



## Mesa Artspace Lofts

155 South Hibbert, Mesa, AZ 85210

CASE FOR SUPPORT

### Project Summary

Mesa Artspace Lofts is a sustainable, mixed-use affordable arts project in downtown Mesa, Arizona. Now in predevelopment, the project will include up to 50 units of affordable artist live/work housing as well as performance/exhibition space, classroom space, and space for creative businesses. Mesa Artspace Lofts will be one block off



Local artist painting at a Mesa Art Event. Photo: David Crummev



## Project Overview

Due to strong local momentum for the arts as a strategy for downtown development, Artspace has been working with the Mesa community since 2012 to explore the feasibility of an Artspace live/work project. The Mesa Artspace Lofts initiative is a true community collaboration involving Artspace, Mesa's Mayor, City Council and City staff, community leaders, neighbors and local artist residents. Five community meetings and a six-month long market survey of arts-space needs within the greater metro area were included in the process.

The arts market study surveyed more than 660 artists in Mesa and the Valley metro area, with **strong resulting figures showing interest and support for affordable rental housing for artists in downtown Mesa**. Based upon the strength of the market survey results, Artspace, in collaboration with local partners, has moved forward with plans to develop a new, affordable live/work facility for artists and arts oriented businesses.

The Mesa Artspace Lofts, located at 155 South Hibbert in downtown Mesa, will include up to 50 units of live/work space for artists and their families. Residential units will vary in type including studio, one-, two-, and three-bedrooms. Unit rents will serve households below 60% of area median income levels. The project will include 5,000 square feet of ground floor commercial space for nonprofit arts organizations and creative businesses as well as 1,200 square feet of community space for events, exhibitions, and educational programs. The project is a TOD (Transit Oriented Development) site located one block from the new light rail corridor, major arts and culture assets and other downtown amenities.

**Mesa Artspace Lofts will not only provide essential high-quality housing for artists and their families, but will also advance downtown revitalization and economic development in Mesa.**

## Summary of Market Survey Results

In 2014 Artspace conducted a formal market survey, targeting artists, arts organizations, creative businesses and residents of the greater Mesa metro area. More than 660 individual artists and 74 organizations responded to the survey.

### Of respondents:

- > **245 (37%)** artists expressed interest in relocating to a live/work facility in downtown Mesa
- > **360 (55%)** artists expressed interest in renting small studio or work spaces
- > **37 (50%)** arts organizations and creative businesses expressed interest in relocating or expanding to a multi-use creative facility in downtown Mesa



Mesa Light Rail, Sycamore Station. Photo: David Crummev

## Mesa Artspace Lofts: Spurring Economic Development

Mesa Artspace Lofts will add as many as 50 resident artist live/work households to downtown. These artists and their families will increase the density of people living and working downtown, leverage the nearby light rail transit expansion, and have a positive economic impact on the downtown businesses and services as they respond to the needs of a growing residential community.



## Project Goals

### 1. Provide Essential, Affordable Residential and Commercial Space to a Growing Arts Community

Finding and retaining affordable space is an age-old problem for artists; many artists are simply unable to rent studio/work space in addition to a residential living space. Artspace's live/work projects make it possible for artists to function effectively and profitably as proprietors of their own small businesses to become long-term contributing residents to their neighborhoods and local economies. Mesa Artspace Lofts will meet the growing community's need for space downtown where artists can live and work.

Additionally, the project will create ground-floor commercial space for arts-friendly organizations such as shared workspace, working studios and co-op galleries. Shared community space for events and exhibitions will be available both indoors and out for use by building residents, tenants, and local groups.

### 2. Advance the Revitalization of Downtown Mesa Through the Arts

An Artspace project in downtown Mesa will help strengthen the area's identity as a local and regional arts destination, and be part of a cluster of cultural assets attracting residents and visitors. The public will be able to attend open-studio events, exhibitions, and performances at Mesa Artspace Lofts, which will be a year-round attraction that will enhance Mesa's reputation as a cultural community and destination. The vibrancy the presence of resident artists brings to a neighborhood can be harnessed as a tool for economic redevelopment.

A dynamic network of partners and volunteers have successfully engaged in community activities utilizing the arts as a tool for economic development. Mesa Artspace Lofts will add to and build upon the vibrancy that has already begun in Downtown.

### 3. Create a Long-Term, Financially Stable and Sustainable Community Asset

All Artspace projects are designed to be financially self-sustaining in their operation. This is chiefly because the Artspace business model does not rely on borrowing beyond a modest first mortgage that can be amortized by tenant rents. In assembling our project budgets, we rely instead on a variety of public and private sources, resulting in a project that is fully funded before we break ground.



## Mesa Artspace Lofts: Strengthening Existing Partnerships

The Mesa Artspace Lofts project will complement an existing network of arts, culture, and community organizations that are already working on more than a dozen collaborative efforts. These include the Mesa Arts Center, Neighborhood Economic Development Corporation (NEDCO), Retail Arts Innovation and Livability (RAIL), and Mesa Urban Garden. The potential for ongoing collaboration among these organizations and the Mesa Artspace Lofts residents will expand upon the partners' creative placemaking strategy for downtown Mesa as the center of creativity and innovation.





# artspace

## Building better communities through the arts

Artspace is a non-profit organization that uses the tools of real estate development to create affordable, appropriate 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 \$500 million portfolio of more than 35 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.

### How To Support Mesa Artspace

If you are interested in helping make possible the Mesa Artspace Lofts project, please contact:

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Local artist working in a Mesa Arts Center Art Studio. Photo courtesy Mesa Arts Center



Mesa Arts Center Event. Photo by Gary Minniss