

# DesignPhiladelphia Announces 2026 Festival Theme: Design Revolution

PHILADELPHIA, PA — DesignPhiladelphia announces the full lineup for its 2026 Festival, running October 1 through 11, under the theme Design Revolution. The theme asks festival participants to show how design is helping solve problems that need to change, and this year housing sits at the center of that conversation for festival goers and designers.

**"Every year, this Festival is a chance to show Philadelphia what design can actually do — not just how a building or a chair looks, but how design decisions shape whether people have somewhere affordable to live, a public space worth spending time in, or a way to get to work with dignity. Design Revolution is our challenge to the design community to put that power to work on the problems that matter most right now. "**

Rebecca Johnson, Executive Director, DesignPhiladelphia

The Festival's new home is the Village of Industry and Art (VIA), 320 S. Broad Street, alongside activations at SEPTA's Suburban Station and Walnut-Locust Concourse, a public hub at the former Temple University Center City Campus café, and events at partner venues throughout the city. The Festival opens with a Kick-off and Awards Celebration on September 30 at the new Forman Arts Initiative Campus and runs a full calendar of community events through October 11.

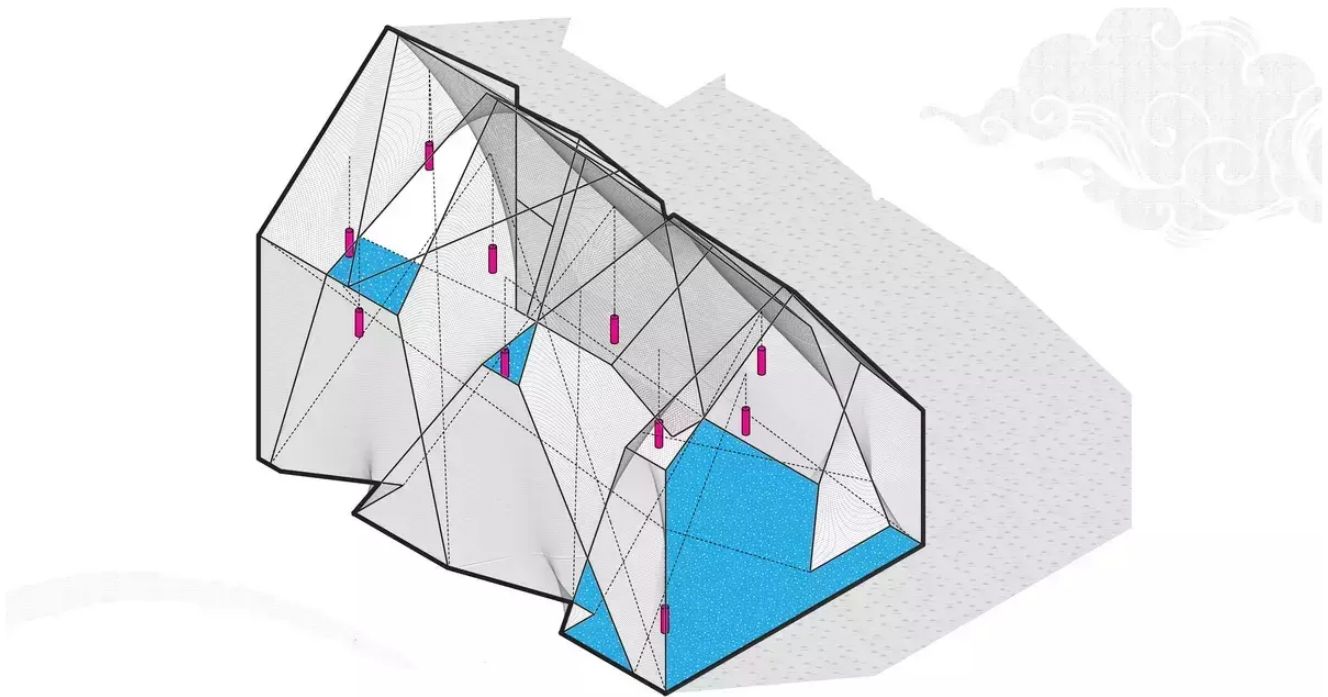
Innovation in Housing: The Architecture of Us and Related Programming



DesignPhiladelphia, AIA Philadelphia, and the Community Design Collaborative are presenting *The Architecture of Us*, a Festival exhibition on view October 1 through 31 at VIA. The exhibition traces the story of Philadelphia's rowhome, from its origins housing immigrant and multigenerational families to the pressures reshaping it today. It explores small-scale housing types, including accessory dwelling units, co-housing, and single-stair apartment buildings, and features real Philadelphians, purpose-built communities, and award-winning designs from the 2025 Stewardson Design Competition. The exhibition argues that "Missing Middle" housing, once common in Philadelphia, New York, and cities across Europe, can be part of the city's housing future. The exhibition is sponsored in part by AIA National and AARP in support of the Stewardson Design Competition. Hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with exceptions for evening events.

A companion half-day event, *The Next Now Symposium: Innovation in Housing*, brings architects, policymakers, and housing advocates to VIA's Atrium on Friday, October 9, from 12:00 to 6:00 p.m. Panels cover the national movement to legalize single-stair apartment buildings, expanding accessory dwelling units, shared living models, and accessible design for aging in place, featuring speakers including Stephen Smith of the Center for Building in North America, the Community Design Collaborative, and Inglis. AIA members can earn continuing education credits, and the public is welcome. A reception follows at Frankie's

Summer Social, VIA's outdoor courtyard. Tickets are \$35 general admission and \$15 for students.



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Temple University's Tyler School of Art Architecture Program presents home:bodies, a hands-on textile installation in Frankie's Social Courtyard that lets visitors reshape a home-scale space built from draped fabric and suspended objects, on view October 1 through 11.



▲ peoples philly.webp

The University of Pennsylvania presents A People's Philly in VIA's Screening Room, a collaborative exhibition exploring how community-led movements for spatial justice, collective care, and civic stewardship have shaped Philadelphia's past, present, and future, bringing together community and student work with archival and speculative material.

Authors Rachel Pastan, Diana Lind, and Samantha Paige Rosen discuss ADUs, co-living, multigenerational housing, and chosen family at Rewriting the Family Home, a book talk moderated by writer and cultural historian Elizabeth Greenspan. The event takes place Thursday, October 2, with a reception at 4:30 p.m. and panel at 5 p.m., at DesignPhiladelphia's O'Donnell & Naccarato Lounge, Unit 171, VIA.

## More at the Village of Industry and Art

Beyond the housing programming, VIA hosts a full slate of exhibitions and workshops. BARFA, presented by Philadelphia design collective Dudd Haus in the Carriage House from October 2 through 4, showcases furniture design, craft, and functional art from emerging practices and leading studios nationwide. VIA's resident tenants will also open their spaces to Festival visitors throughout the month.

ARIMAS Studio offers a beginner-friendly, hands-on workshop, Make Your Own Sterling Silver Stacking Rings, teaching traditional metalsmithing from measuring through polishing. Sessions run Saturday, October 3, Saturday, October 10, and Sunday, October 11, each 10 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Registration is \$148 per seat; participants must be 18 or older.

## Reimagining Philadelphia's Transit Hubs

DesignPhiladelphia is collaborating with SEPTA and additional partners to turn Suburban Station and the Walnut-Locust Concourse into destinations for design and engagement from October 1 through 11. These heavily traveled public spaces, more often known for a quick coffee or a bacon, egg, and cheese on the way to work, will host exhibitions, installations, marketplaces, discussions, and interactive experiences that show what these spaces could become, on the scale of a public space like Dilworth Park above.

**"I'm stoked to see DesignPhiladelphia reimagining SEPTA's spaces. It will breathe new life into well-known places throughout the system. DP is the perfect partner to marry the creative community with public infrastructure, introducing exciting concepts that will transform the way transportation spaces are experienced and create new opportunities for the future. "**

Kelly Edwards, Manager, Real Estate Strategy, SEPTA



At Platform X, DesignPhiladelphia partners with STEP OUTSIDE Show for their exhibition: Evolution of Revolution, which is a history of graffiti in Philadelphia and its impact on the global street art scene. DesignPhiladelphia donated chairs to be transformed into original works by street artists will be on view and for auction, with collaborative merchandise available for purchase. All proceeds will benefit STEP OUTSIDE and DesignPhiladelphia's public programs.

The collaboration with the STEP OUTSIDE x DesignPhiladelphia continues on Wednesday, October 7th for Design Outside: A Conversation with Inga Saffron, Architecture Critic for the Philadelphia Inquirer, and Conrad Benner, founder of Streets Department, about the synergy and tension that exists between the built environment and street artists.

The Community Design Collaborative presents Preserving Black Presence in a vacant retail space at Suburban Station, on view throughout the Festival. This multi-year initiative confronts cultural erasure and strengthens historic Black heritage spaces through community-centered design, working directly with local Black-led cultural sites and centering Black communities in decisions about architecture and preservation. The exhibition's first site partner is The Colored Girls Museum.

The University of Pennsylvania's DumoLab Research, directed by Dr. Laia Mogas-Soldevila within Penn's Department of Graduate Architecture, brings a site-specific installation to Suburban Station's open-air lightwell, on view throughout the Festival. The lab translates biomedical engineering, life sciences, and vernacular architecture into regenerative building materials, biodegradable products, and living systems that sense and respond to their environment.



▲ dear philly.webp

DesignPhiladelphia presents Dear Philly, the debut fashion collection from Varvara "Bobby" Diakonenkova, a West Philadelphia-based designer and Drexel University alumna who competed on Project Runway Season 22. Presented with Most Hated Is An Art, the show takes place at Suburban Station on Friday, October 2, at 7 p.m with an afterparty taking place at the W Hotel's Wet Deck.

AIA Philadelphia will present a member exhibition at Suburban Station spotlighting recent work from Philadelphia architects.

On the last day of the Festival, the Walnut-Locust Concourse hosts the first Philly Design Market curated by DesignPhiladelphia on Sunday, October 11, from 12 to 5 p.m. The South Broad Concourse connecting Walnut-Locust Station to City Hall sat closed for six years before reopening permanently in June 2026 following safety, lighting, and security upgrades. The corridor now features a mural by Philadelphia-based artist Lauren Cat West, created with lead teaching artist Alvin Tull, and 200 painted columns completed by community members through a collaborative program with Mural Arts Philadelphia and the City of Philadelphia. Visitors can browse the market underground, then head up to Center City District's Open Streets on West Walnut Street to continue the Festival above ground.

## A New Festival Hub Facing City Hall

In addition to VIA, DesignPhiladelphia is activating a public Festival Hub in the former Temple University Center City Campus café, an all-glass corner space on the west side of Market Street directly across from City Hall. Open October 1 through 11 from 3 to 7 p.m., the Hub offers festival information and wayfinding to installations throughout Suburban Station and the Concourse, along with a MIWA exhibition on residential design for emerging professionals and festival events and receptions held on-site throughout the month.

## Festival Kickoff, Awards, and Community Events



The Festival opens with the 2026 Festival Kickoff and Awards Celebration on September 30 at the Forman Arts Institute's new campus, giving guests an early look at the space alongside music, cocktails, and Philadelphia's creative community. The evening includes the second annual DesignPhiladelphia Awards, honoring individuals and organizations who have pushed boundaries and elevated the city's design landscape.

JADE Night Out (Justice Alliance in Design Education), DesignPhiladelphia's design student social, returns at Frankie's Social Club on Saturday October 10th. Named "A Night on the Town: We Outside!" by DesignPhiladelphia's 2026 JADE Fellows, the evening gathers design and creative students from across Philadelphia's colleges and universities for a free community celebration featuring a live DJ, food, mocktails, and an open dress code from casual to glam. The event caps DesignPhiladelphia's summer JADE Fellowship, a program centering Black and Brown design students.



KidsFest returns as a free, family-friendly celebration connecting families with local makers and year-round creative educational programs. This year's KidsFest joins Old City businesses for a street festival marking 250 years of Philadelphia's history in culture, craft, and design. The Old City Creative Block Party takes place Saturday, October 3, from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., on N. 3rd Street between Arch and Race Streets, with partners including the Free Library, Magic Gardens, and Mission in Arts offering free interactive activities that combine educational programming with the city's historic milestone.

As part of this celebration, HOMEPLACE transforms a historic Philadelphia rowhome at 1803 Pine St. into a four-day living exhibition of the Black home as a site of design, ritual, and political imagination. Presented by Àrokò Cooperative, a worker-owned design studio and publishing house, the project features commissioned artwork, public programming, and the debut of new published works, including contributions from ceramicist and Àrokò founding member Kristen Stain. HOMEPLACE is conceived as a pilot for a recurring salon model in Philadelphia in future years.

## Additional Festival Programming

CBP Architects opens its Old City studio to showcase the firm's recent housing projects and discuss how creativity can expand opportunities within housing as a fundamental human right.



▲ [bellevue.webp](#)

David Kurlander, Historian-in-Residence at the Bellevue, leads a walking tour of the landmark Broad Street building, covering the Hewitt brothers' Gilded Age design, the 1961 AIA convention where Le Corbusier received the AIA Gold Medal, and successive generations of preservation and design that have carried the building through Philadelphia's changing history.

Additional Festival programming, including a spotlight event with Autodesk, will be announced in the coming weeks.

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## About the Festival

The DesignPhiladelphia Festival is the oldest design event of its kind in the country and annually showcases the work of practicing architects, designers, and creative professionals. Experience design in unexpected ways through more than 100 exhibitions, workshops, demonstrations, tours, talks, and events held in venues across the city. Learn about wide-ranging topics, including architecture, urban planning, landscape, graphic, multimedia,

product, furniture design, fashion, and the like. For more information on planning an event, sponsoring, advertising, or attending the Festival, visit [designphiladelphia.org](http://designphiladelphia.org).

## About DesignPhiladelphia

DesignPhiladelphia champions a vibrant design community, committed to excellence, inclusivity, and connections from K through career. With a focus on multidisciplinary design education, an annual festival, and public programs, DesignPhiladelphia aims to create economic opportunities in underserved communities, support the region's design industry, and position Philadelphia as a global hub of design excellence.

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## About DesignPhiladelphia Community

*We foster a vibrant design community from K through Career committed to excellence, inclusivity and connections. As an invaluable partner in Philadelphia's progress we do that through multidisciplinary design education, our annual festival, and public programs about design.*

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