



## The Mayor's Initiative "For Arts Sake"

June 12, 2009  
Kick-Off Meeting

Mayor Kevin Johnson kicked off the meeting by speaking about his vision for how the arts create a sense of community that is uniquely ours. For Sacramento to become a world-class destination it must also be a city of big ideas and the arts are vital to that goal. In spite of the struggling economy, the time to have a conversation is now since the arts can be a catalyst for economic recovery and the revitalization of downtown. Conversely, not paying attention to the challenges facing our arts groups now could ensure a city without a soul in the future.

According to the mayor, the arts do three things for a community:

- They act as a convener by bringing people together, i.e., Second Saturday;
- They inspire and educate – you can't have great schools without the arts; and
- They provide an outlet where ideas and opinions can be expressed in appropriate ways – especially in these challenging times.

Mayor Johnson decided to launch this initiative to stake out his commitment to creating a fertile environment for the arts, and challenged the participants to work with him to:

- Reinvent the way we define and support the arts in this community;
- To be bold; and to
- Do something iconic together.

Examples of bold projects are:

- The E. Clair Raley Studios for the Performing Arts;
- The Crocker Museum of Art expansion;
- The B Street project;
- The vision for California Academy for the Arts at the rail yards'; and
- SMAC's Art in Public Places program.

Major Johnson listed 5 key issues that need to be addressed, according to his conversations with arts leaders and advocates:

- Funding
- Marketing
- Facilities
- Education
- Political leadership

The mayor closed his comments by stating his commitment to promote the arts, inspire the artists and support the arts community. He also introduced Sharon Gerber as his representative for the “For Arts Sake” Initiative.

### Open Forum Discussion (moderated by Dennis Mangers)

#### **Funding:**

- Marie Acosta, La Raza Galleria: Federal block grants have been used elsewhere to employ artists as an under-employed segment of the workforce—why not here? It is an economic development issue. Mayor Johnson agreed to study this.
- Ron Cunningham, The Sacramento Ballet: We need a funding mechanism like the developers’ fees that fund the Art in Public Places Program. Mayor Johnson said that new taxes would not be possible in this economic environment, but encouraged the group to study how public/private funding is accomplished elsewhere in order to “tee up” a recommendation for when times are better.
- Bill Blake, B Street Theater: We need to convene a small working group (including SMAC’s research) to create a strategic plan that to explain to the public what the arts can do with more support. Mayor Johnson agreed, and encouraged the group to quantify the economic impact of the arts locally and create a plan with a bias for action, not process.
- Mark Feldman, Sacramento Philharmonic: Professional artists are an educational resource. The Philharmonic’s musicians reach over 20,000 school children per year. He recommends that arts groups join forces to present professional arts programs in the schools. Also, he recommended that before we ask the public for more funding, we should have a better idea of what they want from their arts providers.
- ???, Artist: We need a separate dialogue for the performing arts and the visual arts. We have very different needs, and since visual artists work individually, their voice can be lost. Why not have art on bus signs?
- Shonna McDaniels, Sojourner Truth Museum: The competition for funding is tough, and the smaller groups often lose out to the bigger ones.
- Lisa Lacy, Images Theatre Company (plans to be the first African-American equity theater company): Those who know how to organize and raise funds should help educate the emerging groups. Please keep inviting us to these discussions so we can learn from others.

- Stephanie Gularte, Capital Stage: We need to look at partnering with business since government funding is too unreliable. The mayor's initiative on volunteerism could inspire others. There are many ways to give – time expertise, joining a board of directors.

### **Marketing:**

- Liv Moe, Mid Town Monthly: Galleries and artists are not benefiting from Second Saturday. Even though the event is successful in other ways, the commercial galleries are not seeing increased sales and are at risk of going under. The mayor thanked her for her perspective.
- Michelle Alexander, Arts & Business Council: We have a business community who does not see the arts as a piece of the economic engine. They need to be educated and ABC has the information on economic impact and could help with a communications plan. Also, we need to avoid focusing solely “on the grid”, and celebrate our regional offerings (Mondavi Center, Roseville Arts!, Placer Grown). Mayor Johnson liked the idea of creating local pride through “buying local” with regard to the arts.

### **Facilities:**

- Kathy Ossmann, Sacramento Master Singers: Encouraged the mayor to support SMAC's study and recommendations for addressing the community's needs for smaller facilities. An executive summary of the study is at: [http://www.sacmetroarts.org/documents/ERA\\_SacPerfArtStudy\\_ExecSum.pdf](http://www.sacmetroarts.org/documents/ERA_SacPerfArtStudy_ExecSum.pdf)
- Jim McCormick, Sacramento Choral Society: Recommended that we engage the state to discuss the proposed California Academy for the Arts at the rail yards as a state facility. The mayor stated that he and council member, Rob Fong, need to get an understanding of how the state might support this project.

### **Education:**

- Daphne Tom Quist, Sacramento Children's Chorus: Youth arts programs need more recognition since they are eclipsed by the professional groups in town. Developing artists need recognition also. The mayor encouraged her to join in one of the smaller groups that will address marketing and/or education as part of this initiative.
- Kristina Lapinsky, student: We need to invest in technology for the arts in our schools, such as software for music education, etc. Mayor Johnson stressed how important it is to educate the next generation as an audience for the arts and announced that he is in discussions with Michael Kaiser, President of the Kennedy Center, to bring his K-8 educational outreach project to Sacramento.

## Next Steps

- Monthly meetings will be held over the next 12 months to continue this discussion between the Mayor and the Arts Community.
- The mayor will develop a leadership team of 6-10 volunteers to meeting more often and move the initiative forward.
- Create action plan with priorities, timelines and commitments for each of the 5 key areas: Funding, Marketing, Facilities, Education, and Political Leadership.

Finally, the mayor encouraged participants to email other thoughts, questions, or ideas to Sharon Gerber at [sharongerber@sixdegreez.net](mailto:sharongerber@sixdegreez.net).

## Coverage of the “For Art’s Sake” Initiative

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