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A History of the Fort Point Development Collaborative

The **Fort Point Development Collaborative** (FPDC) is a joint venture of the *Fort Point Cultural Coalition, Inc.* and *Keen Development Corporation*. FPDC was established in April 2003 to foster the creation of the arts by developing permanent, affordable artist live/work space and cultural facilities in Boston's Fort Point neighborhood.

In 1999, a group of neighborhood artists and non-profit arts organizations joined together to form the Fort Point Cultural Coalition (FPCC) as an impending crisis threatened to displace New England's largest arts community. Twenty-five years earlier, artists had begun to set up studios in Fort Point's underutilized warehouses, transforming the district into a flourishing neighborhood of more than 500 visual artists, arts organizations and arts-related businesses.

The economics of Fort Point have changed. A new convention center and plans for the redevelopment of the South Boston Waterfront have spurred tremendous interest in Fort Point. New development has displaced some cultural organizations and artists already and threatens to displace many more.

FPCC was created to preserve, promote and expand the cultural community of Fort Point, by securing permanent, affordable space for neighborhood artists and arts organizations. Initially, the most visible role of FPCC was that of advocacy, promoting public understanding of the importance of the cultural community in Fort Point and the artists living there. FPCC's ongoing sponsorship of local public art has raised neighborhood visibility throughout the Greater Boston area. But FPCC has always recognized that the only way to preserve the integrity of the neighborhood was to secure ownership of real estate in Fort Point.

In early 2000 FPCC approached Boston Wharf Co., Fort Point's largest property owner, about purchasing several buildings along Midway and A Streets. Instead, Beacon Capital Partners acquired this property for a new mixed-use development project, which would in time become Channel Center. The FPCC shifted gears and began negotiations to acquire buildings within Beacon's property, buildings that would be developed, owned and controlled by artists, for artists.

The result, after three years of planning and negotiation, is Midway Studios. Comprising over 200,000 square feet, the three buildings at 15 Channel Center Street (formerly 24-38 Midway Street) will provide 89 live/work studios, a 200-seat black-box theater, rehearsal spaces, a gallery and office space for non-profit arts organizations and arts-related businesses.

Midway Studios is a major step towards FPCC's goal of developing 300 permanent live/work studios for artists and the development of Fort Point as a major cultural district for the City of Boston. Midway Studios alone is not enough to keep the critical mass of artists necessary to preserve the essence of the Fort Point community. As a result, the FPCC has partnered with Keen Development Corporation to create a more permanent development structure—the **Fort Point Development Collaborative**. FPDC has its eye on other Fort Point properties as it works to ensure that Boston's largest arts community has a permanent home.