

## AARP TOURS THE MURALS—AN ART GALLERY ON CINCINNATI STREETS

CONTRIBUTED BY ELLIOT GROSSMAN  
PHOTOS PROVIDED

As she strolled along the city streets with other AARP members, Debbie Forney learned a lot about Cincinnati, even though it's a place she has called home for decades.

Forney, 55, joined her husband, Gary, and other AARP members for a guided walking tour of the murals in Over-the-Rhine. At the same time, another AARP group explored the murals in Downtown Cincinnati.

The Forneys love that they can discover interesting aspects about an area where they have lived for so long. "Sometimes, you don't know what's in your own backyard," said Forney, a hairdresser from Springfield Township.

In 2007, then-Mayor Mark Mallory traveled to Philadelphia, where the murals there impressed and inspired him. He challenged his city to create at least one mural in each of its 52 neighborhoods. ArtWorks, a Cincinnati nonprofit, accepted the challenge by hiring youth apprentice artists to paint the murals.

Now, murals have been painted in nearly 40 neighborhoods, meaning ArtWorks has about a dozen neighborhoods left to meet



**FRESH HARVEST:** Participants on an ArtWorks murals tour look at the Fresh Harvest mural on Vine Street in Downtown Cincinnati.

(Photo provided)

Mallory's goal. Some neighborhoods, including Over-the-Rhine and Downtown, have lots of murals. In fact, some have so many murals that the city now has 100. The latest mural depicts heavyweight boxing champion Ezzard Charles, who is from Cincinnati.

On this sunny day, AARP members gathered in Washington Park, a focal point of Over-the-Rhine, where they met guide Mary Thomas for a 90-minute tour of seven murals.

It was like a tour of an art museum except that, on this tour, the streets served as the art galleries. And on this tour, participants learned about more than art. They also learned about the city's oldest and most historic neighborhood, a place that had experienced a renaissance in the last few years.

Tim Aiken, 65, of Mt. Washington, who hadn't been to Over-the-Rhine in years, said the

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## AARP TOURS THE MURALS — AN ART GALLERY ON CINCINNATI STREETS (CONT'D)



**CINCINNATUS:** Participants on an ArtWorks murals tour listen to a guide explain the Cincinnatus mural facing Central Parkway in Downtown Cincinnati.

(Photo provided)

another time for the other tour – the Downtown mural tour.

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area's resurgence impressed him. "It's really coming back," he said.

Thomas showed the group a variety of murals that feature prominent people, illustrate aspects of the city's history or convey relevant themes, such as the No Place Like Home mural, which is on the side of a residential building for homeless people.

Some are stunning not only because of their beautiful artwork but because of their size. A mural of former Councilman Jim Tarbell, an ardent supporter of

Over-the-Rhine, rises 40 feet above Central Parkway.

Thomas explained how the mural designs were created, even showing the crowd designs that were not chosen. She asked the group questions to probe their knowledge of the city's history. And she sought participants' interpretation of the art. Her approach engaged the group, which asked lots of questions and offered their own views about the murals.

At the end, Debbie Forney said she enjoyed the tour so much that she wished it were longer. The Forneys think they might come back

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