

Frequently Asked Questions: McLean Project for the Arts' Clemyjontri Project

What is McLean Project for the Arts?

Since 1962, McLean Project for the Arts (MPA), a nonprofit 501(3), has connected art and community in Northern Virginia. Recognized as a longtime premier center for contemporary visual art exhibitions and arts education programming, the mission of MPA is:

- to exhibit the work of emerging and established artists from the Mid-Atlantic region,
- to promote public awareness and understanding of the concepts of contemporary art,
- to offer instruction and education in the visual arts.

What is McLean Project for the Arts' (MPA's) Clemyjontri Project?

MPA's Clemyjontri Project is the working title of a proposed project to build a new visual arts center at McLean's Clemyjontri Park.

Together with the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), MPA is exploring the potential for a new, inclusive visual arts center. The proposed project would center around the existing residence on the property and, expand to include building new galleries and arts education classrooms, and bringing public art to selected walkways in the park.

What is Clemyjontri Park?

Clemyjontri Park and its vision was made possible through the generosity of benefactors Adele and Mort Lebowitz and the Lebowitz family, who donated the property to the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) in 2000 with the desire to provide a comprehensive play experience for all children in a barrier-free setting, provided that the property and home be occupied for compatible community use.

MPA's inclusive programming to all community residents, regardless of ability, complements the park's barrier-free environment. Mrs. Lebowitz, who passed away in 2014 at age 98, named the park after their four children: Carolyn (CL), Emily (EMY), John (JON) and Petrina (TRI).

How will the public learn of this project?

The Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) and McLean Project for the Arts (MPA) will host a virtual kickoff to the FCPA Master Planning process to discuss public processes to consider the development of a visual arts exhibition and education center at Clemyjontri Park on Thursday, December 17, 2020. Participation details are on the FCPA website.

Would MPA then move out of the MCC?

No – MPA will continue our award-winning exhibitions in the Emerson and Atrium galleries and maintain our robust visual arts instruction in DuVal Studio. This new facility would build upon the existing and continuing visual arts programming currently provided by MPA through the public/private partnership with Fairfax County.

With this additional art exhibition and art education space at the McLean Community Center, MPA will expand the programming of our award-winning ArtReach art education outreach program, offer more exhibition space availability to community partner organizations, and expand the size and offerings of our summer art camp programming for community residents.

What is the timing of this project?

A February 24, 2020 public open house was the first public announcement of the project. We envision this as a three-year process, allowing plenty of time for community involvement.

When will MPA know if MPA's Clemyjontri Project is definite?

We hope to know by Q2 2021 whether this plan for an arts campus at Clemyjontri Park will proceed. Several key approval processes remain including revising the Fairfax County Park Authority Master Plan (per FCPA's Board approval processes); the various zoning approvals, including by the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors; and MPA and FCPA Board approvals of an agreement. Prior to such agreement, MPA will complete a capital campaign feasibility study to confirm we can raise the funds to complete this project.

What types of events are planned to be held at the new location?

In addition to gallery exhibitions and art class instruction, events at the space are pursuant to the Clemyjontri neighborhood taskforce's 2002 agreement with the FCPA. They include hosting weddings and other special events (both indoors and outdoors), as well as possible film viewings and performing arts presentations. Music would be possible within the guidelines of the original neighborhood agreement established during park construction.

Proposed Arts Center Programming in Galleries and Studios

This new arts center aims to engage the community through both visual inspiration and in hands-on, creative expression. Galleries would exhibit the work of contemporary artists from throughout the region in juried shows, single-artist exhibitions and state-of-the-art digital work. Studios would offer art instruction to students ranging from novice to expert and allow for specialty classrooms with dedicated equipment (e.g. printing presses, potters wheels, and digital design). The new center would also provide outdoor access for distinctive nature-based art educational programming, i.e. growing native plants for natural dyes.

When would MPA start exhibiting / teaching at the new location?

We had aspired to begin operations at Clemyjontri Park by the end of 2022, which happens to also be MPA's 60th Anniversary. COVID has changed the project timeline; we still aspire to at least a groundbreaking by the end of 2022.

How much will it cost?

It is too early to project as plans are still under development.

How will MPA get the funds to pay for it?

MPA will soon undertake a feasibility study and planning for a significant capital campaign to fund the project. We anticipate MPA@Clemyjontri, as with all MPA operations, will be funded through private donations.

Will there be other partner organizations involved?

Yes – the Fairfax County Park Authority will be involved in the site development and governance. MPA is proud of its many partnerships in the community, i.e. Fairfax County Government, and the McLean Community Center, Fairfax County Public Schools, ServiceSource, and other arts organizations including McLean Art Society, George Mason and Marymount Universities. MPA has also met with the leadership of the Evermay Home Owners Association.

How will parking be addressed?

Parking at Clemyjontri Park is a known issue. We are designing our programming with those concerns in mind.

- 1) MPA's most heavily attended events, MPAartfest and MPA ArtReach will continue to be held at their current locations, McLean Central Park, and MPA's Emerson Gallery at the McLean Community Center. Special events onsite (e.g. MPA's Spring Benefit - usually an evening in May, or MPA Soiree, the last Saturday evening in September) would include offsite parking, with shuttle service to Clemyjontri Park, as is our longstanding practice;
- 2) MPA's exhibition openings, typically held 7-8/year with 75-100 attendees, generally occur from 7 to 9 p.m., which would not conflict with daytime park usage, and are after the peak of the diurnal evening rush hour;
- 3) MPA Summer camp drop-offs will be orchestrated like school Kiss 'n Ride processes;
- 4) MPA classes are low-volume with ~6 - 10 attendees/class. The number of concurrent classes is TBD based on the facility design;
- 5) MPA daily staff is ~10 individuals, not all of whom will be on site at all times.

How can we be involved?

MPA is currently forming committees of community volunteers to be involved in the planning of this new project. We are also working in concert with the many McLean civic and neighborhood groups whose engagement will be an important part of the success of this new venture. In addition, we welcome community involvement in our forthcoming capital campaign.

What is the impact/benefit to neighbors?

We believe this project will be of significant benefit to the adjoining communities – providing a beautiful respite of art and community within walking distance of their neighborhoods. We will have numerous free events open for community participants. The public art we envision throughout the park will add to the park's atmosphere. And we envision expanded educational opportunities for the community and neighbors through our class offerings, guest speakers and workshops.

How will the art to be displayed in the park be selected?

The vast trails that wind through the park will allow for installation of public art, and perhaps even a sculpture garden as part of the grounds. Any public art displayed in the park will be designed and executed in compliance of FCPA and Fairfax County requirements.

*Working DRAFT
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