

The next step in our transformation is coming and WE NEED YOUR VOTE ON MAY 6!



In our first two years of programming, the Bellforge Arts Center has welcomed 17,000+ guests – from every New England state and beyond – with diverse, multiart, and multigenerational experiences. We continue executing our strategic plan to bring the Medfield State Hospital's (MSH) Chapel and Infirmary buildings back to life. Revitalizing these buildings is key to unlocking Bellforge's full artistic, educational, economic, and wellbeing benefits.

At Town Meeting on May 6, we're asking for your "Yes" vote, authorizing Medfield's Select Board to sell the Chapel and Infirmary buildings to Bellforge.

You must be present to vote.

A vote requires a quorum of at least 250 residents and a two-thirds majority.

Ownership benefits the Town financially and enables Bellforge to control construction costs and quality while bringing new, artful life to these century-old buildings.

Town Meeting: May 6, 2024 at 7 pm, Medfield High School Gym

We hope this sheet answers questions you may have. **For more information, please don't hesitate to reach out to Jean Mineo, Executive Director, at jmineo@bellforge.org or (617) 877-5158.**

"What's the current situation?"

- Bellforge holds a **99-year lease** from the Town on the Chapel and Infirmary buildings, which will become a 300-seat performance venue and arts education center, respectively.
- The campus's 19th-century buildings are in **various states of disrepair**, and there is **no utility infrastructure** (electricity, water, gas, etc.) currently available on campus. The cost to Bellforge to renovate the Chapel and Infirmary is now **\$30M**. We've already raised **more than half** of that amount, but much work remains.
- **Bellforge is not asking the Town for funding.** We're asking for ownership, which will help us succeed in this generational, transformative project for our Town and region.

"What are the benefits of this sale to the Town?"

- **Financial benefits from the sale itself:** Bellforge is willing to pay the Town for the Chapel and Infirmary buildings. This sale revenue would benefit the Town, as the buildings' value has been estimated at \$0 due to their condition and lack of infrastructure.
- **Financial impact from Bellforge programming:** For each year Bellforge's construction is delayed, community businesses lose at least \$1.2M in additional economic activity generated by the arts center and our audiences (estimated by Arts Market, a consultant to arts centers nationwide).
- **Preserves the buildings' public benefit:** Allowable-use clauses in the lease require these buildings be used only for performances, educational classes, cultural events, etc. In a sale, these clauses would transfer to the deed, binding Bellforge (and any successors) to these same uses, maintaining the public benefit in perpetuity.
- **Advances the Town's strategic goals:** A sale would help Bellforge become fully operational sooner and create an exceptional, high-demand arts center that aligns with many of Medfield's 2022 Master Plan Goals, Objectives, and Strategies including:
 - Preserve MSH's historic buildings and landscape through renovation and re-use
 - Diversify the tax base
 - Revitalize the MSH campus as a town and regional destination
 - Transform the Chapel as a performance venue and cultural center
 - Support regional efforts to increase area diversity
 - Expand opportunities for community gathering

There is plenty of precedent for this potential sale. **Many local nonprofits purchased their facilities from their towns**, including [TCAN](#) (Natick), [Zumix](#) (Boston), [Hudson Armory Project](#), [North Bennet Street School](#) (Boston), [Northampton Community Music Center](#), and [Children's Museum Easton](#).

“Why is now the right time to authorize the Select Board to make this sale?”

- **Buildings’ age and conditions present immediate and long-term challenges:** Within the past year, part of the Infirmary’s first floor collapsed into the basement due to water infiltration from roof leaks. Other campus buildings are experiencing similar collapses. Additional structural issues and resulting hazardous conditions will increase renovation costs. These circumstances complicate the challenge of creating a modern, acoustically and technologically advanced art center inside century-old buildings. To provide the most rewarding experience for artists and guests, we need control and agility to partner with top experts in this field, manage our costs, and overcome issues as they arise.
- **Optimizing our investment for the benefit of Medfield and the region:** Building ownership would deepen Bellforge’s investment in Medfield and accelerate the impact of our mission for the Town and region. By making this financial and strategic commitment, Bellforge would strengthen its stewardship of these unique, historic structures; ensure a more nimble, stable, and sustainable environment for our programming; and empower our organization to more fully and immediately deliver cultural and economic benefits that enhance Medfield’s quality of life.
- **Alignment with Trinity’s schedule:** We estimate state legislative approvals for the Chapel and Infirmary sale to Bellforge may take a year. It’s advantageous to align Bellforge’s schedule with Trinity Financial’s development of the residential portions of the property to support both of these complex projects, optimize resource sharing, and minimize disruption to future residents and Bellforge guests.

“[We] understand what Bellforge is trying to accomplish and are supportive of your endeavors. **It is obviously in Trinity’s interest that Bellforge’s development move forward and be successful**, and we are certainly aware of the pressure of construction costs.”
– Trinity Financial

“What would happen after a ‘Yes’ vote at Town Meeting?”

- The Select Board would be authorized to seek required approval from the state’s legislature for the negotiated sale. Bellforge anticipates this approval process may take **up to one year**. We hope to **seek this approval as soon as possible**, so we can sustain our forward momentum as we endeavor to bring Bellforge to full life and avoid further building deterioration.
- Bellforge has engaged in conversations with **Rep. Vaughn, Rep. Garlick, and Senator Rausch** to advocate for this motion. If the Town votes favorably, all three view their role as shepherding the sale through to approval.
- Ideally, Bellforge will bid out our project to potential construction partners by **early 2025**. We estimate it will take approximately **16 months** to finish our renovations. Our construction documents are already complete.

Thank you for supporting the Bellforge Arts Center.
We’re honored to call Medfield our home and to have such a dedicated, passionate community.

We’re excited to provide a creative gathering place for Medfield residents
– and artists and guests from across our region – for decades to come.



Rendering of the Chapel and Infirmary transformed as the Bellforge Arts Center.

Use your camera to scan the code for meeting information

