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9/20/01

MEMORANDUM

September 13, 2001

TO: Arthur Holmes, Chair
        Montgomery County Planning Board

FROM: Theresa A. Cameron, Executive Director
        Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County

RE: Briefing on *Creative Montgomery*

We are pleased to have the occasion on September 20 to brief you on *Creative Montgomery, A Vision for the Arts and Humanities in Montgomery County, MD,* our county's first cultural plan.

We would like to cover three topics:
(1) The cultural planning process;
(2) The plan's recommendations; and
(3) The role of the Planning Board in the implementation of *Creative Montgomery.*
You already have received a copy of the full text of the plan as well as the *Executive Summary.*

First, we want to express our thanks for the support and guidance of your staff. It has been invaluable. In particular, we would like to thank Charlie Loehr for serving on the Steering Committee and for his efforts on our behalf.

The Planning Process
The planning process was broad and inclusive and designed to bring out the views of the community, not those of the consultants. The process was guided by a 35-member Cultural Plan Steering Committee representing a broad cross-section of the community both in terms of geography and interest areas. A list of the Steering Committee members is found on pages iii-iv of the full text.
Early in the process, a public forum on the arts and humanities was held in Rockville to solicit input to the plan. Over 60 people attended, including individual artists and scholars and representatives of small, medium and large nonprofit organizations. Later in the process, after draft recommendations for the plan were published, a series of six community forums was held in Rockville,

Celebrating 25 Years

Silver Spring, Olney, Bethesda, Germantown, and eastern Montgomery County to hear citizens' responses to the proposed recommendations. All of the information gathered was reviewed by the Steering Committee in their deliberations

One of the first responsibilities of the Cultural Plan Steering Committee was to identify eight critical issues that they wanted the plan to address. The issues they identified that are addressed in the plan are
- Funding and Sustainability
- Cultural Facilities
- Arts and Cultural Education
- Ethnic diversity
- Transportation and Access
- Marketing and Visibility
- Humanities
- Heritage and Preservation
- Support for Individual Artists and Scholars
- Organizational Issues

In addition, the plan addresses the humanities in the county in light of the merger of the Commission on Humanities with the then Arts Council. The merger was underway concurrent with the planning process.

During the planning process, two studies were undertaken that provided data in support of the plan. In November 1999, in collaboration with the Johns Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies and Americans for the Arts, Montgomery County was selected to be included in a national research project to review local support of arts and humanities. The report of this research is included as Appendix A in the plan. In addition, Americans for the Arts was commissioned to do a study comparing the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County with nine other county arts agencies around the country. The results of this study are included as Appendix D in the plan.

Recommendations
Creative Montgomery contains 48 specific recommendations. These are summarized in the "Chart of Implementation Steps" found on pages 127-132 in the plan. The *Executive Summary* also includes a synopsis of the plan's recommendations. We will be reviewing these in more detail during our briefing.

The Role of the Planning Board in the Implementation of *Creative Montgomery*
Throughout this planning process, we have stressed that this is not a plan for the Arts and Humanities Council, nor is it a plan for the County Government. It is a community cultural plan that will require the participation of many stakeholders to achieve its implementation. In this process, there are important roles for the Planning Board. We ask that you:

(1) <u>Continue to encourage developers to provide cultural facilities as part of their developments in exchange for increased density</u>. (Recommendation 2.8, page 62) This policy has proven to be a successful strategy to create new cultural facilities. The most notable examples are Black Rock Center for the Arts in Germantown and Round House Theatre in Bethesda. We ask that you work with the Arts and Humanities Council to create a list of critical cultural facilities that need to be developed so that these needs can be addressed as development opportunities arise.

(2) <u>Identify sites for future cultural facilities and support the development of at least one theater available at reasonable rental rates to multiple users, and at least one visual art exhibition space, and a County Museum of Culture and History</u>. (Recommendation 2.4, page 59, Recommendation 2.10, page 64, and Recommendation 2.7, page 61) As the Planning Board reviews and updates community master plans, consideration should be given to identifying potential sites for future cultural facilities. While it was not possible for the cultural planning process to study potential sites on a community-by-community basis, the Planning Board's community planning activities could examine the availability of sites for such purposes. This activity also relates to the use of development incentives to produce cultural facilities. The Planning Board can play an important role in stimulating the development of new cultural facilities that are not directly affiliated with a specific arts or humanities organization.

(3) <u>Favor sites for cultural facilities along existing and planned transportation corridors, convenient to parking and public transportation</u>. (Recommendation 9.1, page 111) This was one of the most obvious recommendations for the cultural plan and relates directly to the two recommendations above.

(4) <u>Seek opportunities to develop spaces that support the work of individual artists and scholars</u>. (Recommendation 6.4, page 100) Quite a number of artists who reside in Montgomery County work in studio space in other jurisdictions. Again, the community planning process and development incentives may provide opportunities to stimulate the creation of spaces such as studios and work-live spaces for artists and scholars.

(5) <u>Support funding for historic preservation and heritage tourism</u>. (Recommendations 2.11 and 2.12, page 64, and Recommendation 8.6, page 109) Although some of these initiatives may come through the Historic Preservation Commission, the Planning Board's support will be crucial for implementation. In a county with a rich 200-year history, more needs to done both to preserve non-replaceable historic sites and to raise awareness among residents and visitors of the significant landmarks of our heritage.

We appreciate your attention to these issues. Above all, we deeply appreciate your continuing support for the arts and humanities in Montgomery County. We look forward to working with you as we continue to support our Creative Montgomery.

Creative**Montgomery**

A Vision for the Arts and Humanities in Montgomery County, MD

Executive Summary
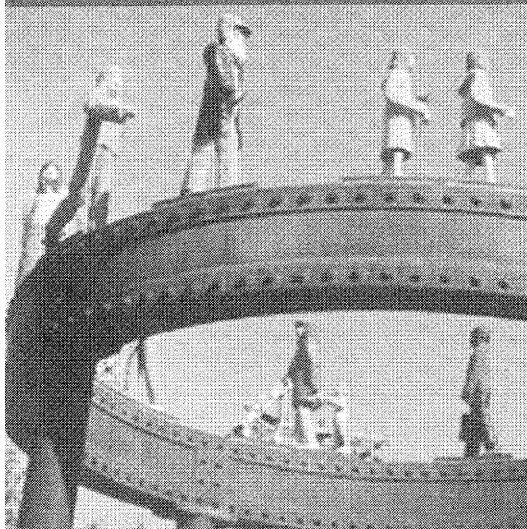
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What Is Cultural Planning?

Cultural planning is the process of assessing the needs of a community in the areas of the arts and humanities. It involves taking an inventory of the community's arts and humanities resources, both public and nonprofit, and identifying ways to build on those resources. Cultural planning means consulting with the citizens of a community to ascertain their cultural values and aspirations. It means assessing the strengths and weaknesses of arts and humanities organizations in the community and exploring ways to capitalize on their strengths and minimize their weaknesses. Ultimately, cultural planning is about giving a community a range of choices about how they will express themselves and understand the society of which they are a part.

Why Plan?

Montgomery County has seen dramatic growth in its arts and humanities offerings in recent years. This growth has manifested itself not only in the number of offerings, but in the quality as well, with an increasing number of cultural institutions that are gaining recognition both regionally and nationally. Along with this growth has come an increasing demand on County government funding for the arts and humanities and a greater need to enhance the capacities of the cultural institutions to develop artistically and organizationally. In response to these demands has come the recognition that the path and speed of cultural growth must be assessed and managed and that it is time for Montgomery County to have its first cultural plan.

The Planning Context

Montgomery County is Maryland's most populated jurisdiction, with a population in 2000 of 873,341. County population is projected to grow to more than 975,000 by 2015. The diversity of the population also is increasing. In 2000, according to U.S. Census Bureau reports, the county's population is 15.1% Black and 11.3% Asian, with 11.5% who are Hispanic or Latino of any race.

Montgomery County is home to a wide variety of nonprofit arts and humanities organizations that offer cultural events and educational opportunities to county residents. Many of them are newly created and/or newly discovered through the planning process. Directories published before this plan was undertaken listed about 80-100 cultural organizations in the county. During the planning process, it became evident that there are more than 280 arts and humanities organizations that contribute to the county's cultural life.

In November 1999, the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County was selected to be included in a national research project to review local support for the arts and humanities in the county. The research found that

- Half of all currently existing arts and humanities groups in Montgomery County were founded since the mid-1980's.
- Total attendance at programs and events of dedicated arts and humanities groups was close to 1.2 million.
- More than 11,000 volunteers contributed close to 800,000 hours at a value of $11.2 million.
- Total revenues amounted to $25.2 million and total expenditures to $22.5 million in 1998. The total economic impact can be estimated at $40 million.
- The shares of both private giving and public support in the revenue composition of arts and humanities organizations in Montgomery County appear to be below the national average, based on available national data.

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The Planning Process

In June 1999, the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County (AHCMC) solicited proposals to prepare a cultural plan. The firm of Jerry Allen and Associates of Soquel, CA was selected. Mr. Allen assembled a team of consultants to address issues specific to Montgomery County.

To ensure broad community participation in the planning process, AHCMC appointed a Cultural Plan Steering Committee consisting of 35 representatives of arts and humanities organizations of varying sizes, county and city governments, Montgomery County Public Schools, businesses and community groups, and individual artists and scholars. The Steering Committee identified critical issues to be addressed in the plan, provided feedback to the consultants as they began to draw conclusions, and reviewed and reached agreement on the final recommendations.

Each of the consultants on the team made several visits to Montgomery County. They received community comments at a public forum, conducted numerous interviews, and heard from several focus groups. As a result, more than 200 people participated in the planning process.

On March 15, 2000, the *Draft Recommendations for the Cultural Plan for Montgomery County* were presented to the Arts and Humanities Council. This document contained more than 50 recommendations related to the future of the arts and humanities in the county along with a matrix of costs associated with implementation. The *Draft* was presented to the County Executive and the County Council. It then was presented to the community along with an invitation to participate in a series of six community forums to solicit reaction to and comments on the *Draft* recommendations. Extensive media coverage of the *Draft* resulted in more comments being sent by mail and e-mail.

Critical Issues

At their first meeting, the Steering Committee identified and prioritized issues of concern that would become the focus of the plan. They identified eight critical issues:

1. Funding and sustainability
2. Cultural facilities
3. Arts and cultural education
4. Ethnic diversity
5. Transportation and access
6. Marketing and visibility
7. Heritage and preservation
8. Support for individual artists and humanities scholars

Values Guiding the Planning Process

At a later meeting, the Steering Committee put into words the values they had heard throughout the process that they felt were most important to the plan. They agreed that we value

- A vibrant arts and humanities presence visibly woven into the fabric of our everyday lives.
- An inclusive community with opportunities for all to meet their potential, to understand others, and to express themselves creatively.
- Our diversity and the sharing of that diversity.
- Creativity as an integral part of everyday living.
- An environment where creative and scholarly excellence can flourish.

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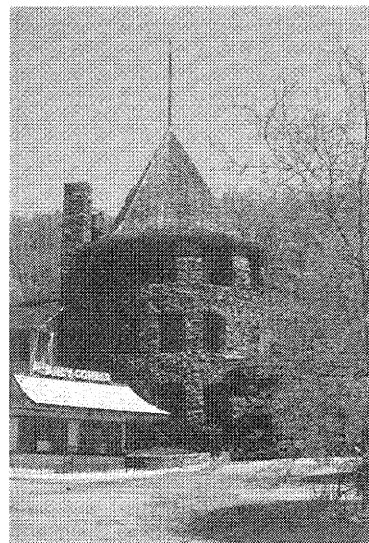
Key Findings and Recommendations

Funding and Sustainability
- Revise grants process to support both arts and humanities.
- Raise level of operating grants for arts and humanities organizations.
- Explore ways to encourage corporate and individual giving.

Cultural Facilities
- Continue annual funding of capital grants and enhance accountability.
- Build a mid-sized theater and a visual arts exhibition facility.
- Create incubator spaces for emerging arts and humanities groups.
- Create incentives for private developers to build cultural venues as part of their developments.

Arts and Cultural Education
- Develop five-year plan for arts education in the schools and in the community
- Restore the school system's arts staff coordinators.
- Organize an arts education advocacy effort.

Ethnic Diversity
- Promote the role and visibility of culturally specific organizations.
- Award incentive grant funds to develop relationships with culturally specific organizations.
- Work with cultural institutions to implement a commitment to diversity.

Transportation and Access
- Link cultural venue sites to major transportation systems and parking.

Marketing and Visibility
- Develop a database of emerging and culturally specific artists, scholars, and arts and humanities groups.
- Seek funding for a major arts and humanities marketing campaign.
- Promote cultural tourism effort with Conference and Visitors Bureau.

Heritage and Preservation
- Plan for a county Museum of History and Culture.
- Preserve local historic sites.

Support for Individual Artists and Scholars
- Develop spaces to support work of artists and humanities scholars.
- Increase grant amounts to artists and humanities scholars.

Organizational Issues
- Develop "core values" statement for AHCMC.
- Diversify board and staff of AHCMC.
- Align AHCMC programs to county economic development efforts.
- Hire Arts Coordinator in Health & Human Services Department.
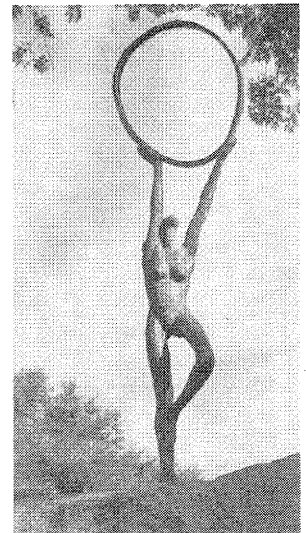
Implementation

The implementation of this plan will involve the support and approval of numerous organizations and individuals in Montgomery County — from the arts and humanities groups to corporate, foundation and individual patrons to the public school system to the County Council and Executive. Each has an important role to play in realizing the cultural vision that has been articulated.