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Grant is a big boost for Everett Artspace plan

Everett gets federal grants for artists' building

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EVERETT -- In less than two years, dozens of artists could be working, living and holding open studio tours at a new Artspace Everett Lofts in downtown Everett.

Artspace, a nonprofit developer, received \$1.8 million in federal grants funneled earlier this month through Everett for the four-story building, which would include 40 affordable apartments, a ground floor arts center and rooftop garden.

"I firmly believe the \$1.8 million investment will pay off in spades for the city and help make Everett a destination place," said Karen Shaw, Everett's director of economic development and human needs.

Artspace, based in Minneapolis, has about \$6 million in commitments for the \$16 million building. The nonprofit expects to raise the additional \$10 million by the end of the year. The organization's mission is to build and retain affordable, well-lit, live-work space for painters, dancers and other artists.

"It will become a vital portion of the downtown," said Cathryn Vandenbrink, regional director for Artspace, one of the nation's top builders of artist communities.

For more than a year, Artspace has been negotiating terms of a 100-year lease with Everett that would allow it to tear down a public parking garage in the 2900 block of Hoyt Avenue and construct the building.

Artspace has had success at 18 similar projects around the country, including two located in Seattle. Rents vary widely at Artspace properties. Prices are based on different factors, including median income and market conditions. To qualify, residents can't make more than 60 percent of the median income in their community.

The Arts Council of Snohomish County is an Artspace partner. The arts council plans on designing and building out the first floor of the project as the new Visual Arts Education Center. This visual arts center will have about 18,000 square feet for art exhibits, classes and workshops, and art production.

Visitors can watch artists at work, take art classes, buy local artwork and attend art lectures and events. The new center will include flexible exhibit spaces, a multipurpose classroom; a hot shop for glassblowers from beginner to expert; a printmaking and bookmaking studio equipped for etching, silkscreening, papermaking and bookbinding; a ceramics studio; and a silversmithing studio.

Maren Oates with the arts council said the organization has raised \$2.5 million and expects to have half of the \$6 million for its portion of the project by early May.

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