

Industrial Arts Center Vision Emerges

Following the City sponsored Industrial and Fine Arts Center Community Workshop held in October, 2008, a working group was formed to help guide the Industrial Arts Center Feasibility Study. Based on discussions at six meetings, survey results, and the review of other rural art center models, a vision for a Fort Bragg Industrial Arts Center (IAC) is now emerging. Based on this vision, the Fort Bragg IAC would be anchored by studios for woodworking, metalworking, ceramics, and glass. These core industrial art disciplines would occupy working spaces of approximately 5,000 square feet each. Beyond this core, the IAC would provide studio space of smaller units, 200 to 2,000 square feet, for various arts such as textiles, jewelry, papermaking, stained glass, pottery, and photography. In addition, the IAC plans would include a common gallery area, meeting rooms, and a performing arts/special events venue, as well as a business support center for the Center's artists and artisans.

The IAC Steering Committee envisions that the Industrial Arts Center would encourage the creation of both fine industrial arts as well as niche manufacturing. The Committee believes that as the Center matures, it will provide vocational education opportunities in woodworking, metalworking, welding, ceramics, and related building trades. The IAC aims to be a haven not just for emerging artists and artisans that have recently completed training in their discipline, but also for retirees and youth alike. The Center aims to provide access to the classes, tools, equipment and space needed for all levels of emerging artists and artisans to pursue and perfect their disciplines.

The IAC Committee places a high priority on building the Center in a location that is within easy walking distance to Fort Bragg's Central Business District. It is anticipated that the IAC would attract a significant number of visitors to the downtown area generating sales for artists, local merchants, and restaurants. At this time, the Committee is evaluating the use of existing industrial buildings on the Georgia Pacific Mill Site. The Dry Kiln Buildings located just south of Redwood Street appear to meet basic IAC requirements as to location and size. It is yet to be determined whether any of these buildings are structurally sound and can accommodate remodeling and conversion into an industrial arts facility. Part of the IAC Feasibility Study will include the structural analysis of these buildings in order to determine the reuse potential. The Committee values the historic nature of the Mill Site structures and aims to apply green building practices if the opportunity arises to reuse any of these buildings. The Committee is exploring the possibility of utilizing LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) standards for remodeling or for the new construction of an industrial arts facility.

The IAC Steering Committee hopes that this emerging vision will encourage other interested artists, artisans, educators and business owners to become involved in supporting community efforts in furthering the potential for an industrial arts facility. If you are interested in learning more about the planning process for an industrial arts center in Fort Bragg or would like to get involved, please feel free to contact the Community Development Department at the City of Fort Bragg at (707) 961-2827.

Jan Bell and Amy Wynn, Fort Bragg Industrial Arts Center Steering Committee