Designing in Collaboration

1. Overview
The Workshop began with an overview of some of the current work sponsored by the Enterprise Rose Architecture Fellowship. Nella Young, Director of the Fellowship, set the stage by first describing Enterprise Community Partners, the parent organization, as an intermediary in the community development field, with over 500 people nationwide bringing tools, grants, and network-building skills to creating affordable housing that links design with community-building. Within that framework, the highly selective Fellowship program offers opportunities for trained architects to bring a design perspective to the community development process.

Nella offered a quick tour of some examples of Fellows’ work around the country, including:
- Yakima, WA: an “Idea Jam” to facilitate discussion about what community members wanted, which led to a “tour de farce” bike race design competition for new bike racks.
- Asheville, NC: asking the question “what do you guys wish could happen but doesn’t seem to get done,” and generating a community response that led to mobile food trucks, programming for healthy food, and education for community members.
- Detroit, MI: an invitation to artists to propose murals for three sites, with community members selecting the muralists.
- Santo Domingo, NM: a “community heritage path” linking the town’s two hubs by collecting the histories of peoples’ families and using community input to develop a public art plan along the path.

A major take-away from these, and other, examples: collaborative action builds trust, which in turn builds, or strengthens, community in ways that are sustainable because they derive from the community itself.
2. Case studies: collaboratively re-imagining places

Mike Chavez, Rose Fellow, Fairmount-Indigo Line Community Development Corporation

• Focus on housing, commercial, and greenspace development
• “Goatscaping”
  o Target of opportunity: West Street “urban wild” (e.g., proliferation of poison ivy): goats as landcapers?
  o Kids brought the idea, including a budget, examples from other places, etc., to the Mayor, and gained approval.
  o Beyond the obvious spectacle of ivy-eating goats, the effort strengthened neighborhood bonds and contributed to building a kind of infrastructure for ongoing, and expanded, community efforts.
• Green-roofed bus shelters
  o With donated materials, Mike and his community colleagues “greened” bus shelters along the corridor.
  o Ran workshops on this project with students at New Mission High School
  o The MBTA is currently looking to expand the program to other sites.

Mark Matel, Rose Fellow 2012-2014, Project Manager, Nuestra Comunidad Development Corporation, Roxbury

• Within the overall frame of detailing how a real-estate development process and economic pro-forma can involve artists, Mark focused on Bartlett Place – originally, an 8.5-acre MBTA bus yard – and the goal of a “creative village.”
• Nuestra bought the site in 2010.
• Goal: to provide not only housing but neighborhood amenities – public park, art in public places – while establishing strategies to counter the effects of gentrification.
• Financial model included apportioning a percentage of the rental revenue on an ongoing basis to support art.
• Plan now includes an arts magnet school as well as a grocery store.
• Challenge: how to build places, not just buildings.

3. Key principles reflected in the work of the Fellowship
• Social and community context can and should shape design.
• Ask the community to help generate ideas.
• Listen and bring ideas from the community to life.
• Creating feedback loops helps cultivate love and forgiveness.
• Action builds trust.
• Build history and community identify into the future of a project.

4. Miscellaneous
• CDCs have ownership power with which to begin and complete development projects: where are the mutual benefits in further collaboration with, e.g., planning directors, city policy makers, etc.? 
• How to expose what the CDCs are doing to a larger audience.
• Lead artists to engage in small-scale projects that are built on community engagement and whose results strengthen the community.
• Increase opportunities for people in the neighborhoods to be part of what happens around them.
• The Figment project as an example of creating space for people to collaborate and, in the process, bring something to give to others.