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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Visual and Performing Arts Center (VAPA) Takes Over Hal Marshall Building.

CHARLOTTE, N.C., (September 21, 2021) – The Visual and Performing Arts Center (VAPA) today announced the opening of its new collaboration with Mecklenburg County. The intent of VAPA is to create a space which brings together artists to create, practice and exhibit their respective arts. Born out of necessity, due to the closing of Spirit Square and the lingering impact of the pandemic, a space was needed for artists to come together to continue to teach classes, rehearse shows and perform. The McColl Center and Charlotte Ballet, part of the founding member group of artists, worked with Mecklenburg County to identify and understand a space in the Uptown area which could be repurposed as an arts center.

This group of founding members were inspired by similar artistic incubators in other cities which grew in popularity and were able to transform areas of town into vibrant thriving hubs for business and tourism and thus VAPA was born.

Mark Hahn, Director of Asset and Facility Management with Mecklenburg County has *“great expectations for this project and believes the location, directly across the street from the McColl Center and Charlotte Ballet facilities, will only benefit from the presence of more artists and visitors.”* He also believes *“as artists come and go, and present shows and events, they will take what is currently a lifeless space on North Tryon and transform it into an area of creativity, energy and cultural engagement.”*

VAPA Board Chair Keli Semelsberger, who is also the CEO of Charlotte Comedy Theater, one of 11 founding member organizations for VAPA, said, *“It is so inspiring to bring together this group of diverse artists to dream big together. We have formed a Board with impressive professional and artistic experience that is determined to see this project through for the benefit of us all. We invite everyone – artists and patrons alike – to join VAPA in our mission to serve the community in the best way we know how – through diversity, equity, inclusion, and art.”*

The mission of VAPA is to cultivate accessible exhibition and creative work spaces to inspire and nurture the relationship between artists and the community. VAPA is committed to providing low-cost studios and exhibition spaces for the visual and performing arts community by raising funds via grants, individual donors, productions, festivals, market days and sponsorships from local organizations.

VAPA exemplifies the innovation and creativity that can result when a diverse group of people work together towards shared goals. Our Board of directors is an interdisciplinary group of people from various arts backgrounds, races, sexes, orientations, for-profit/non-profit status and organization size. Our collaborative efforts to form VAPA demonstrate how diversity serves not only the artistic community but the greater Charlotte community.

For more information, please visit www.vapacenter.com.

About the VAPA Center

The Visual and Performing Arts Center (VAPA) was created in 2021 by eleven anchor arts organizations in Charlotte, North Carolina to create a much needed space for artists to create, practice, exhibit, and perform their respective arts. Our intention is to cover our operational costs, any build-outs, arts scholarships, arts supplies, signage, marketing, security, and community service projects through the support of members, patrons, local governments and organizations, the City of Charlotte and other donors from the greater Community. We want to thank Mecklenburg County for supporting our efforts from the very beginning as a crucial supporter.