

THE IMPACT OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY'S CREATIVE ECONOMY



At the intersection of culture and commerce,
Santa Barbara County's creative economy drives
jobs, innovation, and economic opportunity.

This data-informed snapshot has been supported
through a multi-year partnership
with the UCSB Economic Forecast Project.



ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT
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WHY THE CREATIVE ECONOMY MATTERS IN SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

UCSB Economic Forecast Findings

Locally, Santa Barbara County's creative economy delivers economic value, workforce development opportunities, and quality-of-life benefits.

\$3.77 Billion

Economic Output
in Santa Barbara County

\$62 Million

Annual County Tax Revenue
generated across Santa Barbara
and Ventura counties

\$249 Million

Total State Tax Revenue
generated for California by creative
economy activity across Santa
Barbara and Ventura counties



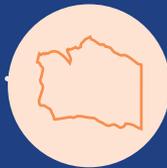
Investing in creativity means investing in:



Jobs and
Revenue Growth



Equitable Economic
Development



A Vibrant,
Attractive Region



A Future-Ready
Workforce

Integrating the creative sector into economic policy and planning, alongside strategic investment in workforce and vocational training, will unlock greater growth, competitiveness, and long-term resilience.

BEYOND THE NUMBERS: OUR CREATIVE ECONOMY IS LARGER THAN REPORTED

While the data show a strong economic impact, **the full scale of Santa Barbara County's creative economy is likely significantly undercounted.** The IMPLAN model and economic data used for this report relies on the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS), which does not fully capture the cross-sector and independent nature of creative work.

As a result, **creative freelancers, embedded creatives, and businesses such as digital content creators, design studios, and creative consultancies** often fall outside traditional industry classifications. These activities generate substantial economic value beyond what traditional data captures, meaning the sector's true contribution is even greater.



Nationally, **freelancers account for more than one-third of the U.S. workforce**, many operating outside traditional industry classification by NAICS Codes

THE CREATIVE ECONOMY DEFINED

Spanning both nonprofit and for-profit sectors—from cultural institutions to artistic services—the creative economy drives jobs, innovation, and community vitality across **Santa Barbara County**. It encompasses industries, workers, and enterprises whose goods and services are uniquely rooted in creativity, culture, design, and innovation.

Creative industries are defined and measured using the IMPLAN economic model and NAICS classifications, providing a standardized framework for assessing economic impact. Data included in this snapshot draw from analysis conducted by the **UCSB Economic Forecast Project** and are supplemented by relevant state, local, and national research.

The Jobs, Businesses, and Professions Shaping Santa Barbara County's Economy



Architecture & Interior Design

Architectural, engineering, and related design services



Entertainment

Motion picture and video industries



Art Dealers - Retail

Galleries and retail stores



Fashion

Specialized design services



Communication Arts

Advertising, public relations, and related services



Furniture & Decorative Arts

Nonupholstered wood household furniture manufacturing



Digital Media

Software publishers and design firms



Industrial Design Services

Specialized design services



Nationally, arts and culture rank third in economic value-added, surpassing transportation, utilities, and agriculture. California leads the nation, representing **25% of the U.S. creative economy** and generating **\$225 billion annually**. The creative economy plays a key role in SB County's prosperity, combining cultural vibrancy with measurable economic strength.

THE CREATIVE WORKFORCE: GENERATING JOBS AND INCOME COUNTYWIDE

Creative workers, from independent freelancers to cultural nonprofits, are a vital part of Santa Barbara County's economy. The creative workforce ranks among the County's **top ten employment sectors**, comparable in scale to construction and manufacturing. These unique jobs are necessarily local and difficult to outsource or replace with artificial intelligence.



Publishing & Printing

Printing



Toys

Doll, toy, and game manufacturing



Visual & Performing Arts Providers

Independent artists, writers, and performers



Fine & Performing Arts Schools

Other educational services

\$1.28 billion

in labor income generated by the local creative workforce

11,232

total jobs across Santa Barbara County (UCSB)

5%

of Santa Barbara County's workforce is directly employed in the creative sector

10–15%

higher wages than the countywide average are offered across many creative professions, reflecting strong job quality.

40–45%

self-employed, including freelancers, contractors, and independent businesses

Because creative work spans multiple industries, including manufacturing, technology, tourism, education, and services, its full economic impact is much greater than what traditional reporting captures.



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 **6.5 MILLION** visitors per year
  **\$2.24 BILLION** in visitor spending
  **\$82.9 MILLION** in local tax revenue

CULTURAL ARTS TOURISM BENEFITS SANTA BARBARA COUNTY



Santa Barbara County hosts approximately **6.5 million** visitors annually, generating **over \$2.24 billion** in visitor spending and **\$82.9 million** in local tax revenue. Cultural tourism plays a central role in driving the region's identity as a destination.

From festivals and museums to live performances and historic architecture, creative assets shape why **people visit, stay longer, and spend more.**

SOURCES: UCSB Creative Economy Report • Otis College Creative Economy Report • Visit Santa Barbara • Americans for the Arts, Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 • BEA Arts & Cultural Production Satellite Account • California Arts Council • Public Policy Institute of CA

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NONPROFIT ARTS & CULTURE: A PROVEN RETURN ON PUBLIC INVESTMENT

Government Investment Fuels Jobs, Income, & Local Tax Revenue

Rooted in creativity and community, the nonprofit arts sector fuels the economy by driving jobs, spending, and tax revenue that strengthen local prosperity and vitality.



Combined, local governments invest over **\$750,000 annually** in nonprofit arts organizations. An increasing number of municipalities across the county are earmarking funding for arts and culture.

That ongoing public investment strengthens the sector's long-term sustainability and helps generate more than **\$200 million** in local economic activity annually.

Impact Highlights

\$198.6M

total annual arts nonprofit
economic activity

\$126.3M

organizational spending

\$72.3M

audience spending

5,857 FTE

jobs supported in the
nonprofit arts sector

\$19.1M

state & local tax revenue
contributed

\$131.4M

household income
generated for local
residents

ARTS & CULTURE BUILD COMMUNITY AND LONG-TERM ECONOMIC HEALTH

The creative economy delivers measurable returns in jobs and revenue while strengthening civic life and building healthier, safer, and more connected communities.

Communities with strong creative economies experience:



Better mental health and well-being,
especially for seniors



Higher graduation rates for
youth and academic outcomes



Safer neighborhoods
and improved
community safety



Lower recidivism
rates and improved
reentry outcomes



Greater levels of civic
engagement, including
volunteering and voting

The social impact of arts and culture is well known, but their long-term economic impact is often overlooked. Arts and culture have a unique and proven capacity to reduce long-term public costs, broaden the workforce, and strengthen community resilience.

*Communities with strong
creative economies prosper by turning
local talent into local opportunity.*

To learn more, download this snapshot or access the full UCSB Economic Forecast Creative Economy Report, visit contact@sbac.ca.gov