



March 3, 2025

Stephen Ehikian  
Acting Administrator  
U.S. General Services Administration  
1800 F Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20405

**Subject: Recommendations on Federal Civic Architecture**

Dear Administrator Ehikian:

On behalf of the 16,000 members of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), we are writing to express deep concern regarding the administration's memorandum on Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture<sup>1</sup> that calls for an emphasis on classical architecture, limiting the scope of design choices for federal projects. This approach will hamper innovation and undermine the ability of design professionals to create spaces that reflect the professions, people, and places these projects aim to serve.

ASLA and our members support the General Services Administration's (GSA) Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture,<sup>2</sup> which seek to ensure that public buildings represent the interests and aspirations of the American people, while creating high-quality, well-designed projects. These guiding principles are the bedrock of GSA's Design Excellence Program and the State Department's Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, leading to some of the most secure, resilient, accessible, and impressive public buildings and spaces on the planet. Adhering to the guiding principles, landscape architects have led and played critical design roles in many GSA Design Excellence projects.

Recently, GSA acknowledged the design excellence in landscape architecture of the Columbus Land Port of Entry, located in Columbus, New Mexico, within the Chihuahuan Desert. The 2022 GSA Design Awards jury was impressed by the process efficiency, security, durability, and sustainable performance achieved by the project, as well as the way it creates a sense of place. "In architecture and landscape architecture alike, the Columbus Land Port of Entry melds high functionality with regional culture and resource

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<sup>1</sup> Memorandum for the Administrator of the General Services Administration, "Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture," January 20, 2025. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/promoting-beautiful-federal-civic-architecture/>

<sup>2</sup> "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture," U.S. General Services Administration. <https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/design-and-construction/design-excellence-program/guiding-principles-for-federal-architecture>

stewardship.”<sup>3</sup> Landscape architects achieved this design excellence and seamless incorporation of the natural environment and community values using cutting-edge design techniques and a robust community engagement strategy.

Any recommendations on the planning and design of federal buildings and spaces should call for a vigorous community engagement process. Landscape architects are leaders in utilizing community engagement strategies as an integral part of the design process—allowing local leaders and the public to have a say in the designs and functions of buildings and sites meant to serve them. ASLA supports the active and intentional engagement of the community and stakeholders in all phases of planning, design, and implementation processes for projects that contribute to the public realm, which builds consensus, trust, mutual understanding, and shared decision-making.<sup>4</sup>

At ASLA, our mission is to empower our members to design healthy, beautiful, and resilient places for all. Federal projects serve as critical opportunities to reflect these values, setting the standard for infrastructure and public spaces across the nation. Restricting design choices, rather than allowing them to be driven by project goals and local context, risks delivering projects that are less functional, less reflective of community identity, and less responsive to future challenges.

As you begin to develop policy and design recommendations to govern our federal buildings, ASLA and its members stand ready to provide insights, information, expert advice, and counsel to ensure that federal design processes remain open, collaborative, and responsive to the communities they serve. We request the opportunity to contribute to the review process as it moves forward. Collaboration with ASLA and allied organizations across the design and architecture industries will help ensure that federal projects are as varied, innovative, and resilient as the American people themselves.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to contributing to recommendations that ensure that federal design projects continue to reflect the needs, values, and aspirations of the communities they are intended to serve.

Sincerely,  
Kona Gray, FASLA, PLA  
President, American Society of Landscape Architects

Torey Carter-Conneen, Hon. ASLA  
CEO, American Society of Landscape Architects

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<sup>3</sup> *GSA Design Awards 2022*. <https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/design-and-construction/design-excellence-program/gsa-design-awards/previous-design-awards>

<sup>4</sup> “Community & Stakeholder Engagement.” *Public Policies*, American Society of Landscape Architects, 2022. [https://www.asla.org/uploadedFiles/Community\\_Stakeholder\\_Engagement\\_Public\\_2022.pdf](https://www.asla.org/uploadedFiles/Community_Stakeholder_Engagement_Public_2022.pdf)