

Talking Points: Shared Space for the Arts

Q. What is the Walla Walla Shared Space for the Arts?

In 2018, a group of nine nonprofit arts organizations began talking about many of the challenges they face, particularly when it comes to office space, having places to meet, and being able to find places to store their equipment. Together, they applied to the Sherwood Trust for a planning grant, to scope out the idea and bring in outside expertise. At this point, the shared space for the arts is a concept, and we are going through an iterative process, guided by The Nonprofit Centers Network, to determine how big this space might be, who will call it home, and much more.

Q. Who are the nine partner groups?

The nine groups include the Walla Walla Symphony, Art Walla, Walla Walla Valley Bands, Walla Walla Chorale, Shakespeare Walla Walla, Danza Classica Ballet, Carnegie Picture Lab, Walla Walla Piano Group, and Walla Walla Chamber Music.

Q. Is the shared space for the arts explicitly for the nine partner groups?

While the nine partners have started the process, many shared spaces serve a broader community and The Nonprofit Centers Network tells us that often the core partner cohort changes over the course of the planning process with new organizations joining the cohort and others finding other ways to meet their needs. We are exploring a variety of models with a range of opportunities for community participation.

Q. What is the need assessment and feasibility process? How long will it take?

The most successful shared spaces are designed to meet the needs of their community. The visioning and needs assessment process that is underway will test our assumptions about what this space could be. A key question is if an arts space can operate in Walla Walla as a sustainable social enterprise. We want to ensure that our community can support this project for the long term.

After the needs assessment concludes in October, we will have a better understanding of how much and what types of space that arts organizations in Walla Walla need. At that point the nine groups will determine if they want to go forward with real estate analysis, financial modeling, and more.

Many shared spaces take three to five years to develop once the feasibility study is complete.

Q. If it will be several years before a new space is opened in Walla Walla, why did you hold a town hall?

As we said before, the most successful shared spaces are informed by the needs of their community. We wanted our community to have the opportunity to learn about potential models of shared space and think about what might work here in Walla Walla.

Additionally, we wanted to see if there were other nonprofit arts groups that might benefit from shared space.

We were blown away by the number of people interested and the feedback we heard about this idea.

Q. Where will the shared space be?

This shared space project is very much in its infancy. No specific buildings are under consideration at this time. Once we complete the needs assessment survey, we will have a better idea of how much space we will need.

Q. What will be offered at the shared space for the arts?

At this point, we have not made any commitments to the amenities that will be offered at the space. So far, we have heard that office, storage, rehearsal, meeting, gallery and training space are of interest.

Q. How is this project being funded?

In the Spring, nine arts groups submitted a grant to the Sherwood Trust to conduct a feasibility study for an arts shared space. The grant was awarded in May 2018.

Shared spaces across the United States have a mix of business models, although the majority rely on earned income from office rent, event rentals, parking lots, and other creative streams to provide high quality space at affordable rates.

Q. Who is the Nonprofit Centers Network?

The Nonprofit Centers Network is a national expert in nonprofit shared space and services, based out of Denver, CO. Since 2004, they have curated resources, researched shared space, held convenings, and consulting with emerging shared space projects across the US and Canada.

Q. How can I be involved?

If you are a part of an arts organization that is looking for space on a regular or permanent basis, please contact us. Our funding is primarily to support the needs of nonprofit arts groups, but we'd like to learn more about your needs. You may be asked to participate in a survey or an interview.

If you are a community member who has thoughts you would like to share, we will be distributing a short survey to collect additional feedback on what Walla Walla needs from a shared arts space. To get a copy of the community survey, please add your name and e-mail to this list: <http://eepurl.com/dECnOD>

Q. How do I stay up to date on this project?

Join our e-mail list here: <http://eepurl.com/dECnOD>

You will only be contacted regarding the shared space for the arts.

Q. I have other questions that you haven't answered.

If you have any additional questions, please reach out to <Name> at <E-mail>. If you have questions for the Nonprofit Centers Network, please e-mail Chelsea Donohoe at chelsea@nonprofitcenters.org