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Shreveport Regional Arts Council Receives Our Town Grant From the National Endowment for the Arts

The Common Link is among 51 grants nationwide selected to support creative placemaking among 447 applicants.

Shreveport, LA— Mayor Cedric Glover announces that Shreveport Regional Arts Council (SRAC) will receive an *Our Town* grant from the *National Endowment for the Arts* (NEA), one of only 51 grants awarded nationwide. SRAC will receive a \$100,000 grant for a Public Art Project to plan and create the technical design for Shreveport's first interactive *Transportation and Information Substation*, the **CommonLink**.

Our Town is the NEA's latest investment in *Creative Placemaking*, through which partners from both public and private sectors come together to strategically shape the social, physical, and economic character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities.

The design of the **CommonLink** will launch the development of Shreveport's Cultural District, **SHREVEPORT COMMON**, which transforms a neglected, 9-block "square" in the western part of downtown Shreveport. Located in the middle of SHREVEPORT COMMON and serving as the hub for all forms of transportation, information, communication, and community engagement, the **CommonLink** will span 20,000 square feet on a city-owned triangle bordering the Municipal Auditorium parking lot facing Texas Avenue. The **CommonLink** plans include a bus stop and shelter, taxi stand, GPS driven "I-Shuttle" stop, bike racks, parking for Mopeds and a Police Car, security "blue light", charging stations for current and future needs, ATM, Wi-Fi, and green areas, benches, covered and open spaces, innovative lighting, and an interactive Kiosk with maps, historical information, directions, and connectivity to on-line events calendar and ticketing. Mayor Glover's appointed **SHREVEPORT COMMON Advisory Committee** recommends this critical "first-step" in populating this historic downtown cultural district by creating a space that's more than a place to "catch a ride," it's the place to catch up on what's happening, when, where, and by whom!

Mayor Glover remarks, "As the area develops into an active Cultural District, what is now a lone, uncovered, unmarked bus stop - rarely used because there is no place to go and nothing to do - will soon be a Transportation and Information Node, called the COMMON LINK. This is envisioned as a functional Public Art installation to be designed in the coming year, and we hope it will be the model for artistic transportation nodes throughout the city."

National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Landesman adds, "*Communities across our country are using smart design and leveraging the arts to enhance quality of life and promote their distinctive identities. In this time of great economic upheaval, **Our Town** provides communities an opportunity to reignite their economies.*"

A major "Art in Transportation" project, the **CommonLink**, will provide an innovative, interactive, transportation, information, communication, Substation that is safe, equitable, visible, accessible, fun and transformative! **CommonLink** will create systemic change in how the city, SPORTRAN, and the community approach public transportation by creating additional "Transportation Substations." The Design of the **CommonLink** extends the role of the Arts in civic engagement as outlined in the City's "Arts By-Laws" created and measured through an inclusive **Arts Congress** that outlines strategies for Arts VISIBILITY, EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY, COLLABORATION, and EDUCATION. Post installation benchmarks such as foot and bike traffic and manned bus stop count will measure use, while resident populations, building ownership, and use of public spaces will measure impact on the area.

As presented in Mayor Glover's speech to the *National Council on the Arts* (the National Endowment for the Arts Advisory Committee appointed by the U.S. Senate) on June 24, 2011, this "Our Town" grant is the "next step" in the planning and design of **SHREVEPORT COMMON** for which the City and SRAC received a 2010 NEA MICD-25 \$100,000 Award. The MICD grant positioned SRAC to engage artists, citizens, developers, and SHREVEPORT COMMON "pioneers" in a 12-month planning process with a professional Design Team under the direction of Historic Preservation Designer, Gregory Free along with his team of architects, landscape architects, urban planners, and a SHREVEPORT COMMON Project Manager. The initial planning design for SHREVEPORT COMMON was engaged by the public on June 18th and will be finalized by July 31st.

Pam Atchison states, "*SRAC's goal through this design project is to reinvigorate and sustain a Public Art Program based on the City's approval of an innovative Ordinance; the hiring of an experienced Administrator; the commitment to engage local artists in every project to sustain and expand the "local" knowledge base; and SRAC's historic success in creating community partnerships that ensure the long-term appreciation for the artwork.*"

Since 1976, the Shreveport Regional Arts Council has been committed to developing, nurturing, promoting, engaging and educating the people of Northwest Louisiana about the arts, maximizing access to the Arts, through ArtBreak, **artspace**, Eye 20 Creative Corridor, Public Art, ShreveportBossierFunGuide.com and the soon to be completed Central ARTSTATION. To learn more about SRAC and its programs visit the website at www.shrevearts.org. For more information on this project contact the SRAC offices at (318) 673-6500.

The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector.

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