

**History**

In 2007 a group of 80 parents asked Maria Castells (owner of Lomas de Tzununá Hotel) to help build a library. Maria, being well connected in the local community, was able to gather a small informal committee of interested parents and teachers and people from Tzununá three of which Ignacio Tepaz, Bartolo Simaj and Diego Simon Sajquiy) are still on the Board) to help gain municipal support, find a space to house the Library, raise funds and gather books. It took several years but finally the Library started with a handful of books and five community volunteers keeping the Library open during the week. Today there are more than 4,000 books and a full time Librarian. In the beginning all the donations for books came through the clientele and connections of the socially minded owners of the Lomas de Tzununá Hotel. The owners Maria Castells and Thierry Delrue say that Lomas is their best excuse to do social work, which is what they love to do, having both worked in international development for more than 20 years.

In 2009 the Library finally opened and later the Music Program was started in 2012. They were housed in the Municipal building along with the pre-school, the police station and the Municipal offices.

In 2012 the informal committee created an organization to have a legal NGO in Guatemala. It is called Asociación para el Desarrollo Educativo y Cultural de Tzununá, Chi Tz´unun Choy. Asociation for the development of Education and Culture in Tzununá, Chi Tz´Unun Choy.\* Four of the five committee members still serve as Board of Directors today. (Association for the Educational and Cultural Develoment of Tzununa)

In 2016 the newly incorporated Community Center Tzununá, a legal Non Governmental Association, was able to purchase the land where the new building was constructed.

In 2014 the board was presented with the architectural renderings for the new Community Center building.

In 2015 with the support of some clients of Lomas de Tzununá that became great supporters of the project the new Community Center was almost completed. The building was constructed using local masons and rocks and sand taken from the property. Among the major donations the project received was one School from the USA that came on a service learning project bringing with them almost $7,000, which was enough finish the roof and a floor, doors and windows in the Library.

The Center moved to the new location in 2016.

* Chi Tz´Unun Choy was the first name of Tzununá according to the book Los Anales de los Kaqchikeles.

**Why a Community Center in Tzununá?**

Tzununá is a small village of 2000 residents primarily of indigenous Maya people who speak Kaqchikel. It is located on the shores of Lake Atitlan and belongs to the municipality of Santa Cruz la Laguna. In spite of the multiple economic disadvantages and systemic social issues, Tzununá is a village with a community spirit that is as inspiring as it is enviable. It is community with a strong desire to provide young people with opportunities for a better life. They know that when the young are helped out of poverty - families and the community thrive as well. The population of the town is very young with 23% between 0 and 6 years old and 32% between 7 and 17 years old. These are the age groups the Community Center is primarily focused on reaching. This represents 55% of the population of Tzununá. These children and youth are the way forward to build a healthy community where all citizens have the opportunity to succeed in life. This makes Tzununá the perfect place to build a Center whose purpose is to harnesses the power of its citizens to create a better community for themselves, their children and grandchildren.

**Our Solution**

The Community Center is the hub of educational, cultural, economic and social empowerment for the citizens of Tzununá. It is a place for young people and their families to get involved in opportunities for growing themselves and their community. The Center has a library, a computer lab, a music and art academy and a cooperative storefront and cafe for the women of the village to sell handmade crafts. The Center provides a space where children and community members can come together to learn, share their culture and make their community better. It will support the public educational system by teaching music, theatre, crafts, planned parenthood, drug and alcohol prevention and promote cultural and community economic development activities.

The location where the Community Center is in a cluster with a new High School, a community laundry facility so women no longer have to go to the river to wash clothing, basket ball court, soccer field, public washrooms and three commercial shops.

This educational, cultural, economic and social hub with the Community Center at its heart is envisioned to be a major economic development driver for improving the financial, cultural and social well-being of all the citizens of Tzununá. When families struggle less to survive there will be time and energy for all the things that make life beautiful and worth living.

**Vision**

The Center will become a model and inspiration for the community and have financial stability to achieve our mission. We envision a vibrant community where all citizens have the opportunity to experience well being in mind, body and spirit. A community with an educated population able to make a positive contribution to their families, their community and society.

**Mission**

Our mission is to create spaces and programs that foster a vibrant community life. The Center as a physical space gathers the community in educational programs that otherwise would not exist, particularly artistic and cultural activities that will foster the already strong spirit of community that is present in Tzununá. All of our programs and activities seek to build and nurture good citizenship though workshops and seminars. The Center serves the needs of children and youth, especially supporting them to pursue informal and formal educational opportunities that will give them and their families a more promising future.

**Values**

1. Accountability and transparency to community and donors
2. Community involvement and ownership of the Center
3. Empowerment of local and youth leadership
4. Holistic approaches to programs that address systemic issues
5. Economic development as part of nurturing culture and well-being
6. Respect for Mayan culture, traditions, language and knowledge
7. High quality services offered free to the community
8. Team approach recognizing unique and valuable contributions of all members
9. Grassroots development and planning
10. Opportunities for every member of the community to learn and grow