

Coliseum unwrap reveals colorful murals

By IRIC NATHANSON

On July 11, the iconic Coliseum building was “unwrapped” to reveal a series of poems and colorful murals displayed in the building’s first floor window bays. The unwrap project is the first step in an ongoing effort to rebuild the East Lake landmark by its new owner, Redesign Inc.

Redesign purchased the Coliseum in 2021 after the building had been abandoned and badly damaged during the civil unrest following the murder of George Floyd in 2020.

Robyn Robinson, who helped organize the Coliseum arts installation, said that the idea for the wrap grew out of conversations between the Redesign staff and a local arts group, five X five Public Art Consultants, on how to acknowledge the trauma caused by George Floyd’s murder and the COVID-19 pandemic. “We also recognized the realities of rebuilding in a neighborhood where people were still hurting and suspicious of any new development that stood to potentially displace them.”

“The arts project was a way for us to provide a message of hope and to demon-



A series of poems and colorful murals are displayed on the first floor of the Coliseum building. At right, Tish Jones of TruArtSpeaks talks about the project on July 11. The building renovation project is \$2 million shy of the funding needed to start. (Photos by Terry Faust)

strate the continued strength of this community,” added Taylor Smrikarova, Redesign’s Coliseum project coordinator.

Visitors to the Coliseum will find poems by Marcia Rendon, Isha Camara and Tish Jones displayed in the window

bays, along with artwork by Precious Wallace, Noah Lawrence Holder and Emma Eubanks.

Wallace’s abstract designs are exhibited on the 27th Avenue side of the building. “Our work is an effort to convey a



sense of the history and the people who have been engaged with the building over the years,” she said. “We hope it will help bring people together and, in doing so, help strengthen the idea of commu-

nity in Longfellow. The mural is really a community-building effort.”

Holder and Eubanks designed the fanciful murals on the Coliseum’s Lake Street side that depict scenes of community life in South Minneapolis. “We wanted to create something bright and lively that reflected the community, its history and the people who were part of the history. We hope the Coliseum’s neighbors will see themselves in our work,” Holder said.

“Emma and I started working on this project last winter,” he added. “We brainstormed about some ideas and then just let the artwork evolve. Once construction gets underway, we hope Redesign will find a way to preserve the murals; maybe by displaying them inside the building.”

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