

Closing Session Plan – Our Town Learning Lab

2:30-2:33: Welcome from Lynne

2:33-2:37ish: Recap and echoing of what we have heard, including key questions

2:37-2:50: Articulating topics you'd like continued dialogue on

Share with the group, or put in the chat and we will lift it up

2:50-3:05: Small group breakout, with assigned facilitator/notetaker. [Prompt Joe]

Prompt: One thing that is going very well, one thing you're struggling with in your project

Backup: Burning questions from recap

3:05-3:15: Reporting out, brief discussion

3:15-3:20: Peer learning slides, end with permission-giving:

If you have a resource team member you know you'd like to connect with, feel free to reach out directly to them. If you're overwhelmed about who to connect with, that's ok, it's normal to not have everything figured out. Feel free to reach out to Lynne for help, and we will also reach out to you to debrief and suggest potential connections.

3:20-3:25: Words of encouragement from resource team members

I want to open up a little space for resource team members to share a few words of encouragement with the group.

3:25-3:30: Farewell from Lynne, Jen

Lynne:

- *Sharing contact information in the chat*
- *Look for more from us – we will take time to digest this experience and come back with more opportunities to connect and re-engage.*
- *There are lots of resource team members beyond who we heard from in the last few days!*

Recap and Synthesis

- Such a rich set of conversations, lots to chew on and bring back to our contexts and communities. I'm going to take a few moments to reflect back some of what we've talked about.
- We reflected that creative placemaking and placekeeping invite us to dream about our homes and what we want to make a reality, thinking of our proposals as dream journals.
- As such, this work is iterative, incomplete, ongoing, the process is as or more important than the product

Commented [LMRI]: Note: This is turning out to be a busy session! I'm going to keep an eye on the time to make sure the discussion opportunities don't get shortchanged.

- Matt and Mark brought alive the idea that community engagement is collective dreaming– what if the whole town became an art campus? It’s complex, not coherent, may be conflicting, but builds energy that can propel the work, and help us live malamapono – coming together to do what’s right.
 - But our work in community and building community is rooted in relationships – by taking the time to build trust, we’ll make sure that our relationships keep us at the table as we work to transform personal dreams to collective ones, even in times of disagreement.
- But as we dream together, we’ve also got to keep an eye on nuts and bolts, and on equity. Who gets invited into the dreaming?
- From Irfana in Washington DC we learned about smart structures and guardrails -MOUs, shared goals, schedules, measurable deliverables, but also having our eyes open to how people actually behave and whether it matches up with what they said they’d do.
- We talked about focusing on early wins to unlock progress on larger visions and aspirations, get started on the right foot, and promote sustainability, in Minnesota and North Dakota
- With Kaki we thought about how to root ourselves in place, and find artists whose work is authentic to the place and the issue, avoiding “plop art.”
 - And to do so by thinking carefully about concrete moments – like our calls for artists
- We learned from Little Falls, Omaha, and Youngstown about using community work as the entry point to finding the right artists, but also creating opportunities for artists to try out community based work, build their capacity, and be recognized for their work, even at the proposal stage.
 - It’s hard to find the right fit, when there’s no training in social practice work, and we need to “unsell” artists on our work as much as sell them on it.
- We were reminded of the importance of networks, and personal invitations – as Jen put it, “the party might change depending on who’s doing the inviting.”
- We shared about patience, openness, and time in the work, whether we’re dreaming big or pursuing implemental change.
 - From John’s years of embeddedness to understand local context and convince policymakers,
 - To Mark and Matt’s reflection on artist-led engagement. Opening space to imagine and dream creates powerful energy and shared purpose, but requires us to cede control and take an imaginative leap.
 - Deep transformational work won’t happen immediately, or perfectly the first time
- In Minnesota we were reminded that common ground isn’t found, it is cultivated. And we learned about concrete strategies:
 - Developing a shared vision and goals, and a shared narrative
 - Hiring naysayers
 - Focusing on how arts can help solve others’ identified challenges
 - Allowing others to take ownership of the idea
 - Engaging unconventional partners to advance dialogue
- And we reflected on how we are all coming to this work at a particular moment, in which many of our projects have been paused. or postponed due to the pandemic

- Some of us are feeling challenged, or inspired, to re-engage key partners who might have different responsiveness in this time
- To re-forge shared goals, understand where we need to flex and shift due to changed circumstances, and what new opportunities for alignment and happy accidents have opened up in the intervening time.
- We brainstormed about coming to this work in a newly networked and digital world, but also heard about the possibilities of a return to the analog-Cornerstone theater's handmade journals and audio-recorders.

This moment, and the complexity of this work, of course leaves us with more questions, many related to the particular moment in which we find ourselves:

- How do we build community and ground our work in place, when we can't gather in place?
- How does the pandemic actually change the places in which we work, privileging networkedness over groundedness? How can we both resist and embrace this reframing in our projects, to mark this moment but remind us of history and ground us in shared context?
- How can we resist letting engagement – and other moments in creative placemaking—becoming stale, ossified, a box to check off? How do we hold space for artists to do the deep collective dreaming work that makes creative placemaking powerful and transformative?
- How can we assess whether an artist is a good fit, when we can't see them in action, in community?
- How can we manage generational differences and layered histories within a particular project or site?
- How can we feel hopeful about finding common ground in such a divided moment for our country?
- How do we adapt when our projects take us in directions different than we anticipated?