

A Case Study in Cultural Economic Development: The Adams Arts Program in Massachusetts

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Why Cultural Economic Development? Why Now?

- Understanding the role the arts play in stimulating local economic development has grown increasingly important during the past decade. As state and federal aid has diminished, cities and towns have been forced to become more creative in their search for additional fiscal resources.
- Municipalities are regularly examining their strengths and weaknesses in the hope of discovering undeveloped assets which can be leveraged to create a sustainable competitive advantage which will enable them to attract growing, appropriate industries (and young knowledge workers) more effectively than neighboring municipalities.
- In the eyes of many city planners and economic development officers, the culture industry has emerged in recent years as a potential asset which is now ready to be investigated and, in many cases, developed.
- Local economic development thinking has changed.

The State of Cultural Economic Development (CED)

- We Know Some Things about Larger Cities
 - We know a bit about how CED works
 - We know a bit about the size, scope, and nature of the culture industries
- But Not Much About Smaller Places
 - How and why are local CED policies created (the process)?
 - Who is involved and what roles do they play?
 - Is it possible to definitively determine the effectiveness of local CED policies?

What is the Adams Arts Program?

- The John and Abigail Arts Program was created by the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 2004 (an earlier version of this program ran from 1997-2003 under a different name) to promote economic and community development through the arts, sciences, and humanities
- The first grants were awarded in 2005 and the program continues to this day
- Grants awarded each year: 22-42 Total money awarded each year: roughly \$800,000 (2010) to \$1.4 million (2007). Amount of individual grants: \$10,000 -\$75,000 (formerly up to \$100,000)
- Planning and Implementation grants are awarded

Who is Applying for these Grants?

- Short Answer: Almost Everyone
 - Urban/rural
 - Inland/coastal
 - Large cities/ very small towns
 - East/West/North/South

- Is it possible that every municipality in Massachusetts is “above average” culturally speaking?

The Study

- Why did three mid-sized municipalities in Massachusetts decide to invest in culture as a local economic development strategy?
- **What elements contributed to creating and sustaining the cultural economic development policies established in these communities?**
- To date, have these policies been “successful” (whose definition)?

Selecting the communities

- “Mid-sized” municipalities in Massachusetts – 30,000-50,000 (2000 census) that also,
- Received Adams Arts Program funding at least three times in the past five years, including 2009 (indicating that a community is making a serious attempt to implement a cultural economic development policy) where,
- The town or city government is either the lead applicant or a partner.

The Municipalities

- Hyannis (Town of Barnstable)
- Gloucester
- Fitchburg

- Pittsfield -- not included
 - A good choice, but it was significantly further away and there was not enough time to include it in the study

Interview Protocol

- Interviewed 4-9 local cultural policy experts in each selected municipality for approximately one hour each.
- Respondents were drawn from a list of supporters attached to the municipalities' Adams Arts grant application.
- Respondents included people who are employed as the following: economic development officer, community development officer, mayor, arts coordinator, executive director, board member of local nonprofit cultural institutions; executive director of a chamber of commerce, public school arts coordinators, college employees working in the arts.
- Sources remained anonymous so they were free to speak freely about the process
- I interviewed people in the public and nonprofit sectors in each community in addition to representatives of the business community (chamber of commerce). However, as each community is different it was not possible to interview the same "balance" of actors in every community within the given time frame.

Hyannis (Town of Barnstable)

- **Year Awarded:** 2006-2010 (5 grants)
- **Grant Request:** \$30,000 (06); \$50,000 (07); \$40,000 (08); \$40,000 (09); \$36,000 (10)
- **Total Funding:** \$196,000

- **Project Name:** Harbor Your Arts (HyA)
- **Lead Partner:** Town of Barnstable
- **Partners:**
 - Arts Foundation of Cape Cod
 - Hyannis Main Street Business Improvement District (BID)
 - Cape Cod Art Association
 - Coastal Community Capital
 - Hyannis Area Chamber of Commerce

- **Population (2000):** 47,821
- **Project Description (2009):**
 - The Town of Barnstable and its Partners work cooperatively to provide resources to our arts community to foster the local economy. The Harbor Your Arts initiative began with seven artist shanties and expanded to an arts-focused revitalization of downtown Hyannis. Next steps include defining a downtown Hyannis arts district with a way finding plan and additional public art to provide connectivity between the Harbor, Pearl Street arts galleries, and Main Street.
- **Project Goals (2009):**
 - A defined downtown arts district will provide economic opportunities for artists and businesses, attract visitors and establish Hyannis as an arts destination. Harbor Your Arts (HyA) supports the local creative economy and business activity on Main Street and harbor area. Performing arts event attendance and revenues for shanty and Pearl Street artists underscores the success of these initiatives. Private investment in the area has begun to increase further enhancing the downtown area.

Gloucester

- **Year Awarded:** 2005-2009 (5 grants); no award in 2010
- **Grant Request:** \$30,000 (05); \$40,000 (06); \$40,000 (07); \$35,000 (08); \$26,000 (09)
- **Total Funding:** \$171,000

- **Project name:** **Arts and Economic Development in Gloucester**
- **Lead Partner:** Society for the Encouragement of the Arts (seARTS)
- **Partners:**
 - ArtsGloucester
 - Cape Ann Chamber of Commerce
 - City of Gloucester
 - Gloucester New Arts Festival
 - North of Boston Convention and Visitors Bureau
 - Rocky Neck Art Colony
 - Cape Ann Artisans Tour
 - Gloucester Committee for the Arts

- **Population (2000):** 30,273
- **Proposed Project Summary (2008 and 2009):** This project provides innovative and effective economic opportunities for artists, businesses and the City by developing, sustaining, and promoting arts activities that are integrated into the business and cultural life of the City, creating and sustaining strategic partnerships, and developing a viable Cape Ann arts market.
- **Project's Economic Development Goals (2008 and 2009):** To create sustainable arts/business collaborations, develop new audiences, showcase high-quality art, increase consumer activity in under-visited locations and businesses, boost existing cultural events, extend programming into the shoulder-months and increase connectivity between downtown and the harbor.

Fitchburg

- **Year Awarded:** (1998, 1999), 2005, 2008, 2009 (5 grants); no award in 2010
- **Grant Request:** \$5,000 (98); \$7,000 (99); \$35,000 (05); \$6,000 (08); \$18,000 (09)
- **Total Funding:** \$71,000

- **Project name:** **REACH Fitchburg**
- **Lead Partner:** Economic Development Office, Fitchburg
- **Partners:** Fitchburg State College – Teaching American History Grant Program
- Central Mass Woman’s Caucus for Arts
- Office of the Mayor
- Fitchburg Art Museum
- Fitchburg Public Schools Department of Visual and Performing Arts
- Fitchburg Historical Society
- Fitchburg Cultural Alliance
- Fitchburg Access Television
- Fitchburg State College: Office of Cultural Affairs and CenterStage

- **Population (2000):** 39,102
- **Proposed Project Summary (2008 and 2009):** The City of Fitchburg has a collective history of more than 300 years as a cultural center in North Central Massachusetts. The intent of the REACH Fitchburg project is to build on those assets to attract sustainable residential and commercial businesses by highlighting downtown Fitchburg as a “Cultural Historic District” with an installation of permanent and dynamic public art projects.
- **Project’s Economic Development Goals (2008 and 2009):** 1) Water Street Bridge Gateway: To create a “sense of place” at the entrance to downtown through a public sculpture project; 2) To generate tourism and community interest in one of Fitchburg’s most unique architects, H. M. Francis; 3) To generate revenue through the sales of artists’ work and Fitchburg Cultural Alliance at 633 Main Street “Storefront Artists.”

The Findings

Demographic Comparison

	% High School	% College Grad	% Graduate Degree	Median Family Income	Population
No Grant	92.0	39.1	16.3	\$86,713	14,136
1 Or More	86.2	33.2	14.2	\$69,516	66,717
> 1 Grant	84.4	30.7	12.9	\$61,369	78,439

Cultural Non-Profit Density

	# Cultural Non-Profits Per Capita	Cultural Non-Profit Spending Per Capita	Cultural Non-Profit Net Asset Value Per Capita
No Grant	4.9	\$106.96	\$540.15
1 Or More	6.1	\$349.10	\$1,100.85
> 1 Grant	5.2	\$392.01	\$1,216.45

How were CED policies implemented and sustained?

- Four elements present in each community were responsible for the creation and implementation of the local cultural economic development policy.
 - 1) a vibrant community partnership,
 - 2) an intermediary organization,
 - 3) local government,
 - 4) funding and technical support provided by the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

1) A vibrant community partnership

- Consists of local government, community, arts, and (occasionally) business leaders
- These local leaders have
 - large personal networks
 - care about the arts AND their community
 - are interested in improving local quality of life

2) An intermediary organization

- Either government or the local arts service organization
- Manage the grant process
- Links the artistic community to government and business – helps to overcome misconceptions
- Keeps the process moving forward by providing a agreed point of contact

3) Local Government

- **Hard Services**
 - Zoning variances
 - Seed money
 - Signage
- **Soft Services**
 - Communications assistance
 - Provide Meeting Space
 - Encourages government employees to attend community meetings
- **Seal of Approval**
 - Signals local residents that these initiatives are important and encourages them to participate

4) Massachusetts Cultural Council

- Funding
 - Planning Grant
 - Implementation Grant
- Support Services
 - Meeting facilitation
 - Grant writing assistance
 - Conflict resolution
 - Training

Tentative Findings

- **Role of the Media**
 - When supportive seems to have a positive impact.
 - Provides local “seal of approval.”
- **Role of a Local College**
 - Can provide significant resources.
 - It wants the local area to be vibrant culturally to help attract quality faculty and students
- **Role of the Public School System**
 - Good quality public schools spur educated professionals to relocate to the community
 - Residents possessing a graduate degree are more likely to attend cultural events than residents with a different level of education

Conclusions

- Virtually all respondents believe the initiatives have had a positive impact on the community – although many believe improvements can be made
- The majority of arts leaders involved in these efforts are overworked and approaching burnout (this is a volunteer activity for them)
- The deeper the initiative is connected to the community, the more respondents described it as successful
- The goals of the initiatives tended to be broad, perhaps too broad – “soft” ED goals seemed very important

Hyannis

- Positives
 - By all accounts the project is a major success
 - Great ongoing group of collaborators and partners
 - Local press supported project – this was perceived as crucial
 - Town government is a committed driver of activity

- Challenges
 - Working with artists is tricky
 - They lack the business skills to run a gallery
 - They can have “difficult” personalities which make it hard for them to get along with each other and in some cases, town officials
 - Local business owners have their own agendas

Fitchburg

- Positives
 - Businesses have moved downtown
 - More people are attending local festivals
 - Increased participation of college
 - Talented young Mayor has a vision for the future
- Challenges
 - Community is not ready to change – City Council dominated by older members who look to the past
 - Lack of financial support from city
 - Arts organizations are struggling
 - Volunteer leaders are fatigued and close to burnout
 - Local residents are not very familiar with the arts and may not understand how this approach will work
 - “City problems”

Gloucester

- Positives
 - Increased number of cultural events
 - More people are coming downtown to participate
 - Strong history of artists and art making
- Challenges
 - Fishing and art industries compete against each other limiting effectiveness of both
 - City support ebbs and flows, primarily for financial reasons, disrupting attempts to establish a sustained effort
 - Volunteer leaders are tired
 - Intermediary organization (seARTS) has struggled to lead efforts
 - “City problems”

The End

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