

Percent for Art Call for Artists **Blanche A. Nixon/ Cobbs Creek Library - Rebuild Project**



Project Budget: \$150,000
Deadline for Submissions: March 10, 2023

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA
Jim Kenney, Mayor

OFFICE OF ARTS, CULTURE AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY
Kelly Lee, Chief Cultural Officer
Marguerite Anglin, Public Art Director

REBUILD PHILADELPHIA
Kira Strong, Executive Director

Project Overview:

The City of Philadelphia's Percent for Art Program and Rebuild announce a competition to commission a site-specific, community driven public artwork for the Blanche A. Nixon/ Cobbs Creek Library. The Blanche A. Nixon/Cobbs Creek Library is a Rebuild designated project consisting of interior and exterior library renovations and exterior site improvements.

This public art project will be an outdoor sculptural representation of Blanche A. Nixon on the library grounds, near the Cobbs Creek Parkway and Baltimore Ave corner. The purpose of this Percent for Art opportunity is to create a beautiful and enduring work of public art that is permanent, site-specific, and reflects the culture, values, and diversity of the Cobbs Creek community. An important goal for this public art project will be to honor the life and legacy of Blanche A. Nixon, the community activist for whom the library is named. Artists will be encouraged to interpret Blanche A. Nixon's story and the history and culture of Cobbs Creek in meaningful and engaging ways, using materials that are appropriate and durable for exterior use.

The City of Philadelphia's Percent for Art program invites all interested artists or artist teams to apply for this public art commission. Priority will be given to artists or artist teams who reflect the diversity of the Cobbs Creek community, and **BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) and female artists or artist teams are strongly encouraged to apply**. Qualified local artists or artist teams who live or work in the community around the Blanche A Nixon library will also be prioritized for this opportunity, but any artist may apply.

Public input and participation will be vital to ensuring the voices of the community are reflected in the development of the Blanche A. Nixon sculpture. Community engagement opportunities will allow Semi-Finalists to hear directly from members of the public about their ideas and aspirations for this project. Semi-Finalists will be encouraged to align their proposals with input and feedback provided by the community.

Project Background:

Serving the Cobbs Creek community for almost a century, the library building is a late-Carnegie era library built circa 1925. The branch was renamed in 1990 to honor Blanche A. Nixon, a local resident, community activist and library volunteer. Mrs. Nixon spearheaded beautification projects at the branch, including its garden and exterior mural.



Affectionally referred to as "Mom Nixon," Blanche was a beloved guardian to not only her six children, but to the entire community. Her tireless efforts to improve the community, her unwavering expectations for kindness and respect, and her contagious smile and laughter throughout it all made her a legendary icon of the community who truly impacted countless lives. As a community activist, Blanche's achievements were numerous, including leading the Crisis Intervention Network and co-chairing the Southwest Philadelphia Interracial Mothers Council and Safe Street Advisory Board.



Archival photos courtesy of Blanche's family

Blanche's particular connection to young people, and her mission to uplift them was clear to all, and many have quoted her phrase "There is no such thing as a BAD child." From afterschool guidance on the library lawn, to organizing summer activities, to negotiating truces between gangs of youth, Blanche was a protective parental presence and a force for good. Many young people referred to her as a mother or grandmother who took them under her wing as her own, and noted that Blanche made them feel loved, important, and special. In their own words, here are a few quotes from people who knew Blanche:

"When you look up the word "caring" in the dictionary, her picture should be right next to it."

"Words can't explain what this woman meant to me. She was the blueprint for our community."

"She helped raise me from 3 doors away with her loving heart. She kept us all in check."

"Never in my years have I met such a sweet, no-nonsense woman, who was small in stature but had the heart of a lioness."

"Whatever had to be done, trust and believe, Ms. Nixon would get it done. She wore her armor proudly with words and her words was her weapon."

An important role of public art is to tell diverse stories and histories that reflect the city's people, values, and culture. Philadelphia is a city with a BIPOC population of over 60%, however, the City has only 12 statues that reflect diverse people groups and only 8 statues of females. Once completed, the Blanche A. Nixon sculpture will be among only a couple of public art statues honoring African American female figures in Philadelphia. As such, it is important for the artwork to educate Philadelphians about Blanche Nixon's life as an African American female role model, her contributions to the Cobbs Creek community and to Philadelphia at large. The artwork should reflect Blanche's likeness, humanity, her warmth, and essence, and inspire viewers to make a positive impact in their community, as Blanche Nixon did. To learn more about Blanche A. Nixon, read this article ["Tribute Speaks Volumes About Library's Namesake"](#) published in The Philadelphia Inquirer in 1990, a year after her death and in commemoration of her namesake dedication at the library.



Design Rendering for the proposed renovations of the front of the library, outdoor seating, and garden from Salt Design Studio

Location and Site Description

The Blanche A. Nixon/ Cobbs Creek Library is located at 5800 Cobbs Creek Parkway in West Philadelphia. The Cobbs Creek neighborhood is known for its distinctive and historic architecture, and its community which represents many diverse cultures. The neighborhood has as a sense of permanence through many generations of families and longtime residents living in Cobbs Creek, as well as an energy of growth, with many new families settling there.

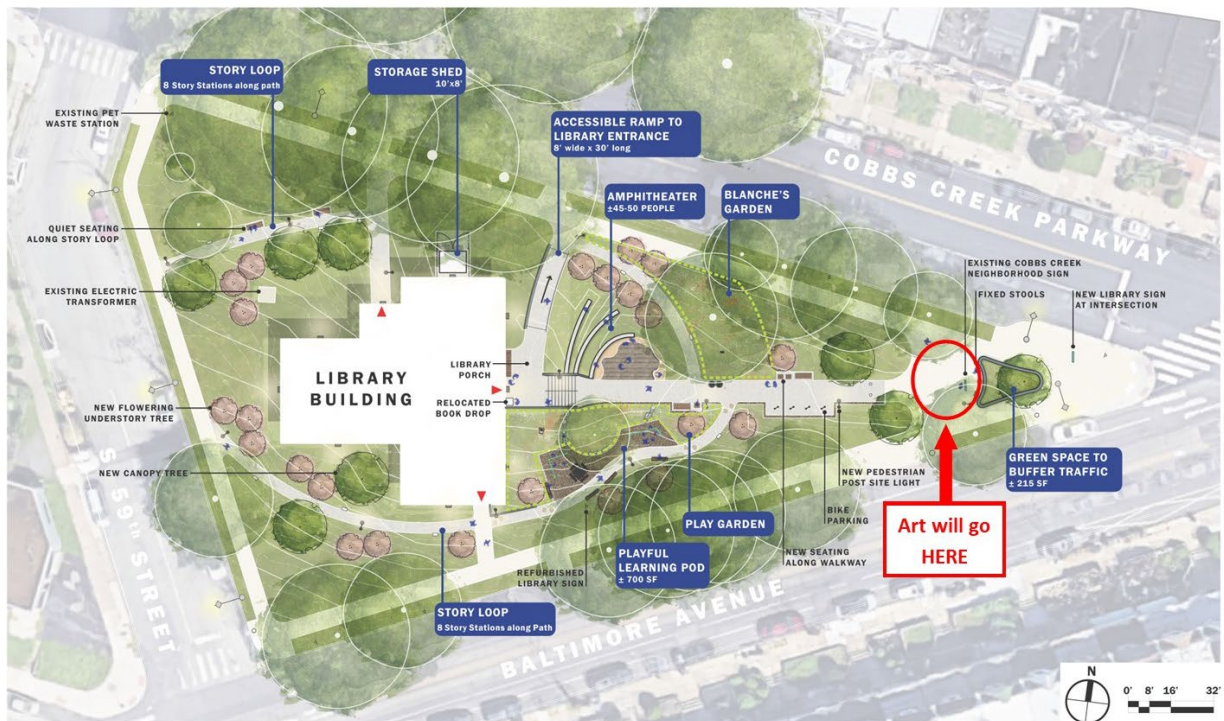
Renovations at the Library will focus on accessibility, landscape, and building infrastructure. The interior renovations will include a new circulation desk, new ADA toilet rooms, an overall improved layout, and refresh of the finishes. The building equipment, lighting, electrical and HVAC system will be updated. The exterior will receive new historically accurate windows. The entrance landing will be extended, and a new ADA compliant ramp will be added along the Cobbs Creek Parkway side of the library. Landscape improvements will include new seating and gathering spaces, a “story loop” walking path, amphitheater area, playful learning area and interpretive nature paths. New LED lighting will be provided across the site to improve site security.

The library is situated on a triangular lot where Cobbs Creek Parkway, Baltimore Avenue, and 58th Street converge. The corner of Baltimore Avenue and Cobbs Creek Parkway is an active intersection and begins the pedestrian approach to the library building. It is roughly 3000 square feet of concrete before the library lawn begins. A community board was installed at this intersection by the Friends of the Blanche Nixon/Cobbs Creek library in collaboration with Tiny WPA during 2021. The Rebuild project will introduce a new buffered planting area with seating to dampen traffic noise. The Rebuild project also proposes to install signage to welcome patrons.

The site for the Blanche A Nixon sculpture will be set into the existing pavement on the library grounds near the corner of Cobbs Creek Parkway and Baltimore Avenue. This location on the site is a hub where several walkways meet, and the sculpture will be prominently seen as people enter the main walkway to reach the library. The sculpture location will be framed by a new landscaped planting buffer and seating area that will be provided as part of the library renovations. Blanche's sculpture will welcome people to the library, as well as create an engaging space that is a destination unto itself. Semi-Finalists will be invited to imagine ways in which the sculpture will stand as a landmark of the library and will invite engagement and interaction with community members, residents, and visitors.

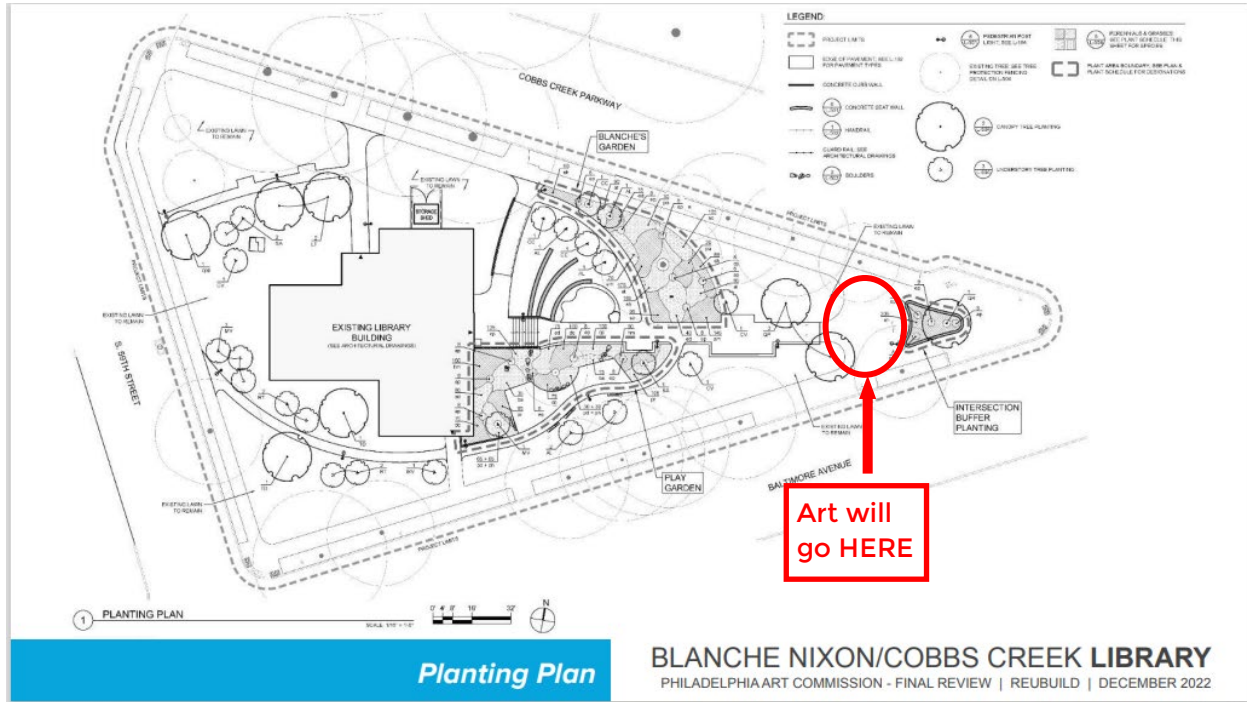


Close up site of where the art will be installed beside a new landscaped planting buffer and seating area.



BLANCHE A. NIXON / COBBS CREEK LIBRARY

Site plan (Bird's eye view) rendering of the library building and grounds and area where art will be installed.



Planting Plan of library grounds

Percent for Art Process:

The Percent for Art commissioning process is a two-part competition consisting of **Part 1: Submission of Qualifications** and **Part 2: Semi-Finalist Proposals**. In Part 1 of the competition, all artists or artist teams who are interested in this opportunity are invited to respond to this Call for Artists by submitting an application detailing their **qualifications ONLY**. Applicants will be narrowed into a smaller group of the best qualified Semi-Finalists who will move on to Part 2 of the competition where design proposals will be requested. **No design proposals are requested at this time. A total budget of up to \$150,000 has been allocated for this Percent for Art commission.** This sum is inclusive of all artist(s) fees, renderings, research, insurance, engineering, fabrication, foundations, installation, travel, and all other project related expenses.

PART 1: SUBMISSION OF QUALIFICATIONS

During Part 1 of the competition, interested artists or artist teams will submit an application detailing their qualifications only. Applicants are narrowed down into a smaller group of Semi-Finalists who will move on to the next stage of the competition. Part 1 consists of the following:

Artist Informational Meeting

Early in the Call for Artist period, OACCE will host an optional Artist Informational Meeting for artists or artist teams interested in applying for the Blanche A. Nixon Percent for Art commission. During this meeting, artists or artist teams can ask questions about the project, the application, and/or the process. All questions that are asked will also be answered in writing and posted on OACCE's website to provide all interested artists or artist teams with the information.

Selection of Semi-Finalists

At the end of the Call for Artist application period, all applications received will be reviewed by OACCE and the Percent for Art Committee, comprised of community members, residents, local arts and culture professionals, representatives from the Project Design team, the Project User-Community Ventures, Blanche Nixon Library staff, and representatives of OACCE, Rebuild, and Philadelphia City Council offices.

The Percent for Art Committee will select the 3-4 best applications to move onto Part 2 as Semi-Finalists. Artists or artist teams competing for this commission must demonstrate past ability to create original, monumental works of sculpture that are engaging, evoke an emotional response and convey a positive visual experience that resonates with the viewer. Examples of past artwork should be indicative of the artist's or artist team's aesthetic, craftsmanship, and overall appropriateness for an outdoor site. The applications will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

- Capacity and demonstrated ability to create high quality, monumental works of sculpture that are relevant to this public art opportunity and suitable for the public realm;
- Prior work that is engaging and evokes an emotional response from the viewer;
- Connection of the artist to the Blanche A. Nixon Library or Cobbs Creek Community;
- Artist or artist teams that reflect the diversity of the Cobbs Creek Community;
- Unique point of view, approach, or style of work;
- Response to questions demonstrating the artist's understanding of the goals and importance of this public art project.

PART 2: SEMI-FINALISTS PROPOSALS

During Part 2 of the competition, the Semi-Finalists who are selected by the Percent for Art Committee will create and propose original designs for the Blanche A. Nixon sculpture. A Finalist artist or artist team will be selected from the competing Semi-Finalists and recommended by the Percent for Art Committee for ultimate approval by [the Philadelphia Art Commission](#). The Semi-Finalists will receive a \$1,000 stipend to develop a thorough design proposal for the Blanche A. Nixon sculpture and will submit their design proposals by the due date in the timeline below. The stipend should cover the costs of producing a written and visual proposal including images, models, renderings, or other materials. The Semi-Finalists' design proposals will also be submitted using OACCE's free application platform, Submittable. Part 2 consists of the following:

Semi-Finalist Pre-Proposal Meeting and Site Visit

Shortly after the Semi-Finalists are selected, a mandatory Pre-Proposal Meeting and Site Visit will be held to give Semi-Finalists more detailed information on the project, the site location, and the requirements for submitting a design proposal for The artwork. The artist or artist teams will receive an outline of information that should be included in their design proposals, including proposal evaluation criteria. Upon notice, all Semi-Finalists are required to sign the Artist Semi-Finalist Agreement/Acknowledgement Form attached. (**Note** this is separate from the contract that will be signed by the selected Finalist mentioned below).

Community Input Meeting #1

Prior to developing their proposals, OACCE will host a public meeting with the Semi-Finalists to allow the community to meet and provide input on what would be inspirational to them prior to the artist or artist teams creating their designs and proposals.

Semi-Finalists Create and Submit Design Proposals

The Semi-Finalists will submit an original design proposal for the Blanche A. Nixon sculpture including visual renderings and drawings of the artist's proposed statue designs and a written and audio narrative describing the artist's original concept, proposed materials, design approach, schedule, budget, and maintenance information.

Community Input Meeting #2

The Semi-Finalists will participate in Public Meeting #2 where they will present their statue design proposal renderings and/or drawings to the public, and the public will have an opportunity to ask questions and hear directly from the Semi-Finalist artist or artist teams about their designs.

Public Voting and Feedback on Semi-Finalist Design Proposals

The Semi-Finalists' statue design proposal drawings and audio and written descriptions of their concepts will be made available to the public. The public will have opportunity during a four (4) week period to review the Semi-Finalists' design proposals, vote on their favorite one and provide feedback. The Semi-Finalists will then have an opportunity to adjust their proposals after the public feedback period (prior to presenting their final design proposals to the Percent for Art Committee.)

Semi-Finalist's Proposal Presentations and Committee Selection of Finalist

The Semi-Finalists will each make presentations of their statue proposals to the Percent for Art Committee and OACCE and answer questions from the Percent for Art Committee about their designs. The Committee and OACCE will review all Semi-Finalists proposals, taking into consideration the public feedback to select one (1) winning Finalist Artist or Artist team's design proposal, based on the following criteria:

- **Aesthetic Excellence and Likeness of Blanche Nixon**
- **Originality and Uniqueness of Proposal**
- **Attention to Detail and Figurative Proportions**
- **Emotional and Inspirational Qualities**
- **Appropriateness of the Design Concept to the Site**
- **Resonance with Community (Public input/feedback)**
- **Feasibility of Budget and Timeline**

Design Development Phase

Once a Finalist Artist is selected from the competing Semi-Finalists, a Design Development phase will occur where the Finalist artist coordinates with OACCE, Rebuild Design team and City operating agencies to further develop their design concept as needed to conform to technical parameters of the site. The selected Finalist is expected to work with OACCE and the City on technical concerns to ensure the full integration of the artwork into the site design.

During this design development stage, the selected Finalist may be required to make aesthetic and technical revisions and adjustments to their design to conform the art concept to the site. The artist is expected to make these changes prior to presenting to the Philadelphia Art Commission for final approval. Any upfront costs or labor incurred by the Finalist artist prior to the contract (during the Design Development phase or for preparing Art Commission presentation materials) is the responsibility of the artist. The first payment of the artist fee will not occur until after the City has executed a contract with the Finalist.

Philadelphia Art Commission Review

The Finalist Artist will prepare a presentation to the Philadelphia Art Commission for final approval, which is the regulatory body that reviews and approves all public art to be placed on public property in Philadelphia.

Artist Enters into Contract with the City

Once an artist or artist team receives approval from the Art Commission, the artist or artist team will enter into a contract with the City of Philadelphia for the fabrication and installation of the statue. Once a contract with the City is in place, the artist may begin receiving payment and start fabrication of The artwork.

Notification of Results:

All artists that applied will be notified via email of their selection status. Artists that are selected as Semi-Finalists to move on to Part 2 of the Percent for Art process will confirm their interest and receive a stipend to cover the costs of producing their written and visual proposal including images, models, renderings, or other materials.

Contract Award

Upon final approval by the Philadelphia Art Commission, the artist selected will be required to enter into a contract with the City of Philadelphia prior to commencing with fabrication and installation of the proposed artwork. No selection shall be deemed final until the proposal has been fully approved and an agreement is properly executed by the selected applicant and the City. Changes to the proposal may be required and/or requested by the City at any stage of the process. If a proposal is not selected from the group of Semi-Finalists, the City reserves the right to return to the original group of teams who responded to this Call for Artists or otherwise solicit new proposals. The City of Philadelphia reserves the right to change, modify, or revise the Call for Artists in part or whole, at any time without prior notice. The City of Philadelphia reserves the right to make no selection for this Call for Artists. An example contract is attached and is expected to be reviewed by all applicants. The selected artist must meet the Insurance and other requirements listed in the contract. If candidates have any questions or requests for changes to the contract, these should be raised prior to submitting their art proposals.

Application Requirements:

OACCE collects applications and materials through the Submittable platform, which requires all first-time users to create a free account. The following must be submitted through the online application form found on CreativePHL.org/public-art/percent-for-art/

1. Artist(s) Info: Name, Address, Phone, Email, Website, Demographic information
2. Resumé/CV
3. Artist Statement/Bio

4. Response to question: What inspires you about Blanche A. Nixon and why does this Percent for Art opportunity interest you?
5. Response to question: How has your public art positively impacted, inspired and/or educated diverse communities?
6. Response to question: Connecting with children was very important to Blanche A. Nixon. In what ways can your process and/or your completed work of art creatively engage youth?
7. Response to question: Do you have a personal experience or connection to the Cobbs Creek community, West Philadelphia, or the Blanche A. Nixon Cobbs Creek Library? How would this connection lead to creating a successful work of public art?
8. Response to question: Why do you feel you are the best artist to be selected for this project?
9. Five to ten (5-10) visual, relevant work samples such as jpgs, pngs, or another acceptable file of your previous artwork that meets the Semi-Finalist selection criteria listed on page 7.
10. Image Identification List that includes artwork Title, Year, Materials, Dimensions, Location, Project Budget.

Blanche A. Nixon Percent for Art Project Timeline Milestones*

Activity	Date
Call for Artist opens	Jan 19, 2023
Non-Mandatory Artist Info Meeting RSVP Here	Jan 26, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.
Questions to OACCE about the project are due	Feb 2, 2023
Question & Answers are posted on CreativePHL.org	Feb 9, 2023
Call for Artists Submission Deadline	March 10, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.
Semi-Finalists are notified	April 21, 2023
Pre-proposal Meeting with Semi-Finalists to Review Proposal Format (Mandatory for Semi-Finalists)	May 4, 2023
Community Input Meeting #1 with Semi-Finalists (Mandatory for Semi-Finalists)	Week of May 15- 18 , 2023
All Proposal materials due	July 7, 2023
Community Input Meeting #2 for Semi-Finalists to Present Proposals to Community (Mandatory for Semi-Finalists)	Week of July 17 - 21
Community Engagement Period	July - August 2023
Changes to All Proposal materials deadline	Sept 14, 2023
Semi-Finalists Proposal Presentations to the Committee	October 5, 2023
Finalist is notified	October 12, 2023
Design Development Phase (note this timeframe may vary)	October - November 2023
Finalist presents to the Art Commission for Review	Jan 2024
Contract with Finalist Finalized	July 2024
Site work/fabrication starts	August 2024
Project Completion and dedication	Spring 2025

**Schedule is subject to change.*

If you need application assistance, please contact Rachel Schwartzman at Rachel.Schwartzman@phila.gov at least 7 days prior to the deadline.

About:

Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy

The Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy (OACCE) closes the gap in access to the arts for all Philadelphians and is committed to equitable support of culture and creativity throughout the city's neighborhoods. OACCE supports free cultural programming; creates opportunities for local artists and creative organizations; connects Philadelphians to quality arts experiences; and preserves the City's public art assets.

The Percent for Art Program was started in Philadelphia 60 years ago and requires that one percent of the budget of a City-funded construction project is designated for site-specific public art. Philadelphia's Percent for Art Program is a model that has been replicated in cities across the country, reflecting the importance of having art in our public spaces and in our daily lives.

Percent for Art commissions beautiful and enduring artworks, which reflect the diversity of Philadelphia's residents and visitors, its rich cultural landscape, its many histories, and the variety of public spaces in Philadelphia's communities.

Rebuild Philadelphia

Rebuild is a historic investment of hundreds of millions of dollars in neighborhood parks, recreation centers and libraries across Philadelphia. Proposed in Mayor Jim Kenney's first budget as a part of his vision for a more equitable Philadelphia, is Rebuild's promise to acknowledge history, engage the community, and invest intentionally, seek to uplift pivotal community spaces, empower neighborhoods, and promote economic opportunity through diversity and inclusion.

Community Ventures

Community is a non-profit organization and the project developer for the Blanche A. Nixon/ Cobbs Creek Library project. Community Ventures is a developer of affordable housing in Philadelphia, whose mission is to enter into joint venture redevelopment efforts with locally based organizations. Community Ventures works with its partners, most often neighborhood organizations, over a period of several years, planning and building a critical mass of housing and mixed-use development to stabilize and improve the local community.