

**Come Dream with Us:
Creating a Vision for the Arts in
Hillsborough, NC**

A Citizen Workshop

Summary Report

**First Baptist Church
Hillsborough, NC**

December 8, 2007

Sponsored by:

**Town of Hillsborough
and
Hillsborough Arts Council**

Workshop Facilitated and Report Prepared by:

Bill Flexner

Creating a Vision for the Arts in Hillsborough, NC in 2013 – A Citizens Workshop

Executive Summary

On December 8, 2007, the Town of Hillsborough and The Hillsborough Arts Council invited community members to come together to dream about the future role of the arts in the Hillsborough community. A total of 75 people, seated at 11 separate tables, attended the 3-hour session. Following an introduction by Tom Stevens, Mayor of Hillsborough, resident author Michael Malone described the rich arts environment that already exists in Hillsborough and challenged the gathered participants to dream together to create a unified vision for significantly strengthening the Hillsborough Arts Community by 2013.

Bill Flexner was introduced as the workshop's facilitator. After a short period of silent brainstorming ("thinking before talking"), Flexner described that the task of the participants was to identify "common ground" with regard to the "Hillsborough Arts Community in 2013: what they like about what they see around them...what "life" is like in the center of Orange County."

After the participants at the individual tables identified their common ground, they were then grouped with the participants from another table. The task of this second stage in the process was to determine areas of common ground between the two tables and then to use that information to draft a "Vision Statement" for the Hillsborough Arts Community in 2013.

Five alternative Vision Statements were drafted by the five table groupings:

- A. *Our vision for Hillsborough by 2013 is to reach and serve every member of our community by providing opportunities for expression, appreciation and participation with the arts that will appeal to and engage members of the local and global community.***
- B. Hillsborough: where art is the fabric of life.
- C. To promote the arts and recognize their importance, to serve as a place where the arts and artists are nurtured. Through our long term commitment to nurture the arts at all levels, Hillsborough and Orange County shine as an example of a vibrant, collaborative, creative community where diverse peoples want to live and visit.
- D. To create an environment where all artists can develop and succeed emotionally, artistically and financially. To create awareness that the arts reflect a charming sense of the unique character of Hillsborough.
- E. Arts Destination Circle...where each aspect of arts, education, quality of life, diversity, and economic development support the others.

Using colored sticky dots, the participants were asked to "vote" on which of the five Vision Statements they most preferred. The consensus of the entire group was that Vision Statement "A" above communicated best the common ground that everyone had been discussing in their small groups.

John Delconte of the Hillsborough Arts Council then explained that the participants would be contacted with the purpose of creating a steering committee to begin the process of creating the reality described in the unifying Vision Statement.

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1 Introduction

This report documents the proceedings and outputs of the “Come Dream with Us: Creating a Vision for the Arts in Hillsborough, NC” citizen workshop that was held at the First Baptist Church in Hillsborough on December 8, 2007. A total of 75 people from all walks of life in Hillsborough participated in the workshop. They were seated at a total of 11 tables that filled the Fellowship Hall of the church.

2 Desired Outcomes

The facilitator, Bill Flexner, explained that desired outcomes for the workshop were to:

- Identify “Common Ground” among the participants with regard to what is happening in the Hillsborough Arts in the year 2013.
- Identify “golden nuggets” – ideas that have value for defining the future, although they are not held by all participants.
- Reach agreement on a Unified Vision for the Arts in Hillsborough for 2013.

3 Workshop Opening

- The workshop was opened by Tom Stevens, Mayor of Hillsborough, who spoke about the value of achieving a unified Vision for the Arts in Hillsborough for 2013.
- Michael Malone, a Hillsborough resident and nationally known writer, described where the arts are currently in the Hillsborough scene. He made note of the wide range of arts activities and events that are happening throughout the year and then talked about the importance of making the arts even stronger in the future.

4 Creating a Unified Vision for the Arts in Hillsborough in 2013

To create a Unified Vision Statement for the Arts in Hillsborough in 2013, the participants were guided through a four-step process:

- Silent brainstorming in their workbook provided by Bill...thinking before talking (30 min).
- Discussion at their table identifying areas of “common ground” and “golden nuggets” (25 min).

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- Sharing their elements of “common ground” and “golden nuggets” with colleagues at a second table and then drafting a preliminary Vision Statement (25 min).
- Presentation and selection of a Unified Vision Statement by the whole group (30 min).

The workshop participants were seated at eleven separate tables that ensured a maximum mix of roles and organizational affiliations. The silent brainstorming was stimulated by six questions that helped participants imagine what life is like about Hillsborough and the center of Orange County in the Year 2013 – 5 years from now.

The six questions were:

- Hillsborough is recognized as a national model for unifying the total arts community in small town America. What is going on in OUR total community that created this recognition?
- The people of Hillsborough are celebrating 5 years of exceptional success. What is the story about OUR success?
- What is it about “life” in Hillsborough that you really like?
- It’s 2013; what is happening in Hillsborough that really excites you?
- It’s 2013; what have you created that makes you feel really proud?
- It’s 2013; what is going on in Hillsborough that has you telling people from other places to come to Hillsborough now?

After completing the silent brainstorming, the participants were asked to share the five most important ideas that they had listed in their workbooks and then to write on flipchart pages the areas where they had “common ground” and then also to document the “golden nuggets”, ideas that they didn’t want to lose, but were not held in common among the participants.

After 25 minutes the individual tables were combined into table groupings where the participants were now asked to share their “common ground” and “golden nuggets” and identify where there is now “common ground” across tables.

Following are the results that were posted on the flip charts by both the individual tables and the subsequent table groupings (presented by Table Groupings):

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Table Grouping “A”

Common Ground:

- Arts Center – sites, community
- Support – paid positions for arts center...funding from various sources
- Promotion of art/events – calendar, TV/radio, central website
- Maintain unique town character...Eno River, Historic
- Variety of Artistic outlets – broaden expression: inclusive, interactive, demos
- A physical center for the arts (with paid coordinator) – gallery, classrooms, theater, and ancillary centers
- Youth arts academy in partnership with public schools
- A walkable/accessible/transit available town with restored historic art venues (i.e., Champagne Club & Colonial Inn), along with landscaping with trees and pedestrian areas and the county offices moved to the outskirts.
- Nationally acclaimed annual arts festival
- Cross cultural and economic boundaries to be fully inclusive
- Public art – historic and contemporary architecture, landscaping, sculpture in all public areas: streets, walkways, parks, etc.
- Space venue, which includes performance, studio, and incubator space
- Smart Growth - thriving downtown, mixed use, density, retail on ground level, green spaces, welcoming diversity, accessibility
- Encouraging participation - youth, culture, children, minority
- Financial support - for artists and participants - Orange County
- Umbrella organization for promotion and collaboration

Golden Nuggets:

- High-quality artist-driven tattoo parlor
- Art component to River Walk, with permanent and changing art work
- Community-wide barn dance
- Trapeze school on/near river
- Outdoor amphitheater
- Skateboard park
- Public murals (parking deck)
- Monthly arts/crafts market (free for vendors--similar to Farmer's Market)
- Arts Magazine (place for amateurs' work)

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Table Grouping “B”

Common Ground:

- Space: out of town, green design, art district, as point of focus for collaboration and conversation
- Mentoring: artist residency, multidisciplinary, local involvement
- Heritage: tied to but also cutting edge
- Public: move out into community, diverse, multidisciplinary, newism, street art.
- Financial: support, including local business
- Leadership
- Space: indoor & outdoor; gallery; performance; classroom/studios; historic & cutting edge; green
- Accessibility: broadly inclusive; diverse; maintain Hillsborough Heritage
- Mentoring: education; outreach
- Public Awareness: events; festivals; PR

Golden Nuggets:

- Last Friday type of event every Friday
- Involve existing community: affordability, inclusive, use public space with heritage
- How do we get there? Baby Steps: festivals (specific); local artist parade; fund raisers, performance
- Keywords: community; expression; vibrant; stimulating; progressive; non-judgmental; reflecting character of town; part of daily life

Table Grouping “C”

Common Ground:

- Inclusiveness: involve schools in arts projects/events
- Involve Orange County in responsibility/collaboration with town
- Create public space, indoor and outdoor, by reusing existing structures (e.g., Colonial Inn, gas station on Churton Street)
- Promote policies to keep Hillsborough affordable for creative people
- Get public/government offices out of commercial district as much as possible
- Preserve/retain Hillsborough’s ambiance during coming change
- Establish policies for affordability
- Use exiting spaces for new public space...indoor and out
- Engage Hillsborough youth via schools in art and community
- Develop Art Center/teaching/performing

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Table Grouping “D”

Common Ground:

- Performing Arts Center with studio & gallery space
- A regular arts forum that facilitates communication and collaboration between artists/public
- Community-wide arts mentoring & education initiative
- Arts Center
- Collaboration and inclusiveness
- Connectivity and walkability, including public transit
- Balance between preservation and growth
- Public art in all places
- Facility space: performing, studio, gallery
- Economic support: town, county, businesses, grants, patrons, etc.
- Mentoring the arts, arts in schools
- Co-op of artists: weekly meetings, artists website, communications
- Communication

Golden Nuggets:

- Economic support for arts community
- Sustainable transportation; accessibility with existing facilities; character and managed growth
- Small town that acts like a vibrant city
- Train station
- Talent show
- Arts Mentoring
- Arts education, using existing spaces, possibly an amphitheater, library
- Retailing of local work
- Movie theater – independent
- Iron chef Hillsborough

Table Grouping “E”

Common Ground:

- Multi-purpose Arts Center
- Affordable & expanded arts education
- Recognized destination for tourists and artists...sustainability, access, Walkability/care free zones,
- Create an organization (alliance of govt, business, nonprofits, arts) charged with developing and implementing a cultural master plan with teeth
- Maintain what is unique to Hillsborough and integrates our diversity
- Outdoor community space (including parks, etc)
- Community Support – volunteers/government/business
- Self-sustaining
- Centralized arts organization and resource center with staff

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- Diversity
- Arts Center with additional spaces, including indoor & outdoor & different locations & scales
- Recognized destination for tourists and artists complementing our heritage and natural resources
- Locally grown foods & arts
- Affordable art education & arts
- Sustainability
- Credo of respect for individual
- Low impact and high impact
- Celebratory
- Physical center for arts
- Lifelong arts education
- Regional focus/attraction
- Parks and public display of arts
- Car free zone
- Revitalization of Colonial Inn
- Connectivity in town
- Four Fleur town
- European Market Days
- Expanded Art Walk
- Historical and genealogical center
- Riverwalk with art
- Mountain to Sea Trail
- Performing and visual arts center (world class) focus diverse communities
- Arts Destination: history/visual arts/crafts/ performing

Golden Nuggets:

- Electric motor coach
- Restore Colonial Inn
- Great Website
- Book Festival
- Writers/book festival
- Elizabeth Keckley drama...slave cemetery
- Cinema/film festival
- Interpretive kiosk for arts and heritage
- Story telling festival
- Keep small town flavor
- Practice space
- Maintain walkable community
- Transportation/traffic concerns
- Good stuff...not junk (art not commercialization)
- Maintain what is unique to Hillsborough small town/antique center
- Plan of “Big Picture” with teeth
- Cooperation between arts groups, business & government work toward shared vision
- Arts Center: gallery space, performance space, classrooms, green buildings
- Broadly inclusive: encourage all to participate/mentoring

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- Preserve open spaces: outdoor performance spaces, green spaces
- Coordination, communication, celebration
- Reflect & maintain Hillsborough's character
- Fundraising & focal point(s)

5 Choosing a Preliminary Vision Statement for the Arts in Hillsborough in 2013

After the discussion held at the 2-table combinations, five Preliminary Vision Statements were proposed:

Table Grouping “A” – Proposed Vision Statement

Our vision for Hillsborough by 2013 is to reach and serve every member of our community by providing opportunities for expression, appreciation, and participation with the arts that will appeal to and engage all members of the local and global community.

In addition to the above Vision Statement, this table grouping identified five arts goals that they felt would be critical to achieving the Vision:

1. A fully staffed, multi-generational Arts Center with a central physical space and auxiliary centers.
2. Coordinated communication and publicity for arts in the community.
3. A walkable/accessible (trolleys) town with public art, historic preservation, plus contemporary architecture, public art, landscaping, greenways, etc. (Eno walk, restoration of Champagne Club and Colonial Inn).
4. Inclusive arts programming for children in partnership with public schools.
5. Annual and ongoing arts festivals and events that are authentic to town.

Table Grouping “B” – Proposed Vision Statement

Hillsborough: Where art is the fabric of life.

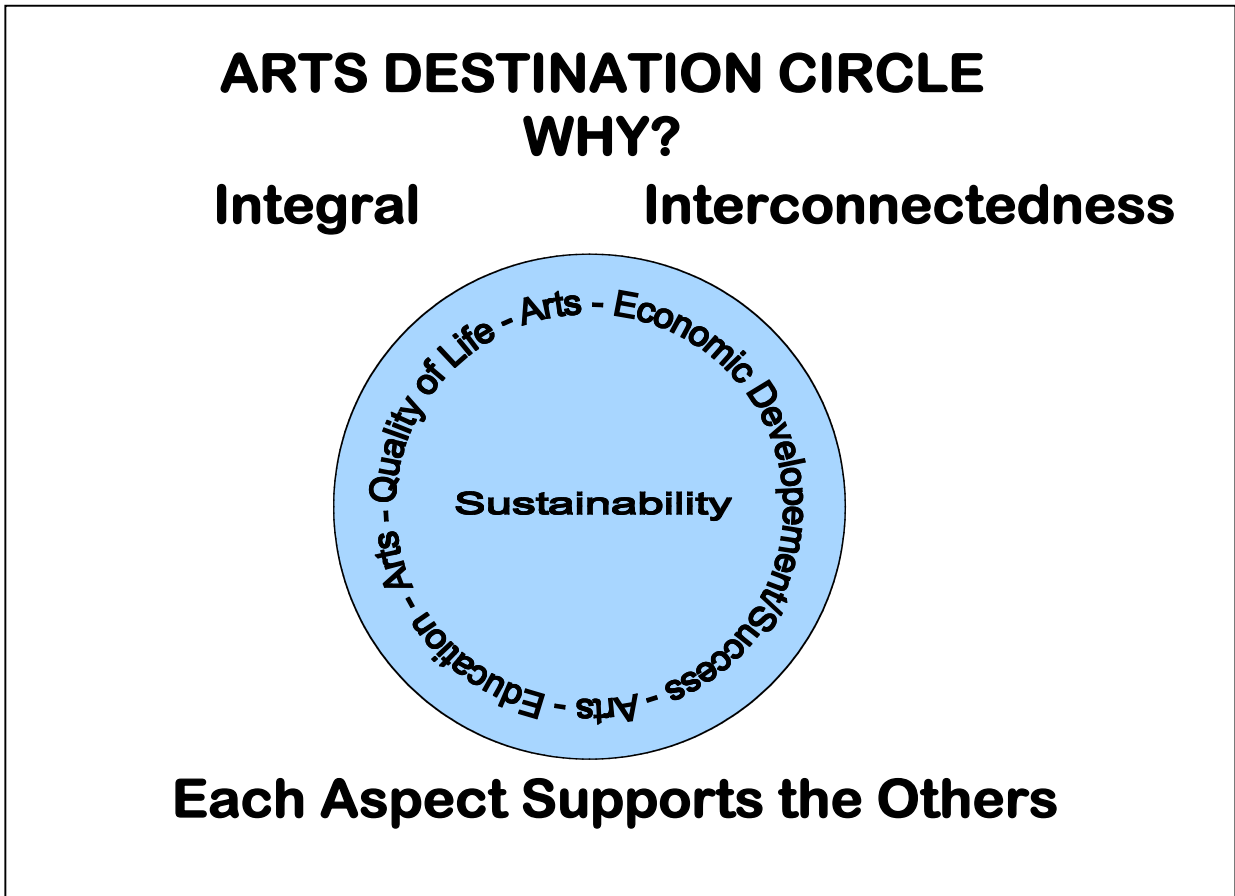
Table Grouping “C” – Proposed Vision Statement

To promote the arts and recognize their importance, to serve as a place where the arts and artists are nurtured. Through our long term commitment to nurture the arts at all levels, Hillsborough and Orange County shine as an example of a vibrant, collaborative, creative community where diverse people want to live and visit.

Table Grouping “D” – Proposed Vision Statement

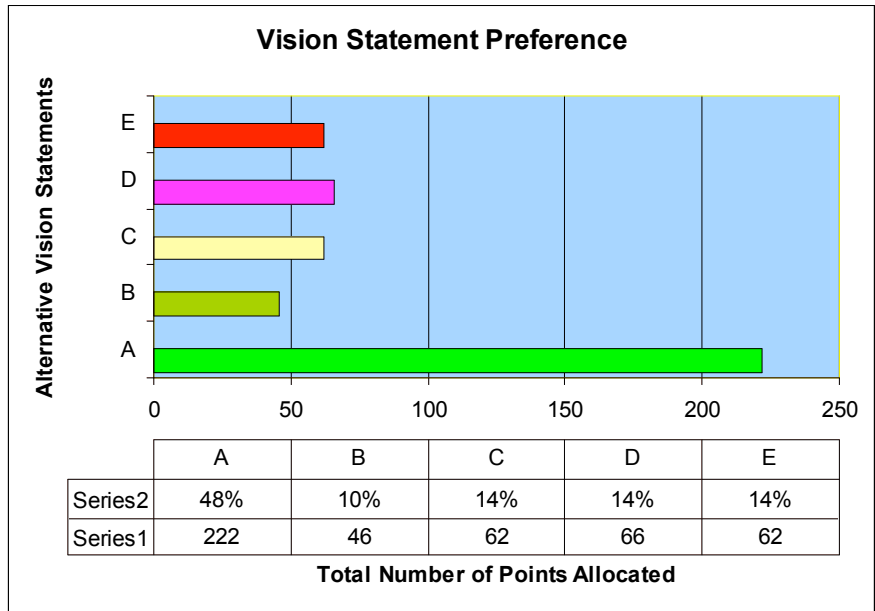
To create an environment where all artists can develop and succeed emotionally, artistically and financially. To create awareness that the arts reflect a charming sense of the unique character of Hillsborough.

Table Grouping “E” – Proposed Vision Statement



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Following the presentation of these five vision statements, the participants were asked to indicate which they preferred most using a sticky-dot voting procedure where each participant was given one RED (6 pts) and 2 BLUE (2 pts each) sticky dots to allocate across all five vision statements. The results in the following graphic show that the Vision Statement proposed by Table Grouping “A” was preferred by nearly half of the participants with none of the other Vision Statements receiving more than 14%.



6 A Unified Vision Statement for the Arts in Hillsborough in 2013

Based on the process used and the discussions that followed at individual tables and then in table groupings, the participants in the Hillsborough Arts Summit agreed upon on the following Vision Statement as the one that will best represented the “common ground” that they found at their tables and that will best help to pull them into the future that they desire for the year 2013 and beyond:

Our vision for Hillsborough by 2013 is to reach and serve every member of our community by providing opportunities for expression, appreciation, and participation with the arts that will appeal to and engage all members of the local and global community.

7 Next Steps

At the close of the Hillsborough Arts Summit, John Delconte of the Hillsborough Arts Council explained that the participants would be contacted with the purpose of creating a steering committee to being the process of creating the reality described in the unified Vision Statement.