

A cultural blueprint for the county

By ANN CONY

A countywide group of businessmen, patrons of the arts, educators and others Thursday night approved without dissent a general but comprehensive plan to promote cultural activities throughout Santa Cruz County.

Over 100 county residents had been working on a plan of action since June. About 60 of them showed up at the meeting held in Cabrillo's Porter-Sesnon Mansion to review and ultimately approve the second draft of the Cultural Action Plan for Santa Cruz County.

Ralph Burgard, a past director of the American Council on the Arts, and consultant from the East who has helped organize similar plans in other parts of the country, served as director of the effort. Also instrumental in the planning stage were Beverly Grova, coordinator of cultural programs for the county, and Hal Hyde of Ford's department store, who served as chairman of the action plan committee.

The undertaking began to materialize about a year ago when the County Arts Commission and interested citizens obtained grants from the National Endowment for

the Arts to hire an outside consultant for advice on strengthening the county's cultural organizations and providing adequate facilities for them. A committee of some 100 county leaders drawn from business, the arts, government, education and public service had its first meeting last June.

The committee has been assisted by a "resource group," some 35 professional administrators of local cultural organizations. A subcommittee has been analyzing present facilities and potential building sites, while Burgard and Ms. Grova have conducted over 200 interviews.

While the 28-page action plan might appear minutely detailed to an outsider, it is, in Burgard's words, painted "in very broad-brush strokes." It was approved "in principle" Thursday night, after minor, non-substantive amendments.

The plan is based on the fundamental premise that "creative activities . . . are not luxuries, frills, amenities or 'nice to have if the budget allows,' " but basic to human needs.

The introduction to the plan notes that attendance at cultural events in the county last year far exceeded 400,000

— more than attended all organized sports in the county. (The comparison to sports attendance was deleted from the text Thursday night for fear it might antagonize sports fans.)

The "continual experimentation and the rise and fall of smaller cultural projects" is also noted. Santa Cruz County abounds with small cultural groups that undertake both traditional and experimental efforts, but many "are destined to last only a few months or, at best, two to three years." The objective of the action plan and the people behind it is to establish a planning and programming vehicle for all the arts on a county-wide basis.

The committee identified three general objectives of the action plan. They are:

—To provide greater opportunities for everyone to enjoy and understand the insights of the world's great artists and scientists.

—To help children and adults develop a greater sense of their own worth through the encouragement of creative skills and talent.

—To provide a continuing series of cultural events and experiences which make living together in Santa Cruz County a source of pleasure and inspiration.

The specific goal of the plan is to "recommend cooperative methods and services which would benefit the citizens of Santa Cruz County by strengthening the area's cultural institutions, assisting its artists and exploring new ways of bringing together the arts, sciences and people."

To meet that goal, the committee recommended eleven objectives be incorporated in the action plan, including:

—Help strengthen the area's cultural institutions.

—Assist the county's elementary schools to supplement and improve their arts and education programs.

—Undertake outreach programs which enable county citizens to participate in creative activities and in part, work together on projects which celebrate their heritage and customs — racial, social, ethnic and historic.

—Encourage the development of high quality cultural events, festivals and other programs — both locally produced and imported — which would enable county citizens to see and hear the best in the arts and, at the same time, help promote tourism to improve the county's economy.

—Help the county's artists improve their working conditions and, indirectly, help to maintain a sufficient number of talented artists in the county.

In January the committee will make recommendations on physical facilities, including cost estimates for new facilities. Also in January the first board of directors will be selected to oversee implementation of the plan.

The operating costs of the programs recommended in the action plan are estimated to be \$120,000 in fiscal 1980-81. The funds would be raised primarily from 12 different sources in the public and private sectors, according to the action plan.

The Cultural Action Plan has already gotten its first \$5,000 benefactor and "people are rushing" to become patrons and benefactors, according to Burgard. The committee will learn next week the amount of its first corporate contribution, he added.

More importantly, "Communications among South and North County, minorities, businessmen and artists is just beginning and will grow. That is perhaps in the longrun one of the most valuable things we can do," Burgard said.

The California Arts Council reportedly wants to use Santa Cruz County as a model for cooperation among the arts, sciences and business. (It is the only county awarded a grant from the state council for this purpose.) And, "I think we can do so much in this county, so far out of proportion to the initial funds," Burgard said. The project may also make Santa Cruz County a model for "citizen cooperation" in areas beyond the arts, he added.

The consultant also mentioned a number of "spinoffs" that have occurred as a result of the

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concerted effort to promote cultural activities.

A Santa Cruz Songwriters' Guild has been organized by Jack Bowers, a member of the resource committee and on Dec. 14, the Santa Cruz Art Center and other organizations will put on a "Gallery Walk" in Santa Cruz, to be financed by downtown businesses there.

Burgard, Hyde and Ms. Grova were invited to address the California League of Cities Conference in Monterey last weekend. Burgard spoke on his experience as an arts consultant and Hyde and Ms. Grova spoke during a section of the program devoted to "City Success Stories."