

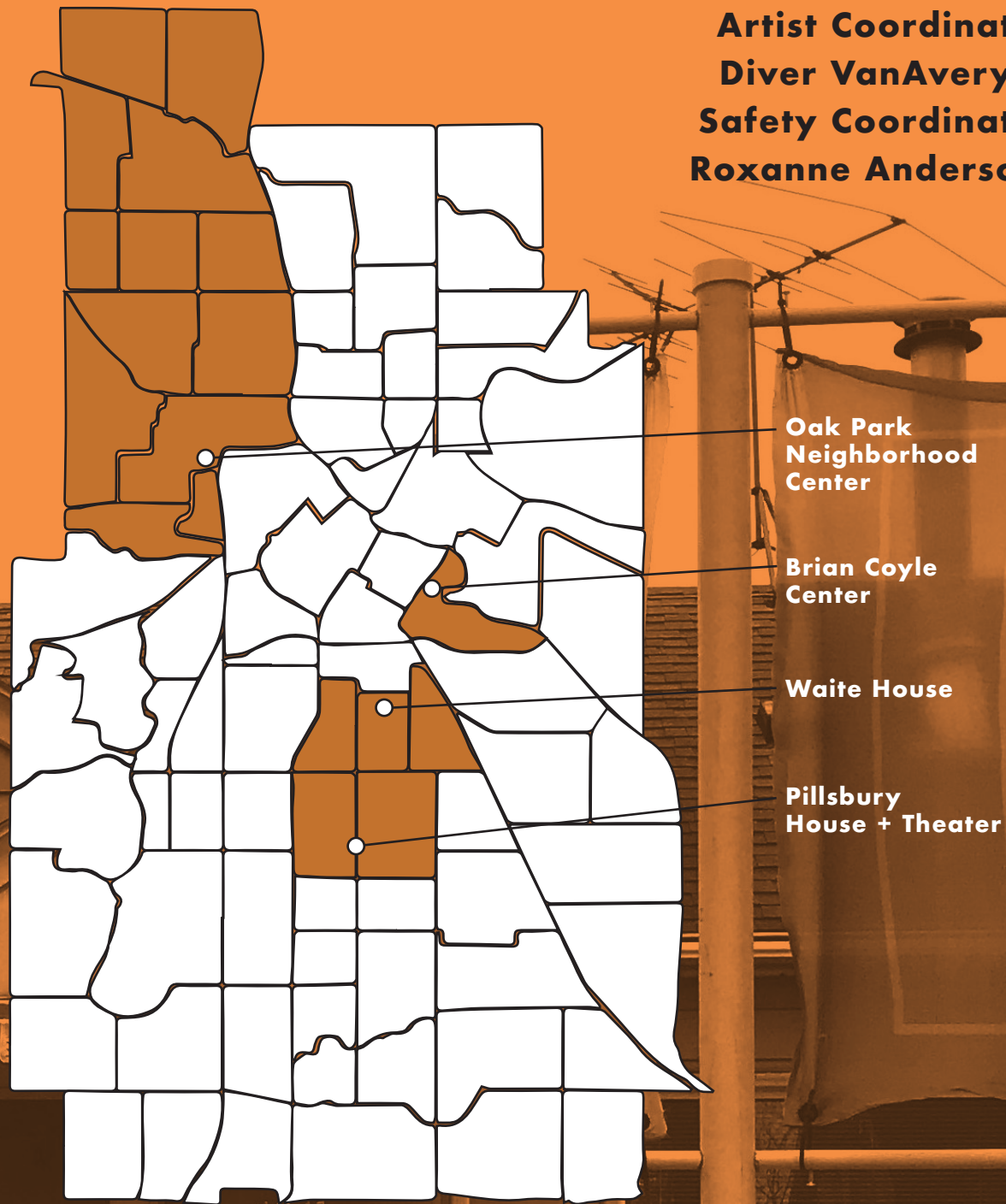
ARTISTS CREATE COMMUNITY SAFETY

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THE 2022
ART BLOCKS
INITIATIVE
was led by
Artist Coordinator
Diver VanAvery &
Safety Coordinator
Roxanne Anderson.



Oak Park
Neighborhood
Center

Brian Coyle
Center

Waite House

Pillsbury
House + Theater

4041

Con Rice's Flag Installation

At a **Pillsbury House + Theatre (PH+T)** staff meeting in 2012, we were talking about 'creative placemaking' and wondering how to connect with the many artists that we knew lived in our immediate neighborhood but didn't know how to contact. PH+T Creative Community Liaison Mike Hoyt mentioned that he could hear an Aztec dance group practicing behind a fence on his block and mused about how powerful it would be if everyone on the block knew they were there and could experience their art. This was the spark that led to launching **ART BLOCKS** in 2013.

What if the rich artist ecology in our neighborhoods was visible to everyone who lives here? What if artists had opportunities to make art in the place where they live? What if everyone who lives on a block or in an apartment building could make or experience art together? What if everyone in a community accessed their creativity – what could they imagine and make together?

These are some of the questions ART BLOCKS seeks to engage. In 2022 we expanded to **Pillsbury United Communities neighborhoods and artists across Minneapolis**, and we added the questions: *How can people who live in proximity support each other in feeling and being safer? How can artists help surface community aspirations around safety and deepen connections?* **We know that relationship – attachment to people and place - is foundational to community wellbeing and safety. And we know that artists' superpower is creating ways for people to connect that are generative, complex and lasting.** We are so grateful to all of the Minneapolis artists who have increased community connection, vitality and safety through their ART BLOCKS projects. THANK YOU for 'creative placekeeping'!

Noel Raymond
Pillsbury House + Theatre
and Pillsbury United Communities

Waite House Artists

Phillips Neighborhood



Native Youth Arts Collective and Tamales y Biciletas

WAITE HOUSE ARTISTS

Sarah M. Greer held two music events in her front yard, one a concert with guitarist Dean Magraw, and the second, a solo concert that was part of a neighborhood social hour/gathering. Sarah and her neighbors set up an outdoor lounge with refreshments and a button-making station to make reusable name tags for future neighborhood gatherings. Sarah believes that safety involves the ability to “move freely about my neighborhood at all hours. A big part of this is that my neighbors and I know each other. A lot of my neighbors say that we look out for one another, but I have noticed that the ways we talk about ‘looking out for one another’ are usually focused on protecting each other’s property/stuff. I would love to see a shift to talking more about how we can look out for the people who live in *and* who pass through our neighborhood. I also still have ongoing questions about how Black folks (especially renters) can have conversations about safety, including abolition, with our neighbors, which don’t risk our being left alienated and exhausted.”

Native Youth Arts Collective, Million Artist Movement, and Tamales y Biciletas collaborated on a series of Power Tree quilting events. Using a giant chalkboard, people wrote answers to the question of what is community safety for you? These answers were turned into quilt squares at open, community quilting circles resulting in beautiful quilts that are taken around the community to various events, protests, and gatherings. One of the teaching artists, Heidi Hafermann shared that for her, “Safety is continuing to see the value and connectivity in your physical neighborhood and neighbor relationships even in the face of outside chaos. Safety is knowing where you can land to feel joy, eat, rest, and be seen.”

Shelly Rainey hosted her first beading class. Her vision was to have a six-week class that helped people learn how to make their own beaded medallion. She believes that hosting experiences like this helps “bring the community together so we can share our traditions and bring back story telling.” To create a sense of safety, Shelly will “smudge the class down with sage before class starts. The sage cleanses the body from all negativity and helps you relax. At the end of the class I’m going to send people home with sage bundles that consist of sage and sweet grass.”

Tamales y Biciletas partnered with various artists in the Phillips neighborhood, Native Youth Arts Collective, Million Artist Movement, and muralist Daren Hill to co-host a series of community safety conversations and quilt square creations. Daren worked with youth to brainstorm collaboration/hopes for the mural on the garden’s shed. Leadership from TyB believes that “community safety is about looking out for each other and the earth, and being bold in reaching out. There was a homeless encampment in the alley behind the garden this summer as we hosted these workshops and we were able to go and visit there, share food, and talk about shared experiences of growing plants. We gave away some bikes too. We also worked with the church up the street to strategize offering water usage and figuring out good support versus boundaries for keeping the veggie gardens safe. Having gatherings and activity in the garden also made everyone feel safer—having accessible growing space, space for skillshares that feel more grassroots, and a place to make art all make the street and neighborhood feel more welcoming. Having so many interconnected events and seeing so many types of creativity in the garden this season definitely made a huge difference in the vibe of the garden and the energy around it, increasing interest in using the space to share plant and medicine knowledge.”

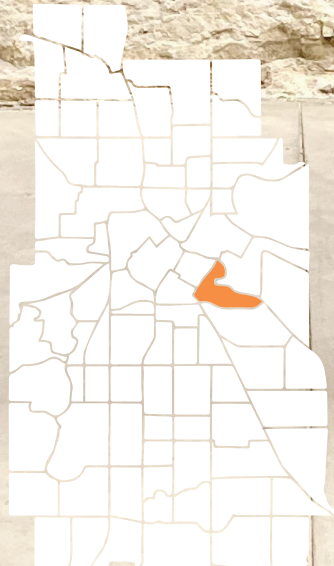
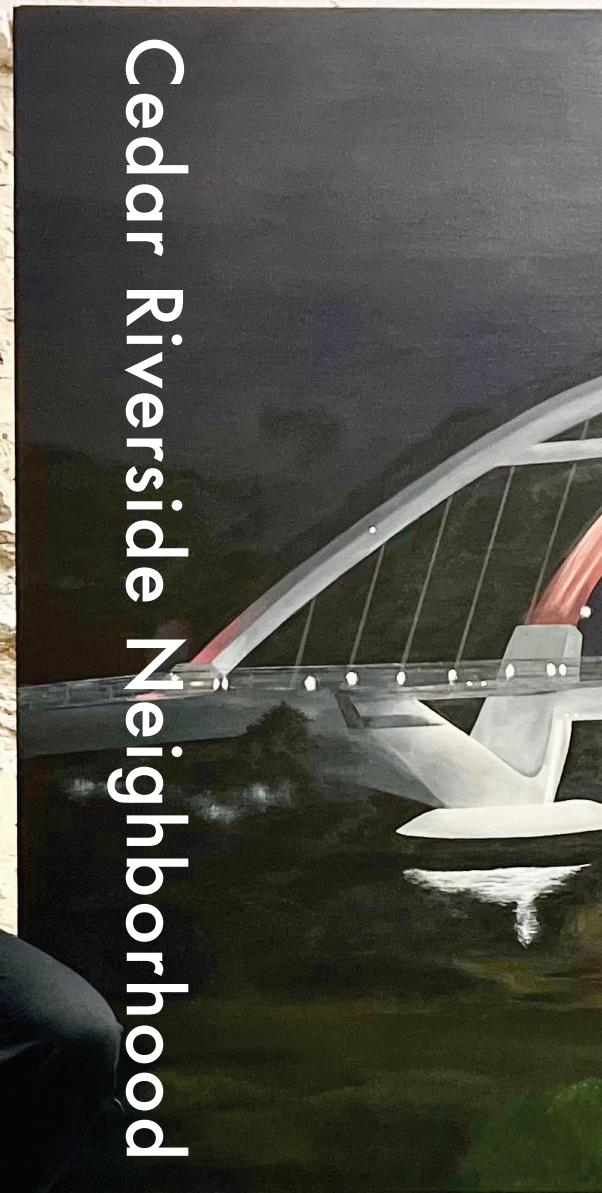


PHILLIPS NEIGHBORHOOD

Brian Coyle Center Artists



Cedar Riverside Neighborhood



Binyam Raba

BRIAN COYLE CENTER ARTISTS

Ifrah Mansour made a Somali hut and installed it in Currie Park and had kids activities in it and around it including coloring, chalk, bubbles, and rock painting supplies. For Ifrah, part of working in community is learning “that I can let go of control and expectation, even when things are falling apart. Sometimes when you try to fix what is going “wrong”, it can take you away from what is happening with people in the moment.” Letting go of agendas and letting real connections happen in real time is a crucial part of co-creating safe, authentic communities.

Hamza Noor took photographic portraits of youth from Cedar Riverside and photoshopped new backgrounds behind them so it looked like they were in the places where their family was originally from. Hamza had to work hard to talk to others because he describes himself as “a really awkward person”, but learned how valuable it is for him to “get past that to connect to my community.” For Hamza, community safety is “knowing and understanding my neighbors and them knowing me because it better helps us work together on the problems we share.”

Binyam Raba painted a huge painting of the beautiful Lowry bridge in Minneapolis lit up with the Oromo flag including two Oromo men dancing joyfully in front of it. The painting was gifted to the Oromo Community Center of Minnesota. “The mayor of Minneapolis ordered two significant bridges in Minneapolis to be lit up with the Oromo flag this year marking the twenty years Anniversary of the Oromo Soccer tournament. That filled the hearts of many Oromo-Americans with joy and pride across the United States as well as globally.” Binyam believes that a safe community celebrates its members from all over the world in partnership with political leaders.

Mohamed Salad created a community scavenger hunt for kids in Cedar/Riverside that prompted them to go into the community and find people and places they love. The children were asked to take pictures along the way and their pictures were framed and used as conversation pieces about what community is and why they love it. Mohamed states, “Safety is communication. It’s speaking with youth and adults and business owners and residents and loving on one another and helping each other and building together a community that loves each other. Inspiring a new generation of Riverside residents to love and cherish this community is a huge step forward to ensuring its safety.”



ALL
S
S
LIFE
CREATING
COMMUNITY
COUNCILS

**This neighborhood raised me
Listened to all I feel like I am
Go outside**

It turns out better

Amplify peoples stories

I've been doing community organizing since I was a kid

Trying to figure out

How to come together

Show up as we are

Let go of control

Say it all out loud

Make spoons

Allow people to show up

Roll up ready for anything

Rally, run, think, talk at the same time

Safety is family

Food is security

When I am working with community I let go

of my capitalistic relationship with time

Paint rocks

The hunger for art is so real

Sending out/gather/state an intent

Turn a conflict into something

Who are you talking to?

What kind of music do you sing?

This takes a long time

Speak up for the wild medicine

I continue

Opportunities for realness continue

I am new at this

I bring ceremony into the sun

Layers of unburdening

What has to be soft so we can open up?

I have a mind of many ideas

This is new

I did it

Divine intervention

There are layers I don't know

**Do better than we did before
Take that one simple step**

Mankwe Ndosi's
Neighborhood Medicine
Photo: Tomas Leal

This poem was created at the Art Blocks Final Gathering from insights spoken by Art Block artists as they reflected on making art in community.

Pillsbury House + Theatre Artists

Powderhorn, Bryant, and Central Neighborhoods



Fernanda Sequeiros/
Spoons that Nourish
Photo: Tomas Leal

PILLSBURY HOUSE + THEATER ARTISTS

Joseph Bard created “Kung Fu Sundays 4 Kids” that combines hip hop and martial arts. Joseph says, “I grew up in a time when it came to community safety, everyone watched out for each other, all the grown ups and elders paid attention to the young children in the neighborhood, and everyone was like your family. When it came to safety we knew the police working, and the police did they actual job instead of harassment. Community safety growing up was different from the times we live in now because we didn’t have to worry about the safety of the children because as a village we protected every child like they was your own. Community safety growing up where I was from, the gangbangers respected the kids and the elders, and didn’t shoot the block up the way they do now. I am glad I was able to create a safe space for young scholars to come in and enjoy.”

Bayou Bay created a game day at ‘Affirmation Space’, an interactive installation at his studio. Bayou invited his neighbors to eat, play games together, and to see the art piece that he made inspired by the desire to create more light on his block. After participating in Art Blocks, Bayou says “I feel much better about my ability to help co-create a safe space where others can gather and help teach or bring more ways of being safe.” But with rising house prices, he is still asking, “When will I be able to afford a house here? Owning and not renting would help me feel safer.”

Mankwe Ndos partnered with her neighbor Phyllis who is a mosaic artist and held an event called “Neighborhood Medicine”. For this event, Mankwe led plant walks on her block and taught people about the wild medicine that was growing, while Phyllis stewarded the creation of a community mosaic. Mankwe commented that the event “introduced one end of the block to the other.” For her, the event affirmed that “intimate events are magic. It made English speakers proud, Spanish and Oromo speakers curious, and showed the membrane.” Creating this gathering left Mankwe asking important questions like “How do younger people and

older people get to know each other? How can we connect across language networks? How does sharing resources nourish this?”

Con Rice created flags that take inspiration from and represent the Black diaspora. He displayed them in the front yard of his grandparents house, which was one of the first Black owned properties in the Bryant neighborhood. Con says, “I developed new skills around outreach that relates to Black people in my neighborhood. I also believe that heightened visibility of our community will further help us put a claim on our spaces and imagine liberation. I define community safety as a freedom from racist violence. I believe that we must begin to envision that reality in our own hearts and minds so that we can spread it from house to house one block at a time.”

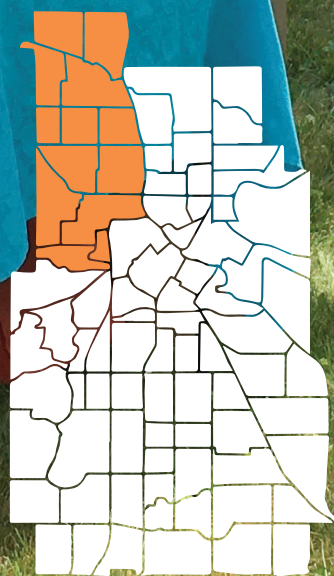
Fernanda Sequeiros created a conversation box called “Spoons that Nourish.” This box contains a series of wooden, hand-carved spoons that each hold a word, question, story, or quote like “Heal”, “Relationships”, and “Release Regrets”. Fernanda prepared a large table for 20 in her backyard under her maple tree, installed a soothing chimney, created a simple water feature, and cooked on an open fire in order to create a simple yet grounding/healing meal where people could share their personal stories. Fernanda commissioned someone in the neighborhood to carve one spoon for each of her neighbors that came to the event, to have a reminder of this gathering. Fernanda reflected “At this gathering I witnessed a lot of beauty as well as pain in my block, more so than I realized existed. From an after pandemic sense of alienation, to depression, to chronic pain, and couples separating. Yet the meal shared and the stories told, showed that there is need for this kind of interaction. That even when we don’t see it, the pain of one shifts the energy of the room. And when a true connection happens among many people we collectively release that weight. I think this is an important step toward safety as the more comfortable we feel among each other, the easier it will be to work around safety issues as time moves along.”

North Side Artists

Northside Neighborhoods



Amoke Kubat and Keegan Xavi's Art Making Day
Photo: Tomas Leal



NORTHSIDE ARTISTS

Kenna Cottman created a “Safe & Spooky Fest” for Halloween that featured a DJ, face painting, a photo booth, hot cider, a spooky story hour, a bonfire, and treats. Kenna said, “Folks came through!!! My goal was to do something that would tell everyone in the neighborhood how much I love them. I feel like because we have so much gentrification going on and so many new people coming into the neighborhood my main point for the safety was just to get people to start to know each other and recognize each other as you’re my neighbor you’re somebody who lives in this community with me and we have to party together and have some good memories together. My safety is knowing people by name and knowing how to get a hold of them. I wanna be able to tell people that I care about what’s going on or find out what’s going on from them. So with this party we got to lay eyes on each other, exchange numbers, exchange emails, and figure out who’s good at what and who likes what.”

Joe Davis created the Building Stories Project: Stories of Housing and Public Safety. Joe filmed interviews and created interactive installations with prompts to build a multi-media archive of community stories of housing and public safety. For Joe, “Community safety looks like permission to be one’s full, authentic self. A place where one’s body feels settled enough to expand. A place of creativity and joy.”

Amoke Kubat and Keegan Xavi led 9 families in an Art Making Day in their front yard. They led people in making “Sticks in a Bundle” inspired by the African Proverb that says we are stronger together than alone. Residents also got swag bags that contained tiny art kits to continue to make art. Amoke will also be hosting Porch Coffee soon. Amoke says that, for her community safety is created when “people are genuinely

friendly and actively build relationships. People want to address problems as they occur. Phone numbers are exchanged. Recently, there were 2 incidents of shots fired around the corner. I was able to call and check on a neighbor on that block because I had their number.”

Kye Saunders wrote and performed an original spoken word piece outside of Cub Foods on Broadway, a busy community gathering site. Kye also brought a painting that she created with her mother to the performance and used the poem and the painting to dialogue with people about the themes in the work. Kye admits that it is difficult to define community safety because it has been a problem for years. To her, safety looks like “less gun violence, accessible shelter with nourishment, schools that don’t have the front doors locked and metal detectors, supply of drugs not being accessible, trust between the community and the police, proper health care, youth having a stable home and stable parents to go to. Will it ever be a priority or are we just going to talk about it?”

Danielle Tietjen hosted a summer of bringing neighbors back together centered at the Community Garden at the end of her block. Through events, classes, dinners, and art her neighbors experienced how art, people, and the earth are all connected. When reflecting on community safety, Danielle says, “Real safety is steeped in equitable housing, job creation, local economy, stronger schools, access to resources. We know this. The mountain of what is needed is huge, and so it can get overwhelming. But I want to remind folks of the beauty and why it’s important to come out of your house and meet your neighbors. We can build the world we want to see if we are brave enough to come outside and do it. Having stronger relationships with my neighbors absolutely makes me feel safer.”

This project was made possible by the Minneapolis Public Safety Transformation Fund of the Minneapolis Foundation.

**JUSTICE
LIVES HERE**

PUC



**PEOPLE
PLACE
PROSPERITY**

PILLSBURY UNITED COMMUNITIES