

26 May 2026 - Commissioner Brandow

***Sections that I could use perspective on are 8,10,19,21.***

Generally speaking, this is a strong and thoughtful starting framework. The phased approach feels realistic for where the department currently is and avoids overcommitting before staffing, maintenance, and administrative systems are in place. I especially appreciate the emphasis on testing through a pilot rather than building policy entirely in theory.

### **General Feedback**

Before getting into the specific sections, I think the biggest strength of this document is that it treats murals as cultural infrastructure and artist workforce development, not simply beautification. That feels important for Santa Fe, especially given the city's relationship to tourism, cultural identity, Indigenous communities, and neighborhood concerns.

A few broad considerations:

- The pilot-first approach feels wise. Starting with 3–5 murals and documenting lessons learned seems realistic and manageable.
- I would encourage building in language on equity and geographic distribution early so that pilot projects are not overly concentrated downtown or in highly visible tourist corridors. Considering libraries, community centers, parks, youth-serving sites, transit areas, and neighborhoods outside the historic core could help demonstrate citywide benefit.
- Given Santa Fe's identity, I think there should be some acknowledgment of Native, Hispano/Chicano, immigrant, and multilingual cultural contexts as part of place-based storytelling, without making work overly prescriptive.
- Since Historic Preservation has already passed the mural exception, clarity regarding the relationship among HPB, AIPP, and staff review will be important to reduce confusion later.

### **Section 5: Eligible Locations**

Although this is a preliminary plan, I would encourage the Commission and City Council to consider ways to include privately owned businesses with publicly accessible spaces in the mural program. One possibility could be offering tax incentives to encourage broader participation and community buy-in. There are a limited number of publicly owned walls and spaces suitable for murals, and partnerships with private properties could expand opportunities for highly visible, accessible public art throughout the city.

### **8. Artist Training & Workforce Development**

*(This may become a companion framework developed in partnership with Economic Development, Education, and Workforce Development initiatives.)*

The City of Santa Fe may support mural workforce development through partnerships, workshops, apprenticeships, and artist mentorship opportunities to strengthen local creative capacity and expand equitable access to public art opportunities.

Training and professional development may include mural design, fabrication and installation techniques, safety practices, budgeting, conservation, public engagement, cultural responsiveness, and project management.

The City may establish or partner to support paid apprenticeship and mentorship opportunities, youth mural crews, and artist workforce development initiatives in collaboration with schools, colleges, nonprofits, cultural organizations, and Indigenous communities.

Where feasible, the City may consider a lead artist or artist-collective model in which commissioned muralists work with paid apprentices during project implementation. Apprenticeships may provide hands-on experience in design development, fabrication, installation, public engagement, conservation, and professional practice while supporting emerging artists, youth, and local workforce development.

Although priority may be given to local artists, emerging artists, youth participants, and underrepresented communities, I would encourage the mural program to also consider curating artists from a national pool. Bringing nationally recognized muralists to Santa Fe could generate public excitement, expand artistic dialogue, and create opportunities for residents to experience significant public artworks.

Given the relatively limited pool of highly experienced muralists in Santa Fe and the surrounding region, this approach could also strengthen local capacity through mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities. Pairing visiting artists with local emerging muralists and youth participants would provide hands-on exposure to new methods and techniques, as well as professional networks, while supporting long-term workforce development. Pilot projects could help evaluate apprenticeship models, mentorship outcomes, budget considerations, and long-term feasibility.

Examples would include: [Pow-Wow!](#), [Mural Festival Istanbul](#), [Festival Mural Montreal](#)  
Regional examples: [Fraser Mountain Mural Festival](#), [Superior Mural Festival](#)

This revision keeps the spirit of the original section but makes it feel more implementable, better aligned with workforce development, and more directly tied to the Mural Lab/pilot phase, rather than reading like a separate education program.

### **Section 10: Selection Criteria**

This is probably the section where the document could be more intentional and curatorial. Right now, the criteria are solid but feel somewhat administrative/generalized. Because murals become part of the city's visual identity, I think it would be helpful to establish a stronger curatorial framework to avoid a program that feels stylistically inconsistent or reactive.

Recommendation: Consider organizing criteria into categories.

For example:

Artistic Excellence

- artistic quality
- originality
- demonstrated experience/capacity

#### Place & Context

- relationship to site
- neighborhood identity
- architectural integration
- visibility/public interaction

#### Cultural Responsibility

- cultural sensitivity
- historical awareness
- appropriateness of symbols or imagery
- consultation where relevant

#### Community Value

- public engagement
- mentorship/youth participation
- community partnerships

#### Feasibility & Stewardship

- budget alignment
- durability
- maintenance considerations
- safety

I would also recommend adding language around: “the development of a cohesive and place-responsive body of public artwork across the city” to encourage artistic experimentation.

### **Section 19: Ownership & Rights**

This section is very important and likely deserves legal review early.

My main thought here is to ensure a balance between artists' rights and City stewardship. I strongly support artists retaining copyright, but I think the language around merchandising/licensing could be clarified.

Recommendation:

Consider adding something like:

*Artists retain copyright to their work unless otherwise negotiated through a contract. Any commercial licensing, merchandise, reproductions for sale, or revenue-generating uses by the City shall be addressed through a separate agreement.*

Why:

- protects artists
- avoids future confusion
- gives flexibility for tourism/publication possibilities
- helps avoid disputes if murals become iconic

I also think VARA language should stay, but perhaps be softened slightly until Legal reviews it. Santa Fe will likely encounter tension between:

- preservation
- building redevelopment

- political/community shifts
- artist moral rights

Having a clear but fair framework now will help.

### **Section 21: Public Art Program Code of Civic & Cultural Responsibility**

This section is thoughtful, but I do think it could be streamlined significantly.

Right now, it reads a bit like policy, legal language, and a values statement all at once. I worry it may become harder to implement consistently or unintentionally create confusion about what triggers a review.

What I like:

I appreciate that it acknowledges:

- difficult/challenging content
- culturally specific work
- religious/spiritual themes
- constitutional concerns
- artistic freedom

That feels very important, especially in Santa Fe.

Recommendation:

Condense this section into a clearer framework centered around:

1. Artistic freedom
2. Public responsibility
3. Cultural respect
4. Legal/safety standards

Something like:

*The City recognizes that public art may address complex social, cultural, historical, political, or spiritual themes. Works shall not be excluded solely because subject matter is challenging, contemporary, culturally specific, political, or unfamiliar.*

Then:

*Additional review may be required when projects involve culturally sensitive imagery, ceremonial knowledge, sacred symbolism, or community-specific histories to ensure respectful engagement and contextual understanding.*

Then keep the concise public safety standards:

- unlawful hate speech
- direct threats
- incitement to violence
- discriminatory harassment prohibited by law

I think shortening this section will make it easier to administer while preserving its underlying values.

### **One Additional Thought: Indigenous & Cultural Consultation**

Given Santa Fe's location and relationships with Pueblo Nations, Diné, Apache communities, and urban Native populations, I wonder whether tribal/cultural consultation deserves slightly stronger language throughout the framework, not just in Section 21.

Perhaps not mandatory for every mural, but something like:

*“Projects involving culturally specific Indigenous imagery, histories, languages, or sacred symbolism may require consultation with appropriate tribal governments, cultural practitioners, or community representatives.”*

That could help avoid future harm while supporting respectful collaboration.

Overall, I think this is a very solid draft and absolutely realistic to bring as an information item on June 2.