

Call for Public Art: Mural for Morton Building – Interior

Call Summary:

Athens Downtown Development Authority (ADDA), the Morton Theatre Corporation (MTC) and The Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County (ACCGov) invites professional artists to submit qualifications for consideration for a mural in the Morton Theatre lobby. The selected artist(s) will work with stakeholders and government staff to create a mural that enhances the user experience and celebrates the contributions of the Morton Theatre in Athens and the Northeast Georgia region. **Deadline to apply is Friday, February 27, 2026 at 5 PM EST.**

Project Overview and Site Description:

The Morton Theatre is located in downtown Athens GA on the storied “Hot Corner” of West Washington and Hull Streets. Built in 1910 by Monroe Bowers ("Pink") Morton, the Morton Theatre is one of the first, and the oldest surviving vaudeville theatres in the United States, uniquely built, owned, and operated by an African-American. The Morton Building housed not only the theatre, but also many of Athens’ Black doctors, dentists and pharmacists and other professionals. The theatre was opened on May 18, 1910 with a piano concert followed by local, regional, and nationally touring vaudeville acts.

In its heyday, the Morton Theatre hosted early acts such Butterbeans and Susie, Blind Willie McTell, Curley Weaver, Sissieretta Jones, Cab Calloway, and Bessie Smith. When built, the Morton Theatre was the only space in the city where white and Black audiences could attend these shows together, with white audiences seated up in the bleachers. Morton’s Colored Opera House, as it was called by some, became a space where audiences were entertained, celebrated during graduation ceremonies of the segregated Knox Institute, and informed during community meetings, debates, and conventions of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. As vaudeville fell out of favor, the theatre saw burlesque acts, before transitioning the space, at the dawn of the silver screen, to a movie house. A fire in the projection booth led to the theatre's closing in 1954. The theatre, left empty for four decades, was overtaken by roosting pigeons. Businesses, however still operated in other spaces in throughout the Morton Building.

In 1980, using a combination of state and federal funds, the building was purchased by the nonprofit Morton Theatre Corporation. Local bands at that time, such as Dreams So Real, the B-52’s and R.E.M. occasionally used the vacant, dilapidated auditorium for rehearsal space and filming music videos. In 1987, the citizens of Athens-Clarke County came to the rescue of the Morton through the passage of the Special Projects Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) referendum that included the restoration of the theatre. In 1991, ownership of the building was handed over to the Athens-Clarke Unified Government, followed in the fall of 1993, by the signing of a management agreement between the Athens-Clarke Unified Government and the Morton Theatre Corporation.

The Morton, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, reopened as a unit of the Arts Division of Athens-Clarke County Unified Government's Leisure Services Department, and is supported by the Morton Theatre Corporation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Morton operates today as a 480-seat rental facility that hosts live theatre, music concerts, church services, weddings, dance concerts, receptions, seminars, award shows, pageants, community events, and more.

The site for the mural is located in the lower lobby of the Theatre. The lobby includes a box office, front welcome desk, seating and is an area of gathering for all visitors to the Morton Theatre. The dimensions of the larger interior wall is approx. 15ft wide and 8ft tall, with smaller adjacent walls at 8ft wide and 9ft tall as depicted in [Attachment A](#).

Public Art Goals & Criteria:

The goal for this mural is to celebrate the Morton Theatre as a social, performance, and community space throughout its long history. The criteria for this project are as follows:

- 1) Original work created by the submitting artist(s)
- 2) Quality art in design and execution.
- 3) Appropriate subject and themes for all ages.
- 4) Enjoyable from interior and exterior vantage points
- 5) Compatible with surroundings, in scale and visibility related to the site
- 6) Paint must be Sherwin Williams with a protective top coat
- 7) Requires minimal maintenance

Eligibility:

The project is open to professional artists (or team) 18 years and older, who are legal residents of the United States. It is preferable that the artist (or team) has experience working with public art projects and community government. Must not be currently employed by Athens-Clarke County Unified Government (including full-time, part-time, seasonal and contract employment).

Budget:

The budget for this project is \$20,000 all-inclusive. This means including, but not limited to, design, materials, insurance ([Attachment B](#)), equipment rental, travel, installation, and artist's fees.

Timeline:

The following timeline is contingent with the facility's schedule and may be changed, but is current as of this RFQ as follows:

- Call Published: Friday, January 2026
- Info Sessions/Site Visits: TBD
(please email tatiana.veneruso@accgov.com for site visit sign up)
- Application deadline: Friday, Feb 27, 2026, at 5pm EST
- Selection panel convenes: March 2026
- Finalist will be contacted: March 2026
- Contract signing: Summer 2026
- Art installation: TBD

Contract Provisions:

The selected artist will be required to enter into a formal contract with Athens-Clarke County. The basic provisions of the contract are included in [Attachment B](#). No work will begin on the project until the contract is signed by all parties. *This process may require no less than 8 weeks to complete after the artist is selected and notified; and may take longer depending on the county approval process.*

Applications:

All applications must be submitted to Athens-Clarke County's online system of calls for entry via this [form](#). All applications must include the following to be considered by the resident selection panel:

1. Contact information, including your name(s), mailing address, telephone number, and e-mail.
2. A resume highlighting your credentials and related experience.
3. Contact information for at least three (3) professional references.
4. Jpeg images of three (3) examples of your **previous mural work of comparable scale and budget (not proposals or mockups)**. Please do not submit any images watermarks that would identify you, as these are blind selections.

If selected as a finalist, you will have approx. 4 weeks to submit the following for a fee of \$200:

1. A title and description of your mural concept for this project. Include a materials list, any needs for special equipment or the like, and a timeline for producing mural. Provide enough detail to support your images and budget.
2. Images of your proposed design keeping within the scale of the sites. You may include additional detail images, if needed. A hand-drawn image, computer generated or digital media must be submitted for your proposed mural design.
3. A budget that details all costs related to the proposed artwork(s) including, but not limited to, design, materials, installation, insurance, travel and artist's fees.
4. Maintenance plan to outline long terms care needs of the artwork.

Contact:

Tatiana Veneruso
Public Art Coordinator, Athens-Clarke County, Leisure Services Department, Arts Division
tatiana.veneruso@accgov.com

Attachments:

[Attachment A: Site Photos](#)

[Attachment B: Contract Provisions](#)





Restrooms





ATTACHMENT C: ACC PUBLIC ART CONTRACT PROVISIONS

The Artist(s) ultimately selected will be required to sign a contract with Athens-Clarke County which contains a number of provisions, including:

- Requirements that the artist communicate and cooperate with Athens-Clarke County.
- A timeline for the completion and installation of the artwork;
- Requirements that the artist produce and provide to Athens-Clarke County certain preliminary design documents, fabrication documents, maintenance plans, and fabrication, delivery, and installation schedules.
- Guidelines for the acceptance of the artwork by Athens-Clarke County and the passing of the title of the artwork from the artist to Athens-Clarke County.
- A compensation and payment schedule.
- Warranties by the artist that the artwork is solely the result of the artistic effort of the artist, the artwork is unique and original and does not infringe upon any copyright, and various other warranties.
- **Insurance*** coverage to be provided by the artist for the risk of loss or damage to the artwork prior to the artwork being delivered to Athens-Clarke County
- Indemnity agreement holding Athens-Clarke County harmless for damages associated with artist's negligent performance of their services.
- Copyright provisions, including the artist's waiver of rights under the Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 (VARA).

Insurance*

Artist shall procure and maintain insurance which shall protect the Artist and ACCGov from any claims for bodily injury, property damage, or personal injury which may arise out of operations under the agreement. Artist shall procure the insurance policies at the Artist's own expense and shall furnish ACCGov an insurance certificate listing ACCGov as certificate holder. The insurance certificate must document that the liability insurance coverage purchased by the Artist includes contractual liability coverage to protect ACCGov. The insurance certificate must provide the following information:

- 1) Name and address of authorized agent
- 2) Name and address of insured
- 3) Name of insurance company (licensed to operate in Georgia)
- 4) Description of coverage in standard terminology
- 5) Policy period
- 6) Limits of liability
- 7) Name and address of certificate holder (ACCGov)
- 8) Acknowledgement of notice of cancellation to ACCGov
- 9) Signature of authorized agent
- 10) Telephone number of authorized agent

- 11)Details of policy exclusions in comments section of insurance certificate
- 12)Additional Insured Endorsement

Note: It is the intent of ACCGov that certificates of insurance should comply with the pertinent Rules of the Commissioner of Insurance, which are found in Chapter 120-2-103 of the Official Compilation of the Rules and Regulations of the State of Georgia.

Each policy shall contain a provision that coverage afforded under the policies will not be canceled (or not renewed or allowed to lapse for any reason) until at least thirty (30) days after Owner has received notice thereof. All policies must be issued by an insurance company licensed to do business in the State of Georgia, with a minimum AM Best rating of A-, and signed by an authorized agent.

The Artist must submit, along with insurance certificate(s), an additional insured endorsement for all coverages as allowed by statute naming the Unified Government of Athens Clarke County, and a notice of cancellation endorsement.

Coverages and Limits Required:

Workers Compensation (WC):

If you are an individual with no employees or otherwise exempt from providing Workers Compensation Insurance, provide a written statement indicating your reason for exemption in lieu of the coverage below.

Workers Compensation Insurance (per Occurrence) in the amounts of the statutory limits established by the General Assembly of the State of Georgia (a self-insurer must submit a certificate from the Georgia Board of Works Compensation stating that the Artist qualifies to pay its own workers compensation claims). In addition, the Artist shall require all subcontractors occupying the premises or performing work under the contract to obtain an insurance certificate showing proof of Workers Compensation Coverage with the following minimum coverage:

- | | |
|--|-----------|
| • Bodily injury by accident – per employee | \$100,000 |
| • Bodily injury by disease – per employee | \$100,000 |
| • Bodily injury by disease – policy limit | \$500,000 |

Commercial General Liability (CGL):

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| • Each Occurrence Limit | \$1,000,000 |
| • Personal & Advertising Injury Limit | \$1,000,000 |
| • General Aggregate Limit | \$2,000,000 |
| • Products/Completed Ops. Aggregate Limit | \$2,000,000 |

Automobile Liability:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------|
| • Combined Single Limit | \$1,000,000 |
| • Installation Floater | |

Umbrella Liability:

\$2,000,000

Additional Insured: The Artist shall add "the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County, its officers, employees, and agents" as an additional insured under the commercial general liability, automobile, and umbrella liability policies. The additional insured endorsement must be provided.