

Strategic Plan

February 18, 2002



Myrna Loy presents the strategic plan.

The Myrna Loy Center

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Introduction

By Bob Anderson

President, Board of Directors

Welcome to the Myrna Loy Center (affectionately called “the Myrna Loy” or just “the Myrna”) and its strategic plan. This plan reviews the strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities the Myrna faces; presents our Mission Statement; and outlines goals and objectives that to direct the organization toward achieving its mission.

The Myrna Loy Center has a rich history, starting in the mid-1970s as an art and foreign film house. It has developed into a dynamic small-city performing arts center with a national reputation for excellence.

In the last few years, the Myrna has gone through a series of dramatic occurrences:

- departure of the founding executive director;
- financial stress;
- temporary closure and layoff of all employees; and
- reopening, after only six months.

The Myrna closed its doors for a period in 2000 because revenues weren’t keeping up with expenses. The reaction to this closure from the community was a deafening “No!”. Almost immediately, community meetings were convened to try to figure out how to save the Myrna. The Myrna’s established and important place in the community became clear. More than one patron said: “The reason I live in Helena is the Myrna!”

Thanks to a concerted effort by the Board of Trustees, the help of many volunteers, and a broad-based campaign called “Reopening the Doors,” the Myrna did indeed come back to life only six months after the crisis hit. After reopening in September, 2000, the Board of Trustees and its supporting community re-committed to the Myrna’s mission and to a strong, stable organization that could continue to fulfill that mission for a long time.

At this writing in early 2002 we are operating at full speed with a committed Board and staff and full performance and film programs. After a period of reflection and hard work, we are ready to face the challenges and opportunities of the future. This plan represents a roadmap for meeting our challenges and fulfilling our potential over the next few years.

The audience of the plan is:

- the board of trustees and staff;
- patrons and constituents; and
- funders, both traditional and prospective.

Executive Summary

The events of the past few years have demanded that the Board, staff and community take a hard look at the Myrna Loy Center, its mission, and its operations. After much soul-searching, we have reaffirmed our Mission Statement, have clearly identified the opportunities and roadblocks we face, and have already begun implementing this Strategic Plan.

The Myrna Loy faces several external challenges:

- the small size of the Helena community;
- the poor condition of the national and the state economies;
- the decline in national funding for the arts;
- small pool of individual and corporate donors;
- competition from excellent local arts organizations; and
- the new age of terrorism, with its effects on the national psyche.

We also recognize external opportunities:

- Helena is very cultured and supportive of the arts;
- The Lewis and Clark Bicentennial will bring in thousands of visitors over the next 5 years;
- Uncertainty about travel *may* keep more discretionary dollars in Helena.

We have recognized our internal weaknesses:

- This historic building has some inherent limitations;
- The Myrna is weak in the area of earned income, and needs to diversify funding sources;
- Building and equipment will need updating/upgrading soon;
- A small staff is carrying an enormous work load.

We are also blessed with a few important strengths:

- Remarkable community support;
- Continuing national reputation for presenting high-caliber arts activities;
- Talented, capable staff and dedicated Board;
- Continuing successful programming of live events and films;
- The Myrna Loy itself is a draw;
- We have rebuilt, nurtured and sustained good relationships with constituents, funders, artists and the community at large.

The Board and staff have implemented most of the recommendations of Morrie Warshawski's *Infrastructure Assessment of the Myrna Loy*, which principally addressed business systems and organizational infrastructure. Remaining are these challenging issues: seating limitations of the Myrna's auditorium and the need to diversify funding.

Myrna's three goals:

- continue to maintain and develop the organization;
- strengthen and diversify funding, especially earned income; and
- maintain and expand creative, artistic offerings.

The Board will implement the Strategic Plan through its committees: Board Development, Building, Finance, Fundraising, Marketing, Human Resources and Programming. Each committee has a set of goals and objectives, which can be implemented on an ongoing basis and evaluated quarterly and annually.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Myrna Loy Center is to present the arts—media, performing, literary and visual—in an educational context, with challenging and culturally enriching programs, by local and regional artists as well as artists who would not otherwise appear in the Helena area or in Montana.

A mission statement much like this has been in place for many years. It has been reviewed, reconsidered, refined and re-adopted many times. As an early part of the recent strategic planning process, it was once again revisited. Once again, the Board, with strong advice from its constituent community, reaffirms this mission.

There should be no doubt that the Myrna will not only nurture and support local and regional artists, helping them to develop audiences, but also present top quality national performers.

History

Built on a hope and a dream

The Myrna Loy Center began its life as Second Story Cinema, founded by Arnie Malina in 1976. Its mission was to show good movies: American classics, foreign films and works by independent and underground filmmakers. King Kong was the first billing, followed by The Thin Man series with William Powell and Myrna Loy.

After a few years on the second floor of a historic building in downtown Helena, Second Story Cinema began to present live events under the name Helena Presents, with local poets, musicians, theater, satirical revues and multimedia shows. Between 1985 and 1991, Helena Presents grew an edge and a reputation, and began bringing in cutting-edge dance companies, jazz and modern music ensembles. It gained national renown for theme festivals and for commissioning collaborations among performance artists, dancers, musicians and composers. Helena Presents put Helena on the map of the top spots for the arts in the west.

Historically, our Series for the Performing Arts has presented traditional and innovative works by culturally diverse artists of national stature. Helena Presents not only brought unique entertainment resources to Helena; it also nurtured local and regional artists and created opportunities for arts and humanities education in the community.

By 1985, the program began to outgrow its small space and a search began in Helena's historic downtown district for a suitable building that could accommodate a cinema, a performance space, offices for the growing organization's staff, and a video-editing suite.

In 1985, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) awarded a grant that enabled the organization to acquire and renovate the historic Lewis and Clark County Jail. Helena's native daughter, Myrna Loy, graciously lent the enterprise her prestigious name. The Myrna Loy Center for the Media and Performing Arts opened in 1991 with two film theaters, a lovely performance space, a lobby art gallery, and a stunning native slate lobby floor created by stone artist David Culver.

The flourishing Myrna gained nationwide support

In its new digs, the Myrna Loy Center flourished. It received many major project grants, including: the American Theater Festival Storytelling Project; the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Jazz Network; a four-year Audience Development Grant from the Lila Wallace Fund; an APAN Arts Partners Program; the Meet the Composer Jazz Program; New Music Alliance Mini-Festival Project; and NEA funding for numerous events including the recent *A Médis Legacy* and *Katherine Kramer's Rhythms of Helena*. The Arts Plus Program and the Kennedy Center Partners in Education Program became leading national models for arts education. The Ruth and Vernon Taylor Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation made long-term commitments for funding. The Myrna Loy Center was one of the founding members of the National Performance Network and has provided residency and performance opportunities for over a decade with NPN funding. The Myrna has received funding through WESTAF, the Montana Arts Council Cultural Trust,

and the Knight Foundation. With the Montana Performing Arts Consortium it brought major block booking opportunities to rural performing arts agencies. The Myrna Loy Center has also received grants from NAMAC for its media program and most recently to study earned income at media arts centers.

The dark night of the soul

By the late 1990s, things began to change. Founder Arnie Malina departed for eastern pastures, taking with him the charisma, personal connections and “creator’s momentum” that had helped the organization compensate for its financial challenges. Remaining staff, new staff and the Board of Trustees tried unsuccessfully to shore up the Myrna’s image, keep its artistic momentum going, fixing financial and administrative problems that had gone unattended. At the same time, traditional arts grant sources dried up or became hyper-competitive. Revenues began to fall short of expenses. Due to a convergence of these and other factors, the Myrna Loy hit a critical point. On March 1, 2000, the Board was forced to close the doors. The year’s remaining performance and film programs were cancelled, and the entire staff was let go.

The day the doors closed, the Helena community began rallying. With tremendous community support, the Myrna’s Board of Trustees resolved to overcome the present difficulties, open the doors again, and help the Myrna to prosper. The Board and a number of committed community volunteers marshaled their resources and raised enough money to pay all the debts and obligations and to re-open the Myrna with a leaner staff and performance program. The doors reopened on September 1, 2000.

The re-created, reaffirmed Myrna Loy Center

Today, the Myrna Loy Center is a mature organization. It grew out of a burst of energy from dreamers with wild and carefree spirits. Now it has reached its mid-life stride by identifying the obstacles to success, and creating a roadmap to follow.

Today, the Myrna Loy Center’s goal is to continue to invigorate the Helena community by:

- showing the best contemporary films;
- stimulating new collaborations among diverse artists; and
- showcasing national, regional and local performers with unique and excellent presentations to share with a knowledgeable and enthusiastic audience.

Changes we have made

From its 1976 inception, the Myrna was staff-dominated, largely due to the energy, creativity, and effectiveness of its founder and his staff. As the Center matured, it became clear that some aspects of the operation lacked stability. After reopening on September 1, 2000, the Board determined to do whatever was necessary to stabilize and strengthen the organization and its finances in order to avoid another closure.

- They listened to the Myrna Loy’s clientele.

- They hired Ed Noonan as Interim Director.
- They engaged arts organization consultant Morrie Warshawski to assess the organizational infrastructure of the Myrna and to make recommendations for improvements in its governance, staff, fiscal operations, business systems and programs.

Today Ed Noonan serves as the Myrna Loy Center's Executive Director. He successfully supervises a core staff of three full-time and five part-time employees, monitors improved business and financial systems, plans and executes a full performance program and works effectively with a largely new board of directors.

Mr. Warshawski's findings and recommendations, *Infrastructure Assessment of the Myrna Loy Center*, were presented to the Board and Staff in January 2001. The Board seriously studied Warshawski's report, embraced its findings and recommendations, and endeavored to follow his advice. In the past year, the Board and staff:

- renewed its commitment and sense of responsibility for the welfare of the institution;
- improved fund-raising planning;
- increased the Board's involvement in fundraising;
- installed better, more professional business systems;
- developed simpler and more understandable cash-flow projections;
- identified key financial indicators and established financial benchmarks for improved management and reports to the Board;
- instituted stricter accounting practices for the use of restricted grant funds;
- updated and improved donor records;
- established a membership program;
- improved grant proposal writing;
- began planning to increase earned income;
- began to develop plans to increase contributions to the endowment;
- restructured Board committees and redefined their jobs and goals;
- assessed and modified the Myrna's organizational structure;

- used website and web technology to support Myrna’s programs;
- recommitted the Board and Staff to enhance relationships with the Myrna’s audiences, members, and donors; and
- embarked on a Strategic Planning process.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Myrna Loy Center has weathered the turn of the millennium to arrive alive and healthy in the 2000’s with new hopes, new dreams and a plan to achieve them, rising out of a community committed to seeing that the Myrna remains central to life in Helena and Montana.

Yet, like all nonprofit organizations, the Myrna Loy Center faces challenges. Many of these are external in nature and beyond the control of the organization. Others are unique to the organization and tend to be under the influence of the organization itself. All must be faced.

External challenges

Helena is a small town with a big city flavor. Helena has a population of 26,000, in a county with 56,000. Adjoining counties of Jefferson and Broadwater are 10,000 and 4,400, respectively. The community has an eager interest in the arts, partly because of the presence of the Myrna. For 26 years, the Myrna has been an active community member, engaging community and statewide groups with films, performances and workshops meaningful to their constituencies. Not surprisingly, the local *Independent Record* enjoys its highest readership and distribution on Friday, the day the arts/cultural insert, “Your Time,” appears.

Small population base: Helena’s small population presents some inherent difficulties:

- lack of a critical mass of people to provide audiences for some performances;
- a limited business-sponsorship base;
- a limited pool of major individual and corporate donors; and
- competition from other excellent arts organizations.

Depressed economy: Another significant challenge results from the status of Montana’s economy. As recently as the 1950s, Montana ranked among the top ten states for per-capita income. Now, Montana is among the bottom five states. Montana’s traditional commodity-based economy—natural resources and agriculture—is suffering. Exacerbating that situation is the national economy, which recently has also taken a downturn.

Arts funding in crisis: At the national level, funding for the arts has plummeted dramatically in recent years. Large, multi-year foundation grants are much less available and the federal government has significantly scaled back its support to state and local arts programs.

Social uncertainty: The attacks of September 11, 2001, changed everything in America. Only time will tell how much and for how long.

The attacks exacerbated the national recession. Philanthropy has tightened nation-wide and there has been a redirection of philanthropy—much of it has gone to causes related to the terrorist attacks. In addition, many Americans are staying home more, spending less, and perhaps taking fewer risks.

On the positive side, there is an increased need for entertainment, diversion and stimulation. Americans need to appreciate the good in their country and they need art more than ever. The Myrna is in the business of meeting this need in Helena.

Internal challenges

Mr. Warshawski pinpointed two serious issues that transcend business systems and organizational infrastructure.

Building limitations: Our building, as beautiful and functional as it is, has only about 250 seats in its main auditorium. This limits the kind of performances that can be presented and also limits potential revenue from performances and rentals. The alternative is the Civic Center, which seats up to 1,800, making it a costly and challenging venue for breaking even on any performance.

Income diversity: The Myrna, over the last many years before its closure in 2000, was too dependent on grant funding. This funding source has declined, necessitating a more diverse funding base.

In addition, the Board and staff have identified certain issues and realities that pose challenges to the Myrna in the years ahead:

Smaller staff: The wide variety of work that was done historically must now be accomplished by a smaller staff with a smaller budget. Creating new sources of earned income is risky, takes a commitment, and requires investment and business skills, which places more demands on the Myrna's limited resources and staff.

Funding uncertainties can create chaos: Grant-funding sources vary from year to year and impact the program offerings of the Myrna.

Strengths

The Myrna Loy Center brings significant strengths to these issues and realities:

- The Myrna is an established Helena institution with a national reputation.
- The building is a Helena landmark that draws people to it.
- The Helena community is cultured and very supportive.
- The Board of Trustees is active and committed to the Myrna’s mission and success.
- The staff is talented and well managed.
- Donors, motivated by the rich program offerings of the Myrna, are renewing their support.

The Plan: Goals and Objectives

Keeping in mind the Myrna Loy Center’s Mission Statement, we have created a “tree” of Goals and Objectives.



Goal. A general, subjective statement of a desired future condition, consistent with the mission.

Objective. An achievement, measurable in quantity and time. A step toward a goal.

The plan has a vertical hierarchy. Starting with the mission, the reader can ask: how? How to achieve the mission statement? By achieving the goals. How to achieve the goals? By accomplishing a set of objectives.

In the other direction, starting with an objective, the reader can ask: why this objective? The answer is the goal above it. Why this goal? The answer is the mission statement.

The goals are organized around committees, which have substantive responsibility for activity areas. These committees (and activities) are:

- Board Development
- Building
- Finance
- Fundraising
- Marketing
- Human Resources
- Programming.

The Board embraces the following goals and objectives (with their targeted timelines) for the organization.

Board Development

The Board Development Committee recruits and orients new Trustees.

Goal 1. To have a strong, diverse Board with the required talent, time, commitment, skill and knowledge.

<u>Objective 1.</u> Re-establish the Board Development Committee.	October, 2001
<u>Objective 2.</u> Update the Board matrix of talents and skills.	February, 2002
<u>Objective 3.</u> Continuously re-evaluate the size of the Board in terms of need and practicality.	Ongoing
<u>Objective 4.</u> Re-evaluate the definition of the Board's role.	February, 2002

Building

The Building Committee looks after the Myrna's facility and equipment to make sure they are in good physical condition and support performances and films.

Goal 1. To have the building be in good physical condition.

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Develop a checklist for all building maintenance. | June, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Perform short-term improvements (as fiscally possible). | Ongoing |
| <u>Objective 3.</u> Develop a plan for long-term improvements. | June, 2002 |

Goal 2. To have the building and its equipment provide necessary support for performances and films.

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Develop a checklist for all equipment maintenance. | June, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Perform routine equipment maintenance. | Ongoing |
| <u>Objective 3.</u> Develop a plan for equipment needs. | June, 2002 |

Finance

The Finance Committee watches the bottom line and helps the Board discharge its financial and fiduciary responsibilities.

Goal 1. To assure the fiscal strength and viability of the Myrna Loy Center.

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Develop an annual budget. | 3 months before start of fiscal year |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Evaluate the financial performance relative to the budget. | Monthly |
| <u>Objective 3.</u> Report timely, accurate financial information to the Board. | Monthly |
| <u>Objective 4.</u> Recommend corrective actions. | Ongoing |
| <u>Objective 5.</u> Develop policies for: borrowing, reserves and use of restricted funds. | March, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 6.</u> Oversee the completion of the annual audit. | Timely and annually |

Fundraising

The Fundraising Committee helps the Development Director raise money.

Goal 1. To fulfill the Myrna's needs for unearned (donated and grant) income.

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Establish a membership program that increases revenue by 5.1% annually. | July, 2003 |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Increase the endowment by 10% per year over the next two fiscal years. | July, 2004 |
| <u>Objective 3.</u> Develop a strategy for business sponsors for 2002-03 events. | March, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 4.</u> Write an annual fundraising plan with clearly defined strategies. | February, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 5.</u> Train and engage the Board in fundraising. | Ongoing |

Marketing

The Marketing Committee works on the earned income side of the Myrna's income budget: ticket sales, rentals and new opportunities.

Goal 1. To increase public awareness of the Myrna Loy Center.

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Outreach: have staff attend 10-12 meetings a year of other organizations/events. | Ongoing |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Investigate the feasibility/desirability of a plasma marquee. | April, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 3.</u> Develop a consistent Myrna Loy Center image in marketing materials. | Ongoing |
| <u>Objective 4.</u> Develop and implement a plan for increased effective use of radio and television. | May, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 5.</u> Continue to use website as key component of providing information to audience. | Ongoing |

Goal 2. To maximize ticket sales.

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Develop a quarterly marketing plan for live performances, films and education opportunities. | Quarterly |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Create special programs for targeted audiences. | 3 times per year |

Goal 3. To increase rental revenue

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Develop a marketing plan for rentals. | March, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Develop a baseline for measuring the increase over 2001-02 rental figures. | June 2002 |
| <u>Objective 3.</u> Increase earned income by 10% annually over the next 3 fiscal years. | 2005 |

Human Resources

The Human Resources Committee deals with personnel issues.

Goal 1. To have in place good personnel policies

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Adopt a personnel policy. | January, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Establish hiring policies and employee files. | February, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 3.</u> Re-examine volunteer program needs and policies. | annually |

Goal 2. To have standards for retention of staff and volunteers.

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Continue to reexamine staffing needs and appropriate levels of compensation | annually |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Develop monetary and non-monetary incentives for staff. | March 2002 |

Programming

The Program Committee assists and advises the Executive Director and the Film Director in the design of performance and film programs.

Goal 1. To have a thriving program of live national, regional and local performances.

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Create a 2003 slate of live events. | May, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Continue the summertime <i>Mondays at the Myrna</i> with local artists. | March, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 3.</u> Evaluate performances for service to both audiences and artists. | Ongoing |

Goal 2. Have a vital Film/Video Program.

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Present 1 or 2 films nightly. | Ongoing |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Present family matinees 3 – 6 times per year. | Ongoing |
| <u>Objective 3.</u> Present media events: lectures, festivals and special films. | Ongoing |
| <u>Objective 4.</u> Evaluate the balance among art, independent and mainstream films. | March, 2002 |

Goal 3. Have an Arts/Media education program.

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Have 3 – 4 arts residencies a year. | Ongoing |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Have workshop performances and literary events 3 – 6 times a year. | Ongoing |
| <u>Objective 3.</u> Investigate developing a new summer arts program and an after school program for youth. | March, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 4.</u> Have a pilot round of media classes and rentals. | November, 2001 |
| <u>Objective 5.</u> Evaluate and set a schedule after the pilot round. | December, 2001 |
| <u>Objective 6.</u> Partner with other arts organizations on education experiences twice a year. | Ongoing |

Goal 4. To have a creative Visual Arts program.

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| <u>Objective 1.</u> Offer exhibition space for 8 artists each year. | Ongoing |
| <u>Objective 2.</u> Evaluate the front gallery as an ongoing exhibition space. | July, 2002 |
| <u>Objective 3.</u> Partner with other arts organization in creating visual art events and classes twice a year. | Ongoing |

Implementation and Evaluation

This strategic plan, which represents most of what the Myrna does, will be implemented by the organization's partnership between board and staff. The staff does most of the work, but the board provides guidance, advice, and volunteer labor, along with policy direction.

Just as the goals and objectives were developed by the committees and are organized around committee function, implementation will be overseen and evaluated by the committees.

Each committee has a more detailed work plan, which conforms with this strategic plan. Those action plans specify specific actions toward each goal.

Quarterly, an evaluation of the strategic plan implementation will automatically be put on the Board's agenda. The Executive Director and the committee chairs will assess the success, problems, and updates to the implementation of the objectives. The obvious questions will be asked: How did we do? Did we do what we said we would? If not, why not? What changes should be made to the plan?

Annually, the Board will have a special meeting/retreat to review the goals and update them, clarifying and changing objectives in light of changes to the goals.

In the annual evaluations of the work of the Board, the Executive Director, and the staff, one of the primary yardsticks for job performance will be the strategic plan and how it is being implemented. This plan will not sit on a shelf or lie in computer file as a historical document. It will be open on desks, regularly accessed on the Myrna's shared drive, and on the table when the Board of Trustees meets.