

Cultural Council Retreat

July 15, 2009

Present: Amy Whittenburg, Gwen Zierdt, Margit Moore, G.G. Getz, Bhaj Townsend, Leah Klinger, Kathy Feek, Jeff Parks, Cathy Heffron

Absent: Tom Gant (on leave), Becca Singer, Bob Larson

CONTEXTUAL ISSUES THAT AFFECT THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Council broke into groups to discuss these contextual issues: Historical perspective, Fiscal Circumstances, Changing Demographics, Previous Planning, Business Development, Arts Education, and Fundraising Environment.

Historical perspective

The City is on a precipice: historically it has had a reputation for being artsy, however due to a perfect storm of the City's budget issues, lack of affordable housing for artists, and galleries leaving the area, we are in danger of losing that reputation. The Council would like art to be cosmopolitan, global, art that brings in a perspective beyond Kirkland. Kirkland became known for the galleries and the visual arts but the vision of this group is to diversify art beyond just visual.

Fiscal Circumstances

There is a concern about funding. With the strategic plan and the % for art program, we have a lot of great programs that have been started without the support of funding to keep it going. Discussion arose regarding funding for like-size cities. How do they raise the funds for the ideas that are in the strategic plan? Example: Santa Monica and Everett.

Financially, Kirkland is in dire straits. All decisions are made through that lens. City Council gives lip service to supporting the arts but that support does not translate into monetary support. As the City Council and City staff is making these decisions about arts, culture, heritage programming, they do not look toward the Cultural Council to help them make these decisions. One example is the Summer Performing Arts Series that is on the list to discontinue funding. Cultural Council would like to see these budget items under the umbrella of the Cultural Council so that their input would be sought before making decisions on these items. There is no budget oversight in the Cultural Council initial charter. Members would like to take on a more of an advocacy position, and hope that that would lead to increase in the times that the City Council consults the Cultural Council. Fiscal circumstances also affect political circumstances. City Council elections this fall could substantially change the face of the City Council. Cultural Council should be looking into their positions on art. Discussion ensued over whether this is an appropriate role for the Cultural Council to take as a City board.

Changing demographics

A question arose about the current demographics of the City. Staff will get numbers to inform this discussion. Kirkland Performance Center is focusing on programming for increased minority population. They want to respond not only to the changing demographics of Kirkland, but the greater diversity of the population in general. Diversity is an issue that continues to come up, not only in population (class, race) but also in terms of art (visual, performance, challenging). Who is the Council serving? Demographics play into that (issues of race, class, etc.) and the Council will need to discuss this when they are deciding what kind of art or programs to put in place. A concern was raised regarding the phrase "blue collar" from the strategic plan.

Previous Planning

All the planning definitely supports the arts. What it doesn't have is a structure of financial support. The City is very supportive of the arts, and created the Cultural Council, but the connection financially is not there. The Cultural Council's role for the last 6 years has been lobbying, what is their role for the next decade?

Business Development

Galleries have been lost, but the Council would like to keep the ones that they have and recruit more. A question was raised about whether it should be a focus of the Council's work. There is good value in that it is Kirkland's history and reputation, but there is also value in other businesses as well and support of businesses, including artists. The Council has supported artists through video on KAST, and funding of an arts brochure for Kirkland. Council would like to help facilitate businesses (cafes, etc) connecting with artists. They could be a liaison and spark an increase in art in civic and other spaces that are open to the public. Council would like to integrate it into citizen's everyday life. Luring other galleries is not as actionable as working with existing businesses. Council would like to encourage existing galleries to become more participatory. Others noted that they are already doing this: the second Thursday galleries have music and artists in action. Leah got a call from Howard Mandville about doing a signature event on chalk art. Funding issues arose around KPC, who is substantially supported by the City, and the concern that if that funding is cut that would significantly affect the arts in Kirkland. The Council also discussed the Kirkland Arts Center and how to make the classes more accessible. KAC is starting a café that will draw people in. A small number of people access City Hall, yet there is great art there. Possibly the City could loan the art to businesses to encourage them to promote art in whatever way they can. Then more people would see it. Addition of street life would also help the businesses. Buskers (street performers) can be permitted and will perform just for tips. That would liven downtown and help businesses.

Art Education

LWSD has not had a strong connection with the City of Kirkland. They have a new superintendent, so there is some hope there to create a better connection. Arts education discussion was around whether kids can be involved more in art through the City. There is a lot of art in the schools, but unless you go there you don't see it. City could potentially display some of it. This year for the first time the Council has done a couple of projects with the school district. They should be sure to get involved when asked. The question was posed of why the Council is not writing grants for more projects like this? One big issue is capacity with a lack of staff. However, there are lots of things that are already happening, such as the teen center workshops. Are there ways to make art more accessible, and ways to utilize space that we already have? There is a need for advocacy. There is not a lot of money and the Council would like to be involved when decisions are made. What role can the Council play in educating others about the value of arts education? There is a lot of research on this to back up this position. How do they make this pitch to the school board, or the landlord, to underscore the value of the arts? Others noted that words do not advocate for the arts, art advocates for the arts. If you have it in your heart from your own experience, it will make a difference. There is a balance between the art and a narrative about the benefits of art.

Fundraising Environment

The issue of the Cultural Council becoming a 501(c)3 came up because the City did not want to fund the Council. The Council has not written grants in the past, but Gwen can help with writing grants. The Council hosted a Brown bag lunch at KAC on Monday to discuss different options for a foundation. Next steps have come out of that. It was a very good start. Donations have decreased 40% for arts organizations in Kirkland. Leakage sends money to Seattle, not Kirkland. The Council is not connecting locally; they do not have a high enough profile. Getting donor lists from Seattle arts organizations could answer the question of whether donors to Seattle live in Kirkland.

Taking stock

Is there anything that was not covered? What specific resources/people does the Council have to involve in this process? School district is probably open, Heritage Society may be in time, the Council has great linkages with non-profits in the city, also with City Hall and City staff, many other people have been brought in from the strategic plan and want to be involved. They need things to do. Amy and Leah are also working on collaborating as well, so we will have a greater list of people to call on. Colleges in the community are another possible resource that we have not tapped into. NW University, Cascadia, LWTC. Would like to connect better with the Kirkland Reporter, editor is very supportive of the arts. Kirkland First is another resource. It's a buy local website that artists can list themselves on. The opening night was at Parkplace books. First 10 businesses to sign up got a commercial, and the Kirkland Chorale Society took advantage of that. The Council should continue to think about people who can help us with the strategic plan. The more people they can get excited and participating the better.

Pocket issues—Actions that are not on the list but should be

- Leveraging the current city collection.
- Brainstorm zero budget art: idea was Youtube video contest
- Educating other policy entities or institutions re: the value of the arts
- Creating a resource library, fact guide, talking points for different areas. This must be an issue based approach that does not go beyond political bounds because the Council is a City board. Advocacy maybe should be in the vision that the Council is creating.
- Space: artist don't have a lot of money, Kirkland not reasonably priced. How do we create space for performance, other arts. How can we be a liaison between artists and businesses? Community Collaboration mailing list.
- Resource lists: resources that the Cultural Council needs, and then resources and toolkit for artists. Those are 2 different lists. The Council would like to be stewards of that list for the community.

Mission, Vision and Values Statements

The Mission statement is the purpose and activities (they set course of the ship and everything else falls into line). Many organizations have 3 main activity statements express the outcome that comes from each of the programs. For example: "creating a well-informed audience base who engages through outreach."

The Vision statement has a broader goal it explains what the community will look like in 25 years. The strategic plan vision is the Council's vision. However, it is based on the consultant's feedback from the community, not what the Cultural Council came up with.

The Values statement is similar to the "other qualifications" on a resume. Things that need to be said, but do not fit into other statements.

Council discussed whether to start with the vision statement, which the cultural council does not currently have, or whether to focus on the recommendations from the strategic plan, and put the vision statement off to a later date.

The council decided to start with the headlines that were created as an ice-breaker. These were the headlines that were brainstormed:

- Kirkland is named 3rd best arts and culture city of its size
- Signature event increases tourism
- Largest percent of artists per capita in the country
- Largest outdoor sculpture park in the country

- Kirkland recognized nationally as **thriving** arts and culture community (growing, changing, interactive)
- Kirkland eclipses Seattle as regional arts **mecca** (destination)

Working from those headlines, the Council brainstormed ideas for objectives that could be combined to create a Mission Statement. These were the ideas that arose:

- What makes Kirkland unique? Concentration of creative ventures in a community this size. Artist live/work space
- Integrating city and community (citizenry)
- Integration means that a larger number of people consider themselves as doing art.
- Presence of successful arts organizations (thriving) Activation of spaces for arts and culture: facilities
- Signature event: brings broad range of people to the community; compelling goal or outcome; adds to the identity of the city as a destination, event has to be unique and capture imaginations;
- How to use facilities that are not being currently used to draw people to them
- Leveraging/collaborating to increase art resources
- Leveraging resource and creating partnerships
- Build relationship and leverage resources
- Help to diversify our artist community and
- Foster artist expression
- Art causes people to think differently
- Educate and expose people to art
- Education and advocacy
- Create environment where people can be cultural creatives
- Foster community involvement
- Challenge educate and advocate
- Foster inclusive artistic expression
- support for a diversity of artist expression
- provide leadership

These six objectives were agreed upon:

- Bring/draw broad audiences geographically and demographically
- Develop/activate cultural facilities/spaces for art
- Activate/Develop cultural facilities and art spaces
- Leverage resources, collaborating and building relationships (street life may be this or separate)
- Foster challenging and diverse artistic expression and participation/involvement
- educate and advocate for the value of investment in the arts
- provide and cultivate leadership

Next Steps

Council decided to schedule the August meeting and devote it to finishing this exercise.

Council agreed to meet Thursday the 20th instead of Wednesday the 19th from 4-6pm due to a scheduling conflict on the 19th.

Homework: Kathy and Margit will work on finalizing the wording of the 6 action bullets and send them to Julie. Julie will send it out to the group.