Kresge Foundation awards $400,000 grant to Project Row Houses to advance community development through arts and culture

HOUSTON – November 14, 2019 – The Kresge Foundation has awarded Project Row Houses (PRH) a $400,000 grant as part of a new Creative Placemaking initiative, Building and Supporting Equitable Development (BASED), which seeks to advance community development through arts and culture.

This $8 million effort is led by Kresge’s Arts & Culture Program as part of its ongoing work to position culture and creativity as drivers of more just communities.

The primary goal of BASED is to develop a platform for continued learning of both leading practitioners and Kresge staff around emerging field priorities, such as strengthening racial equity and inclusion best practices within the community development sector.

“While there are a substantial number of community development organizations that have successfully integrated Creative Placemaking into their broader neighborhood strategies, many of these organizations are facing staffing, policy and funding hurdles,” said Regina R. Smith, Managing Director of the Kresge Arts & Culture Program. “BASED aims to strengthen these organizations and expand efforts that integrate Creative Placemaking into place-based work happening in cities across the United States.”

This is a three-year pilot program that will be implemented in two phases. Twenty grantees total will participate in BASED. For 2019, 11 grantees have been selected. The second cohort of nine grantees will be selected and announced in 2020.

BASED will enable Project Row Houses to connect with these local innovators around a shared agenda for equitable Creative Placemaking.

"Being part of the Kresge Foundation's BASED initiative gives PRH an incredible opportunity to work with and learn from our peers around the country, and it could not have happened at a better time," said Eureka Gilkey, Executive Director of PRH. "Kresge's focus on racial equality and their mission to position culture and creativity as drivers of more just communities puts them in perfect alignment with our vision for a dynamic, reinvigorated Third Ward that celebrates and elevates our neighbors, culture, and community.”

PRH’s work is rooted in the Third Ward with the community members at its core. Through their arts programs, community enrichment, and neighborhood development activities, PRH is addressing the community’s needs in order to develop a space where they can thrive. Determining creative solutions and connecting with strategic partners remains central in how PRH approaches its work.

PRH’s approach to creative placemaking can be seen through providing long-term, safe, and affordable housing for Third Ward residents. Additionally, the nonprofit is in the midst of developing a Financial
Opportunity Center, which will infuse culturally creative inputs to an economic development model, giving residents the tools and training to build a strong financial foundation, consider new career pathways, and access a network of social services that will help them achieve the financial independence that will allow them to remain in Third Ward.

The 2019 grantees have been awarded $400,000 over two years: The foundation has named the following organizations as BASED grantees:

- Asian Economic Development Association, St. Paul, MN
- Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, New York, NY
- Broadway Housing Communities, New York, NY
- Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Boston, MA
- East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation, Oakland, CA
- Inner-City Muslim Action Network, Chicago, IL
- North Limestone CDC, Lexington, KY
- People’s Emergency Center, Philadelphia, PA
- People United for Sustainable Housing, Buffalo, NY
- Project Row Houses, Houston, TX
- The Enterprise Center, Philadelphia, PA

“We are pleased to announce this first BASED cohort,” Smith added. “This group of grantees has a history of partnering with and centering residents in equitably restoring the social, economic and physical wellbeing their neighborhoods.”

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About The Kresge Foundation:
The Kresge Foundation was founded in 1924 to promote human progress. Today, Kresge fulfills that mission by building and strengthening pathways to opportunity for low-income people in America’s cities, seeking to dismantle structural and systemic barriers to equality and justice. Using a full array of grant, loan, and other investment tools, Kresge invests more than $160 million annually to foster economic and social change. For more information visit kresge.org.

About Project Row Houses:
Project Row Houses (PRH) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to empowering people and enriching communities through engagement, art and direct action. PRH was founded in 1993 to be the catalyst for transforming community through the celebration of art and African-American history and culture. Inspired by the work of German avant-garde artist Joseph Beuys and African-American painter Dr. John Biggers, the seven founders – James Bettison, Bert Long, Jr., Jesse Lott, Rick Lowe, Floyd Newsum, Bert Samples, and George Smith – purchased 22 historic shotgun-style row houses on two blocks in a disinvested neighborhood in Houston’s Historic Third Ward and began using the houses as spaces for thematic art interventions.

The PRH site now encompasses five city blocks and houses 39 structures that serve as home base to numerous community enriching initiatives, art programs, and neighborhood development activities. Since its inception, PRH has demonstrated over its 25 year-plus history that collective community art-making is a sustainable vehicle for community transformation. Today, PRH serves as a model for not only the greater Houston region, but for communities all over the world. For more information, please visit projectrowhouses.org.