



**City of Seattle**  
Office of the Mayor

**Date** March 1, 2010

**To** Councilmember Nick Licata  
Councilmember Sally Clark  
Councilmember Tom Rasmussen  
Councilmember Sally Bagshaw

**From** Darryl Smith, Deputy Mayor for Community

**Copy** Michael Killoren, Director, Office of Arts & Culture  
Diane Sugimura, Director, Department of Planning and Development  
Steve Johnson, Acting Director, Office of Economic Development

**Subject** **Response to CODAC Statement of Legislative Intent, SLI 6-1-A-1**

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Arts and culture make significant contributions to the economic, social and cultural vitality of Seattle. They give our neighborhoods their unique character and help bring our diverse communities together.

Seattle is recognized as one of America's top five cities in arts and arts-related employment and boasts higher combined attendance for arts events than for all professional sports combined. On any given day, Seattle offers a remarkable level of arts and cultural offerings for residents and visitors to enjoy. The city has garnered regional, national and international acclaim for the quality of programs in music, dance, the visual arts, theater and media.

Yet for all of these accomplishments, Seattle is losing affordable arts and cultural space as our neighborhoods change and evolve. In response to the sale of the Odd Fellows building on Capitol Hill in early 2008, the City Council formed the Cultural Overlay District Advisory Committee (CODAC). The Council asked the committee to develop a set of recommendations to create and/or preserve cultural space, whether for public exhibition and performance or for rehearsal, studio and office space. The CODAC delved into districts, incentives, zoning and a variety of other tools that the City could use to encourage and preserve the development of space for arts and cultural use.

In the fall 2009, the City Council issued a Statement of Legislative Intent (SLI) 6-1A-1 to follow up on the CODAC recommendations.

The Executive acknowledges the work of the CODAC, the importance of arts and culture in the overall health of Seattle, and the affordable space issues artists and arts and cultural organizations face. The Executive's response to the SLI is framed within the six recommendations of the CODAC below:

## SIX CODAC RECOMMENDATIONS

### **1. Allow for the creation of designated cultural districts within Seattle's neighborhoods, to preserve and enhance space for arts and culture.**

The Executive favors a variety of implementation strategies to achieve the overall CODAC goals of securing dedicated space for community cultural organizations to thrive.

District designation is one strategy among many. Implementing the strategy would be a complex process, which may or may not be the best approach to achieve all of the goals outlined in the CODAC report, especially in the current economic environment. The executive would like to see further analysis of this strategy in order to determine the best approach to its implementation.

The Executive is proposing a variety of tools that address CODAC recommendations 2 through 6 that can be employed in neighborhoods throughout the city:

### **2. Create a cultural districts manager staff position to work specifically on behalf of cultural districts and to liaise on behalf of cultural district programs and activities with institutions, organizations, foundations, government agencies, individuals, and City departments.**

OED has identified short-term funding to dedicate an existing part-time position to provide much-needed overall focus and coordination to this project for a period of approximately two to four months. Fortunately, the incumbent has the required experience and expertise in real estate and development to direct this effort for the next several months.

As recommended by the CODAC, this position is an important first step, providing much-needed capacity to develop a more detailed work plan for this body of work in cooperation with the interdepartmental team comprised of representatives from OED, DPD and OACA, as well as with the Facilities and Economic Development (FED) Committee of the Seattle Arts Commission. The team expects to meet with Arts Commissioners monthly.

### **3. Develop and promote an arts and cultural space 'brand' through the City's financial and land use incentives and its regulatory tools and processes.**

OED, OACA, DPD and the Arts Commission will work to develop a meaningful arts and cultural space brand by rolling out implementation tools and supporting the part-time arts liaison position identified above. Part of the work plan will involve creating the packaging and marketing of the tools and resources identified in this report; raising the visibility and awareness of the the cultural space issue; and identifying opportunities to integrate this work into existing City work plans, such as the neighborhood plan update process, and Phase II work in the Pike/Pine neighborhood.

This work will include either a technical-assistance workshop or launch event on Capitol Hill in late spring or early summer 2010 to report on progress and introduce the tools outlined in this report.

**4. Provide technical assistance for neighborhoods to ensure the most effective use of the above-mentioned tools.**

The Executive, along DPD, OED, OACA, and the Arts Commission, is making commitments to help ensure that the following services and resource tools are made available for all neighborhoods throughout the City:

- DPD agrees to perform an analysis of existing regulatory functions and incentives that relate to developing arts and cultural space. As part of the Phase II work in Pike/Pine, and as a pilot for future efforts, DPD will work with the community to identify specific land use tools for promoting arts and cultural space. This will be included in the package of Phase II legislation. DPD expects this work to continue throughout 2010.
- OED will offer the financial and business services it currently provides for small businesses to individuals and arts organizations interested in developing arts and cultural space.
- OACA will release a comprehensive guide to acquiring cultural space called "Square Feet Seattle." The guide is based on a model originally created in Toronto, adapted by Chicago, and replicated with permission from both cities. The 300-page manual is ultimately intended to serve as an interactive online resource to be launched within four to six months.
- DPD will designate a permit liaison to assist arts and cultural organizations move through the permitting process.
- The arts liaison position, along with OED, DPD, OACA and the Arts Commission, will help ensure that these resources are promoted. We will look for other opportunities for alignment with City priorities, such as the neighborhood planning update process.

**5. Conduct outreach and build awareness about how neighborhoods can provide arts and cultural space to encourage economic sustainability, express community identity, provide community building through participation in the arts and culture, and enhance overall quality of life.**

We need better data and understanding of Seattle's arts and cultural institutions and neighborhoods with a concentration of cultural activity. A citywide inventory of cultural space and needs does not exist. Therefore, we do not yet have all of the tools to evaluate which strategies for encouraging cultural development are most effective.

OACA conducts research and measures the economic impact of arts and culture in Seattle, including employment data and other measures of cultural vitality.

Since every neighborhood plan currently includes some element of arts and culture as an important component of neighborhood character, the departments, OED, DPD and OACA (and possibly DON) can help to promote the value of arts and cultural space in neighborhood and community development. Furthermore, aligning this work on cultural space with other City initiatives would be helpful.

There are also opportunities to support specific project developments, such as those related to Transit Oriented Development priorities along Sound Transit Link light rail, the redevelopment of the King Street Station, Historic Seattle's work on Washington Hall and others.

**6. Identify and pursue partnerships with institutions, organizations, foundations, government agencies and individuals with the intent of achieving goals contained in CODAC's final recommendations.**

OACA and the Seattle Arts Commission are in ongoing contact with other agencies involved in developing cultural space, including 4Culture, Historic Seattle, Artspace Projects and the University of Washington. Representatives from the Arts Commission (including leaders of the original CODAC) and OACA meet monthly to discuss strategies to advance this work and identify opportunities to partner with other entities engaged in supporting the development of dedicated cultural space.