

Lisa Clausen

From: Public Council Inbox
Sent: Friday, July 08, 2011 9:14 AM
To: 'eric@burienlittletheatre.org'
Subject: RE: Arts and Culture as a Core Value in the City's Vision

Thank you for writing to the Burien City Council. Your message will be included in the Correspondence for the Record for a future Council meeting.

L. Clausen
City Manager's Office

-----Original Message-----

From: Eric [mailto:eric@burienlittletheatre.org]
Sent: Thursday, July 07, 2011 11:46 PM
To: Public Council Inbox; Brian Bennett; Jack Block Jr.; Rose Clark; Lucy Krakowiak; Joan McGilton; Jerry Robison; Gordon Shaw
Subject: Re: Arts and Culture as a Core Value in the City's Vision

Dear Burien City Council members:

I urge the inclusion of Arts and Culture in the City as a core value of Burien's long range Vision. The Mayor and City Council have repeatedly stated that "the arts are pervasive in Burien" and they are so interwoven that one does not need to write them into the City's long range Vision for the City. I appreciate the current Council's support for Arts and Culture, but a verbal statement does not substitute for identifying in the Vision document, Arts and Culture as a core value.

It also seems odd to say that Arts and Culture are so integral to the City of Burien that they need not be highlighted. Just the opposite seems to be true. If Arts and Cultural are part of everything in the City, then Arts and Culture should be highlighted. If Arts and Culture are a key element of the City they should be a key element of the City's Vision. Therefore, a specific core value, Arts and Culture should be included in the Vision for Burien.

The current language for including Arts and Culture in the June 20th draft proposed Vision is passive. The current draft Vision includes "creativity" as a value (it does not say Arts and Culture but uses a watered down and ineffectual word "creativity"). The current draft Vision does not state that the City supports and values the critical importance of Arts and Culture to the overall quality of life and economic vitality of the City. It simply notes Burien is currently "creative."

Arts and Culture attract people who shop the local stores and support the local eateries; this brings new businesses, and residents who to put down roots and to become actively invested and engaged in making communities better places to live and work. Without a strong commitment to Arts and Culture the long-term sustainability of Burien's many nonprofit arts organizations is in question. Failure to say directly that the City in its Vision supports and values the critical importance of Arts and Culture is to say the opposite. If Arts and Culture are not important enough to be a core value, they are not important to the City.

The current Council may believe its support for Arts and Culture is so well known that it does not need to be listed as a core value for the City's Vision -- so important it need not be a core value? -- but this may not be true of future Councils. The City's Vision hopefully will guide the City for the next 15 to 20 years. Many, if not all of this Council, will have

moved on by then. What if the new Council is literal, and does not make Arts and Culture a key value, because it is not listed as a core value?

Inclusion of Arts and Culture in the Vision as a core value will ensure that future City leaders will make informed future policy decisions supporting Arts and Culture. Planning, zoning, city codes and ordinances must support the ability of Arts and Cultural organizations and businesses to flourish, engage in commerce and provide services within the city well into the future. Quoted from Burien City News June 2011, "The visioning effort will help shape the long-term future of Burien.

'Vision for Burien' will provide the City with sense of direction and framework for evaluating future policy decisions." If Arts and Culture are to be part of Burien's long term future they should be listed as core values, unless the Council does not believe Arts and Culture are core values of the City.

As this Council has acknowledged, Arts and Culture add to the somewhat vague notion of "livability," but Arts and Culture do much more. Arts and Culture are dynamic economic engines and key to growth in Burien. I am reminded of the notation on the white board at the Business meeting of the affinity group. In big red letters was the phrase, "Arts are key!" If Arts and Culture are key, they should be highlighted, not diminished or understated.

As seen in repeated studies, the return on governmental investment in the Arts has a return of 7 to 1. This is true nationwide, and in King County. That return is higher than for any other investment a governmental agency can make. As the Vision is to be used to drive resource allocation, to fail to highlight Arts and Culture by listing them as a core value is to tell City staff that Arts and Culture are not worthy of City resources and hence to dilute the economic impact Arts and Culture has in the City.

Thank you for your thoughtful discussions you have had on the City's Vision. It has been encouraging to hear that Arts and Culture are a significant force and valued by the current Council. However, the failure to see Arts and Culture listed as a core value in the City's Vision for the next 15 to 20 years has been disheartening.

As you have seen by the turnout from arts and cultural organizations and citizens who are not members of any particular organization, but who are supporters of Arts and Culture, there is strong desire from the people of Burien to see an obvious commitment to Arts and Culture incorporated into the City's final Vision statement.

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