

## 2021 GOVERNOR'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS

### **ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station**



The City of San Diego in 1923, hoped to strengthen its economic ties with the U.S. Military. The city offered more than 200 acres of land to the Navy at the north end of the San Diego Bay to attract the military to move the Training Recruit Station away from San Francisco. The effort proved successful. As it grew throughout the next 70 years, the Naval Training Center (NTC)–Liberty Station–provided specialized training for the recruits of the U.S. Navy and U.S. Naval Reserve and became a valuable resource of defense for our nation throughout the 20th Century. The Naval Training Center officially closed in 1997.

The City of San Diego gained ownership of the property in 2000 with intentions to transform it into a center for commerce, history, and art. The NTC Foundation currently oversees the development of the ARTS DISTRICT portion of Liberty Station. The purpose for the adaptive reuse of Liberty Station is to create a cultural landmark for locals and visitors and preserve the rich history of the formal Naval Training Center. Just as the Naval Training Center was a historic Naval hub, the City of San Diego and the NTC Foundation envisions the ARTS DISTRICT and Liberty Station as San Diego's Town Square.

The ARTS DISTRICT is made up of 26 historic buildings within Liberty Station, located on 100 acres of the northern half of the property. The work performed included adaptive re-use techniques, complete infrastructure upgrades, shell building improvements, and numerous resident group tenant improvements.

Military barracks, officer's quarters, commissary stations, and military fire houses have since been transformed into 145 dance studios, restaurants, artist studios, event centers, and local retail spaces.

Generally, the ARTS DISTRICT project is both an interpretation of the historical resources and a demonstration of an innovative approach to preservation. The layout of Liberty Station remains un-changed and the adaptive reuse applied to the buildings generally consists of updating the exteriors to present a fresher version of themselves and the interiors are updated to adapt to the uses of the new tenants. Ninety percent of the historic fabric is untouched. Original stairs, windows, outdoor lighting, internal spaces, and overall spatial relationship of the 26 buildings were restored to original design. The historic character of the property is preserved even as the buildings are repurposed in ways that they were never intended for, such as a missile manufacturing building becoming a dance studio, and a military rec-hall becoming a live performing arts theatre.

ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station is home to nearly 145 varied and vibrant tenants, including restaurateurs, artists, dance instructors, painting instructors, galleries, oral histories, creative businesses, meeting spaces, museums, and nonprofits serving San Diego. It was created for and is enjoyed by the public while the history of the site is preserved and accentuated. ARTS DISTRICT Liberty Station is simultaneously San Diego's oldest yet latest cultural mecca.