



Revolving Voices Transforms An Underutilized Plaza Into A Vibrant Entryway Welcoming Visitors into Astoria Houses.

The Public Housing Community Fund, NYCHA, Tamra Cosby, and The Urban Conga unveil Revolving Voices for and with the community members of Astoria Houses in Astoria.



Photo Credit: The Urban Conga

ASTORIA, NY - Located at the edge of Astoria Houses, directly adjacent to the Astoria waterfront and ferry dock, *Revolving Voices* is a permanent public artwork and gathering space that celebrates the voices, talents, stories, and cultural histories of the Astoria Houses community. Created by [The Urban Conga](http://www.theurbanconga.com) in collaboration with resident poet Tamra Cosby, the installation physically represents the opportunity to share one's voice, talent, and message within the public realm.

The project was developed through a series of community engagement sessions with Artist-in-Residence Tamra Cosby as part of the [From Roots to Arts: Celebrating NYCHA's Cultural Heritage](#) program. *From Roots to Arts* is an artist-in-residence program developed by the Public Housing Community Fund and NYCHA to highlight artists within NYCHA housing communities to create art and cultivate a deeper sense of community. Through the co-design process, community members shared their memories, experiences, and visions for the space. This process informed both the physical design as well as the stories and imagery embedded within it, creating a permanent piece rooted in the voices of those who live there.



"Projects like *Revolving Voices* demonstrate the power of transforming public spaces into vibrant hubs of community pride and shared history," said **NYCHA Chief Executive Officer Lisa Bova-Hiatt**. "The Connected Communities program places residents at the heart of the design process, ensuring that the art in our developments directly reflects the people who live there. We are grateful to the Public Housing Community Fund, The Urban Conga, and the Astoria Houses residents for their partnership and shared vision."

Taking inspiration from the form of a megaphone, an object designed to amplify and project a voice, *Revolving Voices* reimagines this symbol as a series of large-scale, octagonal forms that follow the curve of the surrounding performance space, gradually decreasing in size. Together, the structures create a sculptural and playable landscape that encourages people to gather, climb, sit, explore, perform, and reflect. The megaphone-like form is broken into four distinct components, each displaying perforated imagery across its outer shell. Viewed from a distance, these images depict the people, talents, and stories that make up the Astoria Houses community, from people playing, to dancing, to protesting. As visitors move closer, another layer of the installation is revealed. The interiors display powerful messages, stories, memories, and poetry from Cosby and other community members, etched directly into the metal panels. Visitors can sit within the structures and become physically surrounded by the voices of their community.

"*Revolving Voices* reflects the stories and lived experiences of residents living at Astoria Houses, and tells the history of the community in a fun, interactive way," said **Alex Zablocki, Executive Director of the Public Housing Community Fund**. "The art, acting as megaphones calling out to the city, gives residents a voice and opportunity to welcome others in. *From Roots to Arts* created a unique opportunity to connect residents with local artists, allowing them to unlock their creativity and have it reflected in art and programming. This new installation brings out the best of Astoria while creating a welcoming and relaxing environment that the community can enjoy for years to come. Congratulations to Tamra, The Urban Conga, and, most importantly, the residents whose creativity and dedication helped make this project a reality."

Each of the four components can be manually rotated by users, allowing the installation to continually change its orientation within the space. As the forms turn, they frame different views of Astoria and create new relationships between the installation, the waterfront, and the Astoria Houses community. The structures can face outward toward the water and the broader public, inviting visitors passing through the waterfront to pause, listen, and learn about the community behind them. They can also turn inward, creating spaces that feel more intimate and connected to the Astoria Houses community. This ability to rotate creates an installation that is ever-changing. The community can continually reshape how the structure sits within its environment, transforming the megaphone-like forms into portals that frame new perspectives



and encourage visitors to see the neighborhood from different points of view. *Revolving Voices* reflects the idea that a community's story is not static, but that it continues to shift, grow, and evolve with the people who contribute to it.

"As an artist and a resident, creating *Revolving Voices* gave me the opportunity to look at Astoria Houses not only as a place where I live, but as a place filled with history, creativity, relationships, and possibility. This piece reflects the idea that our voices may change over time, but they remain connected. What we contribute today becomes part of the story that someone else carries forward tomorrow," said **artist Tamra Cosby**

Revolving Voices is designed to support both everyday moments and larger collective gatherings, acting as a public artwork, playable structure, seating area, performance space, and storytelling device. Residents might sit inside the forms for quiet reflection, gather with friends, or encounter stories and memories from their neighbors. During community events, the surrounding space can become a setting for poetry, music, performance, conversation, and shared expression. *Revolving Voices* creates a space for the Astoria Houses community to perform, converse, listen, and reflect. By placing the voices and creative expressions of residents at the center of a prominent public space, the project invites both the community and the broader public to consider who gets to be heard, whose stories are represented, and how public space can become a platform for collective expression. The result is a landmark shaped by the voices, memories, and continued participation of the community.

"*Revolving Voices* was created to transform a once-underutilized pass-through space into a welcoming communal landmark that reflects the identity and spirit of the Astoria Houses community. By centering the voices, memories, and continued participation of residents, the work creates a place that feels rooted in the community and invites people to gather, engage, and connect," said **Ryan Swanson, Principal of Urban Conga**.

"Working alongside local poet Tamra Cosby and the Astoria Houses community shaped the work into an interaction that extends beyond the physical experience into a prompt for conversation and a reflection of the many stories and perspectives within the community," said **Maeghann Coleman, Principal of Urban Conga**.

PROJECT DETAILS:

Project Name: *Revolving Voices*

Lead Designers: Tamra Cosby; Maeghann Coleman and Ryan Swanson, The Urban Conga

Additional Designers: Alden Copley, Pramity Shah

Initiative: Public Housing Community Fund - From Roots to Arts: Celebrating NYCHA's Cultural



Heritage program

Partners: Public Housing Community Fund, NYCHA, and The Urban Conga

Completion Date: August 2026

Dimensions: Approx. 140SF, Four pieces ranging 4'-8" to 7'-8" DIA. x 4'-8" to 7'-8" H

Project Location: NYCHA Astoria Houses at 4-25 Astoria Blvd, Astoria, NY 11102

About the Public Housing Community Fund

The Public Housing Community Fund is an independent not-for-profit organization that creates and leverages resources and relationships to enhance the opportunities and quality of life for New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residents and their communities while uplifting the importance of public housing in New York City. www.communityfund.nyc

About the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)

The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), the largest public housing authority in North America, was created in 1934 to provide decent, affordable housing for low- and moderate-income New Yorkers. NYCHA is home to 1 in 17 New Yorkers, providing affordable housing to 520,808 authorized residents through public housing and Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT) programs as well as Section 8 housing. NYCHA has 177,569 apartments in 2,411 buildings across 335 conventional public housing and PACT developments. In addition, NYCHA connects residents to critical programs and services from external and internal partners, with a focus on economic opportunity, youth, seniors, and social services. With a housing stock that spans all five boroughs, NYCHA is a city within a city.

About Tamra Cosby

Tamra Cosby, a poet from South Side Jamaica, Queens, and a current resident of Astoria Houses, uses her art to challenge stigmas surrounding residents of public housing. As the From Roots to Arts artist-in-residence at Astoria Houses, she is actively creating spaces for dialogue, self-expression, and change. Through her words, she reshapes the narrative of public housing residents, proving that art has the power to transform lives and communities.

About The Urban Conga

The Urban Conga, an award-winning multidisciplinary design studio led by Ryan Swanson and Maeghann Coleman, AIA, NOMA based in Brooklyn, New York, whose work explores how play can act as a catalyst for community interaction and social activity within the public realm. Working across the intersections of architecture, urban design, public art, and social practice, the studio focuses on creating inclusive, multiscale spatial opportunities that transform overlooked or underutilized spaces into stimulating environments that encourage curiosity, interaction, and free-choice learning. Central to the studio's practice is the utilization of play



methodologies as a critical tool implemented not just in the work itself but within the community-driven design process in which the work is created. The studio examines how participatory design and open-ended spatial systems can help cultivate more empathetic, responsive, and socially resilient environments. Their work worldwide often blurs disciplinary boundaries, combining elements of landscape design, public installation, architecture, education, and performance to create experiences that invite people to actively shape and reinterpret space together. The resulting work encourages spontaneous interaction and shared authorship, turning everyday environments into platforms for collective exchange and exploration. For more information visit: www.theurbanconga.com

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