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BMoCA proposing a move to NoBo Arts District with a 'creative campus,' aiming to bolster city's art destination status

Organizers are hoping to raise \$13.5 million to complete new project in the coming years



From left, David Dadone, BMoCA's executive director, Gwen Burak, BMoCA's deputy director, Leah Brenner Clack, founder of Street Wise Arts, Lisa Nesmith, president of NoBo Art District, Maya Ford, of The Ford Momentum, Jamie Giellis, president of Centro consulting firm and Andrew Ghadimi, of Emerald Development, gather for a photo. All are partners in a new venture to create a creative campus in NoBo Art District that will be anchored by BMoCA's new 17,500-square-foot flagship museum. Fundraising will begin in 2023. (BMoCA/Courtesy photo)



For 50 years, [BMoCA](#) has provided the community with a rotating selection of exhibits from world-renowned creatives, on-site events, performances and art sales.



“From This Day Forward” exhibition curator Tya Anthony examines an interactive piece by Autumn T. Thomas, “Lift Every Voice,” during the opening of the exhibition at Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art on Feb. 11, 2021, in Boulder. (Timothy Hurst/Camera file photo)

A cultural cornerstone, it continues to showcase the work of emerging local talent and established artists — and now it hopes to bolster its legacy with a proposed move and expansion to the NoBo Art District in North Boulder.



Cliff Grassmick / Staff Photographer

A woman walks past BMoCA in 2017. (Cliff Grassmick / Staff Photographer)

The potential site for the planned 17,500-square-foot museum is located on over three acres of land near Violet Avenue, Broadway and 10th Street. An entire creative campus – complete with retail space and housing – will be brought to life by Boulder-based Emerald Development.

“The NoBo area is rich with possibilities, and BMoCA shares that vision,” said President of NoBo Art District Lisa Nesmith. “We look forward to opportunities to build connections with our new neighbors enriching the area as a creative district.”

BMoCA serves over 134,000 visitors annually. The new venue would allow this number to grow and for more programming to flourish.

“The proposed BMoCA expansion will create an exciting visual landmark and hub of activity at the southern entrance to the art district and advance our evolving identity as an art destination,” Nesmith said.

NoBo Art District is already home to over 200 artists. First Friday Art Walks allow folks to explore the many galleries and warehouse spaces that dot the thriving area.

“BMoCA’s expansion to the NoBo Art District is super exciting because it opens the door for more artists and community members to be more involved and have creative opportunities,” said Leah Brenner Clack, founder of Street Wise Boulder, an annual mural festival. “As a member of NoBo’s Board for the past two-and-a-half years, I’ve really had the opportunity to learn so much about the North Boulder arts community and see the growth that’s happening up here.”



An art space inside “Building B” of the Bus Stop Apartments on July 1, 2020 in Boulder. The “Building B” is part of the NoBo Art District. (Jeremy Papasso/Camera file photo)

In 2023, BMoCA will launch a public capital campaign in order to raise funds for the new facility. Construction is predicted to begin in 2025, with the new museum possibly opening by 2026 or 2027. Organizers said they’ll need to raise \$13.5 million to complete the project.

“Street Wise and NoBo have worked hand-in-hand over the last several years, leveraging our strengths to reach our goals,” Clack said. “Of course I would love to see ample public art and murals integrated into the vision of the campus. Murals are such a strong way for people to feel connected and relate to each other.”

Extensive outreach, led by community engagement experts Jamie Giellis, of Centro, Inc., and Maya Ford, of FordMomentum!, is underway to ensure the new campus reflects the values and desires of locals.

“From what I understand, this creative campus aims to be very community-centric and inclusive,” Clack said. “I am a big supporter and believer in community engagement, and I appreciate the intention that they are putting in making sure they understand the local community first. There is opportunity to help envision what the new facilities can be, and they want everyone to be involved. This is so important, and I hope that the community shows up and really speaks from their heart about how we can build something special together.”



Founders of Bohemia, Cindy Parker and Abby Sivy, seated, enjoy music by Fists of The Proletariat at a previous NoBo First Friday, prior to the pandemic. (Bohemia/ Courtesy photo)

Outreach will include an online survey, a community-design event and a series of in-depth conversations with business owners, artists, elected officials, affordable housing advocates and many more.

“Within Boulder’s creative community, the flagship museum and campus will serve as an inclusive place, thoughtfully designed to foster creativity and opportunities by providing spaces for artists, housing, retail and open space,” said Mike Piche, secretary of BMoCA’s Board and member of the project’s expansion task force.

In addition to NoBo Art District, partners who support the new building include Create Boulder, the City of Boulder Office of Arts and Culture and the Boulder Chamber.



NoBo Art District President Lisa Nesmith levels a piece of art on the wall inside Building B next to The Bus Stop Apartments in July 2020 in Boulder. (Jeremy Papasso/Camera File Photo)

“The most exciting part of being in NoBo is that BMoCA has a unique opportunity to anchor a mixed use ‘creative campus’ in an emerging arts district,” Piche said. “Not only will the museum be well-equipped to support new, original and imaginative artistic experiences internally, but will also help serve as a catalyst for community-based arts programming, discussion and design.”

BMoCA will continue to operate out of its space at 1750 13th St. while the project evolves, but in the coming years folks can look forward to a larger center rooted in collaboration that will have an even greater impact and reach.

“When art organizations come together, special things happen, which is why BMoCA’s move to NoBo is so exciting for all of us,” Clack said.

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Reporter**

Kalene McCort covers arts and entertainment throughout the