

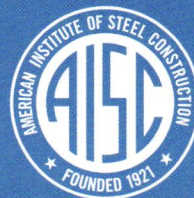
Summer 2019

# Oculus

A Publication of  
AIA New York  
Volume 81, Issue 2  
\$10

THE INCLUSIVE CITY





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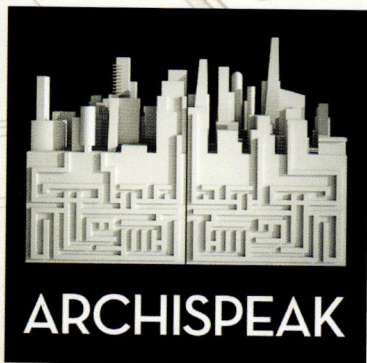
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## 8 Letter from the President

Recognizing Barriers

By Hayes Slade, AIA

## 10 Letter from the Editor

Out of Many, One

By Molly Heintz

## 11 Contributors

## 12 At the Center

Mapping Community: Public Investment in NYC

Topiary Tango

Big Ideas for Small Lots NYC

Oculus Book Talk

## 18 Beyond the Center

She Built NYC

## 19 Street Level

Madison Square Boys & Girls Club, Harlem

By Natalie Dubois

The Statue of Liberty Museum

By Claire Wilson

## FEATURES

## 23 Introduction

The Inclusive City

## 24 Housing, Not Included

10 Policies to Make Rent Affordable for Low- to Middle-Income Households

By Stephen Zacks

## 30 Culture Pass

Nine Stories of How Civic Space in NYC is Changing Hands

By Tom Stoelker

## 38 Learning from Queens

By Engaging Residents, NYC's Most Diverse Borough Creates Public Space for All

By Katherine Fung

## 44 OP-EDS

Architecture for a Multicultural Society

By Stephen Yablon, AIA

From Urban Segregation to Social Disintegration

By Emre Arolat, Hon. FAIA

## 48 In Print

Capsule Book Reviews

By Stanley Stark, FAIA

## 50 Calendar of Events

## 50 Beyond the Center

Olana State Historic Site

## 51 Index to Advertisers

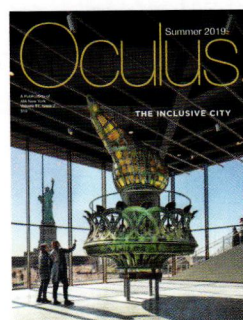
Summer 2019

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## 52 Letter from the Executive Director

A Green City Must Also Be an Inclusive City

By Benjamin Prosky, Assoc. AIA



**Cover:** The new Statue of Liberty Museum, designed by FXCollaborative, opened in May. **Above:** The plaza in front of the museum offers views of New York Harbor and leads visitors to Lady Liberty.

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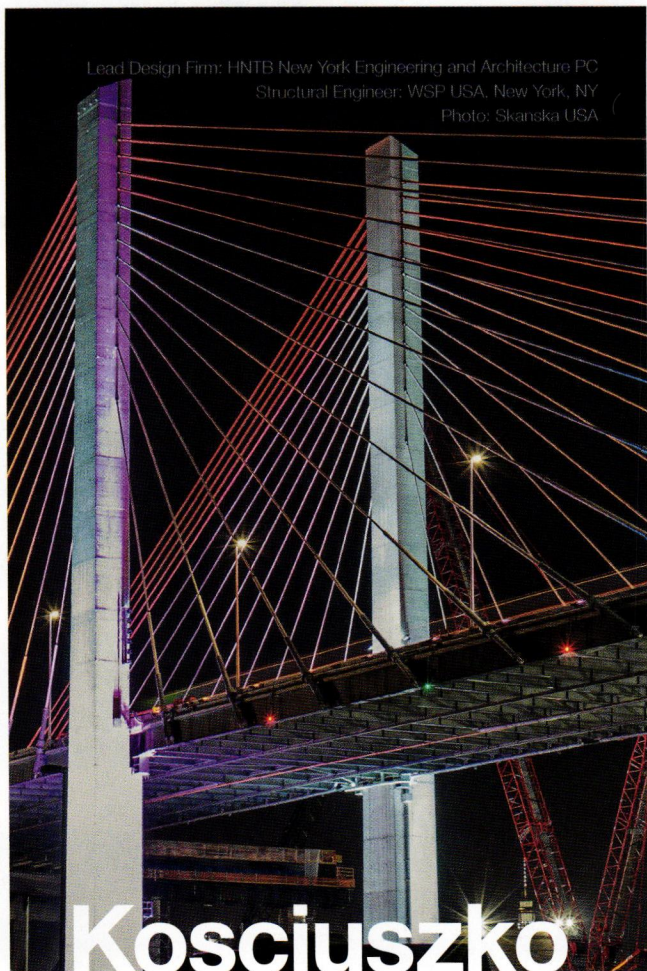
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Structural Engineer: WSP USA, New York, NY  
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# Kosciuszko à Gogo

The design of urban infrastructure affects city life as much as the design of its buildings. That's why replacing the **Kosciuszko Bridge**—a notorious pinch point in traffic between Brooklyn and Queens—was a high priority for Governor Cuomo. With heavy lifting from **HNTB**, **WSP USA**, and **Skanska**, a striking cable-stayed span has risen where the outdated bridge once stood, ensuring New Yorkers may still have trouble saying its name, but they never have trouble getting home. Read more about it in **Metals in Construction** online.



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A Publication of the AIA New York Chapter  
Summer 2019 Vol. 81, No. 2

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# Instant Replay

With four consecutive Stanley Cup victories in its history, the **Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum** is a beloved fixture of Long Island life. When the owner of the 1972 arena decided to reward fans with a renovation worthy of its storied past, it reimagined the venue with an overcladding that would bring new life to the facility. With a design by **SHoP Architects** and **Thornton Tomasetti**, the new folded-ribbon facade of composite aluminum fins connects to the original structure with a minimum of intervention, ensuring thoughtful reuse of a venue that still has a lot of wins in its future. Read more about it in **Metals in Construction** online.

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# STATUE OF LIBERTY MUSEUM

FXCollaborative

## Strength in Collaboration.

The Statue of Liberty stands on a pedestal of Stony Creek Granite. The LEED Platinum Statue of Liberty Museum designed by FXCollaborative is now being built with the same ANSI/NSC 373 Gold Certified Stony Creek Granite in a collaboration including the Phelps Construction Group, Back Brook Masonry LLC, and two American stone companies each with over a century of experience: the North Carolina Granite Corporation and the Stony Creek Quarry Corporation. Our strength is in our partnerships and shared values of performance, authenticity, and quality.



Doug Norman of North Carolina Granite Corporation inspecting Stony Creek Granite.



26,000 SF custom masonry installation work in progress by Back Brook Masonry LLC



Statue of Liberty Museum, opening May 2019



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# RECOGNIZING BARRIERS

The idea of *accessibility* is simultaneously straightforward and nuanced—as are most important concepts. In our daily work as architects, we are responsible for creating environments and spaces that everyone can enjoy, regardless of impairments. There are layouts, standards, and products that assist us in designing barrier-free projects. I remember happily dining with my grandfather (repeatedly) at the worst restaurant in his town because it was the only place to eat that had a ramp out front. He was too embarrassed to go anywhere that had steps because he didn't want to be seen in public, struggling to climb up and down. If you don't need this type of assistance, you take the dignity and independence these measures provide for granted. But the transformational benefits of creating barrier-free environments should never be underestimated.

What about barriers that are not physical? Perceived barriers? Economic barriers? Social barriers? The projects we build are experienced as more than a series of elements intended to satisfy a basic need—they communicate an ethos. Many times, the overwhelming perception of a completed project is not what was scripted in the author's mind. We see this again and again when the team designing and delivering a project overlooks aspects large or small that become the gestalt of the project once it is delivered to the public. Accessibility, considered in this broader way, is much more challenging. Furthermore, I doubt there will ever be

codified solutions, because this idea of accessibility is always evolving.

Because our projects are public and have longevity, we are creating for an audience and a time that we don't necessarily know. It is imperative that we consider the potential audiences' needs and interpretations broadly.

This past month, I had the honor of serving as jury chair for first phase of the Big Ideas for Small Lots design competition co-sponsored by NYC Housing Preservation and Development and the AIA New York Chapter. The intent was to create a replicable design for affordable housing on a small, non-conforming, city-owned vacant lot and show how it could translate to other lots. The city will be making a public investment in these projects by donating the land. The submissions were inventive and thoughtful. The proposals needed to deliver accessibility from a physical standpoint as well as from a perceptual standpoint, with their benefits exceeding the public cost and delivering on their potential. The impact of these proposals will stretch far beyond the specific lots included in the competition. Despite their small footprints, their ripple effect in their immediate block, neighborhood, and city will be outsized—before we consider the influence they will have through publication and study. Please check out the competition finalists in the piece starting on page 14 of this issue.

Photo credit: Ana Slade



While this instance is unique, because of the public profile of the competition, I would suggest that we apply this rigorous critical lens to all our work. The impact of a project is not proportional to the size of the project. Our ability to address important issues of accessibility and equity in our work is not proportional to the size of the commission. How many of us have trekked long distances to see a beloved and formative precedent project only to be surprised, simultaneously, by how small the project is physically and how powerful a presence it is in person?

I find this to be intimidating and inspiring. No matter the scale of our work, we can and will be making a statement that transcends the physical aspects of any one project. We must work to keep true accessibility the goal of our work as architects. ■

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Hayes Slade".

Hayes Slade, AIA  
2019 AIANY President





Cade Museum for Creativity + Invention, Gainesville, FL    Installing contractor: Architectural Sheet Metal, Inc.  
 Architect: GWWO Architects    Photographer: hortonphotoinc.com    Profile: 7/8" Corrugated    Color: Galvalume Plus

## Creative Vision



**7/8" CORRUGATED**  
 METAL WALL PANEL  
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The award-winning Cade Museum for Creativity + Invention, with its cylindrical core and extending arcs, almost appears to be in motion—a sense of movement reinforced by the running lines of the structure's corrugated metal wall panels.



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# OUT OF MANY, ONE

En route from Brooklyn to Manhattan this spring, I passed through massive new floodgates installed at the entrance of the Midtown Tunnel. Above the seal of New York State, the gates bear the outsize inscription *E Pluribus Unum*, borrowed from the seal of the United States. The translation is inscribed below: “Out of Many, One”

The New York State seal has its own relentlessly cheerful motto, *Excelsior*, “Ever Upward,” but it seems fitting that these New York City gates remind us of our country’s foundational concept: although we may come from different places and have different philosophies of life, we’re able to unite for a common purpose. We both celebrate and question this idea in our current issue on “The Inclusive City.”

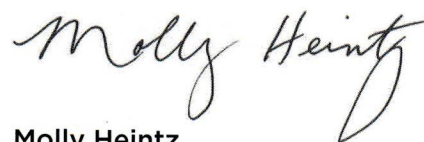
It’s too easy to live in a bubble in this country. In places where public transit is lacking, going from home to work and back again by car leaves little opportunity for spontaneous encounters with fellow citizens you don’t already know. In New York, where many of us commute by subway or bus daily, we’re constantly confronted with new faces, difference, and diversity. But at the same time, we can become slaves to a routine, not taking time to consider the experiences of other New Yorkers whose paths might diverge from our own in significant ways.

Inclusion means feeling recognized and accepted, and ultimately this creates a sense of belonging. In this issue, we look at the policies and planning that help underpin a truly

inclusive community and spotlight the voices of New Yorkers who may not be on our daily radar. Picking up the thread from the Winter 2019 issue (“Design for Dignity”), Stephen Zacks continues his investigation into the city’s affordable housing crisis, enumerating strategies that may help make living and working in the city viable for a broader population. Katherine Fung writes about the combination of top-down and bottom-up ideas that offer new platforms to the residents of Queens, where over 150 languages are spoken, and how these initiatives are coming to life in some of the city’s most welcoming new architecture. And writer-photographer Tom Stoelker travels to (almost) every borough to speak with a new generation bringing multicultural perspectives to established institutions and infrastructure around the city.

We zoom out to look at one of the city’s most iconic gateways, Liberty Island in New York Harbor, where FXCollaborative’s Statue of Liberty Museum opened in May. And, as this issue was going to press, one of the city’s most dazzling 20th-century points of entry, JFK’s TWA terminal designed by Eero Saarinen, was beginning its new life as a hotel. We’ll nod to the innovative Saarinen among others in our upcoming Fall issue dedicated to “The Future of Materials.” Once again, we’re looking for member op-eds related to the issue theme. Please send your 800-word submission to [editor@aiany.org](mailto:editor@aiany.org) by July 15.

At the end of the current issue, you’ll find op-eds by members Stephen Yablon and Emre Arolat that grapple with the ideas of multiculturalism, inclusivity, and hospitality. As Arolat points out, even the smallest gestures can make someone feel welcome or unwanted. We can all think of examples of these situations. For instance, more and more shops and restaurants around the city are going cashless, but what kind of message does that send to customers who, for whatever reason, may not have a credit or debit card? As architects and thinkers who play a key role in envisioning the future we want for our city, we must make inclusivity the starting point. We’d do well to take a close look at the spare change gathering dust on our desktops: *E pluribus unum*. ■



**Molly Heintz**  
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Photo credit: Alyssa Loorya





# CONTRIBUTORS

**Emre Arolat** ("From Urban Segregation to Social Disintegration"), RIBA, Hon. FAIA, is an architect and professor. He co-founded his firm, EAA – Emre Arolat Architecture, in 2004. He was the recipient of the Mies Van der Rohe Award for European Architecture in 2004 and the Aga Khan Award for Architecture in 2006. Recently, he was the Norman R. Foster Visiting Professor at the Yale School of Architecture.

**Natalie Dubois** ("At the Center," "Street Level") is a designer and writer. After completing her Master of Architecture at the University of Toronto, she worked in design and architecture for six years before attending the School of Visual Arts Design Research, Writing and Criticism program. She is interested in writing about all aspects of design and its impact on our lives.

**Katherine Fung** ("Learning from Queens") is a freelance journalist who covers design, social justice, and international stories. Her work has been featured in print and on-air for Public Radio International, WNYC, and Reuters.

**Yasmeen Khaja** ("At the Center," "Beyond the Center") is a designer and researcher. She is a recipient of the Print Regional Design Awards for her undergraduate thesis, "Love and Tenderness," and the School of Visual Arts Paula Rhodes Memorial Award for her master's thesis, which investigates the territorial construction of nation-states through meme circulation in global cyberspace. She was previously at the School for Poetic Computation.

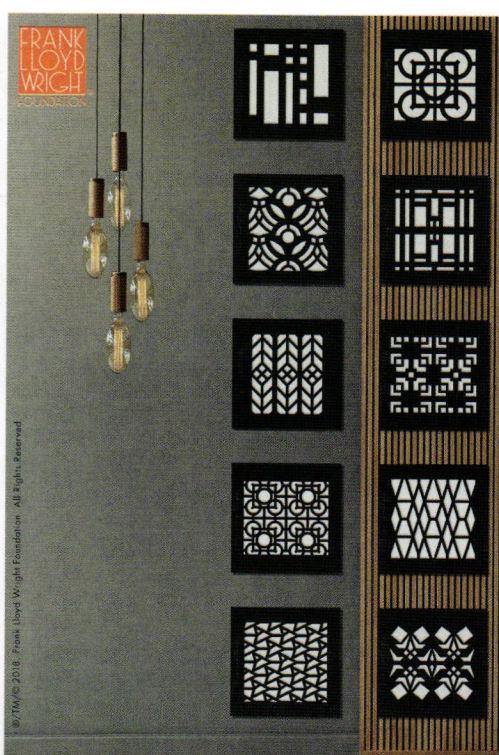
**Stanley Stark** ("In Print"), FAIA, NCARB, LEED AP, has been associated with *Oculus* since 2003 as a writer and illustrator. He currently has a position with the City of New York.

**Tom Stoelker** ("Culture Pass") is a senior staff writer at Fordham University. As a freelancer, he writes and photographs the urban landscape, features for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Architect's Newspaper*, and *Landscape Architecture Magazine*.

**Claire Wilson** ("Street Level") has been an *Oculus* contributor for 10 years. Based in New York City, she was the author of the *New York Times*'s "Square Feet: Blueprints" column on design in commercial space. She writes frequently about real estate.

**Stephen Yablon** ("Architecture for a Multicultural Society"), AIA, LEED AP, is a New York-based architect. He established his eponymous firm in 1995 to create contemporary architecture that is transformative, enabling organizations, communities, and individuals to thrive in the future. He has served on the boards of numerous non-profits, including New York City cultural organizations, and he is a member of The Architectural League, the Surfrider Foundation, and the Program Leadership Council of the Van Alen Institute.

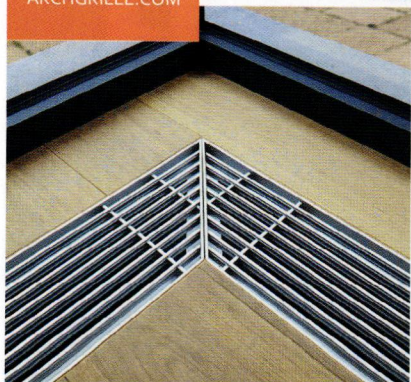
**Stephen Zacks** ("Housing, Not Included") is an architecture critic, urbanist, and curator based in New York City. He is founder and creative director of Flint Public Art Project, co-founder of Chance Ecologies and Nuit Blanche New York, and president of the non-profit Amplifier Inc., which develops art and design programs in underserved cities. He previously served as an editor at *Metropolis* magazine. ■



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AT THE CENTER

## ON VIEW

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### Mapping Community: Public Investment in NYC

Through August 31, 2019

Curators Faith Rose, AIA, of O'Neill Rose Architects and David Burney, FAIA, of Urban Placemaking Management at Pratt Institute have collaborated with Assistant Curator Valerie Stahl of Columbia's GSAPP—teaming with students from Pratt Institute—to elucidate the processes of NYC's investment in public places. This exhibition, "Mapping Community: Public Investment in NYC," illustrates the relationship between communities and their neighborhoods through



The spray shower at the McDonald Playground on Staten Island, designed by DLANDstudio.

the allocation of New York City's funding procedure. The researched work explains how building communities builds spaces, showing

how people share responsibility and collectively influence their environment in the coalescence of a neighborhood. **YK** ■

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AT THE CENTER

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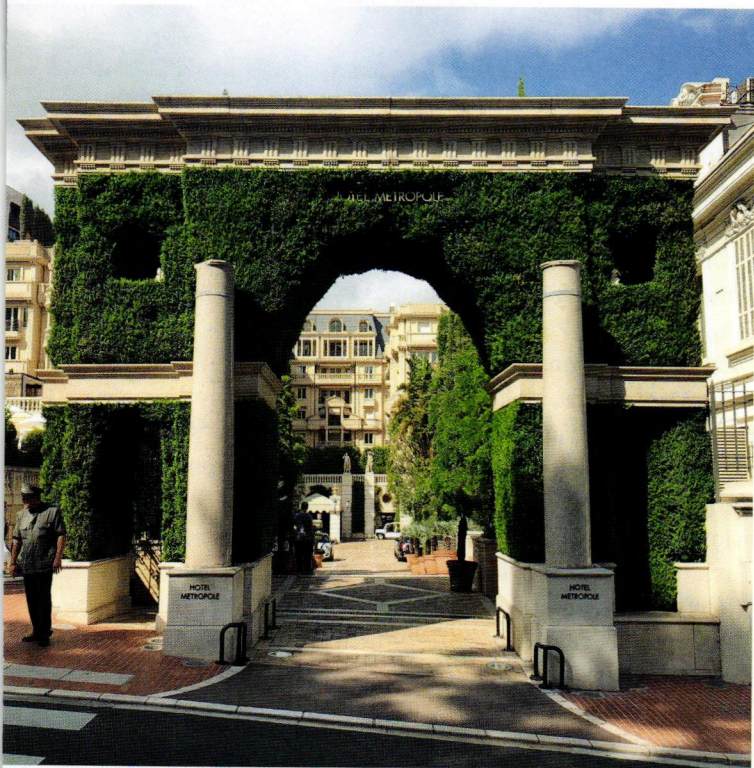
Center for Architecture  
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### **Topiary Tango**

Through September 14, 2019

Mark Zlotsky, founder and principal of the NYC-based Laboratory for Architectural Research and Design, was awarded the 2017 Stewardson Keefe LeBrun Travel Grant to survey topiary in various locations, including the gardens of Italy, France, and the United Kingdom. Zlotsky's ongoing research explores topiary's playful and almost-anthropomorphic qualities in relation to the character of a place. Among the gardens he surveyed is the historic Levens Hall in Northern England, housing the oldest topiary garden. Within the U.S., Zlotsky's work covers Italian- and English-inspired topiary terrain and present-day topiary by Pearl Fryar. Topiary structures guide the experience of a space, yet their persistently malleable forms—unlike traditionally permanent modes of architecture—open a dimension of personality that accessorizes the theatrics of a place. Zlotsky's studies will be at the Center, revealing a taxonomy of play in horticulture. **YK ■**

Photo credit: Mark Zlotsky



The topiary triumphal arch and entrance to Hotel Metropole in the heart of Monte Carlo.

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AT THE CENTER

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**Big Ideas for Small Lots NYC**  
August 1 through Fall 2019

In trying to find solutions to New York City's affordable housing crisis, the city is getting creative. In February of this year, the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD) partnered with the AIA New York Chapter (AIANY) to launch a global design competition called Big Ideas for Small Lots NYC. The competition sought proposals for high-quality affordable housing on challenging small or irregularly-shaped lots throughout the city.

A jury of nine, with backgrounds in architecture, urban design, real estate development, and public policy, evaluated

over 400 submissions from 36 countries. On May 14 five proposals, all by New York City-based firms, were selected based on their design, replicability, and construction feasibility. The Center for Architecture will feature these five winning submissions in an exhibition opening August 1 that will run through the fall.

Each design is innovative in its own way, from Anawan/101 + Kane AUD's programmatically inventive multi-use common area called the "urban garage," to Michael Sorkin Studio's environmentally-forward Net Zero proposal, to OBJ's smart use of modular construction. Units are innovative in size and layout as well, with micro-apartments by Only If Architecture and co-living spaces by Palette Architecture.

"The impact of the selected proposals will stretch far beyond the individual lots specified by the competition," said AIANY 2019 President and Jury Chair Hayes Slade, AIA. "Despite their small footprint, their ripple effect on the immediate block, neighborhood, and city will be outsized." HPD will assist the finalists in turning their designs into affordable housing development proposals to be reviewed and approved by the agency. **ND ■**





Opposite: "System for Narrow Living" by Only If. Top left and right: "More with Less" by Palette Architecture. Middle right: "Mass Green Living" by Anawan/101 + Kane AUD. Bottom right: "Fold and Stack" by OBJ. Bottom left: "Greenfield House as Garden" by Michael Sorkin Studio.



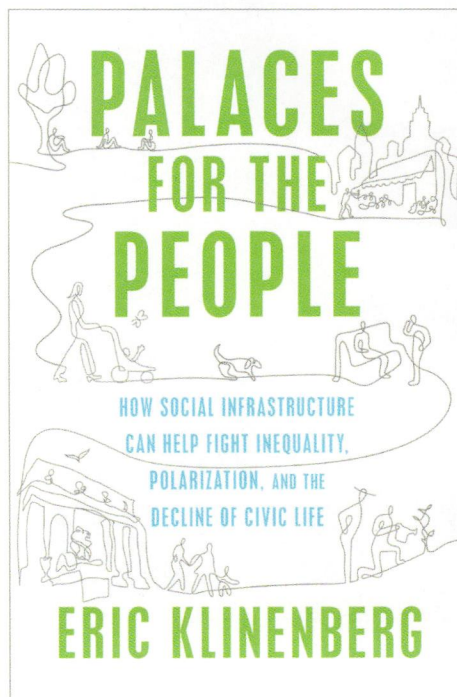
# OCULUS BOOK TALK

Center for Architecture  
536 LaGuardia Place

*On June 10, sociologist and author Eric Klinenberg discussed his book *Palaces of the People: How Social Infrastructure Can Help Fight Inequality, Polarization, and the Decline of Civic Life*. The following excerpt comes from the chapter “Before We Lift the Next Shovel”:*

Entrepreneurs have amassed vast fortunes in the new information economy, and yet no one has come close to doing what [Andrew] Carnegie did between 1883 and 1929, when he funded construction of 2,811 lending libraries, 1,679 of which are in the United States. Today, the Carnegie libraries are set in ordinary residential neighborhoods throughout the world, and they continue to be powerful sources of uplift. Carnegie’s extraordinary commitment to American cities and communities is worth recalling, as are the principles that motivated him. An immigrant himself, Carnegie believed that anyone who had access to culture and education could achieve success in the United States. He knew firsthand that not everyone could be a student here. As a child in Pittsburgh, he had no choice but to work instead of going to school. But a local merchant who lent books to children in his neighborhood changed his life. “It was from my own early experience that I decided there was no use to which money could be applied so productive of good to boys and girls who have good within them and ability and ambition to develop it, as the founding of a public library in a community,” Carnegie wrote. He funded libraries to provide books, courses, social activities, and relief from the pressures of daily life. He also wanted them to inspire people, which is why so many of the original Carnegie libraries have high windows, vaulted ceilings, and ornate designs. Building libraries “is but a slight tribute,” Carnegie explained, “and gives only a faint idea of the depth of gratitude which I feel.”

I appreciate the appeal of “moon shots,” the projects with goals like space colonization and immortality that today’s leading philanthropists, particularly those in the tech industry, pursue with such passion. But too many of these initiatives seem motivated by hubris and narcissism rather than concern for “boys and girls who have good within them and ability and ambition to develop it.”



Right: The International Book Collection at Elmhurst Public Library, designed by Marpillero Pollak Architects.



It’s hard to find Carnegie’s sense of goodwill and civic-mindedness in today’s Silicon Valley, where the entire industry depends on a technology developed by the government—the Internet—and a publicly funded communications infrastructure. Like [Mark] Zuckerberg, corporate leaders are always happy to experiment with projects that promote the common good while raising their market capitalization. But there are limits to how much they can accomplish by giving while taking. How much more wealth do they need to accumulate before they are ready to help?

It’s particularly puzzling that so few corporate leaders from the information economy, including those in technology and finance, have supported the library, the primary institution promoting literacy and providing Internet access to those who would otherwise have no way to get online. There are exceptions. In the 1990s, Microsoft and the Gates Foundation, which stands out for its investments in schools, health centers, and other vital social infrastructures, donated \$400 million to help libraries across the United States establish Internet connections. In 2008, Stephen Schwarzman, the Wall Street financier and CEO of the Blackstone Group, gave \$100 million to the New York Public Library, which in turn named its landmark building on Fifth Avenue after him. And in 2017, the Stavros Niarchos Foundation gave \$55 million to renovate Manhattan’s major circulating library, just across from the Schwarzman building. These are





extraordinary contributions, but they're just a drop in the bucket compared with what cities around the world need in order to rebuild the woefully outdated branch libraries that, despite their old age, still uphold neighborhoods and communities, helping those who aspire to a better life or just need companionship to get through the day.

Today, as cities and suburbs reinvent themselves, and as cynics claim that government has nothing good to contribute to that process, it's important that institutions like libraries get the recognition they deserve. After all, the root of the word "library," *liber*, means both "book" and "free." Libraries stand for and exemplify something that needs defending: the public institutions that—even in an age of atomization and inequality—serve as bedrocks of civil society. Libraries are the kinds of places where ordinary people with different backgrounds, passions, and interests can take part in a living democratic culture. They are the kinds of places where the public, private, and philanthropic sectors can work together to reach for something higher than the bottom line.

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BEYOND THE CENTER

# SHE BUILT NYC

Southeast entrance to Prospect Park

## Our Destiny, Our Democracy: Shirley Chisholm Memorial

Completion 2020

By the end of 2020, a new monument will rise at the Ocean Avenue entrance to Prospect Park. Titled *Our Destiny, Our Democracy*, the monument, initiated by She Built NYC, will publicly memorialize Shirley Chisholm—the first black woman to serve in Congress. Of the 150 statues of public figures in the city, only five are currently dedicated to women. The new memorial, designed by Chicago-based Amanda Williams and Brooklyn-based Olalekan Jeyifous, will exemplify Chisholm's dynamism as it offers different viewing perspectives to park-goers. As this sixth female monument for the city is being completed, She Built NYC will also be giving form to four other statues in different boroughs: Billie Holiday in Queens, Elizabeth Jennings Graham in Manhattan, Dr. Helen Rodríguez Trías in the Bronx, and Katherine Walker in Staten Island. **YK ■**



Renderings of the monument *Our Destiny, Our Democracy*, initiated by She Built NYC and designed by Amanda Williams and Olalekan Jeyifous.



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The new Madison Square Boys & Girls Club in Harlem, by Rogers Partners, can be seen glowing from beneath the 155th Street Viaduct.



## STREET LEVEL

# MADISON SQUARE BOYS & GIRLS CLUB, HARLEM

BY NATALIE DUBOIS

It's not even open yet, but the new Madison Square Boys & Girls Club (MSBGC) in Harlem is already making an impact on its neighbors. While on a sneak-peek tour in May by Open House New York, passersby were vocal in expressing their thoughts on the building. Said one man who stopped his van while driving past, "Absolutely beautiful. Thank you. Welcome to Harlem."

The four-story Pinkerton Clubhouse sits at the corner of East 155th Street and Bradhurst Avenue and is the first purpose-built Boys & Girls Club facility in half a century. Designed by Rogers Partners, it will open its doors to children ages six to 18 this summer. This new building replaces the organization's former Manhattan location near Madison Square Park, which closed in 1999 as the demographics of the neighborhood changed. After an extensive search for a new location with the greatest community need, MSBGC settled on this unique site across from leafy Jackie Robinson Park and beside the

landmarked 155th Street Viaduct, where there are 6,000 kids within a five-block radius.

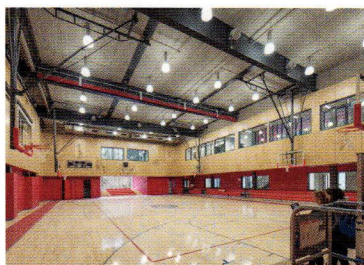
For an annual fee of five dollars, its members will have access to a plethora of amenities and after-school programs (and a hot meal). The building is jam-packed, featuring a high school regulation-sized gym with a climbing wall, age-specific rooms for homework support, a dance and performance space, an art room with a kiln, a full-service music production studio, a digital technology lab with two 3D printers, a film screening room, and two kitchens. Because the Pinkerton Clubhouse is the most urban of MSBGC's five locations, there is no additional spill-out space, like a parking lot. Instead, the architects provided a sports field on top of the building.

Rob Rogers, founding partner of Rogers Partners, said that "the concept of invitation is deeply embedded" in the design of the building. Just as MSBGC's program offerings are meant to be as exciting and inclusive as possible to entice kids in and encourage them to stay, so too is the architecture.





Top: The pop of bright green cladding hints at the sports field on top of the building. Middle left: The central stair; bench seating overlooks the gym below. Middle right: The gym. Bottom: A section of the project through the central stair shows the orange interior accents that are visible from the outside.

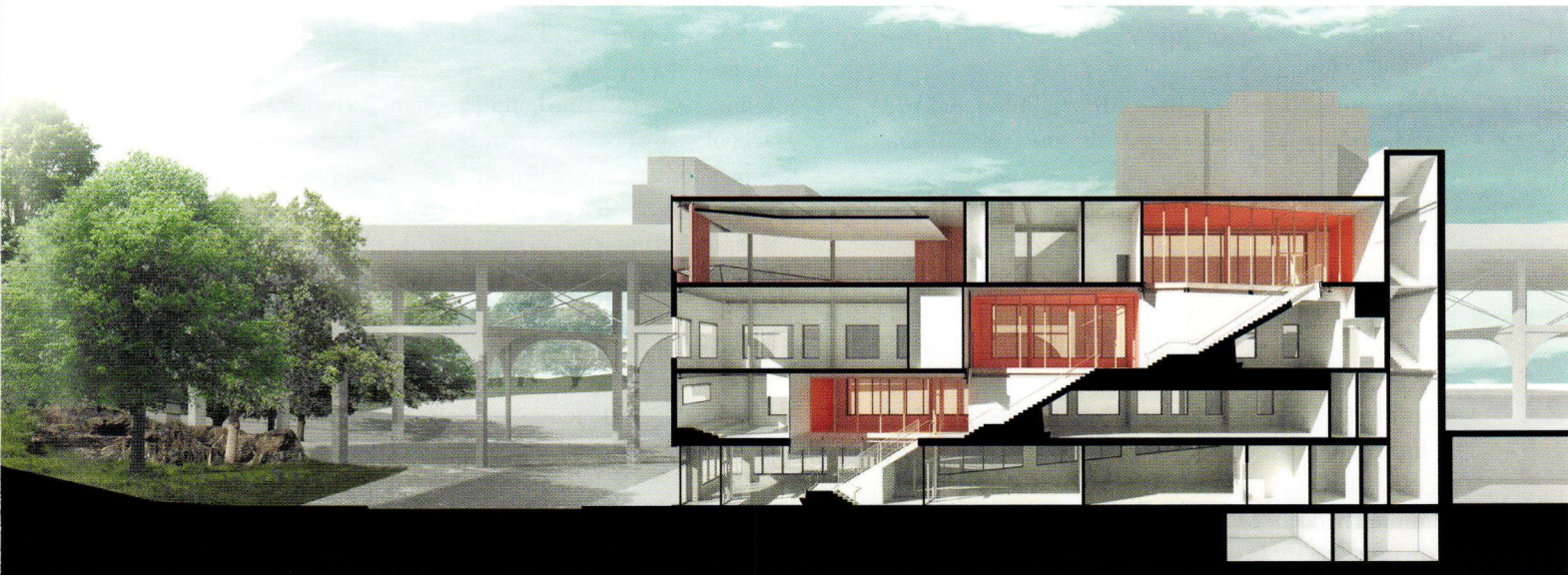


The building does this with a central stair and extensive interior and exterior glazing, creating a transparent, dynamic interior that visually connects the various spaces with natural light and views, while broadcasting the building's activities to the community outside. Orange interior accents make the building glow warmly like a lantern at night, one of the building's "cues that there's something compelling and exciting and desirable going on in here," Rogers said. Tim McChristian, the executive director of MSBGC, noted that teens are the hardest group to retain, and that they "vote with their feet." Accordingly, one of the clubhouse's spaces caters to them with a "skybox," a teen-only hangout on the third floor, where they can see and be seen.

The material palette is simple, rugged, and well detailed. Dark zinc panels on the exterior make the brightly lit spaces inside pop from the outside. On the interior, concrete and plywood are featured throughout. Betsy Stoel, an associate partner at Rogers Partners and the director of the project, explained that "the budget was not enormous for New York and the amount of space we wanted to build. So the approach we took was to let the materials be expressed in their natural form wherever possible." Many materials do double duty, like perforated acoustic panels in the gym that illustrate children playing sports, and the concrete floor in the lobby that rises up to make a welcoming bench.

After five years of working with MSBGC on the Pinkerton Clubhouse, Stoel said she was excited to see the building finally occupied by kids. "I think it will be really amazing to see them in here. I can't wait." ■

Image credits: Scouting shots taken by Albert Vecerka/Esto (top, middle left and right); Courtesy of Rogers Partners Architects + Urban Designers (bottom)





STREET LEVEL

# THE STATUE OF LIBERTY MUSEUM

BY CLAIRE WILSON



It doesn't even have to be peak tourist season. On any given day, the line of visitors to the Statue of Liberty snakes almost all the way down the center path of Lower Manhattan's beautifully restored Battery from the security tent behind Castle Clinton. At this time of year, it can be unbearably hot; it is definitely crowded. You hear what seems like every language in the world as you walk along.

Everyone there has one thing in common, however: a desire to experience firsthand the magic of Lady Liberty, a gift to the United States from France that has been the universal symbol of freedom around the world since 1886, when it first welcomed the public.

The new Statue of Liberty Museum, opened in May and designed by FXCollaborative, is a new icon to attract people to the landmark and teach them its history. For the first time since 9/11, it also gives them a



Above: FXCollaborative conceived the Statue of Liberty Museum as a garden pavilion that would add to the experience of all visitors to Liberty Island. Below: Visitors climb the grand stairway to the rooftop viewing platform, which uses granite from Stony Creek Quarry in North Carolina.



close-up view of the statue's original torch, which was in the pedestal and closed off to 80% of its daily visitors for security reasons.

Inside the museum, visitors can personalize their own notion of freedom through a series of interactive displays created by ESI Design. In the very last of three galleries, visitors see the torch, the harbor, and the statue; take a portrait; and leave a personal, inspirational message behind. But, according to Emily Webster, ESI's head of media design, the goal was much broader. "The concept driving the museum is that liberty is not a passive idea," she said, "but one that has to be proactive to maintain it."

The low-slung, single-story building sits on the northern end of Liberty Island, once known as Bedloe's Island. According to Nicholas Garrison, FAIA, project designer and partner at FXCollaborative, the building's unusual shape comes from its site, a parcel along the island's craggy shoreline.

Embracing the idea that a boxy building wasn't in the cards, the design team tipped the whole thing on its axis and ended up with a triangle of space that became the instinctive location for the centerpiece of the project. "It's a piece of terrain upon which we located a sharp-angled glass vitrine for the torch, in what was the most important corner of the site from water and land," Garrison said. "Putting the torch in there made perfect sense as a way to celebrate the most visible and iconic symbol of the artifact."

They took other cues from the landscape and what was already there. Fort Wood, an 11-point former fortress that is the base of the statue, gave license to the angles of the museum, but in the opposite spirit: the fort is turned inward, while the museum radiates outward, communicating that unique sense of joy that comes with freedom.

The glass in the 22-foot-high curtain wall around the torch is bird-proof. Other materials are those used by Richard Morris Hunt in the original design, such as pink Stony Creek granite. FXCollaborative used it for a monumental staircase that is part amphitheater, part picnic area, which leads to the entrance and the rooftop observation area. "It's a public porch and a means of getting up and down," Garrison said. "It's meant to be a hang-out area."

Heavy-gauge copper was substituted for the 1886 bronze on the fascia for cost reasons, and pre-cast concrete on the museum exterior is a stand-in for the hand-cut stones of Fort Wood. It's craggy and rustic, Garrison points out, and reminiscent of the Palisades just upriver.

The roof is planted with native grasses to attract native and migratory birds, along with bees and butterflies. A portion of the roof is clear of planting to encourage visitors to take in the unique panoramic views.



A highlight of the exhibitions is the original torch, installed in a gallery with 22-foot-high glass walls. The museum opened to the public on May 16.

Museum displays inside the building combine a high-tech approach with film, vintage photos, artifacts, and life-size molds of the statue's face and foot. The 26,000-square-foot exhibition space is divided into three galleries: an Immersive Theater that shows a 10-minute video about the statue's history and encourages viewers to contemplate what liberty means around the world; an Engagement Gallery that takes visitors to the warehouse where Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi built the statue; and an Inspiration Gallery where guests can document their visit and enjoy the stunning views.

The presentation is all digital, fulfilling the museum's goal of creating an institution that looks toward the future, according to Webster. "We wanted to offer a way to have a conversation about this important idea of liberty," she said. "We did not want to create a museum that looked backward."

Garrison is pleased with the project, which took about seven years to complete. "It does everything I wanted it to do," he said. "It has its own true identity and its own sense of purpose. Thirty years from now, we'll look at it as part of its own moment with its own DNA, and see how it still seems to fit and work." ■



# THE INCLUSIVE CITY

A rendering of the dining area of Make the Road's new headquarters, designed by TEN Arquitectos.



Image credit: Courtesy of TEN Arquitectos

For many of us who grew up in other parts of the country, our first visit to New York City was a revelation—sidewalks packed with so many different people miraculously getting along so well with one another. It seemed to epitomize what President Jimmy Carter called “the beautiful mosaic” of America. Of course, the reality always has been more complicated, and behind the miracle of New York is a history of civic struggles for justice and equality. A chronicle of the city’s power dynamics may be read in the design of buildings, streets, and neighborhoods, but even more revealing is who

uses—or doesn’t use—these spaces today.

In this issue, we put a spotlight on citizens who represent a dazzling and diverse cross-section of New York, questioning how the idea of inclusivity compares to the reality: How welcoming can a city truly be if it becomes unaffordable for those with families or lower incomes? How are new generations claiming cultural territory in established neighborhoods? And, in the city’s most multicultural borough, how are public institutions designed to serve constituents? **Molly Heintz ■**



FEATURE

# HOUSING, NOT INCLUDED

## 10 Policies to Make Rent Affordable for Low- to Middle-Income Households

BY STEPHEN ZACKS

New York is experiencing an extreme housing market and policy failure, with the majority of residents fundamentally housing insecure. Almost 63% of New Yorkers are renters, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, and the highest proportion are under 50 years old. The median income for an individual in the city is nearly \$58,000, meaning half of New York City adults make less. Few apartments are available for under \$1,500 in the open market, yet to rent a \$1,500 studio, leaseholders are expected to be earning \$60,000, based on the traditional metric of income being 40 times the monthly rent. By this measure, the market is failing to meet the needs of more than half of individual wage earners.

The market is only marginally better for two-income households: Two-bedroom apartments for \$2,500 and up are more readily available, but lessees must earn \$50,000 each unless backed by a cosigner. Since a full-time minimum wage job brings in only \$31,000, the market excludes all but the most

secure middle-class wage earners. No wonder New Yorkers are up in arms about high-end condo and office park developments: the most basic need for shelter is being neglected.

Imagine if a housing policy were designed to meet the needs of the largest number of New Yorkers. It would produce apartments of an adequate size for every household type that would be well designed, promote health and well-being, conserve energy, and, above all, be affordable for most residents. Here are 10 proven, immediately implementable policies that would remediate the market-and-policy failure:

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**“Housing should be a human right.”**  
**—NYS Assemblyman Joseph Lentol**

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# 1

## EXPAND RENT STABILIZATION

The danger of rent control, we are often reminded, is that landlords might earn less than it costs to maintain buildings, resulting in widespread abandonment. A search of public records on any given rent-stabilized building, however, indicates that landlords typically walk away with hundreds of thousands of dollars in annual income—with little to no effort. Currently, nearly a million New York City apartments—almost half the city’s rental units—are relatively affordable and secure from inflationary rent increases due to rent stabilization and control. With the city’s average household size of 2.67, that means nearly a third of New Yorkers may be protected by rent regulation.

“Do I wish New York State’s rent control laws were tougher?” said a former high-level official of the De Blasio Administration. “Yes, I do. Rent stabilization is not the most equitable system, but it does protect a lot of people. And the number is declining because we don’t have as strict rent-control/rent-stabilization laws as we should. But the city’s ability to do anything in that area is largely preempted by the state.”

The simplest policy solution available to lawmakers—now being considered in Albany and advocated by the Housing Justice for All coalition—is the expansion of rent-stabilization guidelines to include more units. As smaller buildings increasingly come under the control of speculators and larger landlords, the coalition is proposing a “good cause” eviction law that would give tenants in buildings of less than six units the right to renew leases at limited rent increases, while strengthening protections for existing rent-stabilized tenants.

Rent stabilization can also involve eligibility guidelines like the ones NYC Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) already use to allocate new units. The current package of bills allows rent increases for building improvements, but limits them to prevent exploitation by unscrupulous landlords. “We must have strong rent protections to ensure that individuals aren’t priced out or pushed out by landlords,” said New York State Assemblyman Joseph Lentol. “We just passed a bill that criminalizes landlord harassment behavior, which will be a deterrent to forcing families out of rent-stabilized housing.”

Opposite: Stanley Commons, a 240-unit affordable housing development and community center in East New York, opened in 2018 and was designed by Dattner Architects.

# 2

## PUBLICLY FUND SOCIAL HOUSING

In 1975, the city’s short-term bonds to build affordable housing nearly bankrupted the city. Eleven years later, the federal government prohibited federal money from being used to build public housing, substituting a fragmentary system of grants and tax incentives to private and non-profit developers. This has resulted in the failed housing marketplace of today. Despite that, the NYC Housing Authority still shelters nearly 400,000 residents—one in 14 New Yorkers—and another 200,000 receive Section 8 housing vouchers. More than 200,000 are on waiting lists for public housing and nearly 150,000 for Section 8 housing.

“New York needs to follow the lead of London, where boroughs like Hackney have started building public housing for the first time in four decades,” noted urban planner and housing specialist Karen Kubey. “New public or ‘social’ housing projects there, designed by Karakusevic Carson Architects and others, are built to high design standards and meaningfully involve residents during the design process. Developments are typically cross-subsidized with market-rate housing. Doing this would require policy shifts, but if our sister financial capital can do it, why can’t we?”

“Housing should be a human right,” said Lentol, “and the federal government should be spending more money on housing than on building multimillion-dollar concrete walls.”



# 3

## USE PUBLIC BANKING

Even if the federal government refuses to provide funding, the city and state governments still can. They can issue state and municipal bonds and establish public banking institutions, using city and state tax revenues to issue long-term, low-interest loans to non-profit developers for housing and infrastructure projects, recycling the profits toward additional public investments. “As new tax money is garnered from platform-style companies,” said Lentol, “it should go to programs that allow localities and not-for-profits to build.”

Public banking is a model we can learn from French social housing providers like Paris Habitat, which for more than a century has been building social housing using loans from the Caisse des Depots. “All this money is dedicated to funding what the country needs to develop its activities,” said Bertrand Bret, advisor to the chairman of Paris Habitat. “It means harbor, airport, speedway, economic development of the cities, tourism, and social housing.” A recent exhibition curated by Javier Arpa at the Pavillon de l’Arsenal showcased 100 years of Paris Habitat’s projects, including work by Hariri Architects, Brenac & Gonzalez, Béal & Blanckaert, Sou Fujimoto, and MAD that is indistinguishable from the highest quality luxury housing in New York City.

Keith Engel, AIA, a senior associate at Dattner Architects, long known for its affordable housing specialization, points out that existing laws place limits on the amount of debt the city and state are allowed to take on. “There’s a finite amount of subsidy that comes into the city, and that’s been shrinking,” Engel said. “A lot of projects sitting in architects’ offices aren’t moving forward because the closings can’t happen as there’s just not enough funding.” In the meantime, Dattner has focused on raising the sustainability standards of its projects, incorporating passive housing techniques in non-profit developments financed by HPD, including Stanley Commons, a 240-unit affordable housing development and community center in East New York that opened in 2018; 425 Grand Concourse, a 277-unit development in Mott Haven projected for 2020; Chestnut Commons, a 275-unit passive house with community center, expected by 2022; and 1675 Westchester, 220 units on a rezoned lot in Soundview.



Left: Dock D3 by Brenac & Gonzalez & Associés, a Paris Habitat building in Saint-Ouen.

Right: A recent exhibition curated by Javier Arpa at the Pavillon de l’Arsenal showcased 100 years of the French social housing provider Paris Habitat’s projects.

# 4

## IMPLEMENT FIRST RIGHT TO BUY

Many architects and city officials cite the limited availability of land and competition with for-profit developers for sites as key factors impeding more low- to moderate-income developments. Even the costs of acquiring brownfield sites are now being inflated by competition with traditional developers. Bret cites the ability of public agencies to get a right of first refusal for the purchase of developable land and apartments, which it then offers to qualifying applicants at preferential rents scaled to each household’s income.

“It is what is called the ‘preemptive right’—the right to buy first,” Bret said. “If you want to buy a flat, a building, or a garage, you have to get the agreement of the local authority. Each week, a dedicated committee checks what is put on the market, and according to the location, the local authority can say, ‘I want this for an extant school, I want this for building a new swimming pool, I want this to create social housing, and I put my right to buy first.’ And there is a discussion between the seller and the local authority to fix the good price.”



# 5

## **BUILD ON UNDERUSED AND UNUSUAL SITES**

Another strategy to alleviate the housing crisis is to privilege the use of public land. Steps in the right direction include initiatives like the Big Ideas for Small Lots competition, a collaboration with the AIA New York Chapter that thinks of innovative ways of developing unusual sites; the De Blasio Administration's Mandatory Inclusionary Housing policy for rezoned districts; the NextGen program to build new housing on NYC Housing Authority property; and projects like Hunters Point South and the Essex Market/Seward Park Urban Renewal Area.

"The challenge in New York is we're in an expensive, high-density environment," said Jay Valgora, AIA, principal of Studio V. "Much of the city is already built." Valgora believes waterfronts, urban renewal sites, and public housing "are huge opportunities to actually realize the goal of creating much more affordable housing."

# 6

## **MANDATE SOCIAL HOUSING IN EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD**

The adoption of policies that more equitably allocate housing to create a mixture of incomes throughout the city goes to the heart of the integral relationship between housing and inclusion in NYC. Eran Chen, AIA, founder and executive director of ODA, believes that mixed-income projects like Hunters Point South should be a mandatory model for every neighborhood and large building.

"The only good long-term solution is in full integration of a certain percentage of affordable housing components in most buildings above a certain scale," noted Chen. "To do so, policies should incentivize builders and developers with increased density/height bonuses for new construction and real estate tax reductions for existing rental buildings. Affordable units need to be built on-site, be applicable in wider areas in the city, and be incorporated into existing build-

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**Waterfronts, urban renewal sites, and public housing "are huge opportunities to realize the goal of creating much more affordable housing." —Jay Valgora, AIA**

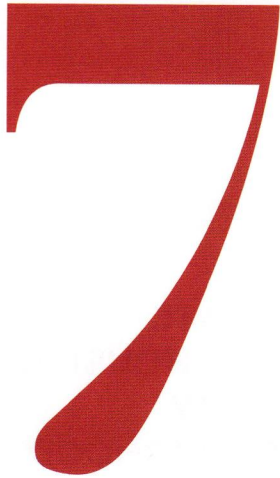
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Critics point out that the affordability targets are often too high to qualify for, and the number of units is usually conservative, erring on the side of ensuring that developers can reap profits by allowing a greater percentage of market-rate housing. Both Dattner and Studio V have developed projects in NYCHA's Astoria Houses at Halletts Point, which will eventually comprise 2,400 apartments. An HPD spokesman mentions the recently announced latest phase of the Hunters Point South project as another model: Designed by ODA, it will include 1,100 new units, 60% of them permanently affordable, along with 100 units of supportive housing for seniors.

ings. A majority of buildings should have an affordable component well mixed and equally distributed in such a way that landlords and developers will not encounter financial hardship."

Vishaan Chakrabarti, former Manhattan city planner and principal of Practice for Architecture + Urbanism, points out that the biggest impediments to expanding and improving the homeless shelter system is the local opposition that occurs whenever a new shelter is announced. He recommends "mandatory fair share for homelessness housing, where we pass a law that says there have to be a certain number of units in every Community Board in NYC."





## TAX VACANT LAND AND APARTMENTS

In New York, owners currently get a tax break if they don't live in their apartments as a primary residence. A policy meant to spur investment, this incentive pushes the market toward upper-income condos rather than meeting the needs of residents. The City Council has already considered a version of a pied-à-terre tax on vacant apartments, which could encourage people with investment property to rent it and generate revenue for construction of social housing. This has been done successfully in Vancouver, British Columbia, with some positive impact on lowering prices, and Paris has a similar tax to discourage absentee owners. By one estimate, there may be 50,000 units of vacant apartments in the city, though the former De Blasio official believes many are being rented.

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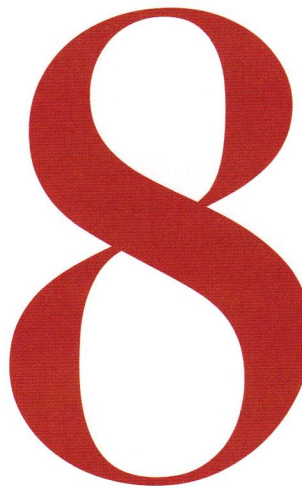
**The Basement Conversion Pilot Program attempts to legalize rentals in basements that might not meet all the narrow coding regulations for window height, air, ceiling height, and fire safety but have potential to be regularized.**

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Chakrabarti further recommends taxing vacant land to discourage real estate companies from land banking—holding on to lots without building. “We’re not generating enough supply of any housing, market rate housing or affordable housing, to keep up with demand, which is continually pushing up demand for market rate housing. A lot of that has to do with people land banking,” he said. “We must look at whether we need to more heavily tax vacant land, so owners have much more incentive to build.”



A rendering of Chestnut Commons, a 275-unit affordable housing development with community center, is being designed by Dattner Architects to Passive House standards and is expected to be completed by 2022.



## CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE HOUSING TYPES

The HPD is looking into alternative and unorthodox housing types to meet the needs of populations not being served by the market. The Basement Conversion Pilot Program attempts to legalize rentals in basements that might not meet all the narrow coding regulations for window height, air, ceiling height, and fire safety but have potential to be regularized. Dattner Architects is working with the Cyprus Hills Local Development Corporation on the pilot program, preselecting places that could work.

Another under-the-radar housing type are single-room occupancy (SRO) units, which the HPD and Engel believe can meet the needs of younger people, older people aging in place, and residents open to cohabiting. Last November, the NYC department of Housing Preservation and Development issued an RFP for ShareNYC, seeking development teams to arrive at design guidelines for SROs that improve on the Bowery flophouse of old. Valgora mentions Frank 57 at 600 West 58th Street as an example of experiments with co-living: The project includes 12 co-living units with shared bathrooms, but the market being the market, these are actually being leased for even more than the standard units in the development.



# 9

## REVIEW ALL TAX STRUCTURES

One of the biggest underlying conditions that makes housing unaffordable is the whole suite of city, state, and federal tax incentives meant to promote housing construction, dating back to a period of a lack of investment in the city. They include the federal mortgage interest deduction, the state 421-A deduction, the J-51 abatement for renovating apartment buildings, and the co-op and condo deduction. All these tax structures need to be reviewed and geared toward promoting affordable housing.



### **The Skyscraper Museum 39 Battery Place “Housing Density: From Tenements to Towers” Through November 2019**

The story of affordable housing in New York City is inextricably linked to density. “Housing Density: From Tenements to Towers,” an exhibit currently on display at The Skyscraper Museum in Lower Manhattan, explores the city’s relationship to density through private and public housing projects. Photos, models, and diagrams document the city’s shift from low-rise hyper-dense tenement buildings,

# 10

## UPZONE

Only with these policies in place would it make sense to do more of what the Bloomberg and De Blasio administrations have already done: strategically upzone areas where there’s room for expansion of building heights without destroying the character of neighborhoods. “You’ve got to start with the basic evidence that the new destabilizes the old,” Chakrabarti said. “All this business about area median income and affordable housing creation works only if you have very significant policies in place to stabilize existing neighborhoods.”

Since 2000, notes Bertrand Bret, Paris has gone from 11% to 22% of its apartments being regulated as social housing, with a goal of reaching 25% by 2025. Meanwhile in New York, since 1981, there are 200,000 fewer regulated apartments and twice as many homeless people. It’s time to reverse course—quickly. ■

A model in the “Housing Density” show at the Skyscraper Museum highlights notable New York City housing developments, such as (shown here, clockwise from top) Penn South (1962), London Terrace (1930), and the Chelsea-Elliot Houses (1947).

which housed up to 1,100 people per acre in 1900 and occupied 87% of its site, to the “tower in the park” model, like NYC Housing Authority’s Polo Grounds Towers (1968), which houses 268 people per acre but uses only 16% of its site. The concept of density remains controversial—Does it create crowding? Or vibrancy?—but the exhibit aims to examine density as a way to understand the future of the city. The exhibition was co-curated by the museum’s Carol Willis in collaboration with Matthias Altwicker, AIA, and Nicholas Dagen Bloom, both of NYIT. The museum is also running a related lecture series in mid-summer and fall. Look for more details at [www.skyscraper.org](http://www.skyscraper.org). **ND**



FEATURE

# CULTURE PASS



## Nine Stories of How Civic Space in NYC is Changing Hands

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY TOM STOELKER

### **EAST VILLAGE, MANHATTAN: RYAN HADDAD, PLAYWRIGHT AND PERFORMER AT THE PUBLIC THEATER**

“Multicultural can mean many things,” said Ryan Haddad, a 27-year-old playwright and performer. Haddad, who has cerebral palsy, holds a residency in the Emerging Writers Group at the Public Theater in Manhattan, where he has no problem getting around. He comes from the millennial generation often celebrated for its multicultural awareness, but which, more often than not, overlooks the disabled.

“Whenever somebody plans a party in Brooklyn—because that’s where you have the cool parties, the cool performances, the cool clubs, and the cool places to go—I

often groan because it’s hard for me to get there,” he said. It’s not just difficult for him as an audience member, he said, but also as a performer. When producers get behind a piece he’s written, they discuss access for him as well as for the audience, homing in on ADA compliance of nearby public transportation, which often falls short.

Haddad’s experience is one of many where infrastructure influences how communities form or fall apart. In other instances, housing and highways built by Robert Moses from the 1930s through the 1960s continue to sustain middle-class families far from Manhattan’s gleaming towers and Brooklyn’s farm-to-table restaurants. Old Jewish, Irish, and Italian neighborhoods are now home to Ben-





Opposite: Ryan Haddad, playwright and performer, at the Public Theater in Astor Place, the East Village. Left: Charles Leslie, founder of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art, at the museum on Wooster Street in SoHo.

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**Natives and settlers talk about how civic infrastructure and their neighborhoods have helped or hindered the making of a multicultural city.**

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gali hip-hop artists performing off the Bruckner Expressway, and Dominican writers holding readings in the shadow of the George Washington Bridge.

Bedroom communities that once housed white working-class families of police, firemen, nurses, and secretaries are now home to communities of color who have raised first-generation techies, artists, and activists—as well as police officers, firefighters, and executive assistants. These young New Yorkers, who have stayed on instead of moving out, are as much a part of Robert

Moses's legacy as the highways and bridges he built. They're not looking for new neighborhoods closer to "The City" or Brooklyn—like their mid-century brethren, they just want to live close to Mom.

Likewise, there are the stalwarts who hunkered down when others headed out: the homesteaders of SoHo and the Italian butchers of Arthur Avenue. As E.B. White observed, there's always "the person who was born somewhere else and came to New York in quest of something," the settlers who give the city its passion.

Here's a small sampling of natives and settlers who posed for photos and talked about how civic infrastructure and their neighborhoods have helped and hindered the multicultural city.

**SOHO, MANHATTAN: CHARLES LESLIE, FOUNDER OF THE LESLIE-LOHMAN MUSEUM OF GAY AND LESBIAN ART, AT THE MUSEUM**

Charles Leslie and his life partner, the late Fritz Lohman, held their first exhibition of gay art in their SoHo loft the same month as the Stonewall riots, which mark their 50th Anniversary this summer. The couple were part of the original homesteaders who had settled in SoHo and fought Robert Moses's plan to build a raceway through the Cast-Iron District. "We wanted 12 square blocks," said Leslie, "and we ended up with 48 square blocks."

When he moved to the area, it was called the South Village, if it was called anything. He remembers when City Planning Commission officials casually began using the term "SoHo," instead of referring to the disputed neighborhood as the South Houston Industrial District. Many credit urban theorist Chester Rapskin with coining the term, a notion Leslie would hardly dispute. He remembers Rapskin standing in his living room, warning the activists that, though they'd won the preservation battle, the area was bound to undergo drastic changes. "You think you have a tiger by the tail, and you think you're going to keep this fly in amber?" Leslie recalled Rapskin asking rhetorically.

He credited Friends of Cast Iron Architecture with making the most persuasive argument for preservation, posting that the prefabricated cast-iron building method represented a distinctly American contribution to international architecture. In addition, he credited gays. "Wherever artists, creative people, or gays live, change is inevitable," he said, riffing on something he recalled Rapskin saying. "Gay people have an interesting take on what's beautiful. They can hit a walk-up tenement and find beauty. It's a noticeable attribute wherever you go."



**ARTHUR AVENUE, THE BRONX: MICHAEL RELLA AND PETER SERVEDIO, BUTCHERS AT PETER'S MEAT MARKET, THE ARTHUR AVENUE RETAIL MARKET**

In an effort to get pushcart vendors off city streets in the 1930s, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia set up several public markets, and Arthur Avenue Retail Market in the Bronx continues to be one of the most vibrant. Though the utilitarian buildings project civic blandness at its worst, the vendors more than compensate in vitality and color. Merchants at Arthur Avenue, many first- and second-generation Italians, continue to speak the native tongue with locals and customers traveling there from Long Island and New Jersey.

Peter Servedio started there as a butcher in 1962. "The only two years I was missing was when I got drafted to go to Vietnam," he said. "Then I came right back and I just loved it. I got discharged in '69; in '70 I took over." He hired his nephew, Michael Rella, after Rella graduated from nearby Lehman College with a bachelor's in economics, "in case something happens." Rella had emigrated from Puglia, Italy, in 1966 after the rest of the family had already

settled in. Just as they were making a home, the remainder of the borough was falling apart. "There was a time, especially in this neighborhood, when there were a lot of empty lots and many people moving out. But we loved the business, we loved the people," said Servedio. "So we decided to build it up to what it is today."

Soon Rella became a partner, and the two were joined by employees reflective of today's revived Bronx.

"It's a very diverse butcher shop: we have Mexicans, Albanians, Guyanese—all very excellent workers. They all have working papers, legal, which is important," he said. "We take care of them, obviously. Most have been here for over 20 years, which is amazing, because usually you don't hear that in a company anymore."

**GARMENT DISTRICT, MANHATTAN: NICOLA CAITO AND CAMILLE TETARD, PATTERNMAKERS, AT THEIR ATELIER**

Late last year, in response to a decline in apparel manufacturing, the City Council lifted zoning rules in the Garment District that required landlords on the area's side streets to offset any newly created office space with an equal amount of manu-



Michael Rella and Peter Servedio, butchers at Peter's Meat Market, housed in the Arthur Avenue Retail Market, which was established in 1940 by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia.



facturing space—most of it for the rag trade. But with much of the manufacturing moving overseas, the work that remains tends to be on the high end of the spectrum. It complements fashion showrooms and design offices nearby, to say nothing of the WeWork branches, non-profits, and tech firms moving in. For Camille Tetard and Nicola Caito, the 1920s loft-style buildings were perfect for them to put to their original use.

Coming from a line of Italian tailors, the French-born Caito spent several years working for the French couturiers before moving to New York. Here, the couple saw a market for his precise craftsmanship. Soon he was working with Thakoon, Carolina Herrera, and Hervé Pierre. With Pierre, he helped craft Melania Trump's inaugural gown (and also created gowns for Hillary Clinton and Michelle Obama).

The couple runs a multicultural firm with employees that have hailed from China, Korea, Japan, and Brazil. But the two said they hire based on humbleness, not culture. New York

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**In late 2018, the City Council lifted the zoning rule that any newly created office space in the Garment District had to be offset with an equal amount of manufacturing space.**

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assertiveness, often encouraged by the big design schools, doesn't fly here. "They come out of Parsons, where they don't have a degree specifically in patternmaking, because it doesn't exist, and they want \$80,000 per year," said Tetard.

Caito noted that the firm hired an "American apprentice—and she's wonderful." But the willingness to learn crosses international boundaries, particularly with couture-level craft. "The Italians and the French have hundreds of years of doing this kind of work, so it is a big part of the way we're going to approach the world," said Caito, adding that he can tell right away when someone is bluffing about their knowledge, usually because they're aggressive.

"I look for that person who's humble and not the bluffer," he said. "You find these two kinds of people anywhere in the world: not only in New York, not only in Paris."

### **GRAND CONCOURSE, THE BRONX: BASMA SHEEA, BENGALI-AMERICAN SINGER, AT THE ANDREW FREEMAN HOME**

Fully the Bronx and fully Bengali, Basma Sheea has a sound of her own: R&B merged with Bengali music and rap. She was set to perform at the Andrew Freedman Home for the "It's the Bronx" music festival last spring, but when the promoters' ties to real estate developers came to light, social media caught fire, with other Bronx collectives, like Hydro



Nicola Caito and Camille Tetard, patternmakers, at their atelier in the Garment District.



Punk, agitating for an embargo on Instagram. The pressure shut down the event. “I understand why this was such a big deal for them to go against it and to protect their community, but most of us artists weren’t really aware of where the funding was coming from,” Sheea said from the steps of the Freedman home, itself a dichotomy of blessings and curses, not unlike the concourse.

The Andrew Freedman Home was built in 1922 for rich industrialists who had come on hard times in their old age. The limestone Palazzo Farnese-esque edifice cost \$1 million to build, which is more than \$27 million in today’s dollars. Today, the Freedman home has slowly crept back from decay and anomaly to house artist studios, Fifth Avenue-worthy exhibitions, and events. The owners have become de facto leaders in the Bronx arts community, eventually holding a town hall for the opposing parties of the shuttered festival. Like the concourse, the once-grand facility has seen better days, but the organization has stepped up to its new role as the borough bounces back—though amidst persistent poverty. For many activists, the Bronx represents the last stand against gentrification.

“This whole drama brought together a group of artists,” said Sheea, “even though you didn’t get to perform.” Sheea joined Yo-Yo master/rapper Richard Pigkaso and other Bronx artists to meet at an open mic night at an Irish pub in Pelham Manor, NY, to compete for a spot on NPR’s Tiny Desk Completion. For Sheea and her newfound artist friends, including Hydro Punk, simply finding an open mic and audience was a triumph. Lest one forgets, this is the borough where hip-hop was born and where boogaloo, salsa, and bebop grew up—in spite of urban decay. Gentrification presents an unexpected challenge. “It’s music that ties everybody I know” said Sheea. “You have this story to tell, I have a story to tell. For me, it’s never really been about class. Honestly, I’ve never really thought about that divide until now.”

### **GRAND CONCOURSE, THE BRONX: ELISSA CARMONA, LEAD SINGER AND FOUNDER OF THE MARRISANIA BAND PROJECT, AT THE BRONX MUSEUM OF THE ARTS**

Elissa Carmona agrees about the need for Bronx artists to find a venue. She grew up in Morrisania in the South Bronx and Park Hill in Staten Island, and her voice was discovered early, at church, taking her on tour at a young age. But as a teen she started working. She soon joined the service, raised a daughter, and got her master’s in social work. Singing was put on hold until seven years ago. Carmona’s experience in grant writing for non-profits spurred a local effort to clean up Reverend Lena Irons Unity Park in Morrisania—aka Unity Park. Her skills also came in handy when founding her band sprung from the park cleanup, with support from the

Top: Basma Sheea, Bengali-American singer, on the steps of the Andrew Freedman Home in the Bronx, a landmarked 1922 building designed by Joseph H. Friedlander and Harry Allan Jacobs. Bottom: Elissa Carmona, lead singer and founder of Morrisania Band Project, in front of the 2006 Arquitectonica-designed North Wing at the Bronx Museum of the Arts.



Bronx Collective for the Arts. The band still performs at Unity Park each summer, describing its sound as “a blend of hip-hop soul, neo soul, afro punk, jazz, and funk.”

Carmona, who had looked forward to appearing at “It’s the Bronx,” had performed on the Grand Concourse only a year previously at the Bronx Museum of the Arts. She enjoyed meeting artists from across the borough, something that



doesn't happen enough. "We're culturally diverse, but we tend to be clannish; we stay within our own separate enclaves," she said. "Occasionally we mingle if we work together, but that's not always the case in the arts."

Artists in the Bronx, she said, need to be "strategic and very creative to find and create opportunities here in the Bronx that provide venue space." For her, the social media pressure that shut down "It's the Bronx" shut down a lot of opportunities, too. "It's no secret that the Bronx is one of the poorest cities in New York State; we have a lot of homelessness, and people are hungry," she said. "People figure the arts are not as important, and the limited funding that does go to artists goes to school-age youth—and rightly so, they need it—but it leaves us adults having to leave the borough to find any opportunity."

### **WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, MANHATTAN: JOHN PAUL ENFANTE, WRITER AND TEACHER, AT THE HISPANIC SOCIETY**

John Paul Enfante grew up in Washington Heights and feels no connection to the Hispanic Society or Audubon Terrace, the complex that also houses The Academy Arts and Letters, and long ago lost the American Geographical Society, the Museum of the American Indian, and the American Numismatic Society. Despite its name—and sporadic efforts—the society has held a fraught relationship with its Latino neighbors.

"It has nothing to do with me," Enfante said. "I appreciate it the few times I've experienced it, but I've only experienced it three times. Two times it was through an event I found out about through Dominican writers, the other time was when the Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance had an event."

Like most artists in underserved communities, Enfante and his fellow poets and writers are on a constant search for space to congregate and share work. There's Alianza

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### **Enfante and his fellow poets and writers are on a constant search for space to congregate and share work.**

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Dominicana Cultural Center, a dedicated community space set aside in a new building at the Columbia University Medical Center that was fought for and won, but which presents a generational divide. "Alianza is serving the community in a real way for Dominicans and Latinos in Washington Heights and Inwood, but it's run by an older group, and they have a set way of doing things," he said. "We have a have a group with different ideas on how to use the space and do programming."



John Paul Enfante, writer and teacher, in front of the landmarked Hispanic Society of America, designed in 1904 by Charles Huntington, at Audubon Terrace in Washington Heights.





Despite gentrification and recent developments, Enfante has no plans to leave the neighborhood. He refers to the “Broadway divide,” where newcomers, co-ops, and condos sit to the east of the thoroughfare, and his old neighborhood to the east stays pretty much the same. It’s where he’s raising his daughter. “There’s that element where there’s some people like me who have a salary or have health insurance and are living decent lives who want to stay,” he said, “but at the same time, I see the segregation of the vision, like the Broadway divide.”

There are places where the community has always come together, he said. “When I was a teenager, I would go to Cloisters, and what’s interesting about that space is that you’ll see diversity in every sense—not only diversity in the people from all over the world, but people from the

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**“People need to open up more—  
and say hello on the elevator.”  
—Ness McKelvey**

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neighborhood, locals,” he said. “Which is interesting when you have a space like the Hispanic Society, because I don’t see locals in there.”

Enfante said the area has three types: those who make money and want to get out, those who are stuck, and those who, like him, want to stay. “I enjoy this area, I know this

area,” he said. “I appreciate it as a space, the proximity to everywhere. I love the community, the people, the diversity. And I might complain about segregation, but I like the fact that I can go to a bar, and it’s just an Irish bar. You have to readjust and look at the world through that Irish lens. You hear certain sayings and certain slang, and people are talking over you, and you just don’t get it.”

### **MIDTOWN, MANHATTAN: NESS MCKELVEY AT HOME**

Ness McKelvey lived for years in the Bronx before securing housing at Henry Hall, which bills itself as “a new concept in luxury living” that is designed “to feel like a boutique hotel.” Through the city’s effort to diversify housing, McKelvey got his space as part of the city’s affordable housing lottery, which stipulates that 20% of new housing be set aside for moderate-income families. But while he loves his apartment, he said high-rise living, while culturally diverse, isn’t economically diverse. Just a stone’s throw from Hudson Yards, the West 38th Street building exudes a hip vibe with rap playing in the elevators. McKelvey said he likes hip-hop but feels uncomfortable in the elevator with his more upscale neighbors when the N-word blasts from the speakers. “It’s supposed to be high class, it’s supposed to be upper echelon,” he said, “but people don’t act like that—they act like other people are peasants, beneath them.”





McKelvey is starting a new blog called NewCityNYC.com that talks about what to do for little or no money on Midtown's burgeoning West Side. When asked how people in the new West Side developments can foster multiculturalism, he was blunt: "People need more involvement; they're being too exclusive. They need to open up more—and say hello on the elevator."

### ST. GEORGE, STATEN ISLAND: BAIN COFFMAN AND GUI JUNTA, RESTAURANT OWNERS AT CHANG NOI THAI

Bain Coffman and Gui Junta met on the Staten Island Ferry when she was showing the city to friends who were visiting. Coffman grew up in upstate New York's dairy country, and Junta grew up in Thailand. He lived in Staten Island, and she lived in Queens and ran a restaurant in Manhattan. Junta had partnered in restaurants on the Lower East Side when he encouraged her to come see his neighborhood, which sits in the shadow of Borough Hall. Like every borough downtown, St. George has a big lunchtime crowd. But few business owners live in the neighborhood, even with its large residential population. The potential to connect with customers was something that drew Junta to the area, as her Manhattan customers were more transient.

"This is our home, this is our business, this is our neighborhood, and you have more connection," said Junta. "In Manhattan, people might come in only one time in their lives, and then they're gone. The tourists come, sit down,

Opposite: Ness McKelvey at home in Henry Hall, completed in 2017 by BKS Architects with interiors by Ken Fulk, on the northern edge of Hudson Yards in Midtown. Above: Bain Coffman and Gui Junta, owners of Chang Noi Thai restaurant in downtown St. George, Staten Island.

laugh, and don't come back. In the restaurant here, I feel more connections, that everyone is like a friend."

As the center of government in the city's most Republican borough, the two see more customers from across the political spectrum than most city restaurants, even though the immediate area sways to the left. On a recent weekend, customers coming and going in the cozy eatery numbered about a dozen. Three languages were spoken at different tables. "It would be great," said Coffman, "if people could understand each other and not say, 'That's weird,' and instead say, 'That's just different; why do you do it like that?'"

Junta thinks the multicultural city would thrive if more people saw things through an immigrant's eyes. "This is not my culture," she said, "so everything is new in this country. As Bain said, I wish everyone would treat us kindly in the same way—if you are white, Asian, black, or anything."

She has experienced prejudice, even in her own neighborhood. "Some people don't like that I'm not the same color, the same culture, or the same people," she said. But she believes that simply operating a business in the area has the potential to change perceptions. "People leave here and respect me and the restaurant; everyone respects each other. You can make peace together." ■



# LEARNING FROM QUEENS



By Engaging Residents, NYC's Most Diverse Borough Creates Public Space for All

BY KATHERINE FUNG

On a recent Saturday afternoon, hundreds of people gathered to watch performers sing traditional Bengali songs and dance to the thumping beat of a dhak drum. They were celebrating Bengali New Year in Diversity Plaza, a pedestrianized public space in the Queens, NY, neighborhood of Jackson Heights. It was a typical scene at the intersection of 37th Road and Broadway. Since the plaza was created in 2016, it has hosted cultural and civic events—including Ramadan prayers and the Hindu festival of Diwali—for the many groups that call Queens home.

"This is the gateway to a living United Nations," said Agah Saleh, who helped name the site and manages it with his wife through their non-profit organization SUHKL. He was referring to the mosaic of ethnic groups and nationalities in the neighborhood and the

rest of Queens: almost half of the borough's 2 million residents are immigrants, and their homelands span 195 countries around the globe, according to the United States Census Bureau.

Diversity Plaza and other projects in Queens are examples of built spaces that have successfully brought together people of different cultural backgrounds. They have become even more important, many residents say, as some parts of the borough feel the squeeze of gentrification. Most community members, architects, and planners behind them say that creating and preserving those spaces requires collaborating with the people they're meant to serve.

That type of outreach was critical for Make the Road, a community organization that serves and advocates for immigrants, when it set out to build its new headquar-





**“Some of the Spanish-speaking architectural staff could engage directly with members, and they had a lot of cultural knowledge.” —Antonia Genao**

ters underneath the 7 train line on bustling Roosevelt Avenue. Working with consultants from Hester Street, Make the Road hired TEN Arquitectos, which is based in Mexico City and New York.

The choice made a difference, according to Antonia Genao, director of operations at Make the Road, because it reflected the organization’s largely Latino membership. “Some of the Spanish-speaking architectural staff could engage directly with members, and they had a lot of cultural knowledge,” she said. “They just understood certain things that would have been almost impossible to explain to someone else.”

To get community input, Make the Road hosted design charrettes with hundreds of members and staff-



Renderings of Make the Road’s new headquarters in Corona, Queens, by TEN Arquitectos. The project is expected to be completed in 2020.

ers, along with the architects and consultants from Hester Street. It shuttled attendees from Brooklyn and other parts of the city to Queens, and provided simultaneous Spanish-language translation.

Genao recalled that some of the things people said they needed in a new building were obvious, such as big adaptable spaces and a commercial kitchen where they could make food for events. But the meetings also revealed feedback that Genao didn’t expect—like how members wanted a room to work on large posters for protests, and how employees wanted more spaces to have informal conversations. “People told us they would talk about these great ideas in meetings, but then the meeting would end and they would have to leave immediately because every



space was booked,” she said. “So they ended up going to cafés outside.”

The heart of the new community center is a grand staircase on the ground floor, designed for people to sit and talk. It flows toward the street, where other people can see it through a transparent glass façade. TEN Arquitectos Principal Andrea Steele said the staircase signals that everyone is welcome. “We didn’t try to represent diversity through something based in Latino culture because the members represent themselves,” she said. “The best way to represent diversity is inclusivity through this gathering space, where they can make change.”

Steele said the layout—which transitions from communal areas near the entrance to more private spaces like classrooms and areas for one-on-one consultations further back—aims to make the space more democratic and eliminate the need for rules about where members can be. “Instead of telling people you can’t be here or there, they’re free to be wherever they want on the floor plan,” she said. “The only way to build a community is to empower all the individuals.”

The same philosophy prompted Janice Melnick, the administrator of Flushing Meadows Corona Park, to open up more areas where people can barbecue. Previously,



Above: A celebration of the Lunar New Year at Elmhurst Public Library, designed by Marpillero Pollak Architects. Below: Flushing Meadows Corona Park’s Community Advisory Board held an open house in December 2017 to gather community members’ needs and ideas for how to improve the park. Opposite: The Learning Garden at Elmhurst Public Library.

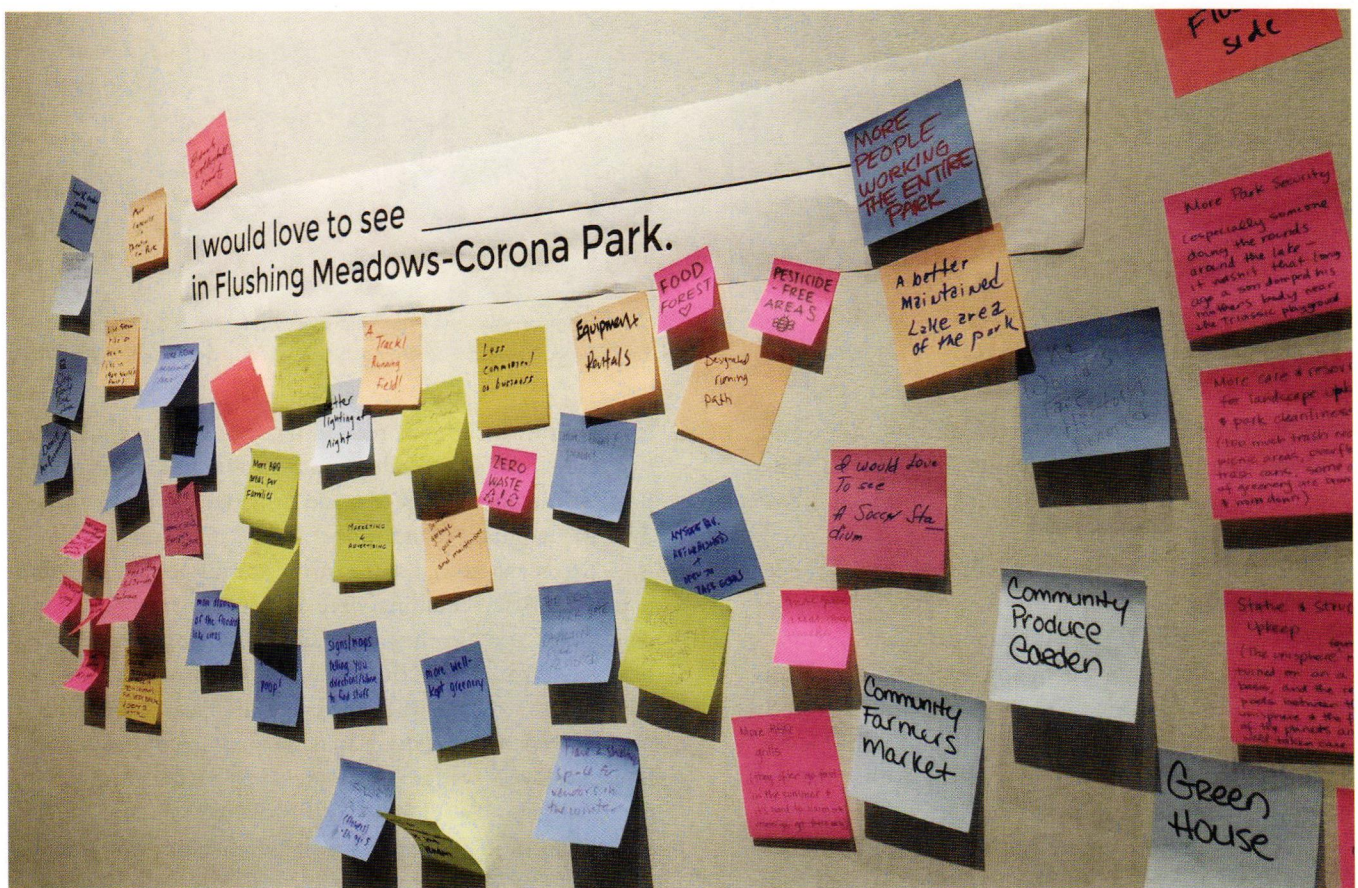


Photo credits: Courtesy of Marpillero Pollak Architects (top left and opposite); Courtesy of the Community Advisory Board for Flushing Meadows Corona Park (bottom left)





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**“The best way to represent diversity is inclusivity through this gathering space, where they can make change.”**  
—Andrea Steele, AIA

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visitors were allowed to grill in only one spot, but park staffers saw that families who broke the rules were coming from Corona, and designated a new area closer to that side of the park. “This was something we noticed, and we didn’t want to stop people from enjoying the park,” Melnick said. “Now when we see someone barbecuing on the baseball field, we just ask them to go across the path.”

The park also hosted a grassroots design experiment dubbed the “Community Design School,” which began five years ago. The project recruited 25 people who hailed from 12 countries and lived in surrounding neighborhoods to come up with ideas to improve the park. Participants such as Libertad Sanchez and Esther Sanchez, who developed a proposal for a new playground for kids with special needs, continue to advocate for park programming on behalf of community members.

The Queens library system is another institution that serves the borough’s diverse residents. With more than 11.4 million visitors in 2018 and programs that include English classes and résumé workshops, the branches function like community centers. Library officials have been thinking about what that means in Queens, and earlier this year they launched a rebranding campaign focused on diversity. The Queens Library is now the Queens Public Library, with the new tagline, “We speak your language.” All 65 branches have tablets with Google Translate to assist patrons.

Architects have recognized the role of libraries in communities in recent years, and one way they’ve built libraries differently in Queens is by adding green space for patrons. Architect Stephen Holl made the new Hunters Point Library overlooking the East River five-and-a-half stories tall, rather than lower and wider, to maximize space for an adjacent public reading garden. The design, according to his firm, gives people access to the Long Island City waterfront.

At the redesigned Elmhurst Public Library, Sandro Marpillero and Linda Pollak of Marpillero Pollak added a learning garden and benches for local residents. Pollak recalled visiting the basement of the former building



Right: View into the Park Cube and towards St. James Parish Church from the second floor of the Elmhurst Public Library. Bottom: P.S. 70Q by RKT Architects, an elementary school in Astoria, has the phrase "Good Morning" stenciled on its walls in different languages. Opposite: Diversity Plaza on a recent Saturday afternoon.



Photo credits: Courtesy of Marpillero Pollak Architects (top left); Esto/Albert Vecerka (bottom left); Katherine Fung (right)





and learning how patrons used the branch. “Someone told us there would be as many as 1,000 people coming to the multipurpose room for Chinese New Year,” Pollak said. “They told us over and over it was one of the most intensively used libraries in Queens.”

She discovered that the library’s users spoke more than 57 languages—the most common being Spanish, Chinese, and Tagalog—and noticed that pockets of foreign-language books were scattered among English-language titles. When the new building opened in late 2016, it included a reading room dedicated to the international book collection.

After hearing about the community’s needs from the library’s employees, Marpillero and Pollak also designed classrooms

and a meeting room to be accessible via a separate after-hours entrance to provide patrons with space for local events.

Similarly, Peter Bafitis of RKT Architects considered how the new 500-seat wing of P.S. 70Q, an elementary school in Astoria, would function as a civic space when he started work on the project. In addition to classrooms, a library, and offices, the building includes an outdoor teaching garden and a gymnasium. Bafitis’s team designed the gymnasium, which is sunken below grade, with walls of windows to let in light from the lobby and the outdoors, keeping in mind that the space also serves as a meeting place and voting site. “Primary schools really become community facilities just because of what they are,” he said. “Young families go there to take their children to learn, but also to be taken care of.”

Learning that students at the school speak more than 50 languages, Bafitis’s team paid homage to the diversity of the student population by stenciling the wall tiles with “Good Morning” in different languages throughout the lobby and hallways.

Back in Jackson Heights, Agah Saleh said that people from all walks of life come to Diversity Plaza for the lively environment and the events he organizes that cater to local residents.

Several years ago, he and his wife, Shazia Kausar, initially opposed the Department of Transportation’s plans to pedestrianize the area. They owned local businesses and believed that closing the street to cars would hurt their sales. After seven months of fights with the city, they decided to try to transform Diversity Plaza into a destination and improve traffic congestion in the neighborhood. Saleh said that once he was involved in the planning process, he felt ownership over the space.

Since then, Kausar has used her restaurant to supply the electricity needed for performances and other events in the plaza. Her family collects the colorful metal bistro chairs from the concrete pavement and stacks them up indoors every night to deter theft.

While not all their hopes have materialized, Saleh said

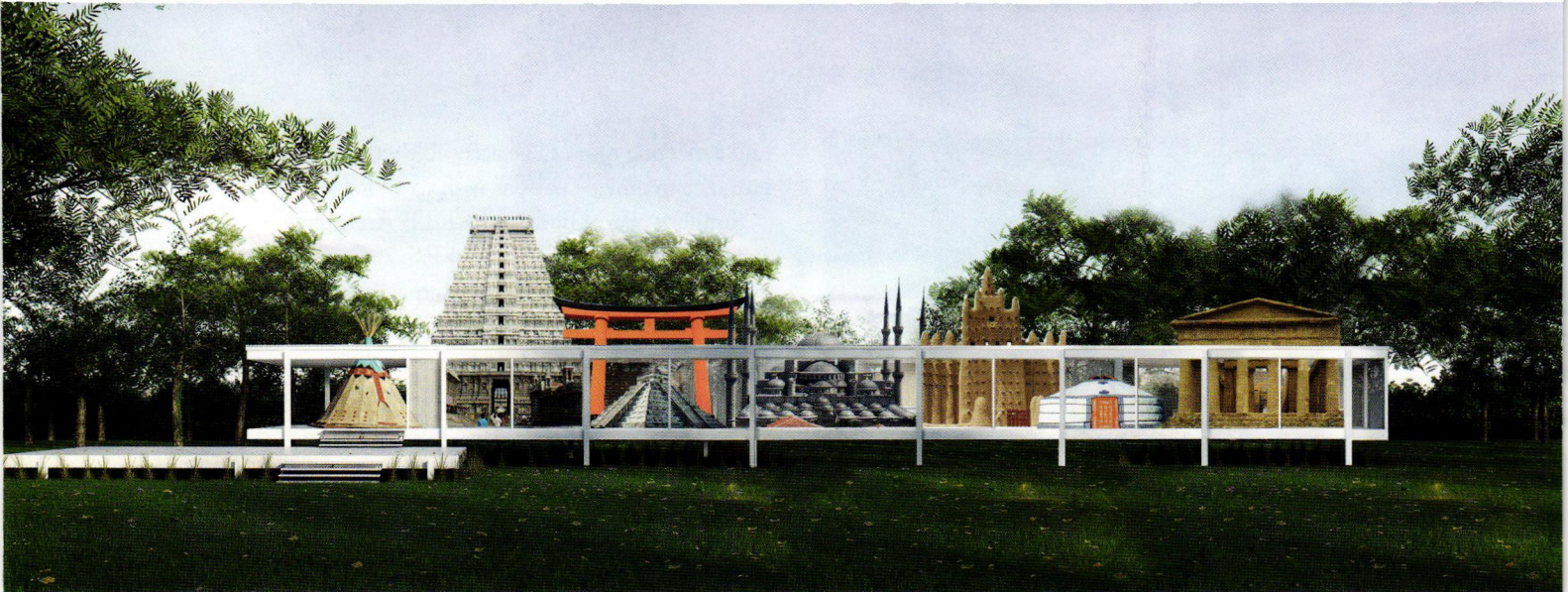
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**Marpillero and Pollak also designed classrooms and a meeting room to be accessible via a separate after-hours entrance to provide patrons with space for local events.**

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that he and his wife carry on as stewards of the plaza, meeting with local business owners late into the night and always looking ahead to the next event. He said the work—which he calls his “blood and sweat”—is worth it. “We want to contribute in such a way that a legacy of the immigrants will stay behind,” he said. ■





OP-ED

# ARCHITECTURE FOR A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BY STEPHEN YABLON, AIA, LEED AP

Twelve years ago, our architecture firm was working with Columbia University on a new multidisciplinary Center for Student Advising when we were asked an unusual question by the dean of the college: “A hundred years ago, everyone who attended this university was part of the same club, having gone to similar prep schools and looking forward to a future in elite society. Now our students come from all over the world, from radically different cultures and economic classes. We are trying to build a sense of community based on this diversity. Can you help us create spaces that address this need?”

Since then, several other institutional clients have raised similar questions. During an interview for a museum project, we were asked, “How would you reflect the diverse community of Brooklyn?” And while working on the design for a reproductive health care facility in Queens, a surprising number of client meetings revolved around making the spaces welcoming to people who spoke over 100 languages and had widely diverse traditions.

For many of us living in large, culturally diverse cities, increased multiculturalism is seen as something to celebrate. It creates richer urban experiences, greater cultural innovation, and economic growth. Architects working in diverse cities should recognize that this is an important and little discussed issue that should influence the design of public and institutional buildings and spaces. Incorporating the needs of diverse

cultures will help us create architecture and cities of the future that are truly welcoming, cosmopolitan, and equitable.

America and many other developed nations in the world have been experiencing a rapid and unprecedented increase in population diversity. The current political situation in the U.S., Brexit, and nationalist trends in Europe and even India make it clear that multiculturalism is one of the central issues of our time. Many countries are bitterly divided on whether to accept a more diverse society or fight to maintain the dominance of a single ethnic or cultural identity.

Stunning increases in population diversity during the past 20 years might make this issue more pressing in architecture, especially in America’s larger cities. The United States is now a more racially and ethnically diverse country than ever before. According to a report by the Congressional Research Service, the 2017 population of white people, non-Hispanic or Latino, in the U.S. was 60.7%, and by the mid-2040s, that population will be just less than 50%. Each of these ethnic groups has its own cultural and even architectural traditions.

Major institutions are seeing this increased diversification in their communities. The student body of Columbia University is now approximately 60% non-white. Planned Parenthood records show that during the 1970s, its typical patient was young, white, middle class, and single. But today’s statistics tell a different



story. For example, within the first year of opening its new facility in Queens in 2015, which was designed by our office, patients from more than 127 different countries of origin were served.

For centuries, architecture has been an expression of the values and traditions of the dominant culture, ethnicity, religion, or even corporations within societies. If a country or society expanded through conquest or trade, architecture was often used as a tool to impose its values on others. Examples of this can be seen worldwide from the Roman Empire, which built Roman-style buildings from Britain to the Middle East, to Mughal architecture in India, which transplanted a Persian style of architecture into a conquered continent.

Imperial or colonial powers sometimes incorporated local architectural motifs and forms into civic architecture as a means of placating the conquered or dominated local communities. A fusion of grand neoclassical British Empire style with elements of Indian Mughal architecture was masterfully accomplished by Edwin Lutyens in Delhi. More recently, the Hilton Hotel in Istanbul, designed by SOM in 1951, incorporates Middle Eastern motifs in the interiors of an International Style building. This gesture puts a kind face on the overwhelming power of post-World War II American capitalism locked in a propaganda cold war with the Soviet Union.

Of course, there are many instances of an architectural mash-up strategy resulting from two cultures borrowing from each other, or architects just falling in love with foreign cultures. Venetian Gothic architecture of the 14th and 15th centuries is a magnificent example of the former. Five hundred years later, some of the most acclaimed modernist architects experimented with combining a local vernacular with Modernism. Aspects of Le Corbusier's work in Chandigarh was

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**Creating representative and relevant spaces for a multicultural group of users is a challenging problem little discussed within architectural circles.**

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inspired by Indian culture and urbanism. Frank Lloyd Wright was truly a "cultural appropriator," freely borrowing from Japanese, Mayan, and even American Indian architecture. Kenzo Tange masterfully melded

modernist architecture with traditional Japanese forms in his Olympic Stadiums of 1961. More recently, architects following a regional modernist or critical regionalism approach have mixed classic Modernism with local vernacular architecture for environmental, aesthetic, and cultural conservation reasons.

Yet these are all examples of a dominant style that a majority of people in society agree upon, accommodating one local culture that is assumed to be static. But is this relevant in global cities that are increasingly multicultural and consist of neighborhoods that are in constant change? Furthermore, in today's global cultural supermarket, people are rapidly influenced by art, media, and products from the entire world, unbound by place or local tradition.

In the context of rising nationalism and populism in the West, emphasizing local place and cultural identity in a globalized world can also be a double-edged sword: it can be seen as an antidote to the dislocation and destruction of local culture, or can also be taken as a way of restoring "blood and soil." Consider the possibilities when minority groups, rather than being compelled to assimilate and give up their cultural traditions, have the opportunity to have a voice at the table. The National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C., makes a highly visible statement about the importance of non-Western cultural traditions within our county on the Washington Mall, a place dominated by buildings in either neoclassical or various modernist styles.

Creating representative and relevant spaces for a multicultural group of users is a challenging problem that is little discussed within architectural circles. One can deal with it through the creation of more welcoming public spaces, similar to squares and streets that are universally understood as places of community, social interaction, collaboration, or sometimes protest. Including spaces like these, even in interiors, creates places of inclusion and democracy, where people can gather and experience their common humanity. Another approach is to imply diversity through more abstract gestures, such as color and the use of multiple languages. For our Planned Parenthood Project in Queens, a clean, abstract, light-filled aesthetic is punctuated with a rigorous color system that act as a non-verbal orientation device and expresses the diversity of the surrounding community. Room



signage mainly uses colors or numbers. The word “Welcome” is displayed in multiple languages immediately upon entry.

Yet in terms of architectural style, it seems that the current default approach is to avoid the question of representation and relevance altogether, and employ a neutral, minimal, and technically advanced architecture without references to any cultural tradition. The thinking seems to be that if one is to respect the local, the design should respond only to the physical aspects of the site and local climate.

Incorporating references to multiple cultures is daunting and risks being seen as kitsch. Yet, there are successful examples, such as BIG’s Superkilen park in the diverse Nørrebro neighborhood of Copenhagen, which opened in 2012. Public participation was the basis for the design, which incorporated an array of objects and artifacts that are critical to the idea of “park” in the home region of the neighborhood’s residents, including fountains, speakers playing music, and landscapes for skateboarding. We can also take a cue from artists who have borrowed from many cultures to create new forms of expression. Isamu Noguchi freely incorporated ideas from pre-Columbian sculpture to Hindu architectural

astronomical monuments. The recent work of musician Rhiannon Gibbens is a global mix, combining even early African-American banjo with Persian Sufi music.

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**In terms of architectural style, it seems that the current default approach is to avoid the questions of representation and relevance altogether.**

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The growing demographic and cultural diversity of our time, especially in large American cities, is a powerful reason for architects to start responding to a new world of users. Making the issue of multiculturalism central to our concerns as designers will create places that welcome diverse populations and give democracy a chance to thrive.

*Stephen Yablon, AIA, LEED AP, founded Stephen Yablon Architecture in 1995 and works with mission-driven educational and institutional clients to create public spaces that encourage social interaction, collaboration, and community. ■*

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## OP-ED

# FROM URBAN SEGREGATION TO SOCIAL DISINTEGRATION

BY EMRE AROLAT, HON. FAIA, RIBA

“What was your room number?” he asks, looking me sharply in the eye. The expression on his face seems to say that the entire beach is his personal property. “I don’t have a room; I’m not staying in the hotel,” I say. For some reason my voice is trembling. I feel like I’ve been caught red-handed. “In that case, I request that you not bring your chair into this area,” he says. For a split second my mind races back and forth between the courtesy of his speech and the coarseness of his body language. No matter how much I tell myself not to mind, this fellow is making me feel like a piece of garbage. I take a quick look around. To my left, blue and white umbrellas stretch out for a few hundred meters like soldiers in ranks. To my right, the rows of umbrellas are shiny red. Beefy-armed attendants at wooden huts hand out towels and beach chairs. The man who has planted himself

in front of me with his threatening manner must be one of them.

I fold up the plastic chair I bought for seven dollars on Collins Avenue right behind the beach and walk away, looking back over my shoulder now and then. His eyes are still following me. He must be at least 6’3” tall. His arms are thicker than my legs. *Don’t even think about it*, I tell the mindless tough guy within me.

Now what? I seem to have gotten too close to the red umbrellas! Another heavy-set youth comes up to me. “Are you looking for someone?” he asks, with the same rough manner as the first one. There must be someone in this city training all these guys to have the same tone of voice. You can’t tell one from the other. *No, buddy, what’s it to you? I’m not looking for anyone, just trying to find a quiet corner to read my book*, I want



to say. Instead, I take a deep breath. The blazing sun has got me in a bad enough temper. I say nothing and back away toward the street.

I'd heard the beaches in this city were open to the public. It seems the reality is something else. If you can't give your room number, you're out of luck. You can go to hell. You can either walk up and down the street, or get into the sea and stay there. I throw my chair into the first garbage bin I see. I got to sit in it only for a few moments. Oh well. So today was that kind of day.

Suddenly, I catch the scent of the ouzo I sipped on the simple beach of the beautiful Greek island of Leros. An involuntary smile spreads over my face. The tamarisk trees sway gently in the sweet light breeze. And how generously they share their shade year after year with those who use the beach—people of every class and color. First come the elderly people early in the morning. They swim long and chat together before the sun reaches its blazing peak. Then families appear, one by one. The elderly are replaced by children who never tire of the great joy they take in running into the sea, shouting. A little later large groups sit down to lunch of stuffed vegetables and tzatziki made of pure white yogurt. No one comes up to ask who you are, where you come from, where you are staying. No one cares what brand your shirt is. The melody of Greek singer Antonis Remos's "Kardi Mou" drifts across the beach. The inhabitants of Leros share the blessings God has bestowed on that beautiful little corner of the world with great generosity of heart.

I have come to travel a lot more in recent years. Last year Emre Arolat Architecture added a New York office to its busy Istanbul and London offices. What with

contexts, varied cultures, and worldviews not at all alike. And sometimes there are parallels so surprising you would never have thought them possible.

It is a very appealing and informative mental exercise to read in the physical structures of cities the social congruities of different geographies, their varied sociocultural layers, and of course their dominant political dimensions. Miami Beach is both a favorite locale of a jet-set society and a terrible example of a quality public space. A few years ago, while a visiting professor at the Yale School of Architecture, I considered the city with my students in the Advanced Design Studio. I recommended they rethink Miami Beach in the context of its architectural spaces and develop various proposals, going beyond the icon-making factors that have dominated the urban fabric in recent years. Could a quality planning strategy overcome this difficult problem we might call *urban segregation*—and the phenomenon of social disintegration it brings with it?

However impossible it may seem to keep up our work without getting caught in the wheels of the system, what kind of trump cards remain in the hands of an architect carrying out projects in this neoliberal environment we find ourselves in? What can we do for the public good? Can an architect occupy a position other than being an agent of the image industry, hopelessly carrying water for the mills of power? Can the power of design bring social classes together to ensure the diversity we seek?

We are living through a period when leaders all over the world are trying to increase their power at any cost. And, through the centuries, the city has been a kind of instrument such people have easily manipulated to display that power. At first glance it might not seem to

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### Could a quality planning strategy overcome this difficult problem we might call *urban segregation*—and the phenomenon of social disintegration it brings with it?

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these three important centers, plus projects ongoing around the world, academic work and conferences, a very active life is inevitable. In fact, I write this piece on the plane between New York and Miami. Beneath me, the evening blue of the Atlantic Ocean is finally turning sunset red—in my mind, the varied social climates of the tens of cities I have visited in recent months. So much travel could be tiring for some. But the truth is, I feel fortunate to have a chance to study these urban environments. Cities are mirrors of many things: varied

make much sense to weigh Miami Beach and the Blefouts Beach of Leros on the same scale. But we should not forget that cities become more attractive the more permeable they are, and a democratic urban politics is possible only to the degree that social diversity is inclusive and undiluted.

*Emre Arolat, Hon. FAIA, RIBA, is the founder of Emre Arolat Architecture, with offices in Istanbul and London. Last year, the firm opened an office in New York. ■*



## REVIEWS

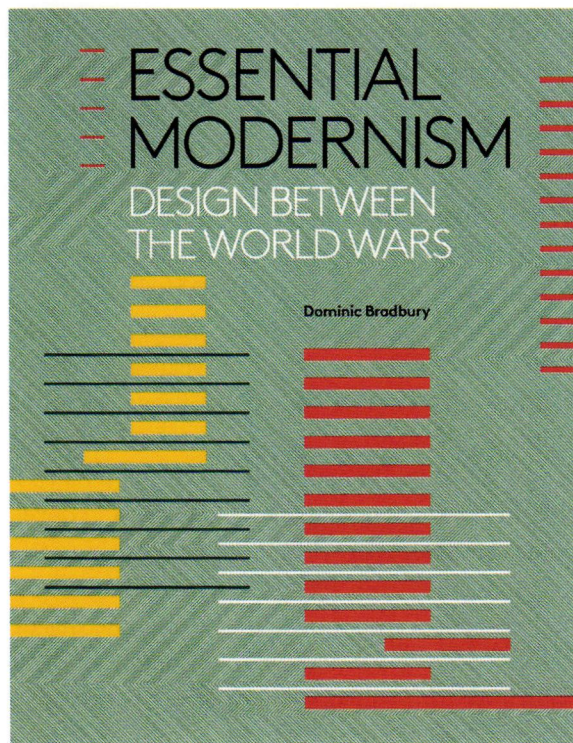
**Essential Modernism: Design Between the World Wars**, by Dominic Bradbury (with essays by Tim Binton, Mel Buchanan, Anne Hoy, Margret Kentgens-Craig, Jolanthe Kugler, Rick Poyner, Patrick and Laurence Seguin, and Patrick Wright). Yale University Press, New Haven. 2018. 480 pp.

This sumptuously illustrated survey highlights the work of modernist designers from the early 1920s to the mid-1940s. Its scope includes furniture, lighting, ceramics and glass, industrial and product design, graphics and posters, and architectural and interior design. The whole gang that created modern design is here, such as Mies van der Rohe, Corbu, Aalto, Wright, Eileen Gray, Moholy-Nagy, Rietveld, Gropius. A lot of treasures are pictured here, making it a perfect gift book. But forget friends—purchase this for yourself!

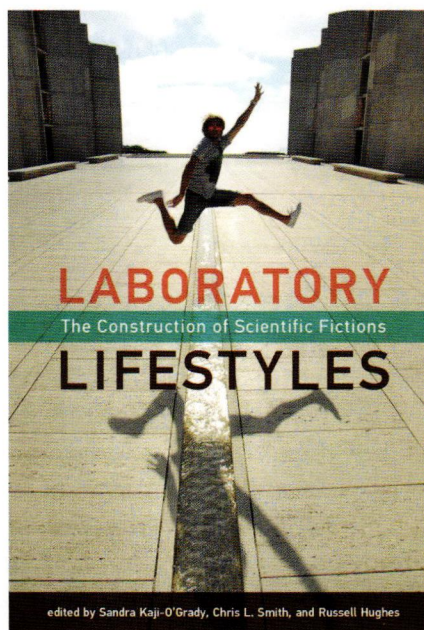
**Laboratory Lifestyles: The Construction of Scientific Fictions**, edited by Sandra Kaji-O'Grady, Chris L. Smith, and Russell Hughes. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2018. 274 pp.

This set of case studies on recent laboratories (approximately 18) contends that laboratories shape the lifestyles of their users, and lifestyle shapes the scientists who work in the labs. These claims are only episodically demonstrated.

Two cases of survival study experimentation—BioLab 2 in a self-contained environment in the Arizona desert, and Skylab where astronauts and cosmonauts were



isolated in outer space for months at a time—demonstrate the close relationships between work and lifestyle and their environment. In a few cases, locational choices clearly influenced life and work styles, notably the Southern California labs near the beach, and the carnival accessory to the Siberian lab at Novosibirsk.



The strongest contention is that softer spaces supporting interaction and intercommunication, amenities, staff dining facilities consistent with the science or location, along with creative uses of softer furnishings like Xerox PARC's bean-bag seats, attractive supportive architecture, and the attributes of the surrounding environment, may attract scientific staff and help to sustain esprit de corps and focus. But these

workplace design strategies are not new or unique to labs.

Research mission, alignment with staff, and facility organization are not discussed. No floor plans were presented to suggest that this, too, may have a compelling relationship to mission and lifestyle. There's no formula for what will make a research facility successful and productive as a hotbed of creativity and productivity. Every aspect of mission, staff, facility, management, and invested resources plays a part. This study, interesting and provocative as it is, has sliced the topic too thinly to make the connections.

*In honor of the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Guggenheim, check out these behind-the-scenes stories of the iconic building and its architect.*

**The Guggenheim: Frank Lloyd Wright's Iconic Masterpiece**, by Francesco Dal Co. Yale University Press, New Haven, 2017. 172 pp.

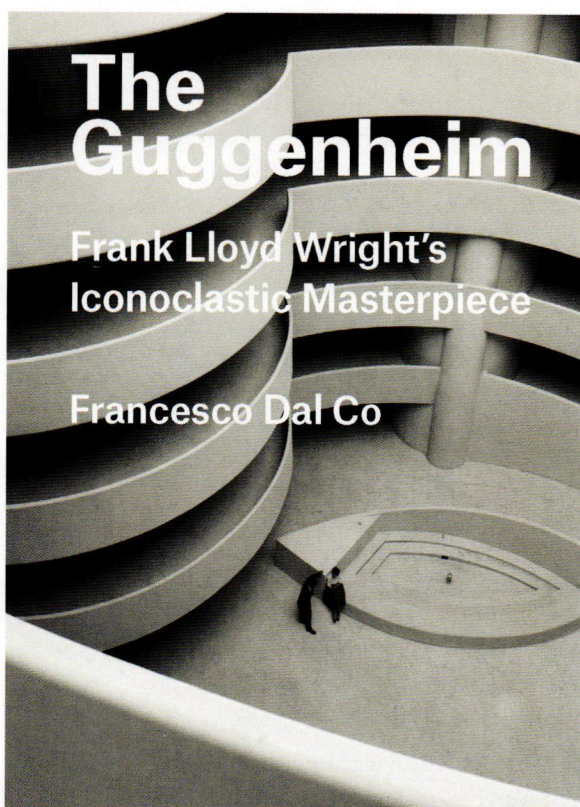
The Guggenheim is perhaps Wright's most famous accomplishment. It took 16 years to complete (1943–1959) and



was the source of both controversy and contention. Dal Co recounts the story in detail. He also makes it clear that it was Wright's creativity, haughty stubbornness, ability to strategically compromise, and iconoclasm that drove the design and allowed it to reach its conclusion. This was despite headwinds from the press, the artistic and critical communities, and the skeptical New York City building regulators.

was completed in 1959, six months after Wright's death. Ironically, the Guggenheim is now regarded as a New York treasure and, despite its limitations, one of the great museums of the world.

Dal Co has provided an insightfully observed, lavishly illustrated story of this adventure. Though named for Solomon Guggenheim, this is very much Mr. Wright's museum.



Wright's design of an inverted-spiral ramped ziggurat atop a low two-story base was conceived early and did not significantly change as the project migrated from site to site until it landed at Fifth Avenue between 88th and 89th streets. Throughout this long period, Wright matured his design while the invective that the design was an anti-urban and anti-museum continued to rage. Curiously, Robert Moses, then a powerful commissioner, helped smooth the way for local approvals. The building

more than 1,000 projects, and of these at least 500 were built, and 400 still exist. The majority of projects in this guide are homes, including Robie House, Fallingwater, Taliesin, and Taliesin West, and a number are Usonian houses and variants. A lot of these residential projects are under ownership of local governments, universities, foundations, and non-profits. Many of his larger non-residential projects are listed, including the Guggenheim Museum, Marin County Civic Center, SC Johnson Administration and Research Center, and Unity Temple.

**Wright Sites: A Guide to Frank Lloyd Wright Public Places (Fourth Edition). Frank Lloyd Building Conservancy,** edited by Joel Hoglund. Princeton Architectural Press, NY. 2017. 160 pp.

This guide, featuring Wright buildings available for public visits and tours, covers 74 of the architect's projects; 71 are in the U.S., and three are in Japan. We sometimes forget how prolific Wright was. Over his long career, he designed

This is a helpful guide for planning visits to Wright projects. But it is also an astounding reminder about how productive and influential Wright's career actually was.

*For your summer travels, a book worth a second look...*

**What's So Great About the Eiffel Tower? 70 Questions That Will Change the Way You Think about Architecture,** by Jonathan Glancy. Laurence King, London, 2017. 176 pp.

The former architecture critic at The Guardian and now a BBC commentator, Glancy rightly suggests that everything deserves a second look. So look he does—at buildings architects, cities, skylines, theories, and architectural movements. Using a rhetorical question as his starting point for each essay (e.g., "Sagrada Familia: Genius or gimcrackery?"), he imparts appreciations that may surprise, and recognitions that may have been lacking, along with some downgrades. These very short essays (70 in total) are keenly observed as well as entertaining. The lesson: It is always good to look again.

*Stanley Stark, FAIA, NCARB, LEED AP, is the book critic for Oculus. ■*

What's so great about the Eiffel Tower?  
*70 questions that will change the way you think about architecture*

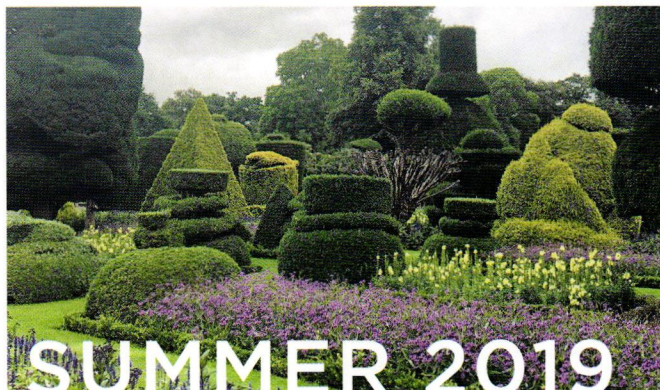


Jonathan Glancy



# CALENDAR

## Events and Exhibitions



Levens Hall, featured in the exhibition “Topiary Tango,” is the oldest topiary garden in the world, located in Cumbria England. The design was laid out between 1689 and 1712 by Guillaume Beaumont, a pupil of Andre Le Notre, who was famous for the gardens of Versailles.

### “Mapping Community” Symposium

*Saturday, June 15, 1–6pm*

### Yona Friedman’s Lexicon

*Friday, June 21, 6–8pm*

*With Yona Friedman, architect*

### Annual Golf Classic at Baltusrol Golf Club

*Monday, July 8, 10am registration, 12pm tee off*

### Outsourcing Oversight: The Question of Privatizing Civil Service in Architecture

*Wednesday, July 10, 6–8pm*

### “Topiary Tango” Opening

*Thursday, July 11, 6–8pm*

### “Topiary Tango”: Curator Talk

*Monday, July 15, 6–8pm*

*With Mark Zlotzky, Curator, Topiary Tango, 2017 Stewardson Keefe LeBrun Travel Grant recipient*

### Plaza Life Revisited: The Role of Small Urban Spaces 40 Years After Whyte

*Thursday, July 25, 6–8pm*

*With Thomas Balsley, FASLA, SWA/Balsley; Emily Schlickman, SWA Group*

### “Big Ideas for Small Lots NYC” Opening

*Thursday, August 1, 6–8pm*

For more information visit: [calendar.aiany.org](http://calendar.aiany.org)

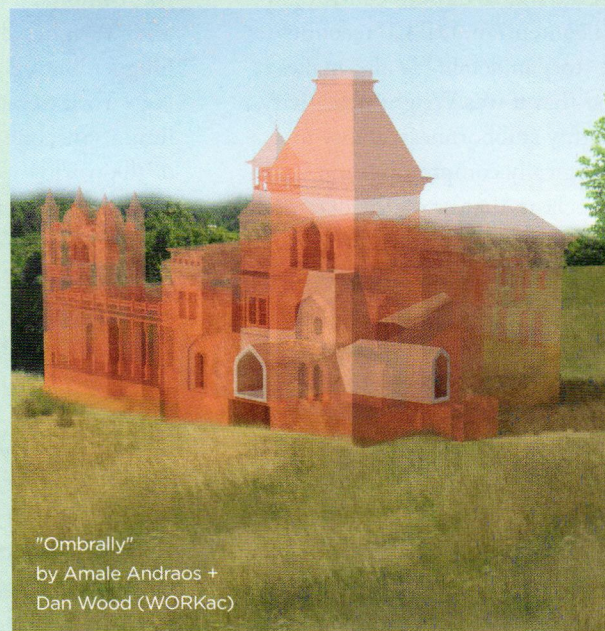


Image credit: Courtesy of Amale Andraos + Dan Wood (WORKac)

### BEYOND THE CENTER

## OLANA STATE HISTORIC SITE

5720 State Route 9G, Hudson, NY

### In Frederic Church’s Ombra: Architecture in Conversation with Nature

Tuesday–Sunday, 10am–5pm

Park open daily 8:30am–sunset

Exhibition through November 3, 2019

Frederic Church and architectural collaborator Calvert Vaux considered the outdoor “Ombra” room in Olana, the Church family’s 19th-century home, to be a space in transit. Designed to contemplate its expansive views of Hudson Valley, the room reconciles the dichotomy of inside and outside—as do the other unexplored transitional zones within the house. Exhibiting at Olana is a group of architects and artists invited by guest curator Barry Bergdoll to traverse these spaces and engage their natural surroundings. From the deeply resonant framework of climate crisis emerges a responding body of multimedia work—featuring, among others, Steven Holl, Tatiana Bilbao, and Amale Andraos and Dan Wood of WORKac. Designed by Spacesmith, the exhibition is on display until November 3. *YK*

Photo credit: Mark Zlotzky



## INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

### Summer 2019

ABC Stone Trading .....	5
Acoustical Surfaces.....CVR	3
AISC .....	CVR 2
ARCAT .....	1
Architectural Grille .....	11
Artistry in Architectural Grilles .....	17
Brass Light Gallery .....	18
E.W. Howell Co .....	12
Gamco Corporation.....	51
Hendrick Architectural Metals.....	13
Kee Safety.....	3
Ornamental Metal Institute of New York .....	6
Petersen Aluminum.....	9
Severud Associates Engineers ..CVR	4
Steel Institute of New York .....	4
Stony Creek Quarry .....	7

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# A GREEN CITY MUST ALSO BE AN INCLUSIVE CITY

**BENJAMIN PROSKY, ASSOC. AIA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
AIA NEW YORK CHAPTER CENTER FOR ARCHITECTURE**

Here's a scenario that most New Yorkers experience every winter: It's February. It's 17°F outside, and you are inside...sweating! Why? Because you live in a building that has steam heat, blasting uncontrollably. (Well, at least you have no control over it. You've turned the knobs on your radiator, but they do nothing.) So you open a window, and you can see the air get wavy as the heat wafts out and the room starts to cool. Or you may even turn on your A/C unit, sitting in your window all winter, to counter the extreme heat of your apartment. In the summer, that same A/C unit, installed precariously in your window with a piece of cardboard and maybe a towel "insulating" the gaps around it, is blasting as the heat leaks in around it and the manufactured cold air leaks out. New Yorkers, this is not normal! It is wasteful—of resources and of finances—and it is part of the reason why buildings in NYC (mostly older ones) contribute around 70% of the city's carbon emissions. Why do we rent or even purchase housing at prices higher than in almost any other city, and accept these conditions?

Help is on the way, or so we hope. In April 2019, on the cusp of Earth Day, with the support of the AIA New York Chapter and several other sustainable advocacy

groups, the New York City Council passed our city's first retrofit bill. The bill aims to legislate the retrofitting of residential buildings 25,000 square feet and larger with green heating and cooling systems, double-paned windows that don't leak air in or out, and the sealing up of roofs that leak hot and cold air, among other sustainable improvements. This is a bold step towards NYC's goal of reducing our carbon emissions 80% by the year 2050.

We must figure out how this will be done, who will pay for it, and how to ensure that the green retrofitting of NYC's buildings will be an exercise in inclusivity: That, no matter our income level, we will all live and work in healthy and comfortable environments, outside and in.

As New York was legislating steps to address its large stock of polluting buildings, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network: A Global Initiative of the United Nations recently convened a think tank of architects, academics, and activists for a dialogue on sustainability at Columbia University. The think tank's host, economist, and sustainability visionary, Professor Jeffrey Sachs, tasked participants to think about creative ways to promote the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to "make cities and human settle-

ments inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable." These key themes also appear in the U.S. Conference of Mayors's priorities.

Reviewing these goals and thinking about how each of us can work towards them in our own projects, or advocate for legislative action supporting them, will help us collectively create sustainable and inclusive cities. Here are the SDGs's Sustainable Cities and Community targets:

1. Ensure safe and affordable housing.
2. Provide affordable and sustainable transport systems.
3. Guarantee inclusive and sustainable urbanization.
4. Protect the world's cultural and natural heritage.
5. Reduce the adverse effects of natural disasters.
6. Reduce the environmental impact of cities.
7. Provide access to safe and inclusive urban spaces.
8. Establish strong national and regional development planning.
9. Implement policies for inclusion, resource efficiency, and disaster risk reduction.
10. Support least developed countries in sustainable and resilient building.

For more information about the UN's Sustainable Development Network, log on to [www.unsdsn.org](http://www.unsdsn.org). ■

Photo credit: Courtesy NYC City Council

