

MEMORANDUM

DATE	March 16, 2023	PROJECT NUMBER	23044
TO	Alyssa Manno, Partner Engagement Manager	PROJECT	101 W. Branch Street, Arroyo Grande Letter of Opinion
OF	Visit SLO CAL	FROM	Clare Flynn, Cultural Resources Planner Christina Dikas, Project Manager

REGARDING 101 W. Branch Street, Arroyo Grande Letter of Opinion

This letter of opinion has been prepared for Visit SLO CAL to address proposed plans to paint two murals on the exterior of the building located at 101 W. Branch Street (APN 007-481-001) in Arroyo Grande. The letter of opinion summarizes the historic significance of the property based on existing documentation, outlines the building's character-defining features, describes the proposed mural project, and provides an opinion about whether the project will impact the building's historic character, materials, or ability to remain eligible for listing in the National Register and California Register. It also provides guidance related to painting murals on historic building exteriors and outlines best practice guidelines for compliance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.



Figure 1. Aerial image showing 101 W. Branch Street. Source: Google Maps, 2023. Edited by Page & Turnbull.



Figure 2. The northeast façade, facing Bridge Street.
Source: Google Street View, 2020.



Figure 3. The Northwest facade, facing W. Branch Street.
Source: Google Street View, 2020.



Figure 4. The southwest facade. Source: Google Street View, 2020.



Figure 5. The southeast facade. Source: Google Street View, 2018.

Methodology

To prepare this memorandum, Page & Turnbull reviewed images of the property using Google Street View, the Historic Resource Data Sheet prepared for the property in 1991, State of California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) 523 forms prepared by Page & Turnbull in 2011, the associated Survey Report prepared in 2011, and information about the proposed mural project provided by Visit SLO CAL.

Existing Historic Status

A Historic Resource Survey (HRS) was completed for the Village Commercial, Village Residential, and Historic Design Overlay District areas of Arroyo Grande in 1991. The survey was limited to the city's commercial and residential Village core, centered on the area between Branch Street and Cherry Avenue between Traffic Way and Crown Hill. During the project, 118 properties were surveyed and

inventory sheets were completed for each, including the building at 101 W. Branch Street. The 1991 survey documentation describes physical characteristics of the building but does not include an evaluation of historic significance.

In 2011, Page & Turnbull completed the City of Arroyo Grande Historic Context Statement (HCS) and Survey Report. The HCS was revised by the City of Arroyo Grande Historical Resources Committee in 2013. The project provided a framework for the documentation and evaluation of historic resources in Arroyo Grande. It included a city-wide historic context statement, summarizing the history and development of the Arroyo Grande, and an intensive level architectural survey of properties in the Village Commercial Core along Branch Street. DPR 523 A and B forms were prepared for each of the properties that were intensively surveyed, including 101 W. Branch Street. The property was constructed around 1907 during the “Village of Arroyo Grande (1862-1910)” period of Arroyo Grande’s history and is an example of commercial development during that period. According to the DPR forms, the property is eligible for listing on the National Register and California Register under Criteria A and 1 (events), respectively, for its association “with the early commercial development of the Village Core” and under Criteria C and 3 (architecture) “as one of few brick commercial blocks in the Village Core” that “embodies distinctive characteristics of the building type and possesses high artistic value.”¹

Character-Defining Features

The City of Arroyo Grande HCS and Survey Report lists the following character-defining features for commercial properties constructed during the Village of Arroyo Grande (1862-1910) period of the city’s history:

- Commercial use
- Located along Branch Street or Bridge Street
- Vernacular, Western False-Front, False-Front Italianate, or twentieth-century commercial style
- Modest in size
- Sited on property line, no setback
- Wood-frame or masonry (brick or stone) construction
- One or two stories in height
- Wood, stone or brick cladding
- Glass storefronts with wood sash windows (typically fixed, double-hung or casement)

¹ Page & Turnbull, “101 West Branch Street, 102-106 Bridge Street,” Department of Parks and Recreation DPR 523 A and B Forms, 2011, 2.

- Flat, pent or gable roof with parapet²

Additional character-defining features, specific to 101 W. Branch Street, based on imagery available on Google Street View, include the following:

- Dentilled wood cornice
- Double-hung wood sash windows with ogee lugs
- Glazed wood doors
- Brick masonry bands, pilasters, and stringcourses
- Angled recessed storefronts with glazed transoms and large display windows

Existing Guidance on Exterior Murals

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstruction Historic Buildings* ("SOI Standards with Illustrated Guidelines") does not provide any specific guidance about new murals on historic buildings. The guidance related to paint generally can be summarized as follows: do not apply paint or other coatings to materials that have historically been unpainted or uncoated, and do not remove paint from historically painted materials and leave unpainted or uncoated.

In addition to Page & Turnbull's assessment of the impact of the proposed murals on the historic eligibility of the property at 101 W. Branch Street, the murals will need to comply with all relevant City of Arroyo Grande code requirements and design guidelines, which are included in the Appendix.

Recommendations

For the purposes of this letter of opinion, murals are assumed to be painted murals. Page & Turnbull makes the following recommendations for painting murals on the existing painted brick exterior facades of a historic building.

Materials

Exterior murals should be applied using paint that is:

1. Breathable. Non-breathable paints such as elastomeric paints, which form a vapor barrier that will trap moisture in the brick masonry, should not be used.
2. Water-based and film-forming. Solvent-based paints should be avoided as they may cut through the existing exterior paint and stain the substrate brick masonry.
3. Compatible with the existing exterior paint on the building, so that it bonds well and does not peel or delaminate prematurely.

² Page & Turnbull, "City of Arroyo Grande Historic Context Statement (HCS) and Survey Report," Revised by the City of Arroyo Grande Historical Resources Committee, 2013, 41.

4. Any type of non-painted mural or mosaic that involves fasteners, attachments, glue, etc. should be reversible and would require additional review.

Location & Placement

Murals should be designed such that:

- Their placement, size, and location does not cover or obscure significant architectural features (windows, doors, decorative details, etc.)
- They are located on secondary (rear or side facades) of the building, rather than the primary façade
- They are located on the blank areas of walls, security doors and/or temporary features, such as construction fencing, and avoid covering significant architectural features
 - Murals that extend over secondary doors (that have historically been painted or coated) at rear or side facades may be appropriate.
 - Murals that extend over significant architectural features including window trim/frames, primary doors, decorative features (plaster ornament, string or belt courses, etc.), or the roof cornice will likely require further review.
 - Murals should not cover window glazing or window openings, such as with plywood infill.

These recommended guidelines do not address agreements between the property owner(s), tenant(s), and artist(s). However, the property owner should consider establishing agreements with tenant(s) and artist(s) regarding the duration that the mural will be installed, what the process is for removal of a mural, and what maintenance plans are in place for the duration of the life of a mural.

Proposed Mural Project

Visit SLO CAL proposes to paint one new mural on the exterior facade of 101 W. Branch Street. The mural will be painted on the northwest façade of the building, facing W. Branch Street, and will be painted by artist Buddy Norton of Canned Pineapple Co. The mural will be 30 feet long and 10 feet high and painted using a water based exterior acrylic latex paint from Sherwin Williams' Latitude paint line. According to the artist, the paint is not solvent based or elastomeric and has never had issues with adhering to existing painted walls.

The following statement by Buddy Norton describes the artist's concept for the mural:

I based the over-arching concept off the loose inspiration of the migration of the monarch butterfly while tying in subtle nods to the city's [history] where the murals will live. Everything we choose for these pieces was something that either migrates or carries the spirit of something coming and going. The Monarch butterflies, wildflowers, [strawberries] water, fish, surf, and sun were all things we thought held that and represented the coming

and going of life on the central coast. We plan on [carrying] out that theme with color as well [as] having a dark and light yin and yang flow to everything.

I wanted each wall to have a unique look while at the same time carry[ing] on the themes of the [larger] project so that it was obvious, they all were connected. Each wall has Monarch Butterflies on them in different ways. We wanted it to feel as if the butterfly was taking you on a journey from wall-to-wall landing in each town's unique environment.

With the artwork for Arroyo Grande, we wanted to tie in the unique richness of the farming community with the Monarch Butterfly concept. Drawing flowers to resemble windmills, [strawberries] for the seasonal excitement as well as the Strawberry festival, which I remember going to as a kid.



Figure 6. Location proposed for a mural on the northwest façade (outlined in red). Source: Visit SLO CAL.

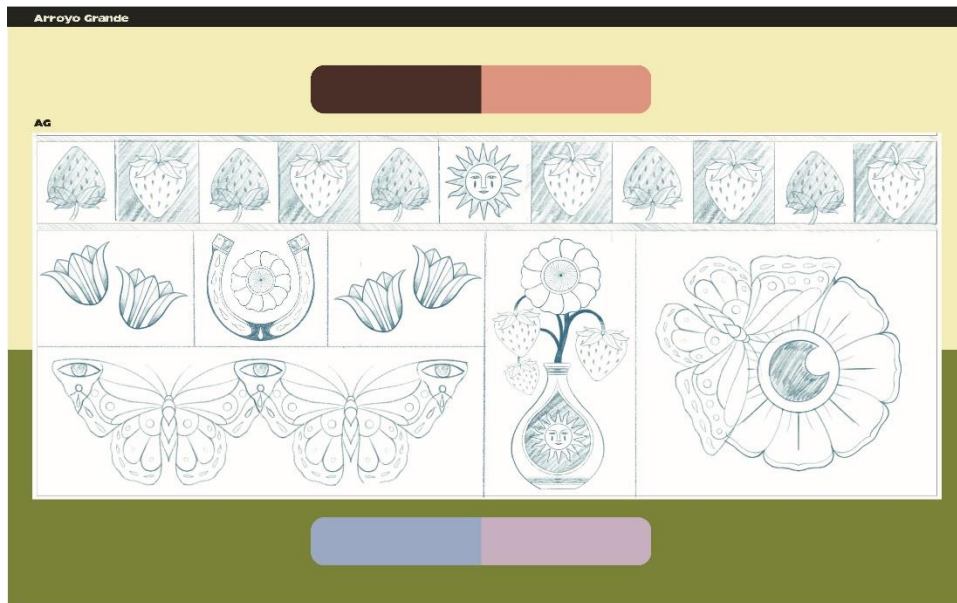


Figure 7. Artist's sketch of the proposed mural. Source: Canned Pineapple Co.

Arroyo Grande Public Arts proposes to paint a second mural on the exterior façade of 101 W Branch Street. The mural will be painted on the southwest façade of the building, facing a paved parking lot. The façade does not contain any character-defining features with the exception of two small windows on the upper floor. Several painted and applied signs have been installed on the façade. The artwork and size have not yet been determined. The Public Art Commission will adhere to the paint specifications provided by Page & Turnbull.



Figure 8. The southwest facade. Source: Visit SLO CAL.

Opinion on Proposed Project

Based on information provided to Page & Turnbull, it does not appear that the proposed mural project will have an impact on the character, materials, or historic status of 101 W. Branch Street. Although the first mural will be painted on one of the street facades of the building, facing W. Branch Street, it will be painted on a blank area of the façade and will not cover or obscure any of the building's character-defining features. The design concept for the mural is intended to reflect the agricultural history of Arroyo Grande through an artistic depiction of monarch butterflies, flowers drawn as windmills, and strawberries, representing the city's annual Strawberry Festival. The content of the mural conveys aspects of the social, cultural, geographical, and environmental history and identity of Arroyo Grande and is, therefore, consistent with the historic character of the Village Core district.

The second mural will be painted on a secondary, southwest façade, which contains no character-defining features other than two small windows. This façade currently features some non-historic painted and attached signage, so it will not be the first time that the façade has had images applied to it.

The paint proposed to be used will be water-based, breathable, and adhere well to the existing painted brick surface so that it will not damage the historic brick cladding of the building. The murals will not result in a permanent change to the building, and if desired, they can be painted over in the future to return the building to its existing appearance. As such, Page & Turnbull finds that the proposed murals will not negatively impact the historic status of the building at 101 W. Branch Street.

APPENDIX. ADDITIONAL CITY OF ARROYO GRANDE MURAL REQUIREMENTS

CITY OF ARROYO GRANDE MUNICIPAL CODE

The City of Arroyo Grande Municipal Code describes requirements for obtaining a permit to install a mural on a building within the city.

§ 16.16.200. Mural permit.

- A. Purpose and Intent. To ensure a mural enhances the architecture or aesthetics of a building or wall and to ensure a mural does not detract from the character of the district within which it is located and to ensure a mural is not detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare, a mural permit shall be required for all murals. A mural permit is in addition to signs.
- B. Authority. The community development director is authorized to approve mural permits subject to the appeal provisions of Section 16.12.150. The architectural review committee shall provide recommendations to the community development director regarding mural permit requests. A public hearing is not required.
- C. Submittal and Review Procedures.
 1. Mural permit applications shall contain the following:
 - a. Completed planning application form and required fee and attachments (see also Section 16.12.030);
 - b. Five copies of a plot plan, drawn to standard engineers scale (approval necessary for use of scale smaller than 1:30, i.e., 1:40 or 1:50) and with a north arrow, showing:
 - i. Location, exterior boundaries and dimensions of the entire property that is the subject of the application,
 - ii. Public and/or private adjacent streets, rights-of-way, and easements,
 - iii. Site access, circulation and off-street parking facilities,
 - iv. Existing and proposed buildings and structures,
 - v. Wall, fences, exterior lighting structures and planted areas,
 - c. Five copies of a mural plan showing:
 - i. Dimensions and area (in square feet) of the mural,
 - ii. Dimensions and areas of building walls on which the mural is to be located,
 - iii. Height of the mural above the average ground surface,
 - iv. Means of lighting, if any,
 - v. Description of materials and colors,
 - vi. Scaled drawing of the mural showing design details;
 - d. One colored rendering depicting the mural on the side of the building or wall, at a scale sufficient to clearly show all elements of the proposed design;
 - e. Color photographs of the subject wall or building and surrounding sites;
 - f. Other information that the community development director may reasonably require to secure compliance with this title.

2. After receipt of a completed application, the community development director shall schedule a mural permit application for review by the architectural review committee.
 3. Upon recommendation by the architectural review committee and when the proposed mural satisfies all applicable provisions of this title, the community development director shall approve a mural permit.
 4. If the community development director approves the mural permit, the building department shall be notified. A building permit and payment of applicable fees may be required.
 5. If the community development director determines the proposed mural to be unacceptable, the director shall inform the applicant of identifiable issues and suggest alternatives to resolve such issues. The applicant shall then be directed to return with revisions and/or work with staff to resolve issues. If issues cannot be resolved, the community development director shall deny the mural permit application.
- D. Required Findings. The community development director may approve a mural permit only if all of the following findings of fact can be made in an affirmative manner:
1. The proposed mural is consistent with the goals, objectives, policies and programs of the Arroyo Grande general plan, specific plan, and any applicable design guidelines or approvals;
 2. The proposed mural will not be detrimental to the public health, safety and welfare;
 3. The proposed mural, including the physical location or placement, size and design, is consistent with the character of the district and the neighborhood within which it is located;
 4. The proposed mural, including the physical location or placement, size and design, is consistent with the character of the building or wall upon which it is placed and will complement the architecture or aesthetics of the building or wall;
 5. The proposed mural does not contain any advertising material (murals containing advertising materials may be reviewed as signs subject to the provisions of [Chapter 16.60](#)).

§ 16.16.200(C)

4. Mural Permit. No murals shall be painted without the approval of a mural permit in accordance with [Section 16.16.200](#) of this title. Murals are not considered signs and shall not include the name, logo, or other representation that advertises a business, product, service or other commercial activity. Murals are considered a means to enhance the architecture or aesthetics of a building or wall and not a form of advertisement. If a mural is proposed that contains advertising materials, it shall be treated as a sign and reviewed pursuant to subsection (C)(1), (C)(2), or (C)(3) of this section and shall comply with Table 16.60.040-A. The mural permit process allows city review of murals to ensure that size, location and placement is consistent with the character of the district within

which it is located; the character of the building or wall upon which it is placed; and that the mural is not detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare.

CITY OF ARROYO GRANDE GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS

The City of Arroyo City Council adopted Design Guidelines and Standards for the Historic Character Overlay District (D-2.4) in 1991. The most recent update to the document was in 2009. The document contains the following guidelines relevant to applying murals to buildings within the city's historic districts. The building at 101 W. Branch Street is located in the Village Core Downtown (VCD) historic district.

Public Art

1. Public Art shall be consistent with the City's Policy on Public Art, and in character with the historic period.³

PUBLIC ART GUIDELINES AND PUBLIC ART DONATION PROGRAM

The City of Arroyo City Council adopted Public Art Guidelines and Public Art Donation Program in 2004. The most recent update to the document was in 2021. The document contains the following guidelines and selection criteria for public art on non-residentially zoned private property:

Guidelines

The following guidelines developed by the San Luis Obispo County Arts Council are intended to facilitate and encourage Public Art that is proposed to be placed in non-residentially zoned private property or by a property owner on adjacent public right of way within the City:

1. Public art shall be of high artistic quality.
2. Public art shall be compatible with the immediate site and neighborhood in terms of social and cultural characteristics, architectural scale, materials, land use and geographical and environmental context.
3. Public art shall not impede pedestrian or vehicular traffic or conflict with public or private easements.
4. Consideration shall be given to any public safety or public health concerns related to, or created by, the artwork.

³ City of Arroyo Grande and Catherine Graves, "Design Guidelines and Standards for the Historic Character Overlay District (D-2.4)," Updated 2009, 40.

5. Public art shall be constructed of durable, high-quality materials and require minimal or no maintenance.
6. Public art shall be securely installed.
7. A wide variety of artistic expression is encouraged. However, expressions of profanity or vulgarity are inappropriate.

Selection Criteria

The following are considerations for the selection of public art

1. Relationship to the social, cultural and historical identity of the area;
2. Evaluation of artistic excellence;
3. Appropriateness of scale, form, material, content and design relative to the immediate neighborhood;
4. Appropriateness of proposed materials as regards to structural and surface integrity, protection against vandalism, public safety and weathering;
5. Ease of maintenance;
6. Appropriateness of proposed method of installation and artwork and safety and structural factors involved in installation;
7. Artist's experience in working on comparable projects.

Location

Public art is allowed in any district and is strongly encouraged in the Village Downtown, Village Mixed Use, Gateway Mixed Use, Fair Oaks Mixed Use and Public Facility Districts. Promotion of public art visible from intersections within these districts as well as proximate to public gathering areas, plazas and public parking areas is highly recommended.⁴

⁴ City of Arroyo Grande, "Public Art Guidelines and Public Art Donation Program," Amended 2021, 3-4.