



City of Tacoma

To: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
From: Amy McBride, Arts Administrator, Office of Arts & Cultural Vitality
Copy: Andreta Armstrong, Office of Equity & Human Rights
Subject: Black Lives Matter Mural Update
Date: May 18, 2022

Summary:

In July of 2021, Council approved \$5,000 from Council contingency funds in support of a mural in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. The mural will be painted on the stairs of Tollefson Plaza this summer. This project is the result of a months-long collaborative process between the City of Tacoma’s Human Rights Commission and the Tacoma Art Museum, with funding support from the City of Tacoma, the Tacoma Arts Commission, and Tacoma Creates. The Selection and Review Panel included members of the Human Rights Commission, Tacoma Arts Commission, and Tacoma Art Museum staff. Once completed, the artwork will be maintained by the Office of Arts & Cultural Vitality.

Project Artists:

Dionne Bonner was selected as the Lead Artist in August, 2021. She is working with local artists Gwen Jones, Chuck Taylor, Kenya Adams, and Breeze to support the project.

Bonner is a public artist, graphic designer, and community activist whose mission is to “create space for open dialogue and reflection by creating a community voice through the creative process.” A Tacoma native, Bonner works intimately with community for her public-facing projects. Recent public projects include: *In Loving Memory*, a youth memorial mural at the Eastside Community Center; *Interconnections*, a mural about unity and community at Forterra’s Hilltop Project; and *Paint the Street*, a temporary intersection mural created as part of the Lincoln District Revitalization. She also recently exhibited *A Pioneering Spirit: A Fight for Liberty and Freedom Exhibit*, a series of paintings honoring the legacy of 13 Black historical figures at Tacoma Historical Society and Spaceworks’s 950 Gallery.

Funding:

The artist’s contract for this mural is \$20,000. Tacoma Art Museum and Tacoma Arts Commission are contributing additional funds to support partner artists and site prep.

Lead Artist’s Contract:

\$5,000 Council Contingency
\$5,000 Tacoma Arts Commission
\$10,000 Tacoma Art Museum

Timeline:

Early June 2022*: Priming
Mid June 2022*: Mural painting starts
Late June 2022*: Community Paint Day
Mid July 2022*: Mural Complete
Mid July 2022*: Ribbon Cutting
August 2022*: Community Celebration

*Timeline is weather dependent. The steps need to dry out before priming can start, and we need a dry stretch of days. City Painters will be priming as soon as site conditions allow.

Community Involvement:

This project has intentionally focused on collecting input from the local Black Community during the early stages, through online surveys, 5 in-person focus groups, youth engagement at Hunt and First Creek Middle Schools, social media, project posters, and targeted presentations and communications with community groups. Through an online intake form, over 320 people have signed up for the project mailing list. The general public will be invited to help paint the mural, both through regular volunteer shifts and community paint days. City and Art Museum staff are organizing a community celebration, once the mural is complete. Tacoma Public Library staff will be capturing this project for their archives.

Artwork Design:

On Tuesday, April 26, 2022 the Selection & Review Panel approved the design. On May 9, 2022 the Arts Commission voted to approve the design and accept the mural into the Municipal Art Collection for ongoing care.

The design is inspired by community input. It speaks the shared history, future, and past of the local Black community, and the effects of prejudice and systemic racism. The design is organized around a tree, whose roots spread through the mural, weaving through words such as: accountability, trauma, life, justice, joy, hope. Several figures appear in the artwork, including peaceful protesters and an elder sitting under the central tree, reading an imagined book, *The Future Written by Our Youth*. A quilt is spread throughout the mural. Community will have an opportunity to leave a paint handprint on certain sections of the mural.

Attached, please find colored-pencil sketches of the artwork design. The artist is continuing to refine elements of the design. The final mural will contain more detail and stronger colors, due to the nature of paint vs. colored-pencil, and the difference in scale.
