

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT for the ARTS

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Springfield Library & Museums Association in partnership with the Springfield Cultural Partnership to Receive \$100,000 Our Town Grant from the National Endowment for the Arts

Springfield, MA—National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Mary Anne Carter has approved more than \$84 million in grants as part of the Arts Endowment's second major funding announcement for fiscal year 2020. Included in this announcement is an Our Town award of \$100,000 to Springfield Library & Museums Association in partnership with the Springfield Cultural Partnership for Spark!: Igniting Our Community, a project in the newly renovated Pynchon Park, to envision and create public art that serves to connect our city, residents and visitors. This is one of 51 grants nationwide that the agency has approved in this category.

"These awards demonstrate the resilience of the arts in America, showcasing not only the creativity of their arts projects but the organizations' agility in the face of a national health crisis," said Mary Anne Carter, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. "We celebrate organizations like the Springfield Museums and the Springfield Cultural Partnership for providing opportunities for learning and engagement through the arts in these times."

SPark: Igniting Our Community, a two-year public art project that will transform recently reopened Pynchon Park into a vibrant public space through innovative multi-media art installations created by local and national artists. City residents, community stakeholders, and cultural institutions will be involved in a collective process to imagine, select, and commission public art that celebrates Springfield's citizens, culture and heritage.

The park, closed for forty years, will use the arts to connect neighborhoods and people, creating equitable partnerships that demonstrate the power of civic engagement for more vibrant and livability communities. The park's reopening offers an opportunity to continue momentum by celebrating public art in this passageway and creating a programming and civic engagement space. This project will create a walkable pathway between the museum district and the commercial downtown, spurring retail and public space projects along these avenues and encouraging greater tourism throughout the city.

"The SPark Art project is a remarkable opportunity to create a museum without walls informed by the hopes and vision of community members in the heart of downtown Springfield," said Kay Simpson, President and CEO of the Springfield Museums. "Pynchon Park will become more than just an easy way to walk from downtown to the Springfield Museums, the Central Library, and the Armory," Simpson said, "It will become a community space for solace and conversation surrounded by intriguing art. We feel privileged to play a role in creating an Art Park that showcases the talents of artists from Springfield and beyond."

"Empowering the arts and cultural community is paramount to the strength and resilience of our community. In addition to the wide range of public art installations, Pynchon Park will be a new

venue for Springfield artists and organizations to utilize for programming and other activations, "said Karen Finn, Executive Director for the Springfield Cultural Partnership. "Receiving the NEA Our Town grant amplifies the SCP's goal of connecting artists, institutions, and audiences to celebrate Springfield's creativity."

It will create physical access between neighborhoods, improving traffic patterns, pedestrian and public safety. As a highly visible beautification project, it will transform an under-utilized urban park into an outdoor art gallery, increasing access to the arts for city residents. The active art selection process will foster community investment. The park will function as a vital community gathering space and asset through each phase, serving as a catalyst and model for urban design projects in contiguous areas and neighborhoods that link through thematically unified pathways and sculpture.

A collaboration between the City of Springfield, the Springfield Museums, Springfield Cultural Partnership and Skyview Downtown, a privately owned apartment complex, is reimagining the long-closed Pynchon Park as a pedestrian-friendly pocket park which will serve as an art-filled connector between Springfield's reenergized downtown and the Springfield Museums, Springfield Central Library, and Springfield Armory National Historic Site. Once complete, the park will serve as a platform for "interruptors," public art installations and performances that shape movement through the space as an interactive journey.

About the project partners:

The Springfield Museums is a nonprofit organization comprised of five museums located in the heart of downtown Springfield, MA. The mission of the Springfield Museums—as the regional center for informal learning for STEM and the Arts—is to warmly welcome all visitors and encourage them to spark their curiosity with art, science, history and all things Seuss. Formed in 1857, the Springfield Museums support the preservation and current vibrancy of the evolving character and cultural heritage of Springfield. The Museum's permanent collections and robust lineup of exhibitions, educational programs, and special events serve to inspire, educate, and entertain 500,000 regional and increasingly far-reaching visitors annually. The Museums strive to provide resources accessible to all people, especially people from our surrounding community—all Springfield city residents, 30% who live below poverty level, receive free admission.

Springfield Cultural Partnership, serving as Project Director for the Our Town Grant, connects artists, institutions & audiences to create and celebrate creativity in Springfield. The SCP is a 501c3 founded in 2016 and serves all of Springfield, MA. The SCP is a member based organization represented by a range of membership levels that represent a diverse mix of individuals and organizations all committed to supporting the vitality of our local cultural economy. The SCP oversees the MCC designated Springfield Central Cultural District. The Springfield Cultural Partnership's Mission is to foster civic engagement and arts education in the City of Springfield by creating and sustaining a vibrant cultural environment, authentically engaging institutions, artists, and the community.

The City of Springfield Parks Division's mission is to maintain and enhance Springfield's parks and open spaces to provide safe and sustainable active and passive recreational opportunities for residents and visitors. The Parks Division is responsible for the care and maintenance of over 50 parks (2,500 acres), 160 traffic islands and terraces, and 55 miles of city sidewalks to ensure safe passage for school children and residents. The Division also conducts construction projects aimed at expanding and reclaiming parkland and open space to increase, diversify, and improve quality recreational programming and leisure activities. The Division is currently working on restoring four city parks, one of which is the focus of this project, in order to bring basic amenities like electrical services, green space, pedestrian pathways, wayfinding and seating.

For more information on this National Endowment for the Arts grant announcement, visit [arts.gov/news](https://www.arts.gov/news).