Serving as a creative hub, fostering vibrancy, and celebrating creativity in the broader Houston region.

Our Mission

The mission of Art League Houston is to connect the community through diverse, dynamic, and creative experiences that bring people together to see, make and talk about contemporary visual art.
Inclusivity
We welcome all members of our diverse community and seek opportunities for interaction and access. Art - and therefore Art League Houston - is for everyone.

Creativity
We are passionate about the power of creativity to inspire individuals to action and to facilitate understanding among people. Creativity is at the heart of everything we do.

Learning
We provide opportunities for people to learn about art, themselves, and each other. Learning permeates all of our programs.

Evolution
We change and grow with our city and the arts landscape. We look to the future while celebrating our past.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Having successfully navigated organizational and financial challenges brought on by COVID and presented with rapid technology changes and compelling concerns related to racial justice and equity, Art League Houston (ALH) finds itself facing new and dynamic challenges. Reflecting its commitment to meaningfully serving and supporting the community of artists and art-enthusiasts in the region, ALH is inspired to meet the moment by leveraging and nurturing its core strengths while addressing organizational limitations.

Over the next five years, ALH’s primary focus will remain the effective cultivation of the art community while expanding its reach to engage new and diverse populations and audiences. In this pursuit, ALH will enhance the capacities of its unique building in Montrose to allow for a re-imagined art school curriculum that will push the boundaries of equity for artists, and lively events for art students, local artists, organizations, and community members. Additionally, ALH will build upon the dedication of passionate staff and leadership to innovate and strengthen its organizational capacities.
"Rethinking Your Neighborhood: A Collaborative Experience" Violette Bule, 2021
STRATEGIC DIRECTION & KEY GOALS
2021-2026

Over the next 5 years, ALH will have cemented its role as a creative hub for arts in Houston by serving new and diverse audiences across the region while expanding and ensuring equity for artists. We will reach this destination by achieving these key goals:

**Re-Imagine the Art School**
We will re-imagine the school to prioritize arts access, racial equity, and economic justice. By 2025, we will have diversified curriculum offerings, increased BIPOC representation among teaching artists and students, and transitioned towards a Contribute-What-Can pricing model for classes.

**Revitalize the Campus**
We will maximize the capacity of the Montrose campus through facility improvements that will improve accessibility for all audiences and enhance visitors' creative experience. We will also implement a mortgage reduction plan to be ready to launch a capital campaign in 2027.

**Increase Our Organizational Capacity**
Through a larger full-time staff and upgraded technology, we will increase our capacity to support innovations in our school, community, and exhibition offerings while deepening our impact and reach.
1. **Background Review**
   Review of existing documentation and research provided by ALH.

2. **Stakeholder Focus Groups and Surveys**
   Input from diverse stakeholders (artists, teaching artists, students, board, staff funders, etc.) through surveys, interviews, and focus groups, as well as an equity assessment and conversations with board and staff.

3. **Blue-Sky Session I: Review Research**
   Review findings of the research in a way that allows the board and staff to participate in ‘blue sky thinking’ – open-ended thinking, imagining, thinking flexibly, and taking responsible risks – about what can be possible for the future of ALH.

4. **Blue Sky Session II: Vision & Goal Development**
   Having considered all the research and taken into consideration the impacts of the pandemic, the board and staff set the overall strategic direction and goals for the next five years.

5. **Action Plan Development**
   Having developed the overall strategic direction and goals for the next five years, the board and staff set the action steps for reaching each goal with related assignments and timelines.

6. **Strategic Plan**
   The strategic plan was approved by ALH’s Board of Directors.
Once all the data was collected and prior to goal development, ALH board and staff participated in an extensive “Blue-Sky” session to review the information gathered and explore new ideas. The data review and stakeholder discussions surfaced three critical themes that informed the strategic direction of the five-year plan:

- Embrace ALH’s Reputation as a Vital and Dynamic Organization
- Prioritize Equity and Invest in Upgraded Technology
- Balance Organizational Vision with Capacity
“ALH IS WHAT MOST ART ORGANIZATIONS WANT TO GROW UP TO BE.”

– STATEWIDE ARTS LEADER

ALH is viewed as a strong and reputable organization by key stakeholders in recognition of its innovative leadership and efforts around artist advocacy, as well as providing a vibrant and inspiring environment for students to make art. Community stakeholders expressed interest in seeing ALH’s continued commitment to ensuring the vitality and diversity of Houston’s local artist community and sounded a call to action for the organization to better articulate the power of art to evoke positive social change.

Embrace ALH’s Reputation as a Vital, Dynamic Organization
'The Journey to Me'  Vicki Meek, 2021
“ALH HAS MADE THEMSELVES IN SOME WAY A PART OF THE POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES, MAKING THEMSELVES MORE THAN JUST AN ARTS INSTITUTION.”

– LOCAL ARTIST

Both internal and external stakeholders noted growing trends in equity-focused advocacy - both socially and politically - and the need for greater Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) representation in the non profit arts sector. The increased need for prioritizing diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion was a consistent theme throughout the stakeholder engagement process. There was also widespread interest, and enthusiasm for, using technology more effectively and as a tool for accessibility in the school and throughout the organization.
“ART LEAGUE HOUSTON ALWAYS HAS AMAZING INTENTIONS FOR ITS WORK. THE BIGGEST STUMBLING BLOCK IS THE (LIMITED SIZE) STAFF AND FINANCIAL ABILITY TO FOLLOW THROUGH CONSISTENTLY ON ALL ITS GOALS.”

– ALH STAKEHOLDER

Two key internal opportunities emerged from the stakeholder assessment: 1) Address issues related to staff capacity; and 2) Strengthen the engagement and ability of the board of directors to stimulate more philanthropic investment and achieve more local and national recognition for being an arts hub that fosters a diverse community of artists and art students.
Following the Blue Sky sessions, the Strategic Planning Committee, comprised of both staff and Board members, then met for two consecutive weekends to set the strategic direction for the organization over the next five years. Five key themes emerged:

Push the boundaries of equity to increase BIPOC representation and accessible opportunities for new artists in every aspect of ALH programming.

Take risks and radically experiment in re-imagining art school programming and new community-focused activities to bring diverse and accessible offerings to new audiences.

Revitalize the Montrose campus such that it becomes a vibrant creative hub, fostering the exchange of ideas and celebrating creativity through mixers and lively events.

Continue to be a voice and direction of leadership for all arts organizations by articulating the critical role that art plays in our lives, and the many contributions it makes to improve our lives.

Increase the capacity of the organization to meet the new goals by increasing staff support, improving technology infrastructure, and enhancing board and fundraising efforts.
ALH staff shaped the strategic direction and key themes into three comprehensive, SMART, and manageable goals with related objectives, priority levels, and assignments. The following strategic goals, objectives, and timeline were reviewed by the Board and formally approved for implementation in January 2022.

**GOAL 1**
Re-Imagine the ALH Art School to Foster Equity and Impact Positive Social Change

**GOAL 2**
Revitalize the Campus and Implement a Mortgage Debt Reduction Plan

**GOAL 3**
Increase Organizational Capacity and Invest in Technology
STRATEGIC VISION
GOAL 1

RE-IMAGINE THE SCHOOL TO PRIORITIZE ARTS ACCESS, RACIAL EQUITY, AND ECONOMIC JUSTICE BY DIVERSIFYING CURRICULUM OFFERINGS, INCREASING BIPOC REPRESENTATION AMONGST TEACHING ARTISTS AND STUDENTS, AND TRANSITIONING CLASSES TO A CONTRIBUTE-WHAT-CAN PRICING MODEL

OBJECTIVES

- Establish a Art League School Mission Statement
- Shift to a Tuition-Free Education Model
- Re-think the ALH Membership Model
- Diversify and Increase the Impact of Art League School
- Build a Greater Sense of Community
- Leverage Existing Community Partnerships to Provide Off-Site Art Classes in Target Communities
Objective 1
Establish an Art League School Mission Statement
- Establish school committee
- Announce new school mission statement

Objective 2
Shift to a Tuition-Free Education Model
- Analyze current ALH art class pricing model and research new pricing strategies
- Establish a fund to support a Pay-What-You-Can model
- Develop a store credit fund with local art supply stores to enable student discounts on materials
- Pilot a new Pay-What-You-Can revenue structure

Objective 3
Re-think the ALH Membership Model
- Increase the accessibility of the membership program
Objective 4

**Diversify and Increase the Impact of Art League School**

- Increase the racial, economic, and gender equity amongst teaching artists and students
- Research evolving needs of the community/conduct research to identify opportunities for diversification
- Clearly define new target audiences and identify needs and interests of prospective new students within these audiences
- Grow the innovation of our educational offerings
- Support the artistic growth of teaching artists
- Develop more opportunities for exchange between exhibiting artists and students at the ALH School
- Develop an equitable recruitment/training process to engage new teaching artists
- Increase professional development opportunities for teaching artists (expand skill share program)
- Increase the stability and quantity of employment opportunities for teaching artists
- Improve technological infrastructure
- Grow the number of digital/online educational offerings
Objective 5
Build a Greater Sense of Community

- Develop events that foster engagement between teaching artists and the ALH community
- Organize twice-a-year “make and take” events for ALH students and the public
- Build an active and supportive network between teaching artists and the Teaching Artist Guild
- Grow the number of collaborative events between ALH and Canary Montrose
- Increase impact of the organization’s K through Gray programming
- Design and implement new studio visit program between local artists and curators

Objective 6
Leverage Existing Community Partnerships to Provide Off-Site Art Classes in Target Communities

- Develop new programs that build on existing relationships within the community, exhibition, and public art programs in undersupported communities
STRATEGIC VISION

GOAL 2

REVITALIZE THE CAMPUS BY MAKING FACILITY IMPROVEMENTS AND IMPLEMENTING A MORTGAGE DEBT REDUCTION PLAN TO BE READY TO LAUNCH A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN IN 2027

OBJECTIVES

- Raise $250,000 for Facility Improvements
- Fund Needed Repairs, Upgrades, and Maintenance for Building
- Increase the Visibility of the Montrose Building and Leverage the Parking Lot and Esplanade to Enhance the Creative Feel of the Campus
- Develop and Implement a Mortgage Debt Reduction Plan to Pay Off Mortgage by 2027
- Begin conversations with capital campaign consultants to prepare for a capital campaign in 2027
Objective 1
Raise $250,000 for Facility Improvement
- Create a three-year facility improvements plan that prioritizes accessibility and innovation
- Establish a fund to support facility improvements
- Establish a Patron Circle

Objective 2
Fund Needed Repairs, Upgrades, and Maintenance for Building
- Phase I: Make the building accessible to all audiences (ADA accessibility, etc.)
- Phase 2: Increase storage and organization in studios (re-evaluate space use)
- Phase 3: Improve SG lighting and walls and upgrade galleries to be more efficient and flexible

Objective 3
Increase the Visibility of the Montrose Building and Leverage the Parking Lot and Median to Enhance the Creative Feel of the Campus
- Install a large-scale exterior building sign on Montrose
- Design a more appealing and accessible main entrance
- Utilize the parking lot as a platform for creative experiences
- Re-establish public art projects on the Montrose esplanade
Objective 4
Develop and Implement a Mortgage Debt Reduction Plan
- Establish a five-year plan to pay off mortgage debt
- Establish a fund to pay off mortgage debt

Objective 5
Begin Conversations With Consultants to Prepare for a Capital Campaign in 2027
- Once the mortgage is paid off - prepare for a capital campaign to expand the ALH campus
STRATEGIC VISION

GOAL 3

INCREASE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY THROUGH A LARGER FULL-TIME STAFF AND INCREASED TECHNOLOGY CAPACITY

OBJECTIVES

- Develop and Implement a Technology Infrastructure Plan
- Hire Staff Needed for Growth
- Increase Board Capacity and Diversity
- Improve Standardized Collection of Demographic Data on Students, Membership, and Program Participants
- Increase Staff Retention
Objective 1
Develop and Implement a Technology Infrastructure Plan
- Develop budget and fundraising plan for upgrading staff devices and software
- Update and improve the website for increased language accessibility and improve access to services
- Research and maximize capacities of software being used internally and in the art school

Objective 2
Hire Staff Needed for Growth
- Hire a part-time Facility Manager
- Hire a full-time Teaching Artist Fellow
- Hire additional administrative staff

Objective 3
Increase Board Capacity and Diversity
- Review and update board of directors policies and procedures to prioritize equity
- Increase the number of board members to between 12-15.
- Increase racial, economic, and gender equity on the board of directors
- Fully implement the board fundraising initiative, annually
Objective 4
**Improve Standardized Collection of Demographic Data on Students, Membership, and Program Participants**

- Research improvements to demographics data collection process
- Develop an equitable process to collect and analyze demographic data
- Implement a plan to collect and analyze data

Objective 5
**Increase Staff Retention**

- Certify the organization for instruction by TEA
- Establish a pathway for staff advancement
Timeline

**2022**
- Develop Re-Imagined ALH School Transition Plan
- Develop Community-Focused Public Programs
- Develop Facility Improvement Plan
- Re-Think ALH Membership Structure
- Develop Technology Upgrade Plan
- Increase Board Capacity
- Develop Mortgage Debt Reduction Plan
- Launch Fundraising Initiatives to Support Strategic Goals

**2023**
- ALH School Transition Plan: Phase 1
- Launch New Community-Focused Public Program
- Facility Improvement Plan: Phase 1
- Pilot ALH Membership Structure
- Technology Upgrades: Phase 1
- Strengthen Board Capacity
- Mortgage Debt Reduction Plan: Phase 1
- Continue Fundraising Initiatives to Support Strategic Goals

**2024**
- ALH School Transition Plan: Phase 2
- Facility Improvement Plan: Phase 2
- Technology Upgrades: Phase 2
- Strengthen Board Capacity
- Mortgage Debt Reduction Plan: Phase 2
- Continue Fundraising Initiatives to Support Strategic Goals

**2025**
- ALH School Transition Plan: Phase 3
- Facility Improvement Plan: Phase 3
- Technology Upgrades: Phase 3
- Strengthen Board Capacity
- Mortgage Debt Reduction Plan: Phase 3
- Increase Staff Capacity
- Launch New Studio Visit Program for Local Artists
- Re-launch Rotating Esplanade Project
- Continue Fundraising Initiatives to Support Strategic Goals

**2026**
- Complete ALH School Transition Plan
- Complete Facility Improvement Plan
- Complete Technology Upgrades
- Complete Mortgage Debt Reduction Plan

**2025**
- Increase Board Capacity
- Develop Mortgage Debt Reduction Plan
- Launch Fundraising Initiatives to Support Strategic Goals
Staff

Jennie Ash
Executive Director
Diego Canales
Weekend Program Associate
Alberto Careaga
Director of Education
Janet Carreker
Finance Manager
Erin Carty
Communications & Program Associate
Jimmy Castillo
Director of Exhibitions & Curatorial Projects
Eepi Chaad
Director of Community Engagement
Maureen Lax
Evening Program Associate
Susan Reedy
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Consultants

Working Partner
Special thanks to Erin McClarty for facilitating valuable equity conversations with ALH board and staff.

Photography

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