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Media Contact:

Katie Cornell, Center for Craft, 828-785-1357, kcornell@craftcreativitydesign.org

Arts Market Study Reflects Significant Demand for Affordable Housing

Asheville, NC – The Center for Craft and the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce are pleased to share the Asheville Arts Market Study, an analysis of the Art Market Survey conducted in Winter/Spring 2018 to assess affordable housing and space needs for Asheville's creatives, including artists, makers, performers, musicians, writers, designers, etc. Findings reveal a strong demand for a variety of spaces, including new affordable housing, private studios, and shared creative and performing arts spaces. The study recommends an initial housing project that includes **168 units of affordable housing for artists/creatives and 81 additional units of affordable studio space located at the City's "Ice House" site at 81-91 Riverside Drive.** This report will be presented at the City Council meeting on December 11, 2018, and the community is invited to attend. The full report is available at keepavcreative.com

Creative Placekeeping is a primary focus for the Center for Craft. "Asheville's creative sector has significantly shaped the region's identity and culture over the past 100 years. Craft is and has been the foundation," said Center for Craft Executive Director Stephanie Moore. "We know that many artists, creatives, musicians and performers are leaving due to the rapidly increasing cost of living, putting Asheville's culture at risk. Collective efforts to develop affordable housing and space solutions for artists should be a key priority."

In 2015, The Center for Craft, in partnership with the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, commissioned Minneapolis-based Artspace Consulting to conduct a preliminary feasibility assessment and report as the first step towards developing affordable space solutions for artists and the creative sector in Asheville, North Carolina. A community leadership group was established to provide guidance and oversight, including representatives from the City of Asheville, The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina, HomeTrust Bank, UNC Asheville, MHAworks, and Asheville Design Center.

Kit Cramer, President/CEO of the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce views Asheville's creative sector as an integral component of Asheville's livability and culture. She has led the partnership on behalf of the Chamber for the past two-and-a-half years. Cramer notes, "We're interested in finding ways to cultivate the creative sector in Asheville. Housing and work spaces that are affordable are a part of that. The creative sector is part of what makes Asheville Asheville."

The Artspace effort is one of many community initiatives that have been developed in response to Asheville's broader housing crisis. "Asheville is experiencing a large scale affordable housing crisis, and it's imperative that we partner to create housing for people of all income levels," said Elizabeth Brazas. "There have been recent successful efforts to build affordable and workforce housing but the needs are still great. An effort focused on the creative sector would be another positive step and would help maintain our vibrant arts culture."

In March 2017, Artspace conducted a Preliminary Site Visit, which included meetings with over 200-Asheville area stakeholders. Based on assessments made during their visit, they recommended testing demand for an 80-unit affordable artist housing development via the Arts Market Survey and identified the City-owned parcel located in the River Arts District at 81-91 Riverside Drive (i.e. "Ice House") as the priority for priority development site. The property is one of three City Council designated sites for affordable housing. In Winter 2018, the Center for Craft launched a community-wide survey campaign called Keep AVL Creative (keepavlcreative.com). **1,435 individuals and arts/creative businesses participated in the survey, and over 300 individuals and organizations** were engaged through in-person outreach efforts.

Mike Marcus, Assistant Director at the Center for Craft has led the overall project and related fundraising efforts since 2015. For Marcus, a critical aspect of the project's success has been the quantification and assessment of Asheville's creative sector. This is the first such effort in the Asheville area. "The success of the survey in terms of community engagement is extraordinary. 1,435 responses in a city of 90,000 is significant and provides critical data for our community to make decisions from, similar to what other sectors have," says Marcus. "Much of the survey success can be attributed to the way in which Asheville area arts, creative and cultural leaders came together to further a set of goals bigger than any one organization or creative discipline. Each organization engaged its respective audience to ensure that Asheville's creative sector was fully represented in the data. The level of collaboration on this effort is humbling and hopeful." The goal of the Arts Market Study is to provide the necessary market research to inform, support and advocate for investment in new affordable housing and work spaces for the arts/creative sector.

In addition to the need for 168 units of affordable artists housing and 81 additional units of affordable artist studio space, the Arts Market Study also identified the following demographics and trends within the Asheville's arts/creative sector:

- 40% of respondents are interested in affordable artist housing
- 38% of respondents have household incomes under \$30,000 per year (Asheville's median income is \$44,946, according to the 2016 U.S. Census)
- 65% of interested artists are 21-40 years old
- 69% of all individual artist respondents have jobs outside of their creative practice
- Top arts/cultural/creative industry involvement of survey respondents:
 - Painting and Drawing: 27%
 - Crafts/Fine Crafts: 21%
 - Music: 17%
 - Writing/Literary Arts: 17%
 - Photography: 15%
 - Mixed Media: 15%

Artspace's assessment of survey data includes the following observations and trends within Asheville's arts/creative sector:

- Affordable artist housing will primarily support existing local Asheville/Buncombe artists (76% of respondents are current Asheville/Buncombe residents)
- Affordable artist housing will also serve local workforce households. The top non-creative work engaged in by interested artists is "service/leisure/hospitality" (15%) followed by "education" (12%), "retail" (9%), and "professional and business services" (9%)
- Majority of artists interested in new space have considered leaving Asheville. The opportunity of new space may help to retain members of the local creative sector.

- River Arts District is the most preferred location for an affordable artist housing development
- While nonprofits will be served by new creative space, for-profit creative businesses would be the primary beneficiary. Investment in a multi-use project would help to support the small business community.
- There is a need for temporary/short-term housing for visiting artists in a new facility. The feasibility of including this housing type should be explored with potential community partner operators and future funders.

As part of the community leadership group, Mayor Esther Manheimer and City Councilwoman Sheneika Smith have been early advocates of Arts Market Study. “This project is a wonderful display of how community-led solutions help advance efforts to solve Asheville’s housing challenges” said Councilwoman Smith. Mayor Manheimer echoed this sentiment, saying “Affordable housing continues to be a priority for the city of Asheville. Artspace’s preliminary recommendation for an affordable housing development for artists in the River Arts District is exciting. I look forward to the presentation at the Asheville City Council meeting in December.”

On December 11, 2018, Mike Marcus of the Center for Craft and Elizabeth Brazas of The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina will present the Artspace project and related findings to Asheville City Council. The presentation will focus on the significant demand for affordable artist housing and will strongly recommend that the City move forward with a project of this nature at their River Arts District property (81-91 Riverside Drive).

The community is invited to attend the City Council meeting on December 11, 2018.

For more information, visit keepavilcreative.com.

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ABOUT ARTSPACE

Established in 1979, Artspace is a national nonprofit real estate developer that specializes in creating, owning, and operating affordable housing and studio space for artists and creative sector businesses. They currently own and operate 42-projects across the country and have made over \$700 million in real estate investments to-date.

<http://www.artspace.org>

ABOUT THE CENTER FOR CRAFT

Founded in 1996, The Center for Craft is a national 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing the field of craft through fostering new ideas, funding craft scholarship, and backing the next generation of makers, curators and critics. The Center has developed a strong national reputation as a significant resource for artists, museums, academic researchers, university students and arts organizations. Each year, the Center for Craft administers over a quarter million dollars in grants to those working in the craft field. www.craftcreativitydesign.org

ABOUT THE ASHEVILLE AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce is a member organization with more than 1,700 member businesses and organizations. Chamber members collaborate with community organizations and coalitions to support the community and each other with the mission of building community through business. The Asheville Chamber focuses on growing jobs, serving as a voice for business and fostering member success. For more on the Asheville Chamber, visit www.ashevillechamber.org