



ABOUT the PROJECT

The **2025 Paint CHQ** mural festival is an innovative project intended to enhance Chautauqua County Department of Planning and Development’s ongoing economic development efforts. Public artwork is an essential building block in economic development and quality of place, and this project will bring one large mural to up to five downtown districts— providing another asset in our walkable, pedestrian-friendly downtowns. These murals will attract visitors, locals, and tourists!

In partnership with local community members, Chautauqua Region Economic Development Corporation (CREDC) and Chautauqua County Department of Planning and Development (CCDPD) will work to bring large-scale murals to several of our communities. Each community will have a unique project in a location that aligns with the strategy and goals of the festival. The goals and purpose of this type of artwork implementation include highlighting community assets, embracing the value of public art investment, bringing visitors to your community, encouraging economic growth, building a foundation for more public art investment, and improving quality of place.

This regional mural festival concept will build on the quality of place efforts accelerated by the CREDC and CCPD, growing regional pride and garnering significant attention and exposure nationally.

What is a mural festival?

Mural festivals involve the implementation of a group of murals in a condensed timeframe. The festival atmosphere draws media attention and outside visitors while inviting residents to be part of the public art creation. Forbes writer Lea Lane explored the mural festival movement in an article titled, [“It’s Not Graffiti, It’s Street Art: The Best Urban Mural Festivals Around The Country.”](#) According to Lane, “Forward-thinking cities are showing their support for the arts through urban mural festivals. These vibrant events make art accessible, free of charge to their communities, create Instagram-worthy backdrops to attract visitors, and provide a platform for both local and international talent.”



Why invest in murals and public art?

Many communities are utilizing public art to create a positive impact in their hometown. In downtown Fort Wayne, Indiana the [Art This Way](#) program has implemented large-scale murals in order to activate their public spaces. The 2019 [Gehl](#) Public Spaces + Public Life study referenced the Art This Way program's efforts, stating that public art is a key component of improving the public realm, and public artwork is an essential building block in economic development.



The before and after images of a Make It Your Own Mural Fest project in Noble County, Albion, IN which is approximately 1,300 square feet in size. This fox mural by Jerrod Tobias is situated along a pedestrian sidewalk on the city's main corridor near the historic courthouse.

According to [Americans for the Arts](#), public art engages a community, engenders a sense of pride and community identity, and enhances a community's quality of life. Investing in arts and culture initiatives creates the environment for this prosperity and growth. When patrons attend an arts event, they may pay for parking, eat dinner at a restaurant, shop in local retail stores, stay in a hotel, or have dessert on the way home. Based on surveys conducted by Americans for the Arts, in 2018, the typical attendee spends \$31.47 per person, per event, beyond the cost of admission. 34% of attendees came from outside the county in which the arts event took place, and they spent twice as much as their local counterparts (\$47.57 vs. \$23.44).

In the 2019 [Forbes](#) article, [“Why It’s Good Business To Support The Arts,”](#) author Henry Kurkowski reports, **“Promoting the arts can also positively impact the bottom line for companies that support these organizations....companies today are increasingly rated by their community involvement, ethics and social responsibility. It’s a way to stand out from the competition.”**

Initiatives like this festival, which improve quality of life across the region, can increase the quality of the regional labor force, which will continue to positively affect business and talent attraction efforts. This will result in an increased per capita personal income.



The before and after images of an Art This Way collaboration with Warrior Breed Motorcycle Club (an all-veteran biker group) in Fort Wayne, IN. This mural covers the non-historical EFIS walls on the lower half of this historic building in their downtown.

Who is leading this effort?

Leaders of the **Paint CHQ** mural festival project includes the Chautauqua Region Economic Development Corporation (CREDC) and Chautauqua County Department of Planning and Development (CCDPD), with strong support and collaboration from Alexandra Hall with A H Public Spaces Consulting, LLC.

A H Public Spaces Consulting has built and managed several regional public art initiatives. Hall is actively managing over 50 public art projects in 2025. Hall developed and executed the **LivCo Walls Mural Festival**, in Livingston County, NY and the **Make It Your Own Mural Fest** in Northeastern Indiana.

Committees leading this effort:

- Chautauqua Region Economic Development Corporation (CREDC) Representatives
- Chautauqua County Department of Planning and Development (CCDPD) Staff
- Four to Five Local-Level Village/City Steering Committees with artist representation (one per downtown)

How can local artists get involved?

There are three ways local and regional creatives can join this initiative.

1. High-quality, large-scale mural installation requires experience and skill. There will be an opportunity for creatives to apply to paint one of the mural projects—the artist open call opportunity will be announced in the spring of 2025.
2. If local creatives want to learn how to install murals, the mural festival **Paint CHQ Mural Apprentice Program** is meant to offer aspiring mural artists an opportunity to garner valuable experience installing large-scale murals. Through this program, volunteer apprentices will be paired with experienced muralists. Apprentices will be asked to help assist in the mural installation during the mural festival.
3. Each community will develop a **Steering Committee**, and local artists are encouraged to participate on this committee. Being on this committee does not prevent an artist from applying to install a mural or prevent them from participating in an apprentice opportunity.

When and where will the mural festival take place?

The festival is planned for September 2025. Several villages/cities in Chautauqua County, NY will participate, and specific mural designs will be determined through a village-led selection committee process with a combination of county-level, consultant guidance, and local input. Events surrounding the festival will take place throughout Chautauqua County.



How much does a mural festival cost?

Working with a public art consultant, project leaders have identified a total project cost of approximately \$100,000, which represents about \$25,000 per mural. The total cost includes considerations for all facets of the festival, including marketing initiatives, events, artist fees, supplies and more.

Funding for the mural festival is earmarked for placemaking-related projects. Funding is provided through the Chautauqua County Partnership for Economic Growth's placemaking initiative. Additional funding may come from grant applications, local foundation support, and corporate sponsorships.

What are the goals for the mural festival initiative?

Chautauqua County Department of Planning and Development Staff has identified four goals for the mural festival:

1. **Build** on the success of previous placemaking initiatives, increasing pedestrian traffic and tourism within the downtowns of the Chautauqua County cities and villages.
2. **Expand** on existing public artwork with a series of large, high-quality murals.
3. **Drive** national, state and county-wide media exposure to showcase and build upon the Live CHQ Talent Attraction and Retention Campaign: Chautauqua County is a wonderful place to live, work and visit.
4. **Inspire** communities to create and curate more public artwork in Chautauqua County by offering local artists apprentice opportunities and by exposing local creatives to a larger network of professional mural artists.

*For further information, please contact **Rebecca Wurster**, Planning Coordinator with the Department of Planning & Development and Planning Manager of the Chautauqua County Partnership for Economic Growth under the umbrella of the Chautauqua Region Economic Development Corporation (CREDC).*

Phone: (716) 363-3620 | Email: WursterR@chqgov.com

*For festival related questions, you may also reach out to **Alexandra Hall**, A H Public Spaces Consulting, LLC. www.ahconsultingllc.com; Email: AHPSConsulting@gmail.com*

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