

# **Elevate: Public Art and Placemaking Program**

Elevating History: A Mural Series from the Living  
Oral History Project



**+ THE ANN ARBOR ART CENTER**

## OVERVIEW

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2. Elevating History: A Mural Series from the Living Oral History Project
  - About the Project
  - Partners
  - Call for Art
  - Timeline

# THE DDA ELEVATE PROGRAM

The DDA Elevate Program aims to fund public art and placemaking installations that enhance the downtown experience for all people.

## Our program goals are to elevate:

- History & Storytelling
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Play, Interaction, and Creativity
- Placemaking

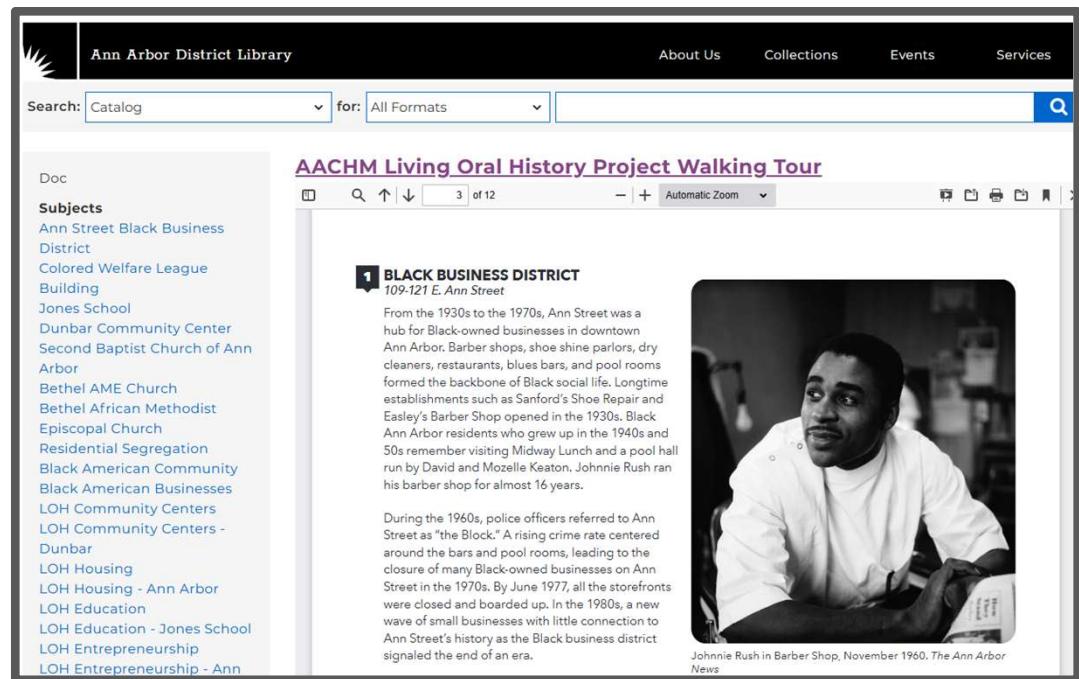


**ELEVATE**  
DDA DOWNTOWN ART & PLACEMAKING PROGRAM  
*Liberty Plaza*

# ELEVATING HISTORY: A MURAL SERIES FROM THE LIVING ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

**Project Focus:** To honor downtown's history as a vibrant center for Ann Arbor's Black community, businesses, families, and civic leaders.

**Partnership:** DDA Working with the A2AC, [AACHM](#) & [AADL](#)



Ann Arbor District Library

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**Subjects**

- Ann Street Black Business District
- Colored Welfare League Building
- Jones School
- Dunbar Community Center
- Second Baptist Church of Ann Arbor
- Bethel AME Church
- Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church
- Residential Segregation
- Black American Community
- Black American Businesses
- LOH Community Centers
- LOH Community Centers - Dunbar
- LOH Housing
- LOH Housing - Ann Arbor
- LOH Education
- LOH Education - Jones School
- LOH Entrepreneurship
- LOH Entrepreneurship - Ann

**AACHM Living Oral History Project Walking Tour**

1 BLACK BUSINESS DISTRICT 109-121 E. Ann Street

From the 1930s to the 1970s, Ann Street was a hub for Black-owned businesses in downtown Ann Arbor. Barber shops, shoe shine parlors, dry cleaners, restaurants, blues bars, and pool rooms formed the backbone of Black social life. Longtime establishments such as Sanford's Shoe Repair and Easley's Barber Shop opened in the 1930s. Black Ann Arbor residents who grew up in the 1940s and 50s remember visiting Midway Lunch and a pool hall run by David and Mozelle Keaton. Johnnie Rush ran his barber shop for almost 16 years.

During the 1960s, police officers referred to Ann Street as "the Block." A rising crime rate centered around the bars and pool rooms, leading to the closure of many Black-owned businesses on Ann Street in the 1970s. By June 1977, all the storefronts were closed and boarded up. In the 1980s, a new wave of small businesses with little connection to Ann Street's history as the Black business district signaled the end of an era.



Johnnie Rush in Barber Shop, November 1960. The Ann Arbor News

# ABOUT THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL HISTORICAL MUSEUM

**The only Museum dedicated to the preservation of Black history in Washtenaw County**

## Our Mission

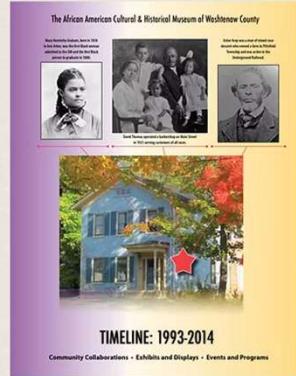
To research, collect, preserve and exhibit cultural and historical materials about the life and work of African Americans in Washtenaw County. Click on the Timeline and read about the past programs, tours, exhibits and collaborations the AACHM has been part of over the years.

**African American Cultural and Historical Museum of Washtenaw County**

AACHM Exhibits Collections Local History Woodlawn Cemetery Support Contact Shop

## Celebrating a Permanent Home

**Our Mission**  
To research, collect, preserve and exhibit cultural and historical materials about the life and work of African Americans in Washtenaw County. Click on the Timeline and read about the past programs, tours, exhibits and collaborations the AACHM has been part of over the years. Check out the [Facebook](#) page for the past years of activity,



**TIMELINE: 1993-2014**  
Community Collaborations • Exhibits and Displays • Events and Programs

**The only Museum dedicated to the preservation of Black history in Washtenaw County**

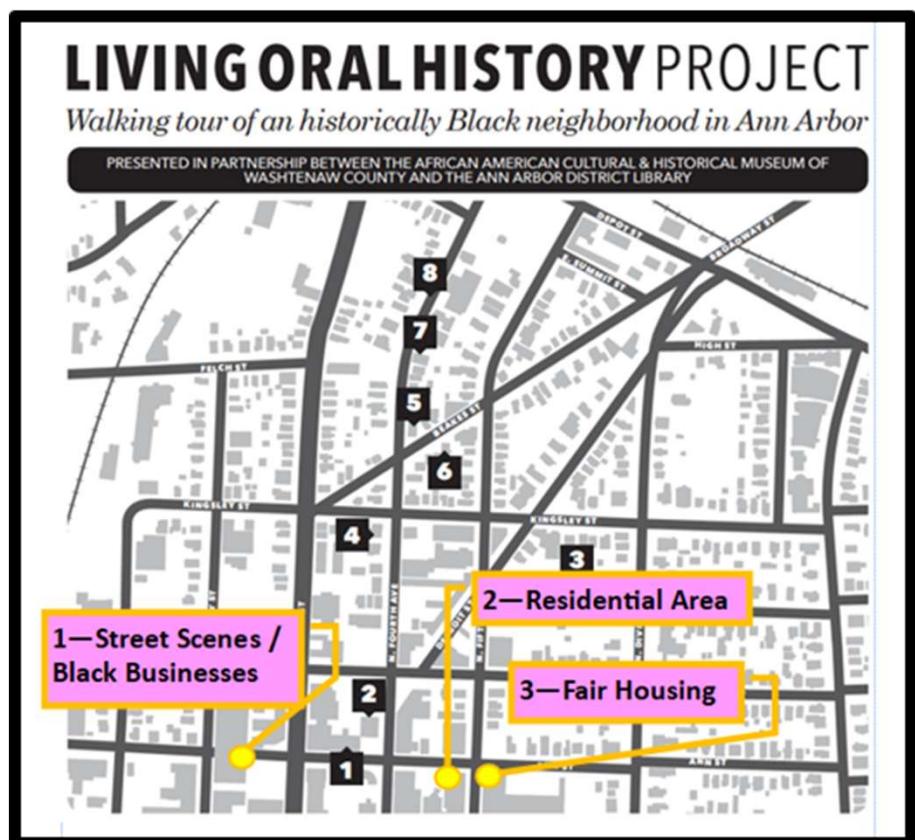
On February 6, 1993 Dr. Margaret Burroughs, co-founder of the DuSable Museum in Chicago, spoke at the Delta Psi Omega Chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority on Founders' Day. The theme was "Celebrating African Identity Through the Arts". She challenged those in attendance to start an African American Museum in Washtenaw County. The first organizational meeting was held on March 13 and the challenge issued by Margaret Burroughs was shared with the greater community. And the many, many people from the community responded with volunteer hours, financial donations, board of trustee service, ad hoc and standing committee work, and memberships.

# ABOUT LIVING ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

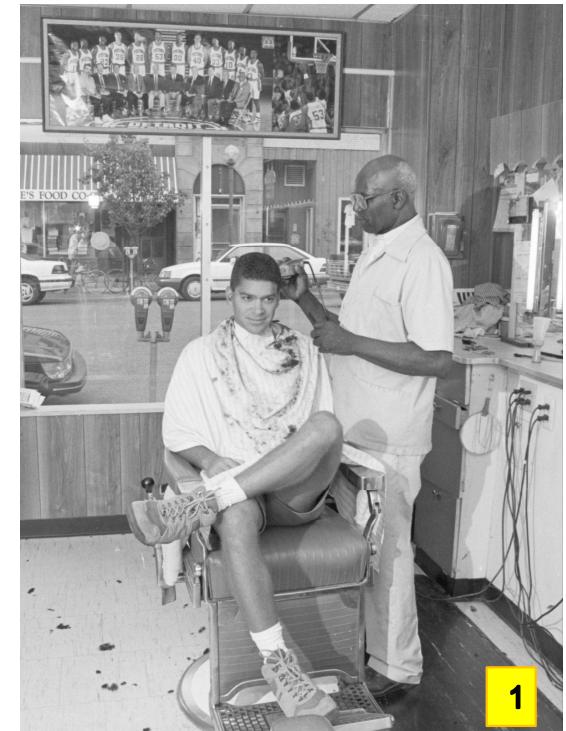
# Living Oral History Project

## **Selected Mural Themes Include:**

- 1 – Street Scenes / Black Businesses
- 2 – Residential Area
- 3 – Fair Housing



# CALL FOR ART



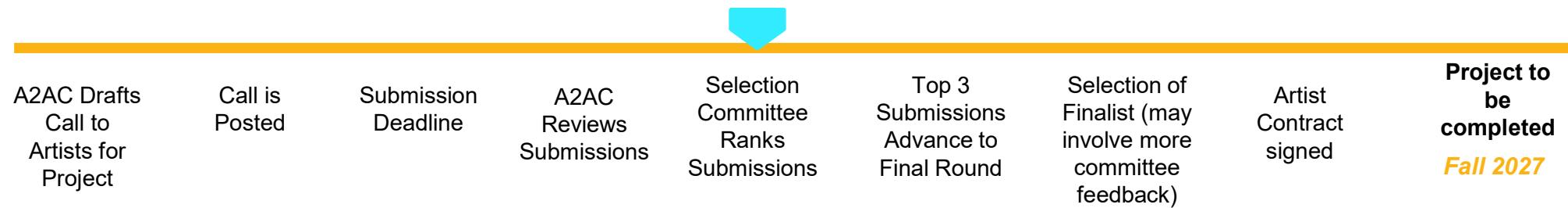
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# SELECTION PROCESS

- Call Submission Deadline: November 10th, 2025
- Selection Process
- Selection Committee consists of representatives from:
  - DDA Staff Member
  - Public Services Staff Member
  - AACHM Board Members and Executive Director
  - Housing Commission Community Leadership Council Member
  - Public Arts Commission Member
  - AADL Staff Member
- Semi-finalists Selected: Feb 2026
- Semi-finalists Proposals: Artists will be given 6 weeks to develop proposal(s)
- Finalist Awarded: April 2026

## Process Timeline



# INSTALLATION

- **Project Completion and Installation:** Ann Street will be under construction Summer and Fall of 2026, starting near the parking garage (Project 1) and moving sequentially towards City Hall (Project 2 and 3). The DDA would like to install the murals after construction of each street section is complete.
  - **Project 1:** Installation expected September 2026, dependent on the completed section of Ann Street construction. Installation may move to Spring 2027
  - **Project 2:** Fabrication to be complete in 2026 and installed early 2027 after Ann St construction is complete
  - **Project 3:** Fabrication to be complete in 2026 and installed early 2027 after Ann St construction is complete

## Process Timeline

