

Public Architecture

Leveraging Design to Serve the Public Interest

Established in 2002 as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, Public Architecture provides a venue where architects can work for the public good. Rather than waiting for commissions, Public Architecture takes a leadership role, identifying and responding to significant social problems of broad relevance. Public Architecture's approach is two-fold. The organization undertakes a series of in-house "design initiatives," which are prototypical projects that address larger social issues through design and advocacy. Public Architecture also coordinates "The 1%" program, a national initiative that recruits firms to pledge 1% of their time to pro bono service and connects them with nonprofits in need of design assistance.

Timeline

- 2002** Inspired by his firm's own self-initiated pro bono work, architect John Peterson, principal of San Francisco-based Peterson Architects founds Public Architecture. Peterson Architects' work becomes the basis for the Sidewalk Plaza design initiative—Public Architecture's first in-house design initiative.
- 2003** The Day Labor Station and Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) design initiatives are launched.
- 2004** John Cary becomes the Public Architecture's first fulltime executive director.
Public Architecture expands its founding board of directors to include local and national leaders from the design profession and other fields.
- 2005** Supported by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, Public Architecture launches The 1%—the first cohesive effort to make pro bono work a staple of the architectural profession.
The Material Reuse design initiative is launched with "ScrapHouse"—a demonstration home made entirely from salvaged materials built across the street from San Francisco City Hall and subsequently the subject of a National Geographic Channel documentary. ScrapHouse led to Public Architecture's participation in the design of the Technology Access Foundation Community Learning Space—a Seattle community center that will have a significant scrap and salvage component.
- 2006** Within a year of its launch, The 1% has recruited more than 40,000 hours annually of pro bono design services.
The *ADU Garage Conversion Manual* and *The Lowly and the Difficult*, both featuring ADUs and the suburban context are published and distributed.
The City of San Francisco grants funds for construction of the Brainwash Sidewalk Plaza, designed in association with the firm CMG Landscape Architecture.
- 2007** Public Architecture opens registration in The 1% program to nonprofits. A new matching portal allows nonprofits to connect with design professionals offering pro bono service and vice versa.
The American Institute of Architects confers the Institute Honor for Collaborative Achievement on Public Architecture.
Day Labor Station design initiative is featured in the Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum's "Design for the Other 90%" exhibition and wins the Spark! Design Award.
- 2008** With continued support from the NEA and new support from the American Institute of Architects, The 1% program recruits more than 350 firms. Over 150 nonprofits register their facility needs with The 1% program.
Public Architecture and its Material Reuse design initiative is awarded a grant from the USGBC as part of its first ever distribution from its Research Fund.
Day Labor Station design initiative wins North American division Silver Award at the Holcim Awards for Sustainable Construction.
- 2009** John Peterson and John Cary are honored as Designers of the Year by *Contract* magazine.