

ABOUT TOWN



By Commissioner Denis Bilodeau

As I await more information on the infamous property revaluation, I thought it would be of interest to provide an update on **The** largest new development coming to our Town... The Cain Center for the Arts.

What started out in 2013 as a community-supported idea has quickly become an incredible reality: a new center for arts in the Lake Norman region. Already offering arts education programming and events, Cain Center for the Arts is well on its way to becoming a modern, flexible venue featuring a 450-seat theater, gallery space, classrooms, and an outdoor amphitheater.

For those unfamiliar with the initiative, here's a quick recap: In 2013, residents of Cornelius approved a \$4 million dollar bond to be used for downtown redevelopment projects. Through the work of a dedicated committee and extensive community research, the need for a larger arts center became clear, and the idea of a public-private partnership was born. Fast forward to 2017 when the town purchased 1.85 acres in downtown Cornelius for the center's site, a 501(c)3 is formed, and executive director Justin Dionne has been hired to implement plans for financing, architecture and construction, marketing, programming and, most importantly, fundraising for the center.

After a market study, public input sessions, and an extensive traffic study, the Town and the center's board and staff have moved forward with architectural plans. Conceptual renderings by Charlotte-based C Design and

Malcolm Holzman of Holzman Moss Bottino, a firm based in New York, were completed in 2017.

Last September at a Town of Cornelius meeting, it was announced that local community leaders and FIG (Financial Independence Group) founders, Bill and Ericka Cain, would make a \$5 million leadership contribution to the project. The momentum continued to build when a month later, in October of 2018, former NC Rep. John Bradford and Sen. Jeff Tarte announced the donation of \$125,000 from the state of North Carolina to Cain Center for the Arts. \$100,000 of the funds were allocated for architectural services, while the remaining \$25,000 was earmarked for educational programs.

The non-profit also began its debut programming in October 2018. Through a partnership with Charlotte Ballet, the center launched a 10-week series of dance classes for seniors. This spring the center is offering educational outreach at 26 local schools in Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Mooresville, and Denver. The center has created partnerships with Charlotte Ballet, Children's Theatre of Charlotte, and Charlotte Symphony for the performances and demonstrations, which kicked off on January 4 at Lakeside Charter Academy.

The center currently has almost \$12 million of the \$25 million capital campaign, leaving \$13.5 million to raise. Donors who contribute or

pledge \$2,500 or more will become members of the center's Founders' Society, and be permanently recognized within the new arts center for their foundational contribution.

In late January, the center will also launch a rebranding that honors its new name and lead gift from the Cain family. Staff has worked with the marketing team at Ginger Griffin Marketing and Design to create a new logo and plans to have a special community event that will debut the new "look," in addition to offering arts and entertainment, and a chance to hear a quick update about the center. Stay tuned.

For more information about Cain Center for the Arts, visit www.cainarts.org.

For more information about your Town, please consider attending a "Connecting Cornelius" meeting with your Mayor and Commissioners on the first Monday of each month at 8:30 am at Harveys Restaurant or stop in at Town Board Meetings on the first and third Monday each month at Town Hall (You can also connect into the Town Board meetings via the Town website).

As always, you can reach me at dbilodeau@cornelius.org.

Cheers!