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Roswell Arts Fund study calls for performing arts center

Julia Grochowski May 16, 2018

ROSWELL, Ga. — Roswell is the perfect home for a new performing arts center, according to a new feasibility study by the Roswell Arts Fund.

But a lack of funding may put a kink in those plans.

“A performing arts space has the potential to drive economic development, increase tourism, reflect our local pride and activate our tag line: ‘Modern Spirit. Southern Soul,’” said Roswell Arts Fund spokeswoman Whitney Parks. “This space could strengthen our brand that Roswell is a place to live, work and play.”



America
is made up
of small
communities.

The Roswell City Council was slated to consider a proposal to advance the study this week at its regular meeting. Information about a site location and business model would be elements included in the new study.

Roswell is not the only North Fulton city considering a performing arts center.

The Johns Creek City Council denied further action on a proposed center May 7 when it determined the current proposal failed to provide a working business model that would pay for itself.

Last year, the Alpharetta City Council floated the idea of a performing arts center and has repeatedly called for businesses to step forward with ideas for funding. The city itself has balked at funding such a project without private partners.

Meanwhile, in neighboring Gwinnett County, the Lawrenceville City Council unveiled concept design plans this month for a \$26 million expansion of the existing Aurora Theatre. It is expected to be one of the largest live performing arts stages in the state.

The City of Roswell has seen four studies between 2012 and 2016 recommending the city explore the potential of a performing arts space.

One study commissioned by the Arts Fund, found a niche market in Roswell for a multi-use performance theatre.

“Roswell’s unique location and character offer several possibilities,” Parks said. “A vision of a warm, inviting space that would architecturally blend into our historic center emerged – a space that would complement Canton Street’s vibe and energy.”

The Roswell Arts Fund has recently, on behalf of the city, completed Phase Two of the study. The second phase focuses on identifying users, patrons and how such a center could be made to thrive in the region.

The findings indicate a strong potential audience and a clear gap in available high-quality performance spaces in the area, Parks said.

The study also found that people reported a strong interest in traditional performances, such as ballet, opera, symphony and theatre. Respondents were also interested in music, especially jazz, cultural-rich music, blues and gospel.

The study concluded with three recommendations;

- Develop a facility for music, music education, meetings and events. This would be a state-of-the-art, regionally-distinct facility for live music and would accommodate a capacity of 400-600 in the main performance area and an additional informal space for groups of 100 or less. Programming might include regular performances by an in-house band or ensemble; locally, regionally, and nationally touring acts; and outside rentals.
- Build an all-year-round amphitheater space along the river
- Renovate the Cultural Arts Center

The Roswell Arts Fund has already requested funding from the city to begin business and site plans based on the recommendations. The city's initial proposed budget for fiscal year 2019 has denied the funding request, but that may change as council members iron out adds and deletions to the budget before its adoption later this spring.

For information on the study and its results, visit roswellartsfund.org.

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