

Jefferson Davis Artist Lofts, LP, TX  
Cleanup Grant

## FORMER JEFFERSON DAVIS HOSPITAL

### Artists Call a Former Brownfield Home

<b>ADDRESS:</b>	1101 Elder Street, Houston, TX 77007
<b>PROPERTY SIZE:</b>	1.6 acres
<b>FORMER USES:</b>	Cemetery, park and hospital
<b>CURRENT USES:</b>	34 loft-style rental apartments
<b>EPA GRANT RECIPIENT:</b>	<b>PROJECT PARTNERS:</b>
The Jefferson Davis Artist Lofts, LP received a \$200,000 EPA Brownfields Cleanup grant.	Artspace Projects Inc., Greater Houston Preservation Alliance, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Downtown Historic District, Washington Avenue Coalition, Cultural Arts Council of Houston and Harris County, and The Building



For additional data and geographic information for this and other Brownfields Grants, please visit EPA's:  
**Envirofacts** - [www.epa.gov/enviro/html/bms/bms\\_query.html](http://www.epa.gov/enviro/html/bms/bms_query.html) **Enviromapper** - [www.epa.gov/enviro/bf](http://www.epa.gov/enviro/bf)

#### PROJECT BACKGROUND:

The former Jefferson Davis Hospital property in Houston, Texas is a registered State Archeological Landmark and was built on a historic graveyard donated to the city by Houston's founders, Augustus and John Allen. The property was used as a park in the 1920s, until the city built its first hospital for indigent care in 1924. The rapid growth in Houston's population made larger hospital facilities a necessity causing the Jefferson Davis Hospital to close. Over the years, the old hospital building had a variety of uses, including a clinic, a residential addiction treatment facility, and records storage. The hospital building then became abandoned, a magnet for the homeless and gangs, and an attractive nuisance for youths. For several years, Avenue Community Development Corporation (CDC) and other community activists looked for a way to re-assimilate the historic Jefferson Davis Hospital back into the Washington Avenue community, an ethnically diverse, mixed-use neighborhood directly northwest of downtown. Since many artists have come to live and work in the Washington Avenue neighborhood, which has a small theatre district and a growing number of art galleries, the Cultural Arts Council of Houston recognized a special need for affordable housing for artists. As a result, in 2002, Jefferson Davis Artist Lofts (JDAL) purchased the property from Harris County for redevelopment. As part of the acquisition process, an environmental assessment was performed in 2001 revealing an underground storage tank that had contained gasoline used to fuel ambulances, as well as lead-based paint and asbestos contamination present in the building.



The Elder Street Artist Lofts. (Photo taken by Steve Hudson)

#### KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

- Cleanup activities were completed in June 2004 and included asbestos, lead, and oil abatement and removal of an underground storage tank.
- No Further Action letter issued by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.
- Leveraged approximately \$6.2 million for cleanup and redevelopment.
- Redevelopment of affordable loft-style apartments completed in October 2005, leveraging 10 redevelopment jobs.

#### OUTCOME:

The use of EPA Brownfields Cleanup grant funds to address and clean up the former Jefferson Davis Hospital helped JDAL leverage funding from diverse entities motivated by different aspects of the project, such as the need for affordable housing, support for the arts, and historical preservation. As a result, a new affordable loft-style apartment building opened in October 2005 and was fully leased by November 2005. One unique feature of the apartment building is a "green" or vegetative roof system that conserves energy. Some of the lofts were leased to New Orleans jazz musicians displaced by Hurricane Katrina. Moreover, the redevelopment provided an opportunity for this property to serve as the connection between Houston's growing Theatre District and the eclectic First Ward neighborhood. The redevelopment also complements the revitalization of downtown that includes the restoration of numerous historic buildings in the central business district.