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Art and the park

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Date Published to Web:
6/4/2008

After more than four years of planning, the many people who've invested financially and emotionally in Canby's art park project witnessed a turning point Wednesday night.

Canby resident and landscape architect Liz Thorstenson pulled back the veil on a simple concept, replacing it with the conceptual drawings that will bring the park to life during Wednesday's unveiling at Wallflower Framing and Gallery.

It was a big moment for the project.

"The conceptual drawing is really the breakthrough moment when this program really comes to life," said JillMarie Wiles, a Canby Livability Coalition representative on the Canby Art Park and Greenspace committee. "I feel ecstatic about the possibility of the culmination of everyone's work coming to fruition."

The Canby Art Park project will reside in a 9,300-square-foot lot located at the corner of Territorial Road and Holly Street in Canby.

Wiles said the location is an important one for Canby and that putting something positive there was important to many people.

"It's a gateway into our city," she said of the art park location. "We wanted to work with the city to preserve it and make it a backdrop for our city. It's a pivotal four-way stop here in town."

The goal is to preserve the lot as a community green space that celebrates the city's agricultural, historical and river-based heritage, as well as the cultural diversity through the elements of public art.

As a small crowd listened, Thorstenson explained how her conceptual drawings embraced the issues and feel that the

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steering committee had deemed necessary to the project. It helped the project take on a tangible quality for those attending.

After working with the city and paying for half the value of the lot by its deadline, the Clackamas County Cultural Coalition provided the Canby Art Park and Greenspace committee with a grant to hire a conceptual artist. The search for that artist led them to Thorstenson, who had just recently moved to Canby.

“We are so excited to have Liz be part of this project,” said Wiles.

With Wednesday’s conceptual drawing unveiling now behind them, the committee looks to build on its fundraising efforts. They are selling personalized bricks at different rates (\$50, \$250 and three \$1,500 “mat” at the entrance) to raise funds. Once they sell 300 bricks, they can break ground.

For more information, check the Web site at www.canbyartpark.org.

The concept drawings will be on public display this weekend at the Wine and Art Festival at the Clackamas County Fairgrounds.

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