



Two new murals approved for Willy Street's Plan B



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Two new murals have been approved for the Willy Street corridor on the near east side, adding to the street's already [vibrant collection of artwork](#).

[Michael Owen](#), a muralist and painter from [Baltimore](#), has been tapped to create a new mural on the side of Plan B at 924

Williamson St. The building is owned by Chuck Chvala, who has donated money toward the project. (Other funds will come from the Madison Community Foundation, Plan B itself and a fundraiser.)

Owen started the [Baltimore Love Project](#) several years ago, in 2008, spelling out the word "LOVE" in sign language on some 20 walls all over the city.

The murals, [according to the project's Facebook page](#), are "identical in regards to content, only ranging in size." Madison's mural will have the same design.

On the back of the building, near Cha Cha Beauty & Barber, [local artist Craig Grabhorn](#) is designing another mural. Muralist Sharon Kilfoy, who went to the Marquette Neighborhood Association Art and Culture Committee meeting where both were approved, said it may have a "broken heart" or "heart with wings" theme.

"We're going to call it a Madison summer of love, with the love mural and the love theme at Absolutely Art," Kilfoy said. [Absolutely Art](#), a nine-year-old near east gallery, recently [announced its plan to close](#) on June 28 after a show featuring Mallory Shotwell's "Love Project."

The murals are one facet of the [Willy Street Public Art Project](#), a \$100,000 fund still being raised by the Marquette Neighborhood Association.

Other elements of the ongoing project include sidewalk poetry and informational markers, approved in 2012, detailing the "cultural and social history of Willy Street," according to Kilfoy.

Each of the 13 marker stands will be designed by metal artist Erika Koivunen, and may include rebar unearthed during 2011 road construction.

"They're not going to all look the same," Kilfoy said. "They will have Erika's mark on them."

Koivunen and her husband, metal worker Aaron Howard, designed and are building the [Williamson Street Gateway Sculpture](#), which could break ground in June. It is set to be installed by the end of the summer.

"It doesn't sound like any other neighborhood association has done anything like this," Kilfoy said. "It can maybe serve as a model for others to increase the public art in their neighborhood. We have this legacy now of doing [fabulous music festivals](#), so there is a level of organization and there are a lot of artists.

"If we can do it, other neighborhoods can do it, too. Hopefully this process will be helpful to other neighborhoods."