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The mosaic panels commissioned by Southfield can be found by the southbound Northwestern Highway Service Drive pathway of the Southfield City Centre, near LTU's campus.

Photo provided by Fred Zorn

Southfield begins installation of 'Tapestry' mosaic panels

By: Mike Koury (</reporterbio/mike-koury>) | **Southfield Sun** (<https://www.candgnews.com/newspaper/southfieldsun>) | **Published November 22, 2021**

SOUTHFIELD — The city of Southfield has begun the installation of mosaic panels outside of Lawrence Technological University.

The beginning of the installation of "Tapestry of Community"



began in October with members of city staff, the local community and the artist commissioned to create the pieces, Hubert Massey.

The panels are located adjacent to the southbound Northwestern Highway Service Drive pathway of the Southfield City Centre, near LTU's campus.

Southfield Director of Planning Terry Croad said it was important for a majority minority community to have representation from artists, and that they were lucky to have something from someone like Massey installed in the city, which adds to their brand and credibility.

"He's just a gentle artist who doesn't have an ego, and it makes it easy for us to work with and telling the story of Southfield through his art mosaic," he said. "Like he says many times ... 'These tiles are designed to last hundreds of years.'"

Croad stated the panels were designed for the pedestrian level so they could be seen from the pathway whether someone is walking or biking.

"They're also in a location, they're colorful enough that they can be seen from the highway and, hopefully, have people say, 'Yeah, I'd like to check that out,' get off the highway and come and visit the art installation," he said.

City officials stated the mosaics — designed as nine separate pieces — will tell the story of Southfield.

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In terms of what it will bring to the area, City Administrator Frederick Zorn stated the art panels will bring a greater sense of vibrancy.

"They're thought-provoking when you step back and look at the panel," he said. "It's about how we come together within the community. The piece speaks to vibrancy, inclusion, working together; pays homage to a balance between neighborhoods as well as commerce when you look at the individual panels."

Croad said art like "Tapestry" evokes discussion and investigation, and whatever people think of it, they want to know more about it.

"We've been working on extending our pedestrian bike pathway. We have now close to eight linear miles of path, and because we're adjacent to a highway. ... We have to work harder to attract and retain people in this arena," he said. "The placemaking and the art are part of having people get out of their offices and walk on a sunny day or come and visit us, and the number of art installations that we've done along the pathway are getting noticed."

According to a city press release, Massey's bold, vibrant images can be spotted throughout metro Detroit, including in Mexicantown, Greektown, the Cultural Center, the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American



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Hubert Massey sits alongside one of his mosaic panels he designed for the city of Southfield. Photo provided by Fred Zorn

History, the Detroit Athletic Club and more.

“An award-winning Kresge Fine Arts Fellow, his distinctive fresco murals grace the halls of such visible Michigan destinations as the Flint Institute of the Arts, Detroit Athletic Club and his alma mater, Grand Valley State University, where he earned an honorary doctorate of fine arts in 2012,” states the release. “In 2014, the Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority commissioned Hubert to create the first large-scale mural completed for Cobo Center since 1987. A fresco painting, the mural will feature images and tell stories of Detroit community pride.”

Massey studied at the University of London’s Slade Institute of Fine Arts. He later learned the centuries-old fresco technique from former assistants of Diego Rivera. Today, Massey is the only known African-American commissioned fresco artist in America, according to the city.

“Public art begins with the community it will serve,” Massey said in the press release. “In fact, after nearly 20 years of creating large-scale public works of art for various cities, communities and neighborhoods throughout the Midwest, it is my belief that public art should be, first and foremost, meaningful to those who surround it.”

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