
CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

www.mercerisland.gov



Arts Council January 28, 2021 Arts Reset - January Workshop

To: Arts Council

From: Emily Moon, Consultant

Date: January 28, 2021

This memo provides a brief overview of what Arts Councilmembers can expect during the January 28th arts reset workshop. A recording of the presentation introducing the reset planning project is available [here](#):

As was discussed in the January 13, 2021 memo to the Arts Council (see Exhibit 1), staff (the Reset Team) will work with the Arts Council to develop an Immediate Action Plan and a Long-term Reset Action Plan. The Immediate Action Plan should be responsive to the City's COVID framework (see Exhibit 2), consider resource constraints, be able to be implemented in the near future and possibly represent the complete list of action steps for the duration of 2021. While financial sustainability is a driving principle for the future of recreation/MICEC, the Reset Team suggests that the long-term reset plan for arts be crafted to reflect a refined focus on the essential services of the Arts Council. This will require that the Arts Council take an exacting look at its goals, role, available resources, and capability to sustain essential services as it provides input on the longer-term reset plan for arts.

Purpose of Workshop

- Discuss current and near-term conditions:
 - Budgeted resources
 - City and/or arts community needs
 - Pandemic status
- Review Arts Council mission and goals
- Share Arts Councilmembers' areas of interest

- Clarify essential tasks/responsibilities of the Arts Council; discuss and categorize core and essential services of the Arts Council
- Identify possible Immediate Action Plan steps, timetable, and resource requirements

If time allows (or during a future workshop):

- Identify required resources for all core services/essential functions of the Arts Council
- Consider the Arts Council's priorities, criteria, and thresholds for expanding services and programs beyond the essential services; discuss the Arts Council's ability to deliver expanded services in the future

Background Information

In advance of the workshop, Arts Councilmembers are encouraged to review the Arts Council Ordinance, Bylaws Statement of Purpose, and a summary of the Mercer Island Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan (provided below and as Exhibits 3-5).

Arts Council Ordinance:

- A. The purpose of the Mercer Island arts council is to advise and make recommendations to the city council and any other board or commission of the city on matters including, but not limited to those set forth herein.
- B. In fulfillment of its purpose, the duties and responsibilities of the Mercer Island arts council shall be to:
 1. Develop the arts and culture plan as a component of the city's comprehensive plan and provide recommendations on periodic updates to the plan as directed by the city council.
 2. Provide a forum for the community to express their views on arts and culture and serve as a central body to promote, develop, stimulate, and encourage arts organizations, artists and arts participation in the city.
 3. Establish guidelines for the commissioning, selection and placement of permanent or temporary works of art in the city.
 4. Review the suitability and advise on the acceptance of art works intended as gifts to the city.
 5. Participate in the selection of artists and performers for programs and events sponsored by the Mercer Island arts council.

6. Support and foster an arts community that embraces the cultural diversity of its citizens and recognizes their contributions to the cultural landscape, including honoring and featuring local artists.
7. Explore opportunities to obtain private, local, state and/or federal funds to promote arts and cultural opportunities in the city.
8. Facilitate communication and cooperation with existing organizations including schools, businesses, non-profits, art organizations, foundations and other community groups to bring artists and audiences together.
9. Advise on other matters as directed by the city council.

Arts Council Bylaws' Statement of Purpose for the Arts Council

The Arts Council's mission is to nurture, promote and support quality cultural arts activities for the community of Mercer Island.

Mercer Island Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan

Vision: To assimilate positive art experiences into everyday life for all community members.

Goal 1: Support the arts on Mercer Island:

- Policy: Support implementation of and encourage community involvement in accessible, high quality performing, visual and literary arts programs, projects, and events.
- Policy: Provide educational art opportunities through Parks & Recreation curriculum
- Policy: Maintain a citizen Arts Council, which is advisory to the City Council and that spearheads arts programming and partnerships.
- Policy: Promote cooperation and local partnerships between the City of Mercer Island and artists, arts providers, nonprofit organizations, urban designers, architects, developers, and others to help improve the quality of the built environment.
- Policy: Coordinate and collaborate with the local school district to broaden accessibility and awareness of local art opportunities and to further art education.
- Policy: Coordinate and collaborate with local, regional, and national arts organizations, and through public and private partners to integrate art into the community via permanent installations and special events.

- Policy: Assess community art needs through community engagement and public involvement.
- Policy: Implement a creative district and accountability strategy to complement and enhance overall city economic development strategy and to foster a thriving creative economy.
- Policy: Support:
 - Efforts to secure space for art and cultural activities;
 - The establishment of a community maker space;
 - Opportunities for housing and/or live/work space for artists; and,
 - A multidiscipline-oriented community arts facility.
- Policy: Maintain a parity of public space for art and cultural activities when existing public art and cultural activity space is modified or eliminated.

Goal 2: Nurture public art on Mercer Island:

- Policy: Encourage diversity in public art.
- Policy: Maintain current and encourage new spaces for public art placement.
- Policy: Maintain and preserve the current collection and encourage the acquisition of additional public art.
- Policy: Incorporate public art in town center development design and site features.
- Policy: Maintain requirement that at least 1% of qualifying capital improvement projects' costs are set aside for public art acquisition, repair, and maintenance.
- Policy: Make an effort to incorporate public art into and surrounding transportation projects.
- Policy: Welcome and support community involvement in public art processes.

Goal 3: Preserve Mercer Island's Heritage:

- Policy: Promote awareness and appreciation of Mercer Island's history and historic resources.
- Policy: Support efforts to secure space for the preservation of Mercer Island's historical and cultural heritage and related archival materials.
- Policy: Promote public engagement with culture and heritage organizations.
- Policy: Support the curation of historical exhibits in the community.

A Note on Core Services or Essential Functions

Discussing what we deem to be essential functions or core services can be challenging. Often, people have differing opinions based on their experiences, values, or definitions. For the Arts Council workshop discussion, the Reset Team encourages the Arts Council to utilize a definition that is commonly used in municipal services delivery:

Core services or essential functions are those that the municipality is required (or compelled) to deliver. Sometimes these are services that are expected because no other provider exists.

Looking at governing documents such as ordinances, bylaws, or strategic plans can help us identify core services.

In addition, we can group core services into two categories: those that are the “public good/social core services” and those that are the “business sustainability essential functions.” The latter are functions that make the former possible. A third category of programs and services is labeled the “non-essential desirable” category. These are often the programs and services that may go beyond the basic elements of the mission, are discretionary, or are simply desired by the community.

During the workshop, the Arts Council will be asked to help the Reset Team sort the Arts Council’s core services or essential function into those three categories.

The Reset Team is working to develop a comprehensive list of Arts Council services and functions for the sorting exercise. To help you start thinking through this task, here is a draft list:

- Policies & Procedures – Advise on policy development and maintenance, including:
 - 1% for Art in Public Places guidelines
 - Gallery exhibit policies
 - Park master plans, comprehensive plan, and other Citywide strategic planning efforts
 - Community Arts Support guidelines
- Programs & Events – Assist with planning, promoting, and evaluating arts & culture programs and special events, including:
 - Mostly Music in the Park
 - Shakespeare in the Park
 - Friday Night Films
 - Mercer Island Gallery exhibits
 - Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery installations
 - Other special community events (e.g. Art on the Water, Community Dance, etc.)
 - Partner programs
 - Mercer Island Sister City Association
 - Mercer Island Historical Society
 - Mercer Island Library
 - Stroum Jewish Community Center

- Youth Theatre Northwest Policy development and maintenance
 - Program evaluation
- Public Art Stewardship – Advise on maintaining, promoting, and adding to the public art collection, including:
 - 1% for Art in Public Places policies and acquisition guidelines
 - Community engagement (e.g. digital platforms like STQRY and Public Art Story Map, public art programs, etc.)
- Community Outreach & Advocacy – Build awareness of and partnership for the Arts Council and Arts Council programs, including:
 - Attending Arts Council and community programs/events
 - Participating in local, regional, and national professional networks to learn best practices, advocate for arts & culture, and promote Arts Council programs
 - Advising on and promoting outreach strategies & channels (e.g. Arts Council website, e-news list, etc.)
- Other projects, services, and responsibilities/functions, including:
 - Creative District exploration
 - Seeking grants and other funding support
 - Arts Council governance (e.g. chairing committees, reporting volunteer hours, etc.)