

March 31, 2021

Beige Berryman  
The Philadelphia Art Commission  
One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Beige Berryman,

At the April 14, 2021 Philadelphia Art Commission meeting, Mural Arts Philadelphia would like to present the final design for a mural located at 9th & Berks Streets scheduled to be painted this spring.

This mural is part of a larger project, The Rail Line Underpass Enhancement Project that started in 2019 and includes underpass murals at 10th & Diamond, 11th & Susquehanna, 10th & Norris. The initial three murals painted/designed by three different artists groups were completed in the summer of 2020.

The artist selected, Brad Carney has focused on the theme of the "magic hour" -- the moment when the sun begins to rise and set. Mr. Carney has worked extensively with community members to gather imagery and text and has gone through many iterations of the designs prior to presenting before the Art Commission in March.

Mural Arts Philadelphia looks forward to sharing Brad Carney's final design and providing more background on the in-depth community engagement process that involved partners from Temple University, Norris Home, The U School, 8th & Diamond Advisory Council and Asociacion Puertorriquenos en Marcha.

We appreciate the opportunity to present the final design for the 9th & Berks Street Mural before the Art Commission and will be submitting additional project information next week.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you require additional information or have questions please do not hesitate to call me at 617-935-5040.

Sincerely,



Maya Curtis  
Project Manager  
Mural Arts Philadelphia

# Submission to the Philadelphia Art Commission

April 14 Meeting

Rail Line Underpass Enhancement Project: Berks 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.

### Project Owner

Mark Dodds

Policy and Planning Program Manager

Division of Housing and Community Development

City of Philadelphia

mark.dodds@phila.gov

215-686-9756

### Mural Arts Philadelphia

Maya Curtis

Project Manager

Mural Arts Philadelphia

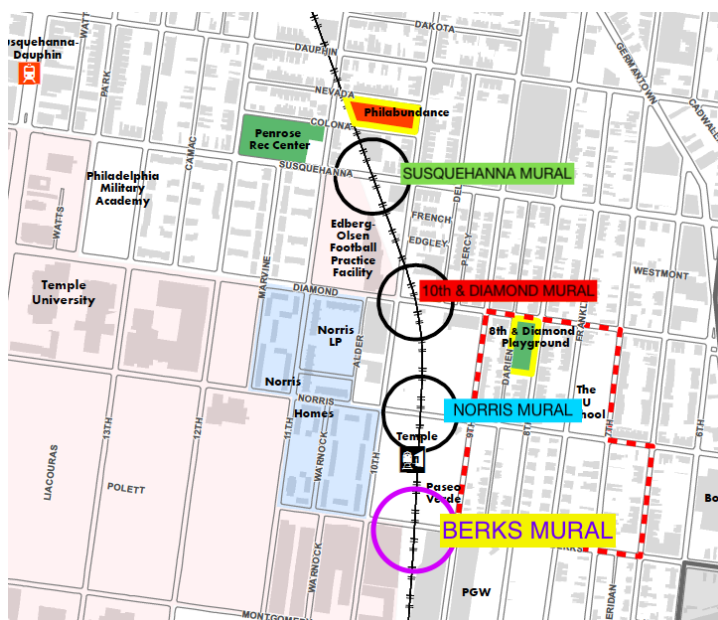
[mayacurtis18@gmail.com](mailto:mayacurtis18@gmail.com)

617-935-5040

## 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. The project originally spanned three underpasses at the intersections of 10th & Norris, 10th & Diamond and 11th & Susquehanna that were completed in the fall of 2020. The success of the originally three sites expanded the project to the Berks Street mural underpass a block down from the 10th & Norris mural. See **Fig.1** for project site map.



**Fig. 1**

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 additional project site for the Rail Line Underpass Enhancement Project is the SEPTA Regional Rail Line underpass site, at 9th & Berks Street. The mural will be direct paint and there is no associated construction with this project. **See appendix A.**

## **Artist Selection Process**

The overall Rail Line Underpass Enhancement Project has relied 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 for the original three projects (Diamond, Susquehanna and Norris underpass). The open call was seeking artist qualification for artists in the Mid-Atlantic region, roughly from Washington D.C. to New York City and 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 artist submissions were vetted by an internal team of stakeholders (MAP, DHCD, OTIS) who ranked submissions in order of preference. The selected artists were then vetted by the Artistic Advisory Committee, made up of community members and stakeholders who ranked the submission in order of preference. Twelve artists were selected as finalists (four artists per site) and paid \$1500 to develop their concept. Twelve designs were reviewed and selected by three committees.

The artists selected from Berks Underpass Mural were selected from the top remaining nine artists and then narrowed down to the four artists. The Artist Selection Committee included Thora Jacobson (Mural Arts Design Review), Felix St. Fort (Staff Muralist, Mural Arts Philadelphia), Eric Battle (Independent curator, Blockson Collection), Iliana Dominguez Franco (Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha), Donna Richardson (Norris Homes) and Andrea Swan (Temple University). The final recommendations were made to Jane Golden (MAP) and Melissa Long (DHCD)

## Design Development

As part of the design development process Brad Carney was asked to host 2-3 community engagement events to further involve and inform the community about the project. Carney used the events to collect input from the community, and gather history, stories and images that help influence and shape his design. For the community engagement efforts Brad partnered with poet Ursula Rucker who helped collect poetic elements based on the ideas of Magic Hour.

Our channels for community outreach include project partners Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha's (APM), Norris Homes, Temple University and the 8th & Diamond Advisory Council.

The first engagement event held in November 2020 involved U School students in a senior english class. Carney and Rucker led a series of written reflections on "magic hour," "embrace" and "comfort." The second workshop held in December was open to the general public and fifteen community members shared their poetic reflections on the mural themes of "magic hour" "embrace." We felt that we were not reaching as many people with our virtual community engagement sessions so we tried to do some onsite engagement by doing onsite engagement by putting flyers on the mural wall with QR codes that led to a [survey](#) to get input. This way people passing the project site could be informed that there is a mural coming soon and to contribute their ideas and thoughts.

Since approval of the conceptual design at the March Art Commission two more community engagement initiatives took place. Brad spoke to Professor Lynn Mandarano's placemaking class of both grad and undergrad students. These students have been working closely in the neighborhood with APM and provide good feedback and direction for some of the building and silhouettes.

In partnership with APM a worksheet in spanish and english was distributed to 50 community residents to get feedback specifically on the words and phrases that make up the background of the mural. This effort yielded 10 responses from community residents, We still feel more community input is needed for the words in the background of the design.

Brad brightened the silhouettes, gave more shine/sparklet to the foreground building, refined the portraits and the shadows and included spanish in the background phrases and words.

SEPTA has approved this design, along with the community stakeholders, APM and community residents.

Please note that Carney was also given support in developing his concept and design from Todd Bressi and Thora Jacobson, both part of Mural Arts artistic leadership teams.

## **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.

## **2. Proposed Site Photographs**

See *Appendix A*.

## **3. Drawings of Construction Project**

Not applicable.

## **4. Proposed Works of Art**

*Magic Hour* by Brad Carney was created to reflect personal moments and shared feelings from community experiences during magic hour. Magic hour is a transitional moment each day at sunrise and sunset where the light embraces us and gives us pause to view the awe of the light. The design represents a scene of transition. The sun is just about to set, people are coming and going, embracing the moment of illuminating light.

The mural, placed across the street from the SEPTA station, is also reflective of a location of transition for many commuters going to work, school, and home. The mural aims to provide a moment of pause to those in their daily commute and pass by just as magic hour does-- reflect in a moment, shed light on our lives and to embrace the day.

Each figurative element represents an expression of joy or wonder as the viewer connects within ourselves or from others. The landscape draws from nature, historical buildings, and local contemporary settings reflecting the past, but also looking ahead at the collective bright future. The words and images in the mural are meant to stand alone. They can be formed into one's own narrative, or be something that the viewer thinks about and interprets as they walk away from the mural.

The mural design will be painted with artist grade acrylic paint approved by SEPTA and painted directly on the wall with small portions of parachute cloth.

***See appendix B for the mural design***

## **6. Photographs of Artworks to be Acquired**

Not applicable.

## 7. Permission from City Department that Owns Site

A wall agreement between Mural Arts Philadelphia and SEPTA was issued on October 23, 2020. We have met with SEPTA repeatedly over the last year to engage them in all aspects of the development of this project.

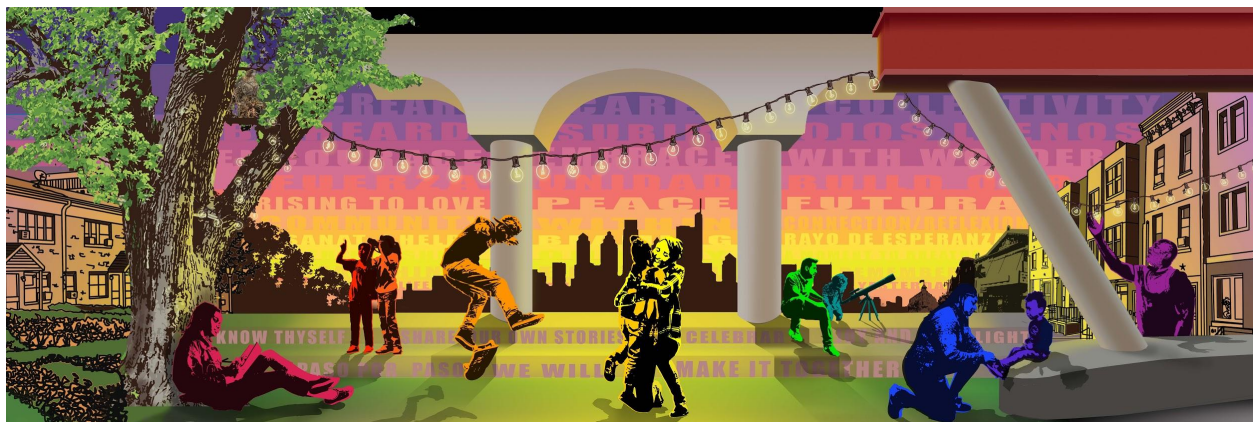
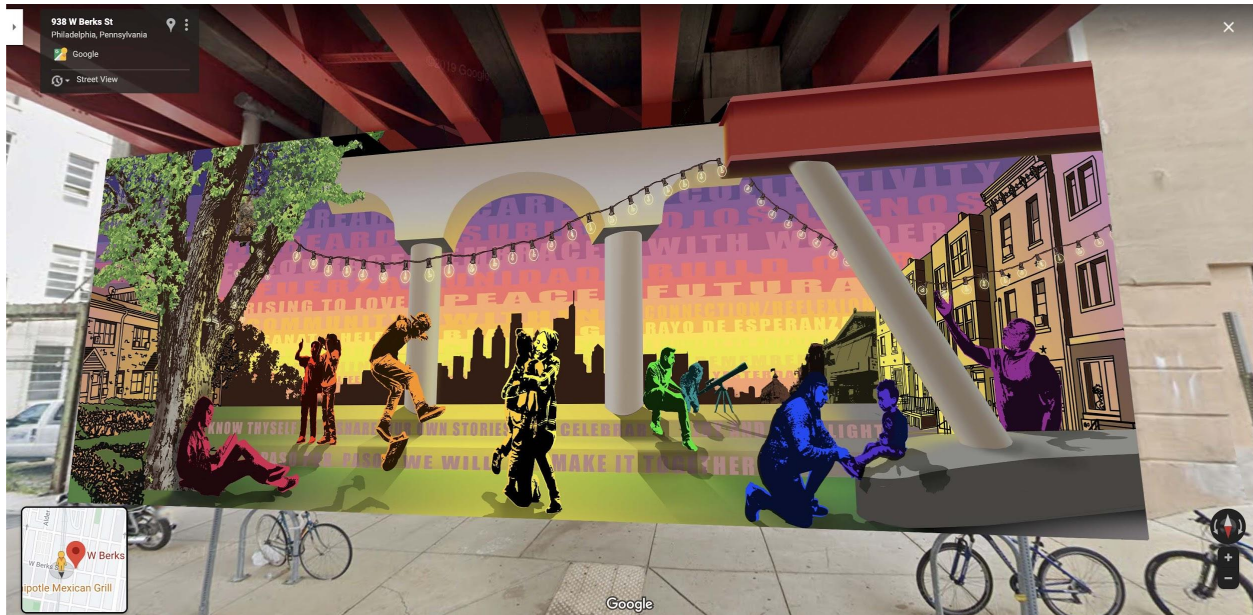
## Appendix A



*9th & Berks Underpass Mural site*



## Appendix B.





# Rail Line Underpass Enhancement Project

*Managed by Mural Arts Philadelphia on behalf of North Central Choice Neighborhood in collaboration with the City of Philadelphia Division of Housing and Community Development.*

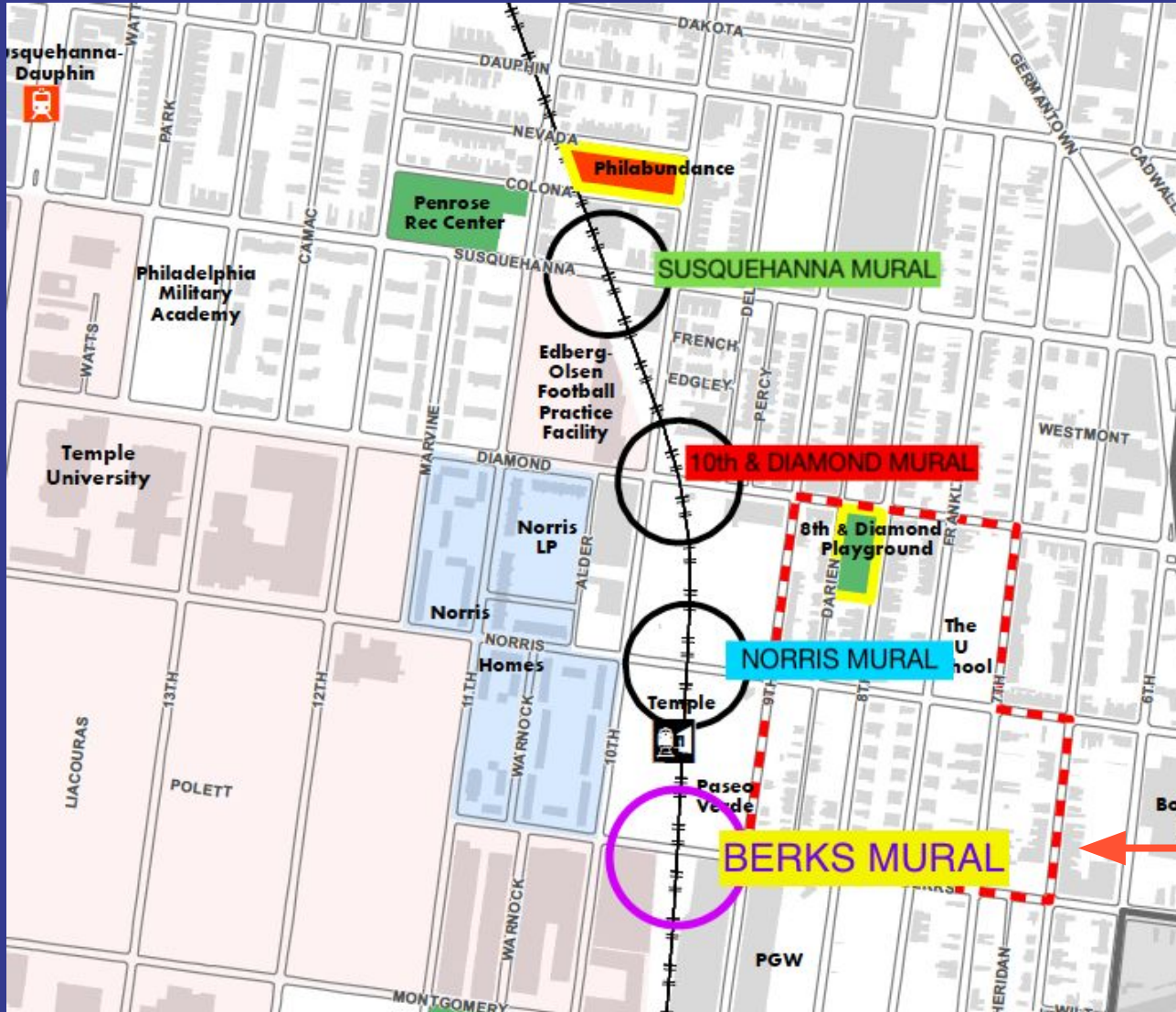


Department of  
Planning and Development  
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA



# PROJECT BACKGROUND

## North Central Choice Neighborhood



# SITE DETAIL





938 W Berks St  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

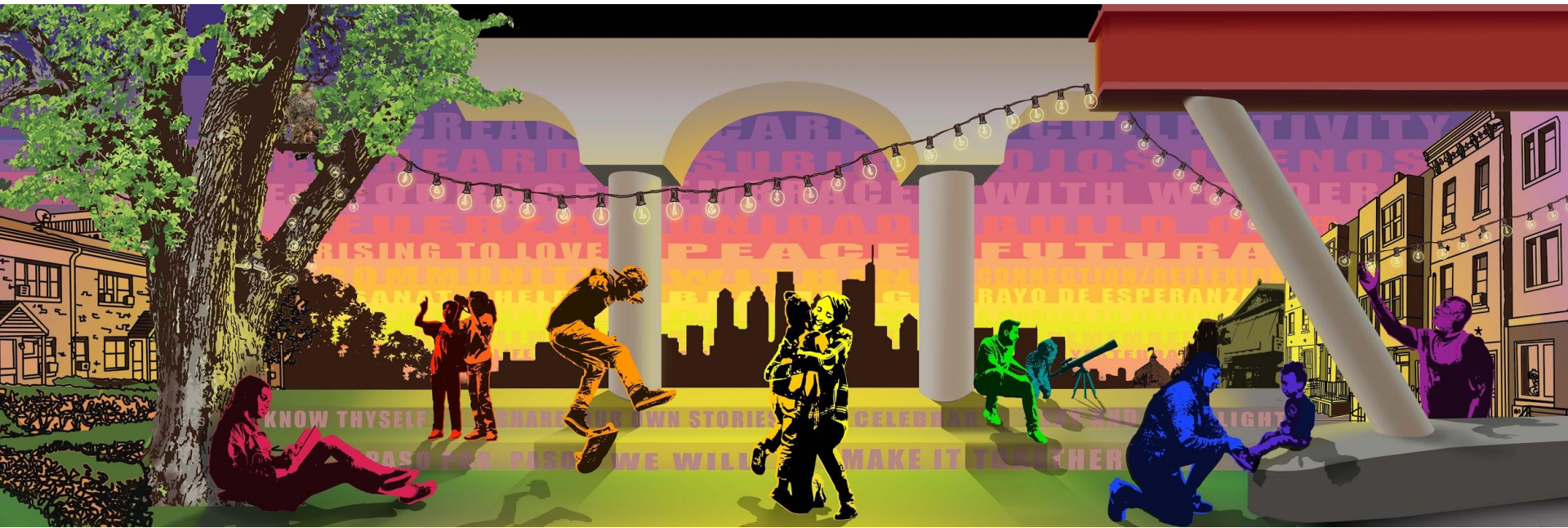
Google

Street View



Google





# BERKS STREET UNDERPASS

Brad Carney

*Magic Hour*

- Magic hour is a transitional moment each day at sunrise or sunset where the light embraces us and gives us pause to view the awe of light
- Represents a scene of transition. The sun is just about to set, people are coming and going and embracing the moment of illuminating light
- Each figurative element represents an expression of joy or wonder as the viewer connects within ourselves or from others.





# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SINCE MARCH

Two additional community engagement initiatives were held to gather specific phrases and words that resonate with people's experiences during magic hour:

- Brad spoke with 18 Temple Students in Professor Lynn Mandarano's placemaking course for undergraduate and graduate students.
- APM distributed worksheets in Spanish and English aimed to engage more spanish speaking residents and help with the digital divide.



## MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA WANTS YOUR INPUT



Please note the mural design above by Brad Carney is currently in progress. This is not a final design. Por favor tome en cuenta que este diseño por Brad Carney todavía está en proceso. Este no es el diseño final.

This spring artists Brad Carney and Ursula Rucker are creating a mural in your neighborhood at the underpass of 9th & Berks Streets. The mural explores the sacred "Magic Hour" when the sun begins to rise and set and we need your input to bring this theme to life!

Please spend 5-10 minutes reflecting on a sacred "Magic Hour" moment in your lives by filling out the questions below. Your ideas will help guide the final mural design that will be painted this spring.

Full Name

Email Address

Phone number

Do you want to be included in further communication about this project?

Esta Primavera, los artistas Brad Carney y Ursula Rucker estarán creando un mural en su vecindad abajo del puente en las calles 9 y Berks. El mural explora la sagrada "Hora Mágica" cuando el sol empieza a amanecer y atardecer y necesitamos tu opinión para darle vida a este tema! Por favor tome 5-10 minutos reflexionando en un momento sagrado de la "Hora Mágica" en su vida mientras contesta las siguientes preguntas. Sus ideas ayudarán a guiar el diseño final del mural que va a ser pintado esta primavera.

¿Quieres ser incluido en más comunicación sobre este proyecto?

Nombre

Correo electrónico

Numero de telefono



Words are an important component to this mural. We need your input to help select words that have **meaning** to you when you reflect on your "magic hour" moment. Please circle the words below that speak to you and feel free to add additional words that have **meaning** and **look** and **sound beautiful** that describe your "magic hour."

Palabras son una parte importante de este mural. Necesitamos su opinión para seleccionar palabras que tienen **significado** para usted cuando reflexiona en su momento de la "hora mágica". Por favor ponga un círculo alrededor de las palabras que le hablan y siéntase libre a agregar palabras adicionales que tienen **significado** y se **ven** y **suenan** hermosas que describen su "hora mágica".

ENGLISH	ESPAÑOL
VOICE	VOZ
BE HEARD	SER ESCUCHADO
ENCOURAGE	ANIMAR
STRENGTH	FUERZA
THINGS WE LOVE	COSAS QUE AMAMOS
COMMUNITY	COMUNIDAD
HEAL / HELP	SANAR/ AYUDAR
SEARCH	BUSCAR
LIFE	VIDA
CARE	CUIDAR
CREATE	CREAR
EMBRACE	ABRAZAR
UNITY	UNIDAD
PEACE	PAZ
WITHIN	POR DENTRO
BEAMING	RADIANTE
QUALITY	CALIDAD
COLLECTIVITY	COLECTIVIDAD
EYES FILLED WITH WONDER	OJOS LLENOS DE MARAVILLA

BUILD OUR FUTURE	CONSTRUIR NUESTRO FUTURO
CONNECTION / REFLECTION	CONEXIÓN / REFLEXIÓN
RAY OF HOPE	RAYO DE ESPERANZA
A MOMENT TO BREATHE	UN MOMENTO PARA RESPIRAR
REMEMBER	RECORDAR
YESTERDAY	AYER
KNOW THYSELF	CONOCERTE A TI MISMO
SHARE OUR OWN STORIES	COMPARTIR NUESTRAS HISTORIAS
CELEBRATE	CELEBRAR
JOY	ALEGRIA
LAUGH OUT LOUD	REÍRSE EN VOZ ALTA
STEP BY STEP WE WILL MAKE IT TOGETHER	PASO POR PASO LO HAREMOS JUNTOS

ADDITIONAL WORDS:

PALABRAS ADICIONALES:



# DESIGN DEVELOPMENT SINCE MARCH

- Phrases and words in spanish have been included into the background
- Shadows on the figure have been changed to a consistent light source
- Building silhouettes have been brightened
- The color of figures have changed been enhanced
- The placements of the lights has been adjusted



# CONTACT INFORMATION

## Mural Arts Philadelphia

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## Project Owner

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# THANK YOU!

