

MEDIA ALERT

New York City Design Organizations Launch the Public Design Alliance

An evolving network of the city's cultural nonprofits seeks to expand opportunities for shared resources and collective impact.

June 25, 2025, New York, NY – In response to shifting national pressures and increasing challenges, a coalition of public design organizations based in New York City has joined forces to form the **Public Design Alliance**. For decades, the leaders of these organizations have found informal ways to stay connected through public and private meetings, shared programs, and joint initiatives, resulting in a sustained yet fluctuating cooperation. Past collaborations—ranging from co-curated exhibitions and charrettes to tool launches and community programs—demonstrate the strong network and shared values among the city's architecture and design institutions. Whether focusing on public space activation, emerging design professionals, or cross-disciplinary dialogue, these organizations have consistently worked together to elevate design's role in the city.

Amid the rise of recent unprecedented federal challenges and pressures on civil society, including the widespread loss of public funding and the stigmatization of DEI values, these peer institutions agree that a more structured platform for partnership will strengthen their collective impact.

Mission and Purpose

The Public Design Alliance is born out of a need for deeper engagement, shared resources, and collective action. This growing network aims to be responsive, aims to foster collaboration and solidarity across the city's design sector, responding to an increasing call for cooperation in uncertain times. Knowing that goals will evolve as the group grows and changes, its current priorities include:

- **Knowledge Sharing:** Building a robust shared knowledge base across organizations
- **Program Collaboration:** Coordinating efforts to create and implement impactful public design programming
- **Community and Audience Building:** Expanding outreach to foster diverse community engagement and support

- **Message Amplification:** Promoting individual and collective voices on key public design issues in local and national media

The establishment of this network is intended to build trust and model solidarity between organizations, prioritizing opportunities to make the design community stronger, more visible, and better connected.

Tizziana Baldenebro, Executive Director, Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation (BWAf) said: “Design is never neutral; it is a reflection of our values and priorities. Building bonds across organizations that reinforce intersectional values makes us stronger. The Public Design Alliance comes at a critical time when equity in the public realm must be fiercely protected. BWAf has long been an instigator in this effort and we stand arm in arm with our peers.”

Keri Butler, Interim President, Municipal Art Society of New York said: “As the federal government slashes funding for nonprofits across the country, it is a critical time for our organizations to come together and share resources so that we can continue to serve our communities. MAS’s work helps residents have a voice in the decisions that shape the future of their neighborhoods. Our programs bring together New Yorkers to celebrate design and culture, building social cohesion and boosting local businesses. Through this alliance, there is an opportunity to raise awareness about the impact these short-sighted federal cuts will have not only on our organizations but on the public and our city’s economy.”

Matthew Clarke, Executive Director, Design Trust for Public Space said: “Thirty years ago, the Design Trust for Public Space was founded on the principle that the public realm needed a more collaborative model across community groups, government agencies, nonprofits, and private-sector experts to reach its full potential. We are proud to be forming the Public Design Alliance and through solidarity in uncertain times, strengthen[ing] our impacts on New York City’s quality of life.”

Hayley Eber, Executive Director, Van Alen Institute said: “It’s clear we’re facing unprecedented challenges, making the Public Design Alliance a critical platform for collective action. Van Alen Institute is excited to collaborate with our peers, allowing us to unify our efforts and amplify our shared commitment to a more just and resilient public realm.”

José Esparza Chong Cuy, Executive Director and Chief Curator, Storefront for Art and Architecture said: “At Storefront, we believe that public life is not a given—it is continuously shaped through acts of imagination, resistance, and solidarity. The Public Design Alliance reflects our long-standing commitment to collective work that expands the role of art and architecture in civic life. In a moment when collaboration is not only

urgent but necessary, this alliance strengthens our shared capacity to imagine new forms of public culture.”

Janet Fink, Executive Director, Institute for Public Architecture (IPA) said: “As a collective of design-focused non-profit organizations with shared values and similar approaches to improving the quality of life in the public realm, we are stronger together. The IPA is delighted to be part of this exciting moment and we look forward to continued and future collaborations with our partners!”

Pilar Finuccio, Executive Director, Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP) said: “At the core of CUP's work is a belief and knowledge that, through values-aligned collaboration, we are able to best express and deepen our values. I'm eager to work with this group of leaders to develop a shared understanding of how we might sustain and strengthen the resources, capacity, and relationships we have. It's in times of uncertainty and grief that we often see more clearly what room we still have to be our best with and for each other, as peers, to care for the people and communities that brought us to our work in the first place.

Kristin LaBuz, Executive Director, Open House New York (OHNY) said: “While Washington slashes funding for arts and culture, New York nonprofit leaders know that resilience is rooted in collaboration. Open House New York is proud to be part of the Public Design Alliance, deepening relationships with our colleagues in ways that amplify our respective missions and strengthen the civic fabric of our city.”

Jesse Lazar, Assoc. AIA, Executive Director of AIA New York and the Center for Architecture said: “The challenges facing our cities—climate resilience, housing equity, public trust—are too complex for any one organization to tackle alone. More than ever, the political and economic moment we are in demands deeper collaboration, connectivity and solidarity. It's a privilege to work together with colleagues at such important and innovative organizations to strengthen one another and advance our shared values, and we look forward to expanding this group in the future.”

Daniel McPhee, Executive Director, Urban Design Forum said: “It has been my pleasure to collaborate with the leaders of these organizations for years and I'm glad to formalize our long partnership. Each of these organizations champion a better New York in its own way, and I can't wait to see what we accomplish together.”

Jacob R. Moore, Executive Director, Architectural League of New York said: “Recognizing the persistent and unique nature of the challenges in front of us, The Architectural League of NY is excited to contribute to a strengthening of the bonds between organizations for whom, in the past, competition has sometimes overrode collaboration. Anchored in shared values, we needn't know the precise shape of the

projects we might take on to know that there is more we can do together than apart in these uncertain times.”

Ilene Shaw, Executive Director, NYCxDESIGN said: "As a citywide initiative that unites all design disciplines—from architecture and landscape architecture to industrial and product, graphic, interior, and experience design—NYCxDESIGN is committed to support the Public Design Alliance. In times of uncertainty, design must be more visible, more valued, and more powerfully communicated. We aim to amplify the collective message that design is not a luxury—it is vital infrastructure for civic life, equity, and economic resilience. By joining this alliance, we hope to strengthen public understanding and appreciation of the role design plays in shaping a better, more inclusive future for all New Yorkers and beyond, particularly through times of challenge."

Gregory Wessner, Executive Director, National Academy of Design said: “As an organization founded by visual artists and architects, the National Academy has long recognized that collaboration is not just a strategy—it is a necessity. With cultural organizations under threat and funding being indiscriminately cut, the Public Design Alliance is a step towards working collectively to advocate for the importance of cultural organizations in sustaining and protecting civil society.”

Tom Wright, President and CEO, Regional Plan Association said: “Decisions being made today about the form and function of some of the City’s most significant landmarks and public spaces will shape the future of our city and region for the next century and beyond. The planning and design of public spaces across our City must express a combination of utility, ambition, and creativity. RPA is proud to join the Public Design Alliance—whose membership includes many of our great civic partners—to help guide robust urban design and cross-disciplinary collaboration.”

Founding Organizations (list as of June 25, 2025):

AIA New York
Architectural League of New York
Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation
Center for Architecture
Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)
Design Trust for Public Space
Institute for Public Architecture
Municipal Art Society of New York
National Academy of Design
NYCxDESIGN

Open House New York
Regional Plan Association (RPA)
Storefront for Art and Architecture
Urban Design Forum
Van Alen Institute

About AIA New York

Established in 1857, AIA New York is the oldest and largest chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), serving as the collective voice of nearly 5,000 licensed architects, allied professionals, students, and design enthusiasts in New York City. The Center for Architecture, inaugurated in 2003 as the AIA's first-ever cultural institution, engages local and international audiences with the value, impact, and wonder of architecture. Together, we advance the value and practice of architecture to promote just and sustainable communities. Both AIA New York and the Center for Architecture advocate for the importance of design in enhancing urban life, offering programming that fosters engagement among architects, professionals, and the public. We prioritize values such as civic engagement, equity, environmental sustainability, resiliency, technological innovation, and inspiring design. aiany.org

About The Architectural League of New York

The Architectural League of New York supports critically transformative work in the allied fields that shape the built environment. As a vital, independent forum, the League stimulates thinking, debate, and action on today's converging crises of racism, inequity, and climate change, in service of a more livable and just world. Founded in 1881 as a forum for discourse among architects, designers, urbanists, and artists, as well as enthusiasts and the general public, the League continues to carry out its mission-driven work through lectures, publications, prizes, digital media, design studies, exhibitions, and research. Our award-winning online publication, *Urban Omnibus*, is dedicated to observing, understanding, and shaping the city. Learn more at archleague.org and urbanomnibus.net.

About Beverly Willis Architecture Foundation

Initially organized as a grant giving non-profit, BWAF now operates as a public nonprofit that advocates for gender equity in leadership and recognition in the architecture, design, landscape, engineering, real estate and construction industries. BWAF achieves its mission by researching and documenting women's contributions and achievements in the built realm, educating the public, and transforming industry practices. bwaf.org.

About the Design Trust for Public Space

The Design Trust for Public Space is a non-profit organization that unlocks the potential of New York's public spaces. Our unique model catalyzes design ideas into action for a more just and equitable city. Founded in 1995 by Andrea Woodner on the tenet that New York City's cultural and democratic life depends on viable public space, today, the Design Trust is a nationally recognized incubator and thought leader that transforms New York City's shared civic spaces—streets, plazas, parks, public buildings, transportation, and housing developments—to create a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable city.

About the Center for Architecture

The Center for Architecture, inaugurated in 2003 as the American Institute of Architect (AIA)'s first-ever cultural institution, engages local and international audiences with the value, impact, and wonder of architecture. Through exhibitions, public programs, educational initiatives, and our Archtober festival and platform, the Center for Architecture brings together architects, designers, students, and the public to foster collaboration within the design community while creating accessible opportunities for the public to experience and learn about architecture. Whether you're an industry professional, a curious visitor, or a student exploring the field, the Center for Architecture offers a space for connection, creativity, and critical conversation—empowering everyone to engage with the transformative power of architecture. centerforarchitecture.org

About the Center for Urban Pedagogy (CUP)

The Center for Urban Pedagogy's (CUP's) mission is to use the power of art and design to increase meaningful civic engagement in partnership with marginalized communities. Founded in 2001, CUP's work is based in the belief that art and design are key to creating a world where every New Yorker, regardless of their identity and income, has access to the trustworthy information they need to assert their rights, benefit from social services, and create equitable systems.

To date, CUP has collaborated with over 150 organizations and schools and 300 visual designers and artists to create over 200 resources that explain city policies in support of advancing social justice and racial equity. Our work has supported over 500,000 New Yorkers in advocating for fair policies across housing, labor, immigration, and healthcare. To learn more, visit welcometocup.org.

About the Institute for Public Architecture

The Institute for Public Architecture, based in the historic Block House on Governors Island, uses design to address social, physical and environmental inequities in the city

through its signature Selected Topic Fellowship and Independent Project Residency programs, and related public lectures, exhibits, film screenings, workshops, and publications. The IPA believes in a future in which design is used as a tool for facilitating social justice and the public has a voice in all decisions that shape our built environment.

About the Municipal Art Society of New York

The Municipal Art Society of New York (MAS) was founded in 1893 to work towards the creation of a livable city, to enhance the lives of all New Yorkers and to use the municipal arts of architecture, landscape architecture, planning, preservation, and public art to improve and protect the built environment of New York. MAS envisions a future in which all New Yorkers share in the richness of city life—where growth is balanced, character endures, and a resilient future is secured. For over 130 years our advocacy efforts have led to the creation of the New York City Planning Commission, Public Design Commission, Landmarks Preservation Commission, and the Tribute in Light; the preservation of Grand Central Terminal, the lights of Times Square, and the Garment District; the conservation of more than 50 works of public art; and the founding of such civic organizations as the Public Art Fund, the New York Landmarks Conservancy, P.S. 1, the Historic Districts Council, the Park Avenue Armory Conservancy, and the Waterfront Alliance. Learn more at mas.org.

About The National Academy of Design

The National Academy of Design promotes art and architecture in America through exhibition, education, and research. Founded in 1825, the National Academy is the leading honorary society for visual artists and architects in the United States. We advocate for the arts as a tool for education, celebrate the role of artists and architects in public life, and serve as a catalyst for cultural conversations that propel society forward. At the core of our mission are the National Academicians, a vibrant community of 500 artists and architects elected by their peers in recognition of their extraordinary contributions to art and architecture in America. Representing a wide cross-section of practice, the Academicians embody our shared belief in the power of art and architecture to change society and enrich lives. Through their individual work and collective initiatives, the Academicians support their communities, their peers, and the next generation of creative thinkers.

About NYCxDESIGN

Design is central to New York City's identity and civic life. Founded by the City of New York, NYCxDESIGN unifies and amplifies the voices of the city's diverse design community—the largest in the world. Since 2012, our internationally recognized NYCxDESIGN Festival has served as the city's official design week, showcasing the

talent and innovation of designers, makers, businesses, and institutions across all five boroughs. The Festival draws 160,000+ local and international visitors to hundreds of events celebrating creativity, equity, sustainability, and culture. As a nonprofit 501(c)(3), NYCxDESIGN also leads year-round programs advancing visibility, opportunity, and inclusion across all design disciplines. Learn more at nycxdesign.org.

About Open House New York

Open House New York is a nonprofit organization that promotes broad, unparalleled access to the city—to the places, people, projects, systems, and ideas that define New York and its future. Through year-round programming and the annual OHNY Weekend festival, Open House New York offers a citywide platform that invites the public to explore the built environment and understand how New York looks, feels, and functions. To learn more, visit ohny.org.

About Regional Plan Association (RPA)

Regional Plan Association (RPA) is an independent non-profit organization that conducts research, planning, and advocacy to expand economic opportunity, environmental resiliency, improved health, and better quality of life in the New York metropolitan area. Since the 1920s, RPA has produced four landmark plans for the region. The most recent was released in November 2017. For more information, please visit rpa.org.

About Storefront for Art and Architecture

Storefront for Art and Architecture amplifies the understanding of the built environment through artistic practice. Founded in 1982 by artists and architects in downtown New York, Storefront has chronicled the changing landscape of the city for over forty years and remains committed to producing and presenting work about diverse notions of place and public life. Learn more at storefront.nyc.

About Urban Design Forum

Urban Design Forum connects and inspires New Yorkers to design, build and care for a better city. We are a member-powered organization of 1,000+ civic leaders committed to a more just future for our city. We believe the built environment—our neighborhoods, buildings, public spaces and infrastructure—shapes our city's health, culture and economy. We bring together New Yorkers of diverse backgrounds and experiences to learn, debate, and design a vibrant city for all. We envision a city where every New Yorker can thrive in a healthy neighborhood, with a stable home, dignified workplace, safe commute, lively public spaces and dynamic arts and culture—and we believe everyone has a role to play in creating that city. Learn more at urbandesignforum.org.

About Van Alen Institute

Van Alen Institute is a driving force behind community-led urban design, which believes that local knowledge and care enrich the design process. Since 1894, Van Alen has invested in people with a passion for improving cities through the power of architecture and design. Our public space projects build unconventional coalitions of designers, local stakeholders, and city leaders, and we support their visions through project scoping, hands-on guidance, and seed funding. From our home in New York City, our work confronts longstanding power imbalances in citymaking, showcases the vanguard of community-led design, and supports the next generation of designers in creating more just cities. See all work at vanalen.org.