



MISSISSIPPI MUSEUM *of* ART
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Mississippi Museum of Art Receives NEA Grant

*Cultural District Project is among 51 Grants Nationwide Selected to
Receive Support of Our Town Project*

(Jackson, Miss.) – Today, the Mississippi Museum of Art (the Museum) announced that it will receive an Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), one of only 51 grants awarded nationwide. The Museum will receive a \$150,000 grant to support its Cultural District Project, the focus of which is the new Art Garden at the Mississippi Museum of Art. Construction of this 1.2 acre green space is currently underway, with plans to open on October 1, 2011.

Our Town is the NEA's latest investment in creative placemaking through which partners from both public and private sectors come together to strategically shape the social, physical, and economic character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities.

The Cultural District Project is an initiative, led by the Mississippi Museum of Art, in partnership with the city of Jackson, Downtown Jackson Partners, and several arts organizations, which seeks to animate Jackson's newest public green space – The Art Garden at the Mississippi Museum of Art – through rich encounters in the arts for Jackson's diverse population and through the formal demarcation of its cultural district. Funds from the NEA will be used to support dynamic educational programming, performances, film screenings, and a signature event, the Town Creek Arts Festival (scheduled for October 1, 2011). In addition, funds will be used to formally define the de facto downtown cultural district through entryways and signage, helping to underscore downtown Jackson as a cultural destination.

National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Rocco Landesman said, "Communities across our country are using smart design and leveraging the arts to enhance quality of life and promote their distinctive identities. In this time of great economic upheaval, Our Town provides communities an opportunity to reignite their economies."

Museum Director Betsy Bradley said, "At the heart of the NEA's Our Town initiative is the acknowledgement that the arts can be an agent of change in the community and, through collaboration with partners in both the private and public sectors, our communities can be stronger and better places to live. We are deeply grateful to the NEA for its support of The Art Garden at the Mississippi Museum of Art, which we believe will have a tremendous impact in downtown Jackson as an economic, social, and cultural catalyst."

Mayor Harvey Johnson said, “The arts have long been part of our vision for the rejuvenation of downtown Jackson, and funding from the NEA puts us one step closer to the realization of this vision. Efforts surrounding The Art Garden at the Mississippi Museum of Art, made possible in part by this grant, will undoubtedly contribute to the increased livability of our city.”

The Art Garden at the Mississippi Museum of Art marks phase two of a building project begun in 2005. In the Summer of 2007, the Museum completed phase one upon the opening of its new home – a \$14M state-of-the-art renovation of a neighboring facility. Created for the community and made possible by the community, the new Museum is flanked by several of the city’s most active cultural organizations, making it the cornerstone of an arts district that – once unified by The Art Garden – will become the thriving epicenter of downtown Jackson.

The Mississippi Museum of Art and its programs are sponsored in part by the city of Jackson and the Jackson Convention & Visitors Bureau. Support is also provided in part by funding from the Mississippi Arts Commission, a state agency, and in part by the National Endowment for the Arts, a federal agency.

The National Endowment for the Arts was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector.

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