

**Program's Mission:**

To share Meagher County's unique cultural heritage through art and interpretation of historic structures on the landscape.

**Purpose & Goals:**

- Provide for the opportunity to build community and partnerships between the various communities and service organizations within Meagher County.
- Become a source of pride for Meagher County residents; an avenue to share the culture and family stories of the region. This common heritage would not only be shared between visitors to the area, but to younger generations.
- Provide another reason for visitors to come to the area and to extend their stay. There are many active tourism opportunities in the county, but few 'passive' ones.
- Showcase the history and scenic beauty of the area, potentially attracting new residents and new businesses as they experience our hospitality and lifestyle.

**What is an Art and Cultural Trail?**

The Art and Cultural Trail will include (1) Barn art quilt squares installed on host structures or free standing posts at intermittent locations. Quilts will be 2'x2', 4'x4', or 8'x8'. (2) Other art installations of the artist/host's choice [metal, wooden silhouettes, etc]. (3) Historical locations and structures. All locations, as well as associated interpretive information (information about the quilt pattern, ranch/family story, and/or historical material) will be freely available on an online map application. This online map will be created by a volunteer with the Chamber of Commerce and publicized through websites, social media, interpretive signs and brochures within the communities.

Introduction/interpretive signs will be erected at host locations with the communities of the county.

All guests on the trail will be discouraged from trespassing on private property and will enjoy the natural and manmade visuals along the route from the public transportation corridors.

**Why is the Chamber of Commerce sponsoring this project?**

Meagher County has many outstanding recreational features and notable local places to eat, drink, and stay awhile. The economy of the county has shifted from natural resource development (mining and logging), to a recreational services base. Meagher County is centrally located between many points of interest; Glacier and Yellowstone National Parks; the larger communities of Billings, Great Falls, Helena, Bozeman, and Livingston.

One of the county's focus is to advertise its assets in unique ways in order to get travelers to visit and stay an extra day (County Economic Growth Plan, 2015). The region could grow if "promoted the county as a Live, Work, Play Community to new residents and potential employers." "The City of WSS is the hub of recreation in the County and experiences a year-round flow of recreationists. Encouraging these people to stay longer in the City would be an important step toward enhancing the County's tourism economy. Ultimately, tourism has the potential for significant growth..."

Within the City of White Sulphur Springs Growth Policy (Draft, December 2016), the ACT aligns with the city's two policies on economic growth to 'promote recreation, travel and tourism' and 'promote recreational and cultural opportunities and quality of life offered by our small town environment.'

**What will this project do?**

This unique project will highlight and celebrate the people, families, and industries of the past; as well as the stories of people today in Meagher County. Cultural and Barn Quilt Art trails are gaining more popularity across the county.

Cultural trails highlight the general history of an area or a specific route in time. In Meagher County there are relics of historic railroads, mining, lumber mills, and military outposts. Barn Quilt Trails are found in over 43 states and 3 Canadian provinces; there is one established in Missoula County, Montana.

**Who started this project?**

In 2016, residents in White Sulphur Springs (lead by Beth Hunt), created and installed fourteen quilt blocks around the community. Designs on barn quilts can represent a family's heritage, story, personal sentiment and/or meaning.

The Chamber of Commerce heard a presentation of this project in the fall of 2016 and voted to take it on for the county. Due to the diverse artistic ability of Meagher County residents and the historic celebrations in 2017, the Barn Art Quilt Trail was expanded to include other artworks and cultural points of interest throughout the county.

**Where will the trail be?**

The starting loop of Meagher County's ACT will be the paved transportation routes between the larger communities of White Sulphur Springs, Martinsdale, and Ringling; Hwy 89, Hwy 12 and State Hwy 294. This route will circle the Castle Mountains, while offering views of the Big Belts, Little Belts, and Crazy Mountains. If there are interested hosts, 'arms' of the trail can reach out to the Smith River, Kings Hills, and Wilsall.

**How will this project be funded?**

A grant was obtained by the Montana Department of Commerce to cover the majority of the building materials and paint for the barn quilts. Additional funds and donations will be needed for paint brushes, rollers, and additional exterior paint colors (anyone have leftover house paint?).

The Meagher County Chamber of Commerce has planned to cover marketing materials, insurance and advertising costs. Additional grants may be applied for to cover the costs of the community interpretive signs.

There are concerns about long-term management of Barn Art Squares over the course of time. At the community meetings ideas will be discussed of how a project maintenance revolving fund can be created to cover future materials and paint. Annual \$5 volunteer memberships? Monetary sponsorship of Art Installations?

**Will someone tell me what I can and can't host on my land?**

Art Installations are exempted from the Montana Department of Transportation visual obstruction and signage program. Art installations should not contain any brands, symbols, and wording which could be misconstrued as advertising (which is strictly managed).

Unlike other Art Trails around the county, the Chamber will not be approving art installation designs, color schemes, etc. The organization asks project partners to provide the Chamber a picture, location and interpretation/meaning of the installation for the online map. The Chamber also plans to be a good neighbor and notify/coordinate with the Montana Department of Transportation about the locations of these features. The Chamber respectfully asks project participants to be respectful of all age groups and personal sensitivities when art installations are installed. True, art is eye of the beholder, but please be courteous.

**This sounds like fun, how can I get involved?**

- Coordinators and volunteers are needed to host/paint quilt squares this summer. They can be large or small gatherings in any community in Meagher County.
- We need volunteers with historical knowledge and pictures to cite points of interest along the roads within the county.
- Able bodies are also needed to help type up descriptions of Art Installations and Historic locations.
- Donate supplies. Paint supplies (brushes, rollers, drop clothes) and exterior paint of many different colors are needed.

**What do I do... ?**

**I am an Artist/Quilter, and have a design idea for a Barn Art Quilt.**

**I have property adjacent to a major road and am interested in hosting a quilt square.**

The Chamber and/or project volunteers will attempt to match artists, quilters, and property hosts. Artists and quilters should submit a design of their square. These will be sent to the potential property owner for review/acceptance.

For property owners/art installation hosts, they should communicate the size of the quilt square and subject matter desired. The Chamber and/or volunteers will attempt to find a comparable match.