

Arts & Cultural Priorities

Office of Economic Development & Tourism

One of the most important elements of both talent attraction and economic development is quality of place. Cities must work to curate authentic experiences that will help residents build strong place attachment. In addition to positioning themselves as welcoming environments to live and work, cities must leverage the amenities and characteristics that make them unique. In fact, research shows that cultural offerings—including entertainment, public art, museums, libraries, parks and bike lanes—are linked to civic satisfaction, well-being and talent attraction.

In 2011, the City of Lynchburg Office of Economic Development established the James River Arts & Cultural District to position arts and culture as a critical economic and employment sector. The program is designed to support and grow arts and cultural businesses, programs and activities in the urban center of the City. To date, \$549,747 in grants has supported 176 programs and projects with an estimated economic impact of more than \$22 million.

In 2018, the Office of Economic Development & Tourism (OEDT) published the *Blueprint for Opportunity*, a five-year strategic action plan to position Lynchburg as the best small city in America. A core value of the *Blueprint* is to “Maximize Quality of Place,” valuing development efforts that prioritize quality of place and leverage the community’s cultural and physical assets. A key action item, utilizing cultural anchors to drive tourism development, is to “redefine the James River Arts and Cultural District program to support catalytic, high impact projects.”

In addition to the *Blueprint for Opportunity*, OEDT staff have referenced the City’s *Comprehensive Plan*, the *Downtown 2040 Master Plan* and the *Regional Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (2018) to outline the following priorities for the James River Arts & Cultural District program.

I. Diversity & Inclusion

- Support projects that involve individuals and organizations that reflect the diversity of Lynchburg.
- Give priority to projects that demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion at multiple levels (e.g., program design, artistic creation, audience, and feedback)
- Support projects that facilitate positive, shared experiences between groups of different backgrounds, building community where there is division or segregation

II. Neighborhood & Districts

- Use the JRACD to catalyze arts & culture projects and expand program in the greater downtown area
- Marketing - create a list or guide of public art to better promote Lynchburg as an arts and cultural destination
- Use gateway entrances to build community pride & culture in neighborhoods

- Examine the need for an Arts & Culture committee/commission for large scale city arts & cultural planning

III. Public Space Activation

- Encourage special events in public spaces to drive economic development & tourism
- Create new walking tour experiences to promote Lynchburg history and culture
- Activate the Bluffwalk and public spaces with projects that drive economic development, arts and culture
- Create better signage and designations to activate public spaces

IV. Public Art

- Support the Downtown 2040 plan by adding public art to Bluffwalk, 12th Street Climb, and other public spaces
- Work with the Public Art Review Committee (City Planning) to understand guidelines and streamline processes to work with other community organizations to establish more murals, public art, and performance art downtown and in neighboring areas
- Create a sculptural and monument review process or committee to discuss placement options

V. Organization & Artist Capacity Building

- Work with city and community organizations to support the growth and sustainability of events that are able to attract a virtual or large scale audience from outside of the area
- Promote artist and maker entrepreneurship through programs such as CO.STARTERS and Create Virginia
- Partner with or sponsor community arts and cultural events such as maker fairs, festivals, and events to support artist capacity
- Build capacity in organizations and individual artists to execute arts and cultural projects at higher levels of quality and impact