



Montclarion/Michael Gray

A MASSIVE MURAL will decorate the fences that now border the five-block construction site down below for the city's convention center and city center complex. Guided by Jack Greene, left, and Gary Graham, artists will begin to work on the designs next month.

Huge mural for City Center site

By Eleanor Edwards

It wasn't so long ago that outdoor murals began transforming the way we looked at art *and* at the urban environment, bringing art into the outdoors and enlivening previously neglected bare walls.

Now outdoor murals have proliferated so that there are books devoted to the subject and, in one city at least, walking tours organized around them.

But now comes a new twist: a mural that will cover five city blocks. Known as the City Center Fence Painting Project, it could well be the largest mural ever conceived and the biggest community art effort to date.

The project is the brainchild of the

Oakland Arts Council, the city's Office of Economic Development and Employment (OEDE) and Grubb and Ellis Development Company, all worried about the unsightly appearance of the downtown vacant blocks that eventually will become the city's new convention center and shopping center complex.

The fading wooden fences surrounding the land were discouraging to potential investors and depressing to the people who live and work in the area.

The entire eight-foot-high fence is painted a medium marine blue, with a foot-wide band of darker hue bordering the top edge of the fence. Onto this vast canvas will go "transition graphics," large patches of airbrushed color designs done by Jack Greene, and intended to unify the overall project.

The spaces between the transition pieces — a total of more than 10,000 square feet divided into 60 sections — are reserved for community artists.