

## Scala, Mary Joy

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**From:** Syd Knight <sk@vanyahres.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 11, 2012 10:00 AM  
**To:** Beyer, Paul; adams-wh@trainarchitects.com; Coiner, Preston; Graves, Whit; Miller, Melanie; Osteen, Michael; Hogg, Brian; DeLoach, Candace; Mohr, Tim  
**Cc:** Scala, Mary Joy; Ross McDermott; gregantrimkelly@gmail.com; maggie.guggenheimer@gmail.com; mdpamer@gmail.com  
**Subject:** Re: West Main Mural: Denial

Mr. Beyer,

Thank you for writing. This application has raised some very interesting questions and has obviously struck a chord with a number of people. I hope you'll consider attending the next BAR meeting where this or another mural is on the agenda so that you can present your views.

The BAR has a long history of supporting public art and has approved a number of murals, sculptures and other installations in historic districts. We agree that public art can be a vital component of any urban environment, including historic ones. Historic districts, however, bring additional criteria to the task of determining whether a work of art is appropriate to its context. Regardless of what you, I or anyone else might think of a particular work of art, Council has determined that historic structures and districts also have value and that their integrity must be considered and protected as applications are heard.

At the meeting where this application was first heard, the BAR made it very clear to the applicant that we would love to be able to approve a mural on this façade but that we felt this particular one violated the City's guidelines by overwhelming the historic building on which it was to be applied. We encouraged him to find a solution that would be more compatible with the building and the district while still satisfying the artist's vision. That's why we suggested that he defer the application rather than see it denied outright; the deferral makes it easier to return with an amended proposal.

I understand that the applicant will be bringing this application back to the BAR soon. I look forward to that discussion and to finding a way to bring more public art to the streets of Charlottesville.

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**From:** Paul Beyer <beyer@beyerhomes.com>  
**Date:** Sat, 8 Sep 2012 10:28:34 -0500  
**To:** <adams-wh@trainarchitects.com>, <pnjcoiner@embarqmail.com>, <whit@evergreenbuilds.com>, <melanie@houseofmillers.com>, <sk@vanyahres.com>, <JMOsteen@tecinc.com>, <bhogg@mindspring.com>, <DeLoachDesigns@aol.com>, <tmohr@tmdarch.com>  
**Cc:** <scala@charlottesville.org>, Ross McDermott <rossdavidmcdermott@gmail.com>, <gregantrimkelly@gmail.com>, <maggie.guggenheimer@gmail.com>, <mdpamer@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** West Main Mural: Denial

Dear BAR Members,

I attended last night's Council / Place-Making / BAR joint session. I appreciate the service you all give to the City, especially when disagreements arise. I noticed last night, though, a retrenchment in your thinking on the West Main Mural decision, and it needs some push-back from the citizens in the community, whose aesthetics you are charged to defend.

I was very disappointed by the original decision to deny the mural, and more disappointed by the refusal to re-

evaluate the decision at the prodding of Council. The philosophies expressed that night, should they continue, have a long ranging negative impact on public art in the City and the types of creative people (and creative development) the City will inspire.

Putting aside for a moment the aesthetic judgments of size, scale, color and design, which I think were misapplied in the West Main Denial, what has the City lost?

- A positive statement to everyone on West Main street that Charlottesville is a creative and vibrant place.
- A boost, aesthetically and economically, to a long struggling and shockingly empty street, that should be among the prime commercial corridors of the region.
- A vibrant piece of art that would help unite the campus with Downtown by bringing visual interest to pedestrians.
- A piece of art, "like" it or "dislike" it, which had integrity, that was designed by a local artist who has worked on national design pieces, and was curated by some of our best local art organizations.
- A large scale work of public art that was PRIVATELY financed by artists and a private landowner.

Instead a negative statement has been sent, one that is chilling toward fresh ideas and insensitive to the difficulty of implementing something new and different. The BAR's decision took the labors of our creative people for granted. The message was: surely you'll spend months more of delay discussing a code that can be interpreted in vague and arbitrary ways. Creative projects don't just happen, they result from passionate individuals. When projects like this are rejected, it is personal, and there is no guarantee those individuals will remain.

Returning to size, scale, color and design, which are in the BAR's charge, please recall, the staff report recommended approval. The problem was not the code. At issue was the broadened discretion the BAR chose to take.

I would encourage BAR members to assume a more modest and judicious understanding of their own role in the community. The nine members can never represent the full breadth of the creativity here. More to the point, the members all have different and, oftentimes, competing aesthetic philosophies. When the BAR proactively dictates what Charlottesville "is," it will destroy individual initiative and create a bland muddle of a City where ideas are whittled down into something palatable to everyone.

I feel that projects coming forward with integrity, mindfulness, and a clear expression of the property owners desire, (even when it's not to my personal liking) should be approved.

A City's future lies in its creative peoples, and empowering them to be dynamic within it. The impulse to preserve the past and turn Charlottesville into a museum is certainly not my idea of that City. Please reconsider the West Main Mural in its original design, and grant it approval.

Best regards,

**Paul Beyer**

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cc. Ross McDermott, Charlottesville Mural Project // Greg Kelly, The Bridge PAI // Maggie Guggenheimer // Matt Pamer, Artist // Mary Joy Scale





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