RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO THE GENERAL PLAN
VISION STATEMENT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Submitted by Tracy Hudak and Todd Collart

Existing Vision Statement - Ventura County is a remarkable place to live, work, and play. Our exceptional quality of life and economic vitality is rooted in the stewardship of our rich natural resources including our world class beaches, fertile agricultural plains, and scenic mountains. The General Plan reflects the County’s ongoing commitment to collaborate with Ventura County cites to address our environmental, social and economic needs and allow our safe, healthy, vibrant and diverse communities to thrive.

Proposed Vision Statement - Ventura County is a remarkable place to live, work, and play. Our exceptional quality of life and economic vitality is rooted in the stewardship of our cultural resources, rich natural resources including our world class beaches, fertile agricultural plains, and scenic mountains; and our talented residents. The General Plan reflects the County’s ongoing commitment to collaborate with Ventura County cites, businesses, and non-profit organizations to address our environmental, social and economic needs in a sustainable manner, and allow our safe, healthy, vibrant and diverse communities to thrive.

Ammend last Guiding Principle - Promote economic, social, and physical health and wellness by promoting access to cultural expression and community participation and by encouraging walking, biking, and access to healthy foods and integrating Health in All Policies into the built environment. (Healthy Communities)

New Guiding Principle – County elected officials and staff will actively and intentionally seek partnerships with non-profit organizations and businesses to fulfill the Vision of the General Plan, its Guiding Principles, and the goals, policies and programs that grow out of the General Plan
RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO NON-PROFITS
Submitted by Todd Collart, 5627 Amherst St Ventura, CA 93003  (805) 644-2923

1. Direct Planning staff to include in the Final Background Report to the General Plan a discussion of the non-profit sector based on the following text.

2. Direct Planning staff to convene the applicable focus group to identify the Assets, Issues and Opportunities for the Non-profit sector and add these to the Final Background Report.

Recommended text to add to the FINAL BACKGROUND REPORT – Chapter 2 Demographics and Economics

Non-Profit Sector of the Economy
Non-profit organizations are often misunderstood and underestimated. While they are often thought of as social service providers their roles extend into areas that parallel many of those in the governmental and business arenas. Similarly, their economic contribution is often underestimated.

According to the 2017 Ventura County Civic Alliance’s “State of the Region Report” there were 3295 tax-exempt non-profits registered with the IRS in Ventura County as of 2015. 1397 filed IRS 990 forms indicating they had annual revenues greater than $50,000. The other 1146 entities had revenues less than $50,000. However, the annual 2015 revenues for all non-profits was $2.7 billion. In addition, they had $5.1 billion in assets. The revenues and assets for all county non-profits has grown significantly from baselines in 2005: $1.4 billion revenue and $2.5 billion assets.

For comparison, “Ventura County’s farm product value reached $2.1 billion in 2014....” (p. 2-35 of the draft Background Report), and the “Agricultural, forestry, fishing & hunting” sector had a 2014 industrial output of $2.2 Billion according to Table 2-30 (INDUSTRY OUTPUT TREND: 2007 TO 2014) in the draft Background report.

A third economic measure of the Non-profit sector is jobs. According to the US Census Bureau there were 21,044 non-profit employees in the county in 2015. The Civic Alliance’s 2017 report noted 17,566 jobs in the Financial Activities sector, and 14,070 jobs in the Construction sector during 2015. There were 26,208 jobs in Agriculture Forestry Fishing & Hunting sector in 2015. So, the non-profit provides a significant number of jobs in Ventura County.

As formidable as the revenue figures appear it is useful to put them into perspective by viewing them on a per capita basis. Assessed this way, the per capita revenues for Ventura County were $3,173 in 2015 compared to a state-wide per capita figure of $7,732. Santa Barbara County had per capita revenues of $7,273, while Los Angeles County’s per capita figure was $6,075. The per capita assessment of philanthropy can be somewhat misleading in that it does not measure the amount of money donated by county residents to non-profits outside the county.
The non-profit with the largest revenues was Community Memorial Hospital(s) with $408 million, followed by the Kavli Foundation that does scientific research, Cal Lutheran University, Reagan Library, and Thatcher School (in Ojai). Beyond these large institutions are much smaller ones that provide us with museums, symphonies, mental health services, youth sports leagues, environmental education, nature preserves, etc.

Non-profits cover a wide spectrum of the economy and work side by side with government agencies and businesses to provide valued public services that are essential to healthy communities. If you adopted a pet, attended a play, hiked in the hills, received a blood transfusion, enrolled children in a sports league, received a free meal, or visited a local museum; you were supported directly or indirectly by a non-profit organization.

**Market Outlook.** While the revenues and assets of non-profits in Ventura County have been rising steadily since 2005 (about 50%), on a per capita basis revenues for local non-profits lag significantly behind the state average and the average per capita revenues for the adjoining counties. As the economy strengthens, albeit slowly in Ventura County, it seems likely that per capita revenues to non-profits could rise accordingly. Furthermore, “The California Economic Forecast projects that per capita income in Ventura County will increase in real terms twice as fast as population, meaning that future residents should have more disposable income.” (p. 6 of 37 – Major Findings Executive Summary of draft Background Report). Whether increases in per capita revenues will be equally spread amongst all non-profits remains in question. It is not unreasonable to see revenues to the largest of the non-profits increase disproportionately to the smaller ones to resemble the disparities elsewhere in the economy.
Recommendations for the Ventura County General Plan Background Report

1. Chapter 2: ECONOMICS & DEMOGRAPHICS
   - Please direct staff to include a discussion of the Creative Economy in the Demographics & Economics chapter, possibly as a standalone section based on the “Revised Comments on the Background Report” included below.

2. Chapter 4: HEALTH AND WELL BEING
   - Please direct staff to expand the definition of Healthy Communities Model to include a social component (state guidelines use “Social Connection and Safety”) and look for opportunities within the Health & Well Being chapter to integrate collaboration with the arts in terms of shaping the built environment and fostering community.

3. ASSETS, ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES
   - We recommend convening a focus group on the Creative Economy to identify Assets, Issues and Opportunities. This will also foster a deeper understanding of creative businesses and how their activities interact with planning regulations. This may also help to augment the county Economic Vitality Summit efforts, which have identified the arts and creative economy as a “key asset”.

Revised Comments on the Background Report

From providing services critical to all sectors, to producing good jobs, to equipping our workforce with needed skills, to injecting vitality into our communities, to increasing creative capacity in individuals and institutions - the creative sector is essential to Ventura County's success. And while the region has a high density of creative businesses and independent artists, we are failing to adequately engage and leverage their presence to help meet both the challenges and promise of our times. Including the creative economy in the Ventura County General Plan is a fundamental first step in enlisting the creative sector in strengthening the local economy, enriching our quality of life, building human and social capital, and positioning ourselves for the future.

WHAT IS THE CREATIVE ECONOMY?
The creative economy is comprised of the businesses, nonprofits and individuals involved in producing and distributing cultural, artistic and design goods and services. The statewide study on California's creative economy, The Otis Report, includes the following industries: Architecture & Interior Design, Art Galleries, Communication Arts, Digital Media, Entertainment, Fashion, Furniture & Decorative Arts, Product/Industrial Design, Publishing & Printing, Toys, and the Visual & Performing Arts. These twelve industries are broken in 57 sub-sectors that include businesses such as art schools, radio stations, software publishers, cabinet makers and fashion wholesalers. “What unifies this dissimilar set of industries,” says the report, “is the fact that they all trade creative assets in the form of intellectual property - the medium through which creativity is transformed into something with economic value.”

California’s creative economy is an economic and employment powerhouse. The 2017 Otis Report finds:
- California’s creative industry output is $406.5B and provides almost 11% of the state’s gross product.
- Creative industries support 1.64M jobs (direct, indirect & induced), equalling 11.8% of all CA employment.
- California has the largest number of creative workers of any state.
- In 2014 there were 340,500 self-employed creative workers in CA that earned $13.9B.
- In Los Angeles County, creative industries account for 1 in 8 direct and indirect jobs.

Ventura County has a robust creative sector. Our county has been called out in the national press¹ and in local studies for having a high density of creative economy businesses and independent artists that generate significant economic and employment impacts.
Data on Ventura County’s creative sector:

- The last county-wide study of the creative sector’s economic impact, produced by the Ventura County Community Foundation (VCCF) in 2008, found that it generated $2.1B in economic activity, on par with agriculture and construction at that time.
- The same VCCF study found that as an aggregate employer, creative businesses along with arts nonprofits employed almost 20,000 people in the county, with the nonprofits engaging an additional 7,000 volunteers.
- In January 2015, Ventura County had 2,490 arts-related businesses that employed 9,887 people, representing 4.9% of the county’s businesses and 2.6% of its employment. This data, drawn from Dunn & Bradstreet, is an undercount given that many arts and culture nonprofits, independent artists and self-employed creatives do not register with the service. But even so, Ventura County stacks up higher than national averages, where arts businesses account for 3.9% of US businesses and 1.9% of US employees.
- According to the Local Arts Index Report (LAI) for Ventura County, in 2009 Ventura County was home to an estimated 282.5 artists per 10K residents, compared to the state average of 220.3 per 10K and the national average of just 123.1 per 10K.

Ventura County’s creative sector is an important economic driver that deserves updated research and a place at the table in terms of economic development and planning. This is not just because of the impacts listed above, but also because of its vital reach into the whole economy of Ventura, as well as the essential roles it plays in community development and in placemaking.

AN EXTENSIVE ECONOMIC REACH

Strengthening Other Sectors ~ A 2012 National Governors Association’s report, titled New Engines for Growth, states that “arts, culture and design” touch the economy at crucial leverage points, including innovation, entrepreneurship, employment, and revitalization.” One of those leverage points is the role that creative goods and services play in helping every other sector succeed. Kaiser designed their clinic in Thousand Oaks around works by local artists that reflect the serenity, beauty and power of the Conejo Valley environs, wanting their patients to draw strength from their natural surroundings in and out of the clinic. The Amgen Science website features amazing photography and video to get visitors excited about the future of biotechnology. Cities hire graphic designers to translate water conservation policy into clear and compelling messages to the public. The hospitality industry relies on musicians, museums and cultural experiences to draw people to the region. Marketing and media services and products are also an essential part of the ecosystem needed to grow small to medium-sized businesses and to encourage industry clusters. The NGA report lists numerous examples of cities, states and counties that have developed programs “to increase creative capacity and competitive advantage” by attracting creative businesses and fostering collaboration with other sectors.

Key To Innovation ~ Artists, designers and creative businesses play a crucial role in spurring innovation. Boeing executive Bill Cusato explained it best in his testimony before the CA state assembly, saying that “connecting aerospace with the arts may be difficult, but if you think in terms of the Boeing 787– this is the art of what is possible and before this aircraft was engineered. it was imagined.” He continued explaining that this imagination led to new thinking about interior space, new technologies and new manufacturing. In order to attract or home grow a critical mass of talent, culture districts and arts-business enterprise zones are being used to cluster expertise in professional and social environments, which, the NGA report says can “provide key ingredients for innovative places”.

Workforce Development ~ Another economic lever highlighted in the NGA report is the role that arts, culture and design can play in “delivering a better prepared workforce.” Not only are creative occupations needed throughout all sectors, but they also offer good-paying jobs. The Otis report found that sixty-two of the eighty creative occupations studied offered earnings above the annual median salary of $39,000 in California. While 49 percent of creative careers require a bachelor’s degree or above, the rest can be developed through on-the-job or technical training. What this means is creative careers are for everyone, regardless of education level. Ventura County has already seized on this with the Arts, Media & Entertainment career pathway program established by the Ventura County Office of Education and VC Innovates, as well as a number of career education classes such as 21st century marketing, computer graphics,
Comments on the Creative Economy

broadcasting, games design, floral design, stage craft and mobile app design. Another significant finding is the number of self-employed creatives, which indicates the need for business and technical training to help strengthen these entrepreneurs. “Now more than ever” says the Otis report, “it is critical that leaders from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors work together to develop and sustain the talent pipeline that feeds the creative economy of our region.”

Student Achievement & Potential ~ Arts education also plays a key role in developing a workforce prepared for tomorrow’s economy. The arts teach new economy skills: creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking, as well as design, fabrication, and sometimes production. Arts learning benefits all students, not just those seeking creative careers. “The arts improve academic performance,” states California Assembly Resolution 46, “students with an education rich in the arts have higher grades and standardized test scores and lower rates of dropping out of school.” Ventura County should make arts education and STEAM learning (adding arts to STEM) a much higher priority if it wishes to grow a labor force prepared to participate in an economy increasingly dependent on media, knowledge and creativity. The great news is that Ventura County has the talent pool of teaching artists to help meet these goals.

CRITICAL TO COMMUNITY SUCCESS

Developing Human Capital ~ The arts play a powerful role in developing health and well-being in individuals. Research has shown that early childhood arts participation fosters social and emotion development, and in older adults it can prolong physical and mental health. The Community Memorial Hospital partners with local artist John Lacques to offer group drumming classes as wellness exercise in their Heart Aware program. Participation in arts and cultural practices can also help individuals realize their potential and overcome adversity. The Ventura County Arts Council’s Art & Juvenile Justice program is rated one of the top programs in the state. It brings arts instruction to incarcerated minors in drawing, music, poetry, dance and theatre, while imparting life skills, cultural authenticity, self-esteem, self-expression and mutual respect through disciplined activities. Artist Michelle Foster provides arts-based healing experiences for survivors of domestic abuse through her organization, Artemisia. Many of our local artists are social change and well-being engineers.

Building Social Cohesion & Vibrancy ~ Arts and cultural opportunities also build community. They can strengthen groups by affirming their identities, affinities or values. They can bridge different communities by providing shared experiences. Arts and cultural non-profits play a vital and cost-effective role in providing community-building programming or serving as platforms for others to create these experiences. The Bell Arts Factory on Ventura’s westside is a great example. The center has 31 artists studios, two galleries, and a community room that offers events, yoga, danza azteca and folklorico classes, and a free after-school arts program for kids. Bell Arts, with its facade covered in a mural of poppies and Gandhi’s word’s “Be the change you want to see in the world”, has sparked improvements in neighboring businesses and facilities up and down the Avenue.

Distinguishing Place ~ Cultural events, festivals, and downtown vibes help celebrate and define Ventura County’s character. The creative sector can “catalyze community revitalization and increase civic enrichment,” says the NGA report, while also attracting tourism dollars. Cultural and heritage tourists spend more, buy local and stay longer than other types of travelers. But its more important that a cultural scene meet the needs of the people who live there. In their Soul of the Community study, the Knight Foundation found that the social offerings, openness to diverse groups, and aesthetics of a place are what drive “community attachment- the loyalty and passion” that people feel towards a place. Arts, culture and design shape these aspects of place. Any discussion of quality of life- whether to meet the needs of residents, or to attract workers, employers, or tourists- must have the creative community at the table.

MARKET OUTLOOK

While California has outpaced the nation in terms of economic recovery, the growth has been uneven within the state. The state’s creative economy has been affected by the same fate, with patterns of expansion in creative service industries and retraction in creative industry manufacturing. Self employment in creative occupations, such as web and
graphic design, is growing faster than salaried workers. This is important for Ventura County to take note of, especially given the findings of a 2011 study, which reported that the combination of “outdoor amenities, creative class and entrepreneurial context,” can be a “trifecta for rural growth,” in terms of economic activity and employment. Ventura County has all three, but is not yet connecting the dots.

The state has recently awoken to the urgency of supporting the creative sector, increasing funding from $1M (the lowest in the nation from 2003 to 2015) to a committed $8.3M. Those dollars are intended for arts education, community arts programming, arts-in-corrections programs, cross-sector collaboration and placemaking. California is also forming a statewide policy to establish culture districts that will include zoning overlays and funding - a nudge towards redevelopment 2.0. While this creates the possibility of finding outside funds to meet county goals, its necessary to examine and address the capacity of our local arts organizations to secure these dollars.

Ventura County needs a coherent and long term vision for strengthening and leveraging its creative economy. Its inclusion in the General Plan is the first step to forming meaningful and effective strategies that are authentic to the county's unique character and position the county to compete in the economies of the future.

REFERENCES


2 Ventura County and the Arts: Impact & Opportunity for Community. (Sept. 2008). Ventura County Community Foundation

3 Data from 2015 provided by Dunn & Bradstreet. Available upon request.

4 Local Arts Index Report: Ventura County (2012). Americans for the Arts in coordination with the City of Ventura and the Ventura County Arts Council. As far as I know, there has never been a public forum about this extensive report.


6 Bill Cusato, Creative Economy Hearing, CA Joint Committee on the Arts; April 15, 2015. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DNrSP-TrnqA&t=53s


11 The Soul of the Community: The Knight Foundation and Gallup. 2008


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