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A visitor to the Tannery Arts Center studios open house Saturday views the art on display.

## Former leather factory bustling with artists

By SHANNA MCCORD

Tannery Arts Center.com

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SANTA CRUZ — Where most people saw run-down buildings and grounds drenched in toxic chemicals at the old leather factory on River Street, Santa Cruz leaders 10 years ago envisioned a vibrant center for artists of all variations.

The former Salz Tannery, where animal hides were made into leather goods for several decades until closing in 2001, is now a

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Tannery Arts Center Executive Director Rachel Goodman took to the stage for a musical presentation at the open studio event Saturday.

## TANNERY

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bustling mecca for artists to live and work.

Eventually, there will be space for them to perform.

"We needed an affordable place for artists to live, work and show their work," said George Newell, the center's former executive director. "That was the kernel of the vision for the Tannery Arts Center. We wanted to keep the creative talent here in Santa Cruz."

Organizers of the Tannery Arts Center celebrated on Friday and Saturday the opening of the artist work studios — the \$7 million second phase of the overall project.

The subsidized artists colony was initiated by the Santa Cruz Redevelopment Agency in 2002 when considering how to keep struggling local artists from fleeing the area because of the county's high cost of living.

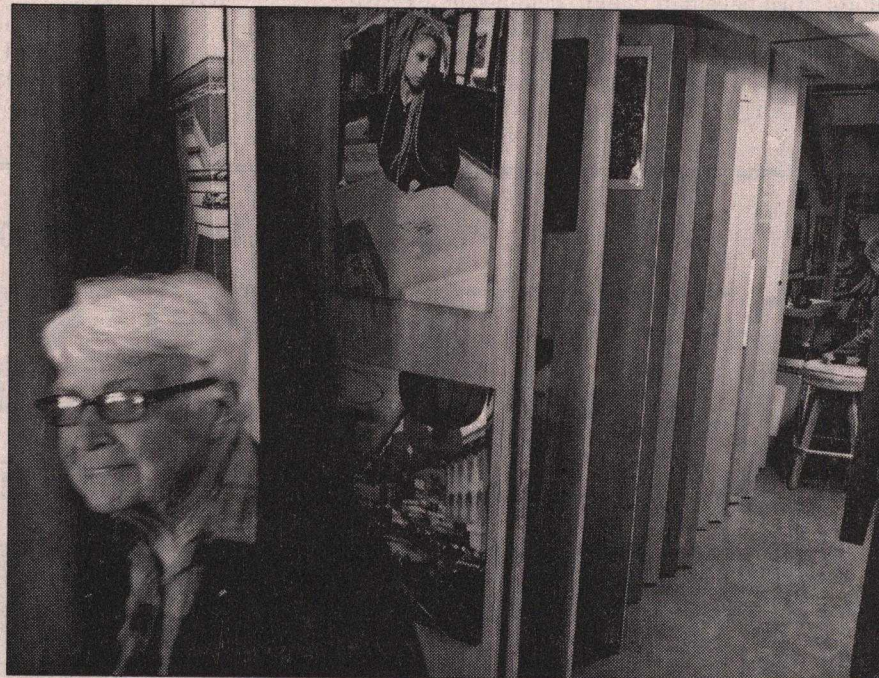
The Redevelopment Agency purchased the land for \$2 million and started working with Artspace of Minneapolis and other nonprofits to transform the former factory.

The \$40 million, 100-unit apartment complex with below-market monthly rents — the first phase of the project — opened to residents in June 2009 and now has a two-year waiting list, Newell said.

The 28 work studios, which made their debut over the weekend, have only two vacancies, Newell said.

They range in size from 300 square feet to 3,500 square feet.

Pat Clarke of Wildfire Creations, who makes jewelry out of gemstones and burlwood, rents a 380-square-foot stu-



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Audrey Wann of Santa Cruz ducked into Chip Schuer's photo presentation for a quick look at the Tannery Arts Center open house Saturday.

dio where she works and sells her creations.

The front portion of her studio looks like an elegant jewelry store with glass cases, mirrors, a nice rug and leather chair. The back, where she works, is filled with drills, grinders and saws.

"I love it, I'm thrilled to be here," Clarke, 63, said. "The variety of being around the other artists, I love. The energy, the kids around, it's great."

Janice O'Driscoll, a print maker, shares an 1,100-square-foot space with 13 other print makers.

They've pinned their art on the walls and filled the room with counters, cubbies and materials needed to create prints.

"The best thing I like here is being around all the artists and collaborating," O'Driscoll said. "When you're in your own garage or studio, you don't get that. It's exciting to be here."

The third and final phase of the Tannery Arts Center will be a \$5 million performing arts center.

Organizers have raised \$3 million for the theater, and are hoping to raise another \$2 million and be ready for the first performance in 2014, Newell said.

The performing arts center will house a 200-seat theater, stage and lobby.

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