



Contra Costa County Cultural Planning Prospectus

Introduction

As Contra Costa County moves to envision CONTRA COSTA 2040, an update to the Contra Costa County General Plan, the Arts and Cultural Commission recommends an update to the Arts & Cultural Master Plan. This document would guide arts and cultural development throughout the county and would be developed through community engagement that ensures inclusion and equity.

This prospectus builds the case for charting the future cultural development on behalf of Contra Costa residents, including the creative sector, to support the artistic and cultural life of our communities. The goals and objectives in a new arts and cultural master plan – or cultural plan – would serve as a strategic roadmap and form the basis for action plans to address significant needs in areas of Contra Costa’s cultural life. The Commission strongly recommends that the stated goals within a plan improve the quality of life for all residents and that the diverse voices of our community are represented.

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The Need for a Cultural Plan

Contra Costa is large – over 700 square miles. About 40 percent of the county is under the jurisdiction of 19 incorporated cities and towns, and large portions of the remaining unincorporated area are part of public park systems, like Mount Diablo State Park and East Bay Regional Park District lands. Contra Costa County is also very diverse, with communities that range from small agricultural towns like Byron in eastern Contra Costa, with a population density of about 200 people per square mile, to urban population centers like Contra Costa Centre, a bustling transit village with a population density of 8,400 people per square mile.

Approximately 1.1 million people live throughout Contra Costa County. The median age of Contra Costa County residents is 39 years old. The population has been steadily aging since 1970, when the median age was about 28 years old. Since 2010, the fastest-growing age group has been seniors 65 or older, as the baby boom generation ages, and the second-fastest growth occurred in the 55 to 64 age group, which includes younger baby boomers. In the unincorporated county today, the majority of residents fall within the 45-64 and 5-19 age brackets.

The majority (69 percent) of unincorporated Contra Costa County residents are white, with significant proportions of Asian (13 percent) and African American (6 percent) people. The Census tracks Hispanic/Latino ethnicity separately from other populations; in total, the Hispanic/Latino population makes up approximately one-quarter of the total population. This population is located primarily in the western county near Richmond and San Pablo and along the Highway 4 corridor in the central and eastern portions of the county.

Clearly, a new cultural plan needs to address changes in age, race and ethnicity of our communities if Contra Costa County is to develop healthy, vibrant communities that are safe, environmentally sustainable and distinctive.

The County adopted its last cultural plan in 2001. A recent survey of key arts leaders in Contra Costa County has revealed that many of the issues identified in the 2001 plan persist, without a comprehensive strategy to address them. The Commissioners believe County arts programs can play a special role in fulfilling the work of the County as stated in *Envision*

CONTRA COSTA 2040, Northern Waterfront Economic Development Initiative Strategic Action Plan and other County planning documents.

The core missions of the County relate to delivery of human services and public safety, areas where the arts are playing a significant role in many parts of the country. The County has a unique ability to respond to needs beyond the capacity of local cities and can play a coordinating function among the various jurisdictions. This may be especially important in the areas of the “Arts as Healing” and providing arts education. Another important County value is addressing cultural services that should be provided to underserved populations living in unincorporated areas. The arts address these concerns and concerns around equity and environmental justice.

The Benefits of Cultural Planning

Cultural planning has many benefits. It brings together three critical elements: arts development, community development, and economic development. A current arts and cultural master plan will address key County issues relevant to Contra Costa County. In transportation, public art can improve transit systems and increase ridership. In health and human services, the arts can provide services to special populations, whether they be the elderly, the incarcerated, Veterans, the developmentally disabled, or other special populations.

The arts are a powerful tool in bringing culturally diverse communities to common civic ground. The development of local arts provides opportunities for access to the arts where Contra Costa residents might not have the resources or time to travel to San Francisco or Oakland for arts events. Moreover, the arts are critical to a well-rounded education. Much research over the past three decades has demonstrated the arts’ influence on academic success. Students studying music perform better in math. Visual arts students are seen to have improved critical thinking skills. Drama students develop a greater capacity for empathy and are more likely to engage in civic life as adults. (See Create CA, California’s Statewide Arts Education Coalition’s *Evaluating California Art Programs*.)

The arts have come to have an increasing role in economic development. There has been a significant shift in the economic development realm, in that business attraction is no longer the sole focus. The goal is not just trying to get Toyota to build a plant in your jurisdiction. More focus has been directed to attracting a talented professional workforce. Young

professionals are no longer making their decision about where to live based on a job. Rather, they are choosing first where they want to live before they look for a job. In other words, the people are no longer just following the jobs. More and more, the jobs are following the workforce. And it has been shown that a robust and lively “scene” with great cultural and entertainment opportunities is a key factor in both personal and business decisions about where to locate. At the same time, these community attributes are attractive to young professionals who are inclined to begin startup businesses in the creative sector (Objective 1.2.2 in the Northern Waterfront Initiative).

What is a Cultural Plan?

What is a cultural plan? It is in essence a set of policy recommendations for countywide cultural development over approximately the next ten years. The policy recommendations are derived from an extensive process of community assessment and engagement, and they are intended for implementation by the Arts and Culture Commission as well as many other partners inside and outside of county government. It is not merely a plan for the Commission. It is a plan for the whole community and requires collective action to accomplish its goals. A cultural plan seeks to give voice to the aspirations of a community for its cultural future. It assesses not only a community’s artists and cultural organizations, but engages the community generally. It recognizes that the beneficiaries of this planning should be the county’s diverse residents and communities. The purpose of a cultural plan is not simply to provide increased support and funding for artists and arts groups. Rather, they get supported by the County in providing services to the community in furtherance of the County’s mission and priorities.

The County’s 2001 Cultural Plan

All five arts leaders participating in our informal survey agreed that the main research conclusions in 2001 still hold up. They also indicated that the identified areas of need were still current, and that the Commission should be a service organization focused on the relationship of the arts to wider community issues.

The 2001 Cultural Plan was a thoughtful and thorough plan for cultural development of Contra Costa County. The Cultural Plan involved more than one thousand individual citizens who completed surveys and attended community meetings throughout the County. It

identified ten areas of need, a relatively high number that illustrates that there are significant needs in many areas of Contra Costa's cultural life. The needs identified were:

- **Advocacy** concerning the role and importance of the arts and culture
- **Arts education programs** in schools and elsewhere in the community
- **Greater communication, collaboration**, cooperation, and networking
- **Cultural facilities** of various types throughout the County
- **Funding** and other support
- **Inclusion and access** by a broader spectrum of the community
- **Marketing** and visibility
- **Opportunities** for artists to perform and exhibit
- **Public awareness** of the value of arts education and the impact of the arts
- **Technical assistance** and professional development opportunities

Nine recommendations emerged from the planning process. These recommendations were thoroughly vetted by the community, cultural stakeholders and County officials. The plan was adopted by the County Board of Supervisors.

Recommendation 1—Arts Education, including having the County taking a leading role in supporting arts education in local school districts and providing arts education and lifelong learning in the arts in other community settings.

Recommendation 2—Outreach and Advocacy, including providing information and education on arts policy issues, and the relationship of the arts to wider community issues.

Recommendation 3—Communications, including being a countywide information clearinghouse and countywide communications service for arts and culture.

Recommendation 4—Cultural Facilities, including supporting the development of local and regional cultural facilities.

Recommendation 5—Funding, including creating new, or facilitating the expansion of, public and private funding resources available for arts and culture.

Recommendation 6—Individual Artists, including providing specific services for individual artists.

Recommendation 7—Local Arts Agencies, including supporting local communities' efforts to create and develop local arts agencies.

Recommendation 8—Marketing, including strengthening the arts marketing efforts of organizations and individual artists.

Recommendation 9—Technical Assistance, including providing training and information for organizational and professional development.

Unfortunately, few of these recommendations were realized. This occurred for a variety of reasons. The needed funding resources were not made available. There were personnel changes. Needed community leadership was not sufficiently engaged and new leadership did not emerge.

Current State of the Arts in Contra Costa County

All of the interviewees reported that Contra Costa County is rich in all artforms and diverse in cultural expression. Several respondents mentioned that Contra Costa could not really be lumped together as a single region. Rather, there are three or four distinct regions of the County. Each region is home to talented artists and innovative programs, and their needs vary and must be evaluated and addressed specifically.

Survey participants said that residents and audience members are looking closer to home for the arts. When they do, they are finding high quality, yet lower priced programs. The challenge is sustaining these artists and arts organizations so they can continue to provide these programs. Not surprisingly, these organizations are struggling to survive in Contra Costa County.

Another defining aspect of Contra Costa County was the high mobility of the population. As people move in and out of the county, the established art providers must continually rebuild their audiences. Neighborhood arts organizations are too-often unknown to their local communities. Marketing is a major challenge.

Many of the surrounding cities in the Bay Area focus their art on the national scene or professional venues. Contra Costa County has always valued community-based arts, including smaller venues and family oriented programming. Contra Costa County communities also enhance their quality of life through various approaches to creative placemaking, which contribute to the region's desirability as a place to live, work, play, learn, and conduct business. (Objective 1.2.2 in the Northern Waterfront Initiative).

Challenges Faced

These smaller organizations and venues are in a constant struggle to develop needed resources and to gain the visibility they need to thrive. Because they are community-based, securing resources and financial stability is an ongoing challenge. Efforts are needed to promote collaborations and partnerships for better use of scarce resources.

Beyond needed resources, there is a strong need to develop greater community recognition of the multiple roles the arts play in building community. This could translate to the will to make the arts a higher priority.

Trends

Survey respondents had difficulty describing where the arts are trending in Contra Costa County. This is perhaps not so surprising. Most arts leaders are intently focused on their day-to-day operations and finding the resources to sustain those operations. Certainly, a sense of trends will emerge during a cultural planning process. One trend that was clearly identified was the cost of living and cost of housing. These are barriers to arts creation and production and to the retention of arts professionals. Arts education, for both youth and adults, is in increasing demand.

The Methodology of Cultural Planning

Planning Approach and Process

How is a cultural plan developed? There are certain tasks that are a part of every arts and cultural master planning methodology:

- **Literature Review.** A thorough review of all plans, studies and research that are relevant to the planning effort, to form a policy basis for the plan and to align the plan with existing County policies, regulations and ordinances.
- **Steering Committee.** Typically, a Steering Committee is appointed to oversee the planning process. This Committee is composed of 8 –15 members who serve for the duration of the planning effort. They should represent a variety of interests across sectors: community leaders, artists and arts organization directors, funders, business leaders, educational leaders, County elected and appointed officials, social justice activists, and other stakeholders with an interest in the plan. The Committee provides advice and guidance to the staff and the planning consultant team. They review the final plan draft and recommend it to the Arts and Culture Commission,

which in turn recommends the plan to the County Board of Supervisors. The Steering Committee meets periodically throughout the planning process.

- **Communications Plan.** A communications plan is developed to ensure that interested persons can participate in, and track the progress of, the planning process. This includes email communications and possibly the development of a webpage on the County website. It is also desirable to develop a social media strategy that will allow interactive communications with the public.
- **Community Engagement.** The plan is developed through extensive engagement of the community and cultural stakeholders. There are interviews with key persons, including arts stakeholders, County officials, community and neighborhood leaders, business interests, and education leaders, among others. Usually there are community meetings, at least one in each Supervisorial District. Special attention is given to reaching out to culturally specific and hard-to-reach populations, such as youth, the elderly, and economically disadvantaged people. Often, artists lead portions of the engagement.

Often there is a “kickoff event” to introduce the community to the planning process and to gather the community’s arts related interests, issues and aspirations. At the end of the planning process, once a draft plan has been developed, a second “Follow-up event” is held to share the plan findings and recommendations. Participants are asked to express their priorities among the plan strategies.

Several surveys are conducted, including an open, online community survey. The community survey is meant to reach the general population and is distributed through a variety of email lists, such as from the County library system and parks and recreation. The County may elect to conduct a random household survey to obtain scientifically valid survey results. Other online surveys may be focused on specific target groups: artists, cultural organizations, creative businesses, and others. An intercept survey might be conducted at local festivals, farmers markets and other community events.

- **Economic Impact Study.** The County may elect to do an economic impact study that measures the impacts of the nonprofit arts on the local economy. It would calculate the total arts expenditures, secondary spending related to the arts, number of jobs in the arts sector, tax revenues generated, and other measures. This study can be expanded to measure the impacts of the for-profit creative businesses: film, digital media, design enterprises, etc. This could support the work of the Northern Waterfront Initiative.
- **Creative Vitality Index and Benchmarking.** The County may choose to obtain data from the Creative Vitality Index administered by the Western States Arts Federation. The Arts and Culture Commission has participated in this index for over five years. This would make a direct comparison of arts related data from a cohort of Counties

of similar size and demographic characteristics. The consultant team may also be asked to compile arts related data from a set of five or six benchmark counties of the client's choosing.

- **Asset Inventory and Mapping.** An inventory of County arts and cultural assets would be developed. Assets might also include visual and performing arts organizations, artists and galleries, historical sites, arts venues, major events and festivals, and other elements based on available data. It could also include creative businesses, using Dunn and Bradstreet's data base. There is not yet a publicly-accessible inventory of County-owned public art.
- **Development and Vetting of Preliminary Strategies.** Once the engagement and research phase of the plan has been completed, the consultant team would analyze and synthesize the data gathered and develop a set of preliminary recommendations. These recommendations are vetted with various stakeholder groups and presented to both the Commission and the Steering Committee for feedback.
- **Draft Plan.** The consultant team creates a draft plan which is posted online with email notifications to all persons who participated in the planning process. Email reactions to the draft are solicited. The draft plan is presented in a public meeting to gather feedback and to allow the public to express a sense of their priorities. The draft is also presented to the Commission and the Steering Committee for their review and comment. The draft plan is vetted with key stakeholder groups and with County officials. They may be presented in a work session with the Board of Supervisors.
- **Final Plan and Presentations.** A final plan is written and circulated with a posting on the webpage. Final presentations of the plan are made to the Steering Committee, the Arts and Culture Commission and the Board of Supervisors, for adoption.

Typical Cultural Plan Components

The cultural plan will typically examine many issues and develop strategies to address them. Issues that arise in many cultural plans include:

- Arts education
- Funding
- Services to artists and arts organizations
- Marketing and audience development
- Public art and civic design
- Cultural diversity, equity and inclusion
- Cultural facilities / space needs
- Creative economy analysis

The plan also includes estimates of the cost of implementation of the plan over time and suggests sources of funding for the plan. It is accompanied by an implementation matrix. In this matrix, the following are identified for each recommendation:

- Lead agency or individual
- Partner agencies
- Timeline for implementation
- Human and financial resources needed
- Metrics for gauging success
- Initial steps to start implementation

Resources Needed to Develop a Cultural Plan

Given the magnitude of the county's population and geography, the budget for developing a countywide cultural plan can vary from approximately \$100,000 to \$200,000. The bulk of this budget would be devoted to fees for consultant services. Other factors that may influence the cost include the extent of community engagement and outreach, inclusion of creative economy analysis, multi-lingual engagement, use of third-party databases, such as the creative vitality index and Dunn & Bradstreet data or inclusion of a random household telephone survey and other elements.

Additional costs would include County staff support for the plan, and expenses for meetings and associated logistics.

County Support for Cultural Planning

Certain things will be needed from the Arts and Culture Commission to enable the planning process to proceed in an orderly and timely way. These include:

- County staff support adequate to ensure a smooth planning process
- Scheduling and logistics for all meetings, interviews, events, etc.
- Development of a webpage on County website
- Information technology support for asset inventory and mapping
- Ongoing communications, including publicizing key meeting and events
- Distribution of planning surveys
- Timely responses to consultant submissions and inquiries
- Supply of background plans, studies and other relevant literature
- Design/printing of the final plan document

Time Commitment

The planning process can be expected to last from 12 to 24 months, depending on the same factors that influence the size of the budget: extent of outreach, supplemental research, use of third party databases, additional tasks such as creative economy analysis, etc.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The Arts and Cultural Commission sees a need to engage in collaborations and community partnerships to advance the arts and culture within all the diverse communities of Contra Costa County. A renewed Arts & Cultural Master Plan would guide community engagement in the arts and local culture over the next 10 years.

Many of the Bay Area counties have arts plans. Alameda, Marin, Napa, Sonoma, San Francisco and Santa Clara Counties all have up-to-date roadmaps to support the artistic and cultural life of their communities. In Marin, the cultural plan calls on the County arts agency to provide technical support to the local cities, and to seek a new arts revenue stream to support arts development for both the County and the various municipalities. In Sonoma County, the County arts agency, Creative Sonoma, is housed in the Economic Development Board and is supporting the development of creative businesses.

Through collaborations and with community partnerships, the recommendation of the Arts and Culture Commission of Contra Costa County is to develop a renewed countywide Arts & Cultural Master Plan during the fiscal year July 2020 - June 2021, and to use the preceding year for preparation.



Community Leaders Interviewed for the Prospectus

In development of this prospectus, Arts and Culture Commission staff conducted telephone and email interviews with:

Alan Siegel, MD, Chair, Art of Health and Healing & Nation Art & Health

Richard Ambrose, Director, Richmond Art Center

Supervisor Diane Burgis, Contra Costa County, District III

Kevin Safine, Walnut Creek Arts, Recreation & Community Services

Randy Taradash, Creative Director/General Manager

Feinstein's at the Nikko | San Francisco



This prospectus was prepared by:

Roger Renn, AC5 Managing Director
Arts and Culture Commission of Contra Costa County

The Cultural Planning Group
Jerry Allen, Partner
David Plettner-Saunders, Partner