

Artist Workspace: Understanding the Need and Maximizing the Benefits.

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### **Executive Summary**

The professional artist has many needs but one shared by every artist is the need to create from a physical place. Many artists find themselves working from home for various reasons but being creative and productive from home, in seclusion from the society they should be connecting with, is a hurdle that many artists face.

Artist studios come in many forms, including home-based studios and shared community studios, but this paper brings attention to the artist workspace community; defined as a creative community of five or more private, work-only, artist studios. Many working artists yearn for this type of creative community but the number of artist workspace facilities currently available across the United States is insufficient.

Information surrounding this topic is in short supply, but where available, artist workspace communities are making an impact. Economic benefits are being felt by the artists who rent workspace as well as the property owner and community at large through inflated property values, tax roll contributions, and ancillary spending. The public is gaining essential access to working visual artists through open studio, workshops, and other community events. Furthermore artists are socializing with other creatives; collaborating, networking, and feeling validated as an artist all as a result of being involved with these workspace communities. There is little to no sign of negative effects associated with the formation of an artist workspace community.

To better understand existing workspace communities a nationwide survey was conducted to identify what is, and is not, working for those involved with existing artist workspace communities. By examining the goals and feedback from respondents, we can help guide the successful development of future workspace communities and strive to maximize benefits associated with them as efficiently as possible. Two surveys, one for the owners/managers and another for the

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artist/tenants, were administered, collected, and analyzed. Survey results confirm the economic, cultural, and social benefits found in the United Kingdom and in early studies in the US. This topic merits further research; however one thing is clear, the potential of the workspace community warrants attention.

### **Introduction**

Every professional artist has many needs; these needs differ from artist to artist depending on their medium and personal preferences. One need shared by every artist is the need to create from somewhere, a physical place. Some artists work outdoors while some must have very controlled surroundings, some need to make a lot of noise, and others require quiet. The same way that performers need performance space and practice space, visual artists need space to display as well as space to create. Generally speaking the public understands and supports the visual artists' need for space to display and sell their work but the need for a working studio space seems to fall below the radar.

### **Defining artist workspace**

For the purpose of this paper, artist workspace is defined as a private area used for the sole purpose of creating work by an individual artist or a team of artists working together. Essentially offices for artists, these spaces are used only for work; they do not serve a residential function. The term artist workspace community is used to identify a group of five or more artist workspaces in a single building.

The majority of artist workspaces discussed in this paper refers to visual artist studios; however the need for creative workspace is not exclusive to the visual arts.

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Common physical requests for artist workspace include things such as: exposed floors, high ceilings, large windows, access to 220 volt power, ventilation, and a sink. Size requirements usually vary from 150 square feet to 3,000 square feet, with the most common size averaging approximately 350 square feet. The building should offer easy access for loading and unloading large items, and flexibility to make noise at unusual hours without infringing on the neighbors.

Many artists that pursue a professional art education spend some time studying in a fine arts center; a facility housing multiple working studios in numerous disciplines. Such facilities create a sense of community, offer artists a support system, and foster creativity and collaboration. However such communities of working artists are difficult to find outside the academic setting. Where creative communities do exist, it's next to impossible to locate them or find information unless you know someone who is involved. The creative communities that do exist are in high demand, adding to the difficulties standing between the working artist and access to existing workspace communities due to high occupancy and low turnover rates.

### **Common problems that artists face**

The above criteria are fairly common for producing visual artists; however, because there is otherwise not a high demand for this unique combination of real estate amenities outside of the artist community, such space is nearly impossible to find. While there are property owners who lease space that can accommodate many of these criteria, often times the spaces are very large in size. For example, a property owner with 20,000 square feet available is more likely to lease the entire large area to one tenant, rather than framing the space into smaller sections and finding multiple tenants.

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When properties like this are available, they are usually located in remote areas, which often lack foot traffic for potential clients and other social benefits (i.e. proximity to restaurants). Safety and security can be a concern in isolated locations as well.

Most professionally aspiring artists begin by working from home in a garage, spare room, basement, or the like. Many of these artists find themselves working from home long term by default; because it's affordable, or easy, or because there are no other options available to them. Being creative and productive from home, in seclusion from the society they should be connecting with, is a hurdle that many artists face. It's true that some artists prefer to work from home but many artists do so with a constant longing for a more social and professional setting; one similar to the fine arts center where they learned to become a professional artist.

For another population of artists, working from home isn't an option. They may require extremely tall ceilings to create large works, or need to operate heavy machinery, or extra space may be necessary to manufacture multiple pieces at once. Much of this work is not compatible with a home workspace due to safety concerns, zoning issues, or incompatible facility needs. Many of these artists also desire a location that not only meets their physical needs but also offers creative support.

### **Lack of availability**

If artists are in need of space, and they want to be surrounded by other creatives, why are artist workspace communities so rare?

A 2004 United Kingdom survey reported just over 2,000 artist studios in operation and 3,553 artists on waitlists (Acme, 2006c, p 7). Simply put, 36% of artists interested in renting studio workspace in the UK were able to do so, while 64% were left without access. While specific numbers have not been gathered in the United States, existing workspace communities that operate

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waiting lists suggest similar conditions. The UK study identified one reason for this is “studios are almost 100% continuously occupied; just seven percent of all spaces change hands each year” (Acme, 2004c, p 8).

### **Existing workspace communities**

There are two basic means by which the majority of existing artist workspace communities began, unintentionally and intentionally. Within each of these categories common trends appear.

Artist workspace communities that came to exist unintentionally are frequently the result of a property owner offering inexpensive space for lease. More often than not the affordable space is the result of an unsafe property due to disrepair or location. Generally speaking these landlords are not concerned with the safety or satisfaction of their tenants, but rather with their own profit numbers. When this is the case, a property often ends up being sold when property values are high and the artists are forced to begin a new search for affordable workspace. But not all unintentional artist workspace community owners are property owners concerned only with their bottom line, in fact sometimes they connect with the artists, absorb their energy, and begin working to provide a supportive creative community to their tenants. One excellent example of this is the Northrup King Building in Minneapolis, Minnesota; a previously vacant property that began attracting working artists in the late 1980s. In the late 1990s leadership recognized this trend and embraced the change. Today Northrup King offers workspace to more than 190 working artists.

Intentionally developed artist workspace communities are most often generated by an artist looking to meet their own workspace needs. Because these artists-turned-developers understand the desires of the working artist to connect with others in the creative world, these communities usually support artists beyond simply providing workspace. A good example of this trend is Equinox

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Studios in Seattle, Washington. The result of sculptor Samuel Farrazaino's efforts to create his own workspace, Equinox Studios provides workspace to more than 65 working artists.

### **Working artists and gentrification**

During tough times, leaders often ask artists to help turn a struggling area in a better direction. Artists need space and a community in need usually doesn't have much to offer, so the exchange is often affordable space. But inexpensive space is usually inexpensive for a reason. "Cheap rent in exchange for temporary and rather dangerous conditions; a bargain struck by many artists, in many cities, in many times" (Richlovsky, 2015). Artists then spend their time and money transforming this cheap space into functional space. "Over the last 30 years, artists have created studios by converting an extraordinary range of older buildings including factories, warehouses, schools, churches and offices... requiring a high level of repairs and maintenance (Acme, 2006a p16)." Over time, the area becomes desirable, others find value, and the neighborhood is soon thriving again. This process is called gentrification.

There are many desirable outcomes associated with gentrification, but unfortunately there are unintentional, negative patterns involved as well. One of the adverse side effects of increased property values is higher rental rates, forcing out many of the initial pioneers who invested sweat equity but have little ready cash. This is an issue affecting our culture in many ways beyond the artist workspace concerns discussed here. "Creative activities are often forced out of an area because they have not had the capital to purchase their property and protect themselves from rent increases... this is a key issue (Acme, 2006a p. 14)."

### **Acme Studios and Artspace Surveys**

Information surrounding this topic is in short supply everywhere. However in 2004, Acme, a London-based charity supporting fine art practice in the UK, introduced an advocacy program called Capital Studios on behalf of the affordable artists' studios sector in London. In 2010 Artspace, the leading arts developer in the US, began a two-part case study of five of their earliest projects. Acme's thorough study on this subject produced findings similar to the US Artspace case studies, as well as the private research that follows. All three studies find artist workspace communities are creating benefits to working artists as well as the neighborhoods that contain them.

### **Economic benefits**

Some tenants in workspace communities acquire financial stability as a result of their participation. They frequently experience an increase in overall income and/or an increase from income earned as the result of production of their work. This is likely a result of lower expenses combined with an increase in exposure and networking. The Artspace study reported 34% of artists claimed an increase in their overall income as a direct result of their involvement with the facility, and 48% attributed the facility with increasing the percentage of income earned from artistic work (2011, p. 32).

Economic benefit also extends to the neighborhood at large, including an increase in property value for the structure and surrounding properties, an increase in contributions to tax rolls, and ancillary spending. Jackie Cherryhomes, former city councilmember on the Traffic Zone commented:

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They redeveloped a marginally occupied property, the Appliance Parts Building which... was sitting vacant like a hulk... It brought the property back on the tax roll in a different way and breathed new life in a building that had not been there (Artspace, 2010, p. 57).

Two of the properties included in the Artspace case study contain artist work-only space, the Traffic Zone Center for Visual Art, in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Tashiro-Kaplan (the TK) property in Seattle, Washington. The Traffic Zone's assessed value in 1992 was \$405,000. In 2008 the property's assessed value was \$3.2 million; an increase of 415% over 16 years after adjusting for inflation. Tax revenues increased from \$23,207 to \$113,995. Artspace's TK property climbed from an appraised value of \$2.8 million in 2003, to \$16.9 million in 2010. Associated tax revenues were less than \$500 in 2003 and more than \$28,000 in 2010 (2011, p. 35)

### **Cultural benefits**

The public also stands to benefit culturally as a result of having an artist workspace community in the neighborhood; the most obvious way is public engagement. A 2009 National Federation of Artist Studio Providers (an organization serving the UK) survey concluded "94% of studios in their register are involved in some form of public activity... 82% holding open studios at least once a year... 73% hosting exhibitions in their building... 62% running workshops... and over 50% holding talks or events (as cited in Moreton, 2013, p. 429)." A former TK manager commented:

People want to be able to connect directly with artists. A lot of artists work in their homes and in outlying areas and the general public don't have access to that. In this kind of entity the public can come in and make direct contact with those who make art" (Artspace, 2011, p. 47).

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Artists are a necessary part of a strong community. Chris Murray, Director of Learning and Development, Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment *Creating Places* conference, Tate Modern, July 2003:

Artists have an important role in the renewal of a high-quality built environment, not just as creators of ‘public art’, but by being part of planning and design teams. This kind of cooperation works best when artists are valued from the outset as an intrinsic part of communities... Artists have an essential role in neighborhood renewal; creating a sense of value, pride, and distinctiveness” (Acme, 2006a p.10).

### **Social benefits**

The social benefits produced by affordable workspace studios are numerous, but the most common, and perhaps most poignant piece revolves around the self-confidence of working artists.

For an artist, having a studio is much more than a physical space. Having a studio signifies their status as a professional person who has made a particular set of life choices. It affirms their self-image, and external perceptions of them as an artist (Acme, 2006b, p. 26).

However, when the working artist is concerned about stability, they are less likely to be an asset to the public. The Acme study explained:

Moving from one short-term let to another, or being involved in campaigns or protracted negotiations to retain studios, is financially wasteful, time-consuming, and saps the energy and confidence of artists. This in turn reduces the likelihood of artists developing confidence in their practice and taking an active role in the local community (Acme, 2006a, p. 15).

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Workspace communities are making a social impact. According to the Artspace interviews and surveys, 72% of artists felt their association with the Artspace building strengthened their professional reputations as artists. Of the studio-only artists to participate in the Artspace study, 92% credited the artist space with helping them attain recognition (compared with 44% of live/work). And 83% said the space validated them as artists (compared with 61% of live/work).

Artist comments included:

- I think an artist getting to say ‘my studio’ just changes things. Since I have been here, I have been in a book and a magazine. I don’t think before I would have had the confidence to be in those kinds of projects (Artspace, 2010, p. 40).
- Being [here] lends credibility that I’m serious. There are a lot of people who call themselves artists that aren’t dedicated to it (Artspace, 2010, p. 40).
- Working near other artists is very important to me. There is an atmosphere of openness, friendliness and freedom to experiment, which working alone could never compare with. You can be alone but not alone – which I think is necessary, when making art over many years (Acme, 2006b, p. 26).

### **Negative effects**

There is little evidence to support negative effects resulting from the creation of artist workspace communities. Although no detractors have been identified, possible factors could include; artificially depressed rental fees might negatively affect surrounding properties, neighbors may not be excited to see artists come to the area, or property maintenance may fall behind if profit margins are too tight.

### **Survey**

To better understand existing workspace communities, a nationwide survey was conducted to identify what is, and is not, working for the owners/managers and the artist/tenants currently

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involved with these spaces. By examining the goals and feedback from respondents we can guide the development of future workspace communities. We can learn how to better serve today's working artists and maximize associated benefits.

Two surveys were sent to the owners/managers of 20 artist workspace communities across the country; a survey targeted for landlords and a survey targeted for tenants. They were asked to fill out the owner/manager survey and forward the artist/tenant survey to their renters.

To ensure the survey only captured information from workspace community members, the first question in both surveys asked "Which selection best describes the artist workspace community you are a part of?" Responses that identified live/work (a property combining residential living space and workspace) or shared workspaces communities (where artists share access to a common work area) have been removed and are not reflected in this study.

### **Artist / tenant results**

The artist/tenant survey received 50 responses, 11 responses identified being a member of a shared work community and one selected live/work community. After removing the live/work and shared workspace responses, 39 artist/tenant survey results were analyzed for this study. See appendix A for full survey results.

The survey began by asking a few questions to get to know the artist/tenant respondents. How long have they been a part of the workspace community, how did they find out about it, and were they able to move in right away or were they on a waiting list? Most respondents have been tenants in these communities for 3-10 years, learned about the workspace community from another artist in the building, and were able to move in right away.

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Collaboration abounds in these creative complexes; 74% of artists reported doing so with other artist/tenants since joining their workspace community. Eight percent responded no, they had not collaborated, 15% selected “not yet” and 3% identified that they are not interested in collaborating with others (Figure 1).

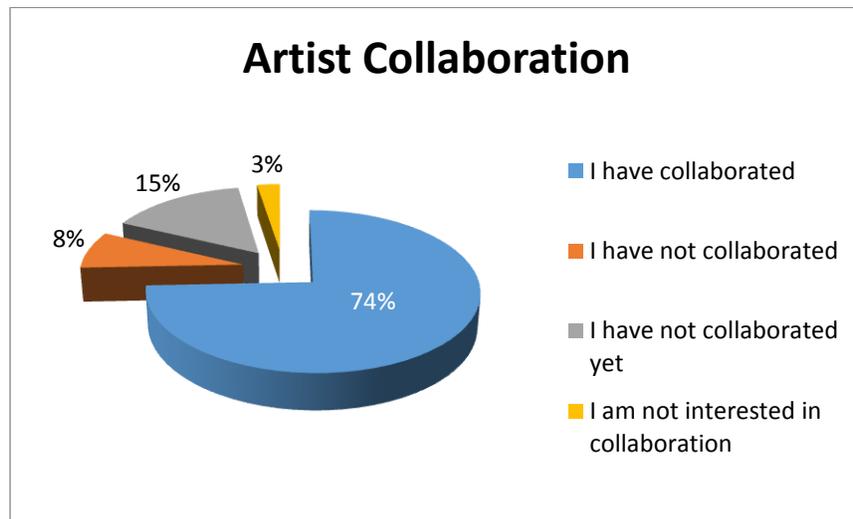


Figure 1. Artist/tenant responses "Have you collaborated with other tenants since moving into this workspace community?"

The artists participating in this study reported their income has benefitted as a result of being involved with these workspace communities. The levels of increased income identified among those artists ranged a great deal, but averaged 44%. One artist wrote in “I’ve gone from part time to full time with my art.” Thirty percent of artists said their income has not changed. One respondent, or 3%, said their income decreased by 5% as a result of their involvement in the workspace community.

Artist/tenants were asked if they plan to remain at their current workspace community or if they were actively looking for something better. The majority of artists selected “I’m happy here and I plan to stay.” (Figure 2).

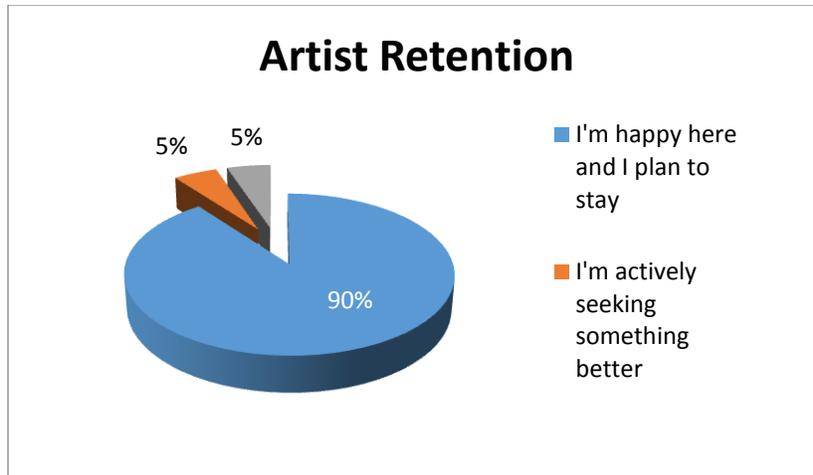


Figure 2. Artists were asked "Do you plan to remain at this workspace community or are you looking for something better?"

Artist/tenants who identified they were planning to move or were undecided were asked to explain why. Of these four responses, two said they would like a larger or improved space within their existing community. One artist did not respond and one survey declared "Leaving my space. Landlord sold us out to marijuana businesses everywhere, [they are] not fun or productive as neighbors." Based on these responses, turnover rates could be expected to range from five to ten percent.

Given the opportunity to share additional comments, survey respondents overwhelmingly substantiate the social and creative benefits previously discussed.

- "Equinox is extraordinary. It has inspired me to sustain a focus and career as an artist. I might have given up much earlier if it were not for the community and sense I am not alone. Sense of finding my tribe – even if I am not friends with everyone – I feel we are wired similarly – we MAKE things by our hands. Love it."
- "I love this building and the management here. I think that Debbie does an amazing job helping to promote the building and its tenants. My neighbors are great (working alone, it's fantastic to have other artists I can see occasionally during the day). I've never seen a setup quite like it anywhere in the country – especially one which is so reasonably priced. I plan to be here for a while!"

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- “Although I’m a loner by nature, having a studio in a building of artists and creators is invaluable for my productivity. I have tried to have studio space in my home and I inevitably stop producing. Even if my building isn’t full of painters like myself, I get so much out of the creative energy that is constantly flowing through the building.”
- “We have a great community of like-minded, professional artists in our building. I feel very lucky to have found the TK building.”
- “You can’t beat the creative energy that runs through this building. You can feel it when you enter! Art being made and things happening throughout! A great place to create!”

### **Owner / manager results**

The manager/owner survey received 11 responses, one of which identified involvement with a shared workspace community. The remaining ten responses are represented in the results that follow. See appendix B for full survey results.

Similar to the artist/tenant survey, the first few questions serve to get to know the respondents. Most respondents have been involved with the artist workspace community for 3-15 years, serve as the property manager, and are not associated with other artist workspace communities.

When identifying how they initially came to be involved with the workspace community, 40% recognized the need and created the space intentionally as an artist workspace. And 20% of the workspace communities were formed unintentionally; artists simply began leasing the property. One clarified “unintentionally at first, and very intentionally since 1998.” The remaining respondents came to the artist workspace community after it was already formed.

In some cases a combination of sources were used to fund these workspace properties. Overwhelmingly respondents identified personal assets were used to secure the properties, in fact

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50% identified the property was funded exclusively with personal assets. It's also worth noting the scarcity of public and government support of these structures (Figure 3).

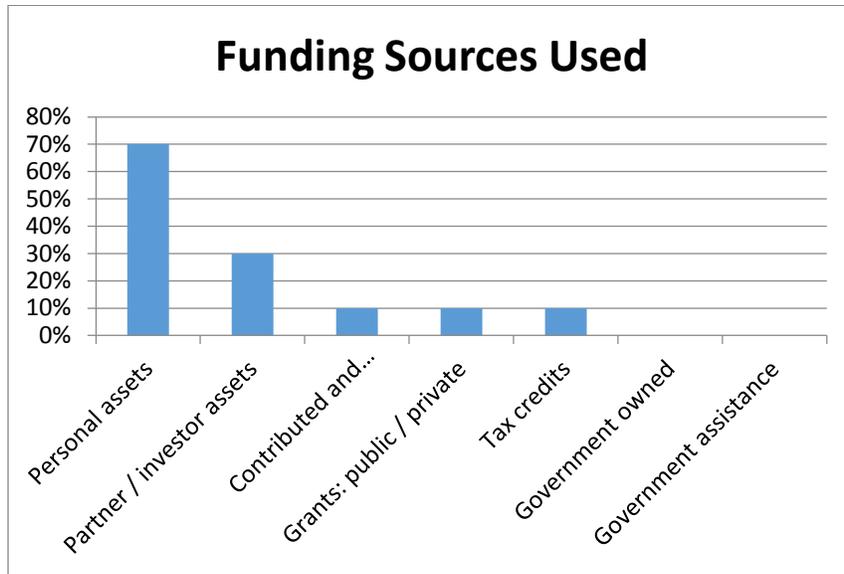


Figure 3. Owners / managers were asked, "How was this project financed? Mark all that apply."

When asked how involved the public was in creating the workspace community, responses ranged broadly. However, when asked about public perception and feedback from the public the response is overwhelmingly positive; 90% selected the highest option "they love us", and no responses identified neutral or negative feedback at any level.

### Goals and priorities

Both the artist/tenant survey and the owner/manager survey asked respondents to identify their goals. Analyzing the goals of those currently involved with the space can help us to better understand why they are involved and what benefits they seek.

Six goals were identified; public engagement, professional artist workspace, affordable rental units, profitability, creative community, and individual reasons. Because each of these goals looks different to property owners/managers and artists/tenants, survey options reflected what each goal

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would look like from that perspective. For example, “profitability” in the owner/manager survey read “Long term profitability” and the artist/tenant survey read “Maximize productivity and profitability” (Figure 4).

<b>Key</b>	<b>Owner / Manager</b>	<b>Artist / Tenant</b>
Public Engagement	Engage the public / neighborhood with creative artists	Interact with the public / neighborhood
Professional Artist Workspace	Create a professional artist workspace	Have a professional artist workspace
Affordability	Maintain affordable rental fees	Affordable rental rates
Profitability	Long term profitability	Maximize productivity and profitability
Creative Community	Happy tenants/artists	Be surrounded by creative energy / professional artists
Individual Reasons	High occupancy and low turnover	Network and expand my artistic opportunities

Figure 4. Goal selections given to artist / tenants and owner / managers.

Artists identified “have professional artist workspace” and “be surrounded by creative energy / professional artists” as their main priorities. Owners/managers identified “engage the public with creative artists, supporting a strong community,” and “maintain affordable rental fees” as their main goals. Comparing the overall goals of property owners/managers with those of the artists/tenants, the largest division is found in public engagement goals (Figure 5).

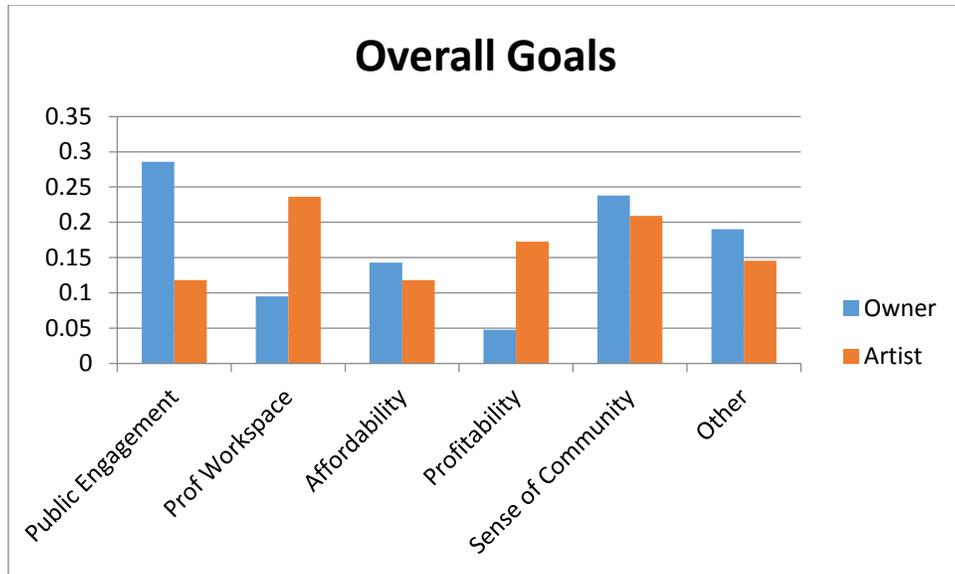


Figure 5. Overall goals of artist / tenants and owner / managers.

When asked to select a primary goal, there is a clear desire among the surveyed artist / tenants for a professional workspace. Of the six goals, creating professional workspace ranked second to last among owners / managers (Figure 6).

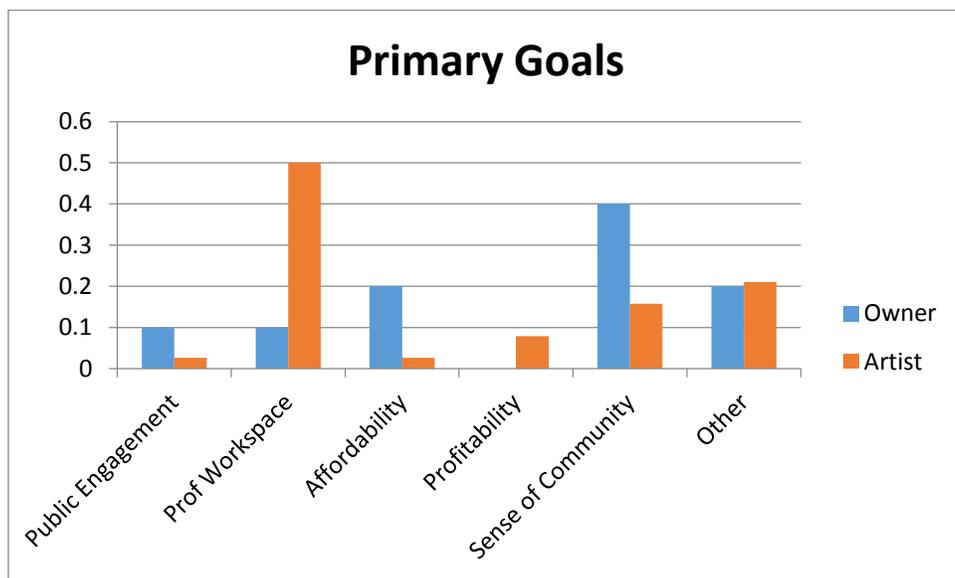


Figure 6. Primary goals of artist / tenants and owner / managers.

Comparing the overall goals of property owners/managers to those of the artists/tenants, the largest division is found in public engagement goals. When asked to identify primary goals, there

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is a clear desire among the surveyed artists for a professional workspace. Of the six goals owners/managers could select, creating professional workspace ranked second to last.

Diving deeper into goals and intentions, owners / managers were asked if they self-identified as an artist, regardless of skill. Responses were split fairly evenly; 60% said yes and 40% no. Based on this response, leadership surveys were divided into artist and non-artist groups and the following trends were found. Artist workspace communities owned / managed by an artist were created intentionally, and their primary goals most aligned with those of the artists: to produce a supportive artist community and create professional artist workspace. Whereas owners / managers who do not identify as an artist said the workspace community began unintentionally (artists just seemed to move in), and their primary goals largely focused on maintaining the property's long term stability.

Also given the opportunity to share additional comments, the owners/managers wrote:

- I believe there is a huge audience that has never even explored the possibility of original art because they have never been in a position to experience the art. People love to connect with the artist and the story behind the work. Before coming to this building I had never explored art. My husband and I now love collecting art.
- We have over 400 artists that work out of Russell Industrial Center... we will be doing this for years to come.

### **Recommendations: increase availability**

The first step to increasing benefits associated with artist workspace communities is to produce more artist communities. The number of artist workspace facilities currently available to working artists across the US is insufficient. Creating access to workspace communities is the essential first step to meeting this need for working artists. Artists that do have access often don't have many options to choose from as many facilities are filled to capacity and have low turnover rates.

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Although this paper does not address the funding of such communities, many creative options are being put into practice. Developers are successfully incorporating artist workspace into new construction and redesign models generating value on various levels. Successful examples include two Artspace projects and a venture by Barrett Homes.

Both Artspace projects discussed earlier combined multiple functions under a single roof in creative ways. The Traffic Zone is co-owned and operated by Artspace (where the Artspace main office is maintained) and 23 mid-career professional artists. And the TK property combines affordable artist workspace with live/work space. Both Artspace properties offer affordable commercial real estate rentals to arts organizations and social venues such as coffee shops.

Barrett Homes proposed the purchase of a property in East London intended to become a large residential complex. The proposal was originally rejected because it didn't provide employment space, but by incorporating 50 artist studios into the second proposal, Barrett Homes was granted consent. "The Galleria project is a living and working example of the compatibility of housing and artists' studios in a mixed-use scheme... the residents and the wider community are beginning to benefit from their proximity to professional artists" (Acme, 2006a, p. 26).

Also not addressed in this paper is organizational structure. There are numerous ways an artist workspace community can operate. The Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, Virginia is owned by the city. The West Main Arts Co-op in Spartanburg, South Carolina is owned and operated by more than 45 artists. The Steel Yard in Providence, Rhode Island was purchased privately and is run by a non-profit. Equinox Studios is currently undergoing a large transition as the privately owned property becomes a for-profit Social Purpose Corporation. Regardless of the structure that takes shape, leadership must be attentive and engaged with the public at large. In the same way that successful business leaders and arts organizations acknowledge their roles in the community, so

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must an artist workspace community. Needs of the community and public interest must always be considered before committing to the development of an artist workspace community.

Property owners looking to meet the workspace needs of artists should ideally be willing to provide such space long term. Providing a stable working environment for artists could play a necessary role in breaking the negative side effects of the gentrification cycle. “Longevity is key to ensuring that affordable workspace will be maintained in perpetuity” (Artist Studios, p26).

Those looking to produce artist workspace developments “can make a powerful business case, showing high occupancy levels and low arrears, leading to eventual net income generation” (Acme, 2006a, p. 15).

The UK has many tools in place that should certainly be adapted in the US; for example the creation of the National Federation of Artist Studio Providers. A central listing of creative workspace communities should not only exist here in the US, but should be easily accessible to the public. These properties should be given a formal term that can be used universally to bring a sense of greater community to the field and an awareness to the public on a nationwide level.

### **Artists**

Participating artists must play an active role if they wish to be a part of a successful artist workspace community. Tenants should maintain open dialogue with property management as the landlord can only address the needs of the artists that have been brought to their attention. Communicating with other tenants in the building is also important to fully understand the needs of everyone in the building, and ensure community health.

It’s also important for artists to participate within the community to the best of their ability. Feedback from the owner/manager surveys express frustration with some artists not taking an active

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role. Why should management work hard to promote an open house event if only a portion of the artists will open their studios and take part? If event participation among artists is low, visitors will be less likely to return and complaints will likely fall to the property owner / manager. Participation in open-house and art-walk events is one way artists can maximize the benefits associated with being a part of an artist workspace community.

Artists should also boost their marketing efforts. When all the artists within a workspace community promote their involvement, it's an extremely effective way to reach their target audience; art purchasers and art appreciators. Artists within the building will benefit from the promotional efforts of their fellow artists, and vice-versa. Artists should be proud of their association with the artist workspace community. Adding a workspace community logo to marketing materials such as business cards, web pages, and email signatures is a great way to bring positive attention to the creative community.

It seems obvious to point out the need for care and understanding when dealing with multiple people under one roof, but feedback from artists warrants a reminder. Perhaps because an artists' studio is a private and safe space it feels like an extension of one's private home. Being mindful of human relationships is an ever important element in every situation, but is essential between those sharing an artist workspace community.

### **Owners / Managers**

Owners / managers also need to assume an active role in order to maximize benefits associated with an artist workspace community. Fostering a sense of community requires a leadership role far more complex than simply collecting rent. Although negative responses are few, artist feedback includes some frustration with property owners surrounding maintenance, and promotion of the property. Positive feedback from the artist/tenant surveys highlights the hard

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work and dedication of property managers. Satisfied tenants feel management demonstrates a knowledge and understanding of the artists in the workspace community and plays a supportive role. The positive feedback acknowledging the supportive role of attentive leadership, and the negative feedback when it's lacking, enforces this need from both perspectives.

Leaders, be sure to ask the artists in your workspace community about their goals. If their goals align with the artists in this study, how do they define professional artist workspace and how can you meet that need in an effective way?

Management should also identify the desired proportions of artist workspace, gallery or retail space, arts organization space, and socially interactive space; striving to maintain harmonious levels. Survey respondents expressed concern with artists using intended workspace as gallery space instead. Working artists who seek professional workspace, who want to be surrounded by other working artists, should be given that opportunity when previously agreed upon.

### **Conclusion**

“If we value art, we must value artists. Ensuring there are appropriate, secure facilities for the long term means artists can continue to make work and contribute to a creative and vibrant city for the benefit of all” (Acme, 2006a, p. 5).

This preliminary research supports the economic, cultural, and social benefit claims found in the United Kingdom and in early studies in the US. The artist workspace community certainly merits further research; however one thing is clear, the potential of the workspace community warrants our attention. If the development of one property can in fact remove working artists from the seclusion, inspire and validate a community of artists, connect them with one-another and create engagement with the public, if it can inspire and validate a community of artists and increase property value in the process, then what are we waiting for?

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Appendix A

**Artist / Tenant Survey** - 39  
responses

**How long have you been a part of this artist workspace community?**

0-2 years	9	23%
3-5 years	11	28%
6-10 years	15	38%
11-15 years	2	5%
16-20 years	1	3%
20+ years	1	3%

**How did you find out about this workspace community?**

An advertisement (online, paper, sign, etc.)	7	18%
Another artist told me about it	18	46%
WI-Another artist workspace property	2	5%
WI - I helped create it	1	3%
Other	11	28%

**Were you able to move in right away or was there a waiting list?**

I moved in right away	33	85%
I spent 0-5 months on the waiting list	4	10%
I spent 6-11 months on the waiting list	1	3%
I spent more than 1 year on the waiting list	1	3%

**Are there other artist workspace communities accessible to you?**

Yes	29	74%
No	2	5%
I don't know	7	18%
No Response	1	3%

**Please select your primary goal.**

Affordable rental rates	1	3%
Be surrounded by creative energy / professional artists	6	15%
Have a professional artist workspace	19	49%

ARTIST WORKSPACE: UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

Interact with the public / neighborhood	1	3%
Maximize productivity and profitability	3	8%
Network and expand my artistic opportunities	5	13%
WI - All of the Above	3	8%
WI - Space to make stuff - but need space to do so AS WELL as support to sustain challenges of other artists	1	3%

**Consider your primary goal selection above. How effectively do you feel this workspace community meets that goal?**

Successfully	5	24	62%
	4	10	26%
	3	5	13%
	2	0	0%
Poorly	1	0	0%

**Please identify your secondary goals.**

Affordable rental rates	12	31%
Be surrounded by creative energy / professional artists	17	44%
Have a professional artist workspace	7	18%
Interact with the public / neighborhood	12	31%
Maximize productivity and profitability	16	41%
Network and expand my artistic opportunities	7	18%

**Have you collaborated with other tenants since moving into this workspace community?**

Yes	29	74%
No	3	8%
Not yet	6	15%
Not interested	1	3%

**Do you feel your income has changed as a result of becoming part of this workspace community?**

Increased	26	Increased 10%	3	8%
			5	13%
	66.7%	Increased 20%		%
		Increased 30%	4	10%

ARTIST WORKSPACE: UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

		Increased 40%	0	0%
		Increased 50%	3	8%
		Increased 60%	0	0%
		Increased 70%	3	8%
		Increased 80%	2	5%
		Increased 90%	0	0%
		Increased 100%	2	5%
		WI - Increases every year	2	5%
		WI - I've gone from part time to full time with my art	1	3%
		No percentage selected	1	3%
Decreased		1 Decreased 5%	1	3%
	2.6%			
No Change		12		
	30.8%			

**How do you feel about the property leadership?**

Good Working Relationship	5	22	56.4%
	4	6	15.4%
	3	8	20.5%
	2	1	2.6%
Difficult to work with	1	2	5.1%

**This artist workspace community has:**

Community outreach / artwalk events	36	92.3%
Visibility to the public	32	82.1%
Parking	28	71.8%
Gallery / retail outlet available to me	11	28.2%
A shared common area	10	25.6%

**I wish this artist workspace community had:**

Community outreach / artwalk events	1	2.6%
Visibility to the public	4	10.3%
Parking	7	17.9%
Gallery / retail outlet available to me	9	23.1%
A shared common area	17	43.6%

**My studio has:**

ARTIST WORKSPACE: UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

Sink	10	25.6%
220 Electric	15	38.5%
Ventilation	25	64.1%
Natural light	28	71.8%
Large doors	17	43.6%
Loading dock access	16	41.0%
Elevators	2	5.1%
Sound barriers	6	15.4%

**I wish my studio had:**

Sink	18	46.2%
220 Electric	3	7.7%
Ventilation	9	23.1%
Natural light	14	35.9%
Large doors	5	12.8%
Loading dock access	2	5.1%
Elevators	0	0.0%
Sound barriers	15	38.5%
Gas	1	2.6%
Direct outdoor access	1	2.6%

**Do you plan to remain at this workspace community or are you looking for something better?**

I'm actively seeking something better	2	5.1%
I'm happy here and I plan to stay	35	89.7%
Undecided	2	5.1%

**If you're planning to move, please explain why.**

I need bigger space - expanding business and large projects. also- leaving my space -- landlord sold us out to marijuana business everywhere. not fun or productive as neighbors	1	25.0%
Would like another (bigger/better) space within this community	2	50.0%

**I would be more involved / participate more within my artist workspace community if:**

1)There were weekly or monthly artist meet and greets, common hang out area, like a cafe...2) if I wasn't so busy working all the time and could keep up with building newsletters, etc

## ARTIST WORKSPACE: UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

Already pretty involved either assisting or collaborating with individuals, would do more if I had more time.

Better neighborhood with better parking

common space with an operable kitchen

had common area, Had regular meetings, events.

I am very involved and participate in all of the events.

I didn't get marginalized.

I didn't have a 32 hour/week job somewhere else. I used to be full time in my studio and was more involved.

I had a somewhat quieter location. My space can be very noisy.

I had more free time

I had more time to attend evening events.

I have cancer

if there were more "fine" artists (painters, sculptors) rather than applied arts like metal work. As it is there is only a few of us traditional fine artists in the 50+ work spaces.

it were more ethnically diverse, had a larger goal that we were working towards other than just making money as individuals

management was more open to the needs of the artists in the building rather than only in the building itself

More artists were willing to commit to the time and energy it takes to create special events, collaborations, exhibitions etc

If the management were more receptive to proposals and ideas.

the building would have monthly meetings that promoted ways to increase the traffic and marketing.

There was a coffee shop / sandwich spot on site.

There were artists around more frequently. Most have other FT jobs and use their spaces as show areas, not working studios.

there were more events similar to art walk/open studio events.

When my children get a bit older. Participating but in limited capacity.

the people were more focused on making and talking about art than who is sleeping with who or who doesn't like who

### **Is there anything else you'd like to share regarding your artist workspace community?**

Although I'm a loner by nature, having a studio in a building of artists and creators is invaluable for my productivity - I have tried to have studio space in my home and I inevitably stop producing. Even if my building isn't full of painters like myself I get so much out of the creative energy that is constantly flowing through the building.

equinox is a much more cohesive community than inscape, so i'm much happier here. I think it could be EVEN BETTER, but i'm pretty darn happy

## ARTIST WORKSPACE: UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

Equinox is extraordinary.  
it has inspired me to sustain a focus and career as an artist.  
I might have given up much earlier if it were not for the community and sense I am not alone.  
Sense of finding my tribe - even if I am not friends with everyone - I feel we are wired similarly -  
we MAKE things by our hands.  
Love it -

I checked that I moved in right away. I had to wait to move in because my space needed to be built out. I wasn't on a waitlist, but I had to wait. I hope that doesn't skew your results.

I love Equinox and wish that more artist could experience the type of community and folks as we have here

I love this building and the management here. I think that Debbie does an amazing job helping to promote the building and its tenants. My neighbors are great (working alone, its is fantastic to have other artists I can see occasionally during the day). I've never seen a setup quite like it elsewhere in the country - especially one which is so reasonably priced. I plan to be here for awhile!

I make more money but my expenses have also gone up a lot so my profit is still very small. That said, I'm ambitious and feel like the space I am in is perfect for me to grow prosperous in.

I would like the parking lots to be in better condition, for customers' as well as artists' sakes. I would like there to be better handicap accessibility throughout the building, given the overall size of the space.

It rocks!

It's a very large building with a large number of tenants ( 200 +) some of whom only rent space to use for gallery space. That makes it hard to work together. We almost feel sometimes like different areas of the building are competing for visitors.

Nope, just to clarify the question about income. Mine has gone up significantly but I don't attribute that to being a part of the community. "no, but my income has increased" wasn't an option.

Our landlord is completely dedicated to promoting an active artist community. He in every way supports us and tries to get new tenants who will fit with us and his vision

The 23 artists in this building are all part owners in the building and have a very good reason to see that all runs smoothly and that security regulations are followed.

The managers could do a better job of maintaining the building

There really is not much interaction between the 200+ artists. When it is "open studio time" we are all in our spaces to meet the public. There really are not very many "group events" that actually allow us to interact with the artists in our building

This is a fantastic space and it is evolving continuously!

we have a great community of like-minded, professional artists in our building; the building management is outstanding, and very responsive to any problems or needs that arise; I feel very lucky to have found the tk building

## ARTIST WORKSPACE: UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

Wish there was more of a sense of keeping regular hours for public access.

You can't beat the creative energy that runs through this building. You can feel it when you enter!  
Art being made and things happening throughout! A great place to create!

**Appendix B**

**Owner / Manager Survey** - 10 responses

**I am  
the:**

Property owner	1	10%
Master Lease Holder	1	10%
Property manager	4	40%
WI - All of the above	2	20%
WI - Family owned / operated	1	10%
WI - Program director	1	10%

**How long have you been involved with this property?**

0-2 years	0	0%
3-5 years	2	20%
6-10 years	5	50%
11-15 years	2	20%
16-20 years	0	0%
20+ years	1	10%

**How many other artist workspace properties are you involved with?**

None	6	60%
1-2 properties	3	30%
3-4 properties	1	10%
6+ properties	0	0%

**How did you become involved with this artist workspace property?**

Unintentionally: artists just seem to move in	1	10%
Intentionally; I searched for the right property		0%
I recognized a need for artist workspace	2	20%
I needed workspace	1	10%
WI - Unintentionally as the first few artists moved to Northeast Minneapolis in 1987 and then VERY intentionally from 1998 to the present.	1	10%
Intentionally; I searched for the right property because I recognized the need and I needed workspace.	1	10%
WI - as a teacher	1	10%
CEO of a non-profit visual art center	1	10%
WI - I needed a job	1	10%
WI - I was a studio renter and became the commercial leasing manager	1	10%

ARTIST WORKSPACE: UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

**How was this project financed?**

Personal assets	7	70%
Artist owned / cooperative	1	10%
Government owned	0	0%
Partner / investor assets	3	30%
Tax credits	1	10%
Government assistance	0	0%
WI - Contributed and earned income	1	10%
WI - Private / Public Grants	1	10%

**How did you decide on this property?**

Location	1	10%
Price	1	10%
Function	1	10%
Availability	0	0%
I was not part of the decision	5	50%
WI - previously owned	1	10%
WI - function, price, location, availability	1	10%

**Please select your primary goal?**

Engage the public / neighborhood with creative artists	1	10%
Create a professional artist workspace	1	10%
Maintain affordable rental fees	2	20%
long term profitability	0	0%
High occupancy and low turnover	0	0%
Supporting a strong community of professional artists	3	30%
Happy tenants / artists	0	0%
WI -Sustainability of property ownership	1	10%
WI - Supporting a strong community of professional artists AND make the industrial arts accessible to our community	1	10%
WI - To facilitate the creation and preservation of affordable arts and cultural spaces, and to support the communities that sustain those spaces.	1	10%

**Consider your primary goal selection above. How effectively do you feel this workspace community meets that goal?**

Successfully	5	7	70%
	4	2	20%
	3	0	0%
	2	0	0%
Poorly	1	0	0%
No response	1	1	10%

**Please identify your secondary goals.**

ARTIST WORKSPACE: UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

Engage the public / neighborhood with creative artists	6	60%
Create a professional artist workspace	1	10%
Maintain affordable rental fees	2	20%
long term profitability	0	0%
High occupancy and low turnover	1	10%
Supporting a strong community of professional artists	3	30%
Happy tenants / artists	1	10%
WI - Help transform the neighborhood	1	10%

**Are your rental fees:**

Below market rate	9	90%
At market rate	1	10%
Above market rate	0	0%
I don't know	0	0%

**Who makes decisions regarding rental fees?**

Property owner	6	60%
Property manager	0	0%
Property owner and manager	2	20%
WI - Master lease holder	1	10%
WI - CEO and board of directors	1	10%

**What do you think your neighbors / city / community think of this artist workspace community?**

They love us	5	9	90%
	4	1	10%
	3	0	0%
	2	0	0%
They complain about us	1	0	0%

**Was the community involved with creating this artist workspace community?**

The community was highly involved	5	3	30%
	4	1	10%
	3	2	20%
	2	1	10%
There was no community support	1	3	30%

**How do you feel about your current tenants?**

Great working relationship	5	7	70%
	4	2	20%
	3	1	10%
	2	0	0%
Difficult to work with	1	0	0%

## ARTIST WORKSPACE: UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

### Are you an artist?

Yes (regardless of skill - beginner to professional)	6	60%
No	4	40%

### If property management is outsourced, how are they compensated?

Hourly wage		0%
Salary	3	30%
Commission based / % of gross rents	1	10%
WI - Salary with bonus potential	1	10%
No response	5	50%

### If a property manager is involved, what are their responsibilities?

Collect the rent and maintain order	9	90%
Foster a sense of community	7	70%
Organize open house events and engage the neighborhood	6	60%
Babysit the artists so I don't have to deal with them	6	60%
Not applicable	1	10%

### Is there anything else you'd like to share regarding your artist workspace community?

We have over 400 artists that work out of Russell Industrial Center and currently only half the complex in use. We will be doing this for years to come

We also have black box theater and a gallery so we encompass all forms of art

## ARTIST WORKSPACE: UNDERSTANDING THE NEED

Because we work with individual artists who each have their own schedules (other jobs, some are active in showing around the state and across the nation, some create commission only work, public art, fine craft and fine art all having their own markets, etc.) it is VERY difficult to actually have so many different people working toward the same venue.

Not being an artist myself, I see the need/desire to constantly create leaves big gaps in actually marketing and selling the work. Artists tend to blame the developer, the customer, etc. for their lack of desire to market and sell the work. They get bored "waiting" for a customer, they don't want to use social media, etc.

The bottom line is that I always believed there is a huge audience that has never even explored the possibility of original art because they have never been in a position to experience the art. People love to connect with the artist and the story behind the work. Before coming to this building I had never explored art. My husband and I now love collecting art.

We work very hard on marketing the building as a place for people to experience art and buy art. However, we are very limited by the amount of time artists are willing to open their spaces for people to come and purchase the work.

As for a couple of the questions above, As a property manager, my duties are focused on the building aspect. BUT as a person willing to work a ton of hours over the past 18 years, we have committed time to fostering a sense of community, organized events, worked with the neighborhoods, City of Minneapolis, artists and more to push for the official designation of the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District and work with the utility company and City of Minneapolis to establish signage in the area. I maintained the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District website for years and sought out money from other developers and neighborhoods to get the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District from a created idea to a fully implemented arts district.

The IMMEDIATE community (the Logan Park Neighborhood Association) was instrumental in financially supporting the arts with money for the street signage for the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District and very early on with money for classes in "The Art of Business and the Business of Art". They were not involved in financing any of our actual building.

If you have more questions, feel free to contact me at xxx-xxx-xxxx.

I would like to share it all with everyone.