



## **Real Art Ways Announces Building Purchase**

*Nationally recognized contemporary arts organization will renovate its current location to increase support of arts, education and community in Connecticut*

**HARTFORD, Conn.** November 16, 2021—[Real Art Ways](#), a contemporary arts organization with an innovative approach to supporting contemporary artists and their work, today announced plans to purchase and renovate the building at 56 Arbor Street in Hartford, where it has been based for 31 years.

“Real Art Ways has been a vital center of arts, culture, and community in the city of Hartford for decades, and it’s an anchor institution in the Parkville neighborhood,” said Hartford Mayor Luke Bronin. “Real Art Ways is already an oasis for artists, creators, lovers of art, and just a whole lot of interesting people, and this expansion will establish Real Art Ways as a major center of contemporary art, arts education, music, film, and creative enterprise – not just for Connecticut, but for New England. This expansion is a part of the tremendous momentum in Parkville and will help strengthen Hartford’s already strong and vibrant arts community.”

The renovation of the building will generate approximately 120 temporary construction jobs from all trades and generate jobs and opportunity long term. With its expansion, Real Art Ways estimates it will hire an additional nine full-time and 16 part-time staff members, for a total of 12 full-time staff members and 28 part-time workers. Other enterprises in the building, which is known as a creative hub, employ approximately 120 people. Real Art Ways is committed to supporting the building’s tenant base, including the many artists and creative businesses who rent studios.

“Real Art Ways’ commitment to the arts and creating more jobs, both during the renovation and through the addition of staff to support its operations, is great news for Hartford,” said Connecticut House Speaker Matt Ritter. “This project will bring substantial economic and social benefits not only to the city, but to the entire State of Connecticut.”

Real Art Ways expects to close on the \$4 million purchase of the historic building, a former Underwood Typewriter Company site, later this year. Its leadership is working with Providence, Rhode Island-based DBVW Architects on the renovation, estimated to cost \$14.7 million and anticipated to begin in the Fall of 2022 and be completed within two years.

“Connecticut is incredibly fortunate to have an organization like Real Art Ways that not only provides residents with access to arts and culture, but that also serves as a gathering place that

helps to strengthen connections between people from different backgrounds and areas of the state,” said Connecticut Secretary of State Denise Merrill.

### **More Ways to Connect and Celebrate the Arts**

In addition to overall improvements to the building, including the addition of renewable energy, Real Art Ways will expand its footprint from 12,000 to 25,000 square feet. This will provide more opportunities for the organization to serve the community by presenting new independent films, visual art, music, literary events and educational programming.

Real Art Ways’ expansion plans include:

- Four cinemas; resulting in an expanded schedule of independent and international films, film festivals and specialty programming
- Educational spaces for classes and workshops for young and old
- A theatrical space for performing arts events
- Renovated exhibition spaces, including a gallery for families
- A café and gathering space
- Renovated outdoor spaces for performances and events
- Rental space for events, studios and offices

This purchase and renovation are the largest capital investments in Real Art Ways’ history. Real Art Ways will use a \$1 million grant approved by the State Bond Commission to support the project and will take an entrepreneurial approach to securing additional funding through state and federal tax credits, and fundraising from corporate partners, foundations and individual donors.

### **A Legacy of Art and Community**

For 46 years, Real Art Ways has been an influential and innovative force in the world of contemporary art. It has presented the work of 40 MacArthur Fellowship winners, believed to be more than any other arts organization in the entire United States. This remarkable achievement is possible because of Real Art Ways’ ability to identify, nurture and support up-and-coming artists who demonstrate tremendous potential. The MacArthur Fellowship is awarded each year to individuals in the U.S. who demonstrate originality, insight and dedication in their creative endeavors.

“Connection and community are at the heart of Real Art Ways. The purchase and renovations will enable us to support more artists and creators, including those who have studios and offices at 56 Arbor Street, and to engage in creative ways with our community,” said Will K. Wilkins, executive director of Real Art Ways. “Real Art Ways is also dedicated to maintaining strong ties with its Parkville neighborhood and the entire city. 56 Arbor Street will be the most important creative incubator in Central Connecticut.”

"Real Art Ways is unique in being a balance of both national and local, in a way that is a model for the nation of what an arts organization can look like," said Roberto Bedoya, cultural affairs manager of the City of Oakland, California, and winner of the 2021 Berresford Prize, a national award given to artists who advance the care of artists in society.

**About Real Art Ways**

Real Art Ways began in the fall of 1975 when a group of artists set up a live-work space in downtown Hartford. The organization has grown into one of the country's best-respected contemporary art spaces, with support for artists and connections with community as core values.

For more information and images, please visit: <https://www.realartways.org/about/press/>

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