

PRELIMINARY FEASIBILITY STUDY

Roanoke, Virginia | January 2024



Cover Photos (From Upper Left): "Walls that Unite" Installation of Murals Dubbed the "The Grandin Village Art Walk," Aerialist Lynsey Wyatt and Tinman Performer Hans Moore at Artspace's Public Meeting, Riverdale Building 13 // Photo Credits: Roanoke Arts and Riverdale Southeast, LLC



**RIVERDALE
SOUTHEAST, LLC**

Prepared at the request of Ed Walker and Riverdale Southeast, LLC

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Artspace would like to thank Ed Walker for inviting us into your community and local leaders Amy McGinnis of Riverdale Southeast, LLC and Douglas Jackson, City of Roanoke's Arts and Culture Coordinator, for spearheading this initiative. The visit would not have been possible without the leadership, coordination, and support of the Roanoke Core Group members. We would also like to thank the 150+ focus group and public meeting attendees who shared their voices over the course of this study. The Core Group and community participants offered invaluable insight, hospitality, and feedback throughout the process.

This study was funded by Riverdale Southeast, LLC.

ROANOKE CORE GROUP

- Amy McGinnis** // Riverdale Southeast, LLC; City Space
- Bob Cowell** // City of Roanoke, City Manager
- Chris Cittum** // City of Roanoke, Executive Director of Community Building and Placemaking
- Chris Thompson** // Virginia Housing, Director of Strategic Housing
- Douglas Jackson** // City of Roanoke, Arts and Culture Coordinator; Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Capacity Development Specialist
- Ed Walker** // Riverdale Southeast, LLC; City Space
- Ina Dixon** // Riverdale Southeast, LLC
- Jahni Quen** // Artist in Residence, Photographer, Melrose Branch Library Employee
- Kiesha Preston** // Artist in Residence, Singer, Actor, Independent Consultant
- Pedro Szalay** // Southwest Virginia Ballet, Artistic Director
- Sandra Turner** // City of Roanoke, Economic Development Specialist



AMERICA'S LEADER IN ARTIST-LED COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION

Artspace is a nonprofit organization that uses the tools of real estate development to create affordable, appropriate places where artists can live and work. Because Artspace owns each of the projects it develops, we are able to ensure that they remain affordable and accessible to artists in perpetuity. Over the last four decades, Artspace has led an accelerating national movement of artist-led community transformation. While embracing the value the arts bring to individual lives, Artspace has championed the once-radical idea that artists living on the edge of poverty and chronically underfunded arts organizations can leverage fundamental social change. With headquarters in Minneapolis and offices in New York and Washington D.C., Artspace is America's leading developer of arts facilities with 57 completed projects to date and has provided consulting services to more than 350 communities and arts organizations nationwide.

WWW.ARTSPACE.ORG

FOCUS GROUP ATTENDEES

A series of virtual and in-person focus groups were held with community stakeholders. We appreciate everyone who took the time to share their ideas and perspectives throughout this engagement.

VIRTUAL MEETING OF INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS AND ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

- Ami Trowell** // Ursula's Cafe, Co-President; Comedy; Theater
- Amy McGinnis** // Riverdale Southeast, LLC; City Space (Core Group)
- Angela Charlton** // Carilion Clinic
- Bernadette "BJ" Lark** // Art Activist, CommUNITY ArtsReach
- Betsy Bannan** // Painter; Virginia Tech, Teacher
- Bob Cowell** // City of Roanoke, City Manager (Core Group)
- Bryce Cobbs** // Painter; Public Art Artist
- Chris Chittum** // City of Roanoke, Executive Director of Community Building and Placemaking (Core Group)
- Chris Thompson** // Virginia Housing, Director of Strategic Housing (Core Group)
- Cindy Petersen** // Taubman Museum, Executive Director
- Douglas Jackson** // City of Roanoke, Arts and Culture Coordinator; Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Capacity Development Specialist (Core Group)
- Ed Walker** // Riverdale Southeast, LLC; City Space (Core Group)
- Elaine Fleck** // Painter
- Gerry Bannan** // Teacher; Painter, Artist
- Gina Loutian-Stanley** // Retired Teacher; Painter
- Ginger Poole** // Mill Mountain Theatre, Producing Artistic Director
- Hana Marie** // Common Clay Collective, Owner
- Ina Dixon** // Riverdale Southeast, LLC (Core Group)
- Ingrid Chase** // Potter; Blue Ridge Potters Guild, Scholarship Chair
- Jahni Quen** // Artist in Residence, Photographer, Melrose Branch Library Employee (Core Group)
- Jane Gabrielle** // City of Roanoke, Artist in Residence
- John Buergers** // Consultant to Riverdale Southeast, LLC
- John Woodrum** // Sculptor; City of Roanoke, Complete Streets Artist in Residence
- Kiesha Preston** // Artist in Residence, Singer, Actor, Independent Consultant (Core Group)
- Molly Kernan** // Circulation, Founder; Aerial + Acrobatic Artist
- Pedro Szalay** // Southwest Virginia Ballet, Artistic Director (Core Group)
- Rory Dowling** // Consultant to Riverdale Southeast, LLC
- Rosemary Ann St. Jacques** // Painter; Fashion Designer; Gallery 202, Member
- Sahleen Powell** // Roanoke Cultural Endowment, Executive Director; Violinist
- Samantha Meyer** // City of Roanoke, Artist in Residence; Taubman Museum, Curatorial Staff Member
- Sandra Turner** // City of Roanoke, Economic Development Specialist (Core Group)
- Sasha Landon** // Songwriter
- Skye Hartwell** // Illustrator; Mixed-Media Artist
- Tonie Barde** // Musician

EQUITY IN SPACE - DIVERSE LEADERS

- Amazetta Anderson** // Community Advocate
- Amy McGinnis** // Riverdale Southeast, LLC; City Space (Core Group)
- Bria Peck** // Burlesque Performer
- Brittany-Marie Aarons** // Performing Artist: Music, Theater and Poetry
- Bryce Cobbs** // Painter; Public Art Artist
- Charlene Graves** // Retired Arts Educator; Artist; Roanoke Arts Commission, Member
- Chris Thompson** // Virginia Housing, Director of Strategic Housing (Core Group)
- DeHanza Kwong** // Jewelry Artist; Midweek Market at Green Cactus
- Dionte "Taye the Truth" Hall** // Musician; Youth Mentor
- Donna Davis** // Goodwill Industries of the Valley, Events Lead; Roanoke Arts Commission, Member
- Douglas Jackson** // City of Roanoke, Arts and Culture Coordinator; Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Capacity Development Specialist (Core Group)
- Douglas Pitzer** // Stroke of Genius, Founder
- Jalen Small** // Roanoke Public Librarian, Williamson Road Branch Manager; Building Bridges over Barriers (B3), Youth Mentor
- Jeff Hoffman** // Digital Artist; City of Roanoke and Melrose Plaza, Artist in Residence
- Katrina Legans** // Artist; City of Roanoke, Artist in Residence
- Kiesha Preston** // Artist in Residence, Singer, Actor, Independent Consultant (Core Group)
- KyAnne Dudley** // The Roanoker, Writer; Spoken Word Artist
- Mariah Williams** // Virginia Housing, Strategic Housing Manager
- Robyn Mitchell** // City of Roanoke and Melrose Plaza, Artist in Residence

CIVIC AND FINANCE LEADERS

Alan Ronk // Community Foundation of Western Virginia, President and CEO

Angela Charlton // Carilion Clinic, Community Health Educator

Carrie McConnell // Ridge View Bank, President

Chris Chittum // City of Roanoke, Executive Director of Community Building and Placemaking (Core Group)

Dave Prosser // Freedom First Credit Union, Senior VP Community Development

Douglas Jackson // City of Roanoke, Arts and Culture Coordinator; Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Capacity Development Specialist (Core Group)

Edward Martin // American National Bank, SEVP I Chief Administrative Officer

Isabel Thornton // Restoration Housing, Executive Director

Jeremy Holmes // Roanoke Valley - Alleghany Regional Commission, Executive Director

Joe Cobb // Roanoke City Council, Vice-Mayor

Lewis Singer // Retired Physician

Matt Weaver // Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Associate Director for Policy & Strategic Development

Pete Eshelman // Roanoke Regional Partnership, Senior Director of Creative Strategies

Sam Rasoul // Virginia State Legislature, Eleventh District Member

Sarah Glenn // Virginia Tech, Facility Planning; Roanoke Planning Commission, Chair

Shaleen Powell // Roanoke Cultural Endowment, Executive Director; Violinist

Todd Ross // Bank of Fincastle

Zenith Barrett // Goodwill Industries of the Valley, Vice President of Business & Community Engagement

Public meeting attendees are included in Appendix B.

Attendees are identified to the best of our abilities. We apologize for any omissions or misspellings.

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"Be the Change" by Students of Patrick Henry High School's National Art Honor Society. Located on the 1st Floor of the Municipal Building North // Photo Credit: Artspace

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

Roanoke is nestled along the Roanoke River and in the Blue Ridge range of the greater Appalachian Mountains making it a beautiful setting and ripe for the 14-mile biking/hiking/walking trail system that has emerged along the river in recent years.

Like many cities across the country, Roanoke is full of opportunities and challenges deeply rooted in historic, geographic, and racial divisions that artificially separated people and places. Located in the southwestern part of Virginia, one hour from the North Carolina border, the city has a population of just over 100,000¹ as of 2023. The community feels very urban but in a mountain setting that is close to many rural areas of the county.

Artspace was invited into the community to assess the feasibility of creating artist housing as part of the Riverdale development. We found that the Urban Renewal projects of the mid-20th century had a lasting imprint on the City, especially the northwest neighborhoods of Melrose-Rugby and Gainsboro, historically areas of African-American housing and commerce. In the southeastern area of the City (where the Riverdale development is located), corporate disinvestment catalyzed a neighborhood shift from working class to impoverished.

These 1950-70s "projects" resulted in distinct quadrants that deeply divided the City and eroded trust in the City's institutions. Consistent efforts to regain that trust are being undertaken through thoughtful and restorative projects in the northwest neighborhoods. Goodwill Industries of the Valley has plans to redevelop its campus into the Melrose Plaza, which will include a wellness center, grocery store, adult high school, banking services and, eventually, quality mixed-income housing along Melrose Avenue between 24th and 25th Street. This development is supported with \$10M in funds from the City's American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) dollars and includes the existing Melrose Library, which reopened in this location in 2019. The City is also investing \$5M in ARPA funding in the Gainsboro neighborhood to seed projects along Henry Street and Gainsboro Road and the area around the former Claytor Memorial Clinic. The goal of these projects is to create more community spaces and affordable housing and to revitalize these once-vibrant business districts.

In Southeast Roanoke, the Riverdale project – the main subject of the Artspace feasibility study – will radically change this part of the city from an industrial site to an innovative mixed-use community with mixed-income housing, new streets, and commercial spaces that are interspersed with artist studios, businesses, and more.

Alongside the historical challenges, Roanoke is experiencing growth through its biomed/tech industries, with Carilion Clinic, which is Roanoke's largest employer, the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine, Fralin Biomedical Research Institute, and other area colleges and universities.

The arts sector has always played a role in Roanoke. It is a growing arts hub for the state and region. The dynamic Roanoke Arts Commission, now in its 40th year, offers support for individual artists and arts organizations and is elevating arts and culture as an important part of the City's brand identity. The Roanoke Cultural Endowment for the Arts is halfway to its goal of raising \$20M to help fund the arts on an ongoing basis through its annual earnings, anticipated to be approximately 5% of this collective community corpus fund. Spaces and places for the arts are tucked into nearly every neighborhood Artspace visited, giving the team the strong impression that the arts have been highly valued for many years.

TABLE 1:
Total Economic Impact of the Nonprofit Arts and Culture Industry in the City of Roanoke
(Combined Spending by Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations and Their Audiences)

	City of Roanoke	Median of Similar Study Regions Pop. = 50,000 to 99,999	National Median
Total Industry Expenditures	\$64,204,799	\$19,538,777	\$35,750,645
Full-Time Equivalent Jobs	1,774	512	1,131
Resident Household Income	\$41,025,000	\$11,623,000	\$23,154,000
Local Government Revenue	\$2,781,000	\$905,500	\$1,407,000
State Government Revenue	\$3,718,000	\$1,049,000	\$1,961,000

Source: Study by Americans for the Arts - Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 (2019)

¹Esri Community Analyst, 2023, Roanoke

Past Planning

The City of Roanoke has a uniquely long history of planning for its future in a comprehensive manner. The first long-range planning effort was completed in 1907, when the City was just two decades old and had roughly 30,000 people. In the late 1920s, Roanoke's City Planning and Zoning Commission selected John Nolen, an eminent landscape architect and influential pioneer in the field of urban planning, to develop the City's [Comprehensive Plan](#). This ethos of community investment in the functionality and design of the City for both existing and future generations has continued to this day.

[City Plan 2040](#) was adopted by City Council in December 2020 and articulates the vision and overarching priorities for Roanoke's future. The Plan's policies and action steps are organized into six principles for sustainable community:

City Plan 2040's Six Principals of Sustainable Community

- Interwoven Equity
- Helathy Community
- Harmony with Nature
- Livable Built Environment
- Responsible Regionalism
- Resilient Economy

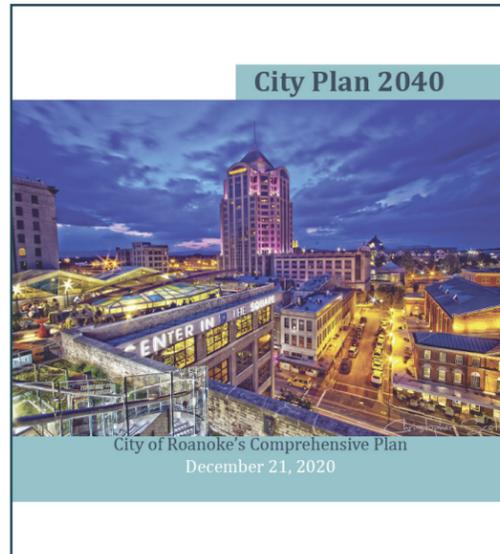
Source: City Plan 204

Several of these principles or "themes" call upon arts and culture as a vehicle for community-building, placemaking, and economic development. These mentions are further explored through policy recommendations that include integrating arts and cultural activities into neighborhood revitalization strategies and enabling art and art uses in all multi-purpose districts. An Artspace-style project supports these objectives in a number of ways, the most salient of which is to ensure local artists and creatives have access to affordable and stable housing and studio and commercial space. This in turn allows them to flourish in their creative fields, contribute to the community, and reinforce Roanoke's reputation as a growing cultural hub.

Within the context of the Riverdale Southeast redevelopment, an affordable live/work development for artists and their families would advance the plan's core priorities around housing, interactive spaces, inclusivity, and economic activity. Below is a snapshot of priorities an Artspace project would align with:

- **Interwoven Equity** - Priority: Neighborhood Choice.
Policy 4. Develop varied and affordable housing options in each neighborhood.
- **Healthy Community** - Priority: Wellness.
Policy 4. Support social connectivity as a positive health factor.
- **Harmony with Nature** - Priority: Clean and Beautiful City
Policy 1. Support beautification efforts in all neighborhoods.
- **Livable Built Environment** -
Priority: Complete Neighborhoods.
Policy 2. Support development of new and strengthen existing mixed-use neighborhood centers with locally distinctive physical, public places for people to interact.

Priority: Arts and Culture.
Policy 1. Integrate arts and cultural activities in the physical design and revitalization strategies of neighborhoods in a manner that highlights local talent city-wide.
- **Resilient Economy** - Priority: Promote Broad Diversity in the Economy.
Policy 2. Embrace and accelerate local commercialization and entrepreneurship.



Source: Plan Roanoke

Planners have begun updating the City's 27 neighborhood and area plans, beginning with the recent adoption of the Neighborhood Centers Plan and the Gainsboro Hub Plan. The Comprehensive Plan also recognizes the importance of updating the Arts and Cultural Plan, which was last adopted in 2011. The Artspace Preliminary Feasibility Study's findings and recommendations are well timed to inform new planning efforts and center the role of the creative sector in creating healthy, vibrant communities. It will be critical that these future plans emphasize the need for long-term, affordable spaces of all types for Roanoke's creatives.

The recent reorganization of the Arts and Culture Department to be housed within the Planning, Building, and Development Department creates a number of new opportunities to leverage the City's resources. Artspace has seen the power of housing arts and culture within economic development and planning departments both at the municipal and state levels in other parts of the country, too. For example, in both the City of Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN, city planners are paired with artists – not just on public art projects but also to tap into artists' brain power in problem-solving city issues, as is happening in Roanoke.

Another example of this kind of collaboration is in the State of Colorado where the Arts Commission and Colorado Creative Industries is housed in the Office of Economic Development and International Trade and works alongside economic development to implement affordable workforce housing projects that include the creative sector.

YEAR OF THE ARTIST

Over the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the City of Roanoke invested more than \$300,000 into 100 community-driven and artist-led projects and numerous engagement events, artist trainings, and public performances. Funding for the initiative came through three grants from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), including ARPA funds. Aply named the "Year of the Artist," this initiative set out to achieve the following goals³:

- Integrate Artists into Civic Problem Solving & Advance Community Goals
- Build a Learning Community, Explore, and Experiment
- Boost the Arts Economic Ecosystem
- Strengthen and Connect the Network of Artists
- Engage with a Sense of Play and Have Fun

The initiative met these goals and advanced the role of artists as community development agents by employing a variety of approaches, including an artist in residence program and numerous Art Matters Grants. The City funded eleven artists in a year-long residency to design, develop, and implement projects that employed cross-sector collaboration and directly engaged the community. The artists worked in partnership with city departments, commissions, and committees to address civic issues in the community. Topics ranged from gun violence and racial equity to environmental impact and climate change. Similarly, 34 Art Matters Grants were awarded to independent artists whose projects "advanced justice, wellness, and inclusion" in the community. The artists also held weekly training sessions on business and community development topics.

"The greatest benefit I have received from my YOTA participation is my observation of the dawning of the integration of the arts as a civic problem-solving tool. The fact that my hometown launched this progressive idea makes Roanoke even dearer to my heart."

-Jane Gabrielle, Gun Violence Prevention Commission Artist-in-Resident

Source: YOTA Year in Review

The [YOTA Year in Review](#) is an example of the multifaceted and innovative efforts by the City of Roanoke to lean into the arts as a tool for community-building and positive social change.

This initiative has propelled the creative identity of Roanoke forward, generating a tailwind of momentum within the creative sector to be innovators and thought leaders in the community.

2022-23 THE YEAR OF THE ARTIST

JUNE EVENTS
Workshops, Networking, & Events for Artists

Be part of the Year of the Artist (YOTA) learning community.

SOUL BOX
JUNE is Gun Violence Prevention Month. Wear orange in support of gun violence prevention and visit the Soul Box Project at Valley View Mall.

These Labored Hills
A series of dance-theater expressions on land, food, and connection in Roanoke. Directed by Nicole Young.

ROANOKE SELF-PORTRAIT PROJECT
Roanoke Municipal Building, 1st Floor Gallery
215 Church Ave. SW 24011
8 AM - 5 PM Monday through Friday

ARTIST CALLS & EVENTS
Learn more & register at: roanokearts.org/meetings

- JUNE 2 - **Art by Night**
- JUNE 3-4 - **65th Annual Sidewalk Art Show**
- JUNE 10 - **These Labored Hills**, Heritage Point, 5 PM, [Tickets here.](#)
- JUNE 12 - **2023-24 Artists in Residence Applications Due**, Midnight. [Apply Here.](#)
- JUNE 17 - **Juneteenth Family Reunion**, Eureka Park, Noon - 5 PM
- JUNE 17 - **These Labored Hills**, Lick Run Farm, 5 PM, [Tickets here.](#)
- JUNE 21 - Buzz4Good Watch Party sponsored by the Roanoke Cultural Endowment - **ARTS + ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**, 6 PM, 5 Points Music Sanctuary
- JUNE 22 - Release of **Next Paid Artist Call** for the City of Roanoke Municipal Art Show
- JUNE 24 - **These Labored Hills** - Mountain View Community Garden, 5 PM, [Tickets here.](#)
- JUNE 27 - **Growing your Arts Business Roundtable** at LEAP with Katherine Devine, 6 PM. [Register here.](#)
- JUNE 29 - **Southeast Artist in Residence Bash**, Morningside Park, 5:30 PM
- JUNE 30 - **Kinnfolk present "Star Above the Mountain"** Spot on Kirk, 8 PM. [Tickets here.](#)

Source: Roanoke Arts

ROANOKE, VA AT A GLANCE	
Population (2023 est.)	100,064
Households (2023 est.)	44,623
Population % Change 2010-2023	+3.1%
Est. Population Growth 2023-2028	+0.4%
Vacant Housing Units (2022)	1.6%
Rental Vacancy Rate (2022)	3.4%
Median Age (2023 est.)	40.7
Median Household Income (2023 est.)	\$50,336
Median Gross Rent (Monthly) (2022)	\$905
Renter-Occupied Households (2023 est.)	45%
Race/Ethnicity (Top 5. 2022 est.)	<p>White: 56.2%</p> <p>African American: 27.7%</p> <p>Two or More Races: 7.9%</p> <p>Other (Non-Hispanic): 5.1%</p> <p>Asian: 2.6%</p>

Source: Esri Business Analyst 2023, US Census, 2022



Public Works by Aaron Spicer From "We Are Art: The Roanoke Self-Portrait Project" // Photo Credit: Roanoke Arts

II. PRELIMINARY FEASIBILITY STUDY

A Preliminary Feasibility Study (PFS) is the first step that Artspace takes to determine whether an affordable arts development project can move forward within the context of a community's unique needs, assets, sites, leaders, and resources.

Since the pandemic, Artspace approaches the PFS study in a hybrid form. We begin with a virtual focus group to allow more people to attend. We kicked off on September 7, 2023 with a virtual focus group for artists and arts organizations to get to know the creative community and gain context before we arrived. The Artspace Consulting team then visited the community in person from September 12-14, 2023 to gather information, tour potential sites, connect with local stakeholders, and share how these projects come together. With this hybrid approach, we were able to collect community feedback in a variety of formats and elicit multi-sector support for the creation of affordable space for the arts sector.

A strong indication of the desire and need for this kind of project in Roanoke was the number of attendees who participated in multiple meetings facilitated by Artspace Consulting during the course of our study. There was a wide mix of attendees at our meetings in terms of ages, art forms, and backgrounds. This engagement included a lively public meeting at Riverdale, which was attended by over 100 community members. Following the interactive presentation, numerous people engaged Artspace in one-on-one conversations to express their excitement for the initiative and interest in supporting subsequent phases.

The local Core Group was initiated by Ed Walker, who has been talking to Artspace for several decades, and led by Amy McGinnis and Douglas Jackson. This group was instrumental in planning the tours, setting up spaces for focus groups, and inviting the community to the various happenings. At every meeting community members expressed their excitement for an Artspace-style project and its potential to address persistent social divides, support creative entrepreneurs, and provide much-needed affordability to Roanoke artists and creatives. Several members of the Core Group commented on how Artspace was invited into the community at the right time – when there is a strong sense of momentum and optimism. This was apparent in all our conversations. We met many Roanoke “boosters” who showed so much love and pride for the city they call home.

Artspace was represented in person by Wendy Holmes, Artspace Consulting Senior Vice President, and Kelli Miles, Consulting Coordinator. Teri Deaver, Artspace Consulting Vice President, also participated in the planning efforts and in the virtual focus group.

PRELIMINARY FEASIBILITY ENGAGEMENT

During the Roanoke study, the Artspace team:

- Facilitated three focus group meetings:
 - Artists and Arts Organizations (Virtual)
 - Equity in Space Conversation (In-Person at the Melrose Library)
 - Finance and Civic Leaders (In-Person at The Collective)
- Toured the community's arts and cultural assets and creative businesses in the heart of downtown and in several other neighborhoods
- Toured four potential sites in the Norwich, Melrose, Riverdale, and Preston Park neighborhoods
- Held a working dinner with the Core Group at Scratch Biscuit Co. with food by Village Grill
- Hosted a Public Meeting at Riverdale Building 9B1
- Held a breakfast wrap-up meeting with the Core Group at Chris's Coffee and Custard
- Followed up with a Zoom conversation with Virginia Housing's Chris Thompson to gain additional insight on the state and regional funding sources relevant to a project like this (see Funding and Financing section on page 42 for more information)

Community Tour

In Roanoke, we visited many neighborhoods that suffered from persistent impacts of de facto housing segregation, Urban Renewal, and racial disparities, but also contained unique creative and cultural spaces.

Douglas Jackson, Arts & Culture Coordinator for the City, drove the team through **Gainsboro**, the city's oldest neighborhood. The area holds significant historical importance as the center of African-American culture, community, and entrepreneurship. Gainsboro's identity was all but erased in the 1950s⁴. New institutions were erected there, such as the Roanoke Civic Center (known as the [Berglund Center](#) today), while others were selectively preserved, like the 1880s tudor-style [Hotel Roanoke](#). A treasure to the neighborhood still to this day, the historic Gainsboro Library is also a surviving asset. The library is a cultural and educational hub for the African-American community preserving the largest collection of books and printed material on black history in Roanoke.

Downtown, Artspace visited several notable spaces and took in the lively and historic character of the city center. The walkable city core offers a mix of retail, office, residential, and light industrial. Downtown housing takes on a number of forms, from tall mixed-use developments and multistory apartment buildings to low-rise townhouses and rowhouses, such as those along Norfolk Avenue. A multidisciplinary array of 110+ public art pieces decorate buildings, alleys, sidewalks, and squares, and a number of plazas offer open-air spaces for events, gatherings, and leisure activities. Downtown is home of a farmers' market that has run continuously at the site since 1882 in Market Square Plaza, which anchors a commercial corridor and the historic [City Market Building](#).

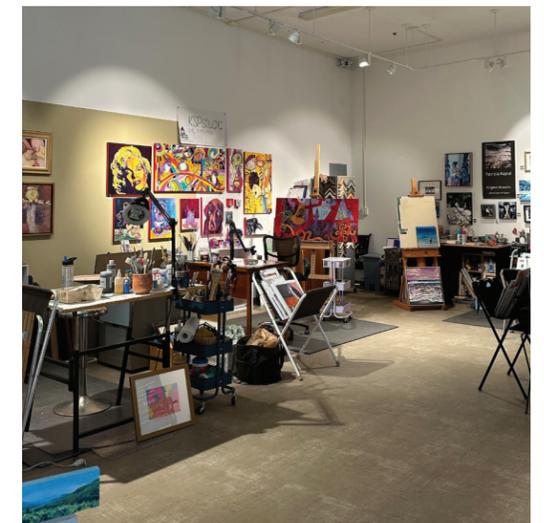
Artspace visited [Art on 1st](#), a gallery and studio space geared towards emerging visual artists, and [Left of Center Art Space](#), a co-op gallery model with studios and an educational space (see page 37 of Project Concept for more information). The [Spot on Kirk](#) was pointed out to Artspace as a valued, intimate venue for the local music scene. The tour also included a stop at [Crafteria](#), a flexible retail space featuring artisan goods from 250 makers, a record shop, Puerto Rican restaurant, and local coffee bar. Crafteria is viewed by many as a small business hub for entrepreneurs and makers.

Artspace also saw the Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building and caught a sneak preview of the new portrait exhibition *It's Here: The Arts, Entrepreneurship + Placemaking*. A call for artists invited 40 of Roanoke's creatives to produce portraits of the folks who inspire them locally.

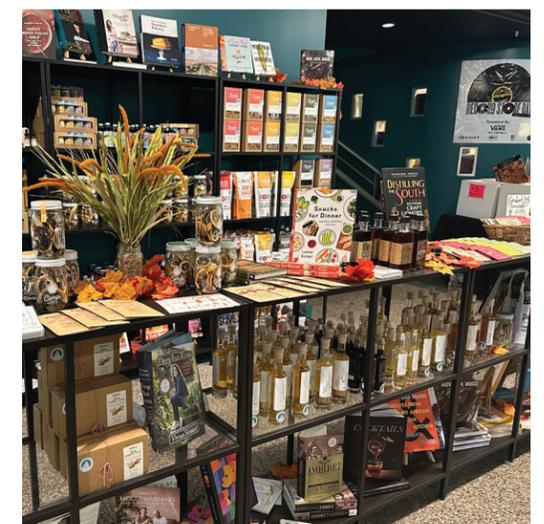
Artspace was also made aware of the burgeoning commercial hub along Salem Ave. SW and Campbell Ave. SW. This northwestern edge of downtown has recently become home to a broader range of creative businesses. Several culinary businesses attract activity to the area, including [Golden Cactus Brewing](#), [Big Lick Brewing Company](#), [Blindhouse Beer Company](#), [Beamer's 25](#), [Sweets by Shaneice](#), and [Tuco's Taqueria Garaje](#). The area also features a metal fabrication company called [Lift Arc Studios](#), [War on Books](#) bookstore, and [Hybrid Martial Arts Center](#).



Outside the City Market Building



Left of Center Art Space



Crafteria // All Photos by Artspace

To the south along Jefferson Street, also known as the “Innovation Corridor,” sits the expansive Carilion Clinic campus, including Virginia Tech’s Carilion School of Medicine and the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute. This area features several newer multifamily apartment complexes, and access to the Roanoke River Greenway. The southwestern neighborhoods of **Wasena** and **Old Southwest** are predominantly residential. During our driving tour, Doug pointed out several new small businesses springing up in the Wasena neighborhood. Core Group members noted the historic design guidelines, highly engaged neighborhood association, and large LGBTQ+ population that characterizes the charming Old Southwest area.

Further west lies **Grandin Village**, a commercial district in the **Raleigh Court** neighborhood. The eclectic neighborhood center is home to the [Grandin Theatre](#), [Roanoke Ballet Theatre](#), and [CoLab](#) coworking space, amongst several local culinary businesses, a tattoo shop, salon, and furniture store. As a part of the *Year of the Artist* initiative, the Grandin Village Business Association, Roanoke Arts Commission, and the Roanoke Natural Foods Co+op partnered to create “The Grandin Village Art Walk.” The art walk features a series of nine murals, titled *Walls that Unite*, by nine different artists.

In touring potential development sites, Artspace visited the **Williamson Road** neighborhood, home to a large and growing Hispanic and immigrant population. While this corridor is home to over 400 culturally diverse small businesses, the neighborhood’s automobile-oriented and aging commercial corridor has left the area in need of infrastructure improvements and creative placemaking to better highlight its rich diversity. The City is currently working with stakeholders to evaluate ways to address safety and improve multimodal transportation along the Williamson Road corridor.

Artspace toured the former Melrose Fire Station site with a team from the Goodwill campus to learn more about the Melrose Plaza project, and hosted an Equity in Space conversation at the Melrose Library next door. As a result of the Urban Renewal projects in Gainsboro, many displaced African American families moved further northwest, to **Melrose/Rugby**. The Melrose Plaza project will create a neighborhood center for the area’s residents and broader community. (See page 58 of Potential Sites for more information).

Lastly, the Artspace team toured the Southeast neighborhood and the impetus for our visit, the **Riverdale** campus. The sprawling 20+ building industrial site was owned and operated by the American Viscose Company, which closed in 1958. Today, the site is owned by local real estate developer Ed Walker. Walker and the development team selected architectural firm [Baskervill](#) in mid-November 2023 to lead a comprehensive masterplanning effort for the Riverdale campus. Southeast Roanoke is a focus for city revitalization efforts, including affordable housing investments made possible through Federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. The site is discussed in more detail on pages 54-57 of this report.

Our sampling during the tour is scratching the surface of the creative and arts entrepreneurial community that will be further revealed as part of the Arts Market Study (see page 63).



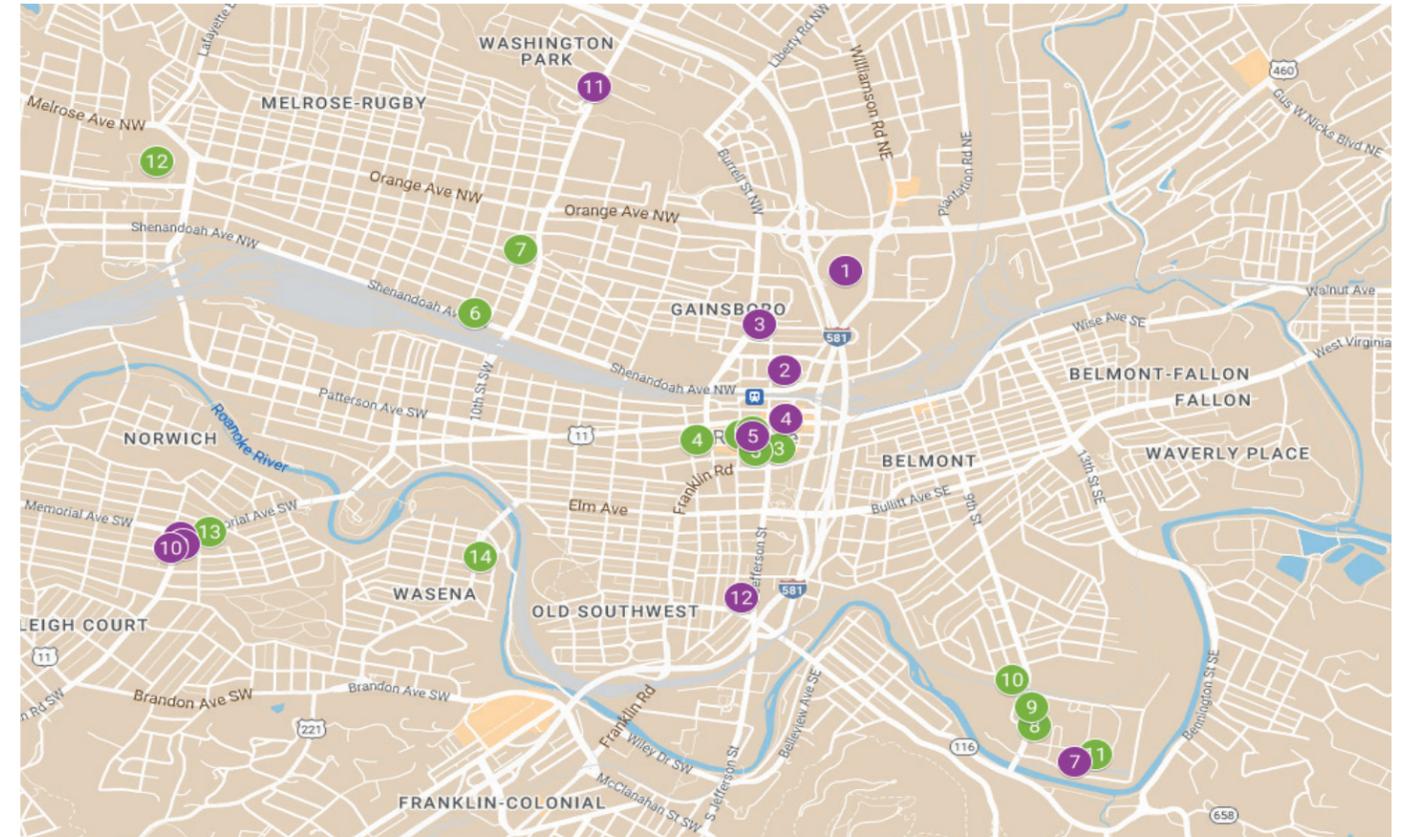
Crème Fresh in Wasena



Roanoke Ballet Theatre in Grandin Village



Art Rat at the Riverdale campus
// All Photos by Artspace



Source: Artspace via Google Maps

Visited

- 1 Art on 1st
- 2 Left of Center Art Space
- 3 Txtur - Showroom
- 4 Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building
- 5 Crafteria: Handmade Food & Goods
- 6 Common Clay Pottery Workshop
- 7 The Collective
- 8 Txtur - Manufacturing Facility
- 9 Chris's Coffee & Custard
- 10 Star City School of Ballet
- 11 ametalsoul Studio
- 12 Melrose Branch Library
- 13 Scratch Biscuit Company
- 14 RND Coffee Lounge

Drove/Walk By

- 1 Berglund Center
- 2 The Hotel Roanoke & Conference Center
- 3 Gainsboro Library
- 4 Market Gallery
- 5 The Spot on Kirk
- 6 Woolworth Building
- 7 Noke Van Co.
- 8 The Grandin Theatre
- 9 Roanoke Ballet Theatre
- 10 CoLab
- 11 Lick Run Community Development Center
- 12 5 Points Music Sanctuary

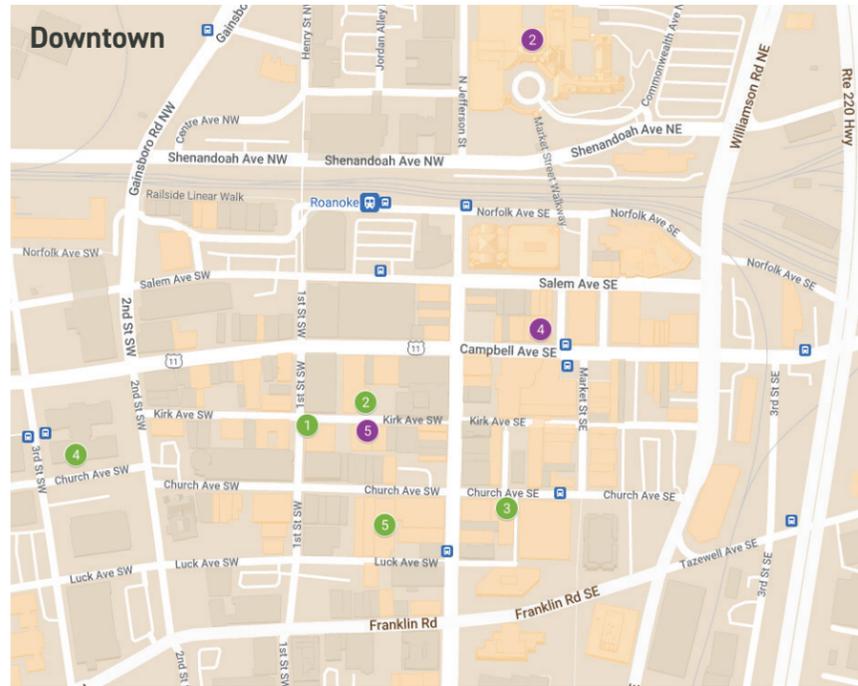
Close Up Maps

Visited

- 1 Art on 1st
- 2 Left of Center Art Space
- 3 Txtur - Showroom
- 4 Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building
- 5 Crafteria: Handmade Food & Goods
- 6 Common Clay Pottery Workshop
- 7 The Collective
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- 10 CoLab
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- 12 5 Points Music Sanctuary



Source: Artspace via Google Maps 16

Core Group Reflections From the Visit

Artspace experienced a willingness in Roanoke's artists to work in concert with one another and cross-sector partners. We asked Core Group members to state **one new thing they learned/experienced or a new opportunity** they saw for their community that came from interactions with their peers through the course of this study. Some of their responses were:

- The arts have the ability to highlight and celebrate diversity and, in doing so, to further connect the community and address persistent segregation.
- The potential to create a space that is emblematic of how much Roanoke cares about the arts.
- Hope that the creative sector will begin to see itself as a dynamic part of the City.
- Seeing the younger generations come "out and up" is inspiring. They are capable leaders and far more diverse, too.
- A reinforced connection between affordable housing, community building, and economic development.
- Economic development and community-based organizations, such as Roanoke Outside, seeing their work's intersections with the arts for the first time or in new ways and being interested in exploring partnership possibilities.
- The power of convening was especially felt during the civic/finance focus group and highlighted the validity of the arts as an economic driver and vital resource for healthy communities.
- The opportunity for Core Group members (and presumably attendees) to connect with people who they have been trying to connect with, including artists and business folks.
- Reconnecting with Goodwill Industries' leadership and learning more about the Melrose Plaza Project was important.
- Sparking conversation to bring back the (X)po event and creative thinking around how to organize it as an opportunity for the artists.
- Goal that Riverdale be recognized as a space for "all the (neighborhood) quadrants." In order to make Riverdale everybody's home, it needs to say "you belong here."
- The public meeting, held at Riverdale Building 9B1, was many people's first time at Riverdale. This was also the first event held on site, and seeing the space activated created optimism about the potential of future events.
- The diversity of people (in numerous ways) in the room at the public meeting was unprecedented. Core Group Member Amy and Artist Ty discussed their feelings that it was the most diverse event held in Southeast Roanoke.
- The feeling that people are collectively "holding hands" to make things happen.

An Artspace-style project on the Riverdale campus presents the opportunity for the arts to play a pivotal role in restoring this neighborhood and bridging the broader community. By developing and maintaining multiple kinds of affordable spaces, both residential and commercial, the creative sector will be part of this Complete Neighborhood.

The Artspace Approach

Based on three decades of experience, Artspace has identified six key components of community-led development that every community needs to have in place to make a grassroots arts project feasible. For the Preliminary Feasibility Study, Artspace organizes information through the lens of these **six components**, defined below:



ALIGNMENT WITH BROADER COMMUNITY GOALS. A potential project can help achieve other civic goals, such as economic development or historic preservation. Artspace considers strategies and partnerships that can leverage impact, so that the operating project can be greater than the sum of its parts. Focus group attendees were asked to circle or rank their top priorities during the meetings with Artspace.

PROJECT CONCEPT. What type(s) of space would the community like to see created? Although many communities have a well-developed project concept in mind before embarking on this study, Artspace's first step is to ask different stakeholders, "What type of creative spaces are needed and wanted in your community?" While these are not the only factors Artspace considers in making a recommendation to move a project forward, they help frame the discussion – especially in the preliminary feasibility stage.

While these are not the only factors Artspace considers in making a recommendation to move a project forward, they help frame the discussion – especially in the preliminary feasibility stage.

ARTS MARKET. Is there a sufficiently strong creative sector to support an arts facility? To answer that question, qualitative data is collected through focus group meetings. Specifically, Artspace seeks to better understand the existing arts community, its assets, challenges, and opportunities. It also lays the groundwork for an Arts Market Study, the second step on the path to an Artspace project, which provides quantitative data about the creative community's space needs.

LOCAL LEADERSHIP. Are there leaders on the ground in Roanoke who are willing and able to advocate for the project, open doors, and keep lines of communication flowing between a developer and the community? These leaders come to the project from all industries - from elected officials who control agencies and program dollars to citizens who are passionate about making their community a better place to live, work, and create.

FUNDING AND FINANCING. Arts facilities typically represent significant investments of civic resources. Although a variety of state and federal programs can be used to generate revenue for construction, Artspace relies on local funding and financing programs to support pre-development expenses and gap funding. The Preliminary Feasibility Study considers the community's interest and capacity to commit resources to an arts facility. Basic information is gathered about local funding options from both private and public institutions as well as philanthropic donations.

SITE ANALYSIS. At this stage, the primary goal is not to select the final site, but rather to identify candidates for further study. The factors under consideration include: location, size, ease of acquisition, and potential for sustained positive impact. As a project moves into predevelopment, these (and perhaps other) candidate sites will be evaluated in the context of a refined Project Concept, Arts Market Study data, and a deeper understanding of local development priorities and funding sources.

Commitment to Equity in Creative Space

At Artspace, we are committed to using our platform as consultants and nonprofit developers to elevate the voices of those who all too often are not included in real estate decisions. Every community has room to improve in addressing diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA) issues. Creative space is not developed in a vacuum, and communities, like Roanoke, have historic imbalances of power that need to be further evaluated for all parties to truly feel welcome in any future community driven space.

One method we use to identify DEIA challenges is inviting artists and cultural leaders who identify as BIPOC – black, indigenous, or a person of color (including hispanic) – LGBTQIA+, or those with other historically marginalized identities to share their challenges and issues around creative space to an Equity in Space discussion. Reflections and perspectives from those conversations are included throughout the report, most notably in the section devoted to alignment with broader community goals (page 32).

Bringing Artspace's National Experience to Roanoke

In addition to the information gathered about Roanoke, this report is informed by Artspace's experience working in other micropolitan cities that have invested in affordable facilities for artists and arts organizations. The following thoughts provide context for evaluating the feasibility and demonstrating the importance of creative spaces:

Mixed-use arts facilities with long-term affordability have been shown to:

GENERATE ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT. Each development provides indirect, direct, and induced economic impact, as well as job opportunities before, during, and after construction.

PRESERVE OLD BUILDINGS, STABILIZE NEIGHBORHOODS, AND REVITALIZE VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED PROPERTIES. They help create activity and foot traffic in areas devoid of creativity.

CATALYZE PRIVATE AND PUBLIC INVESTMENT, such as façade improvements and general beautification in the surrounding area.

CREATE COMMUNITY SPACES that give the public opportunities to interact with the artist tenants through gallery events, demonstrations, performances, and installations. They also provide opportunities for other local artists to showcase their work.

SUPPORT INDEPENDENT ARTISTS who are each, in effect, cottage industry business owners, generating economic activity by selling products or services, purchasing equipment and supplies, and paying taxes.

BUILD COMMUNITY. Artists and creatives are active neighbors and community members. Many collaborate with the educational, cultural, and business communities as teachers, community conveners, and volunteers. The spaces provide a place where cultural art forms can be passed from one generation to the next.

CORE GOALS

At the heart of every Artspace development are these goals:

- Meet the creative sector's space needs
- Ensure long-term affordability
- Reflect the unique culture and character of the community
- Include diverse BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and other underrepresented voices at the table
- Exemplify sustainable and efficient design
- Operate in the black
- Hire a local property management firm trained in affordable housing management to maintain, support, and manage the rental facility



Pieces from Artist Dave Wertz's collection "The Horses" // Photo Credit: Artspace

III. FINDINGS

Creative Sector

One of the purposes of this Preliminary Feasibility Study is to understand the creative sector in Roanoke and offer guidance on how to strengthen it ahead of pursuing an Artspace-style development. In addition to the questions around desired space types, we look to understand the broader needs, characteristics, and experiences of the individuals, arts and cultural nonprofits, and creative businesses that make up Roanoke's creative sector.

To begin, it is useful to have a shared understanding of who makes up the arts/creative sector. Artspace intentionally keeps its definitions of "artist" and "creative" broad in order to be as inclusive as possible. Residents of Artspace buildings range from veterans, recent graduates, formerly homeless, retirees, service workers, educators, and parents – and they also happen to be creative. They are likely to earn a portion of their income from something other than their art. In fact, a look across the Arts Market Studies that Artspace has completed in the past 15 years shows that only about 10% of artist respondents make between 75%-100% of their income through their art.

WHO IS AN ARTIST?

Artspace's definition of a creative is very broad. An "artist" is a person who has a demonstrable commitment to the arts or a creative pursuit? While the term is broad and varies from community to community, if affordable housing is utilized in a project, all "artists" must still qualify for that housing by income. An artist is:

- A person who works in or is skilled in any of the fine arts, including but not limited to **painting, drawing, sculpture, book art, mixed-media and print-making.**
- A person who creates imaginative works of aesthetic value, including but not limited to **film, video, digital media works, literature, costume design, photography, architecture and music composition.**
- A person who creates functional art, including but not limited to **jewelry, rugs, decorative screens and grates, furniture, pottery, toys and quilts.**
- A performer, including but not limited to **singers, musicians, dancers, actors and performance artists.**
- In all culturally significant practices, including a **designer, technician, tattoo artist, hairdresser, chef/culinary artist, craftsman, culture bearer, teacher or administrator** who is dedicated to using their expertise within the community to support, promote, present, and/or teach and propagate their art form through events, activities, performances and classes.

CREATIVE RESOURCES

Artspace asked focus group attendees to rate the availability of a range of services for the creative sector. Networking opportunities were rated highest by the 20 attendees. Compared to other like-sized communities, services were rated as being more available than we typically find, particularly in the areas of networking, grant funding, business development assistance, and available workforce.

How would you rate the availability of the following for the creative sector in Roanoke? Rank on a scale of 1-5.



Artist and Arts Organizations Focus Group Menti Results

These above-average ratings are presumably correlated with the work of the City of Roanoke's Arts & Culture Department and Roanoke Arts Commission in providing services, grants, and opportunities to the creative sector. In 2023-2024, the Roanoke City Council is making available \$336,500 to 24 arts organizations. The Year of the Artist initiative provided an unprecedented amount of flexible project funding to individual artists through artist in residence program, Art Matters grants, and project-specific commissions. The City continues to apply for federal funding to leverage city resources for these art-centered strategies.

"This was an amazing opportunity for musicians like us who want to perform full-time. The prestige that comes from being funded by both the City of Roanoke and the National Endowment for the Arts will open a lot of doors for us that might have otherwise been closed to us. Thank you for investing in local artists and helping us connect more with our community!"

-Josh & Julie Kinn, Art Matters grantees

Source: YOTA Year in Review

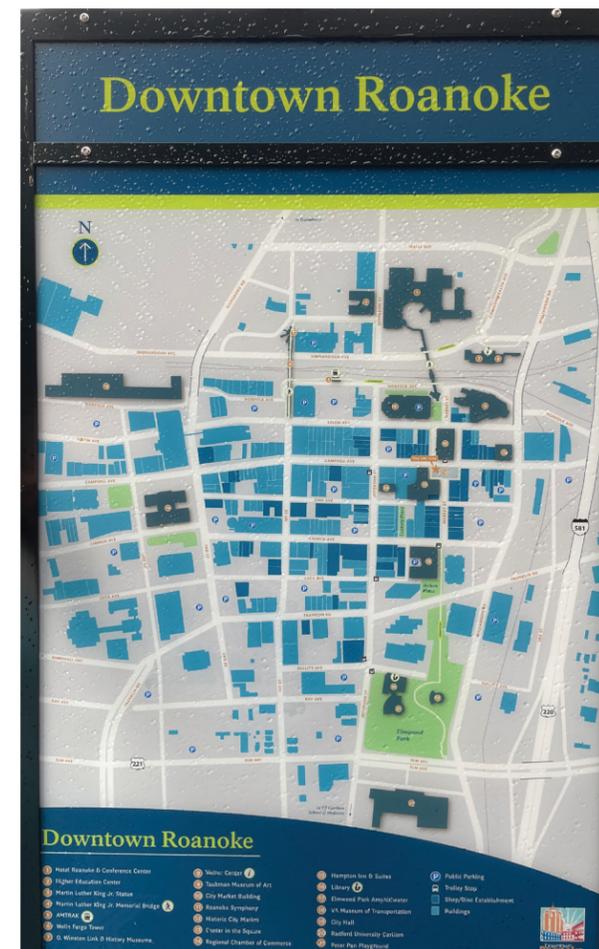
As a leading funder of the arts in Roanoke, the Roanoke Cultural Endowment, once fully endowed at \$20M, will make 3-year operational grants to arts and culture organizations, allowing for more predictability and stability within the arts sector.

The Roanoke Arts Commission provides education for working artists through weekly business development training and networking opportunities. Their [website](#) also shares a number of additional resources for artists and creatives utilizing their skills to tackle community development and placemaking projects.

Artists often look to arts service organizations for resources, the best national example of this is [Springboard for the Arts](#), based in St. Paul, Minnesota. They work to connect artists with accountants and tax preparers, grantwriters, fiscal sponsors, pro bono lawyers, and health insurance partners. Situated at the city level, these entities can play a large role in place- and project-specific initiatives and can act as an advocate for support from other governmental and private entities.

When artists were asked to share "other types of creative sector support" that they need in Roanoke, **media support for art events, small business mentorship and incubator programs, an art supply store, and access to shared equipment** were the most repeated. Quasi-governmental small business development centers, chambers of commerce, city-run business development programs, nonprofits, and community colleges or universities are frequent partners in addressing these gaps. These groups may already have programs and infrastructure in place that with some customization become more relevant to the creative sector, and for others all that is needed is enhanced promotion and cross-sector mutual awareness.

Artists also voiced the need for a centralized arts calendar. In our research, Artspace has found a number of calendars featuring arts and cultural activities, such as [Downtown Roanoke](#) and [Virginia Blue Ridge](#), in addition to Roanoke Arts Commission's arts and culture newsletter. The disconnect could be due to a lack of awareness of these platforms, confusion around how events and programs are added or included, or various constraints around eligible listings. This is not an uncommon problem among communities, given the many different ways people give and receive information.



(Clockwise From the Left) Map of Downtown Roanoke, Untitled Mural by Artist Toobz Muir at 1402 Grandin Road, SW, and "Let Your Mind Be Creative" by Artist JC Stallings from "We Are Art: The Roanoke Self-Portrait Project," Reproduced as a Bus Graphic for the Art by Bus Initiative // Photo Credits: Artspace and Roanoke Arts

Challenges and Opportunities

Artists and arts organizations shared the barriers and threats facing the local creative sector. This feedback helps civic leaders and advocates better understand the current challenges and plan action steps to address these issues. These responses also help frame the recommendations from Artspace, beginning on page 60.

The **top challenges** mentioned were:

- \$\$\$\$\$\$\$
- Ability to financially sustain art
- Access to water
- **Affordable housing**
- **Affordable studio space**
- Art desert in NW Roanoke. Need engagement and facility
- Artist-in-residence program compensating artists for their labor :)
- **Child care x 10**
- **Earning enough money to cover the basics**
- Electricity
- Expanded hours
- Financial education
- Food
- Funding
- Infrastructure
- Insecurity that we all feel that prevents us from taking risks
- Interest in the arts from general population
- Internet
- Money
- Not being fairly compensated for the economic impact we have
- Not enough spaces centered around supporting marginalized communities and artists
- Not enough venues to exhibit work
- Shared spaces for workshops and events
- Support for single mothers with special needs children
- Time
- Workable spaces

Focus group attendees mentioned that quality studio work space is lacking beyond downtown. They also noted that several spaces require prospective renters to have business insurance, which is cost-prohibitive for a small studio space.

Several of these challenges could be addressed through an Artspace-style artist housing project, and through the creative and flexible space developments planned for Melrose Plaza.



Melrose Library and "Panels from the Rockefeller Center Exhibition" by Dorothy M. Gillespie, Located Inside the Library // Photo Credit: Artspace

Similarly, we asked artists to share their perspectives and ideas around **opportunities** that exist for creatives in the community. Space-specific needs are discussed in the Project Concept section on page 36. Opportunities mentioned include:

- 102 acres and 1 million square feet: Riverside Southeast, LLC
- A chance to grow in an intimate community
- A fabulous arts commission
- BJ Lark on neighborhood spaces
- Clay Collective
- Collaboration
- Community engagement
- Create more exhibition spaces for emerging artists
- Downtown
- Grants are becoming more available for us!
- Growing Arts Endowment and Shaleen's work
- Hotel Roanoke
- local arts and music festivals
- Lots of people who love art but don't know how
- Lots of really cool kids
- Lots of stuff to recycle!
- Most beautiful location ever
- Nearby floyd old time music cultural hub
- On the cusp of being truly an arts- centric community!
- People want to move here
- Presenting many types of points of view
- Rising tide culture is strong - developers actually care and an artist coalition effort to advocate for the arts could shift power and money into the hands of artists
- Roanoke Arts Commission ROCKS
- Shared spaces to build community through arts education
- Show spaces, many large buildings available, many are historic spaces
- Support— people increasingly understand the value of artists...there's a window of opportunity!!!!
- Uniqueness/ ability to stand out
- Urban farming!
- Virginia Housing financing
- Year of the Artist!
- Youth arts education

Key Takeaways

From art form and scale to age and race diversity, there is clearly a rich variety of artists and creatives in Roanoke. The community has also embraced a number of unique or more niche forms, such as circus arts, healing arts, and urban farming. Local school systems and universities are investing in programs and resources to train the next generation. A mixed-use concept with housing for artists would benefit Roanoke's creative sector. Artists are optimistic and willing to put forth effort and collaborate on future initiatives.

Overall, the creative sector has imbued a strong presence of arts and culture into the City's identity. It is also not to be understated that the City has continually increased its funding and support of this sector in recent years.

Arts Market Study

The next step in Artspace's feasibility process is to quantify the market for an affordable mixed-use project, commencing in January 2024. Through the Arts Market Study, we conduct an online survey of the area's artists and creatives to determine if there is sufficient demand, and if so, how many residential units should be planned and what other kinds of creative spaces the project should contain. The survey also begins creating a list of interested artists who need space.

Quantifying the market need for these spaces helps attract funders and operators, and the data can be used to plan spaces and programs that are both affordable and self-sustaining, whether in an Artspace project or independent developments in the area.

STEP 2: Arts Market Study

The Arts Market Study (AMS) will enable Artspace to test the priority project concept, a mixed-use affordable arts facility. The data collected helps refine the project concept, influence site selection, and guide future creative space development. The AMS Study gathers information about:

- Amount artists can pay for studio/work space
- Amount artists can pay for housing
- Types of shared or community spaces that are most important
- Types of private studio workspaces that are most important
- Location preference
- Types of amenities that are important

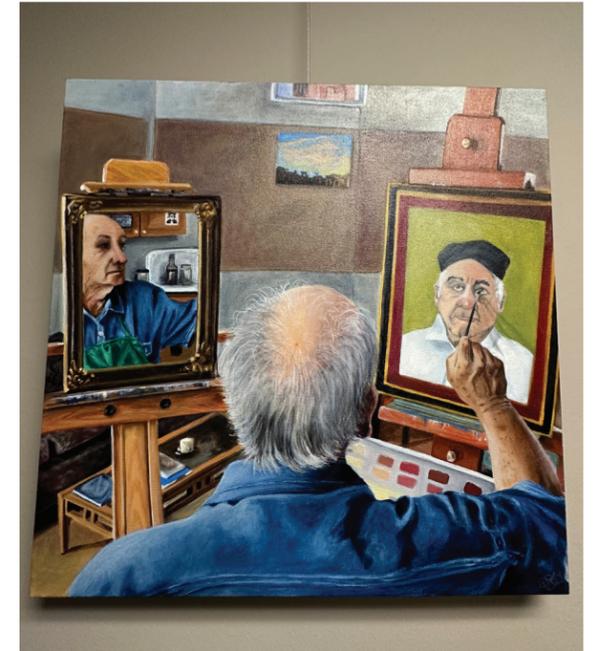
In addition to providing key information about the need for space within the possible context of a future Artspace project, this survey also provides valuable information for other developers and organizations who might consider carving out space for artists in their buildings and planned projects. **Not every type of needed space can be accommodated in a single project.** Having arts market information available to multiple interested parties is important to supporting new creative space opportunities.

ARTIST PREFERENCE IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Artspace live/work projects are unlike most affordable housing in that we use an “artist preference” policy to fill vacancies.

For each project, we appoint a committee that includes diverse artists who are not applying to live in that project. The committee interviews income-qualified applicants to determine their commitment to their chosen art form or creative pursuit. It does not pass judgment on the quality of an applicant’s work, nor is it permitted to define what is or is not art. Artists do not need to earn any of their income from their art form.

Although the IRS challenged the “artist preference” policy in 2007, it dropped the challenge after the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 became law. That law states: “A project does not fail to meet the general public use requirement solely because of occupancy restrictions or preferences that favor tenants...who are involved in artistic or literary activities.” This clause was threatened again in December 2017, but through broad reaching advocacy efforts, the new Tax Cuts and Jobs Act retains the artist preference language in the final signed version of the law.



(Clockwise from Upper Left) Inside Txtur's Downtown Showroom, "Bill Elliot: Portrait of the Artist in His Studio" by Artist Patricia Kapral from "It's Here: The Arts, Entrepreneurship + Placemaking," and Untitled Mural by Artist Andre Danger at Golden Cactus Brewing // Photo Credit: Artspace

Local Leadership

Strong local leadership is essential to the success of any community-led development. Ensuring there is a groundswell of support and readiness to dedicate resources and prioritize a project amidst broader community initiatives is a critical component of the feasibility study. Cross-sector stakeholders must act in partnership to advocate effectively for the project, hosting community conversations and continuing to emphasize the broader community goals complementary to a project. Without voices on the ground locally to keep communication flowing between Artspace and the community, there is little chance of success.

The quality and depth of local leadership is not only evaluated on the basis of their support for the concept and willingness to work in tandem with others toward a single goal, but we also consider what types of formal and informal partnerships might be possible to make the project a success.

Core Group

The Core Group is our go-to group not just for planning but for offering context and opening doors. The group that led the Preliminary Feasibility Study in Roanoke were movers and shakers and the success of the engagement throughout this study can be attributed to the genuine relationships these individuals have cultivated. The group had members of both public and private sector interests and brought unique perspectives and lived experiences.

The Core Group met for months prior to Artspace's first virtual focus group on September 7th, 2023 and in-person visit. Amy McGinnis of Riverdale Southeast, LLC and Douglas Jackson, City of Roanoke's Arts and Culture Coordinator were the leads. The group included representation from Virginia Housing, Southwest Virginia Ballet and the Star City School of Ballet, Roanoke Libraries, and multiple divisions of the City of Roanoke. Several Core Group members also work professionally as artists in the areas of photography, acting, and opera singing. The passion, expertise and drive of this team was palpable.

Civic Leaders and Funders

Supportive civic and finance leadership is critically important to the feasibility of a project. If it is lacking, it will stall a project's momentum. Affordable, community-driven projects rely heavily on civic and funding partners who recognize and value the concept and are willing to make the project a priority for their community.

Artspace was thrilled to see the wide breadth of stakeholders who participated in the Civic and Finance Leaders Focus Group. It included local and regional foundations, banks, and community development financial institutions, prominent institutions such as Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital and Virginia Tech. Virginia House of Delegates member Sam Rasoul also attended and expressed his support of the project. City Council Member Joe Cobb expressed support on behalf of the Council and noted that they are genuine about providing resources and approvals. To better understand the financing piece of a project in the region, the Virginia Housing and Restoration Housing, who are local historic preservationists, were also in attendance. The robust turnout speaks to the high level of interest in such a project and the strong desire to support it.

The group generated an extensive list of funding and financing opportunities (see the funding and financing section on page 42) and shared insights around potential partnerships, current civic priorities, and preferred sites for a future live/work development. In terms of goals, "Preserving Affordability" and "Addressing Inequities and Disparities" were unanimously the top community goals for this focus group. The full results are on page 32. Interestingly, "Promoting Tourism" and "Downtown Revitalization" received zero votes, which is highly unusual for the civic leaders focus group.

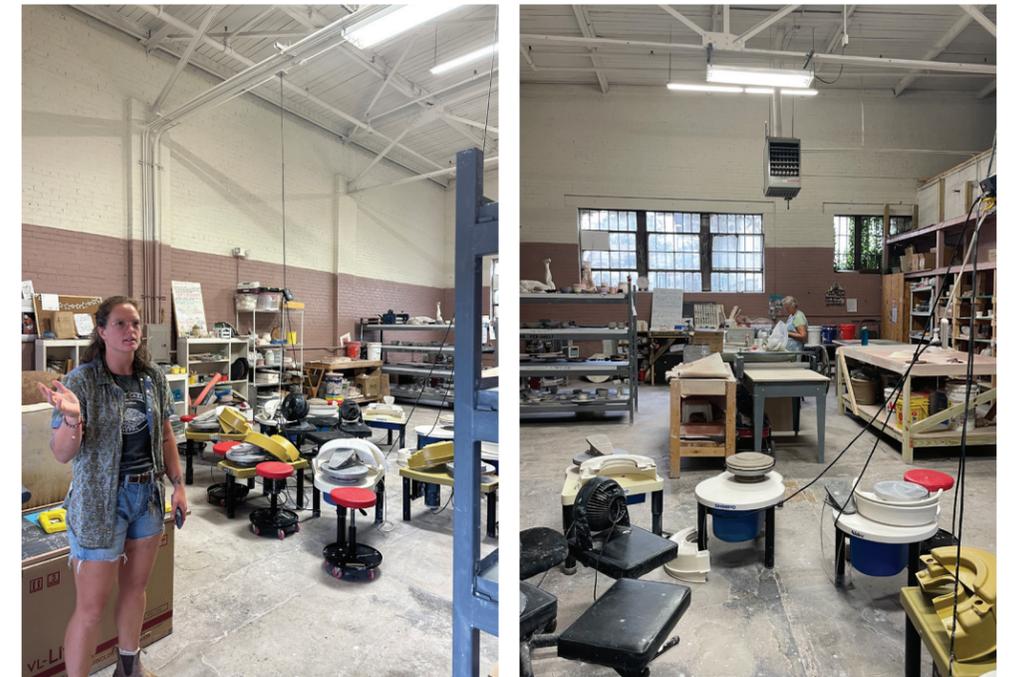
Our overall impression is that the City is enthusiastic about making a live/work project happen at the Riverdale site. Artspace felt the leaders understood the multifaceted benefits to both artist residents and the broader community of such a project and found alignment with current priorities.

Potential Partnerships

Both formal and informal partnerships help Artspace-style projects address multiple community goals. We rely on local leaders to spearhead partnerships and make introductions to begin the conversation. These could be organizations who need space or advocates during the Arts Market Study phase.

In the context of Riverdale, the opportunities are endless. The sheer scale of the site and the open-mindedness of Ed Walker and the development team opens the doors to a myriad of co-locating partnerships, programmatic collaborations, and more. Participants were asked to identify potential partners that could enrich an arts facility project or be complementary to a mixed-use development. Responses included:

- 16 West
- 5 Points Music Sanctuary
- ART RAT
- All the Galleries
- Allegheny Partners - They are a property management company that oversees many apartments downtown
- Amazetta Anderson
- Brian Counihan
- Sunni Purviance
- BJ Lark on neighborhood spaces
- Blue Ridge Potters Guild
- Brian Counihan
- Carilion Community Development
- Community Arts Reach
- Community School
- Honeytree childcare operators
- Humble Hustle
- Jefferson Center
- The Spot on Kirk
- LEAP
- North Cross School head, Armisted Lemon
- RCPS
- Restoration Housing
- Roanoke City Public Schools
- Roanoke Photography Collective
- Sewing collective
- Tattoo artists
- The Collective
- The Studio School
- The Vault
- Virginia Western Community College



Artist and Founder of Common Clay Collective Hana Marie // Photo Credit: Artspace

Alignment with Broader Community Goals

Successful arts buildings serve not only their residents and other tenants but also the surrounding community. They accomplish this by aligning with as many complementary goals as possible, effectively becoming more than the sum of their parts. When multiple goals such as preserving affordability and addressing inequities and disparities can be addressed by an Artspace initiative, it has greater potential to foster long-term, sustainable impact. The coalescence of several community goals also helps to bring more stakeholders to the table who are eager to see the project succeed.

To help us determine the goals that matter most in a community, Artspace gathers input from a broad cross-section of community stakeholders. Once we understand their priorities, we look for ways to bring these goals into alignment. Participants were asked to choose their top three goals from the mission-driven goals that we know could be met through creative space development. The top overall choices are shaded. These results highlight excellent alignment between the top priorities of each stakeholder group.

ALIGNMENT WITH BROADER GOALS RESULTS					
Community Goal	Artists/ Arts Orgs (Virtual)	Civic and Finance (In-Person)	Equity in Space (In-Person)	Public Meeting (In-Person)	Total
Preserving Affordability	12	20	9	25	66
Addressing Inequities and Disparities	12	10	10	11	43
Anchoring an Arts District	12	1	6	17	36
Historic Preservation	6	3	9	7	25
Sustaining Creative Businesses and Nonprofits	8	6	6	12	32
Activating Vacant Lots	3	4	6	8	21
Retaining Recent Graduates	1	5	3	3	12
Increasing Residential Density	1	4	1	5	11
Downtown Revitalization	0	0	0	7	7
Transit-Oriented Development	1	3	0	2	6
Promoting Tourism	0	0	1	2	3

In Roanoke, the top goals were:

1. **Preserving Affordability.** Long-term affordability was identified as the top goal, and preserving affordability is a core value of every Artspace project. We heard repeatedly from Roanoke artists that they are increasingly challenged to find affordable space to both live and work.

While Roanoke is considered “more affordable” than many like-sized American cities, the number of people living below the poverty line is very high at 20.2% and median household income well below the national average at \$50,000. The housing vacancy rate is extremely tight at 1.6%, and the housing market is growing more expensive.

The deepest cost burdens are largely seen in the southeast and northwest areas of Roanoke. Artspace reflected that, while the city is still “affordable” now, it has all the makings of a place on the cusp of an affordability crisis. The low median income and very little housing turnover or housing stock coupled with an ever-growing reputation as a vibrant, well-rounded city to move to, with plentiful greenspace, can change a community quickly if affordable housing solutions are not put in place - especially for artists who have made Roanoke the place that it is today.

The Roanoke Neighborhood Revitalization Partnership (RNRP), which is composed of the City of Roanoke, the HUD Community Resources Division, Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Habitat for Humanity of the Roanoke Valley, Total Action for Progress, Renovation Alliance, and Blue Ridge Independent Living Center, meets quarterly to discuss housing stability needs and the development of affordable housing. Additionally, the City holds monthly stakeholder meetings within local target areas to share information and collect feedback for incorporation into neighborhood plans and resource allocation. The City’s Neighborhood Revitalization Initiatives aim to spur redevelopment and improve residents’ quality of life⁵, many of which align with an Artspace project’s goals. The City has also identified several target areas, one of which is Southeast Roanoke.

In addition to housing, artists expressed the need for affordable non-residential spaces for creating, gathering, and performing. They shared that quality spaces of these types are currently lacking beyond the downtown core. Wherever possible, local developers should look to incorporate these types of spacing into their own projects. Generally speaking, \$1/square foot per month is an affordable rate for creative space.

2. **Addressing Inequities and Disparities.** Roanoke is rightfully proud of its diverse arts and creative sector and continues to lean into the arts as a platform to uplift historically marginalized voices, particularly in recent public art initiatives. Artspace’s Equity in Space conversation aimed to convene voices who have historically not held a place at the table. Major takeaways from the conversation were the growth opportunities that access to long-term affordable space could bring for creative entrepreneurs building out their businesses and organizations.

Equity in Space Conversation

The Equity in Space conversation drew freelance artists involved in jewelry making, painting, poetry, and the performing arts, several Artists in Residence with both the City of Roanoke and Melrose Plaza; Roanoke Arts Commission members, and representation from Stroke of Genius, The Roanoker, and Goodwill Industries of the Valley. The impressive, multigenerational group offered a range of perspectives to the conversation. Among the older attendees, many expressed appreciation for having first-hand experiences with the complicated history of Roanoke, enabling them to pass the stories and legacies of African American residents through their art and advocacy. In general, attendees were very positive about the recent efforts of the City to engage BIPOC artists in revitalization efforts, which is widely uncommon among cities where Artspace has worked.

Many of the attendees were creative entrepreneurs who are passionate about building community-oriented service organizations, developing educational programming and creating impactful events. These leaders face a number of challenges when seeking space, as well as opportunities to showcase their work at existing

businesses. Several musicians shared that downtown restaurants which regularly feature local bands have denied opportunities to hip hop musical groups. In addition to these direct exclusions, artists shared a number of experiences they have had with de facto “redlining” policies when it comes to space access. One instance of this is in space rental pricing. An artist spoke of a time when she was led to believe the fee was a set, affordable rate, only to find out there would be a number of add-on costs.

Artspace asked the focus group attendees what spaces they feel are inclusive and affordable. Several artists recalled the since shuttered Verses Lounge, an intimate, downtown venue that cultivated space for musicians, poets, and visual artists, most notably. While the space served as an effective and beloved community gathering spot, ultimately the lack of a sustainable business model or sufficient subsidy challenged its existence. Attendees also named the recent [Jazz in July](#) programming as an example of thoughtful and successful community-building gathering. The event was organized by Goodwill Industries of the Valleys and hosted at their existing campus in Northwest Roanoke. The event was free to the public and the first of many planned for Melrose Plaza.

Throughout the development process of an Artspace project, we encourage local leaders and the Core Group to make a concerted effort to keep this goal at the top of mind, as it is apparent the community hopes that a creative space project can help to address this persistent civic issue.



Source: Goodwill Industries of the Valleys

3. Anchoring an Arts District. While Roanoke currently does not have a designated arts or creative district, the city is home to several clusters of symbiotic creative businesses, cultural organizations, and arts-centric spaces. The density of these clusters, such as Grandin Village and downtown’s City Market Square, evoke the essence of informal arts districts throughout the City.

An Artspace-style project on the Riverdale campus presents the opportunity to anchor the arts in this “city inside a city” on the southeast side. The City should look to formally designate the Riverdale campus as an Arts District, which can support programming, events, and projects through business and tax incentives, as well as funding. The city should encourage public art and investment as the master planning unfolds on this site. Artspace also recommends the District develop a specific program for Riverdale “creatives” that responds to their needs and provides business development skills, and potentially grant opportunities. Such a program could be funded through a Business Improvement District (BID). An example of a BID that was started by community artists and property owners and continues to benefit the creative sector is in the [River North \(RiNO\) Arts District](#) in Denver, north of downtown.

INVESTING IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Taking a measure of creative placemaking

The Artspace live/work model has been proven to benefit communities by:

- Animating deteriorated historic structures and/or underutilized spaces.
- Bringing vacant and/or underutilized spaces back on the tax rolls and boosting area property values.
- Fostering the safety and livability of neighborhoods without evidence of gentrification-led displacement.
- Anchoring arts districts and expanding public access to the art.
- Attracting additional artists, arts businesses, organizations, and supporting non-arts businesses to the area.
- <https://www.artspace.org/taking-measure-creative-placemaking>

ARAB-AMERICAN MUSEUM AND BLACK LIVES MATTER 360 EXHIBITION PARTNERSHIP

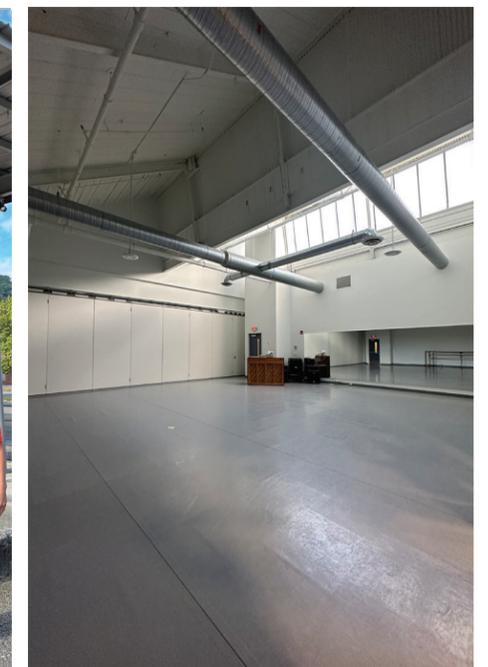
CITY HALL ARTSPACE LOFTS // DEARBORN, MI

City Hall Artspace Lofts in Dearborn, Michigan is a great example of how an Artspace project can foster relationships between artists in and out of the building. During the development process as early as 2010, the Arab-American Museum, which is located directly across the street from the property, was an early partner. City Hall Artspace Lofts now houses an artist in residency unit for visiting artists who are exhibiting at the museum, and have welcomed artists from Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia and beyond. Artspace Consulting also coached the Arab American Museum through our Immersion program on their expansion and incubator space.

The artists in the building, led by original resident Julia Denguhlanga, also have transformed the ground floor into a community gallery space. The Black Lives Matter 360 Exhibition that went up in response to the death of George Floyd showcases work from artists within the building, and from other mission-driven community organizations.



Photo Credit: Artspace



Tour of Star City School of Ballet's Facility with Artistic Director Pedro Szalay // Photo Credit: Artspace

Project Concept

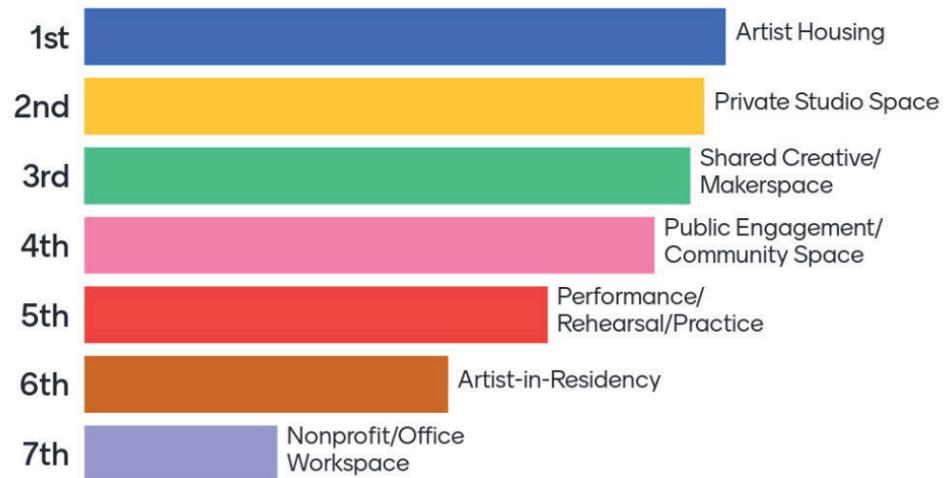
Some communities are clear about what they hope to achieve; others are starting from scratch. They look to Artspace to guide them through the process of determining whether a new facility makes sense for them – and, if so, what kind of space. While the space needs of creatives in each community are different, Artspace has learned from more than 40 years of conversations with artists, arts organizations, and creative businesses and entrepreneurs that there are commonalities across the types of spaces that are needed to live, create, and present creative work.

Priority Concepts

The first questions Artspace asked the Artist and Arts Organization Focus Group were “What types of affordable creative spaces are most needed in Roanoke?” and beyond the categories offered “What other types of creative spaces are needed in Roanoke?” We asked similar questions during the public meeting at Riverdale 5B 1. **Affordable live/work housing** was the leading expressed need, with both private and shared studio/maker space close in line.

What the Roanoke artist and arts organizations said...

What types of artist spaces are most needed in Roanoke? Rank these in order of importance.



Virtual Artist/Art Organization Focus Group Space Rankings



Artist and Co-Founder of Art on 1st Annie Schultz at the Gallery // Photo Credit: Artspace

Here's a more detailed look at the top five space categories:



LIVE/WORK ARTIST HOUSING is residential space where artists can work, as well as live. Artspace live/work units meet standard residential codes. They are rental units that are typically financed in part by federal Low Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and are subject, therefore, to certain restrictions. A common restriction limits units to households whose annual incomes (from any type of work) are between 30% and 60% (sometimes 80%) of the Area Median Income. Artspace live/work units include artist-friendly design features, such as durable surfaces, access to natural light, high ceilings, and wide doorways. There was a clear consensus of the critical need for housing for Roanoke's artists. We know if artists cannot afford to live in their community, they will not create there either.



PRIVATE ARTIST STUDIO SPACE is commercial space specifically designed for the creation or practice of art. Studio space is rented under an annual lease agreement or on an occasional or short-term basis by individual artists or small businesses. Uses can include fine arts studios, industrial work space, teaching, offices, recording studios, soundproof rooms, etc. Keeping the sizes and price points flexible ensures greater market applicability; we generally consider affordable to mean \$1/SF/month.

Two exemplary private studio facilities in Roanoke are [Left of Center Art Space](#) and [Art on 1st](#), both located in the heart of downtown. A cooperatively run gallery, Left of Center Art Space is home to the working studios of six local artists whose mediums span from painting and oil pastels to pottery, weaving, and jewelry. Each artist has access to their own dedicated space within the facility, which also functions as a gallery and features retail and workshop spaces. The co-op holds a number of events throughout the year, including exhibitions, markets, and classes, and participates in downtown's Art by Night open gallery events the first Friday of every month.

Newly established, Art on 1st features pieces by the owners and other local artists, with an emphasis on emerging artists. The gallery puts out artist calls for themed exhibitions and operates on a commission model. In addition to exhibitions, Art on 1st offers space for local artists to hold workshops, lectures, photo shoots, and other art activities. Art on 1st has a symbiotic relationship with LinDor Arts, a traditionally run gallery and custom frame shop located next door.

On the Riverdale site, Artspace visited the private studio of Dave Wertz, [ametal soul](#). The industrial space is filled with heavy machinery for Dave's forging and welding, as well as large tables and floor/wall space for works in progress. The two-room studio offers a dedicated space for scrap metal and raw materials that Dave collects for future projects, much of which has been sourced from the Riverdale campus itself.

The community currently lacks enough space for individual artists to create their work. The large majority of artists engaged in the study shared that they currently produce their work at home, but would like to have a dedicated working space. Focus group attendees expressed their need for studio space to teach private music lessons, social media content creation, and podcast recording.



SHARED CREATIVE SPACE offers shared equipment, education, and community for working creatively or producing art and goods. These spaces are usually run by nonprofits or businesses and traditionally can be accessed on a membership basis. They often include co-working and makerspaces and can be designed for specific purposes, such as ceramics, printmaking, community kitchens, and woodworking. These types of spaces provide access to equipment that is expensive, impractical, or in some cases, hazardous. Interest in these types of spaces has increased nationally in the last few years. Shared creative space is a growing trend that is rooted in many traditional and contemporary art forms.

Roanoke is home to the Common Clay Collective, a 30-member ceramic arts facility in the Loudon-Melrose neighborhood, northwest of downtown. The Collective operates on a monthly membership fee of \$125 and \$10 per ¼ a shelf. The organization also offers five weekly classes for community members, in addition to its youth education. Common Clay is also leading in the way of the healing

arts by offering programming for specific at-risk populations, such as incarcerated youth and victims of human trafficking. In the month since Artspace's visit, they have expanded into the space next door and built a dedicated office, kiln room and community space. We also heard about [Blue Ridge Potters Guild](#), a 125-member cooperative serving potters of all levels from across the county.

The [Grandin Theater Film Lab](#) was also mentioned in the shared creative space conversation. The two-semester program is geared towards teens in grades 9-12 interested in learning film production, lighting, screenwriting, storytelling, acting, sound engineering, and film industry acumen. The program's instructional space is located in the Heights Community Church in the Grandin Village neighborhood and offers students access to video editing equipment.

A number of coworking spaces have also been created in recent years, including The Collective, where the Civic and Finance Focus Group was held, as well as the [CoLab](#) in the Grandin Village neighborhood and [The Quarters](#) downtown. CoLab offers a variety of membership options, including a free "community member" tier which enables one to reserve a specific room for an event.

The expressed need for additional makerspace is a valuable opportunity for other locally driven development projects to support the creative sector beyond an Artspace one. The demand for this type of space, as well as desired amenities, will be evaluated through the Arts Market Study.



PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT/COMMUNITY SPACE was identified as a space lacking in Roanoke. Those expressing interest in community space noted the following types of activities that the space is needed for: pop-up performances/workshops, exhibitions, fashion shows, public performances for social media content creation, and community gatherings. Arts education for children and networking for individual artists could also be accommodated in community space.

Roanoke is home to a number of larger arts institutions that can in certain ways act as community convening spaces, however, these spaces tend to lean more formal and have a history of being less inclusive of a more diverse representation of community. Within the downtown, it seems that a number of the galleries function as informal public engagement and community gathering spaces, as do the libraries, such as Melrose Library.

As discussed previously, the Melrose Plaza development will create a neighborhood center for the Northwest community and plans to build out its programming with events, such as Jazz in July. Beyond downtown, many of the neighborhoods currently lack hubs for public engagement on a larger scale.

Artspace residential projects invariably have community rooms that can serve these functions not only for residents but for the community as well. The kinds of spaces mentioned above can be created beyond an Artspace development by local entrepreneurs and developers who are situated to act upon the insights and data Artspace collects, particularly those of the Arts Market Study.



PERFORMANCE AND REHEARSAL SPACES serve organizations and individuals looking to rent space for private events, performances, rehearsals, or community gatherings, usually for a fee or hourly rate. A typical performance space could take the form of a proscenium theater, black box, concert hall, or flexible event space, while rehearsal spaces may vary in size and often include mirrors, marley flooring, barres, and sound proofing. Artspace has a number of smaller flexible performance, rehearsal, and event spaces in our buildings. If such a space were included in Roanoke, particularly at Riverside, partnering with an organization interested in running/renting/programming on a consistent basis would be key.

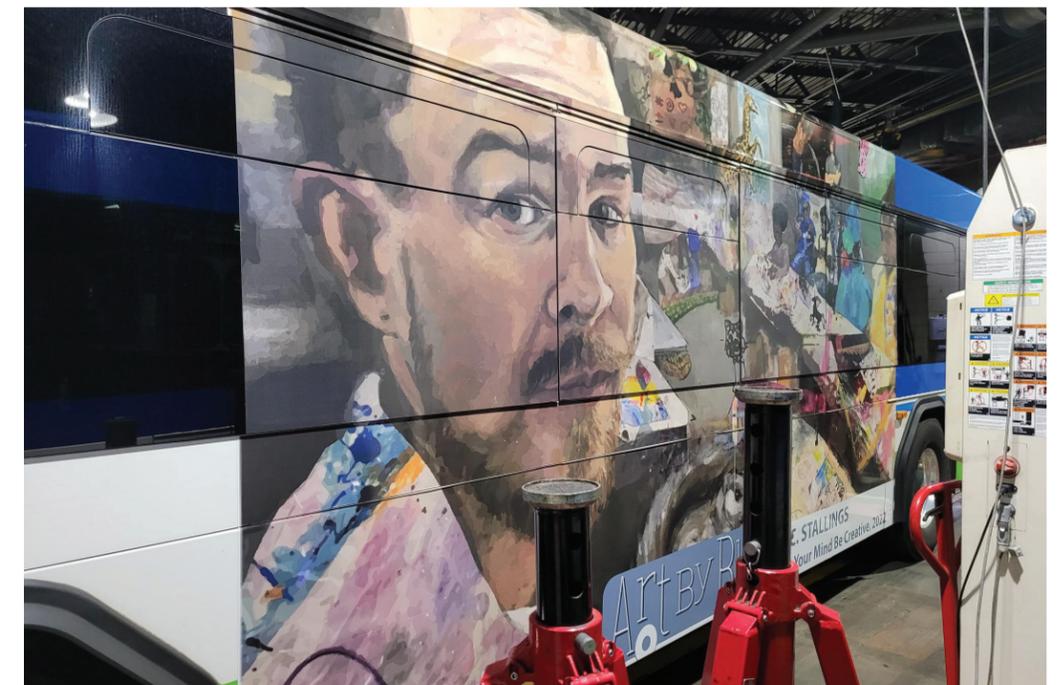
Artspace was impressed by the number and quality of existing performing arts spaces of all scales in Roanoke. [The Star City School of Ballet](#) and youth dance company [Southwest Virginia Ballet's](#) ~15,500 square foot space anchor the Riverdale campus. The large building features four studios of various sizes, an expansive costume storage room, offices, and several common spaces including a

kitchen. The space is also home to an independent salon that leases a ~500 square foot space on a monthly basis. Though Artspace did not tour the [Roanoke Ballet Theater's](#) space in Grandin Village, we were able to glance in. The ballet school and professional company utilize the space's three studios for classes, rehearsals, and studio showings. For productions, both organizations predominately utilize the [Jefferson Center](#) and the [Berglund Center](#), which are equipped with 888 seats and 2,148 seats, respectively. These centers also offer a number of additional spaces to the community. Beyond the Shaftman Performance Hall (888 seats), the Jefferson Center features five additional spaces, ranging in seated capacity from 36 to 300. These various spaces accommodate seminars, workshops, receptions, music performances, and more. A larger facility, the Berglund Center offers a number of versatile spaces. These include: the Berglund Coliseum (with a max capacity of 10,600), Berglund Performing Arts Theatre (seats 2,148), which includes seven dressing rooms and a green room, Berglund Hall (a collection of flexible meeting rooms and exhibit space), and the Berglund Special Events Center, a 46,000 square foot space for larger shows and conventions.

The [Mill Mountain Theatre](#), Roanoke's only professional Equity theatre, is housed within the [Center in the Square](#) complex. The facility features two stages, the Trinkle Stage (345 seats) and the Waldron Stage (115 seats). In addition to managing their own educational and entertainment programs, Mill Mountain Theatre and Center in the Square provide space rental options for nonprofit organizations, such as Opera Roanoke, Roanoke Ballet Theatre, and the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra and operational services for tenant organizations.

Among a number of popular music venues, Artspace learned about [5 Points Music Sanctuary](#), located south of downtown in a renovated 1927 church. In addition to creating a space for live concerts and events, the organization serves as a platform to promote and foster free music therapy programming, hearing loss advocacy, and accessibility efforts. The space is beautifully adorned with 22' arched ceilings, intricate moldings, outdoor courtyard, and recently expanded stage. The venue can accommodate up to 250 people and is fully ADA accessible. Glancing at the event calendar, 5 Points Music features a full line-up of performances every weekend. The downtown venue [Spot on Kirk](#) was also pointed out to Artspace as a valued, intimate venue for the local music scene.

The talent, capacity, and passion of Roanoke's performing arts leaders have truly propelled these venues forward. We encourage the City to continue finding ways to support the work of the local performing arts organizations by making both programmatic and capital funding available to invest in their spaces. Despite the success of these venues and the many others not mentioned above, Artspace heard a need among focus group and public meeting attendees for additional spaces of this scale, especially for local singers, musicians, poets, and spoken word artists to share their work.



"Let Your Mind Be Creative" by Artist JC Stallings from "We Are Art: The Roanoke Self-Portrait Project,"
Reproduced as a Bus Graphic for the Art by Bus Initiative // Photo Credit: Roanoke Arts

Other Spaces of Interest

Both the virtual artist/arts organizations focus group and the public meeting participants were asked what other spaces are needed in Roanoke. Their freeform responses included:

- Arts educational space for youth
- Classrooms to reasonably rent
- Collective space
- Collective space to workshops that house music with DJ and winery
- Creative Reuse Center like SCRAP RVA
- Culinary development
- Durham has a creative reuse center as well - would be amazing here
- Editing suites
- Exhibition space x2
- Fabric arts, collage, silkscreen
- Fashion show/sculpture gallery
- Fashion design and apparel manufacturing
- Film production space for actors and content creators (artists using social media to promote work)
- Glass blowing
- Lawns, shared pool, outdoor cooking, pavilions, garden, nature trails
- Managed pop-up, clustered small creative retail space
- Metalworking studio
- More galleries
- Multi-use space for aerial work
- Music rehearsal
- Musical studios/spaces
- Nearby access to childcare
- Neighborhood-centric community engagement space - indoor and outdoors
- Permanent art market like a farmers market for artists
- Places to purchase art making supplies locally
- Printmaking studio
- Public space for non-disruptive, easily accessible public performances for social media content creation
- Sewing manufacturer
- Space for creative for-profit businesses
- Teaching studios for private lessons
- Woodworking machinery

Although **no project can be all things to all people**, understanding how the community views these concepts and what spaces creatives need is extremely valuable. Other local space initiatives can incorporate some of these or there may be spaces that the community does not know about.

Defining a Project Concept in Roanoke

There is a clear local desire for a facility that provides sustainable, affordable space for the creative sector, acts as a gathering space for creatives and the broader community alike, and enhances the vibrancy of Roanoke.

Based on the information gathered during this study, **Artspace recommends the exploration of a mixed-use, live/work artist housing development as the priority project concept for Roanoke.** A development with affordable live/work housing for artists on its upper floors and private studio/shared creative space/commercial space on the ground floor would be appropriate to pursue in the Riverdale area as a priority site. The mixed-use development examples shared on pages 47-51 showcase this type of project concept.

It is our hope that the information shared in this report will help prioritize creative space needs and advance conversations with civic leaders to support the creative sector.

ARTSPACE & TENANT PARTNERSHIPS

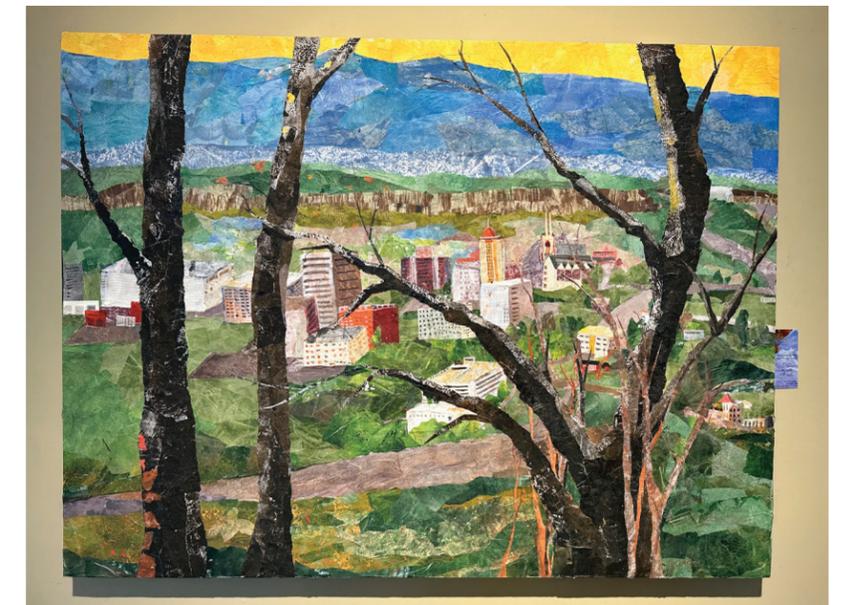
BUFFALO, NY - The Buffalo Arts and Technology Center (BATC) is an anchor tenant in our mixed-use affordable artist housing project in Buffalo. The BATC occupies 15,000 sq. ft. of space on the first and lower level of the historic electric car factory that houses 36 units of artist housing on floors 2-5. The focus of the BATC is two-fold: 1. To provide high quality art instruction to low-income children in the neighborhood, with an eye toward potential art careers and 2. To provide medical technology training to low-income adults in the neighborhood and assist with job placement at the nearby medical campus. There is a synergistic relationship with both the nearby hospital and the artist residents, some of whom act as faculty in the BATC program.



TRINIDAD, CO - The commercial space in Artspace's Trinidad Space to Create project is home to the City's own cultural facility, The Commons. The facility spans over three storefronts that are combined into an expansive, open space of approximately 20,000 sq ft. Featuring a gallery, retail space, community/co-working space, and kitchen amenities, the facility offers space for artists to show and sell work, as well as host events, workshops and community gatherings.



Photo Sources: Buffalo Arts Tech Center // Visit Trinidad



"View From Mill Mountain" by Artist Susan Sellars at Left of Center Art Space // Photo Credit: Artspace

Funding and Financing

An Artspace project represents a substantial financial investment for the community where it is located. Strong city and state leaders often identify and prioritize funding for projects they feel strongly align with their community goals. A typical project of 50 to 70 units of affordable housing for artists, plus community and commercial space, costs \$15 to \$20 million. Predevelopment expenses, the “soft” costs such as architects’ fees, that must be met before construction can begin, are usually about \$800,000 regardless of the size of the project.

In most cases, however, only a small portion of the capital investment comes directly from the community itself. This is because Artspace relies on its track record and 40+ years of experience in 23 states to tap into federal programs, such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC), Historic Tax Credits (HTC), HOME and Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), and Federal Home Loan Bank grants to provide long-term equity for development projects. These programs, and others like them, exist to encourage the development of affordable housing, the rehabilitation of historic buildings, economic revitalization of neighborhoods, and other public purposes.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE	INCOME (30-60% AMI)	INCOME (80% AMI)	# OF BEDROOMS	MAX. RENT (30-60% AMI)	MAX. RENT (80% AMI)
1	\$19,200-\$38,400	\$51,200	Efficiency	\$480-\$960	\$1,280
2	\$21,960-\$43,920	\$58,560	1	\$514-\$1,029	\$1,372
3	\$24,690-\$49,380	\$65,840	2	\$617-\$1,234	\$1,646
4	\$27,420-\$54,840	\$73,120	3	\$713-\$1,426	\$1,902

Source: novoco.com

The local community plays a significant role in the broader funding and fundraising effort, especially during the early steps of the process. We look to the community for the donation of land or buildings, as well as private and public predevelopment funds and commitments of affordable housing allocations in a combination of CDBG, HOME funds, and private philanthropic support.

Philanthropy

In addition to the public funding sources identified on the following pages, philanthropy is an important tool for funding Artspace developments. This comes in the form of gifts from foundations, corporations, and in some cases, individuals. Several of the key people we met during the course of this study are important connectors to the private funding community. Major funders and individual donors to the arts should be considered as well as the private and foundation funders listed on the following pages.

BRAINSTORMING POTENTIAL FUNDERS

The Civic and Finance Leaders Focus Group participants included elected members of city and state government, local and regional foundations, banks, and community development financial institutions. Representation from Virginia Housing, Roanoke Cultural Endowment, Roanoke Regional Partnerships, Restoration Housing, and prominent institutions such as Carilion Roanoke Memorial Hospital and Virginia Tech were at the table.

We asked the attendees to identify possible public, private, and philanthropic resources for a potential Roanoke project and share ideas about where it should be located. This prestigious group was excited about the potential a mixed-use artist housing project could bring to the city in terms of vibrancy, accessibility, and additional investment. The group expressed confidence in identifying resources for projects that are a priority for the community. Potential private funding sources that were identified were by and large based in Virginia and include:

- [Bank of America Charitable Foundation](#): National source and very competitive; support capital and preservation
- [Cabell Foundation](#): Focus area includes cultural organizations and projects in VA
- [Cameron Foundation](#): Focus area includes arts and culture with an emphasis on Petersburg area. Artspace has a relationship with Cameron who occasionally funds outside primary service area.
- [Fairweather Foundation](#): Focus area is education though they also fund some historic preservation projects.
- Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia: The Foundation has three main focus areas – community vibrancy, education/youth and health in addition to donor advised funds with specific interest areas.
- Marietta McNeal Morgan and Samuel Tate Morgan: A trust fund within Bank of America that funds primarily in Virginia with a focus area in historic preservation
- [Mary Morton Parsons Foundation](#): Focus area in historic preservation
- Powell Charitable Trust
- [Richard S Reynolds Foundation](#): Focus on Richmond area but also contributes across the state for projects that align. Culture and historic preservation are among their interest areas.
- [Roller Bottimore Foundation](#): Focus on Richmond but also funds throughout the state with a particular interest in major capital projects.
- [AEP Foundation](#) (American Electric Power corporate foundation): Focus on racial and social justice which could include affordable, workforce housing. Also focus on corporate service areas more generally. Roanoke is a major service area and the current CEO is from Roanoke.

Potential Public Sources

LOW INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDITS

The largest source of funding for most Artspace mixed-use residential projects is the federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program, administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and state housing agencies in accordance with Section 42 of the IRS Code.

LIHTCs come in two varieties, known as 9% credits and 4% credits after the variable in the formula used to calculate them. Of these, 9% credits are much more popular with developers because they can pay for up to two-thirds of a project’s construction budget, more than twice as much as 4% credits. They are therefore extremely competitive, and it is not uncommon for a developer to have to apply two or more times before receiving an award; 4% credits, which take the form of tax-exempt bonds, are easier to obtain.

In Virginia, LIHTCs are administered by the Virginia Housing Development Authority (“Virginia Housing”), a self-supporting, nonprofit organization created by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1972 to help Virginians attain quality, affordable housing. Although Virginia Housing acts much like a state agency, it is an independent nonprofit. Application rounds for 9% LIHTC are once annually in mid-March with preliminary decisions about applicant awards in May and final decisions in late June. In 2023, there were 41 applications, of which 18 proceeded to full applications. There was only one application for LIHTC from the City of Roanoke for the King Street Project. That project received partial funding in 2022.

The current cap or limit of 9% LIHTC dollars is \$2M per project, supporting projects in the 40-100 unit range.

Recent LIHTC awards in Roanoke County bode well for an Artspace initiative. While an Artspace project would probably be a mixed-use facility, with non-residential uses on the ground floor (which cannot be paid for with LIHTC-generated funds) and housing above, we encountered no resistance to this concept in any of our meetings and believe it is a viable model for Roanoke.

The most recent 9% LIHTC award in the City of Roanoke was in 2022, for the 46-unit King Street project in the Hollins/Wildwood neighborhood. Also, in 2022, the Smith Ridge Commons project was awarded an allocation of the competitive 9% LIHTC in unincorporated Roanoke County. This project also received Housing Trust Fund dollars from this new state source and is slated to include 216 affordable units on a 12.5 acre site.

The City of Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority has been the local leader in the development and management of 1,276 public housing units in Roanoke with 2,076 voucher units throughout the City and County. As of 2023, 4,800 Roanoke families were in need of an affordable home with 300 families on the waitlist for existing units of affordable housing. The Housing Authority develops and manages both Section 8 housing units (for families with incomes below 30% AMI) and Section 42 Low Income Tax Credits units (for families with incomes between 30% and 80% AMI).

FEDERAL LIHTC

As in all states, the 9% LIHTC awards are highly competitive with an application round once each year in May. The State looks for a 10% match from the local government (typically cities and counties) in the form of a local housing trust fund, CDBG, or HOME award to be eligible.

4% LIHTC are currently fully subscribed so a competitive application process is under discussion.

A 9% and 4% allocation of LIHTC can be combined into a singular project. Called "twinning," Virginia Housing has been providing a points incentive for developments that combine 9% and 4% LIHTCs in its qualified allocation plan (QAP) since 2015.

"Twinning" allows the agency to stretch its limited 9% credits further while using a more abundant supply of 4% credits to finance affordable housing developments. Virginia Housing funded five hybrid projects in 2015, two in 2016, four in 2017, 14 in 2018, and another nine projects have been reserved credits this year. Together, these projects provide nearly 5,700 affordable units.

According to Virginia Housing, the program has worked well, but the deals are complex, requiring developers to divide a project into two separate legal structures—one with 9% credits and another with 4% credits and tax-exempt bonds.

STATE LIHTC

Housing Opportunity Tax Credit (HOTC) - For calendar years 2022 through 2025, up to \$60 million of HOTC will be available for qualified projects for each of the four calendar years beginning in 2022 and sunseting in 2025. It is possible that the state legislature could approve renewing this resource which is considered a pilot program at this time.

To qualify for the HOTC, the applicant must be determined by the state to be eligible for a 4% or 9% allocation of LIHTC but not yet allocated LIHTC.



"Katherine Devine" by Artist Gerald Hubert for the "It's Here: The Arts, Entrepreneurship + Placemaking" // Photo Credit: Artspace

UNDERSTANDING LOW-INCOME HOUSING TAX CREDITS (LIHTC)



Source: NPR, Illustrations by Chelsea Beck/NPR. Explainer by Meg Anderson, Alicia Cypress, Alyson Hurt, Laura Sullivan and Ariel Zambelich/NPR and Emma Schwartz/Frontline,

OTHER PUBLIC FUNDING SOURCES

This is a preliminary list of other potential public sources discussed during this study as well as other Montana funding sources that could support a development project.

- [Industrial Revitalization Fund](#). A total of \$1.5M annually is allocated to municipalities for the purpose of redeveloping former industrial sites. The Riverdale and Foundry sites could both qualify for this type of funding if prioritized by the City of Roanoke. This source may be sunseting in 2024 with the last application round in 2023.
- [VDCDC](#) is an experienced lender and investor in New Markets Tax Credits, Low Income Housing Tax Credits and Historic Tax Credits. VDCDC is a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI), as well as an investor, consultant, and lender in the affordable housing arena.
- [REACH Virginia program](#). Each year, the state contributes a significant portion of its net revenues into this program to support vital housing initiatives through Homeownership, Rental and Community Outreach programs. In 2023, this program allocated \$85 million for gap funding and permanent financing for affordable housing projects with below market rate lending.
- [Federal Home Loan Bank](#). The Atlanta office serves the Commonwealth of Virginia and is one of twelve government-sponsored Federal Home Loan Banks that provide equity to support housing financing and community investments.
- **State and Federal Historic Tax Credits (HTCs)**. To qualify for the federal program, a property must be listed on the National Register of Historic Places either individually or as a contributing member of a designated historic district. Both the federal and state tax credit programs are administered in Virginia through the Department of Historic Resources. [State tax credits](#) are available for owner-occupied and commercial buildings, as well as income-producing historic buildings.
- **HOME Program**. A federal program that provides funding to state and local governments to fund affordable housing developments. Roanoke is an Entitlement Community that receives a dedicated allocation of HOME funds from the Commonwealth of Virginia. Combined with CDBG, the 2023/2024 City of Roanoke allocation was \$2.6 million.
- **Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)** are tools that cities can use for a range of activities that benefit low- and moderate-income individuals or prevent or eliminate slums and blight. 20% are typically used for infrastructure improvements. Both of the industrial sites that are part of this study could qualify for infrastructure improvements. Roanoke's CDBG current target area is Southeast, which Riverdale is situated in. Current priorities also focus on housing, with an interest in density.
- [Virginia Housing Trust Fund](#). Established in 2014, the purpose of the fund is to provide gap financing to organizations, both nonprofit and for-profit, that serve beneficiaries of low to moderate income. The Trust Fund is administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) in partnership with Virginia Housing. In 2024, the total pool will be approximately \$150M and has been consistently around \$100M since its inception. Virginia Housing is also currently working on establishing a City of Roanoke housing trust fund and exploring the opportunity to initiate the fund with Congressionally Directed Spending dollars.
- [Inflation Reduction Act](#). Building owners will be able to invest in technologies, such as solar panels, heat pumps, wind-resistant roofing, insulation, low embodied carbon materials, and other measures that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make properties healthier and safer for residents in the face of more severe weather and a changing climate. The program's [implementing notice](#) and Notices of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs) will provide a range of grant and loan funding options for multifamily housing owners with varying levels of expertise with green retrofits.
- [Southeast Crescent Regional Commission \(SCRC\)](#) is a federal commission serving the southeast states that formed as part of the 2008 Farm Bill. Its focus is on economic development, workforce housing, among other areas. One of its goals is to expand affordable housing stock and invest in efforts to improve the affordability and availability of quality housing across the region. The SCRC has several grant programs that could provide equity or predevelopment for a future Artspace project.
- [The Virginia Enterprise Zone Program](#), which is established through the Virginia General Assembly, is a State and Locality partnership in which a variety of incentives are available in a geographically defined area. Mixed use projects are available for Real Property Investment Grants. [Additional Link](#)

Example Projects

ARTSPACE LOVELAND CAMPUS // LOVELAND, CO HISTORIC PRESERVATION + NEW CONSTRUCTION

Responding to community goals, Artspace acquired the Feed & Grain Building and a neighboring vacant lot in 2014 and constructed the Artspace Loveland Lofts on the lot in 2016. The building includes 30 live/work units and gallery space. Phase II of the project will finally complete the Feed and Grain building, providing nine units of live/work housing for creatives and their families; along with 6,000 square feet of sustainable commercial space for artists. It is one of Loveland's most historic structures and represents the town's first major industry.

There is a long history across the U.S. of artists and other creatives reclaiming abandoned industrial spaces as spaces to create. Redeveloping the Feed & Grain so that it is code-compliant, on the tax roll, and filled with a creative community will both preserve a local, 120-year-old landmark and make it a hub for creative inspiration.

Artspace's live/work units in Loveland provide housing that ranges from 30% to 120% Area Median Income. This more expansive income spread is due to unique Colorado funding sources. The completed Artspace Loveland Arts Campus will bookend substantial improvements that have been made in Downtown Loveland, fulfilling the community's vision to expand economic opportunities and arts access making Loveland a model for artist-led community development in Colorado.



Phase 1 (right) // Phase 2 (left)

PHASE 1 - ARTSPACE LOVELAND LOFTS

OPENED IN 2015

DEVELOPMENT COST: \$9M

TOTAL AREA: 38,000 SQUARE FEET

LIVE/WORK UNITS: 30

COMMUNITY SPACE: 1,200 SQUARE FEET

PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS: ArtPlace Fund of Community Foundation of Northern Colorado, Boettcher Foundation, Colorado State Historic Fund, El Pomar Foundation, Erion Foundation, Gates Family Foundation, Hach Family Fund, Loveland Community Fund of Community Foundation of Northern Colorado, National Endowment for the Arts, and Several Individuals.

PHASE 1 SOURCES OF FUNDING AND FINANCING

PUBLIC SOURCES

Low Income Housing Tax Credits	\$5,598,880	61%
Colorado State Trust Fund/HOME Funds	\$300,000	3%
City of Loveland Loan	\$300,000	3%
State Historic Fund	\$200,000	2%
Loveland City Contract	\$175,000	2%
Loveland Housing Authority	\$50,000	1%

PRIVATE SOURCES

Philanthropic Gifts	\$1,641,982	18%
Residential First Mortgage	\$912,000	9%
TOTAL	\$9,177,862	100%



PHASE 2 - ARTSPACE FEED & GRAIN

ESTIMATED COMPLETION 2024

ESTIMATED DEVELOPMENT COST: \$12M

LIVE/WORK UNITS: 9

COMMUNITY SPACE: 6,000 SQUARE FEET

PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS: Same as Phase 1

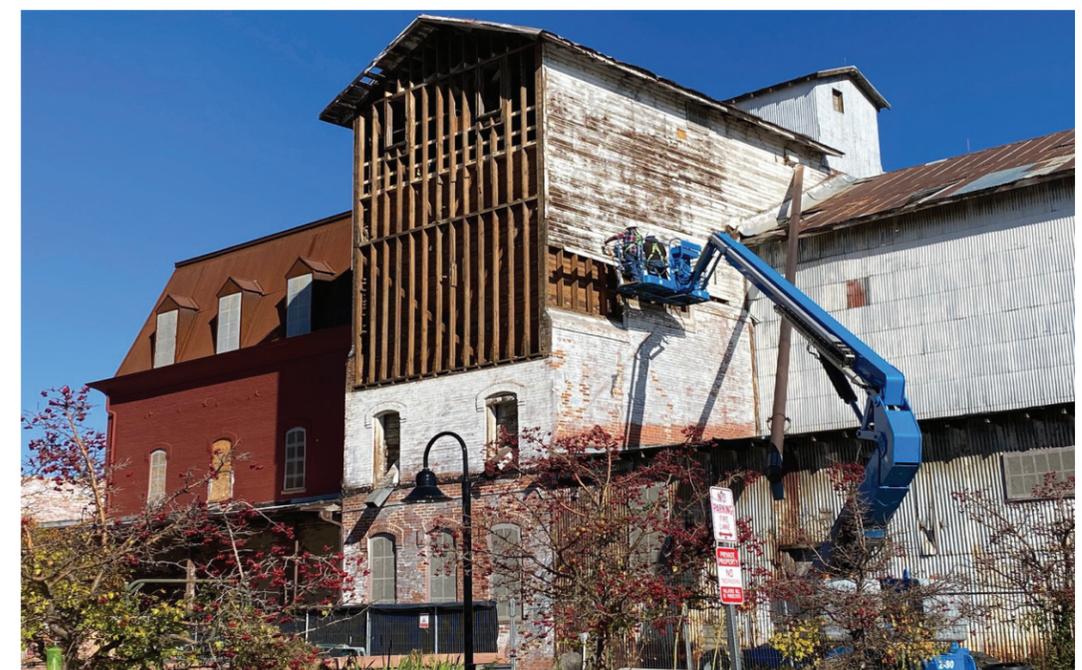
PHASE 2 SOURCES OF FUNDING AND FINANCING

PUBLIC SOURCES

CRF Grant	\$5,000,000	42%
Federal Historic Tax Credits	\$1,861,095	16%
State Historic Tax Credits	\$1,593,274	13%
Urban Renewal Act	\$230,000	2%
DDA Façade	\$62,500	.7%
DDA TAP	\$25,000	.3%

PRIVATE SOURCES

First Mortgage	\$1,680,000	14%
Philanthropic Gifts	\$800,000	7%
Deferred Developer Fees	\$707,934	5%
TOTAL	\$11,959,803	100%



Example Projects

ARTSPACE ELGIN LOFTS // ELGIN, IL HISTORIC PRESERVATION + NEW CONSTRUCTION

Like many railroad communities in Chicagoland in recent years, Elgin has been working hard to preserve and enhance its downtown, with the arts as part of the plan. When City officials were introduced to Artspace at an Illinois Main Street Conference, they asked Artspace to help them achieve their goals. The result is the Elgin Artspace Lofts, a \$15.2 million mixed-use project that created 55 units of affordable live/work space for artists and their families, plus 5,874 square feet of retail and community space for arts-friendly businesses and nonprofit organizations.

The historic Sears structure, occupied most recently by Elgin Community College, has been completely renovated and linked to a new addition. The City of Elgin and the Elgin arts community were the driving forces behind the project, working with Artspace to plan and develop the facility. Elgin's residents and civic leaders believe that permanently affordable space for artists will strengthen an emerging arts and culture cluster in downtown Elgin, serve as a catalyst for continued development, bring vibrancy and activity to the street and increase the number of individuals and families living and working downtown.



As a non-profit developer Artspace can access federal and state grants, tax credits and private donations from numerous local and regionally focused charitable foundations and individuals. This non-profit status does not mean projects are exempt from future property tax. Projects pay property taxes unless the governing municipality has a PILOT or other tax reduction program in place specifically for affordable housing projects. In addition, projects often include commercial spaces with accompanying sales tax and employment opportunities for cities. New activity generated by a project can provide new customers for existing local shops and services.

"The reason I supported [Artspace] is they did this in 30 other communities, and it worked 30 times; can't do any better than that. It improves the community; it improves the tax base; it takes a piece of property that was paying no taxes ... and now it's going to pay tax back into the city."
— David Kaptain, Mayor of Elgin

OPENED IN 2012

DEVELOPMENT COST: \$14.5M

TOTAL AREA: 80,900 SQUARE FEET

LIVE/WORK UNITS: 55

COMMUNITY SPACE: 1,000 SQUARE FEET

COMMERCIAL SPACE: 5,900 SQUARE FEET

PHILANTHROPIC PARTNERS: Bank of America, Educational Foundation of America, Florence B. & Cornelia A. Palmer Foundation, Nicor Gas, San Lippo Foundation, Seigle Family Foundation, Sherman Health and Several Individuals

TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) PROJECT NEAR METRA STATION TO/FROM CHICAGO

SOURCES OF FUNDING AND FINANCING ARTSPACE ELGIN LOFTS // ELGIN, IL

PUBLIC SOURCES

Low Income Housing Tax Credits (9%)	\$8,346,218	57%
Federal Historic Tax Credits	\$417,650	3%
State HOME Funds	\$1,500,000	10%
State Tax Credits	\$1,097,891	8%

PRIVATE SOURCES

First Mortgage	\$1,365,000	9%
Philanthropic Gifts	\$1,200,000	8%
Artspace (Predevelopment Grant Applied to Capital)	\$350,000	2%
Deferred Developer Fee	\$261,561	2%
TOTAL	\$14,538,320	100%



Photo Credit: James Harvey

Potential Sites

While site selection is a critical component of any project, it should not drive the project. During a Preliminary Feasibility Visit, Artspace's primary goal is not to choose a site but to identify candidates for further study should the project move forward. Our goal is to gain a deeper understanding of the project concept and to assess each site for its ability to serve that concept, its alignment with broader community goals, and issues that would affect its cost of acquisition and development. Factors we consider include location, size, physical conditions, adaptability to project concept(s), construction type, zoning, land use restrictions, ease of acquisition, and potential for sustained impact on the broader community.

Given our mission to keep our projects affordable in perpetuity, Artspace gives high priority to sites that can be conveyed below market rate. Sites owned by government agencies are especially valuable, as they can be donated as part of their contribution to seeing the development realized. A minimum of ½ acre and possibly more, depending on parking, would need to be assembled to develop a 50-unit mixed-use artist housing project. The 50-unit number is based on Artspace's experience in other like-sized communities and on the feedback from our in-person visit.

WHERE ARTISTS WANT TO BE

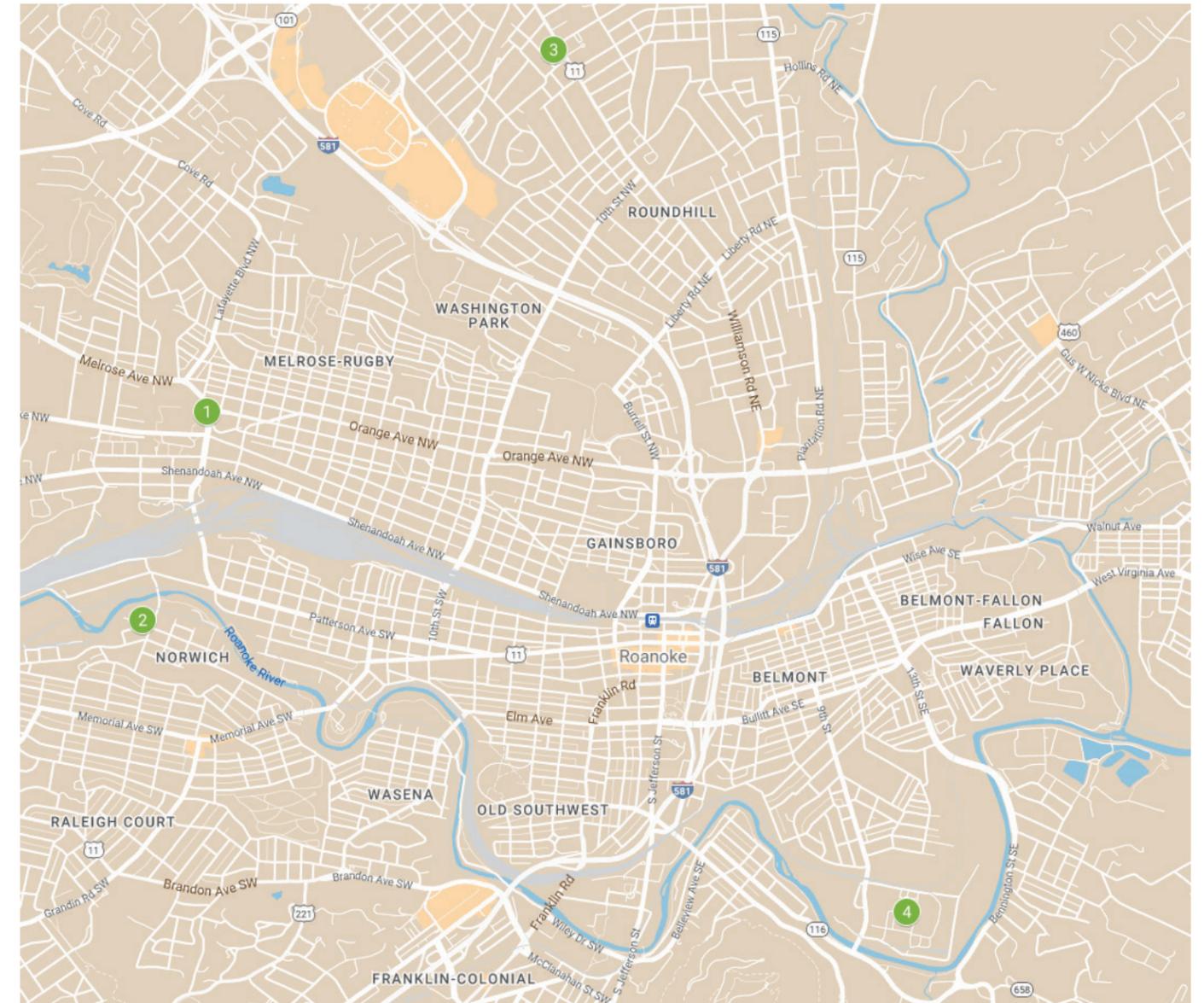
We asked the audiences of the artist/arts organization focus group, equity in space conversation and public meeting to share their thoughts on where an Artspace-style project would be best suited. In their own words, and listed according to frequency, the following areas emerged:

- Riverdale x13
- Northwest x3
- Southeast x2
- Grandin Village x2
- Wasena x2
- Downtown x2
- Close to downtown x2
- Gainsboro
- Melrose area
- NW Roanoke in renovated church
- NW Roanoke on the Goodwill Campus on Melrose in the firehouse x2
- Tangle Wood Mall near 419
- Shenandoah Road area
- Redeveloped industrial space
- Somewhere safe!
- In a neighborhood where creative presence can make a difference and is valued
- Warehouse
- An unused industrial building
- 419 West

Site Tour Observations

Our Core Group selected four sites for the Artspace team to evaluate. These potential sites and corresponding neighborhoods were the former Melrose Fire Station (Melrose-Rugby), Walker Foundry (Norwich), Riverdale (Southeast Roanoke), and a former auto dealership on Berglund Williamson Road (Preston Park).

While all of the sites we visited had potential for reuse as creative spaces of some nature, most had significant drawbacks related to size and cost of acquisition. At this time, Artspace sees the most opportunity for an affordable live/work development for artists at the Riverdale campus in the Southeast region of the City.



Source: Artspace via Google Maps

Sites

- 1 Former Melrose Fire Station - 514 24th Street NW
- 2 Walker Foundry Property - 2415 Russell Avenue SW
- 3 Former Auto Dealership - 3926 Williamson Road NW
- 4 Riverdale - Buildings 5, 7 A/B/C, 13 - Multiple Addresses

RIVERDALE IN SOUTHEAST ROANOKE

Site History and Background

Once home to a sprawling campus of factory buildings owned by the American Viscose Company, this site now known as “Riverdale” (its historic name), was purchased in March 2023 by Ed Walker, a local developer and impetus for this study. The site represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to create a new community, “a city within a city,” in Roanoke.

Today, the Riverdale development team is hiring a master planning firm to begin laying out the potential use and phasing of projects on the site. Because of its size, there will be multiple developers for elements of the site’s development which will be done in phases over the next 10-15 years.

The site is envisioned as a mix of apartments, commercial spaces and industrial tenants (with artists and creatives in the mix) spanning 100+ acres along the Roanoke River near the base of Mill Mountain. It will include both new construction and the rehabilitation of existing structures. The Riverdale campus is a complex site with more than 1 million SF of buildings, most of which are more than 100 years old.

Since American Viscose shuttered the rayon plant in 1958, the property has become home to an eclectic mix of tenants, including artists as well as junkyards of rusted-out autos, tractor-trailers, and construction equipment the latter of which are being cleared from the site at an impressive speed).

The 2023 [Economic & Fiscal Impact report](#), commissioned by the City, estimates that the new development could be responsible for almost \$73 million in total direct, indirect, and induced economic impact to the city by 2030, during its first phase of development. By 2040, it estimates the cumulative impact on the city at more than \$326 million.⁶

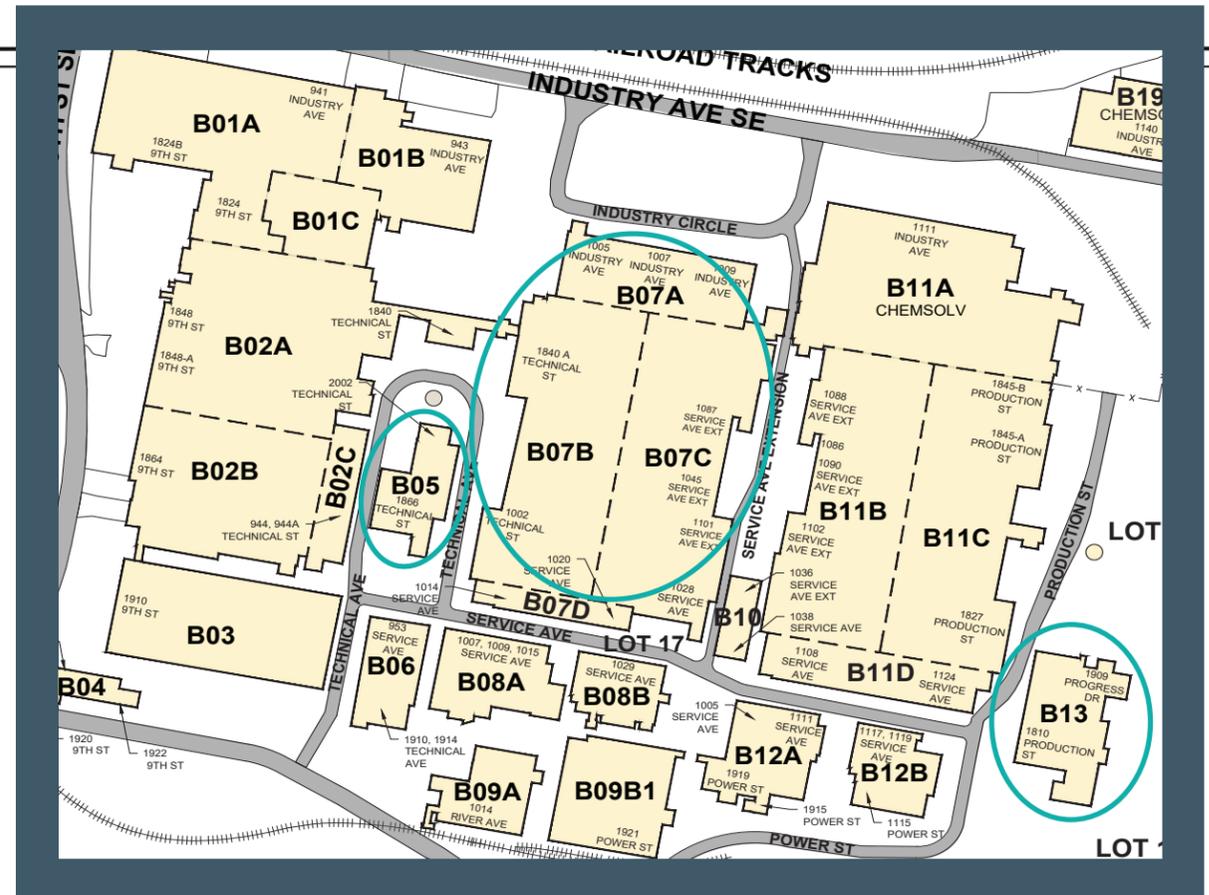
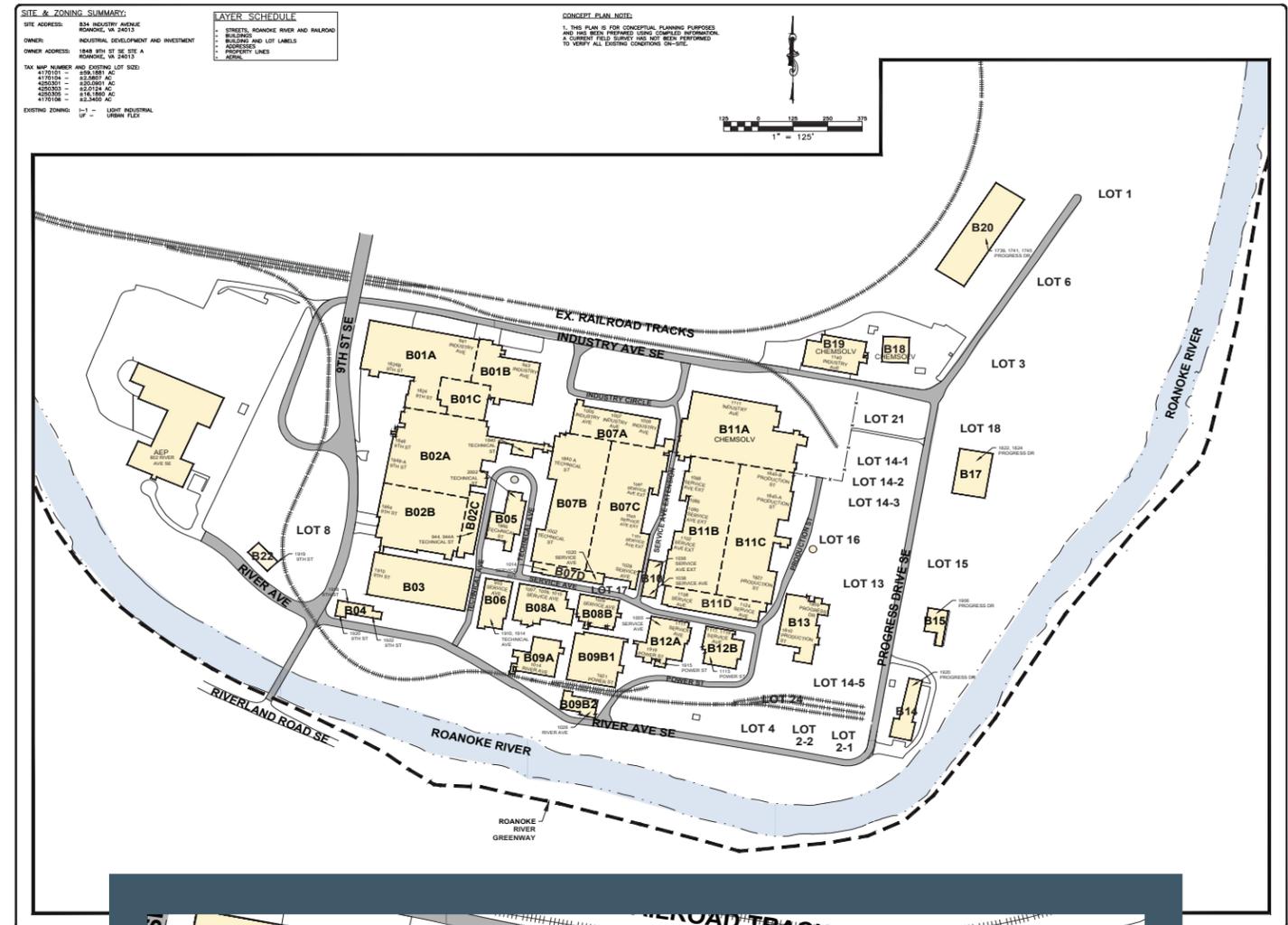
The redevelopment of Riverdale could end up being as significant to Roanoke’s economic health and urban life as the decades-long revitalization of downtown. The site is just over a mile from the city’s burgeoning Innovation Corridor, the area around the Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute that is filling up with lab space and office buildings.

For all of these reasons and more, the Riverdale site makes the most sense in terms of being the best place to focus on a potential Artspace project. On the site itself, there are a number of possible buildings that could be historically rehabilitated and preserved for the purpose of creating live/work residential and working studio units for artists and their families.

While in town, Artspace toured the entire campus. The Riverdale development team drew our attention to three opportunities noted on the Riverdale site map:

- Site 1: Riverdale Building 5: 17,000 SF
- Site 2: Riverdale Buildings 7A/B/C: 42,000 SF/105,000 SF/100,000 SF
- Site 3: Riverdale Building 13: 33,000 SF plus adjoining land

Either Riverdale Site 2 or 3 could make sense for an Artspace-style project with 50-75 units of artist family housing with ground floor creative uses. The Arts Market Study will further test the market to understand the demand for creative space on the Riverdale site.



FEATURES	RIVERDALE SITE
Location (Address):	Multiple addresses
Acquisition (cost and ease of acquiring):	Privately owned. Developer is interested in partners for specific areas of the 100-acre site.
Size (scaled to project concept?):	100+ acres. Potential Artspace sites are as follows: Site 1: Building 5: 17,000 SF Site 2: Buildings 7A/B/C: 42,000 SF/105,000 SF/100,000 SF Site 3: Building 13: 33,000 SF plus adjoining land
Accessibility (connection to audience and community):	While only one mile southeast from the Innovation Corridor, at this time the site feels rather remote. Once redevelopment begins, the site will be like a new city unto itself with strong connections to the growing Greenway, employment opportunities, and to the adjacent neighborhoods.
Parking capability:	To be determined but plenty of space to accommodate
Suitability of site for intended uses:	Many projects can happen on this site. The mixture of residential, commercial, and light industrial will be in the making for many years to come. Opportunity to create a new and vibrant community.
Condition of the building and land (roof, environmental, etc.):	An initial environmental review has been completed but each building will need its own assessment. Significant environmental cleanup has already occurred in its first 6 months of new ownership. The City is committed to supporting remediation efforts.
Zoning (for intended uses):	Will be rezoned as part of the master plan for the site.
Potential for Support (public and private):	Mixed-use live/work residential would amplify the presence of creatives in the City and add residential units in one of the City's priority areas. The presence of creatives will also attract other market rate residential and commercial businesses. The City supports a high level of density on this site.
Designated area of investment? (e.g. opportunity zones, redevelopment district)	TIF, Opportunity Zone

FEATURES	RIVERDALE SITE
Intangibles:	Potential to be a new creative district, providing space for people already in the neighborhood as well as others from the broader City. Also, an opportunity to create a critical mass of long-term affordability for Roanoke's creative sector. Riverdale was also unanimously the most named place among creatives when asked where they would like to see a live/work project happen.
Willingness of Seller	Owner is very focused on partnering and wants to amplify the continued presence of artists and creatives on site and in this neighborhood.
Summary: Excellent = 4 Good = 3 Fair = 2 Poor = 1	Excellent location and size. Opportunity for creative partnerships. Potential to develop into a creative district and improve the site's connectivity to the surrounding natural assets.

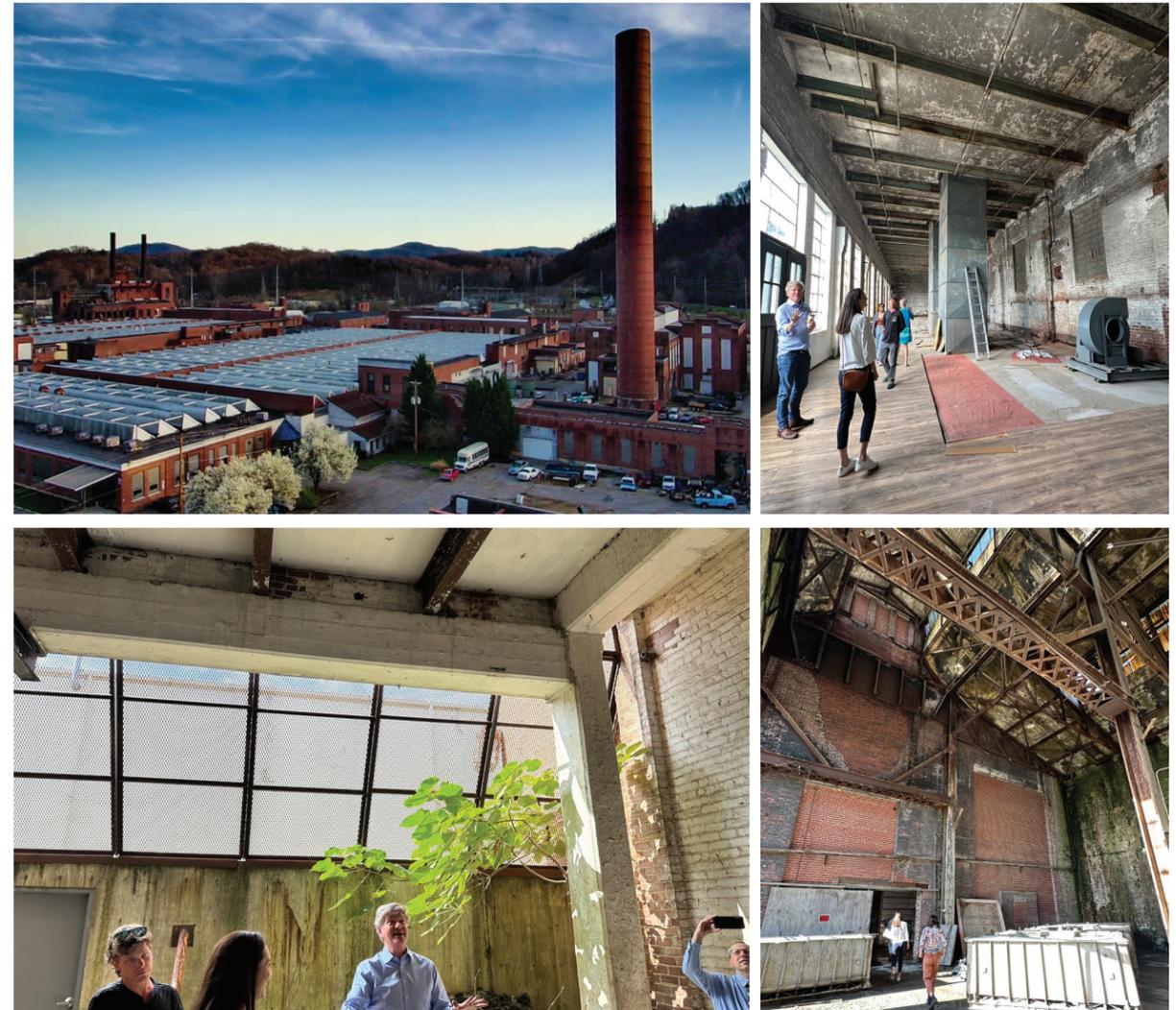


Photo Credits: Riverdale Southeast, LLC and Artspace

NOTES ON OTHER SITES TOURED

While not right for an Artspace-style live/work artist housing project at this time, there is potential for creative reuse on the other sites we toured:

Walker Foundry Property - 2415 Russell Avenue, SW

This former industrial site changed hands in 2019 when the Walker Foundry ceased operation. The 107,000 SF foundry is part of an 11.6 acre site along the banks of the Roanoke River in the Norwich neighborhood. Its redevelopment will be pivotal for the Southwest and Northwest neighborhoods of the City. While some of the industrial buildings could make great reuse as heavy and light industrial makerspaces and other kinds of creative space, the site will require a master plan in order to move forward. Among the factors that make this a challenging site is its current list price of \$3.2 million which is out of reach for an Artspace mixed-use affordable housing project at this time.

Former Melrose Fire Station - Melrose & 24th St - 514 24TH ST NW

This 1929 fire station is ~6,000 SF and part of the larger Melrose Plaza redevelopment plan, spearheaded by the Goodwill Industries of the Valleys in partnership with the City of Roanoke. This restorative initiative will reimagine the adjacent former Kmart into a grocery store, wellness/fitness center, and high school for adults, bringing new opportunity to one of the most disinvested areas of the City. The project will complement the existing Melrose Library which has become a natural community center. The fire station will be surrounded on three sides by potentially developable property in the future. For now, this smaller building and adjacent land is not ideal in terms of size for an Artspace project. It is clearly an exciting development and has potential for future phases to include private studios or makerspace for the creative sector. Artspace has also seen a number of historic fire stations successfully retrofitted into theater spaces and performance venues.

Williamson Road Site 1: 3926 Williamson Road NW

Located on one of the main commercial corridors of the City, this site contains a 10,724 SF 2-story auto dealership surrounded by 2.73 acres currently zoned for commercial/industrial uses. Though the site is large enough for an Artspace-style project, this location feels isolated. When we asked artists where they want to be, Williamson Road was not mentioned. This site could be redeveloped into a hub for the community, a space that is lacking in this neighborhood currently.

SITE SELECTION DISCLAIMER

Typically, Artspace identifies the actual site only 50% of the time during the feasibility study process. These findings are preliminary and based on currently available information. Much can and often does change between the writing of a Preliminary Feasibility Study and actual site selection, which takes place during predevelopment (see Appendix A, "Path of an Artspace Project"). That said, if the funding sources align for the Riverdale site, it is very likely to be the location for a future Artspace project.



IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

Roanoke is well positioned to pursue an affordable live/work mixed-use facility for artists and creatives. Locally, there are dozens of arts assets, city funding for the arts sector, eager students, strong arts leadership, and a need for affordable and stable artist housing. The energy and civic commitment to this concept was evidenced by the participation in the Artspace focus groups and public meeting on the Riverdale campus.

Use data and input to support creative spaces in the Riverdale Master Plan. The focus group input is a great starting point for the needs of creatives for the Riverdale Master Plan. The upcoming market survey data results that should be completed by April 2024 will further support what type of creative spaces should be on the campus.

Create a Pathway to Support Artists. Roanoke artists ranked the availability of creative sector services above average when compared to similarly sized communities surveyed by Artspace. The City's Arts and Culture Department and the Arts Commission deserve praise for their robust programs and grantmaking.

We heard artists still need support through media visibility, business development, and access to shared equipment. Artists also expressed concerns around the accessibility and affordability of resources like child care, electricity, and food.

Examples of types of service organizations that perform these functions include: [Springboard for the Arts](#) in St. Paul, MN and [Artist Trust](#) in Seattle, WA. Artspace has seen, firsthand, how the presence of a local service organization can strengthen the sector. Springboard for the Arts describes itself as an economic development organization and views its function as bringing artists and creatives forward as an economic engine of the cities where they are located.

Arts & Culture Department Technical Assistance. The leadership team plans to strategize around the broader capacity-building opportunities and ideas brought forth during this work. The Arts and Culture Department could evolve their services and resources to include the provision of technical assistance to creative businesses as well as individual artists.

Artspace recommends that the City and other relevant entities seek ways to provide real estate technical assistance and capital funding/financing for additional arts organizations to build the capacity for space projects of their own. Artspace runs such a program, called [Artspace Immersion](#), which takes a cohort-style approach to assisting arts and cultural organizations with space-related projects.

Nonprofits are often left out of loan assistance and small business development programs. The Riverdale campus will have many new space opportunities for the creative sector, and training creative entrepreneurs in basic business development skills that include how to successfully lease space will mutually benefit both parties.

Create a Bonafide Arts District on the Riverdale Campus. Model the future for artists and arts organizations in this new district. Develop and maintain multiple kinds of affordable space – housing and commercial spaces for the creative sector. Create a public art plan for the entire site and brand the campus as an Arts District with signage and wayfinding. Develop a specific capacity-building program for "Riverdale creatives" that responds to their needs and provides business development skills, and potentially funding opportunities.

A resource to garner ideas around the process of creating an arts district is the [Call Yourself Creative](#) toolkit, created by Colorado Creative Industries and The Creativity Lab of Colorado.

Fund these next steps through the creation of a Business Improvement District (BID). Such a district could be established by Southeast Roanoke property owners and funded through a special tax that benefits the entire district and gains value as property developments come online. The [RiNO Arts District BID](#) in Denver is mentioned earlier in this report and is a terrific example of an entity set up from the start to benefit the artists who helped define the district. In Virginia, the Core Group cited the BIDs in [Norfolk, VA](#) and in [Virginia Beach, VA](#) as examples of BIDs that have a focus beyond marketing. The BID in Norfolk includes permit fee reductions for eligible projects as well as tax exemptions for eligible businesses. There is also a [statewide Arts and Entertainment District](#) designation program that provides tax incentives for eligible initiatives.

V. NEXT STEPS TOWARDS AN ARTSPACE-STYLE PROJECT

The Core Group has already begun the next step in the Artspace process, the Arts Market Study. Based on the preliminary findings in this report, we believe that there is a market for 50+ live/work units in Roanoke in a mixed-use Artspace-style project. But our hunch alone is not enough to build confidence in this type of niche development.

The market study quantifies the need for affordable live/work housing and private and shared studio spaces and further reveals the types of shared creative spaces of greatest interest to local and regional artists. The collected data informs site selection, project amenities, and other design factors for an Artspace project as well as other developments containing creative spaces. It is also an advocacy tool for the arts sector that can be used to attract funding and inform civic priorities. Not least, it helps generate community-wide interest in a future project, creating an interest list and enabling Artspace to be visible to the area's artists and creatives that the project will eventually serve.

To advance this forward, the Core Group is well organized and has assembled a diverse group of community leaders to serve as an advisory committee for the Arts Market Study.

After completing the Arts Market Study, the next step towards an Artspace project would involve entering into a predevelopment agreement (see Appendix A: Path of an Artspace Project).

Artspace greatly appreciates this opportunity to work with Roanoke and learn from its inspiring community members and leaders. Artspace came away with a strong sense of the potential for an artist live/work mixed-use facility to be a successful venture and an asset to the community. Insights and recommendations in this report are solely intended to guide a project to the next phase of development and set Roanoke on the path to becoming home to a new mixed-use arts facility.

Arts Market Study: Using the Data to Influence Local Policy, Asheville, North Carolina

Artspace Consulting worked closely with the Center for Craft, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, City of Asheville, NC, and the Community Foundation of Western North Carolina to assess the feasibility of creating new affordable artist workforce housing and creative working spaces, and to quantify the need and preferences for those new artist spaces. A Preliminary Feasibility Study was conducted in 2016 and was followed by an Arts Market Study in 2018. The landmark survey, taken by 1,265 individuals and 170 organizations, documents the immediate need for affordable spaces for makers, designers, and performers in Asheville. The results have been instrumental in helping the community successfully advocate for and address the issue of rapidly rising rents and displacement through local real estate development efforts.

In response to the study findings the City of Asheville prioritized affordable space solutions for artists on a City-owned site in the gentrifying River Arts District. Following broad promotion of the AMS results to the local development community, several other plans for affordable, artist-centric mixed-use developments have been submitted to the City for development by private developers. The result will be the creation of more high-density, mixed-use space specifically geared towards the creative population.

You can read more about how the work Artspace Consulting conducted in partnership with community stakeholders continues to influence the discussion around space and the Center for Craft's work in Asheville in the article [here: "Artspace Survey Findings Ripple out into Asheville's Development Sector."](#)



PATH TO AN ARTSPACE PROJECT

Rome wasn't built in a day, and neither is an Artspace project. In fact, a typical Artspace live/work project takes from four to seven years to complete. Although no two projects are precisely alike, they all travel a similar path through the development process.

Here is a brief look at a typical Artspace live/work project as it proceeds from first inquiries through preliminary feasibility studies, an arts market survey, predevelopment, and development to completion and occupancy. Please note that this is not an exhaustive list of every activity that goes into an Artspace project, and that some actions may occur in a different order.

STEP 1: PRELIMINARY FEASIBILITY VISIT	
OVERVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Gathering and Outreach
PRIMARY ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meet with artists, local funders, businesses, civic leaders, and other stakeholders Conduct a public meeting to introduce Artspace and solicit community feedback Tour candidate buildings and/or sites Extend outreach as needed to ensure that people from underrepresented communities are included in the process
DELIVERABLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written report with recommendations for next steps
PREREQUISITES FOR MOVING FORWARD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrated support from local leadership Critical mass of artists and arts organizations with space needs Established base of financial support
TIME FRAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-5 months, kicked off by a 2-day visit
STATUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed

STEP 2: ARTS MARKET STUDY	
OVERVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessing the Market
PRIMARY ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three phases to the study: survey preparation, data collection, and analysis/reporting Quantify the overall demand for arts and creative spaces Identify the types of spaces, amenities and features that artists want/need Inform site selection, design, and programmatic decisions Maintain community involvement throughout the project Help build support and secure funding
DELIVERABLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Written recommendations and technical report of survey findings
PREREQUISITES FOR MOVING FORWARD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient number of responses from eligible, interested artists to support an Artspace live/work project
TIME FRAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underway - 6 months

STEP 3: PREDEVELOPMENT I	
OVERVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining Project Location and Size
PRIMARY ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with City and other stakeholders to establish (a) preliminary project scope and (b) space development program for evaluating building and site capacity • Analyze candidate buildings/sites with respect to cost, availability, and other factors impacting their ability to address development program goals • Review existing information about potential site(s) to identify key legal, environmental, physical, and financial issues affecting their suitability • Negotiate with property owners with goal of obtaining site control agreement • Continue outreach to artists and arts organizations • Connect with potential creative community partners and commercial tenants
DELIVERABLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation of development space program and goals • Assessment of site suitability and identification of any contingent conditions to be resolved through continued due diligence • Site control agreement or update regarding status of site control negotiations • Summary of project status
PREREQUISITES FOR MOVING FORWARD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site control agreement with property owner • Growing stakeholder/leadership group • Both parties' agreement on project scope and feasibility
TIME FRAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3-6 months
FEE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$350,000

STEP 4: PREDEVELOPMENT II	
OVERVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Design and Financial Modeling
PRIMARY ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish process for selecting architectural team • Confirm development goals and space program with architectural team • Engage architect to create conceptual plans and schematic designs • Engage contractor or cost consultant to provide pre-construction services • Resolve any contingent conditions relating to site control • Create capital and operating budgets • Obtain proposals and/or letters of interest from lender and equity investor financing partners • Prepare and submit Low Income Housing Tax Credit application • Submit other financing applications as applicable • Maintain excitement for the project within the creative community • Encourage and guide local artists to activate the site with arts activities
DELIVERABLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schematic designs • Financial pro-forma detailing capital and operating budgets • Preliminary proposals and letters of interest for project mortgage and equity financing • Summary of project status
PREREQUISITES FOR MOVING FORWARD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Award of Low Income Housing Tax Credits (first or second application) or commitment of alternative funding
TIME FRAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 months+
FEE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$350,000

STEP 5: PREDEVELOPMENT III

OVERVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Tax Credits to Financial Closing
PRIMARY ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure final gap funding commitments • Raise funds for equity, including private sector philanthropic dollars • Complete construction documents and submit permit applications • Negotiate construction and permanent loan commitments • Negotiate limited partner equity investment commitments • Advance project to construction closing • Communicate the progress of the project to the creative community to keep up the involvement and excitement
DELIVERABLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful closing and commencement of construction
TIME FRAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4-6 months
FEE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$300,000+

STEP 6: CONSTRUCTION

OVERVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction and Lease-up
PRIMARY ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee project construction • Engage property management company • Identify commercial tenants and sign lease agreements • Reach out to potential artist tenants, providing education on the application process • Conduct residential tenant selection process
DELIVERABLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed project ready for occupancy
TIME FRAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6-10 months



"Accentuated Forms in Space" by Artist Dorothy Gillespie // Photo Credit: Artspace

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC MEETING ATTENDEES

We would like to thank the many community members who came out to hear about the potential for affordable artist spaces during our visit.

PUBLIC MEETING

Christina Gregory	Dustin Eshelman	Julia Hendrix	Megan Scott Scripps
A.D. Herzel	Ed Walker	Kate Greenway	Meighan Sharp
Amanda Mcgee	Erin Masarjian	Katharine Gray	Meridith Entingh
Amia Balthazar	Frank Giannini	Katherine Devine	Michelle McDowell Smith
Amy McGinnis	Garland Gravely	Kathryn Schnabel	Mim Young
Angela Penn	Greg Brock	Kathy Smith	Mishella White
Annie Schultz	Gretch Coleman	Katie Trozzo	Misty Dawn Vickers
Antonio Stovall	Gretchen Coleman	Katrina Legans	Molly Kernan
Barry Wright	Hana Marie	Kelly Melissa Prim	Moriah McCowan
Ben Bazak	Hannah Cox	Kelly Prim	Nick Guacheta
Betty Branch	Hans Moore	Kemper Mills Fant	Nick Montgomery
Bill McGrath	Harvey Murdoch	Kera Moore	Olive Ahn
Brenna Cutter	Ina Dixon	Kianna Davis	Parker Kapral
Brian Counihan	Ingrid Chase	Kiesha Preston	Patricia Kapral
Bruce Bryan	Jahni Quen	Larry Reid	Paulina Świetliczko
Carrie McConnell	Jaina Lanum	Laura Carini	Pedro Szalay
Casey Murano	Jane Gabrielle	Laura Vahlberg	Pete Eshelman
Christina Gregory	Jasmine Beane	Laurel Bryan	Polly Branch
Chyna Buchanan	Jason Jones	Lew Singer	Rachel Anne Morris
Courtney Powell	Jennifer Fowler	Linda Burnham	Ralph Eaton
Daniel Darquea	Jeremy Holmes	Lindsey Hull	Rebecca Jarvis
Danielle Murray	JJ Brant	Maggie Perrin-Key	Richard Andrews
Dave Wertz	Jo Bertier	MargaretSue Turner Wright	Richie Cannaday
Dehanza Kwong	Joe Cobb	Mark Davis	Rick Sheridan
Devin Cutter	John Cornthwait	Matt Hayslett	Robyn Mitchell
Donna Davis	John Hull	Maureen McGonagle	Roger King
Dotsy Clifton	John Woodrum	Mckenzi Vail	Rosemary St. Jacques
Douglas Jackson	Jon Murrill		Ryan LaFountain

PUBLIC MEETING

Sallie Cappellari	Susanne Sellars	Trish White-Boyd
Samantha Meyer	Suzanne Bazak	Tynesha Hawkins
Samantha Newell	Suzun Hughes	Veronica Jackson
Scott P. Yates	Syreeta Combs-Cannaday	Veronica Jackson
Scott Tate	Tahitia Woods	Victoria Van Tassel-McGrath
Sharon Burnham	Tamarah Jackson	Virginia Carol
Skye Hartwell	Tara Marciniak	Virginia Carol Andrews
Sookie	Tayshawn Rouse	Walt Schnabel
Steven Taul	Thomas Ceddia	Whitney Brock
Sunni Purviance	Toby Smith	Will Powell
Susan Culbertson	Tonie Barde	Yolanda Franklin
Susan Egbert	Trinity Hughes	Zuheil Alvarez Cortés



(From Left to Right) Mural of James Tarpley (known as the Angel of Grandin Village) by Artist Toobz Muir, Chris's Coffee, and "Bird" by Artist Susan Egbert at Left of Center Art Space // Photo Credit: Artspace