

\$1 Million State Grant to Promote Arts and Culture in Atlantic City

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Atlantic City, N.J. — Did you know the resort features about 100 outdoor murals?

Bringing attention to these unique art pieces, as well as other cultural aspects in the city, will become a lot easier thanks to a recent \$1 million state grant received by Stockton University.

The New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA) approved the Public Space Activation Grant in December under the Activation, Revitalization and Transformation (A.R.T.) program, which was created to support Atlantic City and Newark as the cities recover from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“As a result of the pandemic, New Jersey’s thriving downtown commuter hubs saw decreased foot traffic and revenue as many residents and workers transitioned to remote work,” said NJEDA Chief Executive Officer Tim Sullivan. “Gov. Phil Murphy has made a commitment to bring a resurgence to our state’s downtowns by bringing more business, arts, and culture to attract residents and commuters.”

Through the grant, Stockton will work with four community development corporations (CDCs) in the city — Ducktown, Chelsea, Inlet and Midtown — to implement a multistage project to promote at a higher level the arts and culture of Atlantic City and its diversity, said Michael Cagno, the executive director of the [Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University](#).

“We do not do enough highlighting of the diverse cultural aspects of Atlantic City,” said Cagno, who’s also on the board of the Ducktown CDC. “So, we want to create a central brand and umbrella to create that identity.”

Cagno said the money will go toward five different parts, all with the goal of promoting Atlantic City’s arts and culture:

- Forty wayfinding signs will be placed, 10 in each CDC’s neighborhood, throughout the city highlighting cultural and recreational assets, such as the Civil Rights Garden or the Noyes Arts Garage. Cagno said each CDCs will decide what to highlight, and he added there is currently no signage in the city for these places.
- Each CDC will get a gateway marker that will let visitors and residents know when they are in a particular neighborhood. It will have a video screen to highlight specific events.

- Physical signs under a unifying theme will be placed at each of the 100 murals. The signs will include the title, artist's name and a QR code to a digital map of all of the city's murals.
- The nonprofit group MudGirls will create a public art piece of tiles and mosaics by Atlantic City schoolchildren. The statement piece would encourage people to take photos with and share on social media, Cagno said.
- Create a comprehensive marketing plan to highlight arts and culture in Atlantic City, including a branding package and the creation of a website.

"Atlantic City is a beautiful tapestry of arts, culture and history. Experiencing all that Atlantic City has to offer enriches the lives of residents and visitors alike, while also contributing to the city's economic recovery," said Assemblyman Don Guardian. "This funding will preserve and celebrate the diverse communities that honor Atlantic City's past, present and future."

Cagno said in addition to promoting at a higher level art and culture in Atlantic City for tourists and residents, the project will illustrate the collaborative efforts between Stockton and the four CDCs.

"We work together already. We share ideas and concepts and resources," he said. "But as an Anchor Institution in Atlantic City, Stockton's main role is to assist with the facilitation and implementation of the project.

"We want to bring in visitors, and not just tourists, but within the neighborhoods. So, residents from one neighborhood can explore another."

The A.R.T. program utilizes American Rescue Plan State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds in the wake of the pandemic.

PHOTO (CREDIT: Stockton University): The Noyes Arts Garage of Stockton University is just one of several arts and cultural highlights that will be promoted as part of a new \$1 million grant from the state.

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