

BLUEPRINT

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGENCY

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Emerging Blueprint History and Culture Trail Art Installation
~ One of the single largest infusions of outdoor public art in Tallahassee's history. ~



Tallahassee, Fla. – This month, a trio of sculptures by local artist John Birch were incorporated as the fifth installation along the growing History and Culture Trail. This innovative project is a collaborative masterpiece brought to you by the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency, the City of Tallahassee, and the Leon County Government. The History and Culture Trail includes public

artworks and history monuments that honor the history of the neighborhoods, civil rights advocates and economic engines of the communities located adjacent to Cascades Trail and FAMU Way. Once complete, the project will be one of the single largest infusions of outdoor public art in Tallahassee's history.

Since its kickoff last October, five sculptures and three murals have been completed as part of the project. The artists, works, and locations are:

- John Birch (Tallahassee) - "Community", "Your Move", and "Metamorphosis" Wood sculptures, located at the new community gathering space at 3DB Stormwater Facility.
- Bradley Cooley, Jr. (Lamont, Florida) - "The Jazz Man" sculpture, located at the market area near the FAMU Way playground.
- Mark Dickson (Tallahassee) - "In Honor of the Worker" sculpture, located at the St. Marks Trailhead on FAMU Way.
- Yasaman Mehrsa (Toronto, Canada) - "We Are All One" murals, located at Anita R. Favors Plaza.
- Joseph Cowdrey (New Jersey) - "A Stroll Down Seaboard" mural, located at the market area near the FAMU Way playground.

John Birch, a resident of Tallahassee, is one of the seven selected artists for the History and Culture Trail. Birch is a self-trained Tallahassee sculptor who was introduced to wood and power tools by his father. He wields a chainsaw to carve organic forms and figures out of remnants of wood from previously standing trees. These three artworks were formed from live oak wood that was carefully preserved specifically to be repurposed along Capital Cascades Trail. The sculptures, titled Metamorphosis, Your Move, and Community, honor the spirit of the surrounding neighborhood, past and present. The "Community" sculpture stands 9 feet tall at the center of the new gathering space on the west end of FAMU Way. As the western bookend of the History and Culture Trail series, the artwork features three scenes - hands clasped at the intersection of generations, functional seating, a chiseled checkerboard table, as well as an engraving of Shingles Chicken House at its heart. Numerous examples of John's work can be seen throughout the Tallahassee-Leon County community, at schools, community centers, places of worship, and at local residences.



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INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGENCY



"The beautiful wooden sculptures are finely made, showcasing the rich details that reflect the vibrant history and culture of African American neighborhoods in our area," said IA Board Chair and Leon County Commissioner Carolyn Cummings. "Seeing the History and Culture Trail come to life with each piece has been rewarding. I'm excited for a community celebration of the entire project early next year."

The captivating 1.5-mile History and Culture Trail, stretching between South Adams Street and North Lake Bradford Road, is part of Blueprint's Capital Cascades Trail Segment 3 Project. This iconic initiative began construction in 2013, setting the stage for a transformation within Tallahassee's southside. Once complete, the History and Culture Trail will seamlessly blend with the vibrant amenities along FAMU Way, such as the thrilling Skateable Art Park to the tranquil Coal Chute Pond Park, the inviting Anita R. Favors Plaza, the popular market area, playground and more.

"The History and Culture Trail is another feather in the cap for our bustling Southside, further enhancing its status as an economic engine, sought-after destination and hub for creativity," said IA Board Vice Chair and City of Tallahassee Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox. "It complements the more than \$397 million we've dedicated to public infrastructure investment in the Southside, which will yield benefits for our entire community."

Alongside the public art, 11 history monuments will be installed that display historical information and photographs to tell the stories of the neighborhoods, businesses, and remarkable individuals who called the area home. Each monument will feature curated images and information that have been meticulously gathered through years of extensive research and engagement. The public artworks will breathe life into these historical narratives, making them all the more immersive. Residents and visitors will be able to dive into a sea of engagement and reflection that promises to spark meaningful conversations and connections.

"The History and Culture Trail stands as a source of great enthusiasm within Blueprint," conveyed Autumn Calder, Director of Blueprint. "The rewards reaped from this endeavor are considerable, given that public art and historical landmarks actively stimulate tourism, nurture enduring economic growth, and play a pivotal role in cultivating a distinctive local identity."

"With these works, I'm hoping to convey closeness, getting together, playing games, memories of eating at Shingles Chicken, taking a walk in the park, enjoying nature," said John Birch. I wanted there to be a generational aspect to these pieces. I wanted to put a sense of family and community into them."

More sculptures and history monuments will be installed throughout the year. The grand celebration of the Capital Cascades Trail Segment 3 is anticipated for early 2024.

For more information about the History and Culture Trail, please visit Blueprint's Artful Infrastructure webpage.



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About Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency

The Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency (IA) is a joint City-County agency within the Department of Planning, Land Management and Community Enhancement (PLACE). The City of Tallahassee and Leon County created the joint Department of PLACE, which emphasizes the

BLUEPRINT

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGENCY

desire to create a livable, sustainable, and economically vibrant community through the coordinated efforts of the Planning Department, Blueprint IA and the Office of Economic Vitality.