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A Call to Arts: Integrating the Arts into Downtown Orange, MA

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A Call to Arts:

Integrating the Arts into Downtown Orange, MA



Photos by: Leonard Kendall

Draft Approval Date: 07 June 2016

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TITLE PAGE

Title: A Call to Arts: Integrating the Arts into Downtown Orange, MA

Area of Study: North Quabbin Region, Massachusetts

Brief Description: This report is an implementation plan for a demonstration project to integrate the arts into the economy of the town of Orange. It includes recommendations for the town to develop an arts-led economy as well as an arts chapter for the master plan. This is the last report in a series of three that have analyzed creative economic development strategies for the region.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title of Study: A Call to Arts: Integrating the Arts into Downtown Orange, MA
Consultant: Leonard Kendall
Study location: North Quabbin Region (specifically Orange, MA)
Studied period (years): Spring 2016
Phase of development: Third study of three
Purpose: To create an implementation plan for the town of Orange, MA, using a demonstration project to anchor the arts economy.
Methodology: Interviews with the Community Development Director of Orange and an educational consultant, and review of case studies of rural revitalization that used arts-led development.
<p>Summary of Results and Conclusions</p> <p>Analysis: Rural revitalization through the arts is possible with great partnerships and grant funding. Communication with the Community Development Director revealed a need for the Master Plan to be revised to include a section focussing on the arts as an economic development strategy. Putting this into an officially-recognized plan will legitimize and guide arts-led development.</p> <p>Recommendations: Add an arts section to the economic development chapter of the town of Orange master plan, add arts development terms and definitions to the zoning bylaw, create and plan a symposium of stakeholders to further envision the local creative economy, create a steering committee to relieve the current point person, which is the Community Development Director, and use the Arts Education Center proposal from “Forging Ahead” as a demonstration project to anchor the creative economy and set the tone for future development and revitalization in Orange.</p> <p>Next Steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review proposed definitions of terms to add to the zoning bylaw. • Review proposed arts section to the master plan. • Continue to pursue development of a Cultural District in Orange. • Continue to pursue funding opportunities for development. • Create and plan an arts symposium. • Set the structure of the steering committee for the Friends of Orange Development (FOOD). <p>Conclusions: Including an arts section into the master plan will demonstrate to developers and artists that the town is committed to adding the capabilities of an arts-based economy to Orange. Planning for arts-led development is vital to making the switch to a creative economy, and bringing together stakeholders will maintain the momentum.</p> <p>Date of the report: 07 June 2016</p>

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE..... 2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

TABLE OF CONTENTS 4

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS..... 6

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS..... 7

INTRODUCTION 7

PURPOSE 9

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES 10

 1.1 GOALS..... 10

 1.2 OBJECTIVES..... 10

METHODOLOGY 10

 1.3 INVENTORY 10

 1.4 ANALYSIS..... 11

 1.5 RECOMMENDATIONS 11

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND 11

TARGET POPULATION..... 11

CASE STUDIES 12

 1.6 CASE STUDY 1: TOWN OF AJO, ARIZONA 12

 1.7 CASE STUDY 2: YUMA ART SYMPOSIUM..... 13

ANALYSIS..... 14

RECOMMENDATIONS..... 14

NEXT STEPS 18

CONCLUSIONS 18

REFERENCE LIST 20

APPENDIX 21

SUGGESTED ARTS ADDITION FOR MASTER PLAN..... 21

LIST OF IN-TEXT FIGURES

Figure 1: Town of Orange8
Figure 2: North Quabbin.....9

DRAFT

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Abbreviation	Definition
CARD	Commercial Area Revitalization District
CED	Center for Economic Development
FOOD	Friends of Orange Development
FRCOG	Franklin Regional Council of Governments
ISC	International Sculpture Center
ISDA	International Sonoran Desert Alliance

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Michael Goulding, Hampshire College Student

John Delconte, Teaching Assistant, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

John R. Mullin, Ph.D., FAICP, Professor of Regional Planning, University of Massachusetts, Amherst

INTRODUCTION

The town of Orange (Figure 1) is located in central Massachusetts within a region known as the North Quabbin (Figure 2). Orange and Athol are the region's most populous towns and once served as the industrial centers of Franklin and Worcester Counties. Orange has seen the majority of its manufacturing industry leave and is turning to a creative economy strategy as a means for revitalization. This strategy involves using service-based industries, specifically the arts, to reenergize the economy in Orange, which will theoretically spill over into the surrounding North Quabbin Region.

Orange is rural in nature but has a picturesque downtown with the potential to accommodate many new businesses and services. Like many other rural communities that have felt the effect

of deindustrialization, Orange has an inventory of blighted properties, including two mills within walking distance of downtown that are directly adjacent to the Millers River and near the New Home Sewing Machine Company Dam.

Over the course of three semesters in 2015 and 2016, the UMass CED has conducted three studies in North Quabbin, particularly in Orange, exploring how the arts can be used as an integral economic development strategy. The first study focused on identifying non-traditional innovative educational opportunities; the second was on the feasibility of an arts education center; and the following will offer an implementation plan to fully transition to an arts economy.



Figure 1: Town of Orange

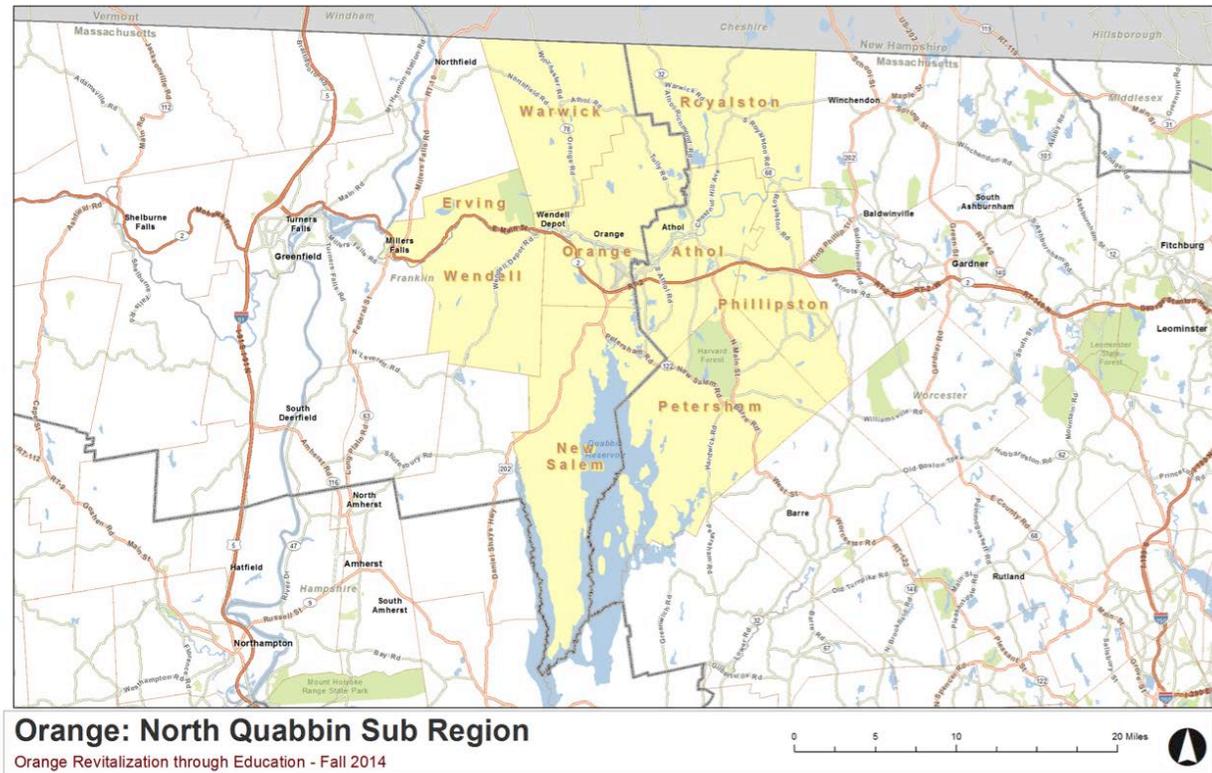


Figure 2: North Quabbin

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to create a realistic vision for the town of Orange to use the arts as an economic driver. This study is the third in a series of three conducted by the UMass CED under the guidance of Professor John R. Mullin to explore educational and arts-led redevelopment strategies for Orange. The principle sources of information were interviews with Orange's Community Development Director, Kevin Kennedy, and educational consultant Susan Hollins. This report will assess strategies to further the arts-led revitalization strategy. It will also offer specific suggestions to the town's master plan to better pursue this economic development strategy.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This project was undertaken to develop a plan to implement a demonstration project to use the arts as an economic engine for downtown Orange. In a previous study, we proposed the adaptive reuse of vacant mills in the downtown commercial area revitalization district (CARD) of Orange as an arts educational center. Details regarding the Arts Education Center are addressed in a previous report (Forging Ahead: Towards an Arts Cluster in North Quabbin).

1.1 GOALS

The goal of this project is to create a realistic approach toward instituting an arts economy in North Quabbin, with Orange as the focus.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

The objectives for this study are to create an initiative for a symposium of artists and other stakeholders in the North Quabbin to further envision arts-led development efforts, to encourage the town to include an arts chapter in the economic development chapter of the master plan, and to create a steering committee to maintain momentum around the notion of arts-led development in the town.

METHODOLOGY

This study follows the UMass CED three-pronged process: 1) Inventory, 2) Analysis, and 3) Recommendations.

1.3 INVENTORY

The inventory process consists of collecting data that pertain to the study area of Orange and the surrounding North Quabbin communities in western Massachusetts. We conducted site visits to downtown Orange to document physical and cultural features. Demographics data were gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau. Case studies and additional research regarding the

arts, the creative economy, sculpture parks, and construction costs have been drawn from scholarly journals, and from arts organization reports that detail the economic impact of arts on the regional and national economy. Interviews were also conducted with experts in the fields of town planning, educational institution creation, and arts entrepreneurship.

1.4 ANALYSIS

The analysis process for this study consisted of applying the data gathered from the inventory stage towards the specific case of Orange and exploring different ways to initiate interest and momentum towards development of an arts culture in Orange. The feasibility of creating a symposium and a steering committee was analyzed. Finally, an arts chapter for the master plan was drafted, with definitions for terms.

1.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations presented in this report take into account local and regional contexts as well as the perspective of other industrial towns that have used this strategy.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

See “Forging Ahead: Towards an Arts Cluster in North Quabbin,” the second of the three studies we are providing, for context and background on the North Quabbin region.

TARGET POPULATION

The target population for the arts economy in North Quabbin is local artists and artisans, who would bring the creative economy to the next level. Indirectly, the proposed arts economy is expected to improve the economic wellbeing, the aesthetics of downtown, and the recreational environment, thereby improving marketability of local businesses to locals and visitors.

CASE STUDIES

1.6 CASE STUDY 1: TOWN OF AJO, ARIZONA

The town of Ajo, Arizona was recently featured in an article in *The Atlantic*, titled “How America Is Putting Itself Back Together,” by James Fallows (2016). Ajo residents live in a small town of 3,000 with a very big industrial past. Surrounded by 3 million acres of preserved desert land, the New Cornelia Copper Company dug a mine that was 1.5 miles wide and 1,100 feet deep. With a copper mine less than a mile from downtown, it was home to the workers of the mine from 1911 until 1983, when the mine officially shut down. Since the closing of the major employment center in the region, the town’s population has diminished by 50%. This led to a revitalization effort through the arts through the International Sonoran Desert Alliance (ISDA). The organization is headed by Tracy Taft, who, after a 1992 visit to Ajo, was so struck by the Sonoran desert that she bought a house that same day. As executive director of ISDA, she has raised money, enlisted allies, and joined with nationwide city-improvement networks to promote Ajo as an arts center in order to revitalize its economy.

The old company town of Ajo has been transformed by the arts, especially because of its “good bones.” One renovation project was the Curley School, which was converted into affordable rental apartments for sculptors, painters, photographers and others. Following the conversion of the school, ISDA was instrumental in renovating the town plaza, which contained small storefronts, restaurants, shops, and public offices. Lastly, a courtyard surrounded by old school rooms was renovated to the Sonoran Desert Conference Center, which was designed to attract conference traffic and host conferences that feature events from the United States, Mexico, and the nearby Tohono O’odham Nation. Taft told *The Atlantic*, “We saw artists revitalizing urban inner cities and wondered if we could make it happen intentionally in a small town” (p. 70).

There are substantial similarities between North Quabbin towns and Ajo. While Ajo had an industrial copper mine, Orange and the North Quabbin had an industrial metal fabricating industry. Both of these communities are rural in nature, and both have incredible “bones” within their downtowns. Instead of the Sonoran Desert, Orange is surrounded by the wilderness of the North Quabbin, and both of these rural communities are roughly a two-and-a-half-hour drive from a major city (Phoenix or Boston). Educational opportunities are offered for adults and children at the centers in Ajo. The histories of both of these towns have left a mark upon them. Using the arts to revitalize the economy is a strategy has been proven workable in Ajo; given the towns’ similar characteristics and histories, it might also work in Orange.

1.7 CASE STUDY 2: YUMA ART SYMPOSIUM

The Yuma Art Symposium started in the mid-seventies after professors George Tomkins and Pete Jagoda at Arizona Western College began to connect guest artists with their students through workshops. The visiting artists, who worked mostly in metals and clay, were generally friends from graduate school. These workshops, held four to five times a year, turned out to be very popular. With their list of friends dwindling, other artists were invited for weekend workshops, whose their work was shown through artist-in-residences and then housed in an annex for viewing. Artists invited for a weekend full of workshops that were often paired with outdoor cookouts that showcased the winter sun of Arizona.

The first symposium, based mostly around metal workshops, soon began to draw outsiders to Yuma. Professors brought students in vans, and people kept returning to the fun and informative workshops. While the artist-in-residence studios were initially associated with the symposium, later years allowed for additional artists to join in the festivities; this led to the bringing in bigger-name artists to Yuma.

Financial support for the Yuma Art Symposium comes from many different sources. Arizona Western College has been supportive for the entire lifetime of the symposium. During the initial stages of its existence, grant funds were allocated by the Arizona Commission on the Arts. Metal artists currently make up the largest segment of enrollment. The 3-day symposium takes place in the winter months.

This scenario is relevant to our proposed project because of the abundance of defunct metal working buildings that remain in Orange. Similarly, Orange is close to a major university, where the University of Massachusetts Arts Extension has an interest in being involved in the formation of an education center for the arts, especially for their Arts Management program.

ANALYSIS

An analysis of various creative economies supports the proposal that the arts can serve as a driver for revitalization efforts in North Quabbin, particularly in Orange. To further this goal, an arts section for the economic development chapter of Orange's master plan has been drafted, and a list of development definitions that should be added to the zoning bylaw has been prepared. This analysis has led to recommendations to make this demonstration project a realistic target.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the town of Orange include an arts section into their master plan, add a number of terms and definitions to the zoning bylaw, plan an artist symposium, where local artists, leaders from arts organizations, residents, and political representatives can come together to plan for an arts education center, and from this, create a steering committee made up of similar members to capture the momentum of this movement.

Adding an arts section to the economic development chapter of the master plan would codify the desire to initiate an arts-based economy in Orange. A town can say they want to join the creative economy, but when it is written into a legal document that is approved by the town government, it is then legitimized. Doing so will recognize it as a prominent strategy for the town's economic development office, which will further enable the town to attract this type of development. A draft arts section for the master plan has been attached as an Appendix.

Along with adding an arts section in the master plan, the town should fully analyze and develop specific terms and definitions to include in Orange's zoning bylaws so that when developers want to build something that is arts related, they know exactly what and where they can build and develop. Further in-depth research is required to develop a comprehensive arts plan in order to fully incorporate the arts into Orange's economy. Here is a list of potential terms and definitions that should be reviewed and modified by Orange's Community Development Office:

Gallery- A room or building for the display or sale of art.

Museum- a building in which objects of historical, scientific, artistic, or cultural interests are stored and exhibited.

Arts Education Center- a building dedicated to the education of people in the art field, such as sculpture, painting, photography, film, or various other mediums.

Sculpture Park- an outdoor garden dedicated to the presentation of sculptures, usually permanent or long-term installations for the view of persons, either public or private.

Amphitheatre- an outdoor venue for viewing performances or other forms of entertainment.

Playhouse- A theater dedicated to the viewing and showing of plays.

Theater- a building or outdoor area where plays or film are shown.(currently in permitted use table; change from SP to Y)

Artist Studio- a room or building where artists actively create and make art using different mediums such as paint, clay, metal, wood, etc.

Artist Loft- living quarters for an artist that includes an area where the artist can work on their art.

Live/ Work space- a single unit consisting of both commercial/office/artist space and residential space occupied by the same resident.

Artist in Residence- a room or building dedicated to the housing of guest artists for a determined period of time.

The following terms should be addressed within the permitted use table in the town's zoning bylaw. These uses shall be incorporated into the table as a permitted use (Y), an excluded or prohibited use (N), requiring a special permit (SP), requiring performance standards (PS), or requiring site plan review and approval by the planning board (SPR). Most notably, these uses should be allowed "by right" within the CARD.

Our last recommendations relate to each other due to the fact that in many cases, such as in Ajo, Arizona, the leadership that drives an initiative within a community tends to come from local stakeholders. We recommend that the town of Orange create and plan an artist symposium in the area to gather interest, opinions, and expertise pertaining to the development of arts development projects in Orange. Invitations to the symposium will go out to any and all stakeholders in the area, including UMass professors, students of art, local business owners, town officials non-profit community leaders, residents, etc. The case in Yuma, Arizona demonstrated that this event could be started as a series of small workshops and presentations combined with social gatherings.

The symposium is intended to be a stepping stone for the creation of a steering committee that would be responsible for how art is developed and promoted within Orange and the North

Quabbin. Currently, all of the arts initiatives and development questions are funnelled into the Community Development Director's office, and the steering committee could relieve the Director of this responsibility. By inviting all the local stakeholders to the symposium, arts-led development becomes a more realistic opportunity for Orange. A potential name for this steering committee is the Friends of Orange Development (FOOD). Example organizational stakeholders might include the Orange Revitalization Partnership, Chamber of Commerce, the Planning Board, Orange Recreation Association, Orange Innovation Center, Orange Historical Society, UMass Amherst Art Department and Arts Extension, Massachusetts Cultural Council, and the North Quabbin Trails Association. The steering committee will include a representative from each of the stakeholder groups. Finding a way to bring these groups together to create a unified vision for the future of the Orange arts economy would benefit all organizations and residents.

The notion of creating a steering committee is supported by Susan Hollins, an educational consultant who has been a source of information for this report. She made it apparent that there are currently at least nine development initiatives in Orange. Having arts-led development interests managed by one steering committee would simplify matters.

Because the stakeholder groups include various universities in the area, we recommend that the arts education center be developed as a consortium, granting access to the eligible students and adults from each of the universities, similar to how the Massachusetts Green High Speed Computing Center has been managed in Holyoke, MA. A number of grants would be needed for this to take place, including those recommended in the second report ("Forging Ahead").

One way to show commitment to arts is to establish an anchor facility. Our demonstration project, the Arts Education Center researched and proposed in "Forging Ahead," together with

the Foundry located in the CARD, could serve as an anchor of the entire art economy in the North Quabbin. The Arts Education Center would be the only one of its kind within 100 miles where large metal sculptures could be cast in the foundry, and could be home to many different arts development projects, such as a sculpture park and artist studios and live/work spaces.

NEXT STEPS

The next steps for implementing this plan include adding the art section to the master plan and making the necessary changes to the zoning bylaw. The town of Orange is currently seeking to become a cultural district in Massachusetts, which would further attract investment into this area. Making sure that the town has a sound vision in place prior to the presentation of development opportunities is critical. Lastly, the town will need to continue to seek grant opportunities to make sure that there is money available for these projects, while continuing to capture the arts movement that is taking hold in the area.

CONCLUSIONS

Our review of case studies shows that it is possible to revitalize a rural community through the arts. Ajo, Arizona has proved that this type of revitalization can be done, even in a town that is smaller and more isolated than Orange. Communities with industrial pasts are filled with opportunities for artists, who are pioneers in establishing a creative economy, creating educational opportunities, and stimulating the creation of housing amenable to a vibrant community. Creating one or more symposiums to learn how to make a town more inclusive of the arts would improve the chances for success. These types of events can be stepping stones for much larger milestones, including the creation of a steering committee to guide artist placement and development in Orange.

The Arts Education Center demonstration project can be a keystone effort for the advancement of a creative economy in Orange. It could trigger the creation of artist studios,

live/work spaces, artist-in-residence programs, educational access, a sculpture garden, and so much more.

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REFERENCE LIST

Conboy, B. Goulding, M. (2015) Orange Arts and Economic Development: Identifying Non-Traditional Innovative Educational Opportunities for Economic Development in the Town of Orange, Massachusetts. *UMass Center for Economic Development*.

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Kendall, L. Meno, S (2015). Forging Ahead: Towards an Arts Cluster in North Quabbin. *UMass Center for Economic Development*

Yuma Arts Symposium (2016) <http://www.yumaartsymposium.memberlodge.org/page-103383>

APPENDIX

SUGGESTED ARTS ADDITION FOR MASTER PLAN

The economy in Orange is evolving. What has long been an industrial town in the scenic North Quabbin region of Massachusetts is seeing a shift to a more service-based structure. The arts represent a creative economic approach to revitalization within the town. Incorporating the arts is a way for to capture cultural and heritage tourism. The addition of public art installations around its historic downtown would set it apart from other towns within the North Quabbin.

The creation of an arts economy would enable the town to market itself as an artist's haven, where an artist can relocate to this area from the city and spend time crafting and creating their work at an affordable cost. Many underused properties in downtown Orange could house different arts-based uses. These uses will look to capture tourists from around the region to come and see the artist's creations as they enjoy the scenic area in and around Orange.

Located on the Miller's River, downtown Orange can capitalize on the growing momentum to incorporate different uses that are permitted to be developed within the Commercial Area Revitalization District (CARD). For instance, an arts education center, museums, amphitheaters, live-work spaces for artists and artisans, trailheads, incubator spaces, and even sculpture parks could be located within walking distance of downtown.

The labor force in the North Quabbin is very skilled and knowledgeable when it comes to the use of large metal works. The loss of industrial jobs in the town has created an opportunity for the labor force to leverage their knowledge of large metal fabrication machinery. The skilled metal workers could become teachers and instructors to artists for the creation of large-scale metal sculptures. The addition of artists and creators into the community will spearhead the path for Orange to revitalize its economy and re-establish the skilled labor force within the region.

Orange may build upon this approach by encouraging local leaders and business owners to pursue an arts economy. With a strong arts vision in the community, fostering new businesses and new artisans in the area can create a seamless transition to the creative economy.

The arts are already represented in Orange. With slight regulatory revisions, Orange could become a thriving community for artists and artisans from all around the Northeast. By building on current local attractions, such as the annual Garlic and Arts Festival, the arts can become a staple in Orange and be used to attract visitors to view innovative large-scale sculptures and the creation of small-scale crafts year round. The development of an arts museum, a sculpture park, and the addition of housing amenities, such as a hotel, will allow visitors to spend more than just a day trip in Orange, and will circulate local dollars throughout the Orange economy.