

**MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA
FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET TESTIMONY
APRIL 15, 2026**

INTRODUCTION

Good Afternoon, Council President Johnson and Members of City Council. I am Jane Golden, Executive Director of Mural Arts Philadelphia. Joining me today are Michaylo "Mike" Wuykiw and Naadiyah Dashiell, participants in Mural Arts' Color Me Back Same-Day Work and Pay Program, Sadiq Hawk, participant in our Restorative Justice Program, and Andre Cheney, Local Artist. I am pleased to provide testimony on Mural Arts' Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget.

DEPARTMENT MISSION & PLANS

Mission: Through participatory public art, Mural Arts Philadelphia inspires change in people, places, and practice, creating opportunity for a more just and equitable Philadelphia. Mural Arts responds to the Mayor's goal to improve the quality of life in all Philadelphia neighborhoods and strive towards a safer, cleaner, and greener city with access to economic opportunity for all. Mural Arts Philadelphia envisions a world where all people have a say in the future of their lives and communities, where art and creative practice are respected as critical to sense of self and place, and where cultural vibrancy reflects and honors all human identities and experiences.

Plans for Fiscal Year 2027:

For four decades, Mural Arts has partnered with artists, residents, and community organizations across Philadelphia to create public art in the shared spaces of our city. Together, we've created more than 4,000 murals across every Council District—artworks shaped through collaboration and grounded in local histories, experiences, and aspirations. In doing so, we've strengthened neighborhood pride, helped establish Philadelphia as the Mural Capital of the World, and created a powerful way for residents and visitors alike to encounter the city through the voices and vision of its communities.

But the murals are only the most visible part of what we do. What people see on the wall is just the surface of something much deeper. Behind every mural are months of listening, conversation, and trust-building. We begin by asking: who lives here, what stories are held here, what should be remembered, and what deserves to be seen? And then we work together—artists, neighbors, community groups, businesses, and City agencies—to bring those voices into the public space of the city. For us, this has always been about making sure that anyone, in any neighborhood, can walk out their front door and see something that reflects them—that reminds them they belong here. That collaborative process is at the heart of everything we do, and it is how we advance Mayor Parker's priorities for Philadelphia: public safety, economic opportunity, education, and cleaner, greener neighborhoods.

MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA

Let me start with public safety. We have long believed that safety begins with connection, dignity, and the chance to be seen for who you are and who you can still become. Through *The Guild*, our paid restorative justice workforce program, Mural Arts provides people returning from prison with structured work, coaching, and support as they rebuild their lives. Through *Rec Crew*, that work continues in neighborhood recreation centers and public spaces, where participants work alongside artists to create places that feel cared for, welcoming, and full of possibility. Each year, these programs serve at least 70 returning citizens, and roughly 80% move on to jobs, training, or education. With full FY27 support, we can grow this work, deepen employment partnerships, and pilot scholarships to help participants become certified in high-demand skill areas.

Public safety also depends on whether residents have places where they can participate, contribute, and shape community life together. In Tacony, Mural Arts created Tacony LAB as a neighborhood cultural space where artists and hundreds of residents come together through workshops, exhibitions, and shared programming that build civic participation, local pride, and a stronger sense of belonging.

And now let's talk about the biggest theme of Mayor Parker's budget proposal this year: economic opportunity. Every year, Mural Arts employs at least 250 artists, attracting and sustaining Philadelphia's creative workforce and investing in the people whose imagination helps shape this city. And through Color Me Back, the City's first program of its kind, launched in 2019, which has become a model for many successful programs throughout Philadelphia, we offer Same-Day Work and Pay to Philadelphians facing housing instability, behavioral health challenges, or justice system involvement. Operating from Suburban Station and our Kensington storefront, the program engages roughly 450 residents each year for approximately 3,200 shifts and distributes more than \$250,000 in wages. But what makes this work so powerful is that it offers more than a paycheck. For hundreds of people each year, Color Me Back provides a place of welcome, consistency, and human connection. Each shift brings together dignity, creativity, and access to support—meeting people where they are and helping them move forward.

Now let's talk about youth development. Each year, Mural Arts serves more than 2,600 young people through free arts education and Career-Connected Learning, in partnership with the Office of Children and Families and School District, rooted in real public projects. These are young people whose creativity might otherwise have little room to grow in school or after school, and our work helps open that door.

Across the city, young people build hands-on design skills, deepen their civic engagement, and form real relationships with practicing artists and employers. They begin to see themselves differently—not only as students, but as makers, contributors, and future leaders. This year, 107 teens are participating in Career Connected Learning, and 13 paid youth interns are working alongside artists and project managers on neighborhood projects, gaining experience, confidence, and a stronger sense of what is possible for their own futures.

And now to the big one: cleaner, greener neighborhoods. This is about the daily experience of living in Philadelphia—what it feels like to walk down a block that is cared for, to see beauty where there was once neglect, and to know that your neighborhood matters. Each year, Mural Arts completes 80 to 100 public art projects, engages roughly 20,000 residents in improving their neighborhoods, performs more than 20 mural restorations, and carries out over 100 graffiti remediations. And now, through Mayor Parker's Gateways to Philadelphia Highway Beautification Initiative, we are helping reshape some of the city's most visible entrances with our great partners at the Office of Clean and Green. I want to thank Mayor Parker for her leadership in creating this ambitious effort and for including Mural Arts in this important citywide work.

MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA

2026 is a landmark year, featuring 108 community-rooted projects. Here are just a few exciting examples: Philly Music Legends Mural Series, honoring Sun Ra Arkestra, Questlove, and Jesse Bermudez; Tribute to Black Dance, celebrating Philadelphia’s extraordinary Black dance legacy; Throughlines, a river-to-river exhibition exploring democracy, labor, stewardship, and belonging; LGBTQ+ Heroes, a permanent Gayborhood mural honoring leaders including Gloria Casarez; and Northeast 250: Threads of History, which will activate Tacony LAB through artist-led public events and community flag-making.

In FY27, additional investment would allow us to support up to ten more mural projects requested by community groups, residents, and Councilmembers and begin to address a restoration backlog of 195 murals that are part of Philadelphia’s civic landscape and cultural memory.

As I prepare to step down after four decades of service, I do so with deep gratitude and unwavering confidence in Mural Arts' future. This work is upheld by Mural Arts’ amazing artists, staff, and community partners, and by public leaders like you who believe in the power of art to help Philadelphia thrive. It has been an honor of a lifetime to steward this work in service of making Philadelphia safer, cleaner, and greener, blanketing neighborhoods in art that honors the people and stories that make our city great. I know that shared commitment will carry Mural Arts forward.

We are deeply grateful for your partnership, for Mayor Parker and her administration, and for the leadership of Chief Cultural Officer Val Gay and the team at Creative Philadelphia. We respectfully ask for your support of Mural Arts’ full FY27 request.

I’d now like to invite Mike, Naadiyah, Sadiq, and Andre to say a few words.



(Left) *Labor and Love Intertwined* by Michelle Angela Ortiz, created with members of Philadelphia’s Italian Market community through Mural Arts Philadelphia.



(Right) *Point Breeze Game Changers* by Gabe Tiberino and Carlos “Calo” Rosa, created with community members at Chew Recreation Center in Point Breeze through Mural Arts Philadelphia.

PROPOSED BUDGET OVERVIEW & OTHER BUDGET DRIVERS

General Fund Financial Summary by Class						
	FY25 Original Appropriations	FY25 Actual Obligations	FY26 Original Appropriations	FY26 Estimated Obligations	FY27 Proposed Appropriations	Difference: FY27 Proposed-FY26 Estimated
Class 100 - Employee Compensation	\$629,179	\$566,756	\$653,245	\$662,847	\$666,048	\$3,201
Class 200 - Purchase of Services	\$3,054,141	\$3,554,141	\$4,454,141	\$4,454,141	\$3,054,141	(\$1,400,000)
	\$3,683,320	\$4,120,897	\$5,107,386	\$5,116,988	\$3,720,189	(\$1,396,799)

Contracts Summary (Professional Services only) and S/LBE Contract Participation Goal are not applicable as MAP has no contracts requiring an RFP.

Proposed Funding Request:

The proposed Fiscal Year 2027 General Fund budget totals \$3,720,189, a decrease of \$1,396,799 from Fiscal Year 2026 estimated obligation levels. This decrease is primarily due to one-time funding in FY26 for four of Mural Arts’ core programs: Restorative Justice, Public Art & Civic Engagement, Tacony Lab, and Mural Restoration.

The proposed budget includes:

- \$666,048 in Class 100, a \$3,201 increase over FY26 estimated obligations due to exempt employee wage increases. This funding will support Mural Arts Crew Operations Personnel.
- \$3,054,141 in Class 200, a \$1,400,000 decrease from FY26 due to one-time funding in FY26. This funding will support Mural Arts’ core operations of its mission-aligned programs and activities.

MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA



(Left) *Kensington Color Me Back Exhibition*, featuring work by participants and teaching artists of the Color Me Back program, Mural Arts Philadelphia.

(Right) *Frances E. W. Harper: We Are All Bound Up Together* by Athena Scott, created with students of Greene Street Friends School and community members in Germantown, through Mural Arts Philadelphia in partnership with Penn State University's Center for Black Digital Research

MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA

STAFFING LEVELS

The department is requesting 10 budgeted positions for FY27, level with FY26.

Employment Levels (as of November 2025)			
	FY26 Budgeted	Filled as of November 2025	FY27 Proposed
Number of Full-Time Positions	10	8	10
Number of Exempt Positions	10	8	10
Number of Executive Positions (deputy level and above)		4	
Average Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$57,107	
Median Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$55,787	

NEW HIRES

Mural Arts had one new hire in March 2026.

VACANCY RATE AND ALLOWANCE

Vacancy Rate Summary (General Fund)						
	FY25 Actual Vacancy Rate	FY26 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance	FY26 Vacancy Rate	FY26 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance Rate	FY27 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance	FY27 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance Rate
Departmental Total	0.0%	N/A	20%	N/A	(\$13,320)	2.2%

**MAP's budget did not include a vacancy allowance in FY26.*

MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA

OTHER BUDGETARY IMPACTS

Federal and State (Where Applicable)

Mural Arts leverages State funds and is awaiting notification from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) regarding an application for a Violence Intervention and Prevention grant.

CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE

M/W/DSBE Participation on Large Professional Services Contracts is not applicable as MAP has no contracts requiring an RFP.

Non-Profit Vendor Demographics is not applicable.

MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA

PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:

Program Name: Mural Arts Philadelphia

Program Number: 01

FY27 Proposed General Fund: \$3,720,189

Program Description: Mural Arts generates impact among individuals, communities, and systems through participatory public art projects that intersect the following five areas: youth development, criminal justice reform, wellness, environmental sustainability, and civil discourse. Project decisions respond to the needs and opportunities articulated by civic leaders, community leaders, or identified in neighborhood plans. Mural Arts' core programs support youth enrolled in Art Education, justice-impacted adults seeking workforce development training through Restorative Justice, and individuals seeking support with mental health and wellness through the Porch Light programs. Mural Arts is part of Creative Philadelphia and partners on cross-collaborative projects that support the Mayor's vision of a safer, cleaner, and greener Philadelphia with access to economic opportunity for all.

FY27 Strategic Goals:

1. In partnership with the Community Life Improvement Program (CLIP), Mural Arts Philadelphia will continue its series of exterior murals at highway entryways and underpasses across Philadelphia. Representing an investment of nearly \$2.4 million in FY26-28, these murals will serve to beautify the highways, underpasses, and neighborhood gateways. Mural Arts will also complete a large gateway project with the Office of Clean and Green Initiatives on the CSX wall.
2. Mural Arts will continue to utilize community murals/public art as a tool of blight elimination and neighborhood empowerment.
3. Mural Arts will partner with City departments to address the graffiti crisis, restore murals, and revitalize public spaces, such as recreation centers, citywide.
4. Mural Arts will create training, capacity building, and continued economic growth opportunities for artists, program participants, and those in the creative sector citywide.

MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA

FY27 Performance Measures:

Measure	FY25 Actual	FY26 Target	FY27 Target
Number of public art projects dedicated ¹	100	80	80
Number of mid- or large-scale restorations completed	14	12	15
Number of project, tour, and event participants (short-term engagement)	28,398	≥ 26,000	≥ 28,000
Number of program participants (sustained engagement) ²	11,500	≥ 10,000	≥ 10,000
Percent of re-entry participants taken back into custody after one year	5.5%	< 8%	< 8%
Percent of re-entry participants employed six months after program completion	78%	85%	85%
Private funding leveraged (per public dollar)	\$2.63	\$2.50	\$2.50
Press and social media impressions (in billions) ³	2.95	1.00	0.50
Successful annual audit	Yes	Yes	Yes

¹ Targets for FY26 and FY27 are lower due to the Mural Arts Program focusing on larger projects related to special events in 2026.

² FY25 actuals were impacted by one-time grant funding.

³ A few high-profile projects impacted FY25's record number of impressions, which are not expected to recur.