

Integrating Arts and Culture to Power Your Community Development Work

A case study of Anchorage, Alaska's Fairview Neighborhood



A large group of diverse people, including adults and children, are standing in front of a brick building with a white door and windows. They are all wearing winter clothing like coats, hats, and scarves. The scene is outdoors and appears to be during the day.

Foreword

Why we want to share the story of the Fairview neighborhood in Anchorage, Alaska

The Fairview community of Anchorage Alaska has developed an inspiring iterative, place-based, and arts-infused approach to holistic community development that is worth sharing.

This case study emerged as a means to highlight the collaborative work—managed by NeighborWorks Alaska and Fairview Community Council—to create a healed and vibrant neighborhood, showcasing their approaches and offering their lessons learned along the way.

FAIRNESS
for FAIRVIEW
IT'S TIME.

NeighborWorks Alaska and the Fairview Community Council collaborate through the Fairness for Fairview initiative.



NeighborWorks® Alaska is dedicated to improving the quality of life for families and individuals by preserving homes, creating new housing opportunities and strengthening neighborhoods.



Fairview is where *people make the difference*. The Fairview Community Council is the voluntary neighborhood organization that represents its needs in the city.

In 2023, Fairness for Fairview received a federal grant to heal the divides from the highway corridor that runs through their community.

To develop their comprehensive community development strategy, NeighborWorks America supported Fairness for Fairview in developing a Theory of Change for the initiative with consultants and case study authors, Justice + Joy.

Reconnecting Fairview Theory of Change

The team developed a Theory of Change for how the initiative's grant activities could support their vision for a healed and vibrant Fairview.

Activity	Belief	Impact	Outcome	Vision
Economic Analysis	Fairview needs economic investment to become safe and vibrant.	To understand opportunities for equitable, asset-focused, and diverse strategic investments in Fairview's landscape, business ecosystem and workforce.	Fairview is vibrant, prosperous, and empowered; Anchorage values and invests in the neighborhood.	A healed and vibrant Fairview that is: welcoming, connected, respected, empowered, & activated year-round
Transportation Modeling	Fairview's healing and vibrancy relies on transforming the G-I couplet into a safe and human-centered corridor.	To discover current mobility patterns, future opportunities, and define success metrics that prioritize residents' safety, ease and joy.	Fairview is multi-modally connected with well-maintained transportation systems that prioritize residents and serves them year-round.	
Greenway Design	A large community-driven public investment in the safety and beauty of this corridor can catalyze private investment and have spillover effects.	To develop a safe, active, attractive corridor that uses art and storytelling to share history and healing, varied travel options and compelling destinations to unite the neighborhood and city.	Fairview has a welcoming physical space that inspires new connections, investments and imaginations around what subarctic amenities can look and feel like.	
Public Engagement Process	A robust and creative public engagement process can remediate engagement fatigue and exclusion while growing the civic power necessary for Fairview to achieve self-determination over its future.	To leverage a creative public engagement process as a tool to engage all Fairview residents--especially those historically ignored--while building trust, belonging and civic capacity.	Fairview residents are excited, civically active and grow into neighborhood leaders that shape the future of Fairview and the city.	

This case study illustrates how Fairness for Fairview has taken up the charge of holistic community development through iterative, place-based, and creative approaches in its attempts to undo the harm of a highway that divided their neighborhood and heal a corridor that is a backbone for their community.

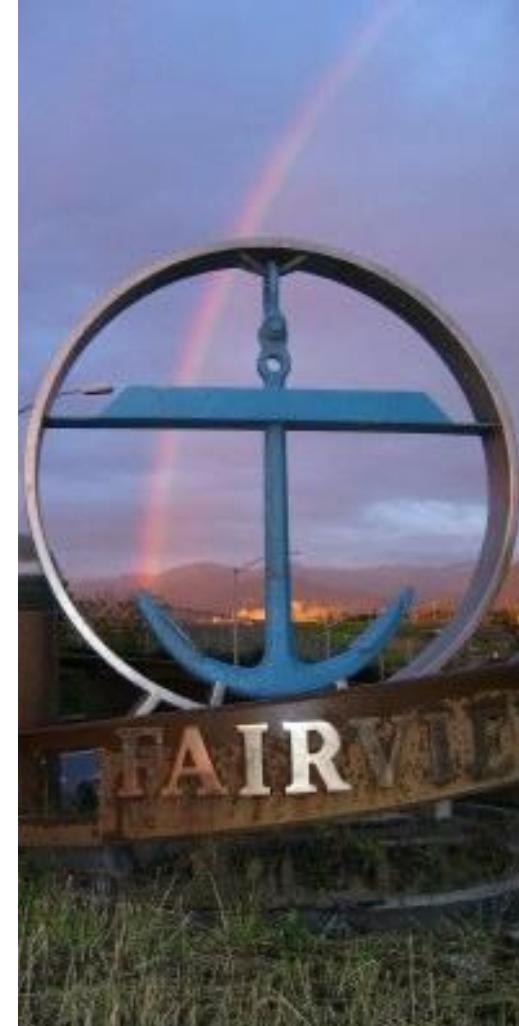
A photograph of a snowy winter scene. In the foreground, there are several cars parked on a snow-covered street. A group of people, including a man in a yellow beanie and a woman with blue braids, are standing near a dark-colored car. The background shows snow-laden trees and a building, with power lines and a stop sign visible. The overall atmosphere is cold and wintry.

Part I: Context

Fairview's history and transportation infrastructure

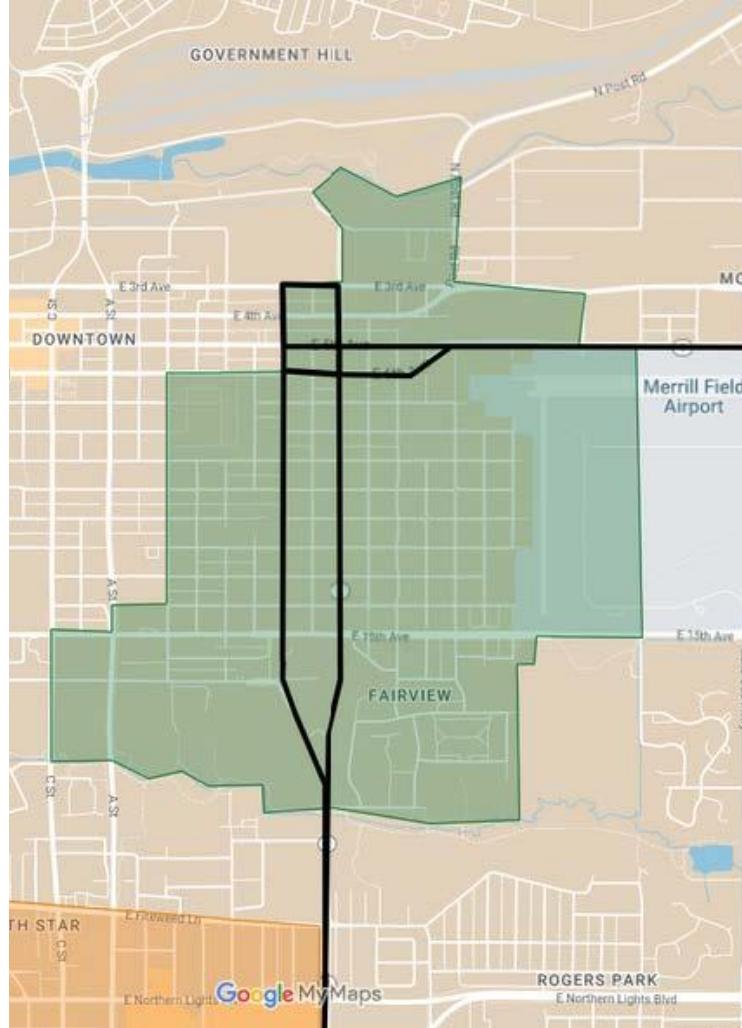
Welcome to Fairview, a historic and diverse Anchorage neighborhood

Home to 6,600 residents, Fairview lies just east of downtown. The neighborhood serves as a gateway to Anchorage's city trail system, boasts cultural and recreational amenities, and is home to one of the oldest continuously operating restaurants in the city.



In 1966, the State of Alaska built a high-speed highway couplet through Fairview.

The City explicitly acknowledged the highway would cut Fairview into pieces, and now the highway design has led to decades of disinvestment, safety, and health impacts in Fairview.



In 2023, Fairness for Fairview received a federal Reconnecting Communities planning grant to reimagine the highway corridor.

The group seeks to revitalize and improve neighborhood safety through a first phase of economic analysis, active transportation traffic modeling, responsive greenway design and robust public engagement that includes civic dialogue and visualization processes.

Part II: The Strategy

Integrating Arts and Culture into Strategic Planning

A multi-method approach to addressing the disconnect, with arts and culture at the center

Fairness for Fairview has long-used arts and culture as a tool to achieve their strategic goals.



Comprehensive Development Pillars:

- Public Engagement
- Change the Narrative
- Build Social Cohesion
- Facilitate Social Integration
- Boost Economic Development

Creative Approaches:

- Creative Engagement
- Resident-Centered Storytelling
- Community Activation
- Building Public Spaces
- Creative Economies

Short + Medium Term Strategies

Rewriting the Story of Fairview

The 1966 highway plans were designed without any community input.

Now, *Reconnecting Fairview* is placing meaningful resident participation at the center of the highway's redesign process.

“

Engineers are going to use transportation modeling, but technical models are not a meaningful way to communicate with community members.

”

— Lindsey Hajduk, NeighborWorks Alaska



Tactic One: Creative Engagement

**Using Creative Methods to better
Communicate technical solutions and
lived-experience**

**After decades of disinvestment,
the city and its residents have largely
defined Fairview by what it lacks.**

Now, through content that centers the people of Fairview, *Reconnecting Fairview* is rewriting the script to highlight the area's assets, redefining its identity and fostering a sense of neighborhood pride



Creative Community Engagement

Challenge:

How do we translate technical planning options to community members?

How can we better communicate resident visions and needs so that technical experts understand them?

Creative Tactic:

Including creative professionals to lead visualizing workshops.

The design team included **lego builds** and **community collaging sessions** so the participants could visualize the functional design parameters and residents could physically communicate their visions.

Outcomes:

Physical props helped design team members take in community ideas in a new way that opened their eyes.

Easy visuals made abstract topics more tangible and made designers articulate their own design assumptions.

Visuals helped identify and address misunderstandings between residents and subject experts.

The design team found the props helped better communicate trade-offs between design options.

Takeaways: Creative Community Engagement



1

Creative engagement keeps both residents and subject experts excited to collaborate

Team reflection:

Art can fill up the cup and keep people engaged.”



2

Creative workshops and tools allow for better communication and understanding of the technical and abstract aspects of planning

Team reflection:

“Including creative engagement methods in the design process has been a tool for us to engage experts from the design community in a non-traditional way.”



3

Introducing non-technical tools allows residents to feel that they can more fully contribute ideas

Team reflection:

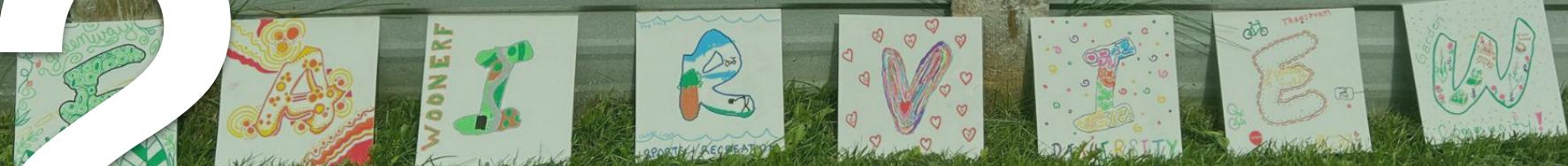
“It flips the typical power dynamic. Residents can *show* their ideas and engage a way that is welcoming, rather than interact with engineering-speak”



Tactic Two: Resident-Centered Storytelling

Changing the narrative of through
creative storytelling

2



Resident-Centered Storytelling

Challenge:

Those inside and outside of the neighborhood held negative perspectives about Fairview.

How do we tell more authentic stories about Fairview?

Creative Tactics:

The Coalition has used arts and culture to elevate authentic stories about the neighborhood through a resident video interview series, cultural performances, interactive engagement pop-ups, public art, and local journalism.

Outcomes:

Produce high quality media, art, and events that authentically representing the area from the inside out.

Beautiful documentation has literally created a new image of Fairview to residents and outsiders.

Recorded stories have served as inspiration for subsequent art installations and events.

The storytelling process helped address heavy topics with sensitivity and without pushing residents away.

“

Art is a way to deal with the heavy and difficult things, including safety and death.

Creative approaches allowed us to approach the things we don't want to avoid, while also making sure people are excited to show up long term for the challenging work

— Lindsey Hajduk, NeighborWorks Alaska

”

Takeaways: Resident-Centered Storytelling



1

Resident stories should be thoughtfully collected and archived so that these stories can continue to shape future planning efforts

The Coalition recorded high resolution video interviews, which they display on their website. An artist later used quotes from the interviews for a place-based installation. The stories can also be thought of as a form of data.



2

Public art can visualize new and authentic stories about a place

The Coalition recorded high resolution video interviews, which they display on their website. Artists then used these interviews as inspiration, transforming selected quotes into light installation on fencing, and using it for signage installations. View it at:

[YouTube Playlist: Fairview, AK](#)



3

Storytelling processes can help address complex and nuanced topics with sensitivity, helping to draw residents in over topics that might otherwise push people away.

“Storytelling can be an avenue for conversations around community safety or other community needs, that can be hard, challenging and burn people out.”

A photograph of a group of women performing on a stage. They are wearing traditional Polynesian-style costumes, including grass skirts, leis, and decorative headpieces. The stage has a green backdrop with tropical foliage patterns. The women are barefoot and appear to be dancing. The sky is clear and blue.

Tactic Three: Cultural Activations

Creatively Activating Fairview to Build Social Cohesion

3

Cultural Activation



Photo: Nathalie Bunton

Challenge:

The historic highway has long separated Fairview into two distinct parts.

How do we reconnect residents to foster social cohesion where it has been severed?

Creative Tactics:

The Coalition has used arts and culture as a means to bring residents together for fun and meaningful gatherings.

The annual Fairview Block party connects residents with their neighbors and friends through a neighborhood celebration of local music, dancing, and fun.

Commissioned community art projects also draw residents together for special events, even during the cold months.

Outcomes:

The neighborhood discovers and highlights its diverse cultural assets, helping the community realize that this vibrancy is an asset that makes Fairview beloved and unique.

Event planning builds new community partnerships and coalitions.

Arts projects provide fun ways for residents to engage with one another.

Takeaways: Cultural Activation



Activations can offer a means to build new partnerships and connect with new residents

Community events become a platform to invite new community partners to collaborate, whether as co-organizers, performers, vendors, sponsors or volunteers, there are variety of ways to plug in.



Special Events can become a vehicle to collect new resident voices and further community engagement efforts

Alongside performances and food, residents were asked to write what Fairview means to them on a white board. These responses offered additional insights to what is important to residents.



Temporary activations can offer immediate interventions to connect people, even when infrastructure is slow to change

Special events can take on a variety of formats and exist in a variety of spaces. This means cultural activation can happen relatively early on in a large-scale community development process.

Fairview has made great strides, but the work isn't done.

As the *Reconnecting Fairview* project continues, the group plans to sustain their commitment to arts-integrated strategies that will support them in facilitating social integration through the built environment and boosting the local economy

Long-term Strategies

The Creative Future of Fairview

Fairview's creative approaches have laid the foundation for the long-term tasks of infrastructure change and economic development

The highway and roadway infrastructure physically segregated the neighborhood.

Now, *Reconnecting Fairview* is working to create new spaces the meaningfully facilitate social integration and brings the whole community together as one neighborhood.



Tactic Four: Building Public Spaces

**Facilitate Social Integration through
Meaningful Public Spaces**

4



Building Public Spaces

Challenge:

Fairview has been physically and socially disconnected.

How can the neighborhood build activated public spaces that facilitate social integration?

Creative Tactics:

The Coalition is replacing the highway couplet with a central greenway that will run through the neighborhood.

Through the teams' extensive creative engagement work, they are aiming to ensure the greenway ensures safety and fosters belonging for all residents.

How it builds on current work:

While the highway transformation and greenway construction is a much longer process, the current creative engagement and community events get residents excited about the project, allow the team to address concerns of neighborhood change, and co-create a vision for the future public space.

When the Greenway is complete, the team hopes to activate it with community-driven public art and space for unique cultural activities.

The neglect for Fairview has hampered the neighborhood's local economy.

Now, *Reconnecting Fairview* is elevating its cultural assets and highlighting its incredible diversity. The group envisions these elements as a means to attract local economic activity that continues to reflect the neighborhood while also growing it.



Tactic Five: Creative Economies

**Boosting the Economy through a
Creative Economies approach**

5

CARRS QUALITY CENTER

1340

OAKEL

Creative Economies

Challenge:

Fairview's neighborhood economy has been depressed due to the damaging infrastructure and long, harsh winters.

How can Fairview foster thriving creative economies as it continues its community development?

Creative Tactics:

The team envisions a thriving local economy in Fairview that is activated year-round.

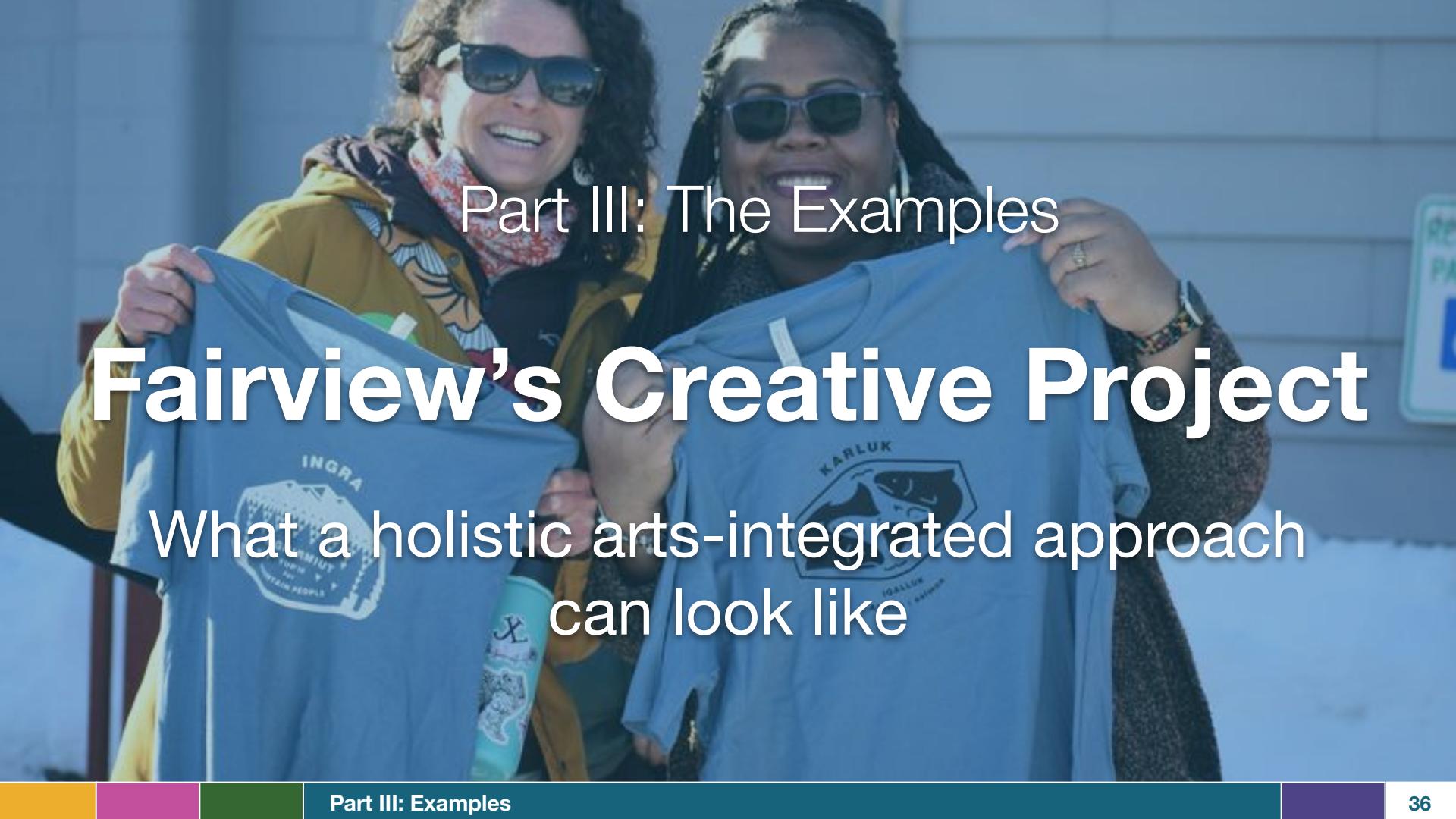
As a key part of this dream, they see cultural amenities and special seasonal events as a key draw to the neighborhood that will support the local business environment year-round.

How it builds on current work:

The team's current creative engagement efforts support local artists, highlight the area's cultural assets, and deepen relationships with the creative community.

The team is also launching a winter lights competition to engage residents while creating a winter destination that will support businesses during the hard months.

As the area's long term economic development strategy takes root, the neighborhood aims to foster vibrant local businesses and support local creatives.

A photograph of two women smiling and holding up blue shirts. The woman on the left has curly hair and is wearing a yellow jacket and a red and white patterned scarf. The woman on the right has long dark hair in braids and is wearing a blue shirt with a logo that includes the word 'KARLUK'. They are outdoors, and a green sign is visible in the background.

Part III: The Examples

Fairview's Creative Project

What a holistic arts-integrated approach
can look like

Summary of Fairview's Arts Interventions

PROJECT NAME	TIMING	TYPE	CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT	STORY TELLING	COMMUNITY ACTIVATION	BUILDING PUBLIC SPACE	CREATIVE ECONOMIES
Voices of Fairview	● Permanent	■ Media	● Yellow	● Green			
Shapes of Fairview	▲ Temporary Installation	▲ Public Art		● Green	● Magenta	● Teal	
Anchorage Design Week	○ Annual	■ Event	● Yellow	● Green	● Magenta		
Wishing Well	▲ Temporary Installation	▲ Public Art	● Yellow		● Magenta	● Teal	
Fairview Block Party	○ Annual	■ Event	● Yellow	● Green	● Magenta	● Teal	
Faces of Fairview Mural	● Permanent	▲ Public Art		● Green		● Teal	
Push Back the Darkness	○ Annual	■ Event			● Magenta	● Teal	● Purple

TIMING: ● Permanent

○ Annual

▲ Temporary Installation

TYPE: ■ Media

▲ Public Art

■ Event

Voices of Fairview

Fairview has historically dealt with issues of poor representation, both through a lack meaningful public engagement with residents and portrayal in media narratives. The team wanted to more authentically represent the Fairview neighborhood, so they developed the Voices of Fairview project.

Voices of Fairview produced videos featuring Fairview community members telling their stories on the lessons they have learned over their time working in neighborhood advocacy and social and environmental justice in an effort to raise awareness about issues and efforts within the neighborhood.



Quick Facts:

Task: to present authentic and diverse community voices in Fairview

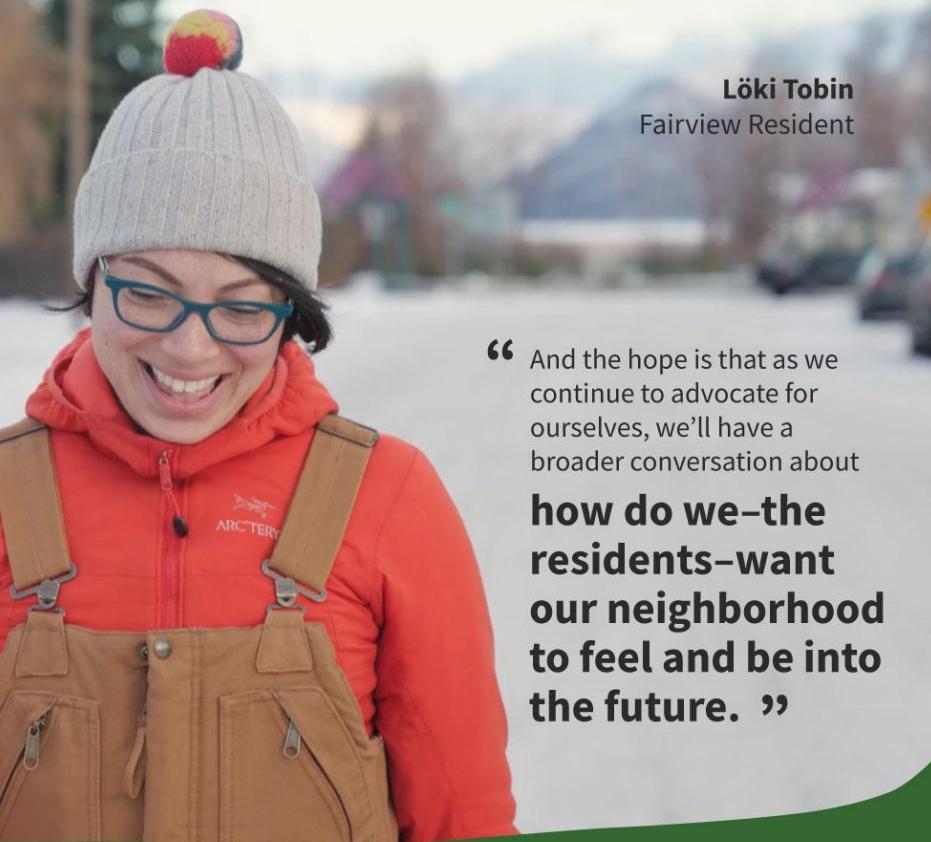
Solution: high quality video stories with resident leaders, and additional video interviews at events

Goals:

- 1) Represent Fairview Authentically
- 2) Share residents' stories
- 3) Raise awareness about key issues

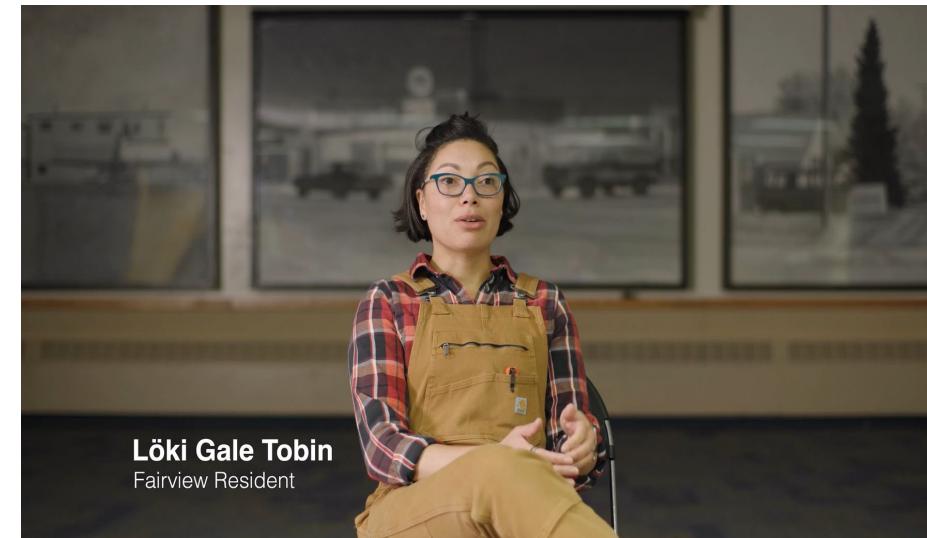
Participants Engaged: produced 5 high-quality stories with selected community leaders, as well as 6 more videos during the Fairview Block Party.

Status: complete, available online



**SAFE STREETS
YEAR-ROUND**

=FAIRNESS



[Watch the interview here.](#)

Shapes of Fairview

Wanting to draw residents and visitors to the greenway site as a part of the project's greenway design element, the Coalition commissioned local artists Thomas Zimmerman and Shinsaku Iwatachi. The artists were eventually tasked to focus on signage.

The artists were interested in how Fairview has been divided by roads meant to make daily life convenient, but that instead divide the neighborhood into puzzle pieces. Inspired by the Voices of Fairview project, they developed simple magenta signs about each puzzle piece. Placed around town, the signs guided viewers to a website with clips of resident's interview to learn more about the different neighborhood areas.



Quick Facts:

Task: How can we inspire people to come to the future greenway site?

Solution: Place-based installation series

Key Partnerships: Artist, Voices of Fairview project, Anchorage Museum

Goals:

- 1) Get people to the greenway site
- 2) Engage people in the project
- 3) Elevate community voices

Challenges: Installation permitting and cost; the afterlife of the signage.

Number of installations: 12

Status: complete, some signs still on display

ADW
02.21-25
2024

Shapes
Of
Fairview:
Sign
Project

Menu

Fairness
For
Fairview
Shapes
Of
Fairview
Sign
Project

Anchorage
Design
Week
02.21-25
2024

A Fairness
for Fairview
Project

View 01

View 02

Divide

ANCHORAGE
MUSEUM

ANC
DESIGN
WEEK

World
Design
Weeks
FAIRNESS
FOR FAIRVIEW
IT'S TIME.

NeighborWorks[®]
ALASKA



Shapes of
Fairview by
Thomas
Zimmerman
and Shinsaku
Iwatachi

Visit this site on
your phone!
adw-fff.com

Anchorage Design Week

The Reconnecting Fairview project team partnered with Anchorage Design Week (ADW), a free annual gathering for community members and creatives to consider the role of design in advancing positive futures through visuals, interventions, workshops, and conversations.

The event brought together all sorts of arts and cultural approaches. Alongside the creative workshops and design sessions, ADW hosted a series of community events such as a history talk, community bus & walking tour, film screening, and micro-presentation session.

These kinds of creative events can also build excitement and momentum which generates buy-in, participation, positive image, and more.



Quick Facts:

Task: How can we gather diverse voices to collectively imagine a place-based future for Anchorage?

Solution: Partnership with an existing annual, interactive gathering

Key Partnerships: Anchorage Museum, Alaska Design Forum, AIGA

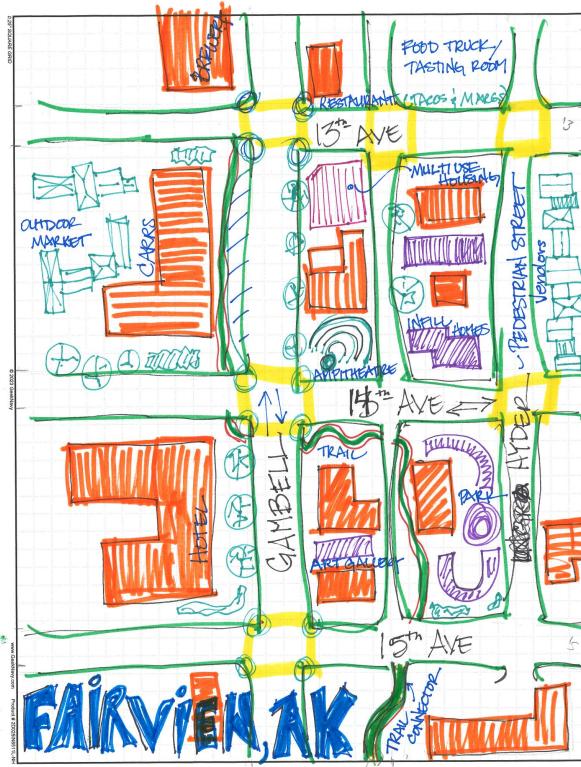
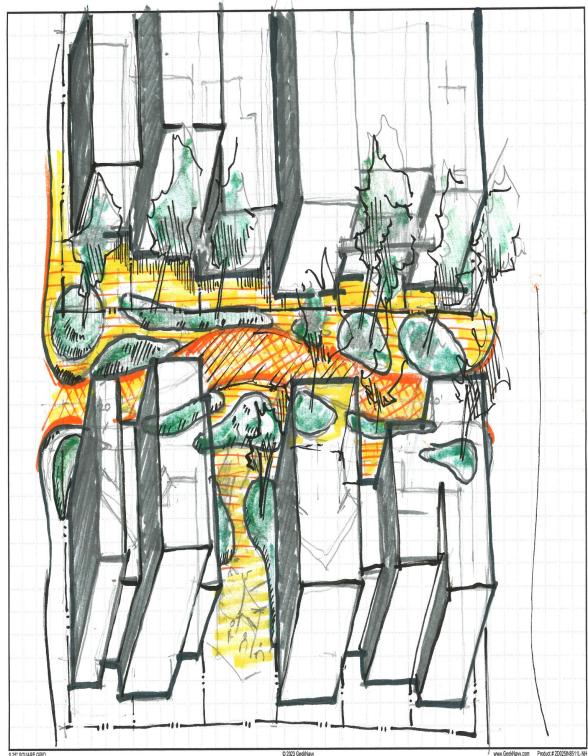
Goals:

- 1) Foster inclusivity
- 2) Promote vibrant neighborhoods

Attendance: 440

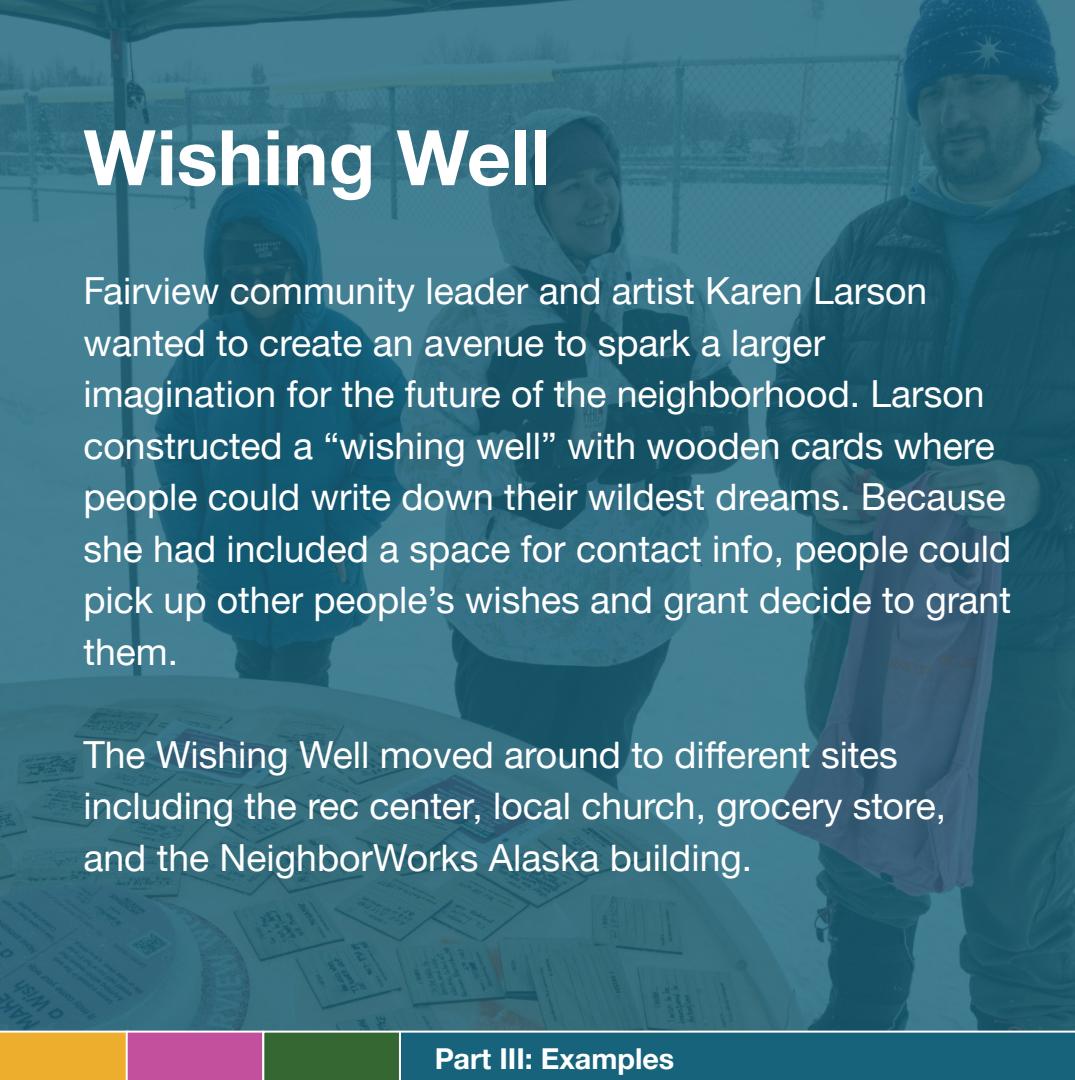
Status: active, annual





Community drawn maps from Anchorage Design Week's Fairview Greenway Research + Design Illustration Session, led by designer Lee Post. The "maps" include multiple kinds of perspectives, allowing residents to imagine Fairview as they see it.

Wishing Well



Fairview community leader and artist Karen Larson wanted to create an avenue to spark a larger imagination for the future of the neighborhood. Larson constructed a “wishing well” with wooden cards where people could write down their wildest dreams. Because she had included a space for contact info, people could pick up other people’s wishes and grant decide to grant them.

The Wishing Well moved around to different sites including the rec center, local church, grocery store, and the NeighborWorks Alaska building.



Quick Facts:

Task: How can we spark imagination around the future of Fairview?

Solution: Traveling participatory art installation

Key Partnerships: Artist, Voices of Fairview project, Anchorage Museum

Goals:

- 1) Engage residents’ imagination
- 2) Connect with different community groups
- 3) Connect residents to each other

Challenges: The sculpture was bulky and hard to move, creating tricky logistics.

Installation Locations: 8

Status: complete, on display



Fairview Wishing Well by Karen Larson

Fairview Wishing Well by Karen Larson



Part III: Examples



Fairview Block Party



The Fairview Block Party is an annual event put on by a variety of Fairview community groups and organizations that works to foster a sense of place, community and identity through celebrating local music, dancing, and fun.

The Block party also serves as an avenue for local organizations to engage with residents, facilitate new community connections, and promote the neighborhood across the city.



Quick Facts:

Task: How can we help connect our neighbors and friends and celebrate our neighborhood?

Solution: Neighborhood festival

Key Partnerships: Community groups, performers, vendors, sponsors, and volunteers

Goals:

- 1) Foster community
- 2) Celebrate assets
- 3) Build neighborhood pride

Participants Engaged: 350

Status: active, annual



Faces of Fairview Mural

Fairview is often treated as a neighborhood to pass through, not a place to get to. In an effort to change the narrative about Fairview, we are working to highlight and celebrate the community members who make the neighborhood so strong.

As the community initiative gears up for upcoming safety improvements along the roadway, the team also wants to center the voices and faces of Fairview along the corridor.



Quick Facts:

Task: How to change the look and feel of the corridor while reinforcing that it is a neighborhood worth paying attention to?

Solution: On-site photo mural with social media campaign (forthcoming)

Key Partnerships: Anchorage Museum, local photographer

Goals:

- 1) Bring the “Voices of Fairview” project into the road corridor
- 2) Celebrate community leaders and members
- 3) Remind residents of the project’s *why*

Participants Engaged: 30

Status: in development



Faces of Fairview Mural Project, Photos by Raye White

Push Back the Darkness

As a sub-arctic city, Anchorage has many months with little daylight and dark conditions. Fairview is taking a creative approach to make the mainstreet corridors exciting and safe year round by launching Push Back the Darkness. They are asking residents and business owners along the Gambell and Ingra corridors to place lights outside to highlight the roadway as a gateway to the neighborhood.

The group is offering to provide LED lights and extension cords, but engaging residents and business owners to power the lights and monitor them.

The group also secured a \$500 prize for the contest winner with the best display.



Quick Facts:

Task: How can we make the mainstreet corridors safe and active all-year round?

Solution: Decorative lighting contest

Key Partnerships: Fairview Business Association (sponsor), local businesses

Goals:

- 1) Promote activity on the corridor through the dark months
- 2) Increase pedestrian safety
- 3) Encourage participation by making it fun

Status: upcoming





Part IV: The Reflections

Lessons Learned

The successes, challenges, and opportunities
of an arts-integrated approach

Takeaways: What Has Led to Success



1



2



3

Adapting creative methods to respond to important problems

To address the issues it tackles, Fairview has explored many arts & cultural mediums—from light installations to public signage to walking tours—so that their art methods are the best fit for the challenges they face.

Letting artists and art projects be flexible and exploratory

Fairview didn't overprescribe what each art piece or project should be. Rather, the art components had lives of their own, and often inspired future ideas. The organic approach made the art feel authentic.

Going step by step, and integrating arts and culture at every stage.

Fairview has an intentional order to their development, starting with deep engagement and relationship building. As they move into the heavier lifts of infrastructure change and economic development, they have laid a creative foundation that they can continue to come back to.

Takeaways: What Has Led to Success



4

Incorporating creatives in leadership positions, and letting leaders be creative

The coalition doesn't just hire artists and creatives, these artists are key members of the leadership team, either as local residents, or as key institutional partners.



5

High quality documentation

Fairview puts their visual content front and center in their work! They use candid photos, videos, writes ups, and workshop content on their website and in their grant reports. These visuals create a clear image of who and what Fairview is, and make clear how meaningful their creative practice is.



6

The integration of past arts projects into future projects

Fairview used their festivals and events as a means to showcase past participatory art installations, extend past engagement efforts, and gather excitement for future efforts.

Takeaways: the Continued Challenges



1

Not every projects makes a huge splash

When operating with openness and flexibility, not every project will have the intended outcome or be a huge hit. It's important to remember the process is also important, and that these projects can still be sources of good learning.



2

There needs to be more training, tools, and resources for this work

Fairview would love to see this Network and other organizations offer capacity building and funding to continue doing this work. Currently, much arts funding comes from smaller grants which can be labor-intensive. There's room to grow!



3

Despite their documented impact, the arts aren't always seen as essential

Fairview has to continue to gather data, stories and documentation to make the case for the importance of arts and culture in their community development and transportation work. This is a challenge many communities face and can impact funding.

Takeaways: Opportunities to Keep Growing



1

Continuing to find budget for creative practice

While Fairview doesn't have a huge budget for their creative projects, they now have a track record (and great visuals) to keep applying for grants and make the case for creative approaches embedded in their work



2

Developing relationships with bigger institutions, such as the University of Alaska, Anchorage

Universities can be incredible partners, but sometimes the academic calendar and competing interests can make it difficult to align with community projects. Fairview has been working on developing this relationship, but it has been slow going.



3

Bigger projects with bigger impact

As *Reconnecting Fairview* enters into the meatier stages of the project, there's room for arts-integrations to be bigger and deeper, such as with public art, and creative economic development planning. These efforts will require more capacity, funding, and deeper integration with the core components of the project work.



Thank you.

Report and design by Lilith Winkler-Schor and
Mallory Rukshana Nezam of Justice + Joy

Thank you to Lindsey Hajduk of NeighborWorks
Alaska. All imagery property of NeighborWorks
Alaska, and the Fairness for Fairview initiative.

Report & Design:



justicejoy.com

Imagery courtesy of:

