

# Colorful bricks to jazz up restroom entry

Frechette's Home Ranch design will be first publicly funded art installation in town.

By Katy Niner and Kevin Huelsmann

Just as DNA makes every creature distinct, so too will a genetics-inspired art installation differentiate a new civic building proposed for downtown Jackson.

On March 7, Jackson town councilors unanimously approved a public art conceptual design by local artist and business owner John Frechette for the new Home Ranch restroom facility.

"The artwork will act as a beacon in downtown Jackson, directing visitors to the information hub," Frechette wrote in his presentation. "The use of color creates a vibrant focal point that will stand out during the many months of winter."

Frechette is basing the installation's design on the DNA of bison and grizzly bears. As such, the sculpture expresses the scientific wonder of nature.

A metal screen wrapping around the building's exterior will frame 84 bricks, each made up of roughly 350 pieces of glass melted and cast together, installed in a pattern replicating a magnified portion of bison or grizzly bear DNA.

"At first glance, it's attractive and separates this from the average building," Frechette said during the meeting. "Then people will become more engaged when they see the information that identifies what the sculpture is and what it represents."

To map the strands, Frechette is working with students from the Jackson Hole Community School and staff from Craighead Beringia South.



Brightly hued glass bricks in bison and bear DNA patterns will adorn the Home Ranch restroom and information center. COURTESY/FRECHETTE

Once the bricks are fired, he plans to host a DNA "mapping" open house and invite all to come and help assemble the installation. "Community involvement builds excitement and generates understanding and a sense of ownership over the project," Frechette wrote in his presentation.

Discovery is crucial to his concept, and, like the valley itself, the sculpture will engage on many levels. The installation will change when seen up close versus from afar, at night versus day, from inside or out.

The installation includes two interpretative features: metal plaques providing artist information and descriptions and, on each plaque, a barcode connected to a social media website. Viewers can scan the bar code with a cell phone to access in-depth information about the piece.

The Home Ranch installation represents the largest art project Frechette

has ever done. "It's really exciting," he said. "It's fun that it's the first publicly funded art installation in town."

Last June, town councilors approved the Jackson Hole Public Art Initiative's call to artists for public art at the Home Ranch building and the budget. A panel made up of local arts professionals, a representative from the design team, a town councilor and a town staff member assessed the applications and invited four finalists to submit conceptual proposals and visit the site. The panel unanimously chose Frechette's design.

In approving Frechette's proposal, councilors thanked the public art initiative for taking on the task of soliciting and vetting proposals for the building.

Town officials set aside \$27,000 of the Home Ranch budget for the public art installation and nearly \$3,000 for executing the selection process.

## Vista 360 seeks funds

Town councilors have approved a request from Vista 360 to apply for a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to help pay for the interior design of the Home Ranch building.

In a memorandum sent to town officials, Vista 360 president Candra Day said the group is seeking a \$150,000 grant from the NEA, of which \$75,000 would be put toward designing the interior of the proposed facility and the creation and installation of any exhibits or displays.

The remaining money would be used to pay for administrative costs, community outreach programs and several proposed events tied to the facility.

Councilors signed an endorsement letter for Vista 360's grant proposal.