



**For Immediate Release**

## **AIA Virginia's Highest Honor Recognizes Storefront for Community Design**

*Contributions to Built Environment Earn Most Prestigious Award from Architect Association*

**Richmond, VA**– [Storefront for Community Design](#) (SFCD) received the American Institute of Architects Virginia (AIA Virginia) Chapter's [Architectural Medal for Virginia Service](#) at the Visions for Architecture celebration at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts. The award is the highest honor that AIA Virginia hands out and recognizes an individual or organization that makes an "unusually significant contribution" to Virginia's built environment, or awareness of the built environment.

"This award emphasizes the value and importance of designing spaces for the communities who use them," said Bernard Harkless, current Chair of the Board of Directors for Storefront for Community Design. "We want to thank AIA Virginia for choosing to recognize Storefront for its community-driven design and build efforts."

In a letter to Storefront informing them of the award, AIA noted they wanted to recognize Storefront for its influence and contributions to uplifting underserved populations through the power of design. "AIA Virginia is delighted to honor Richmond's Storefront for Community Design," said Helene Combs Dreiling, FAIA, Interim Executive Vice President at AIA Virginia. "Since 2011, Storefront has been a stalwart non-profit design hub that seeks to make design programs and resources accessible to all. Leveraging their large network of volunteers, they have prioritized equitable growth, benefiting Richmond and the broader metropolitan area."

Since 2011, SFCD has convened over 370 low-cost design and planning assistance projects and over 20 design education initiatives to community members, businesses, nonprofit organizations, local governments, schools, and neighborhoods.

"This award reaffirms what we've known about the importance and influence of design on communities," said Storefront Executive Director Shawn Balon. "We remain humbled by and thankful for AIA Virginia's recognition, and we look forward to continuing our important work in the communities that matter most around Richmond."

Storefront recently launched a new strategic plan that will focus on more community-driven design. The organization plans to serve over 200,000 residents in Richmond through community design over the next three years.



**About Storefront For Community Design:** SFCD is a non-profit design center in Richmond, VA, founded to bridge the gap and make design programs and resources accessible to all for the love of our city. We aid community partners in ideas, advancing areas of environmental and food justice, health and wellness, economic development, placemaking/placekeeping and design/planning tools to empower community organizing.

##

**Reporters may contact:**

Shawn Balon – Storefront for Community Design

[shawn@storefrontrichmond.org](mailto:shawn@storefrontrichmond.org)

804.649.4935