



18SAC as neighborhood with 18SAC artists as neighbors diagram by Sara Daleiden

Being Well 18th Street Arts Center Development Model Concept

Cross-Campus Arts Center as Neighborhood with Artists as Neighbors in Santa Monica, California, United States of America within Tongva Land

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Our landscapes in Santa Monica, as in our Los Angeles region overall, often feel fragmented, even when in proximity. Our land use decisions that influence how and where we live and work

are frequently made from that experience of fragmentation. Based in 18th Street Arts Center (18SAC) [Core Values](#), we seek to build a translatable model for sensitive development that strengthens differences among neighbors and transitions among neighborhoods to network a healthy city. This model begins with growing a core network of artist-neighbors versed in the arts, land and real estate advocacy. We seek inventive public and private alignments so we can play with the forces of power that dictate timelines and script access to land and other resources, all in the spirit of cultivating critical civic engagement. We recognize both the possibility and responsibility of creating environments that meet the needs and dreams of neighbors, to amplify the authentic local cultures in our neighborhoods and to respect the breadth of cultural groups in our city. So our city can feel whole, while also feeling permeable and responsive, as we navigate our health together, and prioritize being well.

For our development model, we suggest perception of:

- 18SAC as a neighborhood built of two campuses: Airport and Olympic
- 18SAC artists as cross-campus neighbors practicing cultural exchange to:
 - grow market around our art practices.
 - activate the streets in and around our neighborhood with our artwork (see [Recovery Justice: Being Well](#) artist projects created by 18SAC artists from both campuses).
 - imagine the neighborhood growing with us included long-term.
 - build civic engagement muscles as a neighbor group.
 - enjoy each other's company and feel a sense of belonging among us.
- Neighborhood as the experience of attachment and impact around a neighbor or neighbor group:
 - which can import and export diverse cultural values over time.
 - where existing cultures are present and identifiable, and new cultures can be woven in with respect.
 - with different scales and locations of live-work activities.
 - where a neighbor can feel at the center of a daily radius or within a network of multiple sites that aren't contiguous.
- City of Santa Monica as a network of neighborhoods with overlapping and fluid boundaries, connected through a sense of belonging to land.
- City of Santa Monica and 18SAC as a dream team for expanding partnerships and modes of collaboration to build civic health, equity and poetics.

We suggest the restructuring or recovery of the City of Santa Monica government, based in the recent innovation with Cultural Affairs' [Art of Recovery](#) initiative, embraces arts strategies during our pandemic of COVID-19, racism and other public health sensitivities where:

- Artists are embedded in government decision-making and core functions to offer cultural perspectives, potentially through a dedicated artist position in each department, council or other aspect of the government body.
- Art centers become government centers where neighbors can access and participate in government functions while exploring cultural perspectives.

We suggest applying aspects of the City of Santa Monica's [Wellbeing Index](#) to evaluate our 18SAC artists' experiences as neighbors in the 18SAC neighborhood. See collaborator Susannah Laramée Kidd's analysis of the 2021 18SAC campus artist survey for reference.

Being Well is what we seek together as neighbors. Reversing “well” and “being” shifts the concept from passive to active as an expression of our focus to co-produce our neighborhoods, as a basis for co-producing our city. To explore what version of democracy can be possible now within the global port of Greater Santa Monica, within Tongva land, within the Southern California region, within the nation of the United States of America. Being well is both an inward and outward experience no matter where we begin, and so a neighborhood can be made of multiple kinds of people in multiple kinds of places as an approach to belonging.

What we know about our planetary unwellness shows that interconnectivity is real whether we like it, admit it, or not. As a civic facilitator effervescing with contemporary arts resources, 18SAC can critically engage flows running inside and outside its flexible borders, be they physical, discursive, or administrative. Let's look at two case studies, one artistic, one organizational, that may serve as prompts for our imagination.

Case Study Reference I

Sarah Bergmann's [Pollinator Pathway](#) reminds us that when native plants are well, pollinating occurs, which makes everybody else well, too. Its stated aims are “to connect the dots on fragmented landscapes” and in so doing, focus on designing and building a healthier relationship between systems. The project helps to reinstate biodiversity and reframe the cultural narrative about the built and natural environment.

The project's pilot is in Seattle, Washington, is composed of 20 sites, and connects a park with a campus, using streetscape and private space along the way. Each garden on the project is individually funded, researched and designed. By working in partnership with a garden designer, the organizers created a coherent, unified design across the whole project. Plants on the project are primarily native, and are carefully researched for pollinator appeal, human enjoyment, city requirements, drought tolerance and ease of care. Homeowners are responsible for maintaining their gardens. Through the stewardship program, more gardens are continually added.

As an expanding project, some basic criteria for new sites are laid out as follows:

- *Connect Landscape*: The first definition of a Pollinator Pathway is that it connects two green spaces. This is easier to do if you're a utility corridor, and much harder to do if you're a homeowner gathering a network.
- *Partner and Collaborate Across Fields*: Solving big problems requires collaboration. For every project, a partnership between ecologists and designers is essential.

- *Maintain High Standards of Civic Design:* Design is important – especially in human-dominated landscapes. A Pollinator Pathway’s emphasis on native plants means they require extra planning to ensure lasting design.
- *Meet Ecological Standards:* All new projects use very high minimum percentages of native plants, are hardy/drought tolerant, meet pollinator requirements, and are pesticide free.
- *Don’t displace density:* In an urban context, a Pollinator Pathway is about not displacing urban density. This means using Transfer of Development, or, at minimum, only using underused space.
- *Have long-term maintenance plans:* You are building a system for other species. A Pollinator Pathway must be cared for, for the long haul.

As a method and a metaphor, this case study may be useful for 18SAC and the City of Santa Monica to consider. Releasing our understanding of a city as a grid with concise edges, and instead imagining a city as a fertile landscape for many degrees and locations of cross-pollination can set the tone for being well.

Case Study Reference II

[The Village of Arts and Humanities](#) in the neighborhood of North Philadelphia is an example of a long-standing neighborhood arts organization working from a civic ethos with communities and the city. Founded as an action to transform neglected urban space into public art, today it pursues initiatives such as:

- *SPACES residency program*, which invites artists from around the world to live and work on its campus and work with community members who are paid as collaborators for the duration of the residency. The teams identify gifts and challenges in the neighborhood, and create an arts-based response using the artists’ media and the residents’ expertise.
- *Civic Power Studio*, which provides state-of-the art media equipment to study how power operates, to amplify existing neighborhood power; and to build new systems of power that are rooted in care rather than control.
- *The Accelerator Residency*, which invests in neighborhood artists so they can rapidly prototype and evolve their creative ideas for nurturing community relationships.
- *The Generator Residency*, which brings together neighbors, artists and field experts to research, design, and beta-test community wealth-building strategies for the neighborhood.
- *The Elder Fellowship*, which honors and formalizes a community member’s leadership role within the organization, and creates a pathway for other community members in the future to step into a formalized advising capacity.
- Additionally, as part of its *Equitable Neighborhood Development Initiative*, The Village manages the Germantown Ave Commercial Corridor. The organization acts as a bridge between property and business owners with city agencies and resource providers to resolve issues. It also provides services such as daily cleaning of the sidewalk and greening. The Village is a *Registered Community Organization (RCO)*, which is an official community group concerned with the physical development of their community.

The RCO program is a function of the Philadelphia Zoning Code that is overseen by the City Planning Commission.