Legislation Text

File #: 150628, **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 and sculptures.

WHEREAS, Public art, including Philadelphia's collection of outdoor murals and sculptures, enhance the aesthetics of our neighborhoods and reflect 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 1400 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 3,800 outdoor murals 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 and the visit by the Pope, a mural entitled "The Sacred Now: Faith and Family in the 21st Century" will be installed across three facades of St. Malachy School in North Philadelphia; 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 in what can be viewed the largest outdoor gallery in the world; and

WHEREAS, once a mural is painted on a wall, it becomes the property of the building owner. At the same time, the image and the copyright belong to the artist. As long as the artist is living, he or she also has a voice in the mural's treatment. 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 glazes can prevent demolition with costs averaging between $5,000 and $25,000; and

WHEREAS, Public art can and does provide economic benefits to our city particularly in the form of increased tourism dollars and is therefore 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 and sculptures.

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