

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NEW JERSEY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION

LONG-RANGE PLAN

MISSION

The mission of the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission is dedicated to the development and promotion of public interest in the arts and history of local and county cultural traditions.

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CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NEW JERSEY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION LONG RANGE PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2006 Nancy Moses, a specialist in cultural planning and author of the *Cumberland County, New Jersey Cultural Plan*,¹ was retained to develop an Organizational Long-Range Plan extending over five years. The planning process not only assessed the Commission's operations and impact, but set exemplary standards to guide its future and establish rubrics to measure progress.

Cumberland County possesses a surprisingly rich cultural life, with a large collection of historically significant buildings, a diverse cultural heritage, a lively complement of organizations providing cultural services and experiences, and a promising set of new initiatives underway or on the horizon. Cultural providers represent the primary constituency of the Cultural & Heritage Commission. In 2006, 23 received direct support.

The Commission's greatest strategic challenge is how to perform its multiple roles – as funder, educator, planner and producer – with a staff of two part-time employees and a budget of under \$200,000. It also wants to reach for exemplary standards to assure in the future that the county benefits from: higher quality and more diverse cultural offerings; better managed and effective cultural and heritage organization; and recognition as a thriving arts/heritage community. The Long-Range Plan calls for meeting four objectives:

Objective #1: Expand financial and staff resources available to the cultural sector. The Commission is ready to build its budget through taxes, grants, and other sources.

Objective #2: Re-align Commission investments to maximize impact. While it is important that the Commission continue to support organizations without other means of support, it should also begin to more strategically invest in key areas.

Objective #3: Help the cultural community mature. The Commission can provide a range of assistance to those organizations ready, willing and able to attain higher levels of managerial acumen and aesthetic quality that will lead to ongoing support by State level cultural agencies.

Objective #4: Increase the visibility of arts and heritage events and attractions. Local arts, cultural and heritage attractions need to build visibility within and beyond the borders of the County. A wide range of tactics are needed to increase and diversify audience, donors, volunteers, and members, including linking with tourism and economic development agencies.

¹ Nancy Moses and Thomas Reiner, *Cumberland County, New Jersey Cultural Plan*, South Jersey Economic Development Agency, 2004. See Appendix 1 for the Executive Summary of the Plan.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NEW JERSEY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION LONG RANGE PLAN

THE ASSIGNMENT

In November 2006 Nancy Moses, a specialist in cultural planning and author of the *Cumberland County, New Jersey Cultural Plan*, was retained to develop an Organizational Long-Range Plan to guide Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission over the next five years. Matthew Pisarski, Principle Planner for Cumberland County and Coordinator of its Cultural and Heritage Commission, served as project manager.

The Commission sought a plan that would reach beyond *performance improvement* and address *programmatic success*. Accordingly, the planning process was designed to assess the Commission's operations and impact; to articulate exemplary standards to guide its future; and to establish rubrics to measure progress.

The planning process began with a meeting with Mr. Pisarski to discuss the Commission's work. Then, Ms. Moses reviewed a comprehensive set of Commission documents: meeting minutes over two years, grant guidelines, applications to State agencies, past long range plans, and the START project report. She examined the Commission's website and reviewed an analysis of past grantees prepared by Mr. Pisarski. These became the basis for a structured discussion led by Ms. Moses with the Commission around its roles, goals, and standards of performance.

The next step was to hear from the Commission's primary constituents: organizations that provide arts and heritage activities. Two focus groups of grant recipients were held in early May: one for organizations with budgets of \$100,000 or less, and the other for organizations with budgets in excess of \$100,000. The two-hour sessions began with a power point presentation by Mr. Pisarski describing the role of the Commission in the life of the County and presenting an analysis of its work. Then, Ms. Moses led participants through a discussion that addressed ways the Commission could best serve its constituents and advance its mission. Findings from the sessions were combined with other data to develop the Plan's exemplary standards and objectives. These were reviewed by the Commissioners in mid-June 2007.

The Long-Range Plan that follows is a result of this work. Because the 2004 *Cultural Plan* provided an in-depth portrait of the County and its population, it was not necessary to repeat these data. Instead, this Plan begins with an analysis of recent changes affecting its cultural and heritage sector. It then describes the Commission's role in the life of the County, its resources, constituents, and activities.

These form the context for the Long-Range Plan that follows: its performance standards, goals, objectives, and rubrics. To assure coordination and hone priorities, the Commission's Plan is then aligned with Cumberland's *Cultural Plan*. The last part of the document presents implementation steps and rubrics for each of five years.

The author wishes to thank Matthew Pisarski, all focus group participants², and members of the Cultural and Heritage Commission and for their active involvement.

Cultural & Heritage Commissioners

Jean Jones, Chairperson

Patricial Gale, Vice-chairperson

Penny Watson, Treasurer

Marianne Lods, Secretary

Suzanne Merighi

Roy Kaneshiki

Joseph Polhamus

Freeholder Director, Douglas M. Rainear

Freeholder Jane Yetman Christy

² See Appendix 2 for Focus Group summaries.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY'S CULTURAL SECTOR

Cumberland County, New Jersey is surprisingly rich in cultural expression, cultural places, and cultural experiences. New Jersey's most economically challenged county, which suffers from many of the attendant social problems, Cumberland is also a place filled with cultural traditions and residents that cherish its small town and rural lifestyle. The farmland, wetlands, and historic structures that once filled much of New Jersey remain in abundance in Cumberland for residents and visitors to enjoy. In fact, one can argue that the forces that kept Cumberland County so poor for so long actually preserved its cultural distinctiveness and authentic environments.

Throughout Cumberland County, many residents participate in cultural activities. The Commission's website lists 27 "cultural organizations" and 55 "historical organizations," some of which appear on both lists. Many are traditional cultural organizations: museums, libraries, and historical societies; performing and presenting organizations. Others are not. Cumberland's residents are able to access cultural programs, experiences and services from organizations as diverse as government agencies, hospitals, volunteer clubs, tourist associations, religious organizations, and Native American tribes. Moreover, according to WheatonArts's Down Jersey Folklife Center, this area is home to at least 35 ethnic, religious, occupational and regional communities. These diverse cultural providers represent the primary constituency of Cumberland County's Cultural and Heritage Commission. Its secondary constituencies are individual artists and arts-related businesses.

From research undertaken for this Plan and from previous studies, we know much about the challenges faced by these cultural providers. From the *Start Project*, we know that many struggle to identify, recruit, train, and engage board members. From the *Cultural Plan*, we know:

“Because cultural participation increases along with education and wealth, the County's cultural institutions are hard pressed to fill their seats and galleries or to secure individual donations. The County also suffers from a lack of collaboration within the cultural community, between the cultural and economic sectors, and across municipal jurisdictions. Unlike many successful cultural communities, Cumberland County lacks a dedicated tax that supports cultural organizations and marketing.”⁴

We also know that art education in public schools is on the decline, a victim of budget reductions and the President's "No Child Left Behind" policy, which focuses teaching to the standardized tests.

³ Iveta Pirogva, *START Project: Board Engagement and the Creative Process*, for Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission and Camden County Cultural & Heritage Commission.

⁴ Op cite, page 4.

These challenges will take years to overcome. Most are beyond the mission of its Cultural and Heritage Commission and thus the scope of this Plan. Nevertheless, as the Commission surveys the current landscape, it finds much that is promising.

-- By all measures, Millville's Glasstown Arts District has become an extraordinary success, bringing to this once-impooverished community new improvements, restaurants, businesses, residents, visitors, and life. It's monthly "Third Fridays" have become a central focus of County life. What's so remarkable is how quickly these gains have been realized, signaling an emerging appetite for arts and culture. Plans are now underway to catapult Millville to the next level, with a redeveloped waterfront, more retail, housing, restaurants, and other amenities.

-- New residents are moving into homes built on redeveloped farmland and historic houses in Bridgetown and Millville. Because many newcomers seem to possess the income and educational levels of cultural patrons, they represent promising sources of new audiences and volunteers.

-- The largest educational institution, Cumberland County College, has increased its enrollment, offerings, and facilities. Ceramics courses are taught at Clay College in the Millville Arts District for both credit and non-credit students. The Frank Guaracini Fine and Performing Arts Center with a 500-seat theater, now hosts the Bay-Atlantic Symphony and a full schedule of other performances.

-- Wheaton Village, the largest cultural institution, has re-branded itself as WheatonArts in recognition of its creative breadth and growing regional, national, and even international stature. WheatonArts enlivens this region with ongoing displays and exhibits; music and dance performances; craft demonstrations and workshops; and concerts and other performances that present traditional artists and area folklife. It also houses an archive and sponsors research.

-- New facilities are in construction or planning. These include new artist housing and the LeVoy Theatre in Millville, a theatre/retail complex in Vineland, and The Alliance Heritage Center, a novel complex of historic synagogues just outside of Vineland, proposed by the Jewish Federation of Cumberland County.

-- Millions are being invested in a new racetrack and related amenities in Millville. While this is not a cultural facility, the new racetrack promises to bring more of the kinds of visitors who might frequent local artists, crafts shops, and events.

-- Three of the proposed five New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trails are now open, allowing hikers to experience maritime history, coastal habitats, and wildlife migration. This project of the National Park Service, in cooperation with other public and private entities, provides public understanding and enjoyment of sites and resources associated with coastal New Jersey.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY CULTURAL & HERITAGE COMMISSION

Cumberland County's Cultural & Heritage Commission is a division of the Department of Planning and Economic Development. Its members, who serve a five year term, are appointed by the Board of Chosen Freeholders.

In Fiscal 2006, the Commission's budget totaled \$181,874. Seventy-three percent of that, or \$133,000, was re-granted to a total of 22 County organizations. The remaining \$48,874, 27 percent, covered such items as marketing, workshops, events, and administrative expenses. Salary and fringe benefits for the Commission's two part-time staff members are provided through the Department of Planning & Development and are not a component of the Commission's budget.

Role in the Life of the County

The Commission plays four important roles in the life of the county.

Its first role is the one for which it is best known: the role of **funder**. The Commission receives annual block grants from the NJ State Council on the Arts and the NJ Historical Commission and re-grants, via a competitive process, to County organizations that provide cultural and heritage services. It is the policy of the Commission to award grants to all applicants that meet minimum requirements.

Second, the Commission serves as an **educator**. Through its formal program and the informal advice and technical assistance it offers, the Commission helps new organizations launch and existing organizations grow in size and sophistication.

Third, the Commission is a **planner**, with the perspective and authority to assess needs and create programs to address them. As a respected agency of County government that speaks for all its residents, the Commission can command resources for the betterment of the entire cultural sector not available to any single organization.

Finally, the Commission is an **events producer**. It is charged with designing and staging events designed to enrich County life. These events — Teen Arts Festival, East Point Artist Day, and Winter Eagle Festival Art Contest — were put in place to fill the cultural gap created by budget cuts in the school system. Events producer is the most time-intensive role the Commission plays, amounting to 65-70 percent of total staff resources. These four roles — **funder, educator, planner, and events producer** — have been evident in the Commission's work over the last five years.

Constituents

During Fiscal 2006, 18 organizations received re-grants from the NJ Commission on the Arts and another five received re-grants from the NJ Historical Commission.

These organizations were spread across the County, with a cluster around Vineland, the largest city.

Focus groups held in May of 2007 revealed much about these organizations and their desires.⁵ Most of the smaller groups — those with budgets under \$100,000 — are volunteer-run. Many are ethnic heritage organizations which use their grants to fund events that celebrate their heritage and are attended by ethnic group members. These smaller organizations say their top funding needs are programming and publicity. For many, the long-term goal is stability, not growth; they need more and younger volunteers, not professional managers.

The larger groups — those with budgets over \$100,000 — include both professionally run and volunteer-run. They include a range of organizational types: government, social service, tourism, and education, as well as culture. They express many funding needs: promotion, talent and tech support, and historic building maintenance. They also want better performance facilities, since their experience has shown that more professional venues inspire higher performance quality and draw larger audiences.

Both smaller and larger groups expressed the challenges of increasing audiences in a low-income, low-education community. They pointed out that family and popular fare, like Broadway shows, tend to draw large audiences, even for amateur productions. They suggested that the Commission could help increase attendance by encouraging collaboration, cross-promotions, and outreach to key audiences. While many organizations expressed a desire to gain funding from State cultural agencies, they were hesitant to apply because they feared that they might place their County grants at risk.

Implementation of Last Long-Range Plan

In early 2002, the Commission adopted a Long-Range Plan that extended over three years and included a host of recommendations. Over the last three years, many were implemented. The application form and newsletter were improved. Two planning studies were undertaken, and technical assistance to County organizations was increased. Some recommendations, such as a space needs inventory, were accomplished by the State.

Other recommendations were not implemented. Because the Commission's primary constituency consists of organizations providing cultural services and activities, little has been done to assist artists directly or to provide training to art educators. Other activities were beyond the resources of the Commission. Finally, although the 2002 Plan called for shifting the Commission's focus from programming to service, both the scale and number of programs have expanded.

Implementation of Cumberland Cultural Plan

In August of 2004, the South Jersey Economic Development District, in cooperation with the Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission, began development of a Cultural Plan for the County. The Plan focused on ways that cultural and heritage resources could drive economic growth. Its primary goal was to use these resources:

To strengthen the County's economic base, providing jobs for current residents, attracting new ones, and adding new enterprises.

⁵ See Appendix 2 for summaries of the Focus Group sessions.

Secondary goals were:

To improve the quality of life for all those in the County, and

To build the capacity of the cultural/heritage sector.

Although the County Cultural Plan focuses on economic development and the Commission's Long-Range Plan focuses on cultural development, there are a number of actions that can accomplish the ends of both plans. These should take priority as the Commission moves forward in the years ahead.

The Commission led the way in implementation of the Plan by establishing a series of Task Forces of cultural, civic, and educational leaders to move its recommendations forward. Some of the Task Forces have been very active; others less so. It is clear that staff support for the volunteer Task Forces would help move the agenda forward.⁶

ANALYSIS

As Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission looks to the future, it sees a rapidly changing landscape with new residents, new amenities, and new energy around its cultural and heritage resources. At the same time, the Commission struggles with an ambitious agenda of four roles—**funder, educator, planner, and producer**—performed by a staff of two part-time employees and a budget of under \$200,000.

How the Commission reconciles the miss-match between expectations and resources is its greatest strategic challenge. It is not a new challenge. Indeed, the Commission’s 2002 Plan, which called for shifting the agenda from programming to services, stated:

“In order to accommodate a shift from programming to service, the County Board of Chosen Freeholders and the Commission need to consider the expansion of staff or the reduction of programs.”

Unfortunately, neither a staff expansion nor a program reduction has taken place. In fact, despite a recent reduction in State funding, both the scope and the number of events have increased. Teen Arts, East Point Artists Day, and Winter Eagle Festival Art Contest collectively commanded between 65 and 75 percent of Commission staff time. In 2006, The Teen Arts Festival alone absorbed \$10,947 of the Commission’s budget and served less than 300 students.

Commissioners are mindful that tough choices need to be made if they are to serve an under developed cultural sector and a population with growing expectations — and reach for exemplary standards. With such limited resources, the Commission must focus on needs it can effectively address and leave others to the future.

One case in point is in the loss of school-based arts education, an issue being played out in almost every community in the nation. While this will certainly affect cultural patronage, it is also a systemic problem that cannot be solved with any single action. Indeed, the Commission must address this issue strategically, based on careful planning. Looking to the future, the Commission will be best positioned if it is able to:

- Reduce the number of roles it plays in the life of the County by gradually moving some functions to other entities that are able to provide them.
- Increase the financial and staff resources available for cultural and heritage programs, services and grants.
- Help its stronger grantees mature so they can attract support from the State and other funders.
- Foster development of new cultural providers.

- Focus on initiatives that simultaneously address the goals of the Commission and the *Cumberland County, New Jersey Cultural Plan*.

THE PLAN

Exemplary Standards

Exemplary standards guide an organization by describing its optimum profile. As the Commission looks to the future, it will know it has attained success if the following exemplary standards are in evidence:

Higher quality and more diverse cultural offerings. One of the most surprising findings of this planning process was that the number of organizations applying for grants has remained stable over five years, though the aggregate dollars requested has tripled. This suggests a relatively stagnant cultural sector, one that has yet to feed the demand evidenced in Millville's monthly Third Fridays. The County would benefit from a wider range of cultural opportunities for people with diverse interests, ages and backgrounds. The Commission can play a role here by helping more seasoned organizations expand their offerings and by working with the Center for Leadership, Community and Neighborhood Development at Cumberland County College to help emerging organizations form.

Better managed and effective cultural and heritage organizations. Today, many of organizations that comprise "Cultural Cumberland County" are small and struggling. Many lack the basic managerial skills, technology, and acumen that characterize successful cultural players. The Commission can be helpful here by providing these organizations with skills training, access to consultants and conferences, and funding for infrastructure improvements.

Recognition as a thriving arts/heritage community. Today, few people beyond its borders know about Cumberland County and fewer still realize it possesses a distinctive rural character, large compliment of architecturally significant buildings, and exceptionally rich cultural heritage. Many in the cultural and heritage community believe that the County is under-funded by State government and forgotten by corporate and foundation donors. The Commission can help to change this by connecting the cultural sector with the tourism industry, economic development agencies, business leadership, and government cultural officials.

Objectives, Strategies, Rubrics

As Stated above, the Plan assigns priority to Strategies that address both the Commission and the *Cultural Plan*. These are noted in italics.

Objective #1: Expand financial and staff resources available to the cultural sector. After years of planning, the Commission is ready to build its budget through taxes, grants, and other sources. The County's Trust account, established in 1998, can serve as the grant recipient. The *Cumberland County, New Jersey Cultural Plan* includes a list of potential funding sources. The Commission's Coordinator has the interest and expertise

in fundraising and legislative outreach. The missing piece is the time to pursue opportunities.

Strategies

- Re-align the Coordinator's duties to allow him to spend 30 percent of his time on resource development.
- Pass the Open Space Referendum to allow tax dollars to be spent on historic preservation.
- Use the County's Trust Account to apply for grants from major foundations, corporations, and government for a variety of needs including technical staff and innovative programs.

Rubrics:

1. Increase in Commission grants from non-county sources: corporations, foundations, and State and federal government
2. Passage of Open Space Referendum
3. Increase in Commission dollars awarded to local groups

Objective #2: Re-align Commission investments to maximize impact. Currently all worthy applicants receive some level of grant support. This policy is especially important for a community with so few alternatives to County support. Nevertheless, there are ways to more strategically invest some funds in areas that Commission grantees told us are important and which can make a meaningful difference in their managerial capacity, as well as the quality and quantity of offerings.

Strategies:

- Initiate an analysis of the objectives, costs, and benefits of Commission-sponsored events that explores alternative production models.
- Establish "mini-grants" for such needs as promotion and advertising, transportation of youth to County cultural events, cultural activities for at-risk youth, and volunteer growth.
- Purchase disability-access equipment that all groups can use.

Rubrics:

1. Increase in the number of ethnic organizations receiving support.
2. Increase in disabled patrons at cultural events.
3. Completion of study of Commission-sponsored events.
4. Decrease of Commission staff time devoted to events production.

Objective #3: Help the cultural community mature. Not every Commission grantee wants to grow, but many do. And, an important indicator of organizational maturity is an operating grant from a State cultural agency. Grants from the NJ Council on the Arts and the NJ Historical Commission are important not only for the dollars they bring. They also verify the aesthetic importance and managerial acumen of the recipient, thus opening doors to other sources. Because so few Cumberland County organizations receive State operating grants, the Commission should take a pro-active role here. As current grantees

move on to State support, the Commission will then be able to expand its reach to more start-up groups. Residents and visitors will benefit from higher quality and more diverse cultural offerings.

Organizations may not receive grants from both the Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission and the NJ State Council on the Arts or the NJ Historical Commission in the same funding cycle. (Exceptions to this rule are determined by the NJSCA only and are an extremely rare occurrence.) Accordingly, the Commission must modify not only its grant criteria but also its grant schedule.

Strategies:

- Target groups most likely to move up to State funding for special assistance.
- Revise the Commission’s grant cycle to allow groups whose applications are denied by the State to apply for County dollars.
- Host meetings where NJ Council on the Arts and NJ Historical Commission staff
- brief organizations on grant opportunities and procedures.
- Assist County organizations with their applications to State cultural agencies.
- Advocate for Cumberland County culture in Trenton with the help of county political
- leaders.
- Change “Planning for Success” into a daylong workshop with multiple sessions so that each participant can select those that best fit its needs. Add sessions on
- sponsorship development, grant writing, and cross-promotions.
- Support promising initiatives like new cultural venues and artist housing.

Rubrics:

1. Increase in number of cultural providers receiving State operating support.
2. Increase in private dollars to arts and heritage groups in Cumberland County.
3. Increase in attendance at Council-sponsored training workshops.
4. Increase in number of initiatives like new cultural venues and artist housing.

Objective #4: Increase the visibility of arts and heritage events and attractions.

Local arts, cultural, and heritage attractions need visibility within and beyond the County to: build and diversify audience; increase donors, volunteers, and members; tap into new audiences of residents and visitors; and demonstrate value to corporate sponsors. Collaboration among cultural providers, linkages with the County’s tourism and economic development entities will be especially useful, as will tapping into the pool of new residents with an appetite for culture.

Strategies:

- Lobby local media to increase coverage of cultural news, events, and attractions.
- Establish a Cultural Council that meets quarterly to coordinate dates, share ideas, and
- network.

- Explore State tourism grants, especially for co-op advertising.
- Establish linkages between the Commission and County tourism and economic development agencies.
- Provide realtors with information on cultural activities for distribution to new residents.

Rubrics:

1. Increase in number of listings, features, and reviews in regional press.
2. Increase in collaborative initiatives among Cultural Council members.
3. Increase in regional and national print, broadcast, and web-based media coverage of County as a rural cultural destination.
4. Cultural advocates assigned seats on County tourism and economic development commissions.
5. Increase in numbers of new residents on cultural boards and as volunteers.

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

Year 1

Objective #1: Expand financial and staff resources available to the cultural sector.

Re-align the Coordinator's duties to allow him to spend 30 percent of his time on resource development.

Pass the Open Space Referendum to allow tax dollars to be spent on historic preservation.

Establish the County's Trust Account as recipient of grants benefiting the cultural sector.

Objective #2: Re-align Commission investments to maximize impact.

Initiate an analysis of the objectives, costs, and benefits of the first of three Commission-sponsored events.

Establish one "mini-grant" program.

Objective #3: Help the cultural community mature.

Apply for a grant to strengthen the managerial infrastructure of groups most likely to move up to State funding.

Invite NJ Council on the Arts staff to Cumberland County to brief organizations on grant opportunities and procedures.

Change "Planning for Success" into a daylong workshop with multiple sessions.

Support promising cultural initiatives like new venues and artist housing.

Objective #4: Increase the visibility of arts and heritage events and attractions.

Establish a Cultural Council that meets quarterly to coordinate dates, share ideas, and network.

Research how best to encourage local media to increase coverage of cultural news, events, and attractions.

Investigate distribution of cultural information to new residents via realtors.

Rubrics:

1. Passage of Open Space Referendum.
2. Increase in attendance at Commission-sponsored training workshops.

Year 2

Objective #1: Expand financial and staff resources available to the cultural sector.

Establish historic preservation grant program funded by Open Space taxes and managed by Coordinator.

Apply for two major foundation, federal, or corporate grants.

Increase staff by one full-time employee to manage mini grants, communications, and technical assistance.

Objective #2: Re-align Commission investments to maximize impact.

Implement recommendations from the first event analysis.

Initiate the second event analysis.

Establish one “mini-grants” program.

Purchase disability-access equipment that all groups can use.

Objective #3: Help the cultural community mature.

Implement grant program for groups most likely to move up to State funding.

Revise the Commission’s grant cycle to allow groups whose applications are denied by the State to apply for County support.

Establish annual briefing by NJ Council on the Arts and NJ Historical Commission in Cumberland County.

Assist County organizations with their applications to State cultural agencies.

Add new sessions to “Planning for Success” on sponsorship development, grant writing, and cross-promotion.

Survey cultural providers on technical training needs.

Support promising cultural initiatives like new venues and artist housing.

Objective #4: Increase the visibility of arts and heritage events and attractions.

- Become a news source for local media.
- Establish linkages between the Commission and County tourism and economic development agencies.
- Develop cultural information packet for new residents.

Rubrics:

1. Increase in attendance at Commission-sponsored training workshops.
2. Decrease in staff time devoted to events production.
3. Increase in collaborative initiatives among Cultural Council members.
4. Increase in number of listings, features, and reviews in regional media.

Year 3

Objective #1: Expand financial and staff resources available to the cultural sector.

Award first round of historic preservation grants.
Apply for two major grants.

Objective #2: Re-align Commission investments to maximize impact.

Implement recommendations from the second event analysis.
Initiate the third event analysis.
Establish one new mini-grant program.
Implement shared use of disability-access equipment.

Objective #3: Help the cultural community mature.

Hold annual briefing by NJ Council on the Arts and NJ Historical Commission in Cumberland County.
Establish annual advocacy trip to State legislators hosted by County political leaders.
Update “Planning for Success” sessions based on participant needs.
Survey cultural providers on needs for mini grants.
Support promising cultural initiatives like new venues and artist housing.

Objective #4: Increase the visibility of arts and heritage events and attractions.

Lobby local media to increase coverage of cultural news, events, and attractions.
Explore State tourism grants, especially for co-op advertising.
Secure seats for two cultural providers on County tourism and economic development agencies.
Update cultural information packet for new residents.

Rubrics:

1. Increase in attendance at Commission-sponsored training workshops.
2. Increase in Commission grants from non-government sources.
3. Increase in Commission dollars awarded to local groups.
4. Increase in disabled patrons at cultural events.
5. Completion of study of Commission-sponsored events.
6. Decrease in staff time devoted to events production.
7. Increase in collaborative initiatives among Cultural Council members.
8. Increase in number of listings, features, and reviews in regional media.

Year 4

Objective #1: Expand financial and staff resources available to the cultural sector.

Award second round of historic preservation grants.

Apply for two major grants.

Add one part-time staff member to administer grant-funded projects.

Objective #2: Re-align Commission investments to maximize impact.

Commission-sponsored events co-produced with other organization.

Revamp “mini-grants” program based on cultural provider survey.

Objective #3: Help the cultural community mature.

Hold annual briefing by NJ Council on the Arts and NJ Historical Commission in Cumberland County.

Coordinate annual advocacy trip to Trenton.

Update “Planning for Success” based on participant needs.

Support promising cultural initiatives like new venues and artist housing.

Objective #4: Increase the visibility of arts and heritage events and attractions.

Lobby local media to increase cultural coverage.

Secure State tourism grant for co-op advertising

Rubrics:

1. Increase in attendance at Commission-sponsored training workshops.
2. Increase in Commission grants from non-government sources.
3. Increase in Commission dollars awarded to local groups.
4. Increase in private dollars to arts and heritage groups in Cumberland County.
5. Increase in number of ethnic organizations receiving support.
6. Increase in number of cultural providers receiving State support.
7. Increase in disabled patrons at cultural events.
8. Decrease of staff time devoted to events production.
9. Increase in collaborative initiatives among Cultural Council members.
10. Increase in number of listings, features, and reviews in regional media.

Year 5

Objective #1: Expand financial and staff resources available to the cultural sector.

Award third round of historic preservation grants.

Apply for two major grants.

Increase staff member from part-time to full-time to manage grant-funded projects.

Objective #2: Re-align Commission investments to maximize impact.

Commission events now co-produced with other organizations.

Purchase new disability-access equipment that all groups can use.

Objective #3: Help the cultural community mature.

Conduct Long-Range Planning for next five years.

Objective #4: Increase the visibility of arts and heritage events and attractions.

Support promising cultural initiatives like new venues and artist housing.

Rubrics:

1. Increase in attendance at Commission-sponsored training workshops.
2. Increase in Commission grants from non-government sources.
3. Increase in Commission dollars awarded to local groups.
4. Increase in number of ethnic organizations receiving support.
5. Increase in number of cultural providers receiving State support.
6. Increase in disabled patrons at cultural events.
7. Increase in private dollars to arts and heritage groups in Cumberland County.
8. Increase in number of initiatives like new cultural venues and artist housing.
9. Decrease in staff time devoted to events production.
10. Increase in collaborative initiatives among Cultural Council members.
11. Increase in number of listings, features, and reviews in regional media.
12. Increase in regional and national print, broadcast, and web-based media coverage of County as a rural cultural destination.
13. Cultural advocates assigned seats on County tourism and economic development commissions.
14. Increase in numbers of new residents on cultural boards and as volunteers.

Appendix 1

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NEW JERSEY CULTURAL PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August of 2004, the South Jersey Economic Development District, in cooperation with the Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission, retained Nancy Moses, Planning & Development Consultant and Dr. Thomas A. Reiner to develop a Cultural Plan for the County. Its primary goal was to use cultural and heritage resources:

To strengthen the County's economic base, providing jobs for current residents, attracting new ones, and adding new enterprises.

Secondary goals were:

To improve the quality of life for all those in the County, and

To build the capacity of the cultural/heritage sector.

Implementation Steps:

Formulate an Identity and a Vision

Cumberland County as a rural "melting pot" – a theme that is authentic, distinctive, inclusive, appealing and lends itself to rural cultural development.

Strengthen Cultural Assets

Priority for initiatives advancing the "rural melting pot" theme: e.g. expanding Seabrook Educational and Cultural Center; agri-tourism; harvest festival; Vineland culinary institute; and Rural Jewish Heritage Center proposed by the Jewish Federation of South Jersey.

Put in Place Infrastructure and Amenities

Completion of Route 55 together with improved links to the Jersey shore; installing a coordinated vehicular signage system that leads the public to and between cultural attractions.

Expand Marketing and Promotion

A well-financed, continuous cultural marketing campaign directed towards residents and visitors that features a new "rural melting pot" slogan/logo, and marketing workshops for cultural attractions.

Target Markets include:

Residents: patrons of existing cultural activities; students who represent the future cultural patrons; South Jersey families with school-age children; people from different ethnic groups for ethnic-specific events.

Cultural tourists: Jersey Shore visitors and residents in inclement weather; older adults who enjoy educational leisure; day-tripping urbanites.

Develop a Leadership Structure

A structure that can receive tax-exempt contributions; draws on talented leaders from all constituent groups; taps others via task force participation and public meetings; and forges links across the entire County, as well as with neighboring counties, the State, and other leading rural cultural communities long into future.

Appendix 2

Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission Focus Group: May 2 – Smaller Grantees

Attendees: Jewish Historical Society of Southern NJ, Gallery 50, Inc., Township of Upper Deerfield, Seabrook education and Cultural Center, Vineland African American Community Development, Festival Puertorriqueno de NJ, Inc.

Characteristics of Participating Groups

- Principally volunteer
- Budgets under \$100,000
- Many receive grants for festivals and other events

Issues

- Greatest funding need:
 - Publicity – to increase attendance at events, to promote Cumberland County as cultural destination.
 - Programming- to give people reason to attend events
- Organizations seem to draw from within their ethnic community but not beyond. Little cross-over in attendance.
- Everyone goes to same sponsors; they get bombarded.
- Cumberland County College students represent a potential pool of interns and patrons, but have yet to find a way to get them engaged.
- Need to attract younger volunteers because older ones are dying out.
- New residents moving in. Don't know what's available to do in county. May be surprised there's so little to do in the county.
- Youth getting in trouble because there's not enough for them to do. YMCA too expensive. Need a low-cost recreation center with YMCA-type facilities. Also trips to Cumberland County cultural organizations and those in other communities
- NJ Council on the Arts. Feel disadvantaged because we are Cumberland County. Application process daunting; don't know the bureaucrats who give out the money.
- Race track represents an opportunity if the community finds ways to capture patron dollars
- Volunteer organizations don't want to grow, just become more stable.

- Want place to see ethnic and art films. Want a larger performing arts center (CCC is only 500 seats) to draw more crowd-appealing performers. But Bay Shore Symphony can't fill the seats now.
- Commission workshops informative; should find ways to encourage more people to attend.

Ideas

- Publicity vehicles that can be quickly updated and reach more people.
- Target new county residents.
- Establish a Commission Council comprised of cultural leaders who would meet quarterly to share dates, tips, and network
- Volunteer growth grants -- \$1,000, easy application
- Grants to provide transportation for youth to Cumberland cultural attractions
- Grants for cultural activities aimed at at-risk youth
- Commission invites NJ Jersey Council on the Arts to visit; reviews applications prior to submission.
- Commission sets applications deadlines after NJ Council on the Arts notification date so that failed applicants to state can still apply for county funds.
- Link Cultural & Heritage Commission to Tourism Bureau
- Cross-county promotions with Salem County
- More workshop sessions on fundraising
- Find more sponsors from outside the County.

Appendix 2

Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission Focus Group: May 3 – Larger Grantees

Cumberland County Cultural & Heritage Commission
Focus Group: May 3 – Larger Grantees

Attendees: Singing Ambassadors, Cumberland County Historical Society, Boys and Girls Club of Vineland, City of Vineland, Bridgeton-Cumberland Tourist Association, Cumberland County College, Vineland Regional Dance Council, Off Broad Street Players

Characteristics of Participating Groups

- Professionally managed except for Singing Ambassadors
- Budgets over \$100,000
- Range of organization types: government, social service, tourism, education as well as cultural

Issues

- Greatest funding need:
 - Promotion – to increase attendance
 - Talent and technical support – e.g. choreographer, costuming, royalties for music and choreography
 - Programming- to give people reason to attend events
 - Historic building maintenance.
- One side of the County is evidencing a substantial influx of home buyers, who seem to be sufficiently affluent to become cultural patrons. The newcomers may not know all that's available. Or, they may find that local offerings do not meet their expectations.
- Cumberland County needs more book stores, coffee shops –places to meet informally. It also may benefit from a 1,000 seat theatre which would draw a higher level of talent. There are a number of venues in other counties close by that do quite well.
- Projects on the horizon include Levoy Theater in Millville and Landis Theater complex in Vineland. Also, the new NASCAR racetrack, which will attract people of means. The racetrack is looking to book entertainment, which could represent a possibility for some local performing companies.
- When groups perform in quality venues, it improves the quality of their performances.

- Groups rely on County grants, contributions from businesses, some sponsorships, and lots of volunteers and in-kind donations. Stronger grant writing capacity is very important.
- Applying for NJ Council on the Arts grant is very difficult: many forms, hard to get answers to questions. Cumberland County groups have not tried for state grants because of the risk associated with it: if they apply and fail, they may find themselves without any grant money since groups cannot receive funding from the county and state at the same time.
- Other possible sources at the state level include the Tourism Bureau and Green Acres – economic development dollars.
- County residents don't really connect to high culture: that's why Mid-Atlantic Symphony cannot fill a hall. Bridgetown Arts Festival, which is the 3rd weekend in June, estimates that it now draws 90 percent of its patrons from outside Cumberland County. "The locals don't come."
- On the other hand, when arts groups offer popular fare, the public will attend. West Side Story, for example, was sold out two weeks before it opened. A high school musical was so popular that it could have extended its run.
- Local papers tend not to promote cultural events in advance though they will cover them.
- Teens who participate enjoy the Teen Arts Festival. But, since only about 200 participate, the cost per participant is very high: over \$200 per person. The total festival budget is about \$26,000, which could drop by \$6,000 if Cumberland County College's facilities were available free of charge.
- Schools are reducing arts education and class trips. Groups wanting to connect with children and youth need to come into the schools or do it via after-school programs.
- Cumberland County suffers from a "brain drain:" young people leave the county for their education and never return. The State now offers full scholarships to state schools for the top 20% of high school students. This might encourage more Cumberland youth to remain in New Jersey and hopefully return to the County.
- The Commission should not encourage new groups because the current ones are struggling.

Ideas

- Packets with information about cultural activities for new residents, distributed via their realtors.
- Directory of cultural programs.
- Commission secures large grant from corporate sponsors which they re-grant to County arts groups in an equitable way.
- Explore alternative strategies for the Teen Arts Festival. The new approaches should be designed to increase participation and eliminate Commission staff investment. These might include: publicizing directly to teens via MySpace; using the Fringe Festival template to increase appeal; working with music educators; inviting Philadelphia's School of Rock; and turning the Festival over to another organization like Boys and Girls Clubs.
- Matching grants for advertising.
- Culture card offering 10 percent off for all cultural performances and attractions.
- A Commission Council comprised of cultural leaders who would meet quarterly to share dates, tips, and network.
- Lobby the local papers for increased arts coverage and advertising discounts.
- Explore state tourism matching grant for co-op advertising.
- Reformat the "Plan for Success" sessions into a day-long workshop. Add new sessions: on grant-writing, sponsorships, cross-promotions.
- Groups could share the expense and use of disability access technology, thus making it affordable by all. Or, the Commission could purchase and loan it out.
- Grants for cultural activities aimed at at-risk youth.
- Commission invites NJ Jersey Council on the Arts to visit; reviews applications prior to submission.
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- Link Cultural & Heritage Commission to Tourism Bureau.
- Cross promotions with Salem County