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**Cultural Facilities Needs Assessment  
Scottsdale, AZ**

**Prepared for the  
Scottsdale Cultural Council**

**May 2010**

# table of contents

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY ..... 2**

**1. INTRODUCTION ..... 6**

**2. STUDY CONTEXT ..... 7**

**3. SCOTTSDALE AND THE ARTS ..... 11**

**4. THE MARKET FOR CULTURAL FACILITIES ..... 18**

**5. USES AND USERS ..... 25**

**6. COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE ..... 33**

**7. THE FUTURE OF ARTS FACILITIES ..... 41**

**8. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS ..... 44**

**9. DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS & MODELS ..... 46**

**10. MOVING FORWARD ..... 57**

  

**APPENDIX A: MARKET DATA**

**APPENDIX B: SCC MAPS**

**APPENDIX C: VISUAL ARTS SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

**APPENDIX D: PERFORMING ARTS SURVEY SUMMARY OF RESULTS**

**APPENDIX E: FACILITY INVENTORIES**

**APPENDIX F: FACILITY MAPS**

# executive summary

Webb Management Services and Lord Cultural Resources have been hired by the Scottsdale Cultural Council (“SCC”) to develop a cultural facilities master plan for new, proposed, and/or renovated cultural facilities in the City of Scottsdale for the short, medium and long-term. The following report summarizes the findings, conclusions, and recommendations of the resulting Needs Assessment for Cultural Facilities in the City of Scottsdale. Key areas of research and analysis include:

1. The Market for Cultural Facilities
2. Programming Opportunities and Demand for Space
3. The Competitive Landscape for Cultural Programming and Facilities

## **The Market for Cultural Facilities**

The first step in the planning process was to analyze the current and potential market for cultural facilities and programs. Using survey data from the 2007 WolfBrown audience study, addresses of SCC members, donors and ticket buyers, and overarching trends drawn from experience with cultural facilities and audiences in similar areas, we examined the market in terms of four key segments:

1. The City of Scottsdale
2. The 5-mile Radius surrounding SCC facilities
3. The 10-mile Radius surrounding SCC facilities
4. The 30-mile Radius surrounding SCC facilities

Demographic data and trends, as well as supporting research, allow us to characterize the market as:

- Large and increasing in density.
- Regionally diverse, with notable populations that identify themselves as Hispanic or Latino, Black or African American. There are also significant concentrations of empty-nesters, retirees and families.
- Well-educated, with attainment rates that are twice the national average.
- Affluent, with higher than average levels of household income.
- Constantly churning, with students, seasonal visitors and tourists continually moving in and out of the area.

Additionally, the market for non-resident (i.e. visitors) attenders is strong. Scottsdale is a true destination, with an international reputation as a premier resort and for its shopping, recreation, arts and culture. More resources are now being devoted to develop the cultural tourism industry.

Understanding how far participants travel for various Scottsdale cultural events and attractions helps us understand the reach of particular programs. This analysis suggested that SCC and audiences and visitors

are sensitive to the quality and integrity of presenting programs and rental events, which have been attracting higher concentrations of regional audiences over the last few seasons.

The market review, in combination with previous research and the experience of SCC programmers, suggests potential for audience development, particularly in terms of families and diverse populations as well as via a top tier of programming and presenting that is not accommodated in existing facilities.

### **Competitive Landscape**

We also inventoried and studied local and regional facilities where arts events and programming regularly occur in order to understand the existing supply of cultural facilities and programs and identify opportunities and gaps. Three sets of facility inventories were developed:

- Performance facilities in Scottsdale and the Phoenix Metro Area
- Visual arts and cultural facilities in Scottsdale and the Phoenix Metro Area
- Performing and visual art program facilities in Scottsdale (accommodating participatory experiences like classes and amateur group activities)

Not surprisingly, SCPA is the primary performing arts presenter in Scottsdale. Locally, there is a gap in the inventory for mid-sized performance venues larger than 1,000 seats, which limits touring activity within Scottsdale. There is also potential for more seasonal outdoor programming and facilities, which would appeal to permanent and part-time residents as well as tourists.

The region also lacks a dedicated, leading natural history museum as well as a city museum or high-tech experience. There are, however, two relevant projects in development, the Desert Discovery Center and the expansion of the Desert Botanical Garden. Neither of these institutions will offer the traditional or classic experience of a “natural history museum” but they will go a long way to address the natural history gap in a manner that capitalizes on the strengths of the desert and the region.

Finally, Scottsdale is a community that values participatory arts programming for everyone, including youth, teens and seniors. Spaces that accommodate hands-on performing arts programming are currently located in community facilities, libraries and private studios. But there are few dedicated arts spaces that encourage a higher quality participatory experience, allowing residents and visitors to work with and learn from professional artists in an environment dedicated to lifelong cultural learning.

### **Programming Opportunities & Potential Uses & Users of Space**

The market and competitive analyses, along with input from a diverse cross-section of constituents, artists, arts organizations and other potential users suggests demand and opportunities for program and facility development in both the visual and performing arts.

#### **1. Visual Arts**

- There is an opportunity capitalize on the success of the Public Art Division, especially through major events and innovative use of outdoor public spaces.

- SMOCA has great potential to strengthen its identity and develop facilities that position it as the regional contemporary museum within a classic regional triumvirate of high quality art museums.
- There is a need for more community and experimental arts space.
- There is interest in gallery space for “projects and experimentation” and for raw industrial studio space or renovated “clean” studio space.

## **2. Performing Arts**

At SCPA, limitations associated with availability, capacity, physical features and a lack of teaching spaces have prohibited program growth, particularly in terms of education programs. In addition:

- There is potential for SCPA to better accommodate local and regional groups by increasing the level of flexibility in its second theater.
- Regional arts groups are attracted to Scottsdale—but also find it difficult to access space. These groups have limited financial resources, are relatively nomadic (using a variety of performance spaces in Scottsdale and the Phoenix Metro Area), and also tend to use non-traditional venues such as churches, school multi-purpose rooms, private homes and museums.
- There is great support for projects that retrofit existing spaces to accommodate new or improved performing arts space.
- The development of a large-scale facility with an outdoor component is likely to be well-received, but must be carefully positioned animated and operated.
- Collaboration and partnerships will be important to generate support for expanded programs and facility projects within Scottsdale.

## **Conclusions & Development Options**

This analysis led to a series of conclusions on the need and opportunity for cultural facilities in the short, medium and long term:

- The market assessment found good propensity for audience development and expansion in response to a range of programs.
- SCC facilities are located downtown with attractive amenities, a critical part of an active and vibrant hub of activity. This contributes to Scottsdale’s position as a cultural destination.
- SCC is limited by the size and function of existing facilities, particularly in terms of presenting, arts education programming and exhibition programs.
- Regional performance groups are interested in performing in Scottsdale and are particularly attracted to the market for potential audiences and the downtown environment.
- Cultural facility trends indicate potential for new or improved facilities to include more public gathering space, flexible space and spaces to better accommodate informal programming. They also suggest that Scottsdale has potential to build on the pockets of activity that exist in the South end of the City.

A series of facility development options and a few particular programming opportunities are described and discussed within the narrative report. These include opportunities that have potential to be developed in the short, medium and long term given thoughtful planning and continued evaluation. The options have been discussed and distilled with community leadership, also evaluated relative to priorities around the future of SCC and broader community goals.

They include:

1. Continued upgrades to existing facilities, including SCPA and SMOCA, to increase flexibility, support diversified utilization and encourage distinction.
2. A world-class performance enclosure to draw top-tier artists, provide a quality and distinctive venue for regional arts groups and reflect Scottsdale's unique environment.
3. Small to mid-size flexible high-tech space to accommodate informal and accessible programming that targets traditionally underserved market segments and provide opportunities for SCC divisions, local artists and arts organizations to collaborate on inter-disciplinary projects.
4. Facilities for life-long learning to create one or more community academies for the arts that build on the existing roster of arts programs offered at the recreation and amateur level.
5. Experimental spaces that support the creative process and diversify the local community of artists and exhibition opportunities for large-scale work.
6. An art therapy program and facility to build on the success of local business sectors and the history and presence of Native American culture and encourage further innovation and recognition within healthcare, healing arts and more.
7. A 'local icon' museum to celebrate the unique artists and cultural heritage of the community, also creating an international destination.
8. Other programs and activities, including a tier-one festival and incentive program for commercial galleries to support the continued positioning of Scottsdale as an 'arts-town.'