

MINNESOTA
MUSEUM of
AMERICAN ART

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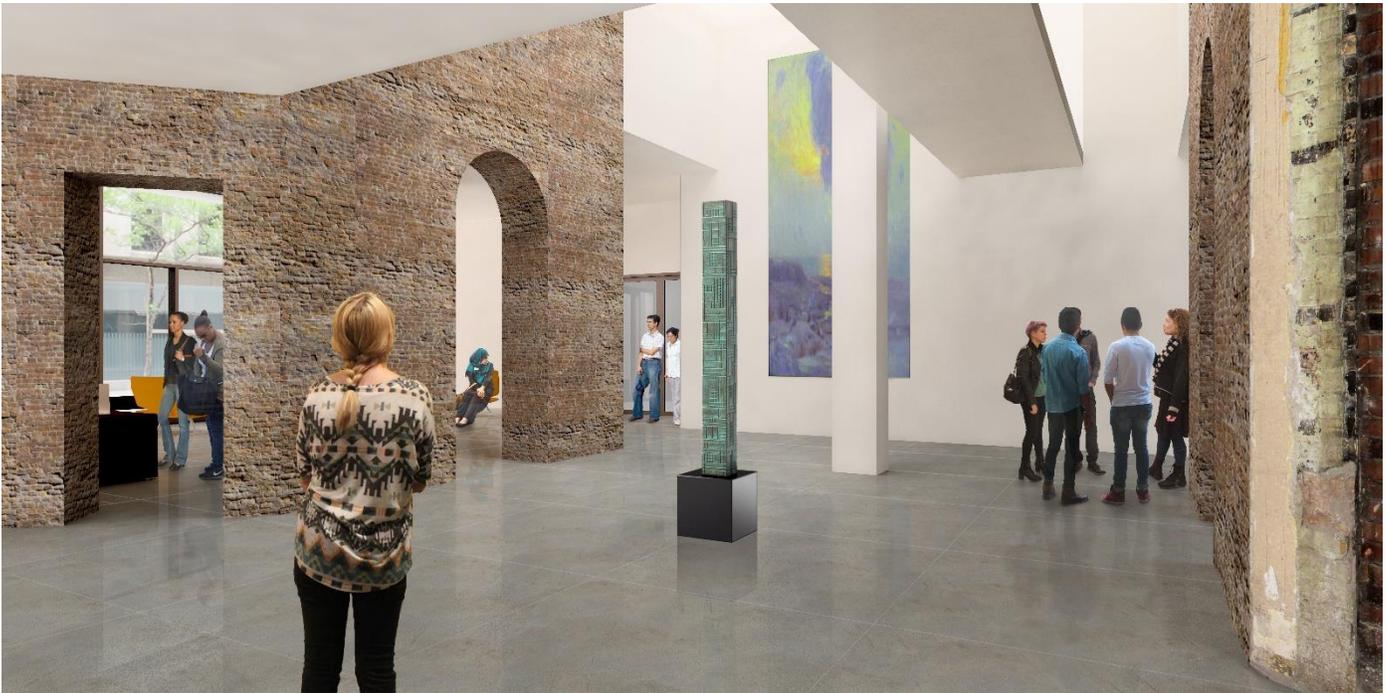
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High-res architectural renderings, courtesy
VJAA, are available for download [here](#).

Minnesota Museum of American Art announces construction plans for an expanded new home in St. Paul's Historic Pioneer Endicott building

One of the oldest visual arts organizations in Minnesota will open its new museum in spring 2018, following an initial phase of construction resulting in 20,000 square feet of space for creating, viewing, and learning about American art and artists.



St. Paul, MN, May 31, 2017—Today the Minnesota Museum of American Art (the M) announces plans to begin construction on the much-anticipated and expanded permanent home for the museum within the Historic Pioneer Endicott, helping bridge the gap between Rice Park and Lowertown in downtown St. Paul. The \$12.5 million development project will begin this summer and involve major renovations of the buildings, originally designed by Cass Gilbert and Solon Beman, resulting in over 20,000 square feet of public space.

The new M will open in spring 2018 and include a state-of-the-art gallery, community gathering spaces, and a sculpture court over which visitors will find a “sky bridge” extending skyway access into the museum. The inaugural exhibition in the new M will draw from the museum’s permanent collection and feature a number of visitor favorites which haven’t been seen for years.

“This is our opportunity to imagine and build a museum from the ground up that has the values of a 21st-century museum at its core—accessibility for all, intergenerational learning and community exchange, support of living artists, and responsible stewardship of a great collection for generations to come,” says Executive Director Kristin Makhholm. “This is the time both to honor the legacy of this historic St. Paul treasure and to break ground with new communities and new audiences throughout the metro, the region, and the state.”

The centerpiece of the new museum’s first phase of construction will be the Sifo Center for Creativity, named in honor of the Sifo Company, a historic toy company that thrived in St. Paul from 1944 to 1975. The Sifo Center for Creativity will feature 5,000 square feet of new classroom and maker spaces. “Arts education is in the DNA of the M,” says Makhholm. “The museum began life as the St. Paul School of Fine Arts in 1894, and we’re proud to revive our tradition of intergenerational learning.” The Sifo Center for Creativity will include spaces for adult and youth-oriented studio art classes, events and educational programs, and a special entrance for school groups.

Rich Pakonen, President of PAK Properties and one of the owners of the Pioneer Endicott building, is enthusiastic about the addition of the new M to the mix of commercial and residential spaces already inhabiting the two-building complex. “How cool is it to have an art museum in the same building with beautiful apartments and appealing businesses, all of it so easily accessible by skyway?” Pakonen says.

Since 2013, the M has maintained a thriving gallery in St. Paul’s Historic Pioneer Endicott. Museum leadership and trustees are now achieving their goal of finding a permanent home for their fantastic collection: some 4,500 works by American masters such as Thomas Hart Benton, Joan Mitchell, Romare Bearden, Ed Ruscha, Louise Nevelson, Wendy Red Star, Paul Manship, and George Morrison, as well as important works of craft and pieces by contemporary Minnesota artists like Wing Young Huie, Julie Buffalohead, Xavier Tavera, Pao Houa Her, Warren MacKenzie, Jim Denomie, and many others.

Situated directly on the light rail line, connected by skyway, and just steps from St. Paul’s rich variety of performing arts spaces, galleries, and artist studios, the M will be embedded in the urban landscape and ready to respond to the communities surrounding it. In the year ahead, during construction of the museum and beyond, the M will continue to engage in partnerships and collaborations with other local organizations—such as St. Paul Public Schools, St. Paul Public Library, Ordway Center for Performing Arts, Hmong Museum, and the Arab-American arts organization Mizna—to expand its reach into new cultural spheres and locations throughout the city. Such partnerships will be even more important, as the M’s current gallery will be closed over the winter months for construction.

The M’s community and economic impact will be significant.

- Learning and engagement: The new museum will be a gathering spot for dialogue between and amongst groups and communities to address the critical need to build relationships across racial, socioeconomic, and other cultural barriers. The M will be the go-to art museum for thousands of St. Paul public school children (78% of color and 72% qualifying for free or reduced lunch), and a place for meaningful engagement between creative adults and school-aged youth.
- Neighborhood improvement: The M will create physical value in the renovation of a nationally significant historic property, adding to the tax base and helping to fill the gap between the vibrant Rice Park and Lowertown areas of downtown St. Paul.
- Job creation: The first phase of development of the new M will create over 50 construction-period jobs and will create or retain 15-20 permanent living wage jobs.

At the helm of development of the project is Sterns & Associates, project development consultant; the AIA Award-winning architectural firm VJAA, which is responsible for its design; and Greiner Construction, which will lead the building process beginning in the summer of 2017. Funding for construction of the museum's first phase of development in the Pioneer Endicott comes from an outpouring of community generosity: a mix of philanthropic donations, New Markets Tax Credit allocation and funding from Sunrise Banks, New Markets and Historic Tax Credit investment by USBancorp, Cultural STAR Program funds, tax increment financing (TIF) assistance from the City of St. Paul, and financing from Dougherty & Company.

In the early morning hours of Friday, May 26, the Minnesota legislature voted to approve a bonding bill, which allotted funding in the amount of \$6 million to the M. This funding from the State of Minnesota will allow the museum to move ahead on the second phase of its expansion as well. In addition to the renovations noted above, the M's second phase of development will include additional galleries and an art study center, both of which will allow for greater public access to the museum's permanent collection.

About the Minnesota Museum of American Art

The Minnesota Museum of American Art (the M) is one of the oldest visual arts organizations in Minnesota, with roots stretching back to the 19th century. Based in St. Paul, the M currently holds more than 4,500 artworks that showcase the unique voices of American artists, guided by the belief that art should reflect the constantly shifting landscape that defines the American experience. With a flagship gallery in the Historic Pioneer Endicott building on the edge of St. Paul's Lowertown neighborhood, as well as traveling shows which introduce art and artists to audiences around the state, region, and country at large, the M is home to an array of responsive exhibitions and programming that connect diverse audiences with artwork, subjects, and issues that are both relevant and widely engaging. For more information, visit www.mmaa.org.

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Image (top): Rendering of the new sculpture court at the M, courtesy of VJAA

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