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## Public Art - Purpose and Benefits: Exploring Strategy in the New England City of Pittsfield, Ma

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**PUBLIC ART - PURPOSE AND BENEFITS: EXPLORING STRATEGY IN THE NEW  
ENGLAND CITY OF PITTSFIELD, MA**

A Thesis Presented

by

PAMELA J. LANDI

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning

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## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to my dear friend, Harry, L. Taplin, who has tirelessly supported me through this process and to my parents who have always placed great value in the pursuit of learning and who never wavered in their encouragement.

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I extend my appreciation to those who offered their time and knowledge about Pittsfield's public art initiatives, and a special thank you to all those who provided the encouragement and support needed to see me through this endeavor.

## **ABSTRACT**

**PUBLIC ART - PURPOSE AND BENEFITS: EXPLORING STRATEGY IN THE NEW  
ENGLAND CITY OF PITTSFIELD, MA**

MAY 2012

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Researchers explore various aspects related to art and urban life using terms such as cultural economy, the 'creative class', cultural clustering; and there are many more. Public art is one strategy, employed for any number of broader agendas spanning from economic aims to community identity. This study examines public art at the intersection of cultural planning strategy and community participation. A midsize New England city Pittsfield, Massachusetts, with a significant industrial mill heritage, provides a location from which to study public art within a specific context over a period of time spanning from 1970 to the present. Qualitative methods such as interviews, document review and survey of specific public art initiatives, both temporary and permanent, will help to uncover motivations and expectations that drive the development of public art projects. More knowledge about these purposes can lead to informative lines of questioning that may help planners and designers better understand the best application of public art in the landscape within a given community.

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# CHAPTER 1

## PREPARING THE LOOM

### 1.1 Introduction

At a painstakingly selected sixty degree angle a paintbrush stands poised on the end of its sleek azure blue handle on its end ready to add orange blush to the sky. An invisible hand of a shadow creator, like you or me, grasps the handle. Claes Oldenburg's five story high Paint Torch commands attention up and down a sidewalk corridor in Philadelphia with its bright paint by day and illumination by night, appealing to imagination and asserting identity in its relationship with the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (PafA) at the OLIN designed Lenfest Plaza along Philadelphia's branded 'Museum Mile'.

This description of both plaza and torch on the PafA website attributes a power to the sculpture to 'beckon' people to the plaza. Paying tribute to the 'spirit' and history of the arts institute, the torch is a 'symbol of liberty', an image that connects with the City of Philadelphia's heritage as a birthplace of America with its central role in Revolutionary history with the pulse of contemporary life. All of these perceived layers of meaning express purpose and identity, from an oversized paint brush!

What portion of our humanity does public art satisfy that would attribute this level of value with little empirical proof that its presence will manifest results as hoped or intended? It may be an intangible that satisfies something deeply intrinsic compelling us to represent, symbolize, shape, identify with, decorate, detail, make distinct, territorialize, personalize, triangulate around, remember and distinguish in order to make a place identifiable in both time and geography.<sup>1</sup> The answer may depend on point of view. An artist may see public art as an essential encounter that compels a person to stop, observe, think, listen and respond. A designer

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<sup>1</sup> William H. Whyte defines triangulation as a social interaction that can occur in a public space when festive activity or noted objects in space like public art will bring together people who may not know one another into a shared experience or conversation (Whyte, 1988).

may see public art as a shaper of space; a texture or enticement that draws people into a space, an animator or a distinguishing element that could elevate the quality of a space. A politician, planner or businessperson may view public art as an image maker that may bring attention to the community as a destination, boost its competitive economic posture or contribute to its representation in the world. A community may see public art as self-identification, manifesting cultural memory or elevating an historic past. To a citizen public art may belong to the familiar, comfortable everyday orientation fading unnoticeably into the background. Conversely, removal of a public art piece may result in a sudden awareness of its absence. Hence, the inhabitant's quality of life changes with shifts in both physical and psychic environments, realms that public art fills.

Built landscapes, complex canvases of human creativity, are compositions of both expression and need. Landscape may be seen as a functional public art of sorts, a placing and arranging of things that fulfill the needs of a human ecology. So why care about this thing public art? Considering the complexity this topic stirs up, how can one not? Underlying this quest is a personal question, one that festers just below the surface that asks, what makes a great public space? The thesis questions are motivated by an observation of a perceived assumption claiming that if a community incorporates public art as part of its landscape policy and design, the enhancements will boost the vitality, economy and desirability of that community. This assumption is incorporated in personal studio design proposals and in other student's conceptual plans forged in the classroom as well as in professional planning documents. Many examples of towns and cities throughout New England, the nation and the world appear to use this assumption to shape design and planning decisions evident by the prolific incidences of percent for art programs, state sponsored Arts in Public Places programs, national and state sponsored art and economic impact studies, offices of cultural development and the hire of cultural planners. No readily measurable answer rises to explain a subject that is large, amorphous, shifting and intangible. However, the acknowledgement of this assumption and associated claims, offers a

stepping stone to an examination of the role of public art as framed by the motivations and outcomes behind its application.

But the issue is more than just a general discussion of the underlying political, social-cultural and economic motivations and expectations for publically sited artwork. Oldenburg's Paint Torch represents a high profile public sculpture set within a large scale metropolitan context. Public art in this setting seems expected given the concentration of human pursuits resulting from a dense and diverse population. But a smaller city functions differently than the metropolis. The use of public art in a smaller urban setting may raise an alternative set of challenges and opportunities that would call for a different handling of public art. The questions that emerge around the use of public art within a smaller scaled urban context are important to look at, given the current popularity and appeal of public art programs in cities of all sizes and geographies over the past three decades. This thesis takes a prolonged, pragmatic look at public art in a smaller sized, postindustrial northeastern city, Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Pittsfield, a city of just under 45,000, serves as a back drop to explore the use of public art and its potential application to other like sized, culturally similar urban contexts (US Census Bureau, 2012).

Bell and Jayne (2006) have addressed the small city context as one that has been understudied. Their insightful introduction to a collection of essays entitled Small Cities Urban Experience Beyond the Metropolis sheds some light on the reasons why the small city context is important to explore (Bell and Jayne, 2006). Their consultancy work with small city 'culture-led regeneration and creative industries development' brought attention to the incongruity of application when applying big city cultural strategies to smaller cities, where the contexts are fundamentally and dynamically different. Markusen and Gadwa warns against 'me-too-ism', the transfer of policy and practices from one place to another, an approach that may not generate the envisioned or desired results. What is applicable from one city to another is something that a city needs to define within its uniquely specified context (Markusen, 2010b; Evans and Foord, 2006; Bell and Jayne, 2006). Differences are strengths. Even so, Bell and Jayne address a second

sometimes problematic point, the question how a small sized 'third-tier' city finds its unique signature in a globally competitive society. They point out that the small city stands in a tension between building itself up and maintaining smallness. As research on the issue of strategic applications to urban size has not caught up with the need of small cities to effectively define and develop themselves in the context of a changing, competitive, global 'urban hierarchy'; smaller cities have little to guide them through the process and strategies that help to build self-definition (Bell and Jayne, 2006). Bell and Jayne summarize some of the research that has been applied to what they refer to as 'Smallville USA'. Demographic researchers note a migration of the American middle class from large cities to small cities in America (Bell and Jayne, 2006). Researchers also have looked at the wake of post industrialized American cities and at their regeneration efforts including various aspects of small city downtown revitalization. Bell and Jayne suggest that this special attention paid to the American small city unleashes questions about how they function. By extension these lines of questioning could potentially reveal how applied cultural development and quality of life strategies like public art can bear fruitful, longstanding and hoped for results in these smaller communities.

Pittsfield is one of many smaller sized cities in the northeast that is employing cultural planning as a means to renew identity, to attract attention, to gain a greater economic competitiveness and to enrich the quality of life of its citizens. This is part of a larger trend that has spread wildly from one early American post-industrial city to another across the New England landscape (Breitbart and Stanton, 2007). Massachusetts cities like Lowell and North Adams are working to revitalize their economies using arts and culture as kindling. Officials from cities such as Fall River, Springfield and Fitchburg are looking to emulate cultural development strategies of other similar small postindustrial cities like Pittsfield and Lowell, whom they perceive are successfully implementing cultural planning strategies (Cultural Pittsfield Blog, 2008; Arts Express, 2012; Kinney, 2009a; Kinney, 2009b).



Although cultural economic and planning ideas are shared from place to place, each community has its own unique point of reference. Pittsfield stands out among these examples, actively employing public art as one arm to a many faceted, two tiered cultural strategy. First, public art is one layer that contributes to the construction of a marketable image that associates the City of Pittsfield with arts and culture. Second, Pittsfield's public art is an attraction intended for personal encounter with the hope that its presence will enrich life for both visitor and citizen. Within a particular regional context and history, the city has more than a thirty year head start in their organized strategic cultural regeneration development. As such, the use of public art is set within a well-developed circumstance that is ripe for discussion. What Pittsfield is doing and how it is doing it may reveal the motivations and expectations that drive the use of public art and may provide insight into the use of public art in other small cities similar in size, yet variant in context, cities like Holyoke. To effectively reach these questions, however, establishment of parameters are needed. The first parameter pertains to the definition of public art and the second parameter addresses the contemporary history of public art. Both will contribute toward establishing the perspective and context of this thesis.

## **1.2 Definitions**

### **1.2.1 Public Art**

The definition of public art is an amazingly complex question caught up in social, cultural, political, historic and economic considerations. Thus, defining public art within the context of this thesis is a first priority. Public art could include a range of activities and institutions; however, in this presentation public art will mean the following:

Public art encompasses both functional objects in the landscape and expressive, decorative forms either permanent or temporary, that belong to any established classic or contemporary artistic disciplines such as but not limited to sculpture, mural, relief; installed with the intent to enhance, physically define, promote or establish identity in a space or a place. The person who creates or designs public art falls to anyone who identifies themselves as a professional artist, craftsman or citizen involved in the creation and design of these installations.

This definition though composed independently, parallels some of the research definitions encountered in review. McCarthy offers up a general definition describing public art as 'site specific ...in the public domain'. Roberts and Marsh identify the maker, 'artist or craftsman' who creates forms for 'public or semi-public spaces'. Hamilton, Forsyth and De Iongh list five forms for public art: sculpture, functional objects, architectural features, landform works and temporary forms such as those generated for festival events (Roberts and Marsh, 1995; McCarthy, 2006; Hamilton, Forsyth and De Iongh, 2001). The thesis definition incorporates four of the five forms.

Having spent time looking at Pittsfield's public art within the fabric of its cultural development has reinforced an understanding that the wider creative economy and the directed strategy of public art are intertwined. Therefore the discussion of public art seems incomplete unless understood within this broader context. Place specific public art belongs to the category of amenity, strategic application and sociological engagement. The more gross scale of creative economy involves cultural planning policy and development that can emphasize arts districts, percent for arts programs or marketing strategies such as place branding (Hall and Robertson, 2001; Evans, 2005). Evans distinguishes the definition of cultural planning from arts planning. He defines the latter as strategic support for the arts, and associated resources. Cultural planning on the other hand refers to a broader, integrated picture, that harnesses arts and culture for development, what he calls a 'cultural approach to town planning'. This approach consists of various layers that belong to the planning process including public participation and urban design. Public art is listed as a mechanism of cultural planning alongside transport, safety, and the networking of work spaces (Evans, 2001). The analysis to come will introduce Evans' models of

regeneration. He defines regeneration as transformation of place that has suffered 'physical, social and/or economic decline' (Evans, 2005). These terms urban regeneration, cultural regeneration reoccur in the cultural economy and cultural planning literature (Miles, 2005; Hall and Robertson, 2001; Markusen and Gadwa, 2010b; McCarthy, 2006; Sharp, 2007; Stern and Seifert, 2010; Hamilton, Forsyth and De Iongh, 2001; Trueman, Cook and Cornelius, 2007).

Pratt presents a definition for cultural-creative industries as activities that join creative skill with the generation of new jobs connected with intellectual property (Pratt, 2005). Cultural economic industries range from technical enterprises to non-profit arts organizations. The industry composition can vary depending on existing policy and collectively fits within a broader term, the cultural economy. This composition is composed of diverse and symbolic project oriented sectors that rely on social networking and may cluster geographically (Grodach, 2010).

The creative economy, a semantic variation of cultural economy (Grodach, 2010), is the subject of a 2007 report called The Creative Economy: A New Definition published under the direction of the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA). This report follows an initial study conducted in 2000 that focused the parameters of New England's regional creative economy on non-profits, artists and entrepreneurs. As the 2007 document title indicates, the metrics for evaluation of New England's creative economy have been rethought since 2000. The cover letter states that in those seven years 'the term "creative economy" has taken on multiple meanings and definitions' that have impaired comparative research. The report responds to the need for 'methodological consistency'. Description of New England's research framework development for the regional creative economy itemizes two approaches that define creative economy research models. The first focuses on products and services and the second centers on 'innovation as an economic driver'. New England Foundation for the Arts has traditionally adopted the former definition, which has retained both cultural enterprises and cultural workers (DeNatale and Wassall, 2007).

The words culture and creative both carry layers of meaning. Raymond Williams defines the word culture as 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language' (Williams, 1983). Miles notes the ambiguity tied to the use of the word culture (Miles, 2005). Though the idea of culture is not fully explored here, it seems important to understand that the perceived definition of culture may at the very least encompass both physical forms and social meaning. Pratt claims that the definition of culture is one derived from within a particular local, political and cultural context (Pratt, 2005). The 2007 NEFA report addresses the word creative, asking if its interpretation should reflect cultural or conceptual meanings. The same problem of complexity accompanies the word art. Currid (2009) raises the importance of understanding 'how art and culture work' when attempting to tie together arts and development. She cautions that this entails a fundamental understanding of what art and culture mean, while recognizing that their definitions are hard to pin down. For her argument she settles on a commoditization of the terms. This present discussion does not limit the term culture so to allow the meaning and purpose of culture and public art in Pittsfield to remain open for exploration. The two terms, creative economy and creative placemaking, are also in need of further explanation and definition.

### **1.2.2 Creative Placemaking and Creative Economy**

In September 2010 a panel of experts on creative culture and economy came together in Toronto to discuss 'creative placemaking'. Rocco Landesman, chair of the Canadian Council of the Arts, in his introduction to the panel discussion states, "where [art] is made is one of the most fundamental elements of what makes a work of art what it is....so place can help inform art; but what can art do for place" (National Endowment for the Arts, 2010). Creative placemaking may be one of the most important concepts explored here on behalf of the study of public art. Ann Markusen defines creative placemaking as "happening when partners from public private nonprofit and community sectors join to strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town or city or region around arts and cultural activities"(Markusen, 2010). Jason

Schupbach, Design Director at the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), describes creative placemaking as a means to build greater "opportunities for art experiences in people's everyday lives". Creative placemaking is a topic, he says, discussed a lot at the NEA: "NEA knows Creative Placemaking works." (Schupbach, 2010)

Jane Jacobs asserts that one of the primary functions of planning and design in cities is to encourage diversity of experience. A place should cultivate a broad 'range of unofficial plans, ideas and opportunities' (Jacobs, 1989). This comment rose from her analysis of urban diversity, but the image conjured seems to call out to creative placemaking. Florida's work also sets the stage for creative placemaking. He indicates a desire for people to find their identity in a place. People will locate based on the 'quality of place'. 'The unique set of characteristics that define a place and make it attractive' is very important to cultivate in a time when he has observed 'lifestyle ... trumps employment' (Florida, 2002). The conclusions drawn from McCarthy's analysis of illustrative cases of public art approaches applied to two cultural quarters in two northern European cities suggest that public art can help establish the qualities of place and lead cultural regeneration. Expressing ideas reminiscent of Florida he considers that the addition of public art can contribute to a type of placemaking that will grow a creative element, attract investment, cultivate social unity and enhance the quality of the residents' lives (McCarthy, 2006).

Fleming and Tscherner approach the topic of placemaking from the point of view of preservationists. They speak about the 'specter of placelessness', expressing concern about how new public environments can be created to carry place meaning compelling enough to inspire long term investment in their maintenance (Fleming and von Tscherner, 1987). People make memory associations with place. Placemaking asserts that every place has a story that needs telling and one of the great challenges is how to construct a landscape that stimulates place narrative. Fleming says "placemaking should be the handmaiden of urban design". The work of a designer is to shape a place so that it opens the imagination over time, allowing for several

interpretations of meaning (Fleming, 2007). Placemaking from this view should direct the eye and body in a series 'of little encounters through space', build on connecting meanings that comprise unique place identity and animate through providing spaces that act as venues for activity (Fleming and von Tscharnner, 1987). Fleming and von Tscharnner's perspective is object oriented, focusing quite specifically on successful (and less successful) incorporation of public art into the design of physical places. This description of creative place making differs from Markusen whose research encompasses a broader view of culture and places as it ties to economic development and the creative economy. At her presentation in Edinburgh she summarizes her findings as three important components of successful creative placemaking. First, in order for creative placemaking to occur, a group or individual needs to initiate action. Next echoing Fleming's ideas regarding place identity, the recognition and understanding of a 'local orientation' is extremely important to define. This means recognizing as well as celebrating the resources and characteristics that already belong to a place. These recommendations are built under an important idea that each city bears its own cultural history and resources, a signature that cannot be replicated in another place. Third, igniting the public and establishing partnerships, perhaps unconventional ones, will provide the scaffolding needed to realize what is envisioned. She warns that the traditional means of using large scale flagship development is not as important as building culture that will directly benefit and attract the support of local residents as well as buy in from local supporting organizations (Markusen, 2010; Markusen and Gadwa, 2010b; Fleming and von Tscharnner, 1987).

Richard Florida has developed an influential social economic theory that pairs creativity with economics. He observes an economic change that has occurred since the exit of industry from the urban core that in his view is significant as the historic shift from an agricultural to an industrial economy (Florida, 2005a). Florida underscores two strongly held premises. First, cities are historically generators of creativity; and second, every human being is creative (Florida, 2005a; Florida 2005b). Building on these basic ideas Florida strives to understand contemporary

cities, particularly the characteristic factors that draw what he calls 'the creative class'. This premise, 'the creative class', refers to a work force that demonstrates preference for certain experiential characteristics: quality of life over commodity, lateral over vertical career mobility and a desire for lifestyle amenities over traditional forms of social organization, such as those explored in Robert Putnam's book Bowling Alone (Putnam, 2000; Florida, 2002; Florida 2005a).

Florida suggests that we are in a time where economic growth is organized around place not industrial corporation (Florida, 2002). The draw of place, not jobs, is central to the making of this economy (Florida, 2005a). For this reason it is important '...to capture the imagination, dreams and desires of young creative workers' (the 'creative class') by designing public spaces that will encourage interactive street life and establish vibrant venues, such as music or cafes, for experience and encounter (Florida, 2002; Florida, 2005a). In this articulation lies the premise that planning for the creative class is spatial planning. If street life plays a central role in the making of a creative city then it is not too much a stretch to consider within this context the place of public art. The emphasis on street life echoes central social thinkers Jane Jacobs and William White who preceded Florida, or research such as Lloyd's study of Chicago's Wicker Park (Jacobs, 1989; Whyte, 1980; Lloyd, 2002). However Florida popularizes ideas in a language that has a certain appeal, one that has generated both widespread support and criticism (Florida, 2002; Markusen, 2006, Evans and Foord, 2006).

Florida's discussion does not directly indicate that public art used as a shaper and maker of public places is a strategy that has a high priority, or for that matter has any role to play in cities who aim to participate in carving a place in the global creative economy. Cities have long used art to adorn and commemorate. However if 'quality of place is a critical piece of the total package that enables regions to attract talent', (Florida, 2005a), then the design of street spaces to integrate permanent public art and accommodate semi-permanent to temporary public art may be important. This recognition of public art as not merely a decorative strategy but rather an integral component of cultural planning is worth considering.

But while Florida develops this type of rationale, a frame of reference that offers a social geographical explanation for public art may not offer enough substance. Public art relates to city life in many deep ways, ways that call out to meaning, memory, social empowerment, the intangible and ever-present drive for human creativity that may or may not be immediately visible at street level. The drive for creative expression is felt among all walks of life, arriving and dissipating at undiscovered moments, a point with which Florida may agree. However, planning for culture cannot necessarily capture a dynamic of a particular class of people, nor should it want this as an end in and of itself. This direction of thought may be too simplistic for a subject such as creativity and public art. Florida's ideas point to one dynamic that seems oriented to middle class managers. His evangelism has appeal and his ideas have some substance to consider and perhaps to employ, but like any appealing theory should only be applied with a critical, inclusive eye that considers its limitations.

Sharon Zukin (1982) may offer some insight into the social appeal of Florida's ideas. In her book Loft Living Zukin pursues an analysis of the synchronous convergence of political, economic and sociological shifts that spurred the rise of the urban centered residential loft market in New York City in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Her analysis provides some insight that helps explain why art and culture attract the urban middle class and what impact this may have on economic development. Her study reveals that the forces at play in New York City are intricate and in many ways unique to the development of a particular place in a particular time, an important consideration (and concern) when cities decide to invest finite public resources into long term cultural planning with the aim to achieve economic gain (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010a). Four points from her research may help to explain the rationale for contemporary cultural planning: real estate speculation and urban regeneration, the ideology of the artist as cultural hero, art as an exportable industry and art as a generator of street life or 'Happening'. Zukin describes the development and character of the loft lifestyle, which was borne of the artist's need to find adequate yet inexpensive, sometimes gritty space in the city. The loft evolved into something



chic and trendy related to what Zukin says was a shift in middle-class economic habits as well as a change in the perception in the meaning of home space. Zukin reports that loft advertisements of the time targeting the urban suburban middle class reveal these newfound values. The promotions emphasized ample space, the connection with the historic industrial past, and as she writes 'a fascination of the middle-class imagination with the artist's studio'. The lofts, symbolic of the final transition of the industrial economy to a new economy based on creative values and mixed use living arrangements, were a door for those outside the art world to enter and experience the fusion of living and working. To enter the studio the middle class enters into what was once the domain of a select few. This cultural identification becomes part of the mystique that identifies the artist as a cultural hero. What resulted from this shift of values was the ability for artists finally to make a living at their creative work. Their work was now exportable to the new middle class who sought the urban artist's 'style and studio' way of life (Zukin, 1982).

Exploration of the definitions exhibit the conceptual intricacy involved in the discussion of cultural planning, creative economy and public art. The definitions also provide a taste of the philosophical historical underpinning influencing the use of public art in contemporary public sphere. Awareness of the underlying complexity is something to keep in mind when exploring the substance and meaning of Pittsfield's cultural programming and public art. An historical overview of public art informed by found research literature will provide a broad, supporting view of the development of contemporary public art in the US.

### **1.3 Public Art History in the US from the 19th Century to the Present**

Although the story of public art reaches back to ancient history, the scope of this thesis is limited to the 20<sup>th</sup> century to the present. This time period is particularly important to the discussion because cultural shifts have occurred that influence how people perceive the role of public art. What was mainly an emphasis on aesthetic enhancement to architecture and public space, the City Beautiful movement during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century gave way

to the introduced values of the modern movement. The modern aesthetic called for more austere, mechanized, unornamented design that was meant to replace social hierarchy with social equality (Hamilton, Forsyth and De Iongh, 2001). This arguably resulted in a public art that did not have the adequate impact to offset the deficits of modern urban design (Evans, 2001).

The Great Depression of the 1930's marked a significant period in American cultural history where the arts became closely intertwined with national public policy. President Roosevelt's New Deal, in response to the Great Depression, called for artists to use their gifts to serve the country. The government hired artists to create work that would inspire and mend a society in crisis. The Roosevelt Administration offered artists a weekly salary in two ways, by providing 'work relief' and 'commissions'. In the name of public good artists filled public spaces throughout the country with murals, sculptures, site amenities among other art and architectural forms (Kennedy, 2009). Dramatic social changes in the 60's and 70's raised new questions about the relationship of the arts to public life. Artist pioneers moved their work out from the studio and into the streets, disassembling 'the distinctions between life and art'. This began a movement where artists exerted influence in the public sphere as valued members of interdisciplinary design teams, or in passionate pursuit of a social agenda. In the 1960's the recently established National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) began to examine how best to promote public art (Cruikshank and Korza, 1988). The NEA's Art in Public Spaces Program began to work on behalf of public art around the same time as the newly formed General Service Administrations (GSA) Art in Architecture (AiA) program that aimed to incorporate art in new federal architectural projects. The first steps into government sponsored cultural intervention took a curatorial approach, imposing high profile and fashionable installations from well-established, often famous artists. This program had little public input. Over time and controversy this approach shifted to allow more local control and community centric projects, often supported with Percent for Public Art or corporate funding. NEA's program had difficulty adapting to this change and eventually the Art in Public Spaces Program ended (US General Services Administration, 2011; Fleming 2007).

While the emphasis on big name public art continued in the 1980's within the US, public art in both the US and Europe became a vehicle for addressing social problems, fueled by a belief in its ability to influence both social justice and economy (Breitbart and Worden, 1994; Miles, 2005). This tension between social and economic aims has been an ongoing issue in cultural planning. Cities are confronted with the challenge of contending for image in a competitive global economy, which sometimes is played out at the expense of local identity and needs (Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007).

Hamilton, Forsyth and De Iongh write that Percent for Art programs had their beginnings in France after World War Two. Since the 1970s, percent for public art programs have been an important cultural planning tool in Western Europe and the United States, gaining wide acceptance and subsequently momentum by the 1980's (Roberts and Marsh, 1995; Hamilton, Forsyth and De Iongh, 2001; Cruikshank and Korza, 1988). Percent for Art means assigning anywhere from .5% to 2% of cost of construction for public building or renovation projects to public art installations (Hamilton, Forsyth and De Iongh, 2001). Percent for Art programs seem strongly influential for delivering public art to the public, allowing for creative collaborations and the shaping of publically owned landscapes. In Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris' survey of the cultural strategy of US cities they report that 93% of their respondents ran public art programs and 76% funded these programs (Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007). Administration of Percent for Art programs can occur at the federal to state level, or in individual municipalities or through independent institutions. These programs can boast hundreds of existing publically accessible art projects that are sited on state buildings and grounds. Arguably, distribution of art in public settings provides for a level of encounter with artistic forms, however Percent for Art programs tend to limit location and the types displayed (Evans, 2001).

Pittsfield's public art programs, like those found in some cities, have not been limited to city support mechanisms, but subsist on public-private partnerships. The mural program in the 1980's involved a consortium of four cities, the Coalition of Local Arts Management in

Massachusetts. This group collectively applied and received funds from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) as part of an initiative to invite Hispanic artists to work in the region. The Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities, Stop & Shop Markets and local arts councils also contributed funds to the mural project (Bonenti, 1985). In more recent years, Artscape has obtained funding through various private and non-profit sources such as the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation (a philanthropic public charity fund), The A.R.T. Fund, the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (Public grant program), the Legacy Banks Foundation, Mass Cultural Council and the City of Pittsfield – organizations credited on the annual Artscape brochures of 2008/09, 2010 and 2011. Artscape has also self-supported, drawing on funds into 2011 from the Sheeptacular event of 2004. This approach has most likely allowed Pittsfield's public art organizers some flexibility in directing the spatial layout and the character of the selected art forms that may have not been possible if directed under the direction of a Percent for Art program.

A narrative of Pittsfield's 20<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural history and the development of the city's public art programs will be presented in a descriptive analysis to come. But the perceived benefits of this research, the questions and assumptions that will guide this inquiry and the methods that are employed need articulation.

#### **1.4 Proposed Research Benefits**

This thesis inquiry is primarily exploratory and as such limited in its scope. However as what is essentially a baseline case study, the assembled work may be useful to the inquirer who would want to delve more deeply into a single aspect or who would embark in the much called for quantitative work. This research has set limitations, but with the following aims: (1) to contribute to an evaluative approach that can support communities who do not have a public art program, but who may wish to include public art in their landscapes, (2) to help communities that do have a public art program to reflect on their own objectives and encourage them to track the

results of their existing public art installations so that they can better plan and evaluate their future projects, (3) to help landscape architects and planners evaluate the incorporation of public art in public spaces, (4) to open for artists more opportunities to show, sell, rent their work and to participate collaboratively in the communities where they live and work.

The main goal of this work is to strive to underscore the underlying motivations and expectations that drive a public art initiative. A secondary goal is to inspire further study into areas such as the public participation process in cultural planning, sociological environmental impact of public art on communities or the spatial attributes for strategic placement of public art. The information presented in this thesis may serve as a point of departure.

### **1.5 Warrants and Assumptions**

Underlying this work is a central assumption that public art is beneficial to a community and has a significant importance to people and society at large. As such, public art should be a central strategy in development and design schemes, but it cannot be assumed that public art initiatives should be undertaken solely as an intuitive process or a leap of faith. Knowledge of the underlying motivations and projected outcomes of a public art initiative is an important first step to developing a strategy that will deliver desired results. Cultural development in contemporary society stands tensely between the emergent and the planned (Evans and Foord, 2006). For this reason community collaboration and dialog between cultural planners, designers and community members is important to the success of a public art initiative. Community arts organizers might consider developing a plan that includes both formal and informal metrics of evaluations in order to align expected with factual outcomes. This can help to inform them if the goals and objectives of its public art program are being met, and can provide researchers with needed information to develop metrics that could have broader applications.

## **1.6 Summary of Research Questions**

The baseline question that reverberates throughout the thesis asks what are the motivations and projected outcomes for public art from the point of view of planning development officials and community arts organizers. What reasons justify the investment in public art? Where did the idea for public art come from? Once the perceived purposes are known, how might this information inform public art program strategy? The analysis will include observations that look at the intersection between public policy, public art and community, specifically as it applies to public art initiatives in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Inherent in this are questions regarding the process of evaluation and community involvement. The purpose of this questioning is to gain further insight into the reasons that motivate community arts organizers and planners to direct valuable limited resources into public art projects and to assess the observed outcomes. A secondary purpose is to examine the role of the public in relationship to public art. Supporting methods will be employed to address these questions and to uncover themes and considerations that arise from the analysis.

## **1.7 Methods**

Five supporting methods are used in this study: case study, document review, interviews, site visits and literature review. The basis of this work is a detailed case study of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. An extensive document review includes study of available planning documents spanning from 1960 to 2011. The collection of newspaper and other media clippings from the Berkshire Athenaeum vertical files provide informational articles and editorials that offer insights into local concerns and attitudes. In addition to these print sources, online web sources provide important access to local commentary and promotional materials.

A series of one to one interviews with individuals involved in some capacity with Pittsfield's cultural planning process provided some primary source account of Pittsfield's cultural planning and public art initiatives. Interviews included individuals who presently or had

in the past acted in various capacities on cultural committees and in various local cultural institutions. A few key actors were not included in this process; however those who participated offered a breadth of historical and practical information that allowed insight into the operations, motivations, beliefs and expected outcomes as they pertained to Pittsfield's public art initiatives. Onsite visits to Pittsfield allowed for first hand encounter with Pittsfield's 2011 Artscape exhibition, mural art and Walk-On sidewalk installations. A generous invitation to attend the August 3, 2011 Artscape meeting offered firsthand experience of the group organization and planning concerns. A literature review was undertaken that compiled professional and academic knowledge from a spectrum of authors, including those authors considered seminal in the study of the creative economy, cultural planning and public art.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Literature that has risen around the topic of the creative economy, cultural planning and applied strategies like public art is comprehensive. Although the review emphasizes writings that address the larger umbrella of creative economy, urban regeneration and cultural planning, certain threads drawn through these topics also may tie to the central concern, public art, therefore providing a foundation for the central themes of the thesis analysis and discussion. An initial survey of researchers' critique of the claims and methods of evaluation associated with cultural planning, urban regeneration policy and applied public art reports on some of the concerns and specifications that currently drive much of the published research. Also informative are the various frameworks developed that organize approaches to cultural development.

#### **2.2 Gaps, Methods and Critique of Claims**

Several authors have pointed out that the intersection between cultural planning strategy and its impacts on people and economy, among other variables, is in need of further study (Currid, 2009; Miles, 2005; Evans, 2005; Hall and Robertson, 2001; Markusen and Gadwa, 2010a; Currid, 2010; Roberts and Marsh 1995; Pryor and Grossbart, 2007; McCarthy, 2006). Not only have various authors presented what they perceive are the gaps in research, they have introduced specific questions and reviews of methods that they hope others will notice and apply to their future work. Evans critiques methods used to evaluate culturally driven urban regeneration, which include both qualitative and quantitative approaches. He describes common reporting strategies that present 'evidence' for the effectiveness and economic value of 'cultures' contribution to regeneration', noting that there is a strong but not exclusive trend toward '...evidence based evaluation of urban policy and practice...based on 'physical, economic and



social' indicators. While acknowledging the important 'role and value culture has in regeneration' of communities, he concludes that reproducible comprehensible models of evaluation of these 'evidences' are missing and should be developed (Evans, 2005). Currid references authors who note that the connection between arts and development are not yet shown in research and "that new... methods [are needed to develop better understanding of] the economic, regional and cultural impacts of art." (Currid, 2010)

Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa critically examine the use of arts and culture to shape urban and regional development planning, expressing that communities take uninformed risk when they build cultural districts, and by extension their creative economy, without having enough solid, researched information on the impacts and costs of their strategy. What they point to in this is an interesting dynamic, that cities are willing step out in what may be described as a 'leap of faith', when it comes to the pairing of culture and economy. When considered against other decisions that planners and politicians face, this high tolerance for risk is quite intriguing.

Markusen and Gadwa echo Currid when they convey that they have not found much writing that establishes cultural planning norms and goals or promotes evaluative methods (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010a; Markusen and Gadwa, 2010b). This may have to do with the difficulty in identifying measures that can take into account the intense, hard to capture variables attached to the idea of creativity and community. They stress the need for researchers to embark on studies that use analytical methods such as cost benefit analysis, multivariate regression models, long term and broad scope comparative longitudinal studies (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010a). They suggest that more such metrics will develop in the near future, citing Anne Gadwa's study on artist live-work residence impact on community and Stephen Sheppard's analysis of cultural institutions and property values as examples of this work (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010b). Sheppard has employed hedonic analysis of housing prices as a means to measure value or demand (Sheppard, 2010). Sheppard's work focuses locally on the North Adams MASS MoCA development, which positions his research objectives and scale within a

similar context as Pittsfield. Gadwa combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches to an inquiry into the how artist spaces may effect neighborhood change. The quantitative approaches include hedonic as well as census and tenant income tax records analysis (Gadwa, 2010).

Markusen and Gadwa acknowledge that not all efforts to grow a creative place identity are successful. Here the researchers diverge from the quest for effective quantitation. Making use of extensive case study review the researchers are able to both identify difficulties and generate suggested tactics. From their efforts have come six 'components of successful placemaking initiatives', five of which depend on community involvement: (1)an individual or a small group that champions a vision, (2)development based on unique identity, (3)public and private sector support, (4)arts community engagement and (5)strong, effective partnerships (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010b). That the researchers should arrive at such strong community oriented indicators through their case work is of noted significance and something that warrants further discussion.

Thus far these comments regarding method address larger issues of placemaking and cultural regeneration. Some researchers have also addressed public art as a cultural regeneration strategy. Moving toward research that addresses more specifically public art and urban regeneration, Tim Hall and Iain Robertson look critically at the claims that they have found about public art and its impacts. Like the trends in the regeneration literature they too report that 'developed procedures and critical theoretical frameworks' are lacking to substantiate these claims Hall and Robertson discuss the limitations and difficulties associated with developing effective methods of evaluation of public art as it relates to urban regeneration, and indicate that there is not just one approach. Their article concludes with a catalog of five lines of questioning that might guide researchers who are looking to understand public art projects, their impacts and trajectories. They organize these proposed questions into five categories: Empirical, Policy,

Structural, Civic and Ideological (Hall and Robertson, 2001).<sup>2</sup> Leaving their concluding comments open to these questions thoughtfully acknowledges the stratified complexity that needs confronting when approaching the question of public art.

McCarthy also indicates that the claims made about public art are at times untenable, pointing out that the advantages of public art comes from a belief more than from 'objective monitoring' or 'empirical justification' (McCarthy, 2006). In bringing this to attention, he points to another interesting notion that public art coincides with belief. From the point of view of researchers the call for evidences, methods and measures is expected, but can be called to question. If researchers should succeed in assigning a cultural value, what would this achieve? Would this lead to some cities identifying a negative value for culture? It seems that cultural regeneration using strategy such as public art must not rely solely on measurement, as the topic traverses into the realm of intangibles, variables of community such as those which Markusen and Gadwa arrived through case study or belief as McCarthy notes. So many communities have embarked on this journey through the repeatedly uncharted territory of art, culture, community vitality and economy and in doing this they have left in their wake countless case studies to consider, leaving a trail of useful information that should be evaluated for approach. This issue of measuring the effectiveness of applied cultural agendas and establishing a course of best practice is one that researchers are obviously struggling with. During a question and answer session at a panel discussion with a team of experts that included Markusen and Florida addressing creative placemaking, an audience member raised this issue. Panel members acknowledged that this issue is extremely important, is unresolved and one that will dominate research for many years to come (National Endowment for the Arts, 2010). Presently, some researchers have begun to define model frameworks that describe approaches to cultural regeneration. While not metrics or

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<sup>2</sup> Empirical questions attend to measureable impacts. Policy questions look at the connection and between a public art program and regeneration planning. Structural questions ask about structural limitations and their relationship to public art. Civic questions look at public art's wider effects. Ideological questions explore what public art says about conditions and their resulting problems (Hall and Robertson, 2001).

methods they are useful in that they can help advance the discussion about the balances of 'place, culture and economy', perhaps generating insights that inform approaches communities can take when designing public art strategy and initiatives (Evans, 2011b).

### 2.3 Frames

Some researchers have developed framework models in an attempt to organize the complex topic involving culture, economy and policy. Evans demonstrates in a Venn diagram the relationship of culture, economy and place. While 'creative cities' pursue cultural planning for independent reasons, they commonly seek to establish a balance between these factors, as Evans comments, "trying to get the optimum mix between the place and the competitiveness and the quality of life and space...the balance between the economy and the importance of the creative economy within that..." (Evans 2011b).



**Figure 1: Place, Culture and Economy (Evans 2011b)**

Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris describes three trajectories for cultural economic development: the Entrepreneurial, the Creative Class and the Progressive. Each handles cultural development in terms of program, geography and audience differently. The Entrepreneurial relies on large scale cultural development as a means to attract tourists by enhancing visibility and image. The Creative Class strategy aims to attract 'the creative class' in hopes to stimulate a local

economy, relying on a sort of filter down effect. This strategy may result in gentrification effects. With roots in social justice, the Progressive strategy focuses on the quality of life that shapes the existing community. This approach encourages community involvement and generation of opportunity.

Their study helps to illustrate the complex of approaches that US cities may take to meet cultural economic goals, which they found seem inclined towards an Entrepreneurial strategy. The authors suggest that this economic motive needs to be balanced against other factors such as the social and educational (Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007). Their framework seems to intersect some with Graeme Evans' three models of regeneration.

### **2.3.1 The Evans Framework: Three Models of Regeneration**

Evans's perspective is broad, examining in depth from varied entry points- fact, case study, reflection and critique - the larger topic of cultural planning. Aside from providing insights from careful study of the subject, Evans' work supports this thesis because the contemplation about public art in Pittsfield has led to a warrant, that the micro-discussion about the motivations and expectations for public art in Pittsfield is bound to the more global discussion of culture as a catalyst for development. To illustrate this relationship, Evans refers to public art as a mechanism of cultural planning. He presents a table overview listing policy 'evidences' related to 'culture's contribution to regeneration'. Public art and architecture fall under physical regeneration as environmental improvements, though he notes that the listings are neither complete nor fixed (Evans, 2005). The framework models of regeneration help to set a more global perspective to the more specific discussion of public art in Pittsfield. Evans presents a framework that organizes the relationship between culture and regeneration in three ways: (1)culture-led regeneration, (2)cultural regeneration and (3)culture and regeneration.

### 2.3.1.1 Culture-led Regeneration

In culture-led regeneration, culture becomes the driving force for regenerative change. This type of regeneration approach tends toward large-scale, often relying on flagship development. The development of this type of regeneration is to stimulate excitement about a place by providing distinction through elaborate, expensive festival programming, site design, architecture and institutional anchors. In an essay that examines the adoption of the culture-led regeneration approach in smaller sized cities Evans and Foord warns against applying the 'externally-driven' flagship approach as central stage to a cultural planning scheme<sup>3</sup>. The strategy may result in a rift between the local culture that belongs to the city and the 'external focus' of the cultural event or institution, which could undermine the success of the strategy as it does not arise from the city's underlying culture (Evans and Foord, 2006). This can be seen perhaps as putting-all-the-eggs-in-one-basket strategy, one that angles for a competitive advantage and has a high level of risk. Though a tolerance for risk may have some advantage, less than desired results may occur when exercised in the presence of imbalances between scale and cultural identity. The competitive advantage, they observe, may be hard for some cities to win, particularly for the smaller city (though some smaller cities have succeeded in this way). What is needed for success, he says, is 'a sustained year round critical mass of trade and cultural activity'. This inspires the

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<sup>3</sup> Bell and Jayne talk about the unique strengths as well as challenges of smaller sized cities. They report that small is an elusive definition, however in the US, Brennan and Hoene define small as less than 50,000 inhabitants. Bell and Jayne also liken small as a state of mind and reach of influence. Regardless of what makes a city small, such cities take high risks if they apply big city policies to a small city context, (what Bell calls 'mundanization'), as the smaller city generally does not have the concentration of population and resources to sustain strategies like flagship developments. Bell and Jayne also report that in the US some researchers have focused on downtown revitalization. This trend in research has uncovered variations in the dynamics that distinguish small city from large. Bell and Jayne report on the special and marketable qualities of a small city's downtown compiled by a researcher named Robertson. Some of these qualities include spatial compactness, higher level of safety, fewer instances of flagship projects, more independent retail and greater number of preserved historic buildings. They report on a researcher Haque who has studied the ideas of diversity versus specialty within the context of the small city downtown area, and who has identified some challenges to approaching 'economic redevelopment planning', such as an absence of a clearly defined vision, which seems important success (Bell and Jayne, 2006).

following consideration that a balance between economic and cultural motivations when striving for the inclusion of a cultural agenda is advisable, and that the chosen strategies should serve this balance (Evans and Foord, 2006). The researchers conclude in favor of a long term planning approach over that of the culture-led, indicating that 'a sustainable cultural renaissance' is an emergent process, composed of many facets that are unique to a given community. A city should avoid a copy-cat approach. Critical, thoughtful planning engaging a medley of tactics 'that best serve the regeneration and community objectives' is recommended (Evans and Foord, 2006; Evans 2005). Markusen and Gadwa find this call to distinctiveness important to the success of 'placemaking led by arts and culture'. One size does not fit all, but rather must 'be appropriate to local circumstances...nurture[ing]...qualities and resources that already exist in the community and can be celebrated to serve community members while drawing in visitors and new businesses...' (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010b, p.4). This long term approach is central to the cultural regeneration approach.

### **2.3.1.2 Cultural Regeneration**

Cultural regeneration refers to an integrative approach to long term cultural 'renaissance' planning, where culture and policy are joined in urban planning and policy making (Evans 2011a; Evans 2005). Flagship type development can be one component of a cultural regeneration plan that may also include the designation of cultural districts, creative clusters and public art. The layering of cultural strategy can build over time leading to 'second or third cultural investment, placemaking and economic strategy'. Looking at public art investment over time could show how generations of public art may link to different generations of policy making. Evans says that these generational layers of cultural intervention are rarely evaluated for best practice, 'what works and what does not', though they lay the ground for this type of self-evaluation (Evans, 2005a). Looking for this type of evaluation seems important to the long term success of any cultural strategy, including public art. Referring to public art only as a strategy is limiting as well.

Cultural regeneration includes, and can make use of the home grown art initiative. The link to cultural regeneration through culture and regeneration (and the inverse) may be the most dynamic and interesting, for it seems as if this may represent the ground where community, culture and planning most vigorously meet.

### **2.3.1.3 Culture and Regeneration**

Culture and regeneration refers to the smaller scale initiative that does not operate from a central strategic plan. This type of regeneration emerges from the community where individuals or community organizations build their own cultural events such as a concert night or place-making expressions like decorative street amenities and public art programs for a park or development. The sum effect of these grassroots actions may influence a larger regeneration process (Evans, 2005; Evans, 2011a). With this in mind the motives behind the culture and regeneration contributions and the expectations that follow may differ between community members and cultural planners. The substance of this model may also represent the greatest challenge to question of measurement, because value is not explicit and in fact elusive.

Themes related to planning strategies recurred in the research literature. These concepts though typically applied to the larger cultural regeneration and planning issues are applicable to the discussion of public art. Another valued concern raised among the various reviewed researchers is community involvement. Both strategy and community involvement seem to bring an essential balance to the discussion of public art and the purposes behind its application

## **2.4 Planning Strategies: Buzz, Branding, Clustering and Layering**

### **2.4.1 Buzz**

Evans names network society as one of four grand academic theories that contribute to the idea or construction of the 'creative city'. He notes that place loses some importance within a network society. However even in this information exchanging context, spatial configuration still



manifests as nodes of information, exchange and activity (Evans, 2011b; Currid and Williams, 2010). This seems to represent a disembodied technological view of social exchange with minimal place association. But this is not the only way to frame the idea.



**Figure 2: Creative City Grand Theories (Evans, 2011b)**

Buzz is a communication based strategy. Storper and Venables provide a sociologically based definition of buzz in their research that explores the importance of social-economic impacts rising from face-to-face contact. Buzz is a systematically 'efficient [dynamic, unplanned] technology of communication' between social networks, with the ability to coordinate in what is temporally and spatially shifting environments; what they refer to as 'uncertain environments'. This type of characterization applies well to the contemporary city, a place in continuous flux and a place characterized by the dynamism of social networks. Buzz regulates social networks, who or what is in or out, and also applies to spatial conglomeration (Storper and Venables, 2004). Bathelt, Malmberg and Maskell define buzz as a web of information, communicated within the context of a cluster (Bathelt, Malmberg and Maskell, 2004). In supporting buzz related research Currid and Williams examines the system of cultural production and consumption. Their research demonstrates the connection between place, cultural economy and sociology, as they state 'For cultural industries, the social context of consumption matters as much as production'.

People need to be near one another to engage in a constant cultural exchange (Currid and Williams, 2010).

Sociologist Howard S. Becker writes about the inherent need for cooperation in the arts. His book Artworlds examines makers and the making of art from the point of view of social organization and how this structures the economics of art (Becker, 1984). Markusen and King credit Becker for revealing the relationship between a social network and economics (Markusen and King, 2003). Currid and Connolly note this interdependence between the cultural industry and the social. They state that people give importance to culture, and cultural production extends from this. This explains, to an extent, the tendency for cultural sectors to cluster (Currid and Connolly, 2007). This interdependence may be viewed from another angle, as social organization becomes mutually reinforcing, a buttress that supports the cathedral of community life.

An interesting observation that Currid and Williams draw from their study involves the role of media as an important place defining commodity. Media images make repeated reference to certain centers of culture, which contribute to how a place is perceived. Media is the 'gatekeeper' disseminating 'the message' out into the world, thus influencing a city's reputation (Currid and Williams, 2010). Buzz viewed as related to commoditization of culture seems on one hand superficial, but recognizing the force of this social dynamic is also quite profound. Public art may fulfill the role of buzz, directing an interaction of place with social exchange. In planning the buzz energy may be harnessed for the purposes of image making, to create a draw. Strategized in this way public art becomes a city's designer clothing, a commodity of show. Buzz that rises from public art may also rise above commodity to fulfill a very human drive for social exchange and critique, and in this way becomes part and indicator of the intangible value associated with cultural expression.

Zukin addresses the significance of the 'Happening' in the 1960's and 1970's. She writes, 'Happenings are important because they lured people who were outside the art world into the unconventional performance space, which was often also an artist's studio.' This in turn provided

a new avenue for distribution and consumption of art (Zukin, 1982). The 'Happening' in terms of its ability to generate energy and attention to place and its draw on a 'spontaneous' audience seems connected to contemporary research on the socially and spatially related phenomenon of buzz as it applies to public art. Public art in a sense is vying for public opinion, an opinion that may run the gamut of approval to disapproval. Its presence is a form of 'Happening', regardless if permanent or temporary, drawing potentially on a wide body of artists known to not known, and meeting a not necessarily self-selected audience. In this way its role in the social sphere may be that of animator. Buzz framed this way is much more alive, or lively than the disembodied network society or the mere policy of product making or image generation, otherwise referred to as place branding.

#### **2.4.2 Branding**

The association of the flagship cultural strategy with cultural-led regeneration is as Evans and Foord note a type of 'hard branding', often a dangerous main course of many cultural renewal plans (Evans and Foord, 2006). There has been much academic discussion around the application of branding to promote place through what is referred to as 'place branding'<sup>4</sup>, a form of perception-based strategy, employed as post-industrial cities or countries develop systematic marketing campaigns to shape image as part of efforts to grow economy and regenerate postindustrial landscapes (Parkerson, 2007; Anholt, 2008, Evans 2006). The idea of place branding as part of a broader scholarly discourse tackling revitalization and the policy making that aims to define public perceptions toward place seems important to the discussion of public placemaking and of public art because of an apparent connection between the service of public art to city image (Truman, Cook and Cornelius, 2008). Peel and Lloyd describe the relationship between culture, place branding and policy as 'prismatic', specifically as it applies to land use

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<sup>4</sup> Pryor and Grossbart note that 'place branding' also is known as 'place marketing' and 'place promotion', one of the factors that contribute to a confusion of meanings, what they call 'inconsistencies' (Pryor and Grossbart, 2007).

regulation policy. This relationship 'materializes' at the level of planning and design where public art and 'well designed' street amenities 'have an important contribution to make in the design of public spaces through giving a sense of identity and by enhancing a sense of place' (Peel and Lloyd, 2007). Pryor and Grossbart draw the observation that brand identity occurs through the generation and use of 'marketplace symbols and rituals'.<sup>5</sup> 'Marketplace symbols' are the physical components placed in the landscape that contribute to brand identity, which could include public art and street amenities. Their research seems to establish that branding with these 'symbols and rituals' comes out of the broader 'marketplace' community in the capacity of 'co-production', and less from a limited group within the professional realm: 'Our data suggest that place brands are socially and culturally embedded, and co-created and reified by social actors.' Underlying a public art program may be multiple meanings, intents, 'social actors' and expected outcomes related to image creation (Pryor and Grossbart, 2007). Examination of what these motivations are and how they are used could contribute to the critical evaluation of a public art program.

Pryor and Grossbart argue that place branding is distinguishable from product branding. Product brands they observe seem more outwardly and concretely oriented toward object identity, marked by very changeable orientations: 'Products can be discontinued, modified, withdrawn from the market, re-launched and re-positioned or replaced by improved products'. In contrast, place branding is highly symbolic; place brands qualify as 'metaphorical entities that are largely mental representations which may be positively or negatively valenced' (Pryor and Grossbart, 2007). As such place, cannot (or must not) be understood as a mere product, or bound only to a culture of consumption, a perspective that Evans and Foord too warns has its limitations (Bianchini and Ghilardi, 2007; Pryor and Grossbart, 2007; Evans and Foord, 2006). Observing the distinctions between place and product branding, public art may situate both as object and symbol. Consideration of this position within a city fabric seems somewhat evocative and in a

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<sup>5</sup> Pryor and Grossbart conducted an ethnographic study focusing on branding in a central business district (CBD) area of a small (<100,000 pop) Midwestern city between 2000-2006 (Pryor and Grossbart, 2007).

way uniquely placed to reveal the motivations and expectations of those who make decisions about public art.

In an editorial discussion Anholt puts forth that he has encountered 'no (reliable) evidence' that shows it possible to influence the reputation of a city using marketing branding techniques, which he prefers to call the 'competitive identity' approach. He acknowledges that places have metaphorical 'brand images', but this is different than actively superimposing a brand to meet city marketing objectives. Instead he proposes that policy governs place branding, not communication; and that it is extremely important to understand this distinction in an age of globalization. He identifies 'five new (policy-based) ideas' of 'competitive identity':

(1) harmonious communication between 'government, business and civil society', (2) reputation as 'external...cultural', not directed from singular, top-down management, (3) a carefully managed reputation, (4) a union of purpose around a single 'strategic' vision and (5) an emphasis on new, progressive, innovative ideas clearly communicated to the outside world (globally). The author goes on to explain that 'strategy, substance and symbolic action' govern policy; and one of these components without the other two weakens the effectiveness of the chosen policy (Anholt, 2008).<sup>6</sup> Putting 'strategy and substance' aside for now (though relevant to the discussion of brand and public art), the relationship between place brand and public art seems to strongly fall in the realm of 'symbolic'. Looking at public art one type of symbolic branding action that has the potential to attach to internal meanings, and visions of place tied to a specific cultural experience, may result in a different meaning than that of a flagship, and may function differently as a result. Bianchini and Ghilardi conclude that place branding and marketing needs to respond creatively to the culture of an area. They summarize five important modes of application for culturally sensitive branding: (1) cross fertilization of ideas between professional disciplines, (2) new

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<sup>6</sup> Anholt defines strategy as the ways and means to achieve a desired goal, substance as the content of strategy to achieve a purpose and symbolic action as a type of substance that involves communication representative of the strategy as well as connected to the place story. (Anholt, 2008).

creative approaches, (3)more critical evaluation, (4)more responsiveness to community input and (5)greater cultural sensitivity (Bianchini and Ghilardi, 2007).

But what lies beneath driving a symbolic, metaphorical understanding of place. Bianchini and Ghilardi, like Pryor and Grossbart, distinguish between place and product marketing and indicate that for 'place branding' to succeed it must rise from the indigenous city culture. They define the indigenous city as a complex entity defined by geography, human construction, community as in socially organized, economy and 'a polity' organized under 'an agreed set of principles'. And according to their definition, from this organization of a city rises expressions of cultural wealth such as area festivals, historic sites and public open places, public art among others. Following these distinctions they introduce the concept 'mindscape'- the space between the underlying imagination that people have about a place and the place itself, which often becomes externalized and represented in literature, media, festivals, historic museums, and no doubt public art (Bianchini and Ghilardi, 2007). 'Mindscape' seems reminiscent of Fleming who approaches the idea from the perspective of cultural memory when talking about the intersection between memory and placemaking (Fleming, 2007). His point of view underscores the distinctiveness of place as design remedy to what he sees has become the banal American landscape. He says 'the art of placemaking' is the effective harnessing 'of mental associations into a sustainable narrative'. Though he is addressing placemaking as it pertains to place design, and not branding specifically, the association of 'a sustainable narrative', and 'mindscape' both seem to capitalize on the human imagination of place rising out of culture, particularly as it manifests a distinctive culture that can lead to a form of physical expression in the city landscape (Fleming, 2007). That being said this idea of mental imaging, or 'mindscape' could not be underscored more as a telling under-layer that also potentially reveals the motivations and expected outcomes behind a cultural planning scheme, and may play out in the type of public art strategy a city develops then implements. This too is an interesting thought because it seems to position public

art not only as a physical, marketable object and the result of symbolic thinking, but also as a manifestation of a rationale.

Pryor and Grossbart's conclusion grounds the understanding of place branding in terms of sociology and space: 'socio-spatial analysis of places promises to offer additional insights into the construction of place meanings and identity' (Pryor and Grossbart, 2007). The mental images associated with place branding are unique identifiers, perhaps reflecting the collective cultural memory of a place or more the reflection of an individual or select group bias. With their articulation may 'emerge' the qualities that define a city's unique character, which can have both social and marketable value (Evans and Foord, 2006; Pryor and Grossbart, 2007).

However, the voice of the community is not always represented in the projected brand image, or more specifically its application to cultural planning tactics such as public art. Bianchi and Ghilardi states: 'Place branding and marketing strategies should be more people-centered and humanistic, by celebrating and giving voice to the imagination and the desires of different individuals and communities of interest in the city.' (Bianchini and Ghilardi, 2007) This statement is very much related to the question as to the audience for public art and who among the audience is invited to participate.

Peel and Lloyd address the idea of the 'spatio-temporal' in their case analysis of "Another Place".<sup>7</sup> The purpose of their analysis is to look at how localized cultural planning deals with both impacts and results of long term siting of public art sculptures, with the observation that the land-use planning 'framework' is an appropriate platform to evaluate the impact of the public art, and to mediate the complex, conflicting concerns, values and benefits that occur around such a project. They conclude with the idea that the planning system plays an important management role in terms of place branding over time (Peel and Lloyd, 2007). In Crosby, the planning system was fairly democratic, where policy seems to a degree in balance with public interest. However,

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<sup>7</sup> "Another Place" is a public art installation of '100 cast-iron men' sited on a beach in Crosby, England by the artist Antony Gormley in 2005 (Peel and Lloyd, 2007).

a policy that relies on 'hard branding', and what has in many instances reflected a top-down approach, may as Evans observes potentially dilute over time, lessening in impact and requiring new resources, new energy to reinvent not the least of which is monetary (Evans, 2006).

The consideration of time seems to be an important when reflecting on the dynamics of branding. Over time a city may develop multiple brands, or image associations. These brands may come from deliberate strategy, but also may rise unexpectedly from segments of the community. The presence of multiple brands may in fact either enrich, or potentially confuse; may come forward and then over time sink out of sight. These reflections support Pryor and Grossbart's suggestion that place branding, like places, is a dynamic, interpretive process (Pryor and Grossbart, 2007).

Within the perspectives presented in this section, public art as a 'hard branding' device on one hand could arise as a flagship cultural-led regeneration scheme, with its wholesale risks. In America such risks have resulted in a few conspicuous failures. Large sculptural works by big name artists was the characteristic strategy of the early National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Art in Public Places (APP), which was highly curatorial in its planning approach not in the end self-sustaining (Fleming, 2007). On the other hand public art may be intricately bound up in the concept of 'mindscape', reflecting a more inherent culture of a city. On its face either direction may in some way be understood as a symbolic gesture, and physically manifest some important if not telling values that emerge from the minds and hearts of those who organize and implement the public art plan.

Even through the place brand is essentially a formal strategy, this review reveals that that much occurs in tandem with the idea of branding than is initially apparent-such as the intersection of branding with place and meaning, or place and time. The idea of clustering addresses place from a different angle. Clustering is a space-based strategy that usually applies to the aggregation of cultural industries. However the concept adapts well to the discussion of public art.



### 2.4.3 Clustering

Markusen and Gadwa present an intriguing question, 'Should cities and states designate and develop cultural districts where cultural activities are clustered together? Or should they encourage a decentralized mosaic of cultural activities throughout neighborhoods and among a series of small towns in a region?' (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010a) The question examines the benefits of the cultural cluster to the urban economy, and tries to shape an understanding as to the function and composition of the cultural cluster. The sophisticated mapping of Currid and Connolly brings into discussion cultural clustering's capacity to act as a magnet for other related industries, which have a tendency to locate in proximity to the cultural industry or institutional anchor (Currid and Connolly, 2008; Currid and Williams, 2010).

Stern and Seifert indicate that cultural clusters, which they define as an area with a variety of cultural assets in close proximity, are either planned or 'evolve organically'; with less scholarly or professional attention paid to the latter. They observe that 'cultural cluster planning' can focus, more preferably and effectively from their point of view, on cultivating benefits to the local community and not to an external, indefinite audience (Stern and Seifert, 2010). Stern and Seifert examine the advantages of the 'emergent' type of cultural clustering, (Stern and Seifert, 2010). They argue that cultural clustering is a self-made, social process arising from the community, with impacts –integrated and indirect - that affect the fabric of a city's creative economy. Cultural clustering by nature is not profit seeking, but profit enhancing with the citizens the benefactors of cultural cluster (Stern and Seifert, 2009). They suggest that this reciprocity of people and creative cultural activity is important for city planners and decision makers to encourage because this type of community orientation is both self-sustaining and self-rewarding (Stern and Seifert, 2010). Cultural clustering, as Stern and Seifert describes, seems to be in one sense like a seed in need of careful cultivation; urging that the success of a cultural cluster depends on an 'understanding of the social ecology and how [this] fit[s] into the contemporary urban creative economy.' (Stern and Seifert, 2010, p. 265) This imagery is

reminiscent of an idea that some authors have presented, that a city has its own ecology, an idea Evans seems to invoke when speaking about the 'creative city' as 'creative ecology' (Stern and Seifert, 2010; Grodach and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007; Evans, 2011b; Evans, 2010).

Though creative industry clusters and public art are different in scale, attention to the impacts of clustering may bring insight into the role that public art plays as a spatial strategy. These reflections raise some baseline questions: What happens when public art is clustered versus dispersed? What are the factors and constraints that dictate its placement? What is the best practice to achieve both visual and symbolic impact, and why is this sought?

Richard Lloyd's work in Chicago illustrates the creative cluster as rising from within the community as opposed to driven by external policy. He engages in an ethnographic, longitudinal study of Chicago's Wicker Park neighborhood, a place where creative industry and creative living intersect. Similar with Stern and Seifert's work, Lloyd describes the 'Neo-Bohemia' neighborhood as evolutionary developing from the people who live, work and animate the creative enclave. This contrasts with the 'Disneyfication' of a place, which is more about consumption and less about residing. This seems somehow directly relevant to public art and its placement within the community structure, not only physically but also socially. These two factors seem mutually reinforcing. This qualification illustrates an important distinction between the making of a culture and the emergence of culture (Evans and Foord, 2006). The environment of Wicker Park as Lloyd describes appears to be one that builds out of a complexity of relationships and, as he indicates, contributes to an urban richness, which cannot be superficially duplicated. Those that live in this place encompass attitudes towards work, living and dissemination of information, which are integrated as a way of life. At its best the environment that results configures new possibilities of interaction, attracting new creative business entrepreneurs and allowing for gentrification without dismantling the existing community. This connection between a rich, layered urban life and the development of new business endeavors is significant because it is one he observes from which new economic growth can occur. It may be

on this level that the connection between public art and economy happens. When the physical expression of place arises from those who reside there, this then adds to the distinctive character of place which is part of the anatomy of appeal that draws in new people and new levels of interaction. Found within this context public art, a shaper of place, might be seen (applied) as one of the essential layers of community life that contributes to urban richness (Lloyd, 2002). What Lloyd's work brings to focus is the dual dynamic of culture in cultural planning, the play between quality of life and economics, and suggests how a balance might be achieved (Evans and Foord, 2003). An examination of specific public art applications may help to reveal how these two modes balance in a city like Pittsfield. This information may further cast light on the motivations and justifications for a public art program and offer grounds for critically thinking about the goals and objectives for public art.

While clustering is identified as a space-based strategy, layering can be understood as either time-based or type-based strategy. The concept of layering rises indirectly from ideas originating from a number of researchers. Layering as a strategy seems to associate with the cultural regeneration approach and adds another important angle to the discussion of public art.

#### **2.4.4 Layering**

Anholt describes symbolic action as a strategy that needs to repeat over time in order to build reputation in a modern society made up of a populace with long term memory deficit (Anholt, 2008). Evans states, 'Like most regeneration, it (the cultural city, economy), takes a generation (10-25 years) to embed itself' (Evans, 2011b), and to do so in an integrated way. The layered approach may be seen as the integration of time and type strategy (Evans, 2001). Peel and Lloyd address cultural policy as a complex, integrative, sensitive process which considers the correlations between 'economy, culture and policy' (Peel and Lloyd, 2007). They refer to a model by researcher Montgomery that depicts cultural planning as cultural production, cultural policy and urban design, which Peel and Lloyd interpret as a depiction of 'integrated and layered'

activity. They then go on to note McCarthy's reflections on the strategic combining of public art contained within the parameters of 'cultural quarters' with other strategies of regeneration. McCarthy suggests that this type of integrated layering with public art has the power to bolster image (Peel and Lloyd, 2007). Parkerson's evaluation of the evolution of Brooklyn, New York's image illustrates McCarthy's point. Though public art is not mentioned specifically here; the establishment of a cultural district, urban neighborhood regeneration, a business district, a master plan that interconnects local institutions, an aim to make the arts 'visible', the construction of Van Valkenburgh's Brooklyn Bridge Park and the inclusion of affordable housing units are all layers that work together to influence public perception (Parkerson, 2007). Parkerson notes that Brooklyn planners did not have a deliberate branding strategy in place, but an image change seemed to develop from a layered collection of convergences rising out of economics, community shifts and 'policy, planning and action over time.' (Parkerson, 2007).

The varied reflections regarding layering in this section rise from various angles and scales of discussion. The collective ideas suggest that layering seems to occur as a blend of both time-based and type-based strategies that not only aims to influence image; but is really aiming for a long term cultural embeddedness, becoming a cultural ecology when rooted the complex interactions of 'economics, culture and policy' (Evans, 2010). Public art it seems represents a branch, one physical manifestation of this process. The Brooklyn example, though Parkerson questions its transferability to other situations, does demonstrate how the layering of arts and culture strategy can potentially impact an image and change the course of a community's identity. This example demonstrates the potential power of a timely emergence of cultural layers when directed by conscious planning policy (Parkerson, 2007, Evans and Foord, 2006). To quote Parkerson's concluding remarks:

"In the Brooklyn example, culture works when it is part of a multi-layered and responsive approach to regeneration, when there is strong visionary leadership and follow-through and when a balance is struck between imported art and the local arts community, allowing for diversity and the unique creative character of a city to emerge and grow." (Parkerson, 2007, p. 267)

The strategic actions represent four angles that support discussion of public art. Their presentation reveals that each approach embodies many levels of interpretation. Significantly, all four strategies address the social dimension in some way. The community and its interactions with cultural planning and public art seem to underlie, and perhaps unify these strategies. The relationship of culture, economy, place, community and public art is important. The influence of politics and policy on the shape of our public environments is necessary to study and understand when discussing the motivations for public art and considering potential impacts on the community.

## **2.5 The Public in Public Art**

Hall and Robinson have noticed in their review of literature on public art the absence of the public voice and propose a shift in research to include those voices (Hall and Robinson, 2001). This opens to a question that is briefly mentioned by McCarthy in his complex discussion of sociology, policy and practice, 'what is public?' (McCarthy, 2006). James Peto describes the complexity in this question when he raises the idea of the indefinable public, an entity that is always shifting in time and place (Peto, 1992). Evans addresses community ownership. He emphasizes that people involved or affected by cultural projects should influence how a project's impact is measured (Evans, 2005). Often, he says, the experience and expertise of those that live and work in neighborhoods, are often under considered and an underutilized resource when evaluating for public art programs and cultural planning (Evans, 2005). Miles, too, addresses the public in public art. In his discussion of the development of markets and public benefit, he indicates that culture is largely predetermined by politics, that people receive culture but are not invited to make or 'shape' culture (Miles, 2005). A potential result of this dynamic may be

evidenced when National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Art in Public Places lost its federal funding in 1995, which Fleming credits to the inability of a panel of art professionals managing the program to understand that the NEA agenda for public art was different than the public's' (Fleming, 2007).

In Hall and Robertson's critical discussion on public and art connections to public and corporate sponsorship they relate that public art can be used as a device of manipulation, meeting objectives of power. As part of their critique of 'prevailing critical paradigms' Hall and Robertson review in some detail the ideas of Patricia Phillips, an important critic of public art, who also addresses this connection between policy and social concerns. She argues that public art controlled through corporate sponsorship is censored and results in safe, uncontroversial art. She challenges the trend toward exclusivity in the landscape. Public art animating the public arena with public debate should be allowed so that it can encourage differences of opinion, which in turn will lead to important social conversation (Hall and Robertson, 2001).

Fleming and von Tscherner encourage the development of public policy that will work against banal, conventional public space development, which has prevailed in the United States; by infusing place designs with historic, cultural and artistic character. They propose tactics that hinge on the idea that community engagement is necessary for the successful use of public art in public landscapes. They take a hard look at who public art projects serve, how these projects either successfully or less than adequately respond to place and to what degree the created spaces connect people with place (Fleming and von Tscherner 1987). Fleming and von Tscherner identify from experience the importance of communication and collaboration that relies on the input of multiple stakeholders, from which can develop with the aid of environmental profiling a master plan. They argue that the knowledge and expertise of these stakeholders gives a project more probable success over projects without a plan (Fleming and von Tscherner, 1987; Fleming 2007).

Examination of city planning strategy documents and cultural plans many cataloged through the efforts of organizations such as Going Public in 1988 and Americans for the Arts, 2001 survey and 2005-2006 Public Art Program Directory can reveal which processes or strategies these cities engage as they work to reinvent their own city life (Fleming, 2007). But these plans must be community centric by design to succeed, only then can they effectively infect the city fabric with 'life and character'. The number of public art projects plans nationwide and the acquired expertise of artist as planners or members of cross-disciplinary integrated design teams attest that there is a well of knowledge that cities such as Pittsfield can draw on as they work toward the reinvention of their public spaces. The pitfalls that have led to project failure resulting in reluctance of some communities to adopt future public art projects can be avoided. Perhaps only with public understanding of place identity can planning for the design of public spaces mature into something with longstanding meaning for the community (Fleming and von Tschamer, 1987; Fleming, 2007).

In a survey to gather information from Scottish councils about their attitudes toward public art Hamilton, Forsyth and De Iongh asks questions about public interest in public art. The council members' response on this question (at ~70%) indicated that public involvement was important, that it raises community acceptance and reduces vandalism (Hamilton, Forsyth and De Iongh, 2001). Markusen and Gadwa qualify this in their discussion about stakeholders and the potential for competing interests by saying that 'Citizens can be expected to participate in cultural planning initiatives in direct proportion to the extent that it feeds a personal or community passion...' (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010a). With that said perhaps public art that comes from the community and reflects the mind of the community may of central importance to evaluating success or anticipating an outcome for any given strategy.

The literature review provides an informed basis for discussion and analysis. The city of Pittsfield offers a substantive environment to study the application of public art, both from a planning and a social perspective. The cultural life of Pittsfield has many layers, reaching back in

time and demonstrating a resurgence into the present day. The current shape of culture in Pittsfield has a deliberate design, in which public art serves as one course. A presentation of Pittsfield's historic context, particularly as it pertains to the development cultural policy and programs for public art furnishes the groundwork on which to build an analysis.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **PITTSFIELD**

#### **3.1 Prelude**

Evans at the start of the lecture delivered at the Glasgow School of Arts Oct, 2011 comments that he hopes his experience as an arts management practitioner brings some "groundedness to this complex, floppy, fluid area of culture, creativity, urban planning and cities." (Evans, 2011b). This remark reflects well the multidimensionality of a topic that behaves like a moving target. As the literature review reveals, cultural regeneration planning, with public art as one trajectory, engages numerous factors: the dynamic of time, the elusive meaning of culture, shifting economic tides, unequal sociological distribution of political power, symbolic metaphorical understanding of place and the perpetual changing face of community. Evans provides a framework that will bring some order to the following discussion. This dividing of cultural planning into three approaches, culture-led regeneration, cultural regeneration, and culture and regeneration provides a back drop to an analysis that looks at the city of Pittsfield's cultural planning approach (Evans, 2005).

While the Evans model provides a borrowed container for the broader topic of cultural planning, four trends in the literature speak pointedly to cultural planning strategy that can be adapted to the discussion of public art. These trends represent four strategic threads –social based strategy, perception-based strategy, space- based strategy, and time/type-based strategy. Also to explore is the community's involvement with public art, the emergence of culture and the tension between quality of life and economy. All these contribute to the reasons a community such as Pittsfield chooses to implement a public art program.

To begin to uncover these motivations and expectations some foundational background on Pittsfield needs establishing. This survey includes some background economic history followed by information regarding cultural development. The historic survey concentrates on the

mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to the present. Pittsfield's contemporary cultural development history is addressed, both as a concept and in terms of its specific public art programs.

### **3.2 Introduction to Pittsfield and Its Art**

Pittsfield, like towns and cities across the nation, has a tradition of public art commemorating historic events and important persons. This type of narrative public art has in time become an integrated architecture of the city, an important contributor to the expression of place identity, cultural memory and self-definition. This older generation of public art, significant as it is to the story of public art in Pittsfield is different than that which has arrived in Pittsfield within the last twenty years. Contemporary public art is positioned as a mechanism of cultural regeneration, an economically driven medley of strategic action caught up with the social play that shapes the projected meaning of public places. Patricia Phillips poetically talks about public art as occupying the space between the public and private, a belonging to the weird 'world of things':

"...relat[ing] and separate[ing] (people) at the same time" Public art is 'dynamic' "... balance[ing] at the boundaries, occupying the inchoate spaces between public and private, architecture and art, object and environment, process and production, performance and installation." (Phillips, 2003, pp. 122, 131)

This is a story of contemporary public art in Pittsfield, shaped by intermediaries <sup>8</sup>(Evans and Foord, 2003; Breitbart and Stanton, 2007) and received by an 'indefinable, volatile and quixotic' public (Phillips, 2003). The current generations of public art are not consigned to a passive role, but are meant to impress the people that live, work and visit the city. This public art

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<sup>8</sup> Evans addresses the role that intermediaries play in the shaping of cultural policy objectives. He defines them as 'professionals and semi-professionals who facilitate the space between cultural producers' – artists and those directing the cultural planning efforts such as the business community, public officials and professional development leaders. He raises the issue that it is important to know how intermediaries interact with policy making and what position they have within the community. His discussion revolves around issues of power and its distribution in society. He observes how cultural planning and cultural planners can overlook the intrinsic culture that already exists in a community, favoring their own well intended interventions (Evans, 2003; Breitbart and Stanton, 2007).

employed as a symbolic arm shaping economic growth builds city image, while at the same time has hoped for power to engage the public in a meaningful cultural conversation. A close look at the evolution of Pittsfield's public art program, the relationship of the sculpture to space, community and economy will encourage more insight into the application of public art. Some characteristics of this application may be particularly unique to Pittsfield, but this study may well suggest approaches for other communities to consider.

### **3.3 Background History: From Industrial Town to Creative City**

The study of the current twenty year application of public art in Pittsfield begins with a sketch of Pittsfield's local economic, cultural history and planning history, strongly dominated throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the entrance and exit of General Electric (GE). Of significance to note, Pittsfield claims to function as the 'doorway to the Berkshires' (City of Pittsfield Planning Board, 1993), a creatively vital region visited every year by a multitude of tourists who come to partake in the bucolic beauty of its mountainous geography, fall foliage and wealth of culture offerings. An era of reinvention followed as a response to the cultural and economic vacuum left after GE retreated from Pittsfield. Central to this reinvention Pittsfield's officials have embarked on a deliberate, planned pursuit of the cultural economy as a means to revitalize a deserted downtown and to re-envision the city as a place alive with culture, to benefit local citizens and equally to become a sought out destination within the cultural fabric of the Berkshires.

#### **3.3.1 Early Pittsfield to GE**

Many eastern American industrial centers such as Lowell, North Adams and Holyoke early in their history grew as centers of manufacturing largely due to advantageous positions along waterways that could be harnessed for the generation of power. Pittsfield is situated at the confluence of two branches of the Housatonic River. By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the river generated energy for a host of 'manufacturing, textile and finance industries' (McGrath, 2008).

Businesses tended toward local ownership, which aggregated wealth and contributed much to the prosperity of the city. The close of the century saw the rise of corporations like General Electric, which operated out of a delocalized, concentrated business model that absorbed countless smaller firms and organized them into a single monopoly. General Electric, otherwise known as GE, is the second title to the company that began in 1890 as the Stanley Electric Manufacturing Company, a producer of light transformers. In just over ten years 'Stanley Works' became the largest employer in Pittsfield (McGrath, 2008). Less than five years after a colorful array of mergers, law disputes, buyouts and agreements, what was becoming the corporate giant General Electric purchased Stanley Works as part of its corporate consolidation. The community of the time may not have fully comprehended the far reaching implications of these events, but the establishment of GE in Pittsfield would utterly change the social, cultural and economic life of the city for the next eighty years (McGrath, 2008). GE not only employed a substantial portion of Pittsfield's population, but also was entrenched in all aspects of community life almost absolute in its power over the town's economy, culture and politics (Nash, 1989). In the mid 1980's GE began its wholesale retreat from Pittsfield as its business model evolved from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century 'welfare capitalism' that it famously helped to invent to a global competitive model which streamlined business with dramatic downsizing and relocated production centers to low cost areas in the South or overseas. GE's exit, like its entrance, dramatically impacted Pittsfield's citizens, which to a substantial proportion of its population was a grievous loss, a grave disappointment that generated some deeply long held bitterness (II)(McGrath, 2008). The exit of GE from Pittsfield's urban ecology had a ripple effect over the economy causing high unemployment, a population exodus and the inability for the regional and local economy to provide jobs that offered the same standard of living as those that GE once provided (McGrath, 2008). Nash notes the turn toward low paying sales and service jobs that could not absorb the number of laid off workers (Nash, 1989; Kirsch, 1998). Businesses that once thrived under GE's influence disappeared, not the least of which were centrally located in the once vital downtown

(Nash 1989). However the end of GE's reign over Pittsfield was also perceived by some as a window of opportunity for cultural and economic reinvention. Pittsfield now could find its new identity and carve out a 'cultural renaissance' that could carry the city into a new, hopefully better future.<sup>9</sup>

### **3.3.2 The Call for Revitalization**

The language of renewal stems back to the 1960's planning document and the idea of revitalization specifically applied to Pittsfield's downtown main street and extended business district is rearticulated as a goal during successive decades. The meaning of revitalization in Pittsfield seems to commonly reflect some foundational goals and associated values such as making the downtown more attractive to business, keeping the downtown vital with minimal empty storefronts, adding amenities to give character contribute to attractiveness and build place identity (City of Pittsfield Planning Board, 1962). The approaches to achieve the goals of revitalization evolved over time to reflect the changing values and subsequently lessons learned from the strategies undertaken. In this way it seems that revitalization reflects Pittsfield's changing society and its ideals. One Pittsfield planner states in a news article in 1990 that the goal (in planning) is to strive toward an ideal, "yet sometimes the ideal can't be reached. Sometimes, because of factors that you hadn't considered – and had no control over – the ideal has to change. But you have to keep changing with it." (Lamont, 1990) City strategies for revitalization seem to reflect a community's image of itself, which in Pittsfield is peppered with some ambivalence, as Garcia suggests, a mix of 'pride and negativism' directed towards the downtown (Gratz, 1994).

As the story is told the bottom dropped out of Pittsfield's economy for two reasons. First GE left as a result of a fundamental change in the way corporations do business and second the

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<sup>9</sup> Evans and Foord use the term urban cultural renaissance to describe a push to recognize a city's culture not just rising out of its cultural institutions but 'in the informal spaces and events of everyday life'. This is related to the idea of the emergence of culture (Evans and Foord, 2006).

Berkshire Mall arrived demonstrative of the changing shopping habits of a suburban economy, a change that in many communities resulted in the weakened commercial viability of the traditional commercial center. These indicators of a changing economy were pivotal; however Pittsfield actively addressed concern for revitalization of the downtown prior to the late 1980's when these events took full effect. The 1962 plan address the desire to strengthen the economics of the downtown. Influencing the drive to upgrade were projections for significant population growth, which never materialized (Lamont, 1990).

### **3.3.3 Urban Renewal**

The period from 1970 to 1980 is one that may be seen as a period of transition. Within this time frame Pittsfield's development policy moves away from urban renewal to the slowly emerging ideal of the creative economy. This cultural planning strategy was first brought to the table under the leadership of Mayor Charles L. Smith. He and his extended network of supporters worked toward the development of creative regeneration policy, which over time would strongly influence Pittsfield's present, one where public art will play a noted role.

During the era of urban renewal, 1960's through 1970's, many cities demolished their intricate, historic urban grain and replaced it with a new modernistic, often 'brutalistic', style of architecture. This planning approach did not deliver the anticipated results promised by its practitioners, causing instead displacement and other social-economic ills. This controversial planning ideology failed in many cities, exasperating some of the problems that practitioners sought to avert (Rae, 2003; Gratz, 1994). Like many communities of the time Pittsfield bought into urban renewal as reflected in a planning report drafted and published in 1962. The 1962 plan examines some of the pivotal concerns for the central business district (CBD) of the time. The Plan reported that the CBD had changed over the last decade. Pittsfield was documenting a decline in employment and a loss of business that was attributed to suburban shopping centers (City of Pittsfield Planning Board, 1962). The City's response to these economic stressors was to

propose the redesign of selected areas of the downtown in order to stem the trend of disinvestment in the city center. This resulted in a projected fifteen to twenty year urban renewal initiative consisting of two primary projects, the 'Columbus and Jubilee Projects', planning that had begun in 1965, and was 'now underway' (Urban Land Institute, 1966). The plan addressed parking and road circulation in the downtown area, but significantly the plan resulted in the razing of several historic blocks that were replaced with massive structures, such as a centrally located Hotel and business complex, then the Hilton Plaza, along West Street (City of Pittsfield Planning Board, 1962; Gratz, 1994). Many of the urban renewal planning proposals, like some of the main arterial expressways, never materialized. Other of the proposals were 'still alive and kicking' into the 1990's (Hathaway, 1990).

Not mentioned in the 1962 plan was any design to incorporate arts and culture as a central planning objective, though regional tourism was addressed:

"The tourist industry can be considered one of the basic industries of the Berkshire County. The present and economically most important phase of tourism can be considered as beginning about 1930....After WWII, increasing income and leisure time helped tourism in the Berkshires grow at a rapid rate...Tourism is frequently downgraded as an economic base as it usually provides only seasonal employment." (City of Pittsfield Planning Board, 1962, p. 5)

References in the 1962 plan to the placement of public art are absent. But it is interesting to note that a published image in the preface to Nash's book shows the author conversing with another in front of a mural with a political message painted in the 1970's (Nash, 1989). One interviewee recounts that during the 1970's a wave of artists came to Pittsfield and took occupancy on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors of downtown buildings (I7). This indicates an arts presence; but the alignment of the public planning vision with arts, culture and economy had not yet occurred.

The Report of the Pittsfield Downtown Development Committee to Mayor Smith in 1980 notes that 'revitalization of Pittsfield's Central Business District has been a community concern since 1962' with a goal to develop a 'competitive and attractive commercial center.' (Downtown Development Committee, 1980) This report was by order of the Mayor as he reevaluated the

CBD redevelopment plan. The cover letter to the report makes mention of recommendations for development that included much of downtown Pittsfield including the 'so -called Urban Renewal area'. Though the sentence was constructed as factual, the syntax suggests that the city was not immune to disappointment that resulted from the urban renewal plans. Nash (1989) writes that not much survived the 'once thriving' business area on West Street, destroyed in what she calls an 'abortive move to rehabilitate it in the 1960's'. She shares that the loss of Union Station '...a stone building of unusual design...' was acutely felt as was the destruction of an entire block of old shops that if preserved would have reflected the style of 'a quaint New England Village'. She indicates that some developers of the time recognized the shortsightedness of the policy. A quote from one of these individuals, William J. Angelo, expresses deep feeling toward this area of downtown. His words reflect a value some may have placed on Pittsfield's historic and cultural heritage. The poetic quality of the quote demonstrates how delicate and organic city structure and the economics that balance within this structure can be:

"Twenty-five years ago, North and West Street were complementary to each other, like two limbs of a body. ....they were like two lungs of a body. And now it is hard for one to work without the other. In addition to having a number of stores and shops down on West Street, there were three major restaurants and a train station in a half mile. It was very, very beautiful, quintessential New England type of town. That was destroyed in the old 1967 urban type of philosophy. And they took down a lot of houses around there. They destroyed them. That was basically the economic base for downtown Pittsfield. They did their business downtown. They wiped them out of there, and they wiped out a lot of the stores and you're operating on one lung. Now (1984 interview) it's come back to a philosophy we think is appropriate to downtown Pittsfield. There are plenty of shopping plazas to go around, but Pittsfield is different." (Nash, 1989, p. 204)

### **3.3.4 The Mall Wars**

The story of the development of the Berkshire Mall is one that recounts the effects of suburbanization, an anxiety about the future viability of Pittsfield's central business district and some seeming ambivalence regarding the downtown (Gratz, 1994). Around the middle of the 1970's The Pyramid Companies, a management group responsible for many mega-mall proposals in Massachusetts and New York wanted to build a regional mall in Lenox. Both Lenox and



Pittsfield resisted the proposal, which was successfully blocked with the support of the then Governor of Massachusetts Michael Dukakis who denied a state permit for a curb cut that would allow vehicular access to the mall (Gratz, 1994). Pittsfield's involvement in the fight was not motivated by any philosophical objection to the mall; rather the city leaders recognized the value of the mall's potential revenue impacts on the community. The 1980 Report to the mayor expressed that there was a public concern as to the 'lack of progress in downtown development' (Downtown Development Committee, 1980). The leaders, in fact, wanted to lure Pyramid to build the mall within Pittsfield's downtown business district. The mall project appears in some ways governed by a similar type of thinking that justified urban renewal type planning, both angling for major redevelopment of the historic downtown structure to gain a competitive edge (City of Pittsfield Planning Board, 1993). But the addition of the mall to the downtown would not only change the physical, historic and cultural composition of the downtown, but also potentially would change the social balance between public and private ownership.

Available to Pyramid were eleven square acres of downtown that had been originally cleared for urban renewal, but that never was developed. Pyramid's proposal, however, called for 'a twenty-two acre enclosed mall with 620,000 square feet of retail space (five department stores, eighty shops) and three thousand parking spaces, room for more cars than at Boston's Logan Airport.' This degree of development would result in the demolition of 'half of downtown's ...existing retail space...with not...a promise [to incorporate] the displaced businesses' into the new development. This plan also would remove the valuable market space above the removed storefronts (Gratz, 1994). Pyramid representative Ungerer urged Pittsfield to take a leap of faith but the citizens of Pittsfield, not development averse, recognized the value of the historic and cultural character of their downtown and saw that 'the future of their community was at stake' (Horner, 1980). Business owners realized that their businesses were not likely to survive the impacts of a new large regional mall (Gratz, 1994). And 'city leaders, a bit wiser after the Pyramid fight, sought out other developers willing to offer a smaller, sensitive proposal

incorporating existing buildings and businesses' (Gratz, 1994). Newly elected Mayor Charles L. Smith in his first inaugural speech in 1980 responded to Pyramid's call for a leap of faith into the unknown with a straight 'No' (Gratz, 1994; Horner, 1980).

The community organized using the platform of historic preservation to fight the proposal and won. The city did not follow this course of action. The Pyramid Companies built the Berkshire Mall while embroiled in controversy in the late 1980's about five miles from Pittsfield's Central Business District in Lanesborough, (Kirsch, 1998). The after-effects of this development were felt in the center of Pittsfield (I1). The construction of the mega-mall resulted in the relocation or closing of privately owned businesses downtown (Kirsch, 1998). Gratz recounts the dynamic as circulatory, businesses left and new ones filled in. However, the point to emphasize is if it is true that the citizens of Pittsfield harbored an ambiguity toward the downtown, the fight to preserve its integrity surely demonstrated a change of perception and a shift in their relationship to the downtown (Gratz, 1994). They were willing to go to bat to save the quality and character of their downtown, and this seems a clear assignment of value. On reflection, the idea of regeneration directed toward a downtown is in itself an expression of value. The lesson that may have surfaced at this junction was that the ideals and means to strengthen the downtown had to be carefully selected so not to conflict with the cultural character. This is a statement of self-value as well as self-identification.

Gratz concludes her discussion of Pittsfield's mall by delivering what is an important insight, and one that Pittsfield's leaders may have taken to heart. The short term effects of a massive intervention do not stand up to the benefits produced by a prolonged, thoughtful diversified approach. This may have been one of the most important shifts in perception to occur as a result of the mall controversy and one that seems to color Pittsfield's planning approach (Gratz, 1994). This expression of cultural value and a new course of policy set the stage for the next generation of phased cultural development that develops under the leadership of Mayor Smith.

### **3.4 The Meaning and Face of Culture in Pittsfield**

Pittsfield's pattern of culture has the shape of an intricately woven tapestry with its intersecting threads. Long ones follow the time line in continuity, while shorter threads are snipped to be fastened to a particular moment or redrawn at another singular interval. Other threads are removed completely. Nash, who wrote about the early GE years through the 1980's, observes that Pittsfield's culture was an outgrowth of neighborhood life and ethnic diversity. Local culture included local cuisine, period architecture, sports, theater, recreational opportunities, clubs, community groups, parades, festivals, small specialty retail businesses and more (Nash, 1989). While some cities may select by choice or happenstance a singular cultural thread, a broad definition remains the topography of Pittsfield's current cultural definition, one that draws from whole cannon of fine to folk arts (dance, music, literature, visual representation, sculpture, crafts) and includes a spectrum of restaurants and entertainment venues. Expressive of the way society consumed culture at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, seven theaters - movie, music and stage - operated throughout downtown Pittsfield. During the General Electric years culture was in many ways defined and controlled by this dominant institution. Holiday celebrations and festivals were closely linked with local retail enterprise (Nash, 1989). With Pittsfield's post GE decline in the late 1980's to early 2000 Pittsfield's cultural life shrank to some degree, but it did not disappear. The Berkshire Museum, an institution of art, history and science has had a continuous one-hundred and three year history.

Owens dubs Pittsfield's present cultural growth a 'second Gilded Age' (Owens, 2008). Within the past ten years as part of a deliberate planning strategy, several cultural anchors have been reinstated in the center of Pittsfield. Period theaters and buildings have been restored as active cultural venues. In 2005 The Barrington Stage bought what were once the Union Square vaudeville theater and then the Berkshire Music Hall. Relocating from Sheffield Massachusetts to Pittsfield center The Barrington Stage restored the theater and reopened in 2007 (Barrington Stage Company, 2012).

The Colonial Theater which originally operated from 1903 to the 1950's reopened under its original name in 2006 after undergoing an extensive, historically accurate restoration to its original Beaux Arts architecture. The restoration of the Colonial is a strong example of Pittsfield's commitment to arts and culture. The theater project was funded in part from the GE funds, monies left with the city as a conciliatory compensation to help Pittsfield rebuild its economy and clean up the environmental damage caused from PCB contamination after GE's departure. Money donated from members of the community as well as state and federal money through the National Parks Service Historic Preservation Fund further provided the needed capital for theater renovations (Whitman, 2008).

The Berkshire Museum received money for updates and restorations in 2006 from the Berkshire Bank Foundation, an organization that has supported many important cultural projects, including temporary public art events. The Beacon Cinema newly opened in 2009 as a six theater movie house in the fully restored Venetian Gothic Revival Kinnell-Kresge building in the Park Square Historic District. On the Beacon's information page the purpose of these cultural anchors is explicitly expressed:

"After nearly 10 years in the planning stage, The Beacon Cinema in downtown Pittsfield Massachusetts is a dream come true. The project is a critical piece of the city's downtown revitalization strategy developed by Downtown, Inc. and the City in the late 1990's. The Cinema serves as an important anchor along with the Colonial Theater, Berkshire Museum and Barrington Stage Company in downtown Pittsfield's growing reputation as the center of culture and entertainment in Berkshire County." (North Street Cinema, 2009)

Pittsfield has had a history of longstanding festival activity. The first children's Halloween parade was organized in 1923 and remains a tradition to the present. An Ethnic Fair featuring music and dance reflective of Pittsfield's diverse population was first established in 1973 and ran without a break until 1986, its thirteenth year (Nash, 1989). The festival did not occur for several years after, but began again in 2006, continuing into the present ("Resurrected Ethnic Fair," 2007). For five years on the third Thursday of the month, the City cordons off North Street for a night of music, food, dancing and street event (Murray, 2011). This festival

directly references GE's payday. On receiving their employment check employees would go downtown for a meal or a movie. Third Thursday in this way is a social landmark that commemorates, celebrates and in this sense continues this once important tradition (O'Brien, 2011).

The purpose of this quick sketch of Pittsfield's cultural history is to establish that culture in Pittsfield is not new idea but central to the city's heritage. At the same time it is evident that the present cultural era in Pittsfield is taking a new and broad track. Cultural anchors are cultivated and fresh ideas are tried in an attempt to blaze a trail to forge a new purpose for the city. The path is clear in its purpose and design, growing Pittsfield's 'reputation as the center of culture and entertainment in Berkshire County' (North Street Cinema, 2009).

### **3.4.1 Establishing the Warp - Mayor Charles Smith**

Mayor Charles Smith elected to office in 1980 arrived in the middle of the mall battle. Comments from his inaugural speech published in a local news article present a careful, but direct political language that did not express complete opposition to the mall, but did suggest that he wanted Pyramid to downsize their plans for the downtown. He talks about 'building on' the city's assets and finding alternatives to the mall project "that would work better for the economic and social interests of [the]city" (Horner, 1980). He envisioned a local control of downtown development, one that kept to Pittsfield's traditional growth model. Mayor Smith's demonstrated in his comments an awareness of value toward the downtown, one that the community also articulated as they rose to protect their historic urban core during the battle for the mall. The timing is interesting because during 1980's some in Pittsfield believed that the shifts felt from GE represented only a phase, that the company would swing its pendulum toward growth and resume its strong operational presence (Kirsch, 1998). Smith's words seem to stretch towards a new internally generated type of civic self-awareness, one that General Electric no longer defined. In a more reflective comment Smith observes:

"I have taken North Street for granted for years, ... must confess it's only lately I've started to look up and around" With new eyes he sees "diversity of architecture - , [a variety of] buildings that [together]...express the character of a city and its people North Street is us." (Horner, 1980, p. 15)

This statement is important because this expression of civic self-awareness is an articulation of a self- definition. Smith's awakening to Pittsfield's architecture and 'call to build on what we have' is a recognition that Pittsfield has a foundational cultural heritage tradition to draw from, but his words also suggest a readiness of imagination open and eager to drawing new cultural threads (Horner,1980).

Mayor Smith was reelected in 1982 and served Pittsfield as mayor until 1987. In his second inaugural speech he talks about Pittsfield becoming the economic 'hub of the county'. He also speaks of hard times, the need for economic recovery and new development. During this time population in Pittsfield was dropping and inflation was rising, facts that concerned civic leaders (Kirsch, 1998; Smith, 1982).<sup>10</sup>

Community input regarding development concerns (including cultural) seemed a priority as evidenced in Smith's newly formed committee called Pittsfield Economic Revitalization Corporation (PERC) intended to bring the business community into partnership with the 'public sector' "to bring the best of both worlds together to solve the thorny problems of economic development, while maintaining the quality of life we now enjoy." (Smith, 1982) This quote clearly states that this dual intent, economy and quality of life, was actively part of Pittsfield's political dialog. Importantly, though, Smith speaks about Pittsfield citizens participating in the development process (Smith, 1982).

In sum, Smith demonstrates an ability for the leadership of the Pittsfield to project a vision for the city over the long term. He was willing to take lessons from recent events and to modify his strategy accordingly. The 1980 Report to the Mayor quotes Smith: 'It is imperative

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<sup>10</sup> Nash notes that a drop below 50,000 would disqualify Pittsfield from block grants the city relied on to bring in new business (Nash, 1989). Well-paying middle class manufacturing declined, replaced by a new more highly paid high-tech professional class, a trend that contributed to an increased disparity of wealth (Kirsch, 1998).

that the recent lessons of history be remembered well and serve as guidance for future action.' (Downtown Development Committee, 1980). This willingness to learn and respond from experience demonstrates a flexibility that seems characteristic of Smith's approach to development and essential to the course of cultural planning that would over time become a central development ideology. Smith's motivations appeared to respond to the particular concerns of the time -Pittsfield's image, its economic future - but he also was projecting a new vision for a future Pittsfield, one not dominated by a single industry and one in which quality of life could walk in concert with economic development. A point of significance stated in Smith's 1982 inaugural speech was the acknowledgement of a political commitment to use arts and culture as a strategic arm to catalyze economic development. He says:

"There have been many milestones of progress over the last two years. Our City celebrated its artists and performers during Artabout. For the first time, Pittsfield made a commitment to bring art to the people, and to downtown. This commitment joined the artistic community with the retail and business community to the benefit of all. We will build on the success of this first effort, learn from everybody, and provide our city with another arts festival for enjoyment of all." (Smith, 1982)

Bill Angelo a planner of that period observes a rising call for the high arts to become a selling point. The city was active in initiating the Berkshire Public Theater and running a local arts center. Commenting on how such institutions contribute to quality of life and attract new industry, he notes how Pittsfield's cultural strategy is drawing on the example of Boston and other larger cities saying, "We need that here in order to assure people." (Kirsch, 1998, pp. 56-57)

The 'push to sell' was an important to Mayor Smith and part of a campaign to project a 'healthy city', which was contrary to some of the negative press that swirled around Pittsfield at that time. Nash quotes Mayor Smith saying "Well, we're doing all the things we can to promote our city and to sell our city... We've worked very closely since I've been in office with the arts to promote the arts in this city." (Nash, 1989, p. 218; Kirsch 1998)

The first Artabout festival in 1981 was one of these pushes to promote. The festival aimed to attract a share of the annual tourist traffic that passed through the Berkshires (Nash,

1989). This eleven day free event emphasizing performance arts featured greater than one hundred cultural offerings (Rud, 1981). Subsequent years the festival was scaled back in size and duration due to funding constraints and concerns rising from the local merchant population ("PDA Merchants, " 1981; "Officials Want," 1983; "A Shortened", 1983). In the end the Artabout festival did not deliver the attention towards Pittsfield that was intended.<sup>11</sup> However, Artabout was one of the first attempts to act on Pittsfield's emerging cultural agenda to change image and to become associated with the cultural life of the Berkshires. The Artabout festival reflects a political climate that would be willing to experiment with new ideas, create new traditions and build on Pittsfield's advantageous geographic position at the center of the Berkshire region. But it also marks something else important, an ideological course that Pittsfield was about to run headlong - the incorporation of arts and culture as a deliberate integrated strategy for redevelopment.

Smith had cultivated a relationship with philanthropist Kitty Lichtenstein whom he appointed as the first city commissioner of cultural affairs in 1985 to head Pittsfield's Cultural Affairs Committee and advisory board (DiMassimo, 1985). Lichtenstein had bought and restored the historic Whittelsy building, which she subsequently rented to the city for a \$1.00 a year (Horner, 1983; Bonenti, 1984). Here the city established the Pittsfield Community Arts Center later to become the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts, which Lichtenstein envisioned as a 'presence of the arts and a catalyst for the area' (Bonenti 1984). Kitty left the post in 1985 and was replaced by a woman named Melanie Rivers who served as cultural commissioner until 1987 (Tichenor 1990).

A second leader of Pittsfield's arts and culture during the Mayor Smith era was Daniel M. O'Connell. He shared Mayor Smith's philosophy that business followed the arts. He says, "It's quite real. If you create more cultural things, businesses come. It's economic development."

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<sup>11</sup>Mayor Smith mentions Artabout and the ethnic fair saying "each succeeded to some degree" (Katz, 1986, p. 7).



(Abbott, 2003). O'Connell an artist himself had made a concentrated effort to bring the arts to Pittsfield since 1975. He belonged to a generation of Pittsfield artists that arrived in the 1970's. Seventy-three artists occupied studio space on the second and third floors on North Street in J. J. Newberry building between 1977 through 1999 until they were evicted when the building was coopted for redevelopment. This group of artists organized arts festivals, engaged in what he called 'guerilla raids for nighttime chalkings' and other spontaneous art events of a style somewhat akin to the 'Happenings' of the 1970's. They also were responsible for opening galleries and establishing a sculpture garden (Abbott, 2003). O'Connell was appointed as Pittsfield's commissioner of cultural affairs in 1987 (Tichenor, 1990).

O'Connell's vision was a social one. He shared Kitty Lichtenstein's purpose to cultivate the arts while keeping them affordable and accessible to a broad audience. He believed that the mere presence of artists was capable of changing the feeling of a community (Abbott, 2003). O'Connell directed a mural project operated under the administration of the Berkshire Artisans. He with artist friends collaborated on a collection of murals placed on buildings around the downtown that depicted various aspects of community life. O'Connell also was responsible for mural restoration and worked to establish a city ordinance that required building owners to contact the artist if they planned to remove or destroy any of the murals (Abbott, 2003; Carman, 1998). O'Connell sought community participation. Mural development involved his retrieving accounts of Pittsfield from town elders living in local nursing homes that helped him form an image of an earlier Pittsfield. The community arts center, home of the Berkshire Artisans under O'Connell's direction, organized mural tours and encouraged the community to come watch the artists at work (Abbott, 2003).



**Figure 3: Lest We Forget 1961-1975 Mural (Berkshire Web, n.d.)**

In 2003 O'Connell was responsible for the placement of two temporary public art sculptures, a pair of bronze lions and a moose, installed at city hall and Park Square respectively (Abbott, 2003).<sup>12</sup> A local radio pundit tagged the lions as 'tax and spin' playing on an issue currently active in the community conversation (I6). By 2003 O'Connell felt that Pittsfield's art scene was well established, "Over a long period of time, we developed arts in the downtown. We softened it up. We created the right atmosphere." (Abbott, 2003)

O'Connell was responsible for the first generation of contemporary public art in Pittsfield. He was heavily involved in the then newly established Department of Cultural Affairs and by 2000 he had worked for nearly 30 years toward the establishment of a tax free arts district in downtown Pittsfield. Rezoning for the arts was not realized until 2006 under Mayor Ruberto, but O'Connell was instrumental in laying out the vision on the table for others to pick up when the time was ripe (Christina Tree, 2006; Abbott, 2003). Not everyone agrees that O'Connell was as progressive for the arts in Pittsfield as he articulates. His social agenda was true, effective and meaningful in terms of artists, art education and the community involvement in arts. But some

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<sup>12</sup> The pieces were well received. Some citizens asked why the pieces could not be kept as permanent installations (I6).

leaders at the planning level felt that he had an overly strong hold over the cultural planning process. Some of the Mayors nearly shut down support for the community center on more than one occasion (Abbott, 2003) (I1).

### **3.4.2 Administrative Threads - Four Mayors and 15 Years (1988 – 2003)**

Anne Everest Wojtkowski, the first woman Mayor in Pittsfield, won the Mayoral Race following Smith's departure from office in 1987. Wojtkowski had to contend with a serious downturn in Pittsfield's economy and was active in her pursuit of downtown development. Wojtkowski did not seem to place a high priority on the cultural agenda. As her term came to a close she expressed regrets for not working harder to advance the restoration of the Colonial. She did however work towards the restorations of the Capitol Theater. The Capitol Theater, rebuilt and renovated by 1993, became the home for the Ralph J. Froio Senior Center (Lamont, 1991a; Lamont 1991b). From these examples Wojtkowski cultural development efforts seemed most directed toward the specifics of cultural anchors and community and less on the synthesis of a broader planned cultural economy.

Edward M. Reilly when he won the Mayor's race in 1991 communicated to the citizens of Pittsfield a desire to reestablish a lost sense of community. He was concerned about what he perceived as a pervasive pessimistic attitude the citizens carried toward their own city. Like Mayor Smith, Reilly observed the difficulty Pittsfield had in retaining its youth ("Edward M Reilly" 1991). His downtown development agenda seemed oriented toward building a more positive reputation within the Pittsfield community and, by extension, establishing a stronger position within the Berkshire region (Sukiennik, 1995; "Reilly Takes New Leadership Role, " 1992). Reilly continued efforts to regenerate and enliven the downtown, but did not see much progress. Like Wojtkowski his cultural planning initiatives focused on proposals for new anchors. These included consideration of a Graphic Arts Museum and a Children's Museum, both of which were not realized (Mattoon, 1995).

In 1997 Reilly left office after three terms, succeeded by Gerald S. Doyle, Jr. Doyle, who was elected to office at the threshold of the new millennium, perceived Pittsfield at a crossroad (Sukiennik, 1998c). The arts and culture agenda seemed reinvigorated during Doyle's four year tenure as Mayor. He seemed particularly attuned to the significance of Pittsfield's central position in the Berkshires (Sukiennik, 1998c). Like preceding Mayors, Doyle saw downtown revitalization as an important vehicle to reach this goal, and placed it first on the list of priorities (Sukiennik, 1998a).

In January 1998 Doyle unveiled a plan that coordinated with the goals of a local business leadership organization, Downtown, Inc.<sup>13</sup> Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. has been a collaborative organization composed of 'downtown property owners, residents, cultural and non-profit organizations' who serve on six board committees (Table 1). This organization carries a leadership imperative to develop and maintain a vibrant downtown to benefit both Pittsfield's citizens and visitors (Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., n.d.). Doyle's new plan promoted a vision to revitalize downtown as a business, cultural and retail center that will serve as a destination for tourists and employees of local business (Sukiennik, 1998a). Specifics of the plan included goals that were expressed in the political agenda of previous Mayors, such as commitment to the Colonial Theater renovation project, improved parking conditions and assigning funds for streetscape improvements. Additionally, Doyle envisioned the development of a new centrally located conference center and parking for a cinema complex (Sukiennik, 1998a).

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<sup>13</sup> Downtown Inc. is still presently active in Pittsfield's downtown development planning goals. Over the years it has changed its name a few times, first known as Downtown Associates later Downtown, Inc., and most recently Downtown Pittsfield, Inc.

<b>Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. Committees</b>	
Arts & Entertainment Committee	Increase the presence and visibility of the arts and entertainment downtown to encourage the growth of this sector as an economic generator to bring people downtown.
Business Improvement Committee	Strengthen downtown's economic base by helping existing businesses work together and succeed, recruiting new businesses, finding new use for vacant spaces and maintaining and improving downtown's appearance and services.
Downtown Quality of Life Committee	Monitor quality of life issues to ensure a good living and business environment downtown. These include crime, sidewalk, maintenance, trash collection, graffiti, bike and skate boarders, panhandlers, unkempt storefronts and/or vacant building fronts.
Fundraising Task Force	Develop and carry out a series of fundraising events to benefit Downtown, Inc.'s operating budget.
Marketing Committee	Develop effective print and on-line marketing effort that focuses on year-round residents, second homeowners and visitors.
Special Events Task Force	Work to coordinate special events such as holiday activities, new business opening celebrations, streetscape improvements, etc. This group will include a "Volunteer Task Force" ready to be called on as necessary to help implement above mentioned events.

**Table 1: Downtown Pittsfield Committees (Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., n.d.)**

During Doyle's term the City of Pittsfield Department of Community Development invited the University of Massachusetts Urban Places Project under the Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning to work on what was called the Pittsfield Gateway Project.<sup>14</sup> In the spring of 1998 a cross-disciplinary studio composed of landscape architecture and planning students worked with Pittsfield officials to generate ideas that would help the city envision the

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<sup>14</sup> The Pittsfield 1993 development plan public process resulted in community input regarding the South Street Gateway, which residents felt should be emphasized and protected. The community also expressed that the city should promote a variety of local cultural and natural attractions to promote tourism (City of Pittsfield Planning Board, 1993).

'Gateway Block' area between South Street, and Park Square, an area with a concentration of cultural offerings that could serve as an anchor for future downtown redevelopment. The program design built on the city's existing assets was aimed to address tourists who might partake in the city's cultural offerings. Doyle reports that the UMass study would soon be complete, though there is no mention as to how this study's would impact the planning process. A review of the development objectives related specifically to historical and cultural assets listed in the Executive Summary suggests that the city did achieve to varying degrees most of these stated goals (Table 2) (Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning UMass Amherst, 1998).

<b>Pittsfield Gateway Project Executive Summary Goals X= has been addressed by 2011</b>	
Restoring the Colonial Theater to attract theater, dance, and other artistic productions to the area.	X
Creating a visitors center at the corner of South Street and East Housatonic Street to greet tourists and welcome them to the area.	X
Promoting new festivals to attract tourism, especially in the fall and spring to extend the tourism season.	X
Developing options for adding additional institutions and activities, particularly those with a focus on art and culture.	X
Implementing a Bed and Breakfast program	Unknown

**Table 2: Gateway Project Executive Summary Goals**

Mayor Doyle refers to a second study funded by the city (Sukiennik, 1998a). The 1999 Cultural Action Strategy, An Arts and Entertainment Economic Development Plan. The Report envisions and promotes an Arts and Entertainment district that is linearly laid out, encompassing a total of four blocks, creating in effect an 'elongated elliptical district'. This vision is prescient of the 2005 rezoning of the central portion of the downtown area into an arts district under Mayor Ruberto (Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., 1999). What was not referred to in the report was the

incorporation of public art or landscape design. The plan seemed more oriented to promoting the active venues that could attract tourism (Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., 1999).<sup>15</sup>

The report also promoted community involvement saying:

"We have seen cultural arts projects in other city's achieved largely through community volunteer efforts, having reduced costs for materials and labor, while at the same time raising level of participation in the arts – the goal of Pittsfield's Cultural Action Strategy... this includes teachers and administrators ...for input and inclusion in the process." (Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., 1999, p. 10)

During Doyle's term, leaders visited select cities that had built a reputation for achieving a measure of downtown revitalization with the help of cultural planning strategies. Visited cities included Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Providence, Rhode Island and Northampton, Massachusetts (Sukiennik, 1998a). Though Pittsfield had been working toward a detailed cultural planning strategy of its own, the trip offered an important opportunity to learn from other cities. One of the useful take home points retrieved from the visits was the importance of cultivating public/private partnerships as a means to achieving set goals and objectives. The leaders from Northampton conveyed that Pittsfield did not need the profits from a college population in order to succeed, but rather needed to identify its strengths and to build on them. The officials also pointed out that Pittsfield had an enviable strength, the city's geographic advantage 'of being in the middle of one of the country's finest cultural regions' (Sukiennik, 1998a).

In the end Doyle faced public frustration that had been expressed during Reilly's term and that continued to build up over the slow progress of downtown development (Lincoln, 2001). Sarah Hathaway succeeded Doyle in 2001 for a single term. Hathaway, a professional urban planner, also advocated for downtown development, announcing that she wanted to achieve 'a thriving downtown within the first year term' (Lincoln, 2001; Monachina, 200; Shane 2001). Community ownership and involvement ranked high on her agenda, indicating that she wanted people to feel that Pittsfield is their city (Shane, 2001). Hathaway supported the gateway project

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<sup>15</sup> The report refers to tourism saying, 'Cities large and small around world are recognizing the benefits of pursuing the development of a new urban economic base built on tourism and repeat visitation of people from the local area.' (Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., 1999)

of 1997. She projected that she would accomplish a cultural plan during her term as Mayor (Monachina, 2001).

During Smith's years of service a reawakening to Pittsfield as a business and cultural center of the Berkshires occurred. The building blocks for a cultural renaissance were laid out and progressive action steps set in motion the course of cultural planning that has at present has taken root in a big way. Smith's accomplishments - the Artabout festival, the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts, the Office of Cultural Affairs, and the mural project - was anchored in the belief that an economy can be built over time with the help of a rich and varied cultural agenda. Each of the four Mayors between 1998 and 2004 contributed to some extent to the cultural agenda that Smith initiated. Each of these individuals contributed threads of varying length. Hathaway and Doyle seemed most ready to keep the cultural agenda alive. Concurrently, advocates and associated organizations continued to work towards Pittsfield's cultural future. During this period of time Daniel O'Connell was still actively directing and organizing The Berkshire Artisans and the Mural Project as well as other cultural events around town. Downtown, Inc. was working the vision for the downtown. The Colonial Theater restoration was underway. The stage was set for the next chapter that would develop under Mayor Ruberto's leadership.

### **3.4.3 Weaving the Weft - Mayor James M. Ruberto 2003 to 2011**

James M. Ruberto, a Pittsfield native, practiced business in various large metropolitan cities before returning to Pittsfield to run in the 2001 Mayoral Race. His urban experiences shaped his views regarding arts and culture and his business background informed his approach. With this he brought a fresh perspective to his hometown, viewing the cultural dimension of city life as essential to community vitality (Giuliano, 2009). He lost the race to Hathaway in 2001, but in 2004 he succeeded as Pittsfield's thirty-fifth Mayor (Capeless and McCaffrey, 2006). Ruberto demonstrated from the start a commitment to an aggressive cultural agenda, defining the city of Pittsfield as the 'Downtown of the Berkshires' with a 'future in entertainment' (Tree, 2006).



The creative economic strategy that Ruberto has worked to cultivate captures a broad range of sectors that includes an assembly of business types, cultural amenities, institutions, entertainment venues, restaurants and small company startups. In like fashion an assortment of arts disciplines ranging from visual media to music, literature to performing arts are delivered via small venue flagship anchors to festivals and temporary public art exhibits or events. This collective, eclectic agenda is indented to grow the city economy by joining business strategy with cultural life. It is this big picture wrapped in both economy and quality of life that fuels the surge toward a new self-made Pittsfield, one that aims to attract both new business and residents and to build new job opportunities ("Pittsfield Begins," 2006).

By January 2005 Mayor Ruberto established a new Office of Cultural Development, a renaming that was as deliberate as it was strategic (11). This move severed the almost three decade relationship City Hall had with Daniel O'Connell who left with concerns about the long term care of the murals and the social focus of the public arts programs (Dew, 2005b; Dew, 2005c). The idea that 'arts are for everyone' continues under Ruberto (Giuliano, 2009). However, the change essentially altered the dynamics at City Hall, opening the way for Ruberto to carry out an assertive, but from the point of view of city hall an inclusive, collaborative cultural agenda. In 2005 Ruberto hired Megan Whilden as the Director of Cultural Development, a position created in the spring of 2004 (Dew, 2005a; Dew, 2005b). Whilden whose background is business, marketing, publishing and public advocacy has stated the objective to not only change what Pittsfield offers, but to change perceptions about Pittsfield. (Shaw, 2009; Cahill, 2007; Dew 2005a; Dew 2005b). Whilden has a gift for employing multimedia, both traditional and electronic, to comprehensively disseminate information regarding upcoming events, planning initiatives and other avenues of city promotion and future funding. Some of these efforts are directed regionally and beyond. These tactics raises Pittsfield's image profile helping to develop the tourist market while leveraging political influence that enables the city to acquire grants and other sources of funding (Shaw, 2009).

The same year of Whilden's appointment the Ruberto administration drafted a plan to rezone for a mixed use approach to downtown development allowing for residential, artist lofts to blend with existing commercial zoning along North Street and adjacent streets creating a 'downtown arts district' (Dew, 2005d; Tree, 2006). The establishment of the Downtown Arts Overlay District, which was both adopted and won a smart growth award in 2006, was an important political and planning move that broadens the opportunity for the arts in Pittsfield and strengthens the pursuit of an arts diverse economy (Dew, 2005d). In 2011 Pittsfield's City Council agreed to support the submission of an application to the Cultural Districts Initiative, rising from new state legislation established in 2010 enacted through the Massachusetts Cultural Council that formally designates select Massachusetts downtowns as 'Cultural Districts'. In Pittsfield the new cultural designation is designed to help cities promote tourism and grow their economy through cultural development. Whilden claims that the legislation may have been partly developed because of Pittsfield's accomplishments in the arena of cultural development (Durwin, 2011a). If chosen Pittsfield will be able to post cultural district signage and the city will be listed on the state tourism website. The state designation will help non-profit cultural organizations and the city to obtain grants and other financial assistance. With state approval, Pittsfield would be among the first to achieve the designated cultural district status (Durwin, 2011a; Lindsay, 2011).

As of 2012 Ruberto's term in public office comes to an end. To what extent the new Mayor, Dan Bianchi, will celebrate and advocate for the cultural economy is not yet known. In a pre-election interview Bianchi was asked about this question to which he answered with an endorsement of Whilden's position (Durwin, 2011b). One of the listed goals for economic development in his campaign action plan affirms a commitment to tourism, which he posits is a fundamental link between the regional and local economy. He states a commitment to collaborate with the Cultural Commission to continue the promotional work in this sector (Bianchi, 2011).

Promotion of Pittsfield's arts and culture occurs in several ways, one of which relates to the projection of image. Like many cities, Pittsfield employs buzz slogans as a promotional device. The language used to project city identity expresses the purpose and tenor of policy and planning. What is interesting is that Pittsfield has adopted numerous phrases at different times that emphasize different meanings. Entering in with these phrases is some of the substance and meaning that composes Pittsfield's cultural policy. By extension Pittsfield's public art, both spatially and strategically, in part serves as substance that supports these image phrases.

#### **3.4.4 Self-Promotion in Phrase**

The perception that Pittsfield is the 'excluded middle of the Berkshires', the 'hole in the donut' is one that the City has strived to erode, both in action and rhetorically; replacing the image through deliberate, sustained, strategic marketing with a fresh one that places Pittsfield as a vital center of culture, a destination unto itself (McGrath, 2008; Katz, 1983; City of Pittsfield Planning Board, 1993; Shaw, 2009). Ruberto comments on an article run in Yankee Magazine that featured a promotional essay describing points to visit along Route 7 from Connecticut to Vermont. While naming several stops in Berkshire County, neither the text nor the printed map that accompanied the article acknowledged Pittsfield (Roche, 2006; O'Brien, 2011).<sup>16</sup> A few years later Yankee Magazine ran an article entitled 'Pittsfield, Massachusetts: 10 Reasons to Visit' and in 2009 Yankee posted a blog announcement, 'Art Flows in Cultural Pittsfield The Creative Economy in the Berkshires'. This anecdote illustrates the city's struggle with its reputation (Harris and Lyon, 2007; Beem, n.d.).

Image building relies on a variety of factors. Controlling the physical environment by administering uniformity and injecting character into streetscape amenity are two ways to influence image. The Yankee story demonstrates another important factor, the management of

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<sup>16</sup> Mayor Ruberto wrote Yankee Magazine to ask the magazine to relook at Pittsfield (O'Brien, 2011)

media, shaping what is said (or in this case not said). Managing language, a form of what Anholt calls symbolic action, is a place branding technique intimately tied to the flow of communication about a place, its buzz (Anholt, 2008). The descriptive branding phrase 'Creative Pittsfield' was coined as part of a campaign for self-promotion (O'Brien, 2011). On the Community Spotlight page, The Massachusetts Cultural Council describes the slogan 'Creative Pittsfield' as 'a graphically sophisticated visual identity for the city'; and distinguishes the phrase 'Cultural Pittsfield' as tied to programs that come out of the Office of Cultural Development (Massachusetts Cultural Council, 2011). 'Creative Pittsfield', an identifying title found on stationary, promotional items, town web-banners and potentially future banners and signage downtown; intends to bring some official uniformity to communications about Pittsfield (Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., n.d.).

A number of other unofficial appellations naming Pittsfield have circulated. 'Brooklyn of the Berkshires', cited in a few articles, may have its strongest footing within the artist community (Scribner, 2007) (17). This phrase is one that Whilden is sometimes quoted to say; which she associates with a "funky, diverse and neighborly" image (Filipov, 2010; Roche, 2006; Shaw, 2009). Mayor Ruberto has described Pittsfield as the 'downtown of the Berkshires' and 'the best small city in the northeast' (Filipov, 2010; O'Brien, 2011). These phrases directed toward public hearing unite naming, definition and image in order to shape the perceptions of both local citizens and outsiders (Massachusetts Cultural Council, n.d.; Filipov, 2010).

The City's public art programs fit neatly within the umbrella of 'Cultural Pittsfield'. Their presence reinforce this image of a city devoted to creative endeavor; it is part of the leveraging process –from this point of view it is a strategic, substantive, symbolic action (O'Brien, 2011, Anholt, 2008). Ruberto has expressed that using the term 'creative' is not meant only to refer to the City's promotion of the arts, but that the word is about establishing a state of mind. The slogan 'Creative Pittsfield' intends to go beyond descriptive to reach at the heart of the City's identity, and thereby influence production – it is about the generation of 'creative business' – or to

interpret, the business of creativity (O'Brien, 2011). In 2009 the city won an award from the Massachusetts Cultural Council for Creative Community, acknowledging the 'central role of arts and culture in building healthier...vital...livable communities' (Massachusetts Cultural Council, 2012). This acknowledgement could be one landmark that acknowledges that the imaging campaign is noticed. The award, however, is not so much a measure of image as it is a measure of substance, a key ingredient. The article lists examples of building for culture, describing the city as a 'creative hub for arts and innovation' from the establishment of the Office of Cultural Development, to the city's numerous festivals, the arts district overlay zoning and its institutional arts anchors. These factors comprise the substance and strategy of the 'Creative Pittsfield' image. Alongside this image of Pittsfield as a destination, comes the association of Pittsfield with its region.

#### **3.4.5 Regional Connections and the Idea of the Cultural Corridor**

Pittsfield's regional connection with local identity appears as a recurring theme in Pittsfield's cultural planning history. The 1962 Comprehensive Master Plan prepared at the cusp of the urban renewal period reports that tourism is 'one of the basic industries of Berkshire County.' (City of Pittsfield Planning Board, 1962). Nash and Kirsch both observe that tourism in the 1980's was considered the fastest growing industry in Pittsfield and the surrounding region (Nash 1989; Kirsch 1998). The Cultural Action Plan prepared in the late 90's talks about Pittsfield's 'competitive position within the region' (Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., 1999). Pittsfield's tourism commission and Berkshire Council For Growth were among the list of collaborators in The Community Development Plan of 2000, an indication of a joint local and regional tourism effort. Another indication of regional and local collaboration appears in the more recent Berkshire Blueprint where Megan Whilden is listed as one of the consulting committee members (Berkshire Economic Development Corporation, 2007a). The Berkshire Creative Economy Report, an extension of the Blueprint discusses extensively the geography of the creative

economy and Pittsfield's regional role (Berkshire Economic Development Corporation 2007b). Pittsfield's latest master planning document, Planning to Thrive, talks about Pittsfield centrality in the Berkshire's cultural life (City of Pittsfield, 2009). Dan Bianchi's campaign platform articulates a commitment to cultivate tourism, one which links regional and local economies (Bianchi, 2011).

Pittsfield's cultural centrality extends beyond Berkshire County. Not only is Pittsfield the geographic center of Berkshire County, and an equidistant center between Boston and New York, the city also stands at the center of a relatively recent regional development concept called the Cultural Corridor. The corridor refers to a concentrated pattern of contemporary arts organizations and smaller non-profits and galleries established along a geo-conceptual corridor extending from New York City up the Hudson to Beacon, NY, through the Berkshires and up into Bennington Vermont, linking artists and cultural tourism.<sup>17</sup> With the eye toward bringing attention to the Cultural Corridor concept, organizers from the Storefront Artist Project of Pittsfield designed a Cultural Corridor exhibition, first presented in 2006. In 2011 the exhibit ran as Cultural Corridor VI, which opened at two locations – DownStreet Art in North Adams and The Storefront Artist Project in Pittsfield. The exhibits feature artists who operate along this regional corridor (I7) (Buttenwieser, 2009; "Art in the Berkshires," 2008).

The corridor idea acknowledges that the regional connection is not limited to county boundaries, but really has a vital connection to a meta-region. A substantive connection occurs between the Berkshires and New York City. Many artists have migrated from the metropolitan area into the region. This is true of several of the Pittsfield artists such as Maggie Mailer, the founder of the Storefront Artist Project ("Maggie Mailer's," 2009) (I7). The Cultural Corridor is essentially a regional place branding scheme, connecting the public's perception with a particular geography of culture. Cultural organizations are able to use this concept collaboratively, to help

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<sup>17</sup> Contemporary art organizations include Dia: Beacon, Salem Art Works, Williams College Museum, Art Omi, Ferrin Gallery (Pittsfield), Geoffrey Young Gallery (Great Barrington), Sienna Gallery (Lenox) (I7).

promote their own and each other's programs (I7).<sup>18</sup> A guiding motivation behind the cultural corridor concept is to position Berkshire County as the cultural center of the region, thereby promoting both regional and local planning objectives. These objectives have their root in Florida's concept, the 'creative class'.

### **3.4.6 Florida's Influence on Pittsfield's Cultural Development**

Since Richard Florida first published The Rise of The Creative Class in 2002, his theory of the creative class and the creative economy has had international influence on public planning policy in both small and large communities. Florida came to the Clark Art Institute in January of 2004 where he delivered a public lecture on the creative economy. Mayor Ruberto and his wife were among those who attended the lecture and were able to speak with Florida about Pittsfield's cultural strategy, to which, by account, Florida expressed enthusiasm (I1) (Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, 2004).

Florida's ideas are influential in shaping contemporary Pittsfield's development policy. The words 'creative economy' appeared first mentioned in the Economic Development Chapter of the 2004 Community Development Plan of the City of Pittsfield prepared by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 2004). In the 2008 Draft Master Plan and 2009 final Master Plan (City of Pittsfield, 2009) vision statement Pittsfield is defined as the '...heart of regional culture' where the city's cultural venues are the 'focus of the cultural economy in the Berkshires.' The vision promotes the support of entrepreneurial startups as well as cultural offerings, characteristic of Florida's creative economic ideal. Stated in the Community Context narrative, in the section entitled 'Seeking The Creative Class', is the idea that successful communities need to cultivate characteristics that will build an environment attractive to creative 'innovative' people.

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<sup>18</sup> Another regional example is the spin off from Salem Art Works residency from Art Omi, which had modeled Storm Kings program (I7).

Florida appears again in the final 2009 Pittsfield Master Plan Document Economic and Cultural Development and Historic and Cultural Resources chapter in a reference to the characteristic preferences of 'knowledge workers' (City of Pittsfield, 2009). His ideas are also found in regional planning documents, The Berkshire Blueprint of 2006 and its follow up document The Berkshire Creative Economy Report released in 2007. Furthermore, the language of creative economy recurs in the title and text of a number of articles discussing Pittsfield's movement toward building a cultural economy (Roche, 2006; Forman, 2010; O'Brien, 2011; Beem, n.d.; Giuliano, 2009; Scribner, 2011).

The joining of culture with planning is not a new idea in Pittsfield. Florida may have provided an organization and put articulation, to what Pittsfield already had been exploring for many years, as evident in planning documents that preceded Florida's popular influence. Breitbart and Stanton suggest that leaders in small cities like Pittsfield might find Florida's ideas attractive, because they believe that their community offers many of the qualities that could draw the creative class for a cost that is affordable (Breitbart and Stanton, 2007). The idea of the cost effectiveness of 'revitalization through arts and culture' was not apparent in Pittsfield's literature. In fact Ruberto's critics have objected to the cultural economy agenda because they perceived it expensive (Filipov, 2010; Ruberto, 2010; Scribner, 2011). Study of Pittsfield's planning documents seem to suggest that Pittsfield's motivations seem more aligned with the anticipated economic benefits that follow a creative economic approach.

### **3.4.7 Public Planning Documents and the Evolution of the Creative Economy Idea**

The story of the Mayors reveals the idea of the creative economy as a political development policy is not a new one, but rose as a deliberate path of action building on Pittsfield's search for identity after GE's departure and on a longstanding heritage of local and regional culture. The planning documents of the 1960's are dominated with a push to realize the ideas of urban renewal. The idea of economic revitalization was alive through the 1980's under



Mayor Smith, as is evident in the title of a document, The Pittsfield Economic Revitalization Plan: An Industrial Development Agenda for the 80's (no hardcopy located).

It was not until the 1993 Comprehensive Development Plan that the idea for a Pittsfield Cultural Plan was first introduced. The plan began a process that would prepare for future work (City of Pittsfield Planning Board, 1993). The plan talks about some of the economic components associated later with the creative economy. This included the lure of tourism to CEOs looking to relocate away from metro areas. Projections for Pittsfield's future economic development described the downtown with a diverse mix of business, specialty retail, farmers' markets and improved streetscape design. Goals and objectives are laid out in the final segment of the report. Under the heading economic development is 'The Role of the Arts in Downtown Economic Development', stating that the 'performing, visual, and literary arts will continue to be a vital element of the Downtown'. This goal statement is followed with two objectives, the first to develop an arts center for City Arts Groups (in addition to the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts) and the second to 'support and promote the activities of existing arts groups'. The goal under cultural resources identifies the city's choice to promote a diverse inclusion of arts disciplines into the cultural plan stating that 'all arts – performing, visual, literary and others – will continue to be a vital resource and asset to the community'.

The first objective that follows this statement commits to growing the arts. The second objective acknowledges the talents and contributions of Pittsfield's artists 'to improve the quality of life in the community'. The third objective commits to the education of the community in cultural heritage and the fourth and last cultural objective addresses the physical location for the arts, calling for abundant and 'affordable space for all the arts.' These points affirm an intention for Pittsfield's culture to address both economic development and quality of life.

The 1999 Cultural Action Strategy prepared by consultants Hunter Interests, Inc. by order of Downtown Pittsfield, Inc. was steered by an internal committee comprised of officials, business people, artists, arts administrators and other stakeholders who developed market analysis

and recommendations to advise the City of Pittsfield on its cultural strategies. This document is in essence Pittsfield's First cultural plan, six years after the idea was first mentioned in the 1993 Comprehensive Development Plan. The goal of the project was to 'develop a coordinated action plan of arts, cultural and entertainment entities and activities to support economic growth in Pittsfield's downtown area.' The report encourages Pittsfield to develop its regional competitiveness, emphasizing Pittsfield as a destination at the center of the Berkshires that offers its own diverse mix of cultural offerings. For the success of the city's cultural action strategy analysts strongly urged the City to aggressively self-promote. The report recommended a strong, cooperative, well-coordinated working climate between political and civic organizations.<sup>19</sup>

The language of the plan is in its way lyrical, referring to culture as a 'fabric interwoven with new arts and entertainment opportunities'. This fabric is about change in Pittsfield, 'a sail to catch the powerful winds of tourism, creativity and entrepreneurship, which will carry the city and its people forward into a competitive position within the region'. The language is perhaps reflective of a contemporary planning rhetoric, but also likely expressive of an underlying inspiration and energy towards cultural planning in Pittsfield, that had been building over time.

The Consolidated Plans from 2000 and 2005, 2010 and 2011 mainly focus on citizen participation and social/population issues (affordable housing, disability). In the 2005 and the 2010 plans the Artscape committee (annual public art displays) and a streetscape committees are listed among the collaborators, a first reference to the committee in a public planning document. The consolidated plan of 2010 presents an objective to support 'redevelopment of downtown Pittsfield' specifically to 'provid[e] incentives that support the redevelopment of downtown Pittsfield as a cultural destination and art district'. This also is to include streetscape amenities (period lighting, pavers, street trees, and benches) (City of Pittsfield Department of Community Development, 2000; City of Pittsfield Department of Community Development 2005; City of

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<sup>19</sup> Organizations include the City of Pittsfield, Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., Cultural Commission, Cultural Council, Berkshire CVB, Berkshire Housing Development Corporation and Pittsfield Tourism Commission (Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., 1999, p. 10).

Pittsfield Department of Community Development 2010a; City of Pittsfield Department of Community Development 2010b).

The regional cultural plans of 2006 and 2007 incorporate the language of the creative economy, also found in the Pittsfield Master Plan of 2009, prepared by consultants Saratoga Associates. The language of these latest city and regional plans establish a relationship between Pittsfield's geography and the regional context and their joint creative economic goals (Berkshire Economic Development Corporation, 2006; Berkshire Economic Development Corporation, 2007a; Berkshire Economic Development Corporation, 2007b; City of Pittsfield, 2009).

Downtown Pittsfield, Inc.'s most recent five year strategic plan lays out development goals and objectives that address creative economic development. Priority three focuses on appearance of streetscape, signage and facades calling for a cohesiveness of 'elements, wayfinding and gateways'. Priority four addresses a comprehensive, strategic marketing campaign, which presents the concept of branding as a marketing goal. This relates to the fifth strategic priority to 'increase presence and visibility of arts businesses and cultural organizations in Downtown' to 'brand downtown as an Arts District and destination' by unifying a brand image, by placing coherent signage in front of cultural outlets and by working toward making arts business and activity highly visible through organization, festival strategy and storefronts among other strategies (Downtown Strategic Planning Committee Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., 2010).

The objective toward prioritizing street improvements and façade improvements was observed in planning documents dating back to the 1960's and carried forward into the most recent plan documents. What was absent from most of the planning documents was any direct mention of public art. The Artscape Committee is listed as collaborators on the 2005 and 2010 Consolidated Plans. A photograph of Artscape sculpture on Park Square is included the 2009 Master Plan at the start of the chapter on economic development. Downtown Inc.'s 2011 Report records the most direct reference to public art, calling on Artscape to strategically place large

sculptures in the downtown and to incorporate large graphics to 'create new art destinations' (Downtown Strategic Planning Committee Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., 2010).

Objectives drawn from recorded minutes from Pittsfield township master plan and culture arts and entertainment committee from 2010 address Pittsfield's image and identity and the development of standards that achieve these criteria. Public art is presented as one of the four central 'tactics' (Friman, 2010).<sup>20</sup> Minutes discussing gateways and public art in 2009 reveal that the committee had attended to the complex idea of 'creating sense of place' using physical form as uniform 'graphic or sculptural' elements to communicate city identity (Friman, 2009). The committee discusses public art as a visual element that contributes to the city brand, 'Thereby building the community's identity through public art.' The committee also approached the question that asks what kind of public art is appropriate to Pittsfield. The committee discussed organizing public art according to three local character typologies, urban, rural and suburban with unifying characteristics such as color and style. They question the strategic spatial arrangement of public art asking if it should cluster or scatter; and raised location and opportunities for encounter as key issues. Importantly, the committee demonstrated a motivating concern for community building, an idea that extends from the idea of sense of place; recording an intent to 'Establish a sense of community through interpretive, public sculptures'. Under point four, Creative Arts and Economic Development, the committee broaches the idea of establishing a

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<sup>20</sup> The other three are (1)Community and Township identity, (2)Gateway Corridors and (3)Share the Past, lead us into the future (Friman, 2010).

The purposes and goals for public art are laid out these five points:

- (1)Public Art will include iconic pieces of art that become part of the identity and branding of Pittsfield
- (2)It will also include "cool" things to look at: 3-dimensional art that is fun, interactive, and educational, historical and serve both as destinations and way stops out of many different media- metal, mosaic, painted surfaces, steel, ceramic and mixed media.
- (3)Individual sculptures may be themed, making a statement about our rich heritage
- (4)Determine if they should be clustered, like an art park or distributed throughout the township where they will have high visibility and accessibility by both pathways and roads – and help establish our community-wide identity.
- (5)Define the character and focus of public art (Friman, 2010).

Percent for Art program to establish a financial incentive for public art. This suggests a possible commitment to establishing some permanent public art, a variance from the currently established Artscape program and arts events that emphasize temporary installations (Friman, 2009).

This review of available planning literature illustrates the development of the creative economic idea that has come to shape Pittsfield's planning into 2011. Underlying this idea is a two part purpose for cultural planning. The first is economy and the second is quality of life. The Store Front Artist Project, a program that stands on the boundary between public street art and flagship gallery business, demonstrates the exchange between these two motivations.

### **3.4.8 The Storefront Artist Project and the Dual Purpose of Cultural Planning**

The development of contemporary cultural policy in Pittsfield seems encapsulated in the implementation of the Storefront Artist project, which began in 2001(2) by a local artist and Pittsfield native Maggie Mailer. Ten years after GE made its permanent exit Pittsfield was still in search of its new direction. By the turn of the millennium storefronts along the Central Business Strip along North Street were vacant (I1). When Mailer returned to Pittsfield after having worked as a professional artist in Brooklyn, New York she brought an optimism that saw opportunity in the vacant spaces and set about coordinating with area landlords to permit the use of storefront space as temporary artist studios. When Ruberto took office he harnessed the energy behind the storefront effort. He used this grassroots cultural revitalization as inspiration to grow downtown development with arts and culture, beginning with the completion of the Colonial Theater project (Oaks and Tobin, 2010).

The Storefront Artist Project creates visibility for the arts, one that contributes to the pursuit of Pittsfield's reputation as a cultural center in the Berkshires. This Project as it were stands at the threshold between economy and quality of life. The project is symbolic in that it contributes to an image, an aim that associates with economic development. But the project is substantive, offering affordable space that has directed a 'savory *mélange*' of artists to Pittsfield

(Dudek, 2011). In this way the project remains true to Daniel O'Connell's social ideal of the accessible arts and the community of artisans that help to 'change' a place as well as to the idea of business following culture (Abbott, 2003).

One of the side effects of the Storefront Artists Project is its success. Enlivening the downtown has brought new businesses, which in turn has pushed some of the temporary galleries to the upper floors, (ironically the same floors inhabited by the first wave of contemporary artists of the 1970's) or to new buildings (I7) (Abbott, 2003; Massachusetts Cultural Council, n.d.). The Storefront Artist Project is intended to be nomadic, symbolic of the intangible movement of human creativity. As local artist Peter Dudek writes:

"Temporary and transitory studio/exhibition spaces spring up, show themselves to the public and disappear. Each replaced by another artist, gallery, event or enterprise. Change is the constant." (Dudek, 2011)

After ten years at one location The Storefront Artist Project moved to a highly visible corner location near the intersection of South Street and East Street at Park Square. The Project's position contributes in effect to a core cultural cluster as it operates in proximity to a number of Pittsfield's cultural anchors (the Colonial Theater, the Berkshire Museum, the Athenaeum, Beacon Cinema and New Stage) ("Storefront Artist Project," n.d.). The Project has served as an inspiration to other cities that have looked to Pittsfield for guidance with regard to using culture as a means to regenerate their downtown areas. Fall River has developed a 'Storefront Artist Collaborative' similar to programs developed in both Pittsfield and Lowell. Springfield has sent representatives to Pittsfield to learn more about the city's successes such as the Colonial Theater, The Storefront Artists Project and Creative Pittsfield cultural steering organization (Kinney, 2009a; Holtzman, 2008). This attention from other cities could be interpreted as the success of Pittsfield's efforts to build reputation with cultural programming.

By November 2011 official word published online and in a press release authored by the Project's founder Maggie Mailer announced the end of the Storefront Artist Project after ten years. The iBerkshires article stated that the project had achieved its objectives by 2006, its

mission to fill empty storefronts as a way to promote downtown economics, to positively contribute to Pittsfield's reputation and to provide a model that other cities could emulate. (Mailer, 2011; Durwin, 2011c).

Pittsfield's outdoor public art bears some similarities with The Storefront Artist Project in terms of intent and impact. Outdoor public art in Pittsfield is tied to both economy and quality of life, aims that are not mutually exclusive. The interwoven intent of its application is both symbolic and substantive. The placement of public art in the landscape intends to contribute to Pittsfield's image, however organizers express a passion and a hope that the presence of installations will activate dialog that rises from encounter with the expressed form (I3; I4).

### **3.4.9 Quality of Life and the People of Pittsfield**

Quality of life has been mentioned several times, in the literature review, in the story of Pittsfield's cultural planning policy and development and in the identification of the dual purposes of quality of life and economy that were brought to focus in the discussion of the Storefront Artist Project above. This term 'quality of life' is nebulous. Its meaning can shift depending on who is speaking. In Pittsfield words like vitality and encounter were articulated, qualifying this term to a degree. To understand this term in greater depth would require more contact and communication with a substantial cross-section of the local residents, which goes beyond the scope of this study.

A short presentation of Pittsfield's current demographics, based on the 2010 census, may be a preliminary step in approaching the question of Pittsfield's identity. Knowing this identity is important because it has implications to the intrinsic nature and design of Pittsfield's culture, one that may contrast or align with the aims of local cultural planning. Knowing the persons of Pittsfield could potentially help to bracket the term quality of life. As established in the literature review, community involvement is an important counterbalance to strategic planning. Knowing the population can offer insight into who could be invited into the cultural planning process for

public art and notably the way this involvement might occur. Therefore, before diving into a survey of Pittsfield's public art program, a few words about Pittsfield's demographics is necessary.

Pittsfield has a population just under 45,000, which characterizes Pittsfield as a smaller sized city (Bell and Jayne, 2006). Over the past ten years the population has decreased approximately two percent, in contrast with a three percent increase for Massachusetts. The population is almost ninety percent white, nearly ten percent higher than the average for Massachusetts. The elder population represents closer to twenty percent of the population. Youth ranks alongside state averages, with approximately twenty percent under eighteen years of age. Races other than white are underrepresented when compared to state averages. Near a quarter of the population holds a college degree. The average income is twenty-thousand lower than the state average. Housing cost is about half as expensive as the state average. People who rank below the poverty rate are five percent higher than the state average and unemployment increased noticeably between December 2011 and January 2012. The unemployment rate in December was a few points below the national rate, falling into step with the national rate in January.

In sum Pittsfield is a predominantly white city with a population that appears poorer than found in other areas of Massachusetts. Housing is more affordable than in some places. The shift in unemployment rate may reflect variation in seasonal employment. One-fifth of the population is elderly and likely retired. A second fifth represents youth. This suggests that the majority of the population is of working age, perhaps raising families. These numbers do not offer a clear basis for drawing conclusions about cultural involvement or attitudes without a more detailed face-to-face knowledge of the population to inform. Possibly programs, like Pittsfield's public art events, which will be shortly introduced, could potentially reach broadly across age lines, appealing to families, youth and elders. Although ethnicity is not strongly represented in the numbers, the city has a longstanding tradition of celebrating ethnic differences. One expression



of this is the annual ethnic fair that has been celebrated for many years. The City’s articulated commitment to cultural development and its execution of layers of public art programming provide the primary substance for discussion.

<b>Census 2010</b>	<b>Pittsfield</b>
Population 2010	44,737
Population Percent Change, 2000-2010	-2.3%
White persons	88.3%
Black persons	5.3%
Hispanic/Latino persons	5.0%
Asian persons	1.2%
65 and older	17.6%
Under 18 years	21.2%
High school graduates over 25, 2006-2010	89.1
Higher education over 25, 2006-2010	25.6%
Median home value, 2006-2010	\$171,000
Home ownership rate, 2006-2010	61.3%
Median household income, 2006-2010	\$43,188
Persons below poverty level, 2006-2010	16%
* <sup>21</sup> Unemployment Rate Dec. 2011 - Jan. 2012	6.4 to 8.3

**Table 3: 2010 Quick Facts for Pittsfield (US Census Bureau, 2012)**

### **3.5 Contemporary Public Art in Pittsfield**

Pittsfield’s administration of contemporary public art demonstrates a few characteristic tendencies. While representational public art has been featured, to date selection seems to favor

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<sup>21</sup> \* Data from Bureau of Labor Statistics (United States Department of Labor, 2012)

contemporary abstract works (I1). Pittsfield's cultural organizers tend to commit to temporary annual installations and programs over permanent collection. Furthermore, the administration of the public art, its choice, placement and the structure of community engagement, offers critical information about the intents behind its application. Artscape is Pittsfield's central public art initiative.

### **3.5.1 Artscape**

Artscape has been active since 1999 (City of Pittsfield, 2004a). The Artscape Committee operated informally before 2005, after which it became a formal city committee (I5). The volunteer Artscape Steering Committee is comprised of a mix of artists, businessmen, cultural leaders, city officials and professionals who are divided into various administrating subcommittees (I2). Unlike some of the temporary public art events, which encourage wide community participation, Artscape's program planning is not oriented toward general community involvement (I3). Members are selected via nominating committee whose intent is to represent a cross-section of individuals who offer a range in point of view (I2). Committee guidelines state that the sculptures are placed throughout Pittsfield's Central Business District, which generally corresponds within the boundaries of the Downtown Arts Overlay District. The articulated mission of the 'program is to enhance the downtown's character and attract visitors by installing and promoting works of art in various outdoor locations accessible to the public throughout the downtown area' (City of Pittsfield, 2011).

A call for entries goes out each year and is open to any artist (national or international that would like to participate) (City of Pittsfield, 2011), though participating artists tend to come from the meta-region New England and New York. Submissions due by November are reviewed by jury. The selected sculpture is placed the following spring and remains for a year. Artscape sculpture is temporary or semi-temporary, as some artists are invited to keep their work for successive years. The city purchases very few of the sculptures for permanent display. This

tactic is financially motivated as it minimizes issues of upkeep and liability (the City carries some insurance). The size of the sculpture is limited to what the artist can transport to Pittsfield and the location selected for the art piece. The committee selects the site to display the art, which may fall on both public and private property. This is often done without the artist's input, though requests are considered (I6).

Like the Storefront Artist Project the Artscape program intends to make arts and culture visible. The committee works to place the sculptural pieces in conspicuous locations. The layout of the downtown creates some spatial limitations that make this goal sometimes difficult to realize. Discussion has arisen within the Artscape Committee and within the Master Plan Arts and entertainment committee as to whether or not public art has better impact if clustered or intermittently spaced. Pieces are sometimes placed in clusters for impact 'to catch the eye and draw people to investigate more' (I2). The appropriateness of the art in relationship to its placement is carefully discussed with mixed result and response.

Artscape is structured as a curated program that uses the public downtown landscape as if it were an outdoor gallery. The sculptures are for sale, and if transacted a percentage of the proceeds go to the city. Because of spatial limits and expense to the artist, the pieces tend to be moderately sized. As with any public work, safety is a concern. Plaques with the name of both artist and sculpture underscored with a request not to touch are placed in front of each piece. The price of the sculpture is not advertised.

The program has evolved over the years. The first exhibits drew from artists who that year participated in the curated exhibit at Chesterwood.<sup>22</sup> Pittsfield's public art committee members would visit the show and invite artists to move their work to Pittsfield. In subsequent years the committee wanted to expand the idea by putting a broader call out to artists (I5). The

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<sup>22</sup> Chesterwood was the home and studio of Daniel Chester French, a renowned sculptor of the mid nineteenth, early twentieth century. Today the property is managed by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Each year an exhibition featuring the work of contemporary sculptors occurs on the property during the summer and into the fall (Chesterwood, 2012).

submission schedule has also changed over time. Originally the program followed Chesterwood's timing, but eventually the committee recognized that the Artscape program was not bound to its schedule. The installation of the sculpture moved from the fall to the spring, which aligned better with the promoted events of the summer and fall. (I5).

Once a month in the afternoon during the summer and into the fall visitors and the local community are able to attend a docent led Artscape walking tour. The tour is often well attended and offers an opportunity for the public to both learn about the sculptures, their placement and the artists. The walk provides a forum for people to discuss and to share their responses to the sculpture. The tour also offers an opportunity for the organizers to hear opinion and to monitor the number of attendees (I4). The extent to which the committee attends to this evaluation is not known.

The Artscape committee is involved in the organization of other community public art projects, being one of the primary collaborators on the Sheeptacular (2004) and the Art of the Game (2006-2007) community sculpture events (City of Pittsfield, 2004a). Artscape collaborates with the Office of Cultural Development, Downtown, Inc., The Berkshire Art Association and the Storefront Artists Project on the annual Pittsfield Art show that has been a summer event since 2004. This fair serves as a respected outlet for locally known and new artists to display and sell their work (Pittsfield Arts Show, 2011). In 2012 -2013 the Artscape committee and the City of Pittsfield are collaborating on a summer long celebration entitled Call Me Melville. Artscape's theme will feature sculpture modeled after Herman Melville's Moby Dick and his other works. ("Artscape Call, " 2011).

As noted in the public document review reference to the Artscape program is marginal, barely mentioned as a cultural program strategy. This is not particularly a measure of its significance. One interviewee (I7) observed that if Artscape was Pittsfield's only cultural program, it may appear as if it were simply a streetscape application applied to a depressed downtown. The fact that Artscape has a longevity with solid volunteer committee backing, that

the committee does play a consulting role in the planning process and that Artscape has been a support and organizational collaborator to other temporary community public art events attests to a level of value and usefulness to the city's cultural planning agenda and goals. The same interviewee is of the opinion that the Artscape program is good to have, as it is another 'sign of vitality' and 'belongs as part of an overall cultural conversation', but also observes that the program is best when in collaboration with other efforts (I6). Public art is important to creating a 'vivid' image and in the view of an interviewee Pittsfield's public art has made a difference (I5). The fact that the city has been recognized by the state for the amount of public art is one indication of influence on image that extends outside of the community of Pittsfield.

Public art in Pittsfield also takes the form of temporary public art events. Several such events have occurred within the past seven years. These events draw on the energy and talents of the community. Events such as Sheeptacular, Art of the Game and Hayman! stand at the threshold of public art and festival. Walk-On in its way serves as an innovative, temporary version of the public mural program.



**Figure 4: Artscape Brochure2011 (Gillian, 2011)**

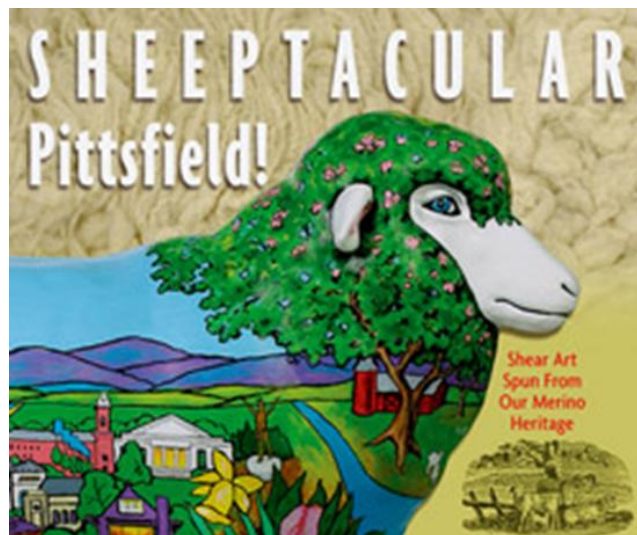
### **3.5.2 Sheeptacular-2004**

The Sheeptacular event of 2004 brought a broad spectrum of community members and partners together to participate in a collaborative public art project celebrating Pittsfield’s historic woolen industry. Two hundred and twenty artists submitted designs before a jury. The seventy life size fiberglass cast merino sheep were distributed to juried artist participants who applied their design before they were placed along streets and in front of buildings throughout Pittsfield. The purpose of the project was to promote the visual arts in the community, to draw tourists, to educate the community about local history and to generate community pride. The project was considered a success on more than one account. The funds raised through auctioning the sheep have supported many town initiatives and charities as well as the Artscape program up to 2011 (Sheeptacular Pittsfield, 2004; "Sheeptacular Makes Hay, "2004) (I3).

One of the characteristics of the project was the breadth of community participation Sponsors, fundraisers, a dedicated steering committee, the Mayor’s office, local cultural

organizations, students, artists and the general public participated in this event. School children decorated smaller sculptures that were placed on public display downtown. The Pittsfield Visitor center provided paper and drawing medium to allow the general public the opportunity to design a sheep. This resulted in two hundred and eleven drawings. The drawings were judged for first prize and runner-up status (Sheeptacular, 2004; "Sheeptacular Makes Hay, "2004).

This reach into the community set a precedent for Pittsfield's temporary public art projects. The project seemed to succeed in generating a level of community pride. A Sheeptacular Reunion Show was organized one year later in 2005 'by popular demand'. The event was celebrated with a family oriented street party along the style of third Thursday festival, cordoning off traffic and providing music, food and spectacle (Bush, 2005).



**Figure 5: Sheeptacular Publication Cover (Sheeptacular, 2004)**

### **3.5.3 The Art of the Game -2006 and 2007**

The Art of the Game was Pittsfield's second community public art project. The two year event celebrated two important aspects of Pittsfield's heritage, art and baseball. The city has a privileged distinction to be the place where baseball was first referenced in America. Many artists, citizens and schools participated in the project, creating art pieces that celebrate baseball

which were displayed throughout Pittsfield's downtown and in front of participating buildings, such as schools.

Pittsfield's special public art events such as Art of the Game create different levels of opportunity for community participation, a strategy that encourages a broad spectrum of citizens to become excited and involved with their history and with the arts in terms of creation and encounter. The strategy endorses a multi-layered package that in addition to art making includes topical lectures, presentations, performances and exhibitions. Painted baseball gloves, paintings in numerous media and scales, sculptures, and crafted arts were among the art works. A few professional artists received commissions. One piece entitled "Splitter", a designed and forged piece by local artist and landscaper James D'Aniello, is currently installed in front of the Court House. This is one of the few sculptures the city acquired as part of its permanent collection (I3).

This work is example of permanent public art incorporated as part of the shape and design of the landscape. The sculpture forms a corner edge of Quirico Park. The pattern of pavement is laid out as a triangular form, reminiscent of the baseball diamond. A second piece generated for this project, "Elements of the Game" by sculptor Jerid Hohn, also joined Pittsfield's permanent collection. Artscape bought the piece then donated it to the city. In 2006 the sculpture was placed in front of the Pittsfield High School, where it was thought to be in a 'visible, prominent location' ("Baseball Sculpture," 2011; Free Library by Farlex, n.d.). This year the city moved the sculpture to Wahconah Park. This move is a second example where public art is placed in a spatial context. The large scale baseball bat set on a stone pedestal representing a fieldstone ball and surrounded by a mitt of arborvitae is in and of itself spatially organized. The new site for the bat, ball and mitt also seemed thoughtfully considered. The sculpture is placed at one side of the stadium entrance near some benches. One of the Artscape coordinators stated 'that he hopes that the sculpture becomes part of the fabric of Wahconah Park, a place' "where families will have their pictures taken." ' ("Baseball Sculpture," 2011). The integration of public art with



context may represent a new dimension of understanding as to the purpose and intent of public art in the landscape. It definitely fulfills another level of impact and encounter.

The application of Art of the Game shifted in the second year with the creation of baseball themed art billboards and trading cards paired with baseball related events including a human baseball formed in the park's baseball diamond and photographed at bird's eye view ("Public Art Program, " 2007). This shift of focus demonstrates flexibility on the part of Pittsfield's organizers. This willingness to take chances and follow a creative idea along a different, experimental tract challenging the community to experience art in a different way is characteristic of Pittsfield's cultural tactic. The Art of the Game did not raise as much financial support from the community as Sheeptacular. However the participation of artists, community members and students paired with the demonstrated flexibility of the organizers speak to creativity and community pride, significant intangibles. Additionally, the billboards gave the participating artists a lot of exposure (I3).



**Figure 6: Splitter by James D'Aniello**

### **3.5.4 Hayman! -2007and 2008**

The Hayman! project of 2007 and 2008 represented a great community building success in the eyes of the organizers. This month long temporary art project culminating in the annual Halloween Parade drew families, businesses and non-profits together in the fun and whimsical act of creating scarecrows. Professional artist Michael Melle with other arts organizers assisted the entrants in building their figures during a daylong 'community building day'. More than ninety scarecrows created for display were distributed throughout downtown Pittsfield. The goal of the project was to 'celebrate community, creativity and the harvest'. The 'haymen' became an image of the community itself, representing a diversity of people, their activities and their pets. Participants not only created human figures but also created scarecrows based on characters and creatures. Others were symbolic of an organization or cause. The event was free of charge and not juried, (though some of the scarecrows makers were offered categorical award), in an open invitation to any group who wanted to participate. The only requirement was to open the doors of creativity. One of the community organizers expressed "... that the best aspect of the project is that it attracted diverse community members. A lot of people got on board,...Look at who created these things. It was the general public - moms, kids, families - not just artists or particular organizations." ("Straw Men, " 2007) Community organizations like the Storefront Artists Project to a local carpenters union assisted with the event, helping with scarecrow construction and with installation. The Berkshire County Sheriff's Office arranged for preparation of the sticks that supported the scarecrows' forms (II) ("Hayman Prepare," 2008). One of the community sponsors observed how collaborative, temporary, community projects like Hayman! distinguishes Pittsfield from other communities ("Straw Men," 2007; "Haymen Prepare," 2008; Thomas, 2007).



**Figure 7: Hayman! Poster**

### **3.5.5 Walk- On**

This temporary, innovative public art project was developed in 2011 as part of Pittsfield's 250<sup>th</sup> yearlong birthday celebration. Support for this project comes from local business sponsors, donors as well as state and local cultural councils. Sidewalk photographs digitally printed on 3x4 archival papers were placed at various strategic locations throughout Pittsfield's downtown arts and business district for a six month period (April to November). For the winter the images moved to the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts for viewing in an exhibit called Walk-On-Walls. The sidewalk art, featuring both original work and historic photographs depict images of Pittsfield's history, past present and future. The title Walk-On evokes the idea of time passing, as well as states an invitation for citizens to step out and seek Pittsfield's historic narrative. One of the special features of the ground level photo show is the inclusion of a Quick Response (QR) code for mobile phone users to receive information associated with a particular image.

This installation is an art of encounter, using current technology to educate and inform. The public is drawn to search history and in this way becomes part of creating history. The

community is asked to see art in a different way, as printed images on the ground on which they step. If the goal of public art in Pittsfield is about creating an image of Pittsfield as a center for arts, The Walk-On installation is composed of Pittsfield in image – an interesting juxtaposition. If the goal of public art in Pittsfield is about education, engagement and narrative, the Walk-On installation fulfills these functions (McKeever, 2011; “Walk-On, a public art installation,” 2011).



**Figure 8: Walk-On**

### **3.6 Summary Reflections on Pittsfield’s Public Art**

These five manifestations of public art in Pittsfield, though different in form and format share in a common goal, to contribute to the image of Pittsfield as a vital center of arts and culture, while at the same time inviting the public to engage with public art in ways that enrich community life. Not all of the formats call for equal levels of public participation. The cyclical Artscape exhibit seems to belong to the classic high arts in the way it organizes and presents its sculpture. The intermittent public art events seem more akin to the life of the commons, though at the level of organization some of the same patterns of programming still apply (Phillips, 1992).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> "Public art is about the idea of the commons – the physical configuration and mental landscape of American public life. The commons was frequently a planned but sometimes a spontaneously arranged open space in American towns...." (Phillips, 1992, p. 298).

Pittsfield's public art initiatives make use of unconventional spaces for the display and encounter of art. The street, the billboard, a baseball park, the frontage or wall of a public and private building are places for an unspecified audience to encounter artistic form and respond (or ignore) its presence. With a concern toward impact and image the pieces are carefully placed within the physical and political constraints of these available spaces. Ideas about space and public art in Pittsfield's landscape seem an evolutionary process. Attempts are made to establish the best context within these constraints, though no system is in place to assist in the measure of actual impact.

Finally, Pittsfield, perhaps more for practical reasons than philosophical tends to favor the temporary installation over the permanent. Patricia Phillips addresses this issue of temporality as creating a flexible platform on which to experiment. She says, 'Public art requires a more passionate commitment to the temporary – to the information culled from the short lived project' (Phillips, 1992). Pittsfield's approach allows for rapid evolution. It provides venue for a spectrum of artists. The rotating art potentially renews space, and the spatial experience of the passerby. On the other hand the temporality may also be seen as treating art as commodity, recycled and never allowed to take hold of city identity deeply or profoundly. This makes sense when thought of as one arm of a larger economic strategy -art as window dressing, art as street dressing. But again to return to Phillips, arts temporality is expressive of a 'belief' that public art and public life are subjects of change, an expectation expressed for the Storefront Artist Project (Phillips, 1992; Dudek, 2011). Change held as a central belief may support creative flexibility and the willingness to experiment, qualities that Pittsfield's cultural organizers seem to demonstrate.

It is these qualities of approach such as flexibility and willingness to experiment that are useful to identify because articulate something about what drives or what influences the development of public art programs. These two named indicators are not the only ones to identify. Now that Pittsfield's cultural development and public art programs are introduced, an

investigation into the process and qualities that characterize Pittsfield's approach can help address the question of public art's purpose. The themes laid out in the literature review provide some direction and language that will assist in the weaving of an analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### WEAVING AN ANALYSIS

#### **4.1 Introduction**

Pittsfield's approach to public art may be viewed through strategic actions identified in the reviewed research that are more often associated with wider cultural planning and creative economy approaches. To do this is to observe if Pittsfield applies these strategies and if so how and what this might say about the motivations and expectations for the City's public art initiatives. This exploration begins with assessing Pittsfield's broader approach to cultural planning within Evans' three part framework. This establishes a context of approach that frames the more specific characteristics of the public art initiatives.

This does not assume that either the broader cultural planning approach or the strategic actions furnish best principles, or provide a complete picture. These strategies are closely aligned to economic objectives. As such the ideological question as to whether or not a city best operates under the principles and practices of a business is not answered here. Considering the central place of economics in our civilization it does not seem surprising that culture should become identified as part of the business of a city.

Because of this slant toward economic motivation, it seems important to follow with the role of the community. This is really where the question of public art in Pittsfield's begins and ends, and it seems as if the research review would support this. For what is the purpose and intent of a strong economy and what motivation lies at the heart of wanting to build Pittsfield as an attractive and vibrant place? The answer is first for the people who live there and second for the people who would come there.

## 4.2 Where Along the Spectrum?

Elements of each of Evans' three model approaches seem to manifest at different capacities at various points along Pittsfield's contemporary cultural development continuum. In 1981 Mayor Smith initiated the eleven day outdoor performance festival, Artabout, aimed to draw attention and new visitors to Pittsfield. The festival was designed to create a large impact with the hope that the event would eventually become popularly associated with Pittsfield.<sup>24</sup> This type of event seems closely associated to the culture-led approach that relies on a single event or a select investment to draw attention to a place. Artabout ran for a few years, each time scaled down. Though it drew a level of perceived success, it ultimately did not deliver the hoped for result and was discontinued (Katz, 1986). This outcome is in line with critique of culture-led regeneration. Attempts to activate culture with large scaled institutions and events can return unreliable results, particularly for the smaller sized city (Evans and Foord, 2006).

The informal activity of the wave of artists that took residence in downtown Pittsfield in the 1970's, the spontaneous chalk drawings and Life Yard sculpture garden that inhabited a vacant lot, is akin to culture and regeneration, cultural activity that rises from within the community. As Evans notes such grass-roots programs can merge with a larger regeneration process, which happened in Pittsfield. As is often the case, the arts eventually became more formally recognized in Pittsfield. Daniel O'Connell's relationship with City Hall and subsequent employment resulted in the organization of the Berkshire Artisans, the establishment of the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts and the Mural Project (Abbott, 2003). These efforts laid the foundation for the third and cultural planning approach, cultural regeneration.

Cultural regeneration is an integrated cultural planning approach that relies on multiple strategies over time. This can lead to generations of 'cultural investment, placemaking and

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<sup>24</sup> Mayor Smith in his fourth inaugural address presented a vision for 'a big annual municipal festival so renowned that when people hear "Pittsfield" the association will be automatic, like "Indianapolis 500" or "Boston Marathon" ' (Katz, 1986).



economic strategy' (Evans, 2005, p. 969). Pittsfield has adopted a multi-component, multi-layered approach that most closely aligns with cultural regeneration. Pittsfield does not identify with a single arts discipline, or with a single flagship venue. The City supports several small scale flagship anchors, institutions that are notably both simultaneously new and historically based. The restoration of the Colonial Theater, the establishment of the Beacon Cinema, the relocation of Barrington Stage and the eclectic offerings at the Berkshire Museum jointly provide a rich variety of cultural offerings – film, music, theater, classical art, science, lectures and educational opportunities. Both monthly and annual festivals (some longstanding for many years) animate the streets throughout the year. These events cover a spectrum of cultural experiences and represent a range of cultural themes. Third Thursdays feature music performances, dancing and food. Annual festivals each emphasize and celebrate specific arts disciplines - the outdoor summer art show, the Pittsfield City Jazz and the WordxWord festivals. These numerous events and established venues support businesses that operate within the arts district, businesses that range from galleries and artist studios, restaurants, coffee shops and clubs. All of these elements conjoin into a long term cultural planning process characterized by persistence and eclecticism, driven by vision and intent in the hope that Pittsfield can reinvigorate its economy through cultural planning and build a rich quality of life for both residents and visitors.

Clearly Pittsfield's main trajectory for cultural planning follows most closely the cultural regeneration path. The idea of time and type based layering is shown to be linked with the cultural regeneration approach, but this strategic action is applicable to the more specific discussion of public art, an idea to further explore.

## **4.3 Strategic Actions and Pittsfield's Public Art**

### **4.3.1 Layering**

The role of Pittsfield's public art is neither central nor stand alone. It is one arm to the larger, layered pattern of culture serving the purpose of building a symbolic image for economy and a substantive community conversation that contributes to quality of life. The sculpture of the '70's may be understood as one generation of public art. This generation faded as artists moved away and attention shifted to more formalized production through the City Art Center and the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts. The mural project marks another generation of public art. The murals continue to be maintained and promoted into the present. The Artscape program represents a third and presently ongoing generation. The temporary public art events, The Art of the Game and Sheeptacular, Hayman! and Walk-On are individual layers belonging to the same generation as Artscape. Collectively these investments in public art, though coming from various angles and originating in different years, seem to share the purpose of contributing to the image of Pittsfield as a city rich in creative activity. Each generation though separated by time and the original organizational impetus build successively over the long term a 'tradition' of projects that contribute to the history and identity of the city. In this way they collectively add another layer of investment that contributes to the larger plan for cultural regeneration of the city.

At the time of this presentation, the cultural planning process has been pursued for at least thirty years, from Smith and O'Connell in the 1980's through Ruberto's administration that ended in 2011. Different emphasis and momentums occurred depending on the political agenda of the moment and the programs of actors outside of city hall who were involved in making things happen. The public art programs in Pittsfield mirror this pattern. This is logical as we have seen that goals and expectations of the public art programming are in tandem with the broader cultural planning. Public art programming fulfilled through time/type based layering establishes a thread along which approach and emphasis may change, but where a continuity of

applying value to arts and culture remains constant. This delivers and reinforces a potentially potent deliberate message that communicates cultural identity and builds the image for Pittsfield as a regional center for the arts.

Essentially, Pittsfield's cultural strategy communicates that it is in the business of promoting that it is a creative city. The identification does not assign one medium as a central offering. The arts in all their forms share Pittsfield's stage – literature, entrepreneurial activity, music, theater and visual arts. This buckshot approach is emblematic of Pittsfield general planning style, which pulls at several strings simultaneously in order to achieve desired objectives. The city's program of public art broadly speaking displays this layering dynamic. The public art program emphasizes temporary sculptural art exhibits and events, but also includes permanent pieces. The display of the public art occurs on walls, sidewalks, on designated streetscape sites, in parks, usually within the downtown arts overlay district, though at times in front of buildings or mounted on billboards in the outskirts of town. The public art occurs at regularly scheduled intervals or as concentrated blasts in time. New ideas are welcome, old ideas are retried, retrofitted or reinvented. What is constant is its recurrence, in tried and new experimental formats.

Pittsfield's public art program seems to demonstrate some qualities of embeddedness attributed to committed, repeated and persistent public art initiatives. The act of layering in time and approach attests to the commitment to the goals and ideals that drive the public art initiatives, but say less as to the effectiveness, or the degree that expectations are met. The annual return of Artscape and the development of new public art events strongly suggest that there is a level of satisfaction and expectation fulfillment. The roundtable discussion among the arts organizers that scrutinizes what works and what does not work, resulting in adjustments that evolve the program over time, attests to a level of risk and experimentation that can occur within a fairly self-satisfied forum. But this does not measure the degree of effectiveness the public art has as one of the

multiple, diverse cultural arms in building image, supporting economic goals, and enriching the lives of citizens and visitors. One can say that it has some, but not how much.

Concurrent with this idea of embeddedness is the idea of emergence. The emergence idea divides along two lines. The organic emergence of culture that rises from within the community marks one direction. In Pittsfield its likeliness aligns with the events that coincided with the artists of the 1970's, followed closely by Daniel O'Connell's and Kitty Lichtenstein's vision that the arts remain accessible and socially oriented. The second direction invites well timed, managed planning action, which can aid the emergence of culture. O'Connell and Lichtenstein also initiated this type of cultural action during the Smith administration. Ruberto's administration has clearly acted in this vein. Time/type layering strategy relates to emergence more peripherally. Aligning with Parkerson's reflections on effective cultural planning, Pittsfield's cultural planning does share some qualities with what he observed in Brooklyn, NY. The Pittsfield approach seems to model a "multi-layered and responsive approach to regeneration...[one that employs] strong visionary leadership and follow through". Pittsfield is striking its own "balance... between imported art and the local arts community, allowing for diversity and the unique creative character of a city to emerge and grow" (Parkerson, 2007).

Although Pittsfield and Brooklyn are not contextually compatible, they share these parallels. As the story of Pittsfield's contemporary cultural development has revealed, Pittsfield has demonstrated "strong visionary leadership". The objectives based on vision, goals setting and self-evaluation over time so seem to come to realization. One need only look toward the goals laid out in planning documentation to see that targeted goals are generally followed through on and often met in some capacity. Though a balance is struck between imported art and the local arts community, this balance fluctuates. What is an optimal balance for Pittsfield is left to experimentation and speculation.

Now that Pittsfield's leadership has changed more shifts may be underway that will likely impact the balance of arts and culture in the community. Hopefully the current leadership will

recognize the importance of what has been achieved thus far. The agenda has recalibrated, conjoining at least on paper arts in culture with educational objectives (City of Pittsfield, 2004c). A shift of focus can potentially invigorate, though the danger is to consider the new agenda as an either or, instead of a both and. There is no proof that the persistent layering of arts and culture would sustain an envisioned economic and quality of life objectives. Practitioners that have been involved in this vision would likely argue affirmatively. However the nurturance of the layers of arts and culture and of public art in Pittsfield is attending to something that is vital to human community, and has been essential in every known civilization. To continue to attend to this process seems prudent. At the very least this could allow for a deepening understanding of the cultural processes and strategies, so that they may be optimally harnessed.

As suggested, strategic layering is in one sense a device of communication that establishes a message about Pittsfield as a creative city. Each generation of public art plays a role in establishing this communication. The idea of networks of communication and the dynamics of buzz provides another frame through which to view the process and approach to public art in Pittsfield. This strategic action functions in a way that can link together social and economic objectives.

#### **4.3.2 Networks of Communication and Buzz**

Pittsfield has a well-developed strategy for building a network of communication that promotes the city's creative sector. This coordinated effort originates mainly through the Office of Cultural Development. It is clear from the planning literature, web information from organizational entities like Downtown Inc. and political statement that Pittsfield's approach to development and self-promotion is based on a business model. Whilden's business and marketing background supports this purpose.

A simple web search for 'cultural Pittsfield' returns a plethora of hits. Information is disseminated on blogs, local regional and meta-regional news outlets, radio and periodicals. This

media blast appears as an ongoing process, attended to with undeniable persistence. Not all communication comes out of the Office of Cultural Development. Information networking occurs from cultural entities such as Berkshire Museum or specially created sites designated to specific events, such as Pittsfield 250<sup>th</sup>. From interviews and observation of information patterns, it seems as if information flows from and through more than one source network; though one suspects that these communications are somehow linked. As is the case in many communities, individuals are often involved and connected with more than one community event and organization. The same people often show up to work and as such the networks of communication around town are interconnected.

This is important particularly when considering how these interlinked networks of communication can be mutually supporting. One interviewee in speaking about The Storefront Artist Project observed the importance of the collaborative and integrated social network as a means of mutually building community and propping up cultural efforts; noting that one entity spins off of another (I7). This is a process of buttressing. Although social networking in the sense of getting the word out is important for economic purposes, this support system is an architecture that helps to build the quality and continuity of culture in a place. This network is an intangible in that it can remain intact when initiatives, like the Storefront Artist Project, come to an end. This is implied in an optimistic statement in an iBerkshires public web post that announced that the closing of The Storefront Artist Project, "Even though we are closing our doors, let's not think of this as the final act for Storefront. We are happy to hand our mantle on to the next generation of artists, knowing something new and pivotal will emerge from this moment of closure." (Mailer, 2011, Durwin, 2011c).

To take advantage of the human social dynamics of buzz seems an appropriate choice when promoting image. This shifting, changing network of social relationships, economy and activity needs a phenomenon like buzz, which Storper and Venables says has the 'ability to coordinate in a temporally and spatially shifting environment' (Storper and Venables, 2004).

Creating buzz is component to Pittsfield's cultural planning strategy, and the city's public art is a device for communication. Among cultural organizers, a desire persists that hopes people will be 'hit' by the city's public art, that it should create interest, that it will draw people and that people will talk about Pittsfield as a nice place to visit. The public art is part of a big picture that expresses downtown pride and communicates that something interesting is happening. One interviewee observes that the Artscape program does not seem to be talked about much. But this thought follows with a statement of the program's inherent value, its presence a signifier of vitality and expected of a vibrant cultural scene. Another interview commented on how feedback is heard. Though an organized effort to track responses to Pittsfield's public art was not noted in the literature or any of the interviews, people do call the cultural organizers to compliment or complain. Opinions in both camps are welcome because the communication indicates that people notice the public art. At its best the public art becomes part of the community conversation, as was the case of the two lion sculpture sited in front of city hall that appeared in daily discussion about current political concerns happening at city hall (I6).

The power of public art to stimulate (and coordinate) conversation seems inherently tied to how effectively the public art impacts people. From this angle economy and quality of life may be viewed as a non-exclusive reciprocal oval as it relates to buzz. Public art creates encounter, encounter creates conversation, conversation contributes to image, image has the (alleged) power to build economy, economy brings people, people encounter public art – ad infinitum. Does the public art in Pittsfield act as an accelerant to this process, creating a momentum that is most probably a desired fruit of the City's promotional campaign? Some thoughtful observation may shed some thought on the question of impact.

There is something to be said about a rotating schedule of temporary public art as a way to meet a shifting environment. The Artscape program annually rotates public art and has done so over several years. With this program comes a set of promotional materials, docent led walks, collective artist exposure and in the case of themed years a coordinated story telling. These

elements establish a rhythmic communication like pulses going into the community and radiating out through the artist networks. In this light buzz functions like a sustained undercurrent. In contrast the participatory, themed public art events seem more like a 'Happening' –emitting bursts of creative activity. These bursts more or less reach out locally and regionally. Like pulsars these events build up a concentration of directed energy, and then explode into the community within a contained period of time. As in the case of *The Art of the Game* and *Hayman!* the process can repeat over a finite number of successive years, varying each year in intensity and community response. The events can leave after waves where the production is revisited or continued within another event. One example of this is the *Sheeptacular Reunion Show*, which occurred a year after the main event (Bush, 2005). Another example is *Walk-On-Walls*, which extended a seasonal outdoor installation by bringing the event to a winter gallery show at the Lichtenstein Center for the Arts (Cultural Pittsfield, 2011). Often public art events are scheduled with other associated events such as lectures, aimed to generate and sustain the conversation.

The temporary public art events tend to spin from one to another, and are quite different in energy and output than the more formal, curated *Artscape* program. The events provide an opportunity for experimentation, a search for what works and what is less effective, and to try new ideas. The model for new events may draw from previous ones. Though each event is unique and temporary, they collectively create an irregular, but palpable beat. Each event employs intense marketing and involves a broad cross-section of community participants from business owners, families, children, artists, and cultural leaders. The extent of community participation and funds raised are informal measures of success. The buzz that may be achieved from these events remains internal and to some extent invisible (no blogs or survey efforts set up for post event assessment were found). However the invention of new events that repeat the dynamic described here functions as a collective charge, repeating the message 'This is a creative and fun community.' 'Things are happening here' 'Look the arts are visible.' 'This is an interesting downtown.' 'Wouldn't you like to come here and be a part of this?'



Permanent public art works seem a move to stabilize identity. Pittsfield's murals or recently acquired sculptures are biographical, referring to the citizens and their history. One interviewee expressed that permanent art tends to disappear over time. The form becomes so part of the landscape that people do not see it anymore (I6). Unless the public art is iconic, like the St. Louis Arch where the form is so identifiable as a part of the city's visual architecture, the public art seems unlikely to generate a high level or long lasting buzz. (Controversial pieces would be an exception.) However the moving of the sculpture "Elements of the Game" to Wahconah Park seems to simulate this on a small scale. This move sets the sculpture in context with an institution that is iconic to Pittsfield. A report on the move indicates a hope that the bat, ball and glove will as 'part of the fabric of Wahconah Park' become a photo backdrop for families ("Baseball Sculpture", 2011). This places the permanent public art not only in a context of location, but in the context of memory and place. Buzz in this context is one of long term association, a conversation that will repeat itself within the personal memories of individuals - a long, sustained frequency with realized points both articulated and fading along the continuum of time.

When driving through Pittsfield the public art may or may not be seen. On foot the Artscape sculpture and wall murals come in and out of view as instances on the landscape. One interviewee noted that the public art plays a supporting role, and is more present for those who seek it out – in the same way that people seek out an encounter with art in a gallery or museum. In this reflection is a skepticism that the public art would cause people driving by to 'stop and ponder'. Another interviewee mentioned that Pittsfield does not have "an artsy downtown", that there is a lack of "indicators that communicates the presence of public art"(I6). These observations draw into question how effective the public art program is at stimulating the sought for perception and response – and what alternatives could evolve the public art program toward meeting these goals.

This question of strategic impact is an active one among Pittsfield's cultural organizers. The move to incorporate platforms for public art along North Street as part of the Streetscape improvement initiative is a tangible response to this question. Siting public art at intervals along a primary thoroughfare downtown concentrates and unifies the presentation of public art in the public setting creating better visibility and impact. Such presentation may move the public art to a more noticeable position. The positioning of the art may influence its power to communicate to its undefined audience in a way that could perhaps better stimulate public conversation. This tactic might also work at gateway locations, where temporary art could function like permanent art; becoming an expected, but changing (therefore not fading) encounter. Attention to the role, function and appearance of gateways was a central topic discussed in the Master Plan Arts and Culture committee meeting notes in 2009. The committee discussed how to create 'a sense of place' in the physical design, generating ideas like the creation of a gateway corridor that leads into the town or the addition of uniform graphic and sculptural elements (Friman, 2009), ideas that in fact the current Streetscape improvements for public art seem to address.

Though the idea of branding was more focus of the committee's discussion, this record demonstrates a concern and interest for the gateway idea as a mode of impact. In one interview it was suggested that it would be very interesting to see public art take the role of an "all-encompassing experience" citing Olafur Eliasson 2008 New York City "Waterfalls" exhibit as an example. This type of public art is one "that everyone responds to" (I4). This reference brings to mind a second large scale impact exhibit, Christo and Jeanne Claude's 2005 public art event in Central Park, "The Gates". It seems like such evocative exhibits elicit a call and response from its audience, one that has potential staying power. It is likely that for years to come those who experienced, read about the exhibit or those whose professional concerns are attuned to place and art making will remember and cognitively refer to the exhibit. When conjuring their historical image of Central Park, an image of orange cloth may flash.

Pittsfield's temporary art events could promote a strong response that might simulate a similar type of buzz described above, but these events are different in that they engage the community as co-creators as well as receivers. The dynamic is not just antiphonal. In this sense these events may potentially generate a deeper conversation, not philosophical as much as familial. The temporary events imprint a cultural memory and association of place and time, rich with community interactions. One can say this type of buzz cultivates an inward conversation before extending outward, generating an intangible, but potentially sustained, embedded buzz. The reach of buzz arising from Pittsfield's temporary events likely remains local, or at best regional.

Though no evidence was found that would indicate much impact, Gregory Crewdson, 2007 staging for his photo of downtown Pittsfield, *Brief Encounter* was similar in design to the encompassing public art experience (BBC Home, 2007). The resulting photograph finds permanency as part of the Berkshire Museum collection, reminding people that downtown Pittsfield served as a canvas resulting from a momentary public art experience. This staged art event may generate a more feather-like buzz, one that once in a while tickles the awareness that Pittsfield served as a subject in a noted artist's creation.

Branding and buzz are intricately related strategic actions. Where buzz is about communication and social networking, place branding is about image generation and managing perception through policy. Branding is closely attached to Pittsfield's economic goals.

### **4.3.3 Branding**

As its cultural development history reveals, Pittsfield has been engaged in an intense, intentional process of reinvention. From the start, the design for Pittsfield's development has interwoven three tiers: office and government, arts and entertainment, retail and restaurants (II). The incorporation of public art into the downtown landscape is one fulfillment of this original cultural strategy.

Downtown Inc.'s Five year strategic plan 2010-2015 lays out strategic priorities for the downtown development, which includes a marketing campaign. Whilden and Supranowicz address the negative perceptions that circulate about Pittsfield, perceptions not only attributed to outside views but also occurring amongst the citizens themselves (Shaw, 2009; O'Brien, 2011). One of the core aspects of reinvention involves taking actions that help to mold new identity in the hope that this can in time overcome negative associations. Messages such as downtown Pittsfield is unsafe or since GE left the business district is dead or nothing is happening in Pittsfield are replaced with new ones that communicate vitality and creativity. One can see in this thought how buzz and branding are part of the same weave. Public art plays a role in this image construction.

Strategic Priority five lays out arts and culture as an objective. The first point addresses image of the Arts District describing it as 'edgy' and 'artsy'. This point calls for 'a unified brand image for [the] downtown [Arts District]'. The second point calls to 'increase arts presence and visibility'. Artscape becomes central to this objective providing a vehicle to select and 'install several large sculptures in strategic downtown locations and large scale graphics to create new art destination'. (Large here is relative to site restrictions and opinion.) (Downtown Strategic Planning Committee Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., 2010).

As has been established public art in Pittsfield plays a complementary role rather than one that is central stage. The Downtown, Inc. priorities establish that making art visible is of particular concern of those who organize the public sculpture. From this point of view the role of public art functions symbolically for both visibility and impact as marketplace symbols (Prior and Grossbart, 2007; Peel and Lloyd, 2007; Anholt, 2008). Although the sculptural public art under the direction of the Artscape committee changes from year to year, sited in different locations throughout the downtown, its presence is a signifier that arts and culture are active working elements in the city. Within this context the rotating sculpture of Artscape arranged throughout the downtown treats public space as a gallery and by extension communicates a self-perception,

one that articulates a patronage and stewardship of the arts. It is unknown if the organizers connect a curatorial approach with self-image or identity. Certainly this approach does reflect the regional 'high arts' arts scene. Put another way public art in Pittsfield is not the articulation of a slogan or even as a single piece of art that single-handedly associates with Pittsfield's identity. Public Art in Pittsfield relates to branding in terms of contributing to the image of the City as one concerned and committed to the high arts, communicating that 'the City of Pittsfield is a place where creativity and innovation flourish' as well as a place that intends to participate in a western based tradition of the arts(I3; I1). Considering Pittsfield's public art in this way represents one response to an active question at least among the Downtown Inc. operatives: "what do we want to project?" (Downtown Strategic Planning Committee Downtown Pittsfield, Inc., 2010) (I1).

As objects in space public art has the potential to enhance or contrast with the landscape in a significant way. Size, shape, color and interpreted meaning contribute to the siting of the Artscape sculpture. Each year this process becomes more streamlined with the Committee's experience as it evolves to clarify its objectives. Since the summer of 2011 the City has been executing a redesign of North Street. Electrified settings specifically designed for public art have been constructed along both sides of the street. This investment not only establishes the commitment the city has made to the visible integration of the arts and the business sectors of the city, but also reflects that there is a continuing evolution of thought revolving around how to have the arts be more visibly presented in public spaces and to have the most impact in terms of image. The addition of amenity for public art along one of the central business arteries bears some similarity to the relocation of "Elements of the Game" from its original location in front of the high school to Wahconah Park in two ways. First, in both instances context becomes an important criteria. Second, the public art forms become integrated components of the landscape design, in contrast with an object that has been 'plopped' into a location. These observations paired with concerns of image and visibility return to the question addressing degree of impact. When passing in front of the high school "Elements of the Game" did not catch the eye until several

visits after. Moving the sculpture to its location at Wahconah Park was by design to give the sculpture in essence a job. The now more visible and contextualized sculpture would take on the role of a public icon where families would have their photo taken when attending one of the local baseball games ("Baseball Sculpture, " 2011).

Thinking outside of Pittsfield and looking again for a moment at Christo and Jeanne Claude's "The Gates", this type of architecturally integrated public art installation may be classified as a contextualized event that could have, though short term, a high level of impact. This impact may not in effect brand Central Park, though (oddly) could in a small way contribute to the image of the city itself. Placing sculpture, as it may be for the first time in the 2012 themed Herman Melville, Moby Dick Artscape exhibit, in a highly visible rhythmic pattern through the downtown, will integrate the sculpture within the context of the arts and culture of the downtown experience. This intermingling of artistic form and landscape pattern gives the pieces a designed position in the landscape. Depending on factors such as the quality of work and its acceptance by the community this move potentially may increase impact, and as such potentially affect the desired communication that contributes to perception. When held together by the uniformity of a themed message, like 2012's Moby Dick, the collective sculpture in the creation of a more immersive experience could contribute in a noticeable way to the perception of Pittsfield as an arts city.

People move through the downtown streets to do business or visit cultural venues predictably on foot. The public art that falls along these pathways, both vehicular and pedestrian, is encountered and becomes part of the expected experience of the downtown, thus building the perception of "Creative Pittsfield". But unlike permanent pieces which run the risk of becoming unseen overtime, the rotation of the public sculpture is likely to remain a fresh renewed annual encounter, perhaps building an anticipation among residents and visitors who will expect something new and interesting to look at each year.

This architectural perspective on branding connects with the next strategic action, clustering. Within academic discussion the spatial dynamic of clustering generally refers to the pattern of proximity between economic sectors and supporting industries. This inquiry raises questions regarding the composition and function of clustering. For instance does a cultural district composed of numerous interconnected cultural activities and businesses attract more of the same and when should planning incorporate a more decentralized approach? (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010a; Currid and Connolly, 2008; Currid and Williams, 2010). In Pittsfield clustering as a strategy manifests broadly as part of the larger cultural planning effort. For purposes of this discussion clustering is applied specifically in terms of the spatial layout of the city's public art.

#### **4.3.4 Clustering**

The Downtown Inc. Strategic Plan- Priority One calls for the formation of 'distinctive commercial sub-districts within the downtown', as a means to assist planning and economic development. The Downtown Arts Overlay District defines the area designation of cultural related activity and institutions, essentially forming the boundaries of a cultural cluster. If the city achieves the cultural designation status through the state of Massachusetts, which spatially follows closely the Arts Overlay boundaries this will reinforce the gross clustering effect. Though not officially designated, the south end of North Street, past Park Square and down South Street delineates a sub-cluster. Located in this end of town are a number of small-scaled flagship anchor institutions. Public art, both temporary and permanent public sculpture and murals, are not confined to this sub-cluster area (though a noted proportion of Artscape sculpture is found in this section of town). Public art is delegated by policy to fall within the Downtown Arts Overlay District (I5). The motivation to assign public art within these boundaries emphasizes more the City's economic objectives (image, impact) than those associated with quality of life (public art as encounter, engagement and expression of identity).

When addressing the question to cluster or not to cluster, the answer may well attach to objective and expected outcome. To cluster public art within a designated art zone seems to first fulfill the aims for impact and perception building, while adding to character identity and attending to quality of life. To disperse public art may communicate that the experience of encounter and engagement with public art is one that may intend to impact across a broad cross-section of community life. Though impact is perhaps spatially diluted, the public art may still contribute to community identity, dependent on the form it takes and how well the community will identify with it.<sup>25</sup> In what seems true to Pittsfield's cultural approach, both spatial configurations seem covered to a degree. Most of the Artscape sculpture is confined to the Downtown Arts Overlay District, but in the case of community public art events like Sheeptacular and Art of the Game the public art display extends more broadly.

The question of clustering or dispersing public art is one that seems not quite resolved. External planning guidance that would help the organizers address the best practices for laying out art in the public realm, measuring impacts and aligning them to the specifics of city objectives do not seem readily found and applied. The organizers experiment and reevaluate based on experience obtained from prior years. Within the Artscape Committee discussion tends toward comment as to 'what works and what does not' (I6). The community participates in the decisions about location. Private property owners may embrace or decline a piece, in this way the process of siting public art is interactive (I6). The committee listens to community feedback that can arrive informally, or through controversy.

The committee has learned that they need to balance the spacing within the given constraints of geometry (I4). They determine placement in consideration of practical issues such as the best space for the most effective presentation, the supports needed, public works requirements and safety issues (I3; I5). They have learned that the pieces should be neither too

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<sup>25</sup> This observation brings to question what type of art is for the community – who is the art for question.



crowded nor too dispersed (I2, I4, I6). As one interviewee pointed out, "public work demands space". If you want to place several pieces together they are forced into relationship with one another. The interviewee saw this consideration as similar to the decision process involved in organizing a gallery show. The selected arrangement could create either a desired tension or undesired conflict depending on the piece. Some correlation between pieces is necessary or the result could have a negative impact, working counter to the efforts to build a positive image or to effect public engagement with the art (I4). From a functional point of view the walking tours depend on spacing the art so that it is accessible by foot. Pieces spaced too far out of an easy walking range 'does not serve the purpose' of the tour (I6).

The 2011 Artscape committee consciously pursued the cluster effect, expecting that this approach would 'draw people in and create interest' (I2). Even if the public art organizers would like to accomplish a cluster effect, available locations for public art are limited, constrained by geometry that does not necessarily permit clustering. After some contention over public sculpture on Park Square, one of the more open spaces in the downtown area that could accommodate a concentration of work, the managing Parks Department limits the number of sculpture to two pieces maximum allowed and obtained the right to pre-review the sculpture before permitting it in the park (I3). One interviewee commented that this was "a shame because the restriction dilutes the effects" (I3). Where clusters are possible they may seem 'haphazard' and small compared to their surroundings, due in part that the scale of the sculpture must be able to fit on the back of a UHall, and to the available locations which are delimited more by circumstance than planning. Interestingly the placement of public sculpture on the newly constructed pads downtown seems a step towards intensifying impact in two ways, on one hand to create a clustered pattern of spacing for public art and on the other hand to organize a pattern of installation that is a permanent part of streetscape design (I2).

While cultural planning guided by clustering, branding, buzz and layering may factor in the successful emergence of identity, image and vitality that carries a city toward its development

goals, the program is incomplete without consideration of the public's role. As the researchers have pointed out the public offers a perspective and expertise borne on experience of living in and caring for a place (Evans, 2005). People are not merely receivers of culture, they are also the shapers and with their involvement there seems more chance of community ownership and potential sustained success of programs (Miles, 2005). That community is important to the purposes of public art is the favored point of view of this discussion. The community is of central importance when talking about public art and its influence on either the economy or a perceived quality of life.

#### **4.4 Public Involvement and Pittsfield's Public Art Programs**

The composition of the intended audience for public art seems divided into four segments. First and foremost, Pittsfield's program for public art aims to enrich local residents. Second the public art is arranged to attract regional tourism. This is the audience of the 'indefinable public' (Peto, 1992). Third, the public art contributes to building marketing leverage to assist in promoting the city as a place of culture that will help to secure grants and special designations. This is a more indirect, professional audience. Last, the public art opportunities call out to participating artists, offering exposure, some recompense and importantly the opportunity to become involved with the cultural dialog.

Looking at who the public art is for reveals something about the motivations and projections that propel its programming. This is a very important question to ask and really the beginning and end point as people are at the core of the cultural planning issue. What stands at the crux of economic and quality of life objectives? Who does a place brand serve? What will buzz impact? For whom will cluster create an impression? Why invest in a variety of cultural forms invested over a period of decades? From whatever angle a question comes and from whichever strategic action to which it refers, the answers in some way or degree return to the human benefit. This observation drives the point that the link between community and the

rooting (or rootedness) of culture has some bearing on the success of cultural programming, public art or otherwise, and is important to consider carefully when designing a planning strategy.

Community involvement in Pittsfield's public art happens on at least four levels: receiving, educating, contributing and creating. Each independent program will employ the community on one or more of these levels; and reflect the style of management of the time. The mural project typifies a pattern of management where a central group of organizers administer a given program. The mural project balanced between O'Connell's and Lichtenstein's social agenda and the expertise of the artist. Although O'Connell with noted mural painter Daniel Galvez championed the administration and execution of the project, community volunteers helped paint the murals (Bonenti, 1985). The murals also functioned at the educational level, providing historical knowledge and instruction in the art of mural making for public settings. The mural topics revolved around community identity - the people, their activities and achievements.

A centralized management of programs bears characteristics that impact the depth and quality of public involvement. For instance Artscape's curatorial approach administered by a committee formed by invitation may attract a cross section of leadership that comes from various professional sectors (artists, planners, cultural administrators, educators, design professionals and so on); but who is not invited? Within Pittsfield's regional context the managerial approach seems in character with that of traditional high arts venues and in a sense is fitting with the objective to participate and contribute to the cultural character of the region. However, this approach may be interpreted as one that is highly controlled and directed, but cultivates a limited level of community ownership. Like the mural program, the Artscape initiative seems oriented toward audience reception, encouraging education through dialog and encounter with sculptural arts. The receiving is intended for the local community, but may tend more to communicate to the indefinable public audience - or to a sub-target group, the museum goer, an audience who seeks out an encounter with the arts.

Though the management of public art in Pittsfield may operate as a very controlled and deliberate process; the public art events show an enthusiasm for opening windows for community involvement. Sheeptacular, The Art of the Game and perhaps most significantly Hayman! were events that reached out broadly drawing on the collective talents and resources of the community. All four levels of community involvement - receiving, educating, contributing and creating - come in to play. Both Sheeptacular and Art of the Game structured the program around a juried invitation; however people (particularly the youth) were invited to participate creatively through drawing and small scale sculpture. Sheeptacular organized through an array of community partnerships, among which included older adult community volunteer group RSVP (City of Pittsfield, 2004b). Walk-On included both artist and community images and poetry. Hayman! was probably one of the most exceptionally community oriented events. Though placement awards were distributed, this event was not directed by jury or invitation to professional artists. A local artist scarecrow expert and the Storefront Artist Project facilitated, providing the necessary instruction and help with the construction of the scarecrows. The community contributed time, resources, logistical help and a great deal of creativity as displayed in the wide variety and character of the resulting hay people.

These public art events evoke a playful dimension that seems important to recognize. The idea of the community playing, learning and creating together is one that has much potential for, and perhaps influence over the emergence and sustained presence of culture. These programs express aspects of local of identity. The sheep of Sheeptacular reference the Marino wool industry of the 1800's. The baseball themed Art of the Game references Pittsfield's special relationship with the sport. Manifestations of self-identity find expression through Hayman!. But community creative involvement is deeper than fun and expression of identity, and reaches another thread of argument as to why it is important to track the social and economic impact of all public art initiatives, and in particular these events. Evoking in the community a creative participation, a mutually experience of fun and face- to- face encounter may get at the core of

what makes a community self-sustaining. This network of human relationships and mutually shared experience is something that no amount of strategic action can predict or plan for, and may be the core ground that can encourage the creative emergence of new ideas that could potentially spur new revenues. This self-sustaining approach seems tied to Mayor Bianchi's vision, and is not unlike Mayor Ruberto and other mayors' emphasis on both economic and social development, though each administration takes on its own language and focus. Notably Bianchi's vision expresses a move toward green infrastructure. This gesture is only one mote of a much larger, hotly debated and current planning push towards what makes a sustainable community. The Mayor's vision deemphasizes arts and culture in that they are only mentioned peripherally in terms of regional tourism and cooperation with the cultural council, downtown as a destination and the continuance of Third Thursday. What hopefully does not get overlooked is how arts and culture and their various layered manifestations, of which public art is only one, can be considered a vital indicator in that that arts and culture are intricately and intrinsically tied to the community experience whether or not rising from a plan or emergent activities, and as such can provide a value measure of community satisfaction, connectedness and involvement. Evans pointed out that over two decades a shift occurred from primarily economic to both economic and social motivations behind cultural investment. He references Betterton's observation that the 'soft edged' (social) reasons for investing in culture is connected with quality of life measures (Evans, 2005, p 966). Perhaps questions regarding arts and culture would fit the into the currently popular survey that is circulating under the guise of The Happiness Initiative designed to measure the wellbeing of a community as an indicator of sustainability (The Happiness Initiative, 2011). Such a survey could in fact provide an opportunity to gather some valuable 'evidence' for community engagement with public art.

The relationship between public art and community in Pittsfield seems to stand in tension between the planned and the emergent, with a fair share of the energy up until 2011 directed toward the planned. That public art has many layers of expression in community life is

something to stand and notice. However, its possible influence as an economic and image building strategy may not be understood well enough, either by the public or leadership, which endangers its continued support over time, perhaps pushing it into the far margins of planning action, so that it could become lost completely. This would be an invaluable loss at the social level.

Perhaps more than Artscape, the public art events may carry a special value in the community conversation, as these events seem to encourage a deeper level of community participation, an experience essential it seems to a self-sustaining community. Mayor Ruberto sums up the central role of the community in a video clip promoting Pittsfield 2011 250<sup>th</sup> year celebration. He says, "...but it's you, the people, who are the most important thing to make Pittsfield the city it is. It's people, just like you, who make the true difference." (Pittsfield250, 2010).

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUDING SYNTHESIS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

What can be drawn out from this study of Pittsfield's culture and public art now that it has been set within the Evans framework, reviewed through four strategic actions and considered from the point of view of community? Several considerations and themes harvested from the analysis create the basis for further discussion. This synthesis will help to distill what has been learned from Pittsfield's example and from this may rise some important insights that may inform an approach to public art.

#### **5.2 Pittsfield's Public Art Initiatives and The Dual Purpose of Cultural Planning**

One of the central agendas for this study of Pittsfield's public art program is to look at the motivations the expectations that drive the City's public art initiatives. Evans identifies two 'sets of meanings'. These two purposes, economy and quality of life are raised several times in this discussion as central overarching motivations for Pittsfield's cultural development and public art initiatives. Particularly notable is that quality of life and economic impact of the arts is explicitly mentioned in planning documents and media, which confirms these ideas as important in Pittsfield's own dialog. Ruberto brought these motivations under a unified agenda, the cultural economy. It is unclear from Bianchi's vision if this dual purpose of cultural development will continue or will be scrapped altogether. In a move toward community sustainability, one hopes it's the first of the two—the 'experiment' has not had time to run its course – though it may be time to grow in its definition.

In speaking with arts organizers about the role of public art, they did not talk about this dualism as conflict but first as a corresponding symbol that contributes to image and second as substantive encounter that intends to stimulate a cultural conversation. This observation leads to

the consideration that when viewed from a particular cultural strategy, Pittsfield's dualistic meaning may be seen in a reciprocal relationship, instead of an opposing one. However, this point of view does not necessarily equalize the two motivations. Rather it seems as if the balances between these two meanings may change over time, or be somewhat context dependent. For instance, under Ruberto economic motivations for cultural strategy seem central. From the point of view of the community identification with a cultural expression the meaning that shapes the form and content of public art may be more important.

Artscape and the intermittent public art events do not demonstrate this balance of purpose explicitly. Though Artscape and the public art events connect with both, one seems more attuned to the detailed motivations that support economy (tourism, symbolic image making, visual impact and regional arts) and the other seems more aligned with the detailed motivations assigned to quality of life (community conversation, involvement and vitality) respectively. Awareness of this dualistic dynamic could contribute to the development of an evaluative approach that can support both the strategic development and emergence of Pittsfield's cultural character.

A desire for impact on community image, a vehicle of communication that Pittsfield is a vital and happening hub of the arts within a regional context, an encounter that stimulates a cultural conversation, a participatory event that generates community creativity and social interaction are all expressions of hoped for outcome and expected benefits of public art in Pittsfield and provide qualitative reason from the point of view of the cultural organizers to invest public resources into public art initiatives. What is missing and may or may not be integral to this investment is a measured follow through that uses cultural participation as an indicator for both sets of meanings. As was presented in the literature review best measurement is a key concern among researchers, one that is currently pursued and projected to take some time to sort out. Meanwhile the city's public art initiatives operate as a type of experiment or leap of faith. This in itself is ground for further research. What is in the nature of arts and culture that permits a faith based public investment? Something intangible (and intrinsically human) is at work.



The four strategic actions - buzz, branding, clustering and layering - seem to do a good job at defining potential indicators for economic motivations for public art. Each of these actions is easily and clearly named in Pittsfield's general planning and media literature coverage. What is fuzzier and not equally articulated were the potential measures with regard to public art and quality of life. The Artscape initiative provides a potential for monitoring response through the seasonal monthly docent led walks. The intermittent public art events have the potential as a potent indicator of the community's investment in public art as well as extents or impacts of creative participation.

Evans and Foord talk about the 'two sets of meanings ' as a dualism that has consequences, which can work against or can fragment cultural development (Evans and Foord, 2003). It is not clear if this detrimental effect is true for Pittsfield, though their warning is one that should be heard. Though the researchers consider operating under this dualism suspect, the argument here is not to question its validity, but to recognize its reciprocal influence on Pittsfield's public art programs and by extension the larger cultural planning initiative. Pittsfield wants, needs to find its identity – and one thread of this identity is its cultural expression. This is not a new point, thinking of Pittsfield's Gilded Age of theater at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well as the corporate cultural organizations and events during the GE years. In the city's most recent history are Ruberto's cultural economic agenda and the cultural planning initiatives united under the efforts of the Office of Community Development with Megan Whilden at its head. Each era bore its own fruits. From the 1970's to the present are layers of public art expressions – the murals, the street art exhibits, the public art events rising from community imagination and temporal circumstance. What is interesting about the O'Connell years is the transition of public art from a socially oriented quality of life expression to one that became united under Smith and Lichtenstein with public planning and found its current planning apex under Ruberto's administration. The Storefront Artist Project seems to exemplify the characteristic of meeting in the middle. The project accommodated the shifts and change characteristic of the artist

community as it was built to move easily from one store front to another as business moved in (Dudek, 2011). The Project provided an institutional outlet for grassroots expression, while at the same time served the political agenda that aimed for a visibility and image making. Through Storefront, Pittsfield built a setting that made visible this balance between quality of life and economic objectives. This initiative has now ended, however due to the dynamic nature of the currents of creativity a new initiative is expected to rise (Durwin, 2011c; Mailer, 2011). The established planning mechanisms and networks that can receive this offspring of creative action are in place – at least for now.

### **5.3 Emergent vs. Planned Culture**

A second theme that can be extracted from the discussion addresses the intersection between public policy, public art and community. What role does the community play in the process of developing public art projects, and how important is community involvement? This question identifies an important counterweight to the economically oriented strategic actions, and is why it was brought to discussion. This perspective argues that the community is the central modeler of culture. Therefore it is important to weigh in how community relates to reciprocal motivations of quality of life and economy as it pertains to public art. One way to do this is to evaluate what emerges from the community in contrast to what is planned for the community. Pittsfield is not a city that relies on large scale flagship planning to achieve its objectives, but rather seems to opt for a more integrated, homegrown, multi-layered approach. In Pittsfield it is hard to extract specifically what is planned versus what comes out of a native community expression. Though the Cultural Development Office represents a planning instrument of the government, the city operates somewhat like a small town, which allows for informal networks. When Maggie Mailer had the idea for the storefront project, she was able to develop the program by asking the building owners if they would be interested and before long the project was born (15). These observations are not meant to understate the role of planning for culture. The

Cultural Development Office replaced the Office of Cultural Affairs, a tactic that deliberately emphasized the relationship between economic development and culture. Programs such as Artscape seem to arise from a certain identification of community with the broader regional art scene and its associated tourism. The Storefront Artist Program also falls along this vein. But these programs do emerge from segments of the community, even if they are coming from the professional or artists networks.

It is important to highlight this idea that the public art initiatives rise out of segments of the community. This leans toward the deep and complex question who is the public of public art. A difference exists between 'the public' and the identity of a community. Public is a more global, indefinite term, whereas community relates to a blend of demographics, geography and social networks. Phillips indicates that the public is indefinable, as civic society is by nature not homogenous (Phillips, 2003). The Artscape program presents sculptural art in non-conventional public setting in hopes that encounter with it will enrich the local community, stimulating cultural dialog and response (I3). While it's logical to extrapolate that the audience in this statement refers to the 'indefinable' public, somehow this does not seem accurate (Peto, 1992). Perhaps the village concept fits this definition better, a human network of communication and geography that is bound together in a shared experience.

Pittsfield's cultural organizers tend to favor the temporary public art format over the permanent. This is true for both the annual rotating Artscape sculptural exhibit as it is for the intermittent public art events. The temporal rotating exhibit offers the opportunity for continual renewal. The art has only a year to fade into the unnoticed and inconsequential background. As Phillips points out the public encounter with public art can be peripheral, something that happens 'when they are doing something else', which she frames as something ironically 'complicated and dynamic' (Phillips, 2003). The temporal format can permit the inclusion of a broad pool of local and regional artists, each bringing their own style and format for expression. This has the potential to reach out to a broader segment of the community.

Furthermore, the temporary public art events can be described as focused thematic festivals. This allows for the potential for public participation in ways the curated exhibit does not. In the discussion four modes of public participation that are activated for these temporary public art events are identified as receiving, educating, contributing and creating. This community oriented approach to public art seems to have a fairly broad reach. What is most difficult to know is what segment of the community the public art does not reach. What are the limits of its influence? This question is left unanswered. The information regarding community involvement mainly came from interviews with public art organizers and available media articles, and not from a cross section of community participants, so no data is in place that can support this question.

This angle of discussion, community and public art, is potentially one of the most potent and important. Pittsfield's public art initiatives fall along a spectrum with emergent on one end and planned on the other, though the two seem simultaneously interconnected. Positioning the community as the beginning and end point leads to the favoring of public art initiatives that emerge from the community. The rationale is that to encourage emergent art is to encourage the community to participate in a creative process. This participation is important because this involvement can potentially sustain a cultural initiative over the long haul, and may also give rise to new creative initiatives. On the other hand, like the dynamic between the dual motivations economy and quality of life, there seems also a need to find the right balance for what emerges from the community and what is planned for the community.

Community involvement and the questions of purpose are two leading points, but these are followed with a third. In examining Pittsfield's public art strategies some themes and considerations regarding the quality of approach to public art became evident. Pittsfield's arts organizers seem to exhibit characteristics that influence the decisions impacting public art. Identifying these qualities of approach could help to shape questions that can apply when looking at public art strategy in other cities.

## **5.4 Characteristics of Approach**

Pittsfield cultural organizers exhibit characteristic patterns of approach. These characteristics are not evaluated for their effectiveness, but catalog a vocabulary that may have useful application when considering public art programs in other communities. The identified characteristics that define approach to public art include context, diversification of public art strategy, flexibility, tolerance to risk, receptivity to new ideas, follow through, supporting networks of coordination and the question of temporary versus permanent. The characteristics of each quality of approach as they apply to Pittsfield's public art programming are explored in this section.

### **5.4.1 Context**

Pittsfield is self-aware of its geographical context. This is expressed in the place branding phrase 'heart of the Berkshires' used in the planning literature and in another phrase 'the downtown of the Berkshires' cited by Mayor Ruberto (O'Brien, 2011). The importance of Pittsfield's economic context within the Berkshire region has been expressed in several planning documents, in media articles and Mayoral statements, including the first point in Mayor Bianchi's vision that states, 'The creation of a business development and marketing plan to create new revenue and jobs in Berkshire County.'

Context is more than regional geography. It includes place demographics, local history, economic standing and a many other variables. The intricacy of context relates to the complexity of the word culture. The two words are fraternal. It seems that at the root of context, like at the root of culture is the community. These observations have more than philosophical significance. Markusen and Gadwa may have it right to suggest that cultural initiatives need to attend to context, just as cultural planning needs to know and find ways to engage its community. Cultural regeneration efforts cannot be a one-size-fits all (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010 b). What works for one context may not work for another. Markusen and Gadwa have observed that projects that

demonstrate a degree of success are those that aim for a 'quality of distinctiveness' that 'builds on the existing expertise and characteristics of place' (19). In this way Pittsfield's cultural planning does seem to attend to this question of context well. Artscape's approach to public art is one example. The program treats the downtown as an outdoor gallery. Though this outdoor setting incorporates space and art in an unconventional way, some of the considerations of a curated gallery show apply: the manner in which art forms relate and interact with each other, or the attention to context, aesthetics and impact. The Artscape show is juried, bringing a range of contemporary artists to show their work each year. This approach suggests a certain identity with the policy and process of the western high arts tradition, one that has had longstanding presence and reputation in the Berkshires. An emphasis on contemporary sculpture presents another theme that does seem to associate with a greater context, considering the cultural corridor idea that connects a network of contemporary art venues and their underlying social networks –Dia: Beacon, Salem Art Works, Williams College Museum, Art Omi, Ferrin Gallery (Pittsfield), Geoffrey Young Gallery (Great Barrington), Sienna Gallery (Lenox) (17).

The public art events and the mural project present another angle of context. Sheeptacular, Art of the Game and Walk-On each celebrate aspects of Pittsfield's history. Not as clear, or done as well is identifying a public art that is expressive and representative of community cultural diversity. The temporary art events do invite the collective community to participate in a shared creative process. Hayman! is the best example of this. But it may be prudent to ask what segment of the community's social context is not reached or represented by the public art. It also may be interesting to ask what creative expressions and ideas are emergent outside of the artist community that might contribute to and enrich what is offered.

Context is one of the central questions to explore when thinking about cultural planning and public art. Because it evokes the idea of emergent and because of its synergistic connection with culture and community, this word is preferable to 'placemaking' when thinking and planning for arts and culture. Consider this – the three C's (context+ culture+ community) add up to at

least three of the four E's of sustainability (equity, engagement and economy). Defining context seems one of the most important considerations for a community to discuss.

#### **5.4.2 Diversity**

One potentially telling observation that seems characteristic of Pittsfield's planning style is the propensity for diversity. As discussion has noted, Pittsfield chooses to identify with a broad range of cultural disciplines of which public art is one. The adopted branding slogan 'Creative Pittsfield' is one manifestation of this. Ruberto comments that the term 'creative' to describe Pittsfield does not only refer to the city's creative economic goals, but indicates a way of thinking. Creative is an inclusive term that embraces more than one artistic discipline. It includes creative venues and creative businesses (O'Brien 2011).

The City's public art initiatives are not intended to carry forward the city's vision alone, but represent one of many layers of strategy contributing to both quality of life and economic goals. The public art projects themselves display a range of diversity. Though there is an emphasis on temporary public art, the city has acquired other installations like Jerid Hohn's "Elements of the Game" for the longer term. Forms for featured art vary. Artscape tends to emphasize sculptural installations; however the city murals are included in the Artscape brochure. Art in the public sphere has taken the form of signs, baseball cards and two dimensional sidewalk installations. Public art programming takes different forms, from the curated annual Artscape exhibit to the temporary public art events that burst into life then fade over a year or two.

One could argue that this diverse an approach bears almost a frenetic character, but equally so one could argue that it casts a broad net into a community that is culturally diverse and heterogeneous. What can be observed is that Pittsfield's diverse approach has the impetus to disperse energy, a kind which bears with it a message that intends to communicate that Pittsfield is a creative place. It seems valid to reflect that this push of diverse approaches to planning and programming seems almost an opposite response to Pittsfield's previous identity under GE, one

that was unified by company hegemony. In light of the City's pursuit of a renewed identity, it is curious to observe this contrast. Another observation considers the social, political and economic issues of this first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This time is characterized by many uncertainties and changes. Could diversity be one way to cope with an uncertain and changing culture? To place the eggs in many baskets seems a reasonable response. Consider also the leap of faith behind this cultural economic and social planning. How does a city know the optimal placement of energy and effort? As Evans notes, evidence does show that culture's role in regeneration is one that is credible, but not much is understood about 'the very different effects that different types of cultural intervention produce in the short and longer term' (Evans, 2005). This issue of diversity needs careful consideration when thinking how it might apply to regeneration, in Pittsfield and in other places. Imagine diversity as a spectrum with a focused deliberate approach that occupies one end and a diverse approach on the other. Consider diversity in terms of the particular character, community and context. This framing of diversity could provide an angle from which to more objectively evaluate strategy.

#### **5.4.3 Flexibility, Risk and Receptivity to New Ideas**

Another quality that seems characteristic of Pittsfield's cultural planning approach is flexibility. This is particularly expressed through the temporary art events. These events are planned to run their course and to come to a conclusion. There is a built in expectation for change. A flexible approach is one that can invite new ideas, execute them and adjust them along the way. The Art of the Game is an example. This public art initiative is meant to parallel in some aspects the Sheeptacular project. When the event did not produce the expected buzz, the crowd and the funds the project shifted in focus. The second year adjusted to include 'a juried baseball art competition' and student art contributions. Its products were mounted on area billboards and printed onto baseball Art of the Game cards. Also added to the event program was a human baseball photographed at Wahconah Park from a plane, an open air art sale, fireworks



and a public art walking-tour brochure. This agglomeration of creative ideas and products was intended to provide multiple opportunities to 'appreciate art in different forms' ("Public Art Program," 2007).

Flexibility is closely aligned with risk tolerance. Pittsfield has demonstrated the ability to take risks with high stake projects such as the Colonial Restoration, or in the form of organizational, political risk such as the establishment of the Office of Cultural Development. On a nuts and bolts level, the investment in special electrified spaces for public art as part of a streetscape capital investment project was a risk move. What it is that regulates this tolerance for risk is not fully understood here. I think on one hand this speaks to vision clarity and cohesion of purpose. On the other hand it also seems to express a supporting belief in the power of creativity to generate the next best idea.

All the examples presented above highlight the receptivity in Pittsfield to new, creative ideas. It also points out the ability for the arts organizers to set an expectation for a result, and to adjust the vision, goal or objective as the case may be as part of an attempt to fulfill the perceived expectation. This implies some internal measure for achieving set expectations. The mechanics of this may be informal, but may function for Pittsfield. In the case of Art of the Game the measure for success was weighted against a prior program. Sheeptacular was considered a financial success. The revenues from this venture were applied to several town programs and contributed to supporting the Artscape initiative for at least six years (2005 -2011) ("Sheeptacular Makes Hay," 2004).

There is no reason to think that this flexible planning orientation is one that would not apply to programs like Artscape. If the organizers thought that interest had waned, that internal conflicts were working against positive image or administration of a program, that a program had run its course then it is likely that a shift of approach or the termination of a program would occur. This flexibility and the ability to greet change creatively is one that supports the city's culture in the long run. Perhaps this quality is one that will permit response to shifts in power and

political vision. It expects that the underground current of emergent culture, when ready, will rise as a new idea, a new initiative that can contribute to the quality of life and economy of the city. This quality of flexibility may also be a necessary support mechanism, like diversity, when reliable indicators for cultural regeneration are not yet developed. Flexibility, risk and receptivity to new ideas are all ingredients of creative experimentation.

#### **5.4.4 Follow Through and Networks of Coordination**

Noted from study of the planning documents is the apparent adherence to follow through of articulated goals and objectives. Sometimes this manifests as an articulation of a goal or objective in the most recent iteration of a plan. For instance in 2006 Mayor Ruberto communicated the intent to develop a steering committee consisting of citizens to assist the community in creating a three to five year cultural plan ("Pittsfield Begins First," 2006). This did not seem to produce a found document; however the idea was rearticulated in the Economic Development section of the 2009 Planning to Thrive: City of Pittsfield Master Plan, which stated that the Office of Cultural Development would manage the effort to develop The Pittsfield Cultural Plan. When interviewees were asked about the plan in preparation for this thesis no one seemed aware of its plan's development, so it remains to be known if this planning document is underway (City of Pittsfield, 2009).

Pittsfield also displays the intent to coordinate with the region. This is evident from Planning to Thrive City of Pittsfield Master Plan, which is explicit in its intent to coordinate with the Berkshire Blueprint and Creative Economy Report. Master Plan Strategy 1 states: 'Build on Pittsfield specific action items, recommendations and strategies of the Berkshire Blueprint and Creative Economy reports to foster the expansion of existing businesses and growth of new businesses' This is one example of the planning coordination that occurs in Pittsfield. Networking and coordination among cultural organizations, community groups, citizen volunteers, local artist networks, and state agencies represents another dynamic that characterizes

the planning of public art events and other cultural strategies and initiatives in Pittsfield. This is a shade different than buzz, which is also about social networking – though the avenues of coordination and networking may parallel. The observation regarding networks of coordination is notable because the circulation of the cultural economic ideal through social networking between cultural intermediaries throughout New England is a multi-regional phenomenon, as has been documented in research conducted by Breitbart and Stanton. They raise the question will these shared patterns of development foster cooperation and new avenues for creative participation, and 'newer models of cultural production' or will they settle into time worn patterns of competitive economic development (Breitbart and Stanton, 2007)? What comes to mind is the vision of a crew team. Success depends on a coordinated group effort and follow-through. This does not mean the absence of tensions or the occurrence of misalignments, but the well-coordinated team can increase the chances for a unified energy that propel them to a particular goal. Markusen and Gadwa talk about 'garnering private sector support, building partnerships, securing arts community engagement and mobilizing public will' as parts that lead to 'successful placemaking initiatives'(Markusen and Gadwa, 2010b). These items each relate to the idea of coordination and seem important to adhere to in planning and development a public art initiative.

Follow-through implies an internal system of accountability and evaluation. This quality suggests that the stated goals and objectives are well articulated, and a plan is used as a guide for present and future action. This creates a consistency, credibility and reliability that I think counter balances the qualities of flexibility and adaptability to change.

#### **5.4.5 Temporary vs. Permanent**

Pittsfield's cultural organizers seem to favor temporary over permanent public art. A variety of reasons may contribute to this decision. Long term public art requires long term ownership of maintenance and requires funds. These concerns apply to the questions landscape architects face when designing water features into public spaces. Over time these installations

often are left dry, and can deteriorate because the cost of their maintenance and operation is too high. When the question was posed about who maintains Pittsfield's murals, the answer was ambiguous. The response was that the Office of Cultural Development may be responsible for them.

The question of temporary over permanent raises some philosophical considerations, ideas that Phillips has thoughtfully examined. She observes a tension between the perpetual and the temporal saying that:

"There is a desire for a steadfast art that expresses permanence through its own perpetualness. Simultaneously, society has a conflicting predilection for an art that is contemporary and timely, that responds to and reflects its temporal and circumstantial context." (Phillips, 1992, p. 295)

As has been pointed out Pittsfield's cultural planning process seems oriented toward change. That the Artscape program and the intermittent public art events rely on revolving art is in line with this. To dig deeper into this question of temporary vs. permanent public art from a philosophical point of view could uncover some pertinent insights into larger social questions about how communities are culturally responding and adapting to a rapidly changing world.

Two sculptures created for the "Art of the Game" project have become permanent acquisitions. Interestingly, both have been designed into specific landscape contexts. Additionally, investment has been made to provide permanent places for temporary public art in the downtown arts district area. This reflects an internal conversation about best placement, visibility and impact – the public art needs to be seen. The question of visibility raises a concern regarding permanent public art. Permanent public art may in time fade into the background, unseen its impact nullified. But Pittsfield's strategy for public art is to raise the visibility of the arts. "Public art is planned for this type of visibility" (I1). This observation suggests a clear rationale for temporary public art. A changing public art is a more visible public art.

The consideration of permanent versus temporary public art raises necessary questions that can help contribute to the development of goals and the articulation of motivations and

expectations that shape a public art program. The two do not need to be placed as an either or scenario. Thought given to how permanent and temporary public art relates to space, time, community and local goals may result in a circumspect balance.

This synthesis of some of the key themes and considerations that originated from an analysis of Pittsfield's public art casts a pattern of information that can be further refined to reveal questions which may serve as a basis for an approach to public art. The information that is derived from such inquiry may support, challenge or clarify the underlying intents that shape public art initiatives. Those who become involved with this question of public art's application in the landscape may find the questions that arise from the extracted themes and considerations helpful when critically thinking about public art and its purpose and function.

## CHAPTER 6

### PROFESSIONAL APPLICATION

#### 6.1 An Approach for the Application of Public Art

This thesis operates from a premise that a planner or designer is always looking for what makes great public spaces. The answer is not simple and seems as one that will accompany the professional over the course of their lifetime. Much can be learned from examining how cultural planning works in a given community. To look at one community provides a baseline from which to look at other communities. Some researchers value this local knowledge when considering complex cultural issues (Evans, 2005). Knowing the motivations and expectations that drive a cultural initiative like public art and how these purposes are put to use for a particular context can help to shape the questions asked. It is a way to frame critical thinking about a project, to know the considerations to look out for and cautions to give. The considerations and themes that have arisen out of this study present a language from which to draw. These boil down to a series of questions that can inform approach. Lines of questioning are systematically drawn from the concluding synthesis, beginning with the identified motivations that underlie broader cultural economic goals as well as specific terms such as public art.

The central analysis and discussion successfully addressed the primary research question, which asks what do communities hope to gain from public art? Specifically why sink limited resources into developing public art programs, what are the underlying motivations and expectations? The expansive answer is that motivations and expectations center around two central purposes, the drive to build economy and the desire to shape a rich quality of life. Both purposes aim to benefit the community, which lies at the center of the question. Evans has identified these purposes in his discussion addressing measurement, connoting that these motivations are part of a larger question of city purpose to incorporate the creative economy (Evans, 2005). However, getting conceptually larger is not the current task. Explicitly talking

about these motivations for public art leads to the question of value. Assigning economic or social value to public art without an agreed upon system of measurement is, as the researchers make clear, a difficult thing to do. This complexity is increased by this idea that economy and quality of life are in reciprocal relationship. This is a pairing of a tangible and an intangible, uniting the myriad of variables associated with each. The discussion did not reach a clear understanding of how to best determine value; but did arrive at the notion of balances. The more answerable question addresses this. In a particular community, what balance should there be between quality of life and economic objectives when considering public art? The resulting answer may likely come up as unique to a given community. This question of balance seems to be a really critical one because it forces an articulation of value in terms of a relationship between economic gains and quality of life.

As observed, the primary hope is that cultural planning initiatives, like public art will benefit the community. This observation brings into focus the centrality of community involvement. The question of community involvement is internal to the discussion of the emergent and planned, the contrast between what public arts emerge from the community imagination and what is planned for the community. Like the issue of motivation, this also leads to the question of balance. A central question to ask when developing an approach to public art is what is the optimal balance for a given community between local initiatives and designed initiatives? This question accepts Parkerson's idea that to nurture 'the unique creative character of a city' is to establish a balance between these two creative directions (Parkerson, 2007). This question reaches out to identifying the public art audience. Who is the community? Is it really the undefinable public, or is it a village tapestry, dynamic in its shifts and changes over time? Based on observations of emergent artistic expression, either self-evident or not in full view, can what is planned reach the identified audience? Who does it not reach? What is the intersection between the emergent and the planned? Who is invited to define this intersection and who is excluded? These are defining questions that can assist in shaping approach.

Finally, certain characteristics were identified that define Pittsfield's approach to public art. Guiding questions can be extracted from each of these characteristics that could assist in identifying the character of approach in a given city. The first of these addresses context. The literature supports the observation that asserts the importance of attending to context. Cities are as diverse as persons in their social and economic composition, history and physical geography. These are some of the parameters that define context that define the lines of questioning. What forms of public art consider a given contextual parameter? Should selected public art initiatives try to break out of context? Would breaking the barrier be a means to expand or remake context, or does such a move doom an initiative to failure? At the very least to question context is to come to a local definition, valuable information that has application beyond the question of public art.

The next question to consider is that of diversity. Diversity addresses range of approach, setting a single focus on one end of a spectrum and multiple focuses on the other end. The question invokes the matter of degree. At one extreme, is it best for a given community to concentrate on one format for public art? This may mean the development of a single, iconic piece that becomes part of a city's identity. At the other extreme is a limitless approach best adopted? Either extreme is not expected to represent the best case scenario. What the question leads to is a discussion of the best fit for public art. What configuration of approach is most suitable given the context, the purposes and the community identity? Would the community best respond to more traditional, representative forms, or would a mix of representation and experimental serve the identified goals better?

Questions related to flexibility, risk and receptivity to new ideas identify important qualities that can influence the effectiveness of approach. Each community needs to determine what effectiveness and success means. Flexibility refers to the ability for self-evaluation, based on the identification and articulation of goals, recognition when these goals are met and the ability if necessary to change course when objectives are met. Not every fulfillment of an



objective requires a change in course. First to ask is to what degree does the directing system allow cultural organizers to change course, and does this system need adjustment? And second, when is it best to change course? The quality of flexibility implies a confidence in the creative process, and a belief that new ideas and possibilities are around the corner.

Questions of risk tolerance are pretty straight forward. To what extent will a community accept risk? This is connected with receptivity to new ideas. Both relate to the concept of experimentation. Openness to risk and to new ideas connects with the creative process. This is important when considering approaches to public art, because as history has exposed public art can open issues of liability, public safety, damage to reputation, new limiting policies, financial loss and perhaps most welcome of these, public criticism. Yet creativity and artistic expression depend on risk. These observations emphasize the importance of those involved in public art, especially at the planning and design level, to know what level of risk is tolerable, as well as when and why this level needs to be pushed. These comments are not meant to delimit risk tolerance, but rather are meant to encourage it. Perhaps a greater risk tolerance can develop within the context of well-formed and informed networks of coordination.

Networks of coordination may be seen (1) as the system of communication between creative initiatives and strategies, (2) as a community of support, or (3) as the web of actors that interact and intersect with various initiatives creating overlaps of leadership. It would seem that networks of communication are fairly ubiquitous community phenomena, but question arises in terms of both degree and effectiveness. The question of degree returns again to the question of community involvement. Who is involved in the networks of communication? Who needs to be invited? Another angle to explore in question asks to what degree the same people show up to work. It is common for the same leaders to show up as initiators and organizers. In terms of effectiveness, what are the benefits of this dynamic, what are the limits? When looking at the system of communication between creative initiatives and strategies, the question shifts. This starts to arrive at the threshold of buzz and marketing. How well are public art initiatives

coordinated, and does this coordination happen in a unified way? When thinking of networks of coordination as a community of support the question is more oriented toward how creative initiatives and strategies are mutually supporting. How do cultural organizations financially support public art? Do the public art initiatives buttress any of the other creative initiatives, and how? These webs of interaction may serve as glue that helps to hold together the different parts and directions of cultural life in a way that can transcend political vagrancies.

One of the qualities that is considered foundational to success relates to follow through. This is an issue of accountability. Pittsfield appeared to consistently align its planning objectives with action. Questions of follow-through are as straight forward as risk tolerance. To what extent and how consistently are ideas for public art executed? Do these ideas evolve over time, or do they stagnate? While not as central an issue as say community involvement, this line of questioning is one that should not be overlooked.

Last but not least, the question of temporary versus permanent evokes a spectrum of possibility. The answer to this question is one that may change over time and is a question that has philosophical implications, as Phillips makes evident (Phillips, 1992). Which serves the community purposes for public art, temporary or permanent? Should organizers focus on temporary public art, and limit permanent acquisitions? What are the gains or costs of either approach? Are the goals better served by incorporating a mix of temporary and permanent public art, and if so what proportion best serves the community?

The distillation of the themes and considerations that arose from analysis and discussion of public art in Pittsfield raises a series of questions that can potentially help to guide lay or professional cultural organizers and designers in defining an approach to public art. From a research perspective, these questions present other directions for further study. In sum, recognizing expectations and motivation is a way to know the goals of the city and can help to identify a city's identity and character. It can direct what to look and to listen for when working with a specific strategy like public art, or a general cultural planning initiative. Since one

research attempt cannot cover all that is relevant, a summary of the gaps that could not be addressed in this paper and comments regarding the potentials for further research will draw this discussion toward closure.

## **6.2 Gaps**

Though this study may have shed some light on various consideration and themes as they apply to public art there are some important gaps that should be recognized. Qualitative studies while useful in their ability to identify focus on critical issues and to build a body of case study information are limited by their inability to provide needed data to create solid evidence that back a particular question. However evidence-based evaluation is not the only path, and does have its own limits (Evans, 2005).

Probably the most significant gap relates to community participation with public art. This research is conducted from the point of view of cultural organizers and planners, but the importance of community's relationship with public art and cultural planning is a recurring theme. Planning reports and newspaper articles don't give much attention to community reaction and involvement. This work might be strengthened if interviews could extend to those involved at the community level. Would time allow an opinion survey directed toward visitors who took the Artscape tour or residents who participated in one of the public art events could provide valuable insight into the true impact of the City's public art initiatives. Ideally a 10% resident survey would have been useful support to this study.

Also, there are a few key omissions. Due to time constraints interviews were neither conducted with the Director of Cultural Development nor Mayor Ruberto, two important figures involved in Pittsfield's cultural planning. Also, it would have been useful to arrange a discussion with or direct questions to local researcher Stephen C. Sheppard who is the director of the Center of Creative Community Development, an organization that researches the creative economy of the, or Kay Oehler who is also associated with the Center and specializes in social and economic

impacts of cultural organizations (Center for Creative Community Development, 2011; Oakes and Tobin, 2010). In addition, the thesis does not include thorough comparison studies of other regional cities that have undertaken cultural planning models, like Lowell and North Adams. Support from national and international cases might further strengthen the overall discussion. Despite these perceived gaps the work has created a baseline study that opens to a field of potential study. A few of ideas are presented for consideration.

### **6.3 Further Research**

The discussion of motivations and expectations for public art seem a tentative first step toward discussing a number of issues that address the role arts and cultural planning strategies. For instance how does public art contribute to sustainable development models or what type of system for best practices when designing with public art could be developed? The present time seems an opportune one to measure performance of Pittsfield's cultural economic strategies. Pittsfield has been building with culture for at least thirty years. The present economic downturn provides a unique occasion to study the effectiveness of the creative economic approach. The shift in leadership raises another opportunity to observe how cultural initiatives sustain after the Ruberto vision.

Pittsfield would afford fertile ground to study networks of communication as they pertain to culture and arts initiatives. The questions underlying public participation, planning and culture are another significant direction to take. Finally, a study that aims to evaluate the course of a particular cultural intervention from its start could provide important contextual information that might assist researchers who are working on the question of metrics. This latter thought is one that should not wait for an external investigator, but ought to be an internal consideration of planning.

These are only a few valuable directions for study. The study of culture, economy and public art has many threads to follow. Though a consensus is building that agrees cultural

development and related strategies do indeed impact economy and quality of life, still not enough is known as to the long term impacts of cultural programming on the life of a community or the social dynamics and balances that are needed to build and sustain these efforts. Although the observations presented in this thesis lead to more questions, pursuit of understanding Pittsfield's planning for culture through its public art has been a useful professional exercise that has led to the articulation of a concluding position, speculative insights and some foundational lines of questioning that have the potential to inform the development of an approach..

Meanwhile the city's public art initiatives operate as a type of experiment or leap of faith. This in itself is ground for further research. What is in the nature of arts and culture that permits a faith based public investment?

#### **6.4 Concluding Remarks**

The motivations and expectations that drive a creative initiative like public art should be articulated because they provide a basis on which to measure whether or not one has accomplished what one has set out to do. As such, these purposes for public art are best known and understood before embarking on a project, and then revisited over time. The themes and considerations observed as a result of the analysis provide a useful language that helps evaluate the purposes of public art.

The dual purposes that Evans set forth as active in the discussion of urban regeneration are identified as the central motivations for public art in Pittsfield. From this discussion various themes and considerations rose that identify characteristics that describe Pittsfield's cultural approach. Though expectations of benefits defines hoped for results, that which relies on both formal and informal evaluation, this exercise does not determine best practices, but does raise questions that can inform approach. A number of insights have risen from the process:

1. Look at the balance between the emergent and the planned, ask about the nature and extent of community involvement
2. Honor context
3. Evaluate the diversity of approach
4. Consider the questions related to characteristics of approach - flexibility and follow through, temporary and permanent, diversity and focused intent, emergent and planned, economy and quality of life, clustered and dispersed, image and impact, risk and receptivity to new ideas, networks of communications

In a willingness to assert a strong position, the most important insight underscores community. It seems pertinent to ask what relationship the community has with a public art planning initiative.

Is the community contributing and creating, receiving the benefits or being educated? How is the community engaged? Who is invited to serve as cultural organizers, and who is not? This question of community is at the root of the motivation and expectation for public art and is most important for the sustained success of a public art initiative.

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