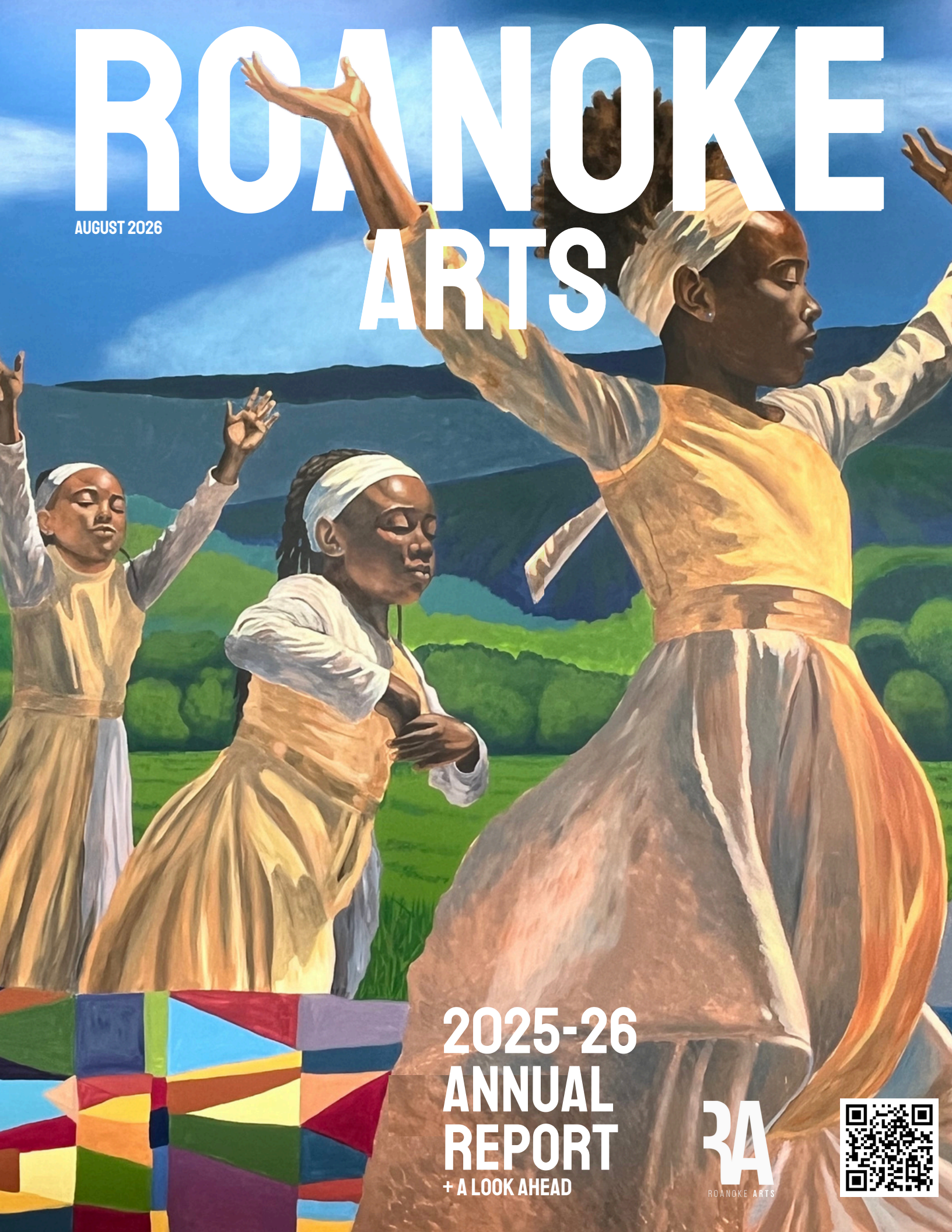


ROANOKE ARTS

AUGUST 2026



2025-26
ANNUAL
REPORT
+ A LOOK AHEAD



ROANOKE ARTS

2025-2026

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Vice Chair **Donna Davis**
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Placemaking Chair **Ben Bazak**
Planning Chair **John Cornthwait, Jr.**
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Funding Chair **Catherine Koebel Stromberg**
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Assistant City Manager **Angie O’Brien**
Assistant City Manager **Sam Roman / Lavar Youmans**
Economic Development Director **Marc Nelson**

Arts & Culture Coordinator **Douglas Jackson**

IN MEMORIAM

We lost two important leaders in the arts community this year. Charlene Graves and Betsy Whitney both worked through the Roanoke Arts Commission and a variety of other civic and cultural organizations to make Roanoke a caring and beautiful community. We miss you both greatly.

CHARLENE VALCURTIA GRAVES

AUGUST 9, 1948 - SEPTEMBER 8, 2025



BETSY CLAIBORNE ROBINSON WHITNEY

AUGUST 11, 1960 - MAY 5, 2026





A NOTE FROM THE CHAIR

Wrapping up the fiscal year is bittersweet for me, as I've completed the maximum allowable terms of service on the Commission, and it's time to rotate off. It's been more than a decade of camaraderie, vision, and creativity.

We like to say that serving on the Roanoke Arts Commission is the most fun you can have serving on a public body, but it's also a meaningful and fulfilling experience. The arts are integral to our lives and critical to our experience as a community in Roanoke. Through the Commission, we each do our own small part to champion the arts and increase their impact through wise public investment.

We're currently in a planning process to consider what the next decade of arts investment looks like. The last decade seems to have passed quickly, but the community has accomplished a great deal,

and it's important to reflect as we look forward. Accomplishments I'm most proud of during my tenure on the Roanoke Arts Commission include:

1. **neighborhood investments** through artists in residence, the Arts Connect Neighbors Catalog and more;
2. **strong funding** through the City and partners, though now with federal changes, this is a priority area with new need; and
3. increasing our **sense of belonging** through the arts in our approach to placemaking and project development.

The process is more important than the product. The values determining how we go about our work shape our community far longer, with greater impact, than any mural, sculpture, or individual performance. Through our work we create a community in which we can all contribute.



I hope as we look back on this work that we see all that we created and invested in, and moreover, I hope that we *feel* what it means to do this together, building our community in the process. And I thank the many individuals, organizations, and partners creating our Roanoke alongside us.

Sincerely,

William Penn

William Penn
Chair

RAC AT A GLANCE

1983

Roanoke Arts Commission created by City Council

Percent-For-Art Program
established by City Council

2002

2006

Part-time staff position created

Art for Everyone
Public Art Plan Approved

2007

2008

First *Art in Roanoke* temporary
sculpture exhibition

Conservator hired with
National Endowment for the
Arts (NEA) grant for collection
care recommendations

2011

2011

City's first
Arts and Cultural Plan
adopted

Parks and Arts funded with
NEA support

2012

2019

75% of the 2011 Arts
& Cultural Plan accomplished

Management of more than \$1.5
million in pandemic relief funding
for arts & culture organizations

2020

2022

The Year of the Artist
begins an emergent arts and cultural
planning process, encouraging
community arts practices among
artists. Five NEA grants supported this
ongoing work from 2021 to 2025.

It's Here Roanoke strategy
collectively developed by the arts
and cultural sector, *Arts Connect*
Neighbors launched

2024

2025

Formal arts and cultural planning
process begins

Arts Connect Neighbors contributes
to the City of Roanoke's 9th
All-America City Award

2026



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The community benefited from access to programming from nonprofit arts organizations through \$300,000 in City investment.

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The Daisy Art Parade returns with a new site and a lot of joy.

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A new online archive sets the stage for important storytelling.

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Thirty artists explore our natural setting and their own contemplative practices in a Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building exhibit.

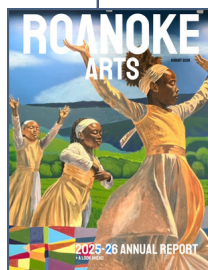
ON THE COVER

S. Ross Browne

A Tapestry of Shared Allegory, 2026

Detail from the Eureka Park Recreation Center Mural

Artist in Residence Robyn Mitchell shepherded the mural project alongside Parks and Recreation's Katie Slusher.



6 IT'S HERE ROANOKE COLLECTIVE ARTS MARKETING



11 ARTS CONNECT NEIGHBORS

More than 6,000 participants have enjoyed Roanoke neighborhood activities through the catalog, and we're still going strong!



16 MURALS: AN INVITATION TO ART

Residents have fallen in love with murals. Art on the streets and in other public spaces can help us see our place anew.

IT'S HERE SPREADING THE WORD

Outreach is a fundamental aspect of the Arts Commission's work. You'll see us communicate in many ways, from social media and email blasts to one-on-one conversations in the corner of the room. Overall, we're spreading the word of all that Roanoke has to offer and the specific strategies that benefit us all.

NEWSLETTER

Art Mouse and Hoppy are still at it. Chief Communicator and Artist in Residence Cory Greer offered an original scene at the top of each Monday morning newsletter. At right, the pair celebrate Mill Mountain Theatre's recent production of *9 to 5*.

Join more than 2,000 subscribers by signing up at www.roanokearts.org/contact.



IT'S HERE ROANOKE & PLAN 26 EVENTS & PRESENTATIONS

We're out there connecting at events and giving presentations, and it's not just the Roanoke Arts Commission, but artists and partners from across the arts and cultural sector. We're all ambassadors in the work of the arts in the community.

Much of the outreach this year has centered around two projects: Arts Connect Neighbors and Our Plan 26 arts and cultural planning process.

Here are some of the events we've participated in and organizations we've presented to:

- Monthly Arts Leadership Roundtables
- GO Fest
- Daisy Art Parade
- Roanoke Arts Pop
- Juneteenth Family Reunion
- Roanoke Valley Rotary
- Virginia Tech Arts Leadership Graduate Program
- Buzz4Good
- Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine
- Roanoke City Public Schools
- Roanoke Main Street Mosaic
- Virginia Parks and Recreation Society
- Virginia Governor's Housing Conference
- National League of Cities



RAC COMMITTEES

Four standing committees advance core components of the City's *Arts and Cultural Plan*. Participation in these hard-working teams is open to city residents without appointment to the Arts Commission, with the exception of the funding committee, which requires City appointment or approval.

The **Collections Committee** advises the Commission on temporary exhibitions and the permanent work in the public art collection. It emphasizes the work of regional artists and oversees all aspects of acquisition and maintenance.

2026 Chair: Demetrius Johnson



The **Funding Committee** reviews applications from nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and recommends investments in programming for our community. They participate in grantee monitoring and program development.

2026 Chair: Catherine Koebel Stromberg



The **Placemaking Committee** advances our community and its places through community-driven and artist-led projects that amplify the voices and creative energy of Roanoke residents, neighborhoods, and partners.

2026 Chair: Ben Bazak.



The **Planning and Advocacy Committee** is overseeing Plan 26. In late 2026 the committee will roll out a plan for the coming 5-10 years. Then they'll work to advocate for investments toward implementation and track progress toward its goals.

2026 Chair: John Cornthwait

CREATING EVERY DAY THE PLACE WE WANT TO BE

Our community team reaches far beyond the 15 members of our Council-appointed commission, four committees and selection panels. Artists and organizational partners, neighborhood leaders and residents, volunteers and professionals, and a whole lot of papier-mâché critters all help advance our community through our arts assets.



"I GET TO BE WITH WONDERFUL PEOPLE DOING WONDERFUL THINGS. I'M PROUD OF THE WORK IN OUR NEIGHBORHOODS."

BEN BAZAK, PLACEMAKING CHAIR





"I REALLY ENJOY MEETING AND SUPPORTING OUR LOCAL ARTISTS, ESPECIALLY OUR HIGH SCHOOL ARTISTS."
JOHN HITCHINS
TREASURER

"I'M SO GRATEFUL FOR THE LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT FROM THE COMMISSION. IF ANYONE EVER NEEDS HELP WITH ANYTHING, THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF VOLUNTEERS WILLING TO ROLL UP THEIR SLEEVES AND PITCH IN."
JOHN CORNTHWAIT
PLANNING AND ADVOCACY CHAIR



A GRAND RIDE WITH JOE LEE

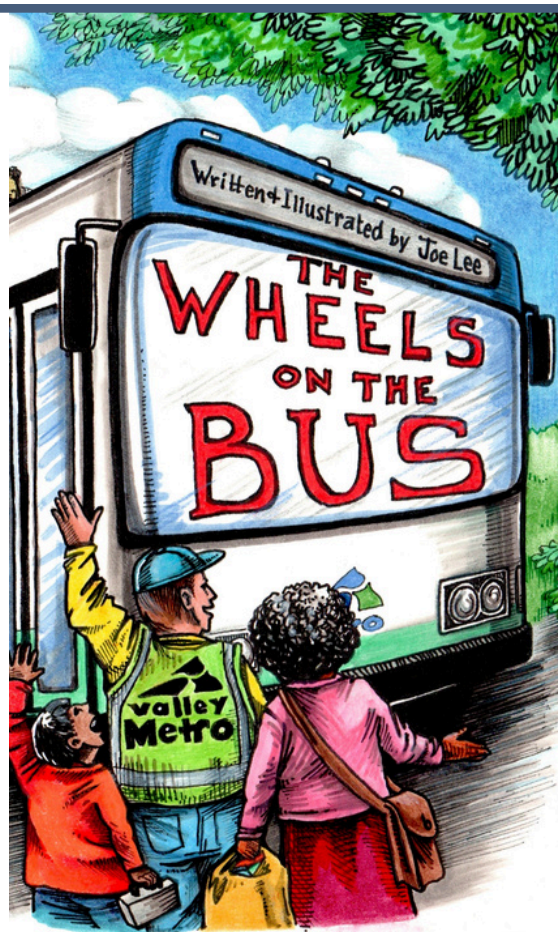
In the eighth volume of the *Writer by Bus* chapbook, Joe Lee weaves together poetry, history, art appreciation, and a love for Roanoke in a graphic form.

Through the annual partnership with Ride Solutions, Valley Metro, the Roanoke Arts Commission, and the Bus Riders of Roanoke Advocacy Group (BRRAG), Lee, a professional clown, writer, and illustrator, rode the city's transit routes as part of his creative process. After two months of riding and writing, he delivered *Wheels on the Bus*.

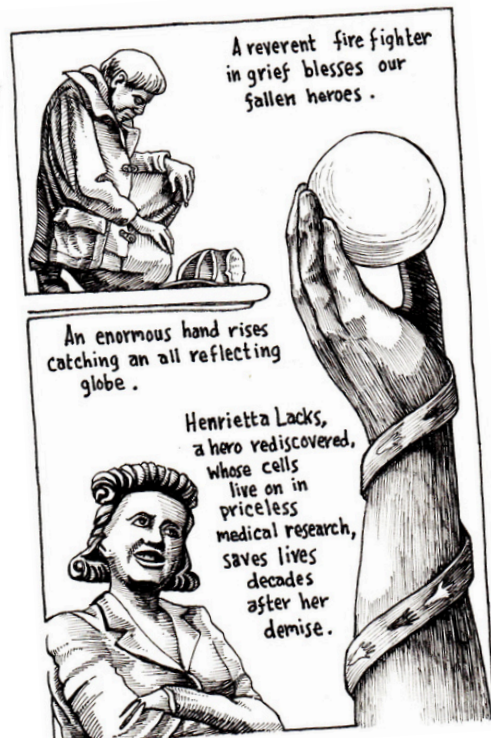
The work was celebrated at a launch event in September 2025 at Third Street Station. Over the next 8 months, the chapbook helped to promote ridership and our community at festivals and library events.

Download a PDF of this work and the other seven chapbooks from the *Art by Bus* project and start preparing your application to be next year's *Writer by Bus*!

Learn more at
www.roanokearts.org/bus



"We chat as we wait for the bus. I'm going to the center of town, and she is on her way to make a connection into the valley."



Being Neighborly

The arts are a tool for Roanoke's neighborhood leaders.



In its third year of bringing together neighbors around the arts, the *Arts Connect Neighbors* catalog remains a signature program of the Roanoke Arts Commission and its partners. Between July 1, 2025, and June 30, 2026, Arts Connect Neighbors sponsored 92 arts activities, paying local artists \$31,525, and engaging more than 3,000 participants. Since the program began in 2024, an estimated 6,000 residents in more than two dozen neighborhoods across the city have connected with their neighbors through the arts. Special thanks to this year's team of catalog facilitators: Joy Truskowski, Karina Martinez, and Ash Earick.

But this is only one part of the neighborhood strategy.

- Artists in residence have worked with all ages to engage neighbors in the Daisy Art Parade.
- The emerging neighborhood strategy has evolved into the Main Street Mosaic effort across five neighborhoods with arts events and placemaking tools helping to build energy around fledgling community development organizations.
- Neighborhood leaders have driven traffic calming art projects, block parties, performances, mural painting, and other artmaking events that feel good and make a difference.



**ARTS
CONNECT**

This year, the City's successful All-America City application included Arts Connect Neighbors. Congratulations to the citywide effort that resulted in a record 9th award.



NEIGHBORHOODS AND PARTNERS TO DATE

- American Red Cross
- Apple Ridge Farm
- Belmont / Southeast
- Bethlehem Bible College
- Bluestone Park
- Bus Riders of Roanoke Advocacy Group (BRAAG)
- Chainges, Inc.
- Community Arts Reach
- Compost Fest
- Elevate 11th Street
- Fairington Apartments
- Fairview Elementary
- FEDUP
- Friends of Washington Park
- Gainsboro Neighborhood
- Gainsboro Branch Library
- Grandin Court Neighborhood Association
- Greater Deyerle
- The Hope Center
- Humble Hustle
- I Heart SE
- Indian Rock Village
- Latinas Network
- LEAP
- Lick Run Community Farm
- Lucy Addison Middle School
- Main Branch Library
- Melrose Branch Library
- Melrose Plaza
- Melrose-Rugby Neighborhood Forum
- Melrose Towers
- Mountain View
- Noble Neighborhood Watch
- Norwich
- Northwest Roanoke Partners
- Roanoke Redevelopment and Housing Authority
- Old Lick Cemetery
- Old Southwest, Inc.
- Old Mountain Road Neighborhood Watch
- Perry Park
- Price Memorial AME Zion Church
- Grandin Place / Raleigh Court
- Raleigh Court Branch Library
- Raleigh Court Neighborhood Association
- Riverdale / Southeast
- Roanoke Foodshed Network
- Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates
- Rosalind Hills Baptist Church / Raleigh Court
- Screaming Vegan
- Second Helpings - Roanoke Rescue Mission
- Shenandoah West Neighborhood
- South Roanoke
- Summit Hills Neighborhood Group
- Villa Heights
- The Villages at Lincoln Terrace
- Wasena Neighborhood Forum
- West End / Hurt Park
- Wildwood
- Williamson Road

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

There's nothing the Arts Commission does alone. For *Arts Connect Neighbors*, two lead partner organizations stepped up to help lead the way in this important neighborhood building strategy because they saw it as a path to a stronger community and a stronger arts sector.



ROANOKE CULTURAL ENDOWMENT

As part of the 2011 *Arts and Cultural Plan*, the community identified the need to provide ongoing, sustainable support for Roanoke's arts and culture organizations as a critical element of our community's prosperity and quality of life. They are well on their way toward building a \$20 million endowment to support our arts and cultural community.



ROANOKE NEIGHBORHOOD ADVOCATES

With the support of the City of Roanoke's Office of Neighborhood Services, Roanoke Neighborhood Advocates (RNA) supports neighborhood-based organizations in establishing, developing, and expanding their capacities in the promotion of Roanoke neighborhoods.

WHAT WE HEARD THIS YEAR

Arts Connect Neighbors

"The activities encouraged youth to reflect on who they are, what they value, and how they want to be seen by others."

"Lots of people seemed to be connecting with friends and friends of friends."

"The activity demonstrated that community-building is not only about activating a space but also about cultivating a shared purpose."

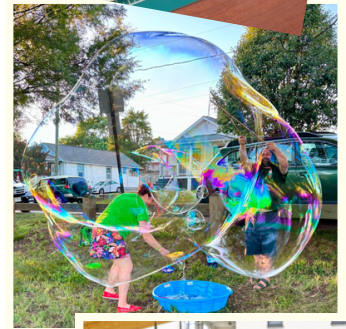
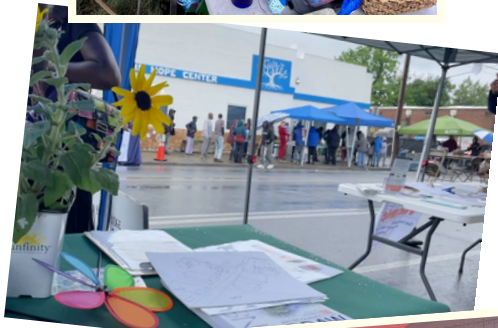
"We are planning to do quarterly gatherings to clean up our Main Street, which will maintain engagement and momentum."

"I had a blast! The event was truly amazing, filled with joyful moments and an incredible, uplifting energy. Through this workshop, I realized how the simple act of creating something by hand can amplify an already vibrant atmosphere, adding even more meaning to what the event represented."

"I was impressed with the talent, energy, knowledge, and interaction. The audience was engaged and appreciative to see culture represented."

"So many relationships amongst businesses, neighbors, and resources were made (or deepened) as a result of this event."

"Beyond the finished pieces, the most meaningful outcome was seeing the children practice patience, problem-solving, and self-expression in a supportive and playful environment."





ARTS & CULTURE FUNDING

ARTS PROGRAMMING ATTRACTS VISITORS, BOOSTS AN ECONOMIC SECTOR, AND BRINGS US TOGETHER

**\$300,000
GRANTED TO LOCAL
ARTS & CULTURAL NONPROFITS**

Funding for arts and cultural programming is an important investment in the region's economy. In addition to creating jobs and tax revenue, these organizations are key in building the quality of life that attracts talented residents, new visitors, and capital investment.

Volunteers appointed by City Council to the Roanoke Arts Commission oversee annual funding for programs by local arts and cultural organizations. Every year, members closely review the plans and operations of applicant organizations for programs worthy of public investment.

The funded projects provide our community with opportunities for education, enlightenment, world class exhibitions, festivals, and performances that Roanokers don't have to leave town for.

Throughout the year, each organization submits quarterly reports and has a monitoring visit from staff and members of the funding committee.

Pictured above (left to right)

The Harrison Museum of African American Culture moved to its new home at Melrose Plaza, and opened the Healing Hands exhibition.

The Spot on Kirk highlights local talent and partners by bringing together a broad swath of the community for special events and performances. Congratulations to organization on its 10th anniversary this year.

The Taubman Museum of Art celebrates 75 years this year. In the 2026 fiscal year, an arts and cultural grant supported Making American Artists, an exhibition from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Art.

The 2025-26 Funding Committee

- Catherine Koebel Stromberg, Chair
 - Ben Bazak
 - Becky Carr
 - Maryjean Levin
 - Amaya Matthews
 - William Penn
 - Shaleen Powell
- Roanoke Cultural Endowment, *Ex Officio*



Pictured above (left to right)

Roanoke Ballet Theatre dancer reads to young people at the Belmont Branch of Roanoke Public Libraries. Arts and Cultural Programming funding supported activities surrounding the performances of *Sleeping Beauty*.

Jefferson Center hosted the Nicole Zuraitis Quartet (above, center). Stan Hale of the *Roanoke Tribune* wrote: "[Y]ou just had to be there to understand what happened on that magical night Thursday, March 5 at Jeff Center's Jazz Club. (Photo by Stan Hale)

Mill Mountain Theatre presents free performances for youth throughout the summer thanks in part to support from arts and cultural funding from the City of Roanoke. Seen here are cast members of *The Rainbow Fish: The Musical* on the Roanoke City Market.



Local Colors brings us together to celebrate our cultures. Here, a traditional dance of Mexico is performed by Dream Dance Studio at the Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration in Downtown Roanoke.

PROGRAMMING FUNDED IN 2025-26

Alma Ensemble Alma del Core

Artemis Journal 2026 Journal

Blue Ridge Literacy Arts & Culture Curriculum

Blue Ridge PBS Artistic Encounters

Community Arts Reach After School Art Series

Eleanor D. Wilson Museum Summer/Fall Exhibitions

Grandin Theatre Film Lab & Visual Literacy Program

Harrison Museum Of African American Culture

The Harlem Renaissance of Henry Street

Historical Society Of Western Virginia a

Roanoke History Trunks in Schools

Humble Hustle Creativity Space

Jefferson Center Family/Star City Programming

Local Colors Cultural Events

Mill Mountain Theatre Young Audiences Reading Series

Opera Roanoke Hansel and Gretel

Roanoke Arts Commission Arts Connect Neighbors

Roanoke Ballet Theatre *Sleeping Beauty*

Roanoke Festival In The Park

Roanoke Symphony Orchestra

Symphony Under the Stars

Roanoke Valley Children's Choir Tuition Scholarship

Science Museum Of Western VA STEAM Program

Southwest Virginia Ballet Collaborative Performances

The Spot On Kirk Local Talent Spotlight

Taubman Museum Of Art American Artists Exhibit

Virginia Museum Of Transportation Education Programs

1



BRINGING IT TO THE STREETS AND OTHER PUBLIC PLACES

Murals have brought new appreciation for public art in Roanoke. Neighborhood leaders and artists are identifying long-overlooked canvases in their front yards. Stewards of public infrastructure see value in using art to get out of the tag-and-cover graffiti cycle. Revitalization specialists also understand the value in murals as part of visible signs of community care worthy of attracting additional investment.

The Roanoke Arts Commission (RAC) has used small public investments to strategically invest in neighborhoods, leverage private dollars, and highlight key community assets.

In 2022, the RAC's Placemaking Committee developed Art in Place, a flexible and responsive tool to invest in murals and other public facing art on both public infrastructure and private property. After piloting the program to better understand its potential and develop some best practices, the Commission used the Resident Artist program to hire muralists-in-residence Jon Murrill and Katrina Legans to help speed up the process. And it's worked. This year, Murrill continued supporting the Placemaking Committee in its mural efforts.

While we may not always be in the mural business, the community has grabbed hold of the increased vibrancy, and the accessible art is a community point of pride.

ART IN PLACE FUNDING SUPPORT

COMPLETED MURALS

- Barrows on Roanoke River Greenway
- City Market Building neon signs
- Campbell Ave & 4th Street, SW
- The Collective, 11th & Moorman Ave, NW
- River's Edge Park and South Jefferson Street. Wall
- SE LOVE Sign, 13th St., SE
- 9th Street Bridge & Roanoke River Greenway, SE
- 13th Street Bridge & Roanoke River Greenway, SE
- Arches, Memorial Bridge & Roanoke River Greenway
- Dorothy Gillespie Mural Rehabilitation, 2nd St., SW
- Gainsboro YMCA, Orange Ave., NW
- Lab Sports on 9th St., SE
- Hunton Lifesaving Crew, Moorman Ave., NW
- Walnut Bridge & Roanoke River Greenway, SE
- 10th Street NW & Lick Run Greenway, NW
- West End Center, Patterson Ave., SW
- Alcova Building at Church and Market streets, SE
- Washington Park, Gainsboro, NW
- Pearl Fu Plaza, Downtown
- Eureka Park Recreation Center
- Brandon and Lynn
- Moorman Avenue

MURALS! continued

Each mural advances different goals ranging from helping develop artists to boosting community pride and celebrating of youth and community serving organizations. Similarly, each has its own funding structure ranging from a three-way partnership between property owner, business district and the City, to leveraged private fundraising as in the case of the regional greenway art and amenities fund.

The 2025-26 Placemaking Committee

- Ben Bazak, Chair
- John Black
- Becky Carr
- Mandy Cribb
- Donna Davis
- Molly Hunter
- Amya Matthews
- Cindy McFall
- Robyn Mitchell
- Jon Murrill
- William Penn

MURALS COMPLETED IN FY 2026

1. Pearl Fu Plaza, *Bloom Bright* by Wing Chow
2. Washington Park Pool House Mural by Brandon Underwood and Katrina Legans
3. Brandon Avenue *Roanoke* Mural by Nathan Brown
4. Six "Focused Driving: Safe Arriving" signal boxes in partnership with the Department of Transportation. Artists: Cory Greer, Robyn Mitchell, Meisha Robinson (pictured), James Patterson, Renee Spaar, and Kris Von Tornado)
5. Williamson Road Bridge at Salem, *Intersecting Terrains* by Mokha Laget (Wall licensed and mural funded by the Taubman Museum of Art)
6. Elm Avenue, SE, Retaining Wall Mural by Molly Kernan with I HEART SE (funded by I HEART SE and a City of Roanoke neighborhood grant)
1. Eureka Park Recreation Center, *A Tapestry of Shared Allegory* by Ross Browne



Explore Roanoke's murals
on our online collection
www.roanokearts.org/murals



THE DAISY ART PARADE CELEBRATES COMMUNITY



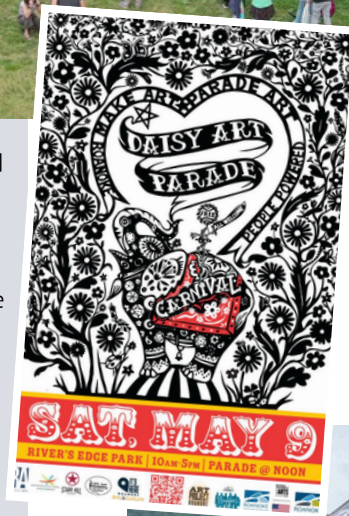
In its fourth year, the Daisy Art Parade gathered more than 400 marchers in 40 krewes, celebrating the creative spirit and community.

The event was held in River's Edge Park, and the organizers added a carnival atmosphere with a stage and bands to encourage paraders to stick around.

This year, Artist in Residence Brian Counihan built a relationship with the nonprofit community art space Art Project Roanoke. With additional organizational support the future looks bright.

The 2025 parade was the last year for the NEA grant support for the activity. The Arts Commission partially funded the 2026 parade through the Percent for Art program, and in FY 2027, Art Project Roanoke will have an arts and culture programming grant from the Roanoke Arts Commission to continue the parade and its neighborhood activation strategy.

Each year, an award is given to a krewe that demonstrates the spirit of the event. It was handmade again this year by potter and Arts Commissioner Becky Carr (seen at right). The parade organizers have named the award "The Becky and Tom Carr Prize," for the couple, who contribute so much to Roanoke's efforts toward neighborhood vibrancy, walkability, and creativity. Thanks, Becky and Tom!



EVERYTHING ABOUT BEING A MEMBER
OF THE RAC MAKES ME PROUD.
UNTIL I JOINED THE RAC, I HAD NO
IDEA WHAT IT MEANT TO BE A
MEMBER OF AN ART COMMUNITY.

BECKY CARR



DAISY
ART PARADE

40 KREWES CREATE ART & BUILD COMMUNITY

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE BRIAN COUNIHAN AND A TEAM OF
ART PROJECT ROANOKE VOLUNTEERS BRING US TOGETHER
IN CELEBRATION OF, WELL, EACH OTHER



DAVID A. RAMEY COLLECTION

City of Roanoke Public Library undertakes archival legacy building

David A. Ramey's artwork includes illustrations of Henry Street as remembered before the devastation of urban renewal.

The Collections Committee is working with the City of Roanoke Public Libraries and David A. Ramey, Jr. to create an online archive of the his father's work.

The subject of a large exhibition at the Taubman Museum of Art and the Harrison Museum of African American Culture in 2024, the body of work is now in care of the City of Roanoke for an ongoing digital archiving project. The Gainsboro Library staff, including interns led by Branch Manager Megan Mizak, has worked hard to scan and catalog work. The archive will be used to track work as it is sold or loaned.

Images from Mr. Ramey's work are included in a mural wall at the Ramey Lot across from the Higher Education Center. Work is on loan as well at the Gainsboro Library, where visitors can see seven pieces, including *Winter Wonderland*, a snowy scene of children playing in front of the library. Additionally, the Collections Committee has chosen seven additional works to display in the City Manager's suite through June 2027.

At right are images of the Hollins University Interns who worked on the Youth Poet Laureate strategy and the Ramey Collection digitization presenting their work to City Council.



Untitled (Henry Street), 1994, Drawing related to "Henry Street" Story in Gainsboro Road and Beyond (Unpublished C), p. 27. Ink and colored pencil on paper, Collection of David Ramey, Jr. © All rights reserved



Hollins University interns, above at center: Evelyn Keefer, Elizabeth Barker, Juliana Guggino, Anna Woods, and Sanaa Belton.

The Roanoke Arts Commission expresses gratitude to David A. Ramey, Jr. for his care and leadership in building his father's legacy.

Visit the online archive at www.virginiaroom.org/digital

Find images and locations of the David A. Ramey Mural Wall at www.roanokearts.org/ramey

ARTISTS AT WORK

ALONGSIDE CITY STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS, ARTISTS HELP LEAD THE WAY



This year, artists advanced Arts Connect Neighbors, the Daisy Art Parade, the Art in Place Mural Strategy, and Percent-for-Art-funded placemaking projects, largely in partnership with neighborhood organizations and City departments, such as Parks and Recreation.

We learn from the artists and we hope in turn that they learn how to work with the City of Roanoke, submit proposals for public art calls, build stronger relationships between neighborhood leaders and the City, and apply their creative process in the community around them.

We work with artists as they apply their creative processes to the world around them. There's a natural alignment of their personal goals with social impact. Plus being an artist is all about a willingness to take risks!

From top left, Robyn Mitchell with Parks and Recreation's Katie Slusher; Ben Bazak with Megan Scott Scripps and Troy Cook of Renaissance Contract Furniture and Lighting; Jasmine Beane with Mayor Cobb; William Penn and Brian Counihan; Jane Gabrielle and Douglas Jackson; and Luke Pugh with Lift Arc Studio's Tay Whiteside.

The 2025-26
Artists in Residence

Lead Artist, Daisy Art Parade

Brian Counihan

Neighborhood Artists

Jane Gabrielle

Molly Kernan

Robyn Mitchell

Teaching Artists

Jasmine Beane

Mike Moran

Facilitators

Joy Truskowski

Karina Martinez

Ash Earick

Muralists

Jon Murrill

Placemaking

Natalia Michel

Chief Communicator

Cory Greer



PILGRIMS AT THE CREEK

ANNIE DILLARD'S WORK INSPIRES CONTEMPLATION & CREATIVITY

Three dozen readers spent the winter and spring of 2025 discussing Annie Dillard's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*. Then, to carry the conversation further, we invited artists to reflect on their contemplative practices and connection to nature.

The result? A creative and beautiful show on the fourth floor of the Noel C. Taylor Municipal Building. The 30 participating artists gathered for community building gallery talks before the monthly evening City Council meetings.

Additionally, artist-led workshops along the creek included contemplative photography, nature study, poetry, mindfulness, and watercolor.

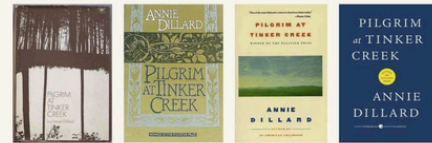
Watch book conversations, see all the work, and learn more at www.roanokearts.org/tinker

"In 1971 I wanted to try my hand at prose. My journals were full of facts that I used to write Pilgrim at Tinker Creek (1974), a sustained nonfiction narrative about the fields, creeks, woods, and mountains near Roanoke, Virginia."

- anniedillard.com

The Book

- Published by Harper's Magazine Press in 1974
- Winner of the 1975 Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction



THE CITY OF ROANOKE PRESENTS

PILGRIMS AT THE CREEK

Clockwise from left:
 MEGAN SCRIPPS, *Pilgrim in Blue* (detail)
 CASEY MURANO, *Come On, Surprise Me* (detail)
 SHARON BURNHAM, *L'ami / L'étranger* (detail)

OCT. 20, 2025 – SEPT. 10, 2026

Thirty artists explore the contemplative life and natural world in celebration of *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*, the groundbreaking 1974 work by Annie Dillard.

NOEL C. TAYLOR MUNICIPAL BUILDING
 4TH FLOOR SOUTH
 215 CHURCH AVENUE, SW
 ROANOKE, VA 24011

Mon. – Fri. 8 AM – 5 PM
 (with the exception of City holidays)



PILGRIMS at the CREEK

THIRTY ARTISTS SHARE THEIR WORK IN MUNICIPAL BUILDING ART SHOW



A LOOK AHEAD: This summer, the work will be used to inspire potential murals beneath bridges as they cross the Roanoke River tributary.

This summer, University of San Diego Professor Jason Kelly will visit Roanoke to study the project as part of a paper he is writing on connections to nature and conservation through Annie Dillard's work.



FEATURED ARTISTS

Linda Atkinson
Polly Branch
Sharon Burnham
Jonathan Chandler
Donna Cooper
Grace Earnhart
Ashley Wilson Fellers
Elaine Fleck
Jane Gabrielle
Alex Foster
Julie Kinn
Laura Ilawan
Dan Kuehl
Bess Lee
Joe Lee

Isabel Meyers
Natalia Michel
Casey Murano
Simone Paterson
Rachel Pence
Kaydee Pickle
Beth E. Rodgers
Lucinda Rowe
Stefanie Sarine
Megan Scripps
Cindy Stevens
Page Turner
Laura Vahlberg
Lauren Walke
Margaret Sue Turner
Wright



Building the next

We envision a Roanoke where creativity builds bridges, culture lives in every neighborhood, and the arts help shape a future we design – together.

To do this, we will:

- Bring people together
- Make space for everyone
- Imagine what's possible
- Celebrate along the way
- Nurture what's next

Our arts and cultural planning process, Plan 26, is assessing the community's learning and progress since the 2011 *Arts and Cultural Plan* and setting a path for the next decade.



The 2025 discovery phase continued into spring 2026 with the launch of a whole lot of listening: more than 700 people have gotten involved by answering questions at outreach events, joining a Story Circle, or completing a survey. Included in the survey is an idea grab, allowing anyone to submit just an idea that will be included in the plan results.

The survey will close in August 2026, although ideas will continue to be gathered throughout the fall as the plan is shared in draft form.

We're committed to creating a plan that reflects the spirit, stories, and aspirations of the people who call this city home and to ensuring that arts and culture remain central to shaping our region's next decade.



Arts & Cultural Plan

Chair John Cornthwait is sharing his considerable expertise in designing and leading the process. Ongoing tracking helps the committee ask better questions and already the input has shaped the workplan for FY 2027. A few things the responses are already telling us:

- People want the city to put real support behind local artists. It's the top pick for where investment should go, followed closely by neighborhood events and festivals.
- Free or low-cost access to the arts and seeing our community's full diversity represented are respondents' highest priorities
- People want art close to home; neighborhood centers and parks rank well ahead of downtown-only venues.

Watch for presentations at Planning Commission and City Council meetings this fall. In the meantime, share your input by taking the survey.

www.roanokearts.org/plan.

**"WHEN I SEE MY CULTURE REPRESENTED,
IT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE I BELONG HERE
AND THAT ROANOKE IS REALLY MY HOME TOO."**

SURVEY RESPONDENT

Steering Committee

John Cornthwait, Chair
Lena Ayuk
Michelle Bennett
Beck Carr
Ingrid Chase
Mandy Cribb
Susan Egbert
Huong Fralin
Katharine Gray
Lee Hunker
Whitney Johnson
Lena Loshonkohl
Kathryn Lucas
Robyn Mitchell
Becky Parsons
William Penn
Douglas Pitzer
Shaleen Powell
John Reburn
Meighan Sharp
Elani Spencer
Katie Wallace

**SHARE
YOUR
IDEAS**



SCAN TO TAKE THE SURVEY

Help shape the next decade of
arts and culture in Roanoke





MISSION

The mission of the Roanoke Arts Commission (RAC), as established by ordinance in 1983, is to advise and assist the city council on matters relating to the advancement of the arts and humanities within the city to establish Roanoke as a vibrant, prosperous community where arts and culture engage people in all aspects of life. The RAC increases the collective impact of the arts and cultural community by:

- Advocating for arts and cultural initiatives and investment.
- Managing and informing the City's Public Art Plan.
- Advancing the City's Arts and Cultural Plan.
- Guiding City investments in arts and culture.

Budget Note

Budgeted funds and projects, encumbered and non-encumbered, are carried forward into the FY 2027 budget and plan.

FY 2026 BUDGET REVIEW

ITEM	Budgeted	Actual	Difference	Notes & Subtotal
PERCENT FOR ART EXPENDITURES	\$313,000	\$175,500	\$137,500	
Collections Committee	\$100,000	\$34,500	\$65,500	
Elmwood Art Walk and Neighborhood Sculpture	\$12,000	\$10,500	\$1,500	Main Street Bridge Project
Municipal Art Shows	\$30,000	\$16,000	\$14,000	Courthouse Project
2-D Acquisitions	\$6,000	\$1,000	\$5,000	Treasurer's Office local artist award purchase (supplies)
Intern Stipend for online exhibitions	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$0	
Maintenance	\$50,000	\$5,000	\$45,000	Mural paint and repair supplies, sculpture moving, fees for online archive, Mosaic repair Market.Building
Placemaking Committee	\$184,000	\$137,500	\$46,500	
Parks & Recreation Residencies	\$16,000	\$16,000	\$0	2 Artists
Public Art Residencies	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0	Muralist in Residence
Neighborhood Artists	\$30,000	\$20,000	\$10,000	Spring extension of 5 neighborhood artists, included Bill Fitzgibbons payment and extra facilitator
Eureka Park Center	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$0	Local artists - mural + panels
Art in Place / Murals	\$40,000	\$23,500	\$16,500	Pearl Fu Plaza, signal box murals, strategic walls, H&C coffee sign
Performance Activation Strategy	\$3,000	\$0	\$3,000	Strategy continuation resources
Washington Park Poolhouse	\$10,000	\$8,000	\$2,000	
Tinker Creek Greenway Mural	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000	
Mill Mountain Project	\$10,000	\$0	\$10,000	Carry Forward
Arts Connect Neighbors Activities	\$15,000	\$25,000	-\$10,000	To cover NEA grant loss
Daisy Arts Activations	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$0	
Executive and Literary	\$10,000	\$1,500	\$8,500	
Youth Poet Laureate	\$5,000	\$500	\$4,500	Emerging Library partnership. Stipend, event funds, publication, etc...
Art by Bus	\$5,000	\$1,000	\$4,000	Transit Residency and Bus Shelters
AFAC (Funding)	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000	
Artist Action Grants	\$15,000	\$0	\$15,000	CF possibly: Announce with the arts and cultural plan release
Planning and Advocacy	\$4,000	\$2,000	\$2,000	
Communicating Artist	\$1,000	\$0	\$1,000	
Public Art Planning Activities	\$500	\$0	\$500	
Annual Report	\$2,500	\$2,000	\$500	
GRANT TOTAL	\$87,000	\$68,000	-\$19,000	
Daisy Art Activations Grant (NEA GAP 24)	\$40,000	\$40,000	\$0	
5 Neighborhood based artists	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$0	
Neighborhood activations	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$0	
City Funding for Catalog	\$0	\$28,000	\$28,000	AFAC Grant
Arts Connect Neighbors Strategy	\$47,000	\$0	-\$47,000	Cancellation of Federal Grant
Arts Engagements	\$19,000	\$19,000	\$0	
Neighborhood Facilitators	\$18,000	\$18,000	\$0	
Chief Communicator	\$9,000	\$9,000	\$0	
Training			\$0	
Catalog, marketing, & documentation	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0	
COMBINED TOTAL FROM ALL SOURCES	\$400,000	\$243,500	\$118,500	

FY 2027 BUDGET

FY 2027 Budgeted Expenditures

FY 2027 Budget	Notes	
PERCENT FOR ART EXPENDITURES	There is currently approximately \$225K in Percent for Art.	\$222,500
Collections Committee		
Elmwood Art Walk and Neighborhood Sculpture	Plan for \$32,000 (elmwood) 8 Pads at \$4K, split over 2 years for 16K in year one.	\$16,000
Municipal Art Shows	Youth Community Builders Project at Courthouse + Employee Art Show	\$5,000
2-D Acquisitions	Ramey Exhibition	\$1,000
Intern Stipend for online exhibitions		\$1,000
Maintenance		\$50,000
Placemaking Committee		
Neighborhood Artists	5 combination facilitators/Neighborhood artists at \$5K each = \$25K	\$25,000
Art in Place / Murals	CF: \$4K 5th street, \$10K Coffee Sign, \$2,500 rebar orb	\$16,500
Tinker Creek Greenway Mural	(We have a match from Greenways to double this.)	\$5,000
Mill Mountain Project	CF: Orignal sculptures	\$10,000
Arts Connect Neighbors Activities	(All resources for catalog activities listed under grants below)	
Wonderpass (Hold for NEA Grant)	(Hold in account as match. 2-year grant (Jan 27-Dec 29)	\$70,000
Executive and Literary		
Youth Poet Laureate		\$2,000
Art by Bus		\$2,000
AFAC (Funding)	\$300,000 appropriated separately through City Council	
Planning and Advocacy		
Artist Action Grants		\$8,000
Communicating Artist		\$5,000
Public Art Planning Activities		\$4,000
Annual Report		\$2,000
GRANT TOTAL		\$45,000
City Funding for Catalog	Art Connects Neighbors activities (secured)	\$15,000
Community Foundation of Western Virginia	Art Connect Neighbors activities (<i>pending</i>) (\$10K more allowed for facilitating artists)	\$21,500
VCA Grant	Art Connect Neighbors activities (secured)	\$3,500
Pathfinders for Greenways	Mural Match for Greenway	\$5,000
COMBINED TOTAL FROM ALL SOURCES		\$267,500

I'M SO PLEASED THAT THIS CITY (AND THIS COMMISSION) PUTS FORTH SO MUCH EFFORT AND ENERGY INTO PROMOTING AND CELEBRATING ARTS AND CULTURE.

ROANOKE ARTS COMMISSIONER JOHN BLACK

**I'M SO BLESSED TO BE ABLE TO WORK SIDE BY SIDE
WITH PEOPLE WHO APPRECIATE
WHAT THE ARTS BRING TO A COMMUNITY.**

IT'S LIKE WATCHING A FLOWER GARDEN BLOOM.

Donna Davis
Vice Chair, Roanoke Arts Commission



WINGCHOW, *Bloom Bright* (Detail), 2026



ROANOKEARTS.ORG