

Lewiston artists look to enhance Academy Park

New mural, relocation of 'Spirit of Victory' in the works

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With Lewiston already home to artists, art installations, the Castellani Art Museum and the Lewiston Art Festival, why not also put art pieces on display at Academy Park, where they could be seen by all entering the village?

That was the idea presented by a group of artists at a 2019 meeting in Mayor Anne Welch's office. With an air of excitement, these creators put forth plans to beautify the area and tie into park programming.

But when the pandemic arrived just a few months later, those ideas were put on hold.

Now, three years later, as festivals, concerts and events are seeing pre-COVID levels of operation and attendance, art project plans also are returning for consideration.

At Monday's Village Board meeting, artist Maureen Kellick briefly discussed her concept to cover the Academy Park comfort station with a wraparound mural

depicting unique local themes.

Following the meeting, she explained, "This was conceived from an approach of the nature of our Greenway, which is the most beautiful, scenic area. That's why I conceived that, instead of a one-wall mural, this mural would wrap around the whole building. And the design of it takes you up the river from the Fort, past vineyards and orchards and farms and the beauty of this escarpment and the river; the fish of the river; the birds. I have a bike in there, of course, because I think this little comfort station is going to be a great stop on the bike trail between Niagara Falls and the lake. The whole thing is conceived with nature, and the river runs through every side of the four walls."

In her proposal, Kellick describes each side:

•**West wall:** "Facing Lewiston's Academy Park and the western sunsets of Ontario, this wall is a graphic illustration of the fertile, rolling land beneath the Niagara escarpment out to the mouth of



the River, Fort Niagara, and the Lake."

•**South wall:** "South Mural Wall faces Lewiston Hill, the Escarpment, and the bike trail entry into Lewiston. The mural design continues with a vista of the lower Niagara River, the Niagara Escarpment, and Lewiston Queenston Bridge. A full-size classic bicycle stands at the Bike Trail (foreground) on the shared US-Canada border with the US and Canadian flags visible above Niagara Falls on the horizon."

•**East wall:** "The mural continues to wrap around to the building's east-facing wall along 9th Street greeting cyclists on the bike trail and visitors, cars, and the Discover Niagara Shuttle entering Lewiston. The mural design features the continuation of the Niagara River as it flows into and through a classic Welcome to Lewiston Postcard format. Lewiston's vivid sunsets over the River are featured above the whirlpools and rapid currents of the water as they spill 'out of the frame' and continue along their swirling path."

•**North wall:** "Facing Center Street and the Welcome Center the waters of the River continue their journey around the final North facing wall and morph into the graphic ribbon echoing the Greenway logo before connecting back to the West wall's lake, river, and scenic orchards and fields. This wall's design is deliberately abstract to serve as a backdrop to a sculptural bench seating; a collaboration is being developed."

Each wall's description includes suggested photo opportunities.

Kellick's proposal lists a potential installation period of May 27 through July 6, 2024. Welch said metal artist and fabricator Dan Buttery is interested in creating benches for Academy Park. Earlier this summer, he installed the "Lewiston Landing" sign on North Water Street.

Welch said, "Maureen has designed a beautiful mural to go on that building; and, in collaboration with Dan Buttery, he's also going to do some metal sculpture there, of a bench, and possibly other pieces on the restroom itself."

Kellick said, "I think the colors, and especially this collaboration between two-dimensional art and three-dimensional art — between a painter and a sculptor — I hope might make this building and this little corner an interesting and fun place to stop to explore, if you're biking or if you're shopping at Tops. Just put a smile on your face, because you're proud to be from Lewiston."

The Village Board voted to allow the artists to move forward with their project.

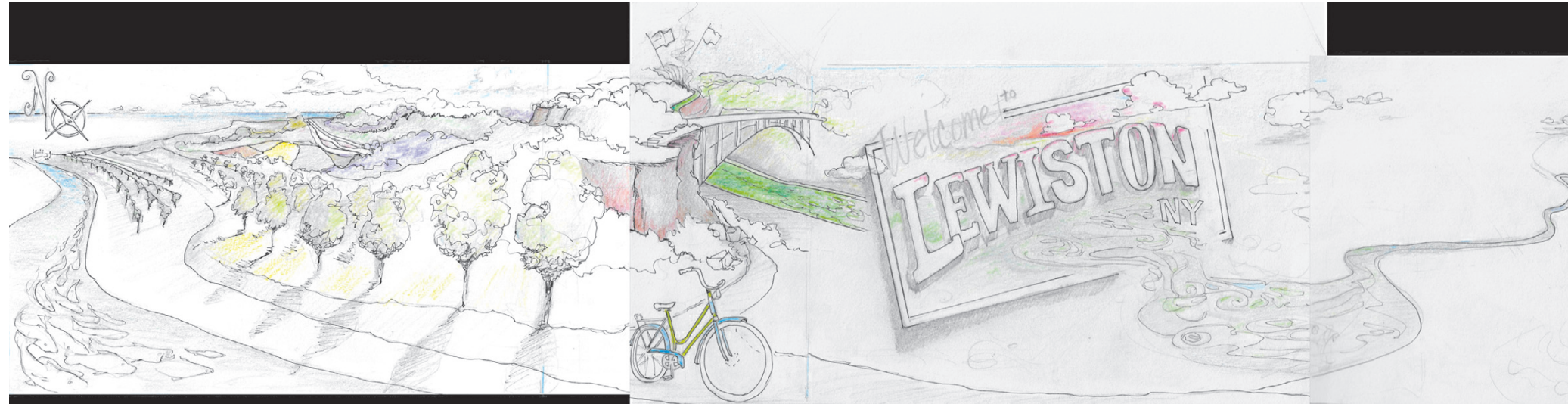
"We'll do some adjustments, and we'll add these three-dimensional components, and hope that maybe we'll be able to do this next year," Kellick said.

She noted the artwork is under consideration for future Greenway funding.

At the board meeting, Niagara River Greenway Administrative Director Lisa Vitello said, "Public art is one of the Greenway priorities, as well as getting people on the bike path. So, we're very excited. Lewiston, of course, is a premier destination for bikers. You have everything that bikers would want, so we're very excited to finally search for and get some funding for these great art projects."

"Academy Park is one of the Greenway's major gateways. We've worked really hard with the mayor to connect Lewiston to the bike trail. We're very excited about this project and these concepts."

Kellick also designed the Greenway logo.



Clockwise: A look at the Academy Park comfort station today. • Lewiston artist Maureen Kellick's conceptual design for the Academy Park comfort station. • The "Spirit of Victory" art installation.



riorating really badly. And then Mike and Dan took it upon themselves to go and they fixed it all up, but it still isn't seen down there. So, we would like to bring it back into the village."

Buttery said, "Everybody I've talked to, after we did the restoration on it, they're like, 'It's sad that it's there, because no one gets to see it down there.' There's really nothing around it. We talked with State Parks. They're willing to help us move it, as well. The thing is, it's on state property, (but) they really don't have any ties with it."

He added, "It's a part of Lewiston's history, because it was at Artpark, as well."

Trustee Tina Coppins suggested placing "The Spirit of Victory" at Academy Park, in conjunction with an archway, to serve as a proper welcoming point.

"That would be really nice," Welch said. "That's an excellent idea."

Trustees voted in fa-

vor of relocating "The Spirit of Victory" to Academy Park.

No timeline was set.

Last fall, the Lewiston Council on Arts teamed with residents Bill and Barbara Vrooman to sponsor artwork restoration. At the time, LCA noted, "The statue, by artist Tom Mullany, was originally part of a larger installation titled

'Drums Along the Niagara,' created in 1989 when the artist was in-residence at Artpark.

"In 1998, Lewiston Council on the Arts reclaimed some of the components of the original installation and brought Tom back to reinvent the pieces as 'The Spirit of Victory.'"

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