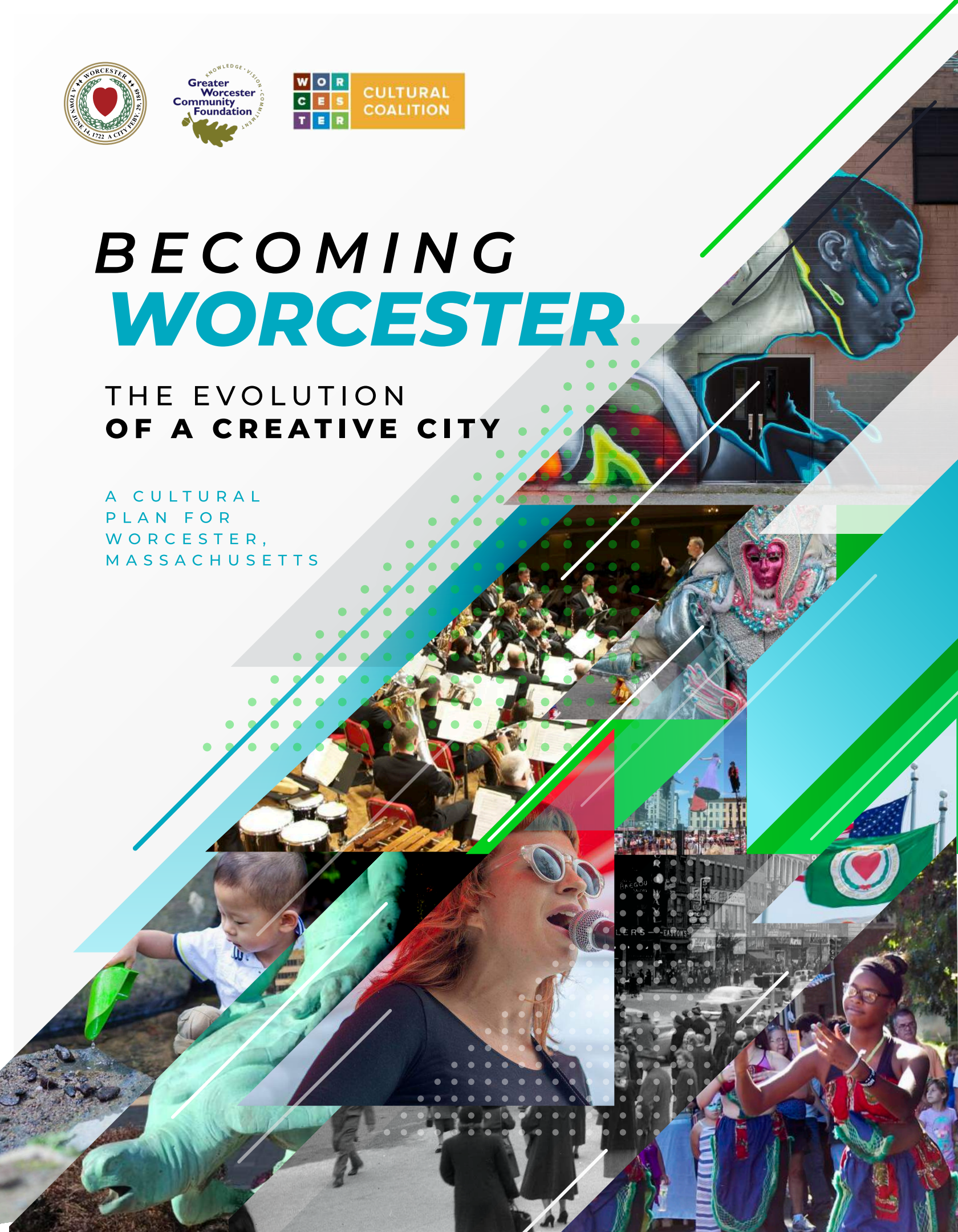




BECOMING WORCESTER

THE EVOLUTION
OF A CREATIVE CITY

A CULTURAL
PLAN FOR
WORCESTER,
MASSACHUSETTS



Dear Worcester:

This letter is a call to action. Worcester is embarking on a new 10-year Cultural Plan which fosters an open and interactive relationship with the community and its government to ensure a better quality of life for everyone. In 2018, the City Administration partnered with the Worcester Cultural Coalition and the Greater Worcester Community Foundation to craft a Worcester Cultural Plan that is inclusive, and embraces arts for all.

Arts, culture, and creativity play a critical role in Worcester's evolution as a great city. Just as we are the Heart of the Commonwealth, so is our cultural heritage the heart of our community. Worcester's museums, libraries, parks, and educational institutions date back hundreds of years. Worcester is the home of poets, musicians, painters and dancers of world renown. We are a proud city of neighborhoods, makers, artists, and immigrants with traditions that make us a city of creative community engagement. Arts and culture brings our city to life, helps us vision and experience the world in new ways, provides healing and gives voice to all. That is why the time is right for a new Cultural Plan which embraces the arts as not just nice, but necessary for Worcester to thrive and evolve into a truly creative city.

The Worcester Cultural Plan is unique in that it is embedded in the City's Masterplan. Arts and Culture are catalysts for creative economic development, embedding art into our streetscapes and design, lifting up our rich immigrant experiences and shining a spotlight on all we offer, knowing that great cities embrace arts and culture. Over the past year, hundreds of individuals have participated in forums, discussions and surveys to develop this plan. An advisory team has worked tirelessly to bring this work to fruition.

The Cultural Plan embeds creativity in the design of our streets, youth engagement, and education, support of our neighborhoods through celebration and creative entrepreneurship, and support for cultural organizations, artists and neighborhood cultural centers.

The Cultural Plan is laid out with goals, strategies and partnerships throughout the next decade. This is not a plan for the meek: it is a call to action. With this new plan we have a roadmap to bring our city to life through arts and creativity.

We extend our sincere thanks to Creative Community Builders for facilitating the process and the hundreds who have participated. We are committed to lifting up our creative community, working with and challenging the creative arts and cultural sectors along with private developers, entrepreneurs, citizens and philanthropists to take us to new heights as Worcester, the truly creative city.



Edward M. Augustus
City of Worcester



Erin I. Williams
Worcester Cultural Coalition



Ann Lisi
Greater Worcester Community Foundation

OUR VISION

WORCESTER IS:

- A city with strong physical and social cohesion that enables ease of movement for people of all ages, abilities, and means;
- A city that supports innovation and entrepreneurship, learning, and cultural opportunities for all;
- A city that reflects its heritage, its diverse cultures, and new ideas in its public spaces, downtown, natural and built environments, and in its neighborhoods;
- A city where daily life is supported by local commerce, services, and activities related to the diverse traditions, creative expressions, and collective celebrations of all its people.

VALUES GUIDING THE PLAN

The Worcester Community Believes In and Practices:

Working together and in partnership and transparency across the range of community priorities and perspectives among residents and nonprofits, civic, educational, and business sectors to achieve mutual goals.

Imagining possibilities and supporting individual and collective aspirations of Worcester residents to create, innovate, and include all people in opportunities.

Including the diversity of people and ideas in every arena; welcoming, listening to and including stories and visions whether familiar, different, or entirely new.

Grounding community work in the City's rich and complex history, unique qualities, assets and advantageous geographic location.

Sharing spaces in the public arena, in daily life, and in special celebrations and through collaboration in development and/or management of civic and cultural resources.



GOALS

I. Old and New Worcester – The City’s Unique Identity

Craft, foster, and project a healthy and vibrant image that is meaningful to everyone who lives, works or visits; an identity that recognizes the city’s history and 300th anniversary.

II. Public Space Design and Activation

Infuse the city with attractive, active, accessible, and connected public spaces that incorporate and support multiple and diverse forms of mobility, ways of life, and cultural and creative expressions.

III. Cultural Equity, Access, and Inclusion

Embrace and foster cultural and creative expression, ways of life, and cultural activity and organizations meaningful to all residents (present and future) while providing equitable opportunities and access to resources.

IV. Youth, Education, and Family Engagement

Prepare and embolden future generations of leaders and active participants in cultural, civic, and entrepreneurial dimensions of the city while fostering greater involvement of families in cultural and civic activities.

V. Creativity and Innovation

Recognize and support artists, creatives, and creative businesses as key to the City’s economic, intellectual, and cultural development. providing resources and an environment supportive of their creative explorations, and incorporating arts and creative thinking across sectors and professional areas.



TOP 20 PRIORITIES

- 1 Shape and tell the “Worcester Story” through a cohesive image and brand that reflects and highlights the City’s many strengths.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: City of Worcester
NOTATION: Goal I; Outcome I.1: Strategic Activities I.1.A., I.1.B., I.1.C.
- 2 Install branding and wayfinding that welcomes people to Worcester at key entrances to the City and to distinctive neighborhoods.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Planning Division; Cultural Development Office; Department of Public Works & Parks
NOTATION: Goal I; Outcome I.2: Strategic Activity I.2.C.
- 3 Promote neighborhoods based on their unique assets - like cultural spaces, history, college campuses, events, parks, architecture, food, restaurants and shopping.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Discover Central Mass; Worcester Cultural Coalition
NOTATION: Goal I; Outcome I.2: Strategic Activity I.2.A.
- 4 Identify existing neighborhood nodes that are gathering places for our wide range of geographically and ethnically based communities.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Office of Economic Development
NOTATION: Goal II; Outcome II.2: Strategic Activity II.2.A.
- 5 Work with City agencies and civic groups to enhance connections and communications with our colleges & universities, the airport, hotels, and the cultural sector.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Discover Central Mass; City Manager’s Office
NOTATION: Goal I; Outcome I.3: Strategic Activity I.3.B.
- 6 Expand implementation of the complete streets policy, and continue streetscape updating throughout the City, prioritizing areas adjacent to schools and public gathering places.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Planning Division; Cultural Development Office; Department of Public Works & Parks
NOTATION: Goal II; Outcome II.1: Strategic Activities II.1.A., II.1.B.
- 7 Work collaboratively to deliver improvements to the City’s public transportation system to help people efficiently get to all areas of the City**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Worcester Regional Transit Authority
NOTATION: Goal III; Outcome III.1: Strategic Activities III.1.A., III.1.B.
- 8 Engage with business and property owners to activate empty storefronts as creative spaces and provide opportunities for collaboration between artists, residents, businesses, and community organizations.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Office of Economic Development, Division of Business & Community Development, Cultural Development Division
NOTATION: Goal II; Outcome II.2: Strategic Activity II.2.E.
- 9 Engage “9-to-5ers” downtown by encouraging business as well as civic and cultural groups to offer incentives to participate in activities and organizations after work.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce
NOTATION: Goal II; Outcome II.3: Strategic Activity II.3.C.
- 10 Expand municipal Public Art program to include a “Percent for Art” requirement for state and municipal capital construction projects.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Cultural Development Division
NOTATION: Goal II; Outcome II.4: Strategic Activity II.4.C.

TOP 20 PRIORITIES

- 11 Improve City regulations to make public spaces more user-friendly for organized events, and encourage an expanded mix and range of public space programming.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Cultural Development Division, Department of Public Works & Parks
NOTATION: Goal II: Outcome II.4: Strategic Activities II.4.F., II.4.G.
- 12 Incorporate universal design standards in exhibition, performance, and event planning.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Office of Human Rights; Cultural Development Division
NOTATION: Goal III: Outcome III.1: Strategic Activity III.1.E.
- 13 Advocate for affordable housing across the City, and support development of a “creative village” with artist live-work spaces.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Economic Development Department; Cultural Development Division
NOTATION: Goal V: Outcome V.4: Strategic Activities V.4.A., V.4.B.
- 14 Actively promote the value and importance of diversity that is fully representative of the City on municipal and community-wide boards, committees, and other decision-making bodies.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: City Manager’s Office; Human Resources Department; Diversity Officer
NOTATION: Goal III: Outcome III.2: Strategic Activity III.2.A.
- 15 Actively promote the value and importance of diversity that is fully representative of the community on local non-profit boards, community coalitions, and other communal organizations.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Greater Worcester Community Foundation; Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce
NOTATION: Goal III: Outcome III.2: Strategic Activity III.2.B.
- 16 Partner with the college & university admissions offices to promote Worcester as a desirable destination for prospective students.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Higher Education Consortium of Central Mass
NOTATION: Goal III: Outcome III.3: Strategic Activity III.3.C.
- 17 Strengthen partnerships to establish clear guidelines and create more pathways for artists and cultural organizations to enrich the lives of students and their families both during and after school.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Worcester Public Schools, Worcester Cultural Coalition
NOTATION: Goal IV: Outcome III.2: Strategic Activities IV.2.A., IV.2.B.
- 18 Provide development services and investment funds for new creative enterprises.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Business Development Division
NOTATION: Goal V: Outcome V.1: Strategic Activity V.1.E.
- 19 Design and launch an artist-in-residence program in such environments as municipal government, business and neighborhoods to incorporate creative design on the front-end of projects.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: City Manager’s Office
NOTATION: Goal V: Outcome V.2: Strategic Activity V.2.B.
- 20 Advocate for an allocation in the City budget to support public art, artist residencies and special events which support creative placemaking.**
PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY: Worcester Cultural Coalition
NOTATION: Goal V: Outcome V.3: Strategic Activity V.3.E.

IMPLEMENTATION

Success of the plan requires ongoing efforts to involve a wide mix of organizations and leaders across the community.

With the adoption of this framework plan by the three partners that commissioned it - the City of Worcester, Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the Worcester Cultural Coalition - we turn to all those community organizations and institutions with responsibility for the plan to move it forward. The following city-wide steps will also be taken:

1. The Cultural Plan Oversight Committee will:
 - a. Monitor and evaluate ongoing plan implementation work;
 - b. Suggest revisions based on evolving communal circumstances;
 - c. Advocate for renewed or special attention to plan implementation work over time.
2. Every spring, an open Cultural Plan review meeting will be convened to provide community members an opportunity to hear from the Cultural Plan Oversight Committee and others about the progress and potential evolution of the plan.
3. We will announce and celebrate important accomplishments as they are achieved.



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**BECOMING
WORCESTER:**



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SPECIAL THANKS TO

