

Definition

A multi-tenant arts facility is an art space inhabited by multiple tenants, often a combination of individual artists/creative entrepreneurs, arts organizations and other creative businesses. The most familiar examples might be a building of artist studios or an art center that houses several non-profit arts organizations.

Key components

- Multi-tenant facilities can be space solutions that **benefit artists, creative professionals, and arts organizations** by generating opportunities for:
 - programmatic/mission synergies, collaboration and knowledge sharing
 - cross-pollination of businesses
 - cost savings and resource sharing
- They can also **benefit communities** through:
 - job creation
 - increased foot traffic in the area surrounding the building (which can aid public safety)
 - patronage of other local businesses by both the art space's tenants and their clientele
- Inhabiting or developing a multi-tenant facility can also **bring challenges** including:
 - a dependency on the tenants' and owner(s)' fiscal health for the building's ecosystem and sustainability
 - the importance of assessing or establishing a strong culture fit among tenants
 - that, as a field, the essential elements of planning and predevelopment (such as assessing readiness for a capital project, its right timing, and space needs according to both mission and revenue model) are under-resourced and under-practiced

Key Learnings

- Affordability is often the primary driver for both developing and selecting space in a multi-tenant facility.
- Maintaining visibility (at street-level and/or in terms of brand) can be a challenge for tenants, which has direct impact on both achieving their mission and their budget's bottom line.
- This shared space model is often associated with 501(c)3 organizations and independent artists, but designers and other creative professionals are in equal need of its benefits.
- These facilities can have important impact on local economies, and are often untapped allies in securing support for the creative sector.

Open Questions

- What kinds of questions, beyond the physical features of a space or its affordability, should prospective tenants ask themselves to assess the appropriateness of a space share?

- How can developers determine if affordable space is sufficient investment in a creative enterprise, or if supplementary services would advance their goals for strengthening a local economy?
- How can developers and tenants alike plan for natural attrition and tenant rotation so that turnover does not have an adverse impact on everyone's budget or on the culture of the building?
- What are the conditions that are required to ensure that multi-tenant facilities can serve as space solutions to creative businesses while also generating real benefits for the neighborhoods in which they are located?

Case Study Example

The benefits and challenges of multi-tenant spaces can be understood through the lenses of both developer and tenant.

Greenpoint Manufacturing and Design Center (GMDC) is a non-profit developer that leases below-market studio space to small creative businesses, including independent artists and designers. In providing low-cost, long-term leases, GMDC is a rare source of stability for its tenants' operations, while also contributing to the local economies in which their facilities are located. GMDC's capacity to function in this way, however, is contingent on a set of zoning policies that can either maintain the integrity of a neighborhood or make it vulnerable to speculative development.

Urban Bush Women (UBW) is a tenant in the **South Oxford Space** in Ft. Greene. UBW is also a touring dance company that travels across the globe to share their work, while simultaneously holding deep engagement with their local community as a core value. To ensure success in meeting the multiple facets of their mission, Urban Bush Women need more than office space. They need an affordable place from which they can develop meaningful relationships with their neighbors. The shared space model of their building allows UBW to collaborate with fellow tenants, host local public programs that foster a relationship among the general public with both the building and its inhabitants, and maintain a stable location for its administrative operations.

Additional Examples and Reference Points

- **Asian Arts Initiative** 1219 Vine Street, Philadelphia, PA (<http://www.asianartsinitiative.org>) serves as the developer for their own building, where they are the anchor tenant.
- **Sammons Center for the Arts** 3630 Harry Hines Boulevard, Dallas, TX (<http://www.sammonsartcenter.org>) is a non-profit organization that developed a facility to provide low-cost rehearsal, performance and administrative space.
- **The Light Box at Goldman Warehouse** 404 NW 26 Street, Miami, FL (<http://thelightboxmiami.org>) is a shared space among three non-profit performing arts organizations.