

HOUSING COMPLEX

Artist Space Rising in Brookland

Posted by [Lydia DePillis](#) on Dec. 10, 2010 at 8:29 am



You wish you lived here. (Lydia DePillis)

Tucked just off busy Monroe Street NE in Brookland, an artist's paradise is taking shape: The [Artspace apartments at Danceplace](#), where a few dozen lucky creative types will be living and working by this time next year.

The 41-unit project, funded by a combination of federal stimulus money and city and non-profit grants, [broke ground](#) in February and now is mostly framed out. Walking through its three floors conveys a sense of how the space will feel: Tailored to the needs of people who move around large objects all the time, the doors are wider, the windows larger, the halls roomier. Surfaces will be plain concrete and vinyl, with no carpeting or other fripperies. In nonprofit [Artspace](#)'s other projects around the country—there's one nearby in Mt. Rainier, Md.—the tenants end up completely transforming the interiors with whatever medium they work in.

The leasing process will begin in the spring, and units go on a first-come, first-serve basis to qualifying artists.

But while the affordable rents and gorgeous rooms might be a draw, it's not for reclusive creatives: Living at Danceplace will require a certain degree of community-mindedness. Residents typically operate as a coop, and are encouraged to invite the public in for walk-throughs, where art is displayed in the halls and in units themselves.

The project isn't just about creating space for artsy folks, though. It's also about infusing Brookland with an artsy spirit, complemented by developer **Jim Abdo's** [project](#) across from Catholic University. **Heidi Kurtze**, director of property development for Artspace Projects, says they chose Brookland in part because it wasn't quite as trendy or expensive yet as U Street NW or H Street NE, reflecting how artistic communities usually develop: On the margins, not in the already-hot real estate markets. (Plus, with units priced at 60 percent of area median income, it will probably avoid the [Loree Grand's problem](#) of not being able to find enough artists to fit narrow income qualifications).

With permanently affordable places for artists to live, future arts-based marketing efforts could be a more substantive and cohesive thing than [some other branding projects I could name](#).

"The creation of an arts district is very much our intent," said Kurtze, "When it's done, she says, "There will probably be a more concerted effort in trying to create an identity."

As the red line rumbles by to the Brookland-CUA station, it feels for all the world like you were in Williamsburg.

