

“Thank you for this opportunity to speak this evening. I’m here to lend Merrimack Repertory Theatre’s support to the Cultural District proposal. As you are no doubt aware, MRT’s 40,000-plus attendees each year patronize more than just the theatre. They dine in Lowell, park in Lowell and discover our fellow artists in Lowell. All of this causes their entertainment dollars and donations – more than two million of them every year - to percolate through our local economy many times over.

Further, every study done on the subject to date has shown that students exposed to the arts perform better in ALL academic areas. At a time when school and social services budgets are stretched to the limits and beyond, the organizations and businesses that will make up the Cultural District add so much more than entertainment to the life of our city.

We believe that the recognition we will receive from the state in forming the Cultural District will be an important factor in both fundraising and joint marketing; and one that will only grow in importance in the future. Though I’ve been here only a short time, I can tell you that Lowell already knows that we work best when businesses and the arts form partnerships. This framework will allow us to expand those opportunities and will help give us the reach we need to attract more Massachusetts residents and tourists to our venue and to our city.

Thank you.”

*Steven Leon, Executive Director
Merrimack Repertory Theatre
(As spoken to Lowell City Council on October 18, 2011)*