



RESOURCE GUIDE

CITY OF CHICAGO



Circle of Life - Christophe Gausparro & Jeff Zimmerman, 2023

Chicago has a longstanding tradition of creating murals that enliven and define our neighborhoods. Recognizing the enormous contribution that murals have made to our cultural vibrancy, the City is dedicated to providing resources that aid in our mural collection’s preservation and continued growth. This resource guide will help guide artists and community stakeholders through the process of creating and registering completed murals on the Mural Registry. The Mural Registry is managed and maintained by the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE).

WHAT IS A MURAL?



Section 7-28-065 of the Municipal Code of Chicago describes graffiti as “an inscription, drawing, mark, or design that is etched, painted, sprayed, or drawn directly upon the exterior of any building or other structure and is visible from the public way.”

While “graffiti” is the technical language used in section 7-28-065, DCASE has chosen to use the word “mural” as an umbrella term that includes both graffiti and art murals, as mentioned in Section 13-20-550 of the Municipal Code of Chicago, which have been registered or which people seek to register.



For My Neighbors, With Love (North Wall) - Adrienne Hawthorne, 2022

GETTING STARTED: CREATING YOUR MURAL

When seeking to create a new mural, all parties involved should have a mutual understanding of the nature of the mural to be created and the potential steps required to realize the artistic vision.

Some practical considerations should include:



IDENTIFYING A LOCATION

When considering a potential location for a new mural, artists, community groups and individual property owners should consider:

- The relevant geography, history, and character of the area
- An appropriate size for the mural relative to its proposed location
- The visual impact of the proposed mural on surrounding buildings, including whether the mural will block light or sightlines
- Whether the proposed artwork poses any potential traffic or other public way safety concerns
- The surface conditions of the location and what site preparation or improvements may be needed



OBTAIN PROPERTY OWNER PERMISSION

Before you can proceed to create a mural, several layers of permissions may be needed. First, identify who owns the proposed mural site and what approvals they require. Property owners may provide conditional approval or require review and approval of a design, budget, demonstrated community engagement, and maintenance plan in order to provide approval. See page 6 for information related to projects on City property, sister agency property (Chicago Park District, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Transit Authority), and other legal entities, like commercial railroads.

If you need further help identifying the property owner of your desired mural location, you can contact DCASE at muralregistry@cityofchicago.org.

PUT IT IN WRITING



A project agreement should address the approved design, budget, materials, timeline, installation schedule (including surface preparation), mural maintenance plan, the agreement's expiration date, a plan for removal, and any necessary remediation of the site.

Americans for the Arts provides helpful resources for public art best practices and sample contracts. Explore more information and download templates at <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/networks-and-councils/public-art-network/tools-resources/public-art-administrators>.



ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY:

Organizers should carefully consider a community engagement strategy throughout this process, from seeking initial input from community members regarding proposed designs to soliciting help from community members in painting the mural to organizing a public unveiling or celebration event.



NOT A SIGN

When developing a mural design, remember that murals containing commercial content will be considered signs, subject to City of Chicago sign permits, and will not be accepted into the DCASE Mural Registry. Murals containing a business name, logo, slogan, trademark, social media identifier, or other business identification – including business sponsorship – in the mural itself shall be considered a sign and shall be subject to the provisions of the Municipal Code of Chicago regarding sign permits. However, the Code provides that the artist or a partner entity may acknowledge the names of sponsors or partners of the art mural in a single, written acknowledgment panel, not to exceed two square feet in area, adjoining the bottom edge of the art mural. This provision does not allow more than one acknowledgment panel in a single art mural or adjacent art murals on the same lot. For more details, please consult Section 13-20-550 of the Municipal Code of Chicago.



PERMIT CHECKLIST

Depending on the nature of your mural, additional permits or approvals may be required prior to installation. Permits may have affiliated fees, which should be factored in to the total project budget. This checklist will help you determine what, if any, permits may be needed:

1. Is the proposed mural located on a historical designated landmark building or in a landmark zone?


If you are not sure, you can find out here: <http://gisapps.cityofchicago.org/ZoningMapWeb/>

If so, contact Landmarks Commission for consultation and review: <https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/dcd/provdrs/hist.html> or by email at landmarks@cityofchicago.org

2. Will the mural require any hardware or substrate to be affixed to the wall?

Yes

No



If yes, a Buildings Permit may be required through the Department of Buildings: <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/bldgs/provdrs/permits.html>

3. Does the mural contain electrical, lighting, or mechanical components, or changing images?

Yes No

If yes, an Electrical Permit will be required: <https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/sites/guide-to-building-permits/home/instructions/ELperm.html>

4. Will the fabrication and/or installation of the mural cause work to be performed in the public right of way (sidewalks, streets, alleys)?

Yes No

If yes, a Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) Occupy the Public Right of Way permit is required. This permit is provided by CDOT's permit office. The link to the permit portal is https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdot/provdrs/construction_information/svcs/online-permit-portal.html

5. Will the fabrication and/or installation of the mural require temporary scaffolding?

Yes No

If yes, a Scaffold Permit may be required through the Department of Buildings: <https://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/bldgs/general/2011%20New/Scaffoldpermit2011.pdf>



Lisa Wronski Mural - Lisa Wronski 2023

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The City of Chicago and other legal entities like our Sister Agencies (Chicago Park District, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago Transit Authority) and commercial railroads, have their own review, agreement, and permitting policies regarding murals.

For artists and organizations seeking to create a mural on City-owned property:

- A bridge permit is required for the installation of a mural on any portion of a structure (including, but not limited to a retaining wall, wing wall, or abutment) owned or maintained by the City of Chicago. Contact Moira Kent at the Chicago Department of Transportation (CDOT) at moira.kent@cityofchicago.org for questions pertaining to this policy.
- To install mural art on pavement, visit CDOT's Make Way for People website to learn more: <http://chicagocompletestreets.org/streets/mwfp/learnmore/>

Sister Agencies and Railroads:

- Chicago Transit Authority: www.transitchicago.com/art
- Chicago Park District: <https://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com>
- Chicago Public Schools: <https://www.cps.edu/sites/cps-policy-rules/policies/800/802/802-2/>
- Metra: <https://metra.com/celebrating-diversity-through-art>
- BNSF Railroad Public Projects: <http://www.bnsf.com/in-the-community/pdf/public-projects-manual-mtm.pdf>



Asherah Bouquet - Czzr Prz 2023



Creative Collective - Matt Bourque 2016



19388_Liu_Dragon Gate_60640

REGISTERING YOUR MURAL

What is the Mural Registry?

The Mural Registry catalogs the City’s growing collection of murals in a publicly accessible database. Artists and property owners may also submit applications to register “permission walls,” i.e., exterior walls that have been specifically designated and approved by property owners for artists to paint on a rotating basis.

Who may submit a Mural Registry application?

- Artist(s) who created the mural
- Property owner who approved / commissioned the mural
- Community group / nonprofit who commissioned the mural
- Property owner of a permission wall, or permission wall artists with documented property owner approval

How do I submit a Mural Registry application?

You can access the Mural Registry application by downloading the application from our website: Chicago.gov/muralregistry

To complete the Mural Registry application you will need

- Completed application
- Images of the mural
- Documentation of mural or permission wall authorization, including Property Owner approval/ agreement (private property or City-owned property). In review of your application, DCASE may need copies of required permits.

How are applications reviewed?

Complete mural applications will be reviewed by DCASE and other City staff as necessary with consideration of the following criteria:

- Murals must be in good condition.
- Murals may not be commercial in nature, and may not depict product placement for a business.
- Murals will not be registered if they contain known gang symbols or depict an unreasonable or offensive act, utterance, gesture or display that creates a clear and present danger of a breach of peace or imminent threat of violence.
- Murals may not depict material harmful to minors.

How do I know I've been approved?

Upon review and approval of the application, DCASE will send notice of approval to the contacts listed in the application along with one Mural Registry emblem containing an assigned unique Mural Registration ID number and instructions for placement of the Mural Registry emblem. Within 30 days of receipt of instructions, applicants must provide photographic documentation of the emblem affixed to the mural to complete the registration process.



Accessing the Mural Registry

The Mural Registry will be available online and include information about each mural's location, artist, and date created, as well as an image of each mural.

Members of the public can access the Mural Registry here: Chicago.gov/muralregistry.

The Mural Registry will be updated online monthly, so we encourage you to visit our site often as new murals are added.

Removing a mural from the Registry

An owner who wishes to remove a registered mural from the DCASE record shall notify DCASE at least seven days before the removal or alteration of the registered mural. Removal of the mural itself should be in accordance with any applicable federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to intellectual property rights protections of copyrighted works of visual art.

The City shall have no duty to maintain any registered mural or protect against future vandalism. If weather, time, or vandalism damage a registered mural to the point that it falls within the exclusions established by these rules or is significantly modified from the approved image, the registered mural may be covered or removed in whole or in part.

Questions?

Email muralregistry@cityofchicago.org