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55 YEARS

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ArtBlock 731 provides affordable artist live/work housing in the historic South End

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ICON architecture has been at the forefront of artist live/work housing since the redevelopment of a former rubber factory into Brookside Artists Live/Work in 2002, and has since embarked on a variety of artist housing projects that span a wide range of program types. At ArtBlock 731 on Harrison Ave. in the South End, two new condominium buildings with contemporary brick and zinc facades include 54 condos, 26 of which are affordable units priced at under \$200,000 and set aside for artists.

Commanding the center of the site is the historic Joshua Bates Art Center, a former school dating to 1884 and now a permanent home for work-only artist studios. To qualify to purchase one of the 26 affordable live/work loft spaces in ArtBlock, applicants must be certified as a working artist by a BRA panel of reviewers. Developed by New Atlantic Development Corp., design by ICON Architecture and built by CWC Builders, the buildings offer units distinct in configuration and size with modern finishes and detail. The 54 live/work and market townhouses and flats offer lower level parking.

The new buildings emulate the surrounding rhythms and materials of the South End, as well as express the community-of-arts within. Indoor and outdoor exhibition spaces and galleries within the ArtBlock enclave enrich both the local community and the neighborhood. Currently Mobius, a performance artists group, is relocating to the gallery space, which caters to the celebration of cross-disciplinary art with its glass display area and street front location.

"This space can really expand the SoWa district," said the president of New Atlantic, Peter Roth. The area is no stranger to investment dollars, receiving \$650 million in investments over eight years and 1,800 new units of housing, 1,000 of them affordable, according to Randi Lathrop of the BRA. To help build ArtBlock 731, the city donated the land for free and invested \$1 million.

"The idea that a community of creative minds exists is a thrill and inspiring," said Maritza Medina, an ArtBlock resident and South End artist. "The opportunity to share an idea is just at your doorstep." For many of the residents, Art Block has kept them from leaving the city in search of affordable live/work options. To them, the neighborhood and the gathering of artists give them hope that the Boston art scene will continue to grow and assert a greater presence.

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