

Written by Shaina Brassard, West Broadway Coalition



If you live, work or travel along Penn Avenue North in Minneapolis, you may have seen artists Wing Young Huie and Ashley Hanson out and about with chalkboards, notebooks and cameras, at bus stops speaking with transit riders or at a neighborhood meeting.

The two artists make up one of four groups undertaking Creative CityMaking projects throughout Minneapolis this year. Creative CityMaking is a grant-funded partnership between Intermedia Arts and the city of Minneapolis that pairs local artists and city planners with the goal of developing fresh and innovative approaches for addressing the long-term transportation, land use, economic, environmental, and social issues facing Minneapolis.

During FLOW Northside Arts Crawl, Hanson and Huie will launch the first of four "pop-up" Galleries. FLOW, taking place Friday, July 26 - Sunday, July 28, is both a community celebration and premier art event in North Minneapolis. FLOW is a free, non-juried, self-guided tour of studios, galleries, theaters, commercial and vacant spaces over a mile and half of West Broadway from Penn Avenue North to the Mississippi River.



"For FLOW, we're aggregating all of the information we've gathered so far," explained Hanson.

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There will be two projectors showcasing images from the creative engagement work done since March. They will also have engagement activities for FLOW-goers to take part in, such as Ping Pong Engagement and CityMaking Jeopardy. These pop up galleries, Hanson explains, are meant to be, "community meetings in disguise" – an interaction where people contribute ideas to the city planning process. On Saturday, July 27 of FLOW, performance artists from north Minneapolis will periodically perform a 30-minute set and engage in a talkback with the audience about their work.

Huie, a photographer, has extensively explored and engaged with dozens of communities throughout the country. His many photographic projects document the dizzying socioeconomic and cultural realities of American society – much of it centered on the urban cores of his home state of Minnesota.

Hanson describes herself as "a community-based theater practitioner." She does not perform in traditional plays, but is an engagement artist with most of her work getting people in a room talking about whatever place or issue or history that they are exploring. Hanson is looking forward to "projecting back" the data she and Huie gather, and inspiring dialogue.



Hanson and Huie were paired with Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) City Planner Jim Voll on the Penn Avenue North Small Area Plan. The plan is an effort to rethink land uses and transportation along the roadway, with the goals of stimulating economic development, job creation, housing strategies, beautification and livability in and between the string of commercial nodes along this important spine in north Minneapolis.

Huie and Hanson's task is to help Minneapolis to work with neighborhoods and businesses along the corridor, asking the questions that are essential in order to have the infrastructure of the city reflect the needs and wants of the people in the city. Hanson and Huie named their project Create Place, and have set about gathering community members' ideas around four issues – economic development, housing, transportation and open spaces.

The artists are learning about the city planning process with the hope of not only informing the Penn Avenue residents, but also making recommendations for community engagement

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processes undertaken by the city- and possibly other cities throughout the country- in the future.

"Can we help figure out what people really want and can it impact the city planning process? What questions are being asked, how are they being asked, and who gets to ask them," asked Huie.

"At first it was really Planning 101," claims Hanson, with the artists and planners learning about how the other works.



Then in March, Huie and Hanson rolled out their first creative engagement strategy, the Traveling Chalkboard, a process adapted from Huie's renowned 2010 public art project in St Paul, "[The University Avenue Project](#)". Other strategies already being implemented or set to be added to the mix are The Pen(n) Project, Bus Stop Jeopardy, Happy Hour Engagement and the Nonhierarchical Think Tank.

According to Hanson, the artists want to know, "What strategies get us the really meaty information that we can turn into hard data, which ones get people excited, which ones are realistic for the city to continue after we've gone."

By taking public participation out of the traditional settings and format, the artists are especially able to engage with those traditionally left out of the city planning process engaging the very young, the elderly, the homeless and those generally not likely to sit on the board of the neighborhood organization.

Like all visual and performance art, Huie and Hanson's work is best experienced and understood in person. Visit the Creative CityMaking Pop Up Gallery Friday, July 26 7 p.m. –10 p.m. and Saturday, July 27 1 p.m. –7 p.m. at 2038 W. Broadway, inside the American Legion building.

For full event details on FLOW Northside Arts Crawl, visit www.flownorthside.org .

Hanson and Huie's website for the Penn Avenue Create Place project is [www. www.createplac](http://www.createplac)

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more about the other Creative CityMaking projects, visit
www.intermediaarts.org/Creative-CityMaking

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