

TEN AT THE TOP & USC UPSTATE

# Great Ideas for Community Vibrancy 2013





## Introduction & Purpose

*As a result of input from people all over the Upstate region of South Carolina, the non-profit organization Ten at the Top created the Our Upstate SC Vision and five driver-area task forces to address issues that can help the Upstate be universally recognized as a leading place in the United States to live, learn, do business, and raise a family. One of the task forces is Community Vibrancy and this booklet is a product of collaboration between the Task Force and urban policy and planning classes under the direction of Dr. Abe Goldberg, a political science professor at USC Upstate in Spartanburg, SC.*

*The purpose of this booklet is to inspire community advocates to implement their own projects to create more vibrancy in their communities that bring people together, create stronger community ties, and generate economic benefit. It is also meant to give helpful overviews of successful projects that have created vibrancy in other places so that someone who is interested in creating a similar project in their own community has some idea of what it takes to accomplish the project.*

*Projects have been organized into five primary areas: Festivals, Events, & Programs, Arts & Culture, Neighborhoods, Parks & Recreation and Uptowns & Downtowns. In addition, special focus was given to identify communities of various population sizes. There was also an emphasis on identifying examples of community vibrancy both in South Carolina and across other parts of the United States.*

*This booklet is not intended to be inclusive of all of the great ideas ever implemented in any community in this country. It is the result of a practical scope of work between two organizations. For additional ideas and comments, please email [info@tenatthetop.org](mailto:info@tenatthetop.org) or call 864.283.2313.*

*An electronic version of this document is available on the Ten at the Top website ([www.tenatthetop.org](http://www.tenatthetop.org)).*

# Acknowledgements

Most of the great ideas for community vibrancy presented in this document were summarized from student projects at the University of South Carolina Upstate. Under the guidance of Dr. Goldberg, the students in his Public Administration and Urban Planning and Policy courses in 2012 found a “Great Idea” then captured data including demographics, project champions, funding sources and results to demonstrate how the Great Idea contributed to the community’s vibrancy. Ten at the Top would like to formally acknowledge and thank the students listed here for their hard work and commitment to making the Upstate communities vibrant places to live.

Additionally, Ten at the Top would like to thank the Task Force members who mentored some of the students, and also the Task Force members who volunteered to help execute the workshops that are based on the ideas presented in this booklet.

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Christopher Rutledge – Seed Libraries  
Taylor Stewart – Books Alive Literary Festival, Third Thursdays  
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# Festivals, Events, & Programs



## BerkShares: Great Barrington, Massachusetts

The BerkShares project is an alternative currency project geared towards encouraging local spending and community pride. The availability of a local currency grants the citizens of Great Barrington to get a discount on locally purchased goods. This opportunity is available to everyone choosing to visit the small town. To participate, citizens go to one of the local banks sponsoring the program. The arrangement allows them to exchange ninety five dollars for one hundred BerkShares, essentially offering them a 5% discount if they choose to participate. Businesses also see significant benefit from the program. The alternative currency increases local patronage, allowing for the microeconomy to expand. The success of the program has seen the local currency being accepted by more than four hundred businesses in the Great Barrington community.

To date, there are approximately 2.5 million locally printed BerkShares in circulation. The project has been the topic of numerous articles due to its success. The great idea has garnered the attention of national and international publications such as Business Week, The London Times, Reuters, NPR, ABC World News, The New York Times, Time Magazine, BBC News. They praised the currency for many things, including its vibrant colors and depiction of local history.

The BerkShares program is the brainchild of Susan Witt and Robert Swann in collaboration with the E.F. Schumacher Society. The project began as a local currency seasonal experiment, and was so successful that the banks supporting it requested that it be done year-round. Witt and Swann agreed, and the BerkShares began being issued in 2006.



[www.berkshares.com](http://www.berkshares.com)

The BerkShares program has been a case study on how a local currency program can improve not only economy, but community pride. The citizens of Great Barrington are encouraged to spend the richly hued and culturally relevant currency. A project such as this would be an excellent opportunity for the communities of the Upstate. Citizens could be inspired to look into the rich history of the Upstate while they are participating in the local economy. The BerkShares project has seen eminent success. Communities in the Upstate could benefit greatly from participating in such a program.

Currently, the City of Greer has a “Keep the Green in Greer” debit card program that is similar in concept to the Berkshares program.

Population:	7,000
Project:	Alternative currency for citizens of Great Barrington
Funding:	Sponsors, but operated by N.P.O.
Effect:	Encourages local spending, develops strong local economy
Online:	<a href="http://www.berkshares.com">www.berkshares.com</a>



## Books Alive Literary Festival: Evans, Georgia

The Books Alive Festival in Evans, Georgia was the result of when the library decided to host an event about authors. Local celebrities and authors are invited to hold conventions on the importance of reading. The festival encourages the local populace to have fun while learning about the joys of literature.

The event usually takes place during the summer months in a city that is near the Fort Gordon Army Base in Augusta, GA. The festival takes about a year to plan, and is paid for by the local library budget. Although organizers attempted fundraisers, they did not turn out as the library expected. The cost of the festival varies depending on its size. In 2012, the festival was around \$20,000; however, it was one of the largest festivals that Evans has hosted. For the most part, the event has been paid for by the friends and family of those that participate in the library.

The book-centered festival adds to the Evans community by giving people of all ages the opportunity to learn about books and the authors that wrote them. The event educates and entertains the residents of the community through activities for all ages. The activities include face painting, water slides, a butterfly release, a scavenger hunt, sidewalk art, story times, and book signings to name a few. There is a set schedule for people to go by so that they are able to attend as many festivities as possible. One of the biggest events that all ages look forward to is the laser show at the end of the night.



[www.booksalive.net](http://www.booksalive.net)

Like many places in the Upstate, Evans, Georgia is a suburban area where there are schools for primary and secondary education in the surrounding area. The Books Alive Festival could easily be applied to a library in the Upstate area of South Carolina. Patrons of the local libraries are a built-in audience.

The downtown areas of the Upstate lend themselves fairly naturally to fairs similar to the Books Alive Festival. The communities of the Upstate are generally happy to go to any festival, and one with an educational bent could prove to be quite beneficial. Locals attending the festival are likely to support small businesses, further adding to its potential benefit. The Upstate has a lot to offer in the form of literature. A festival such as this could prove to be a tremendous boon to its culture.

Population:	About 21,000
Project:	Cultural event
Funding:	Local library budget, donations
Effect:	Helps teach the community the importance of reading with activities for all ages
Online:	<a href="http://www.booksalive.net">www.booksalive.net</a>

## Central School Project: Bisbee, Arizona

The Central School Project (CSP) is a non-profit arts and cultural organization located in Bisbee, Arizona. Bisbee was a prosperous community until mining was no longer seen as profitable. As employees left to go elsewhere, many artistic spirits saw Bisbee as an ideal, attractive, and inexpensive place to settle. CSP was created to provide working space for local artists to preserve their historic school building as a cultural center, and to support appreciation for arts within the Bisbee Community.

This project has taken over a decade to come to fruition and it is still a work in progress. Although the CSP was awarded the Central School building by the local school district, there were still many grants that were needed to preserve and renovate this old school building and to get programs off the ground. Funding has come from a variety of sources including multiple grants from the government, trusts, and a foundation, fundraisers, and Lowe's donated cash and volunteers to the organization to help with the project. The organization also charges rental costs for use of gallery, theater, and other space.

An important thing that made this project successful was the loyalty and support of the group of artists that started CSP. These dedicated board members and supporters are the people that started and continue to promote this organization. The organization started out as a tenants' association of artists in 1982 before CSP was incorporated in 1985. The building was purchased in 1994 from the local school district.

CSP offers art exhibitions, film showings, performances, and many other art programs and festivals. International poets also read at these programs.



[www.centralschoolproject.com](http://www.centralschoolproject.com)

In 2009, CSP held a pilot Visiting Artist program where artists visited to help bring vibrancy to the Bisbee community. There are also students in studio programs put on by CSP member Danielle Winter. Weekly art education classes are taught during the school year.

CSP has put on annual art festivals for the past five years in which over 200 kids and their families have attended. They watch performances and do arts and crafts. All of these programs and festivals have been well-received by the community and these events continue to grow each and every year. The survival of this project for almost 27 years proves that the community has enjoyed and benefited from this project.

This type of project is possible in the Upstate especially given the vibrant arts communities in several of the counties, and there are also many vacant historic buildings- especially mills- that could be reused. Because of the large footprint of the programs and the large scope of the building renovation, similar projects would also need a variety of funding sources to succeed, but the value to the community would be well worth it.

Population:	About 6,000
Project:	Provides and promotes places for art
Funding:	Donations, volunteers, tax incentives, federal grants
Effect:	Preserves, encourages and promotes the artistic culture
Online:	<a href="http://www.centralschoolproject.org">www.centralschoolproject.org</a>

## CorryFest: Corry, Pennsylvania

Created by three local women in an effort to showcase the unique attributes of Corry's citizens, CorryFest is a four day annual event featuring a concert, pageant, parade, car show, pet show, dance recital, skate show, fireworks and the "Corry's Best Band" contest. The events are held in different public spaces across the City to further showcase Corry's assets, and the events draw hundreds of guests.

In an attempt to keep CorryFest first and foremost about local attributes, Corry City Council created a policy that gave participation priority to Corry citizens. People from other areas are welcome to participate, but they must first obtain permission from Council.

The event budget ranges from \$15,000-\$20,000 and is supplemented with t-shirt and commemorative plate sales as well as a bingo tournament. Sponsorship and vendor charges comprise another portion of the budget, and grants from the arts council are requested to cover any additional expenses. Costs are kept low by using volunteers from the local high school and the greater community, which also creates a sense of unity in the accomplishment.

The Upstate already features a variety of great festivals that incorporate their unique attributes; however, there may be others that are interested to grow the vibrancy in their communities. For festivals like the SC Peach festival in Gaffney and the Mayberry Festival in Westminster, they are growing their vibrancy and creating an economic stimulus around a special asset in their community.



[www.corrychamber.com](http://www.corrychamber.com)

Population:	Nearly 6,400
Project:	Community festival
Funding:	Sponsorship, fundraisers and grants
Effect:	Locals showcase their talents and products to identify the unique culture in Corry
Online:	<a href="http://www.corrychamber.com/events/corry-fest">www.corrychamber.com/events/corry-fest</a>

## Cycle to Farm: Black Mountain, North Carolina

The first Cycle to Farm took place in the Town of Black Mountain, North Carolina. Cycle to Farm is a group ride cycling event covering 63 miles of North Carolina. The event supports local farms by having the rest stops hosted at local farms, and local businesses take an active role in the event from beginning to end. Cycle to Farm gives the local economy a beneficial boost.

The event was envisioned, planned, and set into action by Jennifer and David Billstrom, and funded by sponsors and registration fees. Following the first event, local farms and businesses, as well as those who participated in the actual ride, gave overwhelming support for the event, and interest has been so high that the Billstroms are strongly considering branching out with Cycle to Farm by applying it to different communities. This event has shown to be beneficial to the community, and has received nothing but praise since the success of the first ride.

The Cycle to Farm event is a very unique bike ride through Western North Carolina's rural farms and forests. Each of these farms has free samples of their produce available for the riders, and their locally grown produce is available for purchase by the riders. A refrigerated truck stops at each farm in order to transport any purchases made by the cyclists to the finish area for them. Before the ride, participants are offered complimentary coffee from a local coffee roaster, yoga instructors are there to help cyclists stretch before and after the event, and the local bike shop is there as well for mechanical support.



[www.cycletofarm.org](http://www.cycletofarm.org)

The first Cycle to Farm ride was in June 2012. An economic study done in Black Mountain showed that the event added nearly \$50,000 to the local economy, and 57% of participants travelled over 50 miles to take part in the event, which clearly had a large draw. The event aims to support local farms and produce, as well as support local businesses.

The Black Mountain community, which encourages farming and outdoor activities, resembles many in the Upstate South Carolina area. Agriculture is a large part of the economy in South Carolina, and has the opportunity to be even bigger. With the enthusiasm for biking evident with the Swamp Rabbit Trail along with local farms and businesses, the Upstate is a great place to re-create this event. This idea would not only help the local farmers sell more fresh produce, but would also draw cyclists for a visit. An Upstate version of the Cycle to Farm event would help promote a healthier lifestyle while encouraging more bike awareness, and tying together the local food market, local businesses, and cycling, which all promote a better quality of life.

Population:	About 8,000
Project:	Cycling event that incorporates local farms
Funding:	Sponsors and registration fees
Effect:	Supports local farms by hosting stops for cyclists during a 63 mile bike ride
Online:	<a href="http://www.cycletofarm.org">www.cycletofarm.org</a>



## Flash Mobs for a Cause: Chicago, Illinois

Flash mobs are groups of people suddenly assembling in public places usually for the purpose of entertainment, satire, or an artistic expression. Flash mobs are usually organized by telecommunications and social media, but have been known to be organized through word of mouth. They appear at first to be spontaneous, but after a few moments more people from the crowd join in. It soon becomes clear that they are actually coordinated and practiced well in advance.

The term ‘mob’ is perceived to be derogatory, but a flash mob seeks to turn that perception on its head. Instead of an assembly of people doing damage, a flash mob seeks to surprise in a good way. They seek to inspire, and entertain their audience and sometimes convey a message. Flash Mob for America, a group that organizes these events, seeks to create joy through surprise.

Flash Mob America started in Chicago. It has grown to over 200 members who meet to perform various styles of flash mobs from dances, meditations, and other activities. By surprising an unsuspecting audience and capturing it all on camera, there is a celebration of artists, charities, campaigns and other social causes, all of which would be a great way to bring about social interaction and community vibrancy. One of the projects on the Chicago website is a flash mob wedding proposal that will involve the community for what is usually a discreet event.



[www.funonthenet.in](http://www.funonthenet.in)

Flash mobs can be an extremely effective way to bring awareness to issues and raise funds for meaningful causes. These events involve everyone from those that participated, to those that are talking about the mob in communal gatherings, such as local coffee shops. Flash mobs often tend to get coverage from local news and social media. Choreography can be used to form people into words that are pertinent to a particular cause, or letters can be worn on clothes to spell out a certain message when performers end in a certain spot.

Flash mobs can be free to organize, only costing the volunteers’ time, or they can be very elaborate using outside consultants, costumes, and production equipment.

The ability of flash mobs to take place anywhere allows them to be a potential asset to the Upstate. They can help build a stronger sense of community and culture, and may help improve local community interaction.

Population:	2,700,000
Project:	Flash Mobs organized in different cities and communities
Funding:	Free
Effect:	Brings people together for idea and cultural exchanges
Online:	<a href="http://www.meetup.com/Flash-Mob-America-Chicago">www.meetup.com/Flash-Mob-America-Chicago</a>

## The Heidelberg Project: Detroit, Michigan

The Heidelberg Project was founded in Detroit, Michigan in 1986 by a local artist named Tyree Guyton. It is located on the east side, in a neighborhood known as McDougall-Hunt. Tyree Guyton was raised on Heidelberg Street, which is where the project is located.

Guyton wanted to revitalize the neighborhood he grew up in after the houses were abandoned and became drug-infested. He was encouraged to make a change with a paintbrush instead of a weapon. He did not have any resources except the recycled materials, discarded trash, and objects salvaged from the streets of Detroit to use for reclaiming his neighborhood. He began using everyday discarded items and created a two-block area full of color and symbolism, which became known as the "Cultural Village." His goal was to improve the under-appreciated and blighted Detroit community and provide hope and inspiration through art, education, and hands-on programs. Eventually, the Heidelberg Project attracted enough attention to drive the drug dealers out of the area as thousands of people started to drive by the strange new street gallery.

The Heidelberg Project has been evolving since its start in 1986 and is continuing to evolve. Guyton is always adding new projects or pieces of art. Many new programs have grown out of it, including many educational programs for children. The Heidelberg Project also provides art education classes and hands-on workshops for children and their families. The purpose of these programs are to help build local children's self-esteem and to provide a sense of pride in their community. Another program is the Emerging Artist Program.



[www.heidelberg.org](http://www.heidelberg.org)

This helps to open new doors for emerging artists that have not had their work showcased formally. There are four showcases per year which also help to advance the art movement in Detroit.

The Heidelberg Project has been a huge success and has been recognized nationally and internationally. It has won many awards over the 26 years of its existence and has also been featured in many magazines including People, Newsweek, Essence, and Time. In 1998, the Heidelberg Project was recognized as the third most visited cultural tourist site in Detroit.

The Heidelberg Project has provided an asset to the community and its residents by improving the sense of community pride and reason to care for the neighborhood. Communities in the Upstate could benefit greatly from applying the concepts from the Heidelberg Project. Some neighborhoods in the Upstate lack pride in their community. Utilizing local artists and volunteers to revitalize a neighborhood is an affordable and easy way to direct attention back to a neighborhood.

Population:	About 8,000
Project:	Cycling event that incorporates local farms
Funding:	Sponsors and registration fees
Effect:	Supports local farms by hosting stops for cyclists during a 63 mile bike ride
Online:	<a href="http://www.cycletofarm.org">www.cycletofarm.org</a>

## KidsFair: Charleston, South Carolina

KidsFair is an annual interactive event held in Charleston to fulfill cultural, social and educational needs of children and, in turn, promote a sense of community and strengthen families. The event focuses on the areas of health, conservation, education, safety and entertainment by providing 85 free exhibits for attendees.

In order to reach as many children as possible, the event is held downtown and offers free parking in an adjacent garage. While the City partners with the Jewish Community Center to host the event, the fair is funded through sponsors and a dollar admission fee. Sponsors contributed nearly \$25,000 in 2012, not including in-kind donations. Any proceeds from the event go to the JCC to offset scholarship programs.

In its 24th year, approximately 12,000 children and their families attended KidsFair, and numbers continue to increase each year. In addition to families, the mayor, fire department, police departments, non-profit organizations and many other active members of the community participate in the event to make it a truly vibrant experience for everyone.

An event similar to KidsFair has potential for success in the Upstate because it is something that the entire family can attend together, and because it is scalable. For instance, a community could offer more or less than the five focus areas used in Charleston, and the number of exhibits can easily be adjusted depending on the venue, the number of partners, and as the festival gains in popularity.



[www.charlestonjcc.org](http://www.charlestonjcc.org)

Population:	Over 100,000
Project:	An affordable family event centered on children
Funding:	Sponsorships, \$1 entry
Effect:	Educational event with 85 free exhibits and activities for over 10,000 participants
Online:	<a href="http://www.charlestonjcc.org/Matthew%20Joyner/kidsfair.html">www.charlestonjcc.org/Matthew%20Joyner/kidsfair.html</a>



## May Day Celebration: Serenbe, Georgia

Serenbe, Georgia is a small village that is located within the City of Chattahoochee Hill, Georgia which is in southern Fulton County. The residents of Serenbe are made up of artists, farmers, business people and retirees. Serenbe is a nationally recognized New Urbanist community that emphasizes small, self-sustaining neighborhoods. The community attracts hikers, cyclists and runners because of the rolling hill landscape. The Serenbe community formed the Chattahoochee Hills Country Alliance, whose overall goal is to provide a place where residents can live, work and play while embracing nature and combating urban sprawl. The community was built as a place that would embrace art, education, wellness and agriculture.

Serenbe offers an annual celebration that demonstrates and exemplifies its mission to focus on life, nature and health. Serenbe's May Day Celebration is a culmination of weeklong activities to celebrate Earth Day. This celebration is an opportunity to showcase the community's eco-friendly heritage and practices. At the celebration, guests can participate in gardening demos, eco- educational games, and peruse vendors, food, music, organic produce, art exhibits, environmental exhibitions, dancing and all of the festival-goers. The community invites 40 emerging environmentalist guest speakers to come and give lectures to the residents. At the celebration, residents and local officials come together after listening to the environmental lectures and come up with new ideas on how to improve their environmentally-friendly practices. The residents come up with a master plan that the community can follow throughout the year. At the festival green bags are distributed to guests that provide a green survival kit and encourage ten ways to live a green lifestyle.

Serenbe's Mayday celebration promotes vibrancy by encouraging residents and visitors to interact and celebrate the environment together by learning how to be "green" while enjoying a fun- filled day of music, games, food and environmentally-themed demonstrations. It encourages all who attend to take care of the environment and embrace their natural surroundings.

Community celebrations like the one in Serenbe can be repurposed for the Upstate. The strength of the community can be the theme of the celebration. For instance, the Upstate region has traditionally centered on agriculture and natural beauty. The Upstate can take advantage of these opportunities as a way to strengthen the fabric of their community through celebration.



[www.bettercities.net](http://www.bettercities.net)

Population:	About 2,400
Project:	New Urbanist community
Funding:	Residential Alliance Organization, Local grant
Effect:	Showcases local commitment to sustainability and vibrancy
Online:	<a href="http://www.facebook.com/serenbe">www.facebook.com/serenbe</a>

## Okra Strut Festival: Irmo, South Carolina

The annual event known as the Okra Strut takes place in Irmo, South Carolina. The festival is held over an entire weekend each fall and features concerts, rides, okra eating and growing contests, hundreds of art exhibits, and what is billed as the state's largest parade. Every year the community comes together to put on this fantastic okra-centered event that attracts thousands from the surrounding areas.

The Okra Strut has been a continuing tradition in Irmo for 40 years and has continued to evolve. The first one ever held was hosted by The Women's Club of Irmo, a small group of women who saw the need for a new town library and wanted to host a fundraising event in order to make it happen. They hosted a small community arts and crafts show, while also frying and selling okra. The event was instantly popular and thus continued each year. Seven years after its beginning, the Irmo Okra Strut had raised enough funds to build the town a new library.

This festival provides a platform for people in the Irmo community to gather to build community pride and relationships. The number of people in attendance at the event held in September of 2012 was over 60,000. The Irmo Okra Strut was also named among Travel and Leisure Magazine's Top Ten Food Festivals in the nation.

Starting Friday evening the event kicks off with a community street dance resembling a flash mob and live music by various bands. The event also has many kid friendly activities such as face painting, a petting zoo, and amusement rides. Saturday morning there is a 10k run known as Tour de Blue Shoes, and then it is time for the parade. People travel from nearby counties and arrive early in order to get a good spot to spread out their blankets and chairs to watch the four-hour parade.



[www.heidelberg.org](http://www.heidelberg.org)

Profits from the festival are funneled back into the event or into the town itself. Profits from the event have bought equipment for the Police Department of Irmo, built the Lexington County library, and donated the signs that stand at each entrance to the town. There is always a challenge to find a large enough venue for the next year's event, due to the ever-increasing number of attendees.

Festivals can be a great way to grow vibrancy in a community by showcasing a unique attribute of that community, like the Hagood Mill Storytelling Festival in Pickens and the Musgrove Mill Revolutionary Encampment Weekend in Clinton do. The influx of people generated by the event could bring money to nearby businesses in the Upstate. Just like the Okra Strut reinvests back into the community, so could a similar event in the Upstate help to better surrounding communities.

Population:	About 35,000
Project:	A town festival based on okra
Funding:	Local budget
Effect:	Offers good family fun for the community and creates a sense of place
Online:	<a href="http://www.irmoninfo.com">www.irmoninfo.com</a>

## Park(ing) Day: San Francisco, California

Park(ing) day is a global event where citizens, artists and activists collaborate to temporarily transform metered parking spaces into temporary public spaces: parks. The mission for Park(ing) Day is to bring more awareness to the need for more urban open space, to generate critical debate around how public space is created and allocated, and to improve the community interaction and vibrancy in an effort to improve overall quality of life.

The project began in 2005 in San Francisco with just one public parking spot transformed into a functional urban open space/park. By 2006, the idea grew to 47 parks in 13 different cities in three countries spanning two continents. In 2007, it had 200 parks, 50 cities, and nine countries on four continents. In 2009, there were nearly 1000 parks, in 162 cities, in 35 countries, spanning six continents. This idea had spread quickly because the public awareness and need for more open space is so prevalent.

Spartanburg, South Carolina has been participating in Park(ing) Day since 2008, and has had a strong showing of interested residents. Besides converting parking spots into temporary open spaces, there are games, advocacy efforts and socializing that helps to unite the community.

The event costs little to nothing to implement. It takes the time of volunteers who bring their own materials and props to create their space.

This idea is very transferable to other Upstate communities due to its simplistic nature and approach and the fact that most Upstate communities have excess parking that can be used for such an event. Other communities in the Upstate can really benefit from this great idea.



[www.streetfilms.org](http://www.streetfilms.org)

Population:	About 805,000
Project:	Transform public parking spots into temporary urban open spaces
Funding:	Little to no costs
Effect:	Brings communities together in the name of creating more urban open spaces
Online:	<a href="http://www.theatlanticcities.com/neighborhoods/2012/03/guide-tactical-urbanism/1387/">www.theatlanticcities.com/neighborhoods/2012/03/guide-tactical-urbanism/1387/</a>

## Public Fruit Picking Map: Los Angeles, California

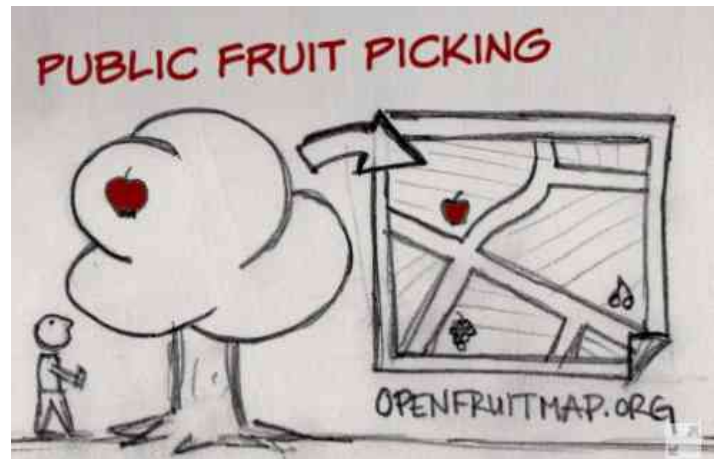
In most cities around the globe, many trees, bushes and plants can be found in public parks and residential neighborhoods that carry various kinds of fruit, herbs, and vegetables. These plants have been there for years but their fruit isn't often harvested because the plants do not belong to someone who takes care of them or they may be on public land.

In 2003, a group of local artists created Fallen Fruit in Los Angeles, whose vision is to help map neighborhoods with a focus on finding and marking public fruit picking places in the community. Maps are also shared to allow people to have input on where trees are and to create an open forum for discussion and interaction in the community.

In the short run, the project simply created awareness for the neighborhood, while providing public fruit picking opportunities. The work of Fallen Fruit has helped to create better social ties and relationships for members of their community. "Every day there is food somewhere going to waste. We encourage you to find it, tend and harvest it." Some people might discover an apple tree on their way to work and enjoy a healthy breakfast. Others will post a cherry tree online which they've discovered during a Sunday afternoon stroll. The Fallen Fruit project can evolve into potentially adopting public trees as a neighborhood coalition and look after it as a hobby.

The climate in the Upstate allows for long growing seasons and, for untended plants, a lot of wasted food. These fruit maps stimulate social interaction as well as provide a source of free healthy food.

This idea can help bring citizens in the Upstate together to share knowledge about their local neighborhood or city.



[www.openideo.com](http://www.openideo.com)

Population:	3,800,000
Project:	Community map to create more awareness of public fruit
Funding:	Volunteers to create online map
Effect:	Shares local knowledge with community, improves social interaction, & adds source for affordable healthy food
Online:	<a href="http://www.performingpublicspace.org/fallen-fruit">www.performingpublicspace.org/fallen-fruit</a>



## Retiree Resource Network: Brevard, North Carolina

The Retiree Resource Network is a group of retired citizens with a multitude of professional expertise that is used to assist small businesses and local entrepreneurs.

In 2004, with the help of the Community Development Block Grant, Brevard County created a panel of local retired residents to help provide quality consulting services to the local businesses free of charge in efforts of rebuilding the local economy. Local business owners reach out to the network to assist them in solving problems that may hinder their progress and growth. After careful consideration, the network coordinator assigns the company with an advisor best suited to solve the problem. In turn, the company receives help from an experienced professional that furthers their success. The Retiree Resource Network has been efficacious since its creation, winning the Outstanding County Program award from the North Carolina Association of County Commissioners and it has served as a model for other rural areas with retirement communities.

Like most southern towns, the economy of Brevard County rested on the shoulders of its mill and textiles industries. After their three largest employers closed their doors, over a third of the town was left unemployed. After months of brainstorming, county economic development director Mark Burrows, along with his advisory board began a plan to rebuild the economy. One aspect of the plan called for the utilization of the intellectual expertise and the experience of the retirees settling the area.



[www.visitwaterfalls.com](http://www.visitwaterfalls.com)

The Retiree Resource Network offers specific assistance to each problem that a local or small business may face. Businesses get free assistance from local retirees with their problem and save thousands of dollars. The assistance that is lent to these local entrepreneurs allows them to move forward and helps create and sustain jobs.

Similar to the Retiree Resource Network, SCORE utilizes volunteers to mentor aspiring small business owners; the Piedmont Score chapter is very active in the Upstate.

The Retiree Resource Network in Brevard has been very successful improving economic growth in Transylvania County. Any community in the Upstate that executes a similar idea may see similar benefits.

Population:	About 7,500
Project:	Provide professional expertise for small businesses
Funding:	Volunteers, CDBG funds
Effect:	Revamped local businesses with local knowledge and experience
Online:	<a href="http://www.brevardncchamber.org">www.brevardncchamber.org</a>

## Rooftop Music and Movies: Chapel Hill, North Carolina

Structures that are funded through taxes should be used to their fullest extent. An object lesson in this principle can be found in Chapel Hill, North Carolina through how the community uses the roofs of parking decks when they are not at their peak hours.

Five years ago, the town of Chapel Hill created the Locally Grown Rooftop Music and Movie Festival that takes place on the top of the Wallace Parking Deck in downtown Chapel Hill. The series takes place every Thursday night from July through August and is free to the public. People are encouraged to ride their bikes to the event, and for not driving they are entered into a local bike shop's raffle. The parking deck was retrofitted in order to accommodate for the expected crowds and the electrical equipment that would be used during the show.

The festival is the brainchild of the Downtown Chapel Hill Partnership and the Parks and Recreation Department of the city, which collaborated to bring the event downtown. The rooftop music festival is popular with the citizens of the city. The local businesses have seen growth in their business as a result of the festival, according to Bobby Funk, assistant director of the Downtown Chapel Hill Partnership (DCHP). The initial emphasis was centered on bringing people downtown for entertainment as a way to revitalize the area. Local businesses help sponsor the event. Music and movies create a great family oriented atmosphere for Chapel Hill to attract locals to downtown Chapel Hill. Nearby businesses favored this idea because it would bring potential patrons past their doors. This idea is great for the entirety of the Chapel Hill community. It has added an element of fun to their downtown by utilizing an under-appreciated amenity.



[www.townofchapelhill.com](http://www.townofchapelhill.com)

Several communities in the Upstate currently feature family-friendly movies as well as hosting local bands on specific nights. Utilizing open parking lots and other spaces like parking garages is an innovative way to create vibrancy and interest in these types of entertainment events. By using local bands and partnering with local theatres as well as area businesses and local government, these events can be held at minimal cost while drawing more people downtown.

Population:	About 88,000
Project:	Retrofitting a downtown parking deck for alternative uses
Funding:	Parks and Rec. Dept., local businesses, sponsors
Effect:	Established another place for community functions and gatherings, improving downtown entertainment opportunities
Online:	<a href="http://www.downtownchapelhill.com">www.downtownchapelhill.com</a>

# Seed Libraries: Fairfield, Connecticut

A seed library is typically established in conjunction with a more traditional library program. The concept is revolutionary, but the name itself is relatively intuitive. Patrons of a seed library are able to “check out” seeds from that library’s desk, much as they might check out books or other materials. Obviously, however, they are not expected to return the original seeds to the library. Rather, they are encouraged to plant and to nurture the seeds as they mature into plants that then will produce seeds of their own. A portion of this next generation of seeds is then duly returned to the library to be checked out and utilized by other citizens, and the cycle begins again. The seeds stored by the library typically vary from season to season, and often include varieties that might otherwise be lost.

One of the most noticeable benefits of a seed library is the beautification of the surrounding community, along with the environmental and social benefits such as fresh, local food. Although many of the communities that sponsor such libraries are larger than Fairfield, the same principles of a seed library still apply. Although many of the communities that sponsor such libraries are larger than Fairfield and than typical cities in the Upstate, the same principles apply. Fairfield’s program, which is fairly standard, offers both online and in-person classes about how to raise seeds in the local environment. Some cities, such as Palo Alto, California, even encourage the users of the seed library to sell the plants that they have raised at the local farmer’s market.



[www.fairfieldgreenfoodguide.com](http://www.fairfieldgreenfoodguide.com)

The seed library also helps to create a sense of community through a shared interest in the dissemination of seeds, and the growth of groups of experienced gardeners interested in nurturing new ones. This, in turn, helps to benefit the community’s health and general sense of well-being, as well as boosting the local economy, which inevitably is helped by the presence and interest of this vibrant, committed cadre of citizens.

The seed library also helps to promote the community’s agricultural heritage, which the Upstate is rich in, such as selling produce of the local farmers market. The seed library provides resources for a more varied approach to creating food and other plant resources and helps educate the public, which is very powerful and inspiring. A seed library in the Upstate can help bring increase of our knowledge and participation in our agriculture heritage and way of life.

Population:	Nearly 60,000
Project:	Provides a seed bank for the community
Funding:	Grants, volunteers, local donations
Effect:	Beautification of the community, education about growing plants, improvement of community’s health and sense of well-being
Online:	<a href="http://www.seedlibrary.wikispaces.com">www.seedlibrary.wikispaces.com</a>



## South Carolina Festival of Flowers: Greenwood, SC

The South Carolina Festival of Flowers is a month-long celebration of Greenwood's features and attractions that focuses most events over three days during the fourth weekend in June. The festival has grown and improved for over 45 years in Greenwood, South Carolina.

The festival originated from community staple Park Seed's annual showing of what they were growing that year. It has since been named one of the Southeast Tourism Society's Top 20 Events in June for five years in a row. Its main purpose is to promote tourism in Greenwood County and "showcase Greenwood as a destination for flowers, families and fun!" A wide array of over 35 events and exhibits are planned for 2013 and include topiary displays, art exhibits, sports events, music performances, craft shows, dinners, tours, and of course, Park Seed Flower Day. In their 45th year, this festival had a \$4.5 million economic impact to the community, and 86,500 people attended the festival throughout the month of June.

An important part of the event's success is the willingness of the organizers to re-evaluate the event itself. After the 2011 festival, event organizers took a step back and asked the attendees for feedback on what they perceived as successful, and what could be improved in the future of the event. One of the results arose in the form of a list of events that was posted in the local paper and online.

Sponsors, partners, and volunteers are what get this festival off the ground every year. There are a variety of sponsorship categories to choose from including promotional partners, partner sponsors, mobile app sponsors, supporting sponsors, contributing sponsors, patron sponsors, festival supporters, and topiary sponsors.



[www.scfestivalofflowers.org](http://www.scfestivalofflowers.org)

The Festival of Flowers is one of several wonderful festivals that occur in the Upstate. What makes this festival a model for community vibrancy is the remarkable number of people it draws in from outside of the community, its considerable impact on the economy, the willingness of the community to reflect on the festival and change it where necessary, and the growth over time that started with a simple partnership.

Population:	70,000 for Greenwood County, 23,000 for the City of Greenwood
Project:	Several days filled with a variety of events centered on flowers and promoting other assets in the county
Funding:	Sponsorships, partnerships, and volunteers
Effect:	Festival has grown over 45 years and in 2012 had \$4.5 million economic impact and 86,500 attendees
Online:	<a href="http://www.scfestivalofflowers.org">www.scfestivalofflowers.org</a>

## Taste of Bigfork Charity Event: Bigfork, Montana

For the past 18 years, Bigfork has found an excellent way to bring together the community while supporting the local Habitat for Humanity and other charities. Through the local chamber of commerce, Bigfork food vendors gather downtown for three hours during a spring Sunday to provide samples of their food, wine and beer. 300 tickets are made available for \$40 each, and the event sells out almost every year. Proceeds from the ticket sales go to Habitat for Humanity, and any remaining proceeds go to other projects like after school programs or food pantries.

Approximately 20 local vendors participate each year, but the event is also a time for local musicians to shine and entertain the 300 guests from Bigfork and its surrounding areas. This combination of local food and entertainment makes the Taste of Bigfork a source of pride for the community and provides a great way for local vendors to market their foods.

There is no shortage of fantastic food events or charitable giving in the Upstate, but perhaps there is more opportunity to leverage these events to give back to the charitable organizations that contribute to the vibrancy of our communities.

The Taste of Bigfork is beneficial to the community because it not only brings vibrancy to the community through camaraderie and good food, but it sustains the vibrancy through solidarity with community service programs such as Habitat for Humanity.

The Upstate could use this concept to create additional avenues for charitable donations by way of the fantastic festivals we already look forward to each season.



[www.bigfork.org](http://www.bigfork.org)

Population:	About 1,700
Project:	Local food tastings supporting local charities
Funding:	Vendors, ticket sales
Effect:	300 tickets at \$40 each are sold to showcase local food and talent to support local Habitat for Humanity and others
Online:	<a href="http://www.bigfork.org/events/view/107">www.bigfork.org/events/view/107</a>

# Third Saturdays at Hagood Mill: Pickens, South Carolina

Hagood Mill was donated to the Pickens County Museum Commission in 1973 by the James Hagood Bruce family after being placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. Since 1996, the mill has operated on the third Saturday of each month, which has evolved into celebrations of traditional arts, folklife and music. Currently over 25 demonstrators come each month to share their skills in milling, blacksmithing, cotton ginning, moonshining, spinning, weaving, beekeeping, metalsmithing, quilting, woodcarving, flintknapping, chair caning, open hearth cooking and more.

In addition to Third Saturdays, Hagood Mill offers a variety of other special events that range from educational programs to seasonal events in spring, summer, and fall, making each visit to the mill unique and equally exciting. These events attract up to 2,000 guests and are made possible by volunteers whose dedication has allowed the success of the mill to continually grow.

Since 1996, the barn has been remodeled into a family farm exhibit, a visitor building and gift shop were constructed, a nature trail was developed, two historic Pickens County log cabins were relocated to the site, a blacksmith shop and cotton gin building were built, a moonshine display was added, an entertainment stage was installed and a bridge to the back of the property was restored.

The Hagood Mill is a great example of a special historical spot in the Upstate that contributes to vibrancy by celebrating its rich history and culture. With volunteers and a small entrance fee to balance the costs of such an operation, a project similar to the one at Hagood Mill could prove to be a valuable historical and cultural asset to the Upstate.



[www.co.pickens.sc.us](http://www.co.pickens.sc.us)

Population:	Under 5,000
Project:	Cultural event
Funding:	Anonymous benefactor
Effect:	Over 25 traditional skills are demonstrated monthly to relive past times and bring the community together in a historically significant setting
Online:	<a href="http://www.co.pickens.sc.us/culturalcommission/hagoodmill/default.aspx">www.co.pickens.sc.us/culturalcommission/hagoodmill/default.aspx</a>

## Third Thursdays: Barnwell, South Carolina

Eight months out of the year on the third Thursday of the month Barnwell, SC hosts a unique downtown activity for small business owners and residents. Established by the small businesses, they agreed to stay open late once a month to promote shopping and socializing in the community. Today, the event has evolved into a family friendly function featuring shopping, arts, crafts, food and entertainment provided by the City.

Local businesses spearheaded the event by placing advertisements in the local newspaper, and they continue to be the backbone of the program. The City includes activities for children such as moonwalks and face painters, and local musicians will often come to play for the crowds as well.

While Barnwell is a fairly small city, its local storeowners have chosen to maximize their profits by working together to bring customers for a special evening once a month. The Upstate is host to some similar events, but this application with the focus on small businesses activity to the main streets of the Upstate. There are many positive, easily customizable attributes that are associated with Third Thursdays For instance, an Upstate community could choose to celebrate local businesses on Sunday afternoons instead of Thursday evenings. Whatever the application, small businesses and residents could surely appreciate an opportunity to celebrate together on a regular basis.



[www.cityofbarnwell.com](http://www.cityofbarnwell.com)

Small businesses in the Upstate could benefit from more exposure and patronage, and this type of event provides both. Small businesses are important to any local economy because they help to keep money from leaking out of the community. This type of event is a great opportunity for public-private partnerships between local government and businesses, paving the way for additional projects with mutual benefits.

Population:	Nearly 5,000
Project:	Promotional event for local businesses
Funding:	City of Barnwell
Effect:	Downtown shops and restaurants stay open late to receive more business while residents enjoy other amenities, too
Online:	<a href="http://www.cityofbarnwell.com/departments/tourism/ThirdThursday.aspx">www.cityofbarnwell.com/departments/tourism/ThirdThursday.aspx</a>

## Arts & Culture



## Art and Ag Project: Yolo County, California

After realizing artists' limitations to access private, beautiful farmlands, artist and farmer Annie Main reached out to the Yolo County Arts Council and together they created the Art and Ag Project. This unique project has brought together farmers, ranchers and artists from around the county to address this need. The Art and Ag Project offers as many as fifty artists annually to visit farms, meet with farmers and create art in "plein air." The project also helps to revitalize the farmlands and to increase awareness of the significance of preserving farmlands and visual arts. The Art and Ag Project is a collaborative effort of YoloArts, the Davis Farmers Market Foundation and the Yolo Land Trust.

Annually, the Art and Ag Project hosts the Art Farm exhibition and the Art Harvest fundraising event. The Art Harvest includes an auction, a limited number of harvest chances, and food and wine grown and produced in Yolo County.

Reaching out to farmers to open up their lands has given artists a creative opportunity to create and be inspired by the view from 'on the farm' as they paint, photograph or create ceramic sculptures.

This project has proven to be so successful that they recently received a grant from ArtPlace America for providing a model for other communities that want to showcase their ties to their land and American agriculture.

The Art and Ag project has been recognized as a leader in intertwining the arts into economic development, and it has added vibrancy in the Yolo communities.



[www.yoloarts.org](http://www.yoloarts.org)

Being the first of its kind, the Art and Ag project brings together Yolo County's rich heritage of farming, gorgeous working landscapes, and a large group of local artists. The program has helped to create public support for the balance between urban areas and open farmland and it helps to create social and economic vibrancy throughout the community.

Given the growing awareness and support of the importance of local food in health, the environment, and the economy, the Art and Ag project could provide more of a spotlight on our existing agricultural community and help to revive and grow our rich farming culture. There are vast lands in the Upstate that artists can use as inspiration for their art. The Art and Ag project can also help bring more attention to the rural parts of our communities.

View the video of the project on the YoloArts website and link to the America's Heartland series (episode 805) featuring the Art and Ag Project. This can be accessed through this link:  
[www.yoloarts.org/programs-and-services/art-ag-project](http://www.yoloarts.org/programs-and-services/art-ag-project).

Population:	200,000+
Project:	Arts and agriculture promoting one another through access to agricultural land
Funding:	Grants and fundraising
Effect:	Gives artists access to private farms to increase awareness of preserving farmlands and the visual arts
Online:	<a href="http://www.yoloarts.org">www.yoloarts.org</a>

## ArtCycle: Spartanburg, South Carolina

ArtCycle is an annual sculpture event that arose from a partnership between the City of Spartanburg, Hub-Bub, Artists Guild of Spartanburg, and Partners for Active Living. The event showcases five sculptures noticeably created from recycled bikes, which are displayed from the months of April to October in downtown Spartanburg. The event was created in 2009 in response to Spartanburg receiving a Bronze level designation in the League of American Bicyclists' Bicycle Friendly Community in 2007. This was the first such designation in South Carolina and was the result of the founding of Partners for Active Living in 2003 and a subsequent Mary Black Foundation grant in 2004.

Five artists are selected from a regional pool to display their sculptures in Daniel Morgan Square and receive \$200 each from the City of Spartanburg to make the sculptures, and the sculptures are placed and viewed in their prominent downtown location where they get good foot traffic especially during festivals like Spring Fling, Jazz on the Square, and Music on Main. The public can vote online for the first and second place pieces. An auction to purchase the sculptures is held in September and all of the profits go back into the ArtCycle program.

ArtCycle not only marries two inherently vibrant qualities of Spartanburg, art and physical activity, but it provides a way for Spartanburg to celebrate the phenomenal achievement of being designated bicycle friendly. The community identified that there is an obesity problem in SC (5th worst in the country), and they chose to create potential solutions with bike trails and a bikeway master plan. ArtCycle is the perfect way to celebrate their success and inspire other Upstate communities to do the same.



[www.active-living.org](http://www.active-living.org)

The ArtCycle event draws attention to bicycles, the Bicycle Friendly Designation of the city, and to the local art scene. With these three components, this innovative celebration helps strengthen the sense of character and vibrancy in a community by adding a dimension of identity and uniqueness that ties the community together. Public art is an important component in creating a sense of place, which is a struggle for many communities in the Upstate. Events similar to ArtCycle can be replicated in other parts of the Upstate, and can feature other themes that are unique to that specific community.

Population:	37,000
Project:	Regional bicycle sculpture competition and display
Funding:	Sculpture auction
Effect:	Celebrates City's achievement in being bike friendly and showcases talent of regional sculptors
Online:	<a href="http://www.active-living.org/Art-Cycle.html">www.active-living.org/Art-Cycle.html</a>

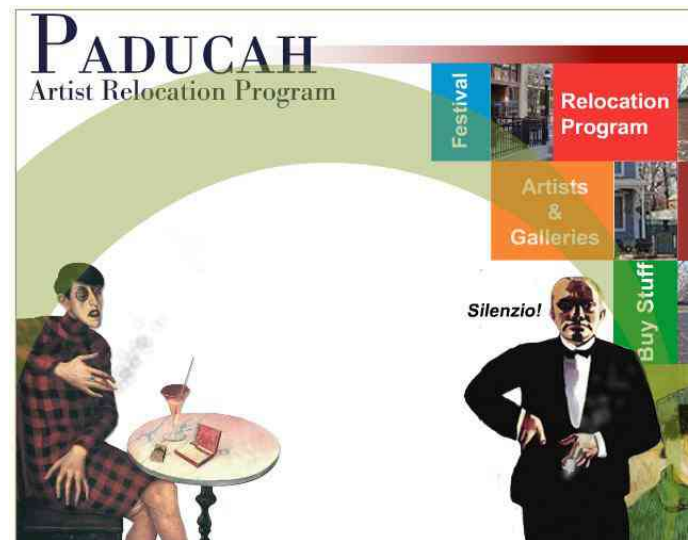


## Artist Relocation Program: Paducah, Kentucky

The Artist Relocation Program began in March 2000 and has become a national model for using the arts for economic development. At a time when funding for the arts was being cut, Paducah fostered an environment where artists and the arts can flourish. Since the program started, Paducah has won numerous awards for its creative innovation such as the National APA award for Special Community Initiative, the Kentucky Bankers Association Pegasus Award for Community Project, and many others.

The city of Paducah offers financial incentives for artists across the country to relocate to Paducah. Dilapidated houses are renovated to house these artists, but as part of the agreement, artists purchase the property for as little as \$1 as long as they help with the renovation process. The intrigue of becoming a part of a true art enclave proved irresistible. To date, Paducah artists/residents, primarily through a generous and innovative financing arrangement offered by community partner Paducah Bank, have invested over \$30 million in restoring this model community to its previous glory. This program has also been a boon for the local Paducah economy by adding another promising industry and appeal to the community.

There are ample opportunities for communities in the Upstate to take advantage of the presence of local artists, as well as trying to attract artists from across the country. There are numerous blighted areas in the Upstate that can be renovated using similar art programs, while bringing more economic activity to the area. By working with local banks and governments, an artist relocation program would be realistic and feasible for the Upstate.



[keepartreal.blogspot.com](http://keepartreal.blogspot.com)

Population:	About 25,000
Project:	Creating an environment for artists to flourish
Funding:	Community partners and innovative financing arrangement
Effect:	Attracts artists from across the country and revitalizes run-down neighborhoods; has invested over \$30 million in restoring community
Online:	<a href="http://www.paducahalliance.org">www.paducahalliance.org</a>

## Arts Alive! Center for the Arts: Enumclaw, Washington

Enumclaw's Arts Alive! Center was created to support the City of Enumclaw's Arts Commission, whose mission is to "...enrich the plateau area by coordinating and supporting literary, visual and performing artists and events, both amateur and professional." The Arts Alive! center does just that by offering a range of volunteer led classes ranging from a variety of paint styles to quilts and even poetry.

The center is a non-profit running off of membership support, gallery space rental, volunteers and approximately \$10 – 15 class fees per hour of instruction, which is offered Monday through Saturday. The center offers instruction for all skill levels including children and works closely with the Arts Commission to fund professional development for elementary art teachers in the local school district. Additionally, the center supports programs in three school districts as well as artists in three major communities and the Enumclaw Arts Commission.

The Arts Alive! Center for the Arts demonstrates two ways in which Upstate communities can add to its vibrancy. At the most basic level, communities can offer artistic support to residents through community centers and some dedicated volunteers. A more involved application would be to create an Arts Commission or a non-profit dedicated to supporting all varieties of art in its community. Adding the element of art is sure to enliven any community, and the level of involvement can be tailored to individual Upstate communities.



[www.plateauartsalive.org](http://www.plateauartsalive.org)

Population:	Nearly 60,000
Project:	Arts center for amateurs and professionals
Funding:	Volunteers, class fees, gallery rental space
Effect:	Brings awareness to arts, offers instruction and helps support Enumclaw's Arts Commission to improve art in schools
Online:	<a href="http://www.plateauartsalive.org">www.plateauartsalive.org</a>

# Oakland Mill Renovation Project: Newberry, South Carolina

Built originally in 1912, the Oakland Mill was once the economic epicenter of Newberry County. However, its prominence declined along with the textile industry in the Upstate, and it was ultimately derailed during the economic decline of 2008. The property was abandoned and soon became derelict, and the surrounding community, left without a source of income, began to decline.

In 2010, West Electrical Contractors Incorporated purchased the property, originally intending to demolish the historic mill, but the company instead approached local government to create a cooperative venture between the public and private sectors designed to renovate the mill into a competitively priced modern housing complex that would provide both residences for private citizens and dormitory space for students at Newberry College.

It was important to the community that the cultural design template of historic Newberry County be preserved in the restoration, but the City of Newberry, already suffering from the economic decline brought about by the mill's closing, would not have had sufficient funds to undertake the project alone. It was through a joint cooperative effort that enlisted both public and private funds that the project came to fruition. Key players included Newberry College, West Electrical Contractors Incorporated, BB&T, and the City of Newberry. They worked with local sources to secure funding through the National Department of the Interior by having the mill approved as an historically significant structure, and the project received a large tax credit as a result of their efforts. The restoration effort employed hundreds of local construction workers, providing a boon to the local economy.



[www.facebook.com/pages/Oakland-Mill-Development-Group/122009114536903](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Oakland-Mill-Development-Group/122009114536903)

Further, with the transformation of the mill to a residential housing structure, the surrounding area saw an improvement in sidewalks, landscaping, and lighting.

Being less than half a mile from Newberry College, the mill is ideally situated to provide student housing, and approximately forty percent of the renovated structure is dedicated to that purpose. The remaining space has been developed to provide competitively priced housing for local residents.

The project has been so successful that it has provided a template for future development. Newberry plans to style as much as one third of the entire town in a fashion congruent with the mill development.

By supporting sustainable development in partnership with local business, the community of Newberry was able to turn one of the largest detriments into one of its greatest assets. This emphasis on using already extant resources to produce a new element of vibrancy is integral to sustainable growth in the Upstate and could be replicated in many Upstate communities.

Population:	About 10,000
Project:	Renovate an abandoned mill
Funding:	Tax incentives and credits, Newberry College, private development
Effect:	Revitalize unused buildings in nearby neighborhoods
Online:	<a href="http://www.newberryobserver.com">www.newberryobserver.com</a>

## Painting Dumpsters: St. Louis, Missouri

Jacob Schmidt of Compton Heights, St. Louis, while taking the trash out one night, noticed how ugly the large trash bins in his neighborhood were. Even worse, people were throwing their garbage outside the dumpsters, which made the entire area look terrible. Although necessary and useful, these dumpsters detracted from the aesthetic beauty of his community. Wanting to add vibrancy and color back into the streets of the neighborhood, he came up with an idea to do something with every day tools. Schmidt, with permission from the city, painted these dumpsters with bright colors and vibrant pictures to add life to the streets. Dumpsters are an essential to community maintenance, but do not have to lack expression. Schmidt's project seized the opportunity to bring verve to St. Louis.

Vibrancy is much more than just a plant, a sculpture, or winsome architecture. Vibrancy is when the community bands together to create something magnificent to add beauty, character, and brio to their surroundings. After the painting, the community adopted the ideals of the project, and set to embellish their locale.

There are two types of supporters for this project: the volunteers that helped create the murals, which brought the color and the beautiful images to the community; and those that helped to reduce the litter by encouraging people to be responsible with their garbage with more awareness and support.



[www.stltoday.com](http://www.stltoday.com)

This project is evidence that a simple idea with little funds can be personalized to each community that would adopt it. One does not need a million dollars or award winning architects to make a community take pride in their neighborhood. It takes one idea, and one person to care enough to fight for it. The Project has gotten national attention. It has been mentioned in StlToday.com, Fox News, NBC, and KSDK.com. The conglomerate Waste Management has even taken notice of the project. They have plans to work with Schmidt in the future to paint the beds of the hauling trucks that move around the city.

Development and urbanization often brings with it banal, utilitarian objects that do little to display the community behind it. These objects often lack expression and can lead to degradation and blight. The Upstate can use strategies like this to beautify areas that might be subject to degeneration.

Population:	About 320,000
Project:	Painting local dumpsters
Funding:	City of St. Louis, Kickstarter.com, volunteers
Effect:	Transform ugly dumpsters into vibrant works of art with the help of local residents
Online:	<a href="http://www.stltoday.com">www.stltoday.com</a>



## Project Row Houses: Houston (3rd Ward), Texas

Project Row Houses is an undertaking started by Rick Lowe in 1993. Lowe was a native of Houston's third ward and saw the houses on Holman Street as an eye sore to the community. He decided to clear out the houses and turn them into open art galleries where local artists could display their artwork to the community to see. The third ward was a rundown community that had high rates of homelessness, abandoned houses, and drug use. As Lowe started to clear out the houses and turn them into galleries, communal enthusiasm soon took root.

The people of the community said that they felt as if the neighborhood had been reborn after Lowe began his work. They also reported that it made them feel safer now that the drugs had been eradicated. Some citizens said that they felt safe to walk around their neighborhood for the first time in a long time. When the project began, Lowe and a group of local volunteers remodeled 22 "shotgun" style houses into art galleries. Today there are over 50 houses that have been converted that span over ten blocks. The houses are open for viewing everyday between noon and 5:00 PM. People travel from all over the country to view the houses and their artwork, which is viewable from the inside or outside of the buildings.

The project is not complete. The community is still attempting to add more houses and artwork to their collection. The project has transformed significantly over time. Project Row Houses not only remodeled homes into art galleries but it helped spawn another



[www.projectrowhouses.com](http://www.projectrowhouses.com)

very important endeavor, the Young Mother Residential Program, which helps provide temporary housing for single mothers. Project Row Houses has acted as a catalyst for other projects in the area that help to improve the community. The reaction to this great idea has been outstanding.

The locals believe that it has brought about a new era in the community. Some go as far as to say that they feel as if Project Row Houses gave them their neighborhood back.

There are neighborhoods in the Upstate that over time have become unsafe and would be candidates for a project that uses art to revitalize the neighborhood.

Population:	13,000
Project:	Renovate run-down houses into public art galleries
Funding:	Local donations- public and private, National Endowment for the Arts
Effect:	Diminishes crime and promotes social interaction through art
Online:	<a href="http://www.projectrowhouses.org">www.projectrowhouses.org</a>

## 300<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration: Williamsburg, Virginia

To celebrate the 300th anniversary of Colonial Williamsburg in 1999, the city embarked on a year-long celebration that increased national exposure and local vibrancy for this historical community.

One of the major benefits of the 300th Anniversary celebration in Williamsburg was its ability to involve every citizen by celebrating a common asset to the community – its vibrant history. The celebration was focused on events during a weekend in May, but the special events continued throughout the year, which allowed the community to celebrate in a variety of ways including musical tributes, art exhibits, historical reenactments and more.

The 300th Anniversary celebration in Williamsburg is also a good example of the City, citizens, local businesses and schools working together to achieve something in common interest. The City funded about half of the \$300,000 event budget, while the other entities contributed the rest. Even event promotion was a joint effort because businesses and schools did not want to miss out on the three to four percent expected increase in tourism.

In the Upstate, there might not always be a big anniversary or historically significant event to celebrate, but there are ways to enliven communities following Williamsburg's lead. The Upstate has a plethora of natural resources and other amenities that make it different from any other part of the country in the same way that Williamsburg is historically unique. Celebrating the unique assets of the Upstate will not only bring together communities, but it can showcase the Upstate's fantastic culture and residents.



[www.hisotry.org](http://www.hisotry.org)

Population:	Nearly 15,000
Project:	Cultural event
Funding:	City and private business donations
Effect:	Celebrating the city's centennial birthday allowed residents and visitors to appreciate Williamsburg's uniquely rich history
Online:	<a href="http://www.colonialwilliamsburg.com">www.colonialwilliamsburg.com</a>

# Neighborhoods



# The Before I Die Wall: Yankton, South Dakota

A resident of Yankton lost someone close to them which made them realize the fragile, short nature of life. She wanted to create a daily reminder of this understanding, and she desired to share it with her community. With the help of friends and neighbors, she painted the side of an abandoned house in her neighborhood with chalkboard paint and stenciled on it “Before I die I want to...”. Chalk was left at the wall for any passer-by to reflect on their lives and put on a response on the board. Residents would be able to share their personal aspirations in a public space, as well as see others’ aspirations and dreams. The idea became popular with word spreading quickly about the wall, and soon the wall was filled with the hopes and dreams of the community. The wall transformed a neglected space into a constructive one. It helped community members understand their neighbors in new and enlightening ways. It showed them that they were not alone. It provided a contemplative space to restore perspective and remind people why they are alive. The Yankton Area Arts Director expressed she thought the project was a great idea. “Seeing other people’s reaction to the wall reaffirms why we wanted to work hard to do this project.”

Supporters of the project also started a Facebook group for residents to share their dreams and ideas. The actual wall would have to be repainted whenever the wall was filled up, leaving no room for new ideas. By creating the Facebook group, more ideas have been shared in addition to what can be physically placed on the wall.

There are ample spaces on empty walls across the Upstate that would render themselves useful for such a project. Vibrancy often arises from new friendships and relationships being formed. Surely one of the best ways to create vibrancy is to gain a better understanding of those in the community. Perhaps, one of the best ways to do this is by sharing the commonality of what brings a community together. Geography is not all that binds humanity. Hopes, dreams, and aspirations are some of the most integral components of a community. The Before I Die Wall is an eminent example of a disparate community brought together by their ambitions.



[www.beforeidie.cc](http://www.beforeidie.cc)

Population:	About 23,000
Project:	Community chalkboard/wall
Funding:	Donations, volunteers
Effect:	Helped unite a community by sharing individual aspirations
Online:	<a href="http://www.beforeidie.cc">www.beforeidie.cc</a>

## Black Mountain Community Garden: Black Mountain, North Carolina

The Black Mountain Community Garden is located in Black Mountain North Carolina. It is a community-initiated program that serves as a multi-purpose resource for the community. It provides education about the importance of growing food, a location for community members to garden, and through volunteer efforts, the garden donates over 4,000 pounds of vegetables every year to area food pantries and kitchens. The community garden of Black Mountain North Carolina was designed by a group of people who wanted to eat fresher, better tasting, and healthier food.

Many people and organizations were part of making the community garden successful. It all started when Dr. John Wilson opened his backyard garden to others who wanted space after he noticed a growing demand for gardening opportunities. He petitioned the town for public space. The town had recently purchased land that extended to the river through a flood plain and was useless for permanent structures. Permission was granted to build a garden there; the Town of Black Mountain gave him 1.25 acres of bottomland along the Swannanoa River, formerly farmland fallow for many years.

The community garden organization has partnered with the town's Health Initiative Program to find ways to improve health and reduce obesity in their community. Gardening provides opportunities for both physical activity and healthy eating, making their proposal successful.



[www.bmrecreation.com](http://www.bmrecreation.com)

The community garden was further expanded when it partnered with other local programs, such as school gardens and the Eat Smart Black Mountain program.

The community garden has helped to foster a new culture of healthy eating and through a focused sense of purpose for the group adds more vibrancy to the Black Mountain community. The program is strong and growing quickly. Future plans include adding a greenhouse and providing more space for more gardeners, as well as adding an educational element for people new to gardening.

There are places in the Upstate that have been successful at implementing these gardens, and a garden is a relatively straightforward project to implement in a community space with the right partnerships in place. These facts coupled with the obesity epidemic in South Carolina make this a prime opportunity for implementation and to increase vibrancy in many Upstate communities.

Population:	Around 8,000
Project:	Community engaged gardening
Funding:	Federal and local grants, volunteers, donations
Effect:	Stronger community ties through gardening, increased awareness of the importance of fresh, local foods and access to them
Online:	<a href="http://www.bmrecreation.com">www.bmrecreation.com</a>

## Boundless Playgrounds: Taylors, South Carolina

This fully accessible playground arose from a strong partnership between Boundless Playgrounds and the CVS Caremark All Kids Can program. It was funded by a \$50 thousand grant from CVS, a private \$150 thousand corporate donation, smaller donations from the public, labor from Verizon as well as additional funding from the Greenville County Recreation Department, which used funds from program fees, rental fees, property taxes, hospitality tax and more grants.

This all-inclusive playground is one of only 200 across the United States and Canada. It creates a safe playing environment in which children of all ability levels can interact and play together. This environment is achieved through surfaces and equipment that are accessible to children who are not able to actively participate on traditional playgrounds. Nationwide, there are 6 million children who cannot play on traditional playgrounds, so this accomplishment in Taylors is an important step for the advancement of the community.

Boundless Playgrounds are a great way to achieve vibrancy in any community because they promote personal interaction for adults and children. Even more importantly, Boundless Playgrounds specifically target inclusivity for community children, which is a valuable lesson at any stage in one's life. In addition to promoting engagement in outdoor physical activity, these playgrounds teach children values of equality and acceptance.



[www.greenvillerec.com](http://www.greenvillerec.com)

Because there are so few of these types of playgrounds, applying this concept of inclusivity for disabled children in other neighborhood play areas would certainly make any community more vibrant.

In recent years a number of playgrounds in the Upstate have created sections that are accessible for all children, regardless of any physical limitations. Incorporating the Boundless Playground concept into new playgrounds would help increase vibrancy and inclusiveness.

Population:	About 40,000
Project:	Fully handicap accessible playground
Funding:	CVS grant, private corporate donation, smaller donations from public, county budget
Effect:	Made a Taylors playground inclusive of all children, despite varying levels of ability
Online:	<a href="http://www.greenvillerec.com/theplayground">www.greenvillerec.com/theplayground</a>



## Corcoran Neighborhood Call for Art: Minneapolis, Minnesota

In response to graffiti tagging in their neighborhood in south Minneapolis, the Corcoran Neighborhood Organization (CNO) formed the Call for Art Project. This project, the great idea of using art and murals to discourage graffiti tags, was the product of a neighborhood the neighborhood's National Night Out, which was a brainstorming event funded by a \$10,000 CNO grant to generate unique ideas to discourage graffiti. The event, held in August of 2009, featured food, games, sidewalk drawing, prizes and a cash payout of \$250 to artist participants with the most unique idea.

CNO's 2011 public art projects were funded, in part, by the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund as appropriated by the Minnesota State Legislature. The City of Minneapolis helped support CNO's 2011 graffiti prevention murals and landscaping work, and the Valspar Foundation continues to provide paint for all of CNO's public art and graffiti prevention projects. Additional support is provided by the McKnight Foundation, the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, and individual donations.

The Call for Art Project that arose from this event ultimately generated other events under the Call for Art umbrella including Paint the Pavement, Boulevard Art Project, Painting Murals, Painting Portraits and artistic attention to the local farmers' market. These projects vary in complexity from annual pavement painting events to projects that focus on permanent installation on chain link fences and walls. These projects are funded by the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund, the City of Minneapolis, the Valspar Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, the Neighborhood Revitalization Program and other individual gifts. In 2011, direct expenses were \$22,040, and dozens of improvements have been made.



[www.corcoranneighborhood.org](http://www.corcoranneighborhood.org)

This project is one potential remedy for the existing graffiti in the Upstate. The ability to apply this project on a varied scale, its relatively small price tag, and its capability for uniting residents makes it an attractive opportunity to increase community vibrancy in any Upstate community. By showing that people care for their community and by calling attention to the artwork, this project also has the potential to reduce crime and increase property values.

Population:	Nearly 6,000
Project:	Promotional art for the Corcoran Neighborhood
Funding:	Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage fund, local and private donations
Effect:	Created an artistic solution for a graffiti problem on neighborhood surfaces
Online:	<a href="http://www.corcoranneighborhood.org/murals.html">www.corcoranneighborhood.org/murals.html</a>

## DASH: LaGrange, Georgia

The City of LaGrange, Georgia was, prior to 2002, subject to the fact that nearly three out of every eleven houses within its confines was structurally substandard. To combat this, LaGrange, along with a local philanthropic organization and a retired native of the city founded Dependable, Affordable, Sustainable Housing (DASH). Since its founding in 2002, DASH has helped rebuild numerous homes in LaGrange.

Hillside, a neighborhood of approximately 400 homes over 275 acres, was the first DASH project and a total investment of \$20 million produced results such as the rebuilding or construction of 81 homes; the development of 154 affordable rental units, a crime reduction of 44%, and an increased tax base by \$6 million. Other, less tangible, effects were that residents felt safe again, children being proud of their homes, neighbors were more involved, and Hillside's historic charm was restored. Furthermore, part of DASH's initiative is to ensure quality improvements requiring minimal maintenance while still using green building techniques. DASH houses meet EnergyStar standards, and their first EarthCraft Certified house was completed in 2012. This not only benefitted the environment, but also lowered expenses.

In addition to housing rehabilitation, DASH offers credit counseling to help increase personal wealth, and the combination of these two services has tremendously benefitted a once dying community. Home ownership increased by 16% and population by 14% in LaGrange since DASH's inception.



[www.dashlagrange.org](http://www.dashlagrange.org)

Just as it did in LaGrange, applying beautification efforts and a sense of value in Upstate communities would certainly contribute to their vibrancy as well.

Helping to increase the rate of home-ownership creates more active participation in the upkeep and character of any community. It helps to establish a sense of pride for one's neighborhood and makes for a desirable place to live.

Population:	25,000
Project:	Housing rehabilitation
Funding:	Callaway Foundation (\$5 M grant), City of LaGrange, largely self-sustaining
Effect:	Rehabilitated housing and stores increased home ownership by 16% and population by 14% in LaGrange
Online:	<a href="http://www.dashlagrange.org">www.dashlagrange.org</a>



# Westcott Community Bulb Project: Syracuse, New York

Westcott, a neighborhood in Syracuse, NY, fostered vibrancy in the community through the vision of resident Peter Wirth and the Westcott Community Center. In an effort to enhance the visual beauty of the community, perennial bulbs are given to residents every October to be planted in public spaces.

Since the onset of the project in 2003, approximately 90,000 bulbs have been given to residents and community organizations. Around 300 individual residents participate in the plantings while 20 additional neighborhood organizations, such as school programs, also participate.

The budget for the program started at around \$3,000 in 2003 but has since grown to \$5,000. The neighborhood is able to sustain the free bulb giveaway through a variety of fundraisers and raffles throughout the year. They also keep costs low by purchasing bulbs at wholesale prices and accepting donated bulbs for the remainder of their stock. When costs cannot be met through fundraisers and donations, grants from community organizations have subsidized the project in the past.

An additional benefit of the project is the vibrancy value in creating a tourist attraction. When outsiders come to visit and admire the beauty of the project and then replicate the program in their own community, the residents of the community can be proud.



*bulbproject.org*

This budget-friendly approach to beautification is feasible for communities in the Upstate, and would contribute to the aesthetic quality of public spaces. In addition to being a cost-effective solution for adding interest to communities, the bulb planting unites the community under a visible outcome reached by teamwork and physical contributions to the community. The Upstate could potentially use their own version of a bulb project with their own native flower and flora which is unique to our region.

Population:	Under 5,000
Project:	Community flowers
Funding:	Community raffles and fundraisers
Effect:	Enhance visual quality of community with 90,000 perennial bulbs and create sense of teamwork with 20 groups and 300 individuals participating
Online:	bulbproject.org

## Weed and Seed Program: Rock Hill, South Carolina

The Urban Rock Hill Weed & Seed Initiative began as part of the United States Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs that dedicates its time to community based projects. The Weed and Seed Initiative was formed to "weed" out the crime in local neighborhoods and "seed" a safer, more vibrant community. This initiative aims to restore these distressed neighborhoods through social and economic community activities.

Weed and Seed was created in 1991 to reduce the crime rates and improve community vibrancy. It began with a trial period including nineteen cities over eighteen months. These cities obtained grants for \$1.1 million to create programs to get the community involved in restoring neighborhoods. One program in particular is located in Rock Hill, SC. Rock Hill is located in York County in northern South Carolina. They began with five neighborhoods. The current Rock Hill Weed & Seed Initiative focuses on seven neighborhoods including Hagins-Fewell, Sunset Park, Crawford Road, Flint Hill, South Central, The Triangle, and Saluda Corridor.

The initiative increases the police funding in an attempt to get criminals off the streets and prevent crimes from occurring. The program has been awarded numerous grants by the United States Attorney's Office and many supporting Police Departments. Projects funded by the Weed and Seed Initiative have greatly improved the neighborhoods with tools such as after-school programs, safe havens, teen centers, and job training for teens and ex-convicts so they can better the community. The Weed and Seed Initiative also has the support of the people in the communities. Most people who responded to a survey on the Weed and Seed Initiative noticed improvements of their neighborhood in both police responsiveness, and community involvement.



[www.thenewk724.blogspot.com](http://www.thenewk724.blogspot.com)

The Weed and Seed Initiative has inspired other programs such as HUD renovation projects, D.A.R.E. (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) Programs, Police Athletic Leagues by local Police Departments, VISTA volunteers, and others. The Upstate can use similar programs to help teach children the dangers of drugs and promote a better quality of life. These programs help bring awareness to the problems with crime and they attempt to bring communities together to establish a common goal which is to create community vibrancy by making our neighborhoods safer.

Population:	About 66,000
Project:	Neighborhood rehabilitation and revitalization
Funding:	Federal program funding and grants
Effect:	Reduce crime rates and improve community vibrancy
Online:	<a href="http://www.justice.gov">www.justice.gov</a>

## Parks & Recreation

## Caractor Park: Lexington, South Carolina

In Lexington, SC a new park was created near an underprivileged neighborhood on the west side of town. The park is the epitome of community vibrancy because of the cooperation and dedication of community leaders and residents working together with private and public companies to construct the park. This pocket park has enhanced the quality of living for the surrounding neighborhood called the “hill.”

The purpose of Caractor Park is to give the nearby historically low-to-moderate income neighborhood a family-oriented outdoor place for children and adults to enjoy. The park includes a playground area, a picnic shelter, covered porch style swings, open green space, a spray fountain, and a bronze marker commemorating Willie B. Caractor, an influential community activist.

The property, previously used for illegal activities and seized by the federal government was returned to the Town of Lexington for use in January of 2005. The one-half acre park took nearly five years to complete as the town purchased additional property to expand the park and worked with local partners to clear and landscape the site.

The creation of the park served as a vehicle for local partnerships to be fostered between the public and private donors, which turned the dream of a park into a reality. Area businesses and organizations contributed funds to create a safe and enjoyable location with amenities for the community. The park enabled the community to come together and plan a public space that served their needs and improved the vibrancy and beauty of the neighborhood. Caractor Park is a clear asset for the community, by acting as a building block for the revitalization of a disadvantaged neighborhood.



*Courtesy of the Town of Lexington*

Caractor Park acts as a great example of how communities, especially in the Upstate, can benefit by adding parks and other amenities that are important to quality-of-life to their communities. These additions provide avenues for the community to come together and take part in their neighborhood. Involving all the stakeholders not only ensures success for such a project, but it builds working relationships for much of the community. These relationships open the doors for future projects and allows for timely completion as these agencies have built trust and gained experience.

Population:	About 18,000
Project:	Creation of a new park
Funding:	Private (84%) and public donations, local taxes
Effect:	Helped add value and pride to a community, brought together residents and local leaders to improve vibrancy
Online:	<a href="http://www.lexsc.com">www.lexsc.com</a>



## Falls Park: Greenville, South Carolina

After years of hiding below the Camperdown vehicular bridge, the Carolina Foothills Garden Club (CFGC) and the City of Greenville spearheaded the campaign to expose Falls Park and install a world-class pedestrian bridge. The process began back in 1967 when CFGC, with the support of the City of Greenville and Furman University, set out to reclaim the 26 acres for the current park. After master planning that provided incremental improvements and enhancements, the vision was finally realized forty years later with the removal of the vehicular bridge and the installation of the Liberty Bridge.

Over \$1 million in investments were ultimately made by the CFGC, which produced a place for Greenville visitors and residents to enjoy with features including scenic overlooks, nature trails, six specialty gardens and a land bridge. The total investment was over \$13 million paid for by hospitality taxes. In addition, contributions from businesses, individuals, and foundations contributed to the Falls Park Endowment to ensure that the quality of the park is sustained.

The park and bridge have been nominated for or received six national recognitions of merit and have incited over \$300 million in nearby private development.

While Falls Park may be a daunting way to achieve community vibrancy, the important lessons are applicable to any scale. First, it may take a sustained commitment. The transformation of Falls Park took almost forty years, but planning and incremental improvements were made throughout that time. Second is that public private partnerships are important to success. In the case of Falls Park, CFGC was in partnership with the city to lend expertise, financial and community support and ensure a successful project. Third, is the importance of identifying a unique (maybe even hidden) aspect of your community that can be celebrated. And finally, in looking for ways to add community vibrancy, look for opportunities that contribute to a sense of place for the local residents and as a result, others will want to come.



[www.fallspark.com](http://www.fallspark.com)

Population:	60,000
Project:	Park rehabilitation
Funding:	Private donations and the City of Greenville
Effect:	Created downtown focal point and incited \$300 million in surrounding investments
Online:	<a href="http://www.fallspark.com">www.fallspark.com</a>



# Greenfield Energy Park: Greenfield, Massachusetts

Greenfield Energy Park is a unique historical gathering place for kids, teens and adults built from a previously abandoned train station. The Greenfield community, with the support of residents, local businesses and other organizations focused on revitalizing this crucial part of the community. This revitalization project is a great example of how a town can engage the community and provide recreation and educational opportunities at the same time.

Greenfield Energy Park has many different meanings behind its name. When the idea first arose to create a greenspace, the Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA) was also looking for a permanent home. Synchronicity happened. In exchange for a break on taxes on a former railroad building, NESEA agreed to develop the adjacent nearly one acre of land (owned by the town) to become a public park, one block from the heart of downtown and to spend at least \$70,000 to do so. The name of the park incorporates “energy” in the title because they felt that it captured the history of the land, the future of renewable energy, and the essential spirit of the community. With 30-40 events held at the park in 2012, the site lives up to its energetic name.

The old train station was blighted for nearly 40 years before any efforts were made to revitalize the area. With the help of many partners, both private and public, the land was able to be revamped. The project involved thousands of volunteer hours of labor and help from the local government. In 1990, the City of Greenfield included the revitalization of the Greenfield Park into their Master Plan, which helped to bring more focus and support to the project.



[www.townofgreenfield.org](http://www.townofgreenfield.org)

The vision for the park is to make sure that it is a sustainable and environmentally sound public space. The community wanted to make sure that this park was maintenance-free. They accomplished this by using materials in the park that were as ecologically sound and as damage-proof as possible. The community leaders decided to incorporate re-used granite curbing that was stockpiled by the Department of Public Works, which make up the center of the amphitheater. They also used stone that came from a local quarry to create the benches and the gardens. The sod that was used was donated by a local sod farmer and laid by volunteers. Artwork was a high priority and all projects were installed through the grant awards and generous contributions. The Green Thumb squad of volunteers maintains the park and keeps it clean and useable for future generations.

The Upstate has plenty of abandoned train or industrial parcels that can be renovated to better serve the community and provide a place for gathering and other community events. Federal brownfield grants are available for the remediation of industrial sites. It would also be a great opportunity to showcase sustainable building and use of sustainable materials.

Population:	About 18,000
Project:	Revitalization of a run-down, former train station site in downtown
Funding:	Public and private donations, volunteers, grants
Effect:	Brought the community together to improve a focal point of the town in a safe setting
Online:	<a href="http://www.townofgreenfield.org">www.townofgreenfield.org</a>

## Gypsy Hill Park: Staunton, Virginia

People have been using this tract of land since the 1800s, and in 1876, the City decided to purchase 30 acres. Those 30 acres turned into 214 acres over the next century as the City continually added acreage to the park with money from its general funds. In addition to more acres, the general funds have added amenities such as barbecuing areas, baseball fields, basketball courts, bicycling, a duck pond, fishing, a fitness station, a football field, horseshoes, a mini-train, monuments, picnic shelters, playgrounds, pools, running tracks, an action skate park, soccer fields, tennis courts, volleyball courts, a recycling station and a bandstand.

This park has developed into a centerpiece for the City of Staunton over the years despite minimal funding, making it a great example of an efficient way to add vibrancy to a community. It is important to emphasize that many great projects are more a product of time than money when developed with limited means and that this does not necessarily compromise effectiveness.

This approach is applicable to the Upstate because it highlights the benefits of an on-going project. Incremental improvements can be applied to non-critical projects in Upstate communities in order to reach long-term goals. This can help ensure that money is not being over-committed to any nonessential functions, while still allowing for recreational enhancements, which is a great way to add vibrancy to communities.

Open space and recreation opportunities are valued by all residents. Having both passive and active uses in the park attract more potential users, and it gets the best use out of the land.



[www.staunton.va.us](http://www.staunton.va.us)

Population:	Around 24,000
Project:	Passive and active recreational park
Funding:	City of Staunton
Effect:	Staunton has been able to enjoy this land for over a century after purchases began in 1876
Online:	<a href="http://www.staunton.va.us/directory/departments-h-z/recreation-parks/parks/gypsy-hill-park">www.staunton.va.us/directory/departments-h-z/recreation-parks/parks/gypsy-hill-park</a>

## Oglebay Resort and Conference Center: Wheeling, West Virginia

What began as a private estate and farm was willed in 1926 to the people of Wheeling and the vicinity for as long as it be operated for public recreation. Under the governance of the Wheeling Park Commission, the property experienced numerous improvement projects funded by federal relief programs and donations.

The Parks Systems Trust was established in 1945 as a formal means to monitor capital, and with the addition of picnic shelters, a horse ring, driving range, tennis shelter, lake, nature center, and Wilson Lodge, Oglebay became a year-round resort by 1957. Grants were often matched with funding from the trust to leverage capital and finance improvements and additional amenities across the 1,700-acre property.

Today, the resort features a spa, zoo, ski area, conference center, formal English gardens, tennis, stables, an environmental center, two golf courses, indoor and outdoor pools, lodging from rooms to cottages, two museums, shopping, dining, and a three-acre lake. The resort also hosts special and seasonal events.



[www.oglebay-resort.com](http://www.oglebay-resort.com)

The wide array of activities offered truly makes this a recreational facility that the entire community can enjoy, and because the community largely supports the resort through The Oglebay Foundation, they feel connected to the resort beyond Mr. Oglebay's generous gift to the community.

The Upstate is fortunate to have a lot of public amenities. If a community can find a way to support and expand public features in its neighborhood, the community can foster a sense of unity and grow together just as they did in Wheeling.

Population:	31,000
Project:	Recreational facility
Funding:	Estate of Earl W. Oglebay, The Oglebay Foundation non-profit
Effect:	Provided 1,700 acre year-round recreational facility to the Wheeling community, which supports the resort's upkeep
Online:	<a href="http://www.oglebay-resort.com">www.oglebay-resort.com</a>

## Paley Pocket Park: New York, New York

During the late 19th century, parks and urban planning became equated with art and civic virtue. As time progressed, the exponential population growth and increasing urbanization of America created a greater need for city parks. Parks provided an area for recreation and relaxation for city dwellers to get away from the hectic commotion. Although parks had long been used in urban areas, in the 1960's urban planner Robert Zion, of Zion & Breen developed a new idea that he called a 'vest pocket park.' A pocket park is a small urban park usually located on no more than one building plot. Zion had the opportunity in 1967 to implement his park idea only blocks away from Olmstead's Central Park. Paley Park is located on 53rd Street between Madison and 5th Avenue in midtown Manhattan.

Although the Paley Park design was expensive and located in one of the most grandiose cities in the world, Zion's idea of a small urban park was implemented on a smaller scale. The park features two ivy-filled walls, dozens of Honey Locust trees and a 20 foot waterfall that is meant to help drown out the noise from the city. The intimate nature of the park makes its users feel comfortable and was an instant success. Prominent planners and architects attribute the parks success to its thoughtful design and its location. Paley Park not only provides a place to escape from the hectic city, but it has also brought prestige, art, and community events to the area. The park has been a popular retreat for both locals and tourist for activities including: reading, eating, leisure, and relaxing.



[www.skyscrapercity.com](http://www.skyscrapercity.com)

Similar parks can be found here in the Upstate. Spartanburg recently built a pocket park along abandoned railroad tracks in the downtown area that is between a wine shop and a coffee shop. Spartanburg's pocket park shows how these smaller parks can be implemented in any community using a minimal amount of space.

Population:	Over 8 million
Project:	Small urban park
Funding:	William Paley donated the land and \$700k
Effect:	Small gathering place for relaxation to get away from the hectic commotion of the city
Online:	<a href="http://www.pps.rg">www.pps.rg</a>



## Town Green: Camden, South Carolina

In the middle of downtown Camden, SC there was a parking lot that took up a large chunk of the downtown area. As part of the implementation of a new plan called “Vision Camden”, the community put more focus on revitalizing the downtown area. One of the features of the vision was to turn this parking lot into a new green space. The town of Camden set forth to transform an aging, damaged parking lot with serious storm water drainage concerns into a large grassy area with oak trees. The park also minimizes the heat island effect, which is where large amounts of impervious surface absorb the sun’s heat and makes the hyper local climate much hotter. The Town Green Project created a vibrant public space in Camden’s downtown while mitigating some of the storm water issues created by the parking lot. Before Town Green was completed the town did not have a public space that could be used as a venue for town events. Different intersections throughout the downtown were typically blocked off for public festivals and performances. By having a public green space in the downtown, Camden is able to infuse more activity and interest to its core and have a vibrant venue for its events.

The mayor and local news have been very vocal on the success that the Town Green has brought to Camden. The project is much larger than just replacing a dying parking lot with green space. It helps to transform the image of downtown and opens up space for locals to enjoy public events, evenings, and weekends. It provides a safe space for family fun and for kids to run around. The project is a great example of how a community can transform vacant space into something desirable.



[www.cityofcamden.org](http://www.cityofcamden.org)

Businesses first thought the project would cost them potential customers by taking away their parking spaces. Alternate spaces were provided behind some of the existing downtown buildings, instead of having the spaces as a focal point in the center of the town. Businesses started to realize that much more people were frequenting downtown than before the project. Local restaurants and shops were seeing more patrons and were glad to see their downtown transform.

There are many empty and abandoned parking lots in the Upstate that could provide green space for the downtown areas. This project could also prompt business owners and residents to take better care of their buildings and communities. The Upstate could use more open green spaces in the downtown areas to hold public events. Camden has set an excellent example for them.

Population:	About 7,000
Project:	Conversion of a parking lot into a public, green space
Funding:	Hospitality tax, private donations
Effect:	Adds a new venue for public events and brings more vibrancy to Main St.
Online:	<a href="http://www.cityofcamden.org">www.cityofcamden.org</a>



# Timken Sports Complex: Union County, South Carolina

Completed in early 2010, Timken Sports Complex in Union, SC has seven baseball fields of varying sizes. Each field features two fenced in bullpens, and there are two towers to service all seven fields. More specifically, the North Tower is 4,900 square feet and the South Tower is 1,800 square feet, and within each are restrooms, a game room, a parent lounge, press facilities and concessions. To complete the baseball facilities, there are two batting cages with turf surfaces including Jugs softball and baseball machines to rent. A well-lit walking trail nearly a mile long circles the complex, and a fenced playground is also located within, rounding out the facility.

Timken U.S. Corporation donated the land for the complex and contributed another \$500,000 for construction, which totaled over \$6.4 million. Union County funds and bonds, a \$100 brick sale and continuing sponsors supplied the remaining balance. It was truly a community effort to construct the complex, and its use continues to reflect that. The fields are open to local schools and recreational teams; the track is open before, during, and after games; and the complex gets use eight months out of the year.



[www.experienceunioncounty.com](http://www.experienceunioncounty.com)

Complexes like this add vibrancy to a community because they promote interaction and have the ability to attract participants from a wide area. The people of Union County all have access to the facility, which has a couple of benefits contributing to community vibrancy. Shared use not only facilitates neighborly activity and involvement, but it also decreases the need for redundant facilities. For instance, this can save a lot of money for local high schools needing practice space. Maximizing uses and sharing recreational spaces is a great way to contribute to vibrancy and should be explored across the Upstate for venues and recreational facilities.

Population:	Over 27,000
Project:	Community baseball complex
Funding:	Corporate, fundraisers and Union County
Effect:	Seven shared fields provide space for a variety of Union County ball clubs
Online:	<a href="http://www.countyofunion.org">www.countyofunion.org</a>

# Uptowns & Downtowns

## Better Block: Oak Cliff, Texas

Jason Roberts and Andrew Howard, Co-Founders of the Better Block Project, wanted to inspire positive change in their Oak Cliff, Texas community that didn't take several years to implement. Familiar with the traditional public comprehensive planning process, Roberts and Howard wanted to take the ideas often suggested during the planning process and speed up the implementation by hosting a one-day event that takes a neglected block and creates a temporary snapshot of vibrancy in the area. The people that come to witness the event are subject to the sounds, smells, flavors, and feel of what could be there permanently. Having actually experienced what it could be like, people would be motivated to make the changes necessary to turn the fantasy into reality.

The first Better Block event was held in a neighborhood of Dallas Texas called Oak Cliff. The block was neglected and in need of some attention, so Roberts and Howard enlisted community organizers, neighbors, property owners, and artists to help them create a living "scene" with storefronts and businesses (termed "pop-ups"), cafes, bike lanes, crafts, and musicians that they showcased on one day. Those helping were all volunteers and the materials used were all donated. If a community feels it must have funds to create the scene, they suggest using a crowdfunding website such as indiegogo.com.

In terms of criteria for a successful long-term project, the most important component to have is a neighborhood nearby. After that, there are four areas that should be addressed: safety, access, places to linger, and other amenities.



*Betterblock.org*

The cities that have hosted Better Block events "have seen improved acceptance by city engineers, planners, designers, and public safety officials of some of the most progressive measures in the urban street design toolbox" and "have reported greater understanding and urgency by elected officials, leaders, and citizens for permanent change."

In terms of a successful event, there are many things to consider: utilize social media, invite artists and musicians to perform, work with local store owners to provide local product, plan for all users (ages and abilities), stripe temporary bike lanes, and bring in potted trees.

Since the first one, Better Block projects have taken place all of the United States and are beginning to catch on in other parts of the world. There are many blocks in need of TLC in the Upstate and many passionate people willing to lead this type of project. The Better Block event put on in Duncan, SC by Upstate Forever in June 2013 is proof that it can happen here!

Population:	2,000- 7 million
Project:	One-day event open to the public that uses temporary stores, cafes, and street infrastructure to create a more inviting block
Funding:	Donated time and materials
Effect:	One fun day that inspires long-term policy change and more inviting public spaces
Online:	<a href="http://betterblock.org/about">betterblock.org/about</a>

## Harmony Courtyard: Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin

After a tragic bus accident affected 30 Chippewa Falls High band members and the accompanying staff, City Council honored them with a vacant lot downtown dubbed Harmony Courtyard. The lot was left bare after a fire burned down the business occupying the space until 1988, and the property was donated to the City in 2004.

The City's Main Street Design Committee transformed the vacant lot into the courtyard to fill the need for public space in the historic district. Labor for clearing the lot, freshening up the buildings and landscaping was provided by local inmates. Other materials and labor were donated, bringing the project total to \$4,679.

The Main Street Design Committee worked with a local sign shop to coordinate the Harmony Courtyard murals that depict the town's history. Now, the pocket park represents a harmonious community that has recovered from tragedy and created a community gathering spot downtown.

Harmony Courtyard is a great example of adding community vibrancy because it came out of two unfortunate events, the bus accident and business fire that created a positive place for the community.



[www.leadertelegram.com](http://www.leadertelegram.com)

The physical construction of the courtyard brought the community together through volunteering, and the murals serve as a lasting reminder of the town's character.

Upstate communities would benefit greatly from finding ways to turn negative features into meaningful, community-oriented places.

Population:	Almost 13,000
Project:	Memorial pocket park
Funding:	Volunteer
Effect:	Aids downtown revitalization efforts while honoring students and staff involved in bus tragedy
Online:	<a href="http://chippewa.com/article_4f803927-d5fa-5e5a-bdf3-3aab903d4275.html">chippewa.com/article_4f803927-d5fa-5e5a-bdf3-3aab903d4275.html</a>

## Main Street Fairmont Revitalization: Fairmont, West Virginia

In an attempt to restore the vibrancy of its downtown, Fairmont, West Virginia started building relationships with local business owners, community organizers and banks to start the reconstruction of its main street. The Fairmont Community Development Partnership was created with the training and local support of local businesses to provide the leadership and synergy needed to encourage economic prosperity in downtown Fairmont. The connections made in the local community between banks and local businesses enabled community development training to help revitalize Fairmont downtown by adding emphasis on economic development.

As a way to gain funding for this enormous endeavor, these Fairmont organizers used local and national funding to promote preservation of historical sites and buildings to restart the beautification of its downtown. The Fairmont Community Development Partnership came up with numerous initiatives to help spur interest and activity in their downtown. One of the strategies used was to create incentives to fill vacant lots in the downtown area. The Development Partnership also hoped to retain the existing

businesses by providing training to business owners on topics ranging from marketing to younger generations to storefront window design and signage. They also helped local business owners to partner with local banks to help invest for business expansion. These local partnerships provided Fairmont the opportunity to revolutionize the landscape of its once forgotten past into the reason and vision for its economic future. When the program first started, there was a 50% vacancy rate in properties in Fairmont's downtown. The current vacancy rate is approximately 20%, creating 247 jobs and 83 new businesses.

The Upstate has many communities filled with historic buildings and rich histories. Some of these buildings are being underutilized and could be used to improve the community. The significance and importance of these buildings and their role in the community are crucial to maintain a sense of vibrancy in the community. It will take the efforts of local champions to help create cohesion and support from existing business owners to understand the community's past and to steer the vision for the future.



[www.mainstreetfairmont.org](http://www.mainstreetfairmont.org)

Population:	About 19,000
Project:	Main Street update
Funding:	Grants, local hospitality taxes
Effect:	Promote economic growth, preservation of historic sites, and improve vibrancy
Online:	<a href="http://www.mainstreetfairmont.org">www.mainstreetfairmont.org</a>



## Main Street TR Revitalization: Travelers Rest, South Carolina

In an effort to improve quality of life and economic vitality, Travelers Rest's (TR) City Council adopted a downtown master plan in November 2006. The downtown revitalization idea was to create a pedestrian-oriented environment along the primary local thoroughfare (Highway 276) in order to encourage more foot traffic in front of the existing businesses. A bonus to this concept was the beautification of the area through the updating of roads, sidewalks and planters.

After traffic studies and branding strategies were completed, Phase I of the project began in June 2009 and wrapped up in Spring 2010. Phase I encompassed three-quarters of a mile in streetscape improvements over three City blocks, 82 decorative streetlights, two pocket parks and nearly a mile of landscape with hardwood trees and sidewalk improvements. The project was funded through grants and local hospitality taxes.

This ongoing effort has already incited growth with the opening of over 20 new businesses along Main Street with more to come, including an upscale restaurant, pub, shops and professional services. Many once-vacant buildings are now occupied, some having been renovated.

Branding efforts for the City include a new logo playing on their common nickname, TR. The logo depicts the letters "Tr" as if it were an element in the periodic table and reads "Get in your element" below.



[www.travelersrestsc.com](http://www.travelersrestsc.com)

Other branding logos feature a similar design but read, "It starts with TR," implying that trails, tranquility and other attributes start with the letters and in the city.

The City continues to champion these revitalization efforts by working with the City of Greenville and Greenville County to further develop the Swamp Rabbit Trail that provides bike and pedestrian connectivity between the two municipalities' downtowns, which continues to grow and create additional vibrancy in downtown Travelers Rest.

Other communities in the Upstate could utilize the pedestrian-oriented strategy and combination of funding that TR did to implement their downtown master plans. It is also beneficial to create a branding strategy so that the area is easily recognized both locally and to visitors.

Population:	Under 5,000
Project:	Main Street update
Funding:	Grants, local hospitality taxes
Effect:	Streetscape improvements and multi-modal accessibility helped support the opening of 20 new businesses on Main St.
Online:	<a href="http://travelersrestsc.com/down_town">travelersrestsc.com/down_town</a>

## Town Character: Helen, Georgia

In 1968, in response to a visually depressing town, three local businessmen chose to change Helen's image to help attract business from tourists passing through. Even though the economy was faring well, the men wanted to add vibrancy to the community and make a lasting impression, so they came up with the concept of transforming Helen into looking like a traditional Bavarian village.

The community has embraced this theme and incorporates a variety of seasonal festivals and small businesses into the concept. They highlight Oktoberfest and Christmas in Helen, while local shops sell German souvenirs. In 2010, tourism generated \$50 million in revenue for Helen.

To maintain the integrity of the project, the businessmen formed the Alpine Valley Corporation, which was a non-salaried group of individuals overlooking the cohesiveness of the 1,100-acre project. Today, zoning ordinances must be met for all buildings in Helen to uphold the Bavarian theme, which evolved from commissioned watercolor sketches, then individual building owners financed the renovations. The City contributed streetlights and planters while utility companies donated the undergrounding of lines.

While the Helen example is extreme, the renovations created a vibrant place and a healthy market for local businesses. The same effects could be captured in the Upstate by applying zoning ordinances or overlay districts to Upstate communities to ensure they have a unique "feel." This can be as minimal as asking property owners to spruce up out front or as involved as renovating an entire community.



[www.helenga.org](http://www.helenga.org)

Population:	Under 1,000
Project:	Create town theme and renovate to suit
Funding:	Mostly private with contributions from City and utility providers
Effect:	Transforming Helen into a Bavarian village adds character, attracts visitors and in 2010 generated \$50 million in tourism revenue
Online:	<a href="http://www.helenchamber.com">www.helenchamber.com</a>

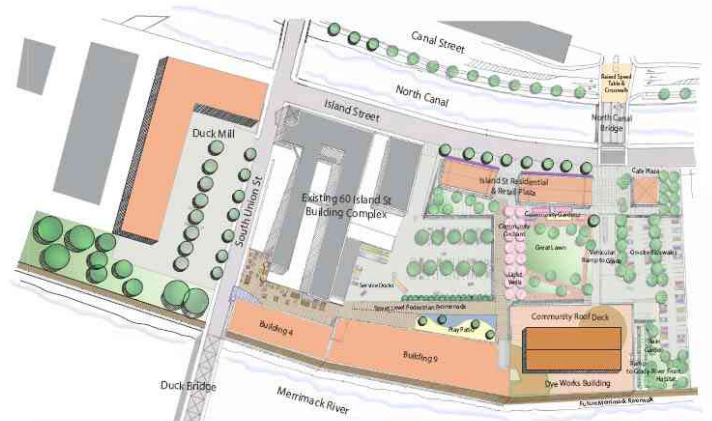
## Union Crossing Redevelopment: Lawrence, Massachusetts

Union Crossing is the product of an ongoing redevelopment strategy in Lawrence, MA spearheaded by the Lawrence Community Works nonprofit and local commercial developers. The goal of the project was to provide innovative family housing by rehabilitating three former mill buildings along the Merrimack River and the adjacent properties.

The entire scope of the plan included approximately 150 units of mixed-income family and workforce housing, including dedicated units for hospital workers and young teachers. Additionally, the plan called for a new day care center serving 136 children from infants to preschoolers, 200 new jobs including entrepreneur incubator space, energy efficient features, efficient parking and reduced utility costs through renewable energy sources and rainwater harvesting.

The project was largely funded through the private sector, but the City receives an estimated yearly tax revenue of \$225,000 from the project. In addition to the income generated, the project was able to accentuate the City's history by transforming the buildings into great public places and thriving areas instead of abandoning the sites. The most unique aspect of the project was that it was able to create attractive affordable housing and still be energy efficient.

The Upstate has potential throughout to renovate former textile mills into affordable housing. Doing so could revitalize communities and improve rundown sites, and making use of public-private partnerships is a viable financing option to keep public costs low



[www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org)

Population:	About 75,000
Project:	Mill Site redevelopment
Funding:	Largely private with supplements from grants and the City
Effect:	Provides 150 quality affordable housing units and 200 new jobs as well as a great micro-community for all to enjoy
Online:	<a href="http://www.lawrencecommunityworks.org">www.lawrencecommunityworks.org</a>

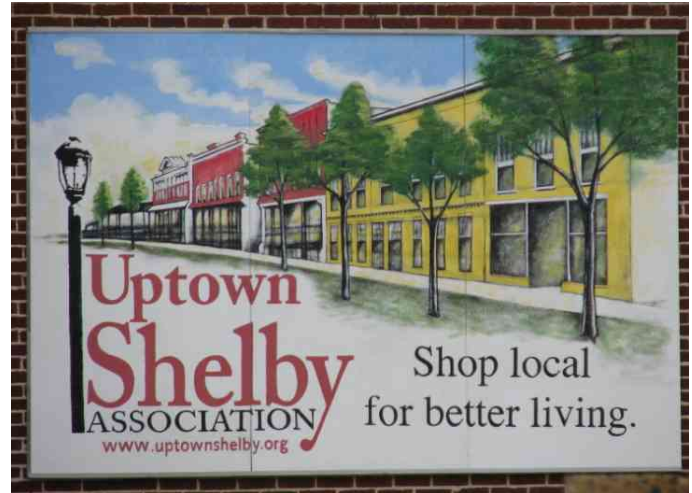
## Uptown Revitalization: Shelby, North Carolina

The City of Shelby has experienced extraordinary amounts of revitalization over the past 33 years. The City of Shelby, Cleveland County volunteers, and Destination Cleveland County have implemented five projects which have contributed to the revitalization of the city and have generated increased revenue that keeps Uptown Shelby thriving.

Two projects in the 1980's and 1990's, using historic tax credits, laid the groundwork for the current strength in downtown residential units—60 condominiums and market rate rental apartments. The first, Mason Square converted the old Egyptian Revival Masonic Lodge into offices and residences. The second was an old Belk store that went through adaptive reuse under the ownership and management of Uptown Shelby Association and resulted in storefront shops, apartments, and a parking facility.

One attraction is the Don Gibson Theatre which was an old movie house abandoned during the 1960s then completely renovated by a group of volunteers into a downtown music center which has generated unprecedented amounts of revenue into downtown Shelby. The theatre garners excitement and attention through their headlining concerts which also generate revenue for Uptown merchants. The Don Gibson Theatre developed an alliance with downtown business entitled, "The Marquee Club" in which the theatre advertises and promotes small businesses in downtown Shelby. The Theatre has been credited with rebuilding occupancy rates, average room nights, and evening restaurant meal sales since opening night.

The second attraction, formerly the Cleveland County History Museum which was located in the 1908 Shelby Courthouse, but now is in the process of being renovated into the Earl Scruggs



[www.uptownshelby.org](http://www.uptownshelby.org)

Center: Songs & Stories of the American South will house historical artifacts in a museum with specialization in experiencing southern music. It also provides a meeting and event center that has major international star connection.

Not only has Shelby renovated several buildings, but they have also renovated a carousel that is utilized by some of the nearly 800,000 people to the Uptown Shelby Park each year. The carousel is a unique destination that provides entertainment with an element of history added in. Shelby's carousel is year-round and is open to the public daily. The ride was completely renovated and transformed into its current state in 1998 primarily by volunteers who sought to bring vibrancy to an historic asset.

Over the past 33 years Shelby has revitalized their community in innovative ways. Through projects such as these, a sense of pride in culture and heritage could be established in the Upstate among citizens and attract outside tourism. Shelby's revitalization efforts started with a group of volunteers and community organizers similar to those present in the Upstate.

Population:	About 21,000
Project:	Renovation of unused buildings
Funding:	Local volunteers, donations, and grants
Effect:	Increase tourism and patronage of downtown destinations, & improved housing & entertainment options
Online:	<a href="http://www.uptownshelby.com">www.uptownshelby.com</a>



## ZipSpaces: Chicago, Illinois

The gist of this great idea is to rent out unused storefronts on a daily or weekly basis for pop-up art, impromptu food festivals, and music jam sessions. Modeled after ZipCar, ZipSpaces is a program that allows organizations with low capital to use space easily, making the area a haven for start-ups. Many cities facing economic decline have too many abandoned buildings and unused spaces. These can be eyesores for downtowns and the local economy. But these buildings can also serve as a vibrant community resource.

By taking over abandoned, unused or temporarily vacant storefronts and commercial properties, for arts, music and cultural events, the city can foster a dynamic ever changing scene of cultural start-ups, while simultaneously addressing the issue of abandoned buildings. A city can use social media as one method of reaching out to potential renters or owners to streamline the process.

A vacant storefront in Chicago provided a place for 21 artists over 21 days to create, collaborate, and engage with the local community. Each artist had their own day for exhibiting their craft, whether it be art, music, or cooking warm meals. Despite the chilling February weather at the time, the idea was a major hit. It inspired many passerbys to enjoy the local displays.



[www.redevelopmenthastings.com](http://www.redevelopmenthastings.com)

Beyond the public engagement element, the project has provided a hub of artistic activity and collaboration.

The Upstate is home to many buildings that go unused. This idea would help find use for them. The benefits of such a project could reach everyone in the community, and potentially help to increase property values. Furthermore, it has the ability to create incentives for start-up businesses that would have a use for the abandoned buildings. These local businesses would act as incubators that could help stir a local economy.

Population:	2,700,000
Project:	Rent out unused or underutilized buildings for varying time frames
Funding:	Minor costs: web design and office tools
Effect:	Adding activity to an area, and adding value for entire community
Online:	<a href="http://sustainablecitiescollective.com/big-city/125866/21-artists-pop-unused-chicago-storefront">http://sustainablecitiescollective.com/big-city/125866/21-artists-pop-unused-chicago-storefront</a>

## Lessons Learned

## Findings & Observations

- Books Alive demonstrated that funding for a project can be trial-and-error. Be prepared to take a different route to fund a project than was originally planned.
- Community vibrancy can often be attributed to showcasing what is unique about a particular community. This can make events like CorryFest and Williamsburg's tercentenary successful whatever the chosen format may be.
- Programs that celebrate learning and inclusivity like KidsFair and Boundless Playgrounds add vibrancy to communities because they emphasize the importance of children. A TATT survey showed that Upstate residents most value a community that is conducive to raising a family, and these programs fully support such an initiative while further instilling values of self-worth in children.
- Taste of Bigfork and Third Thursdays in Barnwell contribute to vibrancy because they focus on local businesses. Combining community get-togethers with strategies promoting small businesses is a fantastic way to encourage support for local businesses while fostering a broader sense of community.
- While the scale of the projects is vastly different, Hagood Mill and Falls Park bring vibrancy to their communities in a similar fashion. Both projects maximized potential from existing amenities, whether historical or natural, and revitalized them into special places for the community.
- Celebrating art is not only in itself a good way to bring vibrancy to a community, but it is also a good for other positive changes as seen in the Arts Alive! Center for the Arts and the Corcoran Neighborhood Call for Art programs. Each program uses art to supplement education and deter graffiti, respectively, which contribute even more to vibrancy in each community.
- Finding inexpensive ways to add beauty to a community adds vibrancy as well. ArtCycle and the Westcott Community Bulb Project are perfect examples, but these projects also exemplify more than beauty. ArtCycle is a celebration of Spartanburg's bike friendly designation, while the bulb project is a celebration of community pride and tradition. Taking inspiration from a source of pride or achievement is a great way to create a beautifying theme for a community.
- Community vibrancy is only a fraction of the additions made by the DASH and Union Crossing projects. Finding ways to provide quality affordable housing to a community, in addition to teaching good financial practices as in the DASH example, revitalized these neighborhoods and improved people's quality of life.
- Gypsy Hill Park and Harmony Courtyard add vibrancy to communities because they create casual yet special places for the community to congregate. Despite dissimilar origins, both places thrive because they celebrate something meaningful to the community and encourage social interaction.
- Community vibrancy can be purposefully created as seen in the examples of Oglebay and Helen, Georgia. These communities made calculated improvements to their resort and town center, respectively, to ensure lasting character.
- Travelers Rest and Union County were able to add vibrancy to their communities by leveraging local recreational interests and making appropriate investments to accompany these interests and incite economic growth.

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# Festival, Events, and Programs

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