



**Staff Report**  
**City of Richmond, Virginia**



**Commission of Architectural Review**

5. COA-112864-2022	<b>Final Review</b>	<b>Meeting Date:</b> 6/28/2022
<b>Applicant/Petitioner</b>	Richmond Hill	
<b>Project Description</b>	Use existing masonry wall for "Mending Walls" mural project.	
<b>Project Location</b>		
<b>Address:</b> 2209 E. Grace St.		
<b>Historic District:</b> St. John's Church		
<b>High-Level Details:</b>  <i>This review by the Commission will not be focused on the design or content of the mural, but rather the feasibility and permission to paint the existing, previously painted masonry wall.</i>  The Applicant requests permission to use the rear wall located behind Richmond Hill for the "Mending Walls" Mural Project.  The existing masonry wall is 500' long, and constructed in 1920.  The wall has been heavily painted with graffiti. Despite multiple attempts to remove, the wall continues to be vandalized and repetitive removal of the paint may cause damage to the brick and mortar joints.  The project is considered to be a form of graffiti abatement, with community informed, permanent murals using Soldalit Paint which has a matte finish and is permeable which allows brick to "breathe"		
<b>Staff Recommendation</b>	<b>Approval</b>	
<b>Staff Contact</b>	Alex Dandridge, <a href="mailto:alex.dandridge@rva.gov">alex.dandridge@rva.gov</a> , (804) 646-6569	
<b>Previous Reviews</b>	In January 2020, the Commission reviewed and approved the rehabilitation of the portion of the masonry wall along E. Grace Street in front of Richmond Hill, which included repointing, a new gate and new openings in the wall.	
<b>Staff Recommendations</b>	None.	
<b>Project Description "Mending Walls"</b>	Mending Walls and Richmond Hill have been working to collaborate during the spring and summer of 2022 to plan,	

	<p>engage, and execute a vision for the approximately 500' wall that borders the south side of the property. The land directly adjacent to the wall is a Richmond City Public Park known as Taylor's Hill Park, which looks out across Shockoe Bottom and can be seen from I-95. This work would involve collaboration with community members, organizations, and Richmond Parks and Recreation to reimagine and rediscover the wall, its history and legacy and the adjacent park. Through this collaborative project a strong message will be sent that these places and spaces (both Richmond Hill and Taylor Hill Park) are "viable, vibrant, and worth preserving.</p> <p>Richmond Hill's facilities personnel and Mending walls have done an extensive amount of research around the best way to create a mural using paints that will not harm the wall. In doing so, the applicant engaged with various historic mason contractors, Historic Richmond Foundation and KEIM Paints.</p> <p>The process for preparing the wall will be to use a recommended bio stripper to remove the existing enamel paints that cover the majority of the wall, so that the more permeable paints can be applied to a clean surface. The wall will then be prepped using Keim mineral-based primers and paints specifically designed for mural painting that also allow the bricks to "breathe." An anti-graffiti coating will be applied to enable Richmond Hill to remove anything that may occur after the mural is installed.</p>
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## Staff Analysis

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards for signage, Mural Guidelines, pg. 75	<p><i>Murals (other than historic painted wall signs) may be permitted on commercial buildings, as defined by current zoning, considering the following guidelines:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>1. In general, murals should be painted on removable material, not directly on a building wall. Murals should be installed on framing that allows water to weep between the mural and the wall.</i></li> <li><i>2. Attachments should not irrevocably damage the building. Painting directly onto the walls of a non-contributing building will be considered by the Commission on a case-by-case basis. Adding a mural to a previously-painted, non-primary elevation of a contributing building will be considered on a case-by-case basis.</i></li> </ol>	<p>The <i>Guidelines</i> do not specifically speak to murals painted on previously painted masonry walls, therefore staff is basing this analysis on the mural guidelines for previously painted buildings.</p> <p>The proposed method of installation for the murals will be to directly paint on the face of the 500' brick wall which was built in 1920. This portion of the wall has been substantially painted repeatedly by unauthorized graffiti artists.</p> <p>Because the wall has been previously painted, Staff is not recommending that the murals be painted on removable material.</p> <p>While the design of the murals is unknown at this time, the overall objective of the final design and theme will speak to the history of</p>

	<p><i>3. A mural's appearance, colors, and scale should reflect the history of the district of which the building is a part. The use of dayglow, luminescent, or reflective paint or materials is discouraged.</i></p> <p><i>4. A mural should not obscure or distort the historic features of a building.</i></p> <p><i>5. Murals should be in compliance with the general signage requirements for Old and Historic Districts, where applicable.</i></p> <p><i>7. Applicants must provide written approval from the building's property owner.</i></p> <p><i>8. Applicants are strongly encouraged to present designs unique to Richmond, not previously installed elsewhere</i></p>	<p>Richmond and what it means to "Transcend Walls".</p> <p>The existing 1920s portion of the wall that will be used for the project has very little architectural embellishments, other than projecting brick piers. The mural will not obscure any significant architectural elements of the wall or the main building.</p> <p>The portion of the brick wall adjacent to 23<sup>rd</sup> street, E. Grace Street, and the eastern side of the property will not be part of this project. These portions of the wall are currently not painted with graffiti like the southern portion of the wall, and will remain unpainted.</p> <p>Staff finds that using this wall for a mural project will not be introducing a visual element that will be significantly different than what exists on the site today.</p> <p>The idea of using a mural as graffiti abatement is a creative and intentional solution rather than the continuous removal of paint which is difficult and damaging to the historic wall.</p> <p>Mending walls has implemented murals on other buildings throughout the city, and has been successful in preventing unauthorized graffiti</p> <p><u>For the reasons listed above, staff recommends approval of the painted of the south side of the wall.</u></p>
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## Figures

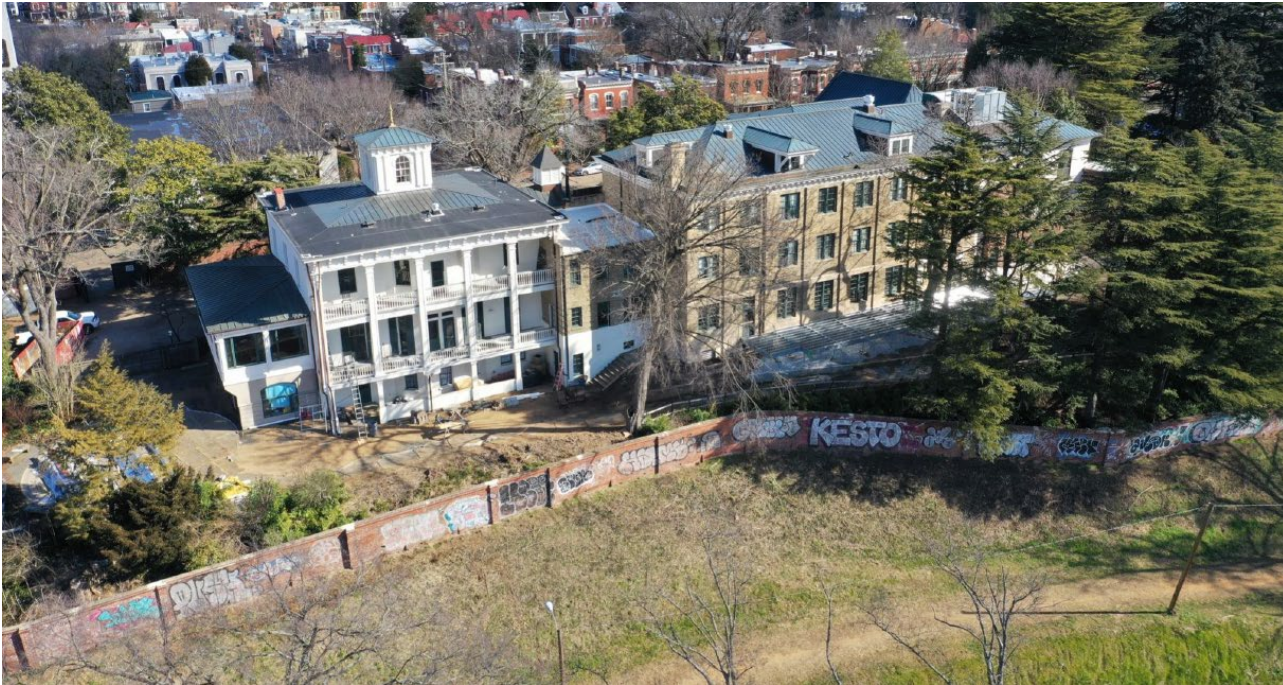


Figure 1. Existing Graffiti



Figure 3. Graffiti on wall, 2019





Figure 3. Portion of wall along N. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, will remain unpainted.



Figure 4. Portion of wall along E. Grace Street, will remain unpainted.