

Written Testimony
Submitted by the African American Museum and Cultural Center
March 9, 2021

To the members of the Senate Budget and Tax Capital Budget Subcommittee and the Appropriations Capital Budget, Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of the Governor's request of \$500,000 to support Phase II of the Museum expansion and addition of affordable artists housing.



Prince George's African American Museum & Cultural Center's Building Expansion Design Scheme

WHO WE ARE

Today, as we in the midst of a renewed quest for racial equity and inclusion, the preservation and presentation of African American history, art, culture and heritage, is critical to community building and pride of place. For over ten years, the Prince George's African American Museum and Cultural Center (PGAAMCC) has been at the forefront of preserving and celebrating the African American experience in Prince George's County and the State of Maryland. PGAAMCC has also distinguished itself as the only repository dedicated to preserving Prince George's African American history and culture. Since its inception, the Museum has collaborated with the Prince George's County government and partnered with over 25 community-based organizations to provide programming for the 900,000-plus residents of Prince George's County and to provide programming for over 4,000 K-12 students in areas. such as interactive and virtual exhibitions, school tours, and school programs.

Annually, PGAMCC welcomes over 12,000 visitors, which has allowed the Museum to play an instrumental role in the telling the story of the African American experience to those inside and outside of Prince George's County. In addition, PGAAMCC has become an important landing place for artists, historians and researchers who want to tell the African American experience and others and has played an important role in the development and success of the Gateway Arts District, which is among the first Arts and Entertainment Districts in the State of Maryland. The addition of affordable housing will be another valuable resource for the community.

Since the COVID-19 state of emergency, the Museum has pivoted to offer virtual programs and COVID-19 health and wellness outreach for people of diverse ages and backgrounds. As a result, the Museum has been able to continue engaging residents, building community, promoting pride of place, and celebrating African Americans' legacy in Prince George's County, Maryland, and beyond.

Over the years, PGAAMCC has become very adept at identifying a broad range of funding sources. These include the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences (Federal), American Alliance of Museums (Federal), Maryland Humanities (State), Maryland State Arts Council (State), Prince George's Arts and Humanities Council (County), Prince George's County Council (County) Prince George's Parks and Recreation (County) and Greater Washington Community Foundation (County).

NEED

While PGAAMCC has had incredible success, it has become painfully clear that the space is insufficient not only for the Museum's current programming and operational needs but also for its future needs and long-term vision. Currently, the Museum is housed in a 4,204-square-foot facility with three small gallery spaces, one office space and cubicles, a tiny kitchen area, two outdated bathrooms, limited storage for supplies, and a cramped outdoor patio. Moreover, many of the Museum's treasured collections are stored offsite in a storage facility because they will not fit within the Museum facility. In other words, the Museum space has become functionally inadequate, and woefully obsolete

PROPOSAL

In order to address these deficiencies, PGAAMCC is requesting state funding in support of the Museum's efforts to expand the Museum from its current footprint of 4,024 square feet to approximately 20,000 square feet and construction of approximately 29,000 square feet of new affordable artists housing. The proposed expansion will allow the Museum to triple the capacity for visitors and the number of students that can be serviced and provide critically needed affordable housing to artists. The current funding request is being made for Phase II of the Program. The expansion will include the following:

- **Performance Venue/Events Space:** The building expansion will include an indoor and outdoor event/performance space that will host revenue-generating performances, space rentals, and special events. In Prince George's County, there is a need for performance venues. The building will now become a resource to local, international, and diasporic,

performing artists, schools, and speakers. PGAAMCC will also be a unique venue for major events and celebrations in Prince George's County.

- **Multiple Gallery Spaces:** The building expansion will feature multiple large-scale gallery spaces for PGAAMCC's permanent exhibit and temporary art exhibitions. Currently, PGAAMCC's small and technologically inadequate space prevents the museum from sharing a full and authentic story of Prince George's Black history and culture. The new expansion will feature a Prince George's Black history exhibit that integrates virtual reality and object-based learning. Following national museum best practices, PGAAMCC aims to equip the facility with state-of-the-art technology that will attract the new era of museum visitors.
- **Workshop/Classroom Space:** Currently, PGAAMCC has insufficient workshop/classroom space to host activities such as after-school programs, Black arts and cultural workshops for youth and adults and artist-in-residencies. The building expansion will include multiple workshop/classroom spaces.
- **Collections Facility:** The building expansion will feature a state-of-the-art collections room facility. The room will be temperature and humidity-controlled and include movable art racks for PGAAMCC's growing Prince George's County Black art collection, shelving and flat files for historical documents, rare books, photo collection, and shelving for artifacts/objects. The room will also include workstations for research and processing collection items. Currently, PGAAMCC's collection of over 1,000 objects and archives are stored offsite, making the collection inaccessible to the public and not readily available to staff for research and education purposes. This new addition allows PGAAMCC to fulfill its mission as a repository of Prince George's Black history and culture.
- **Artist Housing:** The building expansion will include artist housing units. The artist housing units will address the need for affordable artist housing in Maryland and greater Washington D.C. area. The artist housing will not only financially support the operations of PGAAMCC but advance Prince George's County's brand as a premier arts destination/hub in the DMV area.

PHASING

The new facility is proposed to be completed in four (4) phases.

Phase I

Phase I of the project, which was completed in September 2020, focused exclusively on developing conceptual plans. PGAAMCC engaged the Neighborhood Design Center (NDC), a not-for-profit design firm, to develop the plans. Over a two-year period, NDC worked with the Museum Board and staff members, community stakeholders, policymakers, and visitors to develop a concept plan. As part of this effort, NDC developed a comprehensive feasibility study, convened numerous focus groups and conducted surveys a wide range of stakeholders. These documents helped inform the building scheme and program design. The in-kind services provided by NDC enabled the Museum to complete the concept plan at little to no cost. In

addition to pro bono services provided by NDC, the Museum also received pro bono legal and consulting services for over two years and was able to secure a grant through the State African American Heritage Preservation Program for \$20,000 to help underwrite planning efforts. Now, with the conceptual renderings in hand, the Museum is ready to begin Phase II.

Phase II

Phase II of the project will create architectural drawings and construction documents for both the Museum and the affordable artist housing. The Museum is in discussion with a development team, which includes an architectural firm and an engineering firm to assist with the RFP development. The Museum is also in discussions with developers about providing a portion of their services pro bono to reduce costs. Also, the Museum has been in discussions with affordable housing builders interested in partnering with the Museum to develop the affordable housing portion of the project. PGAAMCC will finalize its Capital Fund Development committee and begin implementing its fund development plans.

Phase III

Phase III of the project will be to construct an environmentally friendly indoor and outdoor Museum space that is ADA compliant and accessible to hearing and visually impaired individuals and all essential equipment. This phase will also include the construction of affordable artist housing. Upon completion of Phase III, the facility will be fully operational.

Phase IV

In Phase IV, the Museum will equip the facility with state-of-the-art technology that will service the facility and the larger community. Funding for this technology is not required for the operations of the Museum and, therefore, has not been included in either the Revised Budget or Funding Plan. Inclusion of Phase IV has been provided for informational purposes only.

REVISED BUDGET

<i>(\$ thousands)</i> Uses	Prior Funding	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	Totals	Original Budget
Acquisition	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Planning (Phase II)	86	500	0	0	0	0	586	586
Construction (Phase III)	0	0	0	2,500	6,000	5,500	14,000	16,028
Equipment (Phase III)	0	0	0	0	0	500	500	5,000
Total	\$86	\$500	\$0	\$2,500	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$15,086	\$21,614

FUNDING PLAN

The museum has become very adept in identifying and securing funding for programming and operations. In anticipation of the capital expansion, the museum secured a grant to hire a Fund Development Consultant. The museum is in the final stages of convening a Capital Campaign Committee. The Capital Campaign in consultation with the Fund Development Consultant will have the primary responsibility for securing funding for the museum building expansion and affordable housing. Below are funding goals and priorities to complete Phase III of the Expansion Project:

Funder	Amount	Percentage	Description
Federal Grants	\$500,000	3%	Federal Capital Grant
State Grants	\$2,000,000	14%	Capital Grants (AAHPP, MHT), State Budget support
County Grant	\$2,000,000	14%	Prince George's County Council
Foundations	\$2,000,000	14%	National, state, and local private and public foundations
Corporate	\$3,000,000	21%	National, state, and local corporate sponsorship and partnerships
Private Donors	\$500,000	3%	Regional private donors
Development Partnerships with private financing	\$4,000,000	28%	Housing/Development partnerships and private financing
In-kind	\$500,000	3%	Essential Equipment
TOTAL	\$14,500,000	100.00%	

**This funding plan does not include Phase I and Phase II funding*