

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



Architectural Board clears concept : Structural engineers to work on airport veterans tribute

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During its Monday afternoon meeting, the Santa Barbara Architectural Review Board unanimously approved the concept proposal for a World War II veterans memorial sculpture to be built at the new Santa Barbara Airport terminal.

"I love it," said chair of the review board Dawn Sherry. "I can see it already becoming that place where people meet."

Though the board said some details still need to be worked out, the members overwhelmingly accepted the 20-foot-high glass structure resembling a pair of wings designed by artist Douglas Lochner.

The project was put forth by the executive board of the Pierre Claeysens Veterans' Museum and Foundation to commemorate the men and women who served at the Marine Corps Air Station during World War II, where the airport is currently located. It will be completely private funded, said museum founder John Blankenship.

Both Mr. Blankenship and Mr. Lochner were pleased with the architectural board's support.

"I'm thrilled they understand the vision we were trying to achieve," Mr. Lochner said.

He told the review board that rather than glorify the war, he wanted to honor the character of service and selflessness of those who fought in World War II. He said he felt they were better represented as angels.

The sculpture's two wings symbolize the Marine Corps eagle, aviation and angel wings. They cross to form an arch for people to be able to walk through, Mr. Lochner said.

He said the sculpture will be made of structural, laminated architectural glass that is thick enough that any vandal etch marks can be polished out. The glass also will incorporate a new technology that allows it to be self-cleaning in which the ions react with sunlight to repel dust.

With the board's approval of the concept, Mr. Blankenship said it must be reviewed by several parties: the Planning Commission for the coastal development permit; structural engineers to make sure it can be produced to withstand earthquakes and high winds; and then a final review and approval from the Architectural Review Board.

Mr. Lochner and the structural engineering team will also have to consider suggestions from the architectural board in their final proposal.

Concerns were voiced from several members of the board about the amount of pavement used for the four walkways leading to the center of the arch, as well as the proposed location within one of the grass areas near the terminal.

The board-approved motion suggested that Mr. Lochner consider relocating it from the higher knoll of grass to a lower point of grass, moving it further from the historic old terminal. Board member Gary Mosel said he would like more landscaping to be incorporated.

Mr. Blankenship said he hopes that once the proposal comes to the final stages, the board will rally behind the design as many others involved in the project already have.

Members of the veteran's museum executive committee, the Santa Barbara historic landmarks commission, county arts commission and Santa Barbara airport director, Karen Ramsdell, all told the board that they "enthusiastically support" the proposed Marine Corps tribute.

Though the board's approval is just a small part of the long process leading up to the sculpture's realization, some, like Bob Handy, chair of the Santa Barbara veterans services advisory committee, already dream of the day it will be finished.

"It will be a constant reminder to people going to and from the airport of the sacrifices of those serving today and in the past," he said.

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Members of the executive committee from left, retired Lt. Col. Jack Harris, Cpl. Pete Schenck, Dr. Adam Lewis, Gen. Frederick Lopez, artist Douglas Lochner, Lt. John Blankenship and retired Major Jose Ramirez hope the proposed Marine Corps tribute at the Santa Barbara Airport terminal becomes a reality.

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