

ENTERTAINMENT, LIFESTYLE, NEWS

STATE EXPANDS LYNN'S CULTURAL DISTRICT

BY BILL BROTHERTON | September 11, 2017

LYNN — Five years ago, the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) named the downtown as one of the state's first arts and culture districts.

Yesterday, the MCC not only renewed the Downtown Lynn Cultural District designation but expanded it as well.

Lynn Auditorium, which brings dozens of internationally-known musicians and entertainers to the city annually, is now included within the district. North Shore Community College also falls within its borders. The area also now includes Market, Oxford, Union, Buffum, Liberty and Mt. Vernon streets, and important players such as High Rock Tower, Girls Inc., Greater Lynn Senior Services and many of the city's restaurants.

Carolyn Cole, director of the Lynn Cultural District, said the designation is good for five years. Cultural districts create new opportunities for economic development in Gateway Cities, such as Lynn.

“The expansion to Market Street and the Auditorium, which brings so many people into the downtown, is important and overdue,” she said. “North Shore Community College has expanded and is a key player. We hold most of our events on Mt. Vernon Street, across from LynnArts, and a key player like Laurence (Howard) of Pick Up Modern & More were across the line. I'm glad they are now included in the designation. So many have been such a huge part of us, it's nice to make it official.”

Drew Russo, executive director of Lynn Museum/LynnArts, said so much is going on culturally in Lynn, the re-designation and expansion makes sense.

“Carolyn forcefully advocated for expansion with the MCC,” he said. “The museum and LynnArts have for eight years been a vibrant part of the downtown. Beyond Walls and the Rock the Block party continued the momentum, and this is the next big step.

“Lynn Auditorium was not part of the old designation. Nor were many of the food options downtown and the college. We have benefited tremendously with our partnership with the college. Such cultural partnerships are part of the larger district. The MCC recognizes that the downtown cultural district in Lynn is expanding.”

Joseph Mulligan, Lynn’s MassDevelopment liaison who has played an integral role in coordinating the arts and culture community with city-wide economic development, is also on board.

“The expansion of the arts and culture district and efforts to expand the historical district, continues the momentum downtown and bodes well for the future and vibrancy of the downtown,” he said. “This is a real positive.”

Cole and Russo also praised the efforts and support of James Cowdell, executive director of the Economic Development & Industrial Corp.; Charles Gaeta, executive director of Lynn Housing Authority & Neighborhood Development; James Marsh, Community Development director; Magnolia Contreras of the EDIC; and John Krol, chief of staff for Mayor Judith Flanagan Kennedy.

Cowdell said the designation by the state has made all the difference in reviving the downtown.

“I’m 100 percent for it,” he said. “Look what it’s done. We have certainly put the focus on arts and culture in downtown. The success of the Beyond Walls mural festival is a direct result of the attention the district has been getting.”

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Brotherton is Features editor for the Daily Item. He is also editor of Essex Media Group’s North Shore Golf, 01907 and ONE magazines. A Beverly native and Suffolk University graduate, Bill recently retired from the Boston Herald, where he wrote about music, edited the Features section and was Editorial unit chairman for The Newspaper Guild-CWA local 31032. This is his second stint at the Item, having labored as Lifestyle editor back in the olden days, when New Wave and Hair Metal music ruled the airwaves.

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