

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Manchester, CT - April 23, 2024**



**Manchester Celebrates Its New Designation as a CULTURAL DISTRICT  
with Vibrant Community Festivities**

The Town of Manchester is thrilled to be the sixth town designated as a **Cultural District** by the Department of Economic and Community Development's Connecticut Office of the Arts. Join us in celebration at our next 2nd Saturday Downtown "Open House" on May 11th. Enjoy a day filled with cultural and community activities, from butterfly hunts and flower collecting to dining, shopping, and live music. Bring your family and friends to experience the cultural richness of Manchester and make lasting memories together. Don't miss out on this vibrant showcase of our community's spirit and creativity!

**Event Highlights Include:**

- **Annual Butterfly Stroll** (Starting at 10A): Explore Downtown Main Street and discover artistic butterfly installations in various businesses and along the sidewalk.
- **Floral Bouquet Building** (10A-2P, or while supplies last): Begin at either Silk City Coffee or The Firestone Studio & Café to pick up your glass jar and collect flowers in participating businesses. Limit 1 per household.
- **WORK\_SPACE Events** (903 Main St, 10A-2P):
  - **Art Exhibitions:** Featuring 'Expressions of Healing' by local art therapists and Jeff Hutton's black & white painting series of the founding musicians of folk and rock
  - **Butterfly Scavenger Hunt:** A fun activity for children with prizes
  - **Gallery Shop:** Offering an eclectic array of locally made and unique items
  - **Candid Click Photo Booth & Costumed Characters from CAST children's theatre**
  - **ChatGPT Basics for Business:** (starting at 11A) Join us for a 30-min introduction and learn simple strategies to use AI to help identify and communicate with your target audience.
  - **Verses & Voices - Community Poetry & Songwriting:** (starting at 12P) Co-create a poem with Poet Laureate, Nadia Sims & Town Troubadour, Bill Ludwig, who will help us turn it into a song. (60-90 min)
- **Sidewalk Chalk Art** (along Main St.) - Create your own masterpiece. Pick-up chalk at WORK\_SPACE
- **The Market at 1115 Main** (10A-4P) Outdoor Makers Market and live music performances
- **Silk City Coffee:** (763 Main St, 7A-6P) Community activities and butterfly decorations and enjoy wonderful coffee, sandwiches and baked goods
- **Perennial** - Mother's Day Plant Sale (867 Main St. - 10A-5P)
- **The Little Bird Clay Company:** (29 Bissel St, 9A-2P) Youth Art Show & Sale
- **Mulberry Street Pizza:** (981 Main St, 11:30A-9P) \$10 Village Punch
- **The Main Course** (867 Main St, 10A-10P) - Special menu and \$10 Togosas (To-Go Mimosas)
- **Sculpture Project** (Center Memorial Park next to the Library) giving out info. and bookmarks about Emily Cheney Neville, the subject to their 3<sup>rd</sup> statue
- **Summer Book Chat** at the Mary Cheney Library (2:30P): Learn about this summer's exciting new books
- **Lutz Children's Museum** (247 S. Main St - 12-4 PM advance tickets required)

- **Historic Walk with Town Historian Susan Barlow (12P):** 75-min guided walk viewing some of the cultural, aesthetic and economic contributions of artists and architects to our Culture District. Leaving at noon from Center Memorial Park (corner of Myrtle & Linden)
- **Manchester Historical Society (175 Pine St, 12P-4P):** For tours of multiple exhibits.
- **The Mill Studio of Fine Arts (199 Forest St, 10A-3P)** Enjoy a tour of the art studio and observe a class teaching 19th Century methods of classical drawing

**Details:**

- **Date:** Saturday, May 11th
- **Time:** Activities and times vary by location
- **Parking:** Free, no-limit parking in municipal lots just East & West of Main Street as well as Town Hall.
- **More Info:** <https://workspacemanchester.com/events-programs/> or <https://bit.ly/ButterflyStroll24>

**About Manchester Cultural District:** Liz Shapiro, DECD’s Director of Arts, Preservation and Museums announced this prestigious designation on March 7, 2024, stating, “Manchester’s cultural district is twice the fun – it is literally two districts in one! Come to Manchester and bring your family. Great restaurants, very accessible and kid-friendly art galleries, restaurants and museums, plus a Children’s Museum with live animals! We’re excited to promote the natural vibrancy of this historic cultural destination.” The two unique exploration paths Liz was talking about are described below.

The **North/South** path begins at Center Springs Park and travels down Main Street. Along this route, visitors will encounter landmarks like the Elks Club, the Vietnam War Memorial, the Army & Navy Club, and the Mary Cheney Library. WORK\_SPACE, a multifunctional Coworking, Meeting, and Gallery space owned and operated by the town, adds a modern touch to the historical journey. The path includes local businesses, such as a tattoo and art gallery, coffee and ice cream shops, Urban Lodge Brewing, and an array of retail stores and restaurants. This path also traverses the Central Business District, part of which benefits from being designated as an Opportunity Zone, promising growth and revitalization.

The **East/West** path offers a different flavor, starting from Charter Oak Park, known for its Rotary Music Garden, playground, and connection to the Charter Oak Greenway, stretching all the way to the Cheney Brothers Historic District. This path includes the Lutz Children’s Museum and cultural landmarks like the Manchester Historical Society, Old Manchester Museum, and Labyrinth Brewing, and culminates at the Mahoney Center, home to the town’s Culture and Leisure Labs.

**Manchester Mayor Jay Moran** stated, “The Town of Manchester is blessed to have a multitude of cultural institutions, venues, activities, and other assets (both profit and nonprofit, artistic, economic, and educational) in and surrounding our existing Downtown and Historical areas. Our residents and visitors have a plethora of opportunities to experience culture, art and community in ways that make Manchester special. The cultural District designation will greatly assist Manchester to encourage, support and showcase artists and creative businesses, promote tourism, raise awareness for our rich cultural resources and inspire community participation. This designation will also help us to highlight Manchester’s unique 200-year history and optimize the quality of life for those that work and live here.”

Downtown Manchester is also the stage for various annual events that bring the community together, such as the *Manchester Road Race* on Thanksgiving Day, *Cruisin’ on Main* Car Show, *Silk City Fest*, *Christmas Caroling & Tree Lighting*, and the monthly *2nd Saturday Downtown Open House*, featuring performances by *Imagine Manchester* buskers and a vendor pop-up at the *Firestone Studio and Café*.

This designation not only acknowledges Manchester's dynamic cultural landscape but also highlights our commitment to promoting the arts, supporting creative entrepreneurship, and enhancing economic growth through cultural tourism. Manchester's Cultural District stands as a testament to our town's dedication to creating an environment where arts and culture thrive, benefiting residents and visitors alike.

**Contacts:**

For more information about the Downtown District and the Butterfly Stroll, contact **Joy Press, Downtown Special Services District Marketing Specialist**, [jpress@manchesterct.gov](mailto:jpress@manchesterct.gov)

For more information about May 11<sup>th</sup> activities and ongoing cultural activities in Manchester, please visit <https://www.manchesterct.gov/Community/Arts-Performance/Arts-Culture> or contact **Stacey Zackin, WORK\_SPACE Manager** at 860.647.6029 or [szackin@manchesterct.gov](mailto:szackin@manchesterct.gov).