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CASE STUDIES

BMA OUTPOST

Prepared for
The Baltimore Museum of Art
Baltimore, MD

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*Cover photograph courtesy of Healthcare for the Homeless.

SUMMARY: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

This report presents findings from a study of the BMA Outpost (the Outpost), conducted by RK&A, Inc. for the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA). The Outpost is a mobile museum that took up temporary residence at a variety of sites and/or partner organizations throughout Baltimore from 2014-2016. For this study, RK&A conducted case studies of 10 former Outpost sites (one site equals one case study unit). The purpose of the study is to understand how the Outpost functioned at the 10 sites and explore lasting impressions it may have had on the sites and the individuals who were there.

The following cross-case analysis identifies commonalities and differences across sites and presents and discusses trends. We hope that the information contained herein will help the BMA in its decision making regarding the future of the Outpost program.

The findings presented here are among the most salient. Please read the body of the report for a more comprehensive presentation of findings.

OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Generally, the Outpost was a positive experience for site participants across all sites. On the whole, participants were extremely complimentary about their Outpost experience, regardless of type of organization or degree of prior relationship with the BMA—it was “empowering,” “transformative,” “therapeutic,” and exceeded their expectations. Most said coordinating with the BMA was an easy and pleasant experience and that they appreciated the BMA program manager’s enthusiasm. While some sites, of course, did have challenges (see below), none seemed to have seriously detracted from the overall experience. Given the variety of organization types, lengths of Outpost stays, and participants’ life experiences, the broad appeal of the Outposts is encouraging.

LOGISTICAL CHALLENGES

For the most part, the Outpost did not present major challenges for the sites, although minor issues occurred, some more common than others. A common issue was staffing.¹ For instance,

¹ This was only an issue at sites where the Outpost was left out (not folded and stored) when the program manager was not present. At some sites, the program manager took the Outpost with her at the end of

monitoring the Outpost when the BMA program manager was not present was a burden at sites that offer programming, either because staffing the Outpost took time away from site staff's other duties (e.g., YO! Baltimore) or because site staff felt pressure to keep the Outpost "active" so as not to disappoint patrons (e.g., Govans Library). Similarly, at 901 Arts, staff felt the need to train and monitor young people to help the BMA program manager run the Outpost. Notably, sites with existing programming perceived monitoring the Outpost during off hours as more of a "challenge" than sites that do not have a robust suite of programs. For example, Healthcare for the Homeless, an organization without formal programming, kept the Outpost open without the BMA program manager and considered it a "great leadership development opportunity" for clients. These organizations may be looking to develop programming of their own whereas others are stretched thin trying to run existing programs.

Another challenge is time. In particular, what is an adequate length of time for an Outpost to be at a site? In this study, time spent at a site ranged from one week to two months. Time at a site was determined by several variables, including grant restrictions and sites' schedules. Not surprisingly, time makes a difference. Results suggest that longer durations had deeper impact. For instance, Southeast CDC and Vantage House—both short-duration sites—expressed disappointment; they wished the Outpost could have stayed longer than one to two weeks to encourage more interactions and deepen relationships with neighborhood and retirement home residents. Other organizations, such as Helping Up Mission, where the Outpost was stationed for two months, also wished the Outpost had stayed longer. We know the BMA is already considering extending the Outpost experience—a good decision in light of these findings.

A third issue, which BMA has already addressed, is the challenge of transporting the Outpost. While the Outpost was fixed in one spot at some sites, at other sites, like 901 Arts, the Outpost had to be moved daily, and because it lacks portability, it was a hardship.

And a final challenge emerged at only one of the 10 sites, yet it is significant enough to warrant discussion since it could be an important lesson for the future of Outpost. 901 Arts wished for a more structured initiation process, including a proposal describing what hosting the Outpost would entail, so they could decide whether to host the Outpost in a more informed way. They also wished to be compensated for staff time spent hosting the Outpost since it is a poorly-funded and under-staffed organization. Similarly, though more of an after-thought than a major challenge, Lexington Market wished they had a formal debriefing after the Outpost left. As the Outpost becomes more widespread, the BMA should consider standardizing the initiation and closing process and decide what, if any, financial assistance should be given to host sites, since sites' resources are often thinly-stretched.

EXPRESSIONS OF THE THEME "HOME"

To the Outpost's credit, the theme, "home," resonated universally at the sites. Participants engaged with the theme in highly personal ways and expressed home in different ways, depending on their life experiences as well as the culture of each site. At social service

each day, or folded and stored it onsite; consequently, participants at these sites did not feel pressure to run the Outpost without the program manager.

organizations such as Healthcare for the Homeless, Helping Up Mission, and YO! Baltimore, for example, the Outpost spurred participants to discuss the instability of homes through the lenses of family troubles, incarceration, and homelessness, but also their hopes and dreams for creating a stable future. At neighborhood gathering places such as Govans Library, St. Francis Neighborhood Center, and Filbert Street Garden, stories of home often reflected longtime residents' pride in their neighborhood.

Notably, however, the data also suggest how expressions of home varies across sites in terms of the extent to which they were grounded in creating art versus grounded in other forms of expression, such as conversation. Participants at sites who experienced the “neighborhood mapping” art project, for instance, said the art-making process helped them understand others' perspectives of their neighborhood (e.g., Govans Library, YO! Baltimore, St. Francis), as did free-drawing or painting in response to prompts like “Draw what home means to you.” At other sites, such as 901 Arts and Vantage House, participants said ideas of home emerged more through spontaneous conversation with the BMA program manager when asked questions like “what does home mean to you?” Further, participants at all but one site (Healthcare for the Homeless) did not mention the reproduction artworks that adorned the Outpost as a fundamental component of their engagement with the theme. Consequently, it seems the BMA may have an opportunity to strengthen the connection between the theme and the art, and as it plans the future of the Outpost, the BMA might reclarify the purpose of the reproductions to guide its planning.

OUTPOST AS ART-THERAPY

Whether intentional or not, the Outpost functioned in a healing role at many of the sites. Participants at a few sites—Healthcare for the Homeless, Helping Up Mission, YO! Baltimore—described the Outpost as a “therapeutic” outlet. During its tenure at Helping Up Mission, for instance, participants quickly began to view the Outpost as a “safe zone within a safe zone” that bolstered clients' recovery process. At Healthcare for the Homeless participants said the Outpost helped them cope with their anger stemming from their homelessness. And, at YO! Baltimore, students made art or talked with the program manager at the Outpost as a means of “escape” from difficult home situations. Furthermore, though other (non-social service) sites did not use the word “therapy,” they praised the Outpost (and the BMA's program manager) for creating a comfortable and non-judgmental space for self-expression through art-making and conversation.

Despite this positive feedback regarding the healing nature of the Outpost, the experience of one site serves as a caution for overstepping boundaries. 901 Arts expressed discomfort with the spontaneous conversations that emerged among neighborhood residents and the BMA program manager regarding hardships they experienced around issues related to home. In particular, staff at 901 Arts were concerned that its young people overheard these conversations, and they felt the BMA program manager had overstepped her role in behaving “like a social worker.”

Notably, the sites that praised the Outpost for its therapeutic qualities are all social service organizations that explicitly seek to help individuals confront emotional trauma and stress (e.g., due to homelessness, addiction, high poverty), while the site that was uncomfortable with this aspect of the Outpost is an arts organization whose mission is simply to encourage youth

creativity. This suggests that if the Outpost truly wants to serve a therapeutic role, it may be better accepted in organizations where there is an existing institutional comfort around emotional trauma and stress and where the “recovery” process is already in place.

BALANCING STRUCTURE AND SPONTANEITY

Despite the standard art activities and prompts (e.g., neighborhood mapping and “draw what home means to you,” respectively) that were part of most Outpost iterations, the data suggest that spontaneity may be an effective programming approach, too. The most beloved and memorable occurrences at the Outpost were those that arose spontaneously. For example, the “Life Advice” artwork and cake-decorating demonstrations at Lexington Market were not planned but were among the most revered aspects of the Outpost experience. Several Outpost participants as well as BMA staff praised this spontaneity because it allows the Outpost to relate to everyone. Paradoxically, at the same time as praising the Outpost for its flexibility, a few sites also liked when the BMA program manager led structured activities (i.e., art lessons at 901 Arts, writing lessons at YO!, painting lessons at Vantage House, lessons with elementary-school students at Govans Library) that integrated into or paired well with their existing programming. This tension between structure and spontaneity is something BMA must contend with as it moves forward.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

In small but notable ways, the Outpost contributed to changing some of the organizations. Several, such as Lexington Market and Helping Up Mission, pointed out that the Outpost opened their minds to new partnerships that can provide innovative programming outside their traditional offerings. Others, however, such as 901 Arts, Vantage House, and Filbert Street Garden, did not experience any substantial change even though they enjoyed hosting the Outpost.

A few factors likely account for these differences among organizations. First, sites that hosted the Outpost for the shortest amount of time (one or two weeks) generally reported little organizational change; the Outpost may need to be in place longer for noticeable change to occur. Second, organizations that already have robust arts or youth programming (namely, 901 Arts) reported less change than organizations have little to no arts programming (e.g., Helping Up Mission). Third, organizations where only one person was in charge of managing the Outpost reported no or only minimal change (e.g., Vantage House, Filbert Street Garden), as organizational change often requires participation by many staff.

ASSOCIATION WITH THE PROGRAM MANAGER VERSUS THE BMA

Participants across sites had very positive experiences with the Outpost. In large part, this is due to the genuinely caring relationships the BMA program manager forged with participants at the sites. Nearly all participants said the program manager’s endearing enthusiasm for the Outpost and extraordinary people skills helped make the Outpost a success. Further, throughout the interviews, the evaluator noticed several participants referring to the Outpost as “[the program manager’s] project” versus a BMA project. While it is certainly good news that participants liked the BMA program manager, their affinity for her specifically is somewhat worrisome given that the museum hopes the Outpost will be viewed by community members as an initiative of the

BMA (versus of the program manager operating as an independent artist). The personalities of new program managers will undoubtedly (and necessarily) shape the Outpost experience moving forward; still, there remains an opportunity for the BMA to better present the Outpost as a “BMA experience.”

CONCLUSION

The Outpost enjoyed overwhelming success at the majority of case study sites, despite challenges at a few. Through both structured and spontaneous art activities, it allowed participants across Baltimore to think critically about their own experiences of home, and, to some extent, begin to shift perspectives on how their organizations could operate to better serve their patrons’ needs. Results suggest that the primary strength of the Outpost is that it meets participants “where they are”—physically and emotionally—in their neighborhoods or places they feel safe. A second strength is that the Outpost adapts to the needs of each new site, allowing for “therapeutic” self-expression, reflection, and genuinely fun interactions with art. At the same time, it connects underserved Baltimore communities to the BMA—communities that might never otherwise have had an encounter with (let alone develop a lasting relationship) with the museum. BMA staff should feel proud that they have created something so beloved across the city and within their own institution.

STUDY BACKGROUND

In 2016, the Baltimore Museum of Art (BMA) contracted RK&A, Inc. to conduct a study of the BMA Outpost (the Outpost), a mobile museum that took up temporary residence in a variety of sites and/or partner organizations throughout Baltimore and the surrounding area from 2014-2016. The Outpost aims to serve as an exchange and host conversations about place, home, and why the city of Baltimore matters to its residents. Visitors to the Outpost had the opportunity to view replicas of works from the BMA's collection, contribute to a map of the surrounding neighborhood, create works of art about home, and share stories about their relationships with Baltimore. In choosing each Outpost site, the BMA sought to visit a variety of Baltimore communities as well as organization types; the Outpost resided at each site for a minimum of one week and a maximum of approximately two months.

The purpose of this study is to explore the nature of the relationship between BMA and individual Outpost sites, including how the Outpost functioned as well as what the BMA can learn from partnering sites. While the Outpost has visited more than twenty sites total, this study focuses specifically on 10 former Outpost sites. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to explore:

- ◆ The nature of participants' interactions with the Outpost; including, how the Outpost operated as a space for participants to respond to ideas of home in Baltimore;
- ◆ Qualities that may have contributed to the Outpost's success and challenges encountered at the Outpost;
- ◆ How, if at all, partner organizations were effected as a result of implementing the Outpost, and what factors influenced these effects; and
- ◆ Key trends that emerge across the sites and provide insight for future Outposts.

METHODOLOGY

DESCRIPTION OF CASE STUDY UNITS

RK&A conducted case studies of 10 former Outpost sites. Case studies examine a limited number of events or environments through small samples of participants. Case studies typically examine the interplay of variables to provide as complete an understanding as possible of one event or situation. This type of comprehensive understanding is arrived at through thick description, an in-depth account of the entity being evaluated. This study is also “cumulative,” meaning it brings together findings from many case studies to answer evaluative questions through the emergence of trends and patterns across cases.

For this study, one case-study unit was defined as one former Outpost site. The BMA selected 10 case-study units to represent a variety of sites and/or partner organization types, as well as a variety of neighborhoods in Baltimore and the surrounding area. Each case study included in-depth interviews with up to three individuals from each of the 10 sites/partner organizations, interviews with BMA staff involved with the Outpost, and in some cases, site visits. Individuals selected for the interviews included site staff involved in bringing the Outpost to the site/partner organizations and non-staff participants who spent time at the Outpost.²

The 10 Outpost sites studied (case-study units) are listed below, by organization type:

Social Service Organizations:

- ◆ Healthcare for the Homeless
- ◆ YO! Baltimore Youth Opportunity at HEBCAC (Eastside)
- ◆ Helping Up Mission

Gardens and Markets:

- ◆ Lexington Market
- ◆ Filbert Street Garden

Arts Organizations:

- ◆ 901 Arts
- ◆ St. Francis Neighborhood Center

Other:

- ◆ Southeast CDC

² The data in this report only represents the perspectives of individuals (site staff and non-staff participants) who were willing and available to participate in an interview with RK&A. When reading the findings, it is important to remember that some perspectives, particularly from those who might have encountered the Outpost in passing (e.g., on a street corner), are not represented.

- ◆ Govans Library
- ◆ Vantage House Retirement Community

SITE VISITS AND IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Five of the 10 case-study units were chosen to receive site visits—in-person visits from RK&A. These five sites were chosen because they had particularly unique characteristics that could add context and depth to the interview process.³ RK&A contacted individuals at these sites and made appointments for face-to-face interviews at four of the sites. In one case, face-to-face interviews could not be conducted, so interviews were conducted over the telephone. Interviews for the remaining five case-study units not selected to receive site visits were also conducted over the telephone.

RK&A also conducted telephone interviews with two BMA staff members involved with the Outpost. First, with the Manager of Community Engagement (BMA’s program manager), before beginning the case studies; then, with the Director of Interpretation and Public Engagement (BMA interpretation director), after completing the case studies.

In-depth interviews encourage and motivate people to describe their experiences, express their opinions and feelings, and share with the interviewer the meaning they gleaned from an experience. In-depth interviews produce data rich in information because interviewees talk about their experiences from a personal perspective. RK&A used open-ended interview guides to explore interviewees’ thoughts and opinions (see Appendix), and all interviews were audio-recorded with interviewees’ permission and transcribed to facilitate analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND REPORTING

Case studies produce descriptive data that are analyzed qualitatively. For this study, the evaluator analyzed data for individual case-study units to describe the nature of the site and provide insight into major topics of interest according to the study objectives; and, across case-study units to identify commonalities and differences. As such, findings are presented in narrative in two distinct ways:

- ◆ **Cross-case analysis:** this section presents and discusses patterns and trends appearing across case-study units.
- ◆ **Individual case study findings (10):** these 10, short sections present findings for individual case-study units.

Verbatim quotations (edited for clarity) illustrate participants’ thoughts and ideas as fully as possible; interviewer’s questions appear in italics; within quotations, an asterisk (*) signifies the start of a different speaker’s comments

³Budget limitations did not allow for in-person visits to all 10 sites.

FINDINGS: HEALTHCARE FOR THE HOMELESS



Healthcare for the Homeless (HCH) is a healthcare facility in downtown Baltimore that works to prevent and end homelessness for vulnerable individuals and families by providing quality, integrated healthcare and promoting access to affordable housing and sustainable incomes through direct service, advocacy, and community engagement. Clients visit the organization for a variety of reasons—for healthcare appointments, to attend support groups or classes (e.g., art classes), to access amenities like air conditioning or television, to meet basic needs (e.g., bathroom, water), or simply to spend time indoors.

The Outpost was stationed at HCH from July-August 2015, in the lobby next to the kids and family play area and in front of a large, street-facing window. RK&A conducted three in-person interviews at the HCH Outpost in March 2017. Participant 1 and Participant 2 are HCH clients who participate with HCH's various advocacy groups and staffed the Outpost; both have experienced homelessness and incarceration. Participant 3 is an HCH staff member who works on the organization's client relations committee, engaging clients in a variety of volunteer and advocacy opportunities.

⁴ Photograph courtesy of Healthcare for the Homeless.

“*What I loved about the Outpost is [that] it was so simple and easy. You just invite people to reflect, think about [and] talk about something that everyone can relate to—this universal theme of home. It was very empowering—the ability to share your experience, your thoughts, your hopes, your dreams.*”

-Participant 1
Healthcare for the
Homeless

WORKING WITH THE BMA

HCH's experience working with the BMA was very positive. Participant 3 explained that HCH, as an organization, values the arts thus she was excited about providing clients with the option to make art while waiting for appointments—an opportunity that is not normally available in the lobby. Further, she said Outpost was a “great leadership development opportunity” for HCH staff and clients. In particular, HCH participants spoke highly about the process of working with the BMA's manager of the Outpost, who they said was energetic and enthusiastic about working with HCH. One participant recalled the day the program manager took him on a “fun” quest to pick flowers near a parking lot down the road so she could bring them back to the Outpost for clients to paint.

CHALLENGES

HCH participants said the biggest challenge they encountered was initially recruiting clients to participate. Participant 3 attributed this in part to ingrained mindsets about how to behave in a lobby space—“you're used to your role [being] sit [down] and wait for your appointment.” Participant 1 added that many clients initially mistook the Outpost as a place “for kids” because it was positioned next to the family play area. The BMA's program manager alluded to this difficulty as well, explaining that she often brought coffee and food to attract clients. Moreover, she mentioned occasional difficulties caused by clients' intoxication. HCH participants, on the other hand, did not mention this as a challenge they encountered at the Outpost; perhaps, because they have already accepted this as a reality of their work.

STORIES OF HOME

As an institution focused on homelessness, home is a relevant theme for HCH. Participant 3 said she and other HCH staff initially worried that “home” might be too “sensitive” a topic because of the trauma associated with homelessness; but, to her surprise, no clients expressed discomfort; instead they found spending time at the Outpost as “empowering.”

The BMA's program manager described HCH as having the greatest variety of responses to the theme, home, both in terms of types of art made and ideas represented in artworks and conversations. She said the replicas of works of art served as a starting point for participants to discuss personal issues; some, for example, responded to Ben Marcin's photograph of a homeless encampment in Baltimore because they recognized this encampment from their own experiences being homeless in Baltimore. Others, not having a stable home of their own, drew or painted their “dream homes” or discussed how their possessions represent home to them—a home that is often “stolen” due to living on the streets. The BMA program manager also said some clients came to broader conclusions about their experiences of homelessness, such as one who realized that being homeless was not his fault and expressed this through an artwork containing the words “Homeless but Not Helpless.”

“ [The Outpost] created a whole different kind of community within [the lobby] space. [The lobby] is already a kind of community hangout, but [the Outpost] invited that more intentionally. It was so cool because I got to know many people that cycle in and out of the clinic. It was another way to plug in. I think it was a very great model for what is possible [within the agency]. How can we learn from and support that?”

-Participant 3,
Healthcare for the
Homeless

HCH participants also recalled stories of clients' engagement with the theme of “home” at the Outpost, though they did not mention any of the replicas of works of art. Participant 1, for example, painted his childhood home near the Susquehanna River. Participant 2 said he wrote a poem and drew a house and thought about home in relation to family, telling the evaluator about his sister finding him after he spent 30 years on the streets. Participant 3 said she was struck by an artwork one client created that depicted a man in a striped shirt thinking about prison as a “safe space”; it forced her to think about the lack of resources available to many people upon reentering society. Participant 3 also noted that the theme of home served as a way to think about and reflect on “bigger systemic injustices.”

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Overall, HCH participants' experience of the Outpost was extremely positive. Generally, the Outpost functioned as a place where HCH clients could relieve stress or have a peaceful moment. For example, Participant 1 said the Outpost “gave you peace of mind, sitting, waiting, doing artwork... I remember a whole lot of tension came off people.” The BMA program manager explained that the Outpost took on an “art therapy” role at HCH, in contrast to other “healing” services the organization typically offers clients. She said this site demonstrated “the power of healing spaces.”

Another function of the Outpost was in its ability to build intra- and interpersonal skills. Participant 3 explained that from the provider perspective, she liked that the Outpost was a low-barrier and powerful way for clients to connect with one another and with HCH staff—“I wasn't aware [of] what a great bridging and community-building initiative it would be.” She felt that it allowed her to connect with clients whom she never might have met otherwise. Participant 3 also explained that there is an “overwhelming desire” among HCH clients to give back to the organization and to help others; yet, the organization has struggled to create interesting roles for clients. She said the Outpost was a great model for involving clients in advocacy work.

Finally, both BMA staff and HCH participants highlighted the continued collaborations between the BMA and HCH as a positive effect of the Outpost. Participant 3, for example, now volunteers with the museum's Open Hours and Gallery Host programs. Participants 1 and 2 fondly recalled attending the opening of the *Imagining Home* exhibition. And, the BMA program manager cited HCH clients as a source of inspiration for classes she taught at a local art school.

SUGGESTIONS

HCH Participants did not have any suggestions for the Outpost other than that Participant 3 said she would have liked to strategize with the BMA from the start about ways HCH could keep the Outpost (or something similar) permanently. The BMA program manager, in turn, said it was more difficult to leave this site than others; primarily because clients visited the Outpost every day, which allowed her to form strong, personal relationships.

FINDINGS: YO! BALTIMORE (EASTSIDE)



YO! Baltimore Youth Opportunity Center at HEBCAC—Eastside (YO! Baltimore) was founded to address the education, counseling, and career development training needs of out-of-school youth in East Baltimore. HEBCAC-YO! staff provide older teens and young adults (ages 17-24) with academic classes, GED prep, and job training, as well as connect them to other services such as housing, family support, and health care with partnering public and community-based agencies.

The Outpost was stationed at YO! Baltimore in November-December 2014, primarily in a small office between the front and back of the building. RK&A interviewed two individuals involved with the Outpost at YO! Baltimore via telephone in December 2016 and February 2017. Participant 1 holds a senior management position at HEBCAC and worked with BMA to bring the Outpost to the YO! Baltimore and coordinate logistics. Participant 2 is a teacher at YO! Baltimore whose students spent time at the Outpost and took art and writing lessons with the BMA's program manager.

⁵ Photograph source: http://www.hebcac.org/programs/youth_opportunities.

“ [The BMA’s program manager] created really meaningful relationships, was really able to connect with the students, and invited us all to the BMA. I thought that was pretty inspiring and went beyond my expectations. I didn’t know that she [would] be so personable.”

-Participant 2,
YO! Baltimore

WORKING WITH THE BMA

YO! participants’ experience working with the BMA was very positive and the Outpost filled a gap in YO!’s programming. For example, Participant 1 said he hoped the Outpost might help “expand kids’ horizons” and push them “out of their comfort zones”—all part of a life-skills personal-development strategy that YO! Baltimore tries to provide for its students. He added that the Outpost would allow students who have not visited (or even heard of) the BMA, due to proximity and cost, to connect with the institution. Though less involved with the startup process, Participant 2 said he was excited for the Outpost’s arrival because he believes that art is extremely important for students’ psychological, academic, and career development. Both YO! participants said hosting the Outpost was a departure from the types of services they normally offer students, and they fondly and vividly recalled how the Outpost acted as a social hub that allowed students to have informal but deep conversations with the BMA’s program manager—“they would do little projects or just chat with her about stuff.” Participant 1 particularly liked that students were given one-on-one time with a real artist so they could learn about her life and career.

CHALLENGES

Participants named one challenge they encountered when implementing the Outpost at YO! Baltimore, which was a discomfort leaving the Outpost unmanned. Participant 1 said he appreciated that the Outpost can “standalone,” but he felt it “worked better” when the BMA’s program manager was there—“it needs a human presence—a real artist who’s there actually engaging kids that might be more reticent or hesitant [to participate].” Additionally, Participants 1 and 2 said the Outpost is heavy to move and monitoring the materials when unmanned was a logistical challenge for staff.

STORIES OF HOME

The theme of home worked well for the students of YO! The BMA’s program manager initially doubted that high school students would engage with the Outpost’s theme of home; however, she had many “long” and “deep” conversations with students about home. Many of these conversations centered on the idea that home is not always a safe place; she said some students, for example, discussed being abused at home or spending time in prison. Others discussed and made art based on the idea that home is “about love, people, and healthy relationships” as opposed to strictly physical locations.

Participants 1 and 2 recalled a few of the Outpost activities that were available to help express their thoughts and feelings about home, such as the watercolor map and a “temporary art museum” to which students contributed small objects (e.g., keys, a toy car) they felt symbolized home. Both felt that “home” was a relevant and “inspiring” theme at YO! Baltimore. Participant 2 applauded the Outpost for providing students with a platform to “identify issues that matter to them as related to home” and to help them feel “less isolated in their own struggles.”

“ Our staff is incredibly overworked and underpaid, and they can get beaten down sometimes by the enormity of the work that has to be done. Something like [the Outpost] is a breath of fresh air. It helped remind us that we need to continue to try to stay a little more creative and [be] a little bit more thoughtful [in our work]. It’s not just getting kids through their GED or getting them placed in trial employment. The educational development process is bigger than that.”

-Participant 1,
YO! Baltimore

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

According to Participants 1 and 2, the Outpost served as a reminder of the “importance of creativity” for YO! Baltimore staff. As Participant 1 explained, the enormity of YO! Baltimore’s work can often feel overwhelming, so the Outpost served as a reminder to staff to take time to think about what they want to achieve and not to simply go through the motions of helping students study for the GED or assigning them job trials. Participant 2 said students often found “therapeutic escape” from drawing at the Outpost and that both he and students took pride in seeing their work and talent on display—“it was like a beacon of possibility for expression...I [felt] happy every time I walk[ed] by.”

Moreover, the Outpost experience built positive relationships between YO! stakeholders and the BMA. For example, Participant 1 said the Outpost gave him a more positive impression of the BMA—“I never thought they’d do something like this.” Participant 2 echoed this sentiment and explained that as a result of the Outpost, he now attempts to incorporate art into his classes. Finally, the BMA program manager cited the BMA’s continuing relationship with YO! Baltimore as another positive effect (for example, a YO! student became an intern to the BMA’s program manager and Participant 2 encouraged his students to visit the BMA.

SUGGESTIONS

YO! participants had a number of thoughts on how to improve the Outpost experience. Participant 2 recalled when the BMA program manager brought a friend, a cartoonist, to the Outpost and said the Outpost could benefit from having more working artists participate. Participant 1 said because most students regularly visit YO! Baltimore, the BMA might consider adding more variety to the types of activities the Outpost offers. He also reiterated that the Outpost requires facilitated programming and suggested involving a volunteer (i.e., AmeriCorps) to help the BMA staff the Outpost. Finally, he said would like to see the Outpost act as “more of a conduit to the museum” in the physical sense, so interested students could visit on field trips.

FINDINGS: HELPING UP MISSION



Helping Up Mission (HUM) is a faith-based center, located in the Jonestown neighborhood, that provides holistic recovery services to men experiencing homelessness, poverty, and addiction. In addition to food, clothing, and shelter, HUM helps men with their clinical, mental health, medical, educational, and vocational needs. The 500 men participating in the Mission's Spiritual Recovery Program (clients) reside at HUM for a full year and run the center (cooking, cleaning, laundry, activities, etc.).

The Outpost was stationed at HUM in August-September 2016, where it was setup in the lobby. RK&A interviewed three individuals involved with the Outpost at HUM in person in January 2017. Participant 1 holds a senior management position at the organization and worked to bring the Outpost to HUM. Participants 2 and 3 are former clients who continue to work at HUM. Participant 2 runs the art room and Participant 3 is a chaplain; neither used the Outpost, but both advised other clients to do so.

⁶ Photograph source: <http://source.jhu.edu/volunteer-agencies/community-development-organizations/Helping-Up-Mission.html>.

“ I think my biggest hope was to be able to open up the arts to the guys, because in talking with them I saw in many cases they had a very narrow world. That was my main goal—to be able to get them to the BMA to expose them to something they may not have ever had the opportunity to see before.”

-Participant 1,
Helping Up Mission

WORKING WITH THE BMA

Though the startup process was smooth, Participant 1 explained that there was some internal anxiety about the Outpost since this was the first time HUM allowed an outside organization to run a program. But he eventually became convinced that the Outpost would be a great fit. Participant 1 said he hoped the Outpost would establish more ways for HUM clients to “use art as a tool for their recovery process.” HUM has an art room, but Participant 1 said it is underutilized. He also said he hoped to provide clients access to the BMA, since many had never visited a museum and/or had negative perceptions of museums. Additionally, he hoped the Outpost would help broaden the BMA’s perception of recovering addicts.

CHALLENGES

HUM encountered only minimal challenges with the Outpost. The BMA’s program manager said the reality of being in a space with clients in recovery meant there were “a lot of feelings in the space,” so she sometimes acted as more of a therapist than an art facilitator, talking to clients about difficult issues related to their recovery. Participant 1 said lack of time was the only challenge, since the Outpost was only staffed by the BMA’s program manager three days a week.

STORIES OF HOME

The Outpost’s theme of “home” is well placed in HUM since the organization is the physical (though temporary) home for men who are recovering from a variety of hardships. Because HUM is also a transient space, the BMA’s program manager said the stories of home that emerged were similar to those that emerged at Healthcare for the Homeless, in that clients’ artwork often reflected personal experiences with home as impermanent, transient, and ever-changing—“home wasn’t really a real place at this time.”

“ I didn’t think of the BMA much beforehand as a community-minded organization. But I guess my perception of that has shifted, because they came to us. I’m excited about growing that connection, that relationship.”

-Participant 3,
Helping Up Mission

HUM participants recalled a similar dynamic. Participant 1 described the BMA program manager’s approach to engaging clients with the theme as “very broad” (“home can be whatever you want it to be”) and open (“how can I help you capture that?”), which he appreciated because it allowed for the multitude of experiences and personalities that reside in HUM. He said the artworks about home that clients created were powerful” but contained “a lot of darkness” that reflected clients life experiences; for example, a drawing of home with an “X” across the door to reflect “brokenness” and not being allowed back into your home. On the other hand, he said others contained more hopeful images, such as HUM as a temporary home, rays of sun coming out of a house, and an imaginary reunion with their children.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

The Outpost offered a therapeutic outlet for HUM residents. At the broadest level, HUM participants explained that the Outpost helped HUM clients feel more comfortable with the arts and with self-expression. For example, Participant 1 said the Outpost served as a “safe zone within a safe zone,” allowing clients to express their

“ I think there was, in some cases, an awakening. I think [the BMA’s program manager] helped [clients] understand that art is just taking what’s in your heart and putting it either on paper. The art room upstairs is packed all the time now. A lot of that is [because of] what [the BMA program manager] helped pull out, that art is just what the artist wants it to be. It doesn’t have to be what people around you want it to be.”

-Participant 1,
Helping Up Mission

“softer sides” in a traditionally “machismo” environment. Participant 2 echoed this sentiment and said the Outpost helped pique clients’ interest in the arts, especially those who might have previously been too intimidated to visit the art room. In particular, he noted that working in the open and having someone from another institution pay attention increased many clients’ sense of self-worth and self-esteem.

Participants 1 and 3 also said the Outpost helped “break down barriers” with the BMA and change both HUM staff and clients’ perceptions of the museum—from potentially “intimidating” and “scary” to a “community-minded organization” that “welcomes everybody.” In particular, Participant 1 said the reception the BMA hosted at the museum for clients to display their artwork allowed clients to showcase their pride. Participants 1 and 3 cited a continuing relationship with the BMA (i.e., HUM clients now have the option to visit the BMA once a month) as positive effect; they said they would like to continue this relationship and perhaps do more to emphasize workforce development in creative careers for clients.

SUGGESTIONS

On the whole, HUM participants said they would not change anything about the Outpost.

FINDINGS: LEXINGTON MARKET



Lexington Market (the Market), in West Baltimore, is the oldest public market in Baltimore and an iconic city institution. Serving the city for the past 230 years, it houses over 100 food and commercial vendors and is a home away from home for many residents. Customers come from all over the city to buy a snack, shop for groceries, enjoy a memorable meal, or simply pass the time.

The Outpost was stationed at the Market in March-April 2014, where it was given its own stall amongst other vendors. RK&A interviewed three individuals involved with the Outpost at the Market in person in January 2017. Participants 1 and 2 hold senior management positions with Baltimore Public Markets and worked with BMA to bring the Outpost to the Market and coordinate logistics. Participant 3 worked for a nearby vendor and spent time at the Outpost.

⁷ Photograph is courtesy of Lexington Market.

“ There are a lot of organizations that will turn their nose up at Lexington Market [or] are less than enthusiastic about working with us, for whatever reason. ‘Oh, I don’t feel safe here, it doesn’t this there...’ We get a lot of that. But it was really wonderful and surprising, [the BMA’s] genuine, no fear, like ‘This is great, we want to be here, it’s exciting!’ I thought that was really lovely—their willingness to [say] ‘yeah, let’s try this.’”

-Participant 2,
Lexington Market

“ [The BMA’s program manager] is a very, very positive person. If I had the chance to work with [her] again on any type of project I would be hands-down, 150% in.”

-Participant 3,
Lexington Market

WORKING WITH THE BMA

Lexington Market’s experience of working with the BMA to host the Outpost was very positive. The BMA program manager said that Market staff seemed to naturally understand the “value of having art in unusual places.” Market staff, in turn, said the program manager’s energy made accepting the Outpost easy even though they were unsure what to expect. Interestingly, Participant 2 added that many organizations are unenthusiastic about working with Lexington Market, so BMA staff’s enthusiasm felt “wonderful and surprising.”

CHALLENGES

The Outpost experienced few direct challenges at Lexington Market. However, the BMA’s interpretation director said she believed the Market was the most difficult and “psychologically-draining” site for the BMA’s program manager because illegal drug-related activities occur there. Moreover, even though the Market is not a social-service agency, many of its patrons experience physical, emotional, psychological, financial, and social distress.

STORIES OF HOME

As a “crossroads of the city,” both BMA staff and Market staff hoped the theme of home (particularly “home in Baltimore”) would resonate strongly. As Participant 2 put it, Lexington Market “feels like home for a lot of people.” The BMA’s program manager recalled having a variety of conversations about experiences of home, the market, and Baltimore as a whole, particularly with older customers—everything from “I used to come here with my grandma” to how neighborhoods have changed over time.

Further, the BMA’s program manager explained that something she called “Life Advice” spontaneously emerged from the Outpost. “Life Advice” is made up of over 100 pieces of “wisdom” that customers wrote on the wall after one wrote “listen to your elders.” While none of the Market participants recalled “Life Advice” specifically when asked, they did say the blank walls of the stall were quickly adorned with people’s notes, paintings, and drawings in response to prompts about home. More specifically, Participant 2 recalled a map that was “filled” with people’s representations of home. Participant 3 said she mainly interacted with children at the Outpost through a cake-decorating demonstration that the BMA’s program manager invited her to lead. She remembered that some of the children’s paintings represented home, such as a house with flowers; she also fondly recalled reflecting on her own “happy” childhood.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Overall, the Outpost gave Market customers a place and a “voice” for expressing themselves. Participant 1 said he was surprised how “naturally” the Outpost fit into the market environment and the extent to which customers embraced the opportunity to be express themselves. In this way, he said the Outpost helped show him that the market can support communities in a variety of ways, beyond providing affordable food and business opportunities.



I'd love to say that [the Outpost] was revolutionary, but it was not. We're changing things by half-degrees. So the half-degree the Outpost helped us do was to broaden [our] perspective about what is possible here or what can be experimented with here [at the Market]. But [the Outpost] was a surprise to me in that we can be more open to things that on the surface don't seem to fit seamlessly in with this retail food environment, but somehow they still work. So organizationally, our perspective shifted a half-degree. [We are] more open to stuff—nothing is off the table."

-Participant 1,
Lexington Market

An unexpected takeaway from the Outpost was what Participant 2 described as a “beautiful dinner” that the Market hosted for BMA staff and representatives from other Outpost sites at the conclusion of the Outpost’s run. She said although it was unplanned, she thought it elevated and “put the Market in a different perspective” for people. The BMA’s program manager called the dinner a “powerful equalizer” because it brought together a variety of community members with BMA staff.

The Outpost provided a partnership model that Market stakeholders hope to embrace. Participant 1 and 2 hope the Outpost suggests to other arts organizations in Baltimore that the Market is a viable future partner.

SUGGESTIONS

Market participants had a few suggestions for improving the Outpost. Both Participants 1 and 2 said they would give the Outpost a stall in a more visible and trafficked location. Similarly, Participants 1 and 3 said they would hope to better advertise the Outpost to patrons, since it went unnoticed by many people until close to its departure. Participant 1 added that he would have liked a formal debrief at the conclusion of Outpost.

FINDINGS: FILBERT STREET GARDEN



Filbert Street Garden (the Garden), is a one-acre community garden, native plant conservation project, education space, and working farm located in the Curtis Bay neighborhood of Baltimore. Curtis Bay is a food desert and high-poverty neighborhood. The Garden, located across the street from an elementary school, provides education and access to healthy food to neighborhood residents.

The Outpost, stationed at the Garden in October 2015 was informally advertised as “art in the garden,” and it aimed to connect children to nature through art. Children ages 5 to 13 would drop-in after school and spend anywhere between a few minutes and a few hours. RK&A interviewed one individual involved with the Outpost at the Garden via telephone in March 2017. Participant 1 manages the Garden and worked with the BMA’s program manager to coordinate Outpost logistics.

⁸ Photograph source: <http://www.sierraclub.org/lay-of-the-land/2016/11/for-baltimore-neighborhood-local-garden-symbol-change>.

“ I thought it would be a good program for the kids to express [themselves] personally. We live in a food desert. A lot of underserved kids don't have the opportunity to do activities and their parents don't take them to different activities because of the limited resources and [because] they don't have the money to travel all the way up to the museum. [The Outpost] was convenient, really, convenient.”

-Participant 1,
Filbert Street Garden

WORKING WITH THE BMA

The Garden's partnership with the BMA was generally smooth and positive from start to finish. Participant 1 said she agreed to host the Outpost because it was a convenient opportunity for children who visit the garden to express themselves and to interact with the museum. She explained that the children lack resources due to high poverty and that the Outpost was the first long-term program hosted at the Garden.

CHALLENGES

The only challenge cited, by the BMA's interpretation director, was the low and unpredictable volume of traffic, which is typical of community gardens generally. This made it a less than ideal site for the Outpost. Other than this, Participant 1 and the BMA's program manager did not cite any challenges.

STORIES OF HOME

Curtis Bay, however, as a community, is an ideal site for the Outpost, given the theme of home. The BMA program manager explained that because Curtis Bay is located on the other side of the bay from downtown Baltimore, it feels separate from the rest of the city, allowing a strong "sense of community" to develop. She said many of the conversations she had with visitors to this site focused on the fact that numerous people have called this neighborhood home for generations. Participant 1 had trouble recalling any specific stories of home that emerged at the Garden, stating that the majority of the activities and conversations focused on the garden and plants.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Both the BMA program manager and Participant 1 said the Outpost "activated" the Garden and made children and families in Curtis Bay more aware of its existence and mission. Beyond this, Participant 1 said she was surprised how much children seemed to connect with the garden and nature through the BMA's art activities, saying that children seemed "engaged" and "engrossed" in what they were doing. Moreover, she said the Outpost was "therapeutic" for children and gave children "something to do after school to release anxiety" and express themselves. Though vague, she was quite positive about the Outpost experience—"there was nothing I didn't like about it." Finally, Participant 1 said it encouraged her to invite other organizations to do programming at the Garden to expose children to more opportunities.

SUGGESTIONS

Participant 1 provided no suggestions for improvement.

FINDINGS: 901 ARTS



901 Arts is a non-profit, community-based arts center dedicated to providing afterschool art and music programs to the children and teens of the Better Waverly neighborhood in Baltimore. The organization was founded by parents and adults in the neighborhood.

The Outpost was stationed at 901 Arts in May 2015, where it was setup on the sidewalk outside the 901 Arts building three to four days per week. The BMA’s program manager trained 901 Arts students to help her staff the Outpost, and she taught structured art lessons in 901 Arts classrooms. RK&A interviewed two individuals involved with the Outpost at 901 Arts; one in person in January 2017, and the other via telephone in March 2017. Participant 1 holds a senior management position at the organization and worked with the BMA program manager to coordinate logistics. Participant 2 managed a variety of arts programs at 901 Arts during the Outpost’s tenure, but no longer worked for the organization at the time of the interview.

⁹ Photograph is copyright of RK&A.

“ I needed to train [the BMA’s program manager] on being an ambassador of 901 Arts, because she was basically becoming the face of our organization. Even though she had never volunteered here or maybe just knew our mission statement from the website, parents were coming up and wanted to know ‘Can I enroll my kid in classes?’ ‘What’s the summer camp?’ We weren’t specifically hiring or choosing to partner with her. We had spent eight years developing relationships with folks in the neighborhood. So it gave us a little trepidation to have someone how there [when] we’re not sure how they’re going to treat people or how their interactions are going to go.”

-Participant 1,
901 Arts

WORKING WITH THE BMA

The process of the BMA providing Outpost to 901 Arts was more formalized than other sites. The BMA program manager recalled signing a Memorandum of Understanding, attending a series of planning meetings, and submitting lesson plans to 901 Arts participants to review. 901 Arts participants named a few reasons they agreed to work with the BMA to host the Outpost. First, staffing and funding limitations make it difficult for them to bring young people to the BMA, so they viewed the Outpost as a good opportunity for their young people to interact with the museum outside its walls. Second, they hoped the Outpost might help 901 Arts generate interest in existing programs among neighborhood residents. Third, they said they are open to any program that allows young people to work with artists.

CHALLENGES

901 Arts participants struggled to integrate the Outpost into their existing programming and consequently, it was difficult to allocate resources to the Outpost. Along these lines, the BMA’s program manager said this site imposed more structure than any other site (by asking her to teach formal lessons in addition to hosting the Outpost on a street corner), which she viewed somewhat positively but also felt challenged since she had less opportunity to be spontaneous. Specifically, 901 Arts participants named several other challenges encountered:

- ◆ **Location/construction:** 901 Arts participants said being outside was sometimes problematic due to bad weather; that the Outpost is heavy so the BMA’s program manager needed help bringing it inside; and, that storing the Outpost at the end of each day was difficult since the building is small.
- ◆ **Time:** Participant 1 said the Outpost occupied a lot of her time; primarily, because she had to invent and maintain a system to regulate young people’s time spent at the Outpost. To mitigate this challenge, she created two “ambassador” roles for young people, who worked in shifts to assist the BMA’s program manager.
- ◆ **Classroom management:** 901 Arts participants and the BMA’s program manager said “classroom management” was difficult because of the number of young people who participated in the Outpost at one time.
- ◆ **Organizational reputation:** Participant 1 said the BMA’s program manager unexpectedly became the face of 901 Arts since she was stationed outside. While this did not turn out to be an issue for the BMA’s program manager, 901 Arts participants felt hosting the Outpost was risky for their reputation.
- ◆ **Race:** Participant 2 said she initially perceived a “dissonance” between the BMA’s program manager and neighborhood residents, due to racial dynamics—that is, having a white person stand on a corner in a primarily black neighborhood initially appeared strange.

“ I honestly don’t remember there being a thing [the BMA’s program manager] had a concern about. But some people treat[ed] her more like a social worker and want[ed] to pour out some difficult things because she’s asking them to talk about home and family. That can be problematic to have some guy in his 50s telling her all this stuff and have younger kids overhear it. That’s not a dynamic we would promote in the future.”

-Participant 1,
901 Arts

“ I think [the Outpost’s] strength is that it got people interacting with one another. Young people were able to talk to their neighbors who they had never spoken to before. 901 Arts is very Waverly-based—this is the neighborhood. I think in that way home came through. I don’t know that home came through the art, in what was supposed to be made in the drawings.”

-Participant 2,
901 Arts

STORIES OF HOME

901 Arts staff had mixed feelings about the theme of home. For example, Participant 1 said the theme made people in the neighborhood treat the BMA’s program manager “like a social worker” and tell personal stories about difficult times. She added that inviting residents to share hardships in front of young children is “not a dynamic we would promote in the future.” On the other hand, Participant 2 also recalled this dynamic, but saw these conversations as a strength of the Outpost.

The BMA’s program manager recalled conversations about home with 901 Arts patrons, but she did not convey that she was uncomfortable. Nevertheless, she did point out that she was stationed at 901 Arts during the uprising and protests around Freddie Gray’s death, and she recalled having “political conversations” with neighborhood residents. She also recalled other conversations about home that were less fraught with tension. She said she had conversations with both young people and older neighborhood residents about what makes the Waverly neighborhood feel like home.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

901 Arts’ overall experience with the Outpost was mostly positive, despite the challenges encountered. Specifically, 901 Arts participants discussed ways the Outpost affected their organization. For instance, Participant 1 said having the Outpost on the street corner helped “connect” 901 Arts to neighbors and increased visibility among neighborhood residents. Participant 2 disagreed, however, and said that while she appreciates that the Outpost attempts to encourage face-to-face conversations with neighbors, minimal foot traffic was problematic. Overall, they pointed out that the Outpost opened their minds to potential new partnerships, engaged the neighborhood in a “more fluid” way, and provided innovative programming outside their traditional offerings.

SUGGESTIONS

901 Arts participants named a few suggestions for improving the Outpost experience before and during.

- ◆ **Before:** Participant 1 wished the BMA had provided a written “proposal” asking 901 Arts to host the Outpost so she could more clearly understand what hosting would involve (especially regarding 901 Arts’ staff time) and if 901 Arts should receive compensation.
- ◆ **During:** Participant 1 wished the BMA and/or 901 Arts could have come up with a more workable mechanism for helping manage the Outpost. She also suggested creating a standardized way to collect daily data, such as checklist of the number of people who visited the Outpost.

FINDINGS: ST. FRANCIS NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER



St. Francis Neighborhood Center (St. Francis) is a nonprofit, community-based organization, located in the Reservoir Hill neighborhood, offering a variety of programs to children, adults, and families in the community. As the oldest neighborhood center in Baltimore, St. Francis is committed to ending generational poverty through education, inspiring self-esteem and self-improvement, and strengthening connections to the community.

The Outpost was stationed at St. Francis in October 2014. It was the first Outpost site, setup on the sidewalk outside the center, next to a popular bus stop. Both groups from St. Francis (sent outside during “enrichment time”) and members of the general public (walking by or exiting the bus) used the Outpost. RK&A interviewed one individual involved with the Outpost at St. Francis by telephone in December 2016. Participant 1 holds a management position at the organization and worked with the BMA’s program manager to coordinate logistics.

¹⁰ Photograph source: <http://durabante.com/community-involvement/>.

“ [The Outpost] exceeded [my expectations] because kids formed a relationship with someone new, outside their area. They were able to interact with other people from their community who would come up to the Outpost and be social. I think those two [things] made [the Outpost] exceed [expectations] for me. It was just something different. Got the kids outside of their bubble. Working in art outside and not in the classroom was a really nice thing to have.”

-Participant 1,
St. Francis Neighborhood
Center

WORKING WITH THE BMA

The BMA and St. Francis had a relationship prior to the Outpost, which helped support the collaboration. Participant 1 said he eagerly accepted the invitation to host the Outpost to continue the relationship with the BMA, and he hoped the Outpost would provide outreach and visibility for the organization by virtue of being on the street. As the first Outpost site, the BMA’s program manager said she had no expectations and was open to seeing what would happen.

CHALLENGES

BMA participants and Participant 1 all said it was difficult to physically move the Outpost inside from the street each day because of its weight. Inclement weather also became a problem because they lacked permission to setup inside the center.

STORIES OF HOME

Both BMA staff and Participant 1 said that the theme “home” was a natural fit because Reservoir Hill has a strong sense of community and neighborhood pride. All participants said the Outpost felt like a “transit hub” of the neighborhood due to its location on the street corner near a bus stop. Residents stopped by daily to add items to the neighborhood map, share stories, and make art. The BMA’s program manager recalled having conversations with participants about all sorts of neighborhood topics—architecture, historic homes, old grocery stores and pharmacies, and other memories of places no longer in the neighborhood. Participant 1 remembered that the BMA program manager invited children and neighborhood residents to visualize and draw their communities and/or homes and create a large neighborhood map.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Overall, both BMA participants and Participant 1 spoke very positively of their experience with the Outpost at St. Francis. Participant 1 said he liked that the Outpost allowed him to “see what people thought of their community through art.” He also liked that the Outpost provided children the chance to form a strong relationship with someone new (the BMA’s program manager) who is “outside their area.” Finally, he liked that the Outpost prompted interactions between children and other members of their community. In terms of impact on the organization generally, Participant 1 said the Outpost expanded staff’s thinking about ways to create more “accommodating” and “inclusive,” afterschool programming.

SUGGESTIONS

Participant 1 provided no suggestions for improvement.

FINDINGS: SOUTHEAST CDC



11

Southeast Community Development Corporation (Southeast CDC) is a community-development corporation that operates community revitalization programs, housing, and financial services in Southeast Baltimore. Staff at Southeast CDC identified four sites in the Highlandtown neighborhood for the Outpost to visit over the course of one month. The four sites were: Markets of Highlandtown (a local grocery store where the Outpost setup in the frozen meat section), International Rescue Committee (an organization that works with immigrants and refugees), the corner of Eastern Avenue and Conkling Avenue (a main intersection in the neighborhood), and the Conkling Street Garden. The Outpost visited each site for one week in September 2015.

RK&A interviewed two individuals involved with the Outpost at Southeast CDC by telephone in March 2017. Participants 1 and 2 hold management positions at Southeast CDC and worked with BMA's program manager to select the four sites and coordinate logistics.

¹¹ Photograph source: <http://www.southeastcdc.org/>.

“ I guess if I had any expectations, it was to engage folks in a different way and build relationships. I don't think I personally was really able to [do so] because I wasn't around [the Outpost] every day. But it's spurred us to do some of the programming we had been thinking about, like the community chicken dinner even, which came out of the idea of doing a culminating event with the Outpost—now that's a regular annual program that we do. Then in the garden, it helped me think about finding a way to do regular programming in the garden space that's not specific to gardening, but to getting families together. So that was an expectation that was met or exceeded.”

-Participant 1,
Southeast CDC

WORKING WITH THE BMA

Southeast CDC participants explained that they were motivated to host the Outpost because they are always seeking ways to “build cohesion” and encourage “connections” amongst the neighborhood’s diverse audiences; for example, between business owners and homeless residents who sit on public benches outside their businesses. Participant 2 also said she wanted to promote a stronger relationship between the Highlandtown arts district and other art institutions in Baltimore.

CHALLENGES

Southeast CDC experienced some challenges in hosting the Outpost. Participants said the Outpost’s size and weight made it challenging to move to different locations. Additionally, the BMA’s program manager said that while she enjoyed the four locations, this schedule created intense weeklong experiences. She also said the supermarket was challenging because some patrons sought to finish their shopping quickly and did not stop at the Outpost.

STORIES OF HOME

Because the Outpost visited four different locations in Highlandtown—a supermarket, a garden, a refugee organization, and a street corner—it encountered a great variety of “home” experiences from Highlandtown residents. The BMA’s program manager recalled ways “home” was expressed at the Outpost across locations. At the supermarket, patrons talked about their memories of home through food, such as one person who drew her father’s lasagna recipe. At the Garden, visitors painted traditional drawings of homes, such as their grandmother’s house. At the refugee organization, participants made art about things that reminded them of their home countries, such as a map of Nepal. Participants at the street corner location discussed and made art about wide-ranging experiences of home, from growing up in the neighborhood to homelessness.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Overall, the Southeast CDC Outpost experience was positive. Southeast CDC participants liked that it provided neighborhood residents the opportunity to do something they don’t normally do in the neighborhood—“stop, draw, and have a conversation.” Participant 2 added the Outpost aligned well with the organization’s existing efforts to encourage residents’ artistic expression (because Highlandtown is “an arts district”). Moreover, Participant 1 said the Outpost “spurred” staff at Southeast CDC to consider hosting other types of programming, such as family programs.

SUGGESTIONS

Southeast CDC participants provided a few suggestions for the Outpost. They expected more and higher-quality reproductions of museum artworks and more interaction between the participants and the artwork. Participant 2 also hoped that future Outposts could stay for a longer period of time at each location in order to build stronger relationships with neighborhood residents.

FINDINGS: GOVANS LIBRARY



12

Govans Library (the Library) is a branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library system located in Northeast Baltimore, where children and adults go to read, attend programs, use the computers, and pass the time.

The Outpost was stationed at the Library in January-February 2015, where it was setup inside the front entranceway. Library patrons and students from a local elementary school visited. RK&A interviewed one individual involved with the Outpost at the Library by telephone in March 2017. Participant 1 is a librarian at the Library and worked with the BMA's program manager to coordinate logistics.

¹² Photograph source: <http://www.flickrriver.com/places/United+States/Maryland/Baltimore/Winston+-+Govans/search/>.

“ [The Outpost] gave people a chance to think about their neighborhood. They’d talk about what their family was like, what their neighborhood was like. Some people said ‘my neighborhood is great.’ Some people said, ‘my neighborhood needs this.’ So it brought out issues that I had never thought of, like what does a neighborhood actually need? And made me think ‘wow, kids really do think about their neighborhood.’”

-Participant 1,
Govans Library

WORKING WITH THE BMA

The library staff was motivated to work with the BMA on the Outpost because the idea of bringing people together to discuss the neighborhood and home was appealing and something the library had never done before. The BMA’s program manager was interested in working with a library since libraries are community spaces that bring people together.

CHALLENGES

The Outpost experienced the most challenges on days when the BMA’s program manager was not present. As a solution, Participant 1 and another librarian decided to open the Outpost without the BMA’s program manager, handing out colored pencils, paper, and prompting patrons to draw their neighborhood and/or families.

STORIES OF HOME

The theme of home worked well at the library. Compared to other sites, the memories recalled by library patrons were not as “stressful” as at other sites because most had a stable home. Participant 1 said she appreciated how the mapping project gave families a chance to think about their neighborhood. To the best of her memory, children often made art based on observations from their neighborhood, such as one child who drew litter on the street and talked about the need for clean streets. The BMA’s program manager said many children drew pictures of their homes and many adults named things that are no longer present in the neighborhood or memories from childhood, such as an old candy store or taking dance classes at a neighborhood studio.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

The Outpost led to positive outcomes for the library, particularly for its patrons. Participant 1 said the Outpost helped library patrons (especially children) think more critically about their neighborhood. While Participant 1 did not believe the Outpost changed the library in any substantial way, she reiterated that it made her consider other ways programming could encourage a similar atmosphere.

SUGGESTIONS

Participant 1 suggested the BMA operate the Outpost everyday over the course of its tenure (instead of only a few times a week) so she and other library staff would not feel obligated to run the Outpost in the program manager’s absence.

FINDINGS: VANTAGE HOUSE



13

Vantage House is a retirement community, located in Columbia, MD. In addition to housing, Vantage House offers a variety of classes, wellness activities, and dining options for older adults.

The Outpost was stationed at Vantage House for about two weeks in June 2015, where it was setup in a communal space for independent-living residents. In addition to drop-in activities, the BMA's program manager led a few structured art activities. RK&A interviewed one individual involved with the Outpost at Vantage House by telephone in February 2017. Participant 1 oversees programming for the independent-living residents at Vantage House and worked with the BMA to coordinate logistics.

¹³ Photograph source: <https://www.vantagehouse.org/>.



Something unexpected was that the topic [home] really brought some of our quieter residents out of their shell. I was very surprised by that, happy and elated. Imagine you knew someone for 45 years and all of a sudden your husband gets sick and you've got to move to a continuing care retirement community. You've got to move into a new place and try to make that your new home. [It's] very difficult for some people. For a few people, they were able to share a little bit more about that experience and those trials and tribulations [when] they saw other people at the Outpost sharing their stor[ies]."

-Participant 1,
Vantage House

WORKING WITH THE BMA

Participant 1 said it was easy to work with the BMA to coordinate logistics. He said he hoped the Outpost would serve as a place for residents to think about what home meant to them prior to living at Vantage House, and that it would facilitate positive interactions between new and long-time residents so they could learn about one another. He also explained that his existing, positive impression of the BMA made for an easy startup process; Vantage House residents already have the option to visit the BMA two to three times per year as part of Vantage House programming.

CHALLENGES

Outpost encountered a couple of challenges at Vantage House. For one, the Outpost was only at Vantage House two weeks due to grant restrictions, so the BMA's program manager had limited time to forge deep relationships. Further, Participant 1 said the small space made it difficult for more than a few residents to engage with the Outpost at once—"I think if we had a bigger room we would have had more interest."

STORIES OF HOME

Vantage House residents expressed interest in structured art lessons, so the BMA's program manager led several painting lessons. While she was disappointed that residents did not make more art around the theme of home, she said the theme emerged in other ways; mainly, in informal conversations with residents about their lives prior to coming to Vantage House. Several residents took her on "tours" of their rooms and/or showed her objects from their past, such as family heirlooms.

Participant 1 said residents enjoyed drawing pictures of or painting "what home meant to them," especially of life before coming to Vantage House. For example, he said a few veterans drew images of ships they were stationed on during World War II or the Vietnam War. He praised the BMA program manager's ability to "massage" stories out of shy residents and felt the topic resonated with residents who were eager to share stories from their pre-Vantage House lives.

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Participant 1 felt the Outpost had a positive effect on the Vantage House residents who used it. He noted being surprised how effective the Outpost was at encouraging "quieter" residents to open up and share stories—"that was a shock for sure... I was surprised by that, happy and elated." He said the Outpost did not have any lasting impact on Vantage House itself, mainly because he was the only Vantage House staff involved in the project. Neither he nor the BMA's program manager described any continuing relationship between Vantage House and the BMA.

SUGGESTIONS

Participant 1 suggested setting up the Outpost in a space large enough for more than a few residents to use it at once. The BMA's program manager expressed similar thoughts, and wished the Outpost could have stayed longer than two weeks.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDES

Removed for proprietary purposes.