Cultural Development Highlights FY 16

Economic Development

- **WOO Pass**: Formerly known as the Woo Card, the Woo Pass app launched in FY16 with phase 1 of the app’s development and now serves as a virtual visitors’ guide for the entire Central Mass region. Since its launch, the Woo Pass app has 68 participating businesses and organizations using the app as an additional means for marketing and community engagement including arts and cultural destinations, restaurants, retailers, hospitality providers and more, offering consumers special deals & discounts, news, and special events. The app has 3,703 total downloads and 3,652 user updates to date which proves the app will serve as a comprehensive and effective means of uniting and promoting creative opportunities available throughout the region once completed. In FY16 the Woo Pass program had a very successful “WOOPhoria” event held at the EcoTarium which served as a tool to promote participating Woo Venues and saw an audience of approximately 300+ participants. In addition, the Woo Pass program tabled at over 60 events, increasing visibility and driving traffic to the entire Central Mass region. Woo Pass mobile app is currently available to download for free on mobile app stores: (iPhone) and Google Play (Android).

- **Worcester Arts Council** received $103,000 from the Massachusetts Cultural Council for 2016. With some funds unclaimed from 2015, WAC was able to grant $112,812 in grants to 56 Worcester-based artists and organizations in the arts, sciences and humanities, including two Artist Fellowship awards of $5,000 each. The grants ranged from $224 to $5,000 and of those 56 grants, six were public art and mural projects in response of the WAC 2015 Community Input survey which prioritized public art. In addition, twelve projects were specifically designed to provide access to the arts for low-income youth in the City of Worcester.

- **Salisbury Cultural District** In FY 16 the Salisbury Cultural District’s Board and the City of Worcester’s Wayfinding Project Team developed complimentary brand identities and graphic icons for the City’s Salisbury District as defined in its Wayfinding project as well as the Commonwealth’s approved Salisbury Cultural District. A marketing communications campaign which focused on digital media channels was implemented: a Facebook page was created and unique website launched. A three minute “animatic” of still images streams on the SCD website. Collaborative cultural programming is in the planning stages for FY17.

- **Worcester PopUP: A Community Gallery/Performance venue** Worcester PopUP in residence at 20 Franklin Street employed seasoned and emerging arts activists to program and curate 45 exhibitions, performances and events which engaged seasoned and emerging artists with an emphasis on active community engagement. Over, 1200 people attended the PopUPs events since its inception.

- **Special Events**: The Worcester Common hosted events new and old. The Out to Lunch series featured 11 events including a POW! WOW! Worcester Celebration featuring main stage bands, emerging performers, local artists, crafters, farmers market, food vendors and audience of 400-500 each week. Festival of Lights engaged thousands of people in the lighting of the tree, caroling with Worcester Public Schools choirs, skating on the Common and horse drawn carriage rides. The inaugural Fall Fest drew families in October. Worcester Shakespeare Company set a precedent for live theatre on the Oval. Nearly 100 people attended. The City and WCC reopened the Worcester Auditorium and initiated 6 events: by Preservation Worcester docents tours of the building, the mighty Kimball organ was repaired and played thanks to the Worcester American Guild of Organists. Over 2000 people experienced the beauty and history hidden for almost 30 years.

- **Public Art**: The Worcester Public Art Working Group (PAWG), made up of artists, and arts activists who support public art initiatives in the City of Worcester. PAWG oversees a 3-tiered action agenda: 1) Commission 3 large-scale public art. Completed this year with installations by Caleb Neelon, Damien Mitchell and Alice Mizrahi. 2) Support local and regional artists in the development of public art throughout the City: PAWG/WC commissioned local artists to create murals on the WCUW Main South faced. 3) Encourage and support the engagement of young people and the general public in creating public art, Alice Mizrahi mentored emerging artists and led workshops with young women from the YWCA.
• Public Art: (continued) PAWG hosted a Town Hall meeting for the Arts which resulted in interest for more artist work/live/retail space. WCC was a sponsor of Pow! Wow! Worcester and look forward to catalyzing more public art initiatives in the years ahead. #makearteverywhere!

Advocacy

• Worcester Wayfinding: a city-wide signage and navigational system incorporating public art, supported through the efforts of the cultural and educational community. A 3 million dollar allocation for the Worcester Wayfinding has been procured, a project manager has been hired, and signage is expected to go up in the spring of 2017. The comprehensive system will include over a dozen unique pieces of public art and, exclusive to Worcester, a digital application allowing users to create trails that define their favorite routes of the city. This crowdsourcing initiative will highlight some of Worcester’s favorite spots while introducing users to parts of the city they have yet to explore. The digital application will also be a platform for historical storytelling. For more information about the Wayfinding Initiative, visit: http://www.worcestermass.org/city-initiatives/wayfinding.

• Education Committee: WCC in partnership with the Worcester Public Schools and Worcester Educational Development Fund has procured another $500,000 (over 5 years) from the George I. Alden Trust to support 7 LEAPS, and an additional $100,000 from the Stoddard Foundation which are full-grade comprehensive, curriculum-based experiences for students and staff. WCC is working with WEDF to expand arts and cultural programs, in addition to LEAPS in FY 17

• MASS Creative: an advocacy organization promoting the support of the arts, science and humanities, worked to secure increased funding for the MA Cultural Council and a five million dollar increase to the state Cultural Facilities Fund. Erin Williams as Executive Director of the Worcester Cultural Coalition and Troy Siebels represent Central Massachusetts and serve on the board of directors.

• Americans for the Arts and Economic Prosperity Survey5: Action! In February 2016, A!W was contracted by the WCC to administer the survey to the Worcester community and affiliated cultural institutions. As of 10/26/16, A!W has successfully collected 676 surveys across 51 events – including productions at The Hanover Theatre and Mechanics Hall, showings at ArtsWorcester and Worcester Center for Crafts, and at large and small gatherings like the Out to Lunch series, POW! WOW! Worcester, and stART on the Street. The survey results will be issued in February of 2017 and provide a profile of the economic health of Greater Worcester’s Cultural Community.

Promoting Arts and Culture

• WCC maintains very active Facebook and Twitter accounts for the Worcester Cultural Coalition, the Worcester PopUP and the summer Out To Lunch concert series. Social media continues to grow daily with our friends and followers on Facebook and Twitter now reaching 8,803 with the majority of the demographic representing women ages 35-44 and followed by women ages 25-34. In FY16 the WCC launched two new Instagram accounts: Public Art Working Group and Worcester Cultural Coalition. Since the launch, both accounts have reached a total of 1,073 followers combined with top hashtags: #MakeArtEverywhere, #WorcesterCulturalCoalition, and #OTL Thursdays. In total, the WCC social media accounts now have a combined reach of 9,876 followers.

• WCC oversees monthly unique media plugs in/on more than a half dozen media outlets – print, radio, local television, and online - with an approximate combined cash value of well over a quarter-million dollars. Marketing outlets include: WBUR, WFCR, WNNZ, WICN, WTAG, WCRN, WSRS, WXLO, PIKE, WORC-FM, Go Local Worcester, Charter TV3 and on line. All WCC member organizations and WOO venues are promoted through the WCC’s multi-faceted marketing strategies.

• The website at www.WorcesterMass.org attracted 179,836 unique visitors with 5,758,367 page views in FY15. Worcester Culture Coalition home page attracted 38,414 unique page views. The online Cultural Calendar saw a total of 38,459 unique page views, affirming the site’s status as a reliable, comprehensive source for cultural happenings in the greater Worcester area. Entry to the WCC website through outside referring sites made up significant amount visitors with 96% referred from Google search engine, 7.5% from Social Web, 4% from Massvacation.com and 2.1% from Facebook.

• WCC publishes a popular bi-monthly enewsletter, Arts & Culture Connection, with a distribution of more than 32,000 subscribers with an additional 860 contacts added in the calendar year 2016.

Funding

• WCC is funded in part by the City of Worcester, membership levies, Massachusetts Cultural Council Adams Arts Program, Discover Central MA, Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Barr Foundation, George I. Alden Trust, and the Stoddard Foundation.

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