



Aragon and Douglas Balder Design creating 32,000 s/f development ctr.

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Leading New York City-based general contracting, construction management and consulting firm Aragon Construction and Balder Design & Planning are currently renovating the national headquarter space for the All Stars Project-one of the country's leading inner-city youth development organizations-located at 543 West 42nd St.

Aragon's Andy O'Connor is administering the management for the 32,000 s/f renovation. The project was initiated due to the aging building infrastructure and a heating, cooling and ventilation system that no longer met the needs of All Stars' live stages and theaters, rehearsal rooms, production facilities and staff offices. When complete, the new space will be a state-of-the-art educational and performing arts facility for thousands of poor and minority young people.

All Stars vacated their headquarters in August, when Aragon began construction. In addition to installing an upgraded HVAC system, Aragon is renovating the entry and lobby of the space and rebuilding the existing storefront facade, which had been in disrepair.

All elements of the design were conceived to express the developmental approach and history of the All Stars Project. The new entry, exterior wall and lobby will welcome everyone: the marquee and lobby ceiling, for example, is one continuous plane that spatially helps make a seamless transition from the street to the interior, while the lobby is being transformed into an open theater where performances can be staged and viewed from the street. In keeping with the All Star's motto, "Everyone is an All Star," a three-dimensional 17-ft. high star will be embedded into the exterior wall and entry, visible to everyone that passes by.

Spatial needs, sound and equipment access were design challenges that required creative solutions on Aragon's part. Four air conditioning units, structural steel, piping, and the new exterior wall comprised the very precise design package. The project is scheduled to be complete at the end of this month and the All Stars expect to move back into their space from a temporary location in Midtown, in the spring. The All Stars Project will then host a yearlong series of grand opening festivities.

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