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Press Contact:
Camila Schaulsohn, 212.358.6114, cschaulsohn@aiany.org



Fringe Cities: Legacies of Renewal in the Small American City
to open at the Center for Architecture in NYC
October 2, 2019 – January 18, 2020

The exhibition, curated by MASS Design Group, examines the ongoing impact of urban renewal on 100 small American cities.

New York, NY, October 2, 2019 – The **Center for Architecture** is excited to present the exhibition ***Fringe Cities: Legacies of Renewal in the Small American City***, opening on **Wednesday, October 2 at 6:00 pm** as part of **Archtober**, NYC’s architecture and design month. The exhibition, curated by **MASS Design Group**, explores the Fringe City, defined as an independently situated, small city that has been severely impacted by urban renewal.

Between 1949 and 1974, the United States federal government invested billions of dollars in urban infrastructure through a series of planning, demolition, and construction programs that are collectively known as “urban renewal.” Originally packaged as anti-poverty initiatives, urban renewal often exacerbated existing problems, reinforcing segregation, building highways through downtown cores, and destroying historic structures. While many large cities have rebounded from these social and spatial traumas, smaller cities often continue to struggle with the same problems that urban renewal sought to resolve.

This exhibition presents a snapshot of MASS Design Group’s ongoing investigation into the Fringe City. It examines the role of design in mapping and selling strategies for renewal, taking a deep dive into four cities—**Easton, PA; Saginaw, MI; Spartanburg, SC; and Poughkeepsie, NY**—to understand local impact and hear from the organizations working today to address the legacies of this era of rapid, large-scale change.

The first floor of the exhibition provides context for defining the Fringe City. A timeline documents the social, economic, and political dimensions of urban transformations in America from 1920 to 2020. A selection of planning documents from this era of urban investment explores the role of designers in selling renewal, through enticing renderings, diagrams, and illustrations of possible futures, many of

which would never be realized. Aerial images of 42 of the 100 identified Fringe Cities indicate the location and scope of Urban Renewal projects across small American cities.

On the lower level, the exhibition examines the four case study cities, providing unique accounts of the Fringe City experience. While Fringe Cities share common narratives of spatial transformation, the impact of these interventions varies across context, from a growing distrust of development in Easton to environmental injustice in Spartanburg and a condition of fractured density in Saginaw. As the site of one of MASS Design Group's offices, and the city the firm is most familiar with, Poughkeepsie receives the deepest dive. A map of projects led by local agents of change to address the legacies of urban renewal is complemented by original photography of the city by **Iwan Baan**. While serving as cautionary tales, urging us to avoid repeating past mistakes, these case studies also shed a light on strategies for local, community-driven regeneration.

"What inspires me about this research is that in the landscapes of some of our forgotten places are seeds of inspiration and hope for how we might rethink our national infrastructure," says **Michael Murphy**, Founding Principal and Executive Director of MASS Design Group.

The exhibition is presented as part of **Archtober 2019**, New York City's annual festival of architecture and design taking place during the month of October.

Fringe Cities will be on view through January 18, 2020.

Related Events

Opening

Wednesday, October 2, 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Panel – Fringe City Foundations

Thursday, November 14, 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Panel – Fringe City Futures

Wednesday, December 4, 6:00 – 8:00 pm

Fringe Cities is made possible with the support of the following sponsors:

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This exhibition is supported, in part, by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with the City Council.

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About Archtober

New York City's Architecture and Design Month –presents special tours, lectures, films and exhibitions that focus on the importance of architecture and design in everyday life. Organized by the Center for Architecture in collaboration with partnering organizations across the city, the festival raises awareness of the important role of design in our city and the richness of New York's built environment. www.archtober.org

About the Center for Architecture

The Center for Architecture is the premier cultural venue for architecture and the built environment in New York City, informed by the complexity of the City's urban fabric and in dialogue with the global community. The Center shares a home with the AIA New York Chapter and has the unique advantage of drawing upon the ideas and experiences of practicing architects to produce thought-provoking exhibitions, informative public programs, and quality design education experiences for K-12 students. It also leads New York City's annual month-long architecture and design festival, Archtober. The Center for Architecture's aim is to further public knowledge about New York City architecture and architects, foster exchange and collaboration among members of the design, development, building, scholarly, and policy sectors, and inspire new ideas about the role of design in communities by presenting contemporary and practical issues in architecture and urbanism to a general audience. www.centerforarchitecture.org

About MASS Design Group

MASS Design Group (Model of Architecture Serving Society) is an architecture and design collective with offices in Boston, MA; Poughkeepsie, NY; and Kigali, Rwanda. Its mission is to research, build, and advocate for architecture that promotes justice and human dignity. MASS's recent project, the [National Memorial for Peace and Justice](#) in Montgomery, Alabama, was called "the single greatest work of American architecture of the twenty-first century" by Mark Lamster of *The Dallas Morning News*. MASS has also been recognized with the 2018 American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Architecture and the 2017 Cooper Hewitt National Design Award in Architecture. For more information, visit www.massdesigngroup.org.