

VISUAL ARTS CENTER OF RICHMOND

STRATEGIC PLAN

2019-2024



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

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

JUNIOR BOARD*

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

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

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

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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