

ArtWorks

RICHMOND ARTS STRATEGY

2026-2031

Richmond Arts, Culture and Heritage Services

October 2025



Reconciliation

The City of Richmond is committed to building and maintaining positive and respectful relationships with xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) and Indigenous Peoples who live in and around Richmond in order to advance reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.



Traditional Musqueam cedar bark weaving workshop with artist Rita Kompst

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Origami displays
at the Richmond
Cherry Blossom
Festival



Highlights

What carries over from the previous plan?

ArtWorks: Richmond Arts Strategy 2019–2024 set a solid Vision with Guiding Principles for the development of arts and culture. As approved by Council, these remain in place to provide a comprehensive baseline for the City's ongoing arts and culture service delivery. *ArtWorks* focused on **free programming**, new and **improved spaces**, and **increased awareness**. These priorities carry over to the *Arts Strategy 2026–2031*, along with **investment** in arts and culture, with an increased attention to **building leadership**.

The updated Strategic Directions are as follows:



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1:

Increase Awareness, Pride and Participation in the Arts



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2:

Provide Affordable and Accessible Arts for All



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3:

Invest in Arts and Culture



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4:

Build Arts and Cultural Leadership



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5:

Activate Public Spaces Through (and for!) the Arts



Capstan Village Public Art Walking Tour: art professional Jas Lally with 285 Apples by Gathie Falk

What has changed?

A lot! Implementation of the *Arts Strategy 2019–2024* largely occurred over the pandemic years which greatly impacted the cultural sector as a whole and has influenced how people in Canada are participating in arts and culture.

Coupled with the above are major **social and political changes**, **housing affordability challenges**, **inflation**, **health and climate pressures**, along with the **rise of AI and digital-based creation and organizational transformation**. As such, the cultural sector is facing critical challenges, as are our communities overall.

At the same time, there is increased understanding of the inherent value of arts and culture to cities and communities, and most importantly, to people in their everyday lives.

Backed by growing research, there is now widespread awareness of how arts and culture contribute to:

- **Better health and wellbeing**—in fact, the arts are now being prescribed by doctors as a means to helping with a variety of conditions from reducing cognitive decline to improved emotional and mental health.
- **Safer cities**, including reducing acts of racism, accelerating acceptance of others, reducing delinquency, and improving resiliency and skills-building in at-risk youth.
- Understanding that **accessibility** applies not only to the facility infrastructure, or physical accessibility of the space, but also artistic programming, mission and vision. Taking a multi-dimensional approach to advancing accessibility demonstrates to people living with all types of disabilities that they have a place to participate. Meanwhile, ensuring that opportunities to participate in arts and culture remain low-barrier, that people feel welcomed in arts and cultural spaces, and have opportunities to encounter art in their everyday lives has been renewed as an area of focus.
- **Stronger local economies through the arts**—Arts and culture play an important role in promoting economic goals through local regeneration, developing talent, creating jobs, spurring innovation and attracting tourists. They are critical to being a “complete community,” and to vibrant, sustainable and successful local economies both through labour and production.

What's new?

ArtWorks: Richmond Arts Strategy 2026–2031 builds off the previous strategy with an increased focus on:

Cultural tourism—Richmond is increasingly seen as a destination for vibrant arts, culture and heritage participation. The Strategy expands on ways to integrate arts and culture at strategic and tactical levels with tourism partners.

Raising Awareness—Knowing what arts and culture offerings are available is an increased focus of the plan. Without marketing and communications, Richmond residents remain unaware of the rich cultural programming already on offer.

Creative Placemaking—Though touched-on in the previous strategy, creative placemaking is a collaborative approach to designing, transforming and enhancing public spaces that focuses on the needs, identity and aspirations of the local community.

Climate and Sustainability—In keeping with the City’s Circular City Strategy, the Arts Strategy weaves in ways the arts are vital to understanding the climate crisis and calls for practices with sustainability in mind.

Community and City Roles and Responsibilities—With strategic investment in capacity building, community organizations can take-on and participate in the implementation of some of the actions found in this plan. By building local arts and culture leadership through a range of supports including training and development, the City and community can collaborate and achieve more—together.

See **OUR PLANNING CONTEXT**, pages 27–37.

Overview on Approach

The City of Richmond recognizes that the arts are integral to vibrant communities. Home to an immense cultural mosaic, Richmond is characterized by growth, changing demographics and a diverse arts landscape (see pages 32–33). The *Arts Strategy 2026–2031* represents this diversity and this momentum by identifying the challenges and needs of both the arts community and Richmond as a whole.

The arts can play a strong role in placemaking, community building, tourism and economic development, providing a new or different lens in finding ways to:

- combat social isolation in the community
- enhance quality of life by encouraging healthy lifestyles and lifelong learning
- celebrate diversity and improve awareness of cultural differences
- develop pride of place through art and design
- contribute to community vitality
- improve the ability to attract skilled workers
- gain a competitive advantage as a tourism destination
- and much more

What do we mean by the “arts”?

If it feels creative, odds are it counts! For the purpose of this strategy, “arts” refers to the broad subdivision of culture, composed of many expressive and creative disciplines. The term commonly encompasses, but is not limited to:

- ▶ Visual and applied arts (e.g. painting, printmaking, installations; drawing, sculpture, crafts, textile arts, pottery and ceramics, photography, film and video)
- ▶ Performing arts (e.g. theatre, music, song, spoken word, and dance)
- ▶ Culinary arts
- ▶ Environmental and land art (i.e., site-specific, using natural landscape as medium)
- ▶ Interdisciplinary practices
- ▶ Literary arts
- ▶ Media arts
- ▶ Community-engaged arts practices

Our Purpose

Since 2019, *ArtWorks: Richmond Arts Strategy* has acted as a comprehensive guide for residents, the City and its interest holders to develop stronger connections in order to advance the policies, programs and services needed for the arts to thrive in Richmond. For the 2026 update, the City engaged with staff, interest holders in the community, and arts and culture subject-matter experts, to reflect on the existing Strategy and adapt it to significant shifts in Richmond, the arts and society in general.

The intention was not to develop an entirely new document, but rather to reflect on and adapt it to the current context that includes major considerations, such as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, climate concerns, rising socio-cultural polarization and innovations in accessibility to arts. At the same time, the updated Strategy considers and incorporates the goals of other recent City plans and strategies, including but not limited to the Richmond Accessibility Plan (2023), Community Wellness Strategy (2018), Community Energy and Emissions Plan (2022) and the Circular City Strategy (2023).

ArtWorks: Richmond Arts Strategy 2026–2031 reflects the evolving needs of Richmond residents and visitors, all of whom have the right to enjoy arts and culture in their lives.



Homecoming
by Simone Guo, Richmond-
Brighouse Canada Line
Station

The key objectives for engagement were as follows:

- ▶ Gain key informant perspectives on the progress of the Arts Strategy and new ideas/initiatives to be reflected in an updated Strategy.
- ▶ Connect with the public to get general perspectives of arts and culture in Richmond today and desires for the future.
- ▶ Sensemaking and validation of engagement findings.

Vision and Guiding Principles

Officially adopted in 2019, the community-informed **Vision** and **Guiding Principles** continue to guide ArtWorks: *Richmond Arts Strategy 2026–2031*.

The Vision

Richmond's thriving arts scene:

- ▶ Animates our city everyday
- ▶ Offers rich arts education and experiences, festivals and events
- ▶ Fosters social connections and wellness
- ▶ Provides creative spaces



Guiding Principles

- ▶ Striving for **excellence** among all who participate in and contribute to the artistic life of Richmond, from City services, to community organizations, to individuals of all ages and skill levels.
- ▶ Prioritizing **sustainability** to 'future-proof' the arts through funding, education, infrastructure, mentorship and the integration of the arts into the everyday fabric of our city.
- ▶ Expressing **creativity** through experimentation and fostering collaboration among diverse voices.
- ▶ Providing broad **accessibility** to arts experiences and advancing inclusivity to connect people through the arts.
- ▶ **Community-building** through creative engagement and dialogue, and honouring the spirit of Reconciliation.
- ▶ **Celebrating** and showcasing to inspire Richmond's artistic vibrancy.

Strategic Directions



Art Truck: Interactive mural by
Bea Martin at Burkeville Days

These five Strategic Directions serve as guideposts for the development, implementation, and sustainability of the arts within Richmond over the next five years:



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Increase Awareness, Pride and
Participation in the Arts



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

Provide Affordable and
Accessible Arts for All



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Invest in Arts and Culture



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4

Build Arts and Cultural Leadership



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 5

Activate Public Spaces Through
(and for!) the Arts

What has changed?

The five Strategic Directions of *ArtWorks: Richmond Arts Strategy 2019-2024* were:

1. Ensure affordable and accessible arts for all
2. Promote inclusivity and diversity in the arts
3. Invest in the arts
4. Increase awareness and participation in the arts
5. Activate public spaces through (and for!) the arts

Through thoughtful community engagement, these directions were revised with consideration of current (post-pandemic) conditions as well as social and economic development opportunities.

The previous Strategic Directions 1, 3, 4 and 5 remain with minor edits; however, the updated Strategic Direction 1 (now 2) includes many of the actions previously under Strategic Direction 2: "Promote inclusivity and diversity in the arts".

Strategic Direction 4 is new, reflecting an increased interest around building arts and cultural leadership.

- **Strategic directions** are key themes and desired outcomes that reflect community needs, gaps in the existing cultural landscape, and specific goals for growth.
- **Goals** set the pathway toward a desired result, creating a future-state we aim to achieve.
- **Objectives** are outcome-driven and present how these goals will be achieved and what we will work to accomplish in the next five years.
- **Supporting actions** are specific activities the City and its interest holders will undertake to achieve each objective.

How do we measure progress?

City staff compile key metrics every year on the City's investments in arts and culture, and share these publicly through the Arts Services Year in Review report. These measures reflect the various roles the City has in serving as a supporter, presenter, communicator, investor and facilities operator (see page 37). Each of the Goals, Objectives and Supporting Actions will be monitored as part of implementation of this Strategy, along with prioritization and resource considerations on a regular basis.

Hand-woven blanket by Debra Sparrow at entrance to Council Chambers





STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: Increase Awareness, Pride and Participation in the Arts

GOAL:

Arts and culture are valued, celebrated and integrated into community life.

Engagement and continuing trends in the sector reveal a need for improved promotion of arts and culture—an issue not unique to Richmond. Given several factors—including the slow return of audiences post-pandemic, changing participation habits, and a generation that experienced cuts to arts and culture education in the '90s and early 2000s—investing in marketing and low-barrier opportunities for arts participation is an increasingly critical need across Canada, much like the investments seen in sports, recreation and tourism.

OBJECTIVE 1.1: Build audiences by connecting people to creative events, news and resources.

Supporting Actions:

1. Develop clear, accessible marketing and communications strategies, using preferred languages, plain language, culturally-relevant methods, and multiple channels to build audiences and participation.
2. Increase resources for arts-related marketing and communications, with a view to enhancing needs such as social media presence, audience development tools, and digital-based strategies to support audience growth.
3. Work across City departments (such as Recreation and Sport, Parks, and Community Social Development) and with the Richmond Public Library to cross-promote services and programs, such as through community centre promotional materials.
4. Promote arts and culture beyond city limits to increase awareness of Richmond's cultural offerings.



Tatakizome workshop presented by
Richmond Art Gallery

OBJECTIVE 1.2:

Engage the Richmond community with creative experiences and artistic encounters in daily life.

Supporting Actions:

1. Encourage neighbourhood-based arts and cultural activity (e.g. creative neighbourhood actions, gardening, walking tours, food tourism, etc.), through community grants and other civic support for arts experiences.
2. Broaden understanding of what artistic expression can be through education and experimentation.
3. Link to art in public spaces with creative placemaking actions in Strategic Direction 5 (pages 25–26).
4. Link this Strategic Direction to tourism initiatives that bolster Richmond as a cultural destination.

No. 3 Road Art Column:
Faces of Richmond by
Nadia Mahamoor



Ongoing work

The City and its partners will continue to:

- Support and program art-making demonstrations in the public realm including at signature festivals and pop-up events throughout the year.
- Invite the public “behind the scenes” and to create artwork themselves, through programming such as Doors Open Richmond, Culture Days, Children’s Arts Festival, Media Lab activities and Richmond Art Gallery public programs.
- Provide and promote events (such as Culture Days and Doors Open Richmond) to showcase Richmond artists.
- Foster a built environment where one has spontaneous encounters with art, such as through the Public Art program and Richmond Art Gallery off-site exhibitions.
- Provide programs such as the Public Art Engaging Artists in the Community program, Community Mural program, and Branscombe House Artist Residency program that support community-engaged arts practices.
- Increase visual and performing arts opportunities in public spaces to showcase Richmond artists.
- Align with and support the findings of the 2023 Community Needs Assessment by improving awareness of high-quality arts programming.
- Maintain HowArtWorks.ca as a portal for art community to learn about available programs and resources.
- Grow community engagement through the social media accounts of the City, Richmond Art Gallery and HowArtWorks.ca
- Build on existing services in the Richmond Public Library, community centres and other spaces that include creative programming to reach diverse and new audiences.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: Provide Affordable and Accessible Arts for All

GOAL:

Everyone feels they can participate in Richmond's arts and culture scene where diversity is embraced.

Serving Richmond's growing and changing population supports the City's reputation for delivering high-level artistic offerings and engaging cultural experiences. Ensuring that arts experiences remain accessible and responsive to our diverse community—and that Richmond stories are shared—is central to the Arts Strategy. This goal also connects to other strategies, such as arts infrastructure planning (Strategic Direction 5), to accommodate future audiences.

OBJECTIVE 2.1: Offer a diverse range of affordable arts experiences where all feel welcome and represented.

Supporting Actions:

1. Align with Richmond Accessibility Plan, and in keeping with community consultations, evaluate current arts programs, services and facilities from an accessibility perspective to identify opportunities to enhance participation and address barriers.
2. Work towards arts and cultural infrastructure and programming that is equitably available and accessible to under-represented groups.
3. Develop or expand opportunities to directly support individual artists, cultural organizations and venues that provide low and no-cost public program delivery.
4. Invest in diversity and inclusion training for City staff and programming partners to understand the diverse range of barriers experienced by people with disabilities, as well as ways to remove and prevent them.
5. Promote the Recreation Fee Subsidy Program (RFSP) for arts programs.

Hands on Art, Islamic Art of BC event at Richmond Public Library



Understanding IDEA in the Arts

Historically excluded groups face ongoing discrimination and bias in the arts due to power imbalances and inadequate awareness. Building a shared understanding of Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA) is a vital first step toward creating more respectful and supportive environments.

► **Inclusion**

Inclusion means creating a safe and respectful environment where everyone feels welcomed, valued and able to fully participate.

► **Diversity**

Diversity refers to the range of differences in people's identities, backgrounds and experiences that make each person unique.

► **Equity**

Equity is about fair treatment and removing barriers so everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed and contribute.

► **Accessibility**

Accessibility means a barrier-free experience that ensures everyone can equitably participate in their community; it includes designing spaces, tools and systems that accommodate diverse needs and enable full participation for all.

OBJECTIVE 2.2:

Ensure Indigenous voices and stories are shared and reflected in planning.

Supporting Actions:

1. Build and strengthen relationships with xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) and other Indigenous communities and support the work of city-wide reconciliation initiatives.
2. Provide opportunities to integrate traditional and contemporary Indigenous culture, identity and language into programming and planning.
3. Identify ways to support Truth and Reconciliation and the shared histories of Indigenous Peoples and all Canadians, through inclusive dialogue, celebration and performance, as well as creative placemaking installations.
4. Seek opportunities to work with xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) and other Indigenous artists, knowledge keepers and communities on initiatives that acknowledge and celebrate local Indigenous cultural heritage practices.



Sea to Sky (detail)
by Thomas Cannell,
winner of Creative
Cities Network of
Canada Award of
Excellence

OBJECTIVE 2.3:
Cultivate belonging and interculturalism to engage the imaginations of all generations and identities.

Supporting Actions:

- 1.** Facilitate intercultural communication with creative environments and arts-based programs.
- 2.** Provide a range of participatory programming for all age groups and inter-age groups at the community or neighbourhood level.
- 3.** Invest in and secure dedicated funding for the Art Truck.
- 4.** Explore newcomer and cross-cultural programs and services that integrate creative and cultural experiences
- 5.** Increase multilingual arts experiences.
- 6.** Develop and/or increase the use of creative tool libraries, musical instrument libraries and/or other creative resource lending programs, especially for youth.
- 7.** Promote multigenerational participation in the arts, with opportunities for youth leadership and collaboration between generations.

8. Identify ways to advance the Prescriptions for Arts movement (where physicians prescribe the arts to patients) by raising awareness of Richmond's wide variety of arts participation opportunities among family practices.

9. Collaborate with people with lived experiences in the early planning phases of arts-related capital projects and program development to ensure they appeal to, and offer a sense of belonging, for under-represented groups.



Engaging Artists in Community program:
Express Yourself by artist Keely O'Brien,
with Aspire Richmond in partnership with
Richmond Public Library

OBJECTIVE 2.4:
Celebrate Richmond's diversity, growth and change as a community.

Supporting Actions:

- 1.** Collaborate with diverse community groups to explore ways for the arts in Richmond to appeal to tourists through culinary arts, as well as natural and cultural heritage.
- 2.** Leverage Richmond's diversity to develop representative programming and events that attract audiences from within and beyond the area.
- 3.** Identify opportunities for interpreting and sharing local history and heritage in all of its forms including:
 - Developing interactive experiences and programming that celebrate Richmond's unique character and natural environment.
 - Enhancing and expanding arts and cultural programming to improve education and awareness of local history.
 - Developing a new signature event that showcases Richmond's cultural and ethnic diversity.

Ongoing work

The City and its partners will continue to:

Accessibility

- Work to identify and address physical accessibility challenges to attending festivals, visiting cultural venues and exploring public art.
- Encourage and promote arts and culture opportunities at locations close to transit, and identify opportunities to reduce transportation barriers, such as shuttle buses to major events.
- Review the City's offerings of free and low-cost arts programming and events, and assess required City resources to prioritize barrier-free access.

Youth

- Work with community associations and others to connect youth to creative opportunities and resources.
- Work with School District No. 38 to link arts education resources to teachers.
- Offer free access to media arts training, professional mentorship opportunities and access to equipment through the Richmond Youth Media Program.

Diversity

- Fund Indigenous artist opportunities at the City.
- Encourage collaboration among under-represented community groups, such as Chinese-speaking, Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ youth.
- Encourage and increase programming that involves work by xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) and other Indigenous artists.
- Invite diverse groups, including those under-represented, to participate in the telling of their story in the Richmond context, through creative engagement and art.
- Highlight Richmond's cultural diversity in arts and culture marketing and communication.
- Identify ways to ensure cultural venues and other spaces providing arts experiences are appealing and welcoming to newcomers, people with disabilities, 2SLGBTQ+ residents and other under-represented groups.
- Connect with the diverse cultural communities of Richmond (including faith-based communities) to encourage sharing of art, food and music.

Inclusion and Wellbeing

- Include traditional xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) Welcome at cultural events.
- Support and promote programs across the City and with other City partners that support social and emotional well-being through the arts.
- Increase the scope of affordable arts education programs and services available to all age ranges and levels from entry to pre-professional.
- Review current programming to ensure that underrepresented cultural and 2SLGBTQ+ activities are part of festival and arts event programming.
- Promote, encourage and develop initiatives, including festivals, that encourage cultural cross-pollination through the arts.
- Provide opportunities for free, high-calibre arts experiences such as through the Richmond Art Gallery and signature festivals throughout the year.



STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: Invest in the Arts

GOAL:

Community connections and a healthy, sustainable arts ecosystem are strengthened through capacity-building, collaboration and smart investment.

The City continues to invest in arts and cultural organizations that are reflective of the Richmond community today, as well as in keeping with current operating models in the sector. It also welcomes new ways of working in tandem with community organizations to offer arts and cultural activities and services. These new approaches may even include transferring certain City-managed activities to organizations to carry out, in an enhanced capacity.

OBJECTIVE 3.1: **Invest in the community's capacity through targeted investment, collaborations, organizational development and training.**

Supporting Actions:

1. Conduct a review of the Arts and Culture Grant program, tying eligibility to organizational capacity to ensure it supports and responds to the needs of the community, and aligns with current working models in the arts and art forms.
2. Increase support for the organizational capacity of local arts and cultural groups, with a focus on sustainability, growth and community development.

3. Review arts and culture portfolio to identify current tasks or functions that could be accomplished in collaboration with, or even by, community groups.
4. Review Arts Awards program in response to community participation interests.
5. Look at opportunities to invest in culture through development processes.

Richmond Potters' Club,
operating partner of
the Richmond Cultural
Centre pottery studio



OBJECTIVE 3.2: **Leverage the arts for economic and tourism potential.**

Supporting Actions:

1. Ensure the arts are considered in the City's Economic Development Strategy and that they play a role in the economic sustainability of Richmond.
2. Work with Tourism Richmond to explore opportunities for Richmond's art programs to appeal to a tourism market.
3. Explore new ways to encourage creative industries to locate in Richmond, including social innovation and social enterprise for creative industries.
4. Work with local partners to encourage residents and visitors to participate in and explore Richmond's arts and culture scene, with a focus on hard-to-reach groups such as adults under age 40.
5. Raise awareness of the ways that the arts and creative industries contribute to the economic health of the community.
6. Facilitate and foster opportunities for business to invest in and partner with the arts (such as through sponsorship or provision of space.)

OBJECTIVE 3.3: **Strengthen Richmond's arts sector by fostering sustainable growth through circular practices.**

Supporting Actions:

1. Work towards implementing a circular arts economy toolkit with multiple perspectives, including optimizing resource consumption, promoting sharing and reusing models and developing waste diversion strategies within the arts sector, in alignment with Richmond's Circular City Strategy.
2. Build awareness among and support arts organizations and businesses to integrate new circular practices into their operations.
3. Prioritize working with partners with circular practices and/or environmentally responsible products.
4. Support a conservation and maintenance program to ensure the long-term preservation, safety and integrity of the public art and Richmond Art Gallery collections.

Fish-sculpting demo by artist Ralph Heading at the Richmond Maritime Festival



What is a circular economy and why is it important to the arts?

A linear economy follows a “take-make-use-dispose” model, meaning things are made from raw materials, used for a short period of time, and then disposed of. A circular economy emerges as a counterpoint by closing resource loops—in essence, using as few new resources as possible.

“The City of Richmond’s vision for a circular economy is to maximize the value of resources, by design, through responsible consumption, minimizing waste and reimaging how resources flow in a sustainable, equitable and low-carbon economy”

—Richmond Circular City Strategy

The arts sector produces carbon emissions most commonly through the following activities:

- ▶ Food and water consumption
- ▶ Constructing, maintaining, heating and cooling buildings
- ▶ Mobility and transportation (culture and leisure are considered the third most common reason for global mobility)
- ▶ Undiverted waste
- ▶ Digital impacts of consuming online content

Empowering the arts sector to engage with and implement circular economy strategies will help the sector to grow and become more resilient to economic and environmental change.

Ongoing work

The City and its partners will continue to:

- Collaborate with artists and arts organizations (such as through the Engaging Artists in Community program and at signature festivals) to encourage climate change awareness, and encourage the integration of circular strategies in the arts sector.
- Provide sustainability tools to event organizers via RichmondSustainableEvent.ca
- Position and promote Community Cultural Development staff as a go-to resource for the arts community with a focus on Nonprofit Lifecycles training.
- Support and encourage organizations to leverage City funding to attract additional support from other levels of government and other sources.
- Provide professional development, mentorship and networking opportunities for artists and cultural organizations, such as through the Art at Work series and Artist Salon.
- Create favourable conditions for the filming industry in Richmond.