‘Artists are a tool for gentrification’: maintaining artists and creative production in arts districts

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To cite this article: Meghan Ashlin Rich (2017): ‘Artists are a tool for gentrification’: maintaining artists and creative production in arts districts, International Journal of Cultural Policy, DOI: 10.1080/10286632.2017.1372754

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/10286632.2017.1372754

Published online: 06 Sep 2017.
ARTISTS are a tool for gentrification: maintaining artists and creative production in arts districts

Meghan Ashlin Rich
Department of Sociology/Criminal Justice, University of Scranton, Scranton, PA, USA

ABSTRACT
This study investigates the relationship between arts-themed development and the strategies used by neighborhood stakeholders, including artists and other marginalized populations, to maintain their place in gentrifying arts and cultural districts. Using a case study of a state-sanctioned Arts & Entertainment District in Baltimore, MD (U.S.A.), I find that the organizations that are ‘thoughtful’ in their development actively seek to maintain the production of arts and the residency of artists in the neighborhood into perpetuity. At the same time, the influx of arts-themed development helps raise property values and spurs re-colonization of the neighborhood’s large industrial buildings, making it difficult for artists to find legal, affordable live/work spaces in the district. As illegal DIY artists’ spaces are increasingly scrutinized by city inspectors, artists and other marginalized populations lose territory in the district and feel that they are being used for capital interests. This paper evaluates arts-themed development and public–private partnerships as a strategy for maintaining artists in revitalizing neighborhoods and considers the possibilities for a more inclusive arts district through political and community engagement.

What do we need to do to make people feel safe in our city? And also to understand what artists contribute to our city? We want to make sure they have safe places to live and engage. This task force represents members of our community. It brings together artists, organizations, legal council, developers and funders with one specific goal in mind – to mobilize resources in ways that enrich and invest in cities and best meet the needs of targeted communities.

–Baltimore Mayor Catherine Pugh (quoted from: Ober 2016)

Introduction
On 5 December 2016, the Bell Foundry, an independent artist studio and living space at 1539 N. Calvert Street in Baltimore, MD, was shut down by the Baltimore Fire and Housing Departments in response to an anonymous complaint about building safety violations. All tenants – artists, residents, and DIY (do it yourself) collectives, including the Baltimore Rock Opera Society – had less than an hour to remove their belongings and vacate the property. Most residents had nowhere else to go. They were shocked by the sudden eviction from a space that had long served as a refuge for Baltimore’s marginalized populations: an intersection of punk, artist, LGBTQ, and communities of color. Although the city maintains that it is not targeting artist communities, the condemnation came just a few days after the horrific Ghost Ship
warehouse fire in Oakland, CA, in which 36 people died. Since the eviction, Baltimore’s DIY community is left wondering how to sustain itself as Baltimore’s century-old mills and warehouses are repurposed into market-rate apartments, restaurants, and offices (Figure 1).

Rumors had already circulated before 5 December that the building was bound for rehabilitation and with good reason. A soon to be completed government office complex sits adjacent to the Bell Foundry at 1525 N. Calvert Street, towering over the two-storey warehouse (Cace and Rector 2016; Weigel 2016). Once this building opens, with over 52,500 square feet of offices, 356 employees, and 100 parking spots, it seems impossible that Bell Foundry could have persisted, holding punk and hip hop shows, with musicians and artists making noise at all hours (Sherman 2014).

The threat to illegal DIY spaces is obviously not just due to city inspector crackdowns, but to the increasing pressures of real estate within revitalizing neighborhoods. The Bell Foundry is located within the first state-sanctioned Arts & Entertainment (A&E) District in Baltimore City (status granted in 2002), Station North. This Central Baltimore neighborhood includes Penn (Rail) Station, the main train station for the city, with commuter and Amtrak service to Washington, D.C., New York, and beyond. The neighborhood has a long history of bohemian activity going back to Prohibition with the long-running dive bar, Club Charles. Artists, musicians, and theaters have been part of the fabric of the neighborhood many years before the A&E District designation, and thus the designation seemed like a natural fit in an effort to ‘move the neighborhood forward’ with revitalized and repurposed buildings, such as the Fred Lazarus IV Center. Previously a London Fog factory (among other manufacturers), this North Avenue industrial building is now a Maryland Institute College of Arts (MICA) Graduate Studio Center building, holding classrooms, studios, galleries, a theater, and a locally owned café. Other revitalized warehouses have been the Lebow Building, a former Cork, Crown, & Seal Co. factory, now home to the public Baltimore Design School (grades 8–12), the Centre Theatre, which houses the MICA/Johns Hopkins University (JHU) film studies program, the Baltimore Jewelry Center, and other non-profit organizations, and the Parkway Theatre, a century-old Beaux-Arts theatre now home to the Maryland Film Festival. New construction in the neighborhood includes two below market-rate apartment buildings, City Arts I and City Arts II, with approximately 60 units each offering subsidized rents for artists.

Although much of the development in Station North has been tied to the arts in some fashion, continued development in the neighborhoods within Station North is seen as a threat by artists themselves. Previous research on Station North has shown that there are few options for those who do not want to live in, do not qualify for, or cannot afford the subsidized artists’ apartments or the few available

Figure 1. Condemned Bell Foundry building adjacent to new State of Maryland building.
rowhomes for sale (Rich and Tsitsos 2016). The one major large (and legal) rental complex offering live/ work studios is the long-running Copycat Building. Should the Copycat close because the aging owner sells the property (or a relative inherits it), it would be a major blow to the continued independence and growth of the neighborhood’s art scene. Without cheap rental properties, artists and other marginalized groups often have no space of their own and will most likely leave the arts district. However, many influential institutions, including community development corporations and universities, have worked to shape the neighborhood with artists and other neighborhood stakeholders in mind. Instead of Starbucks, the neighborhood has locally owned cafes and bars. Instead of Citibank and Rite Aid pharmacy, the neighborhood has new/rehabilitated buildings that hold public schools, theaters, under market-rate artist studios, maker spaces, and apartments. Keeping the neighborhood tied to arts and culture through private–public partnership development may be questionable as far as an economic strategy, but undeniably it breathed new life into a neighborhood that once was labeled a ‘No-Man’s Land’ (Westbrook 2014).

This paper seeks to understand and assess the strategies used by neighborhood stakeholders, including artists and other marginalized populations, to maintain their place in gentrifying arts districts. Using the case study of Station North, the organizations that are ‘thoughtful’ in their development actively seek to maintain the production of arts and the residency of artists in the neighborhood into perpetuity. At the same time, the influx of arts-themed development helps raise property values and spurs re-colonization of the neighborhood’s large industrial buildings, making it difficult for artists to find legal, affordable live/work spaces in the district. As illegal DIY artists’ spaces are increasingly scrutinized by city inspectors, artists and other marginalized populations lose territory in the district and feel they are serving, as one Station North artist put it, as ‘tools for gentrification.’ This paper will: (1) outline the methodology and setting of this case study, (2) evaluate arts-themed development and public–private partnerships as a strategy for maintaining artists in revitalizing neighborhoods, and (3) consider neighborhood community associations and political influence on neighborhood development and the possibilities for a more socioeconomically and racially inclusive arts district through political and community engagement.

**Artists and gentrification**

It is a well-worn story in cities throughout the world: older, mixed-use residential/industrial neighborhoods are transformed through early ‘pioneers’ – the artists, homesteaders, and marginalized communities – who move into and work to transform forgotten neighborhoods. Since the 1960s, many sociologists have noted neighborhood succession through population change, with artist settlement being at the forefront of a process of gentrification (Glass 1964; Smith 1979; Ley 1996). Zukin’s study (1982) on loft living in SoHo and Smith’s study (1996) on the rebranding of the Lower East Side are now classic examples of this process in New York City, with an influx of capital following ‘starving artists’ willing to live in raw, industrial buildings and/or neighborhoods abandoned by the middle class. Once the artists settle into lower income neighborhoods, making improvements through sweat equity, powerful economic and political interests form coalitions to raise the market value of the neighborhood’s real estate (Zukin 1982; Ley 1996).

Both Lees’ work (2003) on hypergentrification in Brooklyn Heights and Mele’s study (2000) on the political and economic forces of social control in Loisaida (in New York’s Lower East Side) argue that gentrification cannot merely happen with an influx of artists, but rather with a complex web of larger institutions working to revalorize the neighborhood. Based partially from Lees’ work (2003) and Hackworth and Smith’s paper (2001) on the development of gentrification through different time periods of neighborhood investment and disinvestment since the 1960s, Cameron and Coaffee (2005) argue that while artist settlement and artist production may be the ‘first wave’ of neighborhood gentrification, the ‘second wave’ occurs when artistic production is commodified: gentrifying neighborhoods are themed, packaged, and sold to the non-artist middle class. The final stage of gentrification, the ‘third wave,’ occurs when neighborhoods are further gentrified through large developments and global capital and state
investments, and previously non-gentrified areas beyond the city’s core begin to gentrify (Hackworth and Smith 2001). Lees further refined Hackworth and Smith’s description of ‘third wave’ gentrification with the concept ‘super-gentrification,’ which she defines as ‘... the transformation of already gentrified, prosperous and solidly upper-middle class neighborhoods into much more exclusive and expensive enclaves’ (2003, 2487). Relating ‘third wave’ gentrification to the relationship between artists and neighborhoods, Cameron and Coaffee state that in this phase the focus is ‘explicit public-policy engagement and link to regeneration, on the public consumption of art, through public art and artistic events, and particularly through the creation of landmark physical infrastructure for the arts, such as galleries, museums and concert halls’ (2005, 46). While many arts and cultural districts in economically struggling regions (such as this case study in Baltimore) may never get to that level of ‘super-gentrification’ with ties to global financial markets as described by Smith (2002) and Lees (2003), Cameron and Coaffee have redefined the concept to fit with the process of commercialization of esthetic production (Miles 1997) and the theming of arts districts (Gotttdiener 1997).

Artists are often blamed for neighborhood gentrification (‘the shock troops’), but Markusen (2006) argues that this blame is misguided as ‘artists may be used by developers, even willingly, but they are not the architects or chief supporters of private property and land-use practices that favor single-site transformations of land use against community wishes’ and reminds us that: … many artists are of the community in which they live, including many artists of color and immigrant artists. Many are also poor. Their relative poverty along with their need for artistic space drives them along the sweat-equity route. Many artists play active roles in their neighborhoods in working with troubled youth, in visiting prisoners, and in staging and coaching community arts fairs and performances. Artists often see themselves explicitly as a public conscience and as responsible for using their talent in ways that critique power and inequality and advance community. (Markusen 2006, 1937)

Although artists are generally not wealthy, they have high levels of social and cultural capital, which could be where the blame for neighborhood gentrification stems (Strom 2010). Ley uses Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital in his assessment of artists’ role in neighborhood gentrification: ‘The artistic lifestyle, like the creative art-work, deliberately presses the borders of conventional middle-class life, while at the same time representing its advancing, colonising arm’ (Ley 2003, 2533). Though artists may have chosen poverty and marginalization, as intermediaries between high and low taste, their esthetic production and technical skill is attractive to the middle class (Ley 2003).

Furthering the ties between artists and gentrification, neighborhoods that have a critical mass of artists and other creative workers may attract state interest in development, leading to official arts and cultural district designation (for assessment of arts and cultural districts, see: Stern and Seifert 2007; Darchen 2013; Noonan 2013; Rich and Tsitsos 2016). The creative placemaking strategies employed by many arts and cultural districts may be top-down, stemming from a state-sponsored organization, or they may be more grassroots and/or inclusive of long-time residents. Criticisms of creative placemaking are many: it is a theoretically ‘fuzzy’ concept (Nicodemus 2013), mostly a branding strategy (Evans 2003; Rich and Tsitsos 2016), may exclude a set of diverse stakeholders (Stern and Seifert 2007; Darchen 2013; Montgomery 2016), and can be viewed as an attempt to displace or contain marginalized populations (Bedoya 2013). The use of creative placemaking though public arts projects makes the relationship between artists and neighborhood redevelopment manifest to any casual observer. For instance, when large murals are painted all over buildings in a neighborhood, as was done with the Open Walls Project in Station North, the esthetics of the neighborhood are immediately changed. Those esthetics may not be to the taste of longtime residents nor are they always created through full community input or participation (Darchen 2013; Mathews 2014; McLean 2014; Rich and Tsitsos 2016). The disjuncture between large-scale neighborhood change and stakeholder control is at times literally written on the wall, making the connection between artists and gentrification all the more obvious to non-artists.

Whether or not artists are unfairly scrutinized because of state or financial industry-sponsored creative placemaking activities and for their relationship to ‘first wave’ gentrification, they are often the victims of neighborhood ‘success’ and subject to displacement when neighborhood real estate values escalate. Many arts- and culture-themed neighborhoods form public–private partnerships to alleviate
the financial pressure on artists who are likely to be forced out of live/work spaces as they become rehabilitated for other middle-class uses (such as commercial and residential buildings). In Strom's study (2010) on the growing number of subsidized artist housing developments throughout the U.S., she argues that many economically depressed cities wish to court artists through artist housing in hopes that private economic development will follow. Although there is little evidence that the presence of artists causes economic growth in neighborhoods (Miles 1997; Evans 2005; Strom 2010), subsidized artist developments can be key to maintaining artist populations in the face of neighborhood ‘success.’ Without dedicated spaces for artists to live and produce work, a neighborhood with rising real estate values is unlikely to sustain its artist population, as exemplified by neighborhood after neighborhood (e.g. see: Zukin 1982; Markusen 2006; Catungal, Leslie, and Hii 2009; Martí-Costa and Miquel 2011; Mathews 2014; Rich 2015).

Much of the literature on the relationship between artists and gentrification has shown how artists are often ‘losers’ in the development game. Neighborhoods that receive official arts district designation or are unofficially arts-themed are not guaranteed to protect artists and art-related industries within the district; if the neighborhood is ‘successful’ there is evidence that artists will be driven out (Bain 2003; Strom 2010; Shaw 2013; Vivant 2013). Recent research has investigated the possibilities for artists’ grassroots organization in making claims to city spaces, at times forming coalitions with other marginalized groups (Gauzon 2013; Novy and Colomb 2013; McLean 2014; Montgomery 2016). At stake here is not just a place for people to work, live, and create, but the opportunity to inform and contribute to the development decisions of neighborhoods, decisions that are regularly made through elite networks and financial markets. At this point, we are well aware of why governments, however economically misguided, support public–private partnerships for arts-themed development (Strom 2003; Miles and Paddison 2005). However, are artists and businesses tied to cultural production actually ‘saved’ through these partnerships (meaning, not displaced)? Are there unintended effects to concentrating culture-based redevelopment geographically? What are other strategies for maintaining artists and race, class, and other forms of diversity in arts- and culture-themed neighborhoods? This paper will investigate strategies used by public–private partnerships and development and grassroots, political, and community organizations to maintain artists and artist production, as well as consider the unintended consequences for artist subsidization in the district.

Methods and setting

This study is based on ethnographic fieldwork and 40 formal interviews with 43 participants in Station North (or SNAED), a Maryland State Arts Council designated Arts & Entertainment District since 2002, the first district granted this status in Baltimore. The name Station North is a contemporary moniker, so-called because the southern edge of the district’s boundaries is at Penn (Rail) Station. The actual historic neighborhoods within the district are: Greenmount West, a residential neighborhood with many large industrial buildings; Charles North, a largely commercial area including numerous theaters and North Avenue, the city’s northern boundary until 1888 and a thriving racially and ethnically mixed commercial district; and a small portion of Barclay, a working-class, largely African-American rowhouse neighborhood (see Figure 2 for SNAED boundaries and points of interest).

Using the most recently available U.S. Census data from the 2015 American Community Survey, the main census tract included in Station North has a population of 2244 people, a median household income of $32,596 (in comparison to $74,551 for Maryland), and a population that is 62.3% African-American, 29.9% white, 2.8% Asian, and 2.9% Latino/a (see Table 1, U.S. Census Bureau 2017). Between 2000 and 2010, there were major changes in the residential makeup of the neighborhood, with a 5% increase in population, which includes an astounding 332.7% increase in white population and a 48.5% increase in number of households. Between 2010 and 2015, the population has continued to grow in this neighborhood, most likely due to new or rehabilitated rental housing developments, with a 28.2% increase in total population and a 44.7% increase in white population. Interestingly, the black population stopped declining in this period, increasing by the same number of people as the white
population. In comparison to Station North, Baltimore City has a population of 614,664 (2016 estimate, a loss of 1% since 2010), and is 62.9% African-American, 31.7% white, 2.8% Asian, and 4.8% Latino/a (2015 population estimate) (U.S. Census Bureau 2017).

The data for this study originate from a two-day conference held in June 2013 by SNAED, entitled ‘Artists & Neighborhood Change.’ At this conference (held in MICA’s Fred Lazarus IV Graduate Center and Area 405, an artist-owned live/work building), many stakeholders from the neighborhood, including longtime residents and artists, voiced their concerns regarding residential displacement and the creative placemaking and pro-redevelopment activities of SNEAD and other community developers in the neighborhood (see [Rich and Tsitsos 2016] for a more detailed analysis of conversations at this conference). I identified and made initial contacts with potential study participants, beginning targeted snowball sample interviews with stakeholders. I define stakeholders as individuals who are: local business owners or employees; residents (including long-time and more recent renters/homeowners); and those actively involved in neighborhood institutions/organizations (including community associations, arts promotion non-profits, philanthropic organizations, universities, and community development corporations). Most interviews and ethnographic data collection were completed between June 2013 and June 2014, with a follow-up interview done in January 2017. Out of 43 interviewees, 13 were artists, musicians, and/or engaged in creative production, 15 were current or past residents of Greenmount West or Charles North, and 20 were employees/directors of organizations/institutions directly involved in neighborhood

Table 1. Selected demographic trends for Station North, 1990–2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2015 (ACS estimate)</th>
<th>Percentage (number) change from 2000 to 2010</th>
<th>Percentage (number) change from 2010 to 2015 (estimate)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population (all races)</td>
<td>2298</td>
<td>1668</td>
<td>1751</td>
<td>2244</td>
<td>5 (83)</td>
<td>28.2 (493)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black population, as % of whole</td>
<td>88.4</td>
<td>91.7 (1531)</td>
<td>68 (1191)</td>
<td>62.3 (1397)</td>
<td>−22.2 (−340)</td>
<td>17.3 (206)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White population, as % of whole</td>
<td>10.2 (235)</td>
<td>6.4 (107)</td>
<td>26.4 (463)</td>
<td>29.9 (670)</td>
<td>332.7 (356)</td>
<td>44.7 (207)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Households</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>739</td>
<td>1171</td>
<td>1216</td>
<td>48.5 (432)</td>
<td>3.8 (45)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner-occupiers (percentage)</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>27.5 (4.7)</td>
<td>−25.7 (−5.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vacancy (percentage)</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>−9.7 (−3.5)</td>
<td>−34.6 (−11.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median household income ($)*</td>
<td>18,908</td>
<td>18,089</td>
<td>33,906</td>
<td>32,569</td>
<td>87.4 (15,817)</td>
<td>−3.9 (−1337)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Not in constant dollars.
revitalization (with overlapping categories for some individuals). Confidential face-to-face interviews with study participants lasted an average of 1.5 h. Interview schedule questions asked participants their views regarding the neighborhoods within Station North, including open-ended questions on the A&E District designation, neighborhood redevelopment, and gentrification/revitalization. Interviews were recorded, transcribed by a research assistant, and then coded for themes, which were grouped according to the topics described in the interview schedule. The following section considers the relationship between artists and redevelopment through the perspectives of the stakeholders interviewed for this study.

Redevelopment in an arts-themed neighborhood

[Interviewee 1, woman] For us to make a smart buying decision in this neighborhood, it wasn't affordable. You know, to buy something that we would rehab ourselves … it would have been really hard. We could have done that maybe. But, to make a smart buy, you know, as artists – broke artists in this area – it's next to impossible to get property, to buy in this neighborhood. So everybody who's talking about, artists helping to develop and build this area … if the artists are the tool to help redevelop this area, and then, there's no way for an artist to purchase in the neighborhood, then artists are a tool –

[Interviewee 2, man] for gentrification.

(artists, married couple and nonprofit workshop owners in Greenmount West, Interview, November 2013)

The December 2016 closure of the live/work arts space Bell Foundry was a jolt to those who experienced it, but not surprising to anyone who has observed the physical and social changes in Station North for over a decade. Since the 2002 State of Maryland designation of the neighborhoods of Greenmount West, Charles North, and a small portion of Barclay as the Station North Arts & Entertainment District, major development projects have been planned and completed, transforming large portions of the neighborhood. Most of the large industrial and theater buildings have now been rehabilitated and converted to office, studio, and performance spaces. New construction has been completed in Greenmount West, with two below market-rate artist housing complexes, City Arts I and City Arts II. Two new public schools have also opened in this neighborhood: Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School (in a rehabilitated public school building) and Baltimore Design School, a public middle/high school in a converted Crown, Cork, & Seal Co. factory. Its first official development in the arts district, MICA converted a dilapidated factory on North Avenue into a graduate studio center, including offices (rededicated as the Fred Lazarus IV Center in 2014). Other redevelopments have followed, including two historic theatres, one housing the MICA/JHU joint film studies program and the other home to the Maryland Film Festival. In addition, the first high-rise market-rate apartment complex to be built in the neighborhood in decades should be completed by 2018, situated adjacent to the Charles Theatre/Chesapeake Building complex. Inevitably, with redevelopment in the neighborhood come closures of long-time arts-related businesses/spaces. Most of these businesses/spaces closed because of landlord evictions, not due to city building code violations (See Table 2 for a more detailed description of redevelopments and closures in Station North).

Although the landscape of the neighborhood has shifted since 2002, it has not been as dramatic a shift in comparison to other gentrifying neighborhoods, many characterized by newly built developments and displacement of lower income African-Americans (such as the U Street corridor in Washington, D.C.; see Hyra 2015). Although some interviewees I spoke to explained that there have been large Station North development projects in the works for years (in particular, a total redevelopment of Penn Station and its surrounding lots), much of the current redevelopment in the neighborhood is of existing structures, repurposed for educational, cultural, or creative production programs. While ‘entertainment’ and consumption is a key aspect to the success of Arts & Entertainment Districts (Darchen 2013), much of the development in Station North has been geared toward cultural production and work. For example, the business model of The Motor House (a converted car dealership building on North Avenue) is that the non-profit organizations who rent offices in the space subsidize artists’ studio spaces by paying
market-rate rents. Open Works, a membership-based maker space in Greenmount West with classes and industrial equipment for community use, is owned and partially funded by the same development corporation as the Motor House: Baltimore Arts Realty Corporation (BARCO), the non-profit community development arm of the Deutsch Foundation. These types of developments described here are possible through public/private partnerships and linkages between large financially flush institutions (such as universities and foundations), community development corporations, city, state, and federal government agencies, and individual artists. The next section explores these types of developments and their effect on the neighborhood.

Public/private partnerships

Arts-themed development in Station North was years in the making, as two major community development organizations, Jubilee, Inc. and Central Baltimore Partnership, worked with government agencies, nearby universities, and community associations to wrest control of large derelict properties being ‘sated’ (meaning, waiting for real estate values to rise before selling off properties) by absentee owners. Building code enforcement to force property sale is one of the methods used in the community development handbook; however, it can also put artists’ housing at risk, as evidenced in the Bell Foundry shutdown. A community development corporation employee explains this delicate balance:

One of the major challenges has also been in terms of affordable artist housing … building that relationship with the city’s code enforcement department to not just blanket these neighborhoods with code enforcement, but be much more strategic about it, so we had to change the entire thinking of the code enforcement department on how they actually do what they do. Because if that were the case then all of those buildings along Federal and Oliver [Sts.] would be easily shut down, especially five years ago. None of them were up to code, and most of them aren’t still, but then you lose the entire residential artist population for the most part in the neighborhood. (Interview, January 2014)

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**Table 2.** List of major developments and closures in Station North Arts & Entertainment District, 2007–2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Openings</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Baltimore Post Office – ‘Railway Lofts’</td>
<td>Repurposed post office; apartments and office space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Ave. Market Building</td>
<td>Rehabilitated portions of building, includes Red Emma’s (collectivist bookstore and café) and a few businesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School</td>
<td>Rehabilitated public school building for new charter school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>City Arts I</td>
<td>New build; 69-unit below market-rate artist housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Fred Lazarus IV Center</td>
<td>Repurposed industrial building; MICA graduate studio center/ classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Baltimore Design School</td>
<td>Repurposed industrial building; public middle/high school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>The Chesapeake Building</td>
<td>Rehabilitated restaurant/offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Centre Theatre</td>
<td>Rehabilitated Art Deco theater/offices/JHU &amp; MICA Film Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>City Arts II</td>
<td>New build; 60-unit below market-rate artist housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Motor House</td>
<td>Repurposed industrial building; artist studios/offices/performance space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Open Works</td>
<td>Repurposed industrial building; maker space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Parkway Theatre</td>
<td>Rehabilitated Beaux-Arts theater/Maryland Film Festival home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Nelson Kohn Apartment Building</td>
<td>New build: High rise apartment building with 103 units, market rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closures (years open)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>American Dime Museum</td>
<td>Sideshow museum, now closed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Load of Fun</td>
<td>Live/work artist space, now The Motor House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Charm City Art Space</td>
<td>Punk collective and performance space, now tattoo studio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Hour Haus</td>
<td>Recording and rehearsal music space, now offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Bell Foundry</td>
<td>Live/work artist space, now partially condemned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Liam Flynn’s Ale House</td>
<td>Tavern and musical performance space in North Ave. Market, now closed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Because artists are thought to assist in neighborhood revitalization, community development organizations in Station North work to maintain artists in the district with the understanding that artists are vulnerable to displacement, perhaps even more so than long-time residents protected by government subsidized housing. Furthermore, many artists do not have access to the financing that community developers have and therefore cannot easily buy buildings to protect their work/live spaces in the neighborhood. The community development employee quoted above explains:

[Our organization has] been able to try and work with some of the artists that are looking to transition out of that apartment living communal lifestyle into home ownership, but then, the lifestyle of an artist makes it very challenging to be approved for any traditional financing and what bankers and mortgagers are looking for, artists just can't produce. So that has been a problem in terms of supporting the changing lifestyles of artists and their families from wanting to live in the grungy Copycat [Building] to wanting to be in a little more comfortable environment, but still an artist environment, so City Arts [Apartments] is a nice option, but there's a number of families that are just more older professional artists that would really like to stay in the neighborhood, but have a really hard time doing it, so, and transitioning into more of a traditional single-family household. There's been lots of strategizing around how to work with that. (Interview, January 2014)

The City Arts apartments mentioned above are two below market-rate buildings for artists, financed through a number of development organizations, including Homes for America, Inc., a non-profit housing developer, and millions of dollars in federal/state tax credits. Prospective renters must be involved in creative production and cannot have an income below 60% of the Area Median Income (between $36,420 and $52,020 per household in 2017, depending on number of people in each unit). The apartments come equipped with industrial sinks so that some artistic production can occur. However, large, messy, loud, or industrial projects are unlikely to be produced in these modest apartments. An artist and business owner who does not live in City Arts laughingly commented on the absurdity of working artists living in the complex: ‘Dude, you’re in subsidized housing … you can’t party all night, or you can’t run your drill press at 4 o’clock in the morning because, you know – there’s civilization’ (Interview, August 2013).

Because there is a recognized need for artist housing and artist studio space, a number of developments have provided below-market space for artistic production, including the aforementioned Motor House, Centre Theatre, Open Works, and Station North Tool Library. Partnerships between universities, foundations, community associations, and individual artists have been key in the development of all of these projects. A director of a wealthy foundation explains the business model at work in many of the new developments:

So, our model … which hasn’t been done, but we’re going to try to do it and figure out how to try and make it work is you have some commercial tenants who are paying market rates. That’s the restaurant and maybe some of the office tenants and that helps subsidize some of the space that you can offer to artists at the affordable point that they can afford to pay, that six dollars a square foot or whatever it is. So, you know, that’s what we’re wrestling with now is how we can make the investment necessary, bring the building up to code and attract the commercial tenants so we can subsidize the artists and make it all sustainable without ongoing support from the foundation. (Interview, October 2013)

When asked why the foundation is interested in funding arts-themed development, their response is that their goal is to stop the trajectory of gentrification that often occurs in revitalizing neighborhoods, from ‘first wave’ (artistic production), to ‘second wave’ (artistic commodification), to ‘third wave,’ with super-gentrification of the neighborhood and displacement of artists being the unintended result (Lees 2003; Cameron and Coaffee 2005). Artists may be used as ‘tools of gentrification’ through the theming of the neighborhood as an Arts & Entertainment District while being partially shielded from the ill effects of gentrification by the arts-themed development. A real estate developer employed by the private foundation explained:

Because you can [see] what’s happening, or what has happened historically with the artists. First, the gay community engages in these very poor communities, right? And then the artists come in, right? And then, all of a sudden, five or six years later, the neighborhood gets … a couple nice galleries and restaurants and then all of a sudden it begins to transition and they all get pushed out. They get pushed out by the commercial people with higher taxes and higher rents. We’re trying to come in and make it sustainable for those folks. They can stay here. They can still live here. They can work here. But in addition, the people who live in these communities, like Greenmount West,
we're trying to make sure that we also communicate and have them evolve with us. We want to employ as many people as we possibly can in this process. (Interview, October 2013)

The community development model here is to cater to artists through subsidization while engaging in the larger community, including poor African-American long-time residents and a racially diverse set of professionals and families. Not surprisingly, there are tensions between these artist and non-artist communities, especially as neighborhood development works to raise land rents and property values, as explained by the employee of a community development corporation quoted previously:

The artist oriented population is definitely much more concerned and unsupportive of any major redevelopment or investment … in the neighborhoods. Whereas the community associations, which have very little actually artist representation on it, and a lot of the residents and some other stakeholders in the area, are much more supportive and proactive around those activities. And I think that's a pretty natural tension. Because the artist community is definitely taking advantage of the affordability of it all and if there’s improvements, that means that their affordability is at risk. But to really improve the quality of life of the entire area, investment needs to be made, and there's some great opportunity and greater vision and it's very strategic. And it's become a really collaborative process. So it’s a balancing act, but that's definitely an ongoing challenge and tension. (Interview, January 2014)

The paradox here is that while arts-themed development is a protective strategy to maintain artists and artistic production in the neighborhood, the development simultaneously makes the housing and business rental market in the neighborhood prohibitively expensive, driving out many artists, venues, and/or independent businesses. This has already been evidenced by the closing of Charm City Art Space and Liam Flynn's Tavern, and the forced relocation of longstanding North Avenue pizza restaurant and performance venue, Joe Squared (luckily, the restaurant was able to crowdfund to relocate one block away from the original location). The conflict between artists and other neighborhood stakeholders may be mitigated by community organizations, as explored in the next section.

Community organizations and political power

The two major community associations in Station North – Charles North Community Association and Greenmount West Community Association – are actively engaged in the development decisions in the neighborhood and wield quite a lot of power compared to other Baltimore neighborhood developments (such as the ongoing fight over the major Port Covington redevelopment plan by Under Armour CEO Kevin Plank [Broadwater 2016]). This is due to the close ties the associations have with city planners and the major community development corporations. The neighborhood had been neglected and devalued for so many years that the development trajectory could have gone in many different directions. However, with strong leadership from the community associations, development has been slow and cautious. Changes to zoning laws made it legal for artists to live in industrial mixed-use buildings. This would not have happened without the vision of the community association and their positive relationship with the longstanding artist population in the neighborhood. A long-time Greenmount West community leader explains:

We're trying to be more deliberate … we're not trying to be desperate whores. And just jump in bed with anybody. We've been very deliberative in our expectations. We do have a master plan that we worked on for many years … and the city council there, they adopted it. So, it's our official template … that we've developed for the neighborhood. Two of the things we're focusing on right now is some zoning changes maybe. Because we were one of the first communities in the state to … become a PUD. Which is called a Planned Urban Development. We were one of the first communities in the state to actually understand what that was about. And we jumped right into it. And that's how we were able to maintain some of these mixed use buildings because the Copycat [building] was … out of compliance. So was the Cork Gallery. So was a lot of these other buildings. But with that zoning change it allowed some of the mixed use activities that were already going on in those buildings. It actually bought them legitimacy. (Interview, July 2013)

A comparison between the two major neighborhoods’ Master Development Plans within the Station North Arts & Entertainment District’s boundaries shows two highly contradictory visions of the area. While the Greenmount West Master Plan focuses on the balance between revitalization and raising the quality of life for current residents through industrial building rehabilitation and reuse, strong schools,
and green spaces, the Charles North Master Plan is a developer’s dream, with multiple themed spaces and dense commercial districts packed with new high-rises. The Greenmount West Master Plan’s intent is clear within its opening statement: ‘The tool identified within this Plan to prevent the displacement of existing residents is the creation of new housing stock within the community through the renovation of vacant structures and the development of vacant lots’ (Baltimore City Department of Planning 2010, 5). In contrast, the Charles North Vision Plan’s executive statement is: ‘Charles North is Baltimore’s next possible “impossible” project. Similar to the Inner Harbor of the 1970s, it will create a major “world class” and multi-ethnic destination in the heart of the city’ (Charles North Vision Plan 2008, 4). Included in this plan are renamed sub-neighborhoods, created through newly built and redeveloped properties: ‘20th Street Asia Town Neighborhood,’ ‘North Avenue Market,’ ‘North Avenue Place,’ ‘Major Live-Work Gateway,’ ‘Jones Falls Park’ ‘Cultural Center’ ‘Design Center,’ ‘Charles North Backstage,’ and the anchor of the neighborhood, a major development project at the train station, ‘Penn Station Restored’ (Charles North Vision Plan 2008, 7).

Given the building stock and residential differences between the two neighborhoods, with Greenmount West a much quieter, residential neighborhood than Charles North, the stark contrast between the two visions should not be surprising. Yet, with the Charles North plan pushing for major developments without explicit worry of gentrification and residential displacement (beyond artist displacement, which is noted in the plan), it is unclear how Greenmount West will be affected by the major changes directly to the west of them. Upon first reading of the Charles North Vision Plan in 2013, it seemed like a far-fetched ‘pie in the sky’ development dream. However, with a number of major rehabilitations and developments completed or underway, it doesn’t seem so farcical anymore (see Table 2 for major developments). The Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC), the non-profit organization that manages Baltimore City development, managed the plan for multiple (unnamed) stakeholders. The BDC grew out of the Greater Baltimore Committee, a public–private partnership between downtown financial interests and Baltimore City government responsible for major downtown developments in the 1970s and 1980s, including Charles Center, the World Trade Center, the National Aquarium, the Maryland Science Center, and the Baltimore Convention Center (Levine 1987). The Charles North Vision Plan views the Inner Harbor renaissance as a model for its own rebirth, with a focus on tourism and consumer experiences, rather than a focus on quality of life for residents, as in the case of Greenmount West. A Charles North community association member explained:

> When we did the urban renewal on this plan we wanted to encourage development … So we decided … that we wanted as much [building] diversity and height as we could get …we could have buildings of the same scale as Manhattan. [Laughs] Now it seems absurd but we needed people to have vision because what we had here is a train station and empty parking lots and very few people. There’s not that many residents and we need to encourage residents to come in, it’s not just an artist’s community … I think artists get confused. This is a commercial district. (Interview, July 2013)

While the goal of the Charles North Vision Plan was to revitalize the neighborhood by any means necessary, the seeds of arts-based development had been deeply rooted in the decades of independent bohemian spaces in the neighborhood: bars, theaters, band practice spaces, galleries, music venues, a long-running independent movie theater on Charles Street, the 2002 Arts & Entertainment District designation, and the proximity to a world-class art college, MICA. Most of the major developments in Charles North that have come to fruition (barring the Nelson Kohn Apartment Building) are tied to the production and/or consumption of arts and culture, and many are based on the non-profit organization–artist subsidy model. As explained in the previous section, the web of community development corporations and non-profit organizations (Central Baltimore Partnership, MICA, Baltimore Arts Realty Corporation [BARCO], and others) shaped the real estate development within SNAED to explicitly tie revitalization to the arts and artists, rather than tourism. An employee of a community development organization makes the point that without proprietary development and control over private capital’s demands to the profit margins, the continued existence of the neighborhood’s more bohemian, DIY spaces would be at risk:
Preserving affordable artist space is really important in terms of both housing and in the retail aspect of allowing these more entertainment, culture-oriented entrepreneurs to try and establish themselves. There's going to be some significant new development in the area in the next five years that's really gonna change the market very fast and it's a matter of being proactive with those developers … because if you rely on market conditions and regular finance – traditional financing, you're never going to be able to let a Crown [DIY performance venue] happen, you know? (Interview, January 2014)

Though there are still questions regarding whether artists will continue to reside in either section of Station North due to rising real estate values and lack of available housing stock, there is some support of creative production, much to the chagrin of some long-time residents who may have little interest in supporting artists. Even if there is community support for maintaining a residential artist presence, a Greenmount West Community Association member explains how the association could do little regarding the lack of housing options for artists:

I think artists are concerned about that [displacement]. I know people in the Copycat and the Annex [buildings] have watched their rents almost double over five or six years. And the fact of the matter is there's little that the community association can do and I don't know what the city could possibly do about that. And the problem is that with City Arts [Apartments] they're touting that, 'oh we're attempting to help the artists' but at the same time it only helps a small segment of artists because it's more or less an apartment building, you don't really have any studio space or really raw space that the vast majority of industrial type artists that are in that neighborhood really need. It's not fulfilling the need of the artists in that area. (Interview, August 2013).

Though community organizations may have little interest in preserving space for artists’, the previous and current political administrations in Baltimore have at least given lip service to supporting the arts in Baltimore. As O’Sullivan's work (2013) on strategies for maintaining artists’ housing in New York City, such as rent control and ‘loft laws,’ political regimes can greatly influence the location and condition of this housing. Catherine Pugh, the current Baltimore Mayor, has appointed a taskforce on ‘Safe Art Space’ (quoted at the beginning of this paper) in response to the artist community’s concerns following the Bell Foundry eviction. This taskforce includes members of the Station North artist community, as well as legal and financial/real estate representatives. There is already criticism of the taskforce, with concerns regarding a lack of DIY and marginalized community representation and influence in the organization (Callahan 2017). Elissa Blount Morehead, the former executive director of SNAED (she resigned from the position in 2017), sums up the paradox regarding the developments by public/private partnerships and the arts community’s needs: ‘I hope that we can teach [each other] how this is already being done and how existing work can be supported as opposed to thinking about words like what's going to be “given” or “created” for us … We don't actually need that; what we really need is equity, access, and clear and navigable tools to do what we already do’ (Callahan 2017).

Given that previous Baltimore administrations (in particular, Mayors Martin O'Malley [1999–2007] and Stephanie Rawlings Blake [2010–2016] have treated arts and culture as a development tool for the city, Mayor Pugh's taskforce radically shifts the focus on artists ‘as tools’ of developers to artists as vulnerable to development (Ponzini and Rossi 2010). As in any top-down initiative, it is unlikely to fully capture the perspective and needs of the grassroots. Baltimore's politically connected ‘movers and shakers’ – individuals with political and financial clout and a long history of working with multiple organizations – are the ones who wield the most influence in Station North. This included Joe McNeely, past Executive Director of Central Baltimore Partnership (now retired), Charlie Duff, President of Jubilee, Inc., and Fred Lazarus, past president of MICA (also now retired), all white men who live outside of SNEAD's boundaries. Since the 2015 uprising and protests in response to the death of Freddie Grey, a black man who died in police custody, conversations regarding city development have also shifted, with demands to be more inclusive of all community stakeholders, especially within communities of color (Broadwater 2016). Recognizing that ‘artist’ does not always mean ‘white’ is an important step that the Mayor's taskforce has taken, but in order to be truly inclusive, the DIY community needs to feel that they are actively involved in the development process, else it risks becoming another neoliberal ‘trickle-down’ economics initiative, like the Inner Harbor (Levine 1987).

It is not clear at this time if more artists of color in comparison to white artists (or musicians vs. fine artists; low income vs. middle income artists, high school graduate vs. MFA graduate, etc.) are being
displaced from the neighborhood because there is no statistical data of residential moves of artists since 2010. Although Table 1 shows that whites went from 6.4% of the population in 2000 to almost 30% of the population in 2015, we cannot assume those whites who moved into the neighborhood were artists. However, interviews and news articles used as data for this study show that there is a strong perception among stakeholders that artists are being driven out of the neighborhood, and in particular, artists who have lower financial and cultural capital are more at risk. As the Bell Foundry became a safe haven for many self-identified queer black artists, the scrutiny intensifies on spaces associated with marginalized communities. Rapper and performer Abdu Ali explained to a reporter after the Bell Foundry shut down: ‘It’s a limited amount of black-owned creative spaces in this city, and the ones that do exist have a hard time existing because they’re highly policed. They got more pressure on their back to follow the rules, to stay alive, to make money’ (Kirkman 2016). Thus, even if that building was condemned in response to political pressure and the Ghost Ship warehouse tragedy, the perception and reality is that black artists in Baltimore are less likely to have the cultural and financial connections that white artists do, many of whom are MICA or other college graduates.

**Conclusion**

A huge body of research now exemplifies how cities use arts and culture in neighborhood and downtown revitalization strategies, accomplishing this through public–private partnerships that link financial, educational, cultural, and political institutions in urban real estate development (Gottdiener 1997; Strom 2003; Miles and Paddison 2005; Markusen and Gadwa 2010; Darchen 2013; Nicodemus 2013). A significant portion of this research examines the relationship between artists and neighborhood redevelopment/gentrification (Zukin 1982; Smith 1996; Mele 2000; Cameron and Coaffee 2005; Markusen 2006; Strom 2010). In typical gentrification narratives, artists are seen as the ‘shock troops’ of gentrification – the ‘first wave’ of ‘settlers’ who are the next displacement victims of neighborhood success (Hackworth and Smith 2001; Cameron and Coaffee 2005). As O’Connor and Shaw argue (2014), most public policy that seeks to build the ‘creative economy’ through capital investments in cultural projects and developments inevitably crushes the spaces of cultural production. In this study, set in a transforming state-sponsored Arts & Entertainment District in Baltimore, I further investigate this relationship, as ‘thoughtful development’ through public–private partnerships has attempted to support and maintain artists. Through interviews with neighborhood stakeholders and those actively involved in neighborhood real estate redevelopment, I find that there is recognition from most stakeholders that artists are an endangered population as land rents go up in the neighborhood. Yet, it is an arts-themed neighborhood, and thus most of the public–private partnerships driving development are actively seeking to foster arts-themed development, which in recent years has led to redevelopment of historic structures to serve as movie theaters, artists’ studios, performance spaces, and arts education buildings. Newly built multi-million-dollar developments are serving as subsidized artist housing (in the case of City Arts Apartments I and II) and community maker spaces (such as Open Works).

However, all of the themed developments described in this paper cannot provide the type of artist-controlled environments that ‘organically’ spring from DIY collectives, as in the Bell Foundry. Given how dangerous some of these dilapidated properties may be, the city can no longer turn a blind eye. What artists want and need is ownership over legal, up-to-fire-code spaces, such as Area 405 and the Cork Factory, both longstanding artist-owned collectives and live/work warehouses in Greenmount West. Without these two collectives, Greenmount West may never have been included in the bid for A&E District designation, which originally included only the neighborhood Charles North. With artist ownership and control, there are assurances that artists will be able to stay in those two buildings. For the average artist who is not ready or able to purchase property in a collective building, there are the City Arts Apartments buildings or the Copycat buildings, and little else that is affordable (see Rich and Tsitsos 2016) for more regarding Baltimore’s home buying programs and lack of housing options for artists.

Public–private partnerships have worked to maintain the theming of the neighborhood as tied to arts and artistic production, as well as provide subsidized space for this production. And yet it is still
seen as a top-down project by the DIY community who are unlikely to live in the neighborhood once the cheaper warehouse apartments are inevitably redeveloped with higher, market-rate rents, reflecting their proximity to Penn Station and Washington, D.C. commuter incomes. The Mayor’s Safe Art Space taskforce is taking initiative to address the concerns of this community regarding housing, but again, it is a top-down initiative, working to legitimize or organize marginalized communities through Baltimore’s elite political, legal, and financial connections. For community associations focused on quality of life concerns, such as schools, trash, and crime, protection for artists is not a pressing matter, but could serve as a locus for grassroots cooperation between artists and other community members, especially given the associations’ political clout. This study serves as an example of ‘well-intentioned’ development that may not be financially sustainable in the long-run, and further, may yet contribute to mass displacement of artists and other marginalized populations.

Notes

1. These are overlapping self-identities that represent various backgrounds and communities in Baltimore and are by no means representative of the multitude of African-American, Latino/a, Asian American, and LGBTQ communities. Punk in this context is synonymous with DIY and is also a self-identifier, tied to multiple music scenes. Punk is a historical social and cultural movement that is impossible to define as one esthetic or philosophy today (see McNeil and McCain [1996] for a history of the initial concept and music scene in New York).

2. I use the term bohemian as Lloyd (2006) defines this fluid concept as both a historical idea and a spatial practice that is tied to artists, marginality, and underground culture.

3. Data were collected in 2013–2014 with William Tsitsos. The data analysis for this paper was completed by the author.

4. Charm City Art Space was a punk collective that put on safe (no drugs or alcohol allowed), legal, all-ages music shows for a young, diverse audience. Both Liam Flynn’s and Joe Squared were/are owned by white men, but had/ have a racially diverse staff and customer base and were/are tied to the arts community by holding music and cultural events.

5. The U.S. Census Bureau (2017) provides the occupational category of ‘arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media’ in the American Community Survey but only 34 people in this census tract claim to work in these fields. The most common occupational category is, not surprisingly (given artists’ need to survive by means other than art sales), ‘food preparation and serving occupations’ (151 people). The second most common occupational category is ‘education, library, and training’ (115 people).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Funding

This work was supported by the University of Scranton Internal Research Grant.

Notes on contributor

Meghan Ashlin Rich is an associate professor of Sociology and Women’s Studies at the University of Scranton. She studies race, class, and urban social change, as well as arts- and culture-based strategies to revitalize neighborhoods. Her research has been published in Journal of Urban Affairs and International Journal of Urban and Regional Research.

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