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AIA New York and Center for Architecture's Common Bond Gala to Honor Sustainability and Housing Advocates

The Center for Architecture's largest fundraiser will celebrate architecture visionaries on October 26.

NEW YORK, NY, August 24, 2023 — On **Thursday, October 26**, professionals from the architecture, engineering, construction, and real estate industries will gather at Chelsea Piers, Pier 60 for [Common Bond: The Center for Architecture Gala](#). Since the 1980s, AIA New York and the Center for Architecture have gathered 1,000+ guests each fall to celebrate design excellence in New York City and recognize its leaders and visionaries.

Common Bond will also serve as the single largest fundraiser for the Center for Architecture, providing critical funding to help the organization and its partner, AIA New York, support the ambitious mission to educate the public about the importance of architecture and design. While offering an unparalleled opportunity for forging professional connections, the event provides critical funding for the Center for Architecture's exhibitions, programs, scholarships and other activities, including our popular Education Programs. Guests can [support the event](#) by purchasing a sponsorship, ticket, or ad by October 13.

The Center for Architecture has announced its distinguished 2023 Common Bond honorees, each embodying the values that define our community: collaboration, sustainability, inclusivity, civic engagement, and a commitment to design excellence. Please join us in congratulating Rohit T. "Rit" Aggarwala, Jeanne Gang, FAIA, Jolie Andler Milstein, and The Legacy of Joan K. Davidson and the J.M. Kaplan Fund. Additionally, we are pleased to be recognizing three exceptional architecture students with scholarships at the gala: Katherine Menjivar, Sofia Mercado, and Olena Petsyukh.

HONOREES

Rohit T. "Rit" Aggarwala

**New York City Chief Climate Officer
Commissioner, New York City Department of Environmental Protection**

Rohit T. “Rit” Aggarwala was appointed Commissioner of the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the City’s Chief Climate Officer in February 2022. Under his leadership, DEP has embraced a leadership role on both stormwater and coastal resilience, streamlined its procurement processes to be able to invest more money in infrastructure each year, and improved DEP’s water revenues by reducing accounts receivable and delivering revenues \$250 million above budget in his first year. As Chief Climate Officer, he also led the development of New York City’s most recent sustainability plan, PlaNYC.

Prior to the Adams administration, Aggarwala served as the first Director of the New York City Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability under Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, where he led the creation of the first PlaNYC. He later founded the environmental grantmaking program at Bloomberg Philanthropies and served as president of the Board of Directors of the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group. He was part of the founding team at Sidewalk Labs—Google’s urban technology startup—and more recently was a senior urban tech fellow at the Jacobs Cornell-Technion Institute. He has co-chaired the Regional Plan Association’s Fourth Regional Plan for the New York metropolitan area and is an adjunct professor at Columbia University. Aggarwala holds a PhD, MBA, and BA from Columbia University and an MA from Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario.

**Jeanne Gang, FAIA
Founding Principal and Partner
Studio Gang**

Jeanne Gang, FAIA, is the founding principal and partner of Studio Gang, an international architecture and urban design practice headquartered in Chicago. Known for an inquisitive, forward-looking approach to design that unfolds new technical and material possibilities and expands the active role of designers in society, she creates striking places that connect people with each other, their communities, and the environment.

Her diverse, award-winning portfolio includes cultural centers that convene diverse audiences, public projects that connect citizens with ecology, and high-rise towers that foster community—notably the Solar Carve Tower, the Fire Rescue 2 Facility in Brooklyn, and the recently completed Richard Gilder Center for Science, Education, and Innovation at the American Museum of Natural History, which the *New York Times* called “a poetic, joyful, theatrical work of public architecture.” Ongoing projects throughout the Americas and Europe include the new United States Embassy in Brasília; the University of Chicago’s European hub for study and research in Paris; Stanford University’s Sustainability Commons in Palo Alto; and the new O’Hare Global Terminal in Chicago.

Intertwined with built work, Gang and the Studio also develop research, publications, and exhibitions that push design’s ability to create public awareness and give rise to change—a practice Gang calls “actionable idealism.” The most recent monograph of her Studio’s work, *Studio Gang: Architecture*, was published by Phaidon in both English and French.

A MacArthur Fellow and a Professor in Practice at the Harvard Graduate School of Design, Gang has been honored with the ULI Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development and been named one of the most influential people in the world by *TIME* magazine.

Jolie Andler Milstein

President & CEO

New York State Association for Affordable Housing

Jolie Milstein is president and CEO of the New York State Association for Affordable Housing, the largest affordable housing trade group in the country, and serves as a housing expert and leading advocate for policies on matters that advance the industry. Through partnerships with agency, elected and corporate leaders, Milstein has helped transform NYSFAFH into the foremost voice on housing issues in both New York City and State.

Milstein is a strong proponent of supply-side solutions to solve the housing crisis and has helped drive successful public policy efforts and long-term financing efforts, like New York's five-year housing plan. Her advocacy work was critical to maintaining funding levels for city and state housing programs and the establishment of the Council for Independent State Housing Associations (CISHA) in Washington, D.C.

Prior to her work at NYSFAFH, Milstein developed permanent supportive housing at Praxis Housing Initiatives, served as executive director of the Ulster County Development Corporation, and as senior director for economic development at the New York City Partnership. Milstein has vast corporate experience as a commercial and residential investment banker at First Boston Corporation and as project architect at the architecture firm of Moore Ruble Yudell Architects.

Milstein is a licensed architect with a bachelor's degree in architecture from University of California Berkeley, a master's degree in architecture from the University of California Los Angeles, and a master's degree of public and private management from Yale University.

The Legacy of Joan K. Davidson and the J.M. Kaplan Fund

Joan K. Davidson (1927–2023), a native of New York City and State, long worked for, supported, and guided non-profit and government programs to save buildings, support cultural institutions, and restore landmarks in New York. She made a lasting mark as President of the J.M. Kaplan Fund, an instrumental organization for those seeking grants for the betterment of the natural and built environment, the arts, and civil liberties.

Davidson received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Cornell University and a postgraduate degree from Bank Street College of Education. From 1977–1993, she steered the J.M. Kaplan Fund, a multigenerational philanthropic organization which addressed issues related to architecture and historic preservation, design, and quality of life. She managed the creation of Westbeth Artist's Community as its first President, and laid the groundwork for the Gracie Mansion Conservancy, among other ventures.

In 1995, Davidson founded Furthermore grants in publishing as a program of the J. M. Kaplan Fund. Furthermore supports publication of nonfiction books pertaining to art, history, and the natural and built environment. In addition to her leadership here, she established the Alice Award, an annual prize for illustrated books, in 2013. In 2022 she instituted the Carriage House events program at Midwood, her property in the Hudson River Valley.

Davidson had also served as Chair at the New York State Council on the Arts, Commissioner at the New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, and Chair at the Hudson-Fulton-Champlain Quadricentennial Commission. She lived in Manhattan and the Hudson Valley.

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Katherine Menjivar, BArch, Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture

Katherine R. Menjivar is a driven architecture student at the Bernard and Anne Spitzer School of Architecture. She has been awarded the NAWIC 2019 Competition and will continue to apply herself through design. Menjivar is committed to developing settings that meet utilitarian needs and raise human connection and well-being, guided by a tireless curiosity and a desire to reimagine spatial experiences. Menjivar's ambition is to create cities and landscapes that serve as examples of inventiveness and creativity. As an active student of the City College of New York, when she is not immersed in studio projects, you can find her with CCNY Green Beekeepers, at a volleyball match, running events with the Student Government, and collaborating with fellow students. Every moment fuels Menjivar's drive to learn and create, and she is excited to translate this energy into my future architectural endeavors.

Sofia Mercado, BArch, The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture

Sofia Mercado is a fourth-year Bachelor of Architecture student at The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture. Born in Quezon City, Philippines and raised in Toronto, Canada, Mercado takes inspiration from and hopes to find a balance between the modern and vernacular architectures of both lineages. Her studies have allowed her to develop an understanding and appreciation for adaptive reuse, sustainability, landscape, material studies, and both digital and traditional fabrication. Outside of school, she finds interest in woodworking, ceramics, textiles, or any other form of craft and model making. It is her ambition to blur boundaries between craft and construction and to create an architecture rooted in context—mindful of the hands that build and bodies that inhabit.

Olena Petsyukh, MArch, The New School Parsons School of Design

Olena Petsyukh is a dedicated MArch student at The New School with a passion for making positive changes in architectural practice. Originally from Ukraine, Petsyukh moved to the US, where her architectural journey took root at the New York City College of Technology. But that's not where her creative pursuits began—before diving into the world of architecture, she earned a Graphic Design degree in Ukraine. After graduation, Petsyukh worked as a window display designer in Ukraine and the US, building a portfolio of projects that received appreciation and awards.

Petsyukh's interests and concerns in architecture encompass sustainability, social justice, and the use of healthy materials. She views these challenges not as problems but as opportunities to effect positive change by asking the right questions and striving to translate the most innovative answers into action. This passion came to life in her latest group project at The New School, where the challenge of creating affordable housing for refugees from Ukraine was undertaken.

When she's not immersed in blueprints and models, you'll likely find her on the move. She's an avid traveler, exploring new cultures and soaking in the artistry of the world's museums. Additionally, she was a former member of the Ukrainian National Rhythmic Gymnastics Team, holding the title of a Ukrainian champion, and proudly claiming victory in various international tournaments. That experience has instilled in her the values of discipline, grace, and the beauty of movement—a philosophy that resonates through Petsyukh's architectural projects.

INVESTORS

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Brookfield Properties is a leading global developer and operator of high-quality real estate assets. We are active in nearly all real estate sectors, including office, retail, multifamily, hospitality, and logistics, operating more than 800 properties and over 350 million square feet of real estate in gateway markets on behalf of Brookfield Asset Management, one of the largest asset managers in the world. With a focus on sustainability, a commitment to excellence, and the drive for relentless innovation in the planning, development, and management of buildings and their surroundings, Brookfield Properties is reimagining real estate from the ground up. For more information, visit www.brookfieldproperties.com.



The J.M. Kaplan Fund champions transformative social, environmental, and cultural causes through inventive grant-making. Over its 75-year history, the Fund has devoted \$280 million to propel fledgling efforts concerning civil liberties, human rights, the arts, and the conservation and enhancement of the built and natural worlds. Today, the Fund is active across the United States and beyond, operating grant programs focusing on the environment, heritage conservation, and social justice. To continue its legacy of catalytic giving, the Fund launched the J.M.K. Innovation Prize in 2015, reaching across America to provide early-stage support for entrepreneurs with twenty-first-century solutions to urgent social challenges.

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List as of August 22, 2023

About AIA New York

AIA New York is the oldest and largest chapter of the American Institute of Architects with over 5,000 architect, allied professional, student, and public members. AIANY is dedicated to three goals: design excellence, public outreach and professional development. aiany.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. centerforarchitecture.org