

Keep Fulton Mall art where community can enjoy it

I am one of the artists whose work is on Fresno's Fulton Mall. Jean Ray Laury and I designed and installed 18 mosaic panels on two sides of nine bench backings. They range from 10 to 16 feet long and two feet high.

When the city chose to destroy the pedestrian mall and replace it with a street, the community and the participating artists were assured that the art would be preserved and reinstalled in appropriate places along the new street. Bids for the work will be coming in from contractors in the near future. Requirements for the job given to contractors this summer included the restoration and re-installation of the art. Now the city has changed the rules. The most recent information sent to contractors appears to water down the part of the contract requiring completion of the restoration and re-installation of the art.

I and others are concerned that this means that the city can put the art in storage for an indefinite time and perhaps never reinstall it on Fulton Street. We are also concerned about how and where the art will be stored.

The art collection on the Fulton Mall is unparalleled in Central California. The money to purchase the art in 1964 was raised from citizens of our community. It was turned over to the city for maintenance and protection.

The value of the art, well over a million dollars, is such that the city can never afford to replace it. What will the Cultural Arts District of downtown Fresno be without the art on Fulton Street?

In place of an outdoor public art park, what we will have is a street that lacks any appeal for the public. Evidently the city underestimated the cost of this project and must cut expenses.

When the trees are cut down will they be replaced or is that also too costly? Who will want to go to downtown Fresno now?

Joyce Aiken, Fresno