PRESS RELEASE

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Artist Selected to Transform Historic Copper Beech Tree into Public Sculpture at Weaver Library

EAST PROVIDENCE, RI — The East Providence Public Library, Mayor Bob DaSilva, and the Department of Planning and Economic Development are pleased to announce that artist Anthony Heinz May has been selected to create and install a public sculpture from the historic Copper Beech tree that has stood on the lawn of Weaver Library for generations.

May, a nationally recognized sculptor based in Portland, Oregon, was chosen through a competitive public art selection process to reimagine the beloved tree as a lasting work of art following its decline due to Beech Leaf Disease. The sculpture will preserve the physical presence and legacy of the approximately 125- to 150-year-old tree, which has served as a landmark at Weaver Library.

Anthony Heinz May is a public artist whose sculptures have been installed in parks, arboreta, educational institutions, and public spaces throughout the United States. His work explores the intersection of natural systems and human-made environments, transforming trees and other organic materials into large-scale sculptural installations that promote environmental awareness and community engagement. Library Trustee and artist selection panel member, Betsy Ingraham, said, “I really believe Anthony’s special creation will make imaginations soar!”

Working directly with the tree itself, May creates site-specific sculptures that explore the relationship between nature, community, and the built environment. His innovative process involves transforming the original material into a dynamic sculptural composition while retaining the tree’s identity and history.

“I liked Anthony's design because it encourages the viewer to think about the way nature changes over time. Humans have a profound impact on the natural world (including the spread of diseases like Beech Leaf Disease), and this design calls attention to our relationship with the urban forest,” Molly Ahern, Senior Planner and member of the artist selection panel said.

May’s artistic practice focuses on repurposing fallen and dying trees into public art installations that encourage reflection on environmental stewardship, change, and resilience. By preserving much of the tree in place, the project will allow the Copper Beech to continue serving as both a visual landmark and a reminder of the tree’s important role in the local ecosystem.

“I am looking forward to watching the community observe the tree's transition into an art piece that ignites curiosity and conversation,” said Meredith Bonds-Harmon, Library Director.

The selected design celebrates the Copper Beech’s long history as a witness to generations of East Providence residents while creating a new gathering place for visitors to the library. The sculpture will incorporate portions of the original trunk and branches, transforming them into an expressive work that blurs the boundaries between nature, sculpture, and architecture.
The project is funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in support of the City’s public art initiative.

Additional information about the project, installation timeline, and opportunities for public engagement will be announced as work progresses.