



MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council

FROM: Brian Pedrotti, Community Development Director

BY: Patrick Holub, Associate Planner

SUBJECT: Consideration of Architectural Review 23-006; Painting of a New Wall Mural; Location – 101 West Branch Street; Applicant – Alyssa Manno, Visit SLO CAL

DATE: April 11, 2023

SUMMARY OF ACTION:

Receive public comment and make a recommendation to the Arroyo Grande Public Art Review Panel pertaining to a request for a public art project, for a mural proposed at 101 Branch Street in the Village Core Downtown.

IMPACT ON FINANCIAL AND PERSONNEL RESOURCES:

Staff time will be necessary to attend future meetings of the Arroyo Grande Public Art Review Panel. All requisite time, supplies and materials for the preparation of the mural will be provided by the applicant. The applicant has executed a memorandum of understanding with the property owner that will require the property owner to perform any necessary maintenance activities in the future.

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive public comment and make a recommendation to the Arroyo Grande Public Art Review Panel.

BACKGROUND:

In 2002, the City Council approved measures to promote art in the community, establish a uniform process for the review and selection of public art on public and private property that would be reflective of the community, and to identify general guidelines and selection criteria to promote creativity and freedom of expression, but also compatibility with the character, design, and environment of the surrounding area. The recommendations were prepared with the assistance of the San Luis Obispo County Arts Council.

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In 2004, the City Council adopted a resolution approving Public Art Guidelines (“Guidelines”) and an ordinance incorporating those Guidelines by reference into the Municipal Code as part of the Design Guidelines and Standards for Mixed Use Districts.

Additionally, in 2006, the City Council approved an Art Donation Program that created a process by which an artist, or an individual or group commission an artist, may donate, gift or bequeath public art to the City to be located in a City owned public place. . In 2011, the Public Art Guidelines were amended regarding the Art in Public Places Program and limited the process to public art projects on private property. During this update, public art on private property was defined as art that is displayed in an open area that is freely available to the general public or public accessibility is provided based upon the characteristics of the artwork or its placement on the site. Projects on public property would be considered by the City Council, with the recommendation of the former Parks and Recreation Commission if on park property.

In October 2021, the Guidelines were again amended again to: (1) limit the purview of the Guidelines to public art proposals on non-residentially zoned private property; (2) make clerical changes to account for changes to the City’s advisory bodies and those that provide consultation to the Council on public art projects; (3) change the consulting body that makes recommendations to the City Council from the San Luis Obispo County Arts Council (SLOCAC) to the Arroyo Grande Public Art (AGPA); and (4) establishing a seven (7) member Public Art Panel for the purpose of approving proposed art projects. The currently adopted Guidelines have been included as Attachment 1.

Five (5) public art projects have been approved to date. The first public art piece approved was the mural at 303 E. Branch Street on May 2, 2014, and second was the Japanese Lantern sculpture located at the Peoples Self Help Housing apartments at 150 South Courtland Street. The third approved public art piece is located at 126 South Mason Street and 127 Short Street. That installation consists of two Chumash art pieces. The fourth approved public art project was the repainting of the Strother Park basketball court, located at 1150 Huasna Road. The most recent public art project involved the painting of four (4) City-owned utility boxes located throughout the City.

ANALYSIS OF ISSUES:

The applicant, Visit SLO CAL, is proposing to paint a new mural on the northwestern (Branch Street) elevation of the building (Attachment 2). Visit SLO CAL’s mission is to promote tourism in San Luis Obispo County through marketing, advertising, public relations, group sales, promotions, events and sponsorship branding the region as a choice destination for regional, national and international travelers alike.

The proposed mural is part of Visit SLO CAL’s Mural Trail project, which was created with the intention of highlighting public art in San Luis Obispo County, along with encouraging visitors to travel throughout the county by creating a trail map of murals featured on Visit

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SLO CAL's website. Visit SLO CAL will be creating three murals on three different business walls in the county to add to the public art collection and encourage visitation across the County. The mural artwork highlights the migration of the monarch butterflies through the region.

Murals will be located in Arroyo Grande, Cambria, and the City of San Luis Obispo. Each mural will be funded and donated by Visit SLO CAL, which has commissioned mural artists Canned Pineapple Co. to paint the murals. Each of the murals are on privately owned property and the property owners each are expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which details the agreement for the project between the property owner and Visit SLO CAL. These MOUs include agreements that the artwork will not be altered by the property owner and that the property owner is responsible for the necessary cleaning and maintenance of the mural. Included below is a statement from Buddy Norton, Canned Pineapple Co. artist, detailing his inspiration for the mural artwork:

“I based the overarching concept off the loose inspiration of the migration of the monarch butterfly while tying in subtle nods to the city's where these pieces will live. Everything we choose for these pieces was something that either migrates or carries the spirit of something coming and going. The Monarch butterflies, wildflowers, strawberries, water, fish, surf, and sun were all things we thought held that and represented the coming and going of life on the central coast. We plan on caring out that theme with color as well having a dark and light yin and yang flow to everything.

I wanted each wall to have a unique look while at the same time carrying on the themes of the larger project so that it was obvious, they all were connected. Each wall has Monarch Butterflies on them in different ways. We wanted it to feel as if the butterfly was taking you on a journey from wall-to-wall landing in each town's unique environment.

With the artwork for Arroyo Grande, we wanted to tie in the unique richness of the farming community with the Monarch Butterfly concept. Drawing flowers to resemble windmills, Strawberry's for the seasonal excitement as well as the festival, which I remember going to as a kid.”

Review Process Under Public Art Guidelines

In accordance with the City's Guidelines, public art projects shall be considered by the City Council, with community input as part of a public hearing, and in consultation with Arroyo Grande Public Art Panel. The panel selection for this project includes the following, to date:

- Two representatives from the property owner: Orhan Tolu and Eliad Becker
- Two representatives from AGPA: Shirley Horacek and Kathryn Phelan

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- One representative from the Architectural Review Committee: Vacant – to be appointed at 4/17 ARC meeting
- One representative from the Chamber of Commerce: Kassi Dee
- One representative from the South County Historical Society: Vivian Krug

The intent of establishing this review process is to ensure that public art projects are sensitive to community concerns, while also avoiding government censorship of art. The Guidelines are applicable to public art projects proposed to be located on non-residentially zoned private property or by a private owner in the adjacent public right of way. The Guidelines and criteria also apply to public art projects on City property. All donations for Public Art are required to be considered and approved by the City Council.

The following criteria are used in the selection of public art:

1. Relationship to the social, cultural and historical identity of the area. If the public art is proposed to be located in the Village Core Downtown or Village Mixed Use Districts, the art piece shall be representative or evocative of the turn of the century historical period;
2. Evaluation of artistic excellence;
3. Appropriateness of scale, form, material, content and design relative to the immediate and general neighborhood;
4. Relationship to the social, cultural and historical identity of the area;
5. Appropriateness of proposed materials as regards to structural and surface integrity, protection against vandalism, public safety and weathering;
6. Ease of maintenance;
7. Appropriateness of proposed method of installation of artwork and safety and structural factors involved in installation;
8. Artist's experience in working on comparable projects.

After completion of the public hearing by the Council, the project will then be forwarded for review and consultation by the Arroyo Grande Public Art Review Panel to make the required findings above.

Historic Character

In 2011, Page & Turnbull, an architectural and historic preservation firm from San Francisco, completed the City of Arroyo Grande Historic Context Statement (HCS) and survey report. The project provided a framework for the documentation and evaluation of historic resources in Arroyo Grande. It included a city-wide historic context statement, summarizing the history and development of Arroyo Grande, and an intensive level architectural survey of the properties in the Village Commercial Core along Branch Street. A survey of the subject property was completed in conjunction with this report.

The property building where the Project is proposed to be located, was constructed in 1907 during the "Village of Arroyo Grande (1862-1910)" period of Arroyo Grande's history

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and is an example of commercial development during that period. According to the report, the property is eligible for listing on the National Register and California Register for its association “with the early commercial development of the Village Core” and “as one of the few brick commercial blocks in the Village Core” that “embodies distinctive characteristics of the building type and possesses high artistic value.”

At the request of the applicant, Page & Turnbull prepared a letter of opinion that evaluates whether the painting of a mural would be detrimental to any of the historic features or elements of the building (Attachment 3). This letter identifies the character defining features of the building and provides guidance consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings. This report indicates Page & Turnbull’s professional opinion that the proposed mural will not have an impact on the character, materials, or historic status of the building at 101 W. Branch Street.

Staff would like to clarify that Page & Turnbull’s letter references a second mural proposed to be located on the southwest exterior façade of the building facing the parking lot. That second mural is not currently being proposed by Visit SLO CAL but represents future plans by Arroyo Grande Public Art to paint a second mural on the building in the future. When an application is submitted, that second mural would require separate ARC and City Council review.

April 3, 2023, Architectural Review Committee (ARC) Meeting

On April 3, 2023, the ARC met to review the proposed mural. At that meeting, feedback was generally positive, although the ARC suggested minor changes be made to the appearance to the mural. Those changes included: including more warm tones in the color scheme; telling more of a local message; and replacing some of the imagery with imagery more historically tied to the City. The applicant has been responsive to the feedback and has made changes to the imagery consistent with the ARC’s suggestions. Minutes from the ARC meeting are included as Attachment 4.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. Conduct the public hearing to receive public comment and make a recommendation to the Arroyo Grande Public Art Review Panel; or
2. Provide other direction to staff.

ADVANTAGES:

A recommendation to the Arroyo Grande Public Art Review Panel will facilitate the installation of a new mural aimed at driving tourism activity in the City and the region.

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DISADVANTAGES:

No disadvantages identified.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The action is exempt from CEQA on the basis that it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment. Alternatively, the action is categorically exempt under the Class 4 exemption, which applies to minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation where the project does not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. (State CEQA Guidelines, § 15304.)

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND COMMENTS:

The Agenda was posted at City Hall and on the City's website in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.2.

Attachments:

1. Arroyo Grande Public Art Guidelines and Public Art Donation Program
2. Proposed Mural
3. Page & Turnbull Letter of Opinion
4. April 3, 2023 ARC Draft Minutes