



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: April 21, 2009

TO: Chairperson and Boardmembers

FROM: Housing and Redevelopment Division, Community Development Department

SUBJECT: Report On The Vacant Storefront Art Program

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Redevelopment Agency Board receive a report on the Agency-funded Vacant Storefront Art Program.

BACKGROUND:

In response to the current economic climate, on January 6, 2009, the Mayor held a breakfast with local business leaders to discuss issues facing the City's commercial sector and to identify potential solutions. At that breakfast, members of the Downtown Organization expressed concern over the impact of increasing numbers of empty storefronts along Downtown State Street in the Central City Redevelopment Project Area. The concern focused on the potential onset of blight conditions which could further dampen economic activity. It was suggested that using these visible locations as "galleries" for public art would enhance the attractiveness of the vacancies, draw additional foot traffic and potentially attract lessees to the vacant spaces.

As a result of that discussion, Agency staff facilitated a series of meetings with Downtown Organization staff and boardmembers, County Arts Commission staff, and Redevelopment Agency boardmembers to research the feasibility and implementation of such a program. It was found that multiple Redevelopment Agencies, including our own, have funded successful programs to stem and prevent blight conditions in Redevelopment Project Areas through the temporary installation of public art. Arts Commission staff presented a model of temporary storefront exhibitions based on the 1989/90 *Frontage Gallery* which the Agency funded during the construction of Paseo Nuevo. Agency staff presented the participants with models of temporary vacant storefront exhibitions from other cities facing similar issues including Santa Cruz and Long Beach, CA. These meetings resulted in the creation of the Vacant Storefront Art Program.

DISCUSSION:

The Vacant Storefront Art Program is a pilot program of temporary art exhibitions in vacant storefronts in the downtown core. The program with an estimated cost of \$18,000 will be funded from the Agency Appropriated Reserve Account and will run from May through October 2009. The pilot program would consist of “low-capital” art installations placed temporarily in vacant storefront windows along State Street. The installation will consist of a series of two-dimensional exhibits, with a unifying design theme that identifies the program.

The general form and content of the installations are being developed jointly by the Arts Commission, Downtown Organization, and Agency staff. The actual works are being selected by an Arts Commission-appointed curator and reviewed for approval by the City Arts Advisory Committee. The length of any single display will be approximately three months, but this period may vary according to storefront availability. The program will build upon and enhance the existing cultural events scheduled in the area. The program is set to begin May 7th as part of 1st Thursday programming.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Arts Commission will administer the program, including coordinating and contracting with artists, and oversee the project in partnership with the Downtown Organization and RDA.

The Arts Commission will oversee curatorial selection and the review process with City Arts Advisory, as well as install and take down exhibitions.

The Downtown Organization will maintain a dynamic inventory of potential exhibit spaces and, with the support of the Arts Commission, will work to secure agreements with property managers, leaseholders, and owners.

Participation in the program will be voluntary, and signed lease opportunities will take priority over installation terms. Management groups and owners will be credited for their participation in the program.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

Staff estimates a cost \$18,000 to produce two series of twelve installations, with each series lasting approximately three months. Funding for this program comes from the Agency’s Appropriated Reserve account, which has a balance of \$44,688. This amount is within the Agency Executive Director’s purchase order authority.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

Agency sponsored capital projects incorporate environmentally responsible design and construction techniques including, but not limited to, the specification of recycled content building materials, construction debris recycling processes, and the use of drought-tolerant landscaping. These techniques further the City's Sustainability Goals in a variety of ways specific to the individual project and include reducing waste, recycling, and reducing resource consumption. Where appropriate, these measures will be incorporated into the installation of work as part of the Program.

ATTACHMENT: March 12, 2009, letter from the Santa Barbara County
Arts Commission

PREPARED BY: Brian J. Bosse, Housing and Redevelopment Manager
Jeannette Candau, Redevelopment Specialist

SUBMITTED BY: Paul Casey, Agency Deputy Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office

March 12, 2009

TO: Brian Bosse, City Redevelopment Agency, Manager
 FROM: Ginny Brush, County Arts Commission, Executive Director
 RE: Proposal for State Street Storefront Temporary Exhibition Pilot Program

Background:

In response to concern over the impact of increasing numbers of empty storefronts along State Street in the Historic Cultural Arts District, meetings were held with members of City Council, the Downtown Organization, and the City Redevelopment Agency to address the issue.

At a March 3rd meeting City RDA staff presented a current block-by-block inventory of empty storefronts along with models of temporary storefront exhibitions from other cities (Santa Cruz and Long Beach). Some management companies and property owners of vacancies were also identified.

Arts Commission staff presented a model and identified a variety of organizations and institutions (see following list) that have expressed interest and enthusiasm for the concept of temporary storefront exhibitions based on the 1989/90 Frontage Gallery model. [During the construction of Paseo Nuevo empty storefronts were used as temporary art exhibition spaces that were organized, and selected by a curatorial team linked to Arts Commission].

Potential organizations, groups and institutions interested in the concept are:

- Santa Barbara City Poet Laureate and the poetry community
- Art Studio Department UCSB
 - Graduate and Undergraduate students exhibitions
 - Projects linked to public art classes [Callister/Yasuda/Mulfinger/Beckman]
- University Art Museum (Satellite exhibitions linked to UCSB exhibits)
 - Katherine Kanjo, Director
 - Elyse Gonzales, Curator
- Contemporary Arts Forum Visiting Artists/Model like their Bloom Project
 - Miki Garcia, Director
- SBMA Education/Outreach “Teens for Teens” Program
 - Patsy Hicks, Director
- Santa Barbara Visual Arts Alliance (SBVA)
- Art From Scrap
- Rumble Art Group
 - Catherine Gee Contacts to interested artists

The concept of a pilot program of temporary storefront exhibitions was presented to the Downtown Organization’s Cultural Committee and was enthusiastically supported and was well received by the Board of Directors at its March meeting.

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
Arts Commission



OFFICE LOCATION:

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MAIL:

Post Office Box 2369
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Recommendations:

RDA provide funding to support a pilot program of temporary art exhibitions in vacant storefronts in the Historic Cultural Arts and Old Town Districts from May through October 2009 and have program in place for summer tourist season, Solstice Parade, and Old Spanish Days.

Purpose:

In the Redevelopment Project Area, stem blight conditions encouraged by vacant store fronts through the display of temporary public art.

Benefits:

- Attractively feature and call attention to “for lease” store fronts
- Draw additional foot traffic to downtown
- Synergistically enhance *1st Thursday* programming already in place
- Identify and brand the historic cultural arts district
- Provide increased exhibition opportunities for area artists
- Link otherwise unaffiliated groups and cultural institutions to the Downtown

Scope:

The pilot program would consist of low-capital art installations being placed temporarily in vacant store front windows along downtown State Street. It has been suggested that original poetry formatted on poster-sized displays be placed in the Cultural Arts District above De la Guerra Street and similarly formatted historical photographs of the downtown be placed in the Old Town area of lower State Street. The specific form and content of the program will be determined jointly by the Arts Commission and Downtown Organization and is still to be determined.

The length of any single display would be approximately 3 months, but this period may vary according to storefront availability. Local artists and work would be identified for display through a curatorial process and reviewed by City Arts Advisory and the Downtown Organization’s Cultural Committee for approval. Artists would assume all liability for the displayed work (or would be insured through the Arts Commission). No utility use (such as lighting) would be required of the installation space.

The program would seek to build upon and enhance the existing cultural events scheduled in the area. Kick off for the program is set for May 7th as part of *1st Thursday*, following up on April as National Poetry Month celebration and the recent installation of the City’s new Poet Laureate.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Arts Commission would administer the program and oversee the project in partnership with the Downtown Organization and City RDA.

The Arts Commission would provide staff for installation and deinstallation of exhibitions and oversee curatorial selection and review process with City Arts Advisory and the Downtown Organization's Cultural Committee.

The Arts Commission and Downtown Organization would agree upon general form and format of the installations, and create a name/brand for the project linked to Downtown Cultural Arts District.

The Downtown Organization would maintain a dynamic inventory of potential installation spaces and, with the support of the Arts Commission, would work to secure agreements with property managers, leaseholders, and owners.

Participation in the program would be voluntary and signed lease opportunities would take priority over installation terms. Management groups and owners would be credited for their participation in the program.

Proposed Schedule:

- March 17: Review Program Proposal by planning group
Agree upon form and format of work
- Week of 4/6: Identify insurance requirements (waivers, etc)
Draft name/brand for program (Arts Commission & DO)
Gallery Agreement and Artist Waiver drafted (Arts Commission)
- Week of 4/13: RDA Purchase Order finalized (RDA)
Gallery Agreement and Artist Waiver finalized (Arts Commission & DO)
Appoint Curator (Arts Commission)
- April 16: Present Program Proposal to Arts Advisory Committee for approval (Arts Commission)
- Week of 4/20: Select works (Arts Commission)
Secure store fronts and agreements signed (DO)
Get waivers signed (Arts Commission)
- May 4: Works are formatted and ready for installation
- May 7: Roll out new exhibitions in conjunction with 1st Thursday programming and promotion.
- July: Second exhibition selection and promotion
- July 31: First exhibition ends
- Aug 6: Second exhibition kick-off at 1st Thursday
- Aug – Oct: Run second exhibition
- Oct 31: Pilot program ends

