FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 16, 2023
Contact: Alexa Mauzy-Lewis
Design Trust for Public Space Communications Manager
amauzy@designtrust.org

Design Experts Speak Out Against Adams’ Elimination of Public Design Commission Review

Statement from the Design Trust for Public Space’s Executive Director Matthew Clarke

New York, NY, — The Adams Administration is quietly pushing a proposal to Albany that would designate the city’s Department of Design and Construction (DDC) a state authority in the New York budget. This move, still being negotiated by state lawmakers, would eliminate review by the Public Design Commission (PDC) for all projects less than $100 million. As NYC's design review agency, the PDC advocates for “innovative, sustainable, and equitable design of public spaces and civic structures, with a goal of improving the public realm and therefore related services for all New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs.”

While this plan is aimed toward speeding up construction on city projects, design experts are worried that design quality and oversight will come at the cost.

Design Trust for Public Space Executive Director Matthew Clarke issued the following statement in response:

“While there are positives to rethinking how NYC delivers public projects, like reducing procurement time and speeding up contract approvals, these advances cannot come at the expense of design excellence, which has a proven record of making New York an inclusive, welcome, and vibrant place to live,” said Clarke.

“The city has made great progress elevating design excellence and design justice as top concerns over the past few decades. The Public Design Commission ensures equitable inclusion in public infrastructure and accountability for our public realm and all the parks, libraries, museums, streets, and public spaces that define New York.

Design is an important tool for building sustainable infrastructure that works for all New Yorkers and supports a thriving, healthy city. The DDC must continue to engage New York’s community members and design experts in defining the projects that get built here.”

###

The Design Trust for Public Space is a nationally recognized incubator that catalyzes change and transforms New York City’s shared civic spaces—streets, plazas, parks, public buildings,
transportation, and housing developments—to create a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable city. Established in 1995 by Andrea Woodner, the nonprofit brings design expertise and systems thinking to the public realm to make a lasting impact. Founded on the tenet that New York City’s cultural and democratic life depends on viable public space, the Design Trust focuses on social justice and equity, environmental sustainability, design excellence, and public engagement. Its innovative model brings together government agencies, community groups, and private-sector experts, utilizing cross-sector partnerships to deliver creative solutions that shape the city’s landscape.