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Michelle Williams, executive director of the Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County, stands outside the council's future home at the Tannery Arts Center on Monday.

Where art, culture will intersect

Tanner 125

Group announces move to Tannery Arts Center

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SANTA CRUZ — Local artists, take note: the Cultural Council of Santa Cruz County plans to move out from downtown to a new office on the Tannery Arts Center campus.

The Board of Directors unanimously decided at its June 27 meeting to move the council's headquarters to the Kron House of the Tannery Arts Center.

"We're thrilled. The Tannery Arts Center is where the umbrella organization for the arts of Santa Cruz County belongs," said Michelle Williams, the council's executive direc-

tor. "The synergy, energy and possibilities for collaboration created by being the anchor tenant for this hub for the arts are very exciting."

Discussions about the move had been echoing in the arts community for nearly 10 years, Williams said. The ongoing renovation of the Kron House on the Tannery Arts Center campus prompted the realization of the project.

"The place we wanted to move to has now finally been renovated," Williams said.

The relocation will unfold in the fall.

The council will swap its 5,100-square-foot workspace on Pacific Avenue for a 4,000 square-foot two-

story building at the former Salz Tannery on River Street. Lease negotiations are under way with the city of Santa Cruz, which owns the land surrounding the Tannery Arts Center. The council looks to complete the relocation by Nov. 1, Williams said.

After eight years in Live Oak, the council moved to Pacific Avenue in November. But long-term lease opportunities downtown — market prices would have neared \$6,500 a month for the Pacific Avenue office in the long run — were never an option, Williams said.

"We love being downtown, it's

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incredibly vibrant," Williams said. "But ultimately, it's a bit expensive and we would rather spend money on our cultural programs and grants." This year, the nonprofit agency

allocated \$180,000 in grants to local artists, craftsmen and programs. But the savings generated by the move to the Harvey West area will allow the organization to have a greater impact countywide, Williams said.

The relocation also fits the vision that inspired the Tannery Arts Center by helping the campus become an artistic hub benefiting the entire

county, said Rachel Anne Goodman, the Tannery Arts Center's executive director.

"Part of our mission is to provide an affordable house for the arts in the community — for the council as well as for anyone else," Goodman said. "But this move is also a whole part of our campus finally coming alive with new activities."

The center welcomed 100 live-work housing studios for artists in 2009 and inaugurated a Digital Media and Creative Arts Center this spring. With so many artists working in close proximity, the spirit of collaboration is contagious, Goodman said.

In 2011, the Atlantic Magazine ranked Santa Cruz and Watsonville No. 5 on a list of the Most Artistic

Cities in America.

"There is a lot of potential for long-term collaborations at the Tannery and the Cultural Council may bring that to a whole new level," Goodman said. "We don't know what will happen yet, but it's only positive."

Follow Sentinel correspondent Romain Fongsegrives on Twitter: @romanuevo