MAKING SPACE FOR ART
Securing Cultural Infrastructure in Boston, Cambridge & Somerville

PROJECT OVERVIEW

*Making Space for Art* is a joint effort by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the cities of Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville to establish policies and strategies that expand and protect the region’s cultural infrastructure—the physical spaces used across creative disciplines for making and experiencing arts and culture. Building on past outreach efforts conducted by the three cities, targeted engagement in this project will seek to better understand the needs and priorities of community members. By applying a regional lens to the project, MAPC will create policy guidance to streamline and strengthen cultural planning and policymaking across city lines to make it easier for the users of arts and culture spaces to thrive within a regional ecosystem. The project will also provide municipalities with data tools and strategies to elevate the needs and priorities of arts and culture stakeholders in planning and development policies and processes.

WHAT IS CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE?

Cultural Infrastructure can refer to any physical space where art or culture is produced or presented. This spectrum can include spaces from art museums (clearly defined for arts and cultural use) to space that has no designation or definition as cultural use (such as housing—where many artists produce their work), and a gray area in the middle—places like church basements, restaurant back rooms, university practice rooms, and more we haven’t identified.

The engagement efforts in this project aim to dig deeper in the “gray area” of this spectrum—first identifying and cataloging these spaces, and then making policy recommendations to protect them.

PROJECT PARTNERS

- City of Boston Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture
- City of Cambridge Arts and Cultural Planning and Cambridge Arts
- Somerville Arts Council

PROJECT TIMELINE: AUGUST 2022 – DECEMBER 2023
PROJECT DELIVERABLES

Regional Policy Recommendations to Expand Access to Cultural Infrastructure

Built on a synthesis of existing policies and procedures and strengthened by conversations with community stakeholders in Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville, this package will include a framework for shared regional policy goals, briefing papers on priority policy topics; municipal action plans that identify priority actions to be taken by each municipality; and an implementation plan that identifies roles, responsibilities and the timeline for implementing the recommendations.

Digital Planning Platform to Support Cultural Infrastructure

MAPC’s Digital Services team is prototyping a digital platform to support coordination and planning to protect and expand cultural infrastructure. Initial deliverables will include documenting the key problems a platform would help solve as well as developing the prototype and initial data schema, as well as a spec sheet for a minimum viable product (MVP). Municipal partners will have an option to contract with MAPC to build a custom application as part of project implementation.

PROJECT GOALS

Policy: Streamline policy that relates to cultural infrastructure (from preservation to new development incentives) across three municipalities.

Processes: Identify and recommend tools and processes to integrate cultural infrastructure policy into existing municipal policy, such as within development review.

Data: Aggregate and share cultural infrastructure/facilities data across all three cities in an easy to access and maintain format

Partnerships: Strengthen partnerships and align priorities across arts and culture and other municipal departments within and among the three cities.

STAY IN TOUCH

- If you’re interested in providing feedback, please send an email to makingspace@mapc.org.
- Visit the project webpage for more information and sign up for the project mailing list if you would like to be kept updated on that effort. www.mapc.org/resource-library/making-space-for-art/