

CITY OF WARRENVILLE MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Monica Johnson, Tourism and Arts Commission Chair
Anthony Aguilar, Accountant
SUBJECT: Project Recommendation for Aesthetic Enhancement Program FY26
DATE: September 1, 2025

BACKGROUND

In 2015, the City Council directed the Tourism and Arts Commission (TAC) to create a program that would manage the aesthetic enhancement of our community through the installation of public artwork. Every two years, TAC receives a budget to carry out this work.

TAC's inaugural Aesthetic Enhancement Program project included the commission of four sculptural pieces installed in Leone Schmidt Park. This 2018 installation featured a bronze origami *Seed Sower* (Squirrel) and three bronze origami *Seeds* (acorns) created by New Mexico artist, Kevin Box. In January 2020, TAC's second project was installed on the corner of the Warrenville Police Department property. This stainless-steel sculpture, entitled *10-8* and created by Nebraska sculptor Matthew Placzek, features a police officer holding the hand of a child and appearing to emerge from a wall of words taken directly from the WPD's mission statement at that time.

In December 2023, Jen Kresl's winged horse sculpture entitled *Tribute* was installed in Bob Walters Commons. In that same fiscal year (FY24), TAC recommended the purchase of a second piece of artwork that was created specifically for exhibit in Warrenville's Public Library. The Alebrije owl, *Buck*, was installed in the spring of 2024 as a piece on loan to the Library from the City.

PROPOSAL

With the funds in the FY26 budget for Aesthetic Enhancement, TAC is proposing the commission of a mosaic mural, created with custom-made ceramic pieces and hand-cut art glass, to be installed on the upper brick wall section of the Trailhead building facing the covered picnic shelter and Butterfield Road. A conceptual sketch shows the artists' design, which illustrates all four seasons on the Illinois Prairie Path through a lively and imaginative interpretation of the actual flora, fauna, and activity seen along the path. The finished mural will be in full color.



The mural's scenes will be created by hand and assembled onto four equally sized panels, each 5' wide by 4' tall. The panels will be installed next to each other, giving the appearance that the mural is one continuous piece with overall dimensions measuring approximately 20'6" across by 4' tall.



This proposed mosaic mural would be completed by April 30, 2026. Capital Maintenance Superintendent Jamie Clark has been briefed on the project. He and the artists are in the process of setting a meeting date at the trailhead building to work through a plan for installation.

The cost for the concept, creation, assembly, and installation will be \$60,000, which utilizes the full Aesthetic Enhancement Program budget for FY26. Finance Director Kevin Dahlstrand

has reviewed the payment schedule outlined by the artists, which calls for 50% down, 25% upon half completion, and the remaining 25% upon delivery of all four panels.

NOTE: The cost for this piece would normally be considerably higher than the amount in the Aesthetic Enhancement Budget, but the artists are willing to sacrifice much of their own compensation to take advantage of the opportunity to create what they consider to be a legacy piece.

ARTISTS

Artists Laurie Pollpeter Eskenazi and Linda Kiepke began collaborating on projects over a quarter century ago after meeting at a mosaic workshop at College of DuPage hosted by the ceramics club, ClayPeople, for which Linda was the club's founding president. At that time, Laurie, a full-time ceramic artist who received her BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, was working on a large-scale mural commission for United Way and hired Linda, who had taken an interest in the project. A few years later the club disbanded, and a small group searched for a town that would welcome them. With the help of local club member Ron Osborn, the artists were embraced by Warrenville, forming ClaySpace, which was housed in a building that stood on the river's edge on Second Street.



The group put Warrenville on the "ceramics map" when the city helped ClaySpace sponsor a national blind-juried ceramics exhibition for four years called Clay3 (Clay cubed). After growing out of their Second Street space, the group moved to ClaySpace Ceramic Arts Center in Lisle, where they work today.

In addition to smaller commissioned works, Laurie has done more than a dozen larger public and corporate art installations in California, Colorado, Indiana, and in the Chicago area. Her mosaic work is known for its intricate patterns and vibrant colors, all of which are created solely with handmade ceramic tiles and hand-cut art glass, such as seen in the design being proposed for Warrenville's mosaic mural.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

- Highly visible from both Butterfield Road and the Prairie Path, this artwork promises to become a treasured landmark enjoyed by residents and visitors alike
- Designed to be unique to Warrenville –the center of the design includes Warrenville’s official flower, the Black-Eyed Susan, connected to the colorful W from Warrenville’s logo by a railroad track, signifying the railway that formerly ran along this path
- Extensively researched by the artists to ensure accuracy in the choices of local flora and fauna depicted, as well as consultation with a prominent Chicago outdoor ceramic artist to ensure materials and installation techniques support a long life for the piece
- Designed to showcase hand-made ceramic mosaic pieces woven together with colored art glass in an intricate composition illustrating all four seasons along the Prairie Path, which follows the idea portrayed in Warrenville’s official tagline “*Naturally*”
- Created with attention to detail that will entice viewers of all ages to discover something new during each moment they engage with the artwork
- Naturally waterproof and washable, with minimum maintenance required
- Connected to Warrenville’s ceramic arts community, artists Laurie and Linda feel called to create this large-scale mosaic mural as a legacy piece, which is an honor and an exciting prospect for our city!

RECOMMENDATION

The Tourism and Arts Commission requests that the Committee recommend the City Council approve the purchase of the mosaic mural, to be installed on the Trailhead building at a total not to exceed the cost of \$60,000, and direct staff to work with the City attorney to finalize a contract and accompanying resolution.

TAC commissioners and both artists will be present at the September 8, 2025 Committee meeting to provide an overview of the concept and to answer questions.

