



**Madison
Water Utility**

www.madisonwater.org

• 119 East Olin Avenue, Madison, WI 53713

• TEL 608-266-4651

• FAX 608-266-4426

Proposal to Madison Arts Commission for Mural at Madison Water Utility's Well 24

Prepared by:

Marcus Pearson
Madison Water Utility
119 E Olin Avenue
Madison, WI 53713
mpearson@madisonwater.org

Submitted to:

Madison Arts Commission
Madison Municipal Building
Department of Planning & Community & Economic Development
215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd, Suite 017
P.O. Box 2985
Madison, WI 53701-2985





TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Project Purpose
2. Project Budget
3. Approvals and Timeline
4. Installation, Maintenance & Permissions
5. VARA & First Amendment Rights
6. Selected Artists



Project Purpose

Water Utility (Utility) staff, in collaboration with the Tenney Lapham Neighborhood Association is seeking Madison Arts Commission support for the installation of public art (mural) on the outside of Municipal Well 24 at 101 N Livingston Street, facing East. The proposed mural is to be placed on the back of the building, fastened to the wooden fence in front of emergency generators. The mural will be created by a local artist.

The purpose of the mural is to celebrate the rich history of the Tenney Lapham neighborhood and accomplish community enrichment through public art while activating the space for park-goers and neighborhood residents. The purpose above of “celebrating the rich history of the Tenney Lapham neighborhood” has been shared with all three artists.

All in all, this project (mural) presents a unique opportunity to continue to improve the beauty and vitality of the Tenney Lapham Neighborhood. Most importantly, for the Water Utility, the activation of the space adds an organic layer of security for our facility and emergency generators.

Project Budget

The mural materials and artist(s) efforts will be funded by private donations collected by Tenney Lapham Neighborhood Association (TLNA) members. No City of Madison, Water Utility or TLNA funds will be used.

The selected artist will be paid \$25,000 for their time and efforts creating the mural. Sufficient funds are also in place to pay for materials for the mural, including materials: screws, bolts, polytab, anti-graffiti coating, etc.

Approvals and Timeline

Three local artists (Emily Balsley, Lesley Numbers, and Audifax) presented their conceptual designs at a special TLNA meeting on August 19. Members of the community were given the opportunity to share their thoughts and reactions. This information was also shared via TLNA listserv with over 600 subscribers. Audifax received the most votes (see below).

The installation of a mural was authorized by the Water Utility Board on August 26.

The proposed mural designs will be reviewed by the Public Art Standing Committee on September 15, who will vote on a design. On September 17, the Madison Arts Commission (MAC) will review and vote on the recommendation of the subcommittee.



Madison Water Utility will then submit a proposal to City of Madison's Urban Design Commission for approval, as it requires a minor alteration to the conditional use permit given back in 1974.

Legislative path:

- August 19 – TLNA Neighborhood Meeting
- August 26 – Water Utility Board Meeting
- September 15 – MAC subcommittee meeting
- September 17 – MAC full commission meeting
- TBD – Urban Design Commission Meeting

Installation, Maintenance & Permissions

The proposed mural is to be placed on the back of the building, fastened to the wooden fence in front of emergency generators (see photo of site below).



Madison Water Utility/City of Madison staff will not maintain the mural. The mural and its maintenance are the sole responsibility of TLNA.

The mural is to be in place for a maximum duration of five years from the date of installation. After five years, TLNA will seek Board authorization for continued display of the mural at Well 24.

The mural is to be installed on the wooden fence behind the Well facility, facing east toward Reynolds Park. A Water Utility maintenance staff member will oversee the installation.

Mural is not to interfere with emergency response procedures and/or facility improvements at Well 24. Madison Water Utility reserves the right to remove the mural at any point if it hinders with the functionality of Well 24.



Madison Water Utility is working with City Attorney to finalize a maintenance contract to be signed prior to installation. The contract includes an assurance that TLNA has a maintenance fund set up at a financial institution in the rare case that it is needed; TLNA is expected to respond to any maintenance needs immediately.

VARA & First Amendment Rights

The selected artist will sign a VARA agreement, waving their first amendment rights in the rare case that the mural must be decommissioned.

Selected Artists

Three local artists were selected to develop designs for a 40-foot mural. Each artist presented their work to the Tenney Lapham Neighborhood at a neighborhood meeting. All artists have previously had work approved by MAC via the Existing Art Database:

- Emily Balsley
- Lesley Numbers
- Audifax

Audifax was the most voted artist at the TLNA neighborhood meeting on August 19, 2025, as well as at the Water Utility Board Meeting on August 26, 2025.

Emily Balsley

Emily Balsley is an artist who spends her days and nights passionately hustling from project to project in her colorful studio in Madison, Wisconsin.

Emily is comfortable working both analog and digitally. Her favorite traditional mediums include gouache, pen and ink, and Posca® markers. Her extensive illustration portfolio includes books for kids of all ages, magazines, posters, apparel, maps, puzzles and games.

Past clients include Dial Books for Young Readers, American Girl, Bravery Magazine, Mudpuppy, Usborne Publishing, Marin Magazine, Knopf, Storey Publishing, Fair Indigo, Portland Design Works, Highlights Magazine, Penguin Books, and Rocky Pond Books.



Lesley Numbers

mother and earth-tender, born and raised in Madison, Wisconsin on ancestral Ho-Chunk land. She earned a B.S. in Art Education and an MFA in Printmaking, both from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Her art practice is rooted in a sense of spirit, curiosity and love and her imagery is inspired by daily walks with her dogs, our local biome, music, poetry, magical thinking and dreams. Lesley's hand drawn serigraphs, reductive woodblock prints and botanical ink drawings explore the beauty, wonder, joy and grief of our living and dying world.

This piece highlights all the greatly iconic elements of Madison, WI.





Audifax

Audifax's art is meant to guide the viewer to see their potential, believe in it, and live it; "by spreading a desire to push ourselves towards what matters to each of us, with the understanding our differences are what make this world interesting and beautiful."

A local artist, they followed their heart and said "enough" giving up the illusion of security in exchange for their purpose, to create. They sold their things, went to the streets of Europe and began to paint street art before it was popular in the U.S. "The connection I felt was life changing and I found my favorite canvas, walls."

"This is a design concept for the Tenney Lapham neighborhood mural at the Water Utility Department in Reynolds Park. It holds a meaning unique to our community" – Audifax

Description of proposed mural:

- Diversity - Vibrant colors are used as a representation of our diverse cultures and the beauty of our uniqueness coming together.
- Native American Culture - The Native American history here is incredible. With the help of Senior Research Archaeologist, Constance Arzygjan, I developed an understanding of their timeline. The knowledge I obtained is extensive, so I'll highlight my favorite period, which is the Late Woodland tradition. In this era they began making pottery, domesticated plants and created effigy mounds. We are blessed in Wisconsin to be the grounds of originally 15,000 and presently 4,000 of these unique land formations that included honoring the earth and sky.
- Native Landscape - The respect of the native landscape is what I love most about the Native American culture. I worked with State Archaeologist Amy Rosebrough to understand what the exact site of our neighborhood looked like before being settled. The scene was one of wetlands with patches of forest. The design highlights this with the burr oak tree to the left, and leaves winding from the figure's (representative of the Native American culture) head dress. In the back we see a wetland, and in the foreground native woodland sunflowers and blue flag irises. The wave of lake Mendota flows in the front wrapping around a heart.
- African American History - This was the first African American neighborhood in Madison. John Hill visited from Atlanta, and falling in love with the area, decided to move here with his wife, Amanda. They opened a grocery store in 1917 and it stayed in business 70 years! The hands to the right are holding a group of fruit, showing the offerings of this historical landmark and the bounty they provided to the community.



- Architecture - The small house to the left is a placeholder for a home from our neighborhood that has historical significance. There are many beautiful places here that have housed our history, and will for many years to come
- Heart - This is the present, what we represent today. At the base of every community is heart. You get back the love you pour into it. We're equal, standing proudly in our diversity, knowing we all have a story to tell. We honor the history of this place and we respect each other, and our life experiences. Together we make it our home. Much love to my community. - Audifax"

