

Higgins: \$1 million for renovations at Buffalo AKG Art Museum

Funding, secured by Higgins in federal budget, supports green space connecting museum to community

Congressman Brian Higgins announced \$1 million in federal funding awarded to the Buffalo AKG Art Museum. Secured by Higgins in the fiscal year 2022 budget, this community project funding supports construction of the great lawn, inviting visitors onto the campus and better connecting the museum to the neighborhoods, parks and community around it.

“Situating on the edge of Frederick Law Olmsted’s Delaware Park, the Buffalo AKG Art Museum has long been a fixture in our community, exposing Western New Yorkers of all ages to the fine arts,” Higgins said. “As we continue to make investments in a more connected community, so is the gallery. We are proud to deliver funding to support the great lawn that reclaims Olmsted’s vision for a community connected by parks and parkways, while contributing to Western New York’s ongoing revitalization.”

“For many years, Congressman Higgins has been one of the Buffalo AKG’s most prominent and enthusiastic advocates in government,” said Janne Sirén, Peggy Pierce Elfvín Director. “The generous federal support he secured for the great lawn – a vast new public green space on Elmwood Avenue that unites the three architecturally significant buildings on our campus – enables the museum to further integrate itself into Olmsted’s Delaware Park, a world-renowned masterpiece of landscape architecture. The great lawn is a true community asset, a gathering place for visitors from across our region and the world. It is a privilege to thank Congressman Higgins for his steadfast partner-

ship at every juncture of the Buffalo AKG’s historic campus development and expansion project. Henceforth, the great lawn will serve as a testament to his belief in the transformative power of art and cultural institutions, and the renewal of Buffalo and Western New York.”

A press release explained: Founded in 1862, the Buffalo AKG Art Museum, previously known as the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, is one of the oldest art museums in the country. Located within Delaware Park, it originally featured grand staircases on the east and west ends, and 102 columns – second only to the U.S. Capitol Building. In 1962, the museum expanded, adding a new modernist wing with an auditorium, restaurant, and additional gallery space. During the renovation, the staircase to Elmwood Avenue and green space were eliminated to accommodate a parking lot, decreasing walkability, and disconnecting the Elmwood Village from the park.

The expansion project makes modern updates on the museum’s campus that accommodate visitors while restoring community green space. Federal budget funding, secured by Higgins, supports the new great lawn. Replacing the surface lot, the green space will reconnect the museum to the Elmwood Village neighborhood, the museum district, and SUNY Buffalo State University, reclaiming areas of Delaware Park on the west side of the museum. The new campus configuration will integrate the park with the museum buildings and the adjacent neighborhood.



Congressman Brian Higgins addresses the crowd as Buffalo AKG Art Museum Peggy Pierce Elfvín Director Janne Sirén looks on. (Submitted photo)

The great lawn will sit as a centerpiece to the new and old museum buildings, serving as both a destination itself and a gateway to all the renovated AKG Museum has to offer. Pathways will lead visitors to the indoor town square. Free of charge and open to the public, the new town square will be the hub of the museum’s community engagement activities, sitting adjacent to the museum shop, the cafe, and five state-of-the-art classrooms. Each year, 110,000 people will utilize this new space, in addition to increased visitation due to new and renewed exhibition facili-

ties within the museum. Along with new underground parking, the great lawn, and enhanced campus landscaping, the Buffalo AKG expansion project includes the construction of a new building on the northwest corner of the campus. The Jeffery E. Gundlach Building will add 30,000 square-feet of gallery space for the museum’s world-renowned modern and contemporary art collection.

The courtyard of the museum’s existing Seymour H. Knox Building will be covered with new artwork by Olafur Eliasson and Se-

bastian Behmann of Studio Other Spaces. The project also includes substantial updates to the Robert and Elisabeth Wilmers Building, originally completed in 1905, preserving its architecture, while also making the spaces more accessible and visitor friendly.

The museum, which has been temporarily closed during ongoing construction, is set to reopen to the public on June 12. To learn more about the extensive expansion project, visit <https://buffalo-akg.org/building-buffalo-akg-art-museum>.

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