

Request for Proposals: 2027 Paul Gunther Prize For Inclusive Public Space

Information Session

Interested in submitting a proposal to the 2027 Paul Gunther Prize? Join the League for an online information session on Thursday, October 15, 2026, at 12:30 p.m. ET to learn more about the Prize, eligibility, and submission requirements, with a moderated Q&A for audience questions.

Participation is voluntary and will not impact the evaluation of your entry. Advanced registration is required.

Register [here](#).

Questions

Candidates may email questions to Architectural League Senior Program Manager Zoe Fruchter, fruchter@archleague.org.

About The Architectural League of New York

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.

archleague.org
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The Architectural League is honored to carry on the legacy of cultural leader, preservationist, and public realm activist Paul W. Gunther (1956–2022) through the Paul Gunther Prize for Inclusive Public Space. This \$20,000 award will be given annually for ten years to support the design and research projects of individuals or teams focused on inclusive public space, with a special emphasis on New York City.

In the United States, the intensification of political polarization, the shift of public discourse from physical to digital spheres, and dwindling investments in civic architecture and urbanism are related trends eroding the vitality of the public realm. As a result, genuinely inclusive public space—here defined as space freely accessible to all, which fosters belonging among people of different ages, genders, races, religions, and abilities—is a resource at risk. This is all the more true in a densely populated city like New York, where public spaces play a pivotal role in personal, communal, and civic lives. The fields of the built environment are well positioned to address this need head-on, but dedicated investment is required.

Supported by [the Gunther Fund](#), this annual Prize awards a grant of \$20,000 to one individual or team to pursue a proposal for creating, improving, or preserving inclusive public space in 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. Grants may support research, design proposals, the development of policy recommendations, or some combination of these.

Paul Gunther's Legacy

Paul Gunther (1956–2022) 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, and the Municipal Art Society. These platforms enabled Gunther to pursue his wide-ranging interests, from safeguarding neglected neoclassical monuments to ensuring that the redevelopment of Times Square preserved its incandescent signage. His lifelong commitment to both innovation and preservation directly inspires the prize's mission to uphold and expand the vitality of New York's shared urban spaces.

Eligibility

The grant supports individuals or independent, interdisciplinary teams consisting of designers and/or scholars with advanced degrees from accredited institutions and at least five years of professional or academic experience.

- Designers: Architects, landscape architects, urban designers, or graphic designers with accredited professional degrees.
- Scholars: Holders of master's or PhD degrees in the humanities (art and architectural history, urban studies, gender studies, race studies, disability studies), public health, law, or sustainability.

Applicants must be authorized to accept monetary compensation in the United States in order to receive the grant.

No current Architectural League board or staff members are eligible to participate in the competition. With the exception listed below, no employees of firms or immediate family (spouse/partner; children; siblings) of current board members, staff members, or jury members are eligible to participate in the competition. Individuals who work for the firms of League board members may enter the competition if they are submitting independent work carried out without connection to the firm.

Submission Requirements

Candidates must submit an application consisting of the following components:

1. Executive Summary
 - A concise 150-word paragraph summarizing the proposal.
2. Project Proposal (1,500-word maximum) covering the following:
 - Study Objective: What is the challenge or issue you are seeking to investigate?
 - Site: Identify the site or series of sites you propose to study. How does the site provide a vehicle for your research? Is your study specific to this site only, or can ideas and lessons learned be applied to other public spaces in NYC or beyond?
 - Research Format: How will you or your team develop your proposal, and what will be the final deliverable? Will you write a paper, create a design proposal, develop policies or guidelines, or combine these approaches?
 - Qualifications: Describe how you or your team possess the skills and relevant experience needed to carry out your proposal.
 - Collaborative teams: Describe the nature of your partnership, including how you envision

dividing the responsibilities for design, planning, and execution of the proposal

- Schedule: Present a schedule that identifies key milestones for completing tasks and activities, ensuring the study can be completed within one year.
- Budget: Provide a detailed breakdown of costs, showing how you will allocate the \$20,000 award. The budget can include honoraria for principal investigators, consultant fees, and reimbursable expenses such as travel and materials.

3. Addendum

- Up to 20 pages of supporting material relevant to your proposal. This may include portfolios, publications, or reports. Clearly indicate the role you or your team members played in each item.

Please submit the materials listed above as a single PDF document, with the file size no larger than 60 MB and the page dimensions not to exceed 11×14".

4. Résumé

- Two pages maximum per applicant.

5. Recommendations

- Two letters from individuals knowledgeable about the applicant's or team's ability to undertake the project.

Please submit the materials listed above as two separate PDFs.

Evaluation

The application process is extremely competitive. The intention of the fund is to support genuinely independent projects. Grant funds cannot be used for tuition but may augment academic research. While requests for support of thesis or dissertation research will be considered, they are not a priority of the prize.

Preference will be given to proposals that demonstrate an understanding of the design qualities and social impact of inclusive public space.

Please note that applicants are not required to be professionally licensed. Instead, applicants should demonstrate a deep understanding of the built environment and the ability to carry forward the projects as proposed.

Jury

Anne Rieselbach (Chair)

Keller Easterling

Mario Gooden

Joel Sanders

Vicki Weiner

Mabel O. Wilson

Deliverable

Winners will be required to give an in-person presentation and share a written report about the completed project, one year after the award is given.