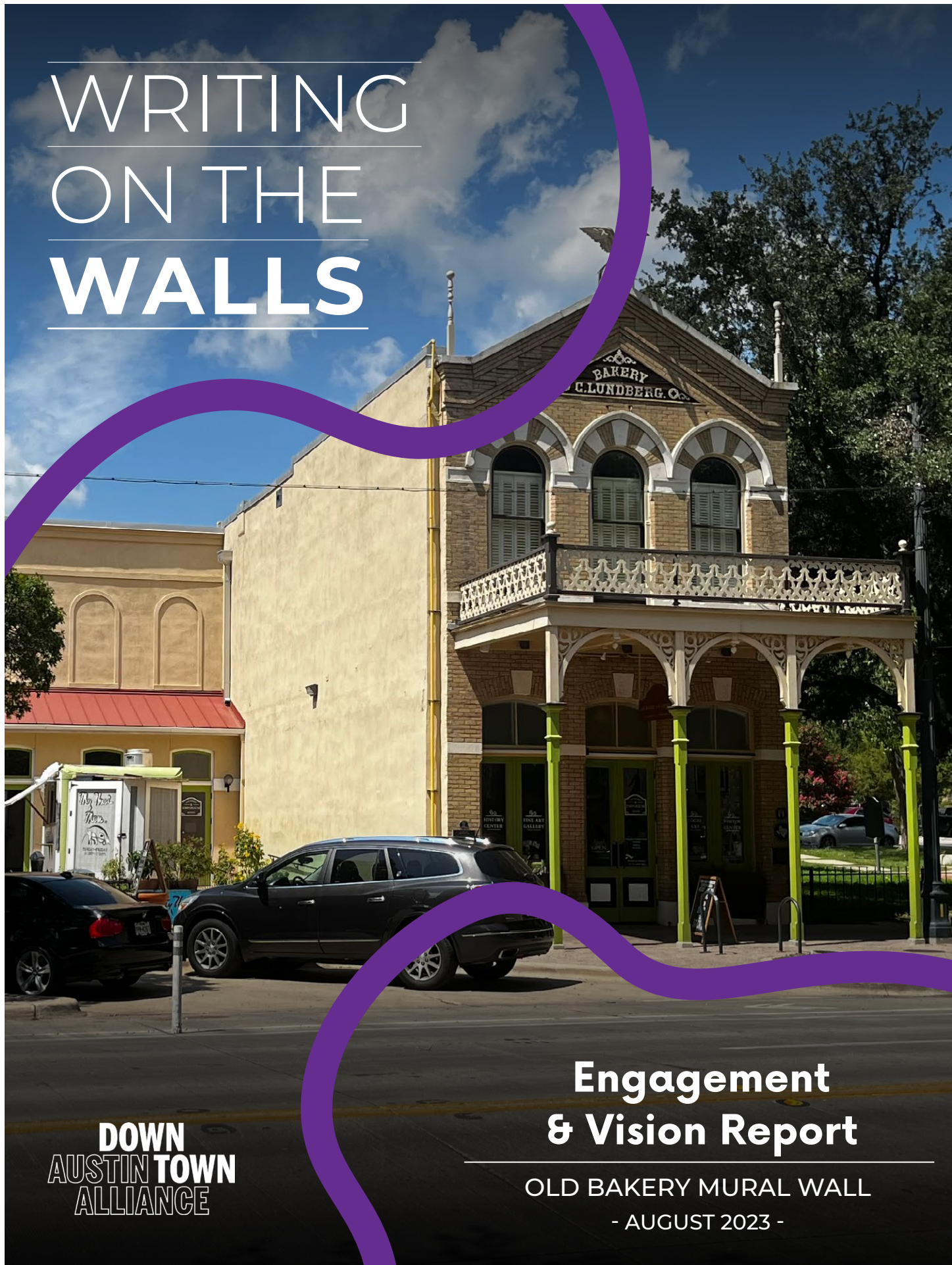


WRITING ON THE WALLS



**DOWN
AUSTIN TOWN
ALLIANCE**

Engagement & Vision Report

OLD BAKERY MURAL WALL

- AUGUST 2023 -

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Old Bakery & Artisan Emporium is a historic building located in downtown Austin at the north-west corner of Congress Avenue and 10th Street. While the main floor is a shop filled with local artisan goods, the upstairs houses a gallery, featuring artists over the age of 50, and an exhibit highlighting Austin’s Swedish-immigrant history through the Lundberg-Maerki Historical Collection. Adjacent to the building is Old Bakery Park, which was transformed in 2014 through a partnership of the Downtown Austin Alliance, Austin Parks Foundation (APF) and the City of Austin. The park was home to the iconic Thai food truck, My Thai Mom, which occupied the space for several years before closing in Fall 2022.

Facing Old Bakery Park is a bare, three-story wall, which originally functioned as an interior dividing wall before the demolition of the adjacent buildings in the 1950s - 1960s. In Spring 2022, APF, the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department and the Old Bakery & Emporium once again partnered with the Downtown Alliance to revitalize the space through [Writing on the Walls](#) (WOW), a program that curates public art and programming in downtown Austin. Through this program, a new mural on the south-facing wall of the bakery will be developed with the community alongside a series of public space enhancements and programming options in Old Bakery Park.

History of the Old Bakery Site

Indigenous History

Reconciliation

PHOTO EDITED: PHOTO CREDIT: TONKAWA TRIBE. WWW.TONKAWATRIBE.COM/HISTORY.HTML

African-American Stories

Restorative Justice

PHOTO EDITED: AUSTIN HISTORY CENTER, AUSTIN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Immigration

Local Entrepreneurship

PHOTO EDITED: AUSTIN HISTORY CENTER, AUSTIN PUBLIC LIBRARY

Architectural History

Preservation

PHOTO EDITED: PHOTO CREDIT: WWW.AUSTINTEXAS.GOV/PAGE/LUNDBERG-BAKERY

PRE-1800S

Old Bakery and the City of Austin reside on the traditional territory and homelands of the Tonkawa, Comanche, Lipan Apache, Coahuiltecan and Jumanos Peoples. The Old Bakery project acknowledges the ancestors of the land and strives to honor the Indigenous peoples and their histories.

LATE 1800S

In response to slavery being outlawed in 1865, Texas landowners rebranded slavery through laws known as 'Black Codes.' Black Codes imposed prison sentences on African Americans for petty crimes, then leased out inmates to work on projects. The prosperous nature of the Capitol Complex and surrounding area exist in part because of racist laws and this new form of slavery.¹

1876-1936

"The Old Bakery was built in 1876 by Swedish immigrant Charles Lundberg. In 1906, Lundberg sold his bakery to his young Swiss apprentice and the newly-named Maerki Baking Company continued to be a cornerstone of the Austin community until the business closed in 1936. The giant oven and the wooden baker's spade remain as reminders of the building's story."²

1963

"After the Maerki Baking Company shuttered its doors [in 1936], The Old Bakery & Emporium building was used for a number of other businesses and changed hands frequently until it was rescued from demolition in 1963 by the combined efforts of the Austin Heritage Society [now known as Preservation Austin] and the Junior League, who offered \$12,500 for restoration."²

References:

1. Grootzinger, K. (2019, March 26) Civil Rights Activist Push Lawmakers to Confront Texas' Dark History of Convict Leasing. The Texas Observer. <https://www.texasobserver.org/civil-rights-activists-push-lawmakers-to-confront-texas-dark-history-of-convict-leasing/>
2. Lundberg Bakery. (n.d.). Lundberg-Maerki Historical Collection. City of Austin. <https://www.austintexas.gov/page/lundberg-bakery>
3. Ladies of the Club. (n.d.) Texas's First Ladies. Austin History Center. <https://library.austintexas.gov/ahc/ladies-club-texas-first-ladies>

To honor the historical importance of the building and the public-nature of the park, the space enhancements and mural curation process included a robust one-year community engagement plan to curate a vision for the mural and define how the community would like to utilize the park. Old Bakery's history became the cornerstone of the engagement process by honoring the native ancestors of the land, acknowledging the impact of slavery and segregation in the Capitol area, celebrating Swedish immigration and entrepreneurship, and highlighting the architectural history of the bakery. The timeline below, used throughout the public engagement process, reflects the history and enduring themes that continue to influence Austin today.



Women's Empowerment



Civic Protest
Change Making



Arts & Culture
Senior Employment

1976

"The Old Bakery & Emporium opened in October of 1976, as a co-sponsored project of the Senior Programs Section of the Austin Parks and Recreation Department and Mrs. Briscoe's [pictured above] First Lady's Volunteer Program of the Texas Center for Volunteer Action."²

1940'S - TODAY

Congress Ave and Old Bakery serve as active spaces for Texas change-makers. From the United Farm Workers' march in 1966 to the Black Lives Matters protests of 2020, the area has been central to civic advocacy. Old Bakery remains an influential space for social movements today.

1980'S - TODAY

"Today, the Old Bakery & Emporium functions as an art gallery, artisan emporium, visitor and information center, and historical center that celebrates not only Austin's immigrant history, but also the diversity and artistic vision of artisans over the age of fifty."²

THE PARTNERS



ABOUT WRITING ON THE WALLS

Writing on the Walls, a program of the Downtown Austin Alliance, curates collaborative public art installations and events celebrating art, diversity and public spaces in downtown Austin. Launched in March 2020, the program collaborates with artists, community members and partners to enhance and improve public spaces that uplift the community. Writing on the Walls provides artists with opportunities to create beautiful public art and empowers Austinites to get involved in the process of selecting the art they'd like to see in their city. Community-driven initiatives through Writing on the Walls create spaces that celebrate the spirit of Austin.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT



Image 1 | Photo Credit: Downtown Austin Alliance

BY THE NUMBERS



2 online surveys

350+ participants



4 pop-ups

500 project flyers



2 public events

750+ participants



5 group conversations

50+ participants

Meeting people where they are

Engagement commenced in Fall 2022 with a virtual survey to gauge public interest and educate the community on the history of the bakery and site. To promote the survey, over 500 bilingual flyers were handed out at events throughout Austin (Image 2).

In December 2022, the survey feedback culminated at the Downtown Alliance's annual Holiday Stroll. This public event highlighted the potential of the mural wall through a downtown mural coloring book and uplifted the feedback received in the survey. At the event, community members co-designed mural concepts with local artist, RichesArt, who projected the ideas onto the blank wall (Image 5).

The second bilingual survey launched March 2023 in tandem with the [Art & Parks Bike Tour](#), an annual Downtown Alliance event. Over 250 participants biked to the Old Bakery to learn about the

project and participate in a hands-on survey (Image 1). The activation remained on the site through the week of SXSW to gain additional input from downtown visitors (Image 3).

In addition to broad public input, the project team gathered a diverse group of creatives, art educators, public space leaders, preservation experts and cultural pillars to advise on the engagement outreach, artist selection process and mural implementation. Over the course of five small-group Community Table Conversations, more than 50 participants volunteered their time to steer the project process and mural vision (Image 4).

Participation was promoted throughout the engagement process, in both English and Spanish, through partner newsletters, social media platforms and media requests.

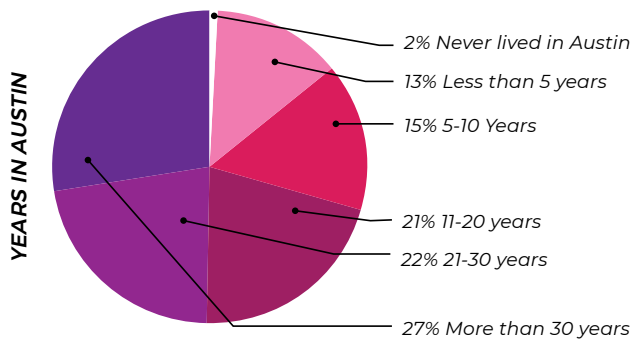
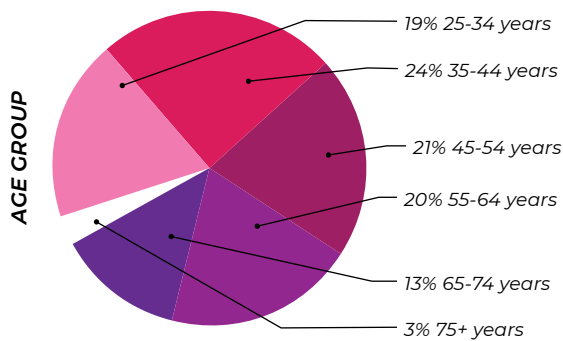
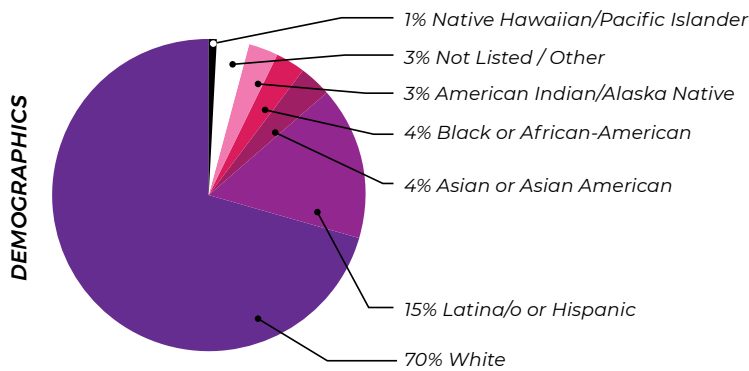


Image 2 | Photo Credit: Downtown Austin Alliance

Mural Requirements

The Old Bakery is a city and state recognized landmark and is a contributing building to the Congress Avenue Historic District. To ensure the projects respects the historic nature of the bakery, the project team coordinated with the city's Architectural Review Committee and the state's Historical Landmark Commission through project briefings and on-site meetings. Before mural installation, the project will undergo a permitting process to follow the guidance of the commissioners and committee members to honor, protect and preserve the historic nature of the building.

Survey Participation*



*Note: Of the 1,000+ community members engaged in the visioning process, approximately 140 individuals opted-in to provide their demographic information. While the charts above are not all-inclusive, it is reflective of a small sample of people engaged during the process.



Image 3 | Photo Credit: Downtown Austin Alliance



Image 4 | Photo Credit: Downtown Austin Alliance



Image 5 | Photo Credit: Downtown Austin Alliance

WHAT WE HEARD

Across multiple engagement platforms and outreach efforts, there is consistent alignment to honor the Indigenous ancestry of the land, uplift the bakery's Swedish heritage and celebrate the central Texas landscape. While there are several more nuanced and specific mural concepts (visualized in the word cloud below), these themes can be integrated and intersected into the mural design.

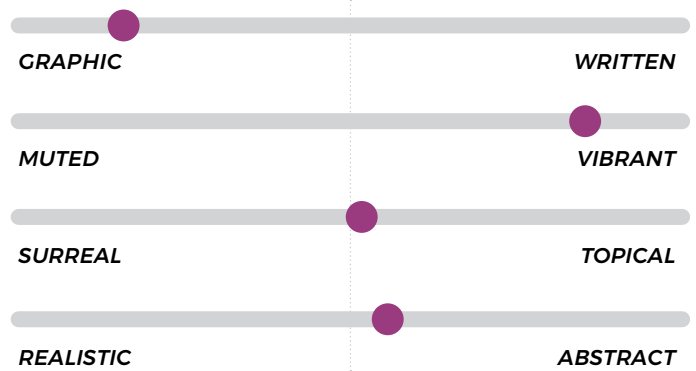
The public provided input on the potential significance the mural as well as the aesthetic style for the art. Overall, the community wants to see art that is iconic, accessible and reflective of Austin's values in a style that is both vibrant and graphic to energize the park. Additionally programming such as performances and events can activate the space.

Mural Themes

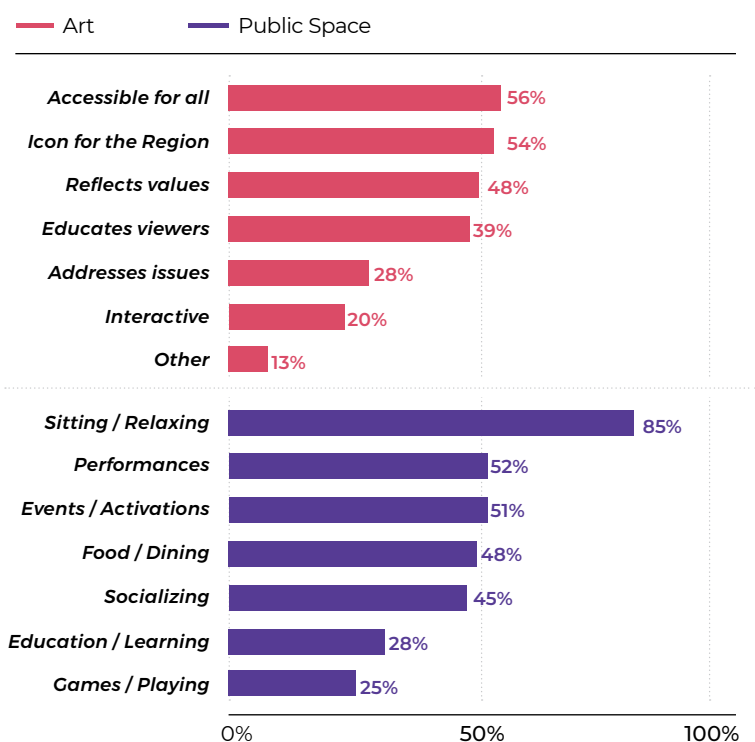


Image 6 | Photo Credit: Downtown Austin Alliance

Mural Style



Priorities in Art & Public Space



The Rotating Mural Wall

Throughout engagement, multiple themes and histories for the mural design arose. To accommodate and provide space for these stories, the community's input recommends a **Rotating Mural Wall** program, where a new mural, pending funding resources and partner support, is curated every three to five years to uplift and connect multiple stories over a fifteen year mural installation period.

This Engagement & Vision Report will be the cornerstone of mural iterations, setting the stage for a series of murals, each of which are grounded in the community's input and vision for the mural wall. While the first mural secured funding and partner support, each subsequent mural iteration will need to go through a new curation, outlined below, to uphold the engagement process.



Identify funding and partners for a new mural installation.



Open a call for artists with a community theme.



Acquire state and city permits for mural installation.



Engage with the community on the new mural design.

THE MURAL VISION

The Rotating Mural Wall honors the past, present and future of the Old Bakery by celebrating the diverse stories of the individuals and communities that have shared Austin's history.

GUIDING THEMES

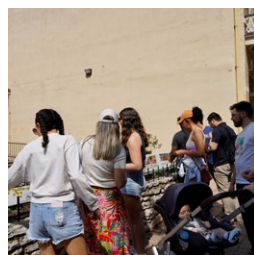
- ✦ Honor the traditional territories and homelands of the Indigenous peoples.
- ✦ Celebrate the Swedish culture and immigrant history of the bakery.
- ✦ Respect the local geography through the native flora, fauna and wildlife.
- ✦ Intersect the multi-cultural stories that shared space with the Old Bakery.
- ✦ Uplift positive and welcoming stories of locals (musicians, activists, etc).
- ✦ Bring together the then and now through an intergenerational lens.



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