

AEA Consulting



2025

Cultural Infrastructure Index

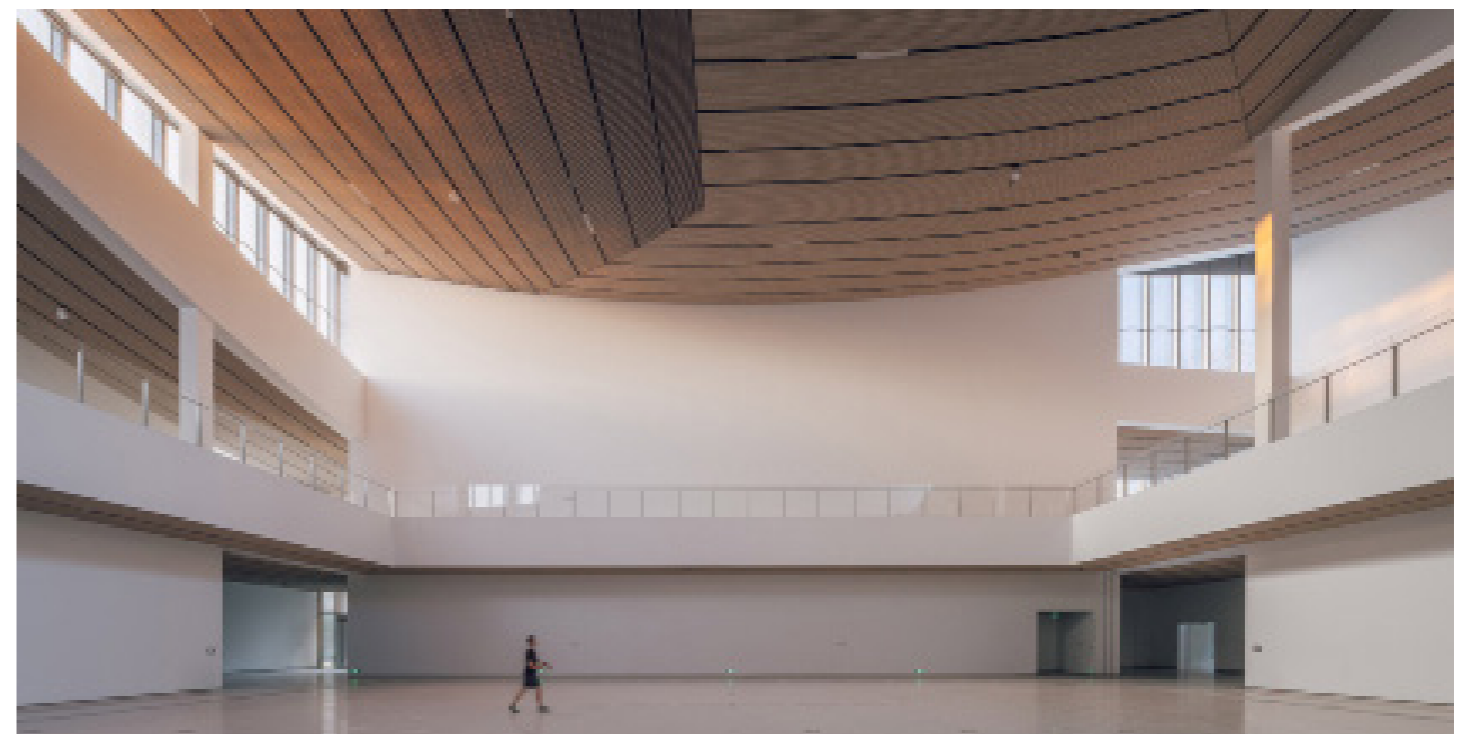
10th edition



2025

Cultural Infrastructure Index

10th edition



Above:
Suzhou Museum of Contemporary Art, Suzhou

Front cover:
FENIX Museum of Migration, Rotterdam

Inside front cover:
Shenzhen Bay Cultural Plaza, Shenzhen

10 Years of the Index



Over the past decade, global cultural infrastructure has grown substantially in scale, geographic breadth, and ambition. This tenth edition of the Cultural Infrastructure Index (CII) documents that growth in detail, tracking 3,150 projects between 2016 and 2025. The dataset captures both the momentum driving cultural capital investment and the disruptions that have tested it.

The Index tracks two distinct categories of project activity: completions, buildings that have opened and exist in the world, and announcements, which represent stated intentions to build. These are not equivalent data points, and the report treats them separately throughout.

Over the decade, 1,521 major cultural infrastructure projects were completed globally, representing \$78.7 billion in capital investment delivered. A further 1,629 projects were announced across the same period, with a stated combined value of \$80.6 billion, though the realized value of that pipeline will only be known as projects complete in future years. The focus of this report is primarily on what has been built: the 1,521 completed projects that collectively represent a decade of sustained delivery in cultural infrastructure worldwide.

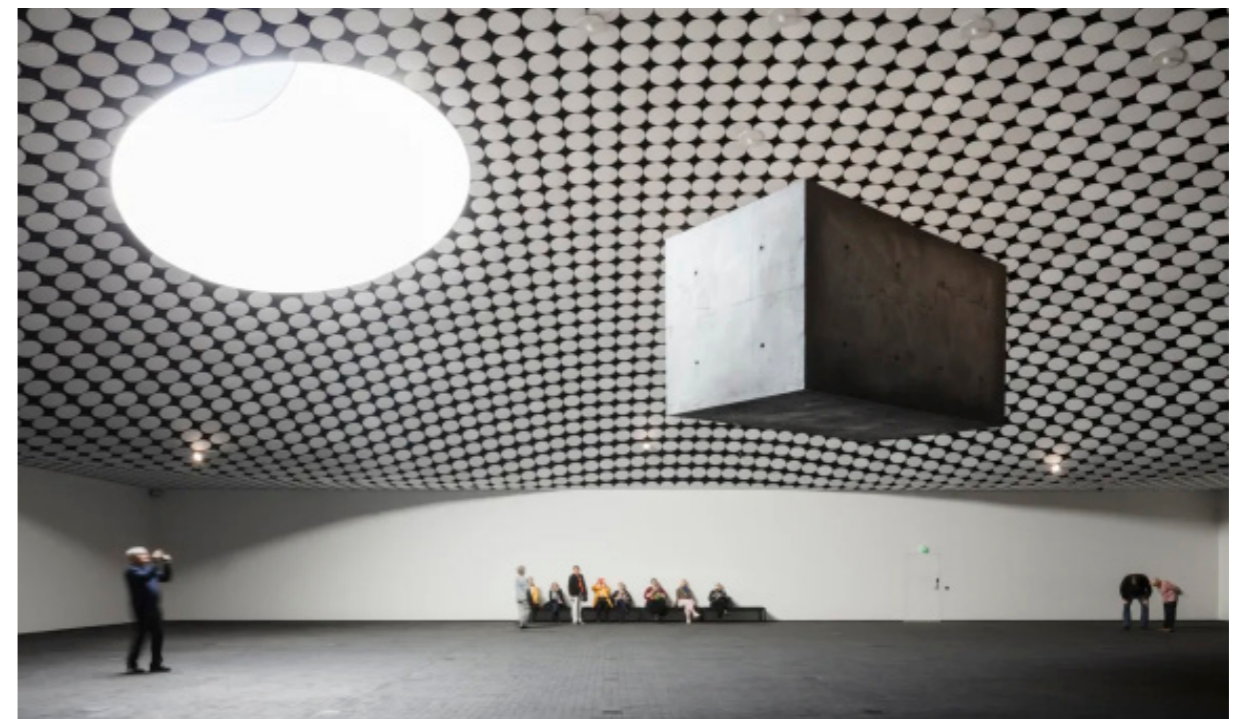
Geographically, North America has remained the dominant region throughout, accounting for 43% of completed projects in 2025, up from 39% in 2016. New York, London, and Shanghai are the three most active cities for completed cultural infrastructure over

the decade, with Paris, Washington D.C., and Beijing also among the most consistent contributors. Europe's share of completions has declined across the period—from 37% in 2016 to 27% in 2025—reflecting both a relative slowdown in new project delivery and the growing weight of North American activity. Asia has maintained a broadly stable share of completions, hovering between 18% and 25% throughout the decade, with China accounting for the majority of activity. The Middle East has delivered a consistent number of completed projects each year, though investment values have been highly variable, driven by a small number of large individual projects. Latin America and Africa both registered a growing presence across the period, though they remain a small proportion of overall completions, reflecting widening ambitions for cultural infrastructure beyond established markets.

The composition of completed projects has also shifted. Museums and galleries remain the dominant building type, representing 55% of all completed projects tracked over the decade, while performing arts

centers account for a further 21%. More significant than these familiar categories is what has changed around them. The CII introduced adaptive reuse as a tracked category in 2021, recognizing its growing prevalence as a development model for cultural uses—a reflection of project stakeholders increasingly seeking to minimize waste while maximizing social value and relevance to local communities. Adaptive reuse projects accounted for 11% of all completions in 2021, growing to a peak of 20% in 2022 before settling at 13% in 2025, representing 24 completed projects that year. The renovation of existing buildings has similarly grown as a share of completions, rising from 9% of completed projects in 2016 to 28% in 2025. Together, these shifts reflect a maturing understanding of cultural infrastructure that increasingly incorporates the stewardship of the existing built environment alongside the creation of new buildings.

The qualitative trends documented in this report deepen this picture. The concept of civic impact has evolved over the decade from a funding rationale into a design brief:



Amos Rex Art Museum, Helsinki

Taipei Performing Arts Center, Taipei

cultural facilities are now routinely expected to function as community infrastructure, with flexible programming, accessible public spaces, and measurable social outcomes built into their briefs from the outset. Alongside this, audience expectations have become a more explicit force in shaping cultural buildings – a consequence of the disruption to in-person attendance during and after the pandemic, which accelerated long-standing questions about what venues need to offer to make the case for in-person attendance.

Design trends across the decade reflect both these pressures and wider architectural trends: a growing emphasis on sustainability and environmental performance; the reintegration of cultural facilities into mixed-use urban contexts; and an increased willingness among clients and architects to work with existing structures rather than replace them. The architects and practices shaping the field have diversified, with new voices from across the globe.

The decade captured in this report is one of substantial growth, punctuated disruption,

and meaningful structural change. The cultural infrastructure sector that emerges from it is larger, more geographically dispersed, and more complex in its ambitions than the one the CII began tracking in 2016.



Top:
V&A Dundee, Dundee

Bottom:
Glenstone Museum, Maryland



A Note on Methodology

The Cultural Infrastructure Index seeks to measure investment in capital projects in the cultural sector globally, identifying projects with a budget of US\$10 million or more that were announced publicly or completed within a calendar year. For the purpose of the Index, “cultural infrastructure” comprises museums and galleries, performing arts centers, multifunction arts venues, immersive arts venues, libraries, outdoor art spaces, and cultural hubs or districts. Types of projects tracked include new buildings, renovations, expansions, and adaptive reuse.

In 2025, CII started tracking large-scale library projects. The criteria for inclusion is \$10M capital budget (where available) and

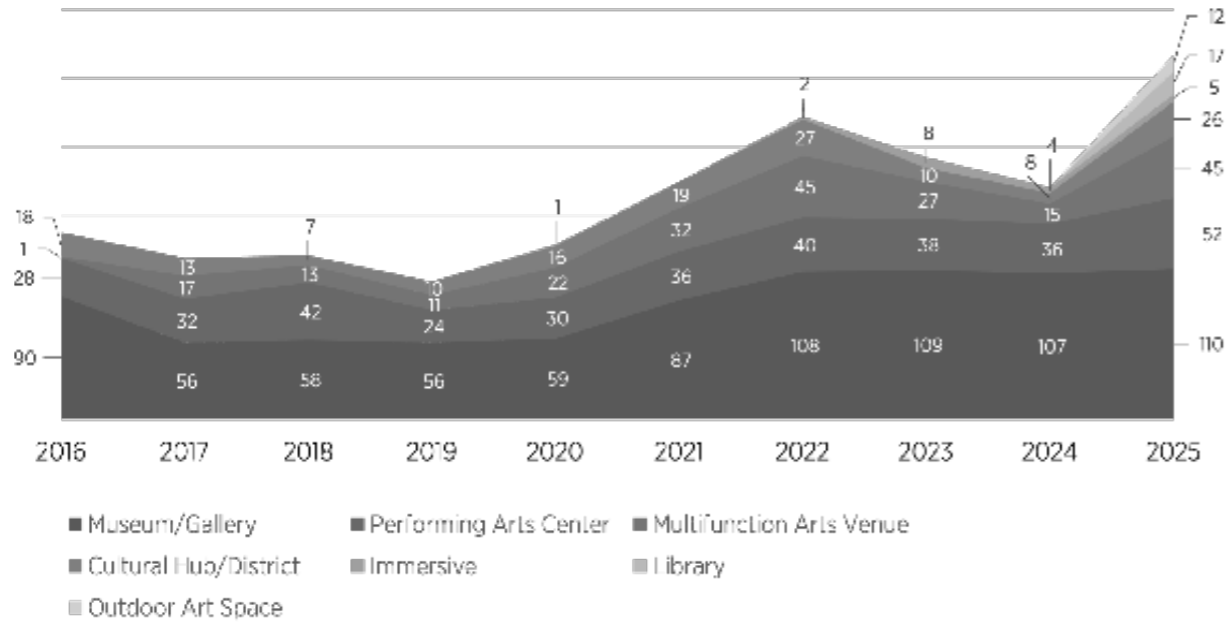
the scale of the project in terms of its likely impact on its host community and local cultural sector. Renovations and expansions of local municipal libraries are generally not included. Also introduced in 2025 is the “Outdoor Art Space” category comprising sculpture parks, open-air art exhibition sites, parks and other outdoor spaces with a significant cultural programming component.

At the time of data collection, capital cost figures were available for 72% of all 3,150 projects tracked by the Index and square meterage figures were available for 62% of the projects tracked.

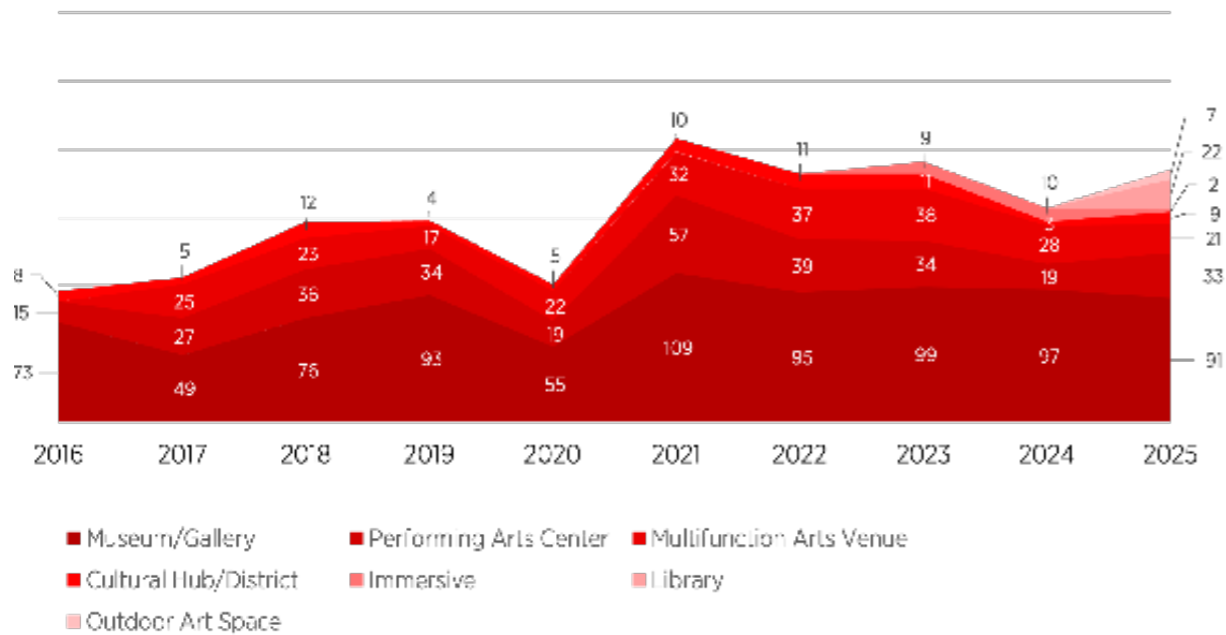
The Palestinian Museum, Birzeit

PROJECTS BY BUILDING CATEGORY

ANNOUNCED 2016-2025



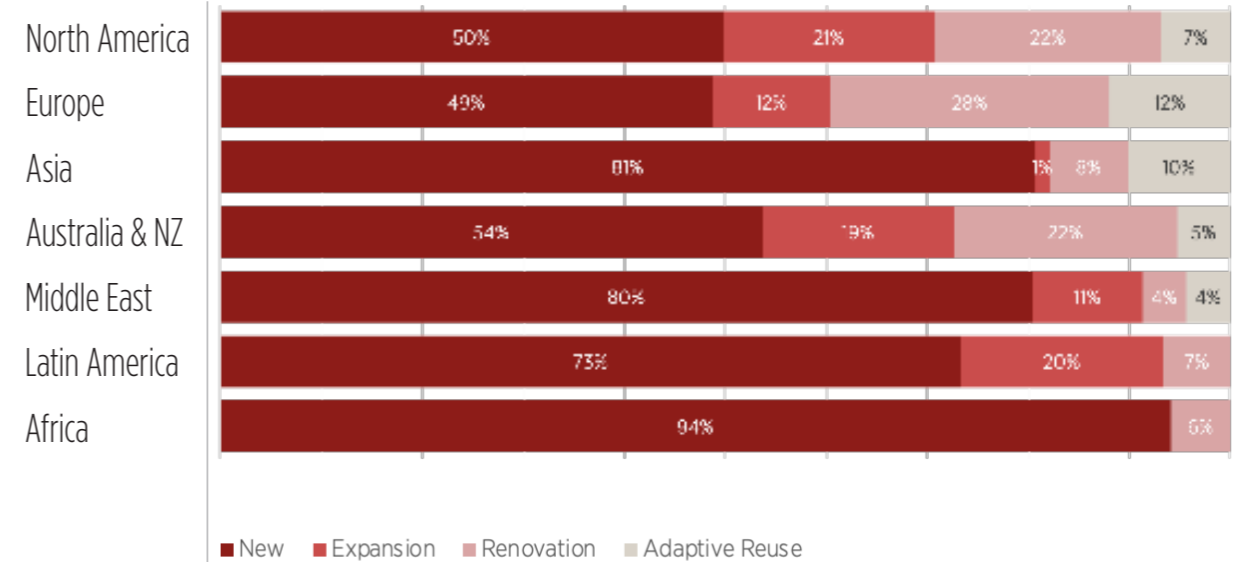
COMPLETED 2016-2025



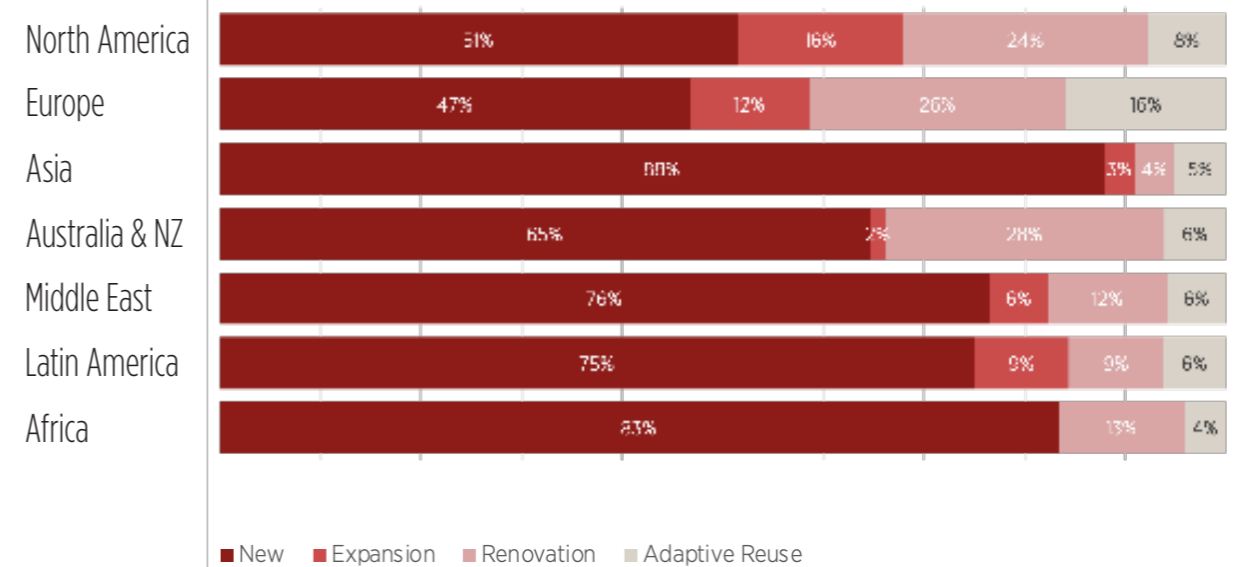
This summary analysis encompasses only publicly-shared projects with disclosed budgets (72% of the dataset) and sizes (62% of the dataset). The full dataset can be made available upon request from AEA Consulting via research@aeaconsulting.com.

WHERE PROJECTS HAPPENED, AND WHAT KIND

ANNOUNCED 2016-2025

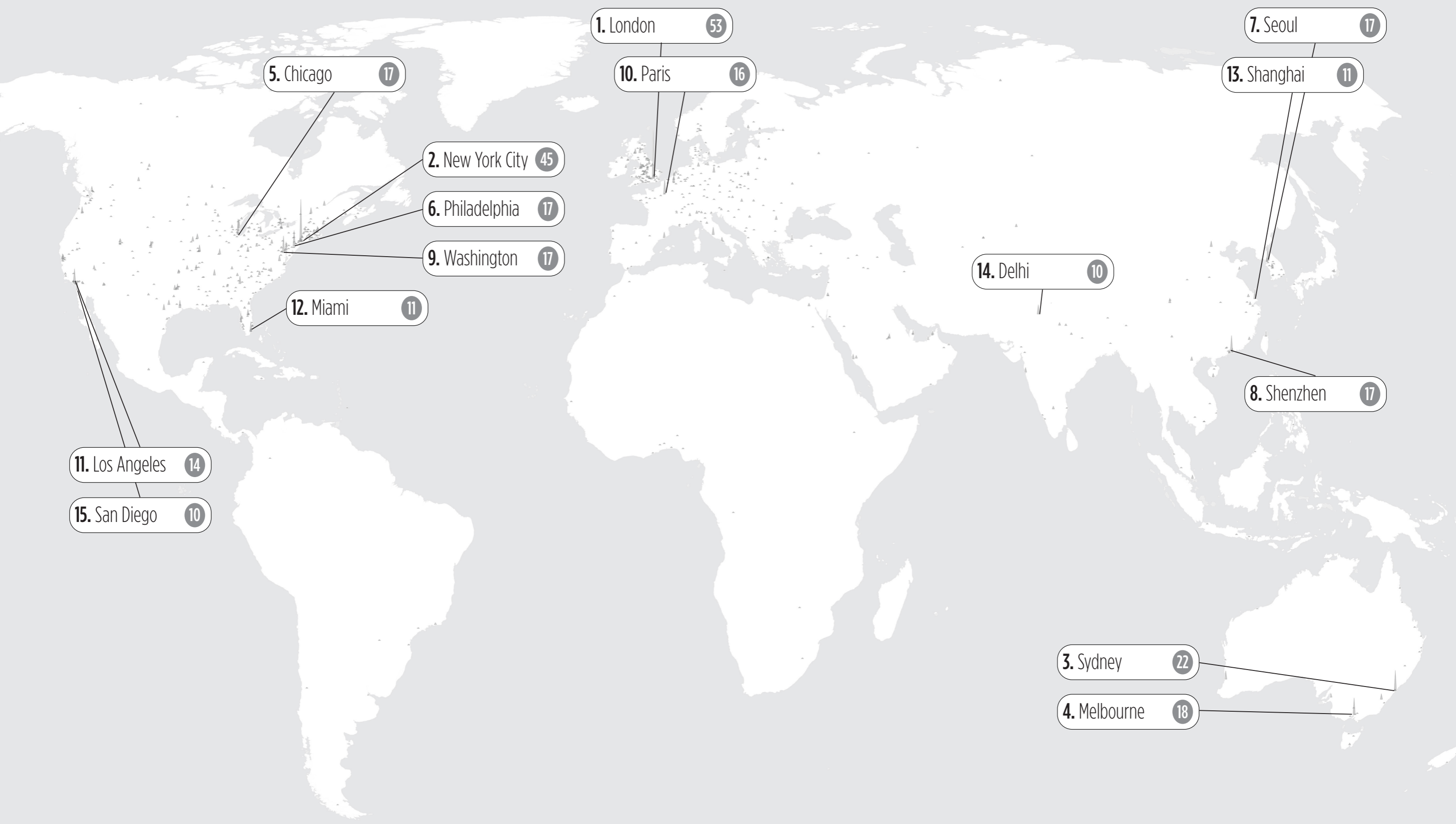


COMPLETED 2016-2025

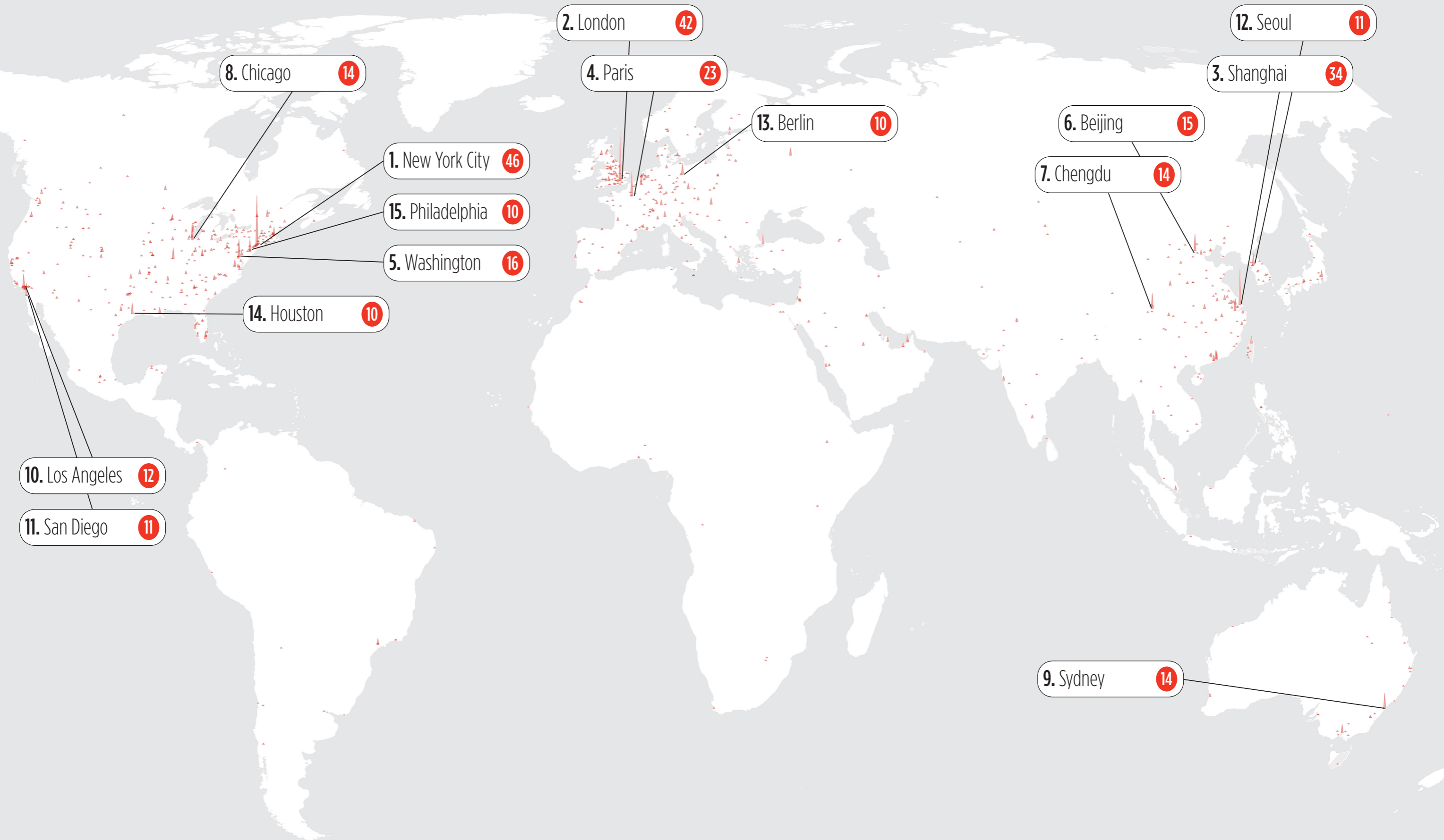


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TOP CITIES BY NUMBER OF ANNOUNCED PROJECTS 2016-2025



TOP CITIES BY NUMBER OF COMPLETED PROJECTS 2016-2025



Capital Project Success Stories: From Monuments to Instruments

Over the past decade, evaluating cultural buildings on the role they play beyond their architectural merit has become standard practice. Impact is now often considered from project inception rather than added retrospectively, and public narratives around new cultural infrastructure frequently emphasize a range of interconnected criteria:

- Cultural Impact: diversity, inclusion, accessibility, resilience, and cultural vitality within neighborhoods
- Social Impact: community cohesion, health support, educational opportunities, and emergency response capacity
- Economic Impact: employment generation, capital investment, tourism development, and international competitiveness
- Environmental Impact: sustainability practices, urban regeneration, and nature-based solutions
- Artistic and Educational Value: programming excellence, creative innovation, and learning outcomes

This expanded framework doesn't diminish architecture's importance. Rather, it acknowledges that the demands placed on cultural buildings are becoming more complex. They are increasingly expected to operate simultaneously as artistic venues, civic spaces, educational resources, and environmental actors. From the ten-year index data, several museums and cultural centers provide useful case studies for how these considerations can intersect in practice.

The Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center (SNFCC): Social and Civic Integration

A decade ago, AEA worked with the Stavros Niarchos Foundation to create a parent organization for the complex that now serves as home to the Greek National Opera and the National Library of Greece. In Athens, the SNFCC transcends its identity as an iconic building designed by a starchitect; it is a park and an everyday civic amenity in a city chronically short on calm, green space, it is a regular for school groups on Tuesday mornings, families on Sunday, and opera patrons at night.

Magazzino Italian Art Foundation: Economic and Social Fortification

Since opening in 2017, Magazzino Italian Art has become a cultural hub for the vibrant Hudson Valley community in New York. Offering free admission, the museum has generated significant impact through visitor attraction and the creation of employment and partnership opportunities. AEA worked with Magazzino to evaluate this economic



Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Center, Athens

impact and assess its broader contribution to the region. One of the compelling aspects of Magazzino's approach involved hiring local businesses in the construction process itself, turning a technical phase into a community involvement opportunity. This approach, while more expensive in the short term, generated long-term social capital and a sense of collective ownership that continues to benefit the institution.

Eco-Museum and Piratininga Waterfront Park (POP): Environmental Intervention and Multidisciplinary Innovation

Set on the Piratininga Lagoon in Rio de Janeiro, this waterfront park and museum is a collaboration between the municipality of Niterói, biologists, social workers, architects, and environmental designers. The infrastructure embeds environmental remediation strategies into the park with environmentally conscious exhibitions



Top:
View of the Piratininga lagoon showing the Eco-Museum and Orla Piratininga Park, Rio de Janeiro

and activities for residents, fishermen, and visitors. Completed in 2025, the project stands out for operating simultaneously as an environmental steward, community hub, and cultural destination. Cultural infrastructure can address ecological urgency without sacrificing public accessibility or ambition.

Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art: Artistic Excellence Through Accessibility

The Centre, completed in 2018, is located in a former bathhouse. Architecturally, it prioritizes openness, accessibility, and everyday use over formal distinction. The new spaces support an expanded exhibition program with commissions, historical presentations, survey exhibitions, and long-term research projects that engage with, rather than be disconnected from, the student population. The result is a feedback loop between emergent and established practices and academic inquiry, as well as engagement between the local and student population in the city of London.

These projects share different ambitions where success is measured in relation to the communities and ecosystems they inhabit. Over the next decade, the Cultural Infrastructure Index will track whether this expanded framework for success becomes genuinely embedded in how cultural buildings are commissioned, designed, and governed, or whether it remains aspirational language layered over business as usual.



Bottom:
Interior view of an Eco-Museum gallery

Audience Behavior and Cultural Infrastructure: Ten Years of Shifting Expectations

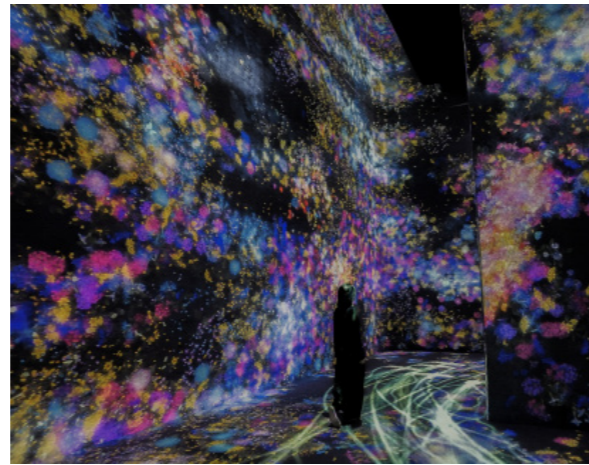
When the AEA Consulting Cultural Infrastructure Index launched in 2016, the sector's preoccupations were largely structural: how many buildings were being built, at what cost, and where. A decade later, the questions behind cultural infrastructure planning have changed. Their driving force is not limited to the ambition of funders or the vision of architects, but to the evolving expectations of audiences whose preferences, behaviors, and sense of agency have shifted, carrying direct implications for how cultural venues are designed, programmed, and sustained.

From Spectator to Participant

The traditional cultural venue was designed around a clear transaction: the institution presented; the audience received. That model has been under pressure. Audience research from recent years identifies a spectrum of audience involvement that extends beyond passive spectatorship, toward curatorial and inventive engagement: selecting, organizing, even creating content alongside institutions. For infrastructure planners, this shift has tangible consequences. Spaces optimized for a single performance mode like the raked auditorium or the white-cube gallery are limiting for institutions whose audiences expect to move, interact, and contribute. The rise of the multifunction arts venue in the CII data is in part a direct response to this.

The Immersive Turn

The growth of immersive and digitally mediated experiences represents perhaps the sharpest expression of audience demand for agency. The 2023 CII formally introduced



immersive arts venues as a distinct category, identifying 17 announced and completed projects globally across North America, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. These venues, from Meow Wolf's Omega Mart in Las Vegas to Fabrique des Lumières in Amsterdam, share spatial requirements that differ markedly from conventional cultural buildings: large clear-span volumes free of structural interference, high-speed digital networks, bespoke acoustic and projection systems, and the flexibility to iterate as technology evolves.

Audience behavior driving this investment reflects a cultural shift toward individualized, participatory experience, what scholars of immersive theatre describe as "narrative agency," the expectation that one's presence in a space will shape the experience. For infrastructure planners and institutional leaders, this creates real capital challenges. As the 2022 Index noted, the combined cost of flexibly designed venues and the technology required to deliver immersive experiences demands business models

capable of maintaining visitor interest and ticket revenue over time, particularly as the technology standards continue to rise.

Accessibility, Community, and the Civic Dimension

Audience behavior trends do not operate in isolation from broader social context. The decade between 2016 and 2025 was marked by intensifying expectations that cultural institutions serve as genuine civic anchors. Post-pandemic, this pressure became especially acute: venues had to justify their existence through demonstrated community relevance. The growth in adaptive reuse projects, which by 2023 accounted for 16 percent of all CII-tracked projects and had a median budget of \$23 million, reflects, in part, a deliberate move toward buildings embedded in neighborhood life rather than set apart from it.

AEA Consulting's work with Powerhouse Arts in Brooklyn—supporting concept development, operational planning, and governance in early stages—illustrates how community engagement shapes infrastructure decisions from the ground up. Understanding who a venue's audiences are and who they might become, is work that precedes and informs every subsequent design and programming choice.

Implications for Planning and Design

The thread across a decade of the CII

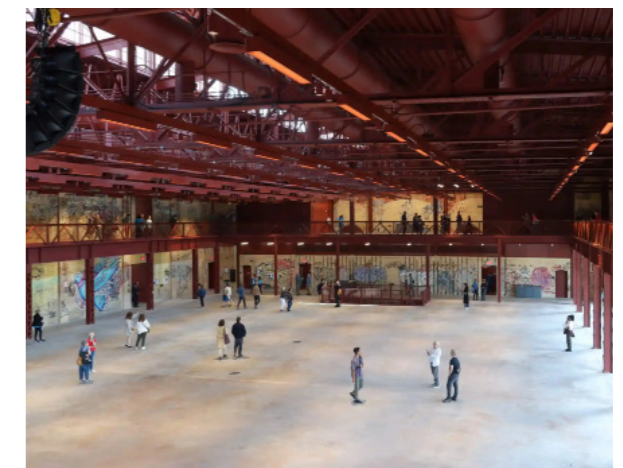
is that audience expectations are now a substantive input into infrastructure planning, a dynamic set of behaviors and demands that shape the design brief from the outset. This means that institutions planning new builds, renovations, or adaptive reuse projects face a question: what do we actually know about our current and prospective audiences, and how are those relationships likely to evolve?

AEA Consulting works with cultural institutions and public-sector clients at this intersection, helping organizations translate audience research and stakeholder insight into feasible, functional, and financially sustainable infrastructure strategies. Whether the challenge is defining the program for a new facility, assessing the viability of an adaptive reuse, or aligning a capital brief with an institution's long-term audience development goals, the ability to connect behavioral evidence to planning decisions is central to the work.

The ten-year arc of the Index suggests that the sector has been learning, sometimes slowly and sometimes through disruption, to build for the audience it has rather than the one it imagines. The next decade will require that lesson to be applied with greater deliberateness, earlier in the planning process, and with a clearer-eyed understanding of how audience behavior continues to change.



Left: Exterior view of Powerhouse Arts, New York City



Right: The great hall at Powerhouse Arts, New York City

The Evolving Brief: Architectural Perspectives on Cultural Infrastructure Trends

As cultural organizations have undergone institutional and programmatic shifts in the last decade, so have the design and construction of cultural infrastructure projects. AEA spoke with some of the world's leading architecture firms actively involved in designing cultural venues—Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), David Chipperfield Architects, Selldorf Architects, and Snøhetta—to understand some of these changes.

Overall, these firms are seeing a sector recalibration toward purpose-led, adaptable, and socially grounded infrastructure. Across geographies and typologies, cultural projects are increasingly shaped by institutional values instead of architectural statements, community outcomes, operational realities, and long-term public value.



From fixed form to purpose-led briefs

Client briefs are shifting away from predetermined formal outcomes toward frameworks centered on institutional mission, community benefits, and social accessibility. Design processes are becoming increasingly collaborative, often beginning with visioning and non-design thinking before programs and form are fixed. Sustainability is now embedded as a baseline requirement, and sensitivity to issues of ethical stewardship—repatriation, restitution, decolonization, and cultural appropriation—is now entering the brief, shaping spatial programming requirements.

“There is a lot of global noise for the latest and the greatest in terms of design, which is clearly very important, but alongside that, there is growing awareness that proper, long-lasting cultural infrastructure isn't just about a nice building. The way it is displayed and accessed matters just as much to a growing number of discerning visitors, as do experiential amenities such as a proper restaurant, outdoor gardens, lecture halls, and interactive spaces, and a mixture of publicly accessible and ticketed spaces to bring visitors of all types together.”

—BIG

Geographies, typologies, and the decentralization of culture

While major cultural investment continues in global cities, there is growing ambition among smaller cities and communities to deliver prominent cultural projects as anchors for identity and development. Geographic decentralization is evident in the establishment of satellite institutions and destination cultural infrastructure outside traditional cultural centers, reflecting both mission-driven

accessibility goals and competition between cities for cultural prominence. Europe and North America are seeing consolidation, renovation, and adaptive reuse dominate pipelines, while Asia and the Middle East continue to pursue significant new-build activity. Some markets are seeing renewed appetite for more defined typologies such as theatres, opera houses, and major galleries; while in other geographies, multifunctionality has become essential. The repertory theatre model—low-cost, adaptable, community-responsive—is influencing other cultural typologies, as single-purpose buildings are difficult to justify economically or programmatically.

“Ultimately, a museum's core task is to be a piece of social and cultural communal infrastructure, first and foremost for the people who live around it, not tourists. This is reflected in an emerging interest in cultural infrastructure as repositories for regional identity, with institutions leveraging locally-significant collections to create destination facilities outside traditional cultural centers.”

—David Chipperfield Architects

Visitor experience, accessibility, and the social role of cultural buildings

Improving the quality of the visitor experience has become a main design driver. Institutions are focused on an experience that cannot be replicated digitally, and prioritizing physical, social, and cultural accessibility to attract younger and more diverse audiences and to shed perceptions of elitism. This translates to a demand for more welcoming entrances, clearer circulation, better amenities, and a stronger relationship between cultural buildings and the public realm. Cultural projects are increasingly expected to play a greater role within the cityscape, tasked with animating streets and public spaces with extended activity beyond traditional opening hours. Operationally, this shift requires rethinking permeability, security, and the boundary between the institution and city.

“The design imperative has shifted away from the volume of visitors that pass through the door to the quality of the experience they have once they arrive. With our work at the Frick (US) and the National Gallery (UK), the focus has been on making buildings more welcoming, legible, and humane—reducing friction, easing congestion, and creating spaces that support contemplation as much as movement. This is inseparable from the ‘hard’ work of infrastructure: improving environmental performance, upgrading ageing systems, and designing for long-term operational sustainability.”

—Selldorf Architects

Challenges: infrastructure, sustainability, and cost

Upgrading mechanical, electrical, and environmental systems, particularly in historic facilities, consumes a growing share of capital budgets. Rising technical standards for travelling exhibitions, coupled with energy and conservation requirements, are increasing capital and whole-life costs, often creating barriers for smaller institutions. As a result, institutions are becoming more entrepreneurial and sophisticated about operational expenditure and the financial implications of design decisions. Sustainability and climate resilience are now core design constraints, alongside flexible approaches to climate control standards in some collection contexts.



“The biggest challenges involve mechanical upgrades to existing facilities, which are often outdated and require building envelope upgrades to meet environmental and energy conservation goals. This is a challenging aspect of projects that feature an expansion and tie-in to existing systems, which is a lot harder than a costly overhaul, so we see a lot of the budget consumed by upgrades to existing facilities.”

—Snøhetta

“We are seeing more of a commitment to environmental sustainability and the necessary adaptation to climate change, including from museums that require careful and precise internal climate control systems. We expect to continue to see innovation in building technology, materials, and construction to support this imperative.”

—Selldorf Architects



Operational resilience and entrepreneurialism: ‘doing more with less’

Financial uncertainty is pushing institutions toward greater cultural entrepreneurialism. Briefs increasingly call for flexible galleries, mixed ticketed and free spaces, revenue-generating functions, and buildings capable of extended, round-the-clock activation. Architects anticipate more creative approaches to maximizing use, diversifying revenue streams, and embedding cultural infrastructure within mixed-use developments and place-based regeneration strategies to support financial viability.

“Financial instability has forced cultural entrepreneurialism into briefs. While major institutions with established pedigrees can weather economic uncertainty, others must be more inventive—requesting revenue-generating spaces, flexible galleries that balance ticketed exhibitions with permanent collections, and infrastructure that extends usefulness beyond traditional hours through late-night programming and event hire.”

—David Chipperfield Architects

“Now that a backlog of pandemic-era building projects is catching up, we are seeing fewer standalone buildings and more visioning work with multiple-phase considerations for clients with large, complex sites who may be evaluating real estate strategies to bring funds into the mix for other projects.”

—Snøhetta



Top: Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington D.C.

Bottom: Blanton Museum of Art, Austin

Looking ahead: adaptability, participation, and public value

Adaptive reuse is expected to continue as the preferred approach meeting both economic and environmental sustainability imperatives. Cultural organizations are likely to emphasize more collaborative co-creation with programs that invite audiences to participate in the art-making process. As such, the sector will see increased demand for production spaces and learning environments, alongside exhibition and performance functions. Touring exhibitions and international cultural exchange will continue to shape spatial requirements for highly flexible, technical environments.

“There will be a shift from product to process, with institutions increasingly emphasizing making, collaboration, and participation over passive consumption requiring workshops, studios, flexible assembly spaces, and technology labs integrated with traditional functions... Adaptive reuse will dominate, and we can already see the attitude to museum buildings moving from expansion to improvement, using what we already have more efficiently. On a more philosophical plane, popular accessibility will continue its influence as a commitment to genuine accessibility and relevance—cultural infrastructure must serve broad publics, affecting everything from wayfinding to programming diversity.”

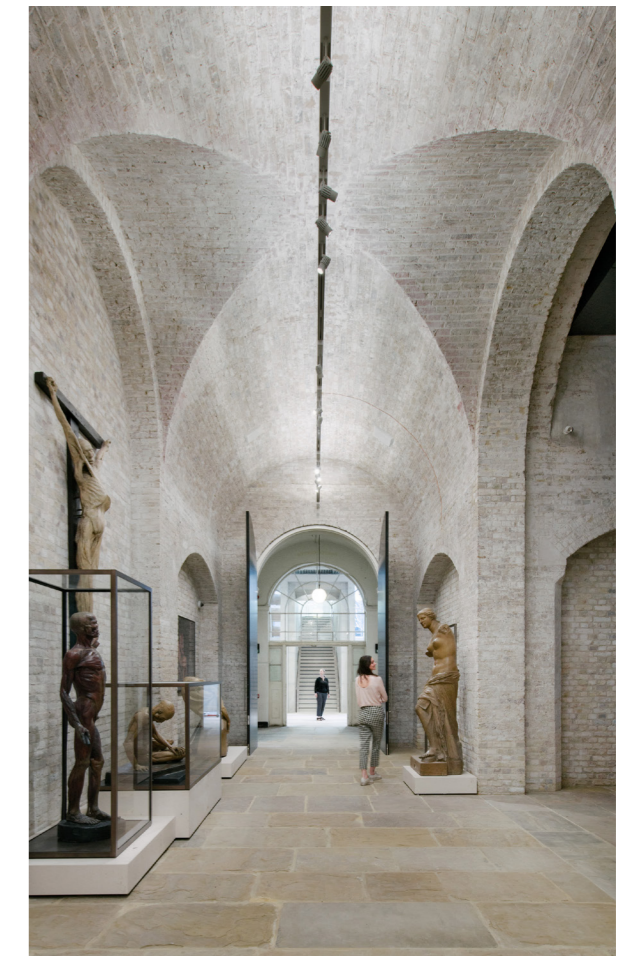
—David Chipperfield Architects



Left: National Archaeological Museum, Athens

These perspectives signal a maturing cultural infrastructure field. Architectural quality remains essential, but it is increasingly evaluated alongside social impact, environmental performance, accessibility, and operational resilience. The most successful projects are emerging where architectural ambition is tightly aligned with institutional purpose, community relevance, and long-term sustainability—positioning cultural infrastructure not as static monuments, but as evolving civic platforms for cultural life.

With thanks to our colleagues who contributed to this piece: Lisa Green (Selldorf Architects), Nathaniel Moore (Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG)), Omar Toro-Vaca (Snøhetta), and Maria-Chiara Piccinelli and Rachelle Spiteri (David Chipperfield Architects).



Right: Royal Academy of Arts, London

Means and Ends: Infrastructure Investment in Cultural Districts

Cultural districts have evolved from organic clusters to policy-driven strategic interventions, and 'gap analysis' now drives many infrastructure investment decisions: What is the missing link in the creative lifecycle? Is the city rich in artists but poor in exhibition space? Does it have world-class museums but no affordable rehearsal rooms for the next generation? Without analysis informed by clear goals for economic development, tourism, or public diplomacy, expensive facilities risk sitting empty, as occurred with many of the first wave of lottery-funded cultural projects in the 1990s.

As we look toward the next decade of cultural planning, the definition of physical infrastructure will likely continue to broaden, embracing the 5G networks that enable augmented reality tours, the "last-mile" transit that ensures equity of access, and the subsidized studio space that prevents the displacement of the artists who give districts their value. The most successful cultural districts will address production and consumption simultaneously, sustaining creative ecologies that support creative workers while cultivating audiences.

Four districts demonstrate how different strategic goals produce fundamentally different infrastructure investments.

West Kowloon Cultural District (Hong Kong): Global cultural soft power

Announced in 1998 with major openings in 2019 and 2022, Hong Kong's West Kowloon Cultural District illustrates how infrastructure can support global cultural positioning. The district emerged from a clear gap in



the city's cultural ecosystem: despite Hong Kong's global financial stature, it lacked large-scale contemporary art spaces and traditional performance venues to attract international audiences. The investment strategy adopted a "total infrastructure" approach. By investing approximately HK\$23.5 billion in an integrated underground basement for transport, logistics, and services, the project removed much of the friction associated with dense urban development. This allowed the surface to become a 23-hectare pedestrian Art Park, providing space for flagship institutions and more, designed to reinforce Hong Kong's role in international cultural exchange.

Lot Fourteen (Adelaide, Australia): Economic diversification and talent retention

Announced in 2018 and opened gradually since 2020, the Lot Fourteen precinct demonstrates how cultural infrastructure

can support economic diversification and talent retention. The initiative emerged from a "translation gap" between research, technology, and creative production. Rather than focusing only on cultural venues, the district treats education, research, and entrepreneurship as core cultural infrastructure. Facilities such as the Entrepreneur and Innovation Centre (EIC) and the Tarrkarri Centre for First Nations Cultures were conceived as complementary anchors designed to foster interaction between technologists, entrepreneurs, and cultural practitioners. A \$60 million Digital Technologies Academy, completed in 2023, further reinforces this strategy by ensuring the district cultivates the skilled workforce needed to sustain its creative economy.

AI Quoz Creative Zone (Dubai, UAE): Formalizing an organic creative hub

AI Quoz Creative Zone, announced in 2021 and opened one year later formalized an existing creative cluster rather than constructing a new one. The area had long hosted artists and galleries in converted industrial warehouses, but lacked the connectivity and vibrancy. The gap was therefore not cultural activity but "soft mobility": systems that allow a district to function as a neighborhood. Rather than replacing warehouses with new buildings, the initiative invested in public realm improvements, including pedestrian routes, cycling paths, lighting, and security.

Orange Development Areas (Bogotá, Colombia): Poverty reduction through the Orange Economy

Orange Development Areas (Áreas de Desarrollo Naranja), introduced through national policy in 2017 and implemented beginning in 2018, illustrate how cultural districts can operate as distributed networks rather than single flagship sites. The policy responded to two gaps in the city's creative ecosystem: geographic fragmentation and limited technical access for small-scale creators. Instead

of concentrating investment in one monumental district, Bogotá designated more than twenty creative clusters across the city. Infrastructure investment focused on targeted improvements such as fiber-optic connectivity, street lighting, safety measures, and public space upgrades. By strengthening the "micro-utilities" of creative production, the program lowered barriers to entry for local entrepreneurs and cultural producers while integrating cultural development into broader strategies for economic inclusion and urban regeneration.

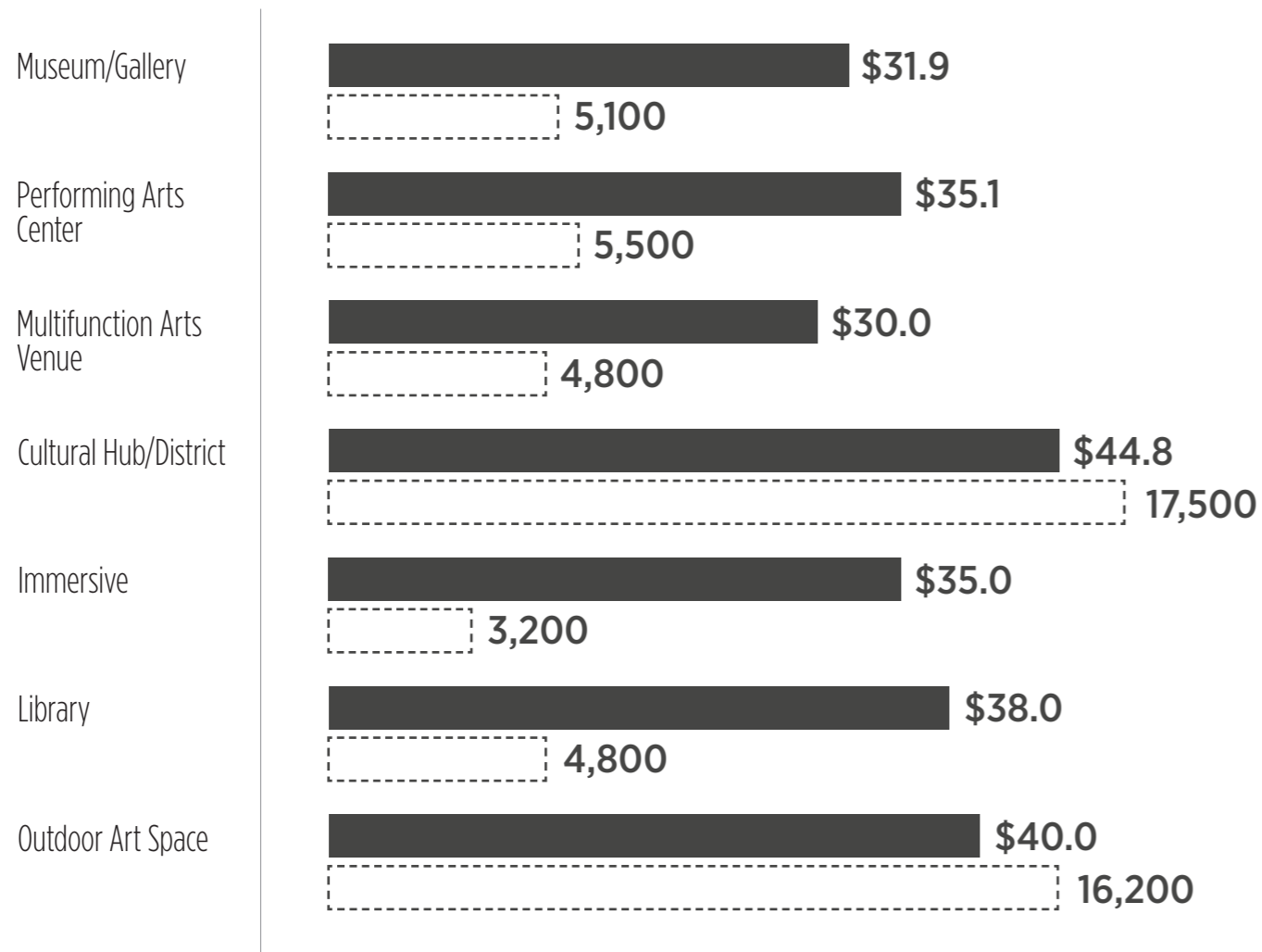




West Kowloon Cultural District, Hong Kong

Top:
Lot Fourteen, Adelaide

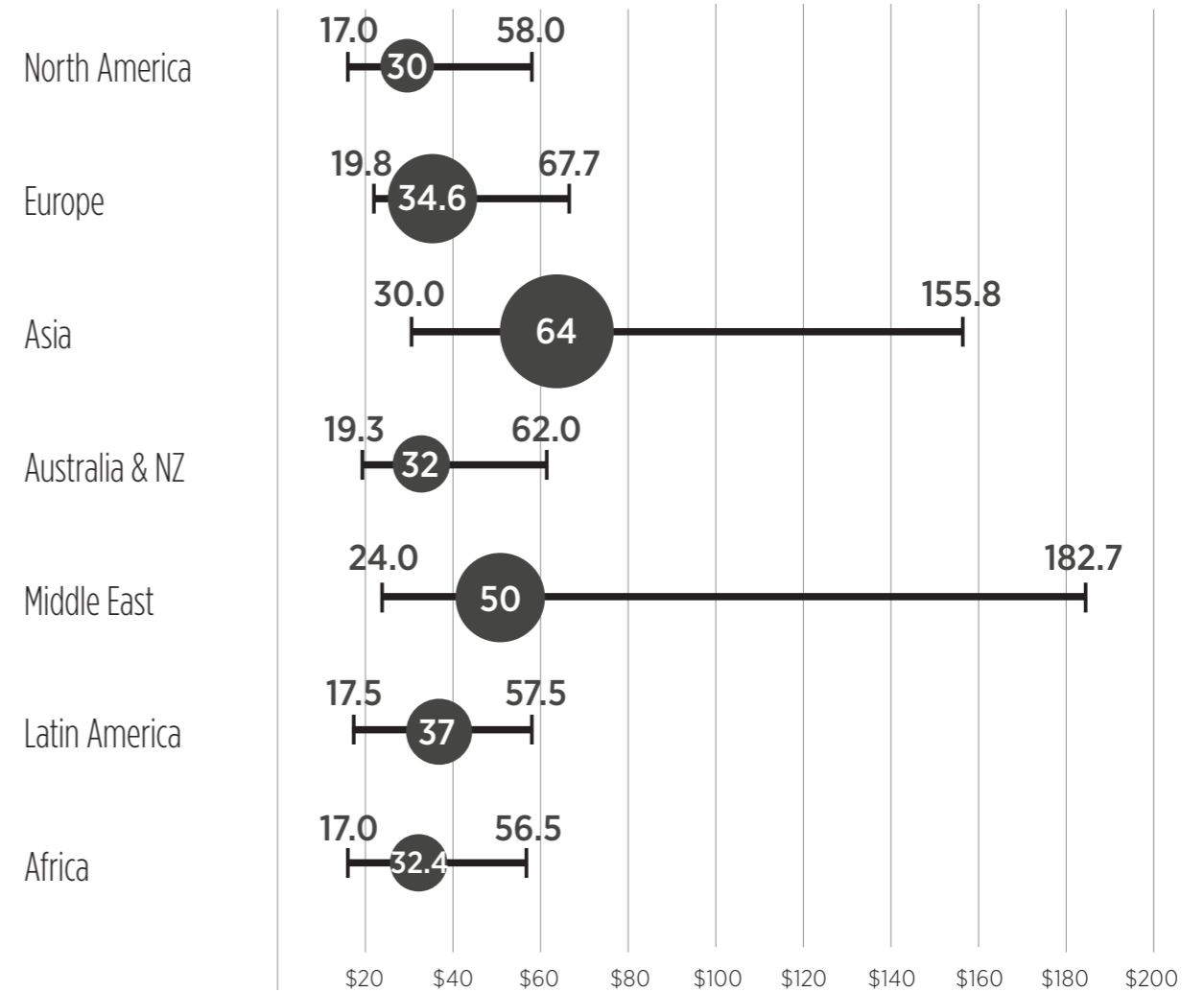
Bottom:
AI Quoz Creative Zone, Dubai




A DECADE OF PROJECT MEDIAN BUDGETS (US\$MN) AND SIZE (SQM) BY BUILDING TYPOLOGY



median project budget (US\$MN) 
 median project size (sqm) 

A DECADE OF BUDGET DISTRIBUTION BY REGION (US\$MN)



median project budget (US\$MN) 
 25th percentile (US\$MN) 
 75th percentile (US\$MN) 

The 25th to 75th percentile range represents the middle 50% of projects. 25% of projects fall below this range and 25% fall above it.

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TOP 10 BUDGETS FOR ANNOUNCED PROJECTS 2016-25

Name	Year	Budget	City/State	Country	Region	Building Type
Valley XL	2018	\$2,800,000,000	Beijing	China	Asia	Cultural Hub/District
Longfu Temple Cultural Complex	2019	\$1,410,000,000	Beijing	China	Asia	Cultural Hub/District
British Library	2025	\$1,400,000,000	London	UK	Europe	Library
Qiddiya City Performing Arts Centre	2025	\$1,400,000,000	Qiddiya City	Saudi Arabia	Middle East	Performing Arts Center
Peninsula Place Cultural Hub	2017	\$1,400,000,000	London	UK	Europe	Cultural Hub/District
Plateforme 10	2016	\$900,000,000	Lausanne	Switzerland	Europe	Cultural Hub/District
The Louvre	2025	\$813,000,000	Paris	France	Europe	Museum/Gallery
The Los Angeles County Museum of Art	2017	\$750,000,000	Los Angeles, CA	USA	North America	Museum/Gallery
Museum of Natural History	2018	\$738,000,000	Berlin	Germany	Europe	Museum/Gallery
Natural History Museum	2017	\$533,000,000	Ho Chi Minh City	Vietnam	Asia	Museum/Gallery



Aerial visualization of Valley XL, Beijing

TOP 10 BUDGETS FOR COMPLETED PROJECTS 2016-25

Name	Year	Budget	City/State	Country	Region	Building Type
Louvre Abu Dhabi	2017	\$1,260,000,000	Abu Dhabi	UAE	Middle East	Museum/Gallery
Les Halles (The Canopy)	2016	\$1,130,000,000	Paris	France	Europe	Cultural Hub/District
Grand Egyptian Museum	2024	\$1,000,000,000	Giza	Egypt	Africa	Museum/Gallery
Elbphilharmonie	2017	\$974,700,000	Hamburg	Germany	Europe	Performing Arts Center
Humboldt Forum	2020	\$825,000,000	Berlin	Germany	Europe	Cultural Hub/District
Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Cultural Centre	2017	\$775,000,000	Kuwait City	Kuwait	Middle East	Cultural Hub/District
M+ Museum at West Kowloon Cultural District	2021	\$760,000,000	Hong Kong	China	Asia	Museum/Gallery
Asia Culture Center	2016	\$680,000,000	Gwangju	South Korea	Asia	Cultural Hub/District
Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre	2016	\$644,000,000	Athens	Greece	Europe	Museum/Gallery
MUNCH	2021	\$632,000,000	Oslo	Norway	Europe	Museum/Gallery



Nighttime exterior view of the Louvre Abu Dhabi, Abu Dhabi



Top:
Museum of Art & Photography, Bengaluru

Bottom:
Museum of Islamic Art, Doha



Depot Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum, Rotterdam

Cultural Infrastructure In 2025



In 2025, the Index tracked 452 major cultural infrastructure projects that were completed or announced—the highest annual total since we began tracking in 2016, and a 38% increase on the 327 projects recorded in 2024. The 267 projects announced this year represent the largest single-year pipeline recorded in the Index’s history, suggesting sustained momentum in cultural capital investment heading into the next decade.

In summary, this year’s analysis of global cultural infrastructure development finds that:

- 185 major capital infrastructure projects were completed in 2025, representing investment of \$5.3 billion. Museums and galleries accounted for the largest share of completions at 49%, consistent with every year since tracking began. Performing arts centers (18%), multifunction venues (10%), and—tracked for the first time as a dedicated category—libraries (12%) and outdoor art spaces made up the remainder.
- 267 projects announced in 2025 represent \$13.6 billion of planned investment—the highest number of announced projects recorded in any

single year. North America accounted for 52% of announced projects. The United States, United Kingdom, and Canada are the three most active countries by volume of announced (planned) projects.

- The median budget for completed projects in 2025 was \$30.5 million, with a median cost of \$7,535 per square meter. The median announced project budget was higher at \$40 million, reflecting that larger projects tend to receive formal public announcements.
- Among completed projects, new builds represented 50%, with renovation at 28% and adaptive reuse at 13%. Among announced projects, new builds accounted for 58%, renovation 20%, and adaptive reuse 8%. The continued strong showing of renovation and adaptive reuse across both categories reflects a sustained shift away from new construction as the default model.
- Public and not-for-profit organisations led delivery, accounting for 84% of completed projects and 90% of announced projects. Commercially led projects represented 6.5%

of completions and 6% of announcements, consistent with recent years.

Among the year’s notable completions, the Quandamooka Arts and Culture Centre on Minjerribah Island, Australia, stands out as an example of Indigenous-led cultural infrastructure developed in direct partnership with a state government. It balances community cultural practice with cultural tourism in ways that are increasingly shaping briefs for First Nations projects globally.

Cultural infrastructure investment has increased in central Asia. In Almaty, Kazakhstan, the opening of the Almaty Museum of Arts—the region’s first major private museum dedicated to modern and contemporary art—and the adaptive reuse of the Tselinny Centre of Contemporary Culture within a former cinema points to the city’s growing ambition as a regional cultural hub.

The year also saw the completion of the Eco-Museum and Piratinga Waterfront Park in Rio de Janeiro, a project that integrates environmental remediation, community programming, and cultural space within a single public landscape.

The qualitative themes explored in the pages that follow reflect both the year’s data and longer

structural currents running through the decade. This edition introduces libraries as a dedicated building typology in the Index, recognizing that contemporary libraries are increasingly conceived as anchor civic spaces rather than collection repositories, with recent projects in the UK, France, and North America embedding digital access, social services, and active learning within what was once a more singular institutional type. A piece on Indigenous cultural infrastructure examines the growing body of projects designed by and for First Nations communities, whose numbers have more than doubled in the last three years of tracking. And a spotlight on Kazakhstan explores how rapidly urbanizing cities outside traditional cultural capitals are using cultural investment to shape civic identity and build creative ecosystems.

Together, these themes point to a sector that is expanding not only in scale and geography, but in its understanding of what purposes the cultural infrastructure serves.



Facing:
Da Nang Museum, Da Nang City

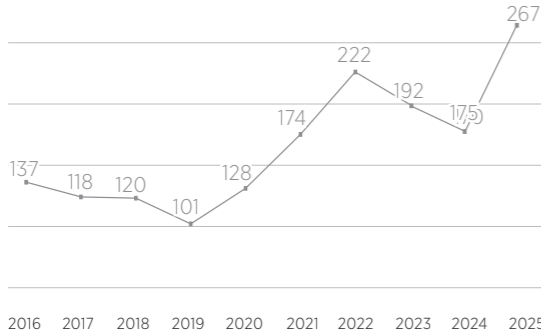
Above:
Studio Museum, New York City

TOTAL PROJECT NUMBERS

ANNOUNCED 2025

267

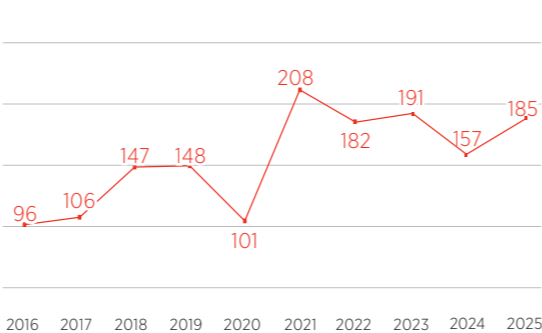
CAGR 2016-2025
+8%



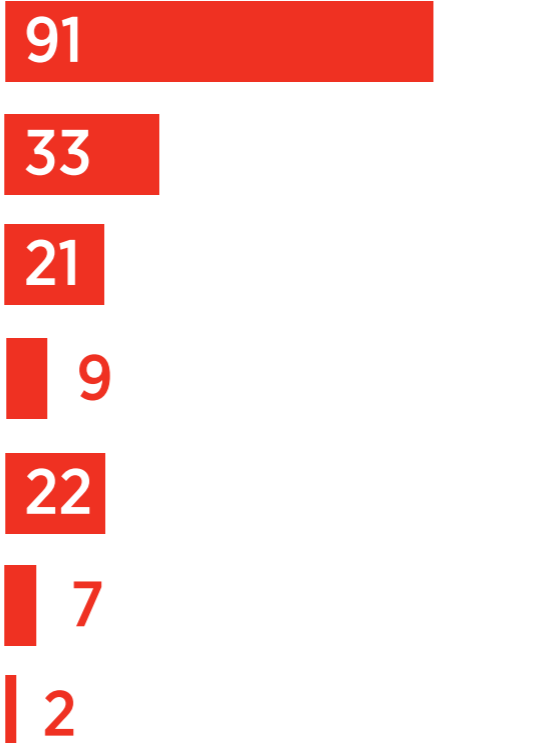
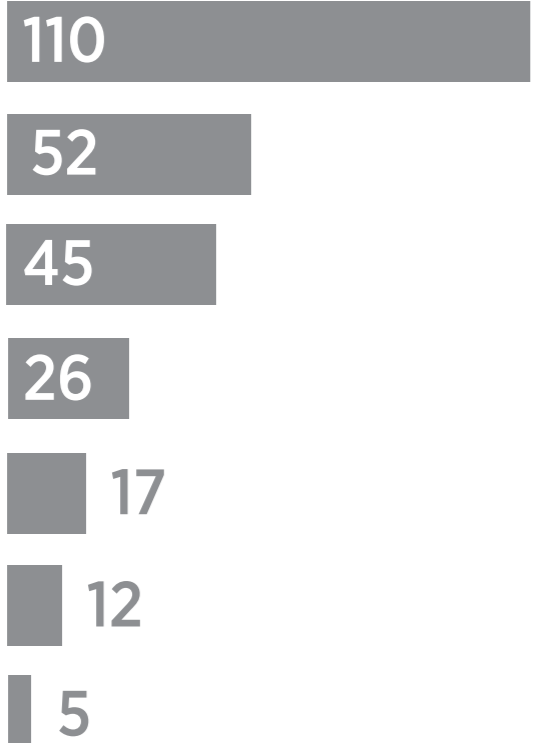
COMPLETED 2025

185

CAGR 2016-2025
+8%



- Museum/ Gallery
- Performing Arts Center
- Multifunction Arts Venue
- Cultural Hub/ District
- Library
- Outdoor Art Space
- Immersive



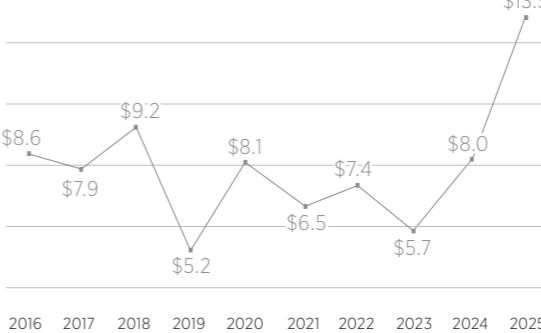
This summary analysis encompasses only publicly-shared projects with disclosed budgets (62% of the dataset) and sizes (57% of the dataset). The full dataset can be made available upon request from AEA Consulting via research@aeaconsulting.com.

TOTAL CAPITAL INVESTMENT

ANNOUNCED 2025

\$13.55B

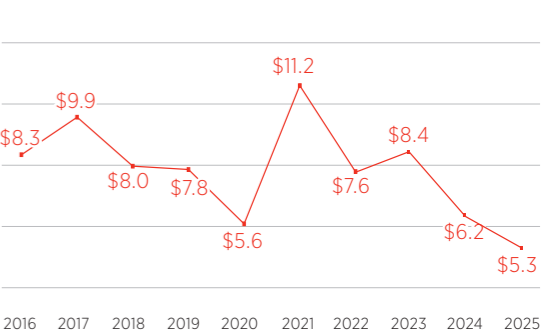
CAGR 2016-2025
5%



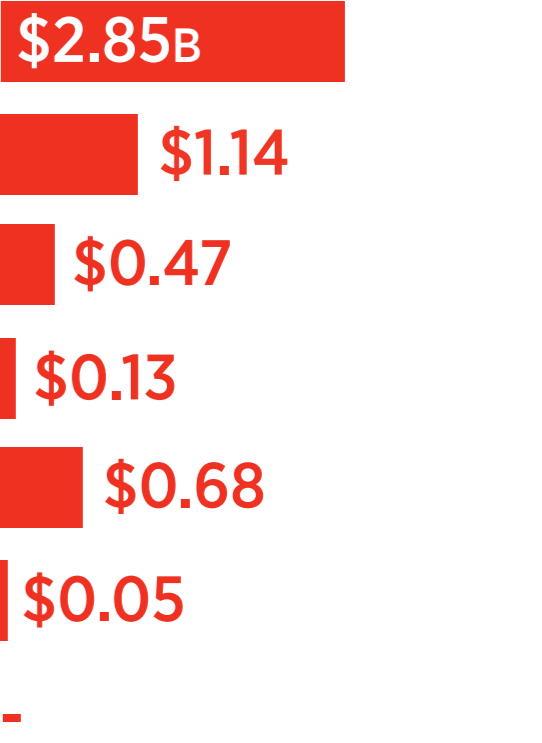
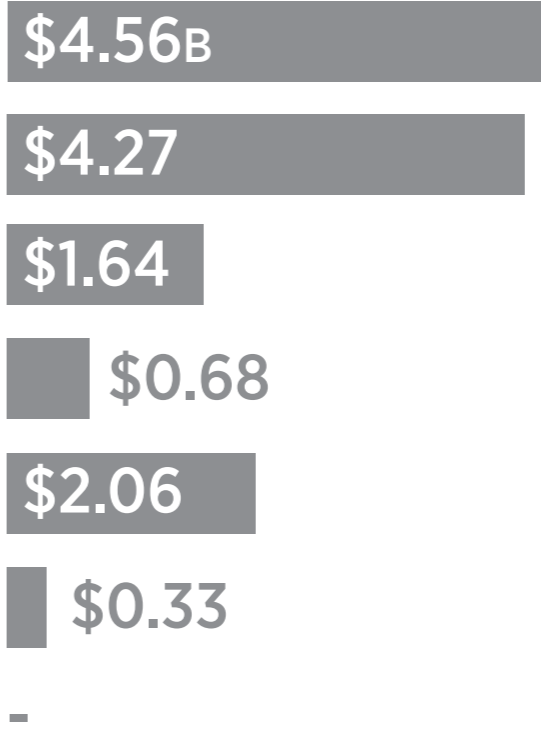
COMPLETED 2025

\$5.32B

CAGR 2016-2025
-5%



- Museum/ Gallery
- Performing Arts Center
- Multifunction Arts Venue
- Cultural Hub/ District
- Library
- Outdoor Art Space
- Immersive



This summary analysis encompasses only publicly-shared projects with disclosed budgets (62% of the dataset) and sizes (57% of the dataset). The full dataset can be made available upon request from AEA Consulting via research@aeaconsulting.com.



Top:
PoMO, Trondheim

Bottom:
The Frick Collection, New York City

Top:
Sheikh Zayed National Museum

Bottom:
Powell Hall, St. Louis

Beyond Books: Designing the Contemporary Library

This edition of the Index introduces libraries as a dedicated project typology category, as recent projects demonstrate they are increasingly conceived as anchors and civic spaces rather than solely repositories of collections. While books, archives, and reading rooms remain central to their identity, many new and renovated libraries are being designed to support a wider range of functions: learning, digital access, cultural programming, social services, and informal gathering. Several projects illustrate this evolution.

The British Library expansion, announced in March 2025, integrates 55,700 square meters of life sciences offices and research facilities alongside traditional library functions. In doing so, the library is positioned as an active participant in the UK’s research and innovation landscape. The decision to pair the nation’s library—one of the largest and most prestigious in the world—with life sciences in particular reflects, in part, the government’s explicit

strategy to expand the country’s science sector.

In many ways, the idea of going “beyond the books” is not new. Libraries, especially local public libraries, have long held themselves out as community centers where the books form part of a broader offering. The James Baldwin Media Library & Refugee House in Paris takes this even further. It combines a media library with housing for refugees within a single building. The library becomes a site of social care and cultural provision, where educational spaces sit alongside integrated social services.

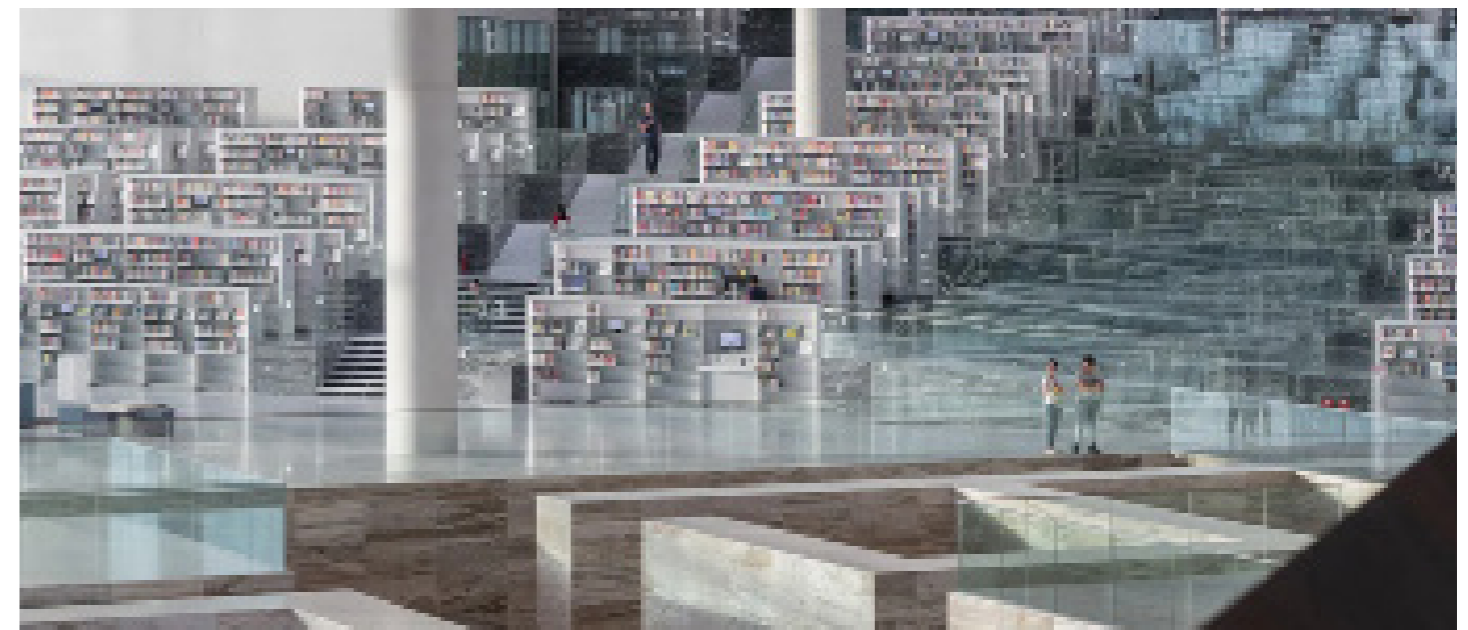
In North America, a number of projects tracked this year highlight a shift away from collections-led planning toward spaces prioritizing access, technology, and active learning. The Cofrin Technology and Education Center in Wisconsin combines library functions with a technology hub for digital access, skills development, and community use. Here, physical collections play a supporting role, while flexible spaces for collaboration, instruction, and experimentation define the building’s primary purpose. Similarly, the Cabarrus Library and Active

Learning Center in North Carolina contains spaces designed to support workshops, fitness activities, group learning, and informal gathering.

Prior to this year, the Biblioteca Parque Villa-Lobos in São Paulo, Brazil, is another great example. Opened in phases starting 2014, it was designed as a cultural and educational hub integrated into daily life within one of the city’s largest urban parks. Its programming emphasizes workshops, digital literacy, maker activities, and cultural events alongside its collections, attracting families, students, and creative practitioners.

In the Gulf region, the Qatar National Library, designed by OMA and opened in 2018, serves as an integrated knowledge platform. It is simultaneously a national archive, research library, and public library set within an educational campus, bringing together historical preservation, academic research, and public learning. Beyond housing collections, the building supports exhibitions, lectures, and digital initiatives that engage researchers and the public.

Libraries now allocate space to communal and educational uses like maker spaces and classrooms, rather than to shelving. Their non-commercial nature, extended hours, and low-barrier entry allow partnerships with educational institutions, social service providers, and cultural organizations. As a result, libraries increasingly function as adaptable infrastructure, evolving alongside the communities they serve. Once perceived as static and delivering a single service, they have proven their ability to remain relevant and connected to public life.



Left: Exterior view of James Baldwin Media Library and Refugee House, Paris

Right: Interior view of James Baldwin Media Library and Refugee House, Paris

Top and Middle: Biblioteca Parque Villa-Lobos, São Paulo

Bottom: Qatar National Library, Doha

Building Spaces With Indigenous Perspectives and For Indigenous Audiences

Over the past 10 years, the Index recorded at least 30 Indigenous-led or focused cultural infrastructure projects, with over half of these identified in the last four years. Advocacy, focused government policy, and land acknowledgement have resulted, among other things, in the generation of new spaces designed by and for Indigenous communities and their arts and culture. Several approaches to building space for indigenous perspectives and indigenous audiences are represented in these projects.

The Quandamooka Arts and Culture Center opened in September of 2025 on Minjerribah Island, outside of Brisbane, Australia. The project flows from the Queensland Government's Minjerribah Futures program, which supports Minjerribah's transition away from reliance on sand mining. The center provides practice space for the Quandamooka people and delivers a new cultural tourism project. To support this dual mandate, the building hosts a collection, exhibition space, event and performing spaces, and a café and gift shop. Also in Australia just outside of Sydney, the announced La Perouse Museum's First Nations Cultural Precinct aims to create employment opportunities for First Nations communities, support the return of cultural objects to Country, and offer tourism experiences.

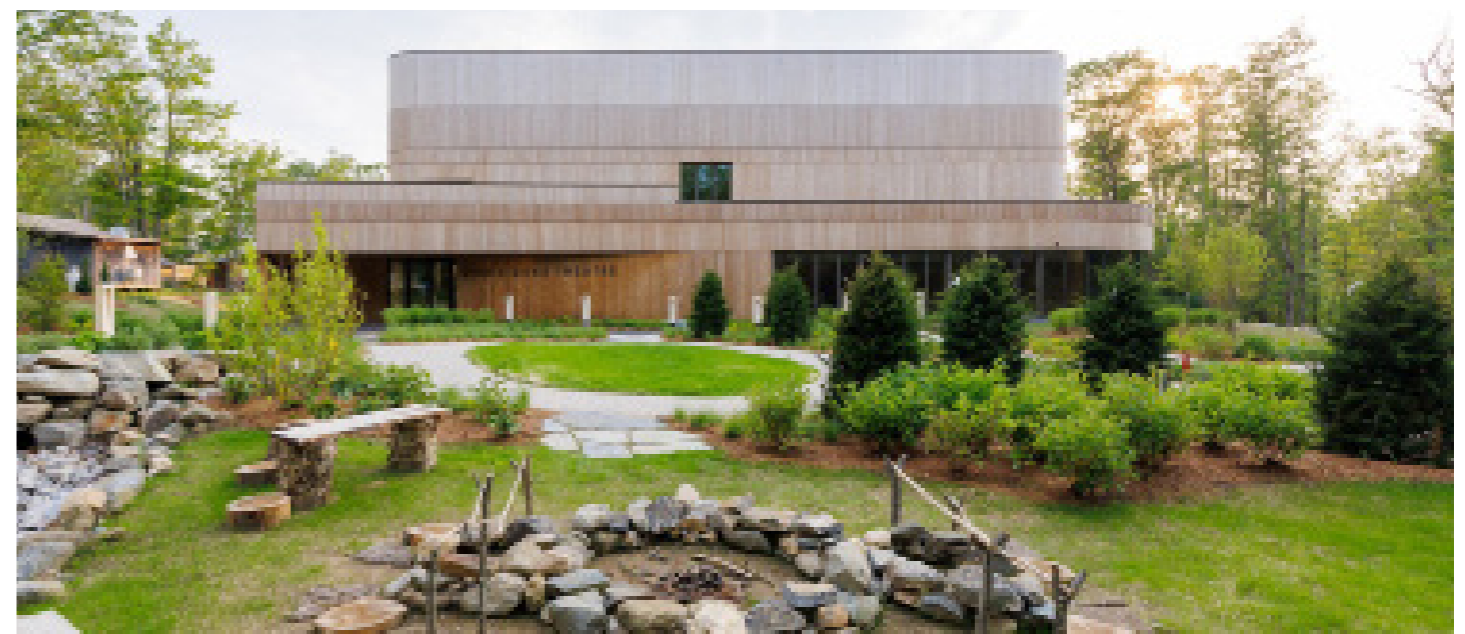
Both Australian projects are a collaboration between the state government and First Nations and balance cultural practices with tourism. In Yukon, Canada, the emphasis is on heritage preservation: the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in Heritage Complex, which received \$25 million from the federal government through the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings program, emphasizes archiving, oral history, and language instruction. Further along the spectrum towards community-serving infrastructure, non-profit Native



Inc. is leading an effort to develop 11 acres of land in North Dakota for housing and a cultural center that will focus on business-related spaces, social services, cultural programming, and events.

Outside of Burlington, Vermont, the Shelburne Museum's Perry Center for Native American Art announced its plan to host the donated Perry Collection, growing its Indigenous collection to 500 objects from over 389 Tribal Nations. The design team includes Two Row Architects, a native-owned business that services Indigenous clients and projects that incorporate Indigenous ideologies and teachings. The design process is guided by values that emerged early in the project: to be stewards of the material but not owners, to listen and collaborate with Indigenous leaders, to serve as a welcoming space for Tribal Members to study and engage

The Quandamooka Arts and Culture Centre, Minjerribah



Top: Artist impression of the First Nations Cultural Precinct, La Perouse

with the collections, and ultimately to reimagine the museum experience for all visitors. Two Row Architects led and facilitated Talking Circles in which Indigenous partners spoke, while the rest of the design team and museum staff listened.

Also tracked in this year's Index is The Doris Duke Theater at Jacob's Pillow, which reopened in July 2025 after the old building was destroyed by a fire in 2022. Although the theater is not dedicated exclusively to Indigenous arts and culture, it acknowledges its responsibility to recognize Indigenous peoples and to steward the land upon which it operates. The design team included four Indigenous artists who contributed visual art installations, a medicinal garden, and a fire pit for gatherings. Mecanoo and Marvel, the lead architects and landscape architects, collaborated with Indigenous artist Jeffery Gibson on the building's design.

The programmatic goals of these projects vary. The Australian projects balance arts and culture with professional and economic development opportunities for First Nations people and tourism. The Yukon and North Dakota projects focus on heritage, language, and social services. Finally, the US projects are designed for broader audiences, but given the scope of the collections and the land on which the spaces are built, it is important to center their perspectives through collaboration.

Bottom: Doris Duke Theater, Becket

Spotlight on Kazakhstan: Almaty's New Cultural Institutions

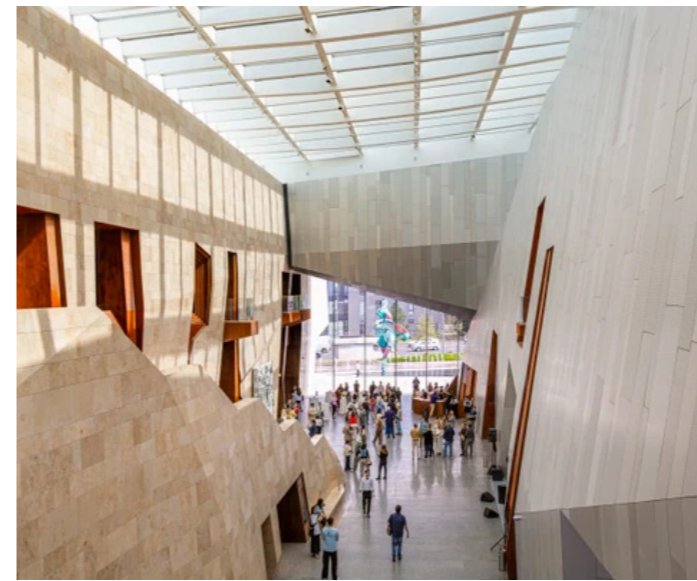
Over the past decade, Kazakhstan has experienced a gradual shift in how its culture is supported and produced, moving from a mainly state-led system to a mix of public, private, and philanthropic efforts. This change is especially noticeable in Almaty, the country's former capital, where urban growth and private wealth are starting to reshape the cultural landscape.

In 2025, the Index tracked two completed and one announced project aimed at engaging future generations, supporting visual arts, and encouraging a more expressive public life. These initiatives point to Almaty's growing role as a cultural hub in Central Asia.



Top:
Aerial view of Almaty showing the Tselinny Center of Contemporary Culture

Bottom:
West undulating façade of the Tselinny Center of Contemporary Culture



Top:
Exterior view of the Almaty Museum of Arts

Middle:
Interior view of the Almaty Museum of Arts

Museum of Science for Children

The Museum of Science for Children is a new purpose-built institution developed in collaboration with Singapore's Science Center and set to open in June 2026. The museum focuses on the future of science education and is conceived as an interactive environment prioritizing engaging exhibits, experimentation, and discovery of hands-on STEM experiences, featuring laboratories, science theatres, and interactive play zones. Future exhibitions include journeys through the solar system, earth sciences, and human biology. Within Almaty's wider cultural infrastructure, this project introduces a strong educational anchor that complements the city's arts-focused initiatives.

Almaty Museum of Arts

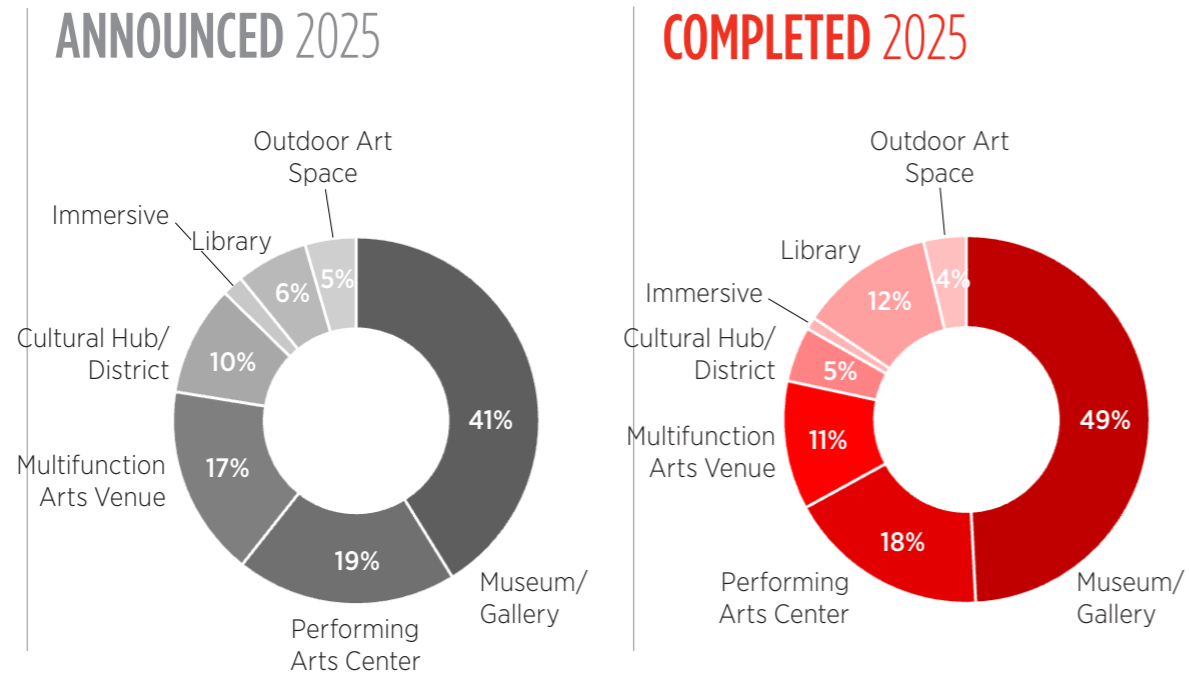
Designed by Chapman Taylor, the Almaty Museum of Arts is considered Central Asia's first major private museum dedicated to modern and contemporary art. The museum holds more than 700 works from the collection of Nurlan Smagulov, bringing together works by Kazakh artists alongside international modern and contemporary pieces, and positioning the collection as a platform for dialogue between local and global artistic narratives. It hosts exhibitions, educational initiatives, public events, and a performances. Outdoor areas are conceived as active cultural spaces for installations, performances, and social gatherings, extending the museum's role beyond the conventional white-box model.

Tselinny Center of Contemporary Culture

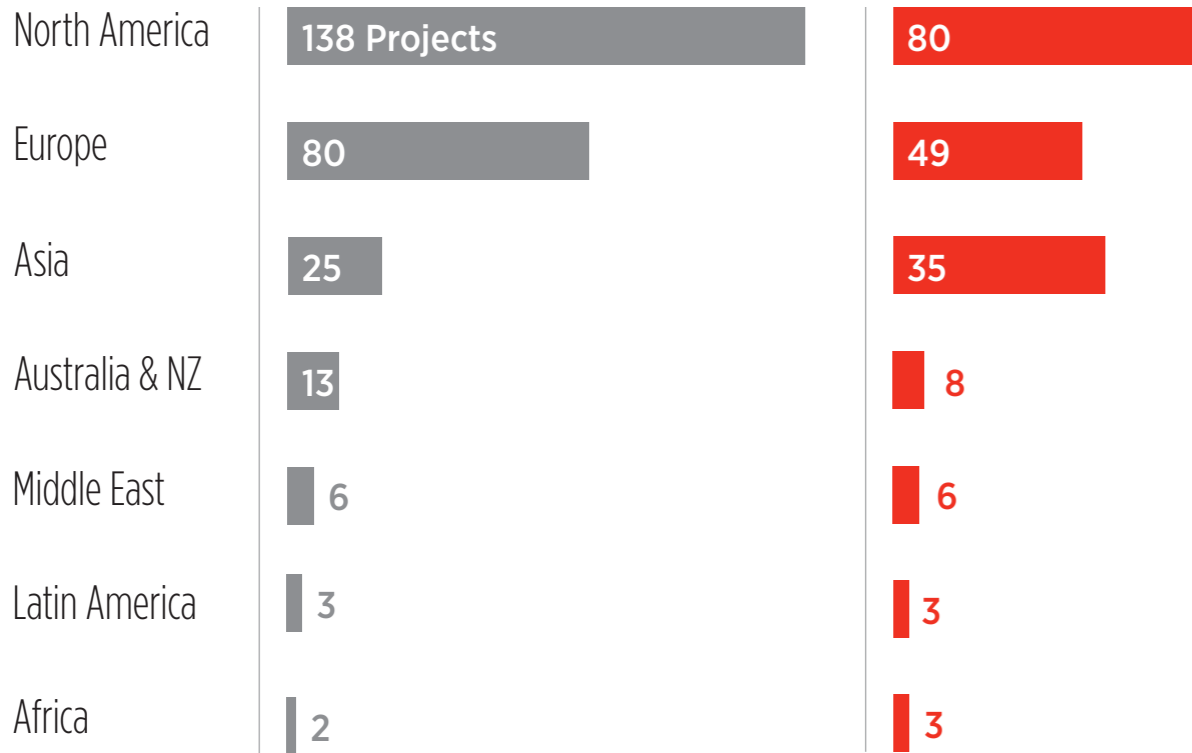
Located within a former Soviet era cinema, the Tselinny Center of Contemporary Culture transforms an existing cultural landmark into a flexible platform for contemporary practice. Reimagined by architect Asif Khan, the project preserves the original auditorium and much of the building's historical character, while introducing new spatial interventions designed to support exhibitions, performances, and interdisciplinary programs. The center aims to provide a space that brings together contemporary art, education, and public life. Its programs include galleries, learning spaces, a bookshop, café, and performance venues to support experimental artistic production and broader community engagement.

Bottom:
North embossed façade of the Tselinny Center of Contemporary Culture

MIX OF PROJECTS BY BUILDING CATEGORY

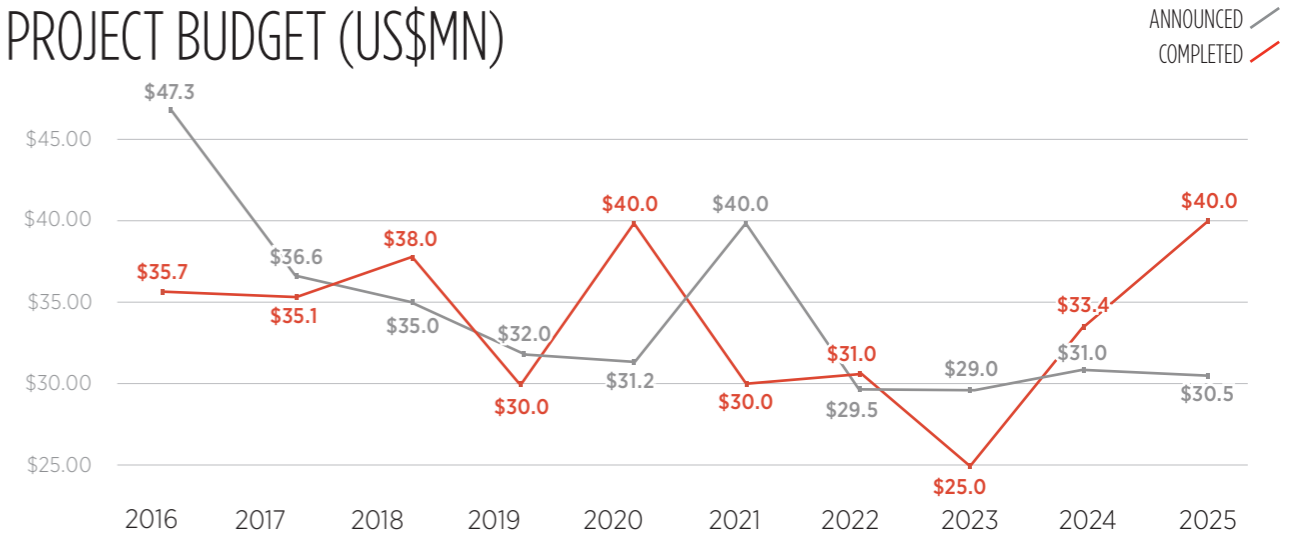


MIX OF PROJECTS BY REGION

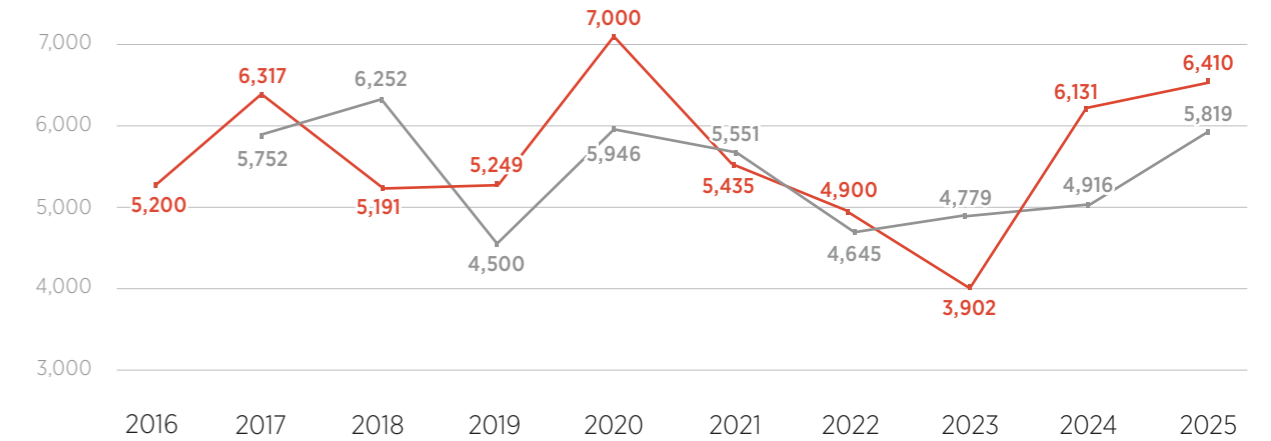


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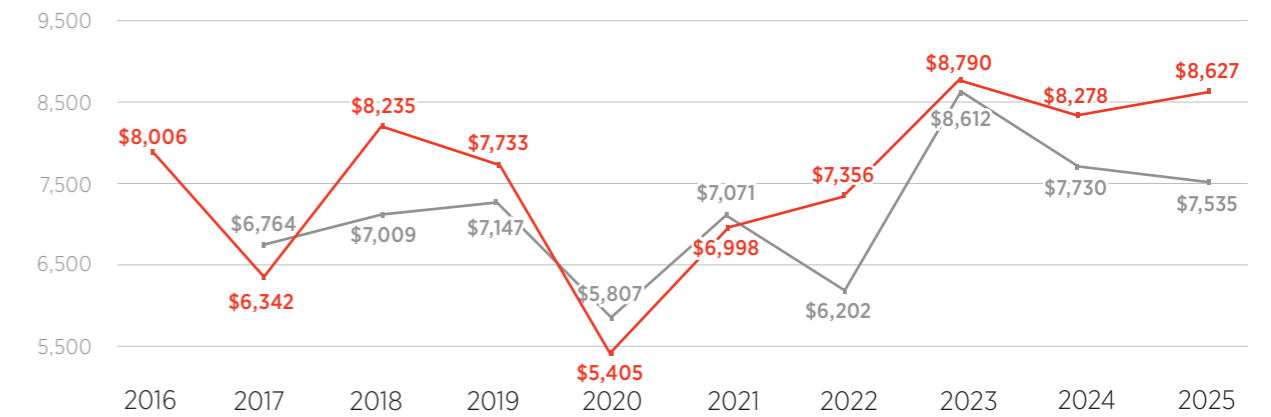
MEDIAN PROJECT BUDGET (US\$MN)



MEDIAN PROJECT SIZE (SQM)



MEDIAN COST PER SQM (US\$)



This summary analysis encompasses only publicly-shared projects with disclosed budgets (62% of the dataset) and sizes (57% of the dataset). The full dataset can be made available upon request from AEA Consulting via research@aeaconsulting.com.

Announced project sizes have been tracked starting in 2017.

TOP 10 BUDGETS FOR ANNOUNCED PROJECTS 2025

Name	Budget	City/State	Country	Region	Building Type
British Library	\$1,400,000,000	London	UK	Europe	Library
Qiddiya City Performing Arts Center	\$1,400,000,000	Qiddiya City	Saudi Arabia	Middle East	Performing Arts Center
The Louvre	\$813,000,000	Paris	France	Europe	Museum/Gallery
Hamburg Opera House	\$403,000,000	Hamburg	Germany	Europe	Performing Arts Center
Isola della Musica	\$395,000,000	Hanoi	Vietnam	Asia	Performing Arts Center
Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts	\$335,000,000	New York, NY	USA	North America	Performing Arts Center
Kingsway Exchange Tunnels Military Intelligence Museum	\$294,000,000	London	UK	Europe	Museum/Gallery
Vancouver Art Gallery	\$257,000,000	Vancouver	Canada	North America	Museum/Gallery
Kelowna Performing Arts Center	\$191,000,000	Kelowna, BC	Canada	North America	Museum/Gallery
Center for the Arts	\$162,000,000	St. Petersburg, FL	USA	North America	Multifunction Arts Venue



Visualization of the British Library's courtyard, London

TOP 10 BUDGETS FOR COMPLETED PROJECTS 2025

Name	Budget	City/State	Country	Region	Building Type
Le Grand Palais	\$548,000,000	Paris	France	Europe	Museum/Gallery
The Frick Collection	\$330,000,000	New York, NY	USA	North America	Museum/Gallery
National Medal of Honor Museum	\$270,000,000	Arlington, TX	USA	North America	Museum/Gallery
Studio Museum	\$175,000,000	New York, NY	USA	North America	Museum/Gallery
Natural History Museum Abu Dhabi	\$150,000,000	Abu Dhabi	UAE	Middle East	Museum/Gallery
Powell Hall	\$140,000,000	St. Louis, MO	USA	North America	Performing Arts Center
Dartmouth College Hopkins Center for the Arts	\$124,000,000	Hanover, NH	USA	North America	Performing Arts Center
The National Gallery (Sainsbury Wing)	\$114,000,000	London	UK	Europe	Museum/Gallery
Portland Art Museum	\$111,000,000	Portland, OR	USA	North America	Museum/Gallery
Montana Heritage Center	\$107,000,000	Helena, MT	USA	North America	Museum/Gallery



Interior view of the renovated Le Grand Palais, Paris



Top:
Mary Schmidt Campbell Center for Innovation & the Arts, Atlanta

Bottom:
LA Almazara, Málaga

Top:
Visualization of The Impact, Copenhagen

Bottom:
The Court Theatre, Christchurch

ANNOUNCED ●
COMPLETED ●

North America

138 80

Museum/Gallery	48	31
Performing Arts Center	29	20
Multifunction Arts Venue	27	7
Library	16	18
Cultural Hub/District	9	2
Outdoor Art Space	9	2

Europe

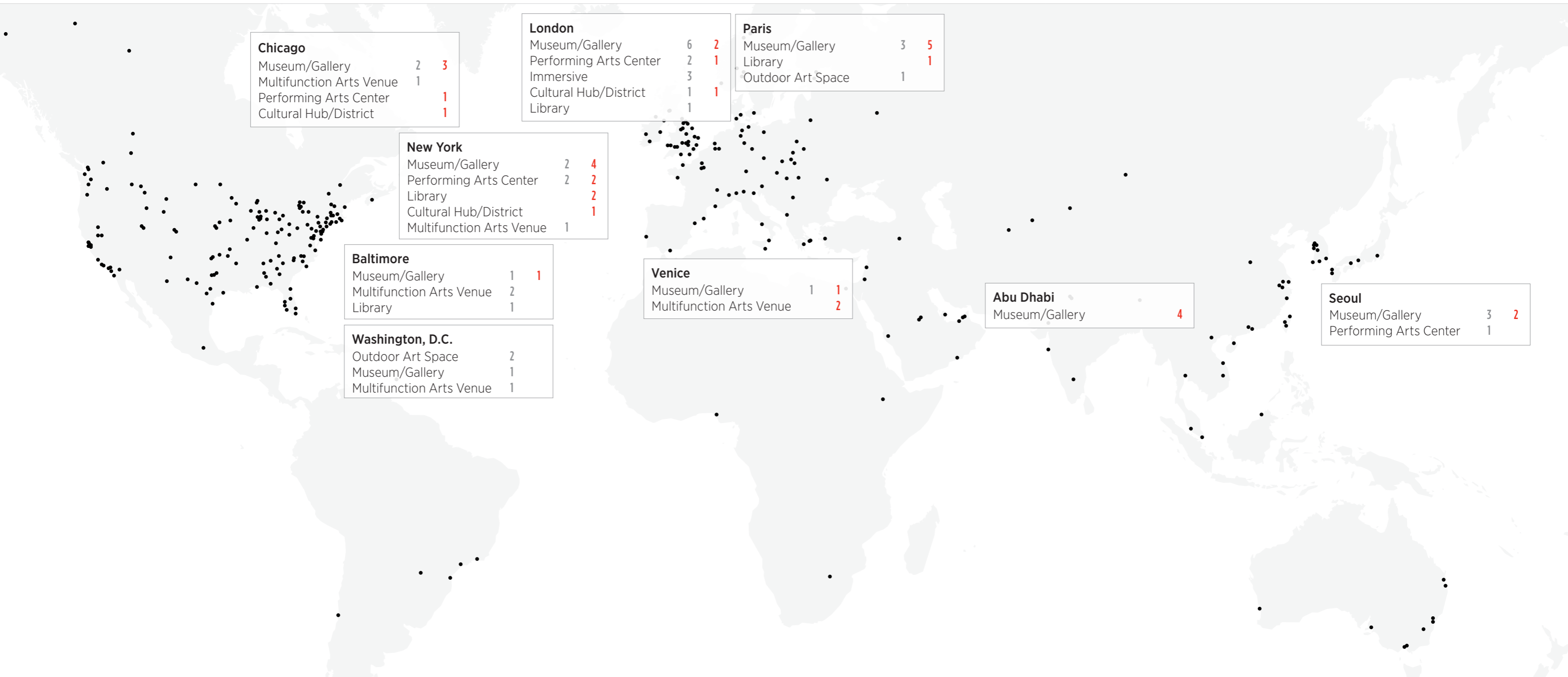
80 50

Museum/Gallery	42	26
Performing Arts Center	15	9
Multifunction Arts Venue	6	6
Cultural Hub/District	9	3
Outdoor Art Space	3	3
Library	1	3
Immersive	4	

Asia

25 35

Museum/Gallery	10	22
Multifunction Arts Venue	6	5
Cultural Hub/District	5	1
Performing Arts Center	3	2
Immersive	1	2
Outdoor Art Space		2
Library		1



Chicago

Museum/Gallery	2	3
Multifunction Arts Venue	1	
Performing Arts Center		1
Cultural Hub/District		1

London

Museum/Gallery	6	2
Performing Arts Center	2	1
Immersive	3	
Cultural Hub/District	1	1
Library	1	

Paris

Museum/Gallery	3	5
Library		1
Outdoor Art Space	1	

New York

Museum/Gallery	2	4
Performing Arts Center	2	2
Library		2
Cultural Hub/District		1
Multifunction Arts Venue	1	

Baltimore

Museum/Gallery	1	1
Multifunction Arts Venue	2	
Library	1	

Washington, D.C.

Outdoor Art Space	2	
Museum/Gallery	1	
Multifunction Arts Venue	1	

Venice

Museum/Gallery	1	1
Multifunction Arts Venue		2

Abu Dhabi

Museum/Gallery	4	
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Seoul

Museum/Gallery	3	2
Performing Arts Center	1	

Latin America

3 3

Museum/Gallery	1	3
Performing Arts Center	1	
Multifunction Arts Venue	1	

Africa

2 3

Museum/Gallery	1	1
Multifunction Arts Venue	1	1
Performing Arts Center		1

Middle East

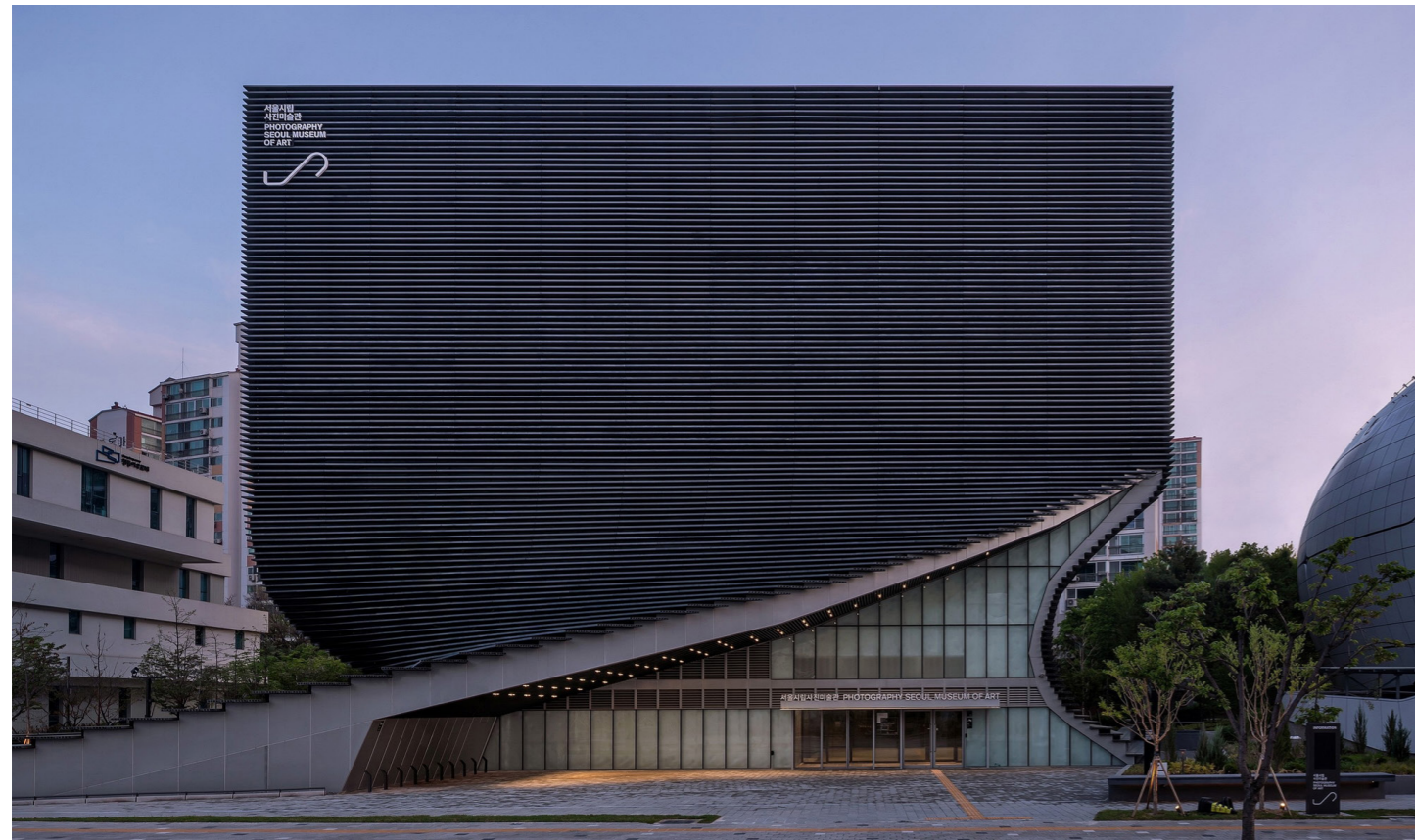
6 6

Museum/Gallery	4	6
Performing Arts Center	1	
Cultural Hub/District	1	

Australia & NZ

13 8

Museum/Gallery	4	2
Multifunction Arts Venue	4	2
Cultural Hub/District	2	3
Performing Arts Center	3	1



Top:
Science Island Museum, Kaunas

Bottom:
Photography Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul



GATE M West Bund Dream Center, Shanghai

Credits

Report and Index produced by Luna BuGhanem, Laura Gildenstern, Jess Nickelman, and Natalia Vartapetova, with input from Adrian Ellis, Mayssa Kanaan, and Ryan Martins.

With thanks to our colleagues and collaborators for their contributions.

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Since 1991, we have successfully delivered more than 1,200 assignments in 43 countries, helping clients around the world plan and realize vital and sustainable cultural projects.

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Global Cultural Districts Network (GCDN) is an independent, international association committed to improving the quality of urban life through the contribution of the arts, culture, and creative industries.

The network fosters collaboration and knowledge-sharing among those responsible for creative and cultural districts, quarters, and clusters in widely diverse contexts, providing rich and rewarding opportunities for cross-fertilization and exchange.

The forum engages leaders and opinion formers in culture and urban development through convenings, research, and collaboration to inform global, local, and sectoral agendas.

For more information visit

www.gcdn.net





WESTON COLLECTIONS HALL

CONSERVATION OVERLOOK

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