

## Rodriguez, Charlotte

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**From:** Elmer, Linda  
**Sent:** Monday, January 12, 2009 2:39 PM  
**To:** Rodriguez, Charlotte  
**Subject:** FW: Mural Ordinance

Please add to 081236 (following the same format as the others I've already put in).  
Thanks -

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**From:** Horn, Sarah  
**Sent:** Monday, January 12, 2009 2:35 PM  
**To:** Elmer, Linda  
**Cc:** Kovac, Nik  
**Subject:** FW: Mural Ordinance

Another one for the file.

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**From:** Juliet Jaeger [mailto:julietjaeger@hotmail.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, January 12, 2009 2:33 PM  
**To:** Coggs, Milele; Bauman, Robert; Dudzik, Joseph; Wade, Willie; Donovan, Robert; Puente, Robert  
**Cc:** Dantzler, Akuwa; Mayor Tom Barrett; Kovac, Nik; Horn, Sarah  
**Subject:** Mural Ordinance

Please don't kill my art.

My name is Juliet Jaeger. Born and raised here in Milwaukee, I grew up on the far south side, attended Thomas More college preparatory high school and graduated from the Milwaukee Institute of Art and Design with a BFA. I now live in the Riverwest neighborhood and run my own business in the Bayview neighborhood. My business restores art and historical documents; preserving art, history, and cultural information. I volunteer at the Riverwest Artists Association's community art center and support local businesses with my patronage. This city is my home and I am a responsible citizen for it. Milwaukee's image and reputation is important to me.

Fall of 2008, I was involved in a grassroots mural painting project. The Art in the Alleys project was completely volunteer. There was no money involved, no one got paid for anything. The artists donated their time and supplies, many with full time jobs and families of their own. Local businesses and homeowners donated the paint. Much of this free paint would have been thrown away; instead, we used it, keeping it out Milwaukee's garbage system. All artwork was approved and often requested by the participating homeowners. We did it all out of love for our community and a love for art. We had many more homeowners interested in murals on their property than artists with free time to paint them. The response was impressive. The homeowners and volunteers cleaned up the three alleys in anticipation of the murals' completion. Weeds were pulled, litter was removed and holes were patched that would ordinarily have been neglected.

I painted two murals. The first is on the garage door at the home Sura Faraj. This garage door was in poor shape. It had several holes in it and had not been repainted in a long time. Sura admits that it wasn't until this project came about that she learned how to repair her garage door. The mural encouraged her to tackle this low priority household project, resulting in a more secure and attractive property. The mural image incorporates historical information from the property.

The site previously housed the activities of a neighborhood blacksmith. The image refers to this history and of the Greco-Roman story of Vulcan, the god of fire, metal, and craftsmanship who was said to live in the belly of a volcano. The vast crop fields that appear the image's background refers to the rich farmland the greater Milwaukee area is built on.

The second mural is of a jellyfish on a vivid blue background. It is painted on was an ugly concrete wall with huge cracks running through it. My mural effectively camouflages these imperfections. The beautiful image of the jellyfish adds to a highly visible wall that would not have been painted otherwise. While painting this mural, I also painted over some unwanted tagging elsewhere on the property, eliminating old "tagging" and effectively beautifying the space. The improvements are obvious from my before and after photos.

The children from the homes near my two mural sites would regularly come and visit me and see my progress. They were very polite and interested. They asked me all kinds of questions and freely offered their own unique interpretations. They wanted to help, too. I asked them if they have art lessons or drawing time at their school and many of them said 'no.' I was shocked by this. All of these sweet little kids were so open to creative thinking and their education doesn't seem to be meeting their needs. We shouldn't be putting a fee on art in our city we should be encouraging it! Murals are an excellent way to include children in art and teach them lessons on how to co-operate and coexist in a diverse group.

While I painted, dozens of other people walking and driving by stopped to compliment my efforts and ask questions about my artwork. The children and employees from the day care next door to one of my mural sites were pleased and excited by the mural. The murals were well accepted by the neighborhood. But we don't have money to pay you, the city of Milwaukee, to keep them if this ordinance takes effect. This ordinance would effectively stop and destroy everything this project has worked to achieve.

I see this ordinance proposal as a way for the city to create revenue. I see this ordinance as an infringement on our freedom of speech and property rights. The owners of these murals and all privately commissioned murals are none of the city's business. Objections or complaints from individual citizens to the content of an individual mural must be resolved on an individual basis.

I disagree with the common councils conclusion that murals encourage unwanted graffiti. In my experience, murals discourage unwanted graffiti. Walls that attract graffiti do so because of their location, visibility, and the availability of space. The walls that are subject to chronic "tagging" are often white and blank; a ready canvas. If there is an artist's mural on this type of wall, the "would be tagger" has no blank place to make his or her mark. They may very well just move on and "tag" anyway somewhere else, but mural is not at fault for unwanted graffiti. Murals and the graffiti the City of Milwaukee wishes to control are two very different things. Furthermore, the "style" in which an artist's mural is made in is not inherent to any message. Confusing gang related graffiti/"tagging" with invested artistic expression is not necessary. A scribble of letters on a wall, postbox, light pole, or bus is unwanted by this city, that fact is not in question. What the committee and this ordinance fails to understand is that strictly controlling murals will have no effect on unwanted graffiti what so ever. Interfering with murals will upset many good citizens and artists, loyal to their city. I don't believe the responsible committee has any idea what they are stepping on.

I find this city's previously established control of graffiti to be impressive already; Milwaukee is often complimented for being so relatively clean of a city. Other major cities can't say the same. During my travels to other cities, I've always notice how much more graffiti and extraneous advertising there is, and how little there is in Milwaukee when I return home. As far as objectionable murals, the individual citizen has all the power they need. If a neighboring citizen finds a mural somehow menacing, they are free to speak to the owner of that mural and reach a compromise. If a private compromise cannot be made, the issue has other avenues of resolution. But putting strict regulations on all private murals is unwarranted and unwanted.

Ever since the end of the 2008 Art in the Alleys project, I've been looking forward to a 2009 project. I met new friends and neighbors in my community. It felt good to work together for the collective good of my new home. I feel crushed by the possibility of it all being destroyed by people who don't understand what they are doing. Please Vote against it.

Thank you for your time,  
Sincerely,

Juliet Jaeger  
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Milwaukee, WI 53221  
Julietjaeger@hotmail.com

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