

**HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION  
APPLICATION FOR A PERMIT WITHIN A NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT  
DECEMBER 14, 2020  
610 BRAZOS STREET  
SIXTH STREET NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT**

**PROPOSAL**

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Paint a mural on the sides of the building.

**PROJECT SPECIFICATIONS**

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The applicant proposes painting a mural on the sides of a non-contributing building to the Sixth Street National Register Historic District. The building was recently modified and staff does not believe that it still contributes to the historic district.



Current photograph, December, 2020 (by staff)



The proposed mural will be painted on the north wall of the building and the mechanical structure on the roof; it will slightly wrap around the sides of the front wall of the building. Like the proposed mural at 506 Congress Avenue, this mural was designed by renowned Spanish artist Ruben Sanchez; Here is his website <https://www.iamrubensanchez.com>

### **STANDARDS FOR REVIEW**

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The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation do not apply to artwork applied to buildings in historic districts, and the Commission has no specific guidelines or standards for proposed artwork. The mural could be removed in the future without damage to the structure.

In her paper, "Historic Preservation Considerations for Murals," Leigh Burns, the director of the Fox Theater Institute recommends that historic buildings should convey the historic message of the building and to take into consideration that murals affect the historic feel of the city and all the architecture within the district.

The City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin's Historic Preservation Commission in 2019 reviewed the following draft guidelines for murals on historic buildings:

*DRAFT – NOT AN APPROVED DOCUMENT*

Mural Guidelines for Historic Properties in the City of Milwaukee

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 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 or rear walls or alley 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.

For more considerations on murals in historic districts, see Margaret Back's 2019 Master's thesis from the University of Pennsylvania:

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)

### **COMMITTEE FEEDBACK**

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Not reviewed.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

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Staff recommends approval of this mural with the added requirement that the applicant complete a maintenance plan. This proposed mural differs significantly from the proposed mural for 506 Congress Avenue in that it is painted on the side of the building rather than the primary façade, and the building is clearly non-contributing to the historic district. There is a precedent for other murals in downtown Austin that have been applied to side walls of the building. Although the size of the mural may be an issue, this proposed mural is more in line with the principles set forth in the City of Milwaukee's guidelines for murals in historic districts.