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### ARTS AND CULTURE

# 'A POTENTIAL GEM'

## \$25M performing, visual arts center planned for Grosse Pointe Park-Detroit border

BY SHERRI WELCH

A philanthropy-led effort to erect a \$25 million visual and performing arts center on the border of Grosse Pointe Park and Detroit is set to break ground next summer.

With its plan to welcome residents, arts groups and artists from Detroit as well as from the Pointes, the project is a stark departure from the Kercheval Avenue barriers that created tension between the two communities for years.

When it opens in the fall of 2022, the "Schaap Center" at the corner of Alter Road and Jefferson Avenue will be home to the A. Paul and Carol C. Schaap Center for the Performing Arts and the Richard and Jane Manoogian Art Gallery and an additional community art gallery.

The Schaaps, who spurred the project with a property purchase in 2012, pledged a total of \$15 million, and the Manoogians committed an additional \$5.5 million. With other gifts that have come in, the nonprofit has raised \$22.8 million of its \$35 million campaign goal to cover capital costs and create a \$10 million permanent endowment.

As envisioned, the nonprofit center will provide a home for the Grosse Pointe Theatre and the Grosse Pointe Symphony Orchestra and host rotating exhibits of works from private art collections around the region in its museum-quality art gallery. In addition to that, there will be community exhibit space for local and visiting artists and student artists, Jaime Rae Turnbull, interim executive director of the Schaap Center, said.

But the new center is not something that is just for the Pointes, said Lumigen Inc. founder A. Paul Schaap, who is chairing the nonprofit leading the project.



The A. Paul and Carol C. Schaap Center for the Performing Arts is planned for the corner of Alter Road and Jefferson Avenue. | RAYMOND CEKAUSKAS ARCHITECTURE LLC/SMITH GROUP

Other performing arts groups and artists from Detroit and the region will also be invited, he said. Organizers are also talking with several groups about performing at the center, including: Grosse Pointe Community Chorus, Mosaic Youth Theatre, Detroit Medical Orchestra, Detroit Concert Choir, Detroit Public Television and Michigan Opera Theatre.

Schaap said he and his wife love the theater and symphony and have supported various groups, including the Hilberry and Bonstelle theaters at Wayne State University where they both worked. The Grosse Pointe Theatre has been performing over last several years at local high schools and moving from place to place, he said.

"That's not very good for a group of that



A. Paul and Carol C. Schaap envision people coming from around the region to see performances at the new center and spend time in the Manoogian Art Gallery.

quality; they're going to have a wonderful home at the Schaap Center."

They see the new center "as a potential gem" for the broader Grosse Pointe-Detroit community, he said.

Schaap envisions people coming not only from the Pointes but also from Detroit and around the region to see performances at the new center and spend time in the Manoogian Art Gallery.

"One of the things we're thinking about is dinner theater involving St. Ambrose," which is within walking distance of the new center, he said.

But there are also small restaurants not far away on Kercheval Avenue and East Jefferson Avenue.

"I think we're going to see a real blossoming of those types of businesses," Schaap said.

"I'm really looking forward to seeing this East Jefferson area take off."

In 2012, the Schaaps, longtime supporters of the theater and symphony, bought a piece of property at the corner of Maryland Street and East Jefferson Avenue from the city of Grosse Pointe Park to protect it from development and preserve it for a future arts center.

The couple formed the Royal Oak-based Urban Renewal Initiative Foundation the following year and through the nonprofit purchased additional properties near the first plot, giving it a total of 2.4 acres. The purchases totaled about \$2 million, said A. Paul Schaap, who sold the company he founded, Southfield-based Lumigen, for more than \$250 million in 2006. Lumigen produces a compound that produces luminescence used in medical diagnostics.

The Manoogians, neighbors and friends of the Schaaps, were co-supporters of the performing arts center, and "with their wonderful art collection, frankly, (they) were looking for a good home for some of that art," Schaap said.

While the Manoogians will certainly show artwork from their private collection at the gallery from time to time, "everyone's hope is that others will use that area to share some of their collecting as well," said Gene Gargaro, president of the Richard and Jane Manoogian Foundation.

"The hope is it will be a community resource and widely used by different performance arts groups and other community groups" and art-



Turnbull



Gargaro

ists, he said.

The Schaaps and Manoogians live in Grosse Pointe, but they are Detroiters, Gargaro said. Carol and Paul Schaap have been big supporters on the Wayne State University campus, and they were among the first donors to the "Grand Bargain" that preserved the Detroit Institute of Arts' collection by shoring up the city's pension plans during the Detroit bankruptcy.

The Manoogians have also supported much in the community, including the DIA for decades, Gargaro said, noting they were also generous supporters of the Grand Bargain.

"The performing arts theater is just the latest example where two very philanthropic families have come together to support a project that will benefit so many," Gargaro said.

## 'A Broadway-style theater'

Urban Renewal brought the plan for the project before the Grosse Pointe Park Planning Commission in August, after years of assembling property and discussion with the city about the project and the Schaaps' and Manoogians' financial commitments to it. An earlier idea to shift overflow parking to the surrounding neighborhood was abandoned following resident pushback, Turnbull said. The project gained city approval in August, and Urban Renewal launched the silent phase of a capital campaign to cover the rest of the costs.

CBRE Inc. is serving as the owner's representative on the project, managing the design and construction process for Urban Renewal. Raymond Cekauskas Architecture LLC is design architect, and Smith Group is architect of record.

Together, they came up with plans for the center that include a 424-seat theater with an orchestra pit on a hydraulic platform to lower it out of audience view of the stage or

expand the stage area, a basement to accommodate a trap door and state-of-the-art lighting and acoustics.

The Schaaps "wanted to make sure there were all the amenities of a Broadway-style theater," Turnbull said.

The Manoogian Art Gallery will include the very best in climate control technology, providing space to display art work collected by the Manoogian family and others, as well as works from local and student artists. There will also be a pre-function gathering area with a wine bar and concession area in the 49,000-square-foot center. The design also includes energy efficiency elements, green stormwater infrastructure and 160 parking spaces.

A joint venture formed by Oak Park-based PCI One Source Contracting and The Dailey Co. in Lake Orion is serving as construction manager of the project.

As construction plans are finalized, Schaap is forming a new nonprofit to operate the center: the Grosse Pointe Park Council for the Arts.

"Everything is being outsourced until there is a team permanently in place," Turnbull said, noting the goal is to have the management team in place by the fall of 2022 when the center opens.

Plante Moran Trust is managing donations made to the campaign, and The Nonprofit Spot is developing an operating plan and budget, which is expected to be about \$831,000 its first year, Turnbull said.

The center has a long-term lease agreement with the Grosse Pointe Theatre and is developing fee-based agreements for performance space usage with other arts groups, she said.

Its proximity to the city of Detroit "is pretty critical" in ensuring it has regional benefit and is accessible, Turnbull said.

"This will be an incredible regional asset for visual and performing arts. ... We think this is going to draw great interest from Southeast Michigan to have an intimate venue of this level with quality, community programming" at accessible ticket prices, she said.

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