

Lisa Clausen

From: Public Council Inbox
Sent: Friday, July 08, 2011 9:16 AM
To: 'Maggie'
Subject: RE: Burien vision & arts and culture

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

L. Clausen
City Manager's Office

From: Maggie [mailto:maggie@burienlittletheatre.org]
Sent: Friday, July 08, 2011 12:09 AM
To: Public Council Inbox
Subject: Burien vision & arts and culture

Dear Burien City Council:

Below is some information about arts and culture and the Visioning process I hope you will consider in your deliberations. The last numbered paragraph is a request for addressing arts and culture in the final Vision.

1. **Visioning Affinity Groups mention arts and culture.** Arts and/or culture were mentioned as important by 6 of the 10 Affinity Groups in the Visioning process:

- * Twenty-Somethings
- * Latino - arts activities for kids
- * Business - "Arts are key!"
- * Health/Wellness - fear "Won't continue to embrace the arts"
- * Recreation - cultural activities
- * Arts - of course we mentioned its importance on several levels

2. **Wording of Visioning questions.** I have a note that someone (but I did not write down who) mentioned the wording of the Visioning questions would not easily elicit an answer of "arts" or "culture". To some degree that is the problem with the wording of the 3 questions on the questionnaire Burien citizens were asked to fill out: "Describe Burien in a single word," "What is your biggest fear for Burien," "What do you personally value about living in Burien." These questions are about what people see Burien as now, and, unless you're a dedicated artist, you're probably not going to mention arts and culture. In the 3 Community Forums, citizens were asked to choose between 2 statements in several pairs of statements of a pair of statements during a "guided discussion." Nowhere in those statements were the words "arts" or "culture" (except for references to "many cultures").

3. **Where were the arts and culture people?** The question was asked: "Where were the arts and culture people in this process?" A number of us took part in the Arts Affinity Group. A number of us also attended the 3 Community Forums, and there were photos on the City Visioning page online of some of us who attended (several Burien Arts Commissioners). That page no longer seems to be available online, but I have a copy of the forums page with at least one of the photos. To assist the City with the Visioning process, Burien Little Theatre passed out the 3-question questionnaire to our audience and returned completed ones to the City

CFTR:07/18/11

by their deadline. Several questionnaires that we turned in to the City mentioned the importance of arts and culture. And many of us were busy working our day jobs that pay our bills and doing our unpaid night/weekend jobs creating and sharing our art with the public at an affordable price. During the visioning process, Burien Little Theatre was in the midst of our season: rehearsing, preparing for and performing several shows. This included a playwrights festival, which involved putting on 6 different plays at one time. Which pretty much taxed our person-power resources.

4. **Bringing money into local economy.** Arts and culture brings money into the city's economy, in addition to enhancing our quality of life. Arts and culture activities draw people from outside Burien to come here for a performance or arts event, or to see visual art. Those people often eat or drink out in Burien before or afterward. Sometimes they even shop here. For Burien Little Theatre, our performers, designers and volunteers come from all over. They also often grab a bite to eat in Burien before or after rehearsals, performances, set builds, etc. (Even I, who live here in Burien, eat out more when we're doing a show because it's easier.) Plus there is all of the paint, furniture, paper, etc. purchased by arts and culture organizations to put on their events. Approximately 87.3 percent of Burien Little Theatre's audience currently eats or drinks out before or after a performance. Attached are 2 articles (one from The Seattle Times and one from The Business Report) providing some statistics on how arts and culture bring in money for the economy.

5. **\$7 to \$1 return.** Unlike many things in which government invests its money, arts and culture actually provides a monetary return, and it's even better than sports. Attached are 3 articles that discuss arts bringing money into the economy. The most stunning statistic is that arts provide a return of \$7 for every \$1 invested by the government, something Wall Street gurus would envy. And that's in comparison to the 3-to-1 return provided by sports. The figure is from the attached article published in October 2008 in the the ICMA Press. You likely already know about the ICMA (International City/County Management Association), which advances professional local government worldwide and publishes the ICMA Press to provide well-researched information on local government issues.

6. **Arts and culture at an affordable price.** By making magic on a shoestring budget, arts and culture groups in Burien are able to keep high-quality art affordable for the average person and the poor. Burien Little Theatre, for example, not only offers low-cost tickets, but also provides Seven Buck Sunday on the first Sunday of every production's run, when all tickets are just \$7. People can volunteer with us and get free tickets as well. We perform staged readings for free at the theater and at places like nursing homes. Some examples of our participation in Burien City events: reading scary stories to kids during Boo in Burien and the Parks Department's Halloween event, providing floral centerpieces for Empty Bowls, operating lights when Burien Concerts in the Park gets rained out and move into the theater. We collaborate with other arts and culture groups to share our resources and sometimes co-produce shows to make all of our dollars go further in keeping our art affordable. Like other local arts and culture groups, we find creative ways and plenty of volunteer hours to keep costs down so we can pay all or most of the costs of producing the show from ticket sales (this is unheard of in theater, where there is typically a much larger reliance on donations and grants). We are all really good at leveraging the money we receive from the City of Burien, thanks to our many talented volunteers. For Burien Little Theatre, the \$2,500 we received from the City for 2011 was for a specific project and constituted about 4% of our entire budget. However, since we spend almost all of the money we bring in each year on our productions and basic overhead such as rent and insurance, that amount can be a make-or-break difference, as it is for other local arts and culture organizations.

7. **Education.** Arts organizations like The Hi-Liners and Burien Little Theatre provide arts education no longer provided by the public schools. Besides giving adults a chance to sharpen or learn new skills, Burien Little Theatre works with older teens, usually 15 to 18, teaching them a range of theater skills from technical work running sound and stagehanding to administrative tasks such as box office. Among the teens Burien Little Theatre works are several students from Aviation High School, since it has no theater program. And we do not charge the students. In fact, some positions receive a modest stipend to help with transportation costs.

8. **A better place to live.** Arts and culture make Burien a better place to live, helping attract and retain businesses and residents.

9. **Vision dictates resource allocation.** Brian Scott made clear in his projections on-screen at the June 6 Burien City Council meeting that the Vision would govern Resource Allocation. If it's not in the Vision, then it should not be funded because it is not mandated. So if arts and culture aren't sufficiently in the Vision, they don't get funded.

10.. **Arts and Culture as a Core Concept.** Arts and culture are pervasive. They are important to education, recreation, the economy, quality of life. It seems that many on the current Burien City Council are aware of the importance and omnipresence of arts and culture in Burien. However, new Council members may not be so astute. Putting arts and culture into the Vision as a sub-concept (in the third tier) rather than a Core Concept (in the second tier) makes it much easier for arts and culture to be marginalized or cut altogether. This would be to the detriment of Burien. If the Vision sufficiently recognizes arts and culture, particularly its economic impact, it will be apparent even to future Council members that it is unwise to marginalize or eliminate arts and culture from the Vision and the Plan created to support the vision. Preferably Arts and Culture should be included at the Core Concept (second tier) level.

Thank you, the Steering Committee and the City staff for the many hours you have all spent working to craft a Vision to carry our City forward into a successful future. I appreciate your time and consideration of this email.

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