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## Under the tracks

### *Bloomingtondale Mural Project unveiled*

By **TIMOTHY INKLEBARGER**  
Editor

#### Web Extra! Slideshow

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With designs ranging from abstract to surreal to contemporary, a group of artists are leaving their mark along the Bloomingtondale Rail Line from North Western to North California.

The 17 murals that emblazon the viaducts along the now-defunct railroad line were about three years in the making, according to Bloomingtondale Mural Project founder Reza Khazeni. He said he was inspired to paint the first mural after moving to the neighborhood near the Maplewood viaduct. Traveling door-to-door, Reza collected donations for the paint to complete the first mural.

"When we finished the first one, we got really positive feedback from the neighbors," he said.

A \$2,000 contribution from 1st Ward Alderman Manny Flores and a donation of paint from Sherman-Williams Paints helped facilitate the 13 new paintings. He said Flores more recently donated an additional \$1,000 to help continue the project.

Kim Frieders, a muralist who recently completed a colorful abstract, collage-style mural at North Western, said she received similar feedback from those passing by on the busy commercial corridor.

"People were walking by, not stopping, but walking by and saying, 'Looking great' and 'Thanks for doing that,'" she said.

She said other muralists working in the interior of the neighborhood received closer attention from passersby, with neighbors coming out to the sites, watching the progress of the murals and making comments along the way. She said a lot of time and consideration was put in to what neighbors would want near their homes.

"If there is a mural the neighbors say they hate, then that would be at the top of the list to be painted over," she said.

Khazeni said he opened the process to anyone interested in submitting proposals, but the main restriction prevented designs that used spray paint because of concern that they would resemble graffiti.

"I said, 'Submit your design and if it's something that we can do with [regular] paint, then we'll do it. Otherwise, you can't do it, because you're just opening a can of worms,'" Khazeni said.

He said he aimed to make the murals a rotating gallery for professional artists. Artists used simple house paints on the murals, which is likely to last a few years before peeling off, which would eventually require restoration of existing pieces or establishing new murals.

"I think we're pretty much trying to do what we can in the moment, and if it doesn't last forever, we're ready to accept that," Frieders said.

That theme was loosely incorporated into the surreal mural titled "Release" by Uptown artist Lucas Myers. The design depicts ocean waves crashing on the shore and multiple floating hands grasping onto beach sand.

"It's about the ebb and flow of natural rhythms, and it's about impermanence," he said, making the connection to public art projects. "Nothing lasts forever. It might get graffiti-ed or eventually wear away."

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*Kim Frieders and her mural "Public Mural No. 1," which resides on the west wall of N. Western Ave.*

*Photo by Josh Hawkins*



*Chicago artist Lucas Meyers in front of his mural "Release," located on the west wall of Washtenaw.*

*Photo by Josh Hawkins*

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