



## CCR-23

### Murals reflect department missions

The city of Cambridge, Massachusetts (101,000), recently commissioned artist Mike Glier to paint a series of murals for the new city hall annex. These murals depict themes inspired by the mission statements of the varied city departments housed in the new building—community development; traffic, parking, and transportation; arts council; animal commission; and conservation commission.

#### Implementation notes

**Leadership/staffing** The mural program is directed by the city's arts council. Community members were involved in all phases of planning for the mural.

**Timeline** The artist spent approximately two years meeting with community members and representatives of the departments that would occupy the building, visiting the site as construction progressed, and planning the murals. He completed all of the murals in approximately six weeks.

**Budget/funding** In 1979, the city council approved an ordinance mandating that 1 percent of construction budgets for city capital improvement projects be spent on public art at the site. The cost of the city hall annex renovations was \$7.1 million, and the murals were commissioned for approximately \$60,000.

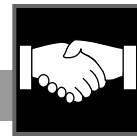
**Program description** The arts council maintains a registry of artists from around the world. When the city hall annex project began, the council arranged for three art professionals to select three artists from the council's registry. The artists were interviewed by a committee that included a neighbor, a local businessperson, and the project's landscape designer. The committee selected artist Mike Glier. Glier received a commission for producing a proposal, which community members, including neighbors and employees who would work in the building, were invited to

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review at public meetings of the seven-member public art commission.

Glier chose to depict the mission statements through the themes of transparency (to reflect the fact that government activities should be transparent, or publicly visible), flow (for example, of traffic), growth (the focus of the community development department), and pleasure (the ultimate purpose of all city departments). In addition to the department mission statements, the murals reflect the building's green, environmentally sound architecture and the history of the building, originally built in 1871 as an elementary school. The large-scale wall paintings therefore depict the relationships among civic goals, the building's green architecture, historic preservation, and the transparency of public process. The murals have many local touches, such as the depiction of people rowing on the Charles River and a bronze sculpture in Cambridge Common. The murals are painted in soft colors showing both images of nature, including vines native to the area, and urban life, such as workers on a coffee break.

**Results** The murals give the building's two-story atrium the feeling of an indoor garden. The peaceful images and touches of humor (such as a worker spilling coffee or a dog's thoughts) lift the mood of visitors to the building.

