



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** July 12, 2011

## **City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture Receives Our Town Grant From the National Endowment for the Arts**

***“Arts Overlay Plan for The Village at Market Creek” is among 51 grants nationwide selected to support creative placemaking***

*San Diego*—Today, The City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture (Commission) announced that it will receive an *Our Town* grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), one of only 51 grants awarded nationwide. The Commission, in partnership with the Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation (JCNI), will receive \$150,000 to design an arts overlay for The Village at Market Creek.

*Our Town* is the NEA’s latest investment in creative placemaking, through which partners from both public and private sectors come together to strategically shape the social, physical, and economic character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities.

The Commission and JCNI propose to revitalize 60 formerly blighted acres into The Village at Market Creek, a thriving arts district woven throughout a smart growth commercial, residential, and recreational development. To date, arts and culture has been the primary tool for accelerating redevelopment in The Village, bringing together nine distinct cultural groups, and creating relationships with government, nonprofits, artists, and the broader San Diego community. The result of the partnership between the Commission and JCNI will be a plan that considers public art for open spaces, walking trails, and plazas; gateway art at transit entrances; motifs that highlight and celebrate the cultural heritage of community residents; programming JCNI’s new Center for Community & Cultural Arts; and other proposals that emerge from the process.

National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Landesman said, “Communities across our country are using smart design and leveraging the arts to enhance quality of life and promote their distinctive identities. In this time of great economic upheaval, *Our Town* provides communities an opportunity to reignite their economies.”

“The *Our Town* project will harness the power of arts and culture to unite neighbors and strengthen community identity. Creative solutions such as this are crucial to the successful recovery of this community as part of an expanding, thriving urban core,” said Mayor Jerry Sanders.

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Jennifer Vanica, president and CEO of JCNI, said, "Since the very beginning of our work in The Village, celebrating culture through art has been a powerful force for bringing people together across their differences in order to create a common vision for change. This *Our Town* grant from the NEA helps us take another huge step in transforming once blighted land into a vibrant multicultural arts district that reflects the rich diversity of this community and attracts people from throughout the region as a 'must see' arts destination in San Diego."

Since 1997, residents of southeastern San Diego have been working in partnership with JCNI to create The Village at Market Creek, embracing their diverse stories and cultures to transform 60 acres of blight at the heart of their neighborhood. Through this unique partnership – and with the support of public agencies, private foundations, and nonprofit organizations – a vibrant cultural and commercial center emerged, beginning with a grocery store and moving to include restaurants, office space, and a cultural plaza. Upcoming plans include the development of 800 units of housing, additional commercial and industrial space and a continued commitment to cross-cultural place-making. For the past 12 months, more than 500 residents have been involved in drafting a comprehensive community plan for The Village. Working with urban planners and other professionals, resident working teams have established a land use plan, created urban design guidelines, made plans for improving and augmenting open space, and committed to becoming a LEED-ND community, resulting in a sustainability overlay for The Village. The teams' next step is to create an arts overlay for the emerging community plan, specifically, to create a thriving arts district. The proposed project will build on JCNI's success linking arts and culture to the built environment, and take it to a larger, world-class scale.

*The National Endowment for the Arts* was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector.

The mission of the **City of San Diego Commission for Arts and Culture** is to vitalize the city by integrating arts and culture into community life while supporting the region's cultural assets and showcasing San Diego as an international cultural destination. For more information call (619) 236-6778 or visit [www.VibrantCultureVibrantCity.com](http://www.VibrantCultureVibrantCity.com)

**The Jacobs Center for Neighborhood Innovation** is a non-profit foundation committed to resident ownership of the plans, process, and assets of neighborhood change. JCNI is serving as the developer for The Village at Market Creek in southeastern San Diego.

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