

Sale will finance future art efforts

Local Arts Council decides building is not part of future

It's no secret that the economic climate in our region is changing. Fortunately, Michigan's arts and cultural community has been recognized as a sector that can help drive economic development, cultural tourism and enhance quality of life.

This recognition, however, has placed additional pressures upon the sector at a time when many have experienced funding cuts at the local and state levels, increased competition for expendable income, great financial need for private dollars, and structural changes to corporate and foun-

dation funding. Recently empowered with a new mission, however, the Arts Council of Greater Lansing is ready to step in as a leader to advocate and advance arts and culture in the capital region.

With a 40-year-long history in the mid-Michigan area, the Arts Council supports more than 600 artists and 130 arts and cultural agencies in Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties. Through services, programs, advocacy and the administration of approximately \$335,000 annually in grants, the Arts Council acts as a regional association similar to a "chamber of commerce" for the arts.

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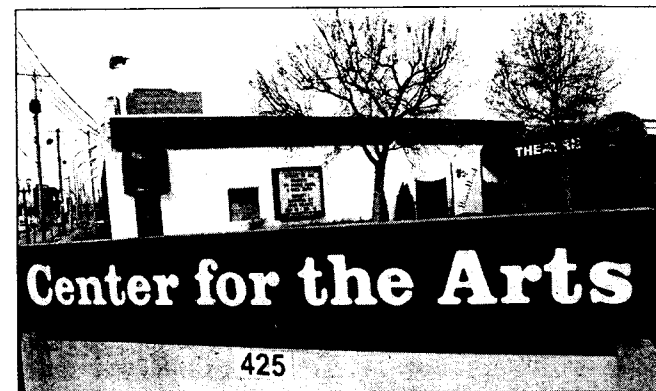
We're more than just the agency that coordinates Silver Bells in the City. We serve our constituents and work alongside area businesses and local government to help fulfill the community's cultural vision.

In January, a survey of regional arts and cultural agencies was conducted. The results demonstrated that the highest priority of needs by our constituents included increased local and statewide advocacy, increased promotional efforts, grant support and continued educational support.

The lowest priority was the need to rent a facility. These results solidified trends the Arts Council had been experiencing for a number of years as owners of the Center for the Arts, a facility it has operated since 1975. The original intent of the center was to provide

a facility the community could utilize through rentals. In addition to the Arts Council offices, it also provided programmed arts activities, abundant community rental space, and housed resident tenants BoarsHead Theater and the Lansing Art Gallery. Today, the focus for all arts councils is to assist its constituents and to expand the economic viability of a community through arts and culture. We share that vision, and owning and maintaining the Center for the Arts doesn't play into it anymore.

After a long, arduous decision, the Arts Council board determined that it is best to utilize our main financial asset to create an endowment to move arts and culture forward in our region. After the sale of the Center for the Arts, the proceeds will be invested in an endowment



LSJ file photo

For sale: The Arts Council of Greater Lansing has decided to sell the downtown Center for the Arts to raise money to finance future arts efforts in mid-Michigan.

at the Capital Region Community Foundation. The interest from the endowment will fund existing programs and assist in the development of new arts and cultural programs.

These funds will best be used as an incubator to encourage and

develop initiatives that build on our artistic, cultural and entertainment capacity while increasing the economic base of the region.

Just as Indianapolis, Cleveland, and other cities have developed an economic rebound around arts and culture, so, too, can Lansing.