



PRELIMINARY  
Proposal from the Newtown Cultural Arts Commission to the  
Newtown Community Center Commission

November 5, 2015





## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Art Works.....	4
The Arts Bring Good Things to Life.....	5
Arts are Under Served in Newtown .....	6
Venues Available for the Arts .....	8
Sports Venues Available .....	9
Town Budget.....	10
Arts Build Community.....	10
Newtown Arts Festival. ....	11
Our Vision.....	12
Why We Need an Arts and Culture Destination.....	12
Programming goals and Objectives.....	13
Facility Recommendations & Concepts Collected from Newtown Residents.....	14
How to Fund On-Going Costs.....	18
Appendix A: Fairfield Hills Master Plan Review Committee Final Report (Excerpts)	
Appendix B: Preliminary Concept Plans and Multi Space Configurations	
Appendix C: Comparable Venues	
Appendix D: Our Stored Assets	
Appendix E: HealingNewtown.Org Events and Classes Held	
Appendix F: Arts Center Report Feb 21, 2011	



## Introduction

*This proposal represents the accumulation of concepts, assertions and proposals already submitted to the Newtown Community Center Commission (NCCC) by many interested parties from the community. These include commissioners, auxiliaries, volunteers and others in the community sympathetic to the mission of the Newtown Cultural Arts Commission (NCAC). They also include the vision of a wide range of stakeholders in the community including Parks and Recreation and the Commission on the Aging with whom we are in continuing dialogue on how best to serve the community as a whole.*

We are all grateful to the commission for their volunteer service, their direction and for the opportunity they have provided our town to contribute their multi-faceted visions of this proposed community center. Following the tragedy of 12/14 Newtown finds itself the grateful beneficiary of a \$15 million gift from GE. They have given us these guidelines for allocating these funds:

## The Charge

**Develop a proposal for construction and operation of a facility that meets these standards:**

- Aligned with the conditions established by the donor (GE)
- Creates a location that does not exist today
- Acts as an anchor for the people of Newtown to come together
- Serves the needs of the entire community
- Does not duplicate existing programs / services
- Is based on \$10 million to build; supported by a \$1 million annual grant over five years

## The Vision

**Newtown Community Center should offer programs and activities which provide educational, recreational, artistic, and creative opportunities for individuals of every age and ability, in order to:**

- Engage the community
- Promote health
- Build self-esteem
- Showcase talent
- Encourage social interaction
- Create a vibrant and supportive multi-generational community hub

**It is the assertion of the NCAC that The Arts, in all of its disparate and often times overlooked forms represent the best way to satisfy the Charge and implement the Vision offered by GE. We will here endeavor to make the case to the NCCC and the town that:**

- **The Arts are valuable**
- **The Arts are currently under served**
- **The Arts offer a unique avenue for community building**





## Art Works

The ultimate challenge for the NCAC is to define that which continually defies definition. Art, by definition and design, is never one thing to one person. Its subjectivity is its ultimate strength. It exists in that place where inspiration and innovation spring eternal.

This, however, is not what the NCCC needs to present to our town. Since 2007, and the initial establishment of the Cultural Arts Commission, Newtown has officially made the case for The Arts. We will continue to do so. What is now required is a plan for a sustainable community center. We applaud the NCCC for their level-headed approach to the community center plan. While we can not make promises of profit we do believe our plan can achieve sustainability – a concept that requires consideration of currencies other than monetary. That said, Art need not be frivolity. The National Endowment for The Arts' tag line, "Art Works" is designed to dispel that notion.

**Randy Cohen**, the keynote speaker and vice president of research and policy with the Washington, D.C. based **Americans for the Arts** organization, noted that the arts contributed more than \$130 million and nearly 4,000 jobs to Fairfield County's economy last year alone. Statewide, he said, *"the impact of the arts resulted in more than \$653 million of economic activity and more than 14,000 jobs in the state."*

*"When you're investing in the arts you're investing in an industry,"* Cohen said during the event. *"And a vibrant arts community is good for business."*

Cohen noted the arts attracts educated and talented people to the area who are being sought after by companies and corporations looking to hire the best and the brightest for their organizations. Recent surveys show that business leaders consider creativity to be one of the top five skills desired in a job candidate. *"The most common way employers look for creativity among candidates is people who either have experience starting their own business or who have studied the arts in the past,"* he said. On top of that, Cohen said that 26 percent of area visitors to artistic venues come from outside of Fairfield County, and most spend an average of \$26 each in addition to regular admission charges at venue.

**Susan V. Booth**, Jennings Hertz Artistic Director of the **Alliance Theatre**, spoke at the Co(lab) Summit in Atlanta, September 22-23, 2013. Co(lab) is a 2-day conference bringing together the best minds to solve how we as a region: attract and retain talent, cultivate innovation and transform education.

*"Youth have better academic outcomes, higher career goals and are more civically engaged when they have the benefit of high-arts involvement."*

**Lisa Scails**, executive director of the **Western Connecticut Economic Development Alliance**, said recent research conducted by the organization found that The Arts are one of the top 10 reasons why people move to this region in the first place. *"It's a very important part of both economic and community development,"* she said.

**Allison Stockel**, executive director of the **Ridgefield Playhouse** and this year's recipient of the Heart of the Arts Award, said the playhouse brings more than \$1.8 million worth of economic activity to the region annually. *"When we first met in 1994 to organize the playhouse I don't think anyone imagined how big of an economic engine for the community it would become,"* said Steven Zemo, a Ridgefield businessman and recipient of this year's Arts in the Community Award. *"But early on we recognized the power the venue could have to help support local businesses and restaurants."*



**Andrea Gartner**, a local business consultant and member of the alliance’s board of directors, said there are lots of opportunities in the region to support businesses and economic development through the arts. *“Opportunities to mind the gap and build a bridge to bring creativity and creative thinking to our environments, our companies, our communities in the towns and cities of our region are all around and the Cultural Alliance of Western Connecticut is the connect or to support artistic and cultural initiatives in our region,”* she said.

## The Arts Bring Good Things to Life

- **The Arts improve academic performance.** Students with an education rich in the arts have higher GPAs and standardized test scores, and lower drop-out rates—benefits reaped by students regardless of socio-economic status. Students with 4 years of arts or music in high school average 100 points higher on the verbal and math portions of their SATs than students with just one-half year of arts or music. (Americas For The Arts-<http://www.americansforthearts.org>)
- **Health care** entities consistently sponsor arts activities internally because they aid in the mental and emotional recovery of patients (80 percent) as well as their physical recovery (41 percent).
- **Creative individuals:** 72 percent of employers say creativity is of primary concern when they’re hiring, yet 85 percent of these employers can’t find the creative applicants they seek.
- Employers (56 percent) and superintendents (79 percent) agree that a college degree in the arts is the most significant indicator of creativity in a prospective job candidate.
- 97 percent of superintendents surveyed agreed that music develops creativity, yet only 17 percent of their schools require music courses for graduation.
- **Arts are good for local merchants.** Attendees at nonprofit arts events spend \$24.60 per person, per event, beyond the cost of admission on items such as meals, parking, and babysitters.
- **Arts drive tourism.** Arts travelers are ideal tourists, staying longer and spending more to seek out authentic cultural experiences. The U.S. Department of Commerce reports that the percentage of international travelers including museum visits on their trip has grown steadily since 2003 (18 to 28 percent). The share attending concerts and theater performances has grown from 14 to 18 percent since 2003.
- The Economic Impact of the Nonprofit Arts and Culture Industry in Fairfield County, CT as stated in a study by Americans for the Arts:
  - Arts & Economic Prosperity IV provides compelling new evidence that the nonprofit arts and culture are a significant industry in Fairfield County—one that generates \$130 million in total economic activity. This spending—\$84 million by nonprofit arts and culture organizations and an additional \$46 million in event-related spending by their audiences—supports 3,972 full-time equivalent jobs, generates \$88.3 million in household income to local residents, and delivers \$10.5 million in local and state government revenue.
- The Ridgefield Playhouse now nearly 20 years old and originally conceived as an adaptive reuse impacts the community economically with almost \$2 million spent in restaurants, shops, lodging.

A recent study by the NEA states that Arts & Achievement go hand in hand. Kids with lo-art programming vs. kids with hi-arts programming:

- Better academic outcomes
- Higher career goals
- Higher college entry rate
- More civic minded – more involved
- They vote and they volunteer
- They show up and they DO



## Arts Are Under Served

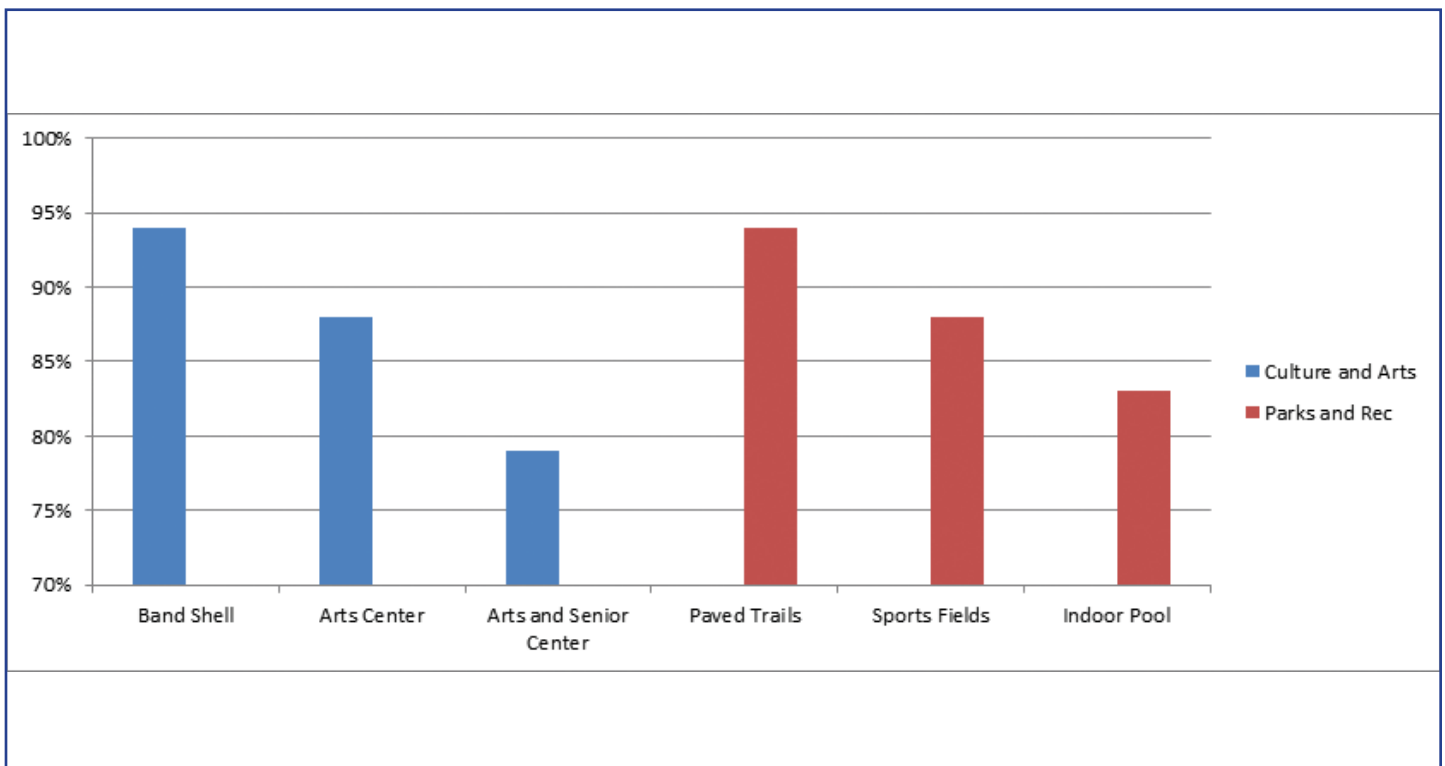
Even though The Arts were officially sanctioned in 2007 financially and from a bricks and mortar standpoint there exists no rallying place through which NCAC can execute it's mandate from the town:

*"to stimulate, facilitate, coordinate and cooperate with existing organizations for the development of the arts. It shall serve as an information center and focal point in the community for activities in the arts."*

*In an ideal world we would be only tangentially involved in this conversation, having already been established in town. The old hook and ladder building, Stratford Hall, Plymouth Hall and even Edmond Town Hall have all been proposed as "homes for the Arts." All to no avail.*

The recognition of the need for a Cultural Arts Center has been supported by the community and town officials long before the acquisition of Fairfield Hills. The Fairfield Hills Master plan dating back at least 12 years has a Cultural Arts Center at the top of the list but the same barrier has continually stymied those efforts - there was no funding for doing so.

There were at least 2 surveys/assessments done of town residents during the creation of that master plan and once again at the top of the list the majority of town residents responding to those surveys supported a cultural arts center. In the September 12, 2011 Report<sup>1</sup>, survey respondents echoed the desire to have the campus integrate a strong arts component. In fact, arts components account for 2 of the 12 top-rated features in the survey.





- 85% of survey respondents agreed that the “Fairfield Hills campus should be a community and municipal center for town services, the arts, recreation and open space.”
- 90% of respondents agreed with including “a band shell for outdoor concerts”
- 88% with including “a performing arts and cultural arts center to hold music and dance performances, art exhibits, etc.”
- 79% of the respondents were open to a senior center on the property, provided it was a “shared space with other community uses (arts, recreation, etc

A Community Recreation Destination: This theme extends the recreational opportunities by working with the private sector to provide a wider range of passive recreational and educational activities.

- 94% of respondents - A “paved trail system for walking, jogging, biking, dog walking, etc.” was tied for number 1
- 88% supported “active recreation in the form of baseball/softball/soccer/lacrosse fields”
- 83% supported a “new facility for the Parks and Rec dept. that includes an indoor pool and community center.

The Paved Trails have been completed.

Many of the sports fields have been completed.

The fact of the matter is that the NCAC has only been able to conduct the town’s business through the tireless but by no means limitless volunteer efforts of our supporters and the largess of local business entities. The Arts owe a tremendous debt to Brause Realty, Tier One, Newtown Congregational Church, Braun moving and storage just to name a few of our benefactors. Through this largess and the collaborative efforts of the National Endowment of the Arts, The Connecticut Office of the Arts, and supportive elected officials we have been able to provide the services which our community has come to expect. But our mission should not rely solely on the contributions of volunteers. It is essential that an autonomous space be established so that the arts can continue to thrive in Newtown.

While Fairfield County can proudly boast a large percentage of the population as involved in the arts (Danbury was recently rated 6<sup>th</sup> best city for the Arts in the United States) we cannot similarly boast an equivalent amount of support for those artists. It is time for our town to invest in these endeavors.

The impact to the population for not having a vibrant, holistic arts community equates not only to lost opportunities but lost resources and income. By creating a nexus for the fine and performing arts on the Fairfield Hills Campus the NCAC will create a drawing point to bring related businesses, auxiliary establishments and creative people to the economic development of the Campus, Newtown and the State of Connecticut. As cities and towns all across the nation endeavor to revitalize under resourced and under utilized centers they have invariably turned to the arts. While Newtown is not a derelict city and our proposal is certainly not some guerilla art movement we are still talking about creative solutions to public space usage. What we have created to date on the budget supplied by Newtown is nothing compared to our potential given adequate support. With a vital center we will continue to build community, provide alternatives to at-risk youth, provide space for fledgling groups who see the arts as a powerful moving force in our society.



*Through the immensely informative and directive forums created by the NCCC we have come to consider the issues of availability and redundancy.*

While Newtown boasts a small number of unique performance venues they are not necessarily suitable for all applications. The obvious Edmond Town Hall was never designed and does not function as an arts center. It's a movie theatre. The schools arts spaces are over utilized and ill-equipped. Newtown will spend \$2.9 million in the next two years to improve the high school auditorium. That \$2.9 million will primarily serve students as the High School has understandable usage limitations.

The current inventory of cultural facilities is limited which in turn limits the potential growth of many organizations. Many of these facilities are in substandard condition, lack modern technology, proper acoustics, lighting, flooring and customer amenities

## Venues Available For The Arts

### Edmond Town Hall Theater 500 seats + 150 in balcony



M-F 6 pm – 11 pm \$1500

Fr, Sa, Sun 6 pm – 11 pm \$2000

\$600 fee added per matinee scheduled for that day

Ability to rent theater space is determined on a case-by-case basis. Movie screenings take precedence.

Alexandria Room Dressing Rooms, Male | Female \$25 for use of both

- Ability to rent theater space is determined on a case-by-case basis. Movie screenings take precedence.
- Sets can not be left overnight - all scenery and props must go up an hour before and come down by 11
- Elevator is not large enough to accommodate most scenery, so you have to carry any large set pieces up the stairs. Then haul it all out after performance.
- Backstage area is very limited and stage is extremely shallow.

### Alexandria Room

858 SF | 150 seats

stage 13 x 19 | commercial kitchen off room



Non-profit Room only\*\* full day 9-11pm\*\*\* \$ 190.00

Room, kitchen \$ 300.00; Room, kitchen and china\* \$ 375.00

\*\*\*Building closes at 11 pm. After 11 pm, additional hours billed @ 45.00 per hour

- Have to load in all scenery props etc an hour before, then haul it all out after performance.
- Stage is very shallow. No offstage space for set pieces or for actors to wait for cue.
- Lighting is very limited with no ability to control for theatrical lighting.
- Entry to stage from dressing room up narrow stairs is dangerous.





## Great Room, Congregational Church

40' x 75' room | 13' x 16' stage'  
Capacity: 220



(8 person round tables) Available for use: 15 (60") round tables that seat 8 people, 100 navy fabric folding chairs, 4 rectangular 6' serving tables  
Classrooms – Newtown Congregational Church - The "Art" Room (capacity 15)

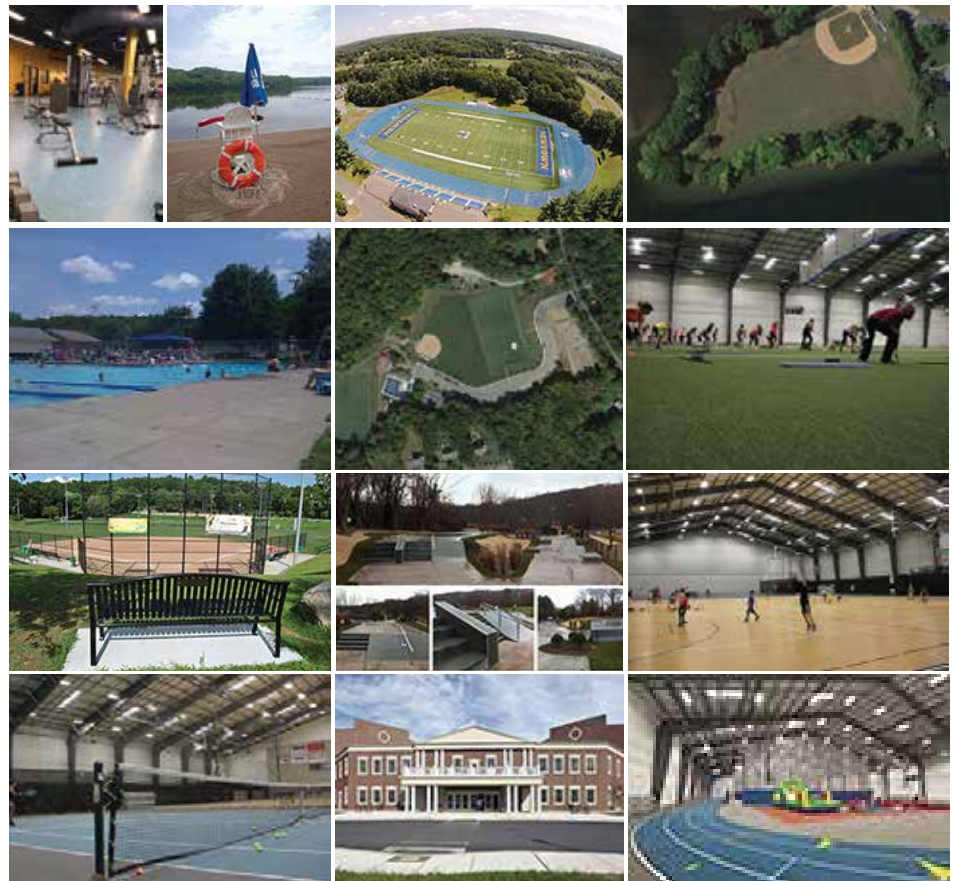
- Cannot leave sets up overnight.
- Have to load in all scenery props etc an hour before, then haul it all out after performance.
- Stage is small and recessed in alcove. No offstage space for set pieces or for actors to wait
- no lighting or sound equipment available for performances

## High School Theatre

\$2.9 million to be spent in the next two years to improve the high school auditorium, facilities tend to have heavy utilization and limited access to outside groups.

## Venues Available for Sports, Parks & Recreation:

- 5 Town Parks
- an eight lane 25 yard outdoor swimming pool and wading pool
- 9 tennis court
- 2 basketball courts
- a skate park
- a marina
- 2 boat launches
- 70 miles of hiking trails
- NYA Newtown Sports and Fitness Center – 90,000 sq. ft.
- HS Indoor Pool 25 yds
- NHS Football Arena and Track
- 42 Athletic fields
- Edmond Town Hall
- Gymnasium





The numbers don't lie. The comparative budget for The Arts exemplifies the disconnect between the desires of the community and allocation of resources by the town.

## TOWN BUDGETS

BOARD OF EDUCATION	\$74,459,845
PARKS AND RECREATION	\$2,331,472
LIBRARY	\$1,209,979
NEWTOWN HEALTH DISTRICT	\$383,555
SENIOR SERVICES	\$314,627
NEWTOWN YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES.	\$298,368
CHILDREN'S ADVENTURE CENTER	\$143,753
NEWTOWN CULTURAL ARTS COMM	\$2,500

## Arts Build Community

To be clear, the NCAC does not seek to compete or make redundant any group or venue.

It is our town-given task to act as a catalyst for current and future groups. We have a well-established and long-standing collaborative relationship with many groups in town including:



- Newtown Commission on Aging
- Town Players of Newtown
- SCAN The Society of Creative Arts of Newtown
- The Newtown Choral Society
- Friends of Music Concerts
- Random Acts of Music Concerts
- Newtown Forest Association
- Newtown High School - Arts and Cultural Activities
- Stray Kats Theater Company
- Ever-Wonder Children's Museum
- Lathrop School of Dance
- Graceful Planet
- Newtown Arts Festival
- Newtown Film Festival
- Newtown Earth Day
- Newtown Parks & Recreation Arts & Culture Programs

- Newtown Cultural Arts Commission
- The Flagpole Radio Cafe
- 12/14 Foundation (Art)
- Within Our Reach
- Ben's Lighthouse
- Resiliency Center
- Spark
- Hearts of Hope
- Live at Edmond Town Hall
- Ben's Bells
- Newtown Kindness
- Sandy Hook Promise
- Newtown Memorial Commission
- Newtown Youth and Family Services
- After School Arts Program such as Pilobolus



## NEWTOWN ARTS FESTIVAL

In September 2012 The annual Newtown Arts Festival was first produced as a weekend outdoor event.

In 2013, the Festival grew to a 9 day celebration featuring a variety of outstanding experiences (including poetry reading, musical events, student film, short theatrical performance and more.) It culminated in a 2-day outdoor event at the historic Fairfield Hills campus, with artisans, artists' workshops, music, performances, and food vendors.

In 2014, the Newtown Arts Festival grew to a month long celebration of the arts held all over town.

2015 saw the Festival present Wednesday and weekend events. It expanded to include original chamber music, a Film Festival, a well attended intergenerational lantern parade and an extended 10 x 10 play presentation.



The Festival provides a regional showcase for diverse artistic expression in and around Newtown and welcomes over 5,000 visitors per year.

The response to the event continues to be enthusiastically positive from vendors, participants, and attendants and a chance to appreciate the range of artistic products created by their talented neighbors and members of the arts community.

Crafts, workshops and events invite participation by all attendants, and unique food vendors offer the opportunity for culinary experimentation.

Proceeds derived from a nominal \$5 entrance fee supports scholarships to local students and grants to local artists/arts organizations.

Each year the NCAC awards two scholarships to Newtown graduating senior who will be majoring in the Arts.

The NCAC also awards town grants yearly to Newtown artists and art organizations

A vibrant, energy-filled experience, the Arts Festival has seen an enormous injection of interest from all over the state.







## Our Vision

### Arts Spaces are gathering places that foster community

As a commission dedicated to promoting the arts, the **NCAC's** services benefit over 27,000 residents of Newtown as well as residents of neighboring towns. The NCAC is a resource for area artists - supporting the growth and development of art be it visual art, performance, music, written word. The **NCAC** helps artists by awarding competitive grants, awarding scholarships by loaning equipment when possible, and by offering a network of people with expertise in a vast range of art-affiliated disciplines. Furthermore, once appropriate space is allocated, The **NCAC** would like to offer rehearsal/studio space for lease, and performance and gallery space for the presentation of fine and performing arts. The **NCAC** reaches community members in all walks of life - by bringing art to the forefront of the community, by promoting vibrant artistic spaces in town, and by fostering artistic projects among community members through affordable, accessible, multi-generational programming, events and classes.

The **NCAC** has been awarded grants from the state, and donations from foundations and individuals to implement and support this mission from our very inception. Our programming has been diverse, and includes the creation of visual and multimedia arts – including painting, sculpture and weaving, musical expression, writing and the performing arts. Programs have ranged from several hours to multiple sessions; most were fully-funded or required a nominal fee or donation.

The intention of **NCAC** is for all community members - young and senior alike - to be afforded the opportunity to experience the amazing benefits of engaging in artistic expression. The **NCAC** also enables local artists and art sans to share their talents by running workshops, thereby building their networks, promoting their work, and most importantly, sharing their talents and passions with member of their own community. In this way, the **NCAC** programming serves the entire community –patrons and artists alike.

The **NCAC** seeks a building that can provide multipurpose, multi-media space and can be configured for use as performance, studio, rehearsal and workshop space. Ideally, the space will offer areas for gallery presentation of work, provide studio and rehearsal space for conduction programming and be offered for lease by local artists, and include a moderately sized stage/theatre for performing arts, dance and musical performances. Most importantly the space will be multi-purpose, multi-use, multi-generational and centrally located in town.

### Why We Need an Arts and Culture Destination -

- To move forward to enlighten the community and instill a better understanding and appreciation of the value of artistic expression in our lives.
- To provide programming that enriches the soul, enlivens the brain, and reaches the heart.
- To coordinate concerts and events being held simultaneously at different venues in town into a central town center location to promote a better attendance at all events

Following the tragedy of 12/14, **NCAC** was presented with the opportunity and honor to include healing our community to our mission. Through our HealingNewtown project organized through a collaborative effort of Arts Organizations, elected officials, local business and our committed army of volunteers, we saw first-hand the power of the arts to build community, create dialogue and lift spirits. We were widely





recognized for our efforts and received a \$30,000 Grant from the **National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)** to support the **HealingNewtown Arts Space** and our programs in Newtown, Connecticut.

*"I want to express our appreciation to the National Endowment for the Arts, Governor Malloy, and our Congressional Delegation for their continued support to help Newtown's Cultural Arts Commission (NCAC) create a sustainable model for the future. The HealingNewtown art space has had a positive impact on our community and continues to provide programs that support resiliency and our path forward. The Connecticut Commission on Arts was instrumental in helping our CAC create this art space immediately after December 14th and continues to provide guidance. We are grateful for that expertise and commitment to our local arts effort",* **Newtown First Selectman Pat Llodra.**

*"The National Endowment for the Arts is honored to support the healing power of the arts at the Healing-Newtown Art Space...We turn to the arts when faced with tragedy to find solace and emotional expression. The volunteer work done to date at the arts center has been remarkable. The NEA is proud to build on that work to secure the art center's programs and services as the community and the nation continue to heal."* **NEA Acting Chairman Joan Shigekawa**

*"In the wake of a tragedy like Newtown, it can be difficult for us to convey our grief for those we lost and empathy for the victims and their loved ones – but art, in whatever form, gives us that voice when everyday communication falls short...In the six months that have passed since that terrible day, we have mourned deeply for the victims and looked for ways to heal while honoring their memory. This grant will help sustain HealingNewtown so that it can continue to be the link between the community and the creative outpouring of love, support and compassion from artists around the world."* **CT Gov. Dannel Malloy**

That small but mighty space on Queen St. gave us more than just the opportunity to serve; though, for all of us at the time, that was invaluable. It also gave us the opportunity to see in practice what we had imagined in theory. That modest 12,000 square feet of open space in the center of town, though long since returned to a commercial space, was as local ceramic artist Karen Pinto said, "like a big hug for the town." It showed us what the town needs and how the NCAC and other groups can answer that need. The gatherings, concert, films shown, art from around the world, performances, dances, classes, receptions, meetings showed us that programming within a Community Center will be as important if not more important than the edifice itself.

The need for professional management specifically tasked with bringing the community together around shared activity will be paramount to any Community Center's success. This will not be a job for volunteers, committees or bureaucrats.

## **Programming Goals and Objectives**

Delivering relevant programming is buttressed by the dual goals of space acquisition and sustaining funding for a full-time director. The NCAC's predominant goal of promoting and supporting the arts in Newtown is likewise underpinned by the development and delivery of relevant, quality programming and events, the support and promotion of local artists and artisans, and advocating for a central building to house the many artistic efforts currently dispersed throughout the community. A central space coupled with the continued direction of a dedicated leader and advocate will amplify the NCAC's ability to meet its mission.



The NCAC's unique programs and events inspire creativity, provide an outlet for budding artists, promote healing through the arts, and allow local artists to share their talents with members of the community. Programming at the NCAC is characterized by an atmosphere of community and cooperation, cross-discipline collaboration and multi-generational interaction.

- Newtown could comfortably support a venue exclusively committed to cultural arts use.
- Arts groups, individual artists and local art institutions have long espoused the benefits a dedicated art space would have for the community.
- A dedicated space would also allow the Commission to permanently display the collection of donated art the community was made the custodian in the wake of the 12/14 tragedy. Through our outreach efforts we have received donations, both financial and material valued in excess of \$300,000 (saying nothing of the goods and services offered for the renovation of a new space).
- The sad truth is that ALL that artwork has now been sitting unseen and untended in a warehouse for two years now.
- Along with all the artwork there is also the matter of all the equipment that was donated to the town. This includes \$20,000 worth of equipment from Guitar Center (drums, microphones, guitars, amplifiers, professional stage lights, etc.), \$30,000 worth of sound equipment along with both complete wireless sound systems (mics/receivers) from Sennheiser, \$20,000 worth of sound equipment from Bose, \$20,000 worth of equipment from JBL/Harmon (mixing boards, speakers, rack equipment, connectivity items, etc.), \$20,000 worth of professional lighting equipment from IDJnow and their partners (lights, lighting controllers, lighting boards, etc.), \$10,000 worth of equipment from Shure, \$10,000 worth of microphones from Heil, AKG, and others, \$5000 worth of tools, workbenches, supplies from Stanley/Black&Decker, not to mention thousands of dollars of donated art supplies.

***All this equipment is in serious danger of becoming worthless  
as it sits in storage, unused and unmaintained.***

## **Facility Recommendations and Concepts from Newtown Residents**

For this multitude of reasons, pursuing a space suitable for the widest array of activities is among the NCAC's foremost priorities. In agreement with the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Authority and NCCC recommendations, we strongly believe that the new community center would benefit the most under-served, intergenerational residents by combining the Senior Center, The Parks & Recreation Offices, a greenhouse and workspace for Horticultural Arts & Sciences, Commercial Kitchen and Arts Center.

A combined 40,856 sq. foot interior space with 25,000 sq. ft exterior space for a plaza, sculpture garden and amphitheater would require the allocation of nearly \$13 million.

- There is an active community of artists and arts organizations in Newtown.
- Many are small and in a fragile state, not just because of the recession.
- There are several mid-size groups producing good work, but most of their needs are for smaller performance space, rehearsal and teaching space.
- New or improved cultural facilities should support broader community goals, including the development of a vibrant Fairfield Hills Town Center, increased visibility for arts and cultural organizations, and advancement of arts education.



- On a global level, we believe that new facilities should serve a broad range of programming for traditional and nontraditional audiences, focusing on the opportunity to create a new community destination.
- The Arts Space in the Community Center should be multi-purpose that will serve a wide range of activities including orchestral performances, chorale music, dancing, musicals, plays and notable speakers.
- A large multi-purpose room with a movable stage that could house an art show or a concert or an open mike and have dividers so that it could become smaller rooms.
- It will be equipped with industry standard theatrical equipment to support productions by local arts organizations and touring groups
- a modular seating that will be versatile for a number of uses. This flexible theater seating model includes a system that folds away for open-floor or cabaret seating, or can be left partially open for smaller audiences and a larger stage.
- The theater lobby will accommodate receptions and events as well as serve as a gallery space for visual artists. The lobby is designed to open onto the plaza, which can also be used for events.
- Rooms for rehearsals for various groups (theater, choir).
- A sound proof room for music lessons
- A dedicated room for visiting artists where supplies could be left for a week or two.
- A dedicated room for weaving where loom can be safely left up and room secured.
- 1500 square feet of storage for the equipment we loan out that was generously donated to us. The stage is a flat stage design that can be modified with risers for raised stage performances.
- All of the rooms we are mentioning are flexible and can be used by other people for lectures, book clubs.
- Dressing rooms will accommodate a range of performers' needs and will be up to actor's -equity standards.
- No infrastructure that competes with existing venues/businesses in our area (consistent with our ordinance)
- Plenty of open space with some natural light that enables us to offer small to medium sized events.
- Programs, events, exhibitions and meetings that serve the existing and future needs of the community.
- It has a loading dock that enables us to receive/ship large items (sculpture, kiln, art supplies, etc.).
- It has a large back room "shop" for a wide variety of projects (utilizing the tools already in our possession but currently gathering dust).
- Multipurpose room:
  - With full room dividers so space can be used "full" for events and also divided into classrooms and workshops and rehearsal spaces as needed



- Stage with lights sound equipment & curtains
- PA, drums, amplifiers, microphones
- Screen and project for lectures and presentations and showing things like operas broadcast from The Met, etc...
- Lots of wall space for hanging art work and displaying works in progress
- Large work tables
- Reconfigurable dance floor
- Maker's Space with 3D printers, computers, and software for designing on 3D printers
- Reconfigurable "soft floor" for activities
- Kilns, looms, easels,
- Sound proofing and sound baffles
- Audio set up in ceiling and walls – to fill the entire space
- Proper lighting!
- Internet access!
- Art & Sculpture Gallery (including multimedia installations) for new and rotating shows:
- 3000 square feet
- Mobile "spacers" like SCAN have to hang artwork on for shows.
- Proper lighting!
- Internet Access
- Workshops and rehearsal spaces as needed
- Stage with lights sound equipment & curtains
- PA, drums, amplifiers, microphones
- Screen and project for lectures and presentations and showing things like operas broadcast from
- Lots of wall space for hanging art work and displaying works in progress
- Large work tables
- Reconfigurable dance floor
- Maker's Space with 3D printers, computers, and software for designing on 3D printers
- Reconfigurable "soft floor" for activities
- Kilns, looms, easels
- Sound proofing and sound baffles
- Audio set up in ceiling and walls – to fill the entire space





- Proper lighting!
- Internet access!
- Art & Sculpture Gallery (including multimedia installations) for new and rotating shows:3000 sq ft
- Mobile “spacers” like SCAN have to hang artwork on for shows.
- Proper lighting!
- Internet Access
- Storage space: 2,000 square feet • Office: 600 square feet • Internet access, workstations, printers, copiers, fax, desks, phones
- 40,000 Sq. Feet Facility Providing Offices for:
  - Newtown Cultural Arts Commission and assistants
  - Newtown Community Center Director and assistants
  - Senior Center Director and assistants
  - Newtown Commission of the Aging Director and assistants
  - Newtown Parks and Recreation Director and assistants
  - Horticulture Center
- Performance/event space with seating for 200
- Commercial Kitchen- incubator for aspiring entrepreneurs, classes
- Work Shop – set design, woodworking, mechanics, makers space
- Fiber Arts – looms, sewing
- Six classrooms/meeting space
- Recording Studio
- Ceramic Studio
- Gallery Space
- Box office
- Communal vestibule
- Outdoor grounds including sculpture garden and amphitheater

These are written and spoken recommendations provided to members of the NCAC in the past two years. We have compiled these suggestions and charted out proposed rooms types, sizes and special requirements. Our information regarding the Senior Center was contributed by **Marilyn Place** and **Curt Symes**, along with their presentation to NCCC. Though we have not spoken directly with the Parks and Recreation Department Director, **Amy Mangold**, we have visited their office and heard what their concerns



may be. As far as the horticultural facilities, we have spoken with members of the Garden Clubs and Victory Garden. We believe that improving and increasing available healthy food sources is the way of the future and believe it should be incorporated into all aspects of our daily lives.

*\*Please refer to Appendix B: Preliminary Concept Plans and Multi Space Configurations*

## How to Fund On-Going Costs

- Income from ticket sales of theatre productions, gallery shows, art sales (commissions)
- Naming Opportunities for plaques throughout the community center
- Exterior - Engraved bricks or paving stones with donors names
- Once appropriate space is allocated, The NCAC would offer rehearsal/studio space for lease, and
- performance and gallery space for the presentation of fine and performing arts,
- Gift shop (limited)
- Cash Donations
- City or tax district funds
- Grants
- Tuition / class fees
- Memberships
- Community Fundraisers
- Volunteers and in-kind donations
- The Community Center would have a full commercial kitchen that could be rented out for a variety of events and could function as an incubator for aspiring entrepreneurs in the food industry.
- The art studios can be rented by local artists as well as used for small meetings or as breakout rooms from a larger gathering or event.

**Though the NCAC has a multi-faceted list of members, we do not pretend to be architects or town planners. We have pulled from the many talents and passions in our community in crafting this proposal. With all the work that went in to it we recognize that it is only preliminary. We are all grateful to the NCCC for their service and for the opportunity to be part of this important conversation. It is our sincere hope that whatever vision the NCCC presents to the town it will inspire our community with its design and unify with its programming.**



*"Arts create healthy whole communities and the future is about building bridges not separate silos."*  
Richard Pilbrow

Respectfully Submitted by Newtown Cultural Arts Commission

NCAC Community Center Committee

Linda Parsloe, Chair

Rob Kaiser

Rob Rabinowitz

Laura Lerman

Terry Sagedy

Maureen Trotto

November 6, 2015