

Imagining America/Connective Corridor Meeting
Friday, September 21, 2007
SU Warehouse

Notes from Group Discussions

Group One: Moderated by Eric Persons, Director of Engagement Initiatives
Syracuse University

Q: Who or what is missing from the Connective Corridor mission, as you perceive its mission to be? Who or what organizations beyond the physical limitations of the Corridor would/could/should be involved?

- For profit organizations like the Delavan
- The arts need to have the soul of the community; right now, we don't have that soul even though we are a significant part of the city. By the soul, I mean we need to have strong 2-way support and understanding with arts organizations reaching out into the community – a vital component to our missions as community organization to engage and interact – and in return, have the community be willing to support the arts; a strong social and political will
 - City/government needs to become more involved and adopt, for example, a 1% tax sharing program to support the arts
- Should be focusing on the dynamic that is emerging in around West Street with the Warehouse – Redhouse – Delavan and the Near West Side Initiative...this should be an area of focus
- Cannot neglect local artists and their needs; make this more of a grass roots effort by empowering local artists to contribute to the process
- Have the Connective Corridor become a model for community development, community art, etc.
- The Corridor needs to be tangible to the community, especially to parents and families, such as events that will attract and engage people in a way that they can relate to the arts and related to the over purpose of the Corridor in bring people back into the downtown area
- Concern: are we just creating intellectual things that really aren't needed or understood by the broader community?
- We need to get teachers, particularly art education teachers and students working with the arts organizations in town and with the broader community
 - Have activities and events that parents and kids **want** to attend
 - Remove the insulation of art education...get teachers to know what is out there

- The SU Warehouse is one of many sites downtown; there are several other cultural resources and organizations that are still not accessible to the community
- Need to truly understand the real barriers in this town on a cultural level; there's a problem of perceptions versus reality. Barriers include
 - Deep ethnic and cultural divides
 - Political
 - Economic
- Think of these barriers (above) and figure out how the Corridor can feed off into other communities
- A great example: the arts organizations in this room, they are formal "white" institutions that have the kinds of organizational relationships that make it easier for them to be at the table. In African American/minority communities, there is a great cultural presence with activities and other efforts but they are informally organized as social networks – we need to figure out how to tap into those informal social networks so other communities can participate in the broader vision of the Corridor.
- Need to facilitate a cultural exchange program *within* our community; inner-community exchange between neighborhoods, ethnicities, etc
- Too many meetings...we just need to get going; trying to get everyone's input all the time will slow this down
- ...versus, the importance of including all group from the bottom up; allow ideas to originate from the bottom up, and then into action
- Arts organizations, community groups, etc not in downtown or on the Hill face a dilemma: as good as an idea the Corridor is, how can we neglect the needs in our own neighborhood; it's hard to get people and organizations to invest the time, energy and resources into another areas when they face very real problems next door
- Need to somehow find a way for community development policies and the arts to come together; generally its an either/or situation; how can we get them to lock together
- Need to think of the Corridor beyond its physical space; think of the Corridor as a conceptual space with many opportunities to connect within the community
- How do we allow/tech/relate the trickle down goals of the Corridor?
- How can smaller groups and communities build their own "corridors"

Group Two: Moderated by Jan Cohen-Cruz, Executive Director, Imagining America

Q: What kind of shared marketing or communication tools exist?

- Two things: 1) Shared website. 2) Computer program that dispenses tickets. A system for all Syracuse fee-based services would be useful to everybody. May be a million dollar investment, but if one could go to one place for any event. Could vendors come in, do the survey, bid, figure out how to pay for it. Check out Pittsburgh site.
- ...A close behind is 3) signage. Throughout downtown we currently have poor signage. Hard to find where you are going. Could be plugged into CC. When the CC Centro signs went in recently people around community said, something is happening here. Sign of what it is AND of activity, that something is coming out of 2 yrs of meetings.
- Few resources, major artist showings, still have 1500 piece mailing list. So getting word out is a priority.
- Many people don't know about events until afterwards. How to market before hand?
- What about listserv that people sign up for, fed through the University?
- PULSE did major service, putting out a broad calendar, generated a lot of audience. It was in the Sunday newspaper. And given to all SU students. This year they didn't do.
 - They did a small one this year.
 - Ee didn't get one. In NYC there's some kind of pamphlet about every arts org – an arts guide. We could distribute places like next to the CC display case at the airport.
 - Student affairs rep should be here like Eileen Stempel.
- There won't be one comprehensive website site. There are about half a dozen. Theirs is "opt in" where people input their info, his org reviews, edits and puts it up. And there's Syracuse.Com. And 4 or 5 sports sites. Once everyone links to everyone else its comprehensive, with links highlighted to other people's websites. So you still have control of your own orgs, and this takes care of trust issues, e.g., people not wanting to share donor lists, etc.
- The issue: Educating everyone to know where to look and time to develop it. And one central place for the Syracuse Convention and Visitors Bureau Division to use. Because it's equally for people from out of town. It will take a year or two to let people know its here.
 - With funding for additional staff person, it can be done much faster.

- Question is how would one IT person handle it, probably at Syr Visitors Bureau by reaching out through its spokes.
- Incredible about staffing this would be – if each of us has an audience or membership list we try to reach, designing emails in a format that combines a banner for the specific org but follows a shared form making it easy to read.
- Also—given our arts/ cultural offerings—and also the educational/ community/ development programs coming out of these organizations—we have to approach this whole idea of marketing and communications same way we always do: who is our audience? 1. visitors from out of town and 2. residents. Keep that audience in mind with everything we do.
- Hope the group discussing Q#1 is addressing question of who's the customer/ audience.
- This is an effort of consolidation we've been talking about for years. Underlines one single box office idea. One stop. Problem of some orgs not knowing what they are doing w/enough lead-time. (On-center) This is a foundation for a whole bridge that serves this project. 60% of people plan their vacations on the internet. If we can get them to buy e-tickets while same time planning a vacation, we'd have them.
- Planners for “education thru arts and minds” are working on a central web location where teachers can link what's happening in the arts locally to classwork.
 - Yes, that's the 2nd area: Partnerships for Better Education, SU's & other universities' collaborations w/ the city school system w SU profs, and students. It's gathering steam.
 - A 3rd area: professional arts orgs hooking up with community groups outside school system.
 - Other colleges and universities are not represented here and need to be; part of Partnership for Better Ed.
- If we can get students while they're young and get them interested...
- Development of technology is bonus for us. Gets to majority of people we need to reach. Tying this into 05 and 06 Rand Report: these aren't answers, just examples. Not one model for every city. These meetings are important to identify our own assets and resources. All arts and culture organizations need to reorganize funding from ground up. Fine to centralize but not instead of bottom up, people anyone can join in, thru their own efforts, can be broad based but all the players at table must contribute. Even if managed centrally.
- Regarding sharing of resources, some people don't have computers but everyone has TV. I've known *Phantom* is coming forever. Could all the arts be promoted throughout the year, on TV and billboards? And arts coverage in tv, etc.

Group Three: Moderated by Laura Reader, Executive Director, Partners for Arts Education and President, Arts and Culture Leadership Alliance

Q: Beyond the Corridor: Is there a willingness to share resources/efforts, or collaboratively pursue needed resources to accomplish specific goals? What are the limitations we need to acknowledge?

- That's a loaded question: The Corridor IS central anyway
- Looks like we are redefining the Corridor. i.e Westside Development...can it be again redefine here?

- "Sharing" resources is immediately beyond the capacity of organizations. Many struggle already. What is the financial value of the time to meet, etc? What is the cost of collaboration?

- Synergy/sharing/cost savings opportunities include:
 - Box office
 - Events/themes
 - Back office operations
 - Calendars
 - Websites (the master site)
 - Communication personnel
 - Promotions, such as TH3
 - Fund development/funders

- Whose job? Whose focus? Whose money? Where is the master plan?

- We must push past the meetings and make things happen!
- Policy and criteria as a promise

- What if we just have no resources? Volunteers, individuals, young/struggling organizations, students, etc
- Is there a place for more/new sharing? Time? Lists? What *are* the needs which everyone shares? (i.e. Gallery space, contact lists)

- Categorize resource areas:
 - Volunteers
 - Communication
 - Information
 - Physical Space
 - Some grants/regranting
 - Professional skills/Training ability: technical assistance
 - Existing partnerships
 - Technology
 - Existing programming
 - Assessment tools and goal
 - Boards/Advisors

Notes from Report out and Open Discussion

- Missing from CC: dance. Parents Promoting Dance is seeking to acquire a facility in CC.
- Syracuse Center for the Arts (former Christian Science Org) is working to become more involved with programs; need to make it a venue for classic music, etc.
- Are there artists studios?
- Yes, at Delavan.
- Need to incorporate nature and natural resources into the plan; natural environment in important part of our culture.
- SU is talking about working with the Center of Excellence to make the Near West Side Initiative a green project. The creek walk in envisioned as an important component to the Corridor, not only for downtown but a natural connector into the south side
- Need to include the library system (they are part of ACLA)
- More inclusion of for profit entities.
- Continually conceptualize CC as a bigger idea about making connections. Both a physical space and broader idea of making connections.
- Be cautious to come back home to rich cultural ideas, integrity as artists and scholars, even as we also have these social goals.
- Maybe call this “A connective corridor,” not THE connective corridor.
- Sometimes we sent out marketing materials before we have the ideas.
- Leave room for additional partners to come to table. And sense of pride: we are taking steps as we can and will expand.
- International and national dimension: zoom in and out of the local. See bigger picture.
- Get kids voices in here somewhere; make sure they are respected and invited as a stakeholder in this
- Hope we don’t need a label like the Connective Corridor, in a year or two because people will already know we’re a creative community.

- Suggestion to add to CC website a local page on this topic. CC site is ready to launch a blog, need someone to manage.
- Everyone here is doing stuff, reinventing. How can we leverage what's already here by knowing what's happening.
- Role of local government. Elections coming up. Finding out where the candidates and current government officials stand on this.

Wrap Up by Eric Persons

Yes, we've been to many meetings, and have our frustrations even today. What's important is what happens next. Something tangible. Couple things I'm already seeing from this discussion: (1) idea of calendar of some kind. Just met a potential donor from a software company looking to do something along the Corridor in this regard; (2) How we can partner to create events, build on what's taking place around the city and tweak it for more relevance to the entire community throughout the city/region....We three will process all this information and throw some ideas back to you.