

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Please answer questions in space provided. Applicants should feel free to use photocopies of the application forms if needed. If possible, answers to all questions should be typed or written directly on forms. If the forms are not used and answers are typed on a separate page, each answer must be preceded by the questions to which it responds, and the length of each answer should be limited to the area provided on the original form.

1. Describe the underlying values of the project. What, if any, significant trade-offs, were required to implement the project?

The underlying values of the Artists For Humanity EpiCenter were to create a permanent youth arts facility to house our programming, offices and gallery while promoting our mission of sustainability for young people and the environment. The facility encapsulates all these values and continues to become a cultural and economic resource for the entire Boston community.

"Long ago, at the beginning of the modern movement, architects dreamed of a new day. Instead of palaces for the powerful, instead of costly architecture that seeks to impress as art, they would apply their skills to solving the problems of ordinary society. They would make a new world that would be logical, economical, practical, and beautiful. Many of those ambitions were overblown, and the results were often disappointing. But occasional works like the EpiCenter remind us that this was an ideal worth pursuing." (Campbell, Robert. "Sustaining a Positive Trend: Artists For Humanity Facility is EpiCenter of Architectural Ideals." *Sunday Boston Globe*. January 1, 2006.)

While there were no trade-offs to the underlying values of the EpiCenter, AFH did make some design concessions. To gain necessary square footage for our envisioned project, AFH needed to build along the narrow property lines. This, in turn, prevented the inclusion of fenestration on the eastern and western exposures. AFH transformed this challenge into an architectural highlight, by creating floor-to-ceiling light wells on our northern and southern exposures. These light wells allow for deep penetration of natural sunlight, provide the most significant solar capture, and offer the best lighting for artists. Our design team implemented several daylighting solutions, such as baffles and translucent studio walls, to further let light infiltrate the facility's interior spaces.

More should be said about the studio walls – the trade-offs of a trade-off, if you will – because they reflect the EpiCenter's progressive design and commitment to environmental responsibility. Comprised of fiberglass and steel, these studios were designed to meet the Green Building Council's LEED standards by maximizing the EpiCenter's innovative lighting and ventilation systems. The translucent walls dull external sounds and allow natural light to filter in, diminishing the need for artificial lighting. The walls also allow studios to vent fumes directly outside, ensuring a healthier work environment. This creates a sense of both separate and communal space, enabling participants to focus on creative projects while feeling part of the larger organization and its happenings.

Artists For Humanity approached similar project challenges as opportunities for dynamic design elements. To maximize solar capture, we created a sloped roof, which visually heightens the building and connects the northern exposure into a single glass column. Likewise, we solved an eight-foot difference in ground level between the West Second Street and West First Street entrances. The approach to the main entry at ground level on West Second Street passes by a sunken garden and continues inside as a mezzanine level overlooking the large gallery space on the first floor. A loading area and small parking lot are accessed from West First Street. Entry at this end of the building is level with the first floor gallery. Both entrances are wheelchair accessible.

2. How has the project impacted the local community? Please include relevant information on urban context.

Artists For Humanity's 100% renewable energy EpiCenter has had a resounding impact on Boston's cultural, economic and environmental communities as a public event space, resource for environmental awareness and host of the City's largest collection of youth-created art. Geographically and symbolically, it bridges the South Boston and Fort Point neighborhoods with opportunities for community interaction and dialogue. The EpiCenter is the fourth artist-owned building in Fort Point, which helps preserve this neighborhood's history and character as the largest arts district in New England.

Visually, the AFH EpiCenter is an arresting balance of steel and glass. The exterior of the building is clad in corrugated stainless steel paneling, a reference to the long history of industrial uses in the district. Large expanses of glass curtain wall on both the North and South facades allow for deep penetration of daylight into the large, open studio spaces inside. It also features a sloped roof, which holds a 49-kilowatt photovoltaic array to generate power for the activities inside.

As the only Platinum LEED facility in Boston, the AFH EpiCenter provides an unique learning opportunity for progressive design and development. In January 2005, Artists for Humanity introduced "Spiritus Solaris," an interactive environmental education program that draws from the EpiCenter's renewable technologies. Comprising a permanent exhibit and corresponding curriculum on energy, conservation and environmental sustainability, "Spiritus Solaris" is rooted in our mission to use art to educate young people about the world around them. It introduces a model that provides the Boston community with a new awareness of the potential of renewable energy and sustainable buildings. AFH sees this as an opportunity to use the EpiCenter as a testament to our belief that people can make a difference, whether it is social, economic, or environmental. In the last two years, approximately 1,500 people have directly experienced "Spiritus Solaris" through guided tours. An additional 15,000 people have experienced the exhibit through attendance at EpiCenter events.

Perhaps the EpiCenter's greatest impact as a force of local economic and cultural development is still unfolding. With 23,500 sq. ft. of studio, office and gallery space, the EpiCenter has allowed AFH to significantly increase teen participation, expand artistic media, and cultivate new business partnerships. In the past two years, Artists For Humanity has created 60 new jobs for Boston teens, 3 jobs for out-of-school youth, and 12 adult staff positions for local arts and business professionals. AFH has also collaborated with the Fort Point Artists Coalition and the South Boston Arts Association to provide studio space two nights a week, free of charge, to local artists. We continue to reach out to neighborhood youth, and collaborate with the South Boston Arts Association and South Boston Community Health Center on their Young At Arts program to evening classes for the program twice a month. AFH also works closely with several community foundations, organizations and schools as program collaborators, youth referral sources, exhibit sites and on design projects. Finally, AFH makes our gallery available for community events and public forums.