

HOMEPAGE

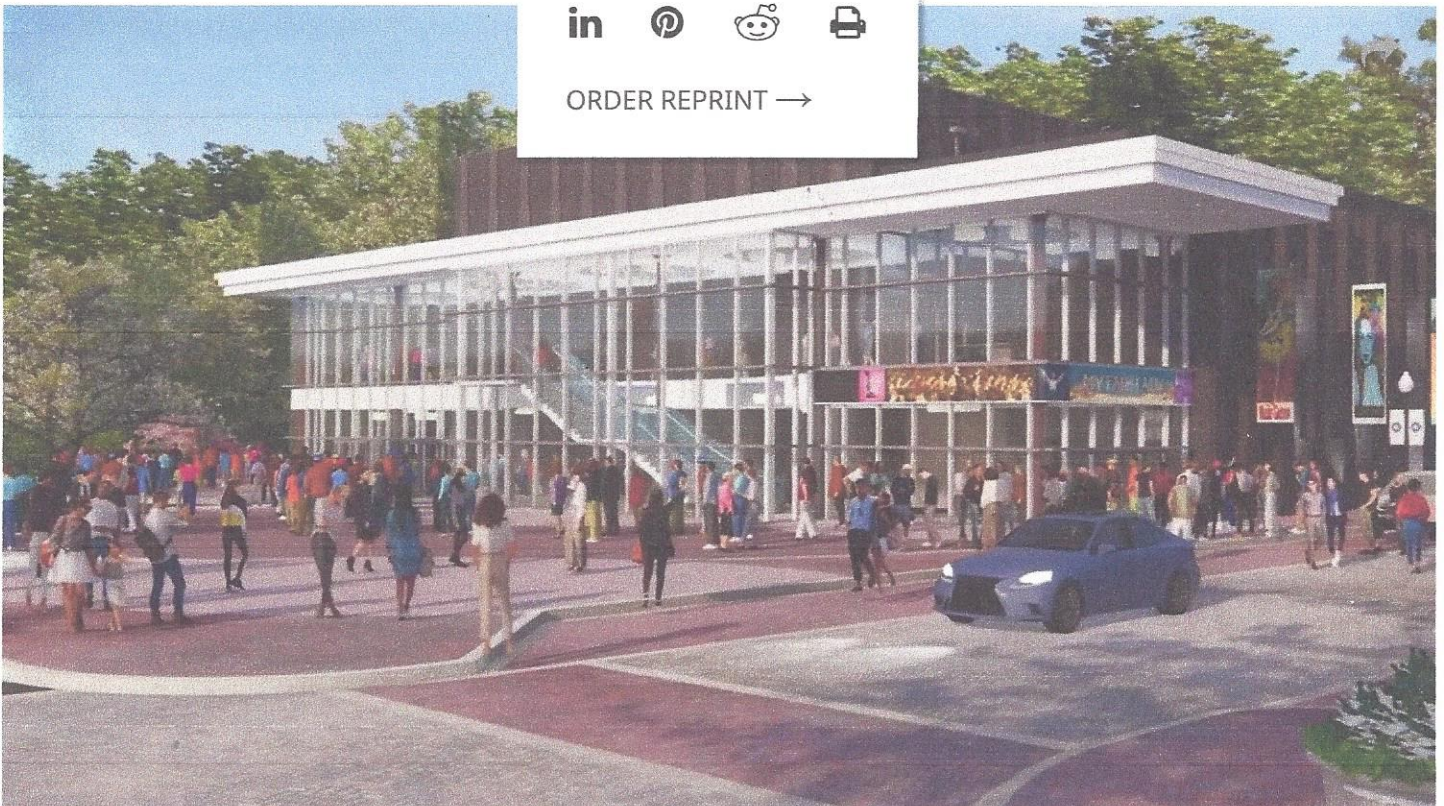
Final plans take shape for new \$25 million arts, community center near Charlotte

BY SONIA RAO

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Mecklenburg County has committed to \$1 to the Cain Center for the Arts for a new arts and community center. This video shows some of the public spaces of the center. BY CAIN CENTER FOR THE ARTS

The Cain Center for the Arts, a \$25 million arts and community center that will serve the Lake Norman region, could open by the end of 2022, Executive Director Justin Dionne said recently.

The approximately 32,000-square-foot center will be on Catawba Avenue in downtown Cornelius, or as locals call the emerging arts district, “Old Town Cornelius”.

The center will include a 400-seat theater, an art gallery, classrooms, an outdoor plaza and a public park with green space, according to renderings provided by the center.

Plans for the center began in 2013 when Cornelius residents approved a \$4 million bond package in support of downtown redevelopment, the Observer previously

reported. The town purchased a 1.85 acre parcel for \$1.5 million in 2017, and planning and fundraising for the center has been underway since then.

The center is named for Ericka and Bill Cain. The founders and owners of the Cornelius-based company Financial Independence Group made a \$5 million donation to the campaign in 2018.



A rendering of the planned \$25 million Cain Center for the Arts in Cornelius. Executive Director Justin Dionne hopes it will be open by the end of 2022. *CAIN CENTER FOR THE ARTS*

In June, the non-profit arts center received a \$1 million donation from Mecklenburg County. That puts the center at \$17 million in donations, out of a campaign goal of \$25 million.

Final plans for the center were released in May.

Dionne said the space will be an arts and cultural hub for the whole Lake Norman region, from Cornelius, Huntersville and Davidson, and into Charlotte and Statesville.

In addition to being a place for people to enjoy the arts, see performances and exhibits or take classes, Dionne said he hopes the center will function as a community space.

“We’re planning a regional center that will have lasting impact,” Dionne said.

CORONAVIRUS CHANGES

The center is planning to finish collecting donations by May 2021, pushing back an earlier goal of the end of this year due to COVID-19, Dionne said.

Construction on the center is set to begin next June, Dionne said, but that could change in the coming months.

“In the times that we are in right now we always have to be flexible,” Dionne said.

However, the designs for the center are final. Dionne said he'd love to be able to have a grand opening celebration by the end of 2022, towards the holiday season.

"This will be at a time when hopefully, knock on wood, COVID has passed," he said. "Everyone will want to be able to come back together, hopefully, by that time."



Plans for the Cain Center for the Arts began in 2013, when Cornelius residents approved a \$4 million bond package in support of downtown redevelopment. *CAIN CENTER FOR THE ARTS*

ADDING TO THE COMMUNITY

The center is \$8 million away from its campaign goal.

Dionne said the center will launch a campaign in September where people can pledge money in exchange for a brick engraved with their name that will be a permanent fixture at the outdoor plaza. The smallest bricks can be purchased for \$250, medium bricks for \$500 and the largest bricks for \$1,000.

The center is still looking for people to make pledge of over \$2,500 and be permanently recognized in the center, Dionne said.

He said the center took a step back from fundraising due to the novel coronavirus pandemic, and started ramping up again in June.

The center is also focused on public service.

It recently partnered with the Charlotte Symphony to deliver a concert to families streamed into their homes, Dionne said. He said the center is also sponsoring a drive-in movie night series at the Lake Norman YMCA presented by local arts organization Bella Love.

“We’re working to try to make sure that not only are we raising funds,” he said, “but that we’re doing our job of helping out and accentuating the community.”

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