

# **VISUAL ARTS CENTER OF RICHMOND**

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

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**2019-2024**

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**VISUAL ARTS CENTER**  
OF RICHMOND





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INTRODUCTION

Dear Friends,


Art-making can be an intuitive process. We use our paint brush to add an unexpected streak of color, we overexpose a photograph, we make a thumb-sized indentation on a clay vessel. We learn the rules and then we break them, and in the process we create stunning work imbued with personal meaning.

For those of us who are artists, strategic planning can feel like the antithesis of art-making. But this planning process is what makes creative expression, in all its forms, possible. The Visual Arts Center of Richmond was established, as the Hand Workshop, in 1963, and the organization survives—and thrives—because generations of artists and art lovers made careful plans and then painstakingly implemented them. If you count yourself among their ranks, thank you.


- VisArts’ 2019-2024 Strategic Plan is big in scope. We want to:
- Ensure our staff, board and programs are positioned to strengthen our local, regional and national reputation
  - Reduce barriers and expand inclusive practices to ensure we are accessible to everyone in our community
  - Maintain and improve our current facility and work toward a future in which the Visual Arts Center of Richmond is not a single building but an urban campus
  - Increase our annual income and endowment to ensure the sustainability of our future

Implementing this plan will require all of us to think like artists. Over the next five years, we’ll need plenty of creative solutions and a stroke of the unexpected at every turn. We hope you’ll find this document to be a source of inspiration as we work to realize our vision:

Art for everyone. Creativity for Life.



Stefanie Fedor  
Executive Director



Patty Wilkerson  
Chair, Board of Directors

**Strategic Planning Committee**

Andrew Valerie, Board Member  
Nicole Bielawski, Board Member  
Emory Gunn, Junior Board Member  
Stefanie Fedor, Executive Director  
Rachel Beanland, Deputy Director  
Jordan Brown, Director of Education and Programs  
Lizzie Oliver, Director of Development



# THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

This strategic planning process started, in the fall of 2017, with the receipt of a capacity-building grant from The Community Foundation. We began by working with the Knowledge Advisory Group to complete an organizational logic model. Through a series of meetings, we identified four major program components and their associated activities and outcomes.

With that work behind us, we moved forward—inviting the Knowledge Advisory Group to partner with the organization’s board and staff on the creation of a five-year strategic plan that would see the nonprofit community arts center into its 60th year of operation.

We assembled a strategic planning committee that included members of the VisArts’ senior leadership team and board. Over the course of the following year, the team met frequently to review research findings and generate new and exciting questions about the organization’s future direction.

The Knowledge Advisory Group conducted a data and document review and administered a series of stakeholder interviews and surveys, designed to elicit feedback on our instruction, exhibitions, building and a range of other issues. The group also completed an environmental scan, which included key data and trends, a SWOT analysis and a competitive analysis.

What the feedback told us was that VisArts has played and continues to play a vital role in our community—offering arts education to those who might not otherwise have access to it. Exceptional teachers and a strong staff culture were a strength, and fundraising was identified as a challenge. The top priority, which was identified again and again, was the need to expand and/or renovate the building. Overwhelmingly, people said they believe that VisArts is poised to become a national leader in the community arts education space.

In the months that followed, the team completed a series of planning exercises with board members and staff. We wrote a new mission statement for the organization and formally adopted the organization’s decade-old tagline, “Art for everyone. Creativity for life,” as our vision statement. We also adopted a series of guiding principles that will help steer our work. Then we wrote the plan itself, which the Board of Directors formally approved at its December 2018 meeting.

Now the real work begins. Over the next five years, we will implement a plan that is both well-grounded and bold. We hope you’ll join us as we do this important and necessary work.



# STAKEHOLDERS

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS\*

Patty Wilkerson, Chair  
Michael Neese, Vice Chair  
Sam Messmer, Board Secretary  
Joel Ray, Treasurer and Chair, Finance  
Bruce Yoder, Chair, Development  
Katie DeLuca, Chair, Education  
Josh Kayer, Chair, Operations  
Kate Ackerly  
Nicole Bielawski  
Marshall Chambers  
Zach Hunt

## JUNIOR BOARD\*

Zhiela Ashtianipour  
Marcel Ames  
Vernon Brown  
Sarah Burgess  
Caroline Creasey  
Liz Creasman  
Lucy Gillis  
Holly Gordon  
Kathryn Green  
Pryor Green  
Emory Gunn

## VISARTS STAFF\*

Stefanie Fedor, Executive Director  
Rachel Beanland, Deputy Director  
Jordan Brown, Director of Education and Programs  
Lizzie Oliver, Director of Development  
Liz Borsetti, Facilities Manager  
Adam Burke, Education Coordinator  
Liesa Collins, Development Coordinator  
Rachel Deutch, Guest and Student Services Coordinator  
Kate Garber, Marketing and Communications Manager

Steve Ridge  
Susan Sadid  
David Shuford  
Frankie Slaughter  
Cheryl Alderman Slokker  
Jane Sper  
Clare Tilton  
Ed Trask  
Andrew Valerie  
Jere Williams

Michael Kalafatis  
Annie Cai Larson  
Jacob Lubetkin  
Blake Mirzayan  
Megan Mott  
Ashby Nickerson  
Lauren Peters  
Kierstin Ruppert  
Luke Stoutenburg  
Danuta Syska  
Janpim Wolf

Shelby Howick, Special Events Coordinator  
Lauren Miner, Guest and Student Services Associate  
Brandon O’Neill, Graphic Designer  
Betsy Ryland, Assistant to the Executive Director  
Nicki Stein, Community Partnerships Manager  
Tesni Stephen, Education Manager  
Tyler Stoll, Studio Manager  
Jeff Vick, Studio Manager

## INDIVIDUAL STAKEHOLDERS

The following individual stakeholders gave their time and valuable feedback to this effort:

Melody Barnes  
Ted Elmore  
Brian Jackson  
Vivian Keasler  
Kathie and Steve Markel  
Pam and Bill Royall  
Alyssa Salomon  
Marcia Thalhimer  
Katie Ukrop

## STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

We gratefully acknowledge the following constituent groups that offered their feedback throughout this process:

Arts and Nonprofit Leaders  
Community Partners  
Donors and Members  
K-12 Educators  
Parents of Youth Students  
Students  
Teachers  
Volunteers



\* As of December 2018 when the strategic plan was approved



# WHAT WE LEARNED

Extensive research and countless conversations taught us important lessons about who we are and where we’re going.



## AREAS WHERE WE EXCEL

- Quality of art exhibitions in the True F. Luck Gallery
- Quality of instruction by teaching faculty
- Availability of classes for youth
- Availability of beginner and intermediate classes for adults
- Our building’s location within the Richmond community

## AREAS WHERE WE CAN IMPROVE

- Availability of open access, or community rental, studios
- Availability of advanced classes for adults
- Accessibility of building for people of all ages and mobility levels
- Capacity of building to accommodate program growth
- Access to parking

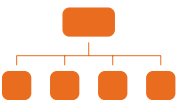
## DESIRED FOCUS

Our stakeholders said they wanted to see us focus on:



- Making arts education accessible to a diverse population of students
- Creating and sustaining innovative programs and services
- Expanding our space to accommodate for more classes and programs

## WORDS OUR STAKEHOLDERS ASSOCIATE WITH VISARTS:



## ORGANIZATIONAL LOGIC MODEL

Through our programs, we:

- ..... Provide opportunities to discover art
- ..... Deepen arts exploration through education
- ..... Support the development of artists
- ..... Align arts experiences with the needs of defined community groups

# MISSION, VISION AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Our mission statement was last updated in 2007, and since then the Visual Arts Center of Richmond has more than doubled both its classes and its community programs, along with its staff and operating budget. As we went into the strategic planning process, it felt like the right time to both re-examine our mission statement and write a formal vision statement for the organization.

We approached writing the mission statement slowly, after a great deal of conversation and careful consideration. But the vision statement hit us like a bolt of lightning. We’d been using a much beloved tagline—Art for everyone. Creativity for life.—for more than a decade, and it was time to recognize the “tagline” for what it really was—our vision for the future.

## OUR MISSION

Celebrate and support the creative life of all people through art-making, exhibitions and community programs

## OUR VISION

Art for Everyone. Creativity for Life.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The work we do is guided by our shared commitment to these principles:

Honor our history.

Be creative.

Act ethically.

Be responsive to our community’s needs.

Tell our story.

Do the research, practice good planning, and create a culture of continual evaluation.

Meet or exceed the Nonprofit Standards of Excellence, as well as the best practices of arts organizations.

Improve our processes to increase our efficiency and make room for innovation.

Be good stewards of our resources.

Leave a legacy.





# GOAL 1

**Ensure our staff, board and programs are positioned to strengthen our local, regional and national reputation**



## STRATEGIES

- 1.1 Create studios that are world class
- 1.2 Plan and implement a creative curriculum that distinguishes us from other arts centers
- 1.3 Become an organizational thought leader in the field of arts education
- 1.4 Maintain the high caliber of our exhibition program
- 1.5 Further define and expand our artist residency program
- 1.6 Recruit and retain talented and engaged board and junior board members who will become passionate advocates for the organization
- 1.7 Recruit and retain talented and engaged teaching artists who inspire students to do their best work
- 1.8 Recruit and retain talented and engaged staff and give them the tools to be successful
- 1.9 Collaborate with leading organizations to create innovative programs
- 1.10 Enhance our customer experience
- 1.11 Build our brand



# GOAL 2

**Reduce barriers and expand inclusive practices to ensure we are accessible to everyone in our community**



## STRATEGIES

- 2.1 Identify and implement recruitment and retention strategies that increase the diversity of the center's teachers and staff
- 2.2 Train teachers, staff and studio volunteers on best practices for creating inclusive spaces
- 2.3 Ensure that we're communicating our message to diverse audiences
- 2.4 Maintain the strength and quality of our existing community partnerships
- 2.5 Establish new community partnerships that target audiences that currently lack access to adequate arts programming
- 2.6 Adopt practices that welcome people who do not speak English as their primary language
- 2.7 Address geographic and transportation challenges that keep people from reaching our building
- 2.8 Ensure that people of all income levels can access our programs
- 2.9 Offer or alter programs to meet the needs of people with a variety of schedules



# GOAL 3

Maintain and improve our current facility and work toward a future in which the Visual Arts Center of Richmond is not a single building but an urban campus



## STRATEGIES

- 3.1 Engage in the regular and ongoing maintenance of our historic property
- 3.2 Improve our existing building to grow our programs, maximize revenue and ensure the safety and well-being of all students
- 3.3 Lay the groundwork for growing our campus



# GOAL 4

**Increase our annual income and endowment to ensure the sustainability of our future**



## STRATEGIES

- 4.1 Grow our current earned revenue
- 4.2 Pursue new models for generating earned revenue
- 4.3 Increase individual contributions
- 4.4 Grow our membership program
- 4.5 Grow our corporate membership program
- 4.6 Increase events revenue
- 4.7 Increase the revenue we receive from corporate, foundation and government grants
- 4.8 Build a reserve fund that is equivalent to one year's operating expenses
- 4.9 Grow current endowments and create new ones to sustain operations and programming
- 4.10 Establish and fund a Real Estate Fund to allow the organization to make real estate acquisitions when deemed prudent
- 4.11 Define and launch a capital campaign that aligns with the organization's strategic plan





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