

Gentrification Knot Project: Proposal for Funding 2013

Organizers: Kevin Brown, Jude Lombardi, Leo Zimmerman

Please briefly describe the project

This project was announced in a Letter to the Editor of City Paper published on September 26, 2012, under the title “[Load of Gentrification](#).” For the purpose of this project, we define gentrification as a dynamic of relations that emerge when poor urban neighborhoods - through a process of renovations, restoration, and residential shifts - change in ways such that current residents can no longer live or work in their neighborhoods.

To prevent this dynamic from happening in the Station North community, the Gentrification (K)not Project is looking for people, artists, academics and others (even politicians) who are interested in participating in exhibits, events and dialogues throughout June 2013 (National Home Ownership Month).

Describe your vision of social change. How does this work fit into a larger movement for social justice?

A change in one component of a network changes all elements that network and the dynamics of the network itself.

It's one thing to see a mural as you walk down the street on Friday night, it's another to see a mural when look out your bedroom window. During an interview in Station North we were told a story about someone who found the view from her bedroom window one day dominated by someone art—and she wasn't a fan.

We don't know everything about what social change should look like. We do think people need be able to *discuss, collaborate and shape* changes that affect their lives in all their milieux, be it at work, home and on the streets.

We do think social change is something that people design and produce together, not something that happens to people as a result of market forces or the plans of others.

We want a new society yet we realize we have to work within the existing society to generate the social change we desire. We consider every “I” a participant and as such act in ways that increase participation by all.

We do reserve that right to orchestrate and facilitate this process as co-organizers with the following “guidelines” for generating a healthy community in mind.

Former Baltimore City health commissioner Peter Bielsonson [listed](#) the following needs for generating a healthy community:

- 1 decent schools
- 2 decent housing
- 3 living wage jobs
- 4 access to health care and nutritious foods.

We agree and add a healthy community also entails access to arts and cultural entertainment, as well as structure and relations that provoke political, social and economic justice - for all citizens of Baltimore.

As we “plan” for the “June Extravaganza,” we will consider these needs as desires, and work towards generating a facilitative structure for presentations, performances and conversations around designing a healthy community.

How we plan to operate?

The Gentrification (K)not Project (a.k.a. SNAG) has been a team of three (BLZ) since its inception. [Station North ARTS Café](#) (SNAC) at 1816 N. Charles Street is our home base for the length of this project (September 2012-June 2013).

We meet at least once a week to discuss the project objectives, timelines, constraints, possibilities and outcomes. We use a modified consensus model for making decisions in order to embrace conflict so that we might reach authentic agreements through our conversations. Resolving our conflicts by working through them has functioned in ways that strengthen our organization and relations with one another. For example, we have already confronted and worked through our disagreement in generating a clear and concise definition of gentrification. So far, we have been able to reach agreements, delegate, and accomplish tasks collectively and independently.

Timeline

October 25, 2012: first meeting with those who have already expressed an interest in participating in this June 2013 Extravaganza.

November 9, 2012: we will hold our official 'Project Launch' at Station North ARTS Café Gallery in order to attract as many people as possible in and around Station North to participate in this project.

November 10, 2012: Spend time soliciting, advertising, and inviting people to submit ideas/proposals about ways they can participate in the project. Identify people organizations might work with us. Work developing a website (s) and designing promotional print and video materials for the G(K) project.

December 12: Live event on WEAA's Morning Blend for 12 12 12

Join us on **12/12/12** @ Station North ARTS CAFE
1816 North Charles Street 21201
from **6 to 8 AM** when
WEAA's The Baltimore Blend hosts a
Community Coffee Talk about
When is Revitalization NOT Gentrification?
in partnership with the
Gentrification (K)not Project
in Station North
JUNE 2013

Several guests talked about gentrification in and around Baltimore City. Created audio about defining [HYPERLINK "http://jlombardi.net/media/SN_weaa_12_12_12.mp4"](http://jlombardi.net/media/SN_weaa_12_12_12.mp4) [gentrification](#) played during show.

January - March 2013: PARTICIPANTS, PARTICIPANTS PARTICPANTS

March 2013: We will begin to work with participants, locate space for events, plan a schedule, and engage dialectically with participants in order to curate events and exhibits.

January 29: Live on the Mark Steiner show talking about participation in G(K) project. Press Release about the G(K) project. Continue to research possible connection such as connecting with makers of "MY Brooklyn" a movie about the gentrification of Brooklyn NYC. Go live with website, flyers, cards, logo, and application for participation form, etc...

February - May GET THE WORD OUT, IDENTIFY PARTICIPANTS, WORK ON MEETING PARTICIPANTS NEEDS, Design and present community event or activity each month promoting participation in G(K) project. Keep developing a variety of media about the G(K) project.

June 1 - 30, 2013: *inclusive* Extravaganza presented in space all around Station North. Including ongoing events, gallery-type installations, presentation, performances, followed by dialogue geared toward generating *conversations* about preventing gentrification in Station North.

July 1, 2013: The Gentrification (K)not Project is over. We hope there are traces left such as videos, stories, plays, papers, and maybe even a new project relevant to the ideas generated throughout the month of June 2013.

In what ways is diversity important in your project?

Gentrification divides and isolates people without their consent or sometimes even awareness. We think that people playing working thinking and designing together can counteract this dynamic.

Diverse participation in our Extravaganza is vital.

As an organizing team we are diverse: young, older, black, white, gay, straight, male, female, from Baltimore, new to Baltimore—and we want to live and/or work in Station North.

We want to design ways for everyone to participate. So, we invite all types of people living, working, playing, and hanging out in Station North to participate in this project one way or another. We will encourage all kinds of people, including neighbors, developers, workers, artists, academics, drunks, stamp collectors, gardeners, teenagers, conformists, ex-felons, postal workers, baseball coaches, rear-window gazers, night owls, storeowners, sanitation workers, teamsters, luxury car owners, junkies, patrons of the arts, grand- mothers, community organizers and even politicians to participate in the Extravaganza.

There are commonalities among us that differentiate our group from some residents of the area. Just for starters, we're middle-class, college-educated, digitally literate people with roofs over our heads at night. There are other differences that we will only become aware of by interacting with a variety of people in the course of the project. We won't pretend these differences don't exist—instead, we hope to listen, reflect and change. For example as we generate recordings (photographs, audio, video), we will invite others to participate and converse, thus dialectically shaping the project.

We don't have statistical information about who lives in Station North. (Station North Inc. commissioned a report which was never published—we're trying to find it.) We have seen people hanging out on stoops, working, drinking in bars, selling things, performing music, waiting for buses, looking for work, exploring, making art, working on bikes, and plenty more. Just walk through the district and you will encounter diversity of gender, race, class, and almost anything else you might think of. (Most people in Station North do speak English.) We care about the artists who live (and more who will live) in Station North, but we have also talked to people in many blocks of Greenmount West who already feel intimidated and marginalized.

Fiscal Budget Management

All the money from this grant will go towards finding, promoting, hosting and supporting participants in the June 2013 Extravaganza. Income and expenses will be tallied, recorded and reviewed monthly. The money from this grant will be divided in four equal parts for the following expenses.

1. **Publicity:** We will print, distribute—by hand, through the mail, and over internet— information about the Extravaganza. We are designing a call for participants in the form of a postcard for wide distribution.
2. **Curator:** Stipend for one person, who is already the curator at SNAC, (Station North ARTS Café). The stipend will compensate this person for her extra work coordinating exhibits at about five different locations across Station North.
3. **Materials:** We will procure materials for participants to help them create projects. This would be helpful in facilitating the participation of those economically disadvantaged and thus otherwise not able participate in the Project. That is, the people most likely to be displaced by gentrification in Station North.
4. **Food and Drink:** we will provide nutritious foods and drinks to be served at selected events.

How do you plan to collaborate with individuals & organizations?

Like “diversity”, collaboration is not only important but essential to our project. We hope to experiment with different ways for people to communicate (and anticommunicate) when working together in ways that embrace our differences and generate dialectical conversations.

For example, we have created and will maintain a wordpress.com website that anyone can post responses on. So we can have conversations online that promote growth and change as the process proceeds. A website for sharing, brainstorming and generating ideas, not only about how to prevent gentrification from emerging in Station North, but about how to make the G (K) project in June of 2013 work even better.

G(K) project website:

<http://gentrificationknot.wordpress.com>

Summary

It is our desire that the Gentrification (K)not project *complement* the efforts of Station North Arts Entertainment District (SNAED) when organizing this Extravaganza so that *dialectical conversations* that identify key factors and variables can shape the future of Station North in a positive ways. Having a member of JKL on the board of SNEAD invites communication and encourages collaboration with those already involved in forming Station North as a burgeoning destination community.

The more diverse a community the more likely conflict will emerge during collaborative conversation. Conflict requires a change in a system and when embraced and struggled through can generate something new.

When addressing Occupy Wall Street, Angela Davis asked: "How can we be together? How can we be together in a community that respects and celebrates the differences among us? How can we be together in a unity that is not simplistic, that is not oppressive, BUT rather complex and emancipatory? Our unity must be complex and emancipatory." She evoked the words of the Black, Lesbian, Feminist Audre Lorde:

"Differences must not be merely tolerated BUT seen as a fund of polarities between which our creativity can spark like a dialectic."

How do we change our attitudes toward conflict and tension so that they may become dialectic opportunities for addressing our differences? This will be an element of our project development as we engage in conversations in order to collaborate. Having on the team a social worker with a background in nonviolence will be helpful. We don't agree about everything, and life would be boring if we did. We do need to understand how to collaborate and how to become healthier by challenging each other.

For more information about us and or the G(K) project contact us at:

HYPERLINK "mailto:kNotGentrification@gmx.us" kNotGentrification@gmx.us

Be well.