



SAN JOSE CREATIVE ENTREPRENEUR PROJECT

Visionary civic and business leaders in the Silicon Valley have long championed the need to attract and sustain a diverse talent pool of artists - “creative entrepreneurs” who work in both the commercial and nonprofit sectors and represent a wide range of talents as musicians, architects, dancers, animators, painters, writers, web and graphic designers, filmmakers, photographers, DJs, craft artists and more. These leaders understand that there is a direct connection between business innovation and creative entrepreneurs, and that other artistic dividends will result to enhance the built environment, civic engagement, and appeal of a city and region as a place to live, work and play.

While the City of San José has actively provided support for the arts since the 1970s, its principal focus has been on the development of arts organizations rather than on opportunities for individual artists. Is there a role OCA could play to make San José a more artist-friendly city to both enrich its cultural vitality and advance its creative economy? This became the central question behind the creation of the San José Creative Entrepreneur Project.

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As a first step, OCA convened a meeting with the Center for Cultural Innovation (CCI), a unique nonprofit training and financial services incubator for working artists in California, to explore the issue. City staff, including the OCA’s arts program director and public art program director, the City’s assistant director for economic and cultural development, the Office of Economic Development’s deputy director in charge of Work2Future, and Work2Future’s business services manager, engaged in discussions with CCI’s president about a potential role in San José’s search for a strategy for artist support.

As a result, OCA and CCI drafted a joint proposal to explore the challenge of improving opportunities for individual artists in San José through a series of complementary activities: a needs assessment within the artist community, pilot training programs, a small test program of encouragement grants, and convening opportunities. These activities would be carried out over a period of one year, from January 2008 to February 2009.

The outcomes of this initiative included the adoption of actionable priorities in the City’s cultural master plan, and a longer term commitment to artist entrepreneurial training and professional development, now carried out through CCI’s Creative Capacity Fund.

A Final Report and Recommendations on the San Jose Creative Entrepreneur Project was issued in March 2009.