



WATSONVILLE/ PAJARO VALLEY ARTS & CULTURE LEADERSHIP

Final
Report

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Background and Context

The Latinx community in the Pajaro Valley/Watsonville area has a long history of developing and presenting community-focused arts and culture. Some examples include the long-standing Esperanza del Valle and White Hawk dance and culture organizations, the many murals painted on Watsonville walls, activities in the Plaza and the schools, a short-lived cultural center downtown, and many others.

While Arts Council Santa Cruz County (ACSCC) has been active in the Pajaro Valley/Watsonville area for many years, for much of that time little of ACSCC's work focused on the impressive creative efforts of the Latinx community.

Starting in 2018, ACSCC consciously began addressing equity in its organizational practices and commitments. Since then it has taken steps to work differently in its relationship with the South County community including individual artists and arts organizations led by and serving BIPoC. These efforts include community meetings to assist in developing and implementing their equity focus, increased funding for arts in the area, bringing local arts

representatives onto the ACSCC board, opening an office in Watsonville, hiring staff to support local artists, and seeking additional funding to further this work.

A concern frequently raised by local artists and arts organizations is the lack of space to create and perform art, as well as challenges accessing the spaces that do exist. In an effort to bring together diverse voices and address this challenge, the ACSCC set up a series of community meetings involving artists, arts organizations and City of Watsonville representatives, with a strong focus on Latinx community members. ACSCC also secured a grant from the Hewlett Foundation that will assist in beginning to address these concerns. In late spring of 2020, bilingual/bicultural facilitators were contracted to facilitate a next phase of the Watsonville Arts Leadership process. This report summarizes the results of those efforts.

What we did

Process overview

To better understand the history behind ACSCC's past efforts in Watsonville and the greater Pajaro Valley, the facilitators began by speaking with staff, reviewing past meeting notes, and gathering other pertinent documents. The facilitators also conducted seven stakeholder interviews. These conversations helped build rapport between individual stakeholders and facilitators and provided key background information.

Five of the seven stakeholders who were interviewed were later asked to form a planning committee to champion this visioning/planning process among their peers. This group provided valuable input on the design and content of each meeting, while contributing a deeper understanding of the issues and history. Three planning committee meetings were held. These meetings informed the content for the two larger meetings that were convened.

The last planning committee meeting provided overall feedback on the project as well as thoughts on how to form an ongoing committee to continue moving

forward with efforts to develop and improve arts and culture space in Watsonville.

Two larger meetings were convened, in August and September of 2020. Each meeting had roughly 25 participants, with most of the same individuals participating in both. Participants included local artists, City of Watsonville staff and council members and representatives of local arts organizations, including ACSCC. The goals of each these meetings were:

Meeting Goals

August 10th, 2020

- Learn from the history of community arts and support for the arts in Watsonville with lessons for moving forward.
- Develop agreements for more effective partnerships for future work on community arts in Watsonville & the Pajaro Valley.

September 29, 2020

- Develop a common vision
- Develop short-, medium- and long-term collaborative goals for establishing an arts and culture space for Watsonville/Pajaro Valley residents

Conclusions/Results

The process of establishing an arts and culture space in the Pajaro Valley is now well-poised to move forward in tangible, visible ways. An opportunity exists to take advantage of the momentum generated by this project by keeping the process moving without delay. A focus on strengthening and building cohesive relationships among all stakeholders should be taken into account when moving forward with this process. While some trust building did result from this project, the long-term outcome of building trust between artists, organizations, and the City should continue to be prioritized through this project.

Ongoing Committee Formation:

Work began on developing an ongoing “stewardship committee” that will lead this effort forward. An initial list of qualities and skills needed for this committee was identified, but needs to be expanded upon. Six individuals involved in the process to date offered to serve on this new committee.

Further work is needed to build a full committee, clarify its role and name, and begin functioning.

To facilitate effective relationship building, a set of partnership agreements were developed during this project. Those agreements include:

Partnership agreements

- Think of this as puzzle pieces, assemble all the pieces, figure out what we want to do.
- Collaborate, organize, develop a model that works for the community.
- Keep equity at the forefront – especially around funding.
- Go into this with an open mind/heart, have each other’s back.
- Be forgiving and patient with each other.
- Count on the Arts Council to help facilitate this process.
- We are doing so much, beyond capacity, be mindful of people’s capacity
- We have to figure out how to make things sustainable, with a plan and timeline.
- To support that process, everyone involved can
 - Clear communication
 - Honor your palabra
 - Come willing to listen
 - Clear expectations
 - Be clear about what agreements are made.
 - Put them on paper, when possible
 - Be clear about the support the City or any partner can provide

Vision and Goals

Draft Vision statement: One important outcome from this project was a draft vision statement for this space, which is ready to be finalized. It reads:

"An arts and cultural space supporting creative expression by and for residents of Watsonville and the Pajaro Valley, with an emphasis on equity."

The following intermediate goals will lead to the realization of the vision statement in a way that is well-resourced, functioning and sustainable over the course of 10 years.

1-2 year goals	5 year goals	8 year goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage donors, city, nonprofits, artists, schools, law enforcement and community for support/campaign. Clarify assets and roles. Begin fund development work/planning (case statement, groundwork, etc.)• Develop organization/structure/committee to lead effort. Explore site search, advisory, lead agency, commission, fiscal sponsor roles• Develop needs assessment, strategic plan, which disciplines will use space• Begin offering activities in coordinated ways. E.g., online events calendar, annual event/program/performance, arts incubator, arts in migrant housing• Accomplish goals in Hewlett grants: improve and increase access to existing spaces, provide capacity building support to artists and local arts organizations, and support leadership development for those advancing the arts center movement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fund development underway• Partnerships, business, City, Arts Council, national funder• Using existing spaces: arts, education, community, incubator –affordable• Needs assessment complete, decide if new or existing space, who will have access, program planning• Construction planning well underway: blueprints, permits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Funding plan well underway, with much of the needed funding secured. Capital campaign, tax initiative mentioned• Management and sustainability planning well underway, with participating organizations engaged• Center functioning: arts, education, community, incubator• Site identified, construction underway• Revisit strategic plan for the arts

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are grouped by the special roles that different stakeholders are likely to play:

All stakeholders

- Maintain an equity focus in all the work – E.g.: ensure equitable distribution of and access to decision-making and resources among local groups, especially to those who may not have the same capacity (i.e. all volunteer staff, limited budgets, etc.) as more-established organizations
- Seek and build partnerships that can support the vision and goals
- Begin actions as soon as possible to take advantage of the momentum developed during this process
- Begin implementing the 1-2 years goals
- Seek ways to utilize/improve and increase access to existing spaces, doing so in ways that make long-term/permanent shifts to equity and community use
- Develop multiple collaborative efforts, short and long-term, that strengthen those partnerships and support the goals
- Maintain good communication with local artists of all generations, making sure that voices that may not have been heard are lifted up
- Educate and build local support from the broader community
- Work closely with the City of Watsonville to leverage City resources (space, budget, programming, connections to local businesses and leaders, etc.), while respecting the limitations of multiple city needs and processes

Ongoing “Stewardship” Committee

- Meet soon with the initial volunteers to further define the committee’s role, qualities to seek in members, the name for the committee, time commitments needed from members and possible members to add
- Invite additional members to the committee and finalize membership
- Begin working with all stakeholders on the goals drafted
- Refine goals and develop a strategy and action plan
- Ensure that new stakeholders joining the process receive enough context of past efforts to participate effectively.

City of Watsonville:

- Continue to support community arts and expression, being creative with use of City resources
- Develop the opportunity for the City to share the possibilities and limitations of the City and its budget with local artists and arts organizations
- Reach out to local artists and arts organizations to assist them in navigating City processes
- Work with local artists, arts organizations and the ACSCC to develop greater trust

Recommendations, cont.

- Advocate for the many values of the arts in the community: economic, health, educational and beyond

Arts Council Santa Cruz County

- Be a full and respectful partner with the ongoing committee, arts organizations and artists, supporting their leadership while bringing ACSCC's rich experience, connections and resources to the table in a spirit of dialogue
- Strengthen ACSCC's partnership with the City of Watsonville, not only related to the arts space effort but all facets of their shared aspirations for arts in the community
- Building on their relationships with the City, artists and the arts community, support efforts to rebuild trust and develop partnerships
- Provide logistical and facilitation support for the ongoing "stewardship" committee
- Help make connections and learn from other similar experiences, locally and beyond

- Leverage connections for funding, with a focus of building an "ecosystem" of support for local artists and community engagement with the arts
- Help facilitate collaborative projects among local arts stakeholders that will build trust
- Showcase local arts history to celebrate what has been accomplished with "limited resources", expanding to include other often-unheard voices
- Continue to develop and support ways for artists, arts organizations and the City to see each other's plans and activities, as a tool for possible collaboration. (Perhaps using the spreadsheet begun during this process)
- Develop partnerships for community leadership in the next phase of the Hewlett project which is focused on existing spaces

Additional Information: More detailed information relevant to this effort is available through the online folder developed to hold this work as well as documentation of earlier efforts:
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/10xZsf-J4-47FYMC7Dtc68oN8DS8t_tRK

The subfolder specific to this Watsonville/PV Arts/Culture Leadership effort includes the following:

- Notes from large group meetings
- Spreadsheet for organizational plans for next 2 years
- History of Latinx arts and culture in Watsonville/Pajaro Valley – rough notes
- Themes from previous meetings.

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