

Memo

DATE: October 12, 2016

TO: Ashland Mayor and City Council

FROM: Ashland Historic Commission

RE: Proposed amendments to review process for public art installations on historic contributing buildings

The Historic Commission reviewed and discussed the proposed amendments to the review process for public art installations on historic contributing or individually listed buildings at the October 5, 2016 meeting. The Commission appreciates the City Council's interest in maintaining the City's historic preservation program while integrating public art into the historic districts.

The Historic Commission's preferred solution is to maintain the review of changes to the exterior of historic contributing or individually listed buildings involving public art installations in the land use process. The Oregon Statewide Planning Program requires local governments to adopt programs to protect historic resources. In addition, historic resources that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places are identified as historic resources of statewide significance and given the highest level of protection. Ashland's four historic districts, Downtown, Railroad Addition, Skidmore Academy and Siskiyou-Hargadine, were listed on the National Register of Historic Places from 1999-2001.

The Historic Commission believes that the structure of the land use process works well to protect Ashland's inventoried historic resources in large part because of the opportunities for public input and application of approval criteria. The noticing process, the public hearing at the Historic Commission and the ability to request a public hearing at the Planning Commission ensures that interested community members have the chance to comment in a fashion that is focused on the preservation of the historic building. Additionally, the land use process requirement to apply approval criteria in a systematic manner focuses the review on maintaining the significant architectural features of historic contributing buildings and the character of the historic districts, rather than involving an evaluation of the public art proposal. The Historic Commission supports the inclusion of a set of public art installation standards for historic buildings in the land use ordinance as suggested in the attached staff memo.

The Historic Commission's second choice would be to create a new review process for public art installations on historic contributing or individually listed buildings. Again, the Commission suggests the inclusion of revised approval criteria so that the impact to historic buildings are systematically evaluated and the City's responsibility to protect historic resources of statewide significance are fulfilled. While the existing process for acquiring public art in AMC 2.29.100 does not currently include a public notice or explicitly require a public hearing, it does appear the intent of the proposed amendments is to include a noticing and hearing process similar to a Type 1 land use application review process.



The Historic Commission identified several concerns with the draft amendments included the references to the land use ordinance in AMC 2.24.060.A and C, the role of the Historic Commission comments in the decision making process, and the effect of the compression of the decision making process to 30 days.

If a new review process is created outside of the land use ordinance, the Commission suggests locating the revised evaluation criteria and public involvement process within the new process, rather than referencing the building design and Type 1 noticing sections of the land use ordinance. This would make the process more understandable and eliminate any question of whether referencing sections of the land use ordinance would trigger the land use process.

The Historic Commission is accustomed to advising the decision maker, such as the Staff Advisor, Planning Commission or City Council, in regards to buildings in the historic districts. The Commission suggests fashioning the new process so that advisory commissions (i.e., Historic Commission, Public Arts Commission) make recommendations directly to the City Council.

Finally, the Commission expressed concern about reducing the time frame from a maximum of 120 days under the land use process to 30 days under the new process. Specifically, the concern was the effect on public involvement and ability of the average person to learn about and participate in the process in this time frame. The applications for the murals on the historic contributing buildings located at 27 Second St. and 5 N. Main St. were processed and approved within the 45-day time period required for Type 1 planning applications.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and make comments on the proposed ordinance amendments involving historic contributing and individually listed buildings. The Historic Commission requests that the ordinance amendments move forward as one complete package and include a set of specific evaluation criteria to assess potential impacts associated with placement of public art on historic structures. The Commission would appreciate additional time to further develop the evaluation criteria.

ATTACHMENTS

October 5, 2016 Historic Commission packet

