

Building a Robust Future for Downtown Rockport Together



Artist rendering of Kline's Cafe Building potential site located at 504 North Magnolia, Downtown Rockport, Texas

Frequently Asked Questions

When did the Art Center acquire land in downtown Rockport?

Rockport Center for the Arts (RCA) acquired an acre of land at the intersection of North St and S Austin St in the summer of 2016. The land is comprised of two lots divided by North St. The land contained one building – the Kline's Cafe Building (KCB). The land was purchased for a planned expansion that had been envisioned in strategic planning sessions that started in 2014.

What happened to the Kline's Cafe Building (KCB) after it was acquired?

Between 2016 and 2017, RCA leased the KCB to two different tenants. The building was occupied at the time Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Rockport.

Was the KCB damaged in the hurricane?

Yes. Like most buildings in Rockport, the KCB sustained damage during the storm: an air conditioner installed on the roof rolled over impacting and damaging the roof; the air conditioning unit was completely destroyed; several broken windows; a large opening in the roof, together with the broken windows allowed water and debris to enter; damages to all of the doors; a storage shed was completely destroyed; and plumbing was non-functioning after water was restored.

What happened to the KCB after the storm?

Upon their request, the existing tenant was released from the lease. RCA restored the building since its property on Aransas Bay was completely destroyed. The 2,100 sq. ft. building was turned into a functioning gallery, a gift shop, two offices and one classroom ahead of a planned art exhibit scheduled for December 2, 2017- 99 days after the hurricane.

How was the convention and performance facility project born?

After the hurricane, Aransas County Long Term Recovery identified a funding opportunity through the Economic Development Administration. Long Term recovery hosted several community meetings with government entities, area non-profits and the Chamber of Commerce. A need to build-up the mid-week tourism market was identified as a goal. This spawned the idea of a convention center that could host meetings organized by business associations and groups from across Texas. Because RCA had the land, and, had the financial resources to provide a required match for a capital project, the Long Term Recovery Team requested the project be submitted by the RCA, with the City of Rockport as a sponsoring government entity. The grant was submitted in May 2018 and awarded in March 2019; adding \$5M to a capital project in downtown Rockport, a sector in desperate need density and economic revitalization. Before submission, this project was vetted by economists at Texas A&M Corpus Christi.

What is the reason the building needs to be relocated?

In order for RCA to be able to build its entire program, which includes a 12,000 sq. ft. complex for the visual arts and art education, a 10,000 sq. ft. convention and performance facility, and a 15,000 sq. ft. sculpture garden, all of the land, [approximately 1 acre], is required.

Who would move the KCB?

Ram House Movers of Sinton, Texas, under the skillful guidance of Lily Wilkinson, will be charged with moving the building. Ram House has worked on many significant projects in Texas; most notably relocating the History Center to its present location on Cedar Ave. They also relocated the Stillman House from Corpus Christi to its present location in Brownsville. Ram House Movers also did the foundation of the R. H. Wood House.

What is the estimated weight of the KCB?

It is estimated that the KCB weighs 90 tons.

Will moving the KCB will cause damage to the structure?

All moving projects contain varying degrees of risk. Ram House Mover's great care and experience moving other cement foundation buildings will be a major benefit for this project, which is expected to be successful. Lily Wilkinson has already visited the building on two separate occasions to assess the method for movement and to affirm her company's ability to move the building.

Is it riskier to move a cement foundation building or a wood frame building?

Experts state that moving a wood frame building has a higher risk.

Will the entire KCB be moved?

A portion of the building that was added on, presumably in the 1960's, that became a functioning kitchen for the various eateries that occupied the KCB in its 70 year history will not be relocated. That portion is roughly 400 sq. ft. of space.

What is the estimated time frame for the move?

Preparations for the relocation would commence in March 2020. It is anticipated that 30 days are required to complete the operation.

Is the KCB eligible for historical designation?

Yes. The new owner of the KCB and the RCA have entered into an agreement that a request will be made to the State of Texas. RCA will pay for the application. Depending on the moving date, either RCA or the new owner will file the application with the help of local history groups.

Who will own the KCB?

The KCB will transfer to a commercial interest owned and managed by Ron Meyeres, proprietor of Upside Ventures LLC of Austin, Texas. Upside Ventures LLC will pay for the relocation in exchange for title ownership of the KCB.

Who is Upside Ventures LLC?

Upside Ventures LLC owns and manages commercial interests in Rockport, mainly the old Comforts of Home, now leased to Oh My! and Goin' Coastal Outfitters, and the old Nancy's Boutique, now Coastal Mercantile. Upside Ventures LLC plans to do additional restoration to the building and then lease it. The KCB will return to City of Rockport's property tax rolls, and its commercial activity will garner sales taxes-something that will benefit the entire community.

Where will the KCB be moved to?

Upside Ventures LLC purchased the empty lot behind Coastal Mercantile, on the corner of St Mary's and Magnolia just for the KCB. The exact address is 504 N. Magnolia. The building's front will face St Mary's St so people driving south on Austin St will be able to see KCB.

What improvements will be made to the KCB?

The building improvements include raising the elevation of the building to comply with current codes and making it ADA accessible. The look and integrity of the "Art Deco" exterior of the building will be preserved and the current landscaping will be relocated as well, giving the Kline Cafe Building an established presence on the new site.

Where is RCA in its capital project plan?

RCA has finalized an agreement with an architect. The entire project will be built in two phases. It is projected that the complex for the visual arts and art education will be inaugurated in the in 2021.