



P.O. Box 270
McLean, Virginia 22101

July 7, 2022

McLean Community Center Governing Board
1234 Ingleside Avenue
McLean, Virginia 22101

Dear Governing Board Members,

I write on behalf of the McLean Citizens Association (“MCA”) regarding the Governing Board’s current draft of a Strategic Plan dated June, 2022 (“Plan”) prepared for the July 6, 2022 Public Hearing. The MCA is overall supportive of the preparation of a new strategic plan for the McLean Community Center (“MCC”) (and inclusion of items such as sustainability). Here are our suggestions:

1. Purpose, Vision, Mission and History

The original and current Mission Statement provides:

“McLean Community Center provides a sense of community for residents of Small District 1A-Dranesville by offering programs, **assisting community organizations** and furnishing facilities for civic, cultural, educational, recreational and social activities.”
(Emphasis added)

The mission of the Community Center has been changed in the current draft of the Plan to the following:

“The mission of the McLean Community Center is to provide access to inspirational arts and cultural experiences, learning, civic, recreational, and social activities in an inviting and equitable manner for all Small District 1A-Dranesville residents.”

MCA strongly supports the retention of the existing mission statement. The original Mission Statement is comprehensive and encompasses the purpose, values, and vision expressed in the Plan.

Of utmost importance, a key purpose of the community center is to assist, support and provide facilities and meeting spaces for the Small District 1A-Dranesville community and civic organizations. This should not only include the MCA, but other community and civic organizations such as the Rotary Club of McLean, neighborhood homeowner and citizens associations and other

citizens groups within Small District 1-A Dranesville; The Plan needs to avoid taking or unintendedly taking “community” out of the McLean Community Center.

The Plan should emphasize that MCC is more than the community center itself providing programming, its a place for community organizations in Small District 1-A Dranesville to create their own programs and offer them to the Small District 1A-Dranesville community. This is an important avenue in diversifying the programming offered to our residents.

2. Goals, Attainment, and Metrics

The Plan should reaffirm that MCC’s longstanding priority goal is on providing programs and events for Small /District 1-A Dranesville residents whose property surtaxes fund the MCC’s budget.

The Plan should also be more specific in its language and describe in detail how the goals will be achieved.

- The Plan should define the intention of the goals and are written so they can be measured.
- Include more details on the staffing plan to attain the stated goals as well as funding avenues. For example, the use of social media to achieve goal of “Be Visible” is detailed and specific tactic to help achieve the goal. We recommend taking the same approach for other goals that are more vaguely stated in how they will be achieved.
- No baseline assessment metrics that were performed are provided. (See pp. 10 of the Plan) Such analysis (especially financial analysis), would be helpful to provide as an addendum to help assess the qualitative goals and objectives of the Plan.
- Goal 5: “Model sustainability. Represent the utmost integrity in our use of financial, physical, environmental, human, and other resources.” A more detailed objective, strategy and tactics in how MCC will be able to financially support the Plan is needed. This section needs to be more explicit in how MCC will steward financial resources.
- We recommend the inclusion of data that illustrates the current programming amount to projected programming amount (how many performances, how many classes/courses, etc.; staffing; financing); and how the various activities might be expected to evolve in the future in response to identified goals.

3. Fiscal Transparency and Responsibility

The Plan should have as a principal goal enhanced financial transparency. The community needs to be informed of the fiscal budget with detailed information of line items. The budget should be clearly aligned with delivery of programming and services for Small District 1-A Dranesville residents.

The Plan does not appear to address whether the current fund beginning balance is adequate beyond some broad comparisons related to practices/assumptions made by other community centers. Does the MCC have data to confirm whether funding requirements are comparable with such other community centers (for example, do all have to fund their capital needs from tax revenue or do they have a different funding sources?)?

If the fund balance needs to be increased to meet current and future infrastructure capital and equipment maintenance and expansion needs, then the goals and objectives should include strategies to accomplish that. MCA is concerned about the potential use of reserves for any general fund expenditures and general fund subsidies for out-of-taxing-district residents.

The Plan should also reaffirm MCC's long standing practice of focusing programming and providing discounts on programming to Small District 1-A Dranesville residents. To this end, the Plan should provide data during the past several years regarding attendance and participation in MCC programs and events by residents outside Small District 1-A Dranesville.

4. Expanded Footprint

The Plan's "Be Visible" Goal identifies objectives to expand MCC's community footprint, including digital presence, and become more embedded within our community. (see pp, 6 of the Plan). This is too vague and could lead to misinterpretation. Assuming the wording is intended to convey expanding the digital footprint and community awareness, we recommend refining the statement to communicate its intended meaning to avoid misinterpretation. It should be clearly stated that it doesn't mean expanding the boundaries beyond Small District 1-A Dranesville.

5. Partner Organizations

Throughout the Plan, but particularly under the fifth strategy for MCC's Model Sustainability Goal (Clarify and document MCC's relationships with partner organizations.), "partner organizations" are referenced. The Plan needs to better identify who such partner organizations are (or could be) and the purposes intended with respect to such partner organizations, but such partner organizations should be organizations that are primarily organized by, and serve, Small District 1-A Dranesville residents. What does it mean to be a partner organization? For instance, the MCA is a founding benefactor of the MCC and the Plan should affirm MCA is a partner organization of the MCC. Who chooses the partner organizations? This should also be identified in the Plan. In general, this concept of partner organizations could be misconstrued to mean many things unintended by MCC and thus we recommend it be clarified in advance of finalization of the Plan.

6. Showcase Excellence

The Plan's "Showcase Excellence" Goal identifies several objectives and strategies (Objectives • Provide innovative program offerings, responding to documented needs in our community. • Expand delivery methods for program offerings. • Refine and consolidate our evaluation processes. • Create a shared definition of "excellence." Strategies 1. Craft a definition of "excellence" that aligns with the MCC's purpose, vision and mission. 2. Reimagine evaluation practices to increase transparency and evaluate performance around programming. 3. Research new ways to deliver programs. 4. Align staff capacity with desired programmatic outcomes. 5. Encourage bold risk taking with permission to fail). (See pp. 8 of the Plan) Most of these objectives and strategies do not entail or result in a measurable goal.

Employees are a large dollar budget line item, and "capacity" usually means additional personnel, not shuffling head count. This strategy should be stated clearly with the intention to understand what the expected outcome should be.

The fifth strategy is concerning (Encourage bold risk taking with permission to fail.) The MCC has spent time/money to prepare a strategic plan that reflects the community's (Small District 1-A Dranesville) interests. A roadmap should reflect fiscal responsibility while being innovative.

7. Model Sustainability

The Plan's goal to explore ways to diversify the revenue mix should not entail de-emphasizing Small District 1-A Dranesville-centric programming or events.

Thank you.

Scott Spitzer
President
McLean Citizens Association