



SANTA FE ART INSTITUTE

November 26, 2024

Dear Councilor Cassutt,

This is a letter of support for the approval of the Aspect Studio Development & Disposition Agreement (DDA) for the Midtown Site.

As you may know, the Santa Fe Art Institute (SFAI) has been one of the few operations on the Midtown Site for the last six years, since the Santa Fe University of Art and Design closed. We have been a strong partner with the City and supporter of the Midtown Master Plan process, including participating as a Midtown Engagement Partner to conduct public engagement, host the Midtown Block Party in 2021, and provide guidance to the City in the Public Engagement Report.

SFAI is also the lead for the Midtown Arts and Design Alliance (MADA) and we have completed our due diligence as part of the Exclusive Negotiated Agreement (ENA) with the City. As Aspect Studios was the only offeror to respond to the film studios RFP, so were we the only offeror to respond to the RFP for adaptive reuse of the Visual Arts Center. Alongside an emerging film campus, MADA is an important community stabilization project that invests in Santa Fe's creative sector. Both projects demonstrate exciting first steps in the rehabilitation of this important site.

While the MADA project is different from that of Aspect Studios, the success of both projects depends upon the City of Santa Fe as a reliable partner as we fundraise and invest in Midtown. MADA has raised over 25% of the total philanthropic goal for our project and 33% of the total fundraising goal to date, which is exciting given that we have only just completed the feasibility phase. However, our fundraising analysis, based on interviews with philanthropists and investors, clearly shows that sustained financial investment in Midtown relies on the City continuing to move forward on approved procurement processes and the approved Midtown Master Plan.

Aspect Studios will help to create long-term economic benefits in Santa Fe and Northern New Mexico by strengthening the emerging film sector here. If this project does not move forward, it would likely set back efforts to redevelop Midtown for years, further adding to the blight and deterioration of this site and important buildings. For example, the Visual Arts Center on the MADA parcel, which was fully operational in 2018, now requires over \$4m in needed HVAC and plumbing equipment and repairs due to remaining vacant for six years.

Thank you for recognizing both MADA and the Aspect Studios projects as vital elements of the approved Midtown Master Plan and thank you for your service to Santa Fe. We look forward to seeing you at Committee and Governing Body meetings this month to present progress on the MADA project.

Sincerely,

Jamie Blosser
Executive Director

Ray Landy
Board Chair, Midtown Committee

SFAI forges critical inquiry and cultural exchange among artists, creative practitioners, and the broader community. We support and amplify dynamic artistic practices that engage complex social issues, inspire individual transformation, and inform collective action.

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