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Mesa Arts Center Receives National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Project Grant

Arts-based Community Development Investment for City of Mesa

Mesa, AZ (May 9, 2018) – Today the National Endowment for the Arts announced Mesa Arts Center as a recipient of an Our Town grant for \$75,000 in support of the project, ***Building a Network; Designing Our Community through Community-Driven Artist Residencies and Community Prototyping***. National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Chairman Jane Chu announced 60 awards totaling \$4.1 million supporting projects across the nation through the NEA's Our Town program.

"The variety and quality of these Our Town projects speaks to the wealth of creativity and diversity in our country," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "Through the work of organizations such as Mesa Arts Center, NEA funding invests in local communities, helping people celebrate the arts wherever they are."

Cindy Ornstein, Arts and Culture Department Director for City of Mesa and Executive Director of Mesa Arts Center, said of the grant, "It is an exciting time in Mesa, and we are thrilled to employ this grant toward further investment and community engagement in the neighborhoods in and immediately south of downtown. We are eager to continue to build on the success of the Main Street Prototyping Festival and community residencies held in late 2017, and to work closely with our project partners (LISC, Mesa Urban Garden, NEDCO/A New Leaf, Artspace, Downtown Mesa Association and Ultimate Imaginations, Inc.) to engage our neighbors in prototyping solutions for our city center."

Out Town Grant project description:

Building a Network; Designing Our Community is a two-year project on the southside of downtown Mesa, AZ, in a group of contiguous, low-income neighborhoods surrounding the Mesa Artspace Lofts (50 artist live-work spaces). The project will employ two community-driven artist residencies – one at CARE Partnership and one servicing both Artspace and Mesa Urban Garden – to connect neighbors in exploring neighborhood needs, aspirations and challenges through artmaking, and also to identify sites in these disconnected neighborhoods in need of creative intervention to enhance safety, walkability, gathering spaces and other issues. The project will also enable the next two stages of community prototyping, building on the Our Town-funded Main Street Prototyping Festival (MSPF) held in November 2017, by enabling the top three most promising prototypes from MSPF, to be developed into longer-term, second generation pilots, and inviting all people to submit and develop prototype proposals for 10 sites identified by the community as requiring intervention.

For a complete list of projects recommended for Our Town grant support, please visit the NEA web site at [arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov).

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About Mesa Arts Center

The Mesa Arts Center mission is to inspire people through engaging arts experiences that are diverse, accessible, and relevant. Owned and operated by the City of Mesa, Arizona's largest arts center is recognized as an international award-winning venue. The unique and architecturally stunning facility is home to four theaters, five art galleries, and 14 art studios and an artist cooperative gallery. For more information, visit [mesaartscenter.com](https://www.mesaartscenter.com).