



The **Albany**
Cultural Heritage and Tourism (CHAT)
Partnership Plan for
2016-2018

Release Date:
August 1, 2016



The **Albany** *Cultural Heritage and Tourism (CHAT)* **Partnership** 2016-2018

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 foundational 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 primary purpose of this plan is to *provide greater specificity* regarding the *organizational structure and functionality* (or, operational plan) 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 meeting these goals.

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 Plan’s narrative will be continually updated.** Various “release dates” on the front cover will indicate to the reader that addendums regarding Foundational Initiatives & Place Making Projects, etc. have been made.

It is said that “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.

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 **Project Teams**, as described below.

I. 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 of Commerce

Susan Holland, Historic Albany Foundation

Jessica Neidl, SUNY System Administration

Cordell Reeves, NY State Historic Preservation Office

Sarah Reginelli (or designee), Capitalize Albany Corporation

Miriam Trementozzi, Former Co-chair, Albany Heritage Tourism Advisory Council

Michele Vennard (or designee), ACCVB

II. Project Teams

Project Teams 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 Cultural Heritage and Tourism endeavors. Project Teams may also include Advisory Board members when it is appropriate.

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

Teams will submit concise monthly updates to the **Partnership Chair** and **Lead Administrator** for the quarterly meetings. Please note: *In order for a project to use the **CHAT Partnership logo**, Project Teams must get annual approval from the Partnership Chair (Director of Cultural Affairs).*

Various dedicated individuals have been actively involved in the *Albany Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee* and/or *Working Groups* in the past, and will continue to be called upon to inform, create and coordinate the CHAT Partnership, according to their availability.



FUNCTIONALITY / Operational Plan

The CHAT Partnership functional areas will fall into two categories:

- I.** **Foundational Initiatives** (on-going), and
- II.** **Place-Making Projects** (time limited).

I. **Foundational Initiatives** are likely to be ongoing and require long-term coordination or administration. These initiatives might include, for example, creation of 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. Some examples of **Foundational Initiatives** are as follows:

- ✦ **Albany Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategic Plan** – Developed by the *Albany Heritage Tourism Advisory Council*, this plan identifies 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 Goals and Strategies 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****Status:** On-going (refer to Strategic Plan for specific strategies and tactics).

- ✦ **Heritage Partnership Outreach & Communications**
 - **Heritage Partnership Meeting** – Cultural heritage partnership met in June regarding accomplishments to date, future programming and visitor survey. Erie Canal 2017 Anniversary was 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.
Initiative Team: ACCVB
Status: Various components completed/on-going.

- ✦ **Heritage Tourism Website**– See Albany.org website of heritage sites <http://www.albany.org/things-to-do/heritage-tourism/> as well as in the 2016 Albany Visitors Guide.
Initiative Team: ACCVB
Status: Various components completed/on-going.

- ✦ **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](#). These posts have received just over 750 views. Bloggers have been recruited through Partners for Albany Stories and include Historic Albany Foundation, Shaker Heritage Society, Schuyler Mansion and Crailo State Historic site.
Initiative Team: ACCVB
Status: Various components completed/on-going.

- ✦ **Hamilton Themed Tours** – Staff coordinated with Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site, Albany Institute of History and Art, and Crisan Café to produce “Hamilton in Albany” a unique three-venue experience that introduces visitors to the relationship Alexander Hamilton had with Albany. A self-guided walking tour was developed by the ACCVB in collaboration with Schuyler and AIHA.
 - To publicize the program, a brochure, “Hamilton in Albany,” was designed, printed, and distributed at each participating site.
 - Created a media kit, including a media release, and distributed it to target media contacts.
 - Purchased and designed print and digital advertising in key markets: New York and Boston.
 - Created and executed a social media plan, to promote the activities on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.Initiative Team: ACCVB
Status: Various components completed/on-going.



- ✦ **Black Heritage Tours** has begun pilot programming with a full launch to take place in August 2016, highlighting American – African Dutch Heritage. Using Albany Hotels, transportation and heritage attractions. The first 2 tour dates have been fully subscribed.
 - “To help promote this to journalists, the ACCVB has worked with partners and elected officials to hold press conference, and created two media releases.
 - Provided assistance with social media strategy and execution.

Initiative Team: ACCVB

Status: Various components completed/on-going.



- ✦ **Visitor Introduction and Training** – Assembles new visitor packages to highlight and market Albany’s unique visitor experiences. These packages could be publicized and sold on Viator, a popular web-based travel booking site affiliated with TripAdvisor.
 - Identifies priority packages, including a Discovery Pass that would encompass multiple historic homes.
 - Schedules follow-up trainings with all interested partners, including Albany Institute of History & Art, Nine Pin Cider Works, Palace Theatre, Historic Albany Foundation, Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, and Myers Residence.
 - Conduct meetings with heritage partners to accomplish the priority projects;

Initiative Team: ACCVB, Empire State Development Corporation, and Viator

Status: Various components completed/on-going

- ✦ **Guided Walking Tours** – The Albany Visitors Center hosts guided walking tours 2 days per month. Tours are promoted through Albany.org as well as other online calendars and social media.

Initiative Team: ACCVB

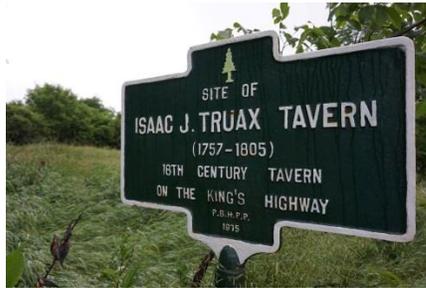
Status: Various components completed/on-going.



- ✦ **Path Through History Secret City Garden Tour** – For the *NYS 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. To publicize the program, we created and executed a social media plan, designed to promote activities on Facebook.

Initiative Team: ACCVB

Status: Various components completed/on-going.



II. Place-Making Projects & Teams include, for example, development of interpretive signage, tours, exhibits and displays, merchandise, and events based on Albany’s cultural and heritage strengths. Several of these Projects & Teams already exist, while other projects are underway in various stages.

Some examples of **Place-Making Projects & Teams** include (but are not limited to) the following:

- ✦ **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 225th Anniversary** - Web page 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.

Project Team: ACCVB

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



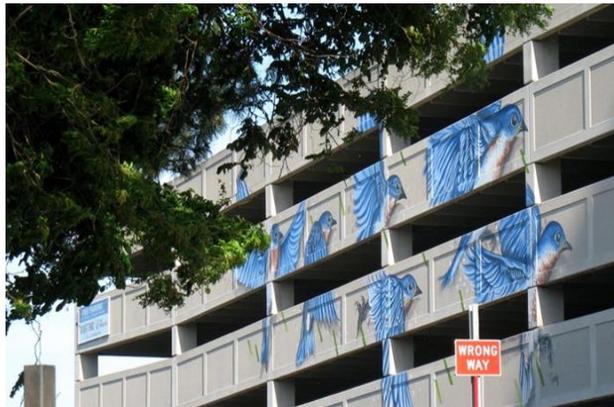
- ✦ **Schuyler Flatts program** – Assisted the planning committee for the viewing and re-interment of enslaved individuals of the Schuyler household during Path Through History Weekend
 - Communication kits were created for April 30 Public Meeting, and June 17-18 Memorial Service, for outreach to neighborhood 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.

Project 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. 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. <http://www.albanyinstitute.org/upcoming-exhibitions.html>
Project Team: Partners for Albany Stories (PAST)
Status: Work in progress
- ✦ **Mural Project:** A collective of local talent is coordinating the creation of several Albany-themed murals around downtown Albany.
Status: **Blue Bird Mural completed;** other projects underway.



- ✦ **Sister-City 70th Anniversary Celebration** – Albany/Nijmegen Friendship Initiative: A week-long series of programs, lectures, films, displays and curated events will celebrate and build awareness of the special relationship that developed between Albany and the city of Nijmegen in the Netherlands after World War II. After witnessing the catastrophic losses of the occupied city in September, 1944, the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division and the city of Albany led a massive donation effort for Nijmegen's postwar reconstruction. These transatlantic ties reached its peak in 1947 and resulted in ship loads of donated tulip bulbs from the city of Nijmegen to the city of Albany.
Project Team: Renée Overdyke, Ph.D., Tammis Groft, and Anja Adriaans
Consultants: Peter Grondahl (Times Union).
Status: Proposed for 2017



Mayor Erastus Corning and John Glenn, chairman of the toy collection campaign, with goods bound for the Dutch city of Nijmegen, undated. (Times Union archive)

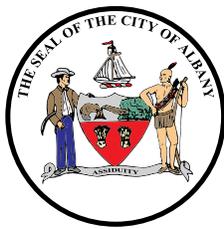
- ✦ **Science Café:** Fun mixer with short expert presentation to generate public interest and knowledge of NYS Museum collections and work. Two events have been done so far at City Beer Hall, both with full-house attendance. First event was Birds & Beer with the state ornithologist; second event was A Toast to Evolution with the state paleontologist.
Project Team: NYSM (Schaming) and Downtown BID (Steffens)
Status: Work in progress.

- ✦ **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 AIHA, Schuyler Mansion, Ten Broeck, and the University Club.
Status: Work in progress for fifth and sixth HHHs.



SUMMARY

- The primary purpose of the plan outlined above to *provide specificity* regarding the *organizational structure* and *functionality* (or, operations plan) of Albany’s newly named **Cultural Heritage & Tourism (CHAT) Partnerships** as this group moves 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 it’s 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.



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