

# Friends of Mira Mesa Arts and Culture



## MIRA MESA MATTERS

8450 Mira Mesa Blvd is in the heart of Mira Mesa on the main thoroughfare, it sits at the corner of Gil Johnson Park, while technically not part of the park, that is how most residents see it.

From the very beginning of its existence in 1977 as a library it has suffered the burden of shortsighted planning and has become an eyesore and a money pit.

Almost as soon as it was built it was too small, and it finally closed in and around 1993 or 1994 when the new 20,000 square foot library was built on the other side of the park.

In 1996 the San Diego Regional Teen Center and Performing Arts Center and Auditorium was APPROVED and FUNDED {please see attached}. The plan was well thought out and would have been successful, UNTIL for some reason, that has not been explained, the Performing Arts Center and Auditorium were never built, and the funds were diverted to the Mira Mesa Community Fund from there I don't know where the funds went.

We had an active self-supporting Theatre Guild at the time, which had a temporary home in a storefront in the Vons shopping center. People from all over San Diego

attended the very well-done theatre productions. I was a member of the Mira Mesa Theatre Guild starting in about 1999.

In 1998 The Epicentre, a regional teen center was established through a lease agreement between Harmonium and the City of San Diego.

In 1999 the Epicentre opened with great expectations that were never met. While there were some successes, they were too far and too few in between taking into account all the time, effort and money that was spent. I sat on the Teen Oversight Committee/ or teen advisory board and I saw the high excitement over many new and exciting programs only to quickly fizzle out, nothing seemed to take root.

There came a time when Harmonium gave up and turned it into a concert venue, which was popular, however because of the small size of the venue it was doomed from the start.

2015 Epicentre officially closed.

Here we are in 2023 and there are factions in the community along with the city and the County of San Diego that want to do the same/similar programs again. What do they say about doing the same thing over and over again yet expecting different results?

The community of Mira Mesa has a branding problem, there are many reasons for that, but the main reason is because as a community we have dropped the ball.

All you have to do is drive down Mira Mesa Blvd to see it.

Maybe it's because we are so focused on weaving between the potholes, while looking for the newest chicken place, that we have neglected to notice the total lack of thought to aesthetics in the planning of our community.

Aesthetically pleasing environments automatically create a sense of stewardship and are more likely to be sustainable.

The only attractive area at this time on the boulevard is our Veterans Memorial wall and the patch of green between the Senior Center and New Salem.

Visual identity along with consistent messaging is crucial to branding a community. A quality cultural performing arts center is a good start.

Mira Mesa needs a quality aesthetically pleasing platform to display and showcase our vibrant, unique and talented community.

Mira Mesa needs a Cultural Performing Arts Center, and 8450 Mira Mesa Blvd is the only piece of property left on Mira Mesa Blvd to build one.

MIRA MESA MATTERS...We need to start over and do the right thing for the community.

**Below are some articles from various news sources:**

**BY DAVID GARRICK San Diego Union**

APRIL 4, 2016, 2:26 PM PT

SAN DIEGO — A once-popular teen center in Mira Mesa that also served as a concert venue is closing because of financial problems and what its nonprofit operator called a “lack of interest” among local teens.

San Diego city officials called the recent decision by Harmonium, Inc. to close the center disappointing and said the city might struggle to find a replacement tenant because of restrictions on the property stemming from federally funded renovations there in 2013.

The 5,600-square-foot facility, known as the Epicentre, opened in 1999 in an abandoned library. It’s just across Mira Mesa Boulevard from Mira Mesa High School.

The summer 2015 closure of its concert venue, which had been a popular alcohol-free performance space that was open to all ages, raised concerns about the viability of the Epicentre.

In addition to concerts, the Epicentre focused on educational activities, recreational services and an entrepreneurial program for young adults.

Harmonium notified the city last year that it was struggling financially and requested an early termination of its most recent five-year lease, which is scheduled to run through April 2017.

But, as part of that lease, Harmonium was given \$100,000 for Epicentre roof and sewer repairs from the city's annual allocation of community development block grants, federal money restricted to low-income areas and projects.

That limits the list of potential replacement tenants to social service agencies geared for primarily low- and moderate-income people, city officials said. Those restrictions, which last for five years after the renovations, could end as early as 2018 if a tenant is found.

Because of the closure, the city is transferring more than \$500,000 from the Mira Mesa Teen Center Fund to the Mira Mesa Community Fund. City officials said some of that money could help pay for upgrading the site, which is in poor shape, and helping reconfigure it for a new nonprofit.

Part of the site is also occupied by senior citizen volunteers of the San Diego Police Department.

### **Times of San Diego 2016**

A San Diego City Council Committee Wednesday recommended terminating the lease for Epicentre, a teen music venue in Mira Mesa.

The Smart Growth and Land Use Committee voted 3-0 after hearing from city staff. Committee member Todd Gloria was absent.

The nonprofit that ran the Epicentre asked for an early termination of its lease, since the future use of the building remains undetermined.

The Epicentre, in a building at 8450 Mira Mesa Blvd. that's owned by the city of San Diego, gave many musical groups their first gigs. Some, like Maroon 5, played the venue before finding fame.

Facing increased competition, Harmonium Inc. closed the concert hall last year, and operators told city officials a teen center at the facility **hasn't drawn much interest from area youth, according to a staff report.**

## Mira Mesa Town Council Newsletter minutes June 2, 2014

XI. Presentation – Harmonium, Rosa Ana Lozada CEO. Epicenter is operated by Harmonium. Harmonium has been in Mira Mesa since 1975. Serve children 0-25. Prevention/intervention. Youth (entrepreneurial program and Epicentre), before and after school care (Prime Time and Klassic Kids). **Community Behavioral Health**. Epicenter established in 1998. 6428 square feet. Intended to be regional teen center. Designed to offer variety of services with leadership and community service opportunities. Have had a number of programs over the years. Currently recording studio, blues lovers summer camp, ecoeventerprise, all about music, San Diegans for health coverage. Have had a number of partnerships. **Challenges: competing locations – MMHS, parks, shopping centers and malls; changing social climate - evolving interests of youth, community** service requirements, technological advancements; lease requirements – can rent space, but not to for-profit incorporated entities. Responsible for all maintenance and utilities costs for Epicentre and RSVP; Infrastructure and repairs. Got CDBG funds for roof and plumbing. Jeremy has worked for 13 years but has a better opportunity. Will move forward and hire new staff. Used to get some larger grants. No large grants now. Have \$1.3 million deficit. \$4.6 million expenses, \$3.2 million income 2002-2014. **Mira Mesa is not low income and is low crime**, so grants are harder to come by. Next steps: 1) revisit the support for a San Diego Regional Teen Center; 2) Engage the City in strategies to increase use; 3) Develop a plan of action to improve facility conditions; 4) **Explore partnerships/consortium in the field of Arts and Music**; 5) Make responsible fiscal decisions. Always need to add “for youth”.

Opportunities: Work with District 6 Councilmember to explore new opportunities; Participate in Harmonium’s fundraising efforts for the Epicentre; Set a goal for facilitating actual meetings with youth organizations and businesses for potential partnerships; contact Harmonium directly with ideas. Introduced Kenny Nakayama, Agency Development Coordinator. 858 603 9316 knakayama@harmoniumsd.org. Have the lease for 5 years, entering 3rd year. Want to revitalize it and be an asset to the community and region. Q: Rental fees have been too high. A: Don’t think they are too high. \$35/hour. Recreation center charges \$5/hour. Board used to have MMTC and Theatre Guild members. Q: Prime Time has a waiting list. A: Decided by SDUSD. Q: Problems with roof and plumbing have been solved? A: Yes. Q: Need to have a draw for the kids. Had computers. Now they go to the library. Need to come up with a business model compliant with lease. Originally had a Starbucks concept rather than Twister Café. Q: Sabrina – come to the PTA and/or Foundation meeting. Q: Are there models in other parts of the City or County that work? A: Have done a lot of research. Q: Did you reach out to Cox or Time-Warner? A: Good idea. Q: Business models may have a problem because kids have so many activities already.