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CREATIVE PULSE

A Baseline Study of Contra Costa County's
Arts and Culture Sector

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PHOTO CREDIT: Visit Concord



Executive Summary

This groundbreaking digital inventory and report offer a comprehensive baseline understanding of arts and culture organizations and projects across Contra Costa County. Its purpose is to illuminate opportunities for strengthening the arts and culture network and optimizing the use of county resources. The report also highlights the unique assets, strengths, and challenges within the county's arts and culture sector.

Despite being the third most populous county in the San Francisco Bay Area, Contra Costa County has long faced significant disparities in funding. These challenges, combined with the county's size and diverse demographics, have made it difficult to efficiently allocate resources and investments across various geographies, organizations, and disciplines. The report's key findings and recommendations stem from in-depth identification, engagement, and connection with underrepresented and underfunded communities within Contra Costa County's vibrant arts and culture landscape.

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Dave Millar, Los Cenzontles
Cultural Arts Academy



Key Findings

- 1.** Arts and culture organizations in Walnut Creek, Richmond, and Concord make up 40% of the 315 organizations identified for this project.
- 2.** Organizations with annual budgets below \$25,000 make up 47% of the 185 organizations that provided organizational budgets.
- 3.** The geographic range and diversity of Contra Costa County has resulted in multiple micro arts ecosystems, each with their own unique characteristics, communities, and challenges.
- 4.** The movement of population and the geographic spread of the county resulted in a varying sense of connection with, and belonging to, the communities in Contra Costa County.
- 5.** The economic disparities and racial segregation that characterize Contra Costa County resulted in inter-communal racial dynamics that disproportionately impact Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) artists and communities of color.

Recommendations

- 1.** Provide a holistic framework of resources to Contra Costa County arts and culture sector including the following resources:
 - General operating support grants for arts and culture organizations
 - Technical assistance to increase organizational capacity, mentorship, and professional development for emerging arts leaders
 - Project funding to support artists to create work across the county and in their own communities
 - Intentional funding for artists and arts organizations working in BIPOC communities
 - Continuing engagement with arts communities throughout the county to understand emergent needs

- 2.** Invest in county-wide infrastructure to support artists and arts and culture organizations
 - A website that highlights artists, arts organizations, and arts and culture events throughout the county
 - A marketing and branding strategy for arts in Contra Costa County
 - A calendar of events and intentional spaces to bring arts and culture workers together
 - Investment in fiscal sponsors/arts intermediaries based in Contra Costa County
 - Programming to elevate individual artists - e.g. county poet laureate

3. Invest in local creative placekeeping at the county, city and community level

- Create cultural districts that aim to preserve and promote cultural communities throughout the county
- Work with artists and arts organizations to create community engagement tools for revitalization projects
- Strengthen the county's infrastructure to enable communities to experience arts and culture, e.g. create transportation routes to cultural hubs, redesign sidewalks to enable arts walks and street arts events, etc.

4. Embed arts and culture in social infrastructure development

- Include the creation of arts venues and funding for local arts organizations as part of new development community benefits
- Support the creation and preservation of arts venues in all communities
- Include artists from historically marginalized communities in the county's affordable housing strategy



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