

CALL FOR ARTISTS

REQUEST FOR ARTIST QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

**NEW
COMMUNITY-BASED
MURAL**

**ADJACENT TO NEW
PUBLIC ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL**

**13TH & GORDON STREET
ALLENTOWN,
PENNSYLVANIA**



MAY 12, 2020



INTRODUCTION

The Allentown Arts Commission, in partnership with Materials Conservation of Philadelphia, seeks artist responses via this Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to commission an original, site-specific work of art by a professional artist(s) in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

The work of art will be located on the side façade of 1232 1/2 West Gordon, which is adjacent to Allentown School District's (ASD) new elementary school, located on Gordon Street, from 12th to 13th Street. The wall for the mural is the side façade of a privately-owned home and faces a small privately-owned parking lot. The work of art may take the form of mural, low-relief sculpture or other appropriate forms of art (or a combination of these), and is open to artists with the demonstrated capacity to create a fully-realized work of art in any of those forms. The development of the work of art must include significant and meaningful engagement of the school community.

BACKGROUND

Since the early 2000's Allentown – the third largest city in Pennsylvania - has seen a wave of population growth, with the current population being the highest in the city's history. Allentown is a majority minority city: about 53% of the city population is Hispanic, 34% white, 8% black, and 2% Asian. Over 6,000 households in Allentown speak a language that is not English or Spanish. It is also an especially young city, with 16% of the population alone between the ages of 20 and 29. The City of Allentown values this diversity and how it makes for a more vibrant city and a stronger economy.

In Allentown Vision 2030, The City of Allentown's recently completed comprehensive and economic plan, public investment in the arts has been identified as a way to highlight the city's diversity and create a more welcoming and unified city. To that end, Allentown has initiated a multi-year public art effort to create works of art across the city of Allentown, with this being the second project in that effort.

ABOUT THE ALLENTOWN SCHOOL DISTRICT

From the Allentown School District website:

"The richness of the Allentown School District's diversity is strengthened by its central role in educating our students for America's future through academic excellence and celebrating the culturally responsive, athletic and artistic range of talent in the schools.

ASD students originate from 51 countries and speak 26 languages. During the 2016-2017 school year, the district enrolled 16,628 students across 15 Elementary & Early Childhood Centers (7,976), 4 Middle Schools (3,421) and 3 High Schools (5,231). The Allentown School District has 2,429 personnel.

89.1% of our families are denoted as Low Income, and 100% receive Free/Reduced Lunch. ASD is the third largest urban school system out of 500 Districts in the Commonwealth and serves a community with a poverty rate of 38.64% of the City's population. (2013 Census)."

THE SCHOOL

ASD's new school (which will soon be officially named) will be a state-of-the-art facility and will combine communities from two nearby schools: Cleveland Elementary and McKinley Elementary. The K-5 school will officially open in September 2020 and will be the first time that these two school communities have joined as one. The new building replaces two smaller, aging facilities, and will offer students and community members a sunny and cheerful place for students to learn and grow. The design of the building embodies ASD's commitment to 21st century learning initiatives, which prioritizes equity of access, collaboration, and integration of technology.

Attached to the school will be a 10,000 square foot community service building that will be in use throughout the day and will house pre-k classrooms, adult education spaces and a food pantry. Unlike other urban

schools, the playground and school yard amenities will be open for use by the community even when the school is closed. This makes the school truly the heart of this community. In fact, when asked about what makes the school special, every stakeholder we spoke to responded with the answer "Community."

PROJECT GOALS

The goals for the work of art include:

- Creating an arts engagement experience that gives students, families and administrators a sense of ownership over the work of art. (Due to COVID-19 restrictions as well as uncertainty over the nature fall semester, the artists will need to think creatively about how this can be achieved).
- Reflecting the diversity and dynamism of the student body and community.
- Creating an inspirational and a highly visually work of art at a significant enough scale to engage viewers.

BUDGET

The budget for the project is \$22,000 and is inclusive of ALL fees, including artist fees, supplies and materials, equipment, wall surface preparation, insurance, studio costs, assistant fees/production support, technical, travel and lodging, time for municipal review and approval, community engagement activities, and all other costs related to the design and production of the work of art. It must also include the community engagement portions of the project.

SCOPE OF WORK

The artist will create a work of art on the side façade of 1232 ½ W. Gordon Street, a 3-story row home. The work of art should address all or part of the wall and must be visible from surrounding streets. Exact dimensions for the painted brick and stucco wall will be provided for artist finalists.

The artist must develop and implement at least 2 meaningful community engagement sessions related to the art and its creation. These ideas must be approved by the school and implemented in coordination with them. Additionally, in the spirit of capacity-building, the selected artist will be asked to mentor an emerging local artist by having the local artist participate in the project in an appropriate and meaningful way. The artists will have to think creatively about how to safely plan and implement community engagement due to COVID-19. Such planning may also require a general re-thinking of public art community engagement.



Aerial view, showing the school and mural site



View of location for new work of art, with new school visible across Gordon Street

APPLICATION PROCESS

Artists who are interested in being considered for this project must submit their response to this RFQ by 1pm on June 12, 2020. Up to 3 artist applicants will be selected as finalists, notified, and invited to attend a site visit (which will likely occur virtually). These artist finalists will be offered a \$500 honorarium in return for creating a proposal that they will present to Allentown stakeholders in Mid-July, 2020. Full proposal details and requirements will be released to artist finalists at the time that they are selected.

Artist responses to this RFQ must include:

1. Artist statement of interest in project (up to 250 words)
2. Artist statement about your work (up to 250 words)
3. Artist statement about past community engagement experience and how that may inform this project (up to 500 words)
4. Current resume (up to one page), including email and phone contact information.
5. Images of four past projects, with an identification sheet that lists the project location, client, date and budget.

PROJECT SCHEDULE

The anticipated project schedule is as follows:

****Please note that the selected artist will be expected to begin work on the project soon after selection.**

RFQ Issued	May 12, 2020
RFQ responses due	June 12, 2020
Finalist artist virtual 'site visits' and stakeholder meeting (finalists will be notified in advance of meeting)	June 26, 2020 (approx. date)
Finalist artists present proposals (virtual?), artist selected	July 16, 2020
Finalize design and contract development	Late July, 2020
Selected artist begins work on project	August 2020
Selected artist begins community engagement	September 2020
Work of art complete	During November 2020

****The Project schedule is entirely dependent on the ability of all parties to safely work due to COVID-19. The project schedule may be changed at any point in the interest of public safety. ****

ELIGIBILITY

The opportunity is open to artists or artist teams working in a variety of media in the United States. Artists must have successfully completed a work of public art in comparable scale or budget to be considered for the project. **Allentown and Lehigh Valley-based artists, female artists and artists of color are encouraged to apply.** The public art program is committed to reflecting the diversity of the City of Allentown in our selection process. Complete applications that meet threshold eligibility will be considered

SUBMISSION INFORMATION

Artists applying to this RFQ must send in their materials by 1pm June 12, 2020. Materials can be submitted via email or mail.

If submitted via email:

-Materials must be sent as a single PDF document not to exceed 4MB in size, and emailed to jguerrero@mccollab.com. All emailed applications will receive an emailed receipt.

If submitted by mail:

-Materials must be submitted in a manilla envelope with all materials printed on 8 ½"x11" paper. Please do not bend, fold, bind or staple application materials. Materials must be received by due date – postmarks are not acceptable.

-Envelopes must be mailed to:

Materials Conservation Co.
1625 N. Howard Street
Philadelphia, PA 19122
ATTN: Julia Guerrero

OTHER INFORMATION

The selected artist will execute a contract with Materials Conservation, and the work of art will be owned by the City of Allentown and will be a part of their collection of permanent public works of art.

As the selected artist will engage with children and families they may be required by the ASD to obtain and present clearances as required by the Child Protective Services Law, including FBI clearances, the Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance, the Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check, and a TB test. Artists who are unable to provide proof of such clearance may not be awarded the project.

By submitting materials in response to this RFQ the Applicant acknowledges that Materials Conservation and/or the City of Allentown may at any time supplement, modify, or re-issue the RFQ. This may include rejecting all applications, cancelling RFQ, extending the time period of this RFQ, adjusting the schedule, soliciting new responses, or requesting additional information from applicants. Materials Conservation and the City of Allentown are not responsible for any cost or expense incurred by the Applicant in connection with this RFQ. All costs incurred in connection with this RFQ are the responsibility of the Applicant.

Questions may be directed to Julia Guerrero at Materials Conservation, at jguerrero@mccollab.com