

GUIDELINES FOR MURALS IN THE TOWN OF MARKHAM

Prepared by the Town of Markham Development Services Commission

Across Canada a number of municipalities have been involved in mural programs, many of which have been municipally sponsored. The most successful program, in Chemainus, British Columbia, has been a tourist attraction and an incentive for downtown revitalisation. A mural program was also initiated in Halifax, Nova Scotia in 1995 to improve the appearance of unsightly blank walls in anticipation of the G7 -Economic Summit.

Municipalities in Ontario that have been involved in mural programs include Welland, Oshawa, Gravenhurst, Shelburne, Scarborough, Pembroke and Toronto. There have been few problems with these organized mural programs, and clear guidelines ensure that standards of design, content and maintenance are met.

The following guidelines have been established to ensure that murals erected in Markham, are suitable for the area where they are proposed to be erected and that the murals will be well maintained and protected against vandalism.

1) Maintenance

To ensure that murals are maintained, the owner of the property will be required to sign an undertaking guaranteeing the continued maintenance of the mural on the building. Should the owner fail to comply, the Town of Markham will secure in the agreement, the ability to carry out maintenance work and recover any costs incurred through the owner's property tax bill or a court of law. The undertaking will bind the present and future owners of the property to the terms and conditions contained within.

2) Subject Matter

Murals must comply with the provisions of the Sign By-law and cannot, and are not used for advertising purposes. Subject matter must be acceptable to the community and should not include subjects that are considered "bad taste" or "indecent" by community standards.

3) Removal

The owners of buildings on which murals have been erected will be required to obtain the permission of the Town of Markham to remove or alter the subject mural.

Proposals to alter or remove murals located within Heritage Conservation Districts, Heritage Conservation District Study Areas or which may impact any property listed on the Markham Inventory of Heritage Buildings will be subject to review by Heritage Markham.

When permission to remove a mural has been granted by the Town, it shall be done so without damage to the building, and the wall surface will be restored to its original condition or appearance.

The Town of Markham will secure in an undertaking agreement, the ability to carry out removal work and recover any costs incurred through the owner's property tax bill or a court of law. The undertaking would bind the present and future owners of the property to the terms and conditions contained within.

4) **Materials**

Applicants for murals will be required to provide the Town with a detailed description of materials to be used and any required treatments that should be undertaken. This will include the surface treatment, coating material and the proposed paint to be used. The applicant will also be required to demonstrate why their proposed methods are the most favourable for that building(s) in terms of appearance, long term durability and protection against vandalism. The materials outline will be accompanied by a letter from an established paint manufacturing or retail company verifying that the methods and materials that the applicant proposes to use are sound.

5) **Surfaces**

Surfaces should be properly prepared and primed prior to painting the mural. On freshly parged surfaces a letter will be required from a representative of an established paint manufacturer or retailer confirming that the surface is suitable in terms of texture and moisture to accept a painted mural.

In those circumstances where there may be potential problems with paint adhesion or damage to the surface of the building, it is recommended that the murals be painted on crezone or canvas board or equivalent. This type of mural is easily maintained or removed, and is less costly to install, as scaffolding is not required.

Where murals are painted directly upon a wall, a properly parged surface is recommended, with provision being undertaken in the parging to limit the expansion and contraction of the surface and correspondingly the peeling of paint. Flush concrete block or brick surfaces may be appropriate so long as the mortar joints are not set back from the surface of the brick.

6) **Paints**

High durability urethane paint has been identified as the most appropriate mural paint by a number of mural artists and painting companies and is required for murals erected in the town. To extend the durability of the finish and prevent permanent damage due to vandalism, a clear coat of high durability urethane or another professionally recognized material is also required as a finishing coat. In heritage areas, paint colours should be derived primarily from heritage paint colour palettes that are relevant to the community.

7) **Illumination**

Mural applications are required to include description of the details of all methods of illumination of the proposed mural. Indirect illumination of murals for the purpose of highlighting the mural in the evening may be permitted by the Town where appropriate for the character of the area. Illumination as a feature of the mural is not permitted.

8) **Corporate Sponsorship/Identification**

The inclusion of contemporary corporate images and/or names for the purpose of advertising is not permitted in murals.

Sponsors of murals may have their names affixed to a wooden or cast metal plaque of approximately 0.3m.(1' - 0") x 0.6m.(2' - 0") in size, that is located adjacent to the mural.

The inclusion of corporate images and names of historic Markham businesses or establishments prior to 1965 may be permitted where appropriate, e.g. Reesor Marmill, Stiver Carriage Works, Wideman's Hardware, etc..

The inclusion of images of charitable organizations whose association with Markham dates back prior to 1965 may be permitted where appropriate. e.g. Boy Scouts, Royal Canadian Legion, Markham Hockey, etc..

9) **Heritage Buildings/Areas**

Murals will not be permitted on heritage buildings where significant features of the buildings are obscured or where potential damage to the building may occur. Murals will be permitted on recent additions to heritage buildings.

Where a mural is proposed for a property that is designated under Part IV or Part V of the Ontario Heritage Act, the applicants will be required to make application for a heritage permit. Where a mural is proposed which may impact upon a property that is listed on the Markham Inventory of Heritage Buildings, the applicant will be required to submit the application for review and commentary by Heritage Markham.

10) **Subject Matter for Heritage Areas**

Murals proposed for erection in heritage areas or on heritage buildings should be consistent with the general provisions on subject matter, identified in section (2) of the Guidelines. To ensure that inappropriate subject matters are avoided, and to enhance the appreciation of the heritage of the Town of Markham, the Town will encourage murals that reflect a theme from the history of the Town of Markham, in heritage areas or on listed or designated heritage buildings. Potential subjects include:

- Pioneer Industries, e.g. Milling, the Railway
- Famous local citizens, e.g. William Berczy
- Recreations of historic photographs, e.g. Old Markham Fairgrounds, Main Street, vanished buildings
- Scenes reflective of the history of that particular building or site
- Themes in Markham's History - e.g. Veterans, Native people, Berczy, settlers, Mackenzie Rebellion,
- Historic Landscape Scenes - e.g. Farmsteads

The depiction of other subjects and scenes in murals may be permitted, subject to the approval of the Town.

11) **Vandalism and Other Physical Damage Prevention**

To protect against vandalism and other physical damage murals will receive a clear coating of a urethane material that will allow the easy removal of spray paint, or other materials. To avoid vandalism, murals should be raised at least 1.52m.(5'-0") to 2.13m.(7'-0") feet above ground level.

12) **Review**

Mural proposals or proposals to remove or alter murals will be subject to review and approval by the Town of Markham in accordance with the "Guidelines for Murals in the Town of Markham". Murals proposed for erection within Heritage Conservation Districts, Heritage Conservation District Study Areas or which may impact any property listed on the Markham Inventory of Heritage Buildings will also be subject to review by Heritage Markham.

13) **Application Requirements**

Mural applications must include the following:

- a reduced scale, coloured rendering of the proposed mural, identifying location on the building with dimensions in metric, and impact on the streetscape;
- a written description/interpretation of the theme of the proposed mural;
- an identification of paint colours, materials and techniques to be used;
- a letter of permission from the building owner to erect the mural;
- a letter from an established paint manufacturer or retailer verifying that the proposed materials, surfaces and methods are sound and resistant to weathering and vandalism;
- an identification of all mural sponsors and how they will be recognized;
- an identification of any illumination of the proposed mural;
- an ongoing maintenance plan for the mural;
- the anticipated life-span of the mural, and plans to remove the mural at the end of the life-span;
- a portfolio of previous relevant works by the mural artist;

Mural applications will be submitted to the Building Standards Department of the Town of Markham. A standard fee of \$60.00 will be charged by the Town for each mural application.

14) **Insurance**

The owner of the property on which the mural is erected will be required to assume the costs of any scaffolding or insurance for the scaffolding required in the erection of a mural.

15) **Non-Compliance to guidelines requirements**

Applicants may seek relief from one or more of the Guidelines for Murals in the Town of Markham through a resolution of the Planning and Development Committee.

Application Process for Murals in the Town of Markham



