

Worthy Brewing owner still waiting to install mural in downtown Bend

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By **Suzanne Roig** (<https://bendbulletin.com/author/suzanneroig/>)



Randy Torcom, director of marketing, left and Brian Chapman, head brewer at Worthy Brewing, carefully place a series of large painted panels titled "Cultivate Your Garden" onto a pallet to be stored at Worthy Brewing in Bend.

All Roger Worthington wanted to do was make the side of his downtown Bend building beautiful by adding a mural painted by local artists.

But six months later, he's no closer to installing that mural because it's considered a sign and requires a change in the city's sign code that won't come before city officials until June 9. And even then, it will take four to six months to process the code changes.

The process requires public hearings before the planning commission and the Bend City Council, said Jacob Larsen, city of Bend community relations manager.



A series of large painted panels constituting a mural titled “Cultivate Your Garden” is being stored at Worthy Brewing Co. in Bend.

“The city is still on track for this original timeline,” Larsen said. “In order to update any city code there is a process.” Worthington, who owns Worthy Brewing in southeast Bend and a pub at 806 NW Brooks Street, would like to install the artwork now. It was completed six months ago and is in storage while the city amends the sign code.

“I am not asking for special treatment, just an avoidance of the consequence of the enforcement of a bad law that nobody seems to respect,” said Worthington in an email to the city. “It’s not in my nature to give up, especially when the cause is worthy.”

Mayor Melanie Kebler said she was surprised the mural was still an issue.

“We are amending the code to allow for more flexibility in putting art on buildings, including the format Roger has chosen for his mural,” Kebler said. “Staff plan to bring this code change to council in June. The problem will be resolved, just not fast enough for Roger, I guess.”

The Downtown Bend Business Association supports the installation of art in public places, including murals, said Rachel O’Rourke, association executive director. The association is collaborating with a local property owner to install a large mural on the side of a building this summer.

As part of that project, the association has been working with the city’s permitting team and the Historic Preservation department to ensure “we follow all the necessary guidelines since many buildings in the downtown core fall within the historic district,” O’Rourke said.

“I can’t speak to the specific process that Roger went through for his proposed sign mural as the association was not involved in those conversations,” O’Rourke said.

Under the city’s sign code, a mural is allowed if it’s painted directly onto a building. Worthington’s mural, which he paid local artists \$20,000 for, is painted on wood, which makes it by definition a sign, not a mural.

Worthy’s frustration is mounting as other efforts to bring in more customers to the downtown pub have been thwarted, he said. Over the years he’s tried to put tables out on the area in front of the pub on Brooks Street to create a cafe feel, and even pitched that the street become pedestrian-only, but was unsuccessful, he said.

“My faith has been challenged,” Worthington said. “I’m frustrated that something so simple and beautiful has turned into something so dramatic and painful. ”

The city says that businesses on Brooks Street — the alley between downtown buildings and Drake Park — that want to provide seating to their customers within the public right-of-way should apply for a [Sidewalk Cafe License](https://www.bendoregon.gov/services/business/sidewalk-cafe-license) (<https://www.bendoregon.gov/services/business/sidewalk-cafe-license>) rather than a commercial [parklet license](https://www.bendoregon.gov/services/business/commercial-parklet-license) (<https://www.bendoregon.gov/services/business/commercial-parklet-license>), said Larsen.

“This recommendation is based on the presence of existing permits for events in the same vicinity and the use of the alley for purposes that do not accommodate the more permanent setup required for parklet structures,” Larsen said.

This is the second mural that Worthington has commissioned. The first, featuring wildlife including a bald eagle, a beaver, a wolf, a grizzly bear and a spotted owl and the word “ReWild,” now is hanging on the outside of his southeast Bend pub because a downtown neighbor objected to the content. The current mural features hummingbirds, butterflies and flowers with the message “Cultivate your Garden,” Worthington said.

“I think the city could do better,” Worthington said. “I don’t want to come across as entitled but why not come up with a variance and let the mural go up now? The enforcement of a bad law is bad for everyone. We need to be uniform in how we treat the public. This pointless delay is inconsistent with the city’s campaign to beautify downtown Bend.”

About Suzanne Roig



Suzanne Roig has been a reporter with The Bulletin since 2018 covering business and health in the region. When she's not working she enjoys taking her dog, Pono, out on hikes. She can be reached at 541-633-2117, suzanne.roig@bendbulletin.com.

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