



03/05/2021

The Honorable Douglas J.J. Peters
Chair, Senate Capital Budget Subcommittee

The Honorable Ben Barnes
Chair, House Capital Budget Subcommittee

FAVORABLE: ZA00* Capital Miscellaneous Grant Program: Maryland Center for History and Culture

Dear Senator Peters and Delegate Barnes,

The Maryland Center for History and Culture (MCHC) urges you to support the proposed FY2022 capital grant supporting critical infrastructure projects at our campus. MCHC is home to Maryland's largest collection of local history and culture comprised of 350,000 objects and artworks and seven million archival works. MCHC's campus improvement plan strongly aligns with Maryland's goals to support education and heritage.

DLS has recommended to cut our funding "due to available State funds that were previously authorized to initiate design." We believe this is based off a factual misunderstanding of our plan and challenges we have experienced receiving reimbursement from DGS. MCHC was awarded \$500,000 in FY 2020 and \$1M in FY 2021 supporting implementation of a complex portfolio of capital projects included in our larger \$12M "Shaping the Future of History" campaign. None of these grants have been primarily designated for planning. **The FY 2020 grant supported installation of new fire suppression system in the 1965 and 1919 wings of the MCHC campus and has been fully expended. MCHC submitted reimbursement paperwork to DGS on 11/05/2020 that was subsequently approved. Unfortunately, our reimbursement has yet to be processed despite fulfilling multiple requests for the same documentation and directly contacting the Comptroller's office which had no record for a payment request.** MCHC is hopeful that, as of this hearing, our FY 2020 reimbursement will be processed. MCHC will expend the majority of its FY 2021 grant within this fiscal year to develop a new collections storage facility. Work begins this April.

The proposed FY 2022 grant for \$500,000 supports major renovations and infrastructure updates in our ca. 1965 building to develop a new "Learning Lab" facility for virtual and on-site educational programs that serve nearly 75,000 students in all 24 Maryland school jurisdictions each year. While these capital projects are interrelated for MCHC mission activities and all part of the same campaign, they take place in different buildings on our campus. It is incorrect to state that there are already available funds for this important project. Though MCHC has raised \$5,263,941 in support of our campaign, contributions from the State of Maryland are a critical part of our fundraising formula. If this FY 2022 grant is not awarded, MCHC's overall construction may be significantly delayed and deferred maintenance in the 1965 building may compile increasing overall project costs. A document fully outlining our campus improvement plan has been provided as an attached.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Mark B. Letzer'.

Mark B. Letzer
President & CEO

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'David Belew'.

David Belew
Director of Grants & Government Affairs

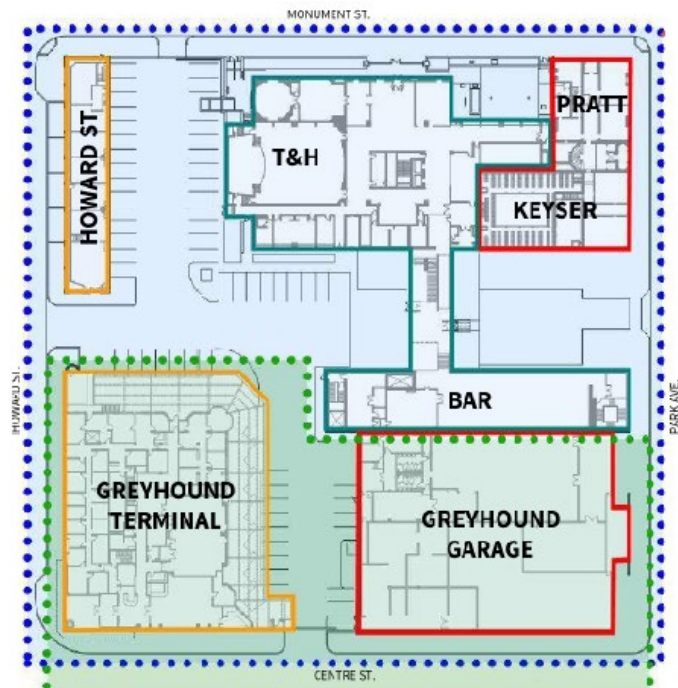


MCHC Campus Development Plan

The MCHC campus constitutes an entire city block bounded by Park Avenue, Centre Street, Howard Street, and Monument Street. This is a critical area bridging the Mount Vernon Cultural District with burgeoning economic renewal in Baltimore's downtown west side neighborhood. Through the aforementioned studies, the MCHC has determined that it has more real-estate than it needs with upkeep draining resources that could be applied to mission activities. We are working to readapt underutilized sections of our campus through sale or long-term lease while concentrating investment where it will have the greatest impact. Revitalizing our campus will enhance collections stewardship and statewide educational programming at the MCHC while supporting larger community development in this high potential corner of Baltimore City. Thank you for this opportunity to provide a broader overview of our campus vision.

Howard St. and Greyhound Terminal:

The MCHC acquired the Greyhound Terminal and Howard St. Buildings at a time when it benefited from approximately \$1M in annual state operating support and maintained 75 staff members. When this state support was lost in the early 2000s, staffing levels were drastically reduced. Today, the MCHC has re-grown staffing levels to 37 fulltime individuals supported by diverse revenue streams. However this growth is not to the point that it necessitates over 20,000 sq. ft. of space found in the Greyhound Terminal. This facility had been utilized as a film production space by HBO, Netflix, and other companies in recent years, but it does not provide a reliable revenue stream or long-term solution for the building. The MCHC has offered this parcel of the campus for sale over the past two years working with the Cushman & Wakefield brokerage firm. Due diligence has been performed to assess multiple bidders and the ways their development plans would interact with the MCHC operations and the character of our historic neighborhood. We are finalizing plans with a buyer of the Greyhound Terminal we believe to be an ideal fit and anticipate making an announcement in the coming months. Revenue generated from a sale will support the MCHC endowment and capital needs. MCHC is still seeking potential developers for the Howard St. Buildings.





Enoch Pratt House (Pratt): This is the oldest section of our campus built in 1844 and owned by the MCHC since 1919. It is an important building architecturally and historically, but its layout is not conducive to modern exhibition or programming space. MCHC has conducted a We are currently searching for a partnership development opportunity to find an adaptive reuse of this space for a third party that honors its historic integrity.

Keyser Library Building: This ca. 1919, basement and three story, 14,660 sq. ft. building is home to our public research library and archives, which stewards seven million books, documents, and manuscripts. A FY20 \$500K bond provided by Governor Hogan’s administration as well as grants from the France-Merrick Foundation and Middendorf Foundation supported a \$1.4M state-of-the-art fire suppression project in this building. One of only a few in the nation, the system’s fine mist droplets would put out a fire without the extensive water damage to collections caused by a traditional system. The MCHC will continue investing in updating this space as part of its long-term campus plan.

Bar Building and Greyhound Garage: This complex of buildings was developed in 2003 and is referred to as the “modern wing” of the campus. The basement and three story 20,034 sq. ft. Bar Building was new construction at the time, while the one story with vaulted ceiling, 19,314 sq. ft. Greyhound Garage was fully updated. A campus use analysis with GWWO as well as a preservation needs assessment conducted by the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts has determined that this complex most adheres to collections care standards for humidity, security, and other factors while the other sections of the campus are markedly deficient barring a multi-million dollar investment. Consolidating all collections storage and high profile exhibitions within the modern wing is the most efficient use of resources. An FY2021 \$1M bond provided by Governor Hogan’s administration and other private funds will convert the Greyhound Garage to modern collections storage. A new roof, minor building layout adjustments, and storage equipment purchases are required to realize this plan. Moving from nearly one dozen, deficient museum storage space scattered throughout the campus to one state-of-the-art facility will greatly improve long-term conservation while enhancing research access for scholars.

Thomas and Hugg Building (T&H): This ca. 1965, basement and three story, 28,580 sq. ft. building is the core of the MCHC administration and public programming activities and the focus of our FY22, \$3.5M budget request. Currently, the basement is home to several collections storage areas; the first floor holds exhibition space, K-12 activities and lunchroom, and our lecture auditorium; the second floor holds exhibition space and library support offices; and the third floor is home to the majority of the MCHC office space for its 37 employees. The aforementioned preservation needs assessment conducted by the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts has determined that T&H is wholly unsuitable for collections storage and exhibitions displaying sensitive objects. While T&H has benefited from new fire suppression systems supported by State in FY2020, fully updating it to collections care standards with new climate control systems, security, shelving, and building envelope improvements may exceed \$10M and is beyond the MCHC’s current fundraising capacity.



However T&H continues to have high value as administrative and public programming space that could be fully realized by a more prudent investment. As we work to consolidate most museum activities in the modern wing of the campus, the MCHC will convert the first floor of T&H to an intentionally designed, K-12 learning space. This is in support of a rapidly growing education program that served 74,899 students and teachers in the 2019-20 school year in 21 Maryland counties and several other states. Much of this has been through virtual outreach. The Learning Lab plan includes the development of a second Virtual Fieldtrip Studio that will fully double the capacity of this popular program as well as logistic areas for coordination of travelling trunks and other outreach assets. In addition to the MCHC's growing outreach initiatives, a great need remains to create an in-person learning experience at the MCHC that provides Maryland's students and teachers hands-on opportunities for historical inquiry.