The Albany Cultural Heritage and Tourism [CHAT] Partnership Guide & Endeavors Catalogue

2016-2018

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PURPOSE and VISION

This plan is a continuation of the recommendations provided in the Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan for 2016-2018. Accordingly, it reinforces our vision for the year 2020 as follows:

“The City of Albany and the Capital Region are recognized as a top international cultural heritage tourism destination. [We] will have a strong preservation ethic, where residents promote their appreciation of place and community pride, and cultural heritage tourism robustly contributes to the region's economic vitality and growth.”

The purpose of this guide is to provide specificity regarding the organizational structure and functionality of Albany's newly named Cultural Heritage and Tourism (CHAT) Partnership as we move forward. The overall goal is to continue to cultivate and promote Albany’s unique cultural heritage as a highly visible, economically vibrant, and quality-of-life enhancing resource. As such, the Partnership will strive to help identify, support, enrich, and complete projects, as well as sustain on-going initiatives toward achieving our vision for 2020.

What is a CHAT Partnership? A CHAT Partnership is defined as a collaboration of two or more individuals from different city and/or Albany region organizations for the sole purpose of combining resources to execute a cultural heritage and tourism endeavor. These Partnerships will interface with the City of Albany Department of Cultural Affairs (DECA) and/or Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACCVB) for promotional and in-kind support. All Partnership Endeavors must have clear measurable outcomes with targeted dates of completion.

The CHAT Partnership is a true collective-impact enterprise. This means that talented and motivated stakeholders from a variety of institutional and community sectors—museums, historic sites, education, hospitality, philanthropy, and private industry—will come together voluntarily, and as convened by the Mayor. Please note, because the Partnership is an on-going collective process, the Guide and Catalogue’s narrative will be continually updated. Various “release dates” on the front cover will indicate to the reader that edits and addendums have been made.

As Mayor Kathy Sheehan has said, “a great city is judged by how it receives its visitors.” The Partnership’s collaborative structure is formulated so that all members can be unified by a common vision, and are empowered to undertake projects that capitalize on Albany’s finest cultural and heritage assets. Ultimately, these efforts are expected to elevate an esteemed sense of place in Albany, for the benefit of both tourists and residents alike.
**CHAT Structure**

The CHAT Partnership will be chaired by Renée Overdyke, Ph.D., the City of Albany’s Cultural Affairs Director. The *Albany County Convention and Visitors Bureau* (ACCVB) will continue to play a key role in the management of this Plan. As such, the lead administrator for this plan will be Maeve McEneny (ACCVB Program Coordinator), who will organize quarterly meetings, produce quarterly reports, coordinate communications, and continue to execute CHAT related ACCVB programs as specified in its contract with the City of Albany. The structure of the Partnership will consist of two key components: an Advisory Board and Partnership Teams, as described below.

**Advisory Board**

The Advisory Board is a semi-structured, voluntary body appointed by the Mayor to serve for a two year term. Board members may be made up of historians, content-area experts, designers, artists, researchers, hospitality/tourism/business leaders, and active community members from whom the Project Teams (described below) may seek information and guidance. Members may also share operational direction, help coordinate events planning/scheduling, and any other assistance to support and enhance CHAT related endeavors. Given that the Advisory Board is voluntary, all assistance sought must reasonably align with all CHAT Partnership goals, as outlined in the Strategic Plan.

The Advisory Board will meet to assess project group status and accomplishments. Advisory Board membership is flexible and does not necessarily require additional meetings outside the established quarterly sessions. As its core mission, the Board serves to coordinate a body of partners and Project Teams drawn from local cultural institutions or organizations. All CHAT partners serve voluntarily and at the discretion of the Mayor. Appointees will communicate regularly with the Cultural Affairs Director and the ACCVB to review project status reports, gauge progress, identify needs, and make recommendations to the Mayor.

The **CHAT Partnership Advisory Board Appointees** (July 22, 2016 – July 22, 2018) include:

- **Renée M. Overdyke**, Ph.D. – **Chair & Cultural Affairs Director**, City of Albany
- **Maeve McEneny** – **Lead Administrator** & ACCVB **Program Coordinator**
- **Bob Belber**, Times Union Center
- **Holly Brown**, the Palace Theater
- **Susan Cleary**, NYS Office of General Service
- **Lee Dixon**, Graphic Designer
- **Leola Edeline**, the Renaissance Hotel
- **Mark Eagan**, Capital Region Chamber
- **Susan Holland**, Historic Albany Foundation
- **Jessica Neidl**, SUNY System Administration
- **Cordell Reeves**, NY State Historic Preservation Office
- **Sarah Reginelli** (or designee), Capitalize Albany Corporation
- **Mark Schaming** – NYS Museum
- **Miriam Trentozzi**, Former Co-chair, Albany Heritage Tourism Advisory Council
- **Michele Vennard** (or designee), ACCVB
How are CHAT Endeavors selected?

The CHAT Partnership takes a new approach to developing cultural heritage tourism in Albany. It seeks to foster lasting positive impacts for the Albany area by connecting innovative institutional partners with traditional cultural heritage stakeholders.

The CHAT Advisory Board members were selected by the mayor for 2016-2018. It is the Advisory Board’s role to identify individuals, entities, and resources that are well-positioned to undertake new cultural heritage related endeavors. Board Members may form their own project teams, drawing from talent throughout the region. This process ensures that linkages remain strong and can support Albany’s historic identity in a way that enhances quality of life and serves as an economic driver for the region.

Community members may approach Board Members with ideas or proposals, but there is no formal application process. This is necessary since the Advisory Board is comprised of active Professionals, whose service to the Partnership is completely voluntary and whose time and resources are extremely limited. Advisory Board members are not obligated to accept project ideas in any kind of open selection process.

Please note: Final selection of CHAT Partnership endeavors are made by the Director of Cultural Affairs, Renée M. Overdyke, Ph.D., in consultation with the Mayor. Use of the CHAT Partnership logo to identify or promote projects, products, events and any other Partnership endeavors is restricted only to those who have been selected in this way.

CHAT Operations and Endeavors

Partnership Teams are considered the most important actors in CHAT. They are self-directed and may be comprised of historians, content-area experts, designers, artists, researchers, hospitality/tourism/business leaders, and active community members who have content knowledge, skills, and available resources to execute specific heritage tourism endeavors.

A key feature in the composition of the Teams is that they be nimble. This means that they should only be as large and structured as necessary to execute projects. Teams determine their own operations, procedures, and communications.

Teams will submit concise updates to the CHAT Partnership Chair (R. M. Overdyke) and/or Lead Administrator (M. McEneny) prior to each quarterly meeting. It is recommended that they identify one Advisory Board member as a direct contact for guidance and support.

It is also important to note that various dedicated individuals who have been actively involved in the Albany Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee and/or Working Groups in the past, may be called upon to inform, create and help coordinate the CHAT Partnership, according to their availability.
CHAT Themes

Many dedicated individuals and groups have given a lot of thought and research into the most appropriate themes that are useful for the Albany CHAT Partnership. The themes listed below are those that are most representative of those developed by various stakeholders. This includes, for instance, themes prepared by the Albany Heritage Tourism Advisory Council, the Heritage Tourism Working Group, Partners for Albany Stories (PAST), NYS Heritage Area System, and Path through History. The following list of themes is intentionally broad to ensure it encompasses the diverse and rich cultural heritage that makes our region so robust and attractive at a world class level.

- **Early Albany**: (circa 1600’s – American Revolution): The roots of American History lead back to Albany. Early Albany stories include those of (yet are not limited to) Native Americans, Dutch Settlers, first families, African Americans, colonization and the military.

- **Architecture and the Urban Landscape**: Albany’s cultural diversity and evolution can be told visually, in the bricks and mortar of our diverse architecture and urban landscapes. Neighborhoods across the city feature homes ranging from the 18th century to more modern sensibilities. For example, The NYS Capitol’s “battle of the styles” reflects the changing aesthetics of over thirty decades in its construction.

- **Social, Political, and Cultural History**: New York remains at the forefront of social, political and cultural change. Albany, as the state’s capital city, more often than not found itself at the center of it all. Stories in our social, political and cultural history include Anti-Rent Wars, Religious movements, Abolitionism, Women’s Rights, and LGBT history. Albany was also the training ground for political heavy weights, including future presidents.

- **Innovation Hub – Science, Technology and Industry**: From Joseph Henry to nanotechnology leaders, innovators are drawn to this region. Albany was the essential to the construction of the Erie Canal, and other historical transportation systems (the railroad and Port of Albany) which ensured that Albany became a center for manufacturing.

- **Performing Arts, Visual Arts and Literature**: Albany has fostered artists across the field. Writer’s such as William Kennedy, Gregory Maguire, Kurt Vonnegut, Lydia Davis and many others call Albany home. World famous Hudson River paintings, modern artists and new artists are celebrated in Albany. Theatre and musical performances are embraced in our numerous performing arts venues.

- **Natural History**: From the Albany Pine Bush to Thatcher Park, Albany’s natural history is as beautiful as it is diverse. The Hudson River and Albany’s Riverfront is the key to understanding Albany’s development from settlement to City.
The CHAT Endeavors Catalogue

The CHAT Partnership Endeavors fall into two categories:

1. Foundational Initiatives (on-going), and
2. Projects (time limited).

Foundational Initiatives are endeavors that are ongoing and/or require long-term coordination and administration. These might include, for example, creation of a revitalization venture; a joint-ticket and/or multi-site “passport”; exploration of additional way-finding infrastructure; creation of metrics to gauge visitor experience and means to act on collected input; brand development and management; and creation and administration of social media campaign. Current examples of these initiatives are the following:

+ **Heritage Partnership Outreach & Communications**
  - Heritage Partnership Meeting – Cultural heritage partnership met in June regarding accomplishments to date, future programming and visitor survey. Sites expressed need for an internal working calendar to avoid scheduling conflicts.
  - Notable anniversaries identified include the hundredth anniversary NYS Women’s Suffrage Amendment and Erie Canal Bicentennial 2017. Both were the focus of the discussion related to programming and REDC funding application.
  - Visitor Survey Summer 2016 – Developed visitor survey which will be distributed by 13 heritage sites in the City of Albany July-August. A postcard providing a link to an online survey has also been developed and will be distributed to those visitors who do not wish to complete the survey on-site.
  - Attendance Tracking – Will continue to solicit attendance numbers of attractions and performance venues on a quarterly basis. 2015 attendance serves as the baseline for tracking future growth.
  - Site Inventory – Conducted a site inventory analysis to determine similarities of sites in terms of hours of operation, admission costs and program to assist in the development of future program.
    - Partnership Team: ACCVB and many others.
    - Status: on-going.

+ **Hamilton Themed Tours** – ACCVB led coordination between Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site, Albany Institute of History and Art, and Crisan Café to produce “Hamilton in Albany” a three-venue experience that introduces visitors to the relationship Alexander Hamilton had with Albany.
  - Self-Guided Walking Tour: Collaboration with ACCVB, Schuyler Mansion and AIHA.
  - Print and Digital Advertising: Distributed to key markets (New York, New Jersey, and Boston).
  - Facebook Ad Campaign (July 6th – 26th): 340,283 impressions, generating 5,245 clicks to site, and produced CTR of 1.55%.
  - Brochures: 2,870 distributed; 1,391 downloads.
  - Media Kit: Distributed to 71 target media contacts.
- WMHT: Completed walking tour on August 24th. Produced 16 tweets, 346 likes and 68 retweets.
- While we allocate funds from our management agreement for advertising, as an organization, we also understand how important activities like this can be. For this initiative, we spent $3,699 on collateral materials, advertising, and FAM tour for media.
- Site Attendance: June-August Schuyler Mansion attendance increased 126%. (2015: 1,984 to 2016: 4,491)
- Partnership Team: ACCVB
- Status: Various components completed/on-going.

- **Black Heritage Tours** has begun pilot programming highlighting American – African Dutch Heritage. The tour uses Albany Hotels, transportation and heritage attractions. The first two tour dates have been fully subscribed.
  - Press Conference: August 5th, attended by 60 people. (Community leaders, distinguished guests, members of the media.)
  - Media Releases: Created two. One at announcement and another at launch.
  - Social Media: Assisted with strategy and execution.
- Partnership Team: ACCVB
- Status: Various components completed/on-going
- **Albany Region Viator Introduction and Training** – To highlight and market Albany’s unique visitor experiences, ACCVB partnered with Empire State Development Corporation and Viator, with the goal of assembling new visitor packages. These packages could be publicized and sold on Viator, a popular web-based travel booking site affiliated with TripAdvisor.
  - Presentation on May 18th with heritage and attraction partners
  - Priority Packages Identified: Includes Discovery Pass encompassing multiple historic sites.
  - Scheduled follow-up trainings with all interested partner.
  - Foundational Group: ACCVB, Empire State Development Corporation, and Viator
  - Status: Various components completed/on-going
  - **Partnership Team:** ACCVB, Empire State Development Corporation, and Viator
  - **Status:** Various components completed/on-going

- **Guided Walking Tours** – The Albany Visitors Center hosts two guided walking tours per month (Thursday & Saturday).
  - Nine tours through August.
  - Four more tours through October
  - Attendance at 57 (average of six walkers per tour)
  - Promotion: www.albany.org, online calendars and social media.
  - **Partnership Team:** ACCVB
  - **Status:** Various components completed/on-going

- **Path Through History Secret City Garden Tour** – For the New York State Path through History Weekend, the Visitors Center partnered with Ten Broeck Mansion, The Olde English Pub, and the Albany Pine Bush to develop a slate of programs that highlight Albany’s unique history and lush natural assets.
  - Social Media: 11 posts related to PTH events. Average engagement of 5%.
  - 21 total tour attendance.
  - **Partnership Team:** ACCVB
  - **Status:** COMPLETED
**Blog Series: “If Walls Could Talk”** - Four posts so far, publicizing sites and related events for Heritage Partners and sites: Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site, Crailo State Historic Site, Myers Residence, and Albany Shaker Meeting House.

- 775 + views.
- Solicited additional blogs from heritage partners. Commitments from Historic Cherry Hill and Ten Broeck Mansion (completed).

**Partnership Team:** ACCVB and Historic Sites  
**Status:** Various components completed/on-going.

**Partnership Team:** ACCVB  
**Status:** Various components completed/on-going.

**Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan** – Developed by the Albany Heritage Tourism Advisory Council, this plan identified three goals, twelve strategies, and over thirty tactics to help achieve the primary goals and purpose of the Albany Cultural Heritage and Tourism (CHAT) Partnerships Plan moving forward. The proposals developed here are a primary reference tool intended to guide all CHAT Partnership Initiative and Projects. The three major goals are:

1. **Promote and expand Albany’s existing cultural heritage experiences.**
2. **Preserve and protect Albany’s cultural heritage assets for present and future generations.**
3. **Establish the management and funding structure to implement the strategic plan.**

**Partnership Team:** Matthew Bender IV and Miriam Trementozzi, Advisory Council Co-Chairs, the ACCVB, and many others (refer to the Strategic Plan for full listing).  
**Status:** Completed January, 2016 (On-going reference for CHAT Partnership)
**CHAT Projects** are endeavors that are time limited and/or require short-term coordination and administration. They include, for example, special events, promotional support, the development of interpretive signage, tours, exhibits and displays, and merchandise based on Albany’s cultural and heritage strengths. Several of these Projects have been completed, while others are underway in various stages. Some examples of **CHAT Projects** and **Teams** include (but are not limited to) the following:

- **Hudson Valley Ramble** – The Hudson River Ramble is an annual event throughout the month of September highlighting the natural and cultural resources in the Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area. Many heritage partners participate in the Hudson Valley Ramble.
  - **Promotion:** Built a Hudson Valley Ramble page on Albany.org.
  - **Crafted social media that drives traffic** Albany.org and the official Ramble site.
  - **Tours:** ACCVB provided tours for the event.
  - **Historic Downtown Walking Tour 9/24**
  - **Albany Bootlegger Tour 9/10:** 20 participants as of 9/9
  - **Partnership Team:** ACCVB
  - **Status:** Various components completed/on-going

- **Erie Canal Bicentennial Celebration** – ACCVB staff is coordinating with Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site, New York State Museum, Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence, Irish American Heritage Museum and other key partners to produce programming related to the Erie Canal Bicentennial in 2017.
  - **Programing Meetings:** June 29th and September 13th
  - **Meeting Participants:** Historic Albany Foundation, Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region, Waterford Museum, Irish American Heritage Museum, Crailo State Historic Site, Albany County Historical Association and Special Events for the City of Albany, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and Mohawk Towpath Scenic Byway.
  - **Programing Brochures:** Mailed out by Destinations of New York State to group tour vendors, trade shows, and highlighted at Travel Media Showcase. Production and mailing: $705.
  - **Erie Canal Media Luncheon, NYC, presented by Canal NY:** September 27th. Highlighting local programming to garner additional coverage. Cost: $1500. 27 media registered.
  - **CFA Grant:** (Pending) Support of marketing plan for promotion of Erie Canal events in 2017.
  - **WMHT:** Coordinating with WMHT, who is airing an Erie Canal documentary in 2017.
  - **Partnership Team:** ACCVB
  - **Status:** Various components completed/on-going

- **Downtown BID “Place-Making” Panels:** Freestanding “place-making” panels installed at key locations in downtown Albany, mostly along State and Broadway.
  - **Status:** Work in progress; installation projected for early September 2016.

- **80 State Street Window Exhibit.** Large window exhibit tells the story of Albany as the point of contact between native peoples and Europeans, and city's Dutch settlement.
  - **Status:** COMPLETED, May 2016
Albany Institute of History and Art’s 225th Anniversary – A web page was created to help publicize the Institute’s 225th anniversary celebrations and programming.

- Albany.org webpage and header on homepage raises awareness about their anniversary calendar and programming
- Assisted in development of web based advertising, advised and managed other editorial content, including ad in NJ Advance Ledger and NY By Rail Magazine.
- Provided training on Viator program and promotions with goal of creating package on this popular travel activities and booking website.

**Partnership Team:** ACCVB and the AIHA

**Status:** Various components completed; work in progress.

Schuyler Flatts Project – ACCVB Staff were part of the planning committee for the viewing and re-internment of enslaved individuals of the Schuyler household during Path Through History Weekend.

- Communication kits were created for April 30 Public Meeting, and June 17-18 Memorial Service, for outreach to neighborhood associations, elected officials, not-for-profits, public authorities, and the media. Each kit included invitation, media release, newsletter blurb, flyer, as well as list of contacts for distribution.
- As a result of outreach, event was covered in the following outlets: News 10, Fox News, WNYT 13, Time Warner Cable News, Albany Times Union, All Over Albany, and Spotlight News.

**Partnership Team:** ACCVB

**Status:** COMPLETED, June 2016
“Pull up a Chair” Project (working title) – The Art of Seating: This project seeks to build on the terrific traveling exhibit, at the Albany Institute of History & Art slated for 10/1 - 12/31, 2017. Each participating heritage site would select an interesting chair in their collection to tell a story about Albany’s history. The goal is to expand visitation and visibility at our sites and use this as a pilot for future cultural heritage tourism collaborations. To help Partners for Albany Stories leverage Art of Seating exhibit at Albany Institute of History & Art, ACCVB assisted in the development of events and exhibits related to chairs. ACCVB also created marketing recommendations document, and provided feedback on collateral materials. [http://www.albanyinstitute.org/upcoming-exhibitions.html]

Partnership Team: Partners for Albany Stories (PAST)
Status: Work in progress

Science Café: Fun mixer with short expert presentation to generate public interest and knowledge of NYS Museum collections and work. Two events have been done so far at City Beer Hall, both with full-house attendance. First event was Birds & Beer with the state ornithologist; second event was A Toast to Evolution with the state paleontologist.

Partnership Team: NYSM (Mark Schaming) and Downtown BID (Georgette Steffens)
Status: Work in progress

Mural Projects: A collective of local organizations is coordinating the creation of several Albany-themed murals around downtown Albany. The Blue Bird AlbanyMural Project, was funded by the Albany Parking Authority, curated by Tony Iadicicco of Albany Center Gallery [http://albanycentergallery.org/] and The Albany Barn [http://albanybarn.org/]. It was expressly created to make a unique entrance into the City of Albany. With the vision to bring distinctive public art to the city, its visitors and residents, many key organizations have started to plan for future art projects that will involve local and regional artists, as well as attracting international artists for our Visiting Artists Series. Participating organizations have thus far included City of Albany, Downtown Albany BID, Capitalize Albany, SUNY, and NYSM.

Partnership Team: Various teams and projects
Status: Blue Bird Mural completed; additional projects underway.
History Happy Hour: Similar to above, but without presentations. This is just a fun mixer for history nerds, held at various historic locations around the city. People like to drink in museums and old houses. The next HHH is in August at the Shaker site (need to confirm that). Previous HHH’s have been held at AlHA, Schuyler Mansion, Ten Broeck, and the University Club.  
**Status:** Work in progress for fifth and sixth HHHs.

We Are NY Film: Albany segment – The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation asked ACCVB to assist in promotion of the new film series they created, “We Are NY” which focuses on historic sites that have unified communities. OPRHP completed the “We Are NY – Albany” film, which focused on the Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region and the Stephen and Harriet Myers Residence.

- Distributed a media release about the film.
- Social Media: Produced 29 posts related to Myers Residence film, with average engagement hovering at 8%.
- Connected with I Love NY for their assistance with promotion.
- **Partnership Team:** ACCVB, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region
- **Status:** COMPLETE

Visitor Survey Summer 2016 – Developed a visitor survey and asked 13 heritage sites in Albany to distribute the survey July-Labor Day. Due to limited resources, 5 sites were not able to assist. This intercept satisfaction evaluation was a Goal highlighted in the Heritage Tourism Advisory Council Strategic Plan. By far, the majority of participants rated their experiences at the sites they visited as GREAT, as well as their overall experience in the Capital Region.
- Distribution: 7 sites
- Surveys completed: 361

Results show that out of 361 survey participants:
- First time visitors: 141
- Spent 2 overnights or more: 173
- Overnighed in hotel/ motel: 146
- Spent more than $250: 116
- Visiting Albany for family/ friends: 130
- Visiting Albany to experience Heritage/ Culture: 119
- Largest percentage of visitors between ages of: 36-65
- What amenities would enhance your experience: Top 3 answers- 1) Better signage 2) Guided tours  3) Better transportation options
- Partnership Team: Albany Visitors Center, Albany Institute of History & Art, Dutch Apple, Historic Cherry Hill, NYS Museum, Shaker Heritage, Myers Residence, USS Slater
- Sites unable to distribute due to limited resources: Crailo, Irish American Heritage Museum, NYS Capitol, Schuyler Mansion and Ten Broeck Mansion

- **Albany Symphony’s Roscoe promotional support** - Members of the CHAT Advisory Board are assisting Albany Symphony with the promotion of the upcoming opera *Roscoe*, adapted from William Kennedy’s 2002 novel. CHAT Partners have been asked to disseminate promotional materials for the even (Oct. 15, 2016, at The Palace Theater) and related NYS Writers Institute event (Oct. 5, 2016, at SUNY Plaza) to help ensure a successful program.
  - **William Kennedy** is perhaps Albany’s best known creative export in the last 40 years, and promoting his work, his life.
  - Kennedy's relationship to Albany presents opportunities to foster placemaking and Albany awareness and hometown pride.
  - **Project Leader:** Jessica Neidl, SUNY System Administration
  - **Status:** On-going
SUMMARY

- This Guide and Endeavors Catalogue illustrate how the Albany Cultural Heritage and Tourism (CHAT) Partnership, as a unique collective of voluntary and dedicated individuals, will move forward. The framework presented here is a working document for use throughout the next two years beginning on the Albany’s Historic Dungan Charter Friday, July 22, 2016, through July 22, 2018. It creates an approach through which the city of Albany and its region can collaboratively develop cultural heritage and tourism guided by the goal of connecting visitors to authentic experiences that highlight our singular, deep roots in the city, region and national history.