

Arts Habitat Edmonton - 2024 Connections & Exchanges Update

2024 Implementation Summary

- The implementation of *Connections & Exchanges: A 10-Year Plan to Transform Arts & Heritage In Edmonton* is in year six of the 10-Year Plan.
- Major accomplishments in the first six years of the Plan include:
 - Provided consultation for the Ortona Armoury Building Rehabilitation Project to be purpose-built for the arts.
 - Opened and manage ArtsHub Ortona
 - Opened and manage ArtsHub Creative Studios
 - Manage ArtsHub 118 Live/Work Housing
 - Created the ArtsHub Ortona Artist Advisory Committee
 - Showcased the new art spaces to key stakeholders, including the arts community.
 - Began to share artist success stories in new spaces.
 - Implemented a Measurement, Evaluation, and Learning Framework for internal use by Arts Habitat Edmonton that is compatible with the framework in *Connections & Exchanges*.
 - Entered the Engagement Phase of the development of Edmonton's first Cultural Infrastructure Plan.
 - Began discussions of a new art space database and a new map to be integrated into Arts Habitat's website.
 - Shared Arts Habitat Edmonton's 2024-2026 Strategic Map
 - A directory of community, arts, and business partners with an interest in the creation and management of art space is in development.

2024 Implementation & Measurements

Ambition One: Alive with Arts and Heritage

Aim One: Edmonton's neighborhoods come alive with meaningful and relevant opportunities for participation and engagement.

Action 1.4 (Ongoing): *Broker relationships with community-based entities to increase access to affordable space for arts and heritage programs, presentations and events.*

- In June 2024, Arts Habitat Edmonton advertised 4 office spaces in ArtsHub Ortona, located in the Rosedale neighborhood, for NFP

professional arts organizations to license. Arts Habitat Edmonton filled all 4 offices in ArtsHub Ortona with diverse tenants:

- Alberta Media Production Industries Association¹
 - Arabic Club for Culture and Arts²
 - Broadview International Film Festival³
 - Punctuate! Theatre⁴
- The four not-for-profit professional arts organizations are anchor tenants in ArtsHub Ortona. Each anchor tenant has an established reach and connection to a diverse set of arts and cultural communities in Edmonton.
 - Arts Habitat Edmonton reached out to the City Arts Centre to discuss expanding its programming within ArtsHub Ortona. Arts Habitat Edmonton worked alongside the City Arts Center in the Fall 2024 to test-run some programs before a full launch in Spring 2025. The programming has been popular and successful in the Workshop/Classroom space at ArtsHub Ortona in 2025.
 - To increase accessibility to affordable space, plans were set in motion to develop a space sponsorship program at ArtsHub Ortona.
 - As of Spring 2025, ArtsHub Creative Studio's studio and office spaces have been overinquired for, and professional artists and not-for-profit arts organizations have been settling into their newly licensed spaces as contracts are being signed.
 - Arts Habitat Edmonton toured artists from both Harcourt House and the Conservatory of Music through ArtsHub Creative Studios and ArtsHub Ortona, as both groups were given notice of an upcoming change in ownership of their buildings. W.E.C.A.N. Society was able to raise the funds needed to keep Harcourt House but the artists in the Alberta College Campus were not, leaving them to find new working and teaching studios in 2025.
 - Arts Habitat Edmonton has helped some of the Conservatory of Music's artists/instructors secure new space at ArtsHub Creative Studios and

¹ <https://ampia.org/>

² <https://www.acca-club.com/>

³ <https://broadviewfilmfest.com/>

⁴ <https://www.punctuatetheatre.com/>

complete applications for a Project Studio at ArtsHub Ortona, as they navigate a time of change in the city's musical landscape.

Action 1.5 (Ongoing): *Provide expert advice on shared space models to support the integration of arts activities in neighbourhood revitalization/ regeneration initiatives.*

- In October 2024, the establishment of the ArtsHub Ortona Community Artist Advisory Committee, with representation from individuals with diverse backgrounds such as local business associations, cultural centers, museums, science centers, performing arts centers, art administrations, artists, Indigenous artists and leaders, and urban developers along with past tenants, to provide valuable guidance on the space's operations and ensured alignment with community needs.
- Arts Habitat Edmonton has been actively working to establish a network of arts, community, and business partners to support arts space development, positioning Arts Habitat Edmonton as a leader in Edmonton's cultural infrastructure. Arts Habitat Edmonton continues to compile a list of potential partners, including developers, artists, and community leaders who are aligned with Arts Habitat Edmonton's mission. This list lays the foundation for meaningful partnerships that will help advance Arts Habitat Edmonton's arts spaces and create more collaborative opportunities across Edmonton's cultural and community sectors.
- Arts Habitat Edmonton started planning a series of open house events, inviting key stakeholders to engage directly with Arts Habitat Edmonton's spaces and mandate. These events will include community talks designed to facilitate dialogue between artists, developers, and other partners, fostering a welcoming environment for arts space development.

Ambition One: Alive with Arts and Heritage

Aim Two: Edmontonians feel a sense of belonging and connectedness to peoples, places and stories.

Action 2.3 (Ongoing): *Contribute actively to placemaking that includes cultural landscape, natural history, built history, object, language, and story.*

- Located in Edmonton's historic Highlands neighborhood, ArtsHub McLuhan House, the former family home of Marshall McLuhan,

renowned Communications Theorist, continues to serve as a dynamic literary and artistic space under the stewardship of Arts Habitat Edmonton. Arts Habitat Edmonton has focused on maintaining the property's operations and supporting its tenants, including the Edmonton Poetry Festival and YouthWrite, both long-standing residents. Arts Habitat Edmonton has implemented regular landscaping and custodial services to enhance the space and improve accessibility. Arts Habitat Edmonton continues to promote ArtsHub McLuhan House as a literary hub of connectivity.

- In July 2024, the ArtsHub McLuhan House Garage Studio Program welcomed its newest artist-in-residence, Thomas Weir. The Garage Studio is designated as an Arts Habitat Edmonton-sponsored space, where the selected artist or artist group receives the Garage Studio space for free (sponsored by Arts Habitat Edmonton) to focus on their creative pursuits, with a requirement to engage the surrounding communities.

Action 2.4 (Ongoing): *Indigenous peoples are supported in revitalizing and participating in cultural traditions locally that reflect their connections to ancestors, the land and living traditions.*

- Arts Habitat Edmonton reached out to the Community Engagement Coordinator for Western Varieties Wholesale (westernvarieties.ca) regarding Arts Habitat Edmonton's ArtsHub art spaces that may interest the Indigenous entrepreneurs and artists they work with.
- Shared important findings from the three major research projects including the 'What We Heard Report' by Naheyawin (2022) to the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan Advisory Committee in a series of in-person meetings.
 - Key Theme: Non-conventional Art and Culture Spaces
 - "We Are The Land," Naheyawin
 - "Creating Art is a Way of Life," Naheyawin
 - "Spaces for Us and for Those Yet to Come," Naheyawin
 - Key Theme: Role of Arts and Culture in the Lives of Edmontonians
 - Art is Not Made in a Vacuum, it is Best Done in Connection, Naheyawin

Ambition One: Alive with Arts and Heritage

Aim Three: Arts and heritage leaders are actively engaged in civic planning and implementation.

Action 3.3 (Ongoing): *Work with City Administration and cultural agencies to research, develop, build and seek approval from City Council for the City of Edmonton's first Cultural Infrastructure Plan.*

- Arts Habitat Edmonton has made steady progress on the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan, a collaborative initiative with the Edmonton Arts Council, Edmonton Heritage Council, and the City of Edmonton. The Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure aims to strengthen Edmonton's cultural infrastructure, empowering arts and cultural groups to enhance their facilities and serve their communities effectively. In 2024, Arts Habitat Edmonton focused on implementing the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan Communications Strategy, which is now complete. This included developing key messages tailored to target audiences and establishing an engagement strategy to guide stakeholder involvement.
- Arts Habitat Edmonton contributed to developing an Engagement Plan, with consultants from Hatlie Group driving the work. A stakeholder register has been created to ensure the representation from diverse voices in the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan's public engagement efforts. Advisory committee meetings with Edmonton's Arts & Heritage partners (including the Edmonton Heritage Council, Edmonton Arts Council, and City of Edmonton) have identified target audiences for the engagement phase. Collaboration among partners remains strong, and plans are in place to gather input from key stakeholders through structured engagements in the coming months.
- Through this work, Arts Habitat Edmonton has encountered key learnings about the complexities of defining what "cultural infrastructure" is, given varying expectations among stakeholders. The broad nature of cultural infrastructure, which encompasses more than just physical space, has required thoughtful navigation and consensus-building. This has underscored the need for a clear definition and potential policy development at the municipal level to support the broader scope of cultural infrastructure.
- In October 2024, a new phase of engagement was launched for the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan to gather perspectives from

Edmontonians on the importance and impact of cultural infrastructure across the city. The goal of this phase is to ensure that the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan is reflective and responsive to the diverse needs and priorities of Edmonton's communities, as identified through years of research and engagement leading up to this project.

- The engagement process includes a public survey accessible to all Edmontonians, as well as focused Ward-based discussions where Ward Councillors and constituents are invited to share how they access and engage with cultural infrastructure in their areas. Individual interviews are also being conducted to gather further insights.
- In 2025, the Engagement Phase has been underway, showing enthusiasm from participants.

Action 3.4 (Ongoing): *Provide tools, resources and advice to the cultural community in support of space audits, capital project management and asset management solutions*

- Arts Habitat Edmonton has been working on a proof of concept for an Arts Space Granting Program to strengthen Edmonton's cultural infrastructure by supporting arts facilities. The program's objective is to provide sustainable resources for arts spaces, filling a crucial funding gap. While progress has been made, including drafting an initial framework, challenges remain in securing prioritization within the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan Advisory Committee and addressing funding constraints. A reassignment of roles and responsibilities has shifted in the Arts Habitat Edmonton team, and Arts Habitat Edmonton is assessing the next steps to ensure the program aligns with Arts Habitat Edmonton and Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan goals.
- To advance the Art Space Granting Program, Arts Habitat Edmonton is leveraging research and case studies from other cities to advocate for its importance. Key challenges include the limited public funding for capital projects, which often leaves facilities under-resourced. A recommendation to increase the feasibility study fund reserve is being explored to better support capital needs. The team's ongoing work focuses on finalizing the grant framework, preparing for further discussions with the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan in the coming year, and refining funding strategies to ensure the program's long-term success.

- Arts Habitat Edmonton met with Green Violin⁵ to discuss the potential of a tiny home community for artists on a lot in the Boyle area.
- Arts Habitat Edmonton continued its conversations with Jaffer Group of Companies⁶ in 2024 regarding the main floor restaurant space adjacent to ArtsHub Creative Studios and its potential as a dance art space. Jaffer is the private partner Arts Habitat worked with to launch ArtsHub Creative Studios.
- Arts Habitat Edmonton was approached by Lindon Carter regarding a space he is renovating to be suited for music rehearsal and recording on 109 Street and 106 Avenue, with support from the property owner. The discussion involved permitting, inspections, feasibility studies, and business models.
- Arts Habitat Edmonton has launched its new booking software —*The Habitat*— to optimize space bookings, and offerings, and attract potential tenants. Arts Habitat Edmonton's proactive measures with this software will help Arts Habitat Edmonton grow and retain users of the ArtsHubs it manages. This software will also help with regular property monitoring and communications to help mitigate risks like property damage or tenant turnover.

Action 3.5 (Ongoing): *Encourage active civic engagement and participation in cultural activities.*

- Arts Habitat Edmonton has been actively working to establish a network of arts, community, and business partners to support arts space development, positioning Arts Habitat Edmonton as a leader in Edmonton's cultural infrastructure. Arts Habitat Edmonton continues to compile a list of potential partners, including developers, artists, and community leaders who are aligned with Arts Habitat Edmonton's mission. This list lays the foundation for meaningful partnerships that will help advance Arts Habitat Edmonton's arts spaces and create more collaborative opportunities across Edmonton's cultural and community sectors.
- Looking ahead, Arts Habitat Edmonton is planning a series of open house events, inviting key stakeholders to engage directly with Arts Habitat Edmonton's spaces and mission. These events will include community

⁵ <https://www.greenviolin.ca/>

⁶ <https://www.jaffergroup.com/>

talks designed to facilitate dialogue between artists, developers, and other partners, fostering a welcoming environment for arts space development.

Action 3.6 (In Progress): *Adopt a holistic definition of civic vitality that includes culture (inclusive of heritage) as a valued component.*

- In 2024, Arts Habitat Edmonton launched the landing page for the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan⁷ announcing the mission statement for the engagement phase of research, “Edmonton’s Cultural Infrastructure Plan will transform arts and heritage by providing key support systems to cultivate meaningful spaces and resources for Edmontonians to access, express, and participate in culture.”

Action 3.7 (In Progress): *Apply a Fourth Pillar approach to the City of Edmonton planning and policy development: social, environmental, economic and cultural.*

- In 2024 Arts Habitat Edmonton developed and implemented its Measurement, Evaluation And Learning (MEL) Framework for Arts Habitat Edmonton, which is appropriate to the capacity of the Arts Habitat Edmonton team and available resources, and is compatible with the framework in Connections & Exchanges, and supports Arts Habitat Edmonton’s strategic map and the business plan.

Ambition One: Alive with Arts and Heritage

Aim Four: Conditions are in place to remove barriers for all Edmontonians to participate in cultural experiences.

Action 4.2 (Ongoing): *Stand alongside Indigenous leaders in cultural work, organizations and projects*

- Penelope Moon Walker, an Indigenous Artist from Liḡwíłdaǰw Kwakwaka’wakw Territory, sits on the ArtsHub Ortona Artist Advisory Committee (AOACC).
- Lewis Cardinal is a communicator and educator who has dedicated his life’s work to creating and maintaining connections and relationships that cross cultural divides. With an expansive track record of local and international public service, Lewis is currently the project manager for

⁷ <https://www.artshab.com/engagments/ecip/>

“kihcihkaw askî-Sacred Land” in the City of Edmonton, the first designated urban Indigenous ceremony grounds in Canada. Lewis Cardinal was selected to be a part of the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan Advisory Committee, established by Arts Habitat Edmonton in 2024.

- As mentioned in the reporting for *Action 3.3*, Arts Habitat Edmonton is leading the development of the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan and was entering the Engagement Phase of the development of the plan in October 2024. Arts Habitat Edmonton’s goal for the Engagement Phase is to ensure that the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan is reflective and responsive to the diverse needs and priorities of Edmonton's communities, as identified through years of research and engagement leading up to this project. A key priority in this engagement is ensuring the participation of a diverse range of individuals, groups, organizations, and institutions of varying sizes, mandates, and cultural backgrounds. The public survey has been designed to reflect a broad understanding of cultural infrastructure, extending beyond traditional arts-based organizations and physical spaces to include Indigenous, faith-based, and cultural ceremonial spaces (both built and natural), as well as other spaces for learning, creation, reflection, and community connection. Before the engagement, significant research was conducted to identify arts, heritage, and cultural sites, spaces, and organizations within each Ward. This research helped inform invitations to participate in the Ward-based discussions currently underway. Particular priority was given to identifying and inviting representatives from Indigenous organizations, sites, and groups, alongside other communities that contribute to Edmonton's diversity.

Action 4.3 (Ongoing): *Resource Indigenous-led activities that support the reclamation of Indigeneity.*

- Arts Habitat Edmonton reached out to the Indigenous Relations Office and the Funding Indigenous Resurgence in Edmonton (FIRE) program offered by the EHC regarding interest in programming a space at ArtsHub Ortona.
- Discussions regarding the programming of a space continue to happen. Arts Habitat Edmonton has been compiling a list of Indigenous programmers to continue to connect with regarding programming opportunities in Arts Habitat Edmonton spaces.

Ambition Three: A Thriving and Well-Funded Arts and Heritage Ecosystem

Aim Eight: New and existing arts and heritage organizational capacity enables innovation and builds resilience in the sector.

Action 8.5 (In Progress): *Provide change capital to cultural organizations to retool and reorganize to meet the needs of a rapidly changing city.*

- Arts Habitat Edmonton is redeveloping its Art Space Map to provide an accessible, interactive resource for Edmonton's arts community. Early discussions with the Edmonton Arts Council and partners have been positive. With the previous database contract ending, Arts Habitat Edmonton is exploring new vendors and formats for the map. Future steps include assembling a project team, defining the project scope, and ensuring ongoing maintenance. Arts Habitat Edmonton aims to create a comprehensive tool that supports artists, enhances engagement, and identifies opportunities in Edmonton's cultural infrastructure.
- Arts Habitat Edmonton has been working on a proof of concept for an Arts Space Granting Program to strengthen Edmonton's cultural infrastructure by supporting arts facilities. The program's objective is to provide sustainable resources for arts spaces, filling a crucial funding gap. Future growth includes increasing its prioritization within the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan, overcoming funding limitations, and developing the internal capacity within Arts Habitat Edmonton to advance this. Arts Habitat Edmonton is refining funding strategies and preparing for discussions with the Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan in the coming year.

2025 Arts Habitat Edmonton Strategic Priorities

Arts Habitat Edmonton Strategic Pillar	C&E Action	Arts Habitat Edmonton's Role	2024 Advancements	2025 Planned Actions
We are Art Space Operators and Managers	Broker relationships with community-based entities to increase access to affordable space for arts and heritage programs, presentations and events.	Lead	Open and Manage ArtsHub Creative Studios.	Manage ArtsHub Creative Studios.
			Manage ArtsHub McLuhan House.	Manage ArtsHub McLuhan House.
			Manage ArtsHub 118 Live/Work Housing.	Manage ArtsHub 118 Live/Work Housing.
			Showcase new arts spaces to key stakeholders, including the arts community.	Profile the artistic success stories of these spaces.
	Contribute actively to placemaking that includes cultural landscape, natural history, built history, object, language, and story.	Shared	Open and Manage ArtsHub Ortona & Create ArtsHub Ortona Artist Advisory Committee.	Manage ArtsHub Ortona .

Arts Habitat Edmonton Strategic Pillar	Arts Habitat Edmonton's Role	Arts Habitat Edmonton's Role	2024 Advancements	2025 Planned Actions
We are Art Space Trusted Advisors	Provide tools, resources and advice to the cultural community in support of space audits, capital project management and asset management solutions.	Lead	Update the art space database and develop a new map to be integrated into Arts Habitat's website.	Develop needs assessment for asset management support in the arts sector.
			Introduce the arts community to the Arts Habitat Strategic Map.	Based on needs assessment, develop an inventory of services that Arts Habitat could offer arts organizations.
We Are Art Space Advocates	Provide tools, resources and advice to the cultural community in support of space audits, capital project management and asset management solutions.	Lead	Develop a list of potential arts/ community/business partners for arts space development.	Collaborate with City planners on embedding arts space thinking into all aspects of district planning.

Arts Habitat Edmonton Strategic Pillar	C&E Action	Arts Habitat Edmonton's Role	2024 Advancements	2025 Planned Actions
We are Art Space Planners	Apply a Fourth Pillar approach to City of Edmonton planning and policy development: social, environment, economic, cultural.	Shared	Develop a Measurement, Evaluation And Learning Framework for Arts Habitat, appropriate to available resources, that is compatible with the framework in Connections and Exchanges and supports the strategic map and the business plan.	Update Measurement, Evaluation And Learning Framework.
	Provide change capital to cultural organizations to retool and reorganize to meet the needs of a rapidly changing city.	Shared	Develop "proof of concept" business case for incentivizing arts space development through a granting program.	Secure private investors and partners to work with the City on a grant fund to incentivize arts space development.
	Work with City Administration and cultural agencies to research, develop, build and seek approval from City Council for the City of Edmonton's first Cultural Infrastructure Plan.	Lead	Develop Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan.	Complete Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan.
	Indigenous peoples are supported in revitalizing and participating in cultural traditions locally that reflect their connections to ancestors, the land and living traditions.	Shared		
	Stand alongside Indigenous leaders in cultural work and cultural organizations and projects.	Shared		
	Resource Indigenous-led activities that support the reclamation of Indigeneity.	Shared		

Arts Habitat Edmonton Strategic Pillar	C&E Action	Arts Habitat Edmonton's Role	2024 Advancements	2025 Planned Actions
We are Art Space Planners	Adopt a holistic definition of civic vitality that includes culture (inclusive of heritage) as a valued component.	Shared		
	Encourage active civic engagement and participation in cultural activities.	Shared	Develop Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan.	Complete Edmonton Cultural Infrastructure Plan.

Other Updates

Arts Habitat Edmonton is committed to the provision of accessible spaces that consider physical and logistical factors such as affordability, physical accessibility, and cultural design (e.g. Indigenous spaces are located in close proximity to natural spaces of some kind). When reviewing applications for these spaces, Arts Habitat ensures access opportunities regardless of a person's background, identity, age, and physical or mental ability. In addition, they broker relationships with community-based entities to increase access to affordable spaces for art and heritage programs, presentations, events, and equity-deserving artists to contribute to placemaking that includes cultural landscape, natural history, built history, object, language and story.