



MISSOULA DOWNTOWN ASSOCIATION
BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
MISSOULA DOWNTOWN FOUNDATION

June 5, 2024
Local Media

MISSOULA DOWNTOWN FOUNDATION LAUNCHES DOWNTOWN MURAL PROJECT IN PARTNERSHIP WITH SANDY MITCHELL AND LOCAL ARTIST LILLIAN NELSON

For the second year in a row, with a focus on arts and culture and a desire to activate alleys, the Missoula Downtown Foundation has partnered with Missoula Artist Lillian Nelson and downtown property owner Sandy Mitchell to create a large art mural on the Dorothy Building at 131 W Alder Street.

Funded by the Foundation's Arts & Culture Impact Grants program, the *Dorothy Dragon* mural will span over 115 feet in length, 28 feet in high, meander through 19 windows and breathe fire up a chimney that has historically kept residents warm inside the Dorothy apartment building for the past century. Artist Lillian Nelson noted in her application that the building is "unique, yet a little rough right now, so a big, sparkling dragon would give it a much needed facelift."

Nelson is a Montana native and 2007 fine arts graduate of the University of Montana. She is an experienced local artist with prior works displayed across town on multiple traffic signal boxes, on dumpster wraps behind the Confluence Center, and upon the 113 foot mural at the Van Buren Street underpass.

"It feels amazing to use the momentum from last year's projects and offer yet another art landmark to the Missoula community," said Travis Neil, President of the Missoula Downtown Foundation. "Coming together with property owners to create lasting pieces of art in the heart of our community has been highly rewarding for our board and staff. Missoulians and tourists both will be able to watch the *Dorothy Dragon* come to life throughout the summer and witness what local partnerships can accomplish."

Artist Lillian Nelson will begin work on the project this week and will look to complete the piece by August 31. The adjacent sidewalks at 131 W Alder Street will be closed intermittently throughout the summer to allow the artist to work.

"I am excited to add much needed color to the building and bring new life into the residential block," said artist Lillian Nelson. "This project could potentially be one of Missoula's biggest and most colorful murals! Contributing to the arts scene in Missoula has been a focus of mine for a long time and the opportunity to produce this mural feels like one of the most substantial projects of my career."

The Arts & Culture Impact Grants Program was created in 2023 with the intent to partner artists with building owners and funding to create destination artwork and implement goals of the Downtown Master Plan and its subsets, including

more art, placemaking projects, alley activation projects, and gateway improvements. The Foundation will be funding two projects this year, with a second piece to begin at 218 E Main

“It feels great to support this project with the Foundation,” said Sandy Mitchell, owner of the Dorothy Building. “I see the dragon as becoming a lasting legacy that I can give back to the Missoula community. What was simply a thought or pipe dream of mine last winter has now become a reality thanks to the expertise and imagination of Lillian. I can’t wait to watch the project evolve this summer!”

These projects are made possible in part due to generous gifts from Missoula Downtown Foundation donors. Folks interested in supporting the Arts & Culture Impact Grants Program are encouraged to donate online at donations.missouladowntown.com.

For more information about the Missoula Downtown Foundation, visit missouladowntown.com/missoula-downtown-foundation/ or reach out to the staff via phone (406-543-4238) or email (info@missouladowntown.com).

Downtown Missoula: Connecting Our Community!