

# The Historic Duluth Armory

HF440/SF84

The Armory Arts and Music Center (AAMC) is asking the state of Minnesota for \$6.5 million to fund design and construction for rehabilitation of the historic Duluth Armory and elements of the North Country Creative Center. This \$6.5 million will match a combination of federal money, state and federal tax credits, and state grants.



## Background:

The [Duluth Armory](#) is a former armory and event venue in the East Hillside area of Duluth. It was built in 1915 for the National Guard and Naval Militia and Reserve and expanded in 1941.

In 1978, it was purchased by the city and its use as an armory was discontinued. Since 2000, the armory has been threatened with demolition, though the city recently lifted the demolition order. Since the acquisition of the building in 2003, the non-profit Armory Arts and Music Center has been working to rehabilitate the building as a cultural venue, including investing nearly \$5 million in establishing a firm foundation for the proposed restoration project.

The Duluth Armory was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2011 for its state-level significance in the theme of military history and local significance in the theme of entertainment/recreation. It was nominated for its role as the home base of a critical port for peacekeeping and disaster response forces, and for being Duluth's largest cultural event venue until 1966.

## The Duluth Armory

The Duluth Armory honors the past and reimagines the future while providing important community space for economic and entrepreneurial development, arts and culture, and a place for history to come alive for future generations.

- Economic and Entrepreneurial Development
  - The former drill hall will be the centerpiece of a vibrant mixed-use commercial space; with a public marketplace filled with small businesses and food vendors. This will be an opportunity for entrepreneurs who may not be able to afford a storefront to have a retail space.
  - A state-of-art Food Enterprise Center consisting of a Production Kitchen, Training Kitchen, and a farm Food Hub storage and distribution center, will be located on the lower level. The Center will involve partnerships consisting of an array of multi-ethnic groups and businesses and be an incubator for local and regional food entrepreneurs.
- Arts and Culture
  - Restoration of the historic Duluth Armory stage will be a focal point to the mixed-use commercial space; allowing the opportunity to foster local and regional talent and keep the space active and fresh.
  - North Country Creative Center will be an exhibit space that celebrates the creative spark of the people and entertainers who were at the Duluth Armory. This includes Duluth native Bob Dylan who will have a permanent exhibit showcasing his ties to the Armory, Duluth, and Hibbing.
  - Music Resource Center is an after-school music education program for area teens which is currently operating in a nearby facility with plans to re-locate to the Duluth Armory once it is renovated.



- History

- The foundational history of the armory as a military training center will be showcased throughout the renovated facility. Built in 1915, military personnel from throughout the northland trained here for over 50 years, especially the Minnesota National Guard and Duluth Naval Militia and Reserve. The Naval Reserve not only provided naval training but played a key role in peacekeeping and disaster response for the Port of Duluth and surrounding area. Coordinating with the Minnesota Military Museum, the story of these service men and women will be honored in the Hall of Heroes.
- At the same time, the Armory played an important role as a community gathering place and the cultural and entertainment hub of the Duluth region.

**Economic Benefits:**

The rehabilitation of the Duluth Armory will provide a broad range of economic benefits to the region with the potential to directly employ hundreds of people, serve the neighborhood, while becoming a top tourist destination in northern Minnesota.

- Will provide economic opportunities to the neighborhood with a higher percentage of BIPOC residents living in it than the rest of Duluth; both in terms of business ownership and jobs.
- Will support small incubator businesses across a broad array of industries; but especially connected to food.
- Will provide a music and entertainment venue for students, local and regional artists.

**Financial Detail:**

- The total project cost to rehabilitate the Duluth Armory is estimated to be approximately \$38.5 million, with the state being asked to provide \$6.5 million from the general fund through DEED.
- The new Duluth Armory will be owned by an LLC with the non-profit AAMC and Sherman Associates as members and partners. Sherman Associates will be the developer and will manage the rehabilitated Armory.
- The state general fund grant will be spent on design, and construction related costs for the restoration of the Duluth Armory—including critical infrastructure improvements and building enhancements.



*The Duluth Armory has a long history as a transformational place – a building that inspired greatness. It has served as a training facility for military units in World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam; as host to the who’s who of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – from Johnny Cash to Bob Hope and Buddy Holly and Harry Truman; and as a place filled with memories for generations of Northern Minnesota families. Our vision is to take this historic building that northern Minnesota holds so dear and reimagine it for the future; honoring the past while updating it for the next 100 years.*

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