

At the “**Planning for the Arts: My Story Makes a Difference**” story circle held at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Roanoke on Tuesday, June 10th, 2025, participants got a chance to share their experiences based on the five major values of the new Arts and Cultural plan: Bring people together, Make space for everyone, Imagine what’s possible, Celebrate along the way, and Nurture what’s next. There were multiple ideas that emerged from the crosstalk conversations that followed.

1. We must embrace and acknowledge the importance of authenticity in every space we enter. Artists should feel welcomed and free to be themselves no matter their age, artistic style/medium, years of experience, level of education/professional training, or duration of residence in Roanoke.
2. We should provide more mentorship and promotional opportunities for young and new artists to help uplift their voices and give them a better sense of belonging.
3. We should find more ways to collaborate across art forms/genres and host more interdisciplinary events to unify artists across the city.
4. We should encourage intergenerational art where different ages come together to create something beautiful.
5. We should create more virtual spaces for artists to gather/learn to make community engagement more accessible.
6. We should make art exhibitions more interactive for audiences so they feel more like active participants.
7. We should aim to do additional outreach for art events with more advanced notice to accommodate busy schedules.
8. We should make space for art appreciators because they play an important role in keeping the arts alive too.
9. We must define success for ourselves and recognize that we can reach excellence through collaboration— one doesn’t have to be sacrificed for the other.

10. We hope to find where technology and art intersect and fuse them together for more interesting projects.

11. We aspire to create more opportunities for people to partake in art-making together.

12. We must let go of perfectionism and value the process more than the product— growth and joy come from the journey.

13. We must acknowledge that every neighborhood in Roanoke is unique and not every strategy will work—a personalized plan for each one will help us reach our goals.

Overall, we strive to appreciate one another's stories, ideas, and contributions and get everyone involved in the fun!