



# **The Arts Community, Arts Village Development and Promotion of Arts in Woodbridge Township**

**Phase I Report**

**by**

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## I. Introduction

### ***Background and Purpose:***

This report is the product of a study performed by the National Center for Neighborhood and Brownfields Redevelopment at Rutgers University for the Woodbridge Township Redevelopment Agency during the summer of 2007. The purpose of the study was to begin to explore the concept of developing an arts village in Woodbridge. The components of this phase of study consist of research that examines typical modes, key issues and success factors in arts village development and a summary and analysis of data collected directly from and about artists to better understand the arts community in Woodbridge in terms of who they are, what their needs are, and the artists' opinions about the village concept and arts promotion generally. The arts village proposal is thus part of a larger initiative to promote greater awareness of and participation in arts and culture by residents of the township. Arts and culture are commonly accepted as integral activities in community life and help to build local pride and economic strength.

Woodbridge, located in Central-Eastern New Jersey, is a township of more than 100,000 residents (5<sup>th</sup> largest municipality in New Jersey). Woodbridge has a working class heritage, with many industrial facilities nearby and its accessibility to the New Jersey Turnpike, Garden State Parkway, Routes 1 and 9, and the public transit lines making it an ideal location for commuters. According to the 2000 census, the population is 70 percent white, 14 percent Asian and 9 percent African American. About 9 percent report a Hispanic ethnicity. Poverty (3.2) and unemployment rates (3.1) are low and the median household income of over \$60,000 is above the state median. Woodbridge is a well-situated, economically healthy and stable community.

The rest of the report is divided into four sections. First, we present research on success factors and key issues in the development of arts villages based on the current state-of-the-art in urban/suburban America. After that, we summarize the characteristics and needs of the arts community in Woodbridge and the working inventory that was created. The next section is a summary of artists' opinions on the arts village and arts promotion. The report concludes with summary findings and recommendations that will suggest a path toward successful arts village development and toward expanded opportunities for artistic expression and participation in the township.

**Study Methods:**

1. Research on Issues and Success Factors: We performed a review of current literature concerning the development of arts village as a form of urban redevelopment, with a special focus on the conversion of former brownfields sites (i.e. properties with perceived or real contamination due to past industrial or commercial activities). We describe five modes of art-based development, giving detailed examples of each. We highlight key success factors and relate these to conditions in Avenel.
2. Artist Survey and Inventory: We entered and tabulated data from roughly 100 surveys that artists returned to the Township. The survey had been designed and distributed prior to the start of this study, and the returned forms allowed the construction of a working database of artists. Based on the questions on the survey, it also allowed tabulation of types of artists, degree of activity in art, and general needs of artists. More than half the survey respondents (54) also wrote comments about promoting arts in Woodbridge. These comments were added to the comments from interviews and focus groups in our summary of artists' opinions and ideas about promotion. The inventory includes about 200 additional names collected through internet and yellow page searches, lists from the local arts commission and snowball sampling. Entries include individual artists, groups, arts organizations, businesses and venues.
3. Artist Focus Groups and Interviews: We conducted five focus group meetings with a total of 27 artists attending from June through August of 2007 in Woodbridge. We also conducted 19 phone interviews with artists (14 of whom did not attend a focus group meeting), for a total of 41 different artists who participated in an interview or a focus group. Both the focus groups and the interviews were designed to obtain rich information from artists regarding their opinions and preferences about use of an arts village, features of an arts village, and about promotion of the arts generally in the township. For the interviews, we asked a set of specific questions about potential usage of an arts village, with answers of "would not consider," "possibly consider," and "likely to consider." In the focus groups, we did not ask for specific ratings that could be quantified, but rather directed an open discussion around these questions to obtain richer answers. We processed the input received but removed any names or identifiers, as per Rutgers University IRB (Institutional Review Board) protocol.

## II. Arts-based Urban Redevelopment

Older industrial suburbs increasingly face redevelopment problems similar to those faced by traditional central cities. Many of these suburbs have industrial areas that for years provided jobs, income and taxes to support large residential areas. Suburban industrial facilities developed along water, rail and highway corridors connecting central cities taking advantage of lower cost land outside of the core of the city. Suburbs, with older, outdated facilities built before the advent of stricter environmental laws, may be especially hard hit. These suburbs have brownfields, vacant and/or abandoned sites that are perceived to be contaminated. Perceived risk of cleanup responsibility makes these sites harder to redevelop. Banks and insurance companies want complete due-diligence before signing off of redevelopment agreements for these sites. The key concept here is perception (Greenberg et. Al 2001). To change perception may require changing the identity of a place. How can you redefine the older suburb to meet the needs of today's residents and firms?

Redefinition may be done by the public sector and/or the private sector. Cities and towns may create public/private partnerships with local developers to create new investment. Increasingly, cities provide various types of tax incentives including historic tax credits, low income housing tax credits and/or tax increment financing to spur activity in areas. While some of the funds for these incentives come from Federal programs, most rely on state enabling legislation. In contrast to these public programs for redevelopment, private-sector led redevelopment requires finding investors and developers who are willing to take the large risks. Artists and developers of artist space have often been these first movers in older central cities (see Zukin, 1982, Smith 1992, Ley 2003 and Cameron and Coaffee 2005). They move to an old undiscovered and disinvested area in order to get large amounts of space at an affordable price. Other artists hear about the space that another artist has found and also make the move. Eventually, the neighborhood identity begins to change and private real estate interests take notice and invest on their own.

Two different models of neighborhood redevelopment have just been briefly discussed. In the first model, the public and private sector works together overcome environmental stigma of a brownfields site to produce neighborhood benefits. In the second model, individual actors (artists) transform a neighborhood through a series of investment decisions that builds on itself. One model incorporates front-end planning while the second almost occurs whether or not the public sector is encouraging artists' actions. This raises the question of how can we incorporate art activities within public and private brownfields redevelopment processes outside of

central cities? How can we use the arts as an “amenity” to further redevelopment of an old industrial site? This report examines the feasibility of an “arts village” concept in the Avenel section of the Township of Woodbridge, New Jersey.

This section starts by briefly discussing the problem of brownfield redevelopment and the promise of the arts as a method of site and neighborhood redefinition. Then five modes of art-based development are discussed including support for artists, support for art organizations, building art venues, building art workspaces, and creating art-related events. Detailed examples will be given for each type of art-based development. Key ingredients of successful art-based development will be described. We conclude this section by noting potential ways of developing the necessary conditions for successful art-based development in Avenel.

For the purposes of this report, an artist is an individual involved in creative production for aesthetic purposes. Typically artists work in cultural media such as painting, sculpture, film, video, music, theatre and dance. The arts are distinguished from crafts in that crafts are connecting to production of cultural objects that are used in everyday life or could be used in everyday life. Some artists work in craft media, yet not all craft is art. Artistic content may be found all around us. Good design shares aesthetic values with art. Designers, architects, and new media equipment operators are all in art-related fields even if they do not produce art. The rise of information technologies and new modes of communication lead to new forms of art. The blurring of categories is part of the process of innovation process and this blurring is something that places want to encourage in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### ***The Problem of Brownfields Redevelopment***

Changing place identity is a challenge. Towns and neighborhoods have complex and intertwined physical, social and economic structures. Our communities are made up the physical infrastructure of streets, utilities, and buildings. Once a town or neighborhood is built, change usually happens incrementally, through many small investment or disinvestment decisions. To some degree, successful neighborhoods go through periods of growth and decline as families settle, raise kids, send them off into the world and then grow old in place only to be replaced by the next occupants of the neighborhood. Occasionally, large changes (such as a plant closing or natural disaster) happen and these may be thought of as a shock to a community or neighborhood. Such a shock will lead to physical and economic dislocation of jobs and residents. The problem of redevelopment of an abandoned industrial facility and its surrounding neighborhood results

from the shock of the original plant closing as well as from the many individual decisions of small property owners who face stagnant or declining property values. These forces feed upon themselves leading to local areas that face long periods of decline. Without some indication of the future direction of the neighborhood, why make new investments?

Luckily, inner-tier suburbs do not exist in a vacuum. While they face hard redevelopment problems, they retain significant advantages in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Hudnut 2004). They are a part of a metropolitan region and their fortunes are somewhat tied to regional trends. For example, Woodbridge lies along the Northeast Rail Corridor with the direct and quick access to New York and Philadelphia as well as close proximity to Newark Airport. The information and financial sectors continue to grow in the greater New York area and this growth provides upward momentum locally, as related business services firms and employees look for metropolitan locations. Yet, the intra-metropolitan competition for these locations may be intense. Businesses and residences will go to the easiest development locations first that combine access to the larger market with local amenities. Investment on a brownfield site may be a harder sell.

Redefinition and redevelopment may be done through individual investment decisions or through collective action often initiated by a government body. Local city or town planning agencies produce redevelopment plans that attempt to further the redevelopment process by providing a vision of what the future might look like. Implementation requires follow through and a commitment to public investments to facilitate redevelopment. However, time and time again, city and towns go through a redevelopment planning process, make public infrastructure improvements but then fail to get the necessary private sector investment. Effective redevelopment requires public-private partnerships with coordination of public and private investment. These partnerships are even more important in the redevelopment of a brownfield site. In brownfield redevelopment, the public sector acts to bring stakeholders in and around the site together to come to an agreement to move forward with redevelopment. Government action may shield the risk falling on new investors. Residents in the local neighborhood not only get some degree of site investigation and/or cleanup; they get new developmental investment near their own properties (Greenberg et. Al 2001).



### ***The Role of Artists in Urban Redevelopment***

In many central cities, artists and the arts play a large role in site redevelopment and neighborhood revitalization. Artists in this report may be defined as people who create products and/or performances of aesthetic and/or cultural value. Artist as an occupation therefore includes painters, sculptors, potters, performers, actors, dancers, musicians, photographers, writers and filmmakers. Other professions may be thought of as arts-related such as illustrators, architects, landscape architects, urban designers, interior designers, web-design, graphic design, product designers, furniture designers, set designers, curators, and skilled crafts people who produce individually constructed products such as pots, art-glass, woodwork, metalwork, jewelry, etc. Effective practice of any one of these skills requires a dedicated work space well supplied with the required tools. These workers must seek an affordable studio space to set up practice. Many artists and arts-related workers do not make their entire living from their craft; they must work other jobs to support themselves. Therefore they face great pressure to find appropriate space.

How then do artists find such space? First, artists are willing to be first movers to a new place. They are looking for larger amounts of cheap space. This space needs some degree of flexibility to allow artists to do what they want. Artists may use noxious materials and loud equipment. Musicians and dancers may create noise when they practice. A vacant industrial/commercial building provides such flexible space. Second, artists bring with them their own skills and the self-motivation to put sweat equity into their own spaces. There is a tension between safe and effective renovation and this do-it-yourself aesthetic. A variety of contradictions then arise in this process of artists creating their own space. Many abandoned industrial and commercial buildings were not built for residential use. Artists have to install critical kitchen and bathroom facilities themselves. If artists live next to their work spaces, then they and their families have to live with the externalities of what happens in the artist studio. Municipal building and zoning codes often do not allow for a mix of live/work spaces and they frown on do-it-yourself installation of key building systems and fixtures. Thus, artists are willing to go to places less noticed by municipal regulators. All of these factors may drive artists to spaces off of the beaten path and to places overlooked by realtors and developers.

Finally artists work within a broader community of patrons and practitioners. These networks are often connected to key arbitrators of community taste as well as higher income consumers of culture and the arts. Art broadly defined is connected to conceptualizing ideas and therefore to innovation in the relatively fast growing information industries. Artists then

play a key “crossover” role between members of important subgroups within a neighborhood (Markusen et al 2006). For example artist may interact with folks with a working class background and those from a more advantaged position who are able to buy expensive works of art or contribute to a performing arts organization. Typically, many artists tend to form their own creative communities as well. Participants in these communities provide critical feedback, links to patrons and collectors, and connections to information about exhibits, performances, and social opportunities. Artists tend to agglomerate within central cities to facilitate this type of social networking to further their careers.

Word about available space travels fast through these social networks. As other artists snap up spaces in and near each other, a new community is born. Other creative workers as well as patrons and non-artists may begin to move to be near others in their broader social network. New residents often share common living and consumption patterns that differ from the patterns of older residents in the neighborhood. These differences may lead to problems of gentrification. In tight housing markets, older residents may get displaced as property owners realize that the new residents are able and willing to pay a higher amount per square foot of living space. Neighborhoods that had stable rents suddenly see rent increases at rates faster than the rate of inflation. The ability to rent property for a higher rate than before creates market signals to real estate investors. Higher rents mean higher internal rates of return which will encourage new investment. As the neighborhood transformation begins to take place, evidence of new investment breaks the cycle of decline. Long-term small scale property owners then find that their property is increasing in value. If these owners are on a fixed income then they too face displacement as increased property values will lead to higher annual taxes. Yet, they get the benefit of being able to sell or mortgage out the newly increased equity in their property.

### ***Arts-based Urban Redevelopment***

Arts have been a focus of urban development for many years. To some degree, art and cultural production require urban locations that serve as the market for arts-based goods, services and performances as well as the center for the social networking that sustains artists. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, museums were developed in many cities to serve as both an educational role and as an anchor for new neighborhoods. Arts facilities were a part of the civic infrastructure built in many of the city beautiful plans of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. More recently, arts facilities have been used as anchors for new entertainments districts being built to revive downtown areas. Perhaps the most famous international example of this is Bilbao Spain where a branch of the Guggenheim Museum was built in an iconic

building designed by Frank Gehry. Suddenly, an aging industrial city was put back on the tourism map (Szatan 2005). Closer to home, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center in Newark is an example of this trend. NJPAC adds a new facility to existing resources in Newark such as the Newark Museum and the New Jersey Historical Society. It is strategically located on the North edge of Military Park between the two major commuter rail lines (Penn Station and Broad Street Station) and a new light rail line connects the stations with the Center. While a few new residential developments have opened in Newark near NJPAC, its record in spurring new development remains limited.

There are multiple ways to use the arts to spur urban redevelopment. As in the examples cited above and those listed in Table 1, a municipality may build new venues for the arts.

**Table 1**  
**Arts Venues as Catalysts for Urban Redevelopment**

CITY, STATE	VENUE	SIZE	DATE	COST	DEVELOPER	DESCRIPTION	SOURCE
Baltimore, MD	France-Merrick Performing Arts Center	139,000 sq. ft.	2004	70 million	Clear Channel Entertainment City of Baltimore, State of Maryland	Redevelopment of Hippodrome Theatre (1914) Performance space anchor for adjacent mixed-use projects	Flynn 2004
Baltimore, MD	American Museum for Visionary Art	55,000	1995, 1997 expansion	7 million	Rebecca Hoffberger	Redevelopment of historic building combined with new space	Arriano 1997 Mansfield 2000
New York, NY	Rubin Museum of Art	70,000	1999 Opened 2004	22 million	BB Realty	Museum in historic district, reuse of dept. store	Grant 1998 RMA 2007
Indianapolis, IN	Harrison Center for the Arts	NA	2003	NA	NA	For profit gallery, turned into neighborhood non-profit arts institution.	Culbertson 2000
Santa Cruz, CA	Tannery Arts Center	8.3 acres	2007	43 Million	Artspace, Inc consulting	Redevelopment of tannery into lofts, studios, offices and venues	Beck 2003, 2004
Rock Hill, SC	Carolina Artisan's Center	100,000	NA	NA	NA	Crafts booths studios, galleries as part of mill complex	Brustad 2003
North Adams, MA	MassMOCA	13 acres 700,000	1999	52 million	Mass. Museum of Contemporary Art & Williams College	Reuse of old factory complex in Berkshires mill town	Borrup 2006

NA = Not available.

These venues include museums, theatres, and performances spaces. Provision of space may also be supported in less direct ways. Subsidies and tax incentives may be given to developers of artist live/work spaces and non-profit office space. Many cities give direct grants to cultural organizations and institutions. Many cities fund annual festivals and art fairs. Some towns encourage the development of an “artist colony” that combines programming and work/live situations for a limited amount of time. Finally some cities have programs that directly fund artists and performers. The development of an “artist village” requires some thought to each of these programmatic elements and possibilities. Therefore, in the next section, we describe each element as a possible program in itself, before developing some conclusions about building synergies between various elements in an artist village.

### 1. Arts Venue Development

The development of an arts venue is a classic method of urban redevelopment. Arts venues such as museums, theatres, art centers and performance spaces are part of the portfolio of public projects that every great city should have. Increasingly, suburban areas are developing their own venues (See Table 2 Suburban Arts Venues). Fundamentally, an arts venue is a destination. It should serve local residents as well as bring visitors and tourists to the city. Development of a new arts venue should be clear as to its purpose. While, many new arts venues (such as the Guggenheim Bilbao) develop with iconic architecture as part of the draw; the venue has to work, first and foremost, as a space for performances or display of art. Interior space planning must suit the projected uses and the projected attendance. Art museums have to pay attention to issues such as fire protection (and find ways to avoid sprinklers!), direct sunlight, and humidity in order to preserve their collections. Performance spaces pay attention to sightlines and acoustics. These space planning issues often lead developers toward building brand new buildings rather than reusing an abandoned industrial building, although many art museums have been located in old industrial buildings (Dia: Beacon, MassMOCA, etc). Arts venues almost always have specific entrance areas and service zones. Service zones should include a loading dock and enough area for trucks to turn around. Entrance areas should be pedestrian accessible and within sight distance of auxiliary establishments such as restaurants, bars and nightclubs in order facilitate offsite indirect impacts.

**Table 2  
Suburban Arts Venues**

CITY, STATE	VENUE	SIZE (SQ. FT.)	DATE	COST	DEVELOPER	DESCRIPTION	SOURCES
Mesa, AZ	Mesa Arts Center	212,775	12/2005	98.7 million	City of Mesa	4 theatres with 2343 seats, 5 art galleries and 14 teaching studios. On 7 acre site.	Urban Land 2005. Tingley and Harrington 2005
Rancho Cucamonga, CA	Victoria Gardens Cultural Center	34,000	10/2005	NA	Forest City, Cleveland OH	Library and performance space within shopping mall and mixed use development	Gentry 2004
Bethesda, MD	Music Center at Strathmore	NA	2/2005	100 million	Montgomery Co, MD	Large performance hall as well as rehearsal space	Facilities 2005
Ossining, NY	The Hudson Arts Foundation	13,000	Proposed /unbuilt	8 million	Stolatis	Theatre, and public access TV studio	Stolatis 2005
Escondido, CA	California Center for the Arts	4 Buildings	1994	NA	Escondido, CA	Performance Hall, Conference Center, Museum and Practice studios	Tingley and Harrington 1995
Allen, TX	Collin County Regional Arts Park	124 acre arts park	Planned	57 million phase one	Collin County	Classrooms performance hall outdoor amphitheatre etc.	Tingley and Harrington 2005 Arts of Collin County 2007
Lorton, VA	Lorton Arts Foundation	Redevelopment of a Federal Prison into 55 acre arts complex 294,000	2007	25 million	Lorton Arts Foundation	Artist units, studio education program residencies, performance space	Ackerman 2006 Salmon 2004
Beacon, NY	DIA: Beacon	200,000	2003	29 million	Dia Art Foundation	Contemporary art museum	Frisch, forthcoming

NA = Not available

Large performance spaces differ from smaller art centers. In smaller and in suburban communities, arts centers provide more than display and performance spaces (Markusen 2006). An arts center can also provide office space for non-profits, educational facilities for arts classes, and meeting space for local arts organizations. Such a mixture of functions encourages communication across the various arts disciplines housed within. Such networking has the potential to deepen the local arts community by increasing connections between participants and patrons of one group with members and supporters of another group. Yet, concentrating disciplines and organizations may also dilute the indirect neighborhood impacts. Many

times arts centers are located in old industrial buildings or obsolete school buildings. However, for the center to work, attention still needs to be paid to issues such as modern building code standards and accessibility for the disabled.

## 2. Artist Work Space Development

At the smallest scale is the development of artist studios, work space and gallery spaces. Perhaps the most famous example of this type of artist space is the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria Virginia. The city bought the plant in the early seventies and allowed artists to redevelopment the building. Artists put a lot of sweat equity into the building. Today the Torpedo Factory houses a museum, 6 galleries and 82 studio spaces and it is considered a cornerstone of the redevelopment and recovery of Downtown Alexandria (Torpedo Factory 2007).

Another model type of development of artist space is an **arts incubator**. This model of studio space development recognizes that many artists are self-employed. Artist occupations require a high degree of entrepreneurship therefore, artists starting out need training in these skills. An arts or cultural incubator provides studio space for artists and art related businesses (clients) as they are starting out. Common services provided to clients include business training (including business plan development, legal training in contracts and health benefit plans), common marketing and exhibition space, as well as shared equipment and administrative services (Arts Incubator KC 2007).

Developers of both large-scale museums and performance spaces and smaller scale arts centers must be very creative in their financing. Direct government funding may be scarce and depends upon local conditions. Utility and streetscape improvements as well as new parking facilities fall more directly in the public realm and usually can be supported through local expenditures and bonding capacity. Because of the transformative appeal of an arts venue and the relatively benign use of site (thinking in terms of non disturbance of environmentally critical areas remaining on site), they may be good candidates for post-cleanup uses of brownfield sites. In cases where an historic structure can be saved and reused, historic tax credits have also been used to structure arts center development deals. In these cases, care must be taken to structure the deal so that ownership of the redevelopment project qualifies for tax credits.

### 3. Artist Housing Development

The trouble with arts venue development is that it may only indirectly impact local artists. A performing arts center may host local symphonies, theatres, and dance troupes; but many, such as the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, mostly host national tours of groups that are based elsewhere. These venues then focus on increasing the consumption of arts and culture locally, whether or not it is locally based. To get an arts community going you have to have artists living and working in your neighborhood. The development of live/work spaces will achieve this goal.

For the past thirty years American cities have seen an explosion of loft projects providing such live/work space. Loft living is a phenomena unto itself. Artists like abandoned industrial buildings because of the tall ceiling, large open, unplanned space, and the flexibility such space provide. What was once a trend of artists taking over old industrial buildings in the SoHo section of Manhattan has become a mode of consumption? Loft living signifies the transition from an industrial economy to the informational economy (Castells 1998). Many of these informational services require design content leading to new work opportunities for entrepreneurs and workers with art and design related skills. The lifestyle of the most successful of these workers has become something that many urbanites strive to emulate (Zukin 1982). SoHo has developed to the point that only very wealthy New Yorkers can afford to live there. Yet, artists by themselves still make less than the national average. How then can you develop artist live/work spaces in such a way to facilitate artists' space rather than just space for professionals who want to live like artists?

Some cities and towns have developed live/work spaces that work for artists. The housing market fundamentally works at a very local scale so it is hard to generalize how one program may be adopted to fit to another place. First, there is the physical structure of the artist space to be developed. There are other ways to configure artist live/work spaces other than the traditional loft in an old multi-storey industrial building. Such space may be configured as a downtown building with work space on the ground floor. One example of such a development is the "Lofts at Artist Walk" in Santa Ana, California (Delson 2006). Other projects have created live/work spaces in a townhouse plan. Artist live/work space might also be configured within a co-housing model.

Secondly, municipalities have created incentive programs for artists as part of an industry targeting program. Some municipalities have created artist certification programs which then allow for residential occupation of commercial structures. Until recently, the art district in SOHO in New York,

required artist certification. Kansas City, Missouri has just adopted a tax incentive plan where artists and art-related used certify their tax status by identifying their primary industry (mostly NAICS code 711510 Independent Artist). Upon certification, tax relief may be granted. Peekskill NY requires certification of artists and then allows them as of right in some commercial zones (City of Peekskill, NY 2007). This has allowed redevelopment of old commercial buildings downtown, in an area with a tight housing market (Northern Westchester County) and with easy access to New York City as well as other upstate art facilities such as DIA: Beacon.

Finally, artist spaces have been developed with almost all of the various tools of urban redevelopment. These include tools include tax increment financing, public and public authority bonding, direct public subsidy at the city and state level as well as Federal programs and even brownfields programs. Table 3 summarizes six public programs identified by Walker (2007) that have been used to subsidize artist housing projects. Each program brings with it a set of requirements. Low-income housing tax credits, Affordable housing program and the HOME Investment program all carry low and moderate income requirements for use in housing development. For example, if you use low-income housing tax credits and you will be developing housing for low-income artists and requiring some annual certification of resident's income. Most Community Development Block Grants must be used in census tracts with a household income 80% or less than the Metropolitan area's median. Federal historic preservation tax credits can only be used on buildings and sites that have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places (National Park Service 2007).

**Table 3**  
**Public Subsidy Programs Used to Fund Artist Housing**

Program	Sponsor
1. Low-Income Housing Tax Credit	US Department of the Treasury
2. Historic Preservation Tax Credit	US Department of the Interior
3. State Historic Preservation Tax Credit	State Agencies
4. Affordable Housing Program	Federal Home Loan Bank
5. Community Development Block Grants	Local Development Agencies
6. HOME Investment Partnerships Program	US Department of Housing and Urban Development

Source: Walker 2007: 76.

Table 4 summarizes a variety of artist space developments around the United States. These examples were chosen based on the diversity of types.



**Table 4  
Examples of Artist Space Developments**

CITY, STATE	PROJECT	TYPE	SIZE (SQ. FT)	DATE	COST	DEVELOPER	DESCRIPTION	INCENTIVES	SOURCE
Boston, MA	Loconia Lofts	Mixed use 40 artist live/work 60 other live	100,000	2000	NA	McLaughlin Development	Selling artist lofts at rate 50% less than market rate units	City land, Live/work zoning	Villani 2000
Cincinnati, OH	Pendleton Art Center	Artist work space	60000	1993	NA	Verdin Corp	Artist work studio	NA	Villani 2000
Salt Lake City, UT	Artspace Utah	Live/work	NA	NA	NA	Stephen Goldsmith	Low and moderate income artist space	Low-income tax credit Community Reinvestment Act goals	Villani 2000
New Orleans, LA	Louisiana Arts Works	Studios and incubator	NA	NA	18 million	Shirley Trusty Corey	Arts space, incubator and arts offices	Historic preservation tax credits	Villani 2000
Hyde Park, MA	Lofts at Westinghouse	62 Live work Units	120,000	2007	12 million	Hamilton Coumper	NA	Brownfield redevelopment, Boston artist space initiative	DePasquele 2007
St. Paul, MN	Lowertown Lofts	30 live work	30,000est	1983	1.7 million	Artspace Projects	Simple artist cooperative	Redevelopment authority bonds, Foundation grants, city housing funds	Anderson 2007
Columbia, SC	Kress Building	Live work., studios	NA	1997	NA	Bob Capes Realty	Live/work combined with gallery	NA	Monk 1997
Coventry, RI	Harris Mill Lofts	160 Artist units Market rate	5 acre site	2007 design	NA	Diodati Construction	Redevelopment of mill complex	Rhode Island Development Authority planning grant	Wims 2002
Paducah, KY	Hide and Junk Building	Studios and Gallery	6,000	NA	NA	NA	Redevelopment of downtown building	City loans	Bradley 2002
Providence, RI	West Elmwood	69 apartments	3 bldgs 3 acres	2007	15 million	West Elmwood Housing Development	Artist housing as anchor for community	Subsidy Low-income housing tax	Davis 2001 Walker 2007

CITY, STATE	PROJECT	TYPE	SIZE (SQ. FT)	DATE	COST	DEVELOPER	DESCRIPTION	INCENTIVES	SOURCE
						Corporation	redevelopment	credit	
Burbank, CA	Burbank Senior Artist Housing	141 apartments	150,000 est.	2003	22 million	Meta Housing Corp	Housing for artists and retired film industry workers	Development Corporation loan low income housing tax credits	Bogohossian 2003
Long Beach, CA	Munson Motor Building	6 Live/work units	7,800	2001	NA	Peterson	Conversion of auto shop to lofts	Low interest loan from city development corp.	Cox 2001b
Peekskill, NY	High Tech Arts Lofts	28 units	112,000	2002	5.5 million	Monahan Development	Subsidized live/work	NY state, Westchester County and City funds,	Peekskill, NY 2002
Fort Lauderdale, FL	Village at Sailboat End	40 artist units out of 200	13 acres	2010	58 million	Lennar Corp.	Low income artist component	Broward County Loan fund	Wyman 2004
Central Falls, RI	American Broad Loom Mills	15 studios retail	NA	2004	1.2 million	Carter et. Al Artist/developer	Redevelopment by artists	Received zoning variance	Pina 2004
Alexandria, VA	Torpedo Factory	82 studios	NA	1970	NA	NA	Redevelopment by city with artist sweat equity	NA	Torpedo Factory 2007
Seattle, WA	Hiawatha Artist Lofts	60 low income lofts	NA	2007	13 million	Artspace, Inc	New income restricted artist housing	City housing funding, low income housing tax credits	Young 2005
Providence, RI	AS 220	19 units	NA	NA	1.06 million	AS 220	Artist cooperative that manages space and retail	Developer combines studios, services and retail.	Walker 2007

#### 4. Support for Arts Organizations and Intermediaries

Constructing a building for arts performances may not be enough to ensure that artistic activity and artists locate in a community. An arts venue could just present the work of non-residents. Resident artists could live and produce art in one community but present their work and sell their work in another. Community arts organizations provide a local forum for the arts (Markusen and Johnson 2006). They connect artists locally, often providing opportunities for culturally specific art forms, less commercially viable art forms and for less formal teaching of arts skills. Many communities have a central agency (an arts council) that advocates (some better than others) for all arts activities within their municipality. Perhaps it is the next frontier of abandonment of the inner city, but the last decade has seen arts organization growth in the suburbs. Most Americans live in the suburbs and for the arts to be relevant they have to have outposts near where they most people live according to some observers (Cuthbert 2002). Unmet needs in the suburbs include performance spaces and teaching spaces (Bye 2002).

Other arts intermediaries play crucial roles connecting the arts to other sectors in society. For example, many visual artists are represented by galleries. Actors are members of a union and can also be represented by agents. Cities wanting more art-related activity must make sure that opportunities exist for intermediary development as well. This may be done spatially by making sure that gallery space is encouraged in commercial space regulations.

Funding sources for arts organizations vary from place to place. A typical arts organization regularly applies for available government grants from city and state arts councils as well as occasional funding from national granting programs such as the National Endowment for the Arts. However, the competition for government arts funding can be fierce. Arts organizations combine government sources of funding with foundation grants, participation in annual giving campaigns such as United Way and through membership drives. Local businesses and especially locally headquartered corporations donate as well.

Arts schools and arts programs within larger higher education institutions have a large role to play in urban redevelopment. To be fully employed in the arts requires specialized training and studies of employed artists show a higher than average level of college education (Markusen and Schrock 2006). Increasingly, schools of music, art and design develop their own venues off campus to showcase their developing talent. These venues can consist of a gallery (as in the Kansas City Arts Institute Gallery in the

Crossroads Arts District) or a theatre as well as a series of performances that do not require the overhead and maintenance of dedicated space. Cal State Fullerton runs some programs and houses some arts graduate students in the Santa Ana CA Artist Village (Delson 2006). Creating a location that appeals to recent graduates of a particular arts program may allow for the genesis of a new arts “scene” as in the American Broad Loom Mills development in Central Falls, RI (Pina 2004). Finally, artists, musicians, etc often end up working as teachers in order to pay for their art careers. Cities and towns should work with their local school districts to ensure that they are fully staffed and providing arts education at the primary and secondary level. Specialized training can start at the secondary level. Fresno CA has started an arts charter school with the intention of linking it to arts district development (Pacio 2001).

### *Direct Support of Artists*

Instead of building new facilities, paying for maintenance and upkeep or supporting the programming of arts organizations, municipalities can also develop programs that lead to direct grants and loans to artists. Many cities have a one percent for arts program. In every major municipal building project in these cities one percent of the cost of the building goes for public art. The budget generated for public art can be competitively commissioned to one artist or to multiple artist projects. Artists may also be eligible for direct grants through many of the same granting agencies that support local arts organizations. The supply of public grants programs differs between artists working in various media (Markusen et al 2006). Direct support of artists also runs into the conflict between artistic freedom and appropriate public discourse (especially when publicly funded).

The Ford and Rockefeller Foundations are in the middle of a decade long project (Leveraging Investments in Creativity or LINC for short) to develop policies that directly improve conditions for artists. While initially started to address artistic needs in the face of cutbacks in Federal funding, LINC has found that artists more than money to succeed. They are looking at issues such as recognition from and of the local community, connections between artistic practices, artistic networks across regions, services that benefit artists, and artist space issues (Jackson et. Al 2003). Studies on issues such as health insurance and retirement funds (LINC 2007) and the development of artist space (Jackson and Kabwasa-Green 2007, Walker 2007) are on their way.

Finally, another element of direct support of artists is an artist residency program. Artist residency programs date back to 19<sup>th</sup> century artist colonies (insert ref). In an artist residency program, artists are given

studio and living space to produce work for a period of time from as little as a month up to a year or two. Depending on the location and program, artists participate in some group critique and production of works for display or performance. The Alliance of Artist Communities (2007) describes artist residency programs as “research and development labs for artists.”

## 5. Arts Events

Art fairs and festivals may be used to bring people into urban areas. The European Community has been declaring a particular city as a cultural capital for a year focusing programming on that region. Temporary festivals may bring people into areas they might not otherwise populate leading to a process of urban discovery (Schuster 2001). The Geraldine Dodge Poetry Festival occurs ever two years and has moved around. There are costs and benefits to moving around. The hosting city gets to experience expert practitioners during the event, thus increasing the recognition of artistic practice. Increased recognition may lead to follow increased support for the art within local institutions such as schools and art centers. Festivals require money and sponsors to perform well (Geraldine R. Dodge Poetry Festival 2007). It helps to have a major foundation supporting such an event. The degree that such directed attention brings long lasting redevelopment depends on the capital investment and the ability to meet arts organization operating costs in the years after the focused attention (Bianchini and Parkinson 1993). More long term impacts may be developed through the hosting of regularly scheduled events such as the Plaza Art Fair in Kansas City, MO or Jazz Fest in New Orleans, LA (Gotham 2005). The degree of impact depends on the ability of event promoter to work with local artists and the use of the event to promote partnerships between local arts and artists attending the event from other places.

### ***Cultural Districts***

Cultural districts bring combinations of the elements of how cities may support the arts (arts venues, artist production space, arts organizations, direct support of people, and arts events) into a dedicated district of a city. Many cities have areas designated as their “cultural district” and ten years ago one analysis listed more than 100 examples of cities with cultural districts (Frost-Kumpf 1998). From this list of examples, five types of cultural districts were identified:

1. **Cultural Compounds:** house large arts institutions in park-like settings.

2. **Major Arts Institution Focus:** A concentration of major arts institutions including theatres, performance halls, libraries and museums
3. **Arts and Entertainment Focus:** includes sports, restaurants and nightclubs into the mix.
4. **Downtown Focus:** including historic rehabilitation of downtown structure with arts programming
5. **Cultural Production Focus:** Concentrates on cultural workers with an emphasis on artist housing and cultural workforce as opposed to cultural consumers

Frost-Kumpf, 1998: 15-17.

Cultural compounds and a focus on major arts institutions have the problem that they isolate cultural institutions away from other activities. You do not get the synergy of having a museum in the neighborhood next to art galleries, restaurants nightclubs, and artist lofts. Lincoln Center in Manhattan is a prominent example. Arts and entertainment concentrations have the problem of feeling like a theme park (Sorkin 1992). Every major city is building an arts and entertainment zone, and often these zones are filled with franchises of the same facilities found in other cities (Hollands and Chatterton 2003). A downtown or main street focus with an emphasis on historic preservation allows a city to utilize its own heritage while providing space for innovation through arts programming. Yet, tensions remain in some cultural districts between presenting historical culture and presenting culture as a living and breathing entity as practiced by artists today. The 18<sup>th</sup> and Vine Jazz District in Kansas City faces this challenge (Wagner 2007). The cultural production strategy holds the most promise for Avenel and Woodbridge Township. Artistic production has the transformative characteristics necessary to redefine and regenerate the neighborhood. The problem here is to figure out how to meld artistic production into the existing fabric of neighborhood and community in Avenel and the cultural resources available in Woodbridge Township. The type of housing matters, as well as many of the other elements found in a neighborhood plan such as projections of future population in the surrounding built-up areas, the existing businesses and storefronts in Avenel, the walkability of the streets and the access of sites to major transportation corridors and mass transit.

Table 5 compares and contrasts elements of cultural districts from around the country. They vary in terms of their size and scope. Some develop organically as artists drift toward places where their friends and fellow artists have located. The production of art is relatively footloose once the artist reaches a high level of success. Elora, Ontario is such a case where artists have located in a town located along a scenic gorge (Reid 2007). The Placida Florida arts district grew out of the efforts of the owners

of an old fish processing plant to save the old structure while providing something different than the rapidly developing nearby coastal towns (Mhalik 2007). Others, such as Durham, NC and Santa Ana CA, take a struggling commercial district and try to revitalize it with artist studios and lofts (Fraser and Warren 2005, Mattern 2001, Delson 2006). Santa Ana's Artist Village has been so successful that claims of gentrification and displacement of existing Latino businesses have led to tensions between artists and the Latino community (Mattern 2001). The Gateway Arts District is an effort to provide a center and to revitalize commercial strips in Prince Georges County, Maryland (Cecil 2003). Thus, there are a variety of cultural districts that Avenel may model itself after.

**Table 5  
Examples of Cultural Districts**

CITY, STATE	DESCRIPTION AND YEAR	ARTIST LIVE WORK?	ARTS VENUES	ARTIST STUDIOS GALLERIES	REDEVELOPMENT SITE	BROWNFIELD SITE	HISTORIC PRESERVATION	LEAD DEVELOPERS	SOURCE
Durham, NC	Arts and Business Coalition of Durham	X	X	X	X	X	X	Public/private venture	Fraser and Warren 2005 Fraser 2001
Berkeley, CA	Cultural district developed on street of old auto shops, 2000	X	X		X	X		Berkley Rep Theatre, City of Berkeley	Rubin 2001
Peekskill, NY	Cultural district with theatre, museum and lofts 1994	X	X	X	X		X	City of Peekskill,	Philillipidis 2005 Borrup 2006
Placida, FL	Artsy town by the ocean, 1986			X	X			Local government Albritton artist	Mhalik 2007
Santa Ana, CA	Santa Ana Artist Village, 1975	X	X	X	X		X	City of Santa Ana, Museum	Mattern 2001. Delson 2006
Tucson, AZ	Warehouse District		X	X	X	X		Toole Shed Studios, Museum of Contemporary Art	Chalupsky 1998 Walker 2007
Long Beach, CA	East Village Arts District	X	X	X				NA	Cox 2000
Tampa, FL	Tampa Cultural District, 20 block site	X	X	X	X		X	NA	Robbins 2000
Kansas City, MO	Crossroads "TIF"		X	X	X			Planned Industry Expansion Authority	CCA 2007
Bentwood, MD	Gateway Arts District, ongoing	X		X	X			CDC led	Cicil 2003



<b>CITY, STATE</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION AND YEAR</b>	<b>ARTIST LIVE WORK?</b>	<b>ARTS VENUES</b>	<b>ARTIST STUDIOS GALLERIES</b>	<b>REDEVELOP- MENT SI TE</b>	<b>BROWNFIELD SITE</b>	<b>HI STORIC PRESERVATION</b>	<b>LEAD DEVELOPERS</b>	<b>SOURCE</b>
North Hollywood, CA	NoHo Arts District	X 1500 units	X	X	X		X	Redevelopment of old railroad industrial area	Mascaro 2004
Elora, Ontario	Elora Cultural District						X	NA	Reid 2007
Bradenton, FL	Bradenton Arts Enclave		X	X	X		X	NA	Melone 2004

### *Elements of Successful Cultural District Planning*

Many cities do cultural planning. For example, Los Angeles underwent several versions of cultural planning in the early 90's (Littman 1990, 1992a, 1992b, 1993). The most successful artist development projects and plans have several factors in common. First, many of them have some basis in local culture. Second, many have strong connections to other regional institutions. Finally, leadership and patronage are also required. How then do you create an "artist village" at Avenel when these three elements are less certain than in the successful cases? In this next section we review each of the factors and then talk about possible elements to consider for Avenel.

Many successful cultural districts build on an underlying history. The preservation of buildings from another era, adds a layer of interest on top of the cultural production activity of artists. The extent that cultural practices are embodied in the activities of everyday residents adds to the air of such a district. Festivals and traditions can be developed that either reflect history or express contemporary practice and production. Think of the Greenwich Village Halloween parade as such a festival. Elora, Ontario also has such traditions. The roots of such practices may be found in the ethnic traditions of the long-term residents in and around the cultural district. Such mixing of heritage and contemporary practice is risky. But, through such interactions, new cultural forms will appear.

Most successful cultural districts have at least one central institution headquartered within them. The Santa Ana California Artist Village has the Orange County Center for Contemporary Art -- the major contemporary art museum for Orange County, one of the largest counties in the country with three million people. Two theatres and Cal State Fullerton Grand Central Art Center add to institutional profile of the district (see [www.aplaceforart.org](http://www.aplaceforart.org)). It is essential that Township officials and Woodbridge organizations identify arts institutions inside their borders and consider concentrating them in order to build some synergy. Perhaps an arts institution from a neighboring community is looking for a new home.

Cultural planning requires vision and leadership from both the public and private sectors. The development of Dia: Beacon required significant patronage from a few large donors. The Director of Dia had to coordinate the gift of the site from International Paper to the museum in such a way as to facilitate the brownfield cleanup and the

use of historic tax credits. Political factors should not be underestimated. Dia: Beacon probably benefited from the fact that New York's Governor at the time was George Pataki, a politician who got his start from the City of Peekskill just down the river from Beacon. When money is in short supply from large donors, leadership and charisma may be necessary to get a project going. Art critics were skeptical of the American Museum of Visionary Art when they first heard of the plans. However, it was through the dogged efforts of Rebecca Hoffberger that the crazy vision of a home for outsider art (art by artists who have not undergone art training) in Baltimore came about (Mansfield 2000). Finally, what financial resources and incentives are available from the Township of Woodbridge? Some of the successful cultural districts (such as Peekskill, NY) have required millions of dollars of local and state funds for redevelopment. Original plans for the North Hollywood Arts District began in the late 1970s as a plan to turn a warehouse district into something nicer. Yet, it took 25 years and the development of mass transit to begin to make the plans into a reality (Mascaro 2004). Artist village developers should be looking for these sorts of leaders who can provide the vision for the Artist village project and the stamina to follow through on the intense networking to bring a plan into fruition.

What then are the elements that could be combined to make a successful artist village at Avenel? In order to address this question, we needed to get some idea of the current condition of artists in New Jersey. Using Public Use Microdata Sets from the 5% sample of long forms filled out for the 2000 U.S. Census of Population and Housing organized by the Minnesota Population Center (Ruggles et al 2004, see <http://usa.ipums.org/usa/>) We calculated the characteristics of employed artists in New Jersey and compared them to the characteristics of employed artists nationally. Employed artists include visual artists, painters, sculptors, photographers, actors, performance artists, dancers, musicians, writers and authors and are selected based upon occupational codes used by Markusen and Schrock (2006) in their work for LINC. Remember that by examining employed artists, this group is comprised of many of the most successful in their fields. Less successful artists must work at other jobs often in occupations that may or may not be related to their cultural practice. The Crossover report on artist communities in California examines some aspects of how different artists get their income (Markusen et al 2006).

The results are shown in Table 6. Taking account of rough estimates of mean square error, these results show little difference

between employed artists nationally and employed artists in New Jersey. Artists in New Jersey may be more likely to be married, have kids and have at least a college degree. How then do these artists fare in the housing market? We also looked at artist household income and housing conditions. Table 7 shows some significant differences in economic characteristics. Artists in New Jersey live in larger households (probably reflecting a higher degree of marriage and households with kids) and there is more money coming into NJ employed artist households than in the average/median employed artist household nationwide.

**Table 6**  
**Characteristics of Employed LINC Artists in New Jersey Compared to the Nation**

(ALL NUMBERS IN PERCENTAGES UNLESS NOTED)	US EMPLOYED LINC ARTISTS	NJ EMPLOYED LINC ARTISTS
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	56.0	54.9
Female	44.0	45.1
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Married	52.8	58.4
Divorced/Separated/Widowed	14.2	10.2
Never married/single	32.9	31.4
<b>Number of Children in Artist Household</b>		
0	67.8	63.9
1	14.6	16.4
2 +	17.6	19.7
<b>Race</b>		
White	86.2	85.2
Black	5.6	7.0
Other	8.2	7.8
<b>Hispanic Status</b>		
Hispanic (of any race)	5.7	6.3
<b>School Attendance</b>		
In School	10.1	8.3
<b>Educational Attainment</b>		
Less than HS	4.6	3.1
HS Graduate	11.3	12.2
Some College	29.8	24.5
College Graduate	38.0	43.1
Advanced Study	16.2	17.1
Median Age	40.0	40.0
N (total)	843,269	25,726

Source: Bohrer and Frisch 2007 using Markusen and Schrock (2006) method of using 2000 decennial population Census data from Steven Ruggles and Matthew Sobek et al. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0 Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center, 2004.

Note: LINC artists include the following occupations: Visual Artists, Photographers, Actors, Directors, Producers, Dancers, Performing Artists, Musicians, Composers and Writers.

**Table 7**  
**Economic Conditions of Employed New Jersey Artists Compared to National Results**  
**(all dollars reported in 1999\$)**

	<b>US LINC ARTISTS</b>	<b>NJ LINC ARTISTS</b>
<b>Number of Households</b>	836,826	25,692
<b>Mean Household Size</b>	2.62	2.81
<b>Median Family Income</b>	53,500	74,000
<b>Mean Family Income</b>	75,800	92,800
<b>Median Household Income</b>	61,600	82,800
<b>Mean Household Incomes</b>	94,400	110,700
<b>Est. per Capita Income</b>	36,100	39,400

Source: Bohrer and Frisch 2007 using Markusen and Schrock (2006) method of using 2000 decennial population Census data from Steven Ruggles and Matthew Sobek et al. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0 Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center, 2004.

Note: LINC Artists are artists who reported the following occupations: Visual Artists, Photographers, Actors, Directors, Producers, Dancers, Performing Artists, Musicians, Composers and Writers.

Since artist housing is a probable component of the artist village at Avenel, we also looked at the characteristics of artist households broken down by housing tenure. Artists households in New Jersey are more likely to own their housing unit than artist households nationwide (68% in NJ to 64% nationally). Characteristics of employed artist households in owner-occupied housing units are shown in Table 8. Table 8 shows that while New Jersey artist owner-occupied households make substantially more than the artists nationwide, they are also paying more for their housing. The median value of an artist owner-occupied unit in New Jersey was 2.33 times the median household income of a NJ owner-occupying household. The national ratio amounted to 2.23. The characteristics of employed artist households in renter-occupied housing are shown in Table 9. Annual rent in New Jersey accounts for 19.6 % of median household income for renting artist households. Artists renting nationwide pay 21.4% -- a slightly higher percent of their incomes. These figures date back to 1999. The housing market has been through a cycle of boom and bust since then so a more up-to-date analysis should be done. This preliminary analysis shows a higher need for owner occupied housing in New Jersey. The centerpiece then of owner-occupied artist housing makes sense for Avenel. The use of public subsidy money for some of the units would ensure availability at the lower end of the economic spectrum.

**Table 8**  
**Economic Conditions of Employed New Jersey Artists Living in Owner-Occupied Housing Units Compared to National Results**  
**(all dollars reported in 1999\$)**

	<b>US LINC ARTISTS</b>	<b>NJ LINC ARTISTS</b>
<b>Number</b>	535,145	17,413
<b>Mean Household Size</b>	2.83	3.03
<b>Median Family Income</b>	67,200	90,000
<b>Mean Family Income</b>	91,800	110,060
<b>Median Household Income</b>	72,900	96,500
<b>Mean Household Incomes</b>	114,600	131,300
<b>Est. Per Capital Income</b>	40,400	43,334
<b>Median Value of Owner Occupied Units</b>	162,500	225,000

Source for Tables 8 and 9: Bohrer and Frisch 2007 using Markusen and Schrock (2006) method of using 2000 decennial population Census data from Steven Ruggles and Matthew Sobek et al. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 3.0 Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota Population Center, 2004.

Note: LINC Artists are artists who reported the following occupations: Visual Artists, Photographers, Actors, Directors, Producers, Dancers, Performing Artists, Musicians, Composers and Writers.

**Table 9**  
**Economic Conditions of Employed New Jersey Artists Living in Renter-Occupied Housing Units Compared to National Results**  
**(all dollars reported in 1999\$)**

	<b>US LINC ARTISTS</b>	<b>NJ LINC ARTISTS</b>
<b>Number</b>	301,681	8,279
<b>Mean Household Size</b>	2.23	2.35
<b>Median Family Income</b>	34,300	47,210
<b>Mean Family Income</b>	47,300	56,441
<b>Median Household Income</b>	43,900	56,000
<b>Mean Household Income</b>	58,600	67,492
<b>Est. Per Capita Income</b>	26,300	28,720
<b>Median Gross Rent</b>	783	913

What other elements might also be included in an Avenel village cultural redevelopment plan? The analysis of the characteristics of employed artists in New Jersey (in Tables 6 through 9) show that an artist village should not necessarily be a 24 hour playground for bohemian entertainment as sometimes artists are portrayed (Lloyd 2006). Close attention should be paid to creating a center where local artists including those living in the artist housing can work, teach and interact with the residents of Woodbridge. The study of "crossover" by Markusen (et al 2006) shows that artists would spend more time on

the community and non-profit side if they could. Such a center would create significant benefits to existing owners of housing near the Avenel redevelopment site. These owners have weathered the long period of disinvestment and environmental remediation on the site and would now be able to access the services of such an artist center. Knowing the importance of community interaction and networking to artists, developers should also identify potential sites for neighborhood hangouts such as a coffee shop, family restaurant, upscale grill and/or a tavern. Public monies might then be spent to create a common streetscape connecting all of the design elements so that visitors know that they have arrived at a cultural district destination.

### ***Implications for Redevelopment of Avenel Site***

A 26-acre property in the Avenel section of Woodbridge could provide a location for an arts village, integrated within the redevelopment of the site, pending further study. It is adjacent to the Avenel train station and was the site of a large industrial facility owned by General Dynamics. Site assessment reports have indicated that the buildings will have to be demolished and extensive remediation performed before the site is ready for new construction.

This study has detailed the practices of arts-based development with attention being paid to practices that might be copied in Woodbridge, New Jersey. Increasingly, suburban areas are doing arts-based development projects (Bey 2002). Arts-based redevelopment has the potential to allow the redefinition and transformation of the Avenel General Dynamics property from an industrial use to a residential site with 21<sup>st</sup> century artistic production. Possible elements of such an arts district have been identified as well as a possible target demographic for artist housing. However, many questions remained unanswered and need to be addressed in order for art-led development to move forward. These include leadership resources, connection and position in the regional artist markets, and the connection to local artist institutions and resources.

Almost all of the projects profiled in Table 1, 2, 4 and 5 in this report had a significant patron or leader guiding it through. For an arts district to be developed in Avenel, continued leadership from the Mayor's office will be important, along with patrons/leaders from the community, who are excited about the possibilities. Discussions with major New Jersey Foundations should be held to identify arts "needs" in northern Middlesex County. Any arts development in Avenel will compete with regional arts programming in New Brunswick, Edison

and in neighboring Union County. As a first-tier suburb, with a significant population of aging baby-boomers, Woodbridge Township may have families and patrons who are ready to give back philanthropically to the Township in some significant way. Could arts “needs” as well as philanthropic goodwill be connected at the Avenel site?

The regional artist market is very strong. Woodbridge and the Avenel site is located in-between New York and Philadelphia. New York scores very highly on many measures of artistic vitality (Jackson et al 2006). More work on finding subgroups/submarkets that would find the Avenel site appealing needs to be done. What would make someone stop in Avenel when the best art in the world is available in New York? Such a submarket could be targeted toward a particular cultural group, a demographic such as children or teenagers, or type of cultural production. For example, who would have thought the best poetry in the world is presented in New Jersey every couple of years?

The local market is not as strong. The same report that shows how strong New York is shows that the Middlesex, Hunterdon, Somerset MSA lags in terms of art establishment employment, arts non-profits, arts events, arts contributions and artist jobs (see Appendix G of the Urban Institute’s *Cultural Vitality Report* for rankings of Middlesex County – Jackson et. Al 2006). Each lag is a potentially underserved market. However, given the documented lags, connections to existing arts institutions may be even more important. What happens to graduates of Mason Gross School of the Arts on the New Brunswick campus of Rutgers University? Would they be interested in new housing and art district possibilities at Avenel? Expand the analysis to NJIT, Kean University, Rutgers-Newark and Seton Hall as well as to more local colleges.

The Avenel station on the Jersey Coast line is served by few trains. It will important to study how connections to the Northeast Corridor could be strengthened so that artists could more easily make it into New York and Philadelphia. Additional work could also include a more detailed and up-to-date analysis of the local housing market and available commercial buildings. How does development in Avenel compare to efforts in nearby Rahway begun 10 and 15 years ago?

While much remains to be done, prospects for the Avenel site still look good. The proximity to New York and the Jersey Shore are major advantages. Communities such as Red Bank, known to be artsy, are no longer anything close to affordable after the housing



boom of the last 10 to 15 years. With careful planning and the right combination of arts activities, a cultural development at Avenel might make sense.

### III. Artist Inventory and Needs

Woodbridge Township is a densely populated, but is suburban in character without a true urban core. The ten separate towns that comprise the township have their own unique character and neighborhoods, but aside from the busy Route 1/9 corridor, most of the township has a residential character. The Main St. corridor in Woodbridge has a variety of small commercial establishments and services with a small town feel. Thus, although its population density and location might suggest that Woodbridge is urban, it has more of a suburban residential, rather than a cosmopolitan character.

Within this context, the arts community has not been a strong or organized presence in Woodbridge. A township cultural arts commission has played a strong role in preserving and renovating a historic building to become the Barron Arts Center. It provides space for exhibitions and small shows and some classroom space, but cannot serve the needs of the entire township due to its limited physical space. A recently completed Community Center offers an Art Wall and space for exhibits, along with a few art classes offered by the local YMCA, but it is not a dedicated arts space. Although there are numerous scattered locations where artists can perform (school auditoriums, local restaurants, nonprofit organization meeting halls) and some businesses or organizations that offer lessons or exhibit space, Woodbridge has no true community performing venue, no community theater groups, no community choir, no organized artist groups, and has very few art galleries and art events, given the population and diversity of culture.

As the township embarks on planning an arts village, it presents an ideal opportunity to find out more about the arts community generally in Woodbridge at the same time. Therefore this study included the construction of a database of existing artists and arts organizations in Woodbridge and a preliminary analysis of the needs of the arts community to foster its growth.

#### ***Artist Characteristics:***

Of the 92 artist surveys that were returned to the township and processed at the time of this report, more than half (50) reported that they are employed as artists. But more (78 percent) said that they were “very active” with their art, even if they were not employed. More than a third said that they are involved in teaching their art. Teaching locations included the local schools, community center, local

senior center, several Woodbridge dance or music organizations, other regional art or music academies (as far away as Hamilton), or at home.

Artist Teaching Locations Reported in Survey (in addition to home):

*In Woodbridge:*

Across the Floor  
American Music Studios  
Evergreen Senior Center  
Indianica, Inc  
New Jersey Conservatory of Music  
Public Schools  
Woodbridge Community Center

*Elsewhere:*

City Dance Academy  
Montclair State University  
Morris County Community College  
Newark Museum  
New Brunswick Senior Center  
Professional Center for the Arts (Hamilton)  
Rutgers University  
Seton Hall  
South Brunswick Senior Center  
St Joseph's High School  
Wilkes Jewish Community Center  
Westminster Conservatory

From the returned surveys and assembly of other lists, we can begin to see a picture of the Woodbridge arts community. At this stage, the inventory that is assembled is incomplete and in some sense, will always be a work in progress. As more artists become aware of this initiative and more snowball sampling occurs through time, the list will continue to grow. At this time (September 2007), there are about 292 entries in the arts inventory. This includes not just individual artists, but also groups, businesses and other organizations.

The inventory currently includes 90 individuals who have identified themselves as visual artists, with mediums such as painting, ceramics, videography, photography, graphic design and creative

writing. There are 77 individual performing artists, the vast majority musicians, but with about half a dozen dancers and 15 actors. At least 19 individuals identified themselves as both visual and performing artists. There are 19 different musical groups listed, from rock to jazz to folk to classical.

The inventory contains 56 businesses that specialize either in arts-related retail products, services, education, or serve as venues (mostly restaurant-based) for performers. It is important to note that many of the retail or service businesses operate from the artists' home. These include sales of ceramics or sculpture and photographic, video production and graphic design services.

### ***Needs of Artists:***

We obtained quantifiable data about artists' needs from both the written survey and our phone interviews with 19 artists. The township survey asked respondents to select issues that were important to their careers as artists from a list of thirteen. Some artists ranked all 13 needs while others simply checked those that were most important, so for the purposes of analysis, we looked at which needs were either ranked highly as needs (in the top half of needs for those who ranked them), or simply checked or given a "1" by those who only checked or rated each need as, for instance, a "1" or "2" priority need.

Of the 74 artists who completed this question, the most important needs were for more space (74%) (studio and performance/exhibit), equipment/supplies (68%), and promotional assistance (59%). Next important were financial support for creative time and career development activities (53% each). Last were financial services, grantwriting, project management and business services (fewer than 30%). The survey also told us that about a third of the artist sample currently owns or rents workspace, but also about a third report that their workspace is inadequate and they are looking for workspace.

**Table 10**  
**Most Important Artist Career Needs (from survey)**

n = 74

Work and Performance Space	74%
Equipment and Supplies	68%
Promotional Assistance	59%
Financial Support	53%
Career Development	53%

We also asked interviewed artists to rate needs on their importance to their careers as artists. The most important need was space for work and performance/gallery, matching with the survey. Information services and financial support were also rated highly, followed by promotional assistance and networking. Least important were business support services, technology and equipment. Also, more than half of the interviewed artists said that they were looking for more gallery or performance space.

The clear needs that emerge from looking at the survey and interview data combined are the need for more space to work and perform, the need to find a way to provide more financial support to artists and the need to promote arts, artwork and artists.

### ***Arts Organizations, Instruction and Events:***

This phase of the study included an investigation of current arts programming available in Woodbridge Township. Assembling an inventory of arts programming can help those interested in the arts to understand where the gaps in programming are and to compare Woodbridge to other places in terms of its measures of arts and culture.

The emerging field of community indicator research suggests some indicators that can be tracked to assess the health of the arts and cultural aspects of a community. There are some very recent studies that put forth national averages. For example, according to national data collected in 1998, a town of Woodbridge's size should have three to four art museums or galleries, four theater organizations, two dance groups, six music organizations and seven to eight other multidisciplinary or arts serves organizations to match national averages. Except for possibly dance, where about half a dozen private dance schools and local cultural organizations have organized dance companies and performances, Woodbridge falls clearly below these national averages. Although the Barron Arts Center can qualify as an art gallery, there are no dedicated art museums, no community-based theater or music organizations (outside of school, church or private organizations), and outside of the Arts Commission/Barron Arts Center, only two small nonprofits dedicated to arts support or funding (Foundation for Arts Renewal Center and Local Artists Forum for Scholarship).

The Urban Institute recently began an initiative on cultural vitality indicators. It defines “cultural vitality” as “a community’s evidence of creating, disseminating, validating and supporting arts and culture as a dimension of everyday life”

([www.urban.org/projects/cultural-vitality-indicators/definition.cfm](http://www.urban.org/projects/cultural-vitality-indicators/definition.cfm)).

The three main categories or aspects that can be measured to reflect cultural vitality have to do with the **presence of opportunities** for cultural and artistic participation (classes, workshops, concerts, etc.), the **extent of participation** (attendees at art events, students in classes, etc.) and **support for cultural activities** (arts support organizations, public or private financial backing, etc.)

As a first step toward building a set of cultural vitality measurements for Woodbridge, we assembled a list of the organizations that offer arts instruction and arts or cultural events, according to information collected at the time of this report (Table 11). We know that there are additional artists and musicians who may offer lessons in Woodbridge but these are either not advertised and/or offered at the artists’ or the students’ homes. Therefore, it is impossible to fully capture the extent of arts-based instruction that may be occurring. Also, it is assumed that all three of the local high schools, the middle and elementary schools offer standard art classes in the school curriculum. We include only those art programs or lessons that go beyond those typically offered to school children nationwide.

We have estimates of numbers of students or attendees/participants for some of the programs. It should be noted that these are rough approximations since this data was never collected before, and also that in some cases the same individual people may be counted more than once as participants, so that totaling the numbers does not necessarily reflect how many different people participate in the programs. For example, many of the same people attend a number of different activities held at the library, or the same individual is enrolled in several dance classes.

**Table 11**  
**Current Arts-based Educational Programming and Events**  
**in Woodbridge Township**

**Art:**

Program	Est. Number of Students/Attendees Annually
Barron Arts Center:	N/A
• Children's Art Classes	
• Kids Arts and Crafts Camp (6 and up)	
• Adult art lessons – Life Drawing	
Cerebral Palsy Association	N/A
• Arts and crafts classes	
Evergreen Senior Center (For people over 50)	
• Oil Painting	50
• Pastel/Watercolor	50
• Drawing	50
Sewaren Library	
• Watercolor and Drawing Classes	
Woodbridge Board of Ed, Gifted and Talented Program	
• Visual Arts (Grades 3-12)	275
Woodbridge Community Center/YMCA	
• Art classes (Parent/Child)	25
Woodbridge Dept. of Parks and Recreation	
• Ceramics class	
Woodbridge Library (four branches)	
• Craft programs for kids	125
• Drop-in crafts	150
• Media Exploration (summer, grades 4-7)	25

**Music (Instrumental and Voice):**

Program	Est. Number of Students/Attendees Annually
Little Fiddler Academy	
• Preschool Music Program	125
New Jersey Conservatory of Music	N/A
Woodbridge Board of Ed, Gifted and Talented Program	
• Music (Grades 3-12)	350

**Dance:**

Program	Est. Number of Students/Attendees Annually
Across the Floor	
• Dance and gymnastics (Age 3 –Adult)	240
• Summer Camp	30
Dance Factor, Inc.	N/A
Dancin' in the Spotlight	N/A
Indianica Academy	N/A
• Dance (Indian Classical, Age 8-18)	
Verne Fowler School of Dance and Theater Arts	N/A
• Dance classes (Age 3 – Adult)	
Woodbridge Community Center/YMCA	
• Dance classes (varied)	100
Woodbridge School of Dance	N/A
• Dance classes (Ages 3-Adult)	
• Dance camp	

**Theater:**

Program	Est. Number of Students/Attendees Annually
Verne Fowler School	N/A
• Musical Theater	
Woodbridge Community Center/YMCA	
• Drama classes	50
• Summer Theater Camp	25
Woodbridge Board of Ed, Gifted and Talented Program	
• Theater arts/creative writing	275

**Events/ Performances:**

Program	Est. Number of Students/Attendees Annually
Barron Arts Center:	
• Poets Wednesday	380
• Taste of the Arts Lecture Series	N/A
• Concerts	N/A
• Art Exhibits	N/A
• Arts on Main St. (with Township)	N/A
• StudentWorks exhibit	N/A
Woodbridge Township	N/A
• Childrens' Art Exhibit	
• Farmers' Market	



• Summer Concert Series	
Hungarian Club	N/A
• Concerts	
Woodbridge Library	N/A
• Art exhibits	

### ***Potential Partnering Organizations:***

The following is a list, suggested by focus group participants, of organizations that could in some way play a role in helping to promote the arts in Woodbridge, or in partnering or helping to expand services provided.

**Cable TV (35):** Could show performances

**Edison Arts Society**

***Edison Literary Review***

**Local Public and Private Schools:** Could offer music, theater and choir camps

**Middlesex County Culture and Heritage Commission**

**National Association of Music Merchants Research:** Already have programs like Drumming for Health and New Horizons Bands for senior citizens.

**Rutgers Music School**

**Salvation Army:** Looking for opportunities to give music instruction

**Stelton Rd. Arts High School**

## **IV. Artists' Opinions and Preferences**

The success of any arts-based development depends on artists' abilities and desires to concentrate together in a physical location to work, live, teach and perform there. Therefore, an essential first step in considering the development of a new village is an assessment of the interest of artists themselves. That is, do the painters, sculptors, photographers, musicians and actors who currently live in the Woodbridge area think that an arts village is a good idea? Is it a place where they would potentially rent or use space? If so, the next question to consider at the earliest possible stages is what types of features and amenities should the village have? Again, the artists who would be using the village will have specific ideas and needs that are important to the ultimate success of the project.

In this section, we summarize the opinions and preferences of artists (visual and performing) gathered during interviews and focus group meetings and in comments written on the township survey. Most of this information was gathered in an open-ended, non-structured manner so it is difficult to quantify precisely but rich in depth, which is appropriate at this exploratory stage. It is grouped, summarized and analyzed, and, where necessary, researcher judgment is used to assess the strength or intensity of certain opinions based on personal interactions with the artists.

We gathered input from artists about four main topics: 1). use of an arts village; 2). features or amenities an arts village should have, 3). concerns or issues about arts villages, and 4). ideas for promotion of arts in Woodbridge.

### ***Use of Village:***

We gathered data from the 19 interviewed artists about whether they were likely to consider using the village personally as either a place to work, to visit or to live. In this subsection we draw primarily from this and from the 27 artists who attended the focus groups. Although the township survey did not specifically ask for opinions about the village, some of the written comments pointed to needs and deficiencies that would potentially be met in a village development and we include some of those relevant comments here.

Overall, reaction was overwhelmingly positive about the need for a village and artists were very enthusiastic about using the village. Artists commented that the Avenel location should be ideal in terms of

easy access and proximity to the New York metropolitan area. There is clearly a general level of excitement in the arts community about this idea.

We received input from a variety of types of artists, both visual-based and performance-based. Regardless of medium, all of the artists felt that the village should be a place that caters to both performance-based and object-based arts and that supports both types of artists and art. Another advantage of the village concept is that it can tie community arts with professional arts. Creating and using this “synergy” was the single most exciting aspect and advantage of the village. Many of the artists talked with great excitement about the village having a community area for “mixing” of various types of artists, so that they can learn from each other, inspire each other and develop innovative ways to combine their media. For example, one artist relayed that the Society of Illustrators holds a Jazz and Sketch night in Manhattan, where illustrators gather to listen to Jazz music as inspiration to their drawing.

The appeal of the village to the artists, then, is not just in giving them individual space to work or sell their work, but in the very community aspects of it. The community works together, some creating, some teaching and some learning. The village is the place where the ties between different artistic fields can be explored and nurtured. One young performing artist bubbled with enthusiasm, calling the village a “dream come true” and that it is “exactly what Woodbridge needs.” The artists felt that artists themselves should be part of the governance of village.

Regarding living at the site, close to half of the interviewed (7 of 18) said that they would possibly or likely consider living at an arts village. We cannot say if this sample of interviewed artists is representative, but even roughly, if we say that Woodbridge has at least 180 individual artists (conservative), or ten times the number who were asked this question in an interview, then we could estimate that there are up to 70 individual artists just in Woodbridge who might consider living in a village. Some in the focus groups said that they would definitely consider living there if they were single. To attract families, they said, the village would need to be family-oriented with activities for kids and would have to allow for ownership (not just rental of living space). The units that are available for rental or ownership should be affordable, to the extent possible, to offer a much cheaper alternative to artists renting lofts in Manhattan or other more expensive suburbs. Artists thought that perhaps a grant might be

available to create a fund that could help to subsidize artists' rent. Another important attraction for artists who might live at the village would be nearby grocery stores and other services. Artists also put forth the idea that a few residencies could be available to attract well-renowned artists for limited periods – an “artist in residence” concept.

Beyond the group of artists who might consider living at a village, there are more artists looking for workspace who would consider renting space at the village to create their art or to rehearse. Of the artists interviewed, over half said they would consider renting either a full-time or part-time workspace/rehearsal space. Many Woodbridge artists currently work from their home, using any spare space as makeshift studios, or operating small-scale art-related businesses from their homes. Many of these artists commented that they need to work somewhere other than home. The need for workspace is also confirmed by the results from the township arts survey as the number one need.

Most of the artists agreed that the amount of space does not need to be large. For a literary artist or an individual musician, a very small, quiet room with a desk and chair is all that is needed. Soundproofing will be important for some of the music studios or rehearsal rooms. For many object-based artists (painters, ceramics, sculpture), a studio for work should be about 12X12 feet, although a few larger studios would be necessary for sculptors of large pieces. The artists stressed that they do not require much to make the space useful. Sufficient lighting was the only specification mentioned repeatedly. Again, reasonable rental prices will make these workspaces attractive. One artist suggested that lower rents could be offered to artists who agree to teach.

The ability to teach classes is appealing to many of the artists in participating in our meetings and interviews. About three quarters of the interviewed artists said they would consider offering lessons at a village site. Space to give lessons should consist of some small rooms for individual lessons, and other classroom-sized areas for group lessons or workshops. For example, for a painting class, there should be room for a model and for a class of artists with easels around the model. There should be at least one lecture hall and perhaps an outdoor amphitheater, also, for seminars and larger demonstrations.

Suggestions for the types of classes that could be offered centered on the idea of tracking the classes, i.e. offering classes at different levels, beginning, intermediate and advanced, and with a

range of options and prices. Almost all artists we talked with had strong opinions about the need for more local arts instruction and were confident that an unmet demand exists in the general public. The Barron Arts Center is currently turning people away from art classes because of capacity limits. Many noted that outside of school arts departments that often offer very little at an advanced level, youth interested in arts have few outlets in Woodbridge. So classes geared to children should be a key component of the village, according to artists. They should have a wide range of exposure, learning more about art and also art history and cultural awareness. Other artists stressed that the youth should be engaged in learning the digital arts and videography, and that this is an area for adults to learn together with kids. Artists with workspace at the village could be encouraged to offer tours and hands-on workshops for children, and for the general public as well.

In addition to teaching classes to the general public, another advantage of concentrating arts instruction together spatially is that artists can also conveniently attend classes and workshops themselves – either to learn from another artist in a similar medium or to gain exposure to other artistic fields. Attending classes or workshop was one of the most popular or likely uses (17 of 19 saying they would consider it) of the village in our interviewed sample. Even those artists who are not living or working at the site have an interest in and ability to further their skill development through classes.

Even those artists who might not choose to live, work or teach at the village are likely to be interested in displaying and selling their work or performing there. Almost all of the artists we talked with agreed that the village would be an excellent outlet for display and celebration of local art and for performing concerts and plays. For those artists who have workspace at the village, easy transport from workspace to gallery areas is essential, for example having big doors and a load in/load out area. Space for selling art could be available to rent, or to share as a co-op with other artists, both on a regular basis and for shows. In other words, there could be “anchor” tenants and visiting tenants. A village shop could sell the one-of-a-kind works of village artists. Almost all of the interviewed artists said that they would be “likely” to use the village for either gallery or performance space. A childrens’ art gallery would also provide awareness of the works created in the childrens’ art classes.

Many artists felt very strongly that performance venues are lacking in Woodbridge and that the village should contain a venue

capable of hosting community theater productions, concerts, lectures and a variety of events. There is currently no community theater organization in the township, but there is a great deal of interest in forming one, and people who are interested in staffing productions. With many artists getting to know each other and working closely together in a village context, the artists feel that many of them could come together in support of small-scale theater productions. For example, the space could feature the works of local playwrights, local musicians could form the pit band, and local painters and designers could help to design the sets. Graphic artist and photographers could do promotion, and so on.

The performance space, however, should be discipline flexible (theater, music, oral performers) and need not be large. Most of the artists talked about an intimate space that could seat 200-300 people as the ideal size. It would be a versatile space, that is, it would not need to have permanent seats (i.e. could be removable or contractible), and could be partitioned into smaller rooms, if necessary. It would be important that the performance area have good lighting and sound. It could have a roll-down screen for films. Some of the performing artists noted that the theater should have dressing rooms with bathrooms.

The artists in the township suggested many other possible uses of the village. They are:

- Have “opening gala” event
- Hosting retreats or festivals spotlighting certain types of art
- Holding Saturday events for kids
- Asking local symphony members and musicians to do music assessments or summer camps for kids
- Open Mic nights
- Hosting concerts
- Arts film series
- Hosting the local “Woodbridge Idol” event
- Plays in the park
- Jazz in the park
- Establishing clubs of various types
- Cultural festivals and awareness

**Features of Village:**

In this subsection, we look closer at the questions of “what should the arts village look like?” and “what amenities should it have to be attractive to artists and to make it appealing for consumers”? So beyond the key anchoring uses of the village for artists (living, working, teaching, displaying/selling, performing), we consider here some of the features in the design of the village that are important or preferred. We draw here primarily the opinions of the 27 artists who attended the focus groups.

The artists suggested that the village be “purpose-built” from the start, that developers are clear about the purposes of the village and build features that cater to those purposes. Something essential to the artists living at the village and to the general public who would come to the village to shop, browse, learn or enjoy shows is food. The village should have at least one restaurant or coffee shop/tea room, some preferred that the shop have a “healthy and organic” menu and bohemian-type atmosphere. Stores that sell art supplies and equipment would also be important in the nearby vicinity, if not on the site itself. Storage for supplies near workspaces is also an important element.

The village should be “pretty to look at,” according to one of the artists. The overall motif of the village is something that should be discussed with artists and many opinions considered. We heard suggestions that the buildings should have a modern “industrial” look with lots of glass and metal, even glass tunnels, while others preferred a very organic style that fits with the landscape with more earthy materials such as clay and brick.

The most important thing about the design and feel is that the village should have a “feeling of art” and be a place of inspiration. It should be open, airy and very walkable, above all. Some artists thought that inspirational sayings should be written on a wall or a sculpture within the village. Another aspect to be included somewhere in the village is a quiet space for meditation and yoga.

In terms of the layout, most artists preferred a traditional “village” type of design that is very pedestrian-oriented with inviting shops and studios with colorful awnings located along the pathway to the performance venue. It should be very inviting and connected to the streets around it so that it flows naturally from the surrounding neighborhood. For the outside parts of the village, artists were in

favor of usable greenspace and a park-like setting. Some suggested walking paths with trees and benches and good night-time lighting. A pond or some type of water on site or a sculpture park were also mentioned as attractive features. If space permits, an outdoor performing area would add versatility to the site. Parking will be a critical feature for both the artists using the site and for visitors to the site. Suggestions for parking were that it should either be concealed (i.e. underground) or located away from the main part of village.

Some other supporting functions were mentioned by artists as possible features of the village. For instance, allocating some space for a research center and library would allow both artists and researchers to have access to resources to aid in studying art and related subjects. Another support service could be an arts business development center that would help artists with marketing and turning their hobbies into businesses. It could allow for incubation and experimentation and for sharing and learning between artists in a peer or mentor relationship. Another idea was that a main lobby at the village should have an area that promotes and advertises all of the activities and the artists at the village.

### ***Concerns and Issues About Village:***

We asked focus group participants about any concerns they had about the development of the village related to either the concept itself or to the specifics of the Avenel site and location. Relatively few concerns were raised, and almost none related to the site location, except that competition from nearby towns that already have some form of arts development should be considered. A few concerns were raised about safety and crime in the neighborhood, but none about the fact that the site is a former industrial site with contamination. We can presume that the artists assume that remedial activities will remove risks.

The only real concern raised about the village design was that site developers and managers will need to be careful about the placement and proximity of artists to each other. Those that use similar materials should be located together, and those that make noise need to be separate from those who need quiet. Also, good ventilation will be essential for certain artists using paints or varnishes that emit fumes.

The other main issue was about the overall management and growth of the village. One artist expressed a concern that planners



need to allow for organic growth in this concept. A plan that is too contrived and overly prescriptive may not achieve the desired results. Several artists stressed the importance of artists sticking together to remove obstacles that can inhibit their success and work hard to avoid factionalizing. Some of the management issues, such as the criteria used for screening of artists who want to rent live or workspace, could become problematic also.

### ***Arts Promotion and Support:***

The opinions summarized in this subsection come from over 60 different artists, those participating in focus groups and interviews, and also many who wrote comments on the township survey. Artists were asked for their suggestions about arts promotion and support in Woodbridge. Many of their comments and ideas relate directly to the needs that artists expressed in this study and to the under-developed arts and culture sector in Woodbridge. Most of the ideas about promotion are about things that could begin or could happen at any time, i.e. they are not tied or connected to the arts village proposal. The township could begin to implement an arts promotional campaign and to strengthen the arts community in the time between now and the opening of the arts village, which would both lay the groundwork for greater likelihood of a successful village, and help to bring all of the benefits of a stronger cultural and arts presence and awareness to the people of the township as soon as possible.

The artists' opinions about promotion and growth of arts in Woodbridge fell into six categories: financial support, organization and relationship building, relationships, advertising/communication, education/programming, events and venues. Artists felt very strongly that Woodbridge needs more opportunities for local artists to display their work, such as art fairs or other events, more coordination of promotional efforts, support for art, expanded education and awareness of arts and culture and development of more venues. They expressed the belief that people come together across cultures to enrich themselves and understand each other better by participating in music, dance, theater and artistic experiences. Art also engages people more broadly in their communities and can attract talented and creative people to the community.

We present a summary list of the ideas and opinions here, and we also include a list of some of the names of other organizations or places that were mentioned by artists as possible good models or

examples of various elements of arts support and promotion (Table 12):

### Financial Support

- Apply for more grants, sponsors and patrons for concerts and art events.
- Try to obtain a grant to fund “extravaganzas” or large events that would feature musicians and other types of performers together.
- Investigate more funding opportunities for bringing in well-renowned performers
- Sponsor fundraisers for the arts.

### Organization and Relationship-Building

- Form committees of artists in each area –music, literary, dance, visual, etc.
- Foster arts organizations.
- Encourage networking of artists through an Artist Coalition (monthly meetings, critique sessions, etc.).
- Organize a community choir
- Organize small music groups (i.e. brass quintets, woodwind quintets, percussion ensembles) to play at various events in Woodbridge.
- Organize a community band.
- Organize a community theater and childrens’ theater.
- Provide transportation to Manhattan for artists.
- Encourage and support Barron Arts Center.
- Build relationships between arts organizations.
- Encourage arts-related businesses.
- Collaborate with universities in the region.
- Build synergism with nearby gentrifying areas.

### Advertising/Communication

- Create and insert free, attractive arts newsletter into the weekly *Sentinel* and mailings from County Culture and Heritage Commission.
- Use web site to let people know what art is already here and how to access local artists.
- Use Artist Collective concept on the internet – like myspace with photos, clips, etc., possibly maintained by art students.

- Post short bio features about local artists on Woodbridge website.
- Paper the town with flyers.
- Find a storefront for an artists' organization or arts promotion on Main St.
- Encourage local newspapers to feature stories about artists.
- Classify the mailing list to do targeted promotional mailings.
- Help to connect businesses with artists.

### Education/Programming

- Encourage art and art history teaching at schools (k-12).
- Give elementary kids tours of recording studios.
- Promote classical music with better string instruction in schools.
- Provide more direction for youth to develop arts businesses with interactions between youth and gallery owners, artists, etc. and through seminars and trips.
- Develop art clubs in schools, after school art opportunities, plus adult night school for adults.
- Provide free or low cost art lessons for seniors.
- Link professional art to educational system through master classes, demos, etc.

### Events

- Have more art shows and fairs for local artists to showcase their work.
- Sponsor trips to museums and exhibits.
- Hold monthly exhibit in schools or auctions for students' work.
- Hold Battle of the Bands at high school.
- Establish a "First Friday" downtown with local shops displaying art, food and entertainment.
- Art or Music in the Park event.
- "Taste of Woodbridge" festival, with food booths and cafes featuring local musicians.

### Venues

- Develop a community-oriented performing venue for dance, music, theater.
- Find creative ways to use available spaces (such as unrented stores) to do more with arts, i.e. allow rental of space for art showcasing.
- Use the Community Center lobby for art displays.

- Create a place where artists can gather.
- Develop more public art in the township, like wall murals or sculpture in parks and public areas.

**Table 12**  
**Examples and Models Suggested by Artists**

* Philadelphia Art Museum	Performance space
* Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston, ( <a href="http://www.icaboston.org/about/">http://www.icaboston.org/about/</a> )	Performance space
* Gil St. Barnard School	Performance space
* Artspace in Raleigh: ( <a href="http://www.artspacenc.org/index.html">http://www.artspacenc.org/index.html</a> )	Village concept
* Manhattan Plaza	Village concept
* Westfield Summer School for the Arts	Education
* Salvation Army, Manhattan	Childrens' Art Gallery
* Princeton and Montclair Arts in the Park festivals	Events
* Brooklyn Museum First Saturday	Events for kids
* Chatham College Symphony	Music assessments Music camps
* Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance ( <a href="http://www.conceptart.org">www.conceptart.org</a> )	Networking/Promotion
* Monmouth County Cultural Arts Department	Promotion

## V. Conclusion

This study and report was exploratory in nature. The purpose was to provide a background on which to lay out key issues to be considered in arts village development and to begin to assess the components, strength, and opinions of the arts community in Woodbridge. The study includes a first look at local artists' interest in the village concept, their needs (potential demand for usage of village) and their opinions about building a stronger foundation for arts development in the township. The township can use this first phase study and report to elucidate its planning for the arts village and to point to a range of possible options to consider to meet goals related to increasing outlets for musical and artistic creativity, more arts instruction and a community that celebrates and supports its local arts and culture.

In this round of study, we focused almost exclusively on the artists themselves, that is, the people who are already doing art in some capacity and who are potential “users” of the village or “suppliers” of arts and culture in the community, in a broader sense. We did not systematically survey all artists for this study, but through a variety of methods, received some type of input from about 80 different artists. At this exploratory stage when the primary purpose is to identify issues and elicit opinions, this is more than a sufficient sample to obtain a good and valid understanding of the arts community.

It is important to stress that the study did not look in detail at the regional arts community or arts organizations and venues outside of Woodbridge township, nor did it examine the “consumer” or “demand” side of arts development, those in the general public who attend events, enjoy or purchase art, take classes, but who do not necessarily identify themselves as artists. The perspectives of these and other stakeholders, such as nearby residents of the Avenel site, were not measured at this stage. This is because the success of every aspect of the project, from arts village development to greater support and promotion of arts, depends first on whether the artists themselves have the needs and desires to participate and endorse it. In other words, if there is no “supply” of artists that support the ideas, then there is no one to populate and use the village or no one to help to promote.

**Findings:**

Main findings of the study are:

- Woodbridge area artists are very excited about and supportive of the creation of an arts village in Avenel, not just for giving them individual space to work, perform or sell their work, but for the community aspects of it and opportunities it presents for arts-based revitalization.
- While all five modes of arts development are important in Woodbridge, the greatest needs for artists are for workspace, more outlets and venues for showcasing work, financial support and more promotion of arts, artists and arts events.
- Artists place a high priority on the importance of the arts in education of children. Strengthening school arts programs, and providing more after school and summer arts enrichment classes and workshops are key areas of focus.
- There are a great number and variety of individual artists and groups living or working in Woodbridge, many running small businesses or working as hobby artists from their homes.
- Arts and culture is an underdeveloped within the township. Although a formal evaluation of arts and cultural indicators in Woodbridge was not part of this study, preliminary analysis of the arts inventory data that was collected indicates that the township would score below national averages on most if not all indicators of cultural vitality, including capacity, diversity, and number of arts organizations, museums, galleries, attendance at arts events and arts education relative to Woodbridge's population.
- We know that Middlesex County lags in terms of art establishment employment, arts non-profits, arts events, arts contributions and artist jobs, according to Urban Institute data. Although a lag can indicate a potentially underserved market, it also means that to make arts-based development work, connections to and between existing arts institutions may be even more important.

### ***Short-term Recommendations***

Based on findings from this portion of the study, we recommend the following actions and activities to occur or begin the planning stages within the next six months to a year. They focus on two general directions. One is that Woodbridge should embark on an arts campaign that includes development and support of arts organizations, more opportunities for public artistic display and performance, and expanded cultural awareness in the community. A second is that Woodbridge should proceed along the path of continued planning and study of the development of an arts village. The Avenel site could provide a suitable location for the village and meet many of the arts needs identified in this study.

#### ***Arts Campaign: Promotion and Support of Arts and Culture***

1. Woodbridge is poised to embark on a coordinated arts campaign with a goal to promote awareness of and participation in arts and cultural activities. The campaign should have an identified leader or leading organization, a motto and a mission statement.
2. To pursue a goal of strengthening the arts community and promoting arts awareness and appreciation among residents, the township should organize a committee of artists and arts patrons to work on planning, strategies and development. This committee should have task forces that include organization development, financial support, promotion, events, facilities, and educational programming.
3. Because Woodbridge has few arts organizations currently, development of new organizations, as well as strengthening existing ones, is an important step. Efforts should begin to develop community-based music and theater groups, among others. Expanded after school and summer youth programming and classes for senior citizens are recommended to fill gaps in arts education.
4. In going forward with an arts campaign, “artist” should be defined broadly to include the fields of music, theater, various visual arts, design and multimedia, and both professional and amateur artists.
5. Additional physical locations for lessons and classes, performing space and workspace could be developed by creatively adapting underutilized buildings or as companion uses in existing facilities. For example, local schools or churches could provide performance space to community theater or music organizations

6. Artists and arts supporters should begin to look for sources of financial support and grants for arts and cultural planning and development efforts (public, private, commercial, nonprofit). Discussions with major New Jersey Foundations should be held to identify arts “needs” in northern Middlesex County and how Woodbridge can help to fill gaps. Woodbridge Township may have families and patrons who are ready to give back philanthropically to the Township in some significant way. Strong advocates outside the formal cultural sector may be important. Some of this support should be dedicated to setting up business development and arts incubator services for artists.

7. It is likely that there is untapped potential to involve more populations with special needs such as the physically or mentally challenged, and senior citizens, in expanded arts education programs.

8. It will be important to develop a robust centralized website that includes promotion of events and educational opportunities, promotion of artists and links to arts and arts support organizations. An electronic and paper newsletter that is widely distributed is recommended also.

### ***Arts Village Development***

9. Developing an artists’ village from the ground up (blank site) in an area that has no reputation for arts or obvious physical or historical assets to build upon is a challenge in terms of identity and marketability, but also an opportunity to build something that ideally serves purposes and goals. Because of this, planners should consider a wide range of input on components, design and niche marketing, and should be looking for capable and excited leaders who can provide and sustain the vision for the project.

10. Planners should examine how to meld the artistic production from the village with the existing community, economy and cultural resources available in Woodbridge Township.

11. Owner-occupied artist housing, in addition to rental options, should be offered within the artist village. The use of public or private subsidies for some of the units would ensure affordability.

12. In terms of making Woodbridge a regional cultural destination, more analysis of the potential subgroups/submarkets that would find the Avenel site appealing needs to be done. Such a submarket could



be targeted toward a particular demographic such as children or teenagers, or type of cultural production.

13. Strengthened relationships with local and regional universities and schools may result in the willingness of graduates to live or work at the village.

14. As the Avenel development proceeds, connections from the Avenel station to the Northeast Corridor should be strengthened so that artists could more easily travel to/from New York and Philadelphia. Initial discussions between NJ Transit and township officials indicates a willingness for adding additional train stops in Avenel.

15. Close attention should be paid to creating a center or location where local artists can work, teach and interact with each other and with the residents of Woodbridge. Eventually, this function will be served in the village, but building this networking and connection can begin now.

16. Redevelopment and arts campaign planners should consider an audience analysis, that is, a demographic, economic and market analysis of the township and region that includes a formal survey of public preferences and needs for arts education, arts consumption and cultural enrichment.

17. As planning for the Avenel site moves forward, residents of the surrounding neighborhood should be surveyed and interviewed regarding preferences and impacts of the site on factors affecting neighborhood quality of life. .

***About the Center:***

Established in 1998 at the E. J. Bloustein School of Planning & Public Policy at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, NJ, the National Center for Neighborhood and Brownfields Redevelopment is a pre-eminent university-based center focused on themes of service and research for the promotion of neighborhood and brownfields redevelopment. The Center seeks to:

- Help community leaders in urban neighborhoods to understand the complex inter-relationships between brownfields and neighborhood redevelopment and provide them with tools to build local capacity for successful neighborhood revitalization planning.
- Work with US Department of Energy and colleagues at other universities to study and help resolve critical issues at contaminated US nuclear weapon legacy sites.
- Conduct research into issues related to smart growth, sprawl reduction, environmental impact analysis, green building, housing and urban revitalization using spatial analysis models, public surveys, policy analysis and case study methods.

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