



CLAY
ART CENTER

2021-
2024

Strategic Plan Executive Summary



9/20/21-8/31/24

Clay Art Center
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Strategic Plan Adopted
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Contents

Background	2
History	3
CAC Mission, Vision, Values & Strategic Vision/Positioning Statement	4
Summary of Organizational Strategy	5

BACKGROUND

During the spring of 2021 CAC decided to launch a strategic planning process. The Board established a Strategic Planning Task Force to lead the charge and develop the planning approach. Thanks to support from the Westchester Community Foundation and the New York State Council on the Arts, the Committee worked with Susan Weinrich from the New York Council of Nonprofits to develop the planning approach, conduct a survey of board and staff members, and establish a planning agenda. Members of the Strategic Planning Task Force participated in a series of strategic planning professional development sessions organized by the Support Center with funding from the Westchester Community Foundation. CAC's Board of Directors and staff met on April 10 to launch the strategic planning process with a review and discussion of the organization's mission, values, and vision. After the retreat, the planning committee reviewed and revised the recommendations and prepared working revised draft statements.

The next phase of the planning process involved a series of four working meetings on the following topics:

- Diverse and Integrated Programming
- Financial sustainability
- Increased brand awareness
- Operational and technological efficiency

In each session, participants reviewed the proposed revised mission, values, and vision statements; the organization's internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats (SWOT), and the relevant survey responses. Each session also included relevant key questions and internal data to inform the discussion and recommendations.

The following document incorporates feedback to the working mission, vision, and values statements as well as discussion items from each session. As the sessions progressed, key recommendations were shared to inform subsequent discussions.

History

Clay Art Center was founded in 1957 by Katherine Choy, whose dream was to open a center for the advancement of the ceramic arts, and she was joined by her friend Henry Okamoto, a respected, classic potter from California. Katherine Choy's tragic and sudden death in 1958 left Henry to dedicate the rest of his life to realizing her dream. A lone beacon on the east coast at the time, it became a haven for clay artists, many who have had significant careers and influenced contemporary ceramic practice.

After Henry's death in 1988, Elsbeth Woody and Claudia Miller took over the reins and infused their energy into several programs, initiating the Summer Workshop Festival and opening a gallery dedicated to exhibiting ceramics.

From 1997, Director Reena Kashyap and Associate Director Ruth Berelson strengthened the programs and focused on advancing the mission by growing the education, exhibitions, Artist Residency and outreach programs. 2007 marked Clay Art Center's emergence as a non-profit organization.

Today, Clay Art Center is a nationally recognized 501(c)(3) non-profit ceramic arts center and it is the largest and most active ceramic facility in the tri-state area, located in Port Chester, NY. Clay Art Center annually serves 9,000 people who walk through its doors to see an exhibition, take a class, engage in creative work, volunteer or purchase handmade clay art. Over 200 full and partial scholarships are awarded each year to under-served children and our community arts outreach programs reach at-risk youth, seniors, underserved families, developmentally disabled youth and adults, adults with mental illnesses, women fighting cancer and adults living with Alzheimer's disease. CAC believes that artistic expression is a basic human instinct. It brings us together through its force of communication and shared experience. CAC continues to be a champion in the community and provides outstanding programs so that everyone has the opportunity for creative expression.

CAC MISSION, VISION, VALUES

Mission

Clay Art Center is dedicated to education, creativity, and community engagement in a diverse and inclusive space for studio practice, exhibitions, personal growth, and professional development.

Vision

Igniting a passion for clay and providing a nurturing community for that passion to flourish.

Values

- Diversity and Inclusivity: We strive to provide a space where everyone is welcome. We treat people with respect and integrity.
- Innovation & Quality: We encourage and nurture creativity in exhibitions, education, and artist programs.
- Exploration & Sharing: We promote curiosity and openness from staff, board, students, teachers, and artists.
- Continuous Learning: We provide educational opportunities for all ages and skill levels.

STRATEGIC VISION/POSITIONING STATEMENT

Clay Art Center will be widely recognized as an exemplary center of ceramic arts with impact locally, regionally, and nationally.

As we look to the future, Clay Art Center will develop the internal capacity and community relationships needed to position the organization to grow, evolve, and thrive and pursue a new state of the art facility.

In order to accomplish this, we will focus on addressing the following strategic priorities and goals.

1. Diverse and Integrated Programming
2. Financial sustainability
3. Increased brand awareness
4. Operational and technological efficiency

SUMMARY OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

CAC has developed a thriving clay art studio and community that involves professional artists and students as well as those who appreciate clay arts by attending exhibitions and purchasing works in the store and online shops. CAC's strategic vision is to be widely recognized as an exemplary center of ceramic arts with impact locally, regionally, and nationally. CAC intends to develop the internal capacity and community relationships needed to position the organization to grow, evolve, and thrive.

In order to accomplish this, the organization intends to focus on the following strategic areas: diverse and integrated programming, continued financial stability, increased brand awareness, and operational and technological efficiency.

CAC intends to prioritize planning and teamwork to develop the relationships needed to increase access and impact to diverse stakeholders and constituencies. This prioritization will be done by: integrating program planning across all aspects of the organization to deepen impact; fully incorporating a diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racist agenda in programming and operations; developing and executing a robust community arts program strategy and plan; and engaging current and past CAC community artists to determine how best to support their professional and career development.

CAC intends to strengthen its fundraising accomplishments to ensure financial sustainability to achieve its strategic priorities. CAC intends to develop and execute a comprehensive fundraising plan with specific measurable objectives; and enhance Board and Staff knowledge and capacity to achieve higher fundraising goals in preparation for an eventual capital campaign.

CAC intends to increase brand awareness by increasing visibility of its brand and conveying more clearly who we are, what we do, and why it matters. CAC intends to enhance its ability to tell its story and increase its impact on the community by diversifying its communication media and broadening its intended audiences. CAC intends to develop and execute a more coordinated and consistent brand identity by establishing a broader marketing strategy that includes evaluation of the impact of marketing efforts.

CAC intends to develop its organizational structure, capacity, and systems to position itself for growth and greater impact. CAC intends to continue, development of a diverse community; investment in retention and development of staff; focusing on and planning for evolving technological and operational needs; enhancing use of data for planning and evaluation; and exploring options for increasing accessibility for people with disabilities.