

Workshop with Barbara Goldstein
Arts Benicia / Arts and Culture Commission
May 21, 2016

Attending: Mayor Elizabeth Patterson, Arts and Culture Commissioners Susan Garske and Frances Fields, former Arts and Culture Commissioners Elaine Eisner and Patty Gavin, Arts Benicia Executive Director Celeste Smeland, former Arts Benicia Director Larnie Fox, Creative Work Fund (CWF) Director Frances Phillips, CWF resident at Arts Benicia, Mark Brest van Kempen, Library Director/city liaison with the Arts and Culture Community Diane Smikahl, and approximately 14 members of the public.

Introduction:

Larnie Fox provided background on the Arts Benicia work with the Creative Work Fund grant that supported the residency of Mark Brest van Kempen. Mark has worked on three visual arts projects: a charrette with the public on public art, and two projects at the waterfront (the bio labyrinth and the floating marsh). These projects were specifically designed to provide a nexus with the City's Urban Waterfront Enhancement Master Plan process, designing art at the initiation of the process and proactively making sure that public art is included in the design phase.

Mark Brest van Kempen said the workshop with Barbara Goldstein is the last part of a multifaceted project. He is interested in the idea of social sculpture, which is like putting pigment into paint and then watching it blend in interesting ways.

Barbara Goldstein started her presentation by clarifying public art vs art in public places. Art in public places can be art created somewhere else and brought in to a site, whereas public art is art created to make a specific place more public.

A number of images of public art were shown, including iconic art, art for enhancement, engagement, revitalization, environmental art, art depicting history, temporary and social practice. She talked about how the Association for Public Art, founded in 1972 as the Fairmont Park Art Association, builds events around art in public places and how the Rose Kennedy Greenway in Boston is using art to animate the linear park that covers the "Big Dig" created when the elevated freeway was removed.

She responded to question about percent for art in private development. She speculated that, because of the small amount of commercial development opportunities and developers are encouraged to commission art that enhances their property, this is not a good funding source for citywide projects in Benicia. Other potential sources for funding art are the Transient Occupancy Tax, sales tax, creation of a public development authority to build a cultural or performing arts facility, partnerships with industry, and grants. Currently, there are many funding sources for creative placemaking projects including the National Endowment for the Arts Our Town grants, ArtPlace and Kresge Foundation grants. There are also grants to promote social justice projects, as these may provide opportunities (e.g. Rauschenberg Foundation).

Barbara discussed artist/artwork selection, recommending that panels include both arts professionals, as the majority, and community stakeholders who would help inform arts professionals and the artist who are subsequently commissioned.

Goldstein asked the group to respond to several questions:

What do you see as the role of the arts in Benicia?

- Serving children;
- Being economic drivers
- Being a center for the arts
- Demonstrating that art provides a large return on investment.
 - Using the data that will come out of the Arts and Economic Prosperity Survey
 - Showing that Art is an economic funding force in the community
- Critical path where we need to make investments that are necessary
- Many ways to create art, but no shared vision
- Art can be a unifying force in the community

Who are your natural partners in supporting the arts in the area?

- Grantees receiving funding from City/Arts and Culture Commission
- Creative skills
- Real estate companies
- Residents, restaurants, promoting a more walkable place.
- Police (more people on the street – less crime)
- Education advocates: schools, teachers, parents, kids
- Environmental community – in Benicia, this has a large nexus the arts community
- High tech companies looking at providing cultural experiences for their employees
- Surrounding communities, who benefit from our success
- People drive through Benicia to go to Napa and Sonoma: get them to stop and spend \$ here
 - Vallejo and other nearby communities: create collaboration/unification
 - Collaboration can be supported by Transit services. We have a good partnership with the Solano Transportation Agency.
 - Mobile art tour with Benicia and Vallejo can be used to bring people to our arts events

Where would you like to see art happen?

- *First Street.* There are some galleries, but would like to see more
 - Business Improvement District (BID) is a good way to bring art into a city. People were thrilled when the BID illuminated the trees on First Street. Do something to celebrate the arts on First Street all the time.
 - Demonstrate there is a direct correlation between art and economic development
- *Place arts organizations and artists in empty storefronts* to help animate pedestrian areas.
- *Open Studios.* Need to provide opportunities for studios to be open more often so people get to know the local artists better.

- *Waterfront*. Several people noted that they are struck by the waterfront and that it is a great opportunity.
 - Amplification of sound at the waterfront
 - Using boats, light
- *Celebrate History*: Benicia is a historically important place – art can help bring art history to life
- *At the off-ramps*. Need art at the gateways to the City.
 - Pine Lake – possibly sculpture or other work showing a steamboat/ferry – iron workers
 - Many possibilities for that site: a key gateway to the city
- *At Parks, Library, schools* where art can connect with children
- *At the Depot* – Railroad cars showing our unique history as the link with San Francisco/Bay Area
- *In places other than downtown...* Southampton resident asked for art in the Community Park, State Park ... places where people live and play
- *Anywhere that would provide more connection of arts for visitors*

How can art contribute to Benicia's sense of community?

- Create a senses of continuity within the community
- Could art help contribute to the unification of the arsenal with downtown and Southampton?

Group Exercise

The group was broken into four sections to discuss the following topics: Waterfront, Open Space, History and Entrances to the City. Each was asked to discuss:

- Where should art be located?
- Who are the stakeholders?
- What are the characteristics that you'd like to see?
- What are the next steps in the process?

Group Exercise: Open Space

Possible Artwork Locations:

- State Park
- Southampton Community Park
- Industrial Park
- Wetlands at 680
- Mare Island
- Rivers (in Sacramento)
- Lake Herman
- Wineries

Potential Partners

- California Arts Council
- Solano Land Trust
- US Department of Fish and Game
- Local State Park Association
- State Park
- Southampton Community Park
- Lake Herman
- Department of Parks and Rec
- Park Users
- Business District
- Industrial Park
 - Association board
 - Valero
- Wetlands 680
 - Coastal Commission
 - Environmental groups
 - Birders
 - Hunters
 - Highway Commission
- Mare Island
 - Shoreline preserve
 - Birders
 - Tourot University
 - Maritime Academy
 - Historical society
 - Veterans/military
- Sacramento River
 - Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission

Workshop with Barbara Goldstein
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May 21, 2016

- California Arts Council
- Fairfield/Green Valley/Suisun
 - Wineries
 - Agricultural Associations.

Characteristics

- Water – amplified sounds, resonance
- People/Users – who would engage with the arts
- Plants and animals – who are there
- Accessible: walkable, hearable

Group Exercise: Entries

Potential Artwork Locations:

- Over/underpasses
- Former Pine Lake
 - Airport --Mitigation for storage
 - Industrial history
- Not refinery only
- Columbus Parkway
- Call transportation (corporate yard)
 - Solano transport
- Park and Ride
- Lake Herman Rd.
- Community park/Jack London Park
- 3rd St. tunnel
- Water tank
- Exits/LED lighting opportunity
- W. 7th Chelsea Hills

Group Exercise: Waterfront

Themes

- Wayfinding
- Opening access to the waterfront
- Contemplative spots
- A walk = a day trip
- Architectural tour (like Vallejo's)
- Environmental Clean-up
- Artists: Robert Arneson, Manuel Neri
- Art on the water itself
- Ferry boat artifacts – railroads
- Transportation history
- Iconic – visible to passersby
- Maker spaces
- Lacking performing arts spaces
 - Space next to Tannery building could be a pop up performance space
- Land each of depot
- Whole – waterfront
- Mothballed ship place
- Marina
- Coast walk/coastal trail
 - There is a waterfront trail project in the works
 - End of 1st
 - Art Benicia – State park
 - Expanding Bay Trail
 - Small parks – 6th/9th, etc.
 - State Park
 - Open Back way to Arsenal
 - Ferry connection

Possible Artwork Partners

- Arts commission
- Amport
- Marina people
- BCDC – partner for waterfront trail
- Department of Transportation
- We want a ferry
- Business community/industrial
- Arts community
- People with money and egos

Workshop with Barbara Goldstein
Arts Benicia / Arts and Culture Commission
May 21, 2016

- People who move here for water, views, and schools
- Benicia Residents
- Community sustainability commission
- Federal/state clean up

Vision

- Destination for arts
- Environmental arts showcase
- Visible history
- Fully integrated/ arts or leading
- Component of waterfront development. Core (not bronze ducks)
- Artists with strong voices engage the community

Group Exercise: History

Possible Locations

- Downtown – Historic State Capitol as an anchor
- Arsenal
- Waterfront
- Von Pfister Adobe

Possible Partnerships

- Arts Benicia and community – fraternal organizations
- Historical Museum – Historical Society
- Amport
- Chamber of Commerce
- Build a connection between history and community
- School District
- Military and veterans

Characteristics

- Music in State Capitol
- Highlight people's narratives
- History of Spanish lands
- Industrial history
- Oral histories
- Augmented reality tours

Next Steps both literal and metaphorical)

- Bring partners together to initiate discussion

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May 21, 2016

- Library as unifying party between historical society and arts community
- Bring community into finding variety

Concluding Remarks

Barbara Goldstein discussed some opportunities that should be explored in the near future:

- California Arts Council has a new grant -California Creative Communities grants
- Assembly Bill 189 promotes establishment of certified cultural districts. There may be some regulations with more detail on this, but the law is very brief and says: AB 189 will “require the Arts Council to establish criteria and guidelines for state-designated cultural districts, as defined. The bill would require the council to establish a competitive application system for certification, provide technical and promotional support for certified state-designated cultural districts, and collaborate with public agencies and private entities to maximize the benefits of state-designated cultural districts. This legislation may be intended to offset the loss of redevelopment districts.
- Cultural Arts Stabilization Fund (CAST) supports preservation of cultural spaces in San Francisco – could be a model for Solano County.

There is quite a bit of connectivity already in place through the Library and the Urban Waterfront Enhancement Plan. Barbara suggested creating a steering committee to bring the various parties together. She recommended getting some traction by working off of small success stories that are already in place, such as the Library’s “This Place has History” program.

The group requested a place they would be able to continue working on this, sharing thoughts and ideas, through a blog or Facebook page. The Library will set up a ‘group’ list for attendees, and Arts Benicia will help by posting on their Facebook page and setting up some of their other social networking sites for this purpose.