

PRELIMINARY REPORT  
Guiding Principles and Recommendations for Creative Carrboro

## INTRODUCTION

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The Creative Carrboro Steering Committee presented this preliminary report to the Carrboro Board of Aldermen for initial consideration at their mid-February planning retreat.

This introductory paragraph has been updated to account for the Board's comments and actions and to reflect staff efforts that have occurred since the report was prepared. At the retreat, Aldermen reviewed and discussed the report and decided there should be a joint meeting of the Orange County Arts Commission and the Carrboro Arts Committee and including the Economic Sustainability Commission to discuss whether they could jointly assume the lead role on the initiative that had been recommended as the task of a new non-profit organization. The balance of funds for this initiative could be considered to help fund this work. Since the retreat, staff work on the reestablishment of the Arts and Crafts Market has continued; a partnership that would use the Town Commons for this purpose is currently being explored. The remainder of this report is unchanged and is expected to serve as a resource for the joint meeting of arts and economic sustainability commissions.

It provides an Overview, Guiding Principles, and Recommendations, as well as specific Comments about the *Creative Carrboro Analysis and Recommendations: Final Report* previously submitted to the Board by the UNC Public Policy Students in early December 2014.

This preliminary report is a work-in-progress. Several of its recommendations, for example, offer specific strategies that can help accomplish the desired outcomes. For other key goals, however, such as assuring equitable access to community-based art experiences, our Committee likely would delegate the task of researching possible approaches, including discussing those options with local constituencies, and crafting appropriate strategies, to a new community-based non-profit organization—provided such an organization is approved, as described in the Recommendations section of this report. We would be glad informally to advise and/or support that new organization in carrying out this assignment.

In all matters, the Creative Carrboro Steering Committee welcomes suggestions and direction from the Board about the draft Guiding Principles and Recommendations presented here and what might enhance their implementation. We especially think the Board's ideas are important because, as described below, our report advises the continued participation of three of the Town's departments to work individually and/or collaboratively whenever feasible to accomplish the implementation of these Recommendations.

Submitted for the consideration of the Carrboro Board of Aldermen by the Creative Carrboro Steering

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Committee: Robert Donnan; Patricia McGuire; Anita Jones-McNair; Art Menius; Annette Stone; Stuart Rosenfeld and Phil Szostak.

## **PART I—Overview and Goals**

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After lengthy review of our research and the considerable public input gathered over the past year, the Creative Carrboro Steering Committee realizes that our town can best be served by persistently pursuing three overarching long-term goals:

GOAL 1—Strengthen and sustain Carrboro’s community-wide creative economy. GOAL 2—

Encourage community-based creative placemaking efforts.

GOAL 3—Assure equitable and affordable access for the entire community to participate in Carrboro’s arts programs, and, as needed, in opportunities for creative entrepreneurship.

These closely related community-wide goals appear to be more appropriate, at least at this time, than any efforts to establish a formally or informally designated arts and creativity district within Carrboro’s downtown or even including satellite areas that might be linked to a downtown district.

The fact is, Carrboro’s arts community and creative economy is widely dispersed throughout our town and not concentrated in any one particular area. A community-wide approach will be more inclusive and more fully address the needs and aspirations of all of Carrboro’s residents and creative enterprises.

Accordingly, the Guiding Principles and Strategic Recommendations presented below build upon these goals and also are consistent with community development strategies set forth in earlier Board-approved plans and studies, including: *Carrboro Vision 2020* (2000); *Creating Carrboro’s Economic Future* (2006), *Relentlessly Local* (2007), and the *Local Living Economy Task Force Report* (2010).

They also take into consideration: 1) Carrboro’s evolving sense of identity as a keenly creative and entrepreneurial place, especially relevant now in light of accelerating commercial development; 2) the Town’s existing and possible future policies toward proactively guiding how that development takes place; and 3) community discussion about public investment in new creative infrastructure.

## **PART TWO—Guiding Principles**

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The Creative Carrboro Steering Committee recognizes that further developing Carrboro’s creative economy

as well as sustaining innovative creative placemaking across our entire community will require the renewal of a long---standing commitment that builds upon and sustains many aspects of the important work already accomplished here in Carrboro over the past three decades.

Moving forward, this patient work will require an ongoing assessment of continually evolving challenges and opportunities. As a first step, the Steering Committee drew upon what Carrboro residents and local creative businesses told us across wide---ranging community conversations in order to develop a set of Guiding Principles. Our intention is that these Guiding Principles underscore and complement the Recommendations also presented in this report.

Moving forward, we believe these Guiding Principles can help Carrboro’s public and private sector leaders continue to adjust to emerging challenges and opportunities that may be beyond the time---frame and scope of our Recommendations. They can help our town’s leaders not only address how things may be changing now but also anticipate and adapt skillfully to how Carrboro continues to change in the future.

The Guiding Principles listed here are grouped thematically, although the order in which they are presented should not imply priority as to their relative importance.

## 1—GRASSROOTS INNOVATION

- Foster opportunities and establish a supportive environment for artists and creative entrepreneurs to jumpstart and develop their art and/or launch creative enterprises.
- Encourage the ongoing entrepreneurial development of creative and innovative ideas by providing financial and technical assistance and allowing sufficient time to realize results.

## 2—EQUITY AND INCLUSIVITY

- Promote community---wide access to the arts and creative endeavors.
- Assure broad and equitable program benefits.
- Provide accessible and multiculturally relevant public art. 3—

## CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

- Strengthen both our town’s emerging and already well---developed creative assets.
- Sustain and project Carrboro’s distinctive sense of place and localism.
- Connect our community’s cultural history to our contemporary creativity.
- Encourage community---based social entrepreneurship that supports the arts, creativity, and

innovation.

#### 4—CREATIVE CONVERGENCE

- Establish Carrboro as a tourism destination but also focus enthusiastically upon serving local residents.
- Pay special attention to linkages with other closely related economic sectors in Carrboro, such as:
  - Wellness and healing arts;
  - Alternative energy and environmental sustainability; and
  - Local foods and sustainable agriculture.

#### 5—LEADERSHIP

- Cultivate strong advocates for Carrboro as a creative place and for the arts in general.
- Foster the ability of diverse creative champions involved with the arts and creative enterprises in Carrboro to tell their own stories as well as to share Creative Carrboro's ongoing story.

#### 6—LINKS TO RESOURCES AND OTHER PLACES

- Help develop opportunities for regional, statewide, and national collaboration that can strengthen and support Carrboro as a world---class creative community.
- Prospect diligently for appropriate philanthropic and other grant---making opportunities that align with Creative Carrboro's values, goals, and emergent aspirations. For example, Carrboro can prepare for and reapply in December 2015 for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Our Town grant program.

### **PART THREE—Key Recommendations**

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Our Creative Carrboro steering committee has organized its slate of strategic Recommendations across four key priorities, each one derived from one or more of the three overarching goals described earlier in this report:

A—Brand Carrboro as a Creative Community

B—Organize and Facilitate Efforts to Support Carrboro's Arts Community and Creative Economy C—

Provide Affordable Living and Working Space for Artists and Creative Enterprises

D—Develop Markets for Carrboro Artists and Creative Enterprises

We limited the number of our Recommendations to those we believe to be the most pragmatic and timely. Accomplishing them will open the door to further assessment and sustained progress. And as with the Guiding Principles, we have grouped them thematically, but the order in which they are presented should not imply priority as to their relative importance.

### **A—Brand Carrboro as a Creative Community**

1. Develop a Carrboro sub---brand, consistent with the recently adopted rubric—“It’s Carrboro: Feel Free”—that can be used to promote the town as “Creative Carrboro” or as “A Community of Arts and Creative Enterprises.” [Goals 1, 2]

We see this strategy primarily as a marketing and branding effort and regard it as more effective and appropriate, at least at this time, than designating an arts and creativity district. Adopting this approach, however, would not preclude establishing an arts and creativity district (or districts) and/or employing branding strategies associated with such districts in the future.

### **B—Organize and Facilitate Efforts to Support Carrboro’s Arts Community and Creative Economy**

2. Provide seed funding—or seek funding from foundations and other organizations, including the Carrboro Tourism Development Authority, to do so—that would help establish a new nonprofit organization that can serve as the hub of arts and creative business activity in Carrboro. The last statement is no longer needed, based on the recommendation of the Board of Aldermen. [Goals 1, 2, 3] The last statement is no longer needed, based on the recommendation of the Board of Aldermen.

The organization’s overall purpose will be to encourage and help coordinate ongoing arts and creative business activity in Carrboro, connecting and facilitating timely conversations among community---based non---profits, businesses, government programs, and individuals. One example would be connecting creative businesses and entrepreneurial artists to the Town’s revolving loan opportunities. Another would be applying the creativity of artists to problems faced by businesses.

The Steering Committee believes such coordination—and, in particular, persistent networking among artists, creative enterprises, the broader business community, and other constituencies across the breadth of our local community—is an essential component underlying any and all efforts to sustain and expand the accessibility, the diversity, and the vibrancy of the Town’s creative placemaking and its overall creative economy.

Moreover, we suggest these networking activities will generate new ideas, strategies, and short-term working partnerships that promote collective impact and successful outcomes.

- a. An initial organizational activity will designate a community---based cross---sector team (see below) to establish and launch the new organization. This interdisciplinary team will:
  - Consider and adopt a name for the new organization from among a slate of possibilities such as: Creative Carrboro, Carrboro Arts and Creative Business Alliance, and the Carrboro Creativity Council.
  - Seek non---profit status under section 501(c) 3 of the Internal Revenue Code.
  - Draft a five---year plan for the organization's work and develop metrics for measuring and assessing the outcomes that result from working partnerships that it encourages throughout the community. These measures can be developed collaboratively and shared widely throughout the community.
- b. Once established and initially staffed, the new organization will:
  - Encourage and promote Carrboro's creative community.
  - Reestablish and coordinate the monthly Artist Market at an appropriate location.
  - Maintain an online inventory of Carrboro artists and creative businesses.
  - Develop and publish a community---wide creative events calendar.
  - Work closely with Carrboro Business Alliance (CBA).
  - Establish a framework for artist residency and artist exchange programs.
  - Raise and distribute funds for non---profit community organizations representing the arts and other creative enterprises.
  - Serve as a convening and information clearinghouse center for the arts, more generally, and for artists and creative enterprises in Carrboro. In so doing, develop and implement an effective communications plan that includes the skillful use of social media.
  - Encourage creative placemaking initiatives in Carrboro, including opportunities to engage and integrate artists more fully in the design and implementation of civic and other community---based projects.
  - Support the commission and community---wide display of public art that addresses the heritage, aspirations, and creative imagination of the entire community.

- Facilitate artist and creative business networking.
  - Establish and maintain ongoing relationships with targeted organizations addressing the arts and creative enterprises in other locations throughout Orange County and the Triangle.
  - Develop, track, and regularly report outcome measures relevant to specific goals and objectives that target: 1) Strengthening Carrboro's creative economy; 2) Encouraging local creative placemaking efforts; and 3) Assuring equitable access to Carrboro's diverse arts assets and creative entrepreneurship opportunities.
- c. Initial efforts to foster the new organization—as well as its ongoing governance—can be provided by but not be limited to representatives of the following entities (appointed by the Board of Aldermen):
- Carrboro Arts Committee
  - Carrboro Economic Sustainability Commission
  - Carrboro Recreation and Parks Commission
  - Carrboro Tourism Development Authority
  - Carrboro Business Alliance
  - The ArtsCenter
  - Carrboro Board of Aldermen
- d. Recreation & Parks staff initially might support the task of creating and launching this new organization (five hours weekly), but ultimately the responsibility of sustaining its ongoing work will require at least a 20-hour per week position (an independent contractor or part-time Town employee) reporting to its governing board.
3. Encourage the Carrboro Business Alliance to establish and support a creative business networking group from among its membership. This group would operate more informally than the new organization described above. It is expected, however, that the two groups would work closely together, when the opportunity arises. [Goal 1]

## **C—Provide Affordable Living and Working space for Artists and Creative Enterprises**

4. Support the development of affordable housing that addresses the creative needs of artists.
- The needs of artists, however, will need to be addressed within the larger context of affordable

housing for other core constituencies in Carrboro, as well. [Goals 1, 2, 3]

5. Continue to explore options for providing and/or supporting the provision of affordable shared or co---working space for artists, creative freelancers, and creative microenterprises. [Goals 1, 2, 3]
6. Explore using New Market tax credits to create artist workspace(s), a makerspace, and creative business infrastructure in applicable areas of town. [Goals 1, 2, 3]
7. Explore how small business permitting and approvals could be expedited for creative enterprises. [Goal 1]
8. Continue to provide and further expand affordable access to art---making instruction and art---making opportunities for the entire community. The Town’s Recreation and Parks Department provides a good example of how to do this well. It will be desirable, however, to consider whether expanded art---making opportunities might be situated across additional geographic locations. [Goal 3]

#### **D—Develop Markets for Carrboro Artists and Creative Enterprises**

9. Restore and sustain the monthly Artists Market at an appropriate location. [Goals 1, 2]
10. Increase awareness of and applications to the Town’s existing revolving loan fund among creative businesses. [Goal 1, 3]
11. Add the UNC students’ creative business GIS map to the Town website, expand and maintain it. [Goal 1]
12. Explore improvements in local wayfinding (for arts and creative enterprises) and signage regulations. [Goals 1, 2]
13. Develop a Carrboro Business mobile app that profiles local creative businesses. [Goal 1]

If requested by the Board, the Creative Carrboro Steering Committee gladly will provide greater detail and additional information about any of our Guiding Principles and Recommendations.

#### **PART FOUR—The Steering Committee’s Reflections on UNC Public Policy Students’ “Creative Carrboro Analysis and Recommendations: Final Report”**

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Our Creative Carrboro team benefited greatly from the research efforts of the UNC Public Policy Students and their excellent report both to us and, subsequently, to the Town Board of Aldermen in early December 2014. Even given the high quality of their work, however, the Creative Carrboro Steering Committee felt it important to share with the Board of Aldermen a brief selection of further



comments, interpretations, and clarifications:

1—Our initial charge to the students early in the fall semester constrained them to a focus on the economic development aspects their research. Our overarching research question, moreover, also limited them to considering only whether it might be advisable to establish an arts and creativity district in Carrboro.

Since that time, however, our Creative Carrboro steering committee, influenced by own research, the students' work, and by broadly based citizen input, moved away from the district approach. It also became clear that the challenge of holistically and equitably developing Creative Carrboro is as much a question of community development (creative placemaking) as it is economic development.

2—We also wish to make the following observations about the students' final report:

- In their report, the UNC students liberally interpreted Carrboro's *Vision 2020* plan, adopted in 2000, to assert that it mandates an "Arts and Creativity District." This, however, is not exactly the case. *Vision 2020* merely calls for support of arts and culture, consistent with prior strategies. The student report, moreover, does not make much use of the earlier *Creating Carrboro's Economic Future* (2006) or *Local Living Economy* (2010) studies, which contain valuable observations and recommendations for the Town.
- Their report also somewhat indiscriminately alternates back and forth among various terms for arts districts, such as "arts and cultural districts" and "creative industries or businesses districts." Ultimately, the intent that emerged through our public dialogues has been to develop targeted strategies that can strengthen and provide more equitable access to local arts and creative industries across the entire community.
- The students write that Creative Carrboro submitted Our Town applications on behalf of this project. The unsuccessful NEA Our Town grant applications were, in fact, collaborations with The ArtsCenter as lead applicant with the Town of Carrboro as its partner. Similarly, Carrboro's Restaurant Overlay (EAT) makes possible restaurants adjacent to residential districts rather than limiting them, as the students report.
- The students overstate their claim that "affordable workspace for all types of artists" exists in Carrboro. In fact, attendees at our public meetings, survey respondents, and others told us that affordable workspace in Carrboro is in short supply and not readily available to artists and creative entrepreneurs, especially at the entry---level.
- The students accepted an assertion by a single local business owner that their property taxes increased by 109% in a single year. The Committee investigated and found that the property was

sold, substantially improved, and then resold in 2007 to the current owner but the new appraised price was not recorded by the tax office until 2009 when the valuation went from \$188,313 to \$383,393.

- While reporting that 29 out of 31 creative businesses surveyed, or 93.5%, were satisfied with Carrboro’s business climate, some implied disappointment that this satisfaction did not come from the direct actions of town government. The Creative Carrboro team believes, however, that this high level of customer---driven satisfaction is something to be celebrated and a hallmark of a healthy local business environment.
- Similarly, the student team finds the report that 25 of 31 businesses expect to expand, and three of the other six would like to expand. The Creative Carrboro team believes that this finding, too, is cause for congratulations.
- As noted in our Recommendations, the existing Carrboro Revolving Loan funds appear to be sufficient for local creative business needs. Even so, we envision there can be better marketing of the availability of these funds to qualifying creative businesses.
- There presently are no specific tax reliefs or exemptions or credits that address for---profit Artist/Creative/Cultural enterprises. Also, state law does not allow local bills. Accordingly, an outright local property tax rebate for creative businesses is not currently allowed by North Carolina General Statutes. There may be economic development tax credits, but the historic tax credit has been repealed. It is possible, however, to envision a scenario where the Town might lease back certain space for art galleries, maker spaces, etc.—perhaps similarly to the way the Town currently leases property for parking.

## APPENDIX—Key Definitions

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Most of the key definitions for our study are based upon the work of RTS, Inc. the Carrboro---based economic development consulting firm formerly led by Dr. Stuart Rosenfeld, who is a member of our Creative Carrboro Steering Committee. We also shared these definitions with the UNC student team to help guide their research and analysis.

**Creative Enterprise**—Any company or non---profit organization for which the primary value of its products or services is rooted in their emotional or aesthetic appeal to the customer.

**Creative Asset**—Any useful or valuable item, facility, or service whose primary value is rooted in emotional or aesthetic appeal to community members and is intended for the community’s use (i.e.,

catering, stages, galleries, etc.).

**Creative Economy**—The creative industries within a local or regional location that span all forms of original art, their applications in the design of products, services, and places, and the value chain that supports all of these enterprises.

**Creative Convergence**—We define creative industries based on the importance of aesthetics and emotional appeal to the success of the products and services they offer. Many other sectors of the economy, however, also include enterprises that meet that criterion. In Carrboro, these sectors include tourism, information technologies, wellness and healing arts; alternative energy and environmental sustainability; and local foods and sustainable agriculture.

**Creative Placemaking**—Within the context of overall community and economic development, creative placemaking is an approach that brings together community partners from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to strategically shape the physical and social character of a particular neighborhood, town, or region through the arts, design, and other cultural activities. With creative placemaking, artists, designers, and cultural organizations become more fully integrated into civic and commercial activity, helping to develop effective organizations and institutions, create and market new and improved products and services, and sustain more livable and prosperous towns, counties, and regions. Developing and displaying public art—including murals, performances, and special events—and providing more accessible and affordable arts programming also helps build bridges among the diverse ethnic, cultural, and other social groups within a specific community.

**Makerspace**—Makerspaces (also known as hackerspaces) are community---operated workspaces where people with common interests—often in computers, machining, technology, science, and the digital arts—can meet, socialize, and collaborate. The focus is on designing and making things with lots of hands---on learning, creation, and innovation through participation. Makerspaces may or may not address niche markets, targeting levels of ambition with projects and familiarity with tools.

Triangle makerspace facilities currently include: 1) *The Makery* at the Kidzu Children's Museum in Chapel Hill, which invites children to mix up real materials, tinker with real tools, and play with new ideas and processes; 2) *Raleigh Makerspace*, which provides inventors, artists, and hobbyists with access to design software and manufacturing equipment; and 3) *Splatspace* in Durham which provides various workzones dedicated to 3D printing and vinyl cutting, electronics, woodworking, gaming and robotics, laser cutting, and audio/visual production. Splatspace also offers all kinds of classes and workshops, ranging from crochet to basic circuitry.