

# SLO Center for the Arts



## **What is the SLO Center for the Arts (SLOCA)?**

The SLOCA is a currently a concept for, as its name implies, a center for the arts in San Luis Obispo. It is conceived as a physical facility where artists of many different disciplines can create, share, present, teach and experience their art and the techniques for creating it. It is a place where the general public can appreciate the art and the techniques used to create the art. And it is a place where our young people can not only learn to appreciate the art but also learn how to create it. It will initially focus on local artists, but will evolve to the addition of an artists-in-resident program so that local artist can be exposed to influences outside our local area.

## **Which artist groups will to SLOCA target?**

The SLOCA concept is to work with almost all artist disciplines – visual arts, creative arts, literary arts, performing arts as well as other art forms. The creative process applies to all of these groups. We expect to work with artist who paint and draw; with artists who perform vocally and with musical instruments and those who create for those performers; with actors, dancers and choreographers ; with artists who create physical objects of art including sculpture, clay, glass, metal, wood, cloth and other materials; with writers of books, plays, poetry and screen plays; with film and still photographers and videographers; with culinary artists as well as those involved in architecture, gardening and landscape.

## **What will the physical facility contain?**

We plan on remodeling the interior of the Sunny Acres historical building to provide studio space, rehearsal space, class room space, office space, meeting room space, gallery and presentation space and workshop

space. In addition, we see using the open space around the building for outdoor studios, as backgrounds and set areas for artists and models, and as the location for a small amphitheater for outdoor performances.

### **Who can use the center facilities?**

We expect that the facilities will be used by several classes of artists. The first group will be sponsoring organizations. We expect that several organizations tied to the arts - visual arts, performing arts and creative arts - will be sponsors. These organizations will have discounted access to the spaces based upon their level of sponsorship.

Second, we expect to have a class of artist who will be selected to be Affiliates Artists. Affiliate Artists will have access to a studio at a discounted rate for up to a 6 month time period. Affiliate artists will be selected from the San Luis Obispo County and will have access to studios and common areas.

Third, we expect to have a class of artists who will be Member Artists. Member Artists will have access to the facilities and resources. They will participate in creative activities, in collaborative activities and educational activities, but not have access to a private studio.

Fourth, we expect that local schools – elementary, high school and colleges – will want to use the facilities with their students and will want to have access to our artists. We would also expect to conduct a summer program for students to learn creative techniques and be able to create artworks using the center's facilities.

Fifth, we expect that the facilities may be useful for non-artist groups such as local businesses and families. We could certainly see how the grounds and facilities might be of interest to them for team building events, social events and weddings.

Finally, we expect to have Artist In-Residence. These artists will participate in 4-week to 10-week sessions. In-residence artists will have access to a private studio of 100 – 400 square feet and to the in-door and outdoor common meeting, office, conversational and rehearsal areas.

### **How about residences for visiting artists?**

We would also like to provide residential space, but see that as a second phase of the development of the Center. Ideally we would like to build a few bungalows for building and grounds caretakers and for the artists-in-residence. However, we envision these bungalows to not reside next to the main building. We want to maintain an image of open space immediately around the building. Ideally these bungalows would reside on the western edge of the county property so that they will not detract from the historical building. An alternative would be start off with only a few residents inside the main building while still maintaining a primary focus on art creation inside the building along with mingling, sharing and educational activities.

### **How would the Center be managed?**

We see the creation of a non-profit organization to manage the facility. It is also possible that an existing organization in the area could perform that role. Our desire is for the facility to be self-sustainable. We still need to work out the financial model for the Center. We would expect that the initial cost of the rehab of the building would be funded through a combination of grants and donations.

**Is this duplicating what already exists?**

As we understand the situation, there is no current facility whose primary purpose is to stimulate and cultivate the collaborative creative process across the breadth of arts forms. There is no facility that provides meeting and office space for our wonderful arts institutions and organizations.

We have a great set of performing art centers including the PAC at Cal Poly, the CPAC at Cuesta and the Clark Center, but they each have a significant size of audience threshold. The SLOCA would be able to address performances and groups that fall below their thresholds.

There are several galleries including the wonderful Museum of Art, but no facility that primarily works to stimulate the creative process of visual arts. Art After Dark and the Artist Tours come closest, but even Arts Obispo does not have a facility. We have an International Film Festival, but it is primarily limited to one occasion a year. In the past there has been a writers conference/workshop, but that can be expanded. And so on.

We would expect the SLOCA to partner and support each of these existing efforts.

**Where would the Center be located?**

That is a great question. As a starting point we have chosen the property behind the old General Hospital. It is currently vacant with about 20 acres of mostly open land. It contains a historical building which needs to be rehabilitated and repurposed. It provides wonderful views and would seem to be a perfect location for a Center that would be a benefit to the entire community and for which there appears to be no overall vision.

However there are issues with that property which would require the support from the County, the City and an organization that currently has an option on the historical building. We feel that using that site for planning and conceptualization of the Center makes the most sense since it is quite possible that the land could become available. We will continue to research other locations for the Center and as an alternative for the organization that currently holds the option on the building.

**What is the next step in moving this concept forward?**

We have many hurdles to overcome before this can become a reality. Our first task is to transform our concept into a substantial plan including the building design, the prioritization of goals, the participation of the various artist groups in the county, the estimate of costs, both initial and on-going, creating a sustainable business model and the creation of an executive board to help in developing this plan.

Once the plan is complete, we expect to present it to the public to gain support for the concept. We feel that our current County and City governments, staff and elected, do not understand the potential benefit to the entire SLO county and city communities. We feel that to convince them we will need a strong outcry from the residents of our communities.

To date, no one has created a vision for the use of the existing property, only piece meal plans and efforts to minimize responsibility and liability. The County Board of Supervisors and staff appear to have jumped at straws that promise to relieve them of their problem child, not to put together a vision that benefits the breadth of our community. They will need to be awakened to the opportunity.

**Who are the targets and stakeholders of the Center and the property vision? And what would motivate them to join and participate in the concept?**

- Artists
  - For the visual artists a strong motivator is retail. Secondary would be facilities, then collegiality and education. For the performing arts rehearsal facilities. All: the ability to meet, create, share and educate.
- Art Lovers
  - A place for the creative process to be nurtured and flourish. A seed to encourage creative art when many of our institutions have pulled away from supporting the arts.
- Neighbors
  - A vision for a property that has been stagnant for over 40 years. A plan that maintains much of the open space and maintains the access to that open space by the neighborhood
- Students
  - A facility that encourages creative arts, provides programs for learning about the arts and the creative process. A resource for the budding artist.
- Community
  - A venue that can be enjoyed by the entire community, not just a few privileged.
- Hikers
  - Access to a trail head with adequate parking.
- Nature Lovers
  - Access to areas of nature scape and natural open space.
- Dog Owners
  - Continued access to the area where they currently walk their dogs.
- County
  - Rehabilitation of an abandon building and release of liability that it brings.
- City
  - A new area for public use.

**What are some concerns about the use of the property for this concept?**

There are several areas of concern by the neighborhood. However, these concerns must be evaluated not compared to the current status, but to the expected conditions should the Transitions project be implemented. But that does not mean that the areas of concern should be ignored in the design of the center.

- Brings more cars and uses land for parking and roads at the expense of open space
- Brings more people
- Brings more noise

The plan will be designed to minimize the impact of these issues on the neighborhood.

**What kinds of artists would we target?**

Visual Arts:

- drawing
- painting
- sculpture,
- photography,
- film,
- video,
- new media,
- installation,

Literary Arts:

- fiction and nonfiction writing,
- poetry,
- screen plays,

Performing Arts

- dance – performing and creation (choreography)
- music – performing and creation (composition, production and orchestration),
- vocal – performing and creation (song writing and composing)
- opera
- acting – performing and creation (screen play, director, fashion, sets)

Other:

- art education,
- interdisciplinary,
- social practice,
- architecture,
- landscape,
- design,
- culinary,
- floral,
- and more to be determined

**Are you proposing uses for the surrounding property in addition to the 1.3 acres current envisioned by the county?**

Yes, we are looking at a total package for the unused space behind the old General Hospital. So far, there are no plans that we have found nor a vision for the property. We are concerned that if it continues to be viewed piece-meal, we will end up with a mishmash of uses and lose the benefit of a planned vision.

Our overriding perspective is that the property should be viewed as a whole with the primary purpose to provide a benefit to a broad spectrum of the community. We see the property as a contiguous area that can be valued by many, not just a few. While the center focuses on the art community, we see its benefit for the entire community – rich to poor, old to young.

In a similar way, we are looking to add uses to the surrounding property that also provide a broad benefit target audience. One of the most pressing is the conservation of open space and providing access to it while not spoiling it. Gardens, landscaping, trails, park-like areas, etc. are the primarily envisioned uses. All of these fit within the concept of open space.

**While the county has already released the 1.3 acres for non-governmental use, how would that work for the remaining property.**

That is a good question. We can understand that the county may not want to provide the entire parcel or commit to our vision. However, we would ask county do what other agencies in their position have done. That is to lease the property for a reasonable time period for implementing our vision. The National Parks Service leases the Headlands Center for the Arts for 20 year periods. That way, if a pressing county need was identified in the future and the electorate concurred that the new need was a higher priority than the existing use, the lease would not be renewed.

**Previously, you mentioned building bungalows on county property not part of the Sunny Acres option.**

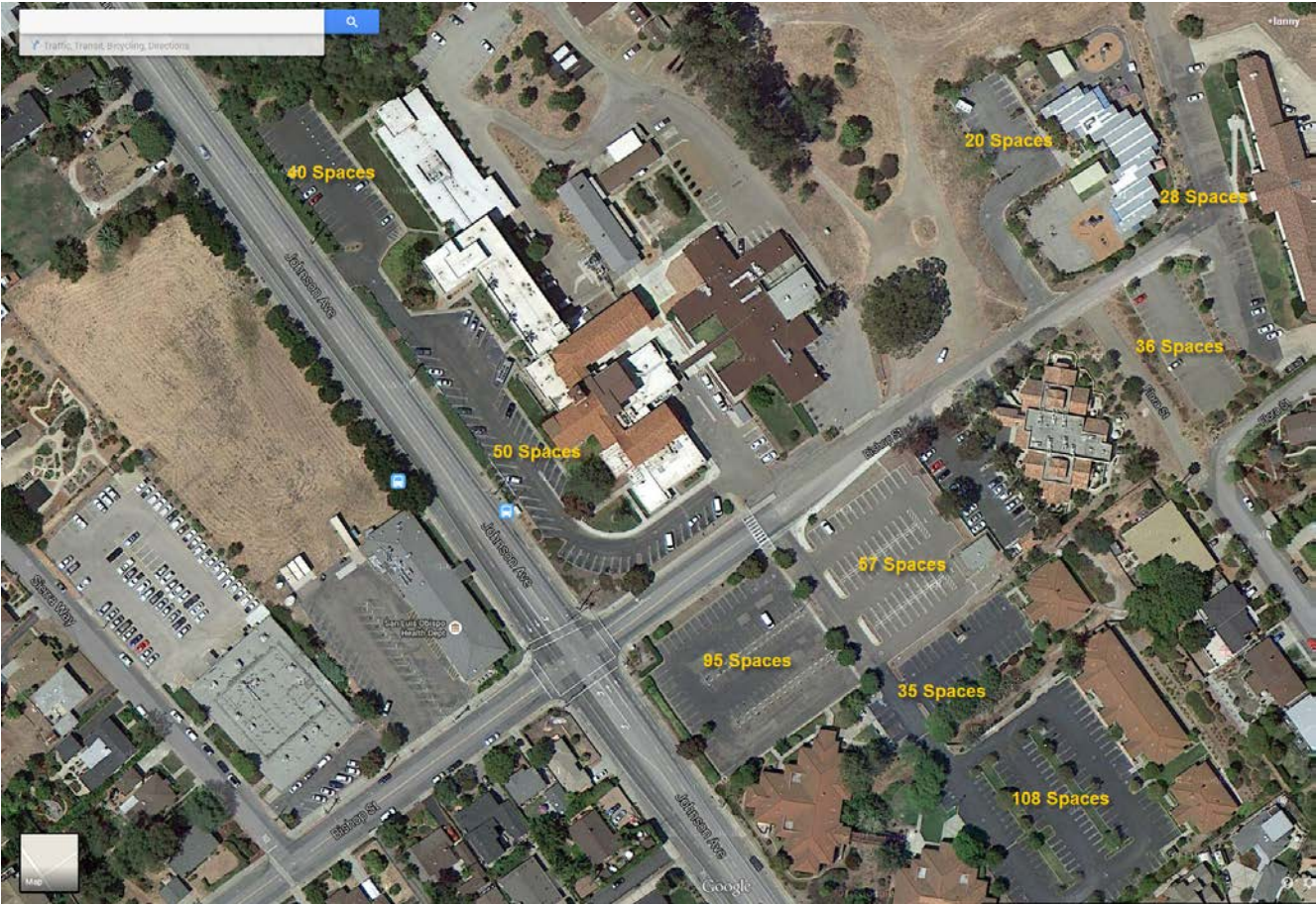
Yes, we did. It would be our hope that we could negotiate with the county for the land adjacent to the Sunny Acres option parcel between the parcel and the adjoining private land to the north and west. If you look at the map of the entire county property with the Sunny Acres option parcel boundaries shown, you will note that there is a relatively thin strip of property to the north and to the west with a larger parcel in the corner to the northwest. If the Transitions project were to proceed, those parcel zoned residential would not be practical for residential use. Only the corner parcel might be useable, but we cannot image that anyone would develop that lot given the high density of the Transitions project and the residents status. So we would propose to the county that those parcels be included in the Sunny Acres option.

**What about parking?**

Yes, parking is an issue since we do not want to create additional parking spaces on the surrounding property. The general concept of the Center is to maintain as much natural open space as possible. Adding a significant number of parking spaces adjacent to the building would obviously violate the desire to maintain open space. Fortunately, there are already more than 350 parking spaces adjoining the general area of the property. These spaces are primarily used during normal business hours 5 days a week. This would leave them available for us by Center participants and guests during non-business hours, weekends and holidays.

What would need to be added is some form of transportation from the parking areas to the Center property. That needs to be worked out, but some combination of the Trolley, shuttle buses, golf carts, etc. will need to be put in place.



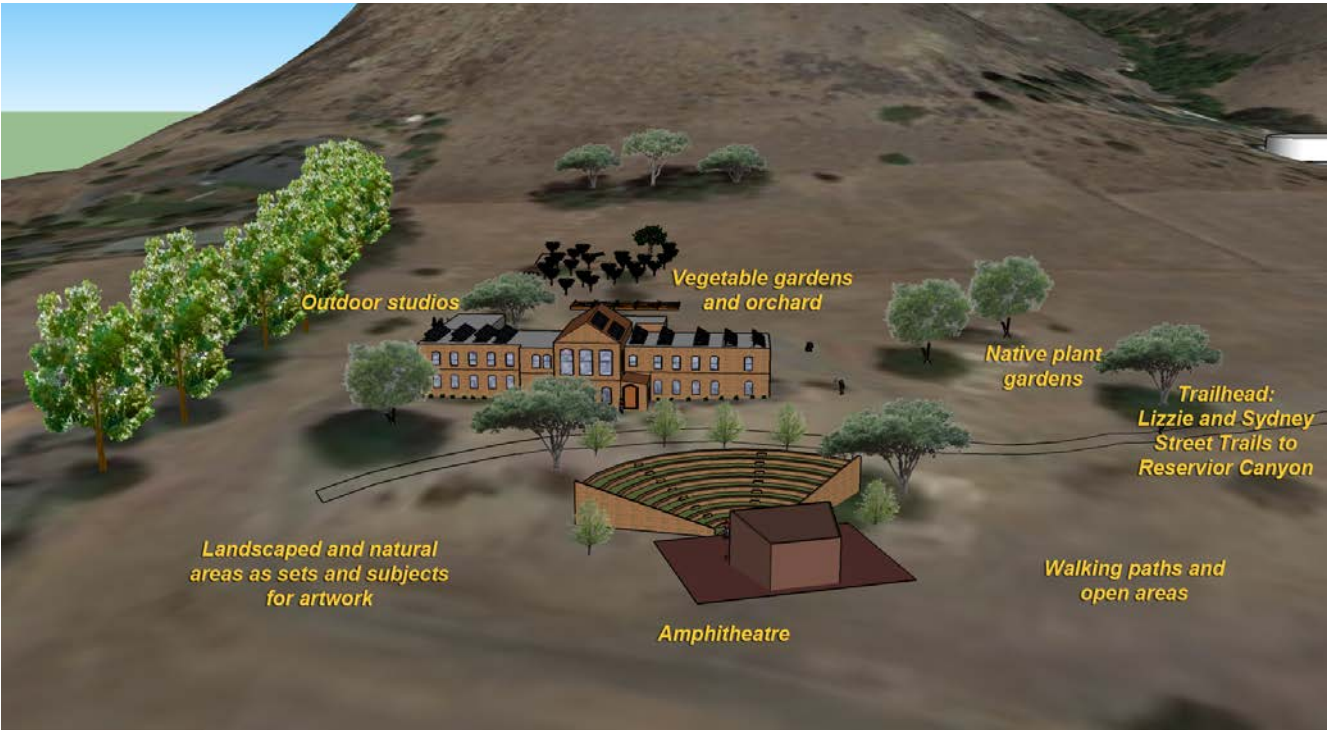


Parking spaces available adjoining the SLOCA property

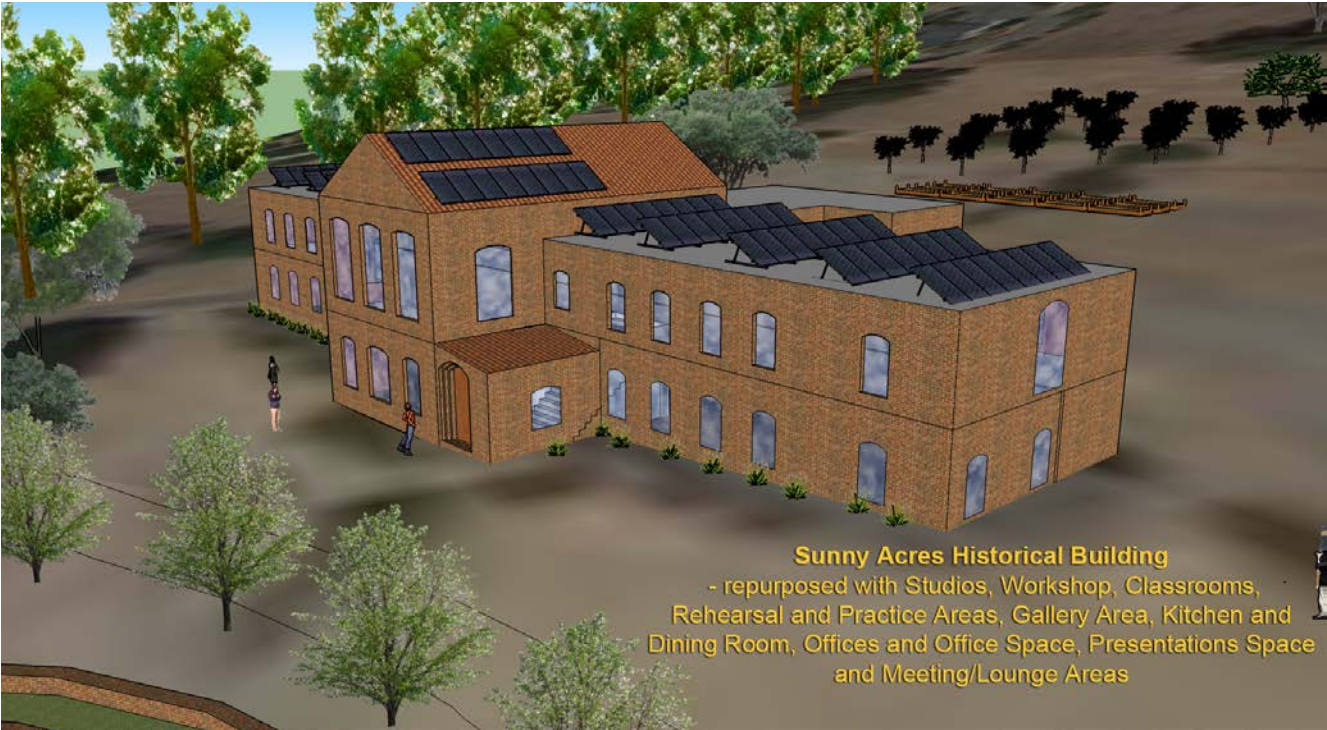


Satellite View of the area with property boundaries.





Conceptual rendering of the campus.



Rendering of the Sunny Acres repurposed building





Rendering of the amphitheater with a capacity of 200 – 300.



Rendering of the areas used as an outdoor studio.



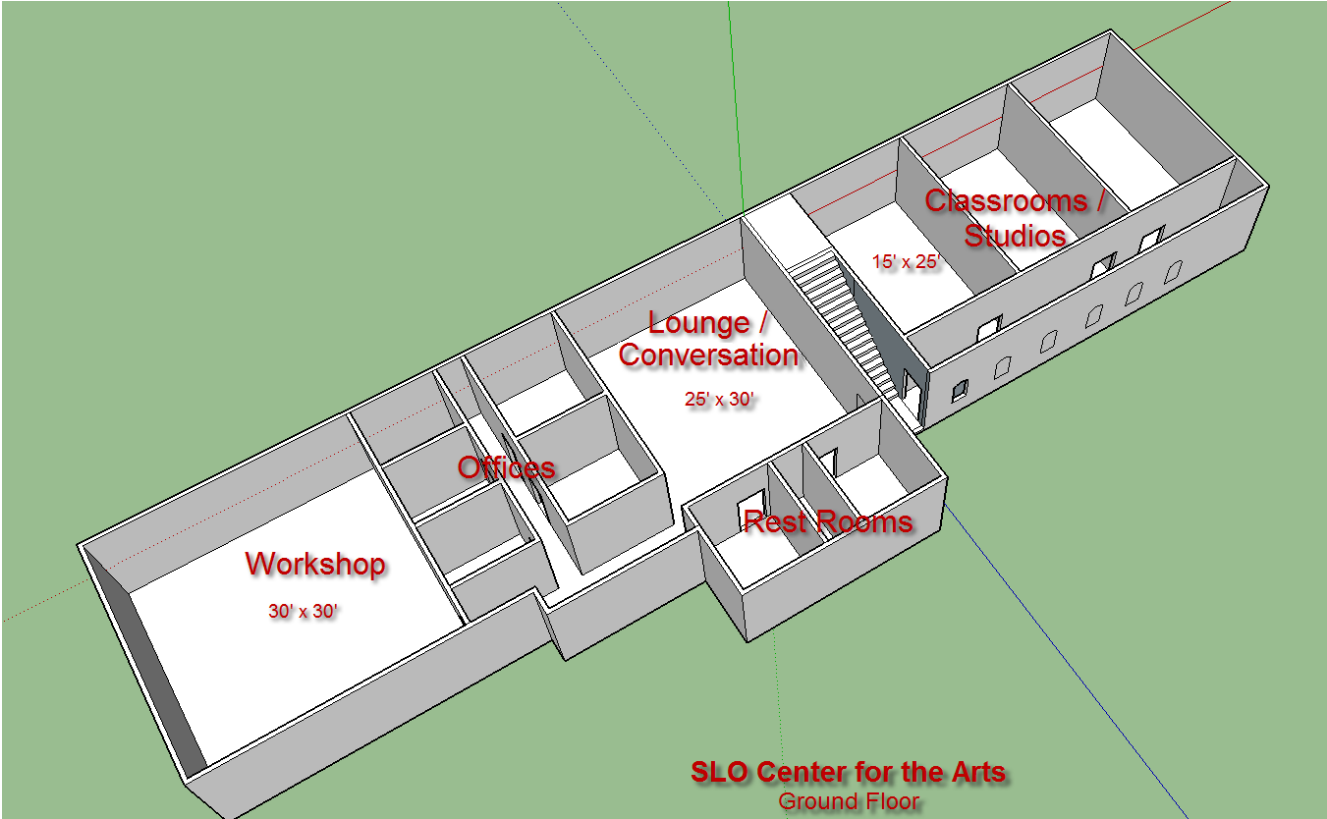
Gardens and Orchards

Rendering of the area behind the building used for gardens and orchard.

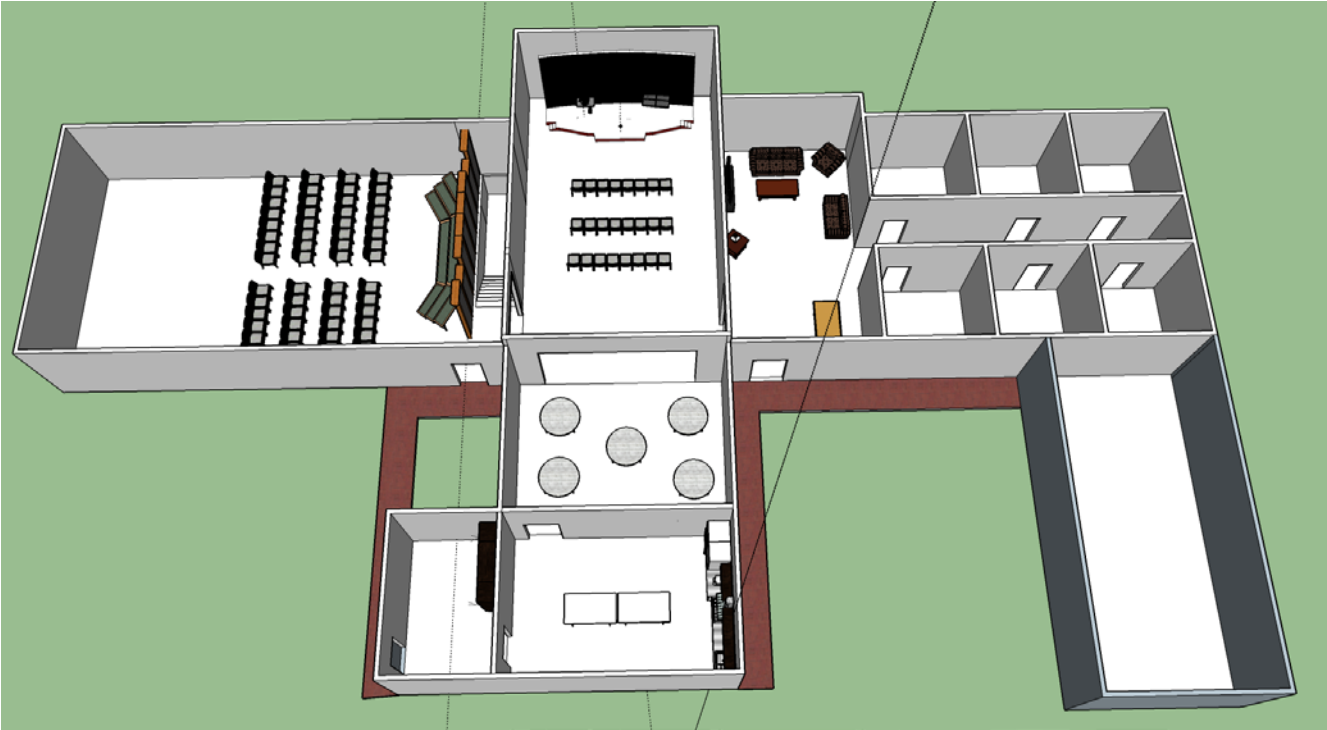


SLO Center for the Arts  
Top Floor

Potential floor plan of the top floor.

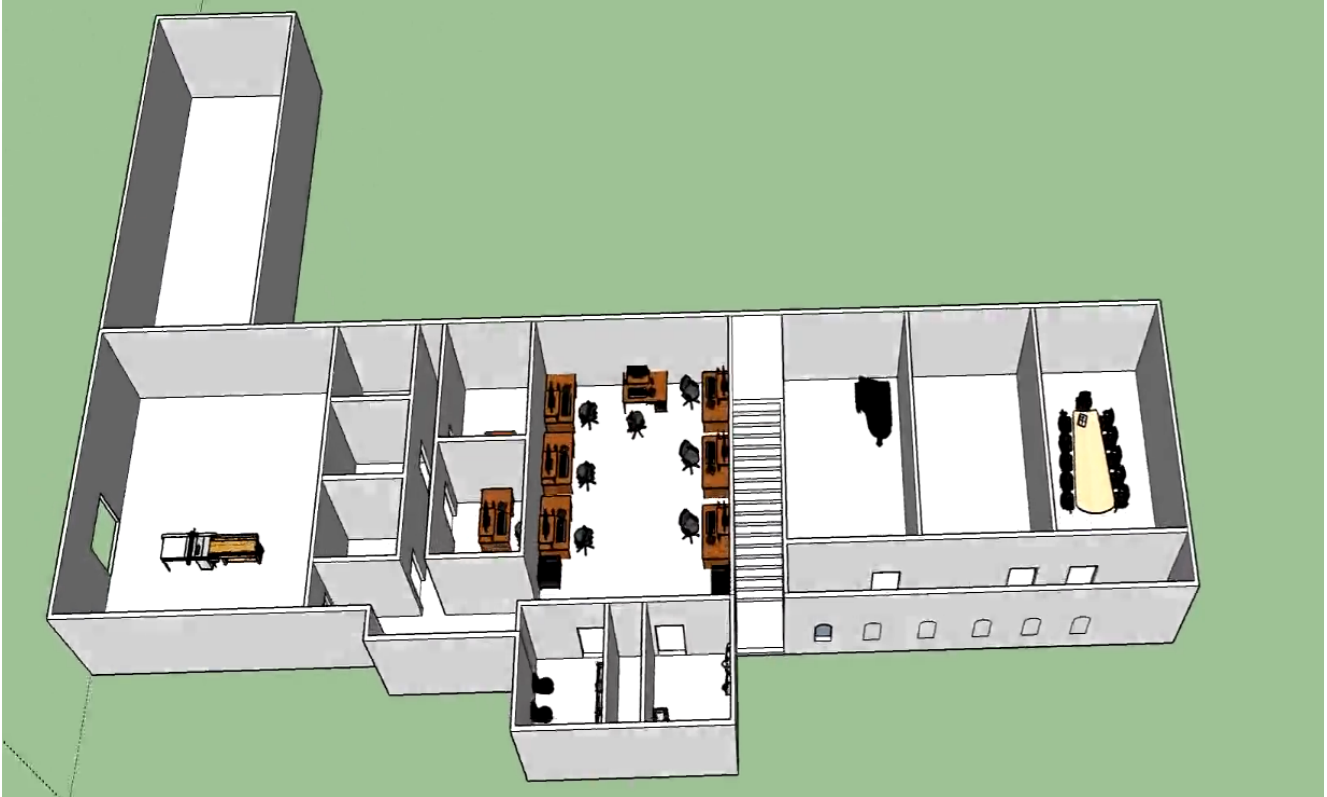


Potential floor plan of the bottom floor.



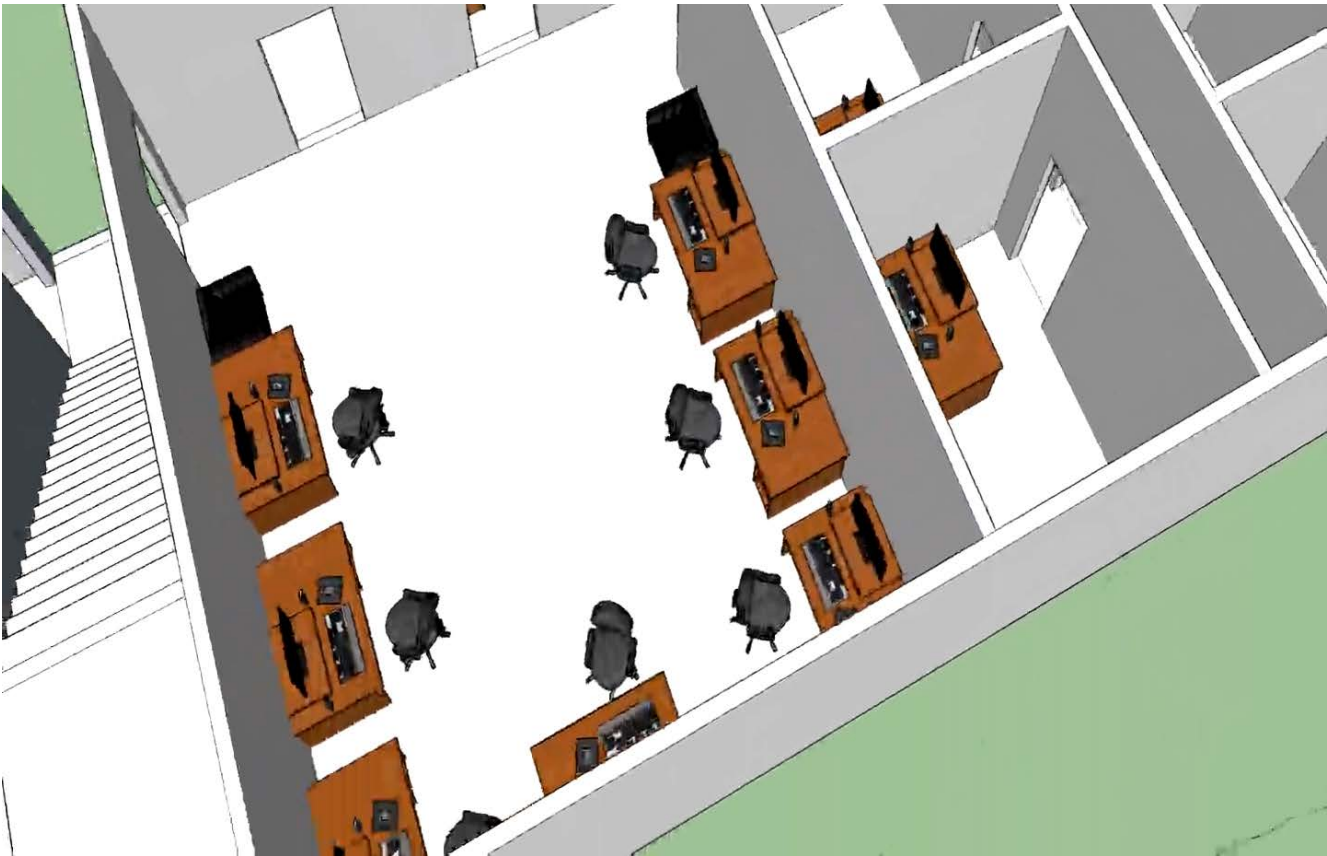


Kitchen and Dining Room.



Potential configuration of the bottom floor.





Open, shared office area