Submission to the Philadelphia Art Commission May 6, 2020 Meeting Rail Line Underpass Enhancement Project, Norris and Susquhanna underpasses Submitted by: Mural Arts Philadelphia On behalf of: City of Philadelphia, Division of Housing and Community Development

1a. Name and Contact Information

The Railway Underpass Enhancement Project is managed by Mural Arts Philadelphia on behalf of the North Central Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant in collaboration with the City of Philadelphia's Division of Housing and Community Development.

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1b. Narrative

Project Background: Railway Underpass Enhancement Project

In 2014, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded a \$30 million Choice Neighborhood Implementation grant to the CIty of Philadelphia. The goal of the project is to transform the North Central Choice Neighborhood into a functioning, sustainable, mixed income community with a focus on jobs, transportation, services and education. See *Fig.1* for project site map.

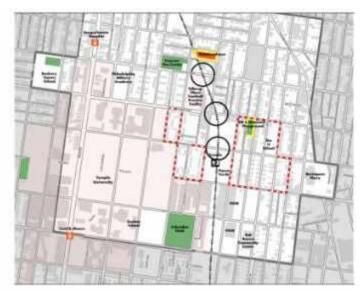


Fig. 1, North Central Choice Neighborhood

The goals of the Choice Neighborhood Implementation Grant include:

- Building on the reconfiguration of Norris Apartments as a catalyst for transformative, neighborhood- wide change
- Linking new and rehabilitated housing to a safer and more sustainable environment, one that connects residents to each other and to assets, jobs, and opportunities within the neighborhood downtown and regionally
- Building on the vision residents have expressed for the community

The Division of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), a lead partner in implementing the grant, seeks to create public artworks in the areas in and around several SEPTA Regional Rail Line underpasses in the neighborhood. The project is called the "Rail Line Underpass Enhancement Project."

DHCD has commissioned Mural Arts Philadelphia to lead the community engagement process, coordinate with DHCD (sponsoring agency, SEPTA, Street Department and the production of the works of art.

The goals of the Rail Line Underpass Enhancement Project are to:

- Beautify the area, inspire residents and express a sense of community pride and purpose
- Help stitch the fabric of the neighborhood by encouraging pedestrian access
- Be relevant to people of all ages, but especially engage youth
- Address community concerns regarding safety, illegal dumping and lack of lighting
- At least one of the sires should reflect an aspect of the community's history

Site Description

The project consists of three different SEPTA Regional Rail Line underpass sites, at Norris Avenue, Diamond Street / 10th Street, and Susquehanna Street. Murals will be painted at each site. *There is no associated construction with this project.*

See *Appendix A* for site photos.

Norris Street Underpass

The Norris Street underpass, between 9th and 10th Streets includes the retaining walls on both the south and north facing walls on Norris Street on each side of the underpass.

Diamond Street & 10th Street Underpass

The Diamond Street and 10th Street includes two underpasses at Dimond Street between 9th and 10th Streets and an underpass at the 10th Street underpass, north of Diamond Street.

Susquehanna Underpass

The Susquehanna Avenue underpass is between 10th and 11th Street

Artist Selection Process

This project relies heavily on community engagement, input and feedback. Over the past few years there have been five community meetings where community concerns were heard, public art themes were gathered, a short list of artists were chosen and design feedback was gathered. There were three open house events where shortlisted artists spoke with community members to get feedback about what people wanted reflected in these public artworks.

The selection process involved several steps.

1. Artist Recruitment

Artists were recruited through an open call process, seeking artist qualifications for the project. The open call was focused on artists in the Mid-Atlantic region, roughly from Washington D.C. to New York City to Pittsburgh, because we wanted to find artists for whom travel to Philadelphia would not be difficult. The call was advertised from April 22, 2019 through May 30, 2019 and distributed through a variety of channels and organizations in this region.

2. Artist Selection

The call yielded 25 responses. The responses were first vetted by an internal team of stakeholders from Mural Arts, DCHD, and the Office of Transportation and Infrastructure Systems, which ranked the responses in order of preference. The responses were then vetted by a community steering group, who also ranked the responses in order of preference. The intention had been to invite 9 artists as finalists, but that was increased to 12 (four per site) to accommodate the top choices of both groups.

3. Concept Development

Each of the twelve teams was paid \$1,500 to develop a concept. The teams were also encouraged to visit the neighborhood and meet with community members.

The process began with an artist Q+A session on June 27, 2019. Most of the artists gathered for site visits and an open discussion with representatives of DCHD, OTIS and SEPTA.

Four open houses / meet and greets were held. In the late afternoon and evening of July 3, 2019, artists were invited to meet with community members at each of the three project sites. We also held open houses in conjunction with other community events on July 20, 2019 and July 27, 2019 near all three underpass locations.

Artists were given support in developing their concepts from Todd Bressi and Thora Jacobson, part of Mural Arts artistic leadership teams.

4. Final Selection

Artists submitted their concepts, along with technical statements that flagged any foreseeable installation issues, at the beginning of September 2019. The review and selection process included four steps:

- 1. Community Design Review: Residential and community stakeholders were invited to review the twelve artist's conceptual designs (three designs per site), speak with artists about their designs and fill out a feedback form. More than 30 forms were received.
- 2. Technical Design Review: DHCD and Mural Arts brought together the project's city partners including SEPTA, Philadelphia Streets Department, OTIS and the lighting consultants GMT to discuss any technical concerns of the twelve conceptual designs. The partners did not make recommendations about which artists to select, but flagged issues that would have to be addressed if the proposals moved forward.
- **3.** Artist Selection Committee: A committee of representatives from Mural Arts and DHCD, along with two Philadelphia arts professionals, reviewed all of the proposals, as well as the community and stakeholder feedback, and made final recommendations to Jane Golden and Melissa Long.

Design Development

As part of the design development process artists were asked to host 2-3 community engagement events through the end of January into early spring. These events would further involve and inform the community about the project. Artists also used the events to collect input from the community, and gather history, stories and images to be used in their mural designs. For all of these events we worked with Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha's (APM) Community Connectors to flyer the neighborhood and inform people of these events.

Per the recommendation made by the Art Commission at the November 2019 meeting artists were asked to revise and adjust their designs to consider how their images will be perceived by walkers and drivers and how the updated lighting plan will fit with their designs. Artists adjusted their designs so specific components of their designs will be under light at night and the light fixtures will intersect with their designs at appropriate points, disrupting the designs as little as possible.

Norris Street Underpass

The conceptual designs originally created by Josh Sarantitis and Patrick Dougher were further along in the design development process than the other two intersections, so only minor changes to the design occured. These included adjusting the design to coordinate with the lighting plan. The mosaic portion of the mural was further developed using content gathered during the artists community engagement event held in February. Residents participated in a portrait photoshoot and poetry workshop. Neighbors dressed up in regal costumes and also wrote poetry. The portraits gathered during this event will be included in parts of the mosaic element.

SEPTA approved the artists use of small areas of polytab directly on the wall. The artists were asked to create a diagram showing the designated polytab areas.

See Appendix B for final designs, polytab diagrams and light renderings

Diamond Street/10th Street Underpass

Andrea Legge (Legge Lewis Legge) organized four community dinner events where people brought images to be scanned and shared digital images and stories. Shawn Theodore, a renowned local artist and photographer was assigned to take portraits of community members at the events and to also take images of the local environs.

Using the personal imagery and portraits gleaned from the four events, the artists designed a mural which "casts" community members in vignettes which illustrate each of their four community-building themes. A gallery show of original portraits taken during the course of the community engagement is planned for a later date.

Andrea Legge's design is a series of vignettes meant to be viewed in portions since the mural can never be seen in whole straight on.

Through Mural Arts Philadelphia's internal design review process Andrea Legge's design evolved to include a mix of real portraits from the neighborhood and "stock" portraits.

Andrea is using a variety of materials to create an exuberant and rich textural experience. Which include painting, stencils, reflective paint, mirrored steel times and shimmery paint with glass beads.

See *Appendix C* for final designs, material information and light renderings.

Susquehanna Avenue Underpass

Artists Priscilla Bell and Anthony Torcasio held three community engagement events at the Penrose Recreation Center (1101 W. Susquehanna St). The first community event was a paint day where four large polytab sheets of sunflowers were painted similar to those seen in the final design. The second community engagement event built upon the murals theme of nature in the neighborhood. Community members created their own mosaic planters and got to take home seeds. The event was so successful the community requested another mosaic planter event which was held a week after the first event. These events helped the artists identify community members to include in the mural, as

The artist's designs went through three rounds of development with Mural Arts' internal design review committee. Recommendations were made to add more depth to the design, brightening the butterflies, livening up the rowhomes in the background and including a new portrait of a young boy in the sunflowers.

Maintenance

Mural Arts Philadelphia will enter into a maintenance agreement with DHCD (the project sponsor) and SEPTA (the wall owner). Mural Arts generally provides for ongoing maintenance, such as graffiti removal and minor repairs. The agreement provides for our access to the wall as necessary, and also ensures that the artist's VARA rights are preserved in any future repairs to the artworks. Maintenance is handled by Mural Arts' Project Management Office (Emily Cooper Moore, Director).

2. Proposed Site Photographs

See Appendix 1.

3. Drawings of Construction Project

Not applicable.

4. Proposed Works of Art

Norris Street Underpass

History in the Present Moment (Their Crowns Like Light Beams) is a mural design by muralists Patrick Dougher and Josh Sarantitis (both from New York City). The project calls attention to the divine nobility, royal bearing and spirituality of the "average" community members of the Norris street neighborhood. The south wall uses color, design and texture to speak to the complexity and beauty of the community and also the tradition in the African diaspora of wearing bright colors and bold festive designs when in worship and celebration. The north wall represents the royal procession of the present moment: "In the here and now we are divine whole beings. In bold dignity we stand upright together in unity. We are whole as individuals and as a community. Accomplishing together what we cannot do alone we each contribute to the whole spirit and soul of the community."

The poems included in the design were also inspired by the "royalty" and beauty of the community members. These "Hood Haikus" were written specifically for the mural design and were contributed by Philadelphia poet Ursula Rucker.

The mural design will be predominantly painted with artist grade acrylic paint approved by SEPTA painted directly on the wall. On the south wall two areas will be fabricated out of mosaic ceramic and glass tiles. The non-paint surfaces are to accommodate the dirt these areas will collect being closed to the street.

The artists will leave a retouched version of the existing painting (on the far left) of a Norris House to honor the work of a past artist and to pay homage to the history of the soon to be replaced Norris Houses.

See Appendix B for the final mural design for the Norris Street underpass.

Diamond/10th Street Underpass

Diamonds in the Rough is directly inspired by the pre-stated theme of 'youth and family' for the project, and by conversations with community members, in particular, statements from two people: "We are diamonds in the rough," (Millicent Clark) and "It takes pressure to make a diamond" (Bruno, age 28, aspiring artist). We were also moved by George Clark, a local community leader who, with other family members, is very active in running at the 8th & Diamond Community Center. George showed us an 8 of Diamonds playing card as a defacto logo for the Center, and explained to us his 8-step 'community building' plan. We proposed to interpret his steps through our *Diamonds in the Rough* concept as a path to becoming the self-described 'diamonds' of the community that Millicent Clark was referring to.

The community distilled the 8 steps down to 4 main community building themes for us and we illustrate them on the walls of the underpasses. The themes are: 'family' (and home); 'temple' (or church); 'school', and 'community'.

See *Appendix C* for the final mural designs for the Diamond/10th Street underpasses.

Susquehanna Avenue Underpass

Untitled by Anthony Torcasio and Priscilla Bell (both from Philadelphia) focus their design on community, abundance and growth aimed to portray the pivotal strengths that exist within the community. Images include a background of botanical images overlaid with people and buildings. The design incorporates elements that are specific to the neighborhood, such as row homes and sunflowers from a neighboring community garden.

This mural will be painted with artist grade acrylic paint approved by SEPTA and Montana brand spray paint.

See *Appendix D* for the mural design on the Susquehanna Ave underpass.

6. Photographs of Artworks to be Acquired

Not applicable.

7. Permission from City Department that Owns Site

The walls for all three sites are owned by SEPTA. We have met with SEPTA repeatedly over the last year to engage them in all aspects of the development of this project. We are currently executing wall agreements and a Right of Entry agreement that will permit us to install murals on these walls. Due to the current city closings the ROE has been finalized and a Safety Work Installment plan is in the process of being approved.

Appendix A: Existing Condition Photos Norris Street Underpass



Norris Street underpass, looking west



Norris Street underpass, looking west at night

Appendix A: Existing Condition Photos Diamond/10th Street Underpass







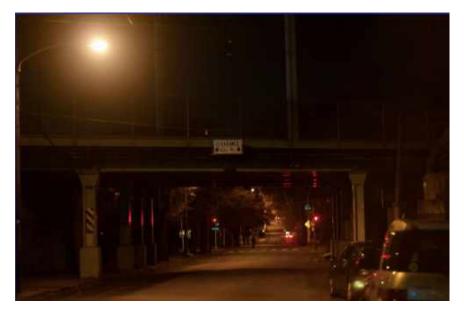




Appendix A: Existing Condition Photos Susquehanna Avenue Underpass



Susquehanna Avenue underpass, looking west



Susquehanna Avenue underpass, looking west at night

Appendix B Norris Street Underpass Artist: Josh Sarantitis, Patrick Dougher Final Designs Light Renderings



Norris Street underpass, north side

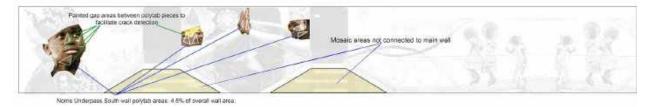


Norris Street underpass, south side

Nonis Underpase Polytab areas 7% of wall coverage. White lines represent gap between polytab sheets to facilitate viewing of wall ourface.



Norris Street underpass, north side Polytab areas



Norris Street underpass, south side Polytab areas

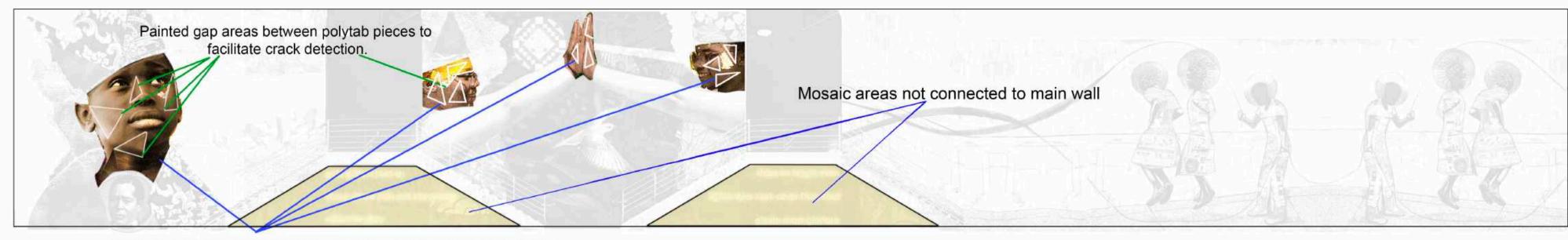












Norris Underpass South wall polytab areas. 4.5% of overall wall area.







SEPTA University Station Temple University Station

gold glitters best on

those whose skin and story mos

eflect its glory



APPENDIX C

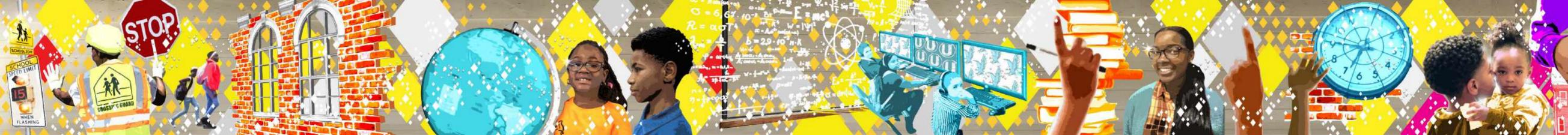
Diamond/10th Street Underpass Artists: Andrea Legge (Legge Lewis Legge) Final Designs Light Renderings Materials Profiles











Temple/Church North 10th St. west side



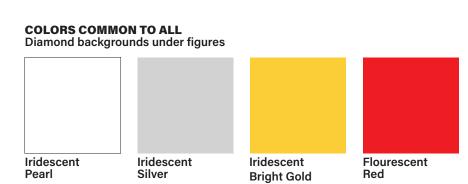
Design

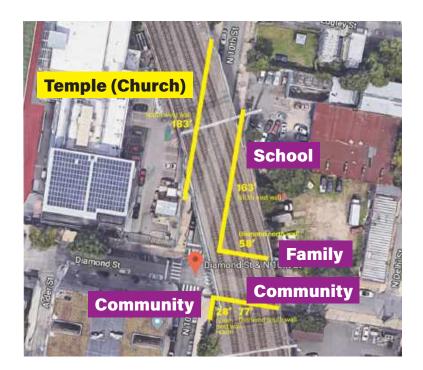


Lights & pedestrians for scale



Diamond motifs





Small diamonds on top of figures



Ames Reflective Paint in White with glass bead

COLOR UNIQUE TO THEME Temple/Church



Bright Purple

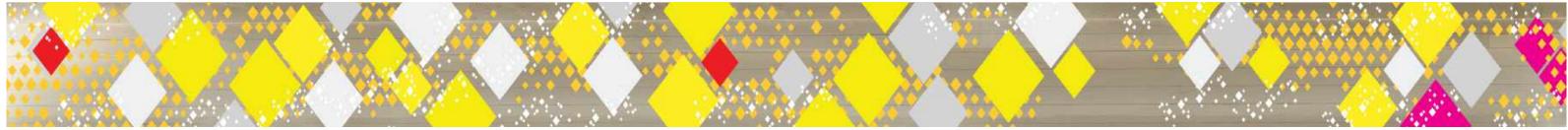
School North 10th St. east side



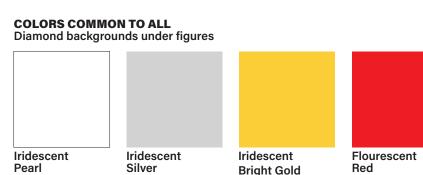
Design



Lights & pedestrians for scale

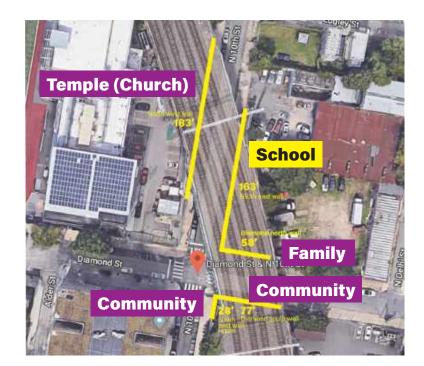


Diamond motifs



Silver

Bright Gold

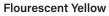


Small diamonds on top of figures



Ames Reflective Paint in White with glass bead

COLOR UNIQUE TO THEME School



Family/Home Diamond St. north side



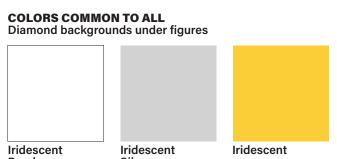
Design



Lights & pedestrians for scale



Diamond motifs



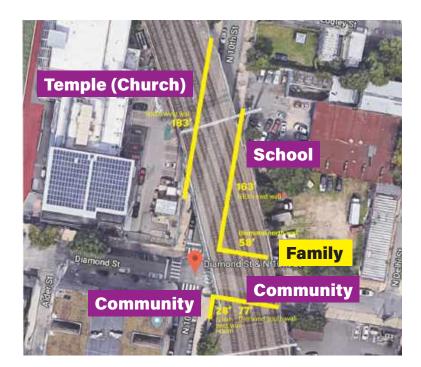


Pearl

Silver

Bright Gold

Flourescent Red



Small diamonds on top of figures



Ames Reflective Paint in White with glass bead

COLOR UNIQUE TO THEME Family/Home



Flourescent Magenta

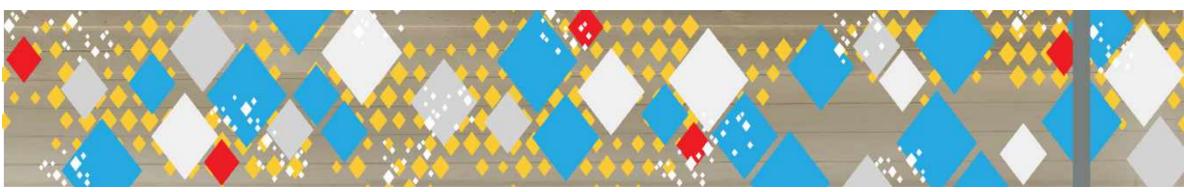
Community Diamond St. south side



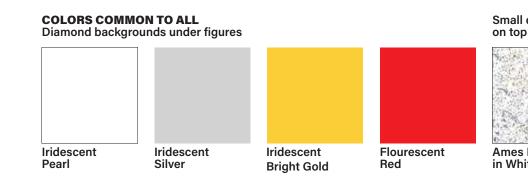
Design

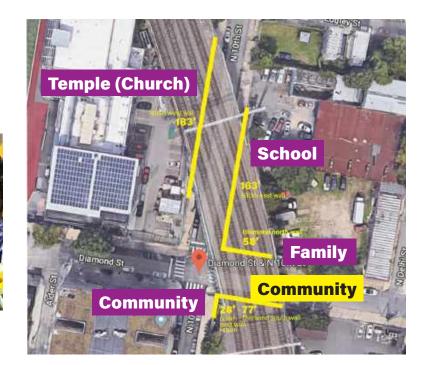


Lights & pedestrians for scale



Diamond motifs





Small diamonds on top of figures



Ames Reflective Paint in White with glass bead

COLOR UNIQUE TO THEME Community

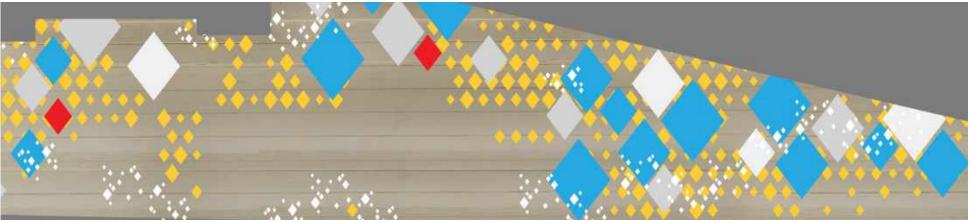


Flourescent Blue

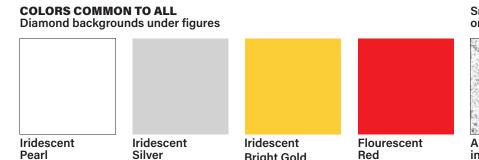
Community North 10th St. east side outer wall



Pedestrians for scale



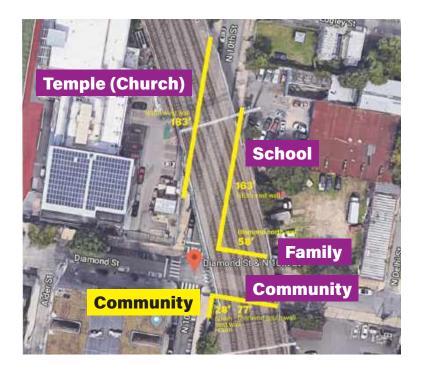
Diamond motifs



Pearl

Silver

Bright Gold



Small diamonds on top of figures



Ames Reflective Paint in White with glass bead

COLOR UNIQUE TO THEME Community



Flourescent Blue





Appendix D Susquehanna Avenue Underpass Artists: Priscilla Bell and Anthony Torcasio Final Designs Light Renderings













