

PUBLIC ART REVIEW COMMITTEE
GREENWAYS TRAILS SYSTEM PERCENT FOR ART PROJECT

Chapel Hill Town Hall – First Floor Conference Room

3 pm, October 7, 2009

Public Art Review Committee members present: Christine Berndt, Greenways Commission; Eric Davis, Lappas + Havener; Bruce Heflin, Manager's Office; Debbie Hepp, Chapel Hill Public Arts Commission; Kumar Neppalli, Traffic Engineering; John Newark, Public Works; Lance Norris, Public Works; Glenn Parks, formerly of the Greenways Commission; Wendi Ramsden, Coulter, Jewell, Thames, PA; Wendy Smith, Engineering/Storm Water Management; Bill Webster, Parks and Recreation Department; Jeffrey York, Public Arts Office (non-voting member); Steve Wright, Public Arts Office (non-voting member)

York reviewed the project's background (artist selection and residency), current stage (preliminary design), and future stages (design development and construction documents, fabrication and installation). The day's goal was to review project artist Al Frega's preliminary designs and provide comments to be addressed in the upcoming design development phase. York introduced Frega and his work.

Frega presented images and models of art prototypes proposed for the Greenways trails that would be composed of recycled steel bus break drums, approximately 100 of which are discarded by Chapel Hill Transit each year. These drums weigh either 100 or 120 pounds and cost \$5 - \$10 recycled. (Note: the small mock ups use a metal cast that represents the scale of the drums, but all drums used would have the type grooves shown in the sentinel photograph). Additional materials that could be used in some proposed prototypes include recycled concrete, recycled rebar, and rocks and wood found on site. Frega presented the following prototypes for consideration:

- 5' – 10' tall sentinel comprising vertically stacked, sleeved, threaded and bolted break drums to be finished with Ospho. A sentinel could be pressure washed or sandblasted to remove graffiti. Sharp edges would be smoothed and natural growth would be allowed to cover the piece. The piece would not tip if climbed as it would be attached to a 36" x 24" footer filled with concrete. Holes in the drums could be covered. The committee questioned leaving the drum holes open, whether one sentinel by itself would be understood as art, and wondered if an artistic flourish could adorn the top. Al stated the concept was a minimal aesthetic and efficient use of the recycled material. He envisions the sentinels standing off trail and in terms of them being an 'element of discovery.' The committee encouraged the idea of showing a mock-up of a grouping of sentinels .
- 36" tall hourglass-shaped trash receptacle made of two drums bolted together, with the bottom filled with concrete to secure it to site. The committee noted that trash receptacles along trails were not feasible maintenance-wise. It was suggested that they could be employed in parks.
- planter / bollard made of brake drums with concrete-filled bottom to secure it to site. The committee noted that the trail system now employs standardized bollards that can be removed with a wrench, and that planters required watering which current staff could not support.
- bike rack comprising an overturned concrete-filled drum and twisted rebar.
- sign-holder / mileage marker comprising a concrete-filled drum with a cast concrete form on top, which could be used for sitting and stretching as well. Rocks and wood were suggested as replacements for the concrete form. Embedding slices of the drums as markers flush with the trail was also suggested.

- benches made of two or more brake drum feet 18 – 20” tall and recycled tinted plastic lumber 4x4s of 6 – 8’ in length. The committee questioned the effects of heat and weight on the plastic.
- benches made of two or more brake drum feet 18 – 20” tall and recycled concrete that was tinted and carved, placed on compacted gravel footer. The committee questioned ADA requirements, lifespan of tint/sealer, who would carve future prototype pieces, and where that bench would be assembled (off- or on-site?). A suggestion was made that AI make a large master carving design, from which sections could be used for particular benches to keep them individual but unified aesthetically. The committee commented favorably that the larger benches – with three supports – have the potential to become more than seating benches, such as platforms for picnic or assembly of small groups. There was discussion of how the concrete obtained from former Airport runway could be an inexpensive recycle source for many future benches. Slabs could vary in size and shape and will not require sophisticated tools for shaping. The prototype manual prepared by AI would include suggested and readily available cutting saws as well as edge preparations that could be carried out by Town staff or other local artisans. The committee responded favorably to the idea that the bench prototype could vary in character and each installation could be a unique bench shape (and stained a unique color), but would have the brake drum supports, which would be the unifying motif in all the prototypes. retaining wall made of rows of brake drums clipped together and backfilled. This art concept will be considered in the plans of the landscape design firms rather than as a prototype.
- entry markers with drum bases and twisted plant forms of recycled rebar. The committee wondered if the large brake drum bases overwhelmed the plant forms; burying the drums may be a solution.

After discussion and offering comments the committee made and unanimously adopted the following motions:

1. The committee recommends the artist proceed with designing concrete bench, sentinel, and bike rack to full scale mock-up.
2. The committee recommends the artist rethink and develop new concept visuals for signage and trail markers, with the possible incorporation of site based rock or wood as a medium for seating.
3. The committee recommends that the trash receptacle and planter designs be removed from consideration.

Chris Berndt requested that the information be shared with the Greenways Commission at their November meeting for further comment, and that AI be invited to the December meeting to present his designs. It was agreed by all. It was also agreed that the presentation to Greenways Commission should not delay the artist’s prototype development (with the landscape architects), which needs to move forward soon.

York thanked the committee and the artist for their work up to and including today’s meeting. York requested that committee members submit further preliminary design comments to York or Wright within the next week.

The meeting concluded at 5 pm.

Respectively Submitted by Steven Wright