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Tarpon adopts extensive public art master plan

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Through its newly devised set of guidelines and master plan, the city's Public Art Committee hopes to show it is serious about applying the brushwork of creativity to Tarpon Springs.

Marleen Gravitz, Public Art Committee chairwoman, says the master plan will provide a timeline with targeted goals for placing art in public places. In April of each year the PAC will develop a list of art projects to be considered for funding. The public art master plan will be updated every five years.

The master plan is funded through the city's public art ordinance, which requires developers to pay an impact fee or commission an artwork to adorn their projects. Development of single-family lots, construction of affordable housing or projects valued at under \$1 million is exempt from the art impact fee.

The committee's goal is for the city to have a reputation for its extensive and accessible public art throughout the city by 2029, Gravitz said.

In the ensuing years artwork will be installed along major roadways to serve as wayfaring signs and elaborate entry features. City parks will all have distinctive art features and parking areas will also be creatively adorned.

Rather than identifying one particular kind of public art, the master plan will seek to encourage diverse selections, including large icons, artist-created benches, murals and sculptures, fountains, and corridor entry features, Gravitz has told city commissioners.

The program is designed to inspire private property owners to add public art into their development.

The plan will provide the city with a cohesive identity and link the downtown, Sponge Docks, Pinellas Trail and other areas of the city. It also encourages development of a community-based mural program.

Last week Siobhan Nehin, founder of the Garden Fairies, kicked off the community-based mural program. The volunteer gardening group will install a 17-by-22-foot tile mural on the side of a downtown historic building.

The mural honors Amelia Meres, an early 20th century city resident who is known as Mother Meres. The municipal parking lot at the intersection of Tarpon and Pinellas avenue, which is named in honor of Mother Meres, is adjacent to the building on which the mural will be placed.

Creation of the mural was a community-based effort that enlisted youngsters who participate in the city's recreation program.

The public art master plan requires artists donating pieces to the city to get approval from the Public Art Committee, which will consider the artist's qualifications, site and installation design. The City Commission will have the final say on whether an artwork is placed in a public building or location.

Gravitz noted the city utility building across from City Hall should be among the first to be visually improved. She said when funds become available the Public Art Program will choose three outdoor sculpture

exhibits in public areas each year.

In 2011 the art committee will hold a call to artists who want to create entryway sculpture feature at: the intersection of Tarpon Avenue and Disston or Levis avenues; Alt. 19 near Oscar Hill Drive at the Anclote River Bridge; Country Club Drive near the Tarpon Springs Golf Course; or Martin Luther King Jr. Drive near North Avenue.

Additional calls to artists this year and in 2012 will seek artists interested in providing sculptures for placement along the local section of the Fred Marquis Pinellas Trail, in Craig Park, at municipal buildings and in city lots between Lemon Street and Live Oak.

Committee members hope the mural restoration in Craig Park will take place next year, along with selection of a water feature or sculpture for the traffic roundabout at the Sponge Docks.