



On Ferry Circle
Richmond Avenue and West Ferry Street in Buffalo, New York.

A multi-use, community based facility for the performing and visual arts
operated by Alleyway Theatre Inc. featuring:

600 Seat Concert Hall
2,300 pipe grand organ
99 Seat Drama Theatre
Art/Exhibit Gallery
Rehearsal Halls/Classrooms
Community Meeting Room
Arts Studios and Offices
Kitchen/Banquet Room

ALLEYWAY THEATRE INCORPORATED

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The Project To Create Upper West Arts Center

Background

In the late 1980's the Alleyway Theatre Inc. Board of Directors identified the need to develop a performance space which would provide high quality and affordable facilities for Western New York's many artists and arts organizations while serving as an additional outlet for the company's expanding and more diversified programming. In September, 1997 the corporation was made aware of the availability of the former Richmond Avenue United Methodist Church. The neighborhood was appraised and consulted regarding the corporation's intentions, and after thorough inspection by architects and engineers, the building was purchased October 28, 1998.

A Perfect Home For The Arts

The architectural treasure which inspires this project is located on Buffalo's upper west side at West Ferry Street and Richmond Avenue on the Olmsted Parkway system. It is a 36,000 sq. ft. Norman style Medina red sandstone former church building featuring an impressive bell tower, and stained glass windows. The century old structure contains two outstanding performance spaces: a drama theatre seating 99, and a 600 seat concert hall. Numerous other spaces will serve as meeting rooms, rehearsal halls, offices, dressing rooms, exhibit space, artist studios, reception halls, classrooms, and the facility will also house a catering kitchen and banquet hall. The elegant concert hall has remarkable acoustical properties and features hand carved woodwork, a 45' high central dome, and one of the area's finest and most versatile recital pipe organs. The small, brass-trimmed drama theatre features a thrust stage, excellent acoustics and a high ceiling. The completed facility will host as many as four simultaneous events.

To Serve The Region

Upper West Arts Center will serve as a **valuable arts resource to all of Western New York**. With affordable rates, it will offer the area's professional artists an excellent and well equipped showcase for their work and talents. In its first years of operation it will **serve over 50,000 people annually**. The Center will be home to a wide variety of cultural entertainment and activities including theatre, opera, dance, music, exhibits, readings and lectures, workshops, meetings, and classes. Each season will feature programming from a combination of sources:

Resident Companies - arts organizations which maintain various levels of ongoing activity in the center. Cultural organizations may have offices, studios, or rehearsal spaces within the complex in addition to using the center as a primary performance or exhibit venue.

Independent Rentals – to any interested company or artist wanting to rent its various spaces for public performance at very affordable rates.

Community/Private Activity – public and private meetings, forums, and ceremonies.

Balanced Programming – artists and companies selected and engaged by the management of Upper West Arts Center to fulfill the goal of presenting the widest possible diversity in all areas of the performing, spoken and visual arts.

A focal point of the life of Buffalo's upper west side for more than 100 years, this grand structure will continue its role as an anchor for the neighborhood. Alleyway Theatre Incorporated has established formal links with neighborhood associations and is working closely with them. Further, the arts center will offer members of the community opportunities to participate as volunteers in a wide variety of related activities .

The Renovation & Restoration Project

The building was purchased for a mere \$100,000. The goal of the initial phase of this adaptive reuse project is to make the building fully ready to serve the public. Various issues of accessibility and safety will be addressed and improvements which will result in the efficient and economical operation of the facility will be accomplished. Renovations include:

- ◆ Installation of sprinkler and alarm systems.
- ◆ Installation of new public restrooms.
- ◆ Installation of new elevator.
- ◆ Installation of upgraded electrical service.
- ◆ Installation of new energy efficient heating and air-conditioning system.
- ◆ General insulation and weatherproofing of windows and doors.
- ◆ Installation of new theatre lighting and sound systems.
- ◆ General interior and exterior repairs and improvements.
- ◆ Roof and gutter system replacement.

Later phases will focus on improvements such as architectural lighting, landscaping, sculpture garden, loading dock, restoration of leaded windows, restoration of interior paint design, cleaning and pointing of masonry, and development of historical exhibits.

Project Benefits

The crises in public funding for the arts has brought into focus the need for arts organizations to earn a greater portion of their income. Upper West Arts Center is an essential tool for many organizations to successfully meet that challenge.

This project has protected the building from its most likely alternate fate: to be cannibalized ... have its stained glass, woodwork and contents sold off ... and then used as a warehouse or worse... fall into neglect. The Upper West Arts Center will be a truly community based arts center which will:

- Preserve and restore one of Western New York's most impressive structures.
- Serve the region with programming in all aspects of the visual and performing arts.
- Serve the region by promoting cultural tourism and economic development.
- Serve the region with educational programming for children and adults.
- Serve the neighborhood as a facility for community meetings and events.
- Serve the neighborhood by promoting stabilization.
- Communicate both the history of the building, the neighborhood, and its association with the Buffalo Olmsted Parks system.

Project Interest And Endorsements

This project is sponsored solely by Alleyway Theatre Inc. but its development will have a positive impact on a large number of organizations and individuals. Its very existence will invite collaboration among those who teach, meet, work and perform there. Dozens of organizations and individuals have already used or expressed interest in future use of Upper West Arts Center.

Expressions Of Support have come from Graycliff Conservancy Inc., Buffalo Olmsted Conservancy, Richmond Neighborhood Community Association, Auburn Crossroads Block Club, The New Millennium Group, Buffalo Common Council, business and community leaders, and hundreds of individuals throughout Western New York. Executive Director Neal Radice was the 2001 winner of the Preservation Coalition of Erie County's Civic Leadership Award for his role in developing the Upper West Arts Center project.

For information or to offer support contact

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