

**Fact Sheet: SOPAC Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

**Quick Points:**

- ❖ SOPAC is the essential place to enjoy the arts.
- ❖ 415 seats, 12 row deeps and not a bad seat in the house
- ❖ Urban at heart, suburban by choice
- ❖ SOPAC is critical component of South Orange's downtown revitalization.
- ❖ So...essential, inviting, enriching, intimate, delightful.....SOPAC

**HISTORY/OVERVIEW**

**Q: What is the history of this project?**

**A:** In the mid-90s a study was commissioned to develop a framework for revitalizing South Orange's downtown. The study identified four "pillars" that were needed to help revitalize the downtown area, one of which was a performing arts center. Working from that initial study, the Village undertook feasibility studies, studied drawings, considered bids and forged partnerships to lay groundwork for the South Orange Performing Arts Center (SOPAC), which is now a reality.

**Q: Why has it taken so long to build?**

**A:** As with many complex development projects, the SOPAC project has taken some time to come to fruition. It took a number of years to decide upon the right kind of facility for the area, what should be included in the plans, considering designs, going out for bids, selecting designs, incorporating changes, evaluating decisions and involving partners.

**Q: What is the relationship between South Orange and SOPAC?**

**A:** SOPAC originated ten years ago as an idea of the Village President and Board of Trustees. The Village laid the groundwork, investigated the viability of the center, assessed need, researched models and solicited plans for design and construction. An independent board and organization was created in 2001 at which point oversight for the SOPAC project was turned over. The Village and SOPAC are partners in ensuring that the vision of SOPAC becomes a well-managed reality. SOPAC is responsible for running a viable, responsible business, and the Village is committed to helping SOPAC reach that goal.

**Q: Is Seton Hall University involved?**

**A:** Yes. Seton Hall contributed \$1 million toward capital enhancements and plans on using SOPAC to develop and grow its theater program. Seton Hall's Theater Department will present three shows in the first season and will receive preferred access to the scheduling calendar.

**Q: How was SOPAC financed and how much did the building cost?**

**A:** SOPAC, like most public buildings, received government funding, bond issues, loans and community support. SOPAC will rely on various other funding sources to offset operating costs such as grants from foundations, corporate sponsorships, rental income, ad sales, partnerships such as with Seton Hall, private individual and corporate sponsorship and continued community support through ticket sales and donations of money and services. Construction of the building cost over \$12 million.

**WHAT IS SOPAC?**

**Q: What is SOPAC?**

**A:** An intimate live performance space that seats more than 400, a five-screen cineplex showing art, independent and family-friendly mainstream films and a loft space available for rental to anyone – individuals, corporations, arts and community groups – which can accommodate up to 150 people for performances, new work development, meetings, civic functions, family gatherings and parties.

**Q: When will it open?**

**A:** SOPAC is scheduled to open November 1, 2006, and will welcome all patrons and supporters.

**Q: Where is it located and is there parking?**

**A:** SOPAC is conveniently located behind the South Orange NJ Transit train platform and the shops on Sloan Street. There are over 800 parking spots within a two-block radius.

**Q: Who will it serve?**

**A:** SOPAC will serve everyone and will provide a comfortable and contemporary space for individuals, couples, families and groups to experience the best in live performance and cinema.

**Q: Is SOPAC a non-profit? Who runs it?**

**A:** SOPAC is an independent 501 (c) 3 not-for-profit organization with a 20-member Board of Governors and a full-time executive director. The SOPAC Governors provide the oversight, advocacy and leadership, and the executive director provides the professional management, operational experience, programming and implementation.

**Q: What is SOPAC's mission?**

**A:** To offer innovative artistic and cultural experiences for diverse audiences within an intimate, inviting environment and become the preferred performing arts center in our region.

**Q: What makes SOPAC special?**

**A:** Each performing arts center is unique. SOPAC stands out as special due to its mixed use duality – live performance and film like BAM in Brooklyn – and for its open design that gives great sightlines from every seat in the house. In addition, SOPAC is located in a dynamic arts-loving community and benefits from the support, involvement and guidance of experienced arts professionals and arts patrons.

**Q: What type of entertainment can we expect?**

**A:** Conceived as a regional performing arts center, SOPAC will present a wide range of cultural programming from music to dance to theater to lectures. Whether you prefer bluegrass, blues, or ballet, SOPAC will present innovative nationally and/or world-acclaimed artists right to your neighborhood.

**Q: What kind of movies will be shown?**

**A:** Clearview Cinemas, known for the best in high-quality film experiences, will operate the movie house and will feature first-run art, documentary, independent and family-friendly mainstream movies.

## **ITS IMPACT**

**Q: Will patrons hear the train noise since the building is so close to the tracks?**

**A:** Outside noise conditions were factored into our planning and have been addressed through acoustical safeguards in the building design. In addition, most programming will occur after rush-hour.

**Q: Where will artists be housed?**

**A:** Artists will be housed in hotels in our region, which helps support local business.

**Q: What are potential benefits to the Village of SOPAC?**

**A:** SOPAC is designed to serve the needs of the greater community. It will provide exciting entertainment options and a loft rental space available for rental by all. It will boost the local economy through increased patronage of businesses, added jobs and higher foot traffic into the evening. It will attract more attention and visitors to South Orange, who may decide to move into the community, thereby supporting a strong housing market. Ultimately it will enhance quality of life by eliminating the need for arts and movie fans to travel, by offering a fun place for teens to work and families to visit and by supporting the role of the arts in a healthy community.

**Q: Will local artists be featured?**

**A:** Yes. SOPAC recognizes the level of talent available right here in the Two Towns and in New Jersey and has programmed many of them for our first season.

**Q: How can SOPAC be successful?**

**A:** We need to continually raise donations from individuals and corporations and receive funding from foundations and government. Ultimately our success is based on meeting the needs of our audience. Success is when everyone in our region prefers to enjoy the arts at SOPAC and buys tickets to shows at our center rather than driving into Manhattan to support New York City's arts scene and economy.

**[www.sopacnow.org](http://www.sopacnow.org)**