

News Release

Foundation Leads the Way to Enhance the Vitality of the Chagrin Valley

Creation of Arts & Entertainment District on Drawing Board with Restored Historic Township Hall and Little Theatre as Anchors

June 21, 2007 – Chagrin Falls, Ohio – Community leaders, representatives of local cultural and civic organizations, and interested citizens have come together to form the Chagrin Foundation for Arts & Culture to promote, support, and encourage the development of arts and culture as integral contributors to the quality of life and economic well-being of the Chagrin Valley.

“Chagrin Falls is at an exciting turning point in its rich history. Originally a mill town, and then a center of retail and commerce, the village continues to evolve – we now have the opportunity to guide its future growth around existing assets and its abundant attributes,” notes Stephen Thomas, chairman of the Foundation’s Board of Directors.

The nonprofit Foundation’s partner organizations (see attached descriptions) include the Chagrin Valley Little Theatre, Valley Art Center, Chagrin Falls Historical Society, Chagrin Light Orchestra, Chagrin Valley Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Chagrin Falls, Village of Chagrin Falls, Chagrin Falls Township, and the Chagrin Arts Commission. The Foundation anticipates fulfilling its mission as a catalyst and resource for the arts by assisting artists and cultural institutions in their efforts to thrive; making effective capital investments in cultural institutions; and supporting programs that will add to the region’s cultural enrichment.

The larger, long-term vision includes the creation of an Arts & Entertainment District. To that end, two inaugural capital initiatives have been identified: the restoration

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of the historic Chagrin Falls Township Hall and the renovation and improvement of the Chagrin Valley Little Theatre – these two important buildings will serve as the anchors of the Arts & Entertainment District. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the Foundation will spearhead the private fundraising efforts that are essential to the success of these projects.

Creation of an Arts & Entertainment District

Under the Foundation's leadership, the discussions regarding a potential Arts & Entertainment District have advanced. Conceptually, the district would enjoy an official designation, with a section (map attached) of downtown Chagrin Falls devoted to the visual and performing arts, clustered with restaurants, shops, and galleries. Building on the village's authenticity and historic character – the signature asset of Chagrin Falls – preliminary plans for the Arts & Entertainment District emerged from the working meetings for the Township Hall and Little Theatre restoration projects. The discussions were inspired by the community's longstanding commitment to arts and culture and included the participation of all of the partner organizations.

The broad vision for this endeavor is focused on existing arts organizations and the economic and social benefits that a discrete Arts & Entertainment District could bring to the community. The Foundation proposes the establishment of a revolving property acquisition fund to allow it to make strategic acquisitions of structures and properties within the Arts & Entertainment District.

Restoration of the Historic Township Hall

The Chagrin Falls Township Hall, once a center of civic, artistic, and intellectual life in northeast Ohio, requires restoration and renovation to allow it to serve again as a dynamic community gathering place. Under the direction of Akron restoration architects Chambers, Murphy & Burge, plans have been created to return the hall to its 1880 appearance, complete with the reconstruction of the second floor destroyed by fire in

1943. The historic structure will be adapted to meet today's needs so that it can be used for both large and small events, performances, exhibitions, and meetings. Details of the project are set forth in the *Concept Design Compilation Package* prepared by Chambers, Murphy & Burge (attached).

Improvements to the Chagrin Valley Little Theatre

One of the oldest continually operating community theaters in the country, the Chagrin Valley Little Theatre began offering performances 77 years ago in the Township Hall, until moving to the Colonial Revival-style building on River Street that was constructed specifically for it. Today, the Little Theatre offers performances 100 days each year, and the building is used for rehearsals, events, auditions, and meetings for an additional 200 days. After nearly 60 years of service, the theater building is in need of repairs and improvements, as well as the addition of amenities such as adequate restrooms and accessibility for patrons of all physical abilities.

In addition to introducing ADA-compliant features, making necessary structural repairs, and updating the electrical systems, the Little Theatre is also looking to expand the second floor, invest in state-of-the-art theatrical lighting, and improve the exterior to enhance its street presence.

Making the Vision a Reality

The Foundation is evaluating options to raise the funds necessary to undertake the two capital projects described above; to create a revolving property acquisition fund for the Arts & Entertainment District; and to establish an endowment fund to support the ongoing operations and programming of the Foundation. These efforts have been preliminarily estimated to total approximately \$8 million.

In what is anticipated to be a multi-phased fundraising campaign that will include both private and public investments, the efforts to restore and renovate the Township Hall and Chagrin Valley Little Theatre have been identified as the first phase, with the

creation of the Arts District & Entertainment District deemed an evolving, phase two endeavor (as described in the attached Case Statement prepared in February 2007 during the exploratory phase of these efforts).

“The Foundation leadership understands that innovative partnerships are central to maintaining a vibrant public life and a thriving town center in Chagrin Falls. It is our goal to achieve both results through thoughtful and appropriate growth that reflects the character and spirit of this very special place,” adds Christina Thoburn, the Foundation’s executive director.

For more information about the Foundation, visit www.chagrinfoundation.org (that will go live on June 28, 2007).

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About the Chagrin Foundation for Arts & Culture

The Chagrin Foundation for Arts & Culture was established by a group of forward-thinking community leaders, citizens, and arts advocates, committed to improving the vitality, quality of life, and economic stability of Chagrin Falls and its surrounding communities, known generally as the Chagrin Valley. A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, it has forged important partnerships with local arts organizations, government, and civic groups to advance mutually-held aspirations for the Chagrin Valley.

The stated mission of the Foundation is to promote, support, and encourage the development of arts and culture as integral contributors to the quality of life and the economic well-being of the Chagrin Valley.

Attachments

- List/descriptions of partner organizations
- Map of proposed Arts & Entertainment District
- *Restoration of the Historic Township Hall and Creation of the Arts & Entertainment District/Case Statement, February 2007*
- *Concept Design Compilation Package* for Township Hall prepared by Chambers, Murphy & Burge, Restoration Architects
- Board of Directors & Staff/Chagrin Foundation for Arts & Culture
- CD with relevant photo images and renderings (all captioned) and PDFs of above documents

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