



**BRONZEVILLE**  
CENTER FOR THE ARTS

2023

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

REVITALIZING MILWAUKEE'S  
BRONZEVILLE NEIGHBORHOOD

# WHO WE ARE

## MISSION

To operate a visual arts museum that nurtures the next generation of artists and art professionals as well as invites the public to explore their inherent creativity through exhibitions, education, and immersive artistic programming.

## VISION

The BCA seeks to elevate the human capacity for creativity and knowledge, expand Bronzeville's legacy as a vibrant artistic hub of the Midwest, and make art of the African diaspora a central focus in the cultural consciousness of present and future generations.

## ACKNOWLEDGING OUR DONORS

The Bronzeville Center for the Arts (BCA) is deeply grateful to all of our donors who supported us in 2023. Their generosity allowed us to take tremendous strides towards our vision of promoting African American arts, culture, and education in Milwaukee.

The investment in BCA supports vibrant art exhibits, dynamic educational programming, and an inclusive space for the Bronzeville community. We thank each and every one for partnering with us to bring the arts to life:

**GODFREY KAHN**



BCA Board Brewers Outing



MOWA Art Ball



Future site of the BCA Destination Arts Museum

# MESSAGE FROM BOARD CHAIR

In 2023, we took important operational steps to begin establishing the Bronzeville Center for the Arts as a cultural pillar within the community. We hired our first Executive Director, advanced plans for Gallery 507, and engaged the Bronzeville neighborhood through scoping sessions and surveys. We navigated changes to staff and reevaluated partnerships to best position the BCA for future success. Furthermore, a \$5 million grant from Governor Tony Evers provided critical funding at a pivotal time in the organization's history.

There were also challenges. As the BCA continues to grow, the importance of strong board governance, participation, and commitment to the BCA mission and vision is crucial. We experienced challenges that slowed some committee progress, but also provided an opportunity to reevaluate priorities. We look forward to recommitting to robust board governance and the BCA vision as we enter the next phase of operations.

In 2024, we will focus on growth, evaluate staffing needs, identify new partners for our building, and increase board expertise. Fundraising is a top priority, as is continuous connection with Bronzeville residents. We are eager to open Gallery 507 and showcase local artists.

With renewed energy and purpose, we move into 2024 well-positioned to fulfill our mission of promoting African American arts, culture, and education. But we cannot reach our goals alone. We hope that you will continue to partner with us to make the BCA a world-class arts destination space. Thank you for your continued support and partnership.



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in red ink that reads "Kristen D. Hardy".

**KRISTEN D. HARDY**  
*Chair, BCA Board*

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Kristen Hardy**, Chair  
**Della Wells**, Vice Chair  
**Terri Boxer**, Secretary & Interim Treasurer  
**Deborah Kern**  
**Freida High Wasikhongo Tesfagiorgis**  
**Sande Robinson**

## STANDING COMMITTEES

### BUILDING COMMITTEE:

**Deborah Kern**, Chair  
**Terri Boxer**, Secretary & Acting Treasurer  
**Marvin Bynum**, Shareholder,  
Godfrey & Kahn, SC  
**Erica-Nicole Harris**, Vice President Real  
Estate, WisPark Operations  
**Bob Monnat**, Senior Partner, Mandel Group  
**Laurie Winters**, CEO, Museum of  
Wisconsin Art

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

**Kristen Hardy**, Chair  
**Della Wells**, Vice-Chair  
**Terri Boxer**, Secretary & Acting Treasurer

### GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE:

**Deborah Kern**, Chair  
**Terri Boxer**  
**Della Wells**  
**Mutòpe Johnson**

# STAFF SPOTLIGHT



**MUTÒPE J. JOHNSON**

*Director, Creative  
Engagement & Partnerships*

Mutòpe is the chief curator for Gallery 507, providing creative support to achieve the strategic, creative, and logistical goals of Gallery 507 as they relate to BCA's long-term community engagement goals. He also oversees the development and execution of strategic partnerships to enhance Gallery 507's programs and fiscal stability.

**WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE A CAREER IN THE ARTS?** There are those who have an appreciation of art, and those that are driven by it because of passion. For me, that passion turned into a long-term goal to not just become an artist but make a living at it. I've always said, "I didn't choose art, the art chose me." Creativity and imagination have always been a part of my internal DNA, so creating a path for myself and not necessarily following one became a personal commitment.

**HOW LONG HAVE YOU WORKED IN YOUR CURRENT ROLE AT THE BRONZEVILLE CENTER FOR THE ARTS?**

**WHAT DID YOU DO BEFORE THIS?** I've been with BCA from its inception in 2020 as a co-founding member, and part-time planning director. I was later promoted to full-time status in June 2022 as director, creative engagement and partnerships. Prior to my full-time employment with BCA, I was a full-time college professor at the University of Wisconsin Whitewater Department of Art & Design.

**WHAT DO YOU FIND MOST REWARDING ABOUT FOSTERING CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE ARTS?**

This role allows me to explore different art perspectives, which I find rewarding. I also get the chance to encourage others to become fully invested partners in understanding the business of art and art history and challenge the misconceptions about pursuing art as a career.

**WHAT'S ONE GOAL YOU HAVE FOR THE BCA MOVING FORWARD?** I am excited for us to open the doors to the public at Gallery 507 within the next few months.

**IF YOU COULD CHOOSE ANY ARTIST, DEAD OR ALIVE, TO SHOWCASE AT THE BCA, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?**

I would select Charles White Jr., whose impact on the art world is an ideal fit for the BCA. He was born in Chicago in 1918, he attended The Art Institute of Chicago and the Art Students League in New York City. White spent most of his career in Chicago and Los Angeles. He died in 1979. An American artist known for his chronicling of African American related subjects in paintings, drawings, lithographs, and murals, his lasting impact on the art world remains relevant even today and would be a perfect fit with the Bronzeville Milwaukee visual narrative. White's work is included in the permanent collections of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, The Newark Museum, and the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, among many others.



Bronzeville Week



Neighborhood Scoping Session



Milwaukee Magazine Betty Awards



Charleston, SC

**The Bronzeville Center for the Arts strives to be an active member of the Milwaukee community.** In 2023, our staff and board participated in a diverse array of local events to connect with residents and partners. By coming together at these events, we are able to strengthen relationships, increase our visibility, bring more people into the BCA family, and enrich the broader cultural landscape. Our participation underscores our commitment to collaboration and to representing the vibrant diversity of Milwaukee.

**BCA IN THE COMMUNITY**

- Bronzeville Week, *August*
- BCA Table at Museum of Wisconsin Art Art Ball, *September*
- BCA Table at Milwaukee Magazine Betty Awards, *December*

**LISTENING TO THE COMMUNITY**

- Lord Cultural Resources BoD Priorities Workshop, *January*
- Design Workshops, *January-June*
- Museum Planning Conference, *March*
- Neighborhood Scoping Conversations, *June & July*
- Lord Cultural Resources 507 Interpretive Planning Sessions, *October & November*

**BOARD ENGAGEMENT**

- Board Brewers Outing (Brewers Foundation sponsor), *May*
- Building Museums Symposium, Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, Atlanta, *May*
- Board Lynden Sculpture Garden Outing, *August*

**SITE VISITS**

- Museum of Wisconsin Art, West Bend, *February*
- UW-Parkside, Racine, *April*
- Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, *April*
- Chazen Museum of Art, Madison, *May*
- Ruby Museum, San Antonio, *June*
- Gibbes Museum, Charleston, *June*

# MARKETING EFFORTS AND EARNED MEDIA

In 2023, the Bronzeville Center for the Arts made a concerted effort to expand our digital presence and media coverage. We began growing our social media following across platforms and fostering community connections. Our earned media coverage also increased as we pitched stories to highlight our plans and diverse voices. Moving forward, we aim to expand our social media audience and cultivate media relationships. Our growing digital footprint and presence in local media will be crucial in spreading our mission and enriching Milwaukee's arts scene.

## milwaukee journal sentinel

### LAND AND SPACE

#### The group developing a Black-oriented arts facility in Bronzeville wants public input

**Tom Boykin**  
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Published 10:17 a.m. CT June 27, 2023

The nonprofit group developing a Black-oriented arts facility in Milwaukee's Bronzeville neighborhood is seeking public input on the project.

Bronzeville Center for the Arts will host its first public scoping session to gather community input to help determine future programming, exhibits and community space for its arts center.

The session will be 5:30 to 7 p.m. Wednesday at America's Black Holocaust Museum, 401 W. North Ave.

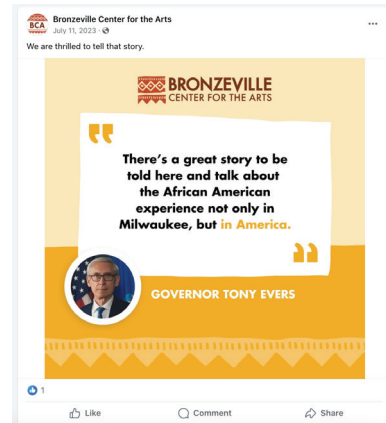
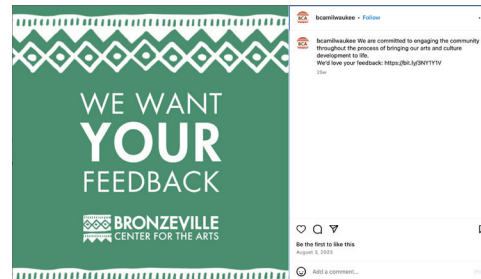
The session is the first of a series of conversations happening this summer, with additional meetings to be scheduled in July and August.

Also, Bronzeville Center for the Arts, in partnership with M&E Architects + Engineers and HGA, launched a visitor experience questionnaire. Interested individuals can access the questionnaire at [www.bcamke.org](http://www.bcamke.org).

The African-American arts and cultural facility is planned for the site of the former Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources office, 2300 N. King Dr.

The center bought the property from the state in 2022 for \$1.6 million. The group plans to demolish it and build a 50,000-square-foot facility for exhibitions, education and immersive artistic programming.

Democratic Gov. Tony Evers' 2023-25 construction budget, totaling \$3.8 billion, included \$5 million for the \$54.9 million development. Republicans who control the state Legislature removed that item from the budget proposal as part of their pledge to reduce spending.



## Bronzeville Center for the Arts Seeks Public Input, Releases Scoping Questionnaire

JUNE 24, 2023



Questionnaire Intended to Guide the BCA in Design, Programming of Destination Arts Museum

MILWAUKEE — The Bronzeville Center for the Arts (BCA), in partnership with M&E Architects + Engineers and HGA, has launched a questionnaire to encourage feedback and engagement from those who live, work, partner and learn in Bronzeville. Results of the questionnaire will guide the BCA as it continues the design process and evaluates programming opportunities for its destination arts museum in Milwaukee's Bronzeville District.

The questionnaire inquires about perceptions, motivations to visit, what makes a welcoming and inclusive experience, opportunities for programs and partnerships, and how the BCA's destination arts museum can help revitalize and celebrate the identity of Milwaukee's Bronzeville District.

"Feedback from this questionnaire will help us ensure that we hear from all interested voices," said Robert Parker, Executive Director and CEO of the Bronzeville Center for the Arts. "From day one, the BCA Board of Directors has been clear about its commitment to engaging the community throughout the process of bringing this cultural and arts development to life."

The BCA exists to increase the collective knowledge and engagement with African American art, art history and artists. The BCA's signature project — a destination arts museum — will be located on a 3.4-acre parcel on the northeast corner of North Avenue and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in the heart of Milwaukee's Bronzeville neighborhood. BCA's vision is to transform the site into a campus for developing and house an art collection and programming space as well as a public plaza and garden.

Interested individuals can visit [bcamke.org](http://bcamke.org) to complete the questionnaire.

### ABOUT BRONZEVILLE CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Established in 2020, the Bronzeville Center for the Arts (BCA) was created to highlight and celebrate African American art. Located in Bronzeville — a historically African American neighborhood in

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

BY BRONZEVILLE CENTER FOR THE ARTS IN 2023

**The Bronzeville Center for the Arts made great strides in 2023, from community engagement to securing major funding.** We anticipate a momentous public opening in Spring 2024 for Gallery 507 and our new headquarters. Through community collaboration, securing public and private funds, and pushing forward capital projects, 2023 marked a banner year for growing BCA's impact.

1

**In August**, the BCA team facilitated various activities and provided free BCA-branded tote bags during Bronzeville Week in the neighborhood.

2

**After being gifted** the property at West North Avenue in January, design and construction for Gallery 507 and the BCA headquarters at 507 W. North Ave. neared completion in 2023. **The team anticipates a public opening by Spring 2024.**

3

**In November**, Governor Tony Evers announced he allocated **\$5 million** in federal funds for the BCA's destination arts museum.

### STATEMENT FROM BCA:

*"We are grateful to Governor Evers for his continued support of the Bronzeville Center for the Arts and our vision for a destination arts museum that increases our collective knowledge of and engagement with African American art, art history and artists. As we continue the design process and evaluate community feedback, this announcement is a major step toward making our vision a reality. We also continue work on our Gallery 507 project, the BCA's first development in Bronzeville. We look forward to a 2024 opening."*



Gov. Tony Evers allocates \$5M in federal funds



Gallery 507 site,  
Kristen Hardy & Mutòpe Johnson



Gallery 507

# LOOKING AHEAD

**AS WE LOOK AHEAD TO 2024,  
THE BRONZEVILLE CENTER FOR THE  
ARTS IS FOCUSED ON SUSTAINABLE  
GROWTH AND COMMUNITY IMPACT.**

**Key priorities for 2024 include hiring staff to strengthen our leadership, identifying new partners for our building development, and expanding our Board of Directors.**

We will kickstart a capital campaign to support our museums, programs, and operations. Deepening connections with Bronzeville residents will also be critical as we prepare to fully open Gallery 507. With an inaugural slate of exhibits and public programming, we are thrilled to soon showcase local artists in our new space.

2024 promises to be a year of progress across all facets of our organization. Guided by our strategic plan, we will work diligently to increase our reach and cement our role as a pillar of Milwaukee's arts community.



Gallery 507