



# Next Steps for Arts Based Development in Sisters, Oregon



# Next Steps for Arts Based Development In Sisters, Oregon

Project Lead:  
Vicki Dugger, Executive Director  
Oregon Downtown Development Association

Local Support:  
Sisters Community Action Team  
Kathy Deggendorfer, Trustee, The Roundhouse Foundation  
Judy Trego, Community Advocate  
Toni Landis, Staff

Project Funding:  
Oregon Housing & Community Services  
The Roundhouse Foundation  
Sister's Community Action Team

2005



# Table of Contents

Executive Summary	6
Introduction & Background	12
Arts in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Economy	16
Beyond Economic Benefits	18
Who Makes Up the Arts' Community?	22
Developing an Arts Based Infrastructure	24
Next Steps: Short Term (next 6-8 months)	32
Participate	
Communicate	
Activate	
Next Steps: Mid Term (next 1-2 years)	36
Communicate	
Create	
Cultivate	
Next Steps: Longer Term (next 3-5 years)	40
When Opportunities Knock, Be Ready to Answer	42
Make Friends with the Term: <i>Measure &amp; Evaluate</i>	44
In Conclusion	46
Appendix	48
Summary of On-Site Interviews (Oct.6-7, 2004)	
Templates	
Resource Information	
Information Sheets	
Case Studies	



# Executive Summary

**T**his report concentrates on the broader need to develop an integrated local arts *infrastructure* in Sisters, rather than the original project focus of setting a next steps framework to develop artisan live/work spaces. The transition in scope and final product is based on feedback from the Sisters arts community through two days of on-site focus groups. Through these discussions, it became clear that a sustainable and multi-faceted arts infrastructure is needed *and desired*, in conjunction with the necessary next steps of creating a vision and implementation plan for arts based development and securing and developing affordable spaces for living and working - - where the arts and artists can flourish. Implementing an arts based development strategy using a much more ordered and integrated approach will yield far more better results in the long-term, than if it were undertaken in a piece-meal, project-by-project fashion. That said, the ultimate success of an arts based development strategy can also be tied to the ability of the local arts community to take advantage of opportunities as they arise - - having the flexibility and capacity to adjust and move ahead without losing sight of their overall vision and plan.

The arts are emerging as a potent force in the economic life of cities and rural areas nationwide. They are assuming an important role as direct and indirect contributors to regional and state economies. Arts and heritage activities help give definition and identity to many communities throughout the United States, making them important economic drivers. In this sense, arts-related activities have long been regarded as important components of tourism development - - often helping seasonal economies transition to year round economies.

- In 2000, the arts had an overall impact of more than \$262 million within Oregon.
- Oregon's non-profit arts groups paid \$55 million in wages and arts groups purchased more than \$28 million worth of goods and services from other Oregon businesses.
- The report also stated that cultural heritage tourism is an important component of Oregon's economy. In addition to direct spending at festivals, cultural heritage activities are integrated into tourism efforts through Oregon and attract affluent visitors to activities throughout the state.
- Deschutes County attracts over 5.3 million visitors per year; with affiliated travel expenditures of more than \$307 million.
- Sisters' world-class arts and cultural events and activities are important factors in the area's growing regional tourism and cultural arts economy.
- Beyond their importance to tourism and cultural heritage activities, the arts are gaining recognition for their role in making communities attractive to workers who want to be identified with and participate in art-based activities both as full time professions and through leisure. These workers value '*quality of place*' above nearly all other factors - - including job market conditions - - in choosing where to locate.

Like any other type of economic development activity, arts based development requires a strong infrastructure in order to be sustainable over the long term. Following are highlighted strategies necessary to build a strong arts based infrastructure in Sisters. Details associated with these strategies are included within the body of the report.

- Focus on, commit to, and support of arts based development through both the public and private sectors.
- Creation of a long-range, community based arts development plan.
- Development and strengthening of local networks of artists and arts organizations.
- Creation of *affordable* spaces for artists - - for both living and working.
- Creation of community art spaces for exhibiting, performing and gathering.
- Creation of incentives for arts based business development.
- Implementation of a multi-faceted marketing effort to attract artists, promote arts events, etc.
- Measurement and evaluation of arts based development activities and projects; then making adjustments as needed and moving forward.

In addition to developing an arts based infrastructure, the report also includes Short, Mid, and Longer Term Steps the community should implement under a broad range of arts based activities.

**Short Term (6-8 months):**

- Keep the arts based development conversation at the forefront of local Strategic Planning efforts through participating in the process. This is an excellent opportunity to develop broader and more strategic goals for local arts development.
- Cultivate public/private partnerships to move a range of arts based development activities forward.
- Begin efforts to identify and secure affordable art spaces for gathering, exhibiting, performing, working and living. With the dramatically escalating prices of both bare and developed land in Sisters, it is critical to focus efforts on addressing this essential component of a sustainable arts infrastructure. The City should become a proactive partner with the nonprofit arts sector, the philanthropic community and private developers to develop live/work spaces, studios and cultural facilities while property values and available building stock still permit it. Following are three sites that have identified as potential opportunities to help move this component forward. Others may also exist. Additional details and information on the sites are included in the body of the report.
  - The Sisters Library site
  - Multnomah Publishing's current building
  - The US Forest Service property located in town
- Create a more formal communication network for artists through database development, e-mail trees, etc. Continue to raise awareness for arts based development.
- Hold a 'nomad' art show to showcase local artists and raise awareness and support for local arts based development efforts. The concept of a nomad art show came about because a community exhibit/performance space does not currently. However, there are several sites in town that could be used to house a temporary show.

### **Mid Term (1-2 years)**

- Continue to cultivate public/private partnerships and collaborations to move arts projects and priorities forward.
- Move ahead with creating affordable spaces for artists for living, working and performing/exhibiting.
- Continue to build and improve communication and networking opportunities for artists, including marketing efforts.
- Formalize a comprehensive vision and plan for arts based development in Sisters. This should occur following sufficient thought and conversation with partners and stakeholders. Through pre-planning, many questions should be answered, including whether a new, local arts organization is needed to carry the process forward, champion the plan, and serve as the private sector partner in implementation efforts.
- Based on projects identified in the plan, develop one-year work plans for each project that has been prioritized for implementation.
- Undertake next steps studies on more complicated and capital intensive projects that have been identified in the plan.
- Cultivate interest and enthusiasm for arts based development and activities by keeping the community and City informed along the way.

### **Longer Term (3-5 years)**

- Continue to focus efforts on strong public/private partnerships to develop affordable art spaces for living, working and performing/exhibiting.
- Review efforts and determine if it is time to add more projects into the work plan mix. If so, those projects should have already been identified as important. If not, keep moving ahead with other projects identified in the plan and try to determine if, and when, you will be ready to move into 'deeper waters.'
- Track successes; make adjustments, as needed.
- Keep arts based development at the forefront of community thinking and local development efforts through communication, networking and visibility.

### **Secrets to Success**

Finally, the 'secrets to success' to developing a strong and sustainable arts based economy in Sisters will depend heavily on:

- An agreed-upon, focused vision for arts based development

- Great planning that concentrates on building the local arts infrastructure *and* implementing identified projects to solve problems and address issues
- Exploration of ‘what’s worked and what hasn’t’ in arts based development for other communities
- An inclusive network of artists and arts organizations
- A strong, local arts organization to champion the arts cause and lead private sector efforts
- A supportive city government that leads public sector efforts in arts based development
- Effective public/private partnerships
- Tenacious implementation of projects and initiatives
- Readiness to step up to the plate with local resources
- Consistent communication among artists and with the community at-large
- On-going assessment of efforts and projects
- Willingness to adjust strategies as needed
- Ability to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities that move efforts forward
- Commitment to successfully work through challenges and conflicts
- A ‘Can Do’ attitude!

Research, interviews and anecdotal information indicate that arts based development is not only strongly desired in Sisters, but has a strong foothold. Moving this niche economic development agenda forward is a logical way to strengthen the existing economy and create a more vibrant and desirable community on many levels.

Sisters is poised and ready to embark on arts based development as a key local economic development strategy. The stars are aligned, the conversation has begun. Now is the opportune time to build partnerships and move the conversation to ‘next step’ actions through the approaches and strategies outlined in this report.



# Introduction & Background

*"If we, as citizens, do not support our artists, then we sacrifice our imagination on the altar of crude reality and we end up believing in nothing and having worthless dreams."*

~**Yann Martel**, from the introduction  
to his novel *"Life of Pi"*

**T**he whole notion of making art and being an artist stirs the imagination like nothing else. Art inspires and challenges us to think about things in new and thought-provoking ways. Making and experiencing art enhances our lives and provides a colorful and necessary counterpoint to our workaday lives.

In addition to enriching our lives, the arts often play an important, but often undervalued role in local economic development. According to Ann Markusen and David King in their study, *The Artistic Dividend: The Arts' Hidden Contributions to Regional Development*, "artistic activity is a major and varied contributor to economic vitality. We suggest that the productivity of and earnings in a regional economy rise as the incidence of artists within its boundaries increases, because artists' creativity and specialized skills enhance the design, production and marketing of products and services in other sectors. They also help firms recruit top-rate employees and generate income through direct exports of artistic work out of the region. Our hypotheses regarding the artistic dividend includes the notion that the presence of a large, diverse pool of artistic talent in a region enables businesses in the region to design their products better, enhance working conditions and employee morale, and market their output more successfully. This occurs when artists sell their services or products to companies in the region. It also happens when artists as buyers of goods and services

prompt suppliers to improve the latter's own offerings. In other words, artists' creative activity works both upstream (the supply side) and downstream (the demand side)."

Many communities across the country are now recognizing the importance of developing and nurturing their arts and creative culture communities - - both for their value in creating a more enriched society *and* as an important driver for 'home-grown' economic development.

As a state with widely varying climates and geography, so it is with Oregon's arts' communities. They come in a wide range of shapes, sizes and specialties. Portland, the largest city, has many different types of arts-based businesses, but is ranked seventh in the nation in concentration of designers (this category includes industrial, fashion, floral, graphic, interior, merchandise and set and exhibit design categories). On the other end of the scale, the small, rural community of Joseph, Oregon (whose population is just over 1000) has reinvented itself after a decline in local natural resource based industries as a NW center for sculptors, bronze foundries and casting.

When most people think of Sisters, Oregon, they associate it with tourism as Sisters is a destination for all types of travelers. However, Sisters can also be thought of an arts community, as it is known for its western-themed commercial architecture; its internationally-renown Quilt Show; and its retail outlets that include art galleries and studios. These 'calling cards' are diverse expressions of the arts. They draw a wide range of visitors to the community for differing reasons.

In addition, there are many artists, craftspeople, performers and other art practitioners who live and work in (and near) Sisters -- and who may *or may not* have their work or services represented within the Sisters marketplace. These community-based assets largely seem to be flying 'under the radar' in terms of their importance to the local economy.

Sisters is also fortunate that it has a local non-profit, the Community Action Team of Sisters (CATS), to help nurture and develop local assets in order to act as a catalyst to help break the cycle of poverty. CATS' active committees include Economic Development, Arts, Community Assets, Community Partners, Community Facilities,

Affordable Housing, and the Sisters Area Trails. This local organization, focused on these issues, will be an important component in further development of the Sisters' arts community.

In addition, arts development is also on the radar of the Sisters Economic Development Committee. This group is in the process of developing a local economic development plan to guide efforts for the next 5-7 years. Goal 3 of the draft plan lists the objective to develop an Arts-Economy Incubator that includes a Live/Work component.

Sisters' focus on the arts, in combination with existing art-based assets and the need to develop a stronger, 'locally grown' economy, drove discussions about how to move forward with nurturing and further developing the Sisters' arts community. The City of Sisters, CATS and The Roundhouse Foundation worked with the Governor's Economic Revitalization Team, Oregon Housing and Community Services and the Oregon Downtown Development Association (ODDA) to define and develop a 'next steps project' to move efforts forward. The scope of work focused on developing an integrated live/work artisan village within the community. The format of the project was to collect input from a variety of stakeholders on the needs within the local community in regards to arts, then develop the structure, framework and next steps necessary to move efforts forward.

ODDA contracted with Oregon Housing and Community Services, CATS and The Roundhouse Foundation to develop the next steps framework. On October 6-7, 2004, Vicki Dugger, Executive Director of ODDA and manager of this project, began on the on-site portion of work. Interviews with a variety of local stakeholder groups were held throughout both days. Groups interviewed on Day 1 included representatives from local arts-based businesses; arts educators; commercial property owners; and city, county, state and federal agencies. Although more informal in format, Day 2 was just as busy as the first day with a wide range of local artists and other stakeholders participating in the discussion.

As the interview portion of the project drew to a close, it became evident that broader recommendations were needed than simply how to get to next steps with developing an artisan village concept that included a live/work component. Time and again the need for

better communication among artists and groups was brought up, as well as the need for more in-depth planning around integrated arts development, and the need for gathering, exhibiting, performing and affordable housing for artists. To address these and other issues voiced throughout the interview process, this report is broader in nature than originally designed. It contains a framework for moving arts development efforts forward through both short- and longer-term projects. It addresses a variety of next steps related to a range of identified needs within the Sisters' arts community - - with the ultimate goal of strengthening and furthering development of the Sisters' arts community in an integrated and sustainable way.

# Arts in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economy

**T**he arts are emerging as a potent force in the economic life of cities and rural areas nationwide. They are assuming an important role as direct and indirect contributors to regional and state economies. Arts and heritage activities help give definition and identity to many communities throughout the United States, making them important economic drivers. In this sense, arts-related activities have long been regarded as important components of tourism development - - often helping seasonal economies transition to year round economies.

In 2000, the arts had an overall impact of more than \$262 million within Oregon, according to a study commissioned by Northwest Business for Culture and the Arts. Oregon's non-profit arts groups paid \$55 million in wages and arts groups purchased more than \$28 million worth of goods and services from other Oregon businesses. (The study addressed the impacts of *nonprofit* arts activities, not artists as entrepreneurs.) The report also stated that cultural heritage tourism is an important component of Oregon's economy. In addition to direct spending at festivals, cultural heritage activities are integrated into tourism efforts through Oregon and attract affluent visitors to activities throughout the state. According the tourism statistics, Deschutes County attracts over 5.3 million visitors per year; with affiliated travel expenditures of more than \$307 million. Sisters' world-class events and activities, including a world famous quilt show (with the nation's largest outdoor quilt exhibit), folk festivals, art festivals, and concert series, are important factors in the area's growing regional tourism and cultural arts economy.

Beyond their importance to tourism and cultural heritage activities, the arts are gaining recognition for their role in making communities attractive to workers who want to be

identified with and participate in art-based activities both as full time professions and through leisure. In the past decade, communities have begun to realize that their economic fortunes are increasingly tied to the local preferences of highly mobile, knowledge-based workers who form the intellectual backbone of the New Economy. These workers value '*quality of place*' above nearly all other factors - - including job market conditions - - in choosing where to locate.

According to Richard Florida of Carnegie Mellon University, four factors determine quality of place: lifestyle, environmental quality, a vibrant music and arts scene, and natural and outdoor amenities. This in part reflects the changes in cultural preferences related to the demographics of this workforce.

Beyond simple residential preference, there are solid economic reasons for skills-based workers to seek a vibrant culture relating to the nature of work in the new Economy. First, creativity is an essential raw material; cultural participation keeps the creative skills required of a knowledge-based workforce sharp.

In recent years, innovative commercial businesses, non-profit institutes and independent artists all have become necessary ingredients in a successful region's 'innovation habitat.'

Using Richard Florida's factors, Sisters is well-positioned in that it is very strong in three out of four of the factors that determine quality of place. Nurturing and further development of the Sisters' arts community into a more vibrant, highly organized, cohesive and visible component will not only provide direct economic impacts, it will make Sisters more attractive to New Economy businesses that largely base their locational decisions on *quality of place*.

# Beyond Economic Benefits

**T**his report would be incomplete if it did not address the ‘softer’ benefits that arts based development creates.

Art and cultural activities can help:

- give members of a community a positive sense of identity and cohesion;
- increase educational attainment and cultural literacy; and
- bridge barriers to address a variety of problems.

(Excerpted from *Strengthening Communities Through Culture*, The Center for Arts and Culture)

Artists are creative problem solvers and expert communicators. Involving artists in community planning discussions can uncover new ways of approaching community problems. A few ways that artists can help solve problems are by:

## **Improving the Built Environment**

Visual artists and writers have the ability to envision and improve the built environment. Involving artists in designing community improvements such as streetscape elements, parks, way-finding systems and community markers often results in much better design solutions.

## **Celebrating Cultural Diversity**

Most communities can be improved by promoting greater understanding among the people who live there. Communities that create opportunities to celebrate and share their heritage enrich themselves and create new opportunities for community dialogue.

### **Addressing Social Issues**

Cross-cultural and cross-generational communication that can occur as the result of a community art effort will open the door for community dialogue on a variety of social issues.

### **Capturing Local History**

Every community has a story to tell, whether it is the story of evolving industry, geological or social history, or changing ethnic populations. Working with artists, musicians and writers is an excellent way to explore that history and make it part of the community's identity.

### **Giving Youth a Voice**

Young people are one of the great underutilized resources in our society. Involving them in art projects, historical research, performance and creation of art projects is an excellent way to promote cross-generational communication and help young people feel like respected members of the community.

### **Rebuilding Community**

In their book, *“Better Together”*, Robert Putnam and Lewis Feldstein take traditional arts institutions and practices to task for their contribution to the decline in social capital.

“Traditionally, arts institutions have done far more bonding than bridging. We are becoming a nation of arts spectator more than arts participants, and this trend is likely to accelerate.”

“Even amid these warning signs, they continue, **“we believe that the arts represent perhaps the most significant underutilized forum for rebuilding community in America.”** To become contributors to community building and social capital, they call for arts organizations and leaders to follow three principles in their work:

1. Look for opportunities to bridge
2. Revive or redesign arts organizations as community institutions and places

3. Include artists and cultural institution in community planning.

Putnam and Feldstein add, “We recommend that America’s cultural institution and the people who work within them create opportunities for political expression, community dialogue, shared cultural experiences and civic work - - all with an eye toward making citizen participation fun.”



# Who Makes Up the Arts Community?

**A**n artist is a person who is regularly engaged in the visual, performing or creative arts as demonstrated by a body of work. Artists include actors, directors, performance artists, dancers, choreographers, musicians, composers, authors, writers, painters, sculptors, potters, photographers, film-makers, installation artists, etc.

The arts community should also include related occupations of artisans and craftspeople, including fiber artists, jewelry makers, instrument makers, traditional artists (storytellers, blacksmiths, basketmakers, etc.), publishers, and others who produce products and services within this vein. In addition, occupations that are closely related to the arts may also be included, including architects, landscape architects and designers, including product designers, industrial designers, graphic designers, and interior designers to name a few.

Those who work in arts education are also part of the arts ‘conversation’ and should include educators who teach arts related courses or lessons in a variety of venues, including workshops, classes, institutes, etc., as well as include private and group instruction. Arts education – both formally in K-12 and higher institutions of learning, and informally through networks of teachers and studios – plays a significant role in creating an arts economy, through the training and employing of artists and by cultivating artist tastes and commitment on the part of the larger public.

Those who serve in supporting roles should also be part of the arts discussion, as they are central to the success of artistic entrepreneurship. They include gallery owners,

co-op groups, arts organizations, civic groups, charitable foundations and non-profits who are working with artists or other arts based businesses.

Finally, this list would be remiss if it neglected to include the City and other local, regional and state economic development entities and agencies as crucial *partners* in helping move local arts based development strategies and projects forward. The City of Sisters is an especially important partner, as proactive efforts on their part to work with the local cultural arts community to create incentives for arts based development and develop affordable arts spaces for gathering, exhibiting/performing, working and living can mean the difference between success and failure of local arts based development efforts.

# Developing an Arts Based Infrastructure

**L**ike any other type of economic development activity, arts based development requires a strong infrastructure in order to be successful and sustainable over the long haul. Following are recommended strategies to build and develop a local, integrated infrastructure that supports arts based development.

## **Focus On, Commit To, and Support Arts Based Development through Both the Public and Private Sectors**

It is critical that both the public and private sectors commit to and support arts based development to ensure that efforts have enough ‘horsepower’ to move ahead and the arts agenda doesn’t get sidetracked or ambushed! Often, efforts to undertake arts based development rests almost entirely in the hands of local artists and arts organizations - - with the City or other groups missing from the conversation. Having the City and other local organizations at the ‘arts table’ as strong and willing partners can mean the difference between success and failure of expanded and sustainable arts based development efforts.

Through the process to develop this plan, feedback from the City staff indicated they, and the Council, are waiting to hear from the arts community what is wanted and needed to help build and support arts based business development and related activities. They indicated the best way to gain support and leverage from the City is to ensure that arts based development planning and activities are community driven and have business focus.

It is not enough for City staff to verbally agree to support arts based development. It is crucial that the City recognize this strategy as a stated goal in local plan documents such as Strategic or Community Development Plans. This not only raises visibility for the arts, it also denotes an official stance supporting arts based development.

In Paducah, KY, the City is committed to arts based development through their Artist Relocation Program that was begun in 2000. Through an urban renewal district, over 1.2 million have been committed to the Artist Relocation Program, with an additional 1.2 million spent on streetscape and infrastructure improvements within the targeted area. In addition, Artist Relocation Program incentives include: 100% financing for purchase and rehab of an existing structure or building of a new structure. The basic loan package is 7% interest for a 30-yr. fixed rate mortgage. Free lots are also available for new construction, as available. The City also pays up to \$2500 for architectural services or other professional fees. The Artist Relocation Program district is also within an Enterprise Zone and all materials for rehab or new construction are tax-exempt. Zoning within the program area enables artists to have gallery, studio and living space under one roof. Other incentives for artists also include discounted web pages and national marketing of Paducah's arts district. The arts district and the Artist Relocation Program have been highlighted in a variety of national magazines, newspapers on television and through several national awards. The Artist Relocation Program is about artist ownership, giving artists a vested interest in the community. In the past five years, forty-five artists have relocated to Paducah from across all parts of the country - - expanding the arts based and highlighting this community as one of the most innovative and successful with their arts based development strategy. To further strengthen Paducah as a center for the arts, the community houses several arts venues and events, including a recently completed, 1800 seat performing arts center that was built for \$44 million - -not bad for a community with a population of just over 25,000!

Examples of ways the City can support arts based development efforts in Sisters could be through a variety of means, including adding arts based development as a stated City economic development strategy in web and print relocation materials; leasing (long-term, \$1/year) or donating property to house a local arts development office and associated activities; earmarking urban renewal dollars for projects and activities that support arts based economic development, including the purchase of property for redevelopment into

live/work spaces; creation of a special arts district overlay zone with incentives for existing arts based businesses expansion and development; funding for a part-time economic development staff position (who could focus on arts based business recruitment and development, write grants, manage projects and studies associated with identified arts development projects, etc.); and extensive, specialized marketing to help recruit arts based businesses.

The Artist Relocation Program and its associated marketing activities are run out of the Paducah City Hall. In fact, the Artist Relocation Program is not even mentioned on Paducah's Chamber website, which is unfortunate, considering it is an extremely successful and innovative targeted business development strategy. (Information from the Artist Relocation Program website is included in the Appendix of this report.) Although the City of Sisters has left marketing the community to the Chamber, a separate approach will be needed to give arts based business development the visibility and stature it needs in order to be successful.

Communicating with, and connecting to, other local civic organizations to invite them to participate in arts based development efforts is another way to build support and consensus. As mentioned earlier, bridging the arts to the wider community is a way to increase visibility, expand partnerships and connect to the community at large. Another component in developing a sustainable arts infrastructure is to develop and nurture arts philanthropy through both corporate giving and private patronage. Studies show that an area's ability to attract and retain artists is closely tied to the activity of philanthropists and quality arts establishments. These components act like a welcome mat; with the community's or region's reputation for this supportive infrastructure spread by word of mouth around the country and even internationally.

### **Formalize a Long-Range Arts Based Development Plan**

An arts based development plan, or 'roadmap', is an essential next step following adopting the goal of arts based development. In the *Recommended Next Steps* section that follows, the action to formalize a Long-Range Arts Based Development Plan is listed as something that should occur within the next year or so. By pushing this activity into

the future, local partners in both the public and private sectors will have time to plan and develop the process to cultivate a community-based arts plan.

### **Build Local Networks of Artists & Arts Organizations**

In *The Artist Dividend: The Arts Hidden Contribution to Regional Development*, Markusen and King state, “Networks and organizations where artists can meet others in the same and related occupations are central to the success of artistic entrepreneurship.

“Membership organizations, including unions, professional groups, and voluntary groupings provide a forum for exchange of information and insight, ideas for improvements in one’s art, and inspiration from hearing others’ stories. Many such organizations run training sessions and workshop in business management, marketing, self-representation and other crucial elements of entrepreneurship, tailored to the art form. Literally every economically successful artist we spoke to credited such forums for helping them at specific junctures in their careers.”

From feedback gathered during the on-site portion of this project, it became clear that artists in and around Sisters’ are hungry for more networking and interaction. Building and nurturing this component of the local arts infrastructure is a critical piece of the puzzle to grow and sustain arts based economic development.

As part of the overall effort to build a local network of artists, it may be necessary to create a community non-profit that assumes the leadership role within the private realm to champion the cause of arts based development.

### **Create Affordable Arts Spaces for Working and Living**

Affordable spaces for artists to live and work are a lynchpin in developing an arts infrastructure. Artists have a range of needs depending on their artistic medium, income level and family size. Some artists need a separate workspace in an industrial zone

while others may want to convert a garage into a studio. Others may prefer a combined live/work space.

Offering affordable spaces for artists to live and work will be critical in Sisters where average rental rates for a small house are around \$10,200 per year (\$850/mo); with a 3-bedroom, 2-bath home renting for \$14,400 per year (\$1200/mo) (Source: Central Oregon Board of Realtors). According to a Sisters realtor, the average price range for an *entry level* home is in the \$219,000 – \$227,000. In addition, an average commercial/industrial space rents for \$.65/sqft and retail space rents for an average of \$1/sqft (Source: City of Sisters' web site.) These rental rates and prices are unaffordable for an independent artist, writer or performer in Deschutes County where their average income is \$14,301 per year (2001, US Census) - - making it virtually impossible for an artist to be able to rent or buy in the area without a plan or program in place to address this gap in affordability.

The City of Seattle is committed to helping provide affordable spaces for artists. Through its Department of Housing, a handbook called "*Space for Artists*" was developed to help address the needs of artists and arts organizations who want to lease or own the space in which they will live, work and/or perform. In addition to this guide, the City is actively involved in helping develop three affordable housing projects for artists. Many other cities and communities around the country understand the importance of providing affordable living and studio spaces for artists as part of an overall arts based development strategy.

Addressing the challenge of providing affordable living and working space for artists in a hot real estate market will take a focused and collaborative effort between public and private sectors. However, without resolution, this issue stands to derail efforts to target and recruit arts based businesses.

### **Create Art Spaces for Exhibiting, Performing and Gathering**

Any community that is focusing on the arts as an economic development driver must 'walk the talk' by providing a multi-functional community art space. Even the small, rural community of Condon, Oregon (population: 729) has an outstanding community art

space on Main Street. According to Boyd Harris, founder of Co-Arts (the Greater Condon Art Association), the City owns and maintains Memorial Hall and partners with Boyd's group on grants and through volunteer efforts. In the 1970s, the fledging Co-Arts group approached the City to redevelop a rundown building on Main Street into a multi-purpose community space that could house all types of arts activities. The City and Co-Arts partnered on grants and fund raising to rehab the dilapidated building. The work and partnership on Memorial Hall continues with the City recently receiving a Community Development Block Grant to rehab the kitchen facilities. The open, flexible gallery space has room for an exhibit of 75-80 pieces and can be configured for performances and meetings to suit a variety of community needs and activities. (Housed in Memorial Hall, Condon's biennial Art Slate show has grown from a juried show, to an invitation-only show.) This on-going, synergistic partnership between the City and Co-Arts is a good example of 'a whole equaling more than the sum of the parts.' The City's support of the arts through its collaboration with Co-Arts is an excellent example of a public/private partnership that truly benefits the arts and the community as a whole.

Paducah, KY, a town of just over 25,000, committed to growing their arts economy and has been very successful at doing so with their innovative and award winning Artist Relocation Program. This community just completed the construction of a \$44 million performing arts center. The community also boasts a center for the visual arts *and* one of the top ten community theaters in the country.

Artists' 'clubhouses', multi-functional spaces to house arts organizations and for artists to use for exhibits, performances, workshops, and to informally gather, are a necessary ingredient in building an arts based economy. These spaces help support artist networks and organizations by providing much needed space for meetings and gatherings. They also provide a dedicated venue for exhibits and performances. And when these spaces can be configured for trainings and provide an environment for artists to just hang out, the benefits of a community art space of this type compound.

Available exhibit and performance space for artists is critical if a community wants to be taken seriously in their efforts to develop a more vibrant arts economy.

The donation of a building, or access to facilities through a long-term, almost no-cost lease, to house administrative activities associated with the arts, as well as provide a space for exhibits, performances and artists to network would help give arts based development more stature and visibility within Sisters. Having a local 'homebase' for the arts and artists is a critical component in building a strong arts infrastructure.

### **Create Incentives for Arts Based Business Development**

In many communities across the country, the public sector has played a major role in jump-starting the local arts economy by providing infrastructure projects, subsidies, tax breaks and amenities that support and solidify local arts activity. Some communities offer free lots for artists who want to build live/work spaces, 100% financing for existing houses/studios, and free design assistance for building rehabs within the target area. These and similar types of incentives could be part of an arts overlay zone that supports the expansion of existing arts based businesses, the development of new arts businesses, and the recruitment of arts based businesses from outside the area.

Another innovative way to incent artists is by investing in activities that nurture artistic entrepreneurship. These could include micro-business loans as well as workshops, web-based training, and technical assistance focused on business management, marketing, self-representation, and other elements of entrepreneurship that are tailored specifically to the arts. Other incentives such as discounted web pages and collective ways of providing health care coverage and retirement plans will also be strong draws to artists who, as a whole, struggle with these issues.

Creating a multi-dimensional package of incentives for artists that addresses more than one type of need will help make Sisters more competitive in retaining and recruiting artists.

**Undertake a Multi-Faceted Marketing Effort to Attract Artists, Promote Arts Events, etc.**

A multi-faceted marketing plan is necessary to get the word out to recruit artists, collectively promote artists, and to publicize local arts offerings and events to visitors. Marketing to each of these target markets will require different methods and approaches. However, each piece of marketing collateral should be produced under a common 'brand umbrella' that is developed specifically to position and identify Sisters as an outstanding arts community with lots to offer.

# Next Steps: Short Term (6-8 months)

**T**he following are recommended steps that should be implemented within the next six to eight months. They cover a variety of topics related to arts development. A logical facilitator of these recommendations is the Arts Committee of the Community Assistance Team of Sisters (CATS).

## **Participate**

1. It will be important to keep the arts based development discussion at the forefront of local Community Strategic Planning Efforts through participation in the process. This is an excellent opportunity to develop broader and more strategic goals for local arts development.
2. Cultivate essential public/private partnerships to move a range of arts based developments efforts forward.
3. Begin to identify and secure affordable arts spaces for gathering, exhibiting, performing, working and living. With the dramatically escalating prices of both bare and developed land in Sisters, it is critical to focus efforts on addressing this critical component of a sustainable arts infrastructure. The City should become a proactive partner with the nonprofit arts sector, the philanthropic community and private development to create live/work spaces, studios and cultural facilities while property values and available building stock still permit it.

## **Communicate**

The most pressing need that was raised throughout the interview process was for better communication among individual artists and art-based groups.

1. Create a comprehensive database of local artists, performers, educators, craftspeople, etc.

Before setting out to create the database, think carefully about how many ways it can be used. This will determine the types of informational fields to include. At a minimum, it should include business name, owner, contact info (including electronic), web address, primary connection to art, secondary connection to art, interest in receiving updates on art happenings and development, interest in volunteering for arts-based projects, etc. A good way to develop the database may be to work with the high school (perhaps a leadership class) to develop the survey and administer it (it could even be offered on-line). From survey results, develop a user-friendly database.

2. Create an e-mail tree for local artists to announce upcoming events and activities. Linking the arts community through e-mail will be a cost effective and easy way to help build communication within the art community.
3. Continue the 'Arts Conversation' begun by this project. Local stakeholders who were interviewed stated this was the first time in a very long time that an organized, open and encompassing 'Arts Conversation' had taken place in Sisters. Bringing the broader arts community together on a quarterly basis would be a very good way to continue the 'conversations' and build a stronger coalition.
4. Continue to raise awareness for arts based development. The importance of the arts as a key economic development focus is a message that needs to be communicated again and again to a variety of local and regional groups and stakeholders.

5. Create a database of available arts space of all types; making sure to update it regularly.

## **Activate**

1. During interviews for this project, an idea came up to have a 'nomad' art show or other 'happening' to showcase local artists. The concept of a 'nomad' show came about because a community exhibit/ performance space does not currently exist. However, there are several 'opportunity sites' that could host a temporary show (especially in the new commercial development that has several vacancies). The whole event/show could be very creatively done, yet organized with enough flexibility to quickly make other arrangements should the space lease prior to the show/event.



# Next Steps: Mid-Term (1-2 years)

**I**mplementing a successful arts based economic development strategy is tricky - - it requires increasing local capacity and building your arts infrastructure while actively marketing your offerings to a different audiences.

Following are recommended 'Mid Term' steps for further developing an arts based economy.

## **Communicate**

1. Continue to cultivate public/private partnership and collaborations to move arts based economic development efforts and plans forward.
2. Move ahead with creation of affordable spaces for artists to live, work and exhibit/perform. The importance of developing this piece of the arts based infrastructure cannot be overemphasized.
3. Continue to improve communication and networking opportunities among artists, arts groups, etc. This will help build a more cohesive and connected arts community. Create opportunities to bring artists together in formal and informal ways to share ideas, problem solve and network.
4. Begin to think about how you will want to communicate through a multi-faceted marketing effort once the arts plan and framework are put into place.

## **Create**

1. Continue to focus efforts on strong public/private partnerships to develop affordable arts spaces.
2. Now is the time to formalize a comprehensive vision and plan for arts based development in Sisters. This should occur following sufficient thought and conversations with partners and stakeholders. Through pre-planning, many questions should be answered, including whether a new, local arts organization is needed to carry the process forward, champion the plan and serve as the private sector partner in implementation efforts.

The Sisters Plan for Art Based Development should be multi-faceted in design, and be based on an agreed-upon vision. It should also include a framework for developing a sustainable and inclusive local arts infrastructure. The plan should also lay out both short and long term goals, projects, budgets, funding strategies, tasks, timelines, partners, and parties responsible. The plan should also include outcomes and measurements so that projects can be evaluated for their effectiveness and success.

An asset mapping exercise might be a valuable way to help identify local arts assets and connections as part of the process to develop the arts plan. Very often this type of exercise ‘uncovers’ hidden assets and spawns ideas on how to better connect and collaborate. If the decision is made to go through an asset mapping exercise, think about how the gathered information will be used and for what purpose. By starting with the ‘answer,’ you can design the asset mapping exercise so that it accomplishes what it needs to. (Asset mapping templates will be included in the Appendix.)

3. Based on projects identified in the plan, create one-year work plans for each project that has been prioritized for implementation.

Each work plan should be divided into categories that include: project name, tasks necessary to complete project, person(s) responsible, budget, funding strategy, and timeline. (Work plan and timeline templates will be included in the Appendix.) It is important that work plans are 'do-able' - - in other words, don't put so many projects on a one-year work plan that there is no way they will all get accomplished. Be realistic about what can be accomplished. People will remember the one or two projects that didn't get done more than the ones that did if you do not plan your work load well. It is better to cross off projects when they are completed and add new ones, rather than have projects that languish on the work plan with no actions taken.

3. Undertake 'next steps' feasibility studies on more complicated and capital intensive projects that have been identified in the plan. This could include studies for live/work projects, etc.

## **Cultivate**

1. Cultivate new partnerships and collaborations to help move plans and projects forward. This includes 'growing' local support for funding arts activities through both corporate and individual patrons.
2. Cultivate interest and enthusiasm for arts activities and projects by keeping the community informed along the way. This includes keeping the City updated on arts based development projects. As the head of Paducah's Artist Relocation Program said, "We made sure that our program and its successes were kept at the forefront of the City Council as they were in charge of making sure it continued (or not). One thing we did to help keep our Artist Relocation Program in a positive light was to nominate it for statewide and national planning awards. Winning these awards clearly sent a message to City Council that we have a great program, recognized statewide and nationally, that needs to be kept in place. Having this kind of visibility and recognition has really helped our cause."



## Next Steps: Longer Term (3-5 years)

**A**t this stage of the game, it is important to review efforts and determine if it's time to add more complicated projects into the work plan mix. If so, those projects should have already been identified as important. If not, keep moving ahead with other projects identified in the plan and try to determine if, and when, you will be ready to move into 'deeper waters.' This issue of capacity is raised based on experience. There are several downtown associations around the state that have been in business for 15-20 years - - and the sad news is they are not increasing their capacity or sophistication to undertake more complicated redevelopment projects, but are happy just doing what they have done for the past 10-15 years. Their complacency with the status quo has led to many missed opportunities to become a stronger leader, voice and advocate within their downtowns.

Explore how other communities have continued to increase their local capacity in implementing arts based development activities and projects. Explore what worked, as well as what didn't, and why.

Track successes and don't be afraid to 'toot your horn' when projects are moving successfully forward. (This is discussed more in the next section *Make Friends with The Term: Measure & Evaluate.*) Don't forget to occasionally bring the community together to celebrate completed projects and talk about 'what's next.' This is a good way to keep the community informed of progress. It also helps volunteers avoid burnout and it can also be used to recruit new volunteers and supporters to the effort.



# When Opportunities Knock, Be Ready to Answer

**T**he original intent of this project was to develop a 'next steps' framework to develop live/work spaces for artisans. As the project progressed, it became clear through on-site interviews and project research that a more comprehensive approach was wanted and needed to cohesively move an arts based development strategy forward. That said, the arts community should capitalize on opportunities as they arise to advance the overall goal of arts based development. This includes partnering on the redevelopment of properties for artists to exhibit, work, live and/or gather - - as these types of projects comprise part of the basic infrastructure needed to develop a strong and sustainable arts based program.

Following are three opportunity sites that have been identified that could help move arts based development efforts forward. They are prioritized by best opportunities to move forward.

- The Sisters Library site, located at 291 E. Main. The site is 13,680 sq. ft. with one building that is 2,685 sq. ft. and a smaller office that is 624 sq. ft. Since this property is owned by the City, it does not have an assessed value assigned to it. The map/TL # for this property is 151004CD02600.
- The US Forest Service property in Sisters, located along Hwy. 120/26 & Pine Street, is also a piece of non-assessable property, due to its ownership. The map/TL # for this property is: 1510050000100. According to a representative from the Forest

Service, they have about 75 acres of property in town and may be looking to sell part of it - - with the current thinking that the Forest Service may need 12-15 acres of the site. Now is the time for the local arts community and the City to activity pursue next step conversations with the Forest Service, in the hopes of working out an agreement to purchase a parcel of land that could be developed into the live/work artisan village concept. There was also an indication that the Forest Service would consider a creative idea/use for a portion of the property they would keep under a special use agreement. Ideas that were discussed included a 'one-stop' information kiosk (including info on local arts activities)/public restrooms/visitor services.

- The current Multnomah Publishers building (8,000 sq.ft.), located at 204 W. Adams, sits on .88 acre. The 2004 assessed value is \$490,030 and the real market value is \$618,360 (\$132,070 for the land and \$486,290 for the building). The map/TL # is 151004CC00101.

When approaching opportunities, the arts community and potential partners should carefully sift each project through the filters of whether (& how) it fits into the overall Arts Based Development Plan and whether there is adequate planning, support, capacity, resources and commitment necessary to successfully complete the project and keep it running once it has been completed. (And if there are gaps in any of these, how can they be filled?) Moving ahead with opportunities in a systematic and judicious way will help ensure the long-term sustainability and success of any arts based development project undertaken.

The ultimate success of an arts based development strategy can be tied to the ability of the local arts partnership to 'answer the door' when opportunity knocks - - having the flexibility and capacity to adjust as opportunities arise and the commitment to move ahead without losing sight of the overall vision and plan.

# Make Friends with the Term 'Measure & Evaluate'

**I**mplementing a multi-faceted arts plan is not for the faint of heart. It should be developed and implemented in a thoughtful way that includes developing and strengthening the arts infrastructure within the community - - building capacity along the way - - while working on desired projects and outcomes.

As arts based development moves forward, it will be important to take stock and evaluate efforts on two levels: arts infrastructure and projects identified in the plan. It is important that efforts are reviewed and evaluated at least once a year. Following are a few questions that will help frame this process.

## **Arts Infrastructure**

- Is the arts infrastructure developing as it should?
- Is arts based development still an identified strategy for community development?
- Is there a strong public-private partnership to move arts based development efforts forward?
- Is there an organized network of artists and arts organizations?
- Is the private sector (leadership) arts organization increasing in capacity and moving forward as it should?
- Are efforts moving forward to provide affordable spaces for artists to gather, show, live and work?
- Are there incentives in place that encourage arts based development?
- Is there a multi-faceted marketing plan in place that addresses: artist recruitment; collectively promotes local artists; and publicizes local offerings and events to visitors?

- How are outcomes being measured?

**Projects Identified in Arts Plan**

- Are workplans being used for projects?
- If not, why not?
- Are you where you thought you would be with projects identified within the plan?
- If not, why not?
- What are the barriers?
- What needs to happen in order to move ahead?
- Are additional projects being added to the plan as others are completed?
- How are outcomes being measured?

## In Conclusion

**T**his report has focused on the broader need to develop local arts infrastructure, in conjunction with the necessary next steps of creating a vision and implementation plan for arts based development and securing and developing affordable spaces for living and working - - where the arts and artists can flourish. Implementing an arts based development strategy using an ordered and integrated approach will yield far more better results in the long-term, than if it were undertaken in a piece-meal fashion.

The 'secrets to success' to developing a strong and sustainable arts based economy in Sisters will depend heavily on:

- An agreed-upon, community based vision for arts based development
- Great planning that concentrates on building the local arts infrastructure *and* implementing identified projects to solve problems and address issues
- Exploration of 'what's worked and what hasn't' in arts based development for other communities - - then taking appropriate 'bests' and adapting them to Sisters
- An inclusive network of artists and arts organizations
- A strong, local arts organization to champion the arts cause and lead private sector efforts
- A supportive city government that leads public sector efforts in arts based development
- Effective public/private partnerships
- Tenacious implementation of projects and initiatives
- Readiness to step up to the plate with local resources
- Consistent communication among artists and with the community at-large

- On-going assessment of efforts and projects
- Willingness to adjust strategies as needed
- Ability to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities that move efforts forward
- Commitment to successfully work through challenges and conflicts
- A 'Can Do' attitude!

Sisters is poised and ready to embark on arts based development as a key local economic development strategy. The stars are aligned, the conversation has begun. Now is the opportune time to move the conversation to 'next step' actions through the strategies and steps outlined in this report.



# Appendix

## Summary of On-site Interviews (Oct. 6-7, 2004)

### Templates:

- Asset Mapping
- Project Workplan
- Project Timeline

### Resource Information:

- Handbook Excerpt: How to Incorporate Arts & Culture into Neighborhood Business District Revitalization Programs

### Articles:

- Artful Business: Using the Arts for Community Economic Development

- Strengthening the Arts in Your Community

- Handbook Excerpt: Space for Artists 2002

### Information Sheets:

- Funding Sources & Programs for Downtown Revitalization Activities

### Case Studies:

- Artspace: Various Projects
- Paducah, Kentucky's Artist Relocation Program



# Sisters Arts Incubator Project

## Notes from Interview Discussions

(Oct 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>, 2004)

### Sisters Community Action Team Office

By Vicki D. Dugger, Executive Director  
Oregon Downtown Development Association

**Groups Interviewed on Day 1:**  
**Sisters Arts Based Business Owners**  
**Arts Educators**  
**Commercial Property Owners**  
**City/County/State/Federal Representatives**

**Day 2 Interviews:**  
**Artists and Interested Parties**

**Interview Format:**  
Informal Q&A and follow-up discussions to determine what the stakeholder groups need/would like to see happen in further developing and supporting the local arts community in Sisters.

**Format of Notes:**  
Summary notes developed during the interviews/discussions will be presented, followed by individual talking point notes taken during interviews.

**Outcome from This Process:**  
From the information gathered, a next steps framework will be developed to help organize and guide future efforts to support, nurture and expand the local arts, artists and their role and presence in the community.

#### **Summary Notes 1: Needs**

- **Marketing:** 1) to bring buyers; 2) to promote local artists; 3) to recruit new artists. This could be done through a co-operative effort and could include a web-based 'virtual co-op gallery' of Sisters artists. Special events and exhibits/performances were also mentioned. There was much discussion about issues with working with the Chamber and its volunteers to disseminate accurate information; the limited hours the Chamber office is open; and issues related to Chamber's mission to serve its members only and that many sole proprietor artist businesses do not see benefits of membership in relation to the cost. An interactive 'touch-screen' info kiosk was also discussed as another way for visitors to access information when the Chamber office is closed.
- **Art Space:** space is needed for the following: studio, workshop, rehearsal, lessons, exhibits, performances, gathering, live/work. Flexibility is needed to address a variety of needs.
- **Good Examples:** case studies and success stories are needed on a variety of arts related topics to understand how other communities have addressed their issues and moved forward with better support for local artists.
- **Economic Impact Analysis:** an analysis is needed to illustrate the enormous economic impacts that local arts events/venues are infusing into the Sisters economy.
- **Database Development:** a comprehensive database is needed of local artists as there is not a current master list. In addition to contact, type of arts, etc., additional information could be included in the database (i.e. needs/plans to expand and/or share studio space, etc.)
- **Balance/Phasing for Moving Forward:** use and build off things that are working don't move too fast and don't reinvent the wheel.

- **Explore Potential New Collaborations:** among those mentioned were North Star (Aspen Youth Services), SOAR, COCC (with accredited programs). Joint tenancy, programs, services should be explored as appropriate as plans are made to move ahead.
- **Explore a Wide Range of Target Audiences:** as efforts move forward to develop a detailed program of work for arts development, it will be important to explore how a variety of audiences could be included/involved, including: elderly, youth, at-risk populations, special needs populations, and those with therapy needs
- **Support Services for Artists:** including assistance with marketing, business development, insurance, space, events, and visibility (through exhibits, studio tours and events).
- **Develop Both Short and Long Term Integrated Action Plans:** discussions focused on the need for both short and long term plans and projects to move ahead in way that will yield success and build momentum and support for the arts.