

# A Primer on Community Led Art Projects

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Created October 2021 By The Live6 Alliance

# Back- ground

## Live6 and Placemaking

Live6 devotes much of its resources to revitalizing vacant urban spaces through murals, public arts activations and other forms of beautification. We work alongside artists through a collaborative community-driven process, convene strategic partners, and facilitate transformative projects on our commercial corridors and public spaces. This creative planning and process work exemplifies one of our core pillars:

*Placemaking.*



According to Project for Public Spaces:

*“Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution”*

[www.pps.org/category/placemaking](http://www.pps.org/category/placemaking)

Residents in the neighborhood where public art projects are being implemented live amongst the murals and installations and should like what they see. We believe residents should feel a sense of ownership and pride in their community when they look at public art. For artists, public art projects provide an opportunity to build their portfolio of practice and build authentic relationships. High quality work and artistic excellence are critical to a project’s ultimate success and longevity in the neighborhood. *Murals and public art can transform under resourced places and rekindle the stewardship, maintenance and care of those places.*

## Connecting Dots and Leveraging Assets

In 2017 the Live6 Alliance embarked on a project, the Detroit Neighborhood Arts Project, to beautify and uplift some forgotten storefronts on the Livernois, McNichols, and Puritan retail corridors in northwest Detroit. Over the past five years, we have worked with local artists and community members to create seven public art installations in vacant lots and on retail storefronts. A shared vision for community growth and prosperity has emerged through processes of community engagement, neighborhood visioning and co-creation during the planning and implementation of these murals and public art installations.

Much of our work in northwest Detroit, specifically the Fitzgerald Neighborhood is centered on an asset based community development approach. We work with residents and neighborhood organizations to identify community strengths and resources. Together, we create a plan for public art projects that builds on strengths and utilizes resources. We aim to bring partners together to create a more sustainable and tightly knit community.

The Fitzgerald Revitalization Project is a multi-year initiative focused on stabilizing and strengthening the neighborhood between University of Detroit Mercy and Marygrove College. The project involves many partners from across Detroit's development landscape including: local city government, the local philanthropic and community development financial institutions (CDFIs), place-based non-profit organizations, neighborhood associations and block club groups, artists, property owners and small businesses. Our overarching goal is to create a collaborative and catalytic environment for equitable community and economic development.



## About This Primer

This primer includes a set of resources for those who need guidance to implement their own public arts projects in struggling yet resilient neighborhoods similar to those in northwest Detroit. Our intent is to provide examples of best practices, strategies and tactics that can be used to ensure that projects balance the wants and needs of all participating stakeholders and reflect the community. We hope the resources are helpful to you in your project management, process planning, and community engagement efforts.

# Partners

This primer is the result of a collaborative effort that involved a number of partners.

## MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA

Mural Arts Philadelphia (MAP) is the most extensive public arts program in the country. MAP operates under the belief that murals and other public art projects can bring about positive and lasting change. Each year the organization oversees dozens of new projects, and thousands of visitors tour their galleries. MAP sponsors projects in cities all over the country, including right here in Detroit. MAP has partnered with Live6 on this primer and is committed to bringing the power of public art to Detroit.

## LIVE6 ALLIANCE

The Live6 Alliance is a community development organization and place-based nonprofit whose mission is to enhance the quality of life and provide economic opportunity in Northwest Detroit. The organization works to develop connections and partnerships which drive revitalization and stabilization of the four neighborhoods surrounding the intersection of Livernois & McNichols (6 Mile). In doing so, Live6 focuses on six pillars; Small Business, Safety, Engagement, Placemaking, Residential Stabilization, and Real Estate Development.

## CULTURE SOURCE

Based in Detroit, CultureSource is a member association for nonprofits in Southeastern Michigan that specialize in arts and culture. As a regional group, they provide professional development opportunities and resources to an array of diverse organizations. It is their vision that creative art and cultural expression be accessible all over the state of Michigan. CultureSource will work to share the primer with interested organizations after its completion.

## MOREE STRATEGIC INSIGHTS LLC

Led by LaToya Morgan, Moree Strategic Insights is a third party service provider who worked with the Live6 Alliance to conduct a series of community engagement sessions focused on distilling lessons learned from our public arts and mural projects. Interviewing residents, artists, and other community organizations, Moree has been able to provide Live6 a list of recommendations based on the feedback received during the sessions. This feedback is directly reflected and included in this document.

## THE WORK DEPARTMENT

The Work Department is a Detroit-based design and strategy firm that works with community-focused organizations on program strategy and implementation, communications, facilitation, and design. The Work Department supported the creation of this primer by conducting research into other resource examples and designing this document.

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page. It features several solid circles in blue and orange. There are also black shapes: a ring with two dots, a diagonal line with a dot at the top, a horizontal line with five dots, and a small shape resembling a comma or a drop. The text 'Case Studies' is written in a large, black, stylized font with white dots inside the letters. The background is a light yellow gradient.

# Case Studies

The following case studies are examples of real projects for you to use as information and inspiration.

1. The Mosaic at Ella Fitzgerald Park
2. “Coming to America” in Hamtramck, Michigan



## The Mosaic at Ella Fitzgerald Park

In the summer of 2018, The City of Detroit's Planning Department, Live6 Alliance, and The Trust for Public Land worked with local artist Hubert Massey to engage with residents on the design and build of the Ella Fitzgerald Park through a collaborative mural and mosaic installation. We held two open studios at the artist's studio showing off the process for creating ceramic tiles which come together to form a 150 foot mosaic. The team held a workshop at a nearby elementary school to create projects related to the development of the park. We reached out to a local gallery to fabricate the tiles for the project. The team hosted four mosaic installation sessions at the park.

This engagement and creative placemaking effort worked to bring the community into the redevelopment process in their neighborhood and this work has enabled the community to get more deeply involved in the creation of the park and play a role in the construction. During the early stages of development, this played a critical role in building trust with the community regarding the activation of the park. This helped to instill a sense of community pride and ownership in the new public space development project.

Photos of this engagement can be found here:

[Hubert Massey Photos](#)

# “Coming To America” in Hamtramck, Michigan

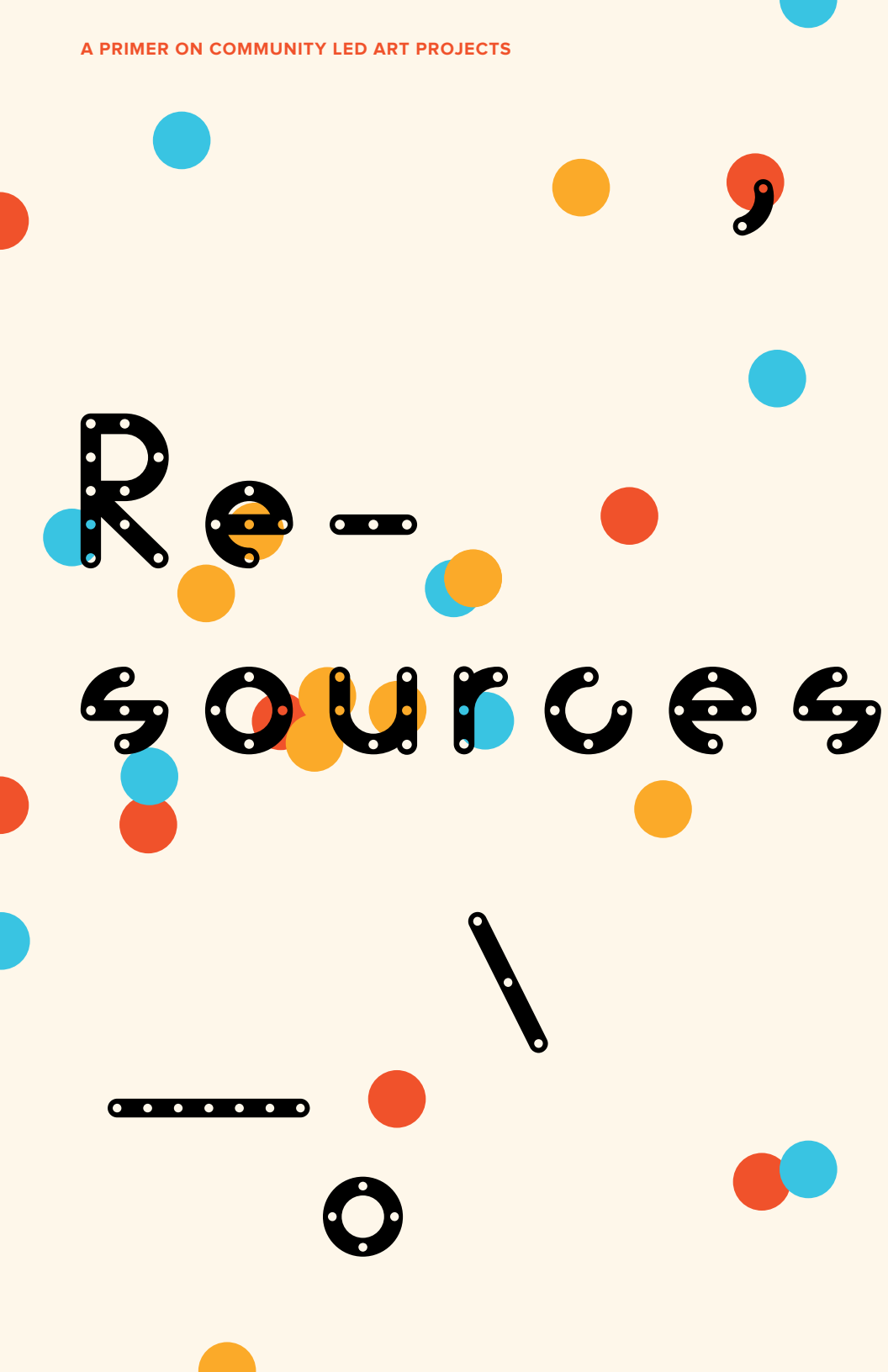
The “Coming to America” Mural in Hamtramck, done in 2018, exemplifies a community-centered approach to planning and executing a public art project. Spearheaded by the organization OneHamtramck, the project was designed to represent the Bangladeshi community, which has significant representation in the area. Much of the project’s success can be attributed to the high involvement of the Bangladeshi community every step of the way.

OneHamtramck and the other stakeholders collaborated with the community by forming a planning committee, sending out surveys, selecting the location and artist, determining a timeline, and fundraising. In doing so, not only did this make for a finished product that the community was proud of, but it also gave them a sense that they had a hand in its creation. The final product was a young girl draped in a Bangladeshi flag with several other symbols well-known to the community, such as a Royal Bengal Tiger.

[🔗 The Mural Project’s Patronicity Page](#)







# Resources

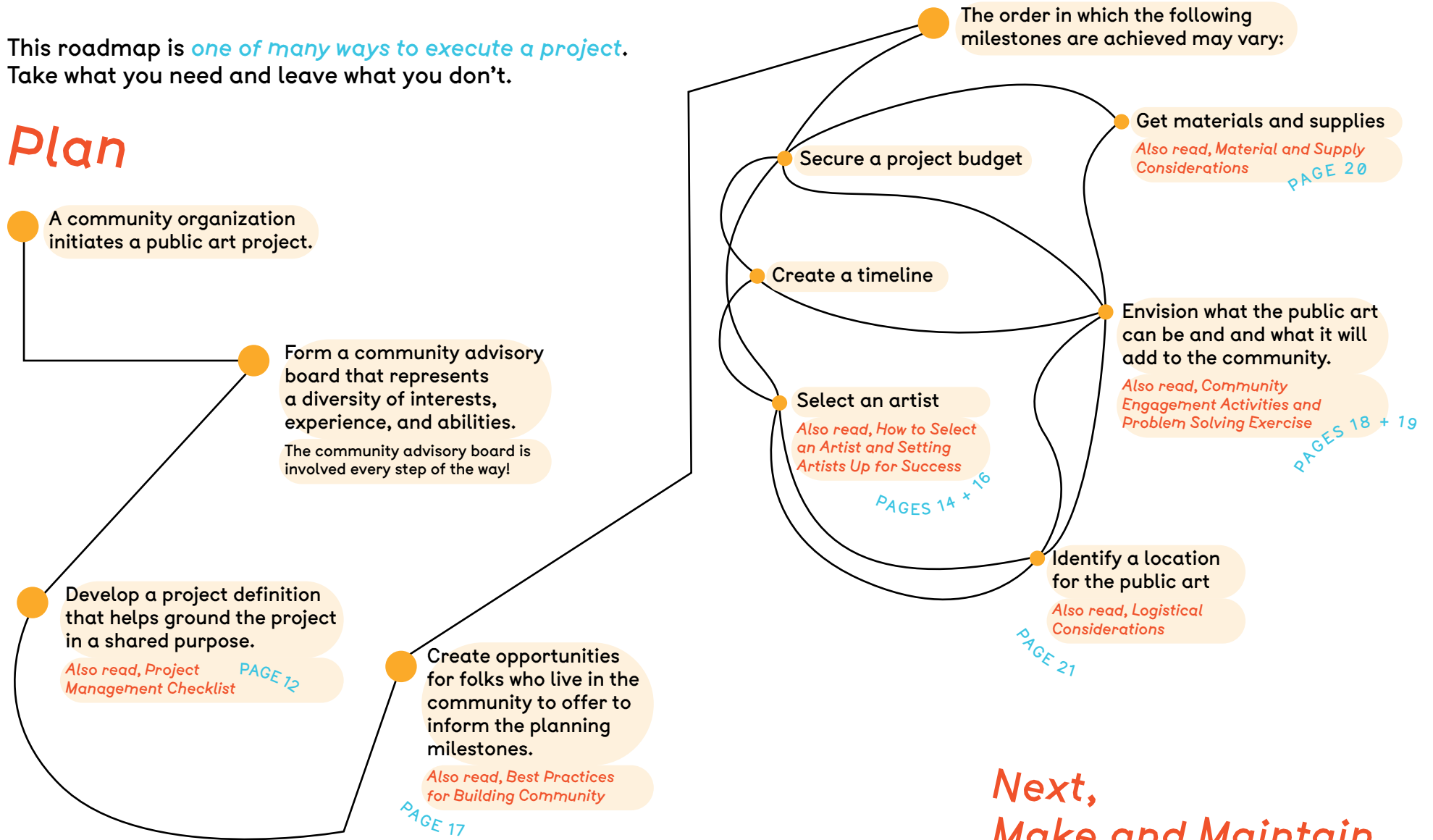
Use these resources to guide you as you lead your own neighborhood arts projects, big or small. You can use all of them or select the ones that are most relevant to your project needs.

1. [Process Planning Roadmap](#)
2. [Project Management Checklist](#)
3. [How to Select an Artist](#)
4. [Setting Artists Up for Success](#)
5. [Best Practices for Building Community](#)
6. [Community Engagement Activities](#)
7. [Problem Solving Exercise](#)
8. [Material and Supply Considerations](#)
9. [Logistical Considerations](#)
10. [Long Term Maintenance](#)
11. [Crediting the Work](#)

# Process Planning Roadmap

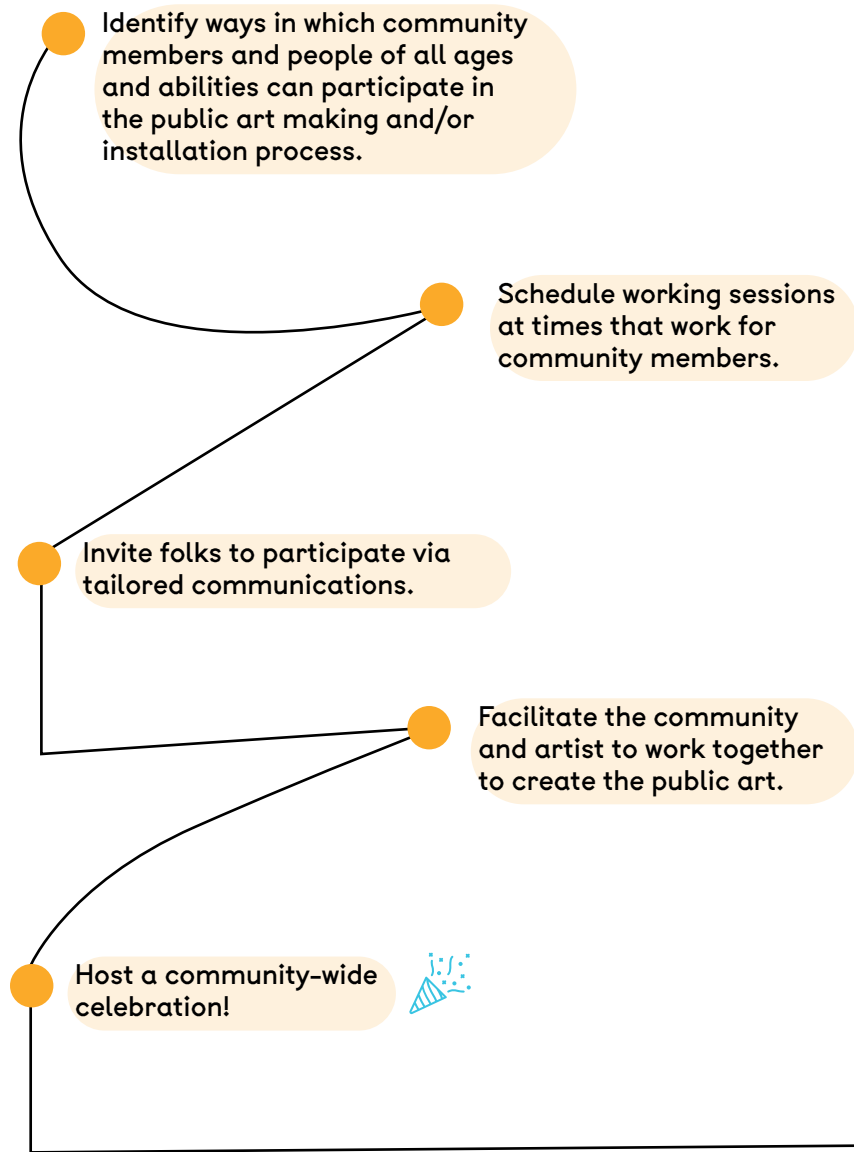
This roadmap is *one of many ways to execute a project*. Take what you need and leave what you don't.

## Plan

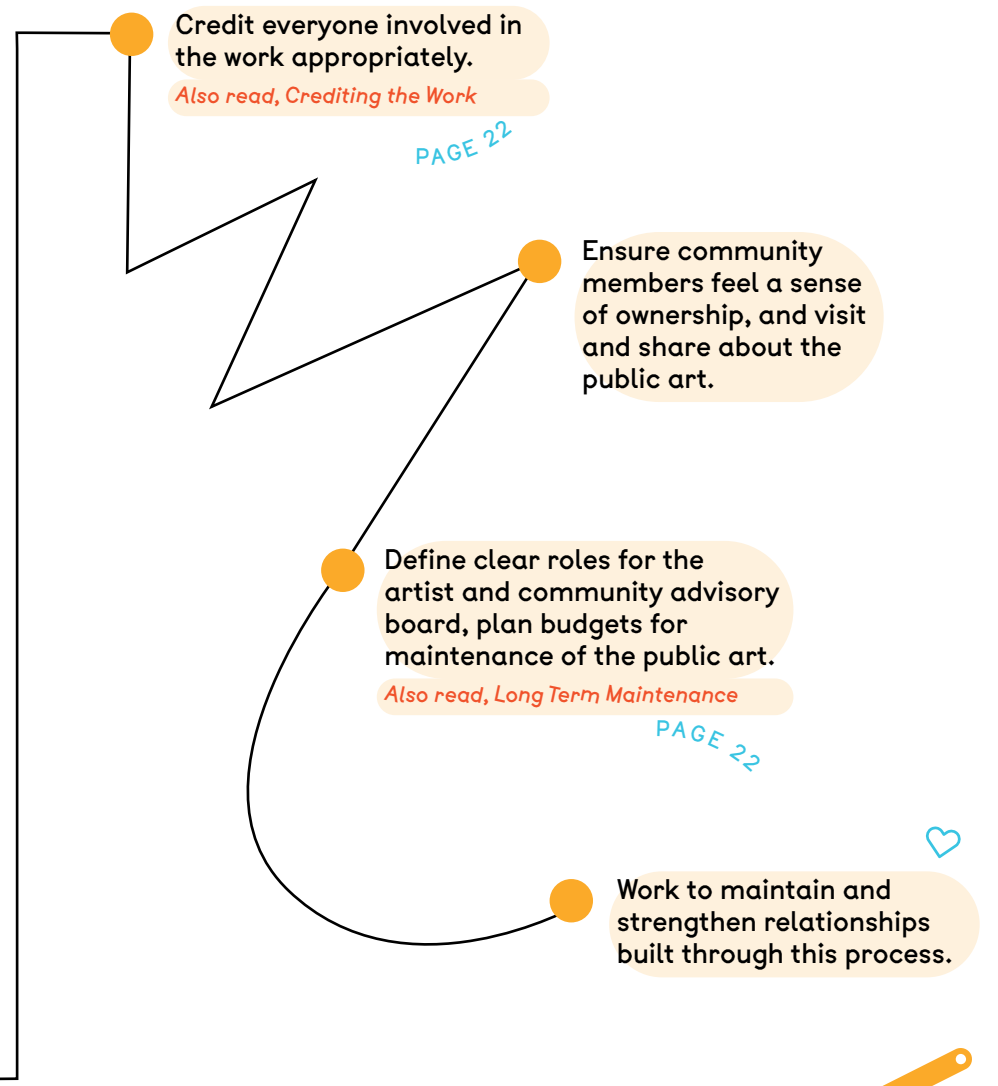


**Next,  
Make and Maintain...**

# Make



# Maintain



# Project Management Checklist

Large-scale projects, no matter the mission, are complex tasks that *require thorough planning* to be successful. Follow these steps for a smoother process.

## ● STEP 1: Create a Project Definition

A strong project definition will act as a tool throughout your project. To complete one, you need to answer a few questions.

- ⊗ What is the background to this project?
- ⊗ What is the purpose of this project?
- ⊗ Who are the stakeholders?
- ⊗ What resources are needed?
- ⊗ What are some realistic objectives of this project?

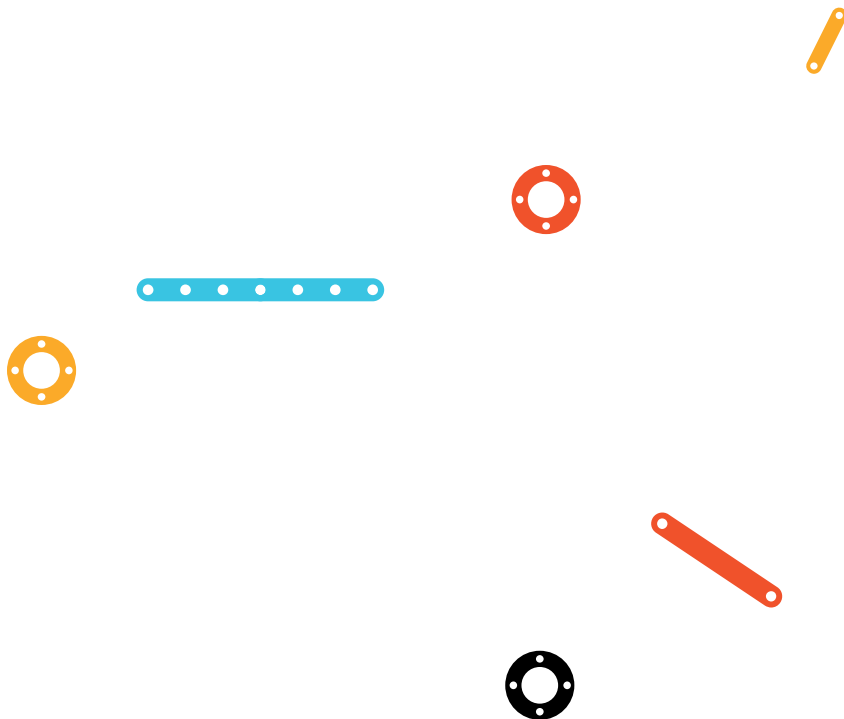
Ideally, you will refer to this definition often, and your answers may change as you gather information, build partnerships, and execute your project. These adjustments are to be expected and will make for a richer outcome.

## ● STEP: 2 Create a Timeline

Develop a realistic timeline with deliverables that match the objectives of your project. This could be daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly depending on the scope of your project.

## ● STEP: 3 Create a Budget

Make sure your available funds are being utilized appropriately and align with the project's timeline.



## ● STEP 4: Set frequent meetings with stakeholders



Engage Early and Often!

Schedule recurring meetings with collaborating individuals, organizations and community leaders to discuss ideas, progress, and potential changes.

## ● STEP 5: Create an Action Plan

Document when and how the bulk of the project will be executed.

- ⊗ What is the proposed date & time?
- ⊗ Will it take multiple days? Weeks? Months?
- ⊗ What labor will be needed?
- ⊗ Will resources be picked up the day of?
- ⊗ Where will resources be stored?

*Remember, the more planning you do, the better off you will be when it's time to make your project happen!*



# How to Select an Artist

It is important to select your artist based on *a complete and comprehensive set of criteria* early on in your project. You can reach out to artists in a number of ways that are both formal and informal.

**Formal outreach:** Release an RFP (request for proposals) asking artists to submit the scope and plans for their project. This should include a budget document, timeline, narrative response to questions and a sample of work or portfolio. In your RFP include the budget so that artists can present the scale and fee structure for the project.

**Informal outreach:** A less formal way to find artists would be to host a meeting or information session and ask interested artists to attend and to bring work samples. Their participation would demonstrate that they are both interested in the project and have the skill set to work with the community to bring the project to life.



**Community advisory board-led selection:** You can put together a team of people to rate and score submissions and in doing so it's best to include a number of different perspectives. This team is called a community advisory board. Think about including children, seniors, business owners, athletes and other non-arts oriented neighbors who can balance out the selection process. We suggest using an objective rubric to score the proposals. Ask everyone to score the same proposals and then have a conversation to decide which artist to select.

Outside of asking for a proposal and work samples, consider scheduling interviews with the artists wherein community members interview them. Because working with the community is a critical role in neighborhood based art projects, it's important to ensure that the artist is friendly and willing to work with residents and business owners and bring them into their creative process.

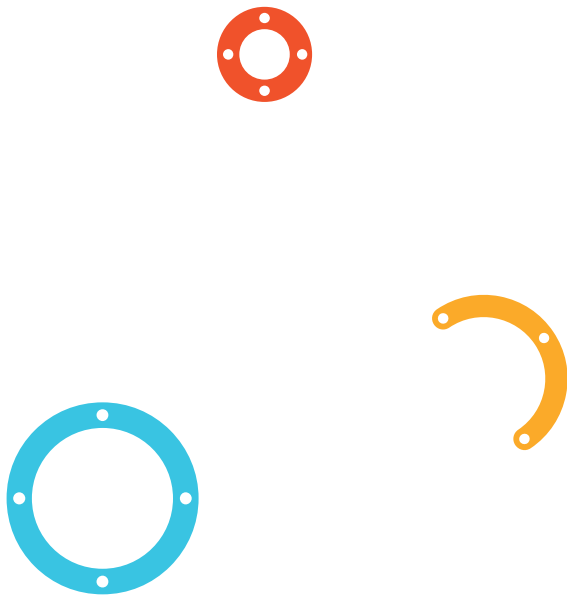
**Artist selection rubric:** You can use this rubric, on the following page, to score the artist on a scale from 1-5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. Add up individual scores and compare those with others on the community advisory board.



<b>ARTIST'S NAME:</b>					
<b>Community Involvement</b> Rate how the artist intends to include the community in the design and execution of the art work	<b>1</b> Never	<b>2</b> Just a little	<b>3</b> Half way	<b>4</b> Mostly but not always	<b>5</b> Every step of the way
<b>Experience</b> Does the artist have enough previous experience and/or willingness to make this project a success?	<b>1</b> Not really	<b>2</b> Sort of	<b>3</b> Getting there	<b>4</b> I think so	<b>5</b> Yes, they seem like a pro
<b>Timeline</b> Can the artist complete this work in the time frame necessary	<b>1</b> 20%	<b>2</b> 40%	<b>3</b> 60%	<b>4</b> 80%	<b>5</b> 100%
<b>Compatibility</b> Does the artist seem like someone that you would like to work with	<b>1</b> Not at all	<b>2</b> Somewhat	<b>3</b> They seem alright	<b>4</b> We could get by	<b>5</b> I'd love to work with them
<b>Budget</b> Can the artist complete this work with the budget available?	<b>1</b> No way	<b>2</b> Probably not	<b>3</b> Maybe	<b>4</b> Probably	<b>5</b> Absolutely
<b>Artistic Capabilities</b> Do you like the style and aesthetic that the artist is proposing	<b>1</b> Not my style	<b>2</b> A little bit	<b>3</b> Its okay	<b>4</b> I get why others like it	<b>5</b> Love it
<b>Feasibility</b> Does the project seem achievable given all considerations	<b>1</b> Nope	<b>2</b> It's a stretch	<b>3</b> Maybe	<b>4</b> I think we can make it happen	<b>5</b> I am confident in this project and this artist
<b>TOTAL SCORE:</b>					

# Setting Artists Up for Success

Do what you can to *make sure the artist you are working with has the support they need* to reflect the neighborhood and get their work done efficiently.



## During the artist selection process

- ⊗ Prepare artists by sharing neighborhood context, whether it's social, political, or environmental. The more transparency throughout the process the better.
- ⊗ Ask questions that help to develop the artist's understanding of the work that you are doing and the impact that you would like to see from hiring them.

## During the planning phase

- ⊗ In your project development, allow time for the artist to gather and/or hear community feedback and process edits.
- ⊗ Be sure that the artist has all of the materials that they need to implement the project. Double check to make sure that their budget accurately reflects the amount of paint or art supplies needed as well as other materials.

## On site for installation or making

- ⊗ When necessary serve as a liaison between the artist and the community or the local municipality. Many artists are so engaged with their process and operations that they probably wouldn't mind the additional support.
- ⊗ Help artists carry or transport supplies! An extra set of hands are always needed and appreciated.





# Best Practices for Building Community



Follow the community's lead and align your project objectives behind their ultimate vision. Ongoing collaboration and community involvement will energize residents about the public art project's process and outcome. They will show it off proudly, and it may lead to more projects down the road.

*Here are some tips to engage folks meaningfully:*

- ⊗ **Provide the community with some sample questions or prompts** that can guide them in their conversations with the artist.
  - ⊗ **Seek out input from people who live and work nearby** to learn about what is important to them.
  - ⊗ **Think about who doesn't usually show up to your community events or engagement sessions**, and be thoughtful about how you can bring them in.
  - ⊗ **Include diverse community members** in the project development process, right from the start of a project. Involve folks of different ages, abilities, and backgrounds.
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- ⊗ **Make it easier for folks to engage** by meeting them where they're at and eliminating logistical barriers to participation. For example, drop off supplies, have engagements on weekday evenings or weekends, provide transportation, offer childcare, translate communications, etc.
  - ⊗ **Set clear parameters and expectations** by informing neighbors of the time frame that the art installation is meant to live in its place. Something temporary sits differently than something more permanent.
  - ⊗ **The more hands on the activity, the better!** If possible, include community members in the assembly, fabrication or artistic process. Consider an approach like paint by numbers or participation through making ceramics, woodbuilding, collaging, creating with textiles, and more.
  - ⊗ **Find out what assets the community already has.** Perhaps there is other public art the project can be modeled after, or maybe there is a local artist to partner with.
  - ⊗ **Find out if there are any community members who sell supplies**, have related business or provide the services needed. Using local companies and spending your budget locally makes a big difference in terms of community perception of the project.
  - ⊗ **Compensate community members for their labor.** Even when the budget is tight, folks need to know that their time is valued.
  - ⊗ **If there is disagreement among the community on what the artwork should be or where it should be located, allow time and space for these disagreements to be expressed.** Knowing they exist will allow you to address them and help make compromises.
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# Community Engagement Activities

The following activities are ranked from *low touch to high touch*.

## 1. Pop Up

Set up easels or bulletin boards with prompts allowing passersby or site visitors to passively participate in the engagement process on their own time. Possible sites include parks, schools, lots or community storefronts.

## 2. Collage

Provide existing images from magazines, memorabilia and other similar materials and ask participants to collage together a vision for the future of their community.

## 3. Intergenerational Visioning

With kids and seniors, draw or write a vision for the community that ties together the past, present and future.

## 4. Asset Mapping

Ask everyone to name or list the resources in their community, or people, places, and things that they value and see as strengths. Then, geographically map the community assets in the neighborhood. Consider how public art can build on strengths while addressing needs or gaps.

## 5. Design Charette.

Bring in designers and architects to create renderings for actual sites so that the community can imagine, envision, and respond to the proposed future of the neighborhood.

## 6. Power Mapping.

Ask folks to identify which people and what entities have power in the form of influence (connections) or resources (money, experience, education, etc.) within their city and neighborhood. Once power structures are identified, work to intentionally flip the power dynamics in order to center those whose voices are less often heard in the neighborhood projects.

# Problem Solving Exercise



The *design thinking* process can help you to work as a team with artists and the community, especially in cases where there is disagreement among the community on what the artwork should be or where it should be located. The following is a set of questions and activities that can guide you through a solution-oriented process.

**Set the tone and build camaraderie using an icebreaker.** Get people thinking and comfortable speaking with each other in a light and playful way.

**STEP 1: What do you want?** Ask community members to share what they would like to see represented in the artwork.

Understand the perspective of the problem from multiple points of view. Utilize stakeholders to begin identifying and addressing the problem at hand. Imagine how others are impacted or affected by the scenario and let it be a causeway for exploring solutions.



**STEP 2: “How might we...?” statements.** Reframe the challenge to get everyone on the same page and clearly state the problem.

Define the problem statement clearly including indication of the urgency and need to find solutions. Understand the problem in context and what circumstantial or systemic barriers exist that are reiterating the problem.

**STEP 3: Sketch-it.** Ask folks to draw and visualize steps to solving the “how might we...?” statement question.

Brainstorm ways to identify unmet needs, filling in gaps by taking an asset based approach. Be imaginative and address as many possible solutions as possible, remember the sky’s the limit here.

**STEP 4: Storyboard.** Have participants storyboard the community enjoying the artwork after its completion.

Identify which of the possible solutions can best solve the identified problem. Try out small improvements or interventions. Be creative with your stakeholder engagement and be sure to include a diverse cross section of participants and users.

**STEP 5: Swap and comment.** Have groups swap their prototypes and share their comments.

Test the solution with your target stakeholder to get feedback. Utilize their input to continue the process and address new or different problems. Remember, there may not be a clear finish line but that doesn’t mean that progress and milestones can’t be celebrated.



# Material and Supply Considerations



## Support local businesses

When shopping for materials and supplies, support locally owned businesses as much as possible. If they don't have the exact materials and supplies that you need, ask them if it is possible to source them! And plan for the time that may be needed to receive materials if they must be ordered and shipped.

Consider purchasing second hand through local businesses and nonprofits. Some of our Detroit area favorites are:

- ⊗ Arts and Scraps,  
16135 Harper Ave, Detroit, MI 48224
- ⊗ SCRAP Creative Reuse,  
4567 Washtenaw, Ann Arbor, MI 48108
- ⊗ Habitat for Humanity Restore,  
28575 Grand River Ave, Farmington Hills,  
MI 48336

Your local hardware store may have discounted paint for sale i.e. paint that has already been mixed but did not exactly match the color intended. Someone else's wrong color could be the perfect color for your project!

## Tips for your supply list

- ⊗ Remember to include ladders, scissor lifts, scaffolding, tarps in your material list. Ensure that those who will be using ladders, scissor lifts and scaffolding are comfortable doing so and align with proper safety precautions.
- ⊗ Consider other tools that you may need. Access to a power saw, working tape measurer, level, drill, hammer and other fasteners will come in handy if you are installing panels on buildings that are boarded up or otherwise secured.

## Be a good neighbor and plan ahead

- ⊗ Be sure to leave the space you are working in cleaner than you found it. Do not leave trash or materials behind onsite. Create a plan in advance where you should discard empty paint cans, trash and other large items including boards, plywood etc. Map out the nearest dumpster or recycling bin and get approval of use. Note that dumping large quantities of material may come at a cost and budget accordingly.
- ⊗ Take into consideration where you might store supplies before the project takes place and after.
- ⊗ There may be hidden costs that you need to budget for! In your planning, be sure to include an allocation for onsite production costs which can include artist assistants, food, water, transportation and last minute supplies as well.



# Logistical Considerations

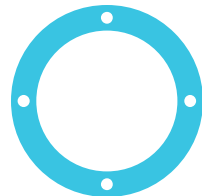


- ⊗ **Research and understand your city's regulations** for painting, installing art or otherwise altering commercial buildings on main retail corridors.
- ⊗ **Be mindful of permitting processes and timelines.** Ensuring that you are compliant with rules and regulations at the beginning of your project will save you hassles and headaches down the road.
- ⊗ **Reach out to adjacent property owners** and let them know your project intentions and timelines, make sure that any work that they may be doing is coordinated with your project to avoid bumps along the way.
- ⊗ **Consider the weather** in your planning and allow for rain dates and alternate scheduling if necessary.



# Long Term Maintenance

- ⊗ When planning public art projects it is important to determine a plan for the long term maintenance of the work. Here are a few tips to keep in mind:
- ⊗ Consider sealing your artwork to avoid chipping, weather damage or other decay to the piece of work.
- ⊗ Talk to the artist about their ability to touch up the art if need be and budget for this so that the artist's time can be compensated for.
- ⊗ If the art isn't a mural but instead an installation, account for labor and materials needed to deconstruct the site and prepare for other weather and external conditions that could change the state of the work.



# Crediting the Work

- ⊗ When utilizing images of the work, make sure that the context matches that in which the work was created and that you are mindful of keeping true to the spirit of work.
- ⊗ When you are documenting or photographing the mural or public art installation be sure to credit both the artist who created the work of art as well as the photographer who is capturing the work.



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# Appendices

The appendices are templates and examples of various tools you may need to complete community led art projects:

1. Artist Commission Contract
2. Budget Template
3. Project Evaluation
4. Photo Licensing Agreement

# Artist Commission Contract

You can use this agreement as a template for your projects so that everyone is on the same page about expectations and scope of work. Remember that it is best to make sure that everything related to your project is in writing. It doesn't have to be too complicated, but being clear and concise avoids confusion or misunderstandings.



ARTIST COMMISSION CONTRACT

This agreement is made on \_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_\_\_  
by and between:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Artist)  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

and

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Client)  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

The parties agree as follows:

The Project:  
Client is commissioning a \_\_\_\_\_ created by  
the Artist.

Subject matter is \_\_\_\_\_  
The medium will be \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_  
and the approximate size will be \_\_\_\_\_ X \_\_\_\_\_sqft.  
It will be in the style of the artist, but, as there are  
variations in the creative process, the client accepts  
the artwork will be unique and therefore subject to  
reasonable variation.

Copyright:  
Artist reserves the common-law copyright to all works  
commissioned by Client that are created by the Artist,  
including all reproduction rights and the right to claim  
statutory copyright. No work may be reproduced by  
Client without the prior written approval of the Artist.

Payment Amounts:  
The fee is based upon the estimated time it will require,  
size and complexity of the completed work, and the  
cost of materials. The amount for this commission is  
\_\_\_\_\_.

Payment Terms:  
A nonrefundable deposit of thirty percent (30 %) of  
the selling price is required before work commences.  
Payment in full is due upon receipt of artwork(s).

In the case that the Client does not wish to continue with  
commission from the completion of preliminary stage,  
the Client is under no obligation to pay compensation to  
the Artist.

In the case that the Client has given payment and  
written instruction to the Artist to proceed with the work  
and recalls commission before completion: The Client  
is entitled to a fifty percent (50%) refund of the post  
preliminary paid amount.

\_\_\_\_\_  
ARTIST PRINTED NAME                      CLIENT PRINTED NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
ARTIST SIGNATURE                              CLIENT SIGNATURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE SIGNED                                      DATE SIGNED

# Budget Template

When setting the budget consider the square footage or size of the art project. Generally speaking murals can range anywhere from \$5-50 per sq ft based on intricacy and design.

Ask the artists how much they generally charge per square foot.

Artist Fee (commission)	
Artist Assistants fees and labor	
Materials and supplies	
Community Advisory Board stipends / consultant fees	
Rentals (scissor lifts, scaffolding)	
Community engagement supplies + refreshments + favors	
Permitting fees	
Property owner small business cost (if any)	
Documentation - photography, video	
Ongoing maintenance (12 months)	
Contingency	
TOTAL:	