

## Clayworks Begins 'Phase 2' With Execution of Contract of Sale

**Baltimore, MD ~ May 31, 2017** - Baltimore Clayworks has executed a contract to sell the Mt. Washington properties for \$3.7 million dollars to a local non-profit, and leadership reported that after six months of hard work the organization is officially on its way towards stabilizing its finances and ensuring its long-term future. Clayworks will remain in the Mt. Washington facilities until March 1, 2018, allowing classes and programs to continue.

During this time-frame, the board is committed to continue its work on "Phase 2" of the plan; working with experts and stakeholders to develop a strategic plan and sustainable business models that will inform the next steps, including relocation of Clayworks operations.

Last fall, it became clear that the financial challenges were not only threatening the continuation of critical programs, but the very survival of the organization. It also became clear that the board and staff's reactive efforts to address the cash flow crises driven by the past and present circumstances have been unable to sustain the organization. The trustee's goal with the sale of the properties was and is to stabilize the immediate financial issues as well as to move the organization into a wider vision for a sustainable future.

The organization's leadership fully examined [other options](#) in deliberating the best course of action, including selling one building and moving into the other, dissolution, bankruptcy, and the difficulties and costs that could come from selling both buildings. It was understood that each decision would move Clayworks in a radically different direction. Moving into one building would shrink the program and vision of the organization, whereas relocation is expected to offer the possibility of growth and service to a wider audience.

Having preliminarily estimated the costs of moving, purchasing new kilns, and the build out of the new space, the leadership is confident that with the proceeds from the sale the organization will be able to manage all of those elements and still have a significant operating reserve. There is still much to be done and the groundwork for these efforts is already under way; our realtor continues to show us potential spaces daily and considerations for the new location include adequate and ample room and facilities for our key programs and equipment, as well as easy access and safe parking. The future is not yet set by any means, but Clayworks' new home could be located in one of the arts districts, whereby the organization and our artists could be more engaged in the Baltimore arts scene.

The organization will be working with additional Baltimore experts as part of its efforts, and hope that stakeholders from the many aspects of Clayworks' current population of supporters will help in this process. Increasing the level of support for Clayworks is of critical importance to the organization, and conversations with foundations and organizations that have supported Clayworks in the past as well as with potential, new ones are already being undertaken. Responses to the plan have been enthusiastic and promising. The board urges everyone who has supported Clayworks in the past to move forward with the organization, to unify and join this initiative with the understanding that Clayworks is more likely to survive and be renewed if we work together.

"This next phase is of the utmost importance to the future of Clayworks, to all of us and to all who we serve. We are committed to taking advantage of all the resources that are available and share our desire for the future of Clayworks. We need to draw on existing leaders of our community and city. With this broad base of engagement and support, Baltimore Clayworks will continue to carry out its mission," said Kathy Holt, President of the Clayworks Board.

In recent years, Baltimore has seen other arts organizations such as Everyman Theatre, Single Carrot Theatre, and the Baltimore Jewelry Center make difficult decisions about both location and change and each has come out of the process stronger. There is confidence from the leadership and its supporters that Baltimore Clayworks will do the same.

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Baltimore Clayworks' mission is to *develop, promote and sustain an artist-centered community, which provides outstanding artistic, educational and collaborative programs in the ceramic arts.* Founded in 1980 by a group of nine community-minded ceramic artists, Baltimore Clayworks has developed a strong local and global reputation for artists' development coupled with sustained community engagement.

Baltimore Clayworks lives its mission daily through its programs: Artists residencies; Ceramic classes and workshops taught by working artists; Exhibitions of nationally and internationally recognized ceramic artists; and a Community Arts program that serves underserved populations at sites across the Baltimore region.

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