

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ARLINGTON COMMISSION ON ARTS & CULTURE (ACAC)

The mission of Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture (ACAC) is to advocate for arts and cultural opportunities throughout Arlington and advise the Town on matters of a cultural and artistic nature. The Commission meets monthly, on the first Thursday of the month in the Jefferson Cutter Gallery. All meetings are open to the public.

Members of ACAC in 2017 were Adria Arch (Co-Chair), Barbara Costa, Carla Dorato, Jonathan Hyde (Treasurer), Stephanie Marlin-Curiel (Co-Chair), Stephen Poltorzycki (Secretary), Leland Stein, Aimee Taberner, and Marga Varea

Town-wide Cultural Plan

ACAC, in partnership with the Department of Planning and Community Development completed an Arts and Culture Action Plan for the Town in August 2017. The plan was completed with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) through a technical assistance grant (PMLA). We appreciated the opportunity to work with MAPC who were able to integrate the needs of multiple arts constituencies with the priorities outlined in a recently completed Master Plan, particularly in the areas of creating complete streets, wayfinding, pedestrian safety, repurposing buildings, and activating public space. The cultural plan has strengthened relationships between the arts and cultural community, Arlington boards and commissions, and the Department of Planning and Community Development and created opportunities for exciting new collaborations, such as those currently underway: the Pathways public art project along the Minuteman bike path aimed at providing continuity through the Cultural District, the vacant storefronts project, and the development of a centralized arts and culture website. We also look forward to the infusion of creativity into future town planning initiatives and development.

The plan includes an additional organizational plan, completed by TDC and funded by community block grant funds, to help coordinate and consolidate Arlington's multiple arts organizations. In the fall of 2017, representatives from Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture (ACAC), Arlington Public Art (APA), Arlington Cultural Council (ACC), Arlington Tourism and Economic Development Committee (ATED), Arlington Center for the Arts (ACA), and the Cultural District Managing Partnership (CDMP) came together in several meetings to work out the structure, charter and budget request of the merger recommended by TDC. The proposed result of the merger to take effect in FY 18 is an expanded Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture to be known as AC², pending discussion with our brand consultant/website developer.

Website Development

\$12-15,000 from the FY17 budget was allocated toward the development of a comprehensive arts and culture website for the town inclusive of a cultural calendar. At the time of this writing (End of November 2017), we have received 5 proposals from website developers/designers/brand consultants and are scheduled to meet with applicants during the first week in December. A consultant will be selected before the end of December with work to begin by the end of January and completed before the end of the fiscal year.

Cultural District Designation Application

Since the completion of the plan in August of 2017, the town has been awarded Cultural District designation from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. MCC's decision was delayed until the ACA's new location was secure, the CDMP had started meeting, and the gap between East Arlington and Arlington Center was being addressed. With the installation of Pathways, public art along the bike path, starting in June of 2017, the ACA's signed lease and renovation funds raised, and a strong line of communication developed between MCC and the Department of Community Development to issue reports on the CDMP and other infrastructure issues, the MCC deemed Arlington ready for the Designation. The CDMP has held monthly meetings to work out their procedures, structure and subcommittees, and a group to consider how to activate the section on Mass Ave. between Franklin St. and Lake St. (otherwise known as the "Committee to Fill the Gap" subcommittee is already active.

Below is the Boston Globe article by Sophia Eppolito about Arlington's new cultural district designation accompanied by images of Ripple, the installation organized by Adria Arch.

GlobeWest

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ADRIANA FANDOLFI



DAVE GRIFFIN

Cultural districts give towns a boost

Arlington is the latest community to obtain the state designation

By Sophia Eppolito
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Maynard's downtown is lined with art galleries and pottery studios. Marlborough celebrates its diversity with an annual heritage festival. Concord boasts historic sites that draw tourists from around the world.

What do they have in common? They all have established cultural districts to highlight their local arts scenes and promote local businesses and tourism.

Now Arlington has joined in, becoming the latest community to obtain a cultural district designation from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

"We have a concentration of arts and culture here in Arlington and everybody needs to know about it," said Stephanie Marlin-Curiel, cochairwoman of the Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture. "Sometimes it's very hidden to Arlington residents . . . but not only do we have lots of arts and culture, we have a lot of creative businesses."

One of Arlington's major art projects this summer was a series of public art installations called Pathways, which celebrated the Minuteman Bikeway's 25th anniversary.

For the town's most recent public art project, "Ripple," nearly 60 town volunteers contributed giant knitted sleeves to wrap around trees along the bikeway. Adria Arch, the project's coordinator, scouted the area and attached the lower pieces over two days in mid-September, then enlisted the help of two arborists from the landscaping service SavATree to reach the highest points.

"They hitched themselves into the branches and contorted themselves into the craziest positions to reach and install each separate piece of knitting and crochet," Arch said. "It was quite amazing."

The following day, dozens of members of the Arlington community celebrated the cultural district designation.

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Cultural districts in (clockwise from top) Arlington, Maynard, and Natick help those towns highlight art scenes and promote local businesses.

Bike Path Projects

The MCC had advised ACAC and the MP to think about how to make the Cultural District feel continuous from Arlington Center to East Arlington, so ACAC engaged Cecily Miller, public art consultant who has been working with APA. Miller advised that the area between Mass Ave and Arlington Center would be a longer term, larger budget process and suggested starting by mounting smaller scale public art on the bike path. On behalf of ACAC, Miller solicited proposals from 9 artists. Proposals were reviewed for consideration and prioritization for implementation, contingent on fundraising. Also on Miller's advice, ACAC applied to the Arlington Cultural Council for a pilot grant to start with just three public art projects for the same bike path area that could be mounted this spring/summer. This initiative celebrates art, nature, community, and the 25th Anniversary of the Bikeway.

All installations are on the Minuteman Bikeway in Arlington between Linwood Circle and Swan Place near Spy Pond.

Fort Point-based collaborators **Claudia Ravischiere** and **Michael Moss** have created FLUTTER, 60 translucent blue plexiglas butterflies arranged in a meandering pattern across a chain-link fence overlooking scenic Spy Pond. Butterflies are symbols of strength, courage and transformation in many cultures. The public is invited to contemplate their extraordinary journeys and consider the impact of habitat destruction.



RHETORIC OF OPPOSITES

Arlington-based artist and graphic designer **Nilou Moochhala** has created a piece inspired by the way that polarizing language has become a divisive force in current national debate. She has developed 25 pairs -- for the Bikepath's 25 years -- of juxtaposed words that highlight difference and eliminate nuance, grey area, or common ground. "Us/Them" "True/False" "Stay/Leave" and "All/None" are examples.



CITY FOX

A London-based street artist who goes by "**Stewy**" has sent two of his stencilled prints of urban wildlife across the Atlantic to a new home. London's green parks and back yards offer food and shelter to many of the same animals -- or their cousins -- found in Arlington. Stewy is collecting an A-Z visual "dictionary"

of them, and uses street art to remind city dwellers of these creatures; like street art itself, urban wildlife is sometimes a source of delight and other times viewed as pests to be exterminated. A London fox and rabbit are wheatpasted to the walls of a pedestrian underpass that runs underneath the Bikeway. This small tunnel is the ideal site for a tribute to the marginalized, barely tolerated wild animals who survive in hidden spaces along green corridors such as the Bikeway.



Provincetown-based environmental artist **Frank Vasello** arrived for a short residency in early October. Vasello constructed "Current", a sculpture from natural materials gathered along the Bikeway in September and worked with students at Ottoson Middle School to create a second sculpture on the grounds of the school.



Arlington artist **Adria Arch** designed RIPPLE, a participatory installation. Working under Adria's leadership, The Arlington Knitting Brigade -- a new group of community volunteers recruited for the project -- created colorful sleeves for a grove trees along the path. Knitters used a common 5-color yarn palette but each develop their own designs. 57 community knitters created 4 foot sections which now adorn some 14 trees and will stay on location through the winter. RIPPLE celebrates the beauty of the path and has engaged many knitters who have contributed their skills to a larger effort and in a way that they might never have imagined.



Pathways is supported by a grant from the Arlington Cultural Council, a local agency funded by the Massachusetts Cultural Council, a state agency. SunBug Solar is a co-sponsor of Rhetoric of Opposites.

GRANTS

Thanks to the efforts of Cecily Miller, the ACAC was awarded a matching grant in the amount of \$2500 to help implement the Pathways projects.

PRESS

ACAC was featured in a [full length article](#) in the Globe West section about our new Cultural District designation.

Also, the Pathways bikepath installations were featured in [Big, Red, and Shiny](#), a highly respected Boston-based critical art review.

In addition, the Ripple installation was written about in the [Arlington Advocate](#) and extensively in [YourArlington](#).

Goals for 2018

- * Implementation of TDC organizational plan to reorganize Arlington's art organizations under one umbrella.
- Implementation of Arts and Culture Action Plan working closely with DPCD
- Assist in the launch of an Arlington Cultural District
- Building and maintaining website, as a one-stop source of information about cultural events and programs for Town residents and visitors
- Continue to advocate for arts and cultural activities and institutions within the Town as well as to promote Arlington as an arts and culture destination