

BRONZEVILLE

CENTER FOR THE ARTS

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Media Contact:

Elizabeth Hummitzsch

414-390-5500

ehummitzsch@muellercommunications.com

BRONZEVILLE CENTER FOR THE ARTS TO CREATE DESTINATION ART AND CULTURAL CENTER FOCUSED ON AFRICAN AMERICAN ART AND ART HISTORY

BCA poised to make major investment in the heart of Bronzeville

MILWAUKEE – Today, the Bronzeville Center for the Arts (BCA) announced its vision for a world-class art and cultural center in the heart of Milwaukee’s Bronzeville District. The BCA was recently selected as the top responder to an offer to purchase a 3.4-acre property owned by the state and previously occupied by the Wisconsin DNR Southeast Regional Headquarters and Milwaukee Service Center. If the project is approved, the former DNR site will be BCA’s second investment in Bronzeville, joining the organization’s anticipated 507 W. North Avenue development.

“This site has tremendous potential for the Bronzeville Center for the Arts,” said Kristen Hardy, a Milwaukee attorney and president of the Bronzeville Center for the Arts board. “Someday in the near future, it is our hope that visitors from across the city, state, and nation will come to Bronzeville to explore African American art and art history in ways that foster and inspire personal expression, the exchange of ideas, and creative entrepreneurship.”

BCA’s \$1.6 million land purchase proposal will be considered by the State Building Commission on February 9, 2022. The proposal will also need approval from the State’s Joint Committee on Finance. If approved, BCA would transform the site into a campus, including a 50,000-square-foot facility that would serve as the BCA’s premier institution. The campus will feature exhibitions, education, and immersive artistic programming.

“The community is at the core of this project,” said Della Wells, a Milwaukee-based artist and Vice President of the Bronzeville Center for the Arts board. “In the coming months, we look forward to engaging partners, stakeholders and community members to learn how we can work together to create a shared vision for the BCA - and make it a reality.”

Construction will begin on the BCA’s first investment in Bronzeville this spring, a \$1 million redevelopment of 507 W. North Avenue. The North Avenue project will include the redevelopment of an existing duplex building as well as the construction of an addition, which

will span an adjacent vacant lot. The BCA's North Avenue development will be home to a gallery, workshop space, and BCA offices.

“We have a great opportunity to increase our collective knowledge about African American art, art history, and artists,” said Mutòpe J. Johnson, a Milwaukee-based artist and the BCA's project manager. “The Center will be a true destination, celebrating the past while making art of the African diaspora a central focus in the cultural consciousness of present and future generations.”

The BCA's proposed programming for its future Bronzeville developments includes:

- **Museum-quality exhibitions** of the visual arts;
- **Educational programs**, lecture series, panel discussions, and seminars both live and virtual, that bring together artists, scholars, educators, community leaders, organizations, and innovators within and beyond the U.S.A., to examine art history, dynamic art projects, career opportunities, creative entrepreneurship, and issues of art and race, among others;
- **Hands-on art workshops** that explore various techniques with an emphasis on teaching creative skills, as well as intellectual and professional development; and
- **Performances** in the visual arts, music, dance, and spoken word, among others.

“In addition to its local significance, the BCA will have a major impact on the entire State of Wisconsin, and its programs will have national and global reach,” said Dr. Freida High Wasikhongo Tesfagiorgis, Evjue-Bascom Professor Emerita, UW-Madison, artist, and member of the BCA Board and Planning Committee.

To learn more about the Bronzeville Center for the Arts, visit www.BCAMKE.org.

ABOUT BRONZEVILLE CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Established in 2020, the Bronzeville Center for the Arts (BCA) centers the art, culture, and history of the African Diaspora. Located in Bronzeville – a historically African American neighborhood in Milwaukee, Wisconsin – the BCA invites audiences of all ages to engage with dynamic exhibitions and enriching educational programming. The BCA seeks to advance institutional equity, connect intergenerational audiences, and provide a place for people to experience intellectual and cultural exchange.

The Center promotes current and future artists and art professionals by opening a lens to the history and heritage of Black artists. Central to the BCA's mission is removing barriers from the enjoyment of art and forging a future that is more creative, connected, and historically informed. Bronzeville's bustling entrepreneurial and artistic history serve as the foundation for the BCA, inspiring us to continue to honor and embody this multifaceted heritage. Learn more at www.BCAMKE.org.

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