



1626 London Rd #779, Duluth, MN 55812
www.dulutharmory.org

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Contact:
Mark Poirier, 218-428-9686
Armory Arts and Music Center
Project Development Consultant
poirierarchitect@gmail.com

Armory Arts and Music Center Announces the Receipt of a \$250,000 Grant

(Duluth MN, January 7, 2014) The Armory Arts and Music Center (AAMC) has been awarded a Minnesota Historical and Cultural Heritage Grant in the amount of \$250,000 from the Minnesota Historical Society. The money, along with \$50,000 of matching funds, will be directed toward exterior masonry stabilization and tuck-pointing of the Historic Armory. The masonry project will follow a reroofing project done this past summer as the AAMC group, which owns the Armory and adjacent property, addresses building issues and works to make the building ready for occupancy. The larger Historical and Cultural Heritage Grants which are awarded once a year are very competitive. “I believe this demonstrates how important the Armory project is viewed at the State level,” says Mark Poirier, the Armory’s Project Development Consultant.

The AAMC’s concept for redevelopment includes for-profit spaces, such as housing and retail, in the front four-story “head house” portion of the building facing London Road. Those spaces would help support community spaces on the north side of the structure such as the Music Resource Center and the multipurpose Drill Hall with its historic stage. There would also be space for indoor parking and artists including Forging Community. The creation of an art “Maker Space” is also being considered. The AAMC anticipates that the building improvements will also help attract a development partner to the project.

The Armory’s listing on the National Register of Historic Places makes it eligible for historic tax credits which are valued at 20% Federal and 20% State of eligible development costs including tenant build-out. A 2012 study by the University of Minnesota found the historic tax credit program to be a good economic incentive with every dollar of tax credit generating \$8 of economic activity. Studies have also shown that renovation of old buildings is also labor intensive when compared to new construction and since labor generally comes from the surrounding area more money is poured back into the community.

MISSION: To preserve the Duluth Armory and its historic value to American culture and the arts, while encouraging its reuse, placing emphasis on arts and education.



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The next step for the AAMC will be the selection of the design team to do detailed review of exterior masonry conditions and develop plans and specifications for the work. After plans are developed the project will be bid with work expected to begin in the summer.

“The AAMC is proud of its accomplishments to date including raising over \$2 million dollars toward the project, the creation of the Armory’s Music Resource Center after-school music program now in its third year, Dylan Fest concerts, and the recent opening of the Armory Annex featuring the Forging Community blacksmithing group, gift shop and AAMC office. The AAMC is thankful for all of the volunteers, donors, grantors and sponsors who have helped make this possible”, said Susan Phillips, Board President of the AAMC.

Historical Background;

The Historic Armory was built in 1915 just prior to World War I and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. For much of its life the Armory served as both a military training facility and a focal point for the Duluth community. The Armory hosted numerous functions such as concerts, dances, conventions and sporting events until the DECC was constructed in the 1960s. The Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra and the 148th Air National Guard both had their start at the Armory. The memorial service for the last Union Army Civil War veteran, Albert Woolson, was held at the Armory in 1956 and was covered in the media around the nation. On January 31st 1959 four Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees—Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, Dion, and Bob Dylan—would share an evening together at the Armory as part of the Winter Dance Party tour. Two days later Holly and Valens, along with the Big Bopper, would die in the plane crash often referred to as “The Day the Music Died.”

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