
COLLABORATIVE WORKSPACES AKA “MAKERSPACES”

For schools and/or for the greater community

What does the “maker culture” mean for the economy?

Growing acknowledgment of connection between “tinkering,” creative entrepreneurship, and community building

MassDevelopment describes makerspaces as “...new and rapidly evolving hotbeds of innovation facilitated by the latest in prototyping technology while rooted in traditional pillars of manufacturing: engineering, design, science, and art.”

A spectrum of makerspaces have sprout up throughout Massachusetts, with some catering more towards artists and hobbyists, and some catering to specific trades. Artisan’s Asylum in Somerville currently hosts 280 members who use studio space for art and design.

Commercial kitchens like CropCircle in Boston are perhaps the more familiar type of makerspaces – this facility supports food-related businesses by providing hourly rental of fully-equipped commercial kitchen space.

Some are smaller office-sized gathering places used by a smaller core of people. There is great flexibility in designing a makerspace.

Makerspaces can help transform vacant buildings into hubs of activity.

These types of community amenities are considered a major pathway into the transition of the Creative Economy.



Context and Research

What is “tinkering”?

Tinkering is what L.S. Starrett did messing around with spare parts in his garage. In the process, he invented his first tool, the meat processor.

Innovation and creativity are shared experiences

“Bringing creative professionals under the same roof allows members to learn from each other and with time collaboratively start new ventures, grow existing businesses and enhance their business network.” (Click Workspace, Northampton).

Academic setting:

Growing awareness that hands-on, technical, and creative endeavors lead to community building and individual achievement

We need to change from a society that values white-collar jobs far more than “blue collar” jobs. We need to embrace technical and creative skills as professions and as for a number of reasons. From a practical standpoint, promoting technical training will help out nation and region better compete globally. From a creative and social standpoint.

Tech classes are not enough

ARRSD has trimmed back on hands on tech courses. The waiting list for Monty Tech shows demand is high. Moreover, tech and vocational programs has for too long been geared to only a smaller subset of students. The “Career Technical Education” movement promotes tech education and “real world” learning integrated with academics for all students.

- Tech Education in General
 - Better performers. Helps students become more college-ready and employable
 - More engaged and motivated students: new ways of learning keep kids engaged. Technical education demonstrates how theoretical and conceptual knowledge can be applied in real-world setting
 - Higher graduation rates, increased college/university enrollments, higher test scores (based on CTE research study published in Washington post)
- Maker-spaces
 - Enables students to apply what they learn (and what they envision) to a real-world problem

Beyond the classroom: Makerspaces and Collaborative Workspaces

What is a Collaborative Workspace?

These are typically established by non-profit groups (sometimes affiliated with a school) to create a place to share tools, infrastructure, materials, and inspiration. Defined by the *Urban Idea Lab* as places where multiple individuals and business share infrastructure such as meeting rooms, kitchens, specialty equipment, shop space, and even administrative staff for the purposed of lowering overhead costs while creating opportunities for connection, interaction, and collaboration.

Makerspaces/collaborative workspaces provide space and materials for entrepreneurs to test ideas and incubate their business.

Can they be profitable?

Makerspace groups must have a diverse investment strategy but eventually they can be profitable. Revenue comes from membership fees, rental costs, storage fees, and class fee (e.g. for artists who want to use space to teach a class). 72% of co-working spaces become profitable after two years in operation (Deskmag 2013 Global Co-working survey)

Fewer than 10 members means a greater likelihood of financial loss, even though they pay less in rent and have lower operating costs.

Is there a critical mass of people in the area who'd use the space?

This area has ample artists, wood-workers, tech-savvy machinists, and other creative types.

We're all in our garages doing it anyway – lets come together and share an experience.

What would the impact of a makerspace be on Athol/North Quabbin

At the very least:

Would create a stimulating and collaborative place for people to work on projects

Offer a central place for artists to give workshops

Help fill a void in the education system, as a makerspace would be open to all age groups

Improve our reputation as a leader in innovative development

Likely:

Would help local entrepreneurs and tinkerers start business and in turn positively affect the local economy

Would attract other creative people to the area (to live, visit, or start a business)



Next Steps

Role of the public sector

Catalyst and convener – finding groups and individuals to take the first steps in brainstorming

Potential financial support (apply for grants)

Formal public support lends credibility