



# Request for City Council Committee Action from the Department of CPED Planning and the Minneapolis Arts Commission

Date: Thursday, December 10, 2009

To: Council Member Gary Schiff, Zoning and Planning Committee

Referral to: Council Member Barbara Johnson, Ways and Means Budget Committee

Subject: Proposed Gift of 60 Photographs from Lake Street USA by the Harrington Company

Recommendation: Recommend approval pending approval of the 2010 Art in Public Places Budget (Note: State Statute requires gifts be approved by two-thirds vote of the Governing body.)

Previous Directives: Approval of Phase II Public Art Policies, by Minneapolis City Council, 4/02/04, which includes policies for Gifts and Loans.

### Department Information

Prepared by: Mary Altman, Public Arts Administrator, 612-673-3006

Approved by: Barbara Sporlein, Planning Director \_\_\_\_\_

Presenters in Committee: Mary Altman

### Reviews

- Permanent Review Committee (PRC): Approval \_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_
- Civil Rights Approval Approval \_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_
- Policy Review Group (PRG): Approval \_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Financial Impact

- Action is within the Business Plan

### Community Impact

- Neighborhood Notification: None Required
- City Goals: 5
- Comprehensive Plan: 9.4
- Zoning Code
- Other

### Supporting Information

*Much of what comprises a community is hidden from public view. And what is publicly seen is often ignored. My hope for this exhibit was to show not only what is hidden, but what is plainly visible and seldom noticed. Wing Young Huie*

The Harrington Company, an association management firm in Minneapolis, proposes to donate 60 photographs from Wing Young Huie's *Lake Street USA* project. In 2000 Huie exhibited 675 photographs along six miles of Lake Street, in store windows, bus stops, sides of buses and abandoned buildings. The subject was the diverse community of people in the Minneapolis neighborhoods surrounding the Lake Street area. This project was one of the most monumental public art efforts in the history of the City. (For more information visit the web sites at <http://lakestreetusa.walkerart.org/> and <http://www.wingyounghuie.com/lakestreet.html>.) The information below outlines the artistic and technical details of the proposed gift.

### **General Artistic Information**

- a. *Images:* The total linear area covered by the 60 photographs is approximately 175 feet. (Images of the photos are attached.) The majority of the 60 photographs were included in an exhibition at the Walker Art Center prior to the Lake Street USA.
- b. *Information on the artist.* Wing Young Huie is a highly regarded local photographer, known not only for this project, but also for similar projects in St. Paul's Frogtown and along University Avenue. His work has been exhibited at a number of local galleries and museums including the Weisman Museum and Minnesota Museum of American Art. The Harrington Company is making their first offer to the City, because Huie expressed this was his first preference.
- c. *Artistic Significance:*

*"Lake Street USA" is likely to stand as a milestone in the history of photography and public art. Other photographers have turned their cameras for varying periods of time on particular neighborhoods or whole cities. Eugene Atget documented the buildings and streets of Paris in the early 20th century; W. Eugene Smith shot Pittsburgh's steel workers and mills in the 1950s; Bruce Davidson recorded East Harlem life in the 1960s, and Eugene Richards photographed the Boston slums in the 1970s. Huie's account of Lake Street at the turn of the millennium updates that documentary. Mary Abbe, Minneapolis Star Tribune*

### **Location/Site**

- d. *City locations:* Working with the Property Services, staff has identified a number of possible locations for permanently exhibiting the works. (Huie has stated the works may be exhibited as a whole or in sections.)\* These include public spaces in the Public Service Center, Mayor's Office, City Council Offices, City Hall Tunnel, 3<sup>rd</sup> Precinct (Lake Street), and City-owned Parking garages. Should the City Council approve this gift, the next step would be for the Arts Commission and staff to select exact locations and develop an installation plan.
- e. *Private property:* Installing the photographs temporarily or on a long term basis is an option. A number of private partners are possible, including the Lake Street Council, local museums and non-profits and neighborhood organizations.
- f. *Storage:* Property Services staff report that storage space exists, should the Commission decide to rotate the photographs.

### **Condition**

- g. *Condition:* The collection has been assessed by an art conservator on contract with the City. Her Condition Report and Treatment proposal reports the photographs appear to be in good condition overall. There is little evidence of fading. They have minor scratches and scuffs. Four or five of the photos have creases, crumpled areas; tears in the paper, and cracks and breaks in the backing board.
- h. *Lifespan:* Because of the adhesives used and the effect the backing board may have on the photographic paper, the conservator estimates the lifespan to be at least 10 to 15 years.

## Financial Information

- h. *Value:* The estimated price paid by Harrington for this collection is \$20,000. In comparison, in 2006, the Minneapolis Public Library commissioned Huie to do a series of 9 photographs for \$17,000 for the North Regional Library.

### *Budget for preparation and installation:*

Costs will vary depending on whether all artworks are conserved and exhibited and where they are exhibited. The minimum cost to the City would be approximately \$500, the price of the appraisal required by Harrington. Should the Arts Commission decide to apply Plexiglas to the photographs and/or determine to purchase security hardware for them, additional costs could be incurred. The Commission has indicated that they would consider covering these costs through the 2010 Art in Public Places budget. Should the Council determine to accept the gift, the Commission would then select a location and develop a budget appropriate to that location.

- i. *Future maintenance costs:* These costs would be minor and include the cleaning and dusting photos or the Plexiglas. Maintenance staff could be trained to do this work, and Property Services has indicated they will take on the responsibility. This commitment could fulfill policy 11.9.3: "The City shall only accept artwork as gifts and loans of public art if annual maintenance for such artwork is donated or otherwise funded for the life span of the artwork."
- j. *Staff time:* This project would be managed within the work plan of the Public Arts Administrator. That means the timing of a future installation, would need to be coordinated within the 2010 work plan in conjunction with other projects.

## Other

- k. *Security:* The works would most likely need to be installed with security hardware. Some potential locations include security cameras.
- l. *Donor requirements:*
  - *Must be a 501c3 organization, or have mechanism in place to allow the Harrington Company to receive a tax deduction for donation of the collection.* IRS publication 526 confirms that the City is a qualifying organization for a deduction.
  - *Will provide a professional appraisal of the collection's value.* Should the gift be approved, \$500 would need to be allocated toward this expense.
  - *Will provide recognition that the collection was donated by The Harrington Company.* The didactics or plaque would need to include this.
  - *Will have a plan to ensure that the collection will be displayed (either all together or distributed throughout various sites) the majority of the time.* Should this gift be approved, such an installation plan would need to be developed by the Commission.

m. *A response from Harrington about whether they would consider donating some of the photos, as opposed to all: They are willing to consider this.*

**Recommendation:**

The Public Art Advisory Panel's recommendation is based on the following observations related to how the proposed Gift addresses the criteria outlined in the City's Public Art Policies:

n. Stimulate Excellence in Urban Design and Public:

- Exhibit concept is extremely high quality—uniting the various cultures and communities of the Lake Street area.
- The Lake Street USA was an important project in the History of the City and Lake Street.
- The works are engaging and high quality in construction.
- As a collection, the works are unique, as most were originally part of the Walker Art Center exhibit, and that exhibit included some photos that were not part of the works that were originally displayed on Lake Street.
- Wing Young Huie is an important local artist and the City does not own any of his work.

o. Value Artists and Artistic Processes

- The City is the artist's first choice as the recipient of the gift.
- The project is an important milestone in the Huie's body of work.
- The display method (mounted on Sintra) is one of the artist's preferred methods of displaying.

p. Enhance Community Identity and Place:

- This artwork is a snap shot in time in the City's history--a community photo album--and will gain cultural value over time.
- The artwork could make an important impact on the building where it is displayed—esthetically, and also in terms of the community's impression of the City Government—in could increase the sense of welcoming in the building.
- The project will build awareness of the City's history and cultures.

q. Involve a Broad Range of People and Communities:

- The artwork truly engaged the community members who were involved.
- The project celebrates the unique and eclectic aspects of the people of the City.
- Many residents feel a strong ownership and connection with the project.

r. Contribute to Community Vitality.

- The project created meaningful connections between City businesses and residents.
- The project provides an opportunity for ongoing dialogue about a range of City issues.
- The project celebrates not only Lake Street, and Minneapolis, but what it means to be an American.

s. Use Resources Wisely.

- The artwork is in good condition.
- The donor is not requiring any restrictions that the City cannot meet.
- The cost to the City is manageable, especially in comparing the impact the artwork.
- Long term maintenance issues can be addressed within the current budget and staff responsibilities.
- The timeline allows for developing a display plan that supports the City's goals and staff work plans.

\*Note: The Arts Commission's vote to recommend approval of this gift to the City Council was \_\_\_\_ in favor and 1 opposed. The one dissenting vote on the Commission noted her vote was because she did not agree with Huie's support of exhibiting the collection in sections. She requested this report note her desire to see the collection exhibited as a whole.