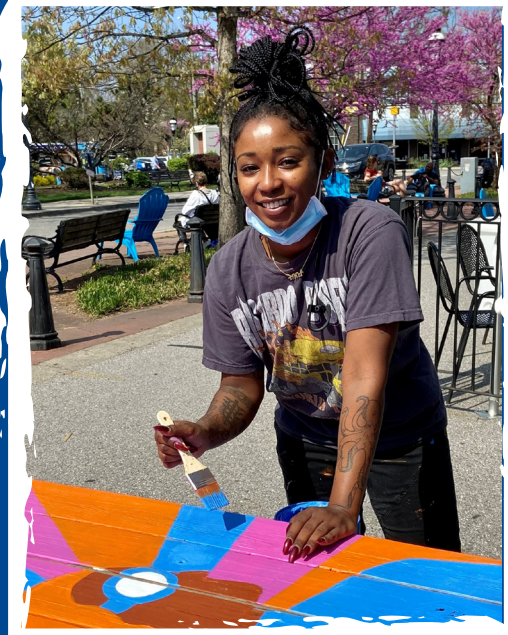




# City of Takoma Park Arts and Humanities Commission



TAKOMA PARK  
**ARTS**

## 2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT





"Art is about **changing what we see in our everyday lives** and representing it in such a way that it gives us **hope.**"

- Kehinde Wiley

"**Creativity takes courage.**"

-Henri Matisse

"There are **no rules.** That is how art is born, how breakthroughs happen. **Go against the rules or ignore the rules.** That is what invention is about."

- Helen Frankenthaler

@TRAPX BOB

## TAKOMA PARK ARTS AND HUMANITIES COMMISSION

### 2020-2021 ANNUAL REPORT

Established by the City Council in 2003, the Takoma Park Arts and Humanities Commission serves in an official advisory role to the City Council on all matters related to the arts and humanities. The Commission makes budget recommendations and produces an annual report highlighting the City's accomplishments in promoting and furthering the arts in Takoma Park.

It has been a challenging time with the coronavirus pandemic forcing the closure of the Takoma Park Community Center and the postponement of many scheduled arts events. Arts and Humanities Coordinator Brendan Smith continued to shift our [Takoma Park Arts](#) events online, including new poetry readings and film screenings. The City also sponsored the Roadside Attractions outdoor concert series which brought live music back to Takoma Park and supported the livelihoods of local musicians when many music venues were closed. The City also supported the Takoma ARtery, a local arts group which arranges window displays of local artists' work that have revitalized vacant and underused storefronts both downtown and at the Takoma Junction.

The Arts and Humanities Division also has moved forward with several innovative public art projects, including a kid-friendly makeover of B.Y. Morrison Park with a new chalkboard mural, colorful picnic tables, and stenciled children's games. A sidewalk poetry contest highlighted the creativity of our residents young and old, while artist Trap Bob painted three new tables in the Takoma Streeterly to celebrate the power and resilience of Black women.

In a time of crisis, the arts are more important than ever. The arts bind us together and provide a creative outlet, emotional support, economic development, and a window outside ourselves to a wider world.

The Commission is thankful for the City Council's ongoing support for our diverse arts and humanities programs. The Commission urges the City Council to approve the FY 22 proposed budget for the Arts and Humanities Division and our public art programs without any cuts so we can continue this important work. We want to maintain our focus and energy as the world emerges from this pandemic with new hope and opportunities ahead.





The [Takoma Park Arts series](#) continued to organize and host new online events, as well as sponsoring the *Roadside Attractions* outdoor concert series. The online film screenings and poetry readings are popular not only with local residents but also our broader community and across the world. The weekly [Takoma Park Arts e-newsletter](#) has more than 2,400 subscribers, and our online arts events have been viewed more than 7,000 times on the [Takoma Park Arts YouTube channel](#).

### Online Poetry Readings

Arts and Humanities Coordinator Brendan Smith worked with Takoma Park Poet Laureate Kathleen O'Toole to organize a diverse range of poetry readings, including a timely *Black Voices in Verse* reading featuring the powerful work of three local Black poets. The *Voices of Woodlawn* reading showcased a collaboration of three Black poets and one white poet who shared their moving poetry about Woodlawn, a former 2,000-acre plantation in Alexandria once owned by George Washington where more than 90 enslaved people were forced to work.

### Vintage Movie Night Film Screenings

Local filmmaker and historian Richard Hall continued his popular *Vintage Movie Night* series online with curated collections of vintage films dating back more than a century to the early days of cinema. The screenings branched across many subjects, including vintage travelogue films, horror films, "back to the future" futuristic films, and the contributions of Black musicians and artists who helped shape American history.



### Roadside Attractions Outdoor Concert Series

The *Roadside Attractions* series brought live music back to Takoma Park in free outdoor concerts by many musicians, including Ethiopian-American singer Munit Mesfin, the Arsen Sumbatyan Quartet, Mir Manley Band, and others. The City paid the musicians to support them at a time when many were suffering financially from closed venues and canceled gigs.

## PUBLIC ART PROJECTS

The Arts and Humanities Division completed several public art projects and launched a new overarching initiative called *Public Art Works*. The plan was approved by the City Council in 2020 with a three-year budget projection. It incorporates public art projects into some upcoming public works and planning projects, including sidewalks, bus shelters, and bike racks. The initiative spreads public art installations across the city to enhance racial and economic equity rather than concentrating projects in downtown or the historic district.



### ART ON THE MOVE BUS SHELTER POSTER SERIES

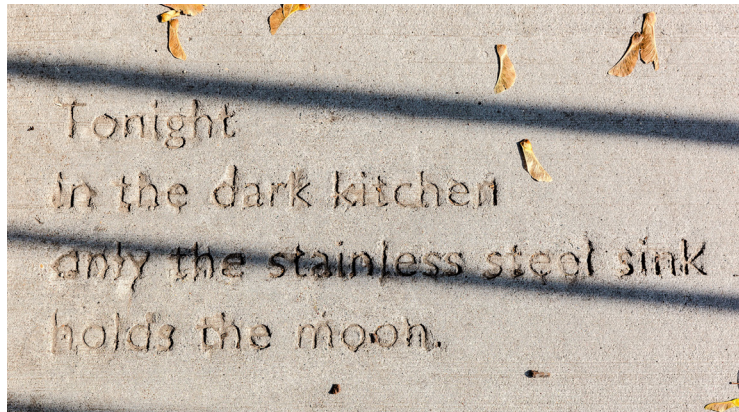
The Arts and Humanities Division designed seven large colorful posters featuring artwork by 14 artists whose work will be featured in upcoming exhibitions at the Community Center. The posters bring art to the streets in 14 bus shelters across Takoma Park to brighten people's day, support the artists' businesses, and encourage public transportation.

### B.Y. MORRISON PARK MAKEOVER

B.Y. Morrison Park at the Takoma Junction was transformed with a kid-friendly makeover which has greatly increased use of the park. The park features a new chalkboard mural for sharing thoughts and drawings, painted picnic tables, and children's games stenciled on the concrete, including colorful balloons, paw prints, and a giant hopscotch robot.







## **SIDEWALK POETRY CONTEST**

More than 125 local residents ranging from 6 years old to seniors entered their original poems in our sidewalk poetry contest. A committee of local poets chose 10 children and 10 adults as winners, who each received a \$100 prize and a chance to have their poem imprinted in a local sidewalk. The Arts and Humanities Division is working with the Public Works Department to identify new sidewalk construction or sidewalk repairs where some poems can be imprinted.

## **TABLES PAINTED BY TRAP BOB**

Black female artist Trap Bob was hired to paint three picnic tables at the Takoma Streeterly with her original designs featuring proud Black women. The project illustrated the City's commitment to public art and racial equity following the vandalism of another table painted by Trap Bob in a separate project by Main Street Takoma. The Arts and Humanities Division also paid Trap Bob to repaint that table to preserve her work and oppose racism in any form.



## **TAKOMA ARTERY**

The Arts and Humanities Division used public art funds to support the Takoma ARtery, a local arts group which enhances the appearance of local business districts by filling vacant and underused storefronts with arts and handicrafts from Takoma Park's creative community. The group also is organizing an art fair at the Community Center to bolster the small businesses of many artists who comprise an important part of the local economy.

SUPPORTING THE ARTS IN TAKOMA PARK

“Thank you to the Arts and Humanities Commission for all of their work in continuing to bring arts to our community, especially during the last year. Arts bring us together and allow us to explore the unknown. They have a healing power that is so important for all of us right now.”

Takoma Park Mayor Kate Stewart

“The arts are a necessity, not a luxury. The arts feed imaginations for all people regardless of age or culture. The arts are education, and without education we as a people will stagnate. In Takoma Park, the arts shape us as a community and help us understand our place in the world.”

Takoma Park Arts and Humanities Commission Chair Thomas Parlon

“In a year in which so much has separated us physically, socially, and politically, the arts—and poetry in particular—have drawn us together. Many local poets and residents are grateful for the work of the *Takoma Park Arts* series in bringing poetry to the community.”

Takoma Park Poet Laureate Kathleen O’Toole

Acknowledgements

Arts and Humanities Commission

- Thomas Parlon (Chair)
- Gloria Tseng-Fischer (Vice-Chair)
- Courtney Tompkins (Secretary)
- Bill Crandall
- Jon Frederick

- Ebonee Harlee
- Joelle Rabion
- John Warren

Arts and Humanities Division Staff

- Arts and Humanities Coordinator
- Brendan Smith





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[takomaparkmd.gov/arts](https://takomaparkmd.gov/arts)  
[arts@takomaparkmd.gov](mailto:arts@takomaparkmd.gov)