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Naperville Heritage Society receives a \$705,000 Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grant from National Endowment for the Humanities

NAPERVILLE, IL — The Naperville Heritage Society, administrator of Naper Settlement, received an Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in the amount of \$705,000 to support the construction of the Innovation Gateway. A new visitor welcome and education center at Naper Settlement, the Innovation Gateway will welcome guests while expanding the museum’s content to represent Naperville in the 20th and 21st centuries and place its local history in context with state and national narratives. With a fully ADA accessible entrance and wall-to-wall digital exhibition space, the 5,150-square-foot building will be the new “front door” to Naper Settlement’s 13-acre site.

The Innovation Gateway will include a digital wall exhibit, the Digital Experience Welcome Zone, that will engage visitors to self-curate their own history journey, redefining the Naper Settlement learning experience. The digital exhibit will be a repository for stories, files, and photos that can be explored by person, theme, timeline, or artifact, and it will allow visitors to upload their own stories through a crowd-sourced mechanism for public and self-curated experiences.

The Innovation Gateway will also serve as important flex space for Naper Settlement’s 290,000 annual visitors (5-year average), including 35,000 school children from 112 districts. The welcome center will allow the museum to expand its current programming and rental space for teacher professional development programs, workshops, lectures, meetings, receptions, and more while providing an improved site entrance that is accessible for people of all abilities. The new facility will prioritize visitors by providing wide-open spaces built to accommodate today’s visitor traffic and include a barrier-free experience for attendees with strollers, those using wheelchairs or scooters, or other considerations.

“Innovation Gateway will connect all that we have been with all that we are and all that we hope to become as a museum,” said Rena Tamayo-Calabrese, president and CEO at Naper Settlement. “In addition to the practical building considerations that are user-friendly, accessible, and visitor-focused by providing amenities like a proper lunchroom space for our students, it is the culmination of a dream that was hard-fought by many. A wall-sized digital exhibit experience will provide the opportunity to share humanities content that will engage every resident, past resident or interested person either in-person or on-line. Every Napervillian will be able to curate their own journey. The museum will exist not only in its current 13 acres, but at the fingertips of residents who can share their own stories and contribute to community history.”

Construction on the Innovation Gateway is expected to start later this summer. For more information about the Innovation Gateway, visit NaperSettlement.org/InnovationGateway.

About Naper Settlement

Naper Settlement is a nationally accredited, award-winning outdoor living history museum set on 13 magnificent acres in the heart of Naperville. Located 30 miles from Chicago, the museum is home to thirty-one historical structures dating back as early as the 1830s. Featuring exhibits, special events, educational programming and more, Naper Settlement is where history comes alive and the community comes to connect. For more information, visit www.napersettlement.org or call (630) 420-6010.

About Naperville Heritage Society

Founded in 1969, the Naperville Heritage Society is a not-for-profit organization and administrator of Naper Settlement, the City of Naperville's museum. With a commitment to the community and a focus to the future, the mission of the Naperville Heritage Society is to collect, document, preserve, and support the history of Naperville, Illinois past and present.