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Town of Aurora

General Committee Report

No. CMS22-030

Subject: Diversity and Inclusion Mural – Design Approval

Prepared by: Phil Rose, Manager of Aurora Town Square

Department: Community Services

Date: June 21, 2022

Recommendation

1. That Report No. CMS22-030 be received; and
2. That the Mural Design prepared by Moonlight Murals Collective be approved.

Executive Summary

This report provides an update on the Diversity and Inclusion Mural planned for the downtown area and seeks Council's approval of the final design prepared by Moonlight Murals Collective (the Artists).

- Since receiving Council approval, staff have worked with the Artists to refine the original design, which portrays the idea of Canadians of all backgrounds coming together to create a beautiful quilt that represents diversity and unity.
- Along with the revised design, the Artists provided a description of the mural design from their perspective.
- The mural location remains uncertain, but staff are pursuing two locations in the downtown.
- A plaque and interpretive signage will be installed alongside the mural that recognizes the Artists, the sponsors, and includes information about the project.
- Staff are working towards a mural installation date of Summer-Fall 2022.

Background

On September 28, 2021, Council approved the mural design titled Community Builds Community by Moonlight Murals Collective for the Diversity and Inclusion Mural and directed staff to work with the Artists to finalize the mural design before bringing it to Council for final approval. Once complete, the mural was to be installed as a vinyl application to the northern wall of 15242 Yonge Street.

Analysis

Since receiving Council approval, staff have worked with the Artists to refine the original design, which portrays the idea of Canadians of all backgrounds coming together to create a beautiful quilt that represents diversity and unity.

The Artists recently submitted the revised version of the mural design. As shown below, it features various quilt patterns that are loosely based on the numerous non-official language groups (i.e., non English or French) represented in Aurora according to 2016 Census data. The Artists conducted research and consulted people in their network when selecting the quilt patterns represented in the design, however, the quilt is not intended to be an exact visual representation of each language group or ethnicity identified in Aurora's census data. Additionally, based on consultation, the Artists also included a quilt pattern with a loon and stylized maple leaves that reflects the Canadian identity as a whole.



Community Builds Community Mural Design Revised

Along with the revised design, the Artists provided a description of the mural design from their perspective.

The Artists have described the mural design as follows:

“The design depicts different hands sewing a quilted blanket. The hands represent different ethnicities, and genders, emphasized by the different shades of skin and size of hands. The quilt contains a number of patches that display motifs and patterns that are reflective of a variety of cultures, including European, African, Middle Eastern, Asian, Canada’s Indigenous Peoples, and many others that reside in the Town of Aurora. The viewer may not know exactly where each patch is from, but they will recognize the theme of unity through differences. The message behind this concept speaks to all the different cultures that have been working alongside each other, collaborating and weaving traditions in order to create a happy and prosperous life for themselves, each other and future generations. This is the beauty of Canada, especially Aurora, where many diverse communities call home.”

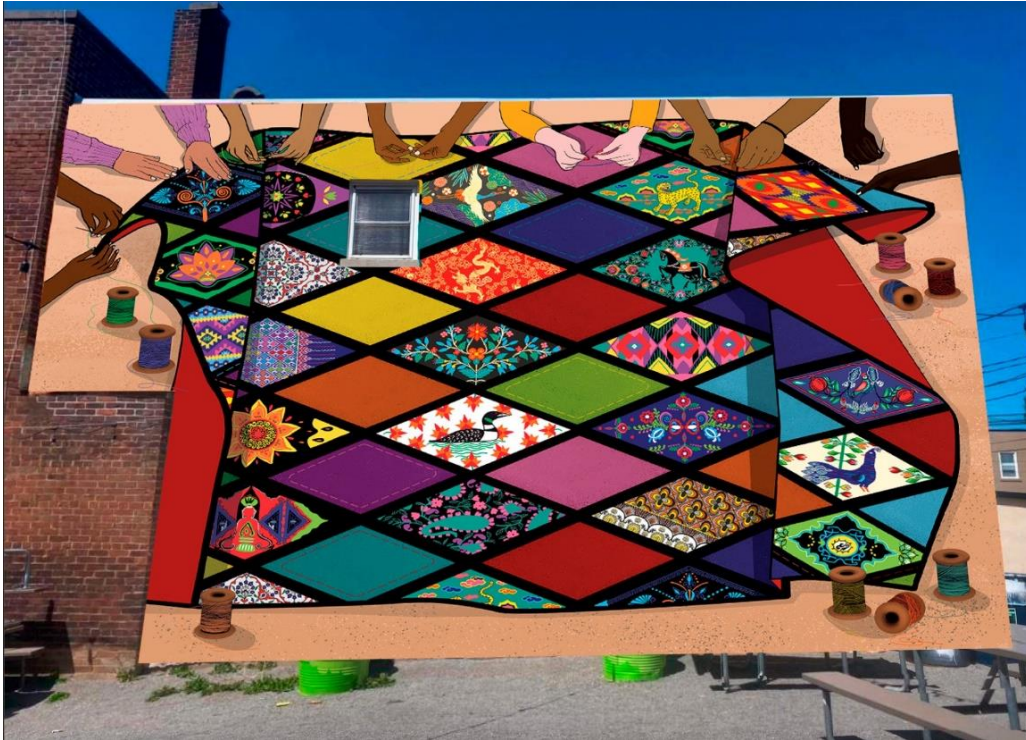
Furthermore, as part of their original submission to the Call for Artists, the Artists provided the following statement:

“Each of us are immigrants who moved to Canada from Iran at an older age. The message this represents means a lot to us, as immigrant artists. Throughout our time in Canada, specifically the GTA, we have been able to not only build better lives for ourselves but have also got to collaborate and work with people from a variety of backgrounds in order to make the city more beautiful. We find that we are constantly inspired by people from different cultures and love the fact that we can also inspire others by what we bring into communities through our art.”

The mural location remains uncertain, but staff are pursuing two locations in the downtown.

Council previously approved the northern wall of 15242 Yonge Street as the location for the Diversity and Inclusion Mural, however, this wall is no longer feasible. Instead, Town staff are pursuing two (2) additional locations in the downtown as shown in the mock ups below. Staff have been corresponding with both property owners and are awaiting final confirmation before finalizing any arrangement in writing.

Location 1: Southern wall of 15221 Yonge Street, Machell's Alley



Location 2: Northern wall of 15105 Yonge Street, Lind Realty Building



A plaque and interpretive signage will be installed alongside the Mural that recognizes the Artists, the sponsors, and includes information about the project.

In addition to the actual mural, staff will work with stakeholders and sponsors to develop wording for a plaque and text panel that acknowledges all parties that contributed to the project. The interpretive signage will provide the public with details about the intended purpose of the mural, which is to celebrate Canadians of various ethnicities and cultures who have contributed to the building of Canada and Aurora. Once installed, the mural will also provide the Town with an opportunity to work with various community groups to leverage the mural as an educational tool that encourages learning around equity, diversity, inclusion, and tolerance.

Staff are working towards a mural installation date of Summer-Fall 2022.

The mural will be printed on a vinyl application and then installed. Although an exact installation date has yet to be confirmed, temperatures must be above approximately 15 degrees Celsius for the vinyl to adhere properly to the wall. Based on annual average temperatures, the mural can be installed up to approximately mid-October. Staff are working towards meeting this timetable.

Advisory Committee Review

Staff presented the latest mural design to the Anti-Black Racism and Anti-Racism Task Force on May 18, 2022. Overall, the Task Force was excited about the mural design. Some members inquired about the process of vetting each of the quilt motifs with representatives of the various language groups and ethnicities interpreted in the mural design. Staff shared this feedback with the Artists, who stated that the motifs and patterns are illustrative of a variety of cultures using the quilt as a metaphor for community building through inclusion. As an artistic representation rather than a strict interpretation of Census data, the process of receiving approval from specific cultural groups for each motif would be quite difficult.

Legal Considerations

Staff have developed an agreement between the selected Artists and the Town that stipulates the rights and responsibilities of each party pertaining to use, ownership and copyright of the mural design.

Staff will also develop an agreement between the Town and the property owner once a final location has been determined.

Financial Implications

The total cost for the installation of the Diversity and Inclusion Mural is estimated to be approximately \$30,000. Full funding for the mural has been pledged by two sponsors, and staff are working to finalize sponsor agreements with each. Consequently, there are no budgetary impacts to the municipality for this project.

Communications Considerations

Once the mural design is approved and installation planned, the Town will develop a communications plan to inform residents.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendations from this report do not impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation.

Link to Strategic Plan

The Diversity and Inclusion Mural supports the following Strategic Plan goals and key objectives:

Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all in its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objectives within these goal statements:

- Celebrating and promoting our culture
- Strengthening the fabric of our community

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council may provide further direction.

Conclusions

This report provides additional information regarding the Diversity and Inclusion Mural and seeks Council's approval of the final mural design prepared by Moonlight Murals Collective. Once complete, the mural will be a great addition to Aurora and will strengthen the fabric of our community by promoting the values of equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Attachments

None

Previous Reports

CMS21-014, Canadian Achievements Diversity and Inclusion Mural Guidelines, April 6, 2021

CMS21-019, Canadian Achievements Diversity and Inclusion Mural Guidelines – Additional Information, April 21, 2021

CMS21-027, Canadian Achievements Diversity and Inclusion Mural – Design Approval, September 21, 2021

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on June 2, 2022

Approvals

Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services Department

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer