

Murals & Public Art

Review Policy for the City of Martinsville

Adopted by City Council April 23, 2024

Purpose:

The City of Martinsville encourages the use of art as a way to engage residents and visitors, create community identity and highlight creativity. The display of murals and public art also assists in supporting the city's arts, tourism, and economic initiatives. The purpose of this policy is to strengthen the role of the City as a facilitator for the display of art in public spaces and implement an appropriate review process for public art. For the purpose of this policy, public art is defined as any work of art or structural design element, including installations, sculptures, and murals, that are situated and visible in a public place and open for the public to experience, regardless of whether or not it is on public or private property.

Goals:

The City of Martinsville strives to use murals and public art to obtain the following community goals:

- 1) To foster the public's understanding and enjoyment of public art;
- 2) Integrate public art into all aspects of the community and make it available to everyone;
- 3) Create distinct places and attractive spaces to be enjoyed by city residents;
- 4) To highlight the efforts of local artists and make Martinsville a haven for artists to work, live, and thrive in the community.

Review Process:

Proposed murals and public art projects in the City of Martinsville must be reviewed and approved by the City Council appointed Arts & Cultural Committee (ACC) prior to project implementation. Proposed murals to be located in any of the city's designated historic districts may require collaboration between the Arts & Cultural Committee (ACC) and the Architectural Review Board (ARB).

Arts & Cultural Committee (ACC)

The Arts & Cultural Committee, or ACC, is responsible for reviewing and approving any public art projects located in all areas of the city. General responsibilities of the ACC include:

- 1) Facilitating public art in public buildings and spaces;
- 2) Guiding the subject matter and direction of public art projects;
- 3) Developing procedures for selection of art and artists, to include input from the public and city staff;
- 4) Making recommendations to City Council on public art policy and acquisitions of works of art;
- 5) Advancing the city as an "arts destination" and attracting artists, cultural tourism, and economic development through public art.

Arts & Cultural Committee Collaboration with Architectural Review Board (ARB)

Proposed murals in the city's historic districts may require the ACC to collaborate with the ARB. The Architectural Review Board, or ARB, is responsible for reviewing and approving any exterior alterations to properties located within the boundaries of the city's historic district. The ARB does not review the content of the art, but instead review how the proposed art installations will impact historic architecture and the overall character of the historic district.

Review Criteria of Murals:

A. Location

- 1) Murals must be painted on side or rear walls of the building and not on its primary façade or above roof line.
- 2) Existing historically significant murals cannot be painted over unless being rehabilitated.
- 3) The number of murals will be limited to no more than three (3) murals per city block.
- 4) The installation of a mural should compliment and enhance the building and be incorporated architecturally into the façade.
- 5) The location of the mural on the building should not cover or detract from significant architectural features or character defining design.

B. Design & Materials

- 1) The scale of the mural should be appropriate to the building and the site.
- 2) The theme of the mural should be appropriate within the context of the surrounding neighborhood and complement the existing character.
- 3) The mural should be an original design.
- 4) A color palette should be used that compliments the colors or architecture found on the property and the streetscape.
- 5) The sponsor and/or artist's names may be incorporated but should be discreet and not exceed five percent (5%) of the design or two (2) square feet of the area, whichever is less.
- 6) Artists should use paints and materials that will not chemically corrode nor compromise the integrity of the building's exterior or structure.
- 7) All murals must be coated with a clear layer of anti-graffiti coating or sealant.
- 8) Paints that are reflective, neon, and/or fluorescent should not be used.
- 9) All costs associated with installing the mural, artist fees, and the selection of the artist will be managed by the property owner.

C. Maintenance:

- 1) The property owner will be responsible for proper maintenance of the mural, including peeling paint.
- 2) The property owner will sign a written agreement for maintenance.
- 3) The property owner may be contacted for mural maintenance at any time the city determines repairs or maintenance is required.

General Public Art Guidelines

- 1) The subsequent guidelines will be applied to contributing, landmark, and non-historic structures in the same manner.
- 2) Alterations made to buildings within the Historic District(s) for arts-based projects should be reversible and not damage the features of historic landmarks or contributing buildings.
- 3) Existing historic architectural details on primary facades should not be altered, covered over, or diminished by arts-based projects.
- 4) Arts-based projects that include information related to a business, product or service will be considered a sign and are required to meet current zoning regulations. When an official interpretation is deemed necessary, the Director of Community Development will determine if a proposal is a mural, sculpture, or sign. Generally, arts-based projects do not include trademarks, service marks, or other markings associated with a business, profession, trade, or occupation.
- 5) Mechanically produced or computer-generated prints or images, including but not limited to digitally printed vinyl, are not permitted.
- 6) Murals or public art that is displayed in the City of Martinsville must be safe, citizen-friendly and suitable for all in the community. The ARB or the ACC will not approve plans for murals or public art that it considers to be unsafe, offensive, or contrary to community standards, including but not limited to:
 - 1) Displays of nudity
 - 2) Displays of violence or threatening imagery
 - 3) Displays of a sexual nature or theme
 - 4) Displays of hostility to any religion(s)
 - 5) Displays that violate copyright/trademark laws
 - 6) Displays that desecrate the American flag or other revered objects
 - 7) Displays that are racially or ethnically offensive.
 - 8) Displays that are harmful or inappropriate for minors.
 - 9) Displays that defame others.

Appeals:

Decisions of the Arts & Cultural Committee can be appealed to Martinsville City Council. City Council has the ability to overturn or amend their decision, if they choose, and approve a mural or public art project in both the historic and non-historic districts.