



Arts-based Community Development Investment for City of Anderson
Church Street Heritage Project one of 64 National Endowment
for the Arts Our Town projects selected nationwide

May 9, 2016

Anderson, SC -- National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Chairman Jane Chu announced 64 awards totaling \$4.3 million supporting projects across the nation through the NEA's Our Town program. The City of Anderson, along with its partner the Anderson Arts Center, is one of the recommended organizations for an award of \$75,000 to support an art installation as part of the Church Street Heritage Project. The Our Town grant program supports creative placemaking projects that help to transform communities into lively, beautiful, and resilient places with the arts at their core. The NEA received 240 applications for Our Town this year and will make awards ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000.

"For six years, Our Town has made a difference for people and the places where they live, work, and play," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "Projects such as the one led by the City of Anderson help residents engage the arts to spark vitality in their communities."

"At its heart, the Church Street Heritage Project celebrates what is unique about Anderson. Church Street was a model of economic vitality in the twentieth century that would be enviable to any modern city today," Mayor Terence Roberts said. "We are thankful to the NEA for its validation of this project in the form of significant funding and we are proud to have as our partner the Anderson Arts Center."

City Council member Dr. Beatrice Thompson, a longtime champion of this project, stated "It is wonderful to see the effort to honor the cultural and historical significance of Church Street come to fruition. I have a great deal of personal satisfaction and pride as I watch a new generation of leaders work so diligently to see that the past is honored in this meaningful and relevant way. It will bring the Church Street story full circle as it spurs economic growth and opportunity anew."

A description of the Church Street Heritage Project in the NEA Our Town Application read in part:

"The Church Street Heritage Project paints a vibrant social, economic place in Anderson, SC. A regional draw, Church Street was a thriving center for African American commerce circa 1900-1975. At its mid-century zenith, there were shoppers by day, revelers by night. Artists and musicians lined the street.

The viability of the area waned. Buildings were razed for a parking lot. A grassroots effort calling to honor the golden era of the street captured the attention of City leaders. A film documented this "greatest generation" of professionals known as *Black Pioneers*. Perspectives revealed a need to cherish the City's diversity. A park under construction on the street's footprint will be a greenspace pallet for art. Artifacts from the era are scarce. Art is central as we reimagine its sights, sounds and entrepreneurial spirit. The project is a permanent installation, blending visual art and technology to rekindle its vibrancy.

As part of a Downtown Master Plan, the City forged robust partnerships to bring nine art projects to its core in the past decade and was honored by the SC Arts Commission with the 2013 Verner Award for Public Art. Park construction is funded by the City to complement greenspace and economic development initiatives. It fits the City's vision to build a cultural tourism destination. Funds requested (*now recommended*) from the NEA are for art elements."

For a **complete list of projects** recommended for Our Town grant support, please visit the NEA web site at arts.gov. The NEA's online resource, [Exploring Our Town](#), features case studies of more than 70 Our Town projects along with lessons learned and other resources.

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