

# ArtsQuest plan to add artistic value to our community

The Bethlehem Gadfly Arts, the, ArtsQuest, Uncategorized December 14, 2019

Gadfly knows it's going to be a good day when he can find "turn and grind" and "artistic grit" in his morning newspaper headlines!

And Gadfly is not only likin' the words about but also the concept behind ArtsQuest's latest development project.

See if you agree.

And don't miss refreshing yourself in the second article on how "the scorched land where capitalists once sought profit is now known for its artistic value to the community."

*John J. Moser, "ArtsQuest to turn Bethlehem Steel's massive former Turn and Grind building into program and festival center." Morning Call, December 12, 2019.*

Bethlehem Steel's massive Turn and Grind Shop, long viewed by ArtsQuest as a jewel on the South Bethlehem SteelStacks campus, will be revitalized into a programming, exhibit and festival venue, the nonprofit arts organization announced Thursday. The renovated 26,000-square-foot brick structure, adjacent to the SteelStacks Visitor Center, will be called The Air Products Atrium at the Turn & Grind Center. Work on what ArtsQuest called "one of the most unique buildings in South Side Bethlehem," will start with \$1.5 million pledged by the foundation of Lehigh Valley industrial gas company Air Products, it was announced.

But the work would include a 14,000-square-foot public programming space that could feature nationally touring education programs, science- and arts-related exhibits, and theater and dance performances.

“The growing collaboration between Air Products and ArtsQuest will result in increased arts programming, performances, exhibitions and experiences for tens of thousands of residents and visitors annually,” a news release said. It noted that Air Products was among the initial partners for SteelStacks and is the title sponsor of its Air Products Town Square.

The Air Products grant also will fund a 4,000-square-foot wing of the Cultural Center, to be called The Air Products MakerSpace, that will be open to local artists, innovators, entrepreneurs and the public, and give them tools, materials, educational opportunities and technologies to “discover, build and create together,” ArtsQuest said.

Also funded from that will be the Cultural Center’s Air Products Visiting Artist Studio. It will seek to provide “an inspirational environment away from the restrictions and pressures of an artist’s regular routines, providing opportunities to work on projects, offer workshops and programs at area schools, and show their work in exhibitions.”

The new Air Products Atrium at the Turn & Grind Center would “welcome thousands of students, professionals, community members and festival attendees annually to SteelStacks,” a news release said.

ArtsQuest said the vision for the Cultural Center and Turn & Grind Center appealed to Air Products and its foundation because of the proposed buildings’ community programming, its ability to help attract and retain a creative workforce, and its enhancement of the quality of life in the region.

“Air Products is committed to the Lehigh Valley and we have a responsibility to be supportive of the local communities where we live and work,” said Air Products Chief Financial Officer Scott Crocco, an Air Products Foundation trustee.

The MakerSpace will be a self-directed learning zone for activities related to science, technology, engineering, art and mathematics, that encourages cross-generational learning. It will include sheet metal, metal machining and welding, woodworking, 3-D printing, laser engraving and digital design and a fabrication lab.

The Visiting Artist Studio will be a space designed to let artists develop their work and explore ideas, while helping to establish the Cultural Center and South Side Bethlehem as destinations to see world-class artists.

*Nicole Radzievich, "How artistic grit reinvented the Bethlehem Steel plant and the South Side." Morning Call, December 13, 2019.*

ArtsQuest's announcement Thursday of a new entertainment venue proposed for the former Turn-and-Grind Shop is just the latest project in a vision that began more than 20 years ago to recast the Bethlehem Steel's shuttered hometown plant.

The transformation began in earnest a decade ago when the Las Vegas Sands opened a casino, priming the pump for development on the rest of a nearly 130-acre swath of the old plant property between the Fahy and Minsi Trail bridges.