

Call for Proposals: American Roundtable

Deadline: 11:59 p.m. EST February 18, 2020

T H E A R C H I
T E C T U R A L
L E A G U E N Y

Introduction

The evolving American economy is significantly changing the landscapes we live in, creating ever harsher extremes, from ascendant places prospering in the information and services era, to declining cities and towns which have not recovered from the disappearance of manufacturing or the industrialization of agriculture. Urban, suburban, and rural America are all being transformed by changing economic drivers, new patterns of mobility, the ongoing effects of racism, a volatile political climate, the impacts of climate change, and other forces.

How can we see with fresh eyes the condition – the successes, failures, and opportunities – of the American landscape? How can we more deeply understand the relationship of individuals and communities to their environments and the constraining and empowering impacts that the built environment has on daily life, and the trajectories of lives?

The Architectural League, one of the country's leading cultural organizations devoted to architecture and the designed world, is launching American Roundtable, a new initiative that will bring together on-the-ground perspectives on the condition of American communities and what they need to thrive going forward. The Architectural League will commission up to ten editorial teams to produce reports featuring diverse voices, expressed through diverse media, creating portraits and agendas for places they know well. The initiative focuses on small cities and towns and rural areas. Commissioned teams will be awarded \$10,000 to support their work, which will be published digitally on archleague.org and in a series of print publications.

The Project

American Roundtable will commission up to ten editors (or editorial teams) to prepare reports on small- to mid-size communities across the United States. The reports will be published online and as a series of standard format print publications in September 2020.

Those interested in assembling a team to explore a locale are invited to submit an editorial proposal and their qualifications for review. The editor, or at least one member of the editorial team, must have a design background (architect, planner, architectural historian, etc). A selection committee will commission up to ten teams to produce reports soon after the Call for Proposals deadline in February 2020. The selection committee will seek to ensure geographic diversity across the United States and diversity in terms of the types of communities represented. Rural areas, small towns and cities, micropolitan regions, or metropolitan regions of less than about 400,000 will be favored. For one source of US demographic information, click [here](#). Proposals demonstrating close ties to (including current or past residency) and intimate knowledge of their subject communities; community buy-in (such as connections to local government, universities, or civic, community, faith-based, and cultural organizations) and a diverse group of project contributors will be favored. Reports should be intended for a knowledgeable, but general public audience; a creative and engaging mix of features within the report is encouraged. Please do not submit proposals for major U.S. cities/metropolitan areas (including neighborhoods, satellite cities, suburbs, and exurbs thereof).

Teams will have the winter and spring to conduct research and produce material with reports due in early July.

Commission and Expectations

An individual or team will be commissioned as the editor of each report. Each report will consist of an introductory essay of up to 2,500 words by the editor(s). Features by contributors commissioned by the editor(s) will respond to questions around five major topics (see below for topics). These features may take any form (i.e. an article, essay, interview, first-person account, photo portfolio or essay, case study, project profile, mapping, set of illustrations, etc.) and should show variety in approach and perspective. Each report must be structured around the five topics, however editors are invited to propose the number and mix of features that best tells the story of their community. For example, a report might consist of five larger features, each addressing one of the five topics; while another contains multiple smaller features in response to each topic. Feature contributors should be diverse in profession (including but not limited to policymakers, residents, design professionals, historians, artists, planners, community activists, and businesspeople) and to the extent possible by personal backgrounds and experiences. No more than one quarter of the features can be the editor(s)' own research or projects. Each topic and its related feature(s) in the report should include a short (no more than 250 words) introduction by the editor(s).

While general discussion or analysis of issues in our national conversation is welcome, no part of any report may lobby for or against specific candidates, parties, or any bills under legislative consideration.

Images submitted with the report must have all rights cleared and must be supplied by the editor(s). A mid-research review will take place in early April. Following submission of the report, The Architectural League will provide additional editorial guidance to prepare material for publication. The Architectural League reserves the right not to publish material deemed to be of insufficient quality; ultimate editorial control will reside with The Architectural League with the expectation that the editor(s) and the report contributors will respond to comments and develop the report to a satisfactory state.

The preparation of each report will be supported by a \$10,000 stipend, which will be managed by the editor(s). \$5,000 of the stipend will be awarded as an advance when commissioned in late February or early March, with the remaining \$5,000 disbursed in July upon submission to and acceptance of the report by the League.

Editors and some contributors may be invited, following publication of the reports, to participate in thematic conversations with other project participants during the summer and fall of 2020.

Please also consult the project [FAQs](#) for additional clarification.

Topics and Questions

We understand that every community is different. While each report should address and be structured around the five topics below to allow for dialogue across communities, reports are encouraged to explore related issues. If the listed questions within a topic do not address aspects of your community that should be explored, we invite editors to propose alternate questions.

1. PUBLIC SPACE

How is exclusion or inclusion in public space and public buildings being addressed in your locale? What challenges exist in your community to create common, inclusive, and civic spaces for all? Is there an example of a specific, recently-constructed public space or building, designed to address some of your community's needs?

2. HEALTH

What are the health needs of your community and how is the physical environment contributing to or detracting from its well-being? How is the delivery of health services spatially organized in your locale? Would a different approach to the delivery of services serve your community better?

3. WORK AND ECONOMY

How has the way people work, the types of economic activity or jobs available, and the development and availability of human capital remade the physical environment of your locale? How are changes in the retail environment and the delivery of goods affecting understandings of community?

4. INFRASTRUCTURE

Identify and analyze the most pressing physical infrastructural needs your community must address in order to thrive. Is there an example of a specific infrastructural project that has or could spatially transform your community?

5. ENVIRONMENT

What are the greatest challenges facing your community related to environmental health, sustainability, and climate change? How is your community's built environment responding to these challenges? How do attitudes and tensions about the use of natural resources affect your community and its relationship to its built environment?

Submission Requirements

Submit material through The Architectural League's [Formstack portal](#).

1) Editor Information (information requested on Formstack form)

2) Statement (no more than 400 words)

Introduce us to your community and tell us why a case study of it will help us learn more about the American landscape, its people, the successes and failures of our built environment, and what is needed in terms of investment to move forward.

3) Project Proposal (no more than 1,000 words)

Outline your proposed report's features in response to each of the five topic areas. If contributors are known please provide very short biographical descriptions; otherwise, succinctly describe the types of contributors and the processes for identifying them that you intend to pursue. Please also list the formats of any planned features (i.e. an article, essay, interview, first-person account, photo portfolio or essay, case study, project profile, mapping, set of illustrations, etc.), and provide short explanations of the features' relevance to the topic, your full report, and our understanding of the built environment. Reports are intended to provide readers with an engaging and creative exploration of a community and its relationship to the built environment. Reports are not expected to be exhaustive or comprehensive, nor should they consist of exclusively academic work. The selection committee is open to reports that amplify or narrow the topics and questions for compelling reasons. The selection committee will use its discretion to commission reports that most creatively seek to explore and understand their communities through multiple lenses and voices and is not solely looking for regimented answers to the proposed questions.

4) Budget (1 page)

Itemize how you intend to use the \$10,000 project stipend.

5) CV (1 page) and Biographical Statement (no more than 200 words)

Each editor should submit a resume/CV that details relevant editorial or curatorial experience. The editor or a member of the editorial team should have design or design history training (but need not be a registered architect). Each editor should also submit a short biographical statement, introducing yourself and your connection to the community of your project proposal.

6) Work Sample (1 page)

Each editor should submit a writing sample. An excerpt from a longer paper or article may be submitted.

Eligibility

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

Selection Committee

Nicholas Anderson (Philadelphia, PA)
David Dowell (Kansas City, MO)
Anne Marie Duvall Decker (Jackson, MS)
Rosalie Genevro (New York, NY)
Mario Gooden (New York, NY)
Paul Lewis (New York, NY)
Jonathan Massey (Ann Arbor, MI)
Sue Mobley (New Orleans, LA)
Erin Moore (Eugene, OR)
Lyn Rice (New York, NY)
Jason Schupbach (Tempe, AZ)

Support

American Roundtable is supported, in part, by the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support has been provided by the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts.



Contact

Applicants may email questions to americanroundtable@archleague.org. Applicants are encouraged to be in contact to discuss their ideas in advance of submission. Join the American Roundtable mailing list [here](#).

The Architectural League encourages participation in its projects by all interested individuals. The League does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, age, religion, gender or gender expression, national origin, disability, or sexual orientation.