

Public Art holiday card contest ups the ante

By CRAIG MURPHY
Of the Keizertimes

Having your design chosen as the city's official holiday card would be a nice feather in the cap.

What would be a nice top-per?

Try a \$100 gift card.

Keizer City Councilors recently adopted a resolution supporting the holiday card contest, which was created by Beth Melendy with the Keizer Public Arts Commission.

Artists are being asked to submit designs for a holiday card by Sept. 18 in order to be considered. KPAC members will decide upon a winner at their monthly meeting in September. As previously reported in the Keizertimes, the winning design will be sent out during the holidays as the city's official card.

When Melendy first proposed the idea, she had the winner listed as getting a \$25 gift card to Michael's Crafts.

That amount was later increased to a \$50 gift card to Michael's.

During the March 24 KPAC meeting, Melendy noted council liaison Amy Ripp had suggested the prize be updated to a \$100 gift card.

"I put in the (contest rules) a \$50 gift card," Melendy said. "We can change it. Is \$50 enough, with the public recognition to come as well?"

Kathy Lincoln figured that would be sufficient for a first-year contest.

"We can always make it more next year," Lincoln said.

Lore Christopher, KPAC chair, convinced fellow committee members to go with a bigger amount.

"It's worth it, so let's really do it," she said. "We will get a lot of submissions for it. It will be a \$100 gift card."

Artwork submitted for the contest must be at least 4 inches by 6 inches, but no more than 8 inches by 10 inches. Entries may be a photograph, a drawing (ink, charcoal or pencil) or a painting (watercolor, oil or acrylic).

Each person may submit up to two entries.

One of the contest rules stipulates the art should depict a Keizer scene or event with a holiday theme. However, there is a limit to such themes.

"Items that are specifically tied to one religion may be excluded," one of the rules reads. "Examples include Santa Claus, angels, menorahs and other religious-based images."

It's expected that all entries will get some exposure, in the form of being on display at city hall during the holidays.

"I say we do it for all of November and December," Christopher said. "We can tell people they will be displayed during that time in the trophy case."

In turn, that led to the question of what happens to the artwork after the holidays. Debbie Lockhart, the deputy city recorder, suggested allowing people to pick up their work after the holidays, between Jan. 4 and 29.

McLeod gives housing update at Keizer Rotary

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First one on the market wins.

Longtime local real estate agent Amy McLeod gave an update on the local housing market during a recent Keizer Rotary luncheon.

McLeod said there is plenty of demand for housing and gave some figures to back it up.

"We increased home sales 18.4 percent in the Mid-Willamette Valley last year," McLeod said. "Pending home sales remain very strong. We're in a much better place than before, above historically healthy levels."

"New construction is up 5.3 percent," she added. "There is very limited lot inventory in the area. You can also look at foot traffic, because numbers remain high. Five of the last six months are the best we've had since the summer of 2013. We have every indication that points to us we're in a healthy market right now. We're in good shape on the demand side."

Naturally, there is another side to that.

"The flip side is the supply," McLeod said. "Our primary concern is that we're getting the most for our house (for sale). One challenge is having enough buyers. A lot of people had their credit affected the last few years. Those buyers are now coming back into the market, so there's a fair amount of pent up demand. That demand is eating up our inventory."

McLeod said the home inventory recently was 5.7 months. The number was down to 4.7 percent in January but was up to 5.75 months in the valley in March. When the inventory is less than six months, she noted it's considered a seller's market while inventory of more than seven months means it is a buyer's market.

"We currently have a seller's market," she said. "It means your prices are appreciating. We are heading to (a buyer's market). Oregon prices gained 6.7 percent last year. We're in a healthy change."

Compared to the peak



KEIZERTIMES/Craig Murphy
Realtor Amy McLeod gives an update on the local housing market during a recent Keizer Rotary luncheon at the Keizer Civic Center.

prices of July 2007, McLeod said prices are still 8.7 percent lower. However, that's much closer than in recent years.

"We have come back a long, long way," she said. "If you're putting your life on hold, I wouldn't encourage you to do that. It's time to get on with life. We have nice steady, stable growth going on right now. At the peak prices were averaging \$249,000. We are currently averaging \$230,000."

McLeod, who joked "a monkey could have sold real estate" during the 2006 boom, said homes being put on the market have to be ready for younger buyers who don't necessarily want to put a lot of work into their new purchase. "You thought the mauve and blue was fine for you, but don't expect the millennials to buy that crap," she said, eliciting chuckles from the crowd. "Home fix-up is not part of their curriculum. Part of getting your house sold at top dollar is you taking on the work and getting the house modernized. It's just the generation we're selling to."

Along those lines, city manager Chris Eppley asked about housing trends.

"Once you all thought popcorn ceilings were cool," Eppley said. "What are some good ideas that will stand the test of time for 15 to 20 years? Is it granite? What can we do slowly over time to keep a house updated?"

McLeod pointed to granite as an example of how trends can change.

"Granite is going to be outdated," she said. "Quartz is the new thing. You're behind the eight-ball if you're talking granite."

McLeod said there are currently 84 million baby boomers in this country, compared to 42 million in generation X and 74 million millennials (ages 20 to 33).

"They will be a powerful force in the marketplace, like the baby boomers," she said of millennials. "They do not make the money to buy your kind of houses."

If current home owners are looking to sell, McLeod encouraged swift action.

"The great housing recession is over," she said. "Buyers are out in droves, but we don't have enough inventory to meet the need. Millennials are entering the market. If you baby boomers are looking to downsize, I'd say get over it. You're competing with echo boomers looking for their first home. You're competing with the largest population group equal to your own."

"I took my own advice," McLeod added. "I bought a condo in Arizona. I want my spot down there before the rest of you come down. Money is available and it's cheap. I don't know what any of you are waiting for."

MHS band at contest Friday

The McNary High School band is tuning up for a performance in the Greater Valley League Concert Band Contest Friday, April 10.

The Celtics will play from 6:15 to 6:45 p.m. at West Salem High School.

The contest is scheduled from 1:50 to 8:30 p.m. with awards to follow immediately after.

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