

Alley Art Festival has had a great run. I'm thankful for a wonderful time each year along Water Street Mall, and now Downer Place, too. The local arts festival filled a need in the community, and it's a highlight of the summer each year.

Going on 16 years of organizing the event, I will look back with fondness as we celebrate the Sweet 16 and final Alley Art Festival on Saturday, August 29.

Alley Art Fest will still be an arts driver in the community as well as a local arts clearinghouse. The website and social media pages will remain active, but the outdoor festival will end. We've really become a collective after all this time, so look for things popping up in the future like small workshops and other art offerings.

I've certainly considered the possibility of Alley Art Festival continuing throughout the years and celebrating many anniversaries, however the infrastructure isn't there for this event. It takes a heftier budget, a staff or organization, and additional resources to pull off a continuing event. I've thought about that, too; maybe I could partner with others to continue the event, but after a few conversations, I realized that it's time to end Alley Art Fest and make room for something new to grow.

I hope that becomes a conversation that the community will have now. There will be an opening, an opportunity for action. I'm excited to see what will blossom.

I've taken on a lot of responsibility over the years, and to be fair to myself, this is the right time to say goodbye to a very full day on the last Saturday of August. Since the event's inception, it has become more challenging to host an outdoor event with insurance costs, safety measures, and paperwork. Although I appreciate the assistance from the city and the incredible help from volunteers, my heart isn't in the organization of a full day event anymore.

I hope that my transparency will help clarify the reasons that Alley Art Festival's Sweet 16 will be the last one. I'm grateful for all of the support I've received from artists since 2010, and I'm looking forward to a big party on August 29. If people are upset and disagree, then I applaud them. I encourage them to work together to see what they can create. It wasn't too long ago that I helped champion the continuation of Aurora ArtWalk. It went on for a couple of more years before it ended. Just like life, events mutate and evolve and new ones pop up. It's a cycle.

Alley Art Festival won't continue as an outdoor event, but the arts community will continue to thrive. There will be new energy and new blood. Aurora will stay fun.

~ Marissa

Please follow Alley Art Festival on IG @alleyartfestaurora and on Facebook at Alley Art Festival.