

# City residents map it out

By **Jennifer Choi**

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**P**eople usually use maps to find their way through unfamiliar physical territory. In a similar but more abstract way, local artists helped community members use the tools to find paths to new social horizons.

School 33 Art Center's exhibit *Maps On Purpose: The Big Picture*, running today through June 14, displays the products of artist-led workshops on mapmaking, which involved members of 23 Baltimore communities. Residents helped produce creative maps that hold personal significance for them and their neighborhoods while conveying social messages.

"We unleashed both community pride and creative ability," said Peter Bruun, director of Art on Purpose, the community-based organization that ran the workshops. "We gave a voice to people who are not the decision-makers and power brokers of Baltimore."

Participants of the Harlem Park workshop created a colorful 15-foot mural of the area, which shows valued sites in the neighborhood and draws attention to the community's housing issues. They glued colored felt and cloth swatches to a cloth background to indicate locations that residents regard as important, such as schools and barbershops, and negative spots, such as vacant houses.

Residents of Middle East used two 14-inch-by-17-inch maps to relay their feelings regarding the relocation that they have had to undergo to make way for a Johns Hopkins project. One map conveys residents' bitter feelings toward the government for the relocation. The other reveals nostalgic feelings by showing some of the activities residents used to enjoy doing in Middle East, before being relocated.

Some people from Remington created a map of regular walking routes. The project revealed that the top destinations are 7-Eleven and Burger King. This caused the Greater Remington Improvement Association to work on improving the health and well-being of the community.

"There's a real grass-roots, urban-planning aspect to the entire mapping project," said Bruun.

Federal Hill, Federal Hill South and Sharp Leadenhall residents created a 20-inch-by-30-inch silkscreen that illustrates the three areas' history, present and future. A small, simple sketch marks the tree under which Frederick Douglass gave a speech, an abstract shape with beaming lines indicates Internet cafe locations, and a big, ladderlike swath cuts across the map, representing the highway project that the neighborhoods

fought against and stopped. The map also shows future endeavors, such as a museum that is in the planning stages, and possible outreach projects between schools and the community.

"Seeing all three of these communities work together and get to know each other was great," said Andy Cook, facilitator of the tri-community workshop. "And they all wanted to have their voices heard."

Only a print of the jointly created map appears in the show because the original will be part of the Walters Art Museum's *Maps: Finding Our Place in the World*. The event, from which the School 33 exhibit draws inspiration, includes a rotating exhibit of the community workshop maps. *Maps on Purpose: The Big Picture* features about 50 community workshop pieces, along with preliminary sketches, drawings and photographs. Community artist and workshop facilitator Valeska Populoh is optimistic that the exhibit will expand people's views of maps.

"I hope it illuminates the depth and dimension of the neighborhoods and people that one can see in maps," she said. "The map is not the territory."

The exhibit hours are 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays; 10 a.m.-7 p.m. Thursdays; and noon-4 p.m. Saturdays. School 33 is at 1427 Light St. Free. Call 410-396-4641 or go to [school33.org](http://school33.org).

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