



MEDIA ALERT
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**City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs
Receives National Endowment for the Arts Grant
Supporting Creation of Affordable Artists' Housing
in Downtown LA Arts District**

***Affordable Artists' Housing Program
One of 59 Projects Selected Nationwide***

[Los Angeles] - The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) announced 59 Our Town grant awards totaling \$4.725 million and reaching 34 states in the third year of funding for the Our Town program. The City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is one of only two local arts agencies in the country that has received two NEA Our Town grants, as well as a grant from the Mayor's Institute on City Design 25th Anniversary Initiative, the precursor to the Our Town program. This most recent award totaling \$75,000, will be invested in the **Affordable Artists' Housing Partnership (AAHP)**, representing full funding from the NEA for a program designed to provide access to affordable artists' housing in Los Angeles, and create a replicable strategy for use in other communities.

Through Our Town, the NEA supports creative placemaking projects that help transform communities into lively, beautiful, and sustainable places with the arts at their core. The projects will encourage creative activity, create community identity and a sense of place, and help revitalize local economies. All Our Town grant awards were made to partnerships that consisted of at least one nonprofit organization and a local government entity.

The AAHP goal is to provide affordable housing opportunities in Los Angeles for qualified artists and their families. A pilot project will take place in the Arts District. Eligible artists will be made aware of the affordable housing units so they can avail themselves of the opportunity to become residents as a means to ensure that artists prominently live and work in the Arts District.

"Creating affordable housing opportunities for artists and their families is essential to keeping LA's standing as a global cultural capital," said Councilmember Jose Huizar, whose district includes Downtown LA's Arts District. "This project will help ensure that a thriving artists' community remains a permanent part of the Arts District."

Olga Garay-English, General Manager of the Department of Cultural Affairs said, "People in Los Angeles who work in the arts and creative industries often have fluctuating incomes and only a small percentage of them are fortunate enough to work full-time or make the majority of their income from their creative pursuits. Many are a part of the low-income community and struggle to find housing that



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meets their unique needs and financial constraints. The AAHP is a national model with a potential to not only make affordable housing available to artists in LA, but with implications to also help groups accomplish this throughout the country. Developing affordable housing for artists in LA will advance neighborhood revitalization by placing the artists and creative workers at the core of our communities, creating vibrant and safe neighborhoods.”

Retaining artists in the community is a critical need identified by Arts District neighborhood stakeholders such as the Los Angeles River Artists and Business Association (LARABA); the Downtown Los Angeles Arts District Space (LADADSpace); and the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc). These organizations approached DCA to create an Our Town proposal that would tackle this issue head on.

Working with project partners the Actors Fund and Artspace, the AAHP will educate artists on the availability of affordable housing as well as financial qualification requirements and documentation needed.

The Actors Fund, a nationwide human services organization that helps all professionals in performing arts and entertainment, will make this opportunity known to area artists, as well as educate them on how to accurately complete the needed financial qualification documents and other application materials. Artspace, the nation’s leading nonprofit developer of affordable space for artists and arts organizations, will be a resource in helping to establish affordable spaces for artists.

A dedicated website targeting artists will be maintained to provide resource materials and application instructions on this pilot program and other upcoming affordable housing opportunities. The AAHP will also cooperate with Arts for LA, the regional advocacy organization working to increase support for arts and culture and arts education in Los Angeles, to promote housing opportunities to the arts community.

Background

The Arts District of Downtown LA is a formerly industrial area that now houses SCI-Arc, the Geffen Contemporary at the Museum of Contemporary Art, performing arts organizations, visual arts studios, and sound stages. Yet, as has happened in other communities in recent years, artists have been forced to spend more on rent than on creating work, and in many instances have relocated, causing the Arts District to struggle with retaining its very artists.

According to noted economist Ann Markusen, Los Angeles is home to more working artists than any other major metropolis in the United States. Throughout the nation, it has been demonstrated that neighborhood quality of life benefits from a full-time presence of artists living and working in the area. The AAHP will keep artists from being displaced by providing new affordable housing options, serving to create synergy among residents that increases community vitality and spurs economic opportunity.



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Additional Information

The NEA received 254 applications for Our Town this year. Grant amounts ranged from \$25,000 to \$200,000 with a median grant amount of \$50,000. DCA received full funding of \$75,000 for an affordable artists' housing strategy, which the NEA is calling, "an exemplary project."

"This is an exciting time to announce the Our Town grants as a national conversation around creative placemaking advances and deepens," said NEA Acting Chairman Joan Shigekawa. "The NEA leads on this topic not only through our funding but through webinars, publications, and research. With these resources, we will help to ensure that the field of creative placemaking continues to mature, enhancing the quality of life for communities across the country."

For a complete list of projects recommended for Our Town grant support, please visit the NEA website at arts.gov. Project descriptions, grants listed by state and by project type, and creative placemaking resources are available as well. The Twitter hashtag is: #NEAOurTown13.

About the City of Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs

The **Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)** generates and supports high quality arts and cultural experiences for Los Angeles' 4 million residents and 40 million annual overnight and day visitors. DCA advances the social and economic impact of the arts and ensures access to diverse and enriching cultural activities through: grantmaking, marketing, public art, community arts programming, arts education, and building partnerships with artists and arts and cultural organizations in neighborhoods throughout the City of Los Angeles.

DCA's projected operating budget and managed portfolio totals \$49.6 million in fiscal year 2013/14. It consists of: \$13.4 million in City related and indirect cost allocations; \$10.5 million in Transient Occupancy Tax funds; \$9 million in one-time City funding; \$9 million in funds from the Public Works Improvements Arts Program (PWIAP); \$7.5 million from the Private Arts Development Fee Program (ADF); and \$.2 million raised to date in private and public funds raised from foundation, corporate, government, and individual donors.

DCA significantly supports artists and cultural projects through its Public Art Division by administering a portfolio totaling \$16.5 million in PWIAP and ADF funds in FY13/14. Of this amount, typically 15% to 20%, or between \$2.5 and \$3.3 million, is attributable to artists' fees.

DCA's Executive Director and Marketing and Development Division have raised over \$21 million since FY07/08 to re-grant to LA-based artists and arts and cultural organizations for re-granting initiatives, and to support DCA's special programming and facilities. DCA also grants approximately \$2.3 million annually to 268 artists and nonprofit arts and cultural organizations through its long-established Grants Administration Division. Additional special project support of more than \$1.5 million is also awarded annually for a total of approximately \$3.8 million invested each year in LA's creative community.



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DCA provides arts and cultural programming through its Community Arts Division, managing numerous neighborhood arts and cultural centers, theaters, historic sites, and educational initiatives. DCA's Marketing and Development Division also markets the City's arts and cultural events through development and collaboration with strategic partners, design and production of creative catalogs, publications, and promotional materials, and management of the culturela.org website visited by over 3 million people annually.

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