



WACO & MCLENNAN COUNTY MURAL RESOURCE GUIDE

Developed by Creative Waco and the City
of Waco reflecting codes and policies in

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INTRODUCTION

Waco has embraced the growing tradition of creating murals that reflect the stories and personalities of our residents, neighborhoods, and businesses. Creative Waco has created this guide to help anyone who would like to learn more about the process of creating a mural.

Creative Waco has created a [Public Art Map](#) in collaboration with community members and partners that brings attention and foot traffic to various areas of our city. This map highlights murals as well as other public artworks, and we hope that stakeholders in the community will share the information and highlight one another's works!

When planning a new mural, everyone involved should have a shared vision for the project, familiarity with the process, and the potential steps required to realize the artistic vision. We hope that this resource will give its readers the basic information, and some best practices for starting the process of commissioning or creating a mural. We suggest using this as a template as you plan, and if you need further assistance after utilizing this resource check out the contact information provided at the end of this document. You can also visit our [Creative Directory](#) to connect with local muralists and experts listed there. If you're a muralist interested in starting a new work, or finding a job, join our Creative Directory and be sure to check our [Project Calls](#) page too!



**Visit the Waco
Public Art Map**
creativewaco.public-art-map

WHAT IS/IS NOT A MURAL?

There are many explanations for what defines a mural. For our purposes, a mural is an original, artist-made work of visual art on, or affixed to an exterior or interior wall. A mural is designed for a specific place with the permission of the site owner and can be made from paint, tile, or other materials appropriate to the site and context.

WHAT IS A MURAL?

- A mural is an artwork, applied to a wall, usually in a public space.
- Murals can be found on side walls, interior and exterior walls, ceilings, floors, and even streets and sports courts.
- Murals can reflect many artistic styles, and many mediums can be utilized to create them from exterior grade latex paint, specialized mural paint, spray paints, mosaic tiles, and so much more.

WHAT IS NOT A MURAL?

A Sign or Advertisement

- The City of Waco's permits and ordinances make a distinction between a sign/advertisement and a mural. According to Part VIII of the City of Waco's Zoning Ordinance, the definition of a sign is "any structure or combination of structure and/or message in the form of a display, device, figure, painting, drawing, placard, poster, billboard, advertising structure, advertisement, logo, symbol or other form designed to advertise or to inform the public."

Graffiti

- Graffiti is writing or artwork applied to a wall without the permission of the owner of the site.

Tagging

- Tagging is writing or artwork using a repeated or recognizable design of an artist or organization. Usually done without the permission of the site's owner.

Copyright or Intellectual Property Infringement

- You are not allowed to replicate someone's artwork or intellectual property without their consent. Includes designs, characters, etc.)

Some nuance: Street Art is a style of artwork influenced by graffiti and tagging, often with a high contrast or 3D effect, and is designed to draw attention in an urban context. Street art CAN be considered a mural if it is site-specific and created with site owner's permission.

FINDING A LOCATION

When evaluating a potential location for a new mural, artists, community groups, and property owners ought to consider:

- The geography, history, and character of the location and its neighborhood.
- An appropriate size for the mural relative to its proposed site.
- The visual impact of the proposed mural on surrounding buildings, including whether the mural will block light or sight-lines.
- Whether the proposed artwork poses any potential traffic or other public safety concerns.
- The surface condition and any site preparation or improvements that may be needed.

OBTAINING PROPERTY OWNER PERMISSION

If the desired mural will be located on a structure that is not owned by the person/s commissioning the artwork, it's of utmost importance to gain that permission. This may begin as a simple verbal agreement, but even in cases where the property owner and persons commissioning the work have a good understanding, it's ideal to have a written document outlining the following:

Find a sample document [here](#).

- Any specifications regarding size, artistic style, or content of the mural.
- How long the mural is expected to be present.
- How (by whom and under what circumstances) the mural may be refreshed, repaired and/or removed.
- How the mural, its creators and its story will be communicated.



Tip: You can identify and find contact information for the property owner of a building or other site using McLennan County Appraisal District (McLennan CAD) website "Property Search" feature: <http://www.mclennanCAD.org/>.

CREATING A DESIGN BRIEF AND CALL FOR ARTISTS

Collaborate with the artist/s you commission on a design brief to help them better understand your vision. This document includes items like:

- A vision or “wish list” of things you’d love to see
- Topics or features you’d like to avoid
- Examples of mural art that appeals to you
- Color palettes you’re drawn to when envisioning the work

Find a link [here](#) to an example design brief from our ARTPrenticeship program. The more inspiration you give, the smoother the process will be. The artist you hire to design is your best partner and collaborator in this--remember to trust them in the execution!

If you have a mural idea but aren’t yet connected with an artist, you can create a Call for Artists. This call should include the design brief, a proposed project timeline, the amount you can pay the artist, the site location, and any other information that would help a potential artist decide if this project is right for them. The call should also include the contents of the proposal you’d like for each artist to submit. This can include examples of their previous work, social media sites, references, or basic concept drawings of a proposed design.

Your Call for Artists should be posted widely in order to reach as many potential artists as possible. In addition to posting on your own channels, local and regional arts and culture organizations (like Creative Waco and the Texas Commission on the Arts) may be able to help you get the word out. Creative Waco has a Creative Directory that lists local muralists. There are also websites where artist calls can be posted nationally or internationally, but these usually require a fee. Examples include publicartist.org, callforentries.com and callforentry.org

PRE-PAINTING LOGISTICS

WRITTEN AGREEMENT WITH AN ARTIST

When you have selected an artist, a written agreement will make sure expectations are clear on all sides. It should include:

- Setting a price and project timeline
 - A description of the mural design and content + arrangements (e.g. equipment hire, or access to building out of working hours) - copyright and right to reproduce the image (especially for commercial or revenue generation)
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BUDGET

Your project budget should consider these elements:

- Desired scale of the mural
- Any needed surface preparation before the application of artwork
- The cost of any city permits (see permit checklist below)
- Whether special equipment such as aerial lifts will be required; some artists will have connections and know the ins and outs of rental and insurance for this, and even include costs in their estimate. Be sure to check!
- Decide whether you will be providing paint and supplies, or if you prefer to simply pay the muralist an all-inclusive fee to empower them to buy what is needed. In most cases, your muralist will know how to get the most bang for their buck out of supplies!

Rule of thumb:

Budget \$60/s.f. for artist fees and materials, and sometimes as high as \$65-\$75 if it's a detailed portrait or otherwise complicated. (This estimate reflects going rates in the Waco area in 2023; please be sensitive to increased costs and inflation.)

Check-in with local muralists, or your ideal artist candidate and ask what the going rates are for design work and mural execution in the area, as it can vary depending on the market.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Talk to your neighbors! Murals can be symbolically powerful and provoke strong responses. When planning a mural, it's important to engage with the community in which it will be placed. If it is an industrial or commercial area, this may be a simple process of connecting with businesses and organizations around your mural location. It's great to give your neighbors a heads-up that some work will be taking place on an exterior wall, and to let them know what to look forward to seeing!

If you are planning to commission a mural in a residential area, an area of mixed development, or location of historical significance, it's vital to do your homework. Murals can be an incredible asset and opportunity for community connection and neighborhood pride. However, there are also examples of ill-conceived murals having to be changed or removed. It's vital to get to know the community context so that your project will be well-received in your community. Art is always a conversation starter, and can be a gift when well done!

Once you've connected a bit with the community in which the mural is going to be placed, we encourage you to reach out to neighborhood associations, local chambers of commerce, and other organizations that might have a vested interest in the messaging of the mural. It's best to engage in the conversations before you begin the project than to find out afterward that the work you've created or commissioned isn't well-received. While a formal consultation or survey isn't always needed, these tools can be helpful if your mural is proposed for a building of historical significance, or a local landmark.



PERMITTING

Depending on the nature of your mural, additional permits or approvals may be required prior to commencing your project. Permits may have related fees, which should be factored into your total project budget. This checklist, based on information provided by the City of Waco, will help you determine what, if any, permits may be required:

PERMIT CHECKLIST

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

☐ Yes

☐ No

Will the mural exceed the height of the structure to which it is affixed or extend from the plane of the wall upon which it is affixed?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes to either question, a Building Permit may be required through the Inspection Services Department: <https://www.waco-texas.com/Departments/Inspection-Services/Construction-Permits>

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

☐ Yes

☐ No

If yes, an Electrical Permit will be required through the Inspection Services Department: <https://www.waco-texas.com/Departments/Inspection-Services/Construction-Permits>

PERMITTING CONT.

PERMIT CHECKLIST CONT.

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 Sidewalk Closure Permit and plan of work may be required. This permit is provided by the Engineering Services Department and information can be accessed here: <https://www.waco-texas.com/Departments/Public-Works/Engineering/Permits-for-Working-within-the-Right-of-Way>

Is the proposed mural located on a City of Waco historically designated landmark building?

☐ Yes

☐ No

If you are not sure, you can find out [HERE](#).

If so, you must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness before making any alterations to the exterior of the property which require the issuance of a Building Permit.

NEXT STEPS

MAINTENANCE CONSIDERATIONS

If you've created a contract with the artist/s designing and executing your mural, you've already had a conversation with them about the conditions of the surface, materials used, and the length of time this mural should last or be maintained.

- Include those details in the artist contract, and any owner permissions and agreements are drawn up.
 - Consult with the muralist who creates the work and develop a document that lists materials, colors used, and any recommendations for cleaning, sealing or graffiti remediation as needed.
 - Be sure to share this with the people responsible for the property maintenance, and keep up-to-date contact information for the muralist, or any recommended experts who can help with touch-ups and maintenance.
 - Pro tip - create a kit with the needed materials for maintenance and store in a climate-controlled environment (an indoor closet for example). Label clearly and include things like paint color samples, sealant, a list of preferred materials, contact information and instructions.
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FUNDING

There are local grants available to artists and nonprofit arts organizations to develop and implement art projects in Waco & McLennan County. Creative Waco administers the following grant programs that may be used to fund public art projects. Check the program requirements for guidelines and eligibility.

Arts Match Program (AMP): Funding to arts organizations for innovative or high-impact projects

American Rescue Plan Grants: Designed to empower artists and creatives, and help organizations save jobs, support operations, and orient marketing and promotional efforts to build diverse attendance and participation.

The City of Waco offers a Neighborhood Grant Program. The Neighborhood Grant Program awards neighborhood associations up to \$7,500 per public project. After completing the first grant, neighborhood associations can apply for two grant projects for a total of \$10,000 per year. The program website outlines project and recipient eligibility.

NEXT STEPS CONT.

Share the Location of Your Mural

Creative Waco's Public Art Map showcases public art projects, including murals, throughout Waco. If you would like to add your mural to the map, fill out the info form located on this site: <https://creativewaco.org/public-art-map/>

**Congratulations! You've made it through
the Mural Resource Guide 2023.**

Support

Ready to get going but would like additional guidance from Creative Waco's public art team?

Contact us here to engage with our mural consultation service. The first session is free, and any fees for further consultation benefit Creative Waco's Public Art programming and our youth internship program ARTPrenticeship.



LOCAL CONTACTS

The City of Waco and other local legal entities each have their own review, agreement and permitting policies regarding murals on their properties (including, but not limited to building walls, retaining walls, wing walls, or abutments).

For artists or organizations seeking to create a mural on City of Waco-owned property:

An Encroachment or Use Agreement 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 Waco (including Waco Transit structures). Contact Planning Services for inquiries: <https://www.waco-texas.com/Departments/Planning-Services>

For artists or organizations seeking to create a mural on McLennan County-owned property:

Any inquiries regarding murals on McLennan County buildings should be directed to the McLennan County Judge's office by calling 254-757-5049. For any other county-owned structures, contact the County Commissioner where the structure is located. County Commissioner contact information can be found here: <https://www.co.mclennan.tx.us/182/Commissioners-Court>

For artists or organizations seeking to create a mural on Waco ISD-owned property:

Proposals regarding murals on Waco ISD property should be directed to the Waco ISD Communications Department by emailing info@wacoisd.org with the subject line "Waco ISD Mural Proposal." The department can also be reached at 254-755-9454 for additional information or questions. Waco ISD prefers student-involved projects.

LOCAL CONTACTS CONT.

For artists or organizations seeking to create a mural on Union Pacific Railroad-owned property:

Any request to have a UPRR bridge painted must be submitted to the Public Projects Contact Center and a Bridge Painting Agreement-Texas Only must be completed. Information is available here:

https://www.up.com/real_estate/roadxing/industry/painting_bridges/index.htm

For artists or organizations seeking to create a mural on Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT)-owned property:

Please contact the municipality where the potential mural/art would reside. TXDOT and the municipality will work on a multi-use agreement once the municipality receives an inquiry. For any other questions, please contact TXDOT at (254) 867-2726.