



OPEN CALL FOR ARTISTS

Project: The Spirit Plaza Branding & Container Activation

Location: 2 Woodward Ave, Detroit, MI 48226

Deadline to apply: May 8, 2026

Mural Completion: July/ August 2026

Total Number of Opportunities: 1

The Opportunity

The General Service Department's (GSD) City Walls Detroit, in partnership with Special Events & Parks Division, & Planning and Development, want to amplify the City's vision for a world-class downtown by seeking a visionary artist or collaborative artist team to transform shipping containers at Spirit Plaza. This project involves designing cohesive visual identity and functional mural, wrap, and/or art activations for 2 storage containers that will serve as landmarks for community gatherings, events, creativity, and public play. This is your chance to think outside the box!

Community Vision and Theme

We are looking to create a comprehensive brand identity that turns Spirit Plaza into a destination as iconic and recognizable as some city parks in other states... (reference Love Park in Philly) a place where the art itself defines the location.

As Spirit Plaza evolves with new playgrounds and seating, the shipping containers must match that energy. We are seeking designs that transform utilitarian storage units into beacons of gathering. This branding will anchor the plaza's most exciting activations, including future events that'll draw residents and visitors from Woodward Avenue into a space that feels intentional, curated, and vibrant.

We aren't just painting containers; we are building a brand for Detroit's front yard. Let's create a space that celebrates Detroit's Creativity, Detroit's Sense of Community, Detroit's Gatherings, and Detroit's Friendly Competition that invites everyone to the game.

Project Scope & Specifications



- **The Canvas:** (2) 8x8x30 industrial storage containers located on the north side of Spirit Plaza.
- **The Objective:** Develop a "Spirit Plaza" brand kit which should include typography, color palette, and motifs applied via high-quality mural or vinyl wrap to engage and draw people into the site with opportunities to interact and/or engage with the surface of the storage container
- **Key Requirements:**
 - **Iconic Branding:** Create a visual landmark that is instantly shareable and recognizable.
 - **Community Connection:** Designs must foster community ownership and reflect Detroit's unique culture and creativity.
 - **The Hub of Play:** The containers must serve as a professional "home base" for friendly competition combining games installations, event updates, and instagramable moments.
 - **City Walls Ownership Pledge:** In accordance with our mission, the artwork must respect the community; therefore, no advertisements or commercial logos are permitted.

IMPORTANT Project Specifications

The following technical details must be considered during the review of the artist's preliminary sketches:

IMPORTANT NOTICE: Historic District Review Requirement

Applying Artists must consider a strategy that blends the container into the design and architecture of the Historic District, with attention to how artwork is framed and situated onto the overall structure.

The Spirit Plaza is located within the Financial District, a designated Local Historic District. All proposed designs for containers or structures must be compatible with the historic character of the surrounding environment.



- **HDC Approval Required:** Any installation or exterior alteration requires formal approval from the City of Detroit Historic District Commission (HDC) via a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA).
- **Design Standards:** Proposals must comply with the City of Detroit's historic preservation guidelines. Applicants should review the [Financial District Historic District Final Report](#) to understand the district's character-defining elements and design constraints.
- **Compliance:** Successful applicants will be responsible for providing the detailed documentation required for the HDC application process (e.g., scaled site plans, material specifications, color samples, and photographs of the site) as part of their project development.
- **Quantity:** Two (2) high-cube containers.
- **Dimensions:**
 - **Containers Dimensions are 8ft x 30ft with (3) 8x30' sides and (2) 8x8' sides per container**
- **Material:** Corrugated steel (requires specialized vinyl or mural application).
- **Hardware:** Designs must account for locking bars, hinges, and corner castings without obstructing movement. The interiors of the containers will be used for storage.

Application and Submission Requirements

1. Portfolio: 3-5 images of past large-scale work (PDF or JPEG)

2. Artist/Artist Team Statement SHOULD INCLUDE the following:

○ **Capacity & Management Statement:** Outline your strategy for managing a project of this magnitude, including your approach to working with assistant artists or collaborators

○ **5-Year Maintenance Strategy:** Provide a comprehensive maintenance plan including a schedule for annual inspections & minor touch-ups



3. Preliminary Sketch or Sketches – You may submit up to 3 distinct sketches.

(Mandatory): A rough visual representation of how you would interpret one or all the core themes.

4. CV/Resume: Highlighting relevant public art experience.

5. References – *You must submit contact information for at least 2 previous clients.*

Timeline & Budget

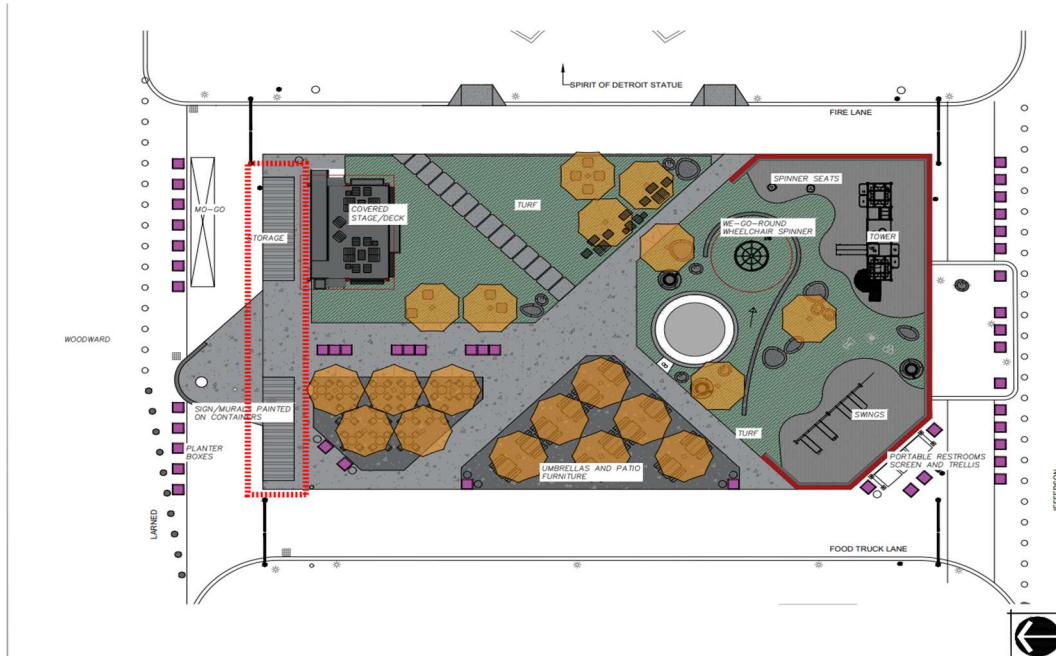
- **Application Deadline:** TBD
- **Design Development:** Early 2026 (incorporating community feedback)
- **Installation Window:** Late Spring /Early Summer 2026
- **Total Project Budget: \$25,000**
- This is **all-inclusive**, covering artist fees, assistants, insurance, materials, and equipment.

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Site/Canvas Context

See [Spirit Container Worksheet](#) & [Spirit Container Example](#)



SPIRIT PLAZA - CONTAINER 1 (EAST SIDE BEHIND STAGE)





SPIRIT PLAZA - CONTAINER 2 (WEST SIDE)



Selection Criteria

Selection Process: A selection panel consisting of community members, stakeholders, and arts professionals will score proposals.

Winning artists/artist team will be selected based on the section panel's evaluation of the following criteria:

- **30pts:** Technical experience & proven ability to create permanent, large-scale public artwork. Evaluation of the portfolio for technical skills and durability
- **20pts:** Project management, Capacity, Sustainability, and Maintenance Strategy Plan demonstrating the ability to manage complex projects within a strict timeline and budget. Strategy for managing assistants and collaborators
- **15pts:** Preliminary Sketches for vision & branding alignment for the "Spirit Plaza" vision community themes: creating landmark shipping containers that match the vibrancy of Woodward Ave



- 10pts: Artist/ Artist Team considered a strategy that blends the container into the design and architecture of the Historic District, with attention to how artwork is framed and situated onto the overall structure.

- 10pts: Detroit-based artist preference

The Selection Panel consists of 1 member from each category below and is facilitated by City Walls Program Director:

- City of Detroit – Mayor’s Office Special Events
- City of Detroit - General Services Department (GSD) Parks
- City of Detroit- GSD Special Events
- City of Detroit - PDD
- Total Access Entertainment
- Visit Detroit
- Community Member - Youth
- Community Member
- Community Member
- Community Member

Eligibility

- **Eligibility:** Open to all artists 18+; preference is given to Detroit-based artists.
- **Selection Process:** A panel of community members, stakeholders, and arts professionals will score proposals.

Questions? Email: citywalls@detroitmi.gov

Subject Line: **Spirit Plaza Project**