

Nonprofit Strategies



SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

An artistic vision becomes business reality in Paso

By Barry VanderKelen

A new nonprofit organization called *Studios on the Park* is being launched in Paso Robles.

It will bring artists to the downtown core and is now in the process of renovating the former Pioneer Auto Parts store on the east end of Paso Robles City Park. When finished, Studios on the Park at 1130 Pine St. will bring much-needed space to artists and allow the public to share in the creative process.

The project is interesting for many reasons. First, it brings the creation of art into the retail core of a city. Art After Dark, which occurs on the first Friday evening of every month in downtown San Luis Obispo, has much of the same sensibilities.

Second, painter Anne Laddon had the original vision for the project and is making it happen. She was involved with a similar project in Alexandria, Va., in the mid-1970s. A group of artists converted an abandoned torpedo plant into studio space. The Torpedo Factory Art Center became the cornerstone for a revitalization of that section of Alexandria.

Studios on the Park will likely add to the growing reputation of downtown Paso Robles being a destination for retail, dining and entertainment.

Third, the manner in which the Paso Robles project is unfolding is a story of balancing passion with business pragmatism. After all, nonprofits are corporations. The most successful ones have solid business models guiding their work. Laddon admits she needs help with some of the business details and she has recruited people to help her.

San Luis Obispo attorney June McIvor, for instance, coordinates the incorporation and tax status certification of the organization. Commercial real estate developer Newlin Hastings leads the negotiations for facility leasing and renovation contracts. In the spirit of full disclosure, the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation is serving as the organization's fiscal agent during its start-up

phase. Eleven people have been recruited to the organization's Board of Directors, and each one has an assignment. It is this team approach that is building momentum in the project.

Laddon projects that Studios on the Park will need to raise at least \$1.6 million to fully renovate the facility. The plans are not to use debt to finance the work so that the cost of studio space to artists is as low as possible. Furthermore, once open, the studios are projected to be financially self-sustaining. Like so many other nonprofit projects, this one encompasses numerous sectors, such as arts, community enhancement and historic preservation.

I will follow the development of this project and write occasionally about its progress. The building's central location makes it easy for everyone to track the physical progress. I will focus on the maturation of the nonprofit behind the building.

Resource Use

- Support nonprofit leadership
- Board development/training
- Strategic planning

Nonprofit Business Column of The Tribune

The San Luis Obispo Tribune publishes a column every other week in the Business section dedicated to the business practices of nonprofit orgs. Barry VanderKelen, Executive Director of the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation writes the bi-

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