Arts-based Community Development Investment for DURHAM, NC

Durham Arts Council one of 64 National Endowment for the Arts
Our Town projects selected nationwide

Durham, NC-- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Chairman Jane Chu announced 64 awards totaling $4.3 million supporting projects across the nation through the NEA’s Our Town program. Durham Arts Council is one of the recommended organizations for an award of $100,000 to support the Phase 1 implementation of the Durham SmART Vision Plan – utilizing public art and urban design to create an exciting and vibrant Arts and Entertainment Corridor along the downtown streets of Blackwell, Corcoran and Foster. The Our Town grant program supports creative placemaking projects that help to transform communities into lively, beautiful, and resilient places with the arts at their core. The NEA received 240 applications for Our Town this year and will make awards ranging from $25,000 to $100,000.

“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. “Projects such as the one led by Durham Arts Council help residents engage the arts to spark vitality in their communities.”

“The SmART Vision Plan is a multi-year public art and urban design strategy that fully envisions a dynamic, art-infused, colorful, and connected North/South corridor that draws pedestrians into an exciting daytime and nighttime environment where they will be enticed to stay and to visit multiple locations along Blackwell, Corcoran, and Foster Streets. This arts-driven economic development strategy can be a key factor in downtown Durham’s future development and success,” said Durham Arts Council Board President, State Senator Mike Woodard.

“We are so pleased and honored that the NEA Our Town grant has been recommended to support implementation of the Durham SmART Vision Plan. Realizing this Vision Plan will take Durham to the next level as a vibrant cultural destination and will enhance the pedestrian experience and connectivity between major cultural, entertainment and business assets in our downtown district,” stated Durham Mayor, William V. “Bill” Bell.

“We are very grateful to the National Endowment for the Arts for awarding this $100,000 Our Town grant for support of the Phase 1 implementation of our SmART Vision Plan Project. We are also grateful to the North Carolina Arts Council for creating the SmART Initiative creative place-making program in North Carolina and for their support that helped launch this initiative,” stated Durham Arts Council Executive Director, Sherry DeVries. Renowned public art and urban design artist Mikyoung Kim completed an Artscape Vision Plan for the Durham SmART Initiative in 2015 as a framework for a
reimagined downtown Arts & Entertainment District. The artist’s community design process, led by the Durham Arts Council and the North Carolina Arts Council, along with 26 public/private community partners, focused on a prominent north-south corridor with deep historic/cultural roots. The plan connects 3 distinct districts along Blackwell, Corcoran and Foster Streets – American Tobacco, City Center, & Central Park respectively. Improved pedestrian access and artfully designed public spaces will support arts based events & greater participation for residents (250,000) in this rapidly transforming city.


The NEA Our Town grant along with local and state matching funds - will support public art design projects identified in the Vision Plan in the Zone B “Back Porch” central district of the Corridor – including designing a new parking deck wrap & new surface pattern ground plane art for pedestrians crossing the railroad line to the City Center area (see illustrations and map attached). This zone and the projects within it were identified as the top priority of the SmART team partners and community stakeholders. Solving the connectivity issues at this most critical juncture for the arts corridor is vital for future cultural & economic growth of the City Center.

“Durham has long understood the importance of the arts to downtown revitalization and vibrancy, which is why it was one of five cities and towns selected as a demonstration site for the N.C. Arts Council’s SmART Initiative,” said Wayne Martin, Executive Director, of the N.C. Arts Council. “The NEA’s recognition and support of Durham’s stunning vision plan for the Blackwell/Corcoran/Foster streets corridor comes at the perfect time.”

For more information about the North Carolina Arts Council SmArt Initiative Cities:  [http://ncarts.org/Economic-Development/SmART-Initiative](http://ncarts.org/Economic-Development/SmART-Initiative)

For a complete list of projects recommended for NEA Our Town grant support, please visit the NEA web site at arts.gov. The NEA’s online resource, Exploring Our Town, features case studies of more than 70 Our Town projects along with lessons learned and other resources.

To join the Twitter conversation about this announcement, please use #NEAOurTown16.

**About Durham Arts Council, Inc.**
The Durham Arts Council (DAC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization which has supported the arts in Durham, NC and the Triangle Region since 1954. Today DAC serves more than 400,000 visitors and program participants, 1,000+ artists, and 60+ arts organizations each year through classes, artist residencies, exhibits, festivals, grant programs, technical support and information, arts advocacy, creative economy and creative place-making initiatives. Our mission is to promote excellence in and access to the creation, experience and active support of the arts for all the people of our community. For more information visit [www.durhamarts.org](http://www.durhamarts.org).

**NOTE:** For radio or television broadcast, NEA requires the following voice-over language: "This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. On the web at arts dot gov." For television broadcast, display of the Arts Endowment logo and web address is required.