



A Companion Zine

Created by



**PORTLAND
STREET ART
ALLIANCE**

In_Place Planning

in conjunction with **Portland Street Art Alliance**

June 10, 2019

About In_Place Planning

In_Place Planning is a team of Master of Urban and Regional Planning Students at Portland State University. The team consists of Sofía Álvarez-Castro, Ellen Palmquist, Austin Ross, Hilary Sueoka, Brittany Quale, and Joey Williams.

About Portland Street Art Alliance

Portland Street Art Alliance (PSAA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in Portland, Oregon.

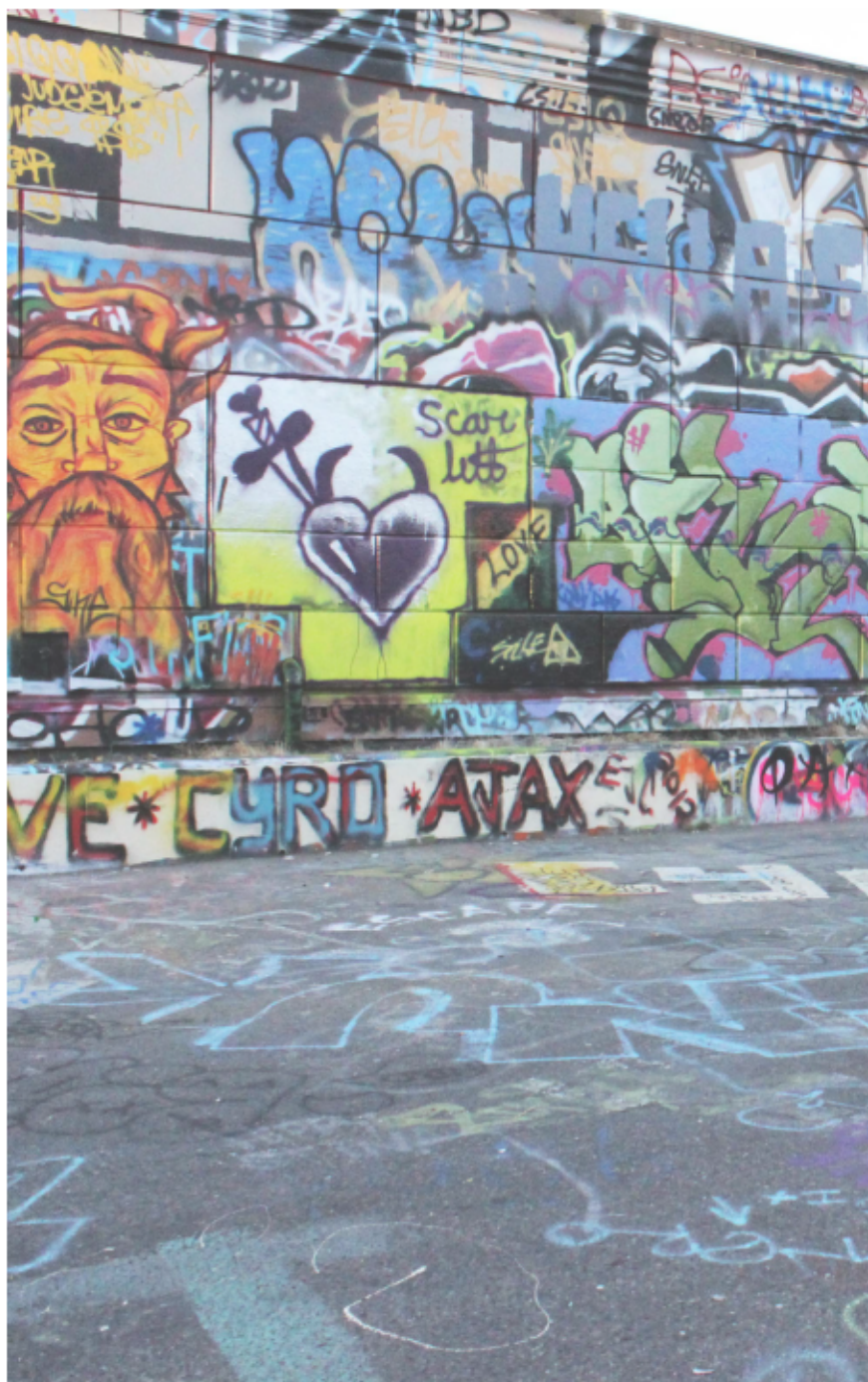


Figure 1: Free Wall in Seattle

Portland's street art regulations and history of strict graffiti enforcement limit creative expression and the growth and development of the public art community.

Legal Walls PDX is a proposal to make the graffiti and street art community more inclusive and connected by planning a legal graffiti wall in the Central Eastside Industrial District.

Free Walls

A free wall, or legal graffiti wall, is a public space where people are free to legally paint, allowing them to practice and connect with other artists. Such a wall may be on the façade of a building or free-standing. Because free walls are open to anyone, old graffiti gets covered by new graffiti, and there is frequently new content. Free walls exist around the United States and internationally and vary in their legality, design, use, and stewardship.

About This Zine

This zine presents the idea of a free wall in Portland through the story of three fictional characters who have a connection in graffiti. The characters and story are based on research and engagement undertaken as part of an effort to plan a free wall in Portland by In_Place Planning and the Portland Street Art Alliance. Though the characters reflect perspectives and identities encountered during this process, they do not represent specific people.

The planning team hopes that this zine will provide an engaging and approachable alternative to a longer, more traditional planning document, helping the team's vision for free walls reach a wider audience.

Graffiti and Street Art

Street art is a widely recognized asset in Portland that helps define many neighborhoods. However, it can be difficult for emerging artists to develop their talents and gain the recognition needed to pursue a career in the arts.¹ For graffiti artists, these challenges are amplified by the illegality of their practice.

Note: In_Place Planning recognizes that *graffiti* and *street artist* are terms that vary in definition by context. For use in this plan, they are meant to be fluid and inclusive.



Graffiti in Portland

Aerosol-based graffiti emerged in Portland in the 1980s and was quickly targeted by law enforcement as a sign of disorder and decay.² Aggressive policing practices fragmented the

graffiti community yet proved ineffective in curbing this form of artistic expression.³ Though controversial, graffiti and street art contribute to the character of many parts of the city, including the Central Eastside Industrial District.

WHOA, I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WAS A BACKSTORY TO WHAT I WAS DOING. BUT STILL, I NEED TO GET UP, AND I WANT MY VOICE TO BE HEARD.

BUT I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT'S SAFE, AND I DON'T HAVE A CREW. I'VE GOTTA GET ESTABLISHED, SO PEOPLE WILL RECOGNIZE MY ART.

YEAH, I WANT TO MAKE A LIVING CREATING ART. I JUST NEED TO PRACTICE BEFORE I GET MY BREAK. I FIGURE I CAN START WITH A MURAL MAYBE.

YOU CAN DO THAT WITHOUT DISSING ME.

YOU SOUND LIKE YOU SEE GRAFFITI AS MORE THAN JUST TAGGING...

IT'S NOT THAT SIMPLE. THERE ARE A LOT OF ROAD-BLOCKS BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR FIRST MURAL.

Regulations

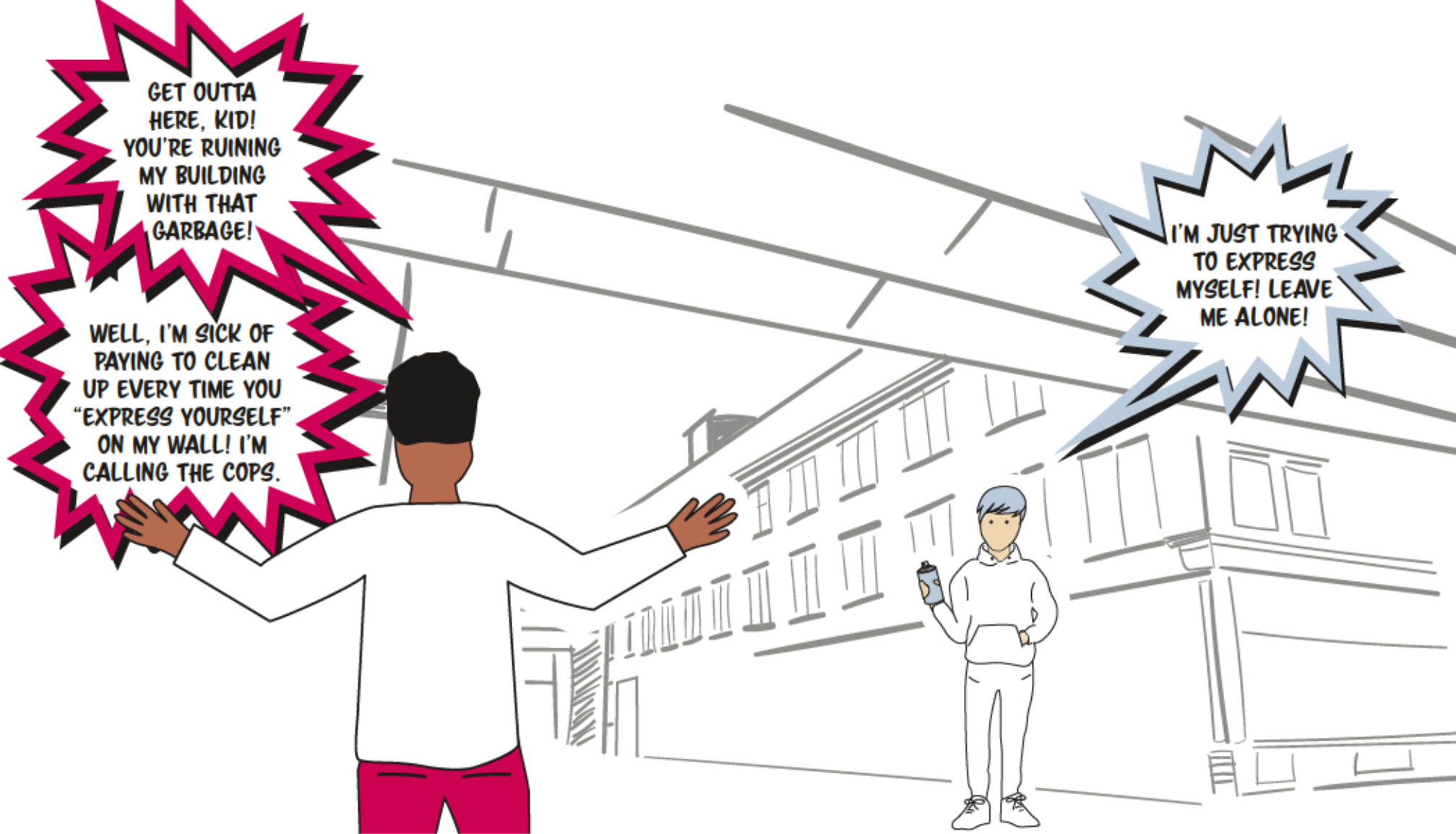
Due to its unique legal history, the City of Portland requires permits for all outdoor murals, rather than simply requiring the permission of property owners.⁴ Permits, which require a fee, waiting period, and interaction with public officials, can present a significant barrier to artists.⁵ Additionally, the City mural code requires all murals to be maintained for a minimum of five years, and the content of a mural cannot be changed once it is in place.⁶ These rules currently make a free wall difficult to create, though potential pathways to legality have been identified.

Challenges for Artists

Because graffiti is illegal, it is difficult for these artists to practice and develop their skills. It is hard to work at the large scale of a mural without space on a building to practice, especially for those with limited resources. This can lead to practicing under illegal circumstances that risk the safety and security of artists. Additionally, fear of inequitable law enforcement may present further barriers that prevent members of historically disadvantaged communities from entering the graffiti community. This creates inequitable outcomes in who is able to express themselves through graffiti and street art in Portland. A free wall would help to reduce this inequity.

“KIDS HAVE
PLAYGROUNDS,
SKATERS HAVE
SKATEPARKS...
AND WE AS
ARTISTS HAVE
NOTHING.

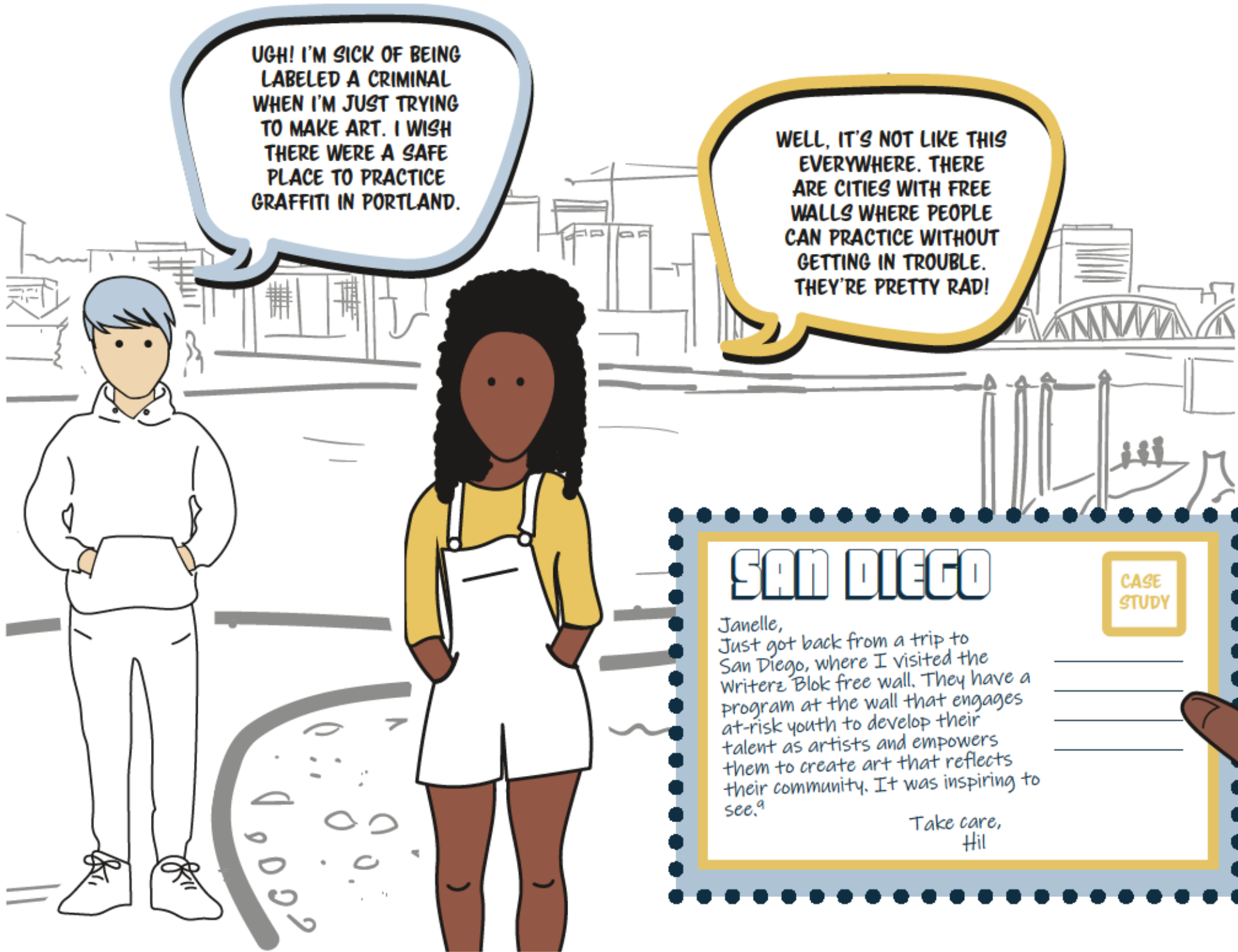
-Quinn the Artist⁷



Graffiti Abatement

Graffiti abatement is a frequent issue for property owners. “Buffing”, or covering graffiti with a new coat of paint, costs businesses time and money. Curating murals that incorporate graffiti-style artwork is one approach being used to curb repeated instances of graffiti on Central Eastside

Industrial District properties, like Alexis Foods and the previous Coast Auto Supply on Southeast 2nd Avenue. Artists are given appropriate time, supplies, and permission to produce legal works of art, and these properties are rarely targeted by uninvited taggers again.⁸



UGH! I'M SICK OF BEING LABELED A CRIMINAL WHEN I'M JUST TRYING TO MAKE ART. I WISH THERE WERE A SAFE PLACE TO PRACTICE GRAFFITI IN PORTLAND.

WELL, IT'S NOT LIKE THIS EVERYWHERE. THERE ARE CITIES WITH FREE WALLS WHERE PEOPLE CAN PRACTICE WITHOUT GETTING IN TROUBLE. THEY'RE PRETTY RAD!

SAN DIEGO

CASE STUDY

Janelle,
Just got back from a trip to San Diego, where I visited the Writerz Blok free wall. They have a program at the wall that engages at-risk youth to develop their talent as artists and empowers them to create art that reflects their community. It was inspiring to see.⁹

Take care,
Hil

Benefits of a Free Wall

For artists, a legal wall could provide:

- A safe, legal space for expression by artists, especially those of historically marginalized identities.
- An accessible platform for mentorship of new and emerging artists, who may become interested in creating public artwork, like murals, with nearby businesses.
- A safe place for the artist community to connect, grow, and develop new skills.

“

WITH A FREE WALL YOU FEEL THAT YOU ARE ACCEPTED, THAT YOU ARE ALLOWED TO EXIST, YOU ARE ALLOWED TO VALIDATE YOURSELF, YOUR WORK, AND WHAT YOU ARE DOING, AND THIS PLACE ACCEPTS YOU. YOU CAN CREATE AND EXPRESS YOURSELF IN ANY WAY YOU WANT.

-@Caleb_Jay_concepts¹⁰

Benefits of a Free Wall

For the Central Eastside Industrial District, a legal wall could provide:

- An opportunity to grow the area's distinctive, street art-infused character.
- An opportunity to develop positive relationships between the street art and business communities.
- An amenity that will attract visitors and new businesses to the area.

“

TWO OF OUR BIGGEST TENANTS CAME TO [THE CEID] SPECIFICALLY BECAUSE OF THE GRAFFITI AND THE STREET ART.

-Adam Tyler, President of Killian Pacific¹¹



TRY A DIFFERENT CAP. YOU CAN GET THAT LOOK LIKE THIS...

COOL, I DIDN'T KNOW YOU COULD DO THAT. LET ME TRY.

lighting

smooth surface!

rules sign!

trash can!

ADA features!

Rules

1
2
3
4
5

Recommendations

The planning team recommends the following actions to those interested in making a free wall in Portland a reality:

- Support a policy change that makes free walls legal in Portland through an amendment to the City mural code or by expanding the Public Arts Mural Program of the Regional Arts and Culture Council
- Encourage careful consideration when determining a location and design elements for a free wall in order to meet the needs of diverse stakeholders
- Promote effective stewardship strategies based on best practices and ongoing community collaboration
- Foster opportunities to develop programming and partnerships that connect the community with the free wall

*Specific considerations available in the full
Legal Walls PDX plan!*

WHO KNEW GRAFFITI
COULD BE GOOD FOR
BUSINESS?

 **marcos**
Central Eastside Portland



 Liked by graffitiidx and 50 others

murp4eva Marcos supports local artists! #streetart ❤️
8h 20 likes Reply

graffitiidx Love the legal wall at your business! ❤️
15 h 50 likes Reply

Works Cited

1. Orien. "Artist Interview." Interview by In_Place Planning. March 5, 2019.
2. Conklin, Tiffany Renée. "Street Art, Ideology, and Public Space." MA thesis. Portland State University, 2012.
3. Orien. "Artist Interview." Interview by In_Place Planning. March 5, 2019.
4. City of Portland Bureau of Development Services. "Original Art Mural Permits." Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/50737>.
5. City of Portland Bureau of Development Services. "Original Art Mural Permits." Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/50737>.
6. City of Portland Bureau of Development Services. "Original Art Mural Permits." Accessed May 29, 2019. <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/50737>.
7. Quinn the Artist. "Artist Interview." Interview by In_Place Planning. February 26, 2019.
8. Portland Street Art Alliance. "Produce Row Mural." Last modified February 8, 2019. <http://www.pdxstreetart.org/articles-all/2019/1/29/produce-row?rq=Alexis%20Foods>.
9. Barros, Roque. "Writerz Blok" Interview by In_Place Planning. April 15, 2019.
10. @CALEB_Jay_concepts. "Artist Interview." Interview In_Place Planning. March 13, 2019.
11. Tyler, Adam. "Legal Walls PDX Interview". Interviewed by In_Place Planning. March 12, 2019.

Figure

1. Tiffany Conklin. Unknown Date. Free Wall in Seattle. Seattle, Washington.



Thank you for reading! This zine is produced by students at **Portland State University** to advance their culminating workshop thesis project in the **Master of Urban and Regional Planning** program.

If you would like to learn more about the process, findings, and recommendations of this planning effort, the **Legal Walls PDX Plan** is available at pdx.edu/usp/master-of-urban-and-regional-planning-workshop-projects.

For further questions and inquiries, please contact the **Portland Street Art Alliance** at pdxstreetart.org/contact-us.



A NEW PLAN FOR GRAFFITI LEGAL WALLS PDX SUMMARY



INTRODUCTION

Due to the negative connotations associated with graffiti, this form of public expression is prohibited in many cities around the world, including Portland, Oregon. Strict public art regulations and a lack of alternatives for urban artists have limited the growth of the graffiti and street art community as well as the public's right to freedom of expression in Portland. Additionally, the illegal status of graffiti often leads to expensive enforcement and abatement efforts and negative interactions between the public and law enforcement.

This planning effort was designed to chart a path toward a more inclusive atmosphere for street art, and specifically graffiti, in Portland, Oregon by planning a legal graffiti wall for public expression in the Central Eastside Industrial District (CEID). This plan proposes legal routes forward, as well as recommendations for implementing, designing, and managing the wall. These alternatives were informed by stakeholder outreach, best practices in other cities, and key advisory interviews. The proposed alternatives are designed to help further the long-term goal of fostering a more inclusive, cohesive, and supportive creative community with more equitable access to creative spaces in the City of Portland.

GOALS

1. Recommend legal pathways to the Portland Street Art Alliance and the City of Portland for the implementation of a legal graffiti wall pilot in the Central Eastside Industrial District.
2. Suggest well-informed opportunities for the design, stewardship, and programming of a legal graffiti wall pilot.

WHAT IS A FREE WALL?

A “free wall” is a wall space that is open to the public for artistic expression, most commonly with paint. Because they are open to anyone, art on free walls is often quickly covered with new graffiti, which showcases frequently updated content. Free walls are often found on the external wall of a building, though free-standing walls may also be constructed for the same purpose. Free walls vary in their management, physical design, and programming from informal, unpermitted walls to highly programmed spaces with clear oversight.

CONTEXT

Graffiti culture emerged in the United States on the East Coast during the 1960s and quickly spread and evolved. The practice arrived in Portland in the 1980s and began to develop along with the nascent mural and street art scene. However, the promulgation of broken windows theory, shortly thereafter, led to strict graffiti laws, aggressive enforcement, and severe punishment for those who were caught doing illegal graffiti. This theory proposed that an area with signs of decay, like broken windows and graffiti, would attract criminal activity, and it has been a dominant pillar of American law enforcement since the 1970s. This official attitude toward graffiti-style art, coupled with a public controversy regarding corporate advertisers and public murals, led to a host of regulations that still present barriers for those pursuing various forms of public expression in Portland today. These factors fractured local graffiti community and created a culture of secrecy and isolation that still persists, despite the fact that the premise of broken windows theory has been debunked.

Despite the adverse conditions for graffiti and street artists in Portland, public art has helped to define the character of many neighborhoods in the city. The CEID is one such area.

This part of the central city was traditionally reserved for industrial purposes but has recently been opened to a broader range of creative and commercial uses. This has led to new development and an ongoing shift in the context of the built environment. For many, street art and graffiti are important elements of the traditional identity of the area and should continue to have a place in the district.

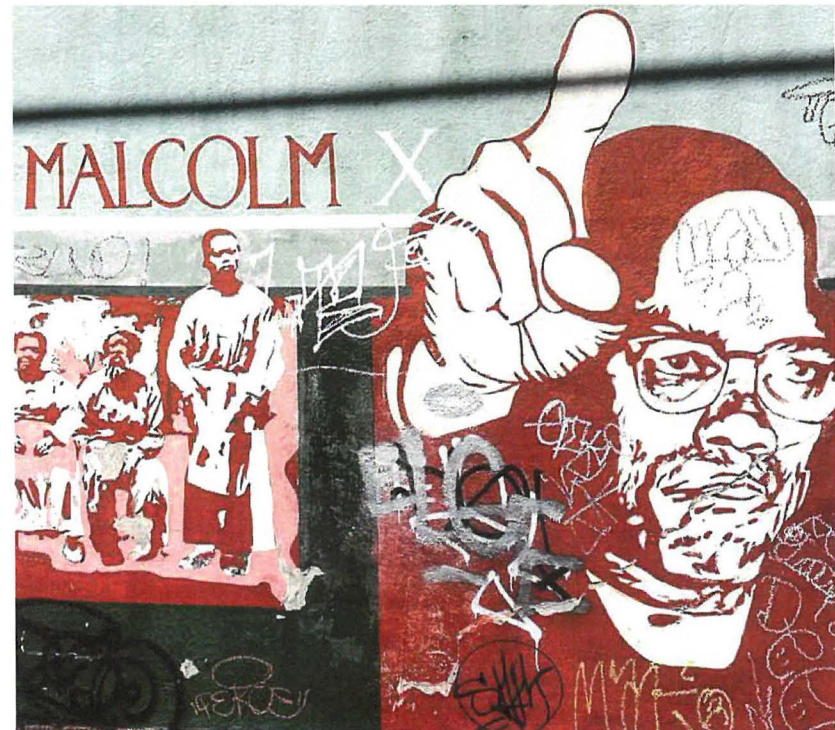


Figure 1: Black Pride Malcolm X Mural by Lewis Harris, painted in 1984, located at NE 17th Ave and NE Alberta St in Portland.

WHY SHOULD PORTLAND HAVE A FREE WALL?

A free wall in Portland would help to reduce the barriers graffiti and street artists face when creating their art. A legal space for graffiti would:

- allow artists to practice and develop their skills without fear of criminal repercussions, making the art community more equitable, inclusive, and safe.
- create a space for artists to network, collaborate, and develop relationships, leading to a stronger public art community and professional development opportunities.

A free wall would also offer benefits to the neighborhood beyond the artist community by:

- contributing to the area's distinctive, street art-infused character.
- fostering positive relationships between the street art and business communities.
- providing an amenity that could attract visitors and new businesses to the area.

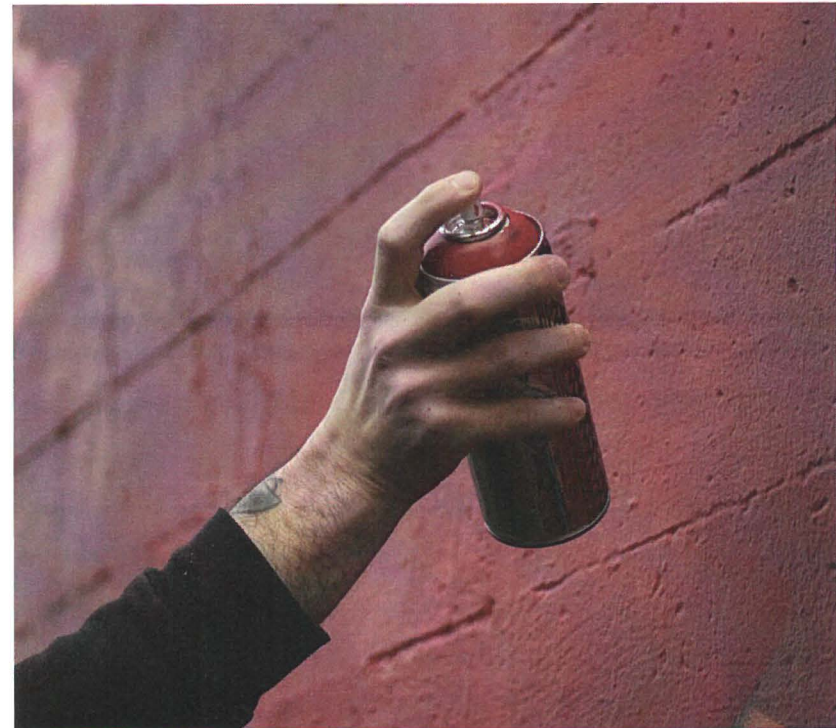


Figure 2: Aerosol is a common medium for graffiti artists.

In order to make well-informed recommendations, the planning team engaged in a thorough research and engagement process, drawing on background literature, case studies of other free walls around the United States, extensive interviews with a variety of stakeholders, and a survey of local graffiti and street artists. This data informed a set of implementation alternatives in four distinct areas:

LEGAL RECOMMENDATIONS

These alternatives offer policy makers and those wishing to implement a free wall options for a legal framework in which a free wall would be possible in Portland.

Alternative 1: Amend the Original Art Murals Permit

Recommended Action - Amend section 4.20.010 B to remove the requirement that murals must not be changed for five years or waive this requirement to allow for a legal wall pilot.

Alternative 2: Expand the Public Art Murals Program

Recommended Action - Continue dialogue with RACC about implementing a legal graffiti wall through the Public Art Murals Program.

DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations in this section guide the design of a free wall to ensure it will meet the needs of various stakeholders and facilitate effective stewardship.

Objective 1: Select a location for a free wall that meets the needs of users and neighbors

Objective 2: Provide amenities that will enhance the free wall and the experience of users and visitors

Objective 3: Create durable and effective visual communications to help establish norms and expectations for the free wall

Objective 4: Create a free wall of adequate size to accommodate intended programming and use

Objective 5: Maintain a flat, smooth surface for artists to paint

STEWARDSHIP RECOMMENDATIONS

The following stewardship recommendations, tailored to the local context, help ensure that a successful pilot project will maximize the benefits of a free wall, while mitigating difficulties experienced elsewhere.

Objective 1: Designate an organization to provide stewardship for the free wall

Objective 2: Create a positive, safe and inclusive atmosphere that encourages use and visitation of the free wall

Objective 3: Develop norms to guide behavior and set expectations for artists and visitors

Objective 4: Minimize the occurrence and impact of hate speech being painted on the free wall

Objective 5: Establish a budget and secure ongoing funding for the implementation and operation of a free wall

Objective 6: Establish policies for access to the free wall in terms of hours of operation and registration

Objective 7: Establish a waste management plan

PROGRAMMING RECOMMENDATIONS

A set of programming recommendations suggest opportunities to ensure that a free wall will offer equitable opportunities for community and personal development, as well as enhance the sense of place in the project area.

Objective 1: Develop youth-oriented programming at the legal wall

Objective 2: Establish partnerships to enhance placemaking opportunities

NEXT STEPS

Due to time constraints, capacity, and project scope, the planning team was not able to follow through with every idea put forward. Opportunities remain for further research and outreach that may help inform the ultimate implementation of a free wall. Site selection will undoubtedly require a thorough vetting process with additional engagement and outreach to residents, the local business community, and the Portland Police Bureau. Once a site is selected, ongoing channels of communication with nearby residents and the business community should be established, and expectations set with the Police Bureau should be specific and clear.

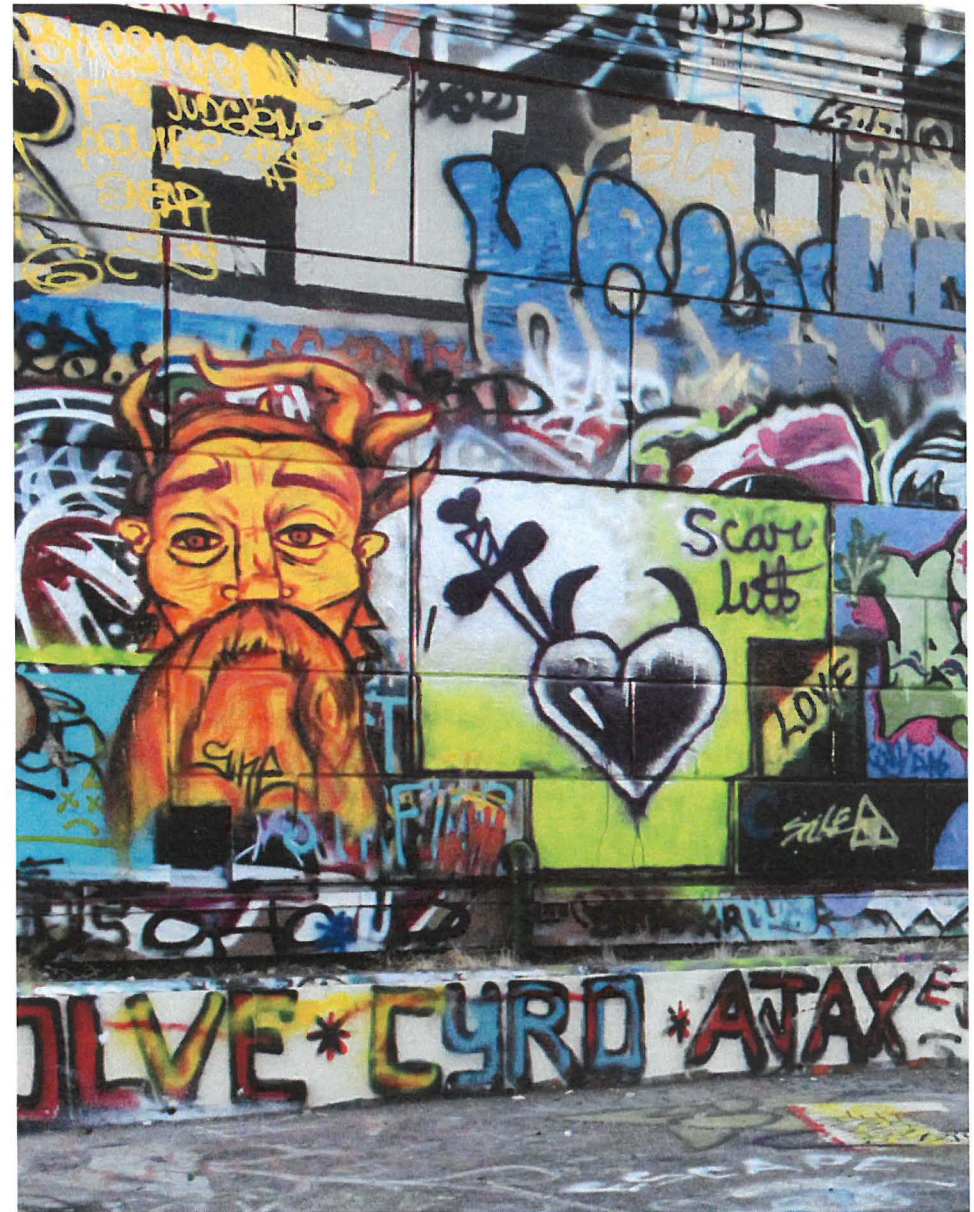


Figure 3: Free wall in Seattle.

From: tiffany@pdxstreetart.org
To: [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Cc: "Joseph Williams"
Subject: August 7th Presentation to Council - Legal Walls PDX Project
Date: Sunday, June 2, 2019 9:57:05 PM
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)

Hi,

My name is Tiffany Conklin and I would like to make a request for a community communications slot on August 7th to present the Legal Walls PDX project, represented by myself (Tiffany Conklin), Tomás Valladares, Brittany Quale, Joey Williams, and Quinn the Artist.

We would like to present together, in that order please.

Thank you!
Tiffany

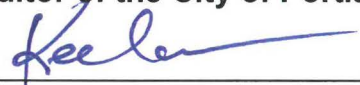
Tiffany Conklin | Portland Street Art Alliance
[Website](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)



Request of Tiffany Conklin to address Council regarding the Legal Walls PDX project (Communication)

AUG 07 2019

PLACED ON FILE

Filed JUL 30 2019
MARY HULL CABALLERO
 Auditor of the City of Portland
 By 
 Deputy

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Hardesty		
4. Eudaly		
Wheeler		