

A Moving Performance

Keewaydin creates a Master Plan for the Arts in Portland

From Portland *Oregonian* editorial, "Give culture the chance to thrive," October 28, 2002

"Back in January Portland's leading cultural organizations hired a consultant to study the feasibility of an idea to expand and improve the region's main performing arts centers. The theme was no less grand than a Lincoln Center West.

Well, you know the consulting biz, right? How they run out and do exactly what the client wants and focus not on feasibility but on salability? If Portland's cultural elite want a Lincoln Center, they get a Lincoln Center, right?

Well, maybe not. The alliance of cultural organizations – the Oregon Symphony, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Portland Center Stage and the Portland Opera – hired Keewaydin, a Minneapolis consulting firm that specializes in these things. The Keewaydin assessment was direct, if not blunt:

No Lincoln Center. Not in this lifetime.

Instead, the consultants came back with the recommendation that the arts and culture advocates focus on something more tailored for the specific needs of Portland and Oregon."



OREGON SYMPHONY



PORTLAND
Center
Stage



Photo by Owen Carey

GBT
OREGON BALLET THEATRE



Photo by Duane Morris

PORTLAND
OPERA

When you attend a performance, music or dance or theater, you expect to get what you paid for, right? Isn't it a pleasant surprise when you get much more than you expected; when the performance moves and inspires you to explore your own creative vision? When four of Portland, Oregon's performing arts organizations asked Keewaydin to help them find an answer to their facilities issues, they didn't get just what they asked

for. Keewaydin gave Portland a performance they hadn't expected and a solution that moved and inspired the whole community.

What did it take to create this spectacular performance? Only three simple things: a first-rate team of experts, a lot of homework, and a team leader with the perseverance to ask tough questions and the courage to find the best answers.

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The clients' original vision included four major performance venues: a 2,200-seat symphony hall, a 2,000-seat hall for dance and opera, a 500 to 600-seat theater, and a 200-seat flexible performance space. Kathy Ehrmann, Keewaydin Principal responsible for managing the study, summarized the project. "These four organizations had come together to create a vision," she said. "They needed Keewaydin to help them ask the right questions to define the best path to reach their goals."

Orchestrating the Performance

In order to accomplish these tasks, Keewaydin assembled a national team of experts in arts management, performing arts facility planning and design, arts project cost analysis, fundraising, urban planning and community advocacy. Each member of the team brought to the project immeasurable gifts of time and talent which would have been difficult, at best, to find in just one place. Keewaydin and David Hawkanson, who worked with Keewaydin when he was managing director of the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, served as the co-conductors, giving direction to the performers and orchestrating the performance.

For six months the team researched, analyzed, interviewed, assessed and reassessed. It soon became disappointingly clear that a multi venue performing arts facility simply would not work for Portland. Raising the necessary funds, upwards of \$400 million by initial estimates, would be difficult on both the private and public levels. Once built, such a facility would be problematic for the

organizations to maintain financially and operationally. Furthermore, a new four venue complex would have an adverse effect on the existing facilities, causing all to be seriously under utilized.

And yet, doing nothing was not an option. Portland could not support a Lincoln Center West, but without an improved infrastructure for the arts, the city clearly could not meet the needs of the cultural community, accommodate future regional growth, or capitalize on opportunities for economic and urban development.

The Show Must Go On

This was the point where others might have given up, but Keewaydin was

"Reaction in the city's Bureau of Planning was enthusiastic, too. 'It's a bright light shining on the needs of the community,' said Ron Paul, who works on arts and culture projects for the Bureau of Planning. 'It's a call to action to galvanize both public and private sectors.'

The challenge is to raise the role of the arts to help plan the city's future, he said. "The city does a good job of paying attention to the natural environment, and also to the economic environment. The next domain we need to add is the urbanity quotient."

From "Study: the arts need new buildings" by David Stabler, Portland Oregonian, October 17, 2002

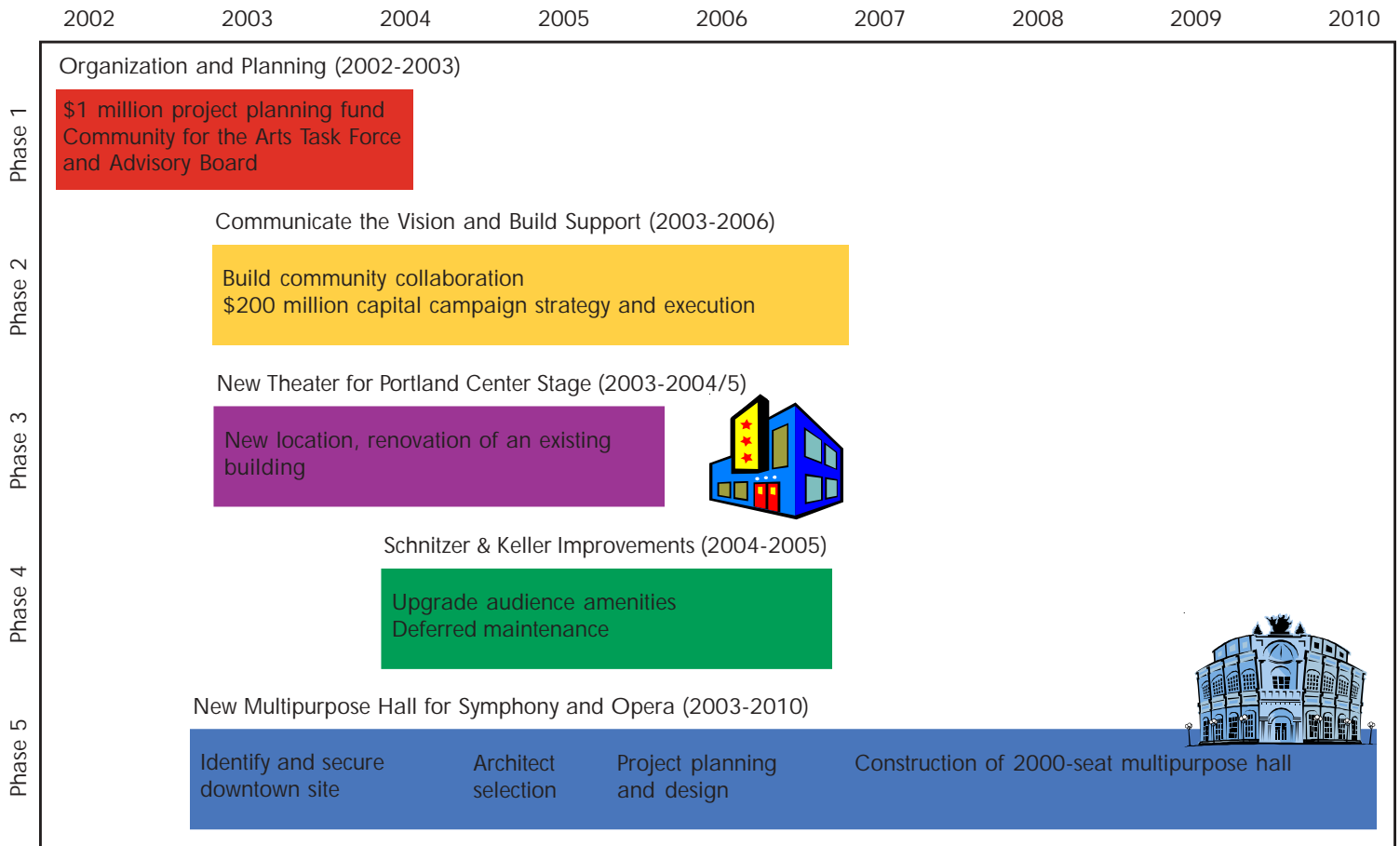
determined to find an answer. "When we started this project, we not only set out to determine the feasibility of the vision, but also promised to find a solution if that vision wasn't achievable," Ehrmann said. "At this crossroads, we recognized that this was a unique collaboration in the arts industry and they could truly capitalize on the synergy they had already built," she said. The group realized that by compromising and establishing priorities, they could achieve their individual and collective goals.

What, then, were the priorities, and how could they match their visions with reality? What emerged from the work of the Keewaydin team was a short- and long-term strategic facilities plan; a multi phase Master Plan for the Arts calling for two new venues within a seven year period of time and capital improvements to two existing venues.

A Master Plan for the Arts

The primary goals of the plan were to realign usage of Portland's venues, relieve the strain of overuse in performance spaces, and to create a state-of-the-art cultural facilities infrastructure to support and stimulate the growth in the region. This would be accomplished in five phases beginning with the first new facility as a renovation for the relocation of Portland Center Stage in 2004 and culminating with the opening of a first-class multipurpose performance hall for the Symphony and Opera by 2010. The multi phase approach would give the organizations time to actively involve community leadership in the plan and to conduct a coordinated fundraising effort.

Portland's Master Plan for the Arts



The cost to complete all phases of the Master Plan was estimated at \$200 million, less than half the original vision. The funding assessment concluded that the performing companies could generate the financial support for this venue equally from both the private and public sources.

The Review Is In

The findings of the study generated excitement among the arts organizations and throughout the community. “We knew this was a solution we could run with, something we could make work,” said Tony Woodcock, president of Oregon Symphony, “because Keewaydin presented a creative, unexpected solution that works for us and benefits our entire

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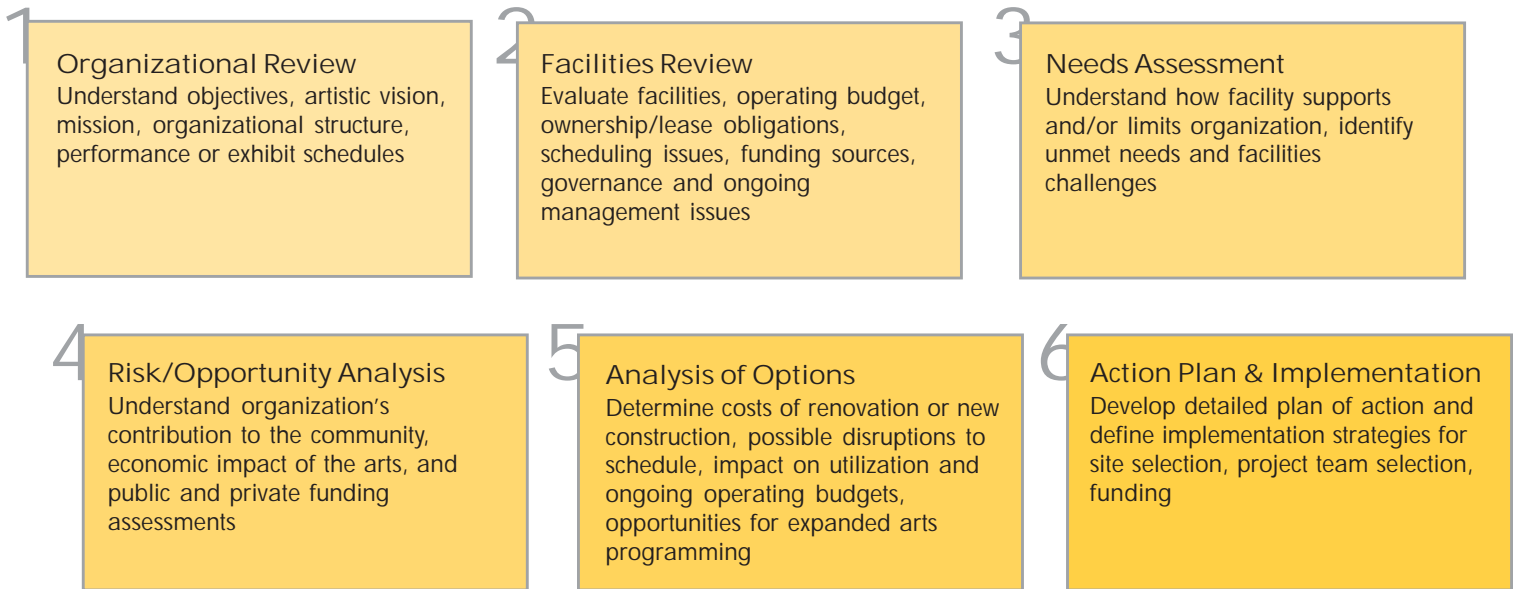
Tony Woodcock
President
Oregon Symphony

community.”

The community embraced the plan because it showed Portland how an investment in the arts would be an investment in the economic vitality of the community. This solution would help all the artistic groups in the region flourish, and would attract tourists and businesses to help fuel the economy.

The study and the “performance” of the Keewaydin team moved Portland to accept and implement a plan different from what was first envisioned. The organizations were inspired to pursue their collective goals and to work together on a facilities solution that offers Portland’s arts patrons and visitors something spectacular to applaud for generations.

Strategic Real Estate Planning for the Arts



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Keewaydin is a national real estate consulting firm with more than 20 years of experience managing real estate projects for business organizations and nonprofits. Our expertise and sensitivity to the unique needs of fine arts institutions allows us to consistently find creative solutions to even the most complicated real estate questions. Our services include:

- Strategic Real Estate Planning
- Feasibility Studies
- Budget Development
- Site Selection and Acquisition
- Architect/Design Team Selection and Contract Negotiation
- Negotiation of Government Incentives
- Project Management

If your organization is contemplating a renovation, expansion or relocation, let us show you how our years of training and practice can help.

To read the Executive Summary of the Portland Feasibility Study or full text of the *Oregonian* articles, go to www.keewaydin.com. If you would like more information about this project, please contact Wendi Wheeler, Communications Manager by email at wwheeler@keewaydin.com or by phone at (612) 341-4422.



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