

# ARTS HABITAT ASSOCIATION OF EDMONTON

## AFFORDABLE, SUSTAINABLE AND APPROPRIATE ARTS SPACE IS ESSENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF EDMONTON'S ARTS CULTURE.

Arts Habitat Association was initiated in 1998 as a non-profit organization focused on finding, developing and managing space for the arts. At that time, 'ArtsHab1', the City's only live/work development, was built on the top floor of a 3-storey commercial building in Downtown Edmonton. In 2008 the Edmonton Arts Council issued "*The Art of Living*", a ten-year cultural plan that contains recommendations to improve art and culture practices in Edmonton. Recommendation # 1 was to reinvigorate Arts Habitat Association by infusing it with City funding and staff. Two staff were hired in 2009. In the 2 years since its reestablishment, Arts Habitat Association has worked with the City, arts organizations and other partners to investigate into Edmonton's arts space needs and issues, to encourage a climate that supports space for the arts, and to build space for the arts in Edmonton. Arts Habitat's activities include:

### Developing Arts Space

- **ArtsHab1** – in its 13<sup>th</sup> year of renting live/work and work-only units to local and international artists. Its community hosts a gallery, special events and community projects.
- **The old Alberta Cycle Building** – a 16,000 sq ft building on 118<sup>th</sup> Ave is being revitalized as a mixed use community arts facility. (In partnership with Arts on the Ave)
- **ArtsHab Alberta Avenue** – the repurposing of 16 suites above the Nina Haggerty Centre for the Arts on 118<sup>th</sup> Ave into an affordable housing cooperative for artists. (In partnership with Edmonton Inner City Housing Society and Artists Urban Village)
- **The Quarters Artists Urban Village** – a proposal for a multi storey mixed use arts development for the Quarters including market housing, seniors' care, live/work units and commercial space for arts organizations and retail. (In partnership with Artists Urban Village)
- **Space Finder** - an online resource to post or find nonprofit and community space: Arts Habitat Association has partnered with the City of Edmonton and the Non-Profit Community to create a website that will help to connect the arts community with providers of affordable and appropriate workspace.
- **Space Seeker** – an online list for artists and organizations looking for arts space to post their needs (EAC website).

### Research and Planning Projects

- **Arts Space Needs & Issues Survey** - To research into arts space needs and issues Edmonton artists and organizations are experiencing, Arts Habitat Association launched a comprehensive "*Arts Space Issues and Needs Survey*" in 2010. 135 artist and organizations responded.
- **Bylaws Review** - "*The Art of Living*" Arts Recommendation #2 proposes that redrawing zoning bylaws and other city practices will stimulate arts activities in Edmonton. In response, Arts Habitat Association partnered with the City to review issues and find solutions toward a more sympathetic regulatory environment that will catalyze, improve and increase opportunities for a broad range of arts activities and space uses in the City. The complete scope of work includes:
  - Investigations of current bylaws and regulations to identify gaps and opportunities;
  - Research of best practices of other municipalities;
  - 7 arts community consultations hosted by Arts Habitat Association to understand actual impediments;
  - Investigation into comparative information relevant to the objectives;
  - A summary of relevant findings, along with any perspectives to represent the issues;
  - Team working meetings to respond to the information;
  - And a defined set of actions and solutions to be vetted through City hosted stakeholder consultation.
- **Space inventory and cultural scan/mapping** - Research into Edmonton's arts space needs and issues must review the inventory of what the arts community has, what it needs, and what opportunities might exist. No complete inventory exists.

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- A complete inventory will inform the typologies of space needed to be defined in the zoning bylaws, where arts uses are concentrated and where it makes sense to plan for clusters.
- A full cultural scan and mapping project will provide the framework to develop that inventory.
- **Advocating on behalf of arts community for space needs** - The focused conversations from the Bylaws Review brought to light significant issues that pointed to the need to better understand what plans, initiatives and incentives exist for arts space retention and development in Edmonton. As a result, Arts Habitat and Community Services continues to meet with city planners to discuss these matters as they relate to the Downtown Plan, Alberta Ave Revitalization, BRZ development incentives, the Quarters, Nonprofit space incentives, and Sustainable Planning.
- **Acting as a resource** – To be a leader for arts space in Edmonton and a voice for the arts community where arts space is concerned Arts Habitat is steadily building its knowledge of available arts space, city processes and permits required to develop arts space, what plans exist for future development, what Edmonton artist needs are and more.

### WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM THE ARTS COMMUNITY

Through the Bylaws Review project, Space Needs and Issues Survey, and one-on-one conversations with artists, arts organizations, Arts businesses and BRZ's we have learned the three key issues for arts space in Edmonton are affordability and sustainability of spaces, appropriateness of spaces, and location of spaces:

- Affordability and sustainability of artist spaces is the number one issue amongst artists. Artists have lost many significant studio spaces in the downtown area over the past several years due to inflation or demolition. Even ArtsHab 1, Edmonton's celebrated legal live/work development, is under threat due to increased lease rates. In an era of diminishing funding, access to property ownership is a key concern for small and mid-sized arts groups. Due to the loss of affordable spaces, individual artists are increasing seeking to create from home or garage studios. The need for supportive development regulations to promote their activities there is paramount.
- Appropriate space is just as important as affordable space. So many of the spaces Edmonton artists and arts organizations currently operate out of are inadequate in size, location, access, state of disrepair, or equipment. Inadequate space limits creative production and audience appreciation. The city urgently needs main stage venues that meet national standards for creation and performance of dance and theatre, rehearsal spaces, a sponsored multi-purpose community arts centre, family friendly live music venues, as well as small studios for a variety of visual artists and crafts people and affordable large art studios for Edmonton's major visual artists - which might be in designated arts buildings.
- Location is important for artists who work from spaces outside the home. Most want to be close to the downtown or in Old Strathcona where services and amenities are well served and there is easy access. Live/work units in the downtown are desirable for artists. Industrial or warehouse spaces are prized for their flexibility and affordability. Arts clusters or precincts near other amenities would promote collaboration, innovation, interest and character and a cohesive community and are desired. 118<sup>th</sup> Ave is becoming a hotbed for artist community to live and create

We also heard artist community concerns around the current bylaws. A detailed report is outlined in the '*Review of Art Space Issues in Edmonton - A Summary Report Prepared by Arts Habitat Association*'. A few points to highlight here are:

- Appropriately define artists' use of space. The artist community strongly felt the need to appropriately define artists' use of space through flexible definitions or use classes that better acknowledge the various, organic ways artist and artist groups actually use space.
- Make more zones available for arts uses. In particular, artists talked about the empty buildings that populate the downtown area and select industrial zones where space is more appropriately sized for arts uses and generally more affordable.

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- Make development regulations in general more flexible, including those for home studios.
- Improve the process to apply for permits and licenses within city departments. Artists perceive these as too expensive, opaque, arbitrary, and unhelpful. Artists want support from the city individuals who deal with them and easy-to-understand written information to guide their process.
- Provide City support for arts development projects through an experienced and integrated arts team who connect across the myriad of city departments, a project manager, and a “how to toolkit” with document templates and outlines of processes to follow. Artist perceive this as a priority to achieve success.
- Creative solutions for current parking requirements are essential. Parking requirements are difficult or impossible to meet in major home businesses, rehearsal / performance spaces and mature BRZ areas.
- Consistently brand and promote local arts and talent to develop Edmonton as a destination for the Arts, to locals and to visitors right from their arrival at the airport.

## WHAT TYPES OF SPACE ARE NEEDED?

**The arts community identified the most urgent current art space needs include:**

- 1 Affordable Studio/work space / Fabrication spaces
- 2 Production space
- 3 Rehearsal /production space
- 4 Storage
- 5 Workshop / Instruction space
- 6 Exhibition venue(s) - for Edmonton artists, emerging and senior (public / community opportunities vs private galleries)
- 7 Presentation/Performance venue
- 8 Audience space
- 9 Meeting space
- 10 Administration/ Office space
- 11 Live/work space

**Specifically, artists identified the kinds of arts spaces needed include:**

- Both smaller work-only studio spaces (150 – 500 sq ft) as well as Professional work-only painting and sculpture studios. (1500 + sq ft)
- Large affordable Commercial or industrial spaces/buildings w loading capability.
- Designated artist spaces that artists sustainably rent or own EG (New York studios)
- Art space for multiple uses: ie/ hold an art show in your studio, gatherings.
- Community spaces - for events, performance and exhibitions and workshop/classes.
- A City Arts Facility
- A Circus specific facility
- Municipally designated buildings for gathering spaces
- Sponsored premier multi-space destination facility
- Performance arts specific multi-user/partner spaces – like the Epcor Centre in Calgary
- Interdisciplinary performance space that suits dance and media. Can be shared space
- Multiple functions in one space
- Something that will replace the Casa Theatre (supported by the provincial government).
- Main stage venues that meet standards across the country for creation and performance of dance and theatre
- 600 – 1600 seat mixed venue
- Mid-sized venue in an accessible location (500 – 700 seats)
- Small performance space (<450 seats)

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- An affordable “soft seat venue” (Fixed seats?) with about 200 seats
- Technically equipped venues seating 100 – 300
- Much smaller (75 seats): premier multi-functional performance spaces
- Appropriate dance performance space
- More suitable and affordable space for both rehearsal and performances eg. Dance Centre in Vancouver
- Affordable rehearsal, performance and workshop spaces in general
- Child oriented venues / Live music venues that are open to children and minors
- Smaller live music venues to meet local demand- more live music venues in general
- Culturally specific venue for weather related contingency (summer and winter) in North Edge and Chinatown.
- Collaborative spaces for craftspeople, designers and artists.
  - A ‘design studio incubator’ or design collectives/co-op studios to kick start new creative businesses in Edmonton
  - Development of specifically designed co-operative housing projects for singles, couples and families (in the Strathcona area) with a visual art/artisan focus.

## Arts spaces the art community identified as being under threat include:

- ArtsHab1 – in 3 years the live/work units will be lost due to landlord lease increase to commercial rates unless the building can be purchased
- Catalyst Theatre – the one theatre venue that the entire performance community uses. (lease is up in 2 yrs.)
- Work Shop West - a long used affordable rehearsal space threatened by multiple zoning issues and regulatory restrictions.
- Firefly Circus - they have been threatened by sudden eviction due to inaction on a rezoning application, causing the tenants’ use of the building to be illegal in that zone. (IM)

## Existing places the community identified as potential opportunities for Arts Space include:

- Grant McEwan West Campus building (arts and/or “holistic urban market”)
- The Epcor Power Plant
- Decommissioned fire halls - should be considered for artist studios before demolition.
- Downtown:
  - Mercer Building @ 104 and 104 - has a landlord interested in long term head lease to arts group but the building will require substantial renovations and code improvements
  - PEDWAY spaces at Enterprise Square – 3 unleased spaces could be utilized by arts to animate the pedway in At 104St until retail tenants can be attracted
  - Empty warehouse Buildings in the centre of the City
  - Inner city closed schools – (Williamson/McCauley ) - arts opportunities and solid long term space
- Strathcona
  - Strathcona light industrial zone (east side of rail 102 east)
  - Closed arenas - (Tipton Arena and Strathcona Hockey Arena) - readapt as cultural venues and Assembly spaces for organizing events
- 118 Avenue
  - The Old Alberta Cycle Building – being repurposed as a work-only arts space and performance venue
  - ETS barns – 1 block south of 117 Ave on 80 St (currently used for storage)
  - Georgia Cycle Building, 118 Ave and 93 St
  - Variety Exchange Building, 118 ave and 94 St
  - Eastwood School – potential arts office space
- Industrial spaces
  - Especially older industrial warehouses whose height is too low for new industrial technology.
  - Other accessible and available light industrial spaces in the centre of the city

## HOW MUCH SPACE IS NEEDED?

While only a tiny sampling of how much and what kind of space is needed by the entire Edmonton arts community, the following data summarizes from the Arts Habitat Waitlist, Updated, August 2011:

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| TOTAL WAIT-LIST PEOPLE |             | TOTAL WAITLIST WORKSPACE DEMAND |                               | PROJECTED DEMAND BY CENSUS **           |
|------------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| Individual artists     | 123*        | Individual artists              | 110,150 FT <sup>2</sup>       |   |
| Organizations          | 49*         | Organizations                   | 121,250 FT <sup>2</sup>       |   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>           | <b>172*</b> | <b>TOTAL</b>                    | <b>231,400 FT<sup>2</sup></b> | <b>Over 1,500,000 FT<sup>2</sup>***</b> |

| ARTS ACTIVITIES AS STATED  | INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS                 | ORGANIZATIONS                     | TOTAL   |
|--|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| Major Discipline   | #                                  | #                                 | #   |
| <b>Literary Arts and Music Composition</b><br>(writing, editing, composing)  | 10                                 | 7                                 | <b>17</b>   |
| <b>Visual Arts</b><br>(painting, drawing, illustration, photography, etc.)   | 84                                 | 17                                | <b>101</b>  |
| <b>Crafts</b><br>(sewing, woodworking, metal work, glass, jewelry)   | 6                                  | 1                                 | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Live Performance</b><br>(theatre, acting, dance, choreography, music, street, performance art)  | Music 26<br>Theatre 19<br>Dance 17 | Music 14<br>Theatre 8<br>Dance 12 | Music 40<br>Theatre 27<br>Dance 29<br><b>Total live performance: 96</b> |
| <b>Costume, Fashion, Textiles</b>  | Textiles 3                         | Costumes 1                        | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Media Arts</b><br>(film, video, photography)  | 21                                 | 7                                 | <b>28</b>   |
| <b>Larger Fabrication Arts</b><br>(Sculpture, mixed-media, installation art, furniture making, glass with furnaces, ceramics with kilns) | 4                                  | Ceramics 1                        | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Design Arts</b><br>(Architecture, industrial, furniture, graphics)  | 1                                  |                                   | <b>1</b>  |
| <b>Culinary Arts</b>   | 0                                  | 0                                 | <b>0</b>  |
| <b>Arts/Culture Administration groups</b>  |                                    | 4                                 | <b>4</b>  |

| SPACE REQUIREMENTS BY TYPE  | SPACE REQUIREMENTS BY AREA |                     |                |                       |                     |                |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------|
|   | ARTISTS                    |                     |                | ORGANIZATIONS         |                     |                |
| Main Category   | Range FT <sup>2</sup>      | Avg FT <sup>2</sup> | TOTAL          | Range FT <sup>2</sup> | Avg FT <sup>2</sup> | TOTAL          |
| <b>Theatre presentation/performance space</b>   | 200 - 1000                 | 600                 | <b>11,400</b>  | 800 - 2,500           | 1,650               | <b>13,200</b>  |
| <b>Rehearsal/development space</b>  | 1,000                      | 1,000               | <b>14,000</b>  | 600 - 2,000           | 1,300               | <b>23,400</b>  |
| <b>Dance space</b> (sprung floors)  | 500 - 1000                 | 750                 | <b>12,750</b>  | 1,000 - 3,000         | 2,000               | <b>24,000</b>  |
| <b>Workshop/ arts instruction space</b>   |                            |                     |                |                       | 500                 | <b>1000</b>    |
| <b>Visual art studio space</b>  | 100 - 1,000                | 550                 | <b>46,2000</b> | 1000 - 2000           | 1,000               | <b>17,000</b>  |
| <b>Live/work space (8)</b>  | 500 - 800                  | 650                 | <b>5,200</b>   |                       |                     |                |
| <b>Fabrication space</b> (requiring tools, noise)   | 200 - 800                  | 500                 | <b>2,000</b>   | 2,500                 | 2,500               | <b>2,500</b>   |
| <b>"Atelier"/ Production space</b><br>(costume, fashion)  | 200-400                    | 200                 | <b>600</b>     | 400 - 600             | 500                 | <b>500</b>     |
| <b>Smaller specialized media facilities</b><br>(film, photography)  | 500 - 600                  | 550                 | <b>11,550</b>  | 600 - 800             | 700                 | <b>4,900</b>   |
| <b>Larger specialized facilities</b><br>(recording, film /video, ceramics, printmaking, multi media)                                |                            |                     |                | 2,500- 4,500          | 3,500               | <b>3,500</b>   |
| <b>Gallery space</b>  |                            |                     |                | 1000                  | 1000                | <b>1,000</b>   |
| <b>Smaller Office/ Admin</b><br>(non-profits, service providers, community resource centres) (storage, office, meeting)             | 300 - 1000                 | 650                 | <b>6,500</b>   | 1,000 - 2,500         | 1,750               | <b>5,250</b>   |
| <b>Larger combined organization use</b><br>(combined workshop/arts instruction, gallery, admin+ small rehearsal /development space) |                            |                     |                | 2,500 - 10,000        | +6,250              | <b>+25,000</b> |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  |                            |                     | <b>110,150</b> |                       |                     | <b>121,250</b> |

\*The Edmonton Arts Council website, where the Arts Habitat Space Waitlist is posted, lists 319 individual artists and 90 organizations as members. Of these numbers, over 1/3 of individual artists and 1/2 of organizations are currently looking for space.

\*\*\*Using statistical analysis distilled from Hill Strategies Research, based on the 2001 and 2006 census, the number of artists in Edmonton is projected to be 4,500 in 2009." [Actual census numbers in 2001 and 2006 for artists were 3,095 and 3,255 respectively.] PAL Edmonton Document, 2009

\*\*\*Considering these statistics, the number of artists and organizations listed as members of the Edmonton Arts Council represent less than 1% of the total artist population in Edmonton, by census. It can therefore be conservatively projected that an additional 1500 artists and organizations are space challenged, equating to a need for more than 1,500,000 FT<sup>2</sup> of space (based on an average of 1000 FT<sup>2</sup>).