

February 25, 2021

Dear Shoreline City Council Members:

RE: Establishment of a Shoreline Arts Commission

The Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services/Tree Board (PRCS/Tree Board) identified Arts and Cultural Services as one of its three strategic priorities for 2020. At its December 3, 2020 meeting, the Board unanimously passed a motion to recommend the establishment of a Shoreline Arts Commission. This Commission would foster the arts as a significant contributor to the quality of life in Shoreline.

We urge the City Council to accept and act on the unanimous recommendation of the PRCS/Tree Board to establish a Shoreline Arts Commission. Further, it is suggested that the City Council appoint a steering committee composed of City staff, PRCS/Tree Board members, and representatives from Shoreline's art community to develop a proposed plan and structure for the Arts Commission. In discussions with King County's arts and culture organization 4Culture, it is clear they are an interested and ready partner to consult with us in the steps to establish an Arts Commission.

#### Vision for the Arts

***Arts have a role in the aesthetic, economic, and spiritual health of a city so are central to our lives. As such, the arts are deserving of government support (as we currently see at all levels of government in the US).***

#### Current Status in King County

4Culture reports that 25 of the 30-plus cities in King County have arts commissions. All receive some funding from 4Culture, and several cities receive joint funding for their arts commission and a local non-profit arts organization (or "lead arts agency"). In other words, the existence of an arts commission for the advocacy, support, planning, and informing of city leadership represents best governance practice in our region for housing public arts programs.

#### Potential Roles for a Shoreline Arts Commission

How might an Arts Commission further strengthen arts and culture in Shoreline? Below are some examples of potential roles an Arts Commission could play as well as how it could complement current arts organizations in Shoreline.

1. The arts, culture, and heritage community in Shoreline is not represented by any single entity but rather by a wide variety of private and public organizations. While this diversity is a strength, each group tends to focus on particular niches. Perhaps the single greatest benefit of an Arts Commission would be a role in serving the community as a single, system-wide body that could speak with a unified voice of advocacy, allowing the various arts organizations an opportunity to combine strengths, collaborate, and grow in unison as a maturing arts community.
2. Serve as a clearinghouse for concerns and ideas about improving and expanding all aspects of the arts.

3. An Arts Commission could help arts and culture programs grow the Creative Economy. The arts are widely recognized as an economic development force. An Arts Commission could increase collaboration with the city's Economic Development Strategic Plan and meet the intent of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan's Strategic Action initiative #6: Enhance Placemaking Through Public Art. Examples include strengthening Aurora Avenue's aesthetic presence; attracting artists and trendsetters to establish a presence in Shoreline; and initiating contacts with Shoreline businesses to support art installations.
4. Fill a current void by expanding opportunities for arts organizations and the City to connect and collaborate with county, state, and federal arts organizations such as 4Culture, Artist Trust, the Washington State Arts Commission, and the National Endowment for the Arts. No current arts organization has the capacity to maintain memberships or participate in their meetings. These are also potential sources of additional resources that largely remain unexplored.
5. Serve as an incubator for new or emerging arts and cultural non-profits, especially in cultural areas not represented in our city. While Shoreline benefits from several long-established non-profits, there are relatively few arts and cultural non-profits overall and the smaller ones often struggle to sustain themselves.
6. Like many organizations and institutions, the arts community in Shoreline is in need of expanding equity and inclusion for minority groups. An Arts Commission composed of a diversity of members would be well positioned to help the City expand opportunities in arts and culture for a broader array of voices.
7. Expand exhibition opportunities for local artists via more shows at City Hall and other public and private venues. There has been a strong demand from local arts organizations for these venues from the Northwest Watercolor Society, Artists Connect, Seattle Artists League - all non-profits seeking hard-to-find exhibition space. This would expand Shoreline's visibility as an arts leader. This activity would thereby expand recognition and empowerment of local artists.
8. Hasten the rate of placement of sculptures for the *Aurora as an Avenue of Art* project through the exploration of public-private partnerships with both businesses and Shoreline residents. Through efforts of PRCS/Tree Board member volunteers, two Shoreline residents have already agreed to fund local artists for commissions to be gifted to the City and installed along Aurora Avenue. This initiative would address the interest some City Council members have expressed in garnering more private philanthropy from our residents to support Shoreline's public art program.
9. Support the visionary efforts of the ShoreLake Arts Council to create a city arts center, addressing for the first time our city's lack of a central arts facility serving a multitude of functions.

Many of the above functions would expand public and volunteer engagement and thereby help ensure the success of the city's current Public Art Plan whose goals include (1) ensuring that the public art program is a leader in the City's placemaking effort; (2) support the City's commitment to equity and inclusion through the arts; (3) engage the community through public/private partnerships; and (4) integrate public art into parks, recreational programs, and new developments (light rail sites, Shoreline Place, etc.).

There is little doubt that the potential programming imbedded in the Art Plan goals has not begun to be fully exploited. It is an unreasonable expectation given the minimal staffing for the public art program. Commission members could significantly augment our city's capacity for expanding arts activities.

Some might suggest there is not a need for an Arts Commission because we already have vital non-profit arts organizations. Although this is true, every city in King County with an arts commission also has vital

arts organizations. Representatives from these cities report close collaboration between private arts organizations and art commissions resulting in stronger programming for the arts as an outcome.

Finally, we hope the Council will not primarily focus on whether or not to establish a new organ of government (an unlikely debate if the issue were whether or not to have a Parks Department), but instead recognize that the establishment of an Arts Commission would finally bring Shoreline up to this widely accepted civic standard for housing public art programs.

Thank you in advance for your consideration to establish a Shoreline Arts Commission.

Sincerely,

John Hoey, Chair, Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services/Tree Board

Bruce Amundson, Chair, Public Arts Subcommittee

Submitted on behalf of the Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Services/Tree Board