

A photograph of a rooftop garden with a water feature. The water is flowing over a series of steps, creating a small waterfall effect. The garden is filled with various green plants, including tall grasses and shrubs. In the background, a modern building is visible under a clear blue sky. Several people are walking on a paved path that runs alongside the water feature.

# 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

DESIGN TRUST  
FOR PUBLIC SPACE

30 YEARS OF TRANSFORMING NYC'S PUBLIC SPACES

DESIGNING AN EQUITABLE WATER FUTURE FOR NYC

OPENING THE EDGE

GREEN SPACE CONNECTIONS

COMMON YARDS

REIMAGINING THE ENSLAVED AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND

NEW YORK: CITY DESIGNED

THE NEURODIVERSE CITY

UNTAPED

## OUR MISSION

The Design Trust for Public Space is a non-profit organization that unlocks the potential of New York's public spaces. Our unique model catalyzes design ideas into action for a more just and equitable city.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS\*

Eve Klein, PhD, Chair	Jerrold Delaine	Jonathan Vazcones
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Matthew Casper	Jean-Gabriel Neukomm, AIA	
Nick Colvin	Dominic Ramos-Ruiz	
R. Darby Curtis, AIA	Greg Reaves, AIA, LEED AP	

†Ted Berger passed away in January, 2026. The Design Trust thanks him for a lifetime of advocacy and will strive to honor his legacy and vision for NYC.

### STAFF\*

Matthew Clarke, Executive Director
Dakota Billops-Breaux, Communications and Events Intern
Patricia Argueta-Medina, Senior Operations and Program Manager
Layla Dozier, Communications and Events Coordinator
Elana Ehrenberg, Strategic Partnerships Director
Alexa Mauzy-Lewis, Communications Director
Alisa Schierman, Development Director
Akemi Sato, Program Director
Matthew Franchi, Cornell PiTech Impact Fellow
Giuliana Tepedino, New York City Designed Intern
Natalie McGuire, Bookkeeper

\*Staff and board who worked with Design Trust in 2025. Meet our current team at [www.designtrust.org/people](http://www.designtrust.org/people)

## LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS




*Matthew Clarke*  
Matthew Clarke  
Executive Director



*Eve Klein*  
Eve Klein  
PHD, Board Chair

In 2025, the Design Trust for Public Space celebrated three decades of transformative public space design in New York City. For our 30th birthday, we reflected on our impacts across the five boroughs—from our first project developing design guidelines for the Brooklyn Public Library system, to reclaiming the High Line as an open public space, and to our recent efforts at removing permitting barriers for hosting events and resources in shared spaces—and began to imagine what the next thirty years of public space should look like. On the heels of reduced funding streams, New York City's public realm needs renewed investment. **We announced the Campaign for Public Space**, a call to action to raise \$1,000,000 by 2027 to ensure that future generations can gather together in community, fully participate in New York's cultural life, and benefit from the many impacts of high-quality public space. **This year, our work demonstrated the potential and power of public space projects.** After a decade of advocacy, we opened a new outdoor space designed by and for New York City Housing Authority residents in the Lower East Side. Opening the Edge inspired four resident-led projects in Brooklyn and the Bronx, including ribbon-cuttings this year of NYCHA's first dog park at Castle Hill

Houses and a new basketball court for the Patterson Houses. We released a toolkit to help NYC's public housing residents bring open space improvements like these to their own backyards, and hosted a national convening of public housing authorities with the Trust for Public Land to scale this work across the country. **Our city is at its best when it's public for all.** The Neurodiverse City unveiled two prototypes exploring how sensory design can improve New York's accessibility, and we continued our partnership with the Macaulay Honors College at CUNY, creating internship opportunities for New York students and access to jobs in the urban planning and design sectors. To lay the groundwork for tomorrow's public spaces, we launched our 12th and most ambitious open call for project ideas on the theme of Water, and announced a Design Ideas Competition to reimagine the Enslaved African Burial Ground at Van Cortlandt Park, creating new visions for memorial and healing. Learn more about all of these initiatives and more throughout this report. We are deeply grateful to our board and staff for their guidance, and to our friends and donors for their passion and dedication to protecting and evolving public space. **Thank you for making the Design Trust impact possible!**



Water never stays the same, it's piped, pooled, treated, wasted, recycled.

DESIGN TRUST LAUNCHES ITS 12TH OPEN CALL FOR PROJECT IDEAS AT THE WHITNEY. PHOTO CREDIT FILIP WOLAK. WATER GRAPHIC DESIGN BY MTWTF STUDIO.

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

water: designing an equitable water future for new york city

DESIGN TRUST FOR PUBLIC SPACE NEXT 30 YEARS

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

# WATER: DESIGNING AN EQUITABLE FUTURE FOR NYC

We opened our 12th **public call for project ideas** on the theme of water in September, 2025!

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Atef Ahmed, Port Authority of NY & NJ

Terri Carta, Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy

Vincent Lee, ARUP

Kara Meyer, +Pool

Siddhartha Sanchez, Bronx River Alliance

Shawn Slevin, Swim Strong Foundation

Lee Altman, SCAPE

Alan Cohn, NYC Department of Environmental Protection

Lisette Mendez-Boyer, AIA, AICP, LEED AP, HKS

Katie Mosher, Billion Oyster Project

Alice Shay, Buro Happold

Dara Byrne, PhD, Macaulay Honors College, CUNY

Ray Fusco, WEDG, Hudson Canyon Consulting

Daphne Lundi, Urban Ocean Lab

Mary Miss, City as Living Laboratory

Eric Sanderson, PhD, New York Botanical Garden

### FELLOWS

#### Daphne Lundi

Climate Resilience and Design Fellow

### SUPPORTERS

Amalgamated Bank

ARUP Consultants

Buro Happold

Cozen O'Connor

HKS Architects

New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature

Woodner Foundation

**Water: Designing an Equitable Future for NYC** invited New Yorkers to submit new project ideas, aiming to incubate solutions to the pressures exerted on New York by too much or too little water and connecting New Yorkers with the cultural vibrancy and memory inherent in our waterways.

Central to our mission and program is our Request for Proposals (RFP), which solicits ideas to realize projects that address a key public space concern in New York City. Organized around a central theme, each RFP cycle is grounded by extensive community outreach and engagement, ensuring alignment with community needs and interests. Final proposals are implemented with the guidance and support of the Design Trust, alongside a range of partners, including city agencies, stakeholder groups, and private sector experts.

The future of the city's public life depends on shifting our relationship with water in all its various forms—rain, oceans, rivers—and the multiple ways we engage with it—construction, art, play, drinking, sewage. To do so, the Design Trust invited New Yorkers to turn their ideas for a more equitable water future into actionable solutions. The two-year initiative will develop up to five water project proposals into tangible initiatives, supported by \$10,000 each in funding and an incubation process guided by the Design Trust and an advisory committee of city agencies, community stakeholders, and design experts. The winning projects will be announced in Spring 2026.



LEFT: SELECTION FROM NATHAN KENSINGER'S "DESIRE LINES & DAYLIGHTING" EXHIBITION. RIGHT: PHOTO URBANISM YOUTH FELLOWS VISIT PIER 52 EXHIBITION WITH KENSINGER OR "DESIRE LINES & DAYLIGHTING" EXHIBITION WALL AT PIER 52.

## PHOTO URBANISM EXHIBITION

# DESIRE LINES & DAYLIGHTING

The **Photo Urbanism** program offers fellowships to local photographers to showcase their artistic perspectives on the public spaces of NYC through a public exhibition, and the opportunity to lead youth photography workshops. In 2025, Photo Urbanism Fellow Nathan Kensinger documented the fight to protect and expand waterfront access in NYC. View the exhibition's digital gallery at [photourbanism.org](http://photourbanism.org)

### FELLOWS

#### **Nathan Kensinger**

Photo Urbanism Fellow

### PARTNERS

Pier 57

### SUPPORTERS

NYC Department of Cultural Affairs

New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

Guardians of Flushing Bay

Harlem River Coalition

Newtown Creek Alliance

NYC H2O

South Bronx Unite Rockrose, 200

Water St

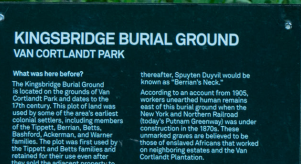


New York City has 520 miles of coastline, but for hundreds of thousands of local residents, the closest waterway is often inaccessible, cut off by train lines, highways, and fences.

Focusing on waterfront communities in The Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens, the "**Desire Lines & Daylighting**" exhibition by filmmaker and photojournalist Nathan Kensinger offers a mix of photographs and interviews uncovering work to reclaim and restore coastlines that have been polluted and cut off by industrialization. Kensinger follows community organizations along the shoreline of the Harlem River and Bronx Kill, the waterfront of Flushing Bay and Flushing Creek, and the coast of Newtown Creek, where residents have created their own informal pathways to these waterways, while environmental stewards have designed proposals to restore habitats, creating much-needed green spaces and public access. Hosted at one of the only indoor public spaces on Manhattan's waterfront, the exhibition was on display in Pier 57's Living Room in June 2025 and accompanied by an opening night talk and closing panel on waterfront access.

As part of the **Photo Urbanism** Fellowship, Nathan also led a workshop-based youth fellowship with six photographers, ages 16-19, teaching technical skills and offering ways to observe and engage with the urban environment. Exploring waterfront neighborhoods, the youth fellows experimented with DSLR, polaroids, and phone photography to share their own perspectives on NYC's waterways.

LEFT: VAN CORTLANDT PARK AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND SIGN COURTESY OF VCPA. RIGHT: DESIGN IDEAS GRAPHIC DESIGN BY MTWTF STUDIO



## 2025 PROJECT

# REIMAGINING THE ENSLAVED AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND AT VAN CORTLANDT PARK

### PARTNERS

Van Cortlandt Park Alliance  
Immanuel Oni, Liminal sp

### SUPPORTERS

Mellon Foundation  
Macaulay Honors College at City University of New York

### LEGACY COUNCIL

Alice Michelle Augustine, Lehman College  
Erin Clarke, VCPA Board  
Nick Dembowski, Kingsbridge Historical Society  
Mary Dillard, Sarah Lawrence College  
Carla Lynne Hall, Artist  
Margaret Holmes, Van Cortlandt House Museum  
Judith Insell, Bronx Arts Ensemble  
Jen Lantzas, NYC Parks  
Judy Mills-Johnson, VCPA Board  
Tijay Mohammed, Artist

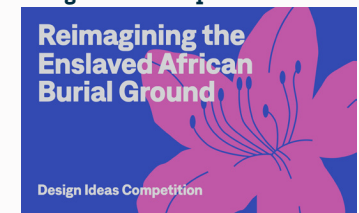
Celia Naylor, Barnard College  
Mimi Peters-Davis, Philipse Manor Hall

Julie Reyes, Bronx Community Board 8

Juan Usera, Musician

Lehman College Youth Members:  
Audrey Adon-Rosario, Amna Ishaq, Anthony Johnson, Paula Swanzyamissah

Van Cortlandt Park Alliance is partnering with the Design Trust for Public Space to reimagine an **Enslaved African Burial Ground** site in the Bronx as a memorial space that fosters long-term healing and restoration, through a **Design Ideas Competition**.



Van Cortlandt Park is home to an Enslaved African Burial Ground that was officially acknowledged and named by NYC Parks on Juneteenth in 2021, due to the efforts of Van Cortlandt Park Alliance and the Enslaved People Project. Despite this recognition, the space remains largely unmarked. Van Cortlandt Park Alliance has partnered with the Design Trust for Public Space and Liminal sp to create a community-informed design for a new memorial that connects Bronx neighbors and visitors to the history of the space, confronts its painful legacy, and invites opportunities for gathering, educating, and healing.

Guided by a Legacy Council made up of local Bronx organizations, community members, thought leaders, and artists, the collaborative project, **Reimagining the Enslaved African Burial Ground at Van Cortlandt Park**, hosted a series of events throughout the summer and fall of 2025 to raise more awareness of the site. In addition to this engagement, the Legacy Council took field trips to sacred sites around the city defining values for a future memorial. The programming also created opportunities to survey the surrounding community, informing a **Design Ideas Competition** launched in November that aligns with the needs of the neighborhood and descendants. The Reimagining project's Request for Qualifications sought architects, artists, and design firms to submit their qualifications to create a proposal for a future memorial's design. Finalists will be announced with their visions publicly exhibited in 2026.



## The Neurodiverse City

VCA SENSORY PLAYGROUND PILOT BY KATT MANZUETA.  
NEURODIVERSITY GRAPHIC DESIGN BY MTWTF STUDIO.

### 2025 PROJECT

## THE NEURODIVERSE CITY: RETHINKING PUBLIC SPACE ACCESS

#### PARTNERS

Verona Carpenter Architects  
WIP Collaborative

#### SUPPORTERS

Trinity Church NYC  
Philanthropies  
National Endowment for the Arts

#### COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

AHRC New York  
Center for Independence of the  
Disabled, NY  
INCLUDEnyc  
NYC Department of Education  
NYC Department of Health and  
Mental Hygiene  
NYC Department Transportation  
PS 112m, PS 42m and the ASD  
Nest Program  
Rockrose, 200 Water St

#### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Fatimah Aure, The Kelsey  
Lydia X. Z. Brown, Autistic Women  
& Non-Binary Network

Jezz Chung, Multimedia  
Storyteller, Self-Advocate  
Cheryelle Cruickshank,  
INCLUDEnyc

Christopher Diamond,  
Department of Design  
Construction

Faye Ginsburg, NYU Center for  
Disability Studies

Aimi Hamrai, Critical Design Lab  
May Lee, PS42m

Sharon McLennon-Wier, Center  
for Independence of the Disabled

Magda Mostafa, The American  
University in Cairo

Christopher Noel, NYC  
Department of Parks and  
Recreation

Kristie Patten, New York  
University

Eman Rimawi-Doster, Harlem  
Independent Living Center

Emily Weidenhof, NYC  
Department of Transportation

Jen White Johnson, Artist, Self-  
Advocate

For neurodivergent New Yorkers, families, and visitors, the cognitive, sensory, and social overload of the city's urban landscape can make essential public spaces, like our streets, parks, playgrounds, and transit systems, difficult to access, if not unusable. The Design Trust, Verona Carpenter Architects, WIP Collaborative, and a network of disability advocates are rethinking the design of New York City's public spaces to better support neurodiversity. A winner of our 2021 RFP themed on health equity, **The Neurodiverse City**, is learning from the experience and knowledge of neurodivergent self-advocates and families to create prototypes for accessible design practices.

Guided sensory audits and visioning workshops in partnership with AHRC NYC, WIP tested a neuroinclusive streetscape design pilot at a privately-owned public space in the Financial District and at Louise Nevelson Plaza. The street prototype features touchable plants, nature soundscapes, and architectural elements to create a room-like refuge. Working with NYC Public Schools and the Autism Spectrum Disorders Nest Program, Verona Carpenter Architects debuted a sensory playscape at PS112m, transforming a concrete schoolyard into a flexible 'garden' with mobile sensory zones. The Neurodiverse City will seek new partnerships for community organizations to bring the design pilots to their neighborhoods, and create a final publication of learnings, best design practices, and accessibility policy recommendations that will be published in 2026.

LEFT: TURNOUT NYC WITH THE QUEENSBORO DANCE FESTIVAL BY ANDRE WHITEHEAD. RIGHT: ROLLER JAM COURTESY OF UPTOWN GRAND CENTRAL



## 2025 PROJECT

# UNTAPED: REMOVING BARRIERS FOR PUBLIC SPACE PROGRAMMING

### PARTNERS

City Parks Foundation  
Trust for Public Land

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

Queensboro Dance Festival  
Alice Austen House  
The Point CDC  
Uptown Grand Central  
Brownsville Community Justice Center

### AGENCY ADVISORS

NYC Department of Transportation  
NYC Parks Department

### FELLOWS

**Jack Shugrue**  
UX Design Fellow  
**Pedro Cruz Cruz**  
Public Space Management Fellow  
**Nur Asri**  
Public Space Management Fellow

### SUPPORTERS

NYC Green Fund  
New York Community Trust

In 2024, an expansive network of public realm leaders announced a new project, **Untaped**, aimed at removing the barriers that make hosting events and programming in public spaces, including streets, sidewalks, parks, and plazas challenging for so many organizations in New York City. Following a year of research and workshops with public space programmers, private-sector funders, and key city agencies, Untaped will be releasing a publication of policy recommendations in 2026.



Public spaces are vital places where New Yorkers feel connected to their city and each other. From block parties to park performances, community-based organizations, artists, cultural producers, small businesses, and neighborhood leaders enliven public spaces, boost economies, and make the five boroughs happier and healthier, however they are up against complex permitting systems, financial burden, and inconsistent rules across agencies. These challenges are most acute in historically underinvested neighborhoods, where improved public space programming can have the greatest impact.

At this critical moment for the future of NYC's public space access, **Untaped** is generating new ideas for policy reform and expanding resources. This project, grounded in the learnings and coalitions built as part of Design Trust's **Turnout NYC** and **Neighborhood Commons** initiatives, recognizes the potential of public spaces as vibrant venues for the arts, local culture, education, culinary experiences, and more, seeking to make NYC's civic commons more open and inclusive.

Untaped brought together over 55 stakeholders across all five boroughs to offer a roadmap for a city where public space is truly public, open, accessible, and animated by the full diversity of its people. Eight core recommendations for regulatory reform, a call to action for the new Mamdani Administration on public realm management, will be released in 2026.



OPENING THE EDGE RIBBON-CUTTING BY TAMEEK WILLIAMS

## 2025 PROJECT

# PUBLIC HOUSING AND PARKS: OPENING THE EDGE

### PARTNERS

New York City Housing Authority  
Davies Toews Architecture  
PARC Foundation

### FELLOWS

**Jane Greengold**  
Participatory Art Fellow  
**Kate Sweater**  
Lighting Design Fellow  
**Immanuel Oni**  
Active Design Fellow  
**Destiny Mata**  
Community Organizing Fellow  
**Javan Blackshear**  
Community Organizing Fellow  
**Lee Jimenez**  
Art Fellow  
**Mollie Serena**  
Community Engagement Fellow  
**Rebecca Hill\***  
Landscape Architecture Fellow

*\*OTE honors the legacy of Rebecca Hill Leising, who passed away in 2020.*

### SUPPORTERS

Former Manhattan Borough  
President Gale Brewer  
Former New York City Council  
Member Carlina Rivera  
Former New York City Council  
Speaker Corey Johnson  
New York State Council on the  
Arts  
National Endowment for the Arts  
NYC Building Congress  
Foundation  
NYC Department of Cultural  
Affairs  
PARC Foundation  
Public Housing Community Fund  
Shelley & Donald Rubin  
Foundation  
Trinity Church NYC  
Philanthropies  
Leviticus Fund  
Fund for the City of New York

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

Lillian Wald Houses Community  
Design Team

**Opening the Edge** was proposed by Jane Greengold to our 2014 RFP, **Energetic City: An Open Call to Build Connectivity in the Public Realm**. Jane noticed that many public housing campuses contained fenced-off and unused empty grass plots, creating what she saw as “physical and psychological barriers” between residents and their neighborhoods. Developed in partnership with NYCHA, a resident-led, participatory design project was formed to target one such fence at the Lillian Wald Houses in the Lower East Side, aiming to create a new, welcoming open space for the community. Since 2016, a coalition of neighbors and community organizers have been advocating for this project, holding many community design meetings and outreach events.

In 2025, we finally cut the ribbon and opened up the park with the residents, designers, and city leaders who made it happen. The new space features benches to relax and catch up with neighbors, a raised platform for performances, tables, paths, and new lighting, and will be stewarded by the residents' network into the future.

Taking down one fence inspired systematic change for how NYCHA thinks about their open spaces. Along the way, this work inspired NYCHA's Connected Communities framework, an initiative centering participatory planning and design to enhance vibrant, safer, and more resilient open spaces in NYCHA communities across the five boroughs. Opening the Edge also laid the blueprint for Design Trust to scale citywide and national projects, learn more on the next pages!

RIBBON-CUTTING AT CASTLE HILL HOUSES OF NYCHA'S FIRST DOG PARK AT BY TAMEEK WILLIAMS



## 2025 PROJECT

# PUBLIC HOUSING AND PARKS: GREEN SPACE CONNECTIONS

### PARTNERS

New York City Housing Authority  
Public Housing Community Fund  
Center for Justice Innovation

### FELLOWS

#### Felix Rosen

Harvard Graduate School of  
Design Community Service Fellow

#### Nicole Vlado Torres AIA, NOMA

NYCHA Open Space Toolkit Policy  
& Planning Fellow

#### Blake Roberts

NYCHA Open Space Toolkit  
Communications & Design Fellow

### COMMUNITY COLLABORATORS

Marlboro Houses  
Roosevelt Houses  
Castle Hill Houses  
Patterson Houses

### SUPPORTERS

Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley  
Charitable Trust

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Keri Butler, The Municipal Art  
Society of New York

Jessica Cruz, NYC Mayor's Office  
of Climate and Environmental  
Justice

Tonya Gayle, Green City Force  
Tamara Greenfield, Downtown  
Brooklyn Partnership

Nick Molinari, NYC Parks  
Heather Lubov, City Parks  
Foundation

Delma Palma, Empire State  
Development

Tracy Perrizo, The Leona M. and  
Harry B. Helmsley Charitable  
Trust

Sideya Sherman, Mayor's Office  
of Equity

Eva Trimble, New York City  
Housing Authority

David Vega-Barachowitz, WXY

Tamika Williams-Moore,  
Citywide Council of Presidents,

Download the NYCHA open space toolkit at  
[www.communityfund.nyc.org/openspace](http://www.communityfund.nyc.org/openspace)

Public housing is an integral part of the city's landscape and home to hundreds of thousands New Yorkers. At the same time, nearly 80% of open spaces across NYCHA sites are underutilized. **Green Space Connections** is working with residents to create and activate outdoor community spaces at four sites in Brooklyn and the Bronx, building green, happy, healthy, and connected communities. The four campuses were selected due to their documented high need in health indicators as well as climate vulnerability. In 2025, we celebrated ribbon-cuttings at two new green spaces at the Castle Hill Houses and Patterson Houses. Through community engagement, residents decided what their neighborhoods needed most. Castle Hill worked with Grain Collective to lay the blueprint for NYCHA's first-dog park, plus an updated BBQ and picnic area. Hoopbus and Kompan helped the Patterson Houses bring to life a new basketball court, playground, and fitness zone. Construction on the two remaining sites will be completed in 2026.

To amplify the lessons of the project and empower a wider reach of New York public housing residents, Green Space Connections created a practical design and resources guide for non-profit organizations and resident leaders to navigate the process of bringing open space projects to their own communities, via the **From Imagine To Activate: Open Space Toolkit For NYCHA**. We hosted a publication release at the AIA Center for Architecture in January 2025, and shared the resource in a citywide PSA campaign.



## PUBLIC PROGRAM

# PUBLIC HOUSING AND PARKS: COMMON YARDS CONVENING

### PARTNERS

Trust for Public Land

### SPEAKER LINEUP

Shaun Donovan, Enterprise Community Partners and former U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development

Lisa Bova-Hiatt, NYCHA

Kenzie Bok, Boston Housing Authority

Rasmia Kirmani, Center for Justice Innovation

Lisa Lee, National Public Housing Museum

Gus Fahey, Valley in Motion

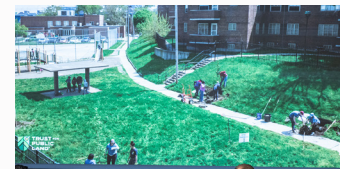
Delma Palma, LSE Architects

Alex Zablocki, Public Housing Community Fund

Jonathan Vazcones, Amalgamated Bank

Justin Cutler, Parks & Recreation, City of Atlanta

NOV 13 & 14, 2025



Communities thrive when housing and public space work together to support residents' well-being. **Common Yards** was a two-day convening exploring the powerful intersection of parks, green space, and public housing. Hosted at 320 Park and inspired by our NYC public housing projects, and Trust for Public Land's nationwide mission to ensure that every person, in every community, can enjoy the benefits of a high-quality park within a 10-minute walk of home, this event brought together public housing authorities, designers, open space experts, funders, and other civic leaders to activate new networks and scale green space improvements in public housing communities nationwide.

As cities face severe housing shortages and growing public health, environmental, and economic pressures, this moment calls for integrated, tangible, and local solutions. By forming creative, cross-sector partnerships, these open spaces can be reimaged into vital community infrastructure, and sustained as central to residents' sense of home and neighborhood vitality.

A free public program featured panels and keynotes making the case for Common Yards, and a call to action to generate momentum for the future. We also invited a select cohort of public housing authority leaders from across the country to NYC site visits, peer learning presentations, and group workshops on expanding the network and capacity of housing authorities to integrate quality social green infrastructure into the everyday lives of public housing residents.



## ONGOING PROGRAM

# NEW YORK, CITY DESIGNED: URBAN PLANNING CAREER PATHWAYS

**New York: City Designed** is a year-long program at the Macaulay Honors College of the City University of New York managed by the Design Trust, featuring an overview seminar, place-based field workshop, and summer internship opportunities.

### PARTNERS

Macaulay Honors College at CUNY

### ADVISORY COMMITTEE

3x3 Design  
Grand Central Partnership  
Historic House Trust of NYC  
HR&A Advisors  
Jamestown LP  
NYC Department of City Planning  
NYC Department of Health & Mental Hygiene  
NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission  
NYC Mayor's Office (Public Realm)  
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation  
TenBerke Architects  
Times Square Alliance

Trust for Public Land  
WXY Studio

### SUPPORTERS

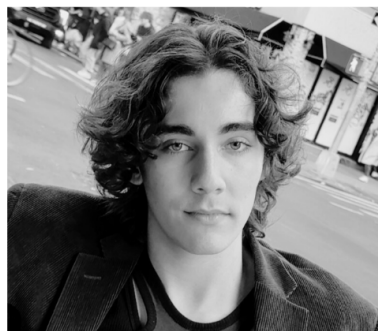
ABNY Foundation  
Macaulay Honors College  
Richard Hampton Jenrette Foundation

### MEET THE 2025 INTERN COHORT

Daniel Berlinsky: TenBerke Architects  
Kyle Gutierrez: NYC Department of Parks and Recreation  
Meher Kapoor: NYC Department of City Planning  
Erika Mondragon: Trust for Public Land  
Manya Sabu: Jamestown LP  
Giuliana Tepedino: Design Trust for Public Space  
Adriana Wu: Historic House Trust of NYC  
Tammy Zhao: NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene  
Matthew Zhou: NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission

We've partnered with the Macaulay Honors College at CUNY to grow the pipeline of students from underrepresented backgrounds in the planning, design, and preservation fields. **New York: City Designed** aims to give students a deeper understanding of New York City as a metropolis that has been purposefully designed over centuries. With a mixture of experiential learning, workshop-based problem-solving internship placements, and in-depth site visits, the program equips participants with the skills to be agents of change, access jobs in the planning and design sectors, and to take power as residents of New York. Students can participate segmentally or in the entire sequence, depending on their interests and needs. The program can form as a core part of the curriculum for an aspiring architect or planner or it can augment an existing area of study.

Spearheaded by a steering committee of city agencies, non-profits, and private-sector design and architecture firms, many participating organizations host students through funded on-site internship placements. Seeking to bring a wide diversity of student groups into conversations of city-making, throughout the year students gain tools for urban design analysis and critique that will prepare them for careers in the planning, design, and preservation fields. All nine student-interns participating in the program this past summer 2025 brought a unique set of interests, skills, perspectives, and a shared passion for urban design and planning, to our DT office!



## FELLOWS FORUM

# 2025 DESIGN TRUST PROJECT FELLOWS

Design Trust Fellows are top professionals who join our project teams and lead research, design and planning work. Our **Fellows Forum** is a community network of fellows past and present with access to special events, grant programs, and opportunities to amplify their current work! Our fellowship program is supported by the Roger Sterling Clark Foundation Meet our 2025 cohort of project fellows:

*(Fellow photos featured left to right)*

### **Daphne Lundi | Water RFP**

Climate Resilience and Design Fellow

### **Nathan Kensinger | Photo Urbanism**

Photo Urbanism Fellow: Water

### **Nur Asri | Untaped**

Public Space Management Fellow

### **Pedro Cruz Cruz | Untaped**

Public Space Management Fellow

### **Jack Shugrue | Untaped**

UX Design Fellow

### **Matthew Franci | Untaped**

Cornell PiTech Impact Fellow

### **Blake Roberts | Green Space Connections**

Communications and Design Fellow

### **Nicole Vlado Torres | Green Space Connections**

Policy and Planning Fellow

### **Felix Rosen | Green Space Connections & Common Yards**

Former Fellow & Trust for Public Land Event Partner

### **Mollie Serena | Opening the Edge**

Community Engagement Fellow

### **Jane Greengold | Opening the Edge**

Participatory Art Fellow

### **Immanuel Oni | Reimagining the Enslaved African Burial Ground & Opening the Edge**

Community Engagement Partner & Former Active Design Fellow



TOP: GREEN SPACE CONNECTIONS FELLOWS LAUNCH THE NYCHA OPEN SPACE TOOLKIT BY TAMEEK WILLIAMS. BOTTOM: PHOTO URBANISM FELLOW LEADS YOUTH WORKSHOPS





## 2025 EVENTS

# BENEFIT FOR PUBLIC SPACE

**JUN 12, 2025** We returned to the beautiful New York Public Library Stavros Niarchos Branch Rooftop to host our annual Benefit for Public Space (with city views open to the public during the library's operating hours). Each year, our Annual Benefit honors innovative leaders who are instrumental in the positive transformation of the city's shared landscape. Friends of Design Trust – our Fellows, community partners, design professionals, civic leaders, and fellow public space lovers – gathered to celebrate our project work and the future of public space in NYC. We presented the 2025 Public Space Leadership awards to: **The Public Theater's Revitalization of the Delacorte Theater**, home to the iconic Free Shakespeare in Central Park and **HR&A Advisors** for 50 years of building equitable and resilient communities and shaping city planning.

In celebration of our 30th anniversary year, we also presented a special tribute to Design Trust Board Member Ted Berger, a noted leader in the New York arts community and integral part of the Design Trust's origin story. In recognition of Ted's decades-long service, we renamed the Public Space Civic Leadership Award, the Berger Prize. Ted passed away in January of 2026, We will continue to cherish his legacy and impact, and honor his vision for a city that celebrates and makes the arts accessible for all.



## 2025 EVENTS

# PUBLIC SPACE POTLUCKS, PANELS, AND PROGRAMS

In celebration of our 30th anniversary, we threw a party all year long, with an exciting roster of public programs, events, and public space field trips around the city, including:

**JAN 30 FROM IMAGINE TO ACTIVATE** At the AIA Center for Architecture, we launched a new toolkit and resource for public housing residents and community groups, *From Imagine to Activate: A Quick Reference Guide for Improving NYCHA Open Spaces in Five Easy Steps*

**MAR 6 WATER TALKS: INSIDE DEP** Open House New York and the Design Trust hosted a sold-out special talk with Rohit T. Aggarwala, Commissioner of the NYC Department of Environmental Protection, in conversation with infrastructure expert Kate Ascher at the SVA theatre.

**APR 17 GREEN SPACE CONNECTIONS LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST** We hosted a breakfast at the New York Botanical Garden with local elected officials to share the Green Space Connections work and the *From Imagine to Activate* toolkit.

**JULY 16 PANEL: CREATING ACCESS TO NYC WATERFRONTS** To close out the Photo Urbanism program's exhibition summer run at Pier 57, featuring the work of Nathan Kensinger's "Desire Lines and Daylighting," Design Trust moderated a discussion between Kensinger and local advocates on the work and a new vision for a more equitable water future in NYC.

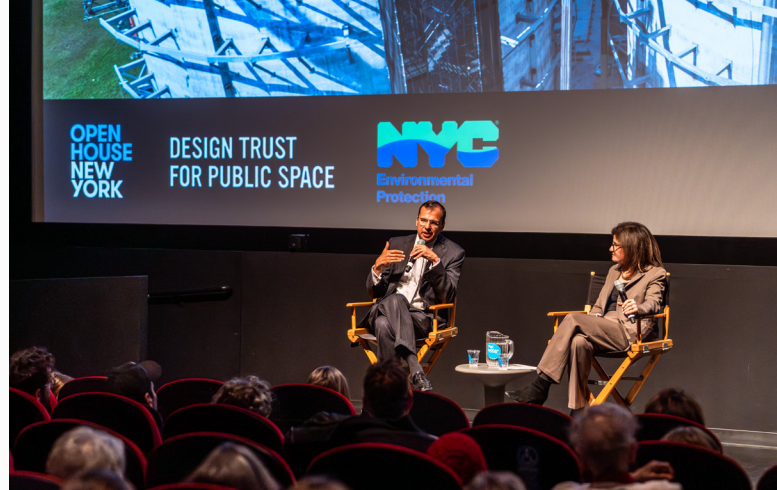
**JULY 25 DT COUNCIL QUEENSWAY TOUR** Our supporter's circle and New York: City Designed students took a tour of a community-led effort to transform a blighted, 3.5 mile abandoned railway in Central Queens into a family friendly cultural greenway.

**SEP 4 PUBLIC SPACE POTLUCK: BRONX RIVER HOUSE** Design Trust's Public Space Potlucks gather urban enthusiasts of all ages and backgrounds together for a shared meal and to experience public space initiatives across the five boroughs. We visited the Bronx River Alliance's home base at the Bronx River House to learn more about their work protecting the river and offering communities in the Bronx ways to meaningfully engage with the environment in and around the water.

**SEP 4 NEURODIVERSE CITY STREET DESIGN PROTOTYPE LAUNCH** Guided by "sensory audits" and design workshops with neurodivergent New Yorkers in partnership with AHRC NYC and WIP, the Neurodiverse City project tested a neuroinclusive design prototype at a NYC DOT pedestrian plaza in the Financial District. Verona Carpenter Architects launched their sensory schoolyard prototype for students at P.S.112 Jose Celso Barbosa, an NYC Public School hosting the Autism Spectrum Disorders Nest Program later in the month.

**SEP AND OCT WATER SESSIONS** Following a sold-out launch of the Water RFP at the Whitney with an interdisciplinary Climate Week NYC panel, we hosted two online informational webinars for interested applicants.

**DEC 1 REIMAGINING RFQ FAQ** After a summer of engagement events with Van Cortlandt Park Alliance for the local Bronx community to learn more about the Reimagining the Enslaved African Burial Ground at Van Cortlandt Park project, we hosted an information session on the Design Ideas Competition Request for Qualifications for interested applicants to design potential visions for the site that center healing, memory, imagination.



TOP: COMMISSIONER AGGARWALA BY MICHAEL LEE. BOTTOM: JUNETEENTH AT VAN CORTLANDT PARK COURTESY OF VCPA



THE  
CAMPAIGN FOR  
PUBLIC  
SPACE  
30 YEARS OF DESIGN TRUST

DESIGN TRUST'S 30TH BIRTHDAY PARTY

## THE CAMPAIGN FOR PUBLIC SPACE

The future of New York City is the future of public space. We announced at our 2025 Benefit for Public Space a new campaign to unlock the potential of the public realm and shared spaces. In celebration of the Design Trust's 30th anniversary and in recognition of public space's importance in building New York's next great chapter, the organization is raising \$1,000,000 over the next two years to ensure that future generations can gather together in community, fully participate in New York's cultural life, and benefit from the many impacts of high-quality public space. The **Campaign for Public Space** is defined by 3 main goals:

1. Launch our 12th and most ambitious Call for Projects on the theme of Water
2. Diversify and broaden the pipeline of leaders into planning and design careers
3. Support innovation and creativity funding, in the face of political stagnation

There's never been a more important moment to be this champion, when our civic future needs your partnership. This investment is a commitment to the future of New York. Learn more at [www.designtrust.org/support-us](http://www.designtrust.org/support-us)

We hosted a special 30th anniversary salon with Design Trust friends and our founder Andrea Woodner to explore the impacts of three decades of project work, and published a retrospective on the public space blog investigating how our history can inform current and future challenges facing New York City's public realm.



TOP: NEURODIVERSE CITY STREETScape PILOT LAUNCH PARTY BY KATT MANZUETA. BOTTOM: BENEFIT FOR PUBLIC SPACE PHOTO BOOTH



# QUOTED

### CITY LIMITS EXCLUSIVE OF THE NYCHA OPEN SPACE TOOLKIT

“Matthew Clarke, executive director of the Design Trust for Public Space, said tenants know firsthand what their developments need. The key is transparency through each stage. ‘This toolkit puts power directly in the hands of residents and community leaders by demystifying complex processes around activating shared areas.’”

### HOW TO BUILD A NEURODIVERSE CITY IN BLOOMBERG CITYLAB

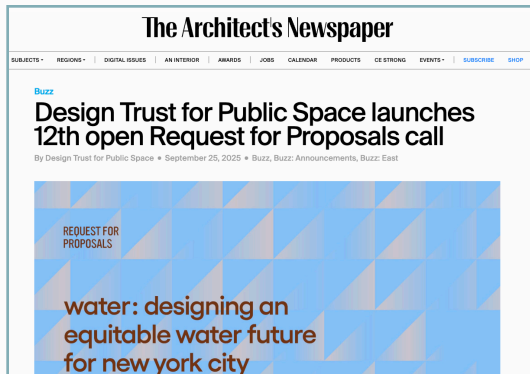
“Cities and schools are not typically designed by, or for, people with conditions such as autism. Often, the processes for how they get built exclude input from neurodivergent residents. [The Neurodiverse City is] developing ways to address these oversights.”

### ARCHITECT’S MAGAZINE ON NEW COALITION OF NYC NONPROFITS

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

### TED BERGER ON CONNECTING THE ARTS WITH PUBLIC SPACE FOR OUR BLOG

“You need to know your history in order to change that history. Learn from the mistakes, and maybe a few successes. I think we’re at a critical moment, when lots of things are either going to have to be rebuilt or rethought in order to survive.”



# MEDIA MENTIONS

Our work was featured in the news 37 times, including in *New York Times*, *City Limits*, *CityLab*, *Gothamist*, *NY1*, *News 12*, *Architect's Newspaper*, and more!

# OUR FOLLOWING

**37,784** Social media followers

**93,181** Website page views

**9,565** Public Space Newsletter subscribers

[BIT.LY/PUBLICSPACESIGNUP](https://bit.ly/PublicSpaceSignUp)

# OUR ADVOCACY

→ Design Trust and the Alliance for Public Space Leadership (APSL) steering committee canvassed over 50 organizations to inform an updated public realm policy platform for 2025 mayoral candidates.

→ In response to the loss of critical national funding streams, we and a coalition of public design organizations based in New York City joined forces to form the Public Design Alliance, fostering collaboration and solidarity across the city’s design sector.

→ After an historic election, one that in which nearly 2.5 million people cast their vote for New York City’s future, the Design Trust is committed to working with the Mamdani Administration to reimagine the public realm across every neighborhood and borough

# THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank you to all of our 2025 donors! We rely entirely on your generosity to help foster thriving, shared spaces. The Design Trust is grateful for our NYC partners that provide crucial operating support that makes this work possible:



**DESIGN TRUST  
FOR PUBLIC SPACE**

**UNLOCKING THE  
POTENTIAL OF NYC'S  
PUBLIC SPACES  
SINCE 1995**

**COVER PHOTO COURTESY OF FRIENDS OF THE HIGHLINE**

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