

# Youth Empowerment: Problem

Racism in Clarksdale inhibits empowerment of underserved youth

## About Clarksdale, Mississippi

### Facts and statistics

Population: 17,000

Racial breakdown:  
79% Black; 19% White

Poverty:  
40% of Black households in Clarksdale are below the poverty line

1987: MS repealed its ban on interracial marriages

1995: MS ratified amendment abolishing slavery (official in 2013)



Low self-efficacy  
Failing public schools

"I just go through the motions"

Low self-efficacy  
Narrow outlook of possibilities

"Everyone around me does this, what else is there to do?"

Low self-efficacy  
Internalized oppression

"I guess I'm just not good enough"

## Segregation and isolation

"You could live your whole life in Clarksdale without interacting with the other race"

Racism prevents young adults from building personal relationships across socioeconomic boundaries

## Theory of change

We will catalyze a cycle of improvement in Clarksdale through engagement which fosters self-empowerment of underserved youth, allowing them to be agents of improvement in their community.

# Youth Empowerment: Solution

Action-oriented engagement fostering self-empowerment

## Value proposition

Our project will provide hands-on engagement for young adults which will foster self-empowerment through the development of self-efficacy and relationships across socioeconomic boundaries.

### Self-efficacy: *experience*

“Yeah, I did that, and it’s good”

Participants need opportunities to repeatedly and visibly succeed

### Self-efficacy: *modeling*

“If they can do it, I can do it as well”

Participants need examples of people like themselves repeatedly and visibly succeeding

### Self-efficacy: *social narrative*

“You have to work twice as hard to get half as far”

Participants need immersion in a narrative that encourages their repeatable and visible success



## Building relationships

Participants will be able to make personal connections across socioeconomic boundaries that will allow them to learn with and from one another, gain greater access to resources, and identify with a broader social group.

Our next question:

What could this look like?



# Youth Empowerment: MS Delta



Ground Zero Blues Club  
Owned by Morgan Freeman



The Crossroads  
Clarksdale, MS



Abe's BBQ  
Clarksdale, MS



Rundown buildings  
Downtown Clarksdale



Delta Blues tourist scene  
The Cathead in Clarksdale



Wealth disparity  
The Shoppe in downtown Clarksdale

# Clarksdale, MS in Context



In Clarksdale ladders of opportunity are scarce and often broken. This is particularly true for younger citizens trying to envision and reach their goals

*Community members are actively working to reestablish each rung on the ladder to provide Clarksdale's youth with opportunities.*

Birthplace of Blues Music



In the heart of the Mississippi Delta

## Isolation and Limited Exposure to New Ideas

*Limited exposure to new ideas and 21st century skills.*

## Community Members Creating Change

*Members of the community envision an economy that is not reliant on blues tourism and are actively working to realize this vision.*

## Community Peace Efforts

*Members of the community have been organizing efforts and rallies to promote peace and reduce violence*

## De Facto Segregation

*The legacy of racism manifests itself in economic inequality and divisive social norms.*

## Few Economic Opportunities

*Economic opportunities are limited to low wage service jobs in the post-agricultural and post-industrial economy.*

## Struggling School Systems

*Public school system struggling to provide effective support system for students.*

## By the numbers:

Population: **17,000**

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**19% White**

9% Below Poverty Line

\$32k mean income

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**80% Black**

46% Below Poverty Line

\$11k mean income



Community Peace Rally

# Earning an Invitation

*Demonstrate our ability to effectively use our skills and resources to add value to community initiatives.*

## Community Member Engagement

Sat down with students, educators, organizers of local initiatives, and local politicians to listen and learn as much as possible.



## Farmers Market Accessibility Research

Connected Clarksdale Revitalization Inc. to resources on running SNAP and EBT (food purchasing assistance) at the proposed community farmers' market

## Crossroads Cultural Arts Center Feasibility Study

Met with 70+ of our peers in Clarksdale to prioritize their needs, values, and knowledge for developing the direction of the Center.



What is an invitation?



Having the Community's Trust



Mutual Respect and Support



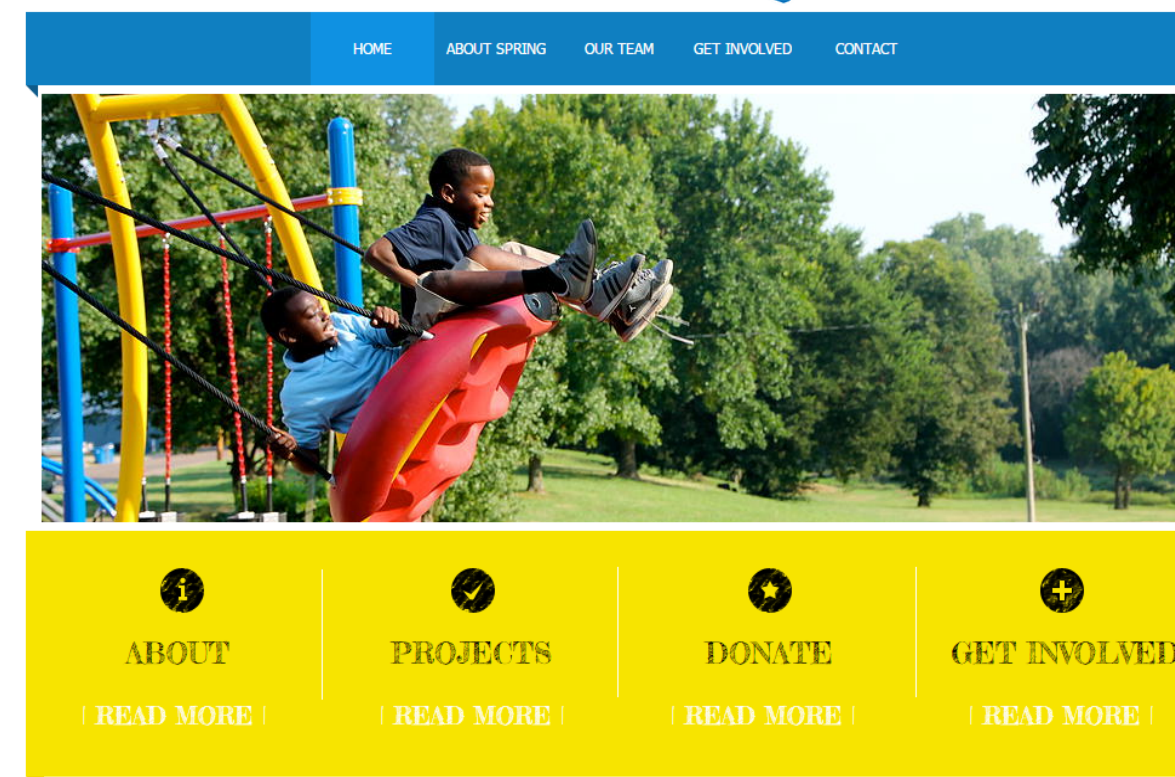
Community Maintains Agency

## Civil Rights Trail

Drafted a map of local historic sites for the tour company The Real Delta to reconnect the town with its powerful Civil Rights history which has been mostly overshadowed by the blues.



## spring Initiative



## Spring Initiative Website

Created a more engaging and informative website for a local after-school program that focuses on building relationships and hope for at-risk teenagers in the county.

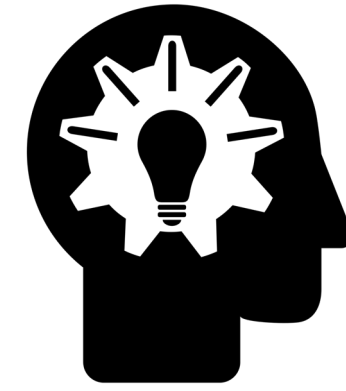
# Vision

“Create a learning, making, doing space that promotes self-empowerment”

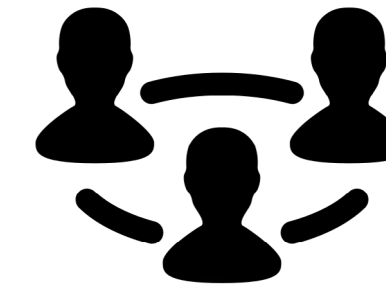
We were given the opportunity to provide definition to an undefined space. We are proposing to create a makerspace. These are the four main components:

## Key Principles:

Community Ownership



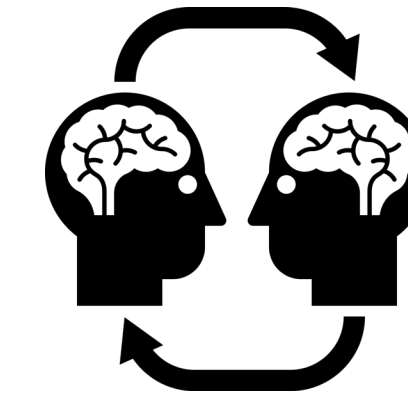
Accessible to Community



Encouraging and Supportive



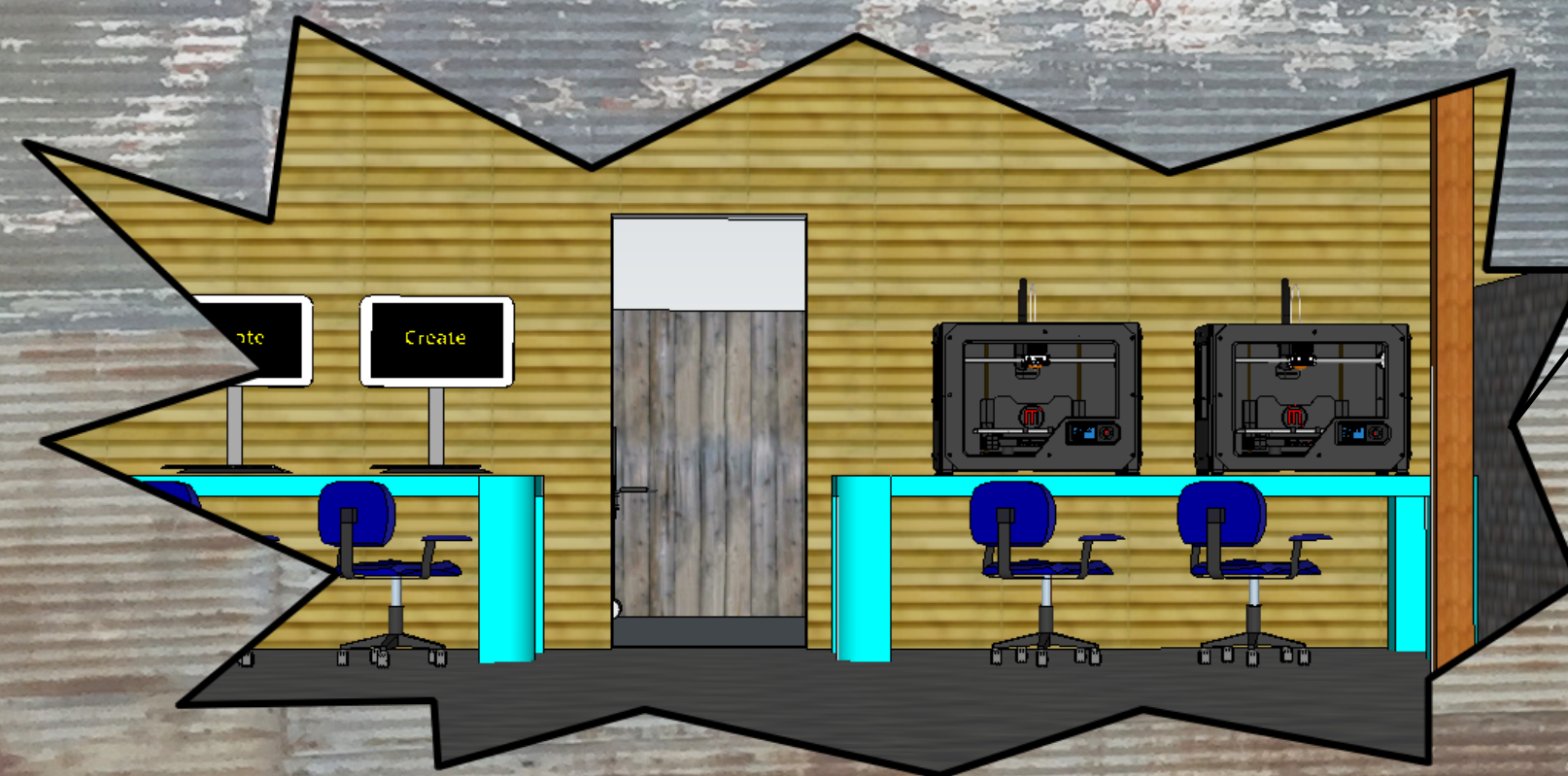
Community Skillshare



Celebrates Success of Participants



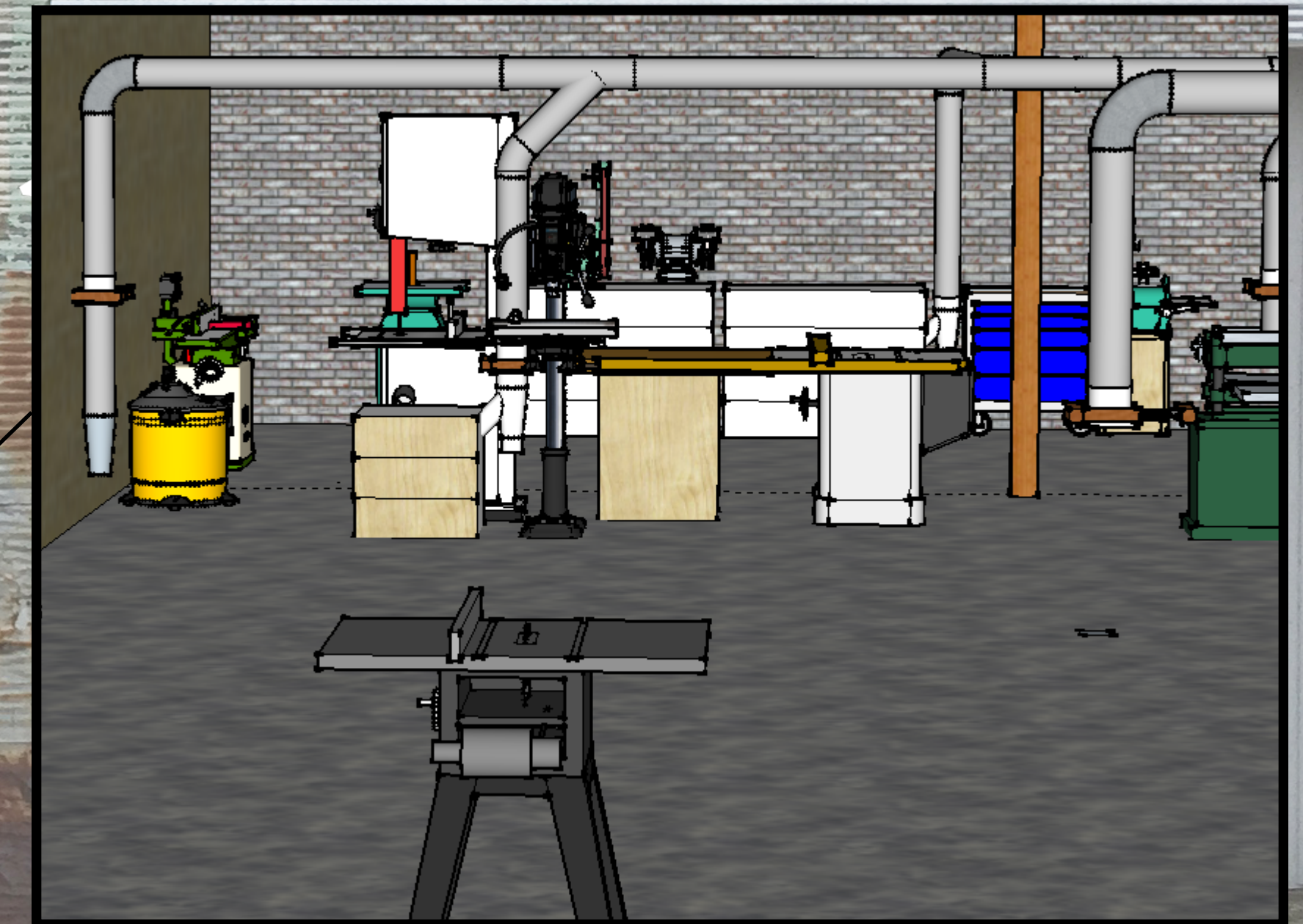
## Computer Design Studio



The computer design studio is equipped with laptop computers, software and other physical tools, to support creative projects.

The fabrication workspace is equipped with a variety of digital and traditional fabrication tools such as 3D printers, laser cutters, CNC routers, metalworking and carpentry machines.

## Fabrication Space



## Entrepreneurship

A Mobile laboratory that inspires people to learn STEAM skills by bringing tools, equipment, and experts directly to people.

An entrepreneurship program would connect mentors with students and coach them through an entrepreneurial venture of their own.

## Mobile Lab



# Building Relationships



**Spring Initiative**  
*Afterschool holistic education program*



**Griot Arts**  
*Afterschool arts and entrepreneurship program*



**Coahoma County Youth Outreach**



**Tri-County Workforce Alliance**



**Rosalind Wilcox**  
*Local Artisan and Educator*



**Community Organizers**



**Real Faith Christian Church**



**Pastor JJ:**  
*runs Young Life*



**Private and Public Developers**



**King's Temple Missionary Baptist Church**



**Coahoma Community College**