

NEWSSTAND DISPLAYS ART OF SURVIVAL

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This may become the tale of the Little Newsstand That Could.

For years, the stand near the corner of Oak and Rush Streets was a ramshackle structure in a ritzy neighborhood.

Faced with the prospect of theirs becoming one of the first newsstands to be dismantled under the city's strict new relicensing procedures, friends of the uninspiring structure decided to take on City Hall.

On Sunday, the battle was begun: The stand was reborn as something approaching art. The new structure, decorated with soft gray paintings of Chicago's landmark buildings, is almost too dramatic to be called a newsstand. Its outer walls are paintings of the Marina Towers, Water Tower, Art Institute, the Chicago Board of Trade and the like. Also pictured is the newsstand's recent nemesis: City Hall.

It sports a street-side drive-up window. It has a skylight. It even makes use of philosophy. Written on the Chicago Theater marquee depicted in one of the murals is this: "A dream, perhaps an aspiration, that something can always be viewed with new perspective, discovering the possibilities. . . of what it could be."

Kathryn Kozan, a Chicago artist, came up with the concept of saving the newsstand that, for all its unloveliness, has been a fixture of the neighborhood for a decade. Her idea was to turn it into a thing of beauty, something City Hall could not possibly want to destroy.

About 15 fellow artists helped her, creating the newsstand in their spare time over the past six months. The project relied solely on donated materials and labor, she said, and had the grateful support of newsstand owner Tharakutari Prasad.

In Sunday's rain, they erected the building after staying up all night to add the finishing touches to the paintings. "We wanted it to look almost like a little city in and of itself," said **Kozan**, drenched by the rain and spattered by paint.

This isn't to say that the controversy is over. So far, Prasad has won only a temporary permit to erect the structure. Further hearings are expected in the coming weeks before the transportation department makes a final decision.

Prasad's new location, a bit farther north on Rush Street, is the new problem. The newsstand is directly in front of the entrance to Sound Warehouse, and the store doesn't like its new neighbor.

When the building went up Sunday morning, Sound Warehouse manager Glenn Harr said he felt like he'd been ambushed.

Harr said the newsstand blocks the entrance to his music and video store. It covers up the window displays and makes it hard for people to drop off videos quickly, he said.

"They could put up the most beautiful thing in the world, and it would still block access to our business," he said.

Ald. Burton Natarus (42nd), a proponent of the new newsstand regulations, which revoked all newsstand licenses Jan. 1 and forces owners to meet stricter aesthetic and location standards, said he had not seen the structure that just went up in his ward.

"We will see what happens at the hearing," he said. "This is a democracy."

Most people who saw the new structure seemed to like it.

"Oh, wow!" said Charles Lindblad, a neighborhood resident who stopped to admire it. "That's really nice."

"I think it's lovely," said Bernina Hill, the assistant manager at the nearby Mrs. Field's cookie store.

"It's nice, something different," said Tanya Beryozkin, working at the Cool Ice cart a few feet away.

Also admiring the goings-on was Anil Modi, owner of a newsstand at State and Division Streets that is likewise struggling to stay put in the face of the new regulations.

"I'd like to make one like it," Modi said.

The idea seems to be a popular one. Last year, some architecture students at the Illinois Institute of Technology designed a spiffy wood-and-glass newsstand at the corner of Clark Street and Fullerton Avenue.

And **Kozan** and her fellow artists said they would like to see more eye-pleasing stands.

In fact, she said they have design concepts to spare that would make every newsstand a conversation piece. Among the ideas: a park, a rolled-up newspaper and the group's favorite, a giant fire hydrant.