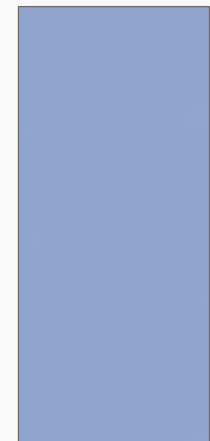


Town of Reading, Community Services & Planning Division

Downtown Reading

CULTURAL DISTRICT EXPLORATORY STUDY



Prepared for:
Town of Reading



Sponsored by: MA Dept. of Housing & Community
Development, MA Downtown Initiative Program

Prepared by:

FinePoint Associates, www.FinePointAssociates.com

Project Director: Peg Barringer
Peg@FinePointAssociates.com

FinePoint
Associates LLC

Acknowledgements

This project was only possible due to the contributions of time, information and insights on the part of many individuals and organizations. Thank you to the partners that participated in and guided this project.

Town Staff Project Contacts

Jean Delios, Assistant Town Manager

Jessie Wilson, Community Development Administrator

Project Advisory Team

Bob LeLaucher, Town Manager

Edward Lipchus, Reading Civic Concert Band

Jack Russell, Economic Development Committee

Jeanette Corbett, Reading Art Association

Jennifer Hart, Creative Arts

Joseph Leto, Reading Art Association

John Feudo, Recreation Administrator

Karl Weld, Economic Development Committee

Leslie Leahy, The Hitching Post

Maria Higgins, Economic Development Committee

Ruth Camber, Reading Art Association

Sharlene Reynolds Santo, Reading Historical Commission

Sheila Clark, Economic Development Committee

Tom Coffin, Colonial Chorus Players

Virginia Adams, Reading Historical Commission

Meeting Participants

Claire Bolger, Bolea Cosmetics

Maryellen, Kenney Colonial Chorus Players

Anita DiLullo, Reading Symphony Orchestra

Anna Dixon, Square Dance Foundation of New England

Anne-Marie Cardosi, Reading Art Association

Claire Bolger, Bolea Cosmetics

Dan Ensminger, Board of Selectmen

Kevin Sexton, Board of Selectmen

Marsie West, Board of Selectmen

Maryellen Kenney, Colonial Chorus Players

Philip Rishworth, Reading Community TV

Cultural Organizations, Artisans, Business Owners & Others that took the time to complete interviews.

Consultant

Peg Barringer, FinePointAssociates

www.FinePointAssociates.com

Contents

1. Project Overview	4	5. Cultural District Case Studies	26
1.1 Purpose		5.1 Orleans Cultural District	
1.2 Process		5.2 Marlborough Downtown Village Cultural District	
1.3 Description of the Study Area		5.3 Natick Center Cultural District	
2. Introduction to Cultural Districts	6	5.4 Beverly Arts District	
2.1 What is a cultural district?		5.5 Commonalities among Case Study Districts	
2.2 How do Cultural districts get created?		6. Survey Results	41
2.3 Benefits of Cultural Districts		6.1 Overview and Interest in Cultural District	
2.4 Overview of Components		6.2 Vision	
3. Cultural Inventory	9	6.3 Objectives	
3.1 Cultural Facilities, Venues and Production Spaces		6.4 Event programming and Promotion	
3.2 Historic Assets		6.5 Art and Culture Facilities	
3.3 Complementary Businesses		6.6 Assistance for Cultural Organizations & Artisans	
3.4 Cultural Resources - Organizations and Artisans		6.7 Interest in Committee Participation	
3.5 Cultural Events		7. Recommendations	49
4. District Boundary and Zoning Considerations.	24	Addendum: Cultural Inventory	
4.1 Business Type			
4.2 Business Size			

1. Project Overview

1.1 Purpose and Players

The Purpose of the project is to: to evaluate existing conditions and conduct initial groundwork to explore the potential for creating a cultural district intended to help enhance and sustain the vibrancy of downtown Reading while fostering local cultural development.

Sponsor: MA Downtown Initiative Program

Consultant: Peg Barringer, FinePoint Associates

Timeframe: July – October, 2014

Project Advisory Team/Working Group: representatives from Town Government, Economic Development Committee, Reading Historic Commission, Creative Economy/Cultural Organizations and Downtown Business Owners/Managers

1.2 Process

The consultant and Project Advisory Team worked together through over the course of several work sessions to accomplish the following activities:

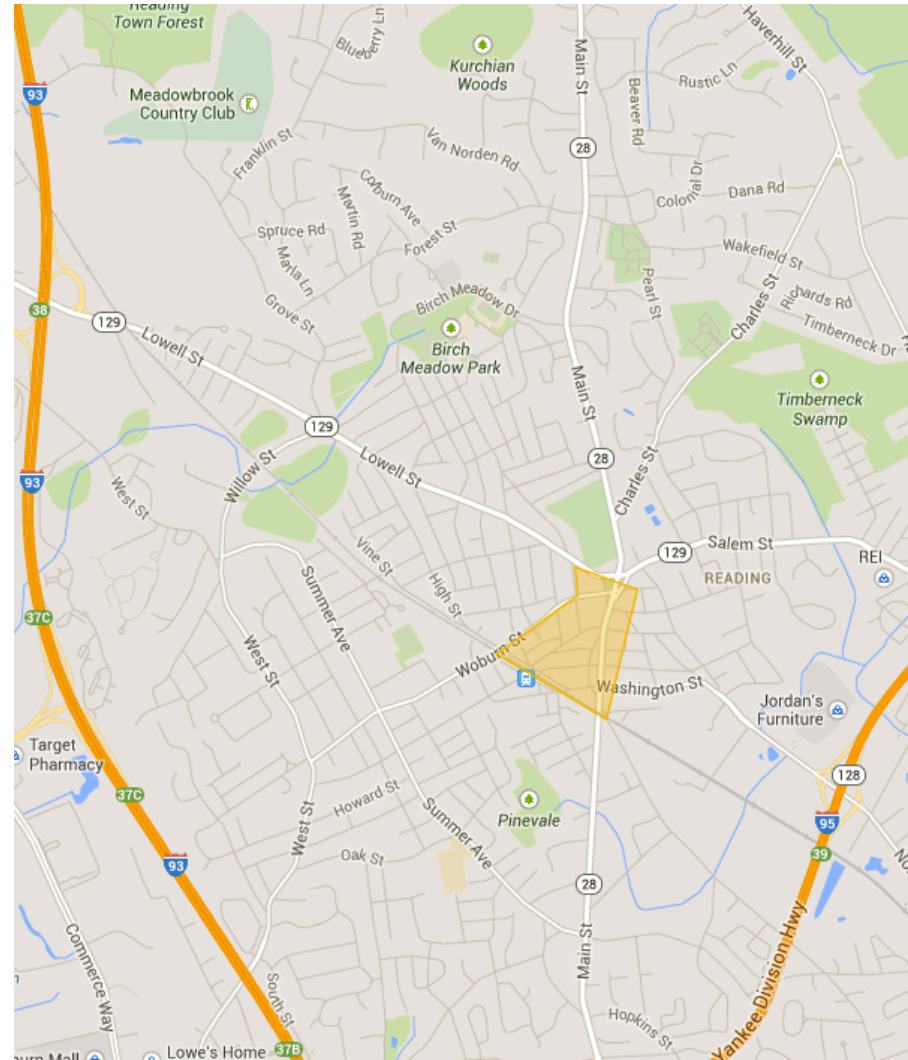
1. Review of the Cultural District concept, components, potential benefits and applicability to downtown issues
2. Development of an inventory of cultural assets and resources
3. Exploring key cultural district components and examples from other communities
4. Obtaining and analyzing input from cultural organizations, individual artists, business owners and other stakeholders
5. Determining recommendations and potential next steps based upon findings

1. Project Overview

1.3 Description of the Study Area

- The map illustrates approximate boundaries of the downtown business district.
- In this study, we will collect and analyze data pertaining to the potential creation of a cultural district that could help support the vitality of downtown. The cultural district boundaries may be different than the downtown boundaries.

Downtown Business District



* Boundaries are approximate

2. Introduction to Cultural Districts

2.1 What is a cultural district?

- A **cultural district** is a specific, well-recognized, labeled, mixed use area of a city or town in which a high concentration of cultural facilities, assets and activities serve as an anchor to attract people.
- Walkable, compact area, easily identifiable to visitors and residents and serves as a center of cultural, artistic and economic activity.
- Facilities include: Performances spaces, galleries, artist studios, museums, arts-related retail shops, music or media production studios, dance studios, high schools or colleges for the arts, libraries, recreation facilities, arboretums, gardens, etc.
- Because they are mixed-use developments, cultural districts often incorporate other facilities such as retail spaces, offices and, occasionally, residential uses. Certain types of businesses such as restaurants are seen as particularly complementary to cultural facilities.

2.1 How do cultural districts get created?

- Can develop organically through the clustering of cultural activities and assets
- Can be encouraged & expanded through actions such as:
 - Formal identification/designation, branding, and promotion
 - Zoning and land use regulations
 - Incentives to attract cultural facilities and creative businesses
 - Development of a partnership to coordinate and manage
- Can be designated at local and/or state level
 - Local identification
 - Local designation and promotion
 - Massachusetts Cultural District designation
 - Application to MA Cultural Council (eligibility determination, application, site visit assessment)
 - 5 year designation
 - Promotional value of designation
 - Currently no funding attached

2. Introduction to Cultural Districts

2.3 Potential Benefits of Cultural District

- Attract artists and cultural enterprises
- Encourage business and job development
- Establish the district as tourist destination
- Preserve and reuse historic buildings
- Enhance property values
- Foster local cultural development

2.4 Overview of Cultural District Components

- Concentration of cultural assets in a walkable area
- Cultural resources (organizations, artists, complementary businesses) that are interested, committed and willing to put in effort
- Plan (vision, goals, activities)
- Partnership organization to manage the district (coordinate activities, continue to set and accomplish goals, market the district, fundraise as necessary, etc.)
- Leadership to get process started

3. Cultural Inventory

The cultural assets and resources in this section are organized as follows.

3.1 Cultural Facilities, Venues and Production Spaces

3.2 Historic Assets

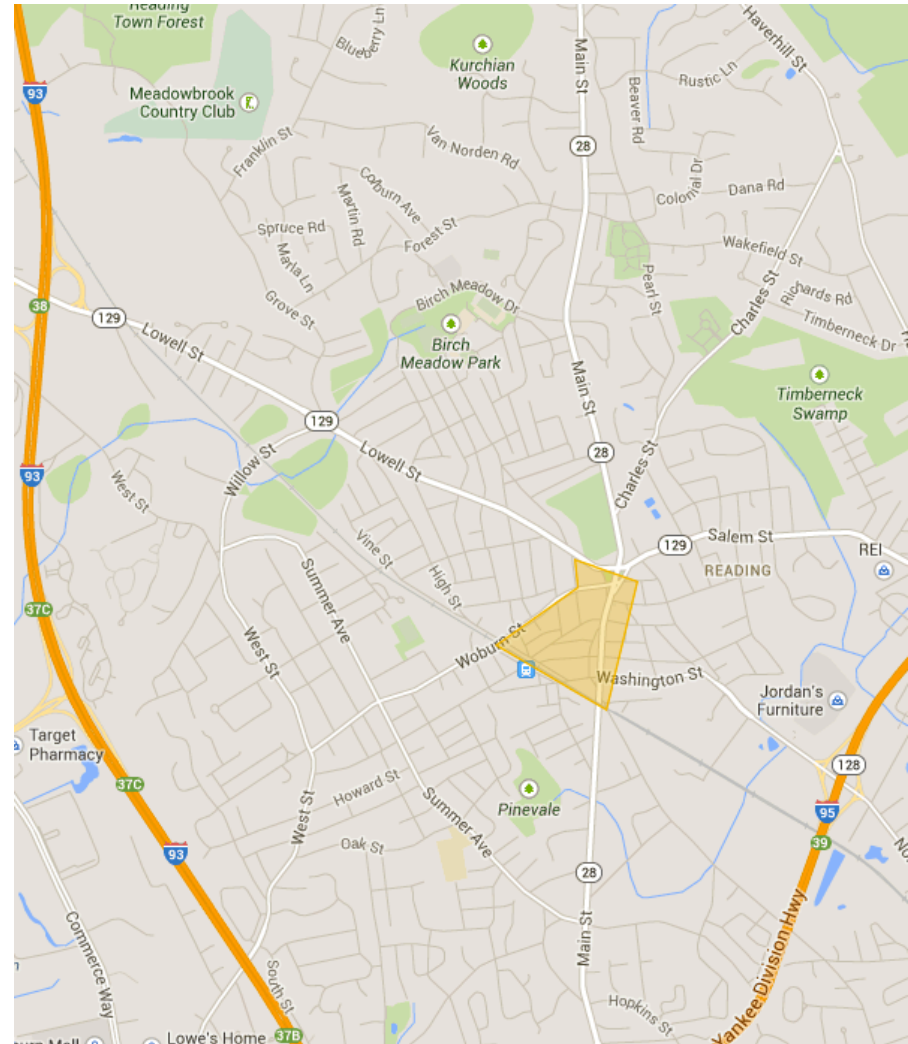
3.3 Complementary Businesses

3.4 Cultural Resources: Organizations & Artisans

3.5 Events

In most cases, the assets are mapped in relation to the downtown business district (see map to right for location of downtown business district).

See Addendum for more Cultural Inventory details.

















* Boundaries are approximate








3. Cultural Inventory

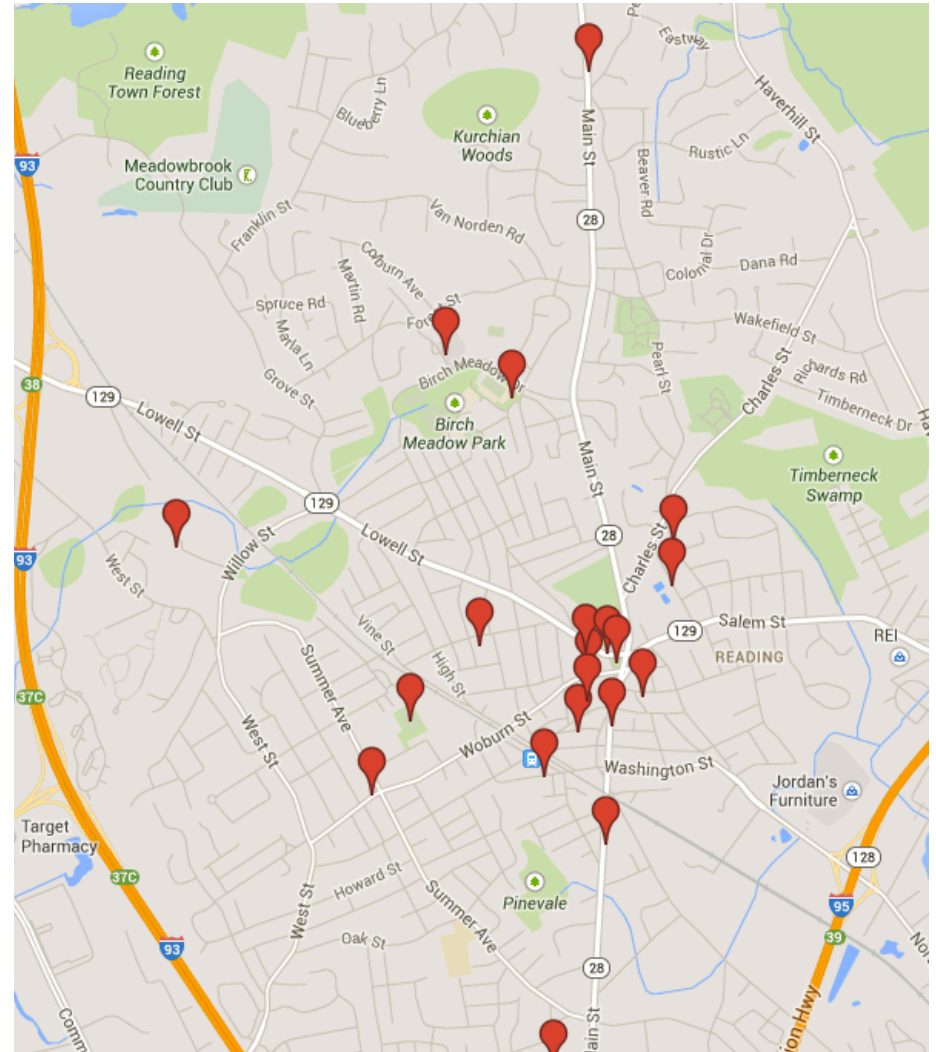
3.1 Cultural Facilities, Venues and Production Spaces

In/Near Downtown

-  Creative Arts
-  Emarc
-  First Congregational Church
-  J & D Dance Academy
-  Memorial Park
-  Northeast Youth Ballet
-  Old South United Methodist
-  Parker Middle School
-  Parker Tavern
-  Pleasant Street Center
-  Reading Community Television
-  Reading Memorial High School
-  Reading Public Library
-  Town Common

Outside Downtown Area

-  Austin Preparatory School
-  Burbank YMCA
-  Colonial Chorus Players
-  Encore Dance Academy
-  La Pierre School of Dance
-  Quannapowitt Players Inc
-  Unitarian Universalist Church






Colonial Chorus Players

Presenting **Community Musical Theater** Since 1961

www.ccp1961.org

www.qptheater.com

 **Quannapowitt Players, Inc.**

Quality Community Theater on Boston's North Shore















Theatre Groups

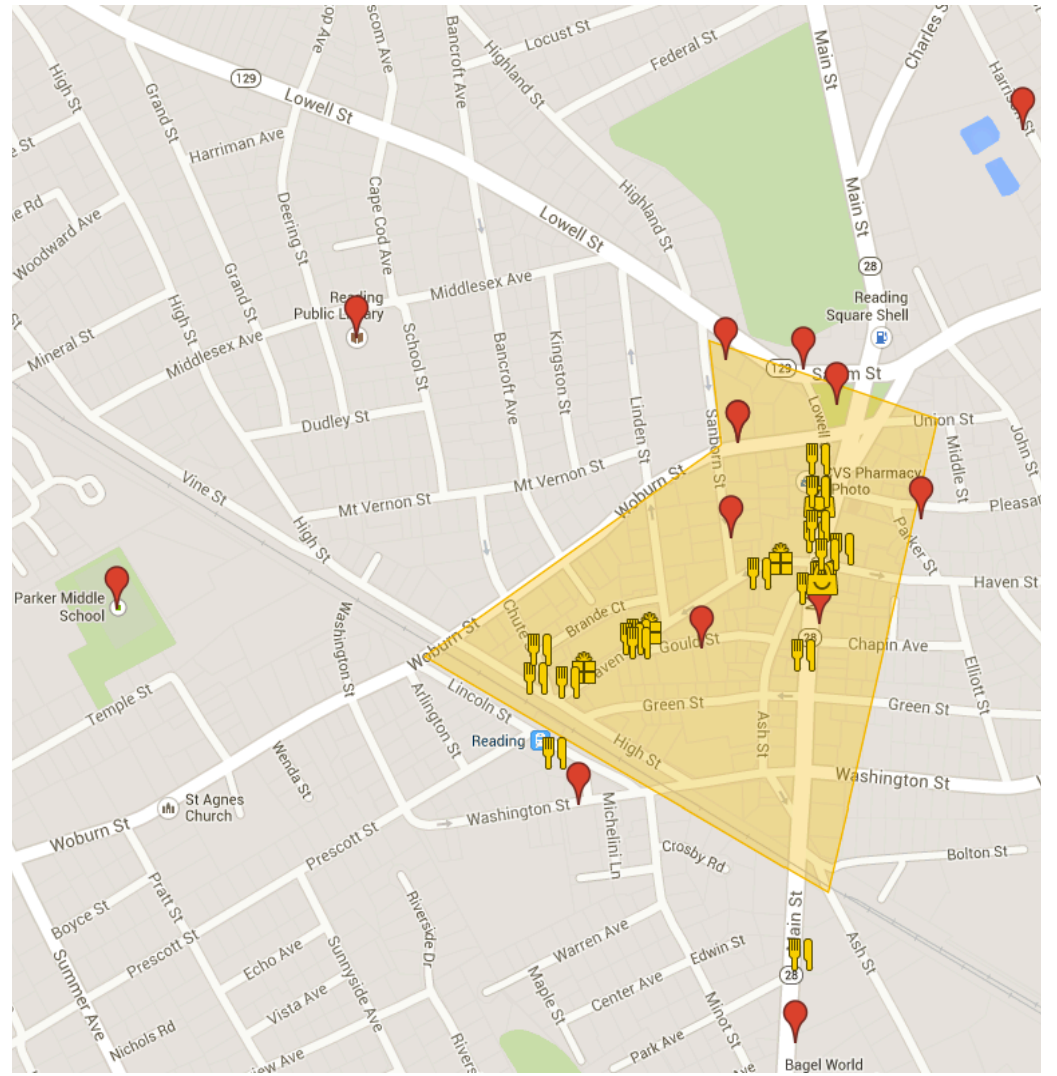
- Quannapowitt Players Theater is an adapted turn-of-the-century red schoolhouse with 150 seats located about 1 mile South from the center of downtown
- Colonial Chorus Players Theater is an adapted fire house located about 2 miles North of the center of downtown

3. Cultural Inventory

3.1 Cultural Facilities, Venues and Production Spaces (cont'd)

In/Near Downtown

-  Creative Arts
-  Emarc
-  First Congregational Church
-  J & D Dance Academy
-  Memorial Park
-  Northeast Youth Ballet
-  Old South United Methodist
-  Parker Middle School
-  Parker Tavern
-  Pleasant Street Center
-  Reading Community Television
-  Reading Memorial High School
-  Reading Public Library
-  Town Common



NSB Northeast School of Ballet



www.northeastyouthballet.org



www.creativeartsforkids.org



www.rctv.org



Arts production and education facilities in the heart of Downtown



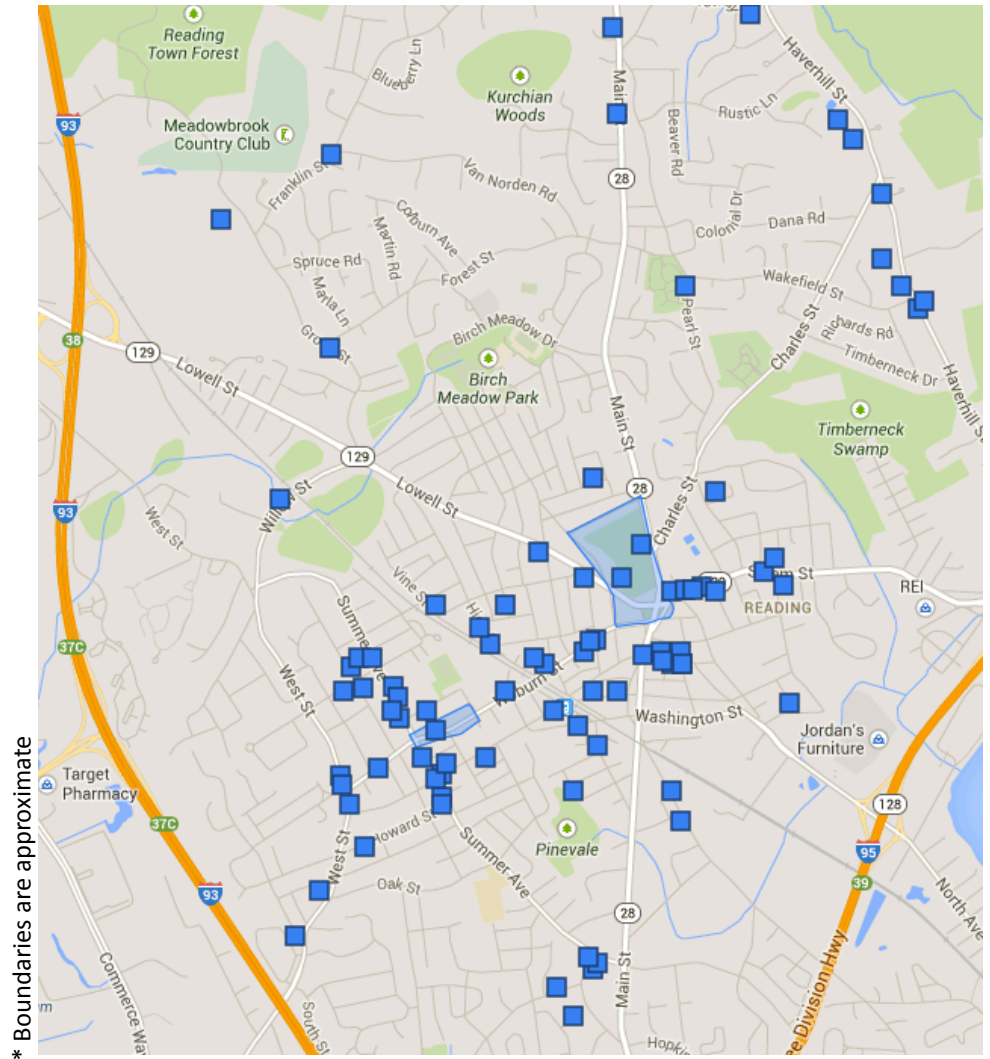
www.jddaor.com

3. Cultural Inventory

3.2 Historic Assets

Historic Asset Overview: National Historic Register Properties in Reading

- Town Common Historic District
- Woburn Street District
- 88 individually listed properties

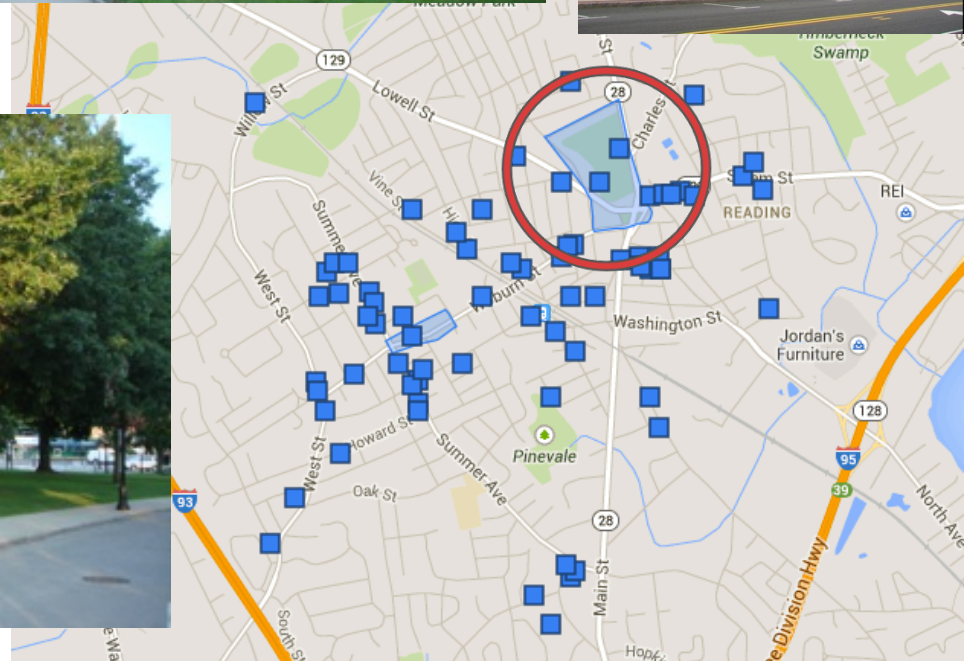


3. Cultural Inventory

3.2 Historic Assets (cont'd)

Historic Asset Highlights in/near Downtown: Town Common Historic District

- Town Common has been communally owned since 1737
- First Congregational Church 1913, replica of 1817 church destroyed by fire
- Town Hall, early 20th century



3. Cultural Inventory

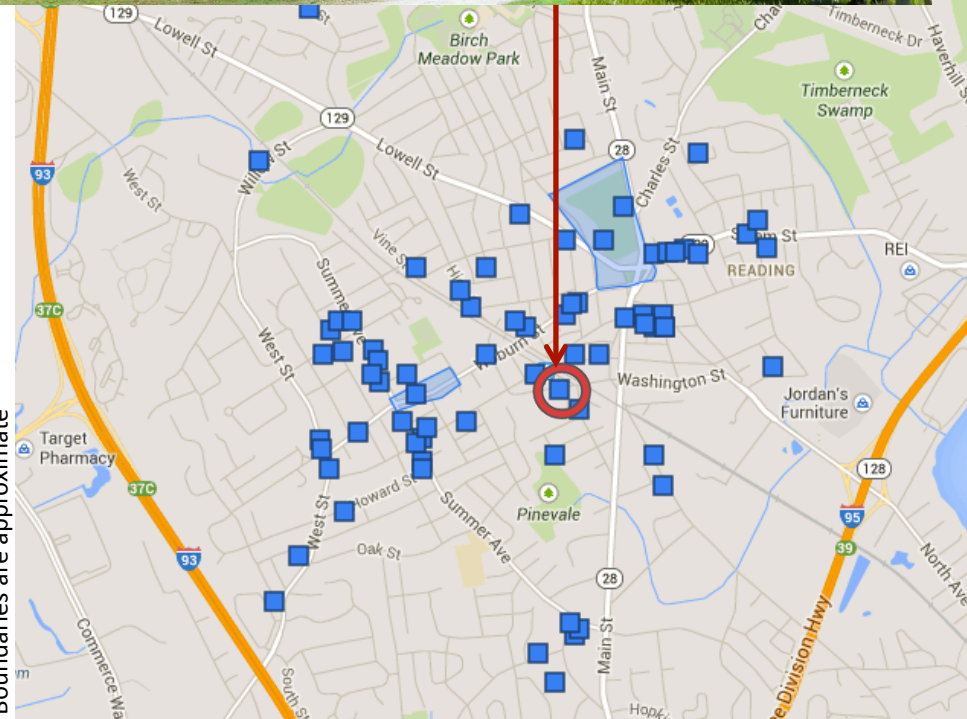
3.2 Historic Assets (cont'd)

Historic Asset Highlights in/near Downtown:

Parker Tavern

- Saltbox tavern built in 1694 by Abraham Bryant, a farmer and blacksmith
- Museum tours
- Civil War Re-enactments
- Lectures and other programming




















Plus Other individual Historic Properties in/near Downtown

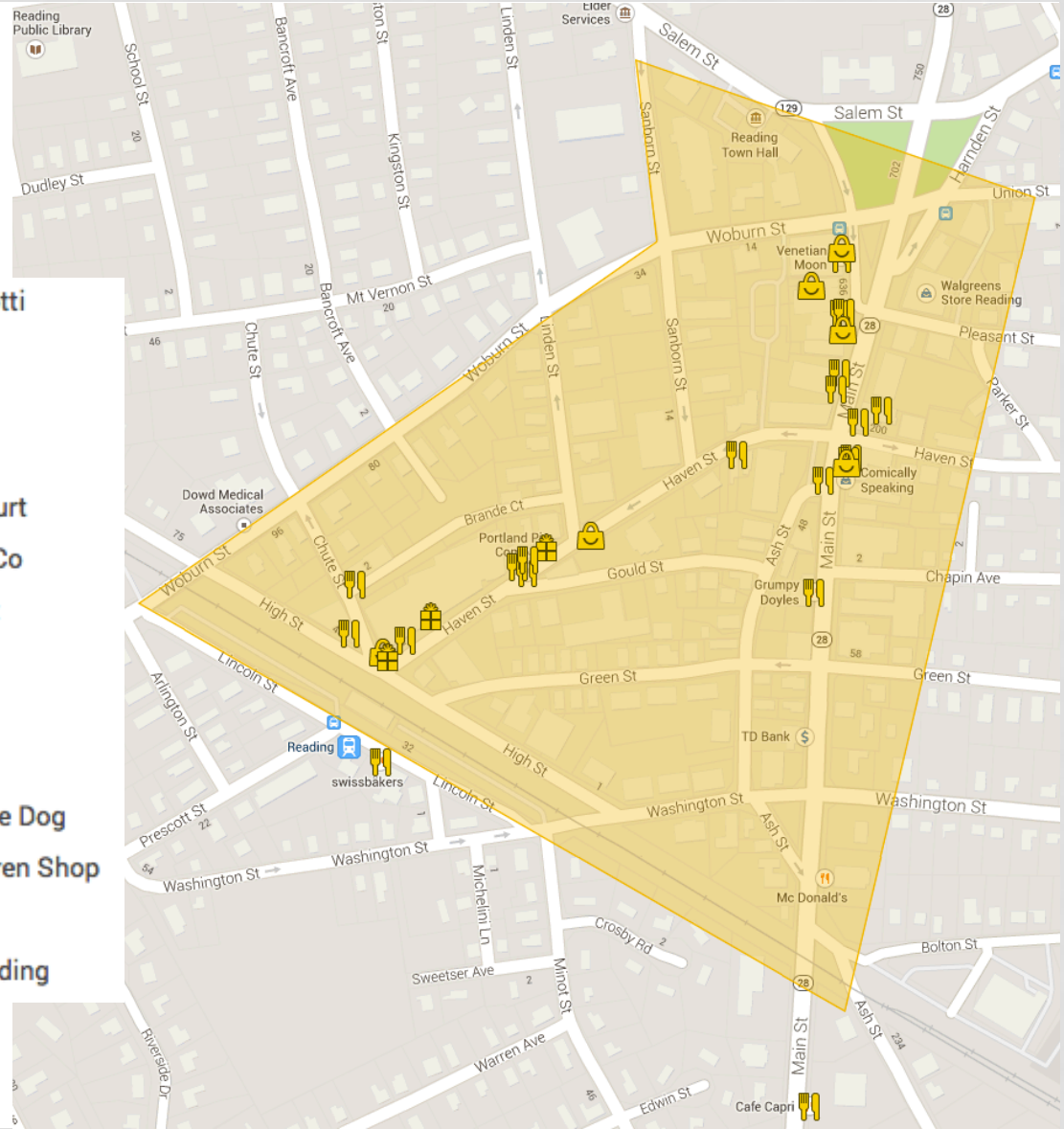


3. Cultural Inventory

3.3 Complementary Businesses

Downtown Business Area

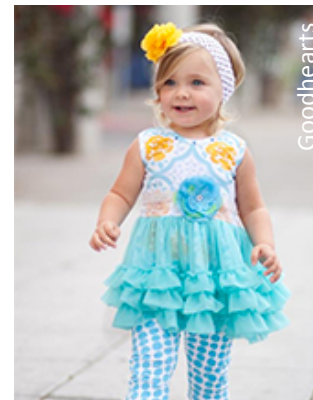
-  Aroma Cafe
-  Avana Sushi
-  Bunratty Pub
-  Bangkok Spice Thai Restaurant
-  Cafe Capri
-  Christopher's Restaurant
-  Colombo's Pizza & Cafe
-  Cookies 'n Cream Bakery
-  D'Amici's Bakery
-  The Green Tomato
-  Grumpy's Ale House
-  Olde Redding Butcher Shoppe
-  Orange Leaf Frozen Yogurt
-  Pizza World
-  Portland Pie Company
-  Ristorante Pavarotti
-  swissbäkers
-  Town Pizza & Deli
-  Venetian Moon
-  Zinga Frozen Yogurt
-  Atlantic Framing Co
-  The Hitching Post
-  Pamplemousse
-  Aine's Boutique
-  Bolea
-  Everything But The Dog
-  Goodhearts Children Shop
-  Raspberry Beret
-  Wine Shop of Reading





Variety of casual and full service restaurants

- Over 20 eateries
- Several opportunities for outdoor dining
- 6 full service restaurants



Complementary Browsing Retail

- 3 gift shops/artsy products
- Women's specialty shops: clothing and accessory boutique, cosmetic and bath products boutique, vintage clothing shop
- Children's specialty/clothing/gifts

3. Cultural Inventory

3.4.1 Cultural Resources -- Organizations

Cultural Resources	Organization	Facility/Venue	Activities/ Events/ Performances	Classes
Colonial Chorus Players	X	X	X	
Creative Arts	X	X	X	X
EMARC Gallery		X	X	
Encore Dance Academy				X
First Congregational Church, UCC		X		
Ivy Chord Coffee House		X	X	
La Pierre Dance School	X		X	X
Northeast Youth Ballet	X	X		X
Old South UMC Organ and Brass	X	X	X	
Parker Tavern Museum	RAC	X	X	
Quannapowitt Players	X	X	X	
RCTV	X	X		X
Reading Antiquarian Society	X	Parker Tavern		
Reading Art Association	X		X	
Reading Civic Concert Band	X		X	
Reading Community Singers	X		X	
Reading Cultural Council	X			
Reading Gymnastics				X
Reading Historic Commission	X		X	
Reading Library	X	X	X	X
Reading Memorial High School Drama & Band	X	X	X	
Reading Society of Craftsmen	X			
Reading Symphony Orchestra	X		X	
Square Dance Foundation of New England, Inc.	X			

3. Cultural Inventory

3.4.2 Cultural Resources – Sampling of Individual Artisans and Creative Professionals

Design

David Osullivan
Robyn Parker

Media

Mary Kelly

Music

Anita DiLullo
Brienne Cate
Carol Harrington
Nancy Miller

Visual Arts

Brian S. Kimerer
David Kay
Jeannette Corbett
Joanne Jolly-Kay
Joanne Kay
Karin Samatis
Karl Weld
Lynne Cassinari
Ruth Camber

Theatre/Puppetry

Donna Corbett
Judith O'Hare

** Just a sampling*

3. Cultural Inventory

3.5.1 Cultural Events -- In/Near Downtown (within .5 mile from Haven Street at Sanborn)

Event	Type	Where	When
Tours, Civil War Re-enactment, Programs	Tour, Re-enactment, Lecture	Parker Tavern	May - October
Walking Tour at Laurel Hill Cemetery	Tour, Re-enactment, Lecture	Laurel Hill Cemetery	May
Reading Community Singers performances	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Parker Middle School	May, December, various other times
Reading Symphony Orchestra performances	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Parker Middle School and Old South United Methodist Church	May, November, various other times
Reading Art Association Art Shows	Art Show or Craft Fair	First Congregational Church Basement	May and November
Reading Garden Plant Sale	Other	Reading Public Library	May
Farmers market (1 vendor)	Other	Near Train Station	Seasonal
Children's Concert series	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Memorial Park	June - August, Wednesdays
Fall Street Fair	Festival or Ceremony	Downtown	September
Family Concert Series	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Town Common	June - August, Sundays
Reading Civic Concert Band performances	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Parker Middle School	November, various other times
Festival of Trees	Festival or Ceremony	Parker Middle School	December
Shop the Block	Festival or Ceremony	Downtown	December, Thursday after Thanksgiving
Window Display Contest	Other	Downtown	December
Tree Lighting Ceremony	Festival or Ceremony	Downtown	December, Sunday after Thanksgiving
RMHS Drama Club Dickens Holiday Marketplace	Art Show or Craft Fair	RHS Performing Arts Center and Main Street	December

3. Cultural Inventory

3.5.2 Cultural Events – Special Events/Entertainment In Downtown Businesses

Event	Type	Where	When
Traditional Irish Music	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Bunratty Tavern	Weekly
Traditional Irish Dancing	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Bunratty Tavern	Weekly
Paint Nights	Other	Bunratty Tavern	Monthly
Fashion Show	Other	Bunratty Tavern	1-2 times/year
Vendor Demonstrations	Other	Everything But the Dog	Monthly
High School Band Performance	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Everything But the Dog	December, Shop the Block
Chicolate Tastings	Other	The Chocolate Truffle	Few times per year
Artist Reception	Art Show or Craft Fair	The Chocolate Truffle	Planned
Shop for a Cause	Other	The Chocolate Truffle	Few times per year
Boston Artsist Trunk Show	Art Show or Craft Fair	The Hitching Post	Fall 2014
Local Artsist Demonstrations	Other	The Hitching Post	Grand Opening, Sept. 2014

3. Cultural Inventory

3.5.3 Cultural Events – Outside of Downtown (possible opportunity to connect with downtown)

Event	Type	Where	When
Quannapowitt Players performances	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Quannapowitt Playhouse	January, February, March, May, October, November December
Colonial Chorus Players performances	Dramatic or Musical Performance	RHS Performing Arts Center and at Old Hose House	April, November, various other times
RMHS Choral Dept. performances	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Reading High School Performing Arts Center	May
RMHS Drama Club Performances	Dramatic or Musical Performance	RHS Performing Arts Center	May, October, November, December, various other times
Reading Library House Tour	Tour, Re-enactment, Lecture	Varies	May
Friends and Family Day	Festival or Ceremony	Birch Meadow Field	June
Craft Sale & Exhibit	Art Show or Craft Fair	Unitarian Universalist Church	October
Ivy Chord Coffee House Music Concerts	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Unitarian Universalist Church	October, various other times
RMHS Band & Color Guard Competition	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Reading Memorial High School	October
Austin Prep School performances	Dramatic or Musical Performance	Austin Prep School	November various other times

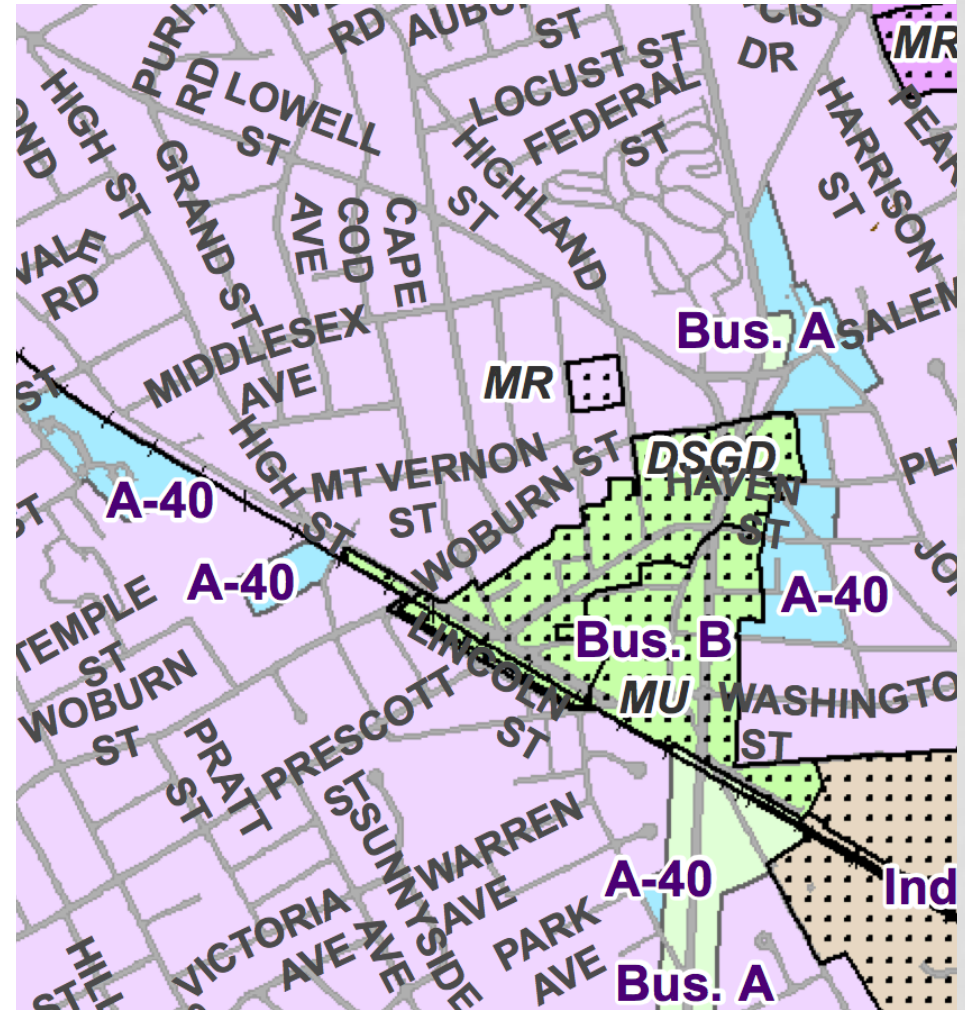
4. District Boundary and Zoning Considerations

4.1 About Cultural District Boundaries

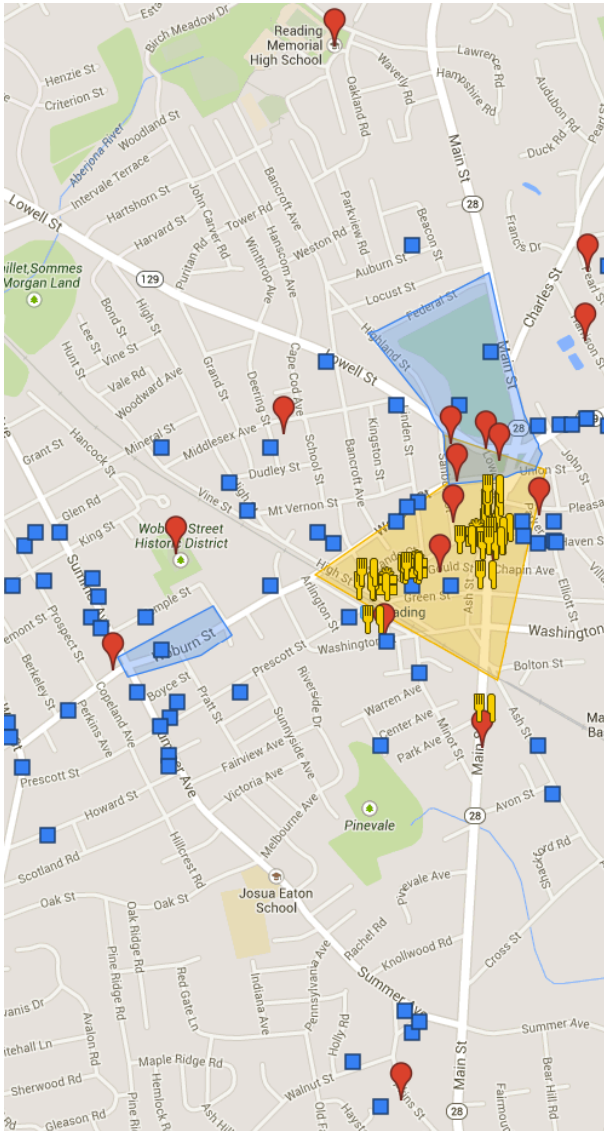
- The boundaries should highlight and focus attention on the cultural/commercial facilities, in other words, not including a lot of intervening residential property.
- The boundaries should be rational and justifiable .
- The district should be compact and walkable.
- There should be a sense of place to the district.
- You can “feel the edges” .

(There can be cultural facilities not located within the district boundaries that can be connected to the district – for example, a kiosk in the district that advertises performances at a theater beyond the boundaries.)

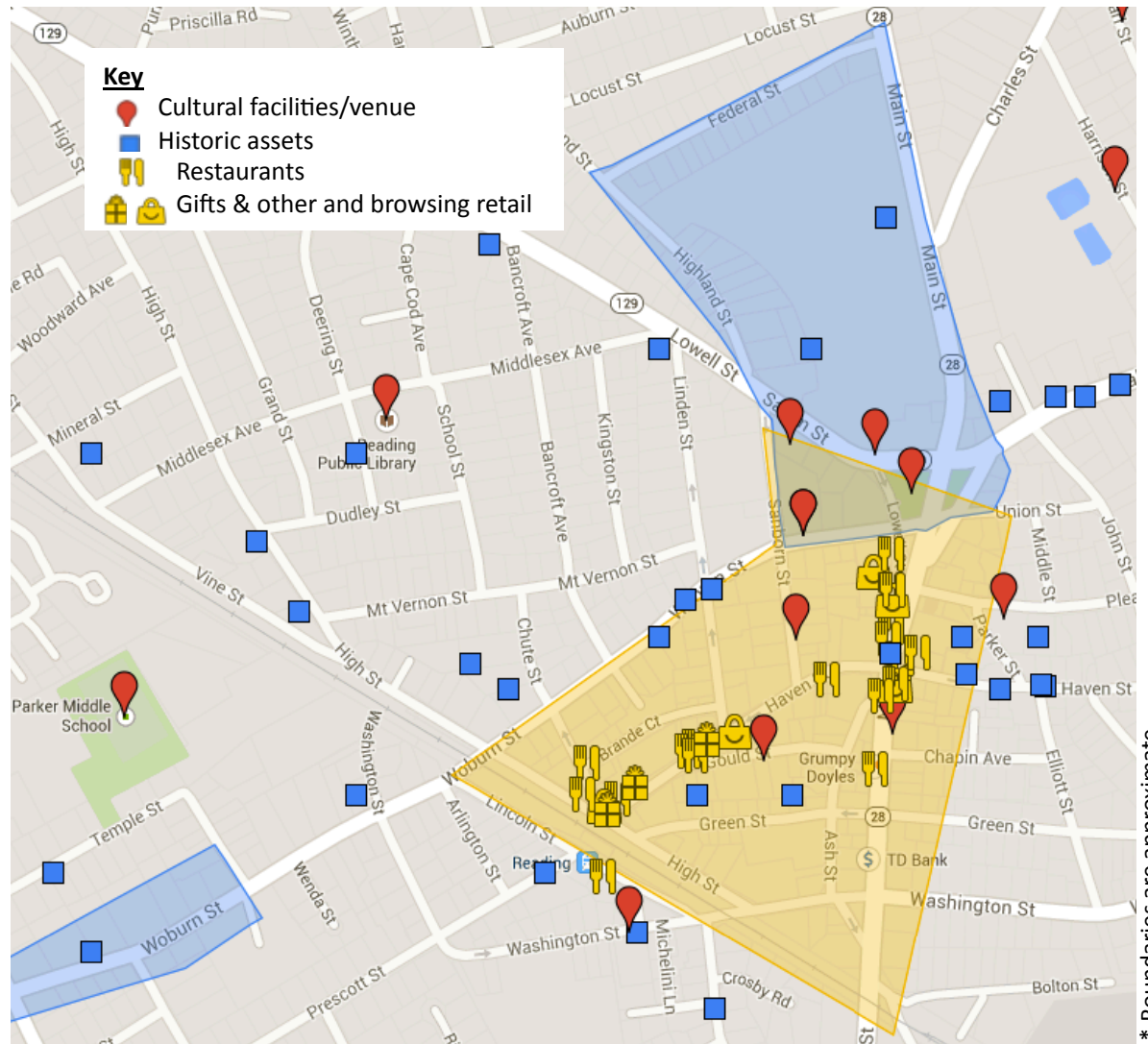
4.2 Existing Zoning



4. District Boundary and Zoning Considerations



4.3 Cultural Concentration



* Boundaries are approximate

5. Cultural District Case Studies

In this section, we will profile four cultural districts, three have received MCC designation and one, the Beverly Arts District, is in the process and hopes to receive designation soon. The districts vary in activities and organizational capacity, two have paid staff and two operate primarily with volunteers.

5.1 Orleans Cultural District

5.2 Marlborough Downtown Village Cultural District

5.3 Natick Center Cultural District

5.4 Beverly Arts District

At the conclusion of this section we will summarize the elements and characteristics that appear to be typical among these case studies.

5.5 Commonalities Among Case Study Cultural Districts

5. Cultural District Case Studies

5.1 Orleans Cultural District*

Background – How Things Got Started

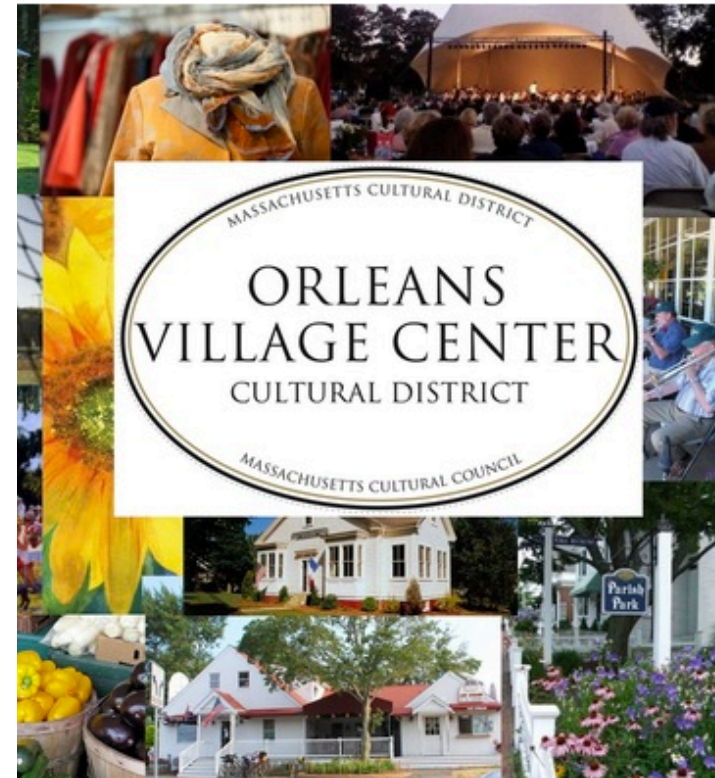
Two initial studies were completed that initially started the ball rolling.

- In 2010, FinePoint Associates completed an Economic Analysis with Recommendations to improve the function and vibrancy of the Village Center.
- In 2011, a streetscape plan was completed with a grant from the Cape Cod Commission.

As a result, 6 working groups were formed to address the recommendations in both studies.

They decided they needed an implementing agency, so in late 2011, the Orleans Community Partnership (OCP) was formed and endorsed by the Selectmen. The OCP worked on a number of initial projects with great cooperation between the Chamber, Library, and other organizations. They developed the slogan “Its all in Orleans” and began using it in promotional campaigns.

In 2012, the OCP spearheaded a collaborative planning process to develop a cultural district and prepare application materials for MCC . They received designation in 2013. Steve Bornemeier, the current president of the Orleans Community Partnership said “This was a wonderful tribute to what a partnership can do”.



- **Source:** Interview with Steve Bornemeier, President, Orleans Community Partnership and www.orleanscommunitypartnership.org

5. Cultural District Case Studies

Implementing Organization

Name: Orleans Community Partnership (OCP)

Mission: to champion the cultural, environmental, and economic vitality of Orleans and surrounding region.

Structure: 501(c)3 organization - nonprofit tax exempt organization that can accept gifts that are tax deductible to the donor

Board, Committees and Meetings: A 16-member Board of Directors meets once per quarter. The Executive Committee composed of officers (president, vice president, treasurer) and a few other board members meets bi-weekly

Staff: OCP has been operating with all volunteers; just recently they decided to compensate the president with a small stipend. They are looking for ways to increase organizational capacity with additional resources.

Funding

The OCP and cultural district activities are funded through membership support and individual event sponsorship

The Visionary and Founding Member Levels range from \$1,000 – \$10,000 and the 1,000 Member Campaign Member Levels range from \$25 - \$500.

OCP started a crowdsourcing campaign: “It’s All in Orleans”. As of September, 2014, they had raised \$2,375

Invest in the future of Orleans Help build “Streetscape” and “Cultural Campus” projects

- **VISIONARY Level**
 - o Pledge your support at one of the levels below for a minimum of five years to underwrite ongoing programs for civic betterment.
- **FOUNDING MEMBER Levels**
 - o Investors--\$10,000+
 - o Financiers--\$7,500+
 - o Leaders--\$5,000+
 - o Partners--\$2,500+
 - o Pioneers--\$1,000+
- **1000 MEMBER CAMPAIGN Levels**
 - o Citizens--\$500+
 - o Supporters--\$250+
 - o Participating Members--\$100+
 - o Enthusiasts--\$50+
 - o Members--\$25+

--It's easy to learn more, or to enroll, on-line--



EXPLORE | HOW IT WORKS | START YOUR CAMPAIGN

It's All in Orleans

www.indiegogo.com/projects/it-s-all-in-orleans

5. Cultural District Case Studies

Cultural District Activities/Projects

Cultural Campus - They are aiming to create a year round “cultural campus” by coordinating and building upon the many cultural organizations and assets in Orleans.

Website – OCP maintains a website with event information, community calendar and more.

Articles - OCP has gotten articles published in Cape Cod magazine every month for 3 years under the theme heading – “Its all in Orleans” written by local authors, community leaders and public officials.

Community Center - The old firehouse was turned into a community center and home for the OCP (previously only partly used by Chamber). Currently, there an adaptive reuse study underway to explore potential to expand the use of this facility as a cultural center.

Visitor Center - The Chamber of Commerce, with the Town is studying the opportunity to create a visitor center in Depot Square, spurred on by the success of the community center. (In 1989, the Chamber got the town to make a ruling about a visitor center but there has been no movement on the potential project until now.)

Concerts on the Green - OCP, in partnership with the library, solicits local sponsors and puts on free concerts at the Village Green Tuesday and Thursday nights (which can be moved inside the library if it rains). The OCP has found someone that organizes the concerts and gets paid from the fee that is paid to the performers.

Streetscape Stroll - OCP organized volunteer tour guides to take people around downtown and help show them what could happen if some of the streetscape improvement recommendations were implemented.

Heritage Wayfinding Project - The Cape Cod Commission and OCP have started working to develop technology and content that will allow visitors to use smart phones to link with historic photographs and twitter size blurbs about the sites in Orleans.

Collaborative Events - OCP has facilitated hundreds of collaborative events. OCP believes its mission is to catalyze existing interests in the community and give local organizations the credit, somewhat disappearing in the background. OCP helps raise awareness of the collaborative partners and feels it can be effective behind the scenes in the role of convener and facilitator (as well as producer). OCP helps other organizations to market events, sometimes acts as an umbrella and coordinating body, and provides support by helping organizations get to the right people and funding opportunities so they can take on projects. Examples of activities going on in Orleans include:

- Art shows at several galleries/venues
- Theater productions
- Farmers market
- Annual clambake
- Concerts at Federated Church
- “Mocktails & Music” at senior Center
- Game Day at Snow Library
- Orleans Canstruction
- Courses and lectures

5. Cultural District Case Studies



GAME DAY

Where **Snow Library**

WHEN!! **Saturday, Sept. 20**

1:00 to 4:00 p.m.



3rd Annual ClamBQ!





AUGUST 27TH – SEPTEMBER 20TH
WEDNESDAY – SUNDAY 8PM

Noel Coward's

BLITHE SPIRIT

Directed by
Judy Hamer

THE ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS
BOX OFFICE: 508.255.1963 TICKETS: \$22
120 Main Street, Orleans, MA • For current performances visit: www.apacape.org

Cape Cod!    

Orleans Farmers Market



Saturdays 8-12 Wednesdays 3-6
Until Nov 22 Old Colony Way
Rain or Shine Between Main and the Marketplace

The Upper Deck
Gallery

38 Main St. Orleans
Inside Cape Cod Photo, Art & Framing

MOCKTAILS & MUSIC

An Open House at the Orleans Senior Center

Source:

www.orleanscommunitypartnership.org

5. Cultural District Case Studies

Impacts

Steve, the OCP president says there is a sense of momentum.

Property sale and redevelopment is beginning to move in positive ways. For example, one of the cultural district collaborators bought the CVS building. He is currently leasing it back to CVS, but is considering restoring the property to its original use as a movie theater, similar to the theater in Chatham.

The town is now considering changes they previously disregarded. Several years ago, a gazebo had been proposed for the Village Green but was voted down because residents thought it would attract loitering or a “bad element”. For last year’s cultural district celebration, the OCP worked with the town to build a dais where several people made speeches and the local theatre troupe (dressed in les miserable costumes) sang God bless America. Due to the overwhelming success of the event, the town is now reconsidering the gazebo.

Lessons for Burgeoning Cultural Districts

- There are often egos and politics involved when attempting to get something like a cultural district started. Some people may feel threatened or nervous. Steve stresses how important it is to keep sitting down with potential collaborators and hearing them out. Engage the community, work with the cultural organizations and community groups, reach out to the Chamber of Commerce, police chief, planning department, etc. His advice is “Back off, listen and connect the decision makers, rather than trying to get your own name in lights.”

- Make sure to create an atmosphere that encourages ideas from board members and the community. Steve says “The organization can provide a petri dish where ideas can grow.” Because of a Board member suggestion, Orleans hosted a successful Canstruction Contest where local businesses build and display structures with can good, that in the end, are donated to local charities.
- Some business owners might be slower to get on board and probably need more courting. Business owners can be leary about where this is heading and if it is going to end up costing them down the road in taxes or other ways.



orleans **canstruction**[®] 2014
one can make a difference[®]

www.orleanscommunitypartnership.org

5. Cultural District Case Studies

5.2 Marlborough Downtown Village*

Background– How Things Got Started

A group of Tufts University students completed a study of downtown in 2010. Spurred on by their recommendations, the Marlboro Downtown Village (DVA) association was established, a group of business owners, property owners and residents that were frustrated with what the downtown had become and looking to create more foot traffic. The group included a local newspaper man that began publishing a quarterly Downtown Village Newspaper

The DVA started undertaking small projects and expanding downtown events. They recognized the potential value of local theater groups, a very active library and local artists. They got very interested in mural projects and they went to look at Haverhill's murals. They also began to look at what cultural assets Marlborough had to offer and they discovered hidden gems. Many historic assets were very underplayed in the old Victorian town including the John Brown Bell historic site right in downtown.

The head of the historic commission found out about the MCC cultural district designation. The DVA liked the idea because it would give credibility and bring focus to the history and cultural aspects of Marlborough.

The DVA worked with the Marlboro Economic Development Council to get the paperwork together for the application. MCC advised them it would take some serious work but the application was approved in 2012. The Economic Development Commission was initially considered to be the governing body and provided some initial funding to the DVA.



** Source: Interview with Mary Scott, President, Downtown Village Association and co-owner of Main Sreet Café and www.facebook.com/DowntownVillage and www.Discovermarlborough.org*

5. Cultural District Case Studies

Implementing Organization

Name: Downtown Village Association

Mission: Preserve the long term vitality of the City' core by identifying and pursuing avenues that will enhance the beauty of the historic area and developing a climate conducive to retail, service, tourist and commercial business.

Goal: To provide create a basic structure in which small business can thrive, thus providing a steady stream of rental income to landlords whose properties will retain their values because they will be able to afford to maintain them in a safe and esthetic manner, which will in turn increase the tax income to the city of Marlborough.

Structure: The Downtown Village Association operates under the Chamber of Commerce. They do not have a separate 501(c)3 organization.

Board, Committees and Meetings: The steering committee meets monthly and sometimes the public is invited. The steering group members include representatives from the historical society, library, senior center, theater group, business owners, and property owners. About 8 – 12 people attend regularly.

Staff: The DVA currently operates with all volunteers and no paid staff.

Cultural Districts Activities/ Projects

Event calendar - The library maintains a unified calendar of events. Lots of individual events are planned and DVA encourages all organizations to list them on the community calendar. The local community theater has several performances per year and there are many other performances and events.

Website – The DVA Maintains a website and facebook page with events and information.

Community Mural Project – Local artists are collaborating on a theme.

Chair with a Flair Event – 30 artists painted donated chairs in their individual styles. The finished chairs were put on display in downtown businesses and then auctioned off. The event engaged people and business owners while raising funds to be used for the community mural project.



www.Discovermarlborough.org

5. Cultural District Case Studies

Main Street Café Hosts Art Openings – the local café doubles as an art gallery. About once per month on a Friday night, the café profiles a local artist and then display their work for a month. The events are lively with music and 20% of the sales go back to the DVA. The café is trying to be a model and, indeed, a few other cafes have followed suit with exhibits and other activities.

Synergia Project – DVA partnered with an arts group in Hudson to host the Synergia event, a combination of prose, poetry and other performances centered around a selected historic theme, often building off from an historic photograph. The theme is different in each town; in Marlboro, the theme was slavery.

Labor Day Parade - biggest in the Commonwealth.

Walking Tour – A tour of historic sites is being developed.



www.Discovermarlborough.org

Impacts

Mary, co-owner of the Main Street Cafe, said she has noticed a positive difference in downtown and an increase in customers. She noted “the community calendar has started to take off” and “we have raised awareness of what Marlborough has to offer”.

Lessons for Burgeoning Cultural Districts

This type of initiative usually starts at the grass roots level with a small core group of interested enthusiastic individuals. In Marlborough, there were about a dozen people that were the “doers”.

Work closely with local government staff and others in key positions; you might need the clout as you move forward.

It doesn’t happen overnight; start by doing some small things and then keep building. The trick is to connect the energy and assets together -- drawing on history, the arts and the businesses.

It’s important to have a strong organization and a paid downtown coordinator can be a real plus. People have less time to volunteer due to their other commitments and they also can get burnt out. A paid staff person would make a big difference. Marlborough is currently on all volunteer organization, they are interested in finding a way to change that.

The attraction and participation of younger folks is necessary. It is important to have some things that entice young people (martini bars, or whatever they are looking for) and bring young families into the downtown.

5. Cultural District Case Studies

5.3 Natick Center Cultural District*

Background – How Things Got Started

Natick Center Associates (NCA) is a very established organization that has been working to keep the downtown vital since 1985.

Natick is very fortunate to have a regional performing arts center and very active arts organization located in their downtown - The Center for the Arts in Natick (TCAN). An old firehouse was renovated in 2003 to provide a theatre, art gallery and community center. The 501(c)3 organization that operates TCAN has eight staff members and a Board comprised of 11 volunteer leaders. TCAN provides a cultural center where national and emerging artists present performances, literary events, and art exhibitions.

As the community became more committed to developing a cultural district, they applied for an Adams Grant to fund a planning process. The Town applied and received designation in 2012 (which stays in effect for 5 years).

The Town was the official applicant for the cultural district. NCA is now the governing body. NCA completes the monitoring reports for MCC which track impacts such as the change in occupancy, evidence of art studios being opened and an increase in programming.

NCA is working on re-branding the downtown with the cultural district.



** Source: Interview with India Young, Executive Director, Natick Center Associates, www.natickcenter.org and www.natickarts.org*

5. Cultural District Case Studies

Implementing Organization

Name: Natick Center Associates

Mission: to maximize the public and private value of Natick Center for everyone who lives, works, or visits here. NCA is committed to enhancing its physical environment and business climate, encouraging redevelopment efforts that are consistent with its historic character, actively recruiting new businesses, strengthening existing ones, promoting the general health and wellbeing of the community and advancing Natick Center as a center for Arts and Culture.

Structure: NCA is a public private partnership and a 501(c)3. The organization was started in 1995 after receiving grant from the recently developed mall and today is a membership organization.

Board, Committees: NCA has a 15-member board of directors. There is a memo of understanding between NCA and the town regarding operation of the cultural district. A specific committee decides on the programming and the financial responsibilities lie with the Board on NCA.

Staff: NCA has one paid staff person and volunteers.

Funding

NCA is funded through membership fees and some public support. They have gotten a few grants for the cultural district and are working on developing more secure funding sources. The Town allocated some funding for year one. NCA would like to negotiate an annual allocation.

Cultural Districts Activities/ Projects

The Center for the Arts in Natick (TCAN) , located in the district hosts over 300 performances per year along with, art exhibitions, literary events and classes.

NCA collaborates on events and celebrations...advocate for thoughtful design and planning...helps quality businesses expand or locate in downtown ... works to improve parking and pedestrian safety...and sponsors projects like the MBTA mural and Moran Park.

NCA collaborates on and promotes events such as:

- Natick Days
- Natick Fourth of July Parade
- Natick Artist Open Studios
- Natick Farmers Market

NCA sponsors Public Art Installations and mural projects.



www.natickcenter.org, www.natickarts.org

5. Cultural District Case Studies

5.4 Beverly Arts District (BAD)*

Background – How Things Got Started

The Beverly Main Streets (BMS) organization has been in existence since 2003 focusing on revitalization of the downtown.

In 2010, BMS, the Chamber and the City got together \$20,000 for a consultant to work on a 2020 plan for downtown. One of the recommendations that came out of this effort was to leverage the creative economy to improve downtown. The presence of Montserrat College of Art in downtown provided an impetus for considering the creation of an arts district.

Tina Cassidy said that they started to look at their assets more closely. They knew they had an arts college but didn't think that would attract people to downtown, but then they realized it's not about the building, it's about what is inside. They started to look at their businesses and found a guy working with glass tiles and another guy making copper weather vanes. Slowly they started to really appreciate the creativity around them and started thinking "maybe we can get something started".

A partnership was formed between Montserrat College of Art, Beverly Main Streets and the City. They applied for a \$75,000 "Our Town" grant from the National Endowment of the Arts (which they got on their second try) to complete a cultural district master plan in 2012.

They have been working on the plan and hope to receive MCC Cultural District designation soon.



** Source: Interview with Tina Cassidy, former Planning Director for City of Beverly and www.beverlymainstreets.org*

5. Cultural District Case Studies

Beverly Arts District Launch Plan

source: www.beverlymainstreets.org

Create and market the BAD brand	May 2014
Launch to the community	May 7, 2014
Create a sharable database of artists and spaces	May 2014 + ongoing
Search for grant funding to hire part-time BAD coordinator	May 2014 + ongoing
Get designation from MA as a cultural district	October 2014
Re-launch the Art Walk	Winter 2014
Install The Beverly Oracle	2015 - 2016

Previous Tasks:

- Form Arts District Advisory Task Force
- Create Name, Logo, slogan

One of the first thing they decided to do was a public art installation. They held a national competition for artists and Montserrat College agreed to host the artist in residency while working on the art piece. Initially, they had brainstormed about some kind of rotating exhibit or an archway over the street to demarcate the district. The process and winning artist took things in a very different direction and evolved into the development of the Beverly Oracle.

The Beverly Oracle

Source: www.facebook.com/thebeverlyoracle

The Oracle is a poetry-based public art project that combines smart glass, a strange chair, a library of luminous answers, painted frescoes, with the aspect of pilgrimage, The Beverly Oracle is a new, permanent work created by the artist Anna Schuleit Haber for the city of Beverly.

Visitors will enter the oracle's glass structure and sit in a specially designed smart chair that will read their physiological characteristics. The glass walls of the enclosure turn opaque, and the oracle prompts the visitor to ask a question. The spoken answer is formed by an algorithm which draws on a pool of answers contributed by writers and poets from across the country, combining them with Schuleit Haber's drawings, which come to life on the walls of the structure. The idea for the Beverly Oracle is based on the ancient Oracle of Delphi, which was consulted for hundreds of years by those seeking answers and advice.

5. Cultural District Case Studies

Implementing Organization

Name: Beverly Main Streets (BMS)

Mission: to promote and enhance downtown Beverly's economic vitality, cultural and historic resources and quality of life.

Structure: BMS is a member of the the national Main Streets movement initiated by National Trust for Historic Preservation. Most Main Streets programs have similar structures and missions while setting their own work plan according to the needs of the community. The organization is 501(c)3 and is not a membership organization.

Board, Committees: BMS has a 7-member executive board and 21 other board members (including 2two student members form local colleges). They have several standing committees including: economic restructuring, promotions and design. Beverly Arts District (BAD) has an 11 member task force.

Funding

Beverly Main Streets is funded by public and private funding and the money raised from events. In 2012, they completed a preliminary planning study for creating a Business Improvement District (BID) that would provide funding through a special tax assessment, but, to date, a BID has not been established. They are currently looking for grant funding to support an arts district coordinator.

Cultural Districts Activities/ Projects

City and BMS implemented way finding signage to direct people to downtown and to parking.

BMS collaborates on and promotes events such as:

- Arts Fest
- Beverly's New Year
- Merry Main Streets
- Downtown Trick or Treat
- College Night
- Street Banner Design Contest

Montserrat College and BMS selected artist to design and build a public art installation –The Beverly Oracle

BMS manages a storefront improvement program



www.beverlymainstreets.org

5. Cultural District Case Studies

5.5 Commonalities among Case Study Cultural Districts

What do they have?

- Historic & cultural assets that could be highlighted, programmed and promoted to attract town residents and visitors
- Abundance of cultural organizations and artisans
- Key art institutions in downtown (Beverly & Natick)
- Art studio space/galleries/artists working in downtown
- Businesses that complement cultural activities (e.g., restaurants, browsing retail)

What do they do? What have they done?

- Facilitate and encourage more programming, events and entertainment by coordinating and collaborating with organizations, artisans & businesses
- Branding, logo, slogan
- Website and facebook page to promote the district and events
- Unified calendar of events
- Highlight historic assets
- Get articles published articles and public relations

How do they get things done?

- Group of committed citizens with someone willing to take the lead and lots of willing volunteers
- 501(c)3 organization with an executive committee
- Funding from membership fees, grants and event sponsors

6. Survey Results

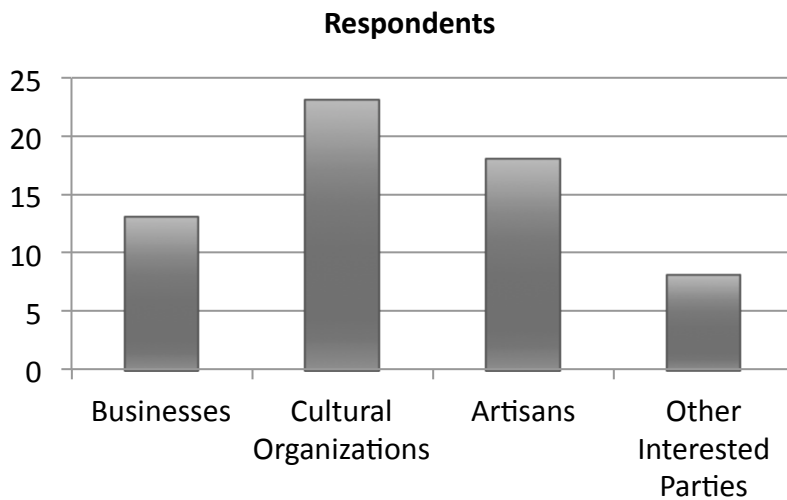
6.1 Overview and Interest in Cultural District

A survey was conducted September/October 2014

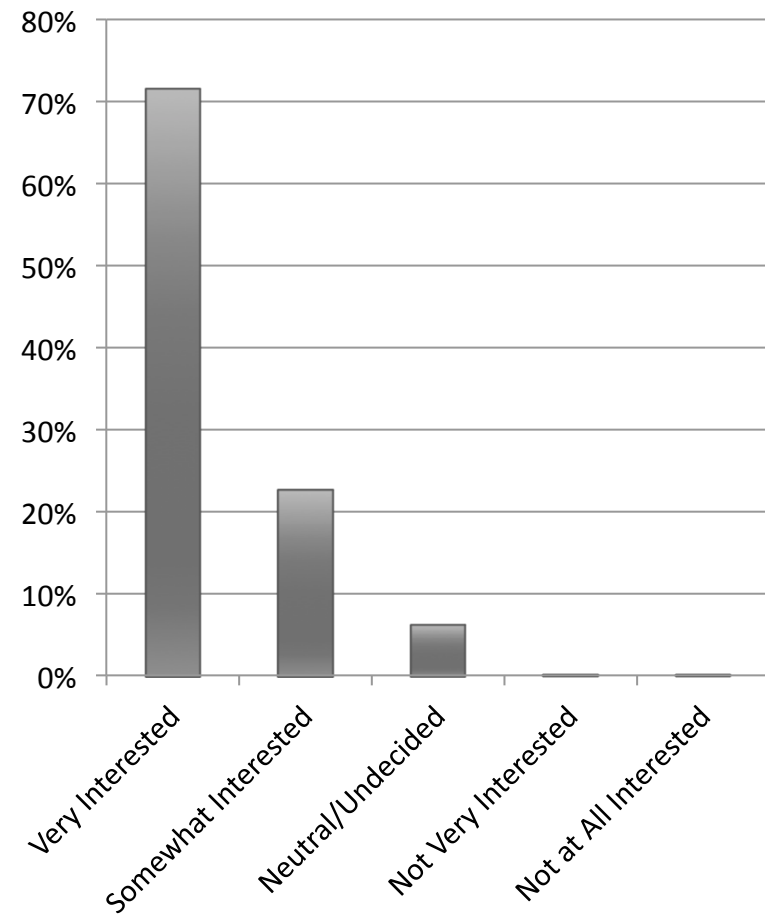
Primary Target Respondents:

- Downtown Business Owners
- Representatives of Cultural Organizations
- Individual Artisans

Total of 52 responses were received; some respondents belong to multiple categories



Respondents expressed a strong interest in developing cultural district.



6. Survey Results

6.2 Vision: Five years from now, the Reading Cultural District will . . .

Most respondent comments regarding the objectives they would like to see a cultural district accomplish fell under 2 primary concepts:

Be a destination that pulls people to downtown with a combination of great restaurants and diverse cultural offerings *(representative comments below)*

Be an anchor for the downtown, with the combination of great restaurants and cultural events. Reading will be a 'destination' town to come for an evening or afternoon as a resident or as a visitor to our town . . . Be a destination that pulls people to downtown Reading with outdoor entertainment and farmers market on the common. . . Be vibrant. . . Be an evening and weekend destination. . . Be an inviting area where people come to see exhibits, hear musical performances, purchase unique, creative products, take courses. . . Provide a diverse offering of cultural activities that will strengthen the business community and make downtown Reading a destination (with enough parking and safe passage for pedestrians). . . Be a center where people can explore different foods and traditions from different cultures.

Provide a place or places for art performances, exhibits and classes *(representative comments below)*

Have a place where the community can come together to enjoy the arts, display and sell their arts and crafts, perform music, theater and dance and receive education in various forms of performing, music, dance and visual arts and crafts. . . Have a space where we could see art exhibited, go to a film screening, or hear a string quartet play. . . Have a performing arts space with non-school organizations in mind. . . Art exhibits of paintings, sculpture, etc. First class performance space available for groups such the RSO, Colonial Chorus, Singers, the various dance schools here, as well as professional entertainers. . . Include a performing and visual art center that provides classes accessible to all at prices that can include all and any child, teen, adult. . . Include a Cultural Arts Center which would house all of Creative Arts' programming (dedicated rooms for visual art, theatre classes & performances (100+ seats), and private music lessons), administration and music library for other performing & visual arts organizations, meetings and demos from Reading Art Association, performances by other groups, an art gallery area showing both kids work and professional artists' work, a place for fundraisers (LOW cost), an "open studio" area for families/kids/artists to "hang-out", music recording studio area, artist studios for working artists, etc.

6. Survey Results

6.3 Specific Objectives for a Reading Downtown Cultural District

Respondent comments regarding objectives they would like to see a cultural district accomplish fell into 3 primary categories:

More Events, Collaborative Events *(representative comments below)*

Organize events in the downtown area, with promotional and sponsorship support from the business community. . . . Coordinate cultural events. . . . Get arts organizations and creative individuals combining events.

Better Promotion of Events, Master Calendar *(representative comments below)*

Inventory all current activities - organize that information - publish a community calendar as one method of community outreach - then hand the effort off to be led by a group of downtown businesses to spearhead. . . . Have a readily accessible listing of upcoming events. . . . Better communication of cultural events occurring in Reading. . . . One central location to go to for ideas of what to do for various ages and interests.

Development of a Cultural Arts Center Facility *(representative comments below)*

Locate space that can be developed for the arts with performance space. . . . Figure out a building that could be purchased (by the town or an umbrella organization) and used for such activities. . . . Find a Home for ALL cultural groups . . . To develop a central location for the reading community to gather to enjoy cultural activities. . . . Explore availability of any municipal buildings that could be used for a community center. Enlist leaders from business, arts, artisans, music, theater and dance groups to exchange ideas and collaborate on the joint venture of a community center. Find sponsors and fund raisers.

6. Survey Results

6.4 Event Programming and Promotion

Currently, many cultural events occur in/near downtown (within .5 mile from Haven Street and Sanborn) -- see table at 3.5.1

Several downtown businesses host special events -- see table at 3.5.2

Many cultural events occur outside of downtown (and may represent opportunity for downtown tie-ins) -- see table at 3.5.3

Many respondents expressed types of additional events they would like to see in Downtown

Most common responses included:

- Concerts, music performances
- Art exhibits, arts and crafts show/fair
- Films

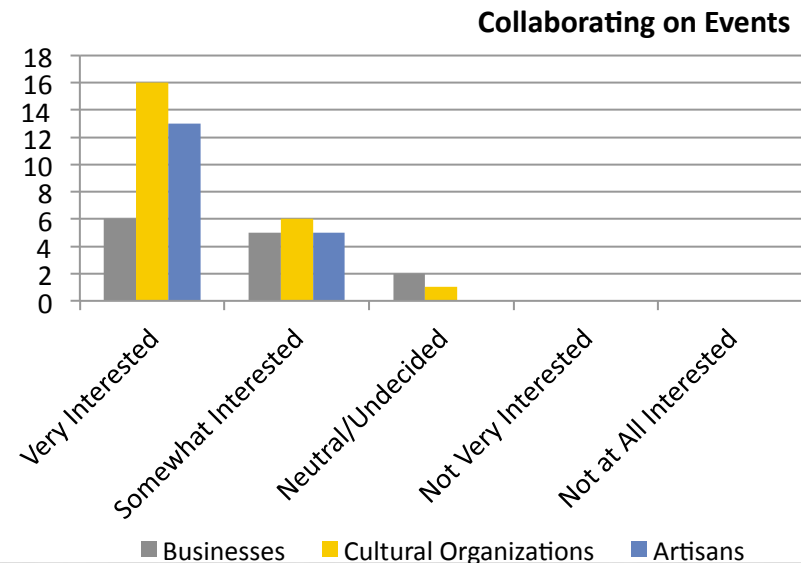
14 cultural organization representatives expressed interest in putting on additional events in downtown, including:

- Art festivals
- Square dancing
- Music performances
- Guided tour of Laurel Hill Cemetery
- Informal sketch groups & workshops

Several businesses expressed interest in hosting more events.

	# of Businesses Very Interested
Displaying Artist Work	4
Selling Artist Work	3
Hosting Music or Other Performance	2
Hosting more of their own events	4

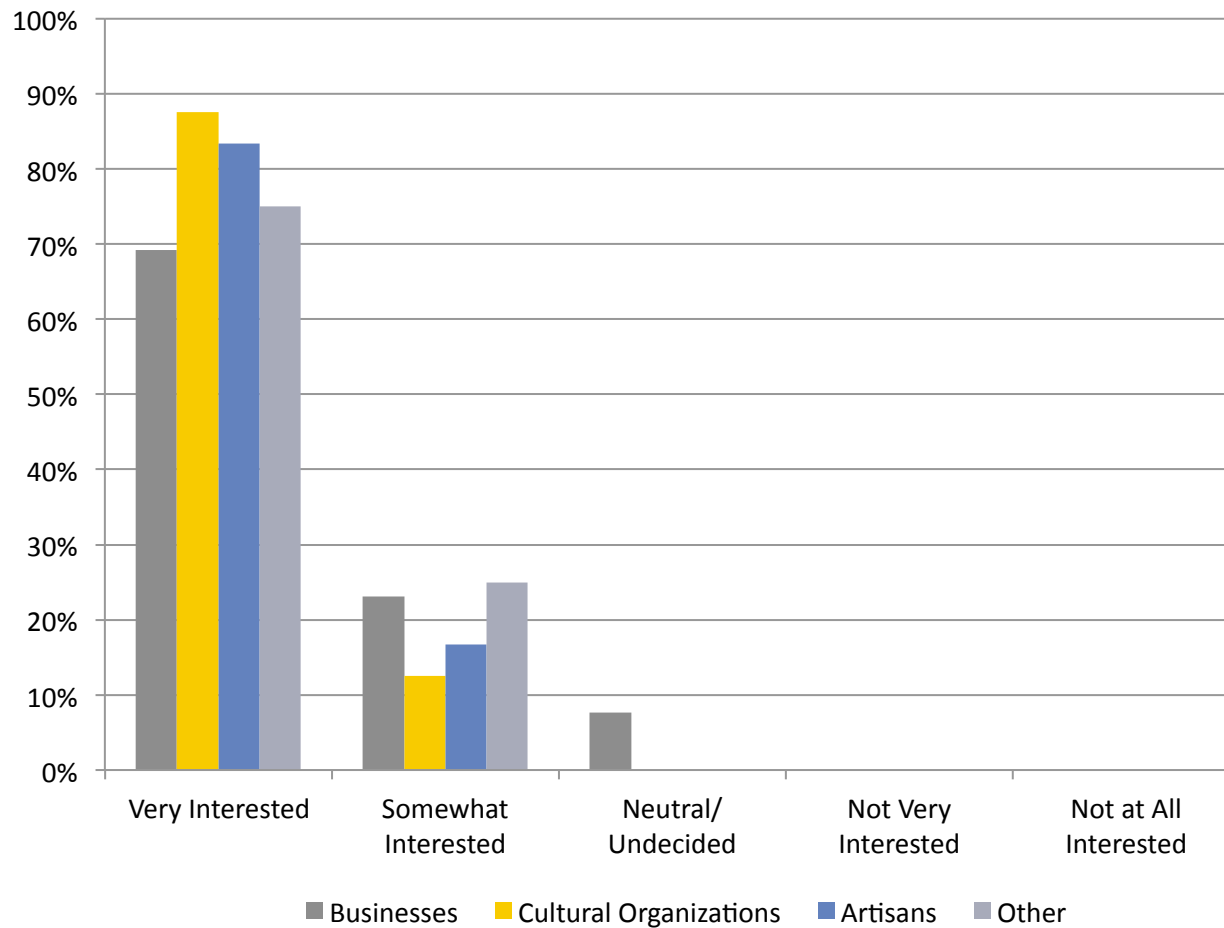
More than two-thirds of cultural organization representatives and artisans and about one-half of business respondents are “very interested” in collaborating on events.



6. Survey Results

6.4 Event Programming and Promotion (cont'd)

Respondents in all categories expressed strong support for having cultural events published in a Master Calendar



6. Survey Results

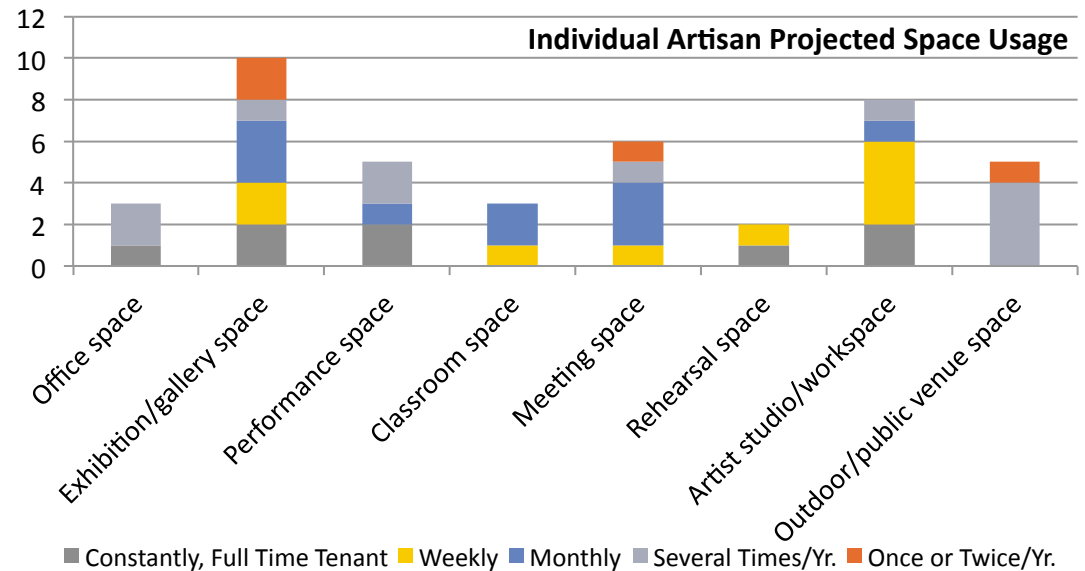
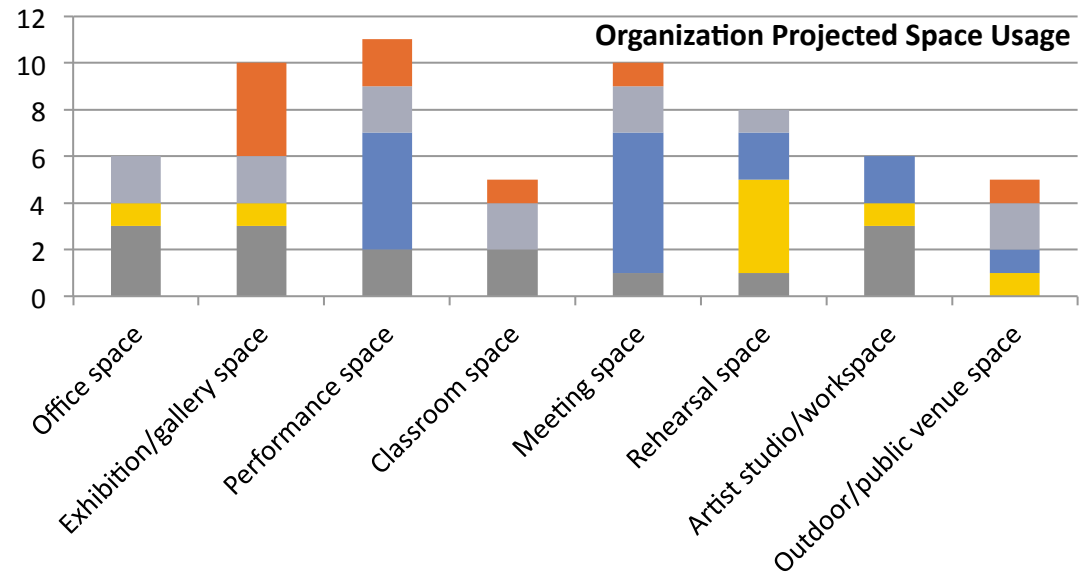
6.5 Art and Cultural Facilities

Many respondents would like to see additional cultural facilities in Downtown

Most common responses included:

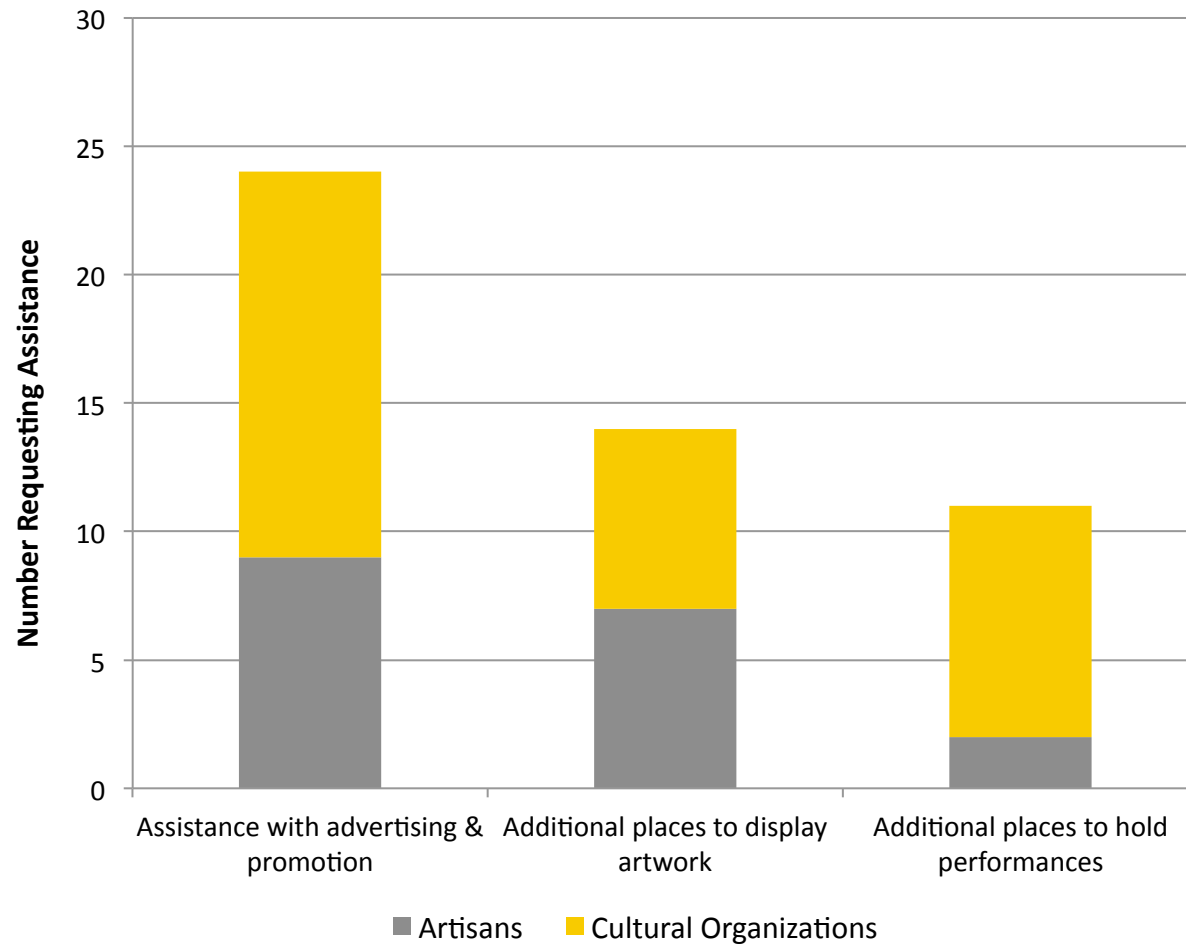
- Cultural center, theater, multi-purpose arts venue
- Art galleries

13 cultural organizations and 13 individual artisans said their current space needs for performances, rehearsals, exhibits, etc. were not currently being met



6. Survey Results

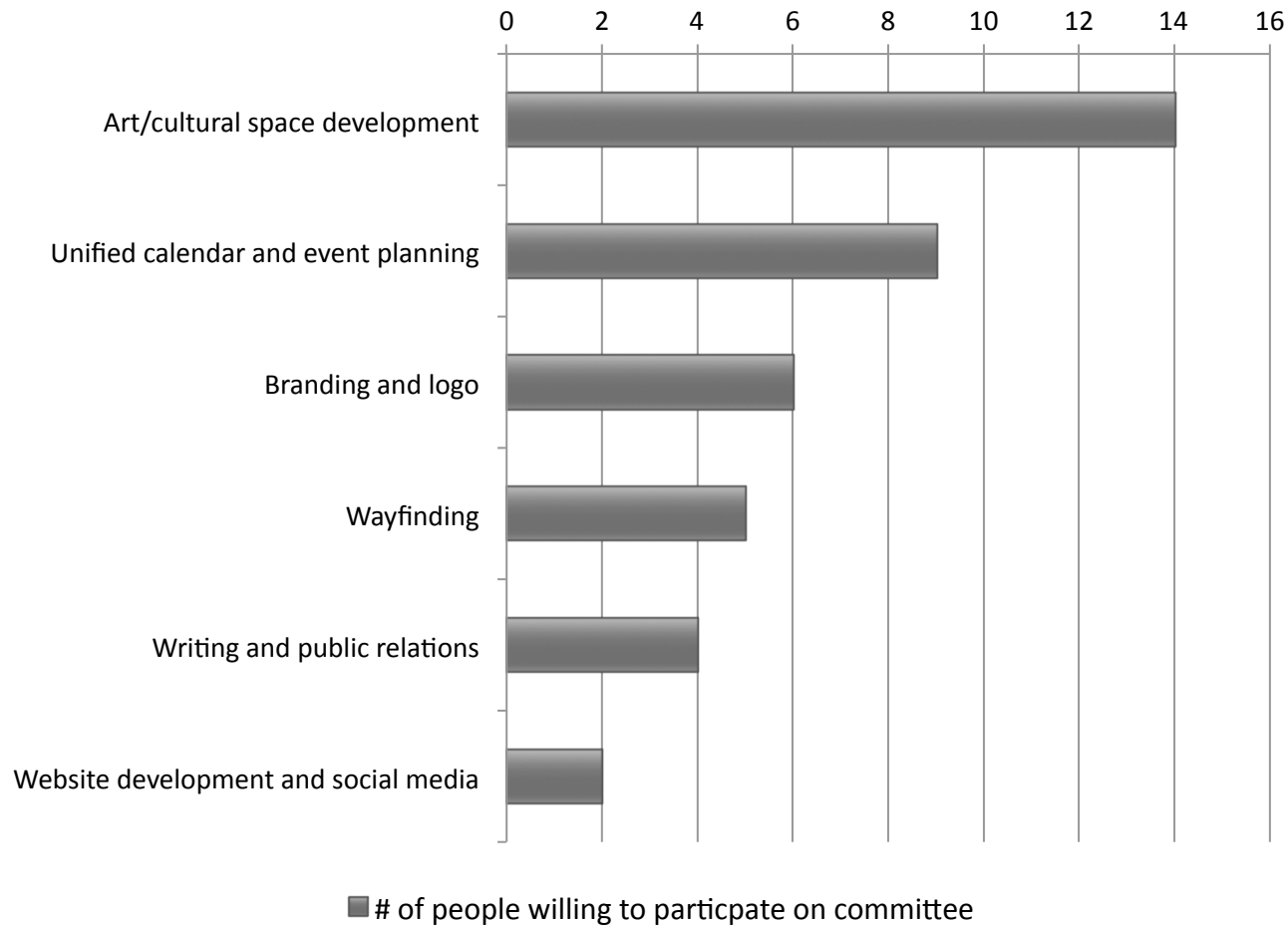
6.6 Type of Assistance Requested by Cultural Organizations and Artisans



Cultural organizations and artisans expressed a desire for assistance a few areas. The most frequently requested category was assistance with advertising and promotion.

6. Survey Results

6.7 Interest in Committee Participation



Survey respondents expressed interest in participating on several committees. The two topics that received the most interest were art space development and unified calendar/event planning.

7. Recommendations

Short Term/Immediate

Get organized, increase critical mass of well-promoted programming in downtown & start exploring options for developing cultural facility

Medium to Long Term

Formalize organization & funding, recruit creative economy enterprises, apply for MCC designation, facility development, infrastructure improvements

7. Recommendations

Short Term Suggested Actions

1. Organize steering committee, leadership & subcommittees
2. Recruit partners and supporters
3. Increase event programming and entertainment in downtown by 50%
4. Develop branding and website/facebook page
5. Create a master calendar/posting site to promote cultural events (perhaps combined with downtown entertainment, shopping and dining guide.)
6. Substantially increase utilization of existing venues
7. Explore options for developing art and cultural center facility and other venues
8. Evaluate current zoning ensure art related uses are not impeded by existing requirements.

Medium to Long Term Suggested Actions

1. Formalize governing organization, form 501 (c)3 corporation
2. Develop funding mechanism (membership fees, grants, event sponsors)
3. Explore options for creating zoning and financial incentives for art related uses.
4. Create strategy to recruit creative economy businesses to downtown
5. Create art and cultural center facility and/or other venues in downtown
6. Apply for MCC designation
7. Implement public relations campaign – get articles published and other publicity.
8. Continue to increase cultural programming
9. Continue to highlight historic assets, especially Parker Tavern
10. Provide infrastructure improvements supportive of cultural district and events such as way finding signage, social gathering/seating areas and public venue improvements if necessary (e.g. seating, band stand, dance floor, etc.)

7. Recommendations

Short Term Suggestions

1. Organize Steering Committee, leadership & subcommittees

- Organize steering committee. This might be a continuation of the existing Advisory Team or revised membership. This group may evolve into a formalized 501(c)3 organization later.
- Elect leadership (chair, co-chair, recording secretary) and commit to monthly meeting with agendas and minutes
- Create subcommittees. Suggested committees are listed below. Several survey respondents have expressed interest in serving on committees numbered 2 through 5.
 - 1) Partnership
 - 2) Art/Cultural Space Development
 - 3) Event Planning
 - 4) Branding, Logo, Website development
 - 5) Master Event Calendar/posting site (might be addressed by committee 3 or 4 or by a separate committee)

2. Recruit Partners and Supporters

- Members of the Partnership Committee should personally meet with representatives of cultural organizations, downtown businesses, town committees and departments to further recruit supporters and partners in the cultural district endeavor.
- Many cultural organizations appear to be already on-board but several others should be specifically approached (e.g., dance schools, High School drama and bands).
- A few business owners have been active in the exploratory process but the committee should seek support from more businesses especially restaurants and specialty retail/gift shops as well as the Chamber of Commerce.
- The case study cultural districts showed the importance of getting wide ranging public support. Several Town department staff have been participating including: community development/planning, recreation, and administration as well as the Reading Historic Commission and Economic Development Committee. Other organizations/departments to contact might include the library, various school contacts in charge of creative/performing arts activities and the public works department.

7. Recommendations

Short Term Suggestions (Cont'd)

3. Increase event programming and entertainment in downtown by 50%

- Review calendar of downtown events and locations, develop objectives for year- round event impact
- Obtain pledge from cultural organization partners to increase events in downtown
- Consider creating a small fund and implementing a “Call for Producers” model to encourage events
- Encourage businesses to host entertainment and events, assist businesses to promote

4. Develop branding/identity for the district and maintain website/facebook page

- Begin to establish identity of cultural district by developing simple webpage/facebook page with appropriate links
- Work toward development of logo/slogan for the district

5. Create a master calendar/posting site to promote cultural events (perhaps combined with overall downtown entertainment and dining guide.)

- Create a vehicle to promote events; work toward establishing a master calendar/electronic posting site for cultural events with brief listings pertinent to events/activities only.
- The current Community Connection contains so much news and information mixed in with events, it does not serve as an efficient guide for someone in town or out of town looking for something to do.
- It might be advantageous to combine event information with overall downtown entertainment, shopping and dining guide information.

6. Substantially increase utilization of existing downtown venues

- Organize more events on the Common
- Make Parker Tavern Museum a bigger a part of downtown, increase promotion, Increase hours of operation and programming
- Encourage coffee shops and restaurants to serve as venues for art exhibits and art openings

7. Recommendations

Short Term Suggestions (Cont'd)

7. Explore options for creating art and cultural center facility and other venues in downtown

- Identify and evaluate potential sites for the possible creation of an art/cultural center facility. Explore feasibility of acquisition and adaptive reuse of the post office building that is currently for sale.
- Continue to identify demand for art and performance space.
- Look for funding opportunities that might be available for planning and development of art center facilities
- Explore other venues that could be created or used on temporary basis.
- Review infrastructure needs to support events at downtown venues (The Common, Parker Tavern, etc.)

8. Evaluate current zoning

- Evaluate zoning, ensure art live-work and work-only studios are allowed as well as & other art related uses will not be discouraged by existing requirements.
- In the medium to long term, explore options for creating incentives for creation of art related uses.



Post Office Property For Sale, Haven Street

7. Recommendations

Initial Next Steps

Next Actions Decided by the Advisory Team

At the conclusion of this study, the Advisory Team decided to take the following next steps:

1. The Advisory Team will work on getting press releases out and articles published about the work that has been completed to date as a means of getting more people and organizations interested in participating. Strategies were discussed to get articles published in the Chronicle, Globe North and Wicked Local as well as have the Town send out information in their bi-weekly email blast.
2. The advisory team decided to continue to meet monthly.
3. They will work on recruiting individuals to take leadership roles on the Steering Committee. At the next meeting, they plan to discuss potential leadership requirements, candidates and structures.
4. The group discussed the importance of representation from a variety of artistic and cultural disciplines (visual arts, theater, music, history, recreation, etc.) along with business owners and government leaders and plans to continue to reach out to their networks to recruit support.

