



**Hummingbird Stitchers Quilt  
Guild  
Community Quilts  
P.O. Box 1326  
Sierra Vista, AZ 85636**

We want to introduce the Council and Sierra Vista to a concept that could add to the attractiveness, increase tourism and raise visibility to the West End Revitalization.

I am a member of the Hummingbird Stitchers Quilt Guild and we have a rich heritage of quilting and a very active quilt guild here in Sierra Vista. The Guild was organized back in 1978 as a non-profit organization for “the purpose of promoting interest and appreciation in quilting and fiber arts”. Since 2009 when I became Community Quilts Inventory Chair the Guild has made and distributed over 4000 quilts in Cochise County and to private individuals. Some of the receiving organizations include oncology centers, Cochise County Foster Care, W.I.C. Program, dialysis centers, Warrior Healing Center, and Forgach House. Last year the Guild gave out a record 541 quilts. We also sponsor a spring quilt show each year that draws up to 1000 visitors, some from as far away as Phoenix. The Guild was fortunate to have received the Mayor’s Art & Humanities Awards for Visual Arts in 2017.

Guild members have looked for ways to promote the West End Revitalization project and increase our visibility as fiber artists in the City. We have noticed the mural art appearing on walls and building in the West End and believe the Guild can have an additional impact. After much discussion members chose to research and develop a barn quilt trail for our region. We believe it will result in a positive economic impact with increased tourism and resulting local business sales. Once the first barn quilts are up interest in the project will grow and there will be further expansion of the trail. It would be a significant tourist attraction if the trail could eventually include all of Cochise County.

## What is a barn quilt?

Quilts are made up of squares, or blocks. A barn quilt is a painted replica of one of those blocks. The most common sizes are 2'x2', 4'x4' or 8'x8'. The pattern is chosen to honor a family, hobbies, or favorite place. They are painted on prepared wood or an aluminum sheet and then mounted on a barn or other structure for their owners, and the public, to enjoy. If a barn or wall is not available people display them in other places such as their homes, garages, fences and windows. If you drive by our Guild rooms on the east end of the Rothery Education Center on Fry Blvd. you will see examples mounted on the outside of the building. Barn quilt trails consist from 6 blocks to a show stopping 120, as on a trail in New York. In Wisconsin there is a retired couple who has created 366 quilt blocks as their retirement activity. That trail covers the entire county.

## Barn quilt history

The first barn quilt in the United States was inspired by a woman named Donna Sue Groves in Ohio, in the late 1990s. After dialogue with friends and neighbors the first block was painted on her barn in 2001. She wanted to honor her mother and her quilting art by painting a quilt block on their tobacco barn. She then realized that the project had wide appeal and also could be beneficial to the community as a means to increasing tourism and economic development. Neighbors soon followed and over the next few years 20 painted quilts appeared in the area. That became the first quilt trail in the United States. A quilt trail can be made up of any number of quilts, large or small, outside on buildings or inside store windows. Design blocks are chosen as a favorite of the maker or representing the locale. Sierra Vista already has many attractions to enjoy; this would add to those.

There are now barn quilt trails in 48 states and 3 provinces in Canada and the trails continue to grow. Over 16,000 quilts are part of organized trails. There is an interactive website, <http://www.barnquiltinfo.com>, where you can click on a state and it will highlight the counties with quilt trails and other news. Trails have been combined in some venues to join other tourist attractions, such as a yearly barn quilt and winery tour in Oregon.

## Barn quilt trails

There is another barn quilt trail in Arizona, in Alpine, up in the White Mountains. Their website is <http://www.alpinearizona.com>. The trail is listed on the city Facebook page with links to a map and other attractions in the area. It is publicized each time someone looks for the town of Alpine and tourist attractions. There is even a featured map and information about the owners of each quilt.

The early Arizona settlers brought their quilts and quilt patterns with them when they came to the Territory. Quilts were in every household and used as a means of decoration as well as utility. Some of those patterns have been passed down to current Cochise residents. Several of our members have barn quilt blocks already displayed on their houses and outbuildings.

Quilt trails are created by quilt guilds, civic groups, local arts councils, school groups, and other organizations, such as the West End Revitalization project. A Trail honors tradition, boosts tourism and is unique. Eye-catching folk art helps put rural communities on a tourism map. Today the American Quilt Trail is one of the fastest growing grassroots public arts movement in the United States and Canada.

We are asking for City support, whether by grant funding, publicity, or other assistance. We have begun the process of meeting with local businesses to discuss the feasibility of mounting a quilt block or two on their building.