San Jose Awarded $200,000 Grant from National Endowment for the Arts

National recognition for San Jose/MACLA partnership project

SAN JOSE, Calif. – The City of San Jose in partnership with Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americana (MACLA) has been awarded a $200,000 Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The grant, the highest level awarded by the NEA, will enhance the South First Area Arts (SoFA) District in Downtown San Jose through the SoFA Creates & Connects program.

“I thank the National Endowment for the Arts on the announcement of an Our Town grant to San Jose,” said Mayor Chuck Reed. “Our decades-long vision and investments to create a world-class arts and cultural district in Downtown San Jose’s SoFA District will be enhanced by this prestigious award.”

Through public art installations and a dynamic event series, SoFA Creates & Connects fosters an integrated approach to “placemaking” in the SoFA District. The grant period will be over two years and the $200,000 will be matched by the City of San Jose and MACLA.

According to the NEA, creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.
New public art in the San Jose project will include an illuminated wayfinding system and “Pop-up Tiendas” designed by California-based artist Teddy Cruz. The project will highlight San Jose as the Capital of Silicon Valley and its ethnic diversity and rich community of creative entrepreneurs.

"This is an exciting time to announce the Our Town grants as a national conversation around creative placemaking advances and deepens," said NEA Acting Chairman Joan Shigekawa. "We will help to ensure that the field of creative placemaking continues to mature, enhancing the quality of life for communities across the country."

Through the Our Town grants, the NEA supports creative placemaking projects that help transform communities into lively, beautiful, and sustainable places with arts at their core. Our Town grant awards were made to local partnerships involving nonprofit organizations and governments.

The NEA received 254 applications for its highly competitive Our Town program this year, and chose 59 projects for grants. Grant amounts ranged from $25,000 to $200,000 with a median grant amount of $50,000. (http://arts.gov/grants/apply/ourtown/index.html)

“San Jose has led the nation in serving diverse audiences through innovative projects for community and economic benefit,” said Kerry Adams Hapner, San Jose Director of Cultural Affairs. “The Our Town grant allows the San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs and MACLA to collaborate with artists and communities to increase cultural and economic vitality of our city.”

MACLA aims to serve the space and small business needs of the local creative sector, focusing on creative entrepreneurs of color and supporting cultural equity and economic prosperity.

“The Our Town grant will allow MACLA to enhance the benefits of our expansion by serving our diverse audiences and artists in Silicon Valley,” said MACLA Executive Director Anjee Helstrup-Alvarez.

MACLA purchased its current building from the City of San Jose in December 2012. With design led by artist/architect Teddy Cruz, MACLA’s vision for the property includes an expanded space for exhibitions and performances and a reconfigured second floor "Creative Entrepreneur Incubator" where multidisciplinary artists and arts-based businesses can create their work in a vibrant space. SoFA Creates & Connects will amplify MACLA’s facility project and its programs.
The City of San Jose Office of Cultural Affairs, a division of the Office of Economic Development, is the City’s lead agency for promoting development of a rich arts and cultural environment for its diverse population of approximately one million residents, its workers who live in neighboring communities, and its many visitors. It fosters cultural development through funding programs, arts industry support, creative entrepreneur support, special event services, and public art. For more information, visit www.sanjoseculture.org.

Movimiento de Arte y Cultura Latino Americano (MACLA), founded in 1989, is an anchor arts institution in San Jose’s Downtown South of First Area (SOFA) district. Its contemporary arts programs are grounded in Chicano/Latino experience and aimed towards creating opportunities for interaction between cultures, experiences, audiences, new art forms, and emerging artists. Visual arts, performing arts, as well as literary arts programs offered by MACLA annually reach approximately 30,000 people. For more information, visit maclaarte.org.

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 and local arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector. For more information, visit www.arts.gov. Tweet hashtag #NEAOurTown13.

This news release is posted online at sanjoseca.gov.