



Peter Crewe
Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Thomas A. Golden, City Manager

FROM: Peter Crewe, Director CASE

CC: Shawn Machado, Asst. City Manager; Conor Baldwin, CFO; Doreen Burgess, Assistant to the City Manager; Melissa Desroches, Executive Assistant; Western Avenue Management team (Jim Grace, Hope Green, Henry Marte)

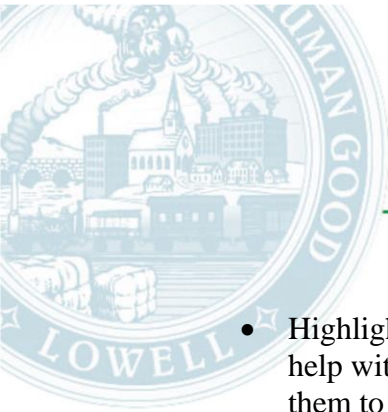
SUBJECT: *C. Robinson Req. City Mgr. Work with Western Avenue Studios to help create a safer more welcoming and cleaner experience for guests and residents*

Western Avenue Studios is a cultural hub in Lowell. It supports over 350 artists in its studios and loft spaces. When the studios opened in 2005, they helped to transform an industrial area of Lowell and provide new opportunities for Lowell creatives and visitors. The popularity of Western Ave continues to grow, and this has highlighted some of the challenges with the Western Ave neighborhood. Peter Crewe from the Office of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (CASE) and Melissa Desroches from the City Manager's Office met with the Management team from Western Avenue to talk about the challenges they are facing and begin to look at ways to make Western Avenue more approachable and workable for the artist community and visitors.

Short Term

- Vacant spaces around Western Avenue Studios are seeing an increase in homelessness encampments. The City is aware of this and will be coordinating with Lowell Police and outreach coordinators to increase patrols and interventions in the area.
- Western Avenue has "beefed up" their security system and will be installing new exterior lighting for their parking lot.
- Students from the Stoklosa Middle School attend after school programming at Western Avenue based organizations. We will make sure Lowell Police and School officials are aware of this. (Improving pedestrian access to Western Avenue Studios is a longer-term goal.)
- The City will work with property owners to cut back and trim overgrown brush
- CASE/Manager's Office spoke with the Engineering Dept about adding Western Avenue to the paving list.

Mid Term



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- Highlighting the entrance to Western Ave where it intersects with School Street will also help with adding to a welcoming atmosphere. In meeting with Western Ave, we invited them to apply for some ARPA public art funding to create a welcome arch over the entrance. The design of the arch could be a community effort by the Western Ave artists and highlight the diversity of the types of art available at Western Ave. There is currently no crosswalk across the entrance to Western Ave along School Street. The design of the arch could extend to a crosswalk across the street as well. (Western Ave is outside the Historic District, so there is more freedom for crosswalk design).
- Ensure Western Avenue is completely repaved and add signage clarifying that it is a dead end (apparently some navigation services erroneously tell people it is a through street)

Long Term

- Work with Western Ave businesses and residents to explore extending the side walk all the way down the street. Additional street lights could help improve the safety of the area.
- The Department of Planning and Development has a lot of larger scale ideas that could be incorporated into an overall redesign of the Western Ave area. These include:

- Adding a shade structure over the bridge on School Street similar to this project:

- <https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/massachusetts/boston/modica-way-near-boston/>



- Improve the air quality by adding green walls similar to this:
- <https://www.thecivilengineer.org/news/vertical-gardens-in-mexico-city-to-combat-pollution>



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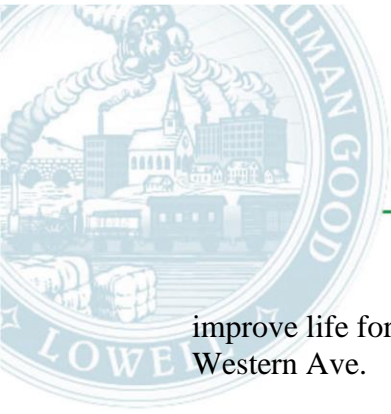
- - Take advantage of the chain link fence that marks the entrance by doing something like this:



- - Western Avenue Studios sits right outside the official Canalway Cultural District. The district boundary cannot be expanded to include it because Cultural Districts must be walkable, and there is no easy route to get to there from downtown. Adding a pedestrian access point to the eastern end of the street would allow us to work with Mass Cultural Council to add Western Avenue Studios into Cultural District, which would open up new resources.

The School Street corridor is on DPD's radar as an area to target for improvement.

Western Avenue Studios is a major cultural asset for the City of Lowell. Investing in working with the community members to improve the area and create more of a neighborhood vibe will



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improve life for the residents of the area, children in Stoklosa Middle school and visitors to Western Ave.