



City Council

Special Recognition - Olympia Dragon Mural

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Title

Special Recognition - Olympia Dragon Mural

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Recognize the artist, citizens and volunteers who installed the Olympia Dragon Mural honoring local Chinese-American history.

Report

Issue:

Whether to recognize the artist, citizens and volunteers who installed the Olympia Dragon Mural honoring local Chinese-American history.

Staff Contact:

Susan Grisham, Executive Assistant, 360.753.8244

Presenter(s):

Doug Mah, Olympia Dragon Mural Committee representative

Background and Analysis:

On August 24, 2019 the Olympia Dragon Mural, located at the corner of 5th Avenue and Columbia Street SE, was dedicated at an event featuring speakers and performers, along with the ancient Chinese tradition of "dotting the eye", or the final brush strokes of painting the eye to bring the dragon to life and to complete the mural.

The Mural, a side-facing dragon against the waves of the sea with a red column based on a traditional scroll, reads, "peace, harmony, community", conceived by artist Mymy Nguyen as an artistic tribute to the once vibrant Chinese American business community that was located along Columbia Street.

Ms. Nguyen stated, *"The dragon is a symbol of strength, ordinarily depicted in great detail - scales, skin, features, and expression: a sense of intention and motion. But in this dragon, we see only a*

silhouette - a ghost of the past strength, intention and motion of Chinese immigrants who left their homes, crossed the widest ocean, and came to Olympia for a better life. This is where they built a community... As a new immigrant, I hear the echo of their experiences; I feel it in my bones... This mural is a tribute to them; a remembrance that mourns the absence of their lost community here, and honors their bravery”.

In January 2019, Ms. Nguyen presented her concept to a gathering of Olympians, including numerous Asian-American community leaders. Deeply moved by Ms. Nguyen’s vision, this group launched a plan to raise funds and secure a location for the mural on the side of one of the early Chinese-American owned buildings. Major donors include: Chinese Healing and Movement Arts; Doug and Cathy Mah; the Tacoma Chinese Reconciliation Project Foundation Board; Aikido of Olympia; Heritage Bank; the City of Olympia; Parking Business Improvement Area (PBIA); South Puget Sound Community College Foundation; Thomas Architecture Studio; Olympia Downtown Alliance and others. Together, these volunteers and donors, along with the artist and her dedicated mural team have created the Olympia Dragon Mural as a touchstone for all of Olympia, offering us a chance to reflect on the past and celebrate the present.

Among the committee members is Brian Lock, whose family once owned the building where the mural is now located. The Lock family were among the Chinese-American business owners in the early days of Olympia.

The City Council will be presented with a print of the Olympia Dragon Mural.

Attachments:

None