

Arts & Culture Exchange . . . Exploring Creative Space Summary & Overview

On November 15 2005, 63 people filled the Museum of the Oregon Territory in Oregon City to discuss how cultural planning impacts communities in different ways. Of particular interest was the opportunity to consider how existing space all throughout Clackamas County could be adapted and re-used for creative purposes. Participants included representatives from arts and heritage organizations, theaters, music associations, libraries, businesses, municipalities and interested individual citizens. Performances were provided by two county-based organizations: Krayon Kids Musical Theatre Company and Clackamas Repertory Theater

Proceedings began with a lively panel discussion triggered by the question: *How Do Arts & Culture Help To Improve Community Vitality?* Panelists included Mayor Alice Norris, Oregon City; Mayor Bob Austin, Estacada; Mayor Judie Hammerstad, Lake Oswego; Cynthia Addams, The Collins Foundation; Linda Bell, Clackamas County Tourism Development Council; Sharon Morgan, Oregon Alliance for Arts in Education; Shelly Parini, Clackamas County Economic Development; David Porter, Clackamas Heritage Partners. Each panelist shared their stories, demonstrating a variety of different ways community life thrives when cultural values are added to the mix.

Stories of successful Creative Spaces ventures in Estacada (Spiral Gallery) and Government Camp (Mt. Hood Museum and Cultural Center) were shared by Jane Reid and Betsy Valian, resulting in numerous questions of general interest:

- How do you find the person in each community with vision and leadership skills?
- How do you reach people who are not part of the "usual suspects"?
- Was there a tipping point of momentum/energy that let you know this idea could be viable?
- Were you able to build a bridge between religious communities and others who have been isolated from arts projects in the past?
- How did you get past marketing and outreach obstacles?

Some specific answers provided by Jane and Betsy included:

- Partner creatively, e.g. with everybody you can think of -- not just those you already know!
- Attend meetings everywhere you can think of, consider all taxpayers as your potential supporters
- Don't make any assumptions -- ask questions!
- Talk to property owners about your project; kicking off with short-term visibility is always an option

A variety of participant break-out sessions resulted in a wealth of terrific ideas, organized around 3 key questions. A few of the most intriguing concepts follow:

How Could Creative Spaces Apply To Your Project or Community?

- Circulate art exhibits between cities in the county, i.e. Lakewood Center to Carnegie Center
- Create and/or perform in: senior communities, hospitals, malls, bus stops, boat landings, national forests, apartment clubhouses, farmers markets, private residences, highway & river easements, empty lots, post offices
- Rotate art among businesses
- Mixed-use space in an old house: retail + artmaking space
- Connect with churches ... usually available 6 days/week!
- Check into charityadvantage.com: free software & help for websites for small nonprofits
- Establish alliances everywhere: if you don't ask, don't communicate, nothing happens!
- Partnerships between musicians and historic sites, drawing audience for both

How Could Creative Spaces Build Cross-Industry Partnerships?

- Build on small beginnings, develop mailing lists & links
- "Add-on's" to existing community successes, i.e. Molalla Buckeroo
- Rooftops of office buildings for exhibit space?

- Consider which industries attract culture-minded people, i.e. "wellness" community, river recreation
- Planfully offer a set of art/heritage enrichment experiences to schools that complements or supports the education goals of the school or district
- Creative Spaces build local economies.....Identify key community groups and get them involved by giving them vested interest
- Map out a step-by-step "battle plan" -- plug gaps in the plan with groups outside of our own

How Could Creative Spaces Work In This Community?

- Need to provide incentive for venues to become involved
- Must overcome insurance barriers for property owners
- Identify available spaces: work with Arts Action Alliance & TDC inventories
- Use CCED to help track down property owners
- Involve artist groups to think creatively about this (Artback, Local 14, Lake Area Artists, MAP)

At the conclusion of the Exchange, organizers confirmed that a lot more planning and conversation is needed to find Creative Space all around the county. **A call was issued for those interested in joining a planning committee to continue working on the ideas developed in this meeting.** The Arts Action Alliance will gather interested people in January, with **a public Progress Report meeting planned for April 12, 2006.**