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To: "[Direct to Mayor and Council - DL](#)"

Date: 3/13/2025 6:51:48 PM

Subject: Council Memo: Enabling Murals and Public Art on Construction Hoardings (RTS# 14437)

Attachments: ACCS-ENG - Memo (Council) - Enabling Murals and Public Art on Construction Hoardings RTS 14437 (2025-03-13).pdf

Good Afternoon Mayor and Council,

The attached memo from Margaret Wittgens, General Manager of Art, Culture and Community Services and Lon LaClaire, General Manager of Engineering Services, provides an update on staff work in response to the Council Motion "Turning Construction Hoarding into a Canvas for Public Art in Vancouver" (RTS# 14437):

- Two streams of work will enable murals and public art in construction hoarding, while also addressing artist and sector-wide needs and improving best-practices.
- Stream 1: Staff will introduce three pathways through existing programs: murals, graffiti art, and vinyl installations on construction hoarding. We will support local artists with fast-tracked permits and free supplies with a focus on Indigenous, Black, and racialized artists.
- Stream 2: Staff will strengthen existing Mural Support Program guidelines to address artist compensation, safety, and administrative processes.

Should Council have any further questions please contact Margaret at margaret.wittgens@vancouver.ca or Lon at lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca and they will ensure questions are addressed through the weekly Q&A

Thank you,
Sandra

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The City of Vancouver acknowledges the unceded homelands of the x m k y m (Musqueam), S wxwú7mesh (Squamish), and Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

MEMORANDUM

March 13, 2025

TO: Mayor and Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager
Katrina Leckovic, City Clerk
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office
Mellisa Morphy, Director of Policy, Mayor's Office
Trevor Ford, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office

FROM: Margaret Wittgens, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services
Lon La Claire, General Manager, Engineering Services

SUBJECT: Enabling Murals and Public Art on Construction Hoardings

RTS #: 14437

PURPOSE

This memo provides an update on staff work in response to the Council Motion "*Turning Construction Hoarding into a Canvas for Public Art in Vancouver*" from March 30, 2021. Two streams of work are outlined to enable murals and public art in construction hoarding, while also addressing artist and sector-wide needs, and improving best-practices.

BACKGROUND

Council directed staff through the motion [Turning Construction Hoarding into a Canvas for Public Art in Vancouver](#) to explore options for requiring the use of portions of construction hoarding for murals, with the intent to support local artists and arts organizations and their recovery post COVID-19. Staff conducted a review of existing by-laws, administrative procedures and programs, staffing and resource capacity, external equity-oriented community engagement and a jurisdictional scan of case studies and best practices in artist compensation. This phase of work was outlined in [a council memo dated July 11, 2022](#).

DISCUSSION

Based on the above review, staff will advance two streams of improvements: first, a low-resource approach to enable murals and public art on construction hoarding; second, adding best practices to existing Mural Support Program guidelines.

1. Enabling murals and public art in construction hoarding

Engineering staff will introduce three pathways to enable murals and public art on construction hoardings through existing permitting processes:

- *Painted mural on construction hoarding*: Artists can create construction hoardings in safe off-site locations, prior to installation. The developer and/or commissioning organization is responsible for identifying hoarding creation site(s) and the ultimate installation of the hoarding.
- *Graffiti art on hoarding*: To continue to support the graffiti community, developers and/or organizations can hold graffiti jams to paint hoarding on site. Engineering staff will work with developers and/or organizations holding graffiti jams to review and approve traffic management plans and issue temporary street occupancy permits to support 24-to-48-hour closures and ensure safety.
- *Vinyl installation on hoarding*: Developers and/or organizations can work with artists to produce vinyl wraps that can be installed on hoarding. The developer and/or organization is responsible for either arranging the vinyl art installation in safe off-site locations prior to erection or apply for traffic operations permits and/or temporary street occupancy permits to support safe on-site installation.

Applicants can benefit from the free paint and supplies offered by the Mural Support Program.

2. Adding best practices to existing Mural Support Program guidelines

Building on the outcomes of the conducted engagement sessions (See Appendix A), learnings from the Balmoral Mural project (See Appendix B), Mural Support Program and Graffiti Art Wall pilot, staff will add best practices to existing Mural Support Program guidelines. This new resource will serve as a helpful framework for organizations and businesses who wish to commission mural artwork. Best practices will provide information and approaches for commissioning entities to determine artist compensation; prioritize physical and cultural safety for artists; outline administration processes and coordination of mural production; and highlight the value and benefits that murals and construction hoarding bring to the community.

In tandem with the above, staff will also explore the creation of an artist roster or similar tool as an opportunity to further support equitable commissioning practices.

NEXT STEPS

This work will be resourced within existing programs and funding streams and will not impact permitting times. Enhanced staff effort will focus on supporting applications by Indigenous, Black and racialized emerging and established artists and will be determined by available resources within existing programs. Staff will work cross-departmentally (Public Art, Street Activities and Development and Major Projects) to achieve the above streams of work and will include updated information and details on the Mural Support Program website.

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact Margaret Wittgens at margaret.wittgens@vancouver.ca or Lon LaClaire at lon.laclaire@vancouver.ca and we will provide a response through the weekly Council Q&A.



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Appendix A - Construction Hoarding, an opportunity for murals and 2D art - Community Engagement Sessions Summary

Executive summary

To explore the feasibility of enabling murals on construction hoardings and learn more about existing mural commissioning practices, challenges and opportunities, Arts, Culture and Community services staff conducted a series of community engagement sessions.

During the community engagement process, stakeholders connected to mural production were interviewed, including: six visual artists with medium- to large-scale mural experience; two developers with experience commissioning 2D art on hoardings; and two organizations with an extensive portfolio of permanent and temporary mural commissions. Additionally, members of the City of Vancouver's Public Art Committee provided insights on the value of murals and public art and Mount Pleasant community members provided feedback through a survey.

Four themes emerged through engagement as key considerations and opportunities, including:

- a lack of consistency and clarity around artist compensation
- the importance of physical and cultural safety for artists
- the complexities surrounding administration and coordination of mural production
- and the value and benefits these projects bring to the community.

Findings from these engagement sessions, along with learnings from the Balmoral Mural project, Mural Support Program and Graffiti Art Wall pilot, will guide staff in the creation of best practices that support the City's role to enable murals and art work in construction hoardings and will provide a useful framework for commissioning organizations and businesses. Findings from each theme are summarized below.

Findings: Key considerations and opportunities

Artist compensation

There is a lack of standards and information for fee structures leading to inconsistent compensation processes:

- *Artists* agree that fees are consistently too low and do not adequately compensate for their time and labour. They noted a lack of transparency around budgets and how they are calculated.
- *Developers* mentioned that they prioritize paying artists their preferred rate and if the budget is too tight, they will adjust the scope of work.
- *Organizations* commissioning murals determine fees based on various projected costs that vary by project, on average trying to stay above CARFAC rates.

Adequate financial compensation and clarity across the industry is particularly relevant as many commissioning groups – as well as City of Vancouver departments – are prioritizing the centring of Indigenous, Black, and racialized (IBPOC) artists – artists who are often in precarious financial situations that worsened with the COVID pandemic. While it is beyond the City's ability

to regulate artist compensation fees, the City understands its importance in building equitable practices. Opportunities that can guide commissioning organizations and businesses to determine adequate artist compensation include:

- holding space for conversations with artists
- breaking down fees
- having knowledge around fees per square foot
- allocating additional budget to address safety matters, tight timelines, site constraints and changes
- reevaluating fees when there is an increase in scope of work.

Physical and cultural safety

There are limited physical and cultural safety practices in place to support artists before and during the mural production process:

- *Artists* identified the need for thorough safety and equipment training before initiating a mural. Further, they highlighted the importance of commissioning entities holding conversations with equity-denied artists – especially Black, Indigenous, women, and queer folk especially – to understand and provide physical and cultural support.
- *Developers* noted that they provide safety and equipment training and share information about the site. For lift operations, artists are required to have a safety certification. Some developers rely on printed vinyl to avoid physical risk on-site.
- Some *organizations* cover all equipment costs; however, artists are responsible for managing safety training costs. Others provide a specific date for fall protection training and take insurance policies on their behalf.

Examples of best practices that can be adopted by commissioning organizations and businesses are needed to support artists' physical and cultural safety, and to reduce cultural inequities. Opportunities to improve physical safety include off-site painting or embracing vinyl installations, managing traffic and public disruptions while working, addressing weather conditions and providing access to washrooms. To advance cultural safety, findings indicate that it is important to show care and solidarity by holding conversations to identify needs, to follow cultural protocols and having check-ins to address needs as the project evolves.

Administration and coordination

Mural production projects are challenging to navigate and resource-intensive due to complex administrative processes:

- *Artists* highlighted the difficulties of navigating complex administrative processes and coordinating with different stakeholders, especially for first-time artists. Lengthy processes can negatively impact relationships building, trust and painting timeline.

- *Developers* noted that they offer coordination between the artist and on-site developer to ensure there is a clear understanding of deliverable parameters. This requires dedicated resources.
- *Organizations* commissioning murals help navigate complex administrative processes and understand the likelihood for projects to change and evolve; contracts are therefore treated as guides and can be adapted. There are often no official internal policies or procedures for commissioning artists.

It is important for artists to have access to clear and organized, but also flexible, processes and timelines. It is important that developers, organizations and City departments work towards clarifying procedures and timelines. Having open communication channels between participating stakeholders can help avoid mishaps and address challenges in a collaborative way.

Value and community benefits of murals and construction hoarding

Stakeholders largely agree that despite the complexity of these projects, there is value in pursuing murals and that exploring diverse and visible public art forms can provide multiple benefits across the city:

- *Artists* shared that while there is a need to find more opportunities to support artists, construction hoardings carry a set of challenges including safety, site accessibility and temporality. However, if addressed, they provide an avenue to promote artistic work, especially for groups, like graffiti artists, that still lack legitimate opportunities.
- *Developers* agree that there is value to enabling murals in construction hoarding to highlight developments in a creative way and connect with the community. However, they also noted the challenges with maintenance of these murals, given the rough site conditions and costs required for implementation and upkeep.
- *Organizations* agree that murals in hoarding have beneficial effects in the community: they enhance the public perception of safety, pride, cleanliness and stewardship, make spaces more livable and attractive, deter graffiti tagging (therefore reducing costs and staff time), help reflect diverse cultures and values, and support sense of belonging.

Diverse and visible public art forms provide opportunities for artists and the community to capture history and cultural values, bring vitality to a neighbourhood, open opportunities for community-connected projects that can share stories, and celebrate diversity and identity. Opportunities to maximize the value of murals in construction hoardings include prioritizing neighbourhoods with low access to public art, finding opportunities to support urban Indigenous, black and racialized artists, legitimizing graffiti artists and finding ways to repurpose hoarding once it is removed. Exploring financial and process support can help facilitate diverse initiatives, including murals on construction hoardings.

Appendix B - Construction Hoarding, an opportunity for murals and 2D art - Case Study: Learnings from the Balmoral Mural Project

In addition to the community engagement sessions, staff also conducted a case study using the Balmoral construction site (159 E. Hastings St.) – a recent project that supported construction hoarding murals in the Downtown East Side – to learn more about existing mural production challenges and opportunities.

The Balmoral Hotel mural project in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside (DTES) was initiated to transform construction hoardings into a meaningful mural, on a site with significant historical and emotional weight for the community. This area, known for its high foot traffic, proximity to major transportation networks, and frequent graffiti, presented unique challenges. The project aimed to engage equity-denied Indigenous artists, providing them with a platform to express their creativity while addressing community needs.

The process involved selecting appropriate materials, coordinating with artists and ensuring their safety and well-being. Staff provided extensive support, including assistance with paint and supply selection, and navigating the City of Vancouver's (CoV) payment system.

The project had several positive outcomes, including increased Indigenous visibility, community healing and a strengthened sense of belonging. The mural served as a memorial for a site that holds trauma for many residents, fostering community building and engagement. To achieve this, the project required additional support from staff to manage site-specific challenges, tight timelines, additional funding for equity-denied artists and lengthy payment processes.

Overall, the Balmoral Hotel mural project highlighted the importance of community-driven processes and the need for careful planning and support. Despite its challenges, the project's positive impact on the community underscored the value of future community-led mural projects, particularly in the DTES and by Indigenous artists. This project provided a vital opportunity to memorialize a significant site and foster community healing and connection.

The findings from this case study along with the engagement sessions outcomes, have helped inform the 2 streams of work to enable murals and public art in construction hoarding.