



With your support, WBUR opened CitySpace at The Lavine Broadcast Center to create connections and bridge differences — to engage our community face-to-face, especially in an increasingly divided world.

A presidential transition, an ongoing global pandemic, and a nation that continues to grapple with the impacts of race and racism on both public policy and the daily lives of its citizens means that live conversation at CitySpace is more critical to our society than ever.

CitySpace closed the doors to its 890 Commonwealth Avenue venue on March 10, 2020 in order to protect both staff and the public, but the virtual doors remained open. In addition to the public events produced on site in early 2020, the WBUR team has led virtual conversations to help answer the pressing questions on all of our minds. We are eager to share more with you in the following pages — none of it would be possible without your generosity and your belief in WBUR's mission.

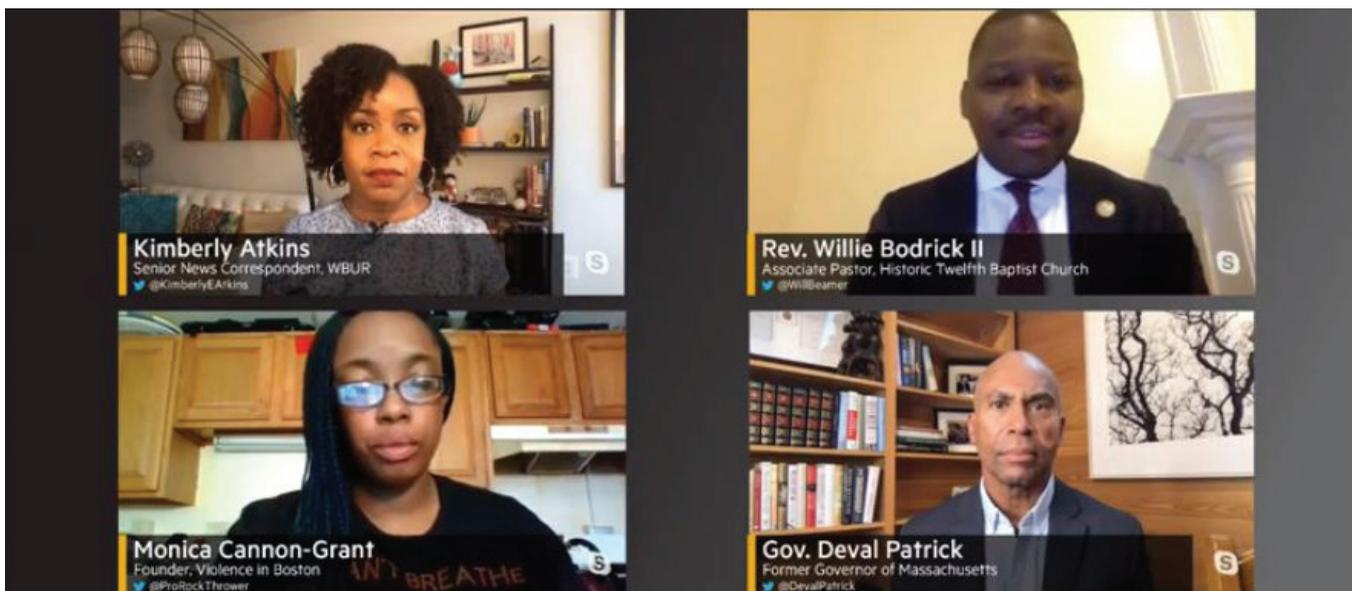


VIRTUAL TRANSITION

When CitySpace closed its doors on Commonwealth Avenue in early March due to the COVID-19 crisis, the WBUR facilities team prepared the venue to act as a back-up studio for the station's public broadcast. If one of the few staff members whose jobs required them to be on-site contracted COVID-19, production of WBUR's local and national shows would continue without interruption in CitySpace while WBUR worked with Boston University to conduct a deep clean of its primary studios.

CitySpace's soundproof theater space — created for both live broadcasts and performances — includes cutting-edge audio technology and is a unique, yet perfect, substitution for the existing studios. Fortunately the on-site team did not have to make the switch.

The CitySpace events team quickly transitioned from in-person programming to virtual community engagement efforts with interviews and conversations, both live and pre-recorded. In the fall of 2020, the team also began to produce virtual events for other nonprofits. This experiment, leveraging the tech and production skills of the CitySpace team, attempted to address revenue needs of the station while providing important resources to our community's nonprofit organizations. Ultimately, while the experience helped us hone critical skills, the efforts took too much time away from our core mission. Moving forward, WBUR will continue to focus on producing its own community-focused programming at CitySpace.



WBUR TOWN HALLS

When government officials advised Massachusetts residents to stay at home due to the COVID-19 crisis, WBUR recognized the longing people had for connection to one another – as well as the need for deep, reliable information. Free and open to the public, the 14-part WBUR Town Hall series brought journalists and experts together to discuss a weekly topic. These conversations were broadcast live on YouTube and audience members were able to ask questions of the guests in real time. The WBUR Town Halls allowed us to connect with our audience in a meaningful way at a time when we needed each other more than ever.

Our journalists covered topics including the societal costs of the pandemic; the racial inequities revealed by COVID-19; the spread of the virus within prisons and homeless populations; combating misinformation;

the impact of the virus on the presidential election; and the ethics surrounding a vaccine. WBUR welcomed many distinguished experts, including Dr. Shira Doron, epidemiologist and infectious disease physician at Tufts Medical Center; U.S. Representative Ayanna Pressley; Dr. Paula Johnson, physician and president of Wellesley College; and Dr. Kevin Tabb, president and CEO of Beth Israel Lahey Health. The series attracted roughly 350 attendees each week and thousands have watched the program recordings since.

COVERING COVID

This virtual series of interviews featured various WBUR reporters and staff sharing how the pandemic has changed their work. The CitySpace team conducted nine interviews, from April through June. Roughly 1,500 people have tuned in to learn more about how our staff members do their jobs.



“*There were maybe 25 of us left in the building...It was those same folks every day coming in and making sure we're staying on the air and that all the folks working remotely are able to connect and get all the sound in and function in an efficient way. It really drove home the seriousness of the moment, I think, but also just how unprecedented the situation is.*”

— Chris Citorik, *Radio Boston* producer, on working on-site at WBUR while others are at home.



CITYSPACE SUMMER CAMP

CitySpace announced its first Summer Camp in 2020 when many camps, programs and activities began to cancel summer offerings. The six-week CitySpace camp series aimed to help families entertain and engage their children during this unprecedented summer by fostering an environment where the kids could immerse themselves in new experiences and gain new skills — away from Zoom and screens.

Over 1,000 children registered to participate in CitySpace Summer Camp, which included a different theme and activity for each of the six weeks. The weekly activities, led by WBUR community partners, included community service, theater, dance, creative writing, art and a book club. WBUR collaborated with 21 partners to make this experience a success.



BLACK BOSTON

WBUR CitySpace worked with Boston University (BU) Initiative on Cities and BU Diversity & Inclusion to offer a recurring discussion series featuring transformative Black leaders from across Greater Boston. The monthly series provided a forum to examine our city's progress toward inclusive access, equity, and opportunity — and where we still fall short. “Black Boston” included guests Congresswoman Ayanna Pressley, Representative Nika Elugardo, and City Councilor Andrea Campbell, and attracted over 1,200 registrants. The event recordings have been viewed roughly 4,000 times.

LOOKING AHEAD

As our region reopens, CitySpace at The Lavine Broadcast Center will embrace a hybrid event strategy. We will monitor state guidance and Boston University policies to offer a safe viewing experience for staff and the community. We hope to return to in-person events in the fall, while continuing to offer streaming options to remote viewers. We will continue to take advantage of remote programming options — which includes attracting talent throughout the globe — while potentially allowing viewers to watch streamed programming on the big screen at the WBUR CitySpace venue.

Audiences in person and online will be engaged and enlightened through a myriad of conversation topics and themes. CitySpace programming offering wide-ranging exploration on subjects including the arts, politics, food, environment, education, health, culture, equity and more are expected over the next twelve months. In addition, we plan to engage the CitySpace community through our monthly email newsletter, social media, and stand-alone outreach campaigns. Beginning in late summer 2021, the CitySpace team will kick off a new WBUR stakeholder series to keep partners up to date on progress.

Callum Borchers

Hiawatha Bray

Meena Krenek

Tsedal Neeley

What are ways companies have been getting better communication and interaction from their employees who work remotely and decide not to go into office?

SERIES

This Changes Everything is a new WBUR series examining how our norms, our institutions and our culture have had to adjust to a new reality and what that reality will look like. From how we work, to how we gather and how we teach, we'll host conversations with the leaders, thinkers and activists who are reshaping our world. While current programming focuses on the impact of the pandemic, we believe the title to be evergreen and plan for an ongoing series.

- We kicked off the series on June 16 with "The Office Edition." Reporter Callum Borchers moderated this conversation about how companies can maintain productivity, collaboration and connectivity in a virtual world.
- "The Higher Education Edition" will take place on September 14. Dr. Robert Brown, president of Boston University; Dr. David Greene, president of Colby College; Dr. Paula Johnson, president of Wellesley College; and Dr. Pam Eddinger, president of Bunker Hill Community College will convene for a conversation about lessons learned throughout the pandemic and how the model of higher education may have changed forever.
- Additional programming topics for 2021 include the Supreme Court, restaurants, and how we gather. The first events of 2022 will cover media and sports.

Tell Me More will pair fascinating leaders in their respective fields for conversations about their journeys, inspirations and life lessons. We plan to partner interesting and talented people together with a WBUR journalist as a moderator — the dinner party conversation in which you'd hope to take part.

- September 13, Elizabeth Kolbert (staff writer, *The New Yorker*) and Helen Macdonald (writer, naturalist and Affiliated Research Scholar at the University of Cambridge) join Barbara Moran, senior environmental producing editor at WBUR.
- October 5, Angie Thomas (author, "The Hate U Give") and Tomi Adeyemi (author, "Children of Blood and Bone") join Tonya Mosley, co-host of *Here & Now*.
- Some hopeful pairings will include politicians Stacey Abrams and Rep. Ayanna Pressley, as well as Susan Stamberg, NPR special correspondent and Lis Napoli, author of "Susan, Linda, Nina & Cokie: The Extraordinary Story of the Founding Mothers of NPR."



Thomas and Adeyemi (Courtesy)

New England Newsmakers will focus on local newsmakers, taking advantage of the depth and breadth of knowledge and expertise within our immediate community. The WBUR newsroom already focuses on many of these scientists, professors and activists through its reporting. Live events at CitySpace will enable us to dive deeper into their areas of expertise.

Curated Cuisine is a continuation of the popular monthly series featuring conversations with renowned chefs and restaurateurs. This year, with our newfound remote capabilities, we'll feature national chefs and food critics, including Melissa Clarke and Sam Sifton from *The New York Times* and Jose Andres.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The mayoral speaker series in the fall will prove a critical resource for Bostonians hoping to cast an historic vote in the contested mayoral race. CitySpace is tentatively hosting a pre-campaign debate with all candidates during the first week of September and will invite the top two candidates to return for a more in-depth conversation in early October.

Eight local artists, all representing different genres, will perform at CitySpace thanks to a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Opportunities like this one, spotlighting and appreciating the unique accomplishments of musical artists throughout the Boston area, bring new audiences into the WBUR fold and enable us to reach new members of our community.

WBUR en español is still in early planning stages and ideally will focus on issues affecting the Latinx community, in Spanish, every other month. According to the most recent census, 20% of the City of Boston identifies as Hispanic or Latino. This event series will meet members of our community where they are, highlighting issues they care about.

The civic engagement hackathon similarly is in very early planning stages. It will be an annual weekend event that engages community participants in innovative work, attacking a specific civic issue with inventive solutions.

WITH THE NEWSROOM

Over the course of the last year and under the leadership of WBUR Chief Content Officer, Victor Hernandez, the CitySpace team is working more closely with the newsroom and WBUR shows. We're working toward a balanced schedule, with representation from all editorial groups — including *On Point*, *Here & Now*, *Radio Boston*, and each of the news teams dedicated to a specific topic area, such as education, environment, and the economy.

- On August 3, 2021 Robin Young is hosting an event at CitySpace that will then be aired on *Here & Now* during regular programming hours.
- *On Point* is planning a capstone event to end the recent special series on Amazon: The Prime Effect.
- The upcoming series of *Endless Thread*, WBUR's popular podcast collaboration with Reddit, investigates the history of memes and will include a live event in CitySpace.
- On October 21, 2021, we'll discuss how educators and students have changed their approach to learning, and how they can continue to recover following the losses of the pandemic.

MEET OUR NEW STAFF

Over the past year, WBUR created two new positions and hired two exceptional individuals to ensure that our investment in CitySpace continues to be a success.

Victor Hernandez is responsible for overseeing all editorial aspects at WBUR including local news and programming, national programs, podcasting and CitySpace.

As the organization's first-ever Chief Content Officer, Hernandez is charged with helping to grow WBUR's audience and cultivate the loyalty and community support that is essential to sustaining local journalism. Before joining WBUR in March 2021, Hernandez was executive editor at Cascade Public Media, a nonprofit media institution created through the merger of Seattle's PBS TV station, KCTS 9 and digital news outlet Crosscut.

Additionally, Hernandez has held leadership roles at CNN, where he oversaw U.S. news coverage; NBC television affiliates in California; and a digital media technology startup. Amy Macdonald, Director of CitySpace, reports directly to Hernandez and will work in partnership with the newsroom.

As Events Business Manager, **Kait Ziskin Levesque** works across teams, leveraging WBUR's numerous assets, to develop one-of-a-kind, compelling engagement opportunities for our partners and our audiences. Prior to joining WBUR, Kait led strategic partnerships at HubWeek, designing partner content & programming that amplified and supported Boston's innovation ecosystem.



Victor Hernandez
Chief Content Officer



Kait Ziskin Levesque
Events Business Manager

THANK YOU

This work would not be possible without your foresight and early investment. When WBUR recognized the need for a forum for healthy debate and civic engagement opportunities, your partnership made the vision for CitySpace at The Lavine Broadcast Center a reality. At a time when these conversations, and the open exchange of information, feel ever-more crucial — we thank you for your ongoing support.

