

CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL ACTIVITIES

ARLINGTON COMMISSION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE (ACAC)

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)
- Arlington Cultural District Managing Partnership (CDMP)
- Representative of non-profit arts community (currently Arlington Center for the Arts [ACA])
- 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)
- At-large commissioners supporting key action committees
- Liaison to the Poet Laureate (PL) Committee

In fiscal year 2022 ACAC leveraged a \$30,000 allocation from the Town to raise an additional \$46,921* toward local arts and culture programming and infrastructure. In addition, the Grants Committee of ACAC administered \$18,700 in grants to local artists and arts organizations, for a total of \$65,621 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 DPCD and engages two part-time contractors, a marketing coordinator who promotes Arlington-based arts and culture activities, and a public art curator focused on community engagement, as well as dozens of volunteers in projects all around town.

Following 2 years of COVID-restricted programming and a focus on infrastructure- and relationship-building, 2022 for ACAC was a year of reopening, renewal, transition, and celebration. This year ACAC

resumed previous signature programs and community projects – such as Garage Band, Live Arts and street art banners – and launched exciting new Artist-in-Residence projects, open air festivals, a cultural district tour, and more.



Kari Percival yard signs for Sustainable Arlington.

Arlington's third Artist-in-Residence, Kari Percival, developed original illustrations and poster designs for volunteer and nonprofit organizations to amplify messages around environmental stewardship and food security: Food Link, Sustainable Arlington/Mystic Charles Pollinator Pathways, Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park, Friends of Spy Pond Park, ArMI (Arlington MA Invasives) and Mystic River Watershed Association.



Supported by an MAPC Accelerating Climate Resiliency Grant, in partnership with DPCD, APS Green Teams and some 20 community partner organizations, Remembrance of Climate Futures - Arlington saw a dozen Arlington High School student interns work with Northeastern Professor and project artist Tom Starr to research, plan and implement an expansive, town-wide installation of public art markers projecting the future impacts of climate change and urging action now, as part of a wider New England regional project.

Some 200+ people honored the students at a Public Art Celebration in the new AHS featuring the interns, HS Honors Orchestra, and state and local officials.

The interns also worked with artist and wildlife advocate Sophy Tuttle to create a vibrant Pollinators Mural celebrating the beauty and importance of local plants and pollinators that spans 5 businesses at 878 Mass Ave.

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Sophy Tuttle worked with Climate Futures interns to create a beautiful Mass Ave mural celebrating local pollinators.

ACAC also expanded popular recurring public art programs including APS Youth Banners supported by Gracie James Foundation, five new Painted Utility Boxes throughout town, and three seasonal storefront window-painting programs in collaboration with Arlington Heights Neighborhood Association and the Chamber of Commerce, including the inaugural Spring Fling Festival, attended by some 500 celebrants.

In 2022 longtime Poet Laureate Steven Ratiner surpassed a milestone 100 poems in his beloved Red Letter Poems series, and concluded his tenure with a poetry celebration at Robbins Library during Porchfest. The reconstituted PL Committee selected Jean Flanagan to begin a term starting in Jan 2023.

Arlington said goodbye to 2019-2020 Artist-in-Residence Michelle Lougee's *Persistence*, whose 37 collaborative sculptures made from plastic bags hung in trees along the Minuteman Bikeway for over a year and were sold during ACA Porchfest 2022. The project was celebrated by some 300 attendees in a film screening and live-streaming of *The Plastic Bag Store*, and an artist talk on art, environmental activism, and plastic pollution by Lougee and filmmaker Robin Frohardt.



2022 Garage Band Dance Party at Arlington Service Station.
Photo: Steward Ikeda

The newly renovated Broadway Plaza came alive with free, family-friendly summer Live Arts programs, including 3 visual arts demonstrations, dancer Seyyide Sultan, True Story Theater, and 7 musical performances, engaging a total of 25 artists and drawing some 70-100 people each week. 2022 also marked the post-pandemic return of Garage Band, the "after-party" to ACA's Porchfest, with some 2,000 people grooving to

live zydeco and cajun music by The Squeezebox Stompers at Arlington Service Station.

ACAC made strides pursuing its Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility goals in impactful collaborations with the Town DEI Office, Human Rights Commission, and Robbins Library such as *Elevating Voices of Color* library programs, Black History Month, and Juneteenth street banners, Chanel Thervil's Portraits of Black Arlington project, and the new Black Joy Project with Stephanie McKay. ACAC's activities were also represented at regional cultural sector DEIA meetings convened by the Barr Foundation, Arts Connect International's Cultural Equity Learning Consortium, and the Mass Cultural Council.

ACAC launched an expansive new cloud-based Arlington Cultural District Self-Guided Audio Tour, narrated by historian Ed Gordon, accessible via Google Maps, Soundcloud, and podcast platforms and prominently featured in *Visit Arlington*. Cultural District status and funding were renewed for another five years by the Mass Cultural Council.

With unusually high turnover among volunteers, town staff, and state liaisons in 2022, ACAC and subcommittees emphasized infrastructural improvements to create efficiencies in inter-committee cooperation, record-keeping, leadership succession, and volunteer recruitment. Early 2022 ACAC hosted some 40 participants in a Virtual Volunteer Fair, engaging several active new community members to assist with events and promotions, serve on committees, and become contributing artists and full commissioners.

The Fundraising Committee refined and built on the prior year's successful models to expand regular spring and year-end appeals, and successfully apply for MCC Cultural Districts Initiative and Festivals grants, a Town Transformative Growth Grant, and others.

Amidst new leadership and process reorganization, ACAC Grants Committee, a local council of the MCC, a state agency, distributed 24 grants totaling \$18,700 for cultural programs in Arlington, with grantees showcasing a wide range of arts: music, visual, film, and literature.



The *En Plein* Outdoor painting event during Town Day brought artists to celebrate the beauty of Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden, accompanied by live music and the awarding of juried and People's Choice prizes. Photo by Lidia Kenig Shcer.

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With over 380 Facebook members, the ArtLinks network provides monthly professional development events, has organized opportunities for members to participate in Open Studios and an annual exhibition with Arlington Center for the Arts, a Holiday Market at Roasted Granola, and launched the first En Plein Air Festival on Town Day.

ACAC's ArtsArlington.org website, newsletter, and other communications channels remain a valuable resource for audiences discovering – and artists and arts organizations promoting – town cultural activities. Pursuing a strategy to promote Arlington as a cultural destination with regional appeal, ACAC has continued last year's trend to grow and diversify out-of-town audiences. 60% of in-state web traffic came from 177 communities outside of Arlington, and 39% of total U.S. web traffic came from 50 other states and territories. Meanwhile, ACAC grew audiences for its semi-monthly newsletter; Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook channels; and established new audio podcast platforms to be promoted and expanded this coming year. ACAC has begun to engage in local and regional planning for activities related to the 250th Anniversary celebrations of the American Revolution, which will be an area of focus through 2026.

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 rep-

resentative from the Arlington Historical Society. During 2022 the Commissions met twelve (12) 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. The December 15, 2022 meeting was cancelled. During the year they entered into Executive Session three (3) times to discuss pending or ongoing litigation. Part of the regular meetings included eleven (11) Informal Hearings held for property owners seeking advice or resource information for work to be conducted and twenty-two (22) Formal Hearings. As a result of those meetings and additional CONA applications not requiring a hearing, twenty-two (22) Certificates of Appropriateness (COA) and fifty (50) Certificates of Non-Applicability (CONA) to be undertaken were granted. In addition, there were three (3) Application Denials 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 approval of fiberglass gutters without the need for a formal hearing which was approved by Town Meeting. They conducted all meetings on ZOOM due to COVID-19. The AHDC would also like to note the resignations this past year of two long-serving Commissioners; Michael Bush (Mt Gilboa/Crescent Hill) and Marshall Audin (At-Large, Architect). Their time, energy, significant and invaluable contributions to the Commissions and to historic preservation in Arlington is very much recognized, appreciated, and will be greatly missed. Newly appointed Commissioners in 2022 were Brian LaBau (At-Large, Architect), Philip Chaves (Avon Place), and Steve Savarese (At-Large, Realtor).

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 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

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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, the Town Hall Gardens and others.

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 [here](#).

The Commission conducted hearings for 26 inventoried properties in 2022.

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

Arlington Community Preservation Act (CPA)

The Historical Commission is represented on the CPA Committee. In 2022, CPA-funded the following historical preservation projects: Jason Russell House, Cooke's Hollow, Mt. Gilboa 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.

Website

The Commission continues to maintain its own website 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 at 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), the Arlington Community Preservation Act Committee (JoAnn Robinson) and the

Historic and Cultural Resources Working Group (Dianne Schaefer and 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 respect, understanding, and empathy.

Visitors to the Dallin Museum are introduced to over ninety artworks spanning the sculptor's sixty-year career. The museum archive is the country's leading repository for historical research on the legacy of Cyrus Dallin and the Dallin family. It comprises more than 6,000 items including photographs, correspondence, sketches, journals, and exhibition catalogues.

The museum completed several large projects including the re-design of the Indigenous Peoples Gallery and the digitization and re-housing of the museum's archival collection of over 6,000 objects and records. The museum was closed for several months for the build out of the re-designed gallery and main entrance but re-opened in late summer with a reception in the new space. The new exhibit provides greater context for Dallin's depictions of Native Americans and the complex responses to this imagery by contemporary viewers. Interpretive themes also explore America's colonial legacy and elevate Indigenous perspectives on history and healing.

The museum offered a variety of in-person and online experiences to members and visitors in 2022 including walking tours of Arlington Center, virtual tours of the museum for online and television audiences in Arlington, Winchester, and Medford. Patriots Day programming, Arts on the Green, children's sculpture workshop, and a holiday celebration of First Lights in collaboration with the Arlington Chamber of Commerce.

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Visitors to the museum explore the re-designed Indigenous Peoples gallery in August 2022. New interpretative panels provide a broad historical and social context and highlight contemporary Indigenous viewpoints.

2022 Achievements

- Completed the re-design of the Indigenous Peoples Gallery and Entry and reopened to in-person tours.
- Accepted the transfer of Cyrus Dallin's personal papers from the Robbins Library to the museum's archives.
- Active social media engagement resulted in a 36 percent increase in followers on Instagram and Twitter and well as a 36 percent increase in total views of museum program and curatorial content on YouTube.
- Processed, re-housed, catalogued and digitized archival collections to preserve the materials and make them accessible to community members and outside scholars.

2022 Activities and Programs

- Filmed interviews for cable television programs in Winchester and Medford to expand the museum's visibility in surrounding communities.
- Led monthly walking tours in Arlington Center highlighting sculptures by Dallin and other local landmarks.
- Observed Patriots Day with presentations about the history of the Battle of Menotomy and reading of Longfellow's *Paul Revere's Ride*.
- Art on the Green returned on Town Day in the newly re-landscaped Whittimore Park.
- Celebrated Indigenous Peoples Day with programming organized with the Robbins Library, Arlington Human Rights Commission, and the Old Schwamb Mill.

Goals for 2023

- Digitize the collection of Dallin's personal papers, recently transferred from the Robbins Library, and make the collection accessible online.
- Install a cast of Dallin's *Paul Revere* sculpture in the garden outside the museum.
- Restore and frame Dallin's landscape painting entitled "Birdbath – Autumn," one of a series of four studies of garden landscapes around the artist's home.
- Seek funding for the interior restoration of the Jefferson Cutter House and to increase and enhance tourism in Arlington.



Representative Sean Garballey with board members of the Dallin Art Museum celebrate Patriots Day 2022 with history and poetry along the route of Paul Revere's ride, Arlington, Mass.