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Arts on Gaines lands \$375K grant

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The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation is awarding a \$375,000 grant to Arts on Gaines, a proposed mix of affordable housing and studio space for local artists.

The grant, announced Tuesday, is \$150,000 more than what the Council on Culture and Arts had sought for the project. Artspace, a nonprofit real-estate firm based in Minneapolis, is proposing to develop Arts on Gaines.

Mike Pate, Tallahassee program director for the Knight Foundation and former publisher of the Tallahassee Democrat, said the grant will help spark improvements on Gaines Street.

"The beauty of this is we finally see some action and some money applied to a project that will make a difference," he said.

The money will be used to start building and financing plans, according to Artspace. The next major step will be selecting a site.

Proponents are eyeing a city-owned site at Gaines and Gay streets, but the city hasn't decided what to do with the property. Artspace officials say the project will go forward even if it's not at the preferred site.

"Until we have site control, it's hard to know what the footprint of the project can be," said Wendy Holmes, vice-president of consulting and resource development for Artspace. "That's kind of the big domino, and then a lot of things fall in place."

The project calls for 55 affordable-housing units and 30 studio spaces, along with rehearsal and office space for performing artists.

Artspace representatives are expected to meet with city and county officials during a brief stay in Tallahassee. On Tuesday, they also presented survey results showing artists' support for the project.