

Transforming Cities, Transforming Lives: The Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme

January 9–March 29, 2019



Aga Khan Garden, Alberta, Canada – Photo by Nelson Byrd Woltz Landscape Architects

Overview

The District Architecture Center is pleased to host *Transforming Cities, Transforming Lives: The Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme*, an exhibition of 27 regeneration projects from nine countries that demonstrate how culture can have a positive impact well beyond conservation. These projects promote good governance, growth of civil society, rise in incomes and economic opportunities, greater respect for human rights, and better stewardship of the environment—even in the poorest and most remote areas of the globe. While some projects are completed, those that remain in progress go beyond mere technical restoration to address the questions of social and environmental context, adaptive re-use, institutional sustainability, and training.

About The Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme

The Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme (AKHCP), through its projects, seeks to be a catalyst to improve quality of life by activating culture as a springboard for economic and social development. These

projects are laboratories for ideas that can positively shape the future in ways that are meaningful, beneficial, and impactful. At their core is a message of opportunity, of potential, of hope.

The AKHCP works on regeneration projects in historic areas in ways that spur social, economic and cultural development. Its central objective is to improve the lives of the inhabitants of these historic areas while promoting models that will sustain these improvements. The Programme has shown how the creation of parks and gardens, conservation of landmark buildings, improvements to the urban fabric and the revitalisation of cultural heritage—in many cases the only assets at the disposal of the community—can provide a springboard for social development.

About the Aga Khan Council for the United States

The Aga Khan Council for the United States of America is the social governance structure for Ismaili Muslims. Headquartered in Houston, Texas, The Aga Khan Council is supported by numerous volunteers throughout the country who provide their time and talent toward improving the quality of life of the community. His Highness the Aga Khan is the 49th hereditary Imam, or spiritual leader, of the Shia Ismaili Muslim Community.

The Ismaili Muslims are a culturally diverse community living in over 25 countries around the world. They adhere to a 1,400-year tradition of Shi'a values that are expressed through a commitment to a search for knowledge for the betterment of self and society; embracing pluralism by building bridges of peace and understanding; and generously sharing of one's time, talents, and material resources to improve the quality of life of the community and those among whom they live.

Transforming Cities, Transforming Lives: The Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme is organized by the Aga Khan Council for the United States of America in cooperation with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme, and AIA|DC. This exhibition was designed and modeled in ArchiCAD19, courtesy of Graphisoft. Generously supported in part by BluEdge.

Related Events

Reception and Talk

Tuesday, January 15, 6:30–8pm

Free.

Registration required via <https://www.aiadc.com/calendar>

Join AIA|DC, the Aga Khan Council for the United States, and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture for the opening of *Transforming Cities, Transforming Lives: The Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme* with a reception and talk by Thompson M. Mayes, author of [Why Old Places Matter](#). Based on his independent

research, Mr. Mayes will talk about why old places—such as those that the Aga Khan Trust for Culture works to preserve—matter to people and describe ways the continued existence of old places contributes to people’s sense of well-being and their capacity to flourish.

The Aga Khan Historic Cities Program, through its projects, seeks to be a catalyst to improve quality of life by activating culture as a springboard for economic and social development. Its central objective is to improve the lives of the inhabitants of these historic areas while promoting models that will sustain these improvements.

Thompson M. Mayes is Vice President and Senior Counsel for the National Trust for Historic Preservation and author of articles related to preservation easements, historic house museums, and the future of historic preservation, among others. Mr. Mayes taught historic preservation law at the University of Maryland. A recipient of the National Endowment for the Arts Rome Prize in Historic Preservation in 2013, he is author of *Why Old Places Matter* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2018). Mr. Mayes received his B.A. with honors in History and his J.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and an M.A. in writing from Johns Hopkins University.

Revealed: Humayun’s Tomb

Monday, February 25, 6:30–8pm

Free.

Registration required via <https://www.aiadc.com/calendar>

Join us for a glimpse at one of India’s most treasured landmarks: Humayun’s Tomb. Completed in 1570, the building of Humayun’s Tomb has inspired many theories. For some, it stands as a testament of a queen’s love for her king and to others it is a son’s memorial to his father. To many, it is an ambitious emperor’s statement of the empire. This film illustrates the captivating story of this architectural marvel and presents a fascinating story on the life of the Mughal emperor Humayun and his dynasty.

This film was produced by the Discovery Channel in partnership with Archaeological Survey of India and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture.

Landscape and Garden Heritage Conservation in the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme

Wednesday, March 20, 6:30–8pm

\$10 for Students & Assoc. AIA Members | \$15 for AIA & DAC Members | \$25 for Non-Members

Registration required via <https://www.aiadc.com/calendar>

James Wescoat, FASLA, Aga Khan Professor of Landscape Architecture at MIT, will give a presentation on *Landscape and Garden Heritage Conservation in the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme*, with examples

from projects in the Nizamuddin area of New Delhi, India to the Bagh-e Babur garden in Kabul, Afghanistan, and Al Azhar Park in Cairo, Egypt. These innovative projects link cultural heritage conservation with community economic development and urban environmental planning in ways designed to enhance the quality of life for residents and distant travelers.

James L. Wescoat Jr. is an Aga Khan Professor of landscape architecture and geography in the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT. He co-directs the Norman B. Leventhal Center for Advanced Urbanism. Mr. Wescoat's research has concentrated on water systems in South Asia and the US from the site to river basin scales. At the site scale, Professor Wescoat has focused on historical waterworks of Mughal gardens and cities in India and Pakistan. At the larger scale, Professor Wescoat has conducted water policy research in the Colorado, Indus, Ganges, and Great Lakes basins, including the history of multilateral water agreements.

At MIT, he teaches courses on Islamic Architecture and the environment, Islamic gardens and geographies, Water-conserving design, and Landscape heritage conservation. James earned his Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree from Louisiana State University and practiced landscape architecture in the U.S. and Middle East before returning to graduate study in geography at the University of Chicago with an emphasis on water resources. Mr. Wescoat is a fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects, and a lifetime member of the U.S. National Research Council.

Selected Images



Earthen Architecture Projects, Mali – Photo by Christian Richters



Humayun's Tomb Complex, India – Photo by Christian Richters



Al Azhar Park, Egypt – Photo by Gary Otte

About the District Architecture Center

The District Architecture Center (DAC) is home to the Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and the Washington Architectural Foundation. Located in the historic Penn Quarter neighborhood, we celebrate the built environment through exhibitions and related programs that engage architects, architectural enthusiasts, allied professionals, students, and the public.

Exhibitions at DAC spotlight excellence in architecture, design, and urbanism; explore and disseminate significant artistic and architectural ideas; and pique curiosities about the man-made world around us. These experiences offer a platform for dialogue on the nature of contemporary design practice, the role of architecture in our communities, and the many ways that design impacts people's lives.

General Information

Location

District Architecture Center
421 7th Street NW
Washington, DC 20004

Contact

202.347.9403

Connect

aiadc.com
Facebook: @districtarchcenter
Instagram: @districtarchcenter
Twitter: @dcarchcenter

#DACgalleries

Admission

Exhibitions are free and open to the public. Refer to related events for admission pricing.

Gallery Hours

Monday–Wednesday: 10am–7pm*

Thursday–Friday: 10am–5pm*

Saturday–Sunday: Closed

*Hours subject to change pending special events, holidays, or inclement weather. Consult our calendar or call ahead.

Membership

Become a DAC Member at <https://www.aiadc.com/membership> to receive member discounts.

Contact

Scott Clowney, Assoc. AIA
Director of Exhibitions and Public Programs
sclowney@aiadc.com

Louis Duva
Communications Coordinator
lduva@aiadc.com