

Street Art Draws Input for Urban Design

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mr4@tulane.edu

When public installation artist Candy Chang moved into New Orleans' Marigny neighborhood last summer, she was surprised by the number of vacant storefronts in the otherwise vibrant residential district. That incongruity was the inspiration for "I Wish This Was," a project that Chang describes as "a kind of love child of urban planning and street art."

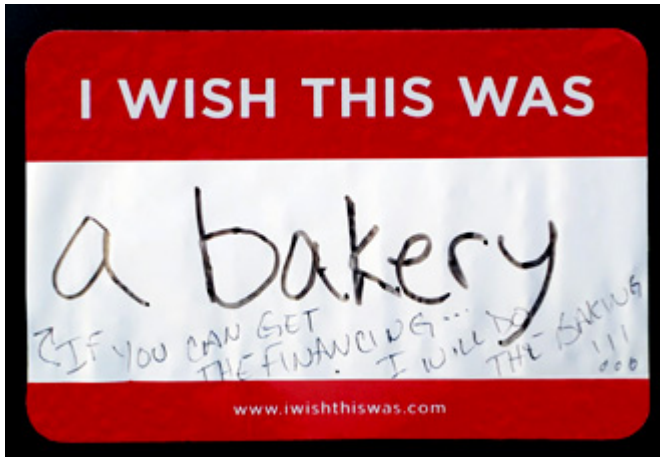


A Tulane Urban Innovation Fellow, artist Candy Chang is passionate about redefining ways to use public space. (Photos provided by Candy Chang)

Through the project, [Chang](#), who was named a [Tulane Urban Innovation Fellow](#) in February, used what she calls a "no-tech format" to give residents increased input and influence in the development of the neighborhood.

Copying the format of the "Hello, my name is" stickers that are ubiquitous at professional conferences, she designed fill-in-the-blank labels with the words "I wish this was" and distributed thousands of them in November.

The stickers, which are easy to remove, began to turn up on the facades of abandoned and blighted properties around town as residents filled in the blanks to express their hopes and dreams for future development. Typical answers included “a grocery,” “a community garden,” “a butcher shop,” and “a taco stand,” though Chang admits delight in off-beat answers such as “Heaven,” and “Brad Pitt's house.”



Beguiling in their simplicity, the fill-in-the-blank stickers are a powerful medium for civic expression.

Through funding from her Urban Innovation Fellowship, which is administered through Tulane and sponsored by the Rockefeller Foundation, and support from [Tulane City Center](#), Chang is developing the project into “Neighborland,” an online platform that she hopes will allow community leaders to reach shared goals. The prototype of the website is scheduled to debut in April.

“‘Neighborland’ will help residents voice their needs, share local knowledge and shape the commercial and physical development of their neighborhoods,” says Chang.

As an artist, Chang says she's passionate about redefining ways to use public space. “A robust public life includes accessible ways for residents to reach out and self-organize,” she says.

Chang was one of four awardees of this year's Urban Innovation Challenge. She was selected from a pool of more than 200 applicants.