



Phoenix Serves as a National Leader in Creating Urban Heat Solutions Using Public Art

*Early Temperature Measurement Returns Showing Impact of Designs
Funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge*

(PHOENIX, Ariz.) — As Phoenix continues to heat up this summer, artistic shade structures are open for use and proving successful, with temperature readings showing up to a 40 degree drop at each site. These works that blend art and shade are part of *¡Sombra! Experiments in Shade*, a groundbreaking initiative through which artists created new installations to increase shade in public spaces and reduce urban heat in the community.

Phoenix was one of only eight cities nationwide to receive Bloomberg Philanthropies' Public Art Challenge grant, bringing in \$1 million to launch this initiative.

"Phoenix is innovating strategies to address extreme heat, including the creation of beautiful shade structures through *¡Sombra!*" Mayor Kate Gallego said. "In partnership with Bloomberg Philanthropies, this project brings together artists and heat-mitigation experts to produce solutions that showcase our unique approach to heat-readiness. These projects will not only beautify neighborhoods but also create new avenues for residents to engage with heat safety and mitigation efforts."

Through *¡Sombra!* (Spanish for "shade"), nine artists were commissioned to design temporary installations that provide functional cooling. Installed between April and June and now open to the public for summer use, each shade structure serves as both creative expression and heat mitigation experiment. Artists are testing solar-powered misting systems, UV-resistant fabrics, heat-reducing paint, recycled textiles and Indigenous building knowledge. Since the installations have opened, the City is measuring real-time surface temperature differentials at each site, with early readings showing drops of up to 40 degrees—offering promising insight into the cooling potential of creative, non-mechanical interventions.

Urban heat is one of the most pressing public health threats facing the Phoenix metro area, with Maricopa County reporting 602 heat-related deaths last year.

“Phoenix is continually innovating to make extreme heat more manageable,” said David Hondula, Director of the City’s Office of Heat Response and Mitigation. “*¡Sombra!* is an exciting integration of public art with practical climate resilience, allowing us to learn new ways to keep people safe and comfortable while enriching our public spaces. The shade provided by these installations is significantly reducing surface temperatures and improving thermal comfort and safety. We are looking forward to continued analysis to understand the specific design elements that are most effective.”

Phoenix's *¡Sombra!* initiative exemplifies the goals of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge, encouraging U.S. cities to partner with artists in tackling critical local issues. Since its launch in 2014, the program has helped foster cross-sector collaboration, community engagement and creative problem solving, delivering more than \$100 million in economic benefits nationwide.

“I am appreciative of Mayor Gallego, City leadership, our internal and external partners, the Arts and Culture staff, and our artists who have made this project become a reality,” said Phoenix Arts and Culture Director Mitch Menchaca. “*¡Sombra!* is providing the risk capital to try new materials, work with new artists and learn about how public art can help with civic issues like extreme heat.”

“The City of Phoenix is demonstrating how the arts can catalyze creative solutions to urgent challenges,” said Stephanie Dockery of the Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Art Program. “*¡Sombra!* is a national model for how cities can partner with artists and community members to build environmental resilience, develop partnerships, and beautify a city.”

To learn more about *¡Sombra!* and sign up for project updates, visit sombraphx.org.

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About Phoenix Office of Arts & Culture

The Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture is the city's designated local arts agency. It supports the local arts, culture and educational community to make Phoenix a great place to live, work and visit. The department manages an award-winning public art program; grants funds to artists and nonprofit arts organizations; and oversees a dozen cultural facilities, including the S'edav Va'aki Museum, the gateway to the

cultural history of the Phoenix area. It assures that the City is in compliance with regulations per the identification and proper treatment of historic properties. Learn more about the department at [Phoenix.gov/Arts](https://phoenix.gov/Arts).

About the Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge

The Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge brings together cities and their leaders, residents, and artists to develop temporary public art projects that address important civic issues in their communities. In 2022, Bloomberg Philanthropies invited mayors of U.S. cities with 30,000 residents or more to apply for up to \$1 million in funding to create temporary public art projects that address important civic issues and demonstrate an ability to generate public-private collaborations, celebrate creativity and urban identity, and strengthen local economies. More than 150 cities from 40 U.S. states applied. Bloomberg Philanthropies selected eight winning cities including Phoenix, to develop projects focused on local challenges. Since launching in 2014, the Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge has spurred more than \$100 million in economic benefits for participating cities and action across a range of civic issues. For more information, please visit publicartchallenge.bloomberg.org.

