



Strategic Plan
for the
Burien Actors Theatre

December 2021



Facilitated by
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Acknowledgements

Thank you for your time providing your perspectives for this effort:

Burien Actors Theatre Board

Scott Gifford, Trustee and President
Steve Feldman, Trustee and Vice President
Paul Gould, Trustee and Treasurer
Sally Nelson, Trustee
Barbara Reamer, Trustee

Staff

Maggie Larrick, Managing Director
Eric Dickman, Artistic Director

Volunteers and Community Members

Lance and Kat Bowman, BAT Volunteers
Chris Craig, City of Burien Economic Development Director
Taylor Davis, Director and Actor at Large
Clyde Hill, SeaTac Council Member
Sarah Klages, Burien Business Owner
Max Lopuszynski, Actor at Large
Shelli Park, Burien Film Festival and Burien Creative District
Kevin Schilling, Burien City Council Member

All photographs are from BAT productions:

Cover from the top:
Comedy ***Native Gardens***, written by Karen Zacarias, 2019
Holiday comedy ***The Christmas Spirit***, written by Frederick Stroppel, 2019
Historical drama-comedy ***Ben Butler***, written by Richard Strand, 2017
Musical comedy ***Young Frankenstein***, written by Mel Brooks and Thomas Meehan, 2013

Page 6:
Musical comedy ***The Christmas Carol Rag***, written by Norman Allen, 2018

Burien Actors Theatre Strategic Plan

December 29, 2021

Introduction and Background

Located in a former elementary school, the original Burien Workshop Theatre was established in 1955. In 1980, this group, plus members of other Burien theater groups, incorporated as Burien Little Theatre. At that time, the organization moved into what eventually became known as the Annex to the Burien Community Center. In 2005, the organization passed on to new leadership who revitalized the theatre, by upgrading the quality of productions and the physical theater space, boosting the audience's experience and physical comfort. This performance space enjoyed continuous support over four decades. As part of broadening their audience, in 2013 the name changed to Burien Actors Theatre ("BAT") to reflect their commitment to current works, innovation, and telling entertaining and compelling stories of our shared humanity.

Then, in mid-2020 the City of Burien, stating liability concerns, had the building demolished, leaving BAT without a theatre space. In March 2020, the COVID pandemic shutdown arrived. This forced BAT to switch to producing live Zoom productions online to continue serving their audience, plus a live show in South King County parks when Covid restrictions lifted in summer 2021. Currently, BAT is looking into temporary space, but in the meantime venues in this area for live, face-to-face theatre are limited. Their unique programming, focused on newer plays and giving older works a unique twist, has been BAT's edge. BAT draws national level playwrights along with local creatives.

BAT's Response and Future Plans

On the heels of losing the theatre space and after many discussions among BAT's Board, what emerged was a goal to have a new performing arts facility in South King County. This would be operated by Burien Actors Theatre and would be home to BAT and support other arts groups within the region.

From these discussions, one step was to update BAT's mission, values and vision and embark on a Strategic Plan. The other step was to fundraise to fund an architect for initial design ideas. In fall 2021, the fundraising quickly met its goal, and BAT engaged LMN Architects, an international architecture firm whose designs include arts spaces such as McCaw Hall, the Vashon Performing Arts Center and the expanded Seattle Asian Art Museum. They will explore the design of a new performing arts space, including a theatre with the requisite technical aspects, to serve this diverse region of South King County and the performing arts entities that exist or will emerge there.

MISSION STATEMENT

We welcome and embrace our shared humanity through live theater. We question norms and thrive because of our diversity and energetic commitment to excellence.

VALUES

- Use respect for all as our guiding principle in everything we do
- Advance diversity, inclusivity, and equity
- Partner with diverse arts organizations, businesses, and educational programs
- Create and support sustainable growth for the theater and our communities
- Inspire and nurture artists
- Be forward-thinking – boldly challenging tradition
- Embrace resourcefulness, adaptability, and innovation in the pursuit of success

VISION

Looking into our future, we see...

- BAT brings people together to explore hopes, dreams, and experiences to build understanding.
- BAT intentionally reaches out to the LGBTQIA+ and BIPOC communities, those with disabilities, and those with limited incomes.
- BAT provides a welcoming home for actors, playwrights, and production staff - inviting creativity, risk-taking, and challenging ideas.
- BAT reaches out to diverse communities, creating opportunities to connect indoors, outdoors, and online.

With the architects set to begin, a private donor provided funds to produce a Strategic Plan to guide and coordinate the steps needed to have a new facility in place in 5 years' time. A retreat with the Board and Staff was held in mid-November of 2021, and the results are in the following pages.

The Challenges

For the retreat, a process based on the Institute of Cultural Affairs methodology was used to generate the building blocks for a Strategic Plan. Attending the retreat was the board and staff.

In preparation for the retreat, the facilitator interviewed sixteen people from the board, staff, volunteers, and community members to develop the perceived strengths, weaknesses, and threats (SWOT) of BAT. These can be found in the Addendum at the end of this report.

Practical Vision: BAT aspires to build their mission, vision, values, and successful programming into a regional center that also welcomes other performing arts groups in the South King County region. BAT intends to operate at a larger scale, in stronger collaboration with the community, with a vital and active facility. To be successful, BAT must add paid key staff and a sustainable financial model--and ultimately become a recognized cultural center that grows the cultural resources and experiences in this diverse region.

Collaborating with the Community	Nurturing the Arts	Have Organizational Sustainability	Work Towards to Regional Artistic Excellence
Obtain support from the Community and Governments Bodies	Be Central to Regional Arts Growth	Create a Dynamic and Sustainable Organization	Increase Regional Reputation
Be an Engine for the Recovering Community	Be a Center for Artistic Innovation	Attain Financial Growth and Sustainability	A Theatre that Attracts Quality Performances
Seek More Partnerships	Reestablish Human Contact	Be Socially Responsible	We Continue with High Quality Productions
Provide an Impetus for Interaction	Be Host for Other Arts Organization	Have an Effective and Diverse Board	Be a Regionally Known Arts Community
		Staff, Board, and Artists Working Together	

Underlying Contradictions			
What is blocking us from moving forward to our future?			
Landing A Place	Strengthen the Organization	Creating a New Image of BAT	Engaging the Community
Shift to What We Can Offer Cities	Need More Staff and Board	Transforming the Perception of Who BAT Is	Create Diversity across the Organization
Past Difficulty: Relationship with City	Grow Operations and Fundraising Strength	Change BAT's Identity from What it Was to What it Will Be	We Need to Learn How to Respectfully Engage Diverse Populations
Resolve the Uncertainty in Our Path			

Underlying Contradictions: Reflecting on the SWOT data, the group identified BAT's largest challenges, including finding a temporary performance space, along with acquiring a site for a new facility; after years of relying on a small core of determined volunteers and contract staff, more paid positions are needed to continue producing better live theater; further, BAT's Board must grow in size and diversity to reflect and represent the communities it wants to serve and expand the scale of the organization. This level of connection with the community is needed to sustain a larger operation with bigger and more varied audiences.

Strategic Initiatives

After discussions about the Practical Vision and Underlying Contradictions, the retreat shifted to creating the top strategic initiatives to organize the work to be done, as shown in the table below.

Planning and data collection are needed to inform the design of the new building. At the same time, getting a temporary home to maintain BAT’s visibility is vital to fundraising for operations and a new building.

This is also a time to grow connections with the various cultures that make South King County so diverse, to hear what would be of interest for them to share their culture with others. Developing relationships and an advisory committee can then nurture the dialog with the community’s interested cultural entities.

An experienced fundraiser is also high priority for funding both a temporary and permanent theatre space. These spaces will better allow BAT to live its mission, values, and vision.

Building our Brand is about transitioning the image of BAT away from its old location and into a new and larger framework. This task will gradually build towards the temporary space’s opening and continue operations until the new facility is constructed and opens.

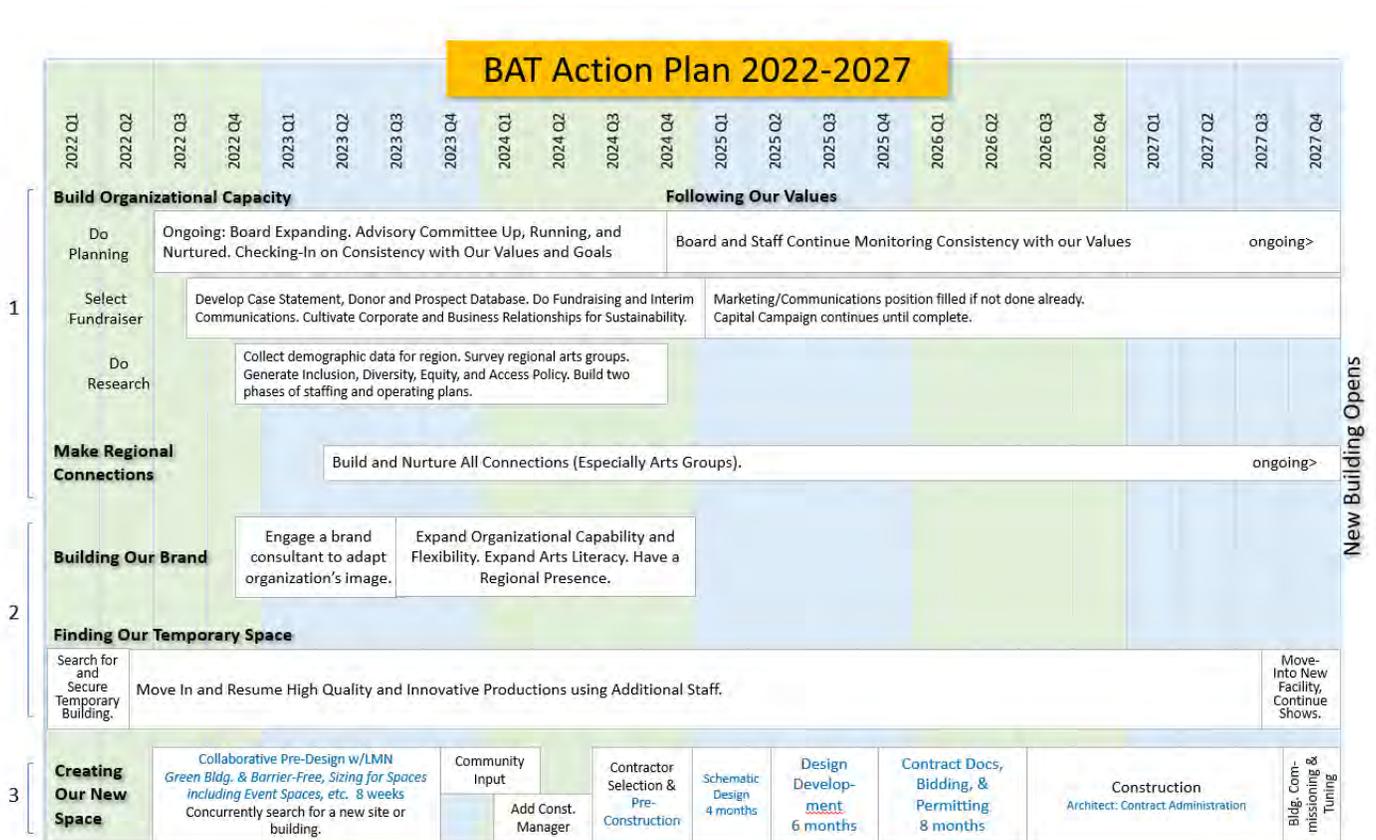
The next page lays out these initiatives across a five-year timeline.

Focus Question					
How can BAT successfully operate a new arts space in our area that creates opportunities to foster creativity, engage discussion, build sustainable revenue, and empower a diverse community for artists and arts organizations that welcome and gives voice to all?					
Do Organizational Planning	Make Regional Arts Connections	Have Sustainable Sources	Creating Our New Spaces	Building Our Brand	Following Our Values
Setup Advisory Committee	Connect and Build Relationships with Arts Groups	Obtain Fundraising Expertise	Secure Temporary Space	Expand Organizational Capability and Flexibility	Ongoing Check
Conduct Studies (surveys, goals, [regional] arts)	Build and Nurture All Relationships	Cultivate Business and Corporate Support	Bring on Construction Manager	Maintain Our Production Standards	Create Plan for Expanding IDEA Policies (inclusion, diversity, equity, and access)
Create Communications Plan (incl. marketing, and branding)		Build a Sustainable Donor Base	Have A Collaborative Design Process	Continue to Keep an "Edge" in our Productions	
Create Staffing Plan (staff, vols, board, for 3 phases)			Green Building & Operation	Expand Arts Literacy	
			Barrier-free and Welcoming Design (incl. good audio)	Have a Regional Arts Presence	
			Determine Size of Spaces for Private Events		

The Action Plan – Three Main Efforts: A Five-Year Project

Taking the Strategic Initiatives then goes into the BAT Action Plan as seen below. This chart coordinates the simultaneous activities that will be taking place along with a rough estimate of duration.

1. Build Organizational Capacity – expand BAT’s group of supporters, seek out new board members, bring on a fundraising consultant and start fundraising. Develop connections with arts groups, particularly focused on the performing arts, and create an advisory group. All tasks will be guided by BAT’s mission, values, and vision.
2. Find a temporary theatre space and resume productions. Hire/contract for production management assistance, to allow BAT’s Managing Director and Artistic Director time to focus more on work related to BAT’s new spaces and overall management rather than as much production management. Create financial model for new operating budget. Build on BAT’s identity for public relations, marketing, and other communications necessary during the build-up to opening a new facility.
3. Identify new permanent site and/or building. Create financial model for new operating budget including house staff. Use new operating budget data to inform the building’s design with the architect. Monitor construction. Plan for starting-up operations.



A larger version of this chart can be found on the last page

Conclusion

What is past is prolog. BAT has demonstrated its ability to grow and produce exceptional theater. Now is the time to dramatically step up and improve the community for years to come. A thriving arts space will bring joy, community, and financial growth to our area. The window to make this change is small. Now is the time.

Producing theater, like building community, is hard work filled with joy and empowerment. Deadlines and challenges shape the participants and provide growth and skill-building. The lessons learned carry through the lives of those touched by doing the work and the audiences who experience the onstage stories of our shared humanity. BAT's work and that of other performing arts groups reflects a better civilization and our place in time, offering diverse perspectives, challenging ideas and entertainment.

With a new facility, BAT and those who will share and use the space will be allowed to flourish and have a greater reach. BAT and the artistic community's growth was hampered by the limitations of BAT's prior space and the rules about its use. BAT could not operate education programs, expand its programming, rent the theatre to others, or house staff adequately. In a new building, expanded facilities plus amenities for diverse and varied uses will be part of the architecture.

What will BAT provide the community? With a new performing arts venue comes the opportunity for a rich diversity of cultures to share their cultural offerings. There will be expanded cultural experiences and creative ways to connect with the varied cultures in our community. The new venue will be a gem, bringing pride, and acting as a magnet for the community. Significantly, patrons to this space will add an estimated \$750,000 to \$1 million of arts tourist dollars to the local economy beyond what is spent in this new arts space.

This project will build stronger ties among the entire community, across cultures and societies. It will continue the bold theatre tradition that has a long history and a bright future in this region while giving the arts and diverse people a voice and a place to be heard.



BAT Action Plan 2022-2027

	2022 Q1	2022 Q2	2022 Q3	2022 Q4	2023 Q1	2023 Q2	2023 Q3	2023 Q4	2024 Q1	2024 Q2	2024 Q3	2024 Q4	2025 Q1	2025 Q2	2025 Q3	2025 Q4	2026 Q1	2026 Q2	2026 Q3	2026 Q4	2027 Q1	2027 Q2	2027 Q3	2027 Q4
1	Build Organizational Capacity								Following Our Values															
	Do Planning	Ongoing: Board Expanding. Advisory Committee Up, Running, and Nurtured. Checking-In on Consistency with Our Values and Goals											Board and Staff Continue Monitoring Consistency with our Values									ongoing>		
	Select Fundraiser	Develop Case Statement, Donor and Prospect Database. Do Fundraising and Interim Communications. Cultivate Corporate and Business Relationships for Sustainability.											Marketing/Communications position filled if not done already. Capital Campaign continues until complete.											
2	Do Research	Collect demographic data for region. Survey regional arts groups. Generate Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access Policy. Build two phases of staffing and operating plans.																						
	Make Regional Connections	Build and Nurture All Connections (Especially Arts Groups).																					ongoing>	
	Building Our Brand	Engage a brand consultant to adapt organization's image.							Expand Organizational Capability and Flexibility. Expand Arts Literacy. Have a Regional Presence.															
3	Finding Our Temporary Space																							
	Search for and Secure Temporary Building.	Move In and Resume High Quality and Innovative Productions using Additional Staff.																					Move-Into New Facility, Continue Shows.	
3	Creating Our New Space																							
	Collaborative Pre-Design w/LMN <i>Green Bldg. & Barrier-Free, Sizing for Spaces including Event Spaces, etc.</i> 8 weeks Concurrently search for a new site or building.							Community Input		Add Const. Manager		Contractor Selection & Pre-Construction		Schematic Design 4 months		Design Development 6 months		Contract Docs, Bidding, & Permitting 8 months		Construction Architect: Contract Administration				Bldg. Commissioning & Tuning

New Building Opens