



City of Aurora

44 East Downer Place
Aurora, Illinois 60505
www.aurora-il.org

Legistar History Report

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File Name: Mural/83 S. LaSalle St.

Final Action:

Title: Approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for a mural at 83 S. LaSalle Street (Greenlife Media Group - 17-00812 / AU22/3-17.171-FCOA-ES-Ward 2)

Notes:

Agenda Date: 09/14/2017

Agenda Number:

Sponsors:

Enactment Date:

Attachments: FCOA.pdf, 3) Round 2 Victorian Window Boxes DOC080817.pdf, 4) Finalist WP_20170817.jpg, 5) Finalist WP_20170817_2.jpg, 2) Proposals - Public Mural RFP 17-26 2017.pdf, APAC Special Meeting 8-17-17 Minutes .docx

Enactment Number:

Planning Case #: AU22/3-17.171-FCOA

Hearing Date:

Drafter: esieben@aurora-il.org

Effective Date:

History of Legislative File

Version:	Acting Body:	Date:	Action:	Sent To:	Due Date:	Return Date:	Result:
1	FoxWalk Overlay District Design Review Committee	08/30/2017	Forwarded	Planning & Development Committee	09/14/2017		Pass
	Action Text:	A motion was made by Charlie Zine, seconded by Clara Diaz, that this agenda item be Forwarded to the Planning & Development Committee, on the agenda for 9/14/2017. The motion carried.					
	Notes:	<i>Mr. Sieben said the purpose of the meeting is a recommendation for approval for a COA for the painting of a mural on the south and east wall of 83 S. LaSalle Street. I realize in the staff report the background was not changed, so I apologize for that. I don't know what happened there. Under Discussion, this is for a city funded mural project. A request for proposals did go out from the city and 5 applicants applied. On August 17th, the Aurora Public Art Commission recommended the proposal from GreenLife Media Group on behalf of the owner BKL Properties, LLC to paint a mural on the south and east walls of the 83 S. LaSalle Street building. The building is currently being rehabbed by the owner for a restaurant on the first floor and 2 apartments on the second floor. The mural, originally called Victorian Window Box, but now called Historic Pierpont Grocery Store, was changed. Per the artist, this mural will attract new visitors to the charming shops and businesses within the Aurora's Historic Auto Row. He states the whimsical, friendly nature-themed art highlights</i>					

unique historic architectural ornamentations in a celebration of warmth and generous hospitality. Again, this process and guidelines are based on Section 8.4, which is the mural section of the FoxWalk Overlay District Design Guidelines, which were adopted on June 28, 2016. Unless there are questions for me, I can turn it over to the Petitioners. I think the artist is here and his group, GreenLife Media Group, and the folks that are rehabbing the building.

I'm Rebekah Axtell. I own a home at 411 Grand Avenue, Aurora, Illinois in the historic Tanner District. I'm a co-owner of GreenLife Media Group together with Joshua Schultz. Joshua Schultz also owns an independent mural company called Creative Edge Murals and More and I'm here together with local artist Keri Borkowicz, who owns a company called Trees of Life Dream Designs, as well as Virginia and Ron Potter. They own a company called Potter Construction. So you are looking at the core creative and production team. This process for this project began on July 4th when I saw Ron Potter driving the Aurora Historic Society's 1922 blue Ford Chevy truck at the Tanner Historic District 4th of July celebration. The truck caught my eye and there had been an indication that there was interest of a historic interpretative mural to be developed for the LaSalle District, the Auto Row District, on the near east side. Ron pointed me in the direction of his company's phone number and said well we are doing a project right on LaSalle and Benton at which time I called Virginia Potter and we discussed the feasibility of painting directly on the wall. Many locations in the FoxWalk District have bare brick and, therefore, painting directly on them is prohibited at this time underneath the FoxWalk Overlay Design Guidelines. So this wall presented an ideal opportunity and Virginia indicated at that time that tuck pointing was to begin in several weeks as well as a fresh coat of paint, which would make the base coat optimal for the application of a mural design. I'd like the creative team to come speak and introduce their various portions of this group project.

I'm Virginia Potter. One of our locations for business is 1650 S.E. River Road, Montgomery. We talked about doing the colors and how I was going to bring in the historic colors on the building. It is the Pierpont and it was their grocery store and it was done in 1892. Looking at it, we started learning more about the building. They have a picture there that shows what it looked like when it was originally done. I am not a fan of just any kind of murals. I prefer them to be kind of on the historic side, telling what the building was and what it is now. Rebekah and I talked and I told her what I had in mind, that I'd rather do more of a trompe-l'oeil than a mural kind of thing. I wanted people to drive by and see what it was and not have to stop and get out and look and try to figure out what was going on. We kind of came to the same plane as what we were looking for. In fact, after the Pierpont grocery store was closed, the Mayor that came next was Bjorseth and he also did a grocery store next door. It seems as if that was the spot where everybody thought it was a good grocery store. They also did a garage in the back and then they turned that garage in the back into a bakery. It is quite lovely inside, that little garage that's there. We said well this would be kind of interesting to bring up the different aspects of the grocery store and since we had the truck that was of the period, we thought that might be a nice introduction into showing it because there is a little garage area in the back that we could show it coming out of and then I had sketched something that I gave to Rebekah showing in the front because we have a side door that's coming out of there and it kind of looks lost by itself when it is just plain. I said well we could maybe draw it into a whole kind of a little grouping where it shows that it is actually people inside and maybe do some things on the outside that brought it into the grocery store. That's kind of how the theme got started and then the real artist took it from there.

Ms. Axtell said so back to the design guidelines for a moment. Aurora, as a collective group of you all, and I believe some of you perhaps developed the FoxWalk Design Guidelines, it is a wonderful document. It is long and deep and wide, 90 pages. One of the applications of the Design Guidelines that stuck out, that really I've enjoyed as an Auroran, are the flower baskets, as well as the new implementation of the historic lamplights on Downer Place. There is a distinctive feature of those streetlights. If you look very carefully, it has a whimsical little swirl up on top of those globe lights and there is really no other place like that in town. When I contacted Keri Borkowicz to product the rendering for the initial concept, we discussed how could we incorporate that swirl and thus carry through the beginning of the implementation of the FoxWalk brand and the street furniture right onto the side of the mural building. Keri researched a bunch of ironwork designs and also did a survey of some of the east side Victorian homes of that area and produced a lovely rendering, which is what got our foot in the door on this project. Also at that time, we walked around, and I'm going to pass around a little packet that I produced based on the good work done by the Aurora Historic Society. There are

displays up in many windows on Downer and there are some photographs of the original Pierpont Grocery signage, as well as the historic lamps that are on that building. So Keri will explain to you our first phase of the design development, which includes the window boxes. Those have grown to be edible flowers because of the grocery store orientation, as well as the application of the historic application of the historic lampposts.

My name is Keri Borkowicz. I studied at the school of the Art Institute in Chicago. I have about 20 years' experience in design marketing. I have extensive background in Fine Arts. I did go and study and walk around and looked at the metal work to do an extensive background check on how this worked into, how we would want to display the metal work on the side of the building because it will be large and it will be very visible. It is not as visible on the smaller renderings, but when it is larger it will be so it is important that it does mirror what is seen throughout the city so this is very important, just like the lampposts. We did extensive studying on the lamppost as well, as well as studying the flowers and the historic flowers of Aurora and the edible flowers of Aurora and what grows here and has been historically here. I think I spoke with Mike Saville and other people in the city about the plants that are planted throughout the city and the new flower gardens and one is being put right there on the corner and making sure they are incorporated into the building so it is not just thrown into the mural, but incorporated precisely into the mural.

Ms. Axtell said there will be a rain garden established right on the corner.

Ms. Borkowicz said right on the corner of the building, so it goes cohesively with the building. It doesn't just stand out like a sore thumb. It works very nicely with what's there and the metal works very nicely with what already is established in Aurora. Then from there, we then discussed, there is a doorway that leads up to the apartment complex and we talked about having a, I know the history of this area and what it used to be and what it is now. This historic area is a very friendly, welcoming area now. People like to come here and eat and drink and bring their families and so making it this window where people come and drink tea and an herb garden. It used to be a grocery market, so we have apples and bins of apples back in the era where they sold market fresh vegetables and such. It is going to be very welcoming.

Mr. Truax said that's the way it's going to look?

Ms. Borkowicz said yes. If I wanted to do a detail, with the time allotted to get this presentation for the previous meeting and this meeting, this tiny detail versus a larger one you are not going to see, but even larger will be even more detailed for the naked eye. It is 11 feet, the actual window, so it will be more detailed with more for you to see. As discussed amongst us, we are going to have it more diverse as far as a silhouette so that it is not like ambiguous.

Mr. Zine said but there is not a real window there, is it?

Ms. Borkowicz said no. It is a fake window, a faux window.

Ms. Axtell said this is called the market window and Keri has done a wonderful job rendering that. There are 3 main sections as you can see. We brought the produce elements out. Keri also has drawn some grape vines growing up along the back. That is totally our hope that the building next door and the bakery behind it is eventually sold to someone who will put in a decent wine garden and a place for fresh baked bread.

Ms. Borkowicz said it would be nice to have grape vines climbing up the building.

Ms. Axtell said and I would not be lying if I told you that the colors came directly from Gina Salomone's trip to Germany recently where she was in an authentic European wine garden and beer garden. This is most definitely a cultural heritage project. My family came over from Europe in the 1600's and have been farmers ever since, so the discovery that the Pierpont was a grocery store was really epic for me. The configuration of this sign, we'll pass that around.

Mr. Truax said this is putting the Pierpont on the sign?

Ms. Axtell said the original drawing that I passed around is a photo of the actual Pierpont hand painted sign and it said Pierpont Grocery very large on the side of the building. In sign painting, we would love to replicate as closely as possible that original sign. It is absolutely gorgeous. You can't really improve on the design. The consensus is that instead of saying Pierpont Grocery it should say something just welcoming. We talked a slogan like Beautiful Aurora or Auto Row. Then we looked very closely at Joe Dispensa's drawing of his proposed Arch for that location and the preliminary drawings indicated that the arch may say something like LaSalle Street Historic, Historic LaSalle Street Auto Row, so we didn't want to replicate that. Therefore, the letters Historic Aurora are just about exactly the amount of letters of the original Pierpont Grocery so that the orientation of the sign design could essentially be untouched.

Mr. Truax said I've looked at the picture, but it didn't stick. Is the decoration around the sign similar to this?

Ms. Axtell said yes. It is a reproduction. I think that with the scale on the building it will be a little wider perhaps. I don't know if any of you are familiar with Pat Kinley. He is one of Aurora's legendary sign painters. There are only a few left. He does a lot of Danny Dolan's signs. He owns Finley Sign Company in Montgomery. We'd love to approach him to see if he would be willing to collaborate with us.

Ms. Borkowicz said if you notice on the original building, I don't know if there is a photo there, there was no window. There was a window added to this building. The original structure did not have a window.

Mr. Truax said the smaller window?

Ms. Borkowicz said yes. Therefore, this sign is a little bit smaller, a little different, so it has to fit.

Ms. Axtell said I do want to touch on a component that the building owners were approached during the process of the proposal development and all wondered about maintenance. The RFP is built quite well in that it mandates a 5 year maintenance on behalf of the creative team, as well as the application of what they call a graffiti defense so that if anyone decides to get creative after the art is finished it can be easily cleaned. I've gone ahead and set up a fund in the Community Foundation of Fox Valley and just learning a little bit from Naperville. They did a ton of private fundraising to do mural development and then maybe a decade in, turned around and asked the city for a sizable sum of money to help to maintain all of the art that had been done. It is my recommendation that instead of following that path that we actually follow a little bit more of a conservative path and take 10% of the total cost of production and put that 10% into a fund under the Community Foundation of Fox Valley and then essentially use that as a capital maintenance fund so that if anything happens to the creative team either during the duration or after that the money is there and there are multiple Trustees that can steward the art. That's just a good template that seems very scalable for future projects. I haven't showed Josh's truck design. So back to the blue truck. This is just a large illustrated rendering. You can see this is going to be our basic process. Josh and Keri are going to do illustrated line art on the building. We have a bucket full of charcoal sticks and we'll actually be replicating the design to scale prior to a drop of paint hitting the wall so that the community has an opportunity to just to see the size and scale. The spirit of this is more of a community art project. I really do believe that public art in its best form is public service, so there will be a great deal of community engagement. If you decide that you would like to add anything to the creative process at this time, welcome to the creative team. We are all ears.

Mr. Truax said just a couple of questions before that. You've added the streetlights. I assume those are going to be on the building?

Ms. Axtell said yes, painted as closely as possible. Frankly the reason that we put them on transparencies is because we thought that John's folks at the Historic Society would have very distinct ideas about how tall they should be. We researched them as best as we could from the photographs provided by the Visitor's Center at the Pierce Art and History Center and believe that those

streetlights really did not extend past the first floor very much. They are primarily designed to illuminate the street level windows, so it is not really appropriate for them to be as high as today's streetlights for example.

Mr. Jaros said so how tall are they? The original ones were, I think, 14.

Ms Axtell said that is really good information.

Mr. Jaros said the ones that they reproduced in town are taller than that because of trucks and stuff like that.

Ms. Axtell said I think there are some, I don't know if they are originals, but are on the Tanner Historic home.

Mr. Jaros said yes, those are those lights without the side arms.

Ms. Axtell said I took a picture by one of those to help determine approximately where to put the light, so we'd invite any input. If you want to literally establish a liaison with the Historic Society that would be incredibly helpful as well as they could feel part of this.

Mr. Truax said are you willing to answer some questions? I walked around tonight and looked at the building. One of my concerns is that the paint is peeling pretty badly. How do you take care of that?

Ms. Axtell said right now it is in the tuck pointing phase. The next phase is going to be, so the brick has to, the mortar has to dry for about 2 weeks and at that time Bob Withrow, who has done many historic buildings, including the Masonic Lodge in Yorkville, is on deck to be contracted by the Potter Construction to do a very thorough job repainting the building. It can't be power washed like other structures because of the sensitivity of the brick, so it will be hand washed. There is also interest on the part of Heather Binder with Rebuilding Together Aurora in terms of getting a team from RTA. They just want to be involved. They have buckets and Dove soap and water and they may want to come help and just literally help with the washing of it.

Mr. Schultz said the answer is very thorough scraping, cleaning, prepping, and priming. There is seal krete involved. It is like about 5 layers of prep work before even the base coat goes on.

Mr. Truax said I recognize that that's an issue for paint in general. If you do it right, you are right, it will last.

Mr. Schultz said it is very important to do it right. My name is Joshua Schultz. My address is 32 Boat Lane, Oswego. The flowers are wonderful, but this is my favorite part of the mural right here. I'm very excited about incorporating a truck into Auto Row that has historical significance. This whole process has been a very illuminating, historical experience for me, so that's been quite the intellectual ride as well as just interesting to meet very cool people that are very involved in the community. It has really connected different parts that I had no idea about. I'm enthralled with that fact. Keri and I will be collaborating as the lead artist. Rebekah is definitely taking charge of the story telling and creative concept and design and planning and we are all like part of that, but it is definitely a team effort. If there are any specific process questions, I can certainly answer any of those.

Mr. Zine said I have a quick question. Did somebody say it was going to be the south and the east side of the building, which is the front? So what's going on the front?

Mr. Schultz said there will be window boxes in those 2 windows as well.

Ms. Borkowicz said I did not do the detail because this is smaller. I did more detail on the front and less on the side.

Mr. Schultz said these are basically relatively, well they are pretty elaborate for sketches, they are decent renderings.

Ms. Borkowicz said and they won't be flat on the wall. So there is a way, with lots of math involved and lots of ruler work, to have the sense that the flower boxes are coming out at you, that they are actually 3-D. That's an important distinction.

Mr. Schultz said that's really the definition of trompe-l'oeil, so it is really to fool the eye. That's what the word means. It will do exactly that.

Mr. Zine said timeframe?

Mr. Schultz said so as soon as the next meeting is finished, which I think is the 14th, and the paint is dry, we are ready to start getting sketches up on the wall, so toward the end of September initial sketches will be begin. It is most likely going to be a phased project considering it is outside. Weather often prohibits a lot of things into October, so depending on the weather, but ideally there will be a first phase completed before winter for sure and, again, if the season permits, we'll go onto phase 2, but we are kind of chunking it out into pieces so that something will be done and sealed.

Mr. Truax said so the cleaning and initial painting will start right away, not the decoration, but just the base, the wall?

Mr. Schultz said yes, that is in the process now. Everything is being tuck pointed. They are almost done tuck pointing. That cures for 2 weeks, so it will be cured up by the time the next meeting for us happens and then the painter is next in line. He'll be using a very specialized seal krete product to seal up any raw mortar that's there as well as the brick that will be exposed after the cleaning and painting process. Essentially after the base coat and the paint work is dry, we are just next in line.

Ms. Axtell so we could be starting with the mural outlining as soon as September 15th because there is only 2 weeks for the brickwork to dry and then the painting of the walls.

Mr. Schultz said well that's depending on the painting contractor.

Mr. Truax said that could be a big job.

Mr. Schultz said it is a decent sized job, but it is not more than a painting contractor can handle at all.

Ms. Axtell said as we explained to the Aurora Art Commission, we definitely want to tackle, in my professional world I do agile project management for technology projects and also creative projects mostly in the digital realm and what that means, agile project methodology means you tackle small sections at a time and then you innovate, do that process, see what worked and then innovate for the next chunk. Basically we would tackle like the truck and the lamppost on the right as one project and bring that to completion within a week and then we would tackle the pollinator garden as another chunk, then we would tackle like the woodwork around the window, not necessarily the detail in the window itself. So there is never a long period of time where it looks half finished. So it literally grows, but people can start coming and taking pictures in front of it. There is never going to be a statement like when are they going to finish that because there are portions of it that can be executed literally in 3 to 10 day chunks at a time, so that's how we are going to schedule it with our calendar. There is another element to this as well and that is just a PR element for LaSalle Row in general and the new store owner that's coming in. It is very newsworthy to have a store coming back into this location and the building to be renovated in and of itself. In order to kind of continue to spread the buzz of the revival of LaSalle Street historic district, if we can't complete the entire thing this fall, it is kind of a PR win to be able to have something left to do in the spring so there is something more that can be newsworthy. Since this is the first time that a project of this nature is being undertaken legally in the City of Aurora in decades, I really think everybody wants to enjoy the ride and I do know that artists produce better work when they feel like they have ample time to make it their best because this is absolutely is going to be a portfolio piece for everybody involved and the city also. Something to be proud of is the goal.

Mr. Truax said thank you for a really outstanding presentation and more importantly you are really

committed to this in ways that I haven't seen a lot of people being committed. To the Potters, it is wonderful that you are doing this, although looking at the building you've got a lot work to do.

Mr. Potter said there's been a lot of work done already.

Mr. Sieben said a lot on the inside.

Mrs. Potter said actually it is in a little bit better shape than it appears. The front, really the portion that we have to paint is the top, that small part at the top, but the oriel bays are what is going to probably be done first and those are all metal, so those are easy to clean. You can go over them with a little brush. We don't have to worry about those, but the side really, there are probably 2 areas, one of them at the front, which is really going to have the most paint with the faux storefront and there is a little part at the back. Now the back of the building is not going to be touched because it is has never been painted before, so hopefully what we are going to do is maybe in the spring start some growth with some vines, some ivy, and I'd like to see some vines grow up the back of the building to kind of incorporate it in front.

Ms. Axtell said preferably grape vines.

Mrs. Potter said grape vines would go with the winery that's going to go in the back.

Ms. Axtell said we highly anticipate more stories coming out of the woodwork, or the brickwork, so to speak because if you go down into that little drive-through and you go into the basement of that grocery store, you'll see the cement blocks where they bricked up the old steam tunnels. Think about the era that those tunnels would have been available to pass things through. It was right at the height of prohibition and I hazard a guess that every single member of the Moose Lodge and the Oddfellows Lodge were not tea-totlers. I don't want to speculate, but the setup is all too convenient.

Mr. Truax said let me warn you about grapevines. I have a large arbor in my back yard. I don't get any of the fruit. The birds eat it all.

Mr. Zine said you might consider Boston Ivy. It is easy on bricks. It grows about a foot away from the house of it insulates the house in a hot summertime.

Ms. Axtell said I'm actually curious about the FoxWalk Design Guidelines. As the Aurora Public Art Commission has now taken on a new role in the process pipeline, that's a thick document and I think that some educational sessions to really help the community understand and kind of bring that good work to the surface would be really helpful. Is that something that you would be willing and able to do to lead a little bit of FoxWalk Design Guidelines education?

Mr. Truax said we'll have to talk to the staff about that. I think you are right, particularly for owners of buildings. They ought to understand what they can and can't do.

Mr. Sieben said right. There might have some additional red tape with this because it is a RFP because it is city funded, or at least partly city funded, so that might have been a little more too.

Ms. Axtell said but in the future. Also, and my eyebrows raised slightly, anyone can now bring a submittal before you to look at regardless of grant cycles. Trust me, there are many that desire to do so.

Mr. Truax said we've only had to deal with putting back a mural on a building and then the Aurora Fastprint. I wouldn't call it a mural, but it is sort of a mural.

Mr. Sieben said it is on panels.

Mr. Zine said there is the Lincoln Highway mural.

Mr. Truax said we'll look at our records.

Ms. Axtell said a related question would be there are 2 other mural projects that our team, not this specific configuration of people, put together for submittals that it would be great if they could go through the pipeline even regardless of the grant cycle. Is that something that you would entertain?

Mr. Truax said we have no jurisdiction over the grant cycle at all.

Mr. Sieben said that is something they can come forward on just like Kim Granholm did.

Mr. Truax said sure, on their own.

Ms. Axtell said thank you so much for your time.

Mr. Zine said first of all, I like everything about the project. I like the colors of the building. I like the whole theme and I think it is very complimentary to the business that's going to go in there. I've seen the work of the artists before and so good job on selecting the artist. I love the historical accents to it. I think it is going to be a new standard for murals down here. Very good all the way around. I'll definitely support it.

MOTION OF APPROVAL WAS MADE BY: *Charlie Zine*

MOTION SECONDED BY: *Clara Diaz*

AYES: *Clara Diaz, John Jaros, Don Truax, Charlie Zine*

NAYS: *None*

Mr. Sieben said just for the record, the final vote on this is at the Planning and Development Committee on September 14, 2017. That's a Thursday, at 4:00 p.m. on the 5th Floor of this building.

*Aye: 4 Preservation Commission Truax, Diaz, Jaros and Riverwalk
Commission Zine*
