

Alabama Gospel Center Approves Design Plan

A design plan for the transformation of the former McCoy United Methodist Church facility into the Alabama Gospel Music Cultural Arts Center has been approved by the Center's board of directors, according to Constance H. Moore, board president.

“The design plan is an architectural analysis of the existing structures, which folds the desired program elements into redesigned spaces, resulting in a customized facility for artists and visitors alike,” Moore said.

Ultimately the center will provide a state-of-the-art performance center for gospel music, a gospel museum, studios for music instruction, recording studio, and reception facility. The AGMCAC will be a resource for a dynamic offering of opportunities for learning, research, rehearsal and performance.

Hoskins Architecture of Birmingham served as lead architect, and Lee H. Skolnick Architecture + Design Partnership of New York City served as exhibition and interpretive design architect. The plan contains schematic drawings and artistic renderings, along with a rich narrative that touches on the evolution of the Gospel Music genre as it will be presented in the multi-faceted facility.

The AGMCAC board engaged a team of creative and insightful leaders from the cultural community to work with the architects in the development of the plan.

Because this will be a multi-million dollar project, construction is planned in stages, beginning with the performance auditorium and visitor lobby and exhibit space.

Restoring the abandoned historic church building as a showplace for the music of the South is seen as a major step in the revitalization of western Birmingham. The property is across from Birmingham-Southern College and is owned by the City of Birmingham.

The Alabama Gospel Center is a nonprofit organization, whose roots go back to the “Region 2020 Cultural Master Plan for the Greater Birmingham Area,” which identified the church as a potential site for cultural programming in an underserved minority neighborhood. In response, the vision for AGMCAC was conceived, and the agency was incorporated in 2004.

As a nonprofit, the organization relies on funding and other support from community partners led by the McCoy Center for Community Service, City of Birmingham and Birmingham-Southern College.

The Design Plan was funded primarily by grants, with the largest coming from the Alabama State Council on the Arts. Foundation grants included those from the Alabama Civil Justice Foundation, Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, Daniel Foundation and Hill Crest Foundation, along with contributions from groups such as the Bush Hills Neighborhood Association and Sixth Avenue Baptist Church.

A host of other area corporations, foundations and organizations have supported the Cultural Center in its progression to this point.

Over the next several months, AGMCAC will conduct a financial feasibility study to determine the amount of funding that potentially can be raised in order to move forward, along with a development plan for attracting the support needed for construction.