

The **totem pole** in Tacoma's Fireman's Park could be permanently braced against collapse by the end of the summer.

Construction firm T. Miller Construction of Auburn will do the job for \$58,000. The only other bidder, MVG LLC of Maple Valley, asked for \$63,100.

Work could begin by the end of this month or the beginning of June, said Darius Thompson, project manager with the city of Tacoma.

City contractors discovered about a year ago that the 111-year-old pole could collapse because of rot and deterioration. Amy McBride, Tacoma's arts administrator, said carpenter ants were responsible for most of the damage.

The city erected a fence around the pole and braced it shortly thereafter, but once the work is complete, the fence should come down, McBride said.

Last year, a city working group debated saving the pole. It tentatively recommended having it removed, laid down and left to decay, a move one Puyallup Tribal member had said was traditional practice. Tacoma's landmarks and arts commissions eventually decided that the **totem pole** should remain part of the city's art collection.

City boosters erected the 83-foot-tall cedar pole in 1903 near the Tacoma Hotel at 10th and A streets. At the time, the pole was hailed as "the largest **totem pole** in the world." It was designated a city landmark in 1975.

The stabilizing rod will be 60 feet high, Thompson said, and will be embedded in the ground.

Estimates for the steel support structure put the cost at around \$40,000, according to a report given to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in June. The city will pay for the project with open space and arts maintenance funds, McBride said.

A more precise timeline could be in place later this month after Thompson speaks with the construction firm, he said.

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