



August 21, 2025

Board of Commissioners  
Lower Merion Township  
75 E. Lancaster Avenue  
Ardmore, PA 19003

Dear Lower Merion Township Commissioners,

Last fall, I and some other Ardmore residents formed the Friends of Schuffele Plaza (FOSP), an official township friends-of-the-park group, to beautify and activate Schuffele Plaza pending construction of the planned redesign of Schuffele Plaza, Lot 6, and Cricket Terrace.

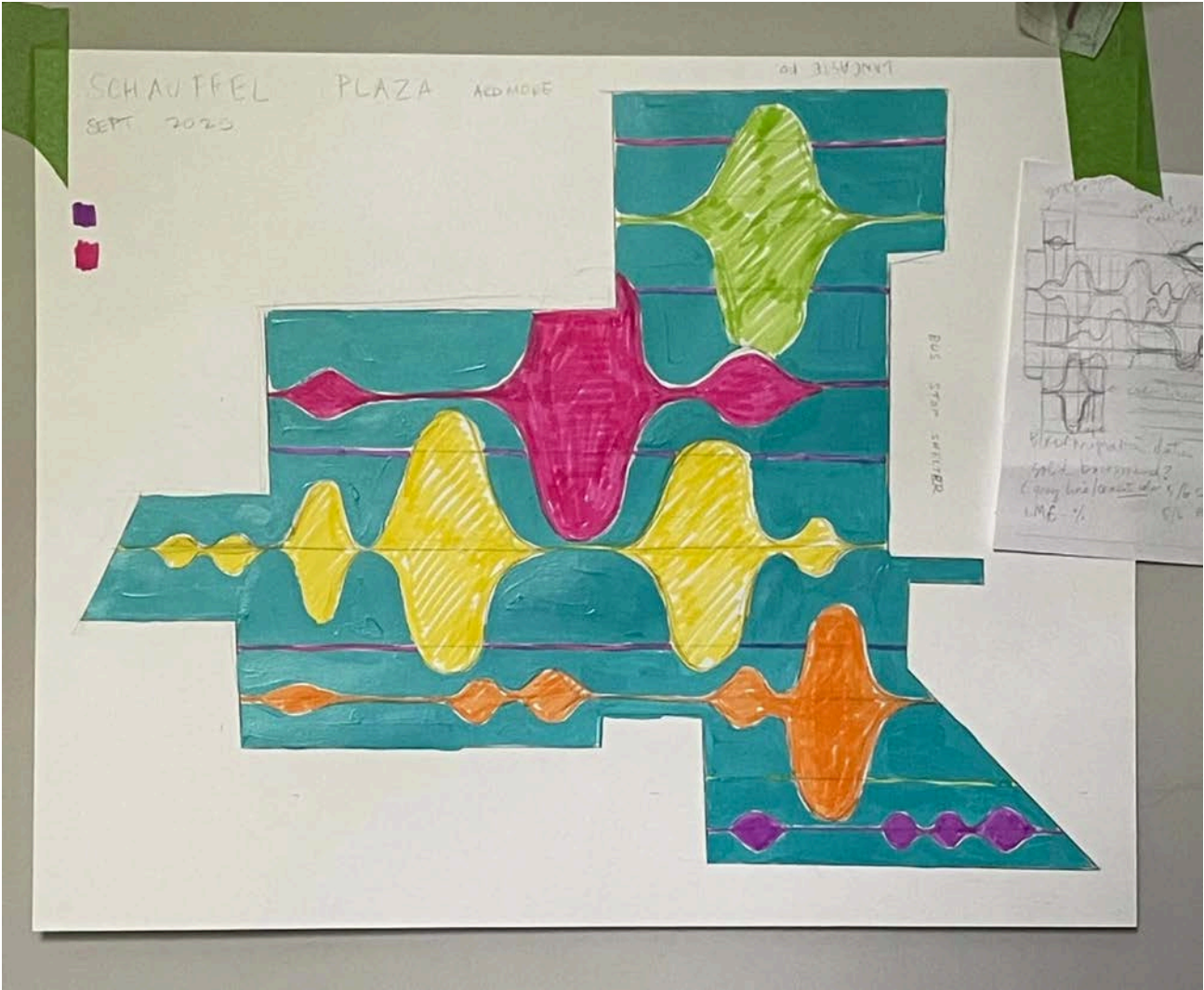
I am writing on behalf of FOSP to request the Township's approval and support for a community-led tactical placemaking project that will add art, greenery, amenities, and programming to Schuffele Plaza. The Better Block Foundation, an urban-design non-profit that works with communities to revive underutilized spaces, is providing technical guidance and a \$2,500 seed grant for the project, with additional support provided by Ardmore Initiative, Lower Merion Conservancy, and Tired Hands.

Schuffele Plaza—located in the heart of Downtown Ardmore, surrounded by scores of local businesses, and within easy walking distance for thousands of residents—is a prime location for a vibrant public space. But the existing plaza is uninspired and neglected, and therefore unwelcoming and underused. We hope to change that by painting a ground mural, adding native plants in colorful planters, providing additional seating, and facilitating occasional performances, markets, and other programming and events.

In addition to providing a more welcoming third place, we hope that this project will demonstrate the strong pent-up demand for attractive and comfortable third places in Lower Merion and deepen the public's appreciation for the value of our shared spaces. The project is rooted in principles of tactical urbanism - a bottom-up approach to change

that uses short-term, low-cost, low-risk, scalable interventions. The plan, detailed below, was directly informed by community input gathered through a public survey conducted this spring.

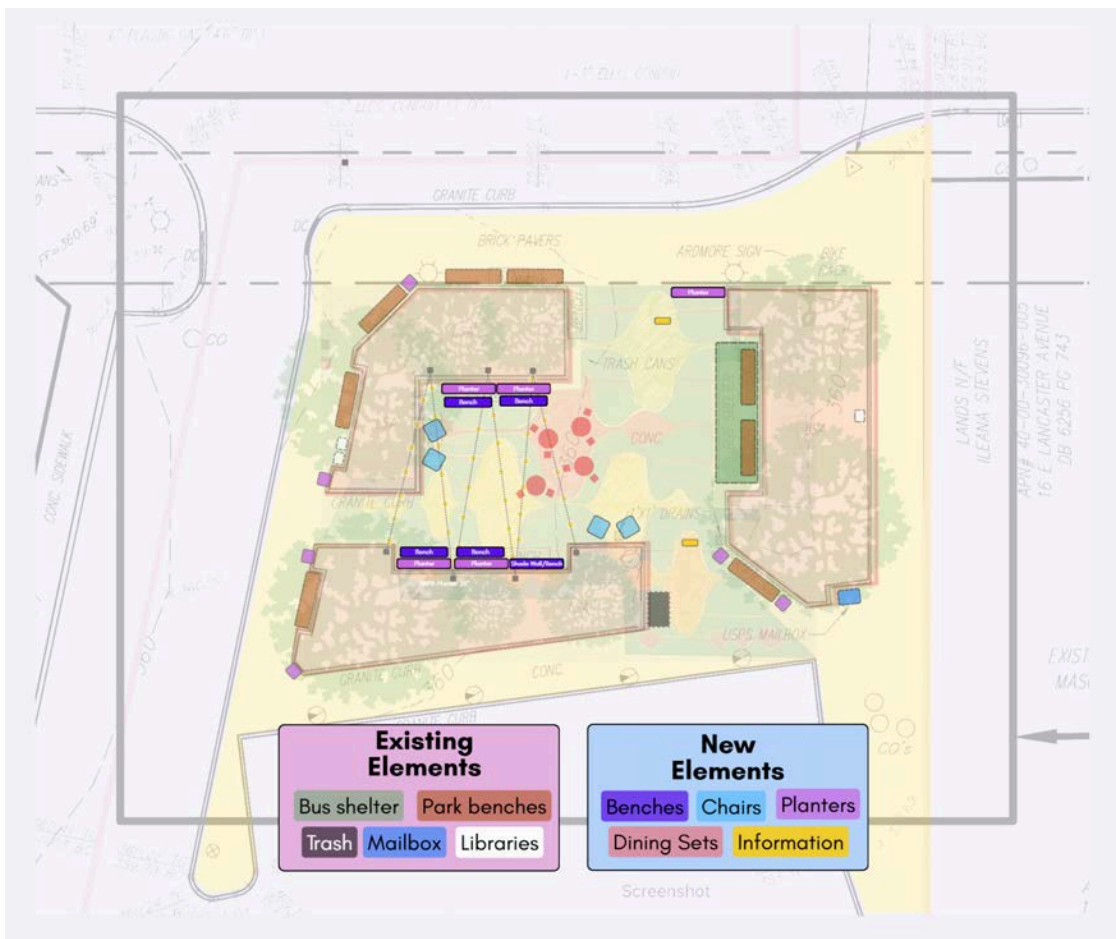
Ardmore resident Deirdre Murphy, an accomplished artist with mural and public art experience, is leading the mural installation, which will cover most of the interior concrete surface area of the Plaza. Deirdre's original and stunning concept uses vibrant colors to visualize mid-Atlantic flyway bird migration data. The mural will be installed using professional-quality exterior masonry paint with anti-slip additive to ensure adequate footing.



Wynnewood resident and native plant expert Kate Cronin is leading the planting component of the project. After assessing the condition of the existing beds, Kate

decided that it would be best for new plants to be planted in planters to avoid potentially stressing the trees. Lower Merion Conservancy is a partner on the project and has graciously offered to purchase plants, which will be mostly if not exclusively native perennials. We will enlist volunteers to help with planting and ongoing maintenance, and Ardmore Initiative has agreed to have its contractor water the plants.

I am leading the effort to build or acquire planters, seating, and other elements. We will build five large (18" x 70" x 26") raised planters and a corresponding bench with a shade wall. The planters will be 15-3/4" deep to ensure winter survival of native perennials, and will be lined with 6 mil plastic sheeting. We will also build six small (12" x 17" x 14") cedar planters. and four (13-3/4" x 60" x 17-1/2") benches. The large planters and benches—which are adapted from the designs of Tiny WPA, a Philadelphia non-profit that supports citizen-led placemaking initiatives—will be partially painted with colors matching the mural palette.



Ardmore Initiative will provide additional bistro sets to supplement the existing ones, and we plan to purchase or seek donations of modern-style Adirondack chairs made of durable composite material. Other potential elements include folding sidewalk signs to display local information, additional string lights, and information about Schauffele Plaza's rich history.

The only items we believe we would need the Township's assistance with are 1) the relocation of five of the eight existing park benches to provide seating along the exterior perimeter and 2) the relocation of the trash/recycle container to a new location away from the seating.



**ASSISTANCE NEEDED FROM LOWER MERION**

The only ask we have of Lower Merion Township is to relocate four of the park benches and the trash cans.

- Benches 1, 2, 3** - No change
- Benches 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & Trash** - Relocate to indicated locations

Better Block, the project's primary sponsor, employs a quick 120-day approach that sidesteps the normal (lengthy) planning process "by putting the power back into the communities' hands through rapid and temporary placemaking." The project began back in May, but I only recently learned that it would need Board of Commissioners approval. Our plan is to have the project completed by the end of September and to host a community gathering and demonstration event on Saturday, October 4.

Here is the full project timeline:

- May 10-June 17, 2025 - Site selection, community survey, preliminary approvals.

- June 18-July 15, 2025 - Evaluate survey results, assemble core team, develop initial concepts.
- July 16-September 17, 2025 - Design, planning, fabrication, and preparations.
- September 20-21, 2025: Mural installation and element assembly.
- Sept 27-28: Planting installation and final preparations.
- Oct. 4: Opening/demonstration.

Ardmore Initiative has offered to help keep the Plaza clean and to water the plants, and the Friends of Schaufele Plaza will handle other ongoing maintenance of the new elements.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Craig Timberlake  
Friends of Schaufele Plaza  
Ardmore