

City of Santa Clarita Arts Commission **Live/Work Facility**



INTRODUCTION:

The City of Santa Clarita Arts Master Plan, adopted by City Council in March 2016, addresses several areas of specific interest to meet the evolving cultural interests of citizens. As noted in Recommendation 2.4, it states begin development of a creative live/work facility in Old Town Newhall.

Old Town Newhall is Santa Clarita's Arts and Entertainment District featuring boutique shopping, locally owned and operated restaurants, home to two theatres The MAIN and the Canyon Theatre Guild, galleries, and events in the Thursdays@Newhall series. Coming soon to the area is Laemmle Theatre, an independent movie theatre specializing in indie, foreign and art films.

Established in the late 19th Century, Newhall was the first permanent town in the Santa Clarita Valley. It was incorporated into the City of Santa Clarita in 1987, but its rich history and old west heritage can still be felt today.

LIVE/WORK FACILITY:

A live/work space is defined as a single unit (e.g., studio, loft, or one bedroom) consisting of both a commercial/office and a residential component that is occupied by the same resident. The live/work unit shall be the primary home of the occupant.

Live/work spaces combine a workspace with living quarters and are ideal for small businesses, entrepreneurs and professionals. These spaces are sustainable, transit-oriented and ideal for people from diverse communities and varied income levels and backgrounds to collaborate, live in and do business. As stated by multiple live/work organizations, suites in these buildings are designed for artists and their families to live and work in

the same space, allowing them to save on rent and transportation costs. Live/work spaces can be funded through municipal and other governmental sources, foundations, tax credits and other incentives. Throughout the United States there are even some facilities that are being financed by the rental or sale of the spaces. The use and finance possibilities are endless when it comes to these types of developments.

LIVE/WORK DEVELOPERS:

Per the Arts Master Plan, City staff spoke with two different organizations responsible for the planning and construction of live/work spaces related to arts organizations. ArtSpace and PLACE are committed to building infrastructures in which the arts are integrated to the wellbeing of the communities that they work in.

ArtSpace is a nonprofit organization based out of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The company has been serving artists and communities since 1979 with more than 300 cultural facility planning efforts. City staff learned about their efforts to facilitate art friendly communities and the possibility of working with them in the future during an hour-long conference call with them.

The company's multi-step approach facilitates the process of creating live/work spaces and it consists of:

- A Preliminary Feasibility Study to assess a new community and looking at the possibility of an ArtSpace project which costs \$25,000.
- This two-day fact finding mission assesses the potential for an ArtSpace live/work or mixed-use project in a community. A team of three is available to visit the city and tour existing buildings and sites, meet with artists, city officials, and other stakeholders, conduct a public meeting to welcome community participation and generate interest about the possible project.
- The study results in a detailed report on their team's findings and what some next steps for the community could be to address the space needs of their creative sector. While it is the first step on the path to an ArtSpace developed project, sometimes the results are used by the community to accomplish different work, or by local developers to create new space rather than an ArtSpace developed project.
- **The Preliminary Feasibility Study isn't a guarantee for an ArtSpace project even when that is a primary goal, but is the first step to begin the process.**

PLACE is a nonprofit that is based out of Minneapolis, Minnesota. PLACE was founded in 2005 with the mission to create spaces that foster a sustainable, just, and inspiring world. As stated on their website, "We exist to create affordable living and working for people of all income levels and backgrounds within sustainable, mixed-use, transit-oriented communities." Their team and board of directors possess many decades worth of development experience. Although they are based out of Minnesota, their ability to meet with the City of Santa Clarita is flexible due to the fact that they have a project in Ventura, California that they visit frequently. Their team is willing to meet with the City while they are in the vicinity.

They have also stated that they can come to the City at any particular time as long as their travel expenses are covered by the City. A one-day visit is by their co-founders Chris Velasco and Elizabeth Bowling costs roughly \$3,000 depending on flights. At the end of the one-day visit, they would present the next steps, which typically include:

- A preliminary feasibility evaluation.
- Shaping the project vision.
- Identifying and expanding key stakeholders.

- Identifying key resources for pre-construction expenses which was stated by their team to be one of the more difficult steps.

PLACE also offers a three-day, preliminary feasibility evaluation which consists of:

- An intensive fact finding mission costing around \$9,800. This includes touring sites, meeting with stakeholders and hold a community meeting.
- The preliminary feasibility evaluation is driven around site feasibility, financial feasibility and market feasibility.
- At the end of the preliminary feasibility evaluation, their team will make an oral report of their findings. Their findings include summarizing the preliminary feasibility for a project as the city envisions, identifying challenges and assets, and suggests ways to overcome the challenges and map out the next steps.

BENEFITS OF A LIVE/WORK FACILITY IN SANTA CLARITA:

The City of Santa Clarita is a hub for artists and other creative types. California Institute of the Arts is one of the most renowned art schools in the country and having a live/work space would give those artists an opportunity to keep creating in Santa Clarita after they have graduated. Over a decade ago, representatives expressed interest in having some type of live/work facility for their graduating students but didn't have the means to get the process going.

The live/work facility could be the catalyst to creating a better future, not just for artists, but future business leaders as well. A live/work facility is a combined effort to bring community and businesses to the neighborhood. The space for artists provides a powerful economic development benefit for the whole community. Keeping the community populated with people creating jobs for themselves, will benefit the valley as a whole.

Live/work facilities lower the startup costs for new businesses which in turn can turn community members into business leaders without necessity for a large amount of money. The opportunity to live and create under the same roof and with only one monthly expense, produces a more prosperous future for these business entrepreneurs and Santa Clarita benefits in turn from a thriving artist community.

PROPOSED LOCATION OF A LIVE/WORK FACILITY:

Per the Arts Master Plan, Old Town Newhall is the ideal area for a live/work facility. Old Town Newhall is the Arts and Entertainment District that hosts 22 retail shops and 23 drink and dining destinations. By night, the town transforms into a lively and energetic entertainment hub. The City of Santa Clarita hosts the Thursdays at Newhall series as well as various comedy, film, theater and other visual arts performances at The MAIN. Construction of The Laemmle Theatre is currently underway on the same street and will provide the residents of Santa Clarita a shorter commute to enjoy art exhibits, indie, and other foreign films.

Per the Downtown Newhall Specific Plan, in Chapter 2: Form and Character, the section outlines a proposal of the existing industrial tracts east of Pine Street and south of the railroad tracks be dedicated to a creative industries consisting of live/work facilities. Per the plan, the facility would attract tenants throughout the region. It was also stated that the existing properties are of sufficient size to accommodate the expected development without necessarily requiring land assembly.