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The Newark Downtown District launches “Gateways to Newark” Initiative
Portraits: Longest Mural on the East Coast and Second Longest Mural in the Nation

1.39 mile urban renewal and art initiative project along Newark's Route 21 is the first of many beautified entry points.

Newark, NJ – May 18, 2016 - The Newark Downtown District (NDD) announced the **transformation of the Amtrak retention wall on Route 21 in Newark, NJ into the country's second longest mural -- approximately the length of 25 football fields.** Phase I of the *Gateways to Newark* project, "Portraits," is the first of several entryway renewal and beautification projects that will include public art, spurring economic growth, and markedly changing first impressions for travelers entering Newark.

The installation is a 1.39-mile-long mural along New Jersey's Route 21 (McCarter Highway), titled "*Portraits*", which will highlight Newark's lively culture, fostering communal dialogue and a celebration of the arts. This mural will unofficially be the East Coast's longest mural to date. There will be 15 distinct works of art by 18 highly acclaimed artists, creating a striking and expansive display for the 330,000 people who work and live in Newark, as well as the 1.1 million commuters who drive down Route 21 each month. "Portraits" is currently being painted, nightly, from 9:00 pm to 5:00 am, and is scheduled to be completed by May 27th, 2016.

"The Gateways to Newark initiative—and specifically the Portraits mural—will have a monumental impact on people's perceptions of the City," said **Newark Downtown District CEO Anthony McMillan**. "The NDD has worked for nearly two decades to make downtown Newark cleaner, greener, and safer. The results of our hard work are evident throughout the district and now along McCarter Highway. The Portraits mural represents our continued commitment to those who live, labor, and leisure in downtown Newark."

The mural is being funded by the Newark Community Economic Development Corporation, through a grant provided by the City of Newark, and paint is being subsidized by Sherwin Williams. Other partners include Amtrak, Panasonic, Edison Properties and Ray's Enterprises.

Rebecca Pauline Jampol (Gateway Project Spaces and Solo(s) Project House, Newark, NJ) is curating the project along with artist and coordinator *Lunar New Year. Eighteen world-renowned lead artists are working on "Portraits". The artists are: *Adrienne Wheeler (NJ, USA) *Akintola Hanif (NJ, USA), *David D. Oquendo (NJ, USA), *Dom Rimx (FL, USA), El Decetor (PERU), GAIA (MD, USA), *GERA (NJ, USA) and WERC (Mexico), *Kevin Darmanie (NJ, USA), *Khari Ricks (NJ, USA), Manuel Acevedo (NY, USA), *MataRuda (NJ, USA), Nanook (MD, USA), *Nina Chanel Abney (NJ, USA), Sonni (NY, USA), Tatyana Fazlalizadeh (NY, USA) and Zephalito (Brazil). (* indicates Newark artists)

As the City celebrates its 350th anniversary, the artists have designed pieces that pay homage to Newark's history, while also celebrating its present and future. Of the artists, 10 are from Newark and the remainder come from as far away as Brazil, reflecting the ethnic and cultural tapestry of the region. "Portraits" celebrates the uniqueness and oneness of our City," **said Mayor Ras J. Baraka**. "The mural honors our rich history, cultural intersections, and narratives of day-to-day life here in Newark. The images represent a powerful, yet entertaining and spirited, compilation of visual expressions."

Media Note: Hi resolution renderings, and bios for artists, curator, and project direction can be found at:
<http://www.newarkmural.com>

About the NDD (downtownnewark.com) :

The Newark Downtown District (NDD), Newark's special improvement district of the central business area, is a privately funded 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization, dedicated to revitalizing downtown Newark by improving the economic viability of the central business district. The NDD also works hard to enhance the quality of life for those who live, labor, and leisure in Newark, by providing supplemental cleaning and safety services, as well as marketing and physical streetscape improvement programs. ***Gateways to Newark: Portraits is the first of several gateways throughout the City that will be renewed.***