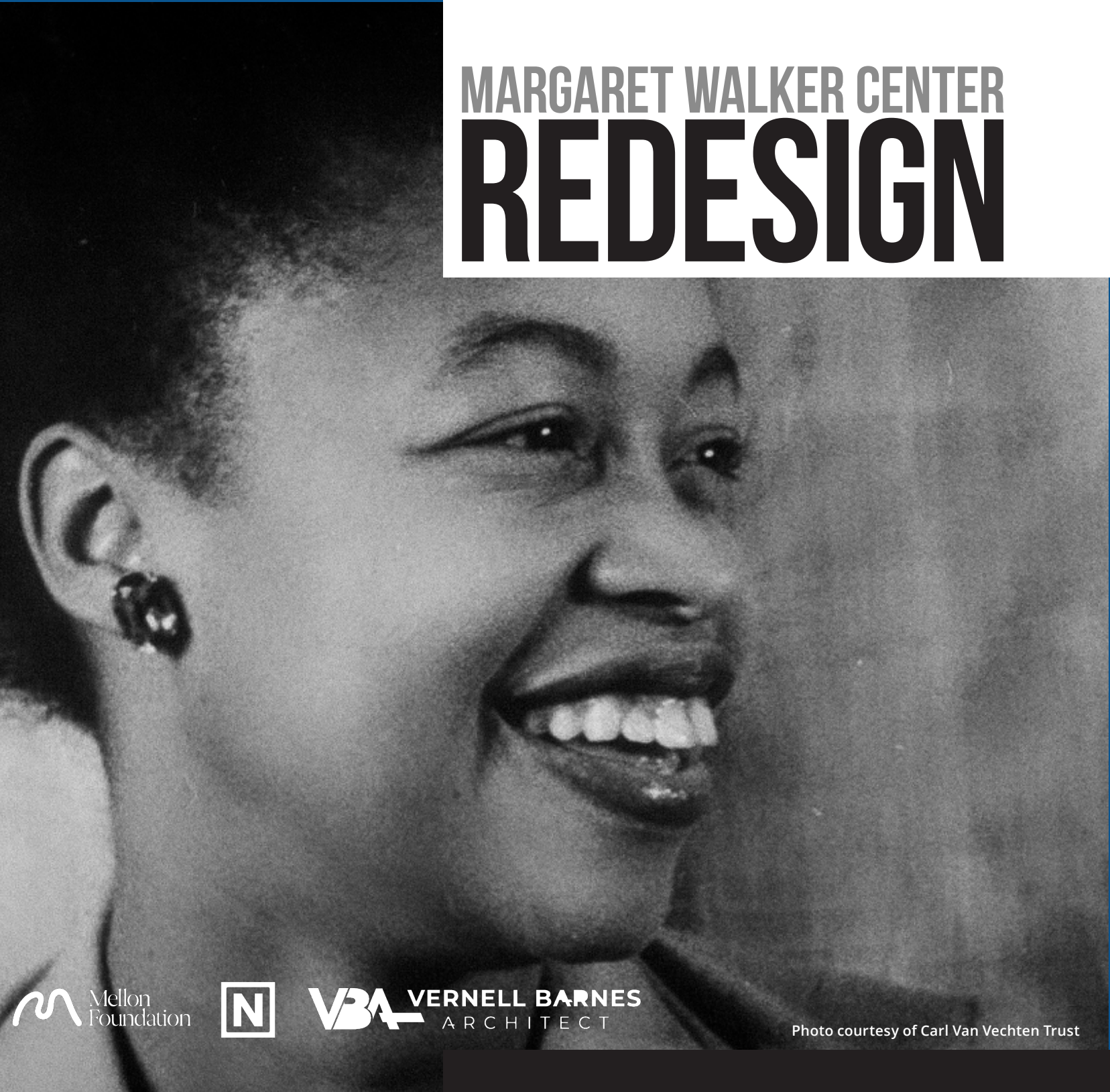


Margaret Walker Center Feasibility Study 2023

MARGARET WALKER CENTER **REDESIGN**



 Mellon
Foundation



 **VERNELL BARNES**
ARCHITECT

Photo courtesy of Carl Van Vechten Trust

MARGARET WALKER CENTER
REDESIGN

from A Poem for Farish Street

Margaret Walker

A Patchwork Quilt

This street is like my grandma's patchwork quilt
Kaleidoscope, appliqued with multicolored
threads of embroidery.

A golden sun, blue skies, carpeted with the green
the yellow, the red, the white, the black, the brown, and
the checkered.

Bright gingham, fine silk and satin and linen cloth
patterned patches on the faces of these people
the Chinese laundry-man

Black cobbler

Greek grocer

And down the street there used to be
a livery stable with a brown Indian man.

Now there's a taxi stand.

Once street cars passed along the side
up Capitol

to where black slaves built the Capitol
the mansion for the governor
and over there, the city hall.

They made these bricks and laid them too
not knowing some day they would meet
as Black and Tan in 1868.

This patchwork quilt is stitched with blood and tears.

This street is paved with martyred Black men's flesh and bones.

* * *

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Photo courtesy of William R. Ferris

Margaret Walker

1915 - 1998

As a professor of English at Jackson State in 1968, Margaret Walker founded the Institute for the Study of the History, Life, and Culture of Black People.

Already an accomplished author, she stood at the forefront of a nascent Black Studies movement, and the Institute reflected her immersion in 20th century African American history and culture. During her lifetime, she had the unique opportunity to be mentored by the likes of W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes, and Richard Wright and to be a mentor to writers such as James Baldwin, Alice Walker, and Sonia Sanchez.

Born in Birmingham, Alabama, on July 7, 1915, Walker was reading and writing by the time she was five. When her family settled in New Orleans in 1925, her writing flourished after meeting Langston Hughes, who encouraged her to leave the South to complete her education. Graduating from Northwestern University, her father's alma mater, in 1935, Walker stayed in Chicago to work with the Federal Writers' Project. There, she developed a close friendship with Richard Wright and joined his Southside Writers Group.

In 1937, Walker wrote her seminal poem, "For My People," which served as part of her mas-

ter's thesis at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop. For her work in her book of poetry, *For My People*, she became the first Black woman to receive the Yale University Younger Poets Award.

By 1949, Walker and her husband, Firnist Alexander, decided to move with their four children to Mississippi, so she could join the English Department at Jackson State. While there, she completed her doctoral dissertation in the Iowa program. Inspired by the memories of her maternal grandmother, Elvira Ware Dozier, *Jubilee* was published in 1966. It represented thirty years of research and reflection and has never since been out of print. The genre of fiction known as the neo-slave narrative emerged from *Jubilee* and came to include the likes of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and Alex Haley's *Roots*.





Photo courtesy of Carl Van Vechten Trust

Margaret Walker's lasting achievement at JSU was her Black Studies Institute. As director, she organized several conferences that were the first of their kind, including the 1971 National Evaluative Conference on Black Studies and the 1973 Phillis Wheatley Poetry Festival.

After thirty years of teaching, Margaret Walker retired as Professor Emerita and donated her literary and administrative papers to the Institute that she had founded and that was subsequently named in her honor. The Margaret Walker Papers at JSU constitute one of the single largest collections of a modern Black, female writer anywhere in the world. The Walker Center houses close to forty significant manuscript collections and an oral history repository with nearly 1,000 interviews.

**“
Let a new earth rise.
Let another world be born.
Let a bloody peace
be written in the sky.
Let a second generation
full of courage issue forth;
let a people loving freedom**

- For My People



Margaret Walker Center

Mission

The Margaret Walker Center is an archive, museum, and Black Studies institute, dedicated to the preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of African American history and culture for a local and global community of students, scholars, and supporters.

Vision

Founded by Margaret Walker in 1968, the Center seeks to honor her academic, artistic, and activist legacy by expanding and promoting its manuscript holdings and oral history collections, interpreting African American history and culture through its museum and exhibits, coordinating public programs on campus and throughout the community, preserving historic structures central to the African American experience, and advocating for a degree-granting Black Studies program at Jackson State University.

The Margaret Walker Center is an archive and museum dedicated to the preservation, interpretation, and dissemination of African American history and culture.

DESIGN INTENDED
TO PAY SUBTLE HOMAGE
TO WEST AFRICAN TEXTILES,
AFRICAN AMERICAN QUILT
PATTERNS, AND MARGARET
WALKER'S INITIALS - MW.



Defining the Problem

Housed in historic Ayer Hall—the oldest building at Jackson State—the Margaret Walker Center's current facility is limited. As a repository for historic collections and gallery for exhibitions, Ayer Hall faces serious environmental issues and space constraints.

While limited space to grow the Center's collections is a problem, Ayer Hall's issues with temperature and humidity control are not sustainable for an archive and museum. The first three floors of the building were never properly insulated, and, in a Mississippi summer, moisture builds. On rainy days, water can seep through the roof and the walls.

Inside the archives, insulated water piping runs along the ceiling of the Center's manuscript vaults, and the roughly 1,000 oral histories, dating to the early 1970s, were housed in their own wing on the third floor but had to be relocated to the first-floor vaults because of environmental degradation.

Due to the fact that Ayer Hall has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1977, there are constraints on what can be done to fix these problems. Even if expensive renovations to Ayer Hall made it adequate as an archive, there is no room for expansion, and the building remains landlocked in the middle of campus with limited access for the community beyond JSU.

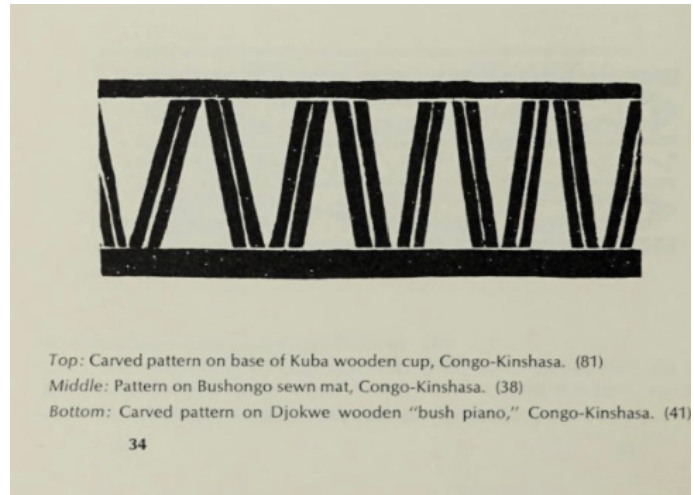
With these problems in mind, shareholders in the Margaret Walker Center's legacy informed the design process. Center Staff and a Steering Committee participated in regular reviews of materials, and community engagement sessions were held in-person and online.



Ayer Hall, circa 1904

Design & Inspiration

Margaret Walker's "A Poem for Farish Street: A Patchwork Quilt" was dedicated to a sculpture in a historically Black Jackson neighborhood. Motifs in the art and the poem tie together the external and internal spaces of this design concept. Subtle allusions to West African and African American textiles are baked into the floor patterns of the external plaza and internal street and the metal panels around the building's exterior.



Top: Carved pattern on base of Kuba wooden cup, Congo-Kinshasa. (81)
Middle: Pattern on Bushongo sewn mat, Congo-Kinshasa. (38)
Bottom: Carved pattern on Djokwe wooden "bush piano," Congo-Kinshasa. (41)





Instructional and Studio Space

The total area allocated to instructional and studio space is a 9,209 square feet. Four classrooms - one tiered and three with flexible seating arrangements - will be located on the John R. Lynch Street side of the building.

The classrooms will have floor-to-ceiling glass walls that will put education on display. Three of the classrooms will have a rear wall with digital screens that will double as billboards highlighting current and future events for the Margaret Walker Center.

The flexibility of the classrooms will allow professors from all majors not only to introduce students to archives and research methods but to engage students in any discipline who have different learning styles through multiple learn-

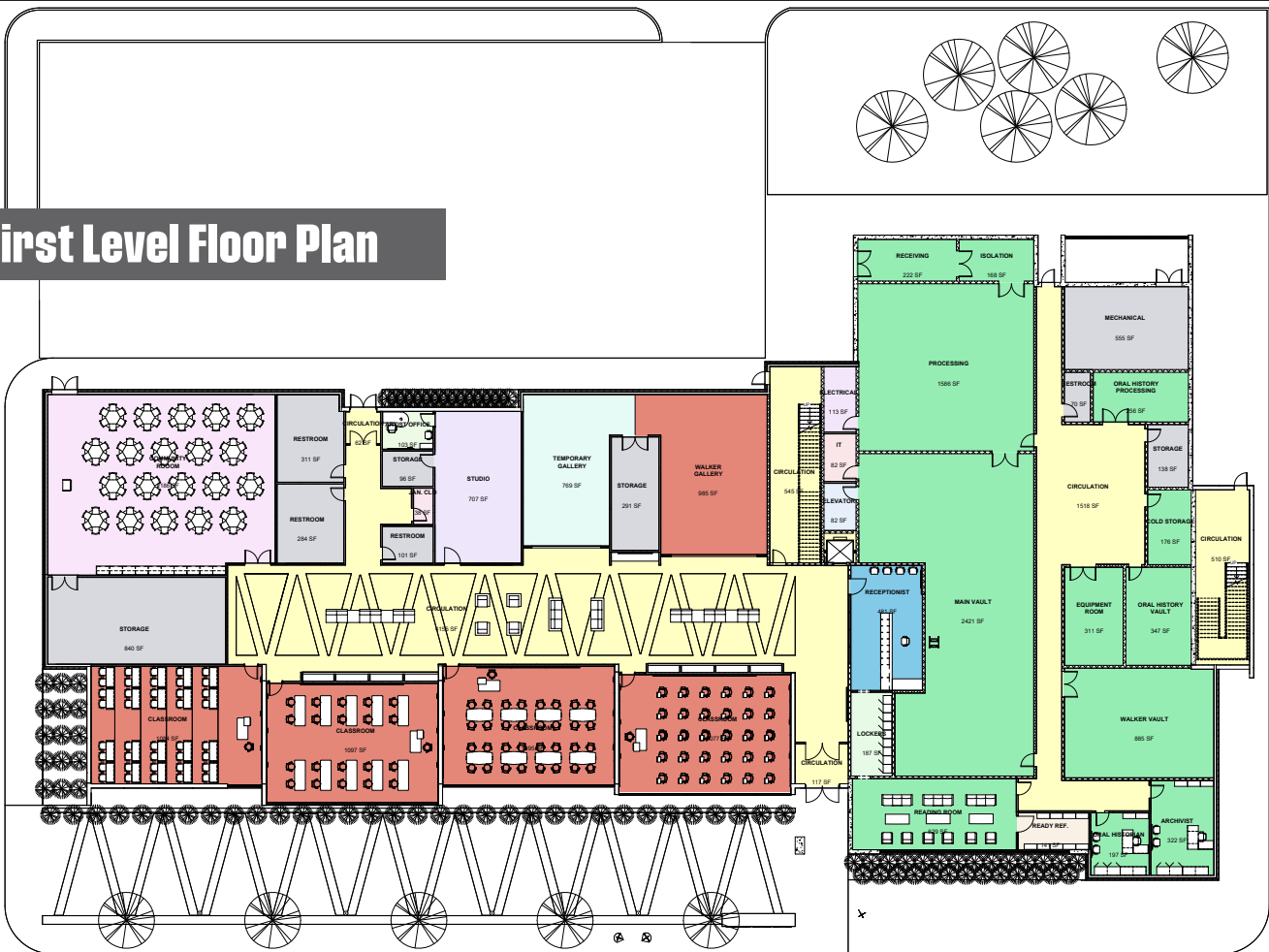
ing environments. As with other spaces, the classrooms will also be available to the community for various uses.

A community room will provide seating for up to 200 people depending on the arrangement and can be used for lectures, meetings, and video presentations.

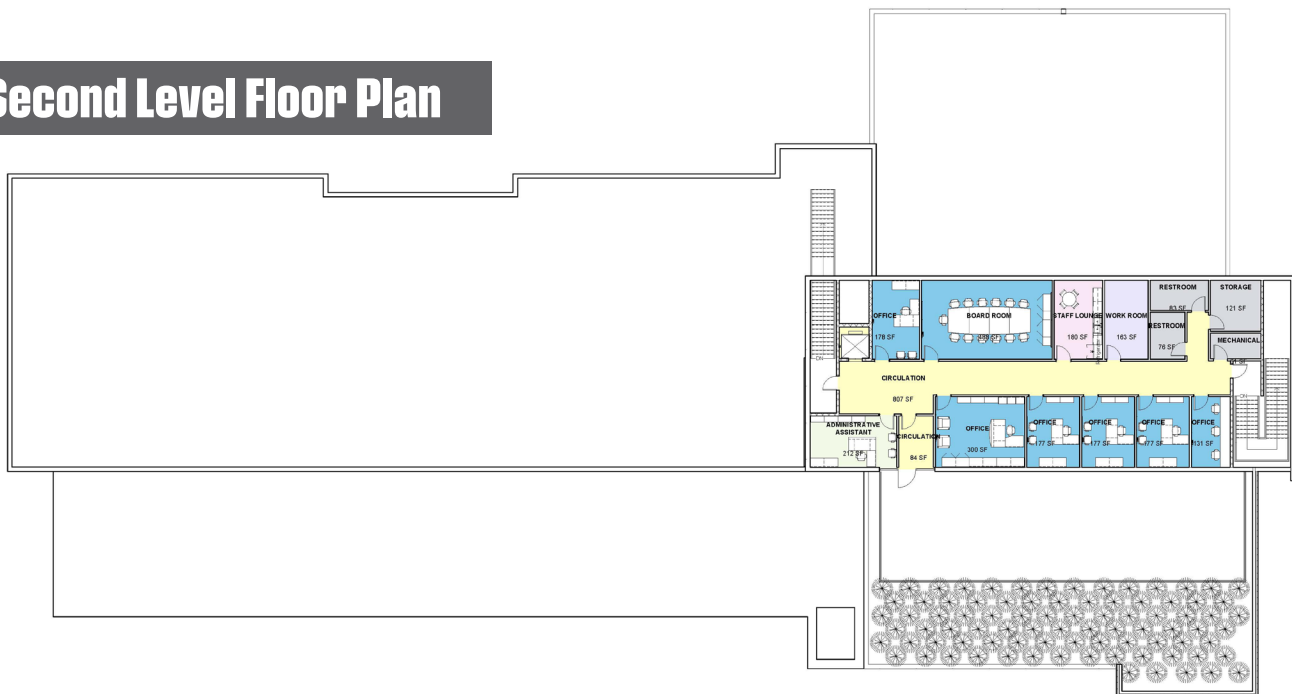
One studio of 707 square feet is provided for visiting artists. The studio can be used for a variety of functions such as dance, music, and photography among other potential educational and outreach programs..

The building has two art galleries, one a 985 square foot permanent exhibit highlighting the life and times of Margaret Walker. The other gallery, 769 square feet, will be used for temporary and traveling exhibits.

First Level Floor Plan



Second Level Floor Plan



Archival and Research Space

Archival space will account for 7,661 square feet. The reading room will accommodate 12 researchers at a time. The “back of house” operations for the archives will consist of 6,372 square feet of space. Those include vaults and spaces for receiving, processing, isolation, equipment, and cold storage.

Administrative and Office Space

Administrative and office space will account for 2,684 square feet for ten full-time employees and student workers. The majority of offices will be located on the second floor, where a conference room, work room, staff lounge, and an outdoor rooftop deck can be accessed.

The rooftop deck allows for further community engagement as a space for receptions and other events.



Budget

| INSTRUCTIONAL SPACES | EXISTING SF | PROPOSED SF | QUANTITY | TOTAL SF |
|--|-------------|-------------|----------|--------------|
| Classroom | -- | 1090 | 4 | 4363 |
| Artist In Residence Studio | -- | 707 | 1 | 707 |
| Artist In Residence Office | -- | 103 | 1 | 103 |
| Artist In Residence Storage | -- | 96 | 1 | 96 |
| Walker Exhibition Gallery | 878 | 985 | 1 | 985 |
| Temporary Exhibition Gallery | -- | 769 | 1 | 769 |
| Auditorium/ Community Room | 728 | 2186 | 1 | 2186 |
| TOTAL | | | | 9209 |
| ARCHIVE SPACES | EXISTING SF | PROPOSED SF | QUANTITY | TOTAL SF |
| Reading Room | -- | 629 | 1 | 629 |
| Ready Reference Room | -- | 141 | 1 | 141 |
| Main Vault | 900 | 2421 | 1 | 2421 |
| Oral History Vault | 100 | 347 | 1 | 347 |
| Walker Vault | 300 | 885 | 1 | 885 |
| Equipment Room | 208 | 311 | 1 | 311 |
| Cold Storage Room | -- | 176 | 1 | 176 |
| Processing Room | 1036 | 1586 | 1 | 1586 |
| Receiving Room | -- | 222 | 1 | 222 |
| Isolation Room | -- | 168 | 1 | 168 |
| Oral History Processing | -- | 256 | 1 | 256 |
| Archivist Office | 120 | 322 | 1 | 322 |
| Oral History Office | 132 | 197 | 1 | 197 |
| TOTAL | | | | 7661 |
| ADMINISTRATIVE SPACES | EXISTING SF | PROPOSED SF | QUANTITY | TOTAL SF |
| Receptionists Office | 384 | 481 | 1 | 481 |
| Conference Room | 480 | 488 | 1 | 488 |
| Director's Office | 264 | 300 | 1 | 300 |
| Administrative Assistant's Office | 180 | 212 | 1 | 212 |
| Educational Programming Office | 136 | 177 | 1 | 177 |
| Visiting Scholar's Office | -- | 178 | 1 | 178 |
| Grants Office | 135 | 177 | 1 | 177 |
| Communications Office | 135 | 177 | 1 | 177 |
| Student Office | -- | 131 | 1 | 131 |
| Work Room | 140 | 183 | 1 | 183 |
| Staff Lounge | 176 | 180 | 1 | 180 |
| TOTAL | | | | 2684 |
| TOTAL NET ASSIGNABLE SQUARE FOOTAGE FOR BUILDING: | | | | 19554 |
| GENERAL BUILDING SPACES | EXISTING SF | PROPOSED SF | QUANTITY | TOTAL SF |
| Circulation | | 7798 | | 7798 |
| Building Storage | | 1390 | | 1390 |
| Mechanical | | 616 | | 616 |
| Men's Restroom | | 284 | | 284 |
| Women's Restroom | | 311 | | 311 |
| Family Restroom | | 330 | | 330 |
| IT Closet | | 82 | | 82 |
| Electrical Closet | | 113 | | 113 |
| Elevator Room | | 82 | | 82 |
| Custodial Closet | | 38 | | 38 |
| TOTAL | | | | 11044 |
| TOTAL NET UNASSIGNABLE SQUARE FOOTAGE FOR BUILDING: | | | | 11044 |

Projected Costs

Due to the environmental and security requirements for exhibit and archival spaces, the standard industry rate for construction of a building like this is a bit higher than it would be for simple office spaces.

At \$400 per square foot for this proposed project of 30,598 square feet, the total construction costs will be approximately \$12,239,200.

Professional fees, furniture, fixtures and equipment, contingency costs and a funding for adequate ongoing maintenance and operations brings the total project cost to \$20,000,000.

“
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grandma's patchwork quilt
Kaleidoscope, appliqued
with multicolored threads of
embroidery. A golden sun, blue
skies, carpeted with the green
the yellow, the red, the white,
the black, the brown, and the
checkered.

- A Poem for Farish Street



Margaret Walker Center

www.jsums.edu/margaretwalkercenter

Jackson State University

www.jsums.edu

Mellon Foundation

www.mellon.org

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Photo courtesy of William R. Ferris