



**RIDGEFIELD CITY COUNCIL
MEETING AGENDA**

**Thursday, January 15, 2026
RACC - Columbia Assembly Room
510 Pioneer Street, Ridgefield, WA 98642**

I. STUDY SESSION - 4:00 P.M.

- 1. Envision Ridgefield 2045: Arts, Culture, and Heritage Goals and Policies - Claire Lust,
Community Development Director, Lee Knottnerus, Deputy City Manager**

II. ADJOURN



City of Ridgefield – City Council
Comprehensive Plan Update

Arts, Culture, & Heritage Element

January 15, 2026



Agenda

- Background
- Draft Arts, Culture, and Heritage goals and policies
 - *Discussion:* Provide feedback on draft goal and policy language
- Goal: Develop consensus on the draft goal and policy language



Background

- What is “Arts, Culture and Heritage”
- Current Conditions
 - *Commitment to Preservation*
 - *Partnerships*
 - *Structures*
 - *Events*
- Direction for the Future
 - *Affirm, Identify, Preserve, Connect, Empower, Sustain*



Draft Goals & Policies

Goal 1.1: Affirm the importance of culture, arts and heritage to Ridgefield's identity.

Policy 1.1.1 Partner with arts, cultural and heritage organizations to expand city-wide awareness and support for arts, culture and heritage/history preservation.

Policy 1.1.2 Create a communications campaign to engage and educate the community in Ridgefield's culture and heritage including interpretive signage, a website and social media presence, features in print materials, the city's community calendar, etc.

Policy 1.1.3 Expand Ridgefield's mobile app, Access Ridgefield, to include public art and a broader range of cultural and historical sites and activities.

Policy 1.1.4 Plan, encourage and support a wide variety of community events that incorporate arts, multiculturalism and Ridgefield's heritage and attract a diversity of populations.

Policy 1.1.5 Facilitate the presence of elected officials and staff leadership at arts and cultural events in the city.

Draft Goals & Policies

Goal 1.2: Identify and preserve Ridgefield's arts, cultural, and historic assets and vitality.

Policy 1.2.1 Create an inventory of cultural and historic resources including buildings, public art, landscapes, artifacts, archaeological sites and landmarks, arts and cultural events, unique neighborhoods, and organizations with a focus on arts, culture and/or heritage.

Policy 1.2.2 Partner with organizations such as the Clark County Historical Society and Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation to create a plan for preservation, restoration and/or rehabilitation of historical properties, arts and artifacts.

Policy 1.2.3 Create a mechanism to gather and preserve stories of past cultures, structures, and general history.

Draft Goals & Policies

Goal 1.3: Create a sustainable structure to support and enhance culture, arts, and heritage.

Policy 1.3.1 Create a community advisory commission to provide a focus on arts, culture and heritage across the city.

Policy 1.3.2 Create a public art program to support preservation and installation of visual arts such as sculptures and murals.

Policy 1.3.3 Designate downtown or a portion of downtown as a historic district and/or support the designation of historical properties on historic registers.

Policy 1.3.4 Designate downtown as a “Creative Arts District.”

Policy 1.3.5 Update and utilize the City Partner program to support arts, cultural and heritage organizations and projects.

Draft Goals & Policies

Goal 1.4: Strengthen connections through arts and culture.

Policy 1.4.1 Design and maintain accessible public spaces that support a wide variety of gatherings, formal and informal, for residents and visitors of all ages, backgrounds and abilities.

Policy 1.4.2 Preserve and enhance the walkability of downtown and prioritize multi-modal connectivity between downtown and Ridgefield’s neighborhoods.

Policy 1.4.3 Prioritize accessibility, beauty and cultural expression in public spaces.

Policy 1.4.4 Encourage and support public art and creative placemaking throughout Ridgefield, especially in Downtown, parks and gathering places.

Policy 1.4.5 Activate parks, downtown areas and other public spaces with art installations, performances, community events and cultural programming that reflect Ridgefield’s history, multiculturalism and vision for the future.

Policy 1.4.6 Create partnerships with non-profit community organizations (RMS, RAA, Multicultural Initiative, RSD) and business organizations and individuals that focus on arts, culture and heritage.

Policy 1.4.7 Provide arts classes for all ages and cultures through the city’s recreation program or partnerships.

Draft Goals & Policies

Goal 1.5: Encourage arts and culture to thrive in the Ridgefield Arts Quarter.

Policy 1.5.1 Use art and streetscape improvements to create physical connections between downtown and waterfront development.

Policy 1.5.2 Work with property owners, artists and cultural organizations to create and use gathering and other spaces.

Policy 1.5.3 Focus on walkability in the area to view and experience arts.

Policy 1.5.4 Partner with community organizations, schools and museums to offer programs, tours, events and exhibits highlighting Ridgefield's past.

Policy 1.5.5 Provide interpretive elements, walking tours and digital resources that bring local history to life in public spaces.

Draft Goals & Policies

Goal 1.5: Encourage arts and culture to thrive in the Ridgefield Arts Quarter.

Policy 1.5.6 Explore opportunities to integrate art and cultural features in new development and infrastructure projects.

Policy 1.5.7 Close alley-ways to through traffic and activate with artistic lighting, visual arts, event uses and pedestrian connectivity.

Policy 1.5.8 Allow artists to decorate city's infrastructure including meters, storm drains, pavement, bridges, etc.

Policy 1.5.9 Update downtown design guidelines to include public art, cultural amenities and historic character of the built environment.

Policy 1.5.10 Reduce financial and other barriers that make it difficult for art and cultural users to have space in the arts quarter.

Draft Goals & Policies

Goal 1.6: Support the creation of needed space for culture, arts, and heritage.

Policy 1.6.1 Make the process of adapting older buildings for public use as easy as possible.

Policy 1.6.2 Incentivize inclusion of space where arts are taught, arts and history are showcased, makers or live/work artists are present, and art supplies are sold.

Policy 1.6.3 Match property owners with cultural organizations looking for space.

Policy 1.6.4 Partner with the Ridgefield School District, the Port of Ridgefield, RAA and other organizations to create space for arts and culture.

Policy 1.6.5 Explore creating a Ridgefield museum in City Hall when it is no longer needed for office space.

Policy 1.6.6 Research funding options such as designating a small portion of public construction to the purchase, installation and/or maintenance of public artwork OR implementing up to a 0.1% increase in sales tax under the Cultural Access program OR use lodging tax funds.

ENVISION
RIDGEFIELD
2045

Thank you!



Arts, Culture and Heritage

CURRENT CONDITION

Arts, Culture and Heritage Defined

ARTS = Art is the expression of human creativity, skill and imagination and a vehicle for the expression or communication of emotions and ideas. It encompasses a full range of visual and performing arts such as painting, sculpture, decoration, music, literature, and performance. Art normally involves intentional creation going beyond mere decoration to convey complex human experiences, values and meaning.

CULTURE = Culture shapes identity and allows groups to function together. It is a way of life of a group of people in a place or time – the learned and shared behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols. It is the language, knowledge, clothing, traditions, cuisine, institutions, music, dance, theater and art that are characteristic of everyday life. These norms are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next, and can change over time.

HERITAGE = Heritage involves the qualities or features belonging to a particular place or culture, such as traditions, languages, history, values or buildings, which come from the past and are still important. It can include tangible things like structures, artifacts and archaeological sites as well as intangible traditions like ancestry, arts, biodiversity, history and stories, values and beliefs.

Culture is a broad, living system of a group's behaviors, beliefs, and ways of life. Heritage is the specific, inherited part of that culture's past that is important enough to be passed down and preserved for identity and continuity. Culture is the whole dynamic lifestyle, whereas heritage is the legacy from that lifestyle that connects a people to their history and roots, influencing the ongoing culture.

Commitment to Preservation of Arts, Culture and Heritage

A commitment to preservation of arts, culture and heritage is grounded in Ridgefield's Vision Statement: "Connecting our historic past with a healthy future where, people, nature and business flourish together."

This Vision is supported by Council goals to: revitalize downtown as a destination location, retain culture and history, and maximize the city's natural resources and attractions including the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge, archeological resources, waterfront area, the Lewis & Clark and Native American connections and the building environments.

Consistent with these goals, the City of Ridgefield has partnered with residents, local and regional arts and heritage organizations and the business community to grow and sustain a thriving and vibrant culture, arts and heritage scene. These efforts have created connections across traditional barriers such as age and ethnic background, contributed to the city's economic vitality, played an essential role in tourism and contributed significantly to the community's collective identity. As the City of Ridgefield grows, a focus on the strategies and initiatives necessary to protect, support and enhance arts, culture and heritage resources and efforts sustain livability, enhance community engagement and inclusion, and retain Ridgefield's unique small-town feel.

Partnerships

The City of Ridgefield cannot support its arts and cultural programs and activities alone. Much of the City's work is done in partnership with nonprofits, community groups, business owners and residents. For example, the City partners with Ridgefield Main Street (RMS) on revitalization of downtown efforts,

the Ridgefield Art Association (RAA) on arts related activities, the Clark County Historical Museum on historic preservation and education, the Ridgefield Multicultural Initiative on planning efforts and a downtown festival, and with multiple downtown merchants, Ridgefield School District, the Port of Ridgefield, the Ridgefield Community Library and local organizations on monthly themed First Saturday events.

Public Art and Community Events

Public Art: The City has a growing collection of public art in the downtown Arts Quarter that enhances the visual landscape, showcases the city's culture and history and expresses community values. The most recent addition includes a large mural that depicts the dragon boats, Ridgefield Roundabout Red wine (made from grapes grown in the city's roundabouts), Lake River and local wildlife.

Community Events: Community Events are a pillar of Ridgefield cultural life. For example, the City hosts themed events on the First Saturday of each month, signature events such as Hometown Celebration, Big Paddle Waterfront Festival, Farm-to-Table community dinner, downtown walks, summer concerts and community paddles on Kaohsiung Dragon Boats. The City also issues permits for community sponsored cultural events like the 4th of July Festival, Oktoberfest and Wine Walks. These gatherings serve as dynamic, living expressions of the city's identity, foster community connections, and promote inclusion for all residents.

Arts Quarter

Ridgefield established the Downtown Arts Quarter in 2018 to provide opportunities for visible public art and unique development design features that reflect the character of the city and build a sense of community.

Preservation of Historic Structures

Many of the downtown commercial buildings, office spaces, and residential structures were built in the early 1900's and have been repurposed to create a thriving historic downtown. Downtown design guidelines and strategic plans have helped to preserve these structures and, at the same time, a historic sense of place and small town feel of the downtown area.

History and Heritage Education

Interpretive signage that tells the stories of downtown historical buildings, walking tours, interactive digital resources, and other educational opportunities have been developed to make history tangible, preserve local knowledge and educate residents and visitors on the historical facts and passed down stories. The City has partnered with the Clark County Historical Museum to develop and offer a Historic Walking Tour of Downtown. And, the Ridgefield Community Library has worked to preserve stories with recordings of long-time residents and archiving photographs.

Archaeology and Artifacts

Ridgefield's location near the confluence of Lake River and Columbia River has played an important role in local Native American history and culture. Previous investigations have uncovered artifacts from early pioneer settlers as well as prehistoric artifacts like Native American tools, and a mammoth tusk.

The City along with residents, the Heritage Society, the Community Library and other organizations have gathered and retained a significant treasure trove of historic artifacts. These items are in storage at City Hall, the library and residential garages because the city does not have a location for display.

DIRECTION FOR THE FUTURE

Ridgefield is a forward-thinking city that honors and celebrates its rich cultural, artistic and historical roots. We strive to protect the places, stories and traditions that define our identity while creating inclusive opportunities for community expression, education and engagement. Through thoughtful planning, preservation and celebration of arts, culture and our heritage, we will strengthen Ridgefield's unique character and sense of place for future generations.

ARTS, CULTURE AND HERITAGE - DRAFT GOALS AND POLICIES

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Appendix - Historical Background

Heritage and cultural resources in Ridgefield are rooted in a rich and colorful history that dates back thousands of years. Knowledge of Ridgefield's history can provide a context in which to understand current growth and development trends, affirm a sense of community and provide direction for arts, cultural and heritage programs in the future.

For millennia, Cowlitz and Chinook tribes occupied and maintained village sites along Lake River in the City of Ridgefield and surrounding areas of Clark County. Euroamerican settlement in the area began in the mid-1800s. The relationship between the euro-american settlers and the native Chinook people was generally friendly and neighborly. As more American settlers came to the area, the small community called Union Ridge, due to the large population of former Union soldiers, began to take shape. Early commerce formed to support the small farming community, with transportation mainly by river. In 1900 construction of the Union Pacific railroad through Ridgefield re-started and opened up new possibilities for travel and commerce. The growth of the community led to official incorporation of the City of Ridgefield in 1909.

For the first half of the 20th century Ridgefield's economy grew based on lumber, shingle mills, prune and potato farming and small commerce. Ridgefield residents then, as now, participated heavily in civic and community organizations and activities including The Priscilla Study Club formed in 1914 and the Ridgefield Garden Club in 1938. During this period Ridgefield also built churches and storefronts that are still standing today. After World War II, the shingle mills closed and many young people left town to find work as economic growth stagnated for a couple decades.

An opportunity to explore a new industry, tourism, sprouted in Ridgefield in the late 1960s. The Federal Highway Act in 1956 initiated development of Interstate 5 and portions through Clark County were completed in the mid-1960s. In 1965, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service established the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. These near simultaneous developments helped to cement the roots of environmental stewardship that are still present in Ridgefield today.

Beginning in the 1980s, community and recreational resources expanded, economics improved, politics changed and the population grew. The Ridgefield Community Center Association was formed in 1984 and raised funds to purchase property and construct a new building which opened in 1994. Long standing community events such as Hometown Celebration and Birdfest began. In 1999, Ridgefield changed from a strong-mayor form of government to a council-manager system. And, the Cathlapotle Plankhouse, built through a partnership of the Chinook Indian Nation, Portland State University, the U.S. fish & Wildlife Service, the Friends of the Refuge and numerous community partners and volunteers, opened in 2005.

Ridgefield experienced a population spike in the 1990s, followed by rapid growth in residential development from 2008 to 2020. This growth spurred city leadership to focus on both attracting new highly desired services and jobs to the area, and preserving the arts, culture and heritage that created the small town characteristics and community feel that residents and visitors have known and loved. This effort took many forms including downtown revitalization, a re-branding effort in 2016 that included an updated City logo and the slogan "Forward Thinking, Rooted in Tradition;" starting Ridgefield First

Saturdays in 2015, a monthly community event program designed to bring people together in Downtown; and establishing the Downtown Arts Quarter in 2018 to provide opportunities for visible public art and unique development design features that reflect the character of the city and build a sense of community.