

Mural Guidelines

for artists, community groups, businesses and everyone who brings murals to our City



Thank you



Photo credits

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

Special thanks to these groups for their images, programs and vision:

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.

Welcome

We created this guide to assist artists and community groups in creating murals. Murals support the City's goal for residents to enjoy high-quality outdoor spaces.

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

This guide **does not**:

- **Cover everything.** It offers an overview of the mural process but does not address every detail for every type of project.
- **Provide legal advice.** While it includes information about contracts, always consult an attorney.

These instructions and other tools are also on the City's website.

Purpose

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

Goals

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

Benefits of murals

Murals offer many benefits to the City. They:

- Inspire creativity
- Make the streetscape more interesting
- Celebrate cultures and history
- Spark discussions
- Build community pride
- Deter graffiti

Links in this document

In this pages we refer to several resources and organizations. The links to these can be found on the last page of the document. There are also links that help you jump to other topics in the guide.



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. A mural might help address this issue. Reach out to community organizations and business associations for ideas for partners. Mural hot spots within the city include:

- Arts and cultural districts
- Midtown Greenway
- Commercial corridors, such as Lake street and Nicollet, Hennepin, and Central avenues

2. Find the property owner

An easy first step for finding 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. Note that some areas of the City do not have addresses. This includes City, County or State sidewalks, bikeways, roads, and alleys. If you would like to work in one of these areas, email mplsaca@minneapolismn.gov.

3. Do I Need a Permit?

Learning the property owner will help you determine if you need permits.

Private property: Permits are usually not needed. A contract with the property owner is recommended. (See contracts and historic buildings below.) Note that the business or tenant you are working with may not be the property owner.

Public property: Governments require permits for murals on public property. The application process varies depending on the responsible government agency. Murals on City of Minneapolis property should follow the City's Public Art Application Process. The same is true for murals on the Midtown Greenway. We encourage you to review the Public Art Application Process early on in your project. The time for this review process varies. For well-planned projects it generally takes 1-2 months. Murals on MnDOT property follow their Art on Trunk Highway Right of Way process.

Obstruction permits: You will need this permit to put equipment on a sidewalk, road or alley. Easy instructions for applying for these permits are on the ROWAY website. They are usually free. Obstruction permits are also helpful when you want to park your equipment on the street or in a no parking zone. They can also help ensure 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, you may need other permits. For example, if you are putting a structure on a building to support the mural, you may need a building permit. The City reviews projected images on a case-by-case basis. Email mplsaca@minneapolismn.gov to learn more.



Step by Step Mural Process

4. Other site concerns

Historic buildings and districts: Look up your building on the historic properties area of the City's website. If the building is historic or in a historic district, contact City staff for further instructions.

Changes in property ownership: The property owner decides if a mural is on their building. The exception is when there is contract that states otherwise. The City of Minneapolis does not play a role in this decision. If the property owner changes, contact the new owner and develop an agreement.

If the group creating the mural is not the property owner: In this case, it is essential to get permission from the property owner. When property owners don't approve murals, they may remove them. (See contracts below.) You should also get written support from the businesses in the building. Never assume the businesses on site own the property.

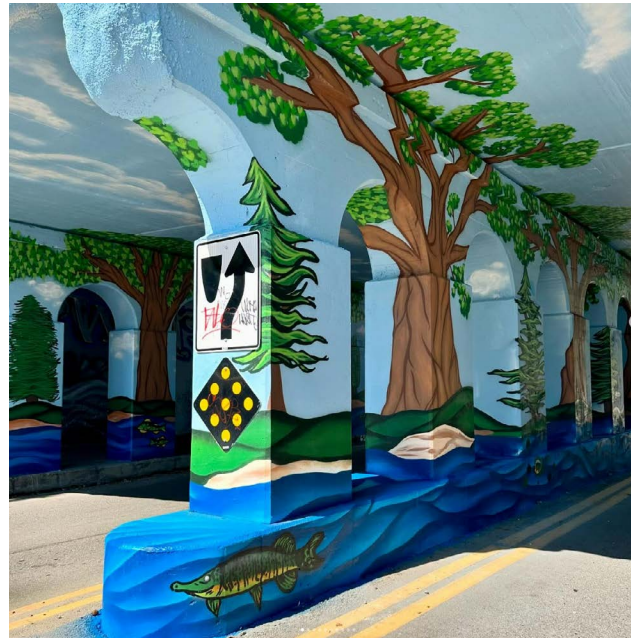
Quick comparison Private vs. public property

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 Ĥaḥáwakpa," Mississippi Memories,
Thomasina Top Bear, photo by same*

5. Engage the community

Engaging the community can benefit your process in many ways. The City requires engagement for murals on City property. 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 developing the design and creating the art
- Partnering with local neighborhood and community organizations
- Involving the artist at a local school
- Creating social media campaigns

Step by Step Mural Process

- Educating the community about public artworks
- Providing tours after the work is done

6. Find an artist

Resources for finding an artist include: COMPAS, MNartists, neighborhood organizations, business associations and arts groups. You can also visit murals on the City's public art maps. 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. This includes: 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 previous work. Use an RFQ if you want the artist to work with you and the community to develop the design.

Ensure the artist you select can scale art to your wall size. Also ensure they have experience with outdoor public art projects. If you are new to mural projects, we recommend you work with an artist with experience in mural making. Consider pairing an experienced artist and a newer one for a mentoring opportunity.

7. Develop the design

A broad range of murals are possible. This includes permanent and temporary works. Different approaches are good for different settings and need different types of repairs. Consider your site and ability when choosing the approach for your project. See materials and tools below for more information.

In developing the design, be very careful in using images and text created by others. You may be violating their rights. Copyrighted or trademarked works can include quotes, excerpts, photos, other artworks, and logos. Reach out to the person or organization who created the work to get permission and make an agreement. See contracts below.

8. Build the budget

Mural costs depend on scale, detail, artist experience, wall prep, and community involvement. Smaller budgets may mean cutting some corners. This can impact quality, longevity, community ownership and the safety of participants.

A rough cost estimate is \$15-\$25 per square foot. Note that artists can design their work to fit your budget. They can create different designs for the same wall for different fees. Forecast has a great sample public art project budget form.

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



X Marks the Spot, Reggie LeFlore, staff photo

Step by Step Mural Process

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

- In 2025, the City of Minneapolis commissioned an artist team to create a 6,200 square foot mural on Lake Street. This project required the team to do extensive community engagement. It also required them to create a very detailed mural to deter graffiti. Other needed support included traffic control and painting under challenging conditions. These factors called for a budget of \$369,000.
- In 2025, the Midtown Greenway Coalition installed five murals on the Greenway for \$115,000. Their budget included payments to culture bearers. The culture bearers advised the artists on culturally-based content.
- In 2025, Lake Street Council commissioned 33 murals for \$1,000,000 (an average of \$25,000/mural). This budget included artist fees, wall preparations, anti-graffiti coatings, lighting, and mural plaques.
- In 2023, the St. Paul Cultural District Mural Festival created eight murals. Eight artists were hired for \$15,000 each.
- In 2022, the Downtown Council commissioned a mural of Prince. The mural, on Ramp A in Minneapolis, cost approximately \$300,000.

9. Seek funding

The funding for each project is unique. Possible sources depend on the location, topic, audience and groups involved.

The property owner may be a source of funding. The mural can bring attention to their business and save them the work of removing graffiti. Possible funding sources include:

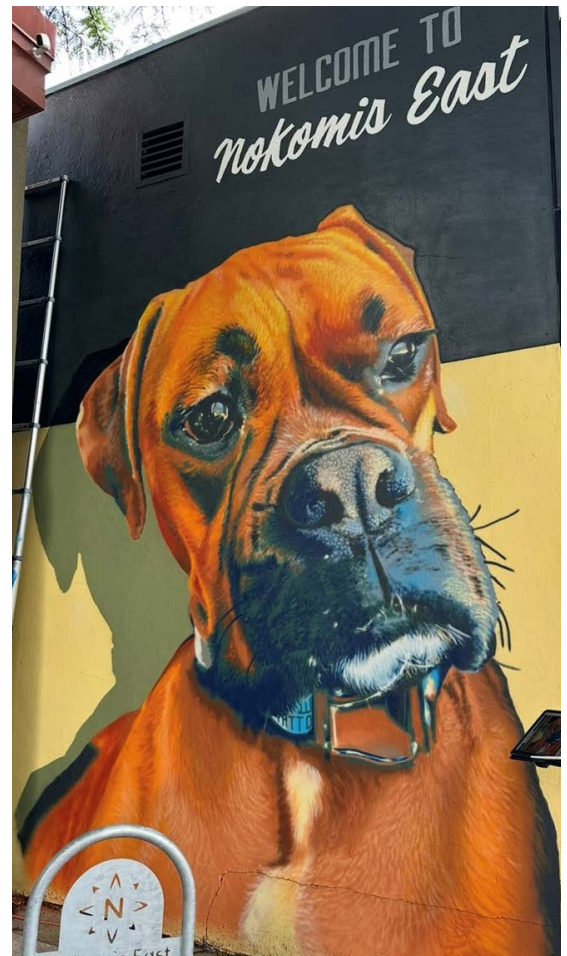
- City of Minneapolis
 - Great Streets Façade Improvement Matching Grant
 - Partnership Fund
 - Cultural Districts Arts Fund
- Metropolitan Regional Arts Council
- Forecast

Other sponsors of murals in recent years have included:

- Lake Street Council
- LynLake Street Arts Series
- City neighborhood organizations
- Midtown Greenway Coalition

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

Public art is a possible City incentive for developers who want to build a larger building. The zoning code calls these incentives "Floor Area Ratio Premiums."



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

Step by Step Mural Process

10. Write contracts

It's important to have contracts in place to protect your rights and the rights of others. They can also prevent the building owner from removing the mural. For help developing contracts for your mural project, contact Springboard for the Arts. They have connections with attorneys who specialize in arts-related contracts. All contracts should reference each other and be consistent with each other. All parties should have copies of all contracts.

Artists: There should be contracts with all artists working on the mural, including artist subcontractors. 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:

- Property owner's rights about use of mural images
- Ownership of the physical mural
- How to alter the mural due to building renovation or repairs
- Lifespan expectations
- Maintenance responsibilities
- Building ownership changes

Agreements should also cover short-term installation issues, including:

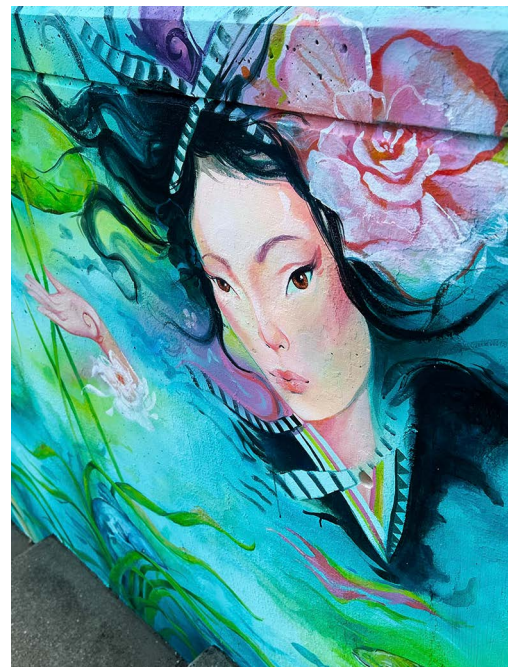
- Artist's access to the site
- Restroom facilities
- Materials and storage
- Water and electricity
- Primary contact person for the building

It is not always necessary to have a written agreement with the businesses on the property. Written support from them is helpful.

Commissioning agent: Sometimes the group hiring the artist differs from the property owner. In this case, there should be a contract between this group and the artist(s). There should also be a contract between this group and the property owner.

Funder: Most funders require signed agreements. These agreements could have terms that relate to your other agreements. Develop all agreements to be consistent.

Others: Other people or organizations may have legal rights related to your project. For example, the mural may include copyrighted images, such as quotes or images of other art. Get agreements for this material as needed.



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

Step by Step Mural Process

11. Address artists' rights

Federal law gives several rights to artists for their artworks. This includes the original designs and use of the images of their artwork by others. All parties involved in commissioning murals should be aware of these rights. They should address these rights in contracts and follow them. Commissioning groups, property owners, and others do not have rights to use mural images. The artist can grant them those rights need if they want. If more than one artist is working on the project, it's important to know which artists are the author of the work. They may also have these rights. They could also be working as painters or fabricators, and not as artists.

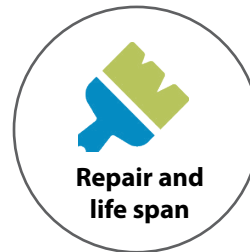
Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 (VARA):

This law gives artists several rights, including to not have their work destroyed. All parties involved in the mural should be aware of this law. The property owner or commissioning group may want to ask an artist to waive these rights. This is because VARA protections can prevent someone from modifying the wall. The best away to prevent changes or removal is to get support from the property owner for the project.



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

Things to Consider



12. Materials and tools

Paint and Primer: Use quality paint that works for the wall material and coatings. This will extend the life of the mural. Ask a local paint company for suggestions.

Artists can create murals using a many materials, both permanent and temporary:

- Permanent: Paint applied to Polytab, mosaic, 2-d metal work, glass enamel, canvas
- Temporary: Printed vinyl, painted and mounted wood, paper installed with wheat paste

Historic Buildings: For historic buildings, contact City staff to learn appropriate materials.

Equipment: Mural projects often need:

- Access to water and electricity
- Lifts, ladders and scaffolding
- Storage
- Containers for dirty paint and water
- Tarps
- Barricades, cones and safety equipment

Anti-graffiti or anti-vandalism coatings: Some people prefer applying coatings to murals to ease graffiti removal. These coatings can be expensive. If they aren't 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 coatings:

- Consider that you will need to apply coatings every few years
- After you apply them, it's harder to paint over them
- Some artists prefer coatings are not applied to their work

Possible options include Mural Guard and TSW4 Acryli-Master Coating Semi-Gloss. Select a coating that is compatible with the wall surface materials and the paint you are using. 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 wanted by the property owner. The City can fine property owners for graffiti-style murals after a complaint. To prevent a fine, owners can register their mural with the City. Email the Clean City Coordinator for more information.

Mural as graffiti prevention: Murals can deter graffiti. Strong community engagement in in a mural project can build community ownership. When this happens people respect the mural and are less likely to damage it. Including a lot

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS



Northside, Peyton Russell, photo by TerraSura Photography

of detail and patterns in the design can help. This and avoiding large areas of solid color makes it difficult for graffiti to have a visual impact.

Graffiti removal tools and information: For information on general graffiti removal tools, visit the City's graffiti webpage. Techniques for removing graffiti depend on the wall materials, paint, and graffiti coating. Consult an art conservator for advice.

Also see anti-graffiti coatings.

14. Sign laws

Some businesses try to avoid sign laws and billboard costs by making signs that look like murals. For this reason, city codes describe the differences between murals and signs. Advertisements must follow the sign code. Avoid using the name, logo and website of your business in the mural, to avoid a fine. For questions about if your mural could be signage, send the design to mplsaca@minneapolismn.gov. To learn about the City's sign rules, painted wall signs or ways to develop creative signage, contact 311 to speak with a planner.

15. Repair and life span

Lack of maintenance can impact a mural's lifespan and quality. The community will live with your mural for many years. Keeping it maintained will benefit the neighborhood. Inspect the mural every year. 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: The lifespan of a mural is also influenced by:

- Sun exposure
- Wall preparation
- Wall stability and drainage
- Paint quality
- 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.)

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

Long-term expectations:

Before work starts, everyone involved should understand your long-term expectations. Put these expectations in writing and in contracts. Consider including the following:

- Who will do maintenance and cover the costs?
- What are the artist and property owner expectations about fading and disrepair? What is okay and what isn't?
- What is the expected lifespan and what happens at the end of the mural's lifespan?
- What happens if the owner wants to remodel, the owner changes or the owner wants a new mural?

Increasing longevity:

- It is important to note that to mural a long life you need to properly prepare the wall. Someone may need to do repairs before installation, including: Power washing, gutter or flashing repair, and tuck pointing or gap filling.
- If possible, choose a location that is not in direct sunlight. Avoid the south sides of buildings.
- Choose a high-quality primer and paint for the type of building surface.
- Consider applying a good sealer.
- As mentioned above, have a good agreement with the property and business owners.
- Prevent pigeon problems as needed.
- Document everything. This includes materials, designs, paint color, artists, contracts, and suppliers. Take photographs before, during and after. This information will be very helpful during future maintenance.

Not every mural needs to last forever. A short-term or temporary mural can make a big difference in the community. Communities change over time, and some images and content might not remain relevant.

16. Safety and insurance

Insurance: Artists and groups installing murals should get the proper insurance. This usually means obtaining general liability insurance. They may also need other insurance, such as vehicle and workers compensation. Reach out to your homeowners, renters and auto insurance vendors for help. You can also contact Springboard for the Arts.

Site considerations: Ensure that emergency vehicles can access the site if there is an accident. If the artwork is on or near sidewalks, provide a clear pedestrian zone. You can do this by using cones, barricades and caution tape. This will prevent people from entering the work area and risking injury. For concerns about safety on site, contact the violence prevention group in your area. You can also hire a private security firm. You can have more than one artist on site at a time or a volunteer.



Lizardman wearing a 3M 6000 Series respirator, staff photo

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

They can 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 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. We encourage yellow vests, heavy shoes or boots, and safety glasses. Wear masks and respirators when using aerosols. Learn the location of the nearest hospital in case of an accident. For serious injuries, call 911.

Training: Train volunteers and artists to use tools and materials according to safety guidelines. An experienced artist will have expertise to conduct this type of training.

Lifts and scaffolding: Conduct regular safety inspections. Users should be trained and certified to use lifts. Use harnesses when required. Do not allow youth use this 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

- Applications for 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



Untitled, Rodrigo Oñate, staff photo

Resources and Links

[Art and Craft Safety Guide of the U.S. Consumer Product](#)

[Safety Commission](#)

[Arts and Cultural Affairs, City of Minneapolis](#)

[Arts Midwest](#)

[Building permits](#)

[Business associations](#)

[City of Minneapolis website](#)

[COMPAS](#)

[Copyright law](#)

[Cultural districts in Minneapolis](#)

[Cultural Districts Arts Fund](#)

[Encroachment permits](#)

[Fine Art Conservation Laboratories](#)

[Forecast](#)

[Floor Area Ratio Premiums](#)

[Graffiti, City of Minneapolis website](#)

[Great Streets Façade Improvement Matching Grant](#)

[Hennepin County interactive map](#)

[Historic buildings, districts and landmarks](#)

[Lake Street Council](#)

[Metropolitan Regional Arts Council](#)

[Midtown Greenway](#)

[Midtown Greenway Coalition](#)

[Minneapolis Arts Commission](#)

[MnDOT Art on Trunk Highway Right of Way process](#)

[MNartists](#)

[Mural Guard graffiti coating](#)

[Obstruction permits](#)

[Neighborhood and community organizations](#)

[Partnership Fund](#)

[Polytab](#)

[Application guidelines for public art](#)

[ROWAY website](#)

[Safe needle disposal](#)

[Sign code](#)

[Springboard for the Arts](#)

[St. Paul Cultural District Mural Festival](#)

[TSW4 Acryli-Master Coating Semi-Gloss graffiti coating](#)

[Visual Artists Rights Act](#)

[Violence prevention safety teams](#)

[Wall](#)

[preparation](#)

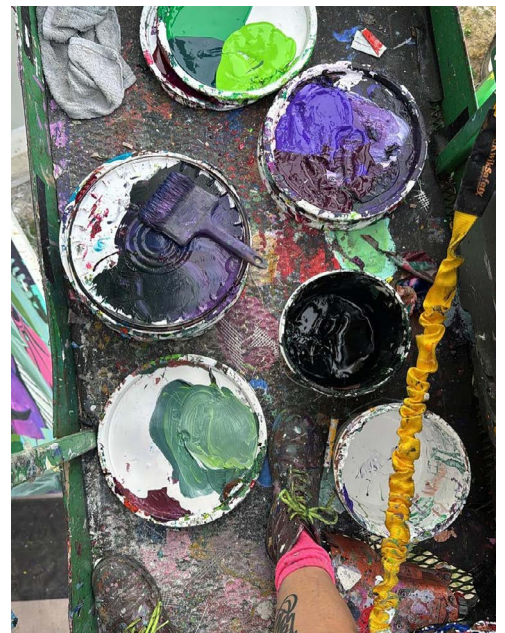


photo by Greta McLain