



PREPARED FOR
THE TOWN OF BRATTLEBORO & THE ARTS COUNCIL OF WINDHAM COUNTY
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Brattleboro

An Atlas of Cultural Assets

Prepared for:

The Town of Brattleboro &
The Arts Council of Windham County

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The Conway School

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Like any healthy ecosystem, Brattleboro's creative culture thrives because of its rich biodiversity. Unlike other communities, whose reputations as arts towns may depend heavily on the monoculture of one signature event or area of expertise, Brattleboro teems with artists and arts organizations who work in a dazzling array of forms, genres, and media. How many towns of 12,000 boast world-class chamber music, a circus school, a contemporary art museum, a jazz center, and schools for dance, visual art, youth theater, music, photography and more ... and a monthly art walk and annual literary, film, and a cappella singing festivals? And this doesn't even take into account scores of individual creative souls who make art in the private realms of their studios for markets and collaborators all over the world.

Hand-in-hand with this biodiversity is broad acceptance of art within the community. Though artists and organizations continue to have to make the case for the importance of the creative sector in the health of the community and the local economy, artists here are not marginalized. Art does not exist on the fringes here; it is woven into the fabric of the community. Part and parcel of this is Brattleboro's rich tradition of amateur art-making. Writers groups, community theater troupes, choral and instrumental ensembles, ballroom dancers, jam sessions, painting groups ... you name it, people of all ages are doing it, here. Art in Brattleboro is not solely the province of professional art-makers; it is for everybody. Moreover, it is the so-called professional artmakers who encourage and nourish this notion. Brattleboro has a rich tradition of fine artmakers who are equally fine teachers and who embrace teaching not just as a way of paying the bills but as something very essential to their art. Case in point, the late Ric Campman, co-founder of the River Gallery School and a fine painter in his own right, devised a technique called Sequencing as a way of helping everyone jump right in and paint. Blanche Moyse, the visionary founder of the Brattleboro Music Center, envisioned a town where music-making took place on a full spectrum, from young beginners holding instruments for the first time to world-class chamber musicians of the highest caliber coming to town for concerts.

Ah, yes, visionary founders. Brattleboro's thriving creative culture owes a debt of gratitude to passionate and inspiring founders, many of whom settled in Brattleboro in part to enjoy the quiet quality of life offered here. They became magnets, drawing other artists here to work with them, further seeding Brattleboro's creative culture. This is still happening today. In a community as small as Brattleboro, a few visionary people can quickly create the critical mass of a vibrant arts culture. Many of these founders—and indeed many of the artists of all stripes who make Brattleboro home—have deep feelings about their community.

The scale of the town, the quality of life, the natural beauty, the connection to local food systems, the intentional, spiritual ways life is lived, the continued importance of face-to-face meetings and chance encounters here, all dance around with the creative culture, reinforcing each other and deepening the connections between the artists and everyone else. Notions of community are embedded in many of the creative projects taking place today.

This interplay of creativity and community thrums with particular intensity in Brattleboro, but it is not a new concept. Vermont is a state of rugged individuals who happen also to cherish community. This seeming contradiction is expressed in Vermont's state motto, "Freedom and Unity." The world witnessed what can happen as a result of this through Vermont's unique response to the flooding of Tropical Storm Irene—rugged individuals rallying together to care for each other in the wake of tough and tragic circumstances. As an exemplar of the unique dynamic tension between individual creativity and community, Brattleboro's arts culture is thus linked to Vermont's rugged, agrarian past, carried forward and given a colorful new expression.

Jonathan Potter
Arts editor for the Brattleboro Reformer

“Every place deserves an atlas, an atlas is at least implicit in every place, and to say that is to ask first of all what a place is.”

Rebecca Solnit, *Infinite City*

The arts are core to Brattleboro’s identity, springing from the built and natural landscape, maintaining and re-presenting long cherished traditions or challenging audiences with new forms of expression. This project documents the cultural ecology of the Brattleboro creative community—the complex formal and informal interactions constantly taking place between art producers, consumers, advocates, arts non-profit managers, and policymakers. This network-focused approach is intended to illustrate the rich complexity of Brattleboro’s cultural scene, while situating individual biographies in the web of relationships that give rise to place.

This document, compiled as a “narrative atlas” (Wood, 2010), is a collection of maps. These are not the usual road maps used to guide a traveler across a physical landscape but rather maps for a conceptual experience of a place, where the community is understood as an organically evolving system composed of a complex network of relationships. The maps illustrate the life of an arts community—its traditions, values, and ideas. Each map weaves layers of meaning and interpretation as it explores particular aspects of the Brattleboro arts scene. These maps are meant to offer a starting point for an ongoing discussion with the goal of enhancing community pride and strengthening community identity by revealing the less tangible and often hidden cultural resources and personal achievements found within the town.

Methods for collecting information included an intensive immersion in the community, taking the form of personal interviews, studio tours, focus group discussions, informal communications, attendance at events, and a community public workshop. Artists from across all disciplines of Brattleboro generously shared their stories and perspectives. The information gathered was translated into a series of maps that reveal the community’s story through different lenses, offering readers new ways of seeing and understanding the complex interconnections and nuances

of creative expression found within Brattleboro—emergent patterns, challenges across fields, and perhaps blind spots, all of which empower the community to engage in meaningful dialogue and make conscious choices about its future.

This narrative atlas is based on cultural asset mapping—a process of inventorying and spatially representing a community’s cultural resources, including the people, places, and organizations that support arts and culture. However, the scope and potential of cultural asset mapping is far greater than this simple definition; it is a tool for revealing the wealth of community talent and the supporting infrastructure present to foster creative action. Cultural asset mapping focuses on the existing resources of a community, enabling it to “discover the value of what exists or what is emerging, rather than imposing a vision” (Nowak, 2007). By revealing the existing resources of Brattleboro, rather than focusing on aspects that exist somewhere else, the community is able to better understand its distinctive situation and build upon its existing strengths and talents while confronting the challenges that they face.

In addition to narrative maps, resource maps, printed in the Appendix, show some of the tangible places that foster artistic and cultural expression in Brattleboro. The resource maps include arts organizations, educational institutions, galleries, performance venues, supply stores, retail spaces, and professional artists with a public presence. Brattleboro’s arts and culture are part of a dynamic system, and consequently, the maps show only a snapshot in time and although these maps include many assets, they are not exhaustive.

From this cultural asset mapping process—from focus groups, from interviews with individuals and arts organizations, from the large community forum—four significant themes emerged: the arts community is shaped by the built and natural landscape; artists in Brattleboro collaborate to build community; the arts community needs and produces diversity; the arts community is not static—it is always evolving in response to local and global factors.

The Arts and Place

Brattleboro's downtown corridor has numerous art-based businesses (*see Figure 1*), while nationally recognized organizations, such as the New England Youth Theater, Vermont Jazz Center, and New England Center for Circus Arts, help anchor Brattleboro as a notable hub of artistic expression and talent. Professional and aspiring artists are consistently drawn to Brattleboro for the quality of life, the natural beauty, the energy of an engaged and supportive community, the quality of educational institutions, and the opportunities for creative expression. In 2012, *Smithsonian Magazine* rated Brattleboro as one of the best small towns in America, largely based on the quality of artistic and cultural resources.

Brattleboro developed as a mill town on the banks of the Connecticut and West Rivers and the Whetstone Brook during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Infrastructure was built to produce flour, textiles, lumber, and paper (Coolidge and Mansfield, 1859). Historical and sometimes quirky mill buildings offer qualities that cannot be found in new structures. While conventional industry has not been drawn to these old mills, Brattleboro's creative sector has repurposed many of them at reasonable cost, bringing greater activity and vibrancy to the town and arts



Figure 1: Main Street of Brattleboro, VT is lined with many arts-based businesses.

sector. The Cotton Mill building, a repurposed mill building, now houses numerous artists and small businesses, including the nationally recognized New England Center for Circus Arts, Vermont Jazz Center, Fulcrum Arts, and Stephen Procter Ceramics, among many others. The building, owned by the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC), has a tremendous impact on the town's art sector by offering affordable rent that helps attract and retain artists.

Because the town never reached the size of other mill towns, fewer buildings were left behind when the manufacturing industries closed. Many artists report being constrained by the lack of suitable art space, either in the size or structural features. According to Sandy Rouse, founder of the Brattleboro Literary Festival, even finding enough weekend rental spaces for the festival in the downtown is difficult. As an early industrial town, there is also a history of contamination in the land and water with numerous existing structures identified as brownfields, and the costs of contamination mitigation are prohibitive. For structures that have been successfully repurposed, building owners are challenged by rents that are often insufficient to cover major repairs, creating a predicament between balancing affordability and upkeep (Lewis, 2013).

Because of Brattleboro's location in the foothills of the Green Mountains, the terrain is steep, especially in the downtown area, which historically has limited development. The town's population of 12,000 has remained remarkably constant for almost 100 years. Many artists appreciate living in such a small-town environment and though it has a small local market, Brattleboro is within a half-day drive from Boston and New York City, making it a location attractive to many artists. According to Douglas Cox, local violin maker, Brattleboro is "far enough away to have its own identity; too close and [a town] becomes an offshoot of the larger city." This location gives artists the opportunity to capitalize on large regional markets, while enjoying a cost of living far below that of the metropolitan areas; Zach Phillips, a young musician, noted that rent is significantly cheaper than major urban centers and more affordable than western Massachusetts.

At the same time, like so many rural towns, there are limited jobs available and wages tend to be lower, conditions directly affecting artists' abilities to do their art. William Hays, local painter and printmaker, explains, "Getting a job here is a huge issue," which he attributes to a small population and limited industrial development. Bill Forchion, performer and filmmaker, says that "If you want to survive here, you have to wear many hats.... Artists are barely keeping their head above the water." A small local market means that most artists—fine artists, artisans, and performing artists, alike—are forced to seek outside markets. Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, local musician with Elixir, says that the band travels frequently nation-wide, but primarily to Boston and New York City. He explains that he "would like more opportunity to work locally, but musicians mostly have to travel elsewhere." This need for artists to source outside markets is particularly difficult for emerging artists who haven't established themselves. In addition to tapping outside markets, artists often seek job opportunities in education like potter Naomi Lindendorf who teaches ceramics at the Putney School. According to Jessica Callahan, those who want to make it as artists are "regularly teaching as a side job."

Artists in Brattleboro Collaborate to Weave Community

The town faced several consecutive hardships in 2011. In April, a fire ripped through the Brooks House, displacing residents and merchants from the largest structure in the downtown area. In early August, a prominent murder shocked the community. Less than three weeks later, Tropical Storm Irene flooded the Whetstone Brook, devastating several neighborhoods along its banks, including lower portions of downtown Brattleboro. In the aftermath of these events, homes, businesses, roads, and artists' studios were devastated, leaving residents with a vivid reminder of the precarious nature of the physical world and their vulnerability within it that may not have been clear before that. Emerging from the damage, community members banded together to help and to heal those who were affected

by the events, often through the medium of the arts. Performances and concerts, such as Flat Street Rising, were held as fundraisers to support those affected. Commitment to community is well developed in Brattleboro as residents often rely on a peer support system.

Artists have a long history of weaving together communities. They tend to participate in civic activities at a higher rate than non-artists (Markusen and Gadwa, 2011, 7). Artists are especially adept at utilizing connections and barter exchanges to fulfill their needs, perhaps because they are so often short on other resources. Brattleboro's size creates an environment where face-to-face interactions are a regular occurrence. A number of organizations, such as the Vermont Theatre Company, sustain themselves through the connective tissue that links them with other community assets. Through such symbiotic relationships with the community, the organization receives the support needed, and in return, the community receives a gift of a performance. Equilibrium, a mixed-use, community-minded store, is similarly built upon the relationships it has created with local artists, healing practitioners, and community members to shape the identity and offerings of the business.

While many artists and organizations rely on connectivity, fostering connections and collaboration in town can be challenging for a number of reasons. Some artists have chosen to live in Brattleboro for its rural seclusion and prefer to maintain their independent lifestyles. Artists who desire greater collaboration are often so busy holding multiple jobs, performing their art, and/or managing the business aspects of their work that precious little time exists to build and maintain additional relationships. Bill Forchion reflected, "I would love to be more involved, but it takes so much energy just to keep up." Predominantly volunteer-based organizations are limited in funds and manpower, and thus limited in their ability to facilitate collaborative initiatives.

Some community members have noted a lack of suitable public space that is free and inclusive to facilitate the exchange of ideas among divergent populations within the community. Jacob Roberts, owner of the store Equilibrium, stated, "There is lots

of energy and initiative, but it is all siloed. It needs an intersection.” Members of the community speak of building an arts campus along Flat Street, which could create an opportunity for cultural exchange, while others seek opportunities to create public space along the riverfront or in the centrally located Harmony Lot. For each of these ideas, members are faced with the challenges of environmental contamination, financial cost, accessibility, or resistance from some in the community.

Some residents have initiated their own collaborative networks. West Brattleboro, for example, is home to numerous professional artists and artisans who work in the peaceful, rural setting of their home or on-property studio. With the vast majority of these artists’ sales occurring outside of the local area, these artists often find themselves working in isolation. For these reasons Douglas Cox and a number of other artists started an organization, Brattleboro-West Arts, in 2009 with the purpose of bringing people out of their homes. They have monthly potlucks, an annual open studio tour, and small critique groups to help each other improve the quality of their work.

The Arts Community Needs and Produces Diversity

Douglas Cox explains that creativity “needs different things to come together and bump against each other.” This collision of disparate ideas allows ideas to be challenged as well as to merge into new modes of perception and engagement with the world, a process that requires a high degree of tolerance of difference. According to Elsie Smith, co-owner of the New England Center for Circus Arts, “the arts give kids an alternative to ‘normal,’” thereby creating healthy opportunities for engagement and skill-building.

As communities become more accepting of others’ differences, they become more attractive to creative people who seek the space and freedom for authentic self-expression. Urban theorist Richard Florida argues that “What [creative people] look for in communities are abundant high-quality experiences, an openness to diversity

of all kinds, and above all else the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people” (2005, p. 36). Perhaps part of the strength of Brattleboro’s arts community emerges from the fact that many community members take pride in Brattleboro’s high level of acceptance. Cor Trowbridge, executive director of Brattleboro Community Television, explains, “There is a profound respect for differences in town. We walk shoulder to shoulder.” Many organizations commit substantial effort to reach out to all class and social strata. Lydia Thompson, creative director of River Gallery School of Art, indicated that the school spends significant amounts of time applying for grants, which help to make programming more accessible to underserved populations. However, she also states that tight budgets and a disparate population that is not involved with the arts create a challenge to making the arts accessible and affordable to all.

As a whole, the community excels in making arts education accessible for all ages, especially for youth. Many of the institutions in town place education and training at the core of their mission. The Brattleboro Music Center has developed outreach programs in all of Brattleboro’s public schools. The New England Youth Theater (NEYT) gives professional level training in all aspects of theater to teenagers and young adults. In-sight Photography teaches photography to teenagers regardless of their ability to pay. Young adults come to Brattleboro from all over the country to participate in the New England Center for Circus Arts (NECCA). Graduates of NECCA and NEYT may go on to become professionals in their field, while others take root in Brattleboro and create their own businesses and productions. Their time spent with these institutions provides connections with other individuals and organizations, while skill development opens new doors for youth to pursue their creative interests.

Despite the town’s embrace of diversity and its focus on education, a number of youth have indicated that they feel marginalized by the community. According to Dalia Shevin, a young local artist, “People bemoan the fact that young people leave Vermont, and then they thwart all that is fun.... This is a hard place to be young.”

For the town, this has manifested as “a challenge keeping younger talent here,” as remarked by Bill Forchion. This shift has been noted by Ethan Hazzard-Watkins, who says there are “fewer, younger musicians here now” than when he arrived ten years ago. Youth add a valuable dimension to a place’s creativity through their willingness to take risks and push the boundaries of convention.

As the Brattleboro population ages, maintaining a community that is attractive to young energy becomes ever more necessary if the town is to remain culturally sustainable. Young artists seem to face a more challenging terrain than was found by those that arrived during the counterculture movement in the 1960s. Recent attempts at procuring and maintaining spaces for youthful expression downtown have met with fleeting success as was the case for The Tinderbox, a collective space for artistic expression that was initiated by a group of young artists. The organization closed in 2009 due to the sale of the building in which they had been renting space. Since then young performers have had a more transient presence; setting up house concerts, fleeting galleries like Through the Music Gallery, and pop-up events like One Thousand Love Letters, but often lacking the space to have their creative expression take root, and for exposure to the broader community.

Younger artists are continuing to make attempts to establish a designated space within Brattleboro, including a new group called The Future Collective. Their mission statement reads: “We are a group from and for a diverse Brattleboro community working to provide fun, affordable, inclusive, anti-oppressive, community-minded spaces and events that foster creative, political, and personal expression.” The group invites all members of the community to participate in their events, which has included a Future Fest, impromptu parades, and other festivities. They presently lack the capital to rent a community space, but are actively fundraising through their events. A challenge that The Future Collective and many other young artists face is a limited openness to the playing of loud music at many venues in town and finding a home for more youthful forms of expression. Youth often challenge the status quo, pushing the boundaries of expression, which can make it difficult

to bridge the generation gap; however, the ability of young artists to feel a sense of belonging and establish a space for their authentic expression is critical for the continued flourishing of Brattleboro's arts.

The Arts Community is Not Static

As businesses and organizations expand, there are longer-term questions that are worth considering. Growth offers economic rewards and increased vibrancy; however, growth also carries the risk of gentrification, which drives the costs of living above what some artists are able to afford. As stated by Elsie Smith, co-owner of the New England Center for Circus Arts, "Creative people live within all strata. You don't want your arts to reach a level where the struggling artist can't survive." As the Brattleboro community considers the future, it is worth asking: What impact will growth have on the cost of living and the town's livability? How do members of the Brattleboro arts community define success? How will changes, such as the reopening of Brooks House, impact the demographics and affordability of the downtown? How can the community facilitate a deeper community conversation among divergent populations?

The dynamics of change within Brattleboro are not separate from those occurring beyond its borders. Brattleboro and its residents are directly affected by the present economic challenges at regional, national, and global scales. Government budgets are being slashed at all levels; arts funding is often one of the first places policymakers look to cut. Rising energy prices affect almost every element associated with the cost of living, including heat, transportation, rent, and food. Art is often viewed as luxury spending by the public, something that gets cut when disposable income is reduced.

The environment also directly affects the town's continued vitality. Alan Steinberg comments, "Vibrancy is a small question if we don't pay attention to the environ-

ment locally and globally.” Major storms, such as Tropical Storm Irene, have recently damaged town infrastructure, including flooding artist studios. Climate change predictions indicate that New England is likely to see an increase in the power and frequency of such storms. These external factors have the possibility of placing extra strain on the town’s resources and the arts community.

In light of rapidly changing economic, environmental, and social conditions, it is worth considering the resiliency of the Brattleboro arts community, including its preparedness to respond to internal and external pressures. The most commonly understood definition of resilience is “the ability of a system to return to an equilibrium or steady-state after a disturbance” (Davoudi, 2012, 300). This perspective assumes that a stable equilibrium exists; in reality, change is both constant and inevitable. A number of community members suggested that if Brattleboro fails to engage dynamically with evolving local and global conditions, the result will be the community’s decline. Observing recent trends in Brattleboro, Jonas Fricke said that “certain established organizations are locking down to preserve Brattleboro, rather than opening up to evolution.” Successful communities do not avoid change or try to preserve an existing state, but rather foster positive change through actively engaging in a continuous process of evolution. This is achieved through a conscious process of observing what exists or has existed, learning from both successful and unsuccessful choices, and responding in fresh and proactive ways. This is reflected in a new understanding of resilience, one in which “resilience is not conceived as a return to normality, but rather as the ability of complex socio-ecological systems to change, adapt, and, crucially, transform in response to stresses and strains” (Davoudi, 2012, 302).

This is a challenging prospect for any community: how to maintain a high level of integrity and identity in the face of a changing environment; how to understand the value of preservation, but accept and allow evolution to take place. The benefits of a strong arts community come not just in the form of paintings, pottery, and music, but in its creative mindset and focus on improving its surroundings and communi-

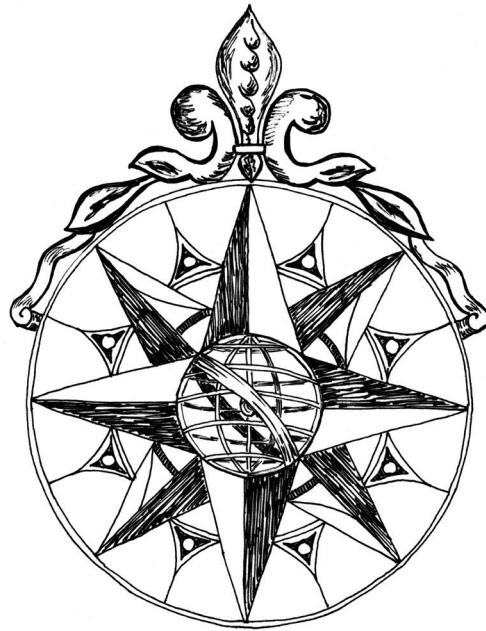
ty. Artists are quite adept at handling transformations; they rely on community connections, local exchanges, and creative solutions in the face of scarce resources as they work to transform ideas and minds toward new ways of perceiving the world.

Discovering Brattleboro's Cultural Assets

The illustrative maps that follow are both a celebration of place as well as an invitation to the Brattleboro community to engage in a deeper dialogue about the strengths, opportunities, and challenges they face. The maps highlight levels of organization within the cultural assets: William Hays (p. 18) is an individual who, like many artists, has followed an organic path in Brattleboro that has been marked by challenges but feels richly rewarded by the high quality of life that the town offers. The Vermont Theater Company (p. 20) is an organization that is intricately connected into the community fabric, relying on collaboration while giving strength to the community through those connections. Equilibrium (p. 22) is a business with a mixed-use, community-minded approach that tailors to the creative sector by housing a café, an artists' gallery, an artisans' retail store, a healing arts center, and a community space, with emphasis on locally sourced goods and providers. The map Clay Arts (p. 24) illustrates the diversity of styles and scales of production through the genre of clay, demonstrating the richness of talent and diversity that emerge from a single media.

Next, the maps explore different types of artistic expression. One Thousand Love Letters (p. 26) demonstrates an ephemeral expression that, for a brief two-week period, powerfully tapped the creative energy of the community. Art Around Us (p. 28) explores more permanent expressions of public art in a community infused with artistry. Community Gardening (p. 30) investigates an ecological expression through the living art of beautifying the natural landscape. The final two maps explore the broader context of place and people. The Stone Church (p. 32) represents a re-dedication of a space—embedded in history and tradition—that inspires

creative action. A Web of Connectivity (p. 34) demonstrates an engaged community intricately connected through a network of relationships between people, places, and organizations, providing a glimpse at the collective wealth of cultural resources found within the Brattleboro arts community.



NARRATIVE ATLAS

“An atlas is a collection of versions of a place”

Rebecca Solnit, *Infinite City*



Map 1: WILLIAM HAYS

An Individual

Brattleboro: a town where artists never starve—at least not when it comes to inspiration or finding fellow artists willing to collaborate creatively. It was this artistic reputation that drew many artists like William Hays to Brattleboro. It was a genuinely creative environment that convinced them to stay. The high levels of local talent are a testament to the quality of life and sense of community that can be found in Brattleboro.

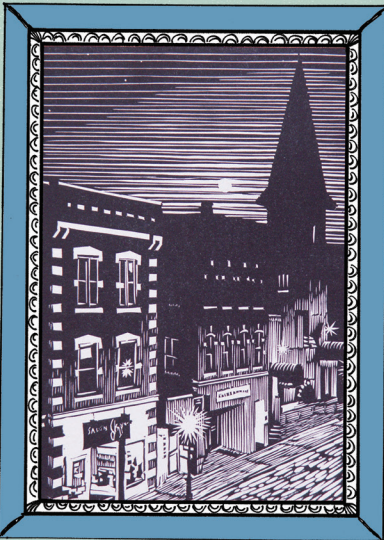
Brattleboro has evolved organically into a place that fosters a high level of livability with a vibrant downtown, a beautiful natural landscape, and a collaborative community spirit. At the same time, there are economic difficulties associated with the limited job opportunities and low wages of a small town. However, financial challenges are nothing new to artists; the passionate will to create trumps the desire for a straightforward lifestyle. The Brattleboro artist may hold multiple jobs as William Hays did between his arrival to Brattleboro in 1986 and 2002 when he became a full-time artist. Even since 2002, William has had to wear many hats; besides practicing his art, he manages the business of selling his work, including financial and administrative duties, while acting as his own agent. Like many artists who struggle with the financial viability of their artwork, William has adapted to economic challenges with hard work, a diverse skillset, and resourcefulness. Even in this difficult economic climate local artists find that their spirits are nourished by the opportunities for inspiration, growth, and connection found in this place—a place in which an artist like William Hays can look back on a quarter-century in Brattleboro and say, “If I had known how difficult it would be, I wouldn’t have done it—except that I would because it is a beautiful life.”

How do conditions today compare with several decades ago when many artists arrived in Brattleboro? How can a community consciously shape the future while allowing individuals the space and freedom to evolve organically?

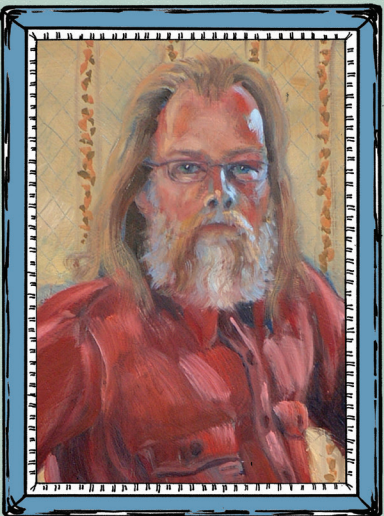
WORKS BY WILLIAM HAYS



"Guilford Farm"



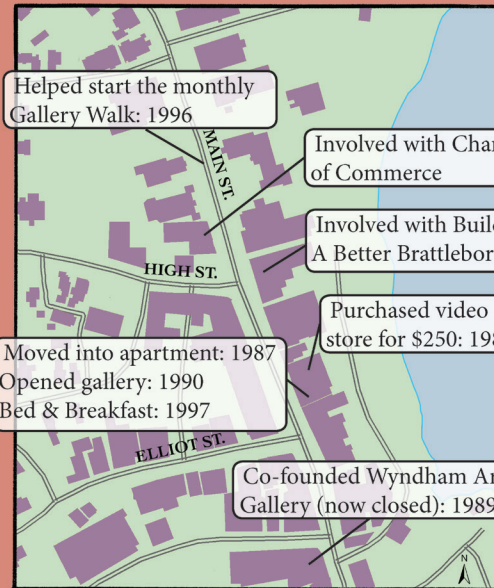
"Brattleboro Moon"



Self-portrait

"The life of a full-time artist is very, very difficult...but it is a tremendous privilege to do what you love with heart and soul."

AN ARTIST GROWS IN BRATTLEBORO



This is a concise history of an individual artist's life in Brattleboro over the last 25 years. Since moving here from Alaska in 1987, William Hays has made his home at his studio, "The Artist's Loft," on Main Street. He represents an era of talented artists who were attracted to Brattleboro's creative environment and, despite the struggles they faced, made this town their home because of the quality of life and sense of community they found here. After years of working various jobs in and around Brattleboro, In 2002, William took on the title of full-time artist. Some of his personal history with the Brattleboro community is plotted on the downtown map above.



Map 2: VERMONT THEATRE COMPANY

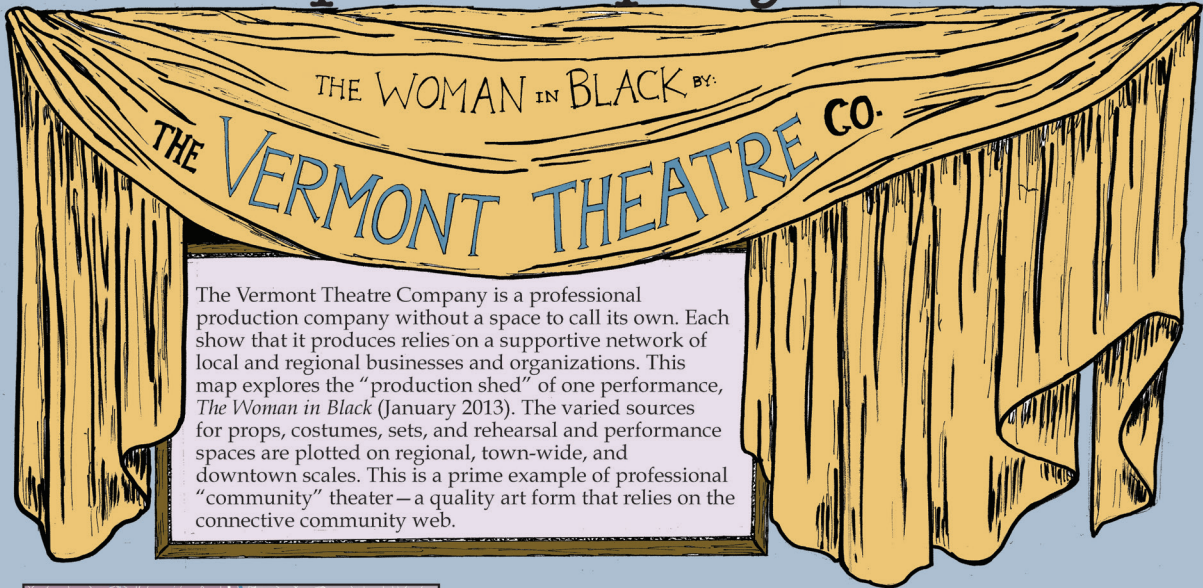
An Organization

The intimate scale of the theatrical production of *The Woman in Black*—two actors centered on a dark stage in the Hooker-Dunham’s minimalist performance space—belies an intricate web of collaborators spreading out from the stage into the streets of downtown Brattleboro and beyond town borders.

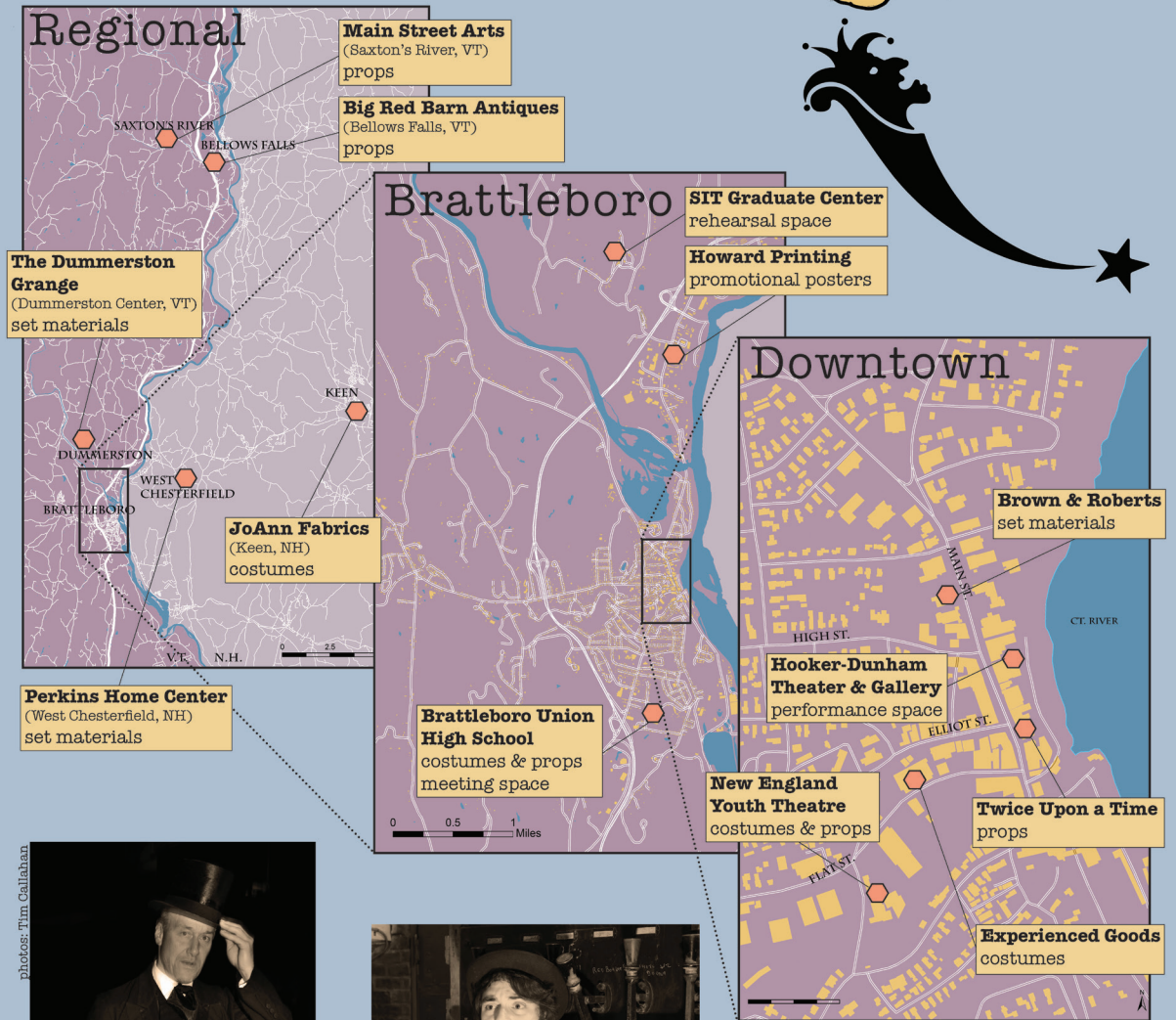
Like most theatrical productions, *The Woman in Black* was the result of a collaborative performance drawing on the skills of the director, actors, artists, and technicians. The Vermont Theatre Company, however, goes beyond the usual system of in-house production by relying on a supportive network of local and regional businesses and cultural resources to produce every element of its shows due to the fact that the organization doesn’t have a theater of its own. Similar examples of organizations engaging in community building was demonstrated in a combined dance-poetry performance between Luminz dance studio and Write Action, a local writers’ group, and an ongoing network of connections built by the Brattleboro Music Center that allows the organization to use performance spaces across the town. The collective pool of talent and collaborative spirit in Brattleboro allows for such community-supported systems of creative expression to exist. Jessica Callahan, executive director of The Vermont Theatre Company, explains: “I am drawn to theater by the inspiring way that a whole community can come together towards a common and artistic goal, and celebrate their accomplishments through performance.” In Brattleboro, the performing arts exemplify a wealth of local talent and community-mindedness; the community nurtures a collective creativity and through this care receives the gift of performance.

What conditions are needed for performing arts organizations like the Vermont Theater Company to successfully rely on a community for it to function? How do individuals and organizations find each other, serve each other, and mutually benefit?

the public playhouse



The Vermont Theatre Company is a professional production company without a space to call its own. Each show that it produces relies on a supportive network of local and regional businesses and organizations. This map explores the “production shed” of one performance, *The Woman in Black* (January 2013). The varied sources for props, costumes, sets, and rehearsal and performance spaces are plotted on regional, town-wide, and downtown scales. This is a prime example of professional “community” theater—a quality art form that relies on the connective community web.



photos: Tim Callahan



Richard Epstein as The Actor



Clark Glennon as Arthur Kippis





Map 3: EQUILIBRIUM

A Business

Two centuries ago, the village general store served as the intersection where locally handmade goods were traded and townspeople met to exchange ideas and news. Moving forward to the 1960s and 1970s, southern Vermont became a magnet for back-to-the-landers—a culture that sought to reconnect with the land while rejecting the excesses of mass-consumption capitalism, and corporate and political power.

With an innovative spirit, business owners Jacob Roberts and Jessica Weston merged the essences of Brattleboro's past traditions into the brick and mortar of the present: a community-minded business that houses a vegetarian café with locally sourced ingredients, a retail store and gallery for community artists and artisans, a healing arts room, and a community space for social events. With a homegrown feel, the mixed-use space facilitates the trade of locally made goods and community conversation, while operating as a business. Open to organic evolution, Equilibrium takes a fluid form, molding itself to the needs and interests of a community ripe with ideas.

What lessons can we draw from the values and traditions of Brattleboro's past to inform decisions for the future? What social, economic, and environmental trends are presently occurring in Brattleboro, and how is the community responding in fresh ways to the shifting local and global landscape?

CREATING A SPACE FOR EQUILIBRIUM:

COMMUNITY SPACE

ART GALLERY

While paying homage to the counterculture of the 1960s and early 70s, Equilibrium paradoxically offers a fresh, youthful energy to Brattleboro's creative community through its unique multi-use, collaborative-based business model. Reflecting the needs and visions of community members, Equilibrium has evolved organically through community input since its opening in November 2012. The cafe sources food from local farmers, the gallery and retail store display the work of local artists, and space is created for community meetings, classes, performances, and the healing arts. This map explores Equilibrium's floorplan, highlighting each aspect of the business and its local and New England contributors.

JAHNAVI NEWSOM:
BRATTLEBORO CAPOEIRA SCHOOL
STEPHEN BUSLOVICH, LMT:
DHARANANANDA YOGA
ELIZABETH KELLEY:
ANAHATA YOGA
ED LIEBFRIED:
THE DIVINE WITHIN
JENNIFER ESPOSITO:
PEACE OF PARADISE
MARJORIE PIVAR:
SHIATSU SCHOOL OF VERMONT
NANCY SHEPHERD:
SHAMANIC DRUM CIRCLE
REBECCA GOLDEN:
EARTH ANGEL HERBALS
GENNA ROSE NETHERCOTT:
OPEN MIC POETRY HOST
ADDISON RICE:
OPEN MIC MUSIC HOST
SU EATON:
CREATIVE ARTS OPEN HEARTS
MATTI SALMINEN:
WRITE MINDED WORKSHOP
JONATHAN STEIN

SARAH ADAM
SAMUEL MCCABE
ELI HELMAN
JESSICA JEAN
JACOB ALAN ROBERTS
DANYA PUGLIESE
HEATHER MILLER
TOM JENKS
BEN KEATING
JASON ABRAMS
PATRICK DIGIOVANNI
SCOT BOROFSKY
ALISSA MULLIKEN
HEIDI BOSWORTH
WILLIAM GUISE

LUZ ELENA MOREY:
MAHALO ARTS CENTER
ANGIE HAMILTON:
LEI ON THE WATER
DR. LISA NASH
DIANE HICKS:
KUNDALINI YOGA
MIRIAM:
GODDESS GATHERING

FOOD/JUICE BAR



WINDHAM FARM & FOOD NETWORK (WFFN) FEATURING:
WESTMINSTER ORGANICS
FERTILE FIELDS BASIN FARM
HIDDENSPPRINGS MAPLE
GREEN MOUNTAIN ORCHARDS
THE GILL GREANERY

UNFI
O'SO FINE GF
LOVE ALIVE

SARAH WEST
MELINDA WALLACE
ANGIE HAMILTON
LAUREN BERNOZZI
JEANNINE BAKRIGES
AIMEE MICHELE
MICHELE MAZUR
STEPHEN BUSLOVICH
JENNIFER ESPOSITO
REBECCA GOLDEN
JEANNINE BAKRIGES
ED LIEBFRIED

COLOR KEY
VT
CT
MA
NH
ME

CHEN DESIGNS JEWELRY **JULIA J. SLONE MUSIC**
DERRIK JORDAN MUSIC **SOUL HIGH TIE DYE**
EARTH ANGEL HERBALS **HERBAL REVOLUTION**
NH WOODTHINGS **FIBER IN FORM** **FLOATING LOTUS**
BONEFLOWER BOTANICALS **MISSION MUSHROOM**
NEW DUDS **PAUL MCMULLEN CERAMICS** **SOLIDAGO**
ILIMA DESIGNS **JAMTASTIC JAM** **MAGIC BY MARGO**
ELI HELMAN **TOKYO POLKADOT** **RON PIERCE FLUTES**
TRINITY BOTANICALS **QUINTESSENTIAL GEM WATERS**
JESSICA JEAN WESTON PHOTOGRAPHY
SUNSU CREATIONS **LOVE ALIVE** **SUNMEADOW ALPACA**
JEDI MIND TRAVELLER **HEARTBLOOD CACAO**
GOOD 4 YOU HERBALS **SIMPLY SPOKEN JEWELRY**
SKEETER SKATTER **TANYA RUDENJAK POTTERY**

SUPERFRESH! HEALING ARTS
ORGANIC CAFE SANCTUARY

CRAFTERS' MARKETPLACE



"equilibrium is a 'positive lifestyle environment' that aims to balance our lives by providing space that nurtures art, culture, community & personal wellbeing"



Map 4: CLAY ARTS

A Genre

A visit to Gallery in the Woods or Vermont Artisan Designs on Main Street reveals an eclectic mix of professional pottery and ceramic arts from local artists. The ceramic works displayed side-by-side on a gallery shelf demonstrate the high level of talent and the diversity of styles and techniques employed. The small, supportive local potter community (like many other disciplines) includes artists like Naomi Lindenfeld who live part-time on the road, following the regional craft fair circuit, or teaching ceramics classes locally. Natalie Blake Studios relies on national markets as far away as California and Florida, while Laura Zindel is in large-scale production selling throughout the United States and beyond to overseas markets. Such dependence on outside markets is seen almost universally among full-time artists, regardless of art form.

The artists in Brattleboro tap a full spectrum from local to global markets. However, their work also reveals the rich diversity of artistic styles and techniques used within the medium. Interestingly, each artist starts with a similar block of cold, wet clay, but with a creative eye and dexterous hands, this humble material is formed into unique objects with utilitarian and decorative purposes. Within these works, stories are told of an individual artist's life—shaped by their relationships and experiences with people and places, grounded within the Brattleboro arts community. These life stories mix together and emerge from their mind's eye through the medium of clay. As each artist molds a piece of themselves into their work, a distinctive style develops, and over time evolves, filling an irreplaceable niche—a unique art form that will resonate in different ways with each person who experiences their work.

What draws accomplished artists to live and work in Brattleboro? How does a community benefit from having many artists all working in the same medium?

Natalie Blake tile

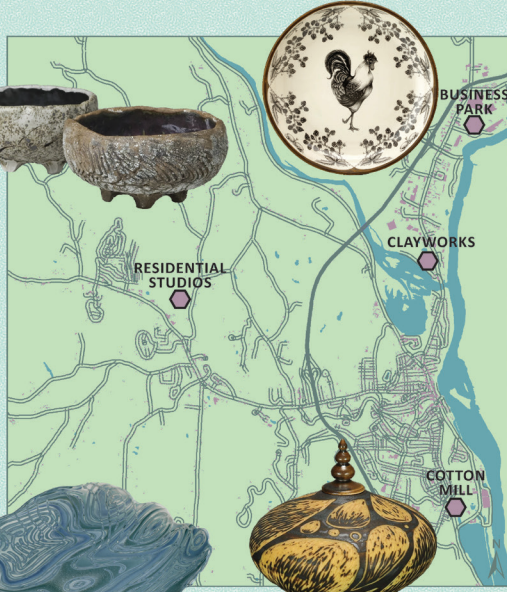
the many faces of clay arts

Across Brattleboro's arts community, there is a wide spectrum of skill levels, from professional to amateur, as well as many scales of production from industrial facilities to home studios. This variety is demonstrated by the community's ceramicists who have utilized a wide range of spaces adapted to their scales of production and work-space preferences. Brattleboro's historic infrastructure creates opportunities for re-purposing old buildings into hubs of creative expression. The resulting art forms are as unique and varied as the people who create them and the spaces in which they are created.



THE CLAYWORKS
 Managed as a cooperative, **Brattleboro Clayworks** opened in 1983 when eight individuals united to share space and resources. The organization offers community access to ceramic media through instruction and rental space. (1800 sq. ft.)
 (Artwork by Alan Steinberg)

BRATTLEBORO BUSINESS PARK
 To accommodate her expanding wholesale production of illustrated ceramic housewares, **Laura Zindel** moved her design and production studio to the Business Park in 2011. (7500 sq. ft.)



Working from her private residential studio for the past decade, **Naomi Lindenfeld** creates a variety of decorative and utilitarian pottery from colored clay in the inspiring, quiet landscape of rural West Brattleboro. (280 sq. ft.)

Nationally recognized, **Natalie Blake Studios** creates intricately designed, sgraffito-carved ceramic tiles for interior and exterior walls and for residential and commercial applications. The studio is presently housed in the re-purposed Cotton Mill building. (1700 sq. ft.)



THE COTTON MILL

Artwork below (l to r)
 Annie Lauterbach, Christie Herbert, Laura Zindel, Rob Cartelli

DOWNTOWN GALLERIES

Artisans create their wares in a range of studios throughout town, but it is the central downtown corridor that represents the face of Brattleboro's arts. Two art galleries, **Vermont Artisan Designs** and **Gallery in the Woods**, showcase the varied styles and high degree of talent represented by professional local potters.





Map 5: ONE THOUSAND LOVE LETTERS

An Ephemeral Expression






The image of the arts in Brattleboro is frequently associated with major organizational pillars such as the Brattleboro Museum and Art Center, the New England Youth Theatre, and the Brattleboro Music Center. It has taken years to build these organizations, including a steady flow of funds and numerous employees and volunteers to keep them running; however, part of the vibrant arts community is less visible, manifesting itself as house jam sessions, writers' groups, and ephemeral pop-up events. One Thousand Love Letters was brought together in two months, on a \$4,200 budget under the creative direction of a young visionary, Dalia Shevin. For fifteen days in a forbidding February winter, One Thousand Love Letters reimaged an abandoned storefront into a "community living room," as aptly described by a young local artist Jonas Fricke. In an age of social disconnection and impersonal text messaging, this pop-up re-introduced a traditional face-to-face social network and revived the art of letter writing.

Who would have thought the old Sanel Auto Parts storefront at 47 Flat Street would become an incubator for creative writing, drawing in people from all social strata—including the town's marginalized youth—to publicly profess their love and then display it as a group installation? It took the innovative spirit of one artist and some willing friends to transform vacant real estate into a center for free, collective expression.

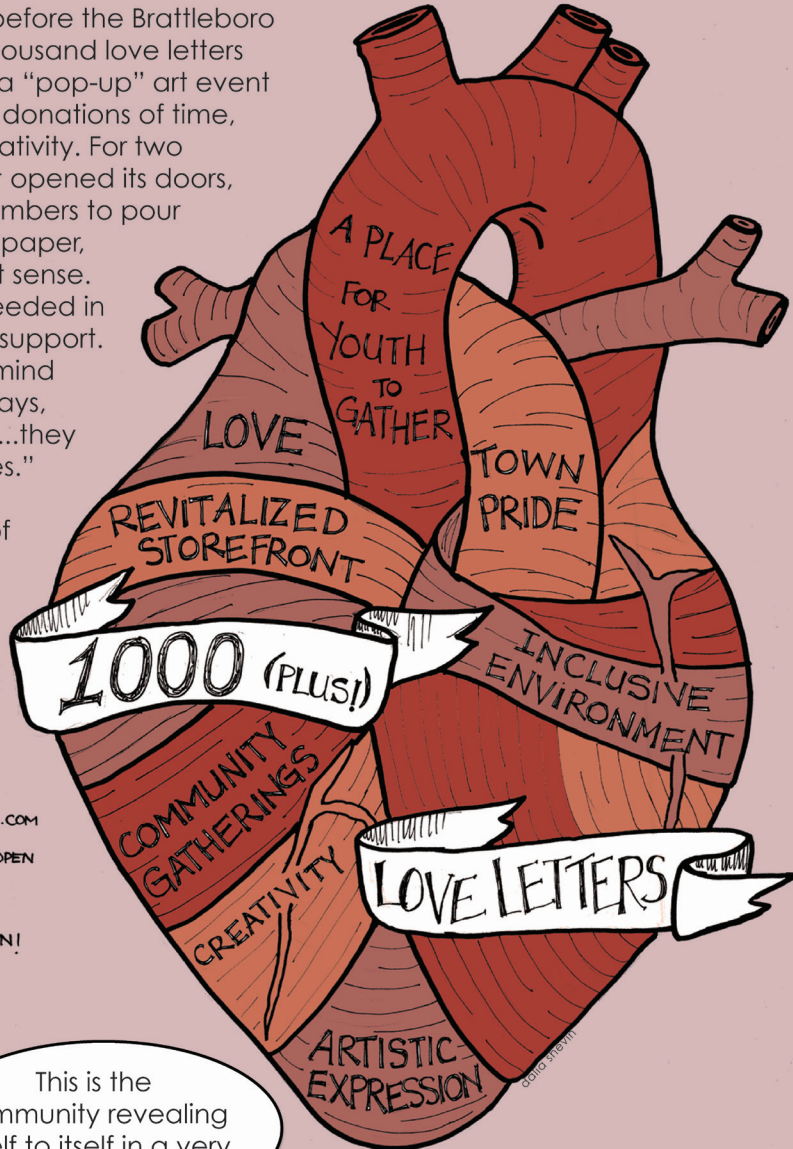
The major cultural institutions stand as lasting examples of a community dedicated to the arts, but one can also look to these short bursts of provocative creativity, ephemeral in nature yet lasting in effect, to challenge current modes of thinking and act as guides for the future. Pop-ups and other short-lived art events are an example of the burgeoning ideas that can materialize when funds or facilities are limited but resourcefulness and community support are abundant. The "letter lab" may be gone, but the community's energy and creative force are still pulsing, ready for the next opportunity for expression to pop-up.

What tools and situations are necessary for artists to be able to respond with spontaneity? How can the arts community provide a fertile ground where creativity emerging from all social strata has space to grow?

pop [up] culture

				
idea Dalia is inspired to create a love letter pop-up art event...	funds A community rallies in a Kick-starter campaign...	space The old Sanel Auto Parts building is rented for \$500...	materials Nearly all materials are donated or loaned...	community A community joins to write over 1,600 love letters!

A challenge was brought before the Brattleboro community: to write one thousand love letters in just fifteen days through a “pop-up” art event supported entirely through donations of time, money, resources, and creativity. For two weeks, an empty storefront opened its doors, welcoming community members to pour out their heart and soul on paper, defining love in its broadest sense. Expectations were far exceeded in a huge rally of community support. Dalia Shevin, the creative mind behind 1000 Love Letters, says, “Love letters are important...they are an endangered species.” With 1,654 love letters born out of this project, the art of creative writing is alive in Brattleboro.



love letters in numbers:

- 2** # OF MONTHS TO PLAN
- 1200** \$ GOAL FOR FUNDRAISING
- 4184** \$ PLEDGED VIA KICKSTARTER.COM
- 15** # OF DAYS LETTER LAB WAS OPEN
- 1000** GOAL # OF LETTERS TO WRITE
- 1654** TOTAL # OF LETTERS WRITTEN!



Dalia Shevin

This is the community revealing itself to itself in a very special way!





Map 6: ART AROUND US

A More Permanent Expression

Downtown Brattleboro represents the convergence of different worlds. The nineteenth-century façades that embody the history of Brattleboro as a hard-working mill town now house galleries, coffee houses, and performance venues, all of which serve as nodes of artistic exchange. However, defining an arts town by its prominent institutions overlooks the outdoor spaces that physically link these structures, which carry their own importance in the identity of an “arts town.” Public expression comes in many forms. It may be as temporary as a child drawing with chalk, or as permanent as a sidewalk art installation. It may be organized through municipal, business, or citizen initiative. Unsanctioned public expression may also be done outside of boundaries of what is accepted and permitted, representing the sometimes unruly nature of the arts. Taken together, public art works reflect the nature, history, and identity of a place, and may provoke discussions and challenge the status quo. Whatever form it takes, public art signifies that creativity is embraced and that the arts are available for all to enjoy.

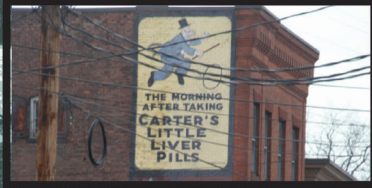
The streets of Brattleboro act as a public gallery, displaying the voice and character of a town that cannot be bound by frames or even walls but pours out into the streets, revealing Brattleboro as a town with a strong arts presence. However, many artists would like to see this public presence of art expanded—upon the many surfaces that have the potential to reveal pieces of the community narrative. The hard surfaces of this post-industrial town are softened by the human presence they support: the sidewalks where interpersonal connections are made, the concrete retaining walls that act as canvases for poetic murals, the brick foundations of neglected buildings that inspire creative, if not sanctioned, expression from spray-paint-wielding artists-in-the-making. Public expressions such as these serve as visual reminders that art is alive in Brattleboro.

How does Brattleboro’s public expression enhance and deepen its creative placemaking? What community story is told through the existing public artworks seen throughout town? What themes are being explored by unsanctioned art?

A WALKING TOUR OF PUBLIC EXPRESSION



Starting at the High Street intersection, walk south along Main Street. To your right, murals adorn the windows of the now-empty Brooks House following the 2011 fire.



From the intersection with Elliot Street, look west to find a humorous example of an early advertising campaign.



On the south side of Elliot Street, not far from the corner of Main Street, fluid lines convert a functional concrete sidewalk into a pleasing piece of municipally sponsored public art.



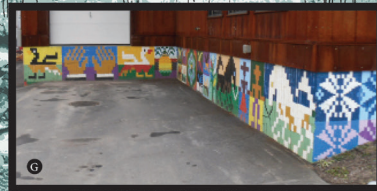
Continuing south on Main Street, turn left onto Arch Street. The alley hosts some unique examples of public expression on the rear of these nineteenth-century buildings.



Returning to Main Street, continue south to find the elegant ironwork on the bridge crossing the Whetstone Brook.



Once across the bridge, turn right on the Whetstone Pathway. On your right, several murals of the Latchis Theater represent an era when movie-going was in its prime.



Across the Whetstone walking bridge, walk west on Flat Street beyond Elm Street. On your right, Scot Borofsky has painted an Aztec-influenced mural on the Cultural Intrinsic foundation.



Continue west on Flat Street, turn right onto Elm Street, and continue up the hill. From the intersection of Elliot Street, face south to see the mural at Equilibrium, created by the store owners. The mural reminds us of the key ingredients that foster meaningful connections.



Head east on Elliot Street, and turn left into Harmony Lot. Adjoining Everyone's Books, a sidewalk has inlays created by high school students as part of a municipally sponsored project.



At the west end of Harmony Lot, there are three consecutive murals, two of which are painted on the foundation walls of buildings

now-deconstructed. This mural, a reminder of Brattleboro's history as a major hub of book printing, was completed by town residents



Public art, including murals and sculpture, communicates that "the arts are alive and well...that *this* is a strong, viscerally alive place," says Jacob Roberts, owner of Equilibrium, a local store and café. The following sites, sponsored by municipalities, businesses, or no one at all, reflect the charm and artistry of the Brattleboro community. Curate your own self-guided tour of public expression. The ephemeral nature of some works means you may find that even in this outdoor gallery there is a circulation of changing works on exhibit.



Map 7: COMMUNITY GARDENING

An Ecological Expression

Tucked in between the Green Mountains to the west and the Connecticut River to the east, the southern Vermont landscape is a source of inspiration for many of the artists who have made this valley their home. Surrounded by the beauty of nature, some Brattleboro residents are inspired to plant floral displays amid the asphalt and concrete that sometimes seem to overwhelm the developed areas of town. They maintain these public gardens without expecting anything in return.

Public gardening combines and catalyzes the most basic aspects of quality of life: our relationship with the natural world, our creativity, and our connections with one another. Public gardens in a town's public spaces announce them as worthy of care and attention and foster respect for place. Public gardens attract visitors to shop, stroll, stay, even move in. They delight motorists on their routine rounds who watch "their" gardens change as the seasons unfold. The civic gardeners who take up the responsibility to work on the streetscape do so within or outside the "proper" channels, demonstrating that the acts of citizens are the main avenue to generating and sustaining quality of life.

Like vacant mill buildings transformed by artists into hubs bursting with creative energy, the overlooked spaces engage the resourcefulness and collaborative spirit that is common to all the arts. Acting out of their own will and desire to join in the shaping of the urban landscape, Brattleboro's unassuming public gardeners give works of public art to their town that appeal to everyone's basic senses, a beauty that is accessible to all.

What underutilized spaces and unnoticed resources exist within the community? How can these hidden jewels be transformed into community assets that contribute to the quality of life?



Anchoring the north end of the downtown corridor, a garden established by Sunshine Rotary Club members demonstrates care, intentionality, and a sense of ownership of public space through a display of natural beauty.



Established and kept up by the Brattleboro Garden Club, the Creamery Bridge Park Gardens serve both as a peaceful setting and an affirmation of the beauty of the old covered bridge and its historic importance.



With the Municipal Building as the backdrop, this Main Street median softens the busy roadway. It was funded by Brattleboro Savings & Loan, and is now maintained by local landscaper Paul Freed, at his own expense.



Located at I-91's Exit 2 off-ramp, a monotonous mowed median has been converted into an array of colors and textures. It is the work of Paul Freed.



Outside the Post Office, an anonymous gardener lifts the public spirit with a splash of color.



Exit 1 is an important entrance point, particularly for first-time visitors. The Exit 1 Gateway Project, an informal gardening group, has taken on the site as a key place for Brattleboro to express civic pride, welcome visitors, and provide everyday uplift on the road.



Alison Macrae, owner of Verde, maintains the extensive gardens at Pliny Park at her own expense with the help of a volunteer. The plantings provide plaza visitors with a green oasis and separation from the busy traffic.



Located on Green Street, John Brosnahan Square is a tribute to a WWI soldier killed in action. With this small garden display the Brattleboro Garden Club shows public recognition of his sacrifice.

THE ART of COMMUNITY GARDENING

Public Garden: a living public art, established in a publicly owned space such as a park or median, for viewing by the public, with the primary purpose of aesthetic enjoyment. These street-side gardens use botanical display as their medium for demonstrating pride of place and community engagement. They are provided by citizen volunteers for the pleasure and uplift of the public—collaborative works generating both aesthetic and civic inspiration.



Alison Macrae provides a mini garden next to her storefront, that invites passersby to pause and look.



Map 8: THE STONE CHURCH

A Re-dedication

Brattleboro's built form is a medley of structures and architectural styles, reflecting the historical charm of an evolving city. Nineteenth-century brick buildings line the now-congested, narrow streets of Brattleboro—a vestige of a past era when horses and buggies dominated the streets. Since the decline of the industrial era, much of the persisting historic infrastructure has been repurposed to reflect the changing needs and desires of an evolving community.

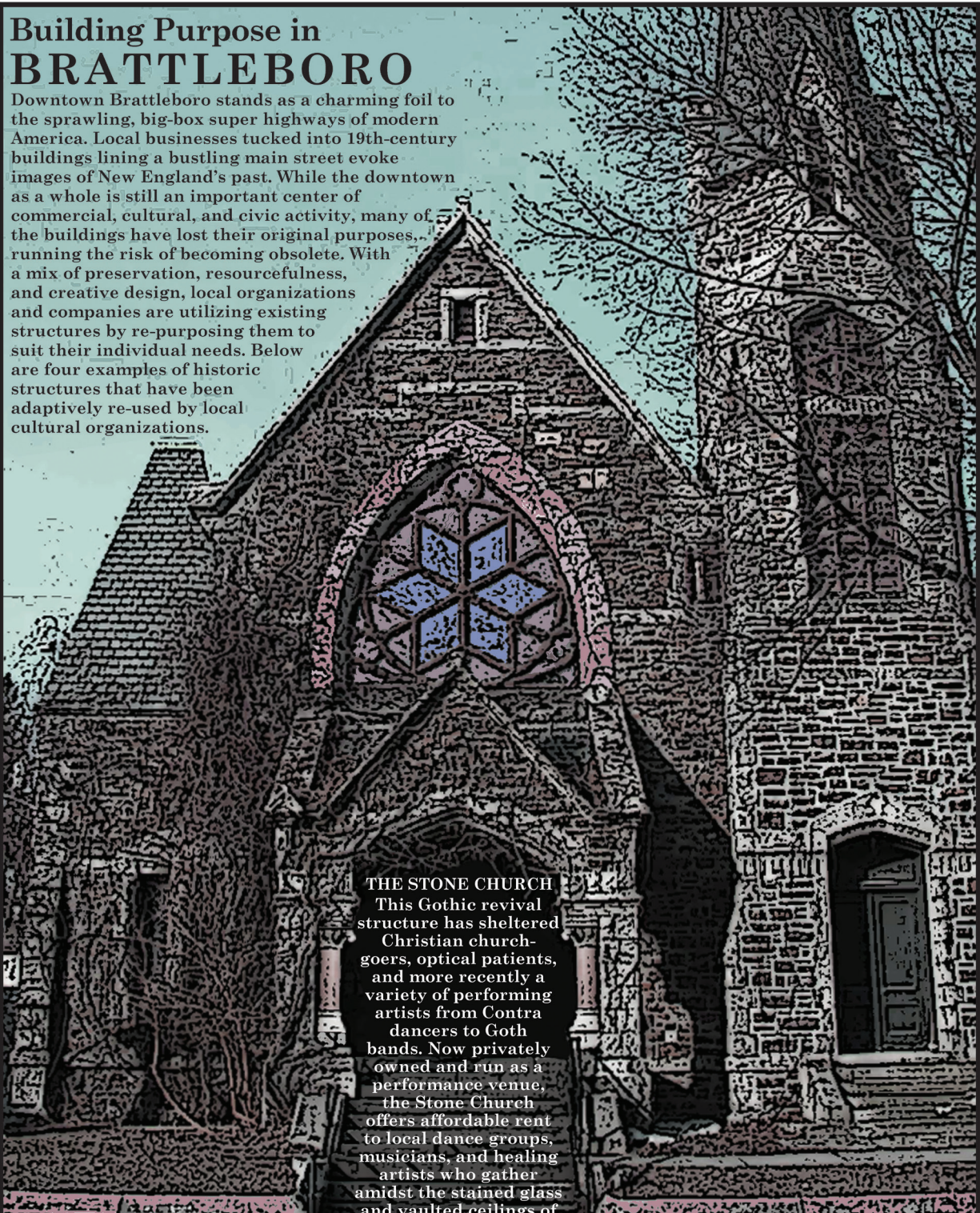
The Stone Church, built in 1875, is a fitting example of adaptive reuse of a historic structure. Originally used as a place of worship, the wide open nave with hardwood floors now provides an ideal setting for group dances, where on nearly any given day, the room comes alive to the rhythm of an African drum beat or the pattering footsteps of Latin dancers. The church's vaulted ceilings and raised stage-like altar create an appropriate venue for musical performances. Its central downtown location and affordable rent make the venue a particularly accessible community space. The building is owned philanthropically by Bob Johnson, and managed by Ray Warren, who together have made the Stone Church available as a service to the community.

Still, there are many challenges when imposing new purposes on aging infrastructure. The structural, financial, logistical and, increasingly, environmental challenges (e.g., contaminated brownfield sites) can turn historic buildings, like the Stone Church, into foreboding structures. But there exists, simultaneously, a certain charm and approachability in these historic buildings—the timeless stature of the old stone church or red brick mill that, despite its evolution from an intended purpose, manages to stay relevant to the needs of the community and will continue to stand if only the community is willing to invest in it a new purpose.

How is the arts community of Brattleboro shaped by the built form and number of buildings available for the arts? What opportunities exist for the community to evolve the built form of Brattleboro to suit new needs without losing its historic rootedness and charm?

Building Purpose in BRATTLEBORO

Downtown Brattleboro stands as a charming foil to the sprawling, big-box super highways of modern America. Local businesses tucked into 19th-century buildings lining a bustling main street evoke images of New England's past. While the downtown as a whole is still an important center of commercial, cultural, and civic activity, many of the buildings have lost their original purposes, running the risk of becoming obsolete. With a mix of preservation, resourcefulness, and creative design, local organizations and companies are utilizing existing structures by re-purposing them to suit their individual needs. Below are four examples of historic structures that have been adaptively re-used by local cultural organizations.



THE STONE CHURCH
 This Gothic revival structure has sheltered Christian churchgoers, optical patients, and more recently a variety of performing artists from Contra dancers to Goth bands. Now privately owned and run as a performance venue, the Stone Church offers affordable rent to local dance groups, musicians, and healing artists who gather amidst the stained glass and vaulted ceilings of this local architectural treasure.

BRATTLEBORO MUSIC CENTER
 Individual rehearsal spaces occupy the cloistered rooms of St. Michael's convent—a building used by the BMC for 61 years that they have outgrown.



THE HOOKER-DUNHAM THEATER & GALLERY
 A former shoe warehouse located one floor below street level now houses a 90-seat theater and two floors of gallery space.

Downtown Adaptive Reuse:

NEW ENGLAND YOUTH THEATRE
 A renovated building with past use in the automotive industry provides rehearsal, production, and performance spaces for local youth.





Map 9: A WEB OF CONNECTIVITY

A Community Engaged

A stroll down Main Street during a once-a-month Friday evening Gallery Walk, a performance gathering, or a visit to the Food Co-op on a Sunday afternoon offers opportunities to run into a series of friends and acquaintances. Sometimes a town of Brattleboro's size is criticized for being too small, but this intimacy offers opportunities for regular, spontaneous face-to-face interactions. The town and especially the arts community are strengthened by the interconnectedness of people, places, and organizations. The physical structures of a town and the individuals who inhabit them are critical to community life—together they create a complex web of relationships where individuals enter into a dynamic exchange of ideas, energy, and resources. These connections between people form a network that serves as the connective tissue of a community, while giving meaning and distinctiveness to Brattleboro.

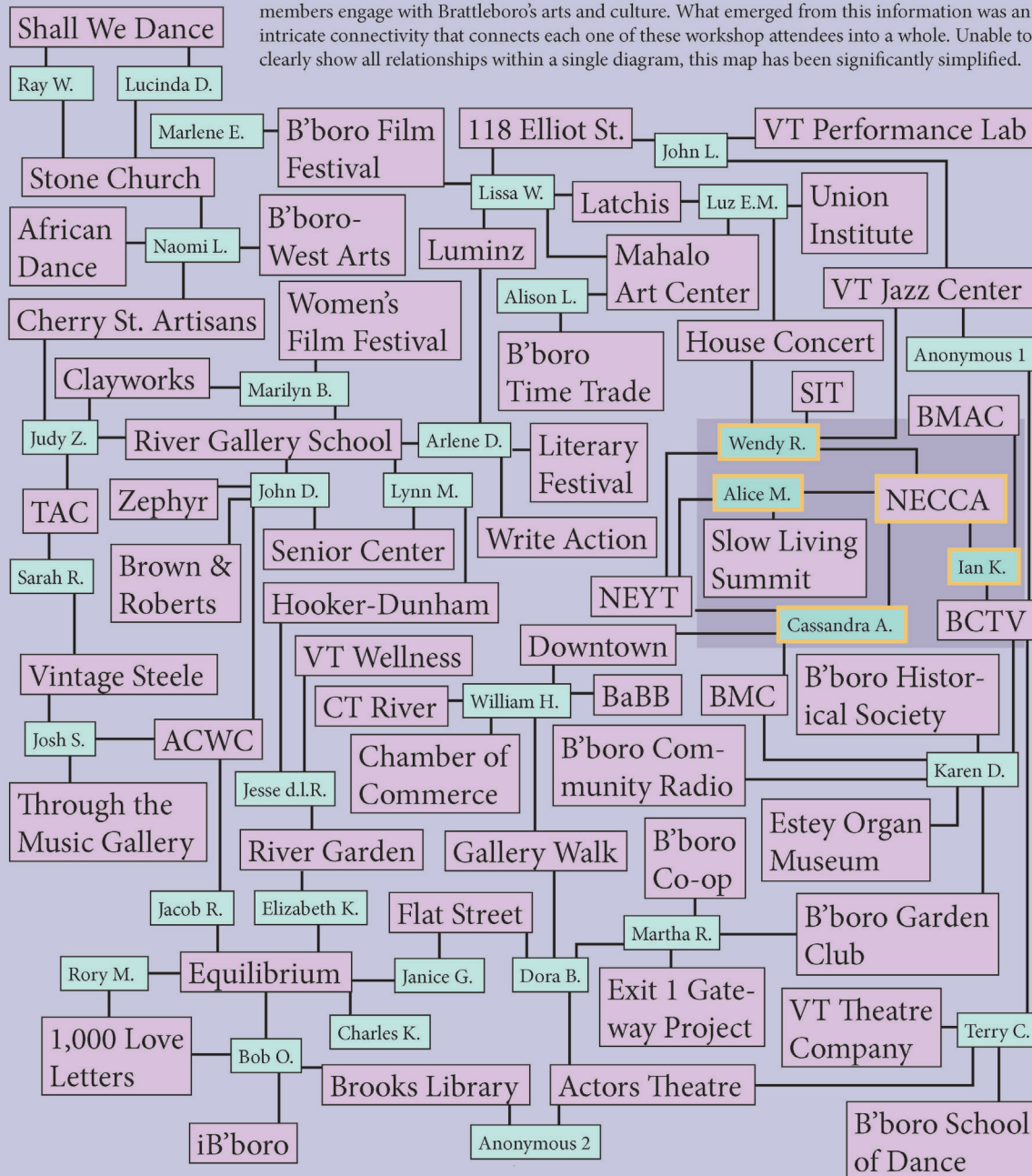
Established cultural organizations form nodes—intersections where the creative energy of individuals is given the space and structure to bump up against and interact with the creative energy and ideas of others. Organizations offer a critical framework for people to convene under a common purpose, while people provide the creative energy that brings the organizations to life.

This web of connections transforms into a safety net to support and lift up a community during hardships. The strength of Brattleboro's connective network was demonstrated after Tropical Storm Irene when an outpouring of community support united to rebuild the lives that were affected by the Whetstone Brook flooding its banks in August 2011. Through the networks and collaborations that bring creative energy together, the arts not only build on community but they build community.

How can greater community connectedness be achieved? How can marginalized groups be better represented in the community web?

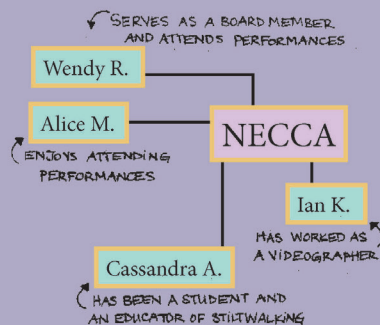
A Web of Connectivity

Communities are organic, living systems built upon a complex web of relationships between people, places, and organizations—a community's cultural assets. Information was gathered from 33 individuals during a public workshop on February 16, 2013, to explore how community members engage with Brattleboro's arts and culture. What emerged from this information was an intricate connectivity that connects each one of these workshop attendees into a whole. Unable to clearly show all relationships within a single diagram, this map has been significantly simplified.



A Piece of the Puzzle

Highlighting and expanding one section of the map hints at the many roles needed for the New England Center for Circus Arts to function well. The system would quickly disintegrate if any one of these roles were to fail. Each subject and link within this web are integral to the strength of the entire arts community.



Legend

- ACWC Arts Council of Windham County
- BaBB Build a Better Brattleboro
- BCTV Brattleboro Community Television
- BMAC Brattleboro Museum & Art Center
- BMC Brattleboro Music Center
- NECCA New England Center for Circus Arts
- NEYT New England Youth Theater
- TAC Town Arts Committee
- SIT School for International Training

“A map does not just chart, it unlocks and formulates meaning; it forms bridges between here and there, between disparate ideas that we did not know were previously connected.”

Reif Larsen, *The Selected Works of T.S. Spivet*

What makes Brattleboro vibrant? This was the question we started with, the question that we posted on message boards across town, the question we would ask again and again to the citizens of Brattleboro. In order to map the cultural assets of this town, we set out to tap into the collective knowledge of the community.

The project goal was to present Brattleboro’s arts and culture in fresh light, revealing new ways of seeing and understanding the community. Through a series of focus groups, individual interviews, coffee shop conversations, and a community meeting we were able to gain a better sense of the community’s relationship to—and perspectives on—Brattleboro’s arts and culture. Attending events, visiting workshops, galleries, artists’ studios and houses, and traversing the sidewalks of the downtown also informed our process of mapping the people, places and organizations that foster creativity in Brattleboro.

With a more informed sense of Brattleboro, we then assembled an inventory of cultural assets within the town, plotting each place and organization to provide a graphic representation of local resources. Resource maps (see Appendix) increase awareness of and accessibility to arts and culture while revealing patterns and relationships. However, the two-dimensional mapping process utilized here can only reveal so much about a community whose depth and complexity call for a deeper narrative. To record the town’s less tangible cultural assets and convey a more metaphorical journey we expanded on the concept of mapping.

Maps are a tool for exploration, of realms both physical and conceptual. Maps can also tell a story—convey the essence of a place. Through a combination of narratives and imagery, we graphically mapped individual stories, which, read together, reveal the arts and culture of Brattleboro through different lenses. The resulting

“narrative atlas” became our way of articulating some of our findings. For each chosen subject presented, many possible maps could equally reflect Brattleboro’s wealth of cultural resources and tell a story of this place. The emergent community narrative illustrates Brattleboro as a living system—one that has evolved organically in response to social, economic, and ecological dynamics operating locally, regionally, nationally, and globally. These dynamics have shaped the cultural landscape.

Conversations with community members reveal a town where art is alive, integrated into the fabric of the cultural and built form; as demonstrated in *Art Around Us* (p. 28). William Hays (p. 18) represents a generation of artists that, through some link, found Brattleboro and made it their home. These artists helped transform a small former mill town into a vibrant arts community. Artists utilized and adapted parts of the built infrastructure in order to produce and grow their works as demonstrated in *Stone Church* (p. 32) and *Clay Arts* (p. 24). Over time artists and arts organizations developed formal and informal bonds. Within the network of these relationships, an organization like *Vermont Theatre Company* (p. 20) is able to utilize community spaces and resources without having a home of its own. *Community Gardening* (p. 30) shows a citizenry that seeks to uplift the public and enhance Brattleboro’s livability. *One Thousand Love Letters* (p. 26) demonstrates the needs and challenges for new creative energy to maintain the viability and vibrancy of the arts. *Equilibrium* (p. 22) offers a vision for a business model that is grounded in the past, yet maintains the values that will help it remain resilient within a changing landscape. All of these come together through the connections people have to places, organization, and the town itself, as illustrated in *A Web of Connectivity* (p. 34). People and places give form to the arts, while the relationships and creative manifestations that develop over time create a vibrant community.

This narrative atlas celebrates the town’s dedication to art and culture. How can this process be continued so that less visible and obvious movements can be captured? What other elements of the community are absent here? We invite the town of Brattleboro to continue this process of cultural cartography—to add their own stories to this atlas as a means of continuing this process of self-discovery and gaining a stronger sense of place.

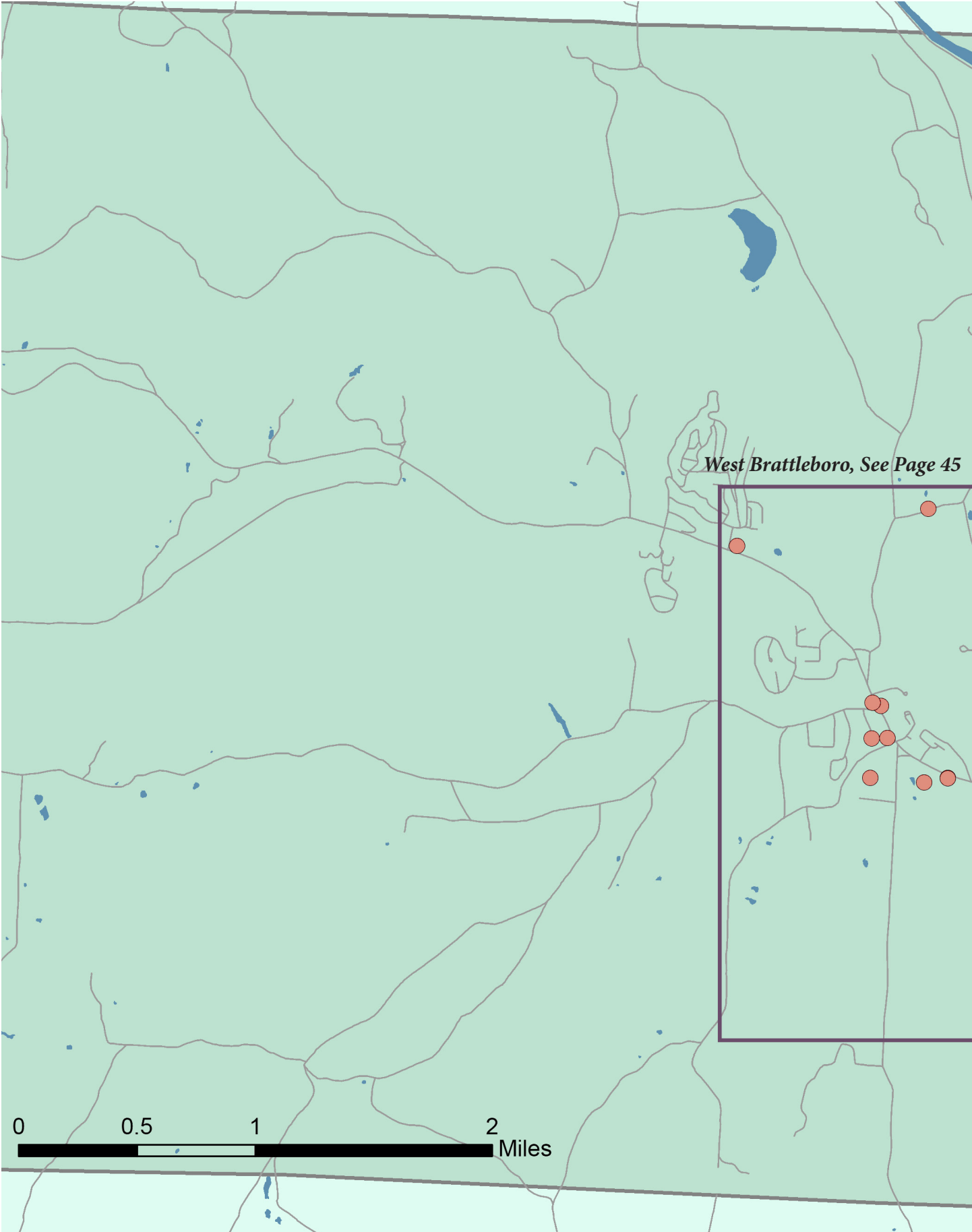
A Cultural Resource Inventory

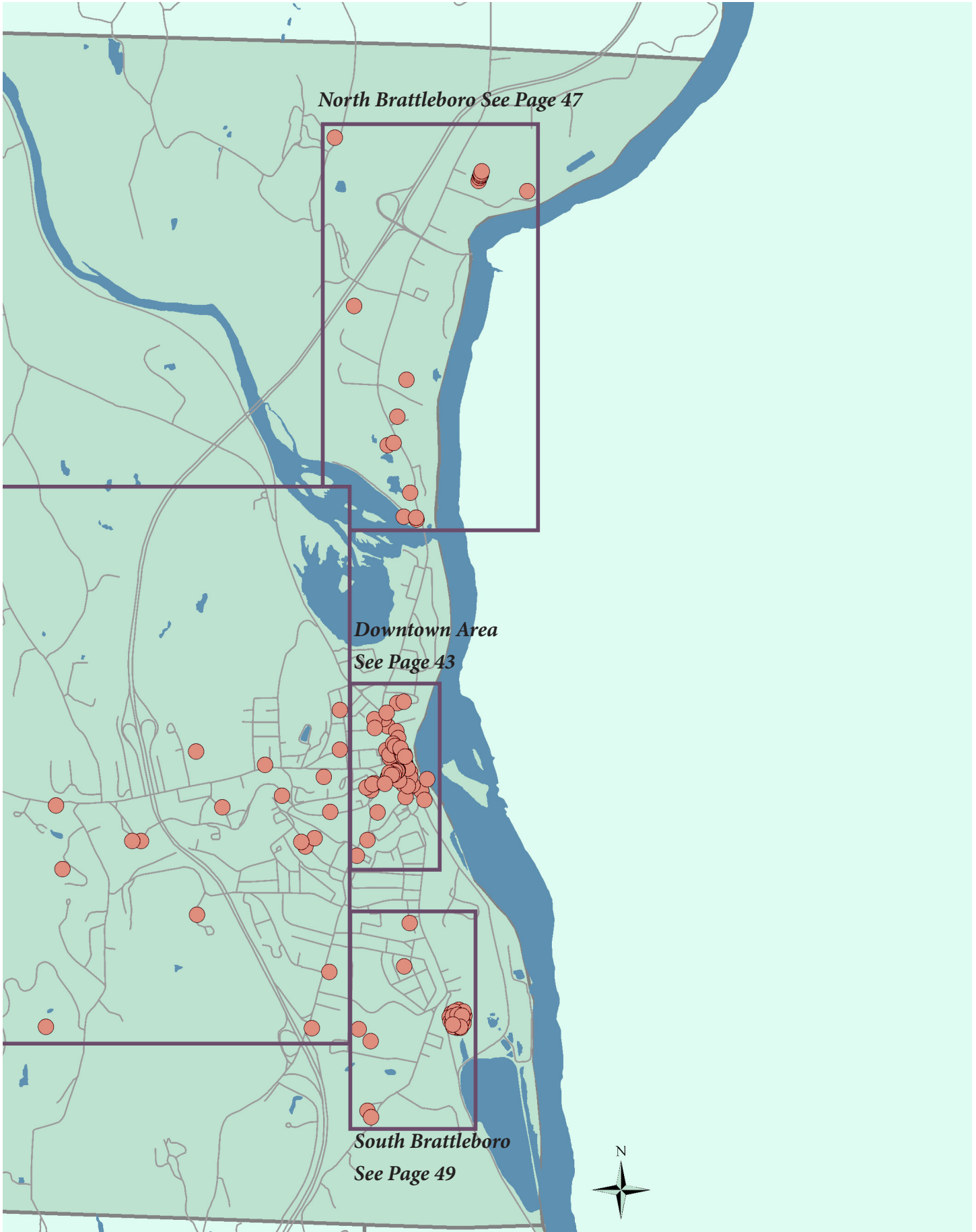
The following maps show many of the cultural resources in Brattleboro. Included in the maps are organizations, educational institutions, art-based businesses, galleries, supply stores, performance venues, and artist studios with a public presence. On facing pages, a listing of names and addresses are provided. They were compiled by searching local directories and Internet sites, talking to residents, and walking the streets of Brattleboro. The maps do not show the many private places, such as residential studios, and the myriad other spaces of personal importance for creativity around Brattleboro. Further, this inventory does not cover the full scope of culture in its broadest sense, which would include, for example, places of historic and scenic value.

A resource inventory is a valuable tool for planners and policymakers, enabling them to make more informed choices. The inventory may be printed as hard copy maps or adapted to an interactive website that improves the ability of artists and artisans to market their works to local community members and visitors. Additionally, resource maps improve community members' ability to access local artists and cultural opportunities (Baeker, 2009, 13).

The maps provide a snapshot in time, conveying the richness of spaces that foster creativity. The downtown area houses a dense concentration of art spaces; however, art is occurring all across Brattleboro. The full Brattleboro map is broken down into inset maps where higher concentrations of art communities exist, including Downtown Brattleboro, West Brattleboro, North Brattleboro (particularly along Putney Road), and South Brattleboro, which includes The Cotton Mill. The inventory could be integrated into an interactive website to help residents and visitors navigate the artistic landscape of Brattleboro.

BRATTLEBORO





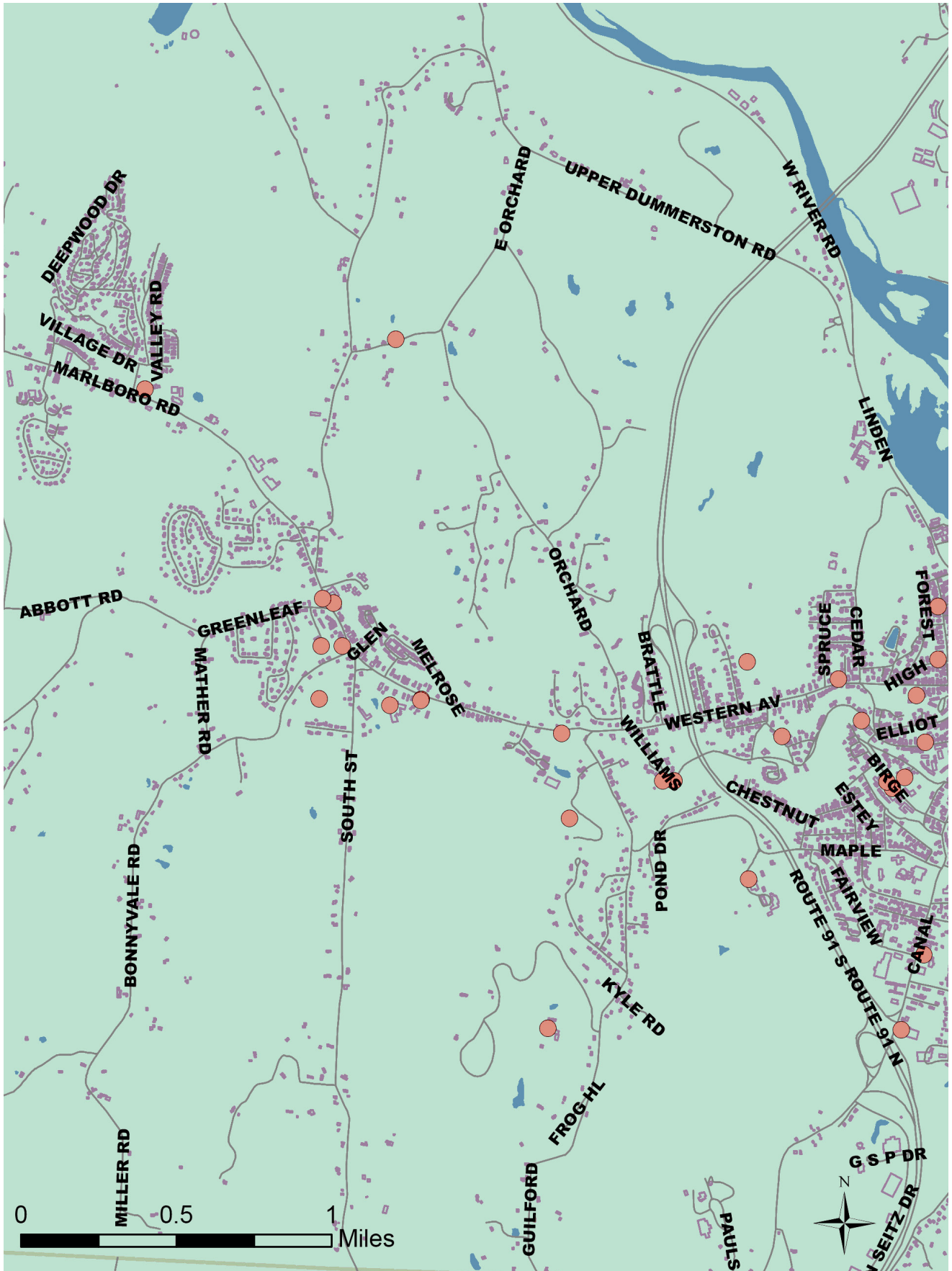
DOWNTOWN AREA

A Candle in the Night	181 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Amy's Bakery Arts Café	113 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Altiplano	42 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Artist's Loft Fine Art Gallery	103 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Back Room Audio	143 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Baskets Bookstore	48 Harmony Place, Brattleboro, VT 05301
Beadniks	115 Main St. Brattleboro, VT 05301
Blue Moose Store	29 High St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Borter's Jewelry Studio	103 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Boys and Girls Club	17 Flat St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Brattleboro Books	36 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Brattleboro Community Television	230 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Brattleboro Food Co-op	2 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Brattleboro Museum & Arts Center	10 Vernon St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Brattleboro Music Center	38 Walnut St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Brattleboro School of Dance	22 High St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Brattleboro Stone Church	210 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Brooks Memorial Library	224 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Catherine Dianich Gallery	139 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Centre Congregational Church	193 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Contemporary Music Store	58 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Dancing Sun	229 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
David Walter Jewelry Studio	81 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Delectable Mountain Cloth	125 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Elliot Street Café	134 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Equilibrium	14 Elm St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Everyone's Books	25 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Experienced Goods	77 Flat St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Fat Cat Studio	24 High St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
First Baptist Church	190 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Flat Street Brew Pub	6 Flat St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Gallery In the Woods	145 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Gibson-Aiken Center	207 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Headroom Stages	17 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Hooker-Dunham Theatre & Gallery	139 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
In the Moment Music and Gifts	143 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Inferno	19 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
In-sight Photography Project	45 Flat St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Latchis Theater	50 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Maple Leaf Music	23 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Marlboro College Graduate School	28 Vernon St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
McNeill's Brewery	90 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Media Room Productions	35 Grove St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Metropolis Wine Bar	55 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Mocha Joe's Café	82 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Mondo Mediaworks	139 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Mystery on Main Street	119 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
New England Youth Theater	100 Flat St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Penelope Wurr Glass	167 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Renaissance Fine Antiques of New England	141 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Renaissance Fine Jewelry	151 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
River Gallery School of Art	32 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Robert H. Gibson River Garden	157 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Rocky Top Tavern	97 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
St. Michael Roman Catholic School	48 Walnut St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Stevens & Associates	95 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Strangebrew Tattoo	58 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
The Commons	139 Main St., #604, Brattleboro, VT 05301
The Violin Shop	58 Elliot St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
The Works	118 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Turn it up!	2 Elliott St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Twice Upon a Time	63 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Twilight Tea Lounge	41 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Verde Garden & Home Decor	133 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Vermont Artisan Designs & Gallery 2	106 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Vermont Center for Photography	49 Flat St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Vermont Digital Productions	22 High St., Ste. 3, Brattleboro, VT 05301
Whetstone Station Restaurant & Brewery	36 Bridge St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
WVEW 107.7 Community Radio	139 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Zephyr Design Framing & Art Supplies	129 Main St., Brattleboro, VT 05301



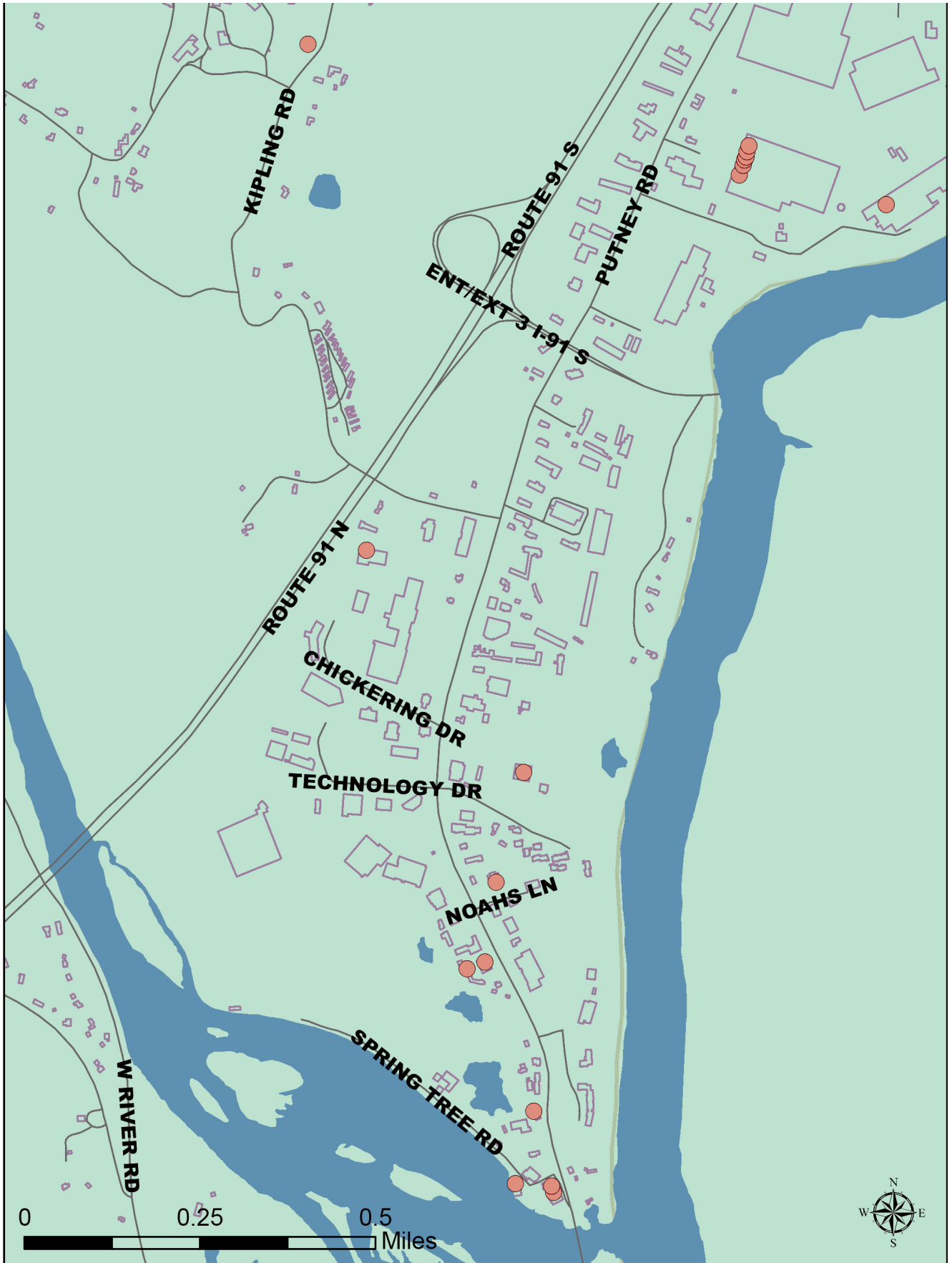
WEST BRATTLEBORO

Academy School	860 Western Ave., West Brattleboro 05301
American Traders	257 Marlboro Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Asian Cultural Center of Vermont	814 Western Ave., West Brattleboro, VT 05301
Austine School for the Deaf	660 Austine Dr., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Brattleboro Farmer's Market	Western Ave., Brattleboro, VT
Brattleboro Union High School	131 Fairground Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301
BuildingGreen, Inc	122 Birge St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Community Schoolhouse	135 High St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Cream of the Crop	580 Canal St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
C.X. Silver Gallery	814 Western Ave., West Brattleboro, VT 05301
Estey Organ Museum	108 Birge St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Green Mountain Creative Dance Center	94 Oak St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Green Street School	164 Green St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Hilltop Montessori School	120 Summit Circle, Brattleboro, VT 05301
Institute for Natural Learning	1037 Western Ave., West Brattleboro, VT 05301
Joan Peters Color Consultant	83 Western Ave., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Knit or Dye	1052 Western Ave., West Brattleboro, VT 05301
Lotus Graphics	448 Canal St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Living Memorial Park (Outdoor Theater)	Western Ave., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Mahalo Art Center	972 Western Ave., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Neighborhood Schoolhouse	231 Western Ave., Brattleboro Vermont 05301
Neumann Studios Stained Glass	30 Strand Ave., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Sanctuary Playwrights Theater	85 Orchard St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Simply Spoken	176 Canal St., #2, Brattleboro, VT 05301
Spybird Theater	446 Williams St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Tasha Tudor Museum	974 Western Ave., West Brattleboro, VT 05301
Vermont Films Group	87 Frost St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
West Village Meeting House	29 South St., West Brattleboro, VT 05301
Whetstone Studio for the Arts	28 Williams St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Whetstone Watercolor Arts	22 Willow St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
WKVT 92.7fm	458 Williams St., Brattleboro, VT 05301



NORTH BRATTLEBORO

Brattleboro Clayworks	532 Putney Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Brattleboro Reformer	62 Black Mountain Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Brattleboro School of Budo	464 Putney Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Community College of Vermont	70 Landmark Hill #101, Brattleboro, VT 05301
Cynthia-Reeves, Spheris Gallery	22 Browne Court, Brattleboro, VT 05301
Daniel Omondi Woodworkings	22 Browne Court, Brattleboro, VT 05301
FiberMark Graphics	161 Wellington Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Green Living Books	22 Browne Court, Brattleboro, VT 05301
Heartfelt Memories	648 Putney Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Howard Printing	14 Noah's Lane, Brattleboro, VT 05301
Kelly's Dance Academy	642 Putney Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301
Laura Zindel Design	22 Browne Court, Brattleboro, VT 05301
National Marionette Theatre	22 Browne Court, Brattleboro, VT 05301
Rodica Tilley	22 Browne Court, Brattleboro, VT 05301
SIT World Learning	1 Kipling Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301
The Marina Restaurant	28 Spring Tree Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301
WTSA 96.7fm, 1450am	464 Putney Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301



At The Cotton Mill

74 Cotton Mill Hill, Brattleboro, VT 05301

Aegis Art Works, LLC
Andrew Laitres
Brattleboro Area Middle School
Center for Digital Arts, Inc.
Daniel Kornguth
Douglas Lynch
George Kaye & Moscode
Good Bear Productions
Greg Goodman
Iron Arts, James Takaki
Jason Gannon
Jeff Burt
Joel Sternfeld
John Hughes
King Parish
Michael Billingsley
Michael Poster
New England Center for Circus Arts
Natalie Blake Studios
Open Music Collective
Outermost Software, LLC
Pro Lingua
Ray Ruseckas
Scot Borofsky
Sensation Products
Sobo Studio
Solinglass Studio
Stephen Procter Ceramics
Stuart Wright
Sylvester Studios
T. Breeze Verdant
Tahnee M Rifaly
Todd Roach and "The Loft"
Vermont Jazz Center

Elsewhere in South Brattleboro

Brattleboro Union High School
Canal Street Headstart
Oak Grove School
Simply Spoken
Thrasher Graphics
Union Institute and University
Vermont Technical College

131 Fairground Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301
112 Canal St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
15 Moreland Ave., Brattleboro, VT 05301
176 Canal St., #2, Brattleboro, VT 05301
62 Blakeslee St., Brattleboro, VT 05301
157 Old Guilford Rd., Brattleboro, VT 05301
11 University Way #7, Brattleboro, VT 05301



OTHER CULTURAL ASSETS

Festivals & Events

Abene African Dance Festival
Brattleboro Film Festival
Brattleboro Literary Festival
Gallery Walk
Marlboro Music Festival

Northern Roots Music Festival
Slow Living Summit
Strolling of the Heifers
Vermont Fringe Fest
Women's Film Festival

Organizations

Alliance for the Arts (AFTA)
Arts Council of Windham County (ACWC)
Brattleboro African Dance
Brattleboro Arts Initiative (BAI)
Brattleboro Contra Dance
Brattleboro Dawn Dance Committee
Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation
Brattleboro Floral Arts and Garden Club
Brattleboro Historical Society
Brattleboro Time Trade
Brattleboro Town Arts Committee (TAC)
Brattleboro-West Arts (BWA)
Brattleboro Women's Chorus
Build a Better Brattleboro (BaBB)
Crabgrass Puppet Theatre
Firekeeper Productions
Free is Art
Fulcrum Arts, LLC (FA)
Future Collective (The)
Ibit Dance

KidsPLAYce
Let's Dance Southern Vermont
Li Pon Artefacts
The Loft Youth Percussion Ensemble
Music New England
Nimble Arts
PenTangle Studio
Post Oil Solutions
Renew Building Materials & Salvage
Shall We Dance
Sounddesign Recording Studio
Southern Vermont Natural History Museum
Strong Coffee Stage
Twilight Music
Twin Vixen Press
Vermont Performance Lab (VPL)
Vermont Theatre Company
Wild Blossom Designs
Windham Orchestra
Write Action

Media

Brattleborology
Dreamcatcher Productions
iBrattleboro

Vermont Views Magazine
WVBA 88.9 Vermont Public Radio

Artists

Barbara Baker-Bury
Becky Graber
Chris Lann Designs
Deborah Ayer Photography
Douglas C. Cox
Douglas Lynch
Gene Parulis
George Kaye & Moscode
Greg Goodman
Heirloom Snapshots
Janet Picard

Jim Giddings
Josh & Marta Bernbaum
Kathy Andrew
Mutsu Crispin
Naomi Lindenfeld
Patty Jacobs
Petria Mitchell
Sharon Myers
Walter Slowinski
Young Shakespeare Players East

Unless otherwise indicated, the maps in this document are for planning purposes only. These maps were created using data from multiple sources. These include:

- Vermont Center for Geographical Information (VCGI)
- Windham County Regional Commission (WCRC), Jeff Nugent
- Original Data Produced by Authors

All resource maps from the first Appendix utilize the same data sources, Brattleboro (p. 41), Downtown Area (p. 43), West of Downtown (p. 45), South of Downtown (p. 47), and North Brattleboro (p. 49).

Data Sources

VCGI:

- Roads, Emergency_RDS_Line. Accessed
- Water ways, Water_VHDCARTO_poly accessed 2/13
- Town boundaries, Boundary_TWNBNDP_poly accessed 2/13

WCRC:

- Buildings, accessed 2/13

Authors:

- Artspaces, created 2/13

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Maps are a tool for exploration of realms both physical and conceptual. *Brattleboro: An Atlas of Cultural Assets* explores the life of an arts community by mapping the cultural assets of the town—the people, places, and organizations that support art and creativity. This journey into cultural cartography employs narratives and colorful imagery to illustrate the richness of a community imbued with creative energy. Moving beyond the two-dimensional geography of a standard atlas, these maps reveal the complexity of an evolving cultural ecology, offering new ways of seeing and understanding the Brattleboro arts scene.

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