

AACTMAD Facilities Requirements

The Ann Arbor Council for Traditional Music and Dance, a non-profit foundation, is a participatory membership organization which enriches people's lives and sense of community through traditional music, dance, song, and related arts.

AACTMAD presents and supports events and programs that preserve living traditions of dance, music, and song, build community among the participants, and provide opportunities for healthy activity, fitness and exercise. AACTMAD serves as a resource to other individuals and groups engaged in similar activities and as a facilitator for music, dance, and song activities that it does not directly sponsor.

In October 2001 and again in March 2005, AACTMAD held long range vision sessions with its membership. At both of these planning sessions, the goal of "having a secure dance facility over which we have significant control" was stated as a top priority. In accordance with this long-term goal, the Facilities Committee has been charged by the Board of Directors to explore ways to obtain control of suitable space for traditional music and dance activities and programs. The Board's resolution of October 13, 2003, said: "AACTMAD is desirous and willing to enter into a building ownership arrangement, subject to the approval of the board."

Currently, all of the spaces that AACTMAD uses for its programs are rented. Rental spaces are not secure. We have identified several areas of concern about rental spaces that we currently use that are neither of our own design nor under our control:

- **Cost** of many spaces is prohibitive for our community use
- **Unsatisfactory acoustics** in large spaces create an unpleasant dance experience
- **Lack of appropriate and comfortable space for young children** limits the ability of families to attend
- **Size of the dance floor** discourages some attendance (when it gets crowded) and makes it more difficult to pay callers and musicians adequately
- **Equity growth** is not possible
- **Need to constantly set-up and tear-down** a large sound system and other equipment consumes volunteer time
- **Restricted access** at the Michigan Union made its use impossible
- **Ability to reserve regularly and in advance** is essential to attendance and growth
- **Cleanliness, maintenance, and aesthetics of halls** we can afford is often sorely lacking
- **Permanent storage** for paper goods, costumes, etc., is lacking and creates more work for volunteers
- **Handicap accessibility** is rarely available in the older buildings available to us. Many older members would like to attend – even to just sit and listen, but they cannot get into the building
- **Sitting space in view of dance floor** for those who wish to attend but not dance (injury, age, preference) is often non-existent
- **Stage often too small** to accommodate performers
- **Lack of air conditioning** limits summer use
- **Welcoming and Shoe Changing Area** is too small and often cramped and not attractive
- **No publicly accessible place for AACTMAD Library** means our resources are not being used to their full potential, and collaboration between callers, musicians, etc., is diminished

We understand that in order for our organization to grow and have a community presence, we must have time, space, and aesthetic control over a facility. Because our use of a facility is primarily in the evenings and weekends, we must find partners who wish to share this space during weekdays and other available times, to make it financially affordable.

As we considered organizations that would make good partners for the co-ownership of a facility, we agreed upon the following values and goals:

- **Experiencing traditional music, dance, and song** enriches everyone in the greater community and keeps the traditions alive and vital.
- **Respect and tolerance** for the differences between people and their cultures is fostered and enriched through singing, dancing, and playing music from many traditions: celtic, African, South American, etc.
- **Beauty and comfortable, welcoming aesthetics** create an inviting and satisfying environment for our activities. We desire to encourage those unfamiliar with traditional music and dance to attend and participate in our events and join our community.
- **Preserving traditional music, dance, and songs** enriches everyone in the greater community and keeps the traditions alive.
- **Family Friendly** events and environments allow people of all ages, including the youngest members of our community, to share and experience traditional folk activities. Making these events a part of their lives will help to perpetuate them.
- **A Sense of Community** is achieved through singing, dancing, and playing music from many traditions.
- **Education and Outreach** are highly valued and deemed necessary to keep tradition alive, as means for providing physical and mental development and as cultural enrichment.

We are now moving forward and beginning to work with partners to develop a partnership agreement and discuss architectural details of this new facility. It is AACTMAD's vision that a co-ownership arrangement will offer our organization:

- A home base for our regular events that will foster community and provide opportunities for impromptu socializing
- A shared-use facility that allows us to be good stewards of our financial resources
- An ecologically responsible facility in terms of the building design, construction, and use
- Growth potential for our educational and outreach programs

A) Initial FAC Committee priority list *(compiled on January 19, 2004):*

WHAT DOES THE FACILITY WE WANT LOOK LIKE?

Minimum requirements (any facility we consider must have the ability to meet these requirements)

- Wood floor
- Floor size larger than current Grange floor (it is about 1100 sq. ft. - At 16 sq. ft. per person for dancing, we want to accommodate at least 150 dancers; therefore we need a 2500 sq. ft. floor
- Dance floor should be dividable - for use by two groups
- A stage
- Social area in view of dance floor
- A commercial kitchen
- Handicap accessibility
- Adequate number of bathrooms - properly configured
- Changing room/area for women
- Coat and shoe changing area
- Welcoming entry
- Space for auxiliary use (i.e. AACTMAD library, office,...)
- Chair/table storage
- Built in sound system and storage for second system
- Parking available for 150 cars
- Building to accommodate 200 people for weddings, etc.
- Air conditioning
- Adequate natural light

Wanted BUT NOT REQUIRED

- More than one dance floor
- No basement space used for congregating
- Dining space for 150-200 people
- Coat and shoe changing area off of entry (not dance floor)
- Charming components
- Porch for sitting
- Grounds for picnicking
- Outdoor dance floor
- Mirrors on walls - for dance classes, etc.
- 5 acres for organic gardening, educational component
- Showers
- Soundproof rooms for rehearsals/small classes

WHAT IS PROPER LOCATION FOR THIS FACILITY?

The group felt that this facility should be located in Ann Arbor or within 5 miles of the city limits in any direction (could go out 8 miles if located East of AA). Close to an expressway exit and no more than two turns off of exit road is preferred.

B) Notes from several Community Forums and committee interviews (*compiled from Jan of 2004 – July of 2006*):

Important Elements/Requirements for the New Facility:

(from dancers, dance leaders/callers, musicians, and organizers)

- Acoustically sound space and stage (good for live, recorded, and DJ needs)
- Built-in and flexible sound systems (band and caller monitors, wireless mics, etc.)
- Sound baffling/absorption/abatement
- Unfinished wood floors with a simple system/policy for protecting them
- Breakout rooms (wood floors) for smaller dancing classes/needs
- Build in a rear entrance for better flow
- Quiet, energy efficient HVAC systems
- Bus space/parking
- LIGHTING
 - Adjustable dimmable, sconces
 - Stage lighting, sufficient lighting space
- Easier access to drinking water
- Stage space adequate for 20+ musicians (some playing large instruments)
- Drop off area near to stage for loading/unloading
- Accessible stage areas
- Site Visits to other successful venues were recommended
- Space that can accommodate weddings
- Bar/buffet station
- DJ table/workspace
- Permanent designated storage space for partners
- Good signage- interior and exterior
- Shoe shelves/lockers/cubbies
- Break room/green room for performers, instrument cases, etc.
- Site that offers instant ability to navigate
- Non-corporate/non-Holiday Inn ambiance!
- Accessibility beyond the law
- On-site business partners (ie. Espresso Royale) or concessions
- Rentable office space/stable \$ base
- Plans for sustainability if leadership changes
- Recording space
- Sufficient electrical outlets
- Changeable/multipurpose space and features
- AIR/VENTILATION
 - Windows that open
 - Ceiling fans/ large floor fans
 - Cross ventilation
 - Controllable ventilation at stage

Remaining Concerns:

- Space Negotiations, Utilization Procedures, targeted rental rates
- Sharing space, Negotiating our needs up front
- Cost Scenarios
- Projected Financials
- Fear of growth, rapid expansion
- Don't underestimate storage needs

c) Homework answers submitted to the Architect, Dan Ludwig, by the FAC committee (*compiled July 18, 2006*):

1. Determine maximum number of people at any given time.

At this time, our events have ranges as follows:

- Performance team practices/music jamming sessions/workshops: 10-30
- Concerts/Singing gatherings: 20-50
- Small dances: 35-60
- Monthly dances: 60-120
- Special events: 100-250
- Large Weekend events: 300-500

2. How much space do you currently occupy? Is it sufficient? Why or why not?

Chapel Hill condo clubhouse every week for the English country dance; it is air-conditioned, as well as having good airflow via a wall of operable doors and windows. It has a large vestibule, a coat closet, a wood dance floor (about 25 X 35), a living room area adjacent to the dance floor (about the same size as the dance floor), and an open kitchen with a serving bar along one corner of the dance floor. It's a great space for dancing up to a max of 50. The open quality of the different spaces all on one level supports good traffic flow, socializing, kids doing homework while their parents dance, serving refreshments, cleaning up afterwards, etc. Dancing is very tight at 50 people. This series is growing, however, and we foresee that this **facility is too small**. One downside of this location is that the dance floor is maintained so as to, on occasion, be too slippery for safe dancing. The building management isn't interested in adjusting their floor treatment to make the dance floor better for us.

Two contra dances a month are held at the **Pittsfield grange**, as well as bimonthly practice sessions of the Pittsfield Open Band. The building has a tiny entryway, the best dance floor almost anywhere (about 30 X 40, unfinished hard maple), a small unventilated stage, a coat closet, small windows (no air conditioning and minimal support for air flow). The basement kitchen is large, and there is room for 50-60 people to be seated at long tables in a separate room adjacent to the kitchen. This hall is sufficient for an 80-person contra dance and has occasionally held 120 dancers or more, but it's not happy at that level. We used to hear that nobody goes there anymore because it's too crowded; attendance of over 100 contra dancers creates an unsafe and unappealing experience. It also does not support families bringing their children to dances, because kids aren't safe on the crowded dance floor and there's no place for the kids to be where parents can see them from the dance floor. The sanitary facilities are inadequate. The heat/cold situation for the bands on the stage can be very uncomfortable; in the winter, dancers need the windows open and the bands get cold. In the summer, that stage is hot and airless. **The building is severely out-of-code and can't be expanded.**

We often rent gymnasiums within **middle schools** for in-school programs (30-200 attendees). We would like to be able to hold family dance and music events in our new facility for these groups.

We hold big weekend events (300-500 attendees) within **middle schools** using several rooms simultaneously such as: 2 gyms, cafeteria, and several music/workshop rooms.

Our performance teams (12 or less people) use 900 square feet of space in **Gretchen's House facilities** on a weekly basis. We also use Gretchen's House facilities for many of our meetings.

3. What privacy / security issues are important to you?

The building needs to be secure when it's not in use. We've been lucky as far as I know that we have not had significant security problems during public dance events. It would be good to have just one accessible entrance open during events, so all participants (not including the band) come in at the front of the hall. Secure storage for sound equipment and our library of resource materials (books, CDs, swords, etc.) is needed. Partner groups and possibly other long-term rental groups will need lockable storage and office space. Places for dancers to store their belongings will be needed, but can't necessarily be secure. This hasn't been a problem up to now. Unlocked storage for dancers' belongings should probably be in view of the people in the hall. Some dances operate on an honor system rather than staffing an admissions table; the admissions table and money should be viewable from the dance floor. While we've never had any problems, I wouldn't want to leave a basket of money sitting out of view, just inside an open front door. Even for the events that staff their admission table throughout the dance, whoever sits at the table will want to be in hearing and in view of the dance floor, rather than isolated in an empty entry hall.

4. What is your forecast for future growth?

Having a visible, attractive building, increasing the capacity of the space, increasing community awareness of our activities, and continuing to grow the quality of the events, we would expect to see an immediate growth spurt on opening the new building, followed by a continuing upward trend of maybe 10 - 15% growth per year. That said, these dances work best when they're not overwhelming masses of people, other than for occasional large special events. Dances that go over about 200 people become less friendly, less community minded, and less manageable. The solution if we start to see too much growth is to add more events on different nights and possibly offer different flavors, themes, constituencies. Other than occasional special events, we're not envisioning any regular 500-person dance events in the future.

5. What are the main activities that you are engaged in?

Participatory dance, music, and song events.

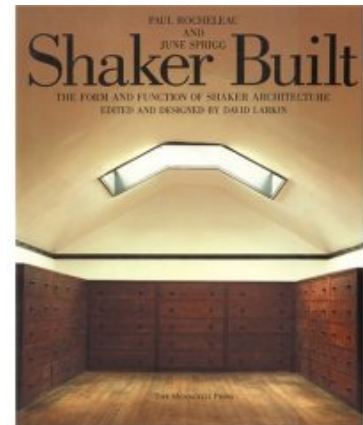
6. What is the image you want to project for your organization? (to the public as well as internally).

Fun. Down home - "natural" (such as use of wood or stone building materials). Environmentally responsible. Welcoming and inclusive - fostering warm community involvement.

7. Think / look for examples of other buildings which you feel represent the character of the space you desire (this is an ongoing exercise).

Interior feeling: Very simple lines with good proportions and good natural light. The interior of Webster Church is an example.

Exterior feeling:



8. How much time does your organization plan to spend each week within the facility? Does this encompass different quantities of people at different times?

Initially:

- 4 weekend afternoons: 10-20 people
- 3 Saturday evenings/month: 75-120 people
- 2 Friday evenings/month: 75-120 people
- Every Tuesday evening and possibly one other Mon-Thu evening: 40-75 people
- 3 weekends per year: 150-500 people
- 3 summertime youth camps – weeklong mornings

9. What is your potential for overlap of uses between users?

Overlap between users is expected to be high. We have developed models for our partner group's needs and will want to rent the remaining unused time-space slots to third parties. We need very complete sound separation between the halls. If there are two different dance events or one dance and a wedding or other event happening at the same time, neither event will want to hear the other hall. We'll also want clear directional flow so that arriving people can find their way even if simultaneous events are occurring. Large attendance parking issues need to at least be discussed.

10. Express concerns you may have regarding sharing of facility (eg: security, sound control, hours of operation, conflicting schedules, public access, etc.).

Some expressed earlier:

- Although events are typically public and we encourage visitors, admission is charged for most events, so minimizing unpaid access is desirable.
- Sound abatement between spaces and acoustics within each space
- Wood dance floor damage
- Schedule conflict processes are being worked out by the partners