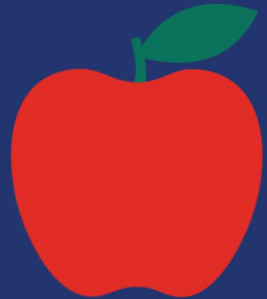




MICHIGAN MUNICIPAL LEAGUE CONVENTION 2025



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KATE KNIGHT

Executive Director
Downtown Development Director
City of Northville

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MARK WASHINGTON

City Manager
City of Grand Rapids

Why Art? Become a Unicorn.

- Differentiate your community
- Revitalize neglected areas, draw foot traffic, and boost safety and activity
- Drives economic growth
- Spark conversation, inspire reflection and emotion
- Become unforgettable
- Dream slide – part of Burning Man festival design by Curious Form



UNFORGETTABLE * NAT KING COLE





MISSION

To elevate quality of life through excellent city services

VALUES

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| ACCOUNTABILITY | COLLABORATION | CUSTOMER SERVICE |
| EQUITY | INNOVATION | SUSTAINABILITY |

Public Art is Not a Luxury — It's Infrastructure for Communities Wishing To Thrive



City Commission Policy 1100-06: Public Art and Memorials

The Arts Advisory Committee (AAC) plays a vital role in supporting the City Manager with expert guidance on public art projects. From murals to monuments, the AAC helps ensure art in public spaces reflects community values, creativity, and care.

Public Art Includes:

- Permanent and temporary art on City property or in City buildings
- Murals visible from public streets
- Art on roads, sidewalks and parking lots and other City infrastructure

What the AAC Does:

- Advises City Manager on art acceptance, placement, materials, and maintenance
- Promotes long-term public art stewardship



ARTPRIZE

Focusing on the intersection of exhibition, experience, and education to drive engagement www.ArtPrize.org



2024 ARTPRIZE HIGHLIGHTS

795,000

Visitors to ArtPrize

1000

Artist Participants

2,700

K-12 Students on ArtPrize Field Trips

160

Venues

\$71-77M

Regional Economic Impact

93,000

Votes Cast

ArtPrize as a Catalyst: Testing a Thesis - Silva

- Experiment with activation in a new public space,
- Demonstrate the site's accessibility and multi-use potential,
- Introduce visitors and business owners to an emerging destination,
- Spark interest, familiarity, and momentum for future use.



From Empty Lot to Activated Space: 555 Monroe NE

- Underutilized spaces in or close to Downtown
- Frequent site for festivals and community events
- Untapped potential for cultural and economic activation



Heartside Park Activation: Steps Toward a More Welcoming Space

- Transforms an empty lot into a bold, colorful destination
- Invites spontaneous play, gathering, and visual interest
- Signals investment, creativity, and care in public space



Participatory Projects: Art in Civic Engagement

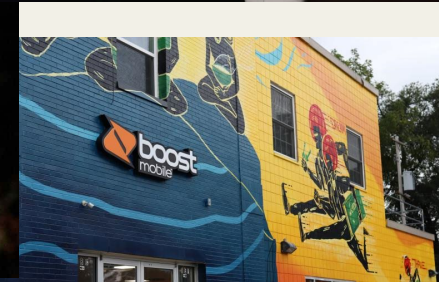
175th Anniversary Poster Contest:

- A citywide call to artists to represent Grand Rapids'
- Showcases community pride, storytelling, and inclusivity in celebrating civic milestones



Third Ward Cultural Tour

- Vibrant and historically rich African American culture
- Immersive experience highlighting significant contributions
- Celebrating Influential Figures



Engage Every Generation

- Design programs that connect generations through shared purpose
- Engage youth by amplifying their ideas and leadership
- Involve older adults by valuing their experience and wisdom



Grand Rapids Total Art Community Impact

- Visitors - 2.6 million
- Economic Impact - \$299 million
- Jobs – 2,559

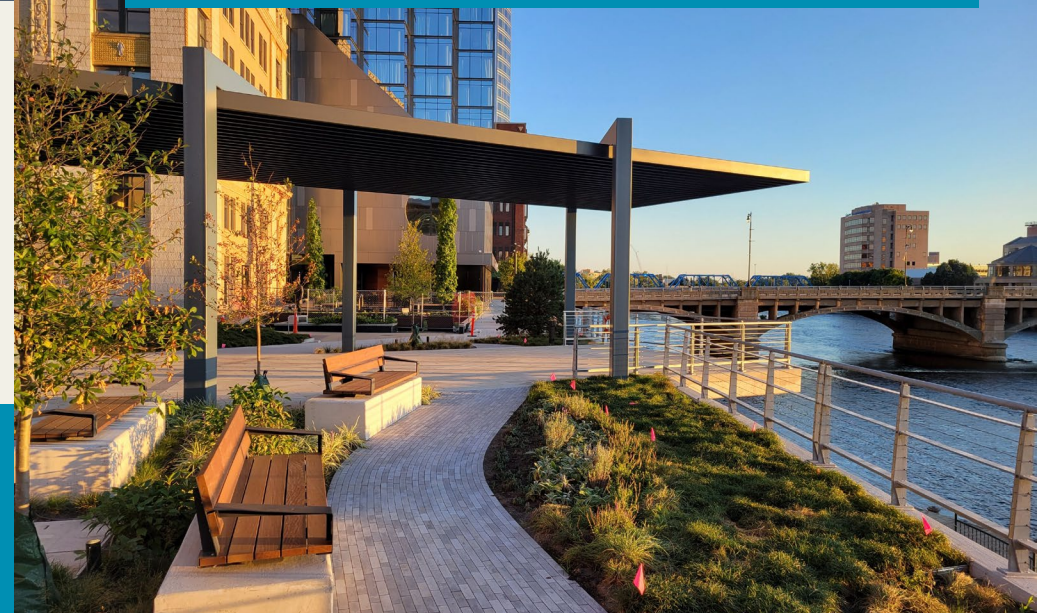
Acrisure Amphitheater



Lyon Square (Before)



Lyon Square (After)



Be Bold. Build a Unicorn. Make your Community Unforgettable.

What can you do to make your community a Unicorn and Unforgettable?



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SCOTT MCLENNAN

Mayor
City of Rogers City

Why Murals in Rogers City?

- Strengthen community identity
- Beautify blank walls and underused spaces
- Connect history, culture, and people
- Spark civic pride & visitor curiosity



Community Challenges We Addressed

- Underutilized downtown spaces
- Perception of decline in small towns
- Need for youth engagement and new energy
- Limited tourism “hooks” beyond natural assets





Murals of Rogers City

- Nautical & shipping heritage murals downtown
- Community-driven alleyway art
- Local artists featured in public spaces
- Seasonal visitors sharing mural photos on social media

How Rogers City Made It Happen

- Partnerships:
City, DDA, Business Owners, Artists
- Local champions leading the way
- Funding from grants, donations, sponsorships
- Community “buy-in” through participation





Impact So Far

- Increased foot traffic downtown
- Stronger sense of place and pride
- Murals as a tourism attraction
- Momentum for more placemaking projects



<https://bit.ly/RCMuralsMap>

Takeaways for Other Communities

- Start with what makes your town unique
- Partner broadly: artists, businesses, government, residents
- Small projects can build momentum
- Public art is an investment in identity, pride, and economic vitality



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MARK VANDERPOOL

City Manager

City of Sterling Heights

Mural, Mural on the Wall: Placemaking Through Art

The City of Sterling Heights leads by example incorporating Visioning principles as a foundation to create

An inclusive, vibrant community that is safe, active and sustainable.

-Sterling Heights Visioning 2040 Statement

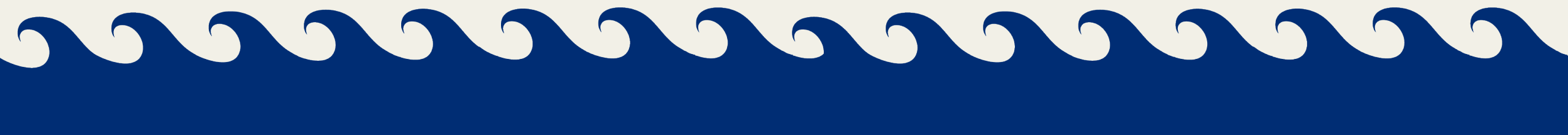
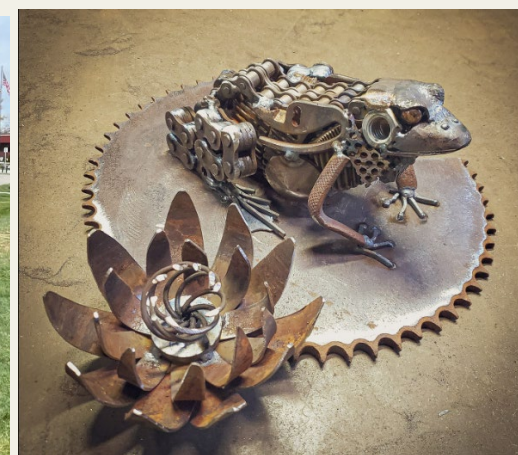


Mural, Mural on the Wall: Placemaking Through Art

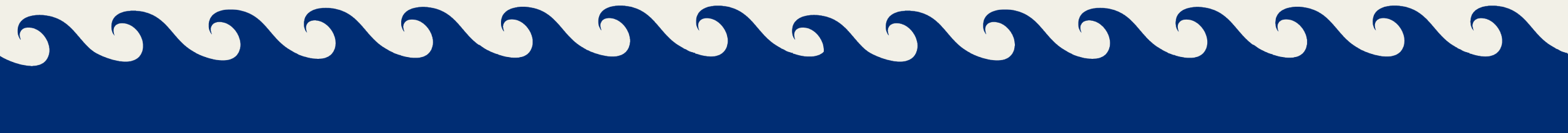
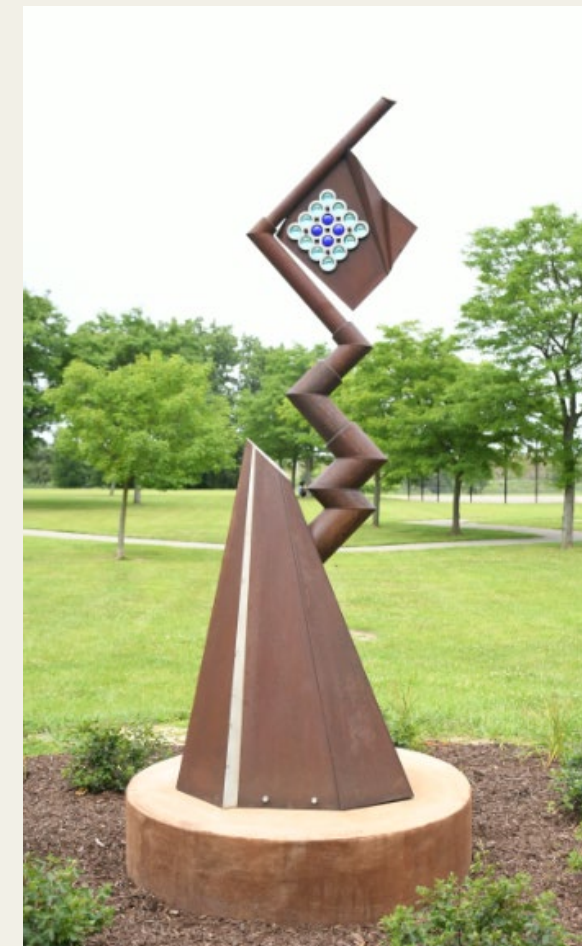
“Art is not a luxury; art is a precondition to success in a world increasingly driven by creativity and innovation...”

- Luis Ubinas, President of the Ford Foundation

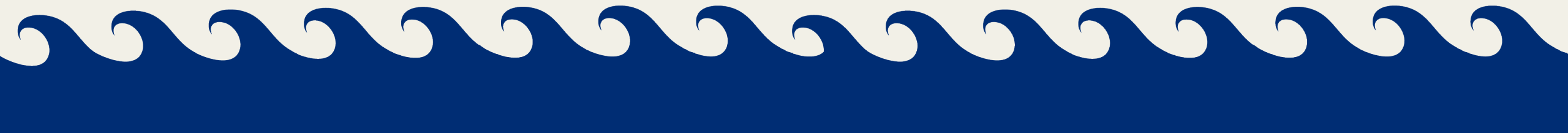
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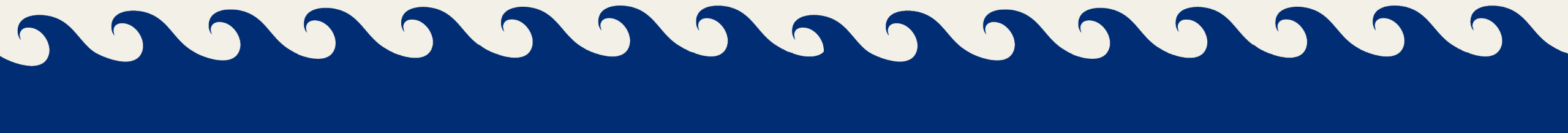
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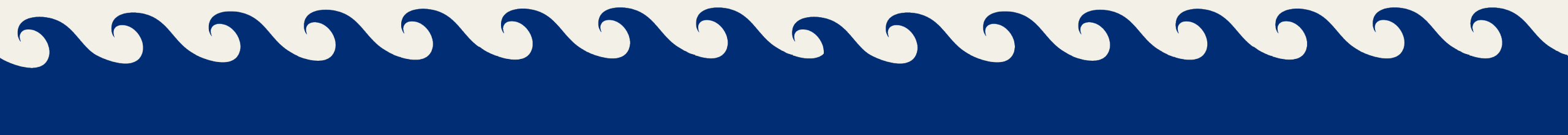
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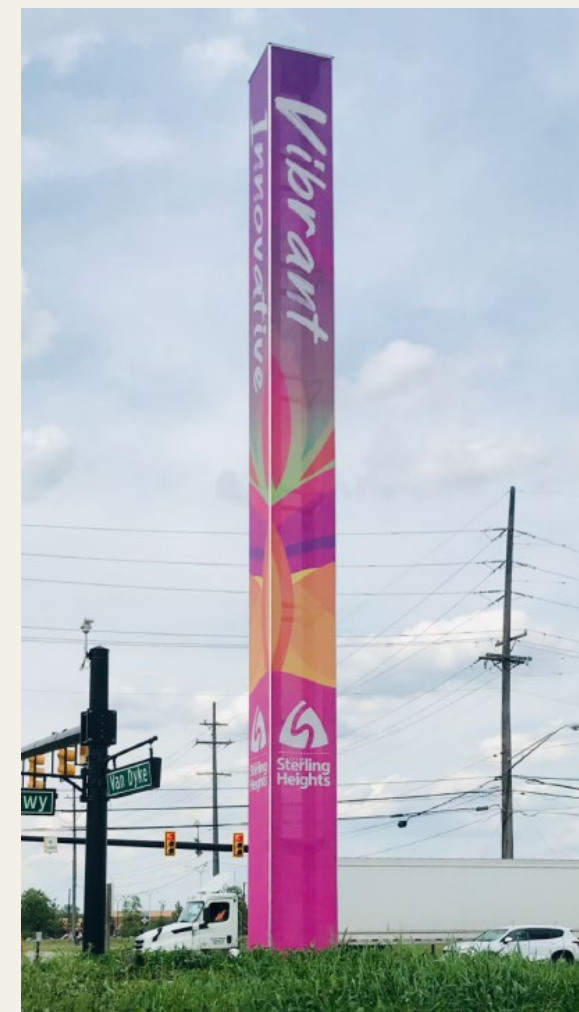
Mural, Mural on the Wall: Placemaking Through Art



Mural, Mural on the Wall: Placemaking Through Art



Mural, Mural on the Wall: Placemaking Through Art









The Seed

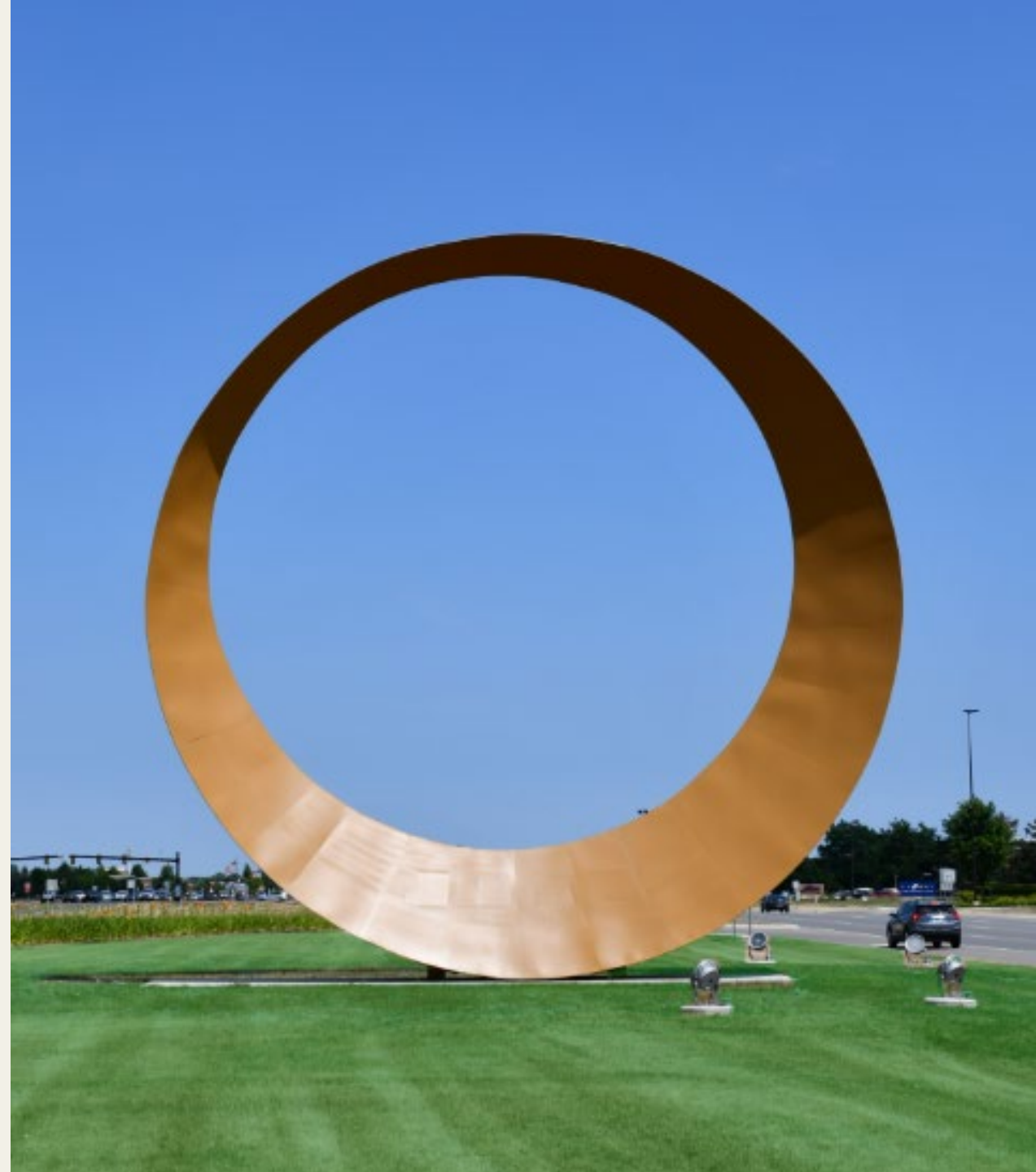
Erik and Israel Nordin (Detroit; Sterling Heights natives)

“The Seed” was installed in November 2017. At 26-feet tall, it is made with steel and blown glass that will patina over time to create a unique and beautiful look. The leaves of the piece are filled with a varying gradient of green glass that is lit at night. The goal behind the piece was to share the City’s vision for Sterling Heights as a place to engage in recreation and enjoy the outdoors.

The Halo

Randall K. Metz, Grissim Metz Andriese Associates (Plymouth)

The Halo is a 35-foot golden ring made of a steel frame, covered in aluminum. Illuminated at night, The Halo has become an iconic universal monument celebrating The Golden Corridor and the roadway, region and shopping/dining opportunities that are a part of it. The design is a modern abstraction of the ancient moon gate, signifying prosperity.





CONVENIENTLY LOCATED ON THE M-59 GOLDEN CORRIDOR BETWEEN VAN DYKE AND SCHOENHERR.





Support for Ukraine



Breast Cancer Awareness



Support for MSU Shooting



Grand Rapids, MI



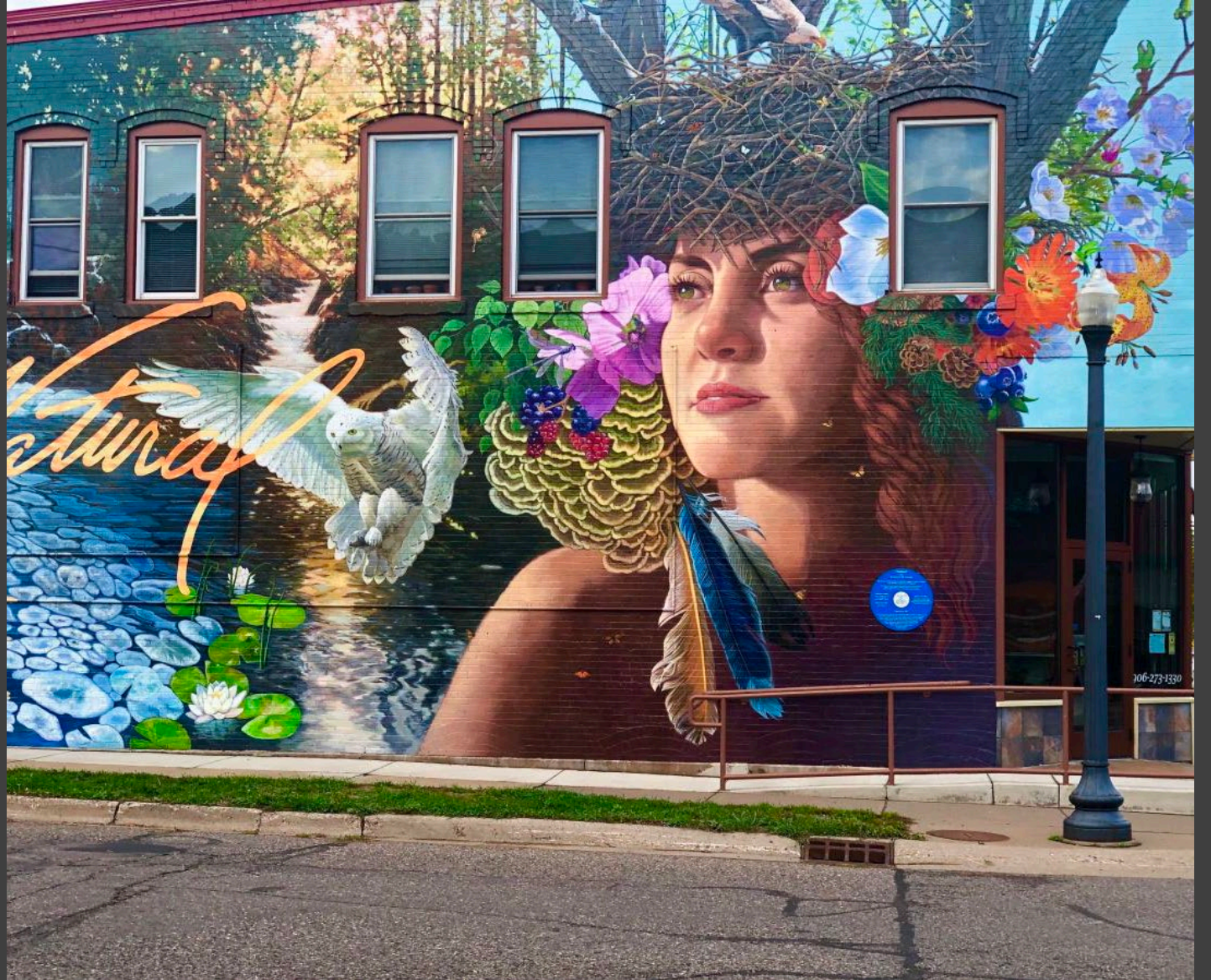
Ann Arbor, MI



Detroit, MI



Baldwin, MI



Why is Public Art Important?

It strengthens communities by creating a shared sense of place and cultural identity, fosters social cohesion and understanding, and provides accessible cultural enrichment for all residents.

“Arts and culture are absolutely essential for emotional engagement with a place.”

*-Peter Kageyama,
For the Love of Cities*





ROI on Public Art

Economic Impact and Tourism

Job Creation

Increased Property Values

Business Growth

Community Identity

Social Cohesion

Public Well-being

Enhanced Public Spaces



ART TAKES CENTER STAGE IN STERLING HEIGHTS
SPONSORED BY: CITY OF STERLING HEIGHTS





MACUMBDAILY.COM

Sterling Heights' Golden Butthole Set to Host Most Epic Car Jump in Macomb County History

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