On June 10, 2020, America Walks hosted the webinar, “Enhancing Walkable Spaces through Public Art”, where presenters featured ways public art has been used to embrace the culture and history of a community while promoting engaging, walkable spaces.

Our webinar featured Ophelia Chambliss – muralist, artist, educator, Karla Osete - Artist in Residence at LaLinea Art Studio, and Melissa Johnson – Town of Matthews Cultural Recreation Manager.

America Walks received many questions and comments from attendees, and many were answered during the live webinar. Panelists took time to offer their expert answers, to continue the conversation and provide further insight on best practices they used for creating safe, accessible, and enjoyable walking conditions in their communities, so you can too. Visit the webinar recording page which includes a link to the YouTube playback and full list of additional resources.

Can you provide guidance on the process of developing a public art plan in a city that has never had one?

**Ophelia:** Have a plan that has multiple streams, locations, and functions. These dispersed bits of variety will allow you to cover more areas and come up with a plan for filling in art in between. Do not only include the downtown business districts, but include neighborhoods as well, allowing the folks in those neighborhoods to be a part of the planning.

**Karla:** Do: start with low hanging fruit projects: easy, fast, and beautiful. Involve community members and organizations that support the outdoors. Don’t give up if you receive opposing comments and try to be politically correct when you speak to them.

**Melissa:** I would do a lot of research for local art groups/commissions, or other cities of a similar size who do have one so that you don’t have to reinvent the wheel. If you create an outside commission to handle it, make sure there are term limits. If you are creating this as an internal plan, just make sure it’s something that holds up and that people will follow. In our plan, there are some different steps based on how the art is presented -- whether it’s commissioned or if it’s an outside person who wants to pay for the art themselves. Depending on your current public art scene, your plan can start small, and just have an approval process. If you already have a growing scene, base it around your current process and just put it in writing.
To all panelists – Have you noticed an increase in the number of people walking where street art has become reality?

Ophelia: I think in the cases of art I have done; art was placed where people walked, part of the "meeting people where they are" thinking.

Karla: Definitively yes, I can tell by the number of people that tag me in their pictures and send me messages. My Sculpture was installed at a trail outside the community, I just cannot imagine what it would do if it were at a more visible location.

Melissa: We actually had more people walk by while the street was closed, and they were able to take notice of the art. Since then, there is still a steady traffic, but that could also be due to the schools being out for the summer, and the increase in the number of people working from home due to COVID-19.

Melissa – Regarding the street murals on the speed bumps, can you tell us about the conversations you had with the public works department that led to getting permission? Also, did you have any concerns about the multicolor crosswalk from people with visual impairments?

Melissa: When the idea came about, we discussed it with the street supervisor within the department, and also the Town Engineer. We wanted to make sure we were allowed to do it, and that we were using a pattern that would be acceptable for traffic, and that the colors we used would also be acceptable. They were very active throughout the process, especially with the test mural. They gave a lot of input on materials to use, colors to use, and more.

In regard to those with visual impairments, this was taken into consideration by the Town Engineer, and is why the comments about adding additional contrast were made. I was incorrect in my statement during the live webinar that it wasn't taken into consideration; it just wasn't from the artist's perspective. The high contrast between the white and the blue, and moving the white flowers over the darker background, was an attempt to create more contrast for someone with a visual impairment.

Any resources you have in regard to funding opportunities- please share

Ophelia: Mid Atlantic Arts Foundation, Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Call For Entry and Application Management for the Arts | CaFÉ, local community foundations and cultural alliances.

Karla: Search with your State Arts commission, National Parks, schedule a meeting with your City Manager to see if there are opportunities for funding to beautify the city, and America Walks Community Change Grants.

Melissa: My budget does include some funding, so if your Town/City/County government is
interested in adding public art, they may be able to help with that. Local arts commissions may have grant funding, as well as national art organizations. There are grants out there, but a lot of them are only offered once a year.

**Karla** – **I work for the City of Phoenix and am working on a climate action plan for the City that will include more walkways. How were you able to connect to these different organizations, like OS3, to help you create the art?**

**Karla:** I was an active member of the cycling club and fortunately identified leaders in the club that had an affinity with art and were supportive of my ideas. One organization buying into your project will generate other connections. Staying close to organizations who are pro-outdoors is key.

**Could you please elaborate on “mural fabric”, durability and installation of it (such as how to glue to surface)?**

**Ophelia:** The mural fabric that I use is called Parachute Cloth but it’s actually Helen which is an interface material. I buy it by the bolt from a place in Chicago. I prime it with gesso and back it with plastic and it’s glued onto the with a clear acrylic adhesive. I prefer to install the murals on brick surfaces never concrete. The lifespan is or should be 30+ years. Especially with the right paint, a high resin like fast paint.

**Ophelia – What is the process for getting the community to decide what is on your murals? Specifically, the Beauty, History and Diversity steel structure.**

**Ophelia:** The process for deciding what goes on the mural, comes through organizing workshops where I get them to talk about what’s important to them, they memories holidays traditions families And sense of community. I do drawing exercises, look for repeat symbols, and then I talk about symbols and ideas, and then translate those into a composite image. The beauty, for Beauty History and Diversity, came out of people admiring the architecture of the buildings and the easy walking over neighborhood. The history came out of it being one of the older neighborhoods and the fact that many generations of families have grown up there. The diversity came out of the fact that they were so many different types of people within that community.