

[Creative Placemaking Grants and 2017 Guidelines Announced](#)

NEA Will Award \$4.3 Million to Support 64 Projects Nationwide Through Our Town

Washington, DC—Creative placemaking is increasingly a tool of choice for those working to forge solutions to community development challenges. As one of the leaders in the creative placemaking field, the National Endowment for the Arts announces its latest round of funding through its signature creative placemaking program, Our Town. The NEA will award \$4.3 million in grants to fund 64 projects in 36 states in cities ranging from Los Angeles, California to Lewiston, Maine.

In places as diverse as New York City and Green River, Utah, these projects demonstrate that art and artists are an essential part of building strong communities; as important as land use, transportation, education, housing, infrastructure, and public safety. Including this round of funding, the NEA will have awarded more than \$30 million in grants to fund 389 Our Town projects since 2011. The web resource [Exploring Our Town](#) features case studies and lessons learned on more than 70 Our Town projects.

Guidelines and application materials for 2017 Our Town funding are posted on the NEA website. [All 2016 Our Town projects](#) are available in the related content section.

“For six years, Our Town has made a difference for people and the places where they live, work, and play,” said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. “The broad-based partnerships and the focus on leveraging local cultural assets have helped residents engage the arts to spark vitality in their communities.”

OF NOTE IN THIS YEAR’S OUR TOWN PROJECTS

Federal Agency Partnerships: Efforts expanded this year to work across government agencies to coordinate federal assistance and expertise to help local communities.

Three Our Town projects are part of U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Agriculture [Promise Zones](#), an initiative to designate communities of all sizes that feature both high levels of poverty and strong local partnerships where the federal government can collaborate and invest. One of the Our Town/Promise Zone projects is in Indianapolis, Indiana where the Harrison Center for the Arts will use a \$75,000 grant to support Pre-Enactment Theater. The theater will develop performances in vacant properties with residents of the Monon16 neighborhood to create a new narrative in a community where 32.7 percent live in poverty.

A [list of Promise Zone projects](#) is available in the related content section.

[Through Strong Cities, Strong Communities](#) (SC2), cities are selected to receive technical expertise from federal inter-agency teams that partner with city leadership to support the community’s vision for economic development. Four Our Town projects are in SC2 cities including Youngstown State University in Ohio to support temporary arts programming and a cultural plan for the Youngstown Arts District.

Rural Towns and Tribes: Creative placemaking continues to be an effective tool for rural towns and tribal communities, building on local cultural assets to address issues. In this round, grants are recommended to towns including Hindman, Kentucky (population 777) and Star, North Carolina (876 population).

- The Coalition of Ozarks Living Traditions in Thayer, Missouri will use their grant for the architectural design of Oregon County Food Producers and Artisans Co-op Culture Hub in the town of Alton (population, 897). Planning for the co-op began in 2014 during one of the NEA's [Citizens' Institute on Rural Design](#) workshops.

Vacant Properties: Reanimating abandoned properties was a theme this year with nine projects totaling \$450,000 employing creative placemaking in post-industrial cities. On either a temporary or permanent basis, these cities are accessing the arts to facilitate community discussions and planning, activate abandoned spaces, connect vacant properties to their surrounding neighborhood, and support equitable revitalization. Although the NEA has supported this kind of work through Our Town since in 2011, the number of projects this year is remarkable. For example:

- The City of Providence, Rhode Island will receive a \$100,000 grant to support neighborhood transformation: Cranston Street Armory animated by art. The project will revitalize the historic armory building as a catalyst for economic development in the surrounding West Side neighborhood, where one-third of families live below the poverty level.
- A list of [projects focused on animating vacant properties](#) is available in the related content section.

Knowledge-Building: This is the second year of funding projects led by field service and policy organizations to provide technical assistance to their members interested in creative placemaking. This year, the NEA will award \$525,000 to eight projects, representing an increase over last year's five knowledge building grants. For example:

- Forecast Public Art in Minneapolis, Minnesota will receive a \$100,000 grant for a partnership with the American Planning Association to translate knowledge of the public art field into tools for urban planners that they can use to influence the livability of mid-size American cities.
- A [list of knowledge-building projects](#) is available in the related content section.

Artistic Diversity: The variety of artistic disciplines is impressive in this round with lead organizations bringing dance, music, and theater to community development efforts. This work builds on the NEA's November 2014 convening, [Beyond the Building: Performing Arts and Transforming Place](#). For example:

- The Dallas Chamber Symphony in Texas will receive \$50,000 for their Taking It to the Streets initiative of informal music making in public sites downtown, partnering with Southern Methodist University Music Therapy Program on project assessment.

Follow the conversation on [#NEAOurTown16](#).

Celebrating its 50th Anniversary, the NEA is the independent federal agency whose funding and support gives Americans the opportunity to participate in the arts, exercise their imaginations, and develop their creative capacities. Through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies,

and the philanthropic sector, the NEA supports arts learning, affirms and celebrates America's rich and diverse cultural heritage, and extends its work to promote equal access to the arts in every community across America. Visit [arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov).

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