City Council Policy Number: 8.20	**Subject:** City of Farmington Hills Outdoor Mural Program Policy
Revised: N/A **Issued:** July 13, 2026	**Page:** 1 of 11
Intent: The City of Farmington Hills seeks to enhance public spaces, foster community pride, and promote art and culture in the City through the creation of vibrant, large-scale outdoor murals. This policy establishes a framework for leasing privately owned blank walls in highly visible locations for the purpose of installing city-commissioned murals. Placemaking is the change agent for improvement, and public art is a unique and powerful tool in the placemaking toolbox. Public art serves as an amenity that draws people in and allows them to connect in meaningful and memorable ways. It adds aesthetic appeal to public spaces and makes navigating those spaces more enjoyable and engaging. Murals can serve as visual landmarks, helping visitors orient themselves within the City, while also enhancing the character of the built environment. Beyond function, public art provides the community with a sense of identity and pride. It transforms seemingly ordinary spaces into cultural experiences, fostering a deeper connection between residents, visitors, and the places they inhabit.	
Applies to: City, Private Property Owners, Artists, and other persons and bodies if necessary.	

I. Objective & Program Overview

To achieve the stated intent of this Policy, the Outdoor Mural Program is a city-initiated public art initiative designed to bring color, creativity, and community identity to highly visible spaces throughout Farmington Hills. Through this program, the City will lease selected blank walls from private property owners for a nominal annual fee (typically $1.00), over a period of five years. The City will advertise a call for artists in order to select professional artists with proven experience, capability, qualifications, and capacity to create outdoor murals on the leased walls. Paint and certain other supplies may be paid for or provided by the City through this program.

At the end of the five-year lease, the property owner (referred to as the "landlord") will have the option to:

- If mutually agreed, extend the lease for an additional period of time, allowing the City to keep the existing mural in place,
- Not extend the lease, in which case the City or landlord may remove or cover the mural, or
- If mutually agreed, begin a new lease period with a fresh mural, which may involve a new artist.

Artists are advised that all submitted artwork must be original and created by the applicant, and is subject to change or removal after the five-year term.

All mural proposals will be reviewed internally by City administration with support from the Department of Special Services Cultural Arts Division. Depending on the location, approvals may also be required from relevant councils, boards, or commissions.

The City welcomes a diverse range of artists to apply. While residency in Farmington Hills is not required, preference may be given to artists within the Southeastern Michigan Region.

Because these murals are intended for large-scale outdoor display, selected designs should be visible from the road and capable of creating a sense of place and recognition for the surrounding area.

To celebrate the launch of each mural, the City may host a ribbon-cutting event to welcome the artwork into the community and recognize the artist's contribution and landlord's participation and support.

II. Eligibility Criteria for Wall Locations and Lease

To ensure the success and visual impact of each mural, both the wall location and the proposed artwork (see Sections III and IV, below) must meet specific criteria. These standards help maintain consistency, safety, and alignment with the City's vision for public art. By focusing on high-visibility areas and structurally sound surfaces, the program maximizes exposure and community benefit.

A. Wall Location Requirements

- Located within designated high-visibility corridors or commercial districts.
- Structurally sound and free of major obstructions.
- Visible from public rights-of-way.
- Available areas on the property and building for purpose of undertaking the mural project and for storage, if needed, on site.
- Property owner must consent to a five-year lease term (see below).

B. Lease Terms

The lease will be designed to be simple, affordable, and mutually beneficial. A nominal fee ensures accessibility for property owners, while formalizing the City's (and its artists) right to install and maintain the mural. Clear terms around access, maintenance, storage, and liability protect all parties and support the long-term sustainability of the artwork. This framework encourages participation while minimizing risk and responsibility for property owners.

1. Standard Lease Structure

- Five (5) year lease term.
- Lease fee of $1 annually, totaling $5 over five years.
- At lease end, the property owner may:
  - If mutually agreed, extend the lease for an additional period of time, allowing the City to keep the existing mural in place,
  - Not extend the lease, in which case the City or landlord may remove or cover the mural, or

- If mutually agreed, begin a new lease period with a fresh mural, which may involve a new artist.

- Include provisions that address the legal and risk considerations set forth in this Policy and any other provisions that may be required by the City Council or City Attorney.

2. Access & Maintenance

- City and its artists and contractors will have reasonable access for installation and upkeep.
- Property owners are not responsible for mural maintenance.
- The City may remove, cover, or refresh murals as needed.
- Identification of all areas on the subject property and building that will be needed for purpose of completing the mural project and for storage, if needed, on site.

3. Liability & Insurance

- The City will carry general liability insurance.
- Property owners will be indemnified against mural-related claims, if allowed by law.

III. Application Process

The application process is structured to be open and available for artists of varying experience levels. By providing detailed wall information upfront, artists can make informed decisions about their submissions. Each step—from application to wall reservation—is designed to streamline coordination between the City, property owners, and artists, ensuring a smooth and collaborative experience.

Step 1: Wall Inventory Review (For Artists)

Artists may review a list of available walls, including:

- Location description
- Wall dimensions
- Photo
- City contact: City Manager's Office

Step 2: Artist Application

Artists submit:

- Selected wall
- Concept/theme
- Preliminary rendering and color palette list
- Up to ten examples of past work

- Identification of all areas on the subject property and building that will be needed for purpose of completing the mural project and for storage, if needed, on site
- Schedule for completion of the mural and the maximum time period for final completion
- Proposed amount to be paid for completion of the project, including itemization of costs
- Materials and information to demonstrate, satisfy, or otherwise address all of the selection criteria set forth in Sections IV.B and IV.C of this Policy

Step 3: Site Review, Funding, & Agreements

- Site visit (if needed)
- Evaluation of funding availability or limitations for the proposal
- Wall Use Agreement signed by the City and property owner, and, if necessary, the artist
- Artwork Agreement signed by the City and artist

Step 4: Wall Reservation & Completion of Mural

- Selected wall is removed from the available list.
- Artist(s) undertakes and completes the mural.

IV. Artist and Artwork Criteria and Selection Process

To ensure the success and visual impact of each mural, both the artist and the proposed artwork must meet specific criteria as they are critical components of the program's success. These standards help maintain consistency, safety, and alignment with the City's vision for public art. Similarly, the content guidelines ensure that murals reflect the inclusive, uplifting, and welcoming spirit of Farmington Hills. The selection process also emphasizes artistic quality, relevance to community values, and the ability to execute large-scale work. By involving City staff, and potentially councils, boards and commissions, the review process ensures that selected murals align with the City's goals and resonate with the public.

A. Call for Artists

- Promoted through City channels and regional networks.
- Open to all; regional artists preferred.

B. Artist Selection Criteria

- General experience as an artist
- Collaboration and communication skills
- Experience with large scale indoor and outdoor murals and other public art
- Experience working with outdoor art mediums
- Examples of past indoor and outdoor work
- Demonstrated ability or specialization in working with the outdoor materials/mediums that will be required for the proposed mural and the type of surface texture and

environmental conditions involved with the wall and location, such that the completed mural will be sustainable, successful, and remain in place and vibrant for at least 5-years
- Capacity, experience, and capability to complete the project within the required timeline and budget

C. Artwork Selection Criteria & Guidelines

These criteria and guidelines provide a creative framework that balances artistic freedom with community standards. By encouraging themes that are uplifting and inclusive, the City fosters a positive visual environment. Technical and accessibility considerations ensure that murals are durable, safe, and viewable by all residents and visitors, reinforcing the program's commitment to positive wellbeing.

- Artistic quality and originality
- Relevance to community and program themes
- Feasibility
- Must be fun, inspirational, thought-provoking, or whimsical
- Must be original and created by the submitting artist
- Must be visible and engaging from the street or sidewalk, and ADA-compliant in location and scale
- Must use and involve outdoor materials/mediums that will be sustainable, weather resistant, successful, and remain in place and vibrant for at least 5-years considering the proposed mural and the type of surface texture, sun and moisture exposure, and other environmental conditions involved with the wall and location
- Preferred Themes
    - Local culture and uplifting historical events
    - Universal concepts such as nature, community, unity, and progress
    - Aesthetic appeal balanced with accessibility
    - Consistent with intent and purpose of this Policy
- Prohibited content includes:
    - Nudity or sexually suggestive content
    - Religious symbols or representations
    - Violence, weapons, or despair/suffering
    - Political messaging or controversial topics
    - Racist, sexist, discriminatory, or non-inclusive imagery

D. Review Process

- Reviewed by City staff.
- May require council, board and/or commission recommendations or approvals.

E. Design Development

- Final rendering and color palette list are required.

- All materials and equipment needed and to be used by the artist for the project (e.g., power washer, primer, scissor lift) are to be identified. Elaborate designs are welcome, but artists should remain mindful of budget constraints.

F. Artist Compensation and Agreement

- Artists will be paid for their work upon completion of the project.
    - *An itemized invoice will be required before payment is processed.*
- Budgets and compensation may vary based on location, scope, availability of funding, and other factors.
- Budgets and compensation will be based on the artist's proposal and determined at the time of selection.
- The artist and City will need to sign an agreement regarding completion of the mural project.

V. Maintenance & Responsibilities

Clear delineation of responsibilities ensures that murals remain vibrant and well-maintained throughout their lifespan. The City manages custody, while artists and property owners have defined, limited roles. This shared approach supports the longevity of the artwork and maintains the integrity of the program without placing undue burden on any one party.

A. City Responsibilities

- Routine inspections and coordination of repairs.
- Right to remove or refresh murals as needed.
- Maintains cleanliness of artwork from natural, outdoor debris.

B. Artist Responsibilities

- Use of durable materials.
- Return to repair premature wear due to material failure.
- Provide minor touch-ups upon request from City.

C. Property Owner Responsibilities

- No responsibility for routine maintenance of mural.
- Must allow access for City staff and artist, as needed.
- Responsible for repair costs if damage is caused by negligence or accidental actions.

VI. Community Engagement

Community engagement is a linchpin of the mural program. While not required for every project, opportunities for public input and celebration enhance community ownership and pride. Events and educational activities deepen the connection between residents and the artwork, transforming murals into shared cultural experiences.

Community Input

- The City *may* seek community input through meetings, surveys, or outreach.

Celebration & Recognition

- The City may have a ribbon-cutting or other event to celebrate and publicize murals.
- The City may promote its murals through City media channels.

Educational Opportunities

- Artist talks, workshops, or school visits may be coordinated when possible.

VII. Legal & Risk Considerations

Legal clarity is essential for a successful public art initiative. The Artwork Agreement and Wall Use Agreement provisions protect all parties involved. These measures ensure transparency, reduce liability, and support a respectful, professional relationship between stakeholders.

A. Insurance

- City provides general liability coverage.
- Artists may be required to carry insurance or sign a waiver.
- Property owners are indemnified by the artist, while on the property creating the mural.

B. Copyright & Reproduction

- Artists retain a limited copyright.
- City owns the mural and receives non-exclusive rights to reproduce, promote, document, and remove the mural.

C. Disclosures

- The Policy and any City actions and decisions under it do not and shall not be construed or interpreted to in any way establish a traditional or designated public forum for speech of any kind for the public, landlord, or artist.
- The City's decisions regarding the selection of artists and artwork under this Policy and Program are not subject to any free speech rights the artist or landlord may have.
- In choosing and awarding a mural project to an artist, the City is engaging in a contract with the artist for a specific work of art, and the artist and artwork chosen are entirely in the City's discretion and the artwork produced becomes the City's property upon commencement of the artist's work.
- Although the City may enter into a lease with landlords for a period of time and although the City may enter into a contract with artists to produce artwork, the City shall owe no duty or obligation to the landlord or artist to retain the artwork for any period of time and shall have the exclusive right to remove or cover the artwork at any time, in its sole discretion, for any reason or no reason at all.

VIII. Program Administration

Effective administration is key to the program's long-term success. Oversight by the City Manager's Office, in collaboration with other City departments, ensures that the program is well-coordinated and responsive. Annual reporting and periodic evaluations allow the City to adapt and improve the program based on real-world experience and community feedback.

A. Oversight

- Managed by the City Manager's Office, in collaboration with other City Departments
- Coordination with Cultural Arts Division and other departments.

B. Interdepartmental Support

- May include Planning, Building, Legal, and Public Works.

C. Annual Reporting

- The City may prepare an annual report for City Council.

D. Program Evaluation

- Policies and procedures may be updated based on program performance and community feedback.
- The City will periodically evaluate the program's effectiveness and may update policies, procedures, or guidelines to reflect lessons learned and evolving community needs.

IX. General

A. Conclusion, Policy Review, and Updates

The Outdoor Mural Program represents a bold step toward enriching the cultural and visual landscape of Farmington Hills. By transforming blank walls into vibrant expressions of creativity and community identity, the City fosters a sense of place, pride, and connection. Through thoughtful planning, inclusive participation, and ongoing stewardship, this policy lays the foundation for a dynamic public art initiative that will inspire residents and visitors for years to come.

To ensure the Outdoor Mural Program remains responsive and effective, the City will periodically assess its performance and relevance. Any necessary updates to this policy will be made in alignment with community feedback, operational insights, and evolving best practices. Revisions will be coordinated with City Council by the City Manager's Office and may be shared with stakeholders to maintain transparency and continuity.

B. Contact Information

For questions about the Outdoor Mural Program, to request a meeting, or to discuss potential wall locations or artist opportunities, please contact:

City of Farmington Hills –
Economic Development Director or
City Manager

Phone: 248-871-2500
Website: www.fhgov.com

City staff are available to assist property owners, artists, and community members throughout the application and mural development process.

X. Definitions

A. Definitions (General)

Artist
An individual or team submitting a mural design proposal for consideration under the Outdoor Mural Program. Artists may be local or regional and must provide original work.

Cultural Arts Division
The City department/division or designated team responsible for supporting the review, coordination, and promotion of public art projects, including murals.

City
Refers to the City of Farmington Hills, including its departments, staff, and representatives involved in administering the Outdoor Mural Program.

Community Engagement
Activities designed to involve residents and stakeholders in the mural process, such as public input sessions, ribbon-cuttings, or educational events.

Landlord / Property Owner
The legal owner of a private property with a blank wall leased by the City for mural installation.

Lease Agreement / Wall Use Agreement
A formal contract between the City, the property owner, and, if necessary, the artist outlining the terms of mural installation, maintenance, liability, and duration.

Placemaking
A community development approach that uses public spaces and amenities—such as murals—to foster social interaction, identity, and vibrancy.

Ribbon-Cutting
A ceremonial event hosted by the City to celebrate the completion and unveiling of a new mural.

ADA-Compliant
Refers to mural placement and design that meets the standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act and any other laws applicable to accommodating persons with disabilities and ensuring accessibility for all individuals.

B. Definitions (Artistic Themes & Content)

Fun
Art that evokes joy, playfulness, or amusement. Often characterized by bright colors, dynamic shapes, or lighthearted subject matter that appeal to a wide audience.

Inspirational
Art that uplifts, motivates, or encourages viewers. It may include themes of resilience, hope, achievement, or community strength.

Whimsical
Art that is imaginative, quirky, or fantastical in nature. Whimsical works often feature unexpected elements, surreal imagery, or playful exaggeration.

Thought-Provoking
Art that stimulates reflection, curiosity, or conversation. These works may explore abstract ideas, cultural narratives, or emotional depth without being controversial or divisive.

Local Culture
Visual representations that reflect the unique identity, traditions, history, or people of Farmington Hills or the surrounding Michigan region. This may include references to local landmarks, events, or community values.

Nature
Art that incorporates elements of the natural world, such as landscapes, flora, fauna, seasons, or environmental themes. It may celebrate biodiversity or promote ecological awareness.

Unity
Themes that emphasize togetherness, inclusivity, and shared human experience. Unity-focused art may depict collaboration, diversity, or symbols of connection.

Progress
Art that symbolizes growth, innovation, or forward movement. This may include representations of technology, education, sustainability, or social advancement.

C. Content Restrictions (Defined)

Nudity
Depictions of the human body that expose genitalia, breasts, or buttocks. All forms of nudity are prohibited, regardless of artistic intent.

Religious Imagery
Symbols, figures, or scenes associated with specific religious or spiritual practices.

Violence
Visuals that depict physical harm, weapons, blood, or aggressive behavior. This includes both realistic and stylized portrayals.

Political Content
Imagery that promotes, criticizes, or references political parties, candidates, ideologies, or current political issues. This includes slogans, campaign symbols, or partisan messages.

Discriminatory Visuals
Any imagery that promotes or implies racism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, ableism, or other forms of prejudice or exclusion. This includes offensive symbols, stereotypes, or language.

This policy was approved by the Farmington Hills City Council on July 13, 2026.