

Additional Information for 2147 and 2149 Ellsworth St



October 31, 2025

Kate Jacobi
Senior Project Manager
Community Projects & Restorations
Mural Arts Philadelphia
1729 Mount Vernon Street
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re: Mural & Party Wall Assessment
Keith Haring Mural
2147 Ellsworth Street
Philadelphia, PA
JBCI Proj. No. 257403

Dear Kate:

Per our Agreement dated September 19, 2025, JBCI performed a visual condition assessment of the "We the Youth" mural by Keith Haring (the Mural) on the brick party wall at 2147 Ellsworth Street in Philadelphia. We were assisted by specialty masonry contractor Joseph Dugan, Inc. (JDI). We are submitting a report of our findings and recommendations.

DESCRIPTION

The Mural, located on the party wall at the west elevation of 2147 Ellsworth Street, was originally completed in 1987 with a restoration project completed in 2013. The Mural is painted on stucco over brick masonry. It has experienced ongoing deterioration exacerbated by chronic moisture infiltration issues.

The current building owner/developer of 2147 Ellsworth Street has proposed demolishing the structure and commissioned an art conservation firm to remove the mural in sections for future off-site restoration. Several community stakeholders, including Neighborhood Gardens Trust, Mural Arts Philadelphia, and the Keith Haring Foundation, are advocating for in-situ preservation and restoration of the Mural.

JBCI was retained to perform a condition assessment of the Mural and party wall, and evaluate the feasibility of various potential approaches to salvaging and restoring the Mural.

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Aerial View



The Mural

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Our site assessment was performed on October 14, 2025. We performed a hands-on survey of the Mural from a high reach. With JDI's assistance, we also performed test drilling through the stucco to better understand the condition of the brick party wall. (After our assessment, drilled holes were filled with white sealant to match the mural and prevent water intrusion through the drill holes.) Our observations are as follows:

GOOD -	No repairs or only minor rehabilitation required.
FAIR -	Major maintenance or minor rehabilitation required.
MARGINAL -	Major repair or rehabilitation required.
POOR -	Repair or rehabilitation required immediately.
DANGEROUS -	Repair or rehabilitation urgent and use should be restricted.

Party Wall

- Existing wall construction consists of two wythes of brick, the original interior plaster, and cement stucco.
- Top of wall at main roof consists of metal edge fascia with roofing cement termination on horizontal; top of wall under coping was not visible.
 - Roofing appears to have a recently applied silver coat, and the roofing cement termination on the metal edge fascia appears to be recently applied. Based on historic satellite imagery, it appears these repairs were completed in May 2023.
- Top of wall at roof deck and backyard site wall consists of wood blocking with a metal cap covered with a reinforced coating.
 - At the site wall, the coping is in good condition.
 - At the roof deck, the coping is in fair condition. The edge of the wood blocking is exposed on the underside and the coating is flaking off.
 - The wall steps down on the north end from the main roof down to the roof deck. The vertical transition for the elevation change is poorly detailed. The metal edge fascia stops, there is no fascia covering the return edge, and there does not appear to be flashing present at the bottom of the transition. The joint between the roof deck coping and the rising wall is open.
- Stucco is in generally poor condition
 - Widespread areas of bulging and delamination
 - Acoustical sounding of stucco was inconclusive; majority of the wall sounded delaminated
 - Full height open vertical crack at center of wall



- Hairline cracks throughout
- Spalled, bulged areas at grade (up to 3-4" off the wall in the most severe areas) – exposing interior plaster surface behind
- Corroded metal lath at spalled areas
- Brick party wall is in generally fair condition
 - Test drilling revealed brick and mortar materials feel generally solid with good resistance on the drill; areas of softer brick and sandy mortar were felt in isolated locations

Mural

- Generally fair condition on building wall; site wall area (north end) in good condition
- Colors are still bold and vibrant
- Isolated areas of delaminated or bubbling paint
- Isolated areas of rust staining



CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our observations and professional experience, the Mural and party wall are in overall fair condition. Several factors may be contributing to the deterioration and prolonged moisture issues.

Top of Wall Detail

In order to prevent water intrusion into the wall, the top of wall condition must be water-tight. The existing roofing termination at the main roof appears to have been recently re-sealed, but based on the condition of the wall, it was likely open for some time and was a significant source of water/moisture intrusion leading to the delamination of the stucco. At the roof deck, there is a metal cap over wood blocking at the top of the wall. The section of the Mural below is in generally good condition, much better condition than the wall below the main roof.

Open Cracking

The open vertical crack through the stucco that extends generally the full height of the wall is also a contributing factor to the water infiltration issues. We were unable to determine if the crack translates through to the brick wall beyond, however, it is remarkably straight which suggests it is a cold joint in the stucco – a joint where new 2013 stucco was installed up against old stucco. If the new metal lath did not overlap the old lath, these two generations of stucco could easily separate as a result of water infiltration induced delamination, or thermal movement. To properly repair the stucco crack, the brick wall should be exposed to confirm the cracking does not propagate through. Depending on the condition, joint repair and/or reinforcing may be required prior to repairing the stucco.

Wall Base Termination

Currently the Mural extends down to grade at the adjacent garden area. Moisture from the ground and garden may wick up the wall, compromising the condition of the base of the stucco and cause the type of deterioration occurring at the bottom of the wall. A preferable termination would be to stop the stucco above the ground at a weep screed.

Plaster Substrate

At the areas of spalled stucco at the base of the wall, it appears that the stucco was installed over the original interior plaster of the previous house on the property. If the plaster and/or brick wall conditions were not sound, the exterior stucco may have been



originally applied to poor substrate conditions. This can contribute to the bulging and delamination.

As part of our assessment, we have considered the feasibility of five restoration options. Our opinions are as follows:

1. Remove the mural in sections for future off-site re-assembly and restoration – Based on the level of stucco deterioration we found, it is our opinion that the mural would not survive this approach. The disturbance to the wall would likely cause the large areas of delaminated stucco to crumble and fall off the backup wall during the process.
2. Preserve the Mural and wall in the same location while the developer demolishes the building and constructs a new building – This approach involves constructing a temporary support structure in the garden space to stabilize both the Mural and the party wall during construction. The support structure would be anchored securely into the ground and connected to the wall at multiple points along its height and length. Our test drilling confirmed that the brick wall is mostly in good condition and strong enough to safely accommodate these connections. During demolition of the existing building, careful methods would be used to avoid damaging the shared wall. After demolition exposes the interior side of the wall, any deteriorated mortar joints should be repaired and loose or deteriorated sections of brick should be rebuilt. As the new building is constructed, its wall would be connected to the existing party wall to provide permanent support. Once this permanent connection is in place, restoration of the Mural could proceed from the exterior. The restoration work would address deterioration at the top of the wall, remove any loose or damaged stucco, repair the underlying brick where needed, install new stucco, and restore the Mural artwork itself. After the Mural restoration is finished, the temporary exterior support structure would be dismantled and removed.
3. Relocate the Mural and wall a few feet onto the garden trust property – To accomplish this the wall would essentially have to be fully demolished and rebuilt new. If the wall was to be free-standing, with no adjacent building, it would have to be designed to resist lateral loads and may end up thicker than 8" depending on the materials used.



4. Relocate the Mural and wall in the same location and demolish the building without construction of a new building – Like Option 3 above, the wall would have to be fully demolished and rebuilt new, designed to resist lateral loads. The existing 8" brick wall would not be stable as a free-standing wall.
5. Preserve the Mural and wall in the same location and renovate the building – This option is similar to the previous restoration project that was completed in 2013. As stated in Option 2, ensuring long term durability of the restored Mural would include improving the top of wall and bottom of wall conditions.
6. Demolish the Mural and wall and recreate the Mural on the new building wall provided by the developer – This option provides an improved substrate for the Mural with less future maintenance. Part of the design of the new building would include a blank area in the correct size of the original Mural with a suitable substrate on which to recreate the Mural. This could be another stucco wall, with proper modern detailing and drainage provisions, or it could be another material. If desired, prior to demolition a scaffolding frame could be erected and wrapped with an image of the Mural to remain in place during construction.

With any of these options, special considerations should be taken into account with regards to the top and bottom of wall conditions to prevent future water intrusion issues and prolong the life of the Mural.

Final Thoughts

In our professional opinion, there is not one clear "best" solution. While Options 2 and 5 can be accomplished, Mural Arts and the Keith Haring Foundation should consider carefully if the expense and effort would be worth the final product. It would remain an old, irregular, brick wall with a stucco finish that may last longer than the 2013 restoration project but will still require regular upkeep and likely more restoration projects in the future as other areas of older stucco start to fail. Options 3, 4, and 6 are at the other end of the spectrum, where it would likely be the most durable long-term solution and minimize maintenance costs, but there would be no material on the wall original to the 1987 project.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide Mural Arts Philadelphia with our Assessment Report. If there are any questions or comments concerning the report contents, please contact our office. We look forward to discussing potential next steps with you.



Kate Jacobi

October 31, 2025

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Sincerely,
JOSEPH B. CALLAGHAN, INC.


Jessica Clifford, PE
Partner/President


Colleen Boulden
Sr. Project Manager

DRAFT



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Photo No. 1: The Mural



Photo No. 2: Main roof/top of wall condition



Photo No. 3: Top of 3rd floor wall condition



Photo No. 4: Bottom of vertical transition – joint open at end of roof deck coping



Photo No. 5: Coating flaking off underside of wood blocking at roof deck coping



Photo No. 6: Bulging at top of wall



Photo No. 7: Delaminated, missing paint



Photo No. 8: Delaminated, missing paint, cracks in stucco beyond



Photo No. 9: Bubbling paint



Photo No. 10: Rust staining, cracking



Photo No. 11: Open vertical crack through stucco at top of wall; delaminated paint



Photo No. 12: Open vertical crack through stucco



Photo No. 13: Cracked, spalled, delaminated stucco and paint; corroded metal lath at grade



Photo No. 14: Cracked, spalled, delaminated stucco and paint; corroded metal lath at grade



Photo No. 15: Cracked, spalled, delaminated stucco and paint; corroded metal lath at grade



Photo No. 16: Top of site wall condition



Photo No. 17: Site wall in good condition



Photo No. 18: Previous restoration project details