

## **Media Advisory**

**Mayor Barrett and City officials showcase mural painting partnership with Waukesha county youth agency to help improve Milwaukee neighborhoods.**

### **For Immediate Release**

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**Date:** Wednesday, December 5, 2007, 11:30 A.M.

**LOCATION:** In front of 3718 W. Center St.

Milwaukee, WI — Have you ever stood in front of a building and said, “What if?” That concept is the key to a pilot project that is creating a lot of firsts in the city of Milwaukee. Typically green boards on a boarded building are targets for graffiti vandals. But this time the City of Milwaukee will get to the green boards first with real art and lend a helping hand to a growing urban neighborhood.

This is the first time a Waukesha county based youth agency will be crossing the county line to help with a new idea in Milwaukee. The Occupied Vacant Building Revitalization Project is a plan to provide store front-like murals to make vacant buildings look occupied, vibrant and a part of the neighborhood. The art work is drawn by volunteer artists under instruction from La Casa’s Community Center in Waukesha. Their art will be unveiled Wednesday to showcase the talents and the cooperation between the two communities.

Members of La Casa’s Youth Art Program, in collaboration with the Milwaukee Department of Neighborhood Services, volunteered to utilize oil paints and create market scenes on the large boards as a canvas. They were painted at La Casa’s Community Center in Waukesha. The youth created boards with corner store or marketplace scenes to give pedestrians and vehicular traffic a colorful, dynamic impression of a thriving community. The goal of this project is to help urban communities reclaim these properties, prevent further building abandonment and possibly spur new business activity to help revitalize the area.

Mayor Tom Barrett, Council President Ald. Willie Hines, Anselmo Villarreal, Executive Director of La Casa de Esperanza and DNS Operations Manager Tom Mishefske will be on hand to unveil the work and to thank the volunteer artists. The project has been a win-win success. This is the first time the City has tried this approach in a neighborhood. The City is hoping this pilot project will plant the seeds of hope and inspiration in the community to help it grow. The social agency benefits from having constructive and expressive outlets for the youth to develop their artistic talent in a positive way. It is a win-win for everyone.

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