



Performing and Visual Arts Venues Study

July 2024

Prepared by Happy Cities and The Arts Firm Inc. for the Halifax Regional Municipality

HALIFAX



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Executive Summary

Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) is the second fastest growing municipality in Canada, but the number of venues in the region has shrunk over the last decade.¹ Venues have closed for both performing and visual arts, and artists are increasingly struggling to find space to show their work.² If HRM does not add new venues, there is a risk it will stifle the growth of its arts scene, depriving residents of a crucial component of quality of life, and an important driver of economic growth.

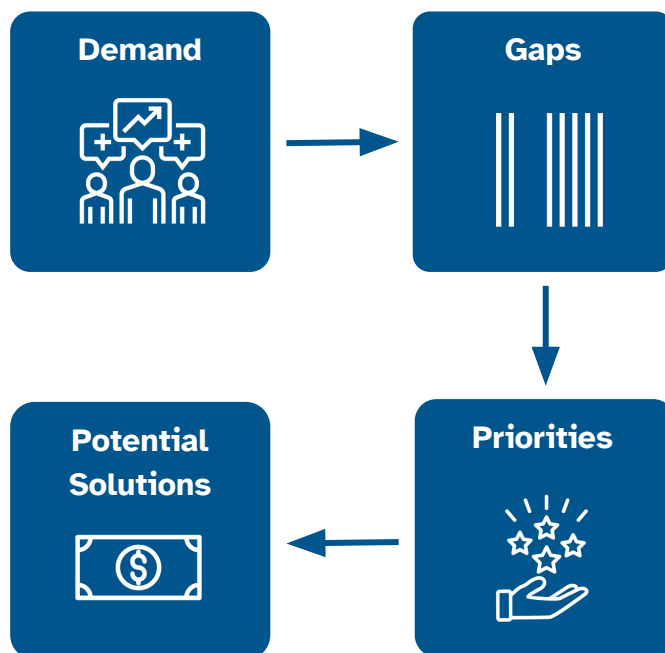
This study seeks to identify the gaps in performing and visual arts venues in the region, and the challenges experienced by venues and artists. The study aims to clarify the highest priority gaps and problems in the ecosystem of arts venues in the Halifax region, and to offer high-level guidance on the kinds of solutions that can address these issues. This Study is vital for informing HRM's future arts-venue related work, including the proposed Professional Arts Venue Plan (formerly known as the Cultural Facilities Plan) which would aim to provide more detailed recommendations on how HRM will support and invest in professional art venues, and the specific, technical requirements for potential new venues.

What we did

This study was conducted in five overlapping stages: background research, stakeholder engagement, public engagement, the needs assessment study, and a second round of engagement to collect feedback on the study. For stakeholder engagement, we identified 128 stakeholder groups—including venue owners and operators, and artists in a wide variety of disciplines—and conducted seven focus groups and 18 interviews with them. We also held two focus groups for stakeholders from the African Nova Scotian community, and interviewed six Indigenous stakeholders and three francophone stakeholders. We engaged the public through an online survey, receiving 480 responses. Concurrently with the first three phases, we developed an inventory map of all venues that meet the project's criteria, and which artistic needs they primarily serve.

Study methodology

This study assessed needs for arts venues in the Halifax region through four steps:



Key Findings: Performing Arts

Performing arts venues can be divided into three categories: professional venues, community venues, and outdoor stages.

Professional Performing Arts Venues

The purpose of professional venues is to create a thriving arts sector that can develop local talent and act as an income-generating economic sector. Stakeholders emphasized that professional venues need to be located centrally so that they can reinforce each others’ success, support a local workforce of artists and technicians, and enable arts festivals that need multiple venues. Cities with a thriving arts sector tend to have a cluster of venues in their core.⁷ Our analysis of professional venues therefore focuses on the regional centre. However, venues in rural and suburban areas also serve crucial functions for arts and culture, which we address in the section on community venues.

Overview of performing arts gaps in the Halifax region:

Urgent

- All-ages music venue
- Black box theatres
- Black box designed for movement

High priority

- Large-scale roadhouse theatre
- Medium-size roadhouse theatre
- Small-scale cinema

Moderate priority

- Concert hall

All-ages music venue. Urgent priority.

The regional centre has no dedicated all-ages music venue. Radstorm often hosts all-ages shows, and other, larger venues sometimes host these shows, but stakeholders emphasize there is a need for a full-time all-ages venue to cultivate the next generation of musicians and concert-goers.

Three to five black-box theatres. (70-300 seats). Urgent priority.

Black box theatres are simple, often square black rooms designed to be as flexible as possible for a wide variety of arts. The Bus Stop Theatre is one of the municipality’s only small black box theatres, and it is badly overbooked: It turned down 202 booking requests in 2023. One of the most common requests from stakeholders was for more black box theatres in a range of sizes, including more with a similar size as the Bus Stop (75 seats) to act as “incubators” for small, up-and-coming arts groups.

Large-scale roadhouse theatre. (1,800+ seats.) High priority.

A roadhouse theatre is a venue that prioritizes outside rentals, rather than putting on its own shows. The region does not have a fully-equipped, modern, large-scale theatre.

The Rebecca Cohn Auditorium is the region’s largest venue that is not a stadium. It was originally designed to be a concert hall, which has led to design limitations, such as the lack of a flytower. Many national and international shows do not come to the Halifax region due to the lack of an adequate large-scale theatre, and because the Cohn’s capacity, at 1,023 seats, is too small to make major shows profitable. The absence of touring shows impacts local artists by reducing their exposure to international producers and curators, and reduces opportunities for local bands to open for popular performers. HRM is unique among similarly sized capitals — Victoria, Quebec City, and Winnipeg — in not having an adequate regional theatre.

A midsize roadhouse theatre. (500-1000 seats.)

High priority.

There is no full-size, properly equipped roadhouse theatre for drama in the regional centre. (The Spatz Theatre lacks full-size wings and changing rooms). There is also no adequate venue for dance, meaning one with special flooring (crucial for the safety of dancers) and a flytower (a rope system that hoists people and set pieces into the air), among other requirements. Stakeholders express concern that in the past, when governments have attempted to design venues that meet everyone's needs, they have not hired appropriate experts, or cut corners, leading to venues that do not fully meet anyone's needs. There are strategies to design a roadhouse to serve the needs of both drama and dance—and other arts—but these require the guidance of an appropriate design expert.

Small cinema. (100-200 seats). High priority.

After the loss of the Oxford Theatre, there is no small cinema in the regional centre for showing independent, arthouse films. Such a cinema should have raked, cushioned seating; high-quality audio and projection equipment; the ability to fully blackout light; and a small stage for interviews and panels at film events. The cinema can be used for other arts activities during the day, but should be dedicated for film screenings during evenings and weekends.

Concert hall. (300-800 seats). Moderate priority.

The region would benefit from having a midsize concert hall optimized for non-amplified music, such as classical and chamber music. However, this is not the highest-priority gap because there are venues that partially serve this need, or that can be retrofitted to better meet it.

Key Next Steps for Performing Arts

Investigate the potential to build a performing arts centre in the regional centre that can address the need for a large, preeminent roadhouse theatre, as well as other venue needs.

A “performing arts centre” refers to buildings containing multiple venues, often with one, large venue. A new performing arts centre in the regional centre could help fill multiple venue gaps that are difficult to address without a new building, and help establish a strong, centralized ecosystem of venues. In particular, it would be difficult to create a large-scale roadhouse theatre without a major building project of some kind.

Explore creating a capital grant program to consider requests from non-profit organizations to create, acquire, or renovate venues.

Such a program would prepare the municipality to evaluate proposals from groups who wish to create new venues, or to renovate existing venues to better meet the needs of the performing arts sector. Such a program could also help protect existing venues by providing funds for maintenance, meeting building standards, or helping organizations acquire the building where their venue is located — which would help protect venues from eviction and rising rental prices.

Establish criteria for evaluating potential new venues. This criteria should reflect the venue gaps identified in this report, and the importance of clustering professional venues close together. Priority should also be given to venues that will be designed and managed to prioritize the arts.

Explore other opportunities for HRM to address performing art venue needs. It may be possible to renovate HRM-owned buildings to create venues. It may also be possible to integrate a performing arts venue into upcoming HRM capital projects.

Community Venues

While professional venues should be located in the regional centre to support the arts industry, other venues serve a distinct purpose: to offer easier access to professional arts in more neighbourhoods, create space for local productions, and strengthen social ties. While the region's core professional venues should be clustered together, community venues should be dispersed throughout the region to reduce the average distance between homes and venues. Strategies for building community venues should be distinct from professional venues, because they fill a distinct gap.

Key Next Steps: Community Venues

Further explore the distinct needs of community venues, and strategies to create them, in future studies. Further analysis will be needed to fully understand the needs of community venues, and strategies to create them.

Explore opportunities to create multipurpose community venues, including for performing or visual arts. Such venues should offer community gathering space, enable professional shows, and be located in areas that are underserved by venues. They should also be cost-effective to build, such as by incorporating them into a larger capital project or renovating an existing building.

Outdoor Venues

There is no outdoor stage in the region with all necessary equipment for large events — including a stage, roof, electricity, and washrooms — which imposes major costs on event organizers. The Alderney Events Plaza is likely best positioned to fill this need. It has a roof, electricity, some washrooms, and could accommodate 15,000 people if a solution can be found to provide safe egress routes across the train tracks. Stakeholders also requested a smaller-scale bandstand with similar permanent equipment, but for an audience of a few hundred people. No existing site is readily available for this purpose.

Key Next Steps: Outdoor Venues

Explore opportunities, including HRM's upcoming capital projects, to invest in a large-scale outdoor stage or a medium-scale band stand. Such an outdoor venue should be centrally located and physically accessible. It should also have adequate electricity, washroom facilities, and a permanent, covered stage that protects artists from sun, wind, and rain.

Halifax Buskers Festival. Photo from HRM Corporate Communications.



Key Findings: Visual Arts Galleries and Studios

Visual arts stakeholders emphasized the following major gaps:

Studio space: Stakeholders described the lack of studio space in the Halifax region as a “crisis.” There are five studios that artists can rent or otherwise access, but most have limited space. Most artists must produce work at home, making it impractical to produce art that involves dust, toxic chemicals, paint splatter, or similar. Artists requested that HRM prioritize creating studio space that can be rented full-time by artists, collectives, or groups.

Financial support for acquiring buildings:

Stakeholders emphasized that if arts groups had the financial support needed to acquire buildings for gallery and studio space, this would enable them to better focus on their mandate, and would eliminate the risk of eviction or rising rents.

Large-scale institutional gallery: Stakeholders were unanimous in expressing strong support for the new Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. A large, regional gallery can attract international artists, exhibitions, and curators, who can then bring attention and opportunities for local artists, art groups, and other galleries. In this way, a large gallery can support the survival of smaller players in the local arts ecosystem.

A lack of opportunities for early-career and mid-career artists: It is difficult to show artwork at many of the region’s galleries until an artist has already developed a strong reputation. However, artists cannot develop a reputation without showing work. As a consequence, many leave the region due to lack of opportunities. To tackle this, there is a need both for more physical gallery spaces and funding to pay artists for showing work.

Flexible gallery spaces: There is a need for more gallery spaces in the Halifax region that can respond quickly to new ideas or to the needs of festivals. Many of the galleries in the region are institutional in nature, are often connected to a university, and have a slow, formal decision making process for how they use their space. If funding were available for existing artist-run groups to acquire buildings to create galleries, this would help establish more flexible gallery space, and help address the need for more early-career and mid-career arts space.

Key Next Steps: Visual Arts

Explore strategies to implement the following list of potential solutions:

- Provide funding or financing support to enable arts groups to acquire and renovate buildings to create or protect gallery and studio spaces.
- Provide funding for new studio spaces.
- Provide funding for new artist-run centres and community galleries.
- Expand funds for nonprofit galleries to pay artist fees for exhibitions and festivals, so that groups can make better use of existing gallery space.
- Continue to support the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia project.
- Provide space in existing public buildings for exhibitions with adequate artist fees.

Establish a criteria for evaluating major capital proposals for visual arts venues. This criteria should reflect the need to support early-career and mid-career artists, to pay fees to artists who show work, and to create rentable studio space to produce artwork.

Key Findings: Governance

Stakeholders identified a range of other challenges faced by artists and venues, and offered potential solutions.

Tax relief

A major financial challenge for many venues is that organizations that lease their venue are not eligible to apply for the HRM tax relief program. This is a major problem, because rising property valuations has led to rising taxes in the regional centre, which risks causing venues to close or move.

Venue ownership and management

One of the central challenges with current performing arts venues in the region is that many are owned and managed by schools, libraries, or university faculties that often prioritize their own needs over that of arts groups. To create a thriving arts scene, it will be essential to ensure the region's preeminent venues can prioritize the needs of the arts. There are examples in Canada of universities that successfully manage arts venues, but it is important that any such venue is run by a department focused on the arts, and not an educational faculty that prioritizes students.

Institutional support for the arts

A number of stakeholders requested an entity that could represent the arts sector in HRM, identify challenges, and make recommendations to the municipality. Such an entity could also potentially play a role in managing public venues.

Key Next Steps: Governance

Prioritize venue projects that will be managed by an organization with a mandate focused on the arts. HRM should consider giving greater priority to funding proposals from organizations with such a mandate. And the municipality should aspire to ensure that HRM-owned venues are managed by such an organization, to the extent possible.

Explore the potential of creating a partnership, advisory body, or working group who acts as an advocate for the needs of the arts community and assists in the promotion of professional art venues and events.

Underrepresented Communities

African Nova Scotian arts community needs

Stakeholders requested cultural space for African Nova Scotian artists in the regional centre, ideally in Dartmouth. Participants expressed aspirations for a mixed-use venue downtown that could include:

- A performing arts venue.
- A recording studio.
- A video editing studio.
- A gallery.

Such a facility could help to address some of the gaps identified above. One stakeholder suggested the space could showcase the history of African Nova Scotian art and culture, which could help justify the necessary funding.

Indigenous arts community needs

The new Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre will meet many of the Indigenous community's needs for the arts. However, Indigenous stakeholders identified a number of other challenges that will remain, including:

- It is difficult and intimidating for Indigenous artists living on reserves to connect with promoters, curators, and others in the arts sector in the Halifax regional centre that could allow them to establish their career.
- Indigenous artists are often siloed into events or programs meant specifically for Indigenous artists. They have too few opportunities to showcase their work in popular settings alongside artists of other backgrounds.
- Galleries and curators have not fully leveraged the opportunity to grow the market for Indigenous visual arts in the Halifax region, which is a major market in other jurisdictions.

Francophone arts community needs

The primary need of the francophone community is for a black box theatre on the Halifax peninsula. Stakeholders have secured funding to build such a venue, called *Le Centre de l'Acadie et de la Francophonie de Halifax*, as part of the new *Conseil scolaire acadien provincial* school in the North End. Its opening is planned for late 2025, early 2026. The next greatest need identified by francophone stakeholders is for better promotion of French-language events. Often, French speakers do not realize what cultural events are available in the region.

Key Recommendations: Underrepresented Communities

African Nova Scotian community

- Explore the potential to support an African Nova Scotian Arts Centre in the regional centre—particularly in Downtown Dartmouth—and whether this could fulfill any of the other venue gaps identified in this report.

Indigenous community:

- Continue to support the proposed new Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre.
- Explore programs that could connect Indigenous artists on reservations with venues and promoters in the regional centre.
- Explore creating a funding program for projects by the Indigenous community to offer their artists opportunities to show, create, or promote their work.

Francophone community:

- Explore opportunities to promote French language events among French speakers.

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1. Introduction

Cultural spaces play a significant role in the social and economic development. To better understand arts venues needs in the region, the Halifax Regional Municipality engaged Happy Cities and The Arts Firm to conduct a Performing and Visual Arts Venues Study. The study is based on extensive stakeholder consultation, an online public survey, and an inventory of the region's performing arts venues and galleries.

The purposes of the study are to:

- Improve the municipality's understanding of professional art venue operations.
- Identify the challenges that existing art venues experience.
- Identify the venue needs of the local arts and culture community.
- Inform the municipality's long-term approach to supporting, renewing and investing in arts venues.

The study identifies high-priority gaps and challenges in the region's venues, and potential next steps to address these issues, so that the arts scene can continue to grow and flourish.

1.1 Economic Value of the Arts

A vibrant arts scene plays an important role in a city's economic success. Culture is crucial for creating a high-quality of life that can attract a highly-skilled workforce, and people of all backgrounds.⁵ A growing number of companies choose to locate in cities that offer the amenities necessary to attract the talented employees they rely on.⁶ In interviews and focus group sessions, stakeholders emphasized that the arts should not be understood as a luxury, but is essential for economic prosperity.



Piano performance at the Halifax Central Library, 2017. ([Paul Louie](#) / Flickr)

1.2 Project Context

The number of arts venues in the Halifax region has not kept pace with its population growth. In 2022, Halifax was Canada's second fastest growing urban area, adding over 20,713 new residents in one year—twice as many as in the previous year. In the same year, its economy grew by a “robust” 3.3%.³ Meanwhile, the area has also lost multiple venues, including The Waiting Room, The Living Room, The North Street Church, The Pavillion, and The Turret Building (formerly the Khyber). Eye Level Gallery also lost its permanent space, and now rents other spaces to show art. Only two new venues were added during this period in Halifax's regional centre, The Light House Arts Centre and The Sanctuary.

There is a risk that the lack of venues could stifle the growth of the cultural sector in the region. One theatre producer said in a 2021 interview with *The Coast*, “You can count on one hand the number of spaces that are actually suitable on the peninsula anymore.”⁴ This study aims to enable HRM to begin to fill these arts venue gaps.



Krasnogorsk, a Halifax-area band. Photo used with permission.

1.3 Project Scope

This study focuses on professional, audience facing, purpose-built performing and visual arts venues that operate throughout the municipality. The study focuses on nonprofit and municipal art venues because the municipality can more directly intervene to support these venues. However, the study also consulted private venues to understand the broader challenges and opportunities in the sector. The project excludes many types of venues and spaces that are valuable for showing art, but which are less essential to professional arts. The study excludes:

- Bars or restaurants that host cover music or DJ nights, but that do not host events advertising specific professional artists presenting original work.
- Churches, bars, or restaurants that occasionally hold performances or visual art shows, but that do not have purpose-built facilities for these events, and/or do not have a regular events calendar.
- Schools or community centres that have spaces that can be repurposed for shows, but that primarily serve other uses.
- Informal outdoor spaces that infrequently host art events, such as parking lots.

We also excluded rehearsal, workshop, or other spaces that may be essential for supporting professional arts, but which are not audience facing. We did, however, make note of gaps on these topics that were raised by stakeholders.

1.4 What We Did

This project included five phases:



1. Background report: We conducted background research on the project context; local and national trends in venues and arts funding; and case studies of similar needs assessments in Vancouver and Hamilton.

2. Stakeholder engagement: The project team identified 128 core stakeholder groups that work in dance, music, theatre, circus, visual arts, film screenings, and literary presentations. We identified 61 additional stakeholders in the African Nova Scotian, Indigenous, and Francophone communities. We conducted engagement through interviews, focus groups, and surveys.

3. Public engagement: The project team conducted a public, online survey to ask residents about their priorities for arts venues in the Halifax region, and to understand how well current venues meet their needs. The survey was open on HRM’s Shape Your City web page from November 9 to December 15, 2023.

4. Second stakeholder engagement. We sent stakeholders excerpts from this study and the full appendices and requested their feedback. We also asked them to rate the level of priority they would assign to each of the venue gaps identified in this study. We sent the survey to 105 stakeholders who had participated in earlier rounds of engagement, and received 33 responses.

Venues inventory. Concurrently with the first three phases, we developed a map of all the venues in the region that meet the criteria in the project scope. We then sent one survey to the performing arts venues and another survey to the visual arts galleries and studios to identify the attributes of each, and the equipment they offer. The inventory highlights the artistic disciplines best served by each venue (where this information is available). Appendix B summarizes stakeholder feedback on how well each venue meets various artistic needs, and what needs each could potentially meet with renovations.

1.5 Who We Heard From

Stakeholder engagement

We conducted 18 interviews and held seven focus groups with a total of 72 stakeholders. Detailed stakeholder engagement findings are included in Appendix A.

Participants included:

- Groups that create or perform art.
- Arts promoters and presenters.
- Associations representing various arts sectors.
- Venue owners and operators, including private, nonprofit, and public organizations that show visual or performing art.
- Visual arts studio owners and operators.

We also received 28 survey responses from arts organizations that use venues, and 24 survey responses from venue and gallery owners and operators.

In addition, we held two focus groups centred on African Nova Scotian needs, with 15 people participants. We conducted six interviews with Indigenous stakeholders, including a dancer, a traditional musician, three contemporary musicians, and a visual artist. Finally, we held three interviews with francophone stakeholders, including venue managers, a theatre director, and a music promoter.



Figure 1. A summary of public outreach conducted for this project.

Public engagement

The public survey reached 480 people. Survey respondents were relatively representative of age brackets 35 or older, but the survey reached relatively fewer young people. Roughly 17% of respondents are younger than 35, and 2% are younger than 25. More than half of respondents are cis women (53%), while roughly a quarter (26%) are cis men. Six per cent are non-binary, gender-fluid, gender non-conforming, genderqueer, or Two-spirit, while 15% prefer not to say.

480

Public survey respondents

17%

Of public survey respondents were younger than 35.

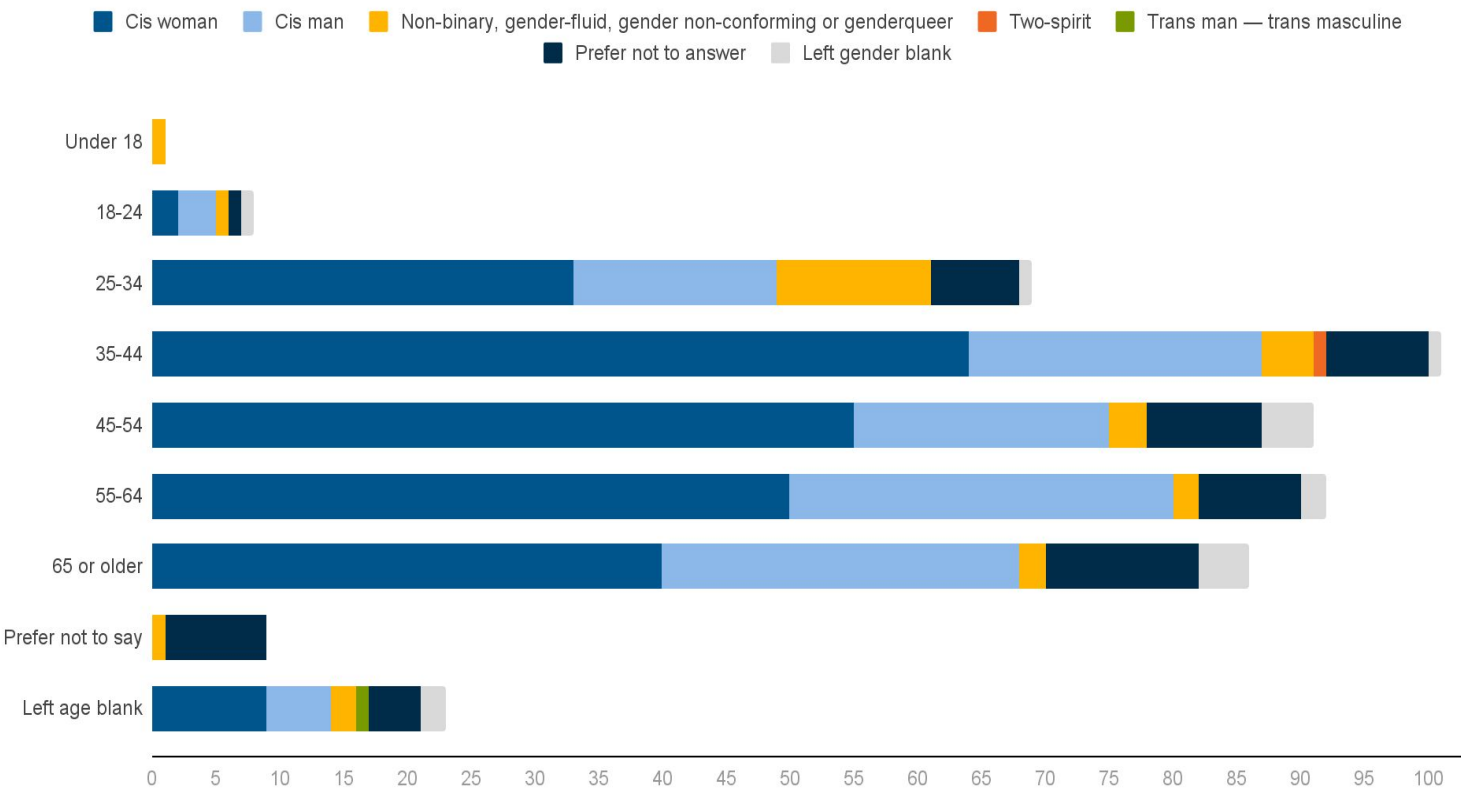


Figure 2. Ages and genders of respondents. 457 gave their age (23 skipped) and 474 gave their gender identity (6 skipped).

1. Introduction

Respondents included urban, suburban, and rural residents. Of the 288 respondents who gave their postal code, 41% live in the regional centre, including 28% from the Halifax peninsula, and 13% from Dartmouth inside the Circumferential Highway. Fifty nine per cent of respondents were from suburban or rural areas of the region. A detailed report on public engagement findings can be found in Appendix C.

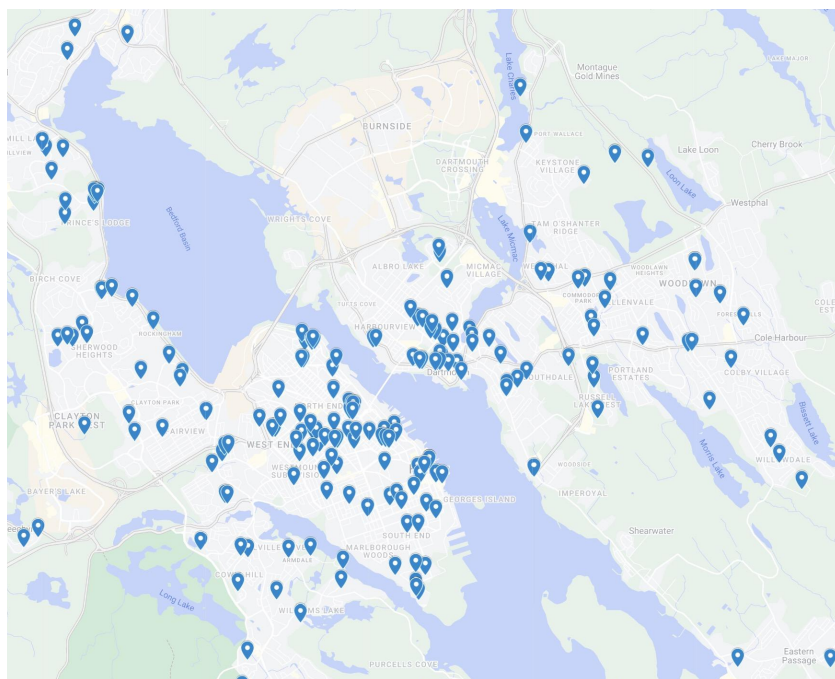


Figure 3b. Location of respondents, by postal code. Detail view of the HRM regional centre.

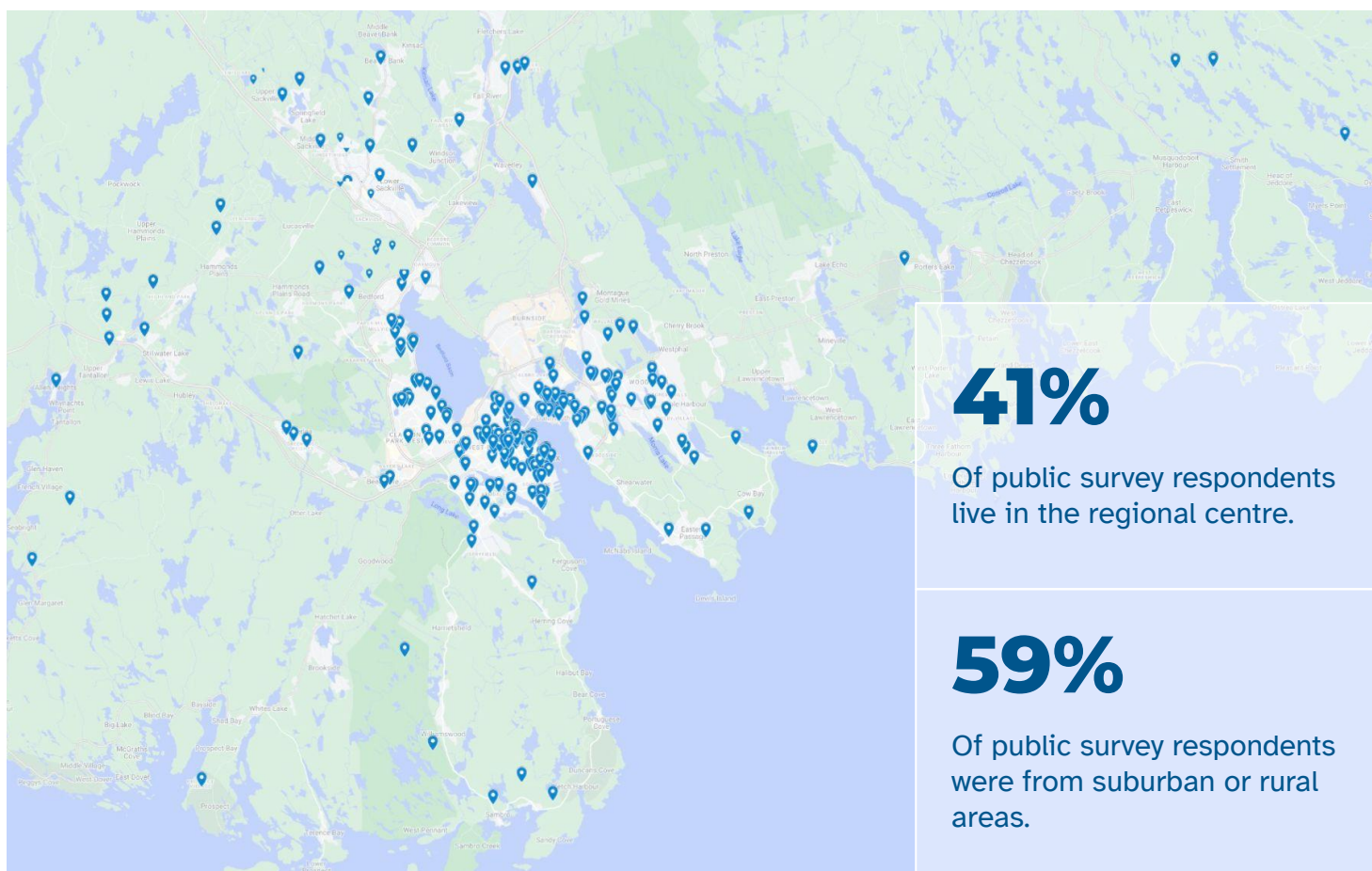


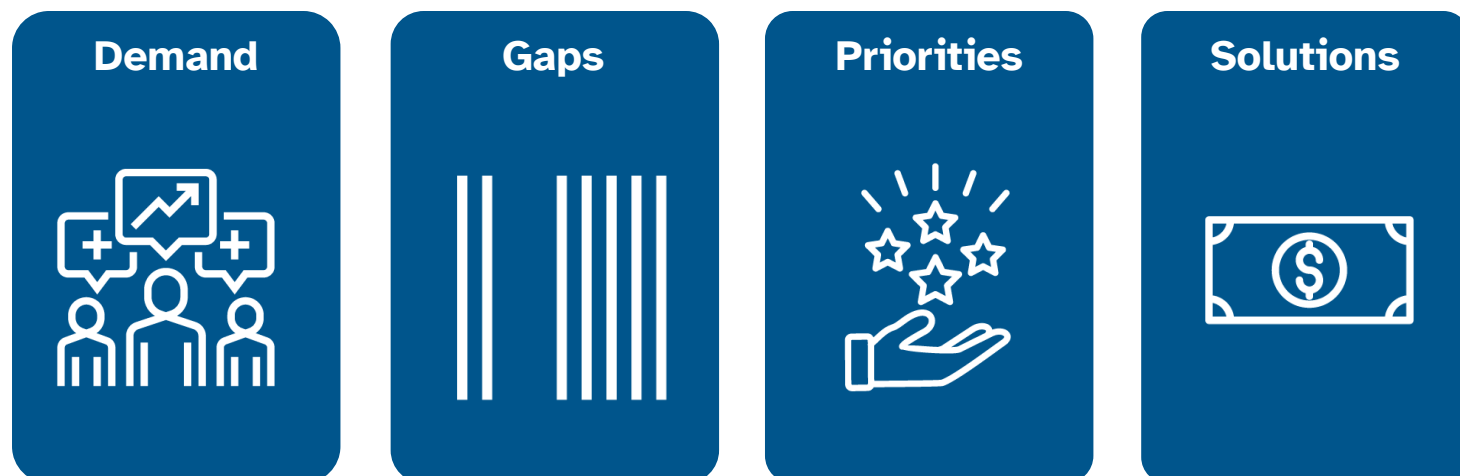
Figure 3a. Location of respondents, by postal code, in the Halifax Region. Markers indicate only the neighbourhood of the respondent, not the exact location.

1.6 Needs Assessment Methodology

To identify the highest priority needs for public investment in venues in the Halifax region, we first categorized various types of arts that have distinct needs (see Section 2.1). We then assessed existing venues in four steps:

- **Demand:** We identified the level of need for various categories of venue based on stakeholder feedback and the public survey.
- **Gaps:** We assessed existing venues in terms of how well they serve various arts categories. In cases where there are gaps, we assessed the severity of the consequences for each kind of art.
- **Priorities:** We identified the highest-priority types of venue the region needs to fill the above-identified gaps.
- **Solutions:** We explored a range of scenarios for investment given a limited budget, and assessed how well each approach can address existing gas.

We then offer a set of recommendations based on this analysis. Although the above analysis focuses on physical infrastructure, we address regulatory, institutional, funding, and other issues in Sections 5 and 6.



2. Performing Arts Venues

This section assesses the performing arts venues in the Halifax region, how well they meet the needs of the arts community, and how best to fill any gaps. This section focuses on indoor venues, while Section 3 addresses outdoor venues. The study finds that there are major gaps in the performing arts venue ecosystem in the Halifax region that will require government intervention to fill.

2.1 Performing Arts Clusters

This study groups performing arts into seven broad clusters based on stakeholder feedback. Although there is some overlap between various clusters, they provide a useful framework to analyze how well current venues meet the needs of various arts and what is missing. In many cases, there are viable strategies that can support more than one cluster, or to create a space that can be adapted for multiple art forms. The clusters are based on input from stakeholders and experts in the field, including The Arts Firm. The seven performing arts clusters are:



Drama: Theatre and similar productions.



Movement: Any kind of performance that involves three dimensional physical movement, including dance, circus, aerials, and acrobatics.

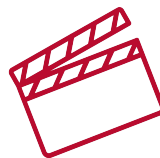


Non-amplified music:

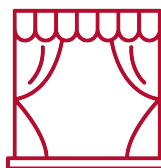
Orchestras, chamber music, choirs, and similar non-electric music.



Amplified music: Pop, rock, or any kind of music that amplifies sound.



Cinema: Film screenings, focused on independent, art-house films (not commercial cinemas).



Stage shows: Comedy, magicians, and similar.



Interdisciplinary: Venues that can accommodate a wide variety of arts, either together in a single show or separately.

Why are these clusters important?

Each arts cluster has its own unique needs, and several stakeholders emphasized that there are tensions between these needs that require a distinct approach to venue design. Participants highlighted the following tensions:

- **Theatre vs. dance:** Dancers require expensive, special flooring, whereas theatre groups often use heavy set pieces that can damage floors, and sometimes need to drill into floors. Dancers also need hotter temperatures.
- **Acoustics vs. amplification:** Non-amplified music — such as orchestras and chamber music — require resonant rooms that naturally carry sound. Resonance can, however, be detrimental to amplified music — such as rock bands and many musicals — because it can cause audio feedback. Non-amplified music therefore needs walls and surfaces that reflect sound, while amplified music generally needs surfaces that absorb sound.
- **Acoustics vs. dance and theatre:** A concert hall's ceiling needs to be optimized for acoustics, often with baffling or other structures hanging from the ceiling. These ceiling-design requirements make it difficult to set up rigging, fly towers, lights, and other equipment for dance and theatre.
- **Time:** Organizations often want to host shows at the same time, undermining the potential benefits of, for example, combining a theatre and a cinema. Theatre companies want to keep their sets on stage for days or weeks, which conflicts

with weekend music performances.

Dancers need shorter rehearsal days over longer periods to avoid injury, which can create scheduling conflicts with theatre and other disciplines.

Sizes

The arts community also needs venues in a range of sizes. Performances are more financially viable, and are perceived as more successful, if they can fill most seats in a venue. This means it is important to have a variety of venue sizes to match the expected audience of each show. It is also important to have a range of sizes to act as “stepping stones,” so that performers can grow their audience over time.

To simplify the analysis of venues and their needs, we divided venues into three broad size categories:

- Small: 0-180 seats.
- Medium: 181-999 seats.
- Large: 1000+ seats.

See Appendix A, Section 2 for important subcategories within each size bracket.

Caveats. The proposed clusters offer useful high-level guidance, but note that there exists diversity within each cluster as well. For example, various types of dance and circus require distinct types of floors, such as “spring floors” for acrobatics, which provide bounce, and “sprung floors” for dance, which dampen bounce. Stakeholders report that venues exist that successfully accommodate all these disciplines, but it is essential that appropriate experts are hired to design and equip venues to adequately meet the needs of each.

2.2 Demand

In this section, we assess the level of demand for each arts cluster, both in terms of public preferences, and what the arts community wants to create. This will help us assess the level of priority to assign to any gap.

2.2.1 Public Demand

Overall, the public survey revealed major demand for more arts venues in the Halifax region. 92% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed HRM should invest more in performing arts venues, and only 19% agreed or strongly agreed there are currently sufficient venues. We also asked residents what types of performing arts they most enjoy, and which they wish there were more of. The results are shown in figure 4. The two most popular categories were live music and theatre, followed by dance and independent film.

92%

agreed or strongly agreed HRM should invest more in performing arts venues.

19%

agreed or strongly agreed there are currently sufficient venues in the Halifax region.

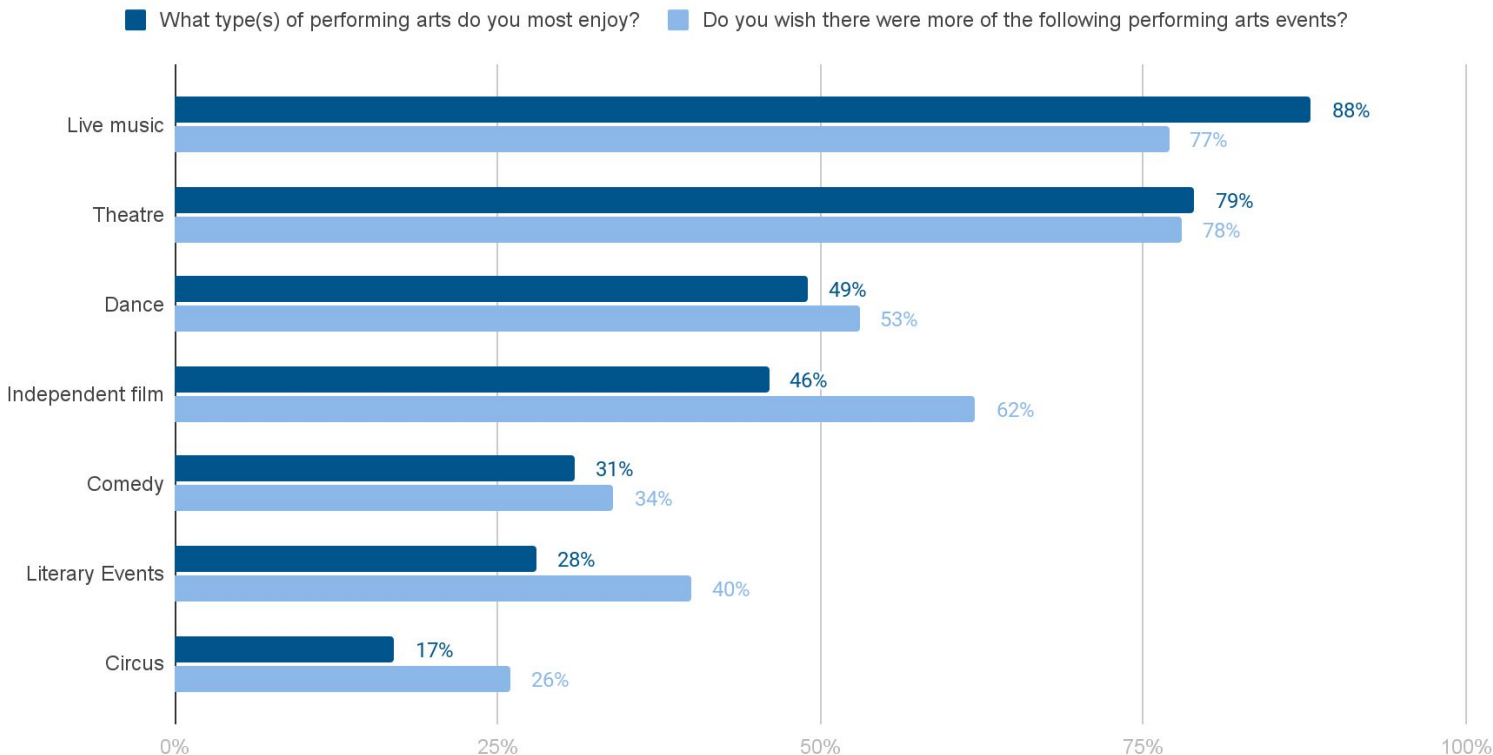


Figure 4. Public survey responses asking residents what kinds of performing arts they most prioritize and desire more of. The chart shows the percentage of respondents who selected each category.

2. Performing arts public investment analysis

In a separate question, we asked residents which kinds of music genres they would like to see more often in performing arts venues (figure 5). Most musical genres require amplification, and this is reflected in the chart.

However, the second most common answer was “Chamber or Classical Music,” suggesting there may be support for a concert hall optimized for non-amplified music genres. A concert hall could also benefit folk music, which was the most common answer mentioned in the “other” category.

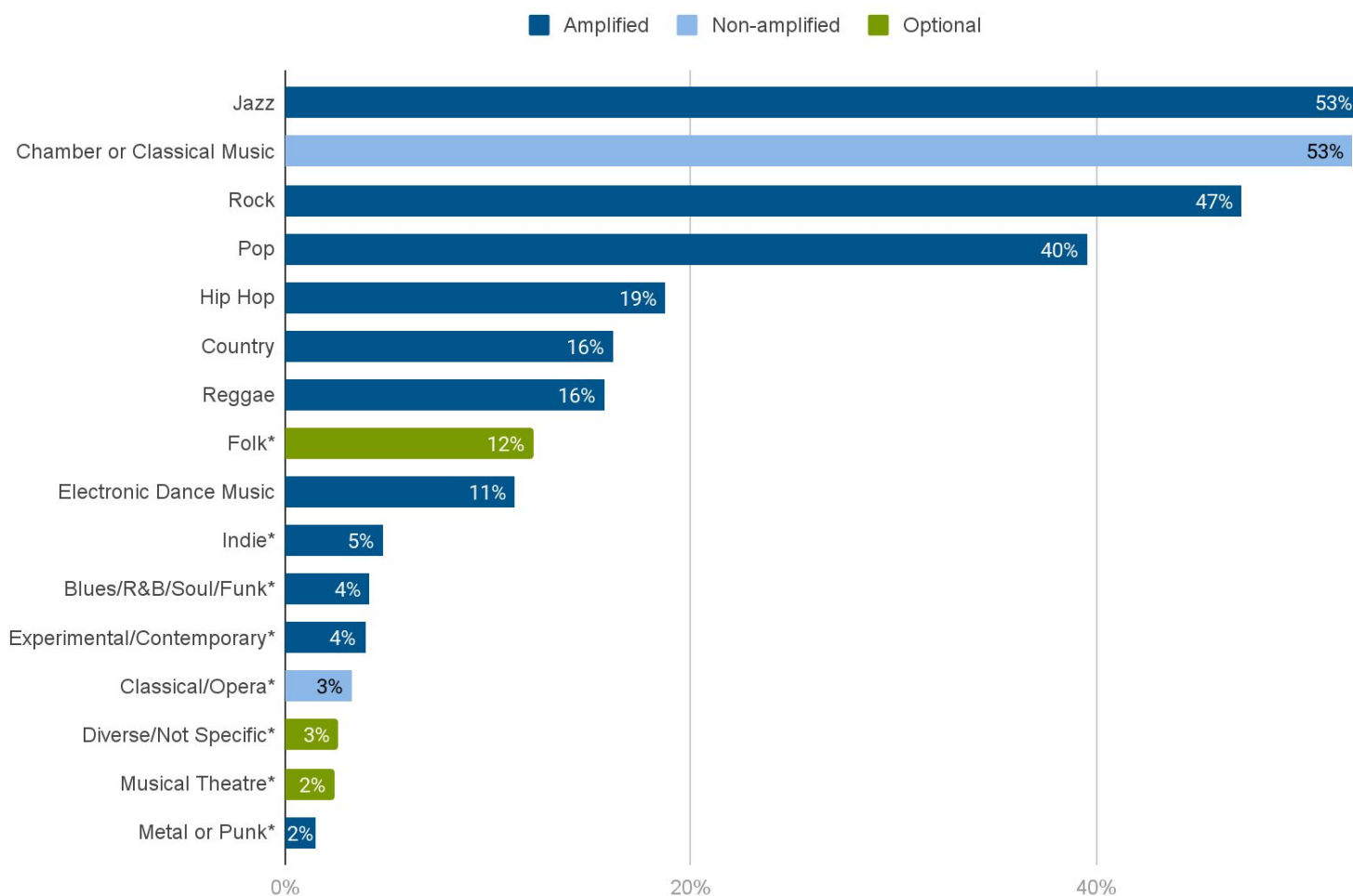


Figure 5. Responses to the question: “Which musical subgenre(s) would you like to see more often in performing arts venues? [Select all that apply].” Answers marked with an asterisk were mentioned in open-ended responses by people who selected “other.” Support for these genres are therefore likely underrepresented.

2.2.2 Artist Demand

We identified 60 groups who present or produce performing arts during the stakeholder engagement, representing many of the most active arts groups in the region. These stakeholders included 15 groups in theatre, 13 in non-amplified music, 10 in amplified music, seven in dance, four in circus, three that organize showings for independent films, and two that work in other miscellaneous forms of art, such as literary events. This suggests that there is the greatest need for venues for theatre, music, and dance, which aligns with the priorities identified in the public survey.

Post-secondary programs

It is also important that venues provide space for the kinds of arts that students train in at local universities, so that the region can retain talent as students graduate. Dalhousie University is the only university in the region with a performing arts program, offering degrees that focus on various elements of theatre and music (primarily non-amplified). Dalhousie also offers a certificate program in dance. These programs reinforce the priority of providing venues for theatre, music and dance. The Nova Scotia Community College Ivany Campus in Dartmouth also offers programs in Screen Arts, Music Arts, Music Business, Music Production and Engineering.



Circus

According to the public survey results, there is relatively low demand for circus. However, circus is relatively new to the region: Of the four circus groups identified, two have existed for 10 years or less and one (Breaking Circus Studio) opened in the last two years. As well, the Halifax region has a circus school (Atlantique Cirque) in Burnside, Dartmouth, which has been operating since 2002. As such, the circus community in the region may still be in its early stages of growth.



Halifax Busker Festival. Photo from HRM Corporate Communications.

2.3 Gaps

This section analyzes how well existing venues meet the demands of the seven arts clusters: drama, movement, non-amplified music, amplified music, cinema, stage shows, and interdisciplinary.

2.3.1 Geographic focus

Venues play a crucial role in all rural, suburban, and urban communities. In Section 3.2, we discuss the importance of investing in rural and suburban venues. In this section, we focus on centrally-located professional venues for three reasons:

- Research suggests that when professional venues are clustered together, they have a greater impact on the success of the arts industry, and on establishing a tourism destination. Cities that have a successful arts industry tend to have a cluster of venues located in their core.⁷
- Stakeholders told us it is important to locate venues close together so that they can support an industry of artists and technicians, build a stable audience for shows, and enable festivals that need multiple venues.
- The majority of public survey respondents selected downtown Halifax and Dartmouth as the highest priority locations for new venues.

It is, however, also important to invest in venues in rural and suburban areas. In Section 3.2, we discuss distinct strategies for analyzing and making these investments.

2.3.2 Needs that Venues Serve

The charts on the following pages offer a qualitative summary of how well all venues in the regional centre (within the project's scope) fulfill the needs of each arts cluster. The analysis is based on stakeholder input, the equipment and layout of each venue, and the requirements of each arts cluster.

Exclusions

For simplicity, table 1 excludes two arts clusters: stage shows and cinema. Stage shows are flexible and can take place in most venues that serve other clusters. Cinema, meanwhile, principally needs one dedicated venue.

Interpreting the analysis of venues

This analysis is qualitative in nature and synthesizes multiple sources of information, a process that necessarily relies on judgement. The goal is to summarize our findings in broad terms to provide direction for decision making. Table 1 was reviewed by stakeholders to validate these judgements, but there is scope for disagreement on the precise scores. For a more detailed assessment of each venue, see Appendix B.

Small-Scale Venues

Venue	Capacity	Drama	Movement	Amplified music	Non-amplified music	Interdisciplinary
Bus Stop Theatre	75					
David Mack-Murray Black-Box (Dalhousie)	80					
The Music Room	105					
Breaking Circus Studio	100		*			
Radstorm	125 [†]					
Light House Studio	168					

Meets needs.
 Largely meets needs.
 Somewhat meets needs.
 Doesn't meet needs.

Table 1. A list of venues in the regional centre with an evaluation for how well each serves each art cluster. (Continued on next page)
 Note that this table does not include the Dartmouth Players Playhouse, as we were unable to reach their representatives.



Breakdancer performs in front of a crowd. Photo from HRM Corporate Communications.

* Breaking Circus is an appropriate venue for circus, but does not meet the needs of dance.

Medium-Scale Venues

	Capacity	Drama	Movement	Amplified music	Non-amplified music	Interdisciplinary
Neptune Scotiabank Stage	195	Meets needs.	Doesn't meet needs.	Largely meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Somewhat meets needs.
Dunn Theatre	198	Meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Somewhat meets needs.	Largely meets needs.
Alderney Landing Theatre	285	Largely meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Largely meets needs.
Lilian Piercey Concert Hall	200	Doesn't meet needs.	Doesn't meet needs.	Somewhat meets needs.	Meets needs.	Doesn't meet needs.
Paul O'Regan Hall	300	Somewhat meets needs.	Somewhat meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Somewhat meets needs.
Joseph Strug Concert Hall	300	Doesn't meet needs.	Doesn't meet needs.	Somewhat meets needs.	Meets needs.	Doesn't meet needs.
The Sanctuary	330	Somewhat meets needs.	Doesn't meet needs.	Meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Somewhat meets needs.
St. Matthew's United Church	450	Doesn't meet needs.	Doesn't meet needs.	Largely meets needs.	Somewhat meets needs.	Doesn't meet needs.
Neptune Theatre	458	Meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Somewhat meets needs.	Largely meets needs.
The Stage at St. Andrews	500	Doesn't meet needs.	Somewhat meets needs.	Meets needs.	Meets needs.	Doesn't meet needs.
Spatz Theatre	780	Somewhat meets needs.	Somewhat meets needs.	Meets needs.	Somewhat meets needs.	Somewhat meets needs.
Light House Performance Hall	1,150 (750 seated)	Somewhat meets needs.	Doesn't meet needs.	Meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Somewhat meets needs.

Large-Scale Venues

Rebecca Cohn Auditorium	1,023	Largely meets needs.	Largely meets needs.	Meets needs.	Meets needs.	Largely meets needs.
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Table 1 Cont'd. A list of venues in the regional centre with an evaluation for how well each serves each art cluster.

The analysis in Table 1 suggests there are many adequate venues for amplified and non-amplified music; some adequate venues for theatre, particularly at a smaller scale; and relatively few venues for movement and interdisciplinary arts. This analysis, on its own, would suggest that there are at least some venues that meet each need.

2.3.3 Barriers to Accessing Venues

However, stakeholders emphasized that many of these venues are rarely available in practice, due to the following barriers:



Competing priorities

- The David Mack-Murray Theatre, The Dunn Theatre, and the Joseph Strug Concert Hall are all owned and managed by Dalhousie University's Fountain School of Performing Arts. The school prioritizes the needs of students. Stakeholders report it is rarely possible to book these spaces.
- The Lilian Piercey Performing Hall is located in the Maritime Conservatory. The Conservatory holds music lessons most evenings, which can interfere with shows, making it difficult to use.
- The Neptune Theatre's main stage is primarily used for Neptune's own productions, and organizations that partner with Neptune, such as Prismatic Festival. Its smaller theatre, the Neptune Scotiabank Stage, is somewhat more available for rental.
- The Spatz Theatre is part of a school and prioritizes school functions. If a production rents the stage for multiple days, it may need to repeatedly take down and put up its set to work around school events. Some stakeholders also find it difficult to secure bookings.

- The Light House Studio is rented by This Hour Has 22 Minutes seven months of the year, leaving five months for other users.
- Paul O'Regan Hall is owned and managed by Halifax Libraries. It can only be booked six months in advance, precluding events that need to be organized earlier, such as many ticketed shows or festivals. An exception is that HRM staff can book the Hall earlier than six months, which means outside groups often find their preferred dates are already taken when it comes time to book.



Overbooking

- The Bus Stop Theatre is significantly overbooked due to a lack of similar venues at that scale. (It turned away 202 booking requests in 2023.)
- The Rebecca Cohn Auditorium is the Halifax region's only large-scale performance hall, and there is substantial competition for it on desirable nights of the week. The Rebecca Cohn is also home to Symphony Nova Scotia, which books the venue many nights of the year.



Affordability

- The Light House Performance Hall is widely considered unaffordable by the arts community, except for large, national music shows.
- Most venues are especially difficult for theatre groups to afford because the Halifax region lacks appropriate rehearsal space, which means theatre groups need to book venues longer.

2. Performing arts public investment analysis

In Table 2, we summarize the extent to which each of these access barriers pose a challenge for each of the selected venues in the regional centre. These evaluations are qualitative in nature, based on what we heard from stakeholders. Note that:

- “Competing priorities” refers to when a space is unavailable due to the organization’s own events or priorities.
- “Overbooked” refers to when a space is mostly booked by outside groups.
- “Affordability” reflects not only the price of the venue, but whether stakeholders perceive it as affordable, given the scale of shows that are possible there, and the number of tickets one can sell.

These ratings should not be interpreted as criticisms: some venues are overbooked precisely because they are popular and highly valued.

Small-Scale Venues

	Competing priorities	Overbooked	Affordability
Bus Stop Theatre	Not a major challenge.	Poses a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.
David Mack-Murray Black-Box (Dalhousie)	Poses a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.
The Music Room	Poses a challenge.	Not a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.
Breaking circus Studio	Poses a challenge.	Not a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.
Radstorm	Not a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.
Light House Studio	Poses a major challenge.	Poses a challenge.	Poses a major challenge.

Medium-Scale Venues

	Competing priorities	Overbooked	Affordability
Neptune Scotiabank Stage	Poses a challenge.	Poses a challenge.	Poses a challenge.
Dunn Theatre	Poses a major challenge.	Poses a major challenge.	Poses a challenge.
Alderney Landing Theatre	Not a major challenge.	Poses a challenge.	Not a major challenge.
Lilian Piercy Concert Hall	Poses a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.
Paul O'Regan Hall	Poses a major challenge.	Poses a challenge.	Not a major challenge.
Joseph Strug Concert Hall	Poses a major challenge.	Poses a challenge.	Poses a challenge.
The Sanctuary	Not a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.
St. Matthew's United Church	Not a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.	Poses a challenge.
Neptune Theatre	Poses a major challenge.	Poses a major challenge.	Poses a major challenge.
The Stage at St. Andrews	Not a major challenge.	Poses a challenge.	Not a major challenge.
Spatz Theatre	Poses a challenge.	Not a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.
Light House Performance Hall	Not a major challenge.	Not a major challenge.	Poses a major challenge.

Large-Scale Venues

Rebecca Cohn Auditorium	Poses a challenge.	Poses a major challenge.	Poses a challenge.
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 Not a major challenge.
  Poses a challenge.
  Poses a major challenge.

Table 2. A list of venues in the regional centre with an evaluation of whether they are difficult for outside arts groups to book due to the venue prioritizing its own programming, the venue being overbooked, or the venue being unaffordable. Almost all venues in the regional centre face at least one of these challenges. Note that this list does not include the Dartmouth Players Playhouse, as we were unable to reach its representatives.

2. Performing arts public investment analysis

Table 3 combines the findings from Table 1 and Table 2 to express how well each venue serves the needs of arts cluster in practice. To receive a high score in Table 3, each venue has to pass through two filters:

- **Filter 1:** How well each venue can physically meet the needs of each arts cluster (as expressed in Table 1).
- **Filter 2:** How accessible each venue is (as expressed in Table 2).

For example, The Bust Stop Theatre physically meets the needs of Drama, but it is overbooked. We therefore score The Bus Stop Theatre as “Doesn’t Meet Needs” in Table 3.

The table represents what arts groups experience when they search for venues to put on shows. **While it may seem that there are many arts venues in the regional centre, Table 3 expresses that very few are available to use in practice.** This table reflects a strong message that we heard from stakeholders: that in practice, there are very few places to put on shows in the regional centre.

“When I say there are zero places capable, that's exactly what it is.”

— Theatre performing group member

Small-Scale Venues

	Capacity	Drama	Movement	Amplified music	Non-amplified music	Interdisciplinary	Primary reason for change
Bus Stop Theatre	75						Overbooked
David Mack-Murray Black-Box (Dalhousie)	80						Prioritizes own events
The Music Room	105						Prioritizes own events
Breaking Circus Studio	100		*				
Radstorm	125						
Light House Studio	168						Prioritizes 22 Minutes 7 months of year

 Meets needs.
  Largely meets needs.
  Somewhat meets needs.
  Doesn't meet needs.

Table 3. A list of venues in the regional centre with an evaluation of how well each can effectively meet the needs of each art cluster, given such barriers as overbooking, affordability, and competing priorities. Any changes made from Table 1 are explained in the right column.

* Breaking Circus is an appropriate venue for circus, but does not meet the needs of dance.

Medium-Scale Venues

	Capacity	Drama	Movement	Amplified music	Non-amplified music	Interdisciplinary	Primary reason for change
Neptune Scotiabank Stage	195						Prioritizes own events
Dunn Theatre	198						Prioritizes own events
Alderney Landing Theatre	285						Overbooked, especially on weekends
Lilian Piercey Concert Hall	200						
Paul O'Regan Hall	300						Prioritizes HRM events, somewhat overbooked
Joseph Strug Concert Hall	300						
The Sanctuary	330						
St. Matthew's United Church	450						
Neptune Theatre	458						
The Stage at St. Andrews	500						Overbooked
Spatz Theatre	780						Prioritizes own events
Light House Performance Hall	1,150 (750 seated)						Affordability

Large-Scale Venues

Rebecca Cohn Auditorium	1,023						Overbooked
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Table 3 Cont'd. A list of venues in the regional centre with an evaluation of how well each can effectively meet the needs of each art cluster, given such barriers as overbooking, affordability, and competing priorities. Any changes made from Table 1 are explained in the right column.

2.4 Priorities

In this section, we identify the highest-priority interventions to address the above-identified gaps. To establish priority, we consider the level of demand expressed in section 2.2, and the severity of the gaps expressed in section 2.3.

2.4.1 Urgent Gaps

All-ages music venue. The Halifax region has no dedicated all-ages music venue. Radstorm often puts on all-ages shows, and larger venues sometimes host them. Stakeholders emphasized, however, that without a full-time all-ages venue, it is difficult for young people to develop the habit of attending shows, and for young performers to develop their skills. The lack of a dedicated all-ages venue puts the future of the local music scene at risk.

Black box theatres. A black box theatre is a simple, black room designed to maximize flexibility for a broad variety of arts. Black boxes can serve the need of small theatre performances, while also serving a range of other arts. Alderney Theatre serves this niche relatively well at 300 seats, but there is an acute lack of spaces at a smaller scale, as indicated by the Bus Stop Theatre rejecting 202 booking requests in 2023. Stakeholders requested three to five additional black box theatres for the regional centre. This was one of the most common requests mentioned by stakeholders.

The *Conseil Communautaire du Grande Havre* has recently secured funding to build a new 220-seat black box theatre in North End Halifax as part of a school, which will be partially available to outside groups. (See Section 7.3). There remains an urgent need to build two-to-four more black box theatres.

Black box designed for movement. There is a need for at least one black box theatre in the region with an adequate flooring and sufficient rigging equipment for dance and circus. The Light House Studio partially fills this gap, because it has a safe floor for dance. The facility should be designed to enable a wide variety of types of circus and dance by offering a variety of flooring types, including hard floors, sprung floors, or foam padding, as well as anchor points for rigging. Venues exist that meet all these requirements, such as in the Tohu Theatre in Montréal.

2.4.2 High Priority Gaps

Large-scale roadhouse. The Rebecca Cohn Auditorium and the Scotiabank Centre are the only venues in the region for shows larger than 1,000 seats. However, the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium can be difficult to book due to high demand for preferred dates. A representative of the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium stated that the facility will need to be replaced or undergo a major renovation in the next 20 years, due to the Halifax region's population growth, and the expectations of audiences and performing arts groups. Already, the facility's relatively small size (1,023 seats) makes it uneconomical for larger or high-profile touring shows.

The Rebecca Cohn Auditorium was not originally designed to be a multipurpose roadhouse, leading to challenges, such as a shallow stage, concrete back wall, and the lack of a fly tower limiting its versatility for theatre, dance, and some touring concert acts. The absence of a second large roadhouse in the region means that it is difficult to renovate the Rebecca Cohn, as this would deprive Symphony Nova Scotia and other large shows of a suitable venue during construction.

The Scotiabank Centre, meanwhile, is too large for many shows (11,093 seats), and as a stadium, it is not appropriate for many types of performances. Stakeholders emphasized that the lack of adequate venues for major touring shows—whether in music, ballet, or other arts—means that many touring groups do not come to the Halifax region, which reduces opportunities for local artists to connect with international curators and promoters, and of local bands to open for popular performers. Without large venues, local artists also have less ability to develop large touring shows themselves.

Most Canadian cities of similar size to Halifax have larger arts venues, as shown in Table 4. Other capital cities and regional centres — such as Victoria, Quebec City, and Winnipeg — have much larger performance venues. Ideally, such a

venue should have adequate multimedia equipment, a flytower, floors that can be adapted for theatre and dance, and other requirements that can be identified by a qualified designer. These features would enable a wide variety of shows, and for multiple arts to be combined in a single show, which stakeholders express is increasingly the trend internationally. In addition, a removable “orchestra shell” — which would cover lights, catwalks, and rigging with an acoustic buffer — would enable such a venue to serve the needs of non-amplified music. A large-scale roadhouse could therefore address multiple urgent needs, and could enable interdisciplinary shows that are currently difficult to produce in the Halifax region.

City	Population (CMA)	Largest Venue	Seats
Oshawa	335,949	Regent Theatre	609
Victoria	363,222	Royal Theatre	1,416
London	423,369	Grand Theatre London	839
Halifax Regional Municipality	480,216	Rebecca Cohn Auditorium	1,023
Kitchener	522,888	Centre in the Square	2,047
Hamilton	579,200	FirstOntario Concert Hall, Great Hall	2,193
Quebec City	733,156	Grand Théâtre de Québec	1,885
Winnipeg	758,515	Centennial Concert Hall	2,305

Table 4. The seating capacity for the largest performing arts theatres (not including stadiums) in seven Canadian cities similar in size to HRM. Population estimates are based on the Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) of each city.

Mid-size roadhouse. Major theatre productions (200+ seats) require a large, raised stage; expansive wings and backstage; and a fly tower. Stakeholders emphasized that the regional centre does not have a single roadhouse in this category. (The Spatz Theatre meets many needs, but lacks changing rooms, among other issues). This means most theatre groups struggle to put on full-scale professional shows.

There is no publicly available venue with adequate facilities for dance in the region. The Dunn Theatre is the only stage in the region with a fly tower, a proper backstage, and large wings. It does not have sprung floors and is largely unavailable because it is used as a teaching facility by Dalhousie's School of Performing Arts Faculty. A number of stakeholders believe it should be possible to design such a roadhouse for both drama and dance, but it requires strict attention to relevant design standards.

Small-scale cinema. There is currently no cinema in the regional centre for showing independent film. Film organizations and festivals currently show films in inadequate facilities, such as in the Natural History Museum auditorium and university lecture halls. It is not difficult to design performing arts venues to show films. However, film stakeholders explained there is a need for a dedicated, small-scale cinema (roughly 100-200 seats), because their audiences want to see films at the same times that other arts organizations want to put on performances. It should be possible to use the cinema for rehearsals and lectures during the day if it is designed with a small stage.

Small, private music venues. Stakeholders expressed that there is a dearth of affordable, small-scale amplified music venues for up-and-coming artists. Stakeholders expressed that private-sector venues should play the leading role in filling this gap, and that government should focus on enabling and encouraging more private venues to open. Unfortunately, HRM has limited legal capacity to respond to this issue, as the municipality is unable to give grants or tax relief to private businesses or individual artists.

2.4.3 Moderate Priority Gaps

Midsized concert hall. Three small to mid-size venues host non-amplified music in the regional centre: The Music Room (105 seats), the Lilian Piercey Concert Hall (200), and the Stage at Saint Andrew's (500). The first two offer excellent acoustics and the third has serviceable acoustics. The Music Room, however, is relatively far from most other venues, limiting its utility for festivals. The Lilian Piercey has limited availability. Stakeholders suggested a medium size concert hall would be well used, but the need is likely less urgent than some of the other gaps identified, because some venues are available that partially meet this need.

Priorities Summarized

The greatest needs for new performing arts venues are summarized in table 5. We validated these assessments with stakeholders, and we summarize their feedback in Part 3 of Appendix A. Note that this list of priorities does not address the need for more small, private music venues, as HRM has limited tools to incentivize such private investment.

Venue type	Rough capacity	Cost	Priority	Drama	Movement	Amplified music	Non-amplified music	Interdisciplinary
All-ages music venue	50-180	\$	Urgent					
2-4 Black boxes*	70-180	\$	Urgent					
1-2 Black boxes*	180-300	\$\$	Urgent					
Large roadhouse theatre [†]	1,800+	\$\$\$\$	High					
Medium-size Roadhouse theatre	500-999	\$\$\$	High					
Cinema	100-200	\$	High	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Concert hall	300-800	\$\$\$	Moderate					



Can meet needs.



Can largely meet needs.



Will likely not meet needs.

Table 5. The highest-priority investments for performing arts venues for the Halifax regional centre, and how well each would serve the needs of various artforms.

* At least 1-2 black boxes should have adequate floors and rigging to fully fulfill the needs of Movement (circus & dance).

[†] The large roadhouse would need a removable orchestra shell (or similar technologies) to fully meet the acoustic needs of non-amplified music.

2.5 Potential Solutions

In this section, we review potential solutions to create each of the venue priorities.

All-ages music venue

Adaptive reuse. Stakeholders emphasize that a full-time all-ages music venue is needed quickly, and it will likely take less time to create a venue in an existing building through adaptive reuse than to wait to include it in a new building. We list a number of potential spaces for renovations in Appendix A, Section 5.

Venue building acquisition. Stakeholders mentioned that Radstorm — which serves an important role as a all-ages music venue — will soon be evicted if the organization cannot find a way to buy their building. They are currently working on fundraising (see Appendix B, Section 6.4).

Black box theatres

Adaptive reuse. It is often possible to create black box theatres by adapting old buildings with large interior spaces. (The Bus Stop, for example, used to be a pharmacy). This is likely the lowest-cost approach to filling this gap, if opportunities for this exist.

Performing arts centre or new builds. If at any point the municipality builds a performing arts centre — that is, a building containing multiple venues — it should include one or more black box theatres. HRM should also review its upcoming capital projects to see if there is potential to include black boxes as part of other new builds.

Access changes. The Light House Media Production Studio could help fill the need for more black box venues, particularly for movement, if it could be provided at a more affordable rate for nonprofit arts events. However, HRM has no authority over the Light House, and does not provide ongoing funding for it, and so opportunities for action on this issue may be limited.

Large-scale roadhouse (1800+ seats)

Performing arts centre. Building a large-scale roadhouse would require a major investment in a new building. If HRM is willing to make such an investment, it provides an opportunity to include other, smaller venues to address other venue needs.

Medium-scale roadhouse (500-1,000 seats)

Upgrading an existing venue and organizational changes. The lowest-cost strategy to achieve this type of venue would be to renovate The Spatz Theatre to include proper wings, dressing rooms, and a backstage, and to address other challenges listed in Appendix B. However, we do not recommend this solution unless the venue's management can be reorganized so that the school's needs no longer take precedence over the arts community's needs, which may not be feasible. The venue's location — near no bars or restaurants — would remain a challenge, as would its imperfect lobby and entrance.

Performing arts centre or other new builds. It would cost more to build a new roadhouse, but this would likely better serve the needs of the arts community, given the above-noted challenges.

Small cinema (100-200 seats)

Adaptive reuse. A small cinema can occupy a relatively small space (roughly 2,900 square feet), and may be feasible inside existing buildings. The Light House Arts Centre has assessed options to renovate its atrium to create a cinema, though this would require a major investment to remove structural pillars.

Performing arts centre & new builds. HRM should explore opportunities to include a small cinema in future capital projects or a performing arts centre in the regional centre.

Medium-size concert hall (300-800 seats)

Performing arts centre. We do not recommend building a stand-alone concert hall, as there are a number of venues that partially meet this need, and we are unaware of existing venues that could be renovated to serve this purpose. However, if HRM builds a performing arts centre, HRM should examine the business case of including a medium-size concert hall as part of this larger project.

Access changes. Paul O'Reagan Hall would be more valuable for ticketed events, festivals, and other arts events if it were possible to book it more than six months in advance. It is not a concert hall, but is often used for non-amplified music, and serves a variety of other art forms.



2.6 Next steps

Next step 1a. Establish criteria for evaluating potential new venues, building on the following preliminary criteria. None of these criteria should be understood as absolute requirements, except for #2.

1. The venue will fill one of the gaps identified in Table 6, with greater weight given to urgent and high-priority gaps.
2. A qualified venue designer has been, or will be, selected to ensure the project will fully meet the technical requirements of the relevant art cluster(s).
3. The venue will be centrally located near high-frequency transit, bars, restaurants, and other venues. (See Next Step 3a for venues that do not meet this criterion).
4. The project will fill other identified gaps, such as rehearsal space, arts office space, recording studios, and specialized equipment (such as a grand piano).
5. The venue will be designed and organized to prioritize the arts. The arts will not be subordinated to the needs of a school, library, or other institution, and ideally, the venue will be managed by an organization with a mandate focused specifically on the arts.
6. Venues should be given greater priority if they will be owned or managed by under-represented groups, or seek to meet the needs of these groups.

Venue type	Size	Priority	Notes on how to meet the needs of the arts community
All-ages music venue	50-180	Urgent	
2-4 Black boxes ¹	70-180	Urgent	At least 1-2 black boxes should have adequate rigging and versatile flooring options to fully fulfill the needs of Movement (circus & dance).
1-2 Black boxes ¹	180-300	Urgent	
Large roundhouse theatre ²	1800+	Urgent	The large roadhouse should be equipped with a removable orchestra shell (or similar technologies) to meet the acoustic needs of non-amplified music.
Medium-size roadhouse theatre	500-999	High	
Cinema ³	100-200	High	Consider designing it with a small stage to serve other uses during the day, such as for lectures and theatre rehearsals.
Concert hall	300-800	Moderate	

Table 6. The highest-priority investments for performing arts venues for the Halifax regional centre.

Next step 1b. Explore creating a capital grant program, or programs, to consider requests from non-profit organizations who wish to create, acquire, or renovate venues to meet the needs of the local professional arts community. When developing such a program, HRM should aim to meet the needs listed in Table 7, and consider incorporating the preliminary criteria proposed for each.

Funding Purpose	Preliminary Criteria to Consider
Create New Venues To increase the supply and diversity of professional performing art venues.	Criteria outlined in Next Step 1a.
Acquire an Existing Venue To protect the professional arts venues from closure due to rising rental costs and potential evictions.	Proposals should be given greater priority if the venue meets some or all of the following criteria: • Serves one or more arts clusters well. • Is heavily used. • Is well positioned near other venues, bars, restaurants, and/or high-frequency transit. • Addresses other art needs, such as by providing rehearsal space, arts office space, recording studios, or specialized equipment (such as a grand piano).
Renovations (Lifespan) To make structural repairs to venues to protect them from potential closure.	The renovation will have a meaningful impact on enabling the venue to stay open, either short-term or long-term. In addition, the venue meets some or all of the following criteria: • Serves one or more arts clusters well. • Is heavily used. • Is well positioned near other venues, bars, restaurants, and/or high-frequency transit. • Meets other art needs, such as rehearsal space, arts office space, recording studios, or specialized equipment (such as a grand piano).
Renovations (Professional Art Experience) To enhance the quality of a venue's audience experience, to meet the needs of professional performers, and to fill professional art venue gaps.	Draw on criteria outlined in Next Step 1a. Additionally, consider prioritizing projects that meet the needs identified by stakeholders in this project, as outlined in Appendix A, including: • Improve acoustics. • Enable a venue to better serve an arts cluster, such as by adding rigging or special flooring. • Improve sound baffling between existing venues and performance spaces so that they can hold shows simultaneously. • Improve accessibility features. • Build larger stages, wings, and/or green rooms.

Table 7. Purpose of a potential funding program to create, acquire, or renovate venues, and preliminary criteria for such a program.

Next step 1c. Explore opportunities for HRM to address the performing art venue needs identified in table 6 of this report.

Strategies	Analysis first steps
Study municipal investment in performing arts venues to gauge the return on investment and community benefits.	HRM funds a variety of capital projects, including recreation centres, community centres, libraries, schools, etc. Identifying a direct link between investments in performing art venues and outputs may aid in future decision making.
Investigate opportunities to integrate performing art venues in HRM capital projects.	• Survey all HRM capital projects planned for the next five years to identify opportunities to integrate performing art venues into said projects, which fill gaps identified in Table 15. • Ensure that when feasibility studies are conducted for any major build or renovation, they include an analysis of whether it is possible to tackle those venue gaps. • Ensure any such venue will be designed and organized to meet the needs of professional arts.
Investigate renovating existing HRM-owned buildings / properties to create new venues.	Conduct an inventory of assets owned by HRM in the Halifax region to assess whether any have the potential to be renovated to fill the identified venue gaps. If possible, explore partnerships with other levels of government to include their buildings within such an inventory.

Table 8. Potential strategies to explore for creating venues, and steps for analyzing them.

Next Step 1d. Investigate the potential to build a performing arts centre in the regional centre that can address the need for a large, preeminent roadhouse theatre, as well as other venues listed in Table 6. This action would begin with the following steps:

- Review similar projects in other cities to outline potential design strategies, partnership structures, and business models to make such a project financially and artistically successful.
- Convene with stakeholders and other levels of government to explore paths to funding and partnering on such a project.
- Assess ways to meet other high-priority goals of HRM and potential partners with the project, such as a major gallery.
- Conduct a detailed feasibility study, including an assessment of the appropriate capacity of each venue, the equipment and technical specifications needed for each, up-front and yearly costs, and the proposed revenue model.

3. Other Performing Arts Needs

This section addresses performing arts needs not captured by the analysis in Section 2: outdoor venues, venues outside the regional centre, and other spaces needed for the arts (such as rehearsal space).

3.1. Outdoor Stage

The Halifax region has insufficient permanent infrastructure for outdoor events, according to stakeholders. There are spaces for outdoor events with some equipment, including the Alderney Events Plaza, Parade Square, and the Garrison Grounds (on Citadel Hill). However, there is no outdoor venue with adequate washroom facilities for large events, a covered stage, and permanent equipment for lights and amplification. Very few offer adequate electricity. In the stakeholder survey, 12 reported they have held outdoor events. Of these, only one agreed that current facilities are sufficient (see Appendix A, Section 3.8).

The absence of adequate outdoor venues reduces the number of groups that can afford to put on outdoor shows, and likely decreases the number and diversity of outdoor events. Some stakeholders report that they cannot put on outdoor shows without major public subsidies. It can also be challenging to find technical crew to set up events in summer months in the Halifax region due to a relative lack of technical crew in the region (see Appendix B, Section 9.1). Stakeholders disagreed, however, over the level of urgency for an outdoor venue, because some feel weather is not ideal for outdoor events in Nova Scotia.

Stakeholders identified a need for two kinds of outdoor venues:

- **High priority gap:** A large stage with space that can accommodate the largest events, over 10,000 people.
- **Moderate priority gap:** A band shell for small-scale shows with a few hundred audience members.

3.1.1 Potential Solutions

The region has two spaces intended for large outdoor events that already have some equipment, and that could be upgraded:

- **Alderney Events Plaza** is the most readily available opportunity for a large event space. The area is large enough to accommodate 15,000 people, according to Alderney staff. However, to enable this capacity, it needs infrastructure for safe egress across the train tracks when a train is blocking the way. The space is located downtown next to a transit terminal with a view of the horizon, and has access to electricity, some indoor bathroom facilities, and has a partially covered stage.
- **Garrison Grounds** is a natural amphitheatre at Citadel Hill and well-located downtown. It has recently been upgraded, including for drainage and electricity. However, grass is not always ideal for events and poses accessibility challenges, which is the primary reason Halifax Jazz Festival does not hold events here.

No existing outdoor event space could readily be upgraded into a band stand.

3.2 Community Venues

While the majority of public survey respondents requested more performing arts venues in Downtown Halifax or Dartmouth, 40% also requested more venues in suburban areas, and 25% requested more in rural areas. (Respondents could choose more than one answer). The survey received similar responses for visual arts events: The most popular answers were Downtown Halifax and Dartmouth, followed by 36% selecting suburban areas, and 26% selecting rural areas.

Research suggests that cultural gathering places play a crucial role in rural and suburban areas to strengthen social connections and build local identity.⁹ While professional venues benefit from being clustered near each other, there is a distinct need to for venues in rural and suburban areas: to create space for residents to gather as a community and to put on art.

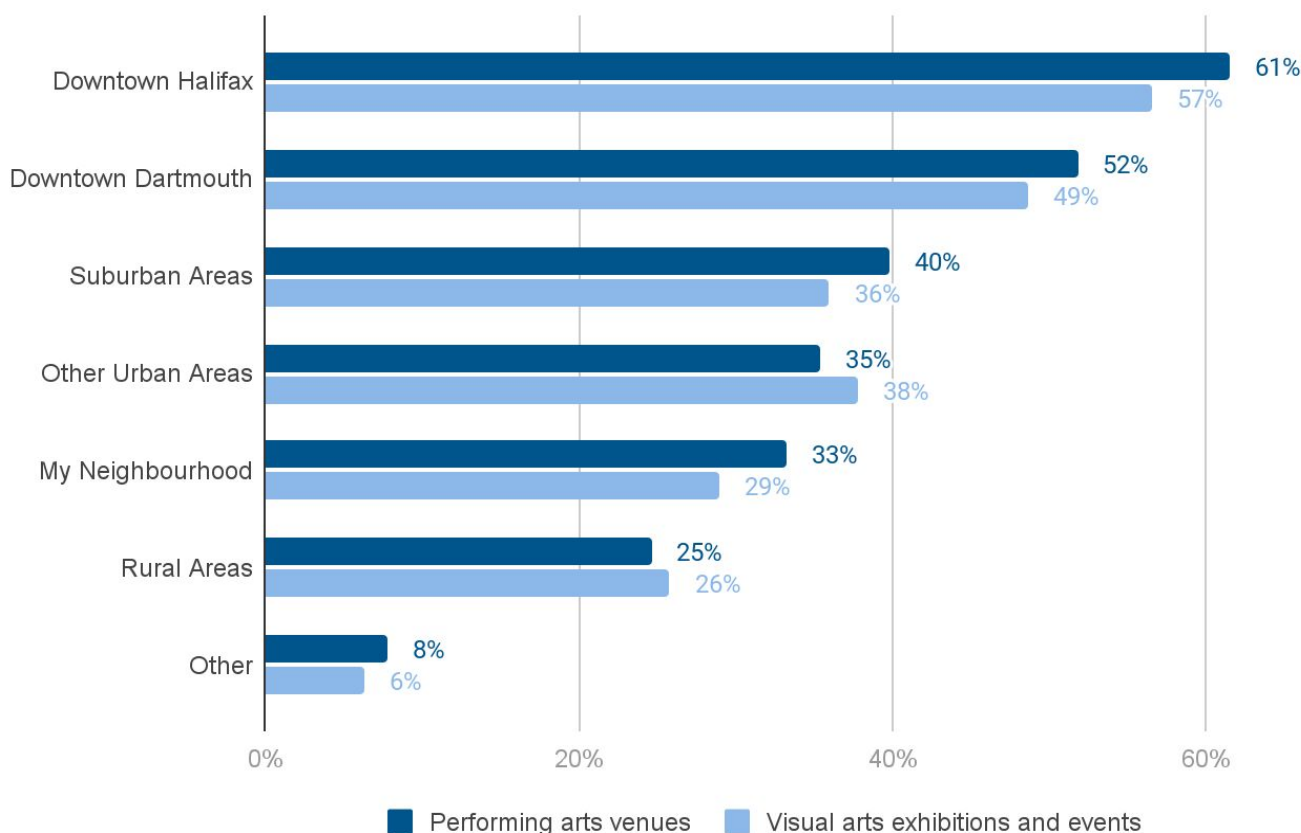


Figure 7. Responses to the questions: “Where in HRM would you like there to be more venues for performing arts?” (dark blue, 475 respondents), and “Where in HRM would you like to see more visual arts exhibitions and events?” (light blue, 442 respondents). Multiple answers were allowed.

Many rural and suburban residents also want the option to see professional shows in their community. We asked residents what attribute they most prioritize in a venue in the public survey, and the most common answer was a “small venue, close to home.” In comments, many emphasized a desire for venues that are easier to access from rural and suburban areas, with some expressing frustration that it is difficult to reach downtown due to traffic.

28%

of public survey respondents value having a small venue, close to home.

There are, therefore, two distinct but important needs: to cluster professional venues close together (see Section 2.3.1), and to distribute venues throughout the region to create community gathering places and to provide better access to shows.

One solution to this tension is to identify two categories of venues that serve distinct needs, which we label “Professional Venues” and “Community Venues,” summarized in table 9. In this way, HRM can establish separate targets, strategies, and funding programs to address these two sets of goals, without undervaluing one or the other.

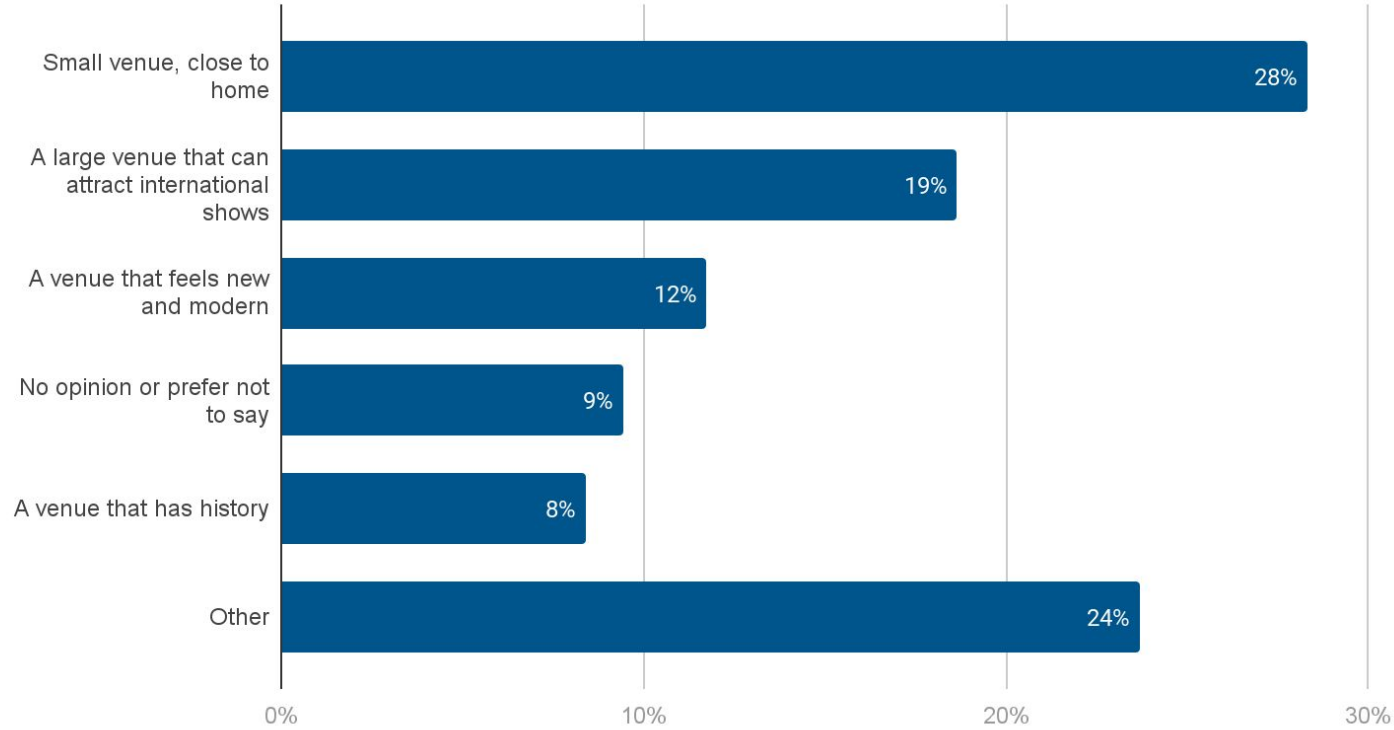


Figure 8. Responses to the question: “What do you value most in a performing arts venue?” Respondents could select only one response.

	Community Venues	Professional Venues
Primary goal	Provide residents with better access to professional and amateur arts performances, and build community.	Create a successful professional arts scene.
Location	Distributed throughout the region to reduce the average distance between residents and venues.	Clustered close together in dense population centres to create a critical mass of artistic activity.
Design	Cost-effective, multipurpose, and potentially integrated into other facilities — such as schools, libraries, or similar.	Purpose-designed venues that can prioritize professional productions.

Table 9. Distinctions between community venues and professional venues.

Distinct design methodologies are appropriate for the two kinds of venue. Stakeholders emphasized that professional, urban venues should be purpose-built so that they can prioritize the arts without compromise. They strongly recommend against venues built into schools or libraries that do not prioritize the needs of performing arts. In contrast, rural and suburban venues are less likely to be used for professional shows on a full-time basis, and will likely need to be designed to serve other functions as well. It is also likely more feasible to provide sufficient rural and suburban venues if many are integrated into schools, libraries, and similar facilities. It may also be more feasible for nonprofits to create community venues by repurposing existing buildings, whereas professional venues often need to be purpose-built.

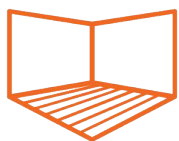
HRM is working on initiatives, such as the Rural Recreation Strategy and Community Facilities Master Plan, which could offer opportunities to integrate amateur and professional arts into planned and future community facilities.

It may also be desirable to invest in a purpose-built venue in a rural or suburban area if there is sufficient demand for the arts to fill a venue’s schedule, and if a community has grown to a size to justify it. HRM has identified rural and suburban growth nodes where future development is anticipated and planned. As these nodes continue to grow, the justification for a dedicated professional art facilities will also grow.

The present study provides more detailed analysis on the urban core in part because it focused on professional venues, and in part because our methodology focused on interviewing stakeholders, and the majority of professional arts stakeholders are located in the core. It would be valuable to analyze the potential for rural and suburban venues, and to engage more stakeholders in these areas, in a future study.

3.3 Other Supporting Spaces and Equipment

Stakeholders raised four additional gaps:



Rehearsal space: Stakeholders identified the lack of rehearsal space as a “major problem” with existing venues (see Appendix A, Section 6.7). The gap is particularly acute for musicians and theatre (see Appendix A, Section 6.2). The lack of rehearsal space means theatre groups need to rent venues longer, which aggravates cost challenges and the difficulty of finding available venues.



Music studios: There was some disagreement among stakeholders on whether music recording studios are easy to access in the region, but African Nova Scotian stakeholders were clear they desire more.



Grand pianos: There are few venues in the region that have grand pianos. Those that exist are relatively far from the downtown (The Music Room) or are difficult to access (Joseph Strug Concert Hall and the Rebecca Cohn Auditorium). This issue poses a challenge for Halifax Jazz Festival, and adds considerable costs to many non-amplified music shows.



Office space: There is a lack of affordable office space in downtown Halifax and Dartmouth intended for the arts sector specifically. Stakeholders expressed a desire to have a place where they can work alongside others in the sector (see Appendix A, Section 6.1).



3.4. Next Steps

Outdoor stage

Next step 2a. Explore opportunities, including HRM's upcoming capital projects, to invest in a large-scale outdoor stage or a medium-scale band stand. Develop a criteria to evaluate potential outdoor stages, drawing on the following proposed criteria:

- Centrally located near high-frequency transit, bars, restaurants, and other venues.
- Highly accessible audience area.
- A permanent stage that requires little setup, ideally with lights and sound equipment.
- A covered stage that protects artists from wind, rain, and sun.
- Adequate electricity.
- Adequate washroom facilities for the majority of shows that will use the space, and the ability to add temporary washrooms for full capacity shows.
- Prioritizes, or is managed by, underrepresented groups.

Community venues

- **Next step 2b.** Further explore the distinct needs of community venues, and strategies to create new venues in rural and suburban communities, in future studies.

- **Next step 2c.** Explore opportunities to create multipurpose community venues, including for performing or visual arts. Develop a criteria to evaluate such projects, drawing on the following proposed criteria:
 - Located in an area that is underserved by existing community venues.
 - Will serve as an effective gathering place for local residents.
 - Can be built in a cost-effective manner, such as by incorporating it into a larger capital project, or by renovating an existing building.
 - Prioritizes under-represented groups.
 - Enables professional shows.

Other space and equipment needs

Next step 2d. Explore opportunities to create rehearsal space, arts office space, recording studios, and spaces with specialized equipment (such as a grand piano), such as through upcoming capital projects.

Next step 2e. Explore opportunities to work with and/or incentivize private developers to create rehearsal space and arts office space.

4. Visual Arts Venues

The second major focus of this study is visual arts, including galleries and studios. Stakeholders report there is a major lack of studio space and galleries, especially for early-career and mid-career artists.

4.1 Gallery and Studio Clusters

Visual arts stakeholders emphasized the need to create an ecosystem of galleries in the Halifax region that support artists at multiple career stages. To be successful, artists need space to show work early in their careers, and to continue showing work until they establish a sufficient reputation to win grants and show work in larger galleries. For the purposes of analysis, this study defines three career stages:

- **Early career:** Someone who qualifies for programs and funding aimed at artists who recently graduated, are young, or are starting their career. (Note that we do not include university students in this phase).
- **Mid-career:** Artists that no longer qualify for early career programs, but who do not yet have the reputation necessary to secure grants, be represented by a major gallery, or access other opportunities.
- **Established:** Artists that have sufficient reputation to secure grants and exhibition opportunities, or show work at major galleries.

Galleries can be classified by a variety of typologies. We developed a classification scheme with five categories with the support of local stakeholders knowledgeable of the sector. Each cluster serves artists at distinct career stages, and complements other gallery types.

Commercial galleries target primarily tourists and others seeking artwork for its ornamental value, and play an important role in supporting many artists financially.

Commercial contemporary galleries target collectors or other customers who value art based on its cultural significance, or the research and development process that went into creating it. Such galleries can provide valuable income for artists, and tend to serve established artists with sufficient reputation to attract customers.

Artist-run centres are galleries or other arts spaces operated directly by artists. These provide flexible space for events and festivals, and support early to mid-career artists.

Institutional galleries are run by a large organization (often a university or government) that pays artists fees for exhibitions.

Community galleries offer high-quality, curated spaces for showing art, but may not pay artist fees for exhibitions, and have less of a budget for holding major, professional exhibitions compared to institutional galleries. The barrier to entry for these galleries tends to be lower than for institutional galleries. These galleries play an important role in supporting early-career and mid-career artists.

4.2 Demand

4.2.1 Public Demand

The public survey results indicate substantial interest in visual arts in the Halifax region. Two thirds (66%) of respondents requested more visual art events, and 63% agree or strongly agree that HRM should invest in galleries and other venues for visual arts. Only 11% agree there are already sufficient galleries in the region. More than two thirds (69%) agree with the statement, “I wish there were more exhibitions and visual arts events in the region,” and 51% said they would attend visual arts events more often if there were more (figure 9).

66%

of respondents requested more visual art events.

69%

of respondents agreed with the statement, “I wish there were more exhibitions and visual arts events in the region.”

11%

of respondents agreed there are sufficient galleries in the region.

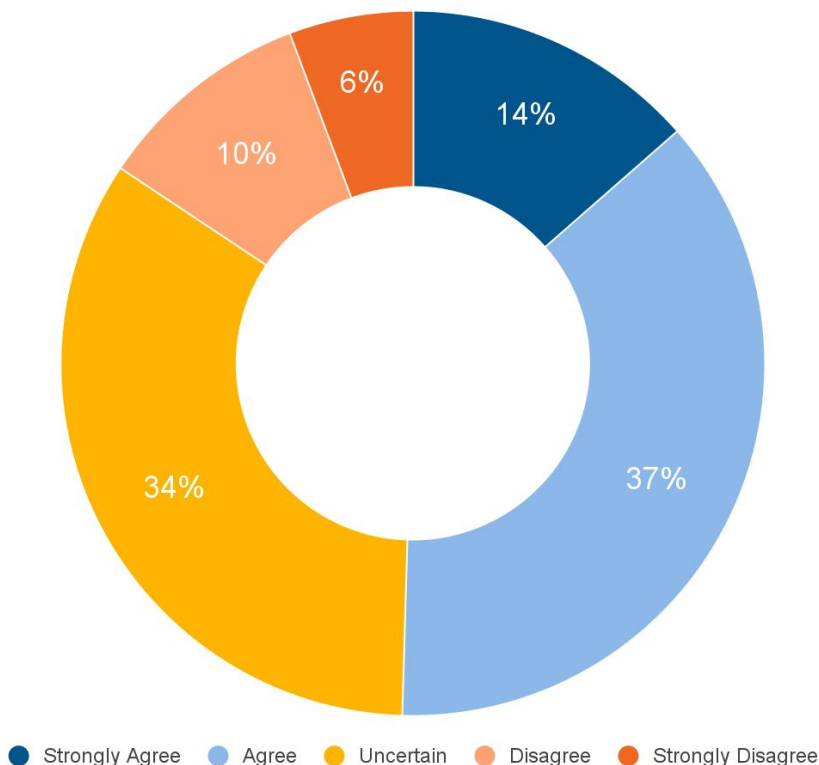


Figure 9. Responses to the question: “Do you agree with the following statement: ‘I would go see visual arts more often if there were more visual arts events or galleries.’”

The public survey suggests that there is greatest demand for visual arts events in Downtown Halifax and Dartmouth, which is the focus of this section (figure 10). However, there is also substantial demand for galleries in other communities, which we discuss further in section 3.2, on community venues.

Respondents shared a wide range of priorities around what they value most in a visual arts venue:

- Some asked for venues in heritage buildings, while others prefer contemporary buildings.
- Some requested putting art in public buildings such as schools and libraries, whereas others asked that art be showcased in spaces specifically designed for it.

- Some requested more contemporary exhibitions that are up-to-date with international trends. Others requested easily-understood art that does not feel “elitist or exclusive.”
- Other respondents specifically requested a diversity of art types, with “a regularly changing display of artists and styles.”

The top three reasons residents say they do not go to more visual arts events is a “lack of preferred visual arts events,” the “location of events,” and the “lack of venues” (figure 11). This suggests that there is a need for more galleries, in more places, and that there is a desire for a greater variety of events at those galleries.

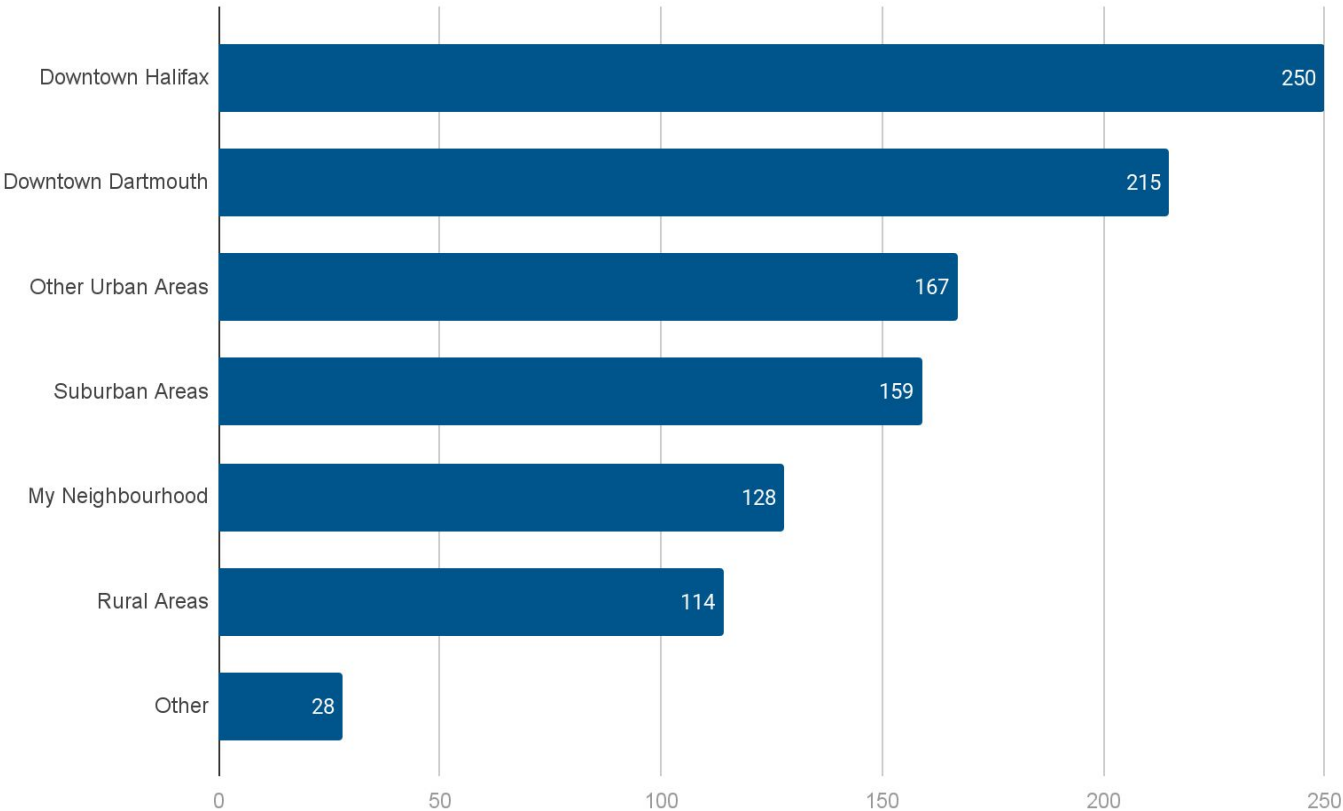


Figure 10. “Where in HRM would you like to see more visual arts exhibitions and events?” Multiple answers allowed.

4.2.2 Stakeholder Demand

Visual arts stakeholders identified four major gaps in the visual arts ecosystem in the Halifax region:

Gallery space for early-career and especially mid-career artists: In other cities, artist-run centres and community galleries play an important role in acting as a stepping stone for early- and mid-career artists.

Flexible gallery spaces, especially artist-run centres: There is a need for more gallery spaces in Halifax region that can respond quickly to new ideas or to the needs of festivals. Many of the galleries in the regional centre are institutional in nature, and have a slow, formal decision-making process for how they use their space. Artist-run centres are usually more flexible in nature.

Studio space: Stakeholders described the lack of studio space in the Halifax region as a “crisis.” There are five studios that artists can rent or otherwise access, but most have limited space. Most artists must produce work at home, making it impractical to produce art that involves dust, toxic chemicals, paint splatter, or similar. Artists placed greatest priority on creating studio space that can be rented full-time by artists and collectives or groups (see Appendix A, Section 13).

Large-scale institutional gallery. Stakeholders unanimously expressed strong support for the new Art Gallery of Nova Scotia (see Appendix A, Section 17). A large regional gallery can attract international artists, exhibitions, and curators, who can then bring attention and opportunities for local artists, art groups, and other galleries. In this way, a large gallery can support the survival of smaller players in the local arts ecosystem.

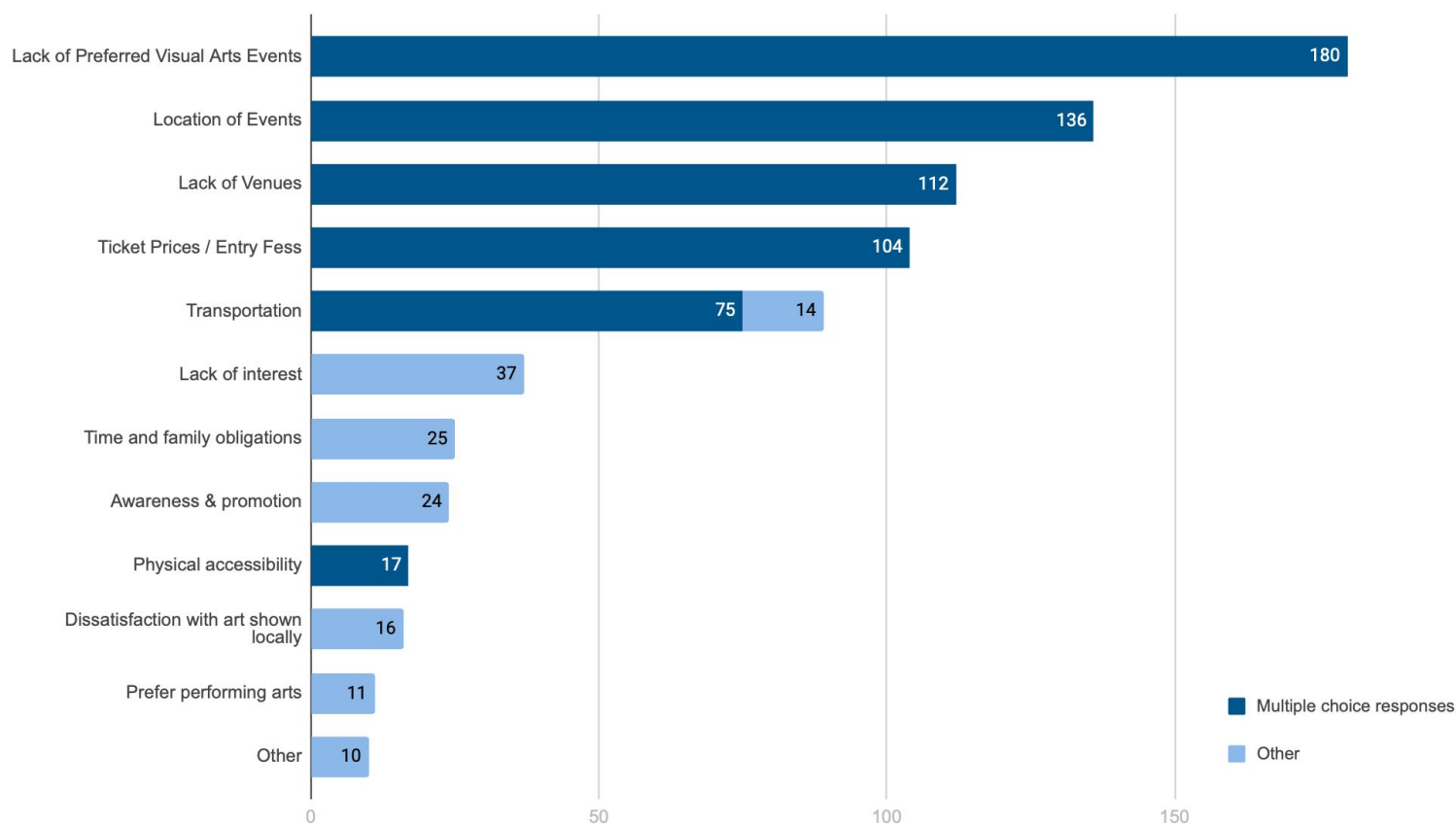


Figure 11. Responses to the question, “Are there reasons why you don’t go to visual arts venues more often?”

4.3 Gaps

Table 3 identifies how many galleries exist in the Halifax region in each category, and offers explanatory notes of which galleries fit into which category.

Type	#	Description
Commercial galleries	14+	There is no lack of commercial galleries in the region, according to stakeholders. (There are additional, smaller, semi-formal galleries that were not included in our list.)
Commercial contemporary galleries	6	There are at least six private galleries that sell contemporary artwork: the Blue Building, Secord Gallery, Katzman Art Projects (formerly Studio 21), The Prow Gallery, 14 Bells Fine Art Gallery, and ViewPoint Gallery. Note there is no rigid line between these and other commercial galleries.
Artist-run centres	3	Hermes Gallery and The Khyber Centre for the Arts are among the only artist-run centres in the Halifax region. The Centre for Art Tapes is an artist-run nonprofit that occasionally hosts exhibitions and pays artist fees, but does not do so often due to lack of funding. Eye Level Gallery lost its physical space after many moves, and currently puts on exhibits in temporary locations.
Community galleries	1	The Craig Gallery.
Institutional galleries	6	There are four institutional galleries tied to universities in the region. The other two institutional galleries are the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia and the Mary E. Black Gallery.

Table 10. A list of gallery types, based primarily on stakeholder feedback, and the galleries that fall into each category.

“We have the talent, creativity and expertise here in [the Halifax region] to build an amazing cultural sector. But we are not given the financial support and venue infrastructure to thrive..”

— Public survey respondent

4. Visual arts venues

Each of these galleries generally focus on showing artwork from distinct career stages, which we summarize in table 11. This analysis is based on the input of stakeholders, and was validated by offering stakeholders an opportunity to give feedback on it in the third phase of engagement. That said, there are exceptions to each assessment: galleries may put on individual

programs or events that focus on a distinct career stage. This table suggests that there is generally a lack of space available for early-career and especially mid-career artists.

Galleries and the career stages they tend to exhibit

	Type	Early career	Mid-career	Established
The Blue Building	Commercial contemporary			
Secord Gallery	Commercial contemporary			
Katzman Art Projects	Commercial contemporary			
Hermes Gallery	Artist-run centre			
The Khyber Centre for the Arts	Artist-run centre			
The Centre for Art Tapes	Artist-run centre			
Eye Level Gallery	Artist-run centre			
The Craig Gallery	Community gallery			
Mary E. Black Gallery	Institutional			
Saint Mary's University Art Gallery	Institutional	*		
Dalhousie Art Gallery	Institutional	*		
Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery	Institutional	*		
Anna Leonowens Gallery (NSCAD) system	Institutional	*		
The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia	Institutional			

Table 11. A list of galleries — excluding commercial galleries, as described in Section 4.1 — and which career stage each tends to focus on exhibiting: early-career, mid-career, and established artists.

- Shows very little work by artists in this career stage.
- Shows some artwork by artists in this career stage.
- Primarily shows artwork by artists in this career stage.

*University galleries often put on shows by student artists. However, industry standards — including Arts Nova Scotia and the Canada Council for the Arts — define artist careers as starting after finishing university.

In a second table, we add another layer of analysis: How easily can an artist at each career stage show their work in these galleries, given other constraints? These constraints may include a lack of funding to hold exhibitions, a lack of space, excessive competition for space due to

the overall lack of galleries, and other barriers. Table 12 suggests there are very few spaces that meet each need, and the spaces that exist are difficult to access due to a lack of funding, and the high levels of competition for these few gallery spaces.

How available galleries are in practice for each career stage

	Type	Early career	Mid-career	Established
The Blue Building	Commercial contemporary			
Secord Gallery	Commercial contemporary			
Katzman Art Projects	Commercial contemporary			
Hermes Gallery	Artist-run centre			
The Khyber Centre for the Arts	Artist-run centre			
The Centre for Art Tapes	Artist-run centre			
Eye Level Gallery				
The Craig Gallery	Community gallery			
Mary E. Black Gallery	Community gallery			
Saint Mary's University Art Gallery	Institutional	*		
Dalhousie Art Gallery	Institutional	*		
Mount Saint Vincent University Art Gallery	Institutional	*		
Anna Leonowens Gallery (NSCAD) system	Institutional	*		
The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia	Institutional			

Table 12. A list of galleries — excluding commercial galleries, as described in Section 4.1 — and how well each serves the needs of early-career, mid-career, and established artists, given challenges to accessing these galleries.

- Inaccessible for this career stage.
- Somewhat accessible for this career stage.
- Prioritizes this career stage.

*University galleries often put on shows by student artists. However, industry standards — including Arts Nova Scotia and the Canada Council for the Arts — define artist careers as starting after finishing university.

There are two important themes in these constraints:



Lack of funding: Some spaces are underutilized due to a lack of funding to pay artist fees for exhibitions. If more funding were provided for exhibitions, it would help make better use of existing spaces.



Competition: There is excessive competition for the few artist-run centres and community galleries that exist because there are too few of them. If more were created, these spaces could become more accessible to a greater number of artists.

4.4 Priorities

Stakeholders identified two specific capital projects as high priority:

- **The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia.** HRM has already committed to supporting this project, which is currently on indefinite hold. See Appendix A, Section 17 for its value to the wider art community.
- **The Turret Building.** The Turret Arts Society will soon submit a capital proposal to rehabilitate 1588 Barrington Street (the former home of the Khyber) into a multipurpose artist-run centre with a gallery, live-work studio space, meeting rooms, and an events space. The building is strategically located in Downtown Halifax near NSCAD and other arts spaces, and, according to stakeholders, the building has long played an important role in the arts scene in Downtown Halifax.

While all stakeholders supported HRM investing in the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, none requested that HRM build other public galleries. They instead requested that HRM provide financial support to arts groups to establish their own galleries and studios, because independent arts groups are best positioned to develop a creative ecosystem and to respond to the needs of artists.

However, some stakeholders did express support for creating gallery space for artists in existing public buildings, so long as there is a budget to pay artist fees (often called “CARFAC fees,” referencing the Canadian Artists' Representation/Le front des artistes canadiens). CARFAC fees are standard rates artists receive for showing work in exhibitions.

4.5 Potential Solutions

Table 13 summarizes the recommendations from visual arts stakeholders on how HRM should support visual arts venues, and how these investments would support artists at various career stages. We validated these assessments with stakeholders, and we summarize their feedback in Part 3 of Appendix A.

The most urgent request emphasized by stakeholders was to provide funding to help arts groups acquire properties for galleries and studio space. This could make them less vulnerable to rising rents, would make them eligible for tax relief, and would enable them to spend more of their time and budget on creating and showing art.

The last item in table 13 — providing space in existing buildings — is the lowest priority proposal in this list but is also likely the lowest cost investment. It would require some staff time to curate the space and funding to pay artist fees. It would provide another avenue by which emerging artists could grow their gallery record, and reduce the pressure on the few spaces that provide this kind of opportunity, such as the Craig.

Investment type	Cost	Priority	Early Career	Mid-Career	Established
Provide funding or financing support to enable arts groups to acquire and renovate buildings to create or protect gallery and studio spaces.	\$\$\$	Urgent			
Provide funding for new studio spaces.	\$\$\$	Urgent			
Provide funding for new artist-run centres and community galleries.	\$\$\$	Urgent			
Expand funds for nonprofit galleries to pay artist fees for exhibitions and festivals, so that groups can make better use of existing gallery space.	\$	High			
Continue to support the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia project.	\$\$\$\$	High			
Provide space in existing public buildings for exhibitions with adequate artist fees.	\$	Moderate			

Generally would not prioritize this career stage.

Will or should prioritize this career stage.

Table 13. Potential solutions to help fill the gaps identified in table 12, and how well each would, or should, serve the needs of artists at various career stages.

4.6 Next Steps

We offer the following list of recommendations in order of priority:

Next step 3a. Explore strategies to implement the potential solutions identified in Table 14.

Next step 3b. Establish a criteria for evaluating major capital proposals for visual arts venues, building on the following proposed criteria. The project:

- Will support early-career and mid-career artists.
- Has a plan to pay artist fees.
- Will offer rentable studio space or community studio space.
- Will meet other needs identified in this study, including office space.
- Will create an artist-run centre or community gallery.

Investment type	Cost	Priority
Provide funding or financing support to enable arts groups to acquire and renovate buildings to create or protect gallery and studio spaces.	\$\$\$	Urgent
Provide funding for new studio spaces.	\$\$\$	Urgent
Provide funding for new artist-run centres and community galleries.	\$\$\$	Urgent
Expand funds for nonprofit galleries to pay artist fees for exhibitions and festivals, so that groups can make better use of existing gallery space.	\$	High
Continue to support the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia project.	\$\$\$\$	High
Provide space in existing public buildings for exhibitions with adequate artist fees.	\$	Moderate

Table 14. Potential solutions to help fill the gaps in the visual arts sector identified by stakeholders.



5. Governance

This section addresses challenges for both performing arts and visual arts venues.

5.1 Tax Relief

One of the main financial challenges identified by stakeholders is that organizations that lease their venue are not eligible to apply for the HRM tax relief program.

This problem grows in severity as property values in the urban core rise. There is a risk that an increasing number of cultural organizations in the regional centre will close, even as the need for them rises given the growing population. Visual arts organizations have closed in recent years in part due to financial constraints including rising taxes, (i.e. Eye Level Gallery's physical space). Representatives of the Light House Arts Centre state that this issue poses a barrier to making their venue affordable. Others, such as The Sanctuary, cite property taxes as their principal financial challenge.

5.2 Grants

Stakeholders express that it is now easier to access operational funding from HRM and the province than it once was, and they encourage HRM to continue this and increase the funding. Operational funding provides organizations with a stable financial base and enables them to focus on producing art, growing their audience, and applying for other sources of funding. When organizations do not have such a foundation, it leads to waste, because arts organizations spend their scarce staff time on managing financial crises, rather than producing art or growing their organization.

5.3 Institutions

5.3.1 Venues managed by arts groups

A major problem for HRM venues is that many are managed by schools, libraries, and university arts faculties — organizations that do not have a mandate focused on supporting arts organizations. This leads to the access barriers discussed in Section 2.3.3. Further, stakeholders shared that when a venue is managed by an arts organization, it is more likely to work proactively with artists to make events happen, to make those events a success, and to say yes to new and unusual ideas.

Artist-run centres play a crucial role in helping early- and mid-career visual artists to establish their reputation, and in supporting arts festivals. Community galleries managed by arts nonprofits play a similar role (see Section 4.1).

5.3.2 Public venues management

If HRM makes a major investment in a public venue, such as a Performing Arts Centre, it is important that the venue is managed by an organization with a mandate focused on the arts, rather than a university arts faculty, school, library, or similar. The Dalhousie Arts Centre does not fall into this list, as it has a mandate focused on the arts, and does not need to prioritize students over other artists.

5.3.3 Arts institutions

Stakeholders identified a number of concerns about the ability of HRM to respond to the needs of arts groups and venues, including:

- The risk aversion of some HRM departments to arts proposals.
- The perceived low priority given to the arts by HRM, given the municipality's many priorities.
- The lack of responsiveness to problems identified by arts organizations.
- A disconnect between HRM's decision-making structures and arts needs.

To address these needs, it would be valuable to have an entity with greater authority and mandate to identify problems experienced by the arts community, and to act as an advocate for them to municipal government. Some stakeholders highlighted that some cities — such as Washington D.C. and London, U.K. — have a “Night Time Mayor,” which represents the interests of the arts community and venues within these municipalities. Others highlighted the example of Nova Scotia's former Waterfront Development Corporation, saying that the organization was very easy for arts groups to work with, because its mandate focused, in part, on the arts, and it proactively worked with artists to organize and support events.

Some stakeholders suggested such a body should also lead efforts to build new venues, to reduce the load on volunteers (see Appendix A, Section 7.3). The precise organization and mandate of any such entity is beyond the scope of this study.



5.4 Next Steps

HRM Venue Management

Next step 4a. Aim to ensure any new major venue supported by HRM is managed by an organization, such as a nonprofit, that has a mandate focused specifically on supporting the professional performing arts, to the extent feasible.

Next step 4b. Explore the potential of creating a partnership, advisory body, or working group who acts as an advocate for the needs of the arts community and assists in the promotion of professional art venues and events.

Next step 4c. Assess current management agreements for HRM-owned venues (such as Alderney Landing Theatre) and partner venues (such as Spatz Theatre) to determine their effectiveness in supporting professional art needs and identify potential revisions that can be incorporated into amended agreements.

HRM Funding

Next Step 4d. Continue to evaluate and measure the funding envelope for the Grants to Professional Arts Organizations Program to ensure that operational funding is prioritized and distributed to meet arts organization's needs.

Next Step 4e. When exploring a capital grant program, or programs, to support non-profit venues (Next Step 1b), develop evaluation criteria to encourage or reward submissions from organizations that have a mandate focused specifically on supporting professional performing arts. Similar evaluation criteria should be used when assessing ad-hoc requests that fall outside of a formal grant program.

6. Other Gaps and Challenges

Other topics are beyond the scope of this study to offer clear recommendations, but deserve further study.

6.1 Lack of Technicians

Stakeholders reported that it can be difficult to access technicians for arts events, especially lighting and audio technicians. The issue is particularly challenging in summer months when multiple festivals are happening in Maritime communities (see Appendix A, Section 9.1). Stakeholders expressed concern that many technicians leave the Halifax region due to a lack of jobs after they graduate from local universities.

Potential solutions

- Building more venues would help create a larger ecosystem of jobs to support a larger talent pool.
- Providing more operational funding for arts organizations would help them keep more technicians employed.

6.2 Arts Promotion

Stakeholders expressed that it has become more difficult to promote arts events in the Halifax region due to *The Coast* ending its print edition and the fragmentation of social media platforms that the public uses. Stakeholders also expressed concern that HRM removes posters too frequently, often taking them down every two weeks. Visual arts stakeholders expressed that the municipality could do more to promote galleries and festivals, and to support the promotion projects of visual arts groups, such as the Halifax Art Map.

Potential solutions

- A stakeholder recommended removing posters once every month, so that residents have a greater opportunity to see posters before they are removed.
- Discover Halifax's events calendar can potentially play a larger role in promoting events. Currently, only 12% of public survey respondents said they use Discover Halifax to find out about events. This issue requires further study.
- Stakeholders suggested that Discover Halifax's front page should promote local galleries and visual arts events, perhaps, in part, by linking to the Halifax Art Map.



Chosen Family, a public art installation in HRM, with artist Margot Durling. Photo from HRM Corporate Communications.

7. Underrepresented Communities

7.1 African Nova Scotian Community Needs

The Union of Black Artists Society, partnered with The Charles Taylor Theatre and Media Association, has proposed to build a venue with over 300 seats in Westphal. If their capital funding campaign is successful, this will meet many of the needs identified by African Nova Scotian stakeholders, including a space that feels like their own where they can put on multiple types of art.

However, stakeholders also requested cultural space for African Nova Scotian artists in the regional centre, ideally in Dartmouth. While Westphal is located near historic African Nova Scotian communities, it is not easily accessible for some African Nova Scotian stakeholders living in the urban core, particularly young people without a car. Participants shared interest in a mixed-use, ANS-led venue downtown that could include:

- A performing arts venue.
- A recording studio.
- A video editing studio.
- A gallery.

One stakeholder suggested the space could also act as a museum for the history of African Nova Scotian art and culture to help justify the necessary funding.

Stakeholders expressed that it would be valuable to create visual arts spaces in the Halifax region that focus on highlighting “Black Visual Art.” One ANS artist reports that she has shown work internationally but struggles to show work in the Halifax region.

7.2 Indigenous Community Needs

The new Mi’kmaw Native Friendship Centre has the potential to meet multiple needs for Indigenous performances:

- A large space for powwows and for other performances.
- An outdoor space for gathering and performances.
- Rooms for rehearsals and meetings.
- Space to show Indigenous artwork.

We spoke to stakeholders who have not yet had an opportunity to give input on the details of the new Mi’kmaw Native Friendship Centre’s design. They shared three broad recommendations:

- Ensure the performance space offers inviting ambiance for music shows so that it can attract a wide variety of artists and audiences from within and outside the Indigenous community.
- Highlight established and up-and-coming Indigenous visual artists to help establish a market for their work.
- Offer space for Indigenous artists of all types to mentor the next generation.

The majority of Indigenous engagement focused on issues unrelated to physical space needs. Three additional issues are highlighted here. Greater detail can be found in Appendix A, Section 10.2.

First, it is often difficult for Indigenous artists living on reserves to connect with promoters, curators, and others in the arts sector in the Halifax region that could allow them to establish their career. Travelling to the regional centre can be expensive and intimidating, and once here, it is difficult to identify who to talk to. It would be valuable for HRM to support programs that would bring Indigenous artists to the regional centre, and offer chances for them to show or develop their work, and meet people who work in the arts sector.

Second, Indigenous artists are often siloed into events or programs meant specifically for Indigenous artists. As a result, they often have too few opportunities to showcase their work in events alongside popular artists of other backgrounds, which reduces their exposure and makes it harder to grow their audience.

Third, a Mi'kmaw visual artist expresses that galleries and curators in the region have not fully leveraged the opportunity to grow the market for Indigenous visual arts in the Halifax region, which is a major market in other jurisdictions.

7.3 Francophone Community Needs

The Conseil Communautaire du Grand-Havre (CCGH) operates a venue called *Salle George-Cottreau*, located in the Carrefour school in Dartmouth. It is a 350 fixed-seat theatre that is often rented out for Francophone shows and festivals. The versatile venue can host music, theatre, dance and stand-up comedy shows. While this venue works well for larger events, it does not have the flexibility to support smaller shows. Further, its location in Dartmouth is not easily accessible to Francophone artists and residents. Therefore, Francophone event promoters often seek venues in the regional centre, mostly black box theaters.

However, black box theaters are in high demand. Francophone stakeholders noted that more black box theaters in the municipality would alleviate their challenge of finding space to host shows.

The *Conseil Communautaire du Grand-Havre* has identified funding sources and a location for a new cultural centre in the west end of Halifax. The new *Centre de l'Acadie et de la Francophonie de Halifax* (The Acadian and Francophone Centre of Halifax) will include a multi-purpose black box theatre that can host up to 220 people that will prioritize Francophone shows. Francophone stakeholders estimated this venue will meet their need for smaller shows. Further, it may be available 30 to 40 percent of the time for the wider arts community. The venue is expected to open late 2025, or early 2026. As such, we do not foresee a need for more francophone venues.

For more challenges related to growing Francophone audiences and supporting artists, see Appendix A, Section 3.

7.4 Next Steps

Next Steps 5a: Explore options to support and/or facilitate the creation of an African Nova Scotian arts centre in the regional centre — with a preference for Dartmouth — that helps fill the need of an ANS-operated venue that helps address the other venue needs identified in this study.

Next Steps 5b: When exploring a capital grant program, or programs, to support non-profit venues (Next Step 1b) and considering ad-hoc capital requests, develop evaluation criteria that encourage venue submissions that prioritize underrepresented communities and align with the municipality's Culture & Heritage Priorities Plan (Sharing Our Stories).

Next Steps 5c: Continue to support the proposed new Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre

Next Steps 5d: Explore opportunities to offer Indigenous artists from reservations more exposure and connections within Halifax's regional centre.

Next Steps 5e: Ensure the Grants to Professional Arts Organizations Program supports equitable access across the municipality's diverse geographic locations and populations, especially Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian organizations.

Next Steps 5f: Explore opportunities to promote performing and visual arts events led by underrepresented communities to align with HRM's commitment to supporting diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.



Jah'Mila singing. Photo from HRM Corporate Communications.

8. Conclusion

The clearest messages heard from stakeholders and the public is that there are insufficient professional arts venues in the Halifax region, and there is a desire for more—particularly in the regional centre. Urgent needs include:

- Three to five black box theatres, of various sizes.
- An all-ages music venue.
- An 1,800+ seat, large-scale, multipurpose roadhouse theatre to act as a preeminent destination for the arts in the region.
- A medium-size (500-1000 seats), multipurpose roadhouse theatre, with the ability to fully meet the needs of dance and drama.
- A small-scale (100-200 seats) cinema for independent movies.
- Permanent infrastructure for a large-scale, outdoor venue.
- Funding to enable existing nonprofit venue owners to acquire permanent spaces, to protect them from rising prices.
- Funding for nonprofit galleries to pay artist fees for exhibitions and festivals, so that visual arts groups can make better use of existing spaces.
- More rentable studios for the visual arts.

The Halifax region has been growing quickly in recent years, but it has been losing venues faster than it has been adding them. This has led to major backlogs for performing arts venues like the Bus Stop Theatre, which turns away hundreds of bookings a year. There are also long waiting lists to rent space in the region's few studios and heavy competition to put on visual arts shows.

Many venues in the regional centre are owned by schools, libraries, or university faculties, and prioritize their own students, clients, or events. This means that in effect, there are fewer venues available for arts groups than it may appear. Among the venues the region has added in recent years, none meets the needs of theatre or dance.

The region's one large multipurpose performing arts venue, The Rebecca Cohn, was not designed for this purpose, and has too few seats to make large shows economical. This scarcity risks limiting the ability of the region's art sector to grow and flourish. Already, stakeholders shared that many national dance, theatre, and music shows do not come to Halifax due to a lack of venues that meet their needs.

There are a number of potential strategies to fill these gaps, including grants, and the potential to include venues in upcoming capital projects. One strategy in particular requires focused study—the potential to build a performing arts centre that could include multiple venues identified, including a large-scale roadhouse theatre. A 1996 study stated, “A large performing arts centre in Halifax has been talked about for more than 40 years.”⁷

It is crucial that its arts sector can grow alongside the Halifax region's growing population to continue to support a high quality of life, attract talent to the region, and export artistic talent. The arts sector cannot grow, however, without physical space for showing work. This study has identified the highest-priority gaps in the physical spaces the sector needs to flourish.

9. List of All Next Steps

2.6 Next steps

Next step 1a. Establish criteria for evaluating potential new venues, building on the following preliminary criteria. None of these criteria should be understood as absolute requirements, except for #2.

1.

The venue will fill one of the gaps identified in Table 6, with greater weight given to urgent and high-priority gaps.
2.

A qualified venue designer has been, or will be, selected to ensure the project will fully meet the technical requirements of the relevant art cluster(s).
3.

The venue will be centrally located near high-frequency transit, bars, restaurants, and other venues. (See Next Step 3a for venues that do not meet this criterion).
4.

The project will fill other identified gaps, such as rehearsal space, arts office space, recording studios, and specialized equipment (such as a grand piano).
5.

The venue will be designed and organized to prioritize the arts. The arts will not be subordinated to the needs of a school, library, or other institution, and ideally, the venue will be managed by an organization with a mandate focused specifically on the arts.
6.

Venues should be given greater priority if they will be owned or managed by under-represented groups, or seek to meet the needs of these groups.

Venue type	Size	Priority	Notes on how to meet the needs of the arts community
All-ages music venue	50-180	Urgent	
2-4 Black boxes ¹	70-180	Urgent	At least 1-2 black boxes should have adequate rigging and versatile flooring options to fully fulfill the needs of Movement (circus & dance).
1-2 Black boxes ¹	180-300	Urgent	
Large roundhouse theatre ²	1800+	Urgent	The large roadhouse should be equipped with a removable orchestra shell (or similar technologies) to meet the acoustic needs of non-amplified music.
Medium-size roadhouse theatre	500-999	High	
Cinema ³	100-200	High	Consider designing it with a small stage to serve other uses during the day, such as for lectures and theatre rehearsals.
Concert hall	300-800	Moderate	

Table 6. The highest-priority investments for performing arts venues for the Halifax regional centre.

Next step 1b. Explore creating a capital grant program, or programs, to consider requests from non-profit organizations who wish to create, acquire, or renovate venues to meet the needs of the local professional arts community. When developing such a program, HRM should aim to meet the needs listed in Table 7, and consider incorporating the preliminary criteria proposed for each.

Funding Purpose	Preliminary Criteria to Consider
Create New Venues To increase the supply and diversity of professional performing art venues.	Criteria outlined in Next Step 1a.
Acquire an Existing Venue To protect the professional arts venues from closure due to rising rental costs and potential evictions.	Proposals should be given greater priority if the venue meets some or all of the following criteria: • Serves one or more arts clusters well. • Is heavily used. • Is well positioned near other venues, bars, restaurants, and/or high-frequency transit. • Addresses other art needs, such as by providing rehearsal space, arts office space, recording studios, or specialized equipment (such as a grand piano).
Renovations (Lifespan) To make structural repairs to venues to protect them from potential closure.	The renovation will have a meaningful impact on enabling the venue to stay open, either short-term or long-term. In addition, the venue meets some or all of the following criteria: • Serves one or more arts clusters well. • Is heavily used. • Is well positioned near other venues, bars, restaurants, and/or high-frequency transit. • Meets other art needs, such as rehearsal space, arts office space, recording studios, or specialized equipment (such as a grand piano).
Renovations (Professional Art Experience) To enhance the quality of a venue's audience experience, to meet the needs of professional performers, and to fill professional art venue gaps.	Draw on criteria outlined in Next Step 1a. Additionally, consider prioritizing projects that meet the needs identified by stakeholders in this project, as outlined in Appendix A, including: • Improve acoustics. • Enable a venue to better serve an arts cluster, such as by adding rigging or special flooring. • Improve sound baffling between existing venues and performance spaces so that they can hold shows simultaneously. • Improve accessibility features. • Build larger stages, wings, and/or green rooms.

Table 7. Purpose of a potential funding program to create, acquire, or renovate venues, and preliminary criteria for such a program.

Next step 1c. Explore opportunities for HRM to address the performing art venue needs identified in table 6 of this report.

Strategies	Analysis first steps
Study municipal investment in performing arts venues to gauge the return on investment and community benefits.	HRM funds a variety of capital projects, including recreation centres, community centres, libraries, schools, etc. Identifying a direct link between investments in performing art venues and outputs may aid in future decision making.
Investigate opportunities to integrate performing art venues in HRM capital projects.	• Survey all HRM capital projects planned for the next five years to identify opportunities to integrate performing art venues into said projects, which fill gaps identified in Table 15. • Ensure that when feasibility studies are conducted for any major build or renovation, they include an analysis of whether it is possible to tackle those venue gaps. • Ensure any such venue will be designed and organized to meet the needs of professional arts.
Investigate renovating existing HRM-owned buildings / properties to create new venues.	Conduct an inventory of assets owned by HRM in the Halifax region to assess whether any have the potential to be renovated to fill the identified venue gaps. If possible, explore partnerships with other levels of government to include their buildings within such an inventory.

Table 8. Potential strategies to explore for creating venues, and steps for analyzing them.

Next Step 1d. Investigate the potential to build a performing arts centre in the regional centre that can address the need for a large, preeminent roadhouse theatre, as well as other venues listed in Table 6. This action would begin with the following steps:

- Review similar projects in other cities to outline potential design strategies, partnership structures, and business models to make such a project financially and artistically successful.
- Convene with stakeholders and other levels of government to explore paths to funding and partnering on such a project.
- Assess ways to meet other high-priority goals of HRM and potential partners with the project, such as a major gallery.
- Conduct a detailed feasibility study, including an assessment of the appropriate capacity of each venue, the equipment and technical specifications needed for each, up-front and yearly costs, and the proposed revenue model.

3.4. Next Steps

Outdoor stage

Next step 2a. Explore opportunities, including HRM's upcoming capital projects, to invest in a large-scale outdoor stage or a medium-scale band stand. Develop a criteria to evaluate potential outdoor stages, drawing on the following proposed criteria:

- Centrally located near high-frequency transit, bars, restaurants, and other venues.
- Highly accessible audience area.
- A permanent stage that requires little setup, ideally with lights and sound equipment.
- A covered stage that protects artists from wind, rain, and sun.
- Adequate electricity.
- Adequate washroom facilities for the majority of shows that will use the space, and the ability to add temporary washrooms for full capacity shows.
- Prioritizes, or is managed by, underrepresented groups.

Community venues

- **Next step 2b.** Further explore the distinct needs of community venues, and strategies to create new venues in rural and suburban communities, in future studies.

- **Next step 2c.** Explore opportunities to create multipurpose community venues, including for performing or visual arts. Develop a criteria to evaluate such projects, drawing on the following proposed criteria:
 - Located in an area that is underserved by existing community venues.
 - Will serve as an effective gathering place for local residents.
 - Can be built in a cost-effective manner, such as by incorporating it into a larger capital project, or by renovating an existing building.
 - Prioritizes under-represented groups.
 - Enables professional shows.

Other space and equipment needs

Next step 2d. Explore opportunities to create rehearsal space, arts office space, recording studios, and spaces with specialized equipment (such as a grand piano), such as through upcoming capital projects.

Next step 2e. Explore opportunities to work with and/or incentivize private developers to create rehearsal space and arts office space.

4.6 Next Steps

We offer the following list of recommendations in order of priority:

Next step 3a. Explore strategies to implement the potential solutions identified in Table 14.

Next step 3b. Establish a criteria for evaluating major capital proposals for visual arts venues, building on the following proposed criteria. The project:

- Will support early-career and mid-career artists.
- Has a plan to pay artist fees.
- Will offer rentable studio space or community studio space.
- Will meet other needs identified in this study, including office space.
- Will create an artist-run centre or community gallery.

Investment type	Cost	Priority
Provide funding or financing support to enable arts groups to acquire and renovate buildings to create or protect gallery and studio spaces.	\$\$\$	Urgent
Provide funding for new studio spaces.	\$\$\$	Urgent
Provide funding for new artist-run centres and community galleries.	\$\$\$	Urgent
Expand funds for nonprofit galleries to pay artist fees for exhibitions and festivals, so that groups can make better use of existing gallery space.	\$	High
Continue to support the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia project.	\$\$\$\$	High
Provide space in existing public buildings for exhibitions with adequate artist fees.	\$	Moderate

Table 14. Potential solutions to help fill the gaps in the visual arts sector identified by stakeholders.



5.4 Next Steps

HRM Venue Management

Next step 4a. Aim to ensure any new major venue supported by HRM is managed by an organization, such as a nonprofit, that has a mandate focused specifically on supporting the professional performing arts, to the extent feasible.

Next step 4b. Explore the potential of creating a partnership, advisory body, or working group who acts as an advocate for the needs of the arts community and assists in the promotion of professional art venues and events.

Next step 4c. Assess current management agreements for HRM-owned venues (such as Alderney Landing Theatre) and partner venues (such as Spatz Theatre) to determine their effectiveness in supporting professional art needs and identify potential revisions that can be incorporated into amended agreements.

HRM Funding

Next Step 4d. Continue to evaluate and measure the funding envelope for the Grants to Professional Arts Organizations Program to ensure that operational funding is prioritized and distributed to meet arts organization's needs.

Next Step 4e. When exploring a capital grant program, or programs, to support non-profit venues (Next Step 1b), develop evaluation criteria to encourage or reward submissions from organizations that have a mandate focused specifically on supporting professional performing arts. Similar evaluation criteria should be used when assessing ad-hoc requests that fall outside of a formal grant program.

7.4 Next Steps

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Next Steps 5c: Continue to support the proposed new Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre.

Next Steps 5d: Explore opportunities to offer Indigenous artists from reservations more exposure and connections within Halifax's regional centre.

Next Steps 5e: Ensure the Grants to Professional Arts Organizations Program supports equitable access across the municipality's diverse geographic locations and populations, especially Mi'kmaw and African Nova Scotian organizations.

Next Steps 5f: Explore opportunities to promote performing and visual arts events led by underrepresented communities to align with HRM's commitment to supporting diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

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