



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 25, 2014

CONTACT:

Dewanna Smith, PIO

O (901) 576-6032 C (901) 574-1494

Dewanna.smith@memphistn.gov

MEMPHIS HERITAGE TRAIL GETS \$150K NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS GRANT

MEMPHIS, TN – National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) announced this week that the City of Memphis is one of 66 cities to receive Our Town grants totaling more than \$5 million. Memphis will receive \$150,000 to develop a master plan, design guidelines and public art for the proposed Memphis Heritage Trail.

“This grant is a great start on the path to making the Memphis Heritage Trail a high quality development that will draw visitors from around the world to our city to experience and enjoy our rich history and culture,” said Mayor A C Wharton, Jr. “We are grateful that the National Endowment of the Arts recognizes and supports this valuable project.”

Our Town projects demonstrate that excellent art is as fundamental to a community's success as land-use, transportation, education, housing, infrastructure, and public safety, and help build strong, diverse communities. Our Town grants fund arts-based community development projects in a way that is authentic, equitable, and augments existing local assets.

The City of Memphis will carry out the two-year project through its Division of Housing and Community Development, in partnership with the UrbanArt Commission and the Mayor's Innovation Delivery Team (MIDT). The Memphis Heritage Trail Redevelopment Area includes historic Beale Street, the FedEx Forum arena, the National Civil Rights Museum, and underutilized commercial and cultural spaces such as Clayborn Temple, the site of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s last speech.

Self+Tucker Architects will oversee the outreach and planning process that will determine the routes for the trail, and will develop design excellence guidelines for community-based artistic elements and cultural identifiers. The UrbanArt Commission will develop criteria and oversee the selection of two pieces of public art to be installed along the trail, the themes of which will be drawn from local cultural histories. The MIDT will carry out an arts-related economic development program to support entrepreneurs in the area. Programming will focus on the 3,000 majority African-American residents of the Memphis Heritage Trail Redevelopment Area, 67% of whom live below the poverty line, as well as the adjacent downtown population and tourists.

“We are pleased and honored to receive such a prestigious grant which will enhance the work we are doing in the Heritage Trail/Choice neighborhoods area”, said Robert Lipscomb, Director of the City of

Memphis Division of Housing and Community Development and Executive Director of the Memphis Housing Authority.

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

"The Tennessee Arts Commission applauds the City of Memphis and its partners in receiving this national and very competitive award, the only one in Tennessee this year. The Memphis Heritage Trail will create a positive impact and continue to build the city's brand as an arts and cultural destination," said Anne B. Pope, Executive Director for the Tennessee Arts Commission.

The NEA received 275 applications for Our Town this year. Recommended grant amounts ranged from \$25,000 to \$200,000. Since Our Town's inception in 2011 and including these projects, the NEA will have awarded 256 Our Town grants totaling more than \$21 million in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

For a **complete listing of projects** recommended for Our Town grant support, please visit the NEA web site at www.arts.gov. Project descriptions, grants listed by state and by project type, and resources are available as well. The Twitter hashtag is #NEAOurTown14.

###