



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 1, 2013

VMFA Plans Regional Visitor Center in Historic Robinson House

State art museum leads in attendance for Richmond region

Since the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts opened in May 2010, its annual attendance has been the largest of any attraction in the region. Because of its proximity to I-95/I-64 and its leadership position, VMFA will rehabilitate the historic Robinson House and repurpose it to include a regional visitor center. The building, located on the museum's Mary Morton Parsons Plaza, will be operated in collaboration with Richmond Region Tourism that includes Henrico, Chesterfield, and Hanover Counties as well as the City of Richmond.

The center will open in the summer of 2015, which will be in time for the UCI World Championship Cycling event in September 2015.

“The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is an ideal place to begin a visit to the Richmond region,” Director Alex Nyerges said. “The Virginia Museum is always delighted to collaborate and support tourism initiatives with our regional partners and aspires to become a destination for cyclists in addition to tourists in cars, motor coaches, tour buses and taxis. Besides operating a world-class art museum, we also have a deep respect for the history of the land and the buildings which the Virginia Museum is charged to protect and preserve.”

The preservation and rehabilitation of Robinson House will stabilize its structure, reclaim interior spaces to evoke the buildings' historic past, and repurpose the spaces for use as a regional tourism center. In addition, a gallery is planned to interpret the history of the site from Native American times to its role as the headquarters and museum for the R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Confederate Soldiers' Home (1885-1941), among other uses. After a competitive selection process, VMFA has engaged Glavé & Holmes' Cultural Studio, led by Steven Blashfield, AIA, to undertake the project. VMFA also has nominated Robinson House to the National Register for Historic Landmarks and the Virginia Landmarks Register.

Robinson House, a handsome Italianate structure completed in the late 1850s, was once part of a 159-acre estate belonging to prominent Richmond banker Anthony Robinson, Jr. In 1884 the house and 36 acres were sold to the R. E. Lee Camp, No. 1, Confederate Veterans, to become a residential



Robinson House on the VMFA Entrance Plaza Photo: Travis Fullerton © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

complex for indigent and disabled veterans. The building, which gained a third floor and belvedere two years later, served as the facility's administration building and war museum. In 1892, Lee Camp sought ongoing and increasing subsidies from the Commonwealth of Virginia to operate the Soldiers' Home. In return, it promised to relinquish the deed to the grounds once the need to house the old veterans ended. By the time the last resident died in 1941 and the property reverted to the state, approximately 3,000 veterans had resided there. Robinson House served a variety of functions during the seven decades that followed: offices and labs for the Virginia Institute for Scientific Research (1949-63); offices, art studios, and galleries for the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (1964-93); and offices for the Virginia Association of Museums (1995-96).

The rehabilitation of Robinson House has long been a VMFA goal. It is listed as a number one priority on the Commonwealth's six-year Capital Outlay Plan. Funding is included in a bond package issued through the Virginia Public Building Authority, subject to the provisions in Chapter 806 of the 2013 Acts of Assembly.

About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

VMFA's permanent collection encompasses more than 33,000 works of art spanning 5,000 years of world history. Its collections of Art Nouveau and Art Deco, English silver, Fabergé, and the art of South Asia are among the finest in the nation. With acclaimed holdings in American, British Sporting, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist, and Modern and Contemporary art – and additional strengths in African, Ancient, East Asian, and European – VMFA ranks as one of the top comprehensive art museums in the United States. Programs include educational activities and studio classes for all ages, plus lively after-hours events. VMFA's Statewide Partnership program includes traveling exhibitions, artist and teacher workshops, and lectures across the Commonwealth. VMFA is open 365 days a year and general admission is always free. For additional information, telephone 804-340-1400 or visit www.vmfa.museum.

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