three major goals as they began their work to build a Center for Creativity and Community. The first involved comprehensive and authentic arts-integration throughout the organization. The second goal was to employ the artistic/creative process in organizational learning, nonprofit management, and innovation. The final goal took PH+T beyond its own walls—to become a leader in the neighborhood’s cultural community development. Back in 2008, little did PH+T anticipate having to initiate this heady agenda in the middle of the Great Recession and two natural disasters that devastated the most struggling urban areas, including PH+T’s own neighborhood.

PH+T leaders and staff see the organization’s development on a long trajectory, but the report summarizes major accomplishments to date related to all of the goals. Among the most notable:

- **PH+T’s total population served remains stable during the transition while PH+T’s bottom line has improved** from deficit in FY 2010-2011 to net positive in FY 2012.
- **PH+T created a Resident Teaching Artist model** in which artists work side-by-side with education, youth development and human services staff to develop, implement, and assess new arts-integration strategies.
- **Pillsbury House Theatre’s audience has grown dramatically**, in general and in total participation of neighborhood residents. **Ticket revenue has also increased substantially** and offset continued declines in fee-based public sector income for human services programming.
- **Afterschool Program enrollment has rebounded from a low of 9 to full capacity in 2013.** Youth Program participants have made steady gains in positive youth development such as confidence, compassion, and creativity.
- **Staff turnover has been surprisingly low.**
- **More than 3,300 people attended a broad slate of activities at 137 neighborhood locations in June 2013.** Artists created over 200 works; the public created more than 650 art pieces.

FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SUCCESS

The following factors were critical to PH+T’s ability to undertake the institutional changes that have resulted in PH+T’s re-invention as a Center for Creativity and Community:
LESSONS LEARNED

Central to achieving the vision is for PH+T to become a learning organization. During the past five years, there have been many lessons learned that continue to inform all aspects of PH+T’s work and operations. Examples of some of the most significant are highlighted below:

For community cultural development:

**Build in your accountability to a community** first without focusing on strategy or payoff. Make sure that those in charge of community initiatives have **demonstrated skills in community organizing and community-focused arts or public art.**

**Assemble a diverse Leadership Team or Steering Committee** whose members reflect the demographics of the community.

**Understand your intentions** and make sure others do too.

**Be aware of the delicate line** between encouraging inclusive and meaningful civic engagement and unwittingly contributing to gentrification and dislocation.

For evaluation:

**Embed evaluation intentionally into arts-integration work.**

**Nurture trusting relationships** between the evaluator and program leaders.

For philanthropy:

**An array of different types of funding is critical** for organizations to successfully launch this scope and scale of institutional change.

**Funding timelines need to appropriately reflect the scope and scale** of major institutional transitions and the pace of meaningful community cultural development.

For institution-wide arts integration:

**Create shared vision.** Try lots of possible solutions, use imagination to take big leaps, take lots of risks, and ruthlessly eliminate options that do not work.

**Develop an engine** for internal combustion.

**Ensure enough time** for authentic explorations across art forms, disciplines, and participants.

**Be entrepreneurial.** If you want something to happen you have to make it happen.

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SUMMARY

**P R I O R I T I E S F O R T H E F U T U R E**

As PH+T moves forward, the experiences and growth gained in the first leg of the journey will influence how the organization negotiates the road ahead. Priorities for the next few years include:

**Recalibrating the balance of arts and human services programming** to ensure that PH+T is addressing the needs of the neighborhood including all marginalized, harder-to-reach populations.

**Defining the next level of arts-integration** and determining the skill-set needed to broaden and/or deepen the creative experiences provided to participants.

**Determining the kind of physical space(s) and partnerships** that will be required to “house” a 21st century Center for Creativity and Community.

**Designing new evaluation tools** to document the unique contributions artists provide in human services programming and how artists and the arts contribute to best practice.

**Developing sustainable financial resources** for PH+T’s operational and programming needs; these will likely need to include new opportunities for earned income and working capital.
INTRODUCTION
This is the story of a journey through change, creativity and community.
A theater and social service agency that once just shared quarters change into a unified organization. The organization infuses creativity into all aspects of its work, both inside its own walls and along the streets of its neighborhood. Ultimately, the organization's work inspires the community to find the meaningful choices, changes, and connections in their own lives.

The story told below follows that journey through the reflections of Pillsbury House +Theatre leadership and staff and the observations of artists, organizational partners and peers, neighborhood residents and businesses, funders, and other community constituents.

The path begins well before Pillsbury House Theatre's founding in the 1990s or the opening of the Pillsbury House Neighborhood Center on Chicago Avenue in 1980. It starts in the original settlement house that Minneapolis flour magnates John and Charles Pillsbury built in 1905.1 At that time, Pillsbury House was a community resource with a health clinic, women's employment center, youth clubs and art classes that became a safe and inviting harbor for residents in need. Pillsbury House embraced the notion that cultural programming was an essential complement to social services in assisting individuals to build their capacity for civic engagement by enhancing self-expression and creativity. As the professional field of human services emerged in the 1920s, Pillsbury House expanded and diversified services at facilities throughout the Twin Cities, becoming Pillsbury United Communities (PUC). PUC's work as a whole has reflected demographic, economic, and social change in American society, and each center within PUC reflects the community in which it worked, addressing needs as defined by the surrounding neighborhood. Today, PUC's five neighborhood centers annually serve more than 50,000 individuals in the Twin Cities. Pillsbury House + Theatre alone welcomed more than 23,000 people through its doors in 2012.

“PUC is not a static organization and we're continually renewing ourselves to stay relevant in ways that are authentic to community,” says PUC President and CEO Chanda Smith Baker. “I love that we have not lost in our history the thought that we co-create with community. We build responses...
based in what we hear, seeing so much in the community as assets, and Pillsbury House + Theatre (PH+T) embodies that mission and values.” Perhaps more than the other PUC facilities, she sees PH+T attracting people from across socio-economic lines. It has become a catalyst built in community, “a place that sparks a new thought. It may not always be an action, but it may be a shift in worldview. Or a perspective or you realize that you were making judgments that were not founded. It’s a place to have eye-opening opportunities.”

Smith Baker’s predecessor, retired President and CEO Anthony Wagner, developed strong ties with Pillsbury House during his 35 years with PUC. He recalls that inviting in Ralph Remington as founder of Pillsbury House Theatre was aligned with “PUC’s strategy for arts as a means for people to get out of poverty. Our viewpoint was that you needed to provide social services, education, and community organizing, and you also had to inspire people – that’s where theater fit.” Hiring Faye Price and Noël Raymond to follow Remington as co-artistic directors also seemed a natural “fit.” Not only did they have substantial artistic backgrounds, both also had academic credentials and work experience in the human services.

Over Wagner’s career, however, the holistic settlement house model fell out of favor “to this hard spiraling in the human services where arts was not seen as integral to social service provision. And there was also an elitist attitude growing within both the arts and social services...We had a real fight in the 1990s and early 2000s from social service funders who thought we shouldn’t be in the arts, and there were [arts funding] policies that regarded us as a problem...It confounded me as to why the society had gotten to the point of believing the arts are not fundamental to the lives of poor people.” Despite those challenges Price and Raymond led Pillsbury House Theatre to critical acclaim for mainstage productions of provocative, socially conscious work and showcases for emerging artists. There was national and local recognition for authentic and highly successful youth and community engagement programs. Organizationally, however, the theater had hit a plateau of human, physical, and financial resources. By 2008, the theater’s annual budget grew to $700,000, making it one of the smaller mid-sized theaters in the Twin Cities and drawing annual audiences of five thousand people to the 96-seat performance space. The theater was at a crossroads. “The seed of what we could be...the path of our institutional development seemed to be about getting more structure, more capacity and infrastructure,” recalls Raymond.

About that same time, she and Price discovered research by Mark Stern and Susan Seifert at the University of Pennsylvania’s Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP). Their studies indicated that “creative clusters” of highly networked cultural assets could have positive impact on community development and neighborhood revitalization. Additional research by Pam Korza and Barbara Schafer Bacon at Americans for the Arts pointed to the potential of arts to build capacity for community attachment. Korza and Bacon concluded that the more diverse the group of people coming together to engage in an arts activity, the more likely capacity building will develop on individual, collective and community levels.

Namir Smallwood and Hugh Kennedy in Buzzer, part of our 2012 Mainstage Season. Photo by Michal Daniel.
Price and Raymond believed that the theater could be just such a networked cultural asset helping to build capacity for community cohesion. First and foremost, there was the theater’s artistic mission to engage audiences through work that is relevant to the community. It was housed within a community center at the literal and metaphorical intersection of four racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse neighborhoods. Each community had entrenched struggles (25-30 percent of the residents lived in poverty, low education attainment, high unemployment, language barriers, dislocation, gang activity and street drugs). However, there were significant community assets (solid core of middle-income residents, multi-generational households, artists living throughout the neighborhoods, multiple churches and public schools, and a history of civic engagement through neighborhood associations). What’s more, the center was located along a ten-block stretch of Chicago Avenue that the City of Minneapolis and some local political and business leaders began to envision as a “destination” for arts similar to Nicollet Avenue’s food-related “Eat Street.”

Considering their choices for the future, the co-directors opted to remain a smaller performing arts organization, but to enlarge its role as a force in the growth of a “natural” cultural district along Chicago Avenue that would nurture and grow existing and new artistic assets that would, in turn, contribute to a better community. “We both came to the conclusion,” says Raymond, “that in our case bigger was not going to be better.”

Meanwhile, PUC faced a new driver of change—the move within the nonprofit sector (encouraged by the funding community) to streamline administrative and management expense. Pillsbury House Neighborhood Center had its management and administrative structure. Pillsbury House Theatre had been run as a semi-autonomous entity with its own management team. While there was interaction between the center’s human services and theater leaders, they rarely collaborated. In 2008, Wagner asked the human services and theater managers to discuss how to do business differently as an integrated model, but he recalls, “...there was a belief from the human services side that the arts integration was a mistake. So the decision was whether to keep them separate or go for the integration. And we went for the integration.”

### Initial Reactions

The decision in December 2008 to place Price and Raymond in charge of developing a unified operation would place Pillsbury House Neighborhood Center and Pillsbury House Theatre in a whirlwind of internal change. The reaction among the center’s staff ranged from reserved optimism to “a definite feeling of fear, maybe even panic when we social service people caught wind that we were going to have to work for the ‘artsy’ people and run the center together,” recalls Matt Tennant, founder and current director of Pillsbury House’s Full Cycle, a bike sales and repair shop that provides assistance and employment training for homeless teens.

Major arts funders at the time called the move “courageous” and noted that Price and Raymond “were exactly the right leaders with a combination of humility and good instincts.” Pillsbury House Theatre also received a multi-year Bush Foundation grant to undertake the planning for an integrated arts and human services model. However, those in the Human Services sector adopted a wait-and-see attitude, something that Wagner expected. “I thought it was a risky move in terms of the funders, but not at all for the people in the neighborhood. I don’t think they care about these things. They care about getting their needs met. I actually thought that the center would thrive and the services would get better.”

Bill Cleveland, director of the Center for the Study of Art and Community and a nationally-known consultant with experience in arts and human services was hired to facilitate the planning process. He believed the organization had the potential to become “a truly distinctive model that rediscovers the powerful impulses of the Settlement House in a new way and new time.” Cleveland also cautioned Price and Raymond that attempting an institutional re-invention while maintaining obligations to the community as a social services provider and a theater producer would be like “building the plane while flying it.”

Little did anyone involved in the evolution of Pillsbury House +Theatre anticipate that along the journey, the “plane” would encounter the Great Recession or neighborhoods recast by home foreclosures or that a tornado and straight-line winds would cause catastrophic damage on the North and South sides of Minneapolis.

So this is a story of a journey through change, creativity, and community, made possible along the way by adaptability.
PART I.
THE JOURNEY TO
CREATE AN ARTS-INFUSED
COMMUNITY CENTER
“It takes an artist’s mind to find parallels between a theater and a health clinic or a bike shop both in terms of staffing and what we’re producing in terms of mission. Sometimes things won’t seem all that different to the people served, but there is a difference in how decisions are made and how we go about working.”

—Anton Jones, PH+T Resident Teaching Artist

From the very start, Faye Price and Noël Raymond knew that to infuse the arts deeply into every aspect of a community center meant more than handing human services and youth development staffs an arts curriculum with hopes that they would initiate new program activities. PH+T turned to Consultant Bill Cleveland, who guided the leaders in developing an environmental scan and community assessment, initial strategic plan and framework for what was originally called the Cultural Community Hub. The Hub’s early vision featured teaching artists working with the existing staff to integrate authentically the arts into the center’s programming based on best practices in arts, human services and child development fields. The vision also included a goal to become a leader in the neighborhood’s community cultural development efforts. The third element of the vision was to become a learning organization that used creative and artistic processes for nonprofit management and innovation. To achieve the vision, retired PUC President/CEO Anthony Wagner notes, “both arts and human services would have to move towards the new direction collectively...Faye and Noël have it within them, but could they translate that and get other people to understand that?”
CHAPTER 1: PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY

In the following chapter we look at initiating the course of internal change at PH+T—people, programs, process, and institutional culture during the past three years. It’s wise to remember that internal change rarely occurs in a vacuum. The shape of the center’s path was twisted by unpredictable external conditions and turned by individual and organizational assets.

(Co-) Leadership Poised for Change

Both within and outside Pillsbury United Communities, Price and Raymond have been regarded as gifted, compassionate and savvy individuals for many years now. PUC President/CEO Smith Baker describes Price as “humble, connected; she’s honest and she’s inspirational.” The terms that come to Smith Baker’s mind for Raymond are “incredibly creative and funny, and also extremely analytical.” So much so that Raymond serves as PUC’s staff liaison to the board’s Finance Committee. “If there’s something missing from the puzzle, and there are ten people sitting around the table, Noël will be the one to find it. She’s a driver,” adds the PUC executive, “so Faye can be very thoughtful and Noël says ‘when will it get done?’”

Aside from complementary strengths, there’s something more to the success of their working relationship. Jerome Foundation President Cynthia Gehrig believes it is rooted in the model of an artistic production partnership, “They’re willing to collaborate, compromise and work together if there’s something of value at stake. It’s hard to be a partner and do that well.” Smith Baker concurs, “We’ve created co-leadership at [other PUC centers] modeled after Faye and Noël as a way of saying we’re committed to developing leadership and a succession plan. It’s working, but not as smoothly because Faye and Noël come out of the arts and art is about feedback and art is about honesty. For them feedback is about having the best play or product at the end. I’m using that model to talk about leadership at PUC.”

Building the Right Team

Pillsbury House Theatre had a history of engaging artists to work with youth-based programs at Richard Green Central Park Community School, Washburn High School, and the theater’s Chicago Avenue Project. However, additional human and financial capacity was needed to explore arts integration throughout the rest of the organization. “Critical to this core strategy was hiring a faculty representing a variety of arts to ‘truly’ partner with many existing different staff,” says Consultant Bill Cleveland. In discussions with the PH+T educators and artists who expressed interest, Raymond would try to describe the work as deeper and different from the typical youth arts approach, “Artists don’t come in to teach a special class, and it’s not even the standard residency model…it’s much, much more than that.”

Thanks to an Arts and Cultural Heritage Legacy Fund grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board in 2010 and 2011, Pillsbury House Theatre received $200,000 to hire five new Resident Teaching Artists. They included a mix of theater, movement and visual artists. Deeply committed to teaching youth, all had robust artistic lives outside of Pillsbury House +Theatre, whether creating work for their own exhibitions and performing ensembles, or collaborating with other local arts organizations. Resident Teaching Artist (RTA) Pramila Vasudevan works with a variety of PH+T youth programs. “Honestly, to be a resident artist for such a long contract is an honor;” says the traditional and contemporary Indian dancer-choreographer and interactive media artist. “You get to create your own curriculum and then shape it over time...there is the freedom to create and respond to what is around you. It is not like there is this highly institutionalized setting; it is walking into a center where you could truly influence what it looked like, how it sounded, what it smelled like.”

With the RTAs in place, Price and Raymond began to work on an even more significant element of the vision — unifying two somewhat disparate staffs that had gone through a major leadership transition. There were some human services and youth program management and staff departures, but fewer than the new leaders expected. As Price and Raymond got to know the staff that remained, they realized that many of them had diverse experiences with the arts from singing in choirs and playing in rock bands, to knitting or attending theater. In total, a sizable percentage of the PH+T staff was comprised of working artists or active arts participants. And many of the staff had lived in the four surrounding neighborhoods for more than a decade.
The two leaders also were strategic in how they filled key management positions. For example, Mike Hoyt was hired as the new manager of Youth Programs. A trained visual and installation artist, he also had been the well-respected executive director of an arts program for homeless teens. When Hoyt joined PH+T, he faced a moribund program that had suffered high staff turnover and declining numbers of youth participants. The opportunity, he remembers, was enormous, “You have a blank slate with nine kids. We needed to build it back up and talk with the community about how it could change and we all could create a new identity for the program. It was going to be a culture shift for the staff that had been retained, the artists, and the youth who had been in the program.”

Price and Raymond also recruited arts organizations to rent space in the building—Obsidian Arts, an African-American visual arts organization, and Upstream Arts, which focuses on arts for people with disabilities. Obsidian Arts was encouraged to program art exhibitions in the center’s lobby area. Upstream’s Co-founder Matt Guidry knew Raymond from grad school and they had started a small theater together that produced work from 1994 to 2007. In 2008, Upstream Arts made the decision to co-locate in the center after creating their organization in a much smaller space and a neighborhood that lacked other arts-related human services providers. “From a mission standpoint, it’s a great fit,” says Guidry. Adds Upstream Co-founder Julie Guidry (and Matt’s spouse), “there was an invaluable built-in peer community…and a lot of our artists are also Pillsbury House artists—either performers, or in after-school and summer programs. You begin to realize the depth of experience in the arts that they bring to the table with you, and then the added value we can bring to them [in providing accessibility expertise] that will benefit Pillsbury House programs.”

Long-time institutional partner Northwestern Health Sciences University continued to provide a free Integrated Health Clinic at the center. Initial discussions with the University about PH+T’s vision led the clinic to consider additional services such as Art Therapy and collaborations that involved arts and health.

Offering Services in the Best Ways Possible

Armed with the strategic plan and a preliminary set of goals Raymond and Price ventured into more detailed planning. The process came at the nadir of the Great Recession in 2010-11. Increasing needs in the community were juxtaposed with decreased funding capacity in the public and private sectors. At the same time, community centers were grappling with a funding shift away from general assistance to more targeted support for specific approaches in human services, youth development and early childhood education.

Chanda Smith Baker, early into her own tenure as the head of PUC, understood the difficult choices that faced each of the centers, “There’s a fine line between being completely open and available for community to have things, and recognizing that there is a financial burden to have those things. When we looked at how many things we were offering in our buildings that were taking staff time, but that had no money associated with it, we had to say—if a person comes into the building for that one thing, how do we connect them to our services? We allowed the centers to make some decisions.”

In the case of PH+T, some programs were terminated and staff let go. “There used to be a Basic Needs strategy, meaning someone was sitting in an office with a pot of money to do emergency assistance, a 311 guide, and relationships to other places. That funding is gone and gone at all of the centers,” says Raymond. Many at PH+T view that part of the transition with sadness. An artist recalls the loss of the center’s clothing exchange becoming the topic of a conversation among the theater’s Breaking Ice ensemble. “As much as I support an arts integrated building,” he says, “I know there are ‘nuts-and-bolts’ things that are important to the day-to-day survival of families…I believe in the arts, but I also believe in having a warm coat in winter.” Health/Wellness Program Manager Kathy Thomas agrees, but has come to a different conclusion based on the issue of effectiveness, “When we had money for, say, housing assistance, it was so little funding and there were so many in need… The clothing exchange, the dollar store for volunteers, the barter network…we had a lot of different services and maybe weren’t necessarily the best people to be doing these services. We had a full-time person to do just referrals. Now that’s being handled by the front desk.” Thomas adds that local churches and other agencies in the neighborhood have stepped up to fill some of the gaps. Just up the street from the center, Calvary Lutheran Church reports use of their emergency food shelves...
has grown enormously. Nearby Park Avenue Methodist Church has had to expand its thrift store hours to meet demand. However, both churches note the change may be attributable to the general economic declines as much as PH+T programming shifts.

There also were major human services programs that faced changing approaches and/or population focuses in light of policy and funding shifts just as PH+T began implementing the arts integration. Raymond chalks it up to sector-wide challenges, “We’re told ‘You serve people who are HIV Positive; you serve people who have more than nine truancies and you serve them this way’...People don’t work like that. There’s very little room for holistic approaches... and PH+T is an organization with a philosophy about whole people and ‘holistic’ systems.”

At the same time, there were seismic shifts in the Arts funding sector. Some of the shift was driven by the economy that diminished the available dollars, making for a far more competitive fundraising environment. There also was a move by major national and regional foundations that had historic commitment to the arts to focus on broader issues such as policy and systems change. Yet even funders that preserved their work in the arts began to express concerns about the sector’s long-term sustainability at a time when many arts organizations had become disconnected from their audiences and the larger community. PH+T’s vision of an arts/human services hybrid and the use of arts as a way of deepening its relationship with the neighborhood struck a chord with leading public and private funders such as the National Endowment for the Arts, the Minnesota State Arts Board, Bush Foundation, The McKnight Foundation, and the Kresge Foundation.

Against this dynamic backdrop, Price and Raymond remained adamant about moving ahead with PH+T’s institutional evolution. Chanda Smith Baker concurred, seeing the potential for large-scale change, “and PH+T had the resources to bring people to the table in ways distinctly different than their PUC peers.”

The question was how to marshal the resources, the creative energy and the collective experience to realize the vision.

Institutional Culture Reimagined Creatively

The PH+T co-directors wanted “a grassroots approach that would get everybody on board and get everyone’s best input.” They turned again to consultant Bill Cleveland, who had helped them with the early planning. Cleveland is known in the arts world for using a facilitation technique called Open Space Technology. “I introduced them to this creative process,” says Cleveland, “that’s a self-organized exploration of program development and design in an exciting way that advances the spirit that lives in an organization.”

From 2009 through 2011, PH+T held a series of group convenings called “Institutes.” More than 80 percent of the staff participated in the gatherings – periodic half-day sessions led by Cleveland and his team of consultants who came from arts and community cultural development backgrounds. True to the theater’s artistic roots, the initial Institutes included physical trust-building exercises and improvisations; the group also sat in a circle on the Pillsbury House Theatre’s stage taking turns holding a multi-colored wooden “talking stick” and describing their fears, their concerns, and their hopes for what a Cultural Community Hub might look like.

By the end of the second Institute, the theater’s proscenium wall was filled with yellow post-it notes that offered ideas about programming directions, facility improvements, and changes in process that would encourage staff collaboration. Price, Raymond, and PH+T managers incorporated many ideas related to core programming into their annual plans. The entire staff divided into subgroups to design and implement ideas for special projects and operational changes that were deemed critical to support PH+T’s transition. (See “Shaping Space, Shaping Identity” on page 19.) Since then, the Institutes have become a fundamental component of PH+T’s organizational process. One teacher calls it “a kind of spiritual base.” Crystal Brinkman, who is Full Cycle’s shop manager and has been part of Institutes for three years, describes their impact, “...Voicing opinions and ideas, learning about the different programs...the sense of knowing each other, being familiar, having a sense of ownership and accountability and input in Pillsbury House has really changed the culture.”

Other staff members admit they had reservations about the interpersonal communication demands of the process, but have become more comfortable over time. Many feel that the Institutes are an effective forum for developing special projects. They also have helped to build capacity to develop more effectively organization-wide responses to critical community issues. Says Education
Director Virginia Lucio, “We consider what we’re doing together, particularly in difficult times. The recent summer storms caused so much damage in the neighborhood and families were truly in need. And we all worked together to gear up the center for emergency services – water, cooling stations, places to charge cell phones. As a staff our work is happening much more organically and it is much more inviting.”

Between the periodic staff gatherings, Price and Raymond have been revamping internal planning to assure increased continuity and follow through between the Institutes and strategic program implementation. David Green, a family advocate, who attended an Institute in 2013 says, “That kind of information sharing and program brainstorming happens at other places, too. But at other places the ideas get put on paper and when you come back and review what actually got done, it’s maybe ten percent. But here they’re on top of setting a plan, getting the plan going, and achieving the plan. We just went through a review [of Institute-generated ideas since 2011] and about 85 percent of what was on the list was done.”

Some suggest that PH+T needs to build upon the Institute concept a more “strategic, inclusive, and interactive” system of internal communications to keep staff aware of change and to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of follow through for successful program outcomes. Those ideas reflect Faye Price’s original hope of developing a “common language for our work.” As RTA Anton Jones has found, “The Institutes are part of a vital structure – do we have a common language? It’s still making itself.”

Despite the initial benefits of getting people “on the same page,” some staff members believe the Institutes have shortcomings or could be pushed further for setting priorities collectively. They question whether there are limits to the level of staff candor when leadership is in the room. They want future Institutes to discuss deeper and thornier issues such as the definition of art within racially and ethnically diverse communities and how that is reflected in PH+T’s work, how to engage more difficult-to-reach community members, how to most effectively design and pilot new programming, and how PH+T will address longer-term facility and capacity challenges in order to achieve the vision. Consultant Bill Cleveland considers those concerns natural and expected for people who choose to work in the “whacky” cross-sector world, “They’re impatient, entrepreneurial, self-organizing and they will always push against structure. And the good organization understands that and the mess and lack of clarity that is sometimes a part of the working situation... There’s a tension between two impulses – open source democracy and ‘theater director’. When do you make a unilateral decision and when do you go to the group? Of all of the narratives, this is the one that’s a work in progress.”
The “Art” and Science of Evaluation

To achieve the vision of becoming what Price called “a learning organization dedicated to continual improvement,” she and Raymond had to grapple with what that meant for evaluation. PH+T had 13 different program areas in 2009, many with their own evaluation tools and processes. Price and Raymond went through all of them and created a comprehensive evaluation framework for the entire organization. Consultant Bill Cleveland marveled at how “you could see how everything adds up.” As the more in-depth planning took place in 2010, PH+T began working with Independent Evaluator Mary Ellen Murphy to develop Logic Models and processes for new and amended programming.

Murphy is fluent in human services and arts evaluation concepts and designs. She also shares Price and Raymond’s determination to create an internal culture of evaluation that’s appropriate and sustainable for smaller, complex organizations like PH+T. There is another complicating factor—the well-known “tension” between arts and evaluation. As Murphy describes it, “Evaluation of the arts is seen as judgment which is contrary to self-expression and the inherent value of creativity; evaluation is viewed as a finite measurement versus a learning process that is similar to the creative process; and the lack of understanding the limitations of various methods and data to validly and reliably assess and capture impact.” Yet Murphy also emphasizes that there are similarities between evaluation and the artistic process: “…Comfort with uncertainty, innate interest in learning, and commitment to high quality and ongoing process; familiarity with exploring alternate ways of assessing or describing; and understanding the value of a collaboration—learning from one another.”

It has taken more than two years to get all of the PH+T programming areas up to speed in defining their programs’ theory of change in the context of arts integration. The theory of change is the relationship between the desired outcomes of a program and the program’s specific strategies that are designed to achieve the outcomes. A typical theory of change also defines the measures used to assess the program’s progress toward achieving the outcomes. And for Chanda Smith Baker, PH+T has led the rest of the PUC centers in organizational evaluation. “There’s such a clarity that’s developed about the arts integration, that it’s affected how we think about the niches for [PUCs other centers] Waite House and Coyle Center. The model, the plan and the execution at PH+T has been really informative.”
Some people walk by the PH+T building at 35th and Chicago Avenue, wondering what goes on in the place. Other people simply walk by, ignoring the cold and ungainly concrete slabs and columns. The building is a prime example of the mid-20th century Brutalist School of architecture. PH+T staff and artists offer other descriptors: “ugly”, “depressing inside and out.” At the early Institutes, a lot of the staff urged PH+T to find ways to make the drab work place mirror the dynamic changes in programming and organizational culture. With no money for a major renovation, they started small...re-designing the building’s most significant public space—the lobby.

PH+T Facilitator Bill Cleveland suggested that the organization work with Natasha Pestich, a community artist and Associate Professor at the Minneapolis College of Art and Design (MCAD). Using the Institute process, Pestich asked staff to “think about space in terms of what you want for its identity, for your hopes. I asked them to imagine a time when they felt happy and successful at Pillsbury House and what they could do to the physical space that would promote that sense of success.” She also encouraged them to imagine “in the most outlandish ways possible.” There was no shortage of ideas—even poems, says Pestich, “they seemed amazingly open and used to using their imaginative muscle to come up with solutions.” The staff suggested cutting up the massive and seldom used board meeting table for small group conversations. One artist wanted his office walls to disappear for more inviting interactive space and then have the walls come back when he needed time to focus on something. Pestich notes, “This inspired a lot of ideas for wall painting and a lobby with tables and sofas that can be easily reconfigured.”

Pestich and a team of MCAD students collected more information from staff sessions and created digital prototypes so that leadership and staff could decide collectively on final designs and color palate. “In the process, there was healthy debate over whether the space should be calm for some constituents while others wanted the space to reflect change and movement.” How to find a balance? Pestich’s team came up with a series of abstract and anthropomorphic shapes for the walls and tall concrete columns as well as sofa covers. “At the same time, we chose a palate where the shifts and changes occur within the same color—green on green, orange-on-orange—so it would be a bit more subtle and quiet.” Staff volunteered to assist the MCAD team to paint the enormous space in about a week. Building Manager Kathy Thomas is more than pleased with the result, “It makes me enthusiastic. I sit down there and look around and the colors—they just grab you and say that something artistic is going on here. I hear from folks who haven’t been here for a while and they talk about the difference. They’re inspired by the lobby.”

Last year, the Youth Program staff extended the idea. Manager Eyenga Bokamba had MCAD alum furniture designers construct simple, wooden tables, seating, and storage cubbies for her area. The kids painted them in the same color palate as the lobby for a distinctive yet coordinated space. Over at Full Cycle, the roof needed to be replaced and Matt Tennant used the opportunity to rehab the exterior and interior of the Bike Shop as part of a larger business plan. What had been an “ugly, neutral, invisible yet decrepit” building is now transformed with new signage, vibrant colors, and television monitors displaying the different Full Cycle programs and services. Says Tennant, “It’s made a big difference.”
CHAPTER 2: AN ARTS-INFUSION ROADMAP

So if your destination is an arts-infused community center, what might it look like? Here are some PH+T snapshots.

- Pre-School children serenade the third floor administrative staff and after-school participants perform a holiday lobby concert for Pillsbury House clients.
- To his delight, a visitor recognizes the photography of a friend in a lobby exhibition of African immigrants who have settled in the neighborhood.
- Toddlers play musical instruments responding to their teacher drumming in the center of a circle.
- Front Desk Receptionist Maria Cortez assists an individual to complete a social services form. Moments later she is answering in Spanish a caller’s questions about how they can make an appointment for that evening’s Integrated Health Clinic, which served about 2,250 people in 2012.
- Two theater artists walk in and Maria chats easily with them about details of the upcoming fall production.
- On the table in the third floor lobby area are a box of crayons and sheets of paper with the title ‘What Pillsbury House Means to Me’. Building Manager Kathy Thomas says they’re available for adults and children to sketch on while waiting for their appointments and Thomas regularly posts the drawings on office doors as a reminder to staff of the difference they make in people’s lives.

In front of the building, Creative Community Liaison Mike Hoyt fires up a barbecue grill adjacent to the Wish Well he built, a wooden sculptural platform that’s become a contemplative space for community members to sit, reflect or, in an hour, bring lunch and have an impromptu discussion about art and life.

Summer campers are getting ready for a field trip to the Science Museum, having just finished what’s known as “Morning Movement.” It has been developed by RTA Pramila Vasudevan to help the 50 artists, teachers, center staff, and kids (ages 5-12) get to a shared energy and attitude. There are stretching exercises followed by five minutes of silent meditation. “It’s amazing...a unifying breath,” sums up Vasudevan, “It brings us together in a physical, non-verbal way. They’re warmed up, but it also calms them down and increases their attention. And it democratizes the space.”

By evening the lobby is quiet, but boisterous voices and Hip Hop beats are coming from the theater, where Teen Director James Williams and artist Antoine Duke offer feedback to a group of budding Spoken Word artists, who are developing work for an Urban Speaks event to be held the following week at Café Southside, a block away.

What may seem to be random art activities or processes are not. They actually represent stops on a larger, still-developing roadmap that leads to PH+T’s vision. This chapter looks at how PH+T has reconfigured some existing roads and built some new ones; how it has taken bypasses amid uncertain conditions. Most importantly, it is about how PH+T seeks to connect all of them as a center for creativity.
Route 1: Cultivating Collaboration

Whether sparked by the vision, the influence of resident artists throughout the institution, or a collective spirit growing out of the Institute process, PH+T staff members overwhelmingly identify authentic collaboration as the most distinctive factor necessary for integrating the arts across the institution successfully. Collaboration has emerged in a myriad of ways both small and large. It has involved programs, operations, and physical surroundings. It has been generated and driven, at times, by the leadership or the center’s staff and artists. The path has not always been marked by success. Yet, in most cases, there has been a throughway of learning and advancement toward the vision.

Building Resident Teaching Artist and Staff Collaboration in Early Childhood Programs

Collaboration does not come easily, particularly in areas that have established curriculum tied to accreditation. PUC and the center have invested considerable resources and energy to maintain top-notch accredited daycare and pre-school programs. There is a history of the pre-school participants achieving 100 percent ratings for Kindergarten readiness. What’s more, the arts have always been part of the program, a benefit that differentiates PH+T from other neighborhood early learning providers in a heavily competitive marketplace. Program participation has fluctuated during the Recession, but has maintained a diverse group of families.

In 2010, Price and Raymond launched an experiment to see if offering free on-site childcare services during theater performances might make the theater more accessible to a new audience. It proved modestly successful in terms of generating new audience; the unexpected outcome was that a few of the families decided to enroll their children in the center’s early childhood program. And the presence of arts has turned out to be only part of the answer. When Bao Phi, a neighborhood spoken word artist and program director at the Loft Literary Center, needed to find a pre-school for his daughter a year ago, “...We looked at other daycares. You know most of them have some emphasis on the arts. But we felt that Pillsbury was deeply ‘community arts’. It felt like the art was reflective and relevant to the kids, and I don’t mean just multi-cultural art traditions—the artists there do, more than in a lot of daycare settings, reflect the population of the students and that is profoundly important.”

Early Education Director Virginia Lucio believes the arts integration effort can take the early childhood program to the next level of excellence for the children, and also provide opportunities for both artists and early childhood teachers to learn from each other. Yet Lucio admits that in the past her staff usually left the delivery of arts activity to staff artists and treated it as an “add-on” to the core curriculum. Raymond agrees, “It’s taken over a year to go from ‘You’re coming in and I have to make space for you and we already do crafts and we have celebrations, so why do I need you?’ to some teachers realizing ‘Oh—this is actually a way to get a child who’s delayed to respond and techniques that I can use. It’s enhancing a way to do my work.’”

According to Resident Teaching Artist Anton Jones, there’s been both challenge and initial success. The collaboration is sometimes scuttled by wavering teacher interest or turnover in infant/toddler teaching assistants, an unfortunate norm in the early childcare field. “I’m like a broken record. We need to have the staff in the room with us. Otherwise we’re just filling time.”

However, Jones also says he’s observed a few daycare teachers adopting his ideas for introducing instruments and new artistic experiences to toddlers: “If there’s a new toddler, I can hand the child a drum and they won’t take it. They won’t come up to me playing it. They’ll treat it like it’s the scariest thing in their life. But the next day, I might get them to touch it with their foot. That’s okay until they’re comfortable with it.” Jones has helped the teachers to link arts activities with other early childhood education practices, “I try to meet them where they are and let them explore. And then I validate the exploration.”

In the case of RTA Masanari Kawahara, “I bring what I know and I bring it to the toddlers.” A puppeteer and visual artist, Kawahara remembers a project with paper maché and construction paper to make a multi-colored ball, “We had to wait for them to dry so we could put their names on them. That’s when I left. And when I came back, the teacher Miss Charlene had decided to put the balls on the wall and added stems and leaves and then they put their names on them. That wasn’t my original intention, but it turned out to be a lovely collaboration.”
An ultimately positive learning process also has occasional bumps. Lucio describes what happened once when RTA Pramila Vasudevan suggested some movement activities for the toddlers. “The artist is there to engage and the teachers would follow them and help the kids. So they’re in the dance studio and the artist said ‘We’re all going to move to the left.’ And the kids ‘went to the left until they hit the wall. And then the artist said, ‘we’re all going to move to the right.’ And the kids started crying because they had no concept of how to move to the right…So there will be some boundaries—protective boundaries for the children. At that point the teacher stepped in and explained to the artist why toddlers couldn’t grasp the concept and together they figured out a solution. That’s arts infusion.”

To Jones, Kawahara, and Vasudevan, the current environment reflects collaborative problem-solving; artists and early childhood teachers co-creating curriculum is further down the road. However, Jones thinks the PH+T Early Childhood area may be at a turning point toward deeper collaboration for arts integration. He says “Virginia is now more involved—she’s always bought into [the arts integration], but she wasn’t necessarily in the room with us.” Recently Lucio asked the resident teaching artists to become part of the early childhood staff monthly meetings and this past summer there was a week-long training session that Vasudevan says “put everyone on the same page and so that kids all feel a sense that people know what they’re doing.” She sees continued sessions as a way of creating a “spine” for arts-infused programming. Jones has hope that more regular and intentional discussion and idea sharing as an entire staff may be a first step toward deeper collaboration that results in the arts blending into the early childhood curriculum more effectively.

Building Arts-Infused Youth Development Programs

The area of strongest growth and collaboration has been in Afterschool and Summer Youth Programs for children, ages 6-12. In reality, there was little place to go but up. The center had always attracted a diverse group of youth and families reflective of the neighborhood. It was the one program within the PUC system known for the depth of arts offerings. In lieu of a gymnasium, Pillsbury House had an auditorium/theater, spaces for visual arts studios and a kiln room for firing pottery. Michelle Barnes grew up in the neighborhood, spent many years as a program participant in the 1990s. As she entered high school, “the program was less arts focused, more about tutoring and unstructured free time. There was lots of turnover in staff, the administrative and leadership team—so the program was in flux.”

By the time Price and Raymond took over, Youth Programming was barely treading water. It reminded them of the early days of the Chicago Avenue Project, which endured some initial stumbles and moved to intentionally develop and invest over time in an acclaimed theater-based approach focused on youth leadership and creative expression. The co-directors believed that by rebuilding the entire center’s youth programming around arts and creative expression, they could “rejuvenate” PH+T’s youth-based work and establish a renewed “identity” for the program in the neighborhood.

In 2009, artist and youth development specialist Mike Hoyt assumed leadership of the Youth Program and recalls a confluence of opportunities occurring just as he began the job. First, new public art and community initiatives such as Minneapolis Art on Wheels were taking off. Secondly, PUC began investing in new youth programs focused on middle school populations and Pillsbury House Theatre had initiated a relationship with Richard Green Central Park Community School. Thirdly Hoyt also had an abundance of his own connections and ideas, “That all became a starting point for working with artists and artist groups…filtering them into the program and doing more long-term and sustained programming.”

“Mike brought life back into the program. This new vision affected who he hired,” says Eyenga Bokamba, who is running the Youth Program in 2013 and originally served as Hoyt’s education coordinator. A trained visual artist and arts educator, Bokamba also taught in the Hopkins School district for 15 years before gaining a graduate degree in education at Harvard University, and working in education programming at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Hoyt collaborated with her as “co-equals,” says Bokamba, “similar experience in slightly different fields. As an educator, this was a lucrative situation. It had a large container—arts programming; it had an interesting limitation around timing, i.e. afterschool and summer. So we were very clear about what it is, but within that defined container you have all this freedom.”

Former teen participant Michelle Barnes studied developmental psychology at Penn State. She returned to her family and the neighborhood, and has collaborated
with Hoyt and Bokamba as a PH+T youth specialist for three years. Asked to define the current program, Barnes answers, “Inquiry-based learning is at the heart of what we do and what we offer, how we teach, what we teach, and how we direct the program. It’s important for us to utilize a significant amount of time to cater to the kids’ interests and offer as many opportunities for learning as we can. Endless amounts of artistic expression and avenues of creativity here and in their lives outside the building.”

All of them look to having four resident teaching artists year round on a halftime basis as key to tackling the Youth Program’s objectives at a deeper level. “We doubled the capacity of our arts teaching with the stroke of a grant,” says Hoyt, “and it allowed youth program staff to focus on youth development and not try to be teaching artists. It allowed expert artists to come in and hone curriculum.”

While the resident teaching artists and the teaching staff worked closely together, Hoyt says it’s been a learning process and a respectful collaboration. “I think they’ve learned and shared a lot. We’re asking artists to do things they’re not expected to do in other teaching positions like collect data and track clients through data systems. We’re asking youth development staff to focus on youth development and not try to be teaching artists. It allowed expert artists to come in and hone curriculum.”

Results of the collaboration to create an arts-infused youth programming have included:

**7 C’s Pizza.**
The Youth Program has customized a highly respected assessment framework known as the “6 C’s for Youth Development,” which is used by a number of Youth Programs in Hennepin County. Each “c” represents an indicator of positive youth intellectual, social and emotional growth such competence, compassion and connection, etc. Not surprisingly PH+T has added a seventh “C”—for creativity. As PH+T began working with the 7 C’s, program staff Michelle Barnes and David Thompson searched for some way to “embed” the new focus on outcomes in the minds of teachers, artists and students. And what better than a 7 C’s Pizza Chart. Kids earn a topping on a pizza over the course of the week that then gets ordered with all the ingredients from a restaurant down the block. It embeds the principles PH+T teaches into an easy to follow chart and includes its own reward. Asking kids to regularly reflect on their own and each other’s behaviors exemplifies how an assessment framework can also serve as a program intervention.

**Dance Party.**
RTA Pramila Vasudevan candidly admits, “I’m an artist first and always taught kids who wanted to be there, who loved dance and wanted to give it their all.” So she found herself in a quandary with some of the older participants being resistant to movement class, “I had the curriculum and the lessons, but I wasn’t equipped with the disciplinary tools.” She turned to her own choreographic project at the time. “It was an all-night outdoors piece about the way we all have patterns and inhabit them—how we get inside of them with our bodies.” She created a class about gender; another one was about the violence of mispronouncing someone’s name. She had some modest success getting the older students to join in.

And then Vasudevan decided to institute a twice-weekly Dance Party that was informal free time with all kinds of music including what the kids listened to on the radio and their MP3s. “And all of the kids just start dancing, and then the staff came in and started dancing (not as well as the kids). There was no hierarchy in the space. Suddenly you have this group moving together. In many ways it’s this nonverbal communication that is completely binding relationships.” Two years later, when Vasudevan holds class, there are few problems. “They don’t think twice about it. It’s about trust.”

“Wary is the person who tries to cancel Dance Party,” laughs Bokamba. She believes that it has additional value as a component of helping youth understand the concept, pleasure and creative practice of improvisation, “And what does it mean to improvise in dance versus painting versus writing? A five year-old may not be able to say the word or explain it to you, but when it’s time to do it they know what you’re talking about.”

**Exposure to Creative Practice.**
Creative and educated risk-taking in a safe environment is a critical part of youth development. It’s also part of daily life for any artist. “There’s something really amazing about being a practicing artist and sharing those real life issues and mistakes and processes,” says Bokamba. Over time, she’s seen kids enter into that process with the teaching artists. “They see two of us talking about a particular frame for
a painting and they’ll offer their opinions. And they have really good reasons about why it should be a big or small frame. Or Ms. Pramila will be selecting backgrounds for a performance and they’ll be eating their grapes and telling us why the projections should be purple or yellow.”

Bokamba has her own painting studio in Northeast Minneapolis and field trips to the space have become a “rite of passage.” She sees it as part of treating the kids as co-producers, “Our kids know the difference between going into a studio and working with an artist versus filling in the lines of someone else’s vision versus creating their own. What we’re trying to do is getting them to recognize that they have the right to create their own aesthetic. And then we give them the tools to figure out what that is and that’s endless.” In the case of one young girl, Vasudevan saw such extraordinary talent that the artist has provided one-on-one instruction during free time. “She’s really there...mind, body, and soul.” The Youth Program has built in flexibility for other children who want to move further into an art form to do so across the disciplines.

Jesa Rae Richards, a lead teacher at PH+T’s Summer Arts Camp in 2012, remembers a rainy day when the computer lab was off-limits. “At first the kids were mad, but the staff offered them the choice of an art class, a movie, or a “dress up” box created by the artists and teachers. A number of the kids opted to go play ‘Pretend’ with the dress-up box. They played for two and a half hours...now this is a group of kids that go to different schools, they were different ages...with no problems and no other toys. They’ve started to be more open, more explorative and the level of creativity really increased in the time I was there.”

Upstream Arts Executive Director Julie Guidry has a perspective on PH+T not just as an organizational partner. Her six-year-old daughter participates in the After-school program. Guidry is convinced that exposure to creative practice coupled with the Six Cs youth development framework and PH+T’s diverse enrollment have had a profound impact on her child, “She understands that there are other ways, opinions, and choices that other people make in their lives.”

Adding that her daughter has a brother with significant disabilities, Guidry observes, “She recognizes the differences that she’s bringing [as a student in the program] and to be empowered by that difference is really unique...there’s no amount of money you can pay for that kind of After-school experience.”

Art beyond the Building.
Taking the Youth Programs outside the walls of the Pillsbury House facility and connecting the kids to the neighborhood in “artful” ways has been explored in a number of ways. One of the early journeys involved establishing a link with Steven Be, a newly-arrived fiber arts business across from the center. Owner Steven Berg had relocated his retail yarn shop from Rosemount and was rehabbing the building with City of Minneapolis community development funding. As a businessman, his decision was prompted by the building’s price. As an artist, Berg liked the quirkiness of the building and the neighbors. “I go where I can make a difference...I knew Pillsbury House provided services to the poor. I had gone to the theater before but I never knew how the two were related. So I walked across the street and got to know some of the staff.” That was the beginning of field trips to the yarn shop where the kids spent their story time and Berg would teach them to finger-knit. “Fiber arts—the medium of yarn, it’s personal, but it’s also a public process, breaking down barriers, walls...when you see a person knitting, you don’t look at the person, you look at the knitting and a conversation begins.” It was a small step in a much more deliberate and intensive process to reconstruct a relevant and arts-infused youth program. (See “Youth Action CREW” on page 25.)
When Masanari Kawahara considered becoming one of the five original Resident Teaching Artists, he saw an opportunity to go beyond the type of youth arts experience he had as an 11-year veteran puppeteer and visual artist at Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre. “At Heart of the Beast, I would see 30 kids in two weeks and that was it.” At PH+T, Kawahara continues, “One of the best things is seeing kids in pre-school coming up through the after-school program…I get to know their strengths and their weaknesses of the kids and how to work with them. It’s a huge benefit getting to know them year after year. Through that there is trust.”

Trust was a big part of Kawahara’s work to build Youth Action CREW, a PH+T program for middle school students (ages 11-14) centered on arts-based service learning projects in the neighborhood. Observes Kawahara, “My aim is to work with the ‘in-betweens’. They’re not little kids anymore, but they’re not yet teenagers. I’ve been experimenting, struggling, and having fun with them. The goal of the service learning is to nurture their growth.”

One of the first CREW projects, an outgrowth of Global Youth Service Day, involved creating public art. “The kids noticed graffiti along the alley walls in back of the building. So we made and distributed fliers asking if any of the neighbors had a garage door they wanted turned into a mural.” One of the homeowners expressed interest and Kawahara guided the CREW kids forward. “We presented ideas to the homeowner for a mural that had a sunny island, a palm tree, and Godzilla (fifth-graders are big for Godzillal) spewing flower fire.” The project, still visible from the PH+T building, was a success for all involved.

It also sparked additional projects for CREW members and middle-schoolers involved in PH+T summer programming. Under the banner of “Curb Culture,” in partnership with neighborhood artists Xavier Tavera and Peter Haakon Thompson, artistic sandwich boards are created and exhibited in front of local businesses along Chicago Avenue. It marked a giant leap in complexity from the mural project.

Kawahara explains, “Youth went through every step of the project—meaning they were responsible for buying the materials for the sandwich boards, assembling them, and sanding them. They also went to every business asking if they wanted to adopt the boards. And we called for artists. The first round we had two youth who worked with the artists to paint the boards. This summer we expanded to more—8 or 9 painted them. This fall we’ll do another call for artists.” For Kawahara it was amazing to see his CREW team go through the process, “actually talking with the business owners. We’d go in as a group and one kid would take the lead. And if kids are asking, the business owners were really open.”

PH+T Co-director Noël Raymond is gratified that an artist such as Kawahara is committed to share his creative gifts with Youth Program participants. And, “because he and the other Resident Teaching Artists are also practicing artists, the kids get opportunities outside our programming.” This fall, Kawahara and fellow PH+T artist Anton Jones are developing a first-ever collaboration between Heart of the Beast Theatre, Children’s Theatre Company, and CREW programs to write, produce, and perform a new work for middle school audiences.
Route 2: Maintaining and Upgrading the Most Established Programs

Faye Price is quick to point out, “Attention is still being paid to Pillsbury House Theatre and the quality continues to be powerful. As we’ve expanded the arts integration, we’ve also had more public showing of our work and reached people we wouldn’t have reached before.”

To that end, there has been a continued relationship between Pillsbury House Theatre and the Guthrie Theater. The most recent co-production occurred last February in a remounting of Pillsbury House Theatre’s 2012 world premiere of Buzzer by Tracey Scott Wilson. The edgy urban drama takes on race and gentrification, and made itself at home in the PH+T and Guthrie neighborhoods, which have grappled with both issues in recent years. PH+T productions regularly show up on critics’ Top Ten lists each year; and the theater also has picked up local Ivey Awards as voted by theater community representatives and aficionados. In 2013, Price and Raymond received the annual Sally Ordway Irvine Award for Initiative honoring their arts integration work.

Local and national funders praise the theater’s “daring” content and commitment to keep their work “grounded in the life of their own community.” Another cited the theater’s “courage to challenge their audiences.” Yet Cynthia Gehrig, president of the Jerome Foundation, says the theater goes further. Referring to PH+T’s emerging artists’ series Late Nite and Naked Stages (adopted in 2009 from Intermedia Arts, which was reorganizing in response to the Recession), “They’re willing to have artists fail. They work with artists who don’t know yet how to work with lighting designers or box office staff. They educate as well as manage the theater so that they’re constantly helping the artists.”

That attitude of helping applies to the audience as well. PH+T’s small and intimate theater provides a welcoming space for new theatergoers and it makes pre- and post-show dialogues feel truly conversational and participatory. Although Faye Price still wants Mainstage patrons to turn off cellphones, she recognizes and is thrilled that younger audiences are Tweeting away during Late Nite or Naked Stages, encouraging friends to drop by for the second half of performances. Molly Greenman, a long-time neighborhood resident and PH+T audience member says more than ever, PH+T’s niche as a community-rooted arts organization is evident in the theater seats, “When I go to theaters like the Capri or Penumbra, most of the people in the audience look like me—white, middle-aged, and middle-income. But PH+T has found theater to be a way to bring in lots of different people together.”

Alan Berks, PH+T communications director, says “There’s more community to be reached and there’s more depth that might be had or can be found in the relationship between patrons, audiences, clients and the arts and the services that they experience.” For instance, the theater has provided a late dinner to draw young adults to attend and create a sense of community with emerging Spoken Word and performance artists that are part of the 13-year old Late Nite series. This year, Late Nite will offer a new weeknight dinner for local artists to share a meal and conversation with guest artists from outside the Twin Cities. The theater also has tried a number of other approaches to encourage new and returning audience members with particular focus on the immediate neighborhood. PH+T was one of the first in the Twin Cities to introduce a “Pay What You Can” policy not just for an individual performance, but for an entire production run. It also offered free childcare services. The results have been impressive. From 2009-2012, the annual audience grew 86 percent to 7,253. As for developing its audience base in the neighborhood, the theater hoped for a 40 percent increase. Audiences from the four adjacent neighborhoods have more than doubled through the first six months of the 2012-2013 season with over 600 residents attending PH+T productions.

The issue of accessibility for disabled theatergoers has been of growing importance for Berks. Initially, he learned a lot from Linda Gill, a community volunteer group leader who works with disabled populations in Maplewood that range in age from 20 to 60, are ethnically diverse and have various degrees of mobility. They got to know each other during a PH+T production that dealt with disability. Gill says that she didn’t know much about the theater, but when she called, “The staff made us feel like part of the family. They made good space available—it was close, convenient, and accessible for Metro Mobility transportation. And the neighborhood being urban didn’t bother anyone, absolutely not! We even went to the corner pizza place, some of our folks walked or rolled back. No problem.” Through a grant from VSA, the theater has begun to tackle accessibility issues strategically to become a more welcoming venue for the disabled. There have been two focus groups that produced additional learning.
Route 3: Building Bridges to and from Existing Programs

As existing and new components of PH+T Youth Programs have been brought under a single departmental banner, there has been an effort to build bridges between them to better infuse arts into core curriculum. There also have been side benefits in terms of raising awareness about the programming in other parts of the organization.

Chicago Avenue Project.
The program brings together professional theater artists to work one-on-one with neighborhood youth on the creation and production of their own plays. Chicago Avenue Program (CAP) used to recruit participants from a broad geography and population. There were some participants whose families sought it out as they would a pre-professional or conservatory program, albeit one with more community consciousness. CAP is now in the third year of a pilot that makes the program available only to Youth Program enrollees as an experiment for greater integration with the core youth arts programming. Youth Specialist Michelle Barnes has started to more intentionally draw connections between general Youth Program activities and the learning that is going on CAP. And the linkages also have become more organic and informal. Says Barnes, “We were watching a movie one day and the credits were coming up and I paused the video. I said ‘do you see those names and jobs, for you kids in CAP, you’re a playwright, an actor, an editor.’ Most just listened. But some actually understood that.” Barnes admits there may have been a loss of economic diversity in the program, but “it’s given a chance for more low-income kids to have that exposure to CAP.” PH+T will be assessing the results of the shift in the coming year and determining CAP’s future directions.

Breaking Ice.
Over the years, this program has created customized theater experiences for organizations and businesses to help with difficult interpersonal and institutional issues. The inspirations for Breaking Ice productions come from research and the personal stories of communities and individuals affected by the issues collected by the Breaking Ice ensemble. The most recent production was created for the national conference of the Alliance of Children and Families. One of the central stories about families in crisis came from an experience of PH+T’s manager of the Be@school program to bring together a struggling family.

Bridges beyond programming.
During the past three years, program managers like Full Cycle’s Matt Tennant have recognized opportunities to work together with arts-related PH+T staff on funding. “We’re able to engage funders on more than one level. Funders who are coming here to support a theater discover there’s a bike shop next door. Or those of us talking with donors who are interested in the bike shop, we’re able to show them there’s another bonus being connected to the community center with a really cool theater and youth arts programming. Kresge was an example and it made a difference for the Bremer Foundation. The relationship really does help us.”
Route 4: Embedding Evidence-Based Assessment as You Go

As programs fine-tuned program evaluation tools and processes Raymond, thought, “We’d put a lot of effort into this for two years and then the systems would be there and it would be easier to manage. It has turned out to be just the opposite. It takes more time… The focus now is that everyone understands the evaluation plan and is supporting it in some way.”

Bokamba and the Youth Programming staff may be furthest along in tracking the data and using it for program development and revision. That may have been due to PH+T’s involvement in the Metropolitan Alliance of Community Centers (MACC) Youth Program Team evaluation work. “We got back results of the 6 C’s of social-emotional development that showed strong positive growth in five of 6 C’s,” Bokamba notes, “But connection and compassion showed the least amount of growth of all the characteristics among our kids. We thought it was interesting that the kids feel really confident and really competent, but they’re not being very nice to each other. It also made sense that connection and compassion were both ranked low because of how they relate to each other.” In response to the findings, Youth Program staff shifted kids to smaller groups with children closer in age. The staff also has focused on best practices in bullying prevention to foster improved connections. Another strategy involves taking more time to increase intern and volunteer understanding of the 6 C’s so that they can reinforce positive behavior in class and among play groups.

Teachers and RTAs also saw a difference in progress/growth between boys and girls. That led Bokamba and her staff to question possible bias in assessment (e.g. quiet behaviors possibly being valued more highly than active behaviors) and/or programming (e.g. behavior management strategies and activities).

These are first steps. Talking with PH+T leadership, teaching staff and RTAs, there are major issues to be resolved before evaluation and assessment are embraced as “organic” parts of the program and creative process:

**Commitment to valid assessment.**

There are ongoing discussions about the 7C’s assessment with PH+T staff seeing overlaps in the definitions of the Cs, lack of clarity in the definitions and the indicators, and challenges of inter-rater reliability due to the lack of clarity. Beginning in the 2013-2014 school year, MACC will begin to use an additional framework developed by the Center for Youth Program Quality for youth in grades 4-12. The Center’s Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) has been used nationally as means to evaluate the quality of youth experiences in a variety of After-school, camps and community center settings. YPQA also helps to identify staff capacity and training needs.

**Agreement on what constitutes success for arts integration.**

The current frameworks come from education and youth development and don’t specifically include arts integration indicators for success. “There can be a way to create a rubric about how well arts are integrated in the programs,” believes Anton Jones, “Community projects, check it off; ten art classes a week—okay but not arts integrated yet; transitions—are they efficient so we can maximize time for arts classes? Let’s find those indicators and measurements.”

**Capacity to use the data.**

How can PH+T build in time and training for staff to collect the data and analyze it in ways that actually will make a difference to their work? Raymond says, “We’re reporting on a lot of things all the time, but the big idea, how all those things roll up, we don’t have the answer yet.” Jesa Rae Richards, a teacher and youth development specialist last year, asks, “Who can operate the data systems? They’ve had support groups across PUC, but we could use someone here with more expertise. It’s not that people don’t want to, but Noël can’t keep this all in her mind. We’re not training people.” The question is who has that accountability? Jones suggests the next step is a “tangible evaluation process” that includes all staff “from the top down that creates an ‘objective enough’ dialogue about how well the programs are doing.”
Route 5: Negotiating the Detours

To Price and Raymond, successful implementation of the vision called for arts infusion to traverse the group of PH+T social service and health/wellness programs. They knew there might be some internal hurdles getting staff interest and investment. In practice, that came early. By 2010 there had been some interesting experiments. The theater performed a reading of a new work in the dance studio adjacent to the Integrated Health Clinic’s third floor waiting room area and recruited audience from patients gathered for appointments. Staff ushered the patients out for their appointments and several patients actually returned later to attend the rest of the performance. Early in the transition, Building Manager Kathy Thomas worked with the Front Desk to encourage visitors to collaborate on a mural in the lobby. Visitors seemed reluctant to participate or said they didn’t have any ideas. Ultimately, the concept was refined to have them work individually on drawings based on the theme “What PH+T Means to Me” and then the drawings were posted throughout the building. Health staffer Kevin Moore turned to Teen Director James Williams, to help find a youth participant to assist in the production of a music video for Moore’s HIV/AIDS Prevention program.

What Price and Raymond hadn’t bargained on was major change in the program and funding policies or program leadership that would put design of larger-scale arts infusion in certain social services programming on hold.

Be@school.
The City and District-wide early intervention program to improve youth school attendance is sponsored by Hennepin County Attorney’s Office and the Minneapolis Public Schools and PH+T serves as one of several program sites. The County pays PH+T to complete an intake process with families referred by the County. The process has also included individual and group visits. “We had all these visions of taking artists and art kits to people's homes” says Raymond, to build relationships with the families for stronger work in the follow up visits. During the past two years the flow of County referrals has been erratic and unpredictable. There also have been problems with the public school system in terms of information they can provide to PH+T. Add to that a 75 percent cut in the program budget for the 2013-2014 school year. Raymond laments, “The impetus is to get people in and out of the program as quickly as possible and there isn’t a value around deep work with people. These are K-5 kids who have chronic truancy issues. You know Kindergarteners are not intentionally skipping school. It’s about the entrenched, intractable, multiple and conflicting issues of families.” For the moment, Be@School moves forward as PH+T considers next steps.

HIV/AIDS Prevention.
PH+T’s long-time approach in this area of its work had been geared to broad education with street outreach. The strategy was to get information to high risk individuals to make healthy choices. Recent research in the health field indicates the best prevention is to get HIV positive individuals into treatment. “So all of the money has shifted to identifying the folks that are positive and getting them into treatment. That’s severely limited Kevin Moore to do anything else, and he has to account for every half hour by half hour of his activity into specific services for which he’ll be paid,” notes Raymond, “It’s been a struggle as to how to bring arts integration into programs that are so locked down and specific.”

FANS
The acronym stands for Furthering Achievement through a Network of Support. This PUC-wide program helps prepare youth in 9th through 12th grade for college. The curriculum includes developing personal goals and plans to achieve them focusing on delaying parenthood, resisting drugs, contributing to the community and going to college. There also are opportunities to find scholarships, prepare for college entrance exams, and look at career paths that fit with college programs. Those who complete the program successfully are eligible for a FANS post-secondary scholarship upon high school graduation.

FANS has experienced some growing pains throughout PUC as each center tried to define the program in the context of its own distinctive focus. There also were initial planning and communications issues between the centers and the parent organization. At PH+T, FANS also underwent an abrupt and difficult leadership transition among program leads. PH+T’s Mike Hoyt and others described a period of staff frustration and confusion. However, Hoyt adds, “Sometimes it’s as simple as creating the structure to make sure everyone has enough ‘agency’ within their program to share knowledge, information, and programmatic issues on a consistent basis. Once that was established, the staff and artists seemed to really build interesting programmatic relationships.” PH+T now has a new, more effective FANS program lead. In response to the insights and input from PH+T and other centers, PUC redesigned the FANS curriculum for the current school year.
**Route 6: Under Construction**

Although leadership and staff are proud and excited about the degree to which the arts have been integrated into the daily work of PH+T, they also fully acknowledge there are program areas and associated organizational processes that require more thought and attention. The most significant include:

**Teen Programs.**

Programs such as Power of Our Voices (POV) and Urban Speaks have helped to define this new area of work for PH+T. The programs use Hip Hop, Spoken Word, theater, and dance to instill self-confidence, life skills, and leadership. They also reflect the best practices of youth development—teens taking an active role in determining the program’s course and firm roots within the community. The programs draw around 25 teen participants annually. Since 2010, audiences for their performance showcases at the theater and neighborhood café have jumped to more than 650 people annually as the programs have added summer components. Much of the programming has occurred off-site and Raymond has a desire to have the program attract more teens on-site. Yet Teen Director James Williams believes that expanding teen programming raises several questions for PH+T. They deal with the types of space needed to attract teens (e.g. a gym, “hangout” areas in building already at capacity); different Youth Program staffing with expertise in adolescent development; and increased operational capacity to accommodate teenagers’ schedules (evenings and weekends). Transportation is “critical,” adds Williams, for working in neighborhoods “where the streets can be dangerous.”

**Management/Staff Communication.**

Even in days following the earliest Institutes, Faye Price recognized that PH+T would have to develop a system for sharing information as programming became more complex and integrated. There have been efforts to formalize internal communications through more regular staff and departmental meetings. However, management and staff expressed the need to continually refine the balance between “need to know” and “nice to know” in PH+T’s environment of evolving programs. Price also envisioned that the programmatic change would lead the staff to develop a “common language and understanding” about PH+T’s work. Interviews with some staff indicated excitement that such a language is emerging, particularly among the afterschool program team. Others believe that there needs to be more significant discussions between PH+T staff and artists about the definitions of “art” and “diversity”. Although some staff expressed doubts about the benefits of such conversations or the potential for reaching a meaningful consensus, others believed having the discussions would have merit in continuing to nurture broad perspectives and the spirit of inclusiveness within PH+T.
CHAPTER 3: PH+T INTERNAL TRANSITION AND CHANGE – PROGRESS THUS FAR

There has been measurable change and progress in many areas over the past three years:

PH+T continues to serve an average of 24,000 individuals each year, but there have been noticeable shifts in populations served; increases in K-12, afterschool, and youth populations have offset decreases in general assistance and core human services clientele.

Pillsbury House Theatre’s audience has grown dramatically in general terms and more specifically in the participation of neighborhood residents. Ticket revenue has also increased substantially and offset declines in fee-based income from human services programming.

The Youth Program has rebounded in terms of youth and family participation. Enrollment increased to 162 children and has been at capacity in 2013. Youth Program participants have made steady gains in the 6 C’s of positive youth development, and have demonstrated growth in a 7th C—creativity.

The Early Education Program remains financially stable, though not at capacity. However, its participants continue to achieve 100 percent in Kindergarten readiness.

The PH+T revenue and expense budgets, on average, have increased slightly over the period and the bottom line has improved from deficit positions in FY 2010-2011 to net positive in FY 2012. The total PH+T staff has grown by 5 FTE (FY2012), over the period.

Commitment and stability of the staff has been relatively high (in a field known for turnover) since the organizational change. Staff and Resident Teaching Artists report that the arts-integration efforts have resulted in personal and professional growth as reflected in the comments below:

- “My perspective on things is wider and my openness to feedback and criticism has expanded.”
- “The kind of reaching I’ve had to do with the kids here has made my mind so much more flexible in terms of my work with adults.”
- “It has expanded my range as a teacher. It’s not just a simple same-step process.”
- “Before I worked with PH+T my exposure to the culture of poverty was very limited. My consciousness of class issues and race issues has been almost entirely from my work at PH+T.”
- “Change, which was often positioned negatively, is now positioned as opportunity and we can be at ease making change, taking creative risks, and making a mistake.”

Formal and informal surveys of building participants laud PH+T’s increased profile and programming. Survey results express sentiments like “I’ve lived in the neighborhood for a long time but had never come into the building before.” And “I appreciate how PH+T is using the arts to demonstrate positive ways for kids and adults to come together and express themselves.”

From Hub to Web

PH+T leaders intrinsically knew that major internal change had to precede working on the strategic goal to become a driving force in the neighborhood’s community cultural development efforts. Their efforts resulted in new and deepened arts-infused programming across the organization. PH+T also made initial strides in extending the creative process to improve broader organizational issues relating to facility and operations.

Yet the biggest “creative” discovery turned out to be in the nature of the arts-integration model itself. As the center’s programming and processes became more collaborative and inter-related, the notion of a “cultural community hub” no longer seemed appropriate. Faye Price felt a “hub” alluded to something concrete and fixed. Mike Hoyt kept asking “What does it mean and what does it require to work in the 21st Century community? Building a huge citadel or building things flexible or nimble?” Noël Raymond realized that PH+T’s future was not being a ‘hub’. It was to become a creative ‘web’. “A ‘hub’ inferred people coming to us,” thought Raymond, “We were eager to walk out our doors and go to them.”
PART II.
THE JOURNEY TO
BUILD AN ARTS-INFUSED COMMUNITY
“It was stretching and learning, but also remembering that we’re a Settlement House and the values of that tradition actually lend a lot to the integration of arts at the neighborhood scale.”

—Mike Hoyt, PH+T Community Liaison

PH+T began its journey with the realization that it had to focus on internal change before it could achieve its other major goal to become a leader in the neighborhood’s community cultural development. Having made progress on the internal transition, the move to enlarge PH+T’s work outside its four walls came at a particularly fortuitous time. First of all, parent organization PUC had begun to think differently about the role of a 21st century Settlement House. “What I see,” says PUC President/CEO Chanda Smith Baker, “...is our role to play in convening, addressing disparities, informing and learning from whom you’re serving. And I see getting much clearer about that.” Secondly, the notions of Seifert and Stern’s “creative clusters” and Creative Placemaking had gained considerable prominence and traction among funders and community developers across the country. PH+T Consultant Bill Cleveland points to a growing field of research studies indicating the contribution of arts to community well-being, “The greater density of artists and arts organizations, the more likely it is you’ll also see lower poverty, less transiency, and greater civic engagement than in comparable neighborhoods lacking cultural resources.” Thirdly, PH+T’s new community effort Arts on Chicago aligned with an Arts and Creative Development initiative spearheaded by Minneapolis City Council Member Elizabeth Glidden. It also coincided with a more recent “38th & Chicago Small Area Plan,” championed and underwritten by local businesses, area economic development groups and neighborhood associations. Furthermore, major new funding came from the arts sector in support of Creative Placemaking through recent initiatives such as the National Endowment for the Arts Our Town, and the larger public-private sector collaboration ArtPlace.

This section looks at PH+T’s growth and profile in the neighborhood’s cultural development and in the context of Creative Placemaking. It will tell the story of what PH+T found as it walked “out the door” and discovered the opportunities and challenges of renewing old relationships and building new ones. It also will examine how the processes developed for PH+T’s internal transformation benefited the external journey. Finally, it will describe how experiences from PH+T’s first major community-based initiative informed organizational thinking about successive work with the neighborhood.
CHAPTER 1: CREATIVE PLACEMAKING — A CONFUSING MAP

Creative Placemaking (CP) has been in and out of the spotlight in both urban design and arts philanthropy since the 1970s. It appears, once again, to be enjoying an upswing since the end of the Great Recession. Here are three descriptors and rationales from national arts organizations involved in recent CP initiatives:

“In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, nonprofit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, tribe, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. CP 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.”
—National Endowment for the Arts

“ArtPlace believes that culture and creativity expressed powerfully through place can create vibrant communities, thus increasing the desire and the economic opportunity for people to thrive in place. It is all about the local.”
—ArtPlace

“The leveraging of cultural assets to strengthen the social fabric of a community.”
—Artspace Projects, Minneapolis

While the definitions and ambitions represented above are comparable, there are heated arguments across the arts, and the community development field about appropriate indicators for measuring CP’s ratio of costs to benefits. That being said, there remains a fair amount of attention and support for arts organizations leading or participating in community cultural development initiatives. For the ArtPlace initiative alone, 13 national and regional funders and six banking institutions have distributed $42.1 million since 2011. Funders such as the Kresge and Bush foundations have refined existing guidelines to reflect their growing interests in how the arts relate to community revitalization, larger cross-sector initiatives, and the reduction of socioeconomic disparities.

Michael Hickey, a National Fellow at the Civic Consulting Alliance in New York City readily admits being perplexed about Creative Placemaking, even after ten years of working on the issue. As moderator/reporter of a 2012 CP discussion by New York City arts administrators and funders, Hickey summarized key CP concepts that seem among the most cogent and useful to date:

It’s a lifestyle, not a program.
CP does not function well as a single, standalone program within a cultural entity... placemaking evolves and transcends when it becomes attached to the core mission of the cultural nonprofit, when the staff adopt placemaking as a unifying principle behind their work, and when relationships to both audiences and external stakeholders are actively engaged through CP activity... you have to have people on your staff who believe CP is fun.

Gradual growth, not rapid expansion.
The ideal would be slow and steady growth, driven by grassroots expansion of the local economy and its creative sector agents. This type of growth favored the retention and stability of the in-place community...[R]apid growth, conversely, could certainly make for some eye-popping success stories, but was also more likely to result [in] substantial displacement and overall change in the neighborhood character.

Advocacy, not promotion.
CP by its very nature requires outreach, visibility and stakeholder engagement...and there are aspects of the work that involve fairly straightforward marketing. Still... there is a distinction between the idea of promotion (which tends to focus on a single venue, performance, etc.) and advocacy (which links more closely with stakeholder engagement, relationship development, and managing within an ecosystem of symbiotic partnerships).

PH+T Artistic Partner and MCAD Associate Professor Natasha Pestich agrees with Hickey’s observations, “To me Creative Placemaking is much more about people coming together and infusing their values and intentions for a place.” Consultant Bill Cleveland adds that it takes “a seven-to-ten year investment to alter the DNA of a place and that is one of the things PH+T understands. It’s not going anywhere and neither is the community and it’s the community who will hold [PH+T] accountable.”
CHAPTER 2: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Just as with the internal journey, this one also has been built upon past history and also more contemporary work. Pillsbury House Theatre has been presenting plays with a particular focus on urban issues for the last 24 years. “Pillsbury House is rooted in the neighborhood. They are very much a place-based organization grounded in the relationship with neighborhoods,” notes Molly Greenman, a local resident and longtime Pillsbury House Theatre supporter. Greenman also is President/CEO of The Family Partnership, an agency that offers mental health services and has collaborated with PH+T for many years in early childhood and youth programming. “They have done a good job of understanding what the neighborhood needs and interests are, and how to develop relevant responses.”

However, Greenman believes that the neighborhood — actually four distinct neighborhoods converging along Chicago Avenue — is changing, and changing more frequently than in the past. New families, more and younger kids, are part of the demographic shifts. “Seven years, I’m walking the dog in the park and suddenly it seems everyone is speaking Spanish...in Powderhorn it seems more geographic and socio-economic.” says Greenman, “You have individual homeowners and then you have walk-ups owned by slumlords...It’s a very mixed neighborhood...and if you get a more diverse community, you have diverse interests and are there ways to engage those people who have needs or who have resources to volunteer, to contribute via outreach?”

For Mike Hoyt, that was exactly the impetus to increase PH+T’s external work. “My experience with [rebuilding] the Youth Program was that most people new to it were new to the neighborhood and had never been in the building and didn’t know what happened here. There was no identity to the exterior of our space for someone new. So I wondered how we could use art as a way to reach out and connect to people, and then fold them back into all the many resources and services offered in the building.”

Leadership and the Right Team (Again) are Keys to Success

In addition to believing it was the right moment to work more intentionally to become a leader in community cultural development, Price and Raymond had no doubt that Mike Hoyt was the best person to head up the effort. An artist well-respected for his public art installations, Hoyt has co-produced work with ice fishers on suburban lakes, tourists in Hawaii, and Twin Cities’ homeless youth as a way of engaging diverse groups of people in meaningful creative exchange. He’s also a long-time neighborhood resident. Those who have worked with the artist over the past 20 years describe him as being “comfortable with a variety of constituents,” possessing “energy that is positive and inviting,” and having “his thumb on the pulse of everything” in the neighborhood.

Hoyt began to sketch out the idea for an initial project while still managing Youth Programs. He turned to artists and organizations that he had worked with, that understood PH+T’s process, and that had substantial community ties—folks like MCAD’s Natasha Pestich and Julie Guidry of Upstream Arts. Beyond the arts community, he talked at length with past collaborators Sarah Lopez and Becky Timm of Powderhorn Park Neighborhood Association. They became the first members of the initiative’s Leadership Team.

Knowing that an initiative would likely involve public art projects, the Leadership Team sought a partnership with Minneapolis City Council Member Elizabeth Glidden and her Aide Andrea Jenkins, a poet and
multimedia artist. Both have a long history of supporting artists in the Eighth Ward. They were influential in making sure that the 38th and Chicago community development plan included expanding the neighborhood’s cultural profile. They also had actively encouraged artists like photographer Wing Young Huie and fiber artist Steven Berg to open businesses along Chicago Avenue, and had backed the building of a new Fire Arts Center devoted to the metal and glass crafts. They signed on, with Glidden saying, “Nationally I see cities paying attention to... how important art is, to how vital and welcoming your city is, all these things to attract new residents, retain residents and build a good economy.”

About that time, the ArtPlace consortium was reviewing a second round of proposals. PH+T and its partners requested funding for the first stage of a longer-term vision: to knit together existing creative assets in four neighborhoods using the process to build a framework for the ongoing support of a vibrant and cultural district. Observes Consultant Bill Cleveland, “PH+T ended up going in the opposite direction of most 501c3 behavior—that is they didn’t chase the money. Having developed relationships both serious and reciprocal, PH+T looked at the community partners and said, ‘We’re applying for this grant, but whether we get it or not, we’re doing this work. It’ll just take longer.’ That may seem like a small thing, but I think it’s revolutionary!”

PH+T received a $250,000 grant from ArtPlace in June 2012 that included some support for the initiative’s Leadership Team and artist trainings. PH+T and the Leadership Team also provided oversight of distributing a majority of ArtPlace funds to artists for neighborhood-based projects. Raymond told Minnesota Public Radio, “Unfortunately, the true character of the neighborhood is not always reflected in media portrayals or, sometimes, in the physical landscape of Chicago Avenue. ArtPlace will help us bring awareness and transform the physical space so that the energy and strengths of these neighborhoods are really recognized.” Raymond and Price asked PH+T Development Manager Corrie Zoll (who would help to raise more than $100,000 in additional funding) and Communications Director Alan Berks to join the Leadership Team along with the community members.

Mike Hoyt immediately moved into a new PH+T position—Creative Community Liaison, to direct planning and to implement the artist trainings and 20 projects in just one year under the banner Arts on Chicago (AoC). “So many things came together in the right way to make it work,” says Hoyt, “A lot had to do with the strength and cohesion of the AoC Leadership Team (LT) and having some established and truly committed partnerships.”

The Institute Process: Inside Out

Hoyt and many of the LT members came to the realization early on that AoC would benefit from a logical extension of the Institute process that had helped to generate much of PH+T’s energy and action around internal change. “First it was helpful to have an outside facilitator from far enough away... to give guidance and also to facilitate AoC convenings so that the LT members could be in the circle with the artists.”
Cleveland, who returned to run the sessions, had his own realizations. “AoC required at least two negotiations with respect to community—this wasn’t just a one-time spectacle. The relationship to the neighborhood was foundational. It had to take place early and constantly, and way before the art part. The other piece was the relationship with the City of Minneapolis and how the artists had to negotiate their way with the public art process. AoC represented cross-community civic engagement with the real value being in the relationships and knowledge that accrued over time, not just the success of the AoC projects.”

At first, the AoC discussions focused on issues in the community, the work of Creative Placemaking and ideas at the national level about gentrification and dislocation. The Leadership Team also had to select artists and projects from a stack of 52 proposals. Natasha Pestich says the LT grappled with whether, “we were looking for people who did great artwork or people with strong community connections. At the end of the day, we balanced it out.”

Then, with what turned out to be a 9-month timeline, the LT, and the AoC artists started to hash out the details. Steven Berg, who received $9,000 for his Fiber Sprawl creations in the neighborhood, describes the original convening as “herding a bunch of wild cats, because we’re all artists different and unique.” Julie Guidry found that in both LT and artist gatherings, “The Institutes allowed ideas to bubble up within set parameters and boundaries...that’s a smart way to create buy-in and have people be motivated to see how their ideas come to fruition.” For her, it was a very different leadership style, “PH+T is comfortable in the silence or in the lack of structure when you’re pulling together strong-minded and opinionated leaders in their own sphere. You let everyone else duke it out and then ask the next question.” And at other times, adds Guidry, that next question might lead to a whacky and amazing idea.

In late 2012, PH+T Family Advocate David Green attended his first Institute. The gathering focused on brainstorming new PH+T projects. Green put his idea up on the wall, “I was thinking ‘P-H-T and in my mind it became PHAT. What if we had a PHATMobile—in my mind a totally tricked out conversion van that has speaker system, TV screen, PA system, room for footballs, basketballs, art stuff. And we drive around the neighborhoods and engage the kids—maybe break dancing and get the word out about PH+T. The Institute group liked the idea, but, told me ‘we got bathrooms and a roof to fix.’” A month later, Pestich came to his office—she had been at an AoC convening and wondered if he was serious about the PHATMobile, “We could [create] a less expensive art designed trailer, get everything in there and go to parks and neighborhoods.” Last spring and summer, Pestich and Green spent Wednesdays at Phelps Park and Recreation Center on Chicago Avenue. There’s music and the chance for kids to screen print custom tee-shirts. (See “From Naked Stages to the Poetrymobile: One Artist’s Journey at PH+T” on page 39.)

Arts on Chicago: Charting the Course

Twenty projects. On the streets. In the shops. At your front door. Here are just a few of them:

Urban/Environment
A nature walk of 29 state-park inspired photograph-with-text signs

Art Stops
Initially designed for bus stops and then morphed into “soul poles”

Bike Racks
Artistic-sculptured bike racks produced with the help of Full Cycle teen interns

Little Free Libraries
Decorative mini-kiosks on the street containing books for anyone to take

Fiber Sprawl
A living, ever-changing fiber sculpture created by community members

“We are the Other”
100 photographs of residents and street life displayed in neighborhood store fronts

Some of the AoC artists had solid, even considerable experience in the realm of public art. For instance, Wing Young Huie has built a regional and international reputation with community-based photography projects on Lake Street in Minneapolis and in the Frogtown section of St. Paul. Hoyt had some working
knowledge from a few of his own projects. However, the majority of AoC artists had little background dealing with a litany of issues that cross the desk of Mary Altman, Public Arts Administrator for the City of Minneapolis. Not having ever put their artwork in the right-of-way or on city or school property before, Altman says “…they weren’t familiar with the pragmatic issues…like is it safe? Can a car hit it? What if a kid climbs on it—will the piece get destroyed? They were new at submitting a sketch about what an artwork would look like let alone a scale drawing. Pillsbury did a lot of hand-holding in that area.”

AoC artist Loretta Day recalls the tribulations getting permission to erect “Soul Poles” as part of her Art Stop project. “We had to go through so many people. PH+T directed us to the right people with letters of recommendation…it would have been a much longer and frustrating journey without them.”

The Chicago Avenue Fire Arts Center (CAFAC) not only was a venue for an exterior mural, but served as fabricator for many of the AoC sculptural projects. Heather Doyle, CAFAC founder and artistic director agrees with Altman, “Sequencing and communication issues led to some stress for artists. One of the artists wanted to work with youth at CAFAC, but we had to go back and figure out tuition assistance to train the kids in welding first so they’d be safe in the studio.”

At the time artists initially went into the neighborhoods to discuss some of the projects with residents, the community was engaged in a debate over the proposed grocery store development that had raised fears about gentrification. Cleveland says, “When the artists began creating work, they, too, were seen as a gentrifying force. There were savvy and sensitive people in the neighborhood and they were pissed off. So the artists were in the conversation—it was inevitable and they asked how do we use what we do to deal with the issue?”

The answer came from PH+T’s Breaking Ice ensemble. A theater piece was created from stories collected in the four neighborhoods. The production featured poetry, music, movement and all sides of the argument. It was performed at PH+T and at sites in the Bancroft neighborhood followed by animated audience discussions. Price says that PH+T is the “keeper of the questions.” Council Member Glidden views PH+T as a venue for focused conversation that “allows us to find some ways to, at the very least, understand others’ points of view…Maybe not agreement, but it’s about remaining connected as a community even recognizing that we may see the world differently.”

Arts on Chicago: A Community Culmination

It’s a hot and breezy Saturday in early June. The barricades are up at 38th and Chicago. On a music stage, there’s some soulful Rhythm and Blues as part of the local Business Council’s Music Festival. It’s also AoC’s culminating event. About 200 people are hanging out, wandering in and out of the shops. Hai Huynh, the owner of Tip-Top Haircut between 37th and 38th Street has his electric guitar turned on, eager to perform one of his own songs from Vietnam. Across the street, photographer Wing Young Huie has just wrapped up a walking arts tour for 35 people, talking about what he’s learned about Chicago Avenue’s history and culture. Down at 35th Street, the front of PH+T is jammed with at least 50 folks stopping by the Mobile Sign Shop to make their own vernacular
“There is this thread through it all that is about experimentation, innovation, and high quality and people have come to learn that whatever happens here is going to be challenging, exciting, fresh and relevant.” Poet/Performance Artist Molly Van Avery is talking about Naked Stages, the PH+T program for emerging artists that she administers. But she finds the words apply to every aspect of PH+T programming. As she has “woven” through PH+T, she believes the organization “launches artists to a new place.”

In her own case, the Powderhorn resident originally thought of PH+T as a theater in a space for youth programming. That changed when Van Avery was introduced to PH+T’s edgy performance series Late Nite, curated by nationally-known writer and actor Laurie Carlos. Carlos and Van Avery began to see potential bridges between Late Night and Naked Stages, which was produced at another Minneapolis theater venue. When the venue ran into financial problems, PH+T offered to take in Naked Stages as a “foster care situation.” According to Van Avery, “While PH+T has its social justice and community engagement missions, it also is very artist-centered. It trusts artists and gives them the freedom to explore who they are and their artistic process...So it was an amazing fit.” The temporary situation evolved into a lasting and permanent relationship. Audiences for Naked Stages have grown about 45 percent over the past three years.

Van Avery calls the institutional changes an outgrowth of the trust that the theater has always given to artists, but that it carries risk, “Shifting the focus away from just theater is huge for PH+T because they know how to do theater really well. Where the risk comes in is the willingness to try new things. With the integration of daycare, Full Cycle and the health clinic, I feel there’s now a clearer understanding of how all of those things and the theater relate to one another.”

And then there is Arts on Chicago, the PH+T initiative to integrate arts in the neighborhood. Van Avery is one of the artists who received $10,000 in funding support to give back her gifts of poetry to the neighborhood---literally. Working with Sculptor Adam Croft, the duo re-designed a golf cart and outfitted it with a writing desk and typewriter that she takes into the community. “The vision was to see a poet at work using the street as studio space,” says Van Avery, “I’d write poems, type them up on the paper door hangers you see in hotels and deliver them anonymously to people’s front doors.” But that didn’t happen. “There were hundreds of poems written in this project and I’ve written six of them! People stopped—some pulled over in cars to stop and write a poem. I had poetry books with me that could be used as “prompts” if people got stuck, but they have not needed them or wanted them.” She also thought that people would want to keep their poems, “but they mostly were fine to say ‘no—give them to somebody else.’ It’s been shocking. Most of [the poems are] amazingly imaginative and quirky and funny. There are a lot of profound thoughts, very revelatory...pretty high quality writing for off the cuff.”

The Arts on Chicago experience led Van Avery to seek a position as a community arts organizer at Springboard for the Arts. This fall she is working with the City of Richfield on developing cultural aspects of a new community development project. “I’ve used all the resources created for Arts on Chicago, I’m mimicking creating a cross-leadership team—it’s a pretty profound ripple effect.”
name signs just like the ones that create that special sense of identity in the Northwoods. Midway between the sign painting and the music, there’s a long line for hot dogs and burgers, courtesy of the 38th and Chicago Business Association. Manning the grill is Dwight Alexander, whose Smoke in the Pit rib joint is one of the new businesses that opened on Chicago Avenue in 2012. Alexander says Pillsbury House means a lot to him; his kids attended summer programs two decades ago and he went to see his nephew in a show at the theater. In fact more than half the folks in line that hour can relate some connection to PH+T. Some talk about the human services they’ve used at difficult moments of their lives; others say they’ve volunteered or regularly attend the theater productions. Some folks are happy just to share their reminiscences of the Avenue. There is the woman who lives in the house her parents bought in the 1940s. She wishes Chicago Avenue could be this friendly and interactive all the time. A man isn’t so sure; he says there is concern on his block that the number of renovations may “price out all of us old-timers.” A new Central neighborhood resident is wheeling his two-year-old son into Wing Young Huie’s gallery for the very first time. Saying that his family has never walked down to 35th Street, he’s interested in knowing more about what services are available. While many have no idea what PH+T is or its connection to the varied arts activities, there’s an informal consensus that the art making has been a positive development in the neighborhood’s existence. And they’d like to see it continue.

**Measuring Success**

Just as in its internal programming evaluation, PH+T has a goal of using evaluation to improve the organization’s venture into community cultural development. Independent Evaluator Mary Ellen Murphy notes that PH+T was one of the few ArtsPlace Round II grantees to focus on people living in the neighborhood as a means of strengthening communities, as opposed to other Creative Placemaking projects that were directed toward broader transit, land use, housing and business development.

As mentioned above, assumptions for evaluating the impact of Creative Placemaking are under scrutiny and no single framework has been considered sufficient or universally applicable because it is so hard to measure the influence of and individuals’ interactions with public art. So much can happen outside the eyes of even a trained observer. However, Murphy notes that PH+T has chosen “to identify community attachment as an ‘authentic’ outcome that is aligned with its mission versus an outcome often associated with community change such as economic development or reduction in crime.”

PH+T worked with the University of Minnesota’s Humphrey School of Public Affairs to develop a Logic Model, outcomes, and 12 indicators to demonstrate how an arts initiative like AoC might demonstrate its impact in increasing and strengthening community attachment. The framework is influenced by the work of well-respected social and cultural researchers Maria Rosario Jackson and Joaquin Herranz, Jr.
Project Accomplishments.
An initial analysis of AoC data shows:

- There were 3,313 participants during the course of the initiative
- There were 137 locations for artworks, performances and other arts activities
- There were 46 businesses involved in the initiative
- Artists created 205 artworks
- Neighborhood participants produced at least 655 artworks
- Of 135 neighborhood participants who responded to AoC surveys, more than 85 percent reported having a conversation with someone new at an AoC event; and more than 90 percent said they would be likely or extremely likely to attend a similar event in the future

It addition to the survey results, informal personal interviews for this report with more than 20 artists and community members during or after various AoC events indicate that the initiative was viewed as a generally positive experience for area residents who engaged with the project, and for PH+T as it debuted externally-focused arts work with the neighborhood. However, AoC’s impact has been even greater in terms of how it affected the artists involved and the support of community, media, and business leaders for PH+T’s new vision and role to inspire the community’s creativity:

Artists.

- Wing Young Huie says that this is the first time in his career that he’s actually established friendships tied to the neighborhood where he has his studio. “That wouldn’t have happened without this project. I’ve become a social connector.”
- Mike Hoyt remembers stopping at Cup Foods corner market late one night and finding customers discussing photography and neighborhood issues with Wing.
- As the owner of a for-profit business Steven Berg thinks it shifted his own perceptions of his role in the neighborhood and gave more purpose and intent to plans for his community foundation.
- For Julie Guidry, “having been in on the Institutes with other community members…codified in my mind the role and work Upstream is doing and that had an influence on our strategic planning.”
- “It was my first experience being a mentor and CAFAC’s first time as a fabricator,” says artistic director Heather Doyle, and the organization is pursuing new opportunities in both areas.

### Arts on Chicago by the Numbers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total number* of participants:</th>
<th>Locations of artworks in four neighborhoods:</th>
<th>Artworks produced by 40 neighborhood artists:</th>
<th>Reported having a conversation with someone new at an AoC event:</th>
<th>Reported that attending an AOC event made them feel more connected to the neighborhood:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3,313</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artworks produced by neighborhood participants:</td>
<td>Businesses that hosted artists &amp; art within ten blocks:</td>
<td>Hot dogs and hamburgers eaten at the June 8th event:</td>
<td>Reported they would be likely or extremely likely to attend a similar event in the future:</td>
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<tr>
<td>655</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>800</td>
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Poet Molly Van Avery has become a community arts organizer for the City of Richfield.

Minneapolis City Council Member Elizabeth Glidden views PH+T as a “Southside connector for the artist community,” and has invited PH+T to join the Steering Committee that continues to work on implementation of the 38th and Chicago community development plan.

City of Minneapolis Public Arts Administrator Mary Altman believes there’s a lot more vitality on Chicago Avenue.

Becky Timm wants to do another smaller and more sustainable AoC-type celebration on annual basis as a way of maintaining community momentum and the partnerships necessary for effecting long-term change in the neighborhood.

There was significant media coverage of the initiative, particularly the June 8th culminating event. And Minnesota Monthly magazine named Chicago Avenue one of four “up and coming” areas in an article on the most livable Twin Cities neighborhoods.

From Art on Chicago Avenue to Art on the Block

In recent months, PH+T has begun to implement a second stage of arts integration into the life of the neighborhood. Art Blocks received more than $90,000 in Arts and Cultural Heritage Legacy Funds from the Minnesota State Arts Board as a follow up to AoC. According to Mike Hoyt, who is now PH+T’s full-time Creative Community Liaison, his initial impetus to do the community work is still relevant and on track. “So you’ve invested a lot of money on the corridor and on Chicago,” Hoyt says, “Now you go into the neighborhood and have activities and small actions facilitated by an art block leader, who also brings them back to events on the corridor.”

Currently there are 20 artists spread between the four neighborhoods. Many of the Art Blocks projects are developed directly in collaboration with residents. Several have block-related gatherings. They seem small-scale, more intimate and have potential to generate long-term relationships between artists and residents; and neighbor-to-neighbor. For example, artists Genevieve Bennett and Justin Jones invited their neighbors to a National Night Out block party and potluck. Part of the evening was devoted to creating wind chimes out of found objects. Residents showed up with food and assorted tin cans, jar lids, old silverware, old keys for the chimes. By the end of the evening, the artists had the makings of a new installation of wind chimes which they installed in a nearby abandoned public garden. “It’s the social capital that’s built between people who didn’t know each other before and who work together.”
together on an art project,” says Raymond, “It’s getting more people to go to things already happening in the neighborhood and to know them and be part of them. That is the part of counteracting the gentrification strategy—let’s root the community in... creating the social fabric.”

Artist Molly Van Avery, who created the PoetryMobile for AoC, says that for her the new initiative seems “more loosey-goosey, a little more ‘flying by the seat of your pants,’ and less cohesive.” Artists are chosen and then go into their own neighborhoods to develop a project. Van Avery, who has enjoyed leading community projects outside her own neighborhood, admits her comment above might reflect a self-discovery during Art Blocks. For her, the personal dynamics of working with your next door neighbors are different and more difficult than she imagined. Avery says that she’ll most likely take on future projects outside her immediate neighborhood.

PH+T Creative Community Liaison Mike Hoyt is comfortable with Art Blocks as “a work-in-progress at best. It’s had a few successes and a few bombs. It’s also important to note that we began this program with the assumption that there are not 12 artists in the four neighborhoods whom could demonstrate that they have the expertise to pull this off. Therefore we entered into the process with the intention to create a cohort that shared a culture of learning so we could truly figure it out together, as artists.”

“The organization is using an artistic model,” says cultural development consultant Bill Cleveland, “They’re going to try a lot of different strategies, and what works will continue...The organizing you try to accomplish at any one moment is under change, the consensus you had a year ago can change completely the next year. Just as in art making, you make a mark on canvas and three months later, how many of those original marks have been overlaid, how many rise to the surface. But if you never make a mark, you have a blank canvas.”
PART III.
LESSONS LEARNED
FROM THE JOURNEY
“How art looks today may not be how art looks tomorrow. But I believe in PH+T’s ability to stay ‘tuned-in’ and to stay relevant.”
—PUC President and CEO Chanda Smith Baker

While there is not yet hard evidence in hand, there are strong hints that PH+T may be a model for the next generation of nonprofits that recognize arts and culture as essential component of services to build healthy and sustainable neighborhoods. PH+T’s journey has offered steep learning curves for the organization, for the community, for residents and for funders.

Lessons Learned:

1. Put philosophy and values at the heart of everything. All of PH+T’s work reflects the organization’s foundational beliefs and values:
   - Unalterable belief that the arts bring about self-awareness and new ideas that help to shape asset-based human services and community development
   - Commitment to strong artistic quality as demonstrated in product and/or process
   - Commitment to creative collaboration as an organizing principle for work with individuals and community
   - Commitment to rigorous and ongoing assessment to determine PH+T’s impact over time
   - Comfort with ambiguity and improvisation that is part of the artistic process as well as complex and dynamic social systems

Lessons for Institution-Wide Arts-Integration

In a speech to colleagues and funders at the first National Innovation Summit for Arts and Culture in 2013, Noël Raymond provided this advice for other nonprofits considering similar arts-integration:

2. Use creative practice and process as a primary engine – for everything you do.
   - Create shared vision, assign roles, identify given circumstances, solve problems by holding questions, trying lots of possible solutions and using imagination to take big leaps, all the while taking lots of risks and ruthlessly eliminating options that do not work.
   - Understand and use multiple professional vocabularies in your daily work.
   - Expand professional relationships rapidly and effectively.
   - Use creativity to “meet the letter of contracts and organizational goals at the same time.”
   - Be less controlling and let things unfold organically.
   - Be entrepreneurial – the territory is so new and the pace of changes so intense that “if you want something to happen you have to make it happen.”
   - Cope with being overwhelmed and under-resourced and don’t give in to frustration
   - Practice, practice, practice
3. Develop an engine like the Institutes for internal combustion.
   • Identify assets, incubate new ideas, generate action and cultivate curiosity
   • Create standards of practice and a method for sharing leadership that will reap
     benefits not only for the short-term, but also in longer-term thinking about
     professional development and succession planning

4. Design a new staffing model such as Resident Teaching Artists to provide artists, human
   services, early childhood education, and youth development staff, and participants.
   • Time is necessary for authentic explorations into one or multiple art forms; and for
     building trust between the artist and the participant that leads to major discovery and
     creative change and by extension programmatic change
   • Continuity is necessary for the artist to develop ideas across a child’s developmental
     spectrum; and for the artist to monitor the creative growth of participants and
     address individual needs; to provide participants, who are ready to move more deeply
     into an art form, an opportunity to have an artistic “mentor”

Lessons for Cultural Community Development

5. Build lots and lots of relationships – without focusing on strategy and immediate payoff.
   • Build your accountability to a community first. Once there is organic trust based
     on an experience of working together, it is much easier to find that sweet spot of
     intersecting self-interest.

6. Hire a Creative Community Liaison with demonstrated skills in public arts and
   community-organizing to develop and maintain the community’s interest in cultural
   development projects and to be a central leadership and communications point person.

7. Recruit a diverse Leadership Team and project artists that reflect the community’s
   demographics and the “voice” of the neighborhoods involved.

8. Understand the underlying intentions of the project and build technical assistance
   capacity accordingly.
   • Work with artists who have a broad range of experience in public art may require an
     elevated level of support, hand holding, coaching, and patience.

9. Understand how to walk the delicate line between encouraging inclusive and meaningful
   civic engagement and unwittingly contributing to gentrification and dislocation.
   • Remain civicly-engaged in the neighborhood development efforts above and beyond
     those directly connected to the organization’s current work.
   • Develop your role as a “keeper of the questions” and continually explore ways in which
     those questions are relevant or are changing in the community.
Lessons for Evaluation

10. Embed evaluation as thoroughly as the arts-integration by intentionally building assessment capacity across the organization.
   • Work with collaborators (e.g. MACC and the County) to better synch assessment and program development schedules so that data can inform program refinement in a timely manner.
   • Make evaluation as easy as possible to ensure implementation and use and devote more time to planning before implementation. In one case it wasn’t until a process proved unworkable that revisions were made.
   • Start small. It often takes three rounds of data for staff to trust the process, develop the skills to understand the value of evaluation, and to use the findings to improve programming.
   • Share the information—often. Raymond notes that Institutes and meetings dedicated to evaluation topics draw the most attention and engagement of staff.

11. Nurture trusting relationships between evaluator, operational and program leaders so that sound and useful evaluation practices routinely inform organizational decision making.
   • Ensure time is available for staff to review and use data to improve programming
   • Expand the use of evaluation across the entire agency and modify some existing assessment tools to incorporate national standards and components
   • Increase the ways in which evaluation findings are disseminated and promoted

12. Develop stronger understanding between program leaders, evaluators, and funders to better integrate the funder’s interests with existing evaluation systems and practices for increased effectiveness and efficiency of assessments.
   • Avoid forcing the organization to create an evaluation framework that requires separate and/or redundant data entry platforms for similar programs and projects

Lessons for Philanthropy

13. An array of different funding support and technical assistance resources are critical for organizations to successfully launch this scope and scale of institutional change.
   • Fund general operating support and capitalization to organizations that can demonstrate a compelling vision and the leadership and planning expertise to realize the vision
   • Fund robust planning processes, research development, training and/or additional capacity-building for program and organizational assessment that relate to a strong vision and overarching goals to effectively re-tool an organization in transition

14. Funding timelines need to appropriately reflect the scope and scale of major institutional transitions, and a realistic timeframe for meaningful community cultural development.
   • Consider a funding period of up to 2 years for the planning and launch of pilot programming/operations
PART IV.
THE ROAD AHEAD
“[PH+T] has a history of thinking outside the box and figuring out ways to make things happen.”
—McKnight Foundation Arts Program Director Vickie Benson

Ask Faye Price and Noël Raymond how far along PH+T is toward reaching their original strategic plan goals and you’ll get typically modest replies: “We’ve put a pretty decent dent in it...We’re maybe 80 percent there.” Both quickly follow up that they’re incredibly proud of the how the staff and the artists stepped up to put “flesh on the bones” of the big vision. They’re also thrilled that so many residents and businesses in the neighborhood showed up for the theater’s work, the youth programs, Arts on Chicago and all the rest. Yet, like true artists, they also know there’s always the creative “itch” to refine and remake PH+T’s work informed by the community needs, and ideas that surface from artists, staff, and the neighborhood.

Among the most significant areas for attention in the near-term:

**Arts and Human Services: The Right Balance to Meet Needs**

Although there is little chance that PH+T will return to the silo’ed model of the past, Raymond acknowledges that the program changes thus far have weighed on the side of arts-integration. “It used to be that people didn’t know there was a theater here. They thought it was a clothing exchange or a daycare. Now it’s the opposite. It’s about finding the balance that can come for creativity and for assistance.” To that end, Raymond scheduled an Institute for fall 2013, organized by Early Childhood Program Director Virginia Lucio, to re-ground the entire staff in the PH+T’s human services mission and values, and to begin discussing opportunities and paying additional attention to that part of the center.

PH+T staff and community members support the “recalibration.” As the neighborhood continues to deal with serious challenges, PH+T wants to find new ways to invite in the residents (including more marginalized populations that may not yet have been reached). They intend to listen carefully and then revisit existing programs or shape new ones. And like so many other examples in PH+T’s recent history, the timing may be spot on. The Reverend Brad Foslee, of Calvary Lutheran Church on Chicago Avenue says that there is momentum in his congregation and the broader community for more robust partnerships around the growing issues of race and privilege; homelessness; education and youth; and healthcare. Foslee also believes that the arts integration work at PH+T may complement the rebirth of arts programming and new leadership at Urban Arts Academy, which is housed at Calvary. Another highly diverse congregation—Park Avenue Methodist Church has a new pastor and a relatively new director of Youth and Family Services. Both say they their congregation is in the process of expanding its outreach and seeking new partnerships to reduce disparities in the community.
Raymond sees new partnerships fitting well with an evolving notion of “constituency” becoming the fundamental organizing principle for PH+T’s work rather than a set menu of programs. “If we think about neighborhood as our constituency, homeless youth as a constituency and struggling families who have children as a constituency, then what are we doing over time to support those constituencies? That becomes the central question as opposed to how do we hang on to be@school...there will always be the influx and outgo of specific activities.”

**Arts-Integration: Defining the Next Level**

While the initial phase of the work made arts a more intentional part of established PH+T programs, for Price, the next level is to make it seamless in the context of the entire experience of the community when it steps inside the building. “We call it ‘Stealth Art’, says Price, “to put art in their way and they won’t even identify it as ‘art’.” To some degree that’s occurred with the Wish Well outside the building. People drive by and look at the wishes. However, Raymond talks about artists rehearsing music in the lobby or the clinic having ‘art in the way.’

Anton Jones suggests that the role of the Resident Teaching Artist may be evolving to Resident Artist and, eventually, out of the organization completely. “When it’s totally arts integrated you won’t need the resident artists. In five years, largely the teachers will carry this on themselves. However, there may be a role for artists to re-evaluate programming or facilitate dialogues or train new staff.” In the short-term, several of the RTAs and program staff expressed the desire to shift some of their time beyond Youth Programs to work with the clinic, human services, or off-site teen programs.

The observations by Jones above raise a broader issue of the artist education and training needed to sustain hybrid models such as PH+T. “No art student is leaving graduate school with the credentials to step into this work and lead from a management level position,” says Creative Community Liaison Mike Hoyt.

So in turn, what does a “Full Package” of staff development look like at PH+T to ready people for an arts integrated web of services and relationships? Hoyt thinks some of this work may not be difficult to identify, “Ultimately we might already be doing these things incrementally within programs but not really calling it that--for instance integrating new evaluation practices, client data tracking, curriculum development, and so on.” Hoyt also mentions that through the leadership of Artist Molly Van Avery, PH+T will play host to an upcoming course Arts for Social Change, which has been developed by the higher education experiential learning consortium HECUA.

**Sustainable Resources for Program Planning and Development**

PH+T has been aggressive and opportunistic in seeking programming support for the many components of the arts-integration model. Over the past three years, program-related grants and fee-based income have remained stable, helping PH+T to maintain an annual budget of about $2.5 million... no small feat for a mid-sized organization.

However, the organization’s programming has become more vulnerable to change given shifts in funding. Raymond sees a limit to how much more program-based grant income can be secured in light of volatile human services support and the tendency of arts project funding to be limited to one or two years at a time. The heavy emphasis on project support also places constraints on PH+T’s ability to support the staff continuity and development critical to push more deeply into the areas of arts integration or community cultural development.

Some of PH+T’s largest and loyal funders agree that human services and arts philanthropy organizations may not be among those most willing to take risks supporting hybrid or cross-sector work. Kresge Foundation Senior Program Officer Sandra McAllister Ambrozy observes, “PH+T actually could fit into all of the Foundation’s buckets, but somehow our systems don’t allow for that.” She sees a two-fold process, “educating funders about holistic integrated thinking, and nonprofits figuring out how to advocate for that.” In the meantime, McAllister Ambrozy says that the significance of PH+T and a few other cross-cutting nonprofits have prompted Kresge to consider funding collaborations between some program areas.

Vickie Benson, who directs the McKnight Foundation’s Arts and Cultural Program, concurs with her Kresge colleague and adds that even within Creative Placemaking, the national funder conversation continues to center on, “a certain community development or real estate development that is focused on attracting people ‘in’... Not enough attention is being paid in the
discussion about the people who are already there in the community... For those of us—particularly the regional funders, it’s really important that we remind the rest of the funding partners that we must pay attention to those who are ‘already there.’”

Benson also believes that PH+T leadership is smart enough to know there’s a predictable “cycle” of funder interest in areas such as Creative Placemaking and “that it’s really no different than any other philanthropic trend.” Raymond is already there, “The arts-integration model’s financial sustainability lies elsewhere.” She adds, “We need to develop unrestricted funding to support ‘add-ons’ to do the arts-integration we want to do and prove they’re effective.” The funding Raymond refers to is “earned or venture income” such as revenue from Full Cycle’s bike sales and repairs or fees from Breaking Ice engagements in the corporate sector (though this is tied strongly to business cycles).

Another financial trend that appears to be gaining traction in the foundation world is the recognition that capitalization (whether in the form of operating reserves, a board-designated endowment, or a working capital fund) may be a new area of funder interest and support. These financial mechanisms are designed as flexible financial resources that PH+T could use to “ride out” uncertain economic times or seize unusual opportunities to further the mission.

Evaluation: The Next Steps

Retired PUC CEO Tony Wagner believes, “The biggest challenge they face is why this is important... it’s the understanding. I think the results are there, but the issue is how to talk about those results according to whether its arts people or human services people...I think the next three years are critical...to demonstrate efficiently to funders that this is a promising avenue.”

Independent Evaluator Mary Ellen Murphy concurs, and she has been working with PH+T leaders and program managers on how to build upon the existing assessment frameworks and tools.

Beyond overall program impact, says Murphy, “PH+T needs to evaluate and document the unique contributions artists provide in human services programming and how artists and the arts contribute to best practice.” The key questions to unearth that information include:

- How has program staff changed their implementation as a result of the artists?
- How is the artists’ work sustained?
- How is art integrated into programming beyond residencies?
- What outcomes are more likely when artists are used to implement programs?

As PH+T moves forward in community development through the arts, Murphy suggests that the evaluation needs to be flexible and responsive to lessons learned throughout the process of developing community. Communities are complex. Multiple systems exist. Change is a constant. Traditional formative and summative evaluation may capture only part of PH+T’s efforts. In Murphy’s opinion, “A developmental approach to evaluation, which focuses on innovation amid complex environments, would be well-suited to guide PH+T’s decision-making in this area of its work.

Facility Needs

In lieu of an opportunity for a comprehensive capital plan, PH+T has been trying to “bite off incremental renovations at about $50,000 a year,” says Raymond. The lobby’s re-design lifted staff morale for a while and caught the attention of those visitors who chose to walk through the doors. However, the facility is maxed out for youth programming; its bathrooms and other infrastructure sadly out of date for an organization of PH+T’s size and reputation. The theater’s current space could hinder further artistic and audience growth.

For Price and Raymond the facility presents challenges not just in the immediate terms above. It also is part of a much broader exploration focused around the constituency organizing principle. On a small scale, it could mean more developing and seeking support for partnerships with neighborhood entities that can offer the best facilities for PH+T programming. On a far grander scale, Raymond imagines, “other kinds of resource acquisition—it’s feasible we could become a campus through acquiring and renovating buildings in the next ten years.”

Ultimately, this is a matter for PUC to decide and President/CEO Smith Baker acknowledges that a prior capital campaign that included PH+T was shelved in the wake of the tornados in North Minneapolis and the Recession. But now, timing may be on PH+T’s side, says Smith Baker. “I’ve thought about the re-configuration of the building and how to still have the space needed for the theater. I do think because of the work they’ve done, PH+T is in a better place to make a case for a major facility renovation.”
Conclusion

PH+T’s journey has come many miles since Faye Price and Noël Raymond began to dream about the creative possibilities that arts could bring to the entire Pillsbury House organization and the neighborhoods along Chicago Avenue. Though the long-term impact of the arts-infusion model remains uncharted, there’s been significant and constructive good accomplished in the journey to date for individual participants and the broader community.

PH+T’s leaders look back on the journey thus far and see having traveled from a stand-alone and siloed theater organization to a center that has begun to offer a vision of truly integrated arts and community services. They also believe that PH+T and their Chicago Avenue partners and artists have begun to fashion a web of creative activities to knit together and sustain their diverse neighborhood. As for the next step—the move from web to the robust network necessary for their vision of a center for community creativity?

Raymond and Price smile, “There are many miles ahead and we’re ready to go!”
i. Portions of the Introduction and Section I first appeared in Designing an Arts/Social Services Hybrid, Nancy Fushan, GIA Reader, Vol. 22, No.2 (Summer 2011) and have been adapted for this report with the permission of GIA.

ii. Portions of this report related to Evaluation and Assessment have been written in collaboration with Independent Planning and Evaluation Consultant Mary Ellen Murphy, PhD

iii. Creative Placemaking 2.0, Anne Gadwa Nicodemus, GIA Reader, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Summer 2012)


v. ArtPlace injects Twin Cities with $1.3 million in grants, Marianne Combs, Minnesota Public Radio, June 12, 2012

