

gouldevans

July 10, 2018

Mr. Porter Arneill
Director of Communications and Creative Resources
City Manager's Office
City of Lawrence
P.O. Box 708
Lawrence, KS 66044

Re: Lawrence Public Library Mural

Dear Mr. Arneill,

This letter is in response to a request from the Lawrence Cultural Arts Commission regarding our position on the proposed mural at the southwest corner of the Lawrence Public Library (LPL). We are proud to be the architect for the transformational, award-winning project. As artists ourselves, we thoughtfully examined and considered each detail that helped recognize the facility as one of the most beautiful library buildings in the world.

Gould Evans is an ardent supporter of public art and storytelling in our community. The powerful story proposed by the Women of Color Mural should be told. However, the following questions remain — is the proposed location the appropriate canvas and does the proposed solution enhance the beauty of the library and stand the test of time?

The design of LPL was conducted over several years with the passionate engagement of community stakeholders and the extensive involvement of artist collaborators. This process included great deliberation and intentness to design and detail a facility to last 50–75 years. If the City chooses to allow a mural on the exterior walls, our hope is that a similar community stakeholder engagement effort be made. This will ensure that the design solution enhances the beauty of the library and is detailed in a lasting manner that will not damage the building itself.

Our experience working with artists to create murals for clients suggests the lifespan of an exterior mural is 15–20 years and can be impacted by the following:

- Exposure: southern and western exposures are the most extreme and, without proper considerations, will accelerate fading.

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- Moisture: This particular location is a retaining wall with earth behind. The potential presence of water can produce vapor that will transmit through the porous concrete. This has the potential of affecting the long-term adherence of the paints. In addition to moisture from the earth, careful consideration should be shown for how rain, snow, sprinkler, etc. are dealt with to avoid streaking or uneven fading over time.
 - Graffiti: A location that is easily accessible to patrons has the potential for destructive behaviors. A plan to address this should be considered.

From an architectural standpoint, a key driver of the library's exterior design was the stark contrast between the vibrant orange hues of the terracotta and the neutral color of the concrete plinth. The concrete plinth itself was detailed using board-formed textures that emulated the size and scale of the terracotta panels.

If the City chooses to allow the mural to be located in this area, considerations should be taken regarding a color palette that is complementary, in lieu of competing with the terracotta. The scale of the mural should also coordinate with the continuity of the concrete plinth wrapping the corner.

We met with the Women of Color Mural on July 1 and discussed our concerns outlined above. During this meeting, the group indicated a willingness to collaborate on a solution.

Our position is, simply, that we support the idea of telling this story through art. Ideally, there would be a process and solution that engages other key stakeholders representing the library, city, artists, and the public; that this is a City-owned building; that obviously the City can choose to do with what it wants; that any proposal should demand the same care and thought to detailing that will ensure it enhances and does not detract from the beauty of the library itself.

Sincerely,



John M. Wilkins Jr., AIA
Principal

Cc: City Commissioners