

Driver's Manual



If you're driving this car, chances are high that you are a resident of Boston. If you have kids, chances are high that they go to Boston public schools, and whether you have always lived here or are a recent or college-motivated transplant, you have had some exposure to the city's arts offerings.

In 2015, these art offerings were re-examined profoundly. The city acquired its first cabinet level arts commissioner, and the general (though sometimes self-selected) public was encouraged to help assess the city's existing arts and cultural initiatives and to imagine better ones.

This car you're sitting in represents several things, so though it may seem indiscreet for a city vehicle, it is actually doing double civic duty. For one thing, it represents a substantial commitment on the part of the arts commissioner to be held accountable: the imagery adorning the car is composed of actual handwritten words of members of your community from around the whole city as they brainstormed about what their neighborhoods need in order to feel culturally vital.

It also is a tangible representation of an innovation in process: for the first time ever, Boston included embedded artists in its planning process from almost the get-go. This car is the direct outcome of that investment in injecting creativity into even the survey-issuing and data crunching involved in developing a strategic plan. Even the expert cultural planners brought in to advise this city (as they have many others around the country and world) have been visibly moved by the creativity and the dedication of Bostonians at all levels of the cultural planning process to sustain and grow a rich and diverse cultural life.

Finally, it is a tangible symbol of change. Drive it proudly—it may seem too colorful and chaotic for a city vehicle, but it says something true that no other city vehicle does, and which it's time to say here: Boston may have a lot of tradition, but it is not afraid to take risks, to be playful and to stand out. If you are from here, you know that Boston has often tried to play it safe, dress conservatively and live in the shadow of some of its larger neighbors. Not anymore. Boston's starting to claim the place it has secretly always had at the cultural table and to spread itself out a bit and get comfortable there. If your role in the city doesn't currently come in contact with the city's cultural agenda, it does now—whenever you drive this car. But it likely will start to in other ways too.

Which is great. Even if you're not used to thinking of yourself as driving culture forward here, you've helped bring things to this point in more abstract ways. And now you are literally driving culture forward (unless you happen to have this car in reverse. In which case you should probably stop reading now and start looking in your rearview mirror!)

This car, with you driving it, is a piece of artwork called *Driving Culture*. It's dedicated to Tracey and Eyou—two Boston teens who came and contributed to the Boston Creates cultural planning process and wanted to know if their exact words would really be heard and seen by the mayor. In addition to enthusiasm and more formal support received from Boston Creates/The City of Boston, Archipelago Strategies Group, Department of Play and Technical Development Corporation, this project is grateful for help from ABC Imaging, Alliance Glass & Sign and Shane Mulrooney Architecture + Design.

Heather Kaplow, November 2015 (www.heatherkaplow.com)