

## Portland Urban

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### North Park Blocks Poised for Boom



Platted in 1969, the North Park Blocks didn't receive the same kind of love during the feverish condominium and retail boom enjoyed in other parts of the Pearl District in recent years. Instead, the North Park blocks grew at a measured pace, becoming the site of two condo redevelopments, some neighborhood-oriented retail, and the acclaimed James Beard-nominated [Park Kitchen](#) restaurant.

Fast forward to 2009, and the North Park Blocks are becoming Portland's inner-city Mecca for arts and international education.

PNCA's announcement it would relocate to the [511 NW Broadway Building](#) in late 2007 sealed the fate of the North Park Blocks. PNCA, the fastest growing private arts school in the country, received the monstrous 511 Building free of charge via a provision that allows educational institutions obtain Federal Buildings gratis if they agree to pay for their renovation. [PNCA](#) has tapped Portland's top architect, Brad Cloepfil of Allied Works to spearhead the redesign.

Last week, [Portland Spaces Burnside Blog](#) announced another such arrangement wherein the US Department of Education will transfer the historic Customs House (pictured) to the International School, a language-immersion school. This will mean faculty plus 400 students on the North Park Blocks, just blocks from where PNCA's headquarters will eventually house up to 2,000.

That's not all. Starting in August, the [Art Institute of Portland](#) will unveil the home of its International Culinary Program on NW 8th and Couch. The facility, headed by Chef [Ken Rubin](#), will eventually house 250 culinary students in a building that's already home to the school's industrial design program.

What sparked the arts education renaissance? Developer Jim Winkler's 2006 renovation of the [DeSoto Building](#) on 8th and NW Davis paved the way with artist studios, gallery space, and the new home of the popular Museum of Contemporary Craft. The rest followed.

What will be next? Just wait and see.

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