

Applicant: City of New Haven, Connecticut, New Haven, CT

Project: Project Storefronts

Attachment 2: Project Narrative

City of New Haven Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)

Project Description: Project Storefronts, a small pilot program initiated in New Haven in 2010 by the City's Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA), is an innovative program that matches individual artists, non-profits or teams who possess an entrepreneurial spirit (what we term "creative entrepreneurs"), with property owners having empty storefronts, and small business counselors. The mission is to establish new innovative retail enterprises which incorporate arts and creativity, while enhancing/expanding New Haven's creative economy which already accounts for 15% of the City's total firms and more than 7% of our workforce. With seed funding of only \$30,000 from the non-profit Economic Development Corporation (EDC) of New Haven, DCA initiated the Pilot Program in summer 2010 to test and refine the concept in New Haven's Ninth Square historic district downtown. Augmented with \$17,000 in additional funding from various sources -- including the Department's own budget -- and lots of in-kind support, DCA hired Margaret Bodell, a recognized arts consultant, to negotiate for space while overseeing the "Call to Creative Entrepreneurs", the application and selection process. It was not until the early 1980s that New Haven's Ninth Square -- the last of downtown's original nine squares -- was finally redeveloped at the tail end of the city's well documented Redevelopment Era. Comprised of 78 historic 19th and early 20th century structures, the area inspired a cocktail of creative but delicate financing that led to the creation of 311 apartments with ground floor retail completed by 1995. But while the residential flourished, the retail languished.

Accomplishments: The Pilot Program resulted in the opening of six previously shuttered storefronts managed by artists intent on honing their entrepreneurial skills. Of the 30 individuals and organizations initially expressing interest, 20 completed applications were submitted and 4 were accepted as start-up test businesses. An additional storefront was occupied by an "Etsy Street Team" (a group of on-line retailers who came together periodically for sales and craft nights) and another Storefront project morphed out of one of the initial test business. The response by the public and the media has been overwhelming, helping DCA snag a coveted

annual *Arts Award* from the Arts Council of Greater New Haven after only a few months in operation. The project has brought life and light and energy into the city's Ninth Square district, a well populated but retail-starved downtown neighborhood that was begging for exciting retail enterprise. A flurry of community activities has since ignited, sparking new visitation to the area. At the time of this writing, two of our original creative entrepreneurs are negotiating with Related Properties to stay in their spaces as paying tenants while Project Storefronts moves on to other buildings in the district.

Budget: The sum of \$100,000 is requested to support Phase II of Project Storefronts. As the very successful Pilot Program winds down, DCA is gearing up to expand the Project starting July 1, 2011. We have already received a commitment of continued financial support from both the NH-EDC and NH-EDO for \$40,000 each, to be matched by \$45,000+ cash and in-kind support from the DCA budget and anticipated in-kind support from property owners of approximately \$30,000 in rent reductions and other support.

Major Project Activities related Phase II: DCA has spent the majority of 2010-11 refining the concept, its components and legal forms while evaluating the successes and shortcomings of its Pilot Program. We will continue to refine during the following activities:

- Ongoing outreach to property owners in New Haven's commercial districts who have vacant retail spaces begging to be utilized
- Ongoing outreach to the creative/artistic sector in Greater New Haven and beyond to expand our base of potential entrepreneurs
- Continued refinement and dissemination of the "Call to Creative Entrepreneurs"
- Continued refinement of Entrepreneur's graduated commitment levels as reflected in our Entrepreneur Agreement
- Continued refinement of other various legal forms required
- Planning for monthly events and activities
- Expanded marketing of Project Storefronts to potential shoppers, creative entrepreneurs, property owners and the media through publicity efforts, printed materials, web and social networking sites, and other outlets
- Monitoring and managing the Entrepreneurs' small business education/counseling via the City of NH's Economic Development Office, NH-EDC, Chamber of Commerce, SBA and a

multitude of other suppliers.

Outcome(s) and Measurements:

- number of entrepreneur applicants
- number of interested property owners
- entrepreneurs' increasing ability to participate in graduated rent payment program
- anecdotal & primary information of impact on surrounding businesses and residents
- media coverage
- retail sales
- foot traffic
- number of entrepreneurs who are able to successfully launch from the project
- landlords new commercial tenants taking over Project Storefronts' space.

Schedule:

On-going

- Negotiations with private property owners for existing/new retail space/occupancy needs
- Creation of special Membership program for Project Storefront entrepreneurs with the Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce's small business division
- Outreach to additional creative entrepreneurs for project's Phase II
- Evaluation/review of new & retiring entrepreneur applications
- New entrepreneur/business build out/start-up
- Marketing and promotion, re-branding of Ninth Square District
- Visitor & sales tracking, individual storefront/project evaluation
- Mini Street Festival & sales promotion activities planning

July-Aug 2011

- Summer Mini Street & Jazz Festival including sidewalk sales & temporary artist installations and performances
- Finalize fall schedule of activities
- Collaboration with Town Green Special Services District, Yale University, other artists/arts organizations/retailers/businesses in the newly proposed *9th Square Sunday Market Fair*
- Assist with establishment of recently proposed *9th Square Merchants Association*

Sept-Oct 2011

- Collaborative event timed to coincide with Artspace's *Citywide Open Studio*
- Finalize winter/holiday schedule of activities/explore possible statewide artist collaborations

Nov-Dec 2011

- Holiday activity promotions
- Late winter activities planning
- Six-month evaluations with landlords, creative entrepreneurs, funders, other partners

Jan-March 2012

- Workshops, exhibitions, other activities
- Finalize spring schedule of activities

April-June 2012

- Planning/finalize summer schedule of activities
- Year-end evaluations

Partners and Key Organizations: In addition to the EDC and the City's Economic Development Office, our other key partners are Artspace (a neighbor in the Ninth square), and private property owners (our current commitment with Related Companies is evolving and The Hurley Group has just offered a huge vacant space that we'll work to subdivide). We also collaborate with numerous individual artists, small arts organizations, Town Green Special Services District, Yale University Properties, the Arts Council of Greater New Haven, The Greater New Haven Chamber of Commerce, Market New Haven (city's non-profit marketing arm), REX (the regional economic development agency for South Central Connecticut).

Target Community: We broadly market to individual artists, small arts organizations wishing to diversify their income streams, property owners, residents, visitors of most all demographics

Promotion: Print, radio, TV and web media publicity, social networking, various downtown New Haven and visitor newsletters, PSAs. Radio and billboard advertising is contemplated depending upon financing.

Documenting, Evaluating, Disseminating Project Results: Participating entrepreneurs document monthly sales, foot traffic, publicity and the impact of their special events/promotions. We also track media publicity spots and impressions. This data is reviewed, evaluated and disseminated to the media/public (as appropriate) and our funding and collaborating partners.

Evidence of Impacts Achieved: In view of the multitude of other variables impacting the Ninth Square District, it is impossible to isolate impacts directly attributable to Projects Storefronts.

Anecdotal information, however, tells us a lot, including such things as:

- Increased foot traffic in the area
- viable new retail businesses growing out of Project Storefronts
- increased engagement with area residents
- positive feedback from neighboring businesses
- establishment of a new Ninth Square Merchants Assn
- attraction of new residents into area, new commercial tenants attracted to our landlord.