

# DRAFT – NOT AN APPROVED DOCUMENT

## Mural Guidelines for Historic Properties in the City of Milwaukee

### INTRODUCTION

The Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission directed staff to draft guidelines for the installation of murals on locally designated historic properties in the City of Milwaukee. Mural requests in Milwaukee have been made by individuals and groups as the popularity of outdoor murals, and the availability of funding mechanisms has increased in recent years. The Historic Preservation Commission felt that such requests for murals on locally-designated properties required discussion and a set of guidelines by which to make informed decisions about granting Certificates of Appropriateness. The draft guidelines prepared below are the result of combing through mural guidelines for historic properties in numerous communities throughout the country.

**For the purposes of these guidelines, a “mural” shall be defined as an artistic work applied to an exterior surface of a pre-existing structure and that does not constitute a sign under s. 200-08-84 of the *Milwaukee Code of Ordinances*.**

### I. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

In addition to those materials usually required for Certificates of Appropriateness (CoA), applicants seeking a CoA for a mural on an historic property shall submit:

- a. Written approval from the property owner for the mural, provided the applicant is not the owner of the property.
- b. A record of ownership of the mural.
- c. A maintenance plan specifying care and the parties responsible for the maintenance of the mural. Maintenance includes, but is not limited to, graffiti removal, removal of surface dirt, reapplication of coatings, touching up damaged areas, and ensuring vegetation does not harm the mural or the supporting building.
- d. An agreement between the artist and the property owner identifying who is responsible for removal of a mural.
- e. Photo documentation of the completed mural shall be supplied to the Historic Preservation Commission to provide a base line for future maintenance, conservation and restoration.

### II. DESIGN STANDARDS

- a. Except as provided below, no mural may be located on elevations that directly face or are parallel to sidewalks and public rights-of-way.

- b. Murals shall be permitted for side or rear walls or alley walls (but not the primary facades) that have been refaced with non-historic materials such as replacing wood with parging.
- c. Murals shall be permitted for side walls that lack historic details (cornices, windows, entrances, etc.), are of painted common brick, includes no decorative masonry work, and that are not street-facing or adjacent to a sidewalk.
- d. No mural shall exceed 50% of the wall on which it is placed or twice the maximum size allowed by the *Milwaukee Code of Ordinances* for wall signage in the area, whichever is smaller.
- e. Murals shall be confined to one wall of a building and not wrap around to other sides, nor may any building have more than one mural
- f. No mural shall be permitted on an unpainted masonry wall such as brick, stone, or stucco. Murals should instead be painted on removable materials such as plywood or other suitable outdoor material. Anchoring shall be placed into masonry joints or other non-damaging areas of the walls. Framing shall be done so as not to trap water between the mural and the wall. Hanging or anchoring shall be reversible.
- g. No mural shall be permitted on wood sidings with surface detail such as, but not limited to bevel siding, board and batten siding.
- h. No mural shall be permitted on a building that has had masonry cleaning or major repointing, nor may a mural be used in lieu of cleaning or repointing on a building in need of it.
- i. No mural shall be permitted on a fence.
- j. Except as provided below, murals shall not cover over windows, doors, cornices, or other architectural elements.
  - i. Murals may be permitted on windows and doors temporarily boarded due to vandalism. They shall be permitted for no more than 90 days or the time permitted for repairs by the Department of Neighborhood Services, whichever is greater.
  - ii. No mural shall be permitted on preventative boarding.
- k. Lighting of a mural shall require a CoA.
- l. Artists shall sign and date their work in a discreet location.

### III. REMOVAL

- a. A CoA shall be required for removal of a mural.
- b. Upon removal, any materials used to adhere the mural shall be removed at the time the mural is removed. This includes, but is not limited to brackets, mounting hardware, caulk or grout, and adhesive glues. The surface shall be returned to its original condition.

The mural guidelines from many communities were reviewed and brought up many factors that the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission will need to consider.

The sources below were particularly helpful in outlining the importance of how murals should be installed, what have been sources of funding, and what should ideally happen with murals once they are approved.

Back, Margaret. 2019. "Managing Community Murals in an Urban Preservation Framework." Thesis (Historic Preservation). University of Pennsylvania. [https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1669&context=hp\\_theses](https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1669&context=hp_theses)

City of Frankfort, Kentucky. Mural Installation Guide. <http://www.frankfort.ky.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1826/Mural-Installation-Guide>

Mural Routes. Mural Production. A Resource Handbook. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. 2014. Ontario Trillium Foundation

The Getty Conservation Institute. "The Conservation of Outdoor Contemporary Murals." Newsletter 18.2, Summer 2003. [https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications\\_resources/newsletters/18\\_2/feature.html](https://www.getty.edu/conservation/publications_resources/newsletters/18_2/feature.html)