

# Heart of Kensington

Due: August 9

## Introduction

Mural Arts Philadelphia, together with Impact Services, is seeking an artist (or collaborative team) to create a creative placemaking project in and around the Kensington and Allegheny (K&A) commercial corridor. The artwork created is part of a five-year initiative, *Heart of Kensington (HOK)*, to build social cohesion and bolster resiliency in Kensington through an intersection of public art, behavioral health, youth engagement, and workforce development.

More specifically, this artwork will be executed in the service of promoting the K&A commercial corridor as a vibrant community hub. The form of artwork created is open to the discretion of the artist but should contain visual touch points that enliven the corridor. The development and creation of the artwork will be executed alongside Impact Service's community engagement efforts and the HOK project partners. Additionally, we are looking for an artist (or collaborative team) who will engage residents throughout the entire process. Currently, we anticipate choosing one artist (or collaborative team) that will execute the project between July through the fall and winter.

The Heart of Kensington vision is for neighbors to feel connected to each other, take shared responsibility for the neighborhood, feel empowered to make a change in their environment and envision a positive future for themselves and their children.

The commission is being managed by Mural Arts Philadelphia in conjunction with Impact Services (the lead organization responsible for implementing Heart of Kensington Collective Impact 2022.)

Goals of the Heart of Kensington collaborative project include:

- Health and safety: residents feel safe in their neighborhood and live in an environment that promotes wellness
- Education: residents are educated and informed about issues affecting the neighborhood
- Economic Opportunity: residents are employed and self-sufficient
- Housing: residents have access to quality affordable housing and are stable in their homes
- Community: residents feel connected, take shared responsibility for the neighborhood, feel empowered to make change and envision a positive future

The goals of the public artwork created as part of the Heart of Kensington include:

- Use art to enact a vibrant commercial corridor
- Engage in a participatory project that reflects the vision of the surrounding community
- Help residents address the impacts of the neighborhood's drug trade

## Schedule

June 14: Open call for proposals released

August 9: Open call proposals due

Artist selection will be a two-step process. We expect that finalist artists/teams will be identified in late August.

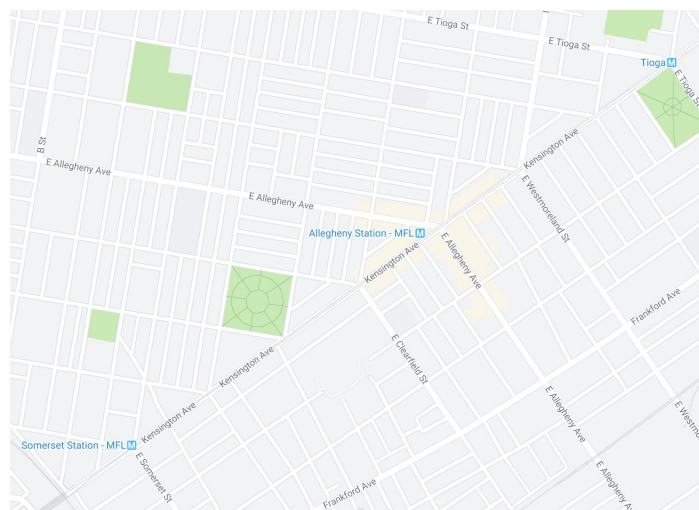
The finalist's plans will be presented at a storefront on Kensington Ave, for the community to vote and offer their input. Artists/teams will be selected shortly after that and brought under contract in mid-September 2019.

Mid September: Final Artist selected

October - February: Public art & community engagement process

March - June: Art production

Mural Arts team has worked with Impact Services to identify what range of possibilities might exist for creative placemaking. The recommendations include a combination of murals, social practice, photography, or paintings on the Septa infrastructure.



## The Project

### About the Heart of Kensington Collective Impact

In 2016, Impact launched a collaborative, inclusive planning process, with the generous support of the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation, that engaged 453 local residents, community organizations and other stakeholders as decision makers, leaders and doers. This process helped develop a vision for the future of Kensington as a neighborhood that is a safe, healthy and clean community.

The Heart of Kensington (HOK) is a community located a few miles north of Philadelphia's Center City district. Historically, it was a densely industrial area known as "The Workshop of the World." In the 1950's factories started closing, jobs began disappearing and the neighborhood was sent into a long decline that still reverberates today. In the last few years, Kensington has faced increased challenges stemming from sustained poverty and unemployment and exacerbated by the growing opioid epidemic—a public health crisis of an order of magnitude that is hard to overstate. Last year, Philadelphia's overdose rate was three times that of the gun homicide rate in Chicago—and Kensington is at the epicenter of this crisis in Philadelphia.

While the neighborhood has suffered from deeply-rooted and multidimensional challenges, it is also a rich community with dedicated residents and opportunities to build on the strengths that already exist. Leveraging these assets, however, will require a new approach that recognizes trauma in the community, acknowledge its effect on people who live here and addresses how to overcome it. Trauma Informed Care provides a framework to do this. Impact is part of a growing movement of trauma-informed organizations and it is applying this approach to its community development work as well.

A Trauma Informed approach to Community Development (TICD) takes a strengths based approach to build community resilience- this means empowering people, investing in communities and building skills/local capacity. It places a premium on collaboration, transparency and building trust.

Rather than focusing on how trauma can disrupt a person's life, we are choosing to develop a strengths-based approach, which focuses on how communities can come together to become safer, healthier, and more resilient. Resilience is the capacity to overcome adversity, to believe that some better future might exist, even when no other possibilities are immediately apparent. Many factors contribute to resiliency,

including social networks and the built environment, and creative placemaking projects offer the opportunity to improve both.

## The Site

The project will be centered on the K&A commercial corridor. As the literal and psychological heart of the community, the intersection of Kensington and Allegheny is of critical importance. Kensington Avenue has all the tools for a thriving commercial corridor, but it is not currently maximizing its potential. General blight, crime and safety, and poor marketing are contributing factors towards its underutilization. Proposed investments already on the table including the Kensington Storefront Challenge and the new Esperanza Health Center can serve as catalysts throughout the focus zone. In addition to already planned investments, a series of proposed projects can further improve the focus zone and help to implement overall neighborhood strategies and tactics.

Additionally, residents feel that there is a perception problem in Kensington, ranging from commercial corridors to the overall narrative of the neighborhood. This project seeks to direct attention to improving the “feel of the neighborhood” through visual representation, infrastructural improvements, and community-building projects to consolidate the commercial corridor identity.

The information shared above was pulled from the Heart of Kensington Collective Impact 2022 strategic plan. For more information please refer to the full plan: <https://bit.ly/2IGHuZR>  
Impact Services, Philadelphia PA  
Report prepared by: Alys Mann Alys Mann Consulting

The Heart of Kensington Collaborative is a project funded by the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation Neighborhood Implementation Grant. The Collaborative partners include Esperanza Health Center, Mural Arts Philadelphia, the Free Library of Philadelphia Foundation’s Maker Program (delivered at the McPherson Square branch), and Street Soccer USA. Impact Services is coordinating and convening the collaborative group and will oversee the community engagement process.

## About Mural Arts Philadelphia

Mural Arts Philadelphia is the nation’s largest public art program, dedicated to the belief that art ignites change. For 30 years, Mural Arts has united artists and communities through a collaborative process, rooted in the traditions of mural-making, to create art that transforms public spaces and individual lives. Mural Arts engages communities in nearly 100 public art projects each year, and maintains its growing collection through a

restoration initiative. Core Mural Arts programs such as Art Education, Restorative Justice, and Porch Light yield unique, project-based learning opportunities for thousands of youth and adults.

In recent years, Mural Arts has evolved into a multi-disciplinary arts organization exploring the intersection of muralism, public art and contemporary art. In addition, Mural Arts has collaborated with an increasing range of community, civic, cultural and development organizations to realize projects that have expanded the city's public art portfolio in new and exciting ways. Increasingly, Mural Arts has assisted in private organizations in commissioning artworks that engage the communities where they are working.

For more information: <https://www.muralarts.org/>

## Artist Scope of Work

### Artist / Artist Team Responsibilities

#### Artists / Collaborative Teams Selected

- Conduct research as necessary to understand the site, the project, the community's history and culture and other considerations as necessary to inform the artistic approach
- Develop a concept for murals and/or other artworks on the project site
- Develop a community engagement plan alongside Impact Services
- Present concept to Mural Arts and Impact Services
- If selected for final review, presentation of concepts to community members

#### Artists / Collaborative Teams Selected for the Commission

- Create an approved design for the artworks
- Collaborate with Mural Arts production team on the completion of the artworks
- For any art components other than murals, identify and secure the services of suppliers, fabricators, installers and other professionals as necessary to fulfill the artist responsibilities in the production of artworks
- Fulfill artist responsibilities within the contracted budget and schedule
- Participate in community engagement and education activities, to be determined

### Mural Arts Responsibility

- Coordinate reviews and permissions in regard to artist selection and concept development, with appropriate partners.
- Provide production support, including the provision of technical assistance, materials, supplies, and labor as required
- Coordinate marketing, documentation and public engagement

#### Budget

The overall budget available for the artworks is \$25,000. This budget would be all-inclusive, including artist fees, artist assistant costs, artist studio costs, materials and supplies, specialty consultants and installation of all artworks.

External costs such as marketing, documentation, security and evaluation do not need to be included in the budget.

#### Schedule

- June 14: RFP released
- July 19: Deadline for Questions
- August 9: RFP closes
- August 21: Shortlist presentation at KABA meeting
- Mid September: Final Artist Announced
- Mid September - October: Meetings with project partners to discuss engagement plan
- October - February: Public art & community engagement process
- Winter: Mural Arts Internal Design Review
- March - June: Art production

## Artist Selection Process

### Eligibility

We are seeking artists or collaborative artist teams who can make a commitment to working in Philadelphia as necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of this project. For the purposes of this RFP, “artist” refers to an individual artist or a collaborative team of artists.

### Selection Process

This will be an open call. Artist qualifications/portfolios will be solicited by Mural Arts Philadelphia. Mural Arts, its artistic advisors and Impact Services will review the artist submissions and identify a short list of finalists.

Up to three artists/teams will be short-listed for each site. Each will be invited to present their concepts to the residential and business community on the K&A corridor. Mural Arts will select the artist/teams that will be invited to the short list, and then awarded the final commissions, in consultation with the community and Impact Services.

The decision will be based on a review of artist/team qualifications and concepts using the criteria that are listed below. Mural Arts is not required to make a selection from the submissions it receives if, in Mural Arts’ judgment, the relevance, quality or the qualifications of the artists are not appropriate.

### Qualifications and Review Criteria

The evaluation of artist/team qualifications will be based on a review of completed works, works in progress or as otherwise described in curatorial writings, critiques, articles or other publications. The artists’ qualifications shall demonstrate:

- Experience in creating permanent, durable, outdoor public artworks
- Appreciation of infrastructure design, urban design and public space;
- Availability to accomplish projects of similar complexity within the budget, timeline and technical constraints presented, based on examples of prior work.
- Experience in community-engaged art processes and research
- Ability to create site-specific artwork that is responsive to the opportunities and constraints of the site
- Ability to create work that engages a wide audience

The evaluation of the finalist artist / team concepts will be based on a review of submitted concepts, using the artistic and urban design goals outlined for the project, as well as the following criteria:

- Creativity in addressing the constraints of the site through materials and methods

- Creativity in community engagement approach
- Success in addressing goals related to enhancing pedestrian spaces
- Success in addressing goals related to reflecting the community's vision and spirit
- Feasibility of completing the project within the allotted budget and timeframe

## Application

### Preliminary Consultation

Artists who are interested in submitting their proposal are encouraged to contact Mural Arts with any questions about the project. Periodically, questions and answers will be posted to the Mural Arts web site where this RFP is posted: (<https://www.muralarts.org/artist-resources/calls-to-artists/>).

### Submission Requirements

Interested artists should submit:

- An application checklist including the names and contact information for all artists on the team, and an inventory of all material that is being submitted.
- A CV or resume for each artist (up to 2 pages per artist).
- A current artist statement for each artist
- A short written response that answers each of these following questions:
  - What interests you about this site?
  - What idea(s) would you be interested in exploring at this site?
  - If an artist team, how would your collaborative process work?
  - Describe what opportunities you would like to explore at the site.
  - Discuss experience working on projects with this many constraints imposed by the site owner.
  - Discuss any other aspects of your practice that will assist us in evaluating your qualifications in the context of the goals and review criteria listed in this RFP.
- Up to 15 images of past completed work that you consider relevant to this project.
  - Digital images must be JPEG files and must be no more than 300dpi and no larger than 1024 x 768 pixel resolution. Each image must be unlocked and downloadable for viewing.
  - Each JPEG file must be titled with the artist's name and number that corresponds to the annotated image list. File name example: JonesJane001, JonesJane002.
- Please provide a list of images, including the following information:
  - Image name, Artist's name
  - Title of artwork, Location, Date of Completion, Public Art Budget
  - Medium and Dimensions



- Brief description
- Provide references of two or more recent clients, not to include Mural Arts Philadelphia. Include name, address, email address and telephone (preferably other public art clients).

#### Submission Instructions

Submissions will be accepted electronically by email, Drop Box or WeTransfer, sent to the following email address. Mural Arts will reply with an acknowledgement of all submissions it receives.

Cathy Harris  
Director of Community Murals  
Mural Arts Philadelphia  
1727-29 Mt. Vernon Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19130  
215-685-0750  
cathy.harris@muralarts.org

Application Checklist

Please complete this checklist and submit as the cover sheet of your application.

Names and contact information for all artists on the team, and an inventory of all material that is being submitted.

	Lead Artist	Collaborating Artist	Collaborating Artist
Name			
Address			
Phone			
Email			
Web			

- A CV or resume for each artist (up to 2 pages per artist)
- A current artist statement for each artist
- A short written response
- Up to 15 images of past completed work that you consider relevant to this project.
- Image list
- References