



July 15, 2024

Ms. Kerry Kennedy, Public Art Program Coordinator  
DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities  
200 I Street, SE, Suite 1400  
Washington, DC 20003

RE: Historic Preservation Review of Proposed DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (DCCA) Public Art Building Communities (PABC) Grant for a Mural at 3433 Connecticut Avenue, NW in the Cleveland Park Historic District

Dear Ms. Kennedy:

On Friday, July 12<sup>th</sup>, the District of Columbia State Historic Preservation Office (DC SHPO) was contacted by Cassandra Hetherington on behalf of artist Claire Sharp, the applicant for the above-referenced DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities grant. This letter provides our comments regarding the grant application in accordance with the DC Historic Landmark and Historic District Protection Act of 1978 and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as applicable.

We understand the applicant proposes to paint a mural on the building at 3433 Connecticut Avenue, NW (see illustration below), an important contributing element of the Cleveland Historic District which was designed by architect W.N. Denton and constructed in 1936. This building has also been the subject of recent reviews by our office in which we sought to ensure compatibility of signage and restore certain elements of the façade.

We strongly recommend against a mural at this location because such an intervention would obscure the fine limestone façade and detailing that characterizes not only this building, but also the historic district's commercial strip which the Cleveland Park National Register of Historic Places nomination describes as a "significant collection [of] commercial Art Deco buildings."

This description is based primarily upon the frequent use of Indiana limestone and/or buff brick to create expansive, monochromatic façades with relatively restrained ornamentation consisting of carved banding, geometric patterns and bas relief detailing. The surface character of the limestone itself is the primary feature that makes these buildings so characteristic of Washington during this era, echoing the image and feel of civic buildings downtown.

These character-defining features can be found on the Connecticut Avenue bridge and both sides of Connecticut Avenue in everything from the neighborhood's "grand" buildings like the Uptown Theater to more modest commercial buildings, apartments and the local post office. Even the recently constructed Cleveland Park Library was designed with similar features to ensure compatibility with the historic district.

Painting a mural at the proposed location would virtually obliterate the integrity of the historic building and significantly diminish the historic district by degrading the visual cohesiveness of the commercial corridor. The adverse visual effect would be exacerbated by the highly visible, prominent corner location and the cumulative effect of the other mural that was recently painted on another contributing element of the historic district – 3333 Connecticut Avenue, NW. We understand that the Cleveland Park Historical Society shares our concerns.

For the reasons outlined above, we consider murals generally inappropriate for Cleveland Park’s historic commercial corridor, but even more so when proposed for primary elevations of buildings that are among the best examples of the historic district’s character-defining Art Deco style. If murals are desired, we recommend they be limited to secondary elevations of non-contributing buildings.

If you should have any questions or comments regarding this matter, please contact me at [andrew.lewis@dc.gov](mailto:andrew.lewis@dc.gov) or 202-442-8841, or our primary Cleveland Park reviewer, Todd Jones at [todd.jones@dc.gov](mailto:todd.jones@dc.gov) or 202-442-8839. Thank you for providing an early opportunity to review and comment.

Sincerely,



C. Andrew Lewis  
Senior Historic Preservation Officer  
DC State Historic Preservation Office

24-0672

cc: Cassandra Hetherington  
Claire Sharp  
Cleveland Park Historical Society  
Rick Nash, ANC 3C

