

artspace

Bell Artspace Campus

New Life for a Tremé Neighborhood Center



Bell School Artspace Campus Main Building, Under Construction, 2015. Photo: Victoria Pisarello

Project Details

Owner/Developer // Artspace Projects

Location // 2100 Ursulines Avenue,
Tremé, New Orleans, LA, 70119

Development Partner // Providence
Community Housing

Type of development // Mixed-use
nonprofit arts campus

Live/work units // 79

Type of units // studio, one- and
two-bedrooms for low- to moderate-
income artists, cultural workers and
their families

Affordability // units range from 30%
to 60% of area median income

Commercial/Community space //
2,000 sq. ft.

Total project cost // \$37 million



“[Artspace] are the pioneers who perfected a model. They are visionaries with tenacity and a ruthless adherence to excellence.”

– Rip Rapson, Kresge Foundation President

Project Summary

Artspace is advancing a shared, community vision to transform the abandoned six-building, two-block former Bell School campus into a thriving cultural center perpetuating the indigenous history of Tremé. This project includes 79 affordable live/work units for artists and culture bearers and 2,000 square feet of space for community, non-profit and creative enterprise partners.

Construction is expected to begin in April 2016, after the 10th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina.

During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a literal barricade ran between New Orleans’ French Quarter and Tremé. This “rampart” was designed to keep marauders, unwanted free people of color and all associated undesirables from the infant city. There, just beyond city limits, Tremé developed into one of America’s most significant cultural districts, and arguably North America’s oldest community of free people of color.

Tremé’s early residents were the builders, architects, merchants, bankers, and artisans who defined the unique style of New Orleans. It was here that a young Louis Armstrong delivered coal in the Storyville red light district, while Jelly Roll Morton played piano and invented jazz. Tremé’s history includes the first printing press operated by free people of color in North America, as well as the civic organizations that planned the Homer Plessy desegregation of public transportation, which led to the landmark civil rights case Plessy v. Ferguson. Tremé’s activist political tradition crystallized in the 1960s and helped elect New Orleans’ first African American mayor in the late 1970s.

Today Tremé is a place where music is ubiquitous, where second line parades are a part of everyday life, and where families often run six or seven generations deep. But rapidly rising prices drive a prevalent concern that the “people who make Tremé Tremé” are at genuine risk of being priced out, which would severely cripple a community that has been defined – invigorated, inspired, and sustained – by its cultural traditions. The two-block Bell campus is the last large undeveloped space in the neighborhood; once complete, only in-fill projects will remain.

Development Partner

Artspace’s co-developer, nonprofit Providence Community Housing, has built more than a thousand affordable housing units in New Orleans since Katrina. Providence Community Housing fosters healthy, diverse and vibrant communities by developing, operating and advocating for affordable, mixed-income rental and homeownership housing, supportive services and employment opportunities for individuals, families, seniors and people with special needs. Learn more at: providencecommunityhousing.org

Private Donors

The Kresge Foundation
The Ford Foundation
The Stavros Niarchos Foundation
ArtPlace America
The Greater New Orleans Foundation
JPMorgan Chase
Erich & Hannah Sachs Foundation

Project Goals

1. Rejuvenate Tremé's cultural infrastructure and restore a vacant, dilapidated campus to its rightful place as a cultural hub

Although the Bell campus has sat silent and empty since Katrina and continues to deteriorate, it was — for generations — a vital asset to the Tremé community. The former school was renowned for its music program and marching band, which featured many future leaders of New Orleans' music scene. The restored Bell Artspace Campus will provide affordable space to live and work for 79 artists and their families, while providing additional complementary space for small non-profit organizations and creative enterprises.

Just as the old Bell School was open to all, the restored campus will be a welcoming gathering place for people throughout Tremé and across New Orleans.

2. Train an artisan work force to fill an important gap

In partnership with the New Orleans Master Crafts Guild, the Bell Artspace Campus will become a site for training new workers in skilled preservation trades, such as brick masonry, metal and plaster work. Although New Orleans has some 90,000 blighted or damaged homes, many dating from the 1800s or early 1900s, there is no existing work force that is appropriately trained, and as a result, skilled craft work is being imported at extraordinary costs. The Bell Artspace Campus will help recover the city's tradition of craftwork and, at the same time, make the cost of such work far more accessible to average homeowners.

3. Spur complementary activity that supports a stronger cultural economy and healthier, safer community

Reinvestment in a community's cultural heritage creates a foundation of sustainable growth – without displacing local residents. As Tremé and all of New Orleans continue to rebuild, the Bell Artspace Campus will ensure that the artists and culture bearers of this region retain access to affordable space where they can live, work and perform. As we come together around these enduring traditions, the benefits of this project will reach far beyond these individual artists to serve the entire community. The project will invigorate the cultural infrastructure because of the artists' ability to create, produce and present their art.



Partners

The following partners — with a deep knowledge of immediate, localized concerns in Tremé and a broad perspective on development opportunities and challenges in New Orleans — have endorsed the shared vision for the Bell Artspace Campus and Artspace's approach to community-based development:

- The City of New Orleans
- New City Partnership
- Greater New Orleans Foundation
- Faubourg Lafitte Residents Association
- Providence Community Housing
- St Peter Claver Community
- Junebug Productions
- Tremé4Tremé
- New Orleans Master Crafts Guild
- Creative Alliance of New Orleans
- Arts Council of New Orleans
- Ashe Cultural Center



New Orleans Metal Artist Derek Walker of Andrew's Welding and Blacksmith, 2014. Photo: Courtesy the artist



From abandoned gym to become community space



Vacant chapel to become artisan work space



Ben Franklin Building to become live/work housing

“Just take a look at Artspace. They create spaces – affordable, sustainable spaces – for artists and arts organizations, and in return, those artists and arts organizations put down roots and become an integral part of the community. Art is created, absolutely. But so are jobs, safer streets, sustainable development, and a more cohesive society.”

—Former NEA Chairman Rocco Landesman

How to Support the Project:

If you are interested in helping make possible the Bell Artspace Campus project, please contact:

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Case Study: Lowertown, St. Paul, Minnesota



Lowertown St. Paul, Northern Warehouse, Pre-Construction, 2007

Sustainable Transformation

Artspace's first and third projects were built in 1990 and 1993 in Lowertown St. Paul, a desolate edge of downtown that at the time had virtually no residents and was primarily known for its empty, decaying buildings. Together, these projects provided affordable live/work space for 118 artists, as well as space for a number of small nonprofit organizations and fledgling creative enterprises.

Over two decades, the impact has been astounding, turning Lowertown into the hottest, fastest growing part of St. Paul — while remaining, despite all of the changes, a hotbed of artistic life and opportunity.

“Can you imagine artists living in one place for a combined 50 years, what that potential of that is? That’s an institution. With more and more stability, people produce more and more.”

— Connell Johnston, Northern Warehouse Artists' Cooperative, Resident Artist



The Northern Warehouse (pictured left) and Tilsner Artist Lofts (pictured right)

Lowertown Today:

- 50,000 annual visitors attend semi-annual “art crawls,” with average spending of \$20/person or \$1 million total.
- A new \$63 million minor league ballpark generates \$10 million in annual economic activity.
- What was once a food desert is now home to a thriving farmer’s market, which attracts 20,000 visitors every weekend between April and November.
- Although original residents had to walk 5 blocks to the closest bus line, today a new light rail station stops directly in front of our first property.
- Downtown as a whole has more than 8,100 resident units today, a 30% increase over the last decade alone.

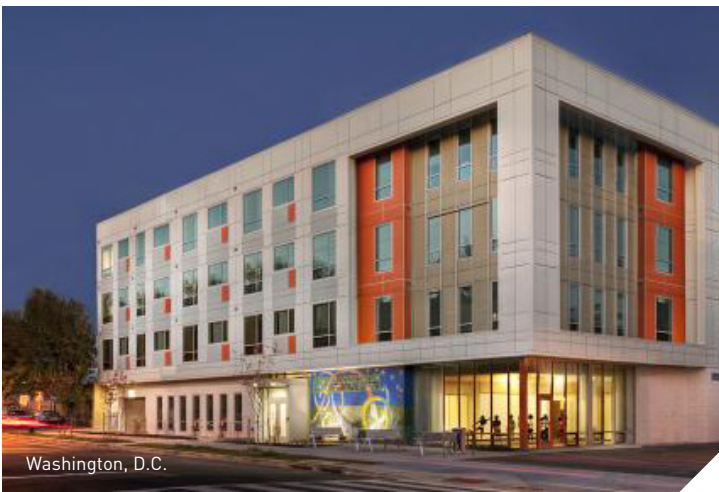
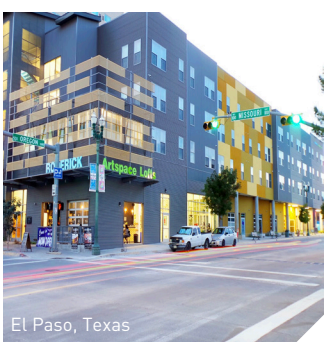


St. Paul Art Crawl draws more than 50,000 visitors



The bustling Farmer's Market next to Northern Warehouse

Artspace projects across the country



LIVING IN AN ARTSPACE PROJECT



“
Our unit is so open, airy and filled with light, it lends itself to making art. The physical space, with the nice big windows and tall ceilings, well I just walk in and feel as if the space is asking or even begging me to sit down and create something.”
– Kara Cox, Artspace Jackson Flats, Resident Artist



“
Living here has changed my life significantly. I don't think I'd be doing the kind of art I'm doing, to the degree I'm doing it, if I had not been here and had the influences around me. I am very grateful for this space and this opportunity.”
– Amontaine Aurore, Tashiuro Kaplan Artist Lofts, Writer & Performer



“
The building reminds me of the Harlem Renaissance, when people in the spirit of art would come together and exchange ideas. I love the idea of being around people who are living and loving what they do.”
– Ansa Akyea, Tilsner Artists' Cooperative, Actor



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Building better communities through the arts

Artspace is a non-profit organization that uses the tools of real estate development to create affordable, places where artists can live and work. We consistently develop these projects in ways that also support more stable, healthy communities anchored in existing assets. Because Artspace owns and operates every project it develops, we ensure that they remain affordable and accessible to artists in perpetuity.

Artspace was founded in 1979 to address a deceptively simple question: how could Minneapolis relocate artists who were being displaced by the gentrification of its warehouse district? Working at the intersection of the arts, urban planning, and real estate, Artspace pioneered a new approach

to an age-old problem. Rather than seeing artists as barriers to economic growth, we recognized unique partners in building better communities: individuals low in income but rich in creativity, entrepreneurialism, and resilience.

By bringing together an unusual coalition of city, community, financial, philanthropic and artistic partners, we were able to convert a deserted warehouse in St. Paul into the Northern Warehouse Artists' Cooperative, with 52 units where artists and their families could affordably live and work. The lower two floors provide commercial space for a coffee shop, gallery, studios, and several non-profit organizations. With the Northern as a spark, this once desolate

neighborhood has emerged as one of St. Paul's most dynamic, and it remains — through all of its changes — a neighborhood anchored in a thriving arts community.

Artspace has gone on to develop a \$600 million portfolio of more than 47 projects providing millions of square feet of affordable space for artists and creative enterprises. Our unique portfolio benefits thousands of artists, strengthens neighborhoods, and has helped inform and inspire a national movement of arts-centered community transformation.