

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES

COMMISSION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE

Mission

The Arlington Commission for Arts and Culture (ACAC) cultivates a sustainable and supportive environment for the arts and enlivens public space with accessible creative experiences to strengthen and enrich our community, create opportunities for artists, and invigorate the local economy.

Operations

ACAC is an umbrella organization including the following:

- Grants Committee (formerly the Arlington Cultural Council);
- Community Engagement Committee (formerly two separate committees, Public Art and Programs & Festivals);
- Cultural District Managing Partnership (CDMP);
- Representative of non-profit arts community (currently Arlington Center for the Arts);
- Representative of business community (currently Arlington Chamber of Commerce);
- Representative of the local community of working artists (currently ArtLinks)
- Representative appointed by the School Committee;
- Liaison from the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD);
- And 3 at-large members.
- Liaison to the Poet Laureate Committee

In fiscal year 2022, ACAC leveraged a \$30,000 allocation from the Town to raise an additional \$32,290* toward local arts and culture programming and infrastructure. In addition, the Grants Committee of ACAC administered \$17,774 in grants to local artists and arts organizations, for a total of \$50,064 of additional funding coming into the Town of Arlington to support audience experiences, local artists, arts and culture organizations, and local businesses by attracting potential customers to Town. ACAC works closely with the DPCD and employs two part-time contractors, a marketing coordinator who promotes Arlington-based arts and culture activities, and a public art curator focused on community engagement. It also engages dozens of volunteers in projects all around town.

While the focus of this report is ACAC's work, it is important to note that ACAC is one part of a diverse community of arts and culture nonprofits, for-profits, and individual artists striving to help Arlington thrive. Amid the vicissitudes of the pandemic, a key focus has been building infrastructure; amplify-



Nilou Moochhala's Reflections on Our Pandemic Experience in Menotomy Rocks Park. Photo: Luciano Oliveira

ing messages of community, solidarity and safety; and serving as a resource and facilitator connecting state and municipal entities, businesses, organizations and artists for mutual support.

In 2021, ACAC reviewed and adjusted its strategic plan (see ArtsArlington.org/About-Us/) for COVID-19 conditions, emphasizing organizational improvements, communicating relief opportunities, and contingency planning for resuming public arts programming under pandemic restrictions.

Committee restructuring and expansion, new member and volunteer recruitment, new fundraising measures, and a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility (DEIA) taskforce bolstered strategic plan goals for sustainability, diverse representation, and relationship-building. In collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce, ACAC's expanded fundraising committee launched Spruce Up Arlington—Get Your Sparkle On! Campaign, connecting artists with businesses on neighborhood improvement projects.

Early 2021 saw several impactful collaborative projects with other town entities from the Black History Month banners project with the Arlington Human Rights Commission (AHRC), environmental talks with Zero Waste Arlington, and talks by BIPOC artists for The Robbins Library and Town Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Division's Elevating Arlington's Voices of Color series.

ACAC continued to host supportive convenings for nonprofits to discuss survival and reopening strategies, and engaged in additional activities with organizations town-wide including the Economic Development Recovery Task Force, Arlington Tourism and Economic Development Committee, Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park, Friends of Spy Pond Park, ACMi TV, Arlington Community Education, Arlington Heights Community Association, Arlington Public Schools (APS) Green Teams, the Ottoson Middle School Arts Department, and others.

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In Spring ACAC retained coordinators to expand public art programs including Live Arts Arlington outdoors performances, APS Youth Banners on Mass Ave, and others. Projects from Painted Utility Boxes to the 10-town Go Out Doors-Neighbors collaborative exhibition received wide regional media coverage.



Volunteers painted community-authored haiku poems on storefront windows in Arlington Heights. Photo: Cecily Miller

2021 saw Arlington filled with poetry, from Poet Laureate Steven Ratiner's Red Letter Poems, April's Poetry Appreciation Month, "Beehive Poets" events, and the community-created Heights Haiku project celebrating Arlington Heights, with writing workshops by Jessie Brown generating some 150 submissions, culminating in neighborhood-wide painted window poems celebration.

Delayed by the pandemic, Michelle Lougee's high-profile Persistence exhibition on the Minute-man Bikeway raised awareness about plastic pollution and was spotlighted in an environmental activism conference keynoted by U.S. Congresswoman Katherine Clark.

Subsequent major Artist-in-Residence projects with broad community participation launched this year include Nilou Moochhala's Reflections on Our Pandemic Experience in Menotomy Rocks Park and Arlington Center, and Chanel Thervil's Portraits of Black Arlington project. East Arlington and the Fox Library came alive with a temporary mural and kickoff celebration of 12 Arlington High School student interns who worked with artist Tom Starr on next year's townwide Remembrance of Climate Futures public art project, supported by a major grant from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

Outdoors performances flourished this summer with the return of Live Arts Arlington bringing a



Maria Lobo mural and C#MINOR7 LiveArts jazz trio at Medford St. parklet. Photo: Stewart Ikeda

dozen music and puppetry acts, painting demos and more to artist-decorated parklets and open spaces townwide. The new hybrid-format Chairful Where You Sit online auction had a festive kickoff featuring art chairs, live bands, poetry reading, and an Arboreal Attire artist talk by sculptor Leslie Wilcox at Jason Russell House.



Artist-decorated dining parklet near Roasted Granola in Arlington Heights by Adria Arch. Photo: Cecily Miller.)

Late summer and fall saw a proliferation of new art in public spaces including the expanded Go Out Doors - Neighbors, part of a collaborative regional exhibition engaging towns throughout Greater Boston and Metrowest; expanded Town parklets art; new and continuing Pathways installations by Christopher Frost, Resa Blatman, and Johnny Lapham on the Bikeway; Confluence by Laurie Bogdan and Kimberley Harding at Spy Pond Park; and artist-decorated Utility Boxes townwide, recently spotlighted by *Boston 25 News*.

ACAC's ArtsArlington.org website, newsletter, and other communications channels remain a valuable resource for audience members discovering, and artists and arts organizations promoting, cultural activities. Following a huge reduction in linking and content the prior year due to COVID-19, in 2021 web traffic has nearly

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doubled even pre-pandemic levels.

Pursuing a strategy to promote Arlington as a cultural destination with regional appeal, ACAC has continued to grow and diversify out-of-town audiences. 51% of in-state web traffic came from 108 communities outside of Arlington, and indeed, 33% of total U.S. web traffic came from 49 other states. Meanwhile, ACAC maintained an accelerated semi-monthly newsletter schedule, ArtsArlington-branded Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook channels; an online auction platform; and established new audio podcast platforms to be expanded this coming year.



Boston 25 News films Arlington artist Grace Willoughby while decorating a utility box in Arlington Heights. Photo: Laurie Bogdan

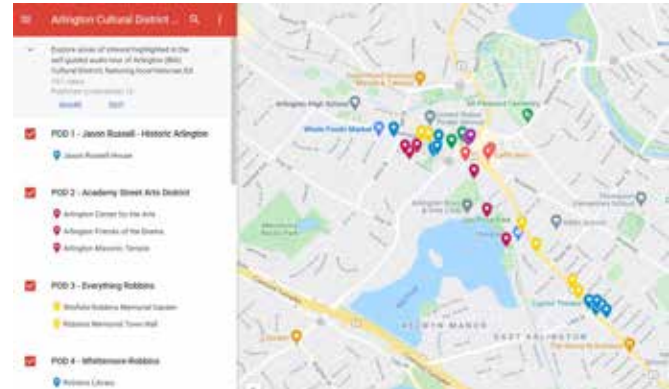


Student interns of artist Tom Starr's *Climate Futures* public art project by a temporary installation at Fox Library. Photo: Fox Library Staff

Striving to diversify its audiences, ACAC has worked at creating a taskforce to promote its Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility goals; recruiting new Commissioners, sub-committee members and non-commissioner chairs; and widening its regional media reach. One result was a leveling of most age demographics in web traffic, and an increase in younger visitors especially in the 18-24 and 25-34 age ranges.

ACAC programs have been featured in *The Boston Globe*, *Boston 25 News*, *WBUR Artery*, *YourArlington.com*, the *Advocate*, *Artscope*, *Art New England*, a major centerfold feature in the inaugural *Visit Arlington Magazine & Community Guide 2021/2022*, statewide tourism and arts media, and in several cultural updates on *ACMI News* and *Talk of the Town*. ACAC was invited to present its work in a panel for a joint conference of Boston and Atlanta Metropolitan Area Planning Councils examining the role of arts and culture in metropolitan planning.

The Arlington Cultural District Managing Partners distributed expanded COVID mitigation funds to artist-created projects in the cultural district while continuing to work with local content and technology producers to create a new COVID-safe and accessible, cloud-based self-guided audio tour of cultural district highlights.



Interactive Google Map linked to audio tour of key sites in the Arlington Cultural District. Map by Stewart Ikeda

The ACAC Grants Committee, a local council of the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC), a state agency, distributed 24 grants totaling \$17,774 for cultural programs in Arlington, with grantees chosen from 37 competitive applications showcasing a wide range of arts: music, visual, film, and literature.

ACAC continues to work with the Town on behalf of artists, from COVID-19 relief funds and busking to public art commissions and studio space. ACAC advocated for Artists' Mixed-Use in Article 35 at Town Meeting. With over 320 Facebook members, the ArtLinks network provides monthly professional development events and has organized Open Studios and Holiday Market opportunities for its members.

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ARLINGTON HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSIONS

The Historic Districts Act, M.G.L. Chapter 40C, was created to protect and preserve the historic resources of the Commonwealth through a local review system that encourages and ensures compatible improvement and development. Over 340 Local Historic Commissions across Massachusetts are already established and working closely with the Massachusetts Historical Commission. They serve as local preservation advocates and as an important resource for information about their community's cultural resources and preservation activities.

Arlington has seven established historic districts that include approximately 351 properties that the community has recognized as unique resources worthy of protection. The seven districts and the dates they were established or most recently enlarged are: Avon Place, 1996; Broadway, 1991; Central Street, 1982; Jason/Gray, 1998; Mount Gilboa/Crescent Hill, 1991; Pleasant Street, 2006; and Russell, 1983.

The Arlington Historic District Commissions (AHDC) are required by law to review the architectural appropriateness of most proposed exterior design changes, whether they be a minor alteration, new additions or structures. Each Commission consists of qualified volunteers appointed by the Select Board and always includes a property owner or resident of each District (if one is willing to serve), an architect, a real estate professional, and a representative from the Arlington Historical Society. During 2021 the Commissions met fourteen (14) times to hold hearings for property owners seeking approval for certificates on exterior work to be conducted on their properties or to discuss ongoing litigation. Meetings were cancelled on March 11, April 8th and July 22nd. During the year the Commission entered into Executive Session three (3) times to discuss pending or ongoing litigation. Part of the regular meetings included eighteen (18) informal hearings held for property owners seeking advice or resource information for work to be conducted and twenty (20) formal hearings. As a result of those meetings and additional CONA applications not requiring a hearing, thirty-one (31) Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) and forty-five (45) Certificates of Non-Applicability (CONA) to be undertaken were granted. In addition, there was one (1) Application Denial issued.

During the year the Commissioners worked on updating their Design Guidelines, gave input and sent recommendations on a number of Community Preservation Act (CPA) Projects – ranging from the Jason Russell House to Cooke's Hollow and Mt Gilboa – listened to concerned citizens' input on preserving local homes, and submitted a warrant article related to ap-

proval of fiberglass gutters without the need for a formal hearing, which was approved by Town Meeting. All meetings were conducted on ZOOM due to COVID-19.

ARLINGTON HISTORICAL COMMISSION

The Arlington Historical Commission (AHC) was established in 1970 as the Town agency responsible for community-wide preservation planning as described in Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40, Section 8D. The 2021 members of the Commission are: Chair, JoAnn Robinson; Commissioners, Michael Gervais, Pamela Meister, Dianne Schaefer, and Eric Stange. Vicki Rose serves as Recording Secretary.

The Commission is an advocate for historic preservation in Arlington and

- Encourages appropriate maintenance and restoration of the Town's historic structures and open spaces
- Educates and advises municipal departments, boards, commissions, and citizens on historic preservation and the significance of Arlington's historic buildings, landscapes, other historic objects, and landmarks.
- Provides guidance and advice to owners of historically significant properties
- Participates in the management and maintenance of historic resources owned by the Town, e.g., Arlington Town Hall, the Whittemore-Robbins House

In addition, the Commission reviews and acts upon any applications for building permits that involve changes to historically or architecturally significant structures in Arlington under the Town's demolition-delay bylaw.

To accomplish these goals, the Commission maintains Arlington's *Inventory of Historically and/or Architecturally Significant Properties* and administers the demolition delay bylaw through formal public hearings and informal meetings with owners of inventoried properties. The inventory can be found on the Commission's website.

Due to the coronavirus shutdown, the Historical Commission has met via Zoom beginning in 2020 to the present.

Hearings and Property Monitoring

The Commission conducted formal hearings for 33 inventoried properties in 2021.

In addition to property hearings, the Commission held one formal hearing for approval of a new sign in the Arlington Center National Register Historic District at 430 Massachusetts Avenue.

Arlington Community Preservation Act (CPA)

The Historical Commission is actively supporting historic preservation grants approved by the CPA Com-

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mittee and Town Meeting. CPA-funded projects include the Jason Russell House, the Whittemore-Robbins Cottage and the preservation of the Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden.

Historic Markers

The Historical Commission provides plaques through the historic house marker program for all Arlington properties on the *Inventory of Historical and Significant Properties*. Each plaque displays the year the property was built and a historic house name, if any.

Web Site

The Commission continues to maintain its own web site that provides a copy of the *Inventory of Historically and/or Architecturally Significant Properties* and describes the process for hearings before the Commission as well as listing our publications and projects. arlingtonhistoricalcommission.org

Other Activities

The Commission continues to work with other Town agencies on the maintenance and restoration of the Whittemore-Robbins House and its outbuildings, the Robbins Library, the Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden, the Town Hall and its grounds.

Commissioners represented the Historical Commission on various municipal boards and historic organizations in Arlington, including the Arlington Historical Society (Pamela Meister), and the Arlington Community Preservation Act Committee (JoAnn Robinson).



CYRUS E. DALLIN ART MUSEUM BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Cyrus Dallin Art Museum (CDAM) promotes new insights into our shared history by exploring the life, work, and values of a celebrated American sculptor. The Museum's mission is deeply informed by Cyrus Dallin's commitment to social justice, education, and artistic expression. The museum seeks to make art accessible to all and to provide experiences that enrich and inspire while promoting mutual understanding and empathy in our communities.

The museum followed the governmental guidance regarding COVID-19 precautions--closing the museum when necessary and limiting the number of visitors in the galleries when open. The safety of the public and volunteers were the top priority. The Museum reopened in August 2021 and visitors are once again able to tour the galleries with the volunteer docents. The museum expanded its docent program and worked to strength its relationships within the Arlington business community.

In response to the pandemic, CDAM developed a robust slate of online programming that extended its reach beyond the museum's walls. An art and architecture walking tour of Arlington Center was hosted monthly from May to September. This program attracted many new visitors, about half of whom patronized local restaurants following the tour, demonstrating the Museum's positive economic impact to the town. Virtual programs about the *Paul Revere Monument*, *Storrow Memorial*, sculptures of influential women, and Dallin's social justice advocacy attracted over 600 viewers across the country.

We have increased our efforts to uplift the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous People. The Museum supported the Arlington Human Rights Commission's 2020 campaign to recognize Indigenous Peoples Day, and in October 2021 we hosted a virtual conversation with Ute Elder Forrest Cuch on trauma and healing.



The Dallin Museum invited Ute Elder Forrest Cuch to lead an important dialogue about history and healing in observance of Indigenous Peoples Day.

2021 Achievements

- Active and strategic social media engagement has led to a dramatic increase in followers across all platforms which include Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.
- Acquired a 1952 bronze cast of *Paul Revere No. 5* from the Unum Insurance Company of Worcester, Mass.
- Re-designed the museum's website and linked to an online gift shop through Red-Bubble.com.
- Observed Arlington's inaugural Indigenous

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Peoples Day holiday with a conversation with Ute Elder Forrest Cuch about history and healing. The discussion addressed colonial violence against Indigenous peoples, laws that formalized and perpetuated harmful practices and a range of issues impacting Indigenous communities today. He shared his thoughts on how to learn from the past and build a more just and equitable world.

2021 Activities and Programs

- Hosted an online unveiling of two newly acquired paintings, *Mrs. Hall's Letter* and a Dallin self-portrait. This program was supported with a grant by the Arlington Cultural Council and donations from the Dallin family.
- Led a special tour of the museum for the Arlington Retired Teachers Club and presented an illustrated lecture about the Paul Revere Monument to the Retired Men's Club of Arlington.
- Engaged new audiences with virtual programming for groups in Winchester, Lincoln, Boston, and Topsfield. These online events drew in-person visitors to Arlington when COVID closures were lifted.

Future Goals

- Complete the grant-funded re-design of the museum entrance hall and Indigenous Peoples Gallery.
- Process, re-house, catalogue and digitize archival collections to preserve these unique materials and make them accessible to community members and outside scholars.
- Continue to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities in the northeast and in Utah to learn more about Native American cultures and initiatives.
- Seek funding for the interior restoration of the Jefferson Cutter House.



The Unum Insurance Company (successor of the Paul Revere Life Insurance Co.) donated a bronze cast of Dallin's Paul Revere No. 5 to the museum.



Board Director Andrew Jay led a monthly walking tour highlighting the art and architecture of Arlington Center.