



## PS 109

### AFFORDABLE LIVE/WORK SPACE FOR ARTISTS NEW YORK CITY

#### **Introduction**

This project will transform the former Public School 109, located at 215 E. 99th Street (between Second and Third Avenues) in East Harlem, into a mixed-use facility containing 64 units of



affordable housing for artists and their families whose annual household income is at or below 60% of the area median income. The project also will provide 6,000 to 12,000 square feet of non-residential commercial space on the first floor for community and educational uses and for arts and cultural organizations that are committed to community development. The total project cost will be about \$22.6 million.

The project is a partnership between Artspace Projects of Minneapolis, the nation's leading nonprofit real estate developer for the arts, and El Barrio's Operation Fightback (EBOF), a nonprofit community development organization based in East Harlem.

P.S. 109 Artist Lofts will serve the El Barrio community by creating both permanently affordable housing in a rapidly gentrifying neighborhood and a substantial amount of non-residential space that will provide homes for Latino social and cultural organizations. In this way it will strengthen East Harlem not only as a creative community but also as a Latino cultural capital.

#### **Background of the project**

This project is the result of two major grants from the Warhol Foundation for the Arts for the purpose of helping Artspace identify a suitable site in New York City to create a sustainable model for affordable spaces for artists to live and work. Over the last 16 years, Artspace has developed 18 major arts-related developments in 13 cities around the United States, most of them in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. These projects have significantly improved the quality of life in the surrounding community by reclaiming abandoned or underutilized buildings and making the neighborhoods more attractive to both artists and non-artists. In many

cases, such as Saint Paul's Lowertown and downtown Bridgeport, Connecticut, Artspace live/work projects have acted or are acting as major catalyst for economic revitalization on a large scale.

P.S. 109 was one of the first buildings Artspace saw when it began visiting New York regularly in 2004. By early 2005, Artspace had concluded that P.S. 109 was its first choice for a New York live/work project. It then began looking for a local development partner, and this search soon led us to El Barrio's Operation Fightback, an East Harlem-based community development



organization with a number of affordable housing projects to its credit. EBOF also operates a variety of programs for East Harlem residents. Its experience in real estate development in the area and familiarity with the neighborhood make EBOF an ideal partner for Artspace.

In October 2005, the project was unanimously endorsed by Community Board 11. Shortly thereafter, the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) awarded site control to Artspace and EBOF.

#### **Goals and objectives**

P.S. 109 is an extraordinary building. It was designed in the Collegiate Gothic Revival style by Charles B.J. Snyder, New York City's Superintendent of Schools, and completed in 1898. It is listed on both the National and State Register of Historic Places. Although it has not been declared a New York City Landmark, it is eligible for that designation, and other Snyder-designed schools have been so designated.

The school is in the shape of an H. It is five stories tall with a steeply pitched roof that gives it a very distinctive look. Ceilings are 12 to 14 feet throughout the building, and in most areas windows run practically from floor to ceiling — an ideal arrangement for artists, who prefer as much natural light as possible. The building's exterior details include several copper-clad cupolas and decorative terra cotta. After the building was boarded up in 1995, much of the exterior terra cotta was removed and stored inside the building; it will be restored as part of the project.

As currently envisioned, the project will include 64 affordable live/work units for artists and their families plus 6,000 to 12,000 square feet on the ground floor and lower level that will be earmarked for a community center/gallery and offices for neighborhood nonprofit groups.

P.S. 109 will be a \$22.6 million project. It will open in mid-2008, if all goes well, as a vibrant new facility that will provide permanently affordable housing and studio space for 64 artists and their families. We believe it will be the first of its kind in New York and hope it will inspire similar projects throughout the city.



**PS 109**  
**AFFORDABLE LIVE/WORK SPACE FOR ARTISTS**  
**NEW YORK CITY**

**FACT SHEET**

Location	215 E. 99th Street (between Second and Third Avenues), Manhattan	
Size	Five stories, 75,000 square feet	
Attributes	Floor-to-ceiling windows, 12 to 14-foot ceilings, clear spans	
Original use	Public school	
Projected use	Mixed-use arts facility containing 64 units of affordable live/work space for artists and their families; 6,000 square feet of ground floor space for nonprofit arts organizations and creative businesses; 6,000 square feet of lower level space for possible office space and/or storage	
Developers	Artspace Projects 250 Third Avenue N., Suite 500 Minneapolis, MN 55401 L. Kelley Lindquist, President	El Barrio's Operation Fightback 413 E. 120th Street New York, NY 10035 Gustavo Rosado, Executive Director
Total project cost	\$22.6 million	
Financing	The majority of the financing will come from tax exempt bonds through the New York City Housing Development Corporation (HDC).	
Estimated gap	\$2 million	
Timeline	Construction to begin mid-2007, completion late 2008	