

Bringing Murals to Minneapolis

A guide for artists, community groups and businesses



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS



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Above: *Joy Ride*, Cadex Herrera, Photo by Midtown Greenway Coalition and CRWN Media

Cover Page: *Embracing Our Stories, Rising Together: Lake Street Medicine*; Daniela Bianchini, Pablo Kalaka, Natchez Beaulieu and Greta McLain; staff photo

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[Arts Midwest](#)

[COMPAS](#)

[Forecast](#)

[Lake Street Council](#)

[Metropolitan Regional Arts Council](#)

[Midtown Greenway Coalition](#)

[Minneapolis Arts Commission](#)

[Springboard for the Arts](#)

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Crown Our Prince, Hiero Veiga.

INTRODUCTION

The Department of Arts & Cultural Affairs created this document to assist artists and community groups in developing mural projects. Murals are key to realizing the City's goal from the Minneapolis 2040 Plan to have residents "enjoy a high-quality and distinctive physical environment in all parts of the city."

This document outlines the step-by-step process for developing murals, important things to consider, and information about when and how to work with the City. Murals can be created in a variety of ways. We hope this primer will point you toward the resources and tools you need to successfully make your vision come to life.

This guide is NOT:

- **Comprehensive:** This guide offers an overview of the mural process and how to work with the City but does not cover every detail for every type of mural project.
- **A substitute for legal advice:** While the guide includes some information about contracts, artists and organizations creating murals should always consult with a qualified attorney to review any agreements.

These instructions and additional tools can also be found on the [City's website](#).

Purpose

This guide provides clear, easy-to-follow information for artists, business and property owners, and organizations about how to plan and complete mural projects in the City of Minneapolis.

Goals

- Guide people on how to successfully carry out mural projects.
- Educate the public on the mural process in general.
- Share important City rules, policies and procedures related to murals.

Benefits of Murals

The [San Francisco Public Information Document](#) articulately describes some overall benefits of murals.

"Murals offer numerous public benefits. They encourage artistic expression and enhance the visual character of the streetscape in an appealing way. Murals are also visual markers of cultural and historic context. Murals are a highly democratic form of art that can foster community pride, expression, and positive placemaking. In addition to their visual appeal, murals can also serve a practical purpose, such as deterring vandalism."



Black August, Jordan Hamilton with JXTA Arts Apprentices, JXTA staff photo

STEP BY STEP MURAL PROCESS

1. Request Your Location

Look for locations in areas of the city that pique your interest. Look for spaces where owners struggle with graffiti, as they might benefit from having a mural to mitigate this issue. Reach out to [neighborhood and community organizations](#) and [business associations](#) for ideas or to partner on a project. Mural hot spots within the city include [cultural districts](#), the [Midtown Greenway](#) and commercial corridors, such as Lake street, and Nicollet, Hennepin, and Central avenues.



2. Determine Property Ownership

An easy first step for identifying the property owner is to talk to the businesses at the site. If they are unable to help you, search the [Hennepin County Interactive Map](#). Zoom to the desired location and click on the building or lot outline to see the property owner and their contact information. Note that some areas of the City do not have addresses. These areas are typically City, County or State Right of Way or ROW (sidewalks, bikeways, roads, alleys or vacated streets). If you would like to work in one of these areas, contact [Mary Altman](#) or [Talia Moorman](#).



3. Do I Need a Permit?

Identifying the property owner will help you determine if permits are needed.

Private Property: Permits are generally not needed, but an agreement with the property owner is highly recommended. (See [contracts](#) and [historic buildings](#) below.) It is important to note that the business or tenant you are working with may not be the property owner.



Public Property: Permits are required for murals on public property. The application process varies depending on the responsible government agency. Murals on City of Minneapolis property or the Midtown Greenway should follow the City's [Public Art Permitting Process](#). We encourage you to review the actual Public Art Application and all of the steps in this document early on in your project. The time for this review process varies, but for projects that are well-planned it generally takes 1-2 months. Murals on MnDOT Property follow the [Art on Trunk Highway Right of Way](#) process.



Obstruction Permits: If your equipment is on a sidewalk or blocking an alley (ROW), you need to obtain an obstruction permit. Easy instructions for registering and applying for these permits can be found on the [ROWAY website](#). They are typically free. Obstruction permits are also helpful when you want to park your equipment on the street, in a no parking zone, or to ensure that there will be space for your vehicle or equipment on the street.



Event Permits: If you are holding a celebratory or painting event, you may need other permits (food, sound, etc.). Contact [Minneapolis 311](#) with details about your event to determine the permits needed.

Other Permits: Depending on your project, other permits may be needed. For example, if you are attaching a structure to the side of the building to support the mural, you may need a [building permit](#). For projects involving the use of electricity, such as projections, feasibility and permitting requirements are determined on a case-by-case basis.. Contact [Mary Altman](#) or [Talia Moorman](#) to discuss the details of your project and learn more.



STEP BY STEP MURAL PROCESS

4. Other Location Considerations

Historic Buildings and Districts: To determine whether a mural can be painted on a historic building or district, first [determine whether the building is historic or in a historic district](#). If it is, contact [historic preservation staff at the City](#) for further instructions.

Changes in Private Property Ownership: The property owner has the right to decide whether a mural remains on their building, unless there is a contract between the owner and another party that states otherwise. The City of Minneapolis does not play a role in this decision. If you learn the property ownership has changed, contact the new owner, educate them about the artwork and develop a new agreement.

When the Commissioning Group is Not the Property

Owner: When the group commissioning the mural does not own the property, it is absolutely essential to obtain permission from the property owner. When property owners don't approve murals, they may remove them. (See [contracts](#) below.) You should also acquire written support from the businesses in the building. (See [the City's sample consent form](#).) *Never assume the businesses on site own the property.*

5. Engage the Community

Engaging the community can benefit your process in many ways. The City requires engagement for murals on City property and in the ROW, however, engagement is not required for murals on private property.

There are many ways to engage the community in the mural process, including:

- Involving the community in design development and artwork creation
- Partnering with local neighborhood and community organizations
- Placing an artist in residence at a local school
- Creating social media campaigns
- Educating the community about public art projects
- Providing tours after the work is completed

[This article by Forecast](#), which was published by [Arts Midwest](#) shares ideas and tools for planning community engagement for public art projects.

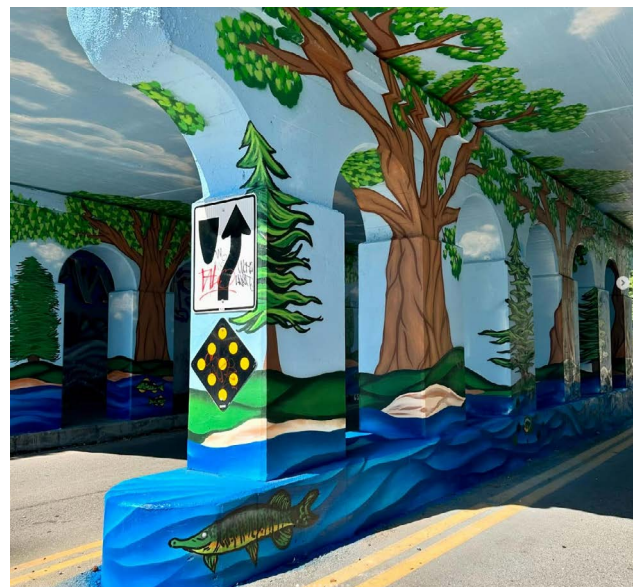
Quick Comparison Private vs. Public Property

Private Property

- ✓ No permit needed (except obstruction)
- ✓ Owner agreement is essential
- ✓ Historic review process may apply
- ✓ Cannot advertise business

Public Property

- ✓ Permit Required
- ✓ Review process required
- ✓ Historic review process may apply
- ✓ Additional regulations for safety and maintenance
- ✓ Cannot advertise



*"Wókiksuye Ĥaĥáwakpa," Mississippi Memories,
Thomasina Top Bear, photo by same*

STEP BY STEP MURAL PROCESS

6. Find an Artist

Resources for finding an artist include [COMPAS](#), [MNartists](#) or your local [neighborhood organization](#), business association or arts organization. You can also visit murals on the [maps below](#) to locate an artist you find interesting and search for them on the web.

Consider issuing a call for artists advertised through organizations that work with artists, such as [Forecast](#), [Springboard for the Arts](#) and [MNartists](#). There are two types of artists calls: A request for proposals (RFP) asks artists to submit an actual design as part of their application. A request for qualifications (RFQ) asks artists to submit examples of their previous work. An RFQ is used if you want the artist to work with you and the community to develop the design.

Ensure that the artist selected has the ability to scale to your wall size and has adequate knowledge of outdoor public art projects. If you have never commissioned a mural before, we recommend you work with an artist with strong experience in mural making. Consider pairing an experienced artist with a newer one to give them a mentoring opportunity.

7. Develop the Design

A broad range of murals and designs are possible. This includes both permanent and temporary approaches. Different approaches are appropriate for different settings and require different types of maintenance. Consider your site and capacity as you select the approach for your project. See [Materials and Equipment](#) below for more information.

In developing the design, be extremely cautious of using images and text that are the intellectual property of others, as you may be infringing on their copyrights. Quotes, excerpts from books, images of other artworks, logos, etc. are examples of works that may be copyrighted or trademarked. Reach out to the person or organization that holds the copyright to obtain permission and make an agreement. See [contracts](#) below.

8. Determine Costs

Mural costs vary considerably depending on scale, level of detail, artist experience, wall preparation, safety precautions, community engagement and anti-graffiti coatings. Smaller budgets often require cutting some corners, which can impact quality, longevity, community ownership and the safety of participants.

A good rough cost estimate is \$15-\$25 per square foot. It's worth noting that an artist can design their work to fit the budget, and create different designs for the same wall for different fees. Forecast has [a great sample public art project budget form](#).



X Marks the Spot, Reggie LeFlore, staff photo

STEP BY STEP MURAL PROCESS

In planning your project, it is important to consider the cost of maintenance. Cutting back on material costs and wall preparation will increase maintenance costs later.

Below are some examples of budgets for recent projects in the City:

- In 2025, the City of Minneapolis commissioned an artist team to create a 6,200 square foot mural for the Lake Street underpass at Hiawatha Avenue. This project required the team to do extremely extensive community engagement and complete a highly detailed mural to deter graffiti. These factors, as well as traffic control, and painting under challenging conditions influenced the City's decision to develop a project budget of \$369,000.
- In 2025, the Midtown Greenway Coalition [installed five murals on the Greenway](#) for \$115,000. This budget included payments to culture bearers who advised the artists on culturally-based content.
- In 2025, Lake Street Council, through the Lake Street Lift initiative, commissioned 33 murals for \$1,000,000 (an average of \$25,000/mural), which included artist fees, wall preparations, anti-graffiti coatings, lighting, and mural plaques.
- In 2023, the [St. Paul Cultural District Mural Festival](#) commissioned eight artists to create murals for \$15,000 each.
- In 2022, the Downtown Council commissioned [a mural of Prince on Ramp A](#) in Minneapolis for approximately \$300,000.

9. Seek Funding

The funding for each project is unique and depends on the location, audience and groups involved.

The property owner may be a source of funding, as the mural can bring attention to their businesses and may save them the work of removing graffiti.

For grantmaking programs and organizations that have supported murals in the City, see the sidebar. Other sponsors of murals in recent years have included:

- [Lake Street Council](#)
- [LynLake Street Arts Series](#)
- City [neighborhood organizations](#)
- [Midtown Greenway Coalition](#)

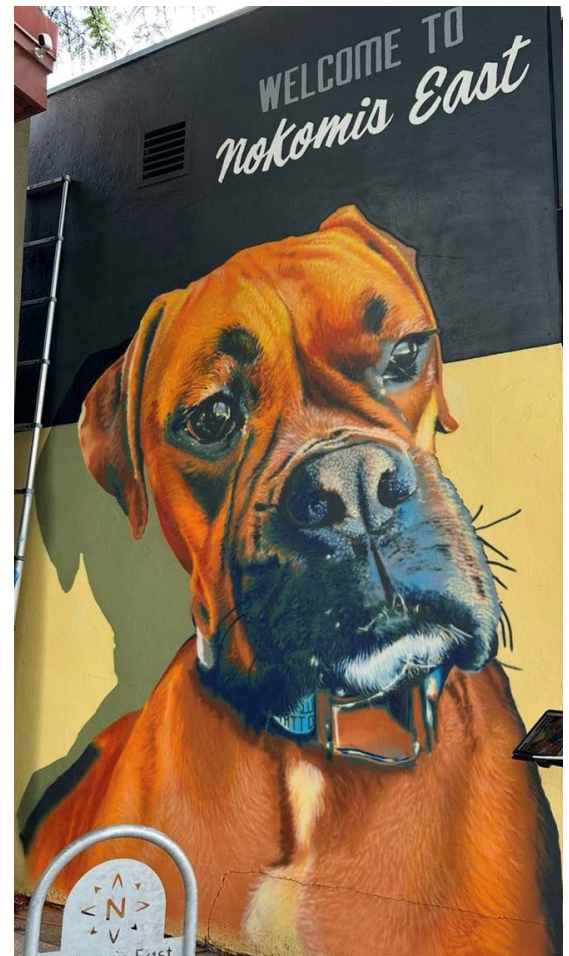
The City also [provides for public art as a possible incentive](#) to developers who want to build a larger building than is typically allowed on their lot size. These are known as "Floor Area Ratio Premiums."

Possible Funding Sources

City of Minneapolis

- [Great Streets Façade Improvement Matching Grant](#)
- [Partnership Fund](#)
- [Cultural Districts Arts Fund](#)
- [Metropolitan Regional Arts Council](#)
- [Forecast](#)

Also consider local corporate sponsors, foundations, individual donors, and GoFundMe campaigns.



Man's Best Friend, Rock "CYFI" Martinez, photo by same

STEP BY STEP MURAL PROCESS

10. Develop Contracts

It's important to have contracts in place to protect your rights and the rights of others and to prevent the mural from being removed. If you need help developing contracts for your mural project, contact [Springboard for the Arts](#). They have connections with attorneys who specialize in arts-related contracts. All of your contracts should reference each other and be consistent with each other, and all parties should have copies of all contracts.

Artists: All artists working on the mural should be under contract, including those who may be sub-contracting with a lead artist. These contracts should identify the artist's rights, who can claim authorship of the mural, who can use images of the mural in promotional materials, compensation, budget and reimbursements.

Property Owner: An agreement with the property owner is essential. This agreement should cover long term issues, such as the property owner's rights regarding use of mural images, ownership of the physical mural, what happens if the mural needs to be changed due to building renovation or repairs, lifespan expectations, maintenance responsibilities, and building ownership changes. Agreements should also cover short-term installation issues: an artist's access to the site, restroom facilities, materials, storage, water and electricity, and should designate a primary contact person for the building. Although it is not always necessary to have a written agreement with the businesses on the property, you should receive written support from them as well.

Commissioning Agent: Sometimes the group commissioning the mural and hiring the artist differs from the property owner. In this case, there should be contracts between the commissioning agent and the artist(s) and the commissioning agent and the property owner.

Funder: Most funders require signed funding agreements. These agreements often have stipulations that relate to your other agreements. Develop all of the above to be consistent and compatible.

Others: Other people or organizations may have intellectual property rights related to your project. For example, there may be other copyrighted images within the mural itself, such as logos, quotes or images of other artworks. Obtain agreements for this material as needed.

11. Address Artist Copyrights

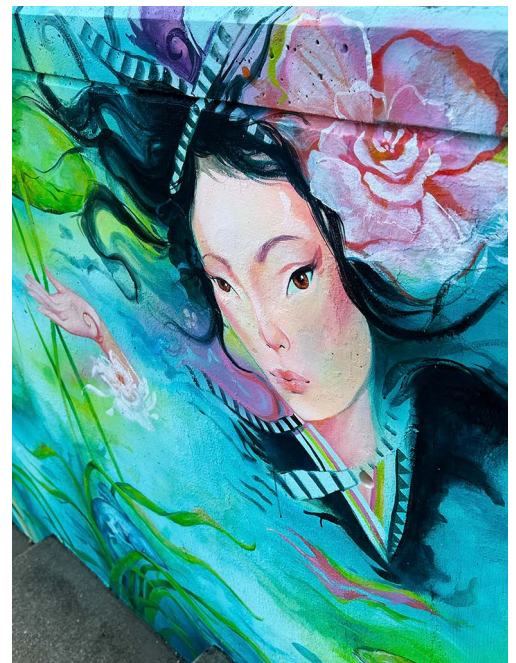
Federal law provides [several rights](#) to artists regarding their artwork, artwork designs and use of the images of their artwork by others. All parties involved in commissioning murals should be aware of these rights, should address these rights in contracts, and should use images of the artwork according to these rights. Commissioning parties, property owners, and the owner(s) of the artworks do not have rights to use of the designs or images of the mural unless those rights are granted to them by the artist. If multiple artists are

Contracts

Contracts should cover artists, property owners, commissioning agents, and funders. They must address artists' rights, and can also address longevity, access, and image use. [Springboard for the Arts](#) offers legal support.

Artists Own the Copyright

Artists' rights to their designs, images and artworks are protected under federal copyright law. Be sure you understand those rights, and that your contracts address those rights.



At the Water's Edge, Kao Lee Thao, photo by same

STEP BY STEP MURAL PROCESS

working on the project, it's important to know which artists are the author of these works and have these rights, as some artists may be solely subcontractors, painters or fabricators.

Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 (VARA): This law gives artists of reputation a number of rights, including the right to not have their work destroyed or modified. All parties involved in commissioning the mural should be aware of this law, and the property owner or commissioning organization may consider asking an artist to waive these rights, as VARA protections can prevent the wall from being modified or demolished. The best approach for preventing the destruction or modification of an artwork is to ensure that the property owner is supportive of the mural and the artist.



Pathways of Legacy, Melodee Strong, photo by Midtown Greenway Coalition and CRWN Media

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS



Materials and Equipment



Murals and Graffiti



Advertising Restrictions



Maintenance and Longevity



Safety and Liability

12. Materials and Equipment

Paint and Primer: Key to the longevity of a mural is using a quality paint appropriate for the wall material. Consult a local paint company for recommendations.

Murals can be created using a variety of materials, both permanent and temporary:

- Permanent: paint applied to [Polytab](#) or parachute cloth, mosaic tile, metal relief, porcelain enamel, canvas
- Temporary: printed vinyl, painted plywood mounted to the wall, paper installed with an adhesive, chalk, media projects (such as projections)

Historic Buildings: If painting on a historic building [contact historic preservation staff](#) to learn which materials are appropriate to use.

Equipment: Mural projects often require access to water and electricity, lifts, ladders, scaffolding, storage, containers for dirty paint and water, and tarps. Barricades, cones and safety equipment might also be needed and are required for projects on City property and the Right of Way.

Anti-Graffiti or Anti-Vandalism Coatings: Sometimes coatings are applied to murals to make it easier to remove graffiti. These coatings can be expensive. If you haven't included them in your budget, reach out to the property owner to see if they might be willing to cover the costs. In deciding whether to use a coating, consider that coatings need to be maintained and reapplied. Once the anti-graffiti coating is applied, it's harder to do paint repairs, so some artists don't want the coating applied to their work.

Possible options include [Mural Guard](#) and [TSW4 Acryli-Master Coating Semi-Gloss](#). It's important to select a coating that is compatible with the wall surface materials and the paint you are using. Again, consult a local paint company for recommendations.

13. Graffiti and Murals

Mural as Graffiti: Murals can sometimes be mistaken for graffiti. The City defines graffiti as something that was not allowed by the property owner.

Materials and Equipment

- High-quality paint and primer
- Permanent materials: tile, metal, porcelain enamel, canvas
- Temporary materials: vinyl, cloth, plywood, paper
- Equipment: lifts, ladders, scaffolding, tarps, water and power access
- Graffiti coatings for extended protection

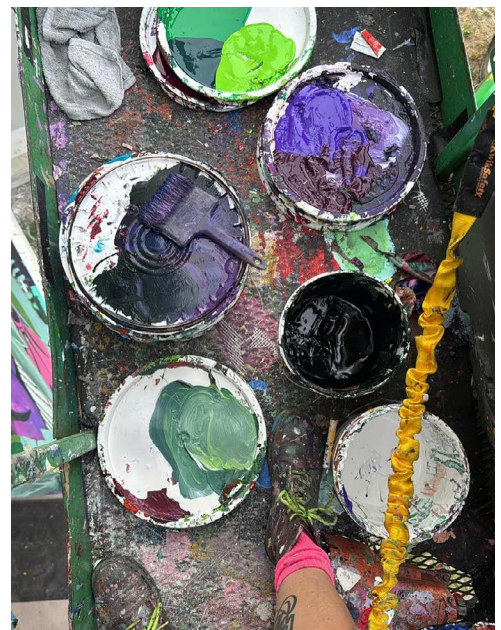


photo by Greta McLain

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS



Northside, Peyton Russell, photo by TerraSura Photography

Sometimes property owners are cited for graffiti-style murals. To prevent citations, owners can register a mural with the City by [emailing the Clean City Coordinator](#).

Mural as Graffiti Prevention: Murals can be great graffiti deterrents. Effective community engagement in the development of the mural can result in strong community ownership, further helping to deter graffiti. Using a high level of detail and patterning and avoiding large areas of solid color can also help to deter graffiti.

Graffiti Removal Tools and Information: For information on general graffiti removal tools, visit the [Graffiti Page on the City's website](#). Techniques for removing graffiti from murals vary depending on the wall materials, type of paint, and whether a graffiti coating has been applied. [Fine Art Conservation Laboratories](#) has great information on their website.

Also see [anti-graffiti coatings](#).

14. Advertising Restrictions

Sometimes businesses try to get around sign regulations and billboard costs by creating signs that look like murals. For this reason, city zoning codes specify the differences between murals and signs. Advertisements must comply with the [sign code](#). To avoid having a mural cited as unpermitted signage, refrain from using the name, logo and website of the business in the mural. If you have questions about whether your mural could be considered signage, send a copy of the design to [Mary Altman](#) or [Talia Moorman](#). To learn about the City's rules for signs, including painted wall signs or ways to develop creative signage, please speak with a Planner by contacting [311](#).

15. Maintenance and Longevity

A mural's lifespan and quality can be impacted by a lack of maintenance. The community will be living with your mural for many years, and preventing its degradation will benefit the neighborhood. An annual inspection is recommended. Spring is a good time to check for damages caused by cold temperatures and salt. Typical maintenance includes graffiti removal, repairing water damage and reapplying graffiti coatings. The artist may be willing to do maintenance for you for a fee.

Lifespan: Factors that affect the lifespan of a mural include sun exposure, wall preparation, wall stability, drainage, paint choices, and the desire of the current and future property owners to keep the mural. (See [increasing longevity](#) below and [contracts/property owners](#) above for more information.)

Long-Term Expectations: Before any work starts, all parties should have a mutual understanding of their long-term expectations. These should be documented or included in contracts.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Consider including the following:

- Who is responsible for maintenance and its costs?
- What expectations do the artist and the property owner have regarding aging, fading and disrepair? What is okay and what isn't?
- What is the expected lifespan and what happens at the end of its lifespan?
- What happens if the building is remodeled, the owner changes or the owner wants a new mural?

Increasing Longevity:

- One of the most important factors related to longevity is [proper preparation of the wall](#). Repairs might be needed prior to installation, such as power washing, gutter repair, tuck pointing, etc.
- If possible, choose a location that is not in direct sunlight. Avoid the south sides of buildings.
- Choose a high-quality primer and paint that is appropriate for the type of building surface.
- Consider applying a good sealer.
- As mentioned above, have a good agreement with the property and business owners.
- Take pigeon deterrent measures as needed.
- Document and carefully archive everything, including materials, designs, paint colors, artists involved, contracts, suppliers, and photographs of the entire process (before, during and after). This information will be extremely helpful during maintenance and conservation.
- Not every mural needs to last forever. A short-term or temporary mural can make a big difference in the community. It's important to recognize that communities change, and some images and content might not remain relevant.

16. Safety and Liability

Insurance: Parties installing murals should obtain the proper insurance. This typically means obtaining general liability insurance, but other forms such as vehicle insurance and workers compensation insurance may be needed in certain cases. For information about these types of insurance policies, you can reach out to your homeowners, renters and auto insurance vendors, or contact [Springboard for the Arts](#).

Maintenance

Longevity depends on wall preparation, materials, sunlight, weather, drainage, and owner support .

Determine who is responsible for maintenance in your agreements.

Short-term murals can also be impactful.



Lizardman wearing a 3M 6000 Series respirator, staff photo

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Site Considerations: Ensure that emergency responders can access the site if there is an accident. If the artwork is on or near sidewalks, provide a clear pedestrian zone by using cones, barricades and caution tape. This will help to prevent pedestrians from entering the work area and risking injury. In certain cases, you may want to contact [the violence prevention safety team in your area](#) or hire private security during installation. Consider having more than one artist on site at a time, or a volunteer to help secure belongings, manage safety and talk to passers-by. Examine the site for hazards, including syringes. (See the City's website about [safe needle disposal](#).)

Participants: Educate participants about relevant safety precautions. Follow regulations for materials, equipment and safety procedures, especially when working with youth. A good resource is the [Art and Craft Safety Guide of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission](#). Yellow vests, heavy shoes or boots, and safety glasses are highly encouraged. Wear masks and respirators when using aerosols. Learn the location of the nearest hospital in case of an accident, and call 911 if someone is seriously injured.

Training: Volunteers and artists should be properly trained to use all tools and materials. An experienced artist should have the skills and expertise to conduct this type of training.

Lifts and Scaffolding: Conduct regular safety inspections. Make sure users are trained and certified in using lifts. Use harnesses when required. Do not allow youth use this equipment.

Safety

Ensure safe pedestrian zones with cones or barriers.

Provide masks, safety vests, boots, glasses.

Train participants.

Only certified users on lifts and scaffolding.

No youth on heavy equipment.



Vision of Marshall Street, Witt Siasoco, photo by same

MURAL MAPS

- The City of Minneapolis and Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board have [several maps of artworks in our public art collections](#), including murals.
- Lake Street Council's [map of public art on Lake Street](#).
- Meet Minneapolis' [map of murals and public art](#).
- MASA's [map of street artwork in the US](#), includes Minneapolis.

USEFUL CITY CONTACTS

[Minneapolis 311](#), Minneapolis311@minneapolismn.gov (Always a great resource on a variety of City topics)

Arts and Cultural Affairs

- [Public Art Permits/Public Art](#), MPLSACA@minneapolismn.gov
- [Cultural Districts Arts Fund](#), MPLSACA@minneapolismn.gov

[Great Streets Façade Improvement Program](#), Judy.Moses@minneapolismn.gov

[Historic Preservation](#), www.minneapolismn.gov/resident-services/property-housing/preservation/historic-preservation/

[Graffiti Removal](#), Michelle.keys@minneapolismn.gov

[Neighborhood Partnership Arts Fund](#), PartnershipFund@minneapolismn.gov

[Right of Way Permits](#), PWRightofWay@minneapolismn.gov

[Sign Permits](#), SignPermits@minneapolismn.gov

[Neighborhood Safety](#), NeighborhoodSafety@minneapolismn.gov



Untitled, Rodrigo Oñate, staff photo