

MEXICAN HERITAGE PLAZA

Steering Committee Meeting #3

8 September 2009

12:00 to 1:30 p.m.

This meeting was designed for the Steering Committee to hear presentations about questions that were raised at Meeting #2.

RDA Presentation:

The first presentation was by Richard Keit of the San Jose Redevelopment Agency (SJRA). The Steering Committee had asked about SJRA's plans for District 5 for the future. Mr. Keit spoke of the investments in District 5 by the SJRA in the past, and of the plans for the VTA bus/rapid transit in the area of the Mexican Heritage Plaza. He also informed the Steering Committee that \$300,000 of upgrades to existing systems have been planned for the theatre and the pavilion, restricted to AV and flooring. However, large budget cuts are required of redevelopment agencies state-wide for the next two years at least, so the bottom line is that the San Jose SJRA has no other plans for the immediate area surrounding the Plaza in the foreseeable future.

The Steering Committee requested a paragraph summary of the status of projects "on the drawing board" in the immediate area surrounding MHP. SJRA will provide this for the next meeting.

RAP Presentations:

The Resident Arts Partners (RAPs) each gave a presentation about their relationship to MHP that addressed the following questions from the Steering Committee:

1. In what ways does your organization utilize MHP as a RAP?
2. How does being a RAP benefit your organization?
3. How does the neighborhood, and the wider community benefit from your status as a RAP?
4. What would you like to see happen to the RAP program at MHP going forward?

Presentations were made by Arlene Sagun, San Jose Multicultural Artists Guild, Leigh Henderson, Mexican Heritage Corporation, and Jess Moreles, Teatro Vision. Texts of each presentation are attached to these meeting notes.

The Steering Committee questioned the three RAP representatives about issues relating to the future of the RAP program and the following points were made:

- The RAP's purpose is to provide programming for the Plaza. As non-profits, they were never envisioned, and going forward cannot be seen, as a revenue source that would contribute to the Plaza being "self-sustaining."
- The RAPs expressed willingness to look beyond the Plaza for office space, although their preference was to remain. Ideas for handling this included looking to other neighborhood venues, or finding unused City office space to help this transition.
- RAP suggestions for improving the ability of RAPs to provide programming to serve the community included:
 - A calendar of events and cohesive strategy for programming
 - A development officer shared by all RAPs
 - Collaborative marketing and fundraising
 - Shared back office functions
 - Rehearsal space and a black box theatre
 - A gift shop or kiosk where artists could sell their wares
- The burden is not on the RAPs to fill financial gaps however, there does need to be a clarity that includes a definition of benefits/expectations and how RAPs are involved and how they are part of the model. One of the Committee's tasks will be to develop the policy for selection of the RAPs and an agreement between the Plaza and the RAPs in terms of benefits and expectations.
- Committee asked RAPs: what were your onsite audience numbers from this past year?
 - Teatro: Despite subscription sales off 30%, there was a 32% increase in sales with 30% being students to total attendance of 9,800

- SJMAG: 4,000 here at the Plaza, 22,000 city-wide
- In the past the Plaza has been homebase for MHC education programs. Currently, Los Lupenos classes and rehearsals are taking place in the Gallery.

Following these presentations, the facilitator brought the usage patterns and rate sheet to the attention of the Steering Committee, pointing out that the majority of use in 2008-09 was by the RAPs. The Steering Committee requested the income associated with each category of user, according to spaces uses. This will be provided at the next meeting.

Next Meeting:

For lack of time, the discussion of the Hoover Center and the subject of for-profit activity and other models was postponed for the next meeting. The Committee agreed to add an additional hour to the next meeting, so there will be time to wrap up the educational items from meeting #3 and also begin to discuss scenarios, in keeping with the process timeline. The next meeting will be Tuesday, October 13th, 2009 from 5:30-8:30pm.

Public comments:

Deputy Consul General José Eduardo Loreto announced that the annual Grito celebration, honoring Mexico's Independence Day, would be celebrated at the Plaza on Sept. 15th at 6pm. It is a free event, open to the public.

A member of the public, Rosemary Ruiz Fernandez, expressed a desire for the Plaza to be a Julliard of the West. She urged that music education offered at the Plaza be standards-based.

ATTACHMENT: RAP Presentations

I. Arlene Sagun, San Jose Multicultural Artists Guild

In what way does your organization utilize MHP as a RAP?

Each February, during Black History Month, SJMAG utilizes the Plaza Theater for a main stage production. During Women's History Month in March, SJMAG produces the only Girlfriend Appreciation Day in the Plaza Pavilion. SJMAG's conducts its board meetings on site, in our office, every third Wednesday of the month.

SJMAG conducts some:

- Daytime rehearsals in the classroom
- Drum Circles in the Gallery
- Dance classes in the Gallery

Benefits of being a RAP group

- Gives us local/national credibility and recognition in being associated with the Plaza.
- Provides opportunity for us to produce/perform theatre in modern, well equipped, quality theatre, and other facilities. The Plaza is beautiful.
- One central location for the public to locate us
- Low cost office space
- Storage area in the theater
- Use of facilities at a reduced rate
- Free and secure parking during productions

How does the neighborhood and community benefit from us being a RAP group?

- SJMAG lives in the area we serve.
- Our Arts Education workshops are held in the immediate and surrounding school districts. SJMAG currently serves almost 10,000 youth and their families through school assemblies, after-school workshops and empowerment programs in the schools and community centers.

- SJMAG's touring ensembles perform throughout the Bay Area at local churches, corporate diversity days, City celebrations, children's shelters and juvenile hall to name a few.
- SJMAG has the only African American Professional Theatre Ensemble in the South Bay.
- SJMAG serves as a connection to other groups and organizations because of its name "Guild" supplying callers with information on:
 - Museums
 - Arts Appraisers
 - Musicians, Actors, and Dancers of color
- SJMAG has the only Dia de los Muertos/Day of the Dead celebration in the South Bay and in 2009, the only celebration in the Bay Area.
- SJMAG's Women's Drum and Poetry Ensemble represents women at large conferences, breakfasts, women's organizations, commissions and retreats:
 - Women's Health Trust
 - National Coalition of 100 Black Women
 - Commission on the Status of Women
 - Women Engineer Conference
 - 15th Annual Latina Conference

What would you like to see happen to the RAP program moving forward?

- Take into consideration the surrounding communities need for productions and programs at little or no cost.
 - Festivals
 - An open air concert
 - Children's Craft day
 - Free matinees
- RAP costs have been lower some what, but now RAP groups are charged for everything bringing the costs ultimately higher.
- Currently SJMAG's second main stage production is held at the Theatre on San Pedro Square because the costs are moderate. SJMAG would like to keep all of their productions at the MHP if possible.
- Bring back after-school programming to the MHP.
- Bring back the Day of the Dead Festival and Celebration to the Plaza.
 - Allow an exhibit of altars a three week run
 - Reconnect the community to the event where it has its roots
- Bring in additional RAP groups:
 - East Indian Dance

- Filipino Dance
- Spanish Flamingo

Impact Statistics

In 08-09, SJMAG served 22,288 Silicon Valley and greater Bay Area residents; 8,100 attended 5 main stage events at the Mexican Heritage Plaza, Theatre on San Pedro Square and San Jose State University campus; 23 fee-based and free empowerment performances reached 4,475 people; our 15 school assemblies and 45 after-school, in-school, and summertime short and long-term artist residency programs served 5,463 Silicon Valley youth, with an additional 4,250 family members attending post-residency recital performances.

II. Leigh Henderson, Mexican Heritage Corporation

As we are actually the newest resident arts partner, we feel that our use of the Plaza as a RAP is still evolving and has the potential to grow in the future. At present, in addition to using the RAP office space, we also use the Plaza extensively as a rehearsal venue. Los Lupeños de San José, the folkloric dance company that is part of our organization, rehearses in the gallery on a regular basis. We're also fortunate to be able to use the stage at the Plaza to rehearse the staging of our Mariachi Festival concerts.

In addition to rehearsing at the Plaza, Los Lupeños also teaches folkloric dance classes at the Plaza, which have been extremely well received. Funding and staffing permitting, we would love to expand our educational offerings here. For instance, the Plaza has in the past served as a very popular venue for PeeWee Mariachi classes and for Mariachi Youth Program classes.

We also do periodic public performances or events at the Plaza - we annually present our Mariachi Youth Program students in concert here, we sometimes collaborate with other organizations on productions or festivals that they are presenting at the Plaza, and, budget permitting, we present Los Lupeños in concert either on stage or in the pavilion.

We are also working with the City to evaluate our status as an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, which would allow us or the City to bring Smithsonian curated exhibits here. Early next year, we'll be partnering with the City to bring a Smithsonian exhibit about the Bracero program to the Plaza gallery, which is especially exciting because we actually helped the Smithsonian to collect objects and stories for this exhibit here at the Plaza.

We love being here at the Plaza as a RAP because it provides us with a home base in the heart of our community. It's a particular boon for Los Lupeños, as it's crucial that they have a home base to rehearse and now having a place to offer classes allows them to build their audience base and recruit new members, which secures their organizational future. Having offices in a beautiful, prestigious venue like the Plaza is also helpful to us when we meet with supporters in the philanthropic and corporate sectors. And, of course, having access to offices, rehearsal space, and performance space at below market rate is something any non-profit would be grateful for.

We try to give back to the neighborhood around the Plaza every way we can. Of course, having a place like the Plaza where people can come for classes and cultural offerings is a great benefit in itself. Being based here, we are also in a great position to partner with other schools and organizations here on the east side, from the schools that we serve with our Mariachi Youth Program, to our recent collaboration with the Mayfair Community Center to offer free Mexican cooking classes at their facility, to providing free tickets to our Mariachi Festival concerts for area non-profits to distribute to their constituents.

Going forward, we would love to continue to be here as a resident arts partner at the Plaza. We're striving to increase the education programs we're able to offer both here and at surrounding schools because it's at the heart of our mission and because we think it's a wonderful way to get our community engaged with this facility. I know that some questions have been raised as to whether MHC plans to stay at the Plaza, particularly as we have moved our annual Mariachi Festival into the downtown. But the Mariachi Festival is once a year. It makes sense to have it there because of size of the venues needed, and because it allows us to partner with the City and with downtown businesses to attract broader audiences. But year-round our education programs tie directly to the Plaza and to the neighborhood around it. So please let us know what we can do to help make the future of the Plaza a success.

III. Jess Moreles, Teatro Vision

Teatro Visión is a Chicano theater company whose mission is to celebrate culture, nurture community and inspire vision through art that moves people to feel, think and act to create a better world.

For 25 years, Teatro Visión has played a leading role in the evolution of Chicano/Latino Theater through producing professional, main stage work by leading Latino playwrights. Grounded by the ideals of social justice and

community access, our programming seeks to share the cultural values that unite all of us as a community.

Teatro Visión has been a resident arts partner of the Mexican Heritage Plaza since 1999 and currently has an operating budget of \$682,265.

Our Core Programs:

Teatro Visión produces a full season of plays a year, most in a bilingual format, and has produced over **54 plays** attended by more than **114,000 individuals**. Our additional programs support this work:

Codices Project: Teatro Visión commissions, develops and produces new works through the Cordices Project. Teatro produces these plays in Spanish and English to expand accessibility. Plays produced have been the World Premiere productions of *Conjunto* by Oliver Mayer and *El Vagon (Boxcar)* by Silvia Gonzalez S, both performed at the Mexican Heritage Plaza.

Visión Project: This program provides free live performances via partnerships with more than **100** local schools and organizations. In our most recent season, the Project engaged **3,745** low-income residents, including **2,156 students**.

Instituto de Teatro is a *teatro* training program for artists, service providers and educators. Unique in the nation and begun with Rockefeller Foundation support, our Instituto program is being developed for national replication.

Mariposa Arts Education Program provides California Visual and Performing Arts Standard-meeting study guides, bilingual performances and forums to engage students, strengthen their civic duty, critical thinking, self-confidence, communication and problem-solving skills.

Professional Affiliations

Our ever-widening network of professional and community based affiliations, both within the Latino community and beyond, has been key to our growth:

The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Theater Communications Group (New York City), the National Endowment for the Arts, Theatre Bay Area, Americans for the Arts, The National Association of Latino Arts and Culture, SOMOS Mayfair, First 5 Santa Clara County, 1stACT Silicon Valley's Multicultural Arts Leadership Initiative, Native Family Outreach and Education

Since becoming a Resident Arts Partner at the Mexican Heritage Plaza in 1999:

- Teatro Visión has produced **31 plays/events**, comprising **390 performance dates** that have attracted over **60,000** people to the Mexican Heritage Plaza.
- Audiences have been growing every year since 2004; this past season saw **9,800** in audiences, the largest one-season total in Teatro Visión history. Over **30%** of this figure was **students**.
- **10 of the 16 plays** performed at the Mexican Heritage Plaza since 2004 have been **performed in Spanish** or have had Spanish subtitles projected above the stage.
- In the last three years, Teatro Visión has hosted **22** performances that garnered over **300** in audiences. The Plaza's theater has been able to accommodate these audiences, whereas Teatro Visión's prior venues (San Jose Stage- 200, City Lights-108) would not have been able to.
- In the last three years, Teatro Visión has produced **10 student matinees**, attracting **3,000 students**, mainly from the local schools in the East Side Union High School District.
- Since instilling its **free educator nights** in 2004, over **500** teachers have attended performances; over **90%** of the teachers are from the neighboring school districts (ESUHSD, SJUSD, Franklin-McKinley).
- In the last four years, surveys have shown that **62%** of Teatro Visión's audiences have been **Latino**; **51%** have been from **San José**.
- In 2005, Teatro Visión contracted with Knowledge Networks to conduct focus groups among our audiences; they revealed that many of our audiences considered the Plaza to be uninviting, unwelcoming and underused. Some believed the theater as "cold" - it does not emit warmth. Teatro Visión has since taken steps to overcome these issues, and at the end of this past season, survey comments left by Teatro Visión audiences overwhelmingly stated Teatro Visión plays to be "welcoming", "comfortable", "wonderful", as well as mentioning "Love you are here".
- Since moving to the Mexican Heritage Plaza, Teatro Visión has paid over **\$281,000** in office and venue rental