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A&E

Multicultural Center takes shape at Abel de Luna

Bringing a vision to life to full colors

CHRISTIAN KALLEN October 21, 2026 9



'JUNTOS' Blanca Molina, a local graphic artist from Guadalajara where the murals of Orozco are a national treasure, adds more color to her own work at the Healdsburg Multicultural Center. (Rick Tang)

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Bursts of color explode from every corner and every angle of the newly repainted Abel de Luna Community Center on the north side of town. Fuchsia, sunflower, marigold, plum and chrysanthemum abut and juxtapose with one another on the many outside walls and columns.

The colors have even more descriptive names according to the Benjamin Moore catalog in the project specifications: Rosy blush, Abstracta, Startling orange, Purple lotus and Bermuda breeze. It's a color palette inspired by two Mexican architects, Luis Barragán and Ricardo Legorreta. So distinct and saturated are the colors one can almost feel the vibrations of the rainbow walking through the buildings that were once, for a previous generation, Foss Creek Elementary School.



Healdsburg is today a giant step closer to getting what it long needed, a functioning multicultural center to accommodate the one-third or more of the town's population that is Spanish-speaking, mixed-race, native or otherwise out of the majority. Proposed in 2023 by a DEI study the city commissioned from Acosta Latino Learning Partnership, the need for such a cultural center echoed the 1982 R/UDAT study by the American Institute of Architects. Even then, over 40 years ago, the need for a center to address a dwindling number of gathering places for Healdsburg's Hispanic population was known, and remedies proposed.

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This project which has been taking shape over the last few months is the Healdsburg Multicultural Center, proposed in late 2024 by the Healthcare Foundation of Northern Sonoma County. It "spearheaded this initiative," according to Amy Ramirez, executive director of the Healthcare Foundation. That is when she and others from the Foundation, including Community Engagement Director Vanessa Miranda-Stewart and Operations Director Hanna Scramaglia, along with the Alliance Medical Center and a fully engaged Corazón Healdsburg, began collaborating to bring a common vision to life.

Through persuasion and persistence they won the City Council's approval for the final element in early September – two murals by Jake Messing and Blanca Molina that received grants from Corazón Healdsburg's Diversity in Arts program. The council's approval and acceptance of the center's bright color palette essentially accedes that such an impactful community program, even if on city property (1557 Healdsburg Ave.), could be and should be run by the community and not the city.

"I can understand the initial discomfort," Ramirez said in a conversation this week. "I think it's a new concept to really turn over power to community. It can be uncomfortable and it can make people nervous. I think we're working through that together."

Now that the first tier of the project is reaching its colorful fruition, Ramirez sees an opportunity to continue fundraising for tiers two and three, to remodel the multipurpose room and open it up to an outside common area, shaded and receptive to families, common projects and inspirations.



"I really feel that when those who are in power really see the benefit of letting community steer and make something that feels like it's truly theirs, especially a community that's been historically unheard and underrepresented – that it's actually a really beautiful process," Ramirez said.

She referenced a woman and her daughter who became part of the design committee over the project's many months, saying: "The mom's probably in her late 20s, and the daughter is 6. And they helped design these colors together."

Ramirez quoted the mother as saying: "My daughter's going to grow up here knowing, 'This building is the way it is because of my mom and I. Like, we made it look that way!'"

On Tuesday afternoon the two selected muralists were at work filling in the outlines of their designs, with ladders, brushes and palettes ready for the members of the Healdsburg City Council in attendance. Councilman David Hagele climbed a ladder in front of Molina's mural of Healdsburg's historic roots and trades, and painted a mustache on a giant, friendly farmer.

Chris Herrod showed up later to add his touch, while across the courtyard the ubiquitous Jake Messing worked on his creation – an orange explosion of poppies and mariposas (the monarch butterfly) taking flight from a woman's hands.

To the south, a short walk to the parking lot led in the direction of the community center's playgrounds, where the next generation of Healdsburgers loudly and happily played soccer.

Learn more at corazonhealdsburg.org/multicultural-wellness.

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Close shaves at the Raven with 'Sweeney Todd'



CHRISTIAN KALLEN

A travel writer and web producer, Christian Kallen started reporting locally in 2008 for every primary news outlet in Sonoma County. He joined the Healdsburg Tribune in 2022.

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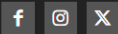
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