Inclusive Growth and Mobility
Create incentives for cultural development and preservation, public art, and public realm design
Action Area: Inclusive Growth and Mobility

Recommendation:
Create incentives for cultural development and preservation, public art, and public realm design

Strategy 1
Provide direct relief to artists, cultural workers, and cultural organizations in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and lay the groundwork to cultivate a more equitable, resilient, and cohesive sector.

Action 1.1: Establish an Executive Office of Arts, Culture, and Heritage to integrate arts, culture, heritage, and historic preservation into community and economic development, health and human services, and education throughout the Commonwealth, and to facilitate coordination and collaboration between state and local entities to support these endeavors. The office should be advised by the board and Executive Director of the Massachusetts Cultural Council and a Cultural Equity Task Force (described in Action 1.2 below).

Action 1.2: Establish a Cultural Equity Task Force to guide the new Office of Arts, Culture, and Heritage to address historic and current racial inequity in cultural representation, funding, and policy support in the Commonwealth. The Task Force will include representation from cultural organizations and community development entities led by, with, and/or in service of BIPOC communities, including groups working at the intersection of race, culture, ability, gender, and sexual orientation. Appointees may also include representatives from the MA Commission on Indian Affairs, Asian American Commission, Office for Refugees and Immigrants, MA Commission on LBGTQ Youth, Massachusetts Office on Disability, and MA Commission Against Discrimination. The task force should establish metrics and collect data that measure indicators of equity in the cultural sector and workforce. This should include measuring public and private sector support, access to capital, and the funding of arts producing organizations, public and private. It should also promote cultural equity in the Commonwealth and have the power to evaluate and veto programs proposed by the Executive Office of Arts, Culture, and Heritage.

Action 1.3: Establish a creative-workforce development program that affirms creative and cultural expression as both a basic human need and a strategy for addressing racism as a public health crisis. Require creative and cultural expression as allowable home occupations across the Commonwealth; invest in arts and cultural education in schools; fund youth development and apprentice programs; hire and contract with artists, cultural workers, and cultural organizations as part of crisis response and recovery efforts as well as part of planning and community development activities. Appoint an Arts & Cultural representative to the board of directors of the Commonwealth Corporation and direct the Corporation to establish creative workforce development programs.
Action 1.4: Expand and streamline access to financial relief and other resources for workers and organizations in the arts and culture sector, including non-profits, independent businesses, and sole proprietor businesses. State and local governments should expand direct financial assistance to artists, teaching artists, and cultural practitioners. Establish programs to provide a guaranteed monthly income to artists; provide explicit permission for artists, cultural workers, and arts and cultural organizations to apply for relief funding, loans, tax credits, and other financial supports for entrepreneurs and small businesses. Increase investment in organizations led by and serving communities of color; and invest in capacity-building and audience development programs to help equip artists and cultural organizations for a post-pandemic reality.

Action 1.5: Establish a variety of stable, robust funding sources, such as a Percent for Art program to engage artists and cultural workers in community development projects and advance an equitable and innovative recovery for the Commonwealth. Pass S.2246, “An Act to Rebuild the Commonwealth’s Cultural Future.” Establish a statewide Percent for Art policy to incorporate creative imagination and innovation into the development, design, and improvement of public works across the state, and designate long-term funding sources, such as a portion of the state’s lodging tax, an allocation of state sales tax, or an admissions tax, to support ongoing programs necessary for supporting, rebuilding, and sustaining arts and culture in our civic life and communities. Additionally, eliminate restrictions on use of state funding for arts and culture purposes by government and private sector entities.

Strategy 2
Promote creative community development that expands opportunities for cultural expression and participation for people of all ages and backgrounds and advances equitable community investment and preservation.

Action 2.1: Incentivize opportunities to integrate artists, cultural workers, cultural organizations, community-based organizations, and creative businesses into community and economic development initiatives, development review, public realm improvements, and infrastructure projects. Embed requirements, incentives, and benchmarks into state and local grant programs to encourage contracting with artists and other creative and cultural entities. For example, increase and earmark funding for MassDevelopment’s Commonwealth Places Program and Underutilized Properties Program to spur creative placemaking and economic revitalization initiatives, particularly in communities hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Cultural Equity Task force should guide the development of these requirements, incentives, and benchmarks to ensure that principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion shape the purpose and structure of all funding opportunities.

Action 2.2: Incentivize opportunities to expand cultural space development and management, and expand access to capital for developing, upgrading, and preserving cultural space. Emphasize racial equity and equitable access for all ages and abilities. Evaluate and change criteria for funding decisions and allocations, establish new programs or entities tasked with the expansion of cultural space and racial equity in access to cultural space, and build a diverse network of cultural space advocates in Massachusetts. Incentivize municipalities to adopt changes to zoning to allow arts and cultural uses to proliferate. Changes may include allowing home occupations of arts and creative uses and creating a special permitting process for cultural spaces that combine multiple uses (such as makerspaces, arts education centers, multi-purpose
event spaces, business and non-profit incubators) by offering variances on parking and other requirements.

**Action 2.3: Embed history and culture into reparative land use and transportation policies and programs to promote investment and development without displacement.** For example, establish new Historic Transit Oriented Preservation programs (HTOP) and Equitable Historic Transit Oriented Preservation programs to embed history and culture and expand tools for equitable cultural development in land use and transportation policies and programs. Establish requirements for broad-based community involvement in visioning and decision-making around the disposition of publicly owned land, particularly for parcels impacted by urban renewal, redlining, highway construction, the destruction of public housing, the removal of public transportation routes, and other policies. Require publicly owned land to increase opportunities for people of color, women, and the participation of Minority Business Enterprises (M/BEs); and require that the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance facilitate the conveyance of properties with deed restrictions for cultural uses and affordable housing.

**Strategy 3**
Cultivate a more welcoming, accessible, and inclusive public realm.

**Action 3.1: Shift narratives to acknowledge injustices, amplify the stories that have been silenced in Massachusetts’s history, and envision inclusive and thriving communities.** Invest in programs that engage artists, advocates, historians, educators, curators, preservationists, and cultural heritage practitioners who are working to amplify community histories and collective memory in order to expand awareness of the full history and contemporary diversity of the Commonwealth. Establish a statewide process on Truth, Reconciliations, and Reparations to examine the role of the state of Massachusetts in supporting the institution of slavery, the genocide of Indigenous people, forced assimilation, and seizure of land, among other policies.

**Action 3.2: Provide coordinated funding and dedicated staffing for programs that advance cultural equity in historic and cultural resource preservation.** Allocate funding to the Massachusetts Historical Commission and Massachusetts Cultural Council to provide in-language technical assistance (including assistance in applying for the Massachusetts Historical Commission’s Survey and Planning Grant Program and the National Park Service’s Underrepresented Communities Grant program) to BIPOC communities to survey and document historic and cultural resources, to conduct equity audits of documented historic and cultural resources, to update the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS), to improve the system’s relevance and accessibility for public audiences, and to establish diversity, equity, and inclusion trainings for volunteer boards and commissions. Additionally, mandate training on Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and protocols for maintaining relationships with Native American tribes for government staff and volunteers with responsibilities for historic preservation and land use planning.

**Action 3.3: Guarantee a right to access nature, recreation, and cultural expression in the public realm.** Convene a statewide working group comprised of the Cultural Equity Task Force, the Massachusetts Office on Disability, the Massachusetts Commission on Indian Affairs, and relevant state agencies to develop and issue statewide guidelines for inclusive design, management, and programming of the public realm. Recommend
local governments adopt policies to advance access and inclusion in the public realm, including streamlining permitting processes and easing administrative burdens associated with performances, busking, vending, exhibitions, festivals, parades, block parties, barbecues, and other activities; reviewing design and signage guidelines for public spaces and implementing changes to make these spaces more inviting and accessible for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities; and adopting a community safety approach that does not rely on policing and surveillance.