



City of Philadelphia

City Council
Chief Clerk's Office
402 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Legislation Text

File #: 160163, Version: 0

Authorizing Council's Committee on Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs to investigate and hold hearings on the preservation and expansion of the City's public art, including its voluminous collection of outdoor murals, mosaics, and sculptures.

WHEREAS, Public art, including Philadelphia's collection of outdoor murals, mosaics, and sculptures, enhances the aesthetics of our neighborhoods and reflects the rich history and cultural fabric of our City; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's Percent-for-Art policy requires that any developer, private or public, who purchases public land through the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority, allocate 0.5 to 2.0% of development funds for the purpose of acquiring and commissioning new art in the community; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia is home to more than 1,400 publicly placed sculptures according to the Association for Public Art and is considered a "museum without walls" because of its impressive and unique collection of outdoor sculpture. Yet pollution, acid rain, and vandalism threaten these irreplaceable artistic and cultural assets; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia currently has over 3800 outdoor murals and mosaics that grace walls in every neighborhood of the City, on subjects as diverse as "Women of Jazz," "Children Trauma and Resilience," "The Roots" hip-hop cultural icons, "Dr. J," "Peace Wall," and one recently completed on the "Philadelphia Eagles". In anticipation of the gathering of the World Meeting of Families 2015 and the visit to Philadelphia by the Pope, a mural entitled "The Sacred Now: Faith and Family in the 21st Century" was installed across three facades of St. Malachy School in North Philadelphia; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program also runs the Restored Spaces initiative, a series of public art and community outreach projects along commercial corridors, in civic spaces and on school campuses that promotes stewardship of the environment. The end result is artwork that blends mural-making, sculpture, and landscape architecture that shapes the urban environment into a cohesive space envisioned by stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, Philadelphia, thanks to its Mural Arts Program, has earned international recognition as the "City of Murals", attracting 12,000 visitors and residents annually for tours of what is commonly known as the largest outdoor gallery in the world. Over the last three years Mural Arts has received over 100 million press impressions annually; and

WHEREAS, Once a mural is painted on a wall, it becomes the property of the property owner(s). At the same time, the image and the copyright belong to the artist and the commissioning entity. As long as the artist is living, he or she also has a voice in the mural's maintenance. Under the National Visual Artists Rights Act, a developer must give an artist 90 days notice that a mural is slated for demolition, yet often such notice is not provided. If such notice were regularly provided, appropriate strategies to memorialize and/or preserve murals could be implemented. The use of varnishes and clear coatings can help preserve and restore these works of art with costs averaging between \$5,000 and \$25,000 per mural based on the size and preservation needs; and

WHEREAS, public art can and does provide economic benefits to the City of Philadelphia, particularly in the form of increased tourism dollars, jobs for artists (200 annually) and as an Econsult study says the work along commercial corridors increases property values and retail sales therefore it is in the interest of the City to preserve and expand the collection of artwork and to assure that it is equitably placed throughout the City's many neighborhoods; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That it hereby authorizes Council's Committee on Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs to investigate and hold hearings on the preservation and expansion of the City's public art, including its voluminous collection of outdoor murals, mosaics, and sculptures.