

Warrenton Neighborhood Arts Project

at 18 Court Street

**new name to be announced April 14th*

Executive Summary

This proposal outlines a plan to transform the municipal building at 18 Court Street into a vibrant cultural hub, the Warrenton Neighborhood Arts Project. The facility will be managed by a central coordinating entity (“the VENUE”) and will serve as a home for a collective of local nonprofit organizations. Anchor and core tenants, including the Gloria Faye Dingus Music Alliance, and potentially (*pending board study, review and approvals*) Fauquier Community Theatre, and potentially (*pending board study, review and approvals*) the Fauquier History Museum as well as other organizations, will provide a diverse array of programming in music, film, theater, history, and visual arts.

The project is designed to be self-funding, removing the building’s operational and maintenance costs from the Town’s budget. Economically, the venue is projected to attract a conservative estimate of 70,000 new visitors to Old Town annually, generating a significant increase in foot traffic for Main Street businesses. This activity is estimated to produce \$50,000 to \$100,000 in new meals tax revenue alone. The Town will also receive direct revenue through a transient-style tax on space rentals and a per-person surcharge on ticketed events.

For residents, the project creates a vital downtown gathering place offering a wide range of cultural, educational, and community events for all ages. By uniting community groups under one roof, this initiative will preserve a prized historic asset, invigorate the local economy, and establish a lasting cultural anchor for the Town of Warrenton and the surrounding region.

High Level Overview

This proposal presents the best use of the Municipal Building at 18 Court Street—a use that yields the highest social and economic benefit to the Town of Warrenton, its residents, and the surrounding communities. Our vision is to utilize the building as a central venue for civic participation in music, film, arts, theater, history, and cultural events. This will be accomplished by uniting existing local community groups under an umbrella organization that will manage the facility.

This project is about bringing people together on Old Town Main Street through abundant self-expression, igniting an engine of economic vitality. The goal is to create an enlivened cultural hub that expands over time, drawing in visitors while enriching the lives of current residents. Our vision aims for shared prosperity—for retailers, for restaurants, and for the Town—by creating a space utilized throughout the day that brings a steady stream of visitors to Old Town.

The primary benefit is establishing a cultural anchor for residents, offering the widest variety of uses. A direct derivative of this cultural anchor is a substantial increase in economic activity and foot traffic for Main Street businesses, resulting in boosted sales and a more vibrant downtown.

Revenue Overview and Economic Impact

The project will generate significant revenue for the Town and a substantial economic multiplier effect for local businesses. This is primarily driven by a large increase in visitor foot traffic to Old Town Main Street.

Foot Traffic and Revenue Projections

Our analysis projects a conservative increase of 70,000 visitors to Old Town annually. This estimate is based on the facility achieving 30-60% of its potential occupancy.

- **Note on Foot Traffic Calculation:** At 100% rental of all interior spaces at expected occupancy, the potential annual foot traffic increase is 204,000 people. Our organizational goal is to achieve 60% of this, which equates to 122,520 persons annually. To account for a ramp-up period, we have used a conservative 30% estimate of 61,260 people for initial projections. The 70,000-person figure used for revenue estimates is well within this conservative range.

This influx of visitors will directly impact Town revenue:

- **Meals Tax:** With an estimated 70,000 new visitors spending an average of \$20 each on food, the Town would receive between \$50,000 and \$100,000 in new meals tax revenue annually. A significant portion of this, approximately 52,500 people, is expected during daytime hours, benefiting retailers and restaurants during their typical operating hours.
- **Direct Town Revenue:** The Town will receive direct revenue through multiple streams:
 - A per-space tax, similar to a transient rental tax, on most venue rentals.
 - A surcharge of \$1.00 per person on all ticketed events.
 - A flat rate based on occupancy for non-ticketed events.
- **Business Taxes:** Increased gross receipts from shops and restaurants will result in higher Business, Professional, and Occupational License (BPOL) tax revenues for the Town.

In sum, allowing for the combined use of the facility by local arts, history, and community groups will invigorate Old Town Main Street and provide a new, sustainable revenue source for the Town, all while preserving the prized real estate asset at 18 Court Street.

Benefits to the Town and Community

The transformation of 18 Court Street will bring numerous tangible and intangible benefits to Town residents, visitors, and the Town government itself.

Benefits to Residents and Visitors

- **A Vital Community Gathering Place:** The venue will provide a much-needed local space for residents, artists, educators, and businesses to host events of all sizes, from small meetings for 12 people to larger seated events for up to 215.
- **A Regional Attraction:** Historic buildings, music halls, and arts centers are powerful magnets. This venue will host live concerts, films, and art events in the heart of historic Warrenton, beckoning travelers from surrounding counties, states, and Washington D.C. to stop, stay, and experience our town.

Benefits to the Town of Warrenton

- **Elimination of Maintenance and Repair Expenses:** A thriving venue generates ample income to cover all operational costs, including general maintenance and repairs. This arrangement removes the financial burden of the building from the Town's budget, as these costs will be covered by the tenants.
- **Preservation of a Prized Local Asset:** The building itself, a 100-year-old landmark gifted to the Town, will be preserved and revitalized. The tenant organizations are committed to preserving our heritage and will lead fundraising efforts for any necessary building improvements, such as commemorative bricks or donor plaques.
- **Synergy with the Fauquier History Museum:** The secure basement vault at 18 Court Street is slated to house precious artifacts from the adjacent Fauquier History Museum at the Old Jail. This provides maximum protection for fragile items and convenient access for rotating exhibits, demonstrating a valuable and cooperative Town/County relationship.

Operating Structure

A single managing entity, an LLC or Foundation referred to as “the VENUE,” will be formed to manage the day-to-day operations and scheduling for the entire building. The VENUE will serve as the single point of contact with the Town of Warrenton, streamlining communication and ensuring professional management.

Both nonprofit and for-profit entities will operate as renters. Operational overhead, maintenance, and insurance costs will be distributed proportionally among the anchor and core tenants based on their usage of the space. This shared arrangement is based on the proven track records of the proposed tenants and their ability to draw audiences.

Proposed Anchor and Core Tenants

This model is based on the interest of several key local organizations. While their boards have not yet formally approved a legal arrangement, they have expressed significant interest in this cooperative structure.

- **Anchor:** Gloria Faye Dingus Music Alliance
- **Anchor:** VENUE (for public and private event rentals)
- **Anchor:** Other Arts Nonprofit (TBD, e.g., ballet, orchestra)
- **Core:** Fauquier Community Theatre (pending)
- **Core:** Fauquier History Museum at the Old Jail (pending)
- **Core:** Visual Arts/Gallery (TBD)

The VENUE will establish a governing board, including representatives from the nonprofit tenants and community members, to oversee facility usage, manage finances, and make adjustments as needed. This structure ensures cooperative and efficient management while allowing each nonprofit to focus on its own mission-driven events.

General Scheduling and Usage Outline

The facility will be available for use seven days a week, with scheduling divided into daytime and evening slots to maximize accessibility and revenue.

Weekday Scheduling (Sunday 7pm – Friday 6pm)

Weekdays will be divided into four distinct time slots to accommodate a variety of activities: 9am-12pm, 12pm-3pm, 3pm-6pm, and 7pm-11pm. This allows for a total of 1,040 weekday time slots annually for classes, workshops, meetings, rehearsals, and smaller performances.

Daytime slots will be ideal for children’s activities, educational programs, senior events, and business conferences. Evening slots are anticipated to be booked by dance clubs, chorale groups, recitals, and community meetings.

Weekend Scheduling (Friday 6pm – Sunday 6pm)

Weekend slots are considered high-demand and will be priced accordingly. These times will be prioritized for major events like concerts, theater productions, weddings, art gallery openings, and community celebrations, which draw the largest crowds and generate the most significant economic impact.

Scheduling will be coordinated by the VENUE to harmonize the needs of all tenant organizations and public renters, ensuring the space is used to its fullest potential.

Other Considerations

- **Art Displays:** Hallways, entryways, and the main hall will feature rotating art shows, with works from local artists available for viewing and purchase.
- **Amenities and Additional Charges:** The facility includes several catering kitchen spaces, a Presidential Suite for private rentals, and a dedicated bridal suite. Use of these spaces, along with amenities like sound systems and special staffing, will be available for an additional charge.

- **Furnishings and Concessions:** The VENUE will coordinate with local antique and vintage shops to furnish period-specific spaces, offering a unique decorative charm. The ground-level concession stand will feature locally sourced food and beverage options.
 - **Insurance and Permitting:** All organizations using the space must provide general liability insurance for their events and file all necessary permits and licenses as required by the Town of Warrenton.
 - **Staffing:** Each nonprofit will provide its own staffing for its sponsored events or may pay to use VENUE support staff. As revenue grows, the VENUE will hire a managing director and production staff.
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Planned Usage by Anchor and Core Tenants

The Gloria Faye Dingus Music Alliance

With a mission of “Making the world a better place through music,” this 501(c)3 nonprofit has a proven track record of hosting high-quality live music events featuring local, national, and international artists. Their decades of experience in event management, professional sound production, and venue operation make them exceptionally qualified to be the primary operations consultant. They will host concerts, film nights, and educational programs, and their expertise will ensure professional oversight of the entire venue. The ground floor vault will be converted into a recording studio for artist use and youth training.

Fauquier History Museum at the Old Jail (upon favorable review and Board approvals)

The museum’s mission is “to stimulate interest in Fauquier County and Virginia history by preserving the evidence of our past, connecting it to our present and educating the community.” The 18 Court Street building itself is a historical artifact, and the museum will assist in fundraising and design oversight for its preservation. The museum plans to use the

space for historical reenactments, storytelling conventions, and educational events. The basement vault provides a secure, convenient space to store and rotate their priceless artifacts, and they plan to utilize their new space for the upcoming 250th Anniversary of the USA celebration in 2026.

Fauquier Community Theatre (upon favorable review and Board approvals)

Founded in 1978, Fauquier Community Theatre aims to “enrich, entertain, and educate audiences through a variety of live theatre productions.” With nearly 50 years of experience, they will bring a fully-fledged team and deep community roots to the project. Starting in a loft on Main Street, they quickly outgrew the space. Seeing no other opportunities in Town, they found a theater in Vint Hill yet see opportunities for tangential activities. They are open to using the facility for auditions, rehearsals, smaller productions, and events or for workshops in acting, stage production, and writing. Their presence could expand performing arts opportunities in Old Town and inspire community participation in theater.

Implementation Plan

Upon Town Council approval, the project can be implemented in phases to allow for immediate use. The Gloria Faye Dingus Music Alliance is prepared to begin hosting live music events within weeks. The VENUE and its partners will simultaneously begin readying other spaces.

- **Immediate (0-3 Months):** The main event space will be cleaned and prepared for music and events. The Fauquier History Museum will begin utilizing the basement vault. The Presidential Suite and first-floor meeting rooms will be updated.
- **Short-Term (6-12 Months):** Fire-rated drapes will be designed and installed for the main hall to improve acoustics and temperature control.

- **Long-Term (1-2 Years):** A second ground-floor ADA-compliant bathroom will be considered to accommodate larger crowds.

The Warrenton Neighborhood Arts Project will cover all operational and maintenance costs, which are currently \$25,000 annually, lifting this budget item from the Town. All architectural improvements will be guided by historical standards, and the VENUE will partner with local trades programs, such as those at Laurel Ridge, for restoration work.

Summary and What Success Looks Like

Success is a fully utilized, self-funding community hub bustling with activity seven days a week. The schedule is filled with live music, films, children’s matinees, art shows, theater rehearsals, and community events. The meeting spaces are booked by local businesses, and the concession stand and souvenir shop showcase local products.

This activity achieves the project’s core goals: 1. **Economic Vitality:** Shops and restaurants are thriving thanks to the 70,000+ new annual visitors. 2. **Fiscal Responsibility:** The building is no longer a financial burden on the Town; instead, it is a source of direct and indirect revenue. Over five years, total Town receipts from the venue could range from \$600,000 to \$1,200,000. 3. **Community Enrichment:** Residents of all ages have a central place for artistic expression, education, and entertainment, strengthening our community’s cultural fabric. 4. **Historic Preservation:** The 100-year-old building, a gift to the Town, is restored and preserved as a vibrant town asset for generations to come.

The popularity of the venue will generate widespread public endearment, attracting visitors from far and wide while enlivening our town with the talent and businesses that are already here.

Appendix A: Floor Plan and Room Assignments

Disclaimer: The floor plan provided by the Town of Warrenton may not be fully accurate.

Claims of room sizes and locations are subject to change. This document and floor plan serve only as a guide. Exact measurements will be made prior to the completion of any lease.

Basement Level (Total Area: 2,722 sq ft)

- **Private Nonprofit Offices:**
 - 155 sq ft: Fauquier History Museum
 - 182 sq ft: Fauquier Community Theatre
 - 180 sq ft: Arts Nonprofit
 - 207 sq ft: Gloria Faye Dingus Music Alliance
- **Basement Vault (274 sq ft):** Assigned to Fauquier History Museum for artifact storage.
- **Conference Room (157 sq ft):** Temporary staging area for events; VENUE shipping/receiving.
- **VENUE Office Space:** Reception room (~57 sq ft).
- **Dedicated Bridal Room:** Can be rented or used as a staff break room.
- **Open Space Room (~425 sq ft):** Arts Nonprofit small classroom or storage.
- **Open Space Room (~275 sq ft):** Reserved for event management and temporary storage.
- **Kitchenette with Bathroom:** For staff use or event rental.
- **Secondary Storage and Bathroom with Shower:** Possible groom's room or building supply storage.

Ground Level (Total Area: 2,989 sq ft)

- **Main Event Area (35' x 50'):** Open space with a stage area (up to 30' x 12').

- **Storage Rooms (Two rooms, ~165 sq ft each):** For tables, chairs, green room use, or performer storage.
- **Ground Floor Vault:** Assigned to Gloria Faye Dingus Music Alliance for audio production and recording studio.
- **Souvenir Shop / Ticket Sales (12' x 20' alcove):** Located near the main entrance.
- **Catering Kitchen / Concession Stand (12' x 12' alcove):** Located off the main floor.
- **Handicap Accessible Family Restroom**
- **Vestibule / Main Entry Way**

1st Level (Balcony and Presidential Suite - Total Area: 663 sq ft + Suite)

- **Meeting/Conference Room (20' x 14'):** Includes small kitchen and private bathroom. Available for hourly rental. Hallway overlooks the main hall for audio/stage engineer use.
- **Presidential Suite:** *Not yet mapped.* Includes large suite with chandeliers, an entry foyer, kitchenette, and bathroom over the main vestibule. Available for private rentals.

2nd Level (Total Area: 343 sq ft)

- **Two Storage Spaces (~10' x 14' each):** Accessible by stairs only. Assigned to Fauquier Community Theatre for costume and prop storage.