

## Arts and Cultural Resources

**GOAL:** Foster an equitable and vibrant artistic and creative culture, reimagine public spaces, and enhance civic life by uplifting and incorporating artists and culture-bearers in all planning and policy-making.

Providence's Department of Art, Culture and Tourism envisions a Providence that is a global destination for arts, humanities, and design,

where neighbors celebrate diverse cultural and artistic experiences, and where all residents and visitors feel a connection to arts practice, making, and culture in everyday lives.

Providence stands proudly as the cultural capital of the state, boasting a rich tapestry of arts and culture that reflects its diverse community and storied history. The city is a welcoming destination for artists, craftspeople, writers, musicians, innovators and art enthusiasts, offering a plethora of experiences that cater to all tastes and interests. From its historic theaters to its avant-garde galleries, Providence provides a platform for artists to thrive and express themselves freely.

One of the cornerstones of Providence's cultural scene is its thriving theater community. The city is home to renowned venues such as the Providence Performing Arts Center (PPAC), which brings Broadway shows and national tours to the heart of the city, and the Trinity Repertory Company, which has been producing world-class theater for over half a century. The Wilbury Theatre Group and Teatro ECAS anchor Providence's Valley Arts District with a variety of award-winning and thought-provoking productions. The city's many performance venues, from large concert halls to independent bars and clubs, and also public spaces and stages, host concerts and performances spanning all genres, ensuring there's something for every taste. Notable venues include the Amica Mutual Pavillion, the Strand, Vets Auditorium, and Fete Music Hall, among many others.

Beyond traditional theater, Providence also embraces experimental and avant-garde performances, with organizations and venues like AS220, the Dirt Palace, the Steel Yard, and Waterfire Arts Center showcasing boundary-pushing works from local and emerging artists. The city's creative spirit is palpable in its numerous galleries and museums, such as the RISD Museum, the Providence Children's Museum, the Museum of Natural History and the Art Club, which exhibit works ranging from traditional to contemporary, showcasing the talents of local and international artists alike. Young people from neighborhoods across Providence connect with art, music, and creativity at an early age through organizations like DownCity Design, New Urban Arts, Community Music Works, and the Manton Avenue Project.

The City has elevated its profile as a tourism destination in Southern New England over the past decade and welcomes both leisure and convention tourism. The RI Convention Center is a 130,000 sq foot exhibition hall that includes a main hall, ballrooms and meeting rooms to all full convention needs. Located within walking distance of the Convention Center, Downtown is home to 14 hotels, including 7

major franchised hotels and 3 boutique hotels. Downtown hotels and several others throughout the city contribute to a total of more than 3,000 rooms, welcoming tourists from around the world, year-round.

Providence is also home to a vibrant array of summer festivals, ranging from PVDFest, PrideFest, and Day Trill to cultural heritage celebrations such as the Dominican, Guatemalan, Puerto Rican, and Cape Verdean Festivals. These and many other events celebrate the unique cultural identities of Providence's community, while boosting tourism and hospitality and supporting local artists and musicians.

Providence's cultural landscape includes the culinary arts, adding another layer to its cultural richness, fueled, in part, by the creative spirit of Johnson and Wales University's College of Food Innovation & Technology (CFIT), buoying a diverse array of restaurants, shared kitchens, food trucks, and markets that offer a variety of cuisines from around the world. From innovative farm-to-table eateries to authentic ethnic fare, foodies can embark on a culinary journey that reflects the city's multicultural identity and gastronomic creativity.

Providence is steeped in history, captivating visitors from near and far with architectural treasures and compact, walkable neighborhoods. Additionally, Providence's renowned WaterFire installation, a mesmerizing display of bonfires lit on the city's rivers, pays homage to its industrial past while offering a unique and enchanting experience for tourists. From guided tours of historic neighborhoods like Benefit Street, College Hill, and Elmwood, to RI Latino Arts' Barrio Tours of Broad Street and visits to the Roger Williams Park Zoo, one of the oldest zoos in the country, Providence offers a wealth of attractions that share its history and culture with all who seek it.

Providence tourism also benefits from its proximity to other regional destinations allowing visitors to experience a variety of experiences within a short distance. Newport, Boston, Mystic Ct., and Cape Cod are a short distance away, allowing Providence to serve as a hub to explore the region's charms and beauty.

As cities' economies continuously change and evolve, Providence must leverage and lean into arts and cultural foundations and night-time economies to support its business climate and attract tourism. Overall, Providence's arts, culture and tourism scene is a testament to its dynamic and inclusive spirit, drawing inspiration from its rich heritage while embracing innovation and diversity. Whether you're a lifelong resident or a first-time visitor, there's always something new and exciting to discover in this vibrant cultural capital.

### **Background**

Between 2019 and 2022 Providence's Department of Art, Culture and Tourism (ACT) developed *PVDx2031: A Cultural Plan for Culture Shift*. ACT invited the public into its thinking and processes through planning studios, surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder interviews. This comprehensive document outlines Providence's vision and strategies for fostering a vibrant and inclusive arts and culture scene. The plan's seven themes frame the ways that the City and its partners will fund and invest in arts and cultural resources for the next ten years:

**Art and Well-being:** The City recognizes that health inequities in our country are deeply embedded and that they redouble the effects of historical traumas. Civic policies, investments and support of creative practitioners and their communities focus specifically on the intersections of art, health, and the environment.

**Placekeeping in Neighborhoods:** Providence has an abundance of artists, arts organizations and creative businesses that are the bedrock of their local, geographic communities. The City centers their needs.

**Creative Workforce:** The ideas, goods and services developed by Providence's creative workforce drive its economy. In kind, the City prioritizes fair wages, affordable housing, and accessible spaces to create/exhibit and develops sustainable resources that make creative work possible.

**Creative Economy:** Providence relies on revenue generated by the sale of art, culture and design-based goods and services to drive its local creative economy. The City understands that barriers to growth and sustainability in the creative sector must be identified and removed to ensure its vitality and longevity.

**Resilient Nonprofits:** Providence's nonprofit arts, cultural, and humanities organizations anchor its local and regional creative sector. They provide spaces for artists and public historians to develop and exhibit and work; offer educational opportunities and entertainment for all communities; and act as welcoming venues for visiting tourists.

**The Future of Arts Teaching and Learning:** Art and culture stimulate curiosity; cultivate critical thinking and problem-solving skills; and help audiences and producers find common ground across differences. The City incorporates art in all curricula and offers fair wages to arts educators.

**Public Awareness, Advocacy and Tourism:** Providence is Rhode Island's Creative Capital, a unique landscape of cultural abundance. BIPOC communities, including BIPOC artists and arts organizations, are centered in its stories about itself.

Overall, "PVDx2031: A Cultural Plan for Culture Shift" serves as a roadmap for Providence to realize its aspirations as a dynamic and culturally vibrant city, guided by principles of equity, diversity, and sustainability in its cultural endeavors. The document outlines long-term goals for Providence's cultural evolution, envisioning a city where arts and culture are fully integrated into everyday life, driving social cohesion, economic growth, and community well-being.

The following objectives and strategies are adapted from the PVDx2031 Cultural Plan.

## Objectives and Strategies

For more detailed implementing activities and measurable outcomes, view Providence's cultural plan *PVDx2031: A Cultural Plan for Culture Shift*.

### **Objective AC1: ART AND WELL-BEING**

Acknowledge and address inequities by focusing support for creative practitioners and their communities on the intersections of art, health, and the environment.

#### Strategies:

- A. Integrate the arts in K-12 learning to advance environmental and community health.
- B. Increase support for artists who foster social cohesion and collective healing; create land-based projects and preserve ancestral knowledge.
- C. Draw attention to the intersection of art, culture, and well-being.
- D. Use creative strategies to support well-being in Providence communities impacted most by systemic racism and climate change.
- E. Fund artist-led design processes that connect art, health, and climate resiliency at the grassroots level.

### **OBJECTIVE AC2: PLACEKEEPING IN NEIGHBORHOODS**

Uplift and support unique and diverse neighborhoods through placekeeping initiatives that center the need and agency of communities and their bedrock artists and arts organizations.

#### Strategies:

- A. Support neighborhood-based artists, organizers and businesses who bring relevant art and live events to their neighborhoods.
- B. Commission artists to produce events, show work and perform in unexpected sites.
- C. Support public projects that advance a spatial justice framework.
- D. Invest in placekeeping strategies that preserve neighborhood-based cultural expression and strengthen a sense of belonging.

### **OBJECTIVE AC3: CREATIVE WORKFORCE**

Support the economic well-being and growth of Providence's creative workforce.

#### Strategies:

- A. Address artists' basic needs, including developing and implementing strategies relating to fair wages and benefits, housing needs, accessible creative space, and other needs.
- B. Centralize resources for creative practitioners, including by facilitating opportunities for connection and professional development between artists and cultural organizations.

- C. Support creative entrepreneurs, including by highlighting creative businesses, training artists in business, and providing technical assistance and small business supports.
- D. Establish new and fortify existing pathways for young adult artists to explore careers in the creative sector.
- E. Hire artists and engage creatives in the development of civic projects and public policy, including by employing and supporting artists specializing in civic engagement and facilitation.

#### **OBJECTIVE AC4: CREATIVE ECONOMY**

Identify and remove barriers to the growth and sustainability of the creative sector to ensure its vitality and longevity.

##### Strategies:

- A. Develop a more equitable and regenerative creative economy, including by adopting practices like providing general and flexible financial support to artists and arts businesses, offering more participatory budgeting opportunities, and sharing workspaces and resources.
- B. Dismantle barriers for arts businesses and organizations to grow at a sustainable pace and to build resiliency, including by government and non-profits prioritizing local creator and arts business hiring and improving procurement, permitting, and licensing processes.
- C. Further develop Providence's life at night and music economy, including by funding and facilitating a life at night study and implementing its recommendations.

#### **OBJECTIVE AC5: RESILIENT NONPROFITS**

Foster sustainable, healthy, and resilient arts, cultural, and humanities organizations that anchor the creative sector and provide myriad benefits to artists, their communities, and visitors.

##### Strategies:

- A. Develop racial equity goals and accountability structures.
- B. Develop shared leadership models between government, non-profit, and community-based organizations.
- C. Re-evaluate grant application and reporting processes to center accessibility, including language access and taking specific steps to rid applications of embedded racial bias.
- D. Develop interdisciplinary programs and collaborative cross-sector projects.

#### **OBJECTIVE AC6: THE FUTURE OF ARTS TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Commit time, space, and funding to support arts teaching and learning to ensure the benefits of art and culture can be enjoyed by everyone, from the youngest to the eldest in our communities.

##### Strategies:

- A. Foster culturally responsive school communities.
- B. Develop neighborhood-based, all-ages arts learning opportunities.

- C. Create pathways for BIPOC arts educators and teaching artists to work in established creative businesses, nonprofit cultural organizations and schools.
- D. Standardize systems for teaching artists working with PPSD.
- E. Create incentives for students and recent graduates to build creative careers in Providence.
- F. Support nonprofit cultural organizations that serve BIPOC, immigrant, incarcerated and queer/trans youth.

**OBJECTIVE AC7: PUBLIC AWARENESS, ADVOCACY AND TOURISM**

Defend and advocate for the importance of the local art and culture sector while finding equitable, profitable ways to share it with visitors and center BIPOC communities in doing so.

Strategies:

- A. Develop marketing strategies that elevate BIPOC residents, artists and cultural offerings.
- B. Promote the work of independent practitioners, nonprofit cultural organizations, and creative businesses.
- C. Strengthen access and equity through cultural offerings and the commemorative landscape .
- D. Promote Providence as a world-class cultural destination through initiatives including supporting live events in the public realm, supporting life at night, enhancing physical accessibility at venues and cultural facilities, marketing and lighting initiatives that encourage winter tourism, promoting walkability and multimodal access in public realm projects, and more.