

# Art for (W)all

a guide to making murals in Nashville



**PUBLIC ART**  
METRO ARTS / NASHVILLE

# Ready to make a mural?



Murals have become an increasingly vibrant part of the mix of public art that is happening throughout Nashville.

Nashville's murals are truly created from the ground up — projects have been initiated by artists, businesses, schools, developers, arts organization and independent curators — and reflect the vibrancy of Nashville's creativity and culture.

Metro Public Art fields many inquiries from people who want to know about different aspects of making murals. This guide is intended to provide answers to basic questions anyone must answer about creating a mural, from how to organize a project to what kind of approvals you will need to how communities can be involved in the process. The information here has been culled from best practices that have been documented by artists and mural organizations throughout the country.

While this guide provides a roadmap, every project will have its own unique circumstances. Anyone taking on a mural project should look for guidance from artists, curators, arts organizations or others who are experienced with the details of mural production. At the end of this publication there is a resource guide that provides information about where to find help.

Metro Public Art's vision is for art to be something that people experience every day as they go about their lives in the city. Murals are a critical part of that, and they can have an immediacy and resonance that leads to vibrant neighborhoods, deeper civic and cultural participation, and a vital public realm. We hope this guide can help you chart a path to success.

## Have an idea for a mural? Or a wall you'd like to paint?

Here are some quick links to help you get started and to find the help you need.

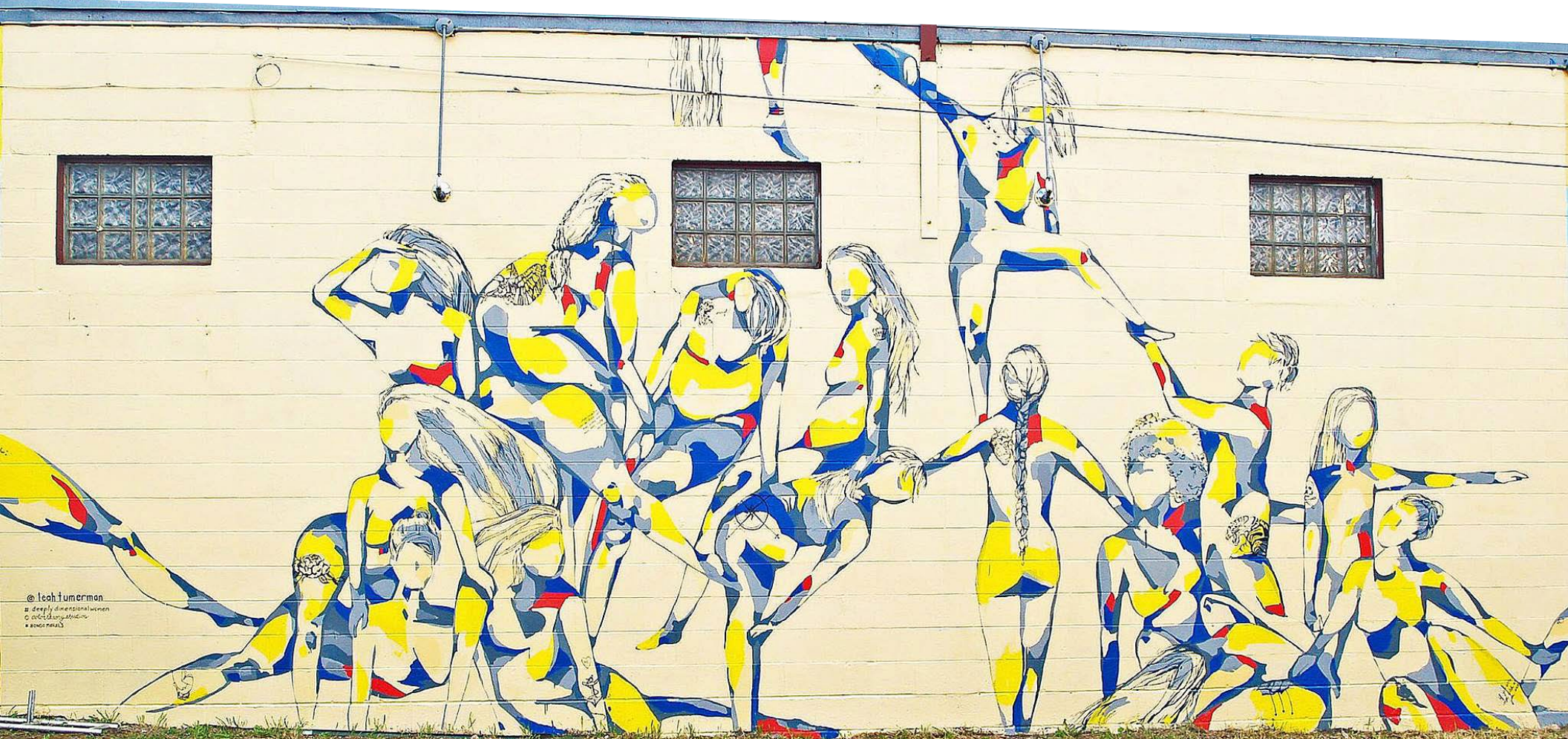
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in deeply dimensional women  
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#womenmural

# Setting Goals

Mural projects can range from quick, spray-painted street art approaches to curated contemporary art exhibitions, from intensive community-engaged projects to a decorative wall inside a coffee shop or a community building. Whatever the project, we must remember that a mural can transform a block, a neighborhood, even a city. What kind of project do you want to do?

Whether you are an artist, a community organization, developer or a business owner, the best way to start is by taking stock of the goals of your project. When you have a clear sense of your goals, it will be easier to make decisions about your project along the way.

What are the key drivers of your project? Where are you willing to make compromises? Your answers to these questions will provide a guide for the many decisions you will have to make as you create your mural project.

## Key issues to consider.

### Artistic

Are you looking for an innovative artist and an innovative design?

### Beautification

Are you trying to improve the visual appearance of a site?

### Community Engagement

What is impact of this mural likely to be on the community? How do you want to involve the community in the planning, design and creation of the mural? Who will the key stakeholders be?

### Longevity

How long would you like your mural to last?

### Image

Are you creating the mural to improve the visibility or image of a project or a neighborhood?

### Place Activation

Are you trying to generate more activity at the site?

### Community Identity

Are you looking for a mural that will connect to some aspect of the community, such as its history?

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## Finding a Wall

A good mural starts with a good wall. The process of finding one can occur in several ways.

- Often a wall is identified by the mural's sponsor, whether an arts organization, a community organization, a building owner or a business, who will then search for an artist to do the project.
- In other cases a wall is identified by an artist, who wants to create a self-initiated project. The artist will then approach the owner for permission.
- Sometimes the artist and the sponsor work together to develop the inspiration for the mural and search for a wall.

Whatever the process of finding the wall, it is important to carefully evaluate the wall before starting work on the mural.

[Read more about evaluating a wall](#)



# Finding a Wall

## Evaluating a Wall

When looking for a wall, you'll need to consider its visibility, its condition, its orientation and whether you can get permission to paint on it. The following considerations generally apply to outdoor walls.

### Visibility

These are some factors to consider regarding the visibility of the wall.

- Consider how visible the mural will be to people walking by or passing by in cars, public transit or bicycles.
- Consider how the mural can relate to an active community space, such as a community garden or a playground. A mural can be a component of ongoing community use and programming of the space or a visual anchor that reinforces the identity of the community.
- Avoid locations where adjacent signs or development will detract from the appearance or effectiveness of the mural.
- If you are an artist and have a composition in mind, consider how the work will look on the wall.

### Surface Conditions

The best type of surface to receive paint is one that is a raw, unpainted brick, concrete or stone material that is free of the defects described below. Wood, metal and other materials that are in new or good condition can also be satisfactory if properly prepared and sealed. For interior walls, cleanly finished drywall works well.

Here is a checklist of things to look for.

- Are the bricks and mortar sound, or are they crumbling, powdery, cracked or broken?
- Is the wall dry, or do you see water seepage, stains or rust?
- Is the wall already painted? If so, is the paint sound or is it peeling, chipping or blistering?
- Is the wall structurally sound, or is it cracked or leaning?

If any of these conditions exist, you may need to repair the wall before you paint, or there may be problems that cannot be repaired and will damage the mural. Consult a reputable artist, mason, or painting contractor for further assessment and recommended treatment.

### Roof Conditions

The long-term viability of an exterior wall – and your mural – is also dependent on the condition of the roof, parapets and flashing. As above, consult with a reputable contractor for further assessment and recommended treatment.

### Surrounding Conditions

The area directly surrounding the wall should be evaluated in regard to issues that might affect installation.

- Is there a safe area where you can work on painting the mural?
- Is there a safe workspace immediately adjacent to the wall, and how is it used?
- Is it a clear lot? Is it used for parking? Is there debris or overgrown brush?
- Is the ground stable, sound or level enough for scaffolding, ladders or boom lift?
- Is there a sidewalk or street space that could be used?
- Are there any overhead wires nearby? These may interfere with the installation, particularly if you use a scaffold or lift. If you see wires, consult with your scaffold or lift contractor.
- Does the work site have access to storage, water and restrooms, or will those have to be provided?
- Are there cameras on the site or security personnel nearby?

### Wall Orientation

The orientation of your wall can impact the longevity of the mural. Walls that face south (even interior walls that face south-facing windows) will receive more direct sunlight and the mural will fade more rapidly.

- Evaluate the direction the wall faces and the amount of sunlight it will get. Avoid walls with too much direct sunlight.

[For information about permissions, go to page seven.](#)

## Finding a Wall

### Permission to Use a Wall

You will need to obtain permissions and approvals to paint on a wall, whether it is publicly or privately owned. Below is a list of key factors to consider before you settle on a wall, and references to help you find more information.

- Who owns the proposed mural site and what permission do they require?  
The wall owners may require review and approval of the design, insurance policies, or demonstrated community review and approval of the mural before you start painting.
- Is the site located on Metro property or private property? What Metro agency is responsible for the wall, and what are its requirements?
- Are there any special Metro permissions required; for example, historic preservation approvals? Or permits for street or sidewalk closures?

For information on street and sidewalk closures, see “Installation Permits,” below.

### Privately-Owned Walls

If the wall is privately owned, the artist and the owner should sign a wall agreement. A wall agreement gives permission for the artist to paint on the wall and sets out the terms and conditions for the project, including processes for cleaning, repair and removal of the mural. If the wall owner is directly commissioning the mural from the artist, these terms can be covered in the artist contract.

*A wall agreement is a legal agreement. Anyone entering into a legal agreement should consult with legal counsel.*

To read more about wall agreements, go to the “Wall Agreements” section of this publication, page 17.

For more information on agreements and contracts, see the “Business Resources” section in the resource guide at the end of this publication.

### Publicly-Owned Walls

If the mural is on Metro Nashville property—such as libraries, parks or right-of-way (such as signal box covers, sidewalks, retaining walls)—there are two important sources of information:

General information can be found here:  
[www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Resources-and-Toolkits.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Resources-and-Toolkits.aspx)

An application with more specific guidelines can be found here:  
[mnac.submittable.com/submit](http://mnac.submittable.com/submit)

Metro Arts recommends that artists interested in working on Metro Nashville property start by filling out the application referenced above and submitting it to Metro Arts, which will then distribute the request to the right agency.

### Metro Design Requirements

In considering the design of a mural, Metro Arts has several criteria that should be followed for murals on Metro property:

For more information, see “Metro Installation, Safety and Maintenance Requirements,” page 9, and “Metro Nashville Review,” page 24.

### Installation Permits

If you are installing the mural from a sidewalk or street, then a Metro Nashville permit for street and sidewalk closures will be necessary to work in those areas.

For street and sidewalk closure permits, visit  
[www.nashville.gov/Public-Works/Permits.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Public-Works/Permits.aspx)

If you are installing the mural from an adjacent property, you will need permission from that property owner.

### Historic Preservation Approvals

Preservation approvals will depend on where the wall is located.

For information on historic preservation review, see “Murals in Historic Zoning Districts,” page 24.

## Finding a Wall

### Working on an Inside Wall?

Most of this guide is focused on the process of creating murals on exterior walls. However, there are many opportunities for creating murals on the inside walls of just about any type of space – from a restaurant to a fashion boutique, offices of all sorts, and schools and community facilities.

The process for interior and exterior walls is similar. Some of the details may differ.

- Study the lighting to be sure how your mural will be seen and how colors will work.
- Consider paints that are suitable for interior surfaces.
- Consider budgeting more for tarps, plastic coverings and tape.
- Be sure you are aware of when the space is available to paint, and plan the installation accordingly.
- Make sure there is enough storage nearby.

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## Metro Installation, Safety and Maintenance Requirements

In granting permission for the placement of a mural, Metro Nashville requires artists or mural sponsors to agree to a series of installation, safety and maintenance requirements.

- By approval of a Temporary Artwork on Metro property, Metro does not accept ownership of said artwork nor any responsibility for future maintenance. Any on-site liability of the artwork or installation of artwork is assumed by the applicant/artist.
- No artwork can obstruct or cause Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) violations in the right-of-way.
- Any art placed on a sidewalk must be made of an anti-skid resistant material. The material must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- All artwork materials used should be designed for use on the particular surface to be painted (or adhered to). Metro reserves the right to review and approve any materials.
- The applicant shall clean and prime surfaces prior to the application of materials unless this requirement is waived in the agreement.
- Paint and other materials shall be applied according to manufacturer's instructions.
- Vinyl wraps must be professionally installed.
- Ventilation channels on utility boxes shall not be covered with paint or other materials.
- Anti-graffiti coatings are encouraged. Removal of graffiti often results in the removal of the anti-graffiti coating as well so it may need to be reapplied.
- If artwork is tagged with graffiti or damaged within the time period approved in the agreement, Metro will contact the applicant to repair. The applicant has 3 days from notification to abate graffiti and 30 days from notification to repair any other damage. If graffiti is not removed within 3 days, Metro reserves the right to paint over the portion of the artwork where the graffiti is located.
- Metro reserves the right to remove or cover any artwork if it is determined to be a safety hazard, is too large, interferes with the flow of pedestrian or vehicular traffic, creates a maintenance problem, interferes with public service or other activities in adjacent areas or is otherwise inappropriate for the space.
- If the Metro-owned property including utility boxes, retaining walls, sidewalk, etc. needs to be repaired or replaced—in part or whole—while the artwork is in place, there is no obligation on the part of Metro to replace, repair or reinstall the artwork. However, the applicant will be given notice so that the artwork can be removed or relocated, should that be possible.

For more information, see the  
"Metro Nashville Review" section of this publication.

# Funding Your Project

## If you are an artist

- Consider sponsorships from businesses and community organizations.
- Consider a crowdfunding campaign.

## If you are a community-based non-profit

- Research funding for the arts, beautification and community development / neighborhood revitalization.
- Consider funding from community service programs, such as nutrition, health, restorative justice and veterans' services. Sometimes those funds can be used for murals if the murals are part of the service program.
- Consider how existing programming funds could be used to support the cost of a mural.
- Consider partnerships with local galleries or arts organizations.
- Consider sponsorships from businesses.
- Consider developing the project through a residency or community-based project funded by an arts source.
- If you are interested in a community-based project, consider applying for the Metro Arts THRIVE program.

[For more information on the Metro Arts THRIVE program, see the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.](#)

## If you are a business owner, building owner or developer

Most arts grant funds will not pay for murals on private property. However, there are ways to use your own resources creatively.

- If you are developing or renovating property, consider whether some of your design and construction funds can be allocated to artist design and mural painting.
- Consider whether some of your marketing funds can be allocated to the project.
- Consider partnerships with local galleries or arts organizations.

[For more information on funding, see the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.](#)

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# Finding a Project Manager

## What Does a Project Manager Do?

A project manager can play many roles in your project — from helping you find an artist; to managing community engagement; to overseeing the budget, schedule, contracts, permissions and other logistics; to finding subcontractors, vendors and sources of supplies; to organizing a celebration at the end.

## Who is a Project Manager?

A project manager can be:

- The artist for your project, or another artist, if they have demonstrated experience in managing murals.
- An independent arts organization whose staff has experience in murals.
- A curator or an art consultant with experience in murals.

The Metro Arts publication, + Art: A Developers Guide to Public Art provides step-by-step guidance for finding and working with a public art consultant, which could include mural project managers. The Resource Guide at the end of this publication also lists organizations you can contact for assistance.

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# OFF THE WALL CHARLOTTE AVE



## Finding an Artist



### **Factors to Consider**

There are a number of factors to consider in selecting an artist, including the artist's experience and proficiency, artistic approach, willingness to work with communities, and availability to do the project in the required timeframe and for the available budget.

### **Artistic Approach**

Murals come in a variety of styles. It is important to understand an artist's creative approach and to make sure it is consistent with the expectations of the mural sponsor. An important aspect of that is the process that an artist uses to develop their ideas, and whether the artist is open to having designs reviewed by others. Some artists only have a rough idea of what their mural will be like before they start to paint, and others prepare their designs meticulously.

An important aspect of an artist's practice is their willingness to work with communities and their approach to doing that. This is often a key goal of a mural project.

*To read more about artistic approaches to mural making, go to the "Creating a Design" section of this publication, page 22.*

### **Technical Skills and Proficiency**

Artists don't only design murals, they also install them. This requires a knowledge of wall surfaces, paint and sealer choices, and alternative approaches like painting on cloth. Mural artists have to be strong project managers, coordinating a design process, the acquisition of materials and supplies, developing a game plan for painting (including the use of scaffolding or a lift), and managing assistants. If a lift is required, the artist will require lift training and certification.

### **Availability**

You can learn about an artist's availability, and their ability to keep within your budget, by asking them to put together a schedule and budget, by interviewing them about their workload, and by asking references about their budgeting skills.

## Finding an Artist

### Where to Look for an Artist

Looking at artists is one of the most exciting parts of a mural process. There are several ways to find information about artists who would suit your project.

- Look at painters whose work is exhibited in Nashville's galleries.
- Contact one of Nashville's mural organizations, galleries or curators for recommendations or assistance in the artist selection process. For information about mural organizations, visit the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.
- Contact Metro Arts for referrals to artists with whom they have already worked with on mural projects.
- Issue a call to artists. For more information about the call to artists process, see below.

### Calls to Artists

A common approach to finding an artist is through a process called a "call to artists." A "call to artists" is a process by which the sponsor of a project solicits interest from artists for working on a project.

A call can be "open," which means it is circulated through public postings, or it can be "invitational," in which a small number of artists are chosen by a committee or a curator to apply.

A call can be a "request for qualifications" (RFQ), which asks artists to submit information about their professional background and experience, or a "request for proposals" (RFP), which asks artists to submit ideas for the artwork. In the RFP approach, it is highly recommended that artists be paid for their ideas, which the artists own. Sometimes an artist selection process combines both approaches, using an RFQ to identify a broad pool of artists from which a short list is developed, and then using an RFP to solicit proposals from a small group of finalists.

[These processes are discussed at more length in the Metro Arts Public Art Community Investment Plan. For a link, go to the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.](#)

### How to Research an Artist

#### Portfolio Review

Many artists have their work up on a website (but don't ignore artists without one). If an artist interests you, contact them and ask them to send you samples of their mural work. Some preliminary issues to consider:

- Do you like the artist's work?
- Does the artist's work exhibit the quality and/or artistic merit you want your mural to have?
- Does the artist have experience working at the scale of your site?

If the artist has created work in Nashville, go take a look. This will give you a better appreciation of how the artist responded to the context of the site, their technique and use of color, and the durability of their work.

#### Interview

An interview can be a key way of learning whether an artist is right for your mural opportunity. Here are some questions to ask.

- What inspires the artist about this opportunity?
- What experience has the artist had with the installation techniques that will be used?
- What experience has the artist had with the community engagement techniques you will be using?
- What are the artist's ideas for engaging the community?
- Is the artist a good project manager?
- What's the artist's approach to site safety? Do they have experience with scaffolding or lifts?
- Discuss the budget and schedule. Has the artist worked with a similar budget and schedule before? What concerns do they have about the schedule or budget?

#### References

You can check references to get real-life feedback on any concerns or questions you may still have. Here are some questions to ask.

- Is the previous client happy with the artist's work? Would they work with the artist again?
- Did the artist understand the context of their site?
- How did the artist manage budget and schedule?
- How did the artist manage community engagement?
- Were there any safety issues?

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# Creating a Budget

## Project Budget

You will need to create a realistic budget for your project, especially if you will be seeking grants or other external funds. The accompanying budget checklist will help you make sure you are covering all the bases.

## Measuring a Wall

A key factor in budgeting is the size of your wall. This will impact the amount of paint you need, the amount of time it will take to paint, and the costs for scaffolding, lifts or similar equipment. Accurate measurements are also important for you to create a scale drawing on which you can base your design.

You can take wall measurements using a tape measure; have a colleague help with the other end. To measure the height of a building, the best approach is to go to the roof and drop a tape measure or a rope, which

you measure later; you can also approximate the height from a photograph if you know the dimension of the width. Be sure to accurately measure and place windows, doors and other architectural features.

## Artist Fees

Make sure that the budget includes adequate fees for artists, artist assistants and other people working on the mural. Artists are professionals and should be compensated accordingly.

The fee should adequately reflect the artist's scope of work, including the following services:

- Community engagement and/or a collaborative design process
- Design
- Painting
- Project management, if the artist is responsible for tasks such as permissions and securing equipment.

Occasionally a mural sponsor will suggest that the exposure of painting a mural will be adequate compensation, but mural and public art professionals discourage this practice.



## Creating a Budget

### Wall Preparation

If your wall needs repair before painting or installing a cloth mural, obtain an assessment and an estimate from a licensed contractor. Also consider powerwashing the wall before you paint, so the paint will adhere better. Obtain an estimate from a licensed contractor.

### Painting on Walls Versus Painting on Fabric

There are two basic ways of painting a mural – painting directly on a wall or painting on a fabric and applying it to a wall. There are pros and cons for each approach. The decision about painting on a wall versus painting on fabric will impact your budget, so plan accordingly. This guide focuses on painting directly to wall, which is more common.

[To learn more about painting on a wall versus painting on fabric, go to the "Painting on Fabric" section of this publication, page 25.](#)

### Calculating Paint Quantity and Budget

Calculating the paint and other materials you will need for a mural project may seem daunting, but if you follow these steps you can figure out how much paint you will need. This can be done before or after you have a specific artwork in mind.

- Measure the square footage of your surface. For example, if you are painting a 10'x10' mural, you will need enough materials (primer, paint, sealer) for 100 square feet.
- Read the product labels for the coverage rating on each product you are considering. For example, one gallon may equal 200 square feet of coverage. Consider that many paints will require more than one coat.
- Calculate how much of each product you will need to cover the square footage you are painting. Adjust your estimate upward if:
  - You are applying primer to a raw, absorbent or rougher textured surface, which might require more than one application of primer.
  - You plan to use under-painting or many colors of paint.
  - You have white areas in your design, which might require more than one application of white paint.
- Calculate your cost by multiplying the amount of primer, paint and sealer you need by the cost per gallon for each material.

### Budget Checklist

- Artist design fee
- Artist labor fee
- Artist assistant labor costs
- Wall and roof repairs
- Surface preparation (power washing, etc.)
- Site preparation (lot clean up, wire insulation, etc.)
- Permits, including street and sidewalk closures
- Primer, paint, gels and sealer/clear coat
- Supplies and materials (brushes, rollers, tarps, buckets, fabric, etc.)
- Printing costs
- Scaffold or lift rental
- Tent rental
- Transportation
- Community meeting and volunteer costs
- Community engagement activities
- Dedication event
- Contingency
- Insurance
- Other

It's valuable to have access to storage, water, and restroom facilities on site, but if these things cannot be negotiated for no cost, then definitely include them in the budget.

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# Writing a Contract

A mural project can involve several types of legal agreements. One is an artist contract, which addresses the terms under which the artist will generate a mural design and paint the mural. Another is a wall agreement, which sets out permission to paint a wall and addresses how the maintenance and conservation of the mural will take place.

## Artist Contracts

*An artist contract agreement is a legal agreement. Anyone entering into a legal agreement should consult with legal counsel before entering the agreement.*

[For links to legal resources, visit the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.](#)

Artist contracts generally cover the topics listed below.

### Goals and Description of the Project

The contract should set out the goals and description of the project, including the organizations involved in the creation of the mural and their general roles and responsibilities.

### Scope of Services

The contract should outline the scope of services that the artist will provide. Services can include creating a design, painting the mural, engaging the community, taking part in events related to the mural and providing a maintenance guide.

In regard to the community engagement process, the contract should provide a basic framework and goals, but allow for flexibility in the actual process as the project evolves. Consider community engagement through all phases, from planning through dedication.

The contract should outline who is responsible for providing and paying for materials (paint, brushes, sundries) and equipment (scaffolding, lifts). The contract should outline who is responsible for providing and paying for artist assistants.

The contract should outline who is responsible for prepping and priming the wall.

If the organization commissioning the project is not experienced with murals, the artist should be asked to provide information necessary for maintenance and conservation.

### Deliverables

The contract should provide a list of any specific deliverables that are required. In addition to the mural itself, this could include a documentation of the paints and other materials that were used (for maintenance purposes).

### Approvals

The contract should outline a clear process for how the design will be reviewed and approved.

### Copyright

An artist contract will assign the ownership of the copyright in the mural design.

- Generally the copyright is owned by the artist, unless other arrangements are made.

The contract should also outline how the copyright holder will assign rights to reproduce the mural for educational, promotional and commercial uses.

- Generally, the copyright holder should benefit from any commercial revenue generated by the mural.
- For murals created by developers or businesses, the contract should contain explicit provisions for use of the mural in advertising, and the artist should be compensated for that use.

[For links to copyright information, visit the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.](#)

*Artists are encouraged to contact an attorney before entering any agreement involving copyright.*

### Moral Rights

Moral rights means the rights an artist has to protect integrity of the mural. These rights are conferred on the artist under the federal Visual Artists Rights Act (VARA). Generally, artists have the right to determine whether a mural will be altered (even if for repairs) or removed.

[For links to information about moral rights, visit the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.](#)

Artists are encouraged to contact an attorney before entering any agreement involving VARA.



## Writing a Contract

### Credits

An artist contract will outline how credits will be handled in marketing materials and on the mural itself. Credits should consider:

- Artist
- Mural Title
- Date of Mural
- Sponsor(s)
- Funder(s)
- Assistants

### Warranties

An artist contract will include certain warranties that the artist and the mural owner make. The artist will warrant that:

- the mural is an original design and will not infringe on the copyright of others.
- the mural will be painted in a workmanlike fashion and will be created with materials and techniques that will, under normal conditions, ensure that the mural survives for the time that it is to be up.

[For a fuller explanation of warranties, download the Public Art Network annotated artist contract, which is linked to the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.](#)

### Insurance

An artist contract will set out any insurance requirements that the artist, as well as any people working for the artist, should have before working on the project.

General liability insurance will cover damage to the site and injury to bystanders who are not working on the project. It will not cover people working on the project, employees or volunteers.

In addition to general liability insurance, you should carry workers' compensation insurance for employees, at least to the degree required by law.

*Artists are encouraged to contact an insurance broker for more information about insurance products.*

### Schedule and Payments

An artist contract should define a timeline and schedule for the work. An artist contract will set out a total fee for the work, as well as a schedule of payments. In writing the fee and payment section of the contract, review the typical budget components outlined above and

make sure it is clear which party to the contract will be responsible for those cost. If the artist is going to be reimbursed for expenses, the contract should spell out the process of documenting expenses.

[For more information about making a budget, see "How to Make a Budget," page 13.](#)

### Business Terms

In addition to the above topics, an artist contract will cover basic business terms, including:

- clarification that the artist is an independent contractor.
- provisions for terminating the contract.
- indemnity and Lien Waivers for subcontractors.

[For more information about the business terms that should be considered, see the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.](#)

### Wall Agreements

The second important legal agreement is the one that grants permission for the artist to paint on the wall. If the wall owner is directly commissioning the mural, these terms can be covered in the artist contract. If the wall owner is a third party (not the artist or the commissioning organization) the wall agreement can be a separate agreement.

The wall agreement should cover several basic topics:

- A process for approving the design.
- Permission to go on the property to work and store materials.
- Liability for people working on the site.
- The amount of time for which the owner will agree the mural to remain.
- A process for informing the artist when the mural is damaged and deciding on how repairs will be made.
- If not in another contract, terms related to copyright and reproduction.
- If not in another contract, terms related to artist moral rights.

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# Working with Communities

While your mural may be on a private wall, it will have a very public presence for a very long time. It will play an outsized role in creating an image for the community where it is located, and creating an impression of that community in the public's mind.

It is important to ensure that the mural is welcomed and seen as a positive addition to the community. Therefore, anybody planning to paint or commission a mural should give careful thought to the community where it will be located and set clear goals for the role they would like community stakeholders to play in the development of the project. With those goals in mind, you can then determine the best approach to involving the community at various phases, such as planning, designing, painting and celebrating the mural.

*For general background on community engagement strategies in mural making, see the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.*

## Why Community Engagement Is Important

Your reasons for creating a mural may depend on who you are — a developer or a business, an artist or a community organization. At the beginning of your project, you should take stock of your goals for community engagement and the visual impact your mural will have on the community, and consider other goals that you might not have thought about yet. Here are some common community engagement goals for mural projects:

- Create a mural that conveys the community's vision and voice
- Create a mural that fits into the context of its surroundings
- Inform the content and/or themes of the mural
- Give people in the community a sense of empowerment through their participation in an art project
- Strengthen community social networks
- Connect people with community resources
- Provide volunteer assistance necessary to complete the mural
- Obtain buy-in for the larger project that the mural is part of



## Working with Communities

### Community Partnerships

If you are a developer, building owner or business owner, you may wish to develop your project through a partnership with a non-profit community group, such as an arts, social service, economic development or religious organization. These groups can bring outreach capacity that may not be possible for you to duplicate, and they may have specific experience with mural projects and the specific community in which you are working.

As in any partnership, it is important to establish the roles and responsibilities for each partner. If you are asking the community partner to assist with the project, you should compensate them equitably for their involvement.

For more on this topic, see the [Metro Arts Equity Statement](#), referenced in the [Resource Guide](#) at the end of this document.

### Involving the Community in the Process

Consider consulting the community in:

- Finding a location for the mural
- Learning what the community's needs and interests are
- Identifying potential stakeholders and participants
- Selecting the artist
- Researching and designing the mural
- Reviewing the artist concept

- Painting the mural
- Celebrating its completion

### Artist Selection Phase

There are a number of factors that go into selecting an artist, including the artist's experience, technical proficiency and availability for the budget at hand. Generally, artist selections are made by a professional art advisor or committees with artistic and stakeholder representation. The community can also play a role in selecting the artist.

If the artist selection is based on qualifications and an interview, then:

- Ask community stakeholders for recommendations about local artists to consider.
- Invite community members to meet with the short-listed artists.
- Include community representatives on the selection panel that creates a short list and interviews the finalists.

If the artist selection is based on proposals, then:

- Invite community members to meet with the artists while they are developing their proposals.
- Invite community members to review the proposals and provide comments to the reviewers.



It is not advisable to allow community members to vote on proposals because the final selection will need to be based on a range of criteria. The final selection should also include the perspective of art and design professionals who are qualified to assess the artist's technical qualifications.

If the artist selection involves an artist site visit, then:

- Arrange an opportunity for the artist to meet stakeholders in formal and informal types of situations.

### Research and Design Phase

The process of researching and designing a mural can be seen as a collaborative activity that openly involves people in the community where the mural is located, or people in organizations related to the mural's topic.

- Begin the engagement and design phase long before any painting is done, potentially even before an artist is selected. Include all stakeholders and concerned individuals. Consider holding one or more community meetings, especially if a large number of people are involved, and make sure to include people who will be impacted by the mural. The meeting can introduce people to the project and collect preliminary needs about the community's ideas about the subject matter.
- Conduct additional research as necessary. Community members and community organizations, such as historical societies, can often provide material that will contribute to the visual ideas the artist includes in the mural.
- Sometimes, murals are created with community participation in the design. In these situations, the artist's role is to facilitate a collaborative process in which people can contribute ideas that are incorporated into murals. There are many different approaches to this, depending on how an artist is comfortable in working and on the overall goals for the murals.
- Sometimes, the design of a mural is reviewed before it is painted. Whether or not there is a review depends on the goals of the mural project. If there is a review, it is best to conduct the review with a committee that includes both stakeholders as well as arts professionals, to give the artist a full range of advice. If further community input is sought, invite interested community members to meet with the artist and have a conversation. Direct voting, and collecting feedback via social media or the internet, are highly discouraged.

### Painting Phase

Mural organizations often make the painting of a mural a key aspect of community engagement, sometimes using a "community paint day," which allows people in the community to paint part of the mural.

These are some additional tips for engaging the community in painting.

- Being organized is key. Keeping volunteers busy is demanding work.
- Consider working through a "paint by numbers style"
- Make signs and clear directions on where things go when people are finished painting.
- Have assistants ready to encourage people and answer questions.
- Have two to three buckets for washing brushes and hands.
- Provide gloves, aprons and smocks.

The key issues to consider are the height of the mural and the types of paint you are using.

- For murals that are low to the ground, you can ask for volunteers to paint directly on the surface where the mural is located.
- For other murals, you can ask volunteers to paint on a fabric material that is then applied to the wall by artists or assistants who are trained to use scaffolds or lifts.
- It is not advisable to ask volunteers and people without the proper training to use scaffolds or lifts, and it is not advisable to ask youth to handle spray paints.

For more information on painting on fabric, go to the "Painting on Fabric," page 25, and see the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.

### Celebration Phase

When the mural is complete, it is a good idea to plan a celebration for the community. There can be a short ceremony to dedicate the mural, at which people who played a key role in project can speak. There should also be a celebration with food, music, dancing and other creative activities — whatever seems right!



### Working with Volunteers

Volunteers can be of great assistance to your project and build a lasting connection to the mural. However, there are practical issues as well as equity concerns to consider.

#### Practical Concerns

- Volunteers will need supervision. Make sure you have people on hand to organize their work and provide guidance.
- Anyone working with children should have proper criminal and child abuse clearances.
- Artists working with spray paint should not have children volunteer on site.
- Volunteers should not be allowed to work on scaffolds or lifts, or to use any equipment for which they are not trained.
- Volunteers should be asked to sign liability releases (in case of an accident) and photo releases (so you can publish pictures of the project).
- Consider using an online organizational resource such as [www.hon.org](http://www.hon.org) or [www.volunteerspot.org](http://www.volunteerspot.org).
- Check with your insurance carrier and the project sponsors about any special considerations related to working with volunteers.

#### Equity Issues

- Be clear about the value proposition: What are volunteers expected to contribute, and what can they expect to receive in return?
- Not everyone has an equal ability to participate. Consider a variety of volunteer roles that allow people of all abilities to participate.
- Not everyone has equal access to participation opportunities. The times that events are scheduled, transportation limitations and family obligations may prevent people from taking part. Identify potential barriers ahead of time and develop strategies to address them.

### Working With Schools

Connecting with local schools, particularly high schools, can be helpful. Consider contacting an art teacher who can bring students by to help work on the mural or meet the artist. Or, ask about connecting with an art club or community service club.

For more information on community engagement in public art and mural making, see the community engagement resources section of the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.

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# Creating a Design

Once you have a wall in mind, it's time to work on the design. This is first and foremost the artist's job.

There are several general considerations in creating a design:

- The Context
- Artistic Approaches
- Collaborative Approaches
- Developing a Theme and a Concept

## The Context

A muralist should strive to create an artwork that transcends its context and adds to its surroundings. These are different contexts for an artist to consider while making a design:

- The most straightforward context is visual, which relates to the building and landscape around the site. Architectural design, building color and materials, plantings and incidental elements like drainage infrastructure all create a backdrop for the mural. Often, a mural design will incorporate the architectural features of the wall where it is located.
  - Will the mural stand out or meld with the landscape of the area? How will your design play off the existing colors of the neighborhood?
- Another context is the activity at the site. Is it a location that people just pass by? Is it place where people stay for formal or informal activities, such as a garden, a playground, or a park? Or does the mural occupy a prominent entry into a neighborhood?
- There are also hidden contexts to consider — historical, social, environmental. The artist should strive to understand these conditions. A mural is ultimately an artistic expression created by the artist, but since a mural is a work of public art, the artist should be sensitive to how the community wants its culture, history and neighborhood identity to be represented.



## Creating a Design

- Viewer sight lines should also be considered. How will people actually view the mural?
  - Detail: For instance, one should not include a lot of delicate, intricate design work on a mural that is located 30 feet above the heads of viewers—they won't be able to read it. But on walls that face pedestrian walkways, the mural can have detail that can be appreciated by passersby.
  - Perspective: How will the mural will look from different angles? How can you play with the architecture of the space or the way people have to see the wall into your design?

### Artistic Approaches

Murals can come in many artistic approaches, drawing on a long tradition of two-dimensional art, and as varied as the interests of the artists who paint them.

Murals can be abstract, representational or ornamental. Abstract murals can range from color and pattern studies to freeform street art approaches. Representational murals can follow many approaches, such as landscapes and cityscapes, or historical imagery and portraits, or tributes and inspirational murals. Ornamental murals use color, pattern and imagery to embellish a wall. Murals have their own traditional languages, or can borrow from other graphic and painting languages, such as graffiti, street art, anime, political posters, portraiture and many more.

While this variety of artistic approaches can make for an exciting cityscape, not all approaches are appropriate for all sites. The project sponsor should take care to understand that the artist and the artistic approach are well matched to the surroundings, visually and in terms of community expectations. This can be explored in the goal-setting phase of the project.

[For more information about goal setting, visit "Getting Started: Setting Goals," page 4.](#)

### Collaborative Processes

In mural-making, it is common for the artist to collaborate on the design with community members or other stakeholders. Sometimes this is a goal of the project sponsor, and sometimes this is a working approach that is important to the artist. If a collaborative process is a goal, it should be made clear to the artist, sponsor and stakeholders early in the process.

Mural artists often have their own approaches to collaborating with communities. Examples include collecting stories from people and creating a composition that interprets those stories, or developing a strategy through which participants can actually design elements of the mural. The artist and project sponsor should discuss these approaches at the beginning of the project to make sure that they support the goals of the project.

[For more information on community engagement in public art and mural making, see "Working with Communities," page 18, and the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.](#)

### Developing a Theme and a Concept

The theme and concept of a mural can come about in different ways.

- Sometimes a mural project is started with a theme in mind, such as a mural that is a tribute to a person or an event, or a mural that explores an inspirational topic.
- Sometimes an artist has a theme in mind from the beginning of a project.
- Sometimes the theme the theme involves through the process community engagement.

However the theme and concept come about, it is important to manage community expectations. It is important to honor the notion that the artist has been chosen to work on the mural because of his or her talents, and is ultimately the author of the expression of the mural. To the extent that the theme is an expression of the community's ideas, it is important to respect that every artist has his or her own way of gathering information from the community, which is part of their creative process.

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# Getting a Design Approved

## Owner Review

The wall owners and/or project sponsor may wish to approve the design before you start painting. They may also wish to ensure that the community is satisfied with the design.

If this is the case, it is best for the artist, wall owner and project sponsor to discuss their expectations for approving the design before the project begins. This process should be recorded in the artist agreement.

## Community Review

Community permission or approval is not a formal requirement for painting a mural in Metro Nashville. However, Metro Arts recommends that the project sponsor, wall owner or artist should allow the community to review the mural design before it is painted. This is recommended not so much to give the community veto power over a design, but to ensure that the mural design does not inadvertently touch on community sensitivities.

In arranging community review of a mural, it is often useful to start with community leaders who can help you connect with the community at large. These could be business owners, leaders of civic organizations, religious leaders or, if the mural represents a particular history or issue, people involved in that topic.

Consider using this group as a sounding board throughout the design process. This group can alert you to issues or themes that might be problematic and can help you from creating a design that will be rejected.

## Metro Nashville Review

Metro Nashville does not approve the design of murals, except in three situations: the mural has characteristics that would make it a sign, the mural is on public property, or the mural is in an historic zoning district.

If the mural is on Metro Nashville property, there are two important sources of information:

- General information can be found here: [www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Resources-and-Toolkits.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Resources-and-Toolkits.aspx)
- An application with more specific guidelines can be found here: [mnac.submittable.com/submit/](http://mnac.submittable.com/submit/)

For more on permission to paint a mural on public property, see "Permission to Use a Wall," page 7.

## Metro Criteria

A mural on Metro property must follow these criteria:

- A mural cannot contain inappropriate or offensive images or words.
- A mural cannot convey messages appearing to advertise or promote a commercial entity (corporation or for-profit business).
- If a mural promotes an organization or non-profit entity, a sign permit may be required.
- Murals with images that create a driver distraction or could be confused with traffic control devices will not be accepted.

## A Mural or Signage?

The Metro sign code exempts "works of art that do not constitute advertising." A mural might be considered a sign if it includes text, imagery, symbols or colors that might be construed to promote a commercial message. If you have any concerns about whether your design would be considered a sign, contact Metro Codes for an informal review.

For more information on the sign permit process, contact Metro Code Administration, which is listed in the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.

## Murals in Historic Zoning Districts

The Metro Historic Zoning Commission reviews exterior repairs or alterations to buildings in areas mapped as historic preservation or historic landmark overlay district. Contact the MHZC to confirm that it needs to review your project; and, if so, to make an appointment to meet with staff.

For more information on historic preservation zoning districts, including links to maps and MHZC contact information, see the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.

## Murals Downtown and in Urban Design Overlay Districts

Depending on the location of your project, you may need to discuss your plan for public art with Metro Planning. Check the Metro Planning web site for more information on Urban Design Overlays and the Downtown Code, which have specific architectural standards.

For more information on specially planning districts, contact Metro Planning.

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# Preparing to Paint

Now that you have permission to use a wall, and have an approval for your design, it's time to get to work. The next step is to prepare for painting.

## Wall Painting Versus Fabric Painting

There are two main approaches to painting a mural – painting directly on the wall, or painting on a fabric that is pasted to the wall.

### Wall Painting

This is the traditional mural-painting process in which the paint is applied directly to the wall. The wall is primed, the wall is painted, then it is sealed to provide UV and graffiti protection.

### Fabric Painting

In the fabric process, the mural is actually painted on a fabric called Polytab (commonly called “parachute cloth”), which is similar to a common dryer sheet that you might use in your laundry.

There are several advantages to fabric painting. The fabric can be painted in a studio, so work can proceed even if the weather is not favorable. Assistant artists or volunteers can help paint without having to get on a scaffold or a lift. And some experience shows that parachute cloth can hold color and last longer than a mural painted directly on a wall.

The disadvantages are that fabric is more expensive (the cost of the fabric and gel) and it can't accept spray paint.

[For more information on painting on fabric, see the American Conservation Institute report referenced in the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.](#)

## What are Those Wires?

Before you start work, check to see what electrical wires are connected to your building or overhead in the vicinity of your work space. This is especially critical if you are using metal ladders, lifts or scaffolding.

Check with an electrical contractor or Nashville Electric Service about putting temporary insulation on the wires to ensure a safe work environment.

## Wall Preparation

Wall preparation is an essential step to ensure the stability of your mural. Wall preparation must be done whether you are painting directly on a wall or applying fabric.

- Your surface should be clean, dry and free of loose material, including flaking layers of paint. Make any patches or repairs that are required before you paint. If you are not certain about the condition of your wall, check with an experienced contractor.
- The wall should be washed to remove loose dirt and dust. A high-pressure water spraying system provides the most effective cleaning. If that's not possible, you can wash the wall using a large pail of water with a mild detergent like dish soap mixed in, and brooms for scrubbing. The wall should be rinsed clean and allowed to dry.
- Old paint can be removed through various means. However, before removing old paint, consult with a licensed contractor. There are numerous environmental considerations to consider, including the potential presence of lead paint, the containment of dust and debris, and the materials used in stripping paint.
- Make sure the roof, parapets and flashing are in good condition and make minor repairs necessary to keep water from seeping into the mural.

## Priming

The mural wall should be well primed before you begin drawing and painting on it. Be sure primer is applied to a well-prepared, well-cleaned wall. There are different materials to consider, and different application methods to consider, such as painting and spraying.

[For more information on wall preparation and priming, see Chicago Public Art Group reference material, listed in the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.](#)

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# From Drawing To Wall

Now that the wall is prepared, it is time to start painting the mural. The next step is to transfer your design to the wall.

## Methods of Transferring Designs

There are three main approaches to converting a design sketch to a wall or fabric panels:

- Using an projector to project your design onto wall or fabric,
- Use a gridding system, or
- Directly draw your image onto the wall.

## Projecting the Drawing

Projecting outlines onto the wall is probably the fastest way to transfer the design. If you have a very complex design with lots of small detailed areas, the projector can eliminate the need for meticulous drawing and multiple corrections.

To project a mural, scan your concept drawing into a digital file formatted for a program like Photoshop. Add a grid on top of the drawing so that you can be certain the image is being projected squarely onto the wall and is not distorted at an angle or elongated by height or width.

## Gridding the Drawing

Create a grid of squares on your small design and a corresponding grid of squares on the wall. The grid on the design can be drawn on an acetate overlay to avoid damaging your original drawing. After priming the wall, create a grid on it as well.

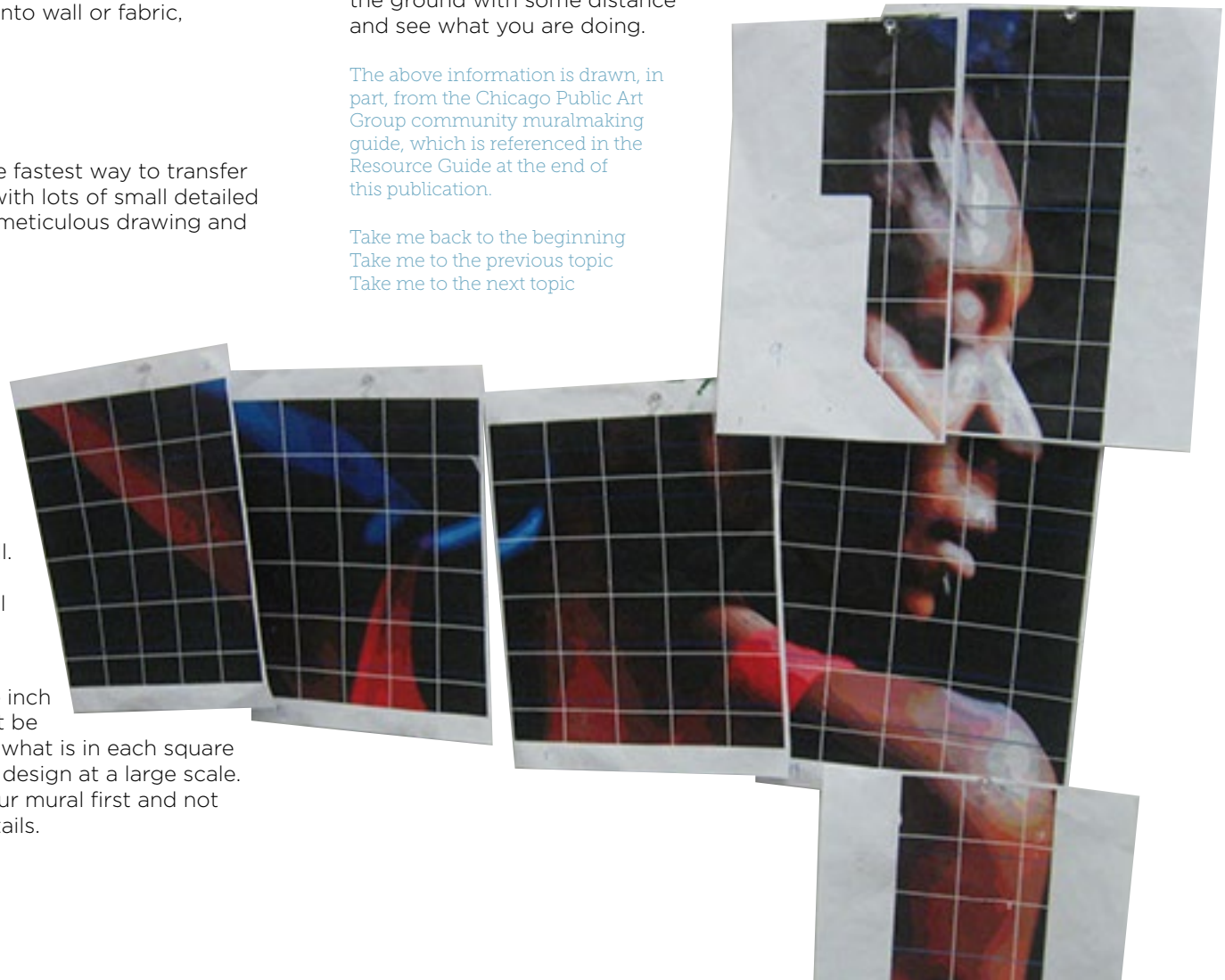
The squares on your small design might be one inch by one inch while the squares on the wall might be one foot by one foot. By copying onto the wall what is in each square of your design, you can reconstruct your mural design at a large scale. You will want to render the basic outlines of your mural first and not involve yourself too much with modeling or details.

## Drawing on the Wall

Finally, you can copy your design freestyle on the wall. Drawing can be done with large charcoal sticks, chalk, spray paint or a paint brush and thinned acrylic paint. Acrylic is recommended because it will dry and not fade or smear into the paint while you are working. Charcoal or chalk lines might be mistakenly wiped away or washed away by rain. Also, consider attaching a brush or chalk to a long stick so you can draw from the ground with some distance and see what you are doing.

The above information is drawn, in part, from the Chicago Public Art Group community muralmaking guide, which is referenced in the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.

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# Paint and Supplies

## Materials

When starting your painting, you should put together a list of all the materials you will need. [Click here](#) for a checklist of the supplies that are commonly used.

## Selecting Primers, Paints and Coatings

Choosing quality materials is essential to creating a vibrant and long-lived mural. The artist will have to consider three different elements of the “paint system:” primer, paint, and final clear coat.

### Primer

Primers are essential for making sure your wall is prepared to accept paint.

- Choose a primer appropriate to the surface that you are painting. Primers will be labeled as to which surface types they are conducive.
- A primer that is 100 percent acrylic, water-based or “water borne” is always preferred for longevity, clean up and environmental concerns.
- Paint stores typically will tint the primer to any color. A light neutral grey, for instance, is typically preferred to a bright white — simply for an easier painting experience, or for a particular effect of the subsequent artwork.

*The above information is condensed from the Chicago Public Art Group community muralmaking guide, which is referenced in the Resource Guide at the end of this publication. For more on primer, consult the Resource Guide at the end of this publication, as well as a local paint retailer.*

### Paint

Most murals are painted with acrylic paint, though spray paint is popular with artists working in street art styles. Spray paint has the advantage of being quick and inexpensive to use, but most spray paints are less durable, fading quickly and unevenly. Enamel and oil paints are not recommended for outdoor use because they are moisture impermeable and do not allow the wall to breathe.

Here are some tips in considering paints:

- Quality is important. The preferred type of paint is 100 percent artist-grade acrylic. Try to avoid using commercial-grade paint, the type of paint that is tinted on site at the retail store using a base paint and sometimes called “house paint.”
- Make use you use the right paint for the surface. Interior latex will not last over time outside.
- Make sure you use the right paint finish. If the mural is not going to be sealed with a clear coat, consider semi-gloss acrylic because it provides protection from being scratched or nicked. If the mural will be sealed, consider flat acrylic, because flat goes on smoothly with less ridges and the colors pop more when it is sealed.
- Be careful to select colors that have good lightfastness ratings. Consult paint charts for the brand of paint you are using.
- Be sure to order a few gallons of gloss or semi-gloss acrylic medium to mix with paints to thin them. Thinning acrylic paints with more than a few drops of water is not recommended as this will affect the longevity of your mural.

*The above information is condensed from the Chicago Public Art Group community muralmaking guide, which is referenced in the Resource Guide at the end of this publication. For more on paint, consult the Resource Guide at the end of this publication, as well as a local paint retailer.*

### Clear Coats

Clear coats are applied after the mural is completed and provide extra protection for the mural. Clear coats don't prevent vandalism, but they make a mural a lot easier to clean or repair when necessary. Some clear coats include UV filters that help keep the mural from fading in the sunlight.

- The most common type of clear coat used on murals is simply a 100% clear acrylic, which is the same composition as the primer and paint that was used on the mural itself. retouching can be done directly upon the surface, with a subsequent retouch of clear coat.
- Acrylic clear coats can be applied by spray, brush or lint-free rollers (always try for the lowest nap for clear coat) and are typically applied in one to two coats.
- Only use products labeled as “non-yellowing.”
- Clear coat with UV protection may not be necessary or cost effective when lightfast paint is used. Consult with your paint supplier.

## Paint and Supplies

If your mural is in a highly vandalized area, you might want to explore an “anti-graffiti” type of clear coat.

- “Sacrificial coatings” are typically water-borne acrylics that create a protective layer between the final paint and any graffiti that is applied to it. To remove the graffiti, the sacrificial coating is also removed. If you choose to use a sacrificial coating, always test it on a sample area or mock-up to make sure that the removal technique works without damaging the mural.
- “Non-sacrificial” coatings create a scrubbable barrier between the artwork and the graffiti. This allows graffiti to be removed without removing the coating. However, these coatings can contain harsh chemicals and should be used with caution as they can be highly toxic and may even be illegal. If the use of these coatings is permitted, they should be applied only by a certified professional, and the manufacturer’s instructions should be followed.

The above information is condensed from the Chicago Public Art Group community muralmaking guide, which is referenced in the Resource Guide at the end of this publication. For more on primer, consult the Resource Guide at the end of this publication, as well as a local paint retailer.

### Application Methods

Primer, paint and clear coats can be applied to the surface by spray, roller, and/or brush.

- Roller, combined with brush, is the most typical and usually most effective method.
- Choose a roller type and wale (depth) based on the surface texture you will be painting.
- Spraying can be a better solution for rougher surfaces, or surfaces that have deep grooves or mortar lines. Spray rigs can be rented and/or implemented by a paint contractor.

For basic information about using spray paint, including special safety considerations, see the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.

### Ordering Paint

Translating a design into a paint order requires more detailed calculations than your preliminary estimates of paint quantities.

Once you produce a scale design in color, you can pick out all solid colors within the design, estimate the area for each color, couple that with coverage ratings and come up with a fairly accurate paint order. Colors that require mixing – such as for skin tones – are a little trickier to estimate.

- Consider buying paint from a company that will let you return anything extra if it is unopened. This is rare, but worth asking about before you purchase.
- If you order online or from a local retailer and are required to pay for shipping, have a budget that would allow for a second smaller order.
- Make sure to consider second coats, detailing and spillages. If community painting is in your plan, consider having extra paint (from having multiple cups of paint and clean up).

The above information is condensed from the Chicago Public Art Group community muralmaking guide, which is referenced in the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.

### Paint Disposal

- Consult your local retailer regarding Nashville’s requirements for the proper disposal of paints, primers, clear coats, gels and other products.

Information about paint disposal can also be found in the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.

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## Checklist of Commonly Used Items

- Milk crates or other sturdy boxes to store paint cans
- Metal scrapers to clean dried paint off palettes
- Painting palettes or trays for mixing colors
- Empty containers with lids (coffee cans, cups, etc.) for mixing colors
- Extension handles for your rollers
- Rags and/or paper towels
- Eye protection (goggles)
- Brushes in many sizes
- Paint spraying system
- Brooms and shovels
- Chalk line snapper
- Parachute cloth
- Stirring sticks
- Chalk/pencils
- Masking tape
- Wire brushes
- First Aid Kit
- Drop cloths
- Utility Knife
- Roller pads
- Scaffolding
- Clear coats
- Knee Pads
- Yardsticks
- Ladders
- Buckets
- Rollers
- Primer
- Paints
- Masks
- Level
- Gels



## Installing the Mural



### Scaffolds and Lifts

Most walls are too tall to be painted simply by standing next to them. Mural artists typically employ scaffolds, lifts or swing stages to reach high spots. Here are some key considerations.

- Look at the context of the mural wall — considering the height of the wall, access at the base of the wall and the slope of the ground at the base of the wall — to determine what type of equipment would be best.
- For all types of equipment — scaffolds, lifts, swing stages — it is best to visit the site with a vendor to ensure they can recommend equipment most appropriate for your situation and provide you with accurate quotes.
- Mural professionals generally advise against using ladders to reach high walls, for practical and safety reasons.

*For more information about scaffolds and other devices, look at Mural Making 101, by the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, which is listed in the Resource Guide at the end of this document.*

### Safety

The paramount concern in choosing and using a scaffold, lift or swing-stage system is preventing injury or accident.

- Anyone using this equipment should be fully trained and certified in its use.
- Follow safety rules in regard to personal protective equipment and don't use headphones when using this equipment.
- Do not allow volunteers to use lifts, scaffold or swing-stage equipment.
- Maintain proper insurance.

## Installing the Mural

### Scaffolds

Visit a scaffolding supplier and become familiar with the equipment and services that are available, as well as any applicable work rules and permitting requirements. There are several scaffolding size formats that you can choose from and an on-site visit with a representative of a scaffolding company can help you choose the scaffolding that is the best fit for your project.

### Lifts, Swing Stages and Fracos

There are several types of mechanical equipment used as an alternative to scaffolds:

- Articulated boom lift: also known as a “cherry picker” or hydraulic bucket lift machinery.
- Scissor lift: a hydraulic lift that rises and falls with a “scissor-like” extending mechanism.
- Fraco: a climbing work platform that travels up and down a wall via one or more large metal columns that rest on a base on the ground.
- Swing stage: a long, narrow platform that window washers use on tall buildings. It consists of a platform that is suspended from the roof or parapet and travels up and down a wall via cables.

### Other Considerations

Mural organizations offer these other tips:

- The slope of the surface beneath the mural site is a concern. Scaffolding can accommodate quite a bit of slope, as one can employ leveling legs with it, but lifts can’t take much slope before their own safety mechanisms will disallow use.
- Consider the power source; some lifts are electric while others are gasoline- or diesel-powered.
- Usually, it is more cost effective to employ scaffolding for a longer-term project and a lift for a shorter one.
- Scaffolding should only be erected by experienced and insured professionals.

### Storage

Scaffolding, lifts, paint, water, electricity, brushes, etc., must all be kept in a secure place at the worksite when you are not painting. Storage arrangements should be worked out with the property owner and other interested parties before the project begins.

Materials can be secured in several ways: rent a portable secure storage box, lock all the parts to a stationary point with large chains and locks, find a facility close by where you can store your materials each night, or transport the materials to and from the site each day.

### Insurance

General liability insurance is required when equipment is rented, typically to protect the rental company from equipment damage and injuries during the period of the rental. Most scaffolding and lift rental retailers will offer an insurance rider that one can purchase as part of the rental, but since it is advisable to procure a general liability insurance policy for the entire project anyway, you may add any insurance requirements from the scaffolding retailer to that of your general liability policy for the entire project.

For more information about insurance,  
see the Resource Guide at the end of this document.  
For specific information about your project,  
contact a local insurance broker.

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# Completing the Project

## Finishing the Mural

### Mural Credits

- Often an artist's signature or tag is a "trademark" of their style and is incorporated into the mural.
- For a mural sponsored by a business or an organization, a more formal credit block in a corner of the mural or adjacent to it might also be appropriate.

A title block would include at a minimum the name of the artist, title of the mural, date, and information about sponsors, funders and assistant artists. (However, if the credits include logos or other kinds of advertisement for the sponsor, the mural might be considered a sign.)

Depending on the location and nature of the mural, the credit block might also include recognition of community members and stakeholders, and a sentence or two explaining the theme or concept.

### Maintenance Program

The artist should submit a short-range and long-range maintenance program for the artwork as part of the close-out process.

For more information, visit "Maintenance and Conservation," page 33.

### Marketing

Make sure you let the general public know about your new mural!

- Working with your mural sponsor, consider a press release or press event such as a dedication.
- Contact Metro Arts and have the mural added to the Metro Arts Art in Public Places registry.
- Artists and sponsors should add the mural to their own web pages. Photos, credits, date, location and a short description of the mural are important basic information to publish.
- Contact the authors of various Nashville mural and public art blogs to let them know about your project.

### Celebration

Consider holding a formal dedication or a community party to celebrate the completion of the mural, especially if the mural was developed through a community process. This can help generate publicity for the mural, its message and the sponsor, and it can strengthen the community's bond with the mural by giving them an event to remember in association with the mural.

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# Living with a Mural

A mural can be an ongoing asset to your community, particularly if it is part of an overall plan to enhance public spaces and programming. Once your mural is completed, make sure you give it proper maintenance, and consider the possibility that it can inspire ongoing community activity.

## Programming

Murals can be part of the ongoing programming of public space in a neighborhood. Community organizations and businesses have used murals as a backdrop for numerous types of activities, such as:

- Arts workshops
- Augmented reality projects
- Gardening and environmental projects
- Musical, poetry and theatre performances
- Neighborhood tours
- Yoga and dance classes

For more about programming case studies, see the [Resource Guide](#) at the end of this publication.



### Maintenance and Conservation

A mural that is painted well with quality materials can last ten or twenty years, depending on the weather and sunlight conditions it faces. However, a mural in public space will require occasional maintenance and repair, and after many years will need major conservation work. At some point, it might be necessary to consider decommissioning or moving the mural.

The artist agreement and/or wall agreement should spell out the process of making decisions about maintaining, conserving and decommissioning the mural, as well as the procedure for protecting the artist's moral rights in the mural design as conferred by the Visual Artist Rights Act.

For more on artist and wall agreements, see "Contracts," page 16, and the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.

### Maintenance, Repair, Conservation

#### Maintenance

Maintenance activities may include removing graffiti, removing surface dirt (especially along the base of the mural), reapplying coating and removing or trimming vegetation that grows in front of the mural. The artist should prepare a maintenance and repair manual for the wall owner. To the extent possible, the manual should include a list of materials used on the project, including paints (colors) and sealers, as well as sources.

#### Repair

Repairs to a mural are necessary when the mural becomes vandalized or damaged. Typically, the artist should be given the first opportunity to repair the mural. If that is not possible, the agreements should establish a process for the mural owner to have the mural repaired by others. Whatever the process, it is important to remove or paint over graffiti as soon as possible, to avoid the sense that the mural and the neighborhood are not being cared for.

#### Conservation

Conservation of a mural occurs when it has become faded or damaged to the point where it does not represent the intention of the artist or the sponsor anymore. Typically, the artist should be given the first opportunity to repaint the mural. If that is not possible, the agreements should establish a process for the mural owner to have the mural conserved by others, or for the mural to be decommissioned and removed.

### Decommissioning

Decommissioning of a mural occurs when the wall can no longer be used for a mural, or when the mural has degraded to the point where it needs to be removed. These circumstances should be contemplated and a process for agreeing to decommission a mural should be included in a wall agreement. Typically, an owner will agree to keep a mural for a certain amount of time, then request the right to remove the mural at their own discretion.

All parties should consult with legal representation before entering into any agreement regarding VARA rights.

For more information about maintenance and conservation, see the muralmaking manuals listed in the Resource Guide at the end of this publication.

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# Resource Guide

## Metro Arts

- Metro Arts Home Page  
[www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission.aspx)
- Public Art Community Investment Guide  
[www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/About-Us/Strategic-Documents/Public-Art-Community-Investment-Plan.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/About-Us/Strategic-Documents/Public-Art-Community-Investment-Plan.aspx)
- Metro Arts Cultural Equity Statement  
<http://www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/About-Us/Strategic-Documents/Cultural-Equity-Statement.aspx>

## Materials and Installation

- Sherwin Williams  
[www.sherwin-williams.com/property-facility-managers/education](http://www.sherwin-williams.com/property-facility-managers/education)
- Golden Artist Colors  
[www.goldenpaints.com/technicaldata/murals.php](http://www.goldenpaints.com/technicaldata/murals.php)
- Nova Color  
[www.novacolorpaint.com/PDF/How\\_to\\_Paint\\_a\\_Mural\\_with\\_Acrylic\\_Paint\\_08-2013.pdf](http://www.novacolorpaint.com/PDF/How_to_Paint_a_Mural_with_Acrylic_Paint_08-2013.pdf)
- Krylon  
[www.krylon.com/spray-paint-how-to/](http://www.krylon.com/spray-paint-how-to/)
- Jose Loza Artist Web Site (painting with parachute cloth)  
[www.jmloza.com/loza-blog/mural-fabric](http://www.jmloza.com/loza-blog/mural-fabric)

## Paint Disposal

- Metro Hazardous Waste Disposal  
[www.nashville.gov/Public-Works/Neighborhood-Services/Special-Hazardous-Waste/Household-Hazardous-Waste.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Public-Works/Neighborhood-Services/Special-Hazardous-Waste/Household-Hazardous-Waste.aspx)
- Metro Latex Paint Disposal  
[www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/pw/docs/recycle/LatexPaintPolicy.pdf](http://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/pw/docs/recycle/LatexPaintPolicy.pdf)

## Funding Resources

- Metro Arts Learning Lab  
[www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Programs/Learning-Lab.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Programs/Learning-Lab.aspx)
- Metro Arts THRIVE  
[www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Programs/THRIVE.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Programs/THRIVE.aspx)

## Business Resources

- Contracts  
[www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/public-art-network/public-art-resource-center](http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/public-art-network/public-art-resource-center)

- Copyright  
[www.copyright.gov/](http://www.copyright.gov/)
- Artist Moral Rights in Visual Artworks  
[www.copyright.gov/reports/exsum.html](http://www.copyright.gov/reports/exsum.html)
- Insurance  
[www.fracturedatlas.org/site/liability](http://www.fracturedatlas.org/site/liability)
- Americans for the Arts, Public Art Network, Public Art Resource Center  
[www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/public-art-network/public-art-resource-center](http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/public-art-network/public-art-resource-center)
- Arts and Business Council of Greater Nashville / Volunteer Lawyers and Professionals for the Arts  
[www.abcnashville.org/vlpa](http://www.abcnashville.org/vlpa)

## Sample Documents

- Artist Agreement (downloadable from Americans for the Arts, Public Art Network, Public Art Resource Center)  
[www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/public-art-network/public-art-resource-center](http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/public-art-network/public-art-resource-center)

## Metro Codes and Permits

### Artwork in the Right of Way

(Signal box covers, sidewalks, retaining walls, other locations deemed appropriate by Metro)

- General information can be found here:  
[www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Resources-and-Toolkits.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Resources-and-Toolkits.aspx)
- An application with more specific guidelines can be found here:  
[mnac.submittable.com/submit/82470/artwork-in-the-right-of-way-row](http://mnac.submittable.com/submit/82470/artwork-in-the-right-of-way-row)

### Historic Preservation

- Historic Zoning Commission  
[www.nashville.gov/Historical-Commission/Services.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Historical-Commission/Services.aspx)
- Historic Preservation Overlay Zones / Metro Historic Zoning Guidebook  
[www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/MHZC/docs/Design%20guidelines%20and%20HB/HANDBOOK.pdf](http://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/MHZC/docs/Design%20guidelines%20and%20HB/HANDBOOK.pdf)
- Metro Maps (to determine if you are in an Overlay Zone)  
[www.nashville.gov/Planning-Department/Mapping-and-GIS/PropertyMapping.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Planning-Department/Mapping-and-GIS/PropertyMapping.aspx)

## Resource Guide

### Signs

- Metro Codes Administration  
[www.nashville.gov/Codes-Administration/Construction-and-Permits/Sign-Permit-Process.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Codes-Administration/Construction-and-Permits/Sign-Permit-Process.aspx)
- Eastside Murals  
[www.eastsidemuralco.com/murals](http://www.eastsidemuralco.com/murals)
- I Saw The Sign  
[www.isawthe-sign.com/](http://www.isawthe-sign.com/)
- Murals and More  
[muralsandmore.com/](http://muralsandmore.com/)

### Nashville Mural Organizations

- Nashville Walls Project  
[www.nashvillewallsproject.com/](http://www.nashvillewallsproject.com/)
- Norf Studios  
[www.norfstudios.com/](http://www.norfstudios.com/)
- Off the Wall Nashville  
[www/offthewallnashville.com/](http://www.offthewallnashville.com/)

### Nashville Mural Guides

- Art in Public Places Guide  
[www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Experience-Art/Art-in-Public-Places.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/Experience-Art/Art-in-Public-Places.aspx)
- YMCA of Middle Tennessee Mural Runs  
[www.ymcamidtn.org/news/east-nashville-5k-mural-run](http://www.ymcamidtn.org/news/east-nashville-5k-mural-run)  
[www.ymcamidtn.org/news/nashville-mural-run](http://www.ymcamidtn.org/news/nashville-mural-run)

### Community Engagement Resources

- Albus Cavus Create Public Art  
[www.createpublicart.org/](http://www.createpublicart.org/)
- Chicago Public Art Group: Community Public Art Guide: Community Murals  
[www.cpag.net/guide/2/2\\_pages/2.htm](http://www.cpag.net/guide/2/2_pages/2.htm)
- Hands on Nashville  
[www.hon.org/](http://www.hon.org/)
- International Association of Public Participation Resources  
[www.iap2.org/?page=resources](http://www.iap2.org/?page=resources)
- Metro Arts Equity Statement  
[www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/About-Us/Cultural-Equity.aspx](http://www.nashville.gov/Arts-Commission/About-Us/Cultural-Equity.aspx)
- Tactical Urbanism Organizers  
[www.turbonashville.org/](http://www.turbonashville.org/)

### Muralmaking Guides

- American Institute for Conservation, Muralmaking Guide  
[www.conservation-us.org/docs/default-source/resource-guides/mural-creation-best-practices-full-document.pdf?sfvrsn=2](http://www.conservation-us.org/docs/default-source/resource-guides/mural-creation-best-practices-full-document.pdf?sfvrsn=2)
- Chicago Public Art Group: Community Public Art Guide: Community Murals  
[www.cpag.net/guide/2/2\\_pages/2.htm](http://www.cpag.net/guide/2/2_pages/2.htm)
- Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council: MuralMaking 101  
[www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/component/content/article/20-general/4295-mural-making-101](http://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/component/content/article/20-general/4295-mural-making-101)
- Redwood City: A Handbook for Public Mural Projects  
[www.morganmurals.com/Public-Mural-Handbook.pdf](http://www.morganmurals.com/Public-Mural-Handbook.pdf)
- City of Nelson: A Practical Guide to Creating a Mural  
[www.nelson.ca/DocumentCenter/View/294](http://www.nelson.ca/DocumentCenter/View/294)
- Albus Cavus Create Public Art  
[www.createpublicart.org/](http://www.createpublicart.org/)
- Planning, Preparing and Painting Your Mural  
[www.resene.co.nz/pdf/Mural-Info-Book.pdf](http://www.resene.co.nz/pdf/Mural-Info-Book.pdf)
- Just Paint blog, Golden Artist Colors  
[www.justpaint.org/](http://www.justpaint.org/)
- How to Paint a Mural From Start to Finish  
[www.widewalls.ch/how-to-paint-mural-think-grid/](http://www.widewalls.ch/how-to-paint-mural-think-grid/)
- Muralroutes Mural Practices Survey  
[www.muralroutes.com/resources/Mural%20Arts%20Practices%20Survey\\_final.pdf](http://www.muralroutes.com/resources/Mural%20Arts%20Practices%20Survey_final.pdf)

### Mural Programming Case Studies

- If You Could Hear These Murals  
[www.muralarts.org/blog/if-you-could-hear-these-walls/](http://www.muralarts.org/blog/if-you-could-hear-these-walls/)
- Urban Flower Field  
[publicartstpaul.org/project/urban/#about\\_the\\_project](http://publicartstpaul.org/project/urban/#about_the_project)
- East Nashville Mural Run  
[www.ymcamidtn.org/news/east-nashville-5k-mural-run](http://www.ymcamidtn.org/news/east-nashville-5k-mural-run)
- Nashville Six Mile Mural Run  
[www.ymcamidtn.org/BlogRetrieve.aspx?PostID=718145&A=SearchResult&SearchID=4890331&ObjectID=718145&ObjectType=55](http://www.ymcamidtn.org/BlogRetrieve.aspx?PostID=718145&A=SearchResult&SearchID=4890331&ObjectID=718145&ObjectType=55)
- Moto Wall (augmented reality)  
[streetartnews.net/2013/08/momo-new-mural-in-st-louis-usa.html](http://streetartnews.net/2013/08/momo-new-mural-in-st-louis-usa.html)
- Mockingbird Trail Mural Yoga  
[www.mockingbirdtrail.com/events/](http://www.mockingbirdtrail.com/events/)

## Photo Credits

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Nathan Brown and Chris Zidek, Barista Parlour, commissioned by Nashville Walls Project  
Courtesy Nashville Walls Project

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Guido van Helten, commissioned by Nashville Walls Project  
Photo: Those Drones  
Courtesy Nashville Walls Project

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Leah Tumerman, *Deeply Dimensional Women*, commissioned by Off the Wall and Bongo Java  
Courtesy Leah Tumerman

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Sam Dunson, Emily Miller, Brandon Donohue, Herb Williams, Chris Zidek, *Gibson Tribute Wall*  
Courtesy Nashville Walls Project

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Thaxton Waters, commissioned by Norf Collective / Wallfest  
Photo: Thaxton Waters

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Nathan Brown, *Metro Schools S.T.E.M. Mural*  
Photo: Nathan Brown

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Niels "Shoe" Meulman, commissioned by Nashville Walls Project  
Photo: Colin M. Day, Courtesy Nashville Walls Project

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Seth Prestwood, *Charlotte Off the Wall*, Commissioned by Off the Wall Charlotte Avenue  
Photo: Blu Sanders.

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Shantell Martin, *Oneday Today*, commissioned by Rolf and Daughters  
Photo: Danielle Atkins

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Chris Zidek, *Sacred Geometries*, commissioned by Nashville Walls Project  
Photo: Nashville Walls Project

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Norf Collective, *Family Matters*  
Photo: Keith3

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Neighborhood Time Exchange, *Respect Your Block*, commissioned by Mural Arts Philadelphia  
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Ben Volta, *Pearls*, commissioned by Mural Arts Philadelphia  
Photo: Todd W. Bressi

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Rone, commissioned by Nashville Walls Project  
Photo: Colin M. Day, courtesy Nashville Walls Project

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J.J. Tiziou, *How Philly Moves*, commissioned by Mural Arts Philadelphia  
Photo: Todd W. Bressi,  
Courtesy [www.HowPhillyMoves.com](http://www.HowPhillyMoves.com)

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J.J. Tiziou, *How Philly Moves*, commissioned by Mural Arts Philadelphia  
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Ian Ross and Chris Zidek, commissioned by Nashville Walls Project  
Courtesy Nashville Walls Project

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Niels "Shoe" Meulman, commissioned by Nashville Walls Project  
Photo: Colin M. Day. Courtesy Nashville Walls Project

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Isaac Lin, *Start from Here*, commissioned by mural Arts Philadelphia  
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Paricia Barerra, *Sembrando Suenos*, commissioned by mural Arts Philadelphia  
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David McShare, *Famous Franks*, commissioned by Mural Arts Philadelphia  
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