

MADE IN MID- TOWN?

A project of the
**DESIGN TRUST
FOR PUBLIC SPACE**
with the
**COUNCIL OF FASHION
DESIGNERS OF
AMERICA**



In 2009 Yeohlee Teng, fashion designer and General Secretary of the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA), approached the Design Trust for Public Space to work on a new project about the fashion industry and the Garment District. At the time, CFDA and their advisor, architect Joerg Schwartz, had been meeting with city officials for several years about the future of the District. But no one was telling the whole story about how this neighborhood works, and what value it brings to the fashion industry and the city overall. CFDA asked the Design Trust to produce an open-ended, independent study, with the hope of providing a vision for what the Garment District could become.

The first phase of this project, *Made in Midtown*, found that the Garment District’s mix of designers, manufacturers, and suppliers — all working in close proximity to one another — functions as a research and development hub that enables fashion designers to innovate and launch new collections season after season. This pamphlet gives you a taste of the project, but we encourage you to check out *madeinmidtown.org*, a multimedia website that uses videos, maps, written profiles, and diagrams to illustrate the importance of the Garment District. It’s also a product fashion designers will appreciate, because it’s produced by a team of very talented people who care deeply about their craft.

In the end, the Design Trust through *Made in Midtown* was able to shift the city’s thinking about the Garment District, confirming again the success of the Design Trust model: build partnerships, work closely with city government, and achieve results that improve the public life of our city.

As part of CFDA’s relentless commitment to advancing American fashion design, we’re grateful for our partnership with the Design Trust, and we’re pleased to support their work. If you’re in the fashion community, or you care about the creative districts and public spaces that help give New York City its energy and identity, we hope you’ll lend your support as well.

Sincerely,



Steven Kolb



Joerg Schwartz



Yeohlee Teng

Council of Fashion Designers of America

WHAT IS MADE IN MIDTOWN?

PHASE 1 PROVED THE VALUE OF A CREATIVE INDUSTRIAL NEIGHBORHOOD.

PHASE 2 WILL PROPOSE A NEW MODEL FOR AN URBAN CREATIVE DISTRICT BASED ON FASHION DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING.

How did the project get started?

In 2007, the Bloomberg administration announced it would consider changing the zoning that protects garment manufacturing space in the Garment District. Local property owners, city officials, and fashion industry representatives met for two years but could not agree on a proposal for moving forward.

In 2009 the Design Trust partnered with the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) to study the value of the Garment District to the fashion industry and the city as a whole, and to develop a vision for the neighborhood’s future that could balance competing interests.

What did the Design Trust do?

In 2010 the Design Trust launched *madeinmidtown.org*, a multimedia website that showed why fashion design is inextricably linked to manufacturing, and how the cluster of designers, factories, and suppliers working in close proximity in the Garment District contribute to New York’s overall economy, identity, and sense of place.

What was the impact of *Made in Midtown*?

The city withdrew its Garment District rezoning proposal. *Crain’s New York Business* wrote: “Word of the city’s move follows a study released this month by the Design Trust for Public Space. Instead of describing the garment center as a relic of a bygone industrial age, the new report

bills it as a thriving and hugely productive research-and-development hub for high-end fashion.”¹

Representatives from the fashion industry, garment workers union, Fashion Center BID, Mayor’s Office, New York City Economic Development Corporation, and the Department of City Planning attended the press conference launching the *Made in Midtown* website.

The project was highlighted in *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Crain’s*, *Fast Company*, *Women’s Wear Daily*, and many other publications.

What’s next?

Made in Midtown Phase 2 will provide a new national model for integrating design and light manufacturing in a mixed-use city center. The Design Trust will explore zoning and land use regulations, programming, branding, and other strategies that help strengthen the Garment District’s identity as a vital hub for creative production.

¹ “Garment Center Rezoning Shelved” Adrienne Pasquarelli, *Crain’s New York Business*, June 14-20, 2010, pgs. 1, 24



Jason Wu, *Jason Wu*

“All my resources are here. It would only make sense for a designer who’s very hands-on to be in the midst of where it all takes place. This is where the magic happens.”



Yeohlee Teng, *YEOHLEE*

“The new names happen because here in the Garment District are the people who can help a startup. If you were to start a business today and you don’t have a huge backer, you can come down here and find somebody that will make a pattern for you, grade for you, cut for you, sew for you. When you’re a startup and you don’t have capital, you can’t send it to China.”



Brooke Backman, *In God We Trust*

“I love days when I’m in the Garment District, going up on an elevator to some place like a fabric showroom or a dye house, and the door accidentally opens on a different floor, and you’re like, ‘what are you guys doing in here?’ It’s amazing—all of that stuff is above street levels. People can walk around the District and have no idea that ten floors above are people who are making stuff.”



Danielle Shriber, *Prairie NY*

“From a quality perspective I feel like I can get myself where I want to go doing it here. And to be honest, the prices aren’t that much cheaper [overseas]. By the time you pay your customs duties, air freight, you’re pretty much at the same dollar amount.”



Anna Sui, *Anna Sui*

“That’s the luxury of having your workrooms right here. You’re able to make a selection and try it and see what works. When you’re working on a collection, one piece leads to the next. If you have to wait a half month for something, you lose that much momentum.”



Nanette Lepore, *Nanette Lepore*

“I couldn’t have started my business if it wasn’t for the New York City Garment District. It’s like a great lab for creativity.”

Video stills by Jordan Alport.



Shelly Steffee, *Shelly Steffee*

“It takes a lot of people to get something made, even if it’s twelve garments. There are so many people that touch the garment.”



Andrew Rosen, *Theory*

“It’s very important for anyone creative, design-wise, to be very interactive with the pattern-making process, sample making, and ultimately, with the manufacturing process. And I think without having those skills present in New York City, it would be very difficult to create clothes that have a sense of excitement, integrity and design.”

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The Design Trust team interviewed over 70 fashion industry and neighborhood stakeholders, including:

Design and Retail

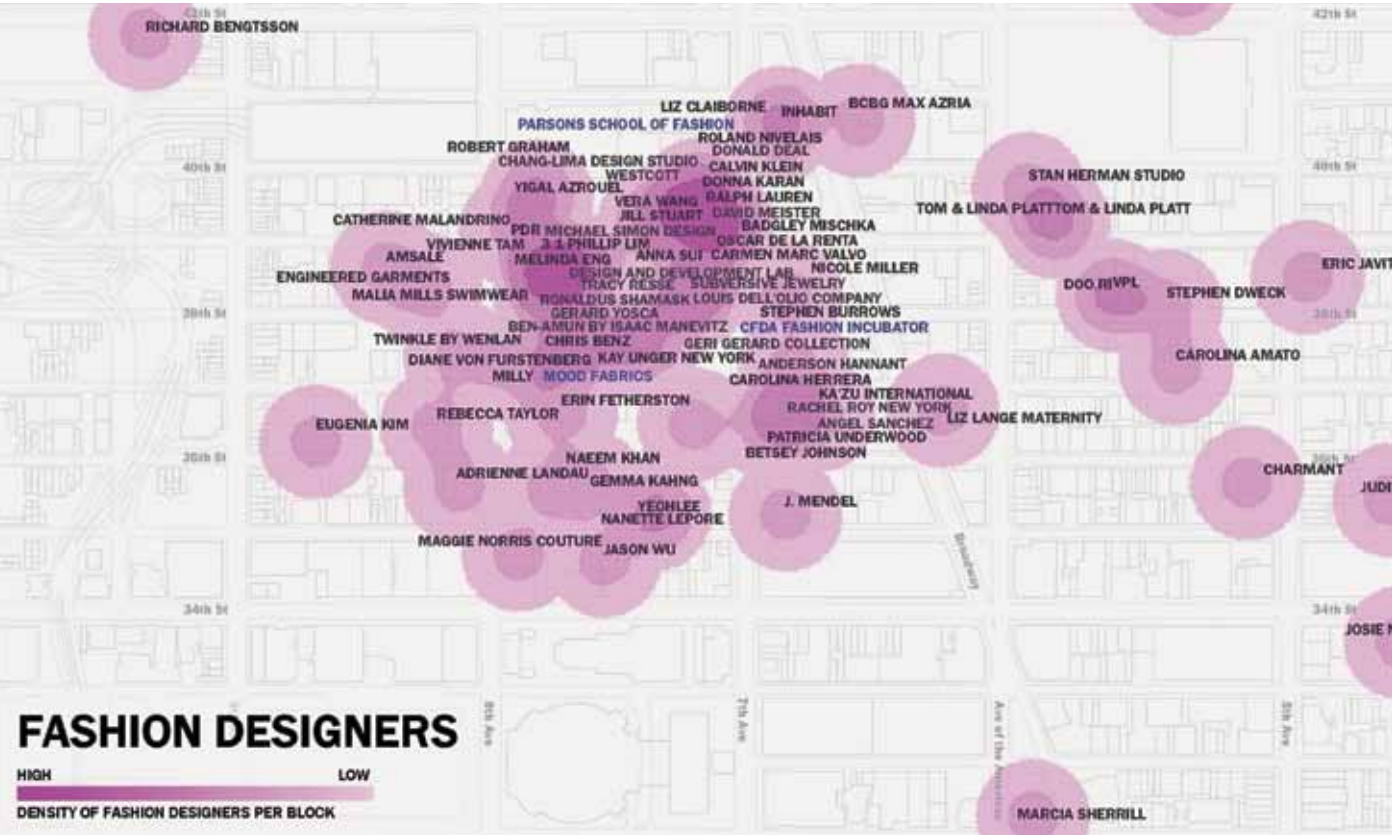
- Brooke Backman and Shana Tabor, In God We Trust
Simon Collins, Parsons The New School
Ron Frasc, Saks Fifth Avenue
Nyla Hashimi, Eva Khurshid
Michael Hong, Level 8 Apparel
Nanette Lepore, Nanette Lepore
Anthony Lilore, Restore Clothing
Fatima Monkush, Eva Khurshid
Stephanie Northrop, Fine Print Studio
Francoise Olivas, Francoise Olivas
Marcia Patmos, Lutz & Patmos
Shawn Reddy, Calvin Klein
Andrew Rosen, Theory
Danielle Shriber, Prairie New York
Shelly Steffee, Shelly Steffee
Anna Sui, Anna Sui
Yeohlee Teng, YEOHLEE
Michelle Vale, Michelle Vale
Diane von Furstenberg, Diane von Furstenberg
Jason Wu, Jason Wu

Manufacturers and Suppliers

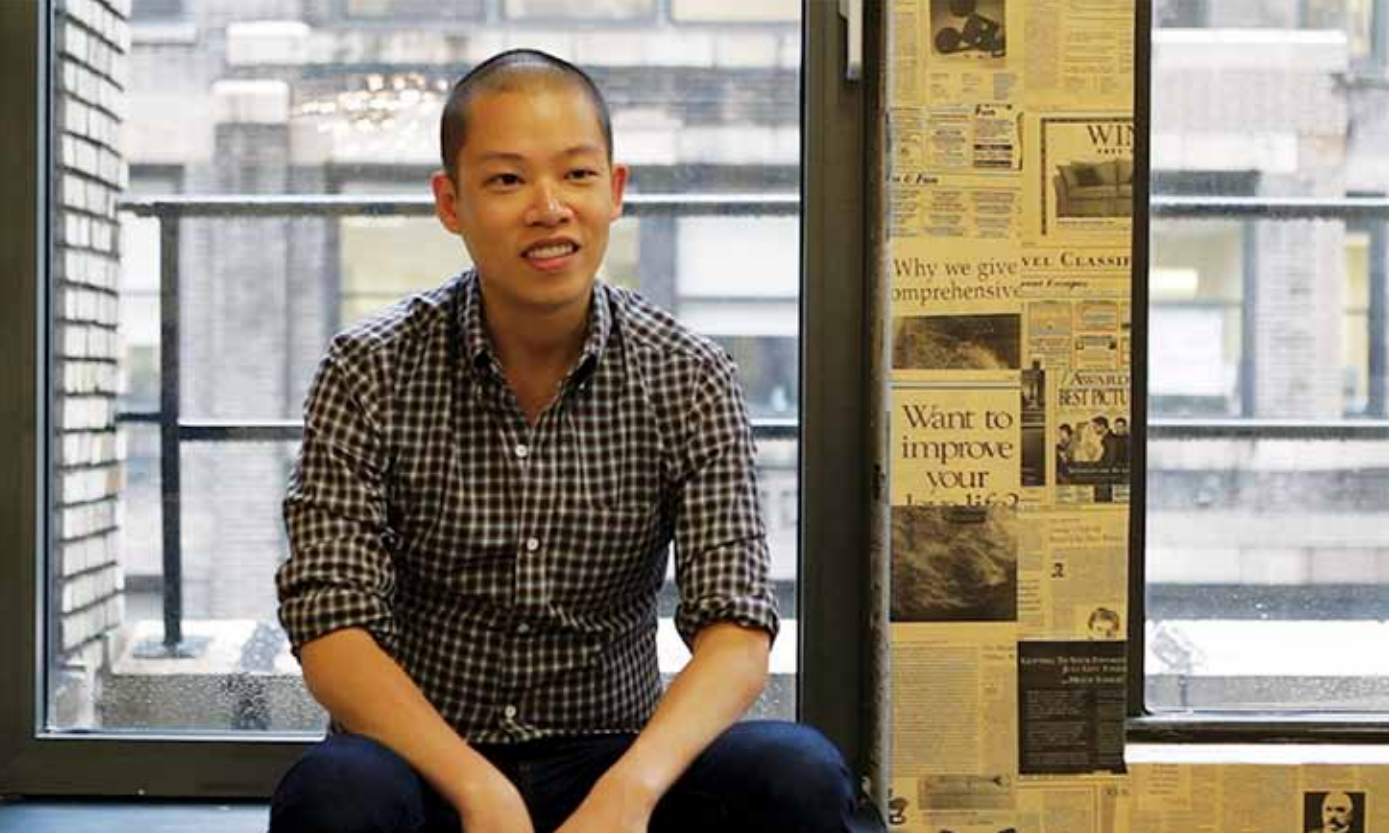
- Larry Boger, Guide Fabrics
Paul Cavazza, Create a Marker
Rodger Cohen, Regal Pleating
Joe Ferrara, Ferrara Manufacturing Company
Larry Geffner, Vogue Too
Danny Gold, Banner-WBA
Ramdat Harihar, R&C Apparel
Cindy Ho, Betsey Adams
Markus Kirkwald, Stoll Fashion & Technology Center
Jenny Koh Lee, Pine
Tina Schenk, Werkstatt
Tony Singh, 4 Seasons Fashion
Howard Strachman, Strachman Associates
Sarah Timberlake, Timberlake Studios
Andy Ward, Garment Industry Development Corporation

Property Owners

- Eric Gural, Newmark Knight Frank
George Kaufman, Kaufman Astoria Studios
Barbara Randall, Fashion Center BID



Fashion headquarters in the Garment District.



Jason Wu

1. THE GARMENT DISTRICT IS A FASHION RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT HUB.

No longer a center for mass production, the Garment District today produces innovation—new ideas, new styles, and new trends—that the rest of the world follows. Designer Nanette Lepore describes the Garment District as “a lab for creativity.”

- Although New York’s fashion industry has clusters citywide, the overwhelming majority of firms and activity are located in and around the Garment District.
- A 2010 New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) survey of local designers found that nearly 50% of local designers produce runway samples—each season’s newest prototypes—in Garment District factories.

2. THE GARMENT DISTRICT IS THE FASHION START-UP CAPITAL OF THE WORLD.

The Garment District functions as a business incubator. Manufacturers in the District accommodate small runs, extend credit, and provide technical expertise, helping today’s start-up to become tomorrow’s Ralph Lauren or Marc Jacobs.

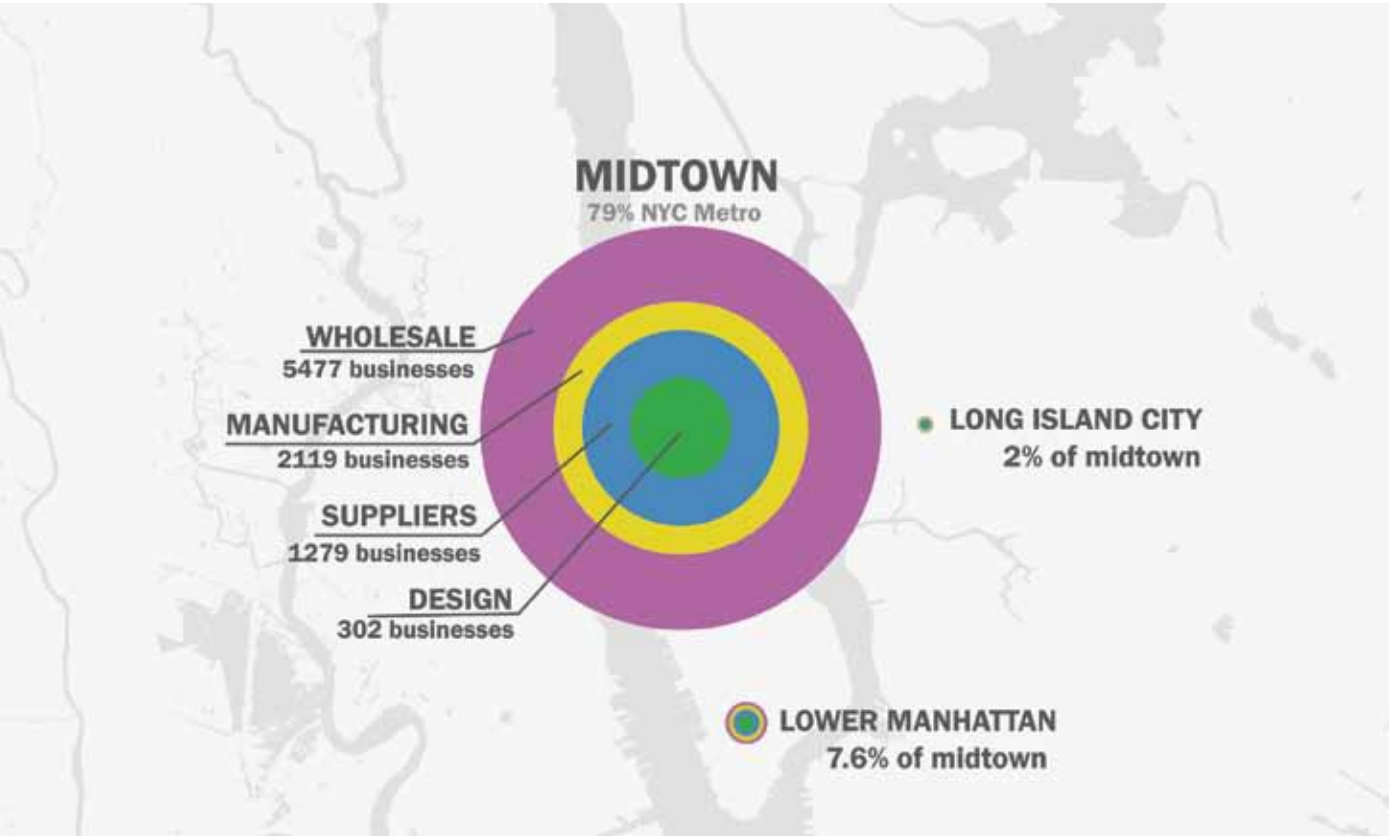
- Jason Wu, the young designer who at age 27 created Michelle Obama’s inaugural gown, graduated from Parsons (on 40th Street), launched his business using skilled craftspeople in the District, and recently expanded to a space on 35th Street, “deeper into the heart of the District,” as he put it.
- No other fashion capital matches New York’s entrepreneurial activity; young designers in Milan or Paris, for instance, typically work in one of the major fashion houses, rather than start their own firms.

HOW DID THE DESIGN TRUST CONDUCT ITS RESEARCH?

- Assembled an interdisciplinary team, including a journalist, filmmaker, graphic designer, web designer, urban planners, and architects
- Analyzed more than 20 years of city, state, and federal data
- Created an accessible, nuanced portrait of the Garment District’s light industrial ecosystem as a basis for future recommendations that all parties could support

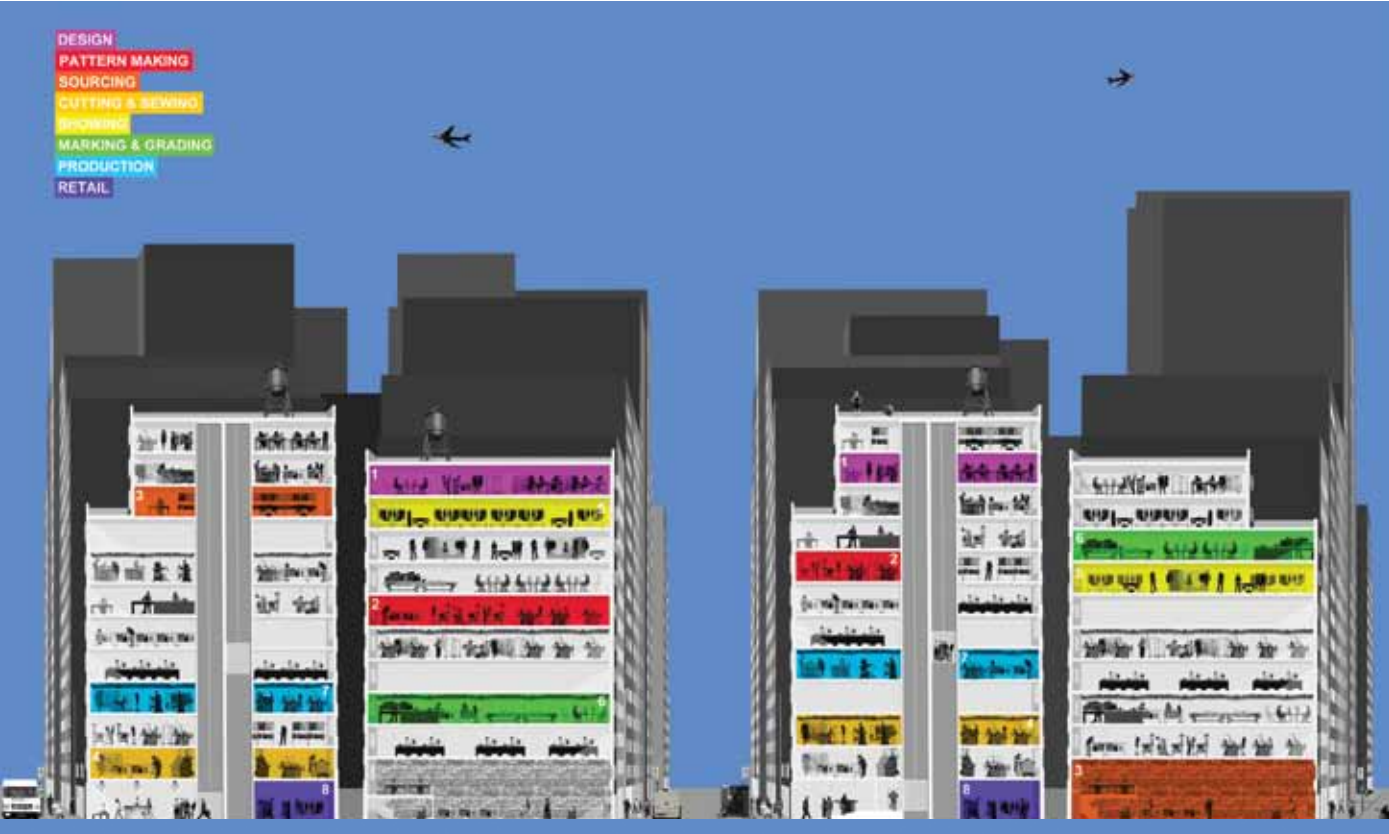
Image by Sarah Williams, Columbia University Spatial Information Design Lab.

Video still by Jordan Alport.



Midtown is the center of NYC fashion.

Image by Sarah Williams, Columbia University Spatial Information Design Lab.



Proximity in the Garment District.

Image by Interboro Partners.

3. PROXIMITY ENABLES QUALITY CONTROL, FAST PRODUCTION, AND INNOVATION.

On the reality show *Project Runway*, designers produce a garment in isolation. In the real world, fashion is a team effort. To realize their ideas, designers using the Garment District can turn to hundreds of manufacturers and suppliers.

- Proximity to manufacturers allows designers to produce clothes more quickly than if they use factories overseas.
- Designers can visit factories to oversee quality, physically interact with materials, and exchange ideas with manufacturers, who often are highly skilled craftspeople.
- The 2010 EDC survey found that nearly 80% of emerging designers and 70% of established designers said the Garment District is “very” or “extremely” important to their production.

4. THE FASHION INDUSTRY IS AN IMPORTANT ECONOMIC ENGINE FOR NEW YORK CITY.

- The fashion industry contributes \$10 billion annually to the local economy—\$733 million yearly from the two Fashion Weeks.¹
- 846 fashion companies are headquartered in New York City—that’s more than Paris, London, and Milan combined.²
- Apparel manufacturing is the largest manufacturing sector in New York City, providing 24,000 working- and middle-class jobs—28% of all of the city’s manufacturing jobs. Nearly a third of these jobs are located within the boundaries of the Fashion Center BID.³

¹ “Strengthening NYC’s Fashion Wholesale Market” NYC EDC 2009
² NYC EDC 2009
³ New York Industrial Retention Network 2006 and Bureau of Labor Statistics 2008

PRESS CONFERENCE AND POP-UP EXHIBIT

The Design Trust partnered with the Fashion Center Business Improvement District to create a *Made in Midtown* exhibit at the Fashion Center/Times Square Pop-Up Space within Port Authority. The exhibit featured:

- garments made by top designers who work or produce in the District, as well as artifacts from every stage of production along the way
- screenings of the eleven videos created for *Made in Midtown*
- computer kiosks allowing people to explore *madeinmidtown.org*
- hundreds of newsprint project summaries, designed to resemble the popular dailies *AM New York* and *Metro*, which were distributed to passersby
- lunchtime and evening presentations of the project’s findings, given by Design Trust staff and Project Fellows

The pop-up exhibit opened with a press conference to launch the website and announce the project findings. As is often true in the world of fashion, the invite list revealed much about the event. In this case, stakeholders who had often been in conflict shared a common stage to support *Made in Midtown* and look ahead to Phase 2.

“EDC looks forward to working with the Design Trust on the second phase.”
—Madelyn Wils, Executive Vice President, EDC

“The Design Trust was able to bring everyone to the table—city officials, designers, manufacturers.”
—Steven Kolb, Executive Director, Council of Fashion Designers of America



Made in Midtown launched June 2, 2010 with a two-day pop-up exhibit, a press conference, cocktail party, and series of panel discussions. At the press conference were:

Joe Ferrara, Garment Center Supplier Association

Steven Kolb, Executive Director, Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA)

Deborah Marton, Executive Director, Design Trust for Public Space

Patrick Murphy, Director, Fashion/Retail Growth Initiatives, NYC Economic Development Corp (NYCEDC)

Edgar Romney, Secretary-Treasurer, Workers United/SEIU

Yeohlee Teng, Founder and President, YEOHLEE and General Secretary, CFDA

The fashion designers:
John Bartlett
Reed Krakoff
Richard Lambertson
Nicole Miller
Narciso Rodriguez
Anna Sui



Photos by Design Trust for Public Space.



PANEL DISCUSSIONS

The Design Trust partnered with the Municipal Arts Society to host two panel discussions about *Made in Midtown* and the future of the Garment District.

“*Made in Midtown* debunks a lot of myths about this industry . . . so many people I interact with say ‘the New York fashion industry has nothing to do with Midtown any longer, it’s gone, it’s merely a shell.’ It’s not true. The Garment District has extraordinary value to all of us.”
—Tim Gunn, Chief Creative Officer, Liz Claiborne, Inc.

“One of the best things about the Design Trust study is that it shows what actually is strong, and what we can work with in the Garment District—that it’s not necessarily a problem that we have to solve, but a series of strengths that are struggling to remain.”
—Sarah Crean, former Executive Director, New York Industrial Retention Network

The Garment District Today and Tomorrow

Moderator:
Tim Gunn, Chief Creative Officer of Liz Claiborne
(and host of *Project Runway*)

Panelists:
Sarah Crean, former Executive Director, New York Industrial Retention Network
Deborah Marton, Executive Director, Design Trust for Public Space
Michael Meola, Principal, Encher Consulting
Yeohlee Teng, Founder, YEOHLEE
Madelyn Wils, Vice President, NYC Economic Development Corporation

Urban Creative Districts

Moderator:
Deborah Marton, Design Trust for Public Space

Panelists:
Simon Collins, Dean of the School of Fashion at Parsons The New School for Design
Fred Dust, Partner, IDEO
Harvey Molotch, Professor of Sociology, NYU
Andrew Oshrin, CEO and Co-Founder, Milly
Sarah Williams, Design Trust Project Fellow and Co-Director, Columbia University Spatial Information Design Lab



Panelists discuss the future of the Garment District and the role of creative districts in contemporary cities.

Photos by Design Trust for Public Space.

PRESS COVERAGE (SELECTED)

“Needle and Thread Still Have a Home,” by Guy Trebay
—*New York Times*, April 28, 2010

“Garment Center Study: Area’s Future Is Bright As Incubator of Ideas,” by Rosemary Feitelberg
—*Women’s Wear Daily*, June 2, 2010

“Garment Center Study Looks to the Future,” by Rosemary Feitelberg
—*Women’s Wear Daily*, June 2, 2010

“Designers Praise ‘Made in Midtown’ Survey,” by Rosemary Feitelberg
—*Women’s Wear Daily*/WWD.com, June 3, 2010

“*Made in Midtown* Examines the Design and Manufacturing Impact of New York’s Garment District”
—*Fast Company*, June 6, 2010

“The Garment District: So Last-Century, or the Perfect Fit for New York?” by Illya Marritz
—*WNYC*, June 8, 2010

“Garment Center Rezoning Shelved,” by Adrianne Pasquarelli
—*Crain’s New York Business*, June 14, 2010

“Designers Pitch Brand New York,” by Elva Ramirez
—*Wall Street Journal*, June 24, 2010

“[*Made in Midtown*] concluded that the Garment District is a more vital cultural force than many imagine, an incubator of ideas and innovation and a magnet for all those *Project Runway* hopefuls who flock to New York.”
—Guy Trebay, *New York Times*

ABOUT THE DESIGN TRUST FOR PUBLIC SPACE

The Design Trust for Public Space is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to improving public space in New York City. We are urban visionaries who think systemically about how cities work. From parks, plazas, and streets to city buildings, transportation systems and entire neighborhoods, the Design Trust has been at the forefront of shaping New York City’s public realm since 1995.

Through a juried RFP process, the Design Trust selects research, design and planning projects proposed by community groups, nonprofits and city agencies from across the five boroughs. We then organize teams of private sector professionals to produce actionable policy, design and planning recommendations that will galvanize change in the way New York City’s public spaces are designed, managed or used.

designtrust.org

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ABOUT THE COUNCIL OF FASHION DESIGNERS

The Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) is a nonprofit trade association whose membership consists of more than 370 of America’s leading apparel and accessories designers. CFDA leads industry-wide initiatives and sponsors awards to support professional development and recognize top talent.

cfda.com



As CFDA’s Executive Director, **Steven Kolb** provided critical feedback on *Made in Midtown*, and was instrumental in raising funds for the project and introducing the project team to CFDA members.



Joerg Schwartz is an architect and urbanist who assisted with the 2009 Garment District survey, and worked closely with CFDA to develop the concept for *Made in Midtown*, and guide every stage of its evolution.



Award-winning designer **Yeohlee Teng** approached the Design Trust on behalf of CFDA to work on *Made in Midtown*, and provided invaluable assistance illuminating the Garment District’s fashion ecosystem and introducing the project team to industry stakeholders.

DESIGN TRUST FELLOWS

The Design Trust awarded five fellowships to private sector professionals to work collaboratively on *Made in Midtown*:



Jordan Alport shot, directed, and edited video for *Made in Midtown*. Jordan runs alport.tv, producing narrative visual media for brands and organizations. Prior to alport.tv, Jordan was a director at Desedo, a production and branding agency whose clients include Coca-Cola, Walmart, Sony Entertainment, and The City of New York.



Glen Cummings created *Made in Midtown*’s graphic identity. Glen is the founder and principal of the graphic design studio MTWTF and a lecturer in graphic design at Yale University School of Art.



Interboro Partners created *Made in Midtown*’s diverse set of diagrams, infographics and comics, describing the complex ecosystem of the Garment District and its value as an urban cluster. Interboro is a New York City-based urban design, planning, and architecture group founded in 2002 by Daniel D’Oca, Georgeen Theodore and Tobias Armbrorst.



Tom Vanderbilt interviewed people at every level of the fashion industry and wrote the collection of personal profiles and central essay for *Made in Midtown*. His most recent book is *The New York Times* bestseller *Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do (and What It Says About Us)*.



Sarah Williams analyzed decades of industry data and development history to create maps and infographics about Garment District real estate and zoning, and the role of the fashion industry in New York City’s economy. Sarah is Co-Director of Columbia University’s Spatial Information Design Lab (SIDL). Before directing SIDL, Sarah founded the Geographic Information System Laboratory at MIT.

Additional Contributors
Adapted Studio was responsible for the interaction design and web development for *madeinmidtown.org*. Founded in 2008 by Matthew Cooley and Eric Ishii Eckhardt, Adapted is an interactive design studio whose work ranges from websites and installations to video games and application prototyping.

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