

A giant, whispering 'tree' is coming to downtown D.C.

By [Sadie Dingfelder](#)

March 13, 2019 at 7:22 p.m. EDT



An interactive sculpture by Mexican-Canadian artist Rafael Lozano-Hemmer is coming to downtown D.C. in spring 2020. The 20-foot-tall piece, “Speaking Willow,” will greet visitors as they enter the courtyard of [Planet Word Museum](#), a [new, language-focused museum](#), which will occupy the historic Franklin School at 13th and K streets NW.

The tree-shaped sculpture will consist of motion-activated speakers that murmur poems, songs and sayings in 500 different languages.

“As you walk underneath, you activate the speakers overhead, and they light up and create a kind of fragile but sweet and romantic atmosphere,” Lozano-Hemmer says.

The piece was commissioned and donated by Planet Word founder Ann Friedman, a philanthropist and retired reading teacher.

“My idea was that the fun with words and language should start even before people go inside the museum walls,” Friedman says.
