

New Bedford Creative awards 3rd EyE Unlimited first-ever “Art is Everywhere” grant

New Bedford Creative has awarded 3rd EyE Unlimited and partners the first-ever Art is Everywhere grant program as part of a pilot to accelerate arts-based economic development in New Bedford. The award includes \$50,000 to create and implement “Your New Bedford,” a project that deepens connections between neighborhoods and downtown, builds partnerships between cultural organizations and community groups, and strengthens the creative economy and arts ecosystem. The grant program is made possible with funding from MassDevelopment and the Barr Foundation.

3rd EyE Unlimited’s project for the Art is Everywhere Grant, “Your New Bedford,” intends to demonstrate that the New Bedford arts scene is more than its rich whaling and abolitionist histories – it is also a hothouse for inclusive and cutting-edge youth-oriented culture. Each “Your New Bedford” event will be designed in collaboration with community partners who are attuned to the needs and resources of local residents, and will feature music, dance and movement, visual arts and education, and a “community corner” – a time for dialogue about local needs and challenges.

Responding directly to COVID-19 impacts on the arts and the New Bedford community more broadly, 3rd EyE Unlimited has retooled and reimagined the original “Your New Bedford” six-part monthly program series in several ways. The group is shifting from neighborhood-based pop-up events in community settings to an interactive virtual format, providing paying work for local artists whose incomes have been directly affected by the pandemic, diversifying artist revenue generation strategies, and addressing the social isolation

felt by many residents at this time.

“3rd EyE Unlimited is honored and humbled to be the recipient of this first Art is Everywhere grant,” said Keri Cox, President of 3rd EyE Unlimited. “During the 20-plus years of 3rd EyE’s existence, we have witnessed and lived through many changes in our city and the diverse communities that comprise it. Our mission since our founding has been to shed light on the vibrant cultural expressions that often go unrecognized, and particularly those of young people who will play a key role in reshaping and reimagining the New Bedford of the future, which is especially relevant now during and after the pandemic.”

“A thriving community is more than just what’s seen on the surface, it’s also what is not immediately visible,” said Your New Bedford’s Project Director Peter Lonelle Walker. “The New Bedford that visitors see, particularly in our revitalized historic downtown, is fueled by the influence, expression and culture of the communities and neighborhoods that lie outside the tourist map. It’s harder to connect right now, and our goal is to create a platform that empowers and showcases our communities and neighborhoods, celebrating the contributions we and our neighbors have made and will continue to make.”

3rd EyE Unlimited and Community Partners Build Bridges

3rd EyE Unlimited is known for their signature annual creative arts festival in downtown New Bedford, the 3rd EyE Open, an effort to build bridges between the neighborhoods and downtown, and between young people and the business sectors. Their project “Your New Bedford” includes a core team of artists who will collaborate with a dedicated roster of community partners. This team includes dancers Terrence Bboy Swift-T Mills, Amanda Eyssallenne, and Tatiania “Tati” Morales, arts educator Samia Walker, artist Mandy Fraser, photographer and performer Darnel Staley, writer and public speaker Tyson Moultrie, and music producer Peter Lonelle Walker.

Barr Foundation and MassDevelopment Collaborate in Gateway Cities

In late 2019, the Barr Foundation awarded a \$500,000 grant to MassDevelopment to create new arts-based programming for Gateway Cities through its Transformative Development Initiative.

MassDevelopment is using a portion of those funds to support a yearlong planning phase in New Bedford with key community partners to create a strategy for enhancing the local arts and culture infrastructure as a mechanism for supporting economic growth. The Art is Everywhere grant program is one component of this multitiered planning phase.

The local team working in partnership with MassDevelopment and the Barr Foundation includes the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts, the Co-Creative Center, New Bedford Creative, and New Bedford Economic Development Council. As a program for Gateway Cities, the Transformative Development Initiative has been working to respond to the economic impacts of COVID-19 in these communities, especially with respect to vulnerable businesses, including artists, that are losing income during this challenging time.

In January 2020, the Art is Everywhere grant opportunity was announced, with applications due February 21. Once the pandemic arrived, the review committee decided to move forward with the call for proposals providing the winning entrant could demonstrate how its project would help support artists and the arts community during this difficult stage.

In addition to the cash award made possible by MassDevelopment and the Barr Foundation, 3rd EyE Unlimited will receive a one-year membership to the Co-Creative Center, the opportunity to participate in professional development training organized by the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts's Creative Commonwealth Initiative, New Bedford Creative, and New Bedford Economic Development Council, and limited

technical assistance from MassDevelopment as needed to help with project implementation.