



Murals and Public Art in Indianapolis

Many people have questions about creating murals and other public art in Indianapolis. For convenience, here are the sections of the Municipal Code that provide guidance for the definitions of murals and works of art. **A mural or work of art that does not fit the established definition of “creative expression” will be regulated as a sign.**

Although the code is very open as to the property owner’s right to freely create or allow works of art on their own property, public art proposed to be created in **historic preservation districts** or in the **Regional Center** have a city permitting process [if the property is both in the Regional Center and in a historic preservation district, apply through the historic preservation permitting process only]. Public art in other districts does not have a city permitting process, although if you are not the property owner you will want to formally obtain the property owner’s permission.

For additional questions, please contact Julia Moore, Director of Public Art, jmoore@indyarts.org or (317) 631-3301 x240.

https://library.municode.com/in/indianapolis_-_marion_county/codes/code_of_ordinances

ARTICLE II. - DEFINITIONS AND CONSTRUCTION OF LANGUAGE

Sec. 740-202. - Definitions.

The words in the text or illustrations of this article shall be interpreted in accordance with the following definitions.

...

Art: Original works created by an individual or team that is experienced in their discipline. In general, art is a creative expression by an individual or design team that also ultimately controls the aesthetic outcome. Art does not advertise a business, product, service or activity. The following disciplines are included as having the potential for producing original creative works: (1) Artists - visual arts, performing arts and literary arts, (2) Craftsmen - glass, metal, weaving, quilting, pottery, etc., or (3) Design professionals - architecture, landscapes, interiors, engineers, etc. This definition excludes the use of commercial trademarks, logos and any other commercial message.

...

Mural: A design or representation painted, drawn or similarly applied on the exterior surface of a structure and the only text includes the artist's name and date of installation.

...

Chapter 742 - DISTRICTS

ARTICLE I. - PRIMARY DISTRICTS

Sec. 742-110. - Historic Preservation Districts.

A. *Generally.*

1. *Statement of purpose.* The purpose of these Districts is to ensure that all use and development of land in the District takes place in accordance with the principles set forth in the adopted historic preservation plan. The District is designed to provide the ability to tailor the land uses in a specific historic area with the unique types of historic and non-historic buildings that make up its character. It recognizes that appropriate development in historically sensitive areas may require limits to the use of some buildings and flexibility in the adaptive reuse of others.
2. *Site and development plan consideration.* The Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission (IHPC) may consider and act upon any proposed use and Site and Development Plan, approve the same in whole or in part, and impose additional development standards, requirements or conditions thereon at any public meeting of the IHPC. The IHPC shall prescribe in its rules of procedure the requirements for applying for a certificate of appropriateness (**COA**) for site and development plan approval. In addition, the rules of procedure shall set forth the fees, hearing process, notice and amendment procedures.

...

ARTICLE II. - SECONDARY DISTRICTS

Sec. 742-202. - Regional Center Secondary Zoning District.

- A. *Applicability.* With the exception of legally established nonconforming uses, no land, building, structure, premises or part thereof shall be used or occupied except in conformity with these regulations and for uses permitted by this section. In the case of any difference of regulations between this Section 742-202 and the regulations of the Primary Zoning District, the provisions of this section shall control. Except as modified by this Section 742-202, all development standards as required by the Primary Zoning District shall apply.

- B. *Commission approval required.* All development of land and demolition of structures located within the Regional Center and the North Meridian Street Corridor District shall be subject to the Commission's approval as included within a required site and development plan approved as hereinafter provided.

...

Chapter 744 - DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

ARTICLE IX. - SIGN REGULATIONS

Sec. 744-902. - General regulations.

B. Exemptions.

15. *Works of art.* Three-dimensional works of art (statuary, sculptures) and two-dimensional works of art (i.e., murals) that are clearly artistic in nature and which do not promote commercial interests are exempt from regulation under this [Chapter 744](#) Article IX. An ILP shall not be required if the provisions noted above are satisfied.