

Baltimore Named \$1M Grant Winner in Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge
'Inviting Light' Aims to Create Transformative Public Spaces in Baltimore's Arts District and Deliver Social Impact

Baltimore, Oct. 19, 2023 -- Today, Bloomberg Philanthropies announced Baltimore as one of eight U.S. cities selected to receive a \$1 million grant through the 2023 [Bloomberg Public Art Challenge](#), a program that brings people together to address important civic issues through public art. Led by Central Baltimore Partnership (CBP) in partnership with the Baltimore City Mayor's Office and the Neighborhood Design Center (NDC), the winning project "Inviting Light" will encompass five temporary art installations in public spaces of the Station North Arts District. Under the direction of artistic lead and curator and contemporary artist Derrick Adams and lighting designers Flux Studio, each of the five interventions will engage with light — artificial or natural — in some way and will respond to the project's investment in creating accessible public spaces for everyone, engaging groups that are typically overlooked in (or intentionally excluded from) the city's public amenities.

Each of the five sites has been identified based on lighting design analysis and robust community engagement. Adams will program a kick-off event in early March 2024 with the support of the Neighborhood Design Center to ask audiences to engage with and consider light in new ways, while teeing up a year and half of activation through the five installations. The installations will be designed by local artists working with community members, Flux Studio, and NDC.

“Public art plays a vital role in improving quality of life, celebrating creativity, and driving economic development,” said Ellen Janes, Central Baltimore Partnership Executive Director. “These types of projects can bring the community together, provide a new vocabulary to approach complex issues, and reflect the future. It must be said that this specific project is made possible because of the intrepid artists who live, work and have invested themselves in Station North for the past two decades. This isn’t about just decorating a public space. The social impact of public art is proven to transform the soul and spirit of communities. When mayors, artists, and community members join forces to highlight the value of including the creative sector when developing solutions to urban issues, not only does trust and goodwill form, but a meaningful financial impact can be seen from jobs, tourism, and programming. Plus, public art enhances the playfulness and quality of life of a city for residents as well as visitors.”

Through programming in 2024, Inviting Light will engage audiences about the coming interventions before installation, offering educational, informational, and collaborative opportunities connected to the project. During the winter, spring, summer, and fall of 2025, each of the sites will be activated by public programming, including artist-led performance, dining,

music, and other socially engaged multimedia activities. This programming responds to a larger intention of “Inviting Light” to support light activation in public spaces in support of greater public activity and presence. The artists are charged to develop thoughtful interventions that consider the specific needs of low mobility and low-income audiences, as well as youth, seniors, and individuals seeking treatment in the District’s social service corridor.

"Public art can transform cities, ignite creativity, and unite communities. It's not just about aesthetics; it's about creating a sense of place and belonging for everyone," said Tonya Miller Hall, Senior Advisor of Arts & Culture for the Mayor's Office. Miller Hall continues, "We have a formidable team of private and public partners committed to a thriving and inclusive Arts District."

In terms of walkability and connectivity, the project sites are served by Baltimore’s Penn Station, the eighth busiest transit hub in the nation with connections to Amtrak, commuter rails, Baltimore’s Light Rail and CityLink bus system, the Charm City Circulator, a free bus network connecting the City’s urban core, and major university shuttles. The project is easily accessible by a 20-minute walk in any direction and notably the densely populated communities along Charles Street stretching south to downtown and north to Central Baltimore.

“Light plays a pivotal role in shaping the character of a place, and our comfort in the public realm,” said Merrell Hambleton, Program Manager of Arts Planning and Cultural Programming at the Neighborhood Design Center. "We believe that every community deserves equitable access to well-lit spaces. With Inviting Light, we will be demonstrating how artist-led and community-informed light can be a catalyst for safety, inclusivity, and vibrancy.”

Adams led the artist selection, in conversation with Flux Studio (for input on the lighting angle) and the Project Management team (for input on site availability, as pertinent to artists work). Adams, Shrum, and Jose Ruiz will collaborate with the five selected installation artists to identify socially engaged artists who will support activation of the sites following installation.

"Without a doubt, art has the power to transform lives. This exceptional opportunity we've received will greatly support our efforts to build a stronger community through creativity. With our audience in mind, our goal is to radically enhance the daily lives of those residing in Station North, shedding light on their experiences in both a literal and symbolic sense,” said Derrick Adams.

Launched in 2014, the Bloomberg Philanthropies’ 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 program supports temporary public art projects that

celebrate creativity, enhance urban identity, encourage public-private collaborations, and strengthen local economies.

“The arts have an incredible power to inspire creativity and spark collaboration on some of the most pressing urban challenges,” said **Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and Bloomberg L.P. and 108th Mayor of New York City.** “These eight projects will help foster community action on issues like public health, climate change, homelessness, and more. We look forward to working with the winners as they bring their projects to life.”

Over 600 cities have applied to the three challenges, where mayors of U.S. cities with 30,000 residents or more submit proposals for projects that demonstrate close partnership between artists, arts organizations and city government, with selected cities receiving up to \$1 million each. Learn more: <https://publicartchallenge.bloomberg.org/>

About the Central Baltimore Partnership

The Central Baltimore Partnership is a 17-year-old nonprofit organization of over 150 active partners working together to implement a comprehensive, equitable revitalization agenda in the 11 neighborhoods of Central Baltimore and the Station North Arts District. Partners range from neighborhood associations to nonprofits, arts organizations, public health, and small businesses--ranging from Alma’s Cocina Latina, Tapas Teatro, Joe Squared, Sophomore Coffee, The Charles Theater, Baltimore Improv Group, Made In Baltimore, Motor House, and PNC Bank -- to Johns Hopkins University, MICA, the University of Baltimore, and Medstar Union Memorial Hospital.

CBP and its partners mobilize creative partnerships and resources to bring new investment to Central Baltimore’s neighborhoods by focusing on growing the creative economy, small businesses and commercial development along key corridors in the Station North Arts District and other business nodes. CBP’s comprehensive revitalization agenda also includes improving public health outcomes and expanding youth opportunities. Current collaborative initiatives include the successful expansion of Artscape 2023, increasing artist studios at Area 405, a 70,000 square foot creative space for artists; acquisition of the historic North Avenue Market to support its activation into a retail, production, and entertainment center.

About the Neighborhood Design Center

The Neighborhood Design Center is a nonprofit organization providing design assistance and community development services to low-income neighborhoods and communities throughout Maryland. With over 50 years of experience, NDC has completed more than 4,000 projects, earning a trusted reputation as a partner for communities seeking to enhance their physical environments. For more information, please visit www.ndc-md.org.

About Bloomberg Philanthropies:

Bloomberg Philanthropies invests in 700 cities and 150 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: the Arts, Education, Environment, Government Innovation, and Public Health. Bloomberg Philanthropies encompasses all of Michael R. Bloomberg's giving, including his foundation, corporate, and personal philanthropy as well as Bloomberg Associates, a pro bono consultancy that works in cities around the world. In 2022, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed US\$ 1.7 billion. For more information, please visit bloomberg.org, sign up for our [newsletter](#), or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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