

Art Commission Review – Submittal Form

(Applicant complete below section)

Project Name: Rocky Statue Relocation

Project Address: 2600 Benjamin Franklin Pkwy **On Public Property?** ☒ Yes ☐ No

Total Budget: \$150,000 **Utilizing City Funds?** ☒ Yes (specify amount): _____ ☐ No

Project Type (check all that apply):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building – New Construction or Addition | <input type="checkbox"/> Encroachment in/over ROW |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Building – Renovation or Repair | <input type="checkbox"/> Signage (Reconsideration) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plaza/Park/Playground | <input type="checkbox"/> Streetery (Reconsideration) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

Project Team:

Agency/Org.: Creative Philadelphia Design Lead (firm): _____

Other: _____

Primary Contact for Project Communications:

Name: Marguerite Anglin

Affiliation: Public Art Director

Email: [REDACTED]

(Art Commission staff complete below section)

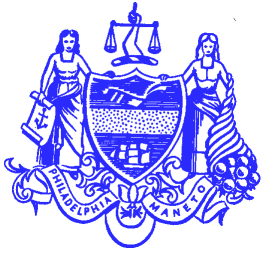
Art Commission Meeting Date of Project Review: 12/10/25

Level of Review:

- ☒ Concept Review ☐ Final Review If Final, specify date of preceding Concept Review: _____
- ☐ Administrative Review (for projects with minimal visual impact on public realm)

Staff Notes (Optional):

Statue currently installed as temporary, proposed as permanent.



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Creative Philadelphia
116 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107
(215) 686-8446

November 25, 2025

Katherine Liss
Director
Philadelphia Art Commission
One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 18th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

RE: December 10th Art Commission Meeting – Rocky Statue Relocation

Dear Katherine,

Creative Philadelphia is requesting placement on the December 10, 2025 Art Commission meeting agenda to present the City's proposal to permanently install the Rocky statue at the top of the Art Museum steps. This request comes with the full support of Mayor Cherelle Parker, Philadelphia Parks and Recreation, The Philadelphia Art Museum and Philadelphia Visitor Center. We are united in our view that this is the right placement for this iconic statue and the right moment for our city to make this happen.

The Rocky statue was created by artist, A. Thomas Schomberg, who made three bronze casts of the statue from the same mold. Currently, two of these cast statues are at the Art Museum – one at the bottom of the steps- "Rocky A", and one at the top of the steps- "Rocky B", which was loaned to the Art Museum in 2024 temporarily for *Rocky Fest*. Under a separate legal arrangement, the City is exchanging ownership of these two casts with the donor, both of which are original, identical works created by the artist. The City is requesting to keep Rocky B permanently at the top and relocate it to a comfortable distance back from the steps. Meanwhile, Rocky A will be included in an exhibition inside the Art Museum in Spring 2026 and then afterwards will be returned to the original donor's private collection.

By permanently locating Rocky at the top of the steps, the City is seeking to restore the statue to its intended setting, where it was first introduced to the public. For many people, this location on the Rocky steps is inseparable from the story of the statue. The image of Rocky Balboa, arms raised in victory at the top of the steps, is one of Philadelphia's most iconic and enduring symbols. But well beyond the fictional character, the Rocky statue has come to serve as a significant cultural landmark, symbolizing the resilience, determination, and grit that defines Philadelphia.

This project is about more than relocating a sculpture. It's about elevating an artwork that, for decades, has symbolized perseverance, aspiration, and the resilience of the human spirit. These are values that resonate deeply in our city and with the 4 million visitors who engage with this artwork each year.

We also see this as an opportunity to lean into the evolving conversation about what is considered "art," and what deserves a place in our most treasured civic spaces. The Rocky statue is a clear example of this evolution. Its artistic significance has not been shaped by institutions, but by the millions of people who engage with it year after year. By formalizing its placement at the top of the steps, we are seeking to honor that public connection, strengthen this iconic site, and enhance the experience for residents and visitors.

We look forward to sharing more about this project during the December 10th meeting.

Sincerely,

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Valerie V. Gay, CFP®
Chief Cultural Officer
Executive Director

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Marguerite Anglin, RA
Public Art Director

Rocky Statue

Relocation Proposal

Philadelphia Art Commission
December 10, 2025



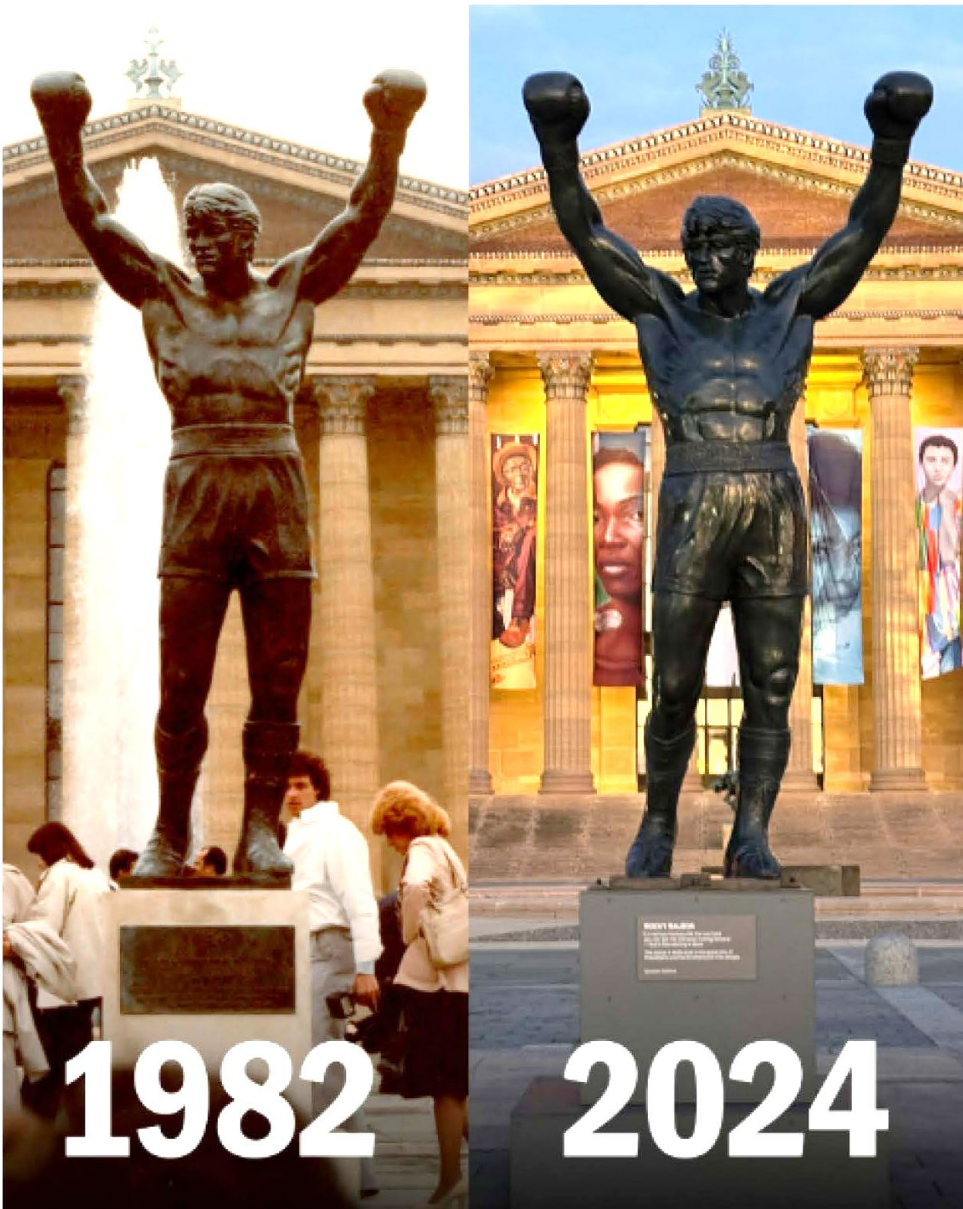
Rocky Statue Background

- Created by artist, A. Thomas Schomberg in 1980;
- Gifted to the City of Philadelphia in 1982;
- Receives 4 million visitors annually from all over the world.
- A cultural phenomenon, reflecting the grit, determination and resilience of Philadelphians and everyday people.



Rocky Through the Years

- **1982:** Originally unveiled at top of Museum steps during *Rocky III* movie.
- **1982:** Relocated to Spectrum Stadium;
- **1987:** Brought back to top of Museum steps for filming *Mannequin*;
- **1990:** Back to the top of steps for filming of *Rocky V*;
- **1993:** Once again to the top of steps for filming of *Philadelphia*;
- **2006:** Relocated to base of Art Museum steps;
- **2024:** 2nd Cast of statue temporarily at top of steps for *Rocky Fest*;



Requesting to Keep Rocky at the Top

- **Rocky 'A'** at bottom of steps is **City owned**;
- **Rocky 'B'** at top of steps is **on loan** to Art Museum for temporary display;
- Both are **original, identical casts of Rocky** statue created by the artist (2 of 3 total);
- The City is **requesting to keep Rocky 'B' permanently at the top of steps**.
- Rocky 'A' at the bottom will be featured in an Exhibit inside the museum in Spring 2026, and then returned to the original donor's private collection.





Clarifications

- Today's request is only for the **permanent installation of Rocky B** at top of steps.
- The City is exchanging Rocky casts A and B with original donor;
- The exchange of casts does not trigger Art Commission approval or deaccession since:
 - the casts are co-originals of the same statue, by same artist.
 - the City will continue to retain an original Rocky statue in its public art collection.

Why the Top?

- Returning Rocky to the **place it was originally unveiled;**
- **Perception has shifted** on what is “art” and what is worthy of being on public view;
- The City has **embraced this internationally celebrated symbol** of our cultural identity;
- Representing and **honoring the resilience and perseverance** of everyday people;
- Acknowledging the **deep emotional connection** with residents and visitors around the world (not just Philly’s statue);
- **Alignment with Mayor, City departments and Institutional partners** who agree that Rocky should be at the top.





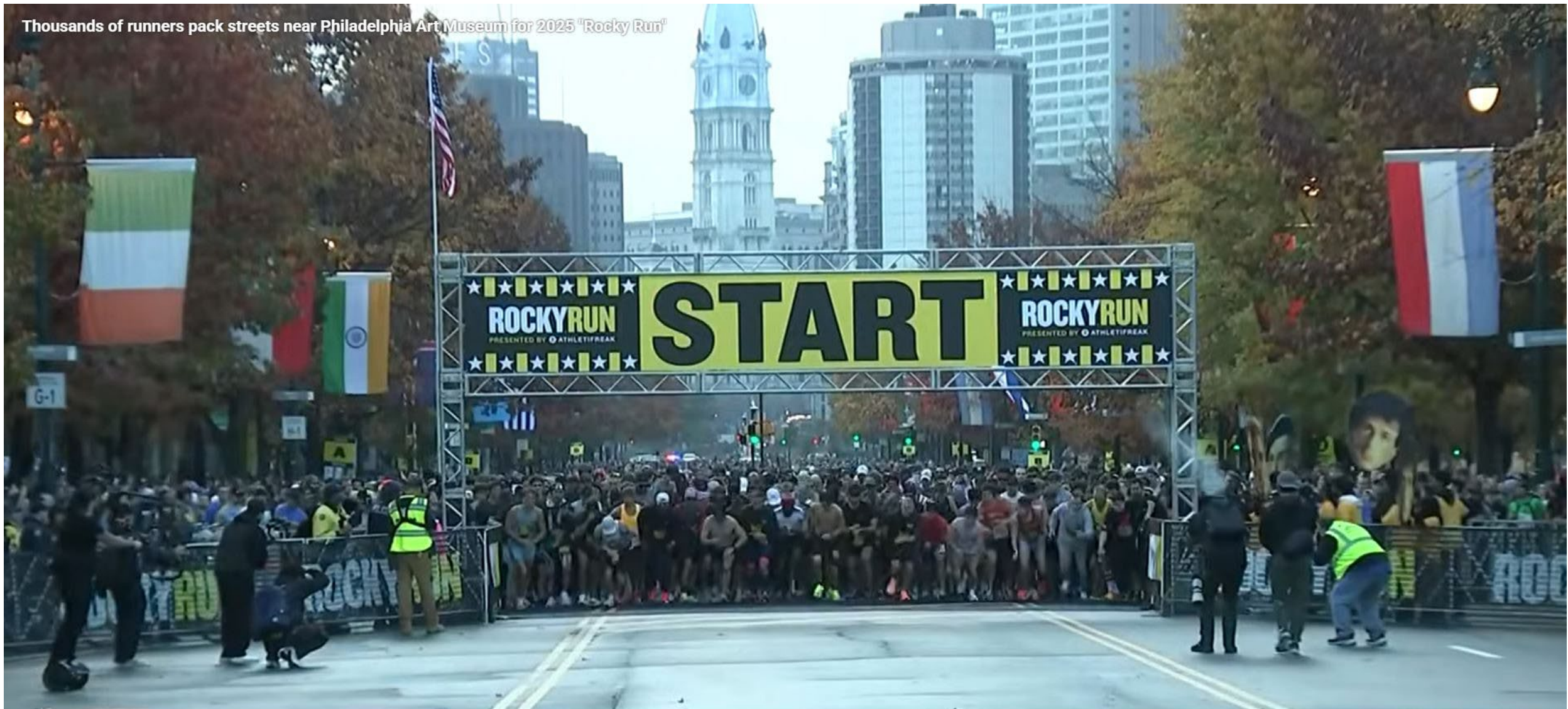
EAGLES PARADE- 2024



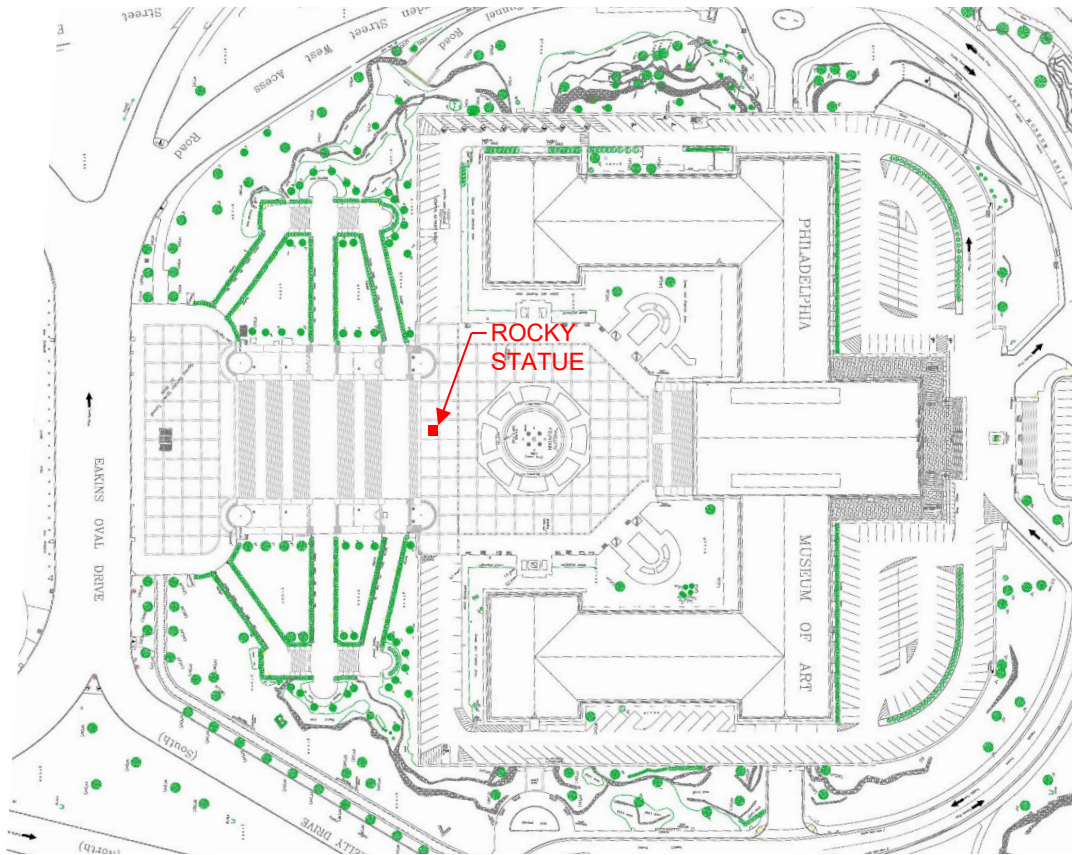
ROCKY FEST - 2024



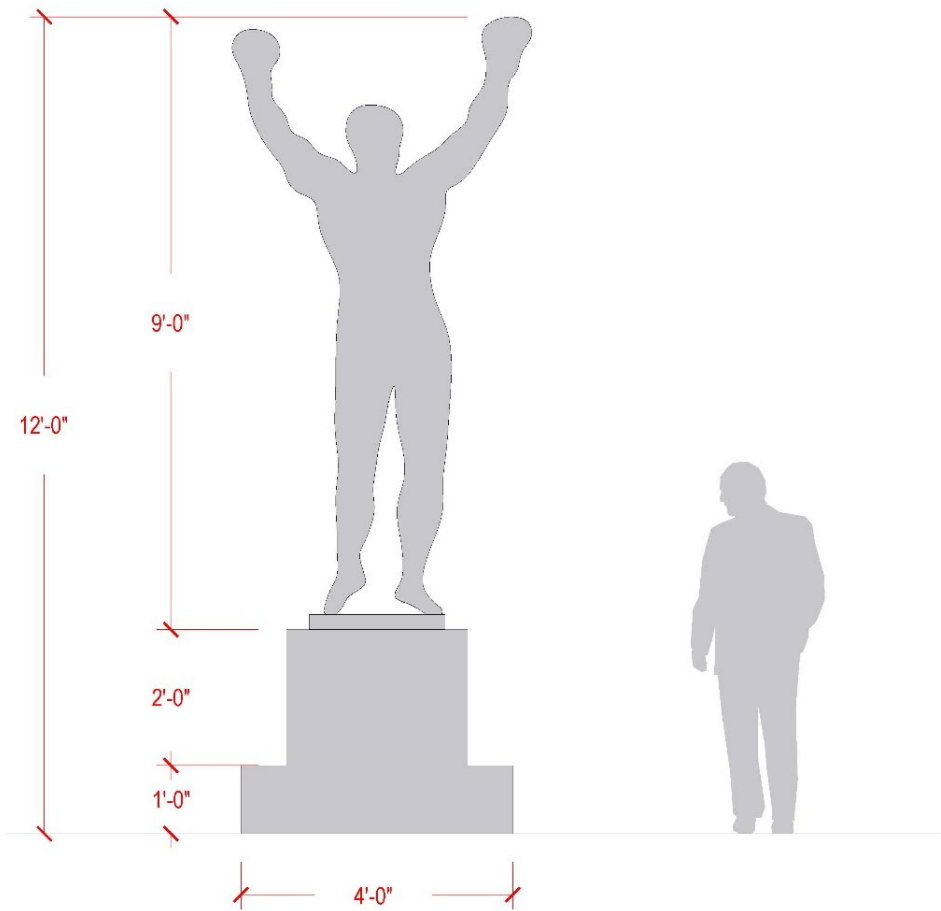
Thousands of runners pack streets near Philadelphia Art Museum for 2025 "Rocky Run"



Proposed Permanent Installation

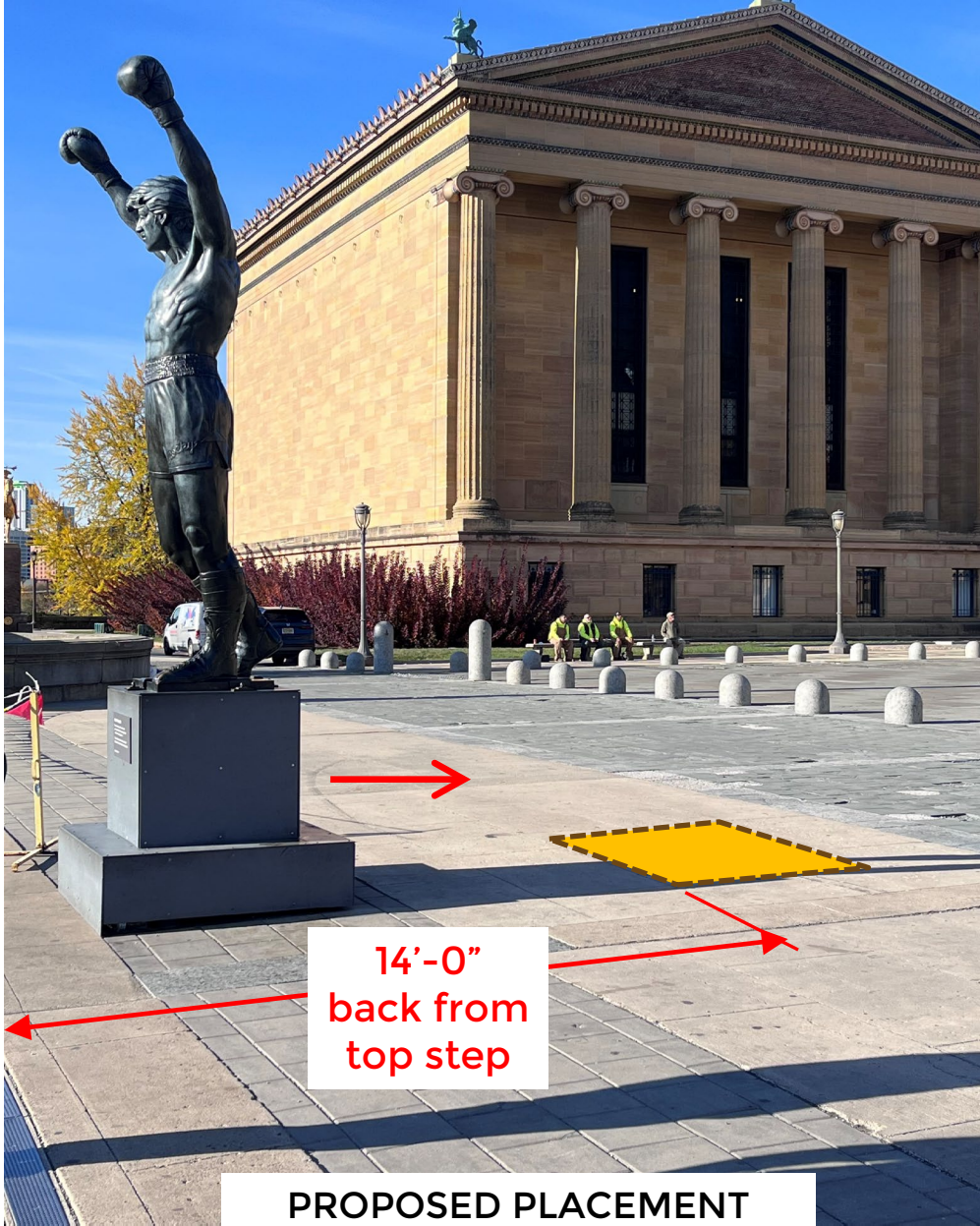


STATUE LOCATION SITE PLAN

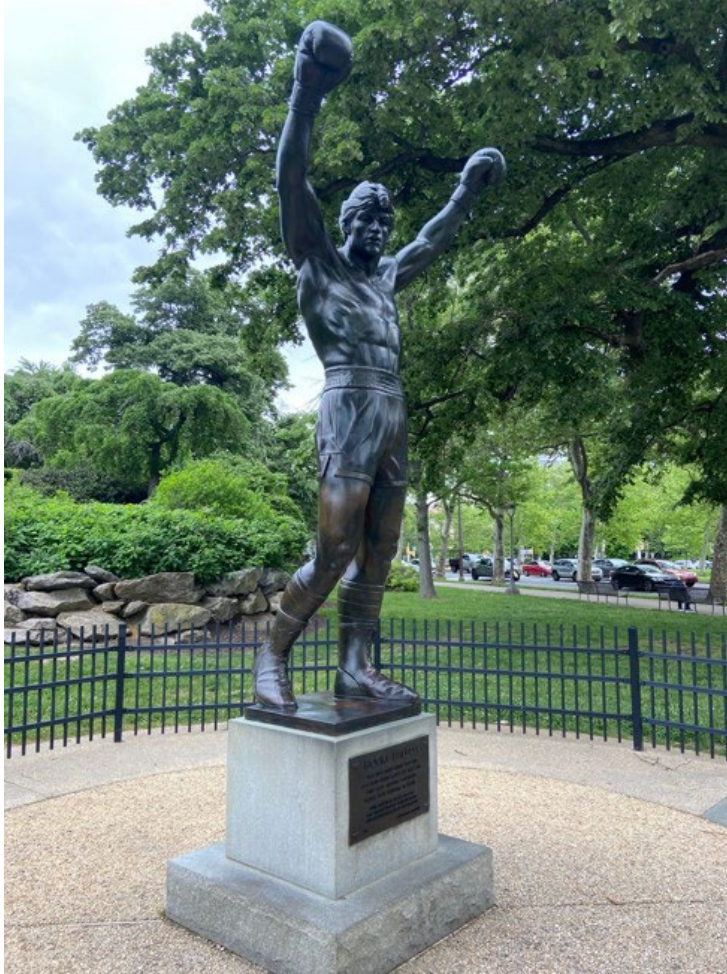


STATUE ELEVATION

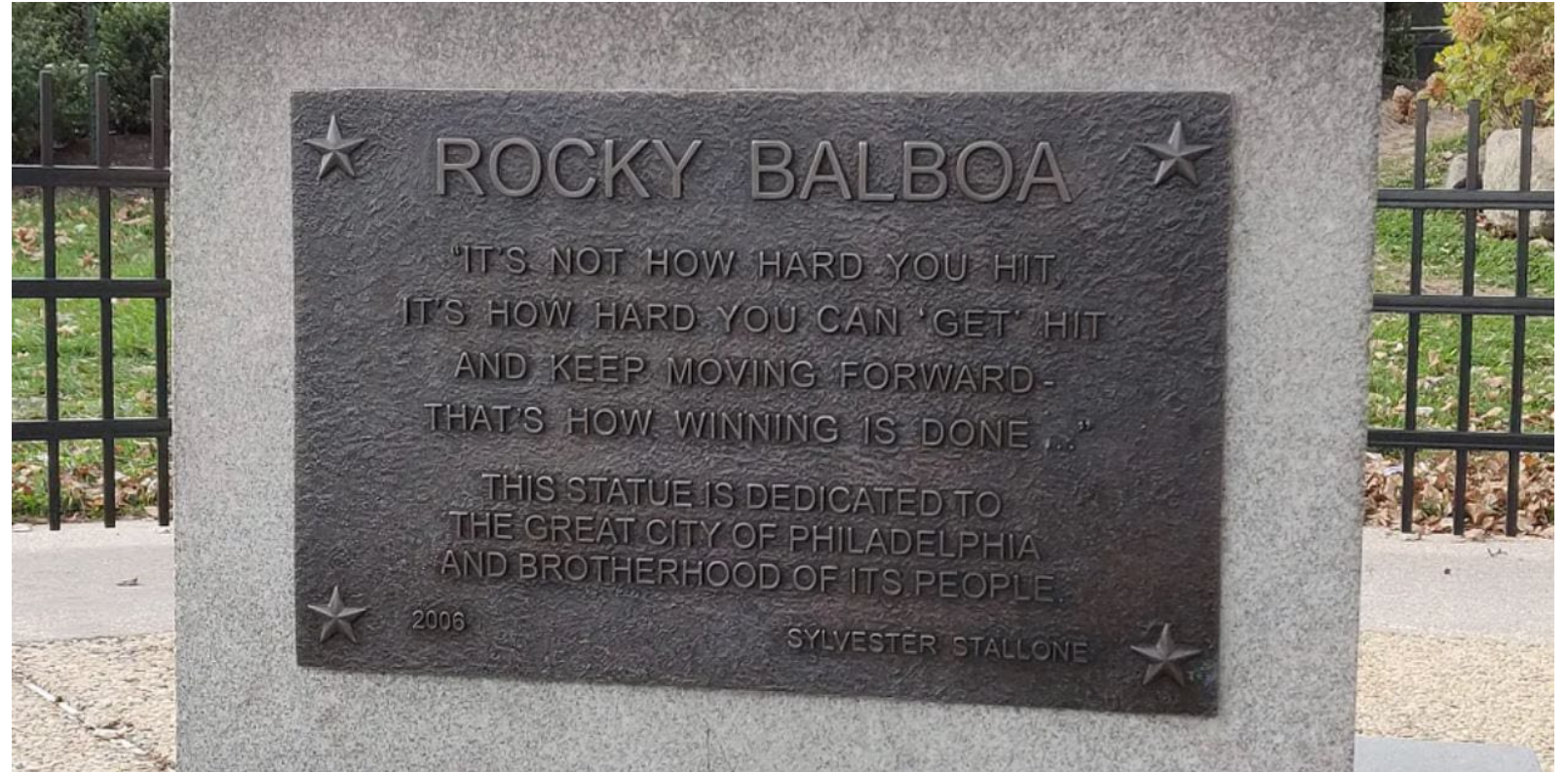
Proposed Statue Placement



Statue Base and Plaque



STATUE BASE



STATUE PLAQUE

Art Museum at Night



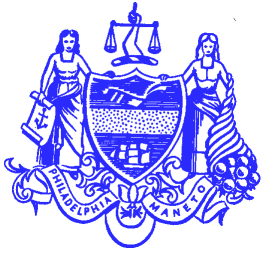
Photo credits: istock, CollectibleArtShop

Future Plans

- The City intends to install another City-owned statue at the bottom of the Art Museum steps;
- This proposal will be presented by Creative PHL at a future Art Commission meeting once details are developed.

Thank You!





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Creative Philadelphia
116 City Hall
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November 25, 2025

Katherine Liss
Director
Philadelphia Art Commission
One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 18th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

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This project is about more than relocating a sculpture. It's about elevating an artwork that, for decades, has symbolized perseverance, aspiration, and the resilience of the human spirit. These are values that resonate deeply in our city and with the 4 million visitors who engage with this artwork each year.

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We look forward to sharing more about this project during the December 10th meeting.

Sincerely,

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Valerie V. Gay, CFP®
Chief Cultural Officer
Executive Director

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Marguerite Anglin, RA
Public Art Director



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215 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107
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FAX (215) 686-2180

CHERELLE L. PARKER
Mayor

December 1, 2025

Katherine Liss
Acting Director
Philadelphia Art Commission
One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: Support Letter for Rocky Statue

I am writing to express my strong and unwavering support for permanently locating the Rocky statue at the top of the Art Museum steps - where it first was introduced to the public nearly forty-five years ago. Since then, the image of Rocky Balboa - arms lifted in triumph atop the steps - has become one of the most instantly recognizable symbols of Philadelphia. Far more than a movie prop, the Rocky statue has grown into a cultural touchstone that reflects the values, grit, and spirit that define this city.

The story of *Rocky* is, at its core, a Philadelphia story. It celebrates perseverance, humility, and the belief that greatness is not reserved for the privileged, but earned through heart and determination. These are the values Philadelphians embrace every day, and the statue serves as a visual reminder of these ideals.

Few works of public art have woven themselves so deeply into the emotional and cultural fabric of Philadelphia. More than four million people each year - residents, students, families, and visitors - climb those steps to stand in the presence of the Rocky statue. They photograph it, celebrate beneath it, emulate it, and draw strength from it. It has become a cultural touchstone, a gathering point, and for many, a symbol of perseverance and possibility. Visitors from around the world come not merely to see a film landmark, but to

stand where a fictional underdog helped countless everyday people feel seen, inspired, and encouraged.

Rocky's original placement at the top is not just cinematic tradition. That location has given the statue its meaning, power, and the sense of triumph that the steps themselves embody. To restore Rocky permanently to this location is to honor the millions of residents and visitors who embrace this statue, and celebrate the human connection between this artwork and the people who find inspiration in it every day.

Public art is at its best when it belongs to everyone—when it lifts us, challenges us, and reminds us of who we are. The Rocky statue does exactly that, and it will do so most fully from its rightful home. By approving its prominent location at the top of the Art Museum steps, the Commission will not only be stewarding a beloved cultural symbol, but also reaffirming the belief of Philadelphians that art should represent everyday people and move them in lasting, meaningful ways.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your dedication to stewarding the artistic environment of Philadelphia. I hope you will join me in ensuring that this iconic work stands at its rightful and intended place where it first inspired millions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cherelle L. Parker". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Cherelle L. Parker
Mayor, City of Philadelphia



December 3, 2025

Philadelphia Art Commission

One Parkway Building
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Dear Members of the Art Commission,

On behalf of the Philadelphia Art Museum (Art Museum), we write to express our strong support for having a Rocky statue at the top of the museum's steps in front of the East Terrace.

The Art Museum is organizing Rising Up: Rocky and the Making of Monuments, an exhibition that will confront the profound meanings and mythologies of the Rocky Statue located at the base of the museum's iconic steps. "Rising Up" will open on April 25, 2026, ahead of Philadelphia hosting World Cup matches and the nation's semiquincentennial, and will run through August 2, 2026. Hosted in the Dorrance Galleries, the Museum is collaborating with Dr. Paul Farber, Co-Founder and Director of Monument Lab, as the guest curator of Rising Up.

We are very happy to support the city-led initiative to have the Rocky statue live on top of the steps in perpetuity. We know the spirit of Rocky continues to inspire millions and are in full support.

Sincerely yours,

Louis Marchesano

Marion Boulton "Kippy" Stroud Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs and Conservation



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
Parks & Recreation
Susan Slawson
Commissioner

One Parkway
1515 Arch Street, 10th Fl
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1587

11/25/25

Katherine Liss
Acting Director

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One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
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Re: Rocky Statue Support Letter

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The Rocky statue has become a defining feature of the Museum of Art and the steps - an anchor that brings residents and visitors together in celebration, exercise, and shared pride. The statue has become not only a beloved landmark but also an inspiration. The ascent to the top, paired with the familiar gesture, arms raised triumphantly, creates a uniquely Philadelphia experience representing both cultural and historical significance of our beloved city.

The statue's original placement is essential to this experience. The view, the climb, and the emotional reward at the top of those steps cannot be replicated elsewhere. Restoring the statue there honors the history of the site and maintains the connection people have built with this landmark over decades.

Parks & Recreation is dedicated to stewarding spaces that inspire and engage the public, including the iconic Museum Art. Returning Rocky to the top of the Art Museum steps strengthens an important piece of Philadelphia's cultural identity and

ensures that this beloved symbol continues to bring meaning to those who engage with it.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration and for your continued care of Philadelphia's public spaces.

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Susan Slawson

Commissioner

Philadelphia Parks & Recreation



11/25/2025

Katherine Liss
Acting Director
Philadelphia Art Commission
One Parkway, 1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: Visitor Center Support Letter for Relocating Rocky

On behalf of the Philadelphia Visitor Center, I am writing to express our strong support for restoring the Rocky statue to the top of the Art Museum steps. For decades, Rocky's triumphant pose has welcomed millions of visitors and shaped the way they experience our city. This statue is not simply a film reference—it is one of Philadelphia's most beloved symbols, instantly recognizable and deeply meaningful.

The Art Museum steps and the statue work together to create a moment travelers actively seek out. Each year, guests from around the world climb to the top, reenact the iconic scene, and connect with the spirit of determination and grit that has become synonymous with Philadelphia. That experience - joyful, memorable, and triumphant - is a cornerstone of what makes a visit to our city so special.

Returning the statue to its original placement would restore the full power of that experience. The top of the steps is where visitors would expect to find Rocky Balboa, with his arms raised in victory and where the message of perseverance resonates most clearly.

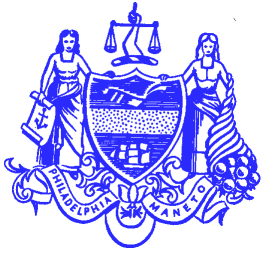
The Visitor Center is committed to enriching every traveler's connection to Philadelphia, our values and our culture. We believe this placement will strengthen that mission and enhance this defining element of Philadelphia's visitor experience.

Thank you for your consideration and for your ongoing support of the cultural assets that help Philadelphia shine.

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Kathryn Ott Lovell
President and CEO
Philadelphia Visitor Center



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