

# The State of RiNo - 2015

- Tracy Weil, Board Chair and Co-Founder

This fall the River North Art District will celebrate our 10th year — and we're booming! These are exciting times for our creative neighborhood.



In 2005 we started with just 8 locations and today the district has over 180 members. These include art studios, galleries, arts organizations, creative & local businesses, restaurants, entertainment venues, craft breweries, winemakers, agriculture and more. The district continues to grow and we're adding new members weekly. Together we have built a strong collective community, with creativity and innovation at the forefront.

With growth comes change and opportunities for our thriving community. Through the efforts of the RiNo Art District Board of Directors, the Urban Improvement Committee, members, community activists, stakeholders, residents and volunteers we are working hard to grow, develop and sustain the momentum of this vigorous community. We strive to maintain our unique artistic, industrial personality. *We are our own small town.*

As a state-certified Creative District, our goal is to promote economic sustainability, ensuring that *RiNo remains a district where artists can create and thrive long-term.*

## ***Where art is made and success unfolds***

In 10 years, we've developed major initiatives and have set the stage for our future:

- The RiNo Art District is a nonprofit c(6) membership based organization. We offer levels for artists, arts organizations, nonprofits, creative & small businesses. The district is also supported by the RiNo Guardians, who make a larger financial commitment to the organization each year to help the district add needed staff to manage our exponential growth. Member locations in RiNo are our biggest asset. Their grass roots efforts to provide stellar programming have transformed this community with art exhibitions, special events, performances, working studios, street murals and quality work.

- The Urban Improvement Committee (UIC) has led the way building our Registered Neighborhood Organization (RNO). Goals of the UIC are to support area residents, fostering local businesses and actively participating in neighborhood issues including making the district more accessible to visitors and constituents. On behalf of the neighborhood the UIC advocates for all major infrastructure projects being developed in the area, including the revitalization of Brighton Blvd., RiNo South Platte River Pedestrian Bridge, River North Park, 38<sup>th</sup> & Blake Street light rail station and the station pedestrian bridge at 35<sup>th</sup>. These efforts further our goal to connect east and west sides to better unite the neighborhood as one. The district is working in tandem with Bike Denver and Walk Denver to enhance accessibility for bicycles and pedestrians.

- As a Registered Neighborhood District, art district champions regularly meet with developers, city planners, stakeholders and small businesses on their upcoming projects. This initiative has been a successful way to connect early with new projects thereby encouraging the inclusion of studio, creative spaces and even public art.

- The RiNo Design Review Board (RIND), a subset of UIC, is establishing Design Guidelines for the district as well as place-making efforts such as the RiNo Alley Project to enliven alleyways with light, music and art.

- The art district Board is working to create the RiNo Urban Art Center, a gathering place to showcase our urban community and enhance the cultural and economic vitality of River North, Elryia Swansea, Five Points & Globeville. The art center will provide access to programs and services that draw on the assets of the district, including the river, to improve the quality of life for area residents and businesses.

- As an advocate for artists, RiNo is leading efforts to ensure their long-term economic stability. The district is working with Minneapolis-based Artspace, a leader in artist-led community transformation. Artspace focuses on creating affordable live/work space for artists and their families as well as non-residential space for artists, arts organizations and creative enterprises. In collaboration with the City of Denver's Arts & Venues and district leaders, Artspace will complete a feasibility study of RiNo in the spring. They are narrowing possible locations in the district for affordable spaces for artists, and drafting guidelines and assistance for developers to include studio space or live/work space in their projects.

## ***RiNo charges ahead***

This is a time of unprecedented change in RiNo. Investment from public and private sectors is substantially changing our area, while new creative businesses are helping to establish a vibrant and economically strong neighborhood.

In an effort to leverage these investments and maintain our urban flavor and creative offerings, the RiNo Art District, in partnership with RiNo property and business owners and the City of Denver, has completed a feasibility study for a Business Improvement District (BID). The BID Petition launches later this month and the Board of Directors and BID Steering Committee Members recommend the creation to allow a funding mechanism for the art districts long term success.

BIDs are a collective effort of local stakeholders to finance services, programs, management, and marketing to help strategically manage growth and change. The RiNo Art District will continue to be the central organization for our neighborhood and with a stable funding source will continue to not only advocate for artists but will also work on increased marketing for the district and programs to support small businesses setting up shop in the district. Branding, signage and wayfinding will play an important role in marketing the district regionally, nationally, and to an international audience.

RiNo is quickly becoming a national model for art districts and communities around the country. The BID will help create a stronger unified voice that will help influence policy, develop partnerships, and leverage funding to manage greater change in the district. Our goal is to maintain our urban character and innovative methods in building and sustaining community success on all levels. We've built this vibrant community into one of the state's hottest neighborhoods and our goal is to *Keep RiNo Wild* — where artists can work, live and thrive in both economic and creative success.



**KEEP  
RiNO  
WILD**

For the last ten years it's been my pleasure to work to advocate for art, artists and creatives throughout RiNo. We started the district with a modest hope of bringing more people to see our work. It has morphed into a bigger initiative to shift the paradigm, bring artists to the development table, collaborate with city agencies and educate the community about the value of art in a neighborhood. Art can transform places with adding meaning, interaction, beauty, and context; creating memorable encounters for people and inspiring a sense of place. We want to empower people owning and renting alike, to mobilize in the spirit of creativity to make a positive change. – *Tracy*

## **RiNo - *Where Art is Made.***

*RiNo Art District Board Members: Board Chair: Tracy Weil, Secretary: Rexford Brown, Treasurer: Jonathan Kaplan, Director & Co-Founder: Jill Hadley Hooper, Director: Lisa Heppner*

*Urban Improvement Committee - Co-Chairs: Justin Croft and Andrew Feinstein, Development: Sean Campbell, Business: John Beldock, Residential: Gina Ambrosio, Art/Art Board Liaison: Jonathan Kaplan, At-Large: Sonia Danielsen*

*RiNo Design Review Board Chair: Will Kerns, Board - Justin Croft, Tangier Barnes, Terra Mazzeo, Adam Gordon, Rick Griffith and Zev O'Brien-Gould*

*Crash Coordinator & Designer: Eva Zimmerman  
Community Engagement: Marina Chotzinoff*