



**ARTS**

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leadership of the NTC Foundation, a nonprofit established in 2000 by the City of San Diego. Empowered to make the proposed Arts District a reality, the group has accomplished exactly that.

But it hasn't been easy, admitted the foundation's executive director, Alan Ziter. To see how far the district's come, Ziter noted you have to look back at how it all started.

"What was given to the NTC Foundation by the city were 26 abandoned Navy buildings, all in various states and conditions—and no money—and they said, 'Go ahead and make an arts district out of this,'" said Ziter. "So the NTC board in 2000 really had to

assess what could fit in these first 16 buildings, what they could be used for, how much it would cost to renovate them, and who could make a home here."

Today, with 16 of 26 historic buildings completed in Liberty Station, the Arts District is home to more than 80 tenants including dance companies, galleries, creative businesses, museums, and nonprofits. More than 500,000 people visit the Arts District annually, adding \$41 million of economic impact and 706 jobs to the region.

Two Arts District tenants, artist Lauren LeVieux and the San Diego Dance Theater, praised the Arts District as a venue of opportunity.

"For two years in Barracks 15, Studio 203, I have asked myself how to

turn part of an outdoor breezeway built in the 1920s into my art," said Lauren LeVieux. "I wanted to create art there, show art there, and I wanted my studio to be art."

"Countless paintings completed, 24 First Friday Events, two tree lightings, two block parties, and two Halloween parties have brought people of all types to see my work ... During my two years at Liberty Station, collaboration opportunities have come my way. Among them, a chance to work with San Diego Repertory Theater and develop custom art to complement a play," LeVieux said.

"Later I was invited to curate a series of group shows in the Command Center at Liberty Station in order to get the resident artists' work into a common space where the vari-

ety and quality of artwork could be visible ... I also had a chance to set up a table in the Public Market every Tuesday morning," LeVieux added.

"Being part of this artistic community has really evolved the programming that we offer," said Matt Carney, executive director of San Diego Dance Theater. "In the past, we would mostly just produce our own shows by our artistic director and resident choreographer."

"Now we are helping to promote and produce a community of artists from San Diego and beyond. An example of this is our 10-day dance festival, Live Arts Fest, where we produce 10 evenings of dance showcasing a different group each night."

Noting that redeveloping Liberty Station has been a challenge given

the architectural limitations imposed by the historically designated former Naval base, Ziter talked about Arts District changes yet to come.

"Ideally we'll have a 300-seat performance venue, as well as more art installations," he said, adding, "The key thing here is the money. Historical buildings are expensive to renovate."

Ziter said funding to renovate Arts District buildings comes from a number of sources, including historical tax credits, private donations, financing a mortgage and fundraising.

"Going forward, we'll be looking for development partners," said Ziter. "We would talk with any developer who has a compelling idea that aligns with our mission of creating a vibrant arts district."

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