

MASS MoCA

MASS MoCA pilots new civic partnership initiatives to help imagine what a creative economy can become for North Adams and the region

\$1M Barr Foundation Grant Supports Creative Placemaking Efforts

North Adams, February 13, 2024 – On the heels of its annual Community Day which welcomed over 2,650 people through its doors for free, MASS MoCA will continue to amplify its commitment to North Adams by piloting several creative placemaking and civic partnership efforts over the next year, which intersect with immediate and long-term community needs in housing, civic infrastructure, environmental sustainability and economic development.

MASS MoCA has received a \$1M grant from the Barr Foundation to support its capacity to work with the City of North Adams including dedicated staff positions, and research consultant expertise on major infrastructure projects such as the Reconnecting Communities Grant, the North Adams Adventure Trail design development, and participation with the Hoosic River Revival/US Army Corps of Engineers assessment of the existing flood chutes.

MASS MoCA's Placemaking Task Force — in consultation with civic and business leaders, local and regional developers, cultural institutions, artists, and other community-led organizations — will further identify and prioritize creative and sustainable approaches to accelerate these and other community-anchored, forward-looking and durable approaches for the museum campus and North Adams community.

Major areas of focus include:

1. **Civic Infrastructure:** MASS MoCA will serve as a key coordinator and participant for several large-scale civic infrastructure projects, including the exploration of possibilities for the Route 2 Overpass crossing the southwest corner of MASS MoCA's property; the design and routing of the Williamstown-North Adams Adventure Bike Trail along MASS MoCA's campus; and public advocacy for the ailing Hoosic River flood chutes that run through North Adams and surround MASS MoCA's campus. Collectively, these projects will integrate intentional, community-centered design into a more beautiful, functional civic space for the future.
2. **Housing:** For over two decades, MASS MoCA has been one of the nation's most singular places for finding new forms of artistic creation for both performing and visual artists; and creative development periods at MASS MoCA (Residencies) are a core part

of providing the conditions artists need to thrive. Expanding and re-envisioning MASS MoCA's on-site artist housing and studio spaces aims to provide pathways for artists to secure ongoing connectivity in the community long-term.

3. **Economic Development:** With 110,000 square feet of leasable space, MASS MoCA's campus has long provided small businesses and agencies with office space on its former factory site. As part of MASS MoCA's modernization efforts, design upgrades are being assessed with the intention of adding benefit to current and future tenants through a diverse "creative campus" strategy, including mission-aligned creative businesses that facilitate connection and collaboration, and who draw other enterprises to the area.
4. **Sustainability:** MASS MoCA aims to reduce its environmental impact through a phased approach to the greening of its historic factory campus.

"The City of North Adams is our home. Direct economic impact through the creative economy and cultural tourism is stated in our original charter 25 years ago, and is an integral part of our vision for the future," said Director Kristy Edmunds. "MASS MoCA has grown to become an anchor institution for the City, region and state. We actively participate in both our local communities' civic aspirations and in identifying solutions to challenges, which require continuous engagement, mutual innovation and dedicated investment."

Related efforts have been underway since Spring 2023 when the City of North Adams — in partnership with MASS MoCA — received \$750,000 in US Department of Transportation funding as part of the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program to examine the Route 2 Overpass and consider ways to create a more connected and thriving downtown North Adams.

Community collaboration lies at the heart of these initiatives and creating long-term strategy and vision for the institution and its environs requires a skilled, capable staff that possesses an equally long-term orientation and dedication to MASS MoCA and region. Morgan Everett, Head of Public Initiatives and Real Estate at MASS MoCA, will oversee leasing operations and will lead MASS MoCA's involvement in our long-term engagement with state and local government. Jenny Wright, Head Researcher for Civic Infrastructure and Community Engagement, will spearhead intentionally-built channels of communication between MASS MoCA and community stakeholders including town residents, community-based organizations, city and state government, and local businesses.

The Barr Foundation has been a core philanthropic partner for MASS MoCA for nearly a decade, providing support for a wide range of initiatives.

"Through this work, MASS MoCA is building durable capacity to work hand-in-hand with its local community to create long-term economic, social, and cultural prosperity," said Barr Foundation Arts & Creativity Program Officer, Francisco Torres. "There is so much potential when a community partners with its local arts organizations and artists to strengthen the social fabric."

About MASS MoCA

In May 2024, MASS MoCA will celebrate its 25th anniversary under its new Director, Kristy Edmunds, not only as a contemporary art museum and performing arts venue, but also as a creative campus with a regional, national and global impact.

MASS MoCA is one of the world's liveliest centers for making and enjoying today's most evocative art. With vast galleries and a stunning collection of indoor and outdoor performing arts venues, MASS MoCA is able to embrace all forms of art: music, sculpture, dance, film, painting, photography, theater, and new, boundary-crossing works of art that defy easy classification. From its beginnings as the major textile mill Arnold Print Works in the mid-19th century, to its days as the Sprague Electric Company in the mid-20th century, to its current iteration as a globally renowned contemporary art museum and fabrication center, the 16-acre MASS MoCA campus has a rich history of serving as the economic engine of the city of North Adams and the surrounding region. For more information about MASS MoCA, visit www.massmoca.org or follow us on Instagram at [@massmoca](https://www.instagram.com/massmoca).

For more information, please contact:

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