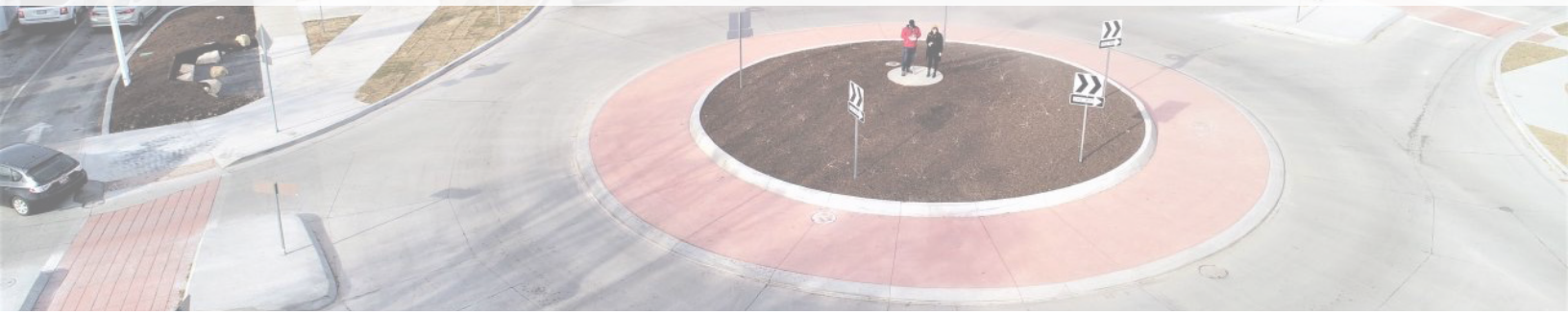


900 SOUTH POETRY PROJECT

ENGAGEMENT REPORT



BACKGROUND

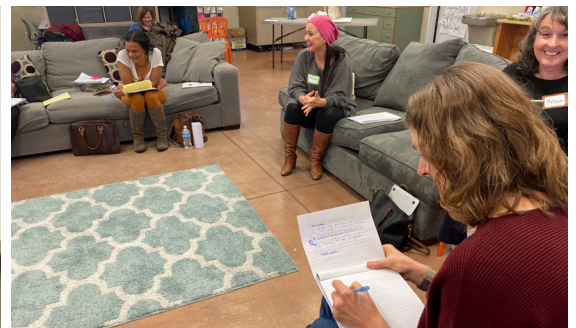
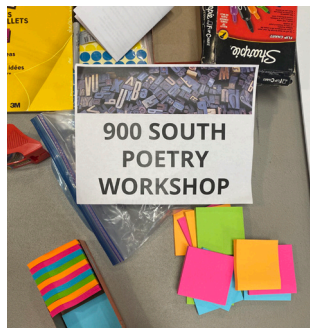
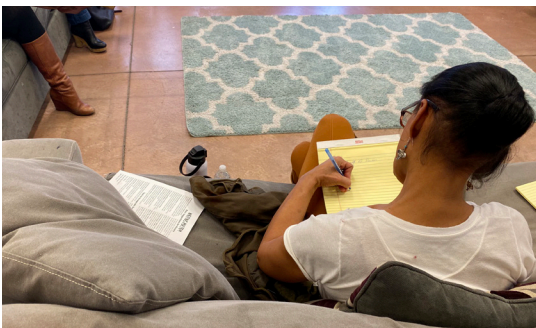
The 900 South Reconstruction brought contention and hard feelings amongst residents and business owners impacted by the changes with the new designs. The ongoing construction has continued to bring stress to the neighborhood with major work being done for the last six-months.

This community exercise will bring the community back together in a facilitated group poetry writing exercise. The community looks back on the project and, led by a professional poet, writes a poem reflecting the experience and hopes for the future. The resulting poem is then included as artwork in the completed project. This community has had robust participation and engagement over the past two-years of design and feedback. This exercise will also allow for them to have a sense of closure and final participation to create something that will last the lifespan of this project. This type of engagement has been used successfully to bring divided communities back together. Healing of the community, the businesses and residents, neighbors coming together. Create a cohesive community. Physicality of reconciliation. Tell a story and distill it into a poem, create the process of healing.

GOALS

Bring together community members who were directly impacted by the reconstruction project in order to:

- Help heal any negative feelings originating from the construction engagement process
- Develop a shared vision about the neighborhood through a group creative writing project
- Memorialize the coming together in poems that the participants, visitors, shop owners, and neighbors may enjoy in the present and future



DAY OF EVENT

On the day of the event all participants were lead though an agenda created by the SLCC Community Writing Center facilitators. The day included many excersices to lead the participants into creating the final poems. These exercises included:

INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITIES

Bring the participants into the mindset needed to be creative. This included actives of collaborative story telling and meditating on the senses being activated in the rooms

POETRY BASICS

Examples of community poetry and how words work.

CREATING THE POEM BUILDING BLOCKS

- Word Brainstorming Exercise - participants write down several words that they feel describe their community.
- Participants then sticker the words that resonate most with them
- Divination/ Popcorn Activity: Select words one-by-one, randomly. How do they fit together? What ideas are generated? Use the random selection as a starting point for shaping the poem.
- Give each participant member a word (or a few) to work with. Have them write a line or two using those words. Work as a group to respond to and arrange those lines.

IT ENDED IN TWO POEMS

As theses activities progressed the facilitators were able to start piecing together full phrases or sentences that were then turned into the poem. As the sentences came together they were workshoped by the [participants slowly building the finalized poem together,

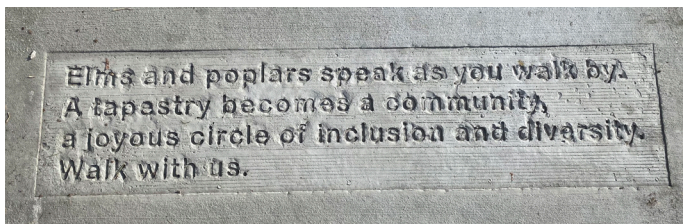


LEARNS

- Participation was hard to cultivate. Of the 25 participants invited only five attended. The ideal number for this type of engagement exercises is 10-12 participants.
- Starting early with talking to the community about this exercise would have worked better. We were very limited in our choices of timeline, and this is a learning to transfer to future endeavors focused on community healing.
- Further explanation before the event to participants was needed. A couple of the participants I spoke with beforehand were very insecure about public creative writing exercises; this is super common.

FINAL PRODUCT

The final poems were a huge success in both creativity and place-making activation.



FUTURE USE

This was only the first phase of a 3+ mile corridor transforming project to implement the 9-Line trail using money from the Funding Our Future bond. 900 South from Lincoln to 900 West is currently in the first phases of community engagement to reintroduce the 9-Line study to the public and gather feedback for the 2021-2023 constitution season. The next phase of this project will include several different communities councils all with their own needs, desires, and concerns.

Building on the lessons learned, this type of project could be continued along this corridor. As a part of the engagement process for the remaining corridor, each community council district could come together to create poems for sidewalks in their neighborhoods. Because we are so early in the engagement process we could get more participation and buy-in into this type of engagement activity resolving the main issues with this process.