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Artspace Buffalo: Buffalo Artists Residence & Gallery

Abstract

Located at 1219 Main Street in Buffalo, New York, Artspace Buffalo provides affordable housing and work space for artists and their families, and commercial space for arts organizations and arts-related businesses. Even though the project is relatively new, American Style Magazine, in its April 2008 issue, named Buffalo the top "Arts Destination for Mid-Sized Cities." Among the attractions and facilities that the magazine noted was Artspace Buffalo, which it said added to the city's flavor. Since Artspace Buffalo is a fairly recent project, it may be too early to quantify the economic development benefits that it has created.

Keywords

Buffalo, Housing/Neighborhoods, Neighborhood Renewal, Arts/Culture, Data/Demographics/History, Historic Preservation, Fact Sheet, PPG, PDF

Artspace Buffalo: Buffalo Artists Residence & Gallery

By Gary Phillips
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What is Artspace Buffalo?

Located at 1219 Main Street in Buffalo, New York, Artspace Buffalo provides affordable housing and work space for artists and their families, and commercial space for arts organizations and arts-related businesses.ⁱ

Before



When did Artspace Buffalo open?

Artspace Buffalo opened in July of 2007.ⁱⁱ A video about one of the artists who performed at the opening of Artspace can be viewed at http://www.metacafe.com/watch/1290801/artspace_opens_in_buffalo/.

How was Artspace Buffalo created?

The City of Buffalo contacted Artspace USA—a company that develops projects, asset management activities, and community-building activities to serve artists and arts organizationsⁱⁱⁱ—to develop a live/work project.^{iv} Artspace USA is known for doing everything, from construction to ribbon cutting, and only comes to communities by invitation.^v Artspace also has a proven track record in 18 other cities—projects that become both an artist's mecca and an urban development anchor.^{vi} Additionally, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton was instrumental in championing the project early on and obtaining funding for it.^{vii} Artspace Buffalo was the first project of its kind in New York State.^{viii}

How much did Artspace Buffalo cost?

The project cost approximately \$17 million.^{ix} The funding came from a mix of federal, state, city, foundation, and private dollars.^x The City of Buffalo provided Home Funds and Community Block Grants, and the State of New York provided Housing Trust Funds, Low Income Housing Tax Credit, and other State tax credits.^{xi} The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development contributed at least \$1 million.^{xii}

What does Artspace Buffalo consist of?

The project consists of 60 live/work units: 36 in the original building plus 24 in new construction behind it. In addition, 9,000 square feet of commercial space on the street level provide offices and other space for arts organizations and arts-related businesses. The area between the buildings has been preserved as a common space.^{xiii} As of July 3, 2008, Artspace Buffalo had a waiting list of 424 artists for the lofts. The original building, the Brietweiser Printing Building, is on the National Register of Historic Places.^{xiv} It was an automobile factory from 1911 through the 1930s and later used as a car dealership and vocational training center.^{xv}

Rendering



How much is the rent for the units?

Priced at between \$450 and \$895 per month, 24 of the Artspace apartments will be available to tenants whose annual income is less than \$36,720. Another 23 are designated to individuals earning under \$24,480 a year. Remaining groups of seven and six lofts are restricted to those who make less than \$20,400, and \$12,240, respectively. There are also income guidelines based on the number of people per household.^{xvi} Once applicants have qualified under the income guidelines they must go before an artist selection committee. Artists qualify to live in the building by presenting a portfolio of work from the last number of years, by performing, or by bringing in a resume of shows that they've put on or arts education they've completed.^{xvii}

What does the interior and exterior space look like?

The redevelopment of the building includes preserving as much original material as possible to keep its historic character. There are also creative and interesting touches for the artists; hallways that are not necessarily one, long straight corridor but have a lot of nooks for residents to hang art; free-standing pillars; and a large lobby on each floor for the residents of that floor to choose the type of art they'd like to hang. The six new buildings were designed with the idea of bridging the commercial six-story rehab building with an entirely residential neighborhood of single-family homes.^{xviii}

What are the main ideas behind Artspace developments?

1. One idea behind the development is that rising rents can price out artists from desirable place to live. Since Artspace Buffalo provides affordable housing and workspace, artists and arts organizations can stay within a desirable area while keeping their costs down.^{xix}
2. Artistic and cultural space can spur economic development and urban revitalization. The Artspace Buffalo project was aimed, in part, to bring new life and activity to Buffalo and further enhance the city's reputation as a home for creative arts.^{xx} For example, the Artspace project in downtown St. Paul has spurred investment in its surrounding neighborhood. The population has more than doubled since the artists moved in, there's a new farmer's market, and there are condominiums across the street. The St. Paul project transformed the neighborhood in which it was located into a hip, artsy area of town. Before that, people just thought of it as an industrial, blighted area of the city. The same transformation is sought in Buffalo.^{xxi}
3. The affordability of the lofts is attracting artists from areas in which rent is very high, such as New York City. This influx of artists has the potential to strengthen and expand the artistic base in Buffalo.^{xxii}

After



How has Artspace Buffalo contributed to Buffalo's reputation as a home for the arts?

Even though the project is relatively new, AmericanStyle Magazine, in its April 2008 issue, named Buffalo the top "Arts Destination for Mid-Sized Cities." Among the attractions and facilities that the magazine noted was Artspace Buffalo, which it said added to the city's flavor. This recognition, in turn, has reinforced the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau's marketing and branding efforts in selling the community to the world in order to attract tourists.^{xxiii} Also, the project received national television exposure in January of 2007 on Home & Garden Television, which was able to draw attention to Buffalo's architectural treasures.^{xxiv}

How does Artspace Buffalo fit into the urban fabric of the city?

Artspace Buffalo is located on Main Street in the City of Buffalo. This area is north of the emerging Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus and downtown Buffalo. Overall, Main Street has seen a lot of development with the rehabilitation of old buildings and the construction of new ones.^{xxv} Additionally, the City of Buffalo has been providing funds for the demolition and rehabilitation of housing to make the area more desirable in the neighborhood in which Artspace Buffalo is located.^{xxvi}

How can the arts help economically develop the community?

1. Cultural Tourism—This is the part of tourism regarding Buffalo's culture, especially its arts. It includes tourism in the urban area and museums and theaters.
2. Art as a Growth Industry—The arts-related industry grew in New York State by 5 percent between 2004 and 2005. In 2005, Buffalo's 28th congressional district ranked 14th in the nation in the number of arts-related jobs, with 19,163 in all. The arts can be a "driver" industry that exports goods and services. For example, the CEPA gallery in Buffalo has the equipment and capacity to produce high-quality, large-scale photographic prints and reprints and serves customers in New York City. By attracting these types of jobs and companies, the economy will grow.^{xxvii}
3. Increased Quality of Life—The "creative class" of workers who play an integral part in the new economy are more mobile than previous types of workers who were more connected to the factories or industries in which they worked. These types of workers are attracted to communities that provide them with a high quality of life, a low cost of living, arts and culture and a diverse and accepting community. By attracting artists and creating a vibrant cultural/artistic community, the arts can help attract knowledge workers.^{xxviii}
4. Arts Promoting Development—The artists and their families moving into Artspace Buffalo will bring life and 24/7 activity to the area and help make it a new hub for the arts.^{xxix}

What are the effects of Artspace Buffalo in its neighborhood?

Since Artspace Buffalo is a fairly recent project, it may be too early to quantify the economic development benefits that it has created. That being said, there have been numerous rehabilitation projects in the neighborhood.^{xxx} Additionally, there are

preliminary talks about the possibility of Artspace rehabilitating the St. Vincent's Female Orphan Asylum on Ellicott Street, which is in the same neighborhood.^{xxx} Also, the New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal is amenable to moving forward with a similar second project if developers bring it to their attention.^{xxxii}

- To keep track and stay up-to-date about the rehabilitation efforts in the Artspace neighborhood, see the Fix Buffalo Blog at <http://fixbuffalo.blogspot.com/>.
- Pictures of the Artspace neighborhood can be viewed at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/fixbuffalo/sets/72157607400971603/>.
- Neighborhood walks are regularly conducted in the Artspace neighborhood. The schedule can be found at <http://fixbuffalo.blogspot.com/2008/09/saturdays-in-neighborhood-schedule.html>.

ⁱ Artspace Buffalo, Gallery Info, <http://www.artspacebuffalo.org/info.html>.

ⁱⁱ Artspace Buffalo, Gallery Info, <http://www.artspacebuffalo.org/info.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Artspace USA, About Artspace, <http://www.artspace.org/about/>.

^{iv} Artspace USA, Artspace Buffalo Lofts, <http://www.artspace.org/properties/buffalo/>.

^v Matt Batcheldor, *Olympian* (Oct. 29, 2008), 2008 WLNR 20608202.

^{vi} James Fink, *Artspace Taking Shape*, Buffalo News (March 13, 2006).

^{vii} Off Main Street, Buffalo News (July 5, 2008).

^{viii} James Fink, *Clinton Stop Includes Artspace Lofts*, Business First Buffalo (July 3, 2008).

^{ix} James Fink, *Artspace Has its Day*, Business First Buffalo (June 11, 2008).

^x Sharon Linstedt, *Artspace Tenants Begin Moving In*, Buffalo News D5 (July 21, 2007).

^{xi} Tom Vannortwick's *Community Development Tour a Huge Hit*, US State News (Oct. 9, 2007); Interview of Lenny Skrill, New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal by Gary M. Phillips (Nov. 2008).

^{xii} *\$4 Million to Finance Housing Sites*, Buffalo News B6 (Dec. 25, 2005).

^{xiii} Artspace USA, Artspace Buffalo Lofts, <http://www.artspace.org/properties/buffalo/>.

^{xiv} James Fink, *Clinton Stop Includes Artspace Lofts*, Business First Buffalo (July 3, 2008).

^{xv} Local News Brief, Buffalo News B3 (Dec. 28, 2006).

^{xvi} Sharon Linstedt, *Artspace Tenants Begin Moving In*, Buffalo News D5 (July 21, 2007).

^{xvii} Editorial, *Q&A: Wendy Holmes on Artspace*, Buffalo News I4 (April 15, 2007).

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^{xix} Matt Batcheldor, *Olympian* (Oct. 28, 2008), 2008 WLNR 20536343.

^{xx} *Sen. Clinton Visits Buffalo Artspace*, US Federal News (July 2, 2008).

^{xxi} Editorial, *Q&A: Wendy Holmes on Artspace*, Buffalo News I4 (April 15, 2007).

^{xxii} Paula Voell, *A Family of Artists Finds its Space*, Buffalo News C1 (Aug. 29, 2007).

^{xxiii} James Fink, *Buffalo Niagara Tabbed for Arts*, Business First Buffalo (April 9, 2008).

^{xxiv} Mark Sommer, *HGTV Putting City on Display*, Buffalo News D1 (Aug. 11, 2006).

^{xxv} James Fink, *Development Eyed for Medical Campus*, Business First Buffalo (Oct. 26, 2007).

^{xxvi} Ken Belson, *Vacant Houses, Scourge of a Beaten-Down Buffalo*, NY Times B1 (Sept. 13, 2007).

^{xxvii} Barbra Kavanaugh, *The Culture Payoff*, Buffalo News I1 (May 21, 2006).

^{xxviii} Barbra Kavanaugh, *The Culture Payoff*, Buffalo News I1 (May 21, 2006).

^{xxix} Barbra Kavanaugh, *The Culture Payoff*, Buffalo News I1 (May 21, 2006).

^{xxx} Neighborhood Walk, Fix Buffalo Today, <http://fixbuffalo.blogspot.com/search?q=artspace>.

^{xxxi} Neighborhood Walk, Fix Buffalo Today, <http://fixbuffalo.blogspot.com/search?q=artspace>; St. Vincent's Archive, Fix Buffalo Today, <http://fixbuffalo.blogspot.com/2005/05/st-vincents-archive.html>.

^{xxxii} Interview of Lenny Skroll, New York State Division of Housing and Community Renewal by Gary M. Phillips (Nov. 2008).