

## | Life in Lynn

**This medium-sized city is turning a corner by revitalizing its cultural arts scene.**

Alexandra Pecci



Photo credit: Robert Boyd

Lynn is coming into its own as an exciting gateway city that's embracing and enlivening its rich arts base and cultural diversity to transform its downtown, its image, and its overall economy.

"I grew up in this city, so I've seen in the 35 years that I've been alive a lot of changes. Lynn is on the upswing again," says Drew Russo, executive director of the Lynn Museum/LynnArts. "Lynn has had a tough [reputation] for a long time. I think the reality is Lynn is a city that's on the cusp of something

great. As a native Lynner, I can see it happening.”

At the heart of what’s happening is the transformation of Lynn’s downtown, which was bolstered by the area’s designation in 2012 as one of the first five recognized cultural districts in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Stretching across several blocks, Lynn’s cultural district is a concise, walkable area that contains within it not only amazing restaurants like The Blue Ox and the legendary design and home store Zimman’s, but also LynnArts, RAW Art Works, Arts After Hours, the Lynn Museum, Grand Army of the Republic Museum, and many other spots.

“There’s quite a lot that happens within that area,” Kate Luchini, director of the Downtown Lynn Cultural District. “It does have such a diversity. It’s an urban area surrounded by the suburbs. And that’s why it’s kind of a magnet for the arts.”

It also has affordable live-work spaces, “like so many cities that are on the rebound,” Luchini says. “Arts and culture is a great catalyst for that.”

The area has changed relatively quickly, says Corey Jackson, founder and managing director of Arts After Hours, a theatre that aims to help revive the city, as well as entertain. The Peabody native says that when he first moved to downtown Lynn in 2006, many of the buildings were boarded up. There were glimmers of what was to come: RAW Art Works had been long-established there, and Gulu-Gulu Café hadn’t yet made its move to Salem. Inexpensive, trendy loft living spaces were becoming available. But there was little else going on in the neighborhood.

“When I moved there, I saw a blank canvas, and it was very clear to me that we could do so much,” Jackson says. He founded Arts After Hours in 2010 “to be the thing that happens when we get out of work.”

“We’re theatre at the very core of it,” he says. “Our mission is to engage and transform the downtown Lynn area through theatre.”

After starting with singles-night events, Arts After Hours has grown into a destination theatre company with almost 4,000 patrons per year. It’s producing four shows in 2016, including *ART*, *The Last Five Years*, and *Silence! The Musical*, all staged at LynnArts Rantoul Black Box Theatre, and *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* in Lynn Woods for the company’s fifth annual Summer Shakespeare performance.

Now, there’s so much to see and do downtown.

“It was interesting to watch all of the storefronts slowly fill,” Jackson says. In fact, it barely looks like the same place.

“The skyline is different, and certainly as you walk around the area you don’t get the feeling that it’s a blank canvas anymore,” he says. “You feel like it’s something that’s on the verge of something big.”

One place that has long proved that Lynn is anything but a blank canvas is Raw Art Works (RAW), which founder Mary Flannery says “is this perfect blend of art and therapy.” RAW gives kids a chance to not only learn about and create art, but also ignites their creativity and gives them the tools to develop confidence and find success through art. Started as a traveling program to work with incarcerated youth, RAW opened in Lynn in 1994, and now works with kids from ages 7 through 19, and even keeps in contact with its alums through college. Now, RAW has been named a “Creative Catalyst” by Adobe, one of seven exemplary youth organizations globally to win this recognition. As a result, RAW has received an Innovation Grant for \$225,000 that will enable student filmmakers in its Real to Reel Filmschool, as well as RAW alums and current RAW youth, to develop a series of productions and projects about immigration, home, and belonging.

Flannery says people often feel nervous about coming to Lynn, or that it’s a dangerous place, but “that’s just not the reality.”

Instead the reality is far more interesting and dynamic. Lynn is a cultural melting pot, where people can celebrate with a Khmer New Year Community Fair one day, and a Caribbean Festival Day a couple of months later. It’s a place where they can see live theatre in the second largest municipal park in the United States, and learn about the city’s history as an industrial powerhouse at the Lynn Museum.

“If you look at the story of America you see a lot of the elements of the story of Lynn,” Russo says. “I think Lynn is a wonderful microcosm of the story of America.”

### Items for your Lynn itinerary

**The Blue Ox** is an award-winning, upscale restaurant that’s one of Lynn’s top destinations for people from around the North Shore and beyond. *191 Oxford St., 781-780-5722, [theblueoxlynn.com](http://theblueoxlynn.com).*

The **Lynn Museum and Historical Society** showcases not only the rich history of Lynn, but also its vibrant, modern culture. The Lynn Museum recently merged with **LynnArts**, which is located at 25 Exchange Street. *590 Washington St., 781-581-6200, [lynnmuseum.org](http://lynnmuseum.org).*

With more than 30 miles of trails across 2,200 acres of forest, **Lynn Woods Reservation** is the second largest municipal park in the United States. *Access the main entrance by taking Walnut Street to Pennybrook Road. 781-477-7123 [cityoflynn.net](http://cityoflynn.net).*

Lynn’s coastline is one of its undisputed gems, making **Long Beach**, **King’s Beach**, and **Lynn Shore Drive** wonderful places to spend time. Also don’t miss the summer concerts at **Red Rock Park**. *781-438-1388, [cityoflynn.net](http://cityoflynn.net).*

**Rossetti Restaurant** offers diners comforting Italian fare, along with a fabulously extensive wine and cocktail menu. *47 Sutton St., 781-599-2051, [rossettirestaurant.com](http://rossettirestaurant.com).*

Find the burger of your dreams—and a root beer float to go along with it—at **R. F. O’Sullivan’s**. *151*

*Central Ave., 339-440-4564, rfosullivans.com.*

Fresh Mexican fare, live entertainment, and a welcoming atmosphere recommend **Trio's Mexican Grill**. *70 Market St., 339-440-4661.*

Journey to Central America and discover the flavors of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Mexico at **Casa Antigua**. *129 Oxford St., 781-584-8240, casaantiguallynn.com.*

Get lost in an authentic bowl of pho and other Vietnamese fare at **Pho Minh Ky**. *238 Union St., 781-477-0656.*

**Café Moka** welcomes diners with fabulous coffee, warm panini sandwiches, creative and hearty soups, and live jazz. *56 Central Sq., 781-584-8957.*

Sample single-origin Rwandan coffee, along with breakfast and lunch options at the brand-new **Land of a Thousand Hills Shop**. *61 Munroe St., 281-246-1667, landofathousandhills.com.*

Enjoy Cambodian cuisine and karaoke at **Apsara Angkor Restaurant**. *877 Western Ave., 781-477-6045.*

Catch a game and some great food at the BONS-winning sports bar, **Lazy Dog of Lynn**. *328A Broadway, 781-477-1988, lazydogoflynn.com.*

**Four Winds Pub & Grill** offers waterside dining and neighborhood favorite food. *265 Broadway, 781-595-5444, fourwindspub.com.*

**Zimman's** has been making North Shore homes more beautiful with its fabrics, furniture, and design services for more than 100 years. *80 Market St., 781-598-9432, zimmans.com.*

Find a huge selection of exquisite lighting, décor, and expert design services at the beautiful and elegant **Lucia Lighting & Design**. *311 Western Ave., 781-595-0026, lucialighting.com.*

No visit to Lynn is complete without a stop for breakfast at the iconic **Capitol Diner**. *431 Union St., 781-595-9314.*

Gaze at the stars and planets through the city's 12-inch Meade telescope at **High Rock Park, Tower, and Observatory**. *High Rock St., cityoflynn.net.*

The **Lynn Memorial Auditorium** plays host to live concerts and theatre, welcoming acts like Alice Cooper and Johnny Mathis. *3 City Hall Sq., 781-599-SHOW, lynnauditorium.com.*

**Raw Art Works** and its artists and clinical art therapists use a variety of media to help kids find their voices through art. *37 Central Sq., 781-593-5515, rawartworks.org.*

Experience live theatre—including Shakespeare in Lynn Woods with *A Midsummer Night's Dream* this summer—with **Arts After Hours**. *Administrative offices at 20 Wheeler St., #B105, 781-205-4010, [artsafterhours.com](http://artsafterhours.com).*

Hit the links at the beautiful, 18-hole **Gannon Municipal Golf Course**, where you'll find a golf shop, leagues, function space, and more. *Great Woods Rd., 781-592-8238, [gannongolfclub.com](http://gannongolfclub.com).*

**Brothers Deli Lynn** offers great deli sandwiches, desserts, like baklava, and more in a friendly atmosphere. *41 Market St., 781-581-3363.*

One visit to the authentic taco spot, **Tacos Lupita**, will reveal why its patrons are so devoted to this place. *129 Munroe St., 781-593-6437.*

For a cozy, family-run pub-style spot known for its water view and deep-fried pickles, visit **Porthole Restaurant**. *98 The Lynn Way, 781-595-7733, [portholerestaurant.com](http://portholerestaurant.com)*

## The Details

**Date of settlement:** 1629

**Date of incorporation:** 1850

**Area:** 13.5 sq. miles

**Population:** 90,329

**ZIP codes:** 01901, 01903, 01903, 01904, 01905

**Median household income:** \$44,849

**Public schools:** Aborn Elementary, Breed Middle School, Brickett Elementary, Julia F. Callahan Elementary, Cobbet Elementary, William P. Connery Elementary, Classical High School, Drewicz Elementary, Lynn English High School, Fallon Elementary, Robert L. Ford Elementary, Fecteau- Leary Junior/Senior High School, Early Childhood Center, E.J. Harrington Elementary, Hood Elementary, Ingalls Elementary, Lincoln-Thomson Elementary, Lynn Vocational Technical Institute, Lynn Woods Elementary, Thurgood Marshall Middle School, Pickering Middle School, Sewell-Anderson Elementary, Shoemaker Elementary School, Edward A. Sisson Elementary, Tracy Elementary, Washington S.T.E.M.

**Private School Focus:** St. Mary's is a Catholic college-preparatory school developing students in grades 6 through 12 from more than 30 communities across the North Shore.

**Notable residents:** Academy Award-winning actor Walter Brennan; Major League Baseball player Jim Hegan; psychologist Frederick Herzberg; aviation pioneer Ruth Bancroft Law; television journalist Lesley Stahl; Major League Baseball star Harry Agganis

**Real estate:**

**MEDIAN**

36 Atkins Ave., 4bd., 1 ba., 1,477 sq. ft., 4,791 sq. ft.

**Price:** \$259,900

**Agent:** Connor Real Estate

**HIGH END**

7 Holly Ave., 3 bd., 2 ba., 1,458 sq. ft., Lot 5,227 sq. ft.

**Price:** \$349,000

**Agent:** A. James Lynch, Inc.