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North Shore CDC Announces Punto Urban Art District

North Shore Community Development Coalition (NSCDC), a Salem-based community development organization, announced their establishment of the Punto Urban Art Museum. Their vision is to create a world class urban art museum district in Salem's Point Neighborhood, one that embraces its rich immigrant and architectural history and presents a dynamic opportunity for the neighborhood's future. The Punto Urban Art Museum has two primary goals: to create a beautiful, uplifting environment for Point residents, particularly for children to grow up in, and to break down the invisible divide between the Point and the rest of Salem by inviting visitors into the Point to experience world-class art first-hand.

Twenty years ago, NSCDC produced two murals which have long been points of pride in the Point neighborhood. Two years ago, NSCDC worked with the Point Neighborhood Association, the City of Salem and Salem-raised and South Florida-based artist Ruben Ubiera on a crosswalk mural project. That installation not only won an award from the American Planning Association-Massachusetts Chapter, it was also very well received within the Point neighborhood. NSCDC & Ubiera saw the opportunity to combine efforts and bring more high quality art to the neighborhood by using NSCDC's affordable housing portfolio and Ubiera's passion for street art and relationships within the art world.

In the past six months, the partnership has begun to do just that: they have worked with nine artists so far to create 13 new large-scale outdoor murals, as well as 12 large-scale wall murals within NSCDC's new office loft, also in the Point neighborhood. They have plans for up to 30 additional artists to paint in 2017 alone, including a contiguous series of 20 walls being made available to local and emerging artists.

As more art has come to the Point, NSCDC & Ubiera realized that this was more than a few murals in a neighborhood; they realized they were creating a museum of urban art. By creating a walkable, curated arts district within three blocks with dozens of murals in the Point, the district will be readily accessible to all that downtown Salem already has to offer to over a million tourists per year. Bringing a fraction of those visitors to the Point neighborhood stands to be a transformative economic development boom to immigrant-owned businesses. It will also begin to break down the invisible barriers between the Point Neighborhood and the rest of Salem by creating a beautiful, walkable destination within the Point Neighborhood for people to visit.

"There is an invisible divide in Salem between the Point and the rest of downtown; the



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investment Salem has seen has largely not been visible within the Point. I think this project is going to help bridge that gap,” said Mickey Northcutt, CEO of NSCDC.

As reported by Yvonne Abraham in The Boston Globe, “...what sets the Salem project apart [from other mural projects] is its scale, and the determination that the neighborhood remain one that belongs to the people who have lived here all along. Though organizers are hoping the works draw visitors, the art is primarily about the residents. [Ruben] Ubiera and other artists saw how quickly Wynwood gentrified after they helped make its streets into an open-air museum. They don’t want that to happen here.”

According to a report by Americans for the Arts, young people who participate regularly in the arts are four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement, to participate in a math and science fair or to win an award for writing an essay or poem than children who do not participate. Low-income children, children who we work with on a daily basis, are not as exposed to art as those from more privileged backgrounds. Increasing public art “...enables those children from a financially challenged background to have a more level playing field with children who have had those enrichment experiences,” said Eric Cooper, president and founder of the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education.

So far, North Shore CDC have invited 9 world renowned artists and 2 local artists, creating 21 murals in the Point Neighborhood. Artist Ruben Ubiera immigrated from the Dominican Republic with his family when he was just 16 years old to Prince Street in the Point. Since then, he has become a world-renowned Urban Pop-Soul artists and has become an integral part of the Punto Urban Art Museum.

Ruben Ubiera, now NSCDC’s first Artist-in-Residence, is curating a dynamic team of global artists to bring their talents to the Point. Born in the Dominican Republic, he spent his formative years in high school in the Point when his family immigrated to the U.S. After receiving an art scholarship, he has become a world-renowned Urban Pop Soul artist, commissioned around the world to do large-scale wall mural installations. “When I was [at Salem High School], if it wasn’t for the teachers that pulled me aside and did what they did for me, I would’ve never done what I’ve accomplished.

Maybe I’m daydreaming, but these [murals] will serve as bridges between communities. Or at least a conversation,” said Ruben Ubiera, artist.

NSCDC is releasing an RFP for local artists to participate in the 20-wall exhibit on June 30th, with responses due by August 4th. Up to 20 artists in total will be selected to participate.

NSCDC invites Salem residents and all other community members to enjoy the beginning of



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this public art initiative. Should you want to learn more about NSCDC or the vision for an Urban Art Museum in Salem's Point Neighborhood please

<https://www.instagram.com/urban.art.museum/> or www.puntourbanartmuseum.org or www.northshorecdc.org.