

Famed architect joins Cornelius Arts Center design team

BY DAVE YOCHUM

An architectural team that includes Malcolm Holzman, a “late modernist icon” and a leader in the world of theater and art center design, has been selected to design the new Cornelius Arts Center downtown.

Holzman, whose New York City firm is Holzman Moss Bottino Architecture, is joining forces with C Design, a Charlotte-based firm that will be the architect of record. Holzman will function as the chief imagineer of the project.

Preliminary architectural fees of \$166,000—with \$100,000 being funded by the state—were unanimously approved by the Cornelius Town Board.



Holzman will work with C Design on Cornelius Arts Center

Holzman said he hopes to design a facility that provides a memorable experience and exceptional quality. Over the course of his professional career, he has completed more than 150 buildings in more than 30 states, representing some of the nation’s most notable architecture.

One of them is *ImaginOn: The Joe and Joan Martin Center* in Charlotte, a highly regarded 102,000 square foot landmark learning center. Other credits include stunning and physically welcoming projects such as the University of Wisconsin-Madison Hamel Music Center; the Murchison Performing Arts Center at the University of North Texas; the Southern Kentucky Performing Arts Center; Hylton Performing Arts Center at George Mason University; The Jefferson Hall Library and Learning Center at West Point; and the Performing Arts Center at Texas A&M-Corpus Christi.

The first design meetings, including consultations with members of the public, will occur in the next month. The Arts Center is moving along quickly, thanks to the non-profit entity chaired by business and civic leader Greg Wessling.

An open question is the cost. The town has already purchased the land, as part of a \$4 million bond package approved by voters in 2013. The remainder will be raised through private donors, with naming rights for rooms, spaces and plazas being an important fundraising tool.

Holzman hinted that it’s possible to build in more than a single phase, as long as the project is “of value and quality.”

“I am prepared to come to town to talk about the project to assist in the fundraising,” the noted architect said. Next Stage Consulting, a strategic planning and consulting firm for non-profits, has been hired to organize fundraising efforts.

“A community only gets to do something like this

once every 25 years if they’re lucky,” Holzman said.

Robert C. Crane, managing principal of C Design, said the project will attempt to incorporate elements of a century-old cotton gin on the site, as well as state-of-the art studio and performance spaces.

The project will also likely give a nod to its neighbors, ranging from the Police Station next door, to the Old Mill building behind it and new neighborhoods like Antiquity, just to the east.

Holzman said the downward slope on the rear of the property is actually a benefit.

“The topography is part of the solution,” he said, pointing out that the ancient Greeks almost always took advantage of the topography. “The Parthenon is built on a rock outcropping,” he said.

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Dream team

Marley P. Carroll, creative director at C Design, said the design could include local materials in a sustainable manner. Carroll designed the Charlotte Coliseum as well as the BB&T Ballpark in Uptown Charlotte.

C Design has an impressive resume as well. Notable projects include the Concourse A North Phase 1 at Charlotte Douglas International Airport, UNC-Charlotte Motorsports Research Building, Charlotte Mecklenburg Police Eastway Station and Piedmont Natural Gas Tennessee Operations Center.

Technology is changing quickly in performance art and theater. "The question is when is it going to happen... whether it takes the place of traditional staging or occurs alongside and slowly replaces traditional staging," Holzman said.

"C Design will retain leaders in stage technology... making technology available in multiple locations," Crane said. The Cornelius Arts and Community Center recently hired Justin Dionne as executive director.

Dionne is the former managing artistic director of Lee Street Theatre, the centerpiece of Salisbury's Rail Walk Arts District. A variety of nonprofit agencies, businesses and government worked together to build the town's art district.

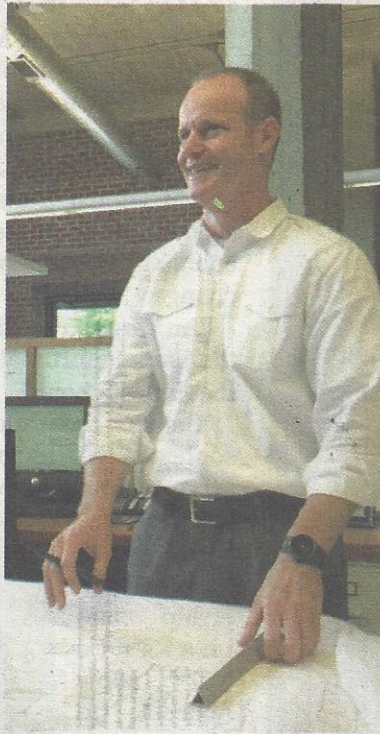
"Everyone worked together to make these projects happen," Dionne said.

Economic impact

Town officials expect the arts center to provide a powerful economic development boost to the downtown area which so far has dodged the revitalization seen in Mooresville and Concord.

Funding for an arts center right now consists of the \$4 million approved by Cornelius voters—the arts center itself will cost millions more.

The arts center will likely have a combination of arts and ceramics studios, performance spaces and a gallery. Town officials envision an arts district downtown that could include a redo of the Catawba Avenue



Crane: Chief collaborationist

streetscape to facilitate festivals. The arts center "Strategic Working Group," comprised of business and community leaders, put together a vision for the arts center: <http://www.cornelius.org/DocumentCenter/View/3754>