

Irrigate

St. Paul, Minnesota

Laura Zabel
Executive Director, Springboard for the Arts



Artist Dianne E'Laine leads participants in the dance she choreographed to her song, *The Light Rail Shuffle*.

2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DATA



PROJECT DATA

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

Project Name _____ Location _____ City _____ State _____

Owner _____

Project Use(s) _____

Project Size _____ Total Development Cost _____

Annual Operating Budget (if appropriate) _____

Date Initiated _____ Percent Completed by December 1, 2014 _____

Project Completion Date (if appropriate) _____ Project Website (if appropriate) _____

Attach, if you wish, a list of relevant project dates _____

Application submitted by:

Name _____ Title _____

Organization _____

Address _____ City/State/Zip _____

Telephone () _____ Fax () _____

E-mail _____ Website (if appropriate) _____

Perspective Sheets:

Organization _____ Name _____ E-mail _____

Public Agencies _____

Architect/Designer _____

Developer _____

Professional Consultant _____

Community Group _____

Other _____

Please indicate how you learned of the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*. (Check all that apply).

- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Direct Mailing | Direct Email | Previous Selection Committee member | Other (please specify) |
| Online Notice | Previous RBA entrant | Professional Organization | _____ |
| | Social Media | Bruner/Loeb Forum | |

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Signature _____ Date _____

**2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PROJECT
AT-A-GLANCE**



PROJECT AT-A-GLANCE

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

This sheet, the Project Data sheet, and the representative photo will be sent to the Committee in advance as the *Project Overview*.

Project Name _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

1. Give a brief overview of the project. Approximately 500 words.

2. Why does the project merit the *Rudy Bruner Award for Urban Excellence*? (You may wish to consider such factors as: effect on the urban environment; innovative or unique approaches to any aspect of project development; new and creative approaches to urban issues; design quality.) Approximately 500 words.

2015 RUDY BRUNER AWARD PROJECT DESCRIPTION



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please answer questions in space provided. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on the forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the question to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

1. Describe the underlying values and goals of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs were required to implement the project? Approximately 500 words.

2. Briefly describe the project's urban context. How has the project impacted the local community? Who does the project serve? How many people are served by the project? Approximately 500 words.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (CONT'D)

3. Describe the key elements of the development process, including community participation where appropriate. Approximately 400 words.

4. Describe the financing of the project. Please include all funding sources and square foot costs where applicable. Approximately 400 words.

5. Is the project unique and/or does it address significant urban issues? Is the model adaptable to other urban settings? Approximately 400 words.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
PUBLIC AGENCY
PERSPECTIVE



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This sheet is to be filled out by staff representative(s) of public agency(ies) who were directly involved in the financing, design review, or public approvals that affected this project.

Name	Jake Spano	Title	Marketing Director
Organization	City of Saint Paul	Telephone	(651) 266-8527
Address	15 Kellogg Blvd West	City/State/ZIP	Saint Paul, MN 55102
Fax ()		E-mail	jake.spano@stpaul.gov

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Signature ? Jake Spano

Digitally signed by Jake Spano
DN: cn=Jake Spano, o.ou, email=coldspice@gmail.com, c=US
Date: 2014.12.09 05:55:47 -0600

Date 12/8/14

1. What role did your agency play in the development of this project? Describe any requirements made of this project by your agency (e.g., zoning, public participation, public benefits, impact statements). Approximately 400 words.

The city of Saint Paul was one of three key players in the formulation, implementation and execution of the Irrigate project largely through conceptual development of the Irrigate framework. After that Springboard for the Arts handled the process of facilitating artist led projects on properties both public and private. Given the temporary nature of the projects, and the fact that many of them happened on private property, this project didn't experience the "heavy hand" of administrative rules as many projects might have which were more permanent in nature which require a formal arts review process, public input, approvals, etc. In fact, this project was designed in such a way as to not encumber artists, businesses, and neighborhoods with a clumsy administrative yoke in order to provide them the greatest perceived, and real, freedom to do their work.

Irrigate is an artist-led creative place making initiative in Saint Paul, Minnesota that changed the landscape of a six mile corridor undergoing massive transit construction through 150 collaborative artist projects, hundreds of new relationships and stories, millions of individual experiences and 30 million positive media impressions. Irrigate partners, Springboard for the Arts, Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation and the City of Saint Paul recognized that the construction of the Green Line Light Rail Transit through the heart of the city's commercial corridor was a unique opportunity to bring together huge infrastructure development, a high concentration of resident artists on both ends of the corridor, a diverse ethnic and cultural mix among the neighborhoods, and a city with a strong track record of artist community engagement.

By mobilizing artists to engage in their community by providing a training in creative place making and collaboration, and an invitation to do a modest collaborative project, over the short term, Irrigate changed the visual and experiential landscape of the area with color, art, surprise, creativity and fun and created a different narrative for the neighborhoods. Over the long term, Irrigate created new cross-sector relationships and ways of working between local artists and community organizations and businesses that outlast the construction period. Irrigate's primary impacts are to:

2. How was this project intended to benefit your city? What trade-offs and compromises were required to implement the project? How did your agency participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

Really in three distinct ways but in order to understand the true value of the project you need to understand that Saint Paul has a tortured history of poor planning decisions especially as it relates to transit and transportation planning. Simply Google "Rondo neighborhood / I-94" and you will see what the construction of the I-94 freeway between Minneapolis and Saint Paul did to the Twin Cities only thriving, middle class African American neighborhood (and it's never recovered). Mayor Chris Coleman was determined not to repeat those mistakes by engaging in a deliberate process that would leverage the creative community to do three things:

1. By connecting neighbors and businesses in an effort to get them to determine their own visions for creative projects in the corridor, we sought to build social capital and relationships in the community.
2. By connecting artists and businesses to engage in projects in/on their properties, we hoped to increase business for those impacted by the lengthy construction cycle and it worked. 65% of community collaborators reported an increase in retail sales, exposure to new clients or community attention for their business or organization through their work with Irrigate.
3. By engaging the corridor in this way, we wanted to provide some positive results for the community to demonstrate that Mayor Coleman was not about to allow a similar result as was seen in Rondo. In turn, this created a new narrative for the neighborhood. Suddenly the press was writing about positive projects and how many businesses were being saved by this project. Further, the publics attention turned to how many businesses were moving into the corridor not out. While this may seem small, the impact of a constant barrage of negative press on a community can be devastating not just for the business community but for everyone.

PUBLIC AGENCY PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Describe the project's impact on your city. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

4. Did this project result in new models of public/private partnerships? Are there aspects of this project that would be instructive to agencies like yours in other cities? Approximately 400 words.

5. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
DEVELOPER
PERSPECTIVE



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This sheet is to be filled out by the person who took primary responsibility for project financing or is a representative of the group which did.

Name	Andriana Abariotes	Title	Executive Director
Organization	Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation	Telephone (651)	265-2292
Address	570 Asbury Street, Suite 207	City/State/ZIP	Saint Paul, MN 55104
Fax (651)	649-1112	E-mail	aabariotes@lisc.org

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Signature ? 	Date	12/09/2014
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1. What role did you or your company play in the development of this project? Describe the scope of involvement. Approximately 400 words.

Irrigate was, from the outset, a partnership between the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Springboard for the Arts and the City of St. Paul. Each partner brought its own unique set of skills and interests to the table. One of the most important elements of Irrigate is the partnership between an organization focused on helping artists and the arts, an organization focused predominately on traditional community development outcomes and a municipal government.

LISC brought a set of values and a perspective to the table, particularly in the early stages of the project that helped influence its overall direction, the outcomes and impact it was able to achieve. Specifically, LISC is interested in comprehensive community development – how to develop the human and social capital and connections in communities that can lead to both the physical transformation of places and the accrual of economic benefits for people, particularly low-income and people of color.

LISC also provided a set of relationships, particularly with more “traditional” community developers such as producers of affordable housing and small business developers that Irrigate was able to leverage throughout the project. This helped inform the partnerships and some of the focus for Irrigate.

While Springboard for the Arts provided day-to-day management and implementation responsibilities, LISC was on the leadership team and provided on-going and regular guidance and oversight for the overall initiative.

2. What trade-offs or compromises were required during the development of the project? Approximately 400 words.

Irrigate has had an incredible impact on the community in terms of creation of human and social capital, physical transformation of place and generating economic benefits for businesses.

First, Irrigate helped artists develop a greater sense of agency – that rather than just being a victim of the construction of the light-rail, they could do something that could impact their neighborhood. Irrigate projects in turn impacted not only the artists, but also the participants – residents, businesses and visitors. It changed how people felt about their neighborhood and how visitors experienced the place. The projects also brought people together in new and interesting ways, forming new connections and bonds between people and between people to the neighborhood. Irrigate transformed the physical landscape. By doing over 150 projects along the corridor, Irrigate created visible change in the community. It made places look more beautiful and cared for. One observer noted that it was like the “broken windows” theory – Irrigate supported projects that showed people cared for this place. Having small, beautiful, highly visible signs of hope and that people – particularly artists who lived, worked, and/or had some other connection to the community cared and were willing to do something about improving the place had a “ripple effect” that invited and charged other artists and residents do something too. Physical transformation of place is critical in that it is a visible and intelligible indicator of progress and that people care about a place.

Irrigate provided economic benefits to the businesses in both the near-term and the long-term. Construction of the light-rail line was very difficult for businesses. Irrigate helped attract customers during this difficult time and helped boost sales. Importantly, Irrigate also helped change the narrative of the Central Corridor as a place where it was difficult to get to and there was limited parking to a place where interesting, fun, cool and hip stuff was happening on a regular basis. This helped reposition the Central Corridor and the businesses along it in the overall marketplace which will have a long-term impact on the bottom-line for neighborhood businesses.

Finally, Irrigate has impacted how LISC and our partners think about and approach our work. Specifically, it has provided “proof of concept” for how the arts can impact community development and shown how “many smalls” can have a big impact. This has resulted in LISC establishing a new national Creative Placemaking Initiative that draws heavily from Irrigate.

3. How was the project financed? What, if any, innovative means of financing were used? Approximately 400 words.

4. What do you consider to be the most and least successful aspects of the project? Approximately 400 words.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
COMMUNITY
REPRESENTATIVE
PERSPECTIVE



COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE

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This sheet is to be filled out by someone who was involved, or represents an organization that was involved, in helping the project respond to neighborhood issues.

Name _____ Title _____

Organization _____ Telephone () _____

Address _____ City/State/ZIP _____

Fax () _____ E-mail _____

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Signature  _____ Date _____

1. How did you, or the organization you represent, become involved in this project? What role did you play? Approximately 400 words.

2. From the community's point of view, what were the major issues concerning this project? Approximately 400 words.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE PERSPECTIVE (CONT'D)

3. Has this project made the community a better place to live or work? If so, how? Approximately 400 words.

4. Would you change anything about this project or the development process you went through? Approximately 400 words.

2015
RUDY BRUNER AWARD
OTHER
PERSPECTIVE

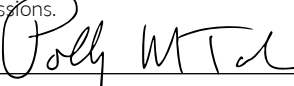


OTHER PERSPECTIVE

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Signature		Date
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1. What role did you play in the development of this project? Approximately 400 words.

2. Describe the impact that this project has had on the your community. Please be as specific as possible. Approximately 400 words.

3. What trade-offs and compromises were required during the development of the project? Did you participate in making them? Approximately 400 words.

4. What do you consider to be the the most and least successful aspects of this project? Approximately 400 words.

irrigate

Visual Representation

Light Rail Shuffle

Artist: Dianne E'Laine

**Site: Arnellia's Nite Club, 1183 University Ave. St. Paul
Community Collaborator: Arnellia Allen**

Artist Dianne E'Laine wrote, performed and recorded a song, the Light Rail Shuffle, that connected the 60's era destruction of the predominantly African-American Rondo neighborhood to the current construction of the Green Line LRT through the same neighborhoods. The song expresses the hope that unlike the Interstate freeway construction that destroyed Rondo, this time things are different, while acknowledging community trepidation and historical fears.

An essential part of her project was the choreographed dance that E'Laine taught to participants at the inaugural event and multiple events afterwards. The song and shared dance together at events provided a starting point and conversation piece.



The Black Dog

Artists: Chris Lutter-Gardella, Rene Meyer-Grimberg
Site: Black Dog Café: 308 Prince St. Saint Paul
Community Collaborator: Stacy Remke, Black Dog Café

Artists Chris Lutter-Gardella and Rene Meyer-Grimberg created a neighborhood mascot as an ambassador of hope and renewal, drawing attention to areas affected by construction to encourage patronage of local businesses. In collaboration with The Black Dog Café, the artists built a large scale two person puppet of a Big Black Dog and hosted a community workshop to put hair on the puppet, engaging the community in co-creating the identity and following the Black Dog's creation and travels. A social media campaign documented the events and generated communication between the community, the café, and the Big Black Dog - the Ambassador – Now called Prince Java the Mutt.



irrigate

Really Big Table Project

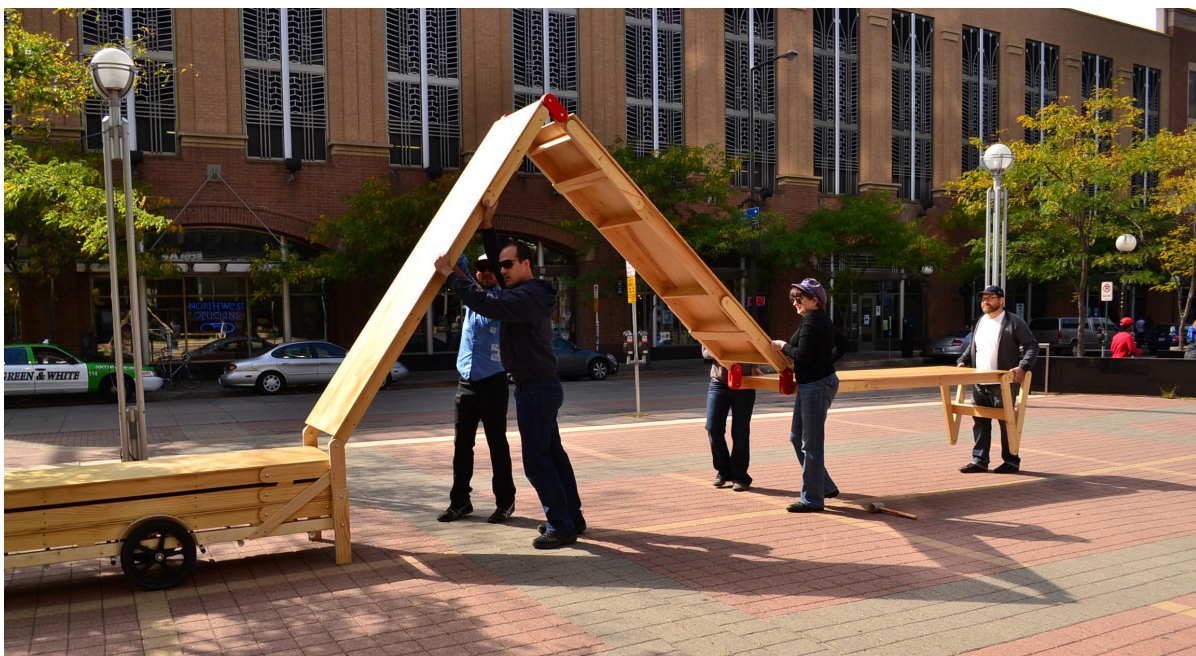
Artists: Amanda Lovelee and Colin Harris

Site: Public plaza on Wabasha St, downtown St. Paul

Community Collaborator: Peet Fetsch--Big Table Studio

Artists Amanda Lovelee & Colin Harris created a bike-trailerable, collapsible 25-foot table that functions as a gathering space and activates streetscapes, initially in a public plaza in downtown Saint Paul, and currently all over the Twin Cities.

Through its modular construction, the table is easily transported throughout the urban landscape by bicycle. The table acts as an accordion book that holds, tells, and creates stories through the use of technology and participation. The table can be set up anywhere accessible by bike to create an instant place for conversation and connection.



Flamenco Christmas on the Green Line: A Processional of Song and Dance

Artist: Deborah Elias

Sites: University Avenue from Victoria Street to Western Avenue.

Community Collaborator: Kathleen Conger, Rondo Library

Artist Deborah Elias brought color, music, and festivity to a one-mile stretch of University Avenue (Victoria to Western) through a traveling flash mob of flamenco singers and dancers.

The project built on the zambomba tradition in Southern Spain where neighbors gather informally in the streets at Christmastime to sing villancicos, or flamenco Christmas carols. The Procession made stops at 10 pre-arranged sites along the route and performed 5-minute flashmobs in locations like a corner market and the fire station. The Procession ended with a celebration at a University Ave restaurant, Ngon Bistro.



Relight the Victoria

Artist: Nick Clausen

Site: The Victoria Theater, 825 University Ave., St Paul

Community Collaborator: Bee and Lamena Vue—Vue Properties

Artist Nick Clausen filmed the Iny Asian Dance Theater doing traditional dances that reflect the vibrancy and culture of University Avenue. Clausen then rear-projected the video on the windows of the now vacant Victoria Theater along University Avenue.

The collaborators on the project were the Victoria Theater's property owners, Bee and Lamena Vue. Their hope for the project was that it would draw attention to the property and allow for someone to buy the property and restore it to its original grandeur.



Saint Anthony Park Wayfinding Bikes

Artist: Carrie Christensen

Site: St Anthony Park Neighborhood, St Paul

Community Collaborator: Saint Anthony Park Community Council (SAPCC)

Artist Carrie Christensen developed an eco-friendly wayfinding art project to encourage non-motorized transit in and around the Saint Anthony Park Neighborhood. A number of decorated bikes with distance and directional signs were placed around the neighborhood to promote and celebrate biking and walking in the neighborhood. The signage is not only a great tool for current pedestrians and cyclists but aims increase automobile driver awareness of the presence of walking and biking in the area, inspire more non-motorized transit, and communicate a sense of neighborhood identity and history.



Greek in the Street

Artists: Gonzo Group members, Luke Weber, Jennifer Harrington, and Cassia Harder

Site: Frogtown Square-- 663 University Ave. St. Paul
Community Collaborator: Tait Danielson-Castillo, Frogtown Neighborhood Association

Inspired by their Frogtown surroundings, artists Luke Weber, Jennifer Harrington, and Cassia Harder put on a production of Aristophanes' "The Frogs," a Greek comedy. The production ran over two weekends with four 90-minute performances.

A parking lot at Frogtown Square was the stage for the actors, the artists chose this location in the hope of encouraging audience members to frequent one of the many restaurants in the two-block radius of Dale and University Avenues. Another benefit of the location was to create an opportunity for passers-by to stop and enjoy a Greek play. Pre-performance time saw food trucks along with family-friendly games and activities.



Letters of Thai Cafe

Artists: Kathy Mouacheupao and Katie Ka Vang
Site: Thai Café , 371 University Ave W, St Paul
Community Collaborator: Yuwadee Poophakumpanart, owner of Thai Cafe

Artists Kathy Mouacheupao and Katie Ka Vang asked patrons of the Thai Café to write a letter which was then hung on the line in the restaurant's window. Anyone could take a letter and write and leave one in exchange.

Each of the two letter writing exchanges started out with a welcome and introduction of the artists and Thai Café owner, Yuwadee and an explanation of the project. People would then be invited to write a letter, leave a letter, eat and socialize. The letter exchange was simple. Provided materials: different types of paper and blank cards, envelopes and pens. Participants provided the time, thought and content for the letters.

Artists provided a prompt: "If you could say or write anything without being worried about judgment and be guaranteed that someone would read it, what would you write?" Once letters were written, they were sealed in an envelope and hung on the line in the window of Thai Café.

Letters hung on the line could be taken by anyone. And, in return participants could write a letter and leave one for someone else.



Paddlewheel-Peoplewheel

Artists: Steve Bougie, Richard Fuller

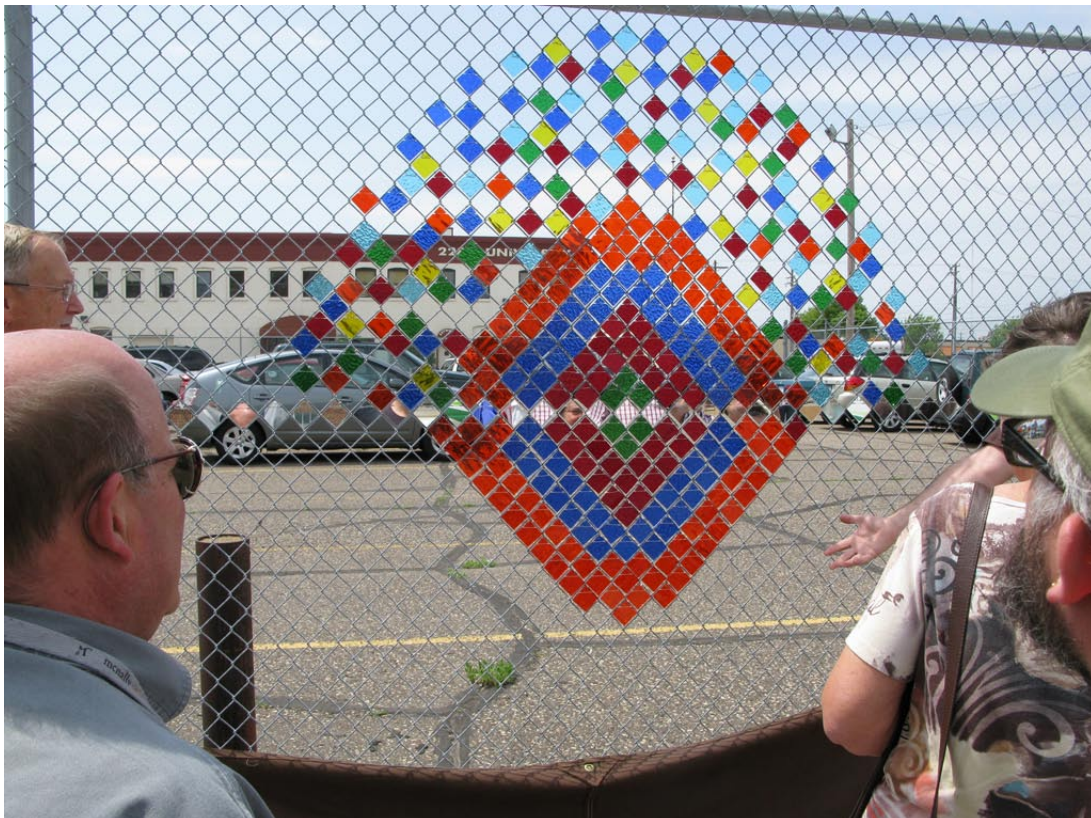
Site: Fence at 2290 University Ave. Saint Paul

Community Collaborator: Brad Johnson - Arcadia Management

Artists Steve Bougie and Richard Fuller created a stained glass piece installation in a chain link fence, which can be seen at University and Raymond Avenue.

With the property owner, Steve and Richard settled on the image of a paddlewheel - reminding us of the history of settlement in our city, rail cars and steamboats, and it reflects the ever-flowing movement and progress of peoples of this neighborhood and along University Avenue. The stained glass depicts the vast richness of the many colors, in every sense of the word, found in this place. The mirrors reflect you.

The installation was unveiled at an event that Steve and Richard hosted, which featured a poem read by Richard and gathered co-workers, friends and family of the artists and collaborator, neighborhood and nearby businesses, Irrigate and its friends and supporters.



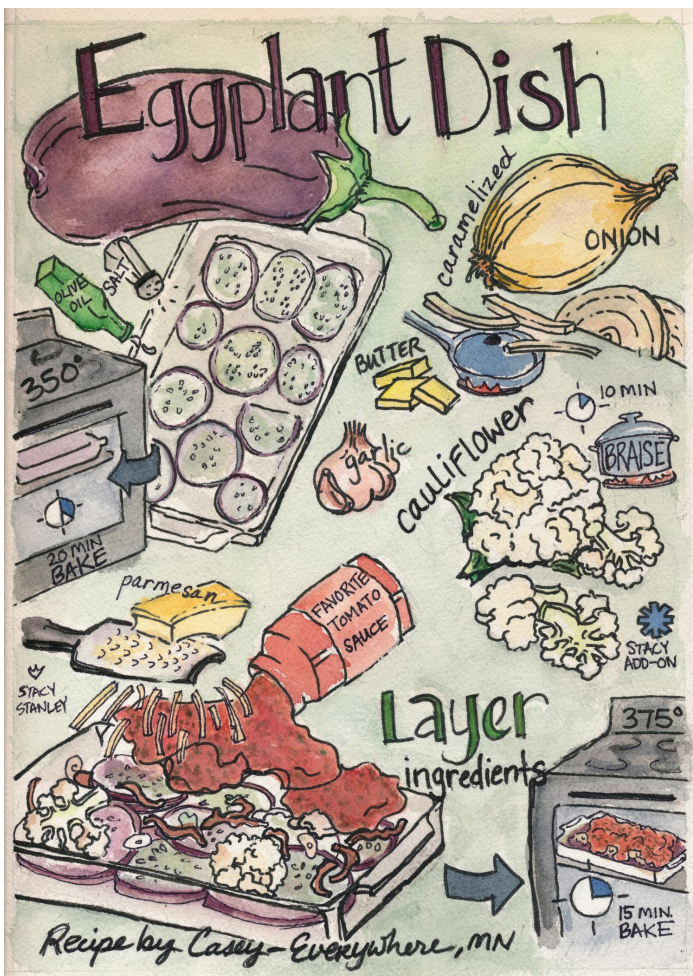
The Visual Recipe Project

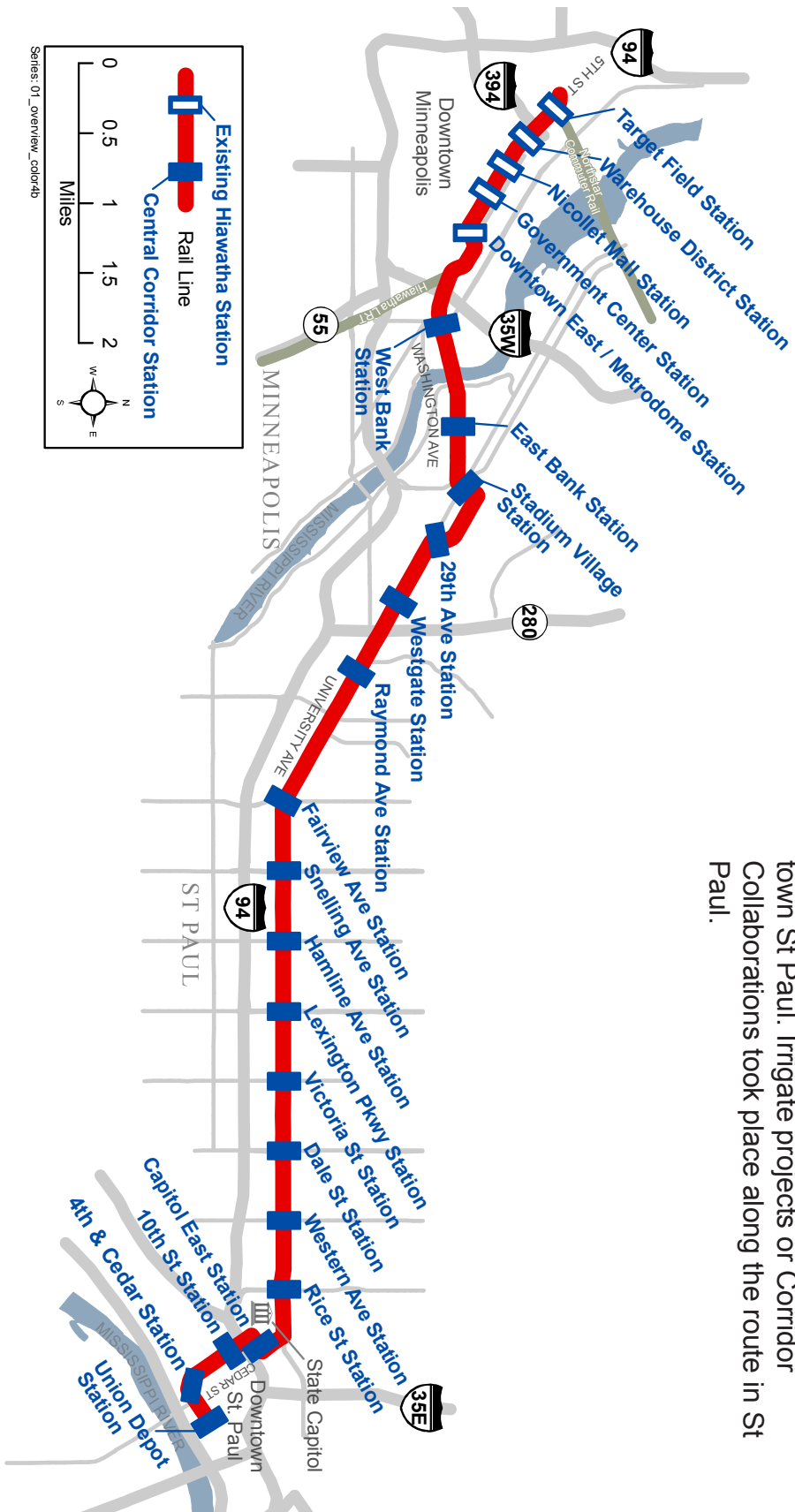
Artist: Stacey Stanley

Site: St Paul Farmer's Market

Community Collaborator: Jack Gerten and the Saint Paul Farmer's Market

The Visual Recipe Project is a collection of drawings and recorded recipes shared at the Saint Paul Farmers Market. Artist Stacey Stanley interviewed shoppers each Sunday for five weeks and asked them to share a recipe with her. While listening to the recorded recipes at her studio, Stanley drew the ingredients to create colorful interactive recipe cards, which were handed out to Market shoppers. During the process, Stanley cooked all the recipes herself to more fully understand them and enjoy the food! A sandwich board sign at her Market Booth served as an interactive tool to draw, engage, and inform Market goers.





Metro Transit map of the Green Line LRT route from Downtown Minneapolis to Downtown St Paul. Irrigate projects or Corridor Collaborations took place along the route in St Paul.

Supplementary Pages

- 1. Media Audit for Irrigate**
- 2. St. Paul Pioneer Press article on Irrigate**
- 3. Next City article on Irrigate**



Earned Media Impact Report

A Comprehensive Analysis of Irrigate's Impact on the Community Narrative through Earned Media Coverage

Introduction

Irrigate is a community placemaking initiative led by Springboard for the Arts in partnership with the City of Saint Paul, LISC and many of Saint Paul's most influential and innovative organizations and leaders.

This unique public-private partnership provides a model of community-based placemaking that leverages infrastructure development, a high concentration of resident artists, a diverse ethnic and cultural mix, and a city with a strong track record of artist community engagement.

"At the intersection of regional development and the arts, this public-private collaboration is beautifully positioned to forge creative, comprehensive approaches to transit-oriented development in the Twin Cities, with a strategic focus on how artists will contribute to its success." Kate Wolford, President, The McKnight Foundation

Irrigate mobilizes artists to engage in their community to change the landscape of the Central Corridor with color, art, surprise, creativity and fun. In the process, Irrigate has had a positive impact on the narrative and resulting community perceptions of the community development transit initiative.

"The biggest common thread I've seen in the Irrigate projects is that they are really about what's possible in the neighborhood. They're not big flashy art installations, but they're about building ties between the people who live in the neighborhood. They're about communicating to people that there are reasons to come to the Central Corridor even during construction." Laura Zabel, Executive Director, Springboard for the Arts

The following report provides an analysis of the impact of the Irrigate initiative on the community narrative through earned media coverage garnered to date. At this, the mid-point in the project, these metrics provide a look back at the success of the initiative over the course of its first 18 months as well as a benchmark against which to measure the impact of the second half of the work.

Irrigate's Impact

Theory of Change: During times of disruption, social capital can be built quickly. Irrigate uses the disruption of the Central Corridor construction project to engage Saint Paul's active creative class to help local communities along the corridor build social capital through placemaking. Through placemaking, the Irrigate initiative has engaged the community to support small businesses. The initiative provides a sense of what's possible when the community engages in creative placemaking, turning a challenging period of transition into an energizing and exciting opportunity to strengthen the community.

"There's been more collaboration between artists and the city than at any other point in our history." Mayor Chris Coleman, City of St. Paul

For 18 months, Irrigate has been mobilizing artists to transform the Central Corridor into a place where community interacts and thrives:

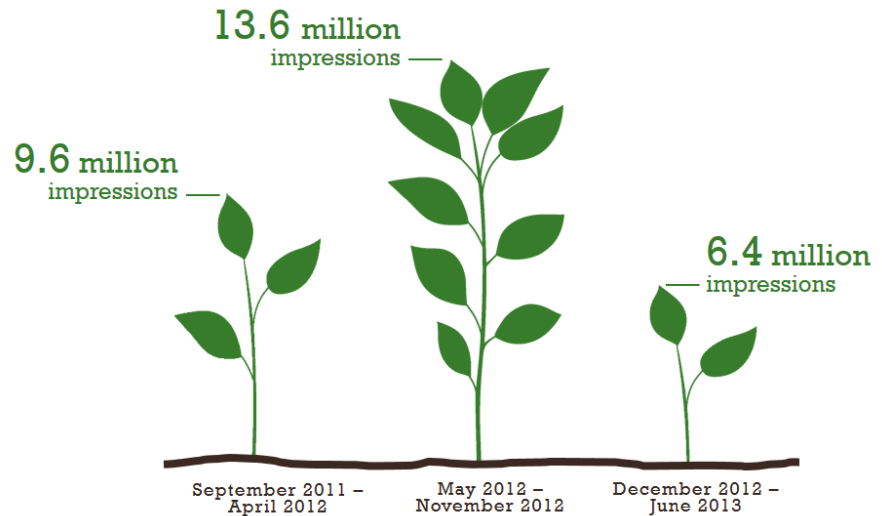
- 18 months into the 3 year initiative
- 450+ local artists completed training led by Springboard for the Arts
- 100+ placemaking projects
- Impacting the six Saint Paul district councils along the Central Corridor: Downtown, Frogtown, Summit-University, Hamline Midway, Union Park, St. Anthony Park

"No Twin Cities initiative has put the "public" in public art like this. The ambitious attempt to seed the construction-blighted Central Corridor route in St. Paul, along University Avenue, with hundreds of art projects has gone beyond eye-pleasing to real community development. (Like Clifford Dodd's posters mapping black-owned businesses.) The urban planners receiving national attention for Irrigate call this "creative placemaking," a buzzword for shaping an area through culture. We call it saving the day." Minnesota Monthly Magazine (November 2012)

Contributing to the Narrative: Earned Media's Influence on Community Perception and Engagement

Quantity: Irrigate has received significant coverage by print, broadcast and online media covering the Saint Paul region impacted by the Central Corridor project. Coverage has focused on the initiative as a whole as well as stories specific to the many unique projects. In addition to profile pieces on the initiative, Irrigate was often included in general stories about the Central Corridor initiative as a positive contributor to community development along the line.

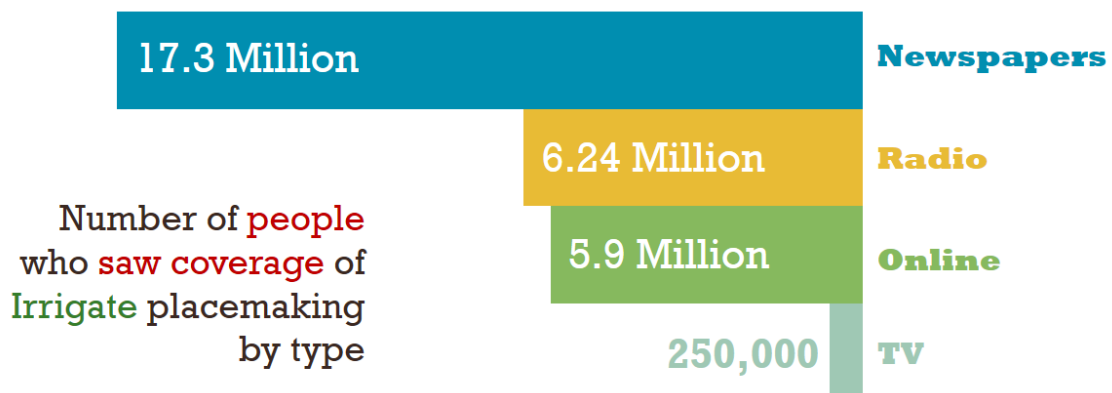
More people
are seeing
coverage of
Irrigate
placemaking
all the time!



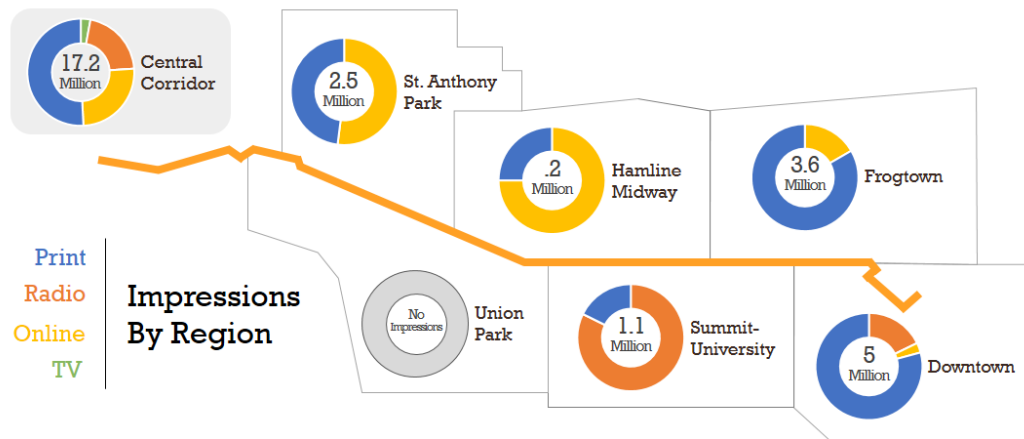
Reach: 30 million impressions (circulation times 2.5) reaching all six of the relevant Saint Paul district councils, and the city as a whole.

How many
people saw
coverage of
Irrigate
placemaking?

30
MILLION



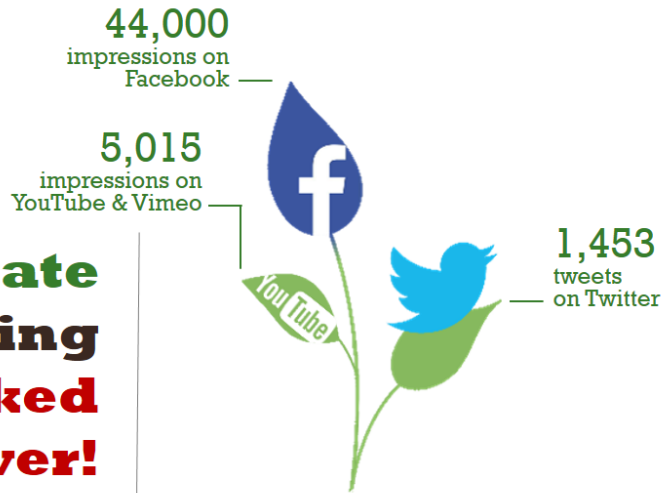
Regional Impact: While coverage of the Irrigate project reached all six communities, the majority of the coverage focused on projects central to Downtown, St. Anthony Park, Summit-University and Frogtown. Hamline-Midway area projects received minimal coverage. Current searches did not identify any coverage of projects in the Union Park district. This could be due to the location of projects, impact of community-based media or other factors. This gap in coverage provides an opportunity in the second phase of this work to identify ways to more intentionally engage the Hamline-Midway and Union Park communities.



*(Breakdown of media coverage related to projects in each district, as well as general coverage related to the region as a whole. Media coverage tracking **does not** include posts made by participating organizations to their websites and blogs.)*

Social Media:

**Irrigate
placemaking
is being talked
about all over!**



Community Perceptions

Through its many touch points with the community surrounding the Central Corridor, the Irrigate initiative has positioned itself as shining light, bringing life, hope and vision to the people and businesses impacted by the Central Corridor project. Through partnerships with funders, engagement of artists, many small projects and the resulting media coverage, the Irrigate initiative is recognized by key community leaders as a catalyst that changed the narrative and continues to positively impact the community and its perceptions for the Central Corridor project.

Community leaders with a commitment to the Central Corridor and an ear to the ground in the community shared their reflections on the impact of Irrigate on the Central Corridor narrative.

*While the City of Saint Paul tried feverishly to garner positive coverage for the benefits of transit that the Central Corridor would bring to the community, their positive message was consistently diluted in the media by negative stories about the impact of construction. As Irrigate projects began popping up along the Corridor in unexpected ways, the disruption of the many small projects quickly had a surprising impact. The magic of art started a different conversation, something that couldn't have been predicted but was such a blessing. Irrigate's public process engaging artists from the community to support local businesses provided a nimble and creative way to influence the narrative and change community perceptions of the value of community development. Irrigate's approach taught the public sector that sometimes it's alright to let go of the bureaucratic process to allow for a more organic process of community engagement. **Nancy Homans, Policy Director, City of Saint Paul***

Irrigate began influence the overall narrative at the darkest hour of the construction narrative (construction problems, business mitigation and access issues). There's no doubt the series of small but notable projects helped turn the narrative around. The narrative created by Irrigate inform a larger view of the future, helping people begin to see what the Corridor will look like, how it will feel to be part of the community along the Corridor. Irrigate initiated the early ripple that began to turn the tide of peoples' perception about the Corridor. It allowed people to look beyond immediate access issues.

*Irrigate seems to be everywhere at once, which adds to the energy of the stakeholders involved in all aspects of the project. While some people may not be able to name Irrigate, when they talk about what's going on along the Corridor, they're experiences are influenced by the many unique projects. The aggregation of these smaller projects has led to a general sense that there are creative, interesting things happening all along the Corridor. As this momentum continues, Irrigate has the opportunity to tell the bigger story of its impact in creative a cultural corridor – a long-term view that the Central Corridor is a place to experience the arts and culture of the local community. **Jonathan Sage Martinson, Director, Central Corridor Funders Collaborative***

*Irrigate has really maximized the idea of small is beautiful. The Irrigate initiative has brought to life the concept that any one individual can take an idea and connect it to a broader community experience. Irrigate leveraged the construction and the coming of the new light rail line to engage local artists to harness the power of their ideas to rebuild a sense of community, energizing individuals and businesses to take part in something bigger than each individual project. The initiative offers an accessible way for the community to be part of the solution. As a community-driven program rather than a public/government initiative, overtime Irrigate has built on itself, activating more neighborhood organizations, artists and local businesses. Pretty soon, you started to see it everywhere. Irrigate has taken hold and it's really exciting. **Andriana Abariotes, Executive Director, Twin Cities LISC***

Considerations

The earned media impact captured in this mid-project report does not reflect measurement against a baseline. Therefore, we cannot accurately assess perception change based on pre-initiative media coverage. It is clear, however, that Irrigate has been part of the conversation from the start and continues to be central to the narrative.

This report provides an illustration of the reach and message penetration of the initiative thus far. It also provides a framework against which to measure the next phase of Irrigate's work in the communities along the Central Corridor line.



Media audit and summary conducted by Tunheim

Founded in 1990, Tunheim is one of the most respected full-service strategic communications firms in the Upper Midwest. Tunheim is recognized for success in the strategy, management and execution of local, regional and national public relations, public affairs and community engagement campaigns. Through a strong bias for a strategic approach, Tunheim provided an objective assessment of the impact of the Irrigate initiative on the media narrative surrounding the Central Corridor. The approach focused on quantity of media coverage, relevancy of messaging, breadth of coverage, and assessment of public perception.

Irrigate is made possible by the generous support of:

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St. Paul: Along light-rail tracks, all kinds of art springs up

By Amy Carlson Gustafson
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It's no secret the Central Corridor light-rail construction is responsible for annoying traffic congestion and has taken its toll on some St. Paul businesses.

But what folks might not know is that it also has inspired a mini-explosion of art over the past year. Seventy artist-led projects -- everything from dance performances near the newly installed tracks to colorful murals on the sides of buildings -- have found their way into the St. Paul neighborhoods lining the six-mile transit route thanks to Irrigate, an initiative to promote the arts and artists.



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As work on the light rail continues, art projects spring up along the route. (Pioneer Press: Ben Garvin)

"The biggest common thread I've seen in the Irrigate projects is that they are really about what's possible in the neighborhood," said Laura Zabel, executive director of Springboard for the Arts, which partnered with the city of St. Paul and the Twin Cities Local Initiatives Support Corporation to create Irrigate. "They're not big flashy art installations, but they're about building ties between the people who live in the neighborhood. They're about communicating to people that there are reasons to come to the Central Corridor even during construction."

Irrigate was formed to promote "creative placemaking" -- the act of people coming together to change overlooked or undervalued places -- along the transit route. Zabel says the program, which is funded privately by national and local grants and will continue until the light-rail line is up and running, exceeded her "wildest dreams" for what the group could accomplish in one year.



The people behind Irrigate are celebrating those successes with "Art Happens Here" on Saturday, Oct. 27.

"It's designed to be a celebration of the neighborhood -- to reflect on what we've done and look ahead to what's next," Zabel said. "We'll have a big map of all the projects, many of the artists will perform, there'll be projects people can participate in and bring home. And a larger project that people can participate in that will be installed on University Avenue."



Kathryn Smith was one of the artists who received a \$1,000 Irrigate grant, which she used to fund her idea of a historic bus tour of the Central Corridor highlighting businesses, projects and organizations. The tour, which took place in the spring, drew more than 100 people. Smith, who collaborated on the project with the Union Depot and the Minnesota Transportation Museum, called the event a "success."

"Lots of people signed up and they had a good time," said Smith, a photographer who lives in the Raymond-University neighborhood. "I'm new to the community, and it was a way to jump right in."

Along with information about placemaking and what's being done along the Central Corridor, Saturday's "Art Happens Here" event also includes a puppet show, live music and dance performances.

"For us it's about the people who live in the neighborhood and the people who care about the neighborhood coming together and making that neighborhood more a place where people want to live, hang out, thrive and stay," Zabel said.

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IF YOU GO

What: "Art Happens Here: A Celebration of Artist-led Creative Placemaking Along the Green Line"

When: 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 27

Where: ZajLaug Chaw, 262 University Ave. W., St. Paul

Cost: Free

Info: irrigatearts.org (<http://irrigatearts.org>)

Video that may interest you

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Owner of closed St. Paul market admits machete attack on customer	4 Minneapolis fires in less than 24 hours believed to be unrelated	St. Paul police search for suspects in man's Frogtown shooting (http://www.twincities.com)	St. Paul Public Library chooses 2015 'Read Brave' book (http://www.twincities.com)

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Art Can Cure Construction Headaches

BY RACHEL KAUFMAN | NEXT CITY | NOVEMBER 20, 2014

Imagine a big infrastructure project coming to your main street.

Imagine how a streetcar will bring new visitors to your city's commercial strip, spending money and spreading the word about how cool your neighborhood is. Imagine how that new bus shelter will lure people out of their cars and onto public transit, or how that parklet in what was once a barren median will brighten the day of passersby.

Now imagine the months of work it takes to get that project built. The road closures. The traffic. The scaffolding blocking your favorite coffee shop's facade.

A new initiative from a St. Paul-based arts organization can help to make sure those months aren't miserable — and are in fact pretty enjoyable.

When St. Paul and Minneapolis were planning a new light-rail line (the Green Line, which opened this summer), [Springboard for the Arts](#), working with the city of St. Paul and the local LISC chapter, was planning too. "The idea is, the hope, the expectation that you have when building transit is greater connectivity," says Laura Zabel, Springboard's executive director. "The reality of living through the construction period is really challenging."

Springboard's "Irrigate" project connected artists living and working in the affected area with small businesses and gave them modest grants. The artists would come up with an idea — a mural, a performance, an installation — that would remind people that these local businesses were "worth braving the construction and confusion to visit."

For example, St. Paul's Black Dog Cafe was almost entirely hidden by construction. "It was difficult to see that there was even a cafe there," Zabel says. The cafe partnered with Chris Lutter-Gardella, an artist who works with puppets; he designed an enormous, two-person dog puppet that prowled the

neighborhood, reminding people that Black Dog was still open.

“The day we walked the dog through Union Depot, business tripled,” owner Sara Remke [told the Minneapolis Star Tribune](#). Not only that, but the dog started showing up at farmers’ markets and even appeared in the St. Paul St. Patrick’s Day Parade. “It’s become kind of a neighborhood mascot,” Zabel says.

Other projects beautified walls with murals or perked up bus stops with potted trees. A printmaker and designer gave away totes with literature explaining the benefits of the forthcoming light rail.

Other artists held workshops or staged performances. Mai Village, a Vietnamese restaurant, was facing foreclosure in 2012. Around the same time that the community rallied to save the restaurant, it debuted Jazz on the Line, a monthly live music night at Mai Village. “That really brought a whole new set of people to that restaurant. They’ve continued those relationships with those artists,” says Zabel. “It’s helped them find a whole new way of reaching people.”

Zabel admits that activating a community through art isn’t a new idea, but she says that what makes Irrigate different is a focus on mitigating the effects of disruption and how it built new relationships with artists and business owners.

“The goal was to create these projects, but the longer-term, more important goal was to make sure that neighborhood organizations know how to find and work with artists, and that artists know how to use their skills in service of their neighborhood.” Case in point: The puppeteer who designed the café’s giant dog was a customer. All it took was a training session and a small grant to connect them.

Springboard has released an [Irrigate toolkit](#) that other cities can use to replicate its success. Even before the toolkit was finalized, Springboard worked with a group in Cleveland during a streetscape disruption there, and Mesa, Arizona is using the toolkit to help small businesses cope during its light-rail construction.

Over the roughly three-year project, Irrigate supported 600 artists and 180 projects all along the Green Line corridor. These things “really, tangibly drew people, attention and dollars to businesses,” Zabel says. “There was a lot of concern about whether the train would be a thoroughfare to get from one city to another ... because of Irrigate, because of a lot of other work that happened in the construction period, people are well aware that there are things to do along the line.”

The Irrigate project received support from Surdna and the Knight Foundation, both of which also provide funding support to Next City.

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Rachel Kaufman is a journalist covering transportation, sustainability, science and tech. Her writing has appeared in *Inc.*, *National Geographic News*, *Scientific American* and more. She also manages Elevation DC, a local site covering city issues in Washington, D.C.

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