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## Two nonprofits focused on making Philadelphia a global city merge with over 130 years of experience

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The World Affairs Council of Philadelphia and Citizen Diplomacy International Philadelphia are merging with a unifying goal of amplifying the city's presence in the international economy.

The organization will begin working as one entity Thursday. Combined, the two nonprofits have over 130 years of foreign affairs experience as it relates to Philadelphia. The merged organization will retain the name World Affairs Council of Philadelphia and its current CEO Lauren Swartz will oversee the unified entity. Andrea W. Silva, the interim CEO of Citizen Diplomacy, will be vice president.



KATY SMITH

From left to right: Gerald Halt, chair of Citizen Diplomacy; Andrea Silva, interim CEO of Citizen Diplomacy; Lauren Swartz, CEO of the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia; Michael Farrell, chair of the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia.

The boards of trustees for both organizations approved the merger this past week, with the World Affairs Council finalizing their vote Wednesday night. The merger comes in the wake of the resignation of CEO Siobhan Lyons, who led Citizen Diplomacy for close to seven years and notified Citizen Diplomacy of her desire to step down in June.

The two organizations have similar goals of connecting Philadelphia with the worldwide economy by building relationships that span the globe. The nonprofits had touched on the topic of merging in the past several years, but it was in 2020 that they realized "we could do a better job together than we can do separately," said Swartz, who served as Philadelphia's deputy commerce director of international business and global strategy from 2016 to 2020. Swartz began her tenure at the World Affairs Council in September 2020 as talks of a merger picked up.

There was an 18-month period of financial, programmatic and cultural due diligence leading up to the votes of approval.

The merged entity will have an operating budget of \$2 million and 16 employees — 12 from the World Affairs Council and four from Citizen Diplomacy. Citizen Diplomacy has been a partner with U.S. Department of State for over 60 years and the new World Affairs Council will partner with the state department on the International Visitor Leadership Program, which brings delegations to Philadelphia each year.

Swartz said the merged entity has the opportunity to "create a catalyst and a platform that enhances the opportunity for Philadelphia to connect to the world."

Despite their similarities, Swartz anticipates a seamless integration. The World Affairs Council works more on the ground in educating Philadelphians on topics of international relations as well as offering travel opportunities. Citizen Diplomacy works more to forge relationships with cities and delegations across the world and bring them to Philadelphia.

In the past three years, the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia has hosted speakers like Samantha Power, the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nation, Condoleezza Rice, the former

U.S. Secretary of State and J.P. Morgan Chase & Co. CEO Jamie Dimon, as well as diplomats from across the globe.

Swartz has a vision of Philadelphia asserting itself on the global stage as the World Affairs Council embarks on its new chapter. She wants to remind people that Philadelphia was one of the first global cities and hopes to play a role in returning it to that international prominence.

"We don't need to find a seat at the table, we need to sit down in our own chair," Swartz said. "We can and should engage globally. Look at the port, look at our infrastructure, we are built between two rivers for a reason, we were good at trade. We have what it takes to engage internationally and create opportunities and positive economic impact at home."

Swartz believes the merger gives the World Affairs Council a chance to extend its reach and deepen its impact in Philadelphia. She said that foreign affairs "is a long game" and that influx of venture capital, partnerships between local and foreign universities and overseas business relationships don't happen overnight. The merger is an opportunity for each nonprofit to build off of the other's existing connections across the globe.

"We have to keep the connective tissue strong between our place and all the places around the world where we want to do business and create partnerships and excel," said Swartz, the seventh CEO of the World Affairs Council. "This merger represents a significant tool in our community, in our region's toolbox, to keep our foreign affairs and our foreign relations strong."

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