


CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: May 12, 2014

To: Honorable Members of the Budget and Finance Committee
Honorable Members of the Arts, Parks, Health, Aging and River Committee

From: Felicia Filer, Director of Public Art
Department of Cultural Affairs 

**Subject: Report Back on the Proposed Citywide Mural Project and
Recommendations Regarding \$1.75 Million in Mural Funding**

As part of the fiscal year 2013-14 Budget deliberation process, the Budget and Finance Committee instructed the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) to report back to the City Council with a mural project implementation plan for City Council consideration and approval.

Specifically, the Committee asked the Department to report back on the murals ordinance and the allocation of \$1.75 million in mural funding to be used for the creation, maintenance, restoration and presentation of murals, including a plan to replenish this funding after it has been exhausted. As part of the fiscal year 2013-14 budget process, the City Council and Mayor placed this \$1.75 million mural funding in the Unappropriated Balance (UB), pending this report back and further City Council action.

On September 4, 2013, the City Council adopted the new Mural Ordinance and subsequently amended it on December 10, 2013. As directed by the City Council, DCA developed a set of Administrative Rules that provide a registration process for Vintage Art Murals and new Original Art Murals. During the design and launch of this new mural registration process, DCA also began to conduct preparatory research and assemble the necessary tools for the development of an effective plan to distribute and deploy the \$1.75 million in mural funding.

These project preparation activities included a re-assessment of the DCA mural database, the establishment of a pre-qualified list of wall mural artists through a competitive Request for Qualifications (RFQ), informal meetings with muralists and non-profit public-art organizations, and preliminary discussions with Council Office staff regarding district-specific mural priorities.

Based on the data and information gathered to date, this report presents recommendations for the transfer, distribution and multi-year deployment of the \$1.75 million in mural funding to advance the following goals:

- Preserve, conserve and restore historically significant murals throughout the City,

- with an emphasis on City-sponsored murals;
- Produce new murals that re-engage communities, especially youth, and create new opportunities for muralists;
- Provide technical assistance, training and workshops for muralists as well as interested community members and stakeholders; and,
- Develop digital mural documentation, presentation and engagement platforms that offer interactive educational and cultural tourism opportunities.

DCA believes that the City’s re-investment in these above areas will be critical for the sustainability of existing historically significant murals and for the re-emergence of Los Angeles as the murals capital of the world.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Department of Cultural Affairs recommends the City Council:

1. Request the Controller establish a new account titled “Mural Project Implementation” in Department of Cultural Affairs Fund 844;
2. Transfer \$1.75 million from the Unappropriated Balance to the “Mural Project Implementation” account in Cultural Affairs Fund 844;

CITYWIDE MURAL PROJECT – OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDED FUNDING DISTRIBUTION

PROJECT COMPONENT	FUNDING ALLOCATION	IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY
Council District-Specific Mural Support	\$600,000 (\$40,000 per CD)	Funding to be used at the discretion of each CD to advance district-specific mural priorities. Council Offices would identify mural locations in their district and DCA would develop mural specifications for the projects. DCA would issue a competitive Request For Proposal (RFP) with the mural project specifications and locations. A panel of experts would select the best projects to advance. Additionally, DCA would work with Council Offices to develop a competitive artist selection process to advance other district-specific priorities and/or public art-relevant activities.
Phase 1 – Preservation, Conservation and Restoration of DCA-Selected Historically Significant City-Funded	\$425,000	Funding to be used to contract either directly with the original artists, or the arts organization responsible for producing the mural project, in partnership with a

Murals		professional mural conservator to conserve and restore up to 25 city-funded historically significant murals. DCA would request mural treatment reports that include a budget, timeline, artist-participation plan and mural restoration scope of work. DCA could launch this phase of work with the proposed murals identified for conservation for which a mural assessment and treatment report already exists.
Phase 2 – Preservation, Conservation and Restoration of Additional Historically Significant Murals Citywide	\$425,000	DCA to provide matching funds to support the conservation of non-city sponsored murals that are important to local communities. DCA would issue an engagement process and open call for muralists and community stakeholders to submit images, locations and information on community murals they deem to be culturally important. A panel of experts would review, rank and select the mural projects to advance for conservation, in partnership with a professional conservator or mural conservation organization.
Digital Mural Documentation, Presentation and Engagement Efforts	\$125,000	Funding to be utilized to deepen and expand mural documentation, presentation and engagement activities through the use of multiple digital platforms. DCA would add features to its new website currently under development and contract with SPARC for Mural Mobile Application “App” by providing content on city-sponsored vintage and new original art murals, that can be made publically available and interactive through geo-tagging and augmented reality, as well as real-time mural vandalism reporting.
On-Site Mural Restoration Training	\$90,000	Funding to be used to contract with professional conservators and mural organizations proficient in mural conservation, to train muralists how to properly conserve and maintain their own murals, to lessen the burden on the city to maintain murals in the future. Specific mural locations would be identified to serve as on-site conservation labs to provide hands-on

		technical training in all aspects of professional mural conservation. The mural restoration training materials and information would become a Publically accessible resource on DCA's website.
Mural Project and Community Engagement Coordinator	\$50,000	DCA to hire part-time staff dedicated to perform this work and serve as the liaison to Council Offices who want to initiate mural projects in their district. The Coordinator would assist with administering artist selection procedures, and oversee City review, approval and permit processes.
Technical Assistance Workshops and Panel Discussions	\$35,000	Open call for proposal to host and produce, in partnership with DCA, seven (7) mural training workshops and panel discussions throughout the City. Workshops would provide information on the City's new mural ordinance and registration process; information relative to artists rights under VARA/CAPA; training and dialogues associated with mural maintenance, conservation and preservation; and, training in proper wall preparation for new murals. One workshop would be held in each of the city's seven (7) planning areas, in partnership with interested Council Offices
TOTAL	\$1,750,000	

PROPOSED CITYWIDE MURAL PROJECT SUMMARY

Muralists and mural organizations have gone through debilitating challenges over the past 12 years. The challenges have been aggravated by the ban on murals, reduced government funding, and an overall depressed local economy. During this same period, society has shifted the way it gathers information, preferring instead to access information via the internet using smart phones, or through social media platforms as an alternative to traditional media, such as print or television. Furthermore, the growth in the city's creative sector and the manner in which the public participates in arts and cultural activities has also shifted. These fundamental changes necessitate that the Department rethink the way the City delivers core mural services efficiently and equitably throughout the city, as well as expand both public awareness of and participation in "mural culture".

The department believes it is important for the City to take a leadership position on the murals issues throughout the city. The City's recent passage of a landmark mural ordinance should be supported by providing funding to stimulate LA's mural resurgence. The Citywide Mural Project is a comprehensive plan that directly responds to the pressing and obvious need to conserve murals defaced by tagging; to create new murals that can engage today's youth and thereby minimize vandalism of older murals; to provide technical assistance and resources to muralists and to the general public about the latest advances in materials, means and methods of mural creation and conservation; and finally, to use technology to disseminate information and other real-time data about murals and mural activity throughout the City.

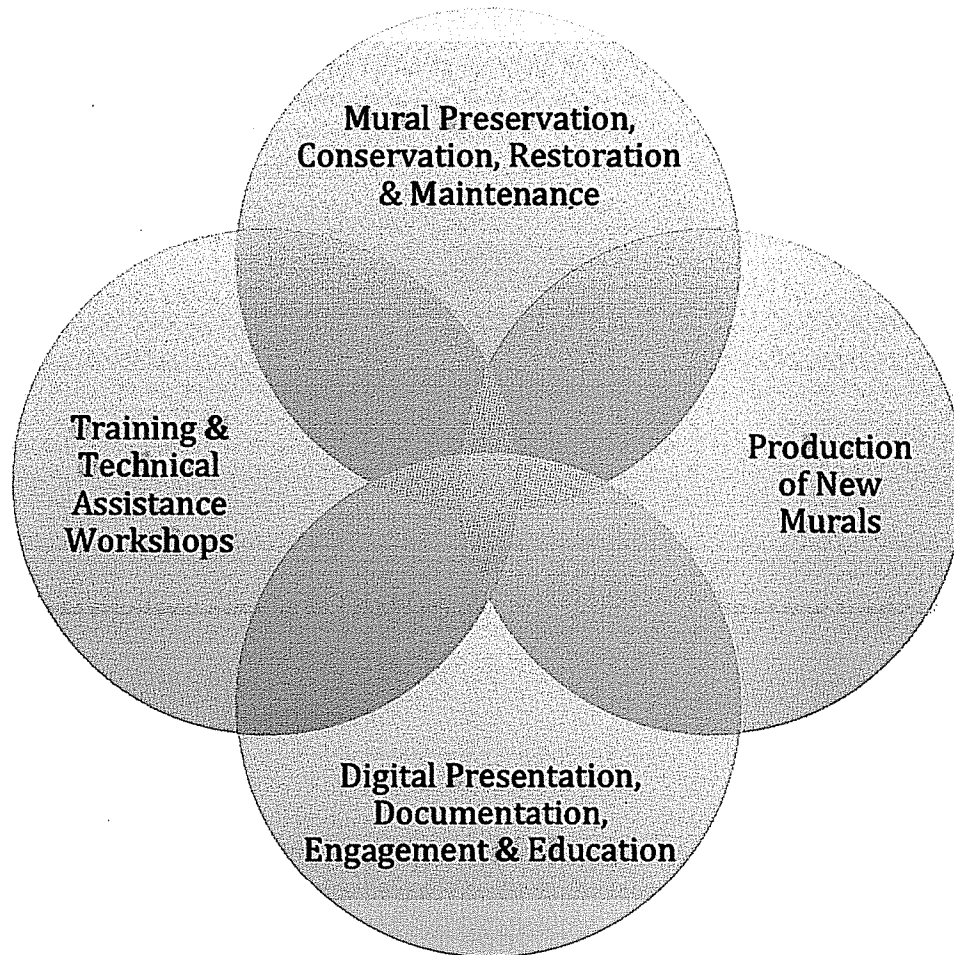
Previously, the city focused its efforts on mural production and conservation. The Citywide Mural Project proposes to establish a comprehensive and progressive network of mural activity and engagement by muralists, property owners, community stakeholders, educators, technicians, technologists and preservationists. The proposed network synergizes four key outcomes: 1) Mural Preservation, Conservation & Maintenance; 2) Production of New Murals; 3) Training and Technical Assistance; and 4) Digital Presentation, Documentation, Engagement & Education.

DCA anticipates that laying a modern foundation for LA's mural resurgence will ultimately result in a new type of "open source" platform for community engagement and participation. It is in this overall regard that the City's investment is critical to implementing the Citywide Mural project to set mural activity on a firm platform. Approving this funding support now will also create synergy with the City's larger efforts toward job stimulation, youth employment, great streets improved with murals and public art, and support a back-to-basics approach to taking care of City assets. Funding and implementing the Citywide Mural Project accomplishes all of these goals and more.

ATTACHMENTS

Please find the following attachments for your information:

- List of city-sponsored historically significant murals
- Proposed list of historically significant murals for conservation
- Partial list of images of murals to be conserved
- RFQ for wall artists
- List of pre-qualified art and mural conservators
- DVD of the Caltrans Mural Conservation Project



PROPOSED CITYWIDE MURAL PROJECT COMPONENTS

Council District-Specific Mural Funding (\$600,000)

Following the adoption of the new mural ordinance, DCA conducted informal discussions with individual City Council Offices, mural organizations and other community stakeholders regarding a variety of mural and public art related issues. Overall there has been a tremendous interest in district-specific funding, to be distributed at the direction of each Councilmember in partnership with the DCA, in support of a variety of mural-related activities. Most notably, many City Council Offices were eager to assist and facilitate with the production of new murals. To this end, DCA is recommending that of the total \$1.75 million, \$600,000 (\$40,000 per Council District) be set aside to advance district-specific mural priorities over the course of the next few years.

From 1988-2000, the city provided funding, between \$200,000-\$400,000 annually, for new mural production through the Great Walls Neighborhood Pride Program. This funding was redirected to mural conservation projects in 2000 because many of the older murals had begun to fall into disrepair. Simultaneously, the Office of Community Beautification increased its funding for murals that were part of a community beautification project. However, by 2009/10

and due to budget cuts, funding for this program was also eliminated. Thus, the City has not been able to support the creation of new murals, in a meaningful and dedicated way, in many years.

Now, the City has an opportunity to redress this shortfall and to make a new investment in our communities by allocating this \$600,000 to support mural-related activities, including the production of new murals throughout the city. However, the department acknowledges some council offices may prefer to support other types of publicly accessible art programs in their district, in addition to murals. Therefore, if a council office chooses not to use the funding for new murals in their district, then the department recommends the council office use the funding to support either youth art education programming, art conservation projects, or other similar activities in their district instead.

DCA has been in touch with several council offices to discuss mural projects they are ready to initiate once funding is secured. Based on these meetings, the department proposes the council offices should identify the locations in their district for new murals as well as the mural project objectives. DCA could develop the specifications for these different types of mural projects, e.g. "master artist", "lead artist to work with youth", "muralist to work with youth to address social tension", "community beautification", "community identity" "street art", etc. The department would compile the information and issue a Request for Proposal for a mural approach to the projects identified, based on the locations and the mural project specifications. A panel of experts would be convened to select the best mural projects to move forward with. Additionally, the department could work with council offices to identify muralists from its recently established pre-qualified wall artist list, which is comprised of muralists who may also be well suited for a particular mural project specification. In the event a council office identifies both the wall location and the muralist, the department would serve in an advisory capacity, as needed.

Recommended Council District-Specific Mural Funding Guidelines for Use:

- Mural preservation, conservation, restoration and recovery;
- Mural maintenance;
- Production of new murals;
- Mural-related presentation, educational and community engagement activities;
- Other mural and public art-relevant activities.

Phase 1 – Preservation, Conservation and Restoration of Selected Historically Significant Murals (\$425,000)

The department's records show that, since the 1980's, over 600 murals throughout the City have been created with city-funding or are located on city property. These murals serve as the preeminent evidence of the city's investment in the neighborhood murals that have positioned Los Angeles as the mural capital of the world. It is estimated that roughly half of these murals remain today. Many of the city-sponsored murals that remain have become artistically and historically significant. In 2001, the department convened a panel of art historians and educators to review the database of city-sponsored murals and asked the panel to rank the historical significance of these 600 murals. This list of ranked murals has been a primary

criterion used by the department to determine its priority for which murals to preserve.

DCA proposes the city continue its commitment to and extend its original investment by conserving City-sponsored historically significant murals. Many of the older murals are in poor condition, experiencing flaking, powdering, paint detachment and or are covered with graffiti tagging. In order to move forward with this mural conservation and preservation work, the Department will need to obtain treatment proposals from either independent mural conservators from our pre-qualified list, or non-profit mural conservation organizations. These proposals will include budgets, timelines, an artist participation plan, and the mural restoration scope of work.

In some instances, the department has identified a number of historically significant murals that already have mural conservation treatment reports, budgets and timelines, and we propose funding these murals in the first phase of the mural conservation efforts. Attached is a preliminary list of previously City-funded historically significant murals that will be considered for Phase I preservation, conservation and restoration.

Phase 2 – Preservation, Conservation and Restoration of Additional Historically Significant Murals (\$425,000)

The City should continue its tradition of funding mural conservation projects and promoting the importance of mural maintenance throughout the city. The department acknowledges there are many other murals throughout the city that are located on private property and were not created with city funding, and yet are important cultural assets in our communities. Therefore, to address the collection of murals that are not in our database, the department proposes issuing a “Call” or “Competition” to muralists and or community stakeholders throughout the City to submit images, locations and information on the murals in the community that they consider to be culturally important. The department would convene a panel of muralists, historians, art historians, and preservationists to review this non-city sponsored murals, rank them and provide matching funds to support the conservation efforts of these other important murals. This would constitute phase II of the mural conservation program. Attached is a DVD of the mural conservation project the Department initiated for the State agency, Caltrans, for \$1.5 million, to conserve 15 freeway murals from 2002-2004. The department has experience with overseeing substantial mural conservation projects.

Digital Mural Documentation, Presentation and Engagement (\$125,000)

DCA proposes that funding be utilized to deepen and expand mural documentation, presentation and engagement activities through the use of multiple digital platforms.

Specifically, the Department proposes the creation of a public-facing, searchable database of city-sponsored and registered Vintage and Original Art Murals. This would allow the public to access information electronically about the murals in DCA’s database and possibly obtain real-time information about the status of mural registration applications. The department is in the process of modernizing its website and should be able to develop and launch these tools in tandem with the launch of the new website or as next-phase features shortly thereafter.

With 87% of American adults using the internet via their cellphones¹, and considering that low income communities are more likely to access the internet by cellphone, DCA is also proposing to partner with the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC) to support a mobile platform that will deliver mural history and interactive content through geo-tagging and augmented reality as well as real-time mural condition (vandalism) reporting. This mobile application will enable self-guided mural tours, mural history and educational opportunities, and digital display of culturally significant murals that no longer exist.

On-Site Mural Restoration Training (\$90,000)

As part of the mural conservation component, emphasis would be placed on teaching muralists how to properly conserve and maintain their murals. Through a series of workshops and on-site training, with professional mural conservators, mural organizations proficient in mural conservation, and professional muralists who have experience conserving murals, emerging muralists would receive training in how to conserve and maintain their murals. The mural restoration training workshops would provide an opportunity for a new wave of emerging muralists to work with experts in the field and gain valuable insight, develop professional skills, and receive training in maintaining their murals. Many of today's young muralists are interested in maintaining their own murals, but they do not know the correct conservation techniques. By training younger muralists in the proper techniques of mural conservation and graffiti removal, more and more muralists can maintain their own work, thereby lessening the burden on the city to do so. Finally, we are proposing to sponsor the implementation of a mural conservation training laboratory that can be used by muralists to gain actual, hands-on training in mural conservation techniques.

Mural Project Community Engagement Coordinator (\$50,000)

To assist with many of the mural project components described herein, the Department proposes funding to support a part-time, dedicated, Mural Project Community Engagement Coordinator position. This position would serve as the DCA liaison to the Council Offices that want to create new murals in their districts. The Coordinator would also be responsible for preparing and releasing the Request for Proposals as described above, providing assistance to Council Offices to identify muralists from the Departments' pre-qualified wall artists list, and/or develop other appropriate muralist selection processes. In addition, the Coordinator would oversee routine administrative duties such as, city review, approval and permit processes, contracting with the muralists, etc. This position would also coordinate with all other aspects of the proposed Citywide Mural Project to ensure continuity and cohesion.

Training Workshops and Panel Discussions (\$35,000)

DCA proposes to facilitate the production of seven (7) mural training workshops and panel discussions throughout the City over an 18-month period to provide the following:

- Information on the City's new mural ordinance and the registration process for Vintage Art Murals and new Original Art Murals;

¹ <http://www.pewinternet.org/data-trend/internet-use/latest-stats/>

- Information relative to artists' rights under the Visual Artist Rights Act (VARA) and California Artist Protection Act (CAPA);
- Training and dialogue associated with mural maintenance, conservation, preservation and restoration techniques;
- Training in wall preparation to ensure proper application for the sustainability of new works over time.

DCA proposes that one workshop be held in each of the City's seven (7) planning areas (Harbor area, South Los Angeles, East Los Angeles, Central Los Angeles, West Los Angeles, North Valley and South Valley) in partnership with interested City Council offices. A panel comprised of representatives from local mural organizations, muralists, professional conservators, and DCA staff, will discuss and disseminate information on the above topics. The written materials, data, information and resources gathered from the workshops will also be made available electronically, for the general public to use. DCA plans to release an "open call" for non-profit arts organizations, mural groups, community groups, neighborhood councils, Business Improvement Districts and other entities to host and produce these workshops in collaboration with DCA.

MURAL FUNDING REPLENISHMENT OPPORTUNITIES

DCA was instructed to report back on possible means to replenish the one-time \$1.75 million funding being proposed for use as part of this report. Ideally, DCA would like to re-establish a permanent line item in the Department's budget to support mural-related activities on an annual basis. However, given that this may not be possible in the near term due to the City's fiscal condition, the Department believes that there are a number of opportunities to replenish and leverage these on-time mural funds. DCA is currently working with the City Attorney and the Chief Legislative Analyst's (CLA) Office to establish new more flexible parameters for the use of the arts development fees (ADF). The ADF program could serve as an on-going funding stream for all types of mural-related activities. In addition, DCA proposes that for the production of new murals, artists and community groups are required to provide a one-to-one match of City funding in an effort to leverage the City support for these projects.

Additionally, since the Citywide Mural Project is comprised of four interrelated, yet discreet parts, future funding can be targeted to support a particular element of the Project, e.g. a "technology grant" could be sought for the Digital Presentation, Documentation, and Engagement & Education component. DCA will continue to solicit individual, corporate and philanthropic support of murals and other creative place-making projects Citywide. Finally, future mural funding should be significantly less than this initial investment, because the foundation for the Citywide Mural Project will have been laid.

MURALS PROGRAM CHRONOLOGY

Los Angeles has often been called the "Murals Capital of the World" with more murals on its walls than any other city. Murals have been created throughout Los Angeles communities by artists with various arts traditions reflecting the city's ethnic diversity. Because of Los Angeles'

rich cultural heritage, its temperate climate, and its abundance of blank walls, murals have become a permanent part of our cultural identity.

In the late 1960's there was a renaissance of mural activity in Los Angeles. Many murals in the late 1960's and early 70's were financed by the artists themselves or, in some cases, with the assistance of small business owners on whose walls the murals were painted.

The County as well as the City of Los Angeles began to fund public murals in the 1970's. In the summer of 1971, City funds were used for the development of murals through neighborhood youth core programs. In 1972 the City of Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Department funded the Eastside mural project. By 1973 the County of Los Angeles was sponsoring ten non-community based abstract murals per year.

In 1974 the Citywide Mural Project was initiated. Two years later it was incorporated as a nonprofit organization, the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC). In 1980 oversight of the Citywide Mural Project was officially transferred to the newly formed Cultural Affairs Department and continued to operate on a small budget until 1984.

In 1986, the City adopted a Comprehensive Sign Code to address citywide signage issues. As part of the Code, a definition of a *mural sign* was included in an attempt to differentiate murals from advertisements. Prior to the 1986 ordinance, murals were not defined and therefore not regulated.

In 2002, the City's exemption for fine art murals from the Comprehensive Sign Code was challenged on the grounds that the City was unconstitutionally privileging one type of protected speech over another. The court ruled to place a general ban on outdoor advertising while creating legislation to establish "sign districts" to permit outdoor advertising in designated areas. This ban included *mural signs*.

Since 2002, a number of sign districts, specific plans, and development agreements have been adopted to allow special sign rules in areas throughout the City. However, these zoning tools have done little to preserve existing murals or foster the creation of new original art murals. In fact, the lack of clarity in current regulation has threatened the survival of existing murals and deterred the production of new murals. Some property owners have faced citation while others have painted over murals out of fear of violation.

On September 4, 2013 the City Council adopted the new Mural Ordinance, which established new definitions for Original Art Mural and Vintage Art Mural to replace the old definition of a "mural sign." Per City Council instructions, DCA has implemented Administrative Rules that govern the mural registration process consistent with the provisions of the adopted ordinance.

Please contact Felicia Filer at (213) 202-5547 if you have further questions or require additional information.

Cc: Elaine Owens-Sanchez, Office of the City Administrative Officer