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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BEVERLY ARTS DISTRICT RECEIVES OFFICIAL DESIGNATION BY MASS CULTURAL COUNCIL

Beverly is the 28th Cultural District in the Commonwealth

Beverly Main Streets (BMS), Montserrat College of Art and the City of Beverly are pleased to announce that the Massachusetts Cultural Council (MCC) Board of Directors voted unanimously on May 19th to approve the designation of the Beverly Arts District (BAD), making it the commonwealth's 28th arts and cultural district. The MCC's Cultural Districts Initiative was authorized by an act of the Massachusetts state legislature in 2010 and launched in April 2011 as a way to recognize those communities which have made a commitment to using arts and culture to build community, expand access to cultural experiences, stimulate economic development and improve the overall quality of life for residents.

This recognition has been several years in the making. It started in 2010 when BMS declared in its Downtown 2020 Strategic Plan that they were going to focus on arts and culture as an economic driver for revitalization. That led the partners to apply for a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and with that funding, the group created a master plan for the future cultural district. "The planning process was really enlightening," said Montserrat College of Art President and BMS Co-President Steve Immerman. "As we started identifying all the creative talent we have in Beverly, plus all the unique cultural assets like the historic theatres, we realized how lucky we are to be in this community and how we need to tell our story more widely. Montserrat is thrilled to be leading this effort with Main Streets and Mayor Cahill's team. This is a terrific partnership that will make great things happen for the city and our artists."

In 2014, Beverly Main Streets, Montserrat College of Art and the City of Beverly applied to the MCC for BAD to be awarded state designation. Prior to the MCC board vote, a site visit was conducted with the MCC team, represented by Executive Director Anita Walker, program director Meri Jenkins, program coordinator Annie Houston and site advisor Maren Bowen. Many stakeholders in the success of BAD attended the site visit meetings and shared their ideas for the district and their reasons why BAD is great for the downtown and the entire city. This was a lengthy process but the team stayed focused on it and last week, the partners attended the MCC board meeting in Williamstown and witnessed the vote that makes Beverly the 28th Cultural District in the commonwealth.

This designation gives the community priority when the state allocates funding for the cultural economy, it allows BAD to put signage on state highways directing visitors to the district, and it gives BAD special recognition on the websites of the MA Cultural Council and the MA Office of Travel and Tourism. It formalizes the work that BAD has already been doing – programming, artist support, driving economic development – all boosts for Beverly’s continuing efforts to attract more visitors, residents and creative businesses to downtown Beverly.

In 2014, the Beverly City Council passed an ordinance which names Beverly Main Streets as the managing entity of BAD on behalf of the city. BAD is now operating as a subcommittee of the BMS Economic Restructuring Committee and is chaired by Beverly resident Amanda Hynes.

“I would like to thank Beverly Main Streets, Montserrat College of Art and members of my administration for their hard work and dedication in successfully securing the Cultural District designation here in Beverly,” said Mayor Michael P. Cahill. “Thanks also to the Cultural Council Board and staff for recognizing Beverly as being a significant cultural destination in the region. We are excited for the new opportunities this designation provides, and will work tirelessly to take advantage of them.”

The Arts District itself is a walkable stretch of Cabot Street where there is a rich and diverse set of arts and cultural resources, creative businesses, studio spaces and cultural organizations. It runs between the 301 Gallery at 301 Cabot and the Beverly Historical Society and Visitors Center at 117 Cabot. Other arts and cultural assets within the city, such as the North Shore Music Theatre, Studios at Porter Mill and Endicott College, will also be able to participate in BAD activities at their satellite locations.

The BAD website and social media presence will be launched in June, just in time for Arts Fest which takes place on June 20 on Cabot Street. New programming is being planned, such as the Ellis Square Performance Series and the revival of an arts walk and open studios. The group is also getting ready to propose a new Public Art Process for the city. A celebration of the Cultural District designation will be held later this summer.

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