



## T.I.F. FUNDING APPLICATION

The Billings Symphony Orchestra and Chorale (BSOC) plans to revitalize a key corner of downtown Billings that has been vacant for several years. This project, at the southeast corner of 29th St. and 2nd Ave., will activate an important intersection as well as elevate the Billings Symphony's visibility and accessibility to our community. This new space will be a welcoming and vibrant place that both represents our organization and catalyzes a stronger connection with the arts in downtown Billings.

By reinvigorating this existing space, we also see a unique opportunity to address many of the Downtown Billings Association's goals of increasing public safety, eliminating blight, and bringing new patrons to our downtown. This project also aligns with the Downtown Billings Framework Plan, which encourages the use of existing infrastructure to restore health and vitality to unoccupied or neglected buildings for the benefit of downtown life. BSOC is the perfect addition to this block in downtown by bringing another source of creative energy and communal spirit to the street.

For many years, the BSOC has struggled to be an active participant in events such as ArtWalk, First Fridays, and the Christmas Stroll because of our office location. We have been tucked away on a second floor where most of the Billings community is unaware of our presence. This new space will change that forever. We will now become a vibrant participant in our downtown events, ultimately helping to shape the future of our community. Once complete, the BSOC's presence and improved accessibility will undoubtedly increase visitation in Downtown Billings.

The BSOC will take over the 3,500 SF corner space to serve as our primary office space and ticket box-office for the public. In addition to the daily office functions, the space is also being designed to accommodate small performances for community enjoyment. We see an opportunity to create a "pop-up" mini-concert series in this space that could bring the arts to downtown in an unprecedented way.



We are applying for TIF funds to assist in the re-development of this corner space and overall building improvements. According to the Framework Plan developed by the Downtown Billings Partnership, a project should:

- Assist in the revitalization of the District.
- Attract a stable population within the District.
- Stimulate private investment within the District.
- Generate additional tax revenues.
- Encourage restoration of historic properties.

Simply stated, we feel that there is no project that better serves these requirements. A few specific areas in which this project address the Framework goals include:

#### **Eliminating Blight**

- The current empty space is a problem for downtown Billings. The doorway alcoves are deep and continually attract homeless camps. As this space continues to sit empty, the blight of this important intersection grows noticeably more unattractive.

#### **Activating an Inactive Space**

- The BSOC project will be occupying space currently inactive and vacant.
- The project will renew an entire vacant corner connecting established businesses on both sides around the corner and across the street to the west.

#### **Increasing Visitation**

- The project will include the BSOC's main box-office for ticket sales to all of our performances and concerts creating more foot traffic to the area.
- The BSOC will play an active role in downtown events, such as ArtWalk, First Fridays, and Christmas Stroll, increasing visitation to the area.
- Access will be provided to our large meeting space to other music and/or non-profit organizations.



### **Increasing Overall Aesthetic**

- The exterior development of this building will include new awnings, lights, and paint which will create a dramatically improved exterior aesthetic to this corner and the length of the entire building on both 2nd Ave. and 29th St..

### **Improved Pedestrian/ Visitor Experience**

- The pedestrian experience along this corner will be notably improved by both activating the space and improving the aesthetics. The corner space is currently an eyesore to stroll past where the front doors are most often serving as a homeless camp. Those same front doors will be filled with flowerpots and a welcome sign to come enjoy the arts and pop-up concerts when strolling by after this project is complete.

### **Increased Public Art**

- As one of the pinnacle arts organizations in Billings, the BSOC will be providing an experience in art on a day-to-day basis. Our design incorporates a space specifically to promote music and other arts to the public (inside or outside the building). We will provide open house performances during ArtWalk, allowing us to share our art to more of the public. We will use this area with a focus on increasing community engagement.
- We will also be exploring a wonderful opportunity to collaborate with local artists to create a mural on the south face of the overall building (the south side of the Sassy Biscuit wall).

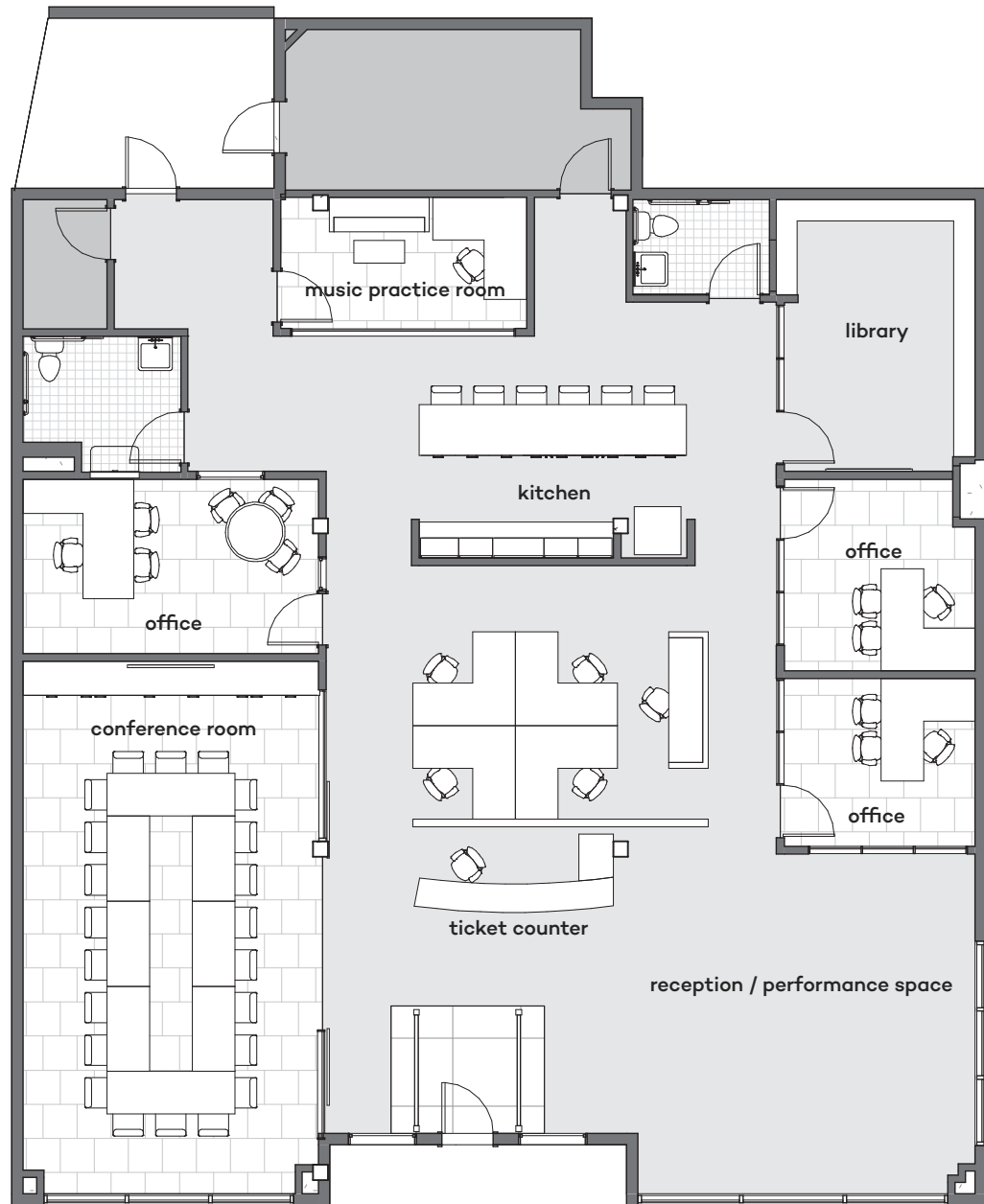
The BSCO has identified several other important goals of this project that will enhance both the downtown and our community at large:

- Become a “music center” in downtown Billings
  - a. Have a space for private lessons and our guest artists’ practice rooms.
  - b. Host small chamber or solo concerts.
  - c. Afford students and musicians different opportunities for cultural and aesthetic experiences through active participation in music and enhance their understanding and appreciation of the arts.
  - d. Promote and support local music students, often conducted jointly with symphony musicians through practices, performances, and lectures.
  - e. Anne Harrigan, our music director, can conduct workshops and lunch and learn sessions for the public helping to promote each concert during the season.



- Maximize collaboration with other arts organizations
  - a. Promote and support research and collaborations, often conducted jointly with other organizations through partnerships and performances.
    - i. Provide open house performances during ArtWalk, allowing us to share our art to more of the public.
    - ii. Increase the public's knowledge regarding the BSOC's long-standing 70-year history in the community.
    - iii. Expose our outreach programs to a much larger audience including the homeless and downtown's at-risk youth population. Such as:
      - 1. Hand drumming circles.
      - 2. Guitar group instruction.
      - 3. Orchestral instrument "petting zoos".
  
- Increase our ticket sales
  - a. With downtown sidewalk access, we can promote easy entrance to the symphony office for concert ticket purchases.
  - b. Advertise our upcoming orchestra and chorale concerts.
  - c. Provide musicians, particularly during concert week, to publicize our upcoming concerts through being featured during ticket sales campaigns.

While we are aware that the requested TIF dollars is a significant investment, the result of filling a critical funding gap for the Billings Symphony to rehabilitate this vacant building will be transformative for downtown Billings.



new exterior building paint for entire facade along 2nd ave. and north 29th st.

exterior public art / mural on south face of building



new exterior lighting around building perimeter

new awnings

new streetscape tree

new exterior windows with operable units to allow music performance to be heard along the street

performance schedule graphics / wall art