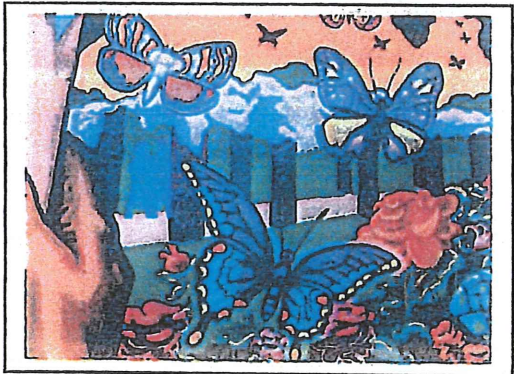
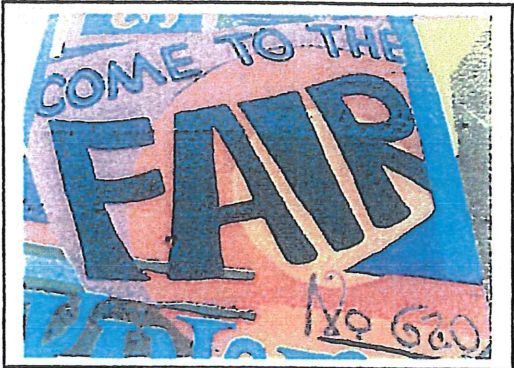
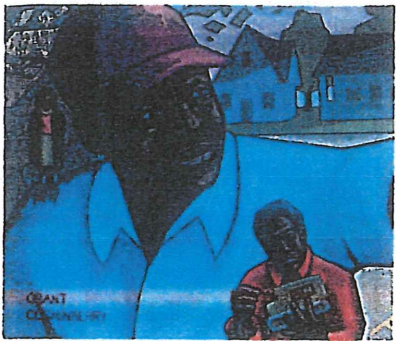


The Great Mural Wall of Topeka

A People's History and
Vision for Topeka



Chesney Park Neighborhood Improvement Association

home of the Great Mural Wall of Topeka
Greatwalloftopeka.blogspot.com

Contact: Tom Benaka
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- 1) The Great Mural Wall of Topeka is a community driven public art project representing a people's history of Topeka to benefit the City of Topeka. The project was initiated in 2006 with a desire to instill community pride, beautify the neighborhood, and curtail graffiti. The wall is located in the Chesney Park Neighborhood at 20th and Western, directly across the street from the Kansas Expocentre and the Capitol Plaza Hotel. The Great Mural Wall covers a former water reservoir owned by the City of Topeka. The Chesney Action Team, a committee of the Chesney Park Neighborhood Improvement Association, collaborated with nationally known mural artist David Loewenstein to develop a vision for the mural. That vision includes 11 separate panels representing the cultural history of Topekans and their neighborhoods. To date, nine community groups have researched, designed, and painted panels under the direction of David Loewenstein. Grant opportunities have also provided street improvements, curbs, and sidewalks on adjacent streets, and funding is in place to install storyboards for each mural panel.
- 2) The total budget for the Great Mural Wall is approximately \$400,000.
- 3) The Chesney Park Neighborhood Improvement Association, a registered 501c3, has received funding for The Great Mural Wall from many sources. Grants, corporate donations, crowdfunding online donations, and gifts from neighbors, family and friends have made this project possible (see attachment for acknowledgment of contributions). Funds are deposited with and administered by the Topeka Community Foundation unless otherwise directed by the granter.
- 4) The Chesney Park Neighborhood Improvement Association is requesting \$40,000 of Transient Guest Tax funds to complete the remaining panels on The Great Mural Wall.

- 5) Transient Guest Tax dollars would be used to complete the last two mural panels on the Great Mural Wall, representing approximately 160 feet. More specifically, funds would be used to purchase paint and other supplies, rent scaffolding and other equipment, and compensate the artist, David Loewenstein, to collaborate with each community group to design and paint the panels.
- 6) We have not had an economic impact study done for the project. Upon completion, the Great Mural Wall of Topeka will be the longest continuous mural installation in Kansas, and one of the longest in the United States. It is already a destination for tourists – six groups have requested guided tours and neighborhood residents have noted cars with out-of-state license plates.
- 7) Return on investment on the Great Mural Wall project cannot be expressed in dollars. Graffiti on the wall has ceased where mural panels have been installed. This creates a much better atmosphere for those visiting the ExpoCentre. The project has also created community pride that is invaluable.
- 8) With funding in place the project will be completed no later than the summer of 2017.
- 9) The Great Mural Wall will be seen by many of the over 500,000 visitors who come to the ExpoCentre each year and be a destination for other visitors.
- 10) The Great Mural Wall, when promoted correctly, will be a tourist destination contributing to the rich arts and culture opportunities which give visitors to Topeka one more reason to spend another night at a hotel.
- 11) Attached you will find a CJ news article from the 2006 kickoff of the mural project and a recent CJ editorial supporting the completion of our project. We have had postcards made showing in detail many of the mural panels. Copies of several of these postcards are attached. We appreciate this opportunity and hope you will choose to fund the completion of the Great Mural Wall of Topeka.

Respectfully Submitted,



Tom Benaka

Chairperson, Chesney Action Team

Acknowledgments

Contributions of \$500 or more:

- AT&T Telecom Pioneers
- Bartlett and West
- Capitol Plaza Hotel (Winegardner & Hammons Inc.)
- Chesney Park Neighborhood Improvement Association
- Indiegogo Crowdfunding
- Mary Ann Benaka
- Mr. and Mrs. Ken Cott
- Kansas Creative Arts Industries Commission
- Kansas ExpoCentre
- Rosa Villa
- Spector Management Group
- St. Francis Health Center
- Treanor Architects P.A.

In kind contributions of \$500 or more

- City of Topeka Water Division
- Ferrell Construction of Topeka
- John Casson – Casson Construction Co.
- Mike and Betty Jackson
- Sunflower Rents Inc.
- White Star Machinery and Supply

Grants received from:

- ArtsConnect Topeka
- City of Topeka Department of Neighborhood Relations – Neighborhood Empowerment grant
- General Mills, Hamburger Helper - My Hometown Helper grant
- Kansas Arts Commission
- US Department of Justice Weed & Seed

Murals to adorn 'Great Wall'

Chesney Park NIA
president wants
area to be a
tourist destination

By **Tim Hrenchir**
THE CAPITAL-JOURNAL

The city of Topeka and the Chesney Park Neighborhood Improvement Association kicked off fundraising efforts Thursday to paint a series of murals reflecting Topeka's heritage along a plain, white wall about 800 feet long and 11 feet tall near the Kansas Expo-centre.

"When finished, this Great Mural Wall will be the pride of the Chesney Park neighborhood and the city of Topeka," said Tom Benaka, president

of the Chesney Park NIA. "It will be a tourist destination and seen by thousands who visit the Expo-centre."

Benaka was among about 20 people who appeared at a news conference to kick off a campaign to raise \$30,000 to finance this year's first phase of the project, which Topeka public works spokesman David Bevens said is targeted at "transforming the white-washed carcass of a now-defunct 10-million-gallon water reservoir into a colorful piece of public art."

Bevens said project plans call for murals to be painted on the exterior of the east, west and south walls of a building constructed in 1931 to house a city water storage reservoir in the 1900 block of S.W. Western Avenue, just west of what is now the Expo-centre.

BIGGER STILL

The world's largest mural, at Pueblo, Colo., is 58 feet tall and almost two miles long, according to a Guinness World Records Web site, www.guinnessworldrecords.com.



Editorial: Mural wall needs a push

Posted:

By The Capital-Journal

In April 2006, city officials and members of the Chesney Park neighborhood gathered at a white wall that formerly served as the shell of a water storage reservoir to announce the commencement of fundraising efforts to transform that wall into the Great Mural Wall of Topeka.

The goal was \$30,000 for the first phase of the project, which a city spokesman said would transform “the white-washed carcass of a now-defunct 10-million gallon water reservoir into a colorful piece of public art.”

The first 60-foot panel was painted in 2007 at a cost of about \$28,000, but transformation of the “white-washed carcass” has taken longer than expected, primarily due to the difficulty of raising money following the demise of the Kansas Art Commission. Work on the mural stalled for more than two years because of a lack of funding.

Anyone who has a few dollars, or some pocket change, to spare should consider giving the Great Mural Wall of Topeka a boost. There is room on the wall for two more panels. To date, each panel has cost about \$28,000.

What began as a Chesney Park project has become a community affair, although Tom Benaka, who was president of Chesney Park NIA when the mural idea was born, continues to be its most visible champion.

Professional artists are selected to direct the production of each panel and community members, young and old, are invited to participate on “community paint days.”

Lawrence muralist Dave Loewenstein is lead artist for the current panel — the ninth overall and his fifth — “How Topeka Got its Name.” Subjects for the completed panels included Grant Cushinberry, Brown v. Board of Education, the arts in Topeka, and city and state history.

Benaka and Loewenstein think one of the remaining panels should be dedicated to the city’s youth, with the final panel providing a look into the future.

Looking into the future was what city officials and Chesney Park residents were doing in 2006 when they decided a blank curiosity stretching along S.W. Western, S.W. 20th Street and S.W. Fillmore should become a colorful art piece of which the neighborhood and the entire community could be proud.

Benaka says he is eager to see the mural finished.

Others who share his anticipation can help make that happen with a timely donation to the Great Mural Wall of Topeka.

Members of The Capital-Journal Editorial Advisory Board are Gregg Ireland, Mike Hall, Fred Johnson, Ray Beers Jr., Garry Cushinberry, John Stauffer, Frank Ybarra, Sally Zellers and Laura Burton.



Dave Loewenstein
The Great Wall of Topeka:
Tribute to Grant Cushinberry

Topeka Water Department
20th & Western
Topeka, Kansas



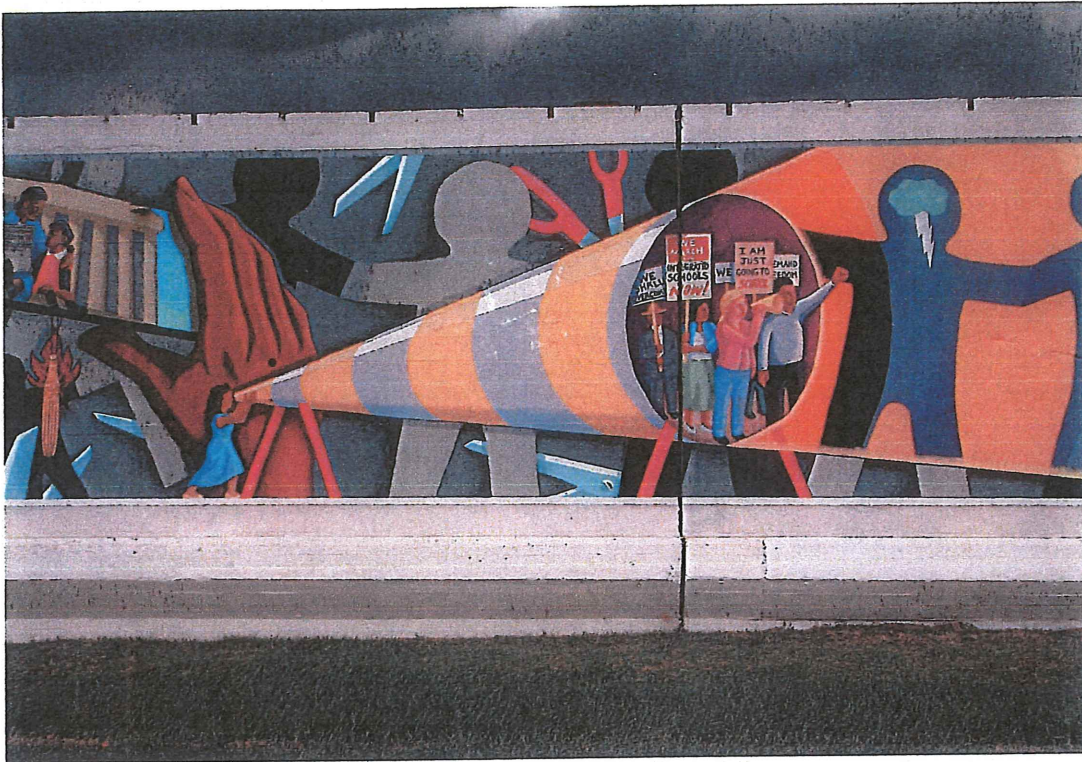
The Great Mural Wall of Topeka:
Central Park (detail)
2008

Topeka Water Department
SW 20th & Western
Topeka, Kansas

Lead artist - Dave Loewenstein
Assisted by Natalie Dye and KT Walsh

Part of the 2008 installment of the Great Mural Wall, this panel portrays the evolution of Central Park, from its beginnings as the "gem in Topeka," to the destruction of the 1966 tornado, to its subsequent revitalization. Longtime resident and local historian Kay Conn is pictured writing her history of the neighborhood.

© D. Loewenstein 2008



The Great Mural Wall of Topeka
The Road From Brown v. Board (detail)
2009

Topeka Water Department
SW 20th & Western
Topeka, Kansas

Lead Artist - Dave Loewenstein
Assisted by KT Walsh and students from Marty Moreno's
Advanced Art Class at Topeka High School

In this dynamic mural, Topeka High students examined the legacy of the historic 1954 Brown v. Board decision, which outlawed segregation in public schools, and then considered solutions to confronting and overcoming stereotypes and prejudice in their own lives today.

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