

First and foremost, I want to thank everyone again for the opportunity to be able to paint a mural for the library - in proposing the concept itself it felt like such a long shot for us to be selected, so we can't even begin to explain how grateful we are that you're trusting us to do this! It has honestly been a great experience working with Rosario, Rubi, Tiffany, and Ali to move this project forward and get it started in the next couple of weeks! In the latest iteration of the mural, there was feedback given regarding the dandelions and what they might represent to the community or what they might indicate about Waukegan as a whole. I hope that the statement I've written below gives some insight to the choice of highlighting the dandelions in the mural and marking them as a symbol for Waukegan and the library, and that they can be understood in the context of the mural's narrative to ease any worries about negative connotations or representations of our town.

*In the time leading up to execution of Waukegan Library's mural, currently untitled, the concept has gone through a multitude of changes, as any piece of art does. But at its very core, the concept always centered around three things: the different worlds we can explore through books, the power in young people's potential, and the importance of opening your mind to big dreams. In coming up with the visual narrative, my sister Elizabeth and I brainstormed different ways to represent how Waukegan Public Library shaped our childhoods and fostered our love of reading. In our proposal we recalled our summers at the library with our two other sisters, Denise and Stephanie, feeling the relief of the air conditioner from the hot summer sun as we walked in the door. We remembered the books we loved as kids and how much fun we had picking them out, sharing our finds with each other before heading home, and used this as our starting off point.*

*A giant dandelion anchors the piece, with a group of children running to and from a field of dandelions in their varying stages of life: some a bright yellow, others beginning their transformation into white puffballs. The older kids are running off with their backpacks full of books and dandelions in their hands, while the younger ones are running to the field ready to pick their own. The books, full of stories they're dying to tell, jump out of backpacks and begin to take over the scene. They themselves are reflective of different genres and subjects - music, art, westerns, horrors, sports, etc. They represent windows to different worlds beyond our own experiences, and, hand in hand with the dandelions, also represent the playfulness of youth and the possibilities that lie ahead.*

*From the beginning, we knew we wanted to incorporate dandelions into the design. At first contained to a corner of the overall sketch, they have since spread out and become the centerpiece of the narrative, taking us from one wall face to another all the way to the library's entrance. There's the obvious callback to Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*, set in Green Town, a fictionalized version of Waukegan. In the book dandelions are a symbol of summer, youth, nostalgia, magic, and the beauty of life itself. In our reality dandelions have come to garner a bad reputation, seen as common weeds that overtake the spaces they find themselves in. It's difficult to ignore the contradiction that exists between the dandelion's reputation and the significance of its place not only in nature, but for those who've run around a field picking*

*dandelions in our youth, in awe of a flower that reflects the stages of our own lives and our potential for growth and change. Despite its reputation, we can't deny the simple joy one feels when making a wish on the fluffiest dandelion one can find. In that very act itself, we acknowledge the magic of a dandelion and allow ourselves to dream, or at the very least, play.*

*We hope the design, painted against the bare brick wall, juxtaposing reality and fantasy, can showcase the wonderment and fun of being a kid, and the importance of finding beauty in even a weed.*