

Overview and Purpose

Mecca of Kulture and Art (MOKA) is a contemporary art, studio and gallery; which is being created to share the rich cultural legacy of jazz and art that originated in the Hill District.

The founders of MOKA are artists Errol “Mobutu” Reynolds and Charlotte Ka. Mobutu and Charlotte have longed for the vibrant culture of art, music and community that had been so vital to the Hill’s legacy. As witnesses of that history, with extensive experience in the arts, they decided to develop a house of culture for the Hill’s current rebirth.



They selected the name MOKA - Mecca of Kulture and Art. Errol is known as Mobutu / shortened to “Mo” and Charlotte’s last name is “Ka” / hence MOKA was named... and the dream of such a space has become a reality.



MOKA is a 4,400 sq ft communal space to meet, reflect, learn and create. It is a place to dream! The first floor will be gathering space and an art gallery, the second floor will be visual arts and education studio, the third floor will serve as visiting artists’ residences and the fourth floor will be occupied by Mobutu and Charlotte (the owners).

MOKA will develop exhibitions, studio practices, artist presentations, cultural exchanges, artist residences and art classes. The Gallery will provide a space for artists, culture workers, and musicians to share their expertise with the Hill community.

Goal

The Hill CDC is working collaboratively with Errol “Mobutu” Reynolds, Charlotte Ka and #ArtsinHD (Hill District Arts Council) to secure funding to complete the outstanding construction work and to obtain an occupancy permit. It is anticipated that it will take 4 to 6 weeks to complete the necessary work, depending on contractor availability. Mr. Reynolds and Ms. Ka are actively working to secure additional funding which is evidenced by the recent launch of their crowdfunding page at www.ioby.org/project/moka-pittsburgh.

The owners of this project have embodied a spirit of collaboration, self-determination and creativity by staring down usual barriers such as age, race and class. Mobutu and Charlotte staked their claim in their culture, and made the bold decision to invest their retirement funds in the future of a community that is still in transition. They are trailblazers who have actualized the often evasive concept of equitable development, as well as place-making centered in Black

culture. The pair has invested the lion's share of funding into this future community destination at approximately \$300K.

Other sources have invested a total of: \$121K

McAuley Ministries \$86K
Neighborhood Allies \$15K
Hill District Development Growth Fund \$20K

Funds needed to complete and allow MOKA to petition for an occupancy permit total approximately \$72,000.

The Funding Path Forward

- Applications will be submitted to the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) (*As of January 3, 2018*)
 - \$3,750 URA Store Front Grant (requires occupancy certificate; please note the occupancy certificate has been applied for in anticipation of securing necessary funding.)
 - \$5,250 Must be secured through crowdfunding and other sources

If the above funds are successfully secured, the funding gap for MOKA equates to approximately \$63,000.

Options to Address the Funding Gap

- MOKA can grant the Hill CDC permission to lease the MOKA Art Gallery for \$350 a day, for five days per month or 60 days per year for a three-year duration. The three-year lease agreement would total \$63,000. The \$63,000 would be paid to MOKA in advance to consummate the lease agreement, and the Hill CDC can act as project manager towards completion. Alternatively, the \$63,000 of funds can be used to secure a short-term loan from Bridgeway Capital or an URA loan to the project.
- To assure that the Hill CDC is able to fulfill programming demands for the lease, the Nafasi Programmer, a staff role already supported by the Heinz Endowments, can begin programming at MOKA Art Gallery. The scope of the Programmer would be strictly limited to the five days per month or 60 days per year aligning with the terms established in the aforementioned lease agreement. Such an approach would require an amendment to the Nafasi Programmer grant, and we would request an additional small grant at the appropriate time in the future to augment any funding shortages to the Nafasi 24-month Programmer grant to assure that a full 24-month term of programming is covered at Nafasi once construction of that project is complete.