

## ZONING ADMINISTRATOR INTERPRETATION

**DATE:** November 14, 2008

**CODE SECTION:** 17.48.170 – Definition of a sign

**QUESTION NEEDING INTERPRETATION:** Is a mural a sign or is it art?


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**INTERPRETATION:** The Zoning Code does not define or have standards for murals. The question that has come up is whether a mural is a sign. In looking at the definition of a sign, a sign can consist of words, text, illustrations, symbols, forms, patterns, colors textures, shadows, etc. This would seem to indicate that a mural on the exterior of a building would be a sign.

**Sign.** A device, fixture, surface, or structure of any kind, made of any material, displaying letters, numbers, words, text, illustrations, symbols, forms, patterns, colors, textures, shadows, merchandise or lights; or any other illustrative or graphic display designed, constructed, or placed on the ground, on a building, architectural projection, wall, post, or structure of any kind, in a window, or on any other object for the purpose of advertising, identifying or calling visual attention to any place, structure, firm, enterprise, profession, business, service, product, commodity, person, or activity whether located on the site, in any structure on the site or in any other location. The term "placed" includes constructing, erecting, posting, painting printing, tacking, nailing, gluing, sticking, sculpting, casting, or otherwise fastening, affixing, or making visible in any manner. The term does not include a religious symbol on a place of worship.

However, as you look further into the definition if a sign, it is clear that a sign is something that identifies a business, service, product, commodity, person or activity. Typically a mural is more like an art work and does not advertise a place, structure, firm, enterprise, profession, business, service, product, commodity, person, or activity and would not be considered a sign.

A mural that does identify a business, service, product, commodity, person or activity would be considered a sign. However, such a sign could get a Creative Sign Permit which is what the Pacific Asian Museum did when it decided to do a mural on the side of its building.



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