

Nook Farm as a New Place



An idea that started during the Smarter Cities Smarter Communities Challenge (SC2) back in 2014 is being resurrected in 2018. Steve Raider-Ginsburg co-founder of Hartbeat Ensemble originally proposed the idea then, and while it didn't win a cash prize, it wasn't completely forgotten. So when the opportunity came along for the Liberal Arts Action Lab to do some research as a student project, Steve and Suzan Bibisi, Executive Director of Hartbeat Ensemble applied. As the website says, "The Action Lab is an educational partnership between Capital Community College and Trinity College in Hartford, the ... goals are to strengthen the city and its role in the region, spark social innovation, and support civic engagement and sustainability."

The idea was that Nook Farm was a treasured part of Asylum Hill history, and the idea of "placemaking" here could benefit the whole community.

As the Project for Public Spaces puts it, "**Placemaking** inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community, strengthening the connection between people and the places they share. Placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, Placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution."

So this was the challenge that was presented to Josephine Bensa, Giana Moreno, Aulona Zeka and Jane Bisson, the team from Trinity and Capital Community Colleges that took it up. Their presentation at the Carriage House Theater on the last Monday afternoon in April was the culmination of their efforts.

They began with a definition of placemaking and examples of creative placemaking in Camden NJ, Washington DC, Chicago IL and Portland ME. Then they researched Nook Farm as it existed from the mid-1800s when it was the home of Mark Twain and Harriet Beecher-Stowe and a host of other creative leaders of the time.

This was followed by the results of a random survey of about four-dozen residents on the street, and concluded with a Plan of Action consisting of four recommendations and an opportunity for participation feedback.

The entire presentation is available at <https://action-lab.org/creative-placemaking>