

FEELING SEEN



"Wear orange," a striking mural of a young man adorned with flowers, is on a residential wall, painted by Brittany Williams for WALL/THERAPY. JUSTICE MARBURY/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

EXPLORE 19TH WARD PUBLIC ART

Justice Marbury Rochester Democrat and Chronicle | USA TODAY NETWORK

Growing up in the 19th Ward, my great-grandparents always had me knee-deep in arts and crafts. Grandpa was all about drawing and music, while Nana stitched beautiful quilts, so creativity was just part of life. • Creativity runs deep in my family, so maybe that's where my love for art comes from. Or maybe it's because art is the perfect way to express yourself, let out frustrations, release some tension, and just feel good all around.

While on a work trip to Detroit, I came across a lot of public art and murals as I wandered through the city. It was refreshing, almost calming, to take a moment and enjoy the scenery in the middle of such a busy place.

I get that same vibe in the 19th Ward. Just driving through, especially down the main streets, it's easy to spot the art that brings the neighborhood to life.

The link between our well-being and art has been explored through initiatives like the Porch Light program, a partnership between Mural Arts Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disability Services, which is founded on the belief that public art can heal communities and individuals.

The program was evaluated by

See 19TH WARD, Page 5D



The vibrant exterior of Arnett Branch Library showcases book-themed murals celebrating literature and community history by Richmond Futch, Chole Smith and Ebony Singleton. JUSTICE MARBURY/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

19th Ward

Continued from Page 1D

Yale University's School of Medicine, which found the following results:

● **Collective efficacy:** There was a relative increase in social cohesion, trust among neighbors, and informal social control within one year of mural installations.

● **Neighborhood aesthetic quality:** Residents reported improved aesthetic quality, including perceptions of neighborhood safety and the walking environment.

● **Behavioral health stigma:** There was a trend-level reduction in stigma toward individuals with mental health or substance use challenges.

AAA recently named seven U.S. cities known for their exceptional street art and murals, with Rochester earning a spot alongside cities like Atlanta; Daytona Beach, Florida; and Houston.

I discovered a good bit of art just by driving around and revisiting murals I remembered from my teen years. But the real hidden gems came from my Instagram followers, who answered a poll I posted asking about their favorite pieces of art in the 19th Ward. Their suggestions led me to some amazing spots I'd never seen before.

There are various types of murals in the 19th Ward, and they all evoke different emotions.

My favorite piece of art is the mural on the side of G&G Steakhouse II. I've loved that mural since childhood. I think it's because of the depiction of a young Black man. It feels calming and challenges the stereotype of Black men and toxic masculinity in the Black community. Brittany Williams's artwork, "Wear Orange," was created in partnership with local chapters of Moms Demand Action and Students Demand Action to raise awareness about gun violence prevention.

Quajay Donnell, a Rochester photographer who spends much time documenting the city's public art, lived in the 19th Ward when he first moved to the city.

"Some of the earliest pieces of public



Painted in large, bold letters, this mural by Shawn Dunwoody encourages positivity with the message, "Think Good, and It Will Be Good." PHOTOS BY JUSTICE MARBURY/ROCHESTER DEMOCRAT AND CHRONICLE

art I discovered in the city were in that neighborhood," he said. "Knowing what I know now, it makes sense that a community so important in Rochester's history would also be home to public art that inspires, educates, and shines bright for those who call the 19th Ward home."

Some of the art I encountered inspired me; some made me nostalgic, but mostly, it made me feel seen.

Justice Marbury covers small businesses, neighborhood concerns and the interesting people who live in Rochester's 19th Ward. Contact her on Instagram @justice_marbury and by email at jmarbury@gannett.com.



A community mural by the legendary FUA Krew (Range, Kool K, Congo and Snoe) encourages change and empowerment.