

San José
Creative Entrepreneur Project
January 2008 — February 2009

Final Report and Recommendations

Executive Summary

Submitted by

Center for Cultural Innovation

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March 2009

I. Project Background and Purpose

Visionary civic and business leaders in the Silicon Valley have long championed the need to attract and sustain a diverse talent pool of artists - “creative entrepreneurs” who work in both the commercial and nonprofit sectors and represent a wide range of talents as musicians, architects, dancers, animators, painters, writers, web and graphic designers, filmmakers, photographers, DJs, craft artists and more. These leaders understand that there is a direct connection between business innovation and creative entrepreneurs, and that other artistic dividends will result to enhance the built environment, civic engagement, and appeal of a city and region as a place to live, work and play.

While the City of San José has actively provided support for the arts since the 1970s, its principal focus has been on the development of arts organizations rather than on opportunities for individual artists. Is there a role OCA could play to make San José a more artist-friendly city to both enrich its cultural vitality and advance its creative economy? This became the central question behind the creation of the San José Creative Entrepreneur Project (CEP), established as a joint initiative of the San José Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) and the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI).

Over a one-year period the CEP initiative proposed five program elements for implementation:

- 1) Forming a CEP Steering Committee;
- 2) Conducting a San José Artist Survey and Needs Assessment;
- 3) Organizing an Artists’ Town Hall Convening;
- 4) Presenting a pilot entrepreneurial Training Workshop for Artists; and
- 5) Developing a pilot Encouragement Grants Program for Artists.

Based on the results of these program activities the CEP initiative would also produce a set of recommendations on strategic pathways, both short-term and long-term, that could help San José become a more “artist-friendly” city where artists could build and sustain significant parts of their careers.

II. Taking Action: Future Directions and Next Steps

Although the funding environment has tightened due to the economic downturn, opportunities still exist for taking action on promising ideas generated from CEP research and program activities. Six recommendations have been identified as activities that could be pursued immediately through the leadership of the City of San José and OCA, working with available partners and resources, to address some of the most pressing needs of area artists and creative entrepreneurs.

- **Recommendation #1: Create new or expanded web-based resources for San José artists.**

Discussion: Time and time again, the need for more web-based information, networking exchange and resources for artists was raised. One high-end example of a website specifically designed to gather and promote artists' resources was the Chicago Artists Resource/CAR website (www.chicagoartistsresource.org), a project of the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs. Whether initiated modestly as links or postings on the OCA website, or developed as a completely new website, a similar resource for San José artists might include: a) artist-to-artist information sharing and social networking (see "Facebook" example at www.facebook.com); b) listings of activities/events to connect artists to audiences (see Artsopolis example at www.artsopolis.com); c) a structure that allows San José artists to lead/link (see examples of artist-run blogs, event listings and advocacy postings at www.phantomgalleries.com, and www.artshiftsanjose.com); d) information on artist space available (see ArtistLink project based in Boston at www.artistlink.org); and e) links to national database information on subjects such as grant funding (see www.nyfasource.org created by New York Foundation for the Arts) and health insurance for artists (see www.ahirc.org created by The Actors Fund).

- **Recommendation #2: Continue to convene artists at a Town Hall or in conjunction with larger arts community events.**

Discussion: While using web-based technology provides extensive reach and makes economic sense, many participants in the San José Artists' Town Hall urged the continuation of convenings for artists as a way to promote community-building, connection to resources and information exchange, the potential for group advocacy, and general excitement and enthusiasm for creative entrepreneurs in San José. These convenings would not have to be expensive or exclusive, and could be programmed as part of larger arts community events.

- **Recommendation #3: Continue to offer training to artists through CCI’s *Business of Art*, or other knowledge-building programs offered through arts service organizations or the City’s Public Art or Workforce Development programs.**

Discussion: Based on research findings, community feedback and the results of the pilot Business of Art training program, it seems clear that continued training and professional development is needed by San José artists to ensure their economic viability and sustainability. Such programming could be provided through a number of existing organizations and/or City agency efforts aimed at artists through the Public Art program or as workforce development training sponsored by Work2Future.

- **Recommendation #4: Investigate the creation of, or contributions to, a “Creative Capacity Fund” to support artist fellowships, provide professional development scholarships, and/or technical assistance programs for artists in San José.**

Discussion: The cost of training and professional development activities is often the biggest barrier to artists’ participating in such programs. In San Francisco, the Arts Commission’s Cultural Equity Grants program and Grants for the Arts, in partnership with CCI, have joined together to create a new Creative Capacity Fund to support scholarship reimbursements for artists and arts administrators who are grantees, and develop special resource publications and technical assistance programs that will target key arts constituencies and needs. We believe this model serves as an example of a new, but modest, funding program that could be launched by OCA in partnership with other funders and donors in the South Bay.

- **Recommendation #5: Investigate a wide range of public/private artists’ space initiatives that would identify and promote many types of available space for live, work, presentation and commercial activity.**

Discussion: Space was identified many times as a need for San José artists, in the Artists’ Resource and Space Study, and other discussions. During the current economic downturn, creating mechanisms to link artists to a wide range of spaces that accommodate their housing and work studio needs, and support the presentation and/or sale of their work to the public, would be especially helpful. The usable inventory of artists’ spaces would include commercial space (underutilized buildings, storefronts, commercial galleries, studio/design spaces, music clubs, theaters, display space in existing businesses, etc.), nonprofit space (existing arts organizations, churches/synagogues/mosques), and public spaces (plazas, parks, libraries, schools, the airport, sidewalks, etc.).

The City, working with business owners, managers and potential developers, could jointly solve problems, and reduce barriers to artists, caused by zoning, insurance, the process of project approval, and funding. OCA could also work with other groups in the Office of Economic Development, Housing Department and the Redevelopment Agency to identify artist housing and workspace building projects and propose bridge financing for these from existing sources, including stimulus funds.

- **Recommendation #6: Explore the creation of an “Innovation Institute” as an arts education initiative that is geared towards business executives to help catalyze creativity and innovation in San José.**

Discussion: CEP has emphasized the relationship between Silicon Valley innovation, businesses, workforce development, and artists’ creative and employment needs, and one way that this nexus might be strengthened is through the creation of a formalized “Innovation Institute” in San José. A promising model exists at the McColl Center for Visual Art in Charlotte, North Carolina, whose Innovation Institute provides 12-weeks of hands-on, experiential training taught by renowned professional artists/innovators, supported by a professional development coach and organizational development consultant. The participants in the McColl program include a mix of corporate executives, government and nonprofit leaders and entrepreneurs with 10+ years of experience, and testimonials have been offered giving high praise to the program, and results. While this example may reflect a longer-term idea, finding ways to link artistic talent and approaches to business success and innovation is a “win-win” strategy for both artists and the economy that truly positions San José as the capital of Silicon Valley.

III. Overview of CEP Program Accomplishments

The goal of the *Creative Entrepreneur Project* was to explore improving the opportunity landscape for individual artists in San José by conducting a baseline needs assessment, providing pilot training programs, financial resources and convening opportunities, and creating a Steering Committee to support immediate and long-term outcomes. A more detailed description of these activities, along with Appendices, is provided in the full version of the CEP Final Report and Recommendations, available from the San José Office of Cultural Affairs. An overview of year-one CEP activities and accomplishments follows:

CEP Steering Committee

A community advisory group comprising key individuals from government, high tech enterprises, education, philanthropy and the arts was established as a key element to both guide and strengthen the CEP initiative. A cross-sector approach identified fifteen individuals who served on the CEP Steering Committee during the pilot year, including co-chairs Kim Walesh, Chief Strategist for the City of San José, Office of Economic Development and Kerry Adams Hapner, incoming Director of the San José Office of Cultural Affairs. The Steering Committee met a total of four times in 2008, providing feedback on the artists' survey tool, supporting survey outreach efforts, interpreting the results of the Artists' Town Hall meeting, and convening as a working group to shape a Menu of Program and Policy Options providing future ideas and suggestions for consideration by OCA and the City, going forward. The continuation of some type of CEP advisory group might be beneficial in the future, both to ensure program continuity and to help the City identify strategic opportunities and new programs and policies that will make San José a premier live/work destination for artists everywhere.

We deeply appreciate the time and effort given by members of the CEP Steering Committee, and key OCA staff members, whose names are listed at the end of this report.

San José Artists' Resource and Space Study

CCI commissioned noted research economist Ann Markusen, Professor and Director of the Project on Regional and Industrial Economics, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, to develop and conduct a survey of San José artists to determine *who* San José's artists and creative entrepreneurs are, *how* they are making their work and livelihoods as artists, and *what* gaps exist as unmet needs.

Professor Markusen, with associates Anne Gadwa and Pat Shifferd, conducted the survey of San José artists for CCI and the City of San José in a collaborative process that began in January 2008 and concluded in September 2008 with publication of the *San José Creative Entrepreneur Project: Artists' Resource and Space Study*. The complete study, which includes an Executive Summary, is attached to the full report and is also available online at www.sanjoseculture.org.

These are some of the highlights of the study process and findings:

- The study was designed as a web-based survey intended to capture the broadest possible definition of artists working in all disciplines and career stages across the visual, performing, film, media, and literary arts, including artists who were working commercially as animators, web designers, architects and rock musicians, as well as avocationally as participants in the so-called “informal arts” sector.
- The survey was conducted online between April 21 – June 17, 2008 supported by extensive outreach efforts including eblasts to the combined email lists from San José arts organizations, OCA, CEP Steering Committee members and CCI, newspaper advertising in the San José Metro, and printed postcards distributed at local arts venues and cultural events around San José.
- Data were analyzed from 642 artists responding with completed surveys, out of a total of 740 responses from: 46% visual artists, 15% musicians, 13% performing artists (actors/directors, dancers, performance artists), 10% media artists, 6% designers and architects, 3% writers, and 7% “other.” The researchers reported that the survey sample size of responding artists was adequate and that the demographics of the survey respondents matched fairly closely with 2000 San José metro Census estimates, although younger, Latino and male artists were somewhat underrepresented.
- Among the key findings:
 - > San José artists are currently quite dispersed across the region by residence and workplace, with a relatively prominent downtown cultural core complemented by a decentralized mosaic of cultural spaces serving diverse residential communities that bring artist face-to-face with their audiences, patrons, and future artists.
 - > 47% of responding artists state that their San José area housing is not affordable – a startling two-thirds are paying more than 30% of their income in total mortgage or rental costs.
 - > San José area artists report heavily subsidizing their own artwork – 63% are not able to cover their creative work costs (materials, studio space, etc.) from their artwork income, and 85% do not make a living from their artwork.
 - > 42% of responding artists confirm inadequate access to specialized tools and workspace needed to create, refine and produce their work.
 - > Strong majorities of San José area artists want to be entrepreneurs. They seek training, resources and space that will enable them to improve their art and make a living from it.
 - > San José artists would prefer to rely on market income rather than grants, but do express frustration with their access to and knowledge of grant-getting opportunities.
 - > Many artists would like further training in their current art form and in using new technologies for making and marketing art. Oft-cited barriers to training include cost, lack of information, scheduling problems, and lack of time, in that order.

San José Artists' Town Hall

On Saturday, September 13, 2008, CEP hosted the *San José Artists' Town Hall: A Convening of Silicon Valley Creative Entrepreneurs* at San José City Hall. Over 200 people, the vast majority of whom were individual artists, attended this event scheduled from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Featured speakers included Richard Chuang, co-founder of PDI/Dreamworks and current CEO of PIC2, San José Mayor Chuck Reed, and a presentation of key findings from the *San José Artists' Resource and Space Study* by Professor Ann Markusen which was followed by a Questions & Answers session with the audience.

Artist attendees later reconvened for a series of facilitated roundtable discussions focusing on eight core issues identified by the survey, plus one additional table for discussion about the survey itself. A resource room of organizations serving artists in the Silicon Valley Area was also organized to enable artist participants to meet staff from service organizations and learn more about resources already available to them.

Notes taken at the Artists' Town Hall meeting and the findings from the San José Artists' Resource and Space Study provided the source material to create a "Menu of Program and Policy Options" outlining a wide variety of programs and activities that could improve the opportunity landscape for artists in San José. The CEP Steering Committee later convened as a working group to consider these opportunities. Their input, and additional conversations with the City led to the final seven recommendations presented in this Executive Summary.

***Business of Art* – Training Workshops and Encouragement Grants**

A seven-week *Business of Art* entrepreneurial training program for artists was presented in San José as part of the CEP initiative. The need for artists' training was supported in the findings of the CEP's San José Artists' Resource and Space Study, and tracks with other national research as one of the major capacity-building needs of artists.

A total of 42 artists registered for the *Business of Art* pilot program in San José and of these, 83% were visual artists. The normal registration fee of \$210 per person for this training was fully subsidized for 34 eligible artists who lived or worked in San José; an additional eight artists who lived or worked in other locations in the region received a 50% scholarship.

Upon completion of the San José *Business of Art* workshop series, each graduate was eligible to apply for a CEP Encouragement Grant of up to \$1,000 to take the next concrete steps in their professional development. Grants were made for a range of activities, including website design, documenting work, travel to conferences, and meetings with career coaches. A number of artists from the CEP *Business of Art* continued to meet and have formed an ongoing coalition of Silicon Valley artists. The group developed a website, www.svartists.org, which features each of their work and posts upcoming events developed by the group. One of the first events developed by this new Silicon Valley artist coalition was a group show titled "Momentum" at Art Object Gallery in San José, which ran from February 4-28, 2009.

IV. Acknowledgements

On behalf of the Center for Cultural Innovation, it has been our pleasure to serve as a partner and facilitator for the San José Creative Entrepreneur Project. We believe that the need for more artists' support and encouragement has been well documented in this year-one report, and that concrete plans and activities to advance the potential of artists and creative entrepreneurs in San José – even during challenging economic times – are within reach and should be undertaken.

Our thanks again to the staff of the San José Office of Cultural Affairs, members of the CEP Steering Committee, Professor Ann Markusen and associates Anne Gadwa and Pat Shifferd, the many arts organizations across San José that assisted us with promoting the Artists' Resource and Space Study and the Artists' Town Hall, CCI staff members Nancy Hytone Leb, Director of Training, and Lauren Bailey, Director of Operations and Member Services, who supported the CEP training and convening components, consultants Marcy Hinand Cady and Nicole McGovern of Helicon Collaborative, web and graphics designers Peter Walberg and Koji Takei, and Emily Sevier, CCI's Director of Bay Area Initiatives who served in the important role as CEP's program coordinator. And last but not least, our thanks to all of the artists, creative entrepreneurs and arts organizations who so enthusiastically participated in all aspects of the program. The Creative Entrepreneur Project truly has been the work of many.



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