

## **Narrative from the previous application for 2013**

### **Attachment 2: ArtsCenter Details of the Project Narrative**

**a) Major Project Activities** The ArtsCenter and the Town of Carrboro request \$75,000 support for a \$155,300 cultural district planning project that will sustain its creative economy and expand access to the arts for its citizens. Since The ArtsCenter began in 1974, Carrboro has quadrupled in population, transforming itself from a cotton mill town of 5,100 into a densely populated small city cited as one of the top arts towns in the USA by John Villani. The Town supports the arts, arts-based businesses, two galleries, and several arts festivals. The challenge for Carrboro and its cultural industry is to maintain, in the face of change, the conditions that led to its strength here. Its natural cultural district has grown organically; due more to a vision first articulated by then Mayor, now State Senator Ellie Kinnaird, than a specific plan. With downtown Carrboro now experiencing its greatest change since the Carr Mill Mall renovation 35 years ago; this is a vital opportunity to create a clearly articulated, community-embraced plan for its cultural and entertainment district. Such creative placemaking will encompass creative asset mapping, creative industry cluster/hub development, public art, community engagement design activities, as well as affordable work, living, and exhibition spaces for artists. These actions are consistent with Carrboro plans including the Local Living Economy Task Force Recommendations and the Regional Technology Strategies (RTS) study, *Creating Carrboro's Economic Future*. They speak to the powerful sense of community and buying locally in Carrboro.

Downtown Carrboro and its arts economy face challenges that include: 1) a new shopping development on the western edge of town and a super Wal-Mart four miles south of downtown; 2) the redevelopment of the south side of the 200-300 blocks of East Main Street that includes The ArtsCenter, Cats Cradle, WCOM community radio, and the first hotel in Carrboro; 3) uneven distribution of business acumen within the local creative economy; and 4) housing, work space, and living costs that make it difficult for artists and creative industry workers to live or work here. Carrboro can identify its arts vision, plan its cultural district, and more effectively use its creative economy for economic development to create a new model for sustaining community cultural development. The Carrboro Cultural and Entertainment District will extend westward along both sides of East Main Street from the Chapel Hill town limits. It will encompass the central business district on both sides of Weaver and West Main Streets and the Town Commons before reaching its western terminus just west of Town Hall. The District will include The ArtsCenter, WCOM, Cat's Cradle, DSI Comedy Theatre, Kalisher, The Art Therapy Institute, Weaver Street Market, RTS, galleries, restaurants, bars, and coffee shops, Carr Mill Mall, music stores, and the Town-owned Century Center.

**b) Goals and impacts on community livability, including serving as a model.** Many creative placemaking efforts focus on economic revitalization using cultural assets. This project addresses how to maintain a successful creative economy as the town evolves. The Carrboro Cultural & Entertainment District will provide critical experiments and models in 1) maintaining and enhancing a strong creative economy in the face of significant change and gentrification, including building new infrastructure for the creative economy; 2) refining a natural cultural district into a distinct, planned cultural district; and 3) fostering collaboration among governmental agencies, non-profits, businesses, and artists. Specific outputs will include identifying ways for artists to afford to live and work in Carrboro and developing the role of the arts within town government. A community cultural vision will emerge from the process and guide planning for the district and the creative cluster/hub within it. It will foster creation,

production, dissemination, and support of the arts. As outlined in section (e) below, the first year of Our Town-funded work will involve an iterative community process employing public and stakeholder meetings, surveys, existing town bodies, and focus groups. This is far more about community building, strengthening arts businesses and providing access to the arts than tourism.

Draft plans for the District will be ready at the start of the second year, during which the plan will be tested, evaluated, and vetted through public and stakeholder meetings. A completed plan will be submitted to the Carrboro Board of Aldermen for formal adoption and announcement during summer 2015. The comprehensive plan will link creativity to economic development, while affording all citizens of Carrboro increased opportunities to explore their creative impulses, building cultural and social capital. The plan will address the legal and tax status of the District and specify how it will nurture arts-based businesses and enhance streetscapes, gateways, and accessibility. A focus on community needs and vision will create cultural tourism.

**c) Outcomes and measurement** The Carrboro Cultural & Entertainment District will address the NEA goal of Livability: Strengthening Communities Through the Arts by strengthening its creative cluster/hub, fostering a more attractive and safer downtown, improving access to the arts for all citizens, bringing different populations together through innovative cultural partnerships, maintaining a sense of identity through the arts, inventorying and creating public art and developing standards, making it affordable for artists, businesses, and non-profits to remain in the District, and engaging artists to teach and create public art. The project will advance a secondary NEA outcome of Engagement through community-based processes and a quadrilateral partnership of government, businesses, non-profits, and individuals. Creation and Learning will also result. The project will be quantitatively measured on: 1) achievement of deliverables; 2) establishment of baseline and annual metrics for evaluating livability and creative vitality using tools drawn from the CVI from WESTAF, QOL indicators, ArtPlace vibrancy indicators, and the creative population of the District; and 3) local economic impact of the arts.

**d) Budget** The Carrboro Board of Aldermen voted on November 13, 2012 to allocate at least \$25,000 toward the match. The Orange County Arts Commission allocated \$1,500, as have individual donors. Partners have committed to \$20,000 worth of in-kind staff time. The Committee will obtain additional cash commitments from foundation, public, and private sources to raise the remaining \$32,300 for the \$80,300 match for a total \$155,300, two-year project.

**e) Schedule of key dates including benchmarks and deliverables** Work began in fall 2012 with the formation of a planning committee consisting of Recreation and Parks Director Anita Jones-McNair and her staff members Rah Trost and Dennis Joines, Community & Economic Development Director Annette Stone, and Julie Tomkovick and Executive Director Art Menius from The Arts Center. Public and stakeholder meetings occurred during December 2012. During the first eight months of 2013, fundraising and team building efforts will continue. September – November 2013: Stakeholder and public meetings and creative asset mapping. Surveys at Carrboro Music Festival, Carrboro Film Festival, and West End Poetry Festival collect data for economic impact reports and project planning. January – March 2014: Draft plans for District, creative cluster/hub, and Carrboro cultural vision released for stakeholder and public comments. Partners propose creative and research projects to test assumptions about the creative economy and the District. Surveys at NC Comedy Festival. April – June 2014: Stakeholder and public meetings provide feedback incorporated into the next drafts of the plans and the design of the projects. July – August 2014: Surveys and focus groups at 10x10 in the Triangle, July 4, and Tomato Day. Working drafts of plans circulated. September 2014 – May 2015: Actions specified

therein conducted; pilot projects test assumptions. Surveys at events collect data. June 2015: Final plans for District, creative cluster/hub, and community cultural vision presented to the Board of Aldermen and made available to the public. July 2015: Carrboro Cultural & Entertainment District officially established. Surveys continue. August 2015: Economic impact of the Arts on Carrboro report released. Our Town funded work and reporting completed.

**f) Partners and responsibilities** Lead partner The ArtsCenter will administer the Our Town grant and provide project leadership, including \$5000 in-kind staff time, supplies, and facilities. The Town of Carrboro will provide at least \$25,000 in cash, \$5000 in-kind staff time, and the support of town events and organizations including Carrboro Arts Committee, Carrboro Day, Carrboro Music Festival, Carrboro Economic Sustainability Commission, Carrboro Film Festival, Carrboro Recreation and Parks Commission, and West End Poetry Festival/Poets Council. Research and planning, especially for enhancing the creative economy and cluster/hub, and measurement and evaluation will be conducted by RTS, a non-profit based in Carrboro. Szostak Design, an award winning local firm, will provide design services. Szostak and RTS are each committed to \$5000 in-kind contributions. Veteran community development specialist Robert Donnan of Saxapahaw, NC will facilitate public and stakeholder meetings and distill the results into summary reports. The Orange County Arts Commission has committed funding as well as outreach for the project. Involving artists and teaching artists as integral parts of the team is essential. Sacrificial Poets will lead efforts to connect with and learn from younger artists, especially in spoken word. Transactors Improv and ArtsCenter Stage will guide theatre components, especially engaging non-traditional audiences. Several other entities have orally committed to this project but did not provide letters of commitment in time to be included.

**g) Target community** The primary target community consists of the 19,800 citizens of Carrboro, whose quality of life will be maintained or enhanced through access to the arts and an local economy and tax base supported by creative businesses and artists. The project will build their awareness of all forms of community capital. The secondary target consists of residents of adjacent Chapel Hill, Orange County, and Chatham County, as well as cultural day trippers from the Triad, Durham, and Raleigh. Artists and businesses and nonprofits, both creative and otherwise, located in Carrboro or considering moving here are further targets.

**h) Marketing plans** The ArtsCenter, the Town, and other partners will promote the project via press releases, PSAs, websites, advertising, personal appearances, postering, and social media. Reports on progress will air at 6 PM Mondays on community radio station, WCOM. Carrboro.com will provide coverage. The Committee will report on its work to the Board of Aldermen. Proposed, draft, and final plans for the Cultural and Entertainment District will be made available. The Committee will reach out to local newspapers, WCHL and WUNC radio, and to WUNC-TV. The project will form a core component of Carrboro's ever stronger brand.

**i) Documentation and evaluation** WCOM and The Peoples Channel, cable access TV, will be invited to record public meetings. Reports and plans will be made available on the Internet to encourage community support and to permit others to learn from our work. A report on key learning will be an output. To evaluate the success of the project, RTS will create and disseminate a more accurate method for assessment of the impact of this and similar work.

**j) Accessibility** All new designs for the district will comply with ADA and exhibit sensitivity to creating public art and spaces that can be enjoyed by all. Increasing access to arts experiences for

people of limited means and all significant demographic groups is a specific goal of the project. The Town of Carrboro has a progressive policy of non-discrimination.