

**COMMISSION OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW
STAFF REPORT
May 27, 2013, Meeting**

12. **CAR No. 14-43** (S. Pomajambo) **6 North 1st Street
Zero Blocks East and West Franklin Street OHD**

Project Description: **Paint mural on the side of the building**

Staff Contact: **W. Palmquist**

The applicant requests permission to paint a mural along a side elevation of this building located in the Zero Blocks East and West Franklin Street Old and Historic District. The property is located at the middle of the block on the west side of N 1st Street between East Franklin and East Main Streets. The historic brick building has been previously painted. The applicant proposes a mural on the north, secondary façade of the building which faces a parking lot, and has included examples of styles of proposed work. Because of the parking lot located directly adjacent to the proposed mural location, any mural would appear very prominent and be highly visible along this block of N 1st Street.

Staff recommends approval of the project with conditions. The mural guidelines outlined in the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines* indicate that the Commission may approve murals painted directly onto non-primary elevations of previously-painted, contributing buildings on a case-by-case basis. The Zero Blocks East and West Franklin Street Old and Historic District has a mix of land uses which can accommodate the presence of a mural. These uses include multi-family residential, commercial, office, and mixed-use. Directly across from this property is located the main branch of the Richmond Public Library. The guidelines note that murals are only permitted on commercial buildings, and the primary use of the proposed location is multi-family residential. However, due to the character of this block and the surrounding neighborhood which includes many office and commercial uses, staff does not feel that a mural would be inappropriate at this location.

While staff is not opposed to a mural at this location, the overall historic character of this building and its prominent visibility necessitates a mural with a more muted palette. The mural guidelines note that a mural's colors should be compatible with the building and historic district of which the building is a part, and several of the mural options included in the application indicate the use of bright paint colors that would not be appropriate for this location.

Staff recommends that the Commission approve the mural with the condition that the mural must utilize a muted palette of colors which should be reviewed and approved by Commission staff. Staff also recommends that the applicant must

supply Commission staff with proof of the property owner's willingness to have a mural painted on their building.

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions noted above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Signage outlined in Section 114-930.7(f) of the City Code, as well as with the *Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines*, specifically the mural guidelines, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.