

**Evaluation of the Greenwood Art Project:**

**Final Report**

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## **Introduction:**

In December of 2016, a group of Tulsa city residents, led by Oklahoma State Senator Kevin Matthews, organized the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of the commission was to bring greater attention to the Massacre, and to “leverage the history surrounding the events of nearly 100 years ago by developing programs projects, events and activities to commemorate and inform.” (1921 Tulsa Race Massacre Centennial Commission, 2021).

At the time of the commission’s creation, it is unlikely that many people outside of the city of Tulsa had ever heard of the 1921 Massacre, apart from descendants of the Massacre’s victims and perhaps a small subset of American historians. This despite the fact that it is now generally acknowledged as one of the worst examples of early 20<sup>th</sup> century racial violence in the United States, resulting in approximately \$1.5 million in real estate damages, over \$750,000 in damages to personal property, and an estimated death toll of anywhere from 30 to over 300 people (Oklahoma Commission, 2001). Even within Tulsa itself the Massacre was not a common topic of public discussion or public reflection. Indeed, central to understanding the meaning of the Massacre is the nearly seventy-year long silence on the events of 1921. White Tulsans did not like to acknowledge the violence because it reflected poorly on the city and did not comport with the progressive image that they wished to promote to the world. Black Tulsans lacked the political and economic power to place it on the public agenda. For that reason, the Massacre essentially disappeared from the historical memory of Tulsa for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, either ignored in official histories or referred to only in euphemistic terms (Krehbiel, 2021). Eventually,

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<sup>1</sup> The original name of the commission was the 1921 Tulsa Race Riot Centennial Commission. The name was revised in light of recent historical work that has forced a re-evaluation of the nature of the events of 1921.

a number of important historical works began to break the silence over the events of 1921 (Ellsworth, 1992; Madigan, 2003), and a state-sponsored commission produced a 100-page historical report (Oklahoma Commission, 2001), but after a brief recognition and discussion of the tragedy, the city moved away from confronting its past once again. City officials rarely referred to it. Students in Tulsa’s public schools rarely heard about it in their classrooms.

The goal of the 1921 Commission was to change this dynamic: to reverse the long neglect of the Greenwood district, and of Black Tulsa more generally, by the city’s power structure. It focused on raising awareness of the events of 1921 and their continued influence on city residents, particularly people living in North Tulsa. One of its tools for achieving this was the Greenwood Art Project, whose stated goal was to add a cultural component to the centennial year events and to be a “catalyst for uniting the city of Tulsa by working with artists, residents, leaders, organizations, and businesses to elevate awareness of Greenwood’s history.” (Greenwood Art Project, 2021). Rick Lowe, 2014 MacArthur Fellow, was brought into the project as lead artist. Jerica Wortham, a poet, publisher, and Tulsa native, was named the Project Manager (Black Wall Street Times, 2019). Later, Lowe would invite William Cordova to serve as co-lead artist on the project (Cascone, 2021).

In early 2018, the Public Art Challenge, an arm of Bloomberg Philanthropies, announced that GAP would be one of five projects to receive funding. The City of Tulsa had submitted an application to PArC on behalf of GAP, as addressing the most important issue facing the city. Of the \$1 million that GAP received from PArC, a certain amount was set aside to conduct an evaluation of its effects. The evaluation of the five different projects for the 2018 period was overseen at the national level by BOP Consulting, and at the local level by the Center for Health, Arts and Measurement Practices.

This present report is final document in CHAMP’s evaluation. It does not contain the entirety of the data collected by CHAMP and other members of the GAP team, but rather attempts to summarize the impact that the project has had on the Greenwood neighborhood specifically, and the City of Tulsa more generally. In constructing this summary, the CHAMP team has used as a central organizing template the three main impact areas as identified by the Public Art Challenge and BOP consulting in the fall of 2019. First, the impact on **Policy and Practice**: that is to say, whether public policy has been positively influenced and future development opportunities have been created. Second, the impact on **Place**, on city spaces and possible transformation in their civic role. Third, the impact on **People and Community**, focusing especially on the ways in which the project has promoted a more active, connected and resilient population (BOP Consulting, 2019). We will address these main impact issues through discussion of four different topic areas: the effects on neighborhood businesses; the effects on the project’s audience and on community residents more generally; changing patterns of the use of public space; and a changed understanding of the relationship between the community and media.

Prior to any discussion of the evaluation of the GAP project, it is important to acknowledge several key challenges that were encountered in the course of the evaluation and were largely unanticipated by the evaluators at its inception. The first of these was the arrival of the COVID-19 virus on the world stage in the spring of 2020, the subsequent spread of the pandemic, and the dramatic effect this had on almost all aspects of life over the next two years. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the pandemic had only a limited impact on the various projects themselves, most of which took place within a fairly narrow temporal window—in the late spring/early summer of 2021—when a combination of vaccinations and warmer weather had

brought COVID cases down dramatically, and the Delta variant had not yet appeared. All of this meant that crowds for the centenary weekend of May 28-31—and even for much of the early part of the summer, as some of the exhibits continued—were probably almost as large as they would have been absent COVID. For the evaluators the pandemic did cause problems, however, since restrictions on public activity that were put in place for much of 2020 meant that a number of strategies for gathering data had to be shelved or modified.

Another major challenge to the evaluation was both less startling and more problematic in terms of conceptualizing an evaluation strategy. Already by the fall of 2019, it was becoming apparent that the place of the Greenwood Massacre in the public imagination, both locally and nationally, had shifted. Over the next two years it would only become more prominent, and more symbolic of the general state of race relations in the country. There are a number of reasons for this change. First, popular culture became aware of the Massacre. In late 2019, HBO aired *Watchmen*, a well-received, limited run series that garnered a good deal of attention in other media (Poniewozik, 2019; Stuever, 2019). The series took place in (an alternative history) Tulsa, and the Race Massacre was a significant plot point. Over time other popular culture figures would involve themselves in the history of Greenwood, including at least two different basketball NBA stars, Russell Westbrook and LeBron James, who helped fund two different documentaries on the subject (Aklilu, 2020; Hernandez, 2021). Two books for young audiences, with the Massacre as their central backdrop, were published (Latham, 2018; Weatherford and Cooper, 2021). Added to this was a renewed interest in the state of race relations in the United States more generally, sparked in part by the anger over the George Floyd video, and perhaps given impetus by the fact that most Americans were spending a lot of time inside their homes and on the Internet, and had greater opportunity to reflect critically on racial injustice (Coren,

2021). In a strange way, then-President Donald Trump may have helped promote the Tulsa Massacre as a symbol of the continuing conflicts over race, when he decided to restart his re-election campaign with a rally in Tulsa in June, 2020. The timing of the rally was heavily criticized because it clashed with the Juneteenth holiday, but discussion of Trump's insensitivity on the issue also pulled in accounts of the Massacre, and helped to further publicize it for a national audience (Brown, 2020a).

The issue of measuring the effects of public art is inherently a fraught one. Generally, the human sciences attempt to establish causality through controlled experiment. In the case of a work of public art, however, such a research design would negate the whole point of the artwork. The history of the Greenwood Art Project dramatically highlights the challenge in making any confident claim about public art's causal effects. Because of the various channels through which a potential audience might have become aware of the Massacre and of Greenwood's history over the past five years, it is difficult to know what source to credit for any changes observed at both the individual and the community level. Should increased levels of foot traffic in public spaces be attributed to GAP works? Or to a documentary that was seen on public television? Or an opinion piece that appeared in the *New York Times*? To what degree can we establish the role of GAP in the shifting discussion of the place of the Massacre in Tulsa's history, or to a reconsideration of how racial discrimination can be addressed in the city?

In the end, we would suggest, it is impossible to disentangle GAP from the other messages and cultural efforts within the last decade that were centered on the events of 1921, all of them working to make public an important piece of history that had been largely unaddressed for most of the previous century. Rather than think about GAP's independent effects on changing how people in Greenwood and North Tulsa think about themselves and their community, and

how others perceive that community, it is more helpful to see GAP as one element within a wider cultural system, impacting other messages and actions, and being impacted by them in turn. We are confident in claiming that these various efforts, *in toto*, had an important impact on the community. We are less confident in making claims about GAP's direct and unique impact (except perhaps in several aspects, which will be noted when appropriate.)

One final complication needs to be addressed before discussion of the findings. In an appendix to the 2019 metrics discussion put out by BOP, there are a series of program level assumptions that underlie the evaluation structure. The last two of these read as follows: "That bringing disparate groups in the community together will have positive effects;" and "That these interventions will not exacerbate already complex and tense civic issues." (BOP Consulting, 2019, p. 7). As will become clear in the pages that follow, those two assumptions become problematic in the case of GAP. The project took place within a city deeply divided by race and class, and one in which the largely Black population of North Tulsa has long felt economically marginalized and culturally ignored. It was perhaps inevitable that once people began to enter into a more forthright and honest discussion of Tulsa's racial history—something that the project itself was of course hoping to achieve—a good deal of anger, distrust, and resentment would necessarily bubble up. Some of this ended up being directed at the project itself. In a moment when economic reparations to Black Americans are very much on the public agenda, the idea of a series of cultural efforts aimed at highlighting injustices, rather than financially redressing them, was taken in some quarters as an insufficient response to the damages inflicted by the Massacre (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Residents of Greenwood and North Tulsa grew increasingly suspicious that the extra attention that the centennial was bringing to the neighborhood was being used by outsiders to profit off their pain (Jan, 2021). As we will see in

our interviews with neighborhood residents, there was at least some dissatisfaction with the role of non-Tulsans in the design and implementation of GAP. This may seem unfair, since the project director was a Tulsa native and most of the artists involved in the project were either residents of the city or had personal connections to it, but perceptions need to be acknowledged, whether fair or not. Indeed, one of the most important lessons of GAP for future public art efforts is that major projects like this one need to realize that they must deal with significant civic cleavages and community anger that they themselves had no part in creating.

## Executive Summary:

The original impetus for the Greenwood Art project was to act as a “catalyst for uniting the city of Tulsa by working with artists, residents, leaders, organizations, and businesses to elevate awareness of Greenwood’s history.” Part of this goal has clearly been met. The history of Greenwood and of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre has become a part of the national historical consciousness. In the past year, commemoration events for 1921 received extensive media coverage and were attended by the President of the United States, as well as a number of other nationally recognized political figures (BBC, 2021); excavation work began on recovering possible remains of victims of the Massacre (Waxman, 2021); and a Congressional judiciary subcommittee heard testimony from the Massacre’s three remaining survivors, who called on Congress to press for justice on behalf of the people affected by the violence (Victor, 2021).

This evaluation report shows that in at least two of the three areas of impact areas originally identified by PArC—*People and Community*, and *Place*—there is decent evidence of a positive trends in community attitudes and activity, and in use of public spaces, especially those spaces directly linked to Greenwood’s history. There is also data, hopeful albeit mixed, suggesting that Greenwood and Black Wall Street have the potential to become draws for tourists, thereby helping spark an economic revival in the North Tulsa district. During our qualitative interviews, one respondent noted as the most important outcome of the centennial events a renewed spirit of entrepreneurialism within the North Tulsa community. The growing demands for reparations can be taken as evidence for a renewed sense of political activism and agency among North Tulsa residents. Several business owners in the area agreed that the area has seen renewed foot traffic (although quantitative data is more mixed on this score), and perhaps just as important, they argued that the changed discourse around Tulsa’s history and its race

relations can be expected to provide a more positive environment for minority business owners in the coming years.

Having noted that, the evaluators must also point out that evidence is not nearly so positive for the other part of GAP's original goal—bringing various elements of the city together. Over the course of GAP's life, it became clear that long-existing divisions, both within Tulsa's Black community, and between that community and that the city's still largely white power structure, have not been resolved, and that these divisions often colored residents' opinion of the project. To a degree, the debates that took place in Tulsa, over both the centennial generally and GAP specifically, simply reflect a larger social dynamic that is ongoing in the United States. If a significant part of the city's population believes that it is important to recognize events like the Massacre and come to terms with Tulsa's often problematic history, there are also large numbers of people who feel that those events are irrelevant to present conditions. That latter group can be expected to fight against any attempt to use discussions of the events of 1921 as a springboard for civic action and, perhaps more importantly, for the spending of city or state funds.

This goes directly to the third impact area identified by PArC and BOP: *Policy* and *Practice*. Given that the centenary year has only just passed, it is too soon to say whether or not the cultural reckoning that GAP hoped to spark will have long-term effects on the economic and social conditions of the residents of Greenwood and of North Tulsa. It is safe to say that, given the history of their treatment by local officials, North Tulsa residents remain extremely suspicious about the city's reaction, and somewhat doubtful that the public discussion around the Massacre will translate into meaningful action and policy on the part of city hall and state government. The efforts of the artists and organizers of the Greenwood Art Project, along with

other groups involved in the 1921 centennial, have provided Tulsa with the opportunity to construct a more inclusive and egalitarian city. Whether Tulsans decide to act on that opportunity remains an open question.

## **Chapter One: Audience Responses**

This section will mainly involve the impact areas of *People and Community* and *Place*. It summarizes three separate but related data-gathering efforts: a series of qualitative interviews with Tulsa residents; the summary of survey responses to a set of questions designed by Bloomberg and BOP to measure the effects of the projects on individual residents, with comparisons of pre- and post-treatment responses; and a final section directed to the aesthetic experience of the artworks themselves.

### **i. Summary of qualitative interviews**

Qualitative material was gathered at two different points in time. The first set of data came in during January and February of 2021, when CHAMP researchers conducted two focus group interviews and three different qualitative interviews. The members of the focus groups were Tulsa residents but not residents of North Tulsa. The three people interviewed individually were from North Tulsa, with extensive contacts within the cultural community. In the fall and winter of 2021-22, researchers returned to the three individual subjects interviewed earlier to get their responses to the GAP project, and their perceptions of its affects on the community.

Because we have already provided an extensive summary of the first round of qualitative interviews in an earlier report, we limit ourselves here to reviewing what we feel are the most important findings from those discussions, in terms of their relevance to GAP's aims and our subsequent findings. In terms of the focus groups, the two most important findings simply confirmed what was already expected. First, there was general agreement that white Tulsans did not have much, if any, knowledge about the 1921 Race Massacre until quite recently, say within the last five years. Prior to that, it was rarely taught in the public schools' curricula and was not discussed publicly, even among white Tulsans who considered themselves progressive on race

matters. (The single exception to this, ironically, was the oldest member of the second focus group, whose parents had sheltered several people from attackers during the night of the Massacre. The history of 1921 thus had come down to her through family lore.) Second, there was also general agreement that many middle-class and white residents in south Tulsa or the midtown area viewed North Tulsa in negative terms, as a dangerous and poverty-stricken space. Note that this perception has implications for potential business growth in Greenwood and North Tulsa, since it will work against business traffic from outside the immediate neighborhood.

The most important finding from the individual interviews was the opinion, voiced by one subject at the end of the interview, that GAP was viewed in some quarters of the community as lacking an organic connection to Greenwood and North Tulsa. This suggested that there was work to be done in terms of highlighting the project's connection to the community.

That message did not seem to get through. When we returned to these same subjects several months after most of the GAP exhibits had ended, the perception that people outside the community were telling Greenwood's story came through once again. One respondent argued that there should have been more of a presence in GAP of Tulsans, and particularly of people from North Tulsa. When asked for advice on future public art projects, this same person suggested that organizers work harder "to identify local talent that could lead the project, that can be the face of the project." Another subject noted hearing comments from community organizers at a local coffee shop to the effect that native Tulsans were not being allowed to tell their community's story: "I'm just wondering why aren't people that are Tulsa natives telling the story, or they're just not being picked [by the project organizers]." Related to this concern was voiced opinion that the process for choosing GAP artists had perhaps not taken into account that many of the original proposals were made by individuals who were not professional artists and

were therefore uncertain about the procedures used to determine inclusion into the final group. For some residents, at least, there was confusion over why their projects were not chosen.

This reaction is more than a little puzzling. For one thing, one of the most prominent and public “faces” of the Greenwood Art Project was Jerica Wortham, its Project Manager and the person probably most frequently quoted in stories about GAP. Wortham is a member of the North Tulsa community. She is exactly the sort of Tulsa “native” that respondents were arguing the project needed. Moreover, the entire GAP team, and certainly the lead artists, made serious and sustained efforts to include members of the community in the final project plan. These efforts bore fruit. The vast majority of the exhibits and events that made up the entirety of GAP were either Tulsa-based artists or those with personal connections to the city and the events of 1921. So the reality of local participation does not seem to have met up with the perception of that participation. The question is why.

We propose two possible explanations, neither of which necessarily exclude the other. The first is that subjects seemed confused about which cultural events that took place in 2021 were affiliated with GAP, and which were affiliated with other cultural institutions or community groups. When asked which GAP events or exhibits they had attended or visited, respondents gave the following responses: a hexagonal structure containing posters made by local residents, a mural of the Massacre located near the Vernon AME church, a ballet sponsored by the Tulsa Ballet Company, the movie night at Admiral Drive-In movie theater, and *Fire in Little Africa*. Of these, the movie night, the hexagon, and *Fire in Little Africa* were associated with GAP, the mural and the ballet were not.<sup>2</sup> Confusion over which artists were GAP artists, and which were not, could have been part of the reason for the mismatch between perception and reality. For

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<sup>2</sup> There was a dance project associated with GAP—*This Car Up*—but it was performed by Tulsa Modern Movement, not the Tulsa Ballet.

example, one subject noted that the Tulsa Ballet event, *Breakin' Bricks*, did not feature any local dancers of color. This came in the discussion of why North Tulsans were not being allowed to tell their own story. Even though this was not a GAP project, the respondent didn't seem to make the distinction. On the other hand, another respondent, who described *Fire in Little Africa* as "mind-blowing," needed to be told by the CHAMP interviewer that the music project was in fact part of GAP.<sup>3</sup>

The second explanation for the criticisms leveled against GAP on this score is that they may have been part of a debate that took place in the spring of 2021 between competing community groups over the commemoration events, which perhaps came to a head with the cancellation of the Remember and Rise event that was to have taken place on the evening of May 31 (*Tulsa World* staff, 2021). The rift was evident enough that one respondent listed it as one of the major effects of GAP upon the North Tulsa community. As a result, the commemorations did not always present a "positive portrait" of North Tulsa to outsiders, this person noted. We return to one of the assumptions listed in the metrics document: that bringing disparate groups together would not exacerbate already tense relationships. In fact, in the case of GAP, existing tensions within the community clearly *did* come to the fore during the commemoration events, and GAP, seen as aligned with the Race Massacre Commission, was brought into the debate. This in turn, we suggest, could have explained part of the criticism about "outsiders" profiting from or dominating the story of Greenwood's tragedy. Although it did not fit the empirical facts, it might be considered part of a larger narrative that was being circulated.

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<sup>3</sup> We also note that the mural situated near the Vernon AME church, which received high praise from several of the subjects who had voiced criticisms about a lack of community involvement and which was not project affiliated with GAP, was created by the Maryland based artist Michael Rosato, who has no known connection to Tulsa or to the Greenwood Community.

What all of this means going forward is that projects must not only aim for inclusion, but that they *must be seen as doing so*. GAP lived up to its goal of including members of the community in its efforts, but that success was not communicated to the community itself.

**ii. Quantitative responses**

One of the important metrics of interest concerned the potential effects that the GAP-affiliated projects had on members of the public who experienced them. To this end, BOP designed a series of eight questions, based on a five-point Likert scale, intended to capture one of six different variables of interest, and three constructs: individual well-being (sub-divided into measures of optimism, thoughtfulness, and interest in new things); community cohesion (defined through measures of social engagement and social capital); and civic pride. Although designed by BOP, the questions were to be administered by each local evaluation team. Measures were to be obtained first through a baseline survey conducted prior to the opening of the project, and then through a post-treatment survey of audience members.

The original proposal of the CHAMP team was to gather the baseline survey data through an in-person survey of households in the Greenwood neighborhood during September and October of 2020. The restrictions put in place following the COVID-19 outbreak made an in-person survey impossible to implement. As an alternative, CHAMP researchers attempted to use the Community Ambassadors program, put in place by GAP program director Jerica Wortham, to develop a snowball sample for the survey. This proved unworkable, as only a very few ambassadors responded to a request for names. Finally, CHAMP decided to administer the survey online. Although the survey was created by CHAMP, it was administered by Qualtrics through their bank of respondents in the Tulsa area. Starting in December of 2020 and ending in

February of 2021, Qualtrics obtained 257 online responses from Tulsa residents, of which 127 met the inclusion criteria for the common items, and 58 of which were from North Tulsa.

a. Baseline results

Because the baseline results were summarized in an earlier report we will simply review here the questions that were asked of respondents. The items are numbered according to their position in the baseline survey

*Measures of Well-Being*

Optimism: Item five asked to rate the extent that the participant felt optimistic about the future after reflecting on their experience attending an art exhibit in the past year.

Thoughtfulness: Item six asked to rate the extent that the participant thought differently about an issue or topic after reflecting on their experience attending an art exhibit in the past year.

Interest in New Things: Item seven asked to rate the extent that the participant felt interested in something new or different after reflecting on their experience attending an art exhibit in the past year.

*Measures of Community Cohesion*

Social Capital: Item eight asked to rate the extent that the participant felt the exhibit or event helped bring the community together after reflecting on the event and where it took place.

Item nine asked to rate the extent that the participant felt the exhibit or event allowed them to spend meaningful time with friends or family after reflecting on the event and where it took place.

Social Engagement: Item twelve asked to rate the extent that the participant felt more encouraged to get involved in their community after reflecting on the event and where it took place.

### *Measures of Civic Pride*

Item ten asked to rate the extent that the participant felt the exhibit or event is part of what makes their city special after reflecting on the event and where it took place. Item eleven asked to rate the extent that the participant felt the exhibit or event made them proud of their city after reflecting on the event and where it took place.

In our spring 2021 summary of these results, we noted that the mean scores on almost all measures were lower among North Tulsa residents than among residents as a whole (the only exception here was on one of the measures of social capital, question eight, in which the two scores were essentially the same: 4.03 for North Tulsa residents and 4.02 for all Tulsa residents.) We argued that two questions would be of interest in terms of a post-treatment surveys: first, did the mean scores rise (among both measures of well-being and community cohesion)? Second, were the scores for North Tulsa residents more strongly or more weakly affected than the scores for all Tulsa respondents?

### b: Post-treatment responses:

The post-treatment survey of the GAP audience was a purposive sample. This is not an ideal method, for reasons that are well-known. Any non-probability sample will raise issues concerning both reliability and validity. However, given the nature of the sampling frame and the resources available, a true probability sample in this case did not seem feasible. CHAMP researchers attempted to address some of the concerns with validity by gathering samples from

as many of the different GAP projects as possible, at different times of the day and on different days of the week. In the end, 105 surveys responses were gathered from 20 of the 40 measured exhibits or productions associated with GAP.

Surveys were administered to visitors to the project sites over the course of the spring and summer of 2021 (the first surveys were administered in late March, at the opening of Katherine Mitchell's exhibit at Vernon Chapel AME Church, and the final ones were gathered on the last weekend of Crystal Campbell's AHHA exhibit). Most (about 60) were gathered during the commemoration weekend of May 26 to June 1. The only demographic data gathered from respondents was their place of residence. Most of respondents (70 total, or 67 per cent) were from the city of Tulsa, and of these, 29 (28 per cent) were from North Tulsa.

Our focus here, as noted in the first section, is on two questions. First, were the response scores for GAP audience members higher than those in the baseline sample, for both North Tulsa residents and Tulsa residents overall? The answer, as we will see presently, is yes. Second, did the mean scores increase more among the North Tulsa population than with the survey population as a whole? The answer to that is, for the most part, also yes.

The first table below provides a summary of the mean scores on the eight different questions, for both North Tulsa and Tulsa as a whole, comparing the means in the baseline and those in the audience surveys.

**Table 1:** Comparison of mean scores.

Item	North Tulsa		Tulsa	
	Baseline	Post-visit	Baseline	Post-visit
Q5	3.97	4.00	4.04	4.02
Q6	3.68	3.86	4.75	3.64
Q7	3.74	4.31	4.04	4.23
Q8	4.03	4.52	4.02	4.43
Q9	3.82	4.69	4.12	4.53
Q10	3.94	4.86	4.08	4.69
Q11	3.86	4.66	4.02	4.28
Q12	3.85	4.45	3.89	4.38

The color coding is simply meant to highlight where mean scores went up on the audience (post-visit) surveys and where they declined. Green indicates that scores increased; red that they decreased. As is evident, scores fell on only two measures: for optimism and interest in new things among Tulsa city residents as a whole. We need to be extremely careful in providing too-confident interpretations of these results, but one possible explanation for the lower scores in these cases may be due to the nature of the audience for GAP in areas of the city outside of North Tulsa. They would be, we hypothesize, more liberal than the city population generally, more likely to have knowledge about the Greenwood Massacre, and perhaps more willing to admit a

sense of guilt about the complicity of the Tulsa’s white population in covering up the story of the Massacre for almost one hundred years. Thus, they may be relatively unlikely to say that GAP exhibits made them optimistic (thinking perhaps that a great deal still needs to be done in the area of race relations in the city), or that they made them think differently about the topic at hand (since they were already disposed to think critically about the events of 1921). Note that among the North Tulsa sample, the scores for questions five and six were the lowest of the mean averages among the eight questions surveyed. This again supports the notion that the GAP audience as a whole was predisposed to be sympathetic to the aims of the project and probably already came into the exhibits with a good deal of knowledge—and strong opinions—about 1921 already at hand.

With that said, the numbers are consistent with the hypothesis that GAP had a moderately positive effect on measures of well-being, especially in North Tulsa (questions five through seven), and a stronger effect on measures of civic pride and community cohesion (questions eight through twelve). Just as significantly, the increase in the measures between the two different populations (the baseline and post-treatment groups) was greater in all cases for the North Tulsa sample, compared to the city-at-large sample, as Table 2 shows.

**Table 2:** Shift (in pre- and post-treatment scores)

Item	North Tulsa	Tulsa
Q5	.03	-.02
Q6	.12	-.11
Q7	.57	.19

Q8	.49	.41
Q9	.87	.41
Q10	.92	.61
Q11	.80	.26
Q12	.60	.49

These numbers are not only consistent with the hypothesis that GAP had a positive effect on variables of interest. They also suggest that the effect may have been stronger among residents of North Tulsa than in Tulsa as a whole, allowing North Tulsans in some sense to “catch up” to other residents in the city. Because measures of optimism and social capital are tied to greater civic and political activism, continued efforts at improving these measures might have a significant impact on North Tulsa’s sense of self: it would positively affect, in other words, the main evaluation construct of *People and Community*.

**iii. Audience responses to the artworks**

In addition to the measures of community cohesion, civic pride, and well-being that were asked of projects across the five sponsored projects, local evaluators were also asked to come up with measures that tried to capture the amount of happiness or satisfaction produced by the experience, and measures of how well they understood the aims of the project.

In order to measure the first question CHAMP researchers asked audience members a fairly simple question: to rate, on a scale of one to ten (with one being low and 10 being high), how much they enjoyed the exhibit or event. We present three different averages for this question. The average for all audience members, which includes visitors to Tulsa as well as Tulsa residents, was 8.84 out of 10; the averaged response to the same question for Tulsa residents only

was 9.51; and the average for North Tulsa residents only was 9.6. In other words, while the average expressed satisfaction was high for all three populations, it was even higher as we narrowed the sample to those audience members who were most closely connected to the GAP, suggesting that part of satisfaction may have been due to pride in the project, or support for the local artists involved.

This is worth keeping in mind when we turn to the next set of measures, two questions designed to capture how well audience members understood the knowledge and the aims of the project. Here too, respondents were asked to rate their responses on a ten-point scale (one being very low, 10 being very high), to the following two questions: “how much did the exhibit or event help you understand the events surrounding the 1921 Massacre”; and, “how much did the exhibit or event help you understand the effects the 1921 Massacre.” As with the previous question, responses in general were high, but once again they increased as the audience sample narrowed. For the question about understanding the event itself, the score rose from 7.75 (all respondents) to 8.28 (Tulsa respondents) to 8.6 (North Tulsa respondents). For the effects question, the average rose from 8.43 to 8.93 to 9.08. On their face, these numbers seem puzzling, since one would assume that Tulsa and North Tulsa residents would know more about the 1921 Greenwood Massacre than visitors from outside the city. The numbers could be explained, however, if we suppose that audience members were treating their responses, as with the previous questions, as rough proxies for their support of the artists involved, and perhaps for support of GAP more generally. Alternatively, one might hypothesize that visitors to the city and to the GAP exhibits and events were motivated specifically because of their interest in the events of 1921, and therefore may have had greater knowledge of the events of 1921 than a general population.

## Chapter Two: Business Impact

CHAMP's measurements of the Greenwood Art Project's impact on local business were divided into two main strategies. The first effort involved going out into the business community, focusing on small businesses in and around Greenwood Avenue, and conducting interviews with the proprietors. That data is largely qualitative. The second set of data is quantitative and taken from foot and vehicle traffic obtained for CHAMP by a third party, Placer.ai, which uses cell-phone tracking from a sample population to obtain foot traffic in a defined geographic space. For the purposes of measuring trends for the Greenwood Art Project, CHAMP had Placer divide the relevant parts of North Tulsa into five distinct areas: **Black Wall Street**, which is the main commercial space for Greenwood Avenue (most of the businesses here are Black-owned); **Main Street**, which includes the area of near North Tulsa directly to the west of Black Wall Street, commonly known as the Arts District, and includes some of the GAP project exhibits (most of the businesses here are not minority-owned); **Guthrie Green**, a major public space in the Arts District; **Peoria and Pine**, a commercial complex that lies about a mile from the area of interest and was used as a comparison space; and finally **Historic Greenwood**, the space on the North Side of the I-244 highway, which includes the Greenwood Cultural Center, the historic Vernon AME Chapel, and the Black Wall Street Mural. Although all the areas are important, Black Wall Street is our main geographical region of interest because of its economic importance within the North Tulsa community, and the role it could play in promoting entrepreneurship among that community.

**i. Qualitative interviews**

Interviews of small business owners were conducted in two waves. The first wave of interviews began in mid to late June of 2020, and lasted through the summer. At the time, the effect of the COVID-19 virus had entered one of its “fallow” phases: as in many other parts of the country and the world, case counts and death rates were down in Tulsa, and public activity and use of public spaces had started to resume. Although not up to pre-pandemic levels, retail sales were healthier than might have been expected, perhaps due in part to the fact that Tulsa sits in one of the most conservative parts of the United States. This meant that many residents were prone to dismiss the threat of virus: perhaps unwisely, but in any case to the benefit of small businesses that depended on walk-in sales for their profits. A total of ten businesspeople were interviewed, most of them located in Historic Greenwood or the surrounding area, known as the Arts District. The interviews were conducted from a schedule of mostly qualitative questions, oriented around two central topics of concern: current challenges and opportunities, especially as these might have been unique to those businesses located in Greenwood and/or owned by Black entrepreneurs; and relations with city and state governments. These two topics were intended to address two of the impact issues identified in the metrics document (see p. 2): *Policy and Practice*, and *Place*. The interview also contained some questions directly related to the pandemic and its effects. That second wave took place in the fall and early winter of 2021. Somewhat disappointingly, given that all participants in the first wave had agreed to a second interview, the drop-off was fairly dramatic. Only five interview subjects agreed to participate in this second wave, and one of these was not part of the initial set of interview subjects.

*Constructs of interest:* We noted previously that there was no consistent pattern to the responses and no unanimity expressed on any particular topic: nevertheless, there were some responses that seemed to us worth highlighting because of their relevance to the potential impact of a cultural event like GAP. The first of these related to the question of **foot traffic**. Several respondents noted that foot traffic was a significant challenge for their business. The Greenwood District is largely, although not exclusively, made up of small retail shops and restaurants, bars, and cafes. It is the sort of space in which a significant pedestrian presence could feed on itself. As more people walk along the streets, the streets appear more inviting for other potential strollers. Once a certain degree of foot traffic is established the neighborhood can be considered ‘popular,’ friendly to tourists and families on weekends. It is established as a destination, a space that one might make an effort to get to, knowing that there are multiple options for shopping and eating in the area. Greater amount of foot traffic could also address a problem raised by at least one respondent, which was the presence of frequent street solicitations that made customers uncomfortable and dissuaded them from visiting the district. A more substantive presence of other pedestrians would provide some sense of mutual security, and make the solicitations less threatening (if not necessarily less frequent).

With this in mind, an argument could be made that Greenwood has both advantages and disadvantages in terms of attracting causal street-level visits. The disadvantages first. Greenwood Avenue, at least at the moment, is awkwardly placed physically, located directly next to a major traffic overpass on the northern border, and with open greenspace to its immediate east, and railroad tracks on the southern edge. It is not a space that one might wander into (when asked directly about the overpass, one business owner answered that if she had the ability to do so, it would be gone “immediately.”) To the west is a new baseball stadium, which of course does

create traffic on game days but also serves to separate Greenwood physically from the rest of the Arts District. This means that during public arts events, such as the monthly First Fridays, spillover traffic from the other Arts District locations is minimal. Then too, this part of the city is not one that has traditionally been thought of as a shopping destination. It has to establish a reputation, whereas other shopping districts have their reputation already in place.

But Greenwood has important advantages that many other parts of the city do not. There is its history. Greenwood is a significant historic location, and perhaps more importantly, this fact is becoming more and more known. Later in this document we will discuss the use of two important public spaces in the Greenwood neighborhood, both of them of historical importance: John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, and the area in and around the Greenwood Cultural Center. Although not commercial areas themselves, these spaces have the potential to pull in visitors, some of whom would be expected to wander into the retail section. The physical character of many of the buildings in the district reflect and embody this history. Within a city as relatively new as Tulsa, this feature serves to distinguish Greenwood from most other spaces in the city. Finally, the fact that many of the businesses in Greenwood are Black-owned may now become an advantage, as politically progressive consumers start to self-consciously commit themselves to supporting these businesses. All of which probably explains why, when asked to name the most significant strength of the neighborhood, a majority of business owners pointed to its historical character and significance.

The need to increase foot traffic, combined with the fact that history and culture are keys to sparking that increase, means an effort like GAP, which both aimed to promote the history of Greenwood and to celebrate its culture, has an obvious potential to positively impact the business prospects of the area. That in turn explains why CHAMP paid a good deal of attention to the

question of whether or not foot traffic increased during, and perhaps more importantly after, the GAP exhibitions and events.

In addition to the question of foot traffic, there was another potential change that CHAMP felt was important to understanding the economic effects of the Greenwood Art Project. This phenomenon is at once more amorphous than foot traffic, more difficult to measure and to establish causal claims for, and in the end probably more important. We summarize it with the construct of **economic environment**. By this we mean the combination of those aspects of the everyday world of the business owner which serve either to nurture or hinder success over the long term. It would include the ability for businesses to work together to promote their common interests (within a chamber of commerce or more informally), relationships with city and state government that might lead to new economic opportunities, promotion of tourism, and development, and a general atmosphere of investment and growing economic activity within a defined area or community. It would also include access to capital. At least two different respondents noted that the biggest challenge to business success in Tulsa, at least for Black entrepreneurs, was access to start-up capital. It is worth noting that both respondents were older and highly experience businesspeople, with an established record of success in the city. One of the respondents outlined three different ways in which beginning Black entrepreneurs may be relatively disadvantaged when it comes to accessing capital. First, they often simply lack the family wealth that white entrepreneurs may be able to draw on. Second, they may have to work harder to convince potential investors, because they may lack experience or, again, may not be part of interpersonal networks that could allow them to establish their bona fides (the example given was a young person who could point to a father's or grandfather's business success as

evidence of know-how). Finally, the beginning proprietor may not be aware of how much capital is required for a starting business to establish itself and survive the learn early years.

Of course, it is not reasonable to suggest that a cultural project like GAP would have any direct impact on the decisions of local banks to loan to minority entrepreneurs, or to help address a shortage of quality and reliable staff (another challenge mentioned by several respondents, most notably those in the restaurant and hospitality areas). The way to think about the relationship, rather, is to see GAP as part of a larger conversation that has started in this city, a conversation about civic history, about the racial dynamics of Tulsa, and about the potential for Greenwood and North Tulsa to be a thriving commercial community, in the way that it once was (both before and after the 1921 Massacre).

*Perceived impact:* Although the quantitative data from Placer.ai, discussed below, complicates the picture, the testimony of the business community in and around Black Wall Street is that foot traffic has increased following the activities of GAP and other activities related to the 1921 commemorations. “That [greater foot traffic] is probably the most significant thing,” one respondent said, “and it’s only going to increase.” Another respondent, who in general often sounded rather pessimistic about the business environment in the area, readily acknowledged that foot traffic had increased from 2020 to 2021 (an impression backed up by the quantitative data). Part of this would of course be attributed to the greater confidence of the public following the release of COVID vaccines, but that cannot be the only cause. A respondent who had owned a business on Black Wall Street several years before the arrival of COVID noted that foot traffic had been so sparse at the time that most businesses would close their doors on the weekends.

Now, thanks to the influx of tourists and others interested in the area's historical importance, weekends are some of the busiest times for proprietors.

Testimony about an improved economic environment, however, is mixed. Several respondents expressed a good degree of optimism about the future commercial and retail prospects for the area and increased interest in its potential, and pointed to efforts like GAP as directly impacting the area's changed business profile. One respondent argued that the single most important business impact of GAP was its contribution to an altered public discussion:

What it did was create a space for dialogue that would not have happened otherwise, that would not have happened naturally. It placed within the citizen mindset this history in an evocative way...Allowed for opportunities for conversations to take place.

This raised public awareness has placed more pressure on local government to work with businesses in Greenwood and elsewhere on the North side of the city, since city officials are now aware that others have started to pay attention to the city's past. Tulsa's current mayor, G.T. Bynum, has made several very public efforts to address at least some of the outstanding issues still related to the Massacre, including strong support for an archaeological investigation into possible burial sites of the Massacre victims.

At the same time the city's government has also made moves that suggest, if not an antipathy towards the neighborhood, at least an unease with the idea that racial relations in the city need to be re-thought. For example, when activists painted "Black Lives Matter" on the street in June of 2020, the city quickly decided that the message was to be removed (Canfield, 2020). This move frustrated some residents and also a number of businesspeople in the area, because they felt the painting worked symbolically as yet another aspect of Greenwood's emerging status as center of Black American consciousness and history (Brown, 2020b). Its

erasure seemed to signal a retrenchment into older attitudes toward Black residents and Black businesses, which might explain why the attitude toward the Black business community and city hall has so often been one of “mistrust,” as one respondent put it. Mayor Bynum has also made it clear that, at least for the moment, the issue of reparations for the victims of the Massacre—an issue that is becoming increasingly important to Black residents of the city—is a non-starter (Creef, 2020).

All the same, it is clear that economic activity in Greenwood and the surrounding area has increased over the past five years. This includes several new office buildings, the construction of two different cultural centers, Greenwood Rising and the OK Pop Museum, a new hotel in the Arts District, and several new residential buildings.

**ii. Foot traffic: quantitative measures**

Initially, CHAMP focused on foot traffic numbers from May 1<sup>st</sup> to June 15<sup>th</sup> over the past three years. CHAMP research associate Ryan Barry used the Placer data to construct a series of graphs. We reproduce the central findings here.

The first set of data are the estimated totals of all visitors to the five different parts of North Tulsa over this time period. For 2019 the numbers are as follows: 199,200 for Black Wall Street; 153,900 for Main Street; 133,700 for Guthrie Green; 35,000 for Peoria and Pine; and 29,100 for Historic Greenwood.

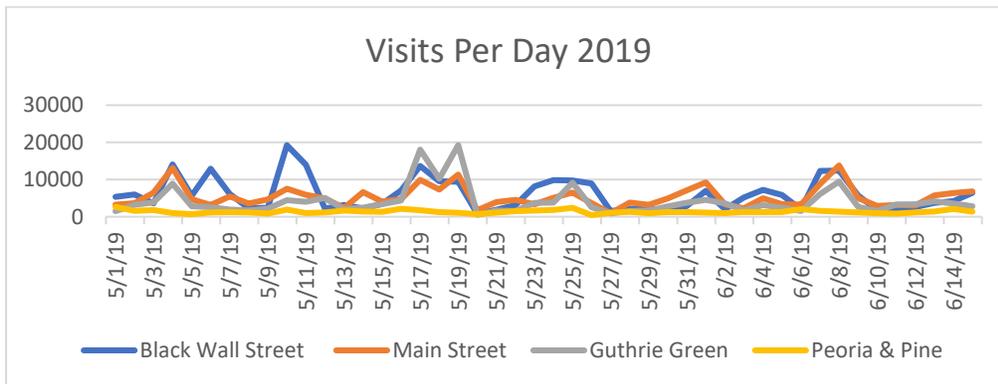
The numbers for 2020 are, unsurprisingly, much lower: For Black Wall Street, the estimate was 46,400 visits, for Main Street, the number was 43,400; for Guthrie Green, 35,200; for Peoria and Pine, 40,200; and for Historic Greenwood, 9,500.

Figures for the year 2021: for Black Wall Street, the estimate is 185,400 visits, for Main Street, the number is 125,700; for Guthrie Green, 123,500; for Peoria and Pine, 43,000; and for Historic Greenwood, 48,400.

It is worth remarking that while the commemoration events of 2021 do seem to have brought visitors to the area, and especially to the commercial strip along Greenwood Avenue, the number of potential customers for most of these business areas did not rebound to pre-pandemic foot traffic. The exception is the comparison area of Peoria and Pine, which saw its numbers increase from not only the 2020, but the 2019 figures as well.<sup>4</sup>

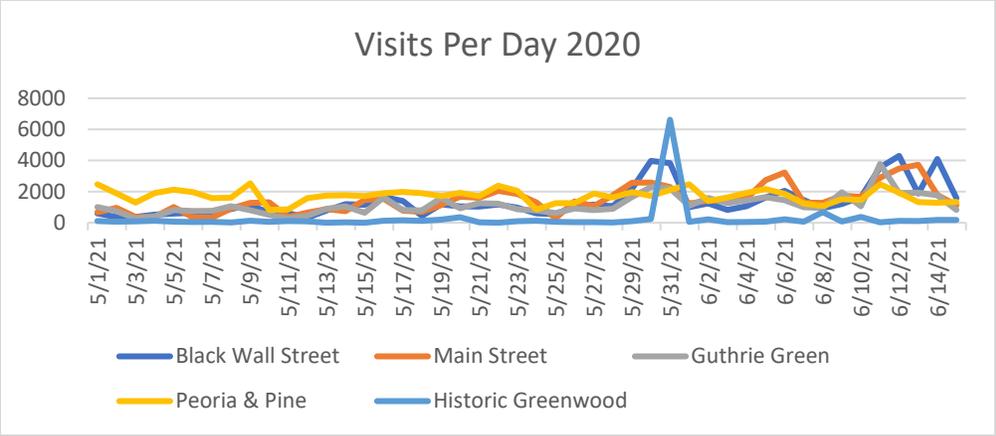
The following three graphs show the trends in foot traffic over the period of interest, for all three years:

**Graph 1:**

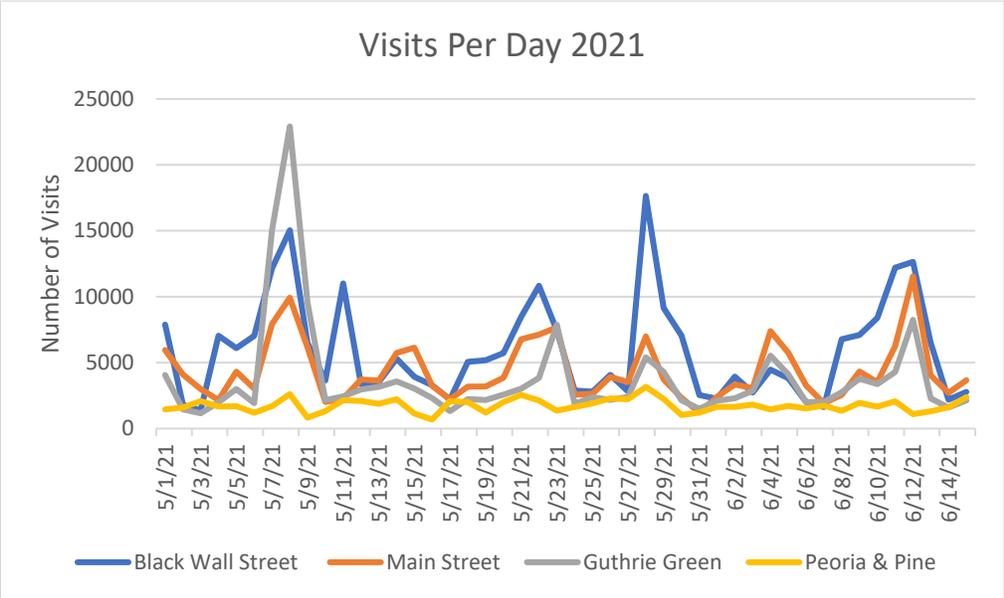


**Graph 2:**

<sup>4</sup> The most likely explanation for this was the introduction of a supermarket at that location, a business that had been a long-standing request from North Tulsa residents. The area up to that point had been characterized as a “food desert,” and had lacked any food outlet selling fresh vegetables and fruit. The introduction of the supermarket has had strong support from the community for that reason.



**Graph 3:**



Of particular interest are the spikes in foot traffic over the month-and-a-half period. In the first graph, summarizing the 2019 numbers, spikes generally take place on the weekends. There is no single weekend that seems to dominate, with the exception perhaps of May 17-19, when traffic in the Black Wall Street, Main Street, and Guthrie Green areas increases in tandem. On this weekend, two community festivals were held: MayFest, a long-running late summer arts festival held every year in the city’s downtown core and the Arts District, and HopJam, a newer

celebration of the city's local breweries.<sup>5</sup> For 2020, when most outdoor festivals were cancelled, traffic spiked only once, on the weekend of the 99<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Greenwood Race Massacre, when a rally to support the Black Lives matter was also held. The rally was mostly congregated in the Historic Greenwood area (hence the notable spike), with some spillover into Black Wall Street.

The most important graph is the third, which shows the dynamics for the 2021 foot traffic. As might be expected, the biggest spike for Black Wall Street comes on the weekend of the commemoration events (May 27-29), including many of the GAP exhibits and events. The numbers drop quite dramatically after the weekend, however, and there does not seem to be a significant increase in foot traffic overall following the commemorations. The weekend of June 10-12 sees another, smaller spike in traffic, and we would expect to see another dramatic spike on the next weekend, for Juneteenth celebrations. But according to the Placer data neither GAP nor the 1921 Centennial in general led to a noticeable increase in foot traffic in the commercial spaces in and around Greenwood Avenue during the months of May and June. Or, it might be said, the evidence for such an effect is mixed.

### **iii. Follow up: November figures**

In addition to looking at the data from May and June, CHAMP decided to use Placer data to examine the period running from October through to December. The logic was that if there had been a significant positive impact on potential customers over the longer term, then we should see significant improvement in foot traffic compared to the same period in previous years. Once again we gathered data for the five different geographical sections mentioned above, although in

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<sup>5</sup> Note that the Peoria and Pine area is almost totally unaffected by these festivals and in generally shows few spikes in activity. The Historical Wall Street area did not register enough traffic to appear in Placer's tracking data.

this case we will summarize the data only for three areas: Historic Greenwood, Black Wall Street, and our control space of Pine and Peoria. This time, however, we added another set of data: automobile traffic. Placer’s dashboard allows us to add “pins” at several different intersections, and then to mark the number of impressions (ie., number of vehicles) that pass by the intersection over a given period. We placed four pins, two of which are located near the center of Historic Greenwood: one on Greenwood Avenue, and one at the nearby intersection of Archer and Elgin Avenues. The other pin—placed at the intersection of Cameron and Boston Avenues—served as our control sample. The motor vehicle traffic is for the month of November only.

The graphs below summarize the main findings:

**Table 3:** Motor Vehicle traffic (number of impressions)

	2019	2020	2021
Cameron-Boston	340,706	203,870	282,277
Elgin-Archer	308,242	200,511	298,061
Greenwood Ave	111,338	78,938	276,054

This shows a promising trend. The drop-off for 2020, at all three locations, is unsurprising, as is the rebound for 2021. Note, however, that at the control location (Cameron and Boston), traffic for 2021 was still significantly below that of 2019, whereas for the Elgin-Archer intersection it had nearly rebounded to its 2019 level and for the Greenwood Avenue location, which is in the heart of Black Wall Street, it was more than double the 2019 number.

Placer also allows us to track where vehicles are coming from. One of the important variables of interest throughout the GAP evaluation has been the origin of visitors, since this provides some hint as to whether the area can begin to pull in tourist traffic from outside the city of Tulsa. We decided to look at the percentage of traffic that came from more than 50 miles outside of geographic area. Results are as follows:

**Table 4:** Out-of-Town traffic as percentage of all traffic

	2019	2020	2021
Cameron-Boston	19.32	13.87	14.61
Elgin-Archer	14.43	16.66	16.93
Greenwood Ave	11.58	13.8	16.78

Here again, the data seem to show positive news. First, we see that over time the percentage of long-distance visitors to the two locations of central interest has gradually increased, suggesting that the area has become better known as a destination to visiting tourists. Again, the Greenwood Avenue site is notable not only for the increase in the percentage of long-distance visitors has not only increased since 2019 but at a higher rate than the Elgin-Archer site (the percentage for Cameron-Boston is actually lower than the 2019 percentage.)

This positive data, however, is tempered somewhat by the foot traffic results. First, the numbers for overall traffic:

**Table 5:** Foot traffic (number of impressions)

	2019	2020	2021
Black Wall Street	190,539	145,186	188,286
Historic Greenwood	53,055	14,584	35,062
Peoria and Pine	113,676	108,058	143,047

In the case of foot traffic the trend is more or less directly opposite of automobile traffic. The two Greenwood areas are much improved over 2020, but they have not rebounded to the 2019 traffic figures. The area around Peoria and Pine, however, has significantly better numbers in 2021 than it did in 2019, before the pandemic hit.

Data show a more positive trend in terms of out-of-town visitors, however:

**Table 6:** Long distance visitors as percentage of all visitors

	2019	2020	2021
Black Wall Street	25	22	27.6
Historic Greenwood	11	25	31.88
Peoria and Pine	15	11	13.35

These figures are more in line with what the same figures suggested about automobile traffic: Black Wall Street and Historic Greenwood are starting to pull in a significant number of visits from out of town (ie., further than 50 miles away). This is most obviously the case with the Historic Greenwood area, and aligns with our findings about the use of public spaces (particularly visits to the Greenwood Cultural Center-Vernon AME-Black Wall Street Mural

space, which lies within this area). Black Wall Street also showed a slight increase in percentage of out-of-town visitors over the 2019 and 2020 numbers.

Taken in total, this data from the end of 2020 illustrate that GAP, along with other 1921 Commemorations, may be having a significant impact on Greenwood's business potential, especially as this relates to the neighborhood's ability to pull in tourists from other parts of the country. It should be added that this data was taken as a good deal of construction activity continues in and around Greenwood Avenue, which would be expected to dampen both foot traffic and motor vehicle traffic to some extent. Thus we may expect to see visitor traffic increase even more in the coming years, as the construction work eases, and new attractions are added to the area.

### Chapter Three: The Use of Public Space

The results in this session are directly (and exclusively) relevant to the impact area of *Place* as outlined in the original metrics document. The evaluation question in this case was the degree to which public spaces could be enhanced, and/or contribute to a reframing of the internal and external city narrative. In order address that question, CHAMP researchers pursued three different strategies.

The first was to make observation samples of public space use, beginning in the spring of 2020 and continuing through to the end of 2021. The two main points of observation were: first, the area around the Greenwood Cultural Center and Vernon Chapel AME Church, which has an historical connection to the 1921 Race Massacre; second, John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park, which lies on the other side of 244 Highway and honors the memory of historian John Hope Franklin, one of the key figures in developing the historical accounts of the events of 1921. The data from these two spaces were intended to establish whether the GAP project could be associated with increased use of public spaces, or with a changed demographic of users. To that end, researchers recorded three types of data. First, a raw number of visitors during the sampled time period (generally one hour). Second, data on how many visitors interacted with others or with the space itself. Examples of interactions with the space were the taking of photos next to historic or artistic elements within the space (such as the Black Wall Street mural, which is located across the street from Vernon AME), or following the reflective maze that is part of the John Hope Franklin Park. In order to count as interactions with other visitors, the interaction needed to be between persons or groups that did not enter the space together. The final type of data gathered was demographic, categorizing visitors based on gender, age, and race, to the extent that these could be determined.

The second strategy was to look at the use of established cultural spaces. This included attendance numbers for Living Arts, one of the important cultural spaces in the Arts District and the one probably most closely connected with the Greenwood Art Project. It also included demographic samples of visitors to Living Arts during the May-June, 2021, period.

The final strategy drew on attendance and viewing estimates from 40 different projects associated with GAP. These ranged from art exhibits (such as Crystal Z. Campbell's "Notes on Black Wall Street") to performances (Deborah Hunter's "Porches") to street art (Jessica Harvey's "Traces.") Most but not all of these exhibits and events took place in the weeks preceding or just after the centenary dates of the 1921 Massacre, in May and June. Because of the large number of projects involved, CHAMP researchers decided on a multi-pronged effort for gathering estimates of attendance and of views. One group of projects were one-time events. These included events like the Dark Town Strutters' Ball, the Admiral Drive-In movie festival, the play "Porches," and the Century Walk. For some of these CHAMP relied on event organizers to gather attendance data; for others, researchers made audience estimates at the events themselves.<sup>6</sup> A second category of projects were exhibits that lasted anywhere from several days to several weeks or even months. Some of these were located in public spaces and intended for a casual interaction, such as the Ceramic Storytelling Project, placed on the entrance steps of a local spa, or Myiesha Gordon Beales' "Fire Sculpture." Others were located in museums or office buildings: "Notes on Black Wall Street" (located in the AHHA Museum), and "Greenwood Imagine" (which was both part of an ongoing exhibit at Living Arts Museum and a performance piece that had two showings at the same museum.) Because of the extended time

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<sup>6</sup> Included in the latter group: the lead artists talk at the Steps to Nowhere on May 28, the "Meet the Artists" event at the Skyline mansion on May 26, the opening of the Pathway to Hope on May 28, the Centennial Parade and the performance of Fire in Little Africa on May 29, the Century Walk, "Porches," "The Day is Past and Gone," and the showing of "Rebuilding of Black Wall Street" at the Circle Cinema on Jul 16.

that these projects were up, it was not feasible to have a researcher on site for the entire period, and so CHAMP was forced to make purposive sampled observations of them and then extrapolate estimates from them. At least three samples were taken from each site, with samples varying by day of week and time. A final category of projects were on-line.

**i. Use of outdoor public spaces: Reconciliation Park and Greenwood Avenue**

We have had occasion to remark, in several earlier reports, that Tulsa historically has not been a city conducive to pedestrian traffic or to the use of public space. The explanation for this is complicated. It would have to include a number of important cultural variables, as well as the fact that the city was built largely after the advent of the automobile. Recently, say within the last 10 years, important public spaces have sprung up, often associated with the efforts of the George Kaiser Family Foundation (The Gathering Place, Guthrie Green). These spaces are physically separated from the Greenwood community, however, and they do not directly touch upon the morally complicated past of the city.

The two public spaces under observation in this evaluation are much different. Both have direct links to the Massacre. John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park was opened in 2011 with a clear mission to promote awareness of Oklahoma's Black community, and the park includes a number of memorials to the events of 1921. The second space, located at the intersection of the 244 highway overpass and Greenwood Avenue, is a less formal space. The original intent of the evaluation team had been to record visits to the Greenwood Cultural Center, which has long been dedicated to promoting awareness of North Tulsa's distinctive culture and the memory of 1921. When the pandemic forced the temporary closure of the Center, the evaluation team shifted its attention to the area surrounding it, which included a number of important, publicly accessible elements related to the memory of 1921: first, the large "Black Wall Street Mural" on the base of

the underpass; second, a memorial to the businesses destroyed in the Massacre; third, the exterior of the Vernon Chapel AME Church, which famously provided sanctuary to people during the night of the Massacre; and finally the Mabel B. Little House, built by two survivors of the Massacre and dedicated to a third.

Observations of the two spaces began in late spring of 2020 and continued through to the end of 2021. One-hour, non-obtrusive observations were made at regular intervals on the weekend, with observers noting both the number of visitors and their demographic make-up. The question was whether a change in visitation patterns could be discerned over the period in question. In order to answer that the evaluation team has divided the observations into two separate periods: from June through December of 2020, and the same time period for 2021.<sup>7</sup>

*a. Visitor levels and activity*

The results are presented in the following two tables. *Average visitors* refers to the average number of people visiting the space over a one hour period.<sup>8</sup> The Active Engagement index is the percentage of total visitors who engaged directly with some physical element within the space.

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<sup>7</sup> Observations were also conducted in early 2021 but have been excluded from this summary for comparison purposes.

<sup>8</sup> For the Greenwood Cultural Center/Vernon AME space, the sample period was Saturdays from 1-2. For Reconciliation park it was Sunday from 3-4.

**Table 7:** Greenwood Cultural Center/Vernon AME

	<b>Average Visitors</b>	<b>Active Engagement</b>
<b>2020</b>	19.3	36.8
<b>2021</b>	43.6	36.2

**Table 8:** John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park

	<b>Average Visitors</b>	<b>Active Engagement</b>
<b>2020</b>	7.7	40.6
<b>2021</b>	21.2	48

A number of points need to be made about the dramatic increases in public use that these tables suggest for both spaces. First, because the observations were conducted unobtrusively, it is not possible to estimate what percentage of visitors were local and what percentage were tourists. Second, there is the complicating factor of the pandemic which, it could be argued, dampened attendance to public spaces in 2020. We would argue, however, that the effects of COVID in this instance were relatively mild, since Tulsa is in that part of the country where cautions were least likely to be heeded, and moreover during a period where Americans in general were starting to come to terms with the pandemic: outside spaces were probably least likely to be impacted by COVID restrictions. Finally, as we have stated in the introduction, given the dramatic increase in the interest shown by the media and other cultural institutions in the events of 1921, at both the

local and national level, it is unsurprising that interest in these spaces has increased. Of course, there is no way to determine how much of a role GAP, specifically, played in the increased traffic. What we would argue, to repeat, was that GAP was part of that larger cultural conversation that has developed around the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. It is associated with this increased interest on the part of the public, and the subsequent increased traffic within these spaces.

*b: Demographic data*

The following tables provide demographic data on the visiting population, based on the three main variables of interest: race, gender, and age. In each case, the figures refer to the percentage of visitors coded into the category.

**Table 9:** Greenwood Cultural Center/Vernon AME-Demographics (Race)

	<b>Black</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>2020</b>	69	28	5
<b>2021</b>	65	31	4

**Table 10:** Greenwood Cultural Center/Vernon AME-Demographics (Gender)

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>2020</b>	48	51	na
<b>2021</b>	41	59	na

**Table 11:** Greenwood Cultural Center/Vernon AME-Demographics (Age)

	<b>0-20 years</b>	<b>21-50 years</b>	<b>Over 50</b>
<b>2020</b>	18	74	7
<b>2021</b>	14	65	20

**Table 12:** John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park-Demographics (Race)

	<b>Black</b>	<b>White</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>2020</b>	61	36	1
<b>2021</b>	48	52	0

**Table 13:** John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park -Demographics (Gender)

	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>2020</b>	57	43	na
<b>2021</b>	43	56	na

**Table 14:** John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park -Demographics (Age)

	<b>0-20 years</b>	<b>21-50 years</b>	<b>Over 50</b>
<b>2020</b>	12	75	13
<b>2021</b>	21	58	21

The most significant shift from 2020 to 2021, in our opinion, is the greater percentage of white visitors to the John Hope Franklin Reconciliation Park. If part of the goal of the Greenwood Art Project was to change the dynamic over discussions of race in general, and of the 1921 Massacre specifically, then this will require a greater willingness on the part of the city's white population to engage in that conversation, and a greater knowledge of the events themselves. Although it is too early to say whether the shift is permanent, or simply the result of the amount of attention that the Massacre has received in the past year, the fact that a majority of observed visitors to the park in 2021 were white does provide some hope for a changed cultural dynamic surrounding these issues.

**ii. Use of cultural spaces**

Living Arts is a cultural center located several blocks from Greenwood Avenue. It hosted several of the Greenwood Art Project events—two separate showings of *Greenwood Imagine*, and the release event for Phetote Mshairi's poetry volume, *RELEASE ME: The Spirits of Greenwood Speak*. An artwork related to the *Greenwood Imagine* event was also part of the center's month-long gallery exhibit of various paintings and sculpture commemorating the 1921 Massacre during May and June of 2021.

CHAMP wanted to know if patterns of observed attendance demonstrated a positive trend upward after the GAP exhibits and events. Again, we do not claim *causality*. Rather, we were interested whether the data were *consistent* with a posited association between GAP, and the increased use of cultural institutions such as Living Arts. The center divides its attendance data into three categories: attendance for First Friday openings,<sup>9</sup> attendance for regular museum

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<sup>9</sup> Tulsa's First Friday events are similar to those in many other American cities. A group of art groups, generally in the same geographic area, band together on joint promotions for the first Friday evening of each month.

hours, and attendance for special events (such as the GAP events mentioned above). CHAMP combined these categories into a single monthly figure, then separated the months into three separate periods: the period before GAP and the 1921 commemoration events (January to April), the period during the bulk of the GAP exhibits and events (May and June), and the period after the events. We then took an average monthly attendance for those three periods.

Unsurprisingly, attendance showed a dramatic increase during May and June—from 342 visitors in the first four months to 1,964 visitors during the period of the commemoration. More interestingly, attendance continued to stay strong for the rest of the year, with an average monthly attendance of 2,122 visitors from July through December. Part of this increase is due to a single outlier. The First Friday event in November, which was combined with Day of the Dead celebrations, brought 8,500 people—at least a ten-fold increase over any other such event in the 2021 calendar year—to the center thanks to an outdoor concert. Even if we subtract that number from the November monthly total, however, average attendance in the second half of the year was still more than twice that of the first four months: 705 visitors compared to 342. There are almost certainly a number of different possible reasons for the increase (COVID’s effects would **not** be one of them, given the timing), but these data are consistent with GAP having some positive effect on public use of this cultural institution.

CHAMP was also interested in whether GAP exhibits might be associated with a changed demographic for attendance at cultural institutions. To that end, we gathered demographic descriptors relating to age, gender, and race during the period before the May/June commemorations events during several sampled observations at Living Arts. We then recorded the same information at several observations made during May and June, for GAP-sponsored

events specifically: in the case of Living Arts, these were the RELEASE ME and Greenwood Imagine events. Results are recorded below.

**Table 15:** Percentage of visitors: gender

	Male	Female	Non-binary
January-April	45	55	0
May-June	40	60	0

**Table 16:** Percentage of visitors: race

	African American	European	Other
January-April	6	87	6
May-June	60	36	4

**Table 17:** Percentage of visitors: age

	0-20 years	21-50 years	Over 50 years
January-April	45	55	0
May-June	40	60	0

We should note that the percentages for the pre-GAP period were taken of all museum visitors, whereas for the later period we focused on visitors to the GAP exhibits and events only. Then too, the pre-GAP samples were sparse: only two sampling periods in the case of Living Arts. Nevertheless, they are suggestive, and are consistent with the hypothesis that GAP maybe

have at least temporarily helped diversify the art-going public in Tulsa, as least as this relates to race.

### **iii. Attendance/viewing numbers**

The relatively large number of projects that made up the GAP as a whole provided researchers with a kind of natural quasi-experiment, with each project differing from others on a number of different variables: physical location, institutional affiliation, and genre. Given the sometimes dramatic differences in audience and viewing numbers, and taking those numbers in turn as rough indices for community engaged this in turn allows us to derive some (very tentative) hypotheses about what kinds of general factors might help public art works engage with local audience (see the figures from the excel spread sheet, Appendix A).

One important variable influencing attendance seems to have been institutional affiliation. Because museums have built-in audience traffic, this will naturally tend to bring visitors to the project. The best illustration of this is “Notes on Black Wall Street,” which ran as an exhibit at the AHHA Museum and was, by some measure, the most popular art exhibit associated with the GAP, as measured by attendance and viewing numbers. “Greenwood Imagine,” which was part of a series of exhibits on Greenwood and 1921, also put up healthy attendance numbers, as did one-time events that took place in established cultural sites—“Porches,” held at the Dennis R. Neill Equality Center; the movie night at Admiral Drive-in; and “The Day is Past and Gone,” held in the Vernon AME Church. The “American Dream” project had relatively high audience and viewing numbers despite the fact that it was quite a distance from Historic Greenwood (in fact, the most distant of all the major projects). But “American Dream” was placed within the Oxley Nature Center. We posit that many of the people who saw the different pieces which made up the exhibit did not intend to see it but simply ran across it during their hikes. This meant that

the exhibit was the benefit of a good number of serendipitous encounters, particularly during the main weekend of GAP, from May 28 through to June 1, which was also a long weekend and thus a moment when a number of city residents were visiting Oxley.

In contrast to these projects, those that took place out of doors, without any clear affiliation with a local cultural institution or space, tended to have disappointing attendance numbers. Many of these projects seemed to have been designed with the understanding that the various elements of GAP could be thought of as a whole, with visitors conducting a sort of “tour” throughout the neighborhood, to visit the different exhibits and events. The map of the different artworks in GAP, accessible through the website, would presumably have been aimed at this kind of audience. Unfortunately, the physical structure of Tulsa and the city’s culture of public space use did not seem to lend itself to this kind of experience. Because Tulsa is so spread out, a simple walking tour of GAP exhibits was difficult if not impossible to implement, and pedestrian traffic is light except within fairly narrow geographic confines. This means that was unlikely visitors would run across any of the outdoors exhibits by accident, except in a case such as Crystal Campbell’s posters on ONEOK stadium (part of the “Slick” project), which were located very close to Historic Black Wall Street and thus captured some significant foot traffic. Compare that project’s attendance with the minimal traffic at Beales’ ambitious “Fire Sculpture,” which was located several miles from Historic Greenwood and thus required a special effort to visit.

This has implications, we believe, for how similar projects might be designed in the future. The idea of combining multiple media forms, multiple artists, and multiple messages into a single project is a promising one. But if it is to work successfully then the structural layout of the various elements needs to be taken into account. A project that is geographically focused, allowing visitors to move from project to project easily, and one in which the various works take

place at the same time, would allow members of the public to experience the full variety of the project, rather than forcing them to pick and choose.

As for the on-line projects, the most obvious discussion point is the remarkable success of the *Fire in Little Africa* project, not only in comparison to the other on-line efforts but in comparison to all the other GAP projects. We would also note that this project received plaudits in our qualitative interviews (see p. 17, above.)<sup>10</sup> It is hard to account for this difference in any way that does not come off as reductive or banal: the success of *Fire in Little Africa* as due to the artistic excellence of its creators, for example. This is true, but it may not differentiate that project from a number of other projects under discussion. For us, the most significant feature of the project, and the one that likely played an important role in its popular success, was the previous experience in the music industry of its creators.

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<sup>10</sup> The performance of the artists involved with the album also drew a large crowd on the May commemorative weekend.

## Chapter Four: Social Media and the Greenwood Art Project

In the 2019 discussion of evaluation metrics, the media's relation to the projects within the Public Art Challenge was framed in terms of coverage, measured both by media mentions within traditional mass media, and more directed mentions within social media (2019, p. 2). The assumption underlying this methodological frame was that "media and social coverage of projects is a good thing" (2019, p. 7). It is a good thing because coverage is expected to be positive, either because of the good will of cultural journalists writing about cultural projects, or because (as in the case of social media) the project organizers themselves control the message.

As regards the Greenwood Art Project specifically, the task of monitoring media mentions was split into national coverage (undertaken by BOP), and local media coverage (undertaken by CHAMP). The data gathered by CHAMP's content analysis of Tulsa's local media has already been recorded, and there does not seem to be a need to go over it again here. We will restrict our comments on that topic by noting that the coverage of GAP within Tulsa's local media outlets—print, television, and radio—seemed remarkably thin, and that many of the most memorable coverage of GAP came from media outlets outside of the city: the *New York Times*' story on the artistic aspect of the 1921 commemorations, featuring an interview with Jessica Wortham (Small, 2020); the *Houston Chronicle*'s feature story on Rick Lowe and his role in GAP (Glentzer, 2020); and PBS's *American Portrait* series on Lowe and the GAP van (PBS, 2021). There were exceptions to this: perhaps most notably, the series of half-hour episodes from the Philbrook Museum's *Museum Confidential*—aired on Tulsa's local NPR station and hosted by Jeff Martin—in the spring of 2021 (Philbrook, 2021). On the whole, however, the local coverage of GAP was not strong in the year leading up to the event.

Our interest here, for the most part, is somewhat different than this. What we wish to add to the discussion is an aspect of media coverage that was not part of the original frame. We will argue that GAP's use of social media, under the direction of Marlon Hall, provides a compelling example of how to think about the relationship between public art projects and social media technologies.

In the early spring of 2020, the CHAMP evaluators had designed several techniques for gathering information from audiences of potential audiences of the Greenwood Art Project, or from members of the community. Many of these involved the use of observations or surveys, undertaken within physical spaces that were intended to provide temporary homes for the various works or events: museums, neighborhood cultural centers, street spaces, parks. The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic did not simply make these methodologies suddenly irrelevant. It forced a more fundamental reconceptualization of what public space would become in a post-pandemic city (Barbarossa, 2020; Davidson, 2020), and what the experience of public art would become (Yerebakan, 2021). One possibility for this new experience would be a shift in the very nature of public space: thinking of public spaces as the sharing of common experience at least partially or even wholly through media technologies, rather than physically, *in situ*.

In fact, media scholars had already been theorizing such a shift several years prior to the arrival of the pandemic (Berry, Harbord and Moore, 2013; McQuire, 2016). This emerging, novel experience of urban space goes by a number of names but one of the most useful, because most expansive in its application, is the notion of "hybrid space" (de Souza e Silva, 2006). The notion of hybridity refers to the common 21st century experience of existing in both mediated and physical space at the same time. The most dramatic examples of this would be virtual reality or augmented reality technologies, but a more important—because more common and mundane—

experience would simply be using mobile media, like a cell phone, to navigate physical space or to coordinate activities with friends. Think about the first night in city you have never visited. You are sitting in a cafe and looking for a restaurant. Your first move is to do a search for a recommendation on TravelAdvisor or Yelp. Finding an appropriate spot, you book a reservation (still on your phone), and also text the location to a friend that you are going to meet there. You then get onto Google Maps and begin following the path laid out, through the various narrow streets of the city, toggling your attention from the phone screen to the ancient buildings that you are passing by, and trying to avoid the other people walking along these same streets. Where are you? In the city? Or at the blue dot that moves along the digital map as you move? You are, say the theorists of hybrid space, in both places at once.

The idea of a new form of public space and public art helps us appreciate the use of social media in the Greenwood Art Project, especially as it relates to the main driver of GAP's social media presence, Marlon Hall. A visual artist, social anthropologist, and griot (or storyteller), Hall came to Tulsa from Houston via the Tulsa Arts Fellowship. He began working with GAP in the late spring/early summer of 2020 and by the fall was finding innovative uses of digital technology, through various social media platforms, to tell the stories of the project and the community of which it is a part.

Hall has long been interested in the use of narrative to establish ties between people and to allow for the flourishing of memory at both an individual and a communal level. One example of Hall's pre-pandemic artwork was a series of salon dinner parties, in which he invited people from different walks of life to sit down with one another over a meal (Hall, 2021). Under his influence, GAP did begin to use social media like Instagram and Facebook, to promote the work of the various artists involved in the project. But it did more than this.

Because of his focus on visual storytelling, most of Hall's social media efforts were directed toward GAP's Facebook and Instagram presence. GAP used Twitter sparingly, most often on retweets of content that originated elsewhere. The interactive, haptic qualities of Instagram also influenced some of the content decisions, allowing users greater control over a post or a story. Many of the posts were descriptions of one of the projects associated with GAP, or a brief biography or interview with one of the GAP artists. But the social media efforts went beyond simply publicizing GAP itself. In an early interview with poster artist Emory Douglas, Hall digs into the role of public art in creating a political identity: "we" art, in Douglas' terms, as opposed to the more subjective experience of what Douglas calls "me" art. In a short Facebook video entitled "I Am Black Wall Street," Hall integrates old stills from Greenwood in the 1940s and 1950s, taken from TheRese Anderson-Aduni's documentary *Re-Building Black Wall Street*, with short clips of entrepreneurs on today's Black Wall Street.

But the best example of how social media can be used to expand upon and deepen the themes of a public art project is probably Hall's treatment of meta-narratives on Google's Arts and Culture website. The page begins with a reflection on the role of stories about stories—meta-narratives—and then uses the experience of the Massacre to think about how stories are told and the role that they play in the lives of communities and individual people. Hall builds into this discussion three different attempts, as he puts it, "to create narratives that sculpt possibility from stone-edged pain:" *Thread*, which celebrates the role of Black women in American life; *The Honoring*, an account of a ritualized return by a young man to the home of his ancestors; and *Home Building*, which begins with Pastor Jamal Dyer singing, "I'm building Me a Home," inside an abandoned steel mill near Greenwood Avenue, and then broadens out to a consideration of the nature of home, and Greenwood as home of Tulsa's black community specifically. As the viewer

scrolls down the page, various images, voices, and sounds, weave in and out of the sensual experience. While not directly referencing any single project or exhibition within GAP, the narratives build upon the concept of remembrance, courage, pain, and hope that connect all of them. Among other things, the page shows what is possible with an imaginative use of social media within public art, by developing and expanding upon the ideas within the works themselves to produce a variation on a theme, much like a jazz ensemble.

There is solid quantifiable evidence that the public found these efforts compelling. Numbers from Google show that, spread out over three different Google social media platforms, GAP exhibitions and photos garnered over 13 million followers. They received 26,242 likes and 385 comments.<sup>11</sup>

We have spent some time on describing the goals behind GAP's social media strategy and highlighting its results because we hope that it can serve as a starting point for a way forward. First, by re-imagining public space and its relationship to art. Not everyone who wanted to see the GAP events and exhibitions would have been able to physically attend them, for various reasons. Social media allow these users to access the art in an intimate and informed way that would have been impossible previously. Second, Hall's work shows how social media can be used not simply as *channels* through which we glimpse art, but can and ought to be understood as opportunities for the *creation* of new artistic works.

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<sup>11</sup> Figures obtained from Marlon Hall, via Google's official numbers.

### **Conclusion:**

The Greenwood Art Project was an innovative, honest, challenging example of public art, and an important part of the historical re-examination that has taken place around the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre. In its ability to leverage the stories and the talents of the community, the project provides an example for what public art can be at its best moments. But the project also helps illustrate the limits of public art. If art can bring renewed attention to historical injustice, or to the on-going, daily injustices that racism continues to engender, it cannot force us to take action to address that injustice. This project should be seen as one step in what needs to be a much more sustained effort. Whether the city of Tulsa is prepared to make that effort is something this evaluation cannot determine.

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