Placekeeping and Equitable Development in the Embudo Valley

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PLACEKEEPING AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IN
THE EMBUDO VALLEY

by

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B.A. WOMEN'S STUDIES, OBERLIN COLLEGE, 1991

THESIS
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Public Administration

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

May 2020
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated with love to my historian, geographer, planner, and place maker father David Philip Fonseca and gardener, crafter, artist, and creative mother Wilda Sauvé Fonseca. My mother made her living through functional, hardworking words and writing, like me.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to my beloved community of Dixon, and to the many people who have made room for me here and helped me feel at home. Thank you to Minna Santos and Shirley Atencio who have always had my back through work and school stress, and to the Embudo Valley Library board, who have encouraged me to take risks and learn on the job. Special thanks to Marcia Brenden, who has been a long-term supporter.

I also thank the people who helped me in this research, including those who graciously allowed me to interview them. I continue to rely on your guidance, and try to emulate and embody your querencia. To the many people I discussed this work with and who gave me suggestions, thank you for your help. Thank you to Suzan Regan of UNM BBER, and to my thesis chair Agustín León-Moreta and thesis committee, Melissa Binder and Shuyang Peng, for your help and suggestions in this research. Thank you to my husband, Brian Harrison, and children Emma and Ulysses, who cleaned the house and listened and discussed at the dinner table while I learned and wrote my way through this degree.

*Mil gracias* (1,000 thank yous) to the UNM Center for Regional Studies and Dr. Gabriel Meléndez who provided financial support to enhance the scope of my research and helped me believe that it was important.
PLACEKEEPING AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE EMBUDO VALLEY

By

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ABSTRACT

Embudo Valley Library is planning to build a permanent stage and improve their grounds to become a public park. In what ways can this project stimulate a creative placemaking community development strategy for Dixon, NM? The research goals are to learn how this project can contribute to revitalization, equity, and creating a cohesive community that retains its historic and cultural essence. The research includes an overview of the community context, a literature review about creative placemaking and community development strategies, and three surveys, the results of which will inform the project. Conclusions are that human centered design and equitable development are effective community planning methodologies that shape investments based on the needs of the users. Placemaking is transformed into placekeeping through practices that elevate community history and identity. Public park infrastructure investments produce equity when improvements to the built environment are linked to wealth building strategies for local residents.

Key words: placekeeping, equitable development, rural public library, creative placemaking
METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS ........................................................................................................... 62

ORAL HISTORY SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS ......................................................................................... 67

NARRATIVE DATA ANALYSIS FROM LIBRARY/STORE ORAL HISTORIES .............................................. 72

CONCLUSIONS FROM ORAL HISTORY SURVEY ..................................................................................... 78

CHILDREN’S SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS ............................................................................................... 79

CONCLUSIONS CHILDREN’S SURVEY ..................................................................................................... 82

PARK SURVEY DATA ANALYSIS ........................................................................................................... 84

PARK SURVEY CONCLUSIONS ............................................................................................................... 96

HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN AND ACTIONABLE PROBLEM STATEMENT .............................................. 98

CHAPTER 5 ............................................................................................................................................ 100

DISCUSSION ........................................................................................................................................... 100

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY ............................................................................................................. 101

FRAMEWORK DISTINGUISHING REVITALIZATION FROM GENTRIFICATION ................................... 101

EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT ................................................................................................................ 103

SURVIVING CONFLICT IN COMMUNITY PROCESSES .................................................................... 105

HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN: IDEATE, PROTOTYPE, AND TEST ......................................................... 106

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING PRACTICE AND MOVING YOUR PROJECT FORWARD .............................. 109

CHAPTER 6 ............................................................................................................................................ 113

CONCLUSION ........................................................................................................................................ 113

REFERENCES ....................................................................................................................................... 115
List of Figures

Figure 1. Embudo Valley Library Community Anchor Institution Logic Model...4
Figure 2. Dixon Census Designated Place, Rio Arriba County Racial Demographics.................................................................12
Figure 3. Poverty Status in the Past 12 months. ...............................................................13
Figure 4. Median Household Income 2013-2017 .............................................................14
Figure 5. Median Household Income 2008-2012 and 2013-2017 .................................15
Figure 6. Española Public Schools enrollment and Española public and charter school enrollment 2013-2014 to 2019-2020.................................17
Figure 7. Dixon Elementary School enrollment, 2013-2014 to 2019-2020. ..............18
Figure 8. Age Range in Population, Dixon Census Designated Place, Rio Arriba County.................................................................................................18
Figure 9. Dixon CDP, Rio Arriba County percent population age 25 and older with a bachelor’s degree or higher...............................................................19
Figure 10. Embudo Valley Library Operating Revenue, Staff Expenditures 2011-2012 to 2018-2019.................................................................23
Figure 11. Total Visits to Library and Programs, Fiscal Year 2011-2012 to 2018-2019.........................................................................................23
Figure 12. Social Determinants of Health......................................................................41
Figure 13. Doc and Lydia Zellers in front of Zellers’ store, circa 1934. ......................69
Figure 14. Lebeo’s Store (date unknown)......................................................................69
Figure 15. Zellers’ Store, 1994. .................................................................................70
Figure 16. Dixon Cooperative Market, July 2019, after finishing most recent USDA Project. ........................................70
Figure 17. 120 Year History of Library Property .............................................................71
Figure 18. Apple house, apple maze, apple sandbox.................................................82
Figure 19. Tree house, slide, and inside the tree house ..............................................83
Figure 20. Tightrope and ladder for little kids, guideline and monkey bars.............83
Figure 21. Ladder to treehouse and chillout room, pathway to tower with telescope and zipline down.................................................................84
Figure 22. How do you use library grounds and how often?.................................86
Figure 23. What are your favorite parts of library grounds? ....................................88
Figure 24. What programs or activities would you use or attend on library grounds?..................................................................................................89
Figure 25. How old are you?....................................................................................92
Figure 26. How long have you lived in Dixon/Embudo/Rinconada? ......................92
Figure 27. What are your priorities for how the library should use its time and funds?..............................................................................................94
Figure 28. Percentage of Very Concerned to Not at all Concerned Responses...95
Figure 29. Spectrum of Public Participation.............................................................108
List of Tables

Table 1. Housing Statistics, Rio Arriba County 2008-2012 to 2014-2018.........20
Table 2. Summary of primary themes from Spring 2019 focus groups.............26
Table 3. Total Park Survey Responses ............................................................64
Table 4. Data Analysis Summary from Library/Store Oral Histories ..............76
Table 5. Data Analysis of Children’s Survey ....................................................81
Table 6. How do you use library grounds and how often?.................................85
Table 7. What matters to you most in developing library grounds? 129
responses. ........................................................................................................87
Table 8. What would you like to be able to do on library grounds that you can’t
do now? ........................................................................................................87
Table 9. What other programming would you like to see? 63 responses.........89
Table 10. Would you like to see a permanent stage constructed on library
grounds? ..........................................................................................................95
Table 12. The difference between gentrification and revitalization. .............102
Chapter 1

Introduction

This research is in service to a public park and stage project on the grounds of Embudo Valley Library in Dixon, NM. The purpose of the research is to learn how creative placemaking practice can enrich this park and stage project and connect it to a community and economic development strategy for Dixon, NM. The research has three components: statistics about the demographic background of the community, a literature review researching creative placemaking and related community development strategies, and three community surveys. The survey results will inform the stage and park project at Embudo Valley Library.

Dixon is a rural, unincorporated village located in the far southeast corner of Rio Arriba County, New Mexico. We represent typical statistics of Northern New Mexico with respect to the poverty represented in the community. While we are similar to rural Rio Arriba County in many ways, in other ways our community is unique and has vast strengths and assets. We have a high performing elementary school, a cooperatively owned grocery store, a non-profit public library, seven active acequia associations, a number of other non-profit organizations and extensive volunteer investment in various community services.

I am the director of Embudo Valley Library, and also a graduate student in the UNM School of Public Administration. Embudo Valley Library is a non-profit 501(c)3 public library located in “downtown” Dixon. Founded in 1992 by community volunteers, the library will celebrate 28 years of service in May. It is one of 14 non-profit public
libraries in the state, and one of five in Rio Arriba County. The mission of the Embudo Valley Library is to connect our community by providing educational, cultural, and recreational resources for area residents. The library provides public library service, numerous educational and cultural programs, 24-7 wi-fi, public access computing, small business supports, and copy, fax and notary services. The library is involved with community projects as well; it co-sponsors the village’s annual Fiesta de Santa Rosa, has completed a number of oral history projects, and it acts as a fiscal sponsor for local organizations like the Neighborhood Watch.

As library director, and someone who is a transplant to the community (I’ve lived in Dixon since 1995, 25 years, yet was not born and raised here), I do continual soul searching to understand how, as an organization, the library can best serve my adopted community. It is a community where many families don’t have a tradition of reading or holding a library card and checking out library books. What use can a public library be to a community that has land-based roots and traditions, a strong sense of place and appreciation for our natural assets and cultural and food traditions, and shows deep querencia, a Spanish word that means connection to, love of, and belonging to a physical place that is your homeland, “the place you love, the place your soul craves” (Spragg-Braude, 2013)?

Embudo Valley Library offers a full range of public library services, and has also done work in community development with activities and impacts beyond the scope of what would normally be considered routine public library service. As library director, I have directed substantial energy towards this work, yet didn’t have ways to understand, analyze, articulate, or evaluate the results, impacts, and outcomes of it.
Embudo Valley Library partnered with the UNM Evaluation Lab in the 2018-2019 academic year to put in place program logic models (a logic model represents the inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes of a program), do a literature review related to economic revitalization, and hold community focus groups regarding community strengths, values, and needs. The idea of economic revitalization came out of previous work and interviews with library directors from Rio Arriba Independent Libraries (RAIL), who saw the area of community revitalization as a potential focus for partnership among these five non-profit libraries in Rio Arriba County. An additional motivation for the focus on economic revitalization was my own perception as a parent, that if our local elementary school ever closed due to low enrollment, it would take an enormous toll on the community. Dixon Elementary is currently the second smallest school in the Española school district, with only 65 students in 2019-2020. Part of my motivation was to investigate how community revitalization could help retain and attract families with children to our community, thereby contributing to maintaining the local school as a primary community institution.

The UNM Evaluation Lab supports teams of graduate students and experienced evaluators who work to assist community organizations to advance their own program evaluation and build capacity. In the case of the Embudo Valley Library, I held the dual roles of both student and Library director, and worked with my team, which consisted of Mather Cotter, another student, and Amanda Bissell, our team lead.

With the help of the UNM Evaluation Lab, core library staff created a Community Anchor Institution Logic Model in an attempt to articulate our community development impacts and outcomes. Some of the work that is identified in the logic
model, such as beautifying library grounds and installing a tile mural map, could be considered “Creative placemaking.” Other parts of the work, investing in capital improvements for Dixon Cooperative Market, has had economic impacts in increased local employment and markets for locally produced foods, and health impacts through access to fresh fruits and vegetables at the cooperative grocery store and farmer’s market. Other outcomes of the library’s role as community anchor institution is that we help other local organizations be more effective by providing meeting and work space. This illustrates what cross sector partnerships can achieve, where organizations work together to create outcomes that neither could produce alone. Cross sector partnerships are a hallmark of creative placemaking.

**Figure 1.** Embudo Valley Library Community Anchor Institution Logic Model.

In the end, while the work that Embudo Valley Library has done has resulted in improvements to the community, the work has been mostly guided by Anglo (non-Spanish speaking people of European origin) governance. I am particularly interested in how the work of the library can start to better represent Hispanic voice and needs, and also contribute to sustainable community development. According to the United Nations, “sustainable development – development that promotes prosperity and economic opportunity, greater social well-being, and protection of the environment – offers the best path forward for improving the lives of people everywhere” (https://www.un.org/en/sections/what-we-do/promote-sustainable-development/index.html). This is my goal: for Embudo Valley Library to facilitate and engage in a broad community effort towards sustainable community development.

Creative placemaking is a relatively new term for planning of public spaces that integrates arts and culture with community input and needs. The American Planning Association says

Creative placemaking is a process where community members, artists, arts and culture organizations, community developers, and other stakeholders use arts and cultural strategies to implement community-led change. This approach aims to increase vibrancy, improve economic conditions, and build capacity among residents to take ownership of their communities” (American Planning Association, retrieved 7/2/19).

This definition of creative placemaking was particularly relevant to me because it highlights “community led change” as integral to informing the project and purpose of the development.

I was familiar with the term creative placemaking, and Embudo Valley Library had even applied for a grant (and were declined) from ArtPlace, one of the premier
creative placemaking funders. ArtPlace funded creative placemaking from 2010 to 2020. Yet I still wasn’t really sure what creative placemaking was. One of the primary motivators for this research is that a long-standing library volunteer and member of the Fiesta Committee asked then board president of the library if the library could build a permanent stage for the annual Fiesta. The president and board responded to this request by planning a range of improvements to library grounds, which is 1.5 acres with a small orchard. The grounds are open to the public.

The library board envisioned a permanent stage for the Fiesta de Santa Rosa as the cornerstone of the development of the grounds. The board moved rapidly on this by holding an internal visioning session for a “Field of Dreams” park project and by securing assistance from the UNM Landscape Architecture Department, where Dixon native Katya Crawford teaches. The library had state legislators who were willing to secure capital funds for a permanent stage for the Fiesta. Because the library is a 501c3 non-profit, however, we were not eligible to receive capital outlay funds from the state. Any capital outlay for a stage would have to be used for a mobile/non-permanent stage, with Rio Arriba County as fiscal sponsor. The library board president successfully managed to secure $206,000 in capital outlay funds from the 2019 state legislature for a state-of-the-art mobile stage for the Fiesta de Santa Rosa. She envisioned that this stage could also be used to host large events and performances and generate income for the library.

When these plans went public, some members of the community pushed back. They felt that an expensive mobile stage was inappropriate for our community and would be beyond the library’s capacity to maintain and operate. The Fiesta Committee was
uncertain about a mobile stage being owned by Rio Arriba County. Still others opposed a plan where the library would host large events on the property, drawing more visitors to the community and creating downtown impacts like noise and parking.

While the board president was responding directly to a community request, the community opposition was linked to how the project was initiated in early 2019. The board president didn’t meet with the Fiesta Committee to get their input on the mobile stage; the library board themselves planned what the “Field of Dreams” should include, and the UNM architecture school was brought in to provide design ideas based on the board’s visioning process. The process was internally focused, with no effort to seek input from the Fiesta committee, from the community, from youth, or from Dixon Cooperative Market (our tenant), and the Carnelian Center, our neighbor, with whom we share the grounds. The board was pushing a fast timeline. The end result is that the mobile stage and park development project alienated and lost trust with both the community and staff.

The motivation for me to do this research was multi-faceted. I hoped to learn what creative placemaking really was, and why it had been launched into the national funding discourse. I hoped to understand how the library could make a public park and permanent stage that would result in positive community outcomes, rather than contribute to gentrification and displacement of native community members. I hoped to build on previous library successes in community development and creative placemaking, and I hoped to repair and rebuild the distrust and damaged community relationships that had been caused by the mobile stage project idea. For me, as library director, it was clear that a permanent stage and development of library grounds as a park was going to become
part of the library’s long-term goal and strategic plan; if we were going to do it, I wanted to do it well.

I am keenly aware of cultural divisions and economic inequalities in our community. Our community has experienced vast change since the 1970’s with the influx of Anglos. This thesis is attempt to respond to these inequalities and divisions. The research questions for this thesis are: in what ways can a public park stimulate a creative placemaking community development strategy for Dixon, NM? What are community development methods and processes that will result in revitalization, rather than gentrification and displacement of the native Hispanic population of our community? In what ways can the library embed community engagement into our processes? In what ways can the library better represent Hispanic voice and needs as an organization? And finally, in what ways can park investments at Embudo Valley Library contribute to building equity and a strong, cohesive community that retains its essential cultural and historic essence?

I read widely to address all facets of the project and my research goals. Roberto Bedoya and Jenny Lee (2013) theorized that for communities of color, the goal should be placekeeping, ensuring that the people who have shaped a community continue to shape the commons, and aren’t displaced by development. Authors Brummet and Reed (2019), Ghaffari, Klein, and Angelo Baudin (2018), Golding, (2016), and Hyra (2016), defined what gentrification is, how it can be measured, and tools to use to prevent it. Reece (2004), defined the difference between revitalization and gentrification. Clarke (2017) explained how placemaking can result in improved community health, and Treskon, Esthappen et. al. (2018) articulated placemaking activities that will help achieve positive
community development goals, including improved community safety. Soule, Hodgeson, and Beavers (2011) and Jackson, Hodgeson, and Beavers (2011), articulate how placemaking can strengthen cultural vitality, and help preserve, celebrate, challenge, and even invent community identity. Jackson and Herranz (2002) researched how creativity and arts and culture relates to building community. People Make Parks (2019) provided excellent park planning community engagement tools. Ideo.org (2015) and the d.school at Stanford University (2018) explained how human centered design, a group of in-depth community engagement mechanisms and innovative prototyping and design tools, produces design based around the needs of the people who will occupy and inhabit your space. Prakash and Spinelli (2016) illustrate how community-led creative placemaking strategies can support interaction, build relationships (also known as social capital), and increase community capacity. The resources of the Strong, Prosperous, Resilient Communities Challenge (n.d.) and the 11th Street Bridge Park (n.d.) explained what equitable development means and how to do it.

With an emphasis on cross-sector partnerships, much of the creative placemaking literature suggests that the practice should be linked to policies like affordable housing, economic development, and workforce development, yet there aren’t many examples in the literature of how rural, unincorporated communities can manifest those policies in the absence of a municipality. Nicodemus (2014) and the Rural Prosperity through the Arts and Creative Sector Rural Action Guide, produced by the National Governor’s Association and the National Endowment for the Arts (2019) offer rural creative placemaking case studies highlighting successful rural projects and methods.
Chapter 2

Embudo Valley Community Background

The community of Dixon/Embudo is a rural, historically Hispano village in the far southeast corner of Rio Arriba County. It has 7 acequias, 4 churches, a K-6 elementary school, a grocery store, a public library, one of the oldest studio tour organizations in the region, and a number of other non-profit organizations. It is located 22 miles from Taos and Española, and 12 miles from Picuris Pueblo, Peñasco and other high road communities like Chamisal, Vadito, and Ojo Sarco.

There were a number of variables I was interested in looking at regarding Dixon/Embudo. I wanted to see changes over time in the following characteristics: public school enrollment, families living at or below poverty level, median annual income, median home value and number of housing units, racial make-up of the population, and age distribution of the population. Educational attainment, change in number of individuals with a bachelor’s degree or higher, had been used by Brummett and Reed (2019) as a way to measure gentrification in a community. Could I find this data, and also decipher what it means?

I struggled to find accurate data about my small community. In many years of the American Community Survey 5-year estimates for the Dixon Census Designated Place there are no margins of error provided, or large gaps in the data. Some statistics in the American Community Survey seem unreliable, for example, the 2014-2018 American Community Survey reports that the percent of Hispanic population increased from 71% in 2010 to 86% in 2018. This is unlikely. My conclusion is that it is hard to gather accurate, comparable, on-going data for small, rural locations.
Some of the community changes I am trying to understand have been going on since the 1970’s, but comparable Decennial Census data about the community over a 50-year period is not available. The projection of the 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-year estimate is based on the Dixon Census Designated Place. But a Dixon Census Designated place in the 2000 Census is not available, only data for the community by zipcodes. This made it hard to compare the 2000 Census to the 2010 Census, as a zipcode is different from a Census Designated Place. I learned from Suzan Reagan of the UNM Bureau of Business and Economic Research that zipcodes are not a good method to analyze data. Furthermore, the population figures for the Dixon Census Designated Place differed depending on whether you used the American FactFinder platform (factfinder.census.gov) or whether you used the new Census platform (data.census.gov).

Overall, I found it easier to look at County level data, and then compare Dixon to the county. The 2014-2018 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates that the population of the community is decreasing; no margin of error is given. What conclusions should be drawn if the population of Dixon has decreased, despite the substantial efforts of Embudo Valley Library to provide services that would make the community a better place to live? Hopefully, the 2020 Census will produce an accurate population count. Much of the data presented in this section can be used as a baseline for future comparisons.

According to the 2010 Decennial Census, compared to Rio Arriba County, there is a substantially larger Anglo/White population in Dixon. Whereas the rest of the County is 71.3% Hispanic, 12.8% white, 14% Native American, and 1.9% other race,
Dixon is 70.7% Hispanic, 26.5% white, 2.6% Native American and 0.2% other. See Figure 2.

**Figure 2.** Dixon Census Designated Place, Rio Arriba County Racial Demographics.

![Racial Demographics](image)

Source: *2010 US Census, American FactFinder.*

Rio Arriba is a poor county. The data from the American Community Survey for poverty status in the past 12 months, percent below poverty level, shows disturbing trends in the County and in New Mexico. Poverty has increased in Rio Arriba County by a full 7.4 percentage points between the 2008-2012 American Community Survey and the 2013-2017 American Community Survey, with 26.4% of Rio Arriba County living below the poverty level in 2017, as compared to 20.6% in New Mexico. 33% of Rio Arriba County children under age 18 live below the poverty level, as compared to 29.1% in New Mexico. See Figure 3.

The data from these two time periods from the American Community Survey percentage of families and people living below poverty for the Dixon Census Designated Place had large margins of error and large gaps in data.
Figure 3. Poverty Status in the Past 12 months.


The 2013-2017 American Community Survey 5-year estimates from Census.gov had median household income data for my community, but it wasn’t available for the Dixon Census Designated Place. Rather, it was available for the Dixon Census County Division, or CCD. The data shows that the median household income for the Dixon Census County Division is lower than both Rio Arriba County and the state.
Figure 4. Median Household Income 2013-2017

![Median Household Income Chart]


Substantiating the trend showing an increase in poverty in Rio Arriba County, the statistics regarding median household income in the County for the same two American Community Survey time periods are dramatic. Where New Mexico showed a 4% gain in median household income between the 2008-2012 American Community Survey and the 2013-2017 American Community Survey, Rio Arriba County showed a disturbing 18% decrease in median household income. (See Figure 5.) At the same time, the Dixon Census County Division showed a 21% increase in median household income. The American FactFinder data set identifies our community as the Dixon Census Designated Place. The Census.gov data set identifies our community as the Dixon Census County Division. The data isn’t always comparable data across platforms.
Figure 5. Median Household Income 2008-2012 and 2013-2017


Ann Markusen in *Fuzzy Concepts, Proxy Data: Why Indicators Would Not Track Creative Placemaking Success* (2012) notes that “most good secondary data series are not available at spatial scales corresponding to grantees’ target impact areas” (Markusen, 2012), and that changes in place take many years to unfold, while short-term evaluation periods won’t capture impact and effect of placemaking. The National Endowment for the Arts and ArtPlace, two major placemaking funders, put in place evaluation systems based on external data sources, rather than conducting individual project evaluation. Markusen (2012) argues that the evaluative frameworks of these entities are problematic because of the inadequacy of data sources for creating place specific indicators, plus the fact that projects generally take longer than 1 to 3 years. Some may take more than 10 years from vision to groundbreaking. Markusen (2012) states that it is extremely difficult to find accurate and localized data to measure change.
over time. This was very much my experience in doing the data and statistical research for this project.

Markusen (2012) also states that indicators that compare places with each other in current time will likely reflect long term community processes, rather than impact of short-term interventions. I was seeking data to understand changes unfolding in Dixon over the course of 20 years, with long-term changes over 50 or more years. The external data about the community is fascinating, but it is hard to know whether it is reliable.

Various sources of data corroborate that Rio Arriba County is struggling. In addition to the decrease in median household income and increase in percent living below poverty level, enrollment in area public and charter schools has decreased 17% in the past seven years. (See figure 6.) One of the motivators in my research was creating a community that could maintain a local public school. I researched changes in enrollment at Dixon elementary school and overall changes in the Española Public Schools District from the 2013-2014 school year to the 2019-2020 school year. (See figure 6.)
Figure 6. Española Public Schools enrollment and Española public and charter school enrollment 2013-2014 to 2019-2020.

![Graph showing enrollment data]

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department STARS Enrollment Data.

Enrollment decreased at Dixon elementary 14%, as compared to 17% for Española public and charter schools. Dixon elementary is a very small school, with enrollment ranging from 72 in 2013-2014 to 63 in 2019-2020. (See Figure 7.)
Figure 7. Dixon Elementary School enrollment, 2013-2014 to 2019-2020.

Source: New Mexico Public Education Department STARS enrollment data.

Based on the 2010 Census of the Dixon Census Designated Place, the population of Dixon is older than the general population of Rio Arriba County. The median age in the Dixon Census Designated Place in the 2010 Census was 49.8 years, as compared to 39 years in Rio Arriba County. (See Figure 8.)

Figure 8. Age Range in Population, Dixon Census Designated Place, Rio Arriba County.
Brummet and Reed (2019) identified percent of population with a college degree or higher as a gentrification measure. According to the 2008-2012 American Community Survey, 22.8% of the Dixon Census Designated Place has a college degree or higher, as compared with 18.5% in Rio Arriba County. This survey identified the margin of error for the Dixon CDP, while the other years didn’t. (See Figure 9.) Given the high margin of error, these two are very similar.

Figure 9. Dixon CDP, Rio Arriba County percent population age 25 and older with a bachelor’s degree or higher.

According to the 2006-2010 American Community Survey, there were 775 housing units in Dixon, with a median home value of $192,000, margin of error of +/- $77,545. According to the 2013-2018 ACS, there were 425 housing units with a median home value of $122,600, and a margin of error of +/- $102,141. Because this data fluctuates so wildly, and has a high margin of error, it seems unreliable. According to the Rio Arriba County Assessor, there were 444 property tax accounts in the 87527 zipcode.
in 2019. Zipcodes, again, are not comparable to a census designated place. Rio Arriba County, for the same time period, shows a median home value of $136,300, and a much smaller margin of error of $12,696. Do the statistics mean that homes in Dixon have a higher median value or that there is more income inequality, which results in variable home values, known as housing segmentation? I couldn’t draw strong conclusions from this data, but it does set up a baseline with which to compare future data.

I researched housing statistics for Rio Arriba County, as a potentially more reliable source of data. (See Table 1.) Comparing the 2008-2012 and 2013-2018 American Community Surveys, the median home value in the county increased 25% from $133,300 in 2009-2013, to $164,800 in 2014-2018. The data shows that there are more vacant units in the County, and that very little housing has been constructed since 2010. It also shows that there was an increase of 3% in units with a value over $1 million dollars. The 2014-2018 ACS shows 1,222 units in the county with a value over $1 million, as compared to only 507 units, in the 2008-2012 survey.


<table>
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<td>BUILT 2000-2009</td>
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<td>BUILT 1990- TO 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>BUILT 1980-1989</td>
<td>18.10%</td>
<td>17.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUILT 1970-1979</td>
<td>21.50%</td>
<td>19.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUILT 1969 OR EARLIER</td>
<td>28.00%</td>
<td>30.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEDIAN VALUE</td>
<td>164,800</td>
<td>133,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERCENT HOMES WORTH MORE THAN $1 MILLION</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUMBER OF HOMES WORTH MORE THAN $1 MILLION</td>
<td>1,223</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: American Community Survey, Census.gov.
I agree with Markusen (2012) who argues that external data shouldn’t be the exclusive measure of a community. The external data I gathered is useful as a baseline, to which further data can be added and tracked. This paints a picture of the environment in the County as well as the environment in Dixon.

**Embudo Valley Library Background, History, and Service Statistics**

Founded in 1992, the library spent its first 10 years in a rented building. Through a generous local donor and community fundraising, the library purchased the Zellers’ Property in downtown Dixon in 2002. The property is 1.5 irrigated acres with heirloom apple trees. The original Zellers’ residence became the home of the library from 2002-2014; it now serves as a community center and youth programs facility. Dixon Cooperative Market moved into the Zellers’ Store building in 2005. The organization completed construction on a new 3,000 square foot library in 2014, and has continued to make capital improvements to the property, making it a downtown destination for residents and visitors alike. In 2014 and 2015, local artist and library board member Shel Neymark worked with four local teens to make and install a tile acequia mural map featuring Spanish place names and local historic sites. In 2016, the library ran a Youth Conservation Corps project, employing 7 local youth to install landscaping and a dry stacked rock wall in front of the library. The core programs of the library continue to be public library services and literacy and cultural programming. The library runs a four day a week after school program, an early literacy storytime, a summer reading program, a STEM and robotics program, and an evening cultural series. It is also home to a volunteer low power fm radio station, the Dixon Farmer’s Market, and the village’s annual Fiesta de Santa Rosa. The library runs a variety of other programs, including oral
history gathering and digital archiving. The mission is to connect the community by providing educational and recreational resources for area residents.

Combining the work of a community anchor institution and placemaking over the last decade, the library has beautified the property in ways similar to a downtown revitalization or Mainstreet project. Its investments in Dixon Cooperative Market have resulted in increased jobs, and library facilities support other community organizations, like the Embudo Valley Tutoring Association and the local acequia associations, to be more successful. These improvements have created a downtown gathering space that melds educational (library) and mercantile (coop) needs of the community. The improvements have also drawn visitors. There are now at least 10 vacation rentals in the community, and numerous visitors stop at the library and store on their way through town.

As suggested by Markusen (2012), for creative placemaking, it may be better to look to internal data. Embudo Valley Library has quantitative data about services. As an organization, the library has experienced growth since moving into a new, larger facility in 2014. As the library has added programs, their budget, staffing (see Figure 9), and total patron visits have increased (See Figure 10). They now have 2.5 full time equivalent staff, made up of seven different part-time employees. The library’s overall budget increased by 48% from 2011-2012 to 2018-2019, and their patron visits increased by 35%.
As a 501c3 non-profit public library, Embudo Valley Library has used USDA Rural Development funding to invest $126,000 in capital improvements to Dixon
Cooperative Market in the last ten years. These investments resulted in a store with a full-service deli and commercial kitchen. Watching the growth of Dixon Cooperative Market is another source of internal data. The store had gross sales of $399,732 in 2006, and $785,355 in 2019. In 2019 Dixon Cooperative Market paid out $190,912 in wages to 6 full time and 5 part time employees, and purchased over $40,000 worth of locally produced goods such as eggs and produce.

**Building on Work with the UNM Evaluation Lab**

Embudo Valley Library contracted with the UNM Evaluation lab in the 2018-2019 academic year. The results of this have contributed to this thesis, as I began to identify economic and community level outcomes from the work of the library. These outcomes helped situate Embudo Valley Library as a community anchor institution already practicing some degree of placemaking. With the UNM evaluation lab, the library did a literature review on community revitalization. We created program logic models (inputs, activities, outputs, and outcome models), including a community anchor institution logic model to capture the full spectrum of the library’s work and impacts. We also conducted three focus groups, one with board members, one with small business leaders, and one with library patrons, asking about community values, strengths, and needs. Through the three focus groups I learned how to do qualitative survey data analysis. The focus groups gave the library a new level of direct and insightful feedback from community members. As another internal data source, these focus groups produced a large amount of qualitative data.

Table 2 is a summary of the primary themes drawn from the focus groups’ responses to the questions, “What are our community values? What are our community
PLACEKEEPING AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE EMBUDO VALLEY

strengths? What are our community needs? What are the potential challenges to addressing community needs? What are solutions to those challenges?"

Focus Group Data Analysis

The focus group data analysis (Cotter, Fonseca, and Bissell, 2019) revealed a strong and interconnected community with a diversity of successful businesses, active organizations, and a good elementary school. Community members expressed strong ties to the people, land, culture, and history of the place. Focus group responses showed the community to be open to newcomers and appreciative of their contributions, but tensions exist between newcomers and long-time residents, and are often expressed through the acequia as a community institution. The value of the acequias was a central theme across all focus groups; the need to protect them and the traditions around them was prominent. This irrigation system is integral to the community identity and is a site of community interaction. The school was also considered central to the community by its members. Primary community needs identified by the focus groups were protecting the “spirit of Dixon” (Cotter, Fonseca, and Bissell, 2019, p. 7) and residents’ sense of place; economic development and the ability for more residents to be able to make a living locally; the need for the community to be attractive, affordable, and accessible to young families; the need for more opportunities for exercise, education, and recreation; improvements to health and safety, specifically by making the highway safer for pedestrians and maintaining the Neighborhood Watch Initiative; and the need for the multi-cultural community to find common ground and work together successfully.
Table 2. Summary of primary themes from Spring 2019 focus groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Library Board</th>
<th>Small Business Leaders</th>
<th>Library Patrons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Combination of local traditions and knowledge with skills and experience of newcomers</td>
<td>Natural resources water/land</td>
<td>Close knit community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>History and place</td>
<td>Community capacity</td>
<td>Existing businesses and institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Robust civic organizations</td>
<td>Existing businesses and institutions</td>
<td>Tradition and history</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make community attractive to (young) families</td>
<td>Protection of tradition</td>
<td>Social engagement opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community health</td>
<td>Exercise/Recreation facilities and opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needs</td>
<td>Networking/Partnerships</td>
<td>Maintain land and agriculture-based traditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of place</td>
<td>Community led initiative(s)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Economic development</td>
<td>Exercise/Recreation facilities and opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retain young people</td>
<td>Maintain land and agriculture-based traditions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educational programs for all ages</td>
<td>Community engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Community health</td>
<td>Safety (roads and crime)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Networking/Partnerships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Connection to place, sense of community, traditional lifestyle</td>
<td>Agency (community capacity)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative environment</td>
<td>Cross cultural connection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can make a living</td>
<td>Close knit community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Pride in community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional values and skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>Bridging different cultures and traditions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Valuing lived experience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited water and land</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monetary and human resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solutions</td>
<td>Water technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Access to funding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bridging people, ideas, and places</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collecting community input</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because this thesis researches creative placemaking, or, perhaps *placekeeping* (Bedoya, 2013), it’s especially important to note that Dixon, as a place, does not need to be made. The community has a strong sense of place rooted in the physical land of Dixon, its beauty, history, traditions, and culture (Cotter, Fonseca, and Bissell, 2019). One focus group participant, for example, said, “I was born here, I’m going to die here. I love this town. This is it for me.” Acequia culture and agricultural heritage contribute greatly to both the sense of place and community connection. The acequias are one place where Hispanics and Anglos work together.

The work with the UNM Evaluation Lab illustrates a basic principle of asset-based community development, where you identify community strengths as a starting point for community development, or in this case, creative placemaking efforts. While this wasn’t a full blown cultural or asset inventory, it provided an overview of the strengths and assets of the community, highlighting that the community shows strong volunteerism, self-sufficiency, self-motivation, cooperation, and knowledge and skills embedded in their local environment (Cotter, Fonseca, and Bissell, 2019).

Because the community already has such a strong sense of place, a clear need identified in the focus groups was “protecting the spirit of Dixon” (Cotter, Fonseca, and Bissell, 2019, p. 7) and preserving the sense of place. Based on my further reading, I see this as also a need to preserve a sense of belonging in what is a changing community. The needs identified in the focus groups can also be connected to the Embudo Valley Library park project through an equitable development plan.
Chapter 3

Literature Review

The goal of the literature review was to learn about creative placemaking and related community development strategies, and to learn techniques and best practices for public park and placemaking projects. Creative placemaking is a relatively new term for planning of public spaces that integrates arts and culture with community input and needs. The American Planning Association says:

Creative placemaking is a process where community members, artists, arts and culture organizations, community developers, and other stakeholders use arts and cultural strategies to implement community-led change. This approach aims to increase vibrancy, improve economic conditions, and build capacity among residents to take ownership of their communities (American Planning Association, retrieved 7/2/19).

My instinct with the Embudo Valley Library park planning and development process is that it should be one that uses community engagement and feedback mechanisms to ensure community buy-in and that the park would meet local needs. I looked for literature with park design and community development “How-to” information. Through a google search, I found People Make Parks (PMP http://peoplemakeparks.org/about/). They are a joint project of Hester Street Collaborative (HSC) and Partnerships for Parks (PFP) to “help communities participate in the design of their parks” (http://peoplemakeparks.org/about/). They advocate that citizen engagement with park design results in better parks because the public will “enjoy and care for places they helped make” (http://peoplemakeparks.org/about/). While their context is urban New York City, with funding coming from government sources, their tools were adaptable to our rural, non-profit context. Their methods, like gathering oral history about your place and park, and using tools that help the community engage in the
design process, were substantiated in different aspects of the placemaking literature.

Their website has 12 different tools to gather input from the public to help you reach out to the full spectrum of your community. In the Embudo Valley Library process, I used and modified a variety of their park design tools: a questionnaire; oral history interviews and surveys about the library property and the Fiesta de Santa Rosa; listening sessions, interviews, and surveys with youth; youth drawings of what they’d like to see; and an interactive design prototype.

**Placemaking and Gentrification**

Part of the conflict and issue brought about by the library’s mobile stage and park project had to do with contested visions for the public space in our village, and what and whom that space should serve. Should it be a space for visitors, or a space for residents? Nearly all the placemaking literature mentions gentrification and states that placemaking and infrastructure investments have potential to displace original neighborhood residents. Yet, the literature doesn’t discuss what gentrification is, what causes it, and what steps can be taken to prevent it. I had to go outside of the placemaking literature to understand what gentrification is and learn how to avoid it.

**SPARCC, the Strong, Prosperous, Resilient Communities Challenge**

(https://www.sparcchub.org/), showcases policies and practices that create equitable development, working against gentrification. SPARCC is an urban initiative dedicated to ensuring that “new investments reduce racial disparities, build a culture of health, and prepare for a changing climate”, with the goal “to change the way metropolitan regions grow, invest, and build through integrated, cross-sector approaches that benefit low-income people and communities of color” (https://www.sparcchub.org/). While
SPARCC is rooted in urban practice, their framework is equally relevant in a rural context.

Gentrification is defined in various ways. Brummett and Reed (2019), in *The effects of gentrification on the well-being and opportunity of original resident adults and children*, define gentrification as “an increase in college-educated individuals’ demand for housing in initially low-income, central city neighborhoods” (p. 9). This definition offers a metric by which gentrification can be assessed: long-term neighborhood change related to the degree of educational attainment of the population. Jason Reece, in *Technical Memorandum on Gentrification Issues* (2004), uses the Brookings Institution definition, which is

Gentrification: the process by which higher income households displace significant numbers of lower income residents of a neighborhood, thus changing the essential character and flavor of the neighborhood. Based on this definition, three specific conditions must be met: displacement of original residents, physical upgrading of most of the housing stock and change in neighborhood character (Reece, 2004, p. 1).

Ghaffari, Klein, & Angelo Baudin (2018), in *Toward a socially acceptable gentrification: A review of strategies and practices against displacement*, define gentrification as “a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socioeconomic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment in fixed capital” (Clark, 2005, p. 263)(p. 1). Golding (2016), in *Gentrification and Segregated Wealth in Rural America: Home Value Sorting in Destination Counties*, uses the Housing Assistance Council’s definition of gentrification, which is “the process by which higher-income households displace lower-income residents of a community, changing the
essential character and flavor of that community” (HAC, 2005, p. 128). The Housing Assistance Council is an advocacy group for rural American housing needs.

All definitions of gentrification combine the idea that higher income households displace lower income households. Two of the definitions highlight how this change in neighborhood composition also changes the character of the community.

In-migration to rural communities has been happening since the 1970’s (Golding, 2016), with an accompanying upward pressure on housing prices. Shaun Golding (2016) used data from the 1980, 1990, and 2000 Censuses to understand long-term demographic changes in rural communities. Golding found that variables for measuring gentrification such as income, occupational status, and educational attainment were not consistently available for the three decades examined in the paper. Alternatively, Golding created a “Rural Gentrification Score (RGS)” which measures how urban residents replace rural residents in a long-term demographic turnover. Golding uses the score to understand whether in-migration to rural communities causes gentrification, a symptom of increasing social inequality. Rio Arriba County, NM, was not identified through this research as a highly gentrified rural county, but the County and community of Dixon have experienced in-migration since the 1970’s from urban and more highly educated individuals.

Golding’s research (2016) found that gentrification can have stronger effects on those with the highest degree of poverty in a neighborhood, and that these effects are most severe at the beginning of the gentrification process. Golding (2016) found that because rural places have a limited housing supply, real estate prices there can increase rapidly, and that “the 1970s saw higher levels of home value segregation in highly gentrified rural counties than in all other counties” (2016, p. 139). Golding’s (2016)
conclusions are that rural gentrification has cumulative impacts, that previous

gentrification is a strong predictor of further gentrification, and that counties that

experienced three decades of gentrification also experienced more extreme home values

and housing value inequality and segregation. Home value segregation means an

unevenness of housing values (Young, 2017). Dixon would seem to illustrate these three

findings.

Golding’s research (2016) answers some of the questions I encountered in doing

the background statistical data research for this thesis. Dixon has been experiencing an

in-migration of more educated and/or urban people for over 50 years. Gentrification is

linked to “expensive urban housing markets spilling over into rural places” (Golding,

2016, p.128). Santa Fe, for example, is experiencing an affordable housing crisis. Their

tight housing market must also put pressure on rural Northern New Mexico. As there is a

need for affordable housing in Santa Fe, there is a similar need for rural affordable

housing all over Northern New Mexico.

Brummett and Reed (2019) did longitudinal research to learn whether

gentrification displaces residents and whether it harms or benefits original residents.

Their research used the 2000 Census and the 2010-2014 American Community Survey.

While their research focused on the 100 largest U.S. metropolitan cities, their findings are

relevant to rural communities. Their research shows that gentrification has the strongest

effects on those who are most vulnerable, which include the less-educated, those in

poverty, and less-educated renters (Brummet, Reed, 2019). They determined that

gentrification modestly increases out-migration, and that out-migration may be strongest

in the earliest stages of gentrification (Brummet, Reed, 2019). They found that those
who leave the neighborhood are not made observably worse off, and that neighborhood change reflects in-migration and the composition of the new population demographic, rather than displacement (Brummet, Reed, 2019). They learned that renter migration is high over the course of a decade, and that neighborhoods are dynamic and can change quickly without displacement of original residents. Brummet and Reed’s (2019) key findings are that in gentrifying neighborhoods, many original resident adults stay and benefit from a decrease in exposure to poverty and an increase in house values, which is a component of household wealth. Original resident children in gentrifying neighborhoods benefit from decreased exposure to poverty and an increase in neighborhood characteristics that are correlated with economic opportunity; some are more likely to attend and complete college (Brummet, Reed, 2019). Brummet and Reed (2019) suggest that “accommodative policies, such as increasing housing supply in high-demand urban areas, could increase the opportunity benefits we find, reduce out-migration pressure, and promote long-term affordability.” Their suggestions are relevant in rural contexts.

Author Derek Hyra (2016) in *Causes and Consequences of Gentrification and the Future of Equitable Development Policy* notes that gentrification can also mean political and cultural displacement. Sometimes, “newcomers take over political institutions and advocate for amenities and services that fit their definition of community improvement” (p. 171). This can be accompanied by a change in ‘neighborhood norms, preferences, and service amenities’ (p. 171).

A main question Hyra (2016) asks is how to build social cohesion and interaction in mixed income neighborhoods and between traditionally segregated populations. He also points out that often there is a loss of political representation for low-income residents in
mixed income neighborhoods. All of these issues are very salient for Embudo Valley Library, both in regards to the history of the library, and in the current park work under the governance of a board that was until recently 100% white in a community that is 70% Hispanic.

Ghaffari, Klein, and Angelo Baudin (2018) reviewed gentrification literature and found three main solutions to gentrification: tenant protections, controlling ownership and development, and community empowerment. They identified six main forces in preventing displacement: public intervention and political will; community participation and bottom-up planning (this means control over decision making); an embedded and effective local community; community movements and political activism; public/private/community partnerships; and multiple financial resources in these partnerships, including employment programs and affordable housing addressing needs of low-income residents. Their findings echo the “multi-sector partnership” language coined by Markusen and Gadwa in their 2010 Creative placemaking white paper. Researcher Golding also states “that if rural development practitioners wish to ensure benefits for local residents and not simply local polities, they will promote in-migration only in tandem with efforts to maintain affordability” (2016, p. 129). What I learned from the gentrification literature is that it is possible to improve neighborhoods and communities while avoiding displacement of residents.

**Placekeeping: Radical Belonging and Placemaking**

A non-profit arts peer suggested I investigate “placekeeping” as an alternative concept to “placemaking.” Jenny Lee and Roberto Bedoya (2014) coined this term, and Roberto Bedoya expanded on it in his 2013 article *Placemaking and the Politics of*
Belonging and Dis-belonging. They asked: “what is the word for ‘the opposite of gentrification,’ and what is the role of creativity in achieving that thing, for which we have no word” (Park, Bedoya, 2014, p. 13)? They ask how placemaking can “keep” or “honor” the identity of a place and foster equitable development.

Bedoya explains how “race, class, poverty, and discrimination shape place” (2013), and how placemaking has often resulted in displacement, removal, and containment of people of color. Examples of this are the removal of Native Americans from their ancestral lands and their confinement on reservations; the internment of Japanese-Americans during WWII; historic policies enforcing segregation through restrictive covenants excluding African-Americans, Jews, and others from white communities; and discriminatory policies and practices that disproportionately affect communities of color, such as New York City’s stop and frisk tactic. In a more contemporary setting, placemaking can result in increased cost of living and higher rents for low and middle income residents when it isn’t accompanied by policy protections like guaranteeing local jobs for residents, creating housing units for low and middle income residents, and establishing a living wage (Wilson, 2015). For these reasons, placemaking must integrate an understanding of social and racial injustice, critical race theory, politics, and history alongside planning and economic development theories. Neighborhood revitalization can have side effects of gentrification, racism, and real estate speculation, rather than working towards what Bedoya (2013) describes as “the democratic ideal of having an equitable and just civil society.” Bedoya articulates an alternative: creative placemaking should not be a development strategy, but “a series of actions that build spatial justice, healthy communities, and sites of imaginations” (Bedoya, 2013).
According to Jenny Lee (Allied Media Projects, 2014) and Roberto Bedoya (2014), placekeeping is ensuring that the people who have shaped a community continue to shape the commons, and aren’t displaced by development. Bedoya (2014) describes a community’s commons as “where we make meaning together, in shared space.” Placekeeping has depth beyond placemaking; it strives to hold onto the stories and lifeways of locals, and keep the cultural memories of a place alive (Bedoya, 2014). The mainstream discourse of creative placemaking, shaped by funders such as National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Program and ArtPlace America, focuses heavily on place in the sense of the built environment (artist’s live/work spaces and cultural districts, for example), but doesn’t integrate the idea of people belonging to a place. The author argues that “before you have places of belonging, you must feel you belong” (2013). The Embudo Valley Library board also constructed the project focusing heavily on the built environment.

Many sources in the placemaking literature agree that placemaking can use personal memories, cultural histories, imagination, and feelings to reinforce identity and “enliven the sense of belonging through human and spatial relationships” (Bedoya, 2014). Creative placemaking can build cultural and civic identity and belonging. Juanita Hardy (2017) recommends a placemaking best practice of building on local art and cultural assets, which will help foster a sense of community pride.

**Cultural Identity and Placekeeping**

The park project of Embudo Valley Library started off with an emphasis on improving the built environment without an articulation of goals and intended outcomes. In restarting the park project with community input and community engagement, it was
my goal to have park improvements contribute to placekeeping, and be shaped by the
needs of the community. The community of Dixon has a very strong identity, sense of
place, and appreciation for our natural and cultural assets (Cotter, Fonseca, Bissell,
2019). One of the suggestions from Hester Street Collaborative’s People Make Parks
website was to do oral history gathering around your park. I did this through oral history
interviews and surveys. One way the library can frame the park project is how the park
builds residents’ sense of belonging and cultural and community identity. Embudo
Valley Library has done quite a bit of oral history work. This work helps connect our
community by educating newcomers about the community and by valuing the histories
and stories shared by long-time community members.

Two sources helped me understand how placemaking can strengthen cultural
vitality and enhance community identity. Jackson, Hodgeson, and Beavers in How the
Arts and Cultural Sector Strengthen Cultural Values and Preserve Heritage and History”
(American Planning Association, 2011) articulate how placemaking can help preserve,
celebrate, challenge, and even invent community identity. As arts and culture can help
preserve heritage and history, they can also help reveal and enhance a community’s
identity, reflected through the community’s character or sense of place. Authors Soule,
Hodgeson, and Beavers, in How Arts and Cultural Strategies Create, Reinforce, and
Enhance Sense of Place (American Planning Association, 2011), describe how a
community’s sense of place is not static; rather, “it evolves and develops over time,
reflecting the spectrum of social values within and around the community” (Soule,
healthy communities both preserve and invent culture, they conserve “history and
Both Jackson, Hodgeson and Beavers (2011) and Soule, Hodgeson, and Beavers (2011) define activities that communities can do to reinforce identity through the placekeeping process. Placemakers (or placekeepers) should work to understand community context. Begin placemaking and community planning by compiling the history and heritage of a place (Jackson, Hodgeson, Beavers, 2011). Community development should be culturally responsive and rely on community participation. Work with trusted community organizations like churches and community centers to record and facilitate community stories and contemporary cultural practices of the community. These are places where less formal and less well funded creativity is expressed. Jackson and Herranz (2002) call these “indigenous venues of validation” (p. 6).

Intangible history and heritage is often not protected or valued until it is in danger. For this reason, efforts to preserve, affirm, and advance cultural heritage can contribute to building community and community identity. In our context in Northern New Mexico, recording community stories both helps to reinforce and strengthen cultural identity as well as educate newcomers about the place they are living in. Cultural heritage is shared by the community and rooted in the history of the people and place. Placekeeping can help manifest that heritage.

Soule, Hodgeson, and Beavers (2011) and Jackson and Herranz (2002) suggest creating a cultural inventory or asset map of cultural resources. A cultural inventory should involve a broad spectrum of stakeholders and address population and demographic information, social and architectural history, language, food culture,
customs, landscape, public spaces, natural resources, transportation infrastructure, informal cultural resources, and formal cultural resources like art and educational institutions and galleries. It can also address religious organizations, informal gathering spaces, restaurants and stores, and festivals. While Embudo Valley Library hasn’t done a cultural inventory, we identified community assets through a group of three focus groups in Spring 2019 (Cotter, Fonseca, Bissell, 2019).

Soule, Hodgeson, and Beavers (2011) encourage a local implementation framework, or place-based development that reinforces the cultural goals and vision of a community. In our case, this means involving the local community in defining project goals, vision, planning, and implementation. Residents let us know they wanted development to be in scale with our rural agricultural identity. While projects should reflect local vision, needs, and histories, sometimes, outsider perspectives are more objective. Outsiders are less likely to get caught up in internal community dynamics (Sarantitis, 2020), and can help resolve conflict, like in the case of the Community Bridge Project in Frederick, Maryland. In this instance artist William Cochran helped the community move beyond divisive debate to transform a plain, concrete traffic bridge into a large-scale work of public art that engaged the community in its creation.

Arts and cultural programming brings placemaking out of a focus on the built environment and into the realm of people and how they will inhabit the space. Placekeeping can integrate community history into everyday lived experience through parks, open spaces, and public streets. Venues like farmer’s markets create “recurrent community gathering space” (Jackson, Hodgeson, Beavers, 2011, p. 7) and communal cultural activities. Arts and cultural programming support community character and
sense of place, and create opportunities for historical and cultural education and for participation in community life through festivals, events, and other activities (Soule, Hodgeson, Beavers, 2011). Dixon’s annual Fiesta de Santa Rosa is key programming that the whole community participates in. The library sponsors baile folklorico classes paired with the Fiesta where local youth learn the traditional dances of the region. The baile folklorico classes are an opportunity for youth to learn regional traditions and connect to the history and lifeways of the community.

**Parks, Open Spaces, and Social Determinants of Health**

Placemaking has potential to use arts in the service of community and economic development (Wilson, 2015). It can have different focused outcomes. Some placemaking, like the effort at Embudo Valley Library, is highly focused on parks and open spaces. The Trust for Public Land defines this as “a cooperative, community-based process that leads to new and rejuvenated parks and open spaces that reflect local identity through arts and culture” (2019). It is characterized by using arts and culture, community engagement, partnership, and stewardship to create equity (Trust for Public Land, 2019).

Social determinants of health are social, environmental, and economic factors that influence health (Kamal, Cox, Blumenkranz, 2017). Effects of social determinants of health can be seen in life expectancy, mortality, and disease burden rates. These factors are related to economic stability, neighborhood and physical environment, education, food, community and social context, and health care systems (Smith, 2019, Henry J. Kaiser Foundation). The Neighborhood and Physical Environment factors identified by Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation are especially related to parks and the built environment.
In 2015, the Trust for Public Land (Clarke, 2017) worked with a coalition of partners in Wenatchee, Washington, a center of large-scale fruit growing with a strong multi-generational Latino/Mexican community, to redesign and renovate 1.26 acre Kiwanis Methow Park. Their work helped me understand how parks can positively impact community health in unexpected ways. In this example, Trust for Public Land worked with the Mexican community to keep the park as a gathering space and address local health concerns. A 2013 community health assessment determined that the Latino community suffered from acute mental health issues and the town didn’t have the capacity to address these needs. The coalition partners organized a cultural event in Methow-Kiwanis park featuring music and dance as well as non-profit and for-profit
health service providers. The event drew 400 people to the park, and was deemed a success. From this experience, the coalition realized that cultural events at the park attracted a broad range of residents, and were also a way to address mental health needs. In the end, the park renovation resulted in new ways to link cultural events to community health needs. Author Clark (2017) states, “What began around an impulse to renovate a key community park resulted in building tools to address issues around public space, health, economic development and education, demonstrating the multiple benefits that parks and open spaces provide” (Clarke, 2017, p. 35).

Looking at the health potential of the Embudo Valley Library park project made it much more interesting to me. Are there ways this specific rural public park could address health disparities and improve community health? This could be one outcome the library plans for, with relevant metrics to measure if and how the project improves health.

**Equity and Infrastructure**

Building a park at Embudo Valley Library will be an infrastructure investment in the community’s public space. Large infrastructure investments can create equity and improve health outcomes (Blackwell, 2017). The history of infrastructure investment, or lack thereof, in the US has been devastating to some communities-for example, contaminated drinking water in Flint, Michigan. Chione Flegal, in *Five Recommendations to Create Equitable Infrastructure Investments* (2019) states, “for too many people, infrastructure has been an oppressive force. A way to consolidate wealth and power for some while reinforcing racial and economic exclusion.”

To achieve equity, Flegal (2019) recommends serving underinvested communities without pushing out existing residents and improving health and quality of life for
residents and communities who have experienced disinvestment. Flegal (2019) says infrastructure should be equitably owned, financed, and funded, so that benefits go to low income people and communities of color; infrastructure investments should create good jobs and opportunities for locals; and projects should include residents in decision making at every step. Community priorities should shape decisions, projects, and outcomes. Flegal (2019) states “Achieving equity requires shared decision making that is rooted in transparency and a commitment to changing inequitable policies and practices.”

Achieving equity in the Embudo Valley Library project means participatory community decision making, generating local employment through the park, and creating mechanisms so that original community residents aren’t pushed out through escalating real estate values.

**Placemaking and Community Safety**

The placemaking that is most resonant to me is placemaking that has intentional goals of creating equity for lower income communities or communities of color. The most powerful examples have community level outcomes, like increasing community safety, which also improves community health. Treskon, Esthappen, et. al, 2018, in “Creative Placemaking and Community Safety” (2018), did case studies of four sites that represented different efforts at placemaking so that “communities and their residents can be safe from risk of harm, injury, or loss of property” (p. 2). The authors define creative placemaking as “efforts to integrate art into a range of community planning and development efforts” (Treskon, Esthappen, et. al., 2018, p. 1).

The four initiatives were different, but all shared four strong facets: promoting healthy identity of self and community, entrepreneurialism and skills building, changing
perceptions and repairing blight, and connecting people to geography. The arts in the case study sites were a broad spectrum of murals, music, sculpture, and dance, as well as other work like promoting entrepreneurship, engaging stakeholders, and using space in new ways (Treskon, Esthappen, et. al., 2018).

The activities that these case study sites used to increase public safety and enhance community health and well-being resonated with me because they integrate design, construction, and programming with engagement and capacity building processes and community goals. While these sites had an ultimate goal of increasing community safety, their methods are a blueprint for any kind of placemaking. The first goal is to get people to visit and stay, through both programming and amenities. As the authors state, “Welcoming design and amenities play a role, but so does programming, especially programming that incorporates arts and culture. Gatherings and events draw people in and familiarize them with a place” (Treskon, Esthappen, et. al., 2018, p. 7). Designers (stakeholders) need to use tools to understand what programming is appealing to the intended users. Cultural activities, for example, are avenues to expressing and supporting culture and identity. Surveys and youth involvement were used in the case study sites to shape appealing programming. For Embudo Valley Library, this suggests programming has to be included in the discussion, rather than a pure emphasis on design features.

Pilot concepts by creating small projects that inform and/or lead to bigger ones. This is similar to the prototyping process in design thinking and human centered design. The primary outcome of this is to build support for larger, more permanent infrastructure. This approach can help build community buy-in. It can also be used to keep a project
active during long-term fundraising, and allow for experimentation and quick changes. Examples are muralizing temporary spaces.

Create a sense of play, which is related to individual and community health. This can help people interact across differences through spaces that cultivate unprogrammed activities and interactions. Play draws people in, fosters ownership, reduces stress, breaks down social barriers, and increases connection between individuals. In this way, play increases health and helps create an equitable environmental space. According to Wolf and Wolf (2012) “play encourages youth to take healthy risks, develop positive relationships, and use problem-solving skills. For residents of high-crime neighborhoods, especially youth, play provides a way to reinvent and rearticulate their self-narratives and find healthy outlets for expression” (Treskon, Esthappen et. al., 2019, p. 9). Engaging participants as creators (Treskon, Esthappen, et. al. 2018) will draw a broader spectrum of community members than passive arts events. Play can be encouraged through active and passive recreation, and through structured and unstructured events.

Embudo Valley Library brings an *Imagination Playground*, a large set of big blue blocks, for kids to play with at the fiesta. It has been immensely successful, and provides a creative, open ended play outlet for these children. From my own experience as a parent, play is a great way to connect with your children, and also a great way to connect with other people that you might not normally interact with. Playgrounds are special places. Community requests highlighted the need for play features for children and families.

Create a place for diverse groups to interact safely. When people inhabit the space, it becomes safer, interaction builds community and empathy, and eventually,
social capital (long lasting relationships). Creative placemaking can target crime hot spots and replace negative activities with positive ones. People connect in public parks and spaces in ways they normally wouldn’t in their regular lives.

Use arts in training, skill building, and employment development. This results in local community economic development. Many places that face safety issues also have a dearth of employment and education opportunities. Hire locals to do project installation, maintenance, and upkeep. For Embudo Valley Library, a direct goal of the project could be local employment. Some work could be done through Youth Conservation Corps, a youth training and jobs program.

Create a system so that marginalized groups have a voice. Let people determine their goals for a space or event. To do this you create inclusive processes, and users help define the space, which is another tenet of human centered design. This results in building agency, creating a more vibrant program and space, and greater community buy-in. Creative placemaking can move beyond informing and consultation to active partnership and community control (Treskon, Esthappen, et. al., 2018). Efforts are sustainable when there is broad community involvement, and accountability in decision making. The Library park survey and subsequent community meeting communicating the results allowed for community participation, which is helping to re-build community trust. Many people who filled out paper survey forms at the Fiesta have never been engaged in library programs before. This was a whole new way for the library to connect with parts of our community.

Create spaces that can be adaptable to changing needs. This is resilience. Spaces that are designed this way have flexible layouts, materials, spaces, and programming.
The benefit is that they are responsive to new users over time. In our context this means don’t overbuild the space. Embudo Valley Library can create a simple yet beautiful and functional space and then rely on programming to bring it to life. In terms of programmatic resilience, on-going evaluation and inclusion of new participants can help to achieve that.

Question existing systems and institutions, to build broad support for systems-change and equitable, inclusive policies. The arts can invite communities and individuals to think differently about their lives and the institutions around them. For us, at Embudo Valley Library, this means broadening our goals to think about how we can address affordable housing, economic development, and workforce development for rural residents, and how we can link those issues to park development, broader strategies in the community and region, and new partnerships.

Through the case studies, the authors found that the primary challenges in creative placemaking are long term resources, community buy-in, and participation. The case study successes were linked to defining project goals up front through asking “What are the goals of our intervention?”, by using community engagement so that stakeholders, residents, and leaders understood the goals of the intervention/project, and by using smaller projects to be part of a broader community development strategy (Treskon, Esthappen, et. al. 2018). Linking the park project to equity building strategies in the Embudo Valley will be the next step for the Library to undertake. The Library should define the goals of the project and ensure that stakeholders understand those goals.
Arts and Culture in Community

Why are arts and culture important? Jackson and Herranz, in *Culture Counts in Communities, A Framework for Measurement*, (Urban Institute, 2002), did foundational research about how creativity relates to community. The findings were that arts and cultural participation are essential to community-building processes and are important in community life. Arts and cultural expressions can capture the history and aspirations of a community in music, song, murals, sculpture, and stories. Arts and culture are also deeply embedded in other community processes. Creative expressions mentioned by community members were viewed as community assets and often connected to community building processes worth advancing.

Their research distilled four guiding principles used to understand what creative and artistic endeavors community members value. Definitions of art, culture, and creativity depend on the distinct cultural values, preferences, and realities of community residents and stakeholders (Jackson, Herranz, 2002). Cultural expression happens along a community continuum in places like community centers, church halls, libraries, and bars, as well as theatres, galleries, and museums. People participate and engage in arts, culture, and creative expression in widely diverse ways (Jackson, Herranz, 2002), by making, doing, learning, teaching, presenting, promoting, judging, and supporting creative expression. Creative expression is valued for aesthetic and technical reasons, but also because it can draw people together to transmit heritage and culture. In the context of Dixon, NM, the Fiesta de Santa Rosa is a cultural festival that draws distant family members back to the community once a year to reconnect with friends and family. It is also a shared cultural event and common meeting ground for the Hispanic and Anglo
cultures in the community. Creative expression in community happens through collective efforts across many different kinds of organizations (Jackson, Herranz, 2002). For example, Embudo Valley Library receives New Mexico Arts funding for the youth afterschool program, the expenses of the Fiesta de Santa Rosa are fundraised by the volunteer Fiesta committee, and the Dixon Studio Tour pursues its arts related mission through membership work that produces the annual studio tour.

Jackson and Herranz (2002) concluded that case studies of community arts practices are the best method for evaluating creative expression in community. Their conclusion reinforces Markusen’s suggestion (2012) that placemaking evaluation should be based on project specific metrics.

Linking Arts and Culture to Community Revitalization

Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa Nicodemus wrote a 2010 National Endowment for the Arts white paper that launched the term “Creative Placemaking” into the national discourse. Markusen and Gadwa (2010) explained how creative placemaking is community revitalization that stimulates economic development. It results in increases in livability, jobs, diversity, and incomes. It is rooted in partnerships that leverage diverse funding and multi-dimensional community-level outcomes. Improvements to livability can mean increased public safety, community identity, environmental quality, affordable housing and workspace, transportation, and collaboration between civic, non-profit, and for-profit partners. Economic development through creative placemaking happens when more dollars are spent locally for art, culture, goods, and services, and then re-circulated through the local economy. Property and sales tax revenues increase, jobs are generated
through retail, art, cultural production, and construction. New businesses and residents are attracted to these communities.

Creative places contribute to the economy: 2 million Americans are self-employed artists; 3.8 million, 3% of the workforce, are cultural workers. Markusen and Gadwa (2010) used original economic research and case studies to summarize twenty years of creative American placemaking. They looked at innovative initiatives in large and small cities, metropolitan and rural places. They reviewed existing literature, scanning hundreds of cases of place-based creative revitalization, and made an in-depth analysis of more than a dozen efforts. They found successful strategies that succeeded “when initiators built partnerships across sectors, missions, and levels of government, leveraging funds from diverse sources and programs” (Markusen, Gadwa, 2010, p. 5).

The authors found that arts and culture make substantial contributions to local economic development, livability, and cultural industry competitiveness yet these contributions haven’t been recognized in policy (Markusen, Gadwa, 2010).

**History of Creative Placemaking**

Anne Nicodemus, in *Fuzzy Vibrancy: Creative Placemaking as Ascendant US Cultural Policy* (2013), says creative placemaking has goals of “arts-centred initiatives with place-based physical, economic, and/or social outcomes” (p. 213), that link cultural activity and community development. The author’s goal in the paper is to understand how creative placemaking relates to previous cultural policy initiatives, and how it relates to previous approaches to arts based economic and community development. Criticisms of creative placemaking are that it supports development and gentrification rather than supporting social equity.
In the US, the arts have a decentralized funding system. “Furthermore, funding patterns have traditionally focused on preserving and presenting visual art and music based on the classical Western European canon, with organizations with budgets over $5 million (2% of the universe) receiving half of arts funding” (Nicodemus, 2013, p. 214-215). National Endowment for the Arts chairman Rocco Landesman helped art become a part of the discussion around community revitalization when he launched the concept of creative placemaking by presenting the potential of the arts “to catalyze successful cross-sector partnerships and advance missions in education, health and human services, housing, rural development, and transportation” (Nicodemus, 2013, p. 215).

Creative placemaking builds on previous trends around arts economic development. One of these is microdevelopment, or grassroots arts strategies that stimulate community revitalization and beautification through arts programs that foster community engagement, and through neighborhood art centers that provide opportunities to make art. Micro development is an example of how smaller arts organizations and cultural activities support gradual change that benefits existing, often low-income, communities. Nicodemus concluded that at the time the article was written (2013), next steps in the field of creative placemaking were to define indicators, metrics, and evaluation tools to measure impact.

**Rural Placemaking**

How is “rural” defined? The US Census defines urban as 50,000 or more residents, and “urban clusters” as 2,500-50,000 residents. According to the National Governor’s Association/National Endowment for the Arts Rural Prosperity through the
Arts action guide, rural is anything not included in those definitions, or places with less than 50,000 in population, that are isolated from urban areas (NGA, NEA, 2019).

HandMade in America was a community development corporation active from 1995-2015; their mission was to grow economies through craft and to advance Western North Carolina as the cradle of craft (https://www.guidestar.org/profile/31-1604083). They did groundbreaking work creating sustainable solutions to rural economic/community development. Much of the contemporary creative placemaking practice and processes are based on models that they developed. Their work especially focused on craft as a means for community revitalization, to create livable and vibrant spaces, and act as an engine for sustainable economic growth. Working in 14 communities in Western North Carolina, they “leveraged public, private, nonprofit and community resources to help raise the annual economic impact of the region’s professional craft industry from $122 million in 1995 to $206.6 million in 2008” (Citizen Times, 2014). HandMade in America didn’t train artists to become better artists, rather, they trained “craft entrepreneurs to develop the skills they need to be innovative small business owners” (Citizen Times, 2014). What made HandMade in America unique is that they worked in very small communities with populations of less than 2,000. Many communities didn’t have mayors, or even town managers (Citizen Times, 2014).

MainStreet programs are also known for their work in rural and small-town revitalization. MainStreet was originally designed for towns of 5,000-50,000. Rural MainStreet Iowa pioneered using the four-point MainStreet approach in towns of less than 2,000 in size. Bradbury (2014) found that the Rural MainStreet Iowa programs had proportionally greater benefits in communities of less than 2,000 in size. Many
MainStreet characteristics are similar to the creative placemaking language, especially the cross-sector partnerships. This could mean a MainStreet program could be helpful for the community of Dixon, if we could find a way to sustain it.

Anne Gadwa Nicodemus did case studies on four rural communities that showed placemaking success, and summarized her findings in *Small is Beautiful: Creative Placemaking in Rural Communities* (2014). Starting in 1996, Bakersville, North Carolina participated in HandMade in America’s Small Town Revitalization program. The Small Town program starts with an intensive three to four day community assessment process where professionals with expertise in economic development, design, historic preservation, marketing/PR, organizational development, and an artist, guide citizens and local officials to clarify goals and strategies to pursue incremental change and secure funding. Nicodemus found that two distinctive characteristics of the Small Town Program in Bakersville were a cross-sector orientation (professionals representing disparate expertise) and peer-to-peer learning across a regional network (Nicodemus, 2014). Bakersville was successful in doing physical and economic re-development. Over the past 20 years they have gained 11 new businesses and 37 jobs in a town of only 350. Some of these businesses are galleries, artist’s studios, a restaurant, and bed and breakfasts.

Nicodemus notes that rural places and cultures are distinctive (2014), and foster a deep sense of community and connectedness (bell hooks, Belonging). From the four rural case study sites Nicodemus concluded that successful strategies were rooted in arts and culture and were able to attract private sector buy-in, partnerships across sectors, missions, and levels of government, and overcame community skepticism to build public
will (Nicodemus, 2014). Commonalities among the sites were that they leveraged distinctive cultural traditions, and strategies were linked to natural assets and agricultural practice. Three out of the four case study areas are part of federally recognized national heritage areas, “places where natural, cultural, and historic resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally important landscape” (Nicodemus, 2014, p. 3). Dixon is part of the federally designated Northern Rio Grande National Heritage Area. We share this feature.

The Rural Prosperity through the Arts and Creative Sector Rural Action Guide, produced by the National Governor’s Association and the National Endowment for the Arts (2019), describes how arts and cultural assets can build economic opportunity and increase vibrancy in rural America. The action guide is based on principles of arts-based rural development: to be effective, initiatives should be based on creative assets and needs of rural communities; creative sector initiatives work best when integrated with an economic development plan; and “creative sector initiatives add value when integrated with additional state and local policies and practices such as workforce development, community development and housing” (NGA, NEA, 2019, p. 3). The report profiles examples of communities that “have become more economically resilient and sustainable through creative sector initiatives” (NGA, NEA, 2019, p. 3). In these cases, the creative sector anchored a system’s change framework for their rural community.

Process steps recommended in the action guide are to inventory your cultural assets, make the arts part of an economic development plan, create collective impact through strategic partnerships, take advantage of federal programs and funding, and identify a bright spot (or model) and take it to scale, with the ultimate goal of integrating arts with long term economic and community development (NGA, NEA, 2019).
Social Capital and Placemaking

In what ways can creative placemaking be linked to increasing community capacity? In “Building Social Capital Through Creative Placemaking” authors Prakash and Spinelli (2016) articulate how placemaking can support a participatory process that “challenges and empowers local communities to take ownership of the space planning process” (p. 54). Creative placemaking is defined as “the interplay of the needs and the aspirations of the community enacted in the design of the built environment” (Prakash, Spinelli, 2016, p. 54). The authors found that creative placemaking can enrich a community in four areas: community-led design, identity, social capital (relationships), and productivity.

The authors see that much of the current practice of placemaking isn’t focused on strengthening the community (Prakash, Spinelli, 2016). Their aspiration is for placemaking to “achieve strong and resilient communities that through social interactions can build equity and civic engagement” (Prakash, Spinelli, 2016, p. 55). By using community engagement strategies, creative placemaking can use arts and culture to build social interaction and determine who has the right to occupy public space. Social and civic engagement led by the arts results in economic benefits and revitalization for communities (Social Impact of the Arts research project, conducted at the University of Pennsylvania by Mark Stern and Susan Seifert).

Prakash and Spinelli (2016) emphasize the value of including community voice in the placemaking design process. They posit that community led design as a placemaking strategy can generate a sense of belonging, create equity and civic engagement, and
provide opportunities to strengthen a community by building social relationships (social capital) among community members.

Prakash and Spinelli (2016) pointed me towards the use of human centered design based on the model elaborated by IDEO.org (2015). Community led design, or co-design, is a bottom up approach that has the goal of building community capacity. “Allowing people to take control of their surroundings means fundamentally a change of attitude from being passive users of services and spaces to being designers and producers of them” (Prakash, Spinelli, 2016, p. 57).

The authors found that “community-led design realizes local assets and skills within the community and instils confidence into local people, enabling them to tackle ongoing and new challenges” (Prakash, Spinelli, 2016, p. 58). A community engagement process can produce multiple benefits of realizing local assets, building community confidence, and developing a sense of belonging and ownership. Drawbacks to a community engagement design process is that it takes longer and may raise conflict.

Prakash and Spinelli (2016) found that civic organizations have a distinct role to play in bridging the gap between top down planning and community led design. Asset mapping, using engagement strategies to identify places and their people as assets, helps create confidence, and is a useful first step in community led design. Understanding and identifying assets generates self-sufficiency, rather than a reliance on outside resources. Asset mapping is a mechanism for communities to use “their local knowledge, skills, and talent” (Prakash, Spinelli, 2016, p. 59) to shape and contribute to a project. Trust and reciprocity are key elements of social capital (relationships), and are the means by which community networks generate opportunity. When there is trust and reciprocity, that leads
to positive participation. Social capital builds the identity of a community, which in turn, results in a better-connected and more productive community.

Prakash and Spinelli (2016) cited research showing that “Civic organisations can be considered as drivers for change in four dimensions: they are mind-setters, innovators, researchers and process-oriented (Turner, 2013)” (Praksh, Spinelli, 2016, p. 59). Civic organizations can help access resources and help the community overcome skepticism. The authors recommend that civic organizations use engagement tools to listen to and build trust with the community (Prakash, Spinelli, 2016). Don’t seek results too soon.

Bring together a diverse group of people to problem solve and build a shared vision. Use the community’s assets in placemaking. Build a physical model that community members can respond to, and look for opportunities for small, incremental change that connect to longer term projects, and that build community identity and maintain community relationships. When people are involved from the start, that builds ownership. A well-designed built environment gives people a reason to linger in their public spaces. The authors note that “Small and incremental changes are likely to sustain a community for a longer period of time” (Prakash, Spinelli, 2016, p. 64). The conclusion of the research is that placemaking can impact empowerment and community-building as much as it can impact public space.

**Impacts of the Arts on Society**

The National Governor’s Association action guide cites research showing that the creative sector can help state economies thrive (NGA, NEA, 2019). The creative sector diversifies the economic base, supports innovation, and increases livability. Arts and culture are economic development drivers. For example, “In terms of value added to the
U.S. economy, the arts and cultural sectors contribute a greater share than do mining, agriculture, the energy/utilities sector or industries such as construction and transportation” (NGA, NEA, 2019, p. 5).

The NEA/USDA Economic Research Service’s Rural Establishment Innovation Survey (REIS) (NGA, NEA, 2019) shows innovation and quality of life impacts attributable to the arts. Rural arts organizations draw non-local visitors at higher rates than urban arts, innovative and design related businesses rise proportionally to the number of performing arts organizations, rural counties with performing arts organizations show population growth and higher incomes, and rural businesses report that arts and entertainment help them retain and attract workers (NGA, NEA, 2019). In Northern New Mexico there are many regional art tours like the Dixon Studio Tour that draw visitors annually. Dixon has a repertory theatre group, the Dixon Community Players, that draws visitors to the community.

Much of the research around impacts of arts focus on economic impact and educational outcomes for students. Jackson and Herranz profiled research demonstrating that “educational achievement is higher among people who study or practice the arts” (2002, p. 32). Other research they cite suggests that “art and cultural participation contribute to youth development by improving problem-solving abilities, communication skills, and self-esteem (2002, p. 38). Economic impact studies they cite suggest “the arts create jobs, increase the local tax base, boost tourism, spur growth in related businesses (e.g., hotels, restaurants, printing shops) and improve the overall quality of life for cities and towns” (2002, p. 32).
This research suggests that the arts contribute positively to youth development, education, and local economies, and also has indirect effects on community building, social capital (community relationships and networks), civic participation, economic development, stewardship of place, increased public safety, preservation of cultural heritage, bridging cultural and ethnic boundaries, transmitting culture and history, and creating group memory and group identity.

The Arts and Cultural Production Satellite Account of the National Endowment for the Arts tracks the annual economic impact of arts and cultural production from 35 commercial and non-profit industries, ranging from architectural services to sound recording. The ACPSA reports that the arts and cultural sector employed five million people nationally who earned $386 billion (ACPSA, 2019), and that $2.9 billion value was added to New Mexico’s economy by the arts, which is 3.2% of the state’s economy. In New Mexico, $1.5 billion dollars is spent in arts worker compensation and 26,605 people are employed in the arts. New Mexico was number 7 in fastest growing states for annual growth in arts and culture value added 2014-2016 (ACPSA, 2019), with an annual growth rate above the national average of 5.9 percent, measured from 2014-2016. New Mexico has an annual growth rate of 7.7 percent. Arts are an integral part of the economy of Dixon. The community has many artists and a strong annual Studio Tour.

Key findings from the ACPSA report are that the arts and cultural sector contributed $804.2 billion or 4.3 percent to the nation’s gross domestic product (GDP) in 2016. The value-added to GDP by arts and cultural production is nearly five times greater than that of the agricultural sector. Arts and culture adds nearly $60 billion more
than construction and $227 billion more than transportation and warehousing to the U.S. economy. The average annual growth rate for arts and culture outperforms the growth rate of the total U.S. economy. From 2014 to 2016, the average annual growth rate in the contribution of arts and culture was 4.16 percent, nearly double the 2.22 percent growth rate of the total U.S. economy.

**Evaluation of Placemaking Efforts**

As placemaking becomes a common term and practice, practitioners need evaluative tools to help them learn from and improve on their work. The purpose of evaluation is to monitor progress over time towards the goals of the project. In *Fuzzy Concepts, Proxy Data: Why Indicators Would Not Track Creative Placemaking Success* (2012), Ann Markusen critiques the two major creative placemaking funders, National Endowment for the Arts and ArtPlace, for relying on external data to evaluate placemaking projects. The author recommends that evaluation of creative placemaking projects should be based on criteria defined by grantees themselves, that funders and policy makers should provide technical assistance to grantees, and support grantees to share and learn from each other. She also recommends committing to a five to seven-year timeline. Markusen notes that few placemaking projects succeed in five years, and some take 10 to 15 years. Markusen (2012) recommends a three-stage evaluation process where a) grantees identify criteria for success and report on those at identified times, b) funding from major donors is based on appropriateness of evaluation, continued monitoring, and continued reporting, c) funders use reports to provide feedback to grantees and support them in redesigning goals as needed. She also suggests that funders provide technical assistance to grantees in combination with cohort learning over time.
The author states “a good evaluation system will monitor the progress of each project team towards its stated goals, including revisions made along the way” (Markusen, 2012, p. 292).

The community safety sites studied by Treskon, Esthappen et. al. (2018) used evaluation to communicate their successes, and create the structure for future improvement. The evaluation frameworks identified what data would be collected, and what questions would be asked to assess effectiveness. In successful evaluation, programs and funders dedicate funding, staff time, and resources to data collection, analysis, and reflection on the intervention. Evaluation can be informed by improvement science, which asks three main questions: 1. What are we trying to accomplish? 2. How will we know that a change is an improvement? 3. What change can we make that will result in improvement? (Lemire, Christie, and Inkelas 2017). This reflects the initial starting point of identifying what the goals of the intervention are. Evaluation best practices in the Treskon, Esthapen et. al. (2018) case study sites used four general rules: data collection and evaluation should be integrated into the project in the developmental phase; instruments should be simple to administer; evaluative tools should be project specific; and participants should be engaged in the process while also respecting their time.

“Painting a mural or hosting a performance won’t have much of an effect if it is done without community understanding, support, or input” (Treskon, Esthappen et. al., 2018, p. 23). One way to avoid this is to learn from the community and incorporate their input.
Chapter 4

Methods and Data Analysis

This research supports a public park creative placemaking project at Embudo Valley Library. Through the literature review, I learned what creative placemaking is and how to do it, and formulated a methodology based on the practice of human centered design. Human centered design embodies many creative placemaking best practices, combining techniques to understand and elevate community history and identity, community cultural practice, community assets, and the people you are designing for, with in-depth community engagement mechanisms and prototyping. Human centered design is centered around the needs of the users, the people who will occupy and inhabit your space. The two sources I relied on to understand human centered design were the “Design Thinking Bootleg” from the d.school at Stanford University (2018), and the “Field Guide to Human Centered Design” created by IDEO.org (2015).

The Field Guide to Human Centered Design by Ideo.org says, to be a human centered designer, means

believing that the people who face...problems everyday are the ones who hold the key to their answer. Human centered designers offer problem solvers...a chance to design with communities, to deeply understand the people they’re looking to serve, ....and to create innovative new solutions rooted in people’s actual needs (Ideo.org, 2015, p. 9).

The community responded negatively to the idea that a mobile stage and public park would be geared towards visitors to the community and generating revenue for the library. Human centered design suggested an early need, in our case, was to define who the existing users of the library grounds were, and consider the current users and residents of the community as who we would ultimately be designing for.
Human centered design happens through three phases: inspiration based on observation, ideation to make sense of what you learned, and implementation (Ideo.org, 2015). In the inspiration phase the goal is to understand people and build empathy. This phase can begin with surveys, interviews, and observation. In the ideation phase, you’ll make sense of what you learned, generate ideas and opportunities, prototype to get it right, and then test and refine your solutions (Ideo.org, 2015). In the implementation phase, you “bring your solution to life” (Ideo.org, 2015, p. 11), with the goal to maximize impact. The objective is to find solutions that are “desirable, viable, and feasible” (Ideo.org, 2015, p. 14). When solutions meet these three criteria they will be both successful and sustainable.

The d.school at Stanford University made a “Design Thinking Bootleg” (2018), another human centered design toolkit. It is shorter than IDEO.org’s toolkit (2015) and therefore a bit easier to understand how to implement. The Design Thinking Bootleg (d.school at Stanford University, 2018) breaks the three phases of human centered design into five steps of empathize, define, ideate, prototype, and test. The first mode, EMPATHIZE, is the foundation of human centered design. To empathize, you observe users of your product/project and their behavior, engage with users by interacting and interviewing, capture quotes, take notes, and watch. You try to understand first-hand who you are designing for, so that you can find the best solutions. In this phase, you “identify the right users to design for,” uncover their needs, and “use your insights to design innovative solutions” (d.school at Stanford University, 2018, p. 4).

In the Embudo Valley Library park project, I followed the human centered design recommendations to understand and empathize with the users of our space. I developed
three different surveys to identify who the users are, understand their needs, and contextualize the project within the programmatic and historic context we are working in.

Table 3. Total Park Survey Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Response Breakdown</th>
<th>Rationale for Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park Survey</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>93 Paper surveys from Fiesta attendees, Afterschool parents, Early Literacy parents, Library patrons 60 Responses on-line</td>
<td>Identify users, understand current uses of grounds, understand needs of users, empathize with users, identify future programming, learn concerns, initiate community feedback loop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Survey</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>27 from afterschool program participants 10 from 5th/6th grade students at Dixon elementary</td>
<td>Survey crafted specific to this age group and literacy level in order to understand needs of users, empathize with users, gain inspiration for park design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library/Store Oral Histories</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>4 interviews 34 paper and online survey responses</td>
<td>Identify users, empathize with users, understand needs of users, understand how park, library, and store serve community, initiate community feedback loop, listen to long-standing community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>228</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

People Make Parks (http://peoplemakeparks.org/tools/), a joint project of Hester Street Collaborative and Partnerships for Parks, was an invaluable resource for helping me shape the methods and survey instruments we used. I prepared a draft park survey which the library board helped me refine, and we launched it at the two-day Fiesta de Santa Rosa on August 24-25, 2019. At the library booth, we actively asked Fiesta attendees to fill out the survey. I and a small team also went out in the crowd and solicited personal responses from community members, either by leaving them with a
clip board and survey to fill out, or by interviewing them and talking them through the survey. This process was particularly valuable because the Fiesta de Santa Rosa is well attended by the Hispanic community. Many people who attend the Fiesta may not use the library for any other reason during the year. It is a huge boon to the library that we are fiscal sponsor to the fiesta and host it on library grounds, thereby connecting to this long community tradition.

We received 93 direct responses from the current users of the library grounds, including Fiesta attendees, afterschool program parents, early literacy program parents, and other library patrons. A community member approached me after we had launched the paper survey requesting changes to the survey to measure whether community members wanted a permanent stage, and to measure concern about potential impacts related to programming and events on library grounds. We made these changes to the survey and launched an on-line version which received 60 responses. According to the Pew Research Center, only 63% of rural American households have broadband, as compared to 75% and above for urban and suburban Americans (Perrin, 2019), and only 56% of those with annual incomes less than $30,000 have home broadband (Anderson, 2019). It is therefore likely that the 60 survey responses we received on-line were from households with broadband, and a higher annual income.

I developed a simple four question survey for children and youth. 27 afterschool program children responded to the survey questions in a group discussion, and the afterschool children each drew a picture of what they’d like in a new park. The afterschool group has many kindergarten and first grade students. I thought it was unrealistic for this age group to fill out a written survey. The group discussion worked
well, and their individual drawings are amazing! I also went into the 5th and 6th grade classroom at Dixon elementary, had them fill out the survey, and then share their thoughts with the group.

People Make Parks (n.d.) recommends gathering oral histories to understand what makes your park special. Oral history gathering also feeds into a human centered design process as it builds empathy with the people you are designing for and with. Many sources (Soule, Hodgeson and Beavers (2011), Jackson and Herranz (2002), Jackson, Hodgeson, and Beavers (2011)) recommend creating mechanisms to understand community context at the beginning of a planning process. I created a third survey, the Library/Store Oral Histories survey, in the hopes that I could gain information about the history of the library property, community member’s perspectives on long-term change in the community, and the role of the library.

The second step in human centered design is DEFINE (d.school at Stanford University, 2018). This is where you distill what you found from the empathy phase and you make “an actionable problem statement” (d.school at Stanford University, 2018, p. 5). This is your POINT OF VIEW, which is your “unique design vision framed by your specific users” (d.school at Stanford University, 2018, p. 5). In the define mode, you express the problem you hope to address. The problem statement becomes your solution generating launching point. Your point of view should have strong language, preserve the emotion of the users you’re designing for, include insight, and generate lots of possibilities.

I followed the human centered design DEFINE mode by doing data analysis from the three surveys. I created a power point to present the survey results, shared it online,
made hard copies available in the library, and shared the results at the Embudo Valley Library annual meeting on February 19, 2020.

**Oral History Survey Data Analysis**

I conducted four oral history interviews. There were 34 additional oral history survey responses, both via paper and on-line. I went to a September Farmer’s Market to get survey responses, solicited paper responses, and used Survey Monkey, an online tool, to make an online survey that was announced twice. I used excel spreadsheets to summarize and code the oral history survey responses. The oral history interviews and surveys create an excellent context within which to understand the role of the library and store in relation to our community history and perceptions of change. They helped me discover deeper roots about the property than I had known before.

The property originally belonged to Seferina Martinez, Lebeo Martinez’ grandmother. Her husband Manuel died at a young age in the flu epidemic of 1918. She was left with 1 son and two daughters; her son, Jose Paz, was Lebeo's father, who eventually ended up as an only child. Seferina gave a portion of the property to be the Catholic Cemetery, and then, out of necessity, she sold the rest to Reverend Eliseo Cordova, the Presbyterian minister. Eliseo and Precedes were Lydia Zellers’ mother and father. Reverend Cordova gave Doc (Raleigh) Zellers and Lydia the land where they
built their house and Zellers’ store. Doc started the store in the early 1930’s. They built their house shortly thereafter.

The library and Dixon Cooperative Market fits into this 120-year historical context because the library bought the Zellers’ property, with a residence, store, and garage, in 2002. The building that houses Dixon Cooperative Market has been a store almost continuously for 86 years, since Doc Zellers founded the store in the early 1930s.

Lebeo Martinez started working in the Zellers’ store in 1951, when Lydia Zellers wrote to him in Utah, where he had gone for work after he graduated from Menaul High School, and asked if he would come and work in the store as a summer job. When Doc decided he was going to retire from the store, Lebeo took out a loan and bought the business. He continued to rent the building from the Zellers. Lebeo took over the store in 1969, working it for the next 23 years, until 1992, when he retired. In the end, he worked in or owned the business for 39 years. As proprietors of the store, Doc Zellers and Lebeo Martinez were important figures in the community. The library and Dixon Cooperative Market connect to this long community history through the buildings and grounds where they are now located. See Figures 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17, historic photos and a historic timeline of the property from circa 1900-2020.

---

1 Doc first built where the deli is now. The store was added on to over time. Doc started construction in the winter, with frozen adobes, and in the spring, one whole wall fell over and they had to re-do it. Doc was good with animals, which is why he had the nickname Doc. He and Lydia met in La Junta Colorado, where she was working as a teacher.

2 Lebeo Martinez graduated from Menaul High School in 1949, and had gone to Utah for work. Grace Rendon and Lebeo Martinez married in 1953. In 1952 Lebeo worked in the store for $5 a day, $30 a week. He worked six days a week, Monday through Saturday, and the store was closed on Sunday.
Figure 13. Doc and Lydia Zellers in front of Zellers’ store, circa 1934.

Source: Zellers’ family photo.

Figure 14. Lebeo’s Store (date unknown).

Source: Zellers’ family photo.
Figure 15. Zellers’ Store, 1994.

Source: Zellers’ family photo.

Figure 16. Dixon Cooperative Market, July 2019, after finishing most recent USDA Project.

Source: Felicity Fonseca.
Seferina Martinez (Lebeo Mtz. grandmother) owns property circa 1900

Seferina sells to Reverend Eliseo and Precedes Cordova circa 1918


Lydia files Zellers vs. Huff, 1948-1951 landmark educational court case contesting the use of nuns, religious brothers, and priests as teachers in publicly supported schools.

Lebeo Martinez hired in store 1951

Lebeo Martinez buys store in 1969; store now called "Lebeo's"


1997 store closes

2002 library purchases property, library moves to Zellers residence

2005 Dixon Cooperative Market opens in 1/3 of original Zellers' store

2008 Fiesta de Santa Rosa revived by volunteer committee

2012 HUFED and USDA RD grants help Dixon Cooperative Market expand to full 2,500 square foot store

2014 Embudo Valley Library moves into new 3,000 sq. ft. building

2015-2017 Teen Tile Mural Project and Youth Conservation Corps beautification of library grounds

2017-2019 USDA RD grants help make a full service deli and new porch and parking lot for store
Narrative Data Analysis from Library/Store Oral Histories

Responses to the question “What is special to you about library grounds?,” are that many community members have roots and memories on the property from their whole life, from childhood, and some for many generations. The property used to be private (the Zeller’s residence) and house an orchard. Now, the library grounds are a commons where people can come and meet and children can play and get together and it’s kind of like the town square. One person said, "It means so much to the town, it's the heart of the town." Many people commented that the landscaping is nice and well cared for, and they value the orchard, green space, and community programming.

Respondents answered the question “What events have happened to you on the library grounds or at the store (Dixon Coop/Lebeo's/Zeller's store) that have been memorable or meaningful?” Things that are most memorable about the property are its long connection to Zeller's and Lebeo's store and its connection to the tradition of the fiestas. One person said "The store has always been a good place for people to gather, talk, and socialize." The store was the identity of Dixon for a long time, and was a place to know and to be known. One person commented "I used to visit Zeller's store every time I visited Dixon as a child. To me, Zellers/Lebeo's WAS Dixon. Lebeo always remembered our names. It was about the only time in our lives that we were handed a dollar to buy anything we wanted." The library is linked to the community's long history of Fiestas, because they happen on the property now.

There are some great fiesta traditions, like the bands would charge a dime a dance; you could dance 10 dances for a dollar. A community member recounted "One band that used to come here was from Peñasco, his name was Luz. They used to play all
over. But his wife used to go out and collect and she wouldn’t miss anybody. She was pretty good at it, because we would try and hide from her and it wouldn’t work.” Many residents have good memories of the store from childhood.

The Fiesta de Santa Rosa coincides with the green chile harvest. One community member left the state as a young adult but would come back every year. He said "Coming to Dixon in August served two purposes- we were after the chile verde and we could also attend the fiesta." After he retired, he returned to the state. He said, "I came back to Dixon because my parents were still alive and I was born and raised here. I had had plenty of California. California has good money and everything, but there’s too many people. All you do is stand in line."

When asked How has the store/library/Zeller's property and the people who use it changed over the years, respondents described long-term changes between 1940's Dixon and 2020 Dixon. In the 1940s on up into the 1970s, residents used to do almost all their shopping at the local stores, as very few people had vehicles. One community member said "Residents stayed in town more in the old days. People grew more of their own food and also didn't have access to vehicles to drive to town." He recounted that people didn’t drive all the way to Española just to go shopping. "A lot of people didn’t have the vehicle to go on." He said, “We’d go to Santa Fe once or twice a year and that was it.” Growing up in the 1940s all the way through to the 1970s they ate beans and potatoes, had their own milking cows, and raised pigs and chile. In the 1940s hardly anyone worked out of town and most people at this time lived from their own small farms. The store sold things on credit to most customers. The community was nearly 100% Hispanic/mestizo. Now, there are many more white people living in the community.
One person said "Here in Dixon, it’s amazing when white people showed up [and multiplied]. That changed Dixon dramatically."

Back in the 1940s and on up into the 1970s, there were four or five gas stations, four or five stores, three dance halls, and at least three bars. Now there is just 1 store, no gas stations, and three winery/breweries. The bars and dance halls used to be part of the fiesta. There would sometimes be three different dances going at one time at the three dance halls. One resident observed that the store used to serve only locals, and that more outsiders shopped at the store now. There is a sense of loss and change between old time Dixon and what it is now, with a few residents saying Dixon Cooperative Market is expensive and things have changed too much. For the most part though, while people have fond memories of how things used to be, there is an appreciation for how the store and library work together to create a community center where people can see their neighbors. There is a general agreement that the store offers a good variety of products and that the library services and programs are appreciated. Overall, community members view the space as a busy community hub where people can see their neighbors.

When asked what role has the library/store/Zeller’s property played in the community’s history, respondents painted a picture of the community and how they remember it growing up. Zellers’ store was very important to the community. As one person said, Doc Zellers "took care of the whole community of Dixon. The people in the community would depend on that store." Most residents used to do their shopping in Dixon, so the store was very significant.

Now, having the store grouped with the library and community center has created a town square of sorts. Numerous people identified this in different ways: as a central
gathering space, with resources for the community; that it is geographically central but also becoming socially and culturally central to the community; that information was and is dispersed through both the library and store; that it is "connected community space," the new plaza of Dixon, the hub of the town. One community member said "In recent times the store and library have expanded the health and well-being of every person including children, here. Our community is a thriving community now...attracting beautiful people to live here, young with new children and older too."

When asked to describe the people who use library grounds, community members described library grounds as being used by the whole community, "Most of everybody," but especially families and children. People identified that the main uses of the grounds are for children and the fiesta, or connected to some kind of library program. The Fiesta de Santa Rosa and the Volunteer Fire Department Pancake Breakfast are the two main social events for the town. In the last few years it has been noticeable that fewer Hispanic people attend the pancake breakfast. But as one resident stated, "The locals will really come out for the Fiestas." While many of the newer Anglos, he said, "You don't see them at all over here [at the Fiestas]. Every year I 've noticed it more and more." The town has changed in that there are many newcomers and people from out of state. Almost all respondents said "the whole community in some way” uses the library grounds. Another identified use was people living on the edge who need warmth and internet, hikers, and some tourists in the summer who sit at the picnic tables.

Asked How have local people contributed to making the library grounds a better place, responses were that community members contribute to library grounds in many ways, by donating money to buy the property initially, by volunteering in different
capacities, and by attending library events and programs. The Fiestas are a hugely important way that the community uses the property. One community member said about the fiestas and how they have changed, that, "The fiesta is basically the same. The people behind it work their tails off and brought it back. You got to give them a lot of credit. We lost the fiesta for a while because nobody would pay attention." Another said, “To me, I think it’s the community taking full advantage of the property. What’s really nice is that we did relocate the fiestas. It used to happen across the arroyo from the fire station.” A number of people noted that the Fiestas are our largest annual community event, and the continued involvement in the fiestas "keep people invested in the outside grounds." One community member said that public places are very important and in short supply. They said "We're very lucky to have a public place like the library. Its proximity to the school is really fortuitous, because people can go from the school, to the library, store, and the post office, and not have to get in their cars, and I think that's crucial to a community."

Table 4. Data Analysis Summary from Library/Store Oral Histories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Themes</th>
<th>Coded Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Once private, the property is now a commons or “town square.”                | • The property used to be private, and housed an orchard.  
• The store is a good place for people to gather, talk, and socialize.  
• Now, having the store grouped with the library and community center has created a commons, a town square of sorts, a central gathering space, the new plaza of Dixon, the hub of the town, a place where people can meet, see their neighbors, and children can play.  
• While people have fond memories of how things used to be, there is an appreciation for how the store and library work together to create a community center where people can see their neighbors.  
• The store offers a good variety of products and the library services and programs are appreciated.                                                                                                                                                                                      |
- Public places like the library grounds are very important and in short supply.

The store was, and is, an important community institution:
- The store was the identity of Dixon for a long time, and a place to know and be known.
- From the 1940s to the 1970s, residents used to do almost all their shopping at the local stores. For this reason, the store was significant.
- The store sold things on credit to most customers

Dixon Cooperative Market and Embudo Valley Library connect to the long history of the store and Fiestas:
- Community members have roots and memories on the property from their whole life, some for generations.
- The property has a long connection to Zeller's and Lebeo's store.
- The library is linked to the community's long history of Fiestas, because they happen on the property now.

The community has transitioned from a nearly 100% Hispanic, agricultural past to a mixed culture community where many commute to work:
- In the 1940s hardly anyone worked out of town and most people lived from their own small farms.
- From the 1940s to the 1970s, there were four or five gas stations, four or five stores, three dance halls, and at least three bars.
- People grew more of their own food and very few people had vehicles.
- The community was nearly 100% Hispanic/mestizo.
- There are many more white people, newcomers, and people from out of state living in the community now.

Some aspects of community change are hard to get used to. Hispanic and Anglo community is still somewhat separate:
- The store used to serve only locals. More outsiders shop at the store now.
- There is a sense of loss and change between old time Dixon and what it is now. A few residents say the coop is expensive and things have changed too much.
- Recently, fewer Hispanic people attend the pancake breakfast.
- There is good Hispanic attendance at the Fiestas, but newer Anglos don’t attend fiestas very much.

The whole community in some way uses library grounds, with main uses by children, families:
- Main uses of the grounds are for families and children and the fiesta, or connected to some kind of library program.
- The Fiesta de Santa Rosa and the Volunteer Fire Department Pancake Breakfast are the two main social events for the town.
PLACEKEEPING AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE EMBUDO VALLEY

The fiestas, and library programs.

- Almost all respondents saw "the whole community in some way" using the library grounds.

The volunteer fiesta committee creates an important annual event of community connection.

- Community members contribute to the grounds by donating money, by volunteering as fiesta committee and board members, and in other ways, and by attending library events and programs.
- At one point, the fiesta stopped happening. A volunteer committee worked hard to bring it back, and keeps it going now.
- The Fiesta happens at the time of green chile harvest.
- The Fiestas are an important annual event of community connection, for extended family who return to the community at that time, and for Hispanic-Anglo connection.
- The fiestas are an important way that the community uses the library property.
- The Fiestas are the largest annual community event, and the continued involvement in the fiestas "keep people invested in the outside grounds."

Conclusions from Oral History Survey

The oral history survey results clearly identify the main users of library grounds as families and children, the fiesta, or connected to some kind of library program. While it is reassuring that residents see the library grounds as being used by the whole community, especially through the Fiestas, there are hints that the community experiences social and cultural divisions; for example, the fact that Hispanic attendance at the Volunteer Fire Department pancake breakfast is decreasing, and that fewer Anglo community members attend the Fiestas. Overall, the library is fortunate to connect to the long tradition of the Fiestas by hosting the event on the property, and the Dixon Cooperative Market is fortunate to connect to the long tradition of Zellers’ and Lebeo’s store. There is some indication that the store isn’t as central to the community as it once
PLACEKEEPING AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE EMBUDO VALLEY

was, due to long term economic changes around farming, employment, commuting, and overall increased prosperity. The community has a long history of exporting young people who, by necessity, seek work and livelihoods elsewhere.

Children’s Survey Data Analysis

The grounds of the Embudo Valley Library have a small orchard, with five standard size mature apple trees, a cherry, plum, pear, and about 18 other smaller dwarf or semi-dwarf apple trees. There is an open space for running around, and a pollinator garden. There are no other play features for children, other than the sidewalks, which are sometimes used for scootering. Our community is filled with numerous apple orchards, and fruit trees in general. When we have a good season, fruit is hugely abundant here.

For both afterschool and 5th/6th grade students, when asked What is your favorite memory of the library grounds? the apple trees were central. Children and youth answered, “I climbed the big apple tree and got to the top,” “I climbed my favorite tree all the way to the top and I wasn’t scared,” “Last year I thought I couldn’t climb a tree and then I did it,” “I met my best friends at my favorite tree,” “I fell down {climbing the tree}, I kept trying and I got it.” Climbing the apple trees in the library orchard has been a confidence building experience for children. It has also been a way for them to connect with their friends and have a new perspective on the world; one child said, “I could see far out from the tree.” The trees provide a respite and help the kids connect with an outdoor natural environment. One child said “I used to have a favorite tree and when I felt sad, I would go there and feel happy.”

Children and youth responded to the question, What would you like to change about the library grounds? with a range of suggestions for play and recreation.
Afterschool children said they would like more playground equipment, like swings, slides, monkey bars, jungle gyms, play house, and tree house. Slides and climbing things were the most popular suggestions (slides 6 times, climbing things 4 times). Creative suggestions were a lizard slide, a tree house, and an apple playhouse. 5th and 6th graders suggested a skate park, playground, open space to run around, paving the road behind the library, and a flower garden near the weeping willow. When asked to draw what they would like to see on the library grounds, ten afterschool children drew some kind of a tree house, relating to the apple trees already on the library property. Their drawings showed treehouses that you can access by a ladder or stairs, with a slide or elevator to get down, monkey bars, mazes, pools, a lizard slide, and an apple house.

5th and 6th graders responded to the question “tell about a special memory or experience that happened at Embudo Valley Library and where it took place.” They said that their most memorable experiences at the library were the Fiestas, playing games outside, and library programs like STEM and Summer Reading. The 5th and 6th graders also responded to the question Is there anything that you’d like to do on library grounds that you can’t do now? by saying “there are not many places to ride a skateboard or bmx, but a skate park would let people have somewhere to ride,” “Be able to skate with my friends,” “Play on a playground,” “Bild a skat park,” and “Add tree houses and little jungle gyms and a trampoline and I would love a zipline to trees and maybe some slides.” An optimist said, “I would like to swim on the library grounds if we get a pool.” Overall, the things that they would most like to do that they can't do now are swim, skate, and have a playground.
### Table 5. Data Analysis of Children’s Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Coded Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Children love the apple trees in the library orchard.**             | • Climbing the apple trees helps children build confidence, and gives them a new perspective on the world.  
• The trees make them feel happy.                                      |
| **Memorable childhood experiences happen on library grounds, especially focused around Fiestas and library program activities.** | • Meet friends and have fun  
• Fiestas  
• Baile Folklorico  
• Being able to ride a bike there  
• Playing outdoor games in open space  
• Library programs like STEM and summer reading |
| **Children requested playground features, open space, and a skate park as improvements to the grounds.** | • More playground equipment (swings, slides, monkey bars, jungle gym, climbing things, slides)  
• Tree house  
• Apple playhouse  
• Skate park  
• Open space to run around  
• Pave road behind library  
• Flower garden near weeping willow |
| **Children envisioned play features that relate to the apple trees in the form of tree houses and apple houses, climbing things, slides, and other features.** | • Tree house accessible by ladder or stairs  
• Slide or elevator to get down from tree house  
• Monkey bars  
• Mazes  
• Pools  
• Lizard slide  
• Apple house |
| **Three biggest improvements for children would be a playground, skatepark and pool.** | • Swim  
• Skate park  
• Playground |
Conclusions Children’s Survey

The apple trees on the library property are well-loved and well-used. This may be because there aren’t any other play features. Regardless, the large, mature apple trees on the property are part of local children’s ongoing collective memory. Climbing the apple trees helps children build confidence, connect to a natural outdoor environment, and create a positive emotional environment, both in connecting with friends and creating a space for processing emotions. I found the children’s focus on apple trees and playground features revolving around tree houses and apple houses to completely capture a part of our community identity— the history and strong presence of orchards in the community. Children requested play features related to apple trees, playground features, bike and skate features, and open space from a park.

Figure 18. Apple house, apple maze, apple sandbox.

Source: Embudo Valley Library afterschool student drawing.
Figure 19. Tree house, slide, and inside the tree house.

Source: Embudo Valley Library afterschool student drawing.

Figure 20. Tightrope and ladder for little kids, guideline and monkey bars.

Source: Embudo Valley Library afterschool student drawing.
Figure 21. Ladder to treehouse and chillout room, pathway to tower with telescope and zipline down.

Source: Embudo Valley Library afterschool student drawing.

Park Survey Data Analysis

Based on the distinct community pushback around the mobile stage idea, it was very clear that the library needed to take a different approach to developing a public park, one that would include community participation, feedback, and that could generate buy-in for the project. As the researcher, I had a human centered design goal of identifying who the current users of the property are and who the library should be designing for. I also had a motive informed by the creative placemaking literature to reduce the emphasis on the park as built infrastructure and increase the emphasis on programming and on how the park would be used. The park survey was designed to help the library understand how
community members use the property, what is most important to them in creating a public park, what potential programming community members would like to see, and what their concerns might be in developing a park.

I used People Make Parks (n.d.) park survey examples and looked at a City of Boston Parks and Recreation (2002) opinion survey to inform the creation of our own survey instrument, with feedback and dialogue from the board contributing to the final survey design. The survey was eventually revised responding to community input. I used Survey Monkey, an online tool, to formulate the paper and online surveys and used their tools to help analyze the results. I coded the qualitative responses in excel. I had hoped to get the library board more in touch with the survey data by having them help with data entry from the paper survey responses and participating in coding. Two board members and two library volunteers assisted in entering the paper survey responses, and one board member helped me do a small amount of coding. I did the remainder of the data entry, coding, and analysis on my own. The park survey had 9 questions on its first paper release in August 2019, and then 12 questions when it was released electronically in November 2019.

Table 6. How do you use library grounds and how often?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>How do you use library grounds and how often?</th>
<th>Percent of respondents who regularly use library grounds in these ways</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attend Fiesta de Santa Rosa</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Dixon Farmer’s Market</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the wi-fi</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor public seating</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit Tile Mural</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PLACKEEPPING AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE EMBUDO VALLEY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My child attends library programs and uses outdoor space</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use outdoor open space</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child uses park/orchard independently</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit orchard/pollinator garden</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picnic in orchard</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 22.** How do you use library grounds and how often?

151 responses

This question had a matrix asking how respondents used the grounds and how often (regularly, occasionally, rarely, never, other). Top three regular uses of library grounds are attending the Fiesta de Santa Rosa (61%), visiting the Dixon Farmer’s Market (44%), and using the wi-fi (32%). The next highest uses were outdoor public seating (30.4%), visit tile mural (30.4%), and my child attends library programs and uses outdoor public space (30.3%).

Source: Embudo Valley Library Park Survey, Survey Monkey data visualization.
Table 7. What matters to you most in developing library grounds?

129 responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Coded Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park should be functional, beautiful, accessible, safe, and done with community involvement, minimize hardscape and maximize open space and greenery, include shaded seating, and be well-maintained. Grounds should be leveled and it should be an all ages and cultures gathering space.</td>
<td>• Functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Beautiful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Accessible to all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Done with community involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• In scale/appropriate for rural community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sustainable for organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Clean and fruit picked up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Welcoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Well maintained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Level grounds for handicapped and elderly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• All cultures and ages gathering space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Programming for children and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Minimize hardscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Natural, green, plant filled environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emphasize agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shade, seating, picnic tables</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. What would you like to be able to do on library grounds that you can’t do now?

102 Responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Coded Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park amenities requested by the community included shaded seating, playground features for children, level grounds, space for healthy living activities, and outdoor programming.</td>
<td>• Benches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Picnic areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shaded comfortable seating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Events like outdoor movies, music, and theater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Gazebo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Level area to dance and move around</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PLACEKEEPING AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE EMBUDO VALLEY

- Greenery
- Playground
- Skate park
- Activities for teens
- Place to do yoga/dance/ tai chi
- Horse shoes, corn hole toss, etc.
- Cooking/horno/barbeque
- Gardening with native plants and pollinators
- Outdoor exercise equipment.

**Figure 23.** What are your favorite parts of library grounds?

Please rank from 1 to 5, with 1 as most favorite, 5 as least favorite. 146 responses.

Source: Embudo Valley Library Park Survey, Survey Monkey data visualization.
The three favorite parts of the grounds are landscaping and flowers (67%), open space (65%), and orchard and trees (62%).

Figure 24. What programs or activities would you use or attend on library grounds?

147 Responses.

Source: Embudo Valley Library Park Survey, Survey Monkey data visualization.

Top three responses were live music (80%), outdoor movies (75%), and play area for kids/families (63%).

Table 9. What other programming would you like to see? 63 responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Coded Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential future programming could include healthy living activities, playground for kids, apple cider community event, and more programming that brings Anglo and Hispanic community together.</td>
<td>• Programs to bring Anglo/Hispanic community together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Acequia days/ holiday related events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Parking improvements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Outside teen activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Tree house for kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cooking classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Badminton, ping-pong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Seating, wi-fi, benches, tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Movies in park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Interactive playground</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The survey asked *Any other comments?* There were 57 responses.

- Community is thankful for the work, services, programs, and events of the library, and appreciative of the staff and what the library does
- Don't see a need for change
- Appreciative of the inclusiveness and community engagement efforts
- Preserve water rights
- A stage isn't necessary
- Parking is a problem. Joint agreement with the school for parking for events?
- Literacy programming is higher priority than a stage/park
- The grounds need to be better maintained

There were appreciative comments from community members, such as:

- Our library is amazing and serves so many.
- I am so proud of all the multitude gifts the library already brings to our community!!!!! Thank you!!!
- I love this library and am so thrilled to see so much work being put into it!
- I love the community and landscape, and treasure the library as a center for information and social exchanges and in its leadership role for engaging the community in any matters of personal, local and wider importance.
• Felicity and her staff are doing a wonderful job for our community.

• Excellent helpful staff and library.

• EVL rocks!

• Thank you, the life blood of our community!

• Honestly, I think what is happening is pretty darn fabulous and I look forward to what unfolds next.

• The staff and the volunteers at the library are wonderful! They are always organizing activities for both adults and children. I think that is great having them in our community. Kudos to all.

• We really appreciate our Library and librarians. Thank you for all you do for our community!

• Keep up the great work!

• As a parent of a young person I am ever so grateful for a safe place for them to be.

We asked the age of respondents. 41.3% of the respondents were 65 or older, 33.33% were 45-64 years old, 20.29% were 25-44 years old, 1.45% were 18-24 years old, and 3.62% were under 18. 24% of the Dixon CDP population is 65 or older. The park survey represents the views of an older demographic in the community.
Figure 25. How old are you?

Source: Embudo Valley Library Park Survey, Survey Monkey data visualization.

Figure 26. How long have you lived in Dixon/Embudo/Rinconada?

141 Responses.

Source: Embudo Valley Library Park Survey, Survey Monkey data visualization.
I was hoping to get many responses from Hispano community members who have lived in the community their whole life. 39% of respondents have lived in community for 25 or more years, although this doesn’t necessarily mean that they are Hispanic. In retrospect, there should have been a direct question about race/ethnicity to measure whether there was good representation in the survey data from the Hispanic community.

An online park survey was launched in November 2019. It retained all the questions from the original survey, and three additional questions were added based on a community member request to directly ask about building a permanent stage and the organizational and community impacts related to park development and programming. This survey got 61 responses, most likely reflecting a demographic that has home internet. The responses to these three additional questions are in Figure 27, Table 10, and Table 11.
Figure 27. What are your priorities for how the library should use its time and funds?

Please rank the following, from #1 most important to #6 least important. 60 responses.

![Bar chart showing priority rankings]

Source: Embudo Valley Library Park Survey, Survey Monkey data visualization.

Respondents ranked priorities to spend library resources on, from most important being library services and least important being changes to library grounds. (See Figure 27)

1. Library Services
2. Youth programming
3. Cultural and historic programming
4. Funding for Dixon Cooperative Market improvements
5. Changes to library grounds
6. Other
Table 10. Would you like to see a permanent stage constructed on library grounds?

61 responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Choices</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Yes/No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>63.33%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>38.33%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third and final question added to the survey asked “Some of the activities asked about previously would potentially affect downtown Dixon by increasing traffic, parking, and amplified sound levels from movie soundtracks, music, and theater. How concerned are you about these affects? Please rate, 1 ‘very concerned’ to 5 ‘not at all concerned.’” There were 60 Responses.

Figure 28. Percentage of Very Concerned to Not at all Concerned Responses.

Source, Embudo Valley Library Park Survey.

66% of respondents were somewhat to very concerned about impacts on downtown Dixon. Other concerns were expressed throughout the survey in the open-
ended responses to different questions. I thought it was important to summarize these. Community members shared these overall concerns about the project.

- Organizational Capacity
- Overtaxing staff
- Things are fine as they are
- Don’t see a need for a stage
- Using irrigated land for permanent structures; losing water rights
- Parking
- Outdoor restrooms
- Tent at Fiesta de Santa Rosa be closer to stage
- Healthier food at Fiesta de Santa Rosa
- More shady seating at Fiesta de Santa Rosa
- Level ground for Fiesta de Santa Rosa

**Park Survey Conclusions**

The results showed that the top three uses of the grounds are the Fiesta de Santa Rosa (61.3% attend regularly), the farmer’s market (44.3% attend regularly), and the wi-fi (31.8% use regularly). The three favorite parts of the grounds are landscaping and flowers (67%), open space (65%), and orchard and trees (62%). Top three types of future programming people would attend were live music (80%), outdoor movies (75%), and play area for kids/families (63%). The demographics of the respondents show that 39% of respondents have lived in community for 25 or more years. The park survey represents the views of an older demographic in the community, with 41% of respondents aged 65 or older. Library services, youth programming, and cultural and historic
programming were ranked as the most important priorities, with capital projects of the Dixon coop improvements and the park grounds improvements as least important. 38 people said they’d like to see a permanent stage built; 23 people said no to a permanent stage. 66% Respondents were “somewhat to very concerned” about park and stage development impacts on downtown Dixon.

In terms of what matters most in developing the property, respondents said it should be functional, beautiful, accessible to all, and done with community involvement. It should be in scale and appropriate for the rural community and sustainable for the organization. In terms of maintenance, it should be safe, clean, fruit picked up, welcoming, well maintained, and with level grounds for handicapped and elderly. It should be an all cultures and ages gathering space, with programming for children and adults. Overall, the design should minimize the hardscape, and retain a natural, green, plant filled environment. The park should have open space and emphasize agriculture with shade, seating, and picnic tables.

People also expressed overall concerns about the project. Some expressed concerns about organizational capacity and overtaxing the staff. Others didn’t see a need for a stage and expressed that things are fine as they are. Others were concerned about using irrigated land for permanent structures and losing water rights. Some expressed concern about the lack of parking and outdoor restrooms. There was some feedback about the fiesta: some requested that the seating tent at the Fiesta be closer to the stage, that healthier food be served at the Fiesta, that there be more shady seating at the Fiesta, and that the grounds be level for the Fiesta.
Children’s top park requests were playground features, bike and skate features, and open space. Adults top park requests were playground/play features for kids, leveled grounds, safe for walking, preserve open space, shaded outdoor seating like picnic tables and benches, and a stage or gazebo.

**Human Centered Design and Actionable Problem Statement**

Based on human centered design, our project needs an actionable problem statement, our “unique design vision” framed by our specific users, which has strong language, preserves the emotion of the users we are designing for, includes insight, and generates possibilities (d.school at Stanford University). The statement should describe our user, represent our most significant insights, and articulate what would be a game changer for our user. d.school at Stanford University (2018) reiterates, “Remember, your user is the hero of your story, not your concept” (p. 68). We use the actionable problem statement to write our design guidelines. This will help us capture the strategies to solve our design challenge and yield actionable design directives.

For the Embudo Valley Library park project, based on the three survey results, I am positing this as our actionable problem statement:

Public parks are shown to increase health, and creative placemaking projects can benefit communities in various ways. The library board is planning to undertake improvements to the library grounds that result in greater community health, social connection, and safe places and activities for children and families, while linking the grounds to community and economic development. There is an emerging possibility that improvements to the grounds can contribute to greater financial sustainability for Embudo Valley Library.
Improvements to the library grounds should benefit Fiesta de Santa Rosa attendees, children and families, and the community at large. Improvements should be based on community cultural assets, including the heritage of apple orchards and fruit growing, other types of agriculture, the Fiesta de Santa Rosa, and the history of the property. Improvements should be in scale with our small, rural, community, and with our small, non-profit library with its limited funds and staff capacity. They should minimize hardscape and maximize open space. Residents requested a stage, level grounds for walking and playing, playground and play features for children, shaded seating, and open space. The continuing influx of Anglo residents into the community that began in the 1970’s has changed the social fabric of the village. A primary evaluative, art, and design framework for a library park project should be “belonging.” The project should enhance community members’ sense of belonging in the Dixon downtown public space, a sense of belonging that will address the deep history of a community going back for generations.
Chapter 5

Discussion

Some of the research questions from this thesis are answered by the results of the park surveys. The three park surveys were a good first step towards embedding community engagement into library processes. The park policies and advisory committee that is forming is a second positive step. The library has purposefully recruited Hispanic community members for this committee. The surveys have helped identify the users that the organization should be designing for and the design elements that would be “game-changing” for our users, such as leveled grounds for the handicapped and elderly, playground features for children and families, and shaded seating for the community at large. The survey results identified which amenities and programming should be prioritized in the final park design. Survey results situate the library in a historic context, highlighting how the community has changed. The survey results indicate a need for the park to connect to the community’s cultural and historic essence as a heritage Hispano agricultural community, and also build community cohesion and create opportunities for cross cultural connection.

Some of the research questions are answered by the literature review, and further discussion below of revitalization and equitable development. Public park development at Embudo Valley Library can stimulate a creative placemaking community development strategy if the library fundraises to involve artists and cross sector partners in the project. The project can support revitalization and equity by connecting to wealth building strategies for residents and through purposeful actions that result in the organization becoming more representative of the community. The library will need to dedicate
organizational resources towards equity partnerships and build the capacity to support this work.

**Organizational Capacity**

Community members expressed through the park survey that improvements to the library grounds should be the last priority in how the library spends staff time and resources. At the same time, the library board has talked about building a permanent stage since at least 2016. The fact that they haven’t achieved this goal is symptomatic of the lack of financial resources and lack of organizational capacity. At the February 2020 close of the NM Legislative session, the library succeeded in repurposing the $206,000 mobile stage capital outlay. Now, it is to be administered with the fiscal sponsorship of the New Mexico Economic Development Department (NMEDD), which will allow Embudo Valley Library to build a permanent stage and make other improvements that could have economic impacts for the library and Dixon Cooperative Market. But, the board still hasn’t addressed the long-term capacity of the organization to manage and maintain more capital improvements and programming.

**Framework Distinguishing Revitalization from Gentrification**

Jason Reece (2004) contrasts gentrification to revitalization and re-investment. He describes gentrification as permanently changing a distressed community into an exclusively upper income community, while revitalization re-develops abandoned or vacant structures and attracts higher income in-migrants in small numbers. He made a useful table that shows the difference:
Table 12. The difference between gentrification and revitalization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gentrification:</th>
<th>Revitalization:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Widespread displacement of traditional low income residents by affluent households.</td>
<td>Mixed income housing development, displacement avoided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residents unable to accrue wealth, remain highly susceptible to displacement.</td>
<td>Wealth building strategies for existing residents implemented, residents stabilized from displacement pressure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing social networks, neighborhood services and local businesses disrupted in the community.</td>
<td>Social networks, neighborhood services and businesses reinforced in the community. Additional new business and services expand options for all residents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community transitions to an exclusive community, inaccessible to low income households.</td>
<td>Community transitions to a mixed income, mixed wealth and diverse community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the case of Embudo Valley Library, in 2002, the library purchased the vacant Zellers’ property, moving the library into the original Zellers’ residence, and using the original Zellers’ store as a community center. Dixon Cooperative Market then opened in a portion of the original Zellers’ store in 2005. This trajectory meets Reece’s definition of revitalization, where a community re-inhabits previously vacant structures. Reece states that equitable development and revitalization share these characteristics: a distressed community transitions into a mixed wealth, diverse community; social networks and services used by traditional residents are maintained and improved; neighborhood businesses are supported and new businesses are created; and improvements focus not only on the built environment but also on creating wealth and new opportunities for existing residents. This last factor of linking the built environment to creating wealth and opportunities for existing residents is the next step for the Embudo Valley Library park project.
The community of Dixon has been experiencing demographic shifts for over 50 years. In the 1970’s there was an influx of Anglo residents. In the 1990’s and 2000’s retirees started moving to the community. In the 2010’s, there has been an influx of second home-owners. This trajectory illustrates what both Golding (2016) and Brummet and Reed (2019) found, that rural gentrification has cumulative impacts and that previous gentrification is a strong predictor of further gentrification. We have become a mixed income community.

**Equitable Development**

Equitable development is a growing field that integrates creative placemaking and community development with tools, methods, and strategies that will ensure that existing residents can stay in their communities. What is equity, and why does it matter? Ted Archer, a former director of small and local business development, explained equity activities this way (11th Street Bridge Project’s equity tool kit, n.d): “It’s not only important to invest in places, it’s also equally important to invest in the people.” Brett Theodos, also interviewed in the 11th Street Bridge Project equity toolkit (n.d.) says equitable park development means “….a deep seated motivation to see the park achieve positive social good in communities.” An underlying principal of both revitalization and equity work is to implement wealth building strategies for existing residents, so that those residents are stabilized from displacement.

The 11th Street Bridge Project in Washington, D.C. (2018) made a blueprint for an inspirational and aspirational example of an equitable park development plan. The 11th Street Bridge Project created three interlinked resources for improving equity in your community: an equity tool kit (n.d.), a 7 step Create a Plan For Your Community video
PLACEKEEPING AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE EMBUDO VALLEY

(n.d.), and an equitable development plan (2018). They state that equity is intentional; in order to produce equity you need to start early and leave enough time for equity building processes (11th Street Bridge Park, 2018). The first component of an equitable development process is identifying diverse and local candidates for staff, volunteers, and board to reflect the community you serve, and to continually engage the community in your planning. This means gathering key stakeholders, like government agencies, experts, business owners, faith leaders, and local residents, and holding public sessions for feedback and community comment. The second component of equitable development is using a multi-sector approach. Identify organizations that can help you implement community recommendations and integrate affordable housing, workforce development, and small business enterprise into your development plan. To produce equity, you use community input in planning AND implementation phases (11th Street Bridge Project, 2018).

The “cross-sector partnerships” language used in the creative placemaking literature came to life for me when I researched equitable development. I realized that the intent of these partnerships is to connect the built environment of the project to the human, social, economic, cultural, and historic landscape of your community. Cross-sector partners will help to achieve community development and revitalization and expand the narrative and scope of your park project to include your residents and their self-identified needs. Equitable development relies on practices and partnerships that will help build wealth for residents and prevent gentrification and displacement. These will be things like workforce development and job training, affordable housing, elevating community history, identity, and arts, re-inhabiting vacant spaces, and improving
community health and safety. Santa Fe, NM based McCune Charitable Foundation says in their 2020 grant application, “socially transformative work is not a solo endeavor.” Partnership and collaborative efforts are key aspects of equitable development. They are what transform placemaking into placekeeping.

**Surviving Conflict in Community Processes**

The first step in an equity process is to engage the community by listening to local residents. This is where the Embudo Valley Library failed in early 2019. The Library park process illustrates what Derek Hyra (2016) suggested is a common consequence of gentrification, where newcomers cause political displacement of the local population by taking over public institutions and advocating for their version of community improvement. The library board worked to secure a mobile stage, then moved the project forward without community input and opportunity for public comment, thus creating conflict and distrust. The project is still recovering from this. Both creative placemaking and community revitalization literature mention a tolerance for diversity of opinion and conflict resolution skills as contributing to community development success (Chambers and Clemmons, 1990, Jackson, Herranz, 2002). While community members were vocalizing objections to the board’s plans for a mobile stage and park being geared towards visitors rather than residents, the organization fell apart internally. We are still in a delicate phase of rebuilding trust between community, board, and staff. When you work in very small communities and in very small organizations, conflict can be devastating. Community processes will find a stronger footing when they use equitable development strategies to produce community engagement and empowerment.
The park survey report achieved through this thesis was presented at the library’s annual meeting in February 2020. This was the first public meeting addressing the project since it was launched in January 2019. Twenty-five community members attended the meeting to express their concerns and get direct responses from the library board. The ensuing public discussion led to the creation of a community park policies committee. This group will create usage guidelines for the space that will be in step with the community vision. Through the park survey and reporting process the library is rebuilding trust. The test will be whether the library can maintain community engagement through the planning and implementation phases.

**Human Centered Design: ideate, prototype, and test**

Equitable development processes closely mirror human centered design. Through in-depth community engagement, you generate your equitable development plan and move from the empathize and define phases into the ideate, prototype, and test phases of human centered design (d. school at Stanford University, 2018). Embudo Valley Library is in between steps one and three in the human centered design process. At this juncture, the library needs to link the results from the park survey to the community needs identified through the UNM Evaluation Report (2019) and then embody them in an equitable development plan. A capacity building step, and one that would put the park project firmly in the revitalization/equitable development camp, would be to create an advisory committee of local residents and core local partners, and to reach out to experts and other organizations that can help us achieve equity outcomes like affordable housing and workforce development.
The third mode in human centered design is ideation (d.school at Stanford University, 2018). This is where you come up with broad and varied design ideas. The phase of ideating is the transition from identifying problems to exploring solutions. The Embudo Valley Library process got out of phase when the library board and the UNM School of Landscape Design launched directly into the ideation phase without first hearing from the community. The three park surveys helped the library to re-start the process through the empathize and define phases. In the case of Embudo Valley Library, we are exploring ideation. Afterschool children did drawings of features they’d like to see in the park, and a board member did an elevation drawing of changes he’d like to see in a library building bordering the park.

The final modes in human centered design are prototyping and testing to make your ideas physical. Through these modes you test functionality and deepen your understanding of the users and the space (d.school at Stanford University, 2018). Your prototype can be a wall of post-its, a scale model, or a roleplaying activity. Prototyping allows the team to explore ideas and refine solutions. Displaying your vision in a prototype builds consensus and helps your users interact and engage in the project. I created a site plan with scale size paper pieces and left it on a table at the library for people to move around and add to. Variations that have come up through this process are new potential locations for the permanent stage and shade structures.

The International Association for Public Participation (2018) created a very helpful Spectrum of Public Participation that defines community engagement deliverables through five different levels of public participation. See Figure 28.
Successful creative placemaking requires a deep level of community participation. The library has not yet defined which level of public participation they are seeking. Prototyping and testing help advance a community’s impact on decision making by creating pathways to get feedback. Through prototyping and testing, you create an authentic experience for the users, and generate more opportunities for insight. Testing helps you refine the prototype. Through testing, you may find that you framed your problem incorrectly, and that you may need to start again. The d.school at Stanford University (2018) advocates, “Prototype as if you know you’re right, but test as if you know you’re wrong” (p. 11).
Creative Placemaking Practice and Moving Your Project Forward

The creative placemaking literature doesn’t explain when or what mechanisms you use to invite design professionals and artists into the process. A professional muralist friend, Josh Sarantitis, suggested that to successfully turn the park project into a creative placemaking project, we need to invite artists into the process as early as possible. He recommended doing this through a Request For Proposal (RFP). We can use our “actionable problem statement” to write a creative placemaking RFP.

The Baltimore INSPIRE program (Investing in Neighborhoods and Schools to Promote Improvement, Revitalization, and Excellence) released a 2018 creative placemaking RFP that resulted in a sidewalk mural by artists Crystal Microti and Whitney Frazier. The RFP for this project is a model that Embudo Valley Library could use. Their overall project links creative placemaking to school improvements, housing renovation, development of community managed greenspace, and improved safe routes to school and pedestrian safety around Pimlico Elementary Middle School. The INSPIRE program is happening in a large metropolitan city, with millions of dollars of school investments driving it, as opposed to a rural, non-profit library context. Does Embudo Valley Library have the organizational capacity, and the will and intention at the board level, to work with multi-sector partners to achieve equity, rather than just improvements to the built environment?

Numerous sources indicate that creative placemaking can start with small projects that lead to larger ones (Treskon, Esthappen, et. al., 2018, Prakash, Spinelli, 2016, d.school at Stanford University, 2018). This is how you generate early wins. As you
develop the project, you should also develop your process for collecting data, setting clear goals, measuring impact, and refining strategies.

11th Street Bridge Project Equity toolkit (n.d.) makes excellent suggestions on how to move a confusing process forward with integrity. They recommend that the budget commits resources for community engagement such as an external facilitator, food and childcare for residents, stipends for stakeholders and residents, and early implementation funds (11th Street Bridge Project Equity toolkit, n.d.).

For Embudo Valley Library, community and equity needs surfaced in the UNM Evaluation Report (2019). As library director, I haven’t known how to take action on these identified community needs. The library board is deeply uncertain about planning and activities that go beyond library grounds and extend into the broader community. Staff is already at their limit for what they can handle. The library is currently undertaking a new round of strategic planning with assistance from Juliana Anastasoff, who works for the UNM Health Sciences Center as a community capacity health worker. She, in a lightbulb moment, explained to me how we take the data from the UNM Evaluation report (2019) and make sure that it is reflected in our new strategic plan. She will also help us connect the park survey data to the plan. Embudo Valley Library could follow the advice of the 11th Street Bridge Project (n.d.) by only addressing the community needs we can directly control or advocate for in our new strategic plan.

A few other key pieces of advice from the 11th Street Bridge Project to implement equitable development strategies are to connect to other groups who are already doing this work in your community, and involve them to amplify and link efforts, if they share your values. In terms of collaboration between organizations, you can set clear
PLACEKEEPING AND EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE EMBUDO VALLEY

expectations with a Memorandum of Agreement outlining funds dispersed, key deliverables attached to timelines, and roles and responsibilities. It will be helpful to solicit ideas and buy-in from government agencies and officials. Work to complement their achievements. Jackson and Herranz stated “The best collaborations seem to be those that are purposeful and involve relationships that enable individual and collective goals to be achieved” (2002, p. 39).

A Creative Placemaking RFP could help the library surface the issue of belonging, and transform the project from placemaking to placekeeping. An emphasis on equitable development would also make the placekeeping component of the project central. What kind of evaluative framework should be adopted for the project? This thesis sets up a baseline of data that can be used to track community changes over time. Embudo Valley Library needs to develop a process for collecting data, setting clear goals, measuring impact, and refining strategies. The evaluative criteria should be distinct from external data and should measure changes resulting from an Embudo Valley Library Park Project. Possible data to track would be community engagement participation, attendance at the Fiesta de Santa Rosa, attendance at new outdoor programming, use of the outdoor space, and an annual survey that measures both library services and how changes to the park are affecting the community.

I recommend that the next steps in the park project will be to link the project to a revitalization and equitable development strategy that centers on wealth building for residents, define the level of public participation to be used, establish ongoing mechanisms for community engagement and feedback, use RFPs to invite artists into the
process, establish evaluative criteria, and integrate human centered design modes of ideation, prototyping, and testing to come up with a final project design.
Chapter 6

Conclusion

Four different fields agree about the basic methods that can be used to link infrastructure investments to community development with the goal of preventing displacement of native residents. The creative placemaking literature (Markusen, Gadwa, 2010) suggests using cross-sector partnerships to leverage diverse funding and multidimensional community level outcomes. The equitable development field (11th Street Brindge Project, n.d.) recommends pairing parks and infrastructure investments with job development, skill building, and affordable housing. Arts-based rural development resources (NEA/NGA, 2019) suggest that this works best when paired with a community and economic development plan and workforce development and housing. Revitalization literature (Reece, 2004) suggests that investments should be paired with wealth building strategies. The Embudo Valley Library board will need to decide whether the park project will be a pure infrastructure investment or whether the library wants to link equity outcomes and community development with the project.

Embudo Valley Library has been working with cross sector partners since 2005, when Dixon Cooperative Market opened their doors in the old Zeller’s Store. It has been doing creative placemaking since 2015, with the teen tile mural and Youth Conservation Corps projects. The park and stage project can incorporate the research completed through this thesis, which builds on work done with the UNM Evaluation Lab.

For an Embudo Valley Library park project to create equity, it will need to have components that address wealth building for the community’s most vulnerable, lowest income, and least educated residents. For a park project to contribute to placekeeping, it
will need to build on community assets and incorporate and explore community identity. For the project to contribute to a sense of belonging, it will need to build social relationships and community cohesion and use programming and well-designed public space to bring our community together. For the project to not cause organizational collapse, it will need to wisely consider long-term sustainability in park maintenance and staff workload.

Combining the placemaking activities identified by Treskon, Esthappen et. al. (2018), with the 11th Street Bridge Project Equity strategies creates a comprehensive template for placekeeping that will support community revitalization rather than gentrification. As suggested by Brummet and Reed (2019), changes in the community of Dixon are evident, but they are most likely caused by the visibility and voice of the new Anglo population, rather than displacement of the native Hispanic population. Changes in the community are positive for residents. Yet most of the highly visible organizations and businesses in the community are dominated by Anglo governance and staff. Having leadership and staffing for local organizations that is more representative of the community could be a prime way to tip the equity issue in our community. For the library, a focus on wealth building strategies as an essential component of changes to the built environment would transform the current project.
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