NEW ORLEANS DANCE COLLECTIVE

A Project of
NODC / JANET ANDREWS

A Collaboration With
TULANE CITY CENTER

Led By
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VISION
A Vision for linking dance with social work

New Orleans Dance Collective (NODC) actively links dance and social work and seeks to address the overwhelming need for positive, esteem-building dance activities for inner-city at-risk youth and is a registered non-profit corporation with the Louisiana Secretary of State.

NODC’s mission is to celebrate community and diversity by providing dance programs for inner-city at-risk youth utilizing group therapy techniques as a means of intervention and to positively affect behavior through dance within a group setting. Janet Andrews, Executive Director of New Orleans Dance Collective, was born, raised and educated in New Orleans, holding a Master of Social Work from Tulane University. Dancing since the age of three and teaching from the age of fifteen after graduating from Bernice Durden School of Dance in 1965, Janet taught dance around New Orleans and Los Angeles for almost fifty years. NODC was incorporated in 2006 to provide dance instruction and cultural enrichment activities targeting disadvantaged at-risk New Orleans youth ages 4-19.

The goal has always been to provide positive alternatives for youth during non-school hours with year-round after school and summer programs. This program addresses crucial areas of personal growth and socialization for individuals (self-esteem), the individual working within a group (unity and mutual alignment, and the group working as a team. Dance classes include time for practice of basic dance skills (fostering self-discipline and a healthier physical body), choreography (individuals developing cooperation within a group, and production/performance planning (developing teamwork and a strong group spirit and individual self-esteem).

NODC targets student aged four (4) to nineteen (19) years old from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The program teaches Tap, Hip Hop, Salsa, Liturgical, African, Modern, Ballet, and Jazz.

NODC is an award winning program, receiving recognition from the Angel Awards of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana for its dedication and commitment to the children, but NODC does not have a place to call home. There is extremely limited studio space in New Orleans post-Katrina, which has been NODC’s biggest obstacle to expanding NODC’s outreach and success, particularly during the school year. Since 2006, NODC has carried on an uninterrupted search for adequate space without success. Available rental properties require up to $70,000 of rehab to provide only one studio, with no guarantee of longevity. The summer program has outgrown its space at Dillard University, which was only available for four (4) weeks in July, for the past four years, leaving NODC no place to operate during the remainder of the year. Many more youth could be served with adequate year-round space.

NODC seeks your help in finding suitable dance space that will allow NODC to expand to year-round programs during off-school hours (after school, weekends and summers). Studio space would allow NODC to expand to year-round programs that would include workshops and a youth dance company, who would perform for community events. Studio space would also allow the studio to be used by other dance artists who do not have available dance space.
STORIES
Two dancers tell their NODC experience

My name is Gabrielle Harrell. At the age of 7, I was introduced to what now has become my passion, dancing! Under the direction of Ms. Janet Andrews, I have learned African, Hip-Hop, Jazz, Lyrical, Salsa, Tap and Ballet. Ms. Janet opened the doors to a world I had never known and I’ve met and danced for people I never thought in my wildest dreams I’d ever meet.

As a member of the New Orleans Dance Collective, I can remember spending countless hours on the weekends learning routines to perform for various functions. Even when our parents couldn’t afford to pay for services, Ms. Janet and her staff were always there with open arms, still eager and ready to teach us, for free!

Their hard work, determination and dedication taught me what it meant to be dedicated to something and that through hard work and determination dreams are possible. Although it was difficult at times to find places to practice, Ms. Janet would not rest until she found us a place. We have been to Ashe’ Cultural Center, Dillard University, St. Bernard Center, Bishop McManus, anywhere she could beg for us a spot!

Having dance in my life has helped me to stay young and in shape. If it weren’t for Ms. Janet and her school, and of course my parents, I don’t know what I’d be doing. Now at the age of 14, I continue to dance with New Orleans Dance Collective and look forward to every time I get to practice dancing and perform with my friends.
My name is Kolby Curry. I am 13 years old and I have attended New Orleans Dance Collective for the last 6 years. Dancing is my passion, and NODC gives me a way to freely express myself. I am able to not only dance, but I am fortunate to have made life-long friendships with the teachers and other students. New Orleans Dance Collective means a lot to me.
The New Orleans Dance Collective actively links dance with social work and seeks to address the overwhelming need for positive, life-affirming, esteem-building cultural activities for inner-city at-risk youth in post-Katrina New Orleans. NODC and Tulane City Center (TCC) have identified a site in the mid-city area for a new Dance Studio to develop a design proposal to engage and expand the current and future NODC activities. The design and programmatic vision developed by TCC and NODC Executive Director Janet Andrews implements a series of spaces to embody NODC’s mission in the community and to act as an important public attractor for the area where it is located.
NODC will be located on Bienville St between N Rendon St and N Lopez St in the mid-city area at the edge of Treme. The site is easily accessible to the citizens living in the community and to the surrounding areas. The site is directly connected to N Jefferson Davis Pkwy and near Carrollton Avenue and the I-10, ensuring easy vehicular access. The neighborhood is mostly residential with few commercial activities. NODC takes advantage of the opportunities offered by the neighborhood by providing a new node for collective activities and public events while acting as an important social catalyst to revitalize the immediate area.
DESIGN CONCEPT
Integrating outdoor and indoor programs

The design concept for NODC revolves around the idea of generating an important node and landmark in the neighborhood. The facade of the building operates as an interface to create a connection between the NODC activities and the street. The lobby at the ground level offers a threshold between the public and the private creating a moment of exchange between the students, teachers and visitors. The dance studios above expose the NODC activities to the street through the glass and metal mesh facade that allows a strong visual connection with the interior spaces. At night, the mesh allows the light to expand toward the street and to dematerialize the facade while emphasizing the skin’s pattern. As a result, the building assumes a mutable facade effect during the different times of the day while reconfiguring its urban presence and interaction with the public.
The building is organized around the outdoor courtyard that acts as a main gathering and exchange area for the users and the different public and private spaces. The courtyard is intended as flexible space that can accommodate multiple programs such as outdoor performance, classrooms, outdoor dance studio, temporary market and in general to offer a space for the students and visitors to gather and rest. A continuous circulation loop wraps the courtyard space, connecting the various programs while creating a close connection between indoor and outdoor and exposing the interiors to natural light. Additionally, the circulation loop expands and contracts to allow moments of informal gathering and to promote interior visual connectivity among all the programs. The lobby acts as a connection between the street and the courtyard and as a moment of convergence of the circulation loop that wraps around the courtyard and links the first and second level. Also the lobby has a shop / commercial space embedded in it to attract visitors to NODC. As private spaces, the building offers a flex office – meeting area and a loft for dancers and artists-in-residence. The main studio is a flexible space that can accommodate multiple indoor programs such as dance classes, workshops and performances. Also, the main studio has the potential to open up towards the courtyard to generate one large continuous space between interior and exterior to allow exchange of multiple events.
SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT
Continuous loop

1st Floor Plan

2nd Floor Plan

right: Interior View of the main Studio
right: Night View - Bienville St
above: Interior View - Studio (2nd floor)
right: View Interior Courtyard
above: Interior View of the Lobby
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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