



CultureHouse Salem
Impact Report

CultureHouse Salem

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Introduction

When Julie Barry, Senior Planner for Arts and Culture at the City of Salem, reached out to CultureHouse and said the City was looking to explore more deeply the viability of using Old Town Hall as an arts and culture community space, we knew right away it was a perfect fit for the CultureHouse community pop-up model. Familiar with our work and approach from our pop-up spaces in Cambridge and Peabody, the City saw an opportunity to leverage our experience to activate this underutilized building and assess the impact of the activations through data gathering and evaluation.

In an effort to use this building to its potential, the City of Salem provided CultureHouse with a grant to partially fund a three-month pop-up to evaluate the possibilities through activating this community resource and creating a space for people to connect and engage with local artists and creatives. Long term, the goal for the project was to serve as a testing site for sustainable programming and operating models for Old Town Hall. To bring the full vision to life, we received additional funding and support from the Essex County Community Foundation, Salem Cultural Council, Eastern Bank Foundation, and Barr Foundation.

Though opening Old Town Hall up to the public was fun and exciting, the work we did before opening was what made the project a success. Before opening, we spent five months engaging with the Salem community and understanding what they wanted to see happen at Old Town Hall. This project would not have been possible without the trust the community gave us, the relationships we formed, and the deeply impactful information people shared with us.

In the three months that CultureHouse Salem was open, so too were the doors to Old Town Hall! Visitors were surprised to see the

doors finally open on a regular basis. They enjoyed being able to walk into the building and experience the history, architecture, community, and arts and culture that Salem has to offer. People regularly came in to see what new experience we would have in store for them that week. Whether they were playing arcade games, interacting with installations, participating in art workshops, enjoying music performances, learning about the history of Salem, or sitting and putting a puzzle together, there was never a dull moment at Old Town Hall!

We had hoped the pop-up would be successful in creating an engaging arts and culture space—and it was! What we did not expect was the effect that the pop-up had on community relationships and the important conversations and concerns that it brought to light. As we went through the process of writing this impact report, it became more apparent that the largest barriers to creating a permanent community arts and culture space at Old Town Hall are not only financial, but also societal. The stories we collected and experiences of opening CultureHouse Salem have formed the basis of our analysis and recommendations for the future of Old Town Hall.

When we started the CultureHouse Salem project, we asked: Could Old Town Hall be a successful and equitable arts and culture community space? Almost ten months later, the clear answer is: yes it can—and if done right, it can also be a tool to repair long-standing inequities within the Salem community.

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Rebel Row

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Salem Arts Association

Salem Art Gallery at The Satanic Temple

Sadie's Beads

Salem Gnu Kitchen

Salem Main Streets

Salem Public Library

Salem Public Schools

The Salem Pantry

Salem Sound Coastwatch

Salem State University

Salem United

Stacey Lubets

Stephen Conroy Driftwood Designs

Survivor Nest Project

The Salem Plant Witch

Tactical Bouzouki

Trisha Craig

Velvet Dirtmunchers



The opening reception for the Creatives of Color Boston exhibition titled Blooming Truths.

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CultureHouse Salem
A pop-up community space at Old Town Hall
Open Wed - Sat 10am - 4pm
Un espacio comunitario emergente al Old Town Hall
Abierto los días miércoles y sábado





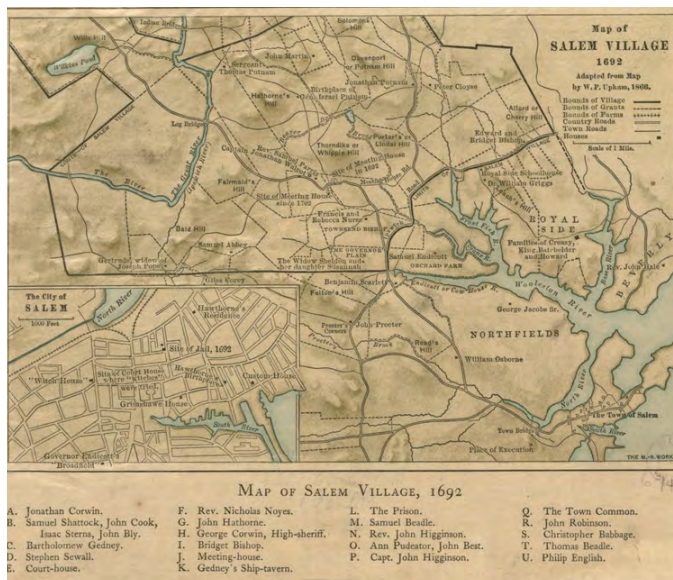
Context

Context

City and neighborhood

Salem

The land of present-day Salem is the ancestral home of the indigenous population known as the Naumkeag. The Naumkeag were partially nomadic and had seasonal homes throughout the North Shore. They moved from one home to the other to ensure that they used the land in an ecologically responsible manner. This constant movement caused confusion with English settlers who took over nomadic villages they thought to be abandoned.¹ The land of the Naumkeag, or fishing place, is now divided into the cities of Salem, Marblehead, Peabody, Danvers, Beverly, Manchester, Wenham, Topsfield and Middleton.²



A map of Salem Village in 1692.³

Salem, meaning "peace" in Hebrew, was founded in 1626 by Roger Conant and a group of immigrants from Cape Ann. It was officially incorporated as a city in 1836.⁴ The City is located at the mouth of the North River (previously known as the Naumkeag River) and is one of the most significant seaports in early American history. The Point and Derby Street neighborhoods were the center for Salem's maritime business and were a critical part of shaping the City's economy.

Salem's maritime trade was over by the early 19th century and the City's industry moved towards leather goods and textile production.⁵ Salem became home to many French-Canadian and Polish immigrant mill workers.⁶ The Great Salem Fire of 1914 was a significant event in Salem's history that destroyed a large section of Salem including the entire Point Neighborhood, a largely immigrant neighborhood in South Salem.⁷ The City quickly rebuilt with new code requirements for fire-proof construction for multi-family housing, which is evident in the Point's distinctive masonry apartment buildings. Salem continued to remain immigrant-friendly with a predominantly Puerto Rican and Dominican Republic population moving into the Point neighborhood during the mid-20th century.⁸

Today, approximately 45,000 people call Salem home and live in a diverse mix of housing types and neighborhoods. The City is centered around its downtown core with other neighborhoods spread through

1 Pioneer Village. (2020). *The Naumkeag*.

2 Destination Salem. *Native History & Indigenous Acknowledgement of Salem, Massachusetts*. Webber, C.H., W.S. Nevins (1877) *Old Naumkeag: An Historical Sketch of the City of Salem*. A.A. Smith & Company.

3 William P. Upham. (1836-1905). *Map of Salem Village 1692*. Norman B. Leventhal Map and Education Center.

4 Destination Salem. *History of Salem*.

5 National Park Service. *Poles at Work in Salem's Industries*.

6 Jen Ratliff. (2022). *Resource Guide - Polish Community of Salem, Massachusetts*. History by the Sea.

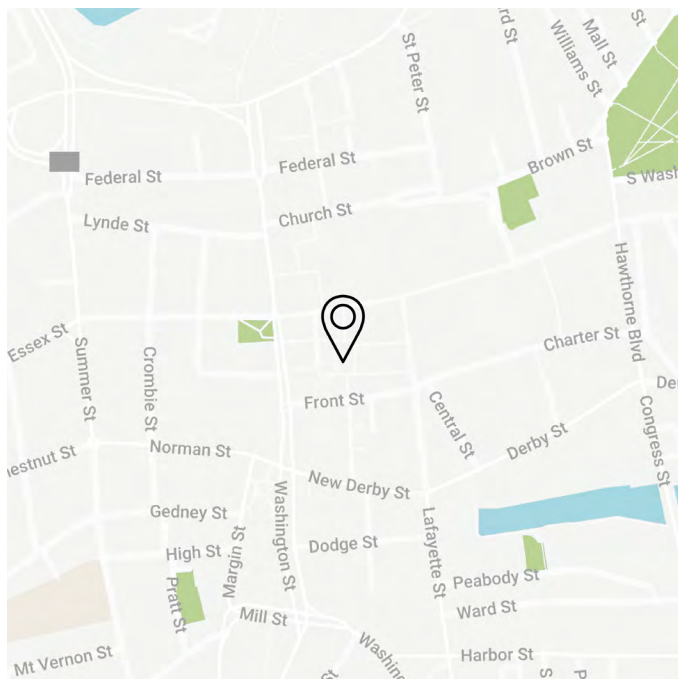
7 New England Historical Society. (2022). *The Great Salem Fire of 1914 Burns Half the City Out of Their Homes*.

8 Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (2006). *Point Neighborhood Historic Preservation Plan*.

North and South Salem. In addition to being an international tourist destination, Salem is a regional employment center and local destination for dining, festivals, and entertainment. Salem is home to several notable institutions including Salem State University, the Peabody Essex Museum and the Salem Hospital/Mass General Brigham. Much of the cultural identity of the City comes from its maritime history, as well as bring know as the location of the Salem witch trials of 1692.

Downtown

Downtown Salem is the heart of the City. The neighborhood, much like the rest of the City, consists of residential, commercial and historic buildings. Downtown has an eclectic mix of offices, tourist attractions, museums, restaurants, shops and hotels nearby. The cobblestone streets and brick facades reinforce the historic American city feeling of the area. The architecture of most buildings downtown are in a Georgian or Federal style. Salem continues to develop, preserve, and highlight urban forms that respect historically established architectural patterns.



The location of Old Town Hall with respect to the Downtown Salem neighborhood.

Transportation

Downtown Salem is a heavy-traffic area that is well-connected to the rest of the City by bus, car, bike and foot. A small network of streets around the center of downtown are pedestrian-only, creating a very pleasant walking experience. This pedestrian area, which centers around Essex Street between Washington Street and New Liberty Street, hosts many shops, restaurants and museums. Derby Square, the seat of Old Town Hall, and Artists' Row are two other pedestrian areas that connect the fabric of downtown. Despite the walkability of the neighborhood and City, many residents choose to travel by car.⁹ To change this, the City continues to expand pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure.

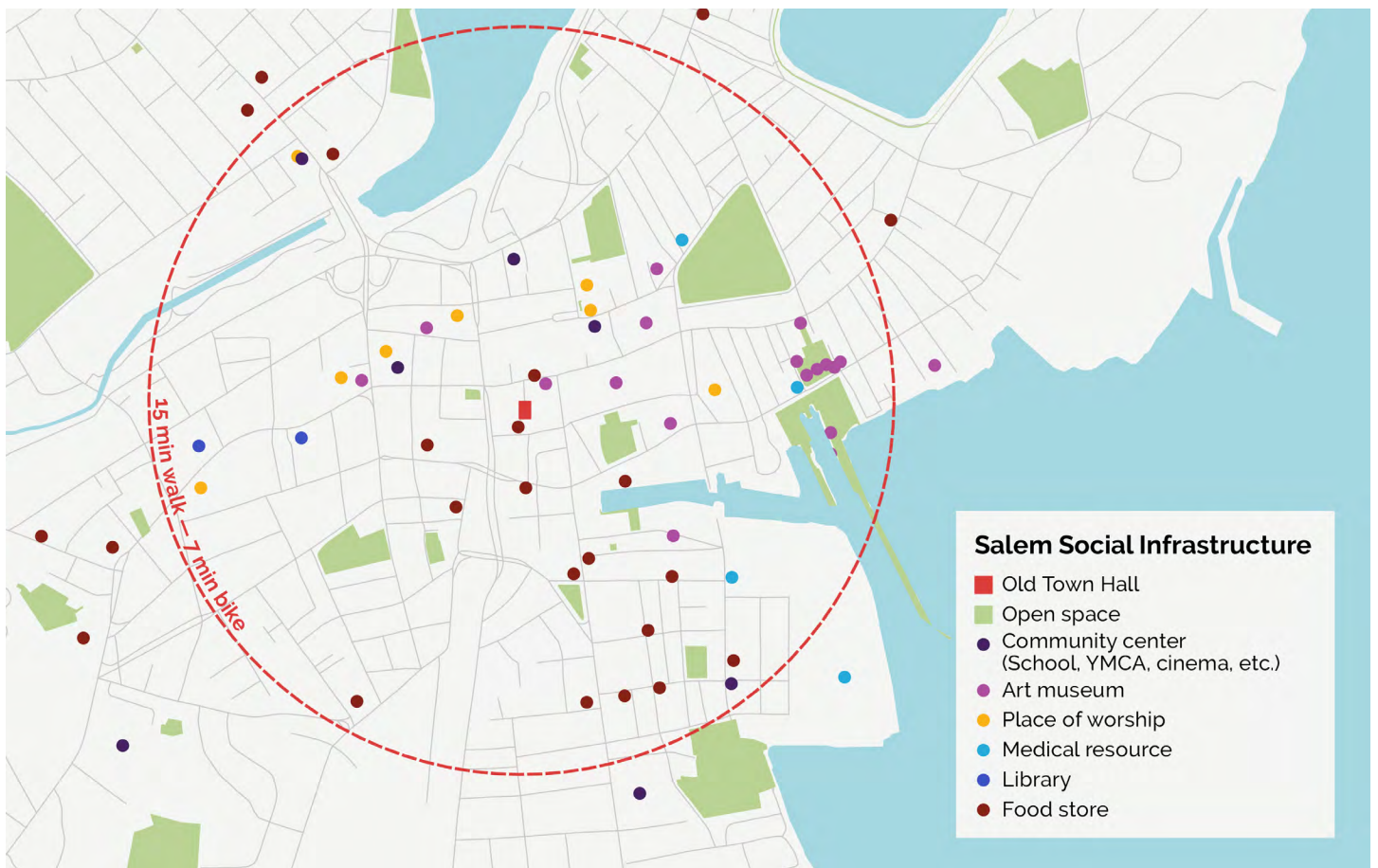
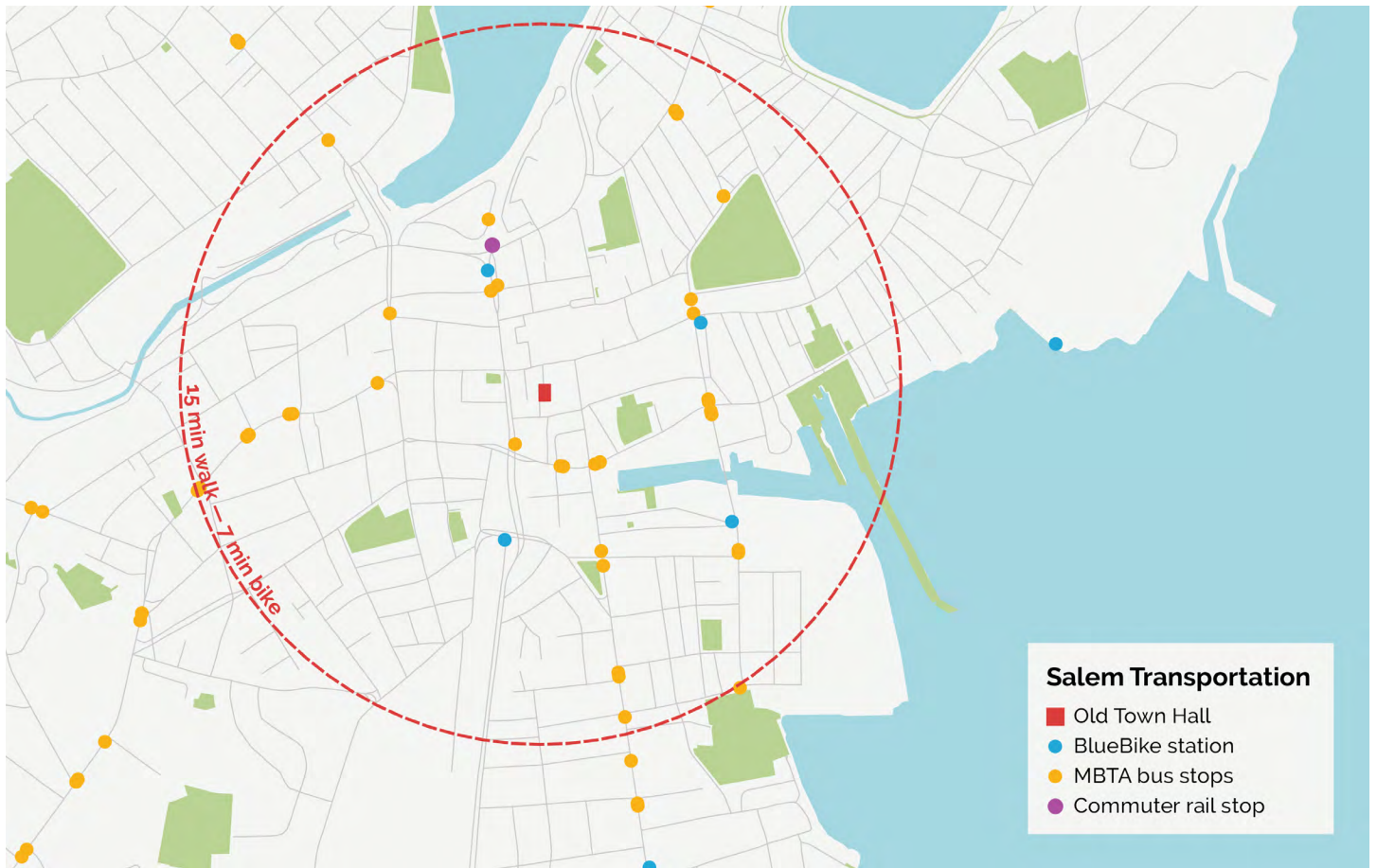


The pedestrian street at Artist Row, looking towards Old Town Hall.

Many commuters in Salem make regular use of the transit hubs in the City, including the MBTA commuter rail station, ferry, and bus services. While Salem does have multiple bikeshare stations, designated bike lanes, and shared-use paths, the lack of safe protected bike lanes on many high-traffic and high-speed roads makes it challenging for some to travel by bike.¹⁰ The recent additions of seven new bike lanes and more Bluebike stations are expanding connections

⁹ Salem Redevelopment Authority. (2011). *Salem Downtown Renewal Plan*.

¹⁰ City of Salem. (2018). *Salem Bicycle Master Plan*.



Maps of Downtown Salem showing access to transportation (top) and social infrastructure (bottom) within a 15 minute walking distance of Old Town Hall.

to Downtown and across neighborhoods. In 2020, the City launched an on-demand rideshare program and has recently started a municipal car share. These efforts all go toward making Salem a “car-light” or “car-optional” community.

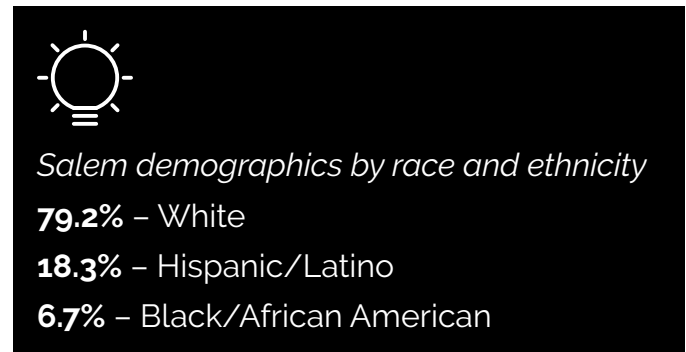
Social infrastructure

Downtown Salem is abundant with arts and culture organizations, schools and a university, religious organizations, restaurants, shops, museums, libraries, community centers, and parks. However, some of the City’s social infrastructure comes with barriers to access such as requiring payment for entry and use of a space, lack of representation of BIPOC communities, and activities that cater only to adults. These barriers leave few opportunities for Salem residents to gather and interact with their neighbors, demonstrating the importance of understanding and responding to what the community needs from their public spaces.

Espacio at 105 Congress Street is an example of a resident-focused community space in Salem. The space was created in response to the Point neighborhood residents’ need for a place to connect with one another and the larger community of Salem. Espacio partners with local organizations to hold free classes and workshops for community members.¹¹ Similar to Espacio, Old Town Hall’s central location could provide an ideal gathering space where Salem residents can interact with one another outside of the City’s normal festivities. Including the community in the process of creating an accessible community space ensures that it responds to people’s needs, builds and strengthens relationships within the community, and provides diverse opportunities for events and programming.

Demographics

Most residents in Salem are white, at 79% of the population. While the overall Hispanic/Latine population is 18% citywide, in the Point neighborhood, the densest neighborhood in Salem, Hispanic/Latine people make up 53% of the population.¹² With a total population of 44,819, half of Salem residents own their own houses and 48% of households are between low and moderate income. Salem’s median income (\$64,228) is less than Essex County as a whole (\$79,263).¹³ In addition to a lower median income, as compared to many nearby cities and towns, Salem is much more racially and economically diverse.



Tourism

Tourism is one of the main social and economic drivers for the City of Salem. Tourists visit mostly for activities related to the Salem Witch Trials. Salem also attracts visitors with its rich maritime history and museums. The height of witch-related tourism occurs in the fall months leading up to Halloween. Attractions include witch-themed venues, events, and merchandise. A retail study of Downtown Salem found that the four main attractions were the Salem Maritime Historic Site, the Salem Witch Museum, the Peabody Essex Museum, and the House of Seven Gables. Tourists and visitors account for the largest share of spending at downtown restaurants and markets.¹⁴

¹¹ North Shore CDC. (2017). *Espacio - Community Space*.

¹² City Data. (2011). *The Point Neighborhood in Salem, MA*.

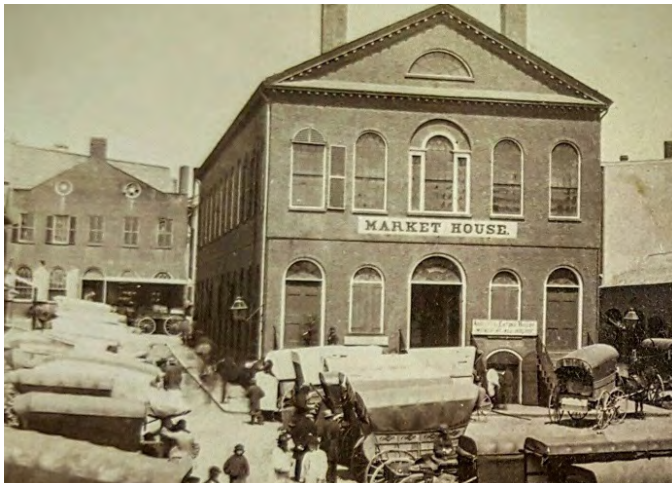
¹³ U.S. Census Data. (2020). *Quick facts about Salem City, Massachusetts*.

¹⁴ Karl F. Seidman Consulting Services. (2007). *Downtown Salem Retail Market Study: Interim Report*.

Old Town Hall and Derby Square

History

Old Town Hall is a federal-style building built in 1816 in the center of Downtown Salem, surrounded by Derby Square and accessible from Essex Street and Front Street. The building is closely associated with Salem's prominent 18th- and 19th-century Derby family for whom Derby Square, Derby Wharf, Derby Street, and the two waterfront Derby houses were named. The Old Town Hall building was designed by prominent architects of the time Charles Bulfinch and Samuel McIntire. The structure is modeled around the concept for Faneuil Hall in Boston, in which a town hall was placed directly over a public market.¹⁵



Old Town Hall, as Market House, circa 1820.¹⁶

Uses

Former land owners and merchants John Derby III and Benjamin Pickman offered the land where Old Town Hall now sits to the then Town of Salem with the provision that a civic building be built for public and commercial use. The second floor, known as the Great Hall, was used as a public hall and contained Town offices until 1837. For most of the 19th and 20th centuries, the rest of the building (the first floor and basement levels) was used as a public market.

Famously known for being one of the filming locations for the 1993 movie *Hocus Pocus*, over the 21st century Old Town Hall has seen various activations and uses. The longest residency in the building has been the History Alive production of *Cry Innocent*, which has been running from June to November for around 30 years. The longest tenant of the first floor was the Salem Museum, which was there for seven years. When the History Alive production is not in the space, the second floor is rented for occasional parties, concerts, or special events. The building and square also play host to annual programming including the Salem Arts Festival, Salem Farmers' Market, and the Salem Flea Market. During the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Old Town Hall was used as a free community COVID testing center.



Salem's seasonal farmers' market in Derby Square.

Recently, the City of Salem conducted a market assessment and community impact survey to determine the future of Old Town Hall. The consensus from the report, published in 2020, was for the City to build off the existing uses and create a permanent arts and culture community center for Salem. In order to create this long-term space, the City began planning for an extensive renovation and restoration of the building which is expected to start as soon as the City secures funding.

¹⁵ Frederic C. Detwiller for James Howland Ballou. (1975). *Salem Town Hall: Historic Structure Report*.

¹⁶ Rebecca Beatrice Brooks. (2021). *Old Town Hall in Derby Square*. *History of Massachusetts Blog*.

Observations

Today, Old Town Hall remains a central attraction for the City of Salem. However, due to the lack of dedicated resources to provide consistent programming and full time staff, the doors are almost always closed. While the City does have an online calendar of events, not many people are aware of this resource and have no other clear way of knowing what—if anything —happens inside Old Town Hall. Due to its location, a high amount of foot traffic passes by Old Town Hall: some from the Essex Street pedestrian mall and Derby Street areas, some coming in from the commuter rail, and others passing by on their lunch or coffee break. Most people passing through the square are looking for a place to sit and relax. While there are benches and seating placed in the square that people occasionally use, there is nothing to engage visitors or encourage them to linger in the area for longer periods of time. When no events are happening in the building, it serves little function other than as something to look at.¹⁷



Challenges

Our initial observations, conversations, and research revealed patterns in the visible gaps and barriers that exist in Salem with respect to arts and culture programming and community spaces. We put these concerns

under three categories that we used to guide us through the next phases of planning and operation of the pop-up at Old Town Hall.

Disconnect with the Salem BIPOC community

There is a clear and deep-rooted disconnect between the City of Salem and the resident BIPOC communities. While the Point neighborhood—which has a large population of BIPOC residents—and Downtown Salem are physically divided by a canal, a social divide creates the most significant barrier. There is a mutual perception that people residing in their respective neighborhoods do not venture into others.



People need to associate an identity with a place. I recently worked on a community engagement project and met different people in the [Point] community, they know me and who I am. We tell them that we are celebrating you; through food that they are used to and art that is culturally reflective of them. When they recognize themselves they are more likely to participate. This gives them a platform to see themselves as well as an opportunity to educate their neighbors.

—Yinnette Guzman, North Shore CDC

Salem's BIPOC communities need to be seen, valued, and celebrated in order to feel included. To achieve this, there needs to be more continuous and conscious efforts to engage with BIPOC communities with tangible results—not just one-off event-based interactions. With so many disparate engagement initiatives happening in the Point and few outcomes, community members are exhausted and frustrated. Leaders often feel they are asked to represent their community for City initiatives

¹⁷ All observational data collection at Old Town Hall and Derby Square was conducted during the colder months of February and March.

that lead nowhere. These fractures, formed over many years, makes it challenging for the BIPOC communities to engage with City projects using existing structures, even when the projects could have a positive impact for residents.

The North Shore CDC has been working to create a sense of identity and pride in the Point neighborhood by highlighting the culture of the existing community. This effort has increased patronage and created a more positive association with the Point in surrounding neighborhoods. Creating a welcoming space at Old Town Hall with programming representing and celebrating BIPOC communities will be an important opportunity to bring diverse visitors and create a new and inclusive identity for Downtown.

Witch tourism

A lot of Salem's tourism culture is based on the Witch Trials—reflected in the art, restaurants, and shops Downtown. Some residents embrace the witch history and tourism (though would like to see the revenue from the industry have more direct community benefit). Other residents wish Salem had spaces downtown that are attractive to its residents and not just tourists—they want more opportunities to learn about Salem's history outside of witches. Old Town Hall is in a unique position Downtown to be a space that responds to residents needs and be a space for information and opportunities.

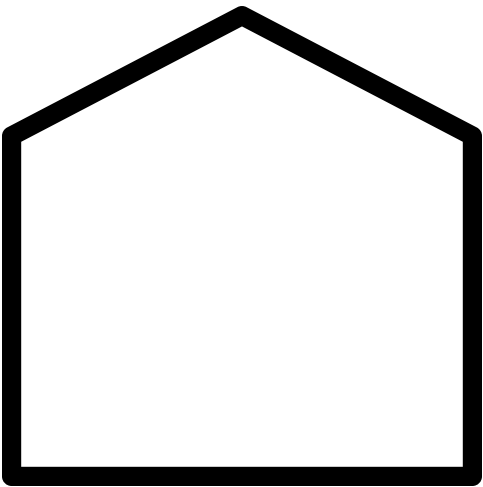
Artists' and creatives' relationships with the City

There is a tension that exists between the creative community and the City of Salem. There is a pervasive feeling that the funding and support the City gives to the creative community is insufficient. Moreover, while there is no shortage of creatives in Salem, due to lack of clarity and access to information, the City often distributes these limited opportunities unequally.

Aside from funding and opportunity concerns, many community members find the process for organizing events at Old Town Hall and Derby Square to be confusing. With few channels for communication, most people do not know who to reach out to and what information is needed to run an event. This is compounded by historically unclear processes and additional paperwork that can present a significant barrier to approval and moving to next steps. Finally, creatives are hampered by a lack of space that is accessible and suitable for their use. These challenges further the existing tensions, leading to an overall frustration in the creative community.



A performance by the ChagallPAC Saxophone Quartet.



Pop-up

Pop-up

Testing different uses of Old Town Hall

Old Town Hall is an underutilized space with so much potential to address community needs. Artists and creatives are looking for more space in Salem to host events and the residents want an easily-accessible community space. While there is a future plan to transform Old Town Hall into a community arts and culture venue, there is still a lot of uncertainty as to who the space would serve, how it would operate, and in what ways it would involve the community.

After five months of pre-opening engagement, on April 1st, CultureHouse Salem opened for three months as a testing grounds for different uses of Old Town Hall—as a living room for the community, an arts culture center, and a connection point to the City. Through closing day on June 30th, CultureHouse Salem returned Old Town Hall to its historical use as a community gathering space and a plug-and-play venue for creatives to access the rest of the Salem community.



Pre-opening community engagement



Five months of pre-opening engagement is a short time to create relationships with a community and gain trust. Though our work was temporary, we were able to have important conversations and ensure insights were passed along to the right parties.

Engagement strategies

We spent November 2021 through March 2022 engaging with the community of Salem to ensure the eventual pop-up was informed directly by community needs. As an organization not based in Salem, we wanted to ensure that we created relationships with the Salem community so they knew us and what we were doing at Old Town Hall.

Over the course of five months of pre-opening engagement, CultureHouse had direct conversations with around 200 people, received over 100 pre-opening survey responses, and hosted a community meeting with 30 people in attendance. We interacted with artists, creatives, City officials, historians, residents, non-profit organizations, government entities, institutions, local businesses, and so many more! Moving away from traditional forms of feedback, we conducted in-person pop-ups in Derby Square with interactive methods of engagement that encouraged those who don't often get involved in City projects to talk to us.

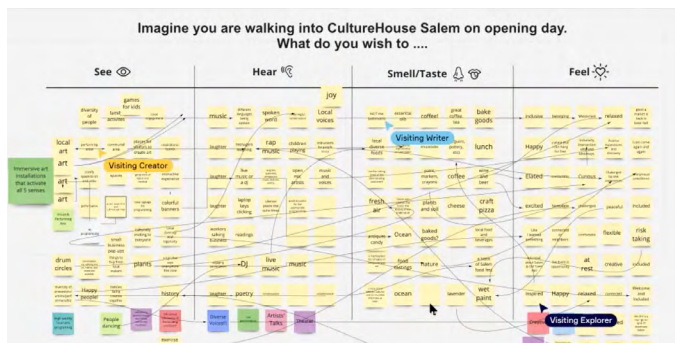
We put together an advisory group of local artists and creatives, residents, and non-

profit and institutional representatives. The advisory group met once a month to hear what we were gathering from the community and guide us in the right direction. During these meetings, participants brought up concerns about the pop-up, informed the programming and artist pay structure, provided CultureHouse with connections to the Salem community, came up with solutions to operational challenges, and offered feedback on decisions.



During one of our interactive mini engagement pop-ups, a father continuously came back with his son. The father was able to answer the feedback questions we were asking while his son played on the trampoline. The son encouraged more kids and parents to gather around and helped us get more people to participate. As the family was leaving, the boy asked us "are you going to be here tomorrow?" and then said "I want you to come back next year!"

After we went through the information from conversations, surveys, and the advisory group and noted down concerns and ideas, we held a virtual community meeting. The meeting was yet another way to ensure that community members were continuously included in the decision-making process. At the meeting, we shared the project goals, highlighted our initial findings, and ran an interactive design exercise to determine the layout of the pop-up.



The design activity at the community meeting.

Our wide range of engagement methods allowed us to gather lots of different feedback from diverse community members. Through surveys, we were able to ask specific questions about Old Town Hall. In-person engagement allowed us to immerse ourselves in the community and give people the opportunity to ask us questions—for instance, we interacted with residents in the Point by joining the Salem Pantry distribution at Espacio. We also collected observational data around Old Town Hall to understand who was visiting the area and why.

What we heard

Initially, we received mixed reactions to the pop-up at Old Town Hall. The community was skeptical about the City's intentions behind the pop-up and whether they were going to see any tangible outcomes. Some worried the project would be the same as the numerous other arts and culture events in Salem they'd seen before. Artists and creatives were concerned about how the project was going to benefit them and cut through the noise of existing arts and culture programming in Salem. Eventually, through productive conversations the skepticism subsided and everyone understood the importance of testing a diversified use for Old Town Hall. People were glad that the City of Salem took a step in the right direction.

Our engagement focused on understanding how people felt about Downtown Salem and Old Town Hall—what they loved, what they wished they could change, and how they access arts and culture in Salem.

After compiling all the feedback we received, we found six main areas of concern for the pop-up to address:

Lack of performance space

Artists and creatives are constantly looking for more space in Salem where they can perform, rehearse, show their work, or use as operation space for their organizations. The existing opportunities in Salem are not always feasible and easily available.

More equitable and accessible programming for artists



It's great that [arts and culture in Salem] is strong, but it seems to always be the same group of people. [Arts and culture in Salem] should be inclusive of a wider range of participants regardless of their connections

—Community survey response

There is a notion among the Salem community that only a select few artists and creatives have access to programming opportunities in Salem. Most people do not know where to get information about hosting events at Old Town Hall, who to talk to, and how to be a part of the larger creative community in Salem. There is limited access for creatives that do not fit into the traditional mold of programming and require multi-use spaces that can respond to their art forms and programming needs.

Lack of access, signage, and communication at Old Town Hall



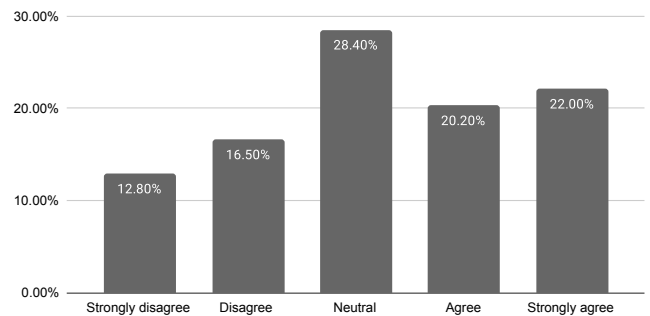
I honestly haven't interacted with [Old Town Hall] much, particularly the inside, even though I work downtown. I have positive feelings towards it though, it is a pretty building and I have enjoyed the farmers market next to it. But I have a very bad sense of 'what it's for,' or what the goals of the building are (other than just being a historic building).

—Community survey response

People agree that Old Town Hall is a beautiful and historical asset to Salem—but has untapped potential. Very few people felt they had access to the building—every time they walked past, the doors were always closed.

Even if there was something happening inside, they wouldn't know since there are no signs pointing to Old Town Hall or indicating what is happening inside. Communication channels for sharing events and opportunities are limited and not necessarily accessible to everyone.

Rate how you feel about the following statement: I have access to Old Town Hall



Pre-engagement community survey responses showing 30% of the Salem community felt like they didn't have access to Old Town Hall.

More youth programming

Adults with kids reported visiting Downtown for special occasions but noticed that there wasn't a lot for children to do. Most restaurants, cafes, bars and shops cater only to adults.

More diverse representation of the Salem community

There is a common sentiment of wanting to see more representation of BIPOC culture in public spaces Downtown. BIPOC organizations looking to bring their work Downtown are often hampered by existing systemic inequities that are perpetuated by insufficient intentional inclusion in Downtown.

Highlight all of Salem's history

Beyond witches, people are curious and eager to learn about the full history of Salem, Old Town Hall, and the diverse local culture. Many community members expressed interest in having lectures, educational workshops, and opportunities for cross cultural interactions.

Design

Design drivers

From the design exercise during the community meeting and the survey responses, we put together design drivers for the interior buildout of the CultureHouse Salem pop-up:

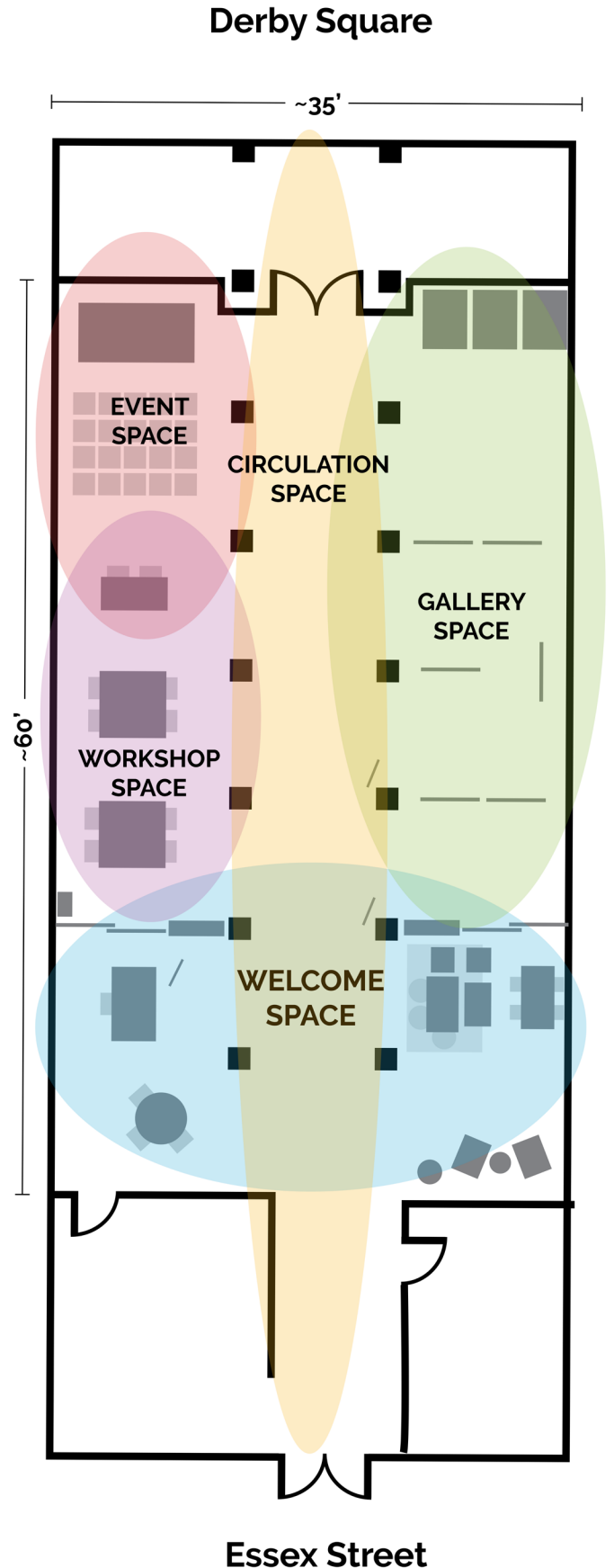
- Clear communication, wayfinding signage, and graphics to let people know what is happening inside CultureHouse Salem—highlighting that it is a free-to-enter space for everyone.
- Opportunities for people to share, engage and learn from each other using varied furniture layouts.
- A multifunctional space that is flexible and able to adapt to different types of art and performances.
- A welcoming environment and atmosphere where all can enter and spend some time without the obligation to be part of an event.

Layout



Visitors watch a *Tactical Bouzouki* performance.

The CultureHouse pop-up took up the first-floor colonnade of Old Town Hall. We created four zones: a welcome space, a workshop space, a gallery space, and an event space. The welcome space was located at the entrance and included a reception desk and a living room area for



passive programming. While the living room was constant, the reception desk would move based on programming needs. The reception was always in the line of sight and easily accessible for all visitors. The workshop space had movable furniture that could be adjusted based on the programming needs. The gallery space had movable walls that acted as partitions and display space for artists and creatives. The walls were moved around to accommodate various permutations of exhibitions. The event space consisted of a small stage (with a ramp for wheelchair accessibility) for performances and seating that could be cleared out for events like dance classes that did not require chairs.



A dance class with Mini Movers Studio Dance.

The layout was easily changeable thanks to furniture that was on wheels or easy to move. Every week, we were able to change the space to accommodate partners' needs—an allowance that ended up being critically important.

Signage

We designed and built a free-standing signage system that ranged from large signs with details about events (placed closer to Old Town Hall), to smaller standing signs and ground chalk markings focused on wayfinding (placed along the way to Old Town Hall).

We placed a large calendar at the main entrance to Old Town Hall. The calendar had a changeable chalk surface that was easy to

write on to advertise events and encourage passersby to come inside. A sign next to the calendar clearly detailed out the days and times the pop-up was open and let visitors know that all events were free.



We placed a chalkboard on an easel in the welcome area that was updated with the events for the day. Additional easels along the central colonnade had information on specific events and exhibits to orient people as they walked throughout the space.



72.6% of visitors found out about events at CultureHouse Salem while walking by.



Programming

Partners

During the engagement phase we collected ideas on what people wanted to do and see at the pop-up. In keeping with the goal of the pop-up to be a testing ground for programming, we made sure to host a diverse range of events in the space. We partnered with 56 artists, creatives, and organizations over the duration of the pop-up, 54% of which were Salem-based.



A bead making workshop with Sadie's Beads.

Before we reached out to partners, we worked with the advisory group to create an equitable pay structure to ensure that all partners were fairly compensated for their time and work. To create this structure, we

broke events into four categories:

- Performances (concerts, theater, dance, open mics, and poetry readings).
- Installations (gallery showings, interactive installations, and informational or historical displays).
- Workshops (artist workshops, wellness workshops, and dance classes).
- Vendors (single vendors or markets with multiple vendors).
- Organized events (talks/panel discussions, community meetings, book clubs, movie nights, rehearsal space, and food/drink vendors).

After talking to the advisory group and benchmarking existing rates, we created a pay structure that we included in our call for artists and collaborators (see the pay structure below).

We put out a call for artists and collaborators through multiple channels of communication including the Creative Collective, press releases, neighborhood associations, Facebook groups, and direct communication with organizations and creatives. Most partners who hosted events at the pop-up found out about programming opportunities

Category	Duration	Compensation	Material Budget
Performances*	1-2 hours	\$125/person	A material budget of \$75 will be provided as requested. Open mic/poetry and live music events will not be provided with a material budget.
Installations	1 month	\$200 Gallery showings and exhibits will not be compensated by CultureHouse.	\$100 Only interactive installations will be provided with a material budget.
Workshops	2-3 hours	\$100	\$100 Classes will not be provided with a material budget.
Vendor market	1-4 hours	Not compensated by CultureHouse.	None
Organized events	1-2 hours	\$50/person for panelists/hosts Volunteered events will not be compensated by CultureHouse.	None

**Due to the size of the space and the stage, performances were limited to groups of four.*

through word of mouth or initial conversation they had with CultureHouse during the community engagement phase.

Events

We hosted a total of 51 free events over the three months we were open, with programming for all ages. We had arcade games, board games, dance classes, art workshops, and performances for kids, teenagers, adults, and seniors to enjoy. The flexibility of the space allowed us to have exhibits up while simultaneously hosting a performance or workshop. At the maximum, in addition to the community living room, we had three exhibits, an interactive installation, a workshop, and a performance all in the same day!



I love the variety of events offered and that every week I could go and see something different

—Visitor at the pop-up

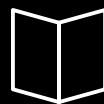
While planning for programming, we had an idea of what the space would look like and what kind of events we could have going on at the same time. Our partners were glad to share and be in the same space as other artists and creatives. Creatives of Color Boston and Salem United were amazed by how their exhibits were able to flow into one another. However, some types of programming could not happen simultaneously. Certain performances required a quiet and consistent audience which meant noisy items like arcade games had to be turned off. Programming partners appreciated that the pop-up created a sense of community within Old Town Hall with 75% reporting they made new connections with other creatives and community members because of CultureHouse Salem.

Passive programming

Most visitors spent around 10 minutes at the pop-up—using it as more of a drop-in space as opposed to strictly an event space. People enjoyed walking in, seeing what was happening, and walking out. Others walked in just to use the bathroom and then stuck around for a bit to look at some art or participate in a workshop.



The most popular programs at the pop-up were the arcade games and the living room space. Most people that returned to CultureHouse Salem came back to enjoy the games or sit and rest in the living room. The living room—which started off with just a center table, seating, and a few games—turned into a cozy corner with additional games and books donated by the Salem Public Library, a community puzzle, informational brochures about local businesses and events, and a basket of wool for knitting! These improvements weren't planned by us—the community took the space and made it their own.



A guide for one of the many tours that meet in Derby Square would come in daily to stay warm, play some games, and hang between tours. Another guide would come in weekly to ask about the events for the day so she could share with her tours.

The arcade games donated by Bit Bar and the Psychomantuem (an immersive art installation by the Salem Art Gallery hosted in the historic vault on the first floor) were active for the duration of the pop-up. They were both an unexpected experience at the pop-up and a great draw for visitors. Arcade game users would come back to break their high scores and reminisce about when they used to play the games as children. The Psychomanteum quickly became the cool thing that people brought friends in to experience! We would share what the Psychomantuem was, but not knowing what the installation contained was the most important part of the experience!



The pop-up visitors enjoying arcade games donated by BitBar.

Visitors



7pm–8pm – Busiest time of day

Saturday – Most popular day of the week

201 – Average number of visitors per day

We welcomed over 10,400 visitors to CultureHouse Salem. The pop-up was open four days a week—from 1pm–6pm on Wednesdays and Thursdays, and

from 1pm–8pm on Fridays and Saturdays. Saturday was the busiest day of the week, while on weekdays, most people came by towards the evening looking for things to do after their workday was over. Even though Wednesday was a slow day and often had no programming, people were glad to see the space open mid-week.

The event that saw the most foot traffic was the annual Salem Arts Festival. The festival, presented in collaboration by Salem Main Streets and the Creative Collective, brings the community together in Downtown Salem with a weekend of art, music, dance, and theater performances. Though the festival brings in a large amount of foot traffic to Derby Square every year, visitors and organizers were excited to have CultureHouse Salem as a space where they could sit and relax away from the noise of the festival.



A visitor at the Vintage Market hosted by multiple North Shore vendors.

The Vintage Market, another wildly successful event, was composed of five vintage vendors and brought in 1,558 visitors over the week it was at CultureHouse Salem! The market took over the whole first floor and was bustling with people throughout the day. We were even able to empty out the old vault and turn it into a changing room. The vendors were successful in doing their own marketing and bringing their following to CultureHouse Salem. While one vendor had been a part of a flea market at Derby

Square before, they were all grateful for the opportunity to be in Old Town Hall alongside one another. They were able to meet new vendors and expand their followings. Even though there were limited options for men, visitors loved being able to admire the building and the exhibitions while doing a little shopping.

Visitors to CultureHouse Salem were consistently happy to see that the space and events were free. This removed a barrier of access for people who normally were unable to pay for a ticket to enjoy arts and culture events in Salem. When asked how much they would be willing to pay for events at a venue similar to the pop-up, most visitors said between five and ten dollars. Other suggestions included a pay-as-you-can scale or a membership structure for events.

During the pop-up we saw the perceived accessibility of Old Town Hall increase by 26%. With prior feelings of disconnection from the building, simply having the doors open to the public made the building so much more accessible to the community. During colder days, when the door had to remain closed to keep the building warm, we noticed a decrease in visitors. After seeing the dip, we included an open/closed sign on the main door that was able to help orient visitors. The fact that all events were free and there were no expectations about what visitors needed to do in the building also contributed towards the feeling of accessibility.

What didn't work

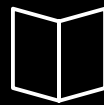
Staffing

Staffing for the pop-up was arranged and paid for by the City of Salem, in collaboration with CultureHouse. The pop-up staff were responsible for managing visitors, creating content for social media, maintaining COVID regulations, conducting data collection activities, and coordinating events. We initially hoped that the space would be staffed by a City staff member in conjunction with a crew of volunteers. However, with the ripple

effects of the pandemic on the artist and creative community, many people wanted to be compensated for their time and effort and were hesitant to volunteer. The lack of incentive and a small volunteer base made it hard to get people to commit to managing the pop-up. After experiencing challenging inconsistencies in staffing, the City hired an additional paid staff member after the first month of the activation which helped the pop-up run more smoothly and predictably. This learning showed the vital importance of investing in permanent staff to manage any future spaces.

Unpredictable audience

The pop-up was a free-to-enter space where people walked around without needing to take part in an event. While this created a great experience for visitors, it was hard for partners to draw the large audiences they hoped to see. Most people chose to walk through the space and enjoy an event or performance from afar, rather than sit down and be a part of the audience. We updated event information to include registration links to ensure that people got reminders, but we did not see much change in participation. Artists and creatives that did their own advertising were more successful in bringing in and holding a larger audience.



Due to the transitional nature of the space and set up, it made it harder to accommodate theatrical performances that required people to sit for a longer period of time and have no surrounding noises. The first floor space is not equipped for a large company of performers which made attracting theater groups harder too. When planning programming, larger groups and those that require a quieter and more attentive audience could be scheduled for the second floor, leaving the first floor to continue operating as a public space.

Targeting Salem residents

Tourists make up the largest portion of people Downtown and we saw that reflected in the breakdown of visitors that came to the pop-up, with 50% of all visitors being tourists. 32% of visitors were North Shore residents and 16% were Salem-based. We saw an increase in residents visiting towards the end of the pop-up as people got more familiar with the space, learned about events that were happening, and word of mouth about CultureHouse Salem spread. People started bringing their friends and family to check out this "cool new space!" We would expect the number of residents visiting to continue to increase if the pop-up had been open for longer. This learning also goes to show that even a space that is not designed around witches or tourism specifically is still a strong draw for people visiting the City, and that with consistent programming, residents will begin to engage with the space and its programming more.

...enic Day Will Be Known As
...ck Celebration Day
...cks, Pinks and Lyanbing's

Negro Election Black Celebration Evolution

Preservation of Parade

Re-establishing the Parade aspect of the event was the first task of Salem United, Inc. Parade participation was recognized as early as 1740. Although there was only a King Governor honored, Salem United, Inc. updated its revision, acknowledging women's contribution by honoring a Queen.

We want our participants to represent positive images in our community. We want to maintain a connection with Police, Firefighters, First Responders and more.

We wanted to protect yesterday, preserve today and build tomorrow!

PRESERVATION OF VENDORS

Negro Election Black Celebration Day Organizers Transition

The late 2000's Annual Black Picnic Day under no leadership. The City of Salem, MA, approached 3 Women Of Color who agreed to rebuild the Day.

Salem United, Inc. revised the return of vendors who represent the needs of the Community. Vendors who will uplift, educate and inform. In 2018, Black Picnic Day worked with The Department of Family and Children Services who documented 13 foster children received homes!

Enjoy the sounds of old school music or dance to the beats of Afropop beats. Feel the soul of spoken word and dance to live music. Join us at the harkness!

1740 - Present "Negro Election Black Celebration"

Protect The History And Its Family Value

Salem United, Inc. believes Community should be able to share its history and value its family bring families together from throughout Massachusetts where our ancestors stood.

We help people understand and use their voice and Reg...

We still have to VOTE for governor, but a government true leader working alone mayor. And we vote for officials and other black leaders.

It begins with one stroke of the pen

Negro Election Day also celebrated coronation in Lynn, Saugus, Salem coronation celebration remains in origin. Salem United, Inc. lives stronger together.

"Never Forget Where We Honor Your Roots - They Support Build Our Wins - They Help"

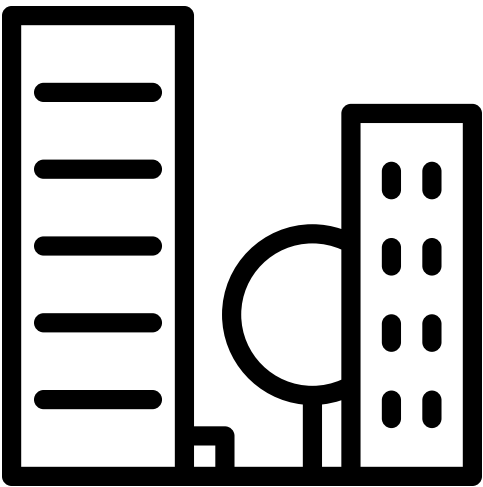
WOULD YOU DIE TO VOTE?

Back in the days of the American Revolution, Black men were often denied the right to vote. This poster highlights the struggle for voting rights and the impact of the 15th Amendment.

PRESERVE PROTECT & BUILD
SALEM UNITED INC
est. 2015



A visitor at the Salem United, Inc. exhibition on the History of Negro Election Day.



Impacts

Impacts



Community spaces free of the expectation of spending or having money are so deeply important. I was so incredibly happy to see a space like this and it was so lovely and welcoming. The emphasis on community with the touches of Salem personality are so genuinely beautiful. I live just 45 minutes away and am just here for the day, but I'm disabled and having this space to sit and enjoy art and quiet games and activities made the entire City suddenly more accessible and enjoyable for me for the day. Thank you for this space. I really hope you see how important it is.

—Shelby Monas, visitor at the pop-up

The CultureHouse Salem pop-up served as a testing ground for potential future uses of Old Town Hall. While open, we were constantly adapting to the needs of the community, working around the limitations of the building, and programming the space to its fullest potential. Throughout our three months of operation we collected over 500 surveys from visitors and conducted observational data collection on the usage of the space. Though the pop-up was open for just three months, the impacts we saw provide a clear path for the future of Old Town Hall and have implications across Salem. These impacts fall into three main categories: place, partnerships, and programming.

Place

Creating a welcoming and accessible community space

If you walked into Old Town Hall during the

CultureHouse community pop-up, you'd see tourists on the couch taking a break from their walking tours, adults playing arcade games and reminiscing about their childhoods, a group of teenagers coming in to try the Psychomanteum installation for the second time around, toddlers putting together puzzles, and passersby inquiring about the bathrooms. These diverse, yet concurrent, activities were not happening by accident—the CultureHouse Salem pop-up intentionally created its own small community within the larger Salem community.

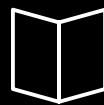
During the pop-up, the doors to Old Town Hall on the Essex Street side were always open during open hours (unless it was too cold out) and the events all displayed on the calendar nearby. This clear communication and openness created consistency and transparency for visitors. Visitors knew when to stop by and what to expect inside. Tourists exclaimed that they wished they could have a space like CultureHouse Salem in their cities too.



The living room area was a consistent draw for the space. The living room created a sense of comfort and connection within Old Town Hall—a stark contrast to the

closed-off and disconnected nature of the building's past. Visitors used this space to create connections with people they didn't know by working on puzzles together and making conversation. Over the duration of the pop-up, the living room space changed as community members contributed additional items and rearranged furniture. A group of kids who came in regularly to draw wanted a place to display their work, so we started a community art board that allowed anyone to showcase their creativity! Along with community art, we noticed local organizations kept dropping off flyers. We created a community board for the flyers which eventually grew to include a table to accommodate more booklets, pamphlets, and give-a-ways! Visitors enjoyed looking at local events and flipping through books about Salem.

Visitors appreciated that there was someone happy to answer tourism questions, point them in the right direction or to the right resource, or just have a conversation.



Chelsea Titchenell, Planning Assistant at the City of Salem, was the primary staff member for the duration of the pop-up. On the first day we were open, she interacted with a visitor who turned out to be her neighbor and owner of a neighborhood cat that she always admired!

Opportunity: Make Old Town Hall accessible to the public

CultureHouse Salem brought to light how important access to Old Town Hall is to the Salem community. The building has the potential to greatly benefit Salem residents, tourists, and the cultural sector. However, it cannot do so when it is closed off to the public. Opening up the building to the public regularly and having activities inside that appeal to a wide cross-section of the population would address a strong community need.

Strategies for increasing accessibility to Old Town Hall include:



A woman and her young daughter (about four or five years old) came in regularly to the pop-up. Each time, the girl checked the community art board for her work and was excited to see it up!

When asked about the highlight of their visit, most people mentioned their interactions with the staff. Having an approachable and friendly human presence in the building helped to create a welcoming environment.

Rental structure

Old Town Hall can be broken down into two spaces: a private event space and a public space. The second floor would serve as the event space and would be available for rent for private functions, ticketed performances, or other funded uses. The rental fee structure created for Old Town Hall should be reviewed by an advisory group (refer to Appendix for details) to ensure it works for different event types and users. The structure should be easily accessible and available to potential users.

Public first floor

A public first floor space would be filled with passive programming such as a living room space, an exhibit about the history of Old Town Hall, rotating vendor markets, exhibits, and small performances. These programs would be funded by the rental revenue generated from the second floor event space.

Even when there are no events happening, the building could stay accessible by maintaining regular open hours that would give visitors access to the building at consistent times every week. Based on the traffic patterns we saw during the pop-up, people flocked to events that were after 5pm and requested that we open on Sundays too. The optimal open times for the building would be Thursday through Sunday from late afternoon to early evening.

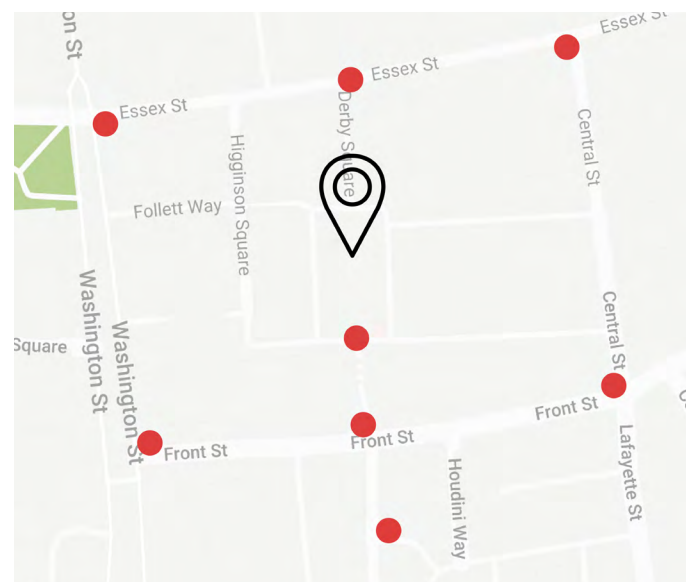
Derby Square

Derby Square has great potential for programming and to be a tool to draw more visitors to Old Town Hall. As the entrance to Old Town Hall is mostly hidden when walking to Essex Street, the Square provides an expanded funnel to get people to stop and access the building. Outside of the markets that happen over the summer, occasional performances, and the scattered seating, the square is mostly empty. The square could be included in the renovations of Old Town Hall with a placemaking plan for more signage, seating, plants, activities, and infrastructure

to support performances and events. Making Derby Square more inviting will help make Old Town Hall more accessible.

Signage

Creating a comprehensive and clear signage plan for Old Town Hall and Derby Square would orient people to building and the events happening inside. There could be a hierarchy of signage, with at least one large sign that has a regularly updated calendar placed at the entrance. Smaller signs that include open times and directions to the main entrance could be placed on Essex Street and Front Street. Additional smaller signs for Old Town Hall could be placed at intersections on Washington Street and Derby Street.



The location of key points for signage with respect to Old Town Hall.

Marketing

To share information, updates, and events with the community, Old Town Hall could have its own social media presence and a monthly event newsletter that targets artists and creatives in Salem, other local organizations, Salem residents, and the North Shore community more broadly. To bring in diverse audiences, information and updates about events at Old Town Hall could be sent through local organizations such as the Creative Collective, Destination Salem, Essex County Community Foundation, North Shore

CDC, Peabody Essex Museum, the Salem Public Library, Salem Community Life Center, Salem State University, and Salem Public Schools. Sharing regular updates with Salem tour companies and hotels will help keep tourists engaged and curious about Old Town Hall. Informing artists and creatives about existing marketing efforts and encouraging them to advertise their own events will further increase program visibility.

Memberships

As a way to generate revenue, harness the love for the building, and create more local buy-in, Old Town Hall could create a membership program. This membership, open to people in communities on the North Shore, could include a monthly newsletter with updates on Old Town Hall, early access to events, and reduced-cost tickets for events at Old Town Hall and around Salem along with other perks! The membership could be a sliding scale based on what someone is able and willing to pay. This revenue could go to maintain the public space on the first floor.

Staffing

In order to operate as an effective public space, Old Town Hall would benefit from a dedicated staff of two full-time positions to handle daily operations. Responsibilities for these roles would include coordinating programming, managing the building, running events, overseeing finances, marketing, and staffing the building during open hours. During the pop-up, we learned that having one or two people consistently staffing is important to maintaining the function of the space and interaction with visitors. Having a consistent friendly face present would also help create a welcoming atmosphere in Old Town Hall.

Partnerships

Developing intentional partnerships through new channels of communication

During the pop-up process, engagement

became a critical way to create and strengthen relationships with the Salem community. We realized that people needed a space to talk and a person to hear them and respond to their concerns. Everyone had different stories about their experiences at Old Town Hall: some had gotten married there, some had been part of arts and culture events around Derby Square, and others were looking forward to the Farmers' Market reopening in the spring. Most people we talked to felt it was important that the building be returned to its original purpose—as a community gathering space open to everyone.


Our engagement process revealed differing levels of tensions between various communities of Salem. The frustrations of the artist and creative community with the City of Salem stem from wanting more support from the City after the effects of COVID on the creative economy. BIPOC communities are dealing with the effects of historic exclusion that are manifested today as a lack of intentional inclusion.

These tensions were reflected in the hesitant participation in the engagement process from community members that were concerned about being part of processes like these and not seeing tangible outcomes. To address these concerns, we were very intentional about letting people know what was happening at Old Town Hall during the pop-up, adapting to feedback and concerns, and exhausting all modes of communication with the Salem community. Most importantly, we prioritized taking immediate action on situations where we had direct control. When we heard concerns that were out of our purview, we were honest and said we would relay the information, but we could not guarantee any results. This approach showed people that their concerns were being listened to and acted upon. With this empathetic strategy, we were able to improve relationships and convert trust into action.

The community meeting, held on February

17th 2021, proved to be a great chance to have City officials and residents in the same space talking to one another. Following the first community meeting, the City realized they needed to hold a meeting to share more details about the future of Old Town Hall and create a space for residents to ask questions and air concerns. Once open, the pop-up became an accessible space where the City could engage with people they had not heard from yet. For those who did not know how to reach out to the City, CultureHouse Salem provided a space to come, ask questions, and start conversations.

it should include residents from each Salem neighborhood, artists and creatives, members of local institutions and nonprofits, local business, and BIPOC residents (refer to the Appendix for details). In order to ensure the group stays balanced, there should be specific goals for how many people from each community are on the committee. The advisory group should be used to provide feedback, advice, guidance, inspire program design, support programming, connect the project to the Salem community, and assist with engagement. All members should be compensated for their time.



It was especially helpful as a City staff person, as the pop-up seemed to remove some of the barriers to questions around accessing the space as we could more directly engage and answer questions on site about Old Town Hall and other art programming around the City.

—Chelsea Titchenell, Planning Assistant,
Arts & Culture (City of Salem)

Intentional engagement


Meeting people where they are will be the most successful form of engagement. Using non-traditional methods of engagement such as interactive and observational strategies will be less extractive and more additive. Seeking the services of a consultant to help with community engagement on future projects will help to provide an intermediary between the residents and the City. Even when Old Town Hall becomes operational as a full-time community arts and culture space, continuing to engage with the community will rebuild trust by creating tangible outcomes through feedback.

Opportunity: Prioritize community engagement

While Old Town Hall has been in need of structural and cosmetic renovations for a while, the current effort to create a sustainable programmatic approach for the building has just started. A strategic engagement plan to bring community leaders from different neighborhoods together to have conversations about the gaps in Salem is critical to uncovering specific additional potential future uses of Old Town Hall.

Advisory group

To guide the future of the building, an advisory group should be created to equitably represent the diverse community of Salem. The group should not be dominated by one group of people, rather



Due to inclement weather we were unable to join the North Shore CDC on their community walks around the Point neighborhood of Salem. North Shore CDC conducts these walks in all the cities they work in as a way to reach the residents where they are and go door-to-door to share information, make relationships and collect feedback. These walks are a great opportunity for engagement in Salem!

Public office hours

Old Town Hall could be used as a space where the community can directly interact

with the City on a level playing field. Unlike City Hall, which can feel daunting and formal, a space created and driven by the community will allow residents and the City to be on equal footing. Aside from casual conversations, Old Town Hall could be used for department office hours, City Councillor listening sessions, and public meetings. This will create a barrier-free and welcoming space for residents to engage with their neighbors and City officials.

Programming

Activating Old Town Hall with diverse programming that represents and celebrates the Salem community

To work towards increasing diversity and representation for BIPOC communities, we started by trying to understand why they did not feel welcome Downtown. The overarching response we got was this: Why would someone want to go to a place where there is nothing that appeals to them? Unsurprisingly, BIPOC community members said they needed to feel seen, valued and celebrated.



The Black Women of the Suffrage Movement Exhibit by the North Shore Juneteenth Association.

To act on this feedback, we made strategic decisions at CultureHouse Salem to include BIPOC collaborators. We reached out to BIPOC organizations and community leaders in and around Salem and asked them how they would like to be a part of programming at Old Town Hall. We had a BIPOC artist or organization represented in the gallery space at all times. Events led by

BIPOC people consistently had the most BIPOC visitors—including the exhibition and reception by Creatives of Color Boston and an exhibition by North Shore Juneteenth. For Black communities that had been historically excluded from being in spaces like Old Town Hall, having exhibits about Black history created a space where they felt welcomed and represented.



There was a large BIPOC attendance for the opening event for the Creatives of Color Boston Blooming Truths exhibition. The artists were all excited to see their work up in a space that was created for and represented them.

—Jelivet Perez, Peabody Essex Museum

In addition to diversified cultural representation, offering programming for diverse age groups was important. To prevent isolation, it is crucial for older adults to engage and participate in public spaces. Having a space where older people could come in and interact with their community, enjoy art and games, and have a place to rest helped to make seniors feel more welcomed and made the entire City more accessible. CultureHouse Salem infused play and social interaction, built connections, and boosted moods by increasing excitement and joy—leading to long-term benefits.



A maritime ropemaking workshop led by Jim Keating.



We pigeonhole people too much. Some things might specifically interest seniors, but seniors like everything just like everyone else. We love history and art here in Salem, we would just like to be included.

—Patricia Zaido, Co-Chair, Salem for All Ages Initiative

Programming at the pop-up was accessible to all ages. The Bit Bar arcade games in particular attracted an intergenerational crowd. People would compete with one another, regardless of age, creating intergenerational connections. Specifically for younger children, we programmed dance classes and art workshops. Along with targeted programming, the layout of CultureHouse Salem infused elements of play for all ages into everyday situations.



This is a really cool place where mom and dad got to learn a little bit and you got to color.

—Visitor talking to their daughter

Equity is about representation and recognition. CultureHouse Salem designated a large part of the project budget to compensate artists and creatives. The process of making the pay structure included research on artist pay, studying the existing rental structures for Old Town Hall, and collecting feedback from the advisory group. Including the advisory group in these conversations was an important step in airing grievances and forming relationships with artists and creatives. A transparent pay structure and the inclusive process for creating it helped nurture and support the creative community and thus the creative economy of Salem.

Opportunity: Create an equitable model for programming

Creating a community arts and culture center at Old Town Hall is a great opportunity to create a new space that has equity at its heart. In the context of Old Town Hall, equity means creating a space where all communities are represented and included in the process of decision-making.

Equitable pay structure

Any future community arts and culture space should include a pay structure for programming partners that is approved by a diverse advisory group. This might mean that fewer events will take place in order to accommodate a fair structure of compensation. Breaking down events into categories based on group size, materials required, space needed, and anticipated audience will create a logical format for the structure. The pay structure should be available to the public and updated every year to reflect market changes and community feedback. This review process creates a space where members of the community are involved in decision-making and have a voice to advocate for their representative communities.

Event approval

A system of approval for events should be created to ensure that the same few people are not running all events at Old Town Hall. This includes making sure that there is diverse representation in the events at Old Town Hall. Those who have not programmed at Old Town Hall before should be given priority over those who have. The process of approval should be made public and the advisory group should be included in any decision-making processes. This approval process ensures that everyone is getting equitable access to opportunities. This will deepen the representation of underrepresented communities at Old Town Hall.



Diverse offerings

In order to invite diverse users into Old Town Hall, programming should offer several levels of interaction. At all times, there should be spaces for play and rest along with any events going on. Workshops and performances can be paired with static interactions like exhibitions and interactive installations. A living room where people have the option to just be in the space and interact with the building how they wish should be a permanent fixture at Old Town Hall. This will help to remove the barrier of a having singular expected interaction with the building. Diverse offerings, rather than one-off events that cater to a certain demographic, will make Old Town Hall more accessible to more ages, races, and genders.



TOWN HALL

Next steps

Closing the CultureHouse Salem pop-up marked a milestone for the ongoing Old Town Hall renovation project. The learnings from the pop-up described in this report provide recommendations for the City of Salem as they work towards creating a long-term community arts and culture space at Old Town Hall. While there is renovation work that needs to be done on the building, part of the project will also involve working with the Salem community to create and update systems and processes for programming and engagement at Old Town Hall.

CultureHouse Salem was just the start of an exciting future for Old Town Hall. The energy, community, and possibility we saw during the pop-up has created momentum that will last well beyond the project. We hope this report spurs meaningful conversations and actions across Salem.

Appendix

Existing resources for programming at Old Town Hall

Old Town Hall is managed by the City of Salem's Planning and Community Development Department, Arts & Culture Program. If you are interested in hosting an arts event, family function, civic meeting, or other activity at Old Town Hall, follow the steps below:

- Review the [calendar](#) for available dates.
- Complete the [Rental Inquiry Form](#) to request confirmation of date availability and begin your booking.
- Assistant Planner for Arts & Culture Chelsea Titchenell (ctitchenell@salem.com) will reach out within three business days of submission to confirm availability and discuss next steps.

There are discounts available for Salem residents, art activations and local non-profits. For more information about the types of activities allowed, additional required documents, and potential associated costs, please view the relevant [rental documents](#). Visit the [Old Town Hall website](#) for general information about the building.

For questions about the programming structure or to discuss deeper partnerships with the building and/or the Arts & Culture Program please contact the Senior Planner for Arts & Culture Julie Barry at jbarry@salem.com or call 978-619-5681.

Event approval

The City should work with the advisory group to create a system for event approvals. Once this has been agreed upon, the Old Town Hall event manager should ensure that they follow these guidelines when approving events. Every quarter the programming plan for the upcoming months should be shared with the advisory group to make sure that the system is working as intended. The advisory group should be made public so the community is aware of the decisions that are made. In order to ensure diverse programs at Old Town Hall, we recommend setting targets for priority events following the guideline below.

Event type*	Events per month**
Events led by local Salem artists, creatives, organizations and businesses	5
Events led by BIPOC artists, creatives, organizations or businesses	2
Family- or children-oriented activities	2
Activities for seniors	2
Social service or civic activities	1

**Partners who have run programs in the previous six months at Old Town Hall should be given lower priority than those who have not.*

***This recommendation is based on running 10 events per month in accordance with the suggested operating budget. Events may fall under more than one category.*

Advisory group

Total members: 15

Description	Minimum number of people*
Salem resident (homeowner, renter, neighborhood association representatives)	8
Hispanic/Latine person	2
Black person or person of color	2
Indigenous person	2
Institution representative (eg. Peabody Essex Museum, Lifebridge North Shore)	2
Educational institutions (colleges and schools)	2
Artist/creative	8
Student (High school or college)	2
Derby square business owner or employee	1
Other Salem local business owners or employees	2
Salem Main Streets representative	1
Destination Salem representative	1

*Members are likely to fall into more than one category

Approximate cost to operate Old Town Hall as an arts and culture community space

Recommended open hours: Wednesday–Sunday, 1pm–8pm.

Item	Amount (per month)	Notes
Old Town Hall Manager (Full Time)	\$5,000	Full-time position at \$28/hr and benefits.
Additional Staff (Part Time)	\$3,000	Part-time (20 hours/week) position at \$18/hr and benefits.
Advisory group	\$400	15 members meeting once a month for a 1–2 hour meeting at \$25/hour.
Programming	\$4,000	Funding needs to pay programming partners for about ten events a month, based on the pay structure created for the CultureHouse Salem pop-up. Budgeted amount includes passive programming materials and collaborations.
Operational supplies	\$200	Supplies needed to operate the space and manage programming.
Marketing	\$300	Advertising for events and programs.
Total	\$12,900	



A view of BitBar's arcade games and exhibitions by the Salem Arts Association and Indra Persad Milowes.

