

ART ROUTE DSM



Research has shown 750,000 people visit Greater Des Moines (DSM) each year specifically for the arts and cultural attractions, but half of these visitors cannot easily find public works of art. Art Route DSM, a partnership of the Greater Des Moines Partnership and several businesses and community development organizations, launched in 2016 with additional paint installations in 2017 to combine a unique experience with artistic and educational elements. Art Route DSM unites pieces of public art to easy access paths via artful city walkways. Free for all to enjoy, Art Route DSM follows the idea of a “Yellow Brick Road” where sidewalks are painted with patterns and lead to world-renowned art, sculptures, murals and architecture. The Route is painted onto city sidewalks and intersections and connects 87 pieces of public art to a six-mile trail in Downtown DSM.

The project emulates Boston’s Freedom Trail in a unique way. Preliminary research did not uncover any other city enacting an artful pathway by connecting both painted sidewalks and painted intersections to public art, marking Art Route DSM as a potential world-first to incorporate these elements together as one project.

Using thermoplastic paint to maximize the project’s longevity, five intersections in Downtown DSM were repainted to illustrate the artistic designs of Canadian street artist Peter Gibson, known as “Roadsworth.” Thermoplastic paint contains a heavy duty adhesive resin, making it a sustainable product intended to last for a longer period of time than traditional road paint. Along the Art Route DSM trail are brightly colored circles spaced approximately 20 feet apart. Following these are chevrons painted on the sidewalk to direct participants toward each of the art displays. Additional information about each piece in the Route is available via the Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation’s mobile app. Users can utilize the GPS-enabled app in conjunction with following Art Route DSM.

The Art Route DSM vision serves to unite public art in DSM to increase economic development and promote health and wellness. As a major economic driver for DSM, arts and culture energize the Downtown DSM core and support DSM’s vision of accessible walkability. The implementation of Art Route DSM has driven economic improvements to nearby businesses and partnerships. The full trail stretches from the Iowa State Capitol on the east side of Downtown DSM to the John and Mary Pappajohn Sculpture Park on the west side, encouraging residents and visitors alike to explore all of Downtown DSM’s businesses and attractions. Future elements of the project aim to incorporate expanding Art Route DSM into the widely popular Downtown DSM skywalks by including window clings identifying viewable pieces on the Route and providing information regarding the art. In addition to the Route in Downtown DSM, other areas of the region have gotten involved with the project. The City of West Des Moines has expanded upon Art Route DSM by installing an Art Route Pocket near the West Des Moines City Hall. Additional Art Route DSM pockets throughout the DSM region are in the works to leverage Art Route DSM as a truly regional effort.

Continued pre- and post-promotional efforts have been made via social media through the Des Moines Public Art Foundation ([@dsmpublicart](https://www.instagram.com/dsmpublicart)) Instagram page and through The Partnership’s social media channels and blogs. Uploaded photographs and videos often provide a detailed description of the work, including an artist biography and common interpretations and understandings of the meaning behind the artwork’s title and design. Visitors are encouraged to submit their own photos of DSM’s art using provided hashtags to be featured by the Des Moines Public Art Foundation.

With a vision to engage, inspire and enrich the lives of citizens and visitors in DSM, the Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation has assisted throughout the community with public and private collaborations. The organization actively seeks community integration of art outside of galleries and museums. The Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation is currently in the process of introducing a new large-scale sculpture to Downtown DSM — “A Monumental Journey” — honoring the legacy of 12 African American lawyers, five of

whom were from Iowa. Art Route DSM will provide further connection and foot traffic to the sculpture once installed.



Due to Art Route DSM's recent public integration, follow-up research and optimization of Art Route DSM is ongoing.

Art Route DSM's success was made possible through a citywide, collaborative effort of community leadership and innovation. In addition to The Partnership, the ensemble of sponsors for Art Route DSM include Wells Fargo, the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines, Bravo Greater Des Moines, Principal, Kum & Go, Bankers Trust, MidAmerican Energy Company, Prairie Meadows, the Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Des Moines Arts Festival®, the Greg and Suzie Glazer Burt Foundation, the Downtown Neighborhood Association and members of the Art Route DSM Committee.

Partner and supporting organizations include the City of Des Moines, the City of West Des Moines, the Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation, Catch Des Moines, Neumann Monson Architects, Substance Architecture, Grimes Asphalt and Paving Corporation, the Des Moines Arts Festival® and Art Week Des Moines, the Des Moines Police Department, Des Moines Public Schools and the Iowa Healthiest State Initiative.

Each of these partners and sponsors came together offering their unique experience and expertise to make Art Route DSM possible.

More information about Art Route DSM can be found online at artrouteDSM.com.