

Background

The painting of non-residential structures in a Historic District, resulting in a significant design change, as is characterized in mural art, is a substantial alteration requiring SHPC approval. Murals and other similar forms of visual art can both add or detract from the character of a building, structure or district based upon their location, size, shape, color palette, materials used and relationship to historic context.

Purpose

Murals and other similar forms of visual art have the ability to create a sense of place in a city and strengthen a community's identity.

Mural Art vs. Signage

Content distinguishes mural art from signage. While a sign specifically advertises a business, product or service through graphics or text, murals are solely artistic in nature. Murals may not include trademarks, service marks, or other markings, colors or patterns which identify or associate with a business, profession, trade, occupation or calling. When an official interpretation is considered necessary, SHPC will determine if a proposal is a mural or a sign. Mural art that constitutes a sign shall conform to the signage regulations and the applicable design guidelines.

Review Criteria

A. Location

1. Murals are not permitted on unpainted contributing or landmark structures.
2. Murals may not be located on the primary façade of a building and should not obscure or damage building elements or details.
3. The number of murals per block face should be limited to discourage visual clutter.
4. A mural may be of any size, but it must be in scale with the district's character and appropriate for its location.
5. Do not paint over other historically significant murals, even if they are faded.

B. Process, Design & Materials

1. The Certificate of Appropriateness should be modified to encompass any lease agreement that may exist. A lease agreement between the building owner and the artist and/or funding source is encouraged, but not mandatory.
2. Subject matter must reflect an aspect of the district's or the city's history so that it contributes to or reinforces the historic fabric of the building or district.
3. Artists must submit a proposed mural which includes a frame of the mural, which may be the boundary of the building wall or a painted circle, square, oval or rectangle.

C. Preservation

1. Use paints and materials that will not chemically corrode nor compromise the integrity of the building's exterior and structure.
2. Prime the wall with a latex exterior paint.
3. A proper finish coat must be applied to complete the mural and protect it from graffiti or weather damage.
4. A maintenance plan, which includes graffiti removal and reapplication of paint, must be submitted to SHPC.