We Preserve, Promote, and Progress the Value of Black Art

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Design Images

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PRESS RELEASE

HISTORIC SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY ARTS CENTER ANNOUNCES PLANS FOR $15M REHABILITATION AND EXPANSION OF COUNTRY'S OLDEST CONTINUOUSLY OPERATING BLACK ART HUB

Community Design Unveiling – Saturday, February 22, 2025



CHICAGO – The **South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC),** the country's oldest, independently run, and continuously operating Black arts institution, today announced its planned rehabilitation and expansion. An official **Community Design Unveiling** will be held on

February 22 at 1:00 pm at **Apostolic Faith Church**, 3823 S Indiana Ave. SSCAC invites those interested in learning more about the project to attend. SSCAC's mission is developing and showcasing Black artists at every stage of their careers.

The addition and rehabilitation project is estimated to cost up to $15M. Designed by **Future Firm** (architect), **wrkSHäp | kiloWatt** (historic preservation architect), and to be built by a joint venture of general contractors **Brown & Momen, Inc. and Berglund Construction,** with the advice of **URBAN ReSOLVE** (development advisor), the project will add over 10,000 square feet of space to the Center, which will expand visitor capacity by 398%, and provide accessibility to people with disabilities. The development team is diverse and local.

The project will expand the Center's capacity for exhibitions, art practice, research, and community engagement. Upon completion SSCAC will be able to facilitate many more exhibitions and interactions with Black artists while increasing access for community members, researchers, arts administrators, historians, and educators.

The Center is working closely with the development team, including consultants and contractors, to ensure that the project aligns with SSCAC's values and it advances equity and community-based development opportunities. Project-enabling work continues over the next few months, with plans to begin construction of the addition and rehabilitation of the historic house later in 2025, and plans to complete the project in late 2026.

The rehabilitation and expansion are supported by the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, the Illinois Arts Council, the Driehaus Foundation, Terra Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Commonwealth Edison, the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation (Climate Initiative) as well as other generous private donors.

The rehabilitation and expansion plan utilizes design approaches that honor the building's historic character while introducing new spaces and upgraded building technology to meet the needs of the next generation of artists and visitors, and the Center's significant on-site archives.

The addition, planned for the rear of the original building, will provide a backdrop to SSCAC's historic facade, creating a clear dialogue between the past and future. State-of-the-art systems, including a geothermal well field and solar-ready roof, will support the project's LEED Silver goal, reflecting SSCAC's commitment to sustainability and efficient operations for decades to come. New museum-grade galleries will provide spaces to preserve and exhibit SSCAC's collection and loaned works. New flexible classrooms, improved archival storage areas, and updated office spaces will equip the center to support artists, educators, and staff. A rooftop gathering space will provide much-needed event space.

A new stepped terrace, evoking the original and iconic front stoop of the Center, will further connect SSCAC to its neighborhood, welcoming Bronzeville residents and visitors alike. The project will both expand and modernize the Center, while honoring its rich legacy. The building's facade will celebrate the pattern of nail holes found in the historic **Margaret T. Burroughs Gallery,** through the implementation of a custom perforated exterior panel system. Evocative of the nail holes created by previous generations of artists' exhibiting in the gallery,

the exterior panel system creates a symbolic link to the past, while allowing dappled natural light to enter the Center, creating an ethereal space and place to celebrate the work of Black artists for generations to come.

SSCAC was named a Chicago Landmark in 1994, a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in 2017, and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2018. The Center's transformation builds on its 85-year legacy as a hub for Black visual art and culture, creating a space that honors its storied history while embracing a sustainable and inclusive future.

Founded in 1940 by preeminent Black artists of the day, the South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC) is where both established and emerging creators find their voice. At that time**, Dr. Margaret Taylor-Burroughs** was one of the center's youngest members, and she would go on to leave an indelible legacy upon Chicago's art ecosystem. As it has for over eight decades, the center accomplishes its mission through dynamic educational programs, exhibitions, talks, and always a focus on community. It has stood as a beacon for the arts, serving as a vital resource locally, nationally, and internationally.

“Sitting on the shoulders of those who came before us, we are thrilled to be able to preserve the legacy of the South Side Community Art Center, while creating space to celebrate and inspire the next generation of Black artists,” said **Monique Brinkman-Hill**, Executive Director of the SSCAC. “As we celebrate over 85 years in operation, we look forward to continuing our work with the development team and members of our community to ensure our historic home and expanded campus will continue to serve this community for the next 85 years.”

With experience working on Chicago’s South and West sides, Future Firm has a strong commitment to the power of architecture to contribute to a more equitable and thriving community combined with a focus on arts and culture projects. Their recent projects include the Bronzeville Winery, Justice of the Pies, The Silver Room, Revolution Workshop, and the new Korean Art Gallery at the Art Institute of Chicago.

"We are excited and honored to collaborate with South Side Community Arts Center, to use architecture and design to support the organization's mission of creating space for Black artists and their work,” said **Ann Lui,** principal of Future Firm. “We describe ourselves as architects for changemakers and are so excited to help provide flexible, functional, and memorable spaces for SSCAC that will serve the organization and its community at large. It's an exciting opportunity to look for ways a building can help to do that work: from the scale of a single wood panel to a spatial vision for growth and change in the coming decades."

As the oldest Black art center in the United States still operating with its original mission in its original location, the SSCAC and Future Firm are working closely with **wrkSHäp | kiloWatt** to preserve its legacy while creating space to support the artists of the future.

“As a little girl growing up in Chicago’s South Side and South Suburbs, I learned about Dr. Margaret Burroughs’ incredible legacy as an SSCAC founder from my parents and maternal grandmother who lived near SSCAC,” said k. kennedy Whiters, RA, principal of wrkSHäp |

kiloWatt. “Decades later, as a preservation architect, I am excited to support the SSCAC community in ensuring that the future of its Bronzeville home is a sustainable one that honors its historic fabric and meets the needs of the present and the future.”

“I am thrilled that the City of Chicago has joined the State and many foundations and individuals to make this project a reality,” said Third Ward Alderperson **Pat Dowell**. “I am also excited that the entire project team is committed to ensuring that this project benefits our community - both during construction and long into the South Side Community Art Center’s future.”

"As a longtime advocate for minority contractors in Chicago, I’m proud this project creates meaningful opportunities for diversity while supporting the cultural growth of the South Side Community Arts Center," said **Ernest Brown,** President & Founder of Brown & Momen, Inc. "For me, this project represents more than just construction—it’s an opportunity to enrich the cultural fabric of the Bronzeville community,” said **Hansel Whiteurst**, Senior Vice President of the building division of Berglund Construction. “It’s a privilege to be part of a project that will provide a space for artistic expression and create lasting opportunities for local engagement and growth."

“We are thrilled that after 85 years, we can build on the vision of Margaret Burroughs and so many other artists in our community to create a space that will inspire the next generation of artists, celebrate Black art, and create real impact not only in Bronzeville but across Chicago and beyond,” said **Twyler Jenkins**, Co-President of the South Side Community Art Center Board.

ABOUT THE SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY ART CENTER

ABOUT FUTURE FIRM

ABOUT wrkSHäp | kiloWatt

ABOUT BROWN & MOMEN, INC and **BERGLUND CONSTRUCTION**

PRESS KIT WITH PROJECT RENDERINGS

PROJECT CREDITS
Builder: Brown & Momen, Inc. + Berglund Construction
Development Advisor: URBAN ReSOLVE
Architect: Future Firm
Historic Preservation Architect: wrkSHäp | kiloWatt
Mechanical, Electrical & Plumbing Engineer, Fire Protection & Sustainability Consultant: dbHMS
Structural Engineer: Rockey Structures
Civil Engineer: Engage Civil

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