



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Lost Province Center for Cultural Arts purchases historic school buildings to create Southern Appalachian cultural center

LANSING, N.C. July 14, 2020 – Lost Province Center for Cultural Arts (LPCCA), a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving and celebrating Southern Appalachian cultural traditions, has purchased two historic school buildings in the rural town of Lansing, N.C. The purchase is the result of a two-year endeavor to raise funds and negotiate with previous owners to secure and repurpose the WPA-era Lansing School buildings for community benefit.

David Norman, Chair of the LPCCA Board of Directors, said the purchase is instrumental to the mission of Lost Province Arts.

“The Lansing School was the center of education in Ashe County from 1939 until the early 1990s. It’s fitting that LPCCA will focus on the preservation of these magnificent school buildings in order to fulfill our mission of educating about the arts and crafts, music and culinary arts of Southern Appalachia.”

The Vision

Lost Province Center for Cultural Arts plans to restore the Lansing School buildings to create a mixed-use campus as a cultural showcase and a venue for the promotion and preservation of the rich history and traditions of Southern Appalachian arts and crafts, music and culinary arts. Once completed, the larger schoolhouse building will feature boutique apartments on the second floor in addition to gallery space and a signature farm-to-table restaurant on the first floor. The smaller classroom building will provide classrooms and shop space for teaching skills native to the region, including woodworking, pottery, glass blowing, blacksmithing, fermentation science, canning, music, storytelling and more.

While Lost Province Center for Cultural Arts shares similarities with other schools in the region, including Penland School of Craft, Florence Thomas Art School, John C. Campbell Folk School, LPCCA will offer a unique experience not available elsewhere in the High Country.

“The multi-disciplinary campus will provide unmatched experiential, hands-on learning alongside master artisans,” shared Norman. “The farm-to-table restaurant creates the opportunity for training in the culinary arts and art of running a business. Studio space and heavy equipment, such as an ironwork forge and pottery kilns, will be accessible for community use. And the onsite housing provides opportunities to develop longer-term artist residencies.”

How It All Began

The Lost Province Arts project started as the dream of two community leaders, Beth Rembert and Carole Ford, who believed that the traditions and arts of Southern Appalachia were at risk of being lost

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forever due to generational lifestyle changes. They saw an opportunity to repurpose the historic Lansing schoolhouse to create for a center to preserve “all-things Appalachian.” Their dream led to discussions, which in turn led to connecting with others who shared a similar passion, including Ann Rose, a local farmer and butcher. Within just a few months, Rose became LPCCA’s first executive director, and a founding board of directors was formed to begin moving their dream into reality.

Historical Significance and Preservation

Prior to the 20th century, the counties of the northwest corner of North Carolina (Ashe, Alleghany and Watauga) were separated from major economic centers of the state by their mountainous terrain. Known as the Lost Provinces, this area was relatively inaccessible. By the early 20th century, roads had been carved through the mountains and the N&W Railroad opened the area for transport. By mid-century, Lansing, N.C. had become a thriving part of Ashe County.

Lansing was graced by a school campus, featuring a stately schoolhouse. The Lansing School was Constructed in 1938 under the Public Works program of the Great Depression and is recognized by the National Register of Historic Places. The purchased buildings – a schoolhouse building made with traditional construction clad with local native stone, and a two-story brick classroom building – sit on the 4.475 acre original school site along with a favorite Lansing destination, Molley Chomper cidery. The school served initially as the Lansing grade school, but with consolidation of county schools became the largest school in Ashe County in the early 1970s.

The school property was abandoned for educational purposes in the 1990s. The facilities have had limited use over the last 27 years and are in need of substantial renovation. Building renovations are expected to take up to five years to complete, though programs and workshops are likely to begin within the next two years within a portion of the buildings and online. LPCCA will utilize a combination of historic tax credits, grants, individual and corporate donations to restore the school to its former glory and deliver programs.

Community Impact

The arts and crafts, music, and culinary traditions of Southern Appalachia provide rich texture to the American story, and are very much alive and evolving still today. LPCCA believes that arts and culture hold the power to provide vibrancy, build community and create a path to greater economic sustainability.

Norman said he is confident that Lost Province Arts will become a significant touchstone not only for Lansing, but for the entire region.



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“The reality we are working towards involves restoring the grandeur of the Lansing School campus, recognizing its place in the history of Ashe County, and creating a vibrant arts center that becomes an economic additive for the ‘Lost Provinces.’”

Lost Province Center for Cultural Arts will be a boon economically to the greater Ashe County region, with both short-and longer-term sustainable benefits, helping to bridge urban-rural divide. In the short-term, LPCCA will infuse the local economy with an estimated \$6-\$10 million in direct construction costs and allied services such as architecture, design, historic consultation, and land use. Additional direct economic impact is found through the employment of staff, educators, artists and local vendors. In a broader sense, the Center is impetus for growth in Ashe County through the attraction of tourists and travelers, educators, musicians and chefs.

Geneva Coffey, an attendee of the Lansing School from 1955-1965 and LPCCA board member, said she is looking forward to seeing the Lansing School become a hustling, bustling place once again.

“The Lansing School is part of the community’s legacy. For many years, the school was the center of community life. Lost Province Center for Cultural Arts will provide an opportunity for the community to come back together in a central place, relive memories and preserve a part of our history that otherwise might be lost. I can’t wait to experience it all.”

About Lost Province Center for Cultural Arts

Lost Province Center for Cultural Arts is dedicated to bridging the urban-rural divide, revitalizing the greater Lansing N.C. community and promoting the cultural arts and skills of the Southern Appalachian region. The preservation of a historic property will provide a spacious venue for classes, special events, sustainable multi-use housing, a signature farm-to-table restaurant and a showcase gallery. To learn more or provide support for this project, visit the Lost Province Arts website at lostprovincearts.org.