Imperiled Studio City mural inspires song

By Rick Orlov, Staff Writer

When you're in the entertainment capital of the world, why not go Hollywood?

That's the thinking of the folks at Studio City Car Wash, who have enlisted a local singer, Natascha Corrigan, to perform a song to try to save their mural when it next comes before city officials.

Using the music of "Second Hand Rose," Corrigan has written a song that extols the mural:

"I love my

Great Wall of Studio City

All my favorite haunts

painted so pretty."

Corrigan was to perform the song at a Sunday rally held at the carwash in a display of community support for the 64-foot mural that has been covered in a pink tarp for months.

"We thought a beautiful mural should have an original song dedicated to its life and impact on the community," said Jack McGrath, the publicist and producer of the Great Wall of Studio City project.

Two city panels have been evaluating what to do about the mural, which in its strictest sense violates the Ventura Boulevard corridor plan, but has some supporters who want to see an exemption to allow it to be displayed.

Maneuvering has begun to find candidates to run in next March's city primary election when seven City Council seats are up for grabs.

The only open seat, so far, is that of Councilman Greig Smith, who has decided against seeking a third four-year term. So far two candidates have announced for the job, Smith's chief of staff Mitch Englander and Armineh Chelebian.

Five of the other council members up for re-election, Paul Krekorian, Eric Garcetti, Tony Cardenas, Bernard Parks and Herb Wesson, have opened campaign accounts and drawn some opponents.

The only incumbent yet to open a campaign account is Councilman Tom LaBonge, who plans to open his account after July 1.

"I thought I would wait until after the fiscal year begins," said LaBonge, who has worked for the city 35 years. "I am very proud to hold this job and feel there are still things out there to do."

There has been an effort to draft Senior Assistant City Attorney Jane Usher to challenge LaBonge - a plan she has rejected.

"I have been approached more than a dozen times in the past six months by advocates for my running," Usher said. "I am concerned on many levels, not the least of which is that I may be more effective and useful in my current role. I don't have any plans to run."

Usher, who served as Planning Commission president, is very popular among neighborhood council groups for her urging them to sue the city over a law giving density bonuses to developers.

There is nothing like real-life experience in helping to shape public policy.

The City Council last week was discussing changes to its campaign laws to come in line with the Supreme Court ruling allowing corporations and unions to make unlimited donations to campaign.

Councilman Paul Krekorian, elected last year despite a massive independent spending effort by unions against him, said he wants to bring more disclosure to the issue.

As he did when he was in the state Assembly, Krekorian brought in a proposal that will require more disclosure of donors to independent expenditure campaigns and triple damages for violations.

Krekorian was outspent by almost a 2-to-1 margin in his special election victory - $980,000 to $571,000.

"I know this issue pretty well," Krekorian said. "The problem is the Supreme Court has gutted the city's policies on contributions. The least we can do is make sure the public knows who is giving the money."

Independent expenditure committees have become the bane of reformers with their ability to spend unlimited amounts in campaigns. Contributions to City Council candidates are limited to $500 and $1,000 for citywide races.

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