

More work needed to get Diversity & Inclusion Mural just right, say Councillors

A new mural celebrating Canada's diversity as a rich tapestry could soon be placed on the southwest corner of Yonge and Wellington, but some fine tuning is needed to make sure it reflects the diversity of Aurora, say Councillors.

Last week, sitting at the Committee level, Council received the winning submission for Aurora's Diversity & Inclusion mural, one which is intended to complement the Great Canadian Achievements mural on the opposite corner.

Approved by Council last year, the winning design by the Moonlight Mural Collective was selected from five submissions received by the Town. An additional sixth proposal was received following the deadline.

With the design submitted and most of the funding in place, the mural is expected to be in place by next May with a formal unveiling in June of 2022.

But, before it gets to that point, some Councillors would like to see some additional tweaks to the finished product.

'Originally, this wasn't what I was expecting? I don't think many were,' said Councillor Wendy Gaertner. 'A quilt wasn't a unique idea to me, but on thinking it through this may be the appropriate venue for what we're trying to accomplish. I know this is just a draft [but] we have to ensure that all parts of the quilt in combination, are what Council is trying to address with diversity and inclusion.'

These areas, she said, include recognition of Indigenous people and achievements and the 2SLGBTQ+ community.

'There are so many groups in the community and even outside the community that we want to include,' she said. 'The artwork has to be very specific to identify all those different groups that we're trying to include.'

Councillor Rachel Gilliland too said the quilt design wasn't what she was expecting, but said this discrepancy might have been borne out of not having a 'proper process' in place to steer the project.

'We don't have our Master Cultural Plan done as of yet and guidelines are not really solidified to make it seamless,' she said. 'I would maybe have liked to have seen some things before hand. It's beautiful, but as far as what is being encompassed, is that the message we're really trying to exemplify.'

While she said she liked the idea of different fabrics representing different communities, she said there was something missing and what has been presented so far was incomplete.'

Councillor John Gallo shared her views on a lack of process.

The project, he says, 'feels somewhat rushed' and Council should have had a say in how it was developed.

'I hate to say 'no' because I always supported the idea [but] I don't like the process,' he said. 'Would it look great there? Probably. Would it add to the Town? Probably. Could it have been done better? Absolutely, in my view. Would it have garnered more support? I think so.'

On the other hand, Councillor Sandra Humfryes said this was Council's 'first go' at the mural and, as far as process was concerned, it is just the beginning.

'Art is also everyone's opinion as well,' she said. 'I may like something that somebody else might not like and we would all probably see different things. It is the first time we actually started to move forward on something like this and I am okay with it.'

While Councillor Michael Thompson saved his opinion on the design itself, he said Council would benefit from having a different version of the design in front of them to consider, one which is superimposed on top of the building's façade to get a fuller picture of what could be the finished product. This was a view shared by Councillor Gaertner and a successful motion was made at the table to get just that.

‘This needs to come back to Council for some kind of approval,’ Councillor Gilliland concluded. ‘Everybody’s art that was submitted is beautiful and definitely there is no lack of talent. At the same time, we’re trying to make a decision on the four corners of our downtown and I think a little bit more pre-process for coming to this is in order and that is because of the lack of the Cultural Master Plan.’

Added Councillor Gallo: ‘It is really important to get it right. To me, there is no rush. We are where we are. I don’t like the process, but let’s see if something can come out of this. If it is not what we’re looking for, we should get back to the drawing board.’

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