

2023

OFFICE OF
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

YEAR IN REVIEW



CULTURAL AFFAIRS PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS-2024



The following transformative initiatives are currently shaping the cultural landscape of Jersey City:

- **Welcoming the New Jersey Symphony:** Jersey City proudly became the new home of the New Jersey Symphony, offering residents access to world-class symphonic performances and enriching educational programs.
- **Loews Jersey Theater Restoration:** Launched an online resource hub for residents to stay informed as the Loews Jersey Theater undergoes its historic restoration, preserving a cultural gem for future generations.
- **Partnership with the Centre Pompidou:** Collaborated with the Centre Pompidou to support its community programming efforts, culminating in the successful presentation of the **Night of Ideas**. This seven-hour event featured over 30 local and international artists, thought leaders, educators, and community groups.
- **New Website Launch:** Developed a new, user-friendly website designed to better serve the community and visitors. The site is set to launch in early 2025, enhancing access to cultural resources and information.
- **Global Cultural Tourism Promotion:** Elevated Jersey City's cultural tourism profile on the global stage through targeted advertising campaigns, participation in an inbound travel trade show, and fostering connections statewide.
- **Arts and Culture Trust Fund Grants:** Administered \$1 million in grants to support local artists and arts organizations, further investing in the growth and sustainability of Jersey City's vibrant arts community.

Read on for more information about the many programs and initiatives currently underway in the Office of Cultural Affairs!



4TH OF JULY FESTIVAL



Jersey City's annual Fourth of July Festival returned in full force for 2024, drawing over 200,000 residents and visitors to the Hudson River waterfront. As the largest and most anticipated 4th of July celebration in the state, the event was a vibrant display of community, patriotism, and summer fun.

"Our Fourth of July Festival is a highlight of the summer, bringing together our diverse community to celebrate our nation's independence with music, entertainment, and of course, fireworks," said Mayor Fulop

A world-class concert capped off the day's entertainment, featuring headliners Funk Flex, Fat Joe, and Wyclef Jean. Earlier, the Main Stage featured performances from local talent, setting the tone for an unforgettable event.

The festival featured the popular Jersey City Night Market, which stretched along Marin Boulevard and Christopher Columbus Drive. More than 80 food and non-food vendors showcased a wide array of mouthwatering treats, unique crafts, merchandise, and memorable souvenirs.

Families enjoyed a host of activities for children of all ages, including bounce houses, face painting, a balloon artist, and fun-filled games hosted by the New York Red Bulls.

The event concluded with a spectacular Grucci Fireworks display, launched from two barges on the Hudson River, creating an unparalleled show set against the backdrop of the New York City skyline.





EVENT PERMIT OFFICE

2024 PERMITTED EVENTS

- 120 Park Events
- 76 Special Events
- 12 Block Parties
- 44 City Sponsored events
- 77 Festivals
- 42 Parades
- 8 Farmers
- 3 Flea Markets

The Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) plays a crucial role in facilitating special events and fostering community relations, with the Event Permit process being a key responsibility.

OCA assists event organizers in navigating the process, ensuring the safe and efficient use of City property for public gatherings. In 2024, OCA processed 382 permit requests for a variety of events, such as festivals, parades, farmers markets, block parties, park events, and religious processions. This marks a 13% increase compared to 2023.

CITY HALL EVENTS

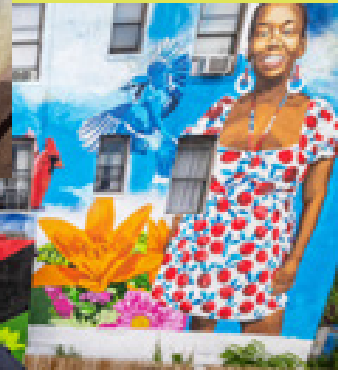
- **44 Flag Raisings**, with **31 cultural programs** held as part of this year's flag raisings
- **State of the City Address**
- **In Her Footsteps**, a celebration of **Women's History Month** with Speranza Theatre
- The first **Sikh Heritage Month Celebration**
- A **General Toussaint Louverture Haitian Celebration**
- The **6TH Anniversary of Sisterhood** with General Santos City
- The **29TH Martin Luther King Oratory Competition** with **100 elementary and middle school students**
- Annual crosswalk painting for **Pride Month**
- Hosted **300 members of the Muslim community** for an **Inter-Faith Ramadan Iftar**
- **11 countries represented during Taste of Culture**, a public event featuring cultural cuisine and performances
- **Annual Mayor's Toy drive** with over **1600 toys distributed**
- **Holiday Cultural Concert** with the Conservatory of Fine Arts



JERSEY CITY MURAL ARTS PROGRAM (JCMAP)

JCMAP Highlights

- **"As Above, So Below (Past, Present, Future Forward)"**: A 50x100 ft mural by Jamaican-American artist Jesse Wright, created in partnership with the Jersey City PBOA and Hudson County Office of Cultural & Affairs/Tourism Development.
- Completed **5 major mural restorations**, preserving public art and revitalizing the city's streetscape.
- Welcomed **Mari Gardner** as the new Director, guiding JCMAP into its second decade.
- Launched an **artist call** to expand and diversify the mural artist pool for 2025 and beyond.
- Added a **Special Projects Manager** to enhance social media presence and community engagement.



JCMAP Highlights

- Celebrated the **10th Anniversary** of the Jersey City Youth Mural Arts Program.
- Completed the largest mural in the program's history: a **150 ft x 50 ft** mural, marking a major milestone.
- Hired **28 youth participants**, showcasing their artistic talents and fostering community connections.
- Hosted a **10th anniversary celebration**, bringing past and present participants together.
- Premiered a **documentary film** of the 2024 program and held a youth arts gallery exhibition and ribbon-cutting.
- Drew mural inspiration from **MOMA visits**, connecting art with cultural exploration.
- Partnered with **local homeowners, community groups, and businesses** to strengthen neighborhood ties and amplify the mural's impact.



BETHUNE



THE BETHUNE CENTER

The Mary McLeod Bethune Life Center, located in the heart of Jersey City's Greenville community, has become a vibrant hub for creativity and inspiration. Offering residents and visitors a unique space to engage in cultural arts, fitness, wellness, and educational activities, the center is dedicated to preserving the rich culture of Jersey City while fostering connections among diverse groups. With its welcoming environment, The Bethune Center serves adults, seniors, and families alike. Additionally, the Bethune Center supports the community by providing venues for meetings, workshops, training seminars, and classes, as well as rental spaces for private events and expos.



2024 BETHUNE CENTER HIGHLIGHTS



- Introduced cultural activities that provided the community with exposure to new experiences and traditions.
- Expanded the fitness center by adding new strength training equipment and installing an impact-absorbing fitness floor in the aerobic room.
- Installed new theater seating in the movie room on the first floor.
- Began construction of the *AeroFarms* structure, which, when completed, will enable the center to grow fresh vegetables indoors for the community.
- Upgraded the building's electrical systems for improved efficiency and reliability.

For a more detailed overview of the Bethune Center 2024 please [CLICK HERE](#)



SUMMER IN THE CITY

Highlights

This summer, the Office of Cultural Affairs brought an array of programming to the community. With a focus on free events for the public, the initiative featured 18 musical performances and 20 movie screenings across various locations.

Summerfest Liberty State Park Concert Series

Celebrating its 49th year, the longest-running free concert series in New Jersey.

- Sponsored by Jersey City Free Public Library
- 10 performances featuring a diverse range of acts.
- 5 new bands were introduced to the series.

Berry Lane Park Concert Series

· 7 performances that highlighted various genres, including Motown, Pop, Jazz, Soul, Funk, Urban R&B, Urban Bachata, 70's to Present R&B, Neo Soul, and Poetry.

- This series was made possible through a partnership with Friends of Berry Lane Park.

Movies in the Park

· 20 movie screenings took place, with a mix of comedy, animation, fantasy, action, and drama.

- The screenings served 4,000 residents, with an average of 6-7 movies shown per month.

These summer events were designed to enrich the community, provide entertainment, and foster a sense of connection through music and film.

ANN E. WALLACE 23'-24'

POET LAUREATE

Ann E. Wallace, PhD, served as the 2023-24 Poet Laureate of Jersey City. A long-time survivor of ovarian cancer, multiple sclerosis, and Long COVID, her experiences with illness and resilience shape her work as a poet, memoirist, and advocate. Her recent collection, *Days of Grace and Silence: A Chronicle of COVID's Long Haul* (2024), details her journey through severe COVID and recovery. Wallace is also the author of *Counting by Sevens* (Main Street Rag) and co-hosts *The WildStory: A Podcast of Poetry and Plants*. She is a Professor of English at New Jersey City University.

Events included her book launch at Art House Productions (April 12, 2024), and readings in New Jersey, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and New York. She was also a participant in local events like the Women of Action Celebration and Script Development for The HerStory Oratory Project. Nationally, Wallace represented Jersey City at various conferences and festivals, including the American Writers Conference and the National Women's Studies Conference. Her poems have been published in numerous literary journals.

Wallace remains an active representative on the NIH's RECOVER Initiative for Long COVID.



MELIDA RODAS 25'-26'

POET LAUREATE

"We are proud to honor Melida Rodas as Jersey City's new Poet Laureate, a testament to our commitment to celebrating the arts and fostering creative expression within our community. Through their work, Melida will inspire, unite, and amplify the voices that make our city so vibrant and diverse," said Mayor Fulop.

Rodas has a long history of collaborating with local organizations on creative projects that celebrate the community. She also co-founded Greenville Arts Crossroads, a grassroots poetry and arts organization that connects, uplifts, and inspires creative talent in Hudson County. In 2023, her impactful work earned her a Jersey City Woman of Action Award. "The Jersey City Arts Council is thrilled to present Melida Rodas as the next poet laureate. We are confident that Melida will use this position to continue and expand her dedication to innovative projects that promote the art of poetry in the Jersey City community and beyond," adds Jersey City Arts Council Board member Jeff Dessources.



ARTS & CULTURE TRUST FUND



This Arts & Culture Trust Fund supports arts organizations and artists that contribute to the culture, well-being, and economy of Jersey City, while also providing increased opportunities for arts education for youth.

2024 was the third year for the Arts & Culture Trust fund. It administered \$1,036,397.00 in funds.

The Arts and Culture Trust Fund is overseen by the Arts and Culture Trust Fund Committee, a governing body made up of community representatives from all wards of Jersey City. The fund is administered by the Jersey City Office of Cultural Affairs. Each year, an independent grant review panel scores the applications and makes recommendations to the Committee.

AVERAGE AWARD AMOUNT

- \$8,660 (Program and Arts Ed Grants) for a total of 57 grantees **(16% increase in awards)**
- \$21,083 (General Operating Grants) for a total of 21 grantees **(11% increase in awards)**
- \$5,000 (Artist fellowships administered by the Jersey City Arts Council) for 20 Individual Artists

44 Program Grant Awards
13 Arts Education Awards
21 Operating Grant Awards
20 Fellowship Grant Awards



2024 COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Ward A Melida Rodas

Ward B Lisa Bellan-Boyer

Ward C Ann Marley

Ward D Sandy Martiney

Ward E Nobuki Takamen

Ward F Elizabeth Lorenzo-Phillips

Mayors Rep Joe Harkins

Councilwoman Mira Prinz-Arey (Non-Voting)

Office of Cultural Affairs Migdalia Pagan Milano (Non-Voting)

JC Arts Council Amy Elise (Non-Voting)

JCACTF Administrator Sarah Martinez (Non-Voting)



SUPPORT FOR APPLICANTS

3 Hybrid in-person/zoom trainings

1 In-person Ward A training

Step by step webinar available online

Accessibility training session

Captioning and ASL interpreted training sessions

Applications available in multiple languages

Computer access for applicants at all JCFPL Library branches with extended time

ARTS & CULTURE TRUST FUND

OPERATING GRANT AWARDS

Ariel Rivka \$18,750
Art Fair 14C \$25,000
Art House Productions \$25,000
Deep Space Gallery \$25,000
Educational Arts Team \$18,750
Golden Door Film Fest \$9,000
JC Film Group-Sip Studios- \$18,750
JC Theatre Center \$18,750
JC Writers \$18,750
Kennedy Dancers \$25,000
MeenMoves \$18,750
Nimbus Dance Works \$25,000
NL Knitting Studio \$18,750
Pro Arts Jersey City \$15,000
Riverview Jazz \$25,000
Smush Gallery \$25,000
Speranza Theatre \$25,000
Styles Youth Community Center \$18,750
Surati Performing Arts \$25,000
The Curtain \$18,750
Victory Hall/ Drawing Rooms \$25,000

ARTS EDUCATION AWARDS

Amy Wilson \$1,000
Area of Refuge \$13,125
Aura Highsmith Creative \$3,000
Black Sheep Contemporary \$7,497
Brighter Bee Academy \$13,125
City Kidz Playhouse \$13,125
Future Arts Leaders \$6,250
Give Chances \$13,125
JC Art School \$5,500
JC Print Room \$17,000
Music Matters \$4,375
NJCU Art Department \$13,125
VAMP \$5,153

PROGRAM GRANT AWARDS

Anti Violence Coalition \$8,750
Arts and Music Church of St. Paul \$8,750
Barrow Mansion \$2,500
Bridge Art Gallery \$14,250
Cantantes Cordibus \$12,316
CWS JC Refugee Arts \$8,750
Con Vivo Music \$13,125
Dancing Tony Pro \$4,500
Farms in the Heights \$14,375
Feminist Bird Club of JC \$5,000
Half-Light Pro \$17,500
Historic Downtown SID \$5,850
HCCC Foundation \$ 13,125
Hudson West Fest \$13,125
In Full Color \$6,840
Japanese Cultural League \$1,000
JC Crafting Circle \$9,909
Jersey City Ballet Theater \$6,000
JC Police Athletic League \$13,125
John T. Trigonis \$13,125
Joshua Lay \$2,500
Kenia Rosete Dance \$4,375
Laia Cabrera & Co \$ 13,125
LSC Art Exhibit \$7,000
McGinley Square SID \$7,500
Meagan Woods \$13,125
Mise En Place Project \$8,750
Monira Foundation \$13,125
NJ Symphony Orchestra \$13,125
Next generation St. Club Dance \$4,375
North River Sing \$8,750
Sabor Latin Music and Dance \$12,637

St. Peters University \$6,793
Segunda Quimbamba Folklore Ctr \$13,125
Shehnazz Dance Academy \$4,375
Society X \$8,750
The Intertwine Festival \$ 4,152
The Statuary \$8,750
Tong Yan Chinese School \$2,500
V Productions and Management \$8,500
Washington Pk. Ass. \$2,500
WBGO \$4,125
Welcome Home JC \$7,500
Whole Spectrum \$13,125

INDIVIDUAL FELLOWSHIP AWARDS

Anthony Williams
Cheryl. R Riley
Christine Barney
Donald Gallagher
Elizabeth Deegan
Ernest Paniccioli
Gregg Rosen
Hyeseon Hong
Josué Morales Urbina
Laura Tatham
Laurie Riccadonna-Lewis
Leslie McIntosh
Michelle Vitale
Milcah Bassel
Nancy Cohen
NyugenSmith
Ryan Roman
Samantha Geracht Myers
Sky Kim-Emerick
Veronica Mang

To view the **2022-2023 Operating, Program & Arts Education Annual Report**, **PLEASE CLICK HERE**