

Wilsonville Spokesman

The art of storytelling

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As Oregon prepares to celebrate 150 years of statehood, Wilsonville is doing a celebration of its own.

Part of that will come in the form of four murals set to adorn the walls of the Visitor's Center. The second mural will be installed this week.

Portland artist Hector Hernandez leads the project, with help from a Wilsonville art committee. His first mural, installed last year, depicts Wilsonville's earliest history, from the first settlers in the area, to the first developments of the town.

"I have enjoyed the possibilities of working on this project with a committee," said Hernandez. "It was not only a project in which the art committee was involved through brainstorming and idea, but also when, during the art festival, people could participate."

As an artist, Hernandez wants his work to seem approachable and interactive. During the Festival of Arts in late May, the artist transferred images from his scale model onto a large canvas. Visitors to the mural had an opportunity, if they chose, to help start the outline of the images. Later, Hernandez filled in and mastered the details.

Theonie Gilmore, president of the Wilsonville Arts and Culture Council, said Hernandez's combination of art and anthropology is vital.

"It's important to work with communities on their ideas," she said. "It had been our hope to show our history with Boones Ferry and to show how, in the last 150 years, life has changed here."

The second mural, which will come in two pieces, will emphasize contemporary history, he said, including urban development.

"It focuses on the river's flow of water as a vital element, and the flow of trade and commerce," he said. "It features camas as native flora, as well as cherry blossoms. At the same time, it demonstrates the rise in urban development, and how that responds to the surroundings and ecology.

"It also shows how modern transportation aided the development of Wilsonville," said Hernandez.

His final focus in this mural project is the development of schools in the city,

and how the development of “human resources” has been the engine driving the city’s growth.

The project finishes up next year with the final two murals, all part of the state’s effort to celebrate its sesquicentennial.

Gilmore said the progress of the mural projects depends on funding. Last year, funding came from the city of Wilsonville. This year, she applied for and received a \$2,600 grant from Arts Action Alliance of Clackamas County.

“We would like to see the community invest in this,” she said, “making the murals a part of their investment here. We would like to have businesses and individuals help foot the bill for the next two murals.”

Wilsonville Arts and Culture Council also has been working to advance this effort of Oregon’ 150th anniversary with several ideas, including a parade, a play and support of a regional history book.