

## **Historic Preservation Considerations for Murals**

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Below are a list of suggestions, questions and considerations when considering adding murals as an artistic feature of local historic districts as well as National Register of Historic Places Districts. A reminder that before you begin these projects a historic building may be individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or individually landmarked by your local historic preservation commission individually or as part of a larger district.

Consider the following in planning mural installation.

- Is the building listed locally in the historic district? If so, have you sought involvement from the local planning office and the historic preservation commission chair to find out if the building is even permitted to have a mural. Many local districts include the review of mural and art installation and if so, do you have that process and paperwork completed? If the mural is to be painted on a historic building the applicant should consider moving the mural to a non-historic, non-contributing building to the local or national register historic district. Historic buildings have finishes and fenestration that contribute to the overall aesthetic to the building and to the larger district. These locations, on significant historic properties should not be the first location for murals.
- If the building for installation is historic and has a historic mural, that mural should be repainted or reapplied as the art or advertisement applies to that type, style or period of not just architecture, but social history of the community. The building should not have a new mural, but convey the historic message of the building.
- If the approval is given for an installation on an historic building, these precautions and best practices should be used:
  - The applicant should use treatment recommendations in the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties and that information may be found here <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf>
  - Painting and installation materials that are used should always be reversible, and the building service should not be harshly cleaned, stripped or compromise the masonry of the building. If possible, the mural could be installed on a surface of a temporary film and applied. This means the film could be easily removed and research into this process could be supported by the Historic Preservation Commission and the applicant together.
- If an HPC (Historic Preservation Commission) reviews murals and approves murals then the city or county municipalities should be aware that murals should not become a reliant historic theme, or use the process to begin applying a theme and art to all buildings. These changes affect the historic feel of the city and all the architecture within the district. Each mural should be treated as a case by case approval and not part of a larger, mass approval. Each mural should be significant individually and not become a “petting zoo” type of environment for murals.
- It is important to note who will be responsible to maintain the mural. Who is financially responsible for keeping the mural painted, cleaned and clear of potential graffiti? The city or county government should apply the same policies for neglect of public art and maintenance

that they do for landscape and buildings. As part of the mural plan for instillation the applicant should submit a maintenance plan to the local permitting authority.