

**THE 2005 VENTURA CULTURAL PLAN:
Creating California's New Art City**

"Weaving culture into every aspect of life"



The 2005 Ventura Cultural Plan: Creating California's New Art City

Adopted by the City of San Buenaventura

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flash-forward ten years: to 2015. Downtown Ventura's Cultural District is home to a lively center for the arts. Artists are residing in an innovative live/work space that is sensitive to their creative process and variable incomes. Arts education programs have been fully integrated into the curriculum of our schools and all children can explore their innate artistic talents. Ventura's unique cultural heritage is celebrated by the community in festivals that reflect each neighborhood's character.

A fantasy? Not necessarily. All of these visions can become a reality when the goals of *The Ventura Cultural Plan 2005: Creating California's New Art City* are realized over the course of the next decade.

Why Another Cultural Plan?

Photo Courtesy of Visitors and Convention Bureau



The last cultural plan, adopted by City Council in 1992, helped shape Ventura's cultural landscape into what it is today. In the intervening twelve years, the community has changed significantly. Many of its cultural needs have evolved, opening the door for the *Ventura Cultural Plan 2005*.

Based on the success of the previous plan, arts leaders in the community are committed to the belief that the planning process can make a positive change in our city's cultural landscape. The focus of this plan is to build the arts infrastructure of Ventura as the foundation of a healthy arts ecosystem. A strong cultural infrastructure includes PLACES for

arts creation, sales, exhibition, performance, rehearsal, living; PEOPLE, including artists, audiences, patrons; and ORGANIZATIONS to produce, support and present art.

Nurturing Authenticity

The 2005 Cultural Plan includes six key policy areas, each with its own set of action items. Because the plan is so closely tied to the community, a focus on authenticity and a desire to nurture Ventura's own unique cultural identity emerged as core values as it began to take shape. Focus group participants repeatedly expressed their desire to see the cultural infrastructure grow while respecting and paying homage to existing assets and underlying culture.

Part of this emphasis on authenticity included taking a comprehensive approach to culture, one that weaves together the broad fabric of the community – artists, architecture, culture, history and the environment. Ventura's surf culture, natural beauty, agricultural roots, mission era founding and eclectic mix of architecture were amongst the elements recognized as integral to the community's identity.



Photo: Robyn Walter

The authenticity of our cultural community was such an important factor in all of the public discussions that staying true to Ventura's identity was designated as policy number one in the plan: **build and preserve a city that is reflective of Ventura's heritage and aspirations.** The plan suggests doing this by not only enhancing the quality of the built environment but also supporting initiatives that enhance, preserve and celebrate Ventura's cultural and heritage resources. Strategies for doing this focus on historic preservation efforts as well as encouraging festivals and events that allow Venturans to embrace the diverse cultures and histories that have shaped the City.

Also paying homage to Ventura's authentic character was the second policy area: **support Ventura's cultural infrastructure—people, places and organizations.** The introduction to

this policy area states, “The arts and humanities are now being seen as tools for civic engagement and our cultural organizations as promoters of social capital; part of the glue that holds our communities together.” Because the arts help to define and communicate Ventura’s culture it is important that those working in the creative sector are provided with both the tangible and intangible resources they need to work and thrive.

Elevating Arts Awareness for All

During the planning process, steering committee members and workshop participants repeatedly emphasized what they termed the “disconnect” between local audiences and Ventura’s now substantial cultural offerings. A result of this concern is policy number three: **create broad-based public awareness of local and regional cultural offerings and amenities.** This policy expresses the desire to see increased participation in the arts and culture across the entire spectrum of residents and visitors to the city. Planning participants emphasized the need to pay particular attention to programs and initiatives that target residents, citing “marketing to tourists is easy, marketing to locals is hard.” The plan suggests more collaborative marketing efforts between arts organizations, which could be facilitated through a cultural marketing committee.



Further elevating the value of the arts in the community is policy number four: **enhance opportunities for life-long learning in the arts.** Arts education is key to increasing participation in the arts and culture and building new audiences. According to the National Endowment for the Arts, early exposure to the arts is the strongest single predictor of arts participation. Arts education, whether integrated into the core curriculum, through after-school programs or by introducing more opportunities for adult education, can be a key contributor towards this community goal.

Creating Cultural Access and Expanding Arts Funding Resources

Enhancing access to the arts emerged as an additional key goal of the planning process and was seen as directly complementary to the desire to broaden audiences and develop new

cultural participants. The arts serve as an essential bridge across language and cultural differences and build connections both within and between communities. Policy number five: **ensure comprehensive access to and involvement in cultural opportunities for all segments of the population** provides the opportunity to address this critical issue.

The cultural equity task force, brought together to examine arts access issues, was another of the very active and effective focus groups that developed from the planning process. The plan recommends retaining such a group to possibly serve under the auspices of the Cultural Affairs Commission to help seek ongoing participation from underserved cultural groups in the implementation of the cultural plan.



Photo: Robyn Walter

The plan further recommends that arts organizations should create and produce culturally relevant programs that involve traditionally underserved groups such as young adults, non-English speaking audiences, and disabled populations.

Over the past decade, as portions of the 1992 Cultural Plan have been implemented, Ventura's consistent policy of investing in the arts has paid off. The arts have become an increasingly visible key partner in downtown revitalization. They have attracted businesses, residents, and visitors. They are a component of Ventura's rising reputation. Because the arts are part of what makes Ventura a great place to live, work, and visit, the cultural plan includes policy number six: **stabilize and expand funding and other resources that support Ventura's cultural assets.**

During creation of this portion of the plan, members of the steering committee and focus groups continually pointed to both anecdotal and hard evidence of the positive impact of the

arts on the local, state and national economies. As in the development of all industries, to help nourish and encourage further growth of our cultural infrastructure a steady stream of both public and private investment needs to be made. The plan recommends exploring public funding sources such as an increased transient occupancy tax on local hotel stays. In addition, the creation of a non-profit fundraising organization is needed to develop local philanthropy to complement public resources.

Achieving the Vision

Once the plan is adopted the work of achieving its vision begins. Since the plan is a community plan, and not just a municipal document, the entire community will be called on to execute it. A huge challenge will be implementing the plan in this time of limited public resources, making the concept of cross sector partnerships critical. Already the involvement of arts organizations, artists, business leaders and educational institutions in the planning process has produced fruitful partnerships that are working to address several of the policy areas. Public/private collaborations have proved to be particularly successful in the initiatives that require immense resources such as Artspace and the Downtown Cultural Arts Village.

The ambitions, hopes and dreams of the community are contained in this plan and it will take the efforts of all to realize them. As Ventura moves forward over the next ten years with the implementation of the policies and action items in the plan the community will be challenged with remaining true to its authentic character while striving to become California's New Arts City—a challenge Ventura is well poised to meet.

SUMMARY OF POLICIES AND ACTIONS

Policy 1. Build and preserve a city that is reflective of Ventura's heritage and aspirations.

Actions:

- A. Enhance the quality of the built environment.
 - 1. Promote high-quality, innovative design as a core component of all public and private development.
 - 2. Establish a private development fee for the arts.
 - 3. Enhance awareness of Ventura's cultural vitality from the freeways.
- B. Support initiatives that enhance, preserve, and celebrate Ventura's cultural and heritage resources.
 - 1. Foster events that promote pride and understanding of Ventura's heritage and history.
 - 2. Revise the Historic Preservation Ordinance.
 - 3. Provide funding for support of City owned historic resources.
 - 4. Promote incentives for private preservation efforts.
 - 5. Engage residents in the active preservation of the integrity of Ventura's culturally diverse neighborhoods.

Policy 2. Support Ventura's cultural infrastructure: people, places and organizations.

Actions:

- A. Continue to address the community's cultural space needs.
 - 1. Facilitate the development of a Downtown Cultural Facility.
 - 2. Support artist retention through the creation of affordable artist live/work facilities.
- B. Craft long-term strategies to develop regional arts leaders and patrons.
 - 1. Create a method of recognizing and celebrating leadership in the arts.

2. Support programs and initiatives that foster and active and diverse pool of arts leaders and board members.
 3. Develop a “Business Leaders for the Arts” program.
 4. Increase the size of the Cultural Affairs Commission.
- C. Support the creative sector through training and other professional development opportunities.
1. Sponsor opportunities for local arts organizations and artists to convene and share information.
 2. Develop a comprehensive resource directory.
 3. Develop mentoring programs for artists and organizations.
 4. Develop international artists-in-residence program.
 5. Support cultural educational facilities and programs.

Policy 3. Create broad-based public awareness of local and regional cultural offerings and amenities.

Actions:

- A. Conduct research on audiences for local cultural offerings.
- B. Develop a Cultural Marketing Task Force.
- C. Develop collective marketing opportunities.
 1. Develop an inclusive monthly calendar of cultural events
 2. Create a collective themed event
- D. Broaden outreach and marketing delivery systems.
- E. Promote Ventura as a cultural destination.
 1. Develop a comprehensive cultural and heritage tourism initiative.
 2. Enhance signage and other information delivery systems in tourist destinations.

- a. Banner Programs
 - b. Signage
 - c. Kiosks
3. Support the Downtown Cultural District

Policy 4. Enhance opportunities for lifelong learning in the arts.

Actions:

- A. Establish an Arts Education Advocacy Group.
- B. Integrate arts education into the core curriculum in local schools, grades kindergarten through 12.
 - 1. Complete an assessment of current arts education resources in Ventura.
 - 2. Work with the Board of the Ventura Unified School District to adopt a resolution in support of the State Standards for Visual and Performing Arts.
 - 3. Develop an arts education plan for Ventura.
- C. Enhance existing after- and extra-school arts education options.
 - 1. Develop new sources of support.
 - 2. Develop a comprehensive arts education resource directory.
 - 3. Expand the City's arts education and youth facilities.
 - 4. Maximize the use of new technology for distance-learning opportunities.
- D. Develop mentorship and other professional development opportunities for teachers and artists.

Policy 5. Ensure comprehensive access to and involvement in cultural opportunities for all segments of the population.

Actions:

- A. Set a high priority for cultural equity in the implementation process.
 - 1. Create an access and cultural equity advocacy group.

2. Seek ongoing input and participation of underserved cultural groups in the implementation of the cultural plan.
- B. Promote the cultural and artistic expressions of Ventura's under-represented cultural group.
1. Establish diversity as criteria for certain grants through Cultural Funding Program.
 2. Encourage the development of events that celebrate Ventura's cultural heritage.
- C. Increase the participation of all segments of the population in the cultural life of the community, from production to consumption.
1. Pursue the development of neighborhood-specific cultural plans.
 2. Encourage cultural events at alternate venues and culturally specific gathering places.
 3. Establish ticket subsidy and distribution programs and facilitate transportation to cultural offerings for all populations.
 4. Encourage bi-lingual programming and advertising for cultural events.
 5. Develop an internship/volunteer program targeting culturally diverse participants.
- D. Develop new partnerships with culturally specific organizations.

Policy 6. Stabilize and expand funding and other resources that support Ventura's cultural assets.

Actions:

- A. Secure a dedicated public funding stream for the arts.
- B. Establish a resource development entity.
- C. Examine the relation between the Cultural Affairs Division and the Visitors and Convention Bureau.

PLANNING PROCESS

In February 2004, the City of Ventura embarked on an exciting new effort to enhance the arts and culture in our community: the *Ventura Cultural Plan*. The last plan, adopted in 1992, shaped the cultural landscape for the following decade. The 2005 plan will set priorities for the next ten years. Key recommendations from this plan are included in the City's new General Plan.

Background

In the early nineties, Ventura's cultural community was in its fledgling stage. Only a few established organizations – like the Ventura County Symphony, the Ventura Master Chorale, and the Ventura County Museum of History and Art – existed. A full and burgeoning visual artist community had made the city its home, but was fairly invisible to all but a few of the more intrepid arts supporters and collectors.

It was a time when the city's cultural identity could easily have been swallowed or steamrolled by other interests – development, tourism initiatives, or simply indifference. Many towns and cities across the nation have been at this stage. But only a few have had the insight, wisdom, and bravery to actually address it when the moment came.

The City of Ventura took the opportunity to focus resources and attention on its artistic amenities, and oversaw the development of Ventura's first cultural plan. Completed in 1992, the plan has proved to be a resounding success as a blueprint for the action items to be achieved. It called for a full complement of policies and actions in order to expand Ventura's cultural amenities and offerings. It involved over 180 people in its formation – community stakeholders who served on the Plan's Steering Committee, chaired task forces, and attended public meetings.

In the over 13 years since the plan was completed, the City of Ventura has either implemented or initiated all of its recommendations. As a result, the growth of the cultural community has been phenomenal. Now Ventura is home to a wealth of active, professional arts organizations. While many previously existed, they have expanded immensely: in just one decade, the budgets of the arts organizations in downtown Ventura alone increased nine-fold, from a total of \$499,000 in 1994 to \$4,061,000 in 2004.

Ventura has a complement of major cultural institutions unusual for a city of its size. The Ventura Music Festival, the Rubicon Theatre Company, the Ventura County Museum of History and Art, and Focus on the Masters comprise the center of the major groups. The individual artists who have resided and worked in the City for years continue to be a major part of its cultural fabric, and are highlighted in beloved cultural events like the Downtown ArtWalks.

The city is also home to many historical sites, including the Olivas Adobe, the Albinger Museum (the only archeological museum in Southern California), and the Ortega Adobe. Many local arts organizations host events in these facilities, like Music Under the Stars, a weekly summer concert series at the Olivas Adobe. The community is passionate about celebrating and restoring its architectural and historical treasures.



Photo: Courtesy of Visitors and Convention Bureau

Approach

Although the cultural plan has not been updated in its entirety since 1992, the City has continued to undertake focused planning initiatives. In 1998 City Council adopted the Downtown Cultural District Plan and in 2003 completed a Cultural Facilities Feasibility Study. Also in 2003, the City's Cultural Affairs and Economic Development Divisions began working

with Artspace to address the needs for affordable housing for the creative sector. And in the spring of 2004, the City provided funding for a report on the economic impact of the arts.

Since funding was not available in 2004 to cover the cost of a comprehensive community wide planning effort, the City decided to take a modular approach to the development of a cultural plan, building upon these diverse planning initiatives and combining a staff driven process with the targeted use of consultants to address key issues.

The eighteen-month planning process encompassed the following elements:

Steering Committee – In January 2004, a 38 member Steering Committee¹ was appointed. Chaired by Councilmember Christy Weir, Cultural Affairs Chair Ed Summers and Public Art Commission Chair Dawne Fowkes, the Committee was made up of representatives of the business, educational, cultural, tourism, philanthropic and social service arenas. The Steering Committee identified critical issues facing Ventura’s cultural community at its first meeting, solicited stakeholders to involve in the process, assisted with focus groups and task forces and reviewed several iterations of the plan. The Steering Committee met six times and actively participated in and oversaw the planning process.

Critical Issues Examination – Four independent consultants with expertise in the various critical issue areas identified by the Steering Committee were retained. In March and April 2004, the consultants interviewed key stakeholders and held seven issue-focused forums to gather community input on the following topics:

- Access and the Arts
- Built Environment and Historic Preservation
- Cultural Heritage/Diversity

¹ See “Planning Participants” for a complete list of the members of the Steering Committee, interviews, and involved members of the public.

- Education
- Funding and Economic Impact
- Marketing and Cultural Tourism
- Nurturing Our Creative Community

Community Input – The planning process was designed to include extensive opportunities for public participation. The objective was to solicit broad participation in defining the vision and creating a roadmap for the city’s continued cultural development over the next ten years. Ventura residents were invited to examine the cultural “state of the city” through four town hall meetings and seven focus group sessions.

A particularly successful outreach strategy was gathering input from the five Ventura Community Councils that represent the different areas of the city. From October through December 2004, staff visited the Council meetings to gain feedback on key findings gleaned from earlier focus groups and invited each neighborhood to examine the cultural “state of the city.” These forums allowed residents to discuss cultural priorities including arts education, a performing arts center, new arts programs in the East End, and historic preservation. Staff also presented the initial policy recommendations and solicited feedback to Ventura Rotary clubs at the Harbor and Seaside Park.

Review and Approval – The draft plan was presented to the Steering Committee, then to the Public Art and Cultural Affairs Commissions for review in February 2005. Comments and suggestions from all sources were then incorporated into the final draft. In June 2005, the final draft was approved by the Steering Committee, the Public Art Commission and the Cultural Affairs Commission.

DEFINING THE VISION: AUTHENTICITY AND COLLABORATION

The arts connect us, helping to celebrate both the things we hold in common and our own individuality. Cultural expression defines, inspires, and engages us, providing solace and entertainment, insight and opportunity, commemoration and innovation. Participants in the cultural planning process envisioned a new ‘art city’, like the one described below, where the arts are woven into every aspect of life. A city whose citizens had harnessed the full power of the arts to enhance and shape community. It is a vision we hope all Venturans will embrace and help bring to fruition.

The Vision: 2015

Ventura is home to a vibrant cultural district as well as a thriving and diverse community of creative individuals. The Avenue links the city’s two primary creative zones, the downtown cultural district and the media/industrial design district near Canada-Larga. The creative sector has participated in the development of a unique city, one where arts and cultural offerings enhance the look and feel of the city’s streets and public spaces. Civic dialogue is facilitated through original theater productions that tackle and elucidate local issues. Creative programs at the Downtown Cultural Arts Village and neighborhood facilities bring together Ventura’s under twenty population to explore issues of identity and culture. An innovative facility re-invents the traditional community institution, blurring the established lines between cultural, recreational and social service offerings. The city’s pedestrian friendly downtown core, historic architecture, and pristine natural setting delight residents and visitors, as do its many festivals, galleries, performance venues and creative businesses.

From its quirky yet beguiling downtown to its vibrant and diverse neighborhoods, from the flourishing creative sector to the beauty of its natural setting, Ventura has distilled a unique local culture that draws upon community heritage, the environment and creative expression. Venturans value the many ways in which the arts touch their lives, contributing to the overall quality of life.

Americans, particularly Californians, have traditionally placed great emphasis on the process of self-discovery. In this quest, the arts offer almost limitless avenues of exploration. As California's new art city, Ventura has invested in and nurtured an array of creative alternatives reflective of the rich diversity of this remarkable community – come find yourself!

POLICIES, ACTIONS AND INITIATIVES

Policy 1.

Build and preserve a city that is reflective of Ventura's heritage and aspirations.

Venturans are proud to be Venturans.

The community is fiercely proud of its history and heritage. The citizenry values what differentiates it from other cities in the region, like Santa Barbara and Thousand Oaks.

Ventura's cultural community has grown organically. Visual artists have historically gravitated to coastal communities, valuing the unique qualities of the light. Think of Carmel, California, or Deauville, the coastal village in France where the Impressionists flocked in the 19th century. Laguna Beach, now home to Pageant of the Masters and scores of art galleries, started as an arts colony.

"Ventura is a small, eclectic California beach town that values its heritage, its community, its climate, and its landscape. The people of Ventura are welcoming, casual, and respectful of the environment. For them, living life, time with family, staying active and maintaining a connection with nature is very important. They are open-minded, appreciative of heritage, cultural, and creative.... Ventura is respectful of its past and focused on its future."

- City Image Community Workshop
Synthesis, Summer 2003

Ventura is no different; although for decades the City's exceptional artist population worked in relative obscurity. In the 1970s, attracted by available open space and a friendly climate, a group of stone sculptors settled in the City. Art City, the only major stone supplier in Southern California was established off Ventura Avenue. As a result, Ventura has become one of the leading centers of contemporary stone carving.

Stone is only one of the media in which Ventura artists work. Now, the city is home to artists of all disciplines who work in the performing, literary, and visual arenas and help shape the unique character of our community.

Valuing Our Heritage

Across the nation in the seventies and eighties, redevelopment left vacant lots at the heart of historic downtowns. The story was no different in Ventura; however, the downtown core

retained much of its character and charm and has now become a widely recognized asset. For the last ten years City Council has consciously promoted policies that emphasize history, the arts and culture as part of the revitalization of downtown.

The relatively recent rediscovery of our historic structures has heightened public awareness of their value to the community and of their fragility. This comes upon a longstanding tradition

Photo: Kathy Gauthier Revard



of preservation in the community. The first Ventura Landmark Committee was organized in 1910 under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce. The primary focus of the movement, supported by the Native Sons and Daughters, was to restore the deteriorating missions and adobes that were so significant

in early California history. Ventura adopted its first modern historic preservation ordinance in July 1973 and established the Historic Preservation Commission.

The success of the first Ventura Architectural Weekend in 2003, along with the recent demolition of the Mayfair Theater in the summer of 2004, has led to an increased understanding of the importance of the city's historic fabric. This in turn resulted in the creation of the San Buenaventura Conservancy and the recent adoption of the Mills Act² by City Council.

² Enacted in 1972, the Mills Act legislation grants participating local governments authority to enter into contracts with owners of qualified historic properties who actively participate in the restoration and maintenance of their historic properties while receiving property tax relief.

Building a Legacy for the Future

Even while we work to preserve our heritage, part of Ventura's vision is to continue to build new treasures for generations to come. We want our descendants to be proud to be Venturans, not inherit a bland built and cultural environment.

The cultural planning process has made clear that the community feels passionately that its built environment must be comparable to the quality of the natural environment. Participants view Ventura as uniquely positioned to combine natural, historic, and cultural resources into a blended authentic whole that differentiates it from other California



Photo: Robyn Walker

beach communities. They envision a city where the physical backdrop of the community reflects the vitality of our cultural life and the beauty of our natural setting.

POLICY 1: ACTIONS

1A. Enhance the quality of the built environment.

Develop and promote programs and initiatives that will help to ensure the long-term attractiveness of the physical fabric of the community through partnerships, policies, and incentives.

1A.1 Promote high-quality, innovative design as a core component of all public and private development

The arts, specifically public art and architectural innovation, can play a key role in smart growth. Cultural assets help shape an environment that makes higher density more attractive to residents. Other cities have successfully developed combinations of restrictions and incentives that foster high quality design. The Cultural Affairs Commission and the Public Art Commission should explore ways in which they can collaborate with the Planning Commission and the Design Review Committee to develop incentives for high-quality design.

1A.2 Establish a private development fee for the arts

Many communities have established a requirement that private development incorporate public art, or fund a portion of the local municipal art program. The majority of these 'percent for art' fees range from one to two percent of construction costs.

Ventura should consider incorporating such a requirement in all new negotiated developer agreements. At the same time, the City could explore different options for implementing such a requirement comprehensively in all new development. In addition the City should explore ways in which an arts or

cultural component could be effectively utilized as an option for developers in lieu of other requirements of the new form based code. For example, a developer might be allowed to substitute ground level art for ground level windows.

In Los Angeles, the Community Redevelopment Agency established a cultural impact fee, which requires that developers in redevelopment areas allocate one percent of the project cost to enhance the arts and cultural resources of the community. It operates much like the Quimby fund (which charges new developers a portion of the project cost for the establishment of new parks).

1A. 3 *Enhance awareness of Ventura’s cultural vitality from the freeways*

On average, 100,000 cars per day travel through downtown Ventura on the 101 freeways. Prioritizing projects that focus on aesthetic improvements to each of Ventura’s freeway over-crossings will increase awareness of Ventura and its cultural vitality. Potential locations include: the Ash Street pedestrian bridge, California Street, the railroad trestle in Downtown, the Seaward overpass in Midtown, and the 101/126 interchange on the Eastside.

The Santa Clara River and the Ventura River define two of the city’s borders. Temporary projects such as banners or permanent sculptural markers could be developed for the bridges to reinforce Ventura’s cultural identity.

Yet another opportunity is to create a highly visible arts icon located in the vicinity of the Downtown Cultural District that would encourage visitors to stop and explore.

1B. Support initiatives that enhance, preserve and celebrate Ventura’s cultural and heritage resources.

Communities throughout the country have recognized the value of preserving their cultural and heritage resources. The trend in the field is to move beyond the traditional focus on buildings to encompass festivals and other mechanisms that celebrate local customs and traditions.

In April 2001, the Center for Arts and Culture in Washington, D.C. convened a panel of experts to discuss major issues in preservation policy. They concluded that “Preservation is about more than the restoration or rehabilitation of buildings and structures; it also embraces America’s cultural objects, landscapes, documents and folk life that define and teach the nation’s stories.”

1B.1 Foster events that promote pride and understanding of Ventura’s heritage and history

The response to the recent Architectural Weekend Tour, established in November 2003 through a joint effort between the San Buenaventura Conservancy, the Chamber of Commerce, the Visitors and Convention Bureau, and local businesses, highlights the interest in and benefits of celebrating Ventura’s architectural heritage. By working collaboratively, area organizations can build on the success of this event and develop additional partnerships that will not only bring new visitors to Ventura, but will enable local residents to rediscover and appreciate their unique environment.

1B.2 Revise the Historic Preservation Ordinance

The recent adoption of the Mills Act by City Council highlights the ability of policy to support individual efforts to restore historic treasures. Given the new interest in preservation, the active development climate, and the existence of new partners such as the San Buenaventura Conservancy, the timing is right to review and update Ventura’s Historic Preservation ordinance, and revisit the role of the Historic Preservation Committee.

1B.3 Provide funding for support of City owned historic resources

While the City of Ventura is the major owner of historic properties, currently there is no designated funding mechanism available to support and maintain important historical sites such as the Ortega Adobe, the Albinger Museum, and the Olivas Adobe. Funds for the preservation of city owned resources could be provided through government programs such as Certified Local Government grants³, developer fees, use fees at historic sites, and/or penalties collected for unauthorized damage or destruction to a locally designated landmark.

1B.4 Promote incentives for private preservation efforts

Private preservation and restoration of historic structures can improve the economic, environmental and aesthetic quality of life in a community. The City of Ventura can encourage private renovation efforts and adaptive reuse of historic buildings by promoting incentives for preservation. Creation of historic districts is often the first step toward securing grants and federal tax credits for property owners. Other incentives include, but are not limited to, low cost loans, reduction in development and permit fees for renovation and adaptive reuse, a streamlined development process, use of the historic building code, and property tax mitigation.

³ The Certified Local Government program is a partnership between local governments, state historic preservation offices, and the National Park Service that promotes local historic preservation efforts. Local governments that have been successfully certified are eligible to apply for annual matching grants from the National Historic Preservation Fund. HPF grants can be used to fund repair and restoration projects, as well as other local historic preservation programs.

1B.5 Engage residents in the active preservation of the integrity of Ventura's culturally diverse neighborhoods

Ventura's neighborhoods are changing rapidly, with new homes and businesses appearing almost overnight. While many of these changes are positive, they often place substantial economic pressure on small businesses and lower income residents to relocate. Yet part of Ventura's character and charm is the variety and diversity of its neighborhoods. Members of the Access and Cultural Equity Task Force identified the need to foster advocates for the preservation of culturally diverse neighborhoods.

Policy 2.

Support Ventura's cultural infrastructure: people, places and organizations

In the United States we are beginning to accept that creativity contributes to our well being in ways that are difficult to evaluate in financial or utilitarian terms. The arts and humanities are now recognized as tools for civic engagement. Our cultural organizations are promoters of social capital, part of the glue that holds our communities together. This goes hand in hand with a new appreciation of the extensive economic contribution that the cultural sector makes to domestic productivity, job growth and export earnings.



In the last decade, Ventura's cultural organizations have increased in number and matured in sophistication. This has been accompanied by consistent growth in the public's understanding of the benefits and value of the arts and culture. The challenge for the next decade is to sustain this evolution. Moving forward, Ventura needs to:

- 1) assist key arts institutions as they transition to the next level of excellence,
- 2) support artists and individuals actively engaged in cultural production, and
- 3) facilitate the participation of new and expanded audiences.

The arts have been a key contributor in the success of the revitalization of Downtown Ventura. Events and initiatives like the ArtWalks, historic tours, the designation of the Downtown Cultural District, Arts Explosion, and the Ventura Music Festival have brought people and attention to Downtown Ventura. In naming Ventura one of "America's Most Livable Cities" in 2003, the national organization Partners for Livable Communities cited its progressive public art program as a key contributor.

ARTWALKS

- Held 3 times a year
- Average event attendance: 10,000
- Average expenditure per person: \$60

The arts will continue to be a key player in the coming decade, as quality of life decisions continue to shape people’s choices about where they live, work, shop, and invest their time and money.

Cultural Infrastructure

A strong cultural infrastructure is the foundation of a healthy arts ecosystem. This includes:

- *people* – artists, audiences, patrons;
- *places* – for arts creation, sales, exhibition, performance, rehearsal, living; and
- *organizations* – production, support, and presentation.

SOME NATIONAL ARTIST SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Providence, Rhode Island – created the Arts and Entertainment District downtown:

- Writers, composers and artists living in the District do not pay state income tax.
- Art sold in the district is not subject to sales tax.
- Building owners get tax breaks when they rehab commercial buildings into artists’ residences.

Alexandria, VA – created the Torpedo Factory:

- City bought the torpedo factory complex.
- In 1974, renovated the complex as an art center.
- Today, the Torpedo Factory has five galleries, 83 studios, hosts education programs, international shows and attracts more than 800,000 visitors each year.

People

The Creative Workforce

Ventura has long been home to a vibrant and extensive creative population. However, many of the factors that made Ventura a livable and attractive place in the last three decades have

changed, placing economic pressures on our creative community. The cost of housing has increased beyond affordability for most of the local artists. Exhibition venues have not expanded significantly, nor have opportunities for sales or employment.

Artist retention is a cornerstone of any creative community. Many communities in the United

States have adopted incentive policies to retain and attract new artists. Providence, Rhode Island and Alexandria, Virginia have both invested in individual artists and facilities as a key component of their economic strategies.



Photo Courtesy of Phil Taggart

Leadership

Ventura’s cultural growth is due in large part to a dedicated core group of private patrons and public investors in the arts. Local arts organizations depend heavily on the generosity of a relatively small pool of individual donors and volunteers. These individuals not only support the activities of local arts organizations, they are also active advocates for the benefits of the arts and culture to the entire community.

In order for the cultural community to thrive, a larger and more diverse pool of informed and committed arts leaders needs to be fostered. These include patrons, as well as board members, and volunteers: advocates who will help to ensure that the arts in Ventura regularly “have a seat at the table.”



Photo: Robyn Walker

Places

Ventura’s phenomenal cultural growth over the last decade has far outstripped the existing cultural infrastructure. For example, Focus on the Masters’ successful *Tuesday Night Talks* meet-the-artist program has outgrown the Laurel Theatre, its home for many years, and a larger facility simply does not exist.

The City’s Cultural Affairs Division has promoted many programs to address this issue. It has encouraged the use of non-traditional venues (used to great effect in the Ventura Music Festival, which hosts concerts in restaurants, stores, and parks). It funded arts organizations to make improvements to existing, non-arts specific venues (like local churches) through a temporary “Arts Venue Grant Program” it implemented in the late 1990s.

While temporary measures are all well and good, ensuring Ventura's future as California's New Art City will require more permanent solutions. Ventura's artists and cultural organizations need stable venues, so that they are not continually struggling with where to live and work.

Organizations

Growth

The City of Ventura has four major arts institutions: the Ventura County Museum of History and Art, the Ventura Music Festival, Focus on the Masters, and the Rubicon Theatre Company.⁴ They have a



Rendering Courtesy of Artspace; Design by Santos Prescott and Associates and Carde Ten

remarkable history of accomplishments and well-deserved reputations for excellence. These and other organizations need new or expanded facilities, professional staff (in many cases) and more resources in order to support their continued evolution.

Business Assistance

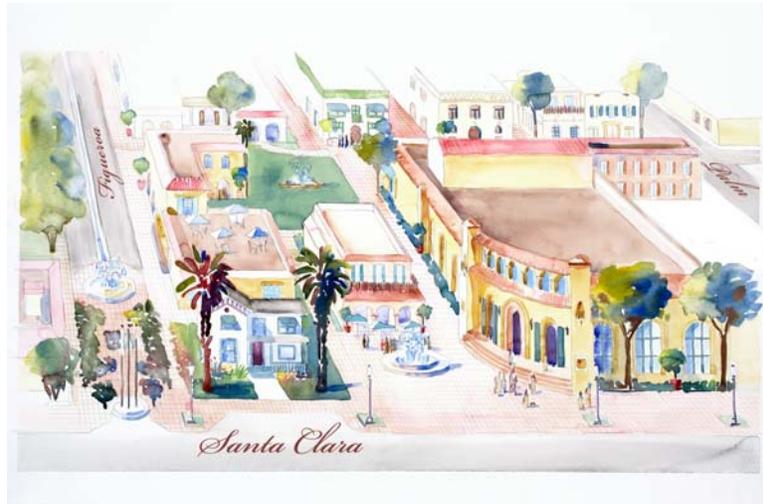
Ventura's small to mid-sized arts organizations need some of the same kind of assistance that all small businesses need to thrive, such as professional staff, training, and marketing assistance. The City of Ventura provides small business assistance loans at a very low interest; arts organizations should take advantage of these and other business development programs.

⁴ "Major institutions" are defined based on their budget size, longevity and audience numbers. The four major institutions have budgets of over \$350,000 and have annual attendance ranging from 4,000 to 60,000.

POLICY 2: ACTIONS

2A. Continue to address the community's cultural space needs.

Almost a decade later, many of the community's space needs and potential cultural venues identified in the 1998 Downtown Ventura Cultural District Plan have been developed or are in process. For



Rendering Courtesy of San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts

example, the Ventura County Museum of History and Art is proceeding with its expansion plan. Other needs have been addressed on a temporary basis. Contemporary art exhibition space was identified as a priority, and in 2002 the Ventura Redevelopment Agency designated an underutilized beachfront shop as an ongoing, although not permanent, gallery space for the San Buenaventura Artists' Union.

2A.1 Facilitate the development of a Downtown Cultural Facility

The 2003 Cultural Facility Feasibility Study⁵ identified a broad spectrum of cultural space needs including:

- 600 - 800 seat theater
- 150 seat flexible space
- arts education and classroom space
- exhibition space
- live/work space

⁵ Prepared by AMS Planning and Research for the San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts and the City.

These can be provided in one or more centralized facilities or can be viewed as modules. There are benefits to both approaches. The City has entered into an agreement with San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts (SBFA) to develop a cultural center incorporating all of these components and has set aside a downtown site for this purpose.

2A.2 Support artist retention through the creation of affordable artist live/work facilities

"I want to live and work in a community where there is a lot of exciting interchange between artists from all different disciplines and levels of professionalism."
- Paul Lindhard, local stone sculptor

In order to address the space needs of its creative workforce Ventura needs to pursue a variety of approaches. Solutions needs to be developed that will make it legal and economically viable for artists to continue to produce their work in the spaces they have pioneered on Ventura Avenue and in other parts of the community. In addition, permanent affordable solutions need to be developed that will not only serve the existing artist population but will attract new talent to the city. The long-term viability of any creative community is dependent on a regular influx of people and ideas.

There are two major projects currently in development that will provide spaces specifically for visual and performing artists in Ventura: Artspace Ventura, a project initiated by the City of Ventura, and the Bell Arts Factory, developed by a private citizen. These two projects will provide, respectively, live/work spaces for low to moderate-income artists, and work spaces for local artists. Both projects must be supported.

There has been extensive discussion about the need for an artist-friendly live/work ordinance. An ordinance must be developed in order to provide individual artists with the possibility of maintaining independent and legal residences and workspaces.

2B. Craft long-term strategies to develop regional arts leaders and patrons.

The cultivation of regional arts patrons will require a long-term effort designed to counteract what the Ventura County Community Foundation identifies as the lack of established local philanthropic tradition. Currently much of the individual giving by County residents leaves the region, and is dedicated to state and national efforts. Counteracting this trend will demand a concerted outreach and educational effort, focusing on individuals and key corporations in the region. The case for the economic, educational, and quality of life impact of the arts needs to be made consistently, and with a unified voice.

2B.1 Create a method of recognizing and celebrating leadership in the arts

While arts organizations in the region are very sophisticated at providing incentives for their specific donors and patrons, there has not been a large-scale, public effort to recognize major donors in the arts. Establishing a well publicized, major awards program may have a profound impact on giving, and will serve to increase awareness of the benefits of supporting local arts. The newly initiated Mayor's Arts Awards may prove to be this vehicle.

2B.2 Support programs and initiatives that foster an active and diverse pool of arts leaders and board members

Traditionally, arts organizations have not availed themselves of board development resources. However, nationally, there are a variety of non-profit board training and assistance programs. In Washington, DC, Boardsource

The City of Ventura implemented its Technical Assistance program in 1996, to provide hands-on consultations with arts organizations and artists. Currently, the program presents one thematic all-day workshop annually, with individual tracks aimed at organizations' staff and board members, as well as individual artists.

(www.boardsource.org) offers in-depth training and numerous other resources for emerging and established board members. Locally, there are leadership and board training programs offered by a variety of groups, including the Ventura Chamber of Commerce, the Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF), and the City of Ventura Cultural Affairs Division, through its technical assistance program.

2B.3 Develop a 'Business Leaders for the Arts' program

Business Volunteers for the Arts, a program of Americans for the Arts, pairs volunteers from local businesses with non-profit organizations. For example, a Chief Financial Officer from a local business might work with the local theatre company to develop new financial policies. In so doing, the volunteers become engaged and invested in the organization and often continue to participate in their development, and frequently, in the arts community as a whole.

Working collaboratively, the City of Ventura and the Chamber can develop a similar mechanism to facilitate the involvement of business leaders in local cultural organizations.

2B.4 Increase the size of the Cultural Affairs Commission

The Cultural Affairs Commission currently has five members. Because the members represent the cultural community and its interests, there is often, particularly in the cases of approving grant award recommendations, a conflict of interest with sometimes up to three of the Commissioners. Increasing the size of the Commission to seven will alleviate this concern, and will increase the opportunity for ownership of the growth of the community's cultural programs.

2C. Support the creative sector through training and other professional development opportunities.

The cultural planning process clarified that while many organizations and artists have similar issues and concerns, there is very little centralized discourse and few mechanisms to address these shared concerns collectively. In other words, most arts representatives end up reinventing the wheel to solve what they perceive as issues unique to themselves.

By coalescing around like issues, the cultural community can leverage greater interest and response in its shared needs and opportunities. If many organizations are interested in developing festivals, for example, to highlight their accomplishments, how much greater will the impact be if they work together on one major festival? A promising cultural pilot project has been the Arts Explosion, now in its second year of monthly, mostly free, arts events produced by individual local arts organizations and coordinated under the umbrella of the San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts.

2C.1 Sponsor opportunities for local arts organizations and artists to convene and share information

A variety of networking opportunities, both formal and informal, can foster information exchange, generate collaborations and leverage resources. Regular brown bag lunches for arts leaders, monthly social gatherings or quarterly forums on a specific topic are just a few of the ways to institute a greater sense of community.

2C.2 Develop a comprehensive resource directory

Imagine having a complete list of all of the spaces available for cultural activities in Ventura, including size, equipment, rental rates, dates and hours of

availability, and contact information. Or a directory of all the artists who teach classes in any given media. Providing centralized information on the creative sector, from equipment rentals to funding sources, from workshops to employment opportunities, would be a tremendous asset to the community. Such a directory would need to be developed in a collaborative manner and most likely produced electronically so that it could be updated on a regular basis.

2C.3 Develop mentoring programs for artists and organizations

The need for increased opportunities for professional development was raised repeatedly throughout the planning process. Participants felt that it could be addressed by working to promote broader awareness of existing resources as well as through the development of new programs targeting the cultural community. Possibilities include:

- The expansion of the City's technical assistance partnership with the Ventura County Arts Council;
- Artist mentorship opportunities (e.g., pairing master public artists with less experienced artists);
- Opportunities for local arts organizations to present master classes with visiting artists; and
- A regular program of peer critiques. (Artists use peer critiques to learn, to develop new artistic ideas and to foster greater understanding and connection in the artist community. Acknowledged master artists in the community could provide critiques on a periodic basis to artists who request this feedback.)

2C.4 Establish international artists-in-residence program

Developing one or more programs that will attract new artistic talent to Ventura on a regular basis will both foster creative exchanges and spread awareness of

Ventura as a cultural destination. One approach might be to partner with the Sister Cities organization to facilitate initial contacts.

2C.5 Support cultural educational facilities and programs

Recently, the opening of the Ventura campus of the Brooks Institute introduced many young videographers and photographers to Ventura. Encouraging additional high profile arts education institutions to locate in Ventura or to develop summer programs that are hosted in the city can expand this influx of new talent.

Policy 3.

Create broad-based public awareness of local and regional cultural offerings and amenities.

Steering committee members and workshop participants emphasized what they termed the disconnect between local audiences and Ventura’s now substantial cultural offerings. Issues that were identified anecdotally included a lack of awareness due in part to limited coverage in the local media and the lack of a centralized source of cultural information; and an overarching sense that many of Ventura’s residents regard the arts and culture as something intended for “somebody else.”

A key focus of the cultural plan is the desire to see increased participation across the entire spectrum of residents and visitors to the city. Planning participants emphasized the need to pay particular attention to programs and initiatives that target residents, stating that “marketing to tourists is easy, marketing to locals is hard.”

Increasing Public Awareness

‘How do I get the word out?’ Marketing and outreach are perennial needs of the art

A project of Americans for the Arts, ArtsMarketing.org is a comprehensive web portal that organizes practical marketing information.
(www.artsmarket.org)

community. Artists and organizations pour their souls into artistic production and all too often have little time and energy left for ensuring the presence of an audience. And ironically, in tough economic times, when reaching new audiences is even more critical, marketing resources are often the first item to be cut.

On a national level, cultural communities are turning to collective solutions: joint initiatives that leverage scarce resources and help build participation through cross-pollination. If a theater company offers the members of a local museum discounts on new subscriptions, both organizations are likely to attract new supporters.

Building New Audiences

Currently, as in many communities, cultural events in Ventura draw on a limited pool of highly committed participants. In many ways, the need to expand audiences mirrors the need to expand the pool of arts patrons; each effort will inevitably support the other. The policies on arts education and access⁶ will also have a long-term impact on audience expansion.



While marketing is critical to building participation in the arts, fundamental to any long-term increase is a mandate to build meaningful connections with audiences. Audience surveys developed as part of the Cultural Facilities Needs Assessment document a clear trend: the arts audience in Ventura is aging. This is a national trend, and not unique to Ventura. However, it underscores the urgency of working to create new connections to a much broader cross-section of the community. It is critical for our survival.

Gerald D. Yoshitomi, author of *New Fundamentals and Practice to Increase Cultural Participation and Develop Arts Audiences*, says that while the arts offer deeply meaningful and rewarding personal experiences, they are misperceived by many as elitist, unavailable or “not for me.” Yoshimoto counsels that audience development should specifically aim to correct these misperceptions and provide new participants with positive experiences. This type of effort requires advocacy that integrates event marketing with long-term strategies for audience building that address the underlying barriers to attendance.

“The sheer volume of travelers interested in arts and history, as well as their spending habits, their travel patterns, and demographics, leaves no doubt that history and culture continue to be a significant and growing part of the U.S. travel experience. This is the market to which the travel industry needs to pay close attention in the future.”

- William S. Norman,
President and CEO,
Travel Industry Association

Capitalizing on cultural tourism

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines cultural tourism as “*traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the*

⁶ See policies number Four and Five.

stories and people of the past and present. It includes irreplaceable historic, cultural, and natural resources.”

According to the Travel Industry Association of America, cultural and heritage tourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry in the United States. In a 2001 survey, 65

Photo: Robyn Walker



percent of Americans (or 93 million people) identified themselves as cultural tourists. 32 percent of visitors (30 million people) added one or more nights to their trips in order to visit cultural destinations. In addition, travelers who include cultural events spend more per day, on average, than other leisure travelers.

Due to the remarkable combination of historic charm, cultural assets and an oceanfront setting, Ventura has tremendous potential in terms of cultural and heritage tourism. In order to successfully capitalize on this potential the community needs to develop a unified vision of Ventura as a cultural destination, a comprehensive approach that consistently weaves the arts into tourism and other marketing materials rather than the development of singular events.

“We should focus on ‘macro-marketing’ – combining arts, environment, history, and architecture.”
- Planning Participant

POLICY 3: ACTIONS

3A. Conduct research on audiences for local cultural offerings.

While anecdotal evidence exists on audience make-up, there has only been one audience survey in Ventura, conducted by AMS for the SBFA as part of the Cultural Center Feasibility Study. The data from the survey provides a good starting point. In order to develop comprehensive audience development plans, local arts organizations will need access to detailed information on current arts participants. The research should be ongoing and be updated periodically (e.g., every three years).

3B. Develop a Cultural Marketing Task Force.

This group, which might evolve out of the Marketing Task Force assembled for the cultural plan, needs to meet regularly to provide a locus for comprehensive cultural marketing activities, including cultural tourism and collective marketing and outreach projects. The group needs to include representatives from the Visitors and Convention Bureau, the San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts, the City and the Chamber, along with a broad and diverse cross-section of artists, arts organizations, businesses and residents in order to ensure that projects creatively address existing barriers to building broader awareness and participation in the arts.

3C. Develop collective marketing opportunities.

Focus group participants as well as the Marketing Task Force emphasized the need for and benefits of working collectively to develop new ways of reaching beyond the standard arts participants and build new audiences. Collective efforts benefit the entire cultural ecosystem.

All boats rise with the tide.
- Focus group participant

3C. 1 *Develop an inclusive monthly calendar of cultural events*

The San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts and the City of Ventura have both produced electronic calendars of cultural events in Ventura; however, they do not reach broad segments of the population. A concerted effort needs to be made to develop a calendar that is comprehensive, inclusive, easy to use and widely accessed.

A successful example of this kind of collective approach is Artsopolis.com, originally established as a project of Arts Council Silicon Valley to meet its own community's need for promoting local arts and culture. This online promotional vehicle has proven so



Photo: Julie Sullivan

successful that they have established the Artsopolis Network (www.artsopolis.com) to provide licensees with the same opportunity to effectively promote the activities of their local organizations. The Artsopolis software allows arts service organizations, alliances, VCBs (visitors and convention bureaus), city and county agencies, and other nonprofit groups to take control of their own media and increase the visibility of the arts by managing their own content.

3C. 2 *Create a collective themed event*

Many communities have developed major cultural events around a shared theme. The *Tenderland Festival of Art, History, Music and Science* in Pasadena is a recent example, where over 30 organizations worked together to produce exhibitions and programs that support their organizational mission but also address a shared theme.

Another example is in Houston, Texas where every two years the world photography community gathers for *Fotofest*. During this month-long event, in addition to special exhibitions and colloquia sponsored by *Fotofest*, a majority of the local museums and galleries host photography exhibitions.

3D. Broaden outreach and marketing delivery systems.

Planning participants and the marketing task force came up with a number of recommendations for potential programs and initiatives to increase awareness of the arts and culture in Ventura. These included:

- Make greater use of new media (internet, etc.);
- Work with local and regional media outlets to develop increased coverage of the arts in Ventura, such as the *Los Angeles Times* and *Sunset* magazine;
- Develop a cultural speakers bureau;
- Work with *Ventura Life and Style* to develop a monthly insert on the arts and culture; and
- Expand the ArtWalks to include new components such as live demonstrations, additional activities on the days before or after the ArtWalk, performing arts version of the ArtWalk, etc.

3E. Promote Ventura as a cultural destination.

In a recent travel article, the *San Francisco Chronicle* touted Ventura as a destination, calling it the "best artsy beach town" and focusing on the ArtWalks. "What does a magnet for artists and surfers – with great beaches, hotels, restaurants, cafes, galleries, wine bars and weather – have to do to attract visitors? Ventura's civic leaders in 1994 decided ArtWalks."
- *San Francisco Chronicle Magazine*, July 18, 2004

Nationally, cultural tourism programs have proven to be catalysts for new audiences and new dollars, helping artists and arts organizations grow and flourish. Americans for the Arts, the national service organization for cultural agencies, found that 71% of all local arts agencies have active partnerships with convention and visitors bureaus. Many cities, including New Orleans and San Francisco, have created cultural tourism

marketing positions in their cities, specialists who develop innovative strategies using the arts to market their community.

3E.1 Develop a comprehensive cultural and heritage tourism initiative

In contrast with many of California’s other coastal cities, Ventura offers more than the beauty of its natural setting. It also provides a vibrant array of cultural activities in its historic downtown, beaches, and harbor. A comprehensive approach to cultural tourism will help broaden regional and national awareness of these riches and will assist local businesses and cultural groups by expanding their patron base. Placing the initial emphasis on existing tourist destinations (i.e., Ventura Harbor and the Downtown Cultural District) will enable the initiative to build upon its strengths and expand organically.

Aspects of such a program in Ventura might include: 1) a task force to craft and implement the initiative; 2) the development of support materials such as a map, directories of artists and cultural attractions, calendar, in-room hotel publication, and welcome baskets; and 3) the establishment of a hotel staff training program.

A first step in implementation would be to partner with existing publications that are currently distributed at the hotels and other venues to incorporate a section dedicated to Ventura’s cultural resources and activities.

5 Principles for Cultural Heritage Tourism Partnerships are key to the success of such an initiative. An analysis of successful models led the National Trust to identify other key approaches including:

- Collaborate
- Find the fit between the community and tourism
- Make sites and programs come alive
- Focus on authenticity and quality
- Preserve and protect resources
- National Trust for Historic Preservation

3E.2 Enhance signage and other information delivery systems in tourist destinations

a. Banner Programs

With a small amount of seed funding, the City of Ventura, in partnership with the Visitors and Convention Bureau, Harbor, and the Chamber of Commerce, initiated a banner program in 2001. In many communities, banners are an extremely effective way to build awareness of the presence of cultural activity and reach new audiences. They also enliven the visual environment.

Los Angeles, California, has an extensive and successful banner program that markets major cultural institutions on thoroughfares throughout the region. Ventura should expand its banner program beyond the Cultural District and the Harbor to encompass major boulevards such as Victoria Avenue and Seaward Avenue. Currently Ventura's ordinances preclude such a program: however, if it were possible for local arts organizations to display event-specific banners it would allow them to broadly market events and reach new audiences. In addition such a program would reinforce Ventura's identity as an arts destination. Sponsors could be solicited to finance such a program in exchange for appropriate recognition on the banners.

b. Signage

Many communities develop a way of indicating the presence of a cultural organization or venue through a banner, plaque or other visual signifier. Such a component could be designed by an artist as part of the Public Art Program.

c. Kiosks

Artist designed kiosks strategically located throughout the downtown cultural district as well as other neighborhoods would offer a low tech option for information sharing regarding all forms of cultural activities from small poetry readings to major openings.

3E.3 Support the Downtown Cultural District

The Downtown Cultural District has become the heart of Ventura's increasingly active cultural life. Cultural plan participants emphasized the need to build upon the synergies present in the downtown area, the combination of shopping, dining and a broad range of cultural options from rock concerts to historic landmarks. They expressed the desire to see increased programming and events that are targeted at local residents as well as out of town visitors.

The steadily increasing participation in cultural district offerings such as the ArtWalks and Arts Explosion is indicative of the demand for such activities. Key to their viability are partnerships between the City, downtown business owners and the cultural community. The events are designed to address multiple goals from increased traffic for area merchants and restaurants, to building new audiences for artists and arts organizations.

An additional factor in their success has been the willingness on the part of all participants to be patient and persevere while the audience builds. Although the ArtWalks now regularly draw over 10,000 attendees, their success is partially due to the fact that the program was established almost 15 years ago, in 1992.

For a number of years projects that take place in the Downtown Cultural District have been awarded additional points under the criteria for Ventura's cultural funding program. This needs to continue and additional mechanisms need to be put in place to foster cultural programming in the district, including both local and family programming, as well events that are more tourist-oriented.

Policy 4.
Enhance opportunities for lifelong learning in the arts.

The community as a whole places a high value on education, recognizing the importance of a skilled and informed citizenry and workforce to the future vitality of Ventura. This consensus is highlighted in the *Ventura Vision* as well as in other community planning documents. Arts education, whether integrated into the core curriculum, through after-school programs or through adult education opportunities, is a key contributor towards this community goal.

“The arts, perhaps more than any other subject, help students to understand themselves and others, whether they lived in the past or are living in the present. In addition they encourage individuals to sharpen their skills and abilities and to nurture their imagination and intellect.”

Former National Secretary of Education Rod Paige

Numerous studies have shown that the arts can increase students’ cognitive and social development. The arts enable students to build self-esteem and self-discipline, work cooperatively in groups and effectively express themselves. Further, the arts contribute to building a productive and forward-thinking workforce by teaching the skills and competencies required in an information-based economy.



By exposing us to new ideas and expressions, the arts help build appreciation and understanding of other cultures and can facilitate communication around difficult issues. Arts education is also key to increasing participation in the arts and culture and building new audiences. According to the National Endowment for the Arts⁷, early exposure to the

arts is the strongest single predictor of arts participation.

⁷ *Effects of Arts Education on Participation in the Arts*, National Endowment for the Arts Report, 1996

“Right now, teachers are desperate to have arts education – many of them pay personally to have arts in their own classrooms.”
- Planning Participant

The arts education field is comprised of three sectors: in-school, after-school and lifelong learning. Communities have found that by reinforcing the connections between all three sectors they can realize an increase in programming and participation in the arts

and culture at all levels. “Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley” provides an example of such a coordination effort (www.ci-sv.org).



POLICY 4: ACTIONS

4A. Establish an Arts Education Advocacy Group.

A coalition of artists, educators, parents and other concerned citizens is needed to advance the cause of arts education in Ventura on an ongoing basis. The issues are complex and cross numerous jurisdictional boundaries. The Arts Education Task Force has been very active throughout the cultural planning process and could form the nucleus of such a group. In order to be able to advocate effectively the group may eventually need to evolve into a structured organization. However, initial activities could be supported by an existing organization such as the City, the Ventura Education Partnership or the Ventura County Arts Council.

4B. Integrate arts education into the core curriculum in local schools, grades kindergarten through 12.

A decade of research has established the value and importance of arts education and its benefits to society as a whole. University of California, Los Angeles, researchers determined that students who were highly involved in arts instruction earned better grades and performed better on standardized tests. They also performed more community service, watched fewer hours of television, reported less boredom in school and were less likely to drop out of school. These findings were also true for students from the lowest socioeconomic quartiles of the 25,000 students surveyed, belying the assumption that socioeconomic status rather than arts engagement contributes to such gains in academic achievement and social involvement.⁸

⁸ *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic Achievement*, a research compendium of the Arts Education Partnership, a coalition of more than 100 national education, arts, philanthropic and government organizations.

4B.1 Complete an assessment of current arts education resources in Ventura

The Arts Education Task Force could undertake this as a first concrete step in creating greater access to these resources.

4B.2 Work with the Board of the Ventura Unified School District to adopt a resolution in support of the State Standards for Visual and Performing Arts

Recognizing the essential benefits of reintegrating the arts into the core curriculum, on January 10, 2001 the California State Board of Education adopted standards for the visual and performing arts. Despite the current state funding crisis, the Board actively worked to implement “comprehensive, sequential, standards-based arts education for every student.”⁹ Los Angeles County recently completed an arts education master plan¹⁰ with the goal of assisting all of the 88 school districts in Los Angeles County in making the arts a component of the core curriculum.

4B.3 Develop an arts education plan for Ventura

The California Alliance for Arts Education¹¹ has developed two programs specifically designed to assist local school districts and communities interested in improving and/or increasing arts education in their local schools: the Model Arts Program and the Community Arts Program. The purpose of the Model Arts Program Network is to help school districts to evaluate, improve, and expand visual and performing arts programs in California schools through a guided self-evaluation process, professional development seminars, conferences and a supportive network of colleagues. The Community Arts Education Project is designed to help parents, local schools and school districts to work together to determine the current status of arts education. It provides communities with

⁹ Details are available on the Board of Education website at www.cde.ca.gov/ci/vp/cf/

¹⁰ *The Arts Education Blueprint*, Los Angeles County Arts Commission, www.lacountyarts.org/artseducation.html

¹¹ Further information on these programs and resources is available at www.artsed411.org

accurate information about arts education, and enables parents to advocate for quality arts programs in their schools.

Ventura can build on these and other models. The plan will need to be formulated in an inclusive manner, making sure that all stakeholders are actively involved in its development, particularly teachers.

4C. Enhance existing after- and extra-school arts education options.

Ventura has a wealth of resources for lifelong learning in the arts, many of which are provided free or at relatively low cost. A majority of the local arts organizations offer talks and seminars to complement ongoing programming. In addition, classes are offered by a wide array of organizations from the City's Cultural Affairs Division to Focus on the Masters, as well as educational institutions such Ventura Community College, Brooks Institute and Cal State Channel Islands.

4C.1 Develop new sources of support

Explore ways to increase support for organizations that provide arts education programs in Ventura, perhaps by using public funds to leverage additional investment on the part of the private sector. For example, the City's Cultural Affairs Commission recently piloted a project in which it provides seed funding to the Ventura Education Partnership (VEP). The VEP will match those funds and redistribute them in the form of grants to support arts programming in local schools.

4C.2 Develop a comprehensive arts education resource directory

Los Angeles County recently developed *Arts for All*, a centralized source of information related to arts education, including artists, arts education programs,

facilities, professional development and funding opportunities. Developing a similar centralized resource for Ventura would create a substantial new asset for the community, increase employment opportunities for artists, and foster improved communication between arts education providers.

4C.3 Expand the City's arts education and youth facilities

Currently the City provides arts education programs primarily at the Barranca Vista and Westpark Community Centers. The Barranca Vista Center, which serves over 10,000 people annually, is outdated and requires renovation and/or expansion to better meet the needs of the community.

4C.4 Maximize the use of new technology for distance-learning opportunities

4D. Develop mentorship and other professional development opportunities for teachers and artists.

Compounding the problem of limited resources and support for arts education in the schools is the fact that many of the younger teachers in the California public schools were educated after the passage of Proposition 13, which effectively limited arts instruction in the schools. As such, they had limited or no exposure to arts education growing up. Facilitating access to professional development and other training opportunities will enhance arts education throughout Ventura.

Arts for All in Los Angeles currently provides professional development training programs for teachers and artists. Training is also available through the California Arts Project (TCAP) (<http://csmp.ucop.edu/tcap/>). TCAP's mission is to deepen teachers' knowledge of dance, music, theatre, and visual art, to enhance student success pre-kindergarten through post-secondary, and develop instructional strategies to support

"Teaching is a time honored means for artists to support themselves."
- Planning Participant

the Visual & Performing Arts Content Standards For California Public Schools, and the state VAPA Framework.

Policy 5.

Ensure comprehensive access to and involvement in cultural opportunities for all segments of the population.

The arts serve as an essential bridge across language and cultural differences and build connections both *within* and *between* communities. Enhancing access to and participation in the arts emerged as key goals of the planning process and were seen as directly complementary to the desire to broaden audiences and develop new cultural participants.

Participants in the Access and Cultural Equity Task Force articulated their overarching goal: “Everybody who lives in Ventura should be able to be able to tap into their creative potential without encountering any form of obstacle or prejudice.” This can only be accomplished through a long-term concerted effort on the part of established cultural organizations to reach out to populations which are disenfranchised and overlooked for all reasons, from income to race, age to gender, location to disabilities.

“People access culture in many ways, by going to museums, libraries and performances; through educational exchange; through print, radio and film and through the world wide web. No matter the system of distribution, policies that foster access to the cultural infrastructure are critical to a citizen’s creative potential. Well-crafted policies that lower barriers to access and to the creation of art and cultural information are crucial to the vitality of the cultural sector and fundamental to a democratic society.”

– Center for Arts and Culture: Access and Equity

The Task Force expressed the belief that the community as whole would benefit from the acknowledgment and advancement of diverse cultures. They, along with other planning participants, expressed a strong desire to foster increased awareness of Ventura’s distinctive



and diverse cultural heritages, to increase the availability of cultural activities in under-served neighborhoods, and to enhance the participation by Venturans of all cultural heritages in the arts community at all levels: from audiences to boards of directors.

Enhancing Access

Traditional barriers to participation in the arts include language, content, and cost, as well as transportation or other physical accessibility challenges. Each of these areas must be addressed in a systematic way and through a long-term commitment in order to ensure effective and meaningful changes. This includes policies, programs and the equitable allocation of resources.

In analyzing the 1992 Cultural Plan, the only area that had not been addressed in a significant manner was the one that dealt with increasing the diversity of participation in the arts and cultural activities in Ventura. Seniors, youth (ages 14 to 25), the Hispanic population, and mentally and physically disabled persons were all identified as having limited or lesser involvement in local cultural offerings. Reasons varied by population and event and included the range of barriers identified above. While each of these populations will require a targeted outreach effort, the larger goal of the cultural plan is to create broad understanding of the value of involving disparate populations in the delivery of arts programs.

Reaffirming the fundamental principles of the Final Declaration adopted by the World Conference on Cultural Policies in Mexico on 6 August 1982, the *Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies* states "that in its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs."

POLICY 5: ACTIONS

5A. Set a high priority for cultural equity in the implementation process.

Issues of cultural equity and access apply to each of the other policy areas of the cultural plan. Increasing the consumption of and participation in the arts by diverse populations will help add depth and breadth to Ventura's cultural community.

5A.1 Create an access and cultural equity advocacy group

As in the Arts Education policy area, the creation of an advocacy group is essential to the long-term goal of achieving widespread access and participation in the arts and culture in Ventura. There is no current group with this specific mandate. And while no one body can achieve this ambitious goal on its own, through incentives, model programs and collaborations, an advocacy group can provide the leadership necessary to realize this section of the plan.

The Cultural Equity Task Force, which has been extremely active in the cultural planning process, should participate in implementation. A potential format is for a Cultural Equity Committee to be established to serve under the auspices of the City of Ventura's Cultural Affairs Commission.

5A.2 Seek ongoing input and participation of underserved cultural groups in the implementation of the cultural plan

Nearly all of the established local arts organizations have an outreach program. One of the priorities of the Equity Committee should be to examine those outreach programs to determine their efficacy. Meaningful participation means much more than just making programs available to underserved populations. It

demands a long-term, systematic commitment to involving diverse populations as arts providers, consumers, leaders, and patrons.

5B. Promote the cultural and artistic expressions of Ventura’s under-represented cultural groups.

Specific emphasis should be placed upon the encouragement of diverse cultural programming both within and independent of established arts events and festivals in the City of Ventura. One way to reach out to underserved populations is to include ethnic programming in ongoing events (mariachis at the Street Fair, for example). However, there should also be a focus on the creation of new events that take place in culturally specific locales and/or include culturally specific programming.

5B.1 Establish diversity as criteria for certain grants through Cultural Funding Program

The Board of Directors’ make-up in particular should be included in the review criteria for the Cultural Funding Program. Anecdotal evidence shows that most patrons and board members in local arts groups are Caucasian; however, the population of Ventura is approximately 7 percent non-White, and 24 percent Hispanic. While most cultural organizations have made an effort to establish partnerships with minority groups, there is still limited participation on the part of Ventura’s ethnically diverse population in the arts. A formal process which encourages diverse groups to participate as board members should be established, including protocols for reaching minorities when there are vacancies on the Cultural Affairs Commission.

5B.2 Encourage the development of events that celebrate Ventura’s cultural heritage

The focus group discussion on access and cultural diversity revealed widespread interest in creating new culturally specific festivals, and re-energizing previous events, such as the Avenue Days. Planning participants expressed an interest in focusing on our unique local heritage: festivals centered on China Alley, the Tortilla Flats neighborhood, and the founding families like the Olivas and Ortegas.

5C. Increase the participation of all segments of the population in the cultural life of the community, from production to consumption.

The involvement of diverse populations will demand an extensive outreach and

“People go where they’re comfortable – so how can we make the arts in Ventura comfortable for all?”
- Planning Participant

marketing effort, as participation is limited in part by a lack of awareness of cultural opportunities. In addition, planning participants identified the need to be inclusive, to build support for and broaden the awareness of the full range of cultural options for all ages and segments of the population, including

“popular” art forms, like hip-hop music events, motorcycle culture, country music, etc.

5C.1 Pursue the development of neighborhood-specific cultural plans

One way to help ensure that all Ventura residents have increased access to the arts is to include a cultural section in all future specific plans developed by the City.

5C.2 Encourage cultural events at alternate venues and culturally specific gathering places

“Take the event to the people, don’t expect them to come to you.” Critical to new audience outreach is the targeting of places where people already congregate. Parks, churches, libraries and community centers can all serve as venues for cultural events. Another option is the establishment of a mobile arts workshop or exhibition program, a kind of ‘bookmobile’ for the arts, or “Artsmobile.”

5C.3 Establish ticket subsidy and distribution programs and facilitate transportation to cultural offerings for all populations

Cost and access were identified as two of the major barriers to participation in established cultural events and programs. Most organizations try to address these issues; they provide low-cost tickets to students and offer transportation options to senior care facilities. These measures, however, are only reaching a portion of the population and need to be expanded and marketed.

5C.4 Encourage bi-lingual programming and advertising for cultural events

Content and language was also cited as a deterrent to ethnic groups’ attendance. Again, efforts have been made to increase bilingual advertising. However, these efforts must be incorporated into a larger, systematic outreach effort to reap the desired benefits.

5C.5 Develop an internship/volunteer program targeting culturally diverse participants

5D. Develop new partnerships with culturally specific organizations.

The arts offer unique ways for groups to explore difficult issues and develop new means of dialogue. Pairing cultural providers with existing organizations and local

leaders who are in touch with specific populations' needs and interests will allow for the development of targeted programs and help develop new participants.

Policy 6.

Stabilize and expand funding and other resources that support Ventura’s cultural assets.

Richard Florida, a leading economist and author of the national best seller *The Rise of the Creative Class*, has focused attention on the creative sector. His work documents that cities with strong creative communities are more competitive economically. According to Dr. Florida, talent, technology and tolerance are the keys to growth in the new economy. Cities with a vibrant cultural life tend to attract and retain the creative individuals and businesses that contribute to a healthy local economy.

“Human creativity is the greatest economic resource.”

- Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*

Ventura’s consistent policy of investing in the arts has paid off. The arts have become an increasingly visible key partner in downtown revitalization. They have attracted business, residents, and visitors. They are a component of Ventura’s rising reputation. The arts are part of what makes Ventura a great place to enjoy life, work, and visit.

A summary of the budgetary growth of cultural organizations presenting performances, exhibits, and activities in the Downtown Cultural District

<u>ORGANIZATIONS</u>	<u>1994 BUDGET</u>	<u>2004 BUDGET</u>
Buenaventura Art Association	\$25,200	\$101,000
Kids' Arts	\$2,897	\$49,588
Plaza Players	\$43,053	\$0
Ventura Area Theatre Sports	\$5,935	\$44,409
Ventura County Master Chorale	\$16,550	\$89,760
Ventura County Museum of History and Art	\$406,000	\$787,000
Ventura Music Festival	\$4,102	\$539,800
Focus on the Masters	\$0	\$354,660
Rubicon Theatre Company	\$0	\$1,943,652
San Buenaventura Artists' Union	\$0	\$30,000
San Buenaventura Foundation for the Arts	\$0	\$121,239
TOTAL ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGETS:	\$499,635	\$4,061,108

The chart only includes organizations who present ALL or MOST of their programs in the Downtown Cultural District. The summary does not include for-profit ventures like galleries or music clubs, which have also increased significantly.

In order to “reach the next stage” and expand there is a need for consistent funding, and a diversification of sources of support.

Economic Impact of the Arts

Americans for the Arts, a national arts service organization based in Washington DC, conducted a national study on the economic impact of the non-profit arts sector from 2000 to 2002. Key findings demonstrated that the non-profit arts are a \$134 billion industry in the United States, and support nearly five million full-time jobs and billions in household income and government revenue.

“Everything is intertwined. More marketing of the arts means more funding for the arts. More funding means more infrastructure. These disparate elements all go together to make a stronger whole.”
- Planning Participant

In 2004, AMS Planning and Research conducted a similar study on economic impact of the arts in Ventura. The surveys showed that artists and arts organizations in Ventura had expenditures totaling \$10.4 million in fiscal year 2003. During the same time, 422,150 local audience members spent \$8.2 million on arts events and associated items (including an average of \$19.35 per person on secondary spending, at restaurants, hotels, etc.). This amounted to total arts spending in fiscal year 2003 of \$18.6 million in the community, creating 645 jobs, \$13 million in household income, and \$768,000 in local government revenues.



Photo Courtesy of
Focus on the Masters

The Dynamics of Arts Funding

Arts organizations and, to a certain extent, artists derive their income in three ways: earned income (ticket sales, memberships, sales), public sector grants and subsidies, and contributed income (individual, corporate and foundation gifts). While there is no typical

formula for a financially “healthy” arts organization, national data suggests the following ranges of funding from each of these sources in a mature and balanced funding environment:

Earned income	40 – 60%
Public sector grants and subsidies	5 – 10%
Contributed income (individual, corporate, foundation)	30 – 50%

In addition to funding needs, the non-profit arts sector relies heavily on volunteers and in-kind contributions to function. For example, the first Ventura Music Festival, presented in 1995, had a cash budget of \$62,000. The in-kind budget (the value of donated goods and services) far exceeded this amount, bringing the total budget to approximately \$85,000. Without in-kind support, the Festival could never have happened.

In Ventura, figures from the 2004 Cultural Funding Program show that the mix of funding sources in 2003 was as follows:

- 52% Earned income
- 16% Grants (with support from the City representing approximately 6%)
- 21% Contributed income (including 3% in-kind)



Communities are also looking at ways of leveraging cultural funding by providing centralized support services. Arts organizations and artists usually work singly to access or provide the resources and services that they each require, such as insurance, marketing, ticketing and audience data. A centralized entity that provides these administrative services can assist organizations and artists by freeing valuable resources for their most vital product: artistic growth.

Corporate Arts Support

Some of America’s largest corporations are this era’s Medicis, supporting the arts for a host of reasons ranging from building a better community to supporting innovation. Ventura is fortunate to have Affinity Bank as a prime example of corporate leadership in the arts. There

is a need to develop broader understanding of the value of the arts and culture among Ventura’s business community.

Municipal Arts Support

The case for public support of the arts has been widely debated in the United States. Why, some ask, should the citizens as a whole support the arts when only a few people actually appreciate them? Why can’t they just pay for the arts themselves? There are a number of answers to these questions. The first is: individual arts patrons *do* pay themselves, and it’s still not enough (referencing the chart above, private contributions and ticket fees only fund 52% of local arts organizations’ budgets).

But perhaps more importantly, public support of the arts reaches beyond individual cultural interests, and supports the very foundation of our community. Public support of the arts often focuses on supporting events that reach children or underserved persons – that sector of the population that truly can’t afford to pay for the arts themselves. Public funding also helps create opportunities for citizens of diverse backgrounds to get together, and thus builds “social capital,” which in turn builds our culture.

Too often the term culture only evokes what people think of as the ‘high arts’. Our culture is so much more than the traditional pillars of the arts: museums, the symphonies, the opera.

Photo Courtesy of Ventura County Museum of History & Art



They, combined with a plethora of individual expressions that are ethnic, familial, or political, proffer a banquet where all are welcome. Our culture does not just *entertain* us: it *defines* us. A rich cultural life helps us understand each other and ourselves. The arts can give voice to thoughts and feelings for which there are no words, and can bridge seemingly endless chasms. Without a cultural

core, we are less of ourselves.

POLICY 6: ACTIONS

6A. Secure a dedicated public funding stream for the arts.

Recognizing the importance of securing a dedicated funding source for the arts, many municipalities across the nation have designated public revenue streams to support their arts communities. Different funding streams can and should have distinct emphases: hotel taxes, for example, should support cultural programs that will contribute to cultural tourism efforts, while property taxes should support broad-based public access to the arts, as all citizens will contribute to them.

The *Transient Occupancy Tax* (TOT) is the most common dedicated funding source for the arts. There is a direct correlation between a thriving arts “scene” and increased tourism. In San Francisco, the TOT, which is currently at 14 percent, is allocated to seven recipients, including the General Fund (which receives 53.3 percent of the total). The arts allocation is 9.1 percent, and is directed to Grants for the Arts (GFTA), which funds the entire grants program, and supports cultural tourism initiatives. In fiscal year 2002/2003, GFTA ‘s TOT allocation was \$15.5 million.

“[Our] foremost goal is to be a stable, dependable base of support for organizations that continue to meet the funding criteria... contribute meaningfully to the presentation and enhancement of existing art forms while assuring the ability of others to experiment, to dare, and to find new as yet untested ways of adding to our cultural life.”

-San Francisco, GFTA grant guidelines

A *district assessment* fee may be an appropriate funding source for the Downtown Ventura Cultural District. Fees may be levied on properties, as there is a nexus between the value of the property and the cultural life of Downtown. Funds may also be accrued through an *entertainment tax*: an additional percentage added on to specific items like movie tickets or video rentals. Broward County, Florida has a tax on video rentals and music purchases that generated \$500,000 for the arts last year. Funding for a cultural district can also be accomplished by allocating a portion of

parking revenues in that district (this may be explored when and if Ventura institutes a parking meter or paid parking program in the Downtown).

Earmarked *sales tax* is another avenue. Denver, Colorado, is known for its innovative “Scientific and Cultural Facilities District,” which levies one-tenth of one percent sales tax over the seven counties of Metropolitan Denver. The proceeds are used to support anchor institutions including the Denver Zoo, the Denver Art Museum, and the Museum of Nature and Science.

St. Louis, Missouri, dedicates a portion of city and county *property taxes* to support cultural institutions including the Art Museum, Science Center, and the Botanical Gardens. Both sales and property taxes are appropriate avenues for funding local and regional major institutions.

6B: Establish a resource development entity.

Changing times engender adaptive solutions. An era marked by economic turmoil and increasing demands on scarce public resources requires a new approach to funding the arts. The Resource Task Force identified the need for a resource development entity, one that would combine the stability and broad participation of the public sector with the entrepreneurial spirit and flexibility of the private sector. This entity would partner with the City of Ventura on the implementation of the community’s vision for the arts and culture. Its primary tasks would be advocacy and resource development, including not only funding, but also leadership and other resources that are critical to the stability and growth of local arts organizations and artists.

Such entities exist in other communities, and are structured to fit the community’s unique needs. Various organizational structures may fit Ventura, including an independent non-profit, a public benefit corporation, a community development organization, or a non-profit arm of the City of Ventura’s Cultural Affairs Commission.

If a dedicated funding source for the arts is established in Ventura, a fixed percentage of it should be devoted annually to the creation of an endowment that would be managed by this entity. The endowment would also be in a position to attract private donors, particularly in regards to estate gifts, thus further ensuring the stability of Ventura's cultural community.

6C: Examine the relation between the Cultural Affairs Division and the Visitors and Convention Bureau

California's 'New Art City' could occupy a unique niche in terms of attracting visitors to our community. Events such as the Artwalks, Ventura Studio Artists Tour and the Music Festival as well as venues such as the Rubicon Theatre already draw attention in the travel section, along with our beaches and historic downtown core. An enhanced partnership between the City's Cultural Affairs Division and the VCB should be explored as a way of maximizing this potential. This should be tied to an exploration of an increase in the TOT as a potential source of support for enhancing the city's cultural offerings.

IMPLEMENTATION

This is a community cultural plan. Implementing the vision articulated in this plan, shaping the vibrant reality of California's New Art City, will require the concerted efforts of the entire community over a number of years. It is not the work of a single entity, but rather a shared goal that many different players will play a major role in realizing. Implementation should be approached flexibly, adapting to new opportunities and other changed circumstances.

The four task forces originally established by the Steering Committee to assist in the development of the plan exemplify the importance of ongoing community participation. Each has evolved in a different way to continue to explore its original charge. The Arts Education Task Force has partnered with the Ventura Education Partnership to work more directly with the Ventura Unified School District and is already tackling certain of the plan's recommendations. The Cultural Affairs Commission is exploring the establishment of two sub-committees; one for Marketing and Cultural Tourism and the other for Cultural Equity. And there are discussions within the cultural community of how best to structure an organization or partnership that can advocate for the value and importance of the arts in Ventura.

CULTURAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION: WHAT, WHO, AND WHEN

SHORT-TERM (Current to 2 years)

Key	Initiative	Lead Implementer	Associated Agencies
1A.1 – Built Environment	Promote high-quality, innovative design in public and private projects	Community Development	CAD, City Commissions
1B.2 – Built Environment	Revise the Historic Preservation ordinance	HPC	CAD
1B.3 – Built Environment	Provide funding for support of City owned historic resources	CAD	HPC; SBC
1B.4 – Built Environment	Promote incentives for private preservation of historic structures	HPC	CAD; SBC
1B.5 – Built Environment	Engage residents in preservation of Ventura’s diverse neighborhoods	Community Development	HPC; CAD; Community councils
2A.1 – Cultural Infrastructure	Facilitate the development of a Downtown Cultural Facility	SBFA	CAD
2A.2 – Cultural Infrastructure	Support artist retention through creation of affordable artist live/work facilities	CAD	Artspace; Economic Development Division
2B.1 – Cultural Infrastructure	Create a method of recognizing and celebrating leadership in the arts	CAD	Chamber of Commerce; Community Councils
2B.4 – Cultural Infrastructure	Increase the size of the Cultural Affairs Commission	City Council	CAC
2C.1 – Cultural Infrastructure	Sponsor opportunities for arts organizations and artists to convene	CAD	Local arts organizations; business community
3B. – Public Awareness	Develop a Cultural Marketing Task Force	CAC	VCB; Chamber; SBFA; arts organizations; artists
3C.1 – Cultural Infrastructure	Develop an inclusive monthly calendar of cultural events	CAD	VCB; SBFA
3D. – Public Awareness	Broaden outreach and marketing delivery systems	VCB	SBFA; arts organizations; artists; CAD
3E.3 – Public Awareness	Expand programming in the Downtown Cultural District	CAC	Local arts organizations; SBFA
4A. – Arts Education	Establish an arts education advocacy group	CAC	VUSD; local arts organizations; artists
4B.1 – Arts Education	Complete an assessment of current arts education resources in Ventura	Arts Education Task Force	VUSD
5A.1 – Cultural Access	Create an access and cultural equity advocacy group	CAC	
5B.1 – Cultural Access	Establish diversity as criteria for certain grants in Cultural Funding Program	CAC	
5C.3 – Cultural Access	Encourage bi-lingual programming and advertising for cultural events	Cultural Equity Group	Local arts organizations
6A. – Resources	Secure a dedicated public funding stream for the arts	Political Action Committee	Local arts leaders

MEDIUM-TERM (2 to 5 years)

Key	Initiative	Lead Implementer	Associated Agencies
1A.2 – Built Environment	Establish a private development fee for the arts	Community Development	CAD; local developers and builders
1B.1 – Built Environment	Foster events that promote pride and understanding of heritage and history	CAD	Community Councils; VCB; organizations
2B.2 – Cultural Infrastructure	Foster an active and diverse pool of arts leaders and board members	Local arts organizations	CAC; VCAC; Chamber; VCCF
2B.3 – Cultural Infrastructure	Develop a ‘Business Leaders for the Arts’ program	CAD	Chamber; arts organizations; businesses
2C.2 – Cultural Infrastructure	Develop a comprehensive resource directory	CAD	SBFA; arts organizations
2C.3 – Cultural Infrastructure	Develop mentoring programs for artists and organizations	CAD	VCAC; SBFA; arts organizations; artists
3A – Public Awareness	Conduct research on audiences for local cultural offerings	VCB	CAD
3E.1 – Public Awareness	Develop a comprehensive cultural and heritage tourism initiative	VCB	CAD; Chamber; artists; arts organizations
3E.2 – Public Awareness	Enhance signage and other information delivery systems in tourist destinations	CAD	VCB; Harbor; Chamber of Commerce
4B.2 – Arts Education	Work to adopt a resolution in support of VAPA State Standards	Arts Education Task Force	VUSD; CAD
4B.3 – Arts Education	Develop arts education plan for Ventura	Arts Education Task Force	VUSD; CAD; arts organizations; artists
4C.1 – Arts Education	Develop new sources of support for arts education programs	Arts Education Task Force	VUSD; CAD
4C.3 – Arts Education	Expand the City’s arts education and youth facilities	CAC	CAD; artists
5A.2 – Cultural Access	Seek ongoing input and participation of underserved cultural groups	Cultural Equity Group	CAC; CAD; local arts organizations
5B.2 – Cultural Access	Encourage events that celebrate Ventura’s cultural heritage	CAC	Community Councils; HPC; arts organizations
5C.1 – Cultural Access	Encourage events at alternate venues and culturally specific gathering places	CAC	Community Councils; artists; arts orgs
5C.2 – Cultural Access	Establish ticket subsidy and transportation programs	Cultural Equity Group	CAC; arts organizations
5C.4 – Cultural Access	Develop an internship/volunteer program for diverse participants	Cultural Equity Group	CAC; CAD; Local arts organizations; artists
5D – Cultural Access	Develop new partnerships with culturally specific organizations	Cultural Equity Group	CAC; CAD; Local arts organizations
6B – Resources	Establish a resource development entity	CAC	VCCF; Local arts organizations

LONG-TERM (5 to 10 years)

Key	Initiative	Lead Implementer	Associated Agencies
1A.3 – Built Environment	Enhance awareness of Ventura’s cultural vitality from the freeways	PAC	Community Councils
2C.4 – Cultural Infrastructure	Establish international artists-in-residence program	CAC	Business community; local arts organizations
2C.5 – Cultural Infrastructure	Support cultural educational facilities and programs	CAC	Local arts organizations
3C.2 – Public Awareness	Create a collective themed event	CAD	Local arts organizations; artists
4C.2 – Arts Education	Develop a comprehensive arts education resource directory	Arts Education Task Force	VUSD; CAD
4C.4 – Arts Education	Maximize the use of new technology for distance-learning	CAC	CAPS
4D – Arts Education	Develop mentorship opportunities for teachers/artists	Arts Education Task Force	VUSD; local arts organizations

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Consultants

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Joshua Shekhtir
Denise Sindelar
Howard Smith
Midge Stark
Michael Tine
Don Ulrich
Wallace Valentine
Christy Weir
Travis Whitlock
Mary Z. Wilson
Stacy A. Wright
Daryl Yankee
Ann Zacher
Michael Zelcer