



ANNUAL REPORT

2025



LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Dear Friend,

What a year 2025 has been. Across the United States, we have witnessed unprecedented attacks on democratic norms, education, healthcare and the right to self-expression—especially in marginalized communities. These assaults have created fear in children and their parents, caused harm to family stability, deepened economic insecurity and widened inequality.

Project Create families have been inordinately impacted this year. They keenly feel the impact of diminished social safeguards, including reduced access to healthcare, lack of affordable housing and displacement, and food insecurity due to lack of access and affordability.

2025 has been a year of reckoning. We at Project Create feel a deeper sense of accountability to the children and families we serve. In times like these, we move even closer to our mission, which, at its heart, is about equitable access to opportunities. We use art as a tool for creative youth development and healing. Project Create's community work is art...and more than art – it's empowerment, representation and radical imagination for a better future.

As this tumultuous year draws to a close, we find ourselves reflecting on where Project Create is rooted — and looking forward with hope to where we're rising.

We are certainly rooted in our mission: to ensure that every young person has access to transformative arts education and art therapy. This deep sense of purpose for over 30 years has sustained us through challenges and guided our growth with strength and purpose. In 2015, we planted deep roots in the historic neighborhood of Anacostia, a community rich with art and history. Our place here inspires our mission and reminds us why access to the arts matters.

As always, Project Create is rising—with new programs, deeper community partnerships, brave new strategies and bold dreams for the future. Our values insist that we continue to fight for democracy through equity and inclusion, amplifying the voices of our young artists.

Thank you for believing in the power of art—and the limitless potential of our young people.

With gratitude and hope for the future,

Christie



Christie Walser
Executive Director

ABOUT US & PROGRAMS

For 31 years, thousands of Project Create students have participated in free out-of-school-time art classes, art therapy groups, workshops, open studio time, field trips, and exhibition and performance opportunities, both at our arts center in the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, DC, as well as at community partner sites in underserved District neighborhoods.

Our signature programs include:

Studio Programs at the Arts Center

Project Create's custom-designed arts center in Anacostia is equipped to host a wide range of art classes in all disciplines, including visual, performing, digital media and literary arts. We offer classes, family workshops, open studio time, film screenings, gallery shows and arts enrichment opportunities for all ages and experience levels. Students and families can participate in as many programs as they like -- all classes are free!

Community Partnership Programs

Project Create's longest-standing program includes weekly multidisciplinary arts education classes taught by experienced teaching artists in partnership with community-based organizations that provide services to children, youth and families in underserved communities.

HeART Space Art Therapy

Project Create's HeART Space groups focus on building coping mechanisms, increasing emotional wellness, decreasing anxiety, and building resilience, using creative techniques such as drawing, painting, collage and sculpting to move towards personal well-being and healing.

Family Programs

Project Create's beloved Family Art Day program offers opportunities for local families to engage in artistic exploration, art-making and creative play. At our bi-monthly Saturday workshops, Project Create serves multi-generational families, all of whom enjoy the chance to create art in an inclusive community.

Workshops

Project Create loves hosting arts workshops, whether at our Arts Center or out in the community. Our brilliant teaching artists share their talent and experience in a variety of artistic disciplines, and our students enjoy learning new creative skills, like 3-D printing, mural-making, poetry and fashion! Look around at any family-oriented community event – you'll probably see Project Create there making art with children and their parents!

MISSION, VISION & VALUES

OUR MISSION

Since 1994, Project Create has provided opportunities for creative youth development through accessible, multidisciplinary arts education to empower young people and amplify their voices. We collaborate with children, youth and families in an inclusive and supportive community where art is healing and transformative.

OUR VISION

Project Create envisions a world where all children and youth have equitable access to a nurturing, artistic environment where they can realize their dreams, reach their creative potential, inspire their peers and contribute to their communities.

OUR VALUES

At Project Create, we believe in the power of art to heal, connect and transform. We foster inclusive, joyful spaces where youth of all skill levels can express themselves, build community, and grow as leaders. Our work is rooted in equity, creative expression, and youth voice — centering trauma-informed practices, celebrating diverse perspectives, and partnering with communities to inspire lasting change.



2025 YEAR IN REVIEW



STUDIO PROGRAMS

There's nothing like an art class at the Project Create Arts Center in Anacostia, where creative exploration and imaginative discoveries happen every day. Children and youth ages 5 to 24 take part in free classes in visual, performing, digital media and literary arts, offered to students daily in two 10-week semesters and during summer camp. Favorite new classes in 2025 included *Storytelling through Comics & Animation* and *Move & Bloom: Dance Therapy*. Other popular classes included improv theater, fashion and mixed media. This year, Project Create served over 175 talented students at our Center through 450 hours of innovative programming. Our school-year programs culminated in an exciting student showcase on May 3rd.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS

We love our partnerships, where Project Create teaching artists and art therapists span the community to ensure that our creative programming is accessible to DC students in every Ward. Our Community Partnership Program has been providing accessible arts education in underserved District neighborhoods for three decades, both inside and outside of school hours. In 2025, we worked in partnership with 19 organizations, including DC Public Libraries, DC Parks & Recreation, Bishop Walker School for Boys, Washington School for Girls and Rocketship Public Schools. In collaboration with our dedicated partners, Project Create served 1,516 DC students this year with fun, enriching arts experiences.



HeART SPACE PROGRAMS



This year, our HeART Space art therapy program served 448 children and their family members, both at our Arts Center and in partnership with community-based nonprofits across DC. Delivered by registered art therapists, HeART Space provides mental health support through weekly, multi-family small group art therapy sessions that focus on techniques to increase emotional wellness, decrease anxiety, and build resilience. Child-centered art therapy offerings include visual arts, music and dance classes. This year, we worked in partnership with 7 organizations, including Community of Hope, Martha's Table and National Housing Trust.

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW

FAMILY PROGRAMS

We love our Project Create families! We see that when parents and caregivers participate in our programs, our students experience a truly supportive learning environment. A collaborative approach between family members and our staff members creates a sense of stability and fosters learning across generations. Since 2015, Project Create's Family Art Day has combined children, families and local artists twice a month for creative workshops. Our Family Wellness Workshops take place on the first Friday of each month. These fun evening classes, which include dinner for families, are led by our art therapists and serve as an introduction to our family art therapy programs.



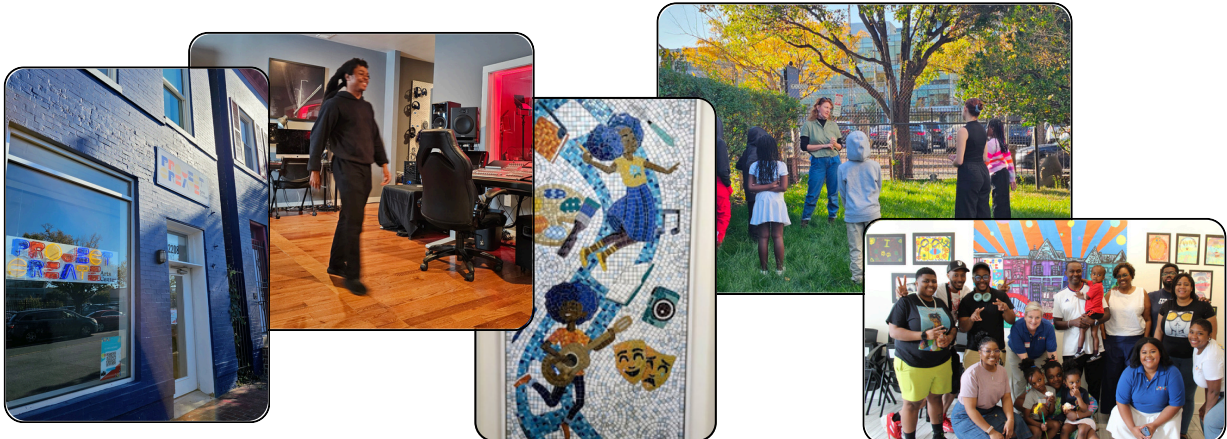
STAFF & TEACHING ARTISTS



This summer, we were proud to welcome new staff members. Nehemiah Dixon, a native Washingtonian, joined Project Create as our Deputy Director, bringing years of experience as a contemporary artist, arts administrator and community advocate. A former teaching artist and program coordinator, Genesis Johnson assumed the role of Program Manager for our Community Partnership Programs. A wizard lesson-planner, Gen provides innovative leadership to our arts educators. And, as always, our 40+ teaching artists and art therapists make the magic happen, every day. They bring talent to each classroom, and they dedicate their creative expertise and experience to create joyful arts learning.

PROJECT CREATE ARTS CENTER

2025 continued to be an important year of growth at the Project Create Arts Center. After the purchase of the building next door in 2023, we got busy renovating the adjoining yard. Our students love spending time in "Dr. Ashley's Community Garden," where they can experience the healing power of nature. In January, we completed a renovation of our digital media studio, adding a podcast/recording booth, a soundboard and other media capabilities. And best of all, we were proud to install a mosaic mural created by our own Jada Batts, former student and current Artist-in-Residence. This mural, made of hand-cut glass and ceramic tiles, depicts two Project Create students engaged in all disciplines of artmaking.



FRIENDRAISING & FUNDRAISING

On March 22nd, Project Create hosted our 30th Anniversary “Growing Pearls” Gala to celebrate 30 years of youth empowerment through art. Together with our friends and supporters, we gathered at Arena Stage for an art auction, live go-go and jazz music, and storytelling. This exciting event kicked off a great year of fundraising, both for our arts programming and for our capital campaign. Thank you to all our corporate and foundation donors, as well as our many individual donors, who make our work possible!



IMPACT

Every young person deserves a space where they feel seen, valued, and supported. At Project Create, art becomes a lifeline — a place where young people explore who they are, express their experiences, and grow stronger within a joyful, healing-centered community.

DATE RANGE:

October 1, 2024 -
September 30, 2025

Youth report high levels of trust, belonging, and connection at Project Create:

95% of students say they have made new friends at Project Create with whom they will stay in touch.

90% of students report feeling proud of the art they made at Project Create.

85% of students say their teachers at Project Create care about them.

85% of students report that they feel welcomed and included at Project Create.

78% of students say they feel brave enough to talk about things that matter to them and to their friends.



Every child and family carries the potential for growth, healing, and connection. In Project Create's HeART Space Programs, creative expression becomes a powerful pathway toward emotional well-being — a place where participants feel seen, heard, and valued as they explore their inner worlds within a nurturing, trauma-informed community.

Families and young people consistently share that HeART Space offers a safe, supportive environment where meaningful change emerges and relationships deepen:

92% of students report that they feel happy in art class.

85% of students report that they can use their imagination to help them solve problems.

85% of students report that making art makes them feel good about themselves.

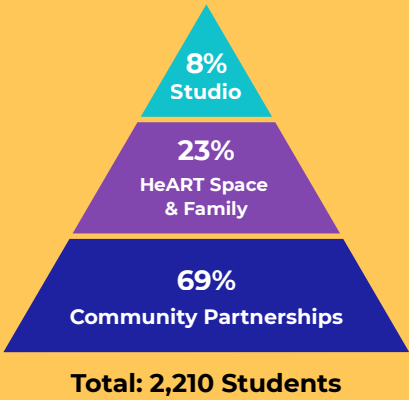
Parents report a **17%** decrease in their children's current stress/anxiety level.

Parents report a **19%** decrease in their own current stress/anxiety level.

Parents report a **41%** increase in confidence in their parenting skills.



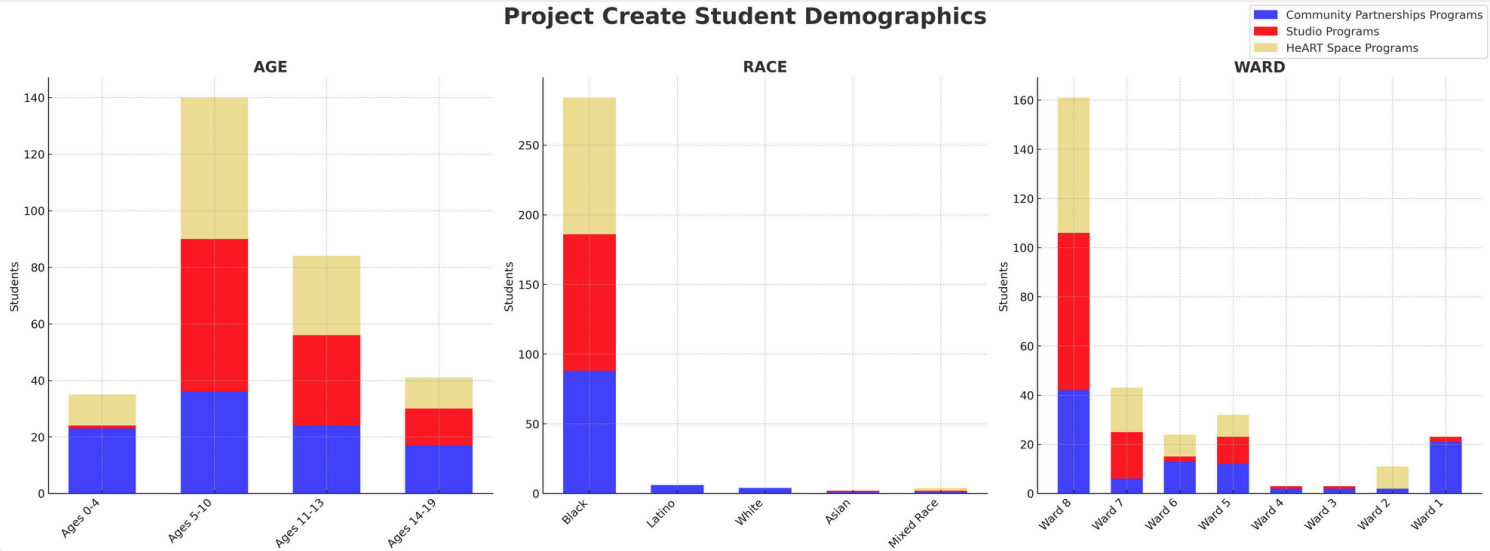
Students Served, by Program



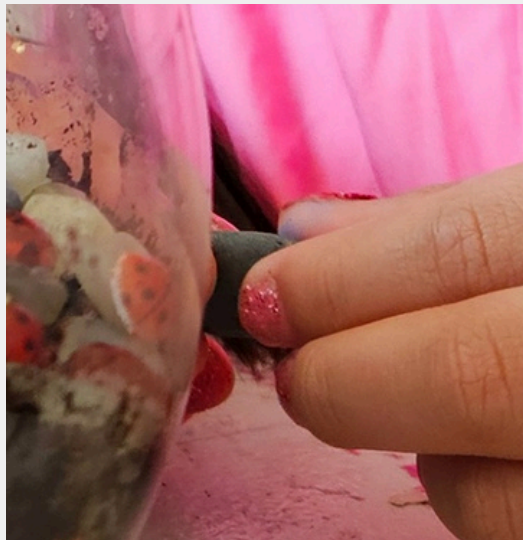
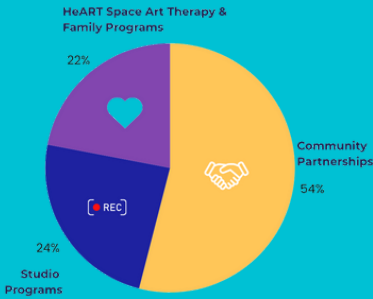
Noah poured creativity and effort into his unique piece, layering on the paint and bringing his imagination to life. When asked what he wants people to feel when they see his work, he said, "I just want them to feel happy!" His dedication shined through, and although he hadn't picked a title yet, we believed he had already created a masterpiece!



Project Create Student Demographics



Programming Hours



“Thank you all at Project Create for this opportunity to continue to blossom as both an artist and individual”

- Monique (Age 20) in Music Open Studio with Mr. Dennis

STAFF & BOARD



Christie Walser
Executive Director



Nehemiah Dixon, III
Deputy Director



Angie Belfield Reese
Director of
Development &
Communications



Katie Duncan
Director of HeART
Space Art Therapy
Programs



Jasmine Watkins
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Detchou**
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Nicola Charles
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Tracie Turnipseed
Board Member



Tim Schwartz
Board Member



TEACHING ARTISTS



2025 DONOR RECOGNITION

Thank you to our donors, whose support allows
Project Create to thrive.

Visionaries (\$100,000 +)

The Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz
Foundation
DC Commission on the Arts &
Humanities
England Family Foundation
DC Office of the Deputy Mayor
for Education/Learn24
Nancy Peery Marriott Foundation
Philip L. Graham Fund
Share Fund

Luminaries (\$50,000 +)

Deloitte & Touche LLP
DC Office of the Deputy Mayor for
Planning and Economic
Development/Great Streets

Catalysts (\$25,000 +)

Clark-Winchcole Foundation
Judy Family Foundation
Martha's Table Community Fund
National Endowment for the Arts
Revada Foundation
Stone Futures Fund
William S. Abell Foundation
Wolohan Family Foundation

Innovators (\$10,000 +)

Corina Higginson Trust
Events DC
Harman Family Foundation
Lainoff Family Foundation
Virginia Cretella Mars Foundation

Sustainers (\$5,000 - \$10,000)

Cloudbreak Foundation
Levatus Foundation
Miller-Wehrle Family Foundation
Morrison & Foerster Foundation
Nora Roberts Foundation
Venable Foundation

Ambassadors (\$500 - \$4,999)

Adam Kent
Anne Aakre
Babatunde Oloyede
Chelsea Cummings Koski
Christian Contardo
Christie Walser & Thomas Mullins
Daniel Shulak
Delia Goncalves
Dennis Houlihan
Dimick Foundation
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Michael Lainoff & Kathryn Kincaid
Nora Whalen
Paige Simpson Faulkner
Shannon McMahon
Sherrill Houghton
Stacy Picklesimer
Stephane Detchou
Timothy Schwartz
Tracie Turnipseed
Walter Ochinko
W. Earl Williams

In-Kind Heroes

Booz Allen
Hogan Lovells
LIDL
Spur Local
WACIF

FINANCIAL REVIEW

October 1, 2024 - September 30, 2025

SUPPORT & REVENUE

\$475,974 Federal & Local Govt Grants
\$335,150 Foundation Grants
\$266,695 Earned Income (Program Partnerships)
\$50,000 Corporate Donations
\$36,834 Special Events
\$29,420 Individual Donations
\$18,565 Interest Income & Other
\$150,000 Transfer of Retained Earnings

Total SUPPORT & REVENUE: \$1,362,638

EXPENSES

Program Services \$1,070,215

\$817,403 Program Personnel, TAs & Art Therapists
\$121,731 Occupancy
\$53,322 Art Supplies, Equipment & IT
\$38,529 Marketing & Design
\$28,117 Student & Family Services
\$11,113 Curriculum Design

Management & General \$194,946

\$50,238 Administrative Personnel
\$33,266 Accounting & Bookkeeping
\$29,335 Strategic Planning Consulting
\$28,436 Human Resources
\$24,645 Insurance
\$18,288 Travel & Meetings
\$10,738 Bank Fees, Office Supplies & Other

Fundraising \$180,509

\$143,537 Development Personnel
\$36,972 Special Events

TOTAL EXPENSES: \$1,445,670

2024-2025 CAPITAL CAMPAIGN REVENUE & EXPENSES

\$712,500 Capital Donations
(\$21,000) Capital Campaign Fundraising Fees
(\$95,090) Renovations & Repairs
(\$67,959) Mortgage Interest
(\$5,703) Property Tax
\$522,748

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

A Space for Children to Flourish

Over the past thirty-one years, Project Create's work in Washington, DC has continued to expand, and our city has continued to change. Our community in Ward 8 is experiencing rapid gentrification, bringing in new resources while also displacing long-time residents.

Amid these economic challenges, the need to preserve and expand space for safe, healthy after-school programming has never been greater. Arts education is being slashed in schools; affordable housing is less and less available; and children and youth are experiencing compounding stressors of exposure to poverty and displacement.

Now more than ever, our community needs a space for children to flourish.

Art Helps Children Thrive

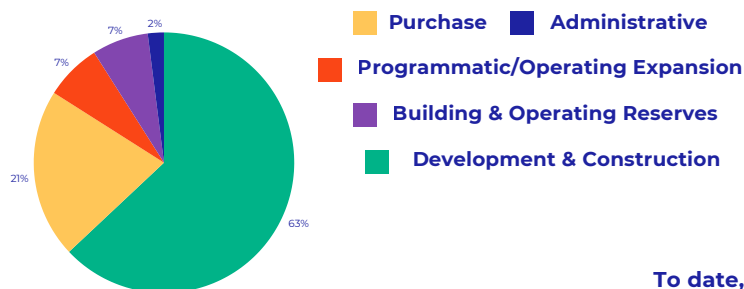
- Students from low-income households who are highly engaged in the arts are also highly engaged in school, with just a 4% drop-out rate nationwide, five times lower than their peers.
- Students who take four years of arts and music classes in their lives score an average of over 150 points higher on the SAT than students who take only one-half year or less.
- Students from low-income households who are highly engaged in the arts are twice as likely to graduate college as their peers with no arts education.

"You get to express yourself. And no one judges you...it's like a safe space for everyone. It really helps me to get my emotions out in a healthy, secure way." - Aliya, age 12

For many young people in Ward 8, Project Create is their "third place," that critical in-between space outside of home and school. How and where kids spend their time can be a make it or break it influence in their lives.

With our 2023 purchase of the building next door, and big plans for expansion, the Project Create Arts Center will be that special place for even more DC children.

Our goal is to raise \$7 million to purchase, renovate and fill our new space with impactful arts education programming and art therapy.



To date, we have raised \$3,035,000 towards our goal.

"At Project Create, you come into a space where you understand that your voice matters." - Ahmad, age 25

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Planning

At Project Create, we are always looking ahead to the future. Last year, we celebrated three decades of accessible arts education, and now we are excited to plan for the next phase of growth. All year long, we have worked on strategic planning, with great input from our staff, board of directors, students and community members. In addition to laser focus on our organizational strategic goals, we also created some new guidelines for HeART Space, our growing art therapy program. Our planning culminated in a staff retreat this Fall at Lake Anna, a great place for innovating, ideating and dreaming about the future of Project Create.

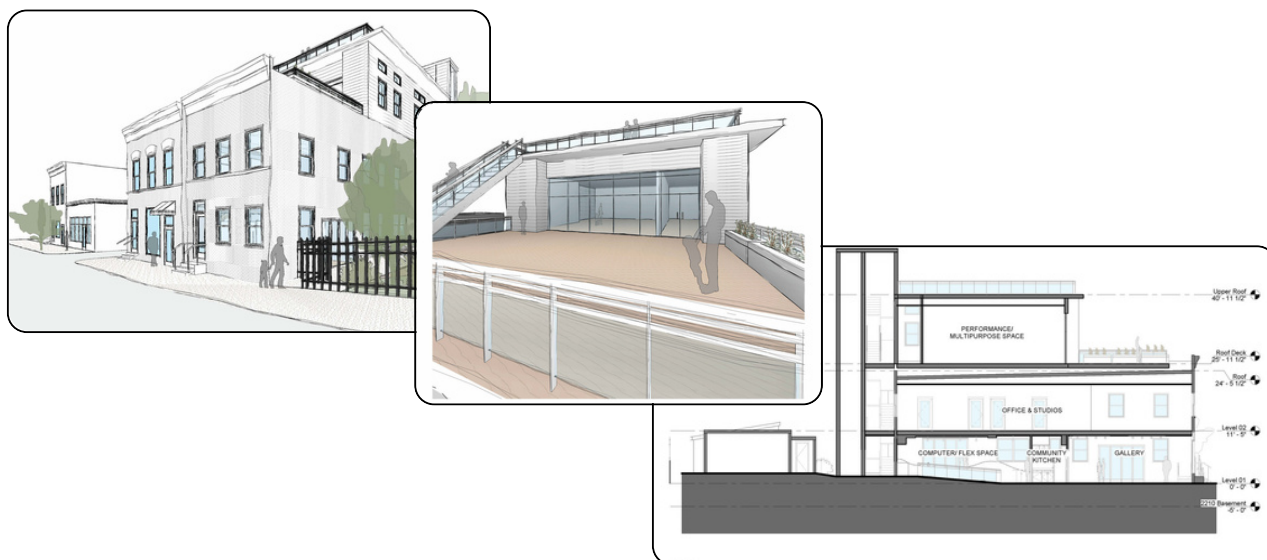
Our strategic and Adaptive Impact Planning will focus on the following four goals:



Growing

A new chapter in Project Create's journey is starting – a chapter filled with promise and potential. The recent acquisition of the building next door has sparked renewed enthusiasm and hope for the future. Our new space will be a canvas upon which the dreams of countless children will be painted, and the possibilities for artistic exploration and community enrichment are unlimited.

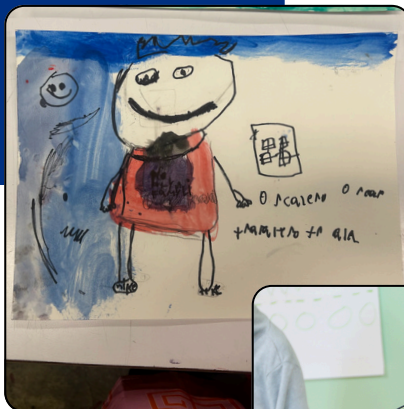
Stay tuned!



PROJECT CREATE

Project Create

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DONATE

Since 1994, Project Create has provided opportunities for creative youth development through accessible, multidisciplinary arts education to empower young people and amplify their voices.

We collaborate with children, youth and families in an inclusive and supportive community where art is healing and transformative.

Email volunteers@projectcreatedc.org for volunteer opportunities.

Follow us @projectcreatedc

