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The Richard H. DrieHaus Foundation Awards a \$2 Million Grant to the South Side Community Art Center for Its Transformational Renovation and Expansion Project

The enhanced space will enable the South Side Community Art Center to continue its mission of supporting and inspiring generations of artists and community members for years to come. It is a significant investment in the future of Black art and culture in Chicago.

Chicago-November 18, 2025 The Richard H. DrieHaus Foundation announced a \$2 million grant to support the South Side Community Art Center's (SSCAC) transformational renovation and expansion project. The SSCAC stands as the oldest and longest-running independent African American art center in the United States and is home to the largest permanent collection of work by Black artists in the country. The project, scheduled for completion in 2027, includes the renovation of SSCAC's current home, a historic Bronzeville mansion on Martin Luther King Drive and the construction of a new addition attached to the rear of the mansion. It will more than double SSCAC's space.

Founded in 1940 by Dr. Margaret Burroughs, Eldzier Cortor, Charles White, Bernard Goss, William Carter, Archibald Motley, and Joseph Kersey, the SSCAC has served as a cultural hub for exhibitions, classes, lectures, and community programming. Its permanent collection features more than 500 paintings, sculptures, photographs, prints, and drawings by leading Black artists. It was formally dedicated the next year by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

“Supporting the South Side Community Art Center’s renovation is about honoring Chicago’s cultural legacy while investing in its future,” said Anne Lazar, the Executive Director of the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation. “The Center has been a cornerstone for Black artists for more than 85 years, and this project ensures that its impact will continue for generations.”

The \$2 million grant has enabled SSCAC to secure additional funding from the City of Chicago and other sources, making the \$15 million project possible. The SSCAC has temporarily relocated as renovations begin. The mansion, built in 1892, was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1994 and added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2018. SSCAC is the only remaining Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) operating in its original building and under its original charter and mission.

"This campaign is not just about preserving a building. It's about investing in a legacy that has given rise to generations of artists," said Monique Brinkman-Hill, Executive Director of SSCAC. "It preserves SSCAC's historic legacy while expanding and elevating the site into a modern, accessible, and community-centered art institution that will inspire generations of artists to come. We cannot wait to welcome people back when the project is complete."

Future Firm, the architectural firm for the project, brings extensive experience working in Bronzeville and has a strong record with arts and cultural institutions across Chicago. The plan encompasses renovation of the existing 7,976-square-foot historic building and construction of a new 9,750-square-foot addition, totaling 17,726 square feet.

“Renovating and expanding SSCAC’s historic building is an opportunity for the architecture to reflect the Center’s deep impact on artists and community. Our design centers on openness: a public-scaled front entry, an interior that is accessible throughout, and new, contemporary exhibition, studio, and storage space for artmaking,” said Ann Liu, a partner with Chicago Future Firm. “Every element takes its cue from the Center’s creative history, from the widened front stoop to the way the Burroughs Gallery’s wood boards reappear as a pattern on the new perforated steel façade.”

SSCAC expects to attract more visitors than it has in the past due to its proximity to the Barack Obama Presidential Library. With the larger and enhanced space, it can accommodate bigger crowds and introduce people from around the world to Black art and culture in Chicago.

“The building is just the beginning. SSCAC needs critical operating and reserve funds which are often overlooked by supporters but are essential to long-term sustainability. The Driehaus Foundation also hopes that its support will serve to leverage support from other foundations and individuals,” said Anita Alexander, Senior Program Officer at the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation.

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