



Memorandum

To: Art Review Board
From: Niall Connolly, Principal Planner
Date: March 28th, 2025
Re: Mural Policy

Introduction

The Town Council has asked the Art Review Board to review and update the Town's policy on murals. One of the roles of the Art Review Board is to review applications for murals on properties in Town. The Art Review Board makes recommendations on murals to the Planning Commission, who ultimately approve or deny approval for murals.

During 2024, the Planning Commission spent a number of work meetings developing recommendations to update the mural policy. Having recently reviewed some applications for murals in Town, the Commission felt that the mural policy needed clarification. These recommendations were then brought to the Town Council. The Town Council chose not to adopt these recommendations, primarily because they wanted input from the Art Review Board first.

The Town Council has asked the Art Review Board to review the current and proposed policies on murals, and to make a recommendation to the Town Council on what the policy should be. Appendix A of this report contains the Town's existing policy on murals, and appendix B contains the proposed policy on murals that the Planning Commission drafted.

To assist the Art Review Board, this staff report includes some information on murals generally, as well as some background on how Springdale has regulated murals up to this point.

Background on Murals in General

A broad definition of "mural" is any artwork executed directly on a wall. There are a number of subcategories of murals. Many murals are contained within the interior of a building. Others are displayed on an exterior surface of a building, wall, or other structure. Some murals are painted, others are made of different media. For the purposes of this report, the term "mural" will refer exclusively to a work of art painted on the outside of a building or wall.

Murals have a long history, dating back millenia. Ancient civilizations covered the exterior of prominent structures important to the society with mural decoration. More recently (in the past two centuries) the use of murals to decorate buildings and structures has expanded to other types of buildings, particularly commercial buildings.

Murals are now frequently used on buildings for a number of purposes: commercial advertisement, civic pride and promotion, aesthetic decoration, political messaging, and more. Some murals are officially sanctioned as public art, some are installed by business or property owners as advertisements or building decoration, and some are unauthorized works of art.

The following images show examples of murals as discussed above.



Calakmul, Mexico (Mayan Pyramid, circa 300 AD) - example of a mural on a socially significant structure



Hamilton County, Texas (circa 1970) - example of a mural used for commercial advertising



Benson, North Carolina - example of a mural used for civic pride and promotion



Concord, New Hampshire - example of a mural used for aesthetic decoration



Cedar City, Utah - example of a mural used for political messaging (save the bees)



St. George, Utah - example of a mural used for civic pride and promotion (promoting the 2022 Ironman World Championship event, created by local artist and professional athlete TJ Eisenhart)



St. George, Utah - example of a mural used for civic pride and promotion

History of Murals / Mural Regulations in Springdale

The Town regulates murals through section 10-17-4(C) of the Town Code, as well as the Town's Public Art Policy. The Policy was originally adopted by Resolution 2012-26 in 2012, and has been updated recently by Resolution 2025-05. The Town first adopted these policies in 2012 in response to a mural being painted on the outside wall of a business. At the time the Town did not regulate murals. Thus, as all the colors used in the mural were color palette compliant the mural display was allowed without further regulation. This mural is still in place twelve years later. A photograph of the mural is shown on the following page.

After this first mural was installed the Commission and Council decided to adopt standards for future murals. The Council and Commission wanted to allow murals, and also recognized the potential for murals to detract from the Town's village character. The Council and Commission crafted standards to allow murals under certain standards. These standards are contained in the code section and resolution referenced above. To comply with these standards a mural must:

- Use colors from the Town's color palette.
- Not contain any commercial advertising.
- Not be larger than 250 square feet, or 75 percent of the gross area of the building wall on which it is located.
- Be compatible with the history and geography of Springdale and Zion Canyon.



Photograph of the first mural installed in Springdale in 2012

According to the Public Art Policy (Resolution 2012-26, updated by 2025-05) and section 10-17-4(C) of the Town Code, requests for murals in the commercial zones must be reviewed by the Art Review Board. That Board makes a recommendation regarding the mural to the Planning Commission. The Commission then approves or denies the mural. This process was established to help ensure the mural is reviewed by artists for compliance with the artistic standards of Resolution 2012-26, and then reviewed by the Planning Commission for compliance with land use standards of the Town Code. The Art Review Board, a recommending body, reviews the artistic nature of the mural. The Planning Commission, the approval authority, reviews the mural for compliance with Town Code.

In the thirteen years since the mural review process discussed above was established, the Art Review Board has reviewed three requests for murals. The first review was in 2016 for a mural at the Tribal Arts building. The other two were both in 2023. One for a mural at Outta Here Ebikes, and the second for a mural at Zion Adventure Company.



Photograph of the mural at the Tribal Arts building

The 2016 request at Tribal Arts and the 2023 request at Outta Here Ebikes were both approved and both murals have been installed. The 2023 request at Zion Adventure Company has yet to be resolved.



Photograph of the mural at Outta Here Ebikes



Photograph of the mural at Zion Adventure (permit approval pending)

The Planning Commission has suggested revisions to the standards for mural contained in the Town's Public Art Policy based on their experiences reviewing the Outta Here Ebike and Zion Adventure Company murals. During review of both murals the Planning Commission expressed general support for the murals themselves. However, Commissioners were concerned about the specific guidelines contained in the Town's Public Art Policy (Resolution 2012-26). These concerns can be grouped into three broad issues:

- 1) Where can a mural be displayed? Section 10-17-4(C) of the Town Code says that murals can be displayed on a "structure or wall surface." The Public Art Policy states that murals can be displayed on "buildings" in the commercial zones, and they can only be displayed on "one wall of the building." The Commission questioned whether either of the recently reviewed mural applications was on a "building wall."
- 2) How big can a mural be? The Town Code contains no limit on the size of a mural. However, the Public Art Policy states that murals are limited to 250 square feet, or 75% of the wall area upon which it is displayed. The Commission had difficulty determining how to apply the 75% of the wall area standard in both recently reviewed applications. Further, the size limit in the current policy can be interpreted to apply to a single mural, and not the cumulative size of several murals on a property. Thus, it is possible that the current policy allows multiple 250 square foot murals on a single property.
- 3) What colors can a mural contain? Section 10-17-4(C) states that the mix of colors on a building or structure to create an artistic display is allowed only as 1) a sign, or 2) a mural. Resolution 2012-26 states the colors used in a mural must be selected from the Town's color palette. The Town has two different color palettes, one for signs and one for buildings and structures. The color palette for signs is more expansive than the one for buildings and structures. The Town's current Public Art Policy does not stipulate whether the color palette for murals is the "building" palette or the "signage" palette.

The Town's experience reviewing murals under the current Public Art Policy supports the following conclusions:

- While Town policy currently allows murals, the current standards are sufficiently stringent such that murals are necessarily more of an accent piece rather than a featured element of a building.
- Mural artists naturally gravitate towards using colors that are not on the Town's color palette.
- The Town's architectural standards and design guidelines discourage large, flat wall surfaces on buildings and structures. Most buildings have broken wall planes, roof overhangs, patio walls, and other elements that break up the mass of a building. This means 1) there are limited large and flat "building wall" options available to display murals, and 2) it is not always clear-cut how to measure the size of a mural as a percentage of the "gross wall area" on which it is located.

General Plan Guidance Regarding Murals

The General Plan does not contain any specific references to murals. The Plan has quite a bit of content regarding the appearance of buildings and structures. The Plan emphasizes the need to preserve and

protect the Town's village character. The Plan also contains direction on promoting public displays of art throughout the Town and enhancing the Town's image as an arts community. The Art Review Board should determine whether and how murals displayed on buildings can promote the dual goals of preserving the Town's village character and promoting public displays of art.

The Art Review Board may wish to reference the following sections of the General Plan.

Vision Statement Summary

Springdale will remain the distinctive small town residents and visitors cherish. It is and will continue to be one of the most desirable places in the State of Utah to live and visit. The Town is committed to maintaining its unique character and village atmosphere, and will actively guard against becoming a generic gateway community. This vision recognizes that new growth and development will occur, and emphasizes the need to guide such development to keep Springdale the unique place it is today and prevent it from becoming "anywhere USA."

Land Use and Town Appearance SUB -GOAL A.

Maintain Springdale's identity as a unique village within a spectacular scenic setting and preserve the Town's distinctive small community feel and atmosphere.

Land Use and Town Appearance SUB -GOAL A(5).

Development along SR9 should be regulated by enhanced architectural control.

Land Use and Town Appearance SUB -GOAL B.

Ensure new development is compatible with the Town's setting at the entrance to Zion National Park, consistent with the Town's architectural heritage, and complements the existing development in the area.

Land Use and Town Appearance SUB -GOAL B(1).

The Planning Commission will update the Town's architectural standards and design guidelines to require that the appearance and design of all new development promotes the Town's village character.

Parks, Recreation, and the Arts SUB-GOAL B.

Promote public art and performing art throughout the community to enhance the quality of life, promote the reputation of Springdale as an arts community, and add interest to the Town's visual appearance.

Suggested Art Review Board Discussion Topics

The Board may wish to discuss the following points relative to mural regulations:

- Can murals help promote the General Plan's dual goals of preserving village character and promoting an arts oriented community? If so, what kinds of murals will best help promote these goals?
- Are the Town's current mural standards effective in accomplishing the General Plan goals as noted above? If not, what changes should be made to more fully achieve these goals?
- Are there specific changes that should be made to portions of the current Public Art Policy? For example:
 - Mural location (building wall vs. other portion of a structure vs. fence, etc.).
 - Mural size, as measured as a percentage of gross wall area.
 - Mural color.

The Art Review Board should discuss these, and other issues related to murals. The Board should then give staff direction on any necessary changes to policy or ordinance.

Summary of Policy Changes Proposed by the Planning Commission

During 2024, the Planning Commission reviewed the mural policy in detail. Their recommended policy is provided in appendix B. The revisions they proposed can be summarized as follows:

- Clarification that a mural must be displayed on a vertical or near vertical structure, and not on a natural feature such as a boulder or cliff. This also prohibits murals on pitched roofs and on horizontal surfaces such as sidewalks or plazas.
- Clarification that the total mural area allowed on a property is 250 square feet. Previously the regulation could have been interpreted to allow multiple 250 square foot murals on a building.
- New regulation that requires murals to be installed low to the ground, and not on portions of the building that are high off the ground.
- Expanded allowance for colors on a mural. Most of the colors on a mural must be on the color palette, and small highlight areas can use colors not on the palette. In all cases the colors used on the mural must be compatible with the natural surroundings.
- New review process for murals. Small murals and murals that use colors exclusively from the color palette are approved by the Art Review Board. All other murals are approved by the Planning Commission after review and recommendation from the Art Review Board.

The current policy and the Planning Commission's proposed policy are both appended to this report. The proposed policy includes yellow highlights to indicate what the proposed changes are. The Town Council has requested the Art Review Board review the proposed changes to the mural standards and make a recommendation whether or not to adopt the changes.

Board Action

The Art Review Board should make a recommendation to the Town Council on the mural policy. The Board may recommend to adopt the draft policy crafted by the Planning Commission, or to make edits to

it. Alternatively, the Board can recommend that the existing policy (which has been in place since 2012) should remain. The Board may use the following language to make a motion:

*The Art Review Board **recommends/does not recommend** that the Town Council adopt a new policy for the approval of murals, as discussed in the meeting dated April 3rd, 2025. This motion is based on the following findings:*

[LIST FINDINGS]

[LIST RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDITS TO THE PROPOSED POLICY, AS APPROPRIATE]

Appendices

Appendix A: Existing Art Review Board Policy (which includes the Town's mural policy).
Appendix B: Draft Art Review Board Policy (as proposed by the Planning Commission).

Appendix A: Current Art Review Board Policy

Town of Springdale Public Art and Art Review Board Policy

Section 1 – Purpose

The Town of Springdale values public art. The Town promotes a community where creativity and artistic expression complement the majestic natural surroundings. This policy establishes guidelines for the display of art on public grounds and buildings. It also establishes standards for displaying artistic murals on residential and commercial buildings. The intent of this policy is to allow and encourage publicly displayed art that is compatible with the Town's natural surroundings and village character.

Section 2 – Definitions

Mural: The mix of colors, designs, shapes and other design elements painted or permanently affixed onto an exterior building wall for the purpose of artistic display.

Public Art: Any visual work of art displayed for two weeks or more in an open publicly owned area, on the exterior of a public facility, inside any town-owned facility in areas designated as public areas, or on private property if the work of art is installed or financed, either wholly or in part, with town funds or with grants procured by the town.

Work of Art: Includes but is not limited to the art forms of sculpture, monument, mural, fresco, relief, fountain, banner, benches, architectural furniture, and performance art facilities. Includes the art mediums of weaving, carving, painting, assemblage, collage, casting, and sculpting.

Section 3 – Art Review Board

The art review board oversees the town's public art program and makes recommendations to the Planning Commission and Town Council regarding the display of public art. The art review board also reviews murals on private properties as outlined in this policy.

The art review board is composed of five members. The members of the art review board are appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the Town Council. Art review board members are selected based on their familiarity with the principles of large scale works of art. If possible, members of the art review board should have experience designing, reviewing, installing, or otherwise being involved with works of public art. Members of the art review board serve two year terms, which can be renewed with the consent of the Town Council.

Section 4 – Public Art Review Process

Except for art displayed in the Canyon Community Center, all public art installations will be reviewed by the art review board. The art review board will develop criteria for evaluating and selecting public art installations. After holding a public meeting to review a proposed public art installation, the review board will make a recommendation to the town council whether or not to approve the public art installation. The council will then approve or deny the public art installation.

Section 5 – Mural Review Process and Standards

Murals in Residential Zones

Murals may be displayed in the residential zones on the rear wall or interior courtyard walls of buildings in the residential zones, as long as the mural is not visible from adjacent properties or streets. There is no review process required for these murals. Murals in the residential zones that are visible from adjacent properties or streets may be displayed subject to the following standards:

- The mural will not create a traffic hazard or otherwise compromise safety in the town.
- The mural must be compatible with and related to the historical, geographical, or natural context of Springdale and Zion Canyon.
- All colors used in the mural must be on the town's adopted color palette.
- The size of the mural must be consistent with the architectural scale and feel of the building or setting.

The art review board will review all requests for murals in residential zones that are visible from adjacent properties or streets. The art review board will hold a public meeting to consider such requests, and then make a recommendation to the planning commission whether or not the proposed mural meets the standards above. The planning commission will then approve or deny the proposed mural.

Murals on Publicly Owned Buildings and Walls

Murals may be displayed on publicly owned buildings and walls on publicly owned properties. Murals on public buildings must meet the following standards:

- The mural will not create a traffic hazard or otherwise compromise safety in the town.
- The mural must be compatible with and related to the historical, geographical, or natural context of Springdale and Zion Canyon.
- All colors used in the mural must be on the town's adopted color palette.

- The size of the mural must be consistent with the architectural scale and feel of the building or setting.

The art review board will review all requests for murals on publicly owned buildings and walls. The art review board will hold a public meeting to consider such requests, and then make a recommendation to the town council whether or not the proposed mural meets the standards above. The town council will then approve or deny the proposed mural.

Murals in Commercial Zones

Murals may be displayed on buildings in the commercial zones and must meet the following standards:

- The mural will not create a traffic hazard or otherwise compromise safety in the town.
- The mural must be compatible with and related to the historical, geographical, or natural context of Springdale and Zion Canyon.
- All colors used in the mural must be on the town's adopted color palette.
- The mural may be displayed only on one wall of the commercial building and must be limited in size to no more than 75% of the gross wall area (including window and door areas) upon which it is displayed or 250 square feet, whichever is less.
- The mural may not contain advertising or signage elements and may not contain direct or indirect references to the products or services offered for sale at the commercial building.

The art review board will review all requests for murals in the commercial zones. The art review board will hold a public meeting to consider such requests, and then make a recommendation to the planning commission whether or not the proposed mural meets the standards above. The planning commission will then approve or deny the proposed mural.

Appendix B: Draft Art Review Board Policy (as proposed by the Planning Commission).

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will make a recommendation to the town council whether or not to approve the public art installation. The council will then approve or deny the public art installation.

Section 5 – Mural Review Process and Standards

Murals in General

As an arts community, the Town encourages murals that are consistent with the Town's village character and its natural setting in Zion Canyon. Murals that complement the architectural or natural setting of a property can help add interest and variety to the built environment and help promote the Town's image as an arts community. All murals in the Town should help promote these goals.

Mural Standards

Murals shall conform to the standards listed below. The art review board shall use these standards when reviewing applications for murals. The art review board shall approve a mural, or make a recommendation for approval, only after finding the mural complies with these standards.

- The mural must be compatible with and related to the historical, geographical, or natural context of Springdale and Zion Canyon.
- The mural will not create a traffic hazard or otherwise compromise safety in the town.
- The mural must promote and enhance the Town's village character, as described in the General Plan.
- Murals may not be displayed on or affixed to natural features such as rocks, hillsides, or vegetation.
- The size of the mural must be consistent with the architectural scale and feel of the building or setting. In no case may the cumulative area of all murals on a single property be greater than 250 square feet.
- Murals are separate and distinct from signs. A mural may not be used as a sign. Murals may not advertise businesses, products, or services and may not convey messages that would otherwise be conveyed by signs. This standard applies to any direct or indirect advertising or signage elements.
- In general, murals should be positioned close to the level of the grade adjacent to the structure. The preference is for murals to be designed such that the top of the mural is no more than eight feet above the adjacent grade. When the nature of the site or the artistic theme of the mural demands, murals may exceed eight feet above adjacent grade. However, in no case may any portion of a mural be more than 15 feet in height above the adjacent grade.
- The majority of the area of the mural must contain colors that are shown on the Town's color palette for signage. Other, less significant, portions of the mural may use colors not on the color palette as an artistic contrast or to highlight a particular component or point of interest in the mural.
 - Mural colors that are not on the color palette must be compatible with the existing natural and built surroundings of the site.
 - Colors that detract from the natural vistas of Zion Canyon are not permitted, whether or not they are on the color palette.

- An applicant who requests a mural color that is not on the Town's color palette for signage has the obligation to demonstrate why the color is necessary and integral to the design of the mural and why no color on the palette could effectively be used in its place.
- Murals in residential zones must meet the following additional requirements:
 - If the mural is visible from outside the property on which it is located all colors used in the mural must meet the Town's color palette for buildings and structures.
 - If the mural is visible from any portion of the SR9 right-of-way the mural is limited to 100 square feet in total area.

Mural Review Process

The review and approval process for murals is based on the nature and location of the mural. The following table outlines the different review and approval processes for different categories of murals.

Category of Mural	No Permit or Review Required	Art Review Board Approval	Art Review Board Recommendation, Planning Commission Approval
Murals not visible from any location outside of the property on which they are located.	X		
Murals that are not in a residential zone, AND: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. only use colors which are on the Town's color palette for signage, OR 2. are 100 square feet or less in size. 		X	
All other murals.			X