

Agenda Report

May 12, 2014

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: ACCEPTANCE OF GIFT OF TOURNAMENT OF ROSES MURAL

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Authorize the City Manager to enter into a contract with Tony Sheets to accept the artwork gift of the *Tournament of Roses, 1890* mural by Millard Sheets; and
2. Authorize the City Manager to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Pasadena Area Community College District for the loan and exhibition of the artwork.

ARTS AND CULTURE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On January 29, 2013 the Arts and Culture Commission recommended the approval of the artwork donation of *Tournament of Roses, 1890* by Millard Sheets as a gift to the City.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Renowned California artist Millard Sheets created in 1963 a mural of Pasadena's first Tournament of Roses Parade for the former Home Savings and Loan bank on Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena. After the bank changed ownership, the mural was slated for deaccession. Staff identified an opportunity to preserve the mural for future generations through a partnership with Pasadena City College (PCC) that would ensure public accessibility of this cultural heritage icon. The location identified for the reinstallation and exhibition is at the PCC campus where it is intended to be on long-term loan. Normally, the City Council would have considered these actions prior to the mural's installation. However, the artwork was installed in honor of the Mayor's 2014 State of the City Address on January 23 and a formal dedication is planned for May 22, 2014.

BACKGROUND:

Context

In 1952, Howard F. Ahmanson Sr. and California artist Millard Sheets formed a partnership. Ahmanson, who had bought several savings and loans, approached Sheets, a nationally recognized artist, and asked him to design buildings for the banks. Over 33 years, Sheets designed more than 40 buildings for Ahmanson's companies, most notably Home Savings and Loan. To adorn the interior and exterior walls, Sheets also created murals, mosaics, and stained-glass windows, always with a local theme.

The Pasadena *Tournament of Roses, 1890* mural was installed in the interior of the former Home Savings at 860 E. Colorado Boulevard at Lake Avenue. Created by artist Millard Sheets with assistance from Susan Hertel in 1963, the mural consists of 20 wood panels representing a historical narrative of the first Rose Parade in Pasadena. Although the Tournament of Roses mural is protected from destruction by both state and federal laws, provisions exist for removal of artwork under certain conditions. As a part of the interior re-branding for the bank lobby by Chase Bank, the current owner of many of the former Home Savings buildings, the mural was proposed for deaccession. In 2009, Cultural Affairs became aware that the mural was intended to be removed from the bank and saw an opportunity to retain this iconic piece of the City's cultural heritage by finding a publicly accessible site in Pasadena.

After years of wear and tear inside the bank building, the *Tournament of Roses* mural required conservation. As part of ongoing negotiations with Tony Sheets, artist's son, to acquire the artwork, staff recommended that the mural be preserved and restored. As a result of staff's recommendation, the Arts and Culture Commission approved \$6,500 from the Cultural Trust Fund to underwrite the cost of the mural's restoration. Subsequently, Cultural Affairs staff successfully negotiated the artwork donation to the City of Pasadena with Mr. Sheets. The Public Art Donation Agreement was accepted by the City Manager on January 29, 2013. The *Tournament of Roses* mural has been appraised at a value of \$90,000. Because any contract valued at over \$75,000 must be approved by City Council according to Pasadena Municipal Code Section 4.08.025, this item is being presented to authorize the City Manager to sign the loan agreement with PCC.

Site

Staff conducted due diligence to locate a suitable City-owned property. Site options were extremely limited due to the mural's large size (75-feet long) and the additional consideration of a contiguous layout with no visual interruption of the artwork narrative. After much research and review of several facilities, an exhibition loan to PCC was negotiated. In early 2014, an agreement was reached for the mural's siting at the college for a three-year loan with option for extension.

The PCC location is in the Hutto-Patterson Gymnasium's publicly accessible east lobby adjacent to the Rose Bowl Court of Champions. The PCC site allows the mural's 20 unique panels to be viewed side by side, composing a total work of art. The location meets various installation criteria: that the site (1) be hospitable to and enthusiastic about the display of this large-scale artwork, (2) have ample space to accommodate the large scale artwork as one continuous piece to honor the artist's original vision, (3) have a thematic connection with the subject of the mural, (4) is publicly accessible, (5) provide a safe and secure environment for a long-term installation, and (6) could share some of the hard costs of the mural's transportation, long-term maintenance, and insurance.

Artwork Concept

The mural contains unique, Pasadena-specific content, the first Tournament of Roses Parade, while it also showcases the style and technique of its renowned artist, Millard Sheets. The Pasadena artwork is one among approximately 100 murals painted by the artist and is an excellent example of his work. The mural, oil painted onto walnut veneer panels, depicts the earliest days of the Parade in Pasadena and features images of participants in late 19th century attire in horse-drawn carriages and on horseback as they proceed along from left to right against a backdrop of iconic Pasadena landmarks including City Hall, parade floats, marching bands, and various street performers of the *Tournament of Roses* mural.

The artwork's preservation is a cultural heritage project that has historical as well as market value. Currently appraised at \$90,000, the unique mural is expected to appreciate in value in years to come. Additionally, the partnership with PCC ensures public accessibility of the mural, maintenance of the artwork in a secure environment, and will give proper prominence to this important artwork at a thematically-linked site. Upon City Council approval, the City Manager will also sign a Memorandum of Understanding regarding the loan of the artwork for display at Pasadena City College. A public reception and dedication event is planned for May 22, 2014 at PCC.

FISCAL IMPACT:


There is no current fiscal impact. Under the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding, PCC will bear the cost of ongoing artwork maintenance and insurance. The City is self-insured against major conservation expenses, should they arise.

Respectfully submitted,



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Approved by:



MICHAEL J. BECK
City Manager

Attachment:

Attachment A – Image of *Tournament of Roses*, 1890 mural