

# Summary Findings Memo

## Shared Space for the Arts Needs Assessment for Walla Walla Valley, WA

Prepared by The Nonprofit Centers Network

### Introduction

Walla Walla Valley, WA has a relatively small population with a thriving arts community. Due to a lack of office space, storage, event space, rehearsal space, and need for increased efficiencies, nine Walla Walla Valley arts organizations became interested in the possibilities of a shared space for the arts. After receiving grant funding from Sherwood Trust, the nine nonprofit arts organizations employed the Nonprofit Centers Network (NCN) to conduct a feasibility study on the need for shared nonprofit workspace in the city of Walla Walla and the surrounding area. A limited scope was approved to determine the vision and local demand, before deepening the process with financial modeling or site selection. Key questions to answer during this phase are:

- 1) Vision: What is the vision for the nonprofit arts center? What are the key goals of the proposed project?
- 2) Demand: If affordable, high quality office space was available to the nonprofit arts community, would they be willing to relocate their offices and able to pay for this new space? How large a scale is the demand that exists in Walla Walla Valley?

### Methodology

After years of working with nonprofit centers across the US and Canada, The Nonprofit Centers Network has developed a proven methodology for exploring the feasibility of new multi-tenant nonprofit facilities that involves qualitative and quantitative data gathering. In this engagement, we convened a visioning session with the nine partner arts nonprofits, interviewed local government, real estate and business leaders, facilitated focus groups and a townhall meeting, and conducted two electronic surveys.

Katie Edwards and Chelsea Donohoe from NCN made an in-person visit to Walla Walla, WA from August 12 to August 15, 2018. In addition to leading the visioning session with the potential tenant partner organizations, both Chelsea and Katie met with six community leaders for one-on-one interviews and conducted two focus groups with 17 participants in total.

NCN customized its needs assessment survey instrument for this engagement, resulting in two surveys. One survey was developed with 52 questions to ascertain potential tenant partners' interest in the project and to identify their space-related needs. Respondents were asked to identify challenges for the project and any potential barriers to their involvement. The survey was distributed to a list of 10 potential tenant partners. The survey opened September 10, 2018, and closed September 28, 2018, with 10 respondents. The total response rate for this survey was 100%. A complete list of study participants is included in the Appendix.

As a complement to the town hall meeting, the second survey was developed with 16 questions to identify the Walla Walla Valley general community's interest level and desires for the project. Respondents were asked to identify the needs, concerns and potential benefits of a nonprofit arts center in Walla Walla. The survey was distributed to community members by nine of the potential tenant partners. The survey opened September 17, 2018 and closed October 5, 2018 with 379 respondents.

### Statement of Purpose

Clarity of vision is a critical component of testing feasibility. On August 13, 2018, members from the initial nine potential tenant partner organizations met at the ArtWalla office to learn about shared space and develop a collective vision for this project. Based on the input of the participants at the visioning session

and a follow-up partner meeting on August 27, 2018, a statement of purpose for a potential shared space was created:

*Our purpose is to provide Walla Walla Valley nonprofit arts organizations with greater efficiency and sustainability through shared office, storage, meeting and larger multi-use space, resulting in a more collaborative and accessible arts community.*

## Feasibility Study Findings

### Community Input

#### Interviews and Focus Groups

NCN conducted a series of interviews and two focus groups with local leaders to inform the lens through which the results are analyzed. The structured format asked similar questions across both settings, allowing for trends to emerge.

Walla Walla has a strong arts community, notable for the diversity of opportunities to experience the arts. Additionally, the quality of the arts offerings is seen as a strength. Many respondents noted that the Walla Walla Foundry operated by Mark Anderson brings world class artists and art to the community.

The biggest challenges reported in this forum were funding for the arts, followed by access to new audiences and relevancy of the arts to the community. The concepts of community relevancy and audience development are closely connected, given the changing landscape of Walla Walla. Some respondents raised the question of the relevancy of the art forms to the evolving demographics and diverse cultures in the community. Additionally, connecting to the youth and cultivating their appreciation for the arts were repeatedly noted.

When community members were asked what came to mind when hearing the phrase “a shared space for the arts,” a wide array of ideas were shared, and most commonly people thought of performing arts centers or galleries. Two different individuals mentioned the Pendleton Arts Center as a potential model. Other answers indicated a significant amount of flexibility in what a space could be.

When asked what the most significant benefits for arts organizations would be with a potential shared space, most responses included increased visibility of the arts. Many participants expressed a desire for one common location where you could find out about opportunities to get involved. Some expressed a need for a shared box office or ticketing venue. Another key benefit the community saw was the potential for arts organizations to work more closely together.

The biggest concerns about a shared space for the arts were how would it be funded and who would operate the space. A question about the kind of funding model that Walla Walla Valley would support was met with uncertainty, and a mix of philanthropic and earned income was the most commonly reported solution. Several community leaders expressed concern on overburdening the existing arts organizations. When asked who should lead an effort to get arts organizations to collaborate, people were quick to name organizations such as the Sherwood Trust (4 mentions), Blue Mountain Community Foundation (3 mentions), the Community Council (2 mentions), the City of Walla Walla (2 mentions), and Walla Walla Symphony (2 mentions). Notably, two interviewees stated that they didn't think any existing organization in Walla Walla was prepared to lead such an effort.

### Town Hall Meeting

During the visit to Walla Walla, a town hall meeting was held at the Foundry Vineyards Tasting Gallery. NCN's town hall meetings are designed to elicit feedback and identify new organizations to participate in the organizational survey. Over 120 community members were in attendance, many of whom served on boards or volunteered for arts organizations. After a short presentation on what shared space is and could be, participants were asked to work in small groups to determine the top three things that each group hoped a

shared space for the arts would do for Walla Walla Valley and the top three things they needed to know more about. As a group, they were required to prioritize their individual hopes and questions. After the small group discussion, a representative from each group shared their group's priorities with the full gathering, and common concerns were clustered on a wall for all to see. In order of frequency, the following topics were highlighted:

#### *Hopes*

- Arts space that is inclusive and accessible to all (7 mentions)
- Centralized information for increased awareness of community arts (5 mentions)
- Collaboration and cross pollination among arts organizations (5 mentions)
- Shared, affordable office and storage space (5 mentions)
- Flexible space for meetings and rehearsals (3 mentions)
- Mid-sized performance space for a 600-member audience (3 mentions)
- Greater financial stability for arts organizations
- Affordable creative spaces
- Educational and inspirational space
- Events for families
- Shared dance events and instruction
- Public exhibition space, like the Carnegie Center
- Co-op Gallery for working artists

#### *Key Questions*

- Where will the funding come from, and how will costs be allocated to be sustainable? (6 mentions)
- How will the space be owned and governed? (5 mentions)
- What organizations will be included? (4 mentions)
- How will the logistics of the shared space work? (4 mentions)
- What do participating organizations need? (3 mentions)
- How will parking be accommodated? (2 mentions)
- Will this space have an impact on gentrification and displace current residents?
- What does the Latino/a community need of an arts space?
- What is the failure rate of shared space?
- How do you plan for organizational growth?
- How does each partner organization benefit?
- Is there willingness to collaborate?
- How can the City of Walla Walla be involved?

#### *Community Shared Space for the Arts Survey*

After the successful turnout at the Town Hall meeting, the partner organizations and consulting team decided to deploy another survey tool in order to reach a broader cross section of Walla Walla Valley residents. The survey was also translated into Spanish. The nine partner organizations distributed the survey to their e-mail lists, and a total of 379 people responded to the survey. When asked if they attended the Town Hall meeting on August 14, 60% reported that they did not attend, indicating that the survey met its goal.

#### *Profile of Respondents*

Most respondents from the community (44%) fell into the 41 to 65 age group. Another 37% were 65+. When asked about racial and ethnic identity, 91% of all respondents identified as white / European American. It is important to note that the opinion of younger Walla Walla Valley residents and those of Latino heritage are not included in these results.

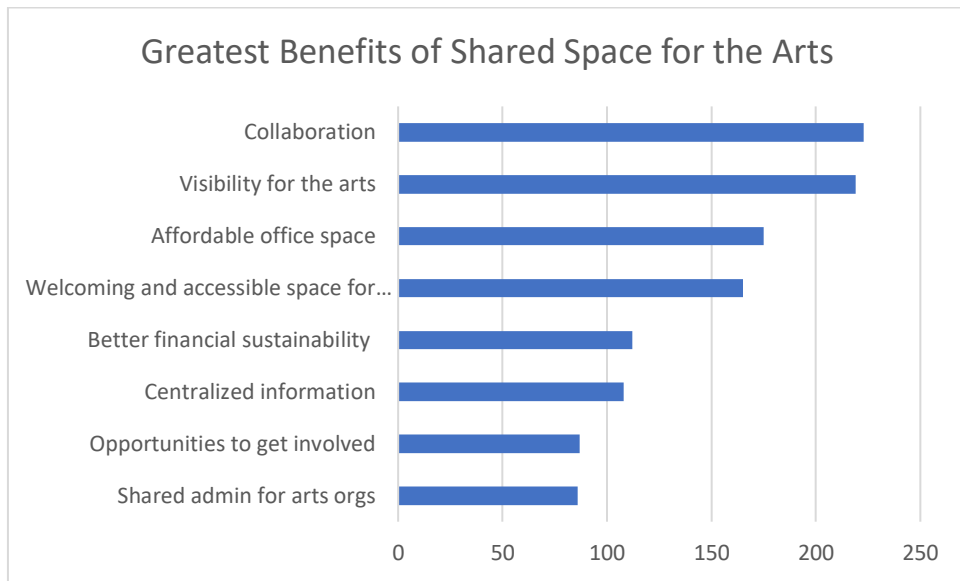
When asked how they were involved in the arts, respondents reported the following:

- 69% reported they attend local arts events

- 51% were donors to the arts
- 45% reported they were either an artist or performer themselves.
- 30% volunteer for the arts
- 25% perform with an arts group
- 15% serve on the board of a nonprofit arts organization
- 7% are employed by arts organizations

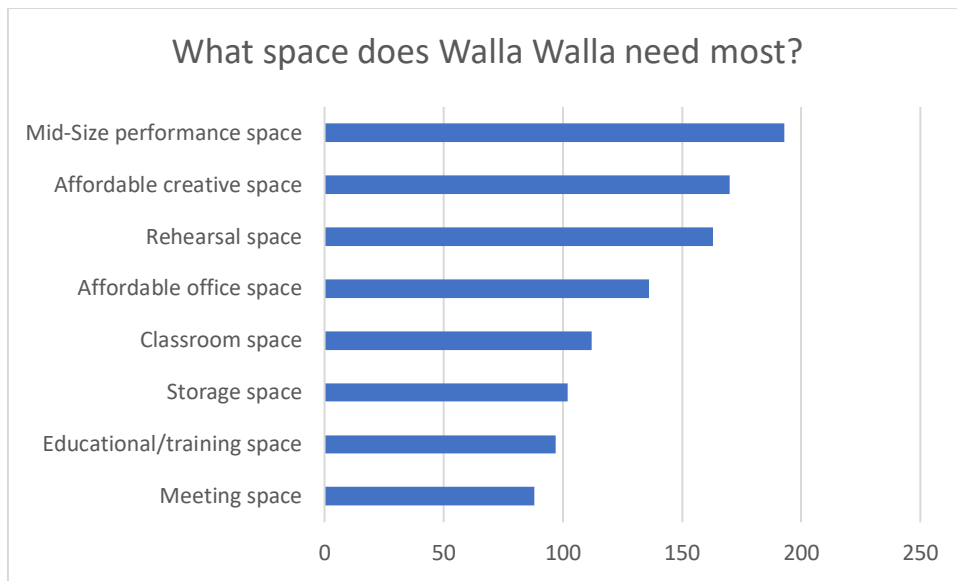
*Community Perceptions about Space Needed in Walla Walla Valley*

The community survey contained a short educational component about shared spaces for the arts. The community was then asked about what they believed would be the greatest benefits to Walla Walla that could be derived from a shared arts space.



Most respondents were hopeful about the potential for collaboration among arts organizations, followed closely by a hope for more visibility for the arts. The third most desired benefit was affordable office space for arts organizations. A welcoming and accessible space for all community members was the fourth most desired benefit.

Survey respondents were also asked what kind of spaces are most needed for arts organizations in Walla Walla.



The most frequent response was a mid-size performance space, smaller than Cordiner Hall but larger than the Gesa Power House Theater. The second most frequent response was affordable creative spaces, such as studios or makerspaces. Rehearsal space and affordable office space came in third and fourth in priority.

#### *Community Concerns*

Community members were asked to share their concerns in an open-ended text box, and consequently the responses were wide ranging. The top concerns were the cost or affordability of the space (46 comments). The second most common concern reflected on the possibility of unfair allocation of resources (36 responses). Some were concerned that larger arts organizations would monopolize the shared resources, and smaller organizations would be overrun. Others were concerned that smaller organizations would use more than their fair share of resources, and organizations with staff in the space at all times would find their time eaten up by dealing with people looking for volunteer-run organizations. Financial sustainability of the space was also a concern. Conflict management, logistics, and scheduling shared spaces were also common community concerns. Finally, inclusivity was mentioned by several respondents.

#### *Community Involvement*

Survey respondents were asked another open-ended question about how they saw themselves involved in the shared space. Most were not sure at this time. 48 saw themselves volunteering in some capacity, although it was unclear whether they were more interested in volunteering for a shared space or for individual partners. Others saw themselves attending events or performing in the space.

Twenty stated that they would be interested in donating to the space. When looking at those individuals' priorities, 10 indicated a mid-sized performing arts space was a priority. 10 indicated a need for affordable office space, and 10 indicated a need for affordable creative spaces, such as studios or makerspaces. This indicates that there is interest and possible financial support in the community for a building endeavor that is not expressly tied to a performance space.

Also notable, 17 respondents saw themselves showing work in a shared space if a gallery was part of the final component. Only 10 respondents indicated using a studio or makerspace.

## Potential Tenant Partner Organization Survey

A detailed space needs survey was sent to the following nonprofit arts organizations based in Walla Walla Valley, with instructions to have staff and board members work together to get accurate data. The participating organizations were:

- ArtWalla
- Blue Mountain Chorus: Sweet Adelines
- Carnegie Picture Lab
- Danza Classical Ballet Foundation
- Shakespeare Walla Walla
- Walla Walla Chamber Music Festival
- Walla Walla Choral Society
- Walla Walla Piano Group
- Walla Walla Symphony
- Walla Walla Valley Bands

## Interest and Demand for Shared Space

After looking at a range of factors, there is demonstrated interest and demand for shared space among arts organizations in Walla Walla Valley. All organizations are interested in the concept of shared space, with 70% of respondents reporting high interest and 30% reporting some interest.

Respondents reported varying levels of overall satisfaction with their existing space, with six being dissatisfied and four satisfied. Seven organizations reported dissatisfaction with the layout and design of their space. All were neutral or satisfied with the cost of their space. Seven were neutral or satisfied with the location of their space.

Over the next five years, 90% of the organizations expect moderate growth in programs and staff size with one organization predicting it will remain roughly the same size.

Seven groups report that they need more space than they already have, four of which need significantly more space. Looking at growth rates and adequacy of present space demonstrates there is a need for additional space to accommodate most of the potential partner tenant organizations.

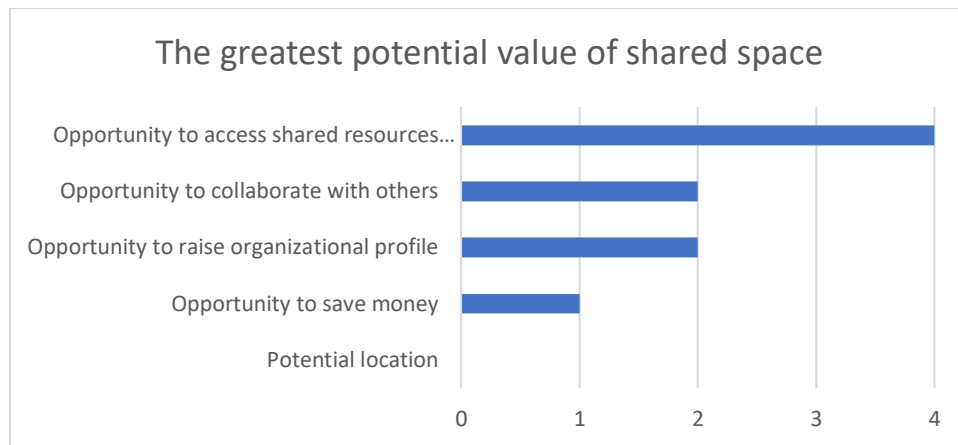
## Ability to pay for space

A key factor in the success of a shared space is the ability of its tenants to pay for rent. Six of the 10 organizations pay rent currently. Collectively, they are paying between \$2,350 - \$2,850 per month for base rent. All but one of the organizations renting space are paying additional occupancy related costs, indicating that there may be additional efficiencies if the groups shared space. Seven of the 10 organizations would pay more than they are currently paying to have access to a shared space that meets their needs. Collectively the seven are willing to pay between \$4,950 - \$7,350 per month.

## Ability to move

None of the partners own their own space. All of the organizations reported that they could move within the next 3 to 5 years, if not sooner. 50% can move any time, and 40% are not constrained by a lease agreement.

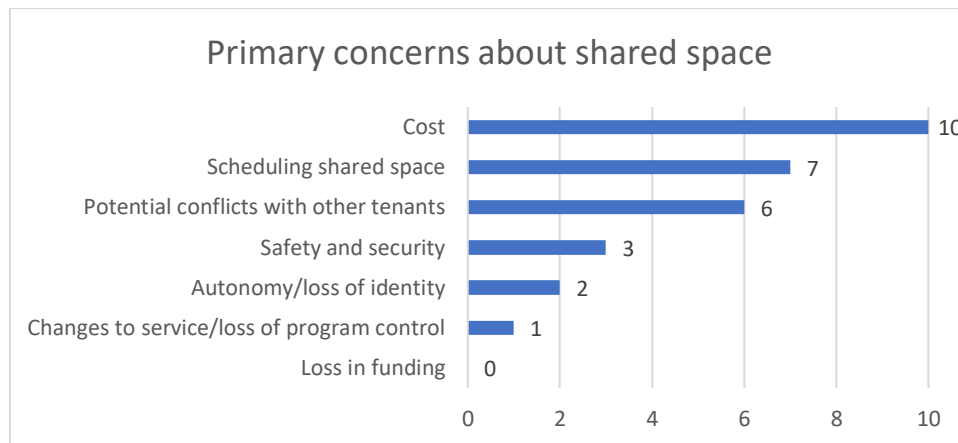
## Key benefits



The tenant partner organizations reported that the opportunity to access shared resources was the most popular potential benefit of the shared space. Collaboration and visibility were identified as having the second greatest potential value. One respondent shared that their organization struggled to choose between sharing resources and raising their organization’s profile in the community as the greatest potential value.

## Concerns

Survey respondents were asked to identify their primary concerns with participating in a shared space. They were able to check all that apply.



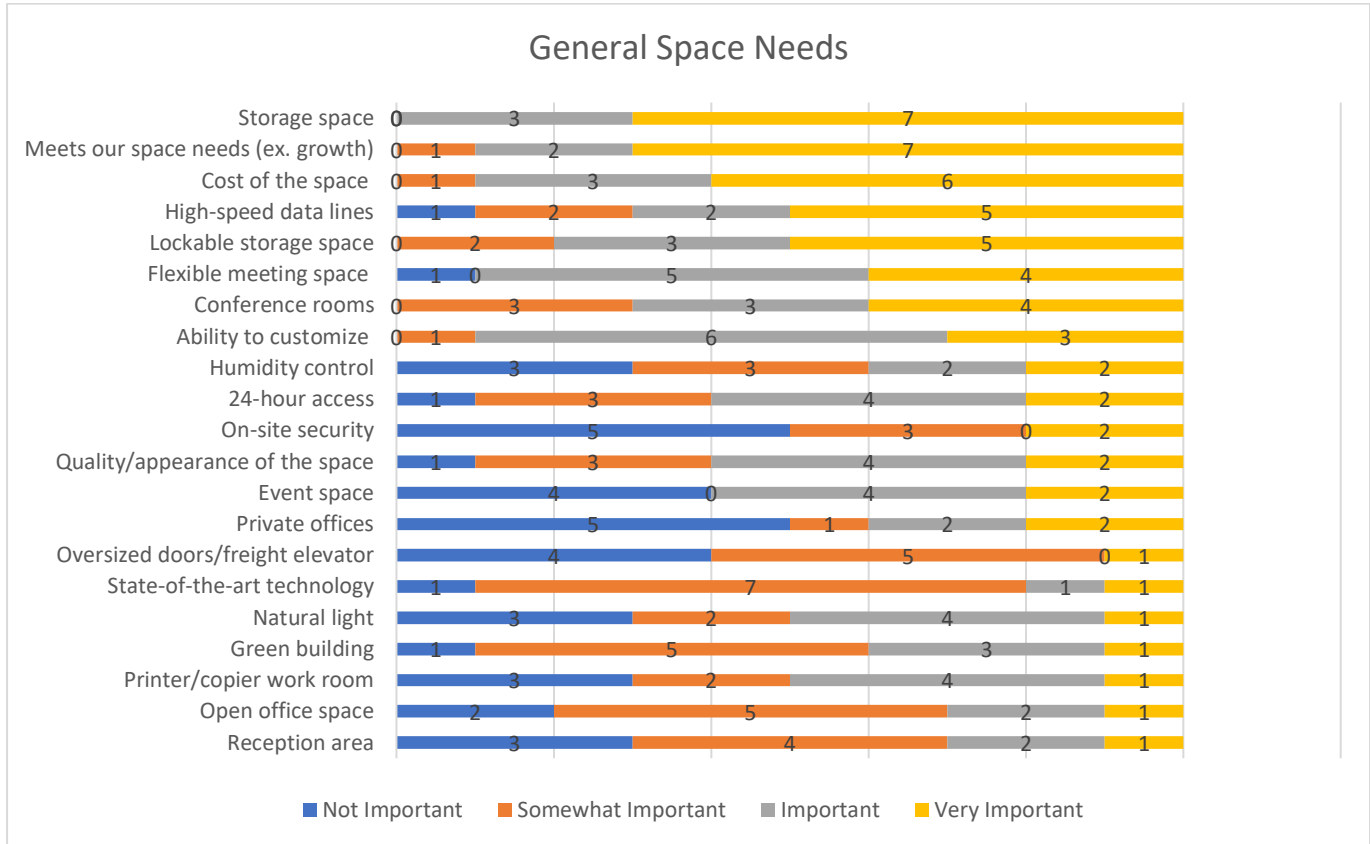
Unsurprisingly, cost was the biggest concern and was selected by all 10 organizations. Much of the cost will be driven by the building that is chosen. Scheduling shared space was the second biggest concern, as indicated by seven organizations. Potential conflicts among tenant partners was a concern for six of the respondents. Both scheduling and conflicts can be managed through strong policies, as demonstrated by the members of NCN.

## Space and Location Needs

In terms of location of the shared space, 5 organizations prefer the Downtown Corridor (Between Rose and Poplar St. - 4th and Palouse St.), one organization prefers along Main St., and three reported no preference. While there is significant agreement between organizations on the where in Walla Walla Valley the space should be located, there are differences concerning importance of features of the location. Easy access to parking stands out as the most important location feature, and a majority of organizations agree visibility to the community is the second most important feature.

*General Space Features*

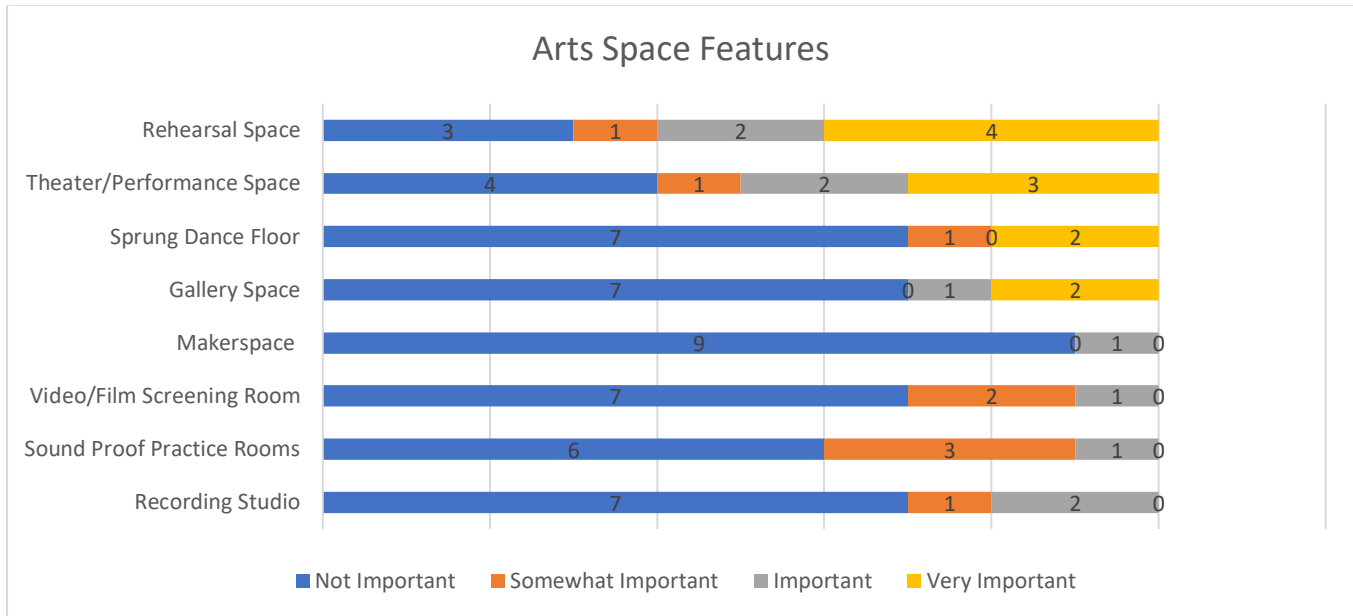
Overall, the tenant partners' needs for general space features align. Storage is reported as the most important feature with the space's ability to meet the partners' needs as the second most important feature. Similar to the results considering the partners' concerns, affordability of the space is also a necessary feature.





*Arts Space Features*

Questions about the need for arts related spaces revealed two common priorities among the group. Rehearsal space was reported as the highest priority with a performance space as the next more important feature. While a dance floor and gallery were reported as very important by only two organizations, it should be noted these features are necessary for those organizations’ work. Six of the eight arts features were ranked “not important” by a majority of the respondents.



*Office Space*

Seven of the 10 respondents reported a desire for some kind of dedicated workspace in the form of private offices or workstations. Five organizations wanted one private office each, whereas two were content with workstations only. To meet the needs of all seven organizations, the offices space would need to contain a minimum of five private offices and twelve dedicated workstations.

The survey also asked about the need for conference rooms and meeting spaces. It was clear from the results that flexible multi-purpose spaces were most desirable. Large (15-20 person) and medium (8-12 person) meeting rooms were the most desired. Only one group needed a small conference room. If these spaces are designed to be flexible, one large, one medium, and one small conference room could meet the needs for these 10 arts organizations.

*Storage*

The survey data revealed storage is an overwhelming need for the potential tenant partners. All 10 organizations reported needing some type of exclusive, continual storage space. The given estimates for square footage suggest the organizations collectively require at least 3,074 - 3,339 sq. ft of storage space with approximately 1,324 - 1,539 sq. ft of the total space being climate controlled (5 Organizations). Seven organizations reported needing the space to also be secure. Considering the broad range of items described as needing to be stored, the space must be flexible with the ability to add options such as custom shelving, preferably located on the ground level and be easily accessible multiple times per day.

*Training*

Three out of the 10 organizations require training space. There is almost complete overlap in required training amenities. With the organizations each holding trainings monthly, quarterly or annually, scheduling

conflicts should be easily avoidable. Overall, the space’s configuration will need to be flexible to accommodate a range of 5-50 people. One organization, not included in this table, explained they do not currently hold regular trainings, but would be interested in conducting more if there was suitable space. This type of program growth should be taken into consideration as well.

All respondents indicated that they would need configurable chairs, moveable tables, a projector and screen, and free parking. Two would need wireless internet access, and one would need suitable acoustics.

Size and Frequency	Time of Day	Location
5-30, quarterly	Afternoons (12pm-5pm) Evenings (after 5pm)	Downtown corridor
50 divided into 3 groups, 3 two-hour trainings in 2 days 3 times during school year  12 art projects per years with 30 or less	Mornings (Before noon) Afternoons (12pm-5pm) Evenings (after 5pm)	Downtown corridor
40 for one yearly summer workshop	Evenings (after 5pm) Late evenings (After 8pm)	Downtown corridor

*Rehearsal Space*

Seven out of the 10 organizations require rehearsal space. With four organizations holding weekly rehearsals in the evenings, organized scheduling will be necessary to avoid conflict. Overall, the space’s configuration will need to be flexible to accommodate a range of 2-100 people. There is significant overlap in required rehearsal amenities as shown below.

- |                                  |                                                   |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| Suitable acoustics (7 out of 7)  | Dance floor (2 out of 7)                          |
| Free parking (7 out of 7)        | Stage (2 out of 7)                                |
| Music stands (4 out of 7)        | Marley floor (1 out of 7)                         |
| Configurable chairs (4 out of 7) | Barres (1 out of 7)                               |
| Risers (3 out of 7)              | Floor to ceiling mirrors on one wall (1 out of 7) |
| Lighting equipment (3 out of 7)  | Microphones (1 out of 7)                          |

Additionally, the size and frequency of rehearsals are compatible, although minor adjustments to schedules may need to be made during busier seasons.

Number of attendees	Frequency	Time of day	Location
15-20	Weekly – additional needed closer to performances	Evenings (after 5pm)	No preference – but easy to find, visible to community, affordable
Up to 25	Weekly	Mornings (before noon) Evenings (after 5pm)	No preference
100	Weekly	Evenings (after 5pm) Late Evenings (After 8pm)	Downtown corridor
70	Weekly	Evenings (after 5pm) Late Evenings (After 8pm)	Downtown corridor
3 to 60+	Quarterly	Evenings (after 5pm)	No preference
3-20	Every other month	Evenings (after 5pm)	Downtown corridor
2-6	1 week in winter and 3+ weeks in summer	Mornings (before noon)	No preference



## Real Estate in Walla Walla

Using an interview guide provided by the NCN consulting team, local partner organizations conducted three interviews with local real estate brokers and shared the findings for analysis. This information was analyzed in conjunction with information gathered during NCN's trip to Walla Walla. All indications show that finding a property for the collaborative will be challenging, as real estate is limited. Much of the downtown real estate is being purchased by developers. Brokers indicate that the collaborative would be more likely to find a space for lease than for purchase. Given the budget and staff sizes of the potential members of the arts shared space, leasing a space is likely to be strategically advantageous for the collaborative.

An increasing number of landlords are moving to triple net leases, where the tenants are responsible for all utilities, taxes, and building repair and maintenance. This could create significant costs for the tenant partners, depending on the condition of the building that is secured. Asbestos, old wiring, and creosote poles are some of the common environmental hazards in buildings available on the Walla Walla market. It will be important for the collaborative to be represented by a realtor or tenant representative who will negotiate favorable terms.

Additionally, some of the brokers indicate that off market properties may be available as the collaborative dials in their space needs.

## Analysis

### **Walla Walla Valley needs affordable, mission driven space for the arts**

The community of Walla Walla Valley has overwhelmingly expressed support for creating an affordable mission driven space for the arts. Given the attendance at the Town Hall Meeting and the response to the community survey, space for the arts is top of mind for many Walla Walla Valley community members. Throughout this initial work, three concepts continually emerged: affordable, stable space for arts organizations, a mid-sized performing arts space that could seat between 600-750 people, and affordable studio or makerspace for individual artists. While these spaces could be accommodated in one building, they also could be three distinct concepts or different phases of a project.

### **The core partners have space needs that are aligned**

After thorough analysis of the potential tenant partner survey, it is clear that the core needs of the existing arts organizations around storage, meeting and training space, and office space are compatible. The groups interested in gallery space are also interested in how this feature could serve multiple purposes, doubling as meeting or training space.

Rehearsal space is also a key need, but it is slightly more difficult to share given the varied missions of the tenant partner organizations. Given the frequency and timing of rehearsals, a singular space should be able to be shared, particularly if the space is between 2,500 - 3,000 sq. ft., which would be able to accommodate a 100-person choir or 70-person band. Theater and dance rehearsals require different amenities but would also be able to fit within the space dimensions. The logistical decision about what can be shared will be largely determined by the tenant partners' willingness to tolerate set up and tear down needs for each specialty.

Additionally, the core tenant partner organizations are being generally realistic about the cost of space. While only six organizations are currently paying for space, eight are anticipating paying more for new space. Combined, their resources allow for a modest real estate budget.

### **The core partners are not positioned to drive the creation of a 600-750 seat performance space**

While there is desire for a 600-750 seat performance space, the data collected thus far indicates this type of space would be utilized for approximately 20-25 performances annually. Performance spaces require a significant amount of upfront investment and build out, and there are many factors that go into their planning and space needs. Preliminary estimates indicate that a performance space of this size would be 4,500 - 5,625 sq. ft. This amount of space would be a significant additional burden on the partners, and it is unclear that there would be a commensurate revenue stream.

### **Walla Walla Valley Arts organizations should seek between 8,500 and 11,000 sq. ft. to lease**

The ideal space will offer a moderate amount of office space, significant climate-controlled storage, moderate conference rooms, and a large flexible space for rehearsals. Based on the desired shared features, this space would include at least one small, medium, and large conference room, a kitchen or break room, a shared reception area, a workroom, and miscellaneous storage. It is anticipated that the conference rooms and rehearsal rooms would be as flexible as possible to allow for a multitude of uses.

We estimate that between 8,500 - 11,000 sq. ft. would be sufficient to accommodate all nine core tenant partners, growing at a moderate rate, plus additional occasional users of the space. The majority of the space requirements are related to the need for extensive storage space, 3,000 - 4,000 sq. ft., much of which should be climate controlled. A dedicated rehearsal space between 2,500 - 3,000 sq. ft. is a significant component of the space needs. Should it be determined that this space cannot be shared, then the partners should consider dropping it from their shared space plan.

Additionally, it is recommended that the partners seek an opportunity to lease space from a local owner instead of purchasing a building themselves. Real estate ownership and asset management is a significant responsibility and would likely detract from the missions of the partners, especially given the age of the commercial building stock. The partners should seek out the support of a broker or tenant representative to help them secure favorable lease terms. Additionally, working with off-market properties may reveal landlords willing to make a contribution to the arts in terms of a below-market lease rate.

### **Financial modeling will support clear decision-making**

Financial modeling was outside of the scope of this consulting engagement, but upon the analysis of the demand findings, NCN would recommend that the arts organizations identify a representative building in the 8,000 - 11,000 sq. ft. to better understand how much this space would cost in the Walla Walla market to inform a commitment to the next steps.

### **Continue to consider a role for individual artists**

There is moderate interest in affordable creative spaces like studios and makerspaces, but the appropriate business model is unclear at this point. Many Walla Walla Valley residents create art in their homes, and while some indicated a need for additional space, their willingness to pay for space is unclear. If a real estate opportunity arises that exceeds the current needs of the partners, renting to individual artists or an emerging makerspace may provide valuable revenue and collaborative synergies.