

Last year the Arts Center began a strategic planning process (which is on-going) that helped us shape our goals of expanding arts education and encouraging creativity through the fine and performing arts for the next five years. To achieve our mission and meet the goals identified in the planning process, it was clear that our current city owned facility needed substantial renovation, upgrades, and expansion. In particular, the growth of the collection has rendered the current storage space woefully inadequate. This issue had been flagged by the American Alliance of Museums in our last accreditation process nearly ten years ago.

These institutional needs were confirmed by member and community surveys, and are in line with the findings of George Sexton, of George Sexton and Assoc., who performed a very high level assessment of the facility in 2012 to determine short-range and long-range issues with the current structure and its use. Both the facility assessment and the strategic plan identified as priorities: desperately needed art storage space, updated mechanicals, a generator, expanded collection and exhibition prep space, updated lighting systems, more studio and storage space for Museum School classes, additional office space, renovated Children's Theater (most of which is still the original 1963 vintage), as well as expanded and/or renovated gift shop and restaurant. In general, because of a series of additions over the decades, the facility no longer functions optimally in terms of efficiency and staff/visitor experience. From this analysis the Arts Center Foundation felt we had a duty to evaluate our physical facility options including consideration of a new facility.

The Arkansas Arts Center Foundation, whose responsibility includes care of the art collection, is exploring these options and ways to ensure adequate and secure funding sources such that its world-renowned collection is housed and displayed in a modern facility that will reflect the significance of the Arts Center in the cultural history of this region and create a friendly atmosphere to explore the beauty and inspiration that the arts bring to our lives.