



Call For **Artists**

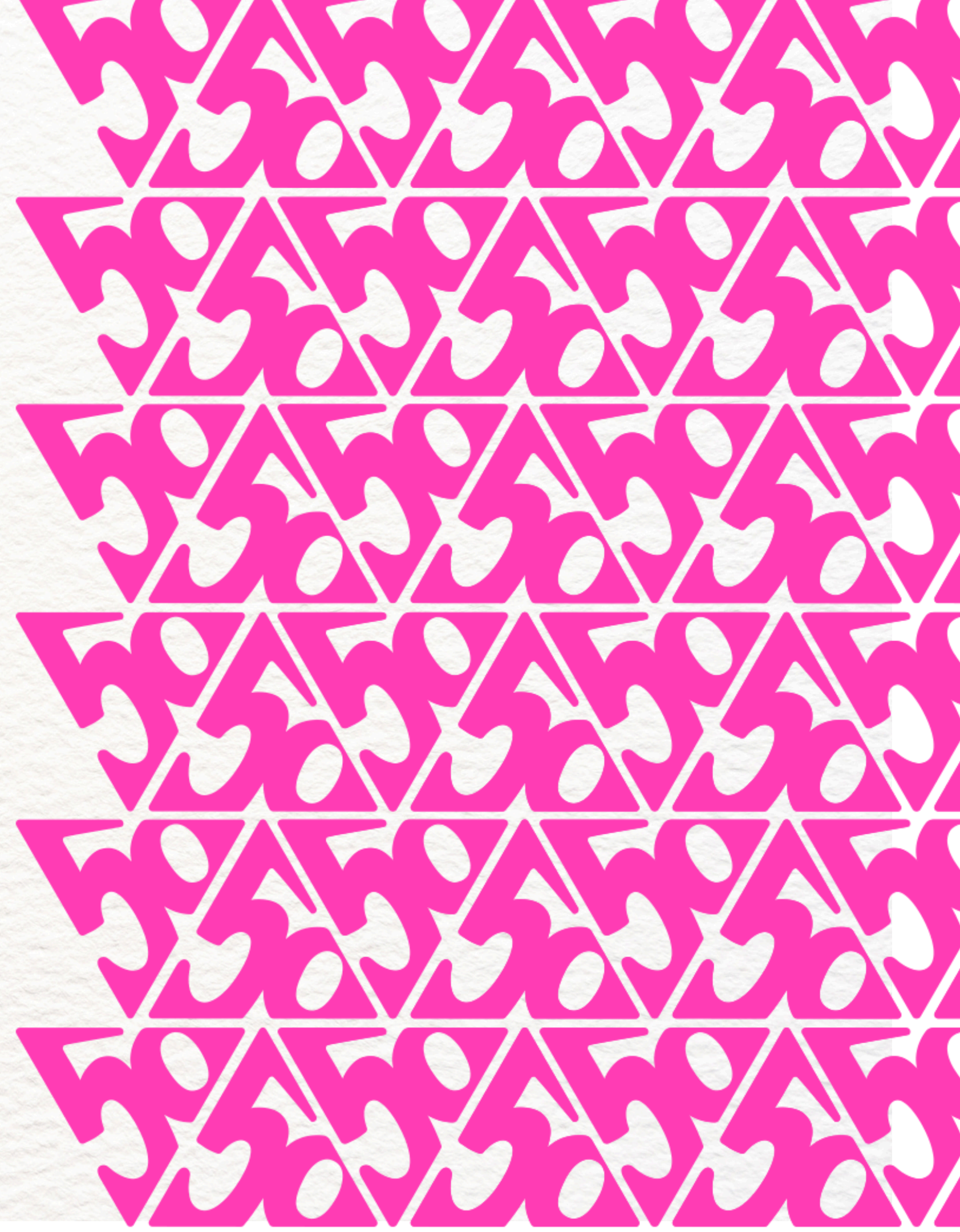
The 519

Celebrating 50 Years

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Why this Request

In 2026, The 519 celebrates its 50th anniversary — a milestone to honour our legacy, celebrate our communities, and imagine a safer, just and inclusive future together. For five decades, The 519 has been a beacon for 2SLGBTQ+ communities in Toronto and beyond: a place of refuge, art, advocacy, and collective care.

This anniversary invites us to ask: **How can The 519 illuminate the future of 2 Spirit, queer, and trans life, art, and community in public space?**

To explore these questions, The 519 is commissioning a **contemporary public art project** that will be a creative landmark in the Church and Wellesley neighbourhood.

The 519 is inviting proposals that explore light, memory, place, and possibility. Help us create a luminous marker of the future.

Project Overview

This installation will be one of many initiatives that celebrate, honour, and commemorate our 50th anniversary. Using light—both medium and metaphor—this bespoke installation will be a highly visible, exterior, bold visual statement that signals The 519 as a space for refuge, art, advocacy, and collective care for Toronto's 2SLGBTQ+ communities.

The piece will **use the building as a canvas**, perhaps installing on the roof, projecting on the facade, illuminating windows—we're excited to hear your ideas! The building itself will power and be the support structure for the piece. The final work should speak to our broader 50th anniversary themes:

Legacy + History, Belonging + Joy, Liberation + Advocacy, Future + Possibility

We're seeking proposals from artists, designers, collectives, and cross-disciplinary creatives for an original public artwork that:

- Uses light as a medium
- Animates the exterior of The 519
- Engages community and inspires audiences
- Speaks to the specific site at 519 Church Street, Toronto
- Amplifies 2SLGBTQ+ voices

Project Details

Working Title:

50th Anniversary: Light Installation

Medium:

Light, installation, sculpture, various

Location:

The 519 [519 Church St, Toronto]

Installation:

Permanent, outdoor, on the building
(i.e. not on the ground or surrounding park)

Timeline:

Completion by October 2026, submitted to
Nuit Blanche 2026

Budget:

The working budget of \$30,000 (CAD) is
inclusive of:

- Artist and collaborator fees
- Design and fabrication
- Equipment, materials, and lighting technology
- Technical and installation support
- Programming, electronics, and software

**The final budget will be confirmed with
the selected artist/team.**

Eligibility

This call is open to:

- Individual artists and designers
- Artist collectives
- Designers, architects, technologists, and interdisciplinary teams
- Creatives working across light, sculpture, installation, immersive media, or community-engaged art



Equity Statement

The 519 is committed to equity, inclusion, and accessibility in all of our work. As Canada's largest 2SLGBTQ+ multi-service organization, we recognize the importance of amplifying voices that have been historically underrepresented in public art and cultural spaces.

We strongly encourage proposals from local and emerging artists who identify as 2 Spirit, queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, racialized, disabled, deaf, neurodivergent, newcomers, refugees, and people with lived experience of systemic barriers.

We value community-informed and culturally responsive artistic practices, and welcome diverse ways of storytelling, creation, and collaboration. Accessibility is central to this project, and artists are encouraged to consider how their work engages a wide range of community members.

Through this commission, The 519 aims to support an equitable process that honours and helps imagine a more just and inclusive future.

Artist Responsibilities

Concept Development:

- Develop a concept that responds to themes of the project.
- Engage in meaningful consultation with The 519 to inform concept, design, and process.

Community Engagement:

- Work with The 519 to ensure that the project reflects our local neighbourhood and community.
- Partake in community consultation and information process.

Technical and Programming:

- Select technology and work with technical staff for installation support.
- Ensure the project is safe and accessible to the public per AODA standards.

Artist Responsibilities

Installation Design and Creation:

- Detailed design plans for light installation, including visual representations, technical specifications, materials lists, and timelines (not required in proposal).
- Oversee installation in collaboration with technical supports, operations staff, and project team.

Installation and Launch:

- Be present for the installation process, ensuring that all aspects of the project are completed on time.
- Participate in public programming related to the launch of the installation, planned for Nuit Blanch October 3, 2026.

Documentation:

- Support The 519's documentation of the project by providing materials related to the design, production, and launch stages of the installation.

Proposals Must Include

Preliminary Project Proposal

To include (3 pages max):

- Concept description
- Artistic intent and thematic alignment
- Preliminary sketches, mock-ups, or renderings
- Preliminary technical notes
- Anticipated materials and fabrication methods

Artist/Team Information:

- CV(s) or bios
- Portfolio or links to past work
- Contact information for all contributors

Budget and Timeline:

- Preliminary budget breakdown
- Preliminary development and creation timeline, with October 1, 2026 completion date.

Optional:

- Letters of support
- Documentation of relevant past installations

How to Apply

Email your complete proposal by
Friday, February 20 at 11:59 p.m. to:
 Roxanne Duncan,
 Project Director, 50th Anniversary
 RDuncan@The519.org

Assessment Criteria:

- Artistic merit, innovation, and conceptual clarity
- Feasibility, durability, technical viability
- Alignment with themes and values
- Budget and timeline alignment

Information Session:

Attend a virtual info session on **Monday, February 9 at 5:30 p.m.** Open to anyone interested in submitting a proposal.
 For details and registration email
 Emkay: EAdjeiManu@The519.org

Selection Process

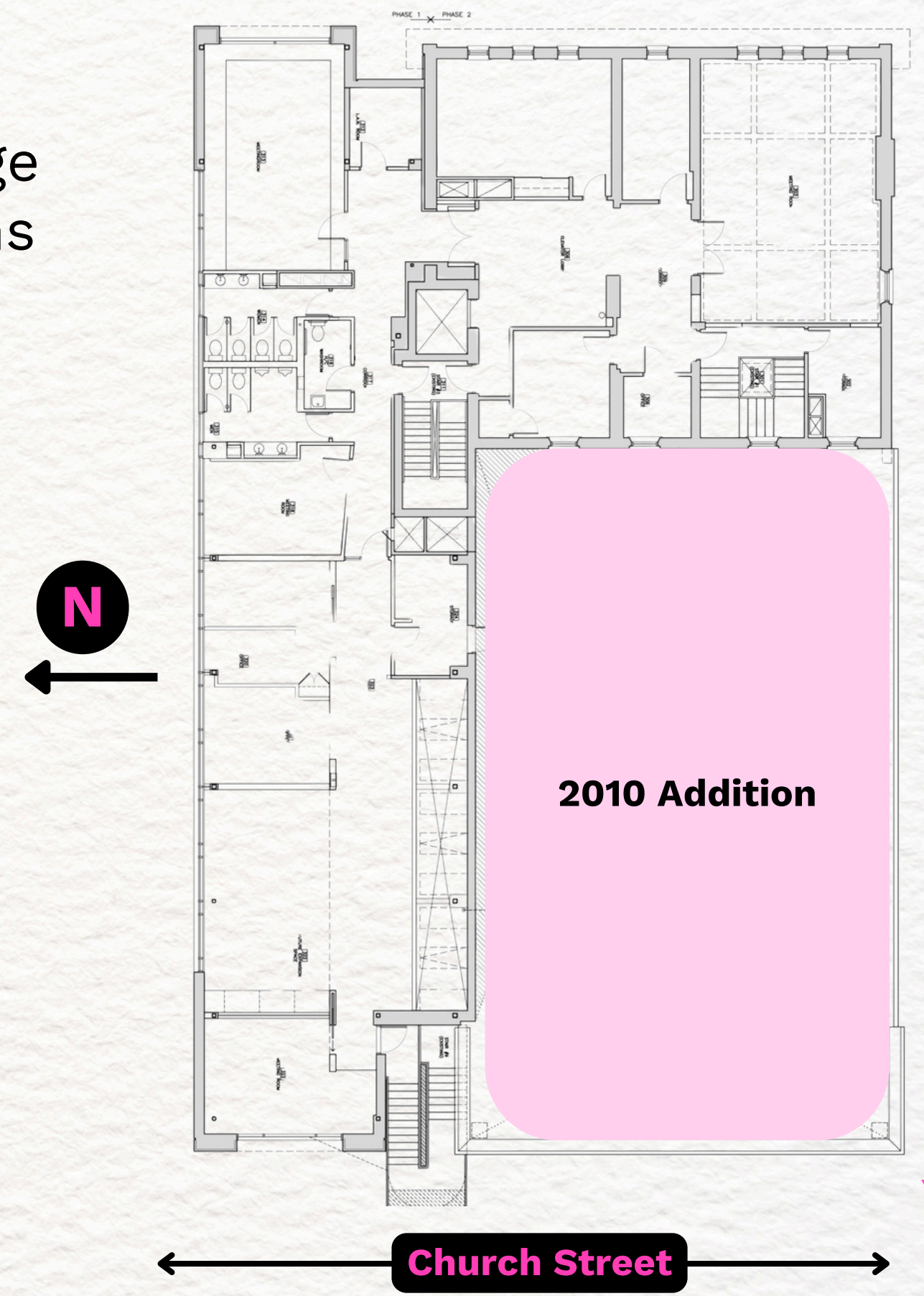
Proposals will be reviewed by a multidisciplinary Advisory Committee made up of artists, curators, community members, and The 519 representatives.

This is a two-stage process. In **Stage One**, artists submit a preliminary proposal outlining their qualifications and initial concept. A shortlist will be selected to advance to **Stage Two**, where each will be invited to develop a more detailed proposal and present their concepts to the selection committee. Stage Two finalists will receive a small honorarium for their detailed proposals.

The final selection will be made based on artistic merit, feasibility, and alignment with project goals. The successful artist will then work with The 519 staff to finalize the design and oversee installation.

Site Details

Built in 1906, the main building is a designated heritage building, and as such is subject to technical limitations and heritage restrictions. The 2010 addition is a more flexible option for installations, though this need not shape the creative direction of the project.



Building Exterior

The North and South walls of The 519 building have existing murals on them that will remain in place. The facades of both the heritage wing and the Salah Bachir Wing facing Church Street do not feature murals or decorative designs.

NORTH FACE



SOUTH FACE



Get in Touch

The project will be led by the 50th Anniversary department at The 519. For more information, contact:

Roxanne Duncan (she/her)

Project Director, 50th Anniversary

RDuncan@The519.org

Emkay Adjei-Manu (they/them)

Project Lead

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