



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

1600 PACIFIC HIGHWAY, ROOM 335, SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92101-2470

### AGENDA ITEM

**DATE:** August 17, 2021

**TO:** Board of Supervisors

#### **SUBJECT**

**REIMAGINE VIBRANT COMMUNITIES THROUGH ARTS & CULTURE  
(DISTRICTS: ALL)**

#### **OVERVIEW**

Efforts focused on arts and culture are an important component to the County's efforts to address critical issues such as public health and healthy communities; children, youth, and families; mental health, probation and juvenile programs, equity, and social justice; and public safety. Arts and culture organizations can also be strategic partners with local government in the pursuit of public policy that drives societal development, global inclusion, and equitable values. A strong arts and culture infrastructure at the County of San Diego will support programs that engage people across cultures, enable audience members of all ages to experience worlds outside of their own through storytelling, and provide education and outreach during and after school, helping them explore self-expression. Arts, culture, and creativity are at the heart of innovation and an important part of economic and workforce development.

In 1993, the County eliminated the Public Arts Advisory Council, which resulted in a gap of resources to support local arts and culture organizations, and consequently a decrease of public art in our communities. San Diego County is the largest county in California without a dedicated arts agency. Although five cities in the County of San Diego have municipal arts agencies, there is no regional entity to support cultural policy, programs, or public funding of the arts across the County's five supervisorial districts.

Elevating arts and culture countywide would provide a more equitable approach towards the public funding of arts and culture organizations throughout San Diego County, continue to elevate our region as an international and multi-cultural powerhouse in arts, culture, and design, and provide a benefit of creativity in boosting our local economy. The County plays a role in arts and culture in the region by providing public art in buildings and parks, funding organizations through grants, and supporting extracurricular school programs through community-based organizations. Arts and

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culture organizations are those with programming for but not limited to visual or performing arts, literary arts, cinematic, theatrical, and include museums, historical societies and centers that provide cultural programming.

This board letter directs the Chief Administrative Officer to assess the role the County of San Diego currently plays in arts and culture in the region and identify new potential funding opportunities to expand efforts. The Chief Administrative Officer should also identify strategies to champion the arts and invest state and federal dollars in cultivating a vibrant arts community, shape innovative cultural policy, and build public awareness of the economic benefits and value of diversity in arts and culture.

**RECOMMENDATION(S)  
VICE-CHAIR NORA VARGAS AND CHAIR NATHAN FLETCHER**

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Office to assess the role the County of San Diego already plays in arts and culture, including an assessment of how Community Enhancement Program grants have been provided to arts and culture organizations.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to identify opportunities to leverage state and federal funding to ensure nontraditional arts and culture organizations are included.
3. Direct the Chief Administrative Office to look at how to increase equity in the access to arts and culture in the region and capitalize on the economic potential of an increased arts and culture program throughout the county to build equity.
4. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to report back to the board within 90 days with a recommendation on how to expand the role of the County in promoting and participating arts and culture opportunities, including the creation of a Commission on Arts and Culture.

**EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT**

From the inception of our country, government at the local, regional, state, and federal level has played a role in creating and maintaining racial inequity. Despite progress in addressing explicit discrimination, racial inequities continue to be deep, pervasive, and persistent across the country. Government can implement policy change at multiple levels and across multiple sectors to drive larger systemic change. It is important to note that to achieve long-term impact, changes must be sustainable. Working for racial equity can allow for meaningful education with community and other institutions that will ensure sustainability.

Cultural equity has been defined as “the condition that all people are fairly resourced in artistic and cultural expression and fairly represented in systems of exhibition, performance, and decision-making.” PolicyLink asserts that “Cultural equity explicitly values the unique and collective cultures of diverse communities and supports their existence in physical spaces, in public policies and investment, and in expression in civic and spiritual life.” Equitable access to arts and culture in all its forms is a core component of an equitable society and has the capacity to transform lives. Achieving cultural equity requires a commitment to removing the barriers to the arts and cultural participation that are experienced when residents are under-represented and

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under-resourced by virtue of the city or area of the region in which they live. Elevating arts and culture in San Diego County will prioritize equitable access to the arts to the benefit all San Diegans, particularly those communities that have been previously left behind.

Arts and Culture resources at the County shall be directed to employ evidence-based art standards and policies focused on and rooted in racial equity. We will pay particular attention to long standing under resourced culturally based organizations in our communities such as the Worldbeat Center, Centro Cultural de La Raza, Common Ground Theater, San Diego Urban Warriors, Chicano Park Museum, African American Museum of Fine Arts, (a museum without a centralized home), A Reason to Survive (AARTS) in National City and Pasacat Philippine Dance Company to name a few. This will create a new vibrant and sustainable community and balance the scale of inequitable funding and organizational support.

To address inequities, the County should design, support and fund initiatives for cultural districts and art networks such as, but not limited to: Barrio Logan, the San Diego Black Arts Business and Culture District, the Convoy Asian Business District, North County Arts Network, the South Bay Arts Network in Southeast San Diego, South and East County Arts Network, and support the rich Native American culture throughout other parts of the County. To further advance equity the County should continue to support and develop programs with creative youth organizations that use the arts to inspire and elevate youth.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no current fiscal impact but, in the future, will return to the board with recommendations and potential fiscal impact.

**BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT**

In California, the arts accounted for \$174.6 billion in value to California’s economy in 2015, making up 7.1% of the state’s overall GDP at the time. Increasing arts and culture opportunities in San Diego County may bring significant economic growth to the region.

**ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT**

N/A

**BACKGROUND**

Efforts focused on arts and culture could be an important component to the County’s efforts to address critical issues such as public health and healthy communities; children, youth, and families; mental health, probation and juvenile programs, equity, and social justice; and public safety. Arts and culture organizations can also be strategic partners with local government in the pursuit of public policy that drives societal development, global inclusion, and equitable values. A strong arts and culture infrastructure at the County of San Diego can support programs that engage people across cultures, enable audience members of all ages to experience worlds outside of their own through storytelling, and provide education and outreach activities during and after

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school, helping them explore healthy self-expression. Arts, culture, and creativity are at the heart of innovation and an important part of economic and workforce development.

In the 1980s, the County of San Diego formed the Public Art Advisory Council (PAAC), a designated local arts agency primarily funded by Community Enhancement Funds, the Voluntary Funding for the Arts program (a partnership with the tax collector that served as a re-granting program) and California Arts Council (CAC) State/Local Partnership (S/LPP) grant. The agency was underfunded and instead of being the policy and equity lead for arts funding for all arts-based Community Enhancement Funds, the grant paid for one- and three-quarter staff person who oversaw the PAAC's work. In 1993, the County eliminated the Public Arts Advisory Council, which resulted in a gap of resources to support local arts and culture organizations, and consequently a decrease of public art in our communities.

Today the California Arts Council continues to fund local arts agencies through the S/LPP, allocating up to \$35,000 in each participating county. When the PAAC was dissolved in the early 90s, the County of San Diego was no longer able to apply for the S/LPP grant, nor has it been able to seek funding from the National Endowment for the Arts or from any other California Arts Council grants programs. Additionally, there have been missed opportunities for arts and culture to leverage state and federal funding opportunities that support County priorities. Most importantly it has left many valuable art and culture organizations behind.

Currently, fifty of the fifty-eight counties in California have a dedicated arts panel recognized by the California Arts Council through a state-local partnership program, which provides annual funding and assistance. The elimination of the County's PAAC 28 years ago put the onus and responsibility of funding arts and culture organizations onto individual members of the Board of Supervisors through either the Community Enhancement Program or the Neighborhood Reinvestment Program.

San Diego County is the largest county in California without a dedicated arts agency. The cities of San Diego, Carlsbad, Chula Vista, Coronado, Del Mar, Encinitas, Escondido, National City, Oceanside, Solana Beach, and Vista have citizen-appointed commissions or advisory boards that provide direction and support to their respective city councils for the development of public arts.

Although five cities in the County of San Diego have municipal arts agencies, there is no regional entity to support cultural policy, programs, or public funding of the arts across the County's five supervisorial districts. The existing arts agencies, except for the Escondido Arts Partnership and National City, are all coastal - Oceanside, Carlsbad, Encinitas, San Diego, and Coronado - leaving nearly two million residents in inland cities, unincorporated areas, the 18 tribal reservations, as well as those in our most diverse communities in the southern region without access to comprehensive public arts and culture infrastructure. Seven cities (Chula Vista, El Cajon, Imperial Beach, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, Poway, San Marcos, and Santee) do not currently have an advisory arts panel and have limited resources to create one. Chula Vista used to have an Arts Commission and Imperial Beach currently has a standalone citizens group that works very closely with the mayor and council.

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That is why we are asking the Chief Administrative Officer to explore and report back with options for increased participation in the region’s arts and culture programs, including identifying state and federal funding, increasing equity in access to arts and culture, and coordinating regionally to promote economic contributions of arts and culture. This work could be achieved by establishing an arts and culture commission that would serve as a forum for community partners to give input on art in county buildings, parks, and facilities, to elevate arts and culture in San Diego County at an international level, and foster county partnerships with local organizations. This strategy could also help guide a more equitable approach toward public funding of arts and culture throughout San Diego County, continuing to elevate our region as an international multi-cultural powerhouse in arts, culture, and design and boost our local economy. Arts and culture organizations are those with programming for but not limited to visual or performing arts, literary arts, cinematic, theatrical, and include museums, historical societies and centers that provide cultural programming.

The County should support and expand upon our current public art programs and the policies that guide them. Though the PAAC was dissolved, the County continues to engage with visual arts programs. Board Policy F-23, the *Inclusion of Works of Art on Certain County Public Buildings Policy*, maintains an inventory of public art that includes historic works by Works Progress Administration (WPA) artists, as well as a collection of California Plein Air paintings by Charles Reiffel that were restored in 2015 with the Clerk of the Board’s oversight. Two other programs, *Art Halls/Art Walls* (Board Policy G-17), also administered by the Clerk of the Board, and Housing and Community Development Services’ *pARTnerships Program*, both provide residents with an opportunity to show their own works of art in County buildings.

The County should coordinate these efforts while exploring opportunities to create new programs “developed to educate the public about art, promote its value to society, and as a means of personal expression for local artists.” Notably, Board Policies G-17 and F-23 will be up for continuance in 2022 and 2023 respectively. A new arts agency and advisory committee can support the preservation of these existing policies, while recommending updates as needed to maximize their outcomes.

A local arts agency can bring new or increased resources for arts and culture to the region. In 2015, the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and the National Endowment for the Arts released economic data showing that the arts accounted for \$174.6 billion in value to California’s economy – 7.1% of the state’s overall GDP at the time, and comparable value to the contributions of the construction, agriculture, and transportation industries combined. The same annual report showed arts and culture production employed over 700,000 people throughout the state and paid \$80.2 billion in compensation, making up 4% of the state’s employment and 6% of the state’s compensation. Through the Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 (AEP5) study, the City of San Diego evaluated that arts and culture generate \$1.1 billion in total economic activity. This spending supports 35,914 full-time equivalent jobs, generates \$894.4 million in household income to residents, and delivers \$116 million in local and state government revenue. San Diego County has a unique opportunity to participate in the upcoming AEP5 study to assess the

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economic impact of nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences and send a strong signal backed with data that when we support the arts, we are not only enhancing our quality of life, but we also invest in the County's economic well-being.

Today's action will allow San Diego County to move closer to achieving cultural equity by exploring ways to expand opportunities for artists, arts and culture organizations and in so doing will allow opportunity for broad cultural participation. These efforts should champion the arts by investing in a vibrant arts community, shape innovative cultural policy, and build public awareness of the economic benefits and value of diversity in arts and culture.

We urge your support.

**LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Today's proposed action to increase the County's support of arts and culture throughout the region supports the Health Families and Safe Communities Strategic Initiatives in the County of San Diego's 2021-2026 Strategic Plan by prioritizing greater cultural equity, access, and inclusion for all San Diegans.

Respectfully submitted,



VICE-CHAIR NORA VARGAS  
Supervisor, First District



CHAIR NATHAN FLETCHER  
Supervisor, Fourth District

**ATTACHMENT(S)**

N/A

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**AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION SHEET**

**REQUIRES FOUR VOTES:**          Yes        No

**WRITTEN DISCLOSURE PER COUNTY CHARTER SECTION 1000.1 REQUIRED**

   Yes        No

**PREVIOUS RELEVANT BOARD ACTIONS:**

In the 1980's the County of San Diego formed the Public Art Advisory Council (PAAC), a designated local arts agency primarily funded by a California Arts Council (CAC) State/Local Partnership (S/LPP) grant. That grant paid for one staff person who oversaw the PAAC's work. In 1993, the County eliminated the Public Arts Advisory Council which resulted in a gap of resources to support local arts and culture organizations, and consequently a decrease of public art in our communities.

**BOARD POLICIES APPLICABLE:**

Board Policy F-23, *Inclusion of Works of Art on Certain County Public Buildings Policy*  
Board Policy G-17, *Art Halls/Art Walls* and Housing and Community Development Services' *pARTnerships Program*

**BOARD POLICY STATEMENTS:**

n/a

**MANDATORY COMPLIANCE:**

n/a

**ORACLE AWARD NUMBER(S) AND CONTRACT AND/OR REQUISITION NUMBER(S):**

n/a

**ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:** First and Fourth Supervisorial Districts

**OTHER CONCURRENCE(S):**    N/A

**CONTACT PERSON(S):**

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