

RE: DECORATION OF THE FENCING AROUND THE METROTOWN
LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION SITE

MUNICIPAL MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the recommendations as contained in the report of the Acting Director Recreation and Cultural Services be adopted.

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TO : MUNICIPAL MANAGER 1989 JULY 19
FROM : ACTING DIRECTOR RECREATION & CULTURAL SERVICES
RE : DECORATION OF THE FENCING AROUND THE METROTOWN LIBRARY CONSTRUCTION SITE

PURPOSE: To provide Council with information on options for the decoration of the hoarding that will be erected when construction begins at the Metrotown Library site, and to obtain Council's approval to proceed with the decoration project as outlined in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. THAT support, in principle, be granted for the decoration of fencing around the Metrotown Library construction site, if feasible.
2. THAT a copy of this report be sent to the chairperson of the Library Board, Ms. Gail Bell, 201-4455 Alaska Street, Burnaby, B.C. V5C 5T3, and to the chairperson of the Public Relations Committee of the Library Board, Mr. Ray Culos, 6544 East Georgia Street, Burnaby, B.C. V5B 1V5, for their consideration.
3. THAT a copy of this report be sent to Mrs. Hazel L'Estrange, 5125 Empire Drive, Burnaby, B.C. V5B 1N1

REPORT

1.0 BACKGROUND

At its meeting of 1989 June 26, Council received correspondence from Hazel L'Estrange, Public Relations Chair of the Burnaby Historical Society. The Society suggested that the plywood fence surrounding the library construction site be decorated with art work.

Council requested that comment be obtained on this proposal from the Chairman of the Library Board and the Arts Development Officer. This report has been prepared by the Arts Development Officer and includes comments from the Chairman of the Library Board.

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2.0 LIBRARY BOARD DISCUSSIONS

During the past year the Library Board has been discussing the possibility of having the plywood hoarding around the Metrotown Library construction site decorated with art work. Board members had commented that other construction sites with fence decoration have attracted positive public reaction when artists were commissioned to produce themes on temporary structures.

The Metrotown Library site includes fencing that surrounds approximately one city block with sheets of plywood. Visibility is excellent from several vantage points, and the fencing will remain up for the 20 month construction period. The Library Board has considered initiating a "Name the Library Contest" as well. The fence decoration proposal and this contest represent two projects for which outside funding would be sought. There is no internal budget allocation for these activities at this time.

3.0 OPTIONS

1. Students from Burnaby's Public School system

One option is to coordinate student artists selected from the school system to design and produce murals on a specific 100 foot section of the fencing. Working with art teachers, and commencing in the fall of 1989, draft designs could be created and reviewed by the Library Board for approval of content, and students would be supervised on site by library staff. Some concern for safety exists. Burnaby School Board Arts Director, John White, suggests that with proper organization it is possible to consider this option.

Students could create the works on site, or alternatively, on additional plywood sheets prepared in the schools and safely secured on top of the hoarding. The second option would provide for easy removal if damaged, and retention by the artists of schools at project's end. The works would remain in place for 3 months. The project could be renewed periodically if it is successful. Themes would be "library-oriented" and possibly seasonal in subject material. A prize could be offered to the best design and presented by the Board.

An estimate of cost for materials is \$2,000, including plywood, paint, and installation, assuming no artist fees are offered.

2. Senior Visual Arts Design Students

Students from SFU and the technical colleges in the region could be recruited through a "Commission Competition" to design and paint the fencing. This option would guarantee a more advanced level of contribution, and present an interesting working challenge to senior students. Again, coordination with instructors would be advisable. A modest cash award to the successful entrant and an adequate production budget would be required.

Recently, Mr. Todd Belcher, a design student at Vancouver's Emily Carr College of Art was commissioned to construct a highly successful "dragon" design on the hoarding around a construction site on West Broadway. Mr. Belcher (Tel. # 732-3610) will be forwarding to staff information on that project, and an expression of interest in the Metrotown Library site for consideration.

3. Professional Visual Artists

Some professional artists may wish to contribute designs and help supervise a technical team to create imagery on site. Working from detailed scale drawings, the technicians would transcribe the design onto the fencing. This approach would require professional fees being paid to both the designer and the technicians. The artists could be selected from a list of possible contributors who have the experience in creating large murals.

4. "Ethnic" Artists

Another option involves asking artists who are recent immigrants to interpret the theme of libraries from their particular perspective. This could create a colourful collection of views from around the world and enhance the multicultural aspect of our community. The Burnaby Multicultural Society could be involved in organizing this theme approach. This is contingent on the availability of qualified artists in this community.

5. Commercial Design Company

A survey of businesses that provide "supergraphic" and mural services could yield a respected team to develop the theme, and include signs and promotional slogans on the fencing.

4.0 COSTS

A more detailed analysis of the size of the total surface to be decorated must be conducted prior to confirming the cost of materials for options 2-5. Other costs, such as labour, would also depend upon the option chosen for the project. Considering the short life of the fencing, it is not advisable to do anything too complicated. Artists may need scaffolding, spray painting equipment and other supports which may add to the budget required. Full assurance should be sought from a successful design team that the project can be completed on schedule and within budget.

5.0 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

1. If it is seen as desirable to promote and finance the creation of works of public art of any merit, commissioning artwork on temporary plywood hoarding is not recommended. In order to achieve the design excellence that would illustrate the history of Burnaby, as has been suggested by the Burnaby Historical Society, it is important to note that the professional artists employed in Chemainus created their works on the walls of permanent structures and with the intention of having them endure. In other words, creating works of art in public places will attract competent artists only if an appropriate budget is in place and the works are considered permanent. This is not to suggest that a variety of pleasant creative expressions could not be generated by lesser known artists or students. However, this approach carries with it the increased risk of generating an unpleasant public reaction.

2. Since the hoarding is temporary, it is also quite predictable that graffiti, glued-on poster material and other gestures defacing the fence will occur. Attempting to restore vandalized art work on this plywood surface could be a rather expensive proposition and it would be doubtful if it would warrant the attempt to repair it. However, it could not be left defaced.

Recently the City of Vancouver revealed the significant expense (estimated at over \$1 million annually) to remove graffiti from public and private property within its jurisdiction.

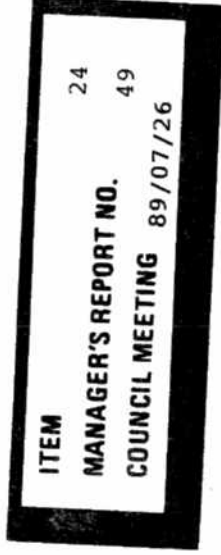
3. In the construction agreement the contractor has provided for the painting of the hoarding with a primer and finish coat, and the addition of scale lettering reading "Metrotown Resource Library, Civic Square, Civic Parking Facility" to be repeated continuously around the site. Allowance has been made for black plastic-coated chain link fence panels to be placed intermittently to allow viewing into the site from the sidewalks. The contractor, at his own expense, will "provide, maintain and relocate hoarding as required", within the terms of the agreement. While given license to choose the colour of the hoarding, the architect does not recommend the addition of art work.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The initial examination of the proposal to decorate this site with art work on the perimeter hoarding reveals many concerns, and justifies caution. The concerns are:

1. The absence of a public art program and policy to help administer a project of such scale and prominence with respect to:
 - a) Terms of reference and criteria to select the desired imagery;
 - b) Determination of a governing party to bear responsibility for the commissioning, installation, financing and maintenance of the work;
 - c) Justification of the priority of the proposal in relation to the anticipated costs and other constraints;
 - d) Management of the public relations considerations.
2. The temporary nature of the project will make it difficult to attract significant financial contributions, and accordingly high quality design proposals.
3. If art work on the fencing were to be defaced, it should be removed immediately, and not repaired, and public reaction to any art work done should be taken seriously.

A preferred procedure would be to refer this analysis to the Library Board for further discussion. Mr. Ray Culos, Chairperson of the Public Relations Committee of the Library Board has the responsibility to examine such issues and make recommendations to the Board. The Chief Librarian and his assistant have stated that a thorough discussion of the options, roles and responsibilities has not occurred to date, and that once a position is taken and a budget set, funds would be required from outside sources.



It is anticipated that municipal staff may be called upon to:

1. Provide staff time to help coordinate the project;
2. Assist in finding the finances required;
3. Facilitate the approval of the project and the installation, maintenance and renewal of art work on site;
4. Recommend qualified jurors for the artistic concepts submitted in a call for contributions.

The Public Relations Committee could pursue discussions with the School Board regarding student involvement in the summer and early fall. Perhaps the painting of 25 panels off-site for installation later could focus on the theme of "cover of your favourite book" or "books about Burnaby".

Ms. Gail Bell, Library Board Chairperson, would prefer a report from Mr. Culos prior to a Board decision. Since the success of this project is directly related to the Board's support, it is recommended that this report be referred accordingly.



for DENNIS GAUNT
DIRECTOR RECREATION &
CULTURAL SERVICES

DN/PAL:jel

cc: Director Finance
Director Planning & Building Inspection
Chief Librarian
Arts Development Officer

