pennsylvania
COUNCIL ON THE ARTS

PCA Creative Communities
Letter of Interest Coversheet

Lead Applicant Information

Organization: The Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation

Address: 4000 Woodland Avenue

City: Philadelphia **Zip Code:** 19104

Municipality: Philadelphia **County:** Philadelphia

Phone: 215-386-2181

Website: www.woodlandsphila.org

FEIN: 31-1609803

Contact Name: Jessica L. Baumert

Contact Title: Executive Director

Contact Phone: 215-386-2181

Contact Email: baumert@woodlandsphila.org

Organization Type: 501(c)3

☑ **By checking the box, you are indicating acknowledgment of and intention to comply with the local government resolution requirement, if your community is selected to participate in the Creative Communities Pilot Program. (See full application guidelines for more information on this requirement.)**

Letter of Interest (LOI) Submission Instructions: LOI deadline, Friday, June 28, 2019. LOIs must be submitted via email to RA-OAcreativepa@pa.gov.

a. Completed coversheet form with acknowledgment of and intention to comply with the local government resolution requirement, if your community is selected to participate in the Creative Communities Pilot Program.

b. Narrative (3 pages max.)
   - Brief community description.
   - Description of any existing cultural plans and/or experience implementing arts-based development strategies.
   - Description of successful community partnerships.
   - Description of community opportunity or challenge the organization would like to address through this program.

c. 3 Letters of Support (local government, planning, convention and visitors bureau (CVB), business improvment district (BID), chamber of commerce, local arts organization, etc.).

The Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation seeks funding through the Creative Communities Pilot Initiative for collaborative place-based programming with Ars Nova Workshop (ANW). This collaboration will offer a series of events devoted to celebrating the cyclical nature of our existence: the seasons, the cycles of birth/life/death, etc. The Woodlands has a variety of spaces adaptable for performances and public engagement, and the project will make full use of these. The setting in The Woodlands is meant to (1) draw audiences to this beautiful, if underused, space; (2) use music and community to celebrate the space as providing respite from the hectic everyday pace of urban living, tapping into a more sustained cycle of life; and (3) integrate the cultural agenda of ANW and The Woodlands with the surrounding neighborhoods by celebrating and tying in the cultural history of the local populations.

Brief Community Description

The Woodlands National Historic Landmark District, located at 40th and Woodland Avenue in West Philadelphia, is an historic cemetery and at 54 acres is one of the largest open spaces in Philadelphia outside of Fairmount Park. The site is situated between University City, Center City, and Southwest Philadelphia. The area, as described in the Philadelphia City Planning Commission's Philadelphia 2035 planning document, is "The University Southwest District (USW) which covers 4.49 square miles and has a total population of 81,746 (2010)." Comprising the neighborhoods of Spruce Hill, Powelton Village, Cedar Park, Kingsessing, West Powelton, Walnut Hill, Garden Court, and University City, the district includes the large institutional, educational, and medical portion of the metropolitan center known as University City, host to 10.9% of the city's employment. Much of the population is located within a 5- to 15-minute walk of The Woodlands.

A larger audience is connected to The Woodlands through the extensive trolley system. The 40th Street Trolley Portal is directly across from The Woodlands' front gates, and nearly 60,000 people, from Center City to Southwest Philadelphia, pass through this transportation hub daily.

ANW and The Woodlands have been in conversation about collaboration for years. ANW is an organization with deep ties in West Philadelphia, and The Woodlands has wanted to attract and serve new and broader audiences in its surrounding neighborhoods.

Description of any existing cultural plans and/or experience implementing arts-based development strategies

Ars Nova Workshop (ANW) our proposed program collaborator, is a music presenter whose mission is to elevate the profile and expand the boundaries of jazz and contemporary music. Without a venue of their own, ANW has cultivated partnerships with other spaces in the city, presenting cutting-edge artists in unusual spaces, and creating unique cultural experiences for audiences. The New York Times praised ANW's "textbook embodiment" of a "more site-specific and curatorial approach" to music presentation. ANW has cultivated a talent for finding under-used spaces in a variety of locations that have allowed it to reach new audiences.

The Woodlands has begun venturing into public programming, but it has not traditionally been viewed as a public performance or exhibition venue. This is changing with its recent strategic planning model, "Woodlands Connects." In this comprehensive plan for the 54-acre site, The Woodlands has taken thorough inventory of the variety of spaces within the cemetery and considered a long-term strategy for renovating many of the spaces so they can be activated for public use. We are currently mid-phase in this project, and our ambition is to make The Woodlands a real resource for the surrounding neighborhoods.

Programming goals for The Woodlands are to:
1) Serve as a cultural epicenter for community building: The Woodlands has unique physical and cultural assets that attract people with different pastimes and occupations, and have made it a hub for community building. Visitors flock to the annual Firefly Night and seasonal craft festivals, just as they enjoy celebratory birthday picnics with friends.

2) Provide access to open space and recreational trails: Urban communities need open space for healthy, outdoor recreation. Woodlands users have proven this need: over the years the footfall of determined runners and walkers has worn a one-mile path through the grass, monuments, and trees around its perimeter. Recently, The Woodlands has conducted intentional planning and developed programming that preserves and increases the use of its park-like landscape for recreation.

3) Interpret and share the rich history of the site and the city: For many local residents and tourists, their mental map of historic Philadelphia does not extend far beyond Independence Hall and Center City. But The Woodlands is located between important transitioning and transformed Philadelphia neighborhoods. Their history is the story of urbanization in Philadelphia and the city's re-emergence as a thriving center of life, work, and play. By interpreting its own history in a way that illustrates the connections between the site and city, The Woodlands also invites deeper physical and cultural connections between people who live or visit here.

Recent restoration work and infrastructure upgrades, including accessible public restrooms, put the site in a position to host large scale events like those we'd like to do with ANW.

Description of successful community partnerships
Strategic partners and collaborators are essential for sustaining and expanding programming, and for supplementing the resources of The Woodlands. Partners include Philadelphia Orchard Project, The Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, The Academy of Natural Sciences, Past Present Projects, The College of Physicians, University of Pennsylvania, University City District, Drexel University, neighboring K-8 schools, and more. Recent and ongoing collaborations of note include:

Past Present Project: Graffiti and Ornament Exhibition
The Woodlands recently worked with Past Present Projects, an organization who believes historic landmarks are potent community resources and the best way to preserve them is to engage audiences with these resonant sites. The month- long exhibition Graffiti and Ornament brought the work of artists Roberto Lugo and Leo Tecosky into the historic Hamilton Mansion at The Woodlands. Bridging past histories of Philadelphia with the present, the site-specific exhibition connected The Woodlands' historic mansion and cemetery to these two contemporary artists, who embrace graffiti and hip-hop culture within their artistic practice. This project was very successful and included weekly public programming components.

Philadelphia Orchard Project, headquarters and demonstration orchard
The Woodlands and Philadelphia Orchard Project (POP) are in the early stages of a place-based partnership at The Woodlands. POP, who works with community-based groups and volunteers to plan and plant orchards filled with edible and useful plants, has their offices on site, and will be moving their nursery operation and planting their demonstration orchard on-site in Fall 2019. This place-based partnership will add infrastructure both organizations will share, and will create educational opportunities and trainings around POP's mission, introducing their partners from around Philadelphia

to The Woodlands. This work will also add to The Woodlands' interpretation, as historically there was a kitchen garden and orchard on the property.

The Woodlands Grave Gardeners
The Woodlands launched its Grave Gardeners program in 2016 with the hopes of enlisting 20 people for its inaugural year. Over 70 people applied, and their reasons for doing so were not just to get some extra gardening space. Some were West Philadelphia locals who wanted to be involved in a community effort; others had recently lost loved ones whose graves were too far for regular visits and wanted to garden in their honor. The Grave Gardeners program is now in its fourth year with 150 participants. Each gardener is assigned a grave to plant and each garden is unique, with the volunteer gardeners actively participating in the interpretation of the grounds through their plant selections. Partnerships with the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and the University of Pennsylvania are critical to the program's success. The program has been newsworthy with local and national press writing about this unique group of volunteer gardeners. The Woodlands has been contacted by cemeteries from around the world for advice on how they should go about starting similar programs at their respective sites.

Descriptions of community opportunity or challenge the organization would like to address through the initiative
Both The Woodlands and ANW are interested in reaching primarily African American and immigrant communities who reside in the surrounding areas of West and Southwest Philadelphia. This project presents an opportunity for both organizations to do so. These neighborhoods are home to many different communities—from a significant Ethiopian/Eritrean enclave to longstanding African American families who have been in the area for generations, many of whom remember the vibrant jazz scene in West Philadelphia in the '50s and '60s. ANW's interest is in cultivating one of the most important audiences for the music they present, as jazz grew out of this community, responding to its cultural and historical circumstances. Historically, West Philadelphia provided an important focal point for jazz venues at the heyday of the jazz scene, when the likes of John Coltrane, Dizzy Gillespie, and Billie Holliday were working there while living in Philadelphia. The 52nd Street corridor ("The Strip") was lined with jazz clubs; other important sites were also located on 40th Street--specifically, Geno's Empty Foxhole, in the basement of St. Mary's Church, was the place to hear Thelonious Monk, Charles Mingus, Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra, and other pioneers. ANW wants to ensure that lineage continues, long after the density of these stages has disappeared. ANW believes strongly in their responsibility to place the music they present in the heart of the African American community from which it comes. The Woodlands has a range of spaces—such as the Hamilton Mansion, Stables, and expanses of lawn and fields with a cemetery backdrop—adaptable for performance and public engagement, and the project will make use of the broad range of these.

Cemeteries as flexible spaces and as spaces to show art are growing trends. The proposed performances could take place in a traditional venue, however having them at The Woodlands, with tombstones all around, presents an opportunity for performances to be particularly powerful. The character of The Woodlands makes it a ready platform for the presentation of art that draws on its history and landscape.

As historic cemeteries continue to run short on burial space and the descendants of people buried there become more removed in time, cities need to consider what these spaces mean and how they can be part of their future. The Woodlands is leading this charge through programs like we're proposing, and working to not only remain relevant, but to become **more relevant** for a broader, more diverse community.

jamie GAUTHIER
DEMOCRAT for CITY COUNCIL

June 26, 2019

Sarah Merritt
Director of Pennsylvania Creative Communities
216 Finance Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Sarah,

I am in full support of The Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation's PA Council on the Arts Creative Communities Pilot Initiative Grant Proposal, "New Grass, Embracing Renewal". As the former Executive Director for the Fairmount Park Conservancy and uncontested Nominee for Philadelphia's 3rd Council seat, I understand the value of the arts and open space, and the impact that they can have on the health, vibrancy and safety of our communities.

The 54-acre Woodlands National Historic Landmark District, situated between University City, Center City, and Southwest Philadelphia, is one of the largest open spaces in the City outside of Fairmount Park. Over 30,000 people visit The Woodlands annually, however, many residents of West and Southwest Philadelphia have yet to discover this hidden gem. The Woodlands location, directly across from the 40th Street Trolley Portal, provides an opportunity to draw audiences from west and southwest Philadelphia via the extensive trolley system that connects these neighborhoods.

Ars Nova Workshop, the main collaborator for this project, is an internationally recognized jazz, experimental, and new classical music presenter, with roots in West Philadelphia. The thoughtful process these two organizations are proposing incudes planning, discovery programming, participatory events and pilot test programming to lay the groundwork for a series of seasonal, multi-year programming.

The programming proposed by The Woodlands and Ars Nova Workshop will engage new audiences in the arts, and will be a great way to introduce the site to a broader group of people. I hope you'll consider supporting this project. I know I look forward to attending a performance amongst the historic buildings, headstones, and tree canopy of The Woodlands.

Sincerely,

J Gauthier

Jamie Gauthier

JAMES R. ROEBUCK, MEMBER
208 IRVIS OFFICE BUILDING
P.O. BOX 202188
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17120-2188
PHONE: (717) 783-1000
FAX: (717) 783-1665

4712 BALTIMORE AVENUE
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19143
PHONE: (215) 724-2227
FAX: (215) 724-2230

www.pahouse.com/roebuck

House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

Chairman, Education Committee

Caucuses
PA Higher Education Assistance Agency, Member Board of Directors
PA Historical and Museum Commission Black History Advisory Committee, Member
PA Legislative Black Caucus, Member

June 21, 2019

Sarah Merritt
Director of Pennsylvania Creative Communities
216 Finance Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Ms. Merritt:

I write in support of The Woodlands Trust for Historic Preservation's proposal to the PA Council on the Arts, for funding through the Creative Communities Pilot Initiative. I served on The Woodlands Board of Directors for over a decade, and have been a supporter of their efforts to engage the community through creative programming.

This project has the potential to reach a diverse audience, and introduce The Woodlands to a large cross section of West Philadelphia through the Arts. Ars Nova Workshop, the main collaborator for this project, is an internationally recognized jazz, experimental, and new classical music presenter, with roots in West Philadelphia. The thoughtful process these two organizations are proposing incudes planning, discovery programming, participatory events and pilot test programming, to lay the groundwork for a seasonal, multi-year project.

The approach proposed by The Woodlands and Ars Nova Workshop will engage new audiences in the arts, and will be a great way to introduce National Historic Landmark Woodlands to a larger cross section of West Philadelphia.

Sincerely,

State Representative James R. Roebuck
188th Legislative District

University City District

Sarah Merritt
Director of Pennsylvania Creative Communities
216 Finance Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Sarah,

On behalf of University City District (UCD) and its Board of Directors, I relay our full support of The Woodlands application for funding from the PA Council on the Arts Creative Communities Pilot Initiative application.

The 40th Street Trolley Portal, UCD's most recent public space project, sits directly across The Woodlands' front gates. This is the busiest at-grade rail station in the city. Nearly 60,000 riders pass through the portal, and thus pass by The Woodlands, each day. This transportation infrastructure provides easy access to The Woodlands for residents from Center City, to Southwest Philadelphia.

The Woodlands improves the quality of life for residents of our community. I look forward supporting them as they further explore place-based arts programming , drawing new audiences to, and activating new spaces within this important historic open space in the heart of University City.

Sincerely,

Matt Bergheiser
President, University City District

3940 CHESTNUT STREET • PHILADELPHIA, PA 19104 • 215.243.0555
UNIVERSITYCITY.ORG UNIVERSITYCITY @UCDPHL @UNIVERSITYCITY