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**Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation and The Zellerbach Family Foundation Release  
First-of-its-kind Contra Costa County Arts and Culture Landscape Report**

SAN FRANCISCO – November 12, 2024 – Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation and The Zellerbach Family Foundation today announced the release of a first-of-its-kind report providing a detailed analysis of the arts and culture landscape in Contra Costa County. The report, authored by Dr. Anh Thang Dao-Shah of Creative Equity Research Partners, highlights the strengths and opportunities of the sector, and provides recommendations for funders and policymakers on the most effective ways to support arts and culture organizations in the region.

“We’re excited to celebrate the arts and culture makers of Contra Costa County,” said Devorah Levine, Executive Director, Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation. “Our foundations set out to better understand the arts and culture landscape in Contra Costa County, and what could be possible if we fully resourced the vibrancy of the region. What we found was a community of practitioners and organizations that already makes our region more vibrant, diverse, and unique.”

*“Creative Pulse: A Baseline Study of Contra Costa County’s Arts and Culture Sector”* is the culmination of 18 months of research and community engagement to understand the unique characteristics of Contra Costa County’s arts and culture sector. In addition to amplifying the creators and practitioners in the county, the report aims to make the arts and culture sector in Contra Costa County more visible to funders, elected officials, policymakers, and the region’s communities. It highlights how recent challenges, such as the pandemic and demographic shifts, have impacted an ecosystem of individual artists and organizations that have been doing important work—often without the visibility and resources they need to thrive.

“The Zellerbach Family Foundation has always seen arts and culture as a critical component of increasing a sense of belonging, safety, and connection in our region,” said Allison Magee, Executive Director of The Zellerbach Family Foundation. “This report provides an important snapshot of a county and sector that is often overlooked, but deserves our attention and support. It inspires us to dream big – both in how we can fund the sector and hold up artists and culture makers to the light.”

The insights for the report were collected through a robust community engagement process, grounded in an equity framework, that included gathering qualitative data about the strengths, challenges, and needs of the sector, and mapping 315 arts and culture organizations across Contra Costa County. Key findings from the report include:

- Arts organizations in Walnut Creek, Richmond, and Concord make up 40% of the 315 arts organizations identified in the report.
- Organizations with annual budgets below \$25,000 make up 47% of the 185 organizations that provided organizational budgets.
- The geographic range and diversity of Contra Costa has resulted in multiple micro arts ecosystems, each with their own unique characteristics, communities, and challenges.
- The demographic shifts the county has experienced, as well as its size and diversity, contribute to artists lacking a sense of belonging and connection to one another and their communities.
- Economic disparities and racial segregation in Contra Costa disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) artists and communities of color. Areas with the highest concentration of BIPOC communities receive the least investment and significantly lack arts venues.
- Contra Costa County integrates arts and culture in other sectors—including in areas like mental health, education, and immigrant rights—to support communities amid seismic shifts.

The report includes recommendations about how to holistically support the sector, preserve arts and culture institutions and infrastructure, and intentionally invest in historically marginalized communities and artists. For more information and to read the report, visit <https://mapartscontracosta.org/>

**About Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation**

The Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation has a clear and simple mission—to enhance the quality of life for all residents of Contra Costa County. Founded in 1989 by the late Dean Lesher and his wife Margaret, the Lesher Foundation continues to uphold this value, giving more than \$100 million in grants to programs benefiting children and families, particularly those in underserved and low-income areas. Find out more at [lesherfoundation.org](https://lesherfoundation.org).

**About The Zellerbach Family Foundation**

For more than 65 years, The Zellerbach Family Foundation has served as a catalyst for constructive social change by initiating and investing in efforts that strengthen families and communities in the Bay Area. The foundation has granted over \$160 million throughout the region focusing on work in Alameda, Contra Costa, and San Francisco Counties that promotes belonging, expression, and a shared sense of safety among people and communities in the Bay Area and beyond. Find out more at [zff.org](https://zff.org).