



**WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL**  
*of Philadelphia*



**CITIZEN DIPLOMACY**  
International Philadelphia

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## **WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF PHILADELPHIA AND CITIZEN DIPLOMACY INTERNATIONAL PHILADELPHIA VOTE TO MERGE**

*Experienced and well-respected nonprofits will unite to create a dynamic international affairs organization focused on further connecting Philadelphia to the world*

**PHILADELPHIA, PA (August 18, 2022)** – Today, [World Affairs Council of Philadelphia](#) (“the Council”) and [Citizen Diplomacy International Philadelphia](#) (“Citizen Diplomacy”) announced that their respective international affairs-focused non-profit organizations will merge. This decision was made after a comprehensive 18-month period of due diligence and organizational collaboration, with approval by the respective Boards of Directors for Citizen Diplomacy (August 12) and the Council (August 17). While the merger is subject to required governmental notices and approvals, the organizations will immediately begin operating in partnership under an approved management agreement. Lauren Swartz will serve as President and CEO. Andrea W. Silva, Interim President & CEO of Citizen Diplomacy, will become a Vice President for the Council. All employees of both the Council and Citizen Diplomacy be retained. The unified entity will operate under the name World Affairs Council of Philadelphia.

The merger of the Council with Citizen Diplomacy presents an unprecedented opportunity for Philadelphia to position itself as a leader and champion of international affairs through both expanded mission and programmatic initiatives, especially in education and global connectivity. As a unified entity, with an operating budget of \$2 million, the Council will continue to execute its outstanding [public policy forums](#), [renowned speaker series](#), [world travel](#), [professional development](#), and acclaimed youth [education programs](#). It will also continue to serve as a key partner to the School District of Philadelphia for the William W. Bodine High School for International Affairs, which the Council co-founded with the District in 1981.

In integrating Citizen Diplomacy's mission and initiatives into the merged organization, the Council will serve as the official partner to the U.S. Department of State for the [International Visitor Leadership Program \(IVLP\)](#), which coordinates international delegations' visits to Philadelphia each year. This program encourages people-to-people cultural exchange for which Citizen Diplomacy has long been known. The Council will also maintain Philadelphia's [Sister Cities](#) programs, which nurtures ongoing relationships with 11 foreign cities with which Philadelphia has partnered. The Council will continue Citizen Diplomacy's [Citizen Diplomat Academy](#), a free, virtual, international exchange program for high school and university

students in Philadelphia and abroad who are interested in addressing the world's most pressing challenges.

"As the City continues to grow through both immigration and regional businesses accessing international capital, talent and opportunities worldwide, the importance of building Philadelphia's international connectivity – and helping Philadelphians understand our role in it – has never been more important," said Swartz. "This is a bold decision by both Boards of Directors, driven by the understanding that together, our organizations could go beyond just supporting these efforts. As one organization, we can elevate this work within our own community – and help lead it."

Michael S. Farrell, Chair, World Affairs Council of Philadelphia, and Managing Director for SEI Private Wealth Management, echoed Swartz's comments saying, "The Council and Citizen Diplomacy have strong legacy traditions in international affairs. While each organization has excelled individually, the potential for what could be, if we brought these innovative and trusted thought leaders together, was impossible to ignore. Our shared commitment to serving Philadelphia as a non-partisan non-profit organization devoted to cultivating dialogue and discourse is what made this merger possible, and we are excited for what this new chapter will bring."

Discussions regarding a potential merger date back to 2020 as both the Council and Citizen Diplomacy began to re-engage audiences and students in a world – and city – dramatically changed by COVID-19. Over the last several months, the Boards of Directors, with the respective executive leadership of the Council and Citizen Diplomacy, have engaged in significant financial, programmatic, and cultural due diligence. Ultimately, both Boards decided to proceed with a vote to merge, which occurred after the departure of long-time Citizen Diplomacy CEO, Siobhan Lyons.

"Siobhan was an invaluable partner in this extensive process, just as Lauren was," said Gerald (Jay) B. Halt, Jr. Chair, Citizen Diplomacy and Shareholder, Volpe Koenig. "Earlier this year, Citizen Diplomacy had been notified of Siobhan's desire to transition from her role at the end of June 2022, which we shared with the Council for full transparency. Siobhan has worked tirelessly over the past seven years to advance the programs at Citizen Diplomacy, and strategically position the organization for a merger. Her unwavering support of this merger and her understanding of the benefits it would bring, further elevating Philadelphia on the international stage gave us tremendous confidence to proceed. We are deeply appreciative to Siobhan for all of her contributions."

Farrell added, "As a former Deputy Commerce Director of International Business and Global Strategy for the City of Philadelphia, and as current CEO of the Council, Lauren Swartz is uniquely positioned to lead these merged organizations forward. Her experience and deep commitment to international affairs as a vehicle for teaching, learning, connection, and economic growth is unmatched. Lauren has articulated a clear, exciting vision for the future of the newly constituted Council, and I share Jay's confidence in that vision – and her."

Halt added, "As the birthplace of American democracy, the sixth-largest city in America, and a top-ranking city for startups, medicine, and higher education, Philadelphia plays an important role in building America's reputation abroad. Combining efforts, we are poised for an exciting future."

While the Council and Citizen Diplomacy will begin to operate together, the merger will not be finalized until the Orphan's Court of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth's Attorney General's Office approves it. Once the merger closes, the Council will then be overseen by one Board of Directors which will be chaired by Farrell. Halt will serve as a Vice Chair and a member of the Executive Committee. All members of Citizen Diplomacy's Board of Directors have been invited to join the Board of the World Affairs Council and all current Citizen Diplomacy staff will be retained.

For more information regarding the approved merger of the Council and Citizen Diplomacy, please visit [www.wacphila.org](http://www.wacphila.org) or [www.cdiphila.org](http://www.cdiphila.org).

### **About World Affairs Council of Philadelphia**

The World Affairs Council of Philadelphia is a non-partisan, international affairs experience provider with more than 70 years of expertise in connecting Philadelphia to the world. Providing authentic and meaningful learning experiences, the Council makes critical, international affairs topics accessible to people of all ages, political beliefs, and backgrounds, shaping their understanding of the world around us. The Council offers youth education, global professional development for business leaders, unique travel opportunities and a robust speaker series. For more information about the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia, visit [www.wacphila.org](http://www.wacphila.org).

### **About Citizen Diplomacy International Philadelphia**

Citizen Diplomacy International Philadelphia is a nonprofit, nonpartisan educational organization that engages the Philadelphia region in international affairs, promotes dialogue and understanding through the exchange of ideas, and builds a global network of friendships for our region's institutions and people. Citizen Diplomacy International Philadelphia has been the official partner of the U.S. Department of State for more than 60 years and oversees Philadelphia's Sister Cities program, making friends for the United States and connecting the region's institutions and people to others around the world. Serving southeastern Pennsylvania, southern New Jersey, and all of Delaware, Citizen Diplomacy International Philadelphia is proud to engage the region's residents in international relations and promote American business, education, diversity, and democracy through international exchange. For more information, visit [www.cdiphila.org](http://www.cdiphila.org).

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