

City arts score big

Major arts grants announced for New Bedford, Fall River

By **Jennette Barnes**
jbarnes@s-t.com

NEW BEDFORD — Basketball courts as works of art and a new park with mosaic tile are among nine public art projects to receive grants from the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts in the first round of a major grant program designed to take the SouthCoast arts scene to a new level.

New Bedford and Fall River organizations will receive \$187,500 for public art, including kinetic sculpture, large-format photographs and pop-up concerts.

One of the goals of this round was to bring art outside the city centers to youth and a culturally diverse audience, said John Vasconcellos, president of the Community Foundation, in an interview before the announcement.

"We wanted full-on access," he said. "We wanted to break any boundaries or borders that kept people out."

Seeded with \$500,000 from Creative Commonwealth, an initiative of the Barr Foundation in Boston, the Community Foundation is working to generate excitement and participation from local philanthropists as well. This is the first of several rounds of grants that will be supported with the Barr money. New local donations were still coming in this week as the Community Foundation prepared for its Wednesday announcement.

In this round, grants were funded with \$150,000 from the Barr Foundation and \$37,500 from local donors.

"This is a day that we are excited about beyond explanation, because it has been a long journey to this point," Vasconcellos said as he opened the ceremony.

One project, called Creative Courts, will commission artist Maria Molteni to gather input from youth about designs for a basketball court, and then renovate two courts — one in New Bedford, one in Fall River — and paint the floors and walls of the courts in big, colorful images. The New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! proposed the project.

"Obviously we're thrilled," said the museum's executive director, Ashley Occhino, after she learned it received \$35,000. The community's response to the idea has been very positive, she said.

Rayana Grace, arts and culture program manager at the Community Foundation, said Creative Courts will connect the artist to local kids and the two cities to one another.

"It was very compelling and such a bridge-builder," she said. "That made it exciting to me."

Another project, by the Cape Verdean Association in New Bedford, will build a park in the empty lot next to the former Strand Theater, at the gateway to the North End's International Marketplace. The park will feature mosaic tile artwork representative of Cape Verdean, Azorean and Puerto Rican culture.

"It's a kickstart to the many programs that we're trying to get going," said association board member Charles Perry Jr. The association owns the Strand, which should open as a cultural center sometime in 2019, he said.

In Fall River, Casa Dos Açores is receiving a planning grant for a festival highlighting Portuguese culture and featuring both international and local artists. The project



"Hard in the Paint" in Dorchester, MA

Creative Courts, a project proposed by the New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! will revitalize and renovate public basketball courts in Fall River and New Bedford with transformative mural-style art, engaging children from the neighborhoods with an experienced artist. (COURTESY PHOTO)

City beginning creative grants process

Hours after the Community Foundation of Southeastern Massachusetts announced the winners of the area's first Creative Commonwealth public art grants, Margo Saultier, Cultural Coordinator for the City of New Bedford, announced the start of a new round of arts and culture funding.

The city is now accepting proposals for Wicked Cool Places, the city's placemaking and storefront enhancement grant program. Wicked Cool Places grants will be in the range of \$5,000 to \$15,000. The deadline to submit proposals is Nov. 5.

According to the application, Wicked Cool Places, "unites willing property/business owners, artists/cultural groups, design/preservation specialists, and business/development experts to help transform New Bedford's overlooked or undervalued places." To goal is to foster "elements that encourage human interaction, from temporary activities such as performances or short-term public art to

is particularly exciting, Vasconcellos said, because unlike most local exhibitions of Portuguese art, the work will be contemporary, not historical.

"That is one that we're kind of over the moon about," he said.

Of 36 letters of interest submitted to the Community Foundation, only six came from Fall River.

Grant winners in that city will help spread the message that art is essential and woven into everyday life, not just something that's nice to have if you've done everything else right, Vasconcellos said.

New Bedford is ready for more. "In New Bedford, we're ready for the next step... that takes it beyond what has been typical," he said.

Thirteen groups were invited to submit full proposals.

Grace said the next round of Creative Commonwealth grants will focus on pilot projects and youth engagement with the arts. As with the first round, grants will

more permanent installations such as facade enhancement or long-term public art."

The placemaking/facade enhancement focus is two-pronged with projects that include vacant parcels, parks, waterfronts, plazas, streets, campuses or public buildings falling under creative placemaking, and for exterior work and enhancements to a building, such as storefront rehabilitation, signage, lighting, and awning features, falling under facade enhancement.

Applicants can be individual artists, businesses or organizations. Funding for the grants comes from the city's Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund, which draws money from the local hotel tax, as well as \$50,000 in contributions from Bristol County Savings Bank.

Application forms are available in the New Bedford Economic Development Council Office (1213 Purchase St.), and the office of Tourism and Marketing located in City Hall (133 William St.). Starting Friday, applications will be available to download from the New Bedford Economic Development Council website and Destination New Bedford online.

emphasize youth and culturally diverse populations.

This week's grant winners are as follows:

- **Creative Courts**, a project proposed by the New Bedford Art Museum/ArtWorks! will revitalize and renovate public basketball courts in Fall River and New Bedford through a transformative mural-style project. It will engage children from the neighborhoods with an experienced artist. **\$35,000**

- Next summer, the Massachusetts Design Art & Technology Institute (DATMA) will present **New Bedford Summer Winds 2019**, a multidisciplinary and STEAM-centric exhibition of community events to highlight New Bedford's relationship to the sea, wind, the arts and economic development. **\$27,500**

- The Cape Verdean Association in New Bedford's **Island Park and Mural** will transform the entrance to the city's International Marketplace

by creating an inclusive park with a tiled wall and mural representative of the North End's diverse island ethnic groups, including Cape Verdean, Azorean and Puerto Rican. **\$30,000**

- **Music in the City** is the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra's project that will bring accessible pop-up concerts into the neighborhoods of New Bedford and Fall River to present an eclectic mix of performances to new audiences at community venues, especially in ethnically diverse areas. **\$30,000**

- **Through Our Eyes: Celebrating Cultural Diversity** is SER-Jobs' project that will create a city-wide public display of large format photos of immigrants in the community. They will use photography to help celebrate Fall River's cultural and linguistic diversity. **\$17,500**

- The New Bedford Historical Society will erect a **statue of a young Frederick Douglass** sitting on a bench in Abolition Row Park, a piece of public art that will help to transform the neighborhood and build community pride while honoring a historical figure who started his journey as an orator, author and abolitionist in New Bedford. **\$10,000**

- **SUPERFLAT NB** is New Bedford's first mural art organization. Its project of the same name will bring 15-20 high-quality murals to New Bedford — and possibly Fall River — in 2019. The name "Superflat" affirms their beliefs that the barriers to arts should be flattened and that it is critical for public art to reflect the whole community, including youth, low-income neighborhoods, and people of color. **\$17,500**

- Casa Dos Açores is receiving a planning grant for the initial stages of a large multi-day **festival highlighting Portuguese culture** and bringing contemporary local and international artists to Fall River. The name of the festival is to be determined. **\$15,000**

- **Celebrate! Mayan Work and Culture** is a festival led by the Community Economic Development Center that highlights Guatemalan and other Central American cultures through a kite festival, dancing, food, musical performances and more. **\$5,000**

Follow Jennette Barnes on Twitter @jbarnesnews.



The Cape Verdean Association in New Bedford's **Island Park and Mural** will transform the entrance to the city's International Marketplace by creating an inclusive park that includes a tiled wall and mural that is representative of the North End's diverse island ethnic groups, including Cape Verdean, Azorean and Puerto Rican. (PETER PEREIRA/THE STANDARD-TIMES FILE/SCMG)



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