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A special project announced by Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak to honor former Minneapolis Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton is underway. The City of Minneapolis will renovate the landmark, Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired bridge on Third Avenue South over Interstate 94 and rededicate it as the "Sharon Sayles Belton Bridge." The plaza at the foot of the north side of the bridge will feature a new public artwork that will honor Mayor Sayles Belton's historic accomplishments. A formal rededication of the bridge, along with the unveiling of the public artwork in Mayor Sayles Belton's honor, will take place in the fall.

Mayor Rybak also announced that the RFP for the public artwork has been released, with proposals due by February 28, 2013. The RFP is available at http://www.minneapolismn.gov/finance/procurement/procurement_professional-services.

"Rededicating this iconic Minneapolis landmark the Sharon Sayles Belton Bridge is a fitting tribute to our former mayor, who was, and continues to be, a bridge builder on so many levels," Mayor Rybak said.

Mayor Rybak continued, "I proposed this project not only because this beautiful bridge was first built under her leadership, but because the Sharon Sayles Belton Bridge connects sites of great importance both to her and our city. On one side of the bridge is the Minneapolis Convention Center, which was also build under her leadership and which is one of Minneapolis' most

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important assets, and on the other side is the Minnesota African American Museum.

"I hope the renovated and rededicated Sharon Sayles Belton Bridge, along with the public art in her honor, will inspire the community to become even more engaged in the vision of this important museum."

Former Mayor Sayles Belton said, "Public art is a wonderful way to tell a story about the values and aspirations of a community. The goal of the vision behind Avenue of the Arts was to share the culture and heritage of the people of Minneapolis through public art, beginning at the Mississippi River and stretching north along Central Avenue and south on Third Avenue. Connecting people and the diversity of our neighborhoods, and leveraging our common bond, hopes and aspirations, is the power of the arts. I am delighted that the City is committed to the power of public art to connect us."

"As Mayor, Sharon Sayles Belton believed deeply in the power of art, especially public art, to transform Minneapolis. This project will stand as a tribute both to her many historic accomplishments and to that conviction," Mayor Rybak concluded.

Bridge renovation

The Third Avenue South bridge over Interstate 94 is scheduled for renovation in 2013. This scheduled renovation will include rehabilitation of the unique pedestrian-style lighting, repainting of the railing and restoration of the colored sidewalk.

The City of Minneapolis first built the now-iconic bridge in 2000, under Mayor Sayles Belton's leadership. It is designed to reflect the prairie-inspired design principles of Frank Lloyd Wright.

New public artwork

Mayor Rybak personally proposed to the Minneapolis Public Art Advisory Panel that the City dedicate a new public artwork to Mayor Sayles Belton. In November 2012, the panel selected Mayor Rybak's proposal to be part of the City's regular 2013 public-art program.

The City of Minneapolis has released an RFP for the public artwork, to be installed on the plaza at the north side of the bridge. Proposals are due on February 28, 2013. From among those proposals, three artists will be invited to submit full designs, with the winning design selected during the week of April 8, 2013.

Each year, the City of Minneapolis dedicates two percent of its total net-debt bond program to creating and installing original public art.

Mayor Sharon Sayles Belton

Sharon Sayles Belton served as Mayor of Minneapolis from 1994–2001, and was the first woman and first African American to hold the post. Before serving as mayor, she represented the residents of Ward 8 on the City Council for 10 years, the last three as City Council

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President.

Among her many accomplishments, Mayor Sayles Belton was a champion of the arts and urban vitality. During her tenure, the City renovated the historic theaters on Hennepin Avenue, creating a regional venue for national theatrical and musical productions. She also spearheaded efforts to reconnect the city to the Mississippi River by revitalizing the blighted central riverfront and transforming it into a thriving area for housing, entertainment, recreation and culture.