

Business

Town agrees to buy land for Arts Center

By [Newsroom](#) · August 1, 2016 · [Post a comment](#)



Aug. 1. *By Dave Yochum.* The Town of Cornelius has signed an agreement to buy a 1.85 acre parcel downtown for a new arts center that has been approved by voters. The price tag is \$1.495 million, according to Commissioner Jim Duke.

The property was assessed at \$1.1 million during the 2011 revaluation, according to Mecklenburg County tax records.

Located next to the Police Station, the property includes blue pre-fab buildings noteworthy for their lack of curb appeal in a suburban downtown streetscape, but also noteworthy for their ties to Cornelius' agrarian past. The site is the old Farmers Co. warehouse, which includes a cotton gin building town officials hope can be somehow restored and incorporated in the arts center project.

It is said to be the only remaining cotton gin in Mecklenburg County. Duke said there is also a scale for weighing cotton that could be part of a long hoped for permanent history museum.

The Farmers Co. business was officially incorporated in 1920 by W.R. Potts, F.G. Sherrill, S.T. Stough, P.A. Sough and Joe A. Sherrill.

The future site of the arts center is owned by Hall Johnston Heirs LLC, whose ownership group, according to NC State corporations filings, includes more than a dozen people.

The site does not include the Potts Barber Shop building on the northwest corner. According to county tax records, it is owned by Gerald Potts, the husband of former Mayor Nannie Potts, the first and only African-American mayor of Cornelius.

Voters in 2013 approved a \$20.4 million bond package that included \$4 million for town center redevelopment, which included a community arts center.

Duke expects the acquisition of the land to close in January, after due diligence is completed. He said an arts center planning committee meets the second Monday of each month at Town Hall. Next steps include forming a 501(c)3 for fundraising purposes as well as naming a board of directors.

Members of the Hall Johnston Heirs LLC

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