

**PCO Art Space Committee
Artspace Exploration – Phase I
Executive Summary
February 26, 2012**

Background:

The Art Space Committee was organized as an ad hoc committee of the Pullman Civic Organization in February 2011. PCO President appointed Arthur Pearson as chair. Committee membership was open to all members of the PCO. A core group of about 10 people regularly participated in monthly meetings held the first Monday of each month typically in a committee member's home.

Major Activities:

The committee's initial task was to **visit a range of existing, successful art spaces** within the region. Committee members arranged for guided tours of Lill Street Gallery, Switching Station Artspace, Batavia Artist Association at Water Street Studios, Fine Line Creative Arts Center in St. Charles, and Union Street Gallery in Chicago Heights.

In June 2011, the committee secured a grant sufficient to **use the Artspace Consulting Toolkit**, an on-line resource to help guide the committee in the steps necessary to determine the feasibility of developing an affordable art space in one of several possible Pullman historic structures.

Over the next several months, guided by the toolkit, the committee conducted artist surveys, audience surveys, surveys of major unused or underutilized historic structures within the Pullman State Historic site, and organizational capacity survey of local organizations.

In October 2011, the committee made a preliminary presentation on its findings as part of the Chicago Artist Month. (It should be noted that committee member Linda Bullen was selected as one of 12 artists featured during the month-long, city-sponsored celebration.) The event was held in the North Wing of the Pullman factory site, and was well attended by local and non-Pullman artists and the general public.

In January 2012, the committee presented its findings to the Pullman Civic Organization at its monthly meeting.

Project Concept:

Using a process outlined in the Artspace Consulting Toolkit, the committee came up with the following guiding principles to frame its investigation:

1. Historic Preservation
 - a. Protect key historic buildings from decay and/or inappropriate redevelopment by repurposing them in a "green" way to accommodate a range of uses, including:
 - i. Artist live/work space
 - ii. Artist studios
 - iii. Art education
 - iv. Art galleries
 - v. Sympathetic commercial development

2. Arts and Education Programming:
 - a. Build upon the unique history and character of Pullman to develop multi-disciplinary arts and arts education programming that achieves a national profile but also is inclusive of community arts and artists.
3. Community Impact:
 - a. Develop and program key historic buildings in such a way that they are affordable for the community, financially sustainable, and an engine for economic development for the broader community.

Artist Demand:

Guided by the Artspace Consulting Toolkit, with additional guidance by Artspace staff, committee members developed an artist survey to assess community and artists' needs for an art space in Pullman. The survey was distributed electronically through more than 20 outlets courtesy of pro bono use of the Survey Monkey account of MBMD Consulting. The key findings were as follows:

- 90 responses, mostly from artists outside of Pullman
- Most respondents were visual artists:
 - Painting, drawing
 - Photography
 - Sculpture
- 80% of respondents currently practice their creative art within their home
- 71% of respondents need new, additional and/or different creative workspace
 - shared studio space
 - facilities with shared equipment/resources
 - private studio space
 - classroom space
 - live/work space
 - more art community, exhibition space, or a combination of the above.
- 50% expressed a need for *private* studio space
 - \$150 - \$249
- 44% expressed a need for *live/work space* (although less than one percent listed this as one of three top priorities)
 - \$500 - \$749
- 38 % expressed a need for *shared* studio space
 - \$50 - \$99

Audience Demand:

Guided by the Artspace Consulting Toolkit, committee members developed an audience survey to assess arts needs of the local community. The surveys were distributed locally both electronically and in hard copy through five community channels. The key findings were as follows:

- Modest response rate: 48
- 100% of respondents are interested in viewing art exhibitions or attending performances i.e. musical concerts, live theater, dance performances.
- 87% of respondent are you interested in taking a class or workshop:
 - Pottery, Dance and Preservation trades

Structures and Cost:

With assistance of the Pullman State Historic Site, we compiled basic history, square footage, construction type, condition and occupancy type for each of the five main structures that comprise the Pullman State Historic Site.

Although it is in the worst condition, the **East Assembly Shops might be the best option for redevelopment as an art space**. At 36,500 square feet, it meets the minimum square footage for an artist live/work facility. (Artspace typically requires that projects include a minimum of 30 live/work units, with an average size of 1,000 square feet per unit.) With the addition of at least a partial second floor, the building could house shared work space or other complementary spaces.

Based on successful Artspace rehabs elsewhere, estimates for repurposing the Rear Assembly Shops as an art space range from **\$150 to \$260/square foot, for an estimated cost between \$5.5 million and \$9.5 million**.

Local Organization Capacities:

Pullman boasts at least 12 groups, five of which are 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. On the one hand, this reflects a great deal of civic pride and involvement. On the other hand, it largely explains why, without exception, all of the groups are limited in their organizational and financial capacities. Even combining them, they compare well to small-scale historic societies but unfavorably to those that raise significant dollars for programming and capital projects:

	2010 Revenues	Financial Ranking	Staff
Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust	\$4.1 million	4 (strong)	15
Swedish American Museum	\$642,000	4 (strong)	7
Unity Temple Restoration Fund	\$524,000	4 (strong)	3
Glessner House Museum	\$255,000	4 (strong)	5
Pullman combined	\$73,000	1 (weak)	2 PT
Ridge Historic Society	\$50,987	3 (stable)	Don't Know
Edgewater Historical Society	\$49,676	3 (stable)	Don't Know

Related Program Opportunities:

In addition to arts programming, the committee cultivated significant interest in a historic preservation training center, which could drive the need for re-use of other Pullman historic structures. Parties potentially interested in exploring the issue further include:

- Campbell Center for Historic Preservation Studies
- Landmarks Illinois
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Preservation Chicago

Recommendations:

The initial recommendations of the committee are as follows:

- Engage a professional firm (likely Artspace) to conduct a next phase artist survey, securing at least 300 responses
- Pilot three preservation courses in partnership with the Campbell Center
- Build/consolidate local organization capacity
- Work with the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs to designate Pullman as a Cultural Hub

Barriers:

Although there is a significant amount of community interest in an art space in Pullman, there remain key barriers that must be addressed:

- **The very idea of an art space is new to many Pullmanites**, who need more information and time to become comfortable with the idea. For instance, some object to the idea of subsidized housing for artists, believing that such will lower property values.
- **Others deeply adhere to a preconceived, albeit vaguely articulated, idea of what the Pullman factory site should be**; namely a conventional museum celebrating the Pullman story.
- **The very idea of nonprofit organizational development is new to many Pullmanites**, including the leaders of some of the existing nonprofit organizations.

Next Steps:

From February through May, the committee has arranged for a range of guest speakers to help community leaders work through some of the identified barriers. **The hope is that by mid-summer, the committee will achieve consensus on specific next steps to build some kind of local capacity and move forward with the next phase of artist surveys and structures exploration.**

February 6 – **Alison Zehr and Laura Samson** will talk to us about the pros and cons of having so many local organizations operating within so small a community. Alison is a highly-respected arts and organizational development consultant, whose clients include small, mid-sized and major nonprofit organizations, city agencies, and most of Chicago's major arts funders. Laura was most recently the executive director of the Alphawood Foundation, one of Chicago's major arts funders.

March 5 – **Sunny Fischer and Lisa DiChiera** will provide their take on our idea for redeveloping the factory site for some combination of art space/historic preservation training center/urban gardening hub. Sunny is the executive director of the Richard H. Driehaus Foundation and president of the board of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. Lisa is the Director of Advocacy for Landmarks Illinois.

April 2 – **Lynn McClure**, executive director of the National Parks Conservation Association, will share what she knows about urban National Parks and her experience dealing with local nonprofit support organizations.

May 7 – **Chris Morris**, program office for the Midwest office of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, will talk to us about Pullman as a potential National Treasure site; what that means and what we might need to do in order to be considered for designation.