



ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART AWARDED EPA GRANT FOR FUTURE MUSEUM SITE

The \$350,000 Grant Will Be Used to Clean Underground Contamination at the Former Belk Building

[For Release May 11, 2020 – Albany, GA] — The Albany Museum of Art has been awarded a \$350,000 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant to clean up contamination at the downtown Albany site that will be the new home of the museum.

“This crucial funding will allow the Albany Museum of Art to continue its long-range plan to move downtown into the heart of Albany,” AMA Executive Director Andrew James Wulf, Ph.D., said. “As one of Murphy’s Laws advises, whenever you set out to do something, something else must be done first. In this case, we the AMA, the Board of Trustees, the staff, and stakeholders, shall do our due diligence in cleaning up this special site so that we can build a new state-of-the-art art museum for Southwest Georgia, its people, and its visitors.

“We are deeply grateful to the EPA for its gracious award of this grant, and we shall do right by them as well as the Albany community in completing this project in a timely and successful manner.”

“I was excited and grateful to learn we have been awarded this critical grant,” AMA Board of Trustees President Jack Davis said. “I’d like to express appreciation to the key players who helped make this happen—Bruce Campbell, a member of the Board of Trustees who is serving as project director; former AMA Executive Director Paula Williams; Executive Director Andrew Wulf; Development and Membership Director Chloe Hinton; Board of Trustees Past-President Ripley Bell, and the entire team.

“We also greatly appreciate the work of the team of specialists at Cardno, the environmental engineering services firm that facilitated the grant application, and the strong support we have received from the city of Albany.”

The Albany Museum of Art applied for the EPA Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program Cleanup grant to assist with the cleanup of hazardous waste and petroleum contaminants at the former Belk

Department Store Building and adjacent parking lot at 128 and 146 West Broad Ave., the future home of the AMA.

Last year, the Robert N. Brooks Sr. family donated the properties, which also include a former dance studio that will be razed for an outdoor sculpture garden. The buildings and parking lot are situated on 1.27 acres of land.

The move downtown will not only place the AMA in proximity to other Albany attractions and the Albany Convention & Visitors Bureau, it will more than double the space at the current museum at 311 Meadowlark Drive. The estimated \$12 million museum will have 53,000 square feet of space, compared to 25,000 square feet at the current location.

The additional space will allow the AMA to increase its number of galleries and to house its permanent collection, which has been in safe storage since the January 2017 storms. The AMA's programming area for children will be increased, and meeting and events space will be expanded. Behind the scenes, there will be more storage and preparation room space, both of which are cramped in the current facility. By growing and adding programming, there will be more points of interest for those who visit the Museum.

The AMA applied for the grant following a public hearing that was conducted at the museum on Sept 26, 2019.

The Brownfields and Land Revitalization Program is designed to provide funding to carry out cleanup activities at brownfield sites, which are properties where expansion, redevelopment or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. The EPA estimates there are more than 450,000 brownfields in the U.S. During the due diligence phase of acquiring the building and parking lot, AMA officials discovered heavy metals and inorganic contaminants co-mingled with petroleum products at the site.

The contamination was not an issue specific to the museum. The environmental cleanup will have to be completed before anyone can make use of the property. Most importantly, the cleanup will mean a healthier environment for Albany.

Built in 1968, the future downtown museum was part of an effort by the Belk company to create a more consistent store design throughout its chain. The location, however, was used for other purposes for decades before the store was constructed, with commercial uses dating to the 1890s. The property formerly housed businesses including horse stables, carriage repositories, retail stores, warehouse storage, auto repair facilities, a paint shop, a print shop and a gas station. The dance studio previously was home to an auto parts and repair store.

CURRENT AMA EXHIBITIONS

- *Cut & Paste: Works of Paper*, works by 11 Georgia artists, is in the Haley Gallery.
- *Looking at America and Painting How I Want, What I Want and How I See It*, works by Dean Mitchell, is in the East Gallery.
- *Do Not Hand Me Over to the Impure Whiteness of Noon: A Hemings Elegy*, works by Yanique Norman, is in the West Gallery.

ABOUT THE ALBANY MUSEUM OF ART

The Albany Museum of Art is located at 311 Meadowlark Drive in Albany, Georgia, adjacent to Albany State University West Campus just off Gillionville Road. The museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums. The Albany Museum of Art is open 10 am through 5 pm Tuesdays through Fridays and noon until 5 pm on Saturdays. Admission is free.

For more information about the AMA please visit our website, www.albanymuseum.com or call 229.439.8400. Be sure to follow the @AlbanyArtMuseum on Twitter, AlbanyMuseum on Instagram and AlbanyMuseumOfArt on Facebook.

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