

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | SEP 12
COUNCIL BLUFFS ANNOUNCES FIRST AVE MURAL PROGRAM

The City of Council Bluffs is implementing a mural program along the newly constructed FIRST AVE trail. This project, administered by the City of Council Bluffs with generous financial support from the Iowa West Foundation, is set to transform the FIRST AVE corridor into a place of artistic expression.

The FIRST AVE trail, a demonstration of Council Bluffs' commitment to quality of life and recreational enhancement, will soon feature a series of murals. Four local artists, Danny Reyes, Betni Kalk, Weston Thomson, and Ilaamen Pelshaw, will transform four separate building walls into vibrant canvases. Locations include the trail-facing walls at 29 S. 21st Street, 3415 West Broadway, 15 S. 20th Street, and the Cochran Park-facing wall at 2200 2nd Avenue.

The City of Council Bluffs has served as a liaison between building owners, artists, and the Iowa West Foundation to bring these murals to life. All mural concepts have been designed and approved, the walls are prepped, and the art should be complete before winter.

"These four murals will celebrate Council Bluffs' rich history, culture, and natural beauty, creating a sense of pride among residents," said Council Bluffs Mayor Matt Walsh. "The mural project demonstrates our dedication to fostering a vibrant and inclusive community that embraces art, culture, and recreation."

Iowa West Foundation has been instrumental in constructing, developing, and activating the FIRST AVE corridor. The Iowa West Foundation's investment in this mural program underscores its dedication to enriching the cultural landscape of Council Bluffs.

"Through their vision, the City of Council Bluffs has created a wonderful amenity for its residents via the First Avenue Trail. These murals will inject a sense of discovery and wonder to the trail user's experience," said Matthew Henkes, Vice President of Grants and Initiatives at Iowa West Foundation. "We're excited to contribute to the City's mural program and can't wait to see what's next!"

1st Avenue, a former rail corridor vacated in 2013, is located one block south of West Broadway, the city's main thoroughfare. Roughly 60% of Council Bluffs residents live within one mile of this corridor. The multi-modal corridor enhances the operation of West Broadway, makes an essential link in the trail system, creates a transit link to Downtown Omaha, and provides the opportunity to redevelop obsolete industrial properties.

The FIRST AVE trail presents a unique user experience. Conducive to walking, biking, and micro-mobility options, trail amenities include lighting, landscaping, public spaces, and trail plazas, making the corridor a linear park, not just a trail.

"Murals hold a unique power to transform public spaces," said Council Bluffs Parks and Recreation Director Vincent Martorello. "Along this trail, they serve as more than just decorations; they're a testament to our community's identity and values. Murals invite residents and visitors to engage with the rich history, diversity, and creativity that define us."

The FIRST AVE mural program will transform the new trail into an artistic experience as walkers, runners, and cyclists make their way through the corridor. Once completed, the FIRST AVE murals will become a significant attraction for residents and visitors.

"This mural program is a testament to the power of collaboration between public and private entities," said Walsh. "We are thankful for the Iowa West Foundation's investment in FIRST AVE and throughout our community. Through partnerships like this, Council Bluffs continues to grow as a dynamic and welcoming place to live and visit."

The FIRST AVE mural program is privately funded, ensuring no taxpayer dollars are utilized. The City of Council Bluffs will provide updates as the murals are near completion. For more information, please visit firstavecb.com.

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The mission of the City of Council Bluffs is to continuously improve the quality of life and attractiveness of the City of Council Bluffs.