



Summit Report

October 2022

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. Within this rich array of creativity, there is no single board, commission or nonprofit entity whose sole mission is the care and stewardship of these assets as a sector.

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. COVID-19 increased demand for safe gathering spaces. And our community is committed to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion in our arts and cultural offerings.

In March 2022, recognizing a need for a creative sector wellness check as Melrose emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Melrose Cultural Council, Melrose Messina Fund for the Arts, and newly formed Melrose

Creative Alliance organized and hosted a first-of-its-kind **Melrose Arts Summit** at Temple Beth Shalom.



The half day workshop explored two key questions:

What is our collective vision for a vibrant, diverse, and sustainable arts and cultural sector? and

How can we work together to get there?

A dedicated group subsequently formed the official nonprofit **Melrose Creative Alliance**, under the Community Coalition umbrella, working and meeting regularly to distill Summit participant input into an actionable set of priorities and initiatives. The results of this work and the findings presented here represent the **shared voices and vision of over 80 creative Melrose producers and consumers**.

Melrose Creative Alliance

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Sign up for news!

OUR VISION

The arts in Melrose are a vehicle to create connections, raise awareness, educate and inform. Support for arts and culture is public and transparent, and includes funding and human resources. Working artists are supported with resources, a sense of community, and professional development. The definition of arts is expansive to encourage a wide array of creative participation. Melrose is colorful and music-filled, where it is easy to discover and access creative and cultural events, making it a vibrant 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.



TOP PRIORITIES

Central to our identified priorities is a commitment to fostering diversity, equity, access and inclusion through and in our arts offerings. Additionally, the **single most cited value** at the Summit is the idea that creative work merits financial commitment to paid professional human resources to advance our goals as a creative and vibrant arts community. Additionally, our Top Priorities are:

1. **Improve systems of public information and outreach, to make it easier for audiences to find creative offerings and support artists. Build systems for artists and creatives to reach the community, both technology and human resources.**
 - a. Make it easier for residents and consumers to find out about creative offerings in the community, awareness of creative practitioners, and how to support them;
 - b. Build *systems* and structures to make it easier for creative producers to get their message out to a wider reach within the community;
 - c. Develop a robust marketing effort across Creative Alliance, City of Melrose, the Chamber of Commerce, and other partners;
 - d. Connect talent pools of human resources, and make information and access to resources for creative producers more accessible;
 - e. Provide arts producers with professional development in outreach, communications, accessibility, DEIA.

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. Visible and demonstrated support for arts and creativity in our community - an environment where creativity is clearly valued and supported;
- d. Make space for marginalized creative voices, intentionally elevate artists and creatives both in and out of Melrose;
- e. 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. The entire City of Melrose is available and ready for creativity, arts & culture, where businesses and people can easily actualize initiatives and projects to support a healthy community, economic development, and thriving vibrant city.

- a. An indoor and outdoor public realm without barriers to creative uses; a healthy array of public and private spaces 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, 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;
- e. Advocate for affordable booking structures that don't rely on small arts orgs to subsidize public spaces, and support for orgs who need frequent access to space for ongoing use.

3 INITIATIVES

The Melrose Creative Alliance is developing and pursuing financial and human resources for three inaugural initiatives to address the top priorities identified above.

1. Creative HIVE

An online directory of information for creative producers and arts consumers. This initiative is *not* a substitute for human efforts in relationship building, but rather a tool *most* requested at the Summit to help creative producers reach audiences and help residents discover creative offerings.

- a. Event listings, classifieds, funding sources, venues, resources and information;
- b. Users can *add* content (events, classifieds) and *extract* content (listings sent directly to an email inbox).

2. Creative CONNECT

In-person meetups featuring guest speakers, presentations, and relationship building opportunities in areas of artist professional development, and community building.

- a. Professional development in marketing, accessibility, public art, and more;
- b. Collaboration building among creatives, community and civic groups.

3. Creative DISTRICT

Pursue a state-designated Arts & Cultural District; a walkable area that infuses creativity into the local economy and builds community through creative and cultural activity.

- a. The Creative Alliance is well-positioned to serve as the required Managing Partnership;
- b. The HIVE project assists with required work of mapping arts and cultural assets.

THE CASE FOR SUPPORT

- Culture is a lens that helps us understand and process the world through our humanity;
- Artists and creatives are essential workers in building equitable futures;
- Addresses negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency by supporting creative industries that play a key role in our local economy;
- 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.

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