Springville Center for the Arts Strategic Plan

Draft August, 2024

Introduction

Springville Center for the Arts' purpose has been clear for more than a decade: *Bring the transformative power of the arts to community members and transform the community.*

How that is fulfilled is ever-changing.

Springville Center for the Arts is a nonprofit community multi-arts center located in the heart of downtown Springville, NY at the border of Erie and Cattaraugus Counties. Established as a grassroots collaborative venture between a long-standing community theater group and a network of fine artists in 1998, the Center is the only permanent year-round cultural provider in the area. The Center provides a multi-arts venue where people gather to both directly participate in and experience creative pursuits, performances, the visual arts or educational programs. The organization has grown from volunteer roots to a professional staff along with summer interns. Volunteers remain critical to the execution of artistic programs as well as completion of a bold capital renovation plan.

The organization was founded by the Springville Players, who began producing live community theater in the 1960's. For the first thirty years, theater events took place at area schools and other temporary locations before moving to the former Brown's Shoe Store at 35 East Main Street in 1998. The store was converted into a black box theater with adjoining gallery and reception space. Initial programming quickly expanded to include youth theater productions, a cinema program, workshops, a writers' workshop, a gallery and concerts.

In June of 2007, the organization rallied together and purchased the Baptist Church of Springville, which was built in 1869 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2008. The building had suffered from years of neglect with leaking roofs, crumbling masonry and partially dismantled interior spaces. Programming began with makeshift modifications and a far-reaching master plan was developed. The Center underwent numerous renovation phases beginning in 2013, funded from a mix of individual contributions, foundation grants and State funds. The Harold L. Olmsted Gallery, named after a local notable architect and artist, the Fran Vacanti Classroom, and an elevator were completed on June 18, 2016. New bathrooms were finished the following year. An Entrance Addition, which added gallery space and provides universal access to the building, was opened September 14, 2023.

Over time the Center's programming has expanded to include community-wide events such as the annual Art Crawl, extensive summer youth programming, and increased visiting artist residencies. The Center has taken a leadership role in community development and actively partners with local schools, the Springville Regional Service Coalition, downtown merchants and others.

In 2012, the Center acquired 5 East Main Street, a collapsed building at the nexus of Springville's downtown. Through grants, contributions, and a pioneering tax-credit and community ownership model, the Center raised over a million dollars to rebuild the structure as Art's Cafe. Recognized with awards from the American Institute of Architects, Preservation Buffalo-Niagara and the state-wide Preservation League of New York, this bustling destination builds everyday connections to the arts with a performance space, art workshop, two residences and a publicly accessible green roof centered around a bakery-cafe.

As of January 2024, the organization is completing multiple major capital projects that have the potential to dramatically change how it operates, who it impacts, and the community itself. At the same time, SCA – like other cultural organizations around the nation and the world – is pulling itself out of the COVID world. With the reopening of the Olmsted Gallery and the Mongerson Theater, the church building will be ready for arts events at a scale and quality that has not been possible before. With both the duration and success of the organization, SCA is clearly no longer a pop-up grassroots arts group. How does SCA continue to meet its mission of cultivating the artist in all of us while presenting itself as a visitor-ready regional institution?

Throughout the strategic planning process, a balance between seemingly opposite challenges became obvious. Key questions about the future highlighted important contradictions:

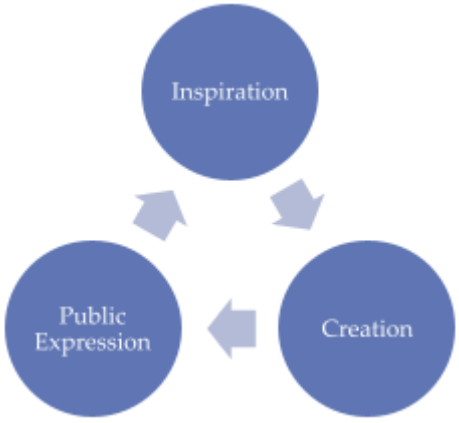
- Are we focused on growth OR sustainability?
- Do we center our plan on further capital expansion OR operations?
- Are we a risk-taking grassroots organization OR a more staid, professional one?
- Do we present professional artists OR nurture the artist in everyone?

Instead of shying away from these key questions, SCA meets them head-on. SCA must work on expansion and stability with a variety of programs and approaches. "OR" becomes "AND".

This creates a tension that makes the strategic plan and organization stronger. None of the issues are mutually exclusive – and in many ways they can naturally support each other.

An obvious example crystalized during a conversation about audiences and who is being served. Is Springville Center for the Arts here to present high-quality art to the general public or is SCA here to foster the general public making art? By saying "yes, and", the path became clear. SCA presents quality programming that impacts people at all stages of artistic development. Audiences are inspired by high-quality art presentations. Some people might be learning through an entry level workshop, while others may be putting on a professional-level production.

Supporting the "life cycle of artwork" became the central focus of the strategic plan. SCA's vision is to present art that inspires the community, some of whom start creating art, which would then be publicly expressed to inspire others.



This fully acknowledges differing levels of audience participation, and encourages "yes, and…" in other areas.

To best support inspiration, creation, and public expression, SCA focuses on creating a positive **ecosystem for the arts**. This ecosystem relies on people, places, spaces, events, and structures that support one another. For example:

- A guest artist is in residence in one of the apartments at Art's Cafe. A visitor encounters a talk at an informal Artist's Night. They take a workshop. Excited by the process, they create a few pieces that are then displayed in the Annual Art Crawl. They are identified as an artist with the potential for a solo exhibit and they work with staff to create an entire show for the Olmsted Gallery.

The ecosystem requires access to spaces and support staff that facilitate the creation of artwork including rehearsal spaces, fully equipped art workshops or spaces of experimentation. Learning and inspiration occur through public classes. Art connects with audiences in a variety of settings including galleries at multiple scales, events large and small, stages, and public settings.

SCA must address not only facilities but all of the capacity needed to make Springville a center for artistic innovation with a deep cultural enrichment of community members.

SCA can't exist in a vacuum. Beyond arts facilities and structures, Springville Center for the Arts needs to exist within a vibrant, thriving community. This community supports SCA but SCA should recognize and embrace the ways it can strengthen and support that community.

This strong community attracts visiting artists, builds connections among people, generates the kind of spirit that leads to volunteerism, makes it an attractive site for employers and entrepreneurs, and raises the quality of life for people of all ages. As seen with Art's Cafe, SCA can take a lead role in addressing change within the community in a variety of ways. How can SCA leverage its resources to build a better community which in turn will better be able to support the arts?

None of this is possible without adequate resources. Springville is a small community with no tourism draw, major corporate benefactor or university population. With several decades of changes in the retail environment, the Main Street environment that is so crucial to the community's appeal is threatened. Without the support of local businesses, by extension, SCA is threatened.

SCA needs a scale large enough to support the staff and spaces that support that arts ecosystem. Within the small community environment the economics are challenging. This is evident in the fragile condition created by low staff salaries, lack of endowment or unequipped spaces.

Springville Center for the Arts should address this head on. How can the organization take steps now that will lead to a healthy local economy a generation later and by extension, a more sustainable organization?

Again, the model shown by the cafe is telling. Not only did SCA create an independent business with many employees and an economic benefit to all of downtown, it created a business which provides access to additional arts programming space. As the business becomes profitable, SCA will benefit financially. The cafe's success is supported by the Center's arts programming and the arts programming is enhanced and made possible by the cafe.

At the core are three priorities – community engagement, learning, and high-quality art.

> Community Engagement: For the past decade, much of the work at the Springville Center for the Arts has focused on bringing people together and engaging them in the arts on many levels. To paraphrase one volunteer, "I've found true community twice in my life. First when the Springville Center for the Arts opened, and then again when the Arts Café opened."

Learning: Learning takes many forms at Springville Center for the Arts. It can be as simple as a person participating in a demonstration at the Art Crawl or as complex as a person making a long-term commitment to learning an art form taught by a professional artist.

Quality: Presenting and supporting the creation of professional quality art is essential for Springville Center for the Arts. Artists from around the world come to Springville to present programs, complete residencies, install art, and create public art. The Center is committed to artists as professionals, and the presentation of high-quality art is the best way to inspire others to join in the creative process.

To support this full ecosystem, the organization needs a scale that both serves many different levels of engagement and is less susceptible to changes in any one program.

These concepts laid the foundation for a plan that allowed for both far reaching vision and the strengthening of long-standing programs. Coupled with a year of interviews, assessments, retreats, and planning, the next steps are clear. The Center must focus on the sustainability of all that has been developed while taking bold, innovative steps that drive growth over decades. As an organization, SCA will always be experimenting and growing.

This strategic plan strives to balance those priorities. It includes efforts to bolster sustainability, complete capital projects and manage multiple volunteer and donor programs. It also sets the stage for exciting new expansion projects, public art, and imaginative new programs.

Mission, Vision, and Values

Mission Statement

Springville Center for the Arts is a catalyst for creative inspiration and expression in our community and beyond.

Vision Statement

Ignited by the arts, our community is known far and wide as a vibrant, creative place.

We create a hub for the arts through:

Programming

SCA presents quality, engaging multi-disciplinary arts programs that are accessible to all.

Places & spaces

SCA creates places & spaces so artists and the community can engage in the complete cycle of the arts: inspiration -> creation -> public expression -> inspiration

People & perspectives

SCA inspires the artist within each of us through direct participation in the arts.

Core Values

Commitment to quality
Encouraging artistic risks by creating a safe environment for creativity and learning through failure
Growth through strategic risks
Community engagement as the foundation of all we do
Embracing change and growth
Commitment to innovation and experimentation

Guiding Concepts

Balance our commitment to community, quality, and learning.
Focus on arts-driven revitalization.
Create ecosystems for success.
Honor grassroots energy and professional standards.

The Five-Year Plan:

An Ecosystem for the Arts

How does one support a strong ecosystem for the arts? By focusing on the essential systems within that ecosystem and how they support one another. This plan highlights several key areas of focus and how each can support the other.

Audience & Artist Development

Build a pathway for participation from those who have no arts connection to the experienced artist.

Programming

Springville Center for the Arts' programs prioritize the intersection of quality, learning, and community engagement that is foundational to all that SCA does.



Multi-Arts Complex

Transform the former Baptist Church site into a premier multi-arts complex

Arts Entrepreneurship

Use SCA's assets and experience as leverage to create a constellation of organizations that support each other. Lay the building blocks for a generation of growth.

Sustainability

Springville Center for the Arts will expand capacity to support both a long-term vision and ongoing operations. Sustainability includes staffing structures, fund development and marketing.

Detailed Goals and Objectives

Audience & Artist Development

Goal:

Nurture the artist within all of us by creating a "pathway" of programming.

Objectives:

Create messaging targeted to specific audiences and ensure crossover experiences so people will access multiple art forms.
Experiment with different programming approaches to reach specific underserved audiences including teens, young adults, parents with young children, preschoolers, seniors.

Ensure there's a pathway of programming to build connections:

- Tier 1 – Present approachable, no cost events within community spaces to introduce people to our brand: Art Crawl, Party on Pearl.
- Tier 2 – Host informal, no commitment, no cost activities within SCA spaces that people may seek out or stumble into: Folk Night at the Cafe, popup kids art programs.
- Tier 3 – Welcome people to one-off, more-formal, experiences: Ticketed Concert at the Cafe, Artist Reception, Outdoor Performance.
- Tier 4 – Build a deeper connection to audiences and workshop participants: Season Tickets, Perform at Open Mic, Submit to an Exhibit
- Tier 5 – Actively pursue people to become fully immersed members & volunteers: Exhibit hanging volunteer, Art Crawl committee.
- Tier 6 – Support artists with a strong commitment to creating and sharing their craft: Solo Exhibit, Directing Theater.

Programming

Goal:

Programs at the Springville Center for the Arts are high-quality, diverse, far-reaching, and engaging. They encourage artistic risk, creativity, and inclusion in the arts.

Springville Center for the Arts' programs prioritize the intersection of quality, learning, and community engagement that is foundational to all that SCA does.



By looking at programming by type (Gallery, Theatre, Presentation, and Specials/Events) and by time of year (Fall-Spring or Summer), trends can be highlighted and audience needs can be best met.

Objectives: Theater Program

Build strong volunteer systems and support spaces that foster community, support the development of theater skills and ensure that everyone impacted by a theater production is excited to come back again. Build upon the relaunch of the Mongerson Theater to usher in a golden age of theater in Springville with regular seasons of diverse in-house productions, educational opportunities and inspiring visiting artists.

Objective: Gallery Program

Support the development of local artists from first exhibit to major solo show through a robust exhibit program admired across the region. Capitalize on the visibility of the exhibit space at Art's Cafe to foster more participation in other visual arts programs. Make the Olmsted Gallery a place where people have the habit of coming regularly and increase visitorship to 500 monthly.

Objective: Presentations

Build SCA's performance audience through the expansion of ticketed performances to encompass both the Cafe and Mongerson Theater. Develop an outdoor Folk Festival and summer outdoor performances. Expand SCA's residency program with a regular call for participants.

Objective: Events/Special Programs

Create a sense of place with arts-based revitalization activities. Grow Art Crawl to become the area's premiere event. SCA will expand their audience through multi-arts programs in unexpected locations. Collaborate with partners to produce a Bootleg Soiree biannually, an evening of art installations and performance that transforms an underappreciated place. Install one hundred pieces of public art in Springville. Produce street level art celebrations such as Party on Pearl.

Objective: Summer Programs

Revamp the summer intern program to include more experienced summer staff. Develop funding for summer youth programs. Tour an Artsapalooza theater and workshop program to 10 rural communities biannually.

Multi-Arts Complex

Goal:

Transform the former Baptist Church site into a premier multi-arts complex

Key Objectives:

- Reopen the Mongerson Theater. Raise $250,000 to install seats, complete support spaces and install equipment and furnishings.
- Complete exterior landscaping, lighting and signage that reflects the dynamic arts activity occurring inside and welcomes visitors.
- Assess needed restoration to the church. Complete masonry work, stained glass repairs, and other structural work to preserve and highlight the historic site for generations to come.
- Rehabilitate the Parsonage into a sought-after artist residency space that is welcoming, energy efficient, requires low maintenance and is a model historic preservation project.
- Construct a scene shop and industrial arts building that complements the architecture of the church and supports the creation of more ambitious artwork.

Arts Entrepreneurship

Goal:

Explore, plan and propose bold new opportunities for art-based real estate development. Use SCA's assets and experience as leverage to create a constellation of organizations that support each other.

Key Objectives:

- Expand Art's Cafe, providing additional residence spaces, a regular arts retail location, and larger kitchen space that supports artisans and more community events.
- Re-imagine the former Roswell site as The Art Farm: a theater, industrial arts and food-based summer camp for underserved youth that presents summer stock theater productions and concerts.
- Invest in downtown residential redevelopment to build artist live/work spaces and access to a greatly expanded residency program in the long-term.

Organizational Sustainability

Goal:

Expand capacity to support both a long-term vision and ongoing operations.

Key Objectives:

- Double the amount of programming staff.
- Build an economy of scale with the creation of "tentacles," different focus areas of the organization that support the administrative structure and reach different audiences.
- Introduce 100 potential donors a year to the organization through volunteer-led cultivation events.
- Translate the excitement of all events into increased donations and awareness of the organization.

- Volunteering at SCA both has value to the volunteer and the organization. Develop a proactive approach to build fully staffed committees, an usher program, greenskeepers and event staff. Meet with a potential volunteer once a week.
- Launch restructured and inspired Visual Arts, Theater and Performance committees that amplify the efforts of staff to create engaging programs.

Appendix

The Process
SOAR Analysis Detail
Meeting Notes
Assessments (to be added)

The Process

The strategic planning process took place in nearly a year of discussions, interviews, meetings, and retreats. It took place in parallel with the opening of the renovated Gallery and the ongoing renovations to the Theatre space at the Center's primary location – providing significant stress on staff and Board time. At the same time, the process included an assessment of and plan for the organization's programmatic committee structure and marketing/fund development efforts.

The work included:

- One-on-one interviews of 20+ community leaders, stakeholders, Board members, and staff.
- A report on feedback and areas of concern.
- A Board retreat in January, 2023 highlighting goals and reviewing the mission, vision and values of the Springville Center for the Arts.
- A Board meeting to complete a SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results) analysis.
- Regularly scheduled meetings with a Strategic planning group.
- Interviews with 20+ current and former program (Theatre, Gallery and Presentation) committee members
- Development of a multi-year plan for Committee structures and policies.
- Assessment of current marketing and fund development efforts and needs.
- Board review of a draft strategic plan.
- Development of a marketing and fund development plan focused on word-of-mouth and cultivation.
- Multiple Board trainings on cultivation and cultivation events.
- Finalized plan.

SOAR Analysis

Strengths
What can we build upon?

Committed membership
Core of people we can rely on
Multiple spaces
Flexibility to think outside the box
Adaptability
We take risks as an organization and artistically
Future-thinking orientation
Talented staff
Wide range of program to serve different skill set, age range and interest
Longevity
Connectivity to the community
Regional
Main St relationships and as a driver of change
Inspiration for change
Strong relationship with grant organizations
Distance from the urban center
Charming setting, location, and buildings
Growth mindset
Committed Board and leadership
Established and new programs
Offer the community a creative outlet
We're not supposed to be here (exciting)
We're surviving and thriving when other arts organizations failed
Sense of place
Becoming more known (locally, regionally, nationally)
Quality of programs

Opportunities
What are our stakeholders asking for? Stakeholders include: members, community, untapped audiences, granters, Main St, interns, visiting audiences, visiting artists, sponsors.

Open the Gallery/Theatre
Programs
More fine craft workshops (stained glass)
Higher-end concerts
Outdoor events
Host of non-ticketed events at the Café
Homeschool programming
3-5-7-9 Main Street
Creating an Ecosystem / Workspace for Artists and Musicians
Could be a physical ecosystem or a space for people to meet, learn, create and become more skilled artists
Need staff support to make that possible.
Create an overall arts experience for visitors
Teaming up with other organizations
Summer Stock/ Summer Theatre / Outdoor Concerts & Program Site
Public Art
Crawl
Post-COVID reunions and new connections
Conscious connection to unplugged experiences – real, live, old-school
Connect with high school and middle school students
Avant garde theatre
Improved government relations

SOAR Analysis (continued)

Aspirations
What do we care deeply about?

Community
Art
Longevity
Theater – avant garde
Reconnecting people to the arts through experiences
Constant growth
Arts as a driver – all ships rise = Main St filled, busy
Quality presentation of work
Respect of the experience for both the artists and the audience – takes you to another place
Expanding geographic reach
Recognition of change
    We're here to change audiences
    People have greater connection to the arts
    Everyone is creative
    Pathways for people to get involved in the arts
Multiple spaces
Endowment

Results
How do we know we're successful?

Visiting artists and all we offer them
Energy and excitement that people sense
Successful with granting organizations
Requests for exhibition space we can't fill
Theater season
Multiple generations participating
When people are asking what's next
Sold-out performances
Growth in the number of members, the amount of donations (# and $), participation in programs
Staff growth and compensation
Increased income – earned and raised
People think of us first
Opening the Gallery and the Theatre
Public Art
Plenty of housing
Growth of Art Crawl
Increased workshop space
Additional galleries & artist spaces in Springville
Tours increased
More programs
Endowment
Strategic debt

Discussion Notes

Vision Statement:

for the arts and artists – and for the community to engage the arts

For Artists:
Creation factory
We create spaces for artists to be inspired, learn, create and ____
Inspiration through public expression
Public expression to inspire

Fundraising

Membership & Individual Giving is very strong – steadily increased annually ($30,000+ annually)

Potential to add people in with more of an ask
Some confusion about the Café (ownership, membership at Café vs SCA membership
Range from $30 - $1000
People may not understand the membership program.
A lot of members may not have experience in charitable giving
Membership benefits: discounts on gallery sales, advance notice of shows, discounts on workshops.
Consider tabling events
Haven't evaluated membership
Database is getting "overweight" – need to evaluate (LYBNT) and set parameters for removing people, scaling back mailings, etc.

Drop-off donations

Jar at events. We need to send the message that we need support.
Training for staff…

Business Giving

Smaller amounts from local businesses. Not a very effective way to raise money.
Kingsley & Andrea worked on this in the past year - $10,000 – mostly tied to Art Crawl/Parade. Range from $100 - $1000.
Needs a review/evaluation –
Board members need situational rehearsal to become more comfortable – increase confidence
Cultivation via a quasi-Benevon model.
There is a low amount of money available in the community. We don't have relationships with any of the larger businesses. (largest employees: school, hospital, Walmart).

Corporate Giving

We need to be looking at other companies that have a larger impact (i.e. law firms, insurance, banking, etc.).

What local corporations can you tap into?

Very small – Allison is the major fundraiser here.

Need to determine ROI on time and effort

Events

Don't do them any more. Gala and Golf Tournament.

Shifted to Art Crawl After Party – didn't make a lot, but was good… it has the potential to grow significantly).

Extremely simple small events – limited food, wine

Could we develop a strategy to raise money through the Crawl – or capture them as future donors.

Analyze the After Party – develop a plan for how that works

Create a calendar, standard documents

Creating annual systems

Volunteers:

We need to put systems and structures in place

Simple ways to volunteer – Tiered approach to volunteerism

Nobody is in charge or thinking of volunteers right now. It needs a home.

Friends of program – a small group of people

to welcome volunteers and focus their work.

Might work well for a Theatre volunteer (like greenskeepers)

We need to define which types of volunteer jobs can go under this.

How do we welcome people?

Need a list of opportunities & marketing for volunteering

Leverage Theatre opening to start a core of new volunteers (usher program)

What is our goal for ACTIVE solicitation of volunteers.

HOW do we ASK.

WHEN do we ask

Volunteer recognition needs to be incorporated.

Establishing

Best publicity

Create systems to track

Engage and attract volunteers through collaborations/ other connections