



**SIDEWALK**

**WAYFINDING**

**MURALS**

**ARTIST GUIDELINE PACKET**

# Bloomington Sidewalk Mural Pilot Project Artist Guideline Packet

*Prepared by:*

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## **Strong Towns Blono Public Art & Safety Committee**

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## Project Scope

Strong Towns Blono, in partnership with Bloomington Public Library and the McLean County Museum of History, with support from the City of Bloomington are seeking to engage the talents of Central Illinois artist(s) to design, install, and maintain temporary wayfinding sidewalk art in Downtown Bloomington. This second annual sidewalk art initiative will require the creation and installation of an overall design concept for 16 surface wayfinding signs at significant intersections between Bloomington Public Library (205 E. Olive St, Bloomington, IL 61701) and the McLean County Museum of History (200 N. Main St., Bloomington, IL 61701), with the goals of Downtown beautification, increased pedestrian safety, and increased awareness of walkability between landmarks of the downtown district and surrounding areas.

## Project Objective

This pilot initiative seeks to use a data-informed approach to wayfinding in Bloomington that will increase pedestrian safety, inspire support for permanent installations of sidewalk and crosswalk murals as well as additional multipurpose public artworks in the city. A 2022 study conducted by Bloomberg Philanthropies - originators of the Asphalt Art Initiative - found that asphalt art (including intersection murals and crosswalk art) in place for at least two years contributed to a “50 percent drop in crashes involving pedestrians or cyclists ... a 37 percent drop in crashes leading to injuries. ... a 27 percent increase in the rate of drivers yielding to pedestrians with the right-of-way ... [and] a 25 percent drop in potentially dangerous conflicts between drivers and pedestrians.”

The design and installation of this temporary surface wayfinding signage is the first step in a larger effort to leverage the power of public art in service of public safety.



Volunteers paint the 2025 wayfinding mural with winning artist, Delia Dennhardt-Kerr.



2025 Sidewalk mural by Dennhardt-Kerr

## Project Site

**Downtown Bloomington** is home to locally owned and operated specialty stores, bars, restaurants, and art galleries. The McLean County Museum of History serves as a landmark identifying the historic core of the city. Visually striking, turn-of-the-twentieth-century buildings flank the Museum Square and public art installations (including wall murals, sculpture, decorated utility infrastructure, and more) are increasingly incorporated throughout the district. Downtown Bloomington is also host to government offices of the City of Bloomington and McLean County, and numerous human service, education, and legal offices.



“As a Main Street America™ & Illinois Main Street Accredited program, Downtown Bloomington is a recognized leading program among the national network of more than 1,200 neighborhoods and communities who share both a commitment to creating high-quality places and to building stronger communities through preservation-based economic development. All Main Street America™ Accredited programs meet a set of National Accreditation Standards of Performance as outlined by Main Street America.”

**The McLean County Museum of History (MCMH)** is a nationally accredited, award-winning nonprofit museum with seven exhibit galleries, a collection totalling more than 18,000 objects, and a local history library/archive with over 15,000 rare and hard-to-find books and 2,000 linear feet of historical papers and

images. The mission of MCMH is to “preserve, educate, and collaborate in sharing the diverse stories of the people of McLean County.”

**Bloomington Public Library (BPL)** has been offering quality services, programs, and resources for more than 150 years. In 1857, the library opened to the public based on efforts by the Ladies’ Library Association. After Mrs. Sarah B. Withers donated land to house a new building, the library relocated and was christened Withers Library in 1887.



It kept that name until 1977, when a new library was built at 205 E. Olive St., and the name was changed to Bloomington Public Library. In 2024, BPL unveiled to the public an expanded and renovated library after two years of construction. The building expansion includes 21,339 square

feet of new space and the renovation of 55,419 square feet of existing space. Highlights include the opening of an Innovation Lab and two Recording Studios, the addition of a permanent Drive-Thru window, and the installation of 592 solar panels on the building’s roof.

**Withers Park** is a City of Bloomington park at the former site of Withers Library (now Bloomington Public Library) at the corner of Washington and East streets in Downtown Bloomington. The park boasts the Trotter Fountain (designed by famed architect Lorado Taft), which was erected in honor of Georgina Trotter – the first woman elected to the Bloomington Board of Education and a major advocate for and supporter of Withers Library. At the time of his passing in 1907, Georgina’s brother James left instructions in his will for the “erection of a \$5,000 fountain in one of the city’s public parks as a memorial” to his family. Withers Park is a destination for those seeking shade and green space in Downtown Bloomington.



## Project Notes

Artists ages 18 and up with residency in Central Illinois are eligible to apply. Artists younger than 18 must also submit a letter of permission from a legal guardian with their application. Artists younger than 18 will require adult supervision for the duration of the installation.

Collaborating artists should submit a joint application indicating the Lead Artist (noting that any finalist designs will have to demonstrate a capacity for shared artistic vision and execution). Designing artists unable to execute the physical installation of the final mural project due to mobility or health restrictions or age may identify a collaborating installation artist in their application.

In the first phase of review, artists will be asked to submit a portfolio of their previous work showcasing their style, range, and experience. Artists are encouraged to curate a portfolio that reflects style and skills relevant to the sidewalk art project, but should not feel as though lack of prior experience with surface murals will eliminate them from consideration. As this is a community-centered and -engaged project, the artist's portfolio should include a written statement describing previous experience coordinating, collaborating, and/or facilitating with members of the general public.

The Strong Towns Blono Public Art and Safety Committee will choose three finalists from the pool of artist applications. These finalists will be asked to submit preliminary sketches of their full design concept for review by the project Committee and for approval from the City Traffic Engineers. Each finalist will be compensated \$250 for this phase of the design work. Please note, if the Traffic Engineer requests alterations for final approval, the artists must make those revisions before the designs can be chosen as the winning design.

The Committee will determine the winning design from the three finalists, pending City approval.

The artist(s) with the winning design(s) will be contracted at \$5000 to execute the project. In addition, \$1,000 will be made available for the purchase of materials and supplies.

Applying artists should be prepared to be in close contact with the Committee (see contacts on last page). The Public Art and Safety Committee will assist artist(s) in navigating the design phase, coordinating the purchase of materials and supplies, recruiting and organizing volunteers, and aiding the artist(s) in the facilitation of the project.

The sidewalk surface will be cleaned and prepped before painting begins.

## Mural Map on Opposite Page

Locations marked in yellow have been approved by the city for the murals. No art can be placed outside of these locations. You do NOT need to use all of the space within the yellow areas for the murals. [Note: the 2025 winning design did not cover all sidewalk space] The mural covers a large space and artists should design their submission taking into account the 6 week window for installation.



### Places with significant art:

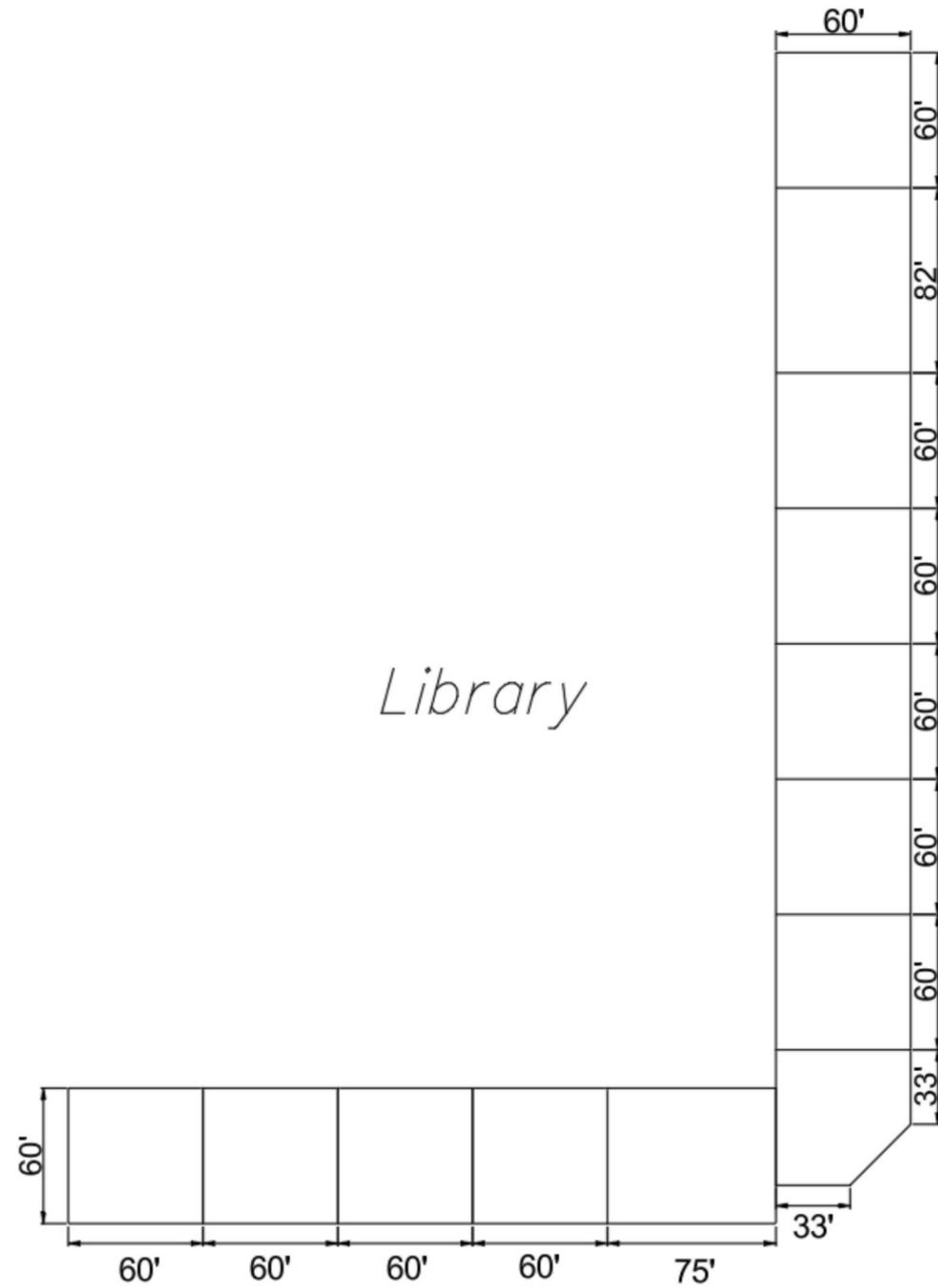
- BPL Plaza
- McBarnes Building Sidewalk
- Washington St. Sidewalk
- Museum Plaza

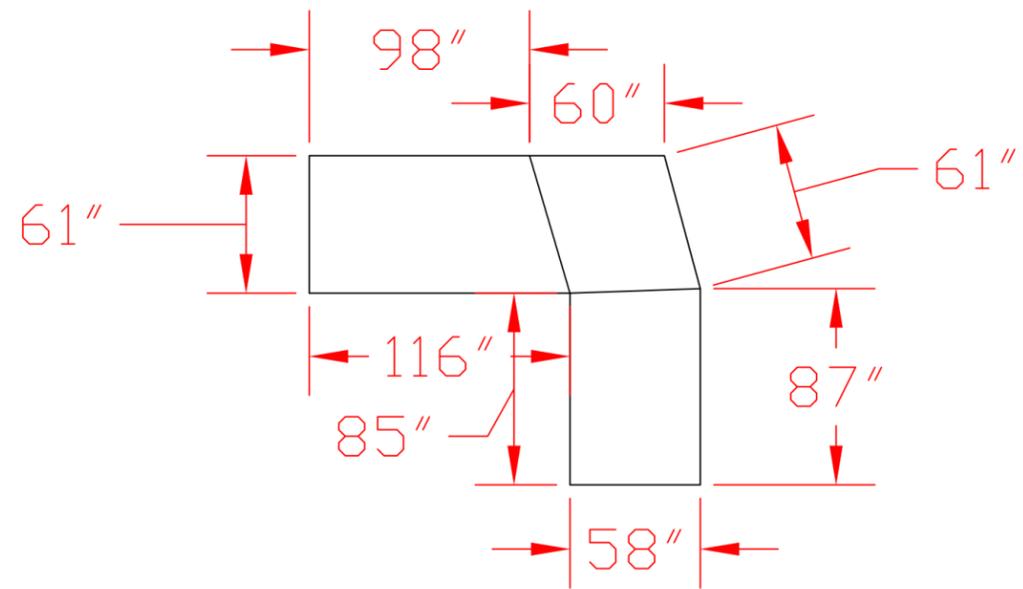
### Smaller wayfinding designs:

- Path along Olive St
- Spot murals along the east side of East St. at the north and south sidewalk corners of Front St, Grove St., and Washington St.

# Library Plaza

Please note the mural art shall not be placed directly on BPL property, and only use the public sidewalks.





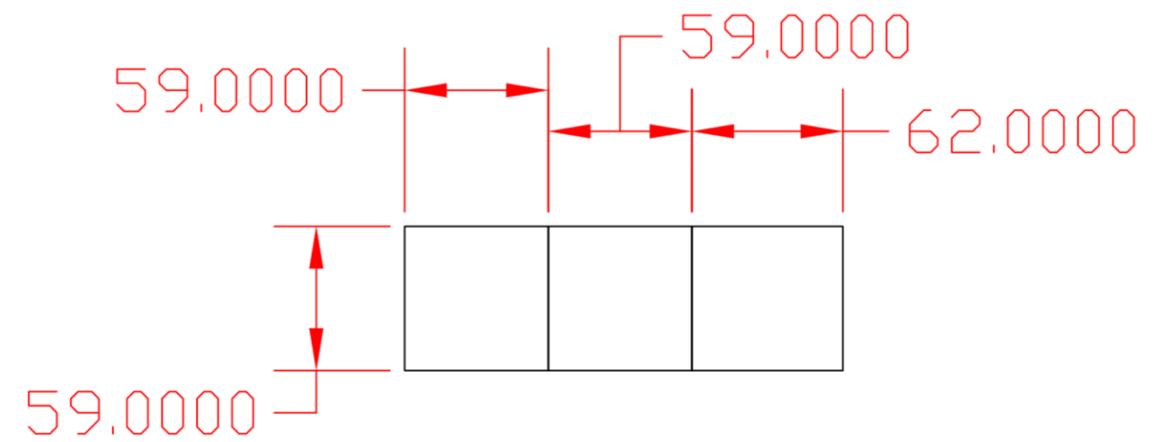
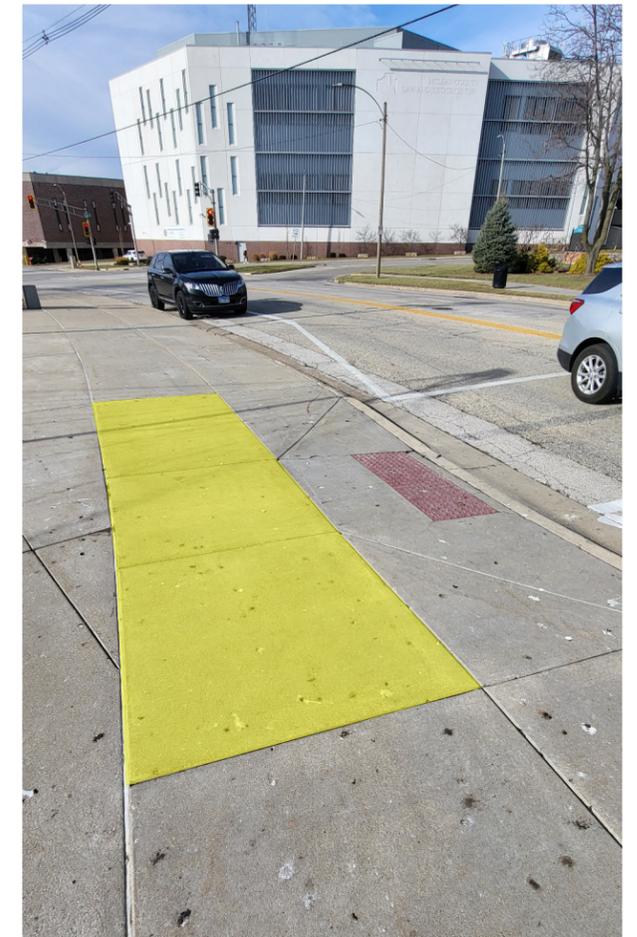
SW CORNER EAST & OLIVE





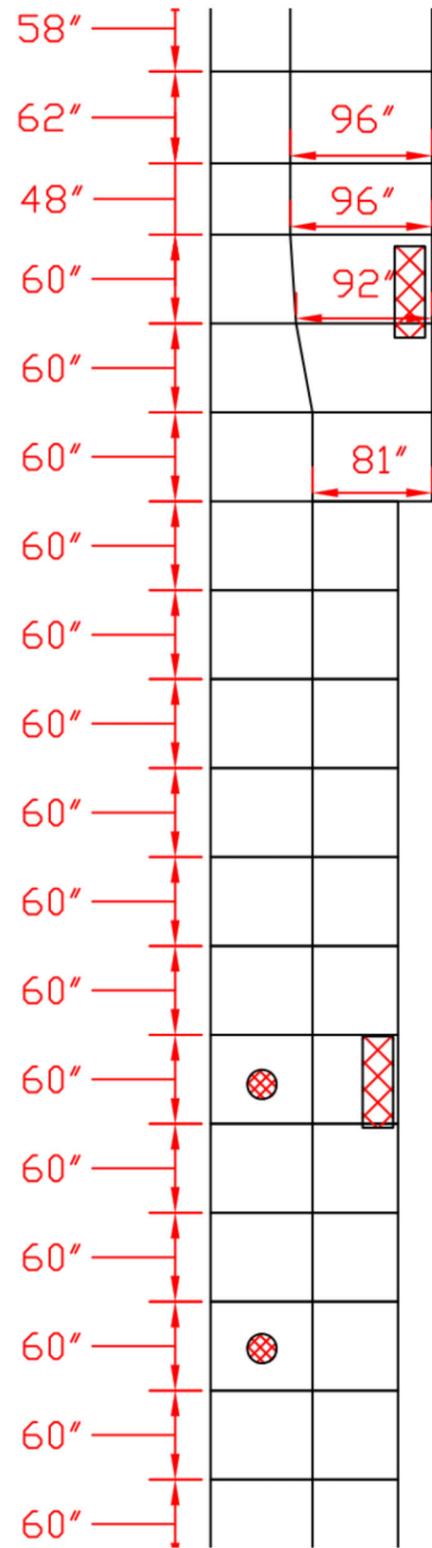
## Olive Street Crossing

The sidewalk on the opposite page has not been measured, but the panels are similar in size as the Olive St Crossing here.

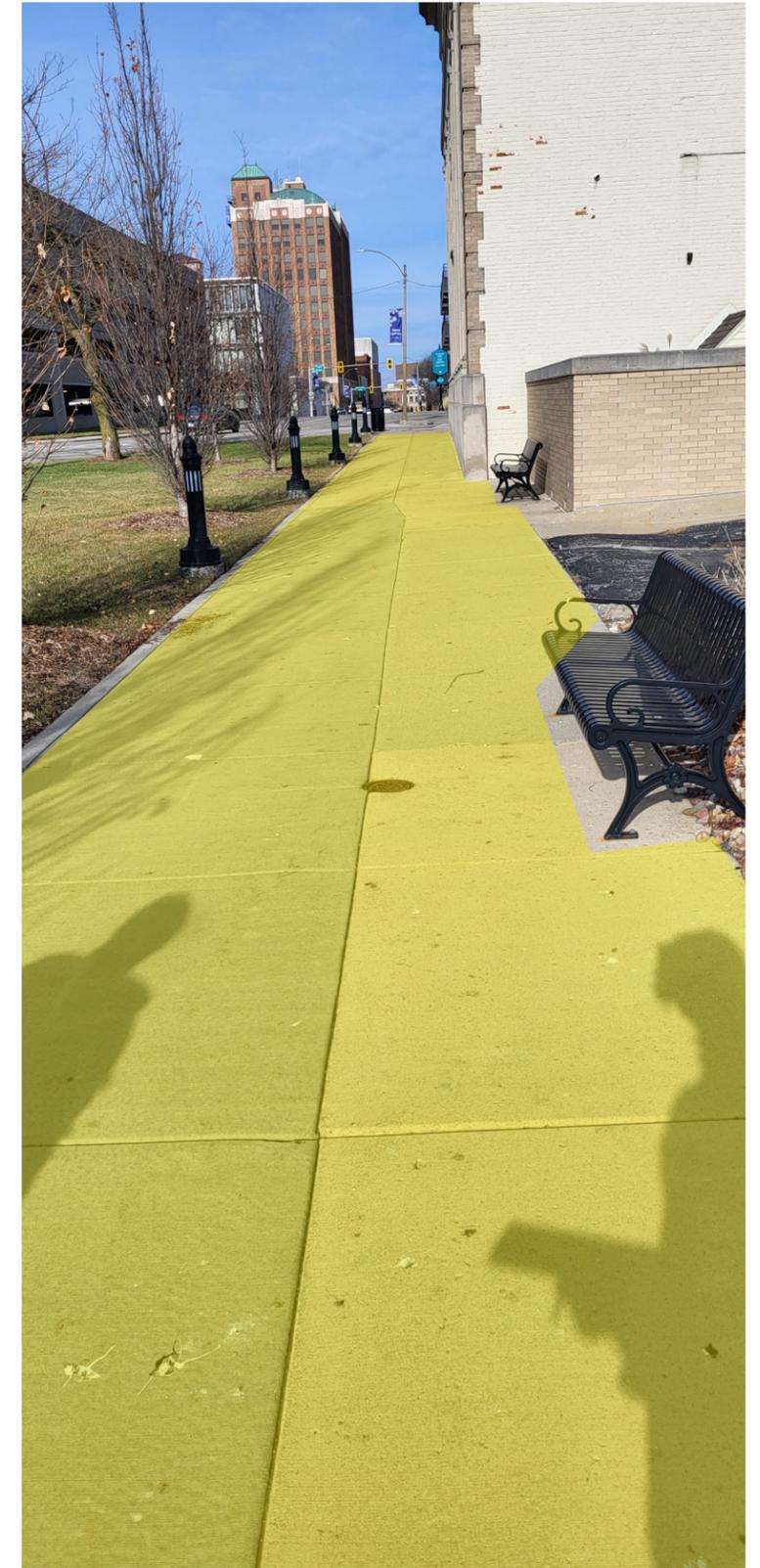


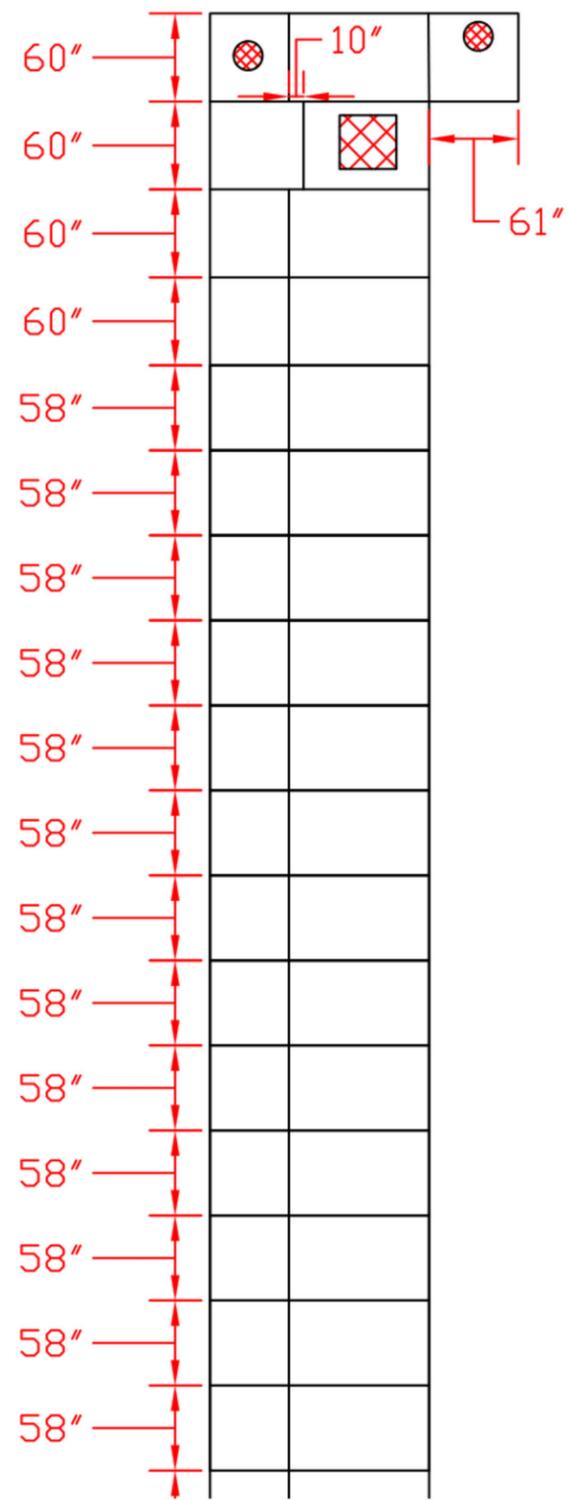
SOUTH OLIVE



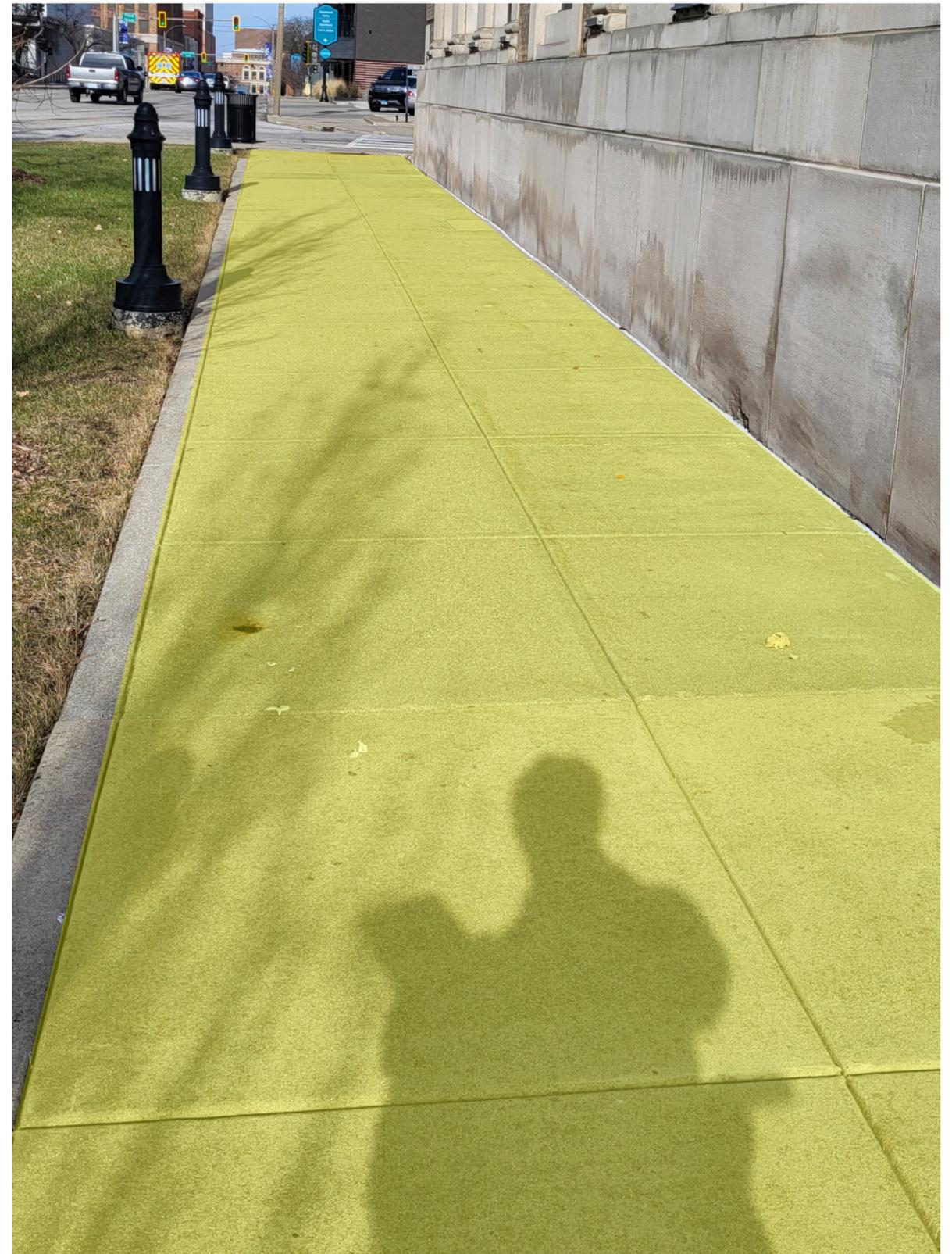


SIDEWALK (CENTER)



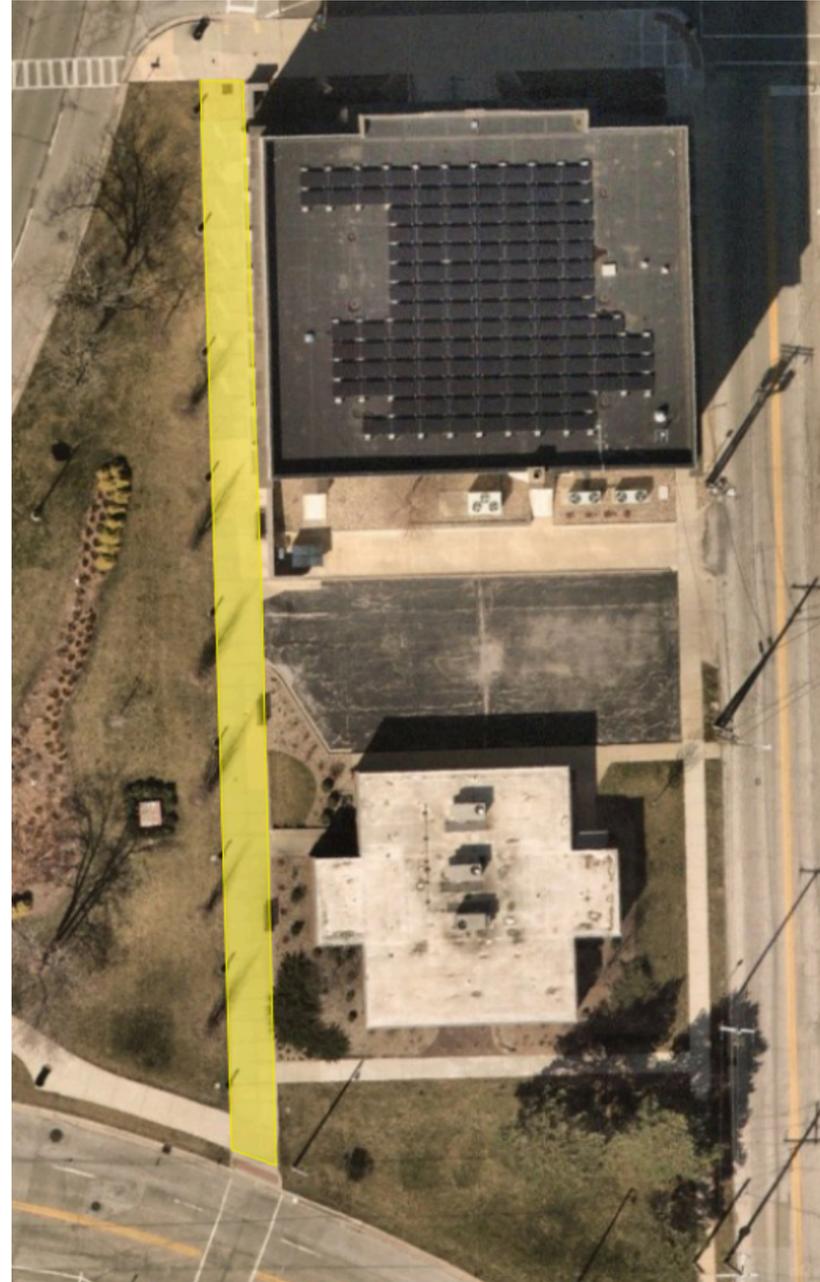


SIDWALK (NORTH)



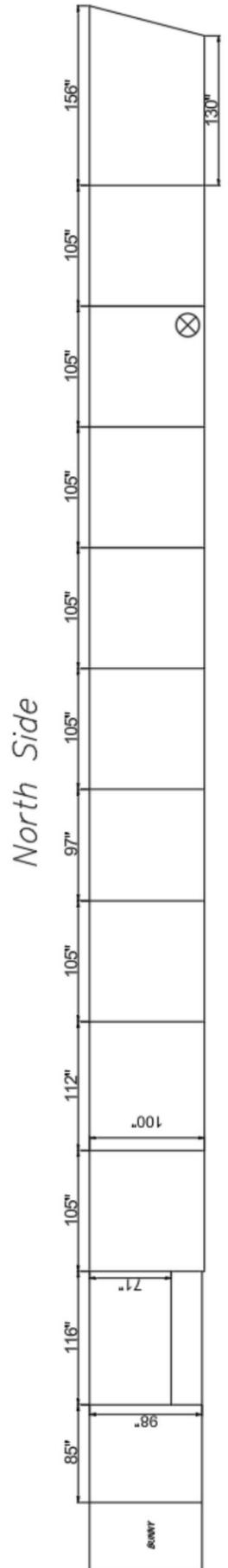
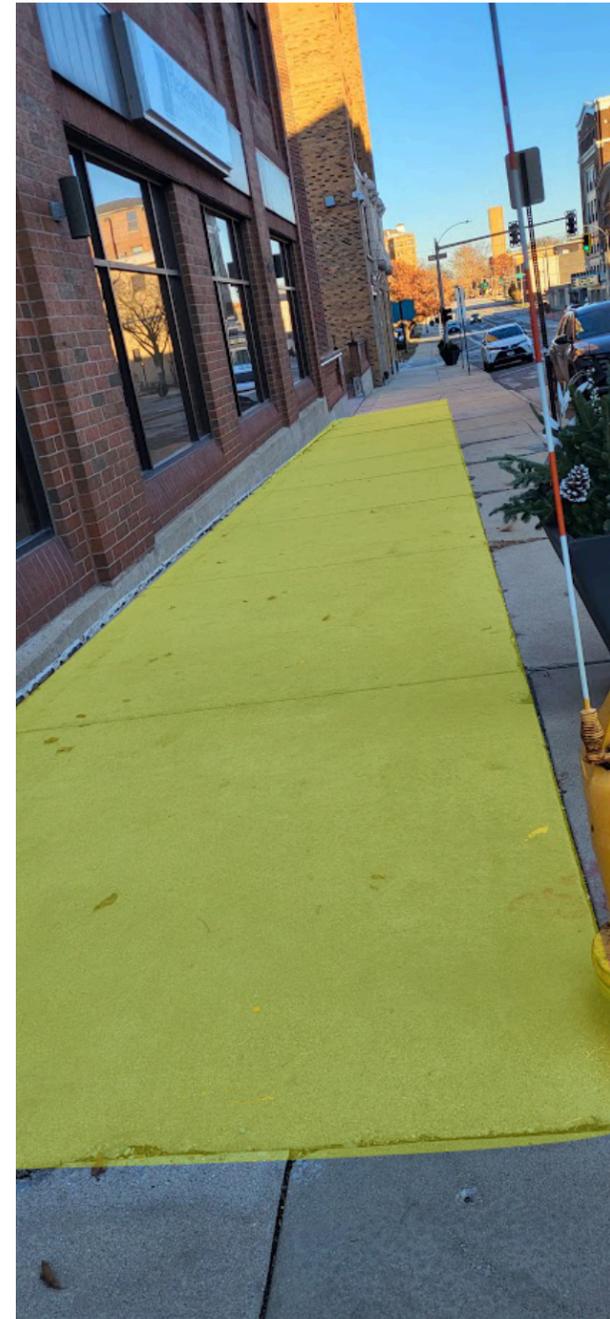
## McBarnes Sidewalk

This portion of the project is the longest continuous sidewalk. Feel free to be whimsical with the designs.



## Washington Street Sidewalk

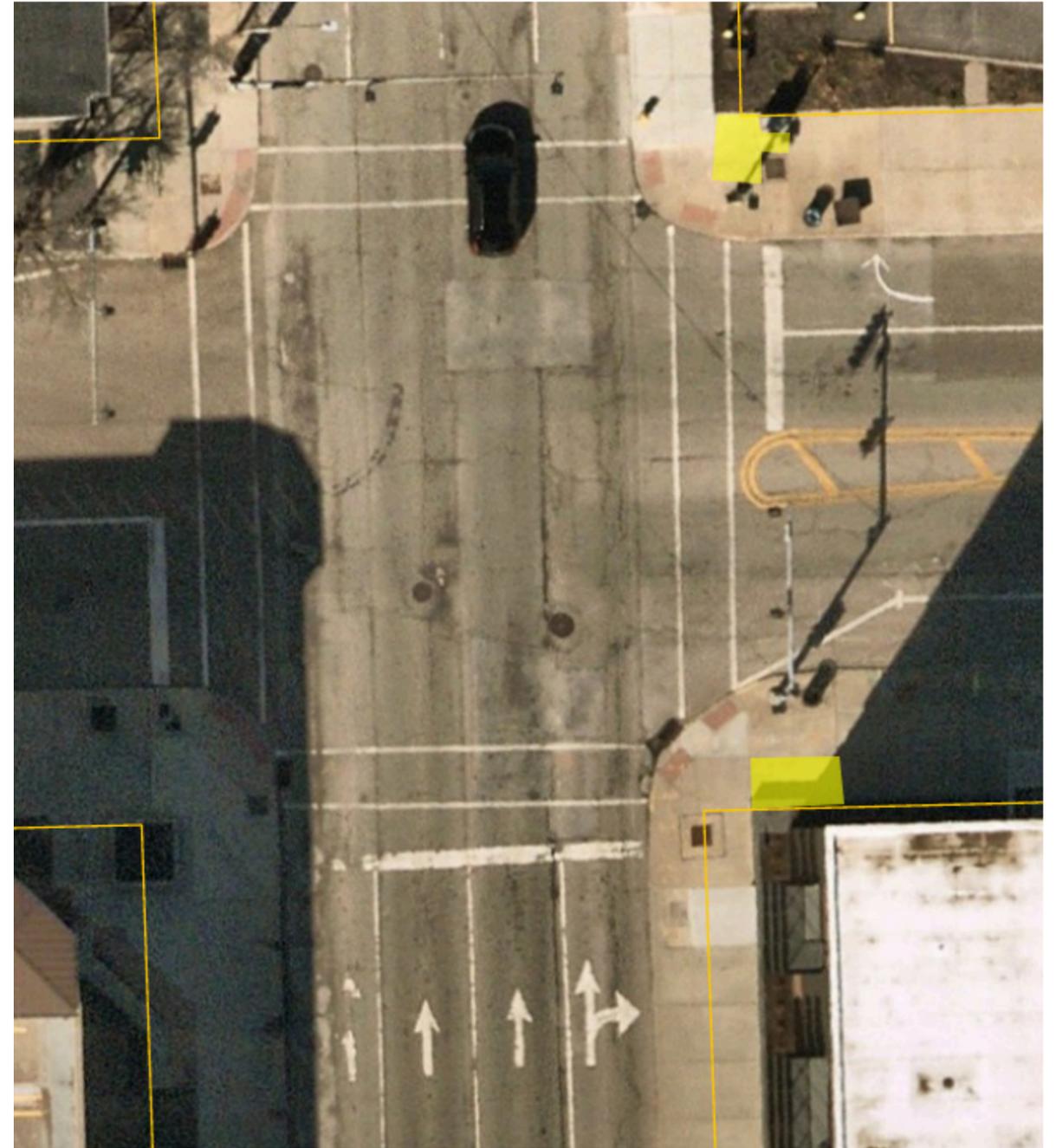
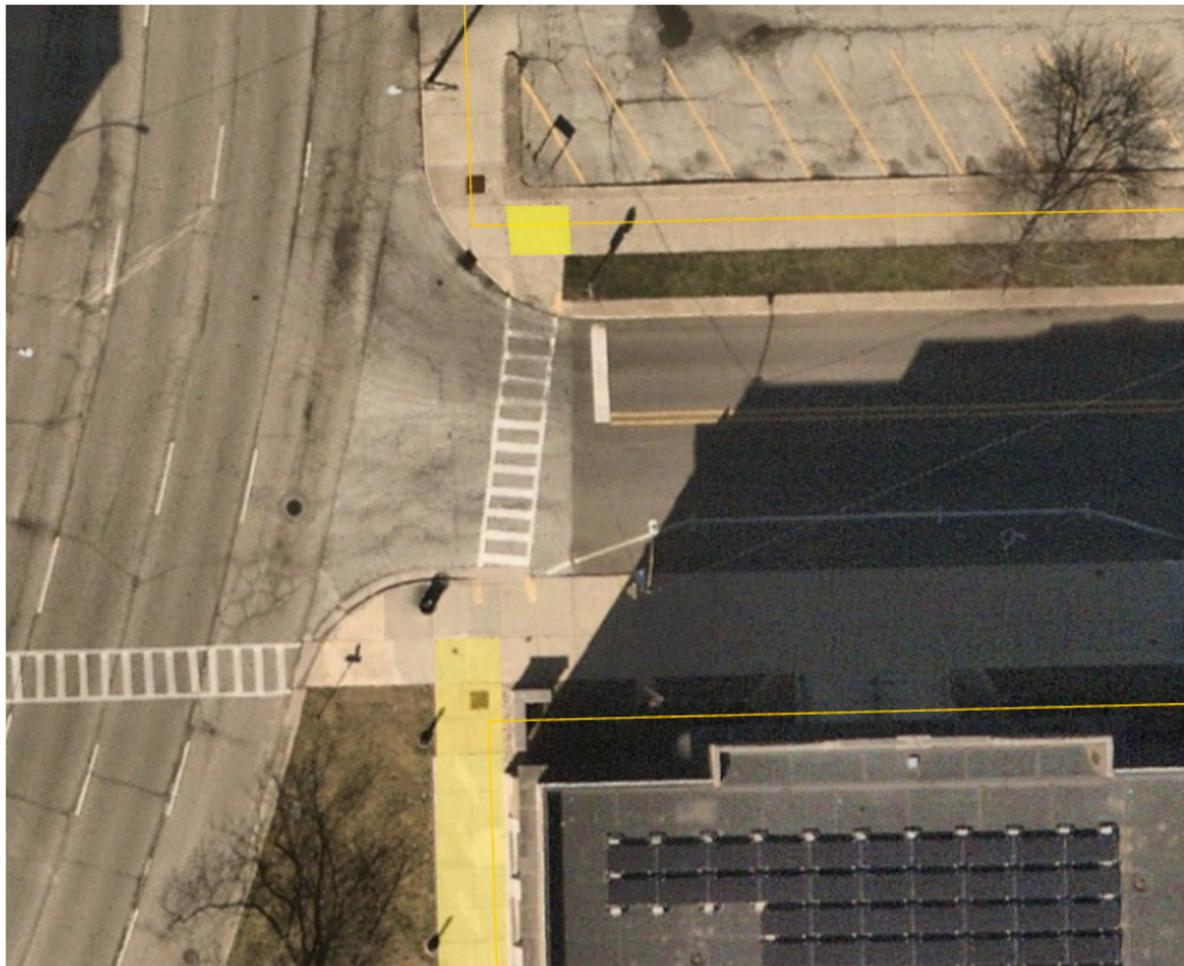
This new section of the mural between the former State Farm building and Main St. requires artist flexibility due to the possibility of ongoing renovations to the building.

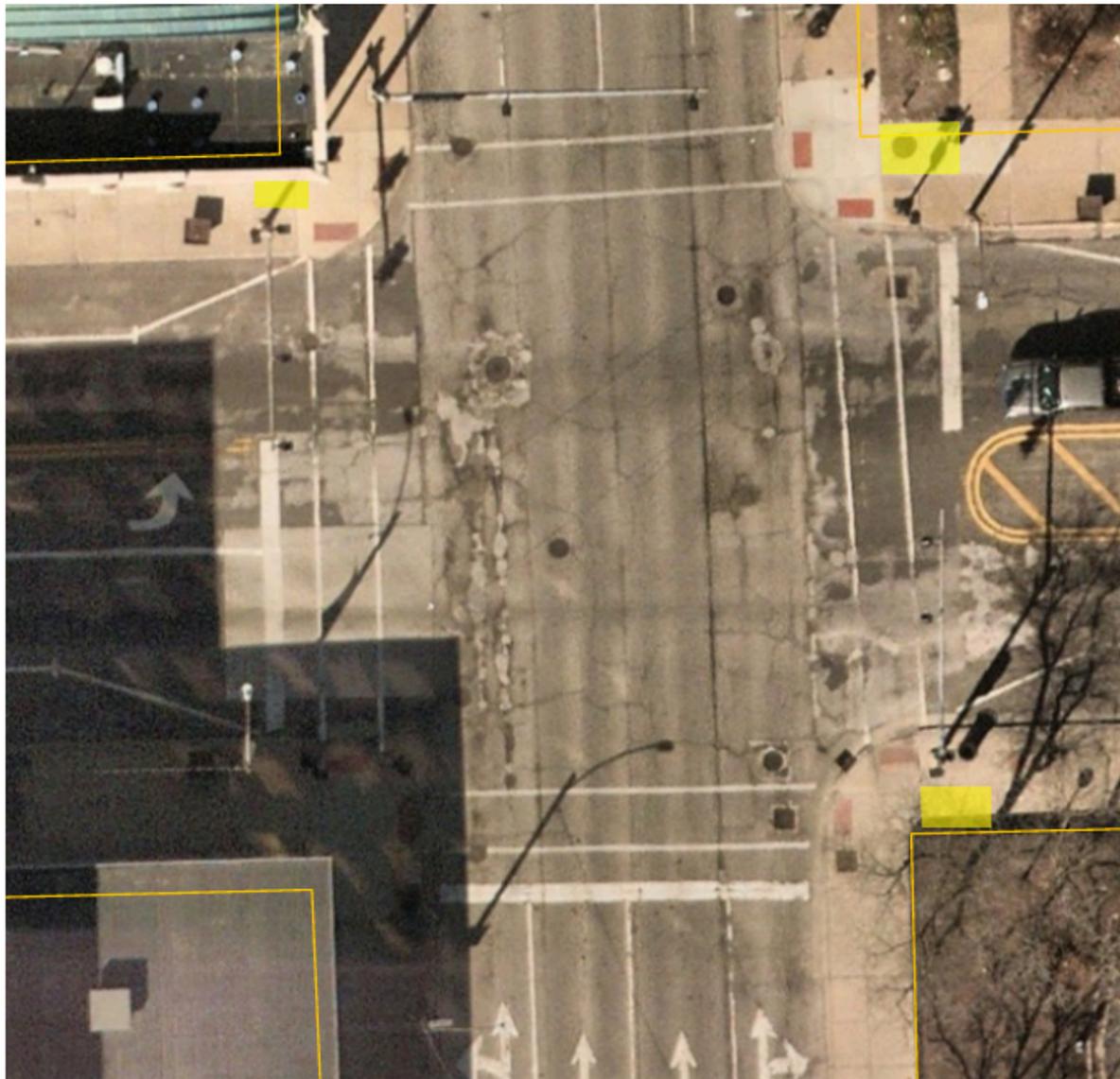


## Smaller Artworks

The sidewalk on this and the following two pages have not been measured, but they are no larger than a standard sidewalk panel (60" x 60").

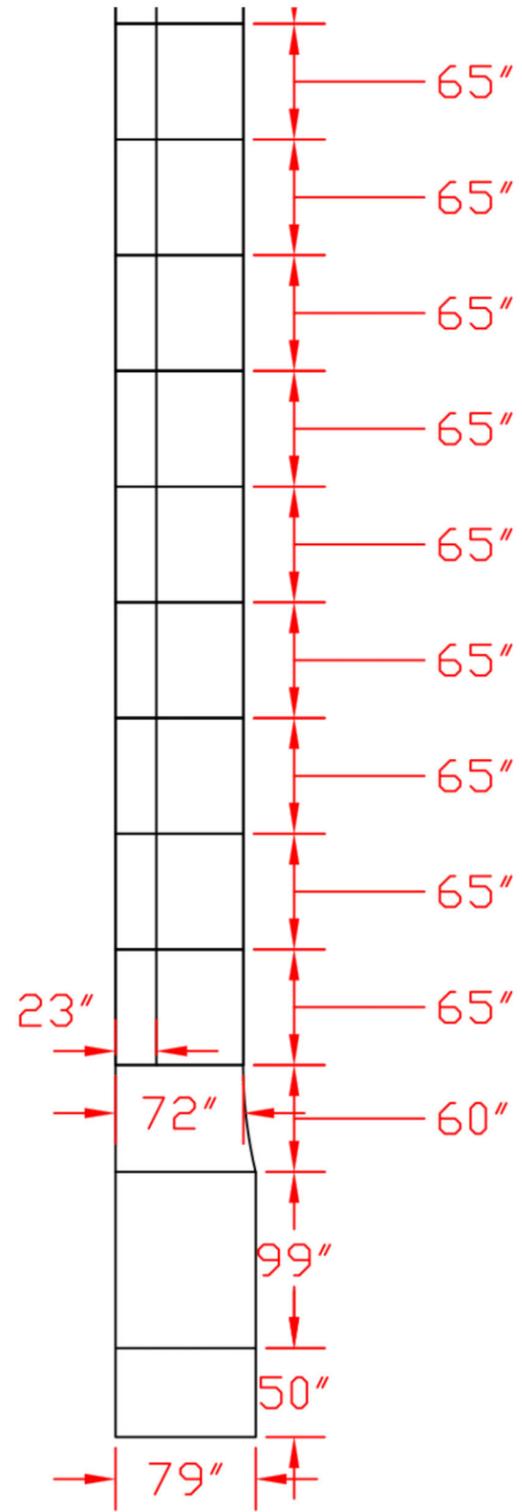
Stencils or other simplistic designs that tie the larger works together would work great in these locations.



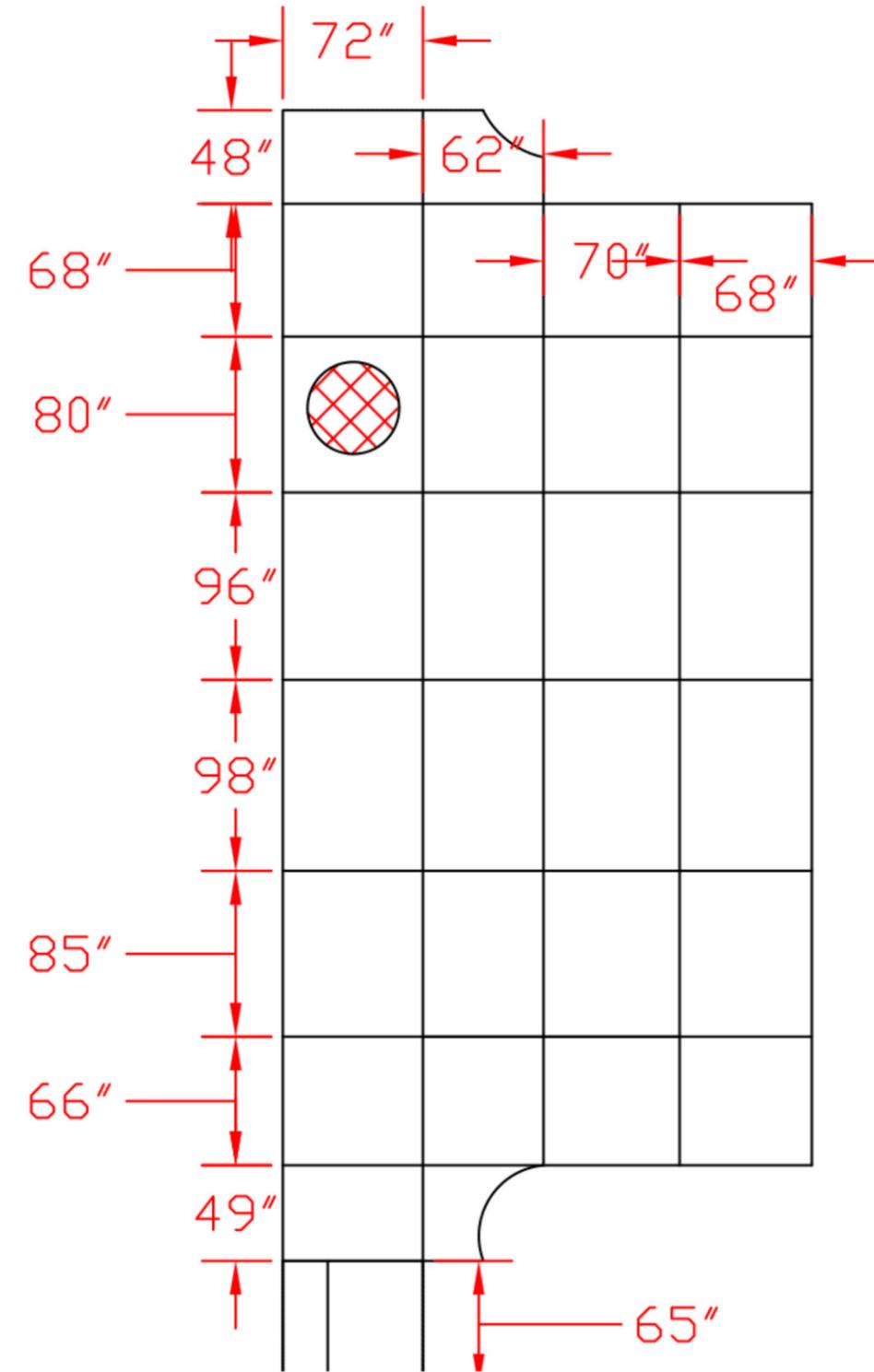


## Museum Plaza

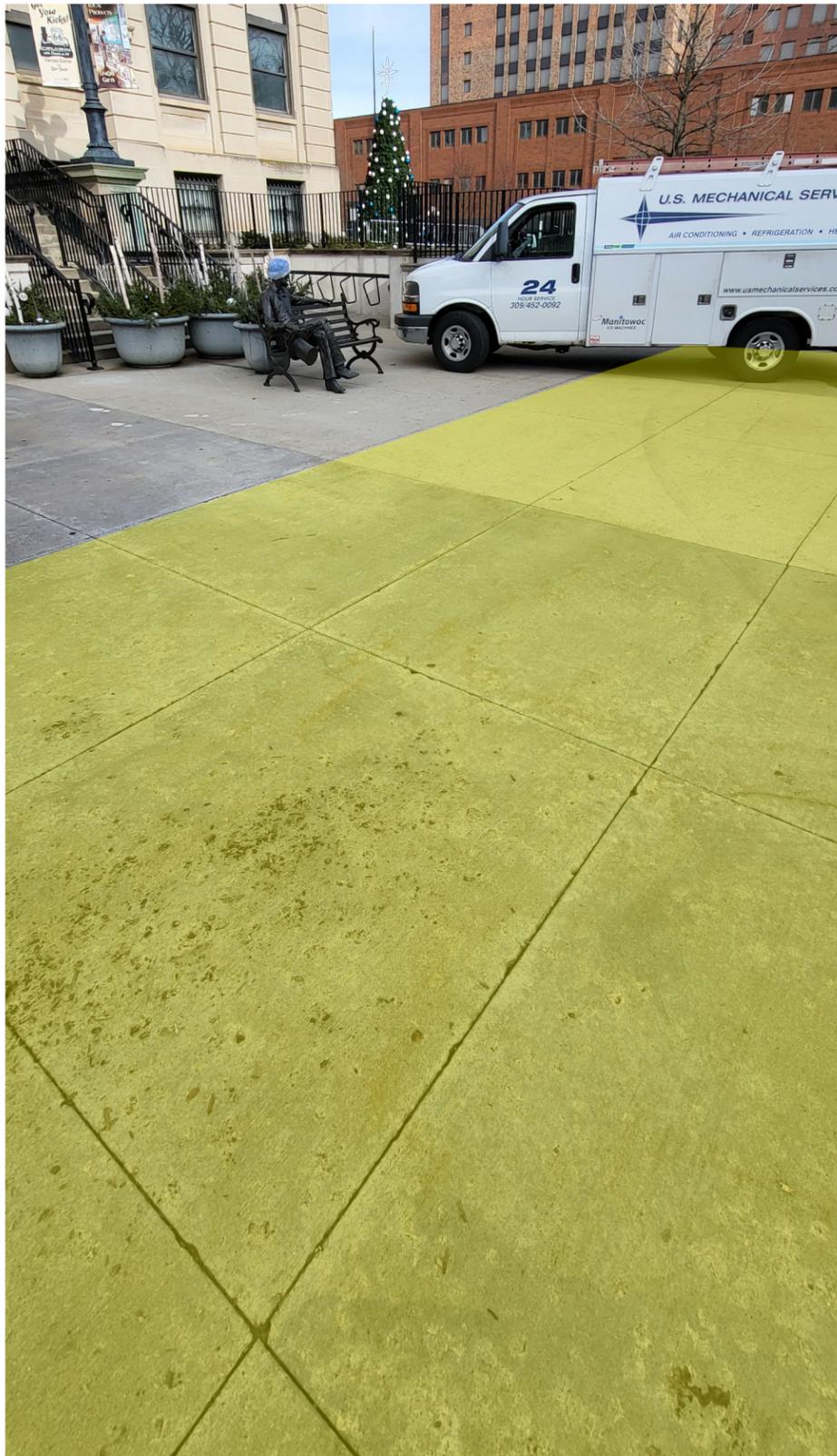
The wayfinding mural ends at MCMH Plaza, at the entrance to the historic McLean County courthouse and museum. The Museum director has requested that the mural includes an indication of the entrance of the museum with arrows or artful direction of your choosing.



MUSEUM (SIDEWALK)



MUSEUM (PLAZA)



## Design Guidelines

Strong Towns Blono has chosen a **Route 66** theme for the 2026 sidewalk murals to celebrate the centennial of the “Mother Road.” The visual style and interpretation of this theme are at the discretion of the applying artists. Applying artists are asked to consider the unique location and function of the surface artworks and how they will enhance the physical surroundings, how they will be effective as wayfinding signage and enhance pedestrian safety, and how they will reflect the goals of the project and the character of the locations that they connect. Designs must include **wayfinding text and direction** (eg. arrows or other indication) to guide pedestrians between the library and the museum. That said, these are prudent parameters for the artist to consider when envisioning their design(s):

- Artwork should not cover up or make it difficult for pedestrians who are vision impaired to use the tactile bumps (Detectable Warning Surfaces) for the crosswalk
- Art cannot be retro-reflective
- Art cannot include any traffic control signs, symbols, or markings as defined by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices - MUTCD) or official agency logos
- No advertising or logo use is allowed
- Design and colors should not be easily confused for other types of markings on the street, like a bike lane or the double-yellow center-line.
- Be sure to avoid **solid swathes** of colors that are recognized by MUTCD as official colors for other purposes (bike lane green, bus lane red, ADA blue). Outside of these, there is broad latitude for colors and designs.



Final designs will be approved by the City of Bloomington Department of Engineering

## Artwork & Materials

Applying artists must be understanding that the installed artworks in this pilot initiative will be **temporary** (lasting 3 to 6 months), though design elements may be incorporated into future semi-permanent crosswalk art installations. Temporary surface artwork and signage will be installed using spray chalk or tempera paint. The chosen artist will be responsible for securing their own materials within the parameters and budget provided (see Materials/Supplies). Applying artists should have experience with public engagement and must be comfortable including volunteers and members of the community in their practice.

Note that applying artists should provide information in their portfolio submissions if their portfolios include AI generated or supported works. Finalist artists using AI will be asked to explain its use in their design process and final design concept, providing a description of if/how AI tools were used in their design process and an estimated percentage of how much of the design was AI generated/supported.

## Timeline/Deadlines

**Applications Open:** January 1, 2026

**Applications Due:** January 31, 2026

**Finalist Artists (3) Notified:** February 2026

**Finalist Site-Specific Design Concepts Due:** April 1, 2026

**Chosen Artist Notification:** April 15 2026

**Artist Agreement Signed:** April 30, 2026

**Installation:** May 2026 (completed by June 13, 2026)



BLICK Student Tempera Paints were used in the 2025 mural.

The winning artist will be required to sign a contract with The City of Bloomington by April 30, 2026. The winning artist will be required to meet with members of the Public Art and Safety Committee (in person at the site) once before installation. The chosen artist will be required to install the surface murals with wayfinding/signage by June 13, 2026. Installation and unveiling will include an element of community engagement to be determined in collaboration with members of the Public Art and Safety Committee. In total, from first application to installation and opening, this project is a 6 month commitment.



2025 murals along the west side of the McBarnes Building

## Sidewalk Mural Opening (June 13, 2026)

The sidewalk mural will open with a celebration on Saturday June 13 at the Bloomington Public Library between 10 am and 12 pm. The event will celebrate the winning mural artist and their work, with comments by the artist and crafts for children. There will also be a table in front of the McLean County Museum of History and a scavenger hunt for children walking from one end of the mural to the other.

## Artist Compensation

\$750: 3 artist finalists, \$250 per artist

\$5,000: 1 project artist

## Materials/Supplies

\$1,000: Actual supplies will be dependent on artist, but can consider...

- Paint/Chalk: Blick Tempera paints
- Applicator (brushes, rollers)
- [Stencil Materials](#)



*Ephemera prepared by Strong Towns Blono using art from the 2025 murals for the Opening Celebration.*

## Ownership

The artist will retain ownership of any ideas submitted for consideration until a final selection has been made and a contract is signed with the City of Bloomington. At that time, the City of Bloomington will obtain 100 percent ownership of artwork produced, in whatever stage of completion, and the artwork shall become the property of the City of Bloomington as a work made for hire as defined by the copyright laws of the United States. The City of Bloomington shall be the sole and exclusive owner and copyright proprietor of all rights and title in and to the results and proceeds of artist's services here-under. In addition, the artist guarantees being the sole author of the work and that all services are original by the artist and not copied in whole or in part.

## Partners

**Strong Towns Blono** is a Strong Towns Local Conversation located in Bloomington-Normal with the goal of improving our communities through bottom-up solutions.

**Bloomington Public Library:** Bloomington Public Library provides its diverse community with a helpful and welcoming place that offers equitable access to the world of ideas and information and supports lifelong learning

**McLean County Museum of History:** The mission of the McLean County Museum of History is to preserve, educate, and collaborate in sharing the diverse stories of the people of McLean County.



## Contacts

Katherine McCarthy, Public Art and Safety Committee Chair [mkmv1413@gmail.com](mailto:mkmv1413@gmail.com)

Hannah Johnson, Public Art and Safety Community Liaison [hejohnson.art@gmail.com](mailto:hejohnson.art@gmail.com)

## Resources

Asphalt Art Initiative - Bloomberg Philanthropies: <https://asphaltart.bloomberg.org/guide/>

Tactical Urbanist's Guide to Materials and Design: <https://tacticalurbanismguide.com/guides/tactical-urbanists-guide-to-materials-and-design/>