

Bloomberg Philanthropies Asphalt Art Initiative Awards 19 European Cities Grants to Transform Streets and Public Spaces

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Asphalt Art Initiative provides cities funding and technical support for arts-driven street redesigns that improve safety, revitalize public spaces, and engage local communities

Recent data shows dramatic reduction in traffic crashes and unsafe driving at dozens of asphalt art project sites

Amsterdam and New York, NY – Bloomberg Philanthropies today announced the 19 European cities receiving Asphalt Art Initiative grants of \$25,000 to undertake projects in 2023 that use art and design to improve street safety, revitalize public spaces, and engage residents of their communities. This program expansion was announced at Bloomberg CityLab 2022, the preeminent global cities summit organized with the Aspen Institute. The 19 selected Asphalt Art Initiative projects in Europe include:

- **New and revitalized pedestrian space in 11 cities:** Brussels, Belgium; Zagreb, Croatia; Brno, Czech Republic; Helsinki, Finland; Reykjavik, Iceland; Florence, Italy; Prato, Italy; Rome, Italy; Ferizaj, Kosovo; Cluj-Napoca, Romania; and Madrid, Spain
- **Pedestrian safety enhancements in 5 cities:** Tirana, Albania; Gdynia, Poland; Bratislava, Slovakia; Kosice, Slovakia; and León, Spain
- **Intersection and crosswalk murals in 3 cities:** Varna, Bulgaria; Athens, Greece; and Istanbul, Turkey

Bloomberg Philanthropies' Asphalt Art Initiative responds to the growing number of cities around the world embracing art as an effective and low-cost strategy to enliven and improve safety in their streets through interventions on plazas, crosswalks, intersections, and other transportation infrastructure. The program is intended to create vibrant new public spaces, foster interagency collaboration, and increase each city's capacity to work with artists as well as community groups on creative projects involving transportation infrastructure. These 19 new projects will build on the success of 42 Asphalt Art Initiative grants previously awarded in U.S. cities and pilot projects in three European cities.

The initiative is inspired by work done to improve pedestrian safety and revitalize New York City streets during Michael R. Bloomberg's mayoralty (2002-2013) and the work of Bloomberg Philanthropies' pro bono consulting arm Bloomberg Associates advising cities around the world on implementing arts-driven street design projects. In addition to grants, selected cities will receive technical consulting provided by Bloomberg Associates and the City of Milan's Agency for Mobility, Environment, and Territory (AMAT).

“Asphalt art projects are a proven, low-cost way for cities to enliven public spaces, build community, and increase safety,” **said Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and 108th mayor of New York City.** “Expanding the Asphalt Art Initiative in Europe will help meet the growing demand for creative street redesigns, while uniting even more artists and neighborhood leaders around the power of public art.”

Asphalt Art Impacts:

Bloomberg Philanthropies has previously given 42 Asphalt Art Initiative grants in U.S. cities and for pilot projects in three European cities. To date, the 31 projects completed through the Asphalt Art Initiative have collectively transformed a combined 330,000 square feet of streetscape with artwork while engaging nearly 7,000 community members and nearly 150 artists in the design and installation process.

With evaluations still underway, Asphalt Art projects have already demonstrated clear early benefits for local neighborhoods:

- **Improving pedestrian safety:** In Kansas City, Missouri, the artistic redesign of an intersection historically rife with speeding cars saw average traffic speeds drop by 45%. Colorful curb extensions in Baltimore, Maryland, led to a 41% increase in the share of drivers yielding to pedestrians with the right of way.
- **Revitalizing public space:** In Glasgow, Scotland, the artist leading the city’s project reimaged 20,000 square feet of forgotten space under an imposing highway at the entrance to a major commuter railway station and the nexus of major bike and pedestrian routes. An asphalt art project in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, brought bright splashes of color to benches, planters, and portions of the pavement near the vibrant local marketplace at Plein 40-45 plaza, drawing customers on market days and enlivening the neighborhood for residents year-round.
- **Engaging community:** Residents of the Friendship neighborhood in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, participated in all aspects of their intersection redesign, from workshops to develop the design drawings to painting the mural under the direction of the lead artists. In downtown Saginaw, Michigan, 29 artists and nearly 500 residents came together for a socially distanced all-day “Paint-A-Thon.” Once the art was installed, there was 100% project satisfaction from surveyed visitors, and 83% of nearby business owners felt the murals benefitted their business.

“From our groundbreaking work in New York, to projects across the US and now expanding to Europe, the Asphalt Art Initiative continues to highlight new possibilities for city streets,” **said Janette Sadik-Khan, Principal for Transportation at Bloomberg Associates and former**

commissioner of the New York City Department of Transportation. “Projects like these not only connect people, but make streets safer, and we encourage cities everywhere to paint their own transportation masterpieces.”

“Public art can inspire community collaboration and create safer, more vibrant streets,” **said Kate D. Levin, who leads the Arts Program at Bloomberg Philanthropies as well as the Cultural Assets Management practice at Bloomberg Associates, and is the former commissioner of the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.** “The expansion of the Asphalt Art Initiative in 19 European cities will further underscore the unique effectiveness of the arts in addressing urban challenges on both sides of the Atlantic.”

Asphalt Art Initiative Resource Library:

- **Safety Study:** A recent [Asphalt Art Safety Study](#) conducted by Bloomberg Philanthropies, in collaboration with Sam Schwartz Consulting, found traffic safety to be demonstrably improved across a cohort of 22 asphalt art projects in the U.S., including a 50% drop in crashes involving pedestrians or cyclists. The research and more information on each of the projects can be found on the [Asphalt Art Initiative website](#).
- **Asphalt Art Guide:** In 2019, Bloomberg Philanthropies also published the [Asphalt Art Guide](#), with case studies and best practices from cities around the world. The guide, which has been accessed over 7,500 times by governments and other practitioners in all 50 U.S. states and 90 countries, is free for download at [AsphaltArt.bloomberg.org/guide/](https://asphaltart.bloomberg.org/guide/), now with new translations to Dutch, Spanish, Italian, French, German and Polish were released this summer as part of the program’s expansion in Europe.
- **Bloomberg Connects App:** More information, images, and videos about existing and upcoming Asphalt Art Initiative projects are now available on [Bloomberg Connects](#), the free mobile app for arts and culture.

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Photos, podcasts, and videos for media use:

Videos and photos along with credits and descriptions can be downloaded [here](#).

About Bloomberg Philanthropies:

Bloomberg Philanthropies invests in 941 cities and 173 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 2021, Bloomberg Philanthropies distributed \$1.66 billion. For more information, please visit [bloomberg.org](https://www.bloomberg.org) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#), [Twitter](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

About Bloomberg Associates:

Bloomberg Associates is the philanthropic consulting arm of Michael R. Bloomberg's charitable organization, Bloomberg Philanthropies. Founded in 2014, we work side by side with client cities to improve the quality of life for residents, taking a strategic, collaborative and results-oriented approach to making cities stronger, safer, more equitable and efficient. Our team of globally recognized experts and industry leaders has worked with cities across the globe on hundreds of projects in order to ignite change and transform dynamic vision into reality. For more information on the consultancy, please visit www.bloombergassociates.org or follow us on [Twitter](#).

Media Contact:

Rebecca Carriero, Bloomberg Philanthropies +1 (212) 205-0182 or rebeccac@bloomberg.org