



ARTS & CULTURE FINALIST: **CROSSHATCH CENTER FOR ART & ECOLOGY,**
with co-applicant **COMMONGROUNDS COOPERATIVE**

INITIATIVE: **Commongrounds + Crosshatch Performance Venue**

OVERVIEW OF INITIATIVE – IN THE APPLICANT’S WORDS

Crosshatch and Commongrounds have partnered to meet the outspoken community arts need of “missing middle” art spaces, by developing a dedicated 150-seat performance venue to be housed within the community-owned walls of Commongrounds Cooperative.

The partnerships’ Music and Events Venue is a state-of-the-art room, serving our region’s music, theater, dance, and wellness communities through a rich calendar of concerts, storytelling series, residencies, workshops, classes, and exhibitions—with virtual options for participation available for nearly every use of space.

Through stakeholder engagement and programming partnerships, we lower the barrier of participation in the performing arts for youth, elders, BIPOC, and members of our regional arts community at-large—both patrons and creators—by providing a cultivated place and culture where the energy resonates with each moment, where safety and trust are paramount, where play is standard, and where innovation and connection are nurtured--beginning in June of 2022 upon building completion.

The following sections contain certain key information from the application, as written by the applicant. While detailed financial information has not been provided here due to its confidential nature, each applicant submitted an initiative budget and supporting financial documents as part of their application. Each proposed initiative and the supporting financial documentation has undergone a thorough financial review by our Community Investment Review Committee (CIRC) and the initiatives proposed by our finalists have met our standards for moving forward.

ORGANIZATION’S VISION STATEMENT

Crosshatch Center for Art & Ecology envisions communities that are grounded in place: where people connect through stories, music, art, shared work, and food, and where the economy and culture are rooted in restoration of the earth and its people.

ORGANIZATION'S MISSION STATEMENT

Crosshatch builds strong communities through the intersections of art, farming, ecology and economy.

DESCRIPTION OF ORGANIZATION AND ITS HISTORY

Founded in 2005, Crosshatch Center for Art & Ecology builds strong communities through the intersections of art, farming, ecology, and economy. Crosshatch envisions communities that are grounded in place: where people connect through stories, music, art, shared work, and food and where the economy and culture are rooted in the restoration of the earth and its people.

Crosshatch began with the idea that the arts—and artists themselves—were essential to this work. Crosshatch also promotes community learning, where education of all kinds takes place in the company of friends and neighbors. Crosshatch programs revolve around the essential work of artists, farmers and other creative makers, and so cast a wide net: from the daily details of the home-economy (including bees, mushrooms, fruit and nuts, soil health, food preservation and many many more), to the broader scope of artist residencies, shared resources and other ways to build creative, regenerative, and resilient local economies.

Our partner in this project, Commongrounds, is a non-profit real estate cooperative whose mission is to develop real estate that meets community needs and increases quality of life for all people in the region. As a cooperative, Commongrounds is owned by the people and organizations that use its facilities: businesses and non-profits that occupy space in the pilot project building, and community members who purchase who have invested money in the organization. The cooperative uses these investments to create intentional spaces that integrate food, family, arts, and wellness—thus creating an opportunity for all to contribute—making the community we love even better, together.

Commongrounds' pilot project is a 4-story mixed-use building scheduled to open in June 2022, under construction now at 416 E. Eighth Street in Traverse City. This project adds timely momentum to the redevelopment of the North Boardman Lake District, the gateway to downtown. The "NoBo" district has been designated by the city of Traverse City for redevelopment as a multi-modal, compact, vibrant "healthy living" corridor and is proximately located to water and recreation trails.

The building is designed to meet community needs by including workforce housing, early childhood care, a 150-seat performing arts and events venue, wellness programs, local food access and education, and family amenities that contribute to quality of life for all

people in the region. The project has proven community support and has already raised \$1.37 million from 500+ community members who are owners.

Together, we will provide shared value and triple bottom line returns on investment to tenants, partner organizations, and people working, living, learning and playing in the region.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF INITIATIVE

Over the past decade, the changing entertainment and hospitality landscape in the Traverse City region has left many vibrant sectors of the performing arts without accessible, mid-sized, spaces to call home—evolving towards the all-inclusive entertainment demands of our region's tourism economy. Our project serves to reverse this course towards a robust, inclusive performing arts scene that holds its art and artists at high value.

In 2017, Crosshatch and singer-songwriter May Erlewine set out to solve this problem and began developing a dedicated 150-seat listening room to be housed within the community-owned walls of Commongrounds Cooperative.

In October of 2020, with construction on Commongrounds poised to begin, Andrew Lutes joined the Commongrounds development team and worked to align the venue vision with the emerging needs and impacts of other regional performing arts organizations and stakeholders.

The timing of the COVID19 pandemic has provided Commongrounds with a unique opportunity to develop a space with the needs of artists and arts organizations, hit hard by the restrictions on in-person gatherings, in mind. In doing so, the collaborators have designed not only a best-in-class sound and lighting system, but a one of a kind audio/video production infrastructure, capable of recording and simulcasting venue performances live—to anywhere on earth—in high definition.

This thoughtful technology infrastructure aligns with a new era of artist business model, as artists took to the web during the pandemic—allowing them to reach their most recent patrons in far off markets, while re-engaging audiences in person, regionally. It also brings plug-and-play virtual integrations to the fingertips of countless purpose-driven organizations and emerging makers throughout our region. These technological capabilities are viewed as essential to the success of our project, are proven, outspoken needs of our regions' artists, and the key category for which we seek Impact100 funding.

As the central core of Commongrounds' arts mission, the Music and Events Venue is a state-of-the-art venue poised to serve our region's original music, theater, dance, and wellness communities through up-close, intentional experiences and the deep interaction of music, movement, written and spoken word, multimedia art, and integrated technology.

With construction underway and a June 2022 target for occupancy, Commongrounds and Crosshatch are currently working with other partner organizations such as Parallel 45, Interlochen Center for the Arts, TC Dance Project, Groundwork Center, and more, to build out a rich calendar of concert series, storytelling series, residencies, workshops, classes, and exhibitions—with virtual options for participation available for nearly every use of space.

Our collaborative mission is to build a compassionate original thought community that nurtures and supports creators and organizations committed to service and social responsibility through the arts. Through stakeholder engagement and programming partnerships, we utilize this venue to lower the barrier of participation in the performing arts for youth, elders, BIPOC, and members of our regional arts community at-large—both patrons and creators—by providing a cultivated place and culture where the energy resonates with each moment, where safety and trust are paramount, where play is standard, and where innovation and connection are nurtured.

COMMUNITY TO BE SERVED

If you love the arts, this space will serve you. As outlined in the executive summary, this space will serve artists and audiences in a broad spectrum.

Foremost, we will serve the music lovers and musicians of the Grand Traverse region. After InsideOut Gallery closed its doors in 2016, we heard from a number of musicians that Traverse City (and the region) was missing a “middle” space. They were faced with a choice, between expensive and large performance venues like the City Opera House or Milliken Auditorium, with pressure high to sell out or lose money; or to play bars, where audiences are often noisy and disengaged (more on this under community needs, below). This venue will serve small audiences in a space where listening is strongly valued and courageous engagement in a safe environment is paramount.

The intention, with regards to programming, is to strike a balance between local music, touring acts, and other sectors of the performing arts—whether it be immersive theater, improv, comedy, dance, or spoken word—while leaving room for area organizations to use the venue as communal space for events that wouldn't otherwise fit comfortably in a bar or conference center. Expect to see high quality musicians from diverse genres, both well-loved and talented newcomers.

Also expect to see book/issue release parties, storytelling events, comedy showcases, film releases, and art shows, as we're excited to serve the broad community of art enthusiasts. This will be a space that welcomes and validates the community choirs, tap groups, dance ensembles, drum lines, a capella groups, improv orgs, comedians, spoken word poets and many many others.

A word on diversity: we expect that this venture will serve folks from Traverse City and the surrounding region, which is demographically diverse in some ways and very monolithic in others. We are actively working to become a space known for its inclusivity and welcoming nature. As a leader in this region, we acknowledge our responsibility to include more underrepresented voices, points of view, and decision-making opportunities around the table as we move forward with program planning. We are already working with the neighboring food hall tenant, Tony Vu (The Good Bowl) to create conduits for ethnically and racially diverse arts and food events at Commongrounds—which we collectively feel is a necessary step towards increasing diversity throughout our region. We believe that the arts are a great way to start a conversation about diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging, and we're proud to help further the progress of these initiatives in Northern Michigan.

Likewise, the venue in the Commongrounds cooperative building development is a space designed for people with disabilities, using Universal Design principles. Special care has been made to ensure that folks with mobility issues have entryways that are truly welcoming, rather than just meeting code. The design infrastructure will have an audio induction loop—state-of-the-art technology for folks with hearing impairments—as well as other accessibility features designed to make this a space for the entire community.

NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY TO BE SERVED

Ask any touring musician about their favorite (and not so favorite) venues, audiences, and even cities, and you'll start to hear about the power of culture. You'll hear about how the experience of performing is shaped by more than the quality of the sound system, and how even expensive and state-of-the-art venues can be ruined by a poor culture of listening. Major performers like Neil Young and Ani DiFranco have vocally complained about the attentiveness of their audiences. We have heard from a number of touring artists and regional artists that Traverse City is a challenge, because they feel like the audiences don't listen. We can change this.

There's a specific pattern at work here: where music and other performing arts need a space of their own, where the artist is valued, where the bar for the experience is set high and held there. Food and drink is great, even important, but needs to be adjacent not dominant (like at most bars). The room needs to be small enough to say "not a bad seat in the house" with a straight face, and when possible put the front row right up next to the stage. The room needs doors that close to the outside world, exceptional sound absorption, and a policy of making you wait until the last note or line is done ringing before letting the door open to the outside.

This serves both the artist and the audience by literally and figuratively closing the distance between them. It allows thoughtful design and culture of place to make the room fall away during a whisper or a howl. It provides a clear intention—which, in turn, serves creators and patrons alike with the deep connection necessary to grow a vibrant arts culture.

Our “missing middle” performance space is designed by and for artists and their audiences—with the sound, lights, video, acoustics, green room, box office, and bar all explicitly created to support intimate, powerful moments of connection.

SUSTAINABILITY OF THE PROPOSED INITIATIVE

The operational budget and business model of the venue was designed to produce 95% of revenue from earned income. The remaining 5% of revenue comes from individual contributions, foundation and government grants. This is a model that, from a programming and occupancy cost standpoint, will generate income and pay its own way.

The model is a tried and true hospitality business plan, centered around the “captive audience” model utilized by successful entertainment venues, with one notable alteration. The “every day” operating model consists of leveraging program offerings and facility infrastructure to attract customers to our venue— then, generating said revenue by selling them our adjacent and value added products and services, including; alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages via the bar, tickets, tuition, memberships, merchandise, recording packages, etc.

Additionally, we boost revenue by renting our facilities to community members and businesses—maintaining the right to sell our products and services to their guests (such as bar service, production rentals, engineering services).

The main difference between us and a traditional venue model, is that we leverage a large swath of our programming blocks to our partner organizations whose missions align with ours.

This is a recipe for financial sustainability.

Our fundraising goal for start-up (and for which we are applying for Impact funding, in part) includes one year of operational funds. This will allow us some time to evaluate our programs and make course corrections—not only for program quality, but also for financial soundness.