

cultural connection

city of san José's cultural plan for 2011-2020



participate : create : connect

executive summary

Cultural Connection was adopted by the San José City Council on February 1, 2011.

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Developed by

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Special thanks to the more than 3,000 people who contributed to *Cultural Connection* through interviews, focus groups, town hall meetings, and public surveys.

Prepared by

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Cover: Christian Moeller's "Hands," an artwork commissioned by the San José Public Art Program at the Mineta San José International Airport, includes images of hands from 54 Silicon Valley residents.



"Show Your Stripes," public art by Jim Conti at The 88 on San Fernando at 1st Street. Interactive light element; public can change patterns/color by dialing a phone number and entering 3-digit numbers of their choosing to activate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A New Vision for a New Decade

Cultural Connection is San José's plan for cultural development in the coming decade. Its purpose is to help create a more vibrant San José through arts and culture. The result of a yearlong process involving more than 3,000 people, *Cultural Connection* presents a vision and shared goals for the City of San José and community partners. This vision is founded on San José's distinct cultural identity and its abundant cultural resources. This plan will strengthen San José's culture and community, while making San José better known and understood in the region, the nation and the world.



Movimiento Cósmico celebrates the Mayan Lunar Year at Circle of Palms, downtown San José

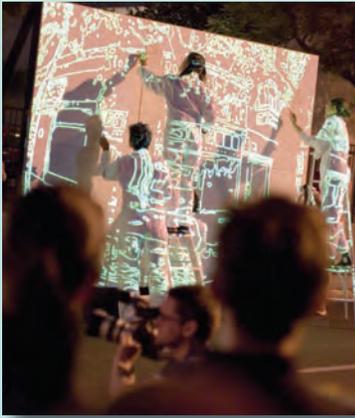
The Importance of Arts and Culture in the Community

Arts and culture are an essential partner in community development. As reflected in *Envision San José 2040*, the City's general plan currently in development, arts and culture contribute to important community goals: a celebration of heritage and diversity, quality education, healthy neighborhoods, and an innovative economy. In this manner, San José's cultural growth is increasingly integral to the City's future. Going forward, cultural development is not the province of the arts community or the City Office of Cultural Affairs alone, but involves the coordinated effort of many other players, including other City departments, the educational sector, the business community, real estate developers, neighborhood leaders, and philanthropic interests.

Why Cultural Planning and Why Now?

Dramatically changed circumstances for the City, the economy and the culture at large require a realignment of the City's cultural resources with clear priorities. Articulating a cultural vision allows the City and community partners to leverage their collective resources and perform more effectively. *Cultural Connection* can help galvanize leaders around shared cultural goals. It will enable the community to achieve its cultural vision for the next ten years and enhance the value of arts and culture to all segments of the community.

What has changed? Money and the culture. San José, like other California cities, faces ongoing structural budget challenges in addition to the current economic recession. While tax revenues are down, other factors drive cost increases faster than revenues. This makes it more difficult for cities to fulfill residents' expectations of local government, including providing cultural amenities. San José's Office of Cultural Affairs, the City's arts agency, has experienced substantial budget cuts in recent years, reflecting this downward pressure on City spending. In addition, the unique character and diversity of Silicon Valley's culture, and shifts in the overall culture, require new responses. The proliferation of informal or amateur cultural activity outside the nonprofit arts world, the growth in popular culture, the deepening use of technology, and the sheer diversity of cultural expression—all necessitate reevaluation of how to fulfill the community's cultural needs.



01SJ Biennial

Cultural Connection was developed in the context of many related responses to this change. It was informed by Envision San José 2040 and is intended to become a key element of the general plan. In addition, the City and community cultural organizations have produced several recent plans and studies that will benefit from alignment in a cohesive ten-year plan.

San José's Cultural Identity and Vision

A collective portrait of San José's distinct and, in some ways, unique cultural identity emerged from the planning process. Diversity is the most frequently mentioned element of San José's culture, both as a demographic fact and as a long-held civic commitment. Reflecting in part the attraction of Silicon Valley, the population is, on the average, relatively well-educated, affluent, international and transitional. In addition, San José has a highly diverse multicultural population not connected directly to high-tech, spanning both multigenerational families and recent immigrants.

San José's culture is highly participatory, and residents' cultural activities are often personal, active, informal and "off the radar" of cultural institutions. San José has also made a long-term investment in its own cultural development, and has created a vital community of nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, artists and arts-related businesses. San José's diversity has shaped its arts and cultural community. There has been an emphasis on culturally based as well as mainstream arts, and the community produces and participates in a broad array of cultural expressions, such as low-riders, ethnic dance, textiles, and hip hop culture. Not surprisingly, a consistent theme of planning was getting beyond comparisons with San Francisco and the Bay Area, and celebrating and promoting San José's own culture.

A cultural vision for San José was developed through the planning process, one that describes the vibrant arts and cultural life desired by the community:

Arts and culture in San José connects people, provides rich opportunities for participation, and fosters creativity.



Vietnamese Spring Festival

Guiding Principles

Cultural Connection is based on five guiding principles, which were identified as authentic traits inherent in San José's cultural sector through Envision San José 2040, new research, and trends in the arts. Five national issue experts were selected to prepare white papers to frame each principle in a national context and draw implications for San José.

Cultural Participation: Supporting residents' personal, active participation in arts and culture.

Innovation: Fostering new responses to growing challenges in cultural development.

Cultural Pluralism: Using culture as a connector and fostering a “cultural commons” through arts and culture.

Arts and Economic Prosperity: Promoting economic development of the commercial creative sector—arts-related businesses.

Public Value of the Arts: Using personally meaningful arts experiences to help achieve community goals and create a better San José.



Mariachi Festival

New Directions Based on Past Achievements

Key ideas in *Cultural Connection* are based on San José’s existing cultural strengths and assets. They are opportunities arising from the starting point of past accomplishments in the community’s cultural development. For example:

Emphasizing Personal Participation: San José has made a sustained investment in its arts and cultural infrastructure, with an emphasis on institutions and facilities for audiences to experience professional artists. *Cultural Connection* seeks to strengthen this infrastructure while providing more opportunities and places throughout the community where people can learn, practice, share, and celebrate their own personal cultural interests.

Using Culture to Promote San José as a Destination: San José’s cultural community has reached the point where it can become a more effective draw for people in Silicon Valley, the Bay Area and beyond. The plan proposes ways to boost cultural tourism while reinforcing San José’s own distinct culture.

Using Culture as a Connector: San José’s has a long-term commitment to celebrating diversity and fostering multiculturalism. This collection of artists, cultural organizations, and relationships now provides the opportunity for an even greater “cultural commons”—many ways to bridge across ethnicity, generations and backgrounds.

Using Culture to Enliven Many Places: San José has developed (and redeveloped) a collection of anchor cultural facilities, primarily in the downtown area. Cultural development downtown and in the neighborhoods can now focus on access to diverse, smaller-scale spaces, inside and outside, that support a broader range of cultural activities, more embedded in everyday life.

Developing San José’s Commercial Creative Economy: San José has focused its cultural policy to date on developing the nonprofit arts and cultural sector. The next stage is to also value and nurture individual creatives and arts-rooted businesses.



Cinema San Pedro



Music in the Park

The Plan: Ten Goals over Ten Years

Cultural Connection has ten goals to achieve the community's cultural vision over the next ten years. The goals are by their nature inter-related so that implementation of one often reinforces another. All goals are of equal priority over the long term but portions of each are more easily accomplished, or must precede tackling other portions.

- 1. Support Residents' Active, Personal Participation in Arts and Culture.**
- 2. Support the Availability of Diverse Cultural Spaces and Places Throughout the Community.**
- 3. Strengthen Downtown San José as the Creative and Cultural Center of the Silicon Valley.**
- 4. Integrate High Impact Public Art and Urban Design throughout the Community.**
- 5. Expand Residents' Access to Arts and Cultural Learning Opportunities.**
- 6. Foster Destination Quality Events in San José.**
- 7. Strengthen Communitywide Marketing and Audience Engagement.**
- 8. Enhance Support for Creative Entrepreneurs and the Commercial Creative Sector.**
- 9. Increase Funding for Cultural Development.**
- 10. Strengthen the Cultural Infrastructure.**



Symphony Silicon Valley at the renovated California Theatre

Implementation

Cultural Connection is a ten-year plan for the City and its community partners. Because cultural development is a collective enterprise, many agencies within and outside of City government, as well as organizations, businesses and people throughout the community participated in development of this plan and will play a role in its implementation.

In recognition of the current economic challenges facing the City and the community, the plan balances the practical with the visionary by identifying short-term recommendations that can be accomplished or initiated in the coming two years, often using currently available resources. These short-term recommendations align with the City's current priorities and internal work plans. There are also more ambitious, long-term recommendations that will require substantial preparation, new resources, and other changes before implementation begins.

Past Cultural Planning Successes *Cultural planning, much like other community planning, builds on the past and points to the future. In this spirit, Cultural Connection, builds upon successes from San José's two previous cultural plans.*

20/21: A Cultural Plan for the New Millennium, adopted in 1997 as a 10 year vision for cultural development, was a major regional planning initiative in partnership with Arts Council Silicon Valley. Significant accomplishments that resulted from the 20/21 Cultural Plan include:

- *Update of the public art ordinance leading to the development of Public Art Next!, the City of San José's Public Art Master Plan*
- *Artsopolis, a model regional arts marketing initiative which has become a national network*
- *Cultural Initiatives Silicon Valley which developed and raised millions of dollars for a comprehensive K-12 arts education initiative that is now housed in the Santa Clara County Office of Education*
- *ZERO1's 01SJ: the Biennial Art and Technology Festival, emerging as one of the world's most significant events of its kind*
- *Renovation of the historic California Theatre into a special downtown, mid-size venue*
- *A cross-sector regional leadership initiative now realized at 1stAct Silicon Valley*

The 20/21 Cultural Plan was preceded by the City's first cultural plan, the 1988 San José Arts 2020, which served as the mandate for the City's initial cultural policy including the establishment of the Office of Cultural Affairs; the development of the arts grants, public art and arts education programs; and program assistance that fostered the development of many small and mid-size arts organizations.



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