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Norfolk, Chrysler Museum plan to purchase EVMS building near the Hague

By Trevor Metcalfe
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 Expand





The city of Norfolk and Chrysler Museum plan to purchase Eastern Virginia Medical School's Smith-Rogers Hall, the school's oldest building, and surrounding land to eventually be a part of the art museum. (Stephen M. Katz/The Virginian-Pilot)

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Since 2019, Eastern Virginia Medical School has been soliciting bids to sell the oldest building on its Norfolk campus.

Now, Smith-Rogers Hall has attracted a pair of buyers. The city of Norfolk and the Chrysler Museum of Art joined forces to purchase the four-story building for \$3.2 million for use as an expansion location for the art museum.

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“We couldn’t ignore the opportunity,” said Erik Neil, the Chrysler Museum director and CEO.

The building, next to the art museum overlooking the Hague, was purchased by EVMS in 1972, [according to Virginian-Pilot reporting](#). Once a nursing school and dormitory, the building was most recently used for administrative offices.

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When EVMS leaders decided to sell the property, Neil said he knew it was a one-time opportunity for the art museum's future. Museum leaders decided to partner with city officials to make the sale happen.



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As part of their agreement, Norfolk would pay first for the total \$3.2 million, said Jared Chalk, the city's economic development director. The Chrysler Museum would then match half that: \$1.6 million.

If approved by city council members, Chalk said the funding would come from the city's 2023 Capital Improvement Plan budget. Neil said a single donor is funding the art museum's portion of the cost — Oriana McKinnon, the widow of former Norfolk Southern chairman Arnold McKinnon and a longtime museum patron.

The purchase would include the EVMS building, its parking lot and a vacant lot that once was the location of Leigh Memorial Hospital.

Neil said the art museum doesn't currently have plans for the space. He hoped an eventual use would align with the museum's educational mission, and expected museum leaders would involve community stakeholders in choosing how to use the space.

He didn't expect anything to happen immediately, though. Right now, Neil said museum leaders are focused on completing a [\\$50 million capital campaign](#) that will expand the Perry Glass Studio and create a new center for photographs, drawings, prints and other works on paper.

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The Norfolk City Council will hold a public hearing on the planned purchase at 7 p.m. Tuesday at 810 Union St. in the City Hall Building. Residents who wish to speak must contact the city clerk at 757-664-4253 by 3 p.m. Tuesday.



Trevor Metcalfe, 757-222-5345, trevor.metcalfe@pilotonline.com

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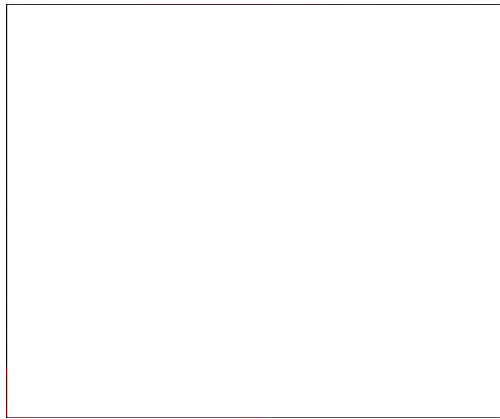
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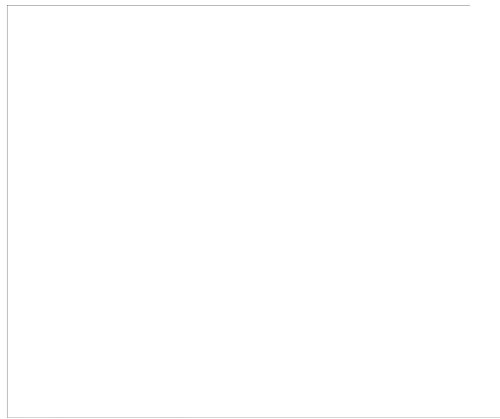
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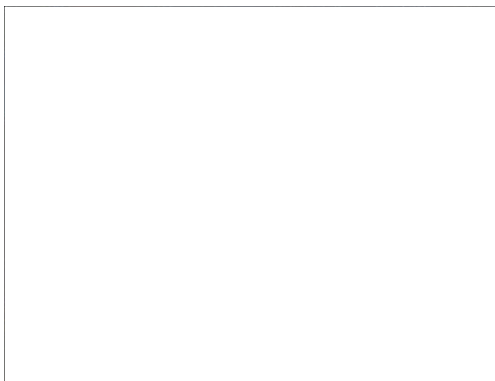
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