



PRESS RELEASE

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Howard County Executive Calvin Ball Marks Start of Transformational Historic Circuit Courthouse Renovation Project with Ceremonial ‘Wall-Breaking’

Project will transform the former Circuit Courthouse into a new 80,000 square foot Center for Arts, Culture and History

ELLICOTT CITY, MD – Howard County Executive Calvin Ball today commemorated the start of renovations at the historic Circuit Courthouse in Old Ellicott City, with a celebratory ‘wall breaking’ ceremony. The former Circuit Courthouse will be transformed into a new 80,000 square foot Center for Arts, Culture, and History; an arts and cultural hub for all. Pictures from the event can be found [here](#). Video can be found [here](#).

“A centerpiece of our treasured Old Ellicott City, our historic Circuit Courthouse stands as a pillar of history in Howard County that we must preserve and breathe new life into,” said Ball. “Although no longer serving Maryland’s judiciary system, this new visionary community center will allow this historic building to gain new meaning as a mecca of the arts, a cultural hub for Howard County’s Asian American and Pacific Islander community, headquarters to our award-winning Roving Radish program and a community space that supports our budding culinary entrepreneurs.”

During his State of the County address in 2023, Ball first announced his plans to repurpose the historic Circuit Courthouse into a transformative Center for Arts, Culture and History. Just last month, Ball announced that more than \$15 million in county, state and federal funding has been dedicated to help transform this historic building. Ball’s proposed Fiscal Year 2025 Capital Budget includes \$7 million in county funding towards the project, with an additional \$3 million in anticipated state and federal grants and \$5 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds previously committed to the project.

“After working with County Executive Calvin Ball for the past few years to secure over a million dollars for the AAPI Culture Center, it was great to see the project get started,” said Clarence Lam, Maryland State Senator. “This Center will be an important reminder of the integral role the AAPI community have played in our County’s history and will play in its future.”

With internal demolition slated to begin this summer 2024, the new Center for Arts, Culture and History will house the Howard County Arts Council, the first-ever Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Cultural Center, the County’s award-winning Roving Radish program and a Shared Commercial Kitchen space.

Howard County Arts Council

Currently located in a former elementary school and home to the Howard County Arts Council, the Howard County Center for the Arts is a multipurpose arts facility that provides a place where people of all ages and skill levels can develop and learn, artists can work and teach, and community arts organizations can establish themselves and grow. The plan for the new Arts Council courthouse space includes: 18 resident artist studios; three designated spaces for resident arts organizations; one black box theatre with flexible seating; two dressing rooms; one dance studio; two galleries; three classrooms; one multi-purpose space for community art groups and others to hold large meetings and workshops; classroom, office, gallery and theatre storage space; and office space for the Arts Council.

This new location also allows for the Howard County Arts Council to grow and expand its programming, as well as creates an opportunity for the Arts Council to seek a designation for Old Ellicott City as a statewide Arts and Entertainment District.

“What a great day for arts and culture in Ellicott City! For four decades, we have funded the arts, served as an advocate for the arts, and operated a multi-disciplinary arts center where we annually produce 10-12 exhibitions, offer year-round classes in the visual and performing arts, and provide low-cost rehearsal, performance and work-space for artists,” said Coleen West, Executive Director, Howard County Arts Council. “The Courthouse location, with its access to public transportation, ample parking, and nearby retail and restaurants, will put the Arts Council in a better position to serve more artists and audiences, increase awareness and engagement in the arts, and broaden experiences for Howard County residents and visitors.”

AAPI Cultural Center

In the last decade, Howard County’s AAPI population has grown considerably, with Asian residents now making up 20 percent of the county. To represent this population and the growing integral part they play in Howard County’s culture and society, Ball established the AAPI Workgroup in February 2021. Five months later, his administration secured funding from the Maryland General Assembly to construct an AAPI Cultural Center. It took two additional years to secure the necessary funding to renovate the historic Circuit Courthouse.

Housed inside, the new AAPI Cultural Center will feature a lounge and social space, exhibit space, offices and dance/martial arts studio. The center will serve as a one-stop referral center for AAPI residents – many of whom are new immigrants – who are seeking access to social programs and other resources, as well as a hub where Asian Americans can form coalitions and obtain help with the U.S. citizenship application process and registering to vote.

“This center will be a vibrant hub where the rich tapestry of our AAPI cultures will be celebrated through art, music, food, and traditions. It will be a space where our stories are told, our voices are heard, and our heritage is honored,” said Lanlan Xu, Chair of the Howard County AAPI Commission. “This center is not just for AAPI communities; it is for all who seek to learn, engage, and celebrate the beauty of our county’s diversity.”

Roving Radish

Howard County’s Roving Radish program began in 2015 and promotes healthy eating habits through affordable easy to cook meal kits. It also supports local farmers by purchasing produce and proteins at a fair and sustainable price for both its meal kit program and Roving Radish Marketplace. Since the program’s inception, Roving Radish has distributed more than 65,000 meal kits, with 40 percent of them subsidized.

This new location will serve as the Roving Radish's new headquarters and will offer staff a space to prepare, package and sell its meal kits. Additionally, from this expanded space, the Roving Radish will be able to launch its new Roving Radish Mobile Market. Taking its Roving Radish Marketplace on the road, this mobile market will bring fresh produce and proteins to residents at various stops throughout the county weekly.

"County Executive Ball's support has allowed the Roving Radish to achieve its goal of making healthy fresh food assessable to our community while supporting our local farms. This new location outfitted for the needs of the Roving Radish will allow for the program to continue to succeed and make a difference in our community," said James Zoller, Manager, Roving Radish. "I am equally excited about the new shared commercial kitchen which has been talked about for the past 10 years and it is finally becoming a reality. This new shared commercial kitchen is going to fill the need for new and small food businesses to access a commercial kitchen while they develop their businesses."

Shared Commercial Kitchen Space

The Shared Commercial Kitchen will provide a space where small and start up food businesses can rent kitchen space without incurring the cost of building a commercial kitchen. The space will feature an assortment of kitchen equipment, dry, refrigerated and freezer storage, and will be available for rent by the hour. It will be managed by the Roving Radish program, utilizing its existing infrastructure, staff and knowledge of the food industry along with partnerships with the Howard County Economic Development Authority and the Howard County Health Department.

This space will also include a Demonstration Kitchen, which can be used to teach cooking classes and support the culinary arts.

Historic Circuit Courthouse History

A Maryland historical landmark, the historic Circuit Courthouse along Capitoline Hill in Old Ellicott City was built between 1840 and 1843. Made of local granite, the courthouse exemplifies the style of Greek Revival architecture with a prominent cupola that once served as an important landmark along the Underground Railroad, helping guide enslaved people on their pathway to freedom.

The building originally conceived, most likely was a simple rectangular box, as the stylistic details now present – the corner pilasters, cornice and door surround with cornice – were all part of a "change order" in February 1841. In 1938, the courthouse received \$40,000 from the Federal government to construct a two-story addition to the rear of the building.

Located on Judicial Way in Ellicott City, a new Howard County Circuit Courthouse opened in the summer of 2021, resulting in the need to preserve and repurpose the original Howard County Courthouse to continue to serve the community. Howard County solicited feedback from the public to gauge community interest regarding the future of the property. An overwhelming majority of respondents favored utilizing the historic Circuit Courthouse for civic and community uses, gathering space, arts and cultural programs, and food-related uses.

The project is expected to be completed and fully occupied in 2026.

County's first Public Art program in partnership with the Howard County Arts Council. This program, called [Arts for All](#), will enhance the county's cultural landscape by commissioning permanent iconic public art installations, strategically placed at county facilities and community spaces, reflecting the creative talent and vision of the Howard County community. The brand-new

initiative underscores the role of public art in placemaking, providing spaces for inspiration, reflection, and interaction. Pictures from the event can be found [here](#). Video can be found [here](#).

“Howard County is home to an unparalleled community of artists and local arts organizations that help shape the creative fabric of our county. Our commitment to the arts is a recognition that a vibrant community is defined by how our residents imagine, create, and inspire others,” said Ball. “Through a partnership with the Howard County Arts Council, the Arts for All program will commission iconic, permanent public art installations from a nationwide network of visual artists. These installations will serve as places to inspire, reflect, interact, and encourage purpose.”

Through the Arts for All program, County Executive Ball and the Arts Council have launched a [public survey](#) to engage residents in selecting themes, types, and locations for the public art displays. This survey will be open throughout summer 2024, while the Howard County Arts Council prepares to issue a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) from prospective artists. In his FY25 Operating Budget, Ball made an investment of \$1.5 million to fund public art installations at various locations over the next several years.

“Today, with the announcement of Arts for All, we are taking public art in Howard County one step further,” said Coleen West, Executive Director of the Howard County Arts Council. “Public art brings cultural and social value to public parks and places by adding meaning and character to our public spaces. Each location is unique and has a story to tell -- and public art can tell that story by creating spaces that are inspiring, have a pulse or feeling, and reflect the sites’ history, aspirations, and values.”

Through an existing partnership with the Howard County Arts Council, Howard County currently participates in the annual ARTsites program, which places temporary public art installations at locations throughout the county. This new Arts for All program will advance public art in Howard County one step further by commissioning iconic, permanent public art installations from a nationwide network of visual artists. Located at public facilities and on county land, these public art installations will captivate, inspire, and draw people from far and wide to experience their beauty.

“Public art plays an incredibly important role in communities across the nation. It beautifies our public spaces and drives tourism, supporting our local economy. Public art also tells stories about our shared history to wider audiences and helps shape the identity of our community,” said Adam Stull, President of the Board of Directors of the Howard County Arts Council. “We look forward to bringing Arts for All to a neighborhood near you!”

“Public art evolves at the intersection of all fields of inquiry and branches of knowledge and can provide a sense of social cohesion, cultural identity, and historical understanding,” shared Oletha DeVane, a Howard County-based multidisciplinary artist and winner of the 2023 Baker Award for Interdisciplinary Arts.

For more information contact Coleen West at coleen@hocoarts.org.

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The Howard County Arts Council is a non-profit organization whose mission is to serve the citizens of Howard County by fostering the arts, artists and arts organizations. The Howard County Arts Council receives major grants from the Howard County Government and the Maryland State Arts Council and sustaining annual support from corporate, foundation and individual sponsors. Howard County Arts Council offices are located at the Howard County Center for the Arts, 8510 High Ridge Road, Ellicott City, MD 21043. The Howard County Center for the Arts is an accessible facility encouraging the full participation of individuals with disabilities. For information, call (410) 313-2787 or email info@hocoarts.org. TDD: 711

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