NEW PUBLIC ART INITIATIVES IN ALLENTOWN 2020

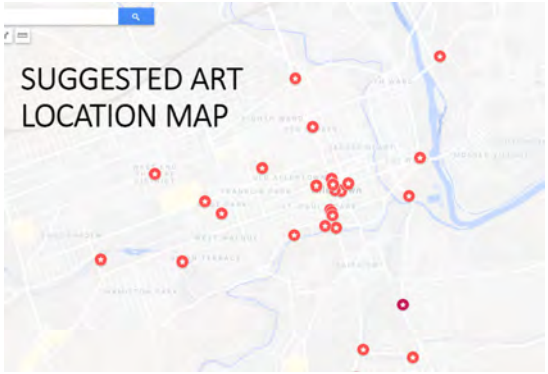
GETTING STARTED

In 2019, Materials Conservation Co. was selected via an RFP to develop a public art program for the City of Allentown. This initiative was a groundbreaking opportunity for the City to offer its support for the arts as a vehicle for beautification and economic development. It was agreed that the goals of the public art program would include:

- Building trust through a process that is open, easily-understandable and informed by first-hand information.
- Using art to tell the story of Allentown's communities today.
- Engaging communities in meaningful ways.
- Commissioning art that is high impact and of high artistic merit.

MC engaged with project stakeholders including the City of Allentown and the Allentown Arts Commission and Public Art Committee via meetings and an online survey in order to hear from each member about their hopes and aspirations for this public art program. Survey findings were represented in the word cloud on the right.

SURVEY RESULTS FORMED THE BASIS OF THE THINKING ABOUT THE PUBLIC ART INITIATIVE.



NEW MURALS FOR ALLENTOWN

Two locations were identified for new large-scale murals:

Gateway Mural:

120 South 8th Street at the PPL Substation

&

New School Mural:

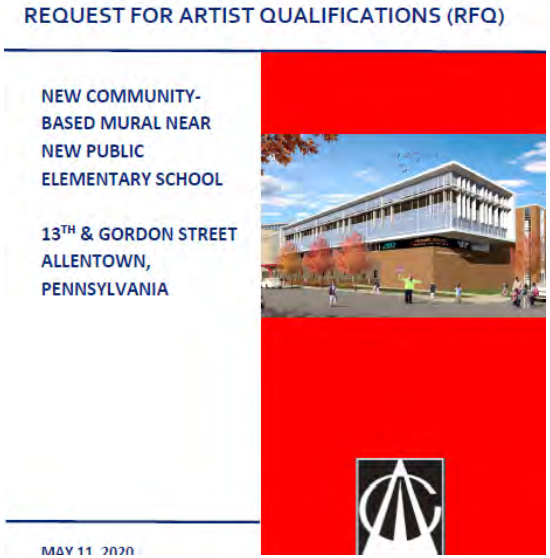
1232 ½ West Gordon Street

Across from Hays Elementary

Applications for both opportunities were open to any artist via open RFQ or RFP, which were circulated widely.

14 artists submitted proposals for the Gateway Mural RFP, and 57 artists submitted their qualifications for the New School Mural RFQ. Applications from artists came from across the country and region.

View of location for new work of art



ation for new work of art, with new school visible across Gordon Street

WELCOME TO DOWNTOWN ALLENTOWN

BY MILA SKETCH

- Mila Sketch of Austin, TX was selected via a competitive RFP for the gateway mural at the PPL Substation.
- The RFP asked for a work of art that reflects the fact that Allentown is a forward-looking, multi-cultural, vibrant and growing city. It also required that the work of art be a highly visual gateway piece at a large enough scale to engage viewers who are walking or driving by.
- Mila's winning design integrated images specific to Allentown, including buildings, mascots and signage.
- Mila worked closely with the Allentown Arts Commission in an iterative process to revise her design to reflect the places that are dear to Allentown.
- The mural was painted in the summer of 2020 and spans almost 85 feet.

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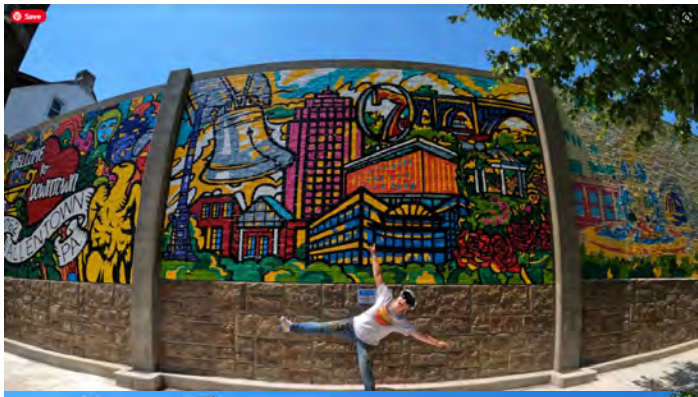


READING IS A PORTAL

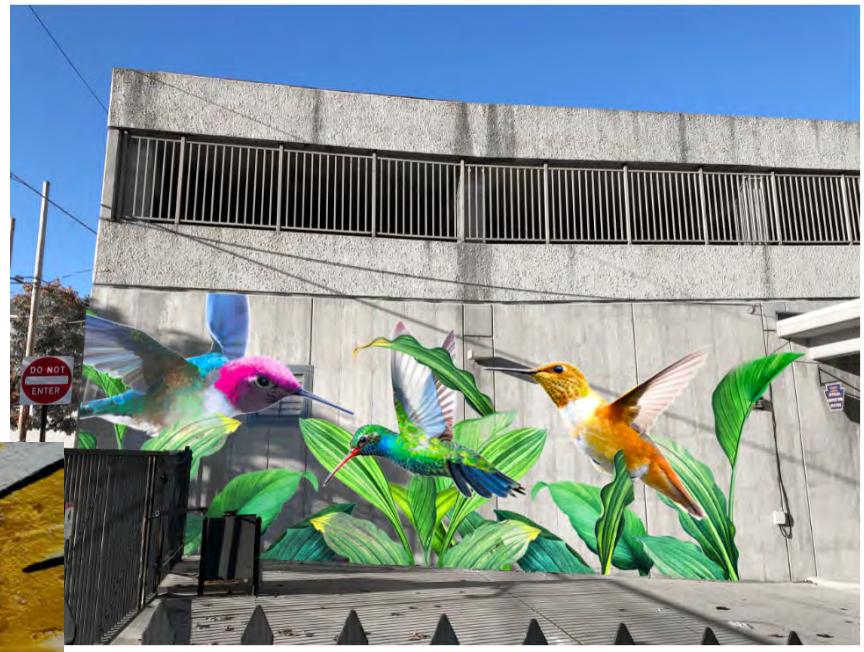
BY AARON GLASSON & CELESTE BYERS

- For this project we worked from the start with the people most involved in Hays Elementary School: the principal, art teacher, architect, outreach coordinator, and more. The school's principal, Naaman Schlegel, emphasized the school's focus on the importance of developing a love of reading. This partnership from the start of the project ensured that the final design would resonate with the school community.
- The RFQ required artists to create a work of art that would celebrate the diversity of the school community and to create a work of art to further encourage a love of reading.
- Aaron Glasson and Celeste Byers of San Diego were selected via highly-competitive artist selection process to create a new mural across from Hays Elementary School.
- Due to COVID-19 it was not possible for the artists to engage students in person. Undeterred, the artists created a bilingual online survey that was distributed to students to help the artists learn about the books and characters that the students were most excited about. Responses to the survey were included in the images that are seen coming from the pages of the book in the mural.
- The artists will also be working with the school's art teacher on an interview about being a professional artist, which will be shared with the older students. Younger students will receive a drawing page where they will get to color and personalize their own line drawing of the mural.

ART OF ENCOURAGEMENT ARTIST RELIEF MINI GRANTS

- The Art of Encouragement Artist Relief Mini grants were created in recognition of the need to provide relief to Allentown artists due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Materials Conservation worked with the Allentown Arts Commission and the Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce to implement a grant program that would provide grants of up to $3,000 for artists to create works of public art across Allentown.
- 16 Allentown artists were awarded grants and works of art have already been installed in the city, with more to follow into 2021.
- These works of art include illustration, sculpture, muralism and graphic design. Works of art will be located in public spaces across the city and will all have branded Art of Encouragement signage to identify them as part of this initiative.

ART OF ENCOURAGEMENT
ARTIST RELIEF MINI GRANTS



Rendering of new mural by Sarah Karess, coming 2021

New mural by Monica Salazar, completed fall 2020