

Public Comments

City of Rockville

Culture and Entertainment Plan

August 31, 2011

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Culture & Entertainment Plan Public Comments

Steering Committee Comments

1. Comments: Looks great! I think the language is much easier to understand. Hard Times Café and Carmen's are holding concerts pretty regularly for the Woodley Gardens community during the warm months. Perhaps add them to the list of restaurants at the end?

Response: Wait to add after comments have been received.

2. Comments: I'm really happy with everything once you get to the actual strategic plan. FWIW, the introduction seems too long, somehow. I've suggested some cuts in the introduction – they may go too far, but I think the document doesn't lose anything by getting rid of them. I really don't like the vision statement; it seems superfluous. That may be just a personal preference thing. I think vision and mission statements are an either/or thing. One or the other is good, but not both.

Response: I feel we need to keep the introduction highlighting Rockville's awards and recognition for readers to understand what Rockville is known for. The deletion of Strategic Plan Elements and the Vision Statement are something we should consider after comments have been received from the public.

3. Comments: This looks good! I think you did a great job revising 4.1 to reflect what the original intent was supposed to be. Only two minor comments:

a) "proximity to the resources world's most powerful city" (p.4) appears unnecessarily strong to me. Perhaps rewording to "one of the world's most influential cities"?

b) The "strategic plan elements" section (p.6) adds nothing for me and I would not be opposed to its removal. That being said, it may have to do more with the fact I already know what the plan entails and if new readers find the section beneficial, please disregard this comment.

Response: "Most Powerful City" was straight out of the Branding material, and we feel we should keep it in to be consistent with the brand. We should discuss this further in the review of public comments. The Strategic Plan Elements section should be considered after comments have been received by the public.

4. Comments: We speak of "Stakeholders", but I didn't see reference as to who these might be --Are these the same as "collaboration partners" referred to on page 11?---I would still like to see some reference to the City Budget---We might make a statement that "This Plan was developed with full recognition that any plan that is ultimately accepted must conform to the Budget passed by the M&C."

Response: Collaboration Partners was misleading as we have many partners who are not listed. The title of this appendix was changed to "Contributors to the Culture and Entertainment Plan".

Text was added: Focus Groups and personal interviews were held with the following organizations early in the development of this plan. The information and recommendations obtained from these meetings was instrumental in the development of this document.

In addition, a statement was added at the end of the Implementation of the Plan section that reads: The pace and approach to implementation of this plan will depend on the resources available through the City Operating and Capital Improvements budget, and funding by other organizations.

Rockville Central Comments

1. I hope that Rockville makes itself more of a city than a suburb and one of the ways it can do that is to be a destination for arts and culture. I moved to Rockville when I did because I could not afford the housing that I wanted in Washington. I don't like living in a suburb, even one as nice as Rockville. But as Rockville has been changing from a suburb into a city in its own right, I have begun to enjoy living here.
2. I'm a dance fan and I don't find the Rockville Civic Ballet impressive. I know that they are an all-volunteer company. I've been to their performances, but the most impressive thing about the RCB is the costumes.
3. I think the City should look to hire and promote more Rockville bands like The Digits! and The West End – Live Rockville, Buy Rockville, Hear Rockville. The Digits have been offered “jobs” twice by the City, but both were volunteer (non-paying) jobs. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday gigs work well because most local musicians have day jobs and can't take the day off to play Out to Lunch Wednesday.
4. We have lots of local Rockville bands to promote. Force Major (who are playing a San Francisco music festival this week!!!), Chute Willrockya, Mercury in Summer, the Treading Lemmings, and elementary-aged Octopus Army (who are not old enough to be on Facebook but are @octopusarmy on Twitter). Rockville bands should apply for the gigs offered by the City and advocate for more opportunities by commenting.

Cultural Arts Commission Comments

1. I have read and found the draft for the Culture and Entertainment Plan inspiring. It is my sincere hope that it will lead to concrete steps down the road and that it will be fully supported through both public and private funds. It has been clearly established that supporting the creative economy brings great dividends to any city which makes the investment, from increased spending in local businesses, such as restaurants and nearby shops, to a greater tax base, as the arts attract a wealthier and more educated population. For Rockville to become a player in the competitive larger DC region, it needs to invest more heavily in the arts, particularly if it wants to attract the sought after young professionals which later might want to move to the area from downtown DC. Having a vision of Rockville as a vibrant art hub is an essential first step towards realizing that vision.

If you could also add Mosaic Restaurant to the “Restaurants (Concerts, Open Mic., etc.)” category, they have music there on Thursday nights.

2. I have the following comments on the subject plan: Obviously much time and thought went into the draft plan. The draft plan contains many worthwhile goals and recommendations, which if carried out would make a valuable contribution to the quality of life in Rockville. (1) The draft plan says that if these recommendations are carried out Rockville will become the looked for destination. However, the draft plan fails to identify what existing features/assets that exist in Rockville are the building block(s) upon which the Plan can build. For example, some cities have natural features to build upon such as a harbor or river, or a longstanding history for a particular art form. The plan should identify this cornerstone and the steps necessary to complete the structure. This connection is missing from the draft plan. (2) The draft plan fails to mention the AIPP Master Plan and the Rockville Master Plan for the Arts. (3) The draft plan fails to mention the King Farm Farmstead and how these structures factor into the Plan. (4) Lastly, the City

should be required to review progress annually in carrying out the Plan recommendations. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft plan. Sincerely, Member, Cultural Arts Commission.

3. I was happy to see that the plan suggests increasing private sector giving by “encouraging local businesses to support culture and entertainment organizations and providers.” I would have liked to have seen a sentence or two that describes how this would be done. As you know, corporate partnerships with arts organizations are often based upon strategic decisions. Corporations thoroughly assess whether their business objectives were met when determining the success of partnerships with arts organizations. Perhaps the City and/or the local volunteer center could play a role in building mutually beneficial partnerships between arts/cultural/sports organizations and local corporations by:

- hosting networking events between corporate and arts/sports leaders
- developing a business case template that businesses and arts/sports organizations could draw upon to create effective partnerships

The local Girl Scout and Boy Scout organizations could also provide valuable contributions to this process. A wonderful way to reach Rockville families with young children (a key demographic of this city) is through these organizations as many children/families participate in Scouting. There is plenty of opportunity for Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts (and their parents) to collaborate with arts organizations for mutual benefit. Many arts and cultural organizations in the City do host programs for Scouts, like the Beall-Dawson House, and, I believe there could be even more opportunities for collaboration.

I noticed that none of the sports/recreation organizations, like Rockville Football League, contributed to this plan. Large numbers of people participate in these organizations. (For example, on any given fall weekend, there are hundreds of young people playing in Rockville Football League games in Dogwood Park, with hundreds of people in the stands cheering them on.) Their contributions could be valuable to a document like this. So many people with families participate in sports in Rockville, and for many families it is their major form of entertainment in the city.

Last, I don't think I saw the Cultural Arts Commission listed as a contributor to this plan.

4. Town Center has summer entertainment programs which mostly are western music and I have not seen any Asian or Middle East music program. And I was told it is decided by the Town Center owner. Fairfax County has entertainment of a different ethnic group every Sunday in summer at Ossian Hall Park. Each group is responsible for using the open theatre. This will educate residents about the rich, diversity of cultures in our area and the ethnic groups have a chance to carry on their heritage. I suggest Rockville have same kind of program for ethnic groups to perform singing/dancing on a weekly or bi-weekly basis at a park (stage can be set) in Rockville City. Thru appreciation of different cultures & entertainment, people understand each other better.

Historic District Commission Letter

August 11, 2011

Mayor and Council of Rockville
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mayor Marcuccio and Councilmembers:

The Historic District Commission would like to add its support for the Draft Culture and Entertainment Plan. This Plan clearly recognizes that Rockville's historic resources are a cultural attraction for local residents and visitors alike. We are pleased to note the inclusion of our historic resources as an integral feature of this plan.

We also note that the Draft Culture and Entertainment Plan lays out a plan of action that is similar to the Heritage Area Plan Amendment currently being drafted by historic preservation staff. It is heartening to see strong city support for the concept of promoting our cultural and entertainment resources to both residents and visitors.

We anticipate the inclusion of the Culture and Entertainment Plan as an addendum to the Heritage Area Application, which will be presented to the Mayor and Council in 2012 for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Janet Hunt-McCool, HDC Chair

cc: Historic District Commission
Susan Swift, Director, Community Planning and Development Services

Rockville Sister City Corporation Comments

1. Where is notice of the German art exhibit in September and reception? Will it go in? I don't really see any attention to Sister City activities—Chinese or German and that would be my criticism. No mention of the June Dim Sum gathering; no attention to the German art exhibit and reception in September; or annual meeting. Will these go in the next forma? There doesn't appear to be any mention of the Wootton exchange with Pinneberg in June. Will the September German student exchange be in? I believe the cultural section is deficient. **The format for Sister City activities need to be "beefed up."

Email Comments

1. Good luck with your endeavor. For forty years, I have lived just outside the Rockville city limits, the Cultural, Entertainment and Dining possibilities draw me to the city now. I expect that Rockville will become even more of an attraction in the future. I scanned through the document again this morning to assure myself that my somewhat rambling phone message about The Plan had some validity. I think so. The Plan is vulnerable, in my view, because there is no creative expression in a "Cultural" document. Where would that appear in a competent, formal, organized document? Possibly several places, but definitely in the "Vision" statement. That quality is

absent. The statement appears to be a collection of objectives or subordinate goals -- rather than an inspirational expression of a vision or big concept. This is a "dangerous" lapse for the city, as has been exemplified by VisArts -- a visual arts venue created (evidently) without creativity.

I believe this Cultural and Entertainment venture is a great idea for Rockville and that The Minor Group has produced a very good Plan document. However, there is something vital missing, in a similar manner to VisArts. Which I also thought was a very good idea -- to the point of wanting to be involved with it ... twice. I don't believe they wanted to hear what I had to say, just before the opening and a month or so ago, though I had the credential and track record with Communications and Environments for Corporate and Institutional clients that would have allowed me to provide valuable assistance. (Plus being educated in the Visual Arts.) Maybe I'm not as likable as I think!

Perhaps the e-mail was a bit more concise than the phone message and could be slightly embellished with some content from the latter. The Evaluation side of my work: Formative -- looking at projects being developed, anticipating problems, and Summative -- looking at completed projects that were not connecting with their audiences ... has shown that any undertaking is difficult, and that a single seemingly minor flaw can unbalance a whole enterprise. Also, every project outcome I've ever evaluated, that was experiencing difficulties, had been accomplished by talented, experienced, competent teams and individuals ... and smart managements. However, for varied reasons their efforts did not mesh in ways that connected with intended public audiences.

I always knew that complex projects, done well, were not easy from my work on the other side -- Planning and Conceptual Development. And, there is no such thing as a "no-brainer!" Everything must be carefully thought through, on every project.

Every project needs a concise Problem Definition (that opens up a broad-spectrum of possibilities, initially). Every project needs a strong concept that attracts and engages people. Most importantly -- every project needs to be AUDIENCE-CENTERED!!! I think that viewpoint was missing in the Plan -- perhaps implied, but maybe not nearly strongly enough. It is relatively easy to succeed with anything using an audience-centered perspective and very easy to fail, lacking one. "History" is littered with failed or struggling projects where the "developers" fell in love with their own work and lost sight of the fact that it was more important for the audience to be smitten, seduced and in love.

The Plan mentions the various existing Rockville Cultural and Entertainment venues. Possibly there is another "environment," public element or object that does not yet exist, that is the linkage between the others. Don't know what it is. It has to be imagined, and there is probably an apt metaphor or analog for it.

2. The plan seems thorough, plainly described, and well laid out. The statements and goals are worthy. I understand how action plans, budgets, and other activities will add to the depth of this draft plan.

* There is much mention of "diversity," but none of this is apparent except in this document's rhetoric. Neither appendix shows any input from other than "mainstream" entities. Where are the

Chinese, Latvians, Hispanics, etc. in here?

* Civic and service clubs, as well as religious congregations, should also have input here. They spread the word, support activities, raise funds for, and participate in Rockville's culture and entertainment as much as others represented in this plan, and for many Rockville citizens they make the connection to culture and entertainment.

* I would like to see the term "humanities" used somewhere in this document. Because it is commonly used throughout this general area of discussion, in Montgomery County and elsewhere, it seems incorrectly omitted in definitions and text in Rockville's plan.

* In Goal 1, Objective 1.3, which is most specific to heritage: Add references to programming and interpretation in this section. Include "manmade" as well as natural landscape. Should be "adaptive use" rather than re-use. Also, limiting 1.3.3. to only the Montgomery Co. Heritage Area program is narrow and shortsighted; there are now and will be later other programs that should be taken advantage of in Rockville.

3. Thank you for allowing Peerless Rockville to review the draft Culture and Entertainment Plan. Peerless supports the draft Plan and is pleased to see the strong role historic preservation and heritage plays in the overall strategic goals of the City of Rockville.

From Website

What Do You Like Best About the Culture and Entertainment Plan?

1. The concept of partnering with private events instead of always asking for contributions.
2.
 - a) The detail provided in the "Understanding the Plan" section
 - b) The comprehensiveness of the plan
 - c) The financial accountability recommendations
 - d) The emphasis on public/private/non-profit partnerships
 - e) The plan's specific inclusion of people with disabilities and those with lower incomes
3. Simply that the City is making an effort to constantly improve in every way. That is very important to me. You either continue to move forward or fall behind.
4. I think there is too much generalization and too many platitudes or current buzzwords; not enough specific information about organizations, programs, and goals.
5. Developing partnerships between the City and the many organizations and groups. Intentionally raising awareness to build participation in cultural and entertainment in Rockville.
6. I like that the Culture and Entertainment Plan is highlighting the arts and performing theatres in the area and trying to make Rockville a cultural destination.
7. That there is a plan.
8. It includes a wide range of activities.
9. It is a nice framework and a good idea but lacks a real enthusiastic mission statement. Why not go for gold, claim to be the best at something and make people come to Rockville.
10. I used to love the wine tastings, food, and crafts! (But ... see noise concerns later.)
11. The fact that it does recognize the value of culture and entertainment.
12. The best thing about the plan is that it exists and, hopefully, that action will be taken to bring the vision about.
13. Shows general commitment of city and region to a high quality of life. However, it lacks specific implementation suggests.
14. It is a positive, proactive, and thorough vision for culture and entertainment in our community.

What Changes Do You Feel Should Be Made to the Plan?

1.
 - a) Recommendations 2.2.2. and 2.2.3. should have a quantitative metric (% or #) that identifies the relative number of applicable accessible programs
 - b) Recommendation 2.2.4. should begin, “Assure that ALL programs are accessible...”
 - c) Recommendation 3.2.4. should state, “Ensure that all ages and Rockville’s ethnicities are **EQUITABLY** incorporated in marketing and promotional materials.” This removes the potential for a future marketing campaign to disproportionately market to one particular ethnicity, which historically ignores and discourages other ethnicities.
 - d) Objective 3.3. should include a financial accountability recommendation consistent with recommendation 1.1.6.
2. There should be some explanation of what programs each organization provides. I see no evidence of any studies or surveys to determine the needs of the community or organizations. SurveyMonkey provides an online method of collecting such information.
3. Need to define stakeholders. I thought that I knew but not sure. This becomes important for Goal 3. Also, probably need to talk more about what will be in the annual action plan.
4. I have noticed that Olney Theatre Center is listed under “Performing Arts Facilities” instead of the “Performing Arts” category and would request that this be changed because Olney Theatre Center is a professional award-winning nonprofit Equity theater that provides year-round, diverse productions to audiences across the metro area.
5. Add the word humanities to the topics that culture and entertainment refers to throughout the Plan (to refer collectively to all aspects of culture, including arts, entertainment, humanities, recreation, heritage, and science and technology.) Also add the definition of humanities to the others.
6. I would like the plan to give preference to hiring Rockville-based entertainment providers. Full disclosure: I would benefit from this preference. Regardless, I do feel that; in general, preference to local vendors and merchants should be given for all Rockville gov’t expenditures. As long as the quality of the service provided is not compromised. For example, my band has performed for Montgomery Village, Kentlands/Gaithersburg, Leesburg, and Bethany Beach, DE just this summer. But we could not get booked by Rockville for the last 2 years! This makes no sense.
7. More focus on sports.
8. Sharpen the specific steps that will make Rockville better than any other destination.
9. The volume of the music must be monitored. I would say that for concerts in Rockville Town Square, the noise is above a safe level, and in the area of hearing damage. I used to go to events, but now they are much too loud to preserve my hearing.
10. It includes a lot of fancy wording with not a lot of substance. Lots of suggestions, but not how to implement them.
11. Even more emphasis on marketing beyond Rockville, and collaboration among the city and other organizations -- Montgomery College in particular. (The MC Rockville campus has excellent music programs that the city should promote, as well as drawing on Faculty and students for programs in city venues. MC Jazz programs and World Music events are top notch and would help the diversity goal.
12. Plan should encourage more private restaurant and bar venues featuring live music such as currently occurs at Out of the Way or Timpano’s. Several such venues in downtown Rockville would really help.
13. It is difficult to determine what changes are being proposed, if any.

Please Give Us Any Comments You Have About the Culture and Entertainment Plan.

1. The plan is fine, but we would like to see the Dawn Crafton Dancers and their nonprofit organization...DANCE Partners, Int, Inc. become more involved with the Rockville Community. Please let me know if you have any suggestions for locations for our state of the art dance studio. We are serious about making a move. We need more space and consider Rockville a premier location convenient to our families. We would like to add a new, larger, state of the art dance studio, which would make Rockville a Cultural Destination for all of our students, bringing business to shops, restaurants in the area. We are ready to move, build, but need the right location, lot, building...we are actively looking at this time.
2. In Appendix A, you should reference Rockville Sister Cities Corporation, not Sister Cities. At least that would provide a pointer to a specific Board and Commission website where one could learn about the organization and what services it provides.
3.
 - a) 3.1.1. Change “Coordinate” to “Bring together.” Still need to know who the stakeholders are to make sense of this section.
 - b) 3.1.4. Need to qualify the purpose of partnering with local universities and colleges ... since the City doesn’t support them. The purpose might be to showcase their cultural and entertainment activities so that they are available to residents of Rockville and attract people to Rockville.
 - c) 3.3.3. Need to expand on this to indicate how it fosters economic development.
4. Would like to see how this might feed into the first year’s action plan. A draft for year one would help me to see how this benefits the City and what intentional steps would be taken that aren’t taken now.
5. In the Introduction P3 - replace “developing” with “continuing to develop” (...a cultural environment that reflects our unique position as a community...) Add the word “should” to the second sentence following Goal 1 so that it reads: Culture and entertainment programming and amenities should distinguish Rockville...Make sure that the Recommendations for the “1.3. Objective - Safeguard and promote Rockville’s heritage and use of heritage resources” are not misconstrued by the HDC to limit the use of certain city facilities. Change both 4.1.2. and 4.1.3. from starting with “Use the...” to “Continue to use the...” In Objective 4.3., change the “or” to “and”.
6. Thanks for the work you do!
7. Stop asking your council and close friends what they think is important. Get out in the community and see what the people need. I see no emphasis here on including the lower socio-economic community, and I am sure it is because they don’t vote. But seriously, stop pandering to the top echelons; you are missing a great opportunity to make Rockville a vibrant first class city. God bless the cultural ideas, but where is the love???
8. I think it’s always difficult to try to be all things to all people. It might be easier to implement the plan by taking one feature at a time and once that works well move on to the next project.

What Would You Like to See Added to the Plan to Make Rockville a Cultural Destination?

1. A quarterly schedule of events that includes more than just city sponsored events.
2. Organize and promote a music festival, which over time could grow to be like Austin’s South by Southwest or New Orleans’ Jazz Festival.
3. How would Rockville encourage the establishment of new cultural entities? How could current programs be expanded to provide additional opportunities for the community and how could they be communicated to the residents?

4.
 - a) 1.1.5. Are there benchmarks for percent of budget to consider allocating for culture and entertainment?
 - b) 1.2.1. Needs to clarify that criteria to evaluate all programming refers to programming offered by the City or supported by the City.
 - c) 1.2.6. Although science and technology sector is referenced here, it is odd that the Rockville Consortium for Science, a group that provides programming and has some City support is not listed in one of the appendices.
5. I would like to see Olney Theatre Center mentioned as Rockville's premiere theater to go to considering Olney Theatre Center is the closest professional theatre in the area, as well as one of the oldest cultural institutions in Metropolitan Washington, having been around 73 years.
6. Add to the end of 1.1.2. "as well as those groups aspiring to become community-based groups." Change 1.2.6. by replacing "science and technology" with "business sector" (why call out science and technology only?)
7. Would like to see some dog events held in Rockville. My family and our dogs go to several in the area, Bethesda, Frederick, etc., and really enjoy them. Would like to see Rockville host some similar events. Brings a lot of people to the area.
8. Additional venues. Opening up the skate park for local bands is a great example.
9. Maintain Redgate golf course.
10. As someone who has watched from a distance, your budget debate on the RedGate Golf Course is a sure sign of stubborn leaders, whose agendas top reality. You have a gem of a golf course and you are allowing high quality staff fritter away. You feel the need to keep throwing money at Rockville Town Center, but obviously someone messed up there and no one is taking responsibility or looking at viable alternatives. You have a huge Hispanic community, how are you involving them in the planning process? Where are the Asian representatives? Get more buy-in from these communities!!!
11. I note the intent to work with the science and technology community, but this has few substantive proposals in the background interviews I read. I propose the city develop a "Maker Faire" on the model of an event started in San Mateo, CA by *Make Magazine* and many others. The Faire encourages a wide group of people, especially young people, to be creative in art, crafts, and technology and brings these folks together to share ideas in a fun way; a great way to engage and attract the current and next generation "Creative Class" folks to our city. Please look at the videos on the Maker Faire web site to see the potential of this event: <http://makerfaire.com/>. I am a retired technologist and have a number of professional society and federal lab contacts who have already expressed an interest in helping. I would be happy to discuss this idea with interested parties.
12. Build additional multi-level parking near Rockville center. Remove the parking area in front of Regal. Replace it with a large green park area with a permanent performance pavilion for free events, benches, plantings, etc.