

Sharswood: A Place in Time Webb Plaza Mural Panel Project



Moore College students work on Betsy Casanas' *Sing Because it is Heard* at her Philadelphia studio, March 8, 2017.
Photo by Steve Weinik.

Posting Date: August 23, 2024

Application deadline: October 6, 2024 11:59 p.m.

Artist fee: \$8,000 for community engagement, planning and design (see Artist Fee section for further details)

Department: Community Murals

**If you have applied to the general Sharswood RFQ and Sanctuary Farm RFQ, you will be automatically considered for this project and only need to provide a letter of interest.

For questions or concerns, please contact at sahiti.bonam@muralarts.org

Introduction

Mural Arts Philadelphia is seeking an artist for a new project at Webb Plaza, 2077 Ridge Avenue, a public space that is part of a recently-constructed commercial development in the Sharswood neighborhood of North Philadelphia. The plaza is named after the Webb family, who had a prominent music business in the area. This is a signature project in a larger project in partnership with the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) and the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency to engage and create multiple public art projects in the Sharswood neighborhood.

The scope of this project will be to create eight small murals that together explore the history and dynamics of Sharswood. The murals will be produced on alumilite panels (a variety of approaches are possible) then installed on identified walls of buildings adjacent to Webb Plaza.

We are seeking an artist interested in storytelling about the cultural history and evolving social conditions in a neighborhood that reflects the last century of Black history in Philadelphia, as well as in helping to ignite a bustling commercial space and corridor, while involving the community in developing the creative vision.

About the Project

Mural Arts Philadelphia is partnering with the Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) and the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency to invest in a variety of new public art projects in Sharswood over the next two years. These art projects are part of the area's ongoing transformation occurring through the improvement of distressed public housing and the addition of new residences, shopping, community spaces and other resources.

Mural Arts is working with PHA as part of the Sharswood Blumberg Choice Neighborhoods Transformation Plan. [Read more about the entire project here.](#) Mural Arts has also received funding from the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Fund to fulfill its goals of developing and rehabilitating distressed neighborhoods for low- and moderate-income residents.

About Sharswood

Sharswood's modern history can be traced to Philadelphia's late nineteenth-century industrial era, when it was transformed from agricultural lands to a neighborhood of row houses for workers, many of them German immigrants, in the breweries that were built in the area to take advantage of water from the Schuylkill River.

About a century ago, the neighborhood was invigorated by the influx of Black Americans moving from the segregated South to seek work in Northern industrial cities, in the early years

of what is now called the Great Migration. Ridge Avenue became a significant corridor for Black-American culture, rivaling areas like Harlem in New York and the Hill District in Pittsburgh, and Columbia Avenue (now Cecil B. Moore Avenue) became a bustling corridor of businesses serving Black Philadelphians.

From an artistic and cultural point of view, this time became known as Philadelphia's Black Renaissance. But conditions in Sharswood were difficult. The neighborhood quickly became segregated and outside of the war years work could be hard to find. By the 1960s, when much of the nation was enjoying the benefits of the postwar economic expansion, Sharswood was experiencing some of the city's worst housing conditions, highest rates of unemployment, poor educational attainment and a markedly lower average income.

Sharswood became a locus of action for racial and economic justice. In 1964, tensions between Black Philadelphians and the police erupted after officers attempted to intervene in a domestic dispute. Three days of unrest followed, with nearly 800 arrests and the destruction of nearly 200 properties, particularly on Columbia and Ridge Avenues. In 1965, following years of legal actions against Girard College's whites-only policy, activists launched a months-long protest at the college and the state office building downtown, attracting Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. in support and resulting in the integration for the school in 1968. (The "Cecil B. Moore Freedom Fighters" were commemorated in a mural completed in 2021.)

Community revitalization efforts began in this era, as well. In 1966, to improve neighborhood conditions, the Philadelphia Housing Authority built the Norman Blumberg Apartments, three towers surrounded by low-rise buildings on an eight-acre site along 23rd Street just south of Ridge Avenue.

However, as Philadelphia lost industrial jobs and population in the last third of the twentieth century, Sharswood was hard hit. Disinvestment took hold: businesses closed on Ridge Avenue, residents left and schools closed. Many of the families that remained in Sharswood, including those in Blumberg Apartments, were experiencing deep and sustained poverty.

Fifty years later, change is looming in Sharswood. In the last decade or so, Philadelphia has experienced reinvestment and population growth driven largely by its successful service, education, health and research sectors. Real estate investment pressures have reached Sharswood, advancing from Brewerytown to the west, Fairmount / Franklintown to the south, and the Temple University area to the east. Sharswood residents and business owners, whose resiliency sustained them through decades of disinvestment, are now facing pressures of displacement.

At the same time, the area surrounding Blumberg Apartments has been designated as a "Choice Neighborhood" by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Philadelphia Housing Authority (PHA) obtained a federal grant to develop a plan for using public and private funding to support locally-driven strategies in a comprehensive approach to neighborhood transformation, including the replacement of the Blumberg apartment towers with low-rise, mixed-income housing (one of the original towers, with housing for seniors, remains). Based on that plan, PHA subsequently received a HUD Choice Neighborhoods

Implementation Grant, which will catalyze more than \$300 million worth of “neighborhood, housing, and people” goals and strategies.

Those strategies include the creation of more than 600 units of housing (replacement public housing, low-income and market-rate rental, and workforce and market-rate homeownership units), on site of the former Blumberg Apartments and on property PHA acquired throughout the neighborhood, as well as rehabilitation of existing housing. They include neighborhood-focused items like a fully-realized Peace Park, a new Ridge Avenue Shopping Center and supermarket, and a small business incubator. Community residents will have access to resources for improving education, health, and job preparedness via new and continuing programs based at a workforce center in the former Vaux School.

Goals

The following are the core goals of this project:

- Explore and make visible the neighborhood’s stories – past, present, future – in collaboration with the community and the businesses at Webb Plaza.
- Collect narratives and ideas through engagement with the community to develop a mural design
- Embrace the stories, voices and/or talents of community members in the creation and production of work
- Activate the space of Webb Plaza
- Support the efforts of the Philadelphia Housing Authority in implementing the Blumberg–Sharswood Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan and to promote affordable housing choices in North Philadelphia, and the efforts of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency to revitalize distressed neighborhoods.

Scope of Work, Budget and Schedule

This project involves the creation and installation of mini-murals on brick walls of buildings at Webb Plaza. The production of these murals can involve either of the following two options:

1. Paint or print on parachute cloth, then adhere the parachute cloth to alumilite panels
2. Paint directly onto the alumilite panels

In either case, the alumilite panels will be installed on the selected walls by contracted fabricators; installation will not be the responsibility of the artist.

The walls can accommodate eight to twelve, standard-sized alumilite panels (4 ft. by 8 ft.) The number of panels is dependent on the final artist's creative direction.

The following are images and a site map of targeted walls. The red marked up boxes approximately address the areas of the panel location, which range from approximately 7 ft. by 9 ft. to 9 ft. by 10 ft. ft of exposed brick.

Building 1

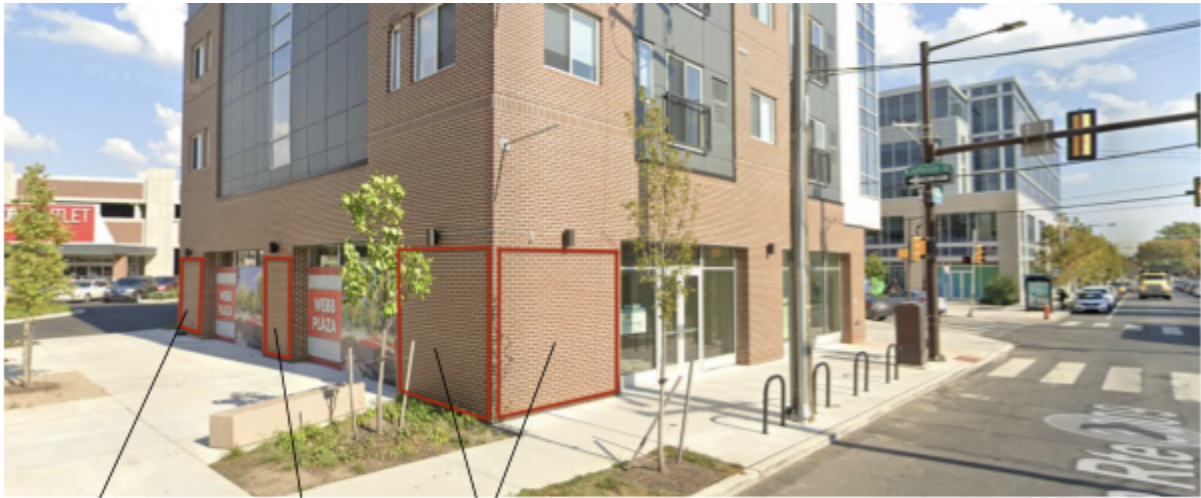


H: 9'9"
W: 10'4"

H: 9'9"
W: 6'8"

H: 9'9"
W: 10'4"

Building 2

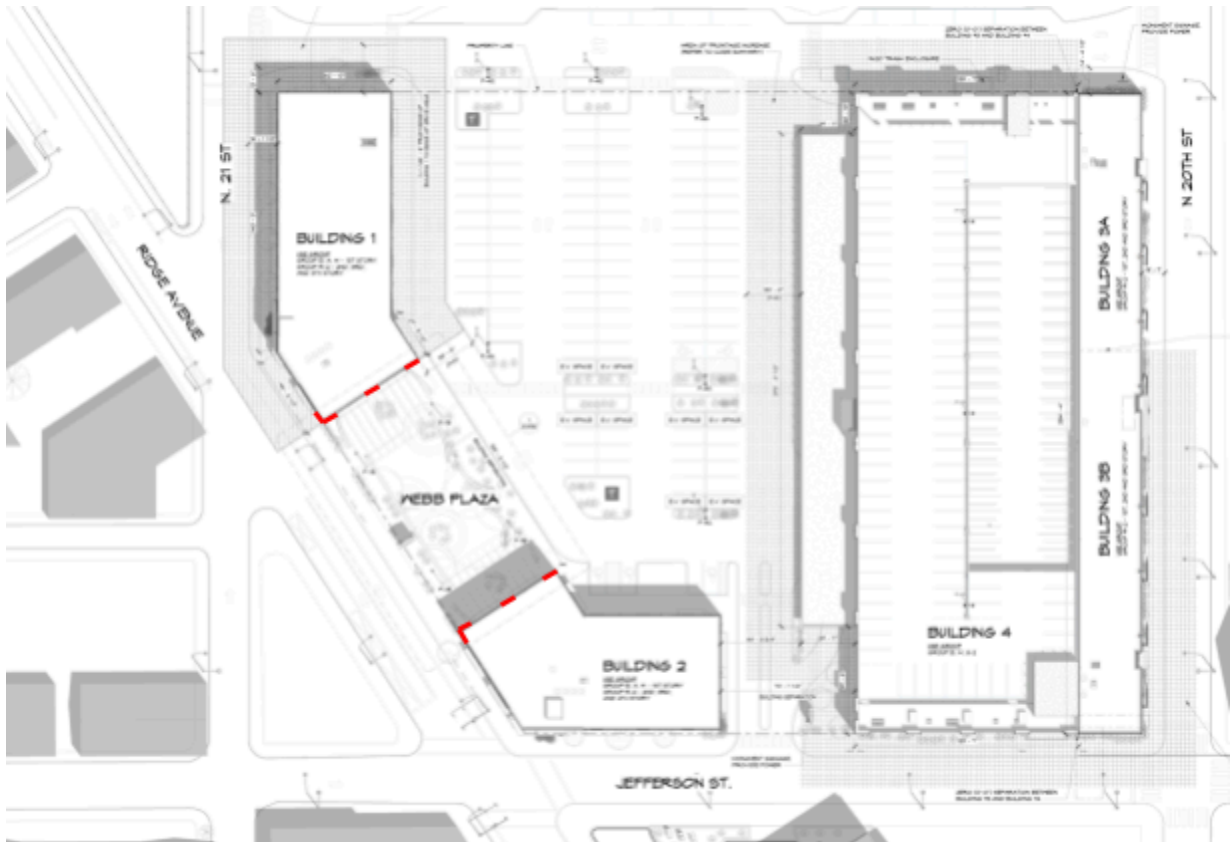


H: 9'9"
W: 10'3.5"

H: 9'9"
W: 6'8"

H: 9'9"
W: 10'4"

Webb Plaza Site Map



Artist Scope of Work

The following are the main responsibilities for the selected artist of the project:

- Conduct research as necessary to understand Webb Plaza and the project, and other considerations as necessary to inform the artistic approach
- Participate in ongoing community and stakeholder engagement activities, organized by the artist and/or Mural Arts
- Create designs for the mural, prepare the digital files necessary for presentation and design review
- Present concept to Mural Arts and to stakeholders
- Collaborate with Mural Arts production team on the best installation / production of the artwork / activation / installation methods that suit the artistic abilities
- Fulfill artist responsibilities within contracted budget and schedule

Mural Arts Scope of Work

The following are the main responsibilities for the Mural Arts project manager/s:

- To oversee and implement the project budget
- Order and manage supplies
- Coordinate community engagement meetings
- Provide any necessary information to the artist for the development of the project
- Contract for and oversee installation
- Problem solve for any project issues

Artist Fee

The artist fee for the planning, research, community engagement and design concept development will be \$8,000. The artist fee for finalizing the designs and producing the mural will be negotiated when the artist's role in the production is confirmed. Mural Arts has additional funds for materials, supplies, equipment, assistants and other costs.

Schedule

The following is the approximate schedule of this project:

- Application open: August 23, 2024
- Application deadline: October 6, 2024 at 11:59PM
- Semifinalist selection: October 11, 2024
- Semifinalist interviews: October 14 - 17
- Finalist selection: October 18, 2024

- Community engagement, research, and design concept development: October - December 2024
- Design stage: TBD
- Installation & production: TBD

4. Artist Selection Process

Eligibility

This opportunity is open to artists based in the Philadelphia area who have a strong experience with community engagement, design/illustration and/or mural making, with an emphasis on storytelling. Community engagement and storytelling are the most important components of conceptualizing this project.

Artists with ties to Sharswood or nearby neighborhoods in North Philadelphia are especially encouraged to apply. Artists must be citizens of the U.S. or have U.S. work authorization.

**Artists who have already applied to the Sharswood artist roster will automatically be considered for this project. Artists who have not applied to be part of the roster will automatically be added, if they wish.

Selection Process

The following is the selection process of this project:

- RFQ application submission opens on August 23, 2024
- First round of applicant review by artist selection committee to select semi-finalists will be on October 11, 2024
- Interviews with semi-finalists will be conducted between October 14-17
- The final artist will be selected by October 18, 2024

Review of all applications by an artist selection committee that includes the following individuals:

- Philip Asbury, Director of Community Murals
- Sahiti Bonam, Community Murals Project Manager
- Todd Bressi, Mural Arts Curatorial Consultant
- Community stakeholders of Sharswood neighborhood
- Shift Capital, the property manager for Webb Plaza

Qualifications and Review Criteria

Artists will be considered for this project based on the following criteria:

- Strong experience in a narrative/storytelling approach through mural design
- Experience in learning/collecting/interpreting community history in a variety of forms (ie. collecting oral stories, secondary research, observing site/location)
- Their creative inspiration for the project
- Experience, technical skills and capacity in designing murals
- Alignment of interests and practice working within a deep, community-engaged process
- Specific affinity with Sharswood or general understanding / experience of communities with similar histories and circumstances in Philadelphia

5. How to Apply

Submission Requirements

All interested artists are to gather and submit the following:

Applicants must submit:

- **Contact information**
 - First Name, Last Name
 - Address
 - Phone Number
 - Email
 - Website (if applicable)
 - Social Media Handles (if applicable)
- **An artist statement (1-2 paragraphs), including**
 - Description of your artistic practice, and how working on a project with the Sharswood community and Webb Plaza will build on and enhance your practice
 - A letter of your interest and creative inspiration in working on the Webb Plaza murals.
***Please note, the letter is the only submission requirement for those who are on the general Sharswood RFQ artist roster.*
- **CV/Resume**
- **Examples of Artwork/Portfolio**
 - Please provide 5-10 images of artwork in JPEG or PDF format of past public art projects, exhibition work, client work or personal work that show your capacity to produce a mural
- Provide a minimum **two references** who can speak to your creative practice and ability to take on a project like this. At least one reference should speak to your ability to work within a deep, community-engaged process.

Submission Instructions

Provide information about where submissions should be sent. Language below:

Artists interested in applying for this opportunity should collect the required materials above and submit your application [using this link](#).

Miscellaneous

Insurance

If insurance will be required, outline those requirements here. Language below:

Prior to performing any Works or Services, or entering into a contract with Mural Arts, the selected artist(s)/artist team(s) must show proof of the minimum insurance as indicated below. This insurance must be maintained during the term of this Agreement:

- a. Workers' Compensation Insurance (including without limitation coverage for Artist, its officers, owners, principals, directors, employees, volunteers, guests, and/or agents) if applicable.
- b. Employers Liability Insurance, if applicable, with minimum limits of the greater of \$100,000 E.L. each accident, \$100,000 E. L. disease-each employee, \$500,000 E.L. disease-policy limit or as required by the law of the state in which the Project is located.
- c. Commercial General Liability Insurance, Insurance Services Office (ISO) form Commercial General (CG) 00 01 (12/07) or equivalent occurrence policy which will provide primary coverage to the additional insureds (Owner) in the event of any occurrence, claim, or suit with limits of the greater of: (1) Artist's actual coverage amounts or (2) One Million Dollars (\$1,000,000) per occurrence and Two Million Dollars (\$2,000,000) in the aggregate. Artist's insurer will add Owner as an additional insured on this policy using ISO endorsement CG 2010 (07/04) or its equivalent.
- d. Automobile Liability Insurance (1) having a combined single limit each accident in the amount of Three Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$300,000) or in the amount of Artist's actual coverage, whichever is greater, and (2) coverage applying to "any auto", including hired and non-owned auto liability.

Artists may satisfy the insurance amounts by an umbrella / excess insurance coverage policy.

Clearances

If the project involves working with youth, certain clearances are generally required. Outline those requirements here. Language below:

Child Abuse Clearance

All artists and independent contractors working for MAA and/or MAP that will have contact with minors on a regular basis in the course of their work day are required to obtain and maintain valid child abuse clearance. It is the Artist's responsibility to obtain and provide to MAA and MAP the original clearance to be copied and maintained appropriately, without break in coverage. The Artist fully understands that if the Artist is named as a perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse, or has been named as the individual responsible for injury or abuse of a child, the Artists will be terminated from his or her position. By signing this contract, each Artist also affirms that he/she has made application for the official Child Abuse Clearance and will provide this clearance within 30 days of the start date of this Agreement, or cease work.

Criminal Background Clearance

All artists working for MAA and MAP who will have contact with minors on a regular basis in the course of their work day are required to obtain and maintain valid criminal background clearance. It is the Artist's responsibility to obtain and provide MAA and MAP the original clearance to be copied and maintained appropriately, without break in coverage. Any clearances with record of criminal activity will be reviewed on an individual basis by an authorized MAA and MAP representative who will determine if the Artists may continue to work for MAA and MAP.

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/>