

August 23, 2018

To: City Council and Manager

We want to convey our strong and clear intent to be a key part of the City's proposed mixed-use development at the Tully's site. We believe the Mercer Island Center for the Arts (MICA) can uniquely and powerfully fulfill the community benefits in the RFQ by creating a new space for arts, culture, and community on Mercer Island. Our message today comes not just from our board and staff, but much more importantly, with support from the Mercer Island community, whom we have listened to intensely over the last 3 months, hundreds in-person and nearly 1,000 online.

Our final, public report on the Community Visioning Dialogue is in process and will be shared widely in mid-September. One thing is clear - we have repeatedly heard a strong desire throughout our community to create a new center for the arts. To be sure, citizens have different opinions on some details, but based on what we heard again and again from islanders, a new space for the arts would -

- Provide a central, convening space to meet the growing demand for arts performances, education and collaboration among residents of all ages. It is desired by a significant majority of islanders and would finally match MI's facilities for education and athletics.
- Act as a significant stimulus to the economic vitality of our town center and local businesses (as well as building a growing revenue source for the City)
- Create a permanent, lasting home for Youth Theatre Northwest, fulfilling the City's commitment, first made back in 2013.
- Become a dynamic addition to the identity of Mercer Island that will enhance not only our island's residents' property values, but our whole community's pride in the place we call home
- Leverage the Sound Transit opportunity to the fullest and provide a beautiful gateway into downtown

This is the opportunity to let the voice of the community shape our downtown development! We look forward to sharing this information in more depth during the September 17 study session at the City Council. While we continue to explore other potential new locations, we believe the Tully's has some very unique advantages, delivers on the most community benefits for the citizens of Mercer Island, and has a higher potential to be a long-term sustainable enterprise. We are clear that the City will not provide funding for MICA's construction or operation and feel this new site gives us the best opportunity for meeting the community's goals and our fundraising goals.

We are ready to dig in and do the hard work this will take over the next few years. It will include undertaking a major fundraising campaign, commissioning a revised design for the new location, and rallying the community's support and continued engagement like we have for the past 3 months. To be crystal clear, MICA is energized, engaged, and ready to do our part to make this happen!

As we all know, this will not be a simple project. MICA will need to define the amount of space needed for specific uses within the mixed-use development, conduct a major fundraising campaign that will be linked to milestones and contingency plans with the City and a developer, and gear up to update all the economic modeling and feasibility studies needed to validate and execute a successful campaign. This is a big challenge and we are 100% up for it, that's why we are starting to get ready now.

With the right partnership with the City and a developer, we can make this happen. MICA is asking the Council to give high priority and weighting to the "Arts and Cultural Events & Spaces" community benefit in the RFQ. The potential good this could do for Mercer Island is exciting, to say the least. We believe the time is now, the place is the Tully's site, and Mercer Island is the community ready to make this dream a reality!

*Sincerely –*

Prady Misra, Co-Chair  
Elliott Newman, Treasurer  
Xixi Shakes, Board  
Paul Shoemaker, Exec Director

Genevieve Morton, Co-Chair  
John G. Hill, Board  
Michelle Peyree, Board  
Sharon Perez, Dir., Strategic Relationships

Virl Hill, Secretary  
Bruce Lorig, Board  
James Rudolf, Board

**MICA**  
MERCER ISLAND CENTER FOR THE ARTS