



1626 London Rd #779, Duluth, MN 55812  
[www.dulutharmory.org](http://www.dulutharmory.org)

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Contacts:

Mark Poirier, 218-428-9686, Exec Director, Armory Arts and Music Center, [mark@dulutharmory.org](mailto:mark@dulutharmory.org)  
Mike Poupore, 218-343-3777, Vice President, Armory Arts and Music Center, [mike@blstcn.com](mailto:mike@blstcn.com)  
Bob Gardner, 612-363-6514, CEO, Gardner Builders, [bobg@gardner-builders.com](mailto:bobg@gardner-builders.com)

### **Armory Arts and Music Center to Host Groundbreaking Ceremony Wednesday, December 5**

The Drill Hall Stabilization Project is the next step to rehabilitate the historic Armory

**Duluth MN** - November 29 - The Armory Arts and Music Center (AAMC) organization will commence its Drill Hall floor stabilization project with a groundbreaking ceremony on **Wednesday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 11am**. The \$1.5 million floor stabilization project is AAMC's largest project to date and necessary to lift the demolition order that was placed on the building in 2000. The project entails the reinforcement of 4,000 SF of existing concrete floor and the removal and replacement of 14,000 SF of floor, and will preserve a prominent building that reflects the character and history of Duluth.

The structural capacity of the existing concrete floor slab has been compromised by decades of water and salts seeping into the floor and rusting the rebar during the 1980s and 1990s when the Armory was used as a garage for heavy equipment. "Over the years we've been addressing the items listed on the demolition order including patching the roof, tuckpointing brick and terra cotta, fixing windows, and general cleanup. The floor is the last major item to be addressed," noted AAMC Executive Director Mark Poirier.

Gardner Builders is leading the floor stabilization project, with plans to be complete by the end of January. Gardner considered innovative ways to perform the project, and opted to work with a specialty demolition contractor from Chicago to utilize Brokk remote controlled demolition robots to safely and efficiently perform the floor removal work. The robots will be on site during the groundbreaking ceremony.

Local engineering and architecture firm LHB led the structural design, and discovered that Claude Turner, the same structural engineer who designed Duluth's famous Aerial Lift Bridge, designed some of the earliest patented flat concrete floor slabs, of which the Armory's Drill Hall is one example.

Hess Roise provided historical consulting expertise for the project, which proved important because the Armory is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. A portion of the funding has been provided from a \$250K Legacy Grant from the MN Historical Society, and additional funding is from State and Federal Historic Tax Credits, all of which have special application processes and reporting requirements. The remainder of the funding has been generously provided by several private donors.

Attendees at the groundbreaking ceremony will learn more about the history of the building as well as the future plans for the Armory, as this project is just the first step in the rehabilitation of the building. The program for the full redevelopment is building momentum towards a mixed-use commercial project centered on creating a Public Market/Food Hall. The size of the building would allow other uses and users also, and would showcase the great views of Lake Superior from the 4-story 'Head House' section of the building facing London Road. The AAMC is currently working with UMD's Center for Economic Development on the business plan and City of Duluth staff have shared their in-house expertise on public markets.



***MISSION: To preserve the Duluth Armory and its historic value to American culture and the arts, while encouraging its reuse, placing emphasis on arts and education.***



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### Historical Background

The Historic Armory was built in 1915 just prior to World War I and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. For much of its life, the Armory served as both a military training facility and a focal point for the Duluth community. The Armory hosted numerous functions such as concerts, dances, conventions and sporting events until the DECC was constructed in 1966. A number of significant historical events and people have ties to the Armory including the relief efforts of the Cloquet Moose Lake Fires of 1918 which happened almost exactly 100 years ago. The memorial service for the last Union Army Civil War veteran, Albert Woolson, was held at the Armory in 1956 and was covered in the media around the nation. On January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1959 four Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductees—Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens, Dion, and Bob Dylan—would share an evening together at the Armory as part of the Winter Dance Party tour. Two days later Holly and Valens, along with the Big Bopper, would die in the plane crash often referred to as “The Day the Music Died.”

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