



Greater East Side Community Council

3/18/21

To: Capital Investment Committee, Minnesota House of Representatives

The Greater East Side/District 2 Community Council (GESCC) serves residents in the northeast neighborhoods of St. Paul. We are writing a letter to support Funny Asian Women Kollektive's efforts to build an Asian American Center for Media and the Arts (AACMA).

On the eastside which represents a 1/3 of the city not only geographically but also by population, we don't have a local arts or culture organization with a consistent presence. In fact, there is essentially only one small arts organization that serves the eastside, and their work is fairly limited and confined to a small portion of the area. We acknowledge that the arts are a key factor in building community through creative engagement that spans race, age and culture and wish we had more partners in this effort. We also acknowledge the eastside to be the home of many Asian American/Pacific Islander residents that do not have the resources provided to them as in other parts of the city.

FAWK's vision to build an Asian American art center will have a positive impact for the eastside of St. Paul; an area of wide disinvestment within our city. In fact, we've had conversations with a local Hmong community who have been looking for space for youth dance practice and youth tutoring. They are unable to use the recreation centers because they don't have the funds to pay for space. A center that offers space, led by women who represent so many of our community members, is much needed. Eastside residents will benefit from performance, gallery, and studio spaces for artists, and serve as a means for building community. The space will be a destination location that can bring much needed money to local businesses that benefit from an increased number of visitors, in addition to the jobs and opportunities that the center will provide.

This art center will also impact St. Paul and the greater state of Minnesota because there isn't currently a centralized hub for Asian American artmaking. This space can be both an incubator of new work and a place where others learn from each other. Lastly, it is more important now than ever to have support community projects that are led by women leaders and leaders of color who are already doing work on the ground.

We are happy to participate in a community discussion to talk more about the project and its possibilities.

Sincerely,

Lisa Theis,
Interim Executive Director