

Building the Maven District at 9th and 9th

Local couple creates a curated wellness community

By **Ashley Szanter** - September 26, 2018

Tessa Arneson and Tim Watcke had a vision: a curated community of businesses catering to the whole wellness of its customers. "It started with a couple buildings and now it's a whole block," says Arneson, a native Utahn who knew Salt Lake City would be the perfect guinea pig for this experiment.

Previously the owner of Pilates on 9th and 9th, Arneson, with husband Watcke, now owns Maven Strong—the anchor tenant of the ever-growing Maven District, smack in the middle of the 9th and 9th and Central 9th neighborhoods in Salt Lake. "I would get a lot of people who would come in and ask, 'where do you go for this?' what do you do for this?' I thought, how cool would it be if I could tell people to walk 25 feet this way and tell them I sent you?"

While the Maven District may have started out as a vision, it's now a fully realized community of 25 businesses from beauty salons to custom suit-makers, fitness centers to ice cream and dessert shop, Normal. "This group of businesses all see our vision. They're locally owned, community and entrepreneur startups," says Watcke. Not only that, but the great majority of these businesses—at least 19 right now—are owned by women. "Everyone on the block is local and most of them are not seasoned vets when it comes to business ownership. They had that bravery to take a step to do something big with us," says Watcke.

While Arneson and Watcke are seeing the Maven District grow by leaps and bounds, their success is surpassing even their original estimations. "We were fully committed, but nervous," remembers Arneson. "We were scared but knew this was 100% the right pick. About a year ago, we started signing leases and, next thing you knew, we were full." In fact, according to Watcke, almost every available space was leased out before framing was finished.

They're not done growing. Next on the docket is a 25-unit townhome community right across the street from the Maven District, designed to match the District in both aesthetics and in its vision of holistic, community-centered support. While the townhomes will take at least 8-10 months to build, Arneson and Watcke believe this will only help the Maven District flourish. "It gives something really special to this venture because it's also going to be a neighborhood. We need the community around us to make this work. It gives vibrancy and the feeling that it's not a strip mall or big development—it has heart behind it," says Arneson.

The couple feels Salt Lake City is an easy place to be an entrepreneur because people love supporting locals. "We wanted to feed into that fire and keep making it bigger and bigger," says Arneson. "There's not another place like it. It's not like 9th and 9th and it's not like 15th and 15th. It's different, and people always get so much more here than they expect." *From 100 E. to 200 E. on 900 South, SLC, mavendistrict.com*

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