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**NEA CHAIRMAN ROCCO LANDESMAN ANNOUNCES THE NEA'S MAYORS' INSTITUTE ON  
CITY DESIGN ANNIVERSARY INITIATIVE**

*MICD 25 to provide grants to transform communities through the arts and smart design*

Washington, D.C. – National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Rocco Landesman gave a policy address today at the annual meeting of the United States Conference of Mayors (USCM). In his speech, the chairman addressed the role of smart design and artists and arts organizations as place-makers and announced the **NEA's Mayors' Institute on City Design 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Initiative**. This funding program builds on the accomplishments of the Mayors' Institute on City Design (MICD) over its 25-year history and reflects the program's tenets of transforming communities through design.

Chairman Landesman said, "Artists are entrepreneurs, small businessmen all, great place-makers and community builders. Bring artists into the center of town and that town changes profoundly. We know now that people do not migrate to businesses. It is businesses that will move to where they can find a skilled, motivated, educated workforce. And what does that workforce look for? In survey after survey, the answer is education and culture."

"Mayors understand that the arts mean business," stated Conference of Mayors President Burnsville Mayor Elizabeth B. Kautz. "The nonprofit arts sector alone generates over \$166 billion annually in economic activity. An important element to making our cities places to attract and grow businesses, tourism, and jobs is for a community to maintain good urban design. The initiatives announced today by Chairman Landesman will help mayors to implement projects and programs locally to ensure that their communities maintain design standards that will promote business and jobs."

Application to MICD 25 is open to the 600 cities (or their designees) that have participated in the MICD since 1986 or are committed to participate in an institute in 2010. All phases of a project -- planning, development, design, implementation, and related innovative arts activities-- are eligible for support. The NEA encourages partnerships which can further the success of MICD projects, especially when involving public and private sector resources.

"The Mayors Institute on City Design has been an important part of the Conference of Mayors for the last 25 years," stated Conference of Mayors CEO and Executive Director Tom Cochran. "We look forward to working with Chairman Landesman and the National Endowment for the Arts as they implement this new grant program to assist mayors in their urban design efforts."

The NEA anticipates awarding **up to 15 grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$250,000**. Guidelines and application materials are available at [www.arts.gov/grants/apply/MICD25/index.html](http://www.arts.gov/grants/apply/MICD25/index.html)

Since its inception in 1986, more than 800 mayors from 600 cities—from small town to metropolises—have participated in a session of the MICD. These mayors learn that through design and the engagement of arts and cultural activities, communities experience a celebration of place that can have a powerful impact on community sustainability and vitality. This place-making is accomplished by providing opportunities for creativity, building social networks, facilitating connections across geographic boundaries, and serving as magnets for attracting a vibrant workforce.

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**Rocco Landesman remarks before the  
United States Conference of Mayors  
Thursday, January 21, 2010; Washington, DC**

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Thank you, Mayor Kautz. Thank you Bob Lynch. I said to Tom Cochran yesterday – and I meant it – that I think the US Conference of Mayors is probably the most important ally the NEA can have. Especially when your ranks include such great leaders as Mayor Diaz, Mayor Hanneman, and Governor Kulongoski. Thank you for inviting me here this morning.

Art works. I mean this in a number of ways.

One of our jobs at the NEA is to fund the very best art works: paintings, sculptures, plays, ballets, operas, concerts. Our support is based on simple criteria: excellence and merit.

Art works in another way that each of you gathered here this morning knows very well: it transforms people and communities. The child who is in fact left behind by programs that train teachers to train students to perform on standardized tests, that child who has a special talent or passion or imagination will realize his or her potential on the stage or in the studio or in the orchestra.

Even those of us who are not artists can vividly recall those special, transcendent moments, when we have been deeply affected by a love song, a dramatic twist, a breath-catching, gravity-defying climax in a dance, a spontaneous, unexpected riff in a thrilling saxophone solo. At these moments we take temporary leave from our quotidian, habitual, exigent daily life and for an instant we become more ourselves and more than ourselves. We are better.

And art makes communities better: prouder, more cohesive, individuated. We know and recognize cities by their special architecture and parks and sculpture gardens and neighborhood arts fairs. And there's no such thing as just music: there's hip-hop in LA, jazz in New Orleans, blues in Memphis, country in Nashville, soul in Detroit, and Broadway musicals in New York. Art not only moves us, it tells the world what is special about us.

Art works.

But I didn't come here at 7:30 a.m. just to wax poetic about poetry. You each have cities to run and it's your luck that you've been elected to run them at an especially bad time. Tax revenues are declining, bond markets are inhospitable, state support is shrinking every month, basic services are endangered, social instability is a lurking possibility which brings me to the third iteration of "ArtWorks."

No one has a magic bullet, certainly not I, but I would suggest that when the goal is neighborhood revitalization, economic growth and civic engagement, art works. Arts workers, and there are 5.7 million of them in this country, are part of the real economy, they not only pay taxes and buy meals and cars and send their kids to college, they attract economic activity.

Artists are entrepreneurs, small business owners all, great placemakers and community builders. Bring artists into the center of town and that town changes profoundly. We know now that people do not migrate to businesses, it is the other way around. Businesses look for a skilled, motivated, educated workforce, and will move to where that is. And what does that workforce look for? In survey after survey, the answer is education and culture.

People follow other people. To turn upside down one of my favorite lines, from the movie *Field of Dreams*, “If you come, they will build it.”

When artists do come and form clusters and build cultural institutions, what happens? Everything good. I’m sure most of you are familiar with the work of Richard Florida about the importance of the “Creative Class” in our fast-changing economy.

For now, my reference point is recent work by Mark Stern, Susan Seifert, and Jeremy Nowak based on a ten-year study at the University of Pennsylvania of the catalytic role of the arts in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Three general conclusions stand out:

- 1) The arts are a force for social cohesion and civic engagement. In communities with a strong cultural presence, people are much more likely to engage in civic activities beyond the arts. Community participation increases measurably and the result is more stable neighborhoods.
- 2) The arts make a major difference in child welfare. To quote, “Low income block groups with high cultural participation were more than twice as likely to have very low truancy and delinquency rates.”
- 3) Art is a poverty fighter. In the cycle I have already described, artists form clusters, cultural institutions are built, people gravitate to them, and the businesses follow. The businesses hire and the virtuous cycle continues. And arts jobs leverage other jobs. Buy a ticket and see a play. You see the actors on a stage. But behind those actors are administrators, designers, ushers, stagehands, costume makers, and just outside the building are parking lot attendants, cooks, and waiters.

I know that I’m preaching to the choir. You know all this already. You’ve been walking this walk long before I started talking this particular talk. City Garden in my home town of St. Louis; the public-private partnership in Peoria that is moving the art museum to the river (with, amazingly, a tax increase passed with the support of organized labor); Mayor Daley’s legendary renovation of the old vaudeville houses in Chicago to create a downtown theater district; Mass MoCA

in North Adams, Massachusetts, and the Folk Arts Festivals in Butte, Montana, and Bangor, Maine; the transformations, via the arts, of Paducah, Kentucky, and Chattanooga, Tennessee.

You know all this already because you've done it. So what can I add? More than a speech, I would hope. And more than the budget of the NEA, which is – how to put this? – “not that big,” would allow.

The NEA, in my view, can help in two ways. As a direct funder of urban planning and design and as a catalyst for significant, broader funding from other sources.

I'll address those briefly now.

First, the direct funding. This is the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NEA Mayors' Institute on City Design, and we are marking that anniversary with a new initiative: MICD 25.

As you all hopefully know, MICD is the NEA's partnership with the US Conference of Mayors and the American Architectural Foundation (thank you, Ron Bogle).

Since 1986, MICD has helped transform communities through smart, innovative design by preparing mayors to be the chief designers of their cities. MICD organizes sessions where mayors engage leading design experts to find solutions to the most critical urban design challenges facing their cities.

Building on this quarter century of momentum, through MICD 25, we will make up to 15 grants ranging from \$25,000 to a quarter of a million dollars in recognition of the role that smart design, arts, artists, and arts organizations can play in building dynamic places where people want to live and work.

These grants will be available to any city that has had a mayor go through MICD over the past 25 years – some 600 cities – whether that specific mayor is still in office or not.

And we will be looking for cities that have partnerships among arts organizations and artists, design professionals and design centers, developers, business owners, community organizations, and private foundations.

We are looking to fund planning projects, including the planning of arts districts, the mapping of cultural assets along with their development potential, and the creation of innovative plans to maximize the creative sector.

We want to fund design projects, to enhance public spaces – such as parks, public buildings, libraries, memorials, streets, and pedestrian bridges. We will fund the revitalization of neighborhoods through the adaptive reuse of historic buildings into affordable housing for artists, studios, and work space.

And we want to make sure that citizens engage with the arts by having communities transform themselves through public spaces that have cultural activities – innovative festivals, outdoor exhibitions, murals and sculptures, sculpture gardens, and waterfront art parks.

We will be able to fund any phase of a project – its planning, development, design, and implementation -- and we are looking to move quickly. Cities that are interested in applying will need to submit their statement of interest by Monday, March 15, 2010.

Finally, I am a recovering Broadway producer, and theater is by far the most collaborative of the art forms in my opinion.. That same spirit of collaboration is the hallmark of this administration, and because of that – for the first time ever – the NEA has begun conversations across all the federal agencies that might intersect with the arts, to find ways that we can work together.

If there is a single, identifiable theme in this administration's domestic policy, it is that we need to do everything we can to promote complete, diverse, sustainable, livable communities, and that the federal agencies can only meet this challenge by working together. Working in silos, sometimes at cross purposes, will achieve little. But responding collectively and collaboratively to your needs can bring real, dynamic change.

Our intention is ambitious, but simple. We will start in a few selected communities where we can make a real difference, and find ways that federal agencies, in conjunction with significant private sector commitment, can build complete communities using the arts as a fulcrum.

Some examples: Affordable artists housing might involve HUD. A city that wants to expand a limited tourist streetcar line into a real mode of public transportation connecting the arts district to the rest of the city might get a hearing at the Department of Transportation. The Department of Education might encourage arts charter schools that can transform a neighborhood. The Small Business Administration might support the entrepreneurs known as artists. And so on.

We need to hear from you and hear the needs of your cities. And the agencies will make determinations within their own guidelines and policies. It is my firm conviction that there is a current or incipient arts resource in every federal agency and that a focused, collaborative effort can produce meaningful results.

Art works.

That's my story and I'm sticking to it. Thank you.