Bristol artist to have work displayed at new McDonald's

By DIANE CHURCH
STAFF WRITER

BRISTOL — A local artist will soon have one of her works displayed on the new McDonald's on North Main Street.

Kim Villanti's painting was unveiled at Thursday's Bristol Rising meeting. The work depicts a streetscape with a storefront McCafe, a barber shop and people enjoying the outdoors, much like the walkable downtown that Renaissance Downtowns is planning to build and Bristol Rising is helping to shape. The picture will be scanned, copied and blown up into a 12-foot by 7-foot print, which will be placed in a recessed area on the front wall facing North Main Street.

Villanti said she came upon the assignment by happenstance.

"I just happened to be at the Renaissance Downtowns office when the person who was supposed to do the painting cancelled," she said. "They were panicking. I felt that I could do it and McDonald's was open to the idea."

Villanti, a local resident and active Bristol Rising member, spent three decades as a graphic designer. She recently made the transition to landscape artist and has some paintings displayed at a gallery in Greenwich. Working with McDonald's and an approved sketch the original artist had done, she painted the picture.

"Getting a corporate commission is a great thing for an artist," she said. "McDonald's is happy with it. That's the most important thing."

She said that having a blown-up reproduction of her art is better than painting an actual mural on site.

"If vandals damage it or it gets faded by the sun or warped by rain, we can always print another one," she said.

The Bristol Rising meeting was held at the former Blondies at the corner of Race Street and North Main Street. Risers, as the members are called, dined on a buffet and sipped drinks as the sun set on a warm summer day. The hamburger stand did not open this year and is now being used by The Milestone as an al fresco dining area from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Customers can also drink outdoors until closing time. Lynn Stamatopoulas, co-owner of The Milestone, said they are planning next year to transform the outdoor dining area into a tiki bar.

Mark Walerysiak Jr., Community Liaison for Renaissance Downtown's Bristol office, said zoning laws require either a certain amount of windows or a mural on the front wall of the new McDonald's. He is pleased that the company let a local artist be involved. Andy Adams, another active Bristol Rising member, also likes the fact that the large fast food chain restaurant is letting a local artist use its building to display her work.

"The painting is beautiful," she said. "We have people in Bristol that are so talented; it's amazing."

Diane Church|Staff
Kim Villanti and her painting.

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"Overall, the meeting was productive and encouraging," he wrote. "Gov. Malloy is very supportive of Bristol Hospital and the vital role it plays in the community."

Although a resolution as to whether Vanguard, a for-profit company, would eventually be able to buy the non-profit hospital was not reached at the meeting, Barwis told employees, "Although there are many details still to work out regarding for-profit hospital systems in Connecticut, we expect to have ongoing conversations with him and his staff as we approach the filing of our Certificate of Need application."

Had the vetoed bill become law, it would have allowed for-profit companies to buy nonprofit hospitals. The approved bill would have allowed nonprofit hospitals to engage in joint for-profit activities with for-profit companies.

Vanguard also has plans to buy Waterbury Hospital.

Although the Bristol sale has been placed on hold temporarily, Barwis said the hospital is doing well financially and is looking into other options should the sale not go forward.

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