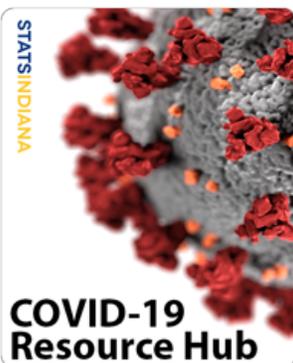


Brought to You By



Resources

[Sign Up for Email Updates](#)[RSS Feeds](#)[Contributing Newspapers](#)

Expanding Arts Place in Portland: Campaign seeks \$2.4 million for facility

Julie Valentine, Intern, (Portland) Commercial Review

Tuesday, September 26, 2017 3:21 AM

[Arts Place](#) has served as a cultural center for a half century, providing access to music, theatre and art for the Jay County community.

Thousands pass through the facility's doors each year to take lessons, participate in programs and enjoy performances. Its leadership is now embarking on an effort to improve those experiences for its patrons.

[Arts Place](#) executive director Eric Rogers recently announced the launch of a \$2.4 million capital campaign to provide funds to revitalize the facility and make better use of its space.

Plans call for about 2,700 square feet to be added to the facility with expansions at its northwest and southwest corners, providing more space to accommodate the growth of its programs. That will increase its footprint by about 13 percent from the current 20,687.

A group of 21 businesses and families, along with [The Portland Foundation](#), committed funds before the campaign was officially announced. Those donations totaled more than \$1 million.

"We believe in this," said Rogers. "Art is a part of life. It is like breathing and eating. So we have to do this."

The idea for the campaign came about five years ago when Arts Place began dealing with structural problems. A building committee inspected the structure and found the problem was worse than anticipated. The facility was suffering from moisture and structural issues in the 1935 portion of the building on the south side — it was originally an auto dealership and was then home to Jay County REMC and [Indiana Michigan Power](#) before Arts Place purchased it in 1983 — and the board realized that a significant amount of money was going to be needed.

"When the board and the planning committee heard (the inspection report)," said Rogers, "we thought, 'Let's think about this is as a bigger picture.'"

Along with the remediation needed to fix the structural issues and damages, the board began to consider how it could change different areas of the building.

Sarah Peterson, who helped with the strategic plan, and [Taylor Architects](#), the firm hired for the project, conducted "community input sessions." They met with about 100 area residents who utilized the building in some way, such as donors, businesses who hold meetings there and groups like [Jay County Civic Theatre](#).

From there, the architects developed a project cost estimate, and then more research was conducted for fundraising and what would be feasible.

"It was an involved process to get to this point," said Rogers.

Remediation and the "not-so-obvious" changes consist of fixing the moisture issue that affect many areas of the building and other "corrective work items" that total \$410,000.



This artist's rendering shows the north-facing side of Arts Place as it would look following a planned \$2.4 million renovation project slated to begin in 2019. Arts Place has started a capital campaign to raise funding for the project, which would include additions to the northwest and southwest corners of the facility. (Artist's rendering from Taylor Architect)

Brick will decorate the outside, replacing the masonry block that was put on 20 years ago.

“It was a popular trend 20 years ago and hasn’t proven very effective,” said Rogers. “The brick will allow the building to stand longer.”

A community gallery and office space will be added to the northwest corner of the building.

The gallery will offer an opportunity for artists to display pieces of art that wouldn’t be able to fill the Hugh N. Ronald gallery’s space.

“We have a lot of artists in the community who are very active but unable to do that,” said Rogers, “and once they’ve had an exhibit ... it may be awhile until their work is seen again.

“It’s an opportunity for that artist to have a presence. It’s a way we can support local artists.”

The desk in the receptionist/tickets area will also be pushed to the west to provide a larger lobby space.

At the opposite end of the building, there will be an addition to the southwest corner.

The facility owns a seven-foot long Steinway Piano, which will be housed in one of the new rooms that will be part of the addition instead of its current home in one of the stage support rooms. The change will provide easier access to the piano for students and faculty.

Another part of that addition is a percussion ensemble room.

When Arts Place was last renovated, participation in the percussion ensemble was relatively low. Now there are enough musicians involved to have two ensembles, and there is not a dedicated space for them to practice.

“They rehearse and have their classes in the set shop,” said Rogers. “When they are playing, you can’t use the stage even for rehearsal.”

The noise makes it nearly impossible for two groups to practice at the same time, and the set shop cannot be used to build sets while the percussion ensemble using it. The new room that will be part of the addition will provide storage and space for the percussion ensembles and allow the noise to be better contained.

Some of the other changes being made are adaptations to the changing world.

One of the rooms that will be eliminated as part of the renovation will be the dark room, where photos from film cameras can be developed. In the last big renovation, the dark room was made larger.

“The dark room was the most popular thing we had from the time I came here in ’76,” said Rogers. “Nobody uses it any more because of technology. Everyone is into digital.”

The darkroom will be replaced with exhibit storage space. When exhibits change out, sometimes artists aren’t able to pick up their work the day it comes down, so Arts Place has to store it somewhere.

There will also be extra sinks added to two of the art classrooms as well as a clay mixing area in one. There will also be a renovated ceramics building and new commissioned art. And, the parking lots will be repaved.

Rogers believes the renovations are important to how Arts Place will impact students’ and artists’ lives. The student body is growing each year, providing for 250 students in the MusicWorks program and 300 students in the ArtsWorks program. Nearly 30,000 visitors come to the facility each year for its theatre productions, concerts, exhibits and recitals.

“This facility is a point of pride for this community,” said Rogers, who said the goal is to break ground in spring 2019 with hopes of completing the project no later than 2021. “It’s pretty hard to find towns of our size that have this.”

Editor, John C. DePrez Jr.; Executive Editor, Carol Rogers; Publishers: IBRC and IAR

Software © 1998-2022 1up! Software, All Rights Reserved