

SMITHVILLE CREATIVE ARTS

Case for Support

ARTS. COMMUNITY. OPPORTUNITY.

202 NE 2nd St. · Smithville, TX 78957

10,500	3,000	$625K	$1.01M
SQ FT HISTORIC BUILDING	SQ FT ORIGINAL WOOD LIVERY	CURRENT LIST PRICE	ESTIMATED TOTAL CAPITAL NEED

01

The Vision

Smithville Creative Arts is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded by Sara Hickman and Jim Cannon with one mission: to acquire, renovate, and activate a 10,500-square-foot historic building in downtown Smithville, Texas.

Owned and operated by the nonprofit, the building will become a self-sustaining, multi-use arts and community hub serving the residents of Smithville and the surrounding region — a place for creativity, connection, and opportunity for everyone.



02

The Building

From livery stable to funeral home to creative campus.

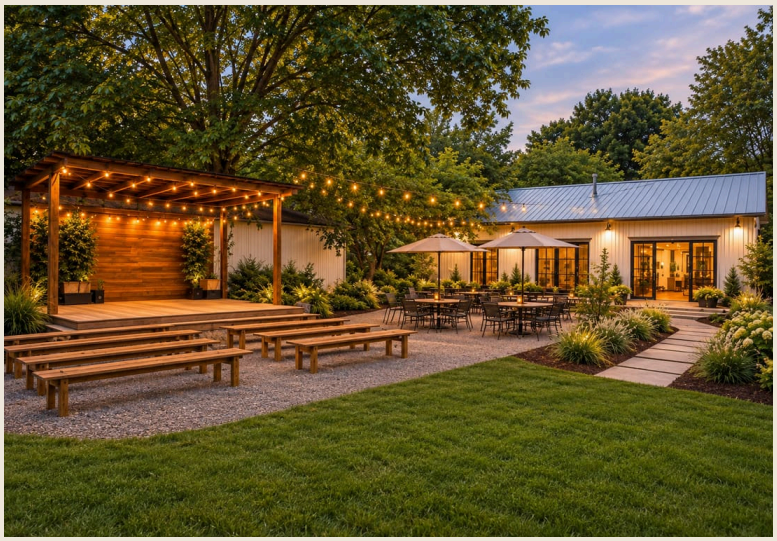
Built as a livery stable — where horses were kept when folks came to visit downtown Smithville — the building later became a funeral home and remained a mortuary until the funeral home relocated. It has sat vacant for more than six years.

Today this single-story, 10,500-square-foot structure on two lots in Smithville's Central Business District is listed at $625,000 and ready for its next chapter.









WHAT THE BUILDING CONTAINS

- A theater area, with two original pews and an organ that conveys with the sale
- 15+ rooms in multiple configurations for art studios and music rehearsal — band, piano, and vocal lesson rooms
- A front garden entrance into a 2,500-square-foot art gallery with plenty of windows and natural light, plus space for concessions and merchandise
- Two kitchens: a large one at the front of the building for luncheons and gatherings, and one beside the theater supporting events, performances, and the artist and musician spaces in the back
- Two bathrooms
- A 3,000-square-foot attached livery, built entirely of original wood, with high ceilings, oversized garage-style doors, and a historic ceramic fire suppression system — it will become a sculpture studio and individual maker spaces for designers, illustrators, fiber artists, painters, and more
- Unfinished upstairs space with room for future studios
- A side yard with a half-circle driveway and mature trees
- A back yard with room to build an outdoor stage for concerts, weddings, farmers markets, and art fairs

CONDITION

Sara has visited the building numerous times and personally paid for a property inspection (available upon request).

The building sits just outside Smithville's Commercial Historic District, so exterior renovations won't require review by the historic approval committee — reducing both timeline and complexity. Standard city permits and approvals apply, and the city's economic development contacts have been identified as resources for guidance on renovation code requirements.

03

Three Layers, One Campus

The campus is designed to operate on three levels at the same time.

LAYER ONE

Community

Mission Core

The charitable heart of the organization. It serves the people of Smithville directly and qualifies the campus for grants and tax-deductible donations.

- Youth arts education programs
- Music and rehearsal access for students and working musicians
- Workshops and classes across disciplines
- AA and community support group meetings
- Community gatherings and family programming
- Artist residency and support programming

LAYER TWO

Revenue

Sustainability Engine

What makes the building financially viable without perpetual fundraising, reducing dependence on grants and donations over time.

- Studio rentals on weekly and monthly terms for working artists
- Rehearsal room rentals on hourly, weekly, and monthly terms
- Ticketed performances in the theater
- Film programming
- Paid classes and workshops
- Event space rentals for community and private events
- Satellite tenant rent from one or two anchor partner organizations

Goal: Cover a significant and growing share of operating costs through earned revenue, so donor and grant funding can go toward mission programming rather than overhead.

LAYER THREE

Activation

Audience & Identity

What makes the campus a living part of Smithville's culture rather than a building that happens to be open.

- Film nights and curated programming, including silent film nights featuring the organ
- Art shows and gallery exhibitions
- Festivals and seasonal community events
- Live performances, plus the Smithville Playhouse Theater
- Family Arts and Crafts Day
- Outdoor farmers market on the property
- Family reunions, weddings, birthday parties, art fairs, and author and filmmaker lectures

04

A Movie Theater for Smithville

Smithville has no movie theater — the nearest cinema is fifteen minutes away in Bastrop.

The building's existing theater space will host films and live performances (plays, concerts, and speakers), and with the organ that comes with the building, silent film nights too. That means film programming from day one.

A curated, community-focused film program — similar in spirit to Alamo Drafthouse — meets a real local need, generates meaningful earned revenue, and gives neighbors a reason to come back again and again.



05

Before & After

See what 202 NE 2nd St. could become.





THEATER HALLWAY





HISTORIC LIVERY





ARTIST STUDIOS



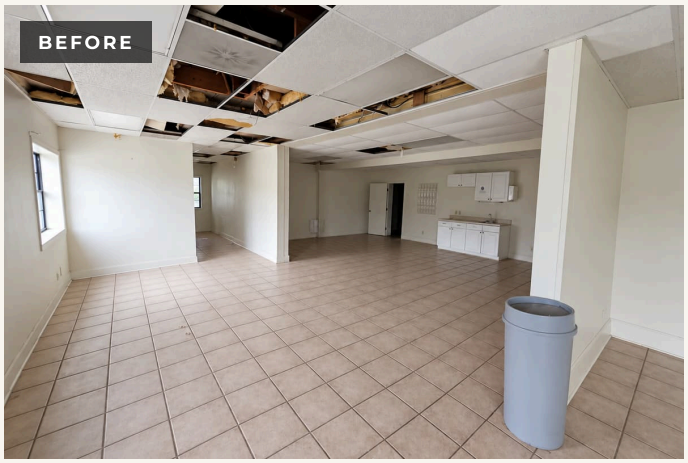


WORKSHOP





WORKSHOP MEZZANINE



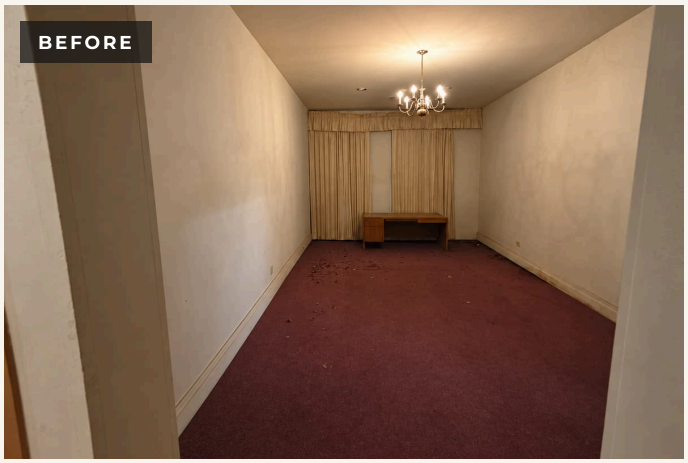


KITCHEN & DINING



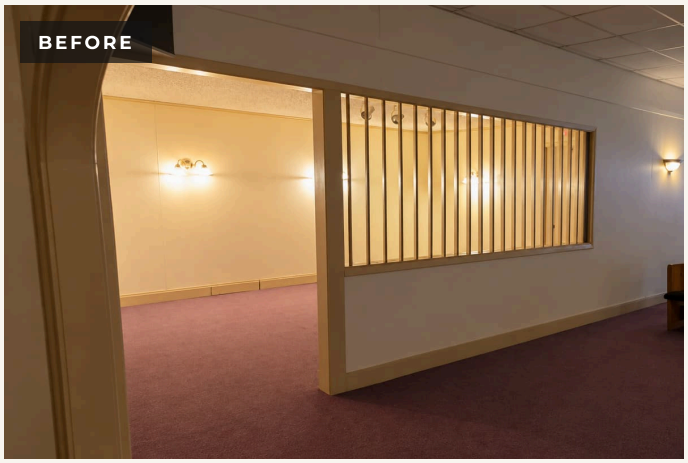


COURTYARD & PATIO



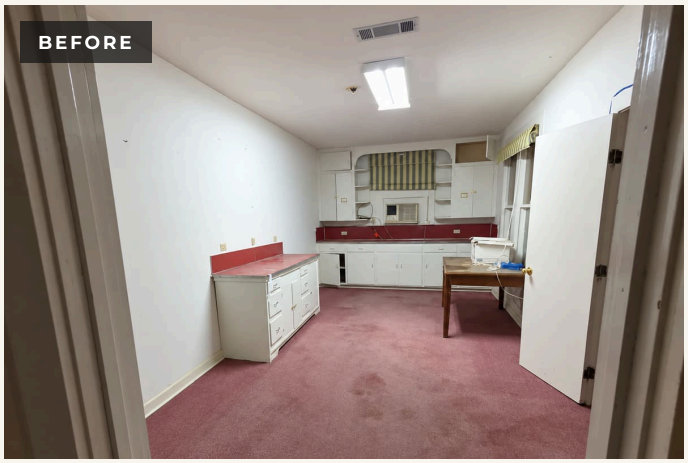


MUSIC ROOM



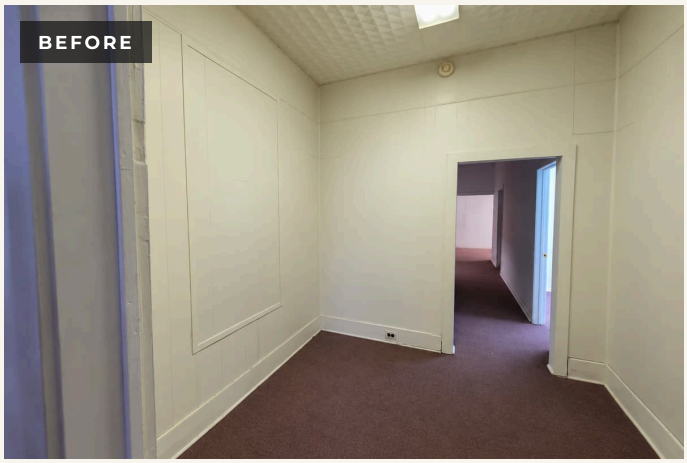


LOUNGE



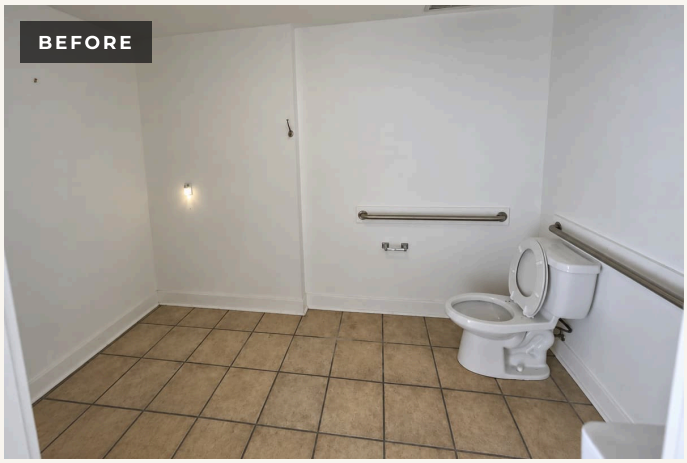


KITCHEN





OFFICE





RESTROOM

Before & after images by Lawrence Fontana.

06

Why Smithville

Smithville is a small city in Bastrop County, about 45 minutes southeast of Austin. It has a strong creative and artistic community, a walkable historic downtown, and a growing population of artists, musicians, and families who have relocated from larger Texas cities in recent years.

Despite its creative character, Smithville has no structured rehearsal or studio space for rent, and no movie theater. The nearest cinema is in Bastrop, and the closest comparable multi-use arts facility is in Austin. Smithville Creative Arts fills that gap.



07

Sara Hickman, Founder



Sara Hickman is a Texas musician, visual artist, and community builder with a long career and a broad network across the Texas arts world. She has lived in Smithville for four years and recently completed an artist residency at The Prizer Gallery on Main Street.

Sara is not a first-time founder. She previously raised $125,000 to renovate a historic 1928 building, now the Sanford Community Center in Palacios, Texas. That model — a founding visionary who creates a usable space, then hands it off to a team to run — is exactly what she's bringing to Smithville.

Smithville Creative Arts was co-founded with Sara's good friend Jim Cannon.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The project has the enthusiastic support of former City Manager Robert Tamble, who has described it as an excellent boost for the town. Sara has also spoken with Director of Economic Development Robert Andrade, Mayor Sharon Foerster, former City Council Member Bill Gordon, and City Council Member Jimmy Jenkins — who all agree that Smithville Creative Arts would benefit the town greatly.

08

Satellite Partners

Sara has board-level relationships with established nonprofits across Austin and Central Texas — organizations with existing programming and audiences that could expand their outreach into Smithville and the surrounding rural area through space on the campus.

The plan is to start with one anchor partner, with room for a second as space and demand allow.



09

What Success Looks Like

YEAR ONE

- 501(c)(3) formed and recognized
- Building acquired and Phase 1 renovation complete
- Theater open with an initial programming calendar
- Film programming launched
- At least two revenue streams generating income
- One satellite partner in residence

YEARS TWO & THREE

- Fully activated building with a diverse programming calendar
- Stable mix of earned revenue, donor support, and grant funding
- Executive Director transition complete, with Sara moving to a board role
- A model sustainable enough to pursue Phase 2: upstairs studio space

10

Help Us Open the Doors

The total estimated capital need is approximately $1,010,000, subject to professional validation of the renovation estimate.

Named spaces are the heart of the campaign. Donors who fund a studio, a rehearsal room, or the theater receive permanent recognition in a building with real community meaning.

EVERY GIFT MATTERS

Local donors, small gifts, and event-based fundraising build community ownership of this project and show the broad local support that major donors and foundations look for.

GIFT LEVELS

LEVEL	GIFT	RECOGNITION
Founding Partner	$250,000 and above	Naming rights for a major space, such as the main theater
Lead Patron	$100,000 – $249,999	Naming rights for a studio or rehearsal room
Community Champion	$25,000 – $99,999	Naming rights for a smaller space and permanent recognition in the building
Sustaining Donor	$5,000 – $24,999	Community recognition and permanent recognition in the building
Friend of the Arts	Up to $4,999	Community recognition and permanent recognition in the building

A Note from Sara

I want to share with you a project I've been working on with my good friend Jim Cannon since the beginning of 2026.

My mom, Anita, was very excited about this idea, so in her honor I'll be naming part of this eventual community arts center after her — the gardens? The sculpture space? I'm not sure yet. I'd like to thank the Lost Pines Artists Alliance for being the first group of folks to donate to Smithville Creative Arts in my mom's name. I promise — Mom's imagination will be living on throughout this project and building!

This is no longer an idea. There is a defined asset, a defined operator, and a defined model. Now it's about finding donors to purchase the property, then renovating, and finally opening the doors to the public for community use and enjoyment.

Thank you for reading. I am visualizing someone out there who will be smitten by our vision and help us purchase the property and turn it into Smithville Creative Arts.

Love,

Sara



SMITHVILLE
CREATIVE ARTS

CONTACT

Smithville Creative Arts · 202 NE 2nd St. · Smithville, TX 78957

smithvillecreativearts.com

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A 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization

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