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**Academy for Integrated Arts to begin 2016-17 school year
with new pledges, new building**

KANSAS CITY, MO, March 28, 2016 – Academy for Integrated Arts (AFIA), a Kansas City charter school, recently purchased a building in Kansas City, Missouri, after receiving more than \$3 million in pledges over the past 6 months. AFIA closed its real estate transaction for the property on March 21, and will move into the space at the start of the 2016-17 school year.

The facility, located at 7910 Troost Avenue, is the original home of King Louie East Bowling Alley, built in 1955. The building was chosen for its sound structure and shape, as well as its locational appeal in the south area of Kansas City. In addition, the large lot on the west side of the building has ample space for parking, playgrounds and community gardens. Working with the team at Kansas City-based Helix Architecture & Design, AFIA has plans to use the space for a modern configuration of common areas and classrooms, including new areas dedicated to music and fine arts.

According to Helix’s Bryan Gross, Lead Architect on the AFIA project, “As we explored both new construction and renovation options for AFIA’s new home, the existing King Louie East building presented a fortuitous solution that accommodates the programmatic needs of the school while allowing them to move in much sooner than building new. In our design, we tried to provide flexible spaces that will foster a culture of collaborative teaching. One particular space we are excited about is a mini-amphitheater with bleacher seating that will allow for impromptu meetings, student performances or a casual reading area. The building will be an incredible asset for AFIA educators and administrators as they continue to grow and advance their mission of using the arts as a catalyst for learning.”

The building purchase was made possible with recent pledges totaling over \$3 million, anchored by a \$1 million lead pledge from Kansas City philanthropists and business owners, Laurie Bomba and Andy Fromm. Bomba currently serves as the school's volunteer librarian, where she has spent 15-20 hours per week witnessing how a constructivist, arts-integrated school operates. "I have been astonished by the work the teachers and students have accomplished in such minimalist facilities. Much is accomplished with little at this school. I can't help imagining what more would be possible in a better-designed space. I leave the property each day with a strong sense that the committed teachers and engaged students of this school deserve better," says Bomba.

AFIA's principal, Tricia DeGraff, Ph.D., says she is thrilled to have the opportunity to build upon the school's recent academic successes in a more inspired, productive space. "Our growing enrollment is a testament to the talented and caring team at AFIA. Families see the value in our constructivist, student-centered approach to learning, but we're out of space in our current facility. In addition to giving us room to grow, our new building is designed to reflect our unique philosophy." The school's student population is projected to increase from 120 to 160 students in grade K-6 for the 2016-17 school year. The school will eventually grow to approximately 350 students. Enrollment for the 2016-17 school year, AFIA's first in its new space, is now open. There are openings in all grades, with enough spots for 40 kindergarteners. Says school founder Lynne Brown, "I am excited by the work of our team. The AFIA educators, our principal, teachers, staff and volunteers are doing outstanding work in two small warehouses, and the new facility will be worthy of their efforts."

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About AFIA

Academy for Integrated Arts was founded in 2012 as a public charter school. The Mission of AFIA is to use the arts to prepare students for an admissions-based college preparatory secondary school. The arts serve as a catalyst for learning, achievement, curiosity and self-esteem. Students are able to create and actively express a deeper meaning of subject matter content through using visual arts as well as music, dance and dramatization. Current enrollment is 120, of whom 79% are African American and 93% are on a Free & Reduced Lunch program. Enrollment for the 2016-17 school year is now open, and applications for new students can be found at afiakc.org, or at the school office at 5604 Troost Avenue.