

# After consultation with art conservator, Towpath mural is best preserved through digital conservation

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**Welland, ON** – According to an art conservator consulted on the viability of saving the Towpath mural affixed to the former Best Value Inn on Niagara Street, the mural’s best chance for preservation is through using contemporary methods and advanced digital technology to reproduce the painting electronically.

After discussions with the artist’s family, the developer of the site, and members of the Canadian Institute for Art Preservation, the mural affixed to the building was attached permanently and could not safely withstand removal and relocation.

There are several layers of materials, all secured with bolts and heavy adhesive. The mural has also sustained extensive damage due to natural elements and has reached the end of its life. The mural would also require significant restoration due to its current condition, which is also not feasible.

“We hoped for the best when it came to preserving and possibly relocating the mural, but the condition of the artwork and several other contributing factors tell us a different story,” said Rob Axiak, director of community services. “We have spoken with the artist’s family and are hopeful to share with them a small section of the artwork by working with the site developer. Having the original painting from the artist is significant to preserve the heritage of Ross Beard’s work.”

The original maquette painted when the original panel chose the art is in the archives at the museum and in good condition. This painting, along with other artwork from this era, is currently on exhibit at the museum.

On the Niagara Street site, the developer worked with city staff to access and inspect the mural and offered assistance to preserve the mural if possible. Though unable to save the mural, the developer will work with staff to incorporate a potential art display in the landscape plan of the new development.

Moving forward, the city will work with the Heritage and Arts and Culture Committees to develop a complete inventory of murals throughout the city, their condition, and develop plans for the sustainability of all public art throughout the city.

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