

Bloomberg Philanthropies Launches the 2018 Public Art Challenge for U.S. Cities

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NEW YORK, Feb. 15, 2018 /PRNewswire/ -- Bloomberg Philanthropies today announced the launch of the 2018 Public Art Challenge. Mayors of U.S. cities with 30,000 residents or more are invited to apply for up to \$1 million in funding for temporary public art projects that address important civic issues. Submissions for dynamic works of art across all disciplines will be considered. Proposed projects will be evaluated on their ability to generate public-private collaborations, celebrate creativity and urban identity, and strengthen local economies.

Bloomberg Philanthropies

The Public Art Challenge is a part of Mike Bloomberg's American Cities Initiative, an effort to help U.S. cities generate innovation and advance policy. The Public Art Challenge encourages mayors to partner with artists, elevating the value of including the creative sector when developing solutions to significant urban issues.

"The Public Art Challenge brings people together to look at issues from new perspectives and uncover new solutions. The winning projects from the first competition all made a real and lasting impact in their cities," said Michael R. Bloomberg, three-term Mayor of New York City and philanthropist. "We're looking forward to seeing what ideas emerge from this year's competition and how they can help to build a strong future for communities around the country."

The foundation's first Public Art Challenge, announced in the fall of 2014, received submissions from more than 230 cities. Proposals covered a range of issues and social themes including neighborhood safety, environmental sustainability, and promoting city identity. In 2015, four projects were awarded \$1 million each to execute projects over a two year period in Gary, IN; Spartanburg, SC; Los Angeles, CA; and the New York Capital Region through a joint project by the cities of Albany, Schenectady and Troy.

The Inaugural Public Art Challenge generated significant activity across the four regions, according to a national impact study:

- \$13 million catalyzed for local economies
- 10 million views
- 245 partners helped implement the projects including businesses, nonprofits, government agencies and community organizations
- 820 people employed through full-time and part-time positions
- 1,300 volunteers contributed their time and talent to the projects
- 490 programs and activities like tours, workshops and lectures

Through a collaborative effort, the cities of Albany, Schenectady and Troy, NY illuminated vacant buildings across the New York Capital Region to mimic human breath and elevate the issues of vacancy and urban revitalization. Artist Adam Frelin, architect Barbara Nelson, the mayors of the three cities, local land banks, and more than 75 community and private sector partners came together to bring the "Breathing Lights" installation to life. This project included a series of related public programming for residents, prospective buyers and investors, and policymakers.

"Breathing Lights helped stimulate discussion and transform public perception by literally shining a light on vacant and abandoned buildings in distressed neighborhoods," said Albany Mayor Kathy Sheehan. "The Public Art Challenge opened the door to unprecedented collaboration and cooperation among our three cities, and allowed us to look at blight and revitalization through an entirely different lens."

The City of Gary, IN transformed an underutilized downtown building into a cultural hub that showcases visual and culinary arts. "ArtHouse: A Social Kitchen," conceived by artist Theaster Gates and the City's Mayor, is a public space that aims to catalyze a cultural district, promote urban revitalization, and generate opportunities for employment in the restaurant industry.

"As the mayor and lifelong resident of Gary, I understand how important jobs, infrastructure, education and public safety are to our rebuilding effort. While we maintain a laser focus on what are traditionally seen as 'bread and butter' issues in cities, I have also come to recognize that arts and culture can play a vital role in development and place-making," said Mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson. "Projects like 'ArtHouse: A Social Kitchen' and organizations like the Miller Beach Arts and Creative District and Decay Devils have fueled entrepreneurship and innovation that complements our focus on traditional issues."

The City of Los Angeles, CA presented "CURRENT:LA Water," the city's first public art biennial. It included 15 multidisciplinary works of art sited in parks and public spaces along the Los Angeles River. Each of the 13 artists involved created artwork that responded to the importance of water, highlighting critical issues related to conservation, ecology and drought.

"There is a dynamic conversation taking place in this country about how cities activate and catalyze public art to address some of their cities' most pressing challenges," said Danielle Brazell, General Manager, Los Angeles Department of Cultural Affairs. "We wanted to create an opportunity for artists to respond to a critical issue facing Los Angeles, the one that rose to the top is water."

With the goal of improving police-community relations and creating safer, more vibrant public spaces, the City of Spartanburg, SC worked with artist Erwin Redl on "Seeing Spartanburg in a New Light." Redl collaborated with the City's police and fire departments, along with the neighborhood associations, to design and develop engaging light and media art installations that touched 10 neighborhoods across the city.

"The Public Art Challenge provided an opportunity to build, repair and strengthen police-community relations in the city," said Spartanburg Chief of Police Alonzo Thompson. "To bring the expansive installation in 10 different neighborhoods to life, residents from vastly different parts of the city came together on a common ground. All were at the table with equal voices."

To view our behind the scenes videos on the previous Public Art Challenge winning projects, visit <https://www.bloomberg.org/press/videos/focus-area/the-arts/>.

At least three winners will be chosen in 2018 to execute their projects over a maximum of 24 months. Bloomberg Philanthropies grants will cover project-related expenditures including development, execution and marketing, but will not fund 100 percent of project costs. The application for the 2018 Public Art Challenge, as well as more information on criteria, deadlines and process, can be found on <http://publicartchallenge.bloomberg.org>.

Photos and Videos for Press Use

Photos and videos from the previous Public Art Challenge are available for use in this [this Dropbox folder](#). All the images provided are free to use and downloadable, credit Bloomberg Philanthropies.

About Bloomberg Philanthropies

Bloomberg Philanthropies works in over 120 countries around the world to ensure better, longer lives for the greatest number of people. The organization focuses on five key areas for creating lasting change: Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation, and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's charitable activities, including his foundation and his personal giving. In 2017, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed \$702 million. For more information, please visit www.bloomberg.org or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Snapchat](#), and [Twitter](#).

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