

Louisiana Crafts Guild
219 East Vermilion Street
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August 25, 2022

To: Kevin Blanchard

From: Gene Meneray, Administrator, Louisiana Crafts Guild

RE: Sans Souci Gallery

Dear Mr. Blanchard:

I appreciate the opportunity to follow up on our conversation on Monday August 22, 2022 regarding the condition on Sans Souci Gallery at 219 E Vermilion St, and likewise the opportunity for further brainstorming on how our respective organizations can best be stewards of this historic property and continue to promote a thriving downtown Lafayette and the original artwork of Louisiana. Our organizations have worked well over the last eight years to use the building for the purposes set by its initial grantors, and also continue to provide a first class sales opportunities for the 95 artists represented in the Gallery, I see no reason we cannot find a solution that satisfies both our needs.

If you could permit me some background, the Louisiana Crafts Guild is a statewide, membership organization dedicated to the visual arts of our state. Created in 1996 by an act of the Louisiana Legislature, the Crafts Guild consists of over 220 members, produces festivals, and operates two galleries, one in downtown New Orleans, and the Sans Souci Gallery, where we have been since 2001. While the Gallery itself doesn't turn a profit, it does serve as a public face for the organization, which introduces the Guild to foundation funders and festival promoters, and we've built a formula where the organization is stable, even though other operations sometimes support the Gallery.

Regarding the space itself, and despite also operating La Guild gallery in Canal Place mall, with all the modern conveniences that come with being a tenant in a luxury mall attached to Class A office space and The Westin's flagship New Orleans hotel, it is Sans Souci, with its cozy doorways and worn Cypress that best represents our organization. Simply put, La Guild Gallery could be located in any city in America; Sans Souci is uniquely Louisianan, and we have a connection to this space, and we want to stay there.

Stipulating that both our organizations are governed by our Boards of Directors, and that this memo is the beginning of a conversation- we know Sans Souci Gallery needs significant repairs, and we see two paths forward. First, and probably easiest for both parties, is for the Trust to donate the building to the Louisiana Crafts Guild and we assume the responsibility for repairs. We see multiple benefits to both parties here.

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For the Trust, obviously, you are not responsible for the repairs and can move those off your balance sheet. Also, as the property was donated to the Trust in 2014, there's no loss. The Trust managed the building ably for eight years, and now can move on with no further outlay.

For the Guild, the benefits are in long term continuity. Not only has Sans Souci been at that location for 21 years, but it has attracted great acclaim, not just locally, but in publications including Southern Living and Garden and Gun. Tourists to Lafayette know the space and seek us out, resulting in years, if not decades of repeat business. Additionally, we know the space and understand our sales calendar. Being in control of the renovation timeline, even while incurring greater expense, in order to maximize our ability to be open and provide a sales outlet to our members, is worth the initial investment. Also, to address a point that came up in our conversation, while few arts nonprofits outside of the Metropolitan Museum of Art are truly wealthy, the Guild is a stable organization that has the cash reserves to handle the repairs, even if they come in higher than anticipated, and we consider gaining the long term continuity of keeping Sans Souci as a cultural space to be a worthwhile investment.

Looking at the theme of continuity, another option is for our two organizations to partner in a capital campaign to raise the needed funds to renovate the space. In this scenario, LTPFA would keep ownership of the building, and we would both engage our network of individual donors and private foundations. To ensure our desired continuity, the Crafts Guild would seek a long term, multi-year lease for 219 E Vermilion.

What I believe neither of us want is for the Guild to have to leave Sans Souci and downtown Lafayette. If, in August 2022, our organization was seeking to place an art gallery in Louisiana, and we examined population migration and growing markets, it's an open question if we'd choose 219 E Vermilion-but that's not what we are doing. Instead, we are looking to continue to support our 21-year history in the space, ensure that locals and visitors continue to know where to find the best in Louisiana handmade crafts, and see our members and our organization succeed. We welcome the opportunity to continue brainstorming to come to an equitable solution and look forward to further discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Gene Meneray'.

Gene Meneray
Louisiana Crafts Guild