



City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs History

The City of Dallas' commitment to arts and culture extends to the earlier years of the 20th century, when the city began its investment in the development and operations of cultural facilities. The creation of a formal city division to oversee this investment did not happen until 1976, when City Arts Program was established in 1976 as a division of the Dallas Park and Recreation Department. The purpose of the City Arts Program was to coordinate details of existing cultural programs and increase opportunities for cultural activities in Dallas.

In 1989, the City Council adopted the ordinance creating the Office of Cultural Affairs, a department within the City Manager's office, with a Director to oversee operations. Many of the functions of the City Arts Program were transferred to the new independent Office of Cultural Affairs, which no longer reported to the Park and Recreation Department. Also in 1989, the City Council established, by ordinance, the Cultural Affairs Commission, an advisory board of citizens to be appointed by the Mayor and City Council.

Today, the Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) operates a budget of over \$18 million; oversees 22 cultural facilities, and 300 works of public art; facilitates cultural services contracts for over 100 arts and cultural organizations; operates a classical radio station; and employs over 70 people dedicated to advancing the arts in Dallas and ensuring that all citizens and visitors have access to a broad array of arts and cultural opportunities.

Highlights of the City of Dallas' Cultural History

- 1897 First work of public art dedicated in the City of Dallas.
- 1909 The Dallas Arts Association donates its permanent collection to the City of Dallas and establishes the Free Public Art Gallery of Dallas, the first official arts facility for the City (that would eventually grow into the Dallas Museum of Art).
- 1910 WRR radio station is licensed by the City's Fire Department (now operating as WRR Classical 101.1 FM).
- 1925 The Fair Park Music Hall opens.
- 1936 As part of the Centennial Celebration, several cultural buildings open in Fair Park, including the new Dallas Museum of Fine Arts and Dallas Museum of Natural History buildings.
- 1959 The Kalita Humphreys Theater, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, opens as the home of the Dallas Theater Center.
- 1976 The Hoblitzelle Foundation gifts the Majestic Theater to the City of Dallas; after a major restoration, the building opens in 1983 as a performing arts center managed through public/private partnership by the Theater Operating Company.
- 1976 City Arts Program established as a division in the Dallas Park and Recreation Department.
- 1977 The Funding Programs/Cultural Services Contracts program is established to support local arts and cultural organizations.
- 1979 Dallas citizens approve \$24.8 million in bond funds to build a new art museum in downtown Dallas. The Dallas Museum of Art raises over \$20 million to build the facility, designed by Edward Larrabee Barnes. The new Dallas Museum of Art opens in 1984.



- 1981 The Bath House Cultural Center opens to the public.
- 1982 The first public art program in Dallas is established as the Art in Public Places Program
- 1983 The City of Dallas establishes the Dallas Arts District, dedicating 68 acres in the northeast corner of downtown Dallas to develop what will become the largest urban arts district in the United States.
- 1984 The Dallas Museum of Art is the first arts institution to open its facility in the Dallas Arts District.
- 1986 The South Dallas Cultural Center opens to the public.
- 1988 The Percent for Art Program is adopted by ordinance by City Council, providing 0.75% to 1.5% of eligible capital projects to be used for public art.
- 1989 City Council established by ordinance the Office of Cultural Affairs and the Cultural Affairs Commission.
- 1989 The Meyerson Symphony Center is dedicated, funded through a public/private partnership with the Dallas Symphony Association. The City dedicates \$49.3 million in bond funds to the project, with the DSA raising over \$50 million to match the city's investment.
- 1993 The Dallas Museum of Art building is significantly expanded with the Hamon Wing, which is built solely with private funds.
- 1995 Dallas citizens approve \$3.9 million in bond funds for cultural facilities projects.
- 1997 The Ice House Cultural Center opens to the public (closes in 2009).
- 1998 Dallas citizens approve \$10.5 million in bond funds for cultural facilities projects.
- 2003 The Latino Cultural Center opens to the public. The land on which the center is built was donated to the City by the Meadows Foundation.
- 2005 City of Dallas and the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts break ground for the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts, a cultural complex funded through a private/public partnership that raised over \$300 million for the construction of these facilities.
- 2006 Dallas citizens approve \$68 million in bond funds for cultural facilities projects.
- 2007 The City of Dallas OCA embarks on a groundbreaking arts education partnership with DISD and Big Thought.
- 2009 AT&T Performing Arts Center opens to the public (developed as the Dallas Center for the Performing Arts).
- 2009 Office of Cultural Affairs celebrates 20 years of excellence in Dallas arts and culture with special event, "20 Days, 20 Deals," offering special discounts to cultural events
- 2010 Oak Cliff Cultural Center opens to the public.
- 2010 The Majestic Theater transitions from being operated by a resident nonprofit organization to being operated by the Office of Cultural Affairs as a multi-user rental facility.
- 2012 Dallas City Performance Hall opens to the public.