



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Newton Arts and Business Nonprofits Urge City Leaders to Seek
Massachusetts Cultural District Designation for Washington Street**

*Newton Community Pride, Newton Cultural Alliance, New Art Center, and Charles River Regional Chamber
Urge City to Apply for Special Cultural District Recognition*

Newton, MA/ January 5, 2024 — A coalition of Newton arts and business nonprofit leaders are urging Mayor Ruthanne Fuller to apply to the state to have a portion of Washington Street and adjoining streets designated as one of the Commonwealth’s Cultural Districts.

Leaders of Newton Community Pride, the Newton Cultural Alliance, the New Art Center and the Charles River Regional Chamber sent a letter to Fuller on December 6 summarizing the cultural and economic benefits of establishing a district.

“Creating a Cultural District along Washington Street would create vibrancy, branding, and cohesiveness for this major thoroughfare that connects West Newton and Newtonville,” the letter states.

Anchored by the New Art Center in Newtonville and the Allen Center for the Arts in West Newton, the proposed Cultural District would highlight several arts/cultural assets including the Jackson Homestead and Museum, public art murals, creative businesses, and performing arts venues.

“As the city reenvision and redesigns Washington Street, the time is ideal to seek and apply a Cultural District designation along Washington Street from Newtonville to West Newton,” said Meryl Kessler, incoming board chair of Newton Community Pride. “The creation of a Cultural District along this major thoroughfare would create vibrancy, branding, and cohesiveness connecting these two village centers and highlight several arts and cultural assets that exist along the way and also provide access to grants that will allow us to market all that we have here,” added Kessler.

Massachusetts has designated over 50+ Cultural Districts, including in nearby Arlington, Lexington, and Concord. Watertown town leaders recently submitted its [application](#) to obtain the Cultural District designation while simultaneously pursuing the redesign of Watertown Square.

According to the MCC website, Cultural Districts drive economic growth, strengthen distinctive local character, and improve the quality of life of families across Massachusetts. By supporting arts, humanities, and science organizations, Cultural Districts attract tourists and entrepreneurs, which in turn help communities foster their cultural sector and expand their tax base.

“Arts and commerce have always gone hand in hand, and we’re convinced that any effort to amplify and nurture the arts will benefit our restaurants, shops, hotels and overall economic vitality and vibrancy,” said Greg Reibman, president and CEO at the Charles River Regional Chamber. “We’re very pleased to be a partner in this endeavor.”

More Information:

**Massachusetts Cultural Council –
Designated Cultural Districts Across the Commonwealth**

<https://massculturalcouncil.org/communities/cultural-districts/designated-cultural-districts/>

What is a Cultural District?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tdYpdFsPaCQ&list=PL0y5ieOo4y5Bn0DWdFeYWmvWft-mOp9WR&index=17>

Newton Community Pride is a nonprofit building community through free and accessible arts and culture programming, public art, beautification, and service projects.

Contact: Blair Sullivan, Executive Director 617-431-3944

Address: 1294 Centre St., Newton, MA 02459

<https://newtoncommunitypride.org>

New Art Center is a nonprofit community art education space which offers everyone, at all levels of ability, exceptional opportunities to make, exhibit, view, think about and talk about art.

Contact: Emily O’Neil, Executive Director 617-359-6451

Address: 61 Washington Park, Newtonville 02460

<https://newartcenter.org>

Newton Cultural Alliance is a nonprofit arts and culture membership organization promoting, enhancing and sustaining arts and culture through member advocacy, economic development, and collaborative facilities with creative community programming.

Contact: Adrienne Hartzell Knudsen, Executive Director 857-636-0199

Address: 35 Webster Street, West Newton, MA 02165

<https://newtonculture.org>

Charles River Regional Chamber is a nonprofit whose mission is to champion our communities' economic and cultural vitality through education, advocacy, and networking. Member communities include Newton, Needham, Watertown, and Wellesley.

Contact: Greg Reibman, President & CEO 617-244-5300

Address: 117 Kendrick Street, Needham, MA

<https://www.charlesriverchamber.com>