



NEWS RELEASE



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Ethos at IFCC: Arts Incubator Proposal Imminent

PORTLAND, Oregon – The Board of Directors of Ethos Music Center has voted unanimously to submit a proposal to Portland Parks and Recreation to operate the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center (IFCC) in North Portland. Ethos' board believes that it has the unparalleled programmatic, organizational and financial ability to operate this building for use as a self-sustaining, thriving arts incubator for the benefit of Portland residents in North Portland and beyond.

“While we mourn the loss of our arts-focused neighbor, Ethos has a vision for using the building as an arts incubator the likes of which Portland has never seen before,” said Peter van der Meulen, Ethos' Board of Directors President. “Charles Lewis, Ethos' Executive Director, has created a compelling plan that will empower artists and arts organizations to reach new audiences and new heights in a self-sustaining, vibrant and visionary manner. We're all very excited and supportive.”

In March 2010, the board of IFCC decided to close after years of financial struggle. Over the past several years, the City of Portland gave the IFCC nonprofit free use of the building along with maintenance, utilities, and a sizeable annual stipend to operate the building. After the IFCC Board decided to close, Portland Parks and Recreation established the following three main criteria for selecting a future tenant of the Interstate Firehouse Cultural Center:

1. Provides multicultural arts programming, showcasing diverse artists and offering multidisciplinary programming of interest to Portland's diverse communities
2. Commitment to the communities of North and Northeast Portland
3. A proven track record of financial stability and community engagement

Ethos believes that the IFCC building serves as an important cultural center that must be preserved in North Portland. IFCC has a 28 year history of promoting, fostering, and showcasing diversity in the arts. Ethos believes that some similar version of this legacy must continue, and Ethos is very interested in making sure that the IFCC building once again becomes a vibrant cultural hub in North Portland.

Ethos has a 10 year history of providing music and music-based educational opportunities for thousands of youth in underserved communities. Ethos currently operates on a \$1,000,000 a year budget with 9 full time staff members, 8 full time AmeriCorps members, 3 part time staff, approximately 50 instructors, and well over 50 volunteers. In addition, Ethos has the possibility of hiring an additional 10 full time AmeriCorps members for the upcoming year. Ethos is very solid financially and posted a \$153,246 surplus last year (even during these difficult economic times when many arts organizations are running huge deficits or going out of business).

Ethos currently owns two buildings located on the corner of Killingsworth and Williams. Ethos' building at 2 N. Killingsworth is a brick building built in 1926 and holds Ethos' main entrance, café, recital hall, HD video recording station, two classrooms, an instructor resource room, and storage. Ethos' second building at 10 N. Killingsworth was built in 1909 and holds 10 classrooms, two instrument storage rooms, a print shop, and offices for Ethos' executive staff. Both of Ethos' buildings have recently been renovated and feature an 8.39 KW solar panel system (completed last week) and an eco-roof (to be completed next week).

“It is extremely important that the future tenant in the IFCC building have experience owning and operating their own building,” said Betsy Brumm, one of Ethos' first board members. “Ethos completely renovated two boarded up and abandoned buildings, turning them into a thriving community center that reaches over 700 students a week. Experience tackling unforeseen building expenses and finding creative solutions is absolutely critical to the successfully operation of any self-sustaining organization.”

Over the past ten years, Ethos has received numerous awards and recognition including being selected twice as one of the top 50 afterschool arts programs in the entire United States by the President's Commission on the Arts and the Humanities. In addition, Ethos was featured on NPR's Etown, was awarded a Bronze medal by the International Festival and Events Association, and was selected as a Public Service Innovator by Harvard University, among many other distinctions.

While Ethos was originally founded as strictly a music-based organization, it has expanded into offering classes similar to those previously offered at IFCC including African dance, break-dancing, musical theater, and visual arts. In fact, Ethos and IFCC have shared a number of board members, staff members, patrons, and an auditor / accountant over the years. Located within one mile of each other, the IFCC and Ethos share a similar geographic focus and are both dedicated to bringing the arts to underserved and underrepresented populations. Based on these factors and many more, Ethos believes that there is an unmatched opportunity for Ethos to effectively and efficiently operate the IFCC building for the benefit of the North Portland community and beyond.

If Ethos is selected to operate the IFCC building, Ethos will continue offering similar programs to those offered by the IFCC including dance, theater, visual arts, etc. on a much larger scale. In addition to maintaining a similar programmatic focus, Ethos plans on continuing to rent out space to smaller community-based theater groups and organizations looking for exposure. Managing the IFCC building would also give Ethos the opportunity to expand its Sound Schools Assemblies program which has featured multicultural performance groups including: Sebe Kan, Norman Sylvester, David Ornette Cherry, the Pete Krebs Trio, Earl & the Reggae Allstars, and many others. Specifically, Ethos would be able to hold interactive assemblies on-site at the IFCC building during the day for school field trips. On-site school assemblies would maximize paid performance time for artists while making the most of established set designs and theatrical treatments.

Central to Ethos' proposal is the idea of creating a vibrant "arts incubator" filled with ample resources for the aspiring artist and nonprofit organization. If selected to operate this building, Ethos will establish a membership-based program for artists and nonprofits to access equipment and supplies that will further their own careers. Run similar to a "tool library", this equipment cache will include card-key access to a high speed 11x17 color photocopier, a 46 inch eco-solvent banner printer, a pottery kiln, computer access, and free high speed wireless internet (all of this equipment is currently owned by Ethos). Color copies and banners will be offered at cost (currently 10 cents per 11x17 page and about \$30 per large banner). Member artists will be able to check out complete sound systems, instruments, turn tables, lighting systems, and much more. Ethos at IFCC will also host frequent classes and workshops on how to establish a nonprofit, how to write grants, how to create business plans, and how to protect intellectual property with trademarks and copyrights. Ethos' arts incubator component will establish unprecedented opportunities for multi-disciplinary collaboration between up and coming artists and artisans.

Five years ago, the City of Portland approached Ethos and asked if Ethos would consider merging with IFCC in an effort to save their struggling nonprofit. Ethos was amenable, but IFCC's board wanted to try to revive themselves. IFCC's board dissolved a few months later, and a number of IFCC board members joined Ethos' Board of Directors. When it became apparent that IFCC was struggling again a few months ago, Ethos offered to absorb all of IFCC's staff and board members so that the organization could continue providing vital services.

Ethos believes that the richness of IFCC's history must be recognized and respected. If Ethos is selected to operate this building, it would seek to have the theater portion of the building named in honor of Charles Jordan's visionary leadership for creating the IFCC.

In order to act as a completely self-sufficient organization, Ethos would request that it be allowed to take financial responsibility for making reasonable building repairs and

improvements without excess restrictions by the City of Portland. Ethos would not request any support for operating this building from the City of Portland.

Ethos believes that the community will be very supportive of Ethos operating the IFCC building. As an example, when Ethos and IFCC explored merging 5 years ago, the Skanner newspaper wrote an unsolicited editorial on March 2, 2005 entitled “IFCC/Ethos Merger: A Good Fit” explaining how positive such a collaboration would be for our shared community (please see <http://ethos.org/TheSkanner-EthosandIFCC.pdf>).

If selected to operate the IFCC building, Ethos would like to begin implementing new green features at the IFCC building including solar panels, increased insulation, an eco-roof, and a new rainwater catch system. Ethos has implemented similar types of projects in its current buildings, and can build off of that experience to make the new IFCC building as eco-friendly as possible.

“IFCC’s metal roof is ideal for creating a rainwater catch system that can be used to flush toilets and water surrounding park area,” said Charles Lewis, Ethos’ Executive Director. “If Ethos operates the IFCC building, I want to make it a beacon of sustainability not only for artists and smaller nonprofits, but for our neighborhood and the environment. Celebrating the arts while respecting the environment is the Ethos way.”

Ethos is experiencing record enrollment and an overwhelming demand for its services. Ethos currently serves over 700 students a week in its North Portland buildings and an additional 1,300 students in schools and community centers throughout Oregon and Washington. Ethos staff would be able to quickly reinvigorate arts programming in the IFCC building with its arts incubator space, rental opportunities, and direct programming.

Former IFCC Board Members are excited about the prospect of Ethos operating the IFCC building. Wanda Wright, a former IFCC Board Member and current Ethos Board Member, said, “Ethos is uniquely qualified to carry the torch for the idea of IFCC into the future. Ethos is the most culturally diverse, financially sound, and programmatically vibrant arts organization in North Portland. The idea of Ethos operating the IFCC building is a natural fit.”

In summary, Ethos believes that there is a great opportunity for Ethos to dramatically expand the positive work the IFCC has completed over the past 28 years. Both organizations share a considerable amount of support and goodwill in the community, and Ethos believes that it has an incredible opportunity to reestablish the IFCC building as a thriving arts-based community center in North Portland while creating several family-wage jobs for artists.

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