

artspace

El Barrio's Artspace (PS109)

April 2011

Project Details

- Location: El Barrio / East Harlem - 99th Street between 2nd and 3rd Avenues, New York City, NY
- Owner/developer: Artspace Projects, Inc and El Barrio's Operation Fightback
- Type of development: Mixed-use artistic/cultural development
- Number of residential units: 90
- Community space: 10,000 square feet
- Type of units: studio, one, and two bedroom apartments
- Affordability: units range from 40% to 60% of area median income
- Total project cost: \$50 million

Overview and Goals

El Barrio's Artspace (PS109) is a community-driven project to transform an abandoned public school building in East Harlem into an arts facility with 90 affordable live/work residences for artists and their families and 10,000 square feet of complementary space for arts organizations.

As is typical in Artspace's work, PS109 brings together a multitude of partners by collaboratively addressing a broad range of locally-initiated goals. These include:



- **To provide a demonstration project of sustainable, affordable space for artists and their families in New York City.** We are very proud that PS109 was called out in Mayor Bloomberg's *PlaNYC 2030* as a case study in providing housing and open space through brownfield development (see p.9 of attached excerpt). As a mission-driven organization, Artspace works in partnership with civic leaders and agencies to create projects that address multiple civic agendas, including affordable housing, historic preservation, economic development, and cultural infrastructure. This complexity enables us to access subsidies and financing tools from a variety of sources that traditional developers are unlikely to obtain. As the third Artspace project in New York State, PS109 sends a clear message that community-driven real estate models of this nature are viable at a time when they are needed most.
- **To anchor and further catalyze El Barrio's dynamic cultural mix.** By working with community and City leaders such as Councilmember Melissa Mark-Viverito, and Commissioner Kate Levin's team at the Department of Cultural Affairs, PS109 will add sustainability in a community which, within a matter of blocks, includes the Julia De Burgos Latino Cultural Center, El Museo del Barrio, La Marqueta, Art for Change, Museum of the City of New York, the Islamic Cultural Center, as well as a rich collection of public art and murals, galleries, gardens and restaurants.

- **To provide a sustainable home for 90 artists and their families as well as 10,000 square feet of community space** animated by a network of cultural organizations including Hip Hop Theater Festival, the Ghetto Film School, MediaNoche, and the East Harlem Tutorial Program.
- **To be an eco- and food-driven neighbor** – PS109 will not only meet the City’s Green Communities criteria by adapting decommissioned facilities and other design criteria, but go beyond those criteria by working with the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets to ensure PS109 is home to a community garden, a community kitchen, and a green market.
- **To engage the 1,000+ residents of the Washington Heights high rises immediately** adjacent to PS109 through the diverse programmatic offerings of our anchor tenants as well as through gallery shows, open studio events, and “arts in the parks” style activities. Our facilities will also be available for community meetings. Currently, PS109 is a large, shuttered eyesore with “keep out – poison!” signs right where their children play.
- **To facilitate economic growth in the community during construction and operations** – during our two-year construction period, PS109 will provide hundreds of construction jobs and a boost to the mix of small businesses and restaurants that serve the residential community of El Barrio. Once complete, PS109 will be a destination by attracting both new residents and cultural tourists who are drawn to PS109 for its programming and arts experiences. Additionally we are working with Seth Pinsky’s team at the Economic Development Corporation in the hope of serving as one of the city’s EDC ‘incubators’.
- **To help a changing community retain its Latino identity** by ensuring that *at least* 50% of the live/work units are reserved for current community residents. These painters, dancers, actors, writers, and other artists are essential to the cultural fabric that has long defined El Barrio as a Latino cultural capital, and their continued presence is under threat.
- **To bring an important historic building back to life.** PS109 is an extraordinary edifice, designed in the Collegiate Gothic Revival style, completed in 1898, and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Demolition actually began on PS109, before being halted by community protest. Artspace helped provide a path forward that met the goals of residents and political leadership.

Project Funding

PS109 is a \$50 million project. Of this sum, the vast majority will come from Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, Historic Preservation Tax Credits, and other city, state and federal sources. Contributors to date include the Ford Foundation, the Andy Warhol Foundation for Visual Art, the Rockefeller Foundation, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, the MetLife Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the New York Community Trust. At this time, Artspace is seeking an additional \$1 million in philanthropic support to advance a November 2011 closing. In 2012/13, Artspace will seek a final \$1 million in philanthropic support to address tenant improves for nonprofit partners.

Project Timetable

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| November 2011 | Financial closing |
| December 2011 | Construction start |
| December 2013 | Completion of construction and beginning of operation |

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