

MURALS IN ARLINGTON, VA Guidelines

Arlington's County Public Art Program

Arlington County's Public Art Program is committed to commissioning large-scale, site-specific public artworks that generally coincide with new construction. The resulting artworks respond to specific architectural and natural features and are typically funded through the County's annual CIP budget or through site-plan negotiated community benefit. Although the Program does commission murals from time to time, it primarily focuses on large scale permanent public art projects that are integrated into architectural, infrastructural, or landscape design.

Arlington Public Art does not typically provide financial or administrative support for the commission of private murals but offers the following basic information about mural-making and how to comply with Arts Commission and Zoning regulations.

Finding an Artist

Artists can be found through local advertising via flyers in libraries, art and community centers, and private businesses. Arlington Public Art Program maintains a mailing list of artists and can distribute opportunities electronically (contact Tomora Wright at 703.228.3771 or twright1@arlingtonva.us).

Funding

Fundraising is part of the mural commissioning process. One possible funding source for a mural involving an Arlington artist is Arlington Cultural Affairs' Grants Program, a competitive program that supports individual artists with grants of \$7,500 in direct support. Click [here](#) for more information.

Zoning Regulations and Arts Commission Approval Process

If an exterior mural is planned, it must be in compliance with County Zoning Regulations. Section 13.2.3 of the Zoning Ordinance addresses Murals or Works of Art. In short, a proposed mural must either be reviewed and approved by Arlington Public Art or meet **all** of the following criteria:

- (a) Is located on the wall of a building in any district, but not in R districts or RA14-26, RA8- 18, RA7-16 or RA6-15; and
- (b) Includes no text legible from a public roadway; and
- (c) Includes no logo or trademarked symbol; and
- (d) Includes no specific commercial product, although it may include such generic products as automobiles, furniture, soft drinks or other items where the brand is not apparent; and
- (e) Includes no picture, symbol or device of any kind that relates to a commercial business, product or service offered on the premises where the wall is located

To be reviewed by Arlington Public Art, the artist must present a design proposal (including proposed materials and maintenance plan) to the Arlington Commission for the Arts' Public Art Committee which makes a recommendation to approve or deny the project. Projects that have demonstrated community support (such as a letter from a civic association) are preferable. If rejected, the proposal will be regarded as a sign rather than public art and will be subject to County signage regulations. Visit [Zoning Ordinance – Official Website of Arlington County Virginia Government \(arlingtonva.us\)](http://www.arlingtonva.us) for further information regarding signage regulations.

Find a Wall

The first step in mural-making is finding an exterior or interior wall. If interior, decide upon an appropriate height to avoid damage from by-passers and consider ventilation (important during the painting process). For exterior applications, evaluate the wall's condition, orientation, and visibility.

Calculate a Budget

Your budget will determine the mural's size. Consider the following expenses: artist fee, liability insurance, wall preparation, materials (paint, brushes, rollers, levels, buckets, drop cloth, sealer), scaffolding, documentation, signage and maintenance. Plan on 30% of the total budget for the artist fee.

Find an Artist

Choose an artist who is comfortable with the scale of your project. During the selection process, slides or digital images will reveal an artist's style and help you decide between representational or abstract imagery. When advertising an opportunity, include a deadline for the submission of materials (cover letter, résumé, artist portfolio, 20 digital slides) as well as a project schedule. Include as much information about the project as possible.

Community Involvement

Decide if the community should be invited to participate in selecting the artist, choosing the mural's imagery, or painting the mural. If you choose to involve the community, describe this component in the original advertisement. Plan on spending considerable time publicizing the project and coordinating public meetings.

Prepare Your Wall

Choose a proper wall for your mural. Take note of its features, irregularities, construction, surface (painted or raw), and overall condition. Check for water damage, rust, surface filth, loose pieces, cracks, etc. Prior to painting, power-wash and prime the wall with gesso (after thorough drying).

Paint

Choose an enduring paint for outdoor murals. Exposure to sun, rain, and pollution can quickly cause damage. The following paints are suggested:

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| • <i>Novacolor (by Artex)</i> | www.novacolorpaint.com | UV-protected acrylic paint (also sell primer/gesso) |
| • <i>Keim Mineral Paint</i> | www.keim-usa.com | Silicate mineral paint that binds with substrate |
| • <i>Accolade Latex Paint</i> | www.prattandlambert.com | High quality exterior latex paint |

Develop a Maintenance Plan

Murals are not usually considered permanent works of art and typically last a maximum of 20 years. Wall selection and preparation is key to longevity. Consult with your artist, the paint manufacturer, and if possible, an art conservator to develop a realistic maintenance plan and budget.