



Allied Arts Council of Lethbridge  
2021 Municipal Election  
Arts Survey: Candidate Response

## **Candidate: Jerry Firth**

### *1. What is your vision for the arts sector within the City of Lethbridge?*

I have always had art in my life, whether it be visual art, graphic art, performing art, or literature. Art has been both an escape and expression for me. I continue to draw and sculpt with my kids, and I do graphic design work as a side job. A fun fact is that I am also a mime, his name is Rufus, and my children also mime with me, as Ruby and Rose.

I do not always access the various art facilities and programs in the city, but I am pleased that they exist for the community. There are some great programs and centres that help to keep art alive in Lethbridge and promotes the benefits of art, and I would like to see this grow.

### *2. What do you believe are the benefits of investing in the arts and how do you view the role of City of Lethbridge in arts investment.*

Investing in the arts would support the City of Lethbridge's mandate to 'provide services, facilities or other things that are necessary or desirable to develop and maintain safe and viable community.'

Art has been highlighted as having many benefits for individuals, providing direct positive effects on one's overall health and wellbeing, across all stages of life. Art also has benefits for a community, by promoting interaction in public spaces, increase civic participation through celebration, and engage different community groups. In other words, and community that invests in and promotes art is a healthy and engaged community.

Further, arts can be a great economic driver for a community, and with Lethbridge as the economic hub of Southern Alberta, poises the city for opportunities to benefit economically from an investment in art facilities and programs.

The role of the City would be to promote arts in the community and partner with community organizations, other levels of government, and private donors to leverage funds for art facilities and programs. The potential is for Lethbridge to have art programs that are widely known and attract people and investment to Lethbridge.

### *3. Please share your thoughts on public art and its role in our community.*

As an artist and community builder, I am a big proponent of public art. Cultures globally and throughout history have used art to cultivate a cultural identity. Public art is sued as a reflection of a community, its story (past, present, and future) and helps to cultivate the that cultural identity

by setting highlighting what is unique about the people and surroundings apart from any other community. Public art also acts as a window to reflect a community's values and brings an awareness to the people of that community and visitors to the community.

*4. Lethbridge City Council has demonstrated their commitment to building a performing arts centre in their recent Capital Improvement Program. Do you support this commitment and if so what is your proposed strategy for completing the project?*

As a performing artist myself, through the art of miming, and a fan of theatre, I strongly support this project. Aside from my passion for art and seeing it as a major benefit to the wellbeing of a community and its people, a performing arts centre has the very real potential to be one of the economics drivers of this city.

A project of this magnitude would require significant investment, thus, the City would need to leverage funding from other levels of government, granting sources and private investment and donations (potentially a title sponsor). To get there, the performing arts centre functional plan and design would need to be reviewed and promoted, pulling in local and regional stakeholders. I have seen projects, especially large projects, stall after the initial planning phase. It is incumbent on the City to work alongside these stakeholders to keep the energy and momentum of the project alive.