



Commission on the Future of the Arts

In Fairfax County

**Final Report to the
Board of Supervisors**

July 2008

Commission on the Future of the Arts in Fairfax County

Final Report to the Board of Supervisors

Table of Contents

Preface	
Executive Summary	Page 3
Previous Studies on Fairfax County Arts Infrastructure	Page 9
The Arts in Fairfax County: A Vision for the Future	Page 11
Arts Facilities: Where All Discussions Begin	Page 15
Public Art in Public Places	Page 23
Arts Education for Life	Page 25
The Relationship of the Arts to Economic Development and to County Government	Page 27
In Closing	Page 30

Attachments

Commission Roster	Attachment 1
Previous Studies on Fairfax County Arts Infrastructure: Annotated	Attachment 2
<i>Arts and Economic Prosperity III: Fairfax County</i>	Attachment 3
Fairfax County Arts Facilities Inventory	Attachment 4
Public Art Policies of Nine Selected Jurisdictions	Attachment 5
Summary of Commission Recommendations	Attachment 6

Preface

In March 2006, at the request of Chairman Connolly and Supervisor Gross, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved an initiative to create a Commission on the Future of the Arts in Fairfax County.

The commission was charged with undertaking a comprehensive review of the current state of the visual and performing arts and what steps should be taken to strengthen the arts as an important component in the overall quality of life and economic vitality of Fairfax County. The examination included

- A review of current physical facilities for the arts in the county, how those facilities do or do not serve the needs of the community, and what types of facilities might be required to meet current and future needs, including an examination of whether or not to look closely at the need for a large, state-of-the-art performing arts center serving the entire county;
- The need for public art in public spaces and how such a program might be funded and administered;
- The role of the arts in Pre-K through 16 education and the role of the arts in lifelong learning opportunities for residents of the county;
- Ensuring that the arts serve the needs of an increasingly diverse county population; and
- The role and relationship of the arts to economic development and the business community, as well as the role and relationship of the arts to county government.

In the fall of 2006 the members of the commission were selected with Dr. Alan Merten, President of George Mason University as chair. The commission roster is found as *Attachment 1* to this report.

The commission acknowledges with thanks the significant assistance it received in the research and information gathering required to prepare its findings and recommendations. Special thanks to the PNC Foundation, and the regional president of PNC, Michael Herrald, for providing the financial support that greatly assisted the commission in its work. As consultant to the commission, Duncan Webb of Webb Management Services provided the benefit of his firm's national experience and expertise in looking at the role

of the arts in overall community development and “lessons learned” from other similar jurisdictions.

Thanks as well to the Arts Council of Fairfax County, the Fairfax County Park Authority, and the Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services all of which assisted the commission in its review of existing facilities and programs as well as thinking about the vision for the future of the arts in Fairfax County.

Finally, the commission expresses its sincere appreciation to the numerous arts leaders and county residents who expressed their views and shared their unique perspectives through a commission hosted open forum and in many other informal settings.

The findings and recommendations that follow represent the commission’s collective assessment of current realities and a vision for the future of how the arts can play an important role in maintaining and strengthening the unique qualities that make Fairfax County a national leader in so many areas of endeavor. This report does not focus in detail on implementation issues. It is our hope that the Board of Supervisors, the business community and arts leaders from across the county, as well as the many residents of the county for whom the arts play a major role in their lives, will come together to advance the agenda proposed by the commission.

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Commission on the Future of the Arts in Fairfax County was created by the County Board of Supervisors to undertake a review of the current state of the visual and performing arts in the county and what steps should be taken to strengthen the arts as an important component in the quality of life and economic vitality of Fairfax County.

The commission looked at these issues from a variety of perspectives:

- Audiences
- Participants (those who actually “make art”)
- Existing organizations
- Arts educators
- Arts facilities
- Sources of public financial support for the arts
- Sources of private financial support for the arts

These elements are often intertwined and progress in one area cannot be accomplished without an active connection to other areas. However complex the issues, and however challenging may be the current economic climate, the commission believes that progress can be made on a number of these issues.

The focus of the commission’s work was to look at existing arts-related facilities in the county and how those facilities do or do not serve the needs of arts groups and county residents generally, as well as what types of new facilities might be needed to meet current and future needs. The facilities examination also included a review of the issues related to the need for a large performing arts center to serve the entire county and the region.

In addition to facilities, the commission was asked to address how Fairfax could address the issues of public art in public places, the role of the arts in providing lifelong learning opportunities for Fairfax residents from Pre-K to seniors, ensuring that arts-related opportunities are available to all of Fairfax’s ethnically diverse communities, the role and relationship of the arts to economic development, and the role of county government in both directly and indirectly supporting the arts.

Over a period of more than a year, the full commission met six times, in addition to subcommittee meetings. In June, 2007 the commission hosted a well attended open forum at Government Center at which many Fairfax-based visual and performing arts groups were represented.

During the course of its inquiry, the commission reviewed prior similar studies in Fairfax, research conducted by the Arts Council of Fairfax County, the Fairfax County Economic Development Authority, the Fairfax Chamber of Commerce, and the Americans for the Arts, among other sources. The commission also met with key community leaders from the public schools to assess the direction of arts education in the county. In addition, the commission engaged the expertise of Webb Management Services to look at the experience of other similar jurisdictions with regard to arts facilities and resources.

The commission is certainly cognizant of the county's current financial constraints and therefore has carefully considered its priorities, as well as the timeframe for implementation of its recommendations. Some items require immediate investment of time and modest financial resources. For other items, discussions and planning can begin now with implementation over a longer period of time.

Findings and Recommendations

A list of all commission recommendations is attached to this report as *Attachment 6*.

The commission began its work by looking at what is perceived as the strengths and weaknesses of the arts in the county as well as opportunities for growth and development. It then developed a statement articulating its vision for the future of the arts in Fairfax County:

Fairfax County will be a community that is recognized for its leadership in the arts. It will be a county in which the arts reflect the county's diversity and are recognized and valued as integral to its future. Its passion for the arts will be demonstrated through public policy in partnership with businesses, educators, artists, and residents.

Through its research the commission became mindful that much of the conversation around arts facilities and resources is today focused on arts *audiences*. However, we are clearly in an era when increasingly residents are looking for opportunities to actually *participate* in art making either individually or through organized groups. The ability to provide "messy space" and the technical capacity for meaningful arts participation to occur is what will increasingly define how well a community fulfills the expectations of its residents with respect to the arts.

Facilities

The commission found that existing arts facilities in the county are not only limited in number, but those that do exist are often too large or too small and technically inadequate to meet the needs arts organizations. There is a serious lack of spaces for people to actually "make art".

High Priority Recommendation

The commission strongly recommends that the major focus of new arts facilities in Fairfax be aimed at building three to four community-based arts centers each containing an approximately 500-seat, well-equipped performance space for music, dance and theater, as well as studio, teaching and exhibit space for visual artists. The commission suggests the idea of building one such center as a “pilot” to examine utilization patterns and how well the mix of services and spaces within the facility meet the needs of the community. There are several existing community centers and park facilities in Fairfax County that could be expanded and renovated to meet these requirements. The county should explore these possibilities with the Department of Community and Recreation Services and the Fairfax Park Authority.

Priority Recommendations

With respect to a large performing arts space (1,500+ seats), the commission found that such a space is necessary to meet the needs of a small number of local arts organizations and to bring to Fairfax outstanding artists from around the world. Such spaces currently exist at Wolf Trap and George Mason’s Center for the Arts. A first-class performing arts facility has the potential to make Fairfax a destination for the arts, much as we have seen with the Kennedy Center in the District and Strathmore in Montgomery County.

The commission recommends that the county explore several options regarding a large venue. A new, free standing performance space at Wolf Trap is one possibility. Another would be an expansion and renovation of the existing Center for the Arts at George Mason University. These two options would require a substantial financial commitment from the county, perhaps the state, Wolf Trap or the University, and the private sector.

A third option might be the construction of a multi-use complex, perhaps at Government Center, to include a large hall along with smaller performance venues, as well as conference facilities. There do exist models across the country of large performing arts spaces that are built as part of a larger project including commercial, retail and/or residential components.

The commission’s report outlines a number of the potential benefits and cautions regarding constructing a new large performance space. Even if construction funds are available, operating expenses would be significant and would likely require a combination of both public funding and private fundraising.

The needs of visual artists for affordable studio, teaching, exhibit and living space require special attention. While Fairfax lacks the inventory of 19th century factories and warehouses that have been adapted elsewhere for use by visual artists, there are a number of older strip malls in the county that might serve as the core for developing an “urban” visual arts “Soho” experience that would not only meet the needs of visual artists, but would add to the economic vitality of the county.

Public Art in Public Places

Most jurisdictions the size of Fairfax County have policies and procedures in place that have guided the development of dynamic public art programs. Fairfax County has no such program. While various public art programs in the county are in the development stage, including a privately funded study for public art in Reston, a county-wide public art program is long past due for Fairfax. As major commercial development activity continues to be planned for various sectors of the county from Tysons to BRAC-related locations, it is an opportune time for county government to enact a public art program.

High Priority Recommendation

The commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors task the Arts Council to establish a public/private task force on a public art program for the county which would consult widely with the appropriate constituencies and develop several alternative policies and procedures, and the financial impact of each, for consideration by the Board. The Task Force would address such issues as lessons learned from other jurisdictions, funding mechanisms and financial impact, the scope of a public art program, and how the community at-large should be engaged in such a program. Both Montgomery County and Arlington County have models that can be considered.

Arts Education for Life

The Fairfax County Public Schools is known for having one of the best K-12 arts education programs in the country. The Wolf Trap Foundation provides a wide variety of arts education programs for teachers and learners of all ages and skill levels. It's Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts provides arts education programs and services for children three to five years of age and their teachers. In addition, there are numerous arts education programs available for seniors through community centers and membership programs such as the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute affiliated with George Mason University.

High Priority Recommendation

In a period of financial constraint, the requirements of federal legislation such as "No Child Left Behind," and state Standards of Learning, make it increasingly important for the local arts community and business community to urge the public schools to maintain and strengthen its commitment to a quality arts education for every student. Arts education not only has its intrinsic value, including building the arts audiences for tomorrow, but the extrinsic value of preparing students to be innovative, analytical, disciplined and self-confident.

The Relationship of the Arts to Economic Development and County Government

A recent study by American for the Arts reports that nonprofit arts and culture is a significant industry in Fairfax County generating \$77.75 million in local economic activity (2005 data). The spending by nonprofit arts organizations and the event-related spending by their audiences supports 1,693 full-time equivalent jobs, and generates \$4.59 million in is state and local government revenue. Clearly, supporting the arts not only enhances our quality of life, but is a critical element in what businesses want in a community.

While these data illustrate the importance of the arts to the county and the business community, neither sector has supported the arts at a level that allows it not only to grow, but to flourish.

Although the most visible performing and visual arts organizations in the county receive some annual support from the business sector, overall operating, special project or endowment support is very modest both in absolute terms and in comparison to similar jurisdictions, especially Montgomery County. The reasons for this are outlined below, but it is clear that the future of the arts in Fairfax cannot rely on government support and the support of individuals. Given the role the arts play in the economic future and overall quality of life in Fairfax, the business community – especially those larger companies with a significant workforce in the county should “step up to the plate” and become leaders in supporting the arts.

High Priority Recommendations

Several members of the County Board of Supervisors, and especially its Chairman, Gerry Connolly, have been, and continue to be, articulate advocates for the arts. However there are numerous ways in which county government can act, even during a period of fiscal constraints, to strengthen the arts and move us toward a shared vision for the future of the arts in Fairfax County. These include doing more to promote the arts locally and nationally, providing additional resources to the Arts Council (FY08 grants budget is \$680,000 vs. just under \$4 million in Montgomery County), developing an overall cultural facilities plan for the county, launching a public arts program, providing improved services and arts opportunities for the many ethnic arts organizations in the county, and using both public policy and the “bully pulpit” to encourage greater business support for the arts.

Priority Recommendation

The Arts Council of Fairfax County, an independent 501(C)(3), is the primary advocate and resource for Fairfax arts organizations and individual artists. However, there is no office or individual within county government that can advise the County Executive and Board of Supervisors and advocate for the arts. The commission urges the county to explore creating such an office.

As Chairman Connolly said recently at the annual meeting of the Arts Council of Fairfax County, “Fairfax County is first in the nation in household income, has world class public education, health services, public safety, and parks and recreation. We have an economic climate that is the envy of the nation. It’s time we did the same for the arts.”

Previous Studies on Fairfax County Arts Infrastructure

Since 1970 there have been four formal studies undertaken examining the need for cultural facilities in Fairfax County. Additional studies have been commissioned dealing with site specific facilities that would serve a small section of the county.

- 1970 *Study of Feasibility and Program Alternatives for a Cultural/Recreation Facility in Northern Virginia*. Prepared by Gladstone Associates for the Northern Virginia Recreation and Cultural Authority
- 1976 *Fairfax County Cultural and Heritage Center Feasibility Study*. Prepared by Fothergill Beekuis Associates for the Fairfax County Park Authority
- 1985 *Study for a Major Arts Complex in Fairfax County*. Prepared for Hazel/Peterson Companies by Harrison Price Company
- 1990 *A Study of the Need for a County-Wide Cultural Facility in Fairfax County*. Prepared by the Wolf Organization for the Fairfax County Government
- 2001 *Town of Herndon Community Cultural Arts Center Feasibility Study*. Prepared by Webb Management Services for the Town of Herndon

None of these studies resulted in additional facilities, but several did have an impact on the design and construction of school and recreational facilities that have been used heavily by local performing and visual arts groups.

While much has changed since the last study of a county-wide arts facility in 1990, there are elements of these studies that are certainly applicable today. The recurrent theme is a *focus on meeting the needs of local performing and visual arts organizations for performance, rehearsal, workshop and storage space, as well as exhibition venues*.

The studies warn against the “one size fits all” approach. Small organizations need specific types of spaces in terms of seating capacity and support facilities. More established groups require somewhat larger spaces through which they can grow their audience and therefore their potential for contributed support. Music, dance and theater each have very specific requirements to effectively do their work. The issue of proximity is also important. Arts facilities must be located in ways that best serve the various geographic areas of the county.

It is interesting to note that none of the studies through 1990 focused on giving expression to the cultural heritages of Fairfax’s increasingly diverse population. This is clearly an important element in 2008.

With respect to a large cultural facility to serve the entire county, the 1990 Wolf study was written just prior to the opening of George Mason’s Center for the Arts. It was assumed then that the Center for the Arts and Wolf Trap would meet the need for large presenting spaces.

The commission has examined how the dynamics have changed over the last 18 years and what mix of facilities will best meet the needs of Fairfax residents now and in the future.

An annotated list of previous arts infrastructure studies in Fairfax County is found as *Attachment 2* to this report.

The Arts in Fairfax County

A Vision for the Future

The commission began its work by discussing a vision for the future. By 2030 what do we want the arts in Fairfax to look like? What opportunities should be available to all our residents? What role should the arts play in the overall quality of life in Fairfax as well as its continuing economic vitality? What is the role of both the public and private sectors in realizing this vision for the arts?

The commission looked at its vision for the future from a variety of standpoints:

- Audiences
- Participants (people “making art”)
- Arts organizations
- Arts educators
- Arts facilities
- Sources of public financial support for the arts
- Sources of private financial support for the arts

To begin to answer the questions posed above the commission examined what it perceived to be the strengths and weaknesses of the arts in Fairfax County as well as the existing opportunities for growth and development.

Strengths

- High rate of participation in arts activities
(According to a 2002 Shugoll Research study, 72% of Fairfax households reported participating or attending at least three cultural events during the past year)
- Strong demographics that support arts participation and attendance
(Disposable income, educational attainment, homeownership)
- A vibrant business community
- Strong Pre-K through 12 arts education programs
- Growing demand for additional arts opportunities, especially for facilities
- Major presenting venues in the county or close by
(Wolf Trap, Mason Center for the Arts, Strathmore, Meriwether Post, Nissan Pavilion)
- New arts facilities in the advanced planning or construction stage
(Lorton Workhouse, Herndon Community Arts Center)
- Diversity in population leads to a diversity of cultural offerings
- Supportive elected officials
- Large number of arts groups networked through the Arts Council
- Youth cohort demanding new art forms and new delivery vehicles
- Strong regional arts community from which to draw, especially in the District

Weaknesses

- Although Fairfax County is justifiably proud of its leadership in many quality of life components, a leadership position in the arts is absent
- Performing arts venues are not distributed throughout the county leaving some areas underserved
- Fairfax County has very little in the way of public art in public places and has no formal policies in place to encourage public art
- In both the visual and performing arts, facilities of the right size and technical capacity are lacking, as is the presence of a large, attractive and technically advanced facility
- In the visual arts, there is a serious lack of both exhibit space and studio space
- There is active competition for private funds among arts groups and from non-arts groups in the region
- Lack of recognition of the value of the arts to economic vitality, especially the role of the arts in providing jobs and ancillary income for small business
- Lack of a sense of county-wide community may translate into lack of support for the arts county-wide
- Lack of arts-related public policies generally
- Lack of public and private funds available to support arts organizations relative to other jurisdictions such as Montgomery and Arlington Counties
- Transportation and traffic plays a role in the ability of people to travel cross county for arts activities
- Difficulty in integrating culturally diverse arts activity with “mainstream” arts activity
- Financial and organizational fragility for many arts organizations in the county; Arts organizations often lack the knowledge and ability to effectively raise funds and market their activities
- Lack of significant support for the arts from the business community; no “executive champion” who can rally support from others
- Lack of an overall cultural facilities plan for the county

Opportunities

- Lack of a primary, county-wide arts facility that can be used by local arts organizations provides a future opportunity to make a dramatic impact for the performing and visual arts
- An opportunity to create a world-class pan-arts festival for Fairfax that draws on local and regional talent as well as touring artists
- Through increased partnerships, an opportunity to enhance arts education at all levels and for all age groups
- Incorporate the arts more fully into the public policy of Fairfax County in areas such as facilities support and public art, among others
- Involve the business community more fully in the arts by demonstrating the value of the arts to economic growth

- Maximize the use of currently available performance and exhibition venues by an online reservation and information service
- An opportunity to make Fairfax County a leader in presenting the arts of varied cultures

Given existing strengths and opportunities, with strategies to address these weaknesses, the commission presents the following statement articulating its vision for the future of the arts in Fairfax County:

Fairfax County will be a community that is recognized for its leadership in the arts. It will be a county in which the arts reflect the county's diversity and are recognized and valued as integral to its future. Its passion for the arts will be demonstrated through public policy in partnership with businesses, educators, artists, and residents.

This vision for the future can best be attained through integration of a vision for the arts with the vision for the county as a whole.

As outlined in the 2007 American for the Arts study, *Arts and Economic Prosperity III: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audiences in Fairfax County*, the arts are a highly significant, and often forgotten, industry. In 2005 total spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations and their audiences in event-related spending was \$77.5 million. This spending supported 1,693 full-time jobs, generated \$35.01 million in household income to residents of Fairfax, and delivered \$4.59 million in state and local government revenue. As this economic impact study states, “when we support the arts, we not only enhance our quality of life, but we also invest in Fairfax County’s economic well-being.”

The full text of the Americans for the Arts economic impact study for Fairfax County can be found as *Attachment 3* to this report.

It is perhaps symptomatic that recent planning initiatives for the county such as *Planning for the Future*, and the Fairfax Chamber of Commerce’s *Fairfax 2030* project hardly mention – if at all – the arts as an element in looking at the future of the county.

These and other studies look at future trends and implications of population growth, the “graying” of Fairfax, ethnic diversification, children and youth, housing, health care, technological change, public safety, and community engagement but ignore the role public and private sectors can and should play in utilizing the arts as an important vehicle in achieving desired goals.

It is our hope that this report will lay out an agenda for the future of the arts in Fairfax County and in so doing, will place the vitality of the arts firmly on the agenda of county government, the business community and all who value the quality of life and economic progress of the county.

Arts Facilities: Where All Discussions Begin

"We've been doing so much for so long with so little, that I think people begin to think we can do anything with absolutely nothing"

Fairfax arts leader
June 2007

In 2005 there were 242 501(c) (3) arts organizations in Fairfax County. There are also dozens of others that have not taken the formal step of becoming a formal non-profit. Of the 242 organizations, 98 filed IRS *Form 990* required of groups that have annual income of \$25,000 or above.

Most visual and performing arts groups in Fairfax (and across the country) operate off the radar screen of government. They are driven by a small group of individuals whose passion for theater, music, dance, crafts, and the visual arts sustain them year in and year out. For many, their active participation in the arts is a central component of their lives. These activities most often take place in private homes, local places of worship, schools (public and private), and community centers. Sustainability is normally only as strong as the ardor of the leader of the core group.

For larger, more established, organizations such as the Fairfax Symphony, Fairfax Choral Society, Fairfax Ballet, the Elden Street Players, or the McLean Project for the Arts, many assume their facilities issues are "solved" since they are performing, producing, exhibiting, etc. However this is far from the truth.

In discussing the future of the arts in Fairfax, the commission was confronted time and again by the central issue of facilities. At the Fairfax Cultural Policy Summit held on May 25, 2005, the three main topics of discussion were solving the space issue, collaborations and partnerships, and public policy.

On June 20, 2007, the commission hosted an Open Community Forum at Government Center to discuss a range of arts-related issues. Close to 100 people attended and 18 organizations were represented. By far, facilities issues dominated the discussion.

The Fairfax Arts Facilities Inventory

With the assistance of the Arts Council of Fairfax County and Duncan Webb of Webb Management Services, the commission reviewed existing performing and visual arts facilities in Fairfax.

An annotated list of those facilities can be found at *Attachment 4* to this report.

Findings

While there are a number of facilities in the county that are used extensively by arts groups, the overwhelming majority of arts events are held in multi-use spaces that do not meet the basic needs of those user groups. This is especially true for the visual arts and performing arts groups whose audiences normally range from 300-500. Larger groups such as the Fairfax Symphony and Fairfax Choral Society have found homes at the George Mason Center for the Arts and Schlesinger Concert Hall on the Alexandria Campus of Northern Virginia Community College.

In reviewing existing arts spaces it is important to make the distinction between facilities that are used by county residents for their own participatory activities and those that serve as venues for professional and semi-professional presentations and exhibitions.

Regarding the current arts facilities inventory, the commission has concluded the following:

1. Existing arts facilities are lacking in terms of appropriate size, technical capacity, and availability.

2. For theater, music and dance there is a **lack of performance space that is the right size**. What we have is either too small or too large. The need is for well equipped performances spaces that seat approximately 500. Existing spaces have very little wing and fly space and generally have little technical sophistication. None of the existing spaces are designed specifically to serve the unique requirements for dance presentations.

The best smaller spaces that do exist are in the Reston Community Center (CenterStage – 290 seats) and McLean Community Center (Alden Theatre – 434 seats).

These spaces have very little availability beyond established users in Reston and McLean. Reston and Mclean were built decades ago through the creation of special tax districts. It is highly unlikely that this model would be viable today.

3. Schools are not the answer. Fairfax has 24 high schools and middle schools with performance spaces available for community rental. They range in size from 500-1,600 seats. These spaces cannot be booked by outside groups until the school calendar is set making it very difficult to market a performance season effectively. It is very difficult to schedule rehearsal time in school facilities. It is also not possible for a production to “sit down” for several weeks due to school use. Numerous community music groups, such as the Fairfax Band, currently use school facilities, but such use is becoming increasingly difficult to schedule because of increased school activity. Generally school facilities are modestly equipped and too large for community theater, music, and dance groups.

4. Existing multi-use facilities (serving music, dance and theater) usually end up serving none of these groups well. Each arts genre has its own specific requirements. Acoustical properties, technical capacity, stage flooring, wing and fly space, and stage size vary with the discipline.

5. The two largest presenting venues in the county, **Wolf Trap and George Mason's Center for the Arts** are too large for almost all county arts groups. The Fairfax Symphony does use the Center for the Arts, but internal use, cost, and size make these unrealistic options for general community use. The Center for the Arts is antiquated technically and is aesthetically not up to the standards of facilities such as Strathmore.

6. Two Northern Virginia Community College venues, **Schlesinger Concert Hall** (Alexandria Campus – 1,000 seats) and the **Ernst Theater** (Annandale Campus – 525 seats) are used by several community arts groups. Schlesinger is well equipped, but is generally underused due to its size. Ernst is a good size, but lacks sufficient parking and is technically and acoustically poor.

7. The **Fairfax County Department of Community and Recreation Services** operates 10 community centers across the county. Its primary focus is social services (seniors, teens, wellness, team sports, etc.) Although several centers have make-shift performance areas, only the James Lee Center in Annandale has a real performance space. That theater seats 245 and is used by a variety of community groups including the Providence Players. The space has modest technical capacity and little wing or fly space. However, in several ways, it is a model to look at for including performance spaces in future or renovated community centers.

8. The **Fairfax County Park Authority** operates five outdoor amphitheaters of varying sizes in county parks and historic sites. One site is partially covered, one has a sound shell, and three have only a wooden stage. All have minimal technical capacities and hold from 75 to 400. During the summer the Park Authority organizes close to 200 performances at these and other park facilities. All performances and related costs are paid for by private contributions of approximately \$200,000 annually. With its extensive property holdings, the Park Authority sites could be considered for any future community arts centers.

9. The **visual arts** have specific needs for work space, classes, and exhibition venues. Fairfax has several well established visual arts organizations including the McLean Project for the Arts, Vienna Arts Society, Fairfax City Art League, and the Greater Reston Arts Center among others. There are also numerous smaller organizations that focus on quilting, wood crafts, and photography, etc. Most of these artists work in their home. Some have studios, but the lack of affordable studio space is a major issue for the visual arts in Fairfax.

A second challenge for visual artists is exhibition space. The organizations mentioned above have limited exhibit space. The Arts Council of Fairfax runs an "Art in the Workplace" program which mounts temporary exhibits of local artists in government and corporate settings. However, with no art museum or large cultural center in the county, artists have limited ability to show and sell their work.

The county has invested heavily in the soon to open **Lorton Workhouse Arts Center**, a 55-acre cultural arts complex created through adaptive reuse of an historic prison. With

150 artist studios, artist housing and gallery space, the Workhouse will have an important impact on some of the most pressing issues facing Fairfax visual artists.

10. There are a variety of arts activities in the county that focus on **specific ethnic experiences**. Most take place in local churches and community centers. “Festival” events can attract a diverse audience, but are normally target marketed to specific ethnic communities. Performing arts events that feature touring artists from specific countries (Korea, Philippines, India, South Africa, Vietnam, Taiwan, Russia, etc.) attract large ethnic-based audiences to the Patriot Center or Mason’s Center for the Arts. Perhaps the most multi-cultural arts audience is found at the annual International Children’s Festival at Wolf Trap produced by the Arts Council of Fairfax County. With a richly diverse calendar of arts activities from many ethnic heritages, the question remains how these events can be experienced and enjoyed by residents from across the county and beyond.

Facilities: Two Fundamental Questions

Following its fact-finding regarding facilities, the commission addressed two fundamental questions, and numerous related issues:

- What type of arts facilities are needed to meet the current and future needs and interests of county residents?
- Does Fairfax need a large, multi-use performance hall with 1,500+ seats?

Community-Based Arts Centers

As discussed above, Fairfax has several smaller arts facilities some of which are part of a special tax district and functionally restricted to specific communities (Reston and McLean), and others that are the wrong size, too expensive, lacking in technical capacity, or lacking in availability.

The commission has concluded that the goal of achieving a vibrant future of the arts in Fairfax is best served by bringing to the community multiple arts spaces that have the mission to serve both arts *participants* as well as arts *audiences*; spaces that are flexible, affordable and have a forward-looking technical capacity. These are spaces that meet the needs of Pre-K to seniors and provide learning opportunities for all who seek fulfillment through the arts.

The Large Hall

Fairfax currently has two large concert facilities; the Filene Center at Wolf Trap seating 3,868 with another 3,160 on the lawn, and the Concert Hall at George Mason’s Center for the Arts seating 1,935. The Filene Center is primarily a spring-summer venue presenting a wide variety of performing artists in music, dance and theater. The Center for the Arts Concert Hall at George Mason opened in 1990. It is used heavily for

university needs and also presents a 50-performance touring artists series during the academic year in music, dance and theater.

The Mason Concert Hall is described by Mason itself as “utilitarian” as are most educational structures constructed with state funds. Its technical capacity is also certainly not state-of-the-art. Many external groups rent the hall for concerts, corporate events and meetings. With the exception of the Fairfax Symphony, which uses the hall for most of its performances, its capacity, rental costs, as well as parking and traffic issues, make this venue unattractive for other community performing arts groups.

Does Fairfax need a large hall *in addition* to what already exists?

For some the answer is “yes” for the following reasons:

- The residents of a jurisdiction as large and successful as Fairfax County deserve a first-class performing arts venue that is architecturally compelling – the “WOW” factor;
- A large venue (which also could have attached to it one or more smaller venues plus other facilities) would have the potential to give Fairfax an identity as a center of arts activity much as the Kennedy Center has done for the District and Strathmore has done for Montgomery County;
- The lack of such a space puts Fairfax at a competitive disadvantage with neighboring jurisdictions when it comes to attracting first class touring artists;
- Without such a space, Fairfax does not have an arts milieu which can attract significant financial support from the private sector, especially the business community;
- A new, attractive large hall will provide economic and quality of life benefits for Fairfax similar to those experienced by other jurisdictions across the country.

Others have said building a new, large hall is unnecessary and unwise for the following reasons:

- Very few community arts groups can cost effectively use a hall with more than 750 seats;
- With limited public and private capital resources, a new large hall will not improve the ability of local arts group to grow artistically or allow more people to actually participate in arts-related activities;
- With outstanding facilities such as the Kennedy Center and Strathmore available why should we duplicate what already exists and further fragment the market;
- The “big hall” is a 20th century idea and ignores many of the trends we see in the arts, especially regarding how arts are presented, who attends, and who supports arts activities;
- Other jurisdictions that, in the last five to seven years, have built large performing arts centers did so only with very large financial commitments from state and local government;

- Newer performing arts centers, such as the Ovation Center in Madison, Wisconsin, the Arscht Center in Miami and Strathmore in Montgomery County are experiencing continuing challenges in meeting operating expenses even with ongoing government support. Private fundraising is being pushed to the limit for these and other facilities, often with diminishing returns.

Facilities: Recommendations

With respect to future facilities, the commission recommends the following:

1. Final decisions on new and renovated arts facilities should be decided upon within the context of a **cultural facilities master plan** for the county that is linked to the county's transportation master plan. The commission sees this as a *high priority* and something that can be accomplished in the near term.

2. With regard to spaces aimed at community arts participation and performance venues, the commission strongly recommends that, once a master plan for cultural facilities is in place, **three to four multi-use community arts centers** be constructed at locations to best serve all geographic sectors of the county. One such facility might be built as a "pilot" to see how well it functions and meets the needs of the community with others to follow as funding allows. These facilities should have the following characteristics:

- A well equipped performance venue with approximately 500 seats and adequate wing and fly space to serve the needs of music, dance, theater, as well as community meetings
- Visual arts exhibition space and teaching space
- "Messy space" for community artists to do their work
- Rehearsal space and storage for performing arts groups
- Cutting edge technology that allows for interactive distance learning
- A governance structure that gives local communities a sense of "ownership" of the center

Community arts centers do not need to be "stand alone" facilities. They can easily be conceived as additions to existing community centers and Park Authority facilities. Existing buildings, such as older movie theaters and antiquated strip malls could provide opportunities to create the core of a community arts center. A community arts center could also be part of a complex that would include a new, large hall.

3. The **needs of visual artists** for affordable studio, teaching, exhibition and living space require special attention. The Lorton Workhouse Center will be a wonderful addition to the facilities inventory for visual artists, but will not have the capacity to solve the entire need.

The commission urges the county to investigate a public-private initiative to create an "urban" visual arts experience using one or more antiquated strip malls in the county, linked to public transit, to develop a "Soho" environment. This could include artist

housing, studio and teaching space, video screening rooms, galleries, retail serving the arts community, as well as restaurants and adequate parking.

4. There is a need in the county for a large (1,500+), first class performance venue.
At least three options are available:

- Construct a new, freestanding facility, perhaps at Government Center
- Expand, renovate and upgrade the concert hall at George Mason
- Construct a large indoor concert hall on the Wolf Trap Park grounds

Wolf Trap has considered this option and it is part of its current strategic plan to pursue the possibility of constructing a space of approximately 2,000 seats. However such an undertaking would require a large private sector investment. **George Mason** has told the commission it is open to discussion with the county and the private sector regarding renovation and expansion of its Center for the Arts along with associated traffic and parking issues.

3. The commission recommends extreme caution in undertaking a plan to build a new, free standing, large performing arts facility in Fairfax for the following reasons:

- Utilization: With the exception of the Fairfax Symphony, no local group could use such a facility
- High construction costs that would necessitate a large public sector investment plus substantial private gifts
- High operating costs will mandate annual fundraising, public subsidy and high ticket prices
- Over time fewer quality touring productions and attractions will be available
- Why compete with Wolf Trap and George Mason for bookings?
- Changing arts audience attendance patterns require more creative and sustained marketing programs

Several new projects have tried to address some of the issues outlined above.

- *Cobb Energy Center in Cobb County, Georgia* will include a large conference center, ballroom, and support facilities that are expected to underwrite the losses of the attached 2,750-seat multi-purpose hall; large local and state government investment
- *Ovation Center in Madison, Wisconsin* was driven by the private sector with a grant of \$105 million for construction and \$100 million for endowment. Even with that level of endowment, higher than expected operating costs and lower than anticipated attendance resulted in operating deficits.
- *Shuster Performing Arts Center in Dayton, Ohio* was a multi-use project including a 17-floor tower with offices and residential condominiums. The arts center is supported by significant private fundraising and city financial support

4. The commission recommends that, given the need for a state-of-the-art, large performance hall in Fairfax, the county look carefully at renovating the concert hall at George Mason or building such a facility at Wolf Trap. Either project would be a joint project of the county, state, university or Wolf Trap Foundation, and private sector with specific spaces and benefits accruing to community arts groups. In addition, the county should look at the potential for building a large facility as part of a larger complex including, smaller performance venues, conference facilities, and mixed-use options such as commercial, retail, and/or residential uses.

5. The commission is aware of ongoing discussions by a special task force looking into the feasibility of building a **Fairfax history and culture museum**. The commission supports these discussions and urges this group to be sure any contemplated museum provides adequate gallery space for rotating exhibitions by local artists and gallery space to exhibit art work loaned or given to the museum by Fairfax residents.

Public Art in Public Places

Across the country over 340 jurisdictions, and almost every jurisdiction of over one million have specific policies and procedures regarding placing public art in public places. Fairfax County does not have a formal public art program.

Findings

1. While individual, privately funded efforts have been and are being undertaken in Reston and elsewhere, there is no proactive county-wide policy or procedure to encourage or fund public art.
2. While there is no county-wide public art program, at least two local initiatives are being planned. In January, 2008, private funds made it possible for Reston to hire consultants to assist in creating a public art plan for that community. The final plan may be a template for a county-wide public art program. The Fairfax County Library Foundation has announced the "Art in the Pages" public art sculpture program which will result in a variety of works on display in the county and the City of Fairfax in the summer of 2008.
3. The Arts Council of Fairfax County sponsors and administers the program "Art in the Workplace" which places the work of local artists in public and private buildings.
4. In many jurisdictions across the county, from Boston, to Miami, to Charlotte, to San Francisco, public art has become a distinguishing characteristic of the outdoor built environment. Regionally, Arlington and Montgomery Counties, as well as Charlottesville have long-standing and successful public art programs. Some programs are focused on permanent installations. Others, such as Charlottesville, have permanent sites, but rotating work by local artists.
5. Financing for public art projects runs the gamut from required set-asides on public and/or private development projects to programs funded each year out of public capital improvement funds. Some funding arrangements mix public and private participation. Boston's public art program is funded out of an endowment established in the 19th century. A number of jurisdictions use the "Per Cent for Art" formula where one percent of construction costs must be set aside for public art at a development site. New York City mandates that one per cent of public building construction costs up to \$20 million, and one-half per cent above \$20 million, be devoted to public art at the site.
6. As major commercial development activity continues to be planned for various sectors of the county from Tysons to BRAC-related areas, it is an opportune time for county government to address the issue of public art in public places.

An outline of public art policies from nine jurisdictions including Montgomery and Arlington Counties is attached to this report as *Attachment 5*.

Recommendations

The commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors task the Arts Council of Fairfax County to establish a public/private task force on establishing a public art program which would consult widely with appropriate constituencies and develop several alternative policies and procedures for consideration by the Board and the financial impact of each. Consideration should be given to:

- Lessons learned from other jurisdictions, including the recommendations of the Reston study now underway
- Funding mechanisms and financial impact
- Scope (public buildings, private development, parks, etc.)
- Policies and procedures
- Community involvement

Public art programs can begin small and grow over time. Certainly it is time for Fairfax County to establish a first class public art program that would add to the aesthetic quality of life and give exposure and support to local artists.

Arts Education for Life

Residents of Fairfax County, of all ages and skill levels, have a wide variety of opportunities to engage in arts education experiences.

The Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) is known nationwide as having among the best K-12 arts education programs in the country. The FCPS goal is that:

“Every child in every school will receive a well-rounded education that includes a comprehensive, sequential, and high quality program of arts education taught by certified fine arts professionals”

Dr. Roger Tomhave, Fine Arts Coordinator
Fairfax County

Findings

1. Each year, 45,000 students in the Fairfax Public Schools grades 4-7 attend a live, professional arts performance or exhibition accompanied by programs to enrich that experience. Such programs can have a profound impact in building future audiences and participants for the arts.
2. Additionally, professional organizations such as the Fairfax Symphony and Virginia Opera provide in-school programs in over 40 Fairfax schools.
3. The Arts Council of Fairfax County sponsors the annual Creative Arts Program Directory and Showcase project. **The CAPS program** links regional performing artists with local schools, civic organizations, and government sponsored arts activities.

The CAPS program began in 1970 and is judged to be highly successful. It provides schools with an opportunity to select, through the CAPS Directory and two annual live showcases, high quality local artists to become “artists in residence” and engage in other curriculum-related arts activities in local schools.

While successful, fewer schools are able to take full advantage of the opportunities presented by CAPS due to reduced funding (each school is given a budget allocation to make use of CAPS activities) and the restrictions imposed by “No Child Left Behind” and the Virginia Standards of Learning exams.

4. The **Wolf Trap Foundation** has established sixteen arts education programs for learners of all ages and skill levels. The nationally acclaimed Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts, founded in 1981, provides arts education services for children three to five and their teachers and families through the disciplines of drama, music and movement. The Institute’s programs are not only local, but in locales across the county. Last year the Institute had 550 classroom residency sessions in Fairfax alone. In addition to the Institute, the Wolf Trap Foundation Scholarship Program for

performing arts teachers provides resources, services and performance opportunities for local and regional teachers that have an important impact on many students in Fairfax. Wolf Trap also offers a variety of master classes and workshops for county residents at its Center for Education.

5. Fairfax seniors have rich opportunities to engage in **lifelong learning opportunities** through the arts utilizing the many and varied programs available through the Fairfax Department of Community and Recreation Services at community centers across the county, as well as programs offered by Wolf Trap and the Mason affiliated Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

Recommendations

1. As we enter a period of fiscal constraints, it will be important for the Arts Council and the Fairfax Public Schools to maintain their commitment to arts education both for its intrinsic value and extrinsic value of preparing students to be innovative, analytical, disciplined and self-confident.

2. Through the CAPS program and other opportunities, the Fairfax public schools should continue to encourage performing and visual arts groups in the county to consider ways in which their expertise can be used in school settings to enhance curriculum and student learning.

3. Fairfax public schools have forged important connections with post secondary institutions and organizations such as Northern Virginia Community College, George Mason University and Wolf Trap. These connections and collaborations offer many opportunities to expand programs and opportunities for faculty and students, even at a time fiscal constraint, and should be advanced. The mantra of “what can we do together that we can’t do alone” should be the order of the day.

The Relationship of the Arts to Economic Development and to County Government

“Communities that invest in the arts reap the additional benefits of jobs, economic growth and the quality of life that positions those communities to compete in our 21st century creative economy....Leaders who care about communities and economic development can feel good about choosing to invest in the arts.”

Robert Lynch, President and CEO
Americans for the Arts

The Americans for the Arts study, *Arts and Economic Prosperity III* (2007) reports that nationally the nonprofit arts and culture industry generates \$166.2 billion in economic activity annually – greater than the GMP of most countries. The sector supports 5.7 million full-time equivalent jobs in the U.S. In addition, arts and culture provides nearly \$30 billion in revenue to local, state, and federal government each year. Collectively, the three levels of government spend less than \$4 billion annually to support the arts – a 7:1 return on investment.

Findings

1. Fairfax County was one of 156 communities that participated in the Americans for the Arts study. The data collected provides compelling new evidence that **“nonprofit arts and culture is a significant industry in Fairfax County” generating \$77.75 million in local economic activity.** The spending by nonprofit arts organizations and the event-related spending by their audiences supports 1,693 full-time equivalent jobs, generates \$35.01 million in local resident household income, and provides \$4.59 million in state and local government revenue. According to the study, supporting the arts not only enhances our quality of life, but also invests in Fairfax County’s economic future.
2. In 2005, 98 arts organizations in Fairfax County filed IRS *Form 990* required of nonprofits which receive more than \$25,000 in income annually. Arts activity in Fairfax also includes many organized activities by groups whose annual income is below \$25,000. Of those filing *Form 990*, 55% of their income came from ticket sales and other earned income, 41% from private sector grants and other contributed income, and 4% from county government.

For comparison purposes, the numbers for Montgomery County, obtained from IRS *Form 990*, are 49% earned income, 42% contributed support, and 9% county government support.

3. Although the most visible performing and visual arts organizations in the county receive modest **annual support from the business community**, overall operating and special project support has been modest in absolute terms as well as in comparison to similar jurisdictions. We feel the reasons for this are several:

- Many of the larger firms focus their arts support in the District and on arts education which ignores the core work of most arts organizations in the county;
- Business support for the arts can be both philanthropic and business-related. Large investments from the business community often come from the latter which involves marketing opportunities, visibility, etc. With the exception of a handful of Fairfax arts organizations, few local arts groups can deliver on those business expectations.
- Many of the larger employers in the county are not headquartered here and arts support often flows most regularly to the home base of larger corporations.
- Larger corporations often target their philanthropy to sectors and organizations in which a number of employees volunteer. Arts groups provide a more limited opportunity for general volunteerism.
- Even smaller operating grants (\$1,000-\$5,000) often can come only when a management level employee sits on the board of an arts organization. Obtaining well-placed corporate executives for most arts boards in Fairfax is challenging once you get beyond the Arts Council, Wolf Trap, Fairfax Symphony, Fairfax Choral Society, and the Arts at Mason.
- For significant and sustained investment in the arts in Fairfax on the part of the business community, you need one or more highly placed "*champions*" within local business organizations. It is that person who can carry the message and encourage his or her peers to support the arts out of self interest if not personal passion. That level of leadership is lacking in Fairfax.

4. **The role of county government in support for the arts** is important to consider. Several County Supervisors have been and continue to be articulate arts advocates, including Chairman, Gerry Connolly. That support has been important in adding significantly over the past two years to grant funds available to the Arts Council and other more indirect expressions and actions of support. This has made a difference in not only direct support for arts groups, but in leveraging that support within the private sector. However there is no county office or individual that has responsibility, on an ongoing basis, for advising the County Executive and the Board of Supervisors on arts planning, public art, etc.

The commission believes there are numerous ways in which county government can act on behalf of the arts in Fairfax County and these are outlined below.

Recommendations

1. The story of how much **arts and culture** contributes to the economy and quality of life in Fairfax needs far **improved promotion by Fairfax County**.
2. **The Arts Council of Fairfax County**, and independent 501(C)(3), is the primary advocacy and service organization supporting arts organizations and individual artists in Fairfax. While its grant budget has grown over the past two years (\$620,000 for FY08) it remains significantly smaller than that of arts councils in similar jurisdictions including Montgomery County which has a FY 08 grants budget of just under \$4 million. In addition to grant support, the Arts Council is significantly restricted by its operating budget and therefore staff resources. The county should undertake an analysis of what is needed to adequately carry forward the work of the Arts Council and develop a multi-year plan to meet those objectives.
3. It is important that the arts have a resource/advocate, "point-person" within county government itself. **An Office of the Arts should be established**, either stand-alone or as part of an existing department, to advise the County Executive and Board of Supervisors on such issues as potential arts districts, public art zoning issues, and funding for the Arts Council.
4. Although in a period of fiscal constraint, the county should begin the process of **developing an overall cultural facilities plan for Fairfax County**. The work of the commission regarding the need for multiple, community arts centers in the county should provide a basis for more detailed planning. The commission believes this should be a high priority.
5. The county has a variety of opportunities through which it can **encourage and influence the business community** to increase its support for the arts. These opportunities should be pursued so that the business community plays a much more substantial role with respect to the infrastructure and operational needs of small and large arts organizations in the county.
6. The commission strongly urges county government to begin the process of developing policies and procedures to implement a **public art program for Fairfax**. Numerous examples of such programs exist regionally and nationally.
7. The Park Authority, Department of Community and Recreation Services, and the Arts Council should jointly discuss and implement strategies to **provide improved services the many ethnic arts organizations in the county** and evaluate ways in which the arts activities of our diverse ethnic communities can be enjoyed by a more general audience.

In Closing

The future of the arts in Fairfax County is not about the arts alone. It is tied inexorably to the myriad of issues that connect the county to those who live, work, and play within its borders. It is also related to many of those same issues on a regional basis.

The arts are connected to the future economic vitality of Fairfax. The arts are an important tool to advance the educational objectives of our schools and to provide opportunities for personal fulfillment throughout our lives. Importantly, with an increasingly diverse population, Fairfax has a unique opportunity to use the arts as a vehicle to promote positive interaction among peoples of different ethnic backgrounds.

The Commission on the Future of the Arts in Fairfax County has raised the issues it feels are paramount in order to strengthen the impact of the arts now and for the future. It has attempted to provide a potential roadmap. The commission fervently hopes that its report will provide the basis for lively discussion within the arts, business, and government sectors, as well as the community at large. However, not only discussion is required, but action steps to move these issues toward implementation so we can say in 2030 that the arts join Fairfax public schools, public safety, health services and economic climate as among the best in the nation.

Attachment 1

Commission on the Future of the Arts in Fairfax County

Commission Membership

Dr. Alan G. Merten, Chair
President, George Mason University

Dr. Jack Dale
Superintendent, Fairfax County Public Schools

Dr. Gwendolyn Everett
Assistant Professor, Howard University
Board Member, Arts Council of Fairfax County

Mr. Pepe Figueroa
President, Priority One Services

Dr. Gerald Gordon
President/CEO, Fairfax County Economic Development Authority

Mr. Terrence Jones
President/CEO, Wolf Trap Foundation for the Performing Arts

Dr. Jay W. Khim
Chairman/CEO, JWK Corporation

Mr. James J. Maiwurm
Managing Partner, Squire, Sanders & Dempsey L.L.P.

Ms. Juliana May
Vice President, The Staubach Company

Mr. Harris Miller,
President, Career College Association

Mr. Jon Peterson
Senior Vice President, The Peterson Companies

Mr. William Reeder
Dean, College of Visual and Performing Arts, George Mason University

Ms. Ann Rodriguez
President/CEO, Arts Council of Fairfax County

Ms. Ann Rust
Director, Constituent Services, Congressman Tom Davis
Chair, Arts Council of Fairfax County

Mr. Suresh Shenoy
Executive Vice President, IMC, Inc.

Attachment 2

Commission on the Future of the Arts in Fairfax County

Overview of Previous Fairfax County Studies On Arts Infrastructure

Since 1970 there have been four formal studies undertaken examining the need for cultural facilities in Fairfax County. In addition several more studies have been commissioned dealing with site specific facilities that would serve a small section of the county. None of these studies resulted in additional facilities, but several did have an impact on the design and construction of school and recreational facilities that have been used heavily by local performing and visual arts groups.

Below is an outline of key recommendations from each of these studies.

1970

Study of Feasibility and Program Alternatives for a Cultural/Recreational Facility In Northern Virginia. Prepared by Gladstone Associates for the Northern Virginia Recreation and Cultural Authority

Principal Findings and Recommendations

1. Currently only school facilities are available for arts groups and these are inadequate to meet the needs of a growing number of cultural organizations in the county.
2. The soon to be opened Kennedy Center and Wolf Trap Park Filene Center will serve Fairfax residents with respect to professional performing arts venues. The need in Northern Virginia is for space(s) serving local arts groups.
3. A recreation and cultural complex in Northern Virginia is feasible and would provide a necessary and desirable addition to the facilities available in metropolitan Washington at the present time.
4. An appropriate initial development program would consist of an arena, exhibition space and a community-oriented performing arts facility.

1976

Fairfax County Cultural and Heritage Center Feasibility Study
Prepared by Fothergill/Beekuis Associates for the Fairfax County Park Authority

Principal Findings and Recommendations

1. Arts groups are growing rapidly in Fairfax County. Currently there are 53 performing organizations and 8 visual arts organizations. They are almost unanimous in their view that Fairfax needs a county-wide cultural center.
2. The Kennedy Center and Wolf Trap are insufficient in meeting the cultural needs of the residents of the county.
3. Currently, all these groups have available are school facilities and houses of worship.
4. The fee structure for using a new facility would be central in influencing utilization patterns by local groups.
5. The history of Fairfax County should be a part of any central county cultural facility.
6. The recommendation is for the county to build one facility that would have the following components:
 - One 1,800-seat theater that could convert to 1,200-seats with support spaces
 - One 350-seat flexible theater with support spaces
 - Gallery space
 - "History of Fairfax" wing
 - Workshop space for artisans

1985

Study for a Major Arts Complex in Fairfax County

Prepared for Hazel/Peterson Companies by Harrison Price Company

Principal Findings and Recommendations

1. The size, income level and education of the Fairfax population can support a major community arts facility.
2. There are 80 arts organizations in Fairfax County and the level of arts activity is growing rapidly
3. The only true arts facility in the county is the McLean Community Center and that is fully booked all year long. The need for additional arts facilities cannot be questioned.
4. There is no need for a 2,000+ seat house that would be used primarily to book in productions. The real need is for a facility that would serve local groups (450 seats)
5. For such a facility to be economically viable there should also be a larger facility in which local groups could produce Broadway stock shows that would have a wide appeal.

6. The proposed new facility would include
 - Two performance facilities (1,500 and 450 seats) along with support spaces
 - Both facilities would be to serve local and regional groups and not seen as presenters of touring groups. That function is served by George Mason's Center for the Arts and Wolf Trap.
 - The estimated size of the facility should be 120,000 GSF.
 - The county should build the facility at an estimated cost of \$15 million.
7. Any new cultural facility should be seen as meeting the needs of Fairfax-based performing and visual arts groups.
8. No strictly professional venue should be considered at this time. Fairfax should be careful not to get an "edifice complex." Residents of Fairfax have many options for professional arts activities in D.C. at George Mason and Wolf Trap.

1990

A Study of the Need for a County-Wide Cultural Facility in Fairfax County
Prepared by the Wolf Organization for the County Government of Fairfax.

Principal Findings and Recommendations

1. Fairfax County should not undertake the construction of a new large performing arts facility at this time. The only local group that could use such a facility would be the Fairfax Symphony. Such a facility would need to become a presenting hall and that is what the new Center for the Arts at George Mason is doing. Should George Mason abandon its presenting program, a fresh look at the issue would be warranted.
2. The true need in the county is for appropriate facilities that serve a variety of local organizations which are at varying points in their development.
3. There is a need for facilities serving small and emerging performing arts groups (arts incubator). This would be one or more small, flexible "black box" theaters seating approximately 150. This space would also have storage space, rehearsal space, scene shop and exhibition space.
4. The county also needs a small formal theater for the presentation of musical and theater events (approximately 400-500 seats). This space would have all necessary support facilities.

Survey of Business Leaders

1. The perception is that Fairfax needs a large, handsome concert hall ("showplace") that would be used occasionally by local groups.

2. Such a facility could help forge a sense of community for Fairfax and a new image for Fairfax as more than just a bedroom community.
3. Opinion is split on whether or not such a facility could be financially viable.
4. Most business leaders were against using county money to build a large facility – they favored some type of public-private partnership.
5. Substantial private, corporate investment in a project to build a large concert hall in Fairfax is unlikely due to:
 - Economic slowdown
 - Tension between the county and the business community over growth issues
 - Reduced corporate giving generally, with an emphasis on social services
6. There is little business interest in funding small arts centers serving local groups.

2001

Town of Herndon Community Cultural Arts Center Feasibility Study

Prepared by Webb Management Services for the Town of Herndon

Principal Findings and Recommendations

1. The market for the arts in Herndon is extremely strong with demographics indicating high levels of participation in the arts and entertainment.
2. There are few quality arts spaces available for the active arts groups in Herndon and the surrounding communities.
3. It is recommended that a cultural arts center in Herndon contain:
 - A proscenium theater of 450-600 seats along with support facilities for arts presentations, arts education programs;
 - A black box theater of 150-200 seats for use by Herndon's main community arts group, the Elden Street Players and other community activities such as seminars, professional meetings, etc.
 - A 2,000 SF gallery to house temporary exhibitions of local artists as well as a studio/classroom for art demonstrations, etc.
 - A building of approximately 40,000 SF is recommended built at a capital cost of approximately \$23 million, with \$13 million from the town, and another \$13 million from the private sector and other public sources. The first \$23 million would support construction with the final \$3 million to fund an endowment to support operations.

4. The center should be owned by the town, but governed by an independent non-profit organization.

Summary

While much has changed since the last study of a county-wide arts facility in 1990, There are messages from these studies that are certainly applicable today.

The recurring theme of these studies is the focus on meeting the needs of local performing and visual arts organizations for performance and rehearsal space, storage, workshop and exhibition venues.

The studies warn against the "one size fits all" approach. Small organizations need specific types of spaces in terms of size, support facilities, etc. More established organizations require larger spaces in which they can further grow their audience and therefore their potential for contributed support. The issue of proximity is also important. Arts facilities must be located in ways that best serve various parts of the county.

It is interesting to note that none of the studies focused on giving expression to the cultural heritages of Fairfax's increasingly diverse population. This is clearly an important element in 2007.

With respect to a large, central cultural facility, the 1990 Wolf study was written just prior to the opening of George Mason's Center for the Arts. It was assumed then that the Center for the Arts, along with Wolf Trap, would meet the need for large presenting spaces. Open for discussion is how the dynamics have changed over the past 17 years and what mix of facilities will best meet the needs of Fairfax residents now and in the future.

2/07

