

ADDRESS: 625 S DELHI ST

Proposal: Install mural on stucco wall

Review Requested: Final Approval

Owner: John Del Rossi

Applicant: Phil Asbury, Mural Arts Philadelphia

History: 1847; William & Letitia Still House

Individual Designation: 3/9/2018

District Designation: None

Staff Contact: Heather Hendrickson, heather.hendrickson@phila.gov

BACKGROUND:

This application proposes to install a mural on the south-facing stucco façade of 625 S. Delhi Street, the historic home of William and Letitia Still and an important surviving station of the Chesapeake-Pennsylvania-New York-Canada network of the eastern Underground Railroad. The proposed mural would be intended to honor William and Letitia Still, famed African American abolitionists and civil rights activists. The application states that the mural could be painted directly onto the stucco south wall of the property, or it could be professionally printed onto 3M banner vinyl that would then be installed using a flexible PVC frame. Currently the stucco façade faces a surface parking lot of an adjacent property and can be seen from Bainbridge Street and much of Palumbo Park. The building at 625 S. Delhi Street was historically designated under Criteria A and J and not for any architectural merit. At some point before designation, the front façade was rebuilt and is not the historic front façade.

SCOPE OF WORK

- Install a mural on the southern stucco façade of 625 S Delhi Street, either by directly painting it onto the stucco or installing a banner.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 2: The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*
 - The alteration of the stucco wall with a mural would not destroy the historic character of the property, which is designated under Criteria A and J.
- *Standard 9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*
 - 625 S. Delhi Street is historically designated for being associated with William and Letitia Still and not necessarily for its architectural merit. The addition of a mural which elevates the story of the Stills would add to the property's significance.
- *Standard 10: New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*
 - *If the proposed mural were removed in the future, the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*
- *Section 6.15.a. of PHC Rules & Regulations:*
 - *Murals shall not be placed directly upon historic fabric.*
 - *Murals shall not be placed in a manner that obscures historic fabric.*

- *The Philadelphia Historical Commission, its committees, and staff shall not consider a mural's content as part of its review of any application for a building permit, but may consider size, scale, and relationship to the historic context.*

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval, with the suggestion that the mural is painted directly onto the wall with permeable paint, pursuant to Standards 2, 9, 10, and Section 6.15.a. of the PHC Rules & Regulations.



Google Maps screenshot looking northwest from Bainbridge Street, captured April 2023. Yellow square indicates the south façade of 625 S. Delhi Street.

4 November 2023

Philadelphia Historical Commission

1515 Arch Street

Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Dr. Farnham and the Philadelphia Historical Commission,

Mural Arts Philadelphia (MAP) is currently seeking formal review in order to proceed with its proposed project to honor William and Letitia Still. If permitted upon review, this project will be located on the south-facing wall of their historic home at 625 S Delhi St, Philadelphia, PA 19147, which is presently owned by John Del Rossi. Bella Vista Neighbors Association (BVNA) is the Registered Community Organization for this property and has expressed support for this project.

The purpose of this mural is to commemorate the life and legacy of William Still, the chairman of the Vigilance Committee of the PA Ant-Slavery Society, a key agent of the Underground Railroad, and a co-founder of the first Black YMCA.

PROCESS: Mural Arts proposes a flexible, scalable process in collaboration with our partners. Budget and timeline estimates may require adjustments as specific choices are scale and depth or engagement are navigated.

ARTIST & DESIGN: The artist selection and mural design processes will be a partnership between Mural Arts, the Philadelphia Historic Commission, community members, and other stakeholders.

MURAL METHOD: Pending approval from the Commission, the approximately 980 square foot mural could be painted directly onto the stucco south wall of the residence. Alternatively, it could be professionally printed onto 3M banner vinyl that would then be installed using a flexible PVC frame. The mural will not be placed upon or obscure any historic fabric of the building.

Please contact the project manager, Phil Asbury, at phil.asbury@muralarts.org or 215-901-1891 with any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your consideration.

PROPOSED SITE:



Head-on view of the proposed mural site, the south-facing wall of 625 S Delhi Street.



View of the proposed site from across Bainbridge Street, which the wall faces.



Another view of the proposed site, including the front facade of the building on S Delhi Street.



A view of the front facade of 625 S Delhi Street.