

**The Ambassador Bridge Gateway Public Art Project Case Study
Connecting Neighbors through Public Art**

**In Response to the Call for Papers:
Art in Transportation Intermodal Transfer Facilities
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1 **ABSTRACT**

2 Integrating public art into transportation projects has been on the rise nationwide since the 1990s, as many
3 state transportation agencies have used Transportation Enhancement Grants to fund public art projects.
4 Urban freeway corridors containing bridge crossings and retaining walls serve as the ideal canvas for
5 incorporating aesthetically pleasing images, textures, or color to concrete or steel. Public art, when
6 integrated with pedestrian friendly facilities, also has the ability to transform spaces and elements into
7 landmarks for the members of the community who may walk, drive or bicycle by the artwork while going
8 about their daily lives.

9 The focus of this paper is to provide guidance on holding a public art competition by presenting
10 the Michigan Department of Transportation’s (MDOT) I-75 Ambassador Bridge Gateway Public Art
11 Project. The authors will present the process used to define the public art scope of work and to structure a
12 competition to select an artist to create and integrate public art into the East Apron of the newly
13 constructed Bagley Street Pedestrian Bridge. The process will highlight how community forums and
14 public participation enabled the “The Spiral of Life” (1) and the “Spiral Kinship” (2) to be born. The
15 collaboration between Detroit artist Hubert Massey and the community engaged people from both sides of
16 the bridge in a process that inspired the works. This collaborative and community-based effort helped to
17 reconnect neighbors through public art.

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1 INTRODUCTION

2 The Michigan Department of Transportation's (MDOT) I-75 Ambassador Bridge Gateway Project in
3 Detroit, Michigan was the largest single construction contract in MDOT's history. The project included
4 the complete reconstruction of I-75 and I-96 between West Grand Boulevard and Michigan Avenue (US-
5 12) and provided new direct ramp connections to the Ambassador Bridge. The project also included the
6 construction of the Bagley Street Pedestrian Bridge, the first cable stayed bridge in Michigan.

7 The project's theme quickly became "Connecting Neighbors" since one of the primary goals was
8 to provide a direct connection between the freeway system and the Ambassador Bridge, the busiest border
9 crossing in North America. The project also sought to reconnect or enhance the connections between the
10 United States and Canada, Detroit and Windsor, and East and West Mexicantown. The Bagley Street
11 Pedestrian Bridge East Apron is located adjacent to the new Detroit Mexicantown International Welcome
12 center and Mercado in an urban setting in Southwest Detroit. Many Detroit landmarks, such as St.
13 Anne's Church, the Michigan Central Station and the Ambassador Bridge, are visible from the pedestrian
14 bridge's Aprons.

15 To build upon the theme of the project, the spirit of collaboration, the public participation and the
16 community outreach which were the hallmark of the project, MDOT decided to incorporate public art by
17 sponsoring a public art competition. Artist Hubert Massey was selected and commissioned to design a tile
18 mural and free-standing sculpture for the East Apron of the newly constructed Bagley Street Pedestrian
19 Bridge. MDOT sponsored several community-based public forums with the artist in order to afford the
20 community the opportunity to influence the content of the works. The ideas generated at these meetings
21 inspired the design of "The Spiral of Life" and "Spiral Kinship."
22

23 PROJECT HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

24 The Mexicantown community has been divided since the 1970s, when the section of freeway along I-75
25 from Clark Street to Rosa Parks Boulevard was originally constructed. Since that time, the Mexicantown
26 residents have desired to reconnect their neighborhoods with a more direct connection between East and
27 West Mexicantown and to the businesses in Southwest Detroit. During the Environmental Assessment
28 (EA) phase of the project in the 1990s, MDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
29 identified reestablishing the link across the freeway as a socioeconomic impact that needed to be
30 addressed and mitigated as part of the project. As Bagley Street is one of the main links between East and
31 West Mexicantown, support for a pedestrian bridge spanning I-75 at this location was embraced by the
32 community.

33 MDOT's goal for the pedestrian bridge was to design and construct a dramatic and significant
34 structure, one that could become a focal point for the community and a landmark or beacon for motorists
35 as they crossed over the Ambassador Bridge from Canada. To achieve this task, MDOT sponsored a
36 national design competition to select a design concept for the pedestrian bridge, with the winning
37 architect being awarded a subcontract with the prime consultant design firm HNTB.

38 From the start of the design process, it was clear this was not going to be an ordinary highway
39 pedestrian crossing. An integrated Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) Design approach was used during
40 the Bagley Street Pedestrian Bridge approach apron plan development. MDOT organized a Steering
41 Committee and held numerous community outreach meetings in order to engage the public in the design
42 process and keep them informed about major project developments. A complete streets approach was
43 also taken during the apron plan development. Having a safe and convenient pedestrian crossing
44 encourages people to walk or ride a bicycle to reach their destination. Therefore, wider than standard

1 shared use path widths, varying 10 to 31 feet, were applied on the structure and ADA accessible ramps
2 were positioned in convenient locations for traversing from the East and West aprons onto the local
3 roadway system sidewalks. The pedestrian bridge crossing and landings also provided an enhanced
4 connection to the new Detroit Mexicantown International Welcome Center and newly constructed carpool
5 lot and easy access to transit stops on the East and West sides of the freeway, encouraging multimodal use
6 of the facility.

7 After several years of design development and refinement, the 747 foot pedestrian bridge spanned
8 417 feet across I-75 and I-96 supported by a 150 foot tall concrete pylon, and included a 285 foot long
9 East Apron and 45 foot long West Apron. The East Apron contained large architectural retaining walls
10 and open spaces, which presented ideal locations for integrating public art. However, previous efforts to
11 display public art in the community were not always successful. MDOT recognized the need and
12 opportunity in conjunction with the Gateway Project to provide public art, and public space for public art.
13 It was only natural for MDOT to follow through with implementing another competition to select an artist
14 to design public art for the pedestrian bridge as part of another community based effort.

15 Since sponsoring a competition to select an artist was another first for MDOT, it did not have a
16 template for successfully performing and implementing public art as part of a design competition using
17 Federal Enhancement funding. Therefore, MDOT engaged HNTB to provide Public Art Services to
18 develop a process to administer an effective competition and project. The overall process included
19 defining the scope of the project, assembling a Public Art Selection Committee, developing and issuing a
20 Request for Qualifications (RFQ), conducting the competition and the artwork selection process,
21 facilitating community forums, and integrating the artwork into the design and construction of the East
22 Apron.

23 **DEVELOPING THE SCOPE AND PROGRAM FOR THE ART PROJECT**

24 Developing the preliminary scope and program for the public art competition was the first focus during
25 the early stages of the project. Defining the scope would address questions about what the artwork should
26 do for the community, including examining who comprised the public that would experience the art, and
27 whether the pieces should be celebratory, commemorative, or highlighting the area's rich past or present
28 history. Structuring the program would define the space, scale, function, limitations and appropriate
29 mediums for the artwork. Other matters, such as ownership and maintenance of the art, would also be
30 determined at this stage. Finally, developing a schedule, securing funding, networking within the local
31 arts community and determining the composition of the Public Art Selection Committee (PASC) were all
32 key contributing factors to the successful development of the scope and program.

33 **Schedule**

34
35 The first item was to coordinate the schedule for the public art with the completion of the final design
36 plans for the Bagley Pedestrian Bridge aprons. This was especially important so construction of the East
37 and West Aprons could remain on schedule. The competition schedule also needed to account for the
38 time required to select an artist, choose a location for the artwork, and complete the adjustments to the
39 design plans in order to integrate the spaces for the artwork. Finally, the installation date for the artwork
40 on site needed to be determined. The goal was to finish the pedestrian bridge aprons and artwork
41 installation in time for a grand opening as part of Mexicantown's annual Cinco de Mayo Festival. The
42 design team recognized these challenges early and developed a plan and schedule to meet critical
43 milestone dates on the design schedule.
44

1 **Funding**

2 The next step in defining the scope of the public art project was to determine the amount of funding that
3 could be secured. Establishing the budget was critical to determining the scale and scope of the public art
4 competition process. This also would help decide the number of pieces and style of artwork that could be
5 reasonably commissioned by MDOT. In these difficult economic times, a creative way was needed to
6 fund the competition effort. After extensive discussions with the FHWA, it was determined that the
7 project was not eligible for federal funding as part of the Gateway Project implementation plan because
8 the Environmental Assessment (EA) (3) did not envision or include public art as part of the project's early
9 development. Instead, FHWA recommended that MDOT apply for a Federal Enhancement Grant to
10 provide the public art. The final outcome was that MDOT's Metro Region office provided \$50,000 of
11 State matching funds from the Region program along with a \$50,000 Federal Enhancement Grant in order
12 to fund the project.

13

14 **Preliminary Program Development**

15 With funding in place, the HNTB Design Team next engaged the pedestrian bridge's architect to begin
16 defining the public art program by identifying the spaces with potential for artwork on the East Apron.
17 Since the design of the Bagley Pedestrian Bridge apron areas were nearly 75% complete, there were
18 limitations to the amount of design adjustments that could be made to prepare the site to receive the
19 artwork. The process began by defining a set of assumptions to be used when evaluating the locations.
20 These assumptions were formulated based on past experiences with public art projects and project
21 specific constraints. The preliminary locations would be used as a starting point for discussion with the
22 Public Art Selection Committee (PASC). The PASC could then provide additional input and direction to
23 help finalize the program for the project. The assumptions used to define the spaces were based on the
24 need for the artwork to be:

25

- 26 1. Multimodal – The artwork needed to be located in a position to be perceived by several modes of
27 transportation. Vehicles traveling along 21st and Bagley Street, pedestrians passing by the site or
28 visitors to the site who may be walking or riding a bicycle should all be able to experience the art.
- 29 2. Visible – The location should be visible both from the street and to visitors to the site, not be
30 hidden from view by elements of the plaza design, and large enough to be seen from a distance.
- 31 3. Integrated – The location should be chosen so that the artwork could be integrated with the
32 architectural functions and construction of the site. The goal was for the artwork to not feel
33 applied, randomly placed or installed in a manner that was not cohesive with the aesthetics of the
34 site.
- 35 4. Fiscally Responsible – The location should not necessitate excessive modifications or additions to
36 the current set of design plans.
- 37 5. Unique to the site – The pieces of artwork must be created specifically for the site and not bought
38 or borrowed from another public art project.

39

40 The current set of design plans were reviewed against the defined assumptions in a workshop setting. The
41 review identified five potential locations for further exploration with the PASC once it was convened.

42

43

44

1 **Convening the PASC**

2 The HNTB team along with MDOT representatives then began the process of networking within the local
3 community to identify potential candidates to serve on the PASC. Since the Gateway Project already had
4 a well established Steering Committee team, a meeting was set up with one of the project stakeholders
5 from the committee to seek advice about candidates for the PASC. There was also networking with the
6 Michigan Council on the Arts and several local art schools, including the Center for Creative Studies and
7 the Art Department at Wayne State University, to seek arts professionals knowledgeable about the issues
8 surrounding public art and willing to serve on the PASC.

9 The roles and responsibilities of the committee members were defined in advance of the meeting
10 in order to properly communicate expectations. The responsibilities of the PASC are described below.

11 *Proposed Responsibilities of the PASC*

- 12 1. To provide knowledge and expertise about artists, aesthetic issues and the field of public art.
- 13 2. To be a liaison to the community/neighborhood and to represent their interests and concerns.
- 14 3. To assist MDOT in defining the artwork project's scope and design parameters.
- 15 4. To select an artist(s) to recommend to submit a design proposal, and to review and comment on
- 16 the design proposal.
- 17 5. To support the artist(s) selected to work on the project by providing background information and
- 18 insights so that the artwork is relevant to its site on both aesthetic and functional levels.
- 19 6. To ensure that the artwork is well-constructed and of durable materials and that its location is
- 20 adequately prepared.
- 21
- 22

23 The committee was designed to contain a blend of MDOT staff, arts professionals and members
24 of the community. Having members of the community on the committee gave credibility to the decisions
25 made during the process. In addition, they were able to provide a voice so the community's interests were
26 reflected in the design guidelines for the artwork. The key roles for each voting member for the Gateway
27 Project PASC are listed below.

28 *The Public Art Selection Committee (PASC):*

29 1 – Aesthetics, Landscaping and Roadside Development Professional

- 30 • MDOT representative

31 3 - Representatives of the community/neighborhood

- 32 • Mosaic Youth Theatre of Detroit – Founder and CEO
- 33 • Matrix Theatre – Executive Director
- 34 • Mexicantown Community Development Corporation

35 2 – Artists/Arts Professionals

- 36 • College for Creative Studies – Director, community+public arts:DETROIT and Artist
- 37 • Wayne State University - Associate Professor and Sculptor

38 1 - Design Professional

- 39 • InForm Studio – Project Architect
- 40
- 41

42 There were also eight non-voting members in the PASC. A Committee Chairperson from the
43 HNTB Design Team led the PASC through the process and seven ex-officio members were added to
44 augment the expertise and experience level of the committee. These non-voting members were not

1 necessarily arts professionals; however, they were selected for their ability to provide guidance on
2 community interests, project history, process, design and construction of the project.

3 Establishing a diverse yet educated PASC was an important step in the project, as the members
4 would be the key decision makers on defining the scope of the project and the content of the Request for
5 Qualifications to choose an artist.

6

7 **EXECUTING THE PUBLIC ART COMPETITION**

8 The focus of the first PASC meeting was to set expectations, provide an orientation to the project site,
9 determine the scope of the project and begin to define the program so the Call for Artists/RFQ could be
10 drafted.

11 The project scope discussion items were particularly far reaching because the Mexicantown
12 neighborhoods are ethnically and culturally diverse, and the committee had many ideas about what the
13 artwork should do for the community. Below is a summary of the most important ideas carried forward
14 during the development of the RFQ.

15

- 16 • The artworks' public is very diverse.
- 17 • The location is international and welcoming.
- 18 • The space will be used for festivals, events and weddings.
- 19 • Primary users of the space are local residents.

20

21 The five potential locations and mediums, previously identified by the HNTB Design Team and
22 the pedestrian bridge architect, were then reviewed in order to help determine the program for the public
23 art project. Since art can speak differently to individuals, each committee member was asked to rank the
24 five locations. The informal poll results revealed two locations as majority favorites that would be
25 included in the RFQ.

26

- 27 • Location #2 (South Bridge Wall, South Elevation) –38'-11 ¾" (L) x 5'-5" to 3'-10 ½" (H) with
28 182 square feet available for a piece containing tile, mosaic, painting or other durable and
29 permanent medium.
- 30 • Location #4 (Leisure Node and Walkway) – Several 8' x 8' spaces were made available to create
31 a series of smaller works, such as a sculpture on a pedestal, or concrete cubes covered by tile or
32 mosaic that function as tables. The spaces were positioned on the apron to allow for a 3 to 4 foot
33 minimum ADA clearance around all objects and to not drastically impede the flow of pedestrian
34 traffic.

35

36 A central idea kept surfacing related to engaging the community. Committee members
37 maintained that the selected artist needed to be community minded, and must be able to gather inspiration
38 for the work from the neighborhood. It was decided to ask applicants to include a statement with their
39 submissions describing how they would engage and garner ideas from the local population.

40

41 **RFQ Development and Distribution**

42 The input received from the first PASC and MDOT was used to generate a draft version for the Request
43 for Qualifications (RFQ), which was distributed to the PASC for their review and comment. The RFQ
44 contained the following elements:

1 *COMPONENTS OF AN OPEN CALL FOR ARTISTS - REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)*

2 **Cover Page**

- 3 • Indicated that MDOT is the issuer of the RFQ, and the deadline date.

4

5 **Information at a Glance**

- 6 • Project Title; Location; Scope; Budget; Deadline

7

8 **Project Description**

- 9 • Statement about MDOT's aims and intentions for the project, why they are funding it and
10 the funding source.
- 11 • General physical locale, description of the part of the city and the immediate
12 surroundings.
- 13 • The urban social and cultural setting and the artwork's "public."
- 14 • Who is in charge of project and/or the lead contact person at MDOT.

15

16 **Locations**

- 17 • Specific potential locations (two areas on the East Apron) are described, dimensioned and
18 detailed.
- 19 • Alternately:
- 20 • Possible locations from which the artist can choose are described.
- 21 • Statement outlining the general possibilities for public art.
- 22 • Expectations for how the work functions in its urban setting.
- 23 • Technical expectations, such as requirements for durability and anticipated maintenance.

24

25 **Project Construction Schedule**

- 26 • Timeline for site construction and how public art project fits into it.

27

28 **Selection Process**

- 29 • List of Public Art Selection Committee members and their affiliations.

30

31 **Submission Requirements**

- 32 • Work Samples in electronic format with specific parameters; Work Sample Narrative
33 describing the work shown; Artist's Statement about the process the applicant will use to
34 gather inspiration for the work from Mexicantown's diverse community; Professional
35 Resume; and three references.

36

37 **Evaluation Criteria**

- 38 • Professional qualifications.
- 39 • Proven ability to take on a project of this scope.
- 40 • Artistic quality as shown in the submitted materials.
- 41 • Character of work is inclusive and capable of being responsive to local culture and
42 identity.
- 43 • Past work constructed of durable materials appropriate to the location.

- 1 • Demonstrated ability to work with government agencies, design and construction
2 professionals, committees and community groups in the creation of a project.

3

4 **Budget**

- 5 • Dollar amount and what it must cover: all expenses for design fees and travel;
6 participation in meetings and presentations; technical consultant’s fees as necessary; and
7 the production, delivery, installation and activation of the artwork, including insurance as
8 required.

9

10 **Questions about the Project**

- 11 • Process for posting questions and getting answers online.

12

13 **Deadline for Submissions**

14

15 **Proposed Timeline**

- 16 • Deadline for submissions; date by which the entrants will be informed of the outcome;
17 date that selected artist(s) will be placed under contract and design work begins; date for
18 design presentation; and date for installation of artwork.

19

20 **Application Checklist**

21

22 **Attachments**

- 23 • See Figures 1-3.

24

25 After PASC and MDOT approval, the final version of the RFQ was translated to Spanish and
26 prepared for distribution and advertisement. Since Federal Enhancement Funds were used for the project,
27 the RFQ was distributed nationwide and was open to residents outside of Michigan.

28 The Open Call RFQ was primarily distributed through electronic networks, the Michigan Council
29 for Arts and Cultural Affairs, the College for Creative Studies and the Detroit Artists Market as well as
30 the arts agencies of surrounding states with reciprocal public art programs, including Wisconsin, Ohio,
31 Minnesota and Iowa along with national listservs. Printed copies in Spanish and English were available at
32 local businesses and the Welcome Center.

33

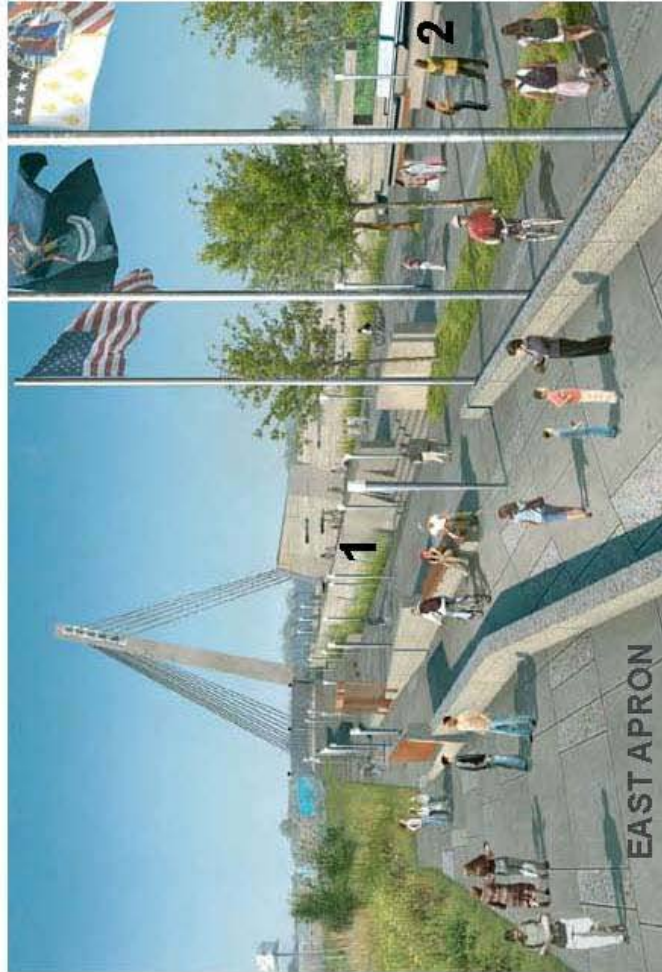
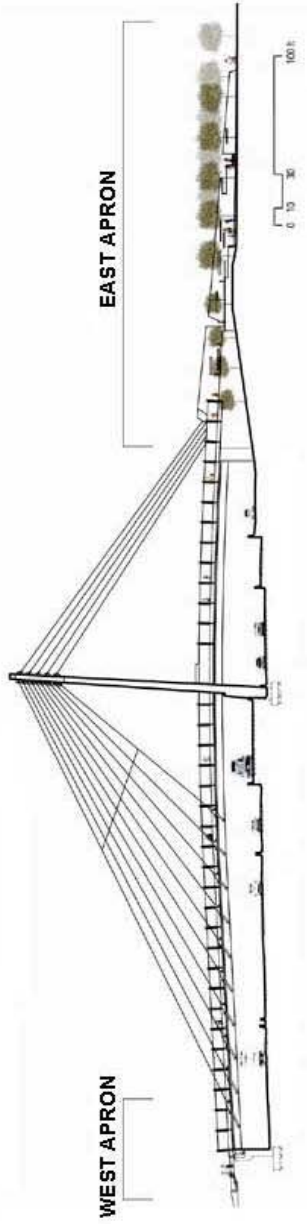
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**PUBLIC ART FOR THE BAGLEY PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE, DETROIT, MICHIGAN
TWO POTENTIAL LOCATIONS FOR ARTWORK — EAST APRON**



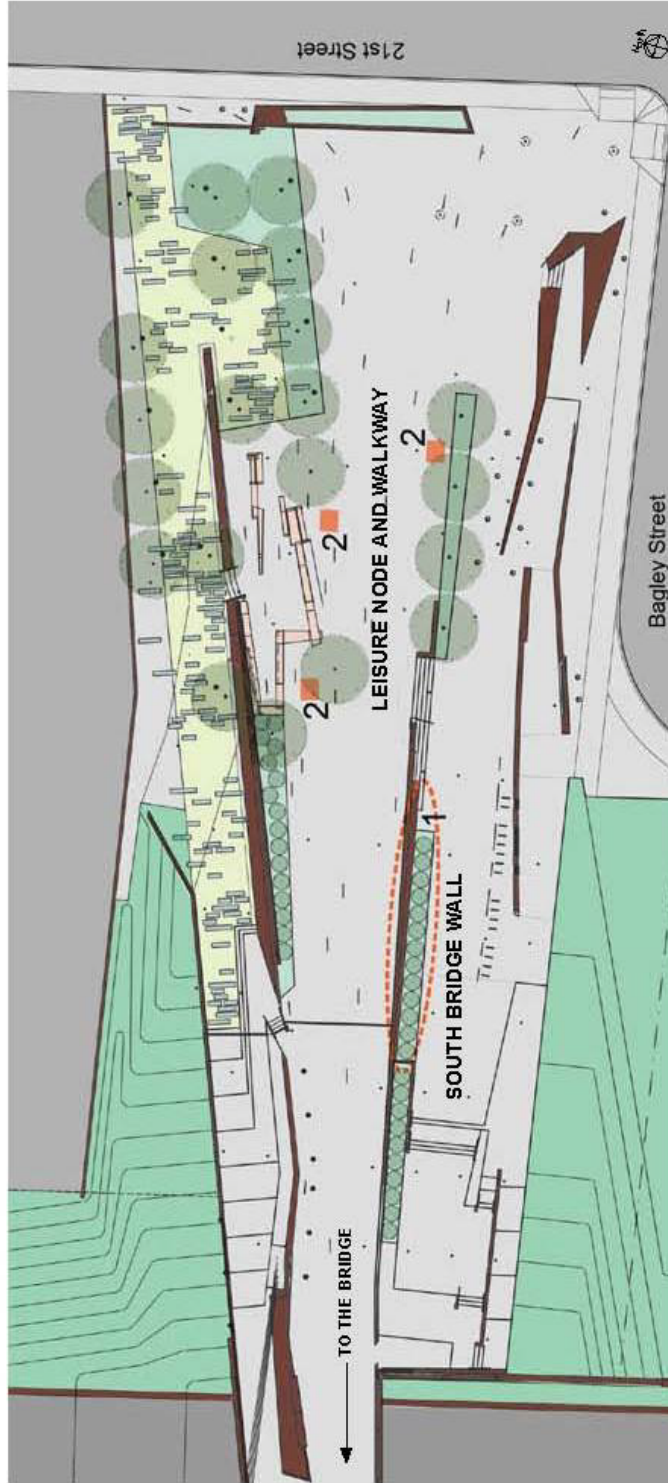
1 SOUTH BRIDGE WALL SOUTH ELEVATION
 Continuous concrete wall for tile, mosaic, painting or other durable material

2 LEISURE NODE AND WALKWAY
 Options for series of smaller works on bases or pedestals or tile- or mosaic-covered cubes that function as tables



1
 2 **Figure 1 RFQ Attachment 1.**

PUBLIC ART FOR THE BAGLEY PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE, DETROIT, MICHIGAN



TWO POTENTIAL LOCATIONS FOR ARTWORK — EAST APRON

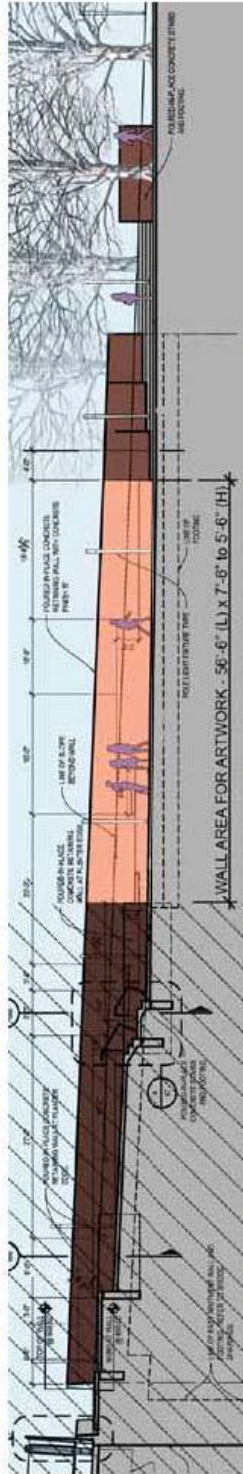
- 1 SOUTH BRIDGE WALL SOUTH ELEVATION**
Total wall area available for artwork measures approximately 56'-6"(L) x 5'-6" to 7'-6" (H)
- 2 LEISURE NODE AND WALKWAY**
Option for a series of smaller sculptural works on bases or pedestals or tile- or mosaic-covered cubes that function as tables.
Approximate dimensions for the sculpture bases or cubes are 2-3' (W) x 2-3' (D) x 2-4' (H)

KEY

- Trees & Shrubs
- Pavement
- Walk
- Groundcover
- Turf Lawn
- Artwork Locations

1
2 **Figure 2 RFQ Attachment 2.**

PUBLIC ART FOR THE BAGLEY PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE, DETROIT, MICHIGAN
DETAILS — TWO POTENTIAL LOCATIONS FOR ARTWORK ON THE EAST APRON



1 SOUTH BRIDGE WALL SOUTH ELEVATION

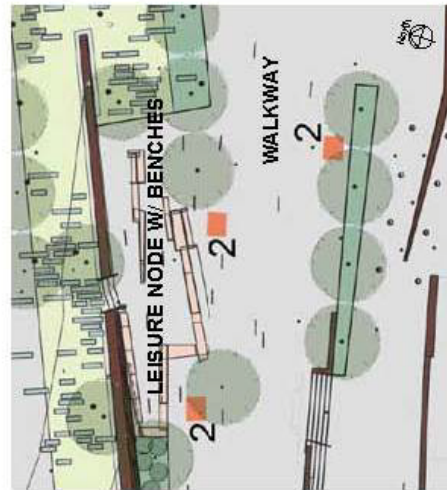
Total wall area available for artwork measures approximately 56'-6" (L) x 5'-6" to 7'-6" (H)



2

LEISURE NODE AND WALKWAY

Option for a series of smaller sculptural works on bases or pedestals or tile- or mosaic-covered cubes that function as tables. Approximate dimensions for the sculpture bases or cubes are 2'-3" (W) x 2'-3" (D) x 2'-4" (H)



1
 2 Figure 3 RFQ Attachment 3.

1 **The Artist Selection Process**

2 Forty-six artists from throughout the United States responded with over 60% from the State of Michigan.
3 The Artists' Statements, which were a key part of the submissions, were sent to the PASC members to
4 read in advance. The PASC was then convened to review, discuss and vote on the applications. The
5 process for the meeting included:

6

7 *Overview Round*

8 The Work Samples from all 46 applicants were first reviewed without discussion to give the PASC a
9 sense of the overall quality and diversity of the entries.

10

11 *First Ranking Round*

12 The artistic quality represented in the submitted materials was the primary criteria during this round.
13 Each artist's Work Samples were reviewed again and questions were addressed by referencing the Work
14 Sample Narratives provided by the artists. Next, the seven voting members ranked each artist IN, OUT or
15 MAYBE. At the end of the round, 20 artists who had received a majority of affirmative votes remained
16 in consideration.

17

18 *Second Ranking Round*

19 The criteria during this round included: professional qualifications and expertise; proven ability to take on
20 a project of this scope; past work constructed of durable materials appropriate to their location;
21 demonstrated ability to work with government agencies, designers, committees and community groups in
22 the creation of a project; and the conceptual approach to the project as indicated by their Artist Statement.
23 The PASC members discussed the level of community involvement that was feasible, prompted by the
24 intentions noted in Artist's Statements. Having members of the public actually produce the work may
25 negatively affect the quality of the resulting artwork. They concluded that there should be a balance
26 between the quality of the work and the involvement of the public. After the second ranking round, six
27 artists remained in consideration.

28

29 *Final Ranking Round*

30 The goal of this round was to identify the top three artists for the project. To determine this, the
31 remaining artists were ranked by each voting member. Hubert Massey, who had received seven
32 unanimous affirmative votes during both the first and second ranking rounds, came in first place during
33 this round. Massey was the PASC's clear first choice for the commission. In his Artist's Statement,
34 Massey remarked that his approach to public art begins with the community it will serve. He says, "What
35 I do is historical, regional and environmental, carefully incorporating symbols and images of pride,
36 heritage and influences from the surrounding community." Massey proposed to engage community
37 residents through a series of community forums. His references subsequently confirmed that he had the
38 experience and ability to create artwork that not only embodies community aspirations but also has high
39 artistic quality and integrity.

40

41 **Announcing the Selection**

42 After the selection meeting, the HNTB Design Team created a project background information summary
43 sheet containing an artist biography and a project timeline to assist MDOT public relations specialists
44 with crafting a formal press release. It was decided to announce the selection through a media blast to

1 newspapers and trade publications, agencies that assisted with the RFQ distribution, and an official
2 posting on MDOT's website. However, due to the challenging economic climate in Michigan at the time
3 of selection, MDOT made the decision to make the announcement at a later date. This avoided potential
4 for negative feedback from the general public about funding a public art project, even though a portion of
5 the project budget would be reinvested back into the community.

6 7 **CONTRACT DEVELOPMENT**

8 Contract development began immediately upon the selection of artist Hubert Massey. The HNTB Team
9 provided MDOT with a standard contract based upon state public art program formats and customized to
10 the project. However, contracting between MDOT and Hubert Massey was particularly challenging as
11 MDOT did not have an established process to commission an artist. The Michigan State Laws and
12 regulations related to the construction of transportation facilities, and required in MDOT contracts, were
13 never envisioned for a public art project, but rather to ensure public safety. The main obstacle was the
14 performance bond requirement according to Michigan State Law Section 129.201 regarding any State
15 contract exceeding \$50,000 for construction within public right of way. Bonding companies are hesitant
16 to bond an artist because they are typically unfamiliar with the work of an artist. Also, a bond payment
17 can hinder the cash flow of an artist and impact the budget available for the public art.

18 The solution was to have Massey design and construct the artwork and a bonded contractor install
19 the pieces under the Sixth Gateway Project construction contract (Landscaping). MDOT's competitive
20 bid process prohibits sole sourcing products or services, so unique Specifications for Construction
21 (Special Provisions) were created for the sculpture and tile installation. Massey provided the names of
22 three contractors with art installation experience to be included in the Special Provision to ensure an
23 experienced contractor was selected. In addition, he was required by contract, to provide detailed
24 installation instructions and be available on site during the installation process to answer questions and
25 provide direction if necessary.

26 27 **Artist Compensation**

28 Compensating the artist was based on a two phase process. Phase One was the Design Proposal and
29 Phase Two was the commissioning phase for creation of the artwork. The payment for Phase One was a
30 lump sum amount of \$10,000, paid upon approval of the Design Proposal by MDOT. The payment for
31 Phase Two, totaling \$90,000, was distributed in four progress payments when milestones were achieved.
32 The milestone payment schedule, shown below, was designed to mirror the budget estimate prepared in
33 the Design Proposal stage.

34 35 ***PAYMENT SCHEDULE***

- 36 • **Milestone One:** The first payment should be made upon the submission of an invoice showing
37 either (a) cost of materials purchased by Artist, and that they have been delivered in satisfactory
38 condition, or (b) estimated percentage of completion of the Artwork, as applicable.
- 39 • **Milestone Two:** The second payment, which, when added to the first payment, should not exceed
40 **60%** of the total Contract price, shall be paid upon completion of half of the required construction
41 or completion of the Artwork, as applicable, and the submission of an invoice for materials and
42 labor.

- 1 • Milestone Three: The third payment, which, when added to the first, second and third payments,
2 should not exceed 95% of the total Contract price, shall be paid after completion of fabrication of
3 the Artwork, and prior to its installation via the submission of an invoice for materials and labor..
- 4 • Milestone Four: Final payment, which shall not be less than 5% of the total Contract price, shall
5 be paid upon installation, receipt of all documentation an invoice from the Artist, and acceptance
6 of the Artwork by MDOT.

7
8 Documentation for expenses was required for each payment and it was stated in the contract that
9 HNTB and MDOT would have the right to inspect the Artwork while it was produced and installed. If
10 either party disagreed with the Artist's estimation of the stage of completion of the Artwork, HNTB
11 through direction of MDOT would notify the Artist within fourteen working days of receipt of billing.
12

13 **COMMUNITY FORUMS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

14 Once under contract, Hubert Massey commenced a series of meetings and forums with the PASC and
15 neighborhood residents. At the first community forum, he sought ideas about subjects to explore as he
16 began his design process for the artwork. Nineteen community members and MDOT staff participated,
17 including many local artists. They talked about the history of the neighborhood, how Mexicantown had
18 been a thriving Spanish-speaking community when divided by the freeway in the 1970s, and subsequently
19 declined. They discussed how the construction of the pedestrian bridge begins to mend this division and
20 will connect small downtowns that have developed on either side of the freeway. They pointed out local
21 landmarks such as St. Anne's Church, the second oldest in the nation, and the nearby Union Depot, which
22 is awaiting redevelopment.
23

24 The participants also offered the following insights:

- 25 • When you visit Canada via the Ambassador Bridge (across the Detroit River from the
26 neighborhood) you are looking at the United States from a different point of view.
- 27 • Three words that describe the community are: centered, diverse, and immigrant.
- 28 • Two words describe the neighborhood's strength: *resilient*; it's grittiness and never-say-die
29 attitude and *transformative*; reflected in the hearts of the people who live here.
- 30 • Detroit is a proving ground of what we want this country to be.
- 31 • Everybody who doesn't see opportunity is leaving; those that see it are remaining.
- 32 • Life spirals on – challenges take you to a higher place.

33
34 This last comment particularly inspired Massey and at the second forum, attended by 24
35 community members and MDOT staff, he brought sketches for a ceramic tile mural and a companion
36 sculpture, both using the spiral as a key compositional motif. He explained, "the primary subject and
37 imagery is the spiral of life... the spiral motif is the energy that passes through the community and that
38 ties it together." After conversation with the community residents, Massey refined his designs to
39 incorporate their suggestions. The design proposal he subsequently presented to the PASC and MDOT
40 contained the following:
41

42 **"The Spiral of Life"**

43 The ceramic tile mural measured 5'(H) x 38' (L). A hand on the left side of the composition grasps a
44 ribbon of fabric that flows throughout the composition. The fabric bears patterning from textiles

1 representing the community's different cultural groups. The history of neighborhood is shown in the
2 spires of St. Anne's Church set at a diagonal near the center of the composition and the Ambassador
3 Bridge and the Detroit River in the upper right. In the center are the "three sisters" – squash, corn and
4 beans – grown by the area's native Springwells people that are also significant to Latino and Chicano
5 people. A suitcase in the lower left-hand corner represents the migrations to and from Mexico. Along the
6 top are images of diverse extended families, set amidst a decorative pattern of spirals, which refer to the
7 resilience of the community and its strong family orientation. Detroit's surrounding landscape is also
8 represented in a mandala-like spiral (See Figure 4).

9

10 **"Spiral Kinship"**

11 The aluminum sculpture measured 16'(H), included a 3'(H) base and a vertical spire with spiral surface
12 relief featuring a globe mounted at its apex. The sculpture was sited in the walkway approaching the
13 pedestrian bridge and the vertical angle of the spire interacts with the bridge's pylon. The globe form
14 represents the universal kinship between the United States and Canada, and the aluminum spirals, unity
15 (See Figure 5).

16

17 After further refinements to the design, made in response to comments by the PASC and MDOT,
18 the design was approved. Massey was authorized by MDOT to proceed with the Commission Phase of his
19 contract.

20



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Figure 4 “The Spiral of Life” unveiled during the Grand Opening event on May 5th, 2010.



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3

Figure 5 “The Spiral Kinship.”

1 **CREATING THE COMMUNITY INSPIRED ARTWORK**

2 After authorization, the HNTB Design Team worked closely with Massey to incorporate changes to the
3 design plans needed to integrate the artwork with the site. Considerations for aesthetic, functional and
4 technical requirements were reviewed at each location. To integrate the tile mural, the South Bridge wall
5 was redesigned with a recess to accommodate the tile, the architectural finish was removed so as not
6 compete with the mural, and wall washing lights were added to highlight the tile mural at night. The
7 sculpture location was aligned with the aesthetic joint pattern in the concrete apron, located perpendicular
8 to the line of travel, and reviewed to provide ADA clearance around the concrete base. A structural
9 concrete base was required to support the sculpture, so several visits to the studio were required to
10 coordinate the sculpture fabrication with the design of the base.

11 Massey produced the artwork over the next several months, engaging the HNTB Design Team as
12 questions arose. He also provided opportunities for the community to become involved with the project
13 as the work was being constructed. Massey employed numerous local contractors, including professional
14 sculpture fabricators, a ceramic design studio to produce the work, interns, documentary photographers
15 and other local artists, while producing the work as well as renting local studio space. Most of the
16 project's budget went directly back into the Michigan economy for fees, services, rentals and materials.

17 After production concluded, Hubert Massey arrived on site to oversee the tile installation and
18 direct the sculpture delivery in cooperation with the HNTB Design Team. The community vision came to
19 life on May 5th, 2010 when the artwork was unveiled during the grand opening celebration of the Bagley
20 Street Pedestrian Bridge.

21 **LESSONS LEARNED**

22 This paper was written to present the process used to structure a public art competition to commission an
23 artist by showcasing the Ambassador Gateway Public Art Project. While the project successfully defined
24 a process for public art projects in Michigan, there are several areas worth noting when considering future
25 public art projects in Michigan or other States.

26 **Convene an Effective PASC**

27 Establishing a PASC containing the appropriate blend of design and arts professionals and community
28 stakeholders directly contributed to the projects' success. The members of the community provided
29 valuable input into defining the RFQ requirements which led to the selection of an artist who was
30 community minded. Public Art projects have the potential to be controversial, so it is essential to
31 incorporate members of the community so their interests are well represented.
32
33
34

35 **Identify the Potential for Public Art during the Environmental Process**

36 The decision to incorporate public art into transportation projects would benefit by establishing a need
37 during the Environmental Assessment phase of the project. Projects that commence with Environmental
38 Impact Statements and/or Environmental Assessments define a project Steering Committee early on to
39 assist with decision making and allow the needs and desires of the community to be represented in that
40 process. This streamlines the process for assembling an effective PASC and allows the scope and
41 program development to run concurrent with developing recommended alternatives, setting design
42 parameters and establishing project mitigation strategies. Starting earlier in the design process also
43 allows an artist to be selected when there is the opportunity to provide input on the design of the site,
44 location of the pieces and site preparation.

1 **CONCLUSION**

2 Integrating public art with the Bagley Street Pedestrian Bridge had a transformative effect upon the East
3 Apron aesthetics and on the community itself. The artwork provided color and vitality to the East Apron,
4 and created a more inviting space for users of the facility. Involving the local residents in the
5 development of the public art gave them a sense of ownership for the project, and for the two pieces of
6 artwork that adorn their community. In the end, the project was not only provided for the community, but
7 also became part of the community.

8

9 **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

10 **Artist**

- 11 • Hubert Massey, Hubert Massey Murals, LLC, Detroit, Michigan

12

13 **Artist's Team**

- 14 • Brian Heath – Project Photographer
- 15 • Rick Pruckler – Tile Fabricator
- 16 • Mike Petrucci - Sculpture Fabricator, Fine Arts Sculpture Centre, Clarkston, Michigan
- 17 • Raymond Vandamme – Sculpture Fabricator, Fine Arts Sculpture Centre, Clarkston, Michigan

18

19 **HNTB Design Team**

- 20 • Regina M. Flanagan, Public Art Project Manager, Art • Landscape • Design, Saint Paul,
21 Minnesota (formerly with HNTB Corporation, Minneapolis, Minnesota)
- 22 • Matt Simon, Gateway Project Manager, HNTB Corporation, Detroit, Michigan
- 23 • Eric Morris, Gateway Deputy Project Manager, HNTB Corporation, Detroit, Michigan
- 24 • Eric Polvi, Gateway Deputy Project Manager – Contract 5 and 6, HNTB Corporation, Detroit,
25 Michigan

26

27 **Public Art Selection Committee (PASC)**

- 28 • Lynn Lynwood, Roadside Development Manager, MDOT
- 29 • Rick Sperling, Founder and CEO, Mosaic Youth Theater of Detroit, Michigan
- 30 • Shaun Nethercott, Executive Director, Matrix Theater, Detroit, Michigan
- 31 • Fern Espino, Mexicantown Community Development Corporation, Detroit, Michigan
- 32 • Cory Lavigne, Pedestrian Bridge Project Architect, InForm Studio (Formerly VanTine Guthrie),
33 Northville, Michigan
- 34 • John Richardson, Artist, Associate Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Art & Art
35 History, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan
- 36 • Sioux Trujillo, Artist and Director of community+public arts:DETROIT, College for Creative
37 Studies, Detroit Michigan
- 38 • Non-Voting Chair: Regina M. Flanagan, Public Art Project Manager, Art • Landscape • Design,
39 Saint Paul, Minnesota (formerly with HNTB Corporation, Minneapolis, Minnesota)

40

41 **Ex-Officio Members**

- 42 • Andrew Zeigler, Metro Region Planner, MDOT
- 43 • Paul Wisney, Project Manager, MDOT

- 1 • Ashok Punjabi, Metro Region Project Development, MDOT
- 2 • Vince Murray, Former Executive Director of Bagley Housing
- 3 • Dan Loacano, Executive Director, Bagley Housing, Detroit, Michigan
- 4 • Nanette Alton, Roadside Development, MDOT
- 5 • Eric Polvi, Project Manager, HNTB Corporation, Detroit, Michigan

6

7 Other MDOT Staff

- 8 • Tony Kratofil, Metro Region Engineer, MDOT
- 9 • Paul Ajegba, Deputy Metro Region Engineer, MDOT
- 10 • Paige Williams, Metro Region Development Engineer, MDOT
- 11 • Brenda Peek, Communications Representative, MDOT
- 12 • Jim Lemay, Photographer, MDOT

13

14 REFERENCES

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