

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN PUBLIC MEETING PHASE 1

Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center: November 29, 2007

Total Participants: 59 Public, 4 Parks and Recreation Staff

Major Themes

The majority of the members of this meeting seemed to be interested in voicing their concerns regarding what they perceived as the dismissal of the artistic director, Jacqui Moscou and the general welfare of the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center due to her absence. The sidebar to this focus was how to advance Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center as an entity stewarded by the African American Community.

The members of this meeting did not take this gathering as an opportunity to invest their opinions and ideas in the creation of a long-range planning design for the future of this city's parks and recreation facilities.

1. What could Parks and Recreation improve?

- Parks and Recreation should consider spinning off to a nonprofit—Langston Hughes is not a community center
- Parks and Recreation has mismanaged the Langston Hughes building inside and it's losing its mission
- The community is being ignored
- Parks and Recreation needs to communicate the recommendations from the Advisory Council regarding mismanagement
- A lot of the community is misinformed, this is leading to lots of accusations
- Parks and Recreation should re-evaluate its relationship with Langston Hughes—the current model isn't working
- Personal and personnel issues are distracting the community from community issues
- The community should be sensitive to the things said because staff are in the meeting
- Parks and Recreation should get out of the business of running a theatre
- Support, protect and enhance Langston Hughes along the lines of its original purpose
- There is community support for the director
- The City has disinvested from Martin Luther King and pro African American programs and services
- Parks and Recreation needs to find ways to work out problems that doesn't involve throwing out people
- Parks and Recreation is good at pools and community centers but not good at performing arts centers—this place needs something different
- What is presently going on at Langston Hughes is not advancing its mission
- Staffing is what makes the perfect program—Jacqui Moscou is not here, now
- Langston Hughes was called Cultural Arts Center
- Any established business works when the staff work together
- Community members can't reach Langston Hughes staff on the phone
- Find someone who will do the job of directing Langston Hughes

SEATTLE PARKS AND RECREATION STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

- Being a nonprofit organization will mean that the community will have to pay for what it is that the community wants to have happen, it will have to be a serious business
- If the community doesn't pay to go to the shows, Langston Hughes will go down
- Support Jacqui Moscou, whether as Operations Manager for building or Artistic Director
- Support the Langston Hughes staff
- Don't forget the children whose lives are changed by Langston Hughes
- The cast of "Dinah Was" didn't get any information back from Parks and Recreation staff or the City
 - Decisions about "Dinah Was" were made without asking the cast
 - Decisions made left the cast hurt and without a home and without answers
 - Decisions demonstrated a lack of direction and a lack of respect
- Parks and Recreation needs to clarify the mission of Langston Hughes and the role and responsibility differences between the managing director and artistic director
- Parks and Recreation needs to start meetings later so people who are working can get there
- The Advisory Council of Langston Hughes gave a recommendation and Parks and Recreation didn't listen and didn't hear what the community was telling it

2. What does Parks and Recreation do well?

- Messaging Langston Hughes as an African American Performing Arts Center
- There is concerned that the Langston Hughes mission will change
- Langston Hughes is a bright light in the community
- It is a place for all generations to see things from African American and black perspective that is positive
- Langston Hughes is good for everybody
- Just because Langston Hughes represents African American voices does not mean it excludes people
- Langston Hughes has transformed many lives

3. What are the issues and challenges that Parks and Recreation will face in the next five years?

- Parks and Recreation needs to make sure that the Langston Hughes building does not get sold to big business
- African American community is being dictated down to by the City government
- The City government is only reacting now that the community is upset
- Parks and Recreation needs to clarify why a popular person staff person gets removed and what the removal process is
- Langston Hughes is about community and unity, the City should not be involved in cultural arts center spirit
- Langston Hughes site used to be a community center
- The community wants answers from Parks and Recreation about what is going on with Langston Hughes leadership
- The community wants Langston Hughes to be cultural and African centered
- Parks and Recreation should be bringing children into Langston Hughes in large numbers
- Langston Hughes is a cultural arts center
- People are afraid that they are getting gentrified out of their community

SEATTLE PARKS AND RECREATION STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

- Parks and Recreation needs to communicate when the Artistic Director's employment discussion is happening and when the community is going to get the information it needs
- The community's spirit is hurt
- Vision
- Langston Hughes teaches stories of culture and profile
- There is no suppression
- Unconditional compassion and commitment
- The face of community may be changing but Langston Hughes is represents the history and culture of people of African American descent; to lose that flavor would be a disservice
- Langston Hughes must continue in its purpose
- Present Council cannot direct City employees
- The community wants to sustain Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center for the City's children
- Langston Hughes cannot be removed and has to continue for the children
- The public need to rise up as a community and continue the energy from the Strategic Action Plan meeting and get involved

4. What are the emerging trends that will drive how Parks and Recreation does business over the next five years?

- Parks and Recreation and the community need to examine how they treat each other, particularly at Langston Hughes
- Parks and Recreation and the community missions are the same
- Fear is blocking progress – get rid of it
- Langston Hughes is a wonderful place
- The community is entitled to a lot more information from Parks and Recreation
- Support Jaqueline Moscou
- Kent had \$10 million set aside for a cultural center, it was turned into a Regional Justice Center
- Youth find out their true character at Langston Hughes
- Why can't we say Black?
- Everything this community builds keeps getting turned over to other people
- We either get rid of people or kill them
- People want to stay involved in the community
- The community with Parks and Recreation needs to get "the people we love" to get along with each other
- Children are turned into a performers at Langston Hughes
- Kids get opportunities to see and talk with major artists
- Current staff are doing a great job
- Staff are putting on wonderful shows with less and less funding each year
- Some community members are only concerned with the programs at Langston Hughes
- Thank you to Langston Hughes staff
- There is a promise here that Langston Hughes is going to continue to go in the same direction
- Parks and Recreation with the community needs to cross bridges and bring people together, to unify
- Langston Hughes' purpose must go on
- Community wants to continue with the process of promoting African American culture
- Parks and Recreation cannot support an exclusively pro black center
- Don't get to have everything of our own

- Community members should get involved with the Advisory Council and speak at Advisory Council meeting which are held the 2nd Tuesday of every month

5. What is your vision for Parks and Recreation?

- Langston Hughes will be what it has been
- Keep youth coming back to the community
- We were turning around before – the whole staff has contributed
- Continue to support Langston Hughes programs, big and small
- Parks and Recreation needs to keep the building within the community and help the community get organized to commit to the Langston Hughes Performing Arts Center
- The purpose and mission statement of Langston Hughes must continue