

February 23, 2021

CHAIR AND CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSIONERS

City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

A Certificate of Appropriateness to paint two murals and change building façade paint colors on elevations of an existing commercial building located at 2800 East 4th Street. The property is developed with a noncontributing structure located in the Bluff Heights Historic District. (District 2)

APPLICANT: Ryan Burns Collective
c/o Amber Morris
2800 East 4th Street
Long Beach, CA 90814
(Application No. COAC2012-03)

THE REQUEST

The applicant is requesting approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness to paint two murals on the north and west elevations and change building façade paint colors of a noncontributing commercial structure in the Bluff Heights Historic District.

BACKGROUND

The subject property is located on the southeast corner of intersection of East 4th Street and Temple Avenue (Exhibit A - Vicinity Map) within the CNR (Neighborhood Commercial and Residential) Zoning District. Currently, the property is developed with a commercial structure that was substantially remodeled from its previous use as an automotive repair shop.

The subject building currently houses a cannabis dispensary. In 2004, the building underwent a remodel that included both a ground-level and second-story addition. At that time, a Site Plan Review and Standards Variance were approved for the site to permit the conversion of an automotive repair shop to a restaurant (App. No. 0403-11 and 0405-16). The remodel and addition were completed in 2007. In 2017, a Certificate of Appropriateness was approved to remodel the existing restaurant patio. In 2018, a building permit was issued for the conversion of the restaurant to a cannabis dispensary. Exterior work included the demolition of an unpermitted roof deck and exterior entry patio cover (Exhibit B - Existing Photos and Proposed Mural Renderings).



This structure is not a contributor to the historic district due to the substantial alterations that have occurred to the building over time and the fact that it was not constructed during the Bluff Heights Historic District's period of significance, which is 1905 to 1950.

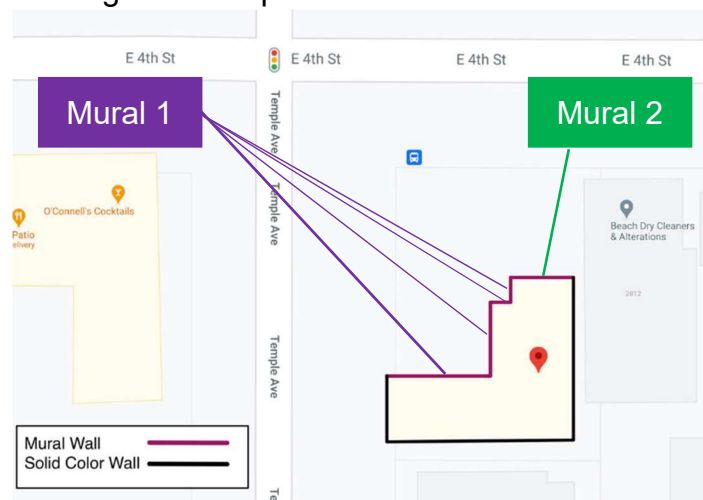
The existing commercial building is oriented in a L-shaped layout largely developed within the southeastern portion of the rectangular parcel, with the south and east elevations constructed on or close to their respective property lines. The building features two north elevations, a one-story elevation in the portion of the building that is oriented east-west, and the two-story elevation of the portion of the building that is oriented north-south, each of which are proposed to contain murals. Similarly, the building features west elevations at both the one-and two-story portions of the building, only one of which, the more easterly, two-story portion, is proposed to contain a mural. The existing south elevation is a solid stucco wall, with no window or door openings for fire code purposes and is built on the property line abutting a residential property to the south at 390 Temple Avenue. The interior east elevation is not visible.

The one-story portion of the building features an approximately 6-foot setback from Temple Avenue and a 50-foot setback from East 4th Street. The two-story portion of the building is set back approximately 38-feet from Temple Avenue and a 30-feet from East 4th Street.

ANALYSIS

The applicant's Certificate of Appropriateness request is for authorization to paint two murals on the existing building and to repaint the body of the building to a different color. As proposed, the murals would be on the north and west elevations of the building, which are substantially setback from East 4th Street and Temple Avenue (Figure 1: Proposed Mural Wall Locations). There will be no physical alterations proposed to the existing commercial building.

Figure 1: Proposed Mural Wall Locations



As shown in the sketch and artist narrative, the intent behind the artwork is to connect the art component of the cannabis dispensary operation to the exterior of the commercial building. The colors used for the mural are intended to take inspiration from the eclectic building color schemes found along the existing 4th Street corridor. As proposed, the murals would extend the full width and height of the building's north and west elevations. The remaining elevation on the one-story portion of the building, facing Temple Avenue, would be painted a muted purple color that is complementary to the mural. The applicant does not propose to paint the south elevation of the building, abutting the residential structure at 390 Temple Avenue. The color on that elevation would remain the orange-yellow color of the existing building.

Within a historic landmark district, any alterations to a building that are visible from the public right-of-way, whether to a contributing or noncontributing structure, must be completed in a manner that is compatible with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Because the proposed murals do not involve the typical paint color scheme allowable under the Bluff Heights Historic District Guidelines, the project is in the decision-making purview of the Cultural Heritage Commission.

In evaluating this request, there are some important factors to consider, including the location of the proposed murals, which are to be painted on the recessed portions of the building that are substantially setback from the street. The City of Long Beach encourages downtown and the commercial corridors as arts and entertainment destinations for residents and visitors. The Cultural Heritage Commission recently approved similar requests to paint murals on Landmark buildings, on July 11, 2016 for the American Hotel/Psychic Temple located at 228 E. Broadway and on June 11, 2018 for the Rowan-Bradley building at 201 Pine Avenue. In these examples, the approved murals were on modified walls with no existing character defining features.

Due to the existing building setback and orientation, the murals would have the highest visibility for pedestrian and vehicle traffic on East 4th Street (eastbound and westbound) and Temple Avenue (southbound). This area of visibility is commercial in nature and the bold mural colors would not disrupt the visual patterns already established at the 4th Street and Temple Avenue intersection, which is adjacent to the Retro Row corridor along 4th Street. Retro Row is an eclectic commercial and restaurant corridor located along the north and south sides of the 4th Street from Walnut Avenue to Temple Avenue that is characterized by unique commercial storefronts, often adorned with vivid color schemes and bold design motifs.

The one-story, west-facing façade along Temple Avenue is the elevation closest to the public right-of-way (6-foot setback) and represents the prominent elevation for continuation of the development pattern along Temple Avenue within the Bluff Heights Historic District. The west facing elevation at Temple Avenue is proposed to be painted a muted purple color complementary to the more vivid purple found in the murals. The south elevation, as proposed, would remain the existing color.

Staff proposes two conditions of approval related to the proposed mural/paint scheme in order to enhance compatibility with the Historic District and surrounding context (Exhibit C – Conditions of Approval). First, staff has incorporated a condition to require the applicant to coordinate with the adjacent property owner at 390 Temple Avenue for the paint color selection for the solid wall along the southern elevation of the existing building at 2800 East 4th Street. Rather than keeping the existing orange-yellow color at this elevation, which is not found on any other elevation of the building, the final color selection shall be neutral in tone and compatible with the residential character to the south. The final paint color for the south elevation shall be documented on the final Certificate of Appropriateness for the project. This would ensure that the elevation most visible from the residential areas is included in the overall design scheme for the building.

Secondly, a condition of approval will require that the final solid color selected for the one-story portion of the façade (west) along Temple Avenue, currently proposed as a muted purple, as shown on Page 13 of Exhibit B, be carried through to at least one north elevation, whether that be on the one-or two-story portion of the building. This condition will ensure that the mural is framed by a more muted, and solid primary building color to bring some visual cohesion to the building and to define the extent of the mural and ensure that it does not appear as though the entire building is covered with the proposed murals.

While unique colors and bold paint schemes are not appropriate for historic residential neighborhoods, they can be appropriate in a commercial setting, such as along the 4th Street corridor (Exhibit D - Findings). With the proposed conditions, the murals are located to face the commercially zoned street frontages and directed away from the more residential character of Temple Street south of the subject site. This approach contains and orients the murals to the commercial area. In this instance, the fact that the building is a noncontributing structure on a commercial corridor, and in particular, on a segment of 4th street is known for its eclectic character, it has been determined that the project would not detract from the residential character of the area nor the historic integrity of the district. As such, the overall paint scheme and orientation of the murals, as conditioned, will ensure that the elevations most visible and adjacent to the residential portion of the Bluff Heights Historic District along Temple Avenue will remain neutral and compatible with the residential character to the south.

The existing building is clad in stucco and the mural areas will be painted over the existing stucco exterior. While not a contributing structure, in accordance with Standard #2 of the Secretary of Interior Standards, the painting of the mural on these walls will not damage any original materials on the building. The proposed alteration, while not historic in nature, could be removed in the future, if necessary, by repainting the building.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff has analyzed the proposed project and has determined that the project meets the requirements set forth in Title 21 of the City's Zoning Code, Section 2.63.080 (Cultural Heritage Commission) of the Long Beach Municipal Code, the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings and the Bluff Heights Historic District Ordinance. Staff supports approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness to allow the painting of murals on the north and west façades of the existing commercial building. All the findings can be made in the affirmative for the proposed alterations, as the murals do not damage or alter any original historic building materials or character defining features. Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness subject to the conditions of approval.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This project has been reviewed for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Based on that assessment, the City has determined the project to be Categorically Exempt from the provisions of CEQA pursuant to the provisions of Article 19 Section 15301 (Existing Facilities) of the CEQA Guidelines. No further environmental review is required.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

On February 16, 2021, 1015 Public Hearing Notices were mailed. As of this date, two letters have been received in response to the public notice (Exhibit E - Public Correspondence).

Respectfully submitted,



MARYANNE CRONIN
PROJECT PLANNER



ALEJANDRO PLASCENCIA
PRESERVATION PLANNER



PATRICIA A. DIEFENDERFER, AICP
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER

PAD:AP:mc

Attachments: Exhibit A – Vicinity Map
Exhibit B – Existing Photos and Proposed Mural Renderings
Exhibit C – Conditions of Approval
Exhibit D – Findings
Exhibit E – Public Correspondence