Systems Synthesis Project Proposal
2006-2007 Academic Year, Fall Semester
Submitted by Heather McElwee & Johanna Taylor
Master of Arts Management Students
Advisor: Jerry Coltin

Title: Facilitating the Creation of Visual Artists Communities in Pennsylvania

Overview:
Visual artists around the country would benefit from living and working in a place that is financially accessible and encourages their career success. Pennsylvania has many towns and cities on the verge of revival with reasonably priced housing and a low cost of living. Of these cities having dwindling industries and could benefit from revitalizations through the arts. Some cities that may be considered by the project include Erie, Scranton and Pittsburgh. This project strives to bring these communities and artists together to create a mutually profitable dynamic for both.

There are many aspects of the project to be addressed by the systems team. Research will be focused on the needs of the artists, the communities and the client. Components will include housing, insurance, studio space, art facilities in the area, sales of artwork, as well as information on foundations and individual grants that may benefit artists and communities. The result will be developing a package of information, contacts and resources that outline a convenient and attractive process for artists to move to towns across Pennsylvania.

About the Project: Surveying Artists

The target artists are currently living in cities with high costs of living. For the purpose of this project we will focus on New York, Boston, and Washington, D.C., because of their proximity to Pennsylvania. The crucial first step in the project will be surveying artists to learn answers to questions such as: why do they live where they do, what would encourage them to move, impressions of Pennsylvania, as well as basic needs to enhance their success.

Currently, there are two proposed methods of connecting to artists for the survey. The first is to contact young or emerging artists involved in MFA or BFA programs in the target cities through their professors. Some examples of target schools: Massachusetts College of Art in Boston, MA; Corcoran College of Art and Design in Washington, D.C.; and the School of Visual Art in New York, NY. Additionally, CMU’s College of Fine Arts will potentially be able to provide contact information for graduates.

The other track is to contact established artists through professional societies and organizations that they belong to on a national level that are not connected to a specific geographic region. Some examples include: Glass Art Society, National Council on Education for the Ceramic Arts, National Sculpture Society, and Allied Artists of America.

About the Project: Tangible Result & Evaluation of Success

Throughout the semester the team will analyze information and processes in order to compile findings together in a cohesive packet of materials. This packet can benefit foundations, artists, community leaders, community development companies, in addition to arts organizations, and may vary in content and format for each group. A website version of the information will also be considered, particularly as a method directed to artists.

The analysis of the economic impact can be used as a basis to gauge the success or failure of encouraging people to move to a community. This can be measured in terms of the economic
value one person brings to a region, as well as the economic value of living in the community to
the individual. These questions will be analyzed to determine how the results could be used as
a future benchmark for success.

The Client: The Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA)

Mission of the PCA: To foster the excellence, diversity, and vitality of the arts in Pennsylvania
and to broaden the availability and appreciation of those arts throughout the state.

The PCA is dedicated to promoting the arts in Pennsylvania through accessibility to citizens but
also by supporting artists. In the stated goals of the PCA, the organization strives to create a
community infrastructure for the arts and provide advocacy programs to assist individual artists
and organizations. The proposed systems project aligns with the PCA’s mission and helps fulfill
their stated goal to “create a climate of opportunity for the arts of Pennsylvania” by assessing
changes that can be made making Pennsylvania a more attractive place to live and work.

Who Benefits:
• The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
• Individual communities
• Small arts organizations trying to attract artists
• Artists

Advisory Panel:
The advisory panel will provide a range of expertise including: members of the CMU faculty
(CFA, MAM, Policy, etc), representatives from local arts organizations particularly those with
interest to actualize elements of the project themselves, as well as professionals in real
estate, accounting, law, and insurance.

Potential Funding Sources:
There may be awards from the PCA to support the project, as well as available grants for
graduate student research from the GSA and GUSH (Graduate Programs Office). The Claude
Worthington Benedum Foundation has a program to fund economic development projects in
southwestern Pennsylvania, and the Dominion Foundation offers a community impact award.