

Thank you for using our printer friendly story page.

[Return to story](#)

Thornton: City picks right plaza art City picks right plaza art

By Scott Thornton
August 6, 2008

Residents and visitors to Madison soon will be able to enjoy a new piece of public art in our great Downtown.

The City Council on Tuesday approved a work by Wisconsin artists Andrea Myklebust and Stanton Gray Sears to be installed along State Street. The piece, titled "The Four Lakes," is symbolic of the Madison region and incorporates an abstract of an effigy mound as a water feature central to the design.

(More information on the design is at legistar.cityofmadison.com/mattersearch/index.aspx; type "Frances Plaza" in the keywords box and click "search.")

The artwork was selected from a field of five outstanding finalists, each with its own unique qualities. "The Four Lakes" is a timeless piece that speaks to our past, present and future. Its durable materials and low maintenance design will enhance the space and be enjoyed for many years.

The redesign and reconstruction of State Street is in its last phase as work continues in the 500 and 600 blocks. The design plan, adopted in 2002, included public art opportunities along the State Street corridor.

The State Street Design Project Oversight Committee kept this in mind as final plans were developed for construction.

The popular Philosopher's Grove at the top of the street was developed by Milwaukee public artist Jill Sebastian. Her forms, the Philosopher Stones, are incorporated in the streetscape.

Frances Plaza was identified as an opportunity for public art that should include a water feature or fountain. This was reaffirmed in the plans and budget adopted for the final phase of construction.

The Frances Plaza Public Art Selection Committee was formed to recommend artwork for the site. It is made up of the aldermen representing State Street, adjoining property owners, State Street business leaders, Madison Museum of Contemporary Art staff, a UW-Madison artist, and current and former members of the Madison Arts Commission.

Forty-four artists responded to the first call by the Madison Arts Commission for proposals for the site. The selection committee reviewed proposals from five finalists and unanimously recommended to the Arts Commission and the State Street oversight committee a piece by Tom Askman as its first choice and the piece by Myklebust and Sears as a second choice.

The State Street oversight committee recommended the Myklebust and Sears piece to the City Council.

The committee weighed several factors in determining its recommendation, including the artistic merits, aesthetics, integration with the plaza design, ease of maintenance and sustainability. The public also provided input to each of the committees along the way.

The plaza site is challenging. It is a small space that requires emergency vehicle clearance, and is a popular gathering spot with a vibrant campus atmosphere. It is an entrance to Wisconsin's most famous street from major parking facilities, the Kohl Center and the Southeast UW campus.

While not everyone initially agreed on a design, the vocal and passionate response was welcome and necessary. Public art often stirs emotions and diverse opinions. In the end, the right piece was selected for Frances Plaza.

Thornton was chairman of the Frances Public Art Selection Committee. He is a former member of the State Street Design Project Oversight Committee and the Madison Arts Commission.

[Return to story](#)

madison.com is operated by Capital Newspapers, publishers of the Wisconsin State Journal, The Capital Times, Agri-View and Apartment Showcase. All contents Copyright ©2008, Capital Newspapers. All rights reserved.