



Ketchikan Area Arts & Humanities Council

Creating and Promoting Opportunities for All Community Members to Experience the Arts

August 6, 2015

Mayor Williams, City Council Members and City Manager Amylon
334 Front Street
Ketchikan, AK 99901

Dear Mayor, City Council Members and City Manager,

Enclosed please find a proposal from the Ketchikan Area Arts and Humanities Council for transfer of the old Fire Station No. 1 to the Arts Council for the purpose of an artist residency program in Ketchikan. The Board and staff of the Arts Council have been working toward an artist residency concept for some time. We believe that the Fire Station building will be a perfect location, and a partnership with the City of Ketchikan and KAAHC will yield extraordinary results.

Members of the Board of Directors and staff of the Ketchikan Area Arts and Humanities Council as well as members of our Artist Residency Task Force, representatives of the City of Saxman, and local artists will be in the audience to answer questions and share their thoughts. We look forward to the discussion and thank you for your consideration and continued support of the arts in Ketchikan.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Light
Executive Director





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Proposal for transfer of Fire Station 1, Ketchikan, AK

In partnership, the Ketchikan Area Arts and Humanities Council (KAAHC) and the City of Ketchikan have an extraordinary opportunity to increase year-round, downtown activity, to invigorate cultural development, to support and grow Ketchikan's artists, and to further brand Ketchikan as a year-round destination. An artist residency program housed in the fire station building on Main Street, which takes advantage of the high concentration of artists, the natural beauty of the area, and the depth and significance of the Native Alaskan cultures living in our community, will benefit the community of Ketchikan.

What is an artist residency?

At its core an artist residency can be thought of as a research and development lab for artists. An artist residency program encourages risk-taking by providing artists with the opportunity to explore concepts in essence, acting as an incubator for the creation of new ideas. An artist residency becomes a hub for local, national and international artists to gather and not only to interact and fully develop their creative vision, it gives the community the ability to experience the artists' journey alongside them. The Fire Station 1 Artist Residency will bring together passionate creators, thinkers, writers, and builders, giving them opportunities to meet and learn from one another in an atmosphere that encourages collaboration. The Fire Station 1 Artist Residency will provide our community with an environment to think big and affect positive change through creative action.

There are different types of residencies we believe might resonate best at the Fire Station Residency and they are described below:

- 1 Local organizations and/or artists in residence where Ketchikan-based artists occupy day work studios over an extended time frame.** This is an opportunity for individual artists or organizations that do not have access to work space to use the Fire Station to create and develop their work. The 555 Collective in Ann Arbor, MI is an example of an artist residency program open to its community artists providing spaces for studios, galleries, workshops, events, public, private, temporary, and permanent art space. Following is their Facebook link, and their website. https://www.facebook.com/pages/555-Gallery-and-Studios/172208522816426?sk=info&tab=page_info and <http://www.555arts.org/>
- 2 A program that hosts visiting international and national artists and curators for up to 3 months and those artists teach and mentor aspiring artists in their field.** The goal of this particular residency is to foster meaningful interactions between the visiting artist and local artists and the community of Ketchikan. <http://www.mendocinoartcenter.org/level2/artist.lasso>
- 3 An artist in residence for a period of weeks or months. The purpose of the residency is to provide artists with a unique opportunity to develop and research concepts to practice and hone skills, the results of which can be exhibited at the Main Street Gallery and elsewhere in Ketchikan.** We believe this is an excellent opportunity for potential collaborations between artists and Ketchikan industry, please see the link included for an artist residency located within the Kohler plumbing factory. <http://www.jmkac.org/index.php/artsindustry-residency>

The artists' presence at the Fire Station will enliven our dialogue in Ketchikan, attracting diverse visual and performing artists to participate in programs ranging from group and individual exhibitions to special events and presentations. The Fire Station Residency will create broad public access to a rich array of quality arts opportunities while promoting a healthy and diverse cultural community.





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Why an artist residency?

KAAHC has been studying the potential benefits to the community of an artist residency in Ketchikan for many years. The Board and staff have attended artist residency conferences, and are in dialogue with leaders of similar sized towns with established, place-based residency programs in historic buildings. The Arts Council was selected to participate in the New Pathways/Alaska program and is using our participation in the program as an opportunity to envision and devise a residency program in Ketchikan. As occurred with the Blueberry Arts Festival, the Wearable Art Show, the Winter Arts Faire and the Main Street Gallery, the Arts Council recognizes in the fire station building the opportunity to further strengthen one of Ketchikan's assets – the arts – to be more interactive and accessible to the community and to the world.

The Ketchikan Area Arts and Humanities Council believes in Ketchikan, and believes that our artists' vibrancy has a role in the community's economic vitality. Artists already make a meaningful contribution to Ketchikan's capacity to adapt to today's economic climate and they can attract other artists of significant stature. An artist residency program will invigorate our artist community and in so doing will draw more people to experience the arts of Ketchikan, enhancing opportunities for cultural events, social gatherings and increased activity for year-round business.

The Proposal

Upon a favorable assessment of the building, the Ketchikan Area Arts and Humanities Council proposes a partnership with the City of Ketchikan to further develop the Arts Corridor of our community through the Ketchikan Fire Station 1 Artist Residency. The fire station building has been vacant for almost 3 years, used only as a storage unit since 2012. Ketchikan's historic fire station represents a unique opportunity downtown that calls out for attention and lively activity, and the layout of the building uniquely lends itself to the exhibit/studio/residency model, a perfect fit for the suggested program. The Board of KAAHC proposes that the City convey ownership of the fire station building on Main Street to KAAHC at no cost, for the purpose of an Artist Residency. KAAHC recognizes this is an enormous undertaking and therefore requests a reversionary clause in our agreement that if in three years KAAHC deems our ability to manage the Residency unsuccessful, ownership of the building reverts back to the City. All renovations and improvements to the Fire Station would be included in the reversion should it come to that. If after the three year period KAAHC determines the program a success, ownership of the building will remain with KAAHC. The City retains first right of refusal should KAAHC determine the need to sell the building in years to come. As part of the KAAHC and City partnership to develop this cultural asset, it will be necessary for the City to fund the expense of the electric and heat for the initial 3 years. KAAHC also proposes that the City share the expense of the assessment of the building.

Fire Station 1 transformation into an artist residency program

To begin the process of transforming the old fire station building into a vibrant location for the Arts Council's artist residency program, we will clean and organize the ground floor for two local master carvers: Nathan Jackson and Donald Varnell. Opening the Fire Station to the carvers through the winter while the Edwin DeWitt Carving Shed is being renovated will serve several purposes and demonstrates the need for a large space for community artists.

- The opportunity to host Nathan Jackson and Donald Varnell for a period of time while we make the building ready for future programming is a gift. Occupancy of the Fire Station by artists of the caliber of Mr. Jackson and Mr. Varnell will raise awareness of the Residency not only locally but nationally as well. It will provide a span of time in which the Arts Council can adapt to the parameters of the building usage and promote and build the residency program's future.





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- The historic fire station building has remained unoccupied for almost three years. We believe that a residency program will bring even more vibrant activity to Main Street, similar to when KAAHC converted the Christen Science Church building into the Main Street Gallery, and at the same time preserve another part of Ketchikan's history. The fire station building is a perfect fit for the emerging residency program.
- Initial occupancy of the space by the artists on the ground floor will allow access to the upstairs area for evaluation and maximize its use for the residency program.
- While the Edwin DeWitt Carving Shed is being renovated, residence at the Fire Station will allow the master carvers to continue working on commissioned pieces without interruption, saving months of time on their work and maintaining their creative momentum.
- Without the artists in the Carving Shed at Saxman, construction crews will complete the renovation more quickly and efficiently by not having to work around the artists and their large scale works, or being concerned about noise or the potential for damaging the artwork. This will save the City of Saxman time and money in their project.

As the carvers vacate the Fire Station in the Spring of 2016, we will launch our first visiting artist program with our inaugural artist expectantly being another of Ketchikan's more noteworthy artists. Not only are there many significant local artists able to launch the program, it will be more fiscally prudent to begin locally. In addition to "featuring" an artist, we will build artists studios within the lower level for more local artists in need and visiting artists. As we gain momentum and recognition we will further develop the range of residency programs described above and will rotate through them each season.

Why now?

The timing of our request is to take advantage of "christening" the residency with the caliber of artists as Nathan Jackson and Donald Varnell. Their reputation locally and world-wide is significant and we will take full advantage of their presence in the building through promotion but also experimentation as to how best to design the residency program for the space and our community.

The artist residency program is a natural extension or growth of the Ketchikan Area Arts and Humanities Council and years of planning have led us to this concept. It is a program which the organization believes the fire station building will uniquely support. The activities we will facilitate will allow movement beyond passive viewing and become more and more interactive, for the community and for artists.

Through the Artist Residency Program at the Fire Station, KAAHC will expand Ketchikan's ability to nurture emerging artists, inspire professional artists and draw attention – national attention – to our arts community.

