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## **Arts Council Santa Cruz County signs lease for dance studio in Downtown Watsonville**

**SANTA CRUZ, CA — April 7, 2022 —** In answer to the call for class and rehearsal space in Downtown Watsonville, Arts Council Santa Cruz County has signed a lease to open a dance studio at 375 Main Street, across the street from the Watsonville Plaza.

The two-story, 3,400-square-foot building will include class and rehearsal space for local dance and music groups Esperanza del Valle, Estrellas de Esperanza, Ollin Baile Folklorico, Activities For All, Whitehawk Indian Council for Children, and Los Cocuyos Baile Folklórico. Upstairs will serve as the Watsonville offices for Arts Council Santa Cruz County, which also has an office at the Tannery Arts Center.

In 2020, the Arts Council formed the Watsonville Stewardship Committee for the Arts, a group of artists, political leaders and arts organizations, who shared a goal of improving access to the arts for Watsonville residents. Working together they looked at needs and opportunities, and developed a report with a list of recommendations. A common theme was the need for affordable, reliable spaces in which to create, practice and perform.

“We’ve tried at least twice before [to open a cultural center] and we see that it’s finally happening. The difference this time is that it’s actually becoming possible, for the first time in decades. This time it’s a collaborative effort. The Arts Council is taking responsibility for

artists in Watsonville, and we have financial support to be able to do this.” said Janet Johns, Director of Esperanza del Valle.

“This time there are authentic and true connections with the Arts Council. Having people in positions who can make this happen is different. People who make a commitment for the arts, can be a team player, and who want to see this come to fruition in Watsonville, like it has in other parts of the county.” said Ruby Vasquez, Director of Estrellas de Esperanza.

“We heard the need for space loud and clear,” said Mireya Gomez-Contreras, Arts Council Deputy Director, “It’s exciting to be working closely with all of these groups to make this a reality. The Arts Council is funding the space for the first year and working with the participating groups to make this financially viable over the long term. We are also excited about parallel efforts to enliven Watsonville’s arts ecosystem, including Pajaro Valley Arts Gallery’s efforts to purchase the Porter Building and Arte del Corazon’s pop-up art markets. The work we’re all doing is synergistic.”

This project is made possible thanks to generous support from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

The Arts Council plans to open the space this summer.

### **About Arts Council Santa Cruz County**

The Arts Council generates creativity, vibrancy, and connection in Santa Cruz County. For over 40 years, we have fueled our creative community, supporting individual and collective artistic expression and building bridges and bonds between people throughout our county. We know that art changes lives. In Santa Cruz the arts are also an economic driver (\$32 million of economic activity annually), contribute to civic pride, and are one of the most powerful vehicles for bringing people together, creating community dialogues, and strengthening relationships.

Through grants to artists and arts organizations, arts education programs that serve more than 17,000 youth across Santa Cruz County, and community initiatives such as [Open Studios](#), the [Tannery Arts Center](#) and the [Watsonville Movement for Arts & Culture](#), we help Santa Cruz County thrive. Learn more at [artscouncilsc.org](http://artscouncilsc.org).