

northbaybusinessjournal.com

This is a printer friendly version of an article from www.northbaybusinessjournal.com

To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published - Jul 23, 2007

COMMENTARY: To enter the Green Center is to step into the future

[Brad Bollinger](#),

BUSINESS JOURNAL EDITOR IN CHIEF

Walking into the under-construction Green Music Center at Sonoma State University, one can't help being filled with a sense of awe.

It is like stepping into the future. Or like stepping into a dream.

Except it is real.

Nearly a decade after the idea was conceived, this magnificent place for music, arts, education and lectures is becoming a reality.

Yes, this complex of buildings for education, recitals and performances is expensive: \$98 million. And money is still needed to complete it.

But, as telecom pioneer and center benefactor Don Green has said, the project ultimately is about this generation of North Bay residents leaving something of great value for future generations.

And what a gift it is.

The main hall won't be just good, it will be one the best in the world. The acoustics are so sophisticated it is expected to take weeks to give the hall its initial "tuning."

And because it is world class, it will attract world-class performers at the same time that it serves as an unmatched venue for students and local musical groups. The center, of course, will be the new home of the Santa Rosa Symphony.

Beyond the main performance center, the project includes a music education building, recital hall and orchestra and jazz rehearsal facilities.

The 1,400-seat main hall opens to a tiered outdoor arena. In all, the site can accommodate as many as 10,000.

First and foremost, the center, because it is part of the university, is about education. But it also is a community asset – and has the potential to be an unmatched Wine Country visitor attraction.

Imagine for a moment a summer music festival – jazz, classical, choral, you name it. The high quality of the entertainment and of the venue are destined to attract music lovers from afar. That is precisely what occurs every summer at the model for the Green Center, Tanglewood in Massachusetts. Each year as Tanglewood gets under way, thousands are attracted to the area to enjoy themselves amidst the music.

It will be a year or so before the Green Center officially opens. But when it does, people are going to look back on the difficult path to getting there as well worth it.

All the questions raised by the skyrocketing construction materials costs – something that has impacted projects everywhere – will seem like trifles. Decades from now, these things will be forgotten, replaced by the story of how it all started.

That was 1997 at the height of the telecom boom when Mr. Green approached SSU President Ruben Arminana.

A devoted choral singer, Mr. Green was interested in helping to build a decent performance facility. Dr. Arminana had a bigger vision of a world-class performing arts center. From those two visions, the Green Center – a true public-private partnership – was born.

Yes, it still needs some financial backing, which is moving forward as more people see it for the first time.

But the Green Center is fast becoming a reality.

...

Brad Bollinger is editor in chief and associate publisher of the BUSINESS JOURNAL. He can be reached at bbollinger@northbaybusinessjournal.com or 707-579-2900, ext. 201.