

WATSONVILLE ARTS PLAN



WATSONVILLE
—ARTS—

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INTRODUCTION

VENTANAS DE JUVENTUD: PAST, PRESENT & US
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PAJARO VALLEY ARTS



La Loteria: Watsonville



WHY THIS PLAN?

This Plan supports and furthers the City’s commitment to supporting and fostering community arts and culture, as outlined in the City’s Public Art/Percent for the Arts Program and the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan, as well as capital improvement projects, such as the City Plaza Revitalization Project.

PUBLIC ART/PERCENT FOR THE ARTS PROGRAM ORDINANCE

In 2022, The City of Watsonville enacted its inaugural Public Art Program aimed at promoting, supporting, and increasing public art displays and opportunities for the performing arts to enhance quality of life and the city’s image. This program includes a new 0.75% developer fee on construction costs for certain residential, commercial, and industrial developments (new residential of 5+ units, commercial/industrial developments over \$500,000, or remodels over \$250,000), with a cap of \$75,000. This fee goes into a “Cultural Fund” to fund public art projects and cultural activities within City functions.

This Ordinance establishes permissible expenditures from the Cultural Fund that include:

- 1. For the design, acquisition, purchase, commission, installation, placement, improvement, relocation, conservation, and insurance of artwork acquired by the City through the Watsonville public art program;
- 2. For preventative care, maintenance, and utility charges related to the artwork and real property purchased pursuant to subsection (a) of this section;
- 3. To sponsor or support the performing arts;
- 4. For the acquisition and improvement of real property for the purpose of displaying artwork or conducting performing arts activities, which has been or may be subsequently approved by the City;
- 5. For costs associated with administering the Watsonville public art program and associated cultural programs, in an amount not to exceed

twenty-five (25%) percent of the total fees deposited into the Cultural Fund pursuant to this chapter during the fiscal year immediately preceding that appropriation, in any year subsequent to the initial fiscal year of the Watsonville public art program; however, in the event the City Council determines that a special circumstance exists, the City Council may set a higher amount by a majority vote;

- 6. Other City-produced cultural or art education programs pursuant to the requirements of this chapter;
- 7. Structures that enable the display of artwork(s); artistic design and fabrication fees; labor of assistants, materials and contracted services required for the production and installation of the work of art; any required permit or certificate fees, business and legal costs directly related to the project;
- 8. Dealer’s fees, if necessary and where appropriate, in concurrence with the National Endowment for the Arts (N.E.A.) recommendation that no more than ten (10%) percent of the artist’s fees be paid as a dealer/gallery commission;
- 9. Transportation of the work of art to the site;
- 10. Preparation of site to receive artwork; and
- 11. Administrative fees/costs as follows: (i) Parks and Community Services Department’s administration costs incurred in the process of administering the public art program including staff time, direct costs and administrative overhead; (ii) documentation, including photographic documentation, of the artwork’s fabrication, installation, and plaques to identify the artwork.

This Plan is intended to guide and prioritize the use of these funds, based on community needs and feedback gathered through a robust engagement process.

Cities gain value through public art – cultural, social, and economic value. Public art is a distinguishing part of our public history and our evolving culture. It reflects and reveals our society, adds meaning to our cities and uniqueness to our communities. Public art humanizes the built environment and invigorates public spaces. It provides an intersection between past, present and future, between disciplines, and between ideas.

- Americans for the Arts

THE CITY THAT LOVES
FARM WORKERS



DOWNTOWN WATSONVILLE SPECIFIC PLAN 2023

The Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP), adopted in October 2023, provides a comprehensive vision and framework for the future development of downtown Watsonville over the next 20-30 years. Throughout this plan, numerous recommendations and guiding principles are directly relevant to the creation of this Arts Plan, emphasizing the integration of the arts in Downtown life.

Some specific recommendations provided by the Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan (DWSP) relevant to this Watsonville Arts Plan include:

FOSTERING A SENSE OF PLACE AND IDENTITY THROUGH ARTS AND CULTURE:

The DWSP sees Watsonville as a unique community with strong art and culture themes. It highlights “murals, art, and events (like the weekly farmer’s market)” as key elements that attract people to downtown. A main principle is to “Foster cultural pride through community planned programs and events that respect and honor Watsonville’s history.”

- The plan seeks to “Embrace Watsonville’s rich cultural history by uplifting the past through design, art, and event programming.”
- It specifically recommends to “Foster a sense of place through community driven murals and public art installations.”
- One goal is to “Leverage and strengthen Watsonville’s cultural and historic identities to create a sense of place.”
- The DWSP urges public and private developments to “promote Watsonville’s history, arts, and culture through the addition of signs, distinctive landscaping, monuments, and/or other features that identify the downtown as a distinct place.”



INTEGRATING PUBLIC ART INTO THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT:

The City of Watsonville has a Public Art Program designed to “promote, support, and increase the creation of public art displays” to improve quality of life and enhance the city’s image.

- The plan states that “public art will play an important role in helping to establish identity, foster community pride, and engage local artists and residents.” It notes that public art has “a significantly positive economic and cultural impact.”
- Guidelines for selecting and placing new public art recommend locations in public and/or quasi-public spaces for enjoyment, such as plazas, open spaces, paseos, alleyways, blank walls, and gateways.
- The plan suggests integrating art with streetscape improvements like seating, lighting, bicycle infrastructure, and parklets, as well as supporting artist-designed streetscape furnishings and utilities.
- It also encourages expanding the Public Arts Program to include temporary and permanent installations, along with live performances that promote unique cultural identity, history, and innovation.
- A portion of the City’s Public Art Fund should focus on the Plan Area to support art installations.



CREATING AND ACTIVATING ARTS-FRIENDLY SPACES:

The Workplace/Industrial character area of the DWSP aims to transform underutilized sites into “business incubators for tech, creative offices, makerspaces, galleries, breweries, coffee roasters, and coffee shops,” contributing to a “funky industrial-artsy feel.” Specific opportunities identified include:

- Art galleries, performance spaces, music venues, artists’ workshops, art studios, and outdoor public gathering areas are encouraged in this zone.
- The Watsonville City Plaza is envisioned as a “major pedestrian-oriented public space” offering “flexible space for dining, arts, entertainment, and community gathering.”
- The plan also suggests adding more plazas and courtyards within new private developments, connected by paseos and alleyways, which should be improved with “landscaping, streetscape amenities, and art” and “programmed with regular events and art displays.”
- The Mansion House opportunity site is mentioned as a place for “public courtyards connected with paseos” and “outdoor dining, cinema, and other active uses.”
- The plan supports reusing historic buildings adaptively, specifically highlighting the Martinelli’s site as an “important historic and cultural resource” that could serve “visitor-serving uses, such as a museum, art gallery, coffee shops, and more” if redeveloped.
- Main Street improvements include enhanced streetscapes, active ground-floor spaces, and the addition of parklets, allowing for more outdoor dining and entertainment.



ENHANCING CULTURAL PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS:

The DWSP calls to “Continue and build off successful community event momentum, such as the Farmers Market, Film Festival, Wine Walk, and Music in the Plaza.”

- Programming should “draw inspiration from the local community, culture, heritage, and history of Watsonville.”
- Events should vary based on “seasons, time-of-day, holidays, scale, and target audiences (like local and regional draw).” The plan highlights the importance of partnering with “organizations, coalitions, community members, and local businesses that can champion and invest in the program.”

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT FOR ARTS AND ARTISTS:

The plan aims to “Attract more visitors by adding cultural activities and facilities, such as regular concerts and museums.”

- It encourages embracing local entrepreneurship, talent, and creativity through public and private partnerships (like Cabrillo College, Digital Nest, etc.).
- The Public Art Program invites developers to “employ Watsonville artists or arts organizations” to meet public art requirements.



CREDIT: WATSONVILLE TAIKO

HISTORIC PRESERVATION IN RELATION TO ARTS:

The DWSP aims to “celebrate these historic resources while preserving them as fundamental focal and cultural points of the downtown area.”

- Maintaining and enhancing the downtown’s historic character is a key goal.
- The adaptive reuse of historic buildings is strongly encouraged for new “cultural and economic uses.”
- It recommends evaluating and designating potential historic districts, which can inform future artistic and cultural interpretations of these areas.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AS A MODEL:

The DWSP was created through an extensive “participatory process” with “multiple opportunities and avenues for engagement.” This process included diverse stakeholders, creating materials in both English and Spanish, online surveys, and pop-up events.

- The focus on “community ownership” and “solicitation and integration of feedback” provides a strong model for how the Arts Master Plan should be developed to ensure it reflects community aspirations.
- These points show a clear intention within the DWSP to use and grow arts and culture as central elements in revitalizing downtown Watsonville and shaping its identity.



CITY PLAZA REVITALIZATION PROJECT

The City Plaza Revitalization Project weaves together the space’s rich history with the community’s current and modern use of this culturally significant asset. Known as the “heart of the city,” this downtown plaza has been the focus of community gatherings and celebrations for well over a century. Watsonville City Plaza is on the National Register of Historic Places, with its classic design, which includes a bandstand and fountain. Through a Prop 68 Grant from the State of California and bond funds leveraged through the City’s Measure R, the project will restore these features to their historic grandeur, preserving them for the enjoyment of future generations. Integrating new recreational features and upgrading the park’s infrastructure will serve to accommodate 20+ annual events and weekly farmers’ markets in and around the plaza. The project will update the gazebo in the center of the park, renovate the historic community fountain, improve landscaping and lighting throughout the park, and add a permanent stage with seating areas, game tables, group picnic areas, public art, a circular walkway around the middle of the plaza, a drinking fountain with bottle-filling station, bicycle parking, improved electrical infrastructure to facilitate events and performances, and signage to highlight the historical elements of the park. This project will increase recreational opportunities and protect a safe green space for residents, while augmenting the site’s historical and cultural significance for one of Watsonville’s densest and most disadvantaged neighborhoods.

At the time of writing of this Plan, design of this project was near completion, with construction anticipated to commence in Spring 2026.



WATSONVILLE ARTS LEGACY

CHAPTER TWO

02

Watsonville’s arts truly exemplify civic pride and a profound community spirit, reflecting the city’s unique identity and the collective dedication of its residents and leaders. The City’s engagement with the arts goes beyond mere ornamentation; it’s a dynamic force that fosters connection, preserves local heritage, and actively shapes this community’s future. Watsonville’s arts and cultural community exemplify the shared values that are deeply rooted in the cultural landscape of this place.

During community surveying, stakeholder interviews, and focus groups, participants were asked to identify unique aspects of Watsonville’s arts and culture community, both tangible and intangible. Particularly strong hallmarks of the arts community, as articulated by community members, include:



**AUTHENTIC AND COMMUNITY-DRIVEN
EXPRESSION**

Time after time, the Watsonville community demonstrates profound community ownership and pride in their shared history, public art, and community events. This collaborative spirit ensures that the art genuinely reflects the community’s values and identity. A hallmark of Watsonville’s art scene is a vibrant, intentional, thoughtful, and authentic spirit that truly reflects the genuine character of the community without pretense. This authenticity is deeply rooted in a community-minded attitude and get-it-done spirit among local non-profits and community members, who are eager to make art happen. The Watsonville Brillante mosaic mural exemplifies this spirit, a 12,000 square foot five-year effort led by Community Arts and Empowerment.



CELEBRATION OF AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE

The soul of Watsonville is deeply rooted in its agricultural history and heritage, nestled in the Parajo Valley, one of the most productive farming communities in the world. Hand-picked crops have been a mainstay of economic life in the community, attracting workers from around the world to Watsonville, shaping both the physical and cultural landscape. This agricultural heritage has been brought to life through murals like “Pájaro Valley Apples” and “Berry Bowl” and mosaic inlays by Kathleen Crocetti reflecting the migrations and farming patterns that have shaped the community since the days of the Gold Rush through the rise of agriculture in the Parajo Valley. The community also works to actively preserve and promote its agricultural past through the Agricultural History Project. This organization’s mission is to ensure public awareness of the economic, cultural, ethnic, and historical significance of agriculture on the Central Coast. They achieve this through educational exhibits, historical archives, and specific programs like “Yesterday’s Farm” and school tours, allowing visitors and school groups to explore the fascinating agricultural history of Sant



ARTS AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Watsonville’s arts scene is a testament to the community’s unwavering belief in the power of the arts to transform lives and contribute to collective well-being. Through educational outreach by local non-profits like Arte del Corazon, Pajaro Valley Arts, the Mello Center, Community Arts & Empowerment, Arts Council Santa Cruz County, Watsonville Public Library, the Parks and Community Services Department, and Watsonville Youth Center. These organizations provide dedicated youth programming and the arts community works to actively counter negative influences by providing “good, healthy activity for the youth”, connecting them directly with artists evidenced by the hundreds of youth who have participated in public art installations like Tabasa Gardens Mural (mosaic), Watsonville Brillante (mosaic) and dozens of mural works spanning nearly four decades by Yermo Aranda within public schools. These opportunities provided to the youth of Watsonville aim to foster a sense of belonging and offer positive pathways for their sense of well-being while providing connections to workforce development. This dedication to the next generation of Watsonvillans highlights how the arts are not just about creative expression for this community, but are a vital and inclusive tool for building a more connected, resilient, and proud community that is actively shaping a hopeful future.



DIVERSE HERITAGE AND SHARED IDENTITY

The arts in Watsonville serve as a powerful medium for preserving and celebrating the city’s rich cultural and historical identities. Murals, such as the “Societies Light: Acknowledging and Empowering Womyn” at Community Bridges, honor the history of indigenous cultures and significant local events like the Watsonville Cannery Strike, acknowledging the sacrifices of Mexican women, mothers, and single parents, ensuring crucial historical sacrifices are visibly celebrated and often unacknowledged histories are not forgotten. This collective sense of pride and public acknowledgement of historical injustices, as seen when the City Council approved the Tabasa Gardens housing project, the site of a mural, depicting Rosie Tabasa and her son, Jess, alongside an apology for actions that fueled race riots in the 1930s. Over 100 members of the Filipino community were involved in its final design, which blind-selected an art concept submitted by eighteen-year-old Filipino student, Caitlin Bayaca.



CITY SUPPORT AND FUTURE VISION

The City of Watsonville has explicitly committed to the arts through its Public Art Program and the establishment of an Arts Fund. This program aims to promote, support, and increase public art displays alongside cultural programs, requiring new developments to contribute to public art either through on-site installations or a fee paid into the fund. Through this effort, the City of Watsonville has signaled to the community that significant civic investment in cultural and artistic resources is a priority area. The Downtown Watsonville Specific Plan champions celebrating historic buildings, community events, and open spaces as foundational elements for future growth and resiliency.

Building off these investments, the City of Watsonville has engaged the community, artists, and organizations in the development of the Watsonville Arts Plan with the ultimate goal of bolstering the arts community and intentionally integrating the arts into key civic activities, moving beyond seeing art as an afterthought but central to co-creation of place and a critical pillar of Watsonville’s economic and social vibrancy.



SOCIALLY RICH, ACTIVE, & VIBRANT

The Watsonville community deeply values the power and impact of the participatory arts and community events, which are deeply integrated into the fabric of this community’s health, wellness, and joy. There is a strong emphasis on creating family-friendly events and acknowledging the cultural significance of shared experiences. The community’s social calendar is rich with events like the annual Strawberry Festival, Music in the Plaza, Dia de Los Muertos, the Filipino American Heritage Month Festival, Watsonville Film Festival, Fiestas Patrias (Cinco de Mayo and Mexican Independence Day Celebrations) and Holiday in the Plaza, which are central to community gathering and celebration. This focus on events that bring the community together underscores a collective commitment to a socially vibrant and connected community.

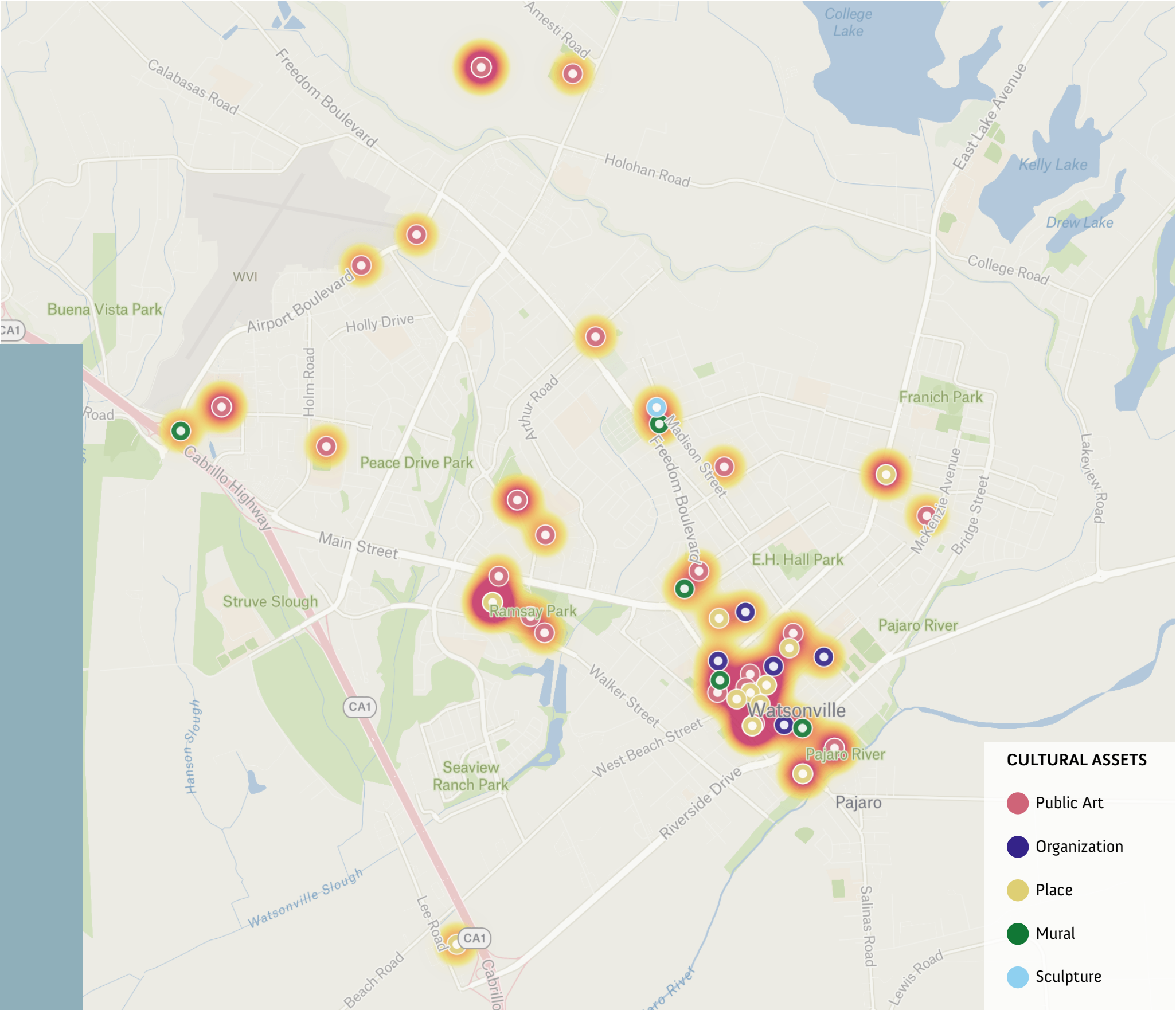
Downtown, especially, is a cherished center of life and culture, where art and community events are vibrant threads that contribute to Watsonville’s unique identity, fostering a deep sense of belonging for community members.



CULTURAL ASSETS

As part of this plan, a cultural asset inventory was completed in partnership with the Advisory Committee and community members

“In every community that manages to sustain or revive itself over time, there are cultural factors that contribute to the vitality and robustness of the people living there. These factors are shared and creative, which is to say they are cultural and they are assets that make life valuable, that make life worth living. These cultural assets can be material, immaterial, emotional, or even spiritual. They can be ‘solid’ things like concert halls, galleries, gardens, parklands and stadiums. They can be special tracts of the natural environment that encourage particular types of cultural activities. Or the climate itself might be a cultural asset if it encourages special kinds of creative and communal activities that bind people together in a place over time. Stories too might be cultural assets if they are attached to particular people and places if they are powerful enough to encourage people to care about and care for their place. In these stories, values can circulate, and special memories often reside in particular locations mentioned in the tales. Thus the places mentioned in the stories can be regarded as cultural assets if people tell of these places and visit them regularly and develop regular practices or rituals or ceremonies to care for them.” -Professor Ross Gibson, Sydney College of the Arts



WHAT CULTURAL PRACTICES ARE UNIQUE TO WATSONVILLE?



FILM

Film, also known as a movie or motion picture, is a visual art that simulates experiences and shares ideas, stories, perceptions, emotions, or atmospheres through moving images, often with synchronized sound. It is a strong medium for storytelling, entertainment, and artistic expression, covering various genres and styles. The Watsonville Film Festival has taken place for the last twelve years. In 2022, the Watsonville Film Festival worked to promote a Low Riders Exhibition in conjunction with the festival celebrating this beloved Chicano tradition and cultural niche



FOLKLORICO & DANZA AZTECA

Folklorico, often referring to Danza Folklórica Mexicana or Mexican Folkloric Dance, sometimes Danza Azteca, is a lively and varied genre of traditional Mexican dance. It highlights the regional diversity of Mexico through unique costumes, music, and dances that reflect the customs, history, and daily life of different states and communities. It is often used as a vehicle for storytelling and preserving folklore traditions. Folklorico dance is a feature of community events like Dia de los Muertos, Fiestas Patrias and the Strawberry Festival celebration. It is a spiritual and ceremonial dance that dates back to the pre-Hispanic cultures of Central Mexico, especially the Mexica (Aztec) people. This dance often features elaborate feathered costumes, percussive instruments like drums and rattles, and specific movements that reflect cosmology, history, and community values. Danza Azteca serves as a form of prayer, celebration, and cultural preservation. The Aztec Dance Ceremony of “Xilonen” has been practiced in Watsonville for decades by the White Hawk Dancers. Folklorico in Watsonville engages community members, young and old, who practice in arts spaces year-round, honing this tradition.



DIGITAL ARTS

Digital Arts, or Digital Art, refers to artistic works that use digital technology as a vital part of the creative or presentation process. This broad category includes many mediums and techniques, such as digital painting. In recent years, new technologies have greatly improved this field, including computer-generated imagery (CGI) and virtual reality (VR) art. The Digital Nest in Watsonville is an important incubator space for this emerging artistic community.



POET LAUREATE

A Poet Laureate is a poet officially chosen by a government or institution to act as the dedicated contributing poet to community events and public activities. The inaugural Poet Laureate in Watsonville was appointed in 2022 and in 2023, the City expanded its Poet Laureate Program through the creation of a Youth Poet Laureate position. This appointment recognizes a youth under the age of twenty for their literary achievements, with a commitment to and a passion for promoting awareness of poetry, and whose work (literary or otherwise) demonstrates a commitment to social justice, equity, and diversity.



MOSAICS

Mosaics are artworks made by assembling small pieces of colored glass, stone, or other materials, known as tesserae, to create a picture or pattern. These pieces are typically set in a bed of mortar or adhesive. Mosaics are durable and can be found in many settings, from floors and walls to decorative objects. Watsonville boasts thousands of square feet of mosaic installations in its Downtown alone, an art form that has become dear to the Watsonville Community for its ability to engage a wide number of community members in its creation and narrative capacity.



MURALS

Murals are artworks painted or applied directly onto walls, floors, ceilings, or other large surfaces. They are usually large-scale and can be found both indoors and outdoors. Murals often have a public purpose, conveying social, political, or historical messages or simply beautifying a space. Watsonville has seen the creation of over 36 murals in the last few decades, many of which have been painstakingly maintained and restored by local artists. Many of these murals have engaged local school children in their creation, and are often feature pieces of school hallways, gymnasiums, and cafeterias.



COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Watsonville’s cultural landscape is actively shaped by a diverse group of artists, community leaders, and organizations. Community leaders and organizations are instrumental in fostering an inclusive arts environment and remain steadfast champions of arts programming. Whether through major initiatives led by these individuals and organizations to transform and revitalize arts spaces, and create identity-defining cultural experiences, or through creation of murals, mosaics, and sculpture across the community, these people and organizations are some of the many who work to actively contribute to the arts community of Watsonville through advocacy, collaboration, and volunteering, tirelessly working to enhance community well-being and civic pride through accessible arts and cultural events.

There are many individuals and organizations contributing to Watsonville’s creative identity, just some of the Artists & Community Leaders in Watsonville who are actively shaping the cultural landscape include:

ORGANIZATION	BIO
Arte del Corazon	Arte Del Corazón’s mission is to provide creatives—especially those historically excluded from the arts sector—with opportunities for financial advancement, professional development, and community engagement. They serve as a connector between artists, community members, and nonprofits, working to enhance economic prosperity and strengthen the creative sector in Watsonville and the greater Pajaro Valley.
Arts Council Santa Cruz County	The Arts Council Santa Cruz County serves as a connector between artists, arts networks, government leaders, arts advocates, arts educators, and arts education organizations. Through grants to artists and arts organizations, arts education programs that serve more than 20,000 youth across Santa Cruz County, and community initiatives such as Open Studios, the Tannery Arts Center, and the Watsonville Center for the Arts, the Arts Council Santa Cruz County helps Santa Cruz County thrive.
Cabrillo College - Watsonville	Cabrillo College is a welcoming community college dedicated to providing an equitable, high-quality education. They are committed to helping students meet their career, academic, and life goals, guiding them in becoming culturally responsive leaders, effective communicators, and critical thinkers. Cabrillo College works to promote economic liberation and social justice, eradicate structural racism, and foster inclusivity by cultivating an environment of innovative teaching practices, support services, and learning opportunities for all students, especially those from historically marginalized communities.
Community Arts & Empowerment	Community Arts & Empowerment is formed to make art for, by and with the public, to build community identity, pride and connections through public art projects, and foster creativity and empower communities through the arts.
Community Bridges	Since 1977, Community Bridges has been a catalyst for a brighter future by delivering fundamental resources for the people of Santa Cruz County. Community Bridge’s family of ten vital programs across 20 different sites serves thousands of local children, families, and seniors each year.
The Digital Nest	Digital NEST creates sustainable and scalable technology learning centers for Latinx and all under served youth in order to foster economic equality. They achieve this by technical and soft skills, providing mentors and broadening networks in order to gain sustainable employment. Digital NEST has sparked a nationwide dialogue among educators, policy-makers and the media as a model for closing the digital divide in under-resourced communities throughout the U.S.



COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Esperanza del Valle	Esperanza del Valle, Mexican Folkloric Dance Company of Watsonville, California, has been dedicated to the dissemination, preservation and performance of the rich traditional dance forms of Mexican dance in our community since 1980. The mission of EDV is to cultivate and promote, pride and understanding of the Mexican culture through its rich folkloric dances rooted in the merging of the Indigenous, European and African heritages.
Los Diablos del Llano de Tecomates	Now living in Watsonville, the members of the group are originally from the Tecomaxtlahuaca area of Oaxaca, Mexico. The group performs a cultural dance (its roots in Spain) representing the historic battle between the Moors and the Christians. The devils’ dance symbolizes the taking of the souls of the defeated Moors. The devils wear “chivarras” (chaps) made of goat skin and hair, jacket and tie, and a wooden mask.
Pajaro Valley Arts	Pajaro Valley Arts (PVA) has been successfully carrying out its mission of “bringing the community together through the arts” since 1984. PVA fosters and promotes the arts in this community with professional visual art exhibits in partnership with guest curators, schools, city government, and local organizations. PVA encourages all art forms and helps connect the community to the artists and their work at no cost to the public. PVA believes every person deserves to have access to the arts and conducts year-round programming to fulfill this vision.
Watsonville Center for the Arts	The Watsonville Center for the Arts, located right in Downtown Watsonville, is a project of the Arts Council Santa Cruz County and brings together a collective of artistic and cultural groups sharing classes with the Watsonville community. Offerings are primarily centered around dance and educational outreach within the local school system.
The Watsonville Film Festival	In 2012 Watsonville-based filmmakers, educators and activists came together to present empowering narratives about the community. Since then, the Watsonville Film Festival has developed from a grassroots collective into a non-profit arts organization offering dynamic year-round programming. The Watsonville Film Festival highlights Latine filmmakers and stories that illuminate our shared humanity and inspire positive change. WFF also recognizes the reality that In the last 10 years, only 4.5% of movies featured Latinx characters, many of them negative stereotypes and works to actively provide latinx community members with the agency over their own representation in film.
The Watsonville Library	The Watsonville Library is the center of community literary arts and historical archive. Through its programs like book clubs, music performances, historical exhibits, and poet laureate program, the library is a key cultural beacon and beloved community space.
Watsonville Senior Center	The Watsonville Senior Center is the central hub for programs and services catering to community adults ages 50 and above. We offer a wide range of recreational programs, including regular art and dance classes, activities, and resources designed to enrich and engage our senior community. Additionally, through partnerships with local non-profit organizations, we provide a variety of resources and services on a regular basis.
Watsonville Taiko	Watsonville Taiko creates opportunities to make meaningful connections through taiko drumming. Taiko are Japanese drums and is also the art form of ensemble drumming with various kinds of taiko. There are many different styles and forms for taiko ensembles. Watsonville Taiko combines rhythm and martial art movements for the mastery of taiko. We introduce Taiko as a discipline to train students to gain personal strength through the cultivation of physical, emotional and spiritual energies.



COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Watsonville Youth Center	The Watsonville Youth Center is a fun and safe place for middle and high school students to come meet new friends and participate in a variety of recreation programs. Opportunities include homework assistance, snacks, and activities such as art, dance, sports, outdoor games, gardening, field trips, and more! Attendance is free with “Passport to Fun” membership.
Whitehawk Indian Council for Children	Established in 1978 in Watsonville, our Mission is to provide a safe environment where youth can develop trust in themselves and others to enhance the quality of life within their families and community and to develop a spiritual awareness through participation in traditional ceremonies and cultural arts
White Hawk Iztatutli	The mission of White Hawk is to provide safe environments where youth can develop trust in themselves and others, to enhance the quality of life within their families and community and to develop a spiritual awareness through participation in traditional ceremonies and cultural arts.

FESTIVAL	BIO
Filipino American Heritage Month Festival	This festival will provide art materials, books, and creative opportunities for families and children to play and learn about rich Filipino history, and to honor historical Filipino contributions to the local community.
Obon Festival	Obon is a time of joyous celebration and gratitude to the generations who went before us and gave us the gift of life. The highlight of the day is colorful dancing in which the community is invited to participate.
Tanabata Star Festival	This event celebrates and symbolizes the annual reunion of two stars separated by the Milky Way: Vega. The Weaver Star and Altair, the Cow-herder Star. As part of this Festival, the Bamboo Tree, a symbol of Hope and Prosperity, will be adorned with Origami and Wishes in the hope of reuniting the couple and bringing Good Fortune.
Xilonen	Xilonen is a rite of passage ceremony, a coming of age for young women that dates back thousands of years before the Spanish invasion.



PEOPLE & ORGANIZATIONS

PERSON	BIO
Yermo Aranda	Yermo Aranda is a cross-cultural artist at ease in the studio painting, on the scaffold priming a wall for his murals or leading the dance group, the White Hawk Dancers, which he co-founded in Watsonville, California in 1983. His art practice has taken him from southern to northern California, but it is in the Monterey Bay Crescent where he has been most active.
Jessica Carmen	A California native, Jessica Carmen, honors her Chicana roots and the feminine experience via vibrant works of art. Her work weaves stories of communities with culturally significant imagery and is inspired by the folklore, artisanal crafts, iconography and flavor of the culture that allowed her to be unapologetically bold and find strength in her femininity. As a self-taught artist, Jessica Carmen is eager to build community through culturally relevant public arts, workshops and conversations
Jessica Carrasco	With over ten years of experience in education, curriculum development, art education, local history, and social justice, Jessica Carrasco’s work is deeply rooted in uplifting her community. She has created public art for the City of Watsonville, served on the Parks and Community Service Commission, and collaborated with local artists to establish spaces and opportunities that showcase and support Watsonville’s creative talent. Additionally, she served on the board of Pajaro Valley Arts Gallery for four years and currently serves on the Board for the Museum of Art & History in Santa Cruz.
Kathleen Crocetti	Kathleen Crocetti is an artist activist using her education, skills, and privileges to mentor and empower underrepresented artists. Ms. Crocetti is the founder and executive director of Community Arts & Empowerment, a non-profit Watsonville-based public arts organization. Community Arts & Empowerment’s monumental 5-year project “Watsonville Brillante,” was completed in 2025. Consisting of 12,500 square ft. of mosaics covering the Watsonville Civic Parking garage, the project paid stipends to 120 artists, engaged over 700 volunteers and highlights the artistic and cultural diversity of Watsonville.
Monica Galvan	Monica Galvan is an artist and community leader in Watsonville, California with over 15 years of experience in the arts. As a painter and sculptor Monica has received coveted grants, certificates and scholarships, as well as a Masters in Fine Arts. With over 7 years of experience as a teaching artist and art administrator, Monica currently spends her time as the Director and Founder of Arte del Corazón.
Janet Johns	For over 45 years of dedication to sharing the beauty of Mexican Folklorico dance with our community. Janet has been a driving force in preserving and promoting this rich cultural tradition. Johns began learning folklórico, traditional Mexican folk dance, at age 18 as a student at San Jose State University. In 1978, where she co-founded Esperanza del Valle. At the time, it was the only adult folklórico dance company in Watsonville, and it has since trained hundreds of performers. She is also a founding member of the Watsonville Film Festival. The Santa Cruz County Arts Commission was proud to honor her as Artist of the Year in 2025.
Yesenia Molina	Yesenia Molina is a multidisciplinary creative who proudly identifies as Chicana and was raised in Watsonville. With over 20 years of experience, her deepest artistic roots are in Folklórico dance. She comes from a family of dancers and currently performs with Esperanza del Valle. Through movement, culture, and community, she continues to celebrate and uplift her heritage. Yesenia believes in the power of the arts to build bridges and inspire connection. Her work reflects a deep commitment to honoring tradition while creating space for new stories to emerge.
Jaime Sanchez	Jaime Sanchez hails from Watsonville, CA. His parents, (the late) Gomercindo Sanchez, and Esperanza Sanchez Gomez, are from Jalisco, Mexico. Sanchez has served as a sergeant in the Marines and has earned an undergraduate degree in public art from CSU Monterey Bay. He has been practicing art (painting and drawing) since 1999. His murals are featured in the Pajaro Valley region and selected artwork can be seen online @JaimeSanchezPainting. Jaime has worked as an educator in the community and is currently a bus driver for the Santa Cruz Metro.



CREDIT: WATSONVILLE TAIKO

REGIONAL LITERARY ARTS ORGANIZATIONS & PEOPLE

PERSON/ORG	BIO
Watsonville Reads Program	Watsonville Reads is a community engagement program that aims to bring people together through the shared reading experience of books tied to a particular theme.
JOURNAL X	A social justice and literary arts magazine published out of Cabrillo College. A platform for multi-lingual and a diversity of art forms to be shared by and for community members in the Pajaro Valley.
Writers of Color (countywide)	Writers of Color Santa Cruz County is a collective of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) writers in the Santa Cruz County area who use their shared experiences to create and share poetry and stories, often collaborating on readings, events, and publications
Jaime Cortez	Jaime Cortez is a writer and visual artist based in Watsonville, California, and the San Francisco Bay Area. His fiction, essays, and drawings have appeared in diverse publications that include “Kindergarde: Experimental Writing For Children” (edited 2013 by Dana Teen Lomax for Black Radish Press), “No Straight Lines,” a 40-year compendium of LGBT comics (edited 2012 by Justin Hall for Fantagraphics Press), “Street Art San Francisco” (edited 2009 by Annice Jacoby for Abrams Press), and “Infinite Cities,” an experimental atlas of San Francisco (edited 2010 by Rebecca Solnit for UC Berkeley Press). He wrote and illustrated the graphic novel “Sexile” for AIDS Project Los Angeles in 2003.



COMMUNITY NEEDS

CHAPTER THREE

03



APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

The community was key to determining the vision for the arts in Watsonville. To ensure this plan authentically reflected the Watsonville community and honored its character and historic legacy, the planning team utilized a variety of engagement methodologies to capture themes to inform plan priorities, actions, and define the curatorial approach to the Public Art Collection. Engagement approaches included 1-on-1 interviews with city leaders, a pop-up session during Dia de los Muertos, and an online survey to gather input from all stakeholders (i.e., City leadership, arts organizations, artists, youth, and the general public).

STAKEHOLDER CONVERSATIONS

Over a dozen 1-on-1 and small group stakeholder conversations were conducted with representatives from City government divisions, artists, educators, interested community members, and local community service organizations. These conversations helped to unveil the opportunities, barriers, and cultural assets that make this community what it is today.

COMMUNITY POP-UP SESSION

A visual preference survey and experience mapping activity was utilized during a pop-up conversation at Dia de los Muertos. The results of this engagement are provided on pages 60–61 of this document. (to be added to the graphic document)

COMMUNITY SURVEY

A non-scientific survey to discern community members’ attitudes and preferences for the arts in Watsonville was published and available from September - February 2025. It was promoted on social media, via the email networks of local organizational leaders, and through print materials distributed through the City of Watsonville and advisory committee members. Due to targeted outreach by advisory board members and city staff, the survey successfully gathered 510 responses. The survey was also promoted directly to participants at each engagement opportunity and was available in Spanish, receiving 28 responses from community members who opted to take the survey in Spanish.

Survey responses and key insights from them can be found on pages 60–61 of this document.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Throughout the process, an Advisory Committee made up of representatives from the Watsonville community with affinities for the arts, parks and recreation, youth, and arts education spaces were engaged in regular conversation to act as a sounding board for the planning process. This committee reviewed all content created throughout the process and was instrumental in the outreach efforts to garner the 510 responses submitted through the survey.

NATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

Throughout the process, case studies from all over the country in communities similar to Watsonville were used to illustrate successful programming or policy. These best practices have been integrated into the plan objectives and strategies to illustrate successes throughout the sector.

STAKEHOLDER REPORT



VISUAL ART FOCUS GROUP

Participants in the Visual Art Focus Group discussed several opportunities for the arts in Watsonville, including waiving fees and providing more resources for underrepresented groups, offering open calls for murals, increasing social media presence for the arts with artist highlights, and creating a dedicated Arts District to generate revenue and attract businesses. They also suggested Key public art and cultural assets, including La Placita (City Plaza), Digital Nest, Arte de Corazon, Pajaro Valley Arts, the Filipino American History Month Festival, and the Filipino American Center.

Key opportunities to rise to meet challenges through this plan include:

- Broad lack of awareness and education about the value of art throughout the community, which can lead to defacement.
- The difficult and costly process for getting murals approved, including a \$250 fee and extensive paperwork.
- A need for dedicated arts administration on the City side to help artists navigate processes.
- Opportunities for better partnerships include working more with digital and multimedia artists, as the City does not need to “reinvent the wheel” by hiring outside the existing artist network.
- Creating space for artist booths at the Farmer’s Market.
- Creating more opportunities for digital arts and multimedia to document life and culture in Watsonville.

STAKEHOLDER REPORT

EVENTS & FESTIVALS FOCUS GROUP

Opportunities for the arts highlighted in the Events & Festivals Focus Group included youth opportunities, fostering multimedia and filmmaking groups, bringing back eWvents like the YWCA multicultural festival, and the Arts Council moving to Watsonville. Participants also suggested events like “Dancing in the Streets Dance Week” and investing in purpose-built equipment such as updated projection systems and portable flooring for performances. They emphasized the City’s role as a resource and true partner for the arts, not just a bureaucratic step, and stressed the importance of a clear, managed City calendar for events. The group also saw art as vital for community wellness and identity.

Key opportunities to rise to meet challenges through this plan include:

- Address the lack of stable and predictable resources that make it hard to sustain recurring events, alongside issues with space accessibility and affordability.
- For partnerships, the group questioned how the City and schools could better collaborate on arts and culture for youth.
- They also suggested collaborating with organizations working to actively promote tourism across the region to highlight local culture and opportunities for exploring public-private opportunities for consistent programming in central community spaces, such as regular film screenings in the Placita.

PERFORMING ARTS FOCUS GROUP

The Performing Arts Focus Group identified showcasing the community’s creative force as a big opportunity. They suggested working with in the sister cities program for cultural exchange and visually representing these relationships within artworks created in Watsonville. They also noted that Watsonville is home to significant performing arts centers like the Mello Center and has groups like Watsonville Taiko and Mariachi residency.

Key opportunities to rise to meet challenges through this plan include:

- A key opportunity was seen in establishing a dedicated center for performing arts and integrating art into other community organizations for social, physical, and mental well-being, seeing art as a path for workforce development and therapy.
- Barriers included historical funding challenges and inequitable distribution of funds, with legacy organizations often favored.
- They noted that philanthropic dollars are scarce, leading to artists and programmers spending too much time seeking grants.
- Practical barriers included the need for more staff to keep programming accessible, lack of safe and affordable practice spaces (especially with concrete floors being hard on the body), and issues with sound systems and storage.
- Partnership opportunities included collaborating with Cabrillo College, the Community Foundation for philanthropy insights, and other local companies.



STAKEHOLDER REPORT

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE ARTS FOCUS GROUP

Participants described the arts in Watsonville as “disconnected” due to lack of collaboration, cross-cultural participation, awareness of events, and connection to resources and investment. They suggested that arts could improve living in Watsonville by offering youth art opportunities and connecting them to actual artists, helping retain a sense of place amidst demographic changes, and integrating artists into City planning conversations from the start, rather than as an afterthought.

Key opportunities to rise to meet challenges through this plan include:

- The idea of a “resident artist in the planning department” was floated, as artists “think artfully” and challenge norms.
- For downtown, the arts should provide opportunities for people to gather, especially youth, to make it a vibrant destination after 7 pm and prevent unhealthy behaviors.
- They noted a lack of diversity and sufficient opportunities in the arts, with limited access to performing arts venues.
- Critical points for events included making them family-friendly and free due to financial struggles in the community. Research suggesting Watsonville’s economic impact from arts is lower than other communities was also mentioned.

GENERAL ARTS FOCUS GROUP

Participants in the General Arts Focus Group emphasized the huge wealth of art and culture in Watsonville, describing it as colorful, vibrant, and rich in history and artists. Opportunities included leveraging the momentum from new focus on the arts, such as Arts Council Santa Cruz County’s Watsonville Center for the Arts location and events like the Art, Wine and Beer Walk. They stressed the importance of policies from elected officials and City employees that shepherd and embrace the arts at the City level, including language that promotes equity and accessibility. They also saw opportunities in educating artists on sustainable entrepreneurship and targeting art teachers for engagement.

Key opportunities to rise to meet challenges through this plan include:

- Key barriers included historical discrepancies and less equitable funding distribution compared to the northern part of the county, with funding always being a challenge.
- A perception issue exists where some people question funding arts over other necessities, and there is a saturation point for funding requests.
- Education about public art’s value was also seen as a barrier to awareness. Investment priorities should focus on local artists, youth arts education and programming, and providing open studio and showcase spaces.
- Public art that represents the community and is accessible in public spaces was also a priority. Noteworthy public art and cultural assets include the Watsonville Center for Arts, the Mello Center, numerous murals, cultural groups like Watsonville-Santa Cruz Japanese American Citizens League (W-SC JACL), and events such as Dia de los Muertos and the Strawberry Festival.



STAKEHOLDER REPORT

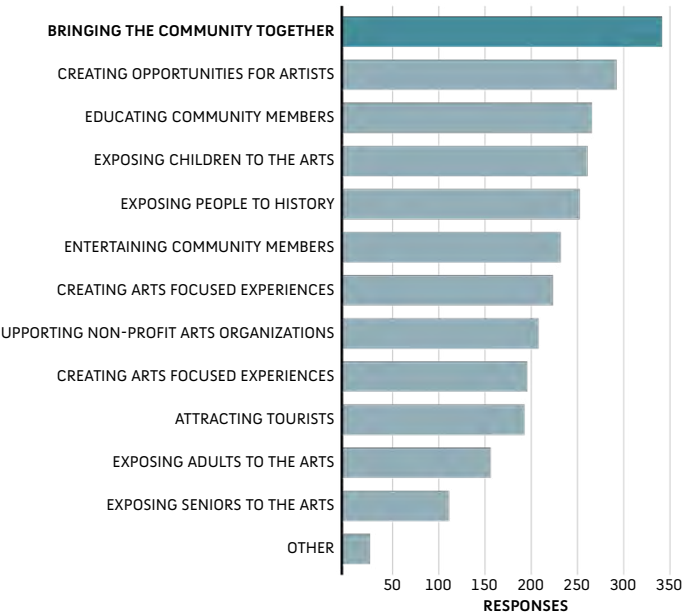
VISION FOR THE ARTS FOCUS GROUP

Participants highlighted Watsonville’s special qualities, including its diverse Mexican/Hispanic, Japanese/Asian community, and a civically engaged nonprofit community with a “roll up your sleeves” attitude. Public art was described as vibrant, intentional, and representative. They believed arts could make living in Watsonville better by creating a more welcoming environment, fostering a stronger sense of community, and providing wonder and amusement to create a “sense of place”. They observed that the art scene is no’t consistent, despite promising signs in Downtown.

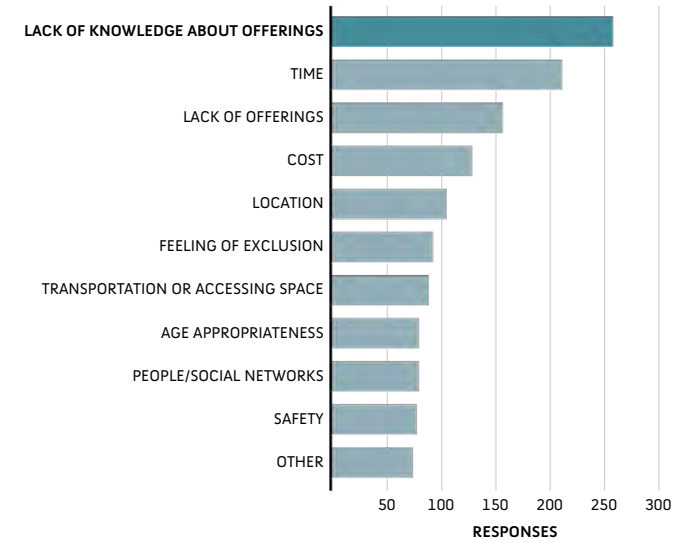
- Key opportunities to rise to meet challenges through this plan include:
- A significant barrier was the difficult process for public art, including a \$250 fee and extensive paperwork, making artists feel they have to “fight the city” to be seen, with art sometimes being considered graffiti unless it fits a certain aesthetic. This discourages artists from participating.
- Participants expressed a desire for more large-scale murals representing various cultures and for poetry to be visually represented, perhaps at the library or embedded in sidewalks.
- They also emphasized the importance of interactive public art and integrating art into community affairs to celebrate it.
- Barriers for artists included difficulty finding arts opportunities, with musicians having limited venues outside of bars, especially for youth.
- Art calls were seen as requiring too much work (e.g., full renderings) for artists who may not be selected.
- Participants also desired a community arts calendar and more opportunities for young musicians.
- A significant barrier was that to encounter art, one usually has to be “actively, intentionally participating,” with limited opportunities for spontaneous discovery.
- Participants desired to experience arts at festivals, artisan fairs, and through incorporation of art into existing community events like National Night Out, offering “small taste of” events to market larger pop-up events.



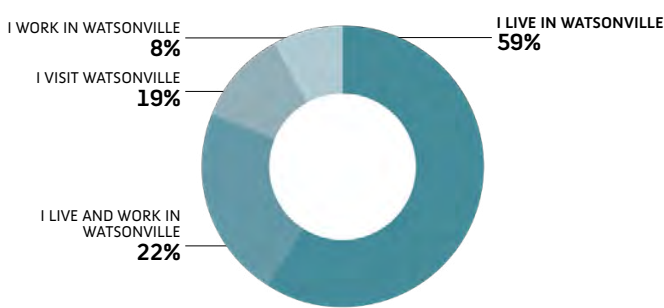
THE ARTS & CULTURE IN WATSONVILLE SHOULD ACCOMPLISH THE GOAL OF:



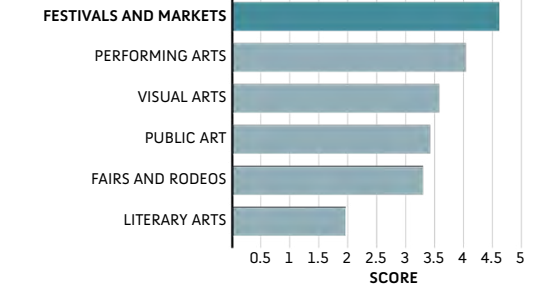
WHAT BARRIERS EXIST TO YOU PARTICIPATING IN ARTS AND CULTURE ACTIVITIES IN WATSONVILLE?



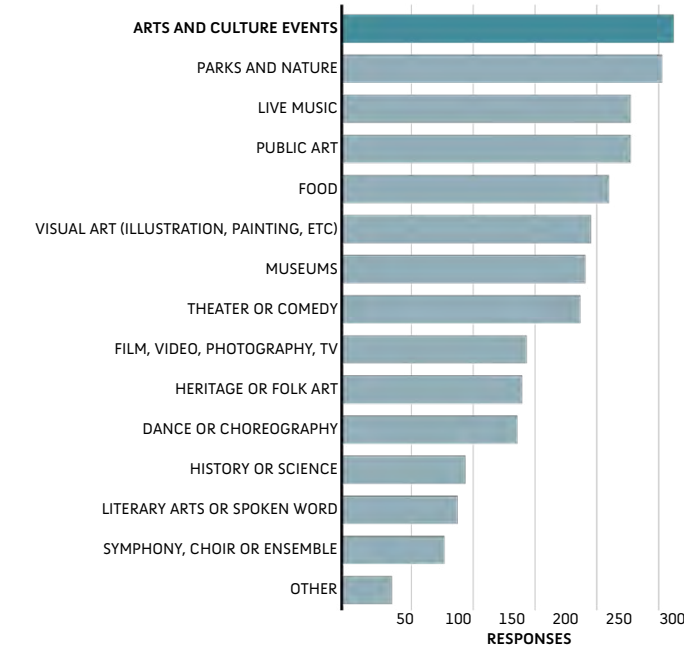
WHAT IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE ARTS IN YOUR COUNTY/REGION?



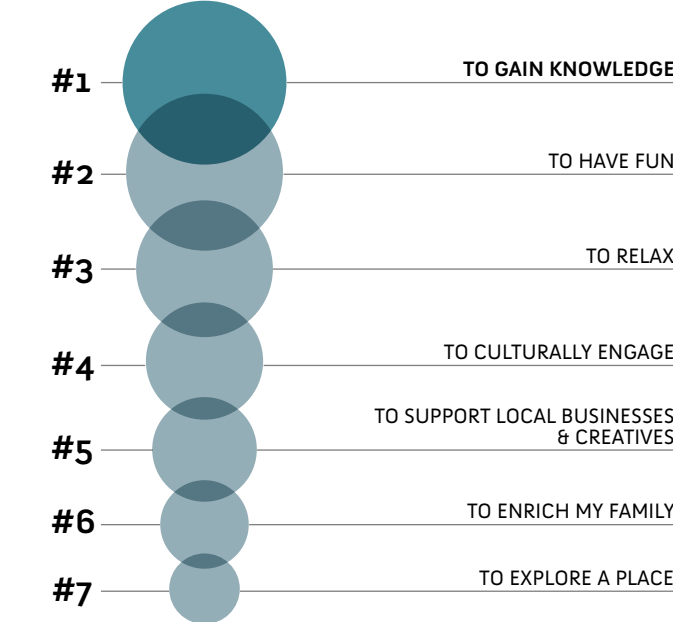
WHICH COMMUNITY EVENT OFFERING IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?



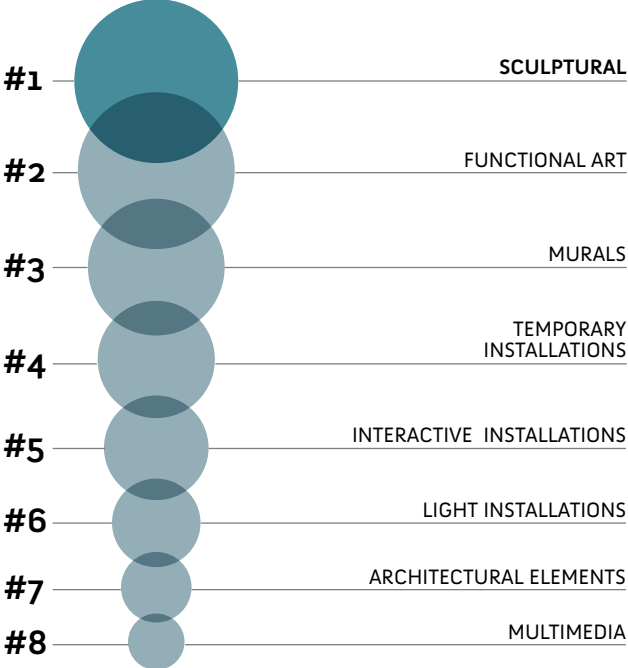
WHAT CULTURAL ACTIVITIES DO YOU WANT MORE OF IN WATSONVILLE?



WHICH OF THESE MOTIVATIONS FOR EXPERIENCING THE ARTS DO YOU MOST STRONGLY ALIGN WITH?



WHAT TYPES OF PUBLIC ART WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE MORE OF IN WATSONVILLE?



SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS

- 510 RESPONSES
- 28 SPANISH RESPONSES
- SIGNIFICANT PARTICIPATION AMONG UNDER 18 AGE GROUP (33% OF RESPONDENTS)
- STRONG DESIRE FOR ARTS AND CULTURE TO BRING COMMUNITY TOGETHER
- MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS LIVE WITHIN WATSONVILLE PROPER
- DESIRE FOR INCREASED AMOUNT OF ARTS AND CULTURE EVENTS
- RESPONDENTS HIGHLY VALUE FESTIVALS AND MARKETS AMONG OFFERED COMMUNITY EVENTS.

HOW THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE CAN MEET CHALLENGES
& INVEST IN SHARED SUCCESS

PROCESS & STANDARDS FOR ARTS ADMINISTRATION

The City of Watsonville should explore the development of standards for administration of arts and culture activities through these lenses, further defined on page 66 in the strategies section of the plan document:

- Policy Update & Guidance
- Published Resources
- Consolidation of Efforts

FUNDING EXPANSION

A strong arts and culture ecosystem supports a variety of arts activities, from built projects and community programs to cultural facilities and organizational operations. Funding art and culture for the greatest impact requires offering a diverse array of funding sources and ensuring they are sustained and predictable. To build capacity at the local level, funding for organizational operations, projects and programming, facilities and cultural infrastructure, and artists and creative entrepreneurs is critical. When properly supported, the arts and culture ecosystem is a driver of economic impact and a revenue generator that empowers cultural creators to reinvest in the sector and their communities.

Across the United States, funding for art and culture comes most predictably from:

- **Sales Tax Measures**
 - Special Sales Tax
 - Transient Room Tax
 - Restaurant Tax
 - Alcohol Tax
- **Development Fees**
 - Percent for art in private development
- **Sustained Public Budget Allocations**
 - General Fund Allocation
 - Percent for Art in Capital Improvement



HOW THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE CAN MEET CHALLENGES & INVEST IN SHARED SUCCESS

Arts and cultural activities, especially singular projects and programs, frequently receive support from philanthropic organizations and granting bodies, or through municipal budgetary allocations, such as one-time general fund provisions or a percentage of public capital improvement project budgets. These funding sources are typically employed for the execution of projects and standalone community programs, given that such funding tends to be less predictable. Resources that generally make available these types of funds include:

- **Publicly-Funded Grants**
 - Federal Grants
 - State Grants
- **Privately-Funded Grants**
 - Common resources include:
 - The Mellon Foundation
 - The Lilly Foundation
 - The Levitt Foundation
 - AARP
 - Local Philanthropic Organizations
- **Private Partners**

CULTURE DISTRICT DESIGNATION & SUPPORT IN DOWNTOWN WATSONVILLE

Pursuing a Cultural District designation in California can be a powerful tool for building capacity within the Watsonville Arts community by affirming the community’s cultural identity, supporting the local creative economy, and attracting new investment. The California Arts Council’s State-Designated Cultural Districts program offers a unique opportunity to formally recognize and uplift areas rich in cultural assets.

How it works

Enacted in 2015, the California Cultural Districts program created a new tool for the development, support, and preservation of California’s extensive

and diverse cultural assets. In 2017, the initial group of 14 statewide Cultural Districts was designated after an open and competitive application process to identify a well-rounded group of communities diverse in make-up, geography, and purpose. “State-designated cultural district” is defined as a geographical area with a concentration of cultural facilities, creative enterprises, or arts venues that accomplishes one or more of the following outcomes:

- Attracts artists, creative entrepreneurs, and cultural enterprises.
- Encourages economic development and supports entrepreneurship in the creative community.
- Encourages the preservation and reuse of historic buildings and other artistic and culturally significant structures.
- Fosters local cultural development.
- Provides a focal point for celebrating and strengthening the unique cultural identity of the community.
- Promotes opportunity without generating displacement or expanding inequality.

As of August 2025, the City of Watsonville, in partnership with the Arts Council Santa Cruz County, has begun the process of applying for a Cultural District designation through the California Arts Council, utilizing the community vision and cultural asset inventory laid out in this plan. Actioning against a key recommendation within this plan.



HOW THE CITY OF WATSONVILLE CAN MEET CHALLENGES & INVEST IN SHARED SUCCESS

DIRECT SUPPORT FOR ARTISTS

How do we reach artists?

Diversity in the opportunities available to artists will lead to more diversity in who benefits from an arts program. Remaining consistent with the format, process, and communications channels in which arts opportunities and resources appear is critical for onboarding emerging artists into City processes and reaching a competitive group of applicants for public art commissions.

What resources do artists need?

The complicated nature of funding means that sometimes there is a mismatch between the community’s needs and what resources are available at the local level. Needs identified by the community recurrently across stakeholder interviews and focus groups include:

1. Direct Funding

- Grants
- Art Commissions
- Operations Support
- Programming Support

2. Spaces

- City-owned facilities with long-term leases
- Cultural Facilities & Venues
- Purpose-built cultural amenities are available at low cost for public use
- A diverse array of facilities that support multiple forms of arts expression and creation and engage a variety of artists

3. Other forms of support and artist development

- Workshops led by Artists & Educators to upskill

- Informational Resources & Knowledge Sharing
- Published guides and information access on City processes
- Interpreters and multilingual guides for accessibility
- Direct staff support for the arts within city functions



STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT THE ARTS

CHAPTER FOUR

04



ARTS SUPPORT STRATEGIES

STRATEGY ONE: CAPACITY BUILDING TO SUPPORT THE ARTS

Introduction

This section outlines the foundational steps the City of Watsonville should take to implement a publicly supported arts program. The steps and considerations outlined in this section are critical to building the necessary capacity and public sector support for plan implementation. This portion focuses on staffing.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY CITY STAFF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Consider hiring a part-time Arts Coordinator utilizing public art funds to act as liaison to the Arts Commission and support project implementation within the Arts Plan
- This may be a contracted role that transitions into a regular position with the City of Watsonville, should need and supporting funding resources grow

STEP 2: SEAT THE ARTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Seating an Arts Advisory Committee is a critical step in leveraging the expertise of the Watsonville arts community for program administration and plan implementation. This should be a 7-9 member body that represents a diverse group of artists, performers, arts administrators and community members from all backgrounds and age groups.

This committee will be responsible for:

- Identifying the annual evaluation criteria for grantmaking utilizing public dollars per the Arts Plan. City of Watsonville will then use these criteria to make funding decisions utilizing the Cultural Fund for projects that are not public art
- Selecting project priorities for implementation, including public art during the current funding cycle, and finalizing the Public Art Program Workplan which will identify
- Making a recommendation for public art selection to the Parks and Recreation Commission
- Helping organize and promote a potential Annual Arts Summit

STEP 3: PURSUE A CULTURAL DISTRICT DESIGNATION

A Cultural District, as outlined by the program, is a well-defined geographic area with a high concentration of cultural resources and activities. Each of the 14 districts received the designation for a period of five years, per state legislation. Aligning with the mission and values of the California Arts Council (CAC), the districts will celebrate the diversity of California while unifying under an umbrella of shared values—helping to grow and sustain authentic grassroots arts and cultural opportunities, increasing the visibility of local artists and community participation in local arts and culture, and promoting socioeconomic and ethnic diversity.

Program benefits include:

- Official state certification – each district will enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the CAC certifying state designation as a cultural district for a period of five years and granting the district the right to use the state cultural district brand in its marketing

- Branding materials – including the state cultural district logo, as well signage and banner templates
- Technical assistance - including at a minimum, an annual convening session, as well as peer-to-peer and other group learning opportunities given available resources
- Joint marketing support – leveraging resources from state tourism partners
- A stipend – \$5,000 per district per year, for two years, to be used to support participation in the pilot process that will lead to the refinement of the design of the cultural districts program
- Participation in developmental evaluation

Key considerations:

- Designate Downtown Watsonville as the district
- Consider a non-profit management entity for operations of the District, this could be an existing non-profit
- Partner with the organizations and people already involved in cultural activities within the Downtown, many of which are highlighted in the early sections of this plan



STRATEGY TWO: ELEVATING THE ARTS COMMUNITY

STEP 1: LAUNCH THE NEW WATSONVILLE ARTS IDENTITY

Launch the new Watsonville Arts identity, created during this planning process, through web, social media, print materials, and promote arts information and resources in the community. In conjunction with the brand identity, the City should unveil the promo video for Watsonville Arts and host the video for public viewing online.

Key Considerations:

- Make a brand toolkit available to local organizations for cobranded events and cultural activities
- Utilize the brand in all communication about Watsonville Arts in collaboration with local community organizations
- Consider rebranding the existing arts program landing page and expanding available digital resources during the brand refresh

STEP 2: HOST AN ANNUAL ARTS SUMMIT

The City of Watsonville, in partnership with the Santa Cruz Arts Council, could work to convene the arts and culture community annually to share updates and resources, inviting members of the community to speak on their initiatives and projects to facilitate more collaboration between members of the sector.

Key Considerations:

- Seek to build stronger relationships with Arts organizations, and use the findings and discussion from the summit to inform subsequent arts implementation planning in annual workplan
- Encourage all members of the Arts Advisory Board to attend
- Invite local artists and organizations to speak on their projects
- Consider stipends through the cultural fund for individuals both locally and nationally to attend as educators providing workshops and resources on a variety of topics for members in attendance
- Identify non-profit, professional, and private support for artists

STEP 3: DEVELOP A CITY-SPONSORED ARTS CALENDAR & COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

In partnership with Arts organizations, the City of Watsonville should identify a single point of contact to author and promote a Watsonville Arts calendar, branded under the new brand identity.

- Using the newly developed Watsonville Arts Identity to strengthen promotion and communications around the arts through a formal strategy for website, social media, wayfinding & signage, and informational materials
- Connect with existing artists registry like Santa Cruz Arts Council for the promotion of arts opportunities

STEP 4: REVIEW EXISTING CITY PROCESSES THAT IMPACT ARTS PROGRAMMING & FACILITIES

Considerations:

- Permitting applications for events and murals
- Offering workshops to artists, online information and cheat sheets for city processes that
- Zoning Requirements for arts and culture Institutions, consider a zoning overlay for the Cultural District that is arts-friendly.

Case studies:

- Nashville Artisan Manufacturing Code
- Lowell, Mass Artist Overlay District
- Somerville, Mass Artist & Creative Enterprise uses by-right
- Twin Cities, MN Creative Zone Overlay



STRATEGY THREE: GROWING THE ARTS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

STEP 1: EXPLORE EXPANDED FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

An evaluation of opportunities to expand funding and resources for the arts community should be explored.

Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT)

An expansion of the existing TOT tax with a dedication of the funds into the Cultural Fund would bolster the available funding and create a direct tie between investment in the arts and driving tourism locally.

Expanded Percent for Art Program

Some regional cities have a higher percentage for art in private development fees, such as Richmond, CA: 1% or Berkeley, CA: 1.75% on-site or 0.8% in fee paid to the fund.

Grant Opportunities

Grants are often an excellent source of one-time, project-based funding or in addition to other efforts in capital raises for facilities. The allowable expenses differ from grant to grant but it should be noted that grants are not a replacement for sustained and long-term funding sources, meaning that it is not advisable that capacity building and the expansion of operations or the reliance of critical programming be only funded through grants.

STEP 2: EVALUATE STAFFING NEEDS & GOVERNANCE TO SUPPORT A GROWING ARTS SECTOR

Periodically reevaluate staffing needs and consider increasing staff support to meet a growing arts ecosystem, as funding allows. An arts manager may be considered as an added position at the city level. This individual may be responsible for:

- Work with various City Departments to develop potential projects for inclusion in the Program Update.
- Coordination with other City planning efforts.
- Present a public art update as part of the City’s regular budget process to the City Council.
- Coordinate and manage the Advisory Board and its quarterly meetings
- Coordinate with Advisory Board to ascertain advice on any matter pertaining to public art, including:
 - Preparing and presenting the public art update to the Advisory Board, the Parks and Rec Commission, and City Council;
 - Artist selection juries and process;
 - Purchase of artworks;
 - Commission and placement of artworks; and
 - Public art programming.
- Coordinate the hiring of an outside consultant or agency to administer public art projects as needed.

- Ensure all City Departments are following the City’s Public Art Public Art Policy.

Additional staff resources or outside consultants may be required to assist in implementing projects,

STEP 3: EXPLORE EXPANDED CULTURAL PROGRAMMING OPPORTUNITIES & RESOURCES

Once any additional funding mechanisms and sources have been identified, consider the expansion of city-supported programming for the arts, such as expanded programming for youth arts through the Youth Center and Senior Center, strengthened partnerships and financial support to current programming providers and improvements to City-owned spaces for the creation and presentation of the arts.

Key considerations

- Expanded programming in the arts at the Youth Center and Senior Center
- Stronger partnerships and more direct support for arts organizations in the community
- Interweaving the arts into existing publicly-sponsored events and coordinating with arts non-profits on complementary offerings

STEP 4: DEVELOP A “CALL FOR WALLS” PROGRAM

Consider hosting an annual mural festival where many murals are painted within a short time span, making for an engaging and community centered arts experience. The City should also consider launching a Call for Walls program to match private property owners with local artists to create works of art, leveraging existing funding resources as matching grants for the creation of the murals where funding is available. As a bonus, this consolidates all the communications and processes into a set timeline and will reduce friction and frustration points throughout the year. In early years, the City should prioritize murals on public properties and then work its way towards unsightly or blank building walls on private properties in the Downtown area and gateways to the city.

Case Studies:

- ArtWorks Cincinnati, OH
- Sarasota, FL
- Cleveland, OH CLEVELAND WALLS

STEP 5: CONSIDER AN ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCY PROGRAM

To continue to provide diverse cultural experiences to community members, consider an artist-in-residency program (local or visiting artist) that continually injects new life and ideas into the local creative fabric.

- Cabrillo College as a Partner



STRATEGY FOUR: INVESTING IN SHARED SUCCESS

STEP 1: INVEST IN THE CULTURAL DISTRICT THROUGH PLACEMAKING & PROGRAMMING MEASURES

Following the strategic plan outlined during the Cultural District designation process, identify the City’s role in enhancing and developing the Cultural District into the center of community life and economic impact. This might include investments into the brand identity and public realm elements. It may also include supporting the development of workforce housing that incorporates artists or retail spaces and creative hubs in the Downtown district that support the growth of the arts and culture sector.

Key Considerations

- Promote the community’s creative identity
- Grow jobs in the creative sector
- Increase tourism and bring new visitors
- Attract and support artists, start-ups, and creative businesses

STEP 2: EXPLORE THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ARTS + CREATIVE INDUSTRIES PROGRAM

City-sponsored creative industry programs are typically initiatives led or funded by municipal governments to support the growth, sustainability, and impact of the creative sector—such as visual arts, design, music, film, fashion, digital media, crafts, and cultural heritage. A Creative Industries program in Watsonville could be an impactful vehicle for attracting and retaining creative talent, driving local economic growth, and ensuring the inclusion of traditional marginalized artists and business owners through public sector support.

Key Considerations:

Grantmaking

- Artist Education
- Visual and Performing Arts Supplies & Equipment
- Creative Enterprise Business Grants

Creative Spaces and Hubs

- Development of arts incubators, makerspaces, and affordable studios
- Workforce housing that includes artists

Training and Capacity Building

- Business skills workshops for artists and creative entrepreneurs.
- Technical assistance for grant writing, marketing, and IP protection.
- Internships and mentorships to connect emerging creatives with established creative entrepreneurs
- Economic impact studies of the local creative sector with shared ownership of findings between local organizations and artists

Case Studies:

- Bloomington, IN - Artistic Advancement Grants
- Richmond, VA - Creative Economy Initiative
- Rochester, NY - Arts in the Loop

STEP 3: CONSIDER THE SUBSIDY OF A COMMUNITY ARTS SPACE OR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF A HISTORIC BUILDING AS A CULTURAL CENTER

There are numerous underutilized properties in and around downtown Watsonville which may be eligible for historic rehabilitation for an arts purpose or the subsidy of another City owned space, such as the Lamborn Home as PVA shifts downtown to the Porter building.

Key Considerations:

- Identify roles and partners
- Identify federal, state, and local funding sources to support project development. A crowdsourced model may be an option if led by a private partner, this could be facilitated through a tool like SmallChange.co
- Consider a market study to identify the feasibility of a variety of cultural amenities, from makerspaces to artist studios, to small-scale artisan manufacturing

Case Studies:

- The Tannery Arts Center in Santa, Cruz
- “Creative Homies” Historic Enterprise Building through SmallChange.co



IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Long-range planning for cultural investment means that oftentimes plans may feel of ‘an era’, This flexible framework helps decision-makers find various funding sources and adapt priorities to local cultural changes. It encourages big dreams while focusing on actionable steps to grow local arts and culture with available funding and capacity. *timelines always have the potential to shift.

The **Now, Soon, Next**, framework for plan implementation provides decision-makers with a flexible yet strategic timeline that prioritizes projects and foundational cultural program elements so that future investments can best leverage the momentum and increased capacity in the cultural sector built through prior phases.



IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX

ACTION ITEM	TIMELINE	PRIORITY	CONSIDERATIONS
1.1 Identify City Staff Roles and Responsibilities	Now	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider hiring a part-time Arts Coordinator utilizing public art funds to act as liaison to the Arts Commission and support project implementation within the Arts PlanThis may be a contracted role that transitions into a regular position with the City of Watsonville
1.2 Seat the Public Art Advisory Committee	Now	Medium	<p>This committee will be responsible for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Identifying the annual evaluation criteria for grantmaking utilizing public dollars per the Arts Plan. City of Watsonville will then use these criteria to make funding decisions utilizing the Cultural FundSelecting project priorities for implementation, including public art during the current funding cycle, and finalizing the Public Art Program WorkplanMaking a recommendation for public art selection to City Council for final approvalHelping organize and promote the Annual Arts Summit & own the Arts Calendar
1.3 Pursue a Cultural District Designation	Now	High	<p>A Cultural District, as outlined by the program, is a well-defined geographic area with a high concentration of cultural resources and activities. Each of the 14 districts received the designation for a period of five years, per state legislation.</p> <p>Originating with the adoption of Assembly Bill 189 in 2015, authored by Assemblyman Richard Bloom, the California Cultural Districts program aims to leverage the state’s artistic and cultural assets. Aligning with the mission and values of the California Arts Council, the districts will celebrate the diversity of California while unifying under an umbrella of shared values—helping to grow and sustain authentic grassroots arts and cultural opportunities, increasing the visibility of local artists and community participation in local arts and culture, and promoting socioeconomic and ethnic diversity. Districts will also play a conscious role in tackling issues of artist displacement.</p> <p>Consider a non-profit management entity</p> <p>Program benefits include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Official state certification – each district will enter into a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the CAC certifying state designation as a cultural district for a period of five years and granting the district the right to use the state cultural district brand in its marketingBranding materials – including the state cultural district logo, as well signage and banner templates

1.3 Pursue a Cultural District Designation (continued)			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Technical assistance - including at a minimum an annual convening session, as well as peer to peer and other group
1.4 Launch the New Watsonville Arts Identity	Now	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Launch the new Watsonville Arts identity through web, social media, print materials, and promote arts information and resources in the community.
1.5 Use the Arts to Bring People Downtown	Now	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish visual identity through the integration of art with streetscape improvements such as seating, lighting, bicycle infrastructure, parklets and other streetscape amenities.• Support artist-designed streetscape furnishings and utilities to integrate artistic features, supporting design creativity in new furnishings, streetscape installations and publicly located utilities.• Support short-term, small-scale, community-based projects—from pop-up parks to open streets initiatives—to quickly test ideas and drive lasting improvements downtown. Consider re-imagining parking spaces as neighborhood gathering places. Draw inspiration from the Tactical Urbanism movement.
2.1 Host an Annual Arts Summit	Soon	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seek to build stronger relationships with Arts organizations, and use the findings and discussion from the summit to inform subsequent Arts implementation planning• The city should provide an arts update every year on existing processes and resources that support the arts community and promote the existing available opportunities provided by existing organizations• Identify non-profit, professional, and private support for artists
2.2 Develop a City-Sponsored Arts Calendar & Communications Strategy	Soon	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In partnership with Arts organizations, author and promote an Arts calendar• Using the newly developed Watsonville Arts Identity to strengthen promotion and communications around the arts through a formal strategy for website, social media, wayfinding & signage, and informational materials• Connect with existing artists registry like Santa Cruz Arts Council for the promotion of arts opportunities• Utilize the interest list for this plan to build

2.3 Review Existing City Processes that Impact Arts Programming & Facilities	Soon	Medium	<p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Permitting applications for events and murals• Offering workshops to artists, online information and cheat sheets for city processes that• Zoning Requirements for arts and culture Institutions, consider a zoning overlay for the Cultural District that is arts-friendly, case studies:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Nashville Artisan Manufacturing Code• Lowell, Mass Artist Overlay District• Somerville, Mass Artist & Creative Enterprise uses by-right• Twin Cities, MN Creative Zone Overlay
2.4 Explore Expanded Funding Opportunities			<p>Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT)</p> <p>An expansion of the existing TOT tax with a dedication of the funds into the Cultural Fund would bolster the available funding and create a direct tie between investment in the arts and driving tourism locally</p> <p>Expanded Percent for Art Program</p> <p>Some regional cities have a higher percentage for art in private development fees, such as Richmond, CA: 1% or Berkeley, CA: 1.75% on-site or 0.8% in fee paid to fund</p> <p>Grant Opportunities</p> <p>Grants are often an excellent source of one-time, project-based funding or in addition to other efforts in capital raises for facilities. The allowable expenses differ from grant to grant but it should be noted that grants are not a replacement for sustained and long-term funding sources, meaning that it is not advisable that capacity building and the expansion of operations or the reliance of critical programming only funded through grants.</p>
3.1 Evaluate Staffing Needs & Governance to Support a Growing Arts and Culture Sector	Soon	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Periodically reevaluate staffing needs and consider increasing staff support to meet a growing arts ecosystem
3.2 Explore Expanded Cultural Programming Opportunities & Resources	Soon	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once any additional funding mechanisms and sources have been identified, consider the expansion of city-supported programming for the arts, such as expanded programming for youth arts through the youth center, strengthened partnerships and financial support to current programming providers and improvements to city-owned spaces for the creation and presentation of the arts.



3.3 Invest in the Cultural District through Placemaking & Programming Measures	Soon	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Following the strategic plan outlined during the Cultural District designation process, identify the city’s role in enhancing and developing the Cultural District into the center of community life and economic impact <p>Key Focuses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Promote the community’s creative identityGrow jobs in the creative sectorIncrease tourism and bring new visitorsAttract and support artists, start-ups, and creative businessesCreate opportunities for affordable housing. This may include live/work and maker spaces for artists.Protect and preserve historic assets in the community that contribute to the characterDrawing inspiration from Watsonville’s sister cities program to inform artwork and cultural exchange opportunities
3.4 Develop a “Call for Walls” Program	Soon	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Launch a call for walls program to match private property owners with local artists to create works of art, leveraging existing funding resources.Consider a mural festival annually when all murals are painted within a short time span, making for an engaging and community centered arts experience. As a bonus, this consolidates all the communications and processes into a set timeline and will reduce friction and frustration points throughout the year.This event could expand to include partnerships with other city departments and seek to put murals on public properties: Senior Center, Youth Center, etc. <p>Case Studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">ArtWorks Cincinnati, OHSarasota, FLCleveland, OH CLEVELAND WALLS!
3.5 Explore the Development of an Arts + Creative Industries Program	Soon	Medium	<p>Consider grant-making opportunities supported by the City of Watsonville for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Artist EducationVisual and Performing Arts Supplies & EquipmentCreative Enterprise Business Grants <p>Case Studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Bloomington, IN - Artistic Advancement Grants

4.1 Consider an Artist-in-Residency Program	Next	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">To continue to provide diverse cultural experiences to community members, consider an artist-in-residency program (local or visiting artist) that continually injects new life and ideas into the local creative fabricCabrillo College as a Partner
4.2 Consider the Subsidy of a Community Arts Space	Next	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Potential sites include the support of the renovation of the Porter Building, Fox Theater, or the subsidy of another city owned space, such as the Lamborn Home as PVA shifts to downtown.Identifying roles and partners <p>Case Studies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">The Tannery Arts Center in Santa, Cruz
4.3 Support the Rehabilitation of Spaces in Downtown to Support Arts and Culture	Next	Medium	<p>Potential funding sources include: State Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits this require the pursuit of historic designation for the properties, but can support 20% of project rehabilitation costs</p>



