



Comments on PW9.12, Options for Permitting Street or Intersection Murals on Local Streets

Walk Toronto is very disappointed that City of Toronto Transportation Services staff are opposing the proposal to allow “street murals” (long-term paintings on the street) on local roads in Toronto.

The staff report itself notes that numerous other cities have successfully implemented a process to allow street murals, including several cities that are smaller than Toronto. If smaller cities can manage this process, it is hard to understand why Toronto’s municipal government cannot.

On specific issues:

1) Traffic implications:

- Staff offer no conclusive traffic-related evidence why street murals should not be allowed. Experience in other cities has shown no indication that they create danger.
- Staff’s concern about driver confusion seem to misunderstand the purpose of a street mural’s effect on drivers. It is a goal of street murals to make the driving environment slightly more complicated, as that leads drivers to slow down and pay greater attention.
- The only concrete evidence provided, from Ottawa, suggests there may be some safety benefit.
- In any case, whether or not there is a traffic calming effect, street murals clearly create a strong community feeling and should be allowed on that basis alone.
- It would be simple to establish guidelines directing that murals cannot interfere with existing traffic street markings.

2) Staffing, Costs, and Administration

- If other cities can manage a permitting process, surely Toronto can
- The staff report proposes unnecessary red tape. Toronto could simply say that street murals are permitted by default on all local roads (not arterials)
- Road closures for painting could be implemented by the community according to the already-existing procedures for closing roads for neighbourhood events
- The existing StreetArt program could review proposed designs
- Again, there is no reason or evidence to suggest that street murals would compromise traffic safety, so there is no reason to monitor it. There is no indication that any other cities feel the need to do so.



3) Maintenance

- Fading or disruption to the mural should be of no concern to the City. Simple guidelines can establish that it is up to the neighbourhood organizers to maintain street murals, and if they fade, so be it. There is no reason to believe that faded designs would cause any danger to traffic.

We are disappointed in this negative reaction to a positive, popular community-building exercise that may have additional safety benefits. We encourage the Public Works Committee to instead take a positive approach and direct staff to create a simple process for enabling street murals by local communities, one that is integrated as far as possible into existing processes.

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