



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.

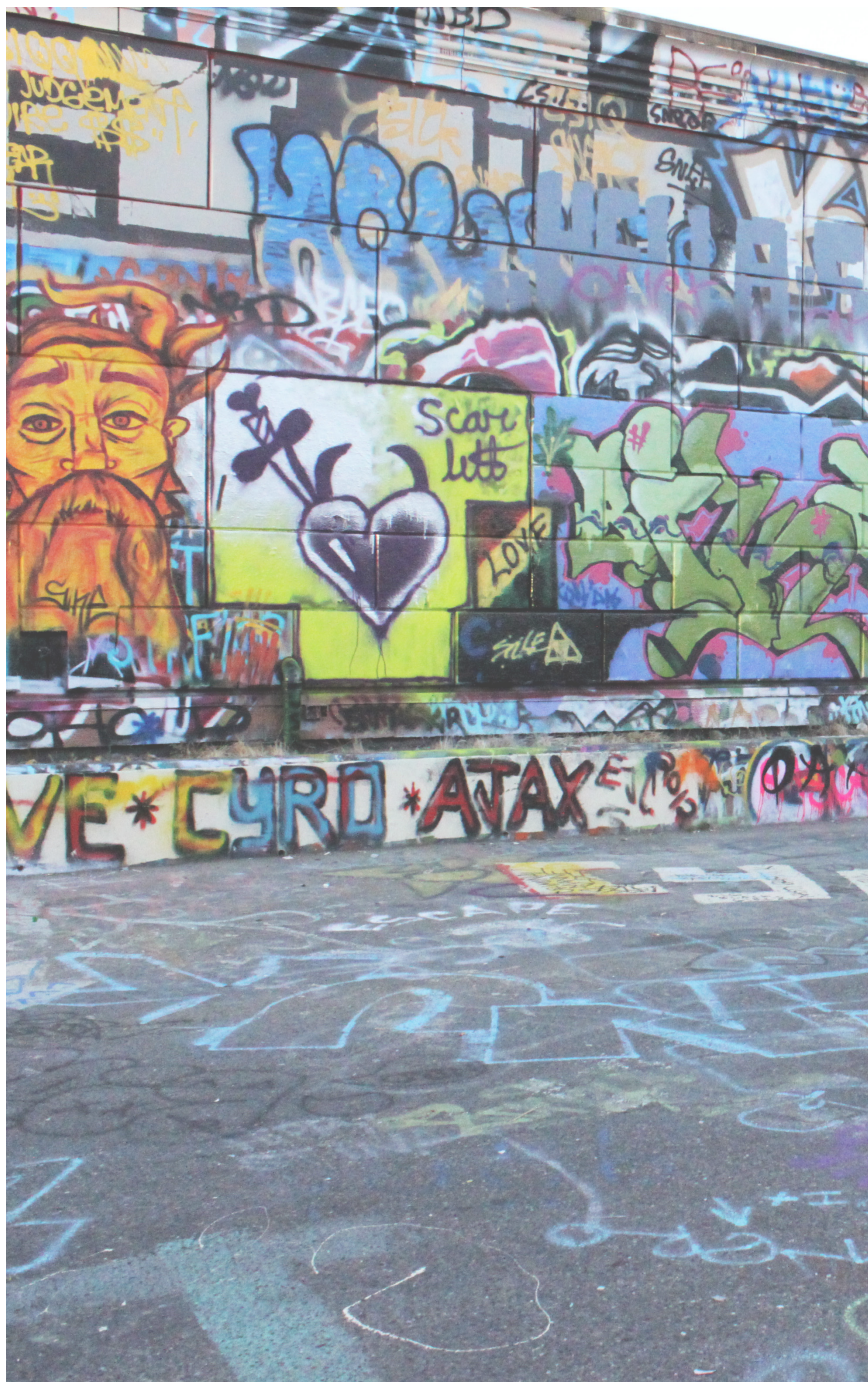


Figure 1: Free Wall in Seattle

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

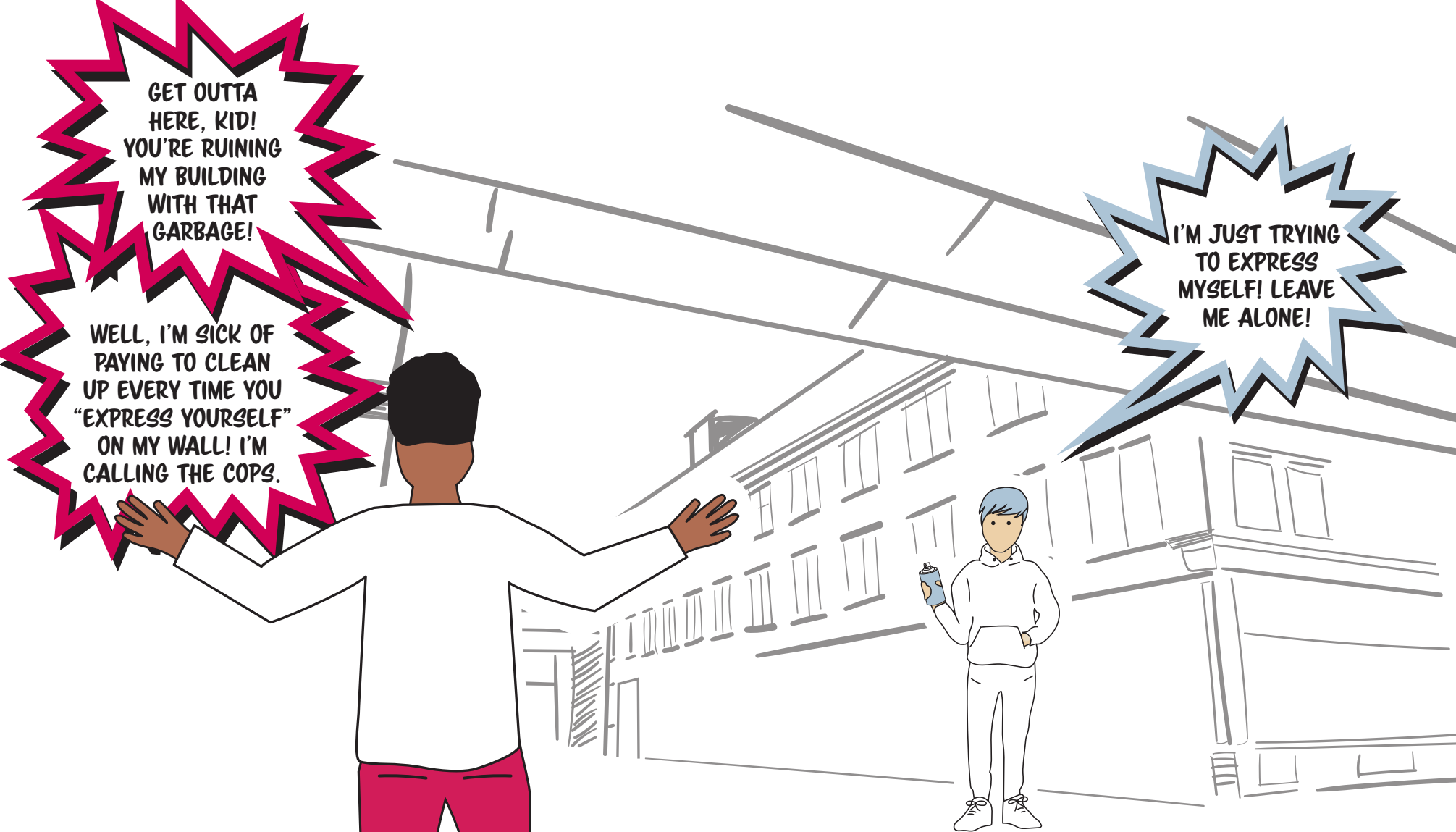
Due to its unique legal history, the City of Portland requires permits for all outdoor murals, rather than simply requiring the permission of property owners.⁴ Permits, which require a fee, waiting period, and interaction with public officials, can present a significant barrier to artists.⁵ Additionally, 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



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

1. No graffiti on private property.
2. No graffiti on public property.
3. No graffiti on historic buildings.
4. No graffiti on utility poles.
5. No graffiti on street furniture.

rules sign!

trash can!

ADA features!

Recommendations

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

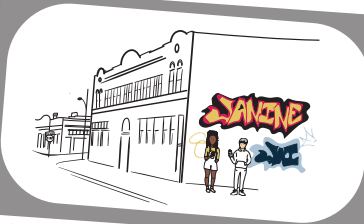
- Support a policy change that makes free walls legal in Portland through an amendment to the City mural code or by expanding the Public Arts Mural Program of the Regional Arts and Culture Council
- Encourage careful consideration when determining a location and design elements for a free wall in order 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 graffitipdx and 50 others

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

graffitipdx 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.



In Place



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