

City of Vancouver to consider mandatory murals on construction hoarding

 Kenneth Chan | Mar 24 2021, 6:37 pm

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Construction hoarding at the Cineplex The Rec Room construction site on Granville Street in downtown Vancouver, painted with a mural by local artist Irvin Hernandez and funded by Vintage Ink Wine. Captured on February 26, 2021. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)

Construction sites, especially those necessitating safety hoarding next to roads and sidewalks, can put a damper on the streetscape for years.

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That is why NPA councillor Sarah Kirby-Yung has introduced a motion seeking city council’s approval to request city staff to draft possible policies requiring a proportion of construction hoarding be used for public art such as murals.

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A growing number of developers and their contractors already use temporary hoarding as a large canvas for murals to help brighten up an area undergoing construction, and to deter graffiti. Hoarding is the technical term for the boarding, typically made of plywood or shipping containers.

If approved, city staff will report back to city council on the recommendations by early 2022. There will also be consultation with the development industry, and potential stakeholders such as business improvement associations (BIAs) and the Vancouver Mural Festival.



Construction hoarding covered with printed art for the Apple flagship store construction site at CF Pacific Centre, taken February 26, 2021. (Kenneth Chan/Daily Hive)

Kirby-Yung states such a policy could serve a double purpose of providing more income opportunities for struggling artists, and another way to showcase their talent.

According to a recent city staff report on the state of the economy, most artists in Vancouver live under the poverty line, with 63% of artists reporting an income of under \$40,000 per year. The median income of artists in the city is about \$22,100.

Furthermore, Vancouver has the highest number of artists per capita of major Canadian cities with about 8,800 artists accounting for 2.4% of the local labour force. This group has been hit by affordability issues with housing and artist studio spaces, and the pandemic has reduced their work opportunities.





New mural by Will Phillips at Colony Granville Bar at 965 Granville Street, Vancouver. Painted in April 2020 during the COVID-19 shutdown. (Downtown Vancouver Business Improvement Association)

The motion highlights the success of [Spring 2020's COVID-19 murals on temporary plywood hoarding covering up storefronts](#) in downtown Vancouver. This was an initiative led by the Downtown Vancouver, Robson Street, and Gastown BIAs, as well as the [Vancouver Mural Festival and the city, which provided an honorarium to each artist and covered the cost of paint and supplies.](#)

She also pointed to the City of Toronto's initiative beginning in 2014 that requires 50% of the surface area of construction hoarding along public right of ways be used for public art.

The Toronto program is now regarded as a success, and it comes at no cost to the municipal government as developers and construction site owners are responsible for commissioning the artists.

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Should murals be required on at least a portion of construction hoarding?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Undecided

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