Artist live/work spaces slated for Northrup King complex

by Karen Kraso

When the sale of the Northrup King Building was made public in 2019, artists who occupied the building’s studio, gallery, and retail spaces took a wait-and-see attitude, said Loreta Bebeau. She has had a studio in the building for 19 years, served on the board of directors of the Northeast Minneapolis Arts Association and volunteered with the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District.

“Most of us knew the building was going to be sold at some time, but we did not know until before the announcement that Artspace was buying the building. This was probably the best outcome we could have hoped for,” said Jack Pavlik, a sculptor and studio tenant since 1999.

Tenants were relieved to learn that the buyer was an arts-focused development nonprofit. They purchased the building with the help of a grant from the local arts organization Intermedia Arts. But questions remained. Artspace, which operates more than 50 art facilities across the country, specializes in constructing or restoring live/work spaces for artists. Would the studios and galleries in the building - which are not residential - be converted to living spaces? What changes would the acquisition bring?

Despite the change in ownership and management, the studios, galleries and retail spaces have maintained intact the past two years. This fall, Artspace presented plans for further developing the 13-acre, ten-building Northrup King site, emphasizing that the occupied spaces will stay as they are. Two buildings will be converted into live-work housing for artists earning 30% to 60% of the Area Median Income, and each building will have 1-, 2-, and 3-bedroom units, gallery space and shared workspace.

An adjacent building to one of the artist-housing buildings will create 8,100 square feet of retail space. Improvements to the grounds will include community gathering spaces, redesigned parking surfaces, a play area for families, and a “stormwater street” that will not only provide improved stormwater management but also showcase and educate the public about stormwater management strategies.

Artspace sought and received National Register of Historic Places designation for the site, which was originally a seed company. This approval would enable the use of tax incentives and funding, and also comes with restrictions on how the property can be modified. “The goal is, of course, that you’re preserving these buildings. You have to maintain that character in a very stringent way,” said Becky Carlson St. Clair, director of property development for Artspace.

In addition to preserving certain exterior and interior building features, the grain silos on the site will remain, with plans to use them for projections of art and to create a plaza in front of them; an existing cistern (with added filtration and treatment) will supply the water for the play area water features.

Art Force is requesting submissions for the first exhibit of 2022 at the gallery at Nordhsa. The theme of the show is “Reflections.” The work should depict or respond to this theme. The exhibition will be installed in late December 2021/early January, 2022 and will remain installed for six months. Artwork will be available for sale and Art Force will manage these transactions.

Submissions should be received by 5 p.m. CST on Friday, December 3, 2022. More details at the link below. https://www.artforce.org/post/call-for-art-nordhaus-aparts