

DESIGN TRUST FOR PUBLIC SPACE

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DESIGN TRUST EMBARKS ON PLAN TO TRANSFORM SPACE UNDER THE CITY'S ELEVATED INFRASTRUCTURE

National Endowment for the Arts Announces \$50,000 Grant to Under the Elevated

NEW YORK, NY (May 1, 2013) – The Design Trust for Public Space—the nonprofit that jumpstarted the High Line and helped bring about New York’s first custom-built taxi—will work with the City’s Department of Transportation (DOT) to revive and animate public spaces below the city’s elevated transit infrastructure.

Under the Elevated: Reclaiming Space, Connecting Communities will engage community leaders, planners, architects, artists, and cultural organizations to develop strategies to maximize the function, use, and spatial qualities of the millions of square feet of space underneath NYC’s bridges, and elevated highways, subways, and rail lines—from dark, litter-strewn expanses of parking under the BQE to arched gateways beneath the 1 train in Harlem.

“The sheer quantity of spaces that lie right before our eyes, unnoticed, as we New Yorkers go about our business, is staggering. NYC has nearly 700 miles of elevated infrastructure, with over 100 million square feet of underused space beneath,” says Susan Chin, FAIA, executive director of the Design Trust for Public Space. “When you look at the impact the mile-and-a-half-long High Line has created, and then consider the potential of these spaces in neighborhoods across the five boroughs, you understand the magnitude of this undertaking.”

Under the Elevated will produce design guidelines as well as programming and policy recommendations that will inform the transformation of spaces citywide and around the world.

“Much of the space below NYC’s elevated transit infrastructure is composed of either parking, storage, or vacant space. We see an opportunity to increase the functionality of these spaces and identify permanent or temporary uses that will enliven the public realm of neighboring communities. For example, we are pleased that the Chinatown Partnership will be a collaborator on this project,” says Wendy Feuer, Assistant Commissioner for Urban Design & Art at DOT. “By working with the Design Trust to develop guidelines for the design and use of these spaces, we can look forward to well-thought-out recommendations that will be respected by design professionals and community organizations alike.”

Background:

In the early and mid 20th century, a massive transportation system was built in the City of New York, including miles of bridges, elevated highways and rail lines, creating a multi-layered city. These structures cleaved neighborhoods in all five boroughs. In most cases, the space underneath became neglected and dispirited. Recent community-driven studies, guerilla art projects, and public demand for more plazas and open spaces have

demonstrated the need for a comprehensive citywide survey and set of guidelines to make the process for designing and programming spaces under elevated infrastructure more accessible.

Under the Elevated will build on the success of the Design Trust's 2001 project, *Reclaiming the High Line*, in partnership with Friends of the High Line. This planning and feasibility study was credited with rescuing the structure from demolition and advanced strategies for transforming an abandoned elevated railway structure on Manhattan's West Side into the vibrant public space it is today.

About the Design Trust for Public Space

The Design Trust for Public Space is a nonprofit organization dedicated to bringing design innovation to New York City's public spaces to make a more dynamic, livable and sustainable city. We create collaborations between city agencies, community groups and private sector experts to work on emerging design and policy projects that result in effective urban strategies. Learn more about [what we do](#) or [help make our work possible](#).

About the NYC Department of Transportation

New York City Department of Transportation's mission is to provide for the safe, efficient, and environmentally responsible movement of people and goods in the City of New York and to maintain and enhance the transportation infrastructure crucial to the economic vitality and quality of life of our primary customers, City residents.

Under the Elevated is made possible through the generous support of:



If you are interested in supporting the project, please contact Ruth Cole, development manager, Design Trust for Public Space, rcole@designtrust.org

Call for Fellows

We are currently accepting applications from professionals interested in becoming a Fellow for the *Under the Elevated* project. The deadline to apply is May 23, 2013. We will award three fellowships in Urban Design, Policy, and Graphic Design as well as a related Photo Urbanism fellowship. For more details:

http://www.designtrust.org/projects/project_13underelevated.html