

# Norwich launches arts and marketing plan

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Norwich — With a strategic plan to promote the arts (<http://www.theday.com/article/20150211/NWS01/150219940>) now written, the Norwich Arts Events Committee is ready to put the recommendations into action.

The plan identified the top five priorities for promoting arts and cultural events in Norwich, with “develop arts-based beautification projects” topping the list. To that end, Mayor Debercy Hinchey will coordinate the new public arts advisory committee to work out the details of how to get public art moving in Norwich.

The mayor’s office is seeking volunteers to work on this and two other top priority tasks, identifying public spaces where live arts and performances can take place and coordinating and marketing a citywide calendar of events. To volunteer, contact secretary Rafaela Rivera in the mayor’s office at (860) 823-3742.

The arts advisory committee’s first task will be to write a procedure for those who want to create public arts projects, such as permanent murals or sculptures.

The procedure is more complicated than it seems, Hinchey said, with questions about which city agencies would need to approve the projects, what types of paint and other materials would be allowed, who should approve the design and who would fix damage to the image.

Tamara Dimitri, the arts in public spaces coordinator for the Connecticut Office of the Arts, will speak to the advisory committee at an upcoming meeting to guide the process, said Wendy Bury, executive director of the Southeastern Connecticut Cultural Coalition.

Creating a public arts process will be needed soon, because Reliance House, a program that serves people with mental illness, is raising the \$2,000 needed for a proposed mural on the city-owned Market Street parking garage.

The mural would depict a tree with dozens of handprints of Norwich residents forming the leaves.

“We need a good process so miscommunications don’t happen and people who are excited about a project have a procedure to follow,” Hinchey said.

The Norwich arts plan was funded by a \$2,500 grant from the Gernon Trust. It was the first city-specific plan coordinated by the regional coalition. The coalition received a \$5,000 grant from the Palmer Fund to create a similar plan in New London.

Jason Vincent, vice president of the Norwich Community Development Corp., who helped coordinate the Norwich Arts Events Committee that wrote the plan, said the outdoor performance art could be critical to showing that the arts are alive in Norwich. A lot of times, Vincent said, things are going on “inside buildings” out of sight to passers-by.

“We’re trying to make sure some performances are outside and visible, to make people more aware of the arts that are going on inside the various locations,” Vincent said.

Bury said she was pleased with how the Norwich plan was written, with Hinchey advocating that the various arts and cultural groups in the city work together on the plan. Representatives from 18 museums, theaters, civic groups, Otis Library, historic preservation groups and business owners attended the meetings.

Participants agreed to sign a memorandum of understanding committing to the group effort and joint marketing plan and “expanding economic interests relative to arts,” the memorandum stated.

“I’m so impressed with them,” Bury said. “We knew when we went through this that they needed some structure. They’re going to have a good product to show for it.”

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