



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Arts-based Community Development Investment for Gretna, in Partnership with the Arts Council New Orleans**

#### ***City of Gretna One of 57 National Endowment for the Arts Our Town Projects Selected Nationwide***

*Gretna, LA*-- National Endowment for the Arts Acting Chairman Mary Anne Carter announced 57 awards totaling \$4.1 million supporting projects across the nation through the NEA's Our Town program, including the City of Gretna's \$150,000 award to support arts programming alongside the Mississippi River. The City of Gretna's partnership with the Arts Council New Orleans for *East Meets West* – an initiative to use temporary public art installations and dynamic programming that responds to the scale of the Mississippi River while encouraging cross River connections that highlight the potential of a more integrated region – represents one of the largest NEA Our Town awards in the country.

"These awards made to organizations across the United States are a testament to the artistic richness and diversity in our country," said Mary Anne Carter, acting chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. Mayor Belinda Constant shares in this excitement for Gretna, "The City and the Arts Council New Orleans are giving people the opportunity to learn, create and be inspired. We are excited about using temporary art installations to highlight the unique opportunities that exist on the Westbank – challenging longstanding assumptions about the Mississippi River as a physical and social barrier within our region."

The concept for *East Meets West* dates back to 2014, when then (and now current) New Orleans District C Councilperson and Algiers resident Kristin Palmer convened stakeholders, including Mayor Constant, to evaluate public art opportunities between Old Gretna and Algiers Point. While there was broad support for the vision, a strategy and an experienced arts organization to lead the project was needed. Palmer's return to office in New Orleans and the completion of Gretna's continued engagement with the NEA reenergized the project. The Arts Council New Orleans was solicited as the lead artistic partner based on their forty plus years of experience conceptualizing and managing public art projects in the region.

*East Meets West* will engage residents on each side of the Mississippi in an exploration of place as it relates to the river and its influence on the region's social, cultural, and economic history and future. Funding received from the NEA will support the commissioning and exhibition of a series of temporary, large-scale multidisciplinary artworks on the Westbank, along the River between Old Gretna and Algiers Point throughout 2020. An overarching objective of the initiative is to encourage greater regional collaboration around transit, including ferry services, while advancing objectives of several master planning processes including Gretna Downtown 2020, the Gretna Comprehensive Plan, and the Regional Transit Authority's Strategic Mobility Plan. "This grant will support our key

strategic goal of providing public art that engages our Westbank communities while encouraging regional transit options and improving connectivity between Jefferson and Orleans Parishes. I am thrilled this grant will support these efforts and hope it will showcase how art can strengthen regional relationships. I am proud to partner with the NEA, the City of Gretna and Arts Council New Orleans to create this innovative project,” said New Orleans District C Councilmember Kristin Gisleson Palmer.

As the primary artistic partner, the Arts Council New Orleans will be responsible for leading the process to select local and Southern-regional artists to complete the installations. The organization has managed the City of New Orleans “Percent for Art” program since its inception in 1983. “The Arts Council is excited to work with leaders in both Gretna and New Orleans to leverage the power of public art to engage residents in conversation about our communities’ shared history and collective future as it relates to the river,” said Heidi Schmalbach, executive director. “The Arts Council envisions a future for our region in which arts and culture play a central role in all aspects of community and economic development. We know our arts community can be a resource in creatively addressing a wide range of shared civic challenges, including transit.”

The City of Gretna and the Arts Council New Orleans would like to thank all of the partners that have made this award possible, including the City of New Orleans, our Federal Delegation members and all other community organizations and government partners.

For a complete list of projects recommended for Our Town grant support, please visit the NEA website at [arts.gov](http://arts.gov).

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