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**By Sophia Eppolito** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT SEPTEMBER 29, 2017

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Now Arlington has joined in, becoming the latest community to obtain a cultural district designation from the Massachusetts Cultural Council.

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“It’s always been small groups or organizations working on their own,” said Arch, who also serves as cochairwoman of the arts and culture commission. “People were having events on the same days. People didn’t know about what was happening in town. . . . We were all spinning our wheels — all trying to do the same thing, but nobody [was] coordinating us.”

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To combat the problem, the commission was founded in 2013. After six months, it decided to apply for the cultural district designation.

The Massachusetts Cultural Council asks applicants to determine a boundary for a district that is compact and walkable, then to hold a community conversation to determine what its long-term goals are. The district also must form a partnership with the local governing body, along with other public and private organizations.

“It’s a multi-pronged process and it takes time to pull that together,” said Meri Jenkins, program manager for the Massachusetts cultural districts initiative.

Once districts are granted the designation, they are by no means off the hook. Jenkins said the districts are expected to provide the cultural council with a yearly report on the progress they’ve made at achieving their goals. Districts also provide two sets of data: the occupancy rates of businesses and the number of visitors coming to the district.

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Maynard’s cultural district designation was awarded in April. The district includes ArtSpace-Maynard, a nonprofit community arts center.

“Because the cultural district includes not just arts but entertainment,” said Maynard Town Planner Bill Nemser, “our downtown is really a neat distribution of everything from arts to ethnic restaurants to theater to cool crafts.”

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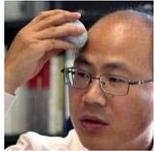
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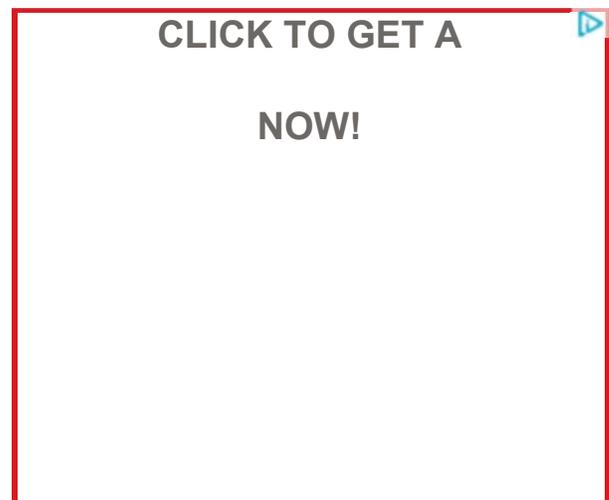
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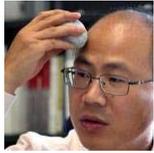
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