

Art Washing Development at Grain Belt

by [Josh Blanc](#) | Apr 12, 2018 | [District News](#)

The Grain Belt complex area around the historic buildings is about to be redeveloped. Two proposals are on the table, each with solutions for the broad city needs of housing and energy uses. Many artists attended Council Member Steve Fletcher's March 8 open house to look at the preliminary designs and found them lacking.

The buildings do not honor the historic quality of the area or utilize local resources. Both developers "art wash" their proposals using presence in an art area as their main selling point. But when pressed on actual art uses they provide no details, mainly stick-built architectural options and quasi-defined art spaces.

Neither actually considered using local art and resource business to build these complexes. There are dozens of local and regional metal, wood, glass, tile, and stone workers who could be utilized. None were considered. When asked, they said they could not afford using artists. That entire premise is unacceptable; locally-sourced materials and labor incorporated into a building design does not have to be more expensive than the standard issue.

As readers of this page have seen over the past five-plus years, numerous institutions including the very public international airport have incorporated original art into their designs and have been lauded for it.

Developers need to rethink how they propose to build in the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District (Northeast AD). Development should be a practice of enhancing the community, not a scheme where the community is left to deal with the consequences of their choices and the city council's choices.

The entire area around the Grain Belt buildings is teeming with development. All chosen current development went against neighborhood organizations' and residents' recommendations for lower density, quality parking and transportation concepts.