

KCB COMMUNITY MURAL TOOLKIT

1. PERMISSION

- a. Find out who owns the property via Hamilton County Auditor and/or CAGIS
 - i. Hamilton County Auditor
 1. <http://www.hamiltoncountyauditor.org/>
 2. Can look up properties, ownership, etc. based on owner name or address
 - ii. CAGIS (Cincinnati Area Graphic Information System):
 1. <http://cagisonline.hamilton-co.org/cagisonline/index.html>
 2. Map based website that allows searches of specific addresses or helps to determine addresses and property information by finding locations on map (similar to google maps) but with information about ownership connected to properties
- b. If the property is owned privately, contact the property owner and get written permission to complete the work.
 - i. See the attached example permission form
 - ii. All owners require different information in order to grant permission, so you must be willing and able to provide all necessary information
- c. If the property is owned publicly (The City of Cincinnati, The Ohio Department of Transportation, etc.) additional steps will have to be taken to secure permission.
 - i. Contact the specific entity and department in order to determine what they need to grant permission. In order to contact the correct department or individual you may need to try calling a number of different options until you find the correct one.
 - ii. City owned retaining walls and property managed by the Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) often require an additional step, a Revocable Street Privilege
 1. See the attached Revocable Street Privilege
 2. These need to come from the community, a community group/council, or be approved by them to move forward
 3. Need to approve design and content, application (paint, boards, etc)
 4. Any sponsorship of mural work is okay, but must be approved as part of the design (if it includes a plaque, how it is being attached to the surface, must be approved)
 5. \$100 fee associated with submission, sometimes this can be waived for community groups
- d. All permanent murals on the exterior of buildings or property DO NOT require a permit but DO require a Certificate of Compliance.
 - i. See the Attached Certificate of Compliance
 - ii. Additional documentation such as photos and a proposed design are required for approval.
 - iii. There is a non-refundable one-time \$105 fee in order to submit a certificate.
 - iv. Zoning laws prohibit murals which have "intent to advertise or show sponsorship of any business or product shown in the mural". So designs must not be used as advertisement or depict or reference any products or services.

2. DESIGN

- a. When determining a design for a mural wall a number of factors are important to consider.
 - i. Site appropriateness and community input:
 1. Understanding your surrounding community (residents, business owners, etc.) that will have to live with the mural every day is critical to the success of mural work.
 2. While everyone will not be happy with everything all the time, it is important to understand what others want to see and why. Without additional community buy-in and support murals can be seen as gentrifying and be contentious projects.
 - ii. Scale of mural content and access
 1. Every design does not work on every wall and understanding what fits where it is important.
 2. Think about how things are viewed (car, pedestrian, etc.) and the pace and location at which someone is viewing it (will people be lingering, sitting in a park, viewing it from afar, etc.)
 3. Think about access to the wall
 - a. How are you going to reach tall portions of the mural?
 - i. Can ladders be used to access high portions?
 - ii. Is it really tall and additional options need to be utilized (scaffolding, lifts, etc.)?
 - b. What is in front of the mural wall and how easy is access?
 - i. Is there a slope, making use of ladders challenging?
 - ii. Is there a road, making safety a concern?
 - iii. What elements might become obstacles?
 - iii. Capability of volunteers
 1. Don't bite off more than you can chew in terms of how large of an area you would like to mural and/or the ability of volunteers to effectively execute a design.
 2. If a wall is enormous, consider focusing the density of the work on one portion of the wall and simply painting out the other parts.
 3. If volunteers are capable of using a stencil or drawing off a grid, use that to your advantage, but consider something more organic or using tape if people are not able to do any of the drawing work or stay in the lines.
 4. Volunteers typically have limited skill when it comes to executing mural work, so instead of thinking everyone is Van Gogh, play to people's actual abilities and keep the work simple.
 - iv. Capacity to fix damage
 1. Murals tend to be avoided by graffiti vandals, but planning for damage is the smartest course of action.
 2. Keeping paint on hand so if vandalism or damage does occur is the quickest, easiest, and most effective way of planning for this scenario.
 3. Simple geometrics, non-blended color fields, etc. are easier to fix than incredibly detailed murals, so be cognizant of these factors when designing your murals.

4. Also consider how many colors you are using, no one wants to keep 100 partially used gallons of paint on hand, when really 10 would have been sufficient.
- v. Timelessness
 1. Representations of people and places are one of the hardest things to accurately depict, quickest things to look dated, and can create unwanted criticism from the community
 2. Avoid creating work that is fleeting, but think about ways to create timeless art that is not contentious.
- b. Content can be difficult to create, unless you are an artist, so know your limits
 - i. Maybe you know someone who would want to design something?
 - ii. Maybe you can put a call out for artists?
 - iii. Maybe the content can be graphic and non-representational?
 1. There are tons of great ideas on the internet to mimic
 2. Check out art blogs (<http://www.thisiscoolossal.com/>) to find really cutting-edge work to inspire you!
 - iv. Maybe the content is driven by the location, community, or need?

3. PREPARATION

- a. Cleaning: critical in order to have paint and primer properly adhere and mural last
 - i. Power washing surface will remove any loose paint or dirt
 - ii. TSP cleaning concentrate is great at removing unknown oils and residues
 - iii. If there is a lot of chipping paint, scrapping the loose debris off first is necessary for proper adhesion (wire brushes, putty knives are great tools for this)
- b. Patching: good for fixing any large areas of damage to the wall that will not be hidden by paint
 - i. Brick walls can be challenging because of their texture but are great surfaces for murals, look for any damage to the mortar and fix before starting mural
 - ii. Masonry walls can be patched using different aggregate cement, obviously walls with structural cracks or concerns should be professionally addressed before minor repairs are made
- c. Priming: depending on the state of the mural wall in question different primers are used and can help increase the life of the work
 - i. Unpainted masonry walls: need a masonry and concrete primer to seal the wall
 - ii. Previously Painted Surfaces
 1. Good Condition: if properly cleaned, these can be just painted right over
 2. High Gloss or Difficult Surfaces: if great adhesion is going to be difficult, use an adhesive primer (LOXON from Sherwin Williams- can even be tinted and is great for poor adhesion surfaces)

4. EXECUTION

- a. Drawing
 - i. Once a surface is primed the mural design will need to be drawn out on the surface before paint can be applied
 - ii. Pencils, colored pencils, and chalk are all great drawing mediums
 1. Stay away from markers, terrible things can happen!!!!
 - iii. In order to scale up a design from paper to a physical wall there are a few standard options

1. Stencil: stencils are great for repeating patterns and once they are produced they are pretty foolproof to mess up the tracing
2. Grid: grids of different scales can be applied to a design that corresponds to a grid applied to a building
 - a. For example: a 1" x 1" grid on paper might translate to a 1' x 1' grid on a wall
 - b. Grids can easily be divided and subdivided so they are ideal for precise murals
3. Free-Hand: no guides, just going for it
 - a. Some talented artists are capable of free hand sketching shapes at the scale of a building or organic designs can lend themselves to a sort of free hand approach
 - b. This can be incredibly difficult to pull off correctly, so unless someone knows what they are doing this is not ideal
4. Combination: some combination of these techniques is pretty realistic, you might start by applying a pattern to achieve a pattern effect, then grid out a section to accurately depict some element, then free-hand draw in detail elements.

b. Painting

i. Paint Types:

1. **Use exterior grade paint!!** This is critical to any mural work being done outside
2. The more glossy the finish the more durable the paint, but the more imperfections show
3. Professional mural artists use paints that are specific for blended color fields and high vibrancy, but they can be costly (<https://www.novacolorpaint.com/>)
4. Sherwin Williams offers thousands of colors and can color match as well, but their colors are not great for mixing

ii. Application Options:

1. First coats and large color fields can be applied with rollers or large paint brushes
2. Secondary color fields are typically filled in with standard paint brushes
 - a. 1.5" angled nylon bristle brushes are the best for this utilitarian type of work
3. Small detail and artist brushes of varying shapes can be used for tight spaces and final layers
4. Some murals employ black outlines, giving a graphic/illustration effect to a piece and there are a few techniques for achieving this final layer.
 - a. Thin artists brushes can achieve this look but can be time consuming to use
 - b. Graffiti Pens offer a variety of widths that offer a constant, refillable flow of paint, and are much quicker for applying this type of line work
 - i. <https://www.montana-cans.com/en/marker-und-inks>

c. Refining

- i. Realistically using volunteers for parts or all of a mural is ideal, but know your volunteers' strengths and weaknesses and when it is time for people to stop

1. Sometimes the use of painter's tape can be employed for design and effect or to limit the need to touch up things after knowing your crowd and their capabilities!
- ii. After the bulk of the painting is done, a small group of people that are focused on refining the mural should be the final eyes looking for:
 1. Any mistakes, overpainted areas, or boo boos to be touched up
 2. Crisp lines where color fields meet
 3. Filled in "holidays", the little holes where primer is visible underneath
 4. Finalizing any blended areas or critical parts of the mural that other volunteers were not capable of painting

5. PROTECTION

- a. Depending on funding, intensity of mural, and lifespan of work there are products available to protect the art from future damage
 - i. Special anti-graffiti clear coats are available to offer maximum protection from graffiti or environment but can be prohibitively expensive (about \$120/gallon) (<https://protective.sherwin-williams.com/detail.jsp?A=sku-28860%3Aproduct-7268>)
 - ii. Less intense clear coats offer more resistance to the environment and can help protect and ensure color fastness, without such an expensive price tag
- b. Some locations or budgets might not allow for clear coat protection and the best way to fix an graffiti or damage to the mural is to keep the mural colors on hand to do touch ups
 - i. Over time the colors will start to fade and any touch ups will become more obvious, but this can be an okay solution on a tight budget
- c. Securing some sort of protection plan or someone to take ownership of the mural and any fixes that need to be made is key to keep things looking good rather than allowing the blighted surface to come back
 - i. Coving graffiti vandalism as soon as possible will alleviate future issues
 - ii. Damage from cars, pedestrians, or people can happen and depending on the severity should be fixed as soon as possible

HOW KCB CAN HELP WITH YOUR MURAL!

1. KCB has an Arts program and we do murals!!
 - a. Check us out on our website (<http://www.keepcincinnatibeautiful.org/programs/arts/>)
 - b. Because our funding is through contracts and grants with specific deliverables, any murals done by KCB are funded through outside donations or specific grants that we facilitate. So while we would like to paint every mural that we are offered we do not currently have the funding to make this happen.
 - c. Typically we target the most blighted walls that are in areas of need
 - i. community districts or gateways
 - ii. chronically graffitied walls
 - iii. deteriorating, poorly executed community murals
 - iv. locations near community centers, recreation areas, schools, etc.
 - d. No we do not do those big fancy murals
 - i. That is Artworks (another local public art based non-profit)
 - ii. We do work with Artworks on specific projects that use murals to combat blight
 - iii. Those murals are incredibly expensive and people pay to have them done
2. KCB can be a resource in other ways
 - a. **KCB Community Mural Toolkit:** provides a step by step how to on best practices when it comes to community murals
 - b. **Art Program Directors:** use us as an informative resource to bounce ideas off of or ask questions
 - i. Claire Bryson (Claire@KeepCincinnatiBeautiful.org) 513.352.4381
 - ii. Katie Davis (Katie@KeepCincinnatiBeautiful.org) 513.352.4381
 - c. **Sherwin-Williams Paint Discount:** We get a discount through our local Sherwin-Williams and as such we solely use their products
 - i. The discount varies based on the specific paint being purchased but generally it is about 30% off list price.
 - ii. This discount can be applied towards your project if certain requirements are met:
 1. You have met with the Arts Program directors to go over project details
 - a. Design, execution, and maintenance are areas of concern
 2. You are associated with a community group or non-profit that is tax-exempt
 - d. **Safe and Clean Grants:** KCB manages Safe and Clean grants which are designed to support and encourage community-based efforts to improve safety, eliminate blight, increase livability, and improve quality of life
 - i. The grant cycles twice a year (the beginning of February and September) so keep an eye peeled for the next grant cycle on our website (<http://www.keepcincinnatibeautiful.org/resources/safe-clean-grants.html>)
 - ii. Community murals are often funded and can be an option for your mural
 - iii. The grants awarded are up to \$10,000 and must have matching community funds available