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City of  
**Indianapolis**  
Bart Peterson, Mayor



## *Beckmann Theatre presents play about Central State at Central State*

*City donates use of former laundry facility for "Asylum"*

INDIANAPOLIS – Mayor Bart Peterson has announced that the City of Indianapolis is donating the use of the laundry facility at the former Central State Hospital for the Beckmann Theatre’s production of the new play, “Asylum.” “Asylum” is the true story of a psychologist’s struggle to save a group of chronic schizophrenic patients at the Hospital before it closed its doors. It will be hosted in conjunction with the American Association of Museums convention here in early May.

“The closing of Central State remains a source of controversy and fascination for many in our community,” said David Schanker, who wrote the play. “‘Asylum’ tells the story of one man’s experience of that tumultuous time, and it is my hope that the play fosters dialogue about the many issues raised by that moment in Indianapolis history.”

The Board of Directors of the Beckmann Theatre approached the City last fall about possible locations for the production. The former Central State property, and specifically the laundry building, was determined to be an appropriate location. Minor alterations were made to the building to prepare it for the performance. The Laundry Building was built in 1895 and had most recently been used by the (Indiana) State Motor Pool.

“The Beckmann Theatre’s production helps the City of Indianapolis with two vitally important goals – first, to promote the reuse of the Central State Hospital facility and second, to create new cultural opportunities,” said Peterson. “We’re thrilled to host this production at such a meaningful location.”

### About Central State Hospital

The state purchased land in 1845 to build Central State Hospital, a state-run facility for people with developmental disabilities and mental illness. The property – approximately 160 acres at the 2800-3300 blocks of W. Washington St. – was reserved for that purpose until the hospital closed its doors in 1994.

The city purchased the property from the state last year for \$400,000 and conducted a year-long planning process by an advisory commission to make recommendations on the reuse of the property. The recommendations can be found at [www.centralstatestudy.org](http://www.centralstatestudy.org). One recommendation includes plans for an arts and culture district.

In addition, the city announced that it will issue a request for proposals (RFP) for the redevelopment of a portion of the former Central State property.

#### Mayor’s Press

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Currently, the Central State site is home to:

- Indiana Medical History Museum. The museum, which is on the National Registry of Historic Places, is the only remaining 19th-century pathology laboratory building. The museum has a long-term lease.
- Indy Parks facilities, including Max Bahr Park, softball diamonds, two soccer fields and playground equipment.
- Indianapolis Fire Department (IFD) Station #18. The fire station will remain in its current location.
- Six houses on Warman Avenue leased by a local veterans' organization, Hoosier Vets Association Foundation, to house homeless veterans.
- A U.S. Diving training center at the Bahr Building.
- The police department's Mounted Patrol Section (horse barn).

### About "Asylum"

"Asylum's" central character, Dr. Jonathan Mangold, was a painter and Vietnam veteran once institutionalized with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He created an art studio at the hospital and in doing so changed the lives of his patients while raising hopes that the hospital could be kept open as a place of refuge for those patients who could survive outside the institution. At the same time, Dr. Mangold fought demons in his own life including the collapse of his marriage and the ghosts of Vietnam.

A preview of "Asylum" will be presented at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 5. Opening night is Friday, May 6, at 7:30 p.m. Other performances happen each Thursday through Sunday of the play's three-week run. The Central State facility is located west off Warman Ave. between Washington and Vermont Streets. Call (317) 590-1454 for tickets or more information.

"Asylum" was written by David Schanker and directed by Rita Kohn. Schanker is a playwright and fiction writer who teaches creative writing and film studies at IUPUI. Kohn is co-founder and resident playwright of the Indiana American Indian Theatre Company in Indianapolis. She also is senior writer with NUVO Newsweekly.

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