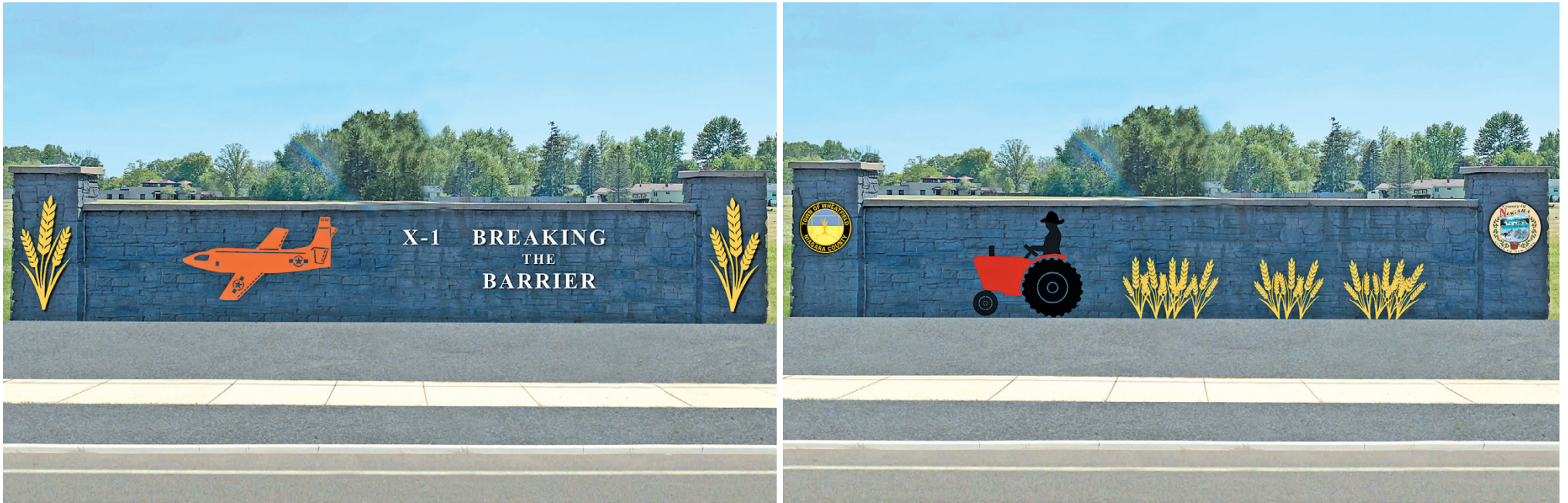


# 'Walls in Wheatfield' project underway



Pictured are artist renderings of future "Walls in Wheatfield" displays. (Submitted)

Continued from Page 1

not only the Nash wall ... but the 'Walls in Wheatfield' vision."

He said she really took to heart the objective of establishing a distinct identity for Wheatfield.

Kontak noted the Town of Lockport was an inspiration to her when the volunteers were formulating the "Walls in Wheatfield" concept.

"One day in 2019, we were coming home from the Town Hall in Lockport and we drove by the corner of Transit and Dysinger (roads). There, they have two stone walls that read, 'North Transit' and a tagline reads, 'Historic Gateway Corridor,' she explained. "I had my husband, (Tom), pull over and I had to take pictures of this. And I said, 'We have to do that for our wall.'"

Tom and Rita are both involved in the volunteer effort.

She said, prior to that, the area at Nash and Niagara Falls Boulevard had been planted by the DOT around 2005 when it widened that section of the roadway. The plantings became overgrown, and she and her husband, along with a garden club, worked to restore it, but eventually decided more volunteers were needed.

"Our project had been to work to get this as our gateway sign into the town," Kontak said.

She explained the thinking was that a sign could provide clarity to a confusing situation created because Wheatfield has four different ZIP codes, yet doesn't have its own unified ZIP code. As a result, locations and business addresses are misidentified as, for example, North Tonawanda, Niagara Falls, Sanborn or Lockport.

"The town, on two occasions

in the past, appealed to the post office for our own ZIP code," Kontak said. "And it came out as a flat 'no.' So we had to do something, and this is what we succeeded in doing."

She said the wall that's at Nash and Niagara Falls Boulevard has received good reviews.

"It has been overwhelmingly praised and accepted ... and it's part of our mission to improve the appearance of Niagara Falls Boulevard," Kontak said.

She praised volunteer group member Julie Otto for decorating the wall for seasons and holidays. She also gave credit to both Melius Welding for the sheaf of wheat design that adorns the sign, and Cooper Sign in the Town of Niagara for the illuminated letters.

Doktor said that, simultaneously with the walls project, the No. 1 objective of the Wheatfield volunteer group is safety along the Niagara Falls Boulevard corridor: "We've been lobbying for years that we need a center turn lane. We need intersection revitalization in the name of safety improvements." Other upgrades sought include traffic signals and pedestrian safety measures to prevent further serious accidents that have plagued that corridor for years.

He said the Wheatfield Enhancement Volunteers wrote letters and sought support from other politicians to achieve the goal: "I'd like to say that we played a part in helping get that process on the plan and ultimately start it this year."

He said that, by the end of this year, the DOT will add turning lanes to all four points of both intersections, at Ward and Witmer. Then, in 2026, it will begin a second project the group has been lobbying for - adding a center turn lane for a 2.1-mile stretch of Niagara Falls Boulevard from Sy Road to Mavis Road.

"The 'Walls in Wheatfield' concept is really just an expression of our pride and our love for the community in which we live, and we hope that feeling is contagious with all of our residents, when it's done," he said.

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