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PRESS RELEASE

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The Colorado Health Foundation awards CAST \$1.9 million to acquire its first affordable housing project in Trinidad, CO

The grant supports CAST Colorado in its purchase of the East Street School, a live-work artist studio space serving the rural communities of Las Animas County

TRINIDAD, CO – January 16, 2026 - [Community Arts Stabilization Trust](https://www.cast-sf.org/) (CAST) in Colorado has been awarded \$1.9 million in capital funds and operating support from The Colorado Health Foundation to support its first Colorado acquisition and long-term stewardship of the East Street School in Trinidad, Colorado. The 23,000-square-foot former school building is CAST's first active live-work housing property to add to its portfolio of nearly 300,000 square feet of spaces for arts and culture across the San Francisco Bay Area and Denver. This will be CAST's first project outside of California since expanding its work to Colorado in July.

"We are deeply grateful to The Colorado Health Foundation for this investment in Trinidad and the creative communities throughout rural Colorado. This directly benefits community residents and recognizes housing stability for artists and creatives as a foundation for health," said **Louise Martorano, CAST Managing Director of National Programs and lead for CAST Colorado**. "As our first official CAST Colorado property, it is especially significant that it is a project that involves permanently preserving affordable housing for artists when the need for housing across Colorado is ever present. Our work in creating cultural spaces for communities to gather is moot if the very people who shape our cultural life can not continue to live, heal, and thrive."

Of the \$1.9 million investment, \$1.825 million will go towards the purchase and the remaining \$75,000 will resource operations for the building's community-facing spaces. The acquisition of the East Street School preserves affordability for 13 live-work units and four artist studios, all of which are currently fully occupied; it will also sustain its larger community event and culinary spaces, continuing partnerships with local and regional



organizations to bring programming focused on food access, art therapy, recovery support, and cultural gathering into the building. Ongoing community events and locally-produced arts exhibitions will only expand in this new chapter of the East Street school, ensuring its dedication to arts, culture, and community as a shared, community-informed and responsive asset.

Adaptive Reuse with an Art Focus

Located between two major art hubs, Denver and Sante Fe, and built in 1919 by the nationally acclaimed architectural firm of Isaac H. Rapp and William M. Rapp, the historic building was originally designed with a sprawling layout and light-filled spaces inspired by educational buildings in California. After 80 years serving elementary school students, the property was redeveloped in 2019 by Urban Neighborhoods, Four Points Funding, and in collaboration with RedLine Contemporary Art Center's Satellite Initiative, with the intent of creating an arts and cultural asset that could support artists, community events, and wellness programming for the rural communities of Trinidad and southeastern Colorado.



Aerial view of the East Street School in Trinidad, CO

“The Colorado Health Foundation was drawn to this partnership because CAST has a model that aligns with our goals to center community in our housing investments,” shared **Tracey Stewart, Senior Program Officer of the Foundation**. “The successful acquisition



of East Street School is our first in Trinidad, Colorado. Louise's work to address community needs was astounding and we're ready to partner for more authenticity."

Shaping the Future of Artist Housing

CAST's exploration into affordable artist housing grows out of more than a decade of experience securing permanent, affordable spaces for arts and culture. Through its community engagement work, CAST has spoken with hundreds of artists over the last three years from live-work artist communities like San Francisco's [Developing Environments](#) and [Project Artaud](#), Oakland's [Shadetree](#) and [Vulcan Lofts](#), and the [45th Street Artists' Cooperative](#) in Emeryville to understand their distinct models and ways to minimize costs in spite of the extreme spikes of the Bay Area housing market. While developing housing projects still remains a challenge financially, these examples show that there are ways to create affordable housing for artists that are outside the tax-credit-driven model, which demonstrate an enormous community value in providing stability to artists who contribute to the creative economy.

Since October 2024, CAST has contributed to conversations around legislation and participated in advisory groups for artist certification for housing, a program that was [approved by the Board of Supervisors](#) last November to enable artists to qualify for affordable housing opportunities like the 94-unit artist housing project at [1687 Market](#).

At the East Street School, CAST assumes the traditional roles of owner and property/asset manager, while also bringing value as an intermediary and facilitator—leveraging existing buildings, collaborating with experienced housing organizations, and testing more practical, lower-cost approaches that center artists and community needs.

"Traditional affordable housing models are often costly and rigid, require scale, and frequently fail to account for artists' variable incomes and live-work needs," noted **CAST CEO Ken Ikeda**. "Our goal is not to add more constraints or replicate what already exists. Our role is to add our voice to the conversations and bring the community perspectives we've heard on the ground to the table, to offer ways that artist housing can and must be done differently—not as an add-on or afterthought to traditional development, but as an intentional, equitable outcome that reflects artists' lived realities, live-work space needs, economic conditions, and community contributions."

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About Community Arts Stabilization Trust (CAST)

Community Arts Stabilization Trust (CAST) is a community-centered real estate organization committed to ensuring artists and cultural workers can stay anchored where they create. Founded in 2013, CAST works in deep partnership with communities across the San Francisco Bay Area and Denver, particularly communities that have endured systemic oppression and historical underinvestment. CAST models new ways to secure and steward affordable, inclusive spaces for creative and cultural expression by applying real estate financing tools and structural models in innovative ways, building community knowledge and agency, and creating and holding space for visioning and arts activation. Its programs and services have helped arts organizations build pathways to ownership, enabled artists to secure long-term affordable leases, and created dedicated spaces for cultural connection and exchange. Learn more at cast-sf.org or follow CAST on [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), and [Bluesky](#).

About The Colorado Health Foundation

[The Colorado Health Foundation](http://coloradohealth.org) is bringing health in reach for all Coloradans by engaging closely with communities across the state through investing, policy advocacy, learning and capacity building. Learn more at coloradohealth.org.