

**Maine Charter School Commission  
Charter Amendment Cover Sheet  
Request to Change Facility, Additional Facility, or  
Make Substantial Facility Renovations**

**School Information**

<b>Date of Request</b>	January 31, 2024
<b>School Name and Mailing Address:</b>	Ecology Learning Center 230 Main Street Unity, ME 04988
<b>Contact</b>	Lēza Packard, Head of School
<b>Contact telephone number</b>	207-230-9275
<b>Contact email address</b>	<a href="mailto:leza.packard@ecologylearningcenter.org">leza.packard@ecologylearningcenter.org</a>

**Provide a brief narrative description of the request.**

The Ecology Learning Center requests permission to add a facility – the Unity College Center for the Arts – an 1800s farmhouse and barn beautifully restored in 2000 into a theater and educational facility for the arts. The building is located immediately adjacent to one of our current buildings. The facility is valued at \$886,100 and will be gifted to ELC for \$0 (zero dollars) with a proposed closing date of February 14, 2024.

**Attachments:**

Interior & Exterior Images

    E 1-5 Exterior photos

    L 1-13 Lower level photos

    M 1-11 Main level photos

    U 1-9 Upper level photos

Floor Plan

Cash Flow Impact Analysis

Classroom Square Footage

# Maine Charter School Commission Charter Amendment Cover Sheet Request to Change Facility, Additional Facility, or Make Substantial Facility Renovations

**Provide the address of the proposed location and interior / exterior images as available.**

Address: 42 Depot Street, Unity, Maine (currently named Unity College Center for the Arts).

[See attached interior and exterior images.](#)

**Provide a current floor plan.**

[See attached floor plan.](#)

**Describe the financing plans and proposed budget for acquisition of a facility and any necessary renovations to meet the school's needs, all local building requirements, and accessibility requirements.**

The facility is being gifted to the Ecology Learning Center by the Unity Foundation (UF). The financial arrangement is that Unity University (UU) will receive \$200,000 total for the building, \$150,000 from UF in residual interest (an arrangement made in 2010 when UF originally gifted the building to Unity College), and \$50,000 in grant funds from UF. ELC has already submitted the grant application for \$50K and has received verbal confirmation of the award. The Purchase & Sale agreement between Ecology Learning Center and UU is in the amount of \$50,000. ELC will pay title insurance (estimated at \$3101.35 on the full valuation of \$886,100) and transfer tax (1950.30). These are high estimates and may be lower as we negotiate the final Purchase & Sale agreement. Other than these two costs, the purchase will cost ELC \$0.

The building is turn-key ready for educational use, with no renovations necessary. The elevator, fully operational and up to date in inspections, provides wheelchair accessibility if needed between the lower, main, and upper levels.

ELC's finance committee has projected capital and operating expenses from February 2024 through June 30, 2027. Please [see attached Cashflow Impact Analysis](#). To meet these long-range projected costs, we have planned a capital campaign to raise \$150,000 by June 2024. We already received two pledges towards that goal – for \$24,000 and \$25,000. We are confident that we will reach our fundraising goal given our connections with Unity College

alums, Unity Foundation, and residents of Unity who want to see the Center for the Arts re-opened for educational use and the benefit of the whole community.

**Provide the estimated number of students and grade levels to be served at the new or additional location.**

The estimated number of students to be served is 120 in grades 9-12, an increase from our current enrollment of 106. We created budget projections for both our current number (106) and requested number (120), with the latter being a more sustainable financial model. If we end our lease at 5 Clifford Commons, the new building plus our original building at 230 Main Street will easily provide adequate space to accommodate the additional 14 students (120 total). [See attached Classroom Square Footage](#) spreadsheet that compares classroom space in the new building (5090 sq ft), our main building (3023 sq ft), and the rental building (1431 sq ft). We will gain more than 3600 square feet of classroom space (in addition to theater, restroom, kitchen, storage space) by replacing the rental with the new facility, a building we will own outright.

**Describe how transportation services will be provided.**

Transportation services will be provided in the same manner they currently are, with the same drop off and pick up location for the bus and vans. The Unity College Center for the Arts is located across the street and within sight of our main building at 230 Main Street. The Center for the Arts is located immediately adjacent to 5 Clifford Commons, the building we rent. The flow of pedestrian travel between 230 Main Street and the new building has therefore already been safely routinized, and parking secured. The Arts Center includes an ample parking lot.

**Describe the benefit to the school and students resulting from the new/additional school facility.**

The benefits of the Center for the Arts to the school and students are extraordinary. First, the new facility will provide space to gather as a whole school community. ELC was intentionally founded as a small school to foster *unity*, cohesion, and esprit de corps that transcend grade level, academic ability, and social class. We have been gathering as a whole school outside in the cold, in a greenhouse where condensation drips down on students, or squeezed into a foyer. The new facility will provide a proper space to gather for meals, all-school

announcements, performances, celebrations, fundraisers, open house events, graduations... and so much more.

Second, the Center for the Arts will strengthen our nutrition program. Eating well and studying sustainable food systems are central to ELC's curriculum. Every student takes a turn preparing lunch, working alongside our Nutrition Program Director. Our current facilities have no kitchen, so we move between two rented commercial kitchens contingent upon availability, and we transport meals which increases operating costs, wastes valuable time, and diminishes the quality of food served. The new facility has a commercial kitchen adjacent to a dining space.

Third, the new facility will exponentially benefit our arts program. As the name promises, the Center for the Arts is fully outfitted for collegiate arts: stage and theater that seats 200, 2 grand pianos, butcher block art tables, 12 pottery wheels, 2 kilns, and an upgraded ventilation system for the ceramics studio. All of this equipment comes with the facility, as part of the Purchase & Sale agreement for no added cost.

**Discuss how the proposed new / additional facility contributes to the realization of the school's mission and vision.**

The Center for the Arts will allow us to realize our mission to "foster real world learning through mentorship and craft, and cultivate compassionate, resilient leaders." As part of the school's Career Readiness graduation requirement, every student must complete an internship. Management of the theater - from scheduling performers to advertising, selling tickets, and serving refreshments - will provide a rich real-world learning opportunity.

The Center for the Arts was originally renovated and opened as the "Playhouse" in 2000, paid for by Bert & Coral Clifford, founders of Unity Foundation. On the opening night, Bert Clifford said, "The dream you are sitting in tonight was created by a couple who dream of how to make their hometown a better place for those who live, work and retire here. The Unity Centre for the Performing Arts will be the site for plays, musicals, movies, receptions and similar events. After the expense for fuel, lights and maintenance, all income will go to educational scholarships for area students. It is our gift to the community."

Twenty-three years later, our students can renew Bert Clifford's gift to the community by once again offering plays, musicals, movies and receptions to the townsfolk of Unity and beyond. The lead person who directed the performing arts center for many years is excited to work with our students and be an internship mentor. Students will gain leadership and entrepreneurial skills as they manage the Playhouse.