

For immediate release

The Architectural League of New York Announces The Paul Gunther Prize for Inclusive Public Space

Honoring preservationist, historian, activist, and cultural leader Paul Gunther, the League carries forward his legacy with a prize supporting research and design projects that contribute to public space across New York City.

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New York, NY (September 15, 2026) —The Architectural League of New York announced today the launch of the **Paul Gunther Prize for Inclusive Public Space**, a ten-year initiative recognizing one of New York City's most influential stewards of the public realm, Paul W. Gunther (1956–2022). The Prize will run on an annual cycle, awarding grants of \$20,000 each year to individuals or teams whose research and design projects demonstrate a commitment to advancing inclusive public space throughout New York City.

Supported by [The Paul Gunther Fund](#), which was generously founded in 2022 by Joel Sanders and grown by many friends and colleagues of Paul Gunther's, the initiative recognizes Gunther's longstanding commitment to preserving and supporting the vitality, diversity, and accessibility of New York's public realm. Throughout his career, Gunther held leadership roles across a range of New York-based nonprofit arts organizations and institutions, including Gracie Mansion Conservancy, the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art, The New York Historical (formerly the New-York Historical Society), and the Municipal Art Society. Across these positions, he championed the preservation of the diverse identities, histories, and art forms that shape New York's built environment and broader cultural and social fabric.

The Fund carries this legacy forward through the creation of the Prize, directing significant resources toward the strengthening and creative expansion of inclusive public spaces throughout the city.

Building on this legacy, the announcement of the Prize coincides with the public release of a Request for Proposals (RFP), inviting individuals or teams to pursue proposals that create, improve, advance, or preserve inclusive and accessible public space, with a particular focus on New York City. Eligible public spaces include exterior sites — such as parks, plazas, and monuments — as well as interior environments, so long as they are freely open to the public. The prize will consider proposals that support the research, design, and development of policy recommendations, or a combination of the three.

Jacob R. Moore, the League executive director, said:

Inclusive public spaces are essential for any democracy to thrive, at the local level here in New York City and well beyond. The Architectural League is honored to recognize one of their great champions, Paul Gunther, with this prize. As a range of pressures collude to diminish the accessibility of public space, the work this prize is designed to support will ensure New York's storied public realm remains truly public, and that this message travels far beyond the city's bounds as well.

Following the announcement of the inaugural Prize and the issuing of its first RFP, the League will offer a voluntary information session for prospective applicants on Thursday, October 15th at 12:30 p.m. ET. Applicants will have approximately three months to develop and submit their proposals, with submissions due in December 2026. A jury of architects, designers, scholars, and advocates for the public realm will review submissions in January 2027, with the Prize winner to be announced in March 2027.

To kick off the Prize's first year, the 2026–2027 jury brings together a unique group of individuals, leaders, and close family, friends, and colleagues who had the chance to witness and work alongside Gunther, including Anne Rieselbach (chair), Keller Easterling, Mario Gooden, Joel Sanders, Mabel Wilson, and Vicki Weiner.

Additional information about the Prize, including the full RFP for the 2027 Paul Gunther Prize for Inclusive Public Space, is available [here](#), with details on eligibility, submission requirements, and evaluation criteria. Winners will be expected to develop a written report and to present their proposal in person one year after the award has been granted. Preference will be given to those who demonstrate a keen understanding of the design qualities and social impact of inclusive public space.

The Paul Gunther Prize is generously funded by a long roster of individual donors and foundations, many with strong personal ties to Gunther himself (full list [here](#)). Nearly fully funded, the Architectural League continues to welcome contributions. To learn more about supporting the Paul Gunther Fund, please contact Cameron King at king@archleague.org.

Interested candidates with questions about the program are invited to contact Architectural League Senior Program Manager Zoe Fruchter at fruchter@archleague.org.

About Paul W. Gunther (1956-2022)

Paul Gunther was a tireless champion of New York City's built public realm, recognizing that its vitality resulted from the diverse perspectives of artists, architects, and everyday citizens alike. Throughout his career, he held leadership roles at New York–based nonprofit arts organizations such as the Gracie Mansion Conservancy, the Institute of Classical Architecture and Art, the New York Historical Society, and the Municipal Art Society. His lifelong commitment to both innovation and preservation directly inspired the Paul Gunther Fund mission to uphold and expand the vitality of New York's shared urban spaces.

About The Architectural League of New York

Founded in 1881, The Architectural League of New York supports critically transformative work in the allied fields that shape the built environment. As a vital, independent forum, the League stimulates thinking, debate, and action on today's converging crises of racism, inequity, and climate change, in service of a more livable and just world.

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