

Testimony - Katharine Boerner

Thrive Montgomery 2050 hearing

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I am speaking today to encourage County Council to partner with your arts and humanities organizations in realizing your objectives for Thrive 2050.

As you envision the future for Montgomery County and our joint objectives as a community please remember that you have in your arsenal of resources the arts and humanities organizations County taxpayers have invested in over many decades. Not only are the organizations poised to assist and help implement your vision for the future - our values as arts organizations inherently match those of your plan.

Inclusion - we have always strived to include everyone in the community and the future is no different for us. With affordable or free tickets, free events and activities, an emphasis on accessibility and outreach, we continue to be committed to reaching our entire County and beyond.

Reflecting the diversity of our County - our program content - be it performing arts, visual arts, stories of our history, festivals and many other programs - reflect the diversity here in our county - beyond this we draw from that diversity for a richness in programs informed by our multi-ethnic, multi-age and varied county population.

Educating our population - instilling creativity in learning and in our work

force has been proven to garner a more effective work force and greater fulfillment for employees - arts organizations build the creative economy and the creative work force.

Healthy citizens - mentally and physically - whether taking part in a dance class, hands on visual arts programs, or attending performances - there is hard evidence to suggest the arts improve the mental and physical health of our citizens. Glen Echo Park where I work is a great example of this - combining communal gatherings, brain stimulation through creative processes, physical movement through dance and theater are all ways to have fun and be healthy, building strong community and intergenerational bonds.

Community identity - think about it - it's the special places and people in our community that come to mind when you want to brag about Montgomery County - unique works of art, history, places - the arts and humanities are a leading part of developing an identity for the County - we are unique, we are creative, we invest in the arts and humanities. When I spoke to this year's Leadership Montgomery Emerging Leaders class about community identity and what makes them feel a sense of connection and belonging they cited the arts - public art, performers, venues, places as critical to developing a unique Montgomery County experience.

As you refine your plans remember the arts and humanities are your partners. In fact you could choose to put us at the center as a hub for realizing Thrive 2050. The investment in our organizations pays off multi-fold for the whole community. The arts reflect the priorities of our community and engage people on a collective and individual level.

The future I envision is a County that is healthy, connected, respected, well cared for, stimulated and creative. Let's "think differently" and use the arts and humanities to further our collective goals.