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Artists sought to help dress up railroad retaining walls

Oak Park artists are being sought to transform the railroad retaining walls along the Green Line corridor from dull, blank concrete into canvases that promote creative expression and provide an enriching visual experience for residents and visitors alike.

"For years, we have discussed how to make those vast expanses of concrete more visually appealing, but the Union Pacific Railroad, which owns the property, has never considered how the walls look a priority," said Village Manager Tom Barwin.

"However, with much perseverance and tenacity, we have convinced the railroad to let the community get involved in making the walls more visually appealing and better complement the surrounding neighborhoods."

Called the *Community Mini-Mural Project*, the first phase of the program will select eight artists to paint separate mini murals ranging in size from about six-feet-by-eight feet to six-feet-by-eleven feet. The long-range goal of the program is to intersperse colorful public art where possible along the entire length of the railroad, according to Barwin.

In this first phase, each of the eight selected artists will receive \$500 for materials prior to beginning the project and another \$500 upon completion. Artists and their concepts will be selected by a panel of judges from the local arts community.

Interested artists must submit an application, available on the Village website or at Village Hall, 123 Madison St. Each application also must include a rendering of the proposed design.

Deadline to apply is 5 p.m., Tues., April 20. Selected artists will be notified by Wed., May 5. The goal is to have the murals on the walls in June.

Concepts will be selected on artistic merit, appropriateness for a public way and originality. Paint is the only medium that may be used and should be of a quality to withstand weather conditions for a reasonable amount of time.

Citizens or businesses interested in sponsoring a mini mural are urged to call 708.358.5770 or e-mail village@oak-park.us.

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