

## **Albert Lea Tribune**

By Sarah Stultz

March 5, 2009

### **200 artists complete Artspace survey**

The Albert Lea artist market survey for Artspace Projects Inc. officially closed Tuesday. The results of the survey, which will help Artspace directors determine if there is a market for artists in the region, are expected by May 1.

Albert Lea community development assistant Wendy Flugum said the survey was sent out to more than 4,000 artists and arts organizations, and as of Monday, 216 artists had completed the survey.

Out of those artists, 124 indicated they have never lived in Albert Lea, and 113 said they would relocate to a live-work arts project in the city, Flugum said.

Though the numbers are still preliminary — the surveys have to be analyzed to find out if the people are valid and income qualified — the Artspace representatives have expressed they are pleased with the results as they have them to date, she said.

Representatives from Artspace originally came to Albert Lea in May, toured four downtown buildings with city leaders, met with members of the local art community and conducted a public forum to inform area residents of their mission.

Artspace — a nationally known, nonprofit organization dedicated to creating affordable, loft-like studios where artists can live as well as work — began in 1979 in response to the decline of Minneapolis' historic Warehouse District in the 1970s.

Since, it has become the national leader in the field of developing affordable space for artists through adaptive reuse of old warehouses, schools and commercial buildings. Together with the cities it chooses to work with, it purchases and renovates buildings and then leases them back to artists at below-market rates.

In cities where the projects have occurred, there has been much revitalization in the other nearby buildings.

At the end of the initial visit to Albert Lea, Artspace Resource Development Director Roy Close and Government Relations Director Stacy Mickelson formed a report based on their visit, including their responses to the project concept, the market analysis, the site analysis, the financial analysis and local leadership.

At the conclusion of their visit, they indicated they were interested in conducting the survey to see if there is a market for artists in the region.

They picked the Freeborn National Bank Building as the location for the project if it comes to fruition. There would be 15 to 18 units available.

With this number in mind, Artspace has indicated it would need three times that number of interested, income-qualified people to respond in the survey for the project to move to the next step.

Artists of all disciplines were invited to participate in the survey — including painters, sculptors, musicians, actors, writer, photographers and even culinary artists.

The more than 4,000 names and arts organization that received the survey included people as far south as Decorah, Iowa, as far east as Rochester, as far north as St. Peter and west to places like Mankato.

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