

ARTS 365

Building and Strengthening a Resilient
Silicon Valley Arts Community
365 Days a Year

Arts Council Silicon Valley
Strategic Plan
June 2006 – July 2009



Executive Summary and Goals

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Twenty-five years ago a group of strategic partners, in what wouldn't be known as "Silicon Valley" for another 15 years, came together to form a new kind of arts organization for Santa Clara County. The partners were disparate – the county board of supervisors, artists, arts administrators and advocates, passionate community members, and the State of California -- and had never worked all together before. Yet they all shared a vision for a strong, exciting, creative, cultural arts presence in their county.

In 2006-07 the Arts Council will celebrate its 25th anniversary. As detailed in the pages of this plan, the Arts Council will continue in its historic tradition of bringing together diverse members and elements of our community to work for the collective good by ensuring a fertile environment where the arts and cultural expression of Silicon Valley can grow and flourish.

Changing Landscape

Four years ago, Arts Council Silicon Valley's (ACSV) last strategic plan called for the Arts Council to step into a position of leadership of the arts in Silicon Valley; ACSV set out to become the "go to" organization and leading spokesperson for the arts in Silicon Valley.

Conversations with a number of key individuals and a variety of focus groups during the planning process told us that ACSV has had great success in doing what it set out to do in 2002. The Arts Council is now seen as a leader in the arts community, capable of opening doors to power brokers in government and business, as well as making the case for the importance of the arts, and is "at the table" whenever a voice is needed. Visibility of the arts community has been greatly enhanced, thanks in large part to the Arts Council's efforts.

Over the past few years, the arts organizations in Santa Clara County have withstood major city and state funding cuts, the fallout from the dot com bust, leadership changes within the arts community, and major competition for dollars and audience members, to name a few.

Some of the specific changes and challenges for the arts community in Silicon Valley and Arts Council which have helped shape the direction of this plan are as follows:

- The significantly scaled-back California Arts Council has resulted in an annual loss of approximately \$1.6 million to Santa Clara County arts groups;
- Change in ownership of the San Jose Mercury News has impacted its corporate philanthropy for the arts along with donated advertising space and the potential loss of nonprofit advertising rates;
- Leadership changes have occurred in major area arts organizations: long tenured leaders have left, leaving organizations in various stages of transition. Many arts groups in the community are struggling with this leadership gap;
- The two community foundations are merging operations and the outcome of the new foundation's funding of the arts is unknown;

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- Accumulated debt and significant financial deficits have threatened to close two major San Jose arts and cultural organizations;
- Other City of San Jose arts support programs appear inadequate to meet the needs of the growing San Jose arts community;
- Calpine Corporation, previously a very strong corporate arts supporter the declared bankruptcy which will leave a large funding gap;
- The possible municipal incorporation of San Martin could result in a 50% decrease in funding from the County of Santa Clara to the Arts Council by way of the Transient Occupancy Tax.

Planning Process

Given this landscape along with the knowledge that it will continue to change, the strategic planning process undertook to answer some basic questions:

What do arts organizations need in order to be resilient in the face of a constantly changing, and challenging landscape? Is ACSV adequately serving small and midsize arts organizations? What role can ACSV play in supporting large-budget arts organizations? How can ACSV shine a spotlight on individual artists?

Now that the Arts Council has established itself as a spokesperson for the arts, what will the Arts Council advocate for and to whom? Is raising awareness of the arts overall in the general public a worthwhile and achievable goal? If so, what would success look like? How can ACSV work with leadership of the new combined community foundation?

Given the county's changing demographics, Silicon Valley will look significantly different ten years from now, in terms of racial and ethnic diversity, than it does today. What role will ACSV play in how arts organizations might respond to these changes? What can ACSV provide especially for organizations whose primary audiences or programmatic roots are culturally and/or ethnically specific?

Strategic Focus: *Building and Strengthening*

ACSV will take a leadership role to:

- **Empower** the Silicon Valley arts community to build its combined capacity and resiliency
- **Motivate** public will for the arts in order to garner increased public and private investment in artists and arts organizations

Given recent volatile economic times and a rapidly changing regional environment, this plan aims to be bold yet pragmatic. This planning process was based on the assumption that an uncertain financial climate will continue into the foreseeable future. ACSV also recognizes that the financial troubles and potential loss of major regional arts organizations have dampened the public perception of the field. Therefore rebuilding the public's trust will be an important consideration over the next four years.

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The goals and objectives detailed in the plan fall into four focus areas:

★ **Advocacy and Leadership to Increase Public Will for the Arts**

The Arts Council will take an active leadership role in helping the arts community develop its clout in order to advocate for greater **political support** for the arts. Working with arts organizations and strategic collaborative partners, such as 1st ACT, First Voice, and the San Jose Arts Commission/ Office of Cultural Affairs, the Arts Council will develop the “case” for the arts and advance universal messaging on the value of the arts to government, business, neighborhoods, and individuals.

★ **Provide Strategic Funding and Support**

The “heart” of the Arts Council has been and will continue to be supporting small, midsize and multicultural arts organizations & individual artists through a menu of funding mechanisms. ACSV can play a significant role in ensuring arts organizations are **resilient** and positioned to survive changes in funding and valuing of the arts.

★ **Visibility and Sharing of Resources**

The Arts Council will continue to use its leadership to **develop capacity** of the arts community – whether through its marketing program, Artsopolis, or through convening of the arts community and others to share knowledge and address issues as they arise. Additionally, the Arts Council will use its clout to develop shared resources for the arts community, helping to reduce expenses and increase efficiency of artists and arts organizations.

★ **Fund Development**

As one of the only regional sources that provides project and general operating support, Arts Council is looked to as a stable, ongoing **funding source**; this role has become increasingly important over the last few years as other sources of funding have dwindled. The Arts Council will examine the feasibility of increasing the Arts Council’s existing endowments or establishing a new endowment. As it did in establishing its current endowments, the Arts Council would look again for innovative and unconventional means to address this goal. ACSV will also develop new sources of unrestricted funding which will also be used to help maintain and increase revenues for regranteeing.

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ACSV STRIVES TOWARDS BUILDING A THRIVING ARTS COMMUNITY

The Arts Council is in a position of strength at this time. It carries no debt. The Artsopolis Marketing Program has achieved 50% earned income in its first three years. Endowments are solidly invested and growing. Staff retention is high with 50% of Arts Council staff having been at the organization for five years or more.

When this plan is realized four years from now, it will have:

- ◆ stabilized the Arts Council itself through developing new sources of income, including plans for building new or increasing existing endowments;
- ◆ created greater public support for the arts through dissemination of consistent, universal messaging and other advocacy efforts;
- ◆ developed shared resources among arts organizations;
- ◆ strengthened its grantmaking ability and pursued opportunities for new funding initiatives.

The Arts Council has proven that it can take on enormous challenges and be successful. Staff and board have already begun implementing activities indicated in this plan even as it is being written and finalized. Over the next four years, ACSV will continue to realize the leadership potential it has developed over the past 25 years.

II. BACKGROUND

Organizational History

Founded in 1982, Arts Council Silicon Valley (ACSV) is a private, nonprofit arts organization dedicated to improving the quality of life for Santa Clara County residents by creating and fostering arts and culture throughout the region.

The largest private nonprofit arts council in the state, Arts Council Silicon Valley, over the past 15 years, has distributed over \$8 million to local arts and cultural organizations, individual artists, schools, and community groups. ACSV enhances the Silicon Valley community by providing funding, advocacy, technical assistance, arts education opportunities, and marketing services to more than 600 local arts and cultural organizations and individual artists throughout Santa Clara County. Its core regranting programs serve small and midsize arts organizations and individual artists and provide opportunities for artists to teach in alternative settings. A program of ACSV, Artsopolis provides a unique collaborative marketing venue for arts and cultural activities throughout the region.

Mission

Arts Council Silicon Valley is dedicated to creating and fostering a dynamic local arts environment by providing funding, advocacy and support services to the region's arts organizations and artists.

Vision

We envision a vibrant Silicon Valley, where the arts inspire our innovative spirit, celebrate our rich cultural diversity, and encourage our individual and community involvement.

The Heart of the Arts Council

The core purpose of the Arts Council has been and will continue to be to fund small, midsize and multicultural arts organizations and individual artists through a menu of funding mechanisms. For these constituencies, strengthening and growing the Arts Council in order to continue as a reliable source of ongoing general operating and project support is critical. All new initiatives proposed in this plan support the goal of making the Silicon Valley arts community more resilient.

Guiding Principles

We believe....

The arts are essential for a vibrant, creative, livable, and economically healthy Silicon Valley. Participating in the arts, whether as creator, audience, critic, or student, can help us to understand and interpret the world from new and different perspectives. Through the arts, issues and challenges are illuminated and new solutions and possibilities can be imagined. Access to opportunities to experience the arts develops the problem-solving skills and creativity necessary to thrive in a global society. The arts enhance our local economy through jobs and related audience spending and play a vital role in Silicon Valley's continued leadership in technology and creativity.

The proliferation of wide-ranging cultural, ethnic and traditional arts and artists is a hallmark of Silicon Valley's cultural landscape. The Arts Council has the ability to identify and support in creative ways the unique cultural plurality of Silicon Valley. Arts Council has been a leader in supporting the diverse traditional and ethnic heritages of Silicon Valley citizens through support to community-based cultural specific arts organizations, community social service organizations, and immigrant and refugee populations by funding small all-volunteer groups, with passion but without a 501(c)3.

Small and midsize arts organizations must continue to be nimble and flexible to survive the dramatic "ups" and "downs" of Silicon Valley. Especially when "stability" may not be a realistic goal, helping arts groups and the arts community to be resilient is essential. Broad community support, institutional flexibility and responsiveness are critical to an organization's ability to continue to serve its constituency, remain hopeful and creative and recover quickly from adverse times.

Individual artists are essential to Silicon Valley becoming an exciting, growing creative cultural center. The area's performing musicians, dancers, theatre artists, and practicing visual and literary artists are the unseen bedrock upon which all Silicon Valley arts organizations, festivals, community celebrations, economic development are built. It is critical to support and nurture a vibrant, supportive environment in which artists may grow, practice, explore, produce, and share in meaningful ways.

The arts leaders of Santa Clara County need to unite to become a stronger voice on behalf of the arts. Arts Council Silicon Valley can help strengthen the universal voice of the arts by convening all arts leaders together in support of key issues and by empowering the arts organizations by providing them with the tools they need to take an active role in the betterment of our arts community.

Strategic partnerships will be essential to achieve our goals. The Arts Council cannot "do it all" and has historically collaborated with other community, county and regional organizations, corporations, and individuals. The arts community needs to continue to deeply engage with and support a wide spectrum of community, social service and educational organizations to effectively create value for the arts and motivate public will.

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Arts Council's 25th Anniversary is an opportunity to highlight accomplishments.

The strategies and activities of this Strategic Plan will be partially carried out during the Arts Council's 25th year of operation. This should be leveraged in all Arts Council activities, materials and communications to achieve maximum visibility. The more well known and understood the Arts Council and its vision, the more effectively its goals can be achieved.

Arts learning is an intrinsic aspect of being human and should therefore be accessible to children and adults of all ages, abilities and economic means throughout Silicon Valley. In addition, arts learning is an essential component of an excellent education as it encompasses separate classes in the skills, knowledge, creation, and history of the performing and visual arts disciplines, as well as the arts and creativity as part of the learning experience and to provide multiple points of entry in all subject areas.

III. STRATEGIC FOCUS

Building and Strengthening a Resilient Silicon Valley Arts Community

ACSV will take a leadership role to:

- **Empower** the Silicon Valley arts community to build its combined capacity and resiliency
- **Motivate** public will for the arts in order to garner increased public and private investment in artists and arts organizations

Since the completion of the last strategic plan, the region's economy is recovering from the "dot com bust". However, the arts community continues to face significant challenges in coping with the ever-changing landscape. For example, California Arts Council funding in Santa Clara County went from nearly \$1,700,000 to 84 arts organizations and 10 individual artists in 2001 to supporting a mere 12 arts organizations and no individual artists with less than \$60,000 in 2005.

Only six months after beginning our strategic planning process in September 2005, the Silicon Valley arts community landscape took a seismic hit, losing nearly \$750,000 in annual financial support from the Knight Ridder Corporation and another potential \$250,000 in donated ad space in the San Jose Mercury News as a result of the sale of the Knight Ridder Corporation and San Jose Mercury News.

There have been recent leadership changes in at least seven of 14 major area arts organizations. Long tenured leaders have moved on; there is a dearth of new leadership ready to step in. Many of these organizations face lengthy transition periods, during which annual fundraising may suffer.

The community foundations of adjacent counties Santa Clara and San Mateo have recently merged and engaged the first executive leader of the new Silicon Valley Community Foundation. The impact of combining the arts programs of the two former foundations remains unknown.

Accumulated debt and significant funding deficits have threatened to close two major San Jose arts and cultural organizations.

The major outcome of the Arts Council's previous three- year strategic plan was to become the "go to" organization representing the Silicon Valley arts community, to the public, the government sector, and potential funders. The challenge in this planning

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process has been to determine how ACSV will move to the next level in developing its power and voice, and therefore to develop the influence of the arts in Silicon Valley.

This strategic plan calls for the Arts Council itself to be resourceful, resilient and collaborative; strategic partnerships will be critical in these efforts. Over the next four years the Arts Council must focus on achieving long term financial stability in order to be able to fulfill expectations of arts organizations and its chosen role in the arts community. The Arts Council will investigate and develop diverse ways it can contribute to building the capacity of arts organizations and ensure that the arts community can continue to bounce back from adversity and ride financial ups and downs.

Goals and Objectives by Focus Area

<p>ADVOCACY and LEADERSHIP to Increase Public Will for the Arts</p>
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Goal: Increase Public Sector Support for the Arts

After more than a decade of reduced and disappearing funding for the arts, it is time to actively work toward bringing back and increasing government support for the arts from the public sector (local, regional, state, and federal). The Arts Council will take an active leadership role in creating public value for the arts and in motivating the public will in support of the arts. Working with other strategic partners such as 1st ACT, San Jose Arts Commission/Office of Cultural Affairs, First Voice, and Arts & Cultural Roundtable, the Arts Council will develop and advance messaging and policies to bring stable funding for the arts back and create a healthy, more livable Silicon Valley.

The arts community represents a large group of people (including staff, boards and audience), and has a significant economic impact on the region. With training, support and resources, the arts community could develop and deliver consistent, effective messages about the importance of the arts that are meaningful to a wide range of stakeholders, particularly decision-makers. In order to increase political clout, the arts community needs leadership, clearly defined goals and a direction to unify its efforts.

Research and studies about the arts, such as those produced in the past by Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley, can be powerful tools in making a case for the arts. As part of its advocacy role, Arts Council will explore taking on this function, as well as regularly publicize and distribute other reports that make the case for the arts, such as those from Americans for the Arts and others.

Objective 1: Develop and disseminate new universal messaging for use by Arts Council, arts organizations and arts supporters

Objective 2: Develop political clout of the arts community

Goal: Build Public Participation in Regional Arts and Cultural Events through Artsopolis

There is limited public awareness about the rich and varied arts and cultural opportunities that exist in Silicon Valley. This results in lack of full and consistent public participation in Silicon Valley cultural arts events and activities. Since the last plan, Artsopolis has developed into a major source of information and marketing for local arts groups that is recognized nationally. In this plan, Artsopolis will be further developed to reach significantly larger numbers of arts patrons, for a greater number of arts organizations. ACSV believes that a significant impact could come from increasing the number of Artsopolis e-subscribers, the open e-rate, the number of tickets sold on Artsopolis.com, and number of website visits. As a direct result, more people will attend a greater variety of arts and cultural events on a more frequent basis.

- Objective 1: Increase public awareness about arts and cultural opportunities through Marketing and Communications
- Objective 2: Increase participation in arts and cultural events by continuing to diversify and personalize online ticketing services

PROVIDE STRATEGIC FUNDING and SUPPORT

Goal: Maintain and Support Core Grants Programs

Supporting and nurturing the growth of small, midsize and multicultural arts organizations is paramount to what the Arts Council does. For these constituencies, the Arts Council is a singularly unique funder and partner.

ACSV recognizes that a key characteristic of a resilient arts community is stable sources of general operating and project funding; The Community Arts Fund and Organizational Enhancement Fund are essential in supporting small and midsize arts organizations to develop their programs and organizational infrastructures. As the arts community continues to face uncertainty in funding sources, it is critical to ensure that funding levels are maintained and not to get distracted by new programs.

- Objective 1 Ensure the Core Grants programs are responsive to the needs of small and midsize arts organizations in Santa Clara County
- Objective 2 Maintain and, when possible, increase current funding levels for organizations in the core grants programs
- Objective 3 Support grantees and others with Arts Council expertise and through technical assistance

Goal: Advance Multicultural Leadership

Santa Clara County is unique in that it is the only Bay Area county where no one ethnic or cultural group constitutes a majority. This cultural diversity is one of the things that identifies Silicon Valley and contributes to making Silicon Valley a vibrant and leading cultural arts center. Building capacity and leadership in the multicultural community is essential to carrying out this vision. The Arts Council currently supports culturally specific creative and traditional arts through grants to arts organizations, community centers, festivals, and immigrant and refugee groups.

Experienced leaders in the multicultural arts community are often stretched to the limit by managing an organization and, at the same time, acting as a community advocate and resource. Developing and implementing strategies to support and grow leadership in the multicultural arts community is a core element of this plan. Working with possible strategic partners such as First Voice and 1st ACT, the Arts Council will work to develop resiliency through leadership in multicultural arts organizations.

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At the same time that some multicultural arts organizations need assistance in building their organizational capacity, multicultural arts and artists are often served by organizations that do not identify themselves as “arts organizations”. The Arts Council will further serve these social service or community organizations that feature arts by and for their community in appropriate and unique ways.

- Objective 1 Provide support/ professional development/ leadership training and technical assistance to community arts leaders representing diverse cultural and ethnic groups
- Objective 2 Investigate developing targeted grants program component for leading midsize arts organizations rooted in diverse geographic and cultural communities

Goal: Investigate and Develop Appropriate New Funding Programs

Two strengths of the Arts Council have always been its knowledge of needs and trends in the arts community and its close relationships with regional artists and arts organizations. Its ability to be flexible and responsive position the Arts Council to identify, initiate and pursue opportunities for new initiatives. All new initiatives proposed in this plan support the overall strategic goal of making the Silicon Valley arts community more resilient.

- Objective 1 Develop strategic opportunities for granting programs to better serve arts organizations
- Objective 2 Continue to support and encourage arts learning experiences and programs through the core grants program

VISIBILITY and SHARING of RESOURCES

Goal: Convene the Arts Community and Promote the Sharing of Resources

A major focus area of this plan is to enhance the ability of small, midsize and multicultural organizations to be resilient in the face of the ever-changing economic, social and political landscape. One of the key roles that the Arts Council can play in the next three years is our role in convening organizations and promoting the sharing and collaboration of information and resources. Increasing the capacity and visibility of arts organizations through shared resources, information and opportunities will make them more capable and adaptive in dealing with challenges, adversity and disruption.

Objective 1 Increase capacity of arts organizations through convening and networking

Objective 2 Develop new resources for grantees and other arts organizations, such as shared discounts for key services

Goal: Help Arts Organizations Develop Resources, Skill and Capacity to Promote and Sell Their Events and Activities

Many local cultural arts organizations lack adequate resources, skills and capacity to market and sell their events and activities. Artsopolis will work with organizations in a number of ways to enable them to effectively access Artsopolis services that will enhance their ability to effectively market their programs and products. Outreach and informational avenues will be explored to make organizations savvy users of Artsopolis features such as creating and maintaining a shared database co-op and the private label ticketing service. Artsopolis will develop strategic partnerships such as increasing the number of media partners and launching new partnerships with civic and cultural organizations throughout the region.

Objective 1: Build the marketing and sales capabilities of partner organizations

Objective 2: Explore, cultivate and expand strategic partnerships

Goal: Create Support and Visibility for Individual Artists

Developing recognition and visibility of artists' work and providing financial support for individual artists has always been an important role that the Arts Council has played. The Arts Council is one of very few institutions that directly funds individual artists in Santa Clara County that encompass visual, performing, literary, and digital media. With Silicon Valley's continuing affordable housing crisis and proven economic volatility, providing support and visibility for individual artists is even more critical.

This plan calls for increasing the Artist Fellowship program, in both number and amount of awards. Institutionalizing practical ways for achieving regional and national visibility for Silicon Valley artists and the development of local resources to support individual artists' economic struggles are both addressed in this plan.

Objective 1 Develop and increase sources of direct funding

Objective 2 Provide avenues to raise visibility of individual artists

Objective 3 Address practical and economic issues of surviving as an individual artist

FUND DEVELOPMENT

Goal: Build/Increase Endowment(s) for Long Term Stability

As a nonprofit organization itself, the Arts Council is dependent on multiple contributed revenue sources. Funding for general operating support is decreasing as many funders change priorities or are interested in the development of new programs.

The Arts Council's two current endowments are administered by Community Foundation Silicon Valley and are restricted to providing annual support for the core regranting programs. Both endowments were raised through unique regional arts initiatives coordinated through the Community Foundation. Neither was a sole undertaking of the Arts Council.

Currently valued at approximately \$1.8 million, both endowments are reliable sources of regranting revenue. It is timely for the Arts Council to investigate growing the current regranting endowments or establish a new one for Arts Council general operating support. Like the previous endowments, it is not anticipated that the Arts Council would conduct a traditional campaign primarily reliant on current individual donors to the organization. The Arts Council would look again for innovative and unconventional means to address this goal. *(It should be noted that this would be a multiyear goal that would begin but not necessarily come to fruition in the three years of this plan.)*

- Objective 1 Conduct endowment campaign feasibility study
- Objective 2 Develop appropriate planning and implementation processes based on outcomes of feasibility study
- Objective 3 Based on feasibility study, identify endowment campaign components

Goal: Maintain and Increase Revenues for Regranting and for Unrestricted Uses

Traditionally, the Arts Council has depended very heavily on corporate, foundation and government grants to provide most of its funding. However, with the number of corporations and foundation funders being limited, the amount of government funding still flat, and the decrease in sources of unrestricted funding, maintaining funding for the core grants programs has become even more challenging. Additionally, most corporate funders are interested in supporting new projects, rather than ongoing support for existing programs. Development of new sources of unrestricted funding is critical.

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Underdeveloped areas of revenue generation need to be explored. These areas include support from individuals, beginning with the Arts Council's own Board members, new approaches to engaging corporations and developing one or more special events as fundraising opportunities. In order to actively pursue these potential revenue sources, composition, training and organization of the Board of Trustees must be undertaken. Staff resources need to be assessed and developed in line with this strategic direction.

- Objective 1 Create strategies to help the organization increase board engagement and effectiveness
- Objective 2 Develop new, innovative ways to engage corporate donors
- Objective 3 Plan an event that makes money by including a fundraising component to the Silicon Valley Arts & Business Awards (ABBYs) and by taking advantage of our 25th anniversary
- Objective 4 Nurture and grow relationships and collaborations with current funders

IV. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

This Implementation Plan is organized alphabetically by functional department. Consequently, some Focus Areas and Goals are addressed in more than one functional department and are so noted. When two or more departments will work in consort on an Objective, it is only stated once under the lead department. This organization of the Implementation Plan will facilitate ease of annual and semi-annual staff and board reviews to assess progress, make adjustments as the Plan unfolds and take advantage of opportunities unseen at the time of the writing of the Plan.

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