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Coalition of National Design Associations Proposes New National Academy

Washington, DC, January 28, 2008—A growing coalition of national organizations focused on the built environment has agreed to create a new National Academy of Environmental Design (NAED) to coordinate research, generate new knowledge, distribute vital information, and make recommendations to policy makers on how to reduce the negative impact of cities, buildings, landscapes, and transportation on our global climate.

The built environment—the communities and buildings we occupy—produces nearly half of all the greenhouse gases and consumes almost 40% of the energy that humans use. Architects, engineers, landscape architects, interior designers, public health physicians, building contractors, researchers, scientists, and many others each play vital roles in designing and constructing the built environment. Yet there is no single entity, no national-level public or private body, charged with coordinating the existing work, or defining the needed research to improve the energy performance and environmental impact of the designed world. Similarly, there is no single entity charged with understanding and documenting improvements to the quality of life that can come through a better built environment. The NAED will take up that charge.

The Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA), The American Institute of Architects (AIA), the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS), the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP), and the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture (CELA) have all endorsed a resolution to establish the NAED. The NAED would incorporate the full range of design and planning disciplines, including architecture, urban planning, landscape architecture, interior design, product design, and graphic design and work with the other National Academies in providing expertise for the National Research Council boards and committees that advise Congress and other levels of government on public policy.

The deans of over 20 schools and more than 100 faculty members nationwide have signed on in support of this proposal, as have other professional organizations such as the Environmental Design Research Association and the Architecture Research Centers Consortium. The coalition's steering committee will work to organize the NAED with a plan to seek congressional support for its establishment in 2009.

"Today, the United States and the world face pressing and catastrophic challenges, including precipitous climate change, species extinction, epidemics affecting human health, and a wide range of toxins, the impacts of which are poorly understood even when recognized," said Kim Tanzer, AIA, President of ACSA. "The NAED will marshal the extensive knowledge of the environmental design disciplines to help the existing academies, through the National Research Council, and address these critically important issues."

The existing National Academies bring together committees of experts in areas of scientific, engineering, and technological endeavor to serve "pro bono to address critical national issues and give advice to the federal government and the public." Four organizations comprise the academies: the National Academy of Sciences (created in 1863), the National Academy of Engineering (created in 1964), the Institute of Medicine (created in 1970), and the National Research Council (created in 1916). The National Academies receive funding from a range of sources, including government allocations, private grants, and foundation support. All four organizations were established during times of extreme need for the nation to act in the face of crisis – the Civil War, World War I, and the Space Race.

The founding organizations of the NAED believe that we have entered just such a perilous period in our planet's history, and that we must act now to secure the future for our children and the generations to come.

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About the Coalition

ACSA (www.acsa-arch.org). The Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture is a 501(c)3 nonprofit membership association founded in 1912 to advance the quality of architectural education. ACSA's membership comprises over 250 schools in several categories, including full membership for all accredited programs in the United States and Canada. ACSA's programs support the over 5,000 architecture faculty at its member schools.

ACSP (www.acsp.org). The Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning (ACSP) is a consortium of university-based programs offering credentials in urban and regional planning. Acting together, the ACSP member school faculty members are able to express their shared commitments to understanding the dynamics of urban and regional development, enhancing planning practices, and improving the education of both novice and experienced planners.

AIA (www.aia.org). For 150 years, members of The American Institute of Architects have worked with each other and their communities to create more valuable, healthy, secure, and sustainable buildings and cityscapes. AIA members have access to the right people, knowledge, and tools to create better design, and through such resources and access, they help clients and communities make their visions real.

AIAS (www.aias.org). The AIAS is an independent, 501(c)3 nonprofit and student-run organization that is more than just a club. This grassroots association is a cooperative between thousands of students (of all ages and academic degrees) committed to helping each other. It provides a sense of community and a forum to share differing views. The AIAS is also a professional organization that is the official voice of architecture students.

ARCC (www.arccweb.org). The Architectural Research Centers Consortium, Inc. is an international consortium of architectural research centers committed to the expansion of research culture and infrastructure in architecture and related design disciplines. Since its founding as a nonprofit corporation in 1976, ARCC has exerted a concerted commitment to the improvement of the physical environment and the quality of life.

ASLA (www.asla.org). Founded in 1899, the American Society of Landscape Architects is the national professional association representing landscape architects. Beginning with 11 original members, ASLA has grown to more than 18,000 members and 48 chapters, representing all 50 states, US territories, and 42 countries around the world. ASLA promotes the landscape architecture profession and advances the practice through advocacy, education, communication, and fellowship.

CELA (www.thecela.org). The Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture is composed of virtually all of the programs of landscape architecture in the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. The members of the faculty of these institutions are invited to participate in the Council. CELA can trace its beginnings to 1920, and for more than 70 years has been concerned with the content and quality of professional education in landscape architecture.

EDRA (www.edra.org). The Environmental Design Research Association advances and disseminates behavior and design research toward improving understanding of the relationships between people and their environments.

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