

HISTORIC BLACK WILLIAMS PROJECT

The Historic Black Williams Project acknowledges the complex and changing history of Williams Avenue and honors the role Portland's Black community has played in this history.

Home to Portland's largest Black community for most of the 20th century, Williams Avenue included a concentration of thriving and active community institutions. Only a handful of these still exist, but their history and the values of the people that built and cherished them live on.

The art installation includes 30 mounted signs and 10 sidewalk tiles on Williams Avenue between NE Broadway and N Killingsworth that represent the history and values of Black Portland. A multimedia information-sharing component will soon follow. We hope this history inspires new intergenerational and cultural exchanges and sparks new initiatives and entrepreneurial endeavours to strengthen Portland's Black community

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In 2011, twenty-six community members participated in the Williams Avenue Safety Project Stakeholder Advisory Committee. Tasked with addressing safety and traffic concerns on Williams Avenue, the group was committed to recommending balanced and sustainable solutions to meet the transportation needs and concerns of residents, businesses and people walking, biking, rolling, and driving along the corridor. As part of their work, the committee recommended that the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) honor the history of Portland's Black community on Williams Avenue. Seeking to be responsive to the community, PBOT agreed with this recommendation. A new committee—the Honoring the History of Williams Avenue Committee—was formed. The committee worked with the Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC) to select an artistic team and collaborate with it to realize the project now on view, the Historic Black Williams Project.

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Through a competitive process, Cleo Davis and Kayin Talton Davis, a husband-wife creative and business team, were selected as the project artists. They grew up in the neighborhood and own two local businesses: Screw Loose Studios and Soapbox Theory. Their combined background includes architecture, industrial design, graphic design, and fine arts.

Cleo and Kayin will continue to collect stories and information, as well as develop more components of the project..

LEARN MORE AT:

BLACKWILLIAMSPROJECT.COM



This project was funded by the City of Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) and administered by the Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC).



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For more information visit: portlandoregon.gov/transportation/73590 & RACC.org.

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