



Expanding our Toolbox of Project Delivery Methods

DDC and other New York City agencies have long been bound by State law to a design-bid-build model that requires them to hire a designer, complete design, and award construction to the lowest qualified bidder. In the last days of 2019—thanks to advocacy by DDC and the industry—New York State passed the first Public Works Investment Act (PWIA), allowing DDC and six other agencies to use design-build delivery.

In the five years since the law was passed, DDC has led the way in using design-build to revolutionize project delivery. As of August 2025, The agency has awarded 12 contracts valued at over \$800 million in its Public Buildings and Infrastructure Portfolio, saving years, meeting the highest standards of quality, and advancing a model of collaboration and innovation impossible with design-bid-build. The agency has already completed all five early works projects in the Borough-Based Jails program and completed the first two projects in its design-build pilot program in 2025 — only three years after issuing a Notice to Proceed (NTP). DDC's procurement and contract terms have been held up as a model of design-build best practices, earning the agency back-to-back DBIA Owner of the Year awards in 2024 and 2025. And DDC launched its first CM-Build procurements in 2025 following the successful 2024 expansion of the PWIA.

In 2025, DDC expanded its alternative delivery program with major new projects, including the East Side Greenway 14th Street Connector in Manhattan and Westchester Square Library in the Bronx. And, working closely with partners and champions in the industry, the agency will advocate to expand the State authorization to provide a full alternative delivery toolkit without limitations.



Why Alternative Delivery?

'Alternative Delivery' refers to a suite of tools that allow the designer and builder to work together collaboratively to meet the project goals and requirements for quality, schedule, and budget.

In **Design-Build**, the agency awards one contract to a single, integrated design and construction team at the start of the project:

- Traditional design-build utilizes best-value selection as part of a two-step solicitation—an RFQ followed by an RFP.
- Progressive Design-Build utilizes quality-based selection as part of a one-step solicitation.

In **CM-Build**, the agency awards separate contracts to a designer and a CM-builder, bringing the CM-builder on board early in the design phase.

Both models allow DDC to deliver high-quality projects to their communities faster, with fewer schedule delays and cost overruns.

- Partnership between the designer and builder fosters a culture of trust and collaboration throughout a project's lifecycle, enabling real-time innovation and problem-solving.

• This partnership ensures that the builder's construction expertise can help shape design decisions, and that design expertise is integrated into the process when challenges and tradeoffs arise during construction.

• Best value procurement allows the City to select the best team for the work based on a range of established criteria, not just cost.

• The ability to start certain construction activities, like site preparation and prefabrication, during design means less down time, ultimately delivering facilities years earlier.

• Alternative Delivery methods offer greater opportunities to engage M/WBEs, with significantly higher M/WBE participation than design-build projects.

Alternative Delivery methods leverage the power of collaboration to complete projects better, faster, and more cost-effectively. By allowing the designer, builder, and City to work together earlier in the process, they offer an efficient approach that reduces risk, saves taxpayer money, and gets needed facilities open years sooner while maintaining the highest levels of quality.

DESIGN-BID-BUILD v. DESIGN-BUILD DELIVERY METHOD FOR RECREATION CENTERS

Comparable Recreation Centers Using Design-Bid Build Delivery Method



Shirley Chisolm Recreation Center Using Design-Build Delivery Method



Queens Garage and Community Center, Queens



Championing Reform

Changing the New York State law that governs design and construction procurement has taken years of advocacy by DDC and leaders in the AEC industry and across City government. DDC has relied on the steadfast partnership of organizations including Building Congress, ACEC, AIANY, Building Congress, BTEA, DBIA, GCA, and STA to champion reform, highlighting the value of alternative delivery tools for the architects, engineers, and builders who deliver City projects and for the communities they serve.

• **2022:** DDC completed its first design-build project in the Borough-Based Jails program, the Queens Garage and Community Space, only 22 months from the time of award. The same year, DDC released the first five procurements in its design-build pilot program.

• **2024:** NYS passed an expansion to the PWIA authorizing CM-build and a limited form of progressive design-build for projects at DDC.

• **2025:** DDC will complete the first three projects in its design-build pilot portfolio just three years after NTP, and released the first CM-build procurements.

• **2026:** In 2026, the agency will complete six design-build projects — every project commenced as part of the initial pilot program. **DDC and its partners will advocate for a broad expansion of the PWIA to include portfolio-wide authorization of design-build, progressive design-build, and CM-build without project type limitations.**

Building a Program from the Ground Up

To realize the full potential of alternative delivery, DDC recognized from the start that the program would require a new way of doing business, including all-new procurement and contract terms and new interagency processes. The agency immediately got to work building the new program, learning from experts and changing the culture of project delivery across City government.

BUILDING EXPERTISE AND CHANGING THE CULTURE

DDC began by training our team as well as our partner and oversight agencies. The agency partnered with national leaders and experts in design-build delivery, like the Design-Build Institute of America (DBIA), to offer both introductory training and in-depth certification training. As of mid-2025, DDC has trained over 150 of our own staff across several divisions, over 70 of whom have become DBIA-certified, plus staff at partner agencies including OMB, MOCS, PDC, and the Comptroller. The agency has created job aids and standard operating procedures and launched Project Manager training on procurement and contract administration themes, incorporating lessons learned.

In addition to training our oversight agencies, DDC also worked closely to tailor interagency processes to accommodate phased design and construction and faster delivery times. This included tailoring the OMB Certificate to Proceed (CP) process, PDC design review, and sponsor agency design review and decision-making. DDC continues to encourage all our sponsor agencies

and oversight to identify dedicated design-build champions to become immersed in alternative delivery practices and help translate the agencies' business practices to this model.

To develop all-new contract and procurement documents, DDC staffed a program management team, onboarded outside experts, and engaged extensively with practitioners and public owners to solicit best practices. Following its first procurements, the agency engaged with dozens of respondents to seek their feedback on what worked and what didn't. As the program grows, DDC continues to update its procurement and contract terms and business practices based on input from the industry.

In 2024, DDC centralized design-build staff into a single Alternative Delivery team directly responsible for overseeing projects in the portfolio. This transformation, which parallels the recommendations of the 2022 State of Practice Report by ACEC Research Institute, has allowed the agency to build dedicated expertise in all aspects of design-build project delivery. As the program expands, the Alternative Delivery Unit will also take the lead in overseeing CM-Build projects.

BUILDING THE INDUSTRY

Because design-build is new to public works in New York City, DDC has positioned its program to expand the field while building expertise and capacity within the industry.

The agency has welcomed new partners to the table by setting commercially friendly terms and communicating what's different about design-build. The agency releases Notices of Intent (NOIs) and Requests for Expression of Interest (RFEIs) to solicit input and feedback on specific upcoming projects where appropriate. The agency does not require designers and builders to have teamed together in the past, though teams must articulate a thoughtful

approach and clear roles in their partnership. It also does not require respondents to demonstrate past design-build experience, though awarded teams must become DBIA-trained and certified prior to the project start.

As a result of this engagement, DDC has received an average of 11.6 Statement of Qualifications (SOQs) submissions for every design-build procurement in its pilot portfolio. DDC's design-build vendors include both seasoned partners and those who have never done business with the City. And DDC continues to build the industry by partnering with DBIA, AIA, and others to ensure New York City's design and construction professionals have the information and training to take advantage of new opportunities.

CONTINUOUS LEARNING
DDC launched its initial design-build projects as a pilot with the intent to learn and adapt the program as it develops. The agency continues to engage regularly with industry associations and other owners to share challenges, best practices, and lessons learned — engagement that is described further in *Strengthening Industry Partnerships*.



Five years after the passage of the PWIA, DDC is expanding its design-build program past the pilot stage and integrating best practices and lessons learned at each step. The practices described here reflect industry-standard best practices developed by DBIA as well as DDC's experience and lessons learned translating these principles to New York City's public works.

PLANNING

Successful design-build delivery requires selecting the right projects and then conducting the detailed scoping that will set them up for success. During the Front End Planning stage, DDC assesses every project to determine the appropriate delivery method. Projects selected for the two-step design-build originally authorized under State law include new buildings and infrastructure projects with limited unknown conditions like private utilities.

Once projects are selected, DDC dedicates the time needed to fully develop detailed project requirements in coordination with a team of consulting architects and engineers. This step includes in-depth **scoping workshops** with a project's many stakeholders, including **end users**, to ensure that all needs and requirements have been identified. It also includes **detailed site investigations** comprising environmental, hazmat, geotechnical, topographic, and any specialized investigations that may be needed. This phase results in detailed scoping documents that lay out specific performance requirements as part of the design-build RFP and ultimately the contract.

SOLICITATION

DDC's goal during the in-market stage is to communicate our objectives and priorities as an owner and then allow the designer-builder maximum flexibility in delivering on those priorities through innovative design and construction solutions that meet the project budget.

DDC utilizes **scoping documents** with **performance specifications**

rather than prescriptive requirements or bridging documents to allow maximum flexibility in meeting the project objectives. In the best value selection process, DDC considers factors including key personnel, teaming approach, design approach, management approach, and the technical proposal. DDC discloses the project budget as part of the solicitation and, while cost is considered in the evaluation, DDC explicitly seeks the best project for the available funding — not a cheaper project. Instead, proposers can offer meaningful **enhancements** to the project that provide greater value to the City.

During the in-market stage, DDC follows DBIA best practices that include **shortlisting three design-build teams** and providing **stipends** to unsuccessful but responsive proposers. DDC hosts **Collaborative Dialogue Meetings (CDMs)** with structured agendas led by the design-build teams to ensure that proposers have the input they need to develop responsive proposals.

As the program develops, DDC has worked hard to rightsize the level of effort during the in-market stage, calibrating both the stipend amount and number of CDMs based on industry standards and experience.



CONTRACT TERMS

DDC has developed all-new contract terms that aim to take full advantage of the potential of alternative delivery, including a collaborative approach that shares the risk and brings new partners to the table. This has required a strong and agile legal team comprising both internal expertise and outside counsel collectively willing to test novel approaches and respond to feedback.

Once the project is awarded, DDC's contract terms lay the groundwork for a strong start. DDC uses the **limited negotiations** step to address any outstanding questions or concerns from the in-market stage, including technical or pricing considerations. A contractually obligated **site validation period** requires the design-builder to conduct their own detailed investigations and diligence within a specific timeframe to uncover any unknowns that may impact the price, schedule, or approach.

DDC's contracts proactively anticipate 'known unknowns' including unforeseen conditions, regulatory changes, and disputes. DDC defines set categories of work that will qualify as Relief Events, or built-in contractual mechanisms to provide relief in time or cost. For **Compensable Relief Events**, meaning those events that qualify for additional funding, DDC utilizes a pre-registered contingency fund that the agency can access without additional regulatory steps, provided that all requirements are met.

When disputes arise, DDC's design-build contracts lay out a specific escalation path that aims to resolve those disputes collaboratively by the project team. When disputes cannot be resolved, the contract provides for a one- or three-member **Dispute Resolution Board** comprised of impartial legal, design, and/or construction professionals selected by both DDC and the design-builder.

To take full advantage of the collaborative potential of design-build, DDC plans to pilot an **award fee** based on the successful federal design-build program. An incentive for exemplary performance, the award fee provides additional compensation at specific milestones when predetermined targets are met, such as exemplary teamwork and exceedance of sustainability goals.

POST-AWARD PRACTICES

After award and site validation, DDC's goal is to ensure design-builders are set up for success by streamlining City regulatory approvals, coordinating design feedback, and fostering strong partnerships.

Public design and construction involves many stakeholders and oversight steps that can collectively add months to the design phase, and standard review procedures may not be compatible with phased design and construction. DDC has partnered with many of its oversight agencies and sponsors to ensure that they are prepared to provide **timely reviews** and feedback at the appropriate milestones. DDC's submittal schedule indicates

which submittals by the design-builder that require City approval versus those that may be resolved between the designer and builder. DDC authorizes certain site preparation work to begin after Schematic Design and certain early works upon completion of Design Development.

Strong partnership is essential to the success of any design-build project, and DDC's procurement and contract terms explicitly seek to build collaborative relationships. During the procurement stage, DDC seeks out coordinated teams that work well together as demonstrated in their proposal and Collaborative Dialogue Meetings. Proposers must identify certain key roles, including a **Design-Build Project Manager** whose role is to bridge project management

and design coordination, and must stipulate the percent of time they are allocating to the project. After award, DDC organizes **Principals Meetings** to proactively address challenges and ensure the organizations remained aligned at the highest levels of leadership.

DDC's contract also requires **partnering sessions** that ensure DDC and the design-build team are aligned on project goals in order to tackle day-to-day challenges and assess team dynamics to improve collaboration and teamwork.

M/WBE PARTICIPATION

Alternative Delivery tools dramatically expand the City's ability to engage M/WBEs and local workforce, with clear results: DDC's M/WBE participation rate for design-build and CM-build projects is over 10 percent higher than the rate for design-bid-build. DDC drives M/WBE participation in its design-build projects through a few key strategies.

DDC sets mandatory **thirty percent M/WBE participation goals** for both the design and construction phase, with **disaggregated goals** for Black (10%), Hispanic (10%), and unspecified vendors. Via the enabling legislation, both **City- and State-certified M/WBEs** are eligible. Multiple tiers of subcontractors can be considered

towards meeting the project's M/WBE goals, allowing the agency to drive participation for a broader range of subcontractors.

Using best value selection, DDC evaluates teams on both their past **performance** and proposed **approach** to engaging M/WBEs, as well as other factors. Teams are now required to include an **M/WBE and Community Engagement Executive** as part of the Key Personnel.

Early partnership among the designer, builder, and agency also means that engagement starts earlier, with more transparency into subcontracting. During the solicitation, DDC publishes the shortlisted design-build teams on its website to facilitate partnering during the RFP step.

After award, the agency requires design-builders to include specific community engagement activities related to hiring local and diverse businesses, particularly within the area. For example, in 2023, DDC held a "Construction Career & M/WBE Expo" in Brownsville, Brooklyn that introduced participants to training in skilled construction trades and anticipation of an upcoming design-build project. Building on lessons learned, design-builders are now required to host "**Meet the Teams**" events for each project, which highlight subcontracting and workforce opportunities. In 2025, teams started these outreach efforts just two days after Notice to Proceed was issued.

Blueprint for Design-Build

Planning

- Choose the right projects
- Engage stakeholders upfront, including end users
- Conduct detailed site investigations
- Be thoughtful in sharing the risk by taking responsibility for existing conditions and City-side approvals

Solicitation

- Provide performance specifications, not prescriptive requirements
- Use best value selection to reward performance and innovation, not the cheapest solution
- Disclose the budget, then design to budget
- Shortlist to three teams
- Provide a stipend for unsuccessful but responsive teams
- Hold Collaborative Dialogue Meetings with decision-makers at the table

Contract Terms

- Identify a creative and solutions-oriented legal team, not "business as usual"
- Use limited negotiations phase to proactively address concerns
- Pay mobilization to allow a strong start
- Use the site validation period after NTP to uncover 'known unknowns' in a timely manner
- Define justifiable Compensable Relief Events payable from a registered contingency fund
- Manage disputes collaboratively through a Dispute Resolution Board
- Next: Incentivize performance through 'award fees' that reward exemplary performance

Post-Award Practices

- Partner with oversight for streamlined design review and regulatory approvals
- Tie site preparation and early works authorization to design milestones
- Require key teaming roles and teaming approach to be evaluated during solicitation to support a collaborative approach upon award

M/WBE Participation

- 30% M/WBE participation goals for design and construction
- Disaggregated goals to address the 'disparity within the disparity'
- Best value selection includes criteria for M/WBE performance and approach
- Published shortlist allows opportunities for teaming

- "Meet the Teams" events hosted in the local community provide access to upcoming opportunities

DDC's Design-Build Projects

As of July 2025, DDC has awarded all ten Borough-Based Jails contracts and 12 contracts in its design-build program for Public Buildings and Infrastructure, collectively valued at over \$16 billion.

Rendering of the new BBJ facility in Brooklyn

Tutor Perini/HOK



PROJECT FEATURE

BBJ Brooklyn Facility

DDC is delivering on the City's commitment to close Rikers Island by overseeing the design and construction for the Borough-Based Jail program. Built on principles of criminal justice reform, the four new facilities will be smaller, safer, and fairer, grounded in dignity and respect for their occupants and staff. Designed to contribute to civic life, the Brooklyn facility will create supportive environments that foster safety, autonomy and well-being, encourage ongoing connections to the networks that support people in custody, and relate to the neighborhood context. This approach unfolds in the surrounding public realm, with broad sidewalks and a therapeutic landscape design supportive of neurodiverse and multi-generational users.

With a Notice to Proceed in June 2023 for the design and construction of the new facility, Phase 1 Design and Site Validation was completed one month early, and Phase 2 Design Completion and Construction is well underway with the start of structural steel erection. During Phase 2, the contract was negotiated

from a Guaranteed Maximum Price to a Lump Sum, easing project management and budget oversight. The Brooklyn facility will be completed in 2029—at least four years faster than would have been possible with design-bid-build.

Throughout the process, the team has remained focused on delivering the best outcomes through design and construction. Internally, the team has focused on learning from best practices in justice design and human experience design and utilized a range of tools to drive productive dialogue. Externally, public engagement has been critical. Starting before RFQs were released, DDC regularly met with and presented to local elected officials, Community Boards, community-based organizations, and Neighborhood Advisory Committees (NACs). From targeted workshops, the team gained design input from community members and insights from justice advocates focused on the visiting experience and rehabilitative environment. This focus on community and stakeholder engagement continues with those groups today and dedicated Community Construction Liaisons are on site daily, available and ready to keep community members up to date on project progress.



PROJECT FEATURE

Shirley Chisholm Recreation Center

Exterior of the new Shirley Chisholm Recreation Center in Brooklyn

Consigli/Studio Gang

Named for the Brooklyn-born and first African American U.S. Congresswoman, Shirley Chisholm, the new \$140 million recreation center for NYC Parks is sited in the heart of Brooklyn at the Nostrand Playground in the East Flatbush neighborhood. A new civic hub, the 74,000 square foot facility is the only public recreation center in the area. With a programmatic mix that encourages health and wellbeing, the community will have access to a public plaza, indoor swimming pool, fitness amenities (including strength and cardio equipment, gymnasium, and walking track), and a teaching kitchen. Design-build delivery allowed the team to nimbly navigate utility re-routing and easement conflicts with minimal schedule impacts, taking weeks instead of months to resolve.

Anticipated to achieve LEED Platinum certification, the Shirley Chisholm Recreation Center reached substantial completion in November, three years from NTP. The project received a 2025 Excellence in Design Award from the NYC Public Design Commission.



PROJECT FEATURE

Orchard Beach Maintenance and Operations Facility

The first project in DDC's design-build pilot program, the new \$35.9 million Orchard Beach Maintenance and Operations facility serves as the headquarters for NYC Parks staff responsible for the care of Orchard Beach, a 122-acre, 1.1-mile public beach in the Bronx. In response to flooding of the original building after Hurricane Sandy in 2012, the new building is strategically sited on a hilltop above the flood zone, which also enables the headquarters to serve as an interagency emergency response center for the Bronx. The two-story, 11,500 square foot structure is expected to achieve LEED Gold certification.

Design-build provided significant benefits thanks to a deeply collaborative team. The building is clad in a robust and enduring insulated precast concrete panel system with an undulating form that takes inspiration

from the historic Orchard Beach Pavilion. With the original design exceeding the anticipated budget, this innovative solution eliminated potential cost and schedule overruns and mitigated safety hazards while delivering on aesthetic and performance requirements.

The Orchard Beach Maintenance and Operations facility reached substantial completion in April 2025, just three years from NTP, and was handed over to Parks staff in time for the 2025 beach season. The project received a 2024 Excellence in Design Award from the NYC Public Design Commission and the 2025 Enlightened Owner of the Year Award from DBIA.

Orchard Beach Maintenance Facility Green Roof and Exterior

Gilbane /nARCHITECTS

PROJECT FEATURE

Raised Crosswalks

Part of the Vision Zero program to eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries, NYC DOT launched an ambitious plan in 2022 to install hundreds of new raised crosswalks throughout the five boroughs. By elevating the crosswalk to the level of the sidewalk, the new raised crosswalks will slow cars, increase pedestrian visibility, and make it easier and safer to cross the street. To deliver on the City's commitment, DDC identified design-build with a guaranteed maximum price as the best delivery approach, leveraging innovation to get more crosswalks built faster.

DDC launched the solicitation for the Raised Crosswalks projects in 2023, with project requirements that include installation of ADA-accessible pedestrian ramps,

audible crossing signals, and coordination with stormwater and private utility lines. DDC's project requirements stipulated a minimum of 100 locations, but innovation during the procurement phase meant that the awarded design-build team will provide 127 locations. The team proposed technical innovations like precast forms to standardize fabrication, enhance quality control, and hasten construction. Unlike traditional delivery methods, the work will be done concurrently in packages, with the first sites starting construction in 2026 while other sites are still in design. This method will further reduce the construction schedule and allow the design-builder to integrate lessons learned into subsequent construction packages.

Expanding the Toolkit



Rendering of 70 Mulberry Street, Manhattan

In 2024, New York State passed an expansion to the Public Works Investment Act authorizing DDC to use CM-Build for libraries and cultural institutions on City-owned land, and a limited version of Progressive Design-Build for resiliency infrastructure.

DDC set to work developing an all-new CM-build contract and solicitation materials and released its first RFQ in Spring 2025, with preparations underway to release additional solicitations. As with design-build, the agency will advance the first CM-Build projects as part of a pilot program designed to respond to input from the industry and lessons learned.

DDC is also preparing to release design-build procurements for resiliency infrastructure that take advantage of the progressive model, though additional changes are required to the law to allow true progressive design-build.

In 2026, DDC and partners will continue to advocate to expand the PWIA to allow broad authorization without project type limitations.

| Division / Program | Project Name | Sponsor | Status | Approx \$ (M) |
|---------------------------------|--|----------|------------------------|---------------|
| INFRASTRUCTURE | Pedestrian Ramps | DOT | Construction | \$13 |
| | Lexington Avenue Pedestrian Safety Improvements | DOT, DEP | Construction | \$33 |
| | Raised Crosswalks | DOT | Design | \$100 |
| | Deep Sewer Manholes | DEP | Procurement | \$34 |
| | East Side Greenway 14th Street Connector | Parks | Procurement | \$163 |
| PUBLIC BUILDINGS | Rockaway Operational Headquarters | Parks | Construction | \$24 |
| | Orchard Beach M&O Facility | Parks | Completed | \$34 |
| | Mary Cali Dalton Recreation Center | Parks | Construction | \$85 |
| | Marlboro Greenhouse | NYCHA | Construction | \$15 |
| | Shirley Chisholm Recreation Center | Parks | Substantial Completion | \$131 |
| | Brownsville Girls Empowerment Center and Community Hub | HRA | Construction | \$119 |
| | Harper Street Administrative Building | DOT | Construction | \$121 |
| | Roy Wilkins Recreation Center | Parks | Design | \$120 |
| | Parks Public Restroom Buildings Bundle | Parks | Design | \$23 |
| | Westchester Square Library | NYPL | Procurement | \$27 |
| BOROUGH-BASED JAILS PROGRAM | Queens Garage and Community Space | DOT | Completed | \$80 |
| | Manhattan Dismantle & Swing Space | DOC | Completed | \$125 |
| | Queens Dismantle & Swing Space | DOC | Completed | \$43 |
| | Brooklyn Dismantle & Swing Space | DOC | Completed | \$60 |
| | Bronx Site Preparation | DOC | Completed | \$77 |
| | Brooklyn Facility | DOC | Construction | \$2,950 |
| | Bronx Facility | DOC | Design | \$2,972 |
| | Queens Facility | DOC | Design | \$3,985 |
| | Manhattan Facility | DOC | Design | \$3,764 |
| Total Design-Build Projects: 24 | | | | \$15,098 M |



