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**Arts-Based Community Development Investment for Houston:  
Houston Arts Alliance Is One of 69 National Endowment for the  
Arts *Our Town* Projects Selected Nationwide**

**HOUSTON, TX (July 15, 2015)** — National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Chairman Jane Chu announced 69 Our Town awards totaling almost \$5 million through the Our Town program's fifth year of funding. Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) is one of those recommended organizations and will receive \$100,000 for *Bayou Trails*, a project which will include community-based planning and responsive arts programming to link three Houston parks (Mason, MacGregor and Hermann parks) that lie along Brays Bayou. The NEA received 275 applications for Our Town this year and will make grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$200,000.

This award marks the second time that HAA has received an Our Town grant and the third for the City of Houston. From September 1 – November 30, 2014, HAA, alongside local artists and community partners, mounted *Transported + Renewed*, a bold mix of community-based and contemporary art projects including music concerts, dance performances, visual arts installations and more, in Houston's East End.

The Our Town grant program supports creative placemaking projects that help to transform communities into lively, beautiful, and resilient places with the arts at their core. Since the program's inception in 2011 and including these projects, the NEA will have awarded 325 Our Town grants totaling almost \$26 million in all 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia.

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*Bayou Trails* will use community-based planning and responsive arts programming to link a series of Houston parks that lie along Brays Bayou. This bayou corridor will engage neighborhoods from the Latino-identified East End through the largely African-American Southeast sector to the culturally-mixed Museum District. Animating diversity outlined by the Bayou Trails pathway will be the focus of this creative placemaking effort and connectivity its goal. Brays Bayou naturally creates that connection and wends through contiguous neighborhoods in Houston that have enjoyed attention through the Bayou 2020 Initiative, through two NEA Our Town grants (University of Houston's Southeast Houston Arts Initiative and HAA's *Transported + Renewed*); and the recent centennial of Hermann Park. Common with each, though, is the increasing concern with connectivity among residents across the project area, to advance community crossover and shared resources.

Project partners will include Houston Parks and Recreation Department, Hermann Park Conservancy, East Lawndale Civic Association, Greater East End Management District, SE Houston Transformation Alliance, the Friends of MacGregor Park and the Museum Park Neighborhood Association.

"Houston Arts Alliance demonstrates the best in creative community development and its work will have a valuable impact on the community," said Chairman Chu. "Through Our Town funding, arts organizations continue to spark vitality that support neighborhoods and public spaces, enhancing a sense of place for residents and visitors alike."

"Houston has been honored with an Our Town grant three years out of the five-year history of this NEA grant program," stated HAA President + CEO Jonathon Glus. "I believe that this is a testament to what an extraordinary city Houston is—a relatively young city that is incredibly rich with possibility and opportunity for creative placemaking due in large part to its geography and its diverse cultural landscape."

For a complete listing of projects recommended for Our Town grant support, please visit the NEA web site at [arts.gov](http://arts.gov). Project descriptions, grants listed by state and by project type, and resources are available as well. The NEA's online resource, *Exploring Our Town*, features case studies of more than 70 Our Town projects along with lessons learned and other resources.

The Twitter hashtag is #NEAOurTown15

## **About Houston Arts Alliance**

Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) is a nonprofit, public-private initiative that invests in Houston's arts and cultural sector, advances Houston's reputation as an arts and culture destination, and works to elevate the quality of life for all Houstonians through arts and culture. As the city's designated local arts agency, HAA provides programs and services for the arts and cultural sector and awards approximately 225 grants annually to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and individual artists. The Alliance is the custodian of the city's art collection; takes permanent and temporary art to Houston's public spaces; presents free Folklife + Traditional Arts programming; nurtures up-and-coming arts organizations through its capacity building programs; connects the business community with the arts; convenes the field as necessary, and provides the latest information and research on cultural policy, economic development and Houston's folklife.

HAA's primary partner is the City of Houston. Approximately 55% of HAA's budget comes from Hotel Occupancy Tax and 30% from the City of Houston's Percent for Art Program, which supports commissions of new civic art projects as well as conservation of existing artworks. The remaining 15% of HAA's budget comes from private fundraising (grants/contributions/other revenue) for programs and special projects. HAA is committed to raising funds for only those projects and initiatives that the Arts Alliance is uniquely positioned to provide the community.

For more information, visit [houstonartsalliance.com](http://houstonartsalliance.com). For events in the region, visit [Artshound.com](http://Artshound.com).