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Media contact: Sarah Haun, shaun@vanalen.org, 212 924 7000 x12

VAN ALEN INSTITUTE INTRODUCES CLIMATE COUNCIL

Investigative Program Brings Range of Professionals Together to Establish a Common Language of Resiliency Across Disciplines



Photo by Cameron Blaylock

New York, NY (June 6, 2018) — Van Alen Institute today announces the launch of its **Climate Council**, a platform for exchange for leading architects, landscape architects, engineers, planners, researchers, developers, and other environmentally-minded professionals.

“We have been creating projects to tackle the impact of climate change for years,” says Van Alen Executive Director **David van der Leer**. “With the launch of the Climate Council, we are deepening our focus on one of the most critical issues of our time, bringing together some of the best minds in several disciplines to share knowledge and accelerate our ability to adapt cities and landscapes to our changing climate.”

Led by Council Co-Chairs architect **Claire Weisz** (Principal-in-Charge, WXY Studio), and landscape architect **Mark Johnson** (President, Civitas), Van Alen launched the Climate Council to explore climate-related issues through curated trips that incorporate design, educational, social, and professional activities.

The Council program centers on investigative travel to North American destinations that are undergoing, or will soon undergo substantial environmental change. In these places, the Council aims to learn from the challenges they see, to offer professional advice, and to share lessons learned with other regions, both through further Council travel and via their practices.

“Bringing experts together in real places of extreme climate impact is where new connections are made, and ideas are exchanged. It’s important that the Climate Council is happening on a continental level,” says Climate Council Co-Chair Claire Weisz.

“The Council gives us access to people who are experiencing the effects of our changing world first hand,” says Climate Council Co-Chair Mark Johnson. “It is our hope that by bringing our diverse Council members together with real issues and evidence, that we will spark our thinking, dig deeper, and find ways to bring best practices into every aspect of our professional work.”

In July 2018, the founding members of the Council will travel to Sacramento and California’s Central Valley. There, they will consider the future of food through the lenses of land, labor, and water, and collaborate with local experts and academics to explore how design can play an impactful part in the movement of food across communities, regions, and the globe.

The Climate Council builds on Van Alen’s successful International Council model in that it fosters a collaborative and congenial setting for exploration and reflection away from everyday practice. It also provides support and funding for Van Alen’s broader climate-related work.

Climate Council Founding Members (list in formation):

Mark Johnson, Climate Council Co-Chair, President, Civitas

Claire Weisz, Climate Council Co-Chair, Principal-in-Charge, WXY Studio

Kishore Varanasi, Director of Urban Design, CBT

S. Bry Sarté, Founder, Sherwood Design Engineers

Steven Baumgartner, Principal, Urban Systems/Infrastructure Strategy,
SmithGroupJJR

Gary Sorge, Vice President, Director of Landscape Architecture, Stantec

Chris Reed, Founding Director, Stoss Landscape Urbanism

Alison Sant, Co-Founder, Studio for Urban Projects

Erik Verboon, Principal, Managing Director, Walter P Moore

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About Van Alen's Climate Adaptation Initiatives

The Climate Council is part of Van Alen Institute's broader inquiry into how cities and communities can adapt to climate change. Van Alen has been exploring these issues through multiple initiatives over the past six years:

- *Keeping Current: A Sea Level Rise Challenge for Greater Miami (2017-ongoing)*, a two-year program including design competitions for public facilities, a summer program for high school students, a mobile exhibit and conference, and more in collaboration with Miami-Dade County and other local partners. This project is supported by nearly \$1M in funding from the Rockefeller Foundation, Knight Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the Miami Foundation, Target, and Terra.
- *Van Alen Sessions: Season Four*, a series of short videos exploring Miami's endeavors to adapt to climate change **to premier at Van Alen on June 28, 2018** with support from the National Endowment for the Arts.
- *Shore to Core*, a design and research competition in collaboration with West Palm Beach (FL) Community Redevelopment Agency, invited professionals to reimagine downtown West Palm Beach as a dynamic, resilient waterfront city.
- *Changing Course: Navigating the Future of the Lower Mississippi River Delta*, a design competition to reimagine a more sustainable Lower Mississippi River Delta. Following Hurricane Katrina and the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill, a broad coalition gathered to develop strategies to bring communities, ecologies, and commerce back into balance.
- *Rebuild by Design* was an initiative of President Obama's Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to address the structural and environmental vulnerabilities that Hurricane Sandy exposed in communities throughout the region and developing fundable solutions to protect residents from future climate events.

About Van Alen Institute

At Van Alen Institute, we believe design can transform cities, landscapes, and regions to improve people's lives. We collaborate with communities, scholars, policymakers, and professionals on local and global initiatives that rigorously investigate the most pressing social, cultural, and ecological challenges of tomorrow. Building on more than a century of experience and with the support of a strong Board of Trustees led by Chair **Jared Della Valle**, Co-Founder and President of Alloy Development LLC, we develop cross-disciplinary research, provocative public programs, and inventive design competitions.

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