

Cain Center rendering provides glimpse of Lake Norman arts and culture centerpiece

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by Lee Sullivan



A community green with a performance stage and a plaza are among the planned amenities surrounding the glass-framed lobby of Cain Center for the Arts building. /Courtesy of Cain Center for the Arts

CORNELIUS – The future face of the region’s arts and culture headquarters is coming into focus, one phase at a time.

An orchestrated release May 19 on the Cain Center for the Arts YouTube channel provided [the first looks of the final design](#) for the grounds and building envisioned as a performance and special event hub for north Mecklenburg and surrounding communities.

The video, featuring comments by Cain Center Executive Director Justin Dionne and detailed drawings of the facility’s lobby and outdoor campus, was the first of three planned online “unveilings” depicting the final version of plans for a “town centerpiece” project fueled by a \$4 million Cornelius municipal bond and an ongoing fundraising campaign that has passed the \$16 million plateau toward a \$25 million goal.

The images broadcast of the lobby and exterior will be followed by similar video releases at noon on May 26, when classrooms will be the main attraction, and on June 2, when designs for the Cain Center's theater and gallery will be shared.

Moments after the YouTube video was released, Dionne said while the continuing Cain Center campaign has taken a low-profile approach during the COVID-19 crisis, design work continued and momentum was building toward the announcement.

"With everything that was happening, and so much to deal with, we purposely took a back seat for a couple of months, but we didn't stop working," he said, adding the Cain Center team has also completed more than half of the construction drawings.

"We took a step back, and understandably there was a slowdown in campaign activity," he said, "but the momentum never stopped."

And he added, echoing his message from the video, the timing for some "good news" seemed appropriate.

"I think people will be glad to hear something positive, some good news about where we are, and where we're going," he said. "This has been a strange time, but we see this as a good way to provide an update and re-energize the community about the Cain Center. for the Arts."

The facility, off Catawba Avenue in downtown Cornelius, will include a 400-seat theater, gallery space, event spaces, classrooms, a 15,000-square-foot community green space and performance area and a 7,500-square-foot outdoor plaza.

The Cain Center will host performances and educational programs and be a venue for events and gatherings. In addition to reinventing downtown Cornelius and anchoring the town's emerging arts district, the Center is also expected to be an event destination for residents throughout the Lake Norman region.

While the video release schedule is set, Dionne said plans for a demolition/groundbreaking ceremony marking the start of site-clearing for the Cain Center – originally expected this month – have been pushed back to the fall because of COVID-19 conditions.

"We want it to be a big public event," he said. "A celebration where everyone can see what's coming and be a part of it."

For updates and more information, visit cainarts.org.