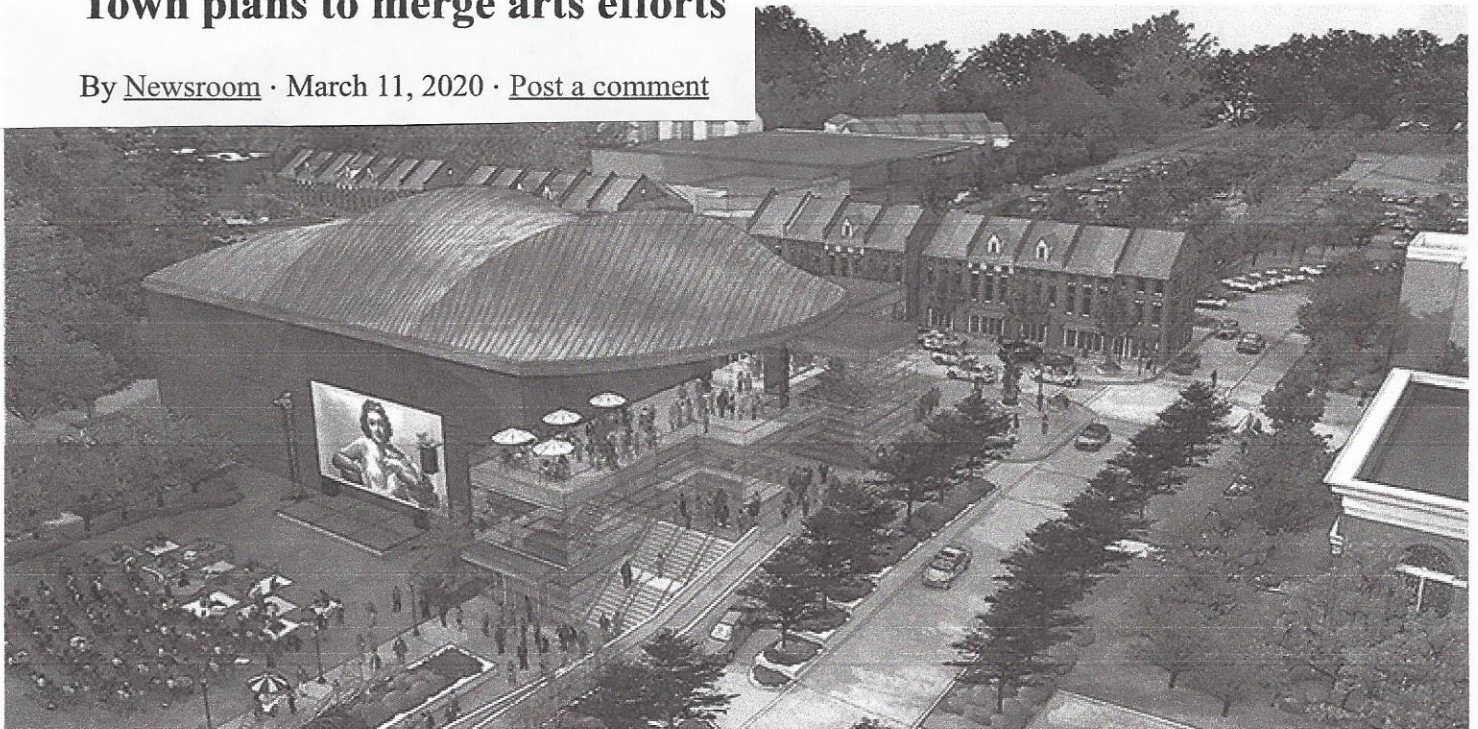


Town plans to merge arts efforts

By [Newsroom](#) · March 11, 2020 · [Post a comment](#)



March 12. By Dave Vieser. Town of Cornelius officials plan to transfer their visual arts programs to the Cain Center for the Arts on Jan. 1, 2021, while a brand new building to house the arts in Cornelius and vicinity is expected to open in summer 2022.

The transfer will include management of all visual arts programs and activities as well as the day to day operations of the Cornelius Arts Center located at the Oak Street Mill.

The projected timetable was unveiled at the Parks and Recreation Commission (PARC) monthly meeting held March 10 at Town Hall. PARC members took no action on the proposal, but did schedule a community meeting to provide more details for 6 pm Wednesday March 18 at Town Hall.

“This is an incredibly exciting time for the town” said Cornelius Mayor Woody Washam. “It is a private/public partnership in the truest sense of the word.”



WASHAM

The Cain Center for the Arts, which was established in 2017, will anchor the new downtown Arts District. The blue buildings currently on the Catawba Avenue site are expected to be demolished this spring. The center will include a 400-seat theater, gallery space, an outdoor venue, and classrooms.

The arts center, which is expected to be an economic engine for downtown, is named for local philanthropists and community leaders Ericka and Bill Cain who donated \$5 million in 2018. A \$4 million bond project for redeveloping the arts district in historic downtown Cornelius, approved by voters in 2013, along with the Cain's donation, have helped put the center towards its \$25 million fundraising goal.



ERICKA AND BILL CAIN

Since October 2019, an operating committee formed by the town has been working on a schedule to integrate programs between the Cain Arts Center and the Town. Tuesday night's announcement was the first step, designed to inform residents and the public about the impending transfer schedule.

“Our ultimate objective is to centralize all art-related programs and activities within the Cain Center for our arts students and patrons,” said Town Manager Andrew Grant.

January 2021 was chosen for the transition since it is a less active time of year for programs. At the same time the transition occurs, construction is expected to begin on the new Cain Center building, with a summer 2022 completion anticipated.

“We’re excited to have the opportunity to continue building our relationship with the artists, teachers and students who’ve helped it thrive through the years” said Justin Dionne, Cain Center Executive Director.

Officials from the town and Cain Center admitted that there is much more work to be done in finalizing all the details of the transition and they

pledged to keep citizens informed.

“The transfer will be a fast moving train,” said Washam. “We don’t want rumors or controversies to impact on the smoothness of the transition nor the ongoing fund raising campaign.”



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