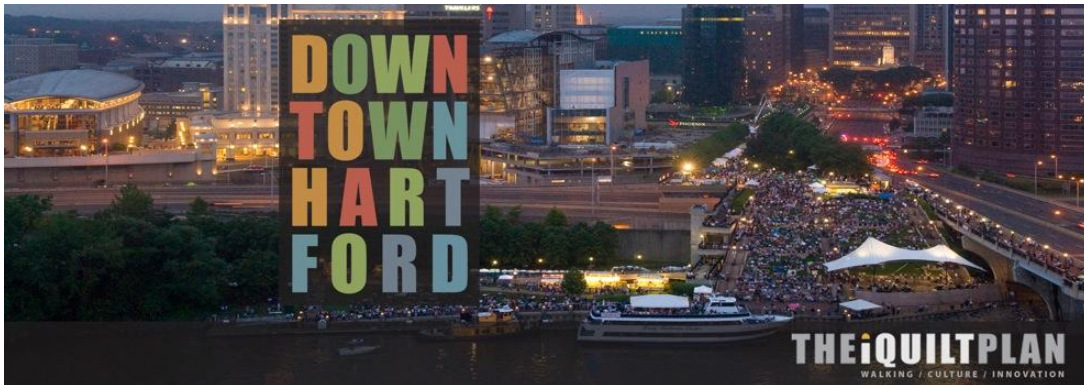


Creative Communities Presentation Outline
Project: The iQuilt Plan: A Culture-Based Urban Design for Hartford, CT



I. History

In 2007, the Urban Land Institute (ULI), the nation’s preeminent authority on land use policy, comprehensively evaluated Hartford’s built environment and the challenges it posed to economic growth. A principal recommendation of the ULI was to: “focus on thoughtful, creative in-fill projects to link and leverage Hartford’s cultural assets.” Generating nearly \$245 million in arts-based economic activity annually, Hartford’s arts and cultural sector is already a driving force in the city’s economy. In a recent study entitled “Destination Attractiveness of Hartford for Convention Business,” conducted for the Greater Hartford Convention and Visitors Bureau by Fenich & Associates of Greenville, South Carolina, Hartford was ranked 14th among America’s 140 largest cities in terms of richness and availability of cultural resources.

In 2008, two of Hartford’s key cultural leaders, The Bushnell and the Greater Hartford Arts Council, initiated the iQuilt, a plan to develop a network of downtown pathways that will connect and leverage the city’s thriving cultural assets to achieve targeted economic and social goals. In 2009, a preliminary iQuilt vision plan was formulated by Suisman Urban Design, winner of the 2006 American Institute of Architects award for excellence in urban design. Led by Doug Suisman, the firm utilized a year of public dialogue and input of over 2,000 citizens in producing a plan that calls for an exciting grid of pedestrian routes that will weave together Hartford’s key cultural sites and institutions around a theme of innovation in science, art and human affairs.

The iQuilt is an arts-based economic development plan designed to capitalize on Hartford’s unique heritage and cultural assets. More than 45 such assets are located within a remarkably compact downtown area – all within a 15-minute walk of each other, and include such jewels as The Bushnell, The Capitol and State museums, Bushnell Park, The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford Stage Company, Old State

House, and the new Connecticut Science center, designed by Cesar Pelli. The plan proposes the development of new public spaces and updates to existing ones, and contemplates an identity-branding program and way-finding strategy. With the addition of proposed interpreted trails, interactive street furniture, green arts features, public art and active art programming, the iQuilt will make it easy and enjoyable to walk from one cultural asset to another.

Begun as a grassroots effort, the iQuilt (www.iQuiltPlan.org) rapidly gained support from all sectors of the city, and has been embraced as a logical next step in ongoing state, municipal and private-sector efforts to revitalize Hartford's neighborhoods and economy. The project will play a strong role in unifying downtown's cultural assets and establishing Hartford as a distinctive, authentic, cultural district – a vibrant destination attracting residents and tourists alike. Given its compact downtown filled with distinctive cultural assets and bordered by eclectic, diverse neighborhoods, Hartford presents an exceptional opportunity for arts-based place-making through urban design.

II. Project Goals

iQuilt Project Goals: 1) increase Hartford visitation and tourism and attendant local spending; 2) stimulate development and expansion of cultural sector by attracting artists and other members of the creative community and arts-based sector; 3) strengthen and coalesce several critical state, municipal and regional initiatives, thereby leveraging more than \$1 billion invested by the public and private sectors in downtown Hartford since 2000; 4) promote further capital investment for new downtown residential and commercial development; 5) provide, as one resident remarked, "A shared living-room for all residents of Hartford to come together"; 6) position Hartford's vibrant cultural sector as an economic development tool to promote downtown as a dynamic place to live, work and visit.

Principal Stakeholders are Hartford Residents

With a 2007 population estimated at 124,563, Hartford is Connecticut's second-largest city. It is a diverse community, predominately African-American and Hispanic, with these two groups accounting for more than 78 percent of the population. While Hartford is home to some prominent Fortune 500 corporations, which serve as the primary economic engine for the region, the city itself, like many urban centers, is home to the majority of the regions poor and has a much higher unemployment rate than the region as a whole. The average unemployment rate in Hartford for 2009 was 13.7 percent, as compared to 7.9 percent for the region. Hartford also shares some of the problems of every great city, including decreasing population and increasing poverty, under-education, low home ownership and crime. Despite a robust economy during much of the past decade, the median annual household income has climbed only modestly, according to the 2005-2007 American

Community Survey, from \$24,820 in 2000 to \$28,572 (adjusted for inflation). According to the 2000 Census, 36 percent of Hartford families lived below poverty line. In short, among cities of its size, Hartford is one of the poorest in the nation.

III. Project Execution

Phase 1: Visioning successfully completed in 2009. *Phase 2: iQuilt Development Plan*, a 12-month planning and pre-development project, currently underway, will conclude the design of iQuilt's core connective infrastructure. Two pivotal place-making projects – Connecticut Square and Bushnell Park – will bring together a world-class team of professionals, and will continue to fully and systematically engage the target audience of all Hartford residents and all other private and public stakeholders in the city. Phase 3: Design of Bushnell Park North, the central "Innovation Boulevard," of the iQuilt is scheduled to take place in 2012.

Obstacles

- i. Acquire the necessary funding.
- ii. Coordination between multiple stakeholder groups.

Both obstacles were overcome by comprehensive and consistent public engagement efforts and subsequent "buy-in" by all sectors.

IV. Project Impact

Steady Progress: The iQuilt has already proven to be a persuasive vision for catalyzing the community:

1. Two keystone capital projects have been triggered: the Metropolitan Water District has committed to a multi-million dollar engineering project to re-introduce flowing water and pedestrian bridges along the northern edge of Bushnell Park; Travelers Insurance Company has committed over \$20 million of physical improvements to its plaza, a major component of iQuilt's proposed Tower Square.
2. New Federal funds have been successfully secured: funding such as EPA's recent Greening America's Capitals award to Hartford help to advance the iQuilt.
3. Arts organizations are engaged: The Bushnell, The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford Stage, Theatreworks and Hartbeat among others are actively planning their respective "patches" of the iQuilt.
4. The iQuilt Partnership is being formalized: the iQuilt's impact has increased the focus on the importance of arts as economic and social drivers, and is leading to the legal incorporation of The iQuilt Partnership as a 501(c)(3) organization; this new organization will oversee and coordinate implementation of iQuilt projects and programming, and substantially accelerate the reinvigoration of Hartford's downtown.

The Hartford iQuilt Plan

To Do Checklist: iQuilt Phase 2 (Jan. 1 – Dec. 30, 2011) Objectives and Timetable

Objective 1: Continue an inclusive, ongoing and meaningful community engagement process in the development and implementation of the iQuilt.

- **Community Engagement (Q1- 4, 2011):** Over 1,800 people provided input to the iQuilt Phase 1: Visioning. Continued community involvement will ensure diverse community perspectives are incorporated and will include community meeting, website and blog maintenance, and a series of Public Forums. An iQuilt membership program will be inaugurated and a major civic celebration (e.g. 150th Anniversary of Bushnell Park, the Centennial of the Carrere Hastings City Plan in 2012, the 350th Anniversary of the signing of The Royal Charter, an innovative milestone in self-governance, etc.) will create a strong sense of place and celebration. iQuilt information will be regularly disseminated to all stakeholders, translated as necessary, with emphasis on outreach to underserved communities.

Assessment, Project 1: Measured by the diversity and number of participants at forums and meetings; the achievement of broad membership in the iQuilt; and/or input of individuals or groups.

1. **Doug Suisman, Principal** Management and Coordination
Suisman Urban Design
Los Angeles, CA
2. **Maureen Connolly** Festival and Events Planning
Maureen Connolly Celebrates
Hartford, CT

Objective 2: Position Hartford's vibrant cultural sector as an economic development and revitalization tool to promote downtown as a dynamic place to live, work, and visit.

- **iQuilt Asset mapping and Branding (Q2 and 3, 2011):** An integrated brand strategy will position culture-based activities as an economic asset of downtown Hartford and the region, spur capital investment, job creation and economic opportunity and promote the arts as an integral component of community life. This inventory will define the brand platform for pursuing the full realization of the iQuilt vision. Documentation of cultural resources (i.e., historic sites, museums, parks, theatres, galleries, performing-art spaces, public art, festivals, etc.) will provide critical data on these assets, demonstrate the role of the arts in community building, and identify knowledge gaps. The inventory will define the platform for pursuing the full realization of the iQuilt. An asset map will be created for future graphic interpretation.

Assessment: Measure the number of organization that provide information on cultural assets and operations; the number of assets, identified and categorized; increase ongoing and active participation in the branding process; and endorsement of branding strategy.

1. **Doug Suisman, Principal**
Suisman Urban Design
Los Angeles, CA

Management

2. **Marla Chow**
Cundari, Inc.
Toronto, Canada

Identity Branding & Design Graphic

Objective 3: Enhance the iQuilt's visual image and way-finding experience, providing an attractive, readily navigable and active destination with easily accessed cultural venues.

- **iQuilt Wayfinding and Design Strategy (Q3 and 4, 2011):** The iQuilt's success requires effective way-finding and the dissemination of information will be produced depicting the locations of cultural assets for pedestrians and vehicles. Two to three sites will be selected for the display of prototype signage, street furniture, lighting and bus shelters. This will include a set of design development drawings to serve as basis for construction documents and shop drawings.
Assessment: Measured by tracking inquiries and feedback from residents and visitors, collecting attendance data and community and participant surveys, and securing feedback on the prototypes for signage, lighting, bus shelters and street furniture.

1. **Doug Suisman, Principal**
Suisman Urban Design
Los Angeles, CA

Management and Design

2. **Diana McCain (Proposed)**
Middletown, CT
Historian and Writer

Historic Trail Development

Objective 4: Formulate a plan for strategic, high-visibility projects to generate momentum and enable future public and private investment.

- **Leverage of Historical Anchors (Q1, 2, 3, 2011):** Bushnell Park, a 40-acre public park located in the heart of downtown Hartford. Built in 1854, it is the oldest public park in the United States. Today, the park closes at dusk and the river that flowed through it was covered over and piped into the Connecticut River after the 1936 floods. A landscape plan, developed to position the park for modern use, will define guiding principles, strategic goals, and incorporate ongoing initiatives to relocate the historic carousel and play area, reintroduce flowing water and footbridges, and upgrade walking paths and lighting to encourage use at night. Enhanced food service and parking will also be explored. Plans will also be developed for "Connecticut Square," to transform a large state-owned parking lot adjacent to Bushnell Park into a dual use space. Plans include a green infrastructure retrofit featuring permeable paving and bioswales. On evening and weekends, the lot would become a public space programmed with concerts, art festivals and community events.

Assessment: Measured by endorsement of design plans by key stakeholders and community groups, advancement of requests for capital funding, and the securing of funding.

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| <p>1. Doug Suisman, Principal
 Suisman Urban Design
 Los Angeles, CA</p> | Management and Design |
| <p>2. Tyler Smith
 Smith Edwards Architects
 Hartford, CT</p> | Local Coordination |
| <p>3. Michael Vergason
 Michael Vergason Landscape Architects
 Alexandria, VA</p> | Strategic Landscape Plan |
| <p>4. William Richter
 Richter & Ceegan
 Avon, CT</p> | Local Landscape Architect |
| <p>5. Domingo Gonzalez
 Domingo Gonzalez Associates
 New York, NY</p> | Architecture Partner
Lighting Plan |

Objective 5: Identify economic and social indicators to measure the iQuilt's contribution to Hartford's economy, position it to secure public and private support, and evaluate progress toward achieving overall vision.

1. **Impact Analysis (Q2, and 3, 2011):** While social advantages of a culturally vibrant urban district are widely acknowledged, the arts and culture industry also generates significant economic impacts through jobs, construction investment, increased tourism and visitor spending. Measuring impact will quantify contributions to the local and regional economy. Analysis will examine output, employment and income impacts as well as other, intangible benefits to the city.

Assessment: Will be measured by the formulation of a data base of cultural organizations and their social and economic contributions to the community.

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| <p>1. Dan Biederman, President
 Biederman Redevelopment Ventures
 New York, NY</p> | Economic Development |
| Biederman's work will be restricted to the development of a revenue plan for Bushnell Park. | |
| <p>2. Sarah Woodworth, President
 W-ZHA, Inc.
 Annapolis, Maryland</p> | Economic Analysis |