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# Annual Report

December 2023

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## INTRODUCTION

Melrose is home to hundreds of arts and cultural assets that comprise our local economy, enrich our quality of life, and contribute to our sense of place.

Cultivating opportunities for these assets to thrive, access funding, secure space, and reach audiences is an ever-present challenge. It can also be challenging for residents and visitors to learn how to engage in all we have to offer, and our community is committed to diversity,

equity, access, and inclusion in our arts and cultural offerings.

A dedicated group formed the official nonprofit **Melrose Creative Alliance**, under the Community Coalition of Melrose umbrella, working and meeting regularly to distill community input into an actionable set of priorities and initiatives representing the **shared voices and vision of over 85 creative Melrose producers and consumers.**

## Melrose Creative Alliance team

Maggie Abdow	Stacey Babb
Larry Bouchie	Garin Boyd
Lauren Grymek	Sam Hammar
Erin Ryan Heyneman	Jennifer Leclerc
Heather MacDonald	MaryBeth Margolis
Mark Morgan	Sara Murray
Stephanie Nelson	Jenne Rayburn
Kristyn Taylor	<b>And you!</b>

**Email us to get involved**  
[melrosecreativealliance@gmail.com](mailto:melrosecreativealliance@gmail.com)

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## OUR VISION

*The arts in Melrose are central to the City's vibrancy and economic development. Support for arts and culture includes human resources, and working artists are supported with resources and a sense of community. The definition of arts is expansive to encourage wide creative participation. An accessible and inclusive Melrose Arts & Cultural District is colorful and music-filled. It is easy to discover and access creative and cultural events, making it a*

*thriving destination for residents and surrounding communities.*

## MISSION

**Formalize and build underlying support and capacity for a vibrant, diverse, inclusive, and sustainable arts and cultural sector in Melrose.**

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## TOP PRIORITIES

Central to our identified priorities is a commitment to fostering diversity, equity, access and inclusion through and in our arts offerings.

**1. Improve public information and outreach to make it easier for audiences to find and support artists and for artists and creatives to reach the community.**

- a. Develop a robust marketing effort across Creative Alliance, City of Melrose, the Chamber of Commerce, and other partners;
- b. Connect talent pools of human resources, and make information and access to resources for creative producers more accessible;
- c. Provide arts producers with professional development

**2. Connect people through the arts. Build trust, intentional and meaningful long-term relationships throughout the community.**

- a. Support arts and creative offerings that take place in the public realm and foster social connections among residents;
- b. Create networking and development opportunities for creatives;
- c. Intentionally elevate artists and creatives both in and out of Melrose;
- d. Examine the structures and systems currently in place that may be barriers to inclusivity and participation.

**3. Equitable access to right-sized public spaces for presenting creative work. Creative organizations and volunteers can easily actualize their initiatives and projects to support a healthy community and thriving city.**

- a. A healthy array of public and private spaces, indoor and outdoor that are ready, accessible, and cost-effective;
- b. Activate public spaces in creative ways to encourage meeting neighbors and bringing people together;
- c. Work with City of Melrose leaders to simplify municipal rules, paperwork, affordable booking structures, and other barriers to creative event production;
- d. Variety of right sized spaces for variety of needs; and advocate for funding to equip existing spaces for modern creative needs;

### 3 INITIATIVES

We have developed the following initiatives to address top priorities identified at Summits.

#### 1. Creative HIVE

An online directory of information for creative producers and arts consumers.

- a. Event listings, classifieds, funding sources, venues, resources, more;
- b. Newsletter gets information directly to subscriber inboxes;

#### 2. Creative CONNECT

In-person annual Summit and meetups featuring guest speakers, presentations, and opportunities for networking, professional development and community building.

#### 3. Creative DISTRICT

Work with City of Melrose to advance a formal application for a state-designated Arts & Cultural District; a walkable area that infuses creativity into the local economy and builds community through creative and cultural activity. The Creative Alliance is well-positioned to serve as the required Managing Partnership to activate and promote the Cultural District.

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### WHY THIS WORK IS IMPORTANT

- Artists and creatives are essential workers in building equitable futures;
- Making it easier for audiences to find creative offerings and support artists in Melrose adds to arts organizations' earned revenue, creating less reliance on fundraising efforts;
- Builds strong partnerships among artists, community members, and civic organizations;
- Building capacity better positions Melrose arts groups for additional funding opportunities: Mass Development, MAPC, MA Cultural Council, etc.
- Establishes Melrose as the regional center of creative economic activity among neighboring communities.

### WHAT WE DID IN 2023

Melrose Creative Arts and Culture Summit: In March 2023, and in partnership with the City of Melrose and Melrose Messina Fund for the Arts, the Melrose Creative Alliance organized and hosted the second annual **Melrose Arts Summit**, gathering the creative ideas of over 80 attendees.

Cultural District: Continued to work with the Mayor's office to advance the City's application for a State designated Arts & Cultural District. *Currently in review with the Mayor's office.*

Arts and Culture Marketing: Through coordinated and strategic partnerships, we improved systems of public information and outreach to make it easier for audiences to find creative events and support artists. We maintain a robust arts calendar and e-newsletter, and have partnered with Melrose Arts, the Mayor's office, Dept of Parks & Recreation, and Council on Aging to promote and market the calendar.

Development Events: We connected people through the arts, built trust as a coalition, and fostered intentional relationships and collaborations in the community. We hosted Creative Connect events featuring funders and collaborators, as well as a Mayoral Forum on Arts & Culture.

## BY THE NUMBERS




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## WHAT WE'LL DO IN 2024

1. Continue to improve public information and outreach, to make it easier for audiences to find creative offerings and support artists.
  - a. Continue to build partnerships to get the calendar link out to the community: Chamber of Commerce, Melrose Weekly news, real estate groups, church bulletins, school backpack, facebook community pages, etc.
  - b. We hope to further partner with the Chamber of Commerce to draw attention to Melrose creative businesses and organizations and find opportunities for creative collaborations that drive our local economy
  - c. Continue to add artists and musicians to the Creative Directory
  - d. Build out the Venues and resources section of the HIVE website
  - e. Promote creative classes being offered throughout the community
2. Continue to advocate for paid professional human resources to advance your goals as a creative and vibrant arts community

3. Host our signature events:
  - a. 3rd Annual Arts Summit: Working theme = The Art of Business (proposed in partnership with Melrose Chamber of Commerce) March 2024. Roundtable with Chamber, etc on how to integrate art and business communities together to strengthen our Creative Economy
  - b. September = Creative Connect  
Suggested theme: working and collaborating with indigenous communities
  
4. Advocate for a formal Cultural District by activating the area and our assets:
  - a. **Proposed:** As the Melrose Human Rights Commission steps away from producing large annual events, we propose the Creative Alliance may be able play a role assisting with marketing Melrose Pride (June): Adopting the model for citywide, inclusive events (ex: MLK Day, Kindness Day, Home for the Holidays) the Creative Alliance has been in conversation and is well-positioned to support existing Pride events happening in Melrose by partnering with the Melrose Human Rights Commission to create and execute an inclusive citywide marketing plan for events, activities and small business offerings happening during Melrose Pride.
  - b. **Proposed:** support Trustees of the Beebe Estate in their efforts to activate and advance the Beebe Estate. Some members of the Trustees of the Beebe Estate have asked for our advice and assistance in business planning for activation and revenue generation for the Beebe Estate. As this is an important asset in our proposed Cultural District, this work fits within our mission. Our role would be to assist Trustees in an effort to explore the possibility of obtaining technical assistance from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council.
  - c. Convene an internal meet-and-greet/roundtable conversation with [Medford CACHE Organization \(April/May\)](#)

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