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Meet the Panelists



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dear Members,

The Connecticut architecture and design community continues to demonstrate what collaboration and purpose can achieve. Our shared commitment to education, sustainability, equity, and professional excellence was on full display at CACX'25, where members and allied professionals gathered at Mohegan Sun for a day of learning, inspiration, and connection.

The conference served as both a celebration and a catalyst—a testament to the innovation, resilience, and leadership that define our profession. Through engaging CE sessions, thought-provoking discussions, and the vibrant exchange of ideas among peers and partners, CACX'25 reaffirmed the strength of our community and the power of coming together to advance

our shared goals. Thank you to all who joined us as attendees, presenters, and exhibitors—your participation and support are vital to everything we do.

During the event, we also convened the 2025 AIA Connecticut Annual Meeting, a highlight of the day and a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the year's accomplishments. It was an opportunity to review progress, recognize leadership transitions, and celebrate the many volunteers and committees whose work supports our mission. Congratulations to the incoming 2026 officers and newly elected board members—I look forward to working with you and building on our shared success.

Looking ahead to 2026, we are excited to continue that momentum. Next year's initiatives will build on the foundation of collaboration and innovation established this year, with expanded educational programs, support for small firms, and continued emphasis on sustainability and EDI. New highlights include mentorship programs and initiatives that connect K-12 students and emerging professionals with practicing architects.

We also celebrate Carole Wedge, FAIA, NOMA, LEED AP, on her selection as AIA National Executive Vice President and CEO, and AIA Connecticut's Ersal Llakmani, Associate AIA, chosen for AIA's Next to Lead program.

Finally, I encourage early- and mid-career professionals to join the Connecticut Professionals' Leadership Academy, an immersive, cross-disciplinary experience designed to foster growth beyond traditional silos and prepare participants to lead with purpose and impact.

Together, we continue to learn, lead, and inspire—building a stronger, more connected architectural community for the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gina Calabro".

Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT, NOMA



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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Dear Members,

As my term draws to a close, I am filled with deep gratitude for the opportunity to serve our AIA Connecticut community. This year has been one of connection, collaboration, and shared purpose, and I'd like to offer a few reflections as we look ahead.



At the 2025 Connecticut Architecture Conference + Expo (CACX'25), I was inspired by the enthusiasm of more than 200 members and exhibitors. Our keynote speaker, Ashley Rigby, reminded us to take chances and embrace the question, what if we succeed? That spirit of optimism and curiosity captures the essence of our profession.

It was a joy to connect and reconnect with so many of you. Among the many inspiring individuals I met was Isabella Fonseca, one of our CAF scholarship recipients and a fourth-year student at Northeastern University. Her enthusiasm and promise embody the bright future of architecture in Connecticut. I extend my sincere thanks to our exhibitors, VIP Circle members, and speakers whose expertise and commitment made CACX'25 such a success.

The sessions were rich in insight. One explored how artificial intelligence can enhance design thinking while underscoring its current limitations in spatial understanding—an area where architects can guide its evolution responsibly. Another addressed energy efficiency in building envelopes, especially in multifamily housing. Attendees raised thoughtful concerns about the lack of architectural identity in many contemporary developments, emphasizing how a “one-aesthetic-fits-all” approach too often leads to uninspired design—particularly in publicly funded projects. These conversations reaffirmed the vital role architects play in shaping spaces that are both functional and expressive.

At our Annual Meeting, I was honored to reflect on our shared responsibility to nurture a profession rooted in growth, inclusivity, and opportunity. I was also proud to announce the 2026 AIA Connecticut Board: President: Michael Ayles, FAIA; President-Elect: Amy Samuelson, AIA; Treasurer: Julia Jack, AIA; Secretary: Dov Feinmesser, AIA. New board members and liaisons beginning in 2026 include Adrienne Nelson, AIA; Max Ballardo, AIA; Marissa Mead, AIA; Aurora Perrault, Assoc. AIA; Robert Swain, AIA (CAF Liaison); and James Regnier, AIA (Young Architect Representative). Together with our continuing directors, Executive Director Gina Calabro, and the dedicated AIA Connecticut staff, they will lead our organization with energy and vision.

I extend heartfelt thanks to our departing leaders—Past-President Sue Wyeth, AIA; Thaddeus Stewart, AIA; Jennifer Huestis, AIA; Nyicia George, Assoc. AIA; Thomas Haskell (CAF Liaison); and Andrew Gorzkowski, AIA (Young Architect Representative)—for their service and commitment.

Before CACX'25, Mark A. Maidique, AIA, was nominated to serve as AIA Connecticut's representative on the Connecticut Fire Marshal Training Council, supporting the Office of Education and Data Management. His appointment strengthens the voice of architects in shaping statewide safety and building standards.

Finally, I look forward to celebrating with many of you at our Year-End Gala on December 11 at the Bristol Events Center. Until then, let's continue to build a profession—and a world—that is welcoming, kind, and full of possibility.

Warmly,

Marc Guerrier Andre, AIA, NCARB
2025 President - AIA Connecticut

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CACX'25: Reimagine. Redefine. Reignite.

*A Full Day of Inspiration,
Innovation, and Connection*

The Connecticut architecture and design community gathered in full force at Mohegan Sun on September 26 for CACX'25—a day dedicated to learning, networking, and forward-thinking design. This year's conference was more than an event; it was a launchpad for innovation, insight, and meaningful connection.

From the moment attendees stepped into the venue, the energy was palpable. With over 30 exhibitors, 18 Continuing Education (CE) sessions, and an all-inclusive experience that included a networking breakfast, the annual meeting lunch, and a cocktail reception, CACX'25 offered an unbeatable blend of education and engagement.

The day opened with an inspiring keynote by Ashley Rigby, TEDx Speaker and Mindset Coach, whose message centered on the power of resilience, purpose, and perspective. Rigby challenged attendees to reframe the way they approach both professional and personal growth—urging them to think beyond limitations and tap into the creative confidence that fuels innovation. Her session set the tone for a day of reflection, learning, and re-ignited passion for the built environment.

With multiple CE sessions spanning design, business, sustainability, and emerging technology, CACX'25 ensured





that every professional—whether architect, designer, engineer, or firm leader—found something of value.

Key themes included:

- Redefining Sustainability - Moving beyond buzzwords toward measurable, responsible design.
- Designing with Purpose - Embracing inclusive and human-centered environments.

- Leveraging AI and Emerging Technologies - Exploring the tools transforming how we imagine and manage projects.
- Business and Leadership Sessions - Helping firms strengthen strategy, marketing, and project management.
- Each session was crafted not just to provide 2026 CE requirements, but to inspire fresh thinking and real-world application.

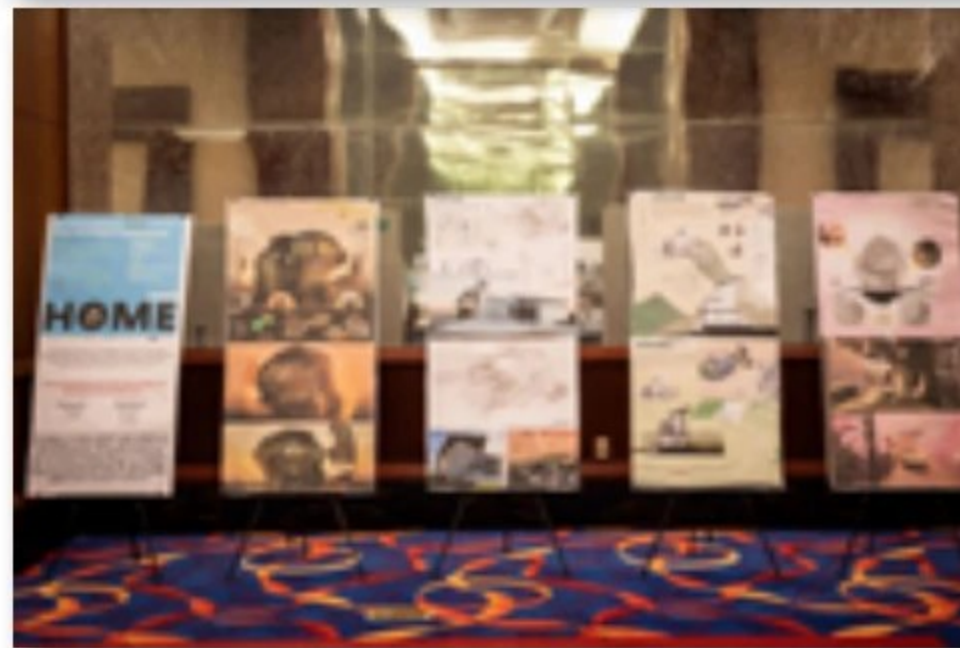
The exhibition hall buzzed with conversation as Connecticut's design and business community came together to share ideas, discover new products, and form meaningful partnerships. Between sessions, attendees connected over coffee, meals, and evening cocktails—turning professional development into genuine community building. Thanks to all who presented, exhibited and attended to make this year's conference a success.






As CACX'25 came to a close, one message resonated clearly: the future of architecture is about more than structures—it's about mindset, connection, and impact.

This year's theme—Reimagine. Redefine. Reignite—captured that spirit perfectly, leaving attendees inspired to take bold steps in shaping the next chapter of design.

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AIA Connecticut Holds 2025 Annual Meeting at CACX'25



The 2025 AIA Connecticut Annual Meeting took place during a luncheon at CACX'25, bringing together members from across the state to celebrate achievements, review the year's progress, and look ahead to 2026. The event highlighted leadership transitions, committee accomplishments, and ongoing initiatives supporting education, equity, sustainability, and professional development.

Leadership and Strategic Vision

President **Marc Andre, AIA**, reflected on the chapter's strategic goals: advancing advocacy, expanding educational opportunities, deepening engagement with the public, and fostering diversity, equity, and sustainability in architecture. "AIA Connecticut continues to serve as the voice of the architectural profession in our state," Andre affirmed, thanking members and partners for their dedication.

The meeting also introduced the 2026 officers, including **F. Michael Ayles, FAIA** as President, **Amy Samuelson, AIA** as President-Elect, **Dov Feinmesser, AIA** as Secretary, and **Julia Su Jack, AIA** as Treasurer, and three new Board members, **Adrienne Nelson, AIA**, **Marissa Mead, AIA**, **Max Ballardo, AIA** and incoming Young Architect Representative, **James Regnier, AIA**.

Each of AIA Connecticut's committee's co-chairs shared updates on their programs and progress:



- **Committee on the Environment (COTE)** reviewed its year of sustainability-focused programming, including LEED v5 updates, net-zero design tours, and the "Path Forward for Buildings" initiative.
- **Women in Architecture (WIA)** highlighted its 4x10 mentoring groups, firm tours, and the 2025 Leadership Summit, "Designing the Firm, Designing the Future."
- **Professional Practice** offered sessions on firm strategy, AI in architecture, cybersecurity, and succession planning, in partnership with the Small Firms Exchange.
- **Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)** reflected on its CACX panel, "Navigating EDI in Today's Political Landscape," and outlined plans for continued engagement, mentorship, and neurodiversity discussions in 2026.
- **Emerging Professionals (EP)** organized ARE study groups, firm tours, and the Napkin Sketch Competition, while expanding its mentoring and social programming.
- **Building Performance & Regulations (BP&R)** code-focused programming such as the 2025 Code Series, with sessions on energy performance, adaptive reuse, and building envelope strategies. Upcoming topics will include lithium battery safety, accessibility, and historic building reuse.



- **The Design Committee** hosted an inspiring lineup of discussions from the Salesforce Transit Center: Urban Regeneration in San Francisco to Architecture and Context - Design and Practice in Argentina. 2026 plans include expanded roundtable discussions and design tours.
- **Small Firms Exchange (SFx)** continued its partnership with the Professional Practice Committee through a three-part series on starting, growing, and transitioning architecture firms. Future goals include quarterly discussion sessions and CEU-accredited programs.

The Connecticut Architecture Foundation (CAF) celebrated over 45 years of philanthropic support for architectural education, having distributed more than \$700,000 in scholarships and grants since 1986. In 2025 alone, CAF awarded \$53,000 to students from over 25 different schools. The foundation reaffirmed its mission to foster a diverse, thriving architectural community across the state.

Membership, Advocacy, and Financial Overview

Membership remained steady with 1,492 members as of August 2025. The Government Affairs Committee, led by F. Michael Ayles, FAIA, Jack Butkus, AIA, and Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT outlined ongoing advocacy on behalf of the profession at the state level.

Treasurer Amy Samuelson, AIA delivered the annual financial report, confirming the chapter's continued fiscal health and strategic investment in professional education and outreach.

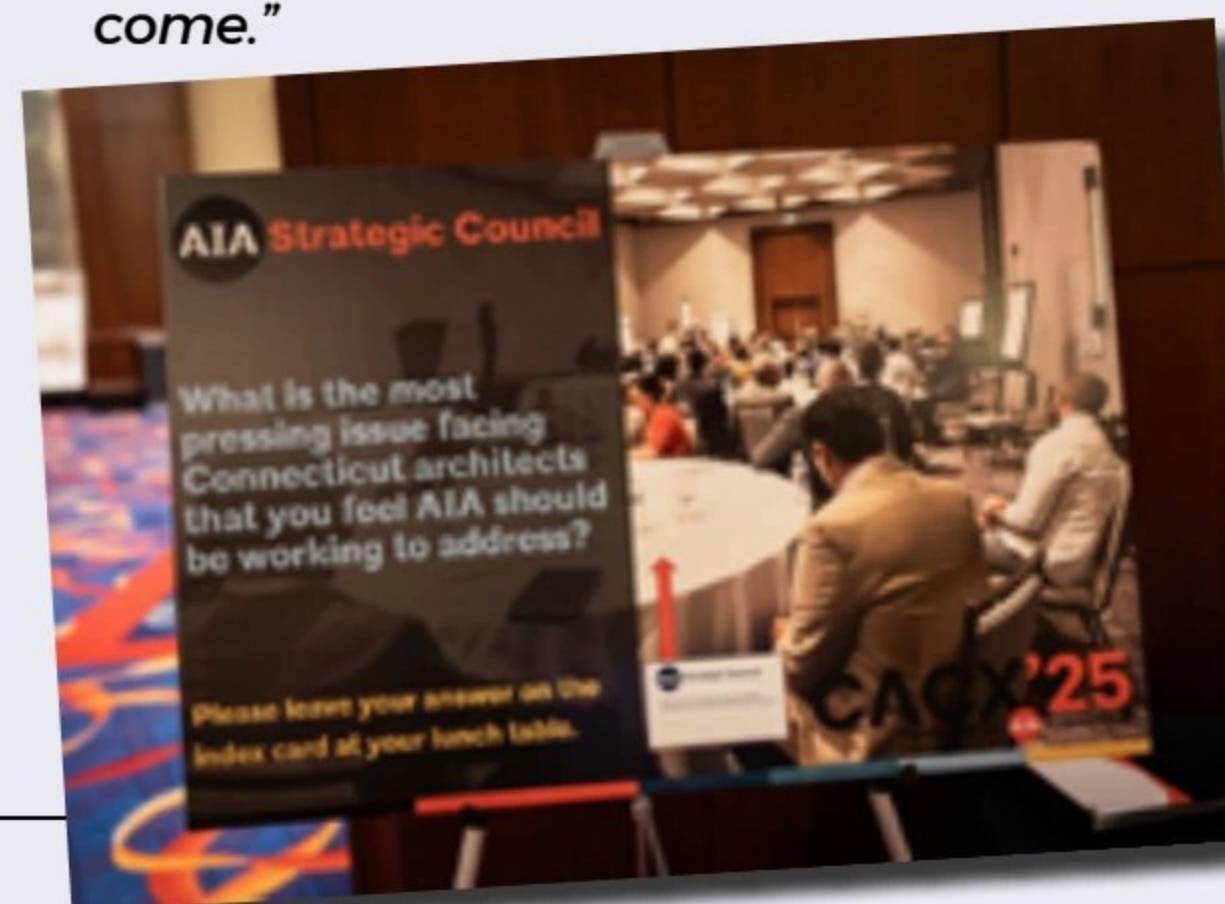
Looking Ahead to 2026

The 2026 program lineup promises continued collaboration across committees, expanded educational offerings, and new initiatives supporting small firms, sustainability, and EDI. Highlights include upcoming design tours, code literacy programs, and mentorship opportunities for K-12 students and emerging professionals.

Closing and Appreciation

The luncheon concluded with thanks to continuing board members and liaisons, and outgoing leaders, including board members Past President Sue Wyeth, AIA; Thaddeus Stewart, AIA; Jennifer Huestis, AIA, and to outgoing Young Architect Representative Andrew Gorzkowski, AIA for their service.

As members gathered for the annual "Passing the Gavel" moment, CEO/Executive Director Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT, expressed gratitude to sponsors, staff, and attendees: "Our collective work continues to shape Connecticut's built environment and strengthen the architectural community for generations to come."



New Board Members & L



Adrienne Nelson, AIA, IIDA

Principal, Pickard Chilton

Adrienne Nelson is a Principal at Pickard Chilton, leading the design of innovative and sustainable projects across the United States. She currently serves as Design Principal for The St. Regis Residences, Houston, a 37-story luxury condominium tower overlooking Buffalo Bayou. Her portfolio includes leadership on landmark developments such as Google's 325 Main Street headquarters in Cambridge, the 2+U mixed-use tower in Seattle, and pioneering mass timber projects in California and Colorado.

A graduate of Iowa State University with degrees in Interior Design and Architecture, Nelson has been recognized for her professional excellence and leadership through honors such as Engineering News-Record's National 20 Under 40 and Iowa State's Outstanding Young Professional Award. An alum of the AIA National Leadership Academy, she has served AIA Connecticut as co-chair of the Emerging Professionals and Women in Architecture Committees.



Max Ballardo, AIA

Associate, Patriquin Architects

Max Ballardo is an architect with an engineering mindset and hands-on contracting experience, bringing a practical, detail-oriented approach to every project. As Job Captain at Patriquin Architects, he contributes to the design and execution of commercial, historic, and multi-family developments.

Before joining Patriquin, Max focused on historic rehabilitation and worked on a range of residential and commercial design-build projects. He earned his Master of Architecture from the Rhode Island School of Design, specializing in Adaptive Reuse. A LEED Green Associate, he is dedicated to environmentally responsible design and creating buildings deeply connected to their sites. Max is actively involved with AIA Connecticut, serving as co-chair of the Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee and as a past Associate AIA member of the board.



Marissa Mead, AIA, NOMA, LEED AP

Principal and Director of Art Integration, Svigals + Partners, an FCA Company

Marissa Mead is Principal and Director of Art Integration at Svigals + Partners, where she unites architecture, art, and community to create meaningful, human-centered places. A graduate of the University of Notre Dame, Marissa combines her early background in sculpture and furniture design with deep experience in architectural ornament and placemaking.

At Svigals + Partners, she leads major projects across multiple sectors while overseeing the integration of art throughout the firm's portfolio. Guided by a belief in the power of beauty and craft, Marissa strives to connect people to their environments—bringing scale, meaning, and joy to the built world. Marissa has been involved with AIA Connecticut's Women in Architecture Committee implementing the K-12 video program.

Liaisons Starting in 2026!



Aurora Perreault AIA, NOMA
Associate, Patriquin Architects

Aurora Perreault is a newly licensed architect and Associate at Patriquin Architects, where she co-chairs the firm's Sustainability Committee, leading initiatives in sustainable design, building performance, and material analysis. Her work explores strategies such as the 2030 Challenge, mass timber design, and performance-based metrics, including contributions to the Slate Upper School project.

A graduate of the University of Hartford's accelerated 4+1 Architectural Design + Technology program, Aurora focused on sustainable design and served as President of the university's NOMAS chapter. Active in the local design community, she serves as Secretary and Programs Chair for the National Organization of Minority Architects Connecticut Chapter (NOMAct) and mentors emerging designers through the ACE Mentor Program and as a juror at her alma mater. Aurora is also involved with AIA Connecticut's Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion and Emerging Professionals Committees.

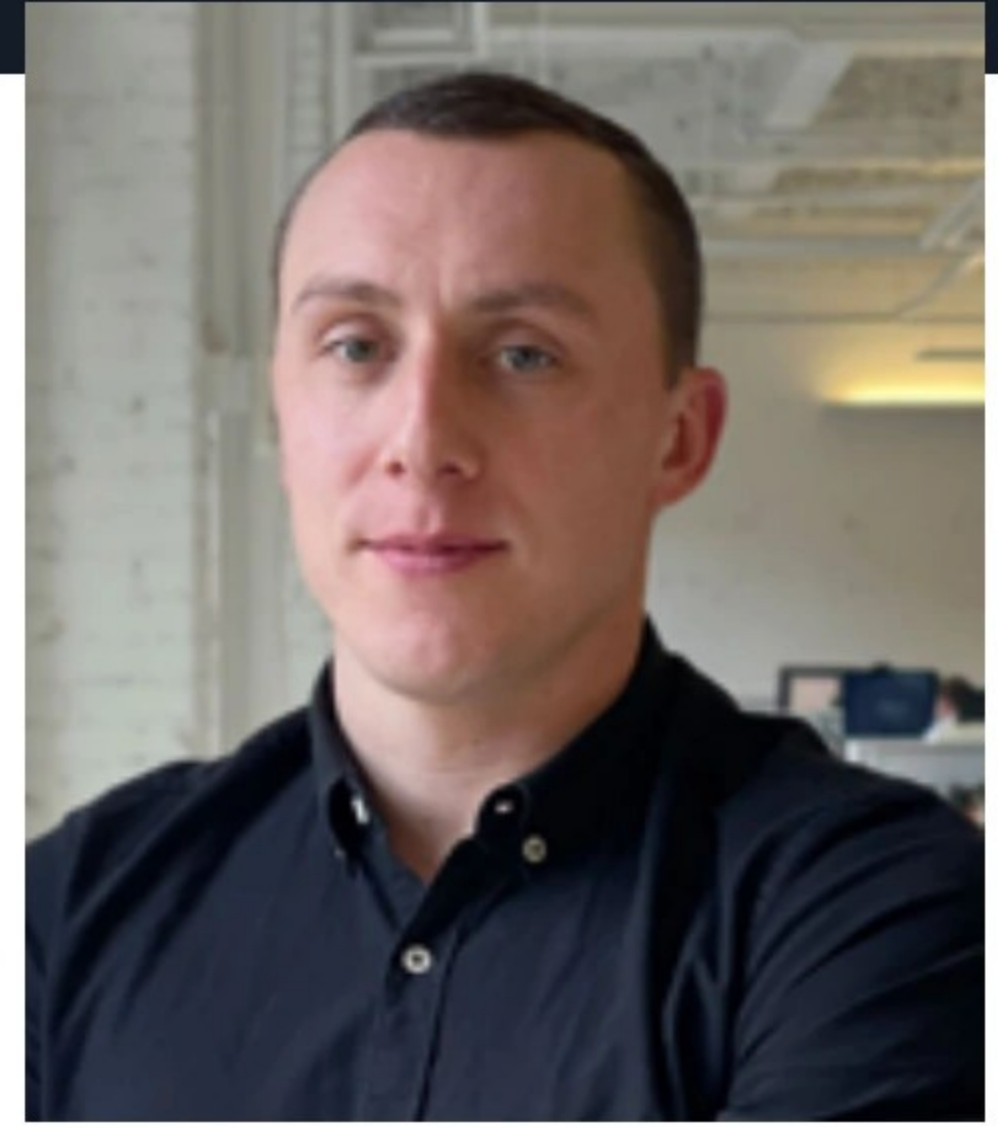


Robert Swain, Jr., AIA, LEED AP

Managing Principal, Amenta Emma Architects

Robert Swain is Managing Principal at Amenta Emma Architects and Principal-in-Charge of the firm's Academic Studio, leading the programming, planning, and design of higher education and secondary school projects. Since joining the firm in 1996, he has guided numerous academic and student life buildings across the Northeast, focusing on creating environments that foster community and a strong sense of place.

A graduate of the Catholic University of America, Robert is an active member of the Society for College and University Planning and a frequent presenter at academic design conferences. He served as the 2023-2024 President of the Connecticut Architecture Foundation and continues to support Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Hartford and K-12 architecture outreach initiatives. Robert will serve as the 2026-2028 CAF Liaison to the AIA Connecticut Board.



James Regnier, AIA NCARB
Job Captain, Amenta Emma Architects

James Regnier, AIA, NCARB, is an architect whose work integrates design innovation, research, and material exploration. He holds a Master of Architecture from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and a Bachelor of Fine Arts in Architecture and Design from the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Currently a Job Captain at Amenta Emma Architects in Hartford, CT, James has contributed to major projects including the UConn School of Nursing and the Leo D. Mahoney Arena at Fairfield University.

In addition to his professional practice, James is an Adjunct Professor at the University of Hartford, teaching architectural modeling, rendering, and design. A recipient of the Autodesk Maker Grant and RPI's Award for Graduate Excellence, he continues to bridge practice, academia, and emerging technology. James will begin his two-year term as the Young Architect Representative for AIA Connecticut in 2026.

Carole Wedge, FAIA selected as AIA Executive Vice President/CEO

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) Board of Directors voted unanimously to select Carole Wedge, FAIA, NOMA, LEED AP, as the next AIA Executive Vice President/Chief Executive Officer.

"It is with tremendous excitement that AIA begins a new chapter with Carole at the helm," said 2025 AIA President Evelyn Lee, FAIA, NOMA. "This is more than a shift in leadership; it is a new opportunity to accelerate the impact architects make in communities across the country and internationally. In Carole, we see a leader who will support our members, chapters, and AIA employees, strengthen the profession, and ensure that architecture is shaping a resilient, equitable, and sustainable future."

Wedge brings experience and vision that align directly with AIA's mission: to empower and inspire architects to improve society and transform the world. The 2020 recipient of the AIA Edward C. Kemper Award, Wedge played a pivotal role in founding the AIA Women's Leadership Summit. Under her leadership, AIA will continue to advocate for architects and support their efforts to design a better world. This includes fostering equitable, resilient communities and advancing public health, safety, and welfare through the transformative power of design.

Wedge served 17 years as CEO of Shepley Bulfinch, one of the nation's largest architecture and



interior design firms. Driving the firm's national expansion, she fostered an open culture and collaborative work environment while spearheading a rebrand that revitalized the firm's institutional identity. Wedge boasts a dynamic leadership record within the architectural community, serving on numerous Boards and Executive Committees, including AIA's Board of Directors, Architects Foundation, the Large Firm Roundtable, the Boston Society of Architects, Boston Architectural College, and Wentworth Institute of Technology. Her work bridges architectural practice with innovation, education, mentorship, and public impact. Wedge earned a Bachelor of Environmental Design from the University of Colorado and a Bachelor of Architecture from the Boston Architectural College.

"I am deeply honored to have the opportunity to lead AIA, an organization that has been an important part of my career as an architect," said Carole Wedge, FAIA, NOMA, LEED AP. "I am dedicated to serving our members by growing our community, championing design excellence, driving positive change, and expanding awareness of the critical importance of our profession and the role architects play in our communities."

As AIA's Executive Vice President and Chief Executive Officer, Wedge will lead the national office in Washington, D.C., overseeing a team of approximately 150 employees. She will collaborate with the board of directors and work closely with over 200 chapters across the nation and abroad to support AIA members and advance the organization's strategic vision. Additionally, she will ensure that AIA remains the collective voice of architecture and design by growing an engaged, diverse membership base and advancing the organization's programs, products, and services to meet the evolving needs of the profession. Wedge will also sit on the independent board of AIA Contract Documents.

The search to recruit an EVP/Chief Executive Officer was led by executive search firm Heidrick & Struggles as well as a diverse search committee that was chaired by AIA 2024 President Kimberly Dowdell, AIA, NOMAC.

Be part of the WLS movement in Atlanta



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- Be part of a transformative movement advancing women's leadership and empowerment in a traditionally male-dominated industry.
- Hear from and celebrate the women trailblazers and rising stars driving change in architecture.

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BUILDING FOR TOMORROW: RESILIENT AND REGENERATIVE ARCHITECTURE

2025 AIA President-Elect Illya Azaroff, FAIA, shares insights with CBS News regarding the vital role architects play on the global climate stage and emphasizes regenerative design as a crucial path toward a sustainable future.

Our built environments face a constant barrage of threats. Disasters and hazards such as earthquakes, floods and wildfires that test our buildings and threaten our communities are intensifying. As these challenges persist, architects are at the forefront, designing solutions that not only withstand these pressures but also help all communities to thrive.

Architects play a critical role beyond aesthetics, designing resilient systems, buildings and communities that protect people, minimize damage and economic losses and enable swift recovery after disasters. Their work includes creating buildings that adapt to evolving conditions, withstand shocks and plan ahead for scenarios such as rising sea levels or extreme temperatures. They also design community systems that ensure access to essential services and provide hubs for shelter and coordination during crises.

The impacts of climate change disproportionately affect impoverished communities, often located in vulnerable areas like low-lying coastal zones or unstable hillsides. Communities may rely on climate-sensitive livelihoods, such as farming and fishing, and may lack the resources, infrastructure, and influence to adapt or recover effectively. This creates a vicious cycle where climate impacts deepen poverty, perpetuating hardship and widening social disparities.

Equitable climate policies are vital to breaking the cycle of poverty and vulnerability, prioritizing the needs of the most affected populations while reducing systemic disadvantages. Resilient projects must be co-designed, collaborating with vulnerable communities, incorporating their needs, local knowledge and wisdom into the design process.

Architects play a key role in

promoting fair resource allocation by advocating for investments in infrastructure, housing and adaptation measures in low-income neighborhoods. By embedding equity into climate action, we can protect those most at risk. Supporting adaptation and mitigation in these communities is not an act of charity but a necessary step toward creating a stable and just global society.

Beyond sustainability: the move toward regeneration

For decades, sustainability has guided environmentally conscious design, aiming to minimize harm by reducing resource use and waste. Resilience has emerged, emphasizing the ability to withstand and recover from shocks. While both remain essential, we can do more and must do more.

Our planet's resources are being depleted at an alarming rate, and merely sustaining current consumption or recovering from





disasters falls short when the baseline itself is deteriorating. The new imperative is regeneration.

Regenerative design represents a paradigm shift—moving beyond minimizing harm to actively doing good. This approach focuses on restoring and replenishing what has been lost. Every project, from individual buildings, elite neighborhoods to city plans, must engage in a purposeful cycle of repair, benefiting communities, economies and entire ecosystems by creating new sources of abundance and prosperity.

What does regenerative design look like?

Regenerative design touches every aspect of our lives and the built environment. It is a holistic way of thinking that integrates human and natural systems to create mutually beneficial relationships. Examples include:

- **Buildings as living systems:** Designing projects that produce more energy than they consume, capture and purify water and improve local air quality.
- **Restoring ecosystems:** Integrating projects into the local environment in ways that heal damaged ecosystems, increase biodiversity and regenerate carrying capacity.
- **Strengthening communities:** Creating spaces and places that foster social connection, promote local economies, build community prosperity and new economic opportunity and enhance public health and well-being.

Regenerative design is the new way forward. It calls on architects, planners, and citizens to become active stewards of our environment, working not just to sustain our world, but to heal it—and ourselves. This proactive, restorative mindset is essential for creating a future that is not only survivable but also prosperous and just for all.

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Insights from NCARB's Path to Licensure

The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) continues to analyze and share data highlighting current trends along the path to licensure—including program completion times, exam performance, and demographic representation. Drawing from NCARB Record holders, these data empower jurisdictions like Connecticut to make informed, evidence-based decisions and to understand how local trends align with or diverge from national patterns.

Connecticut's Licensure Pipeline

In 2024, Connecticut reported **198 active licensure candidates**, representing individuals in various stages of their path to architectural licensure. Among these candidates:

- **98** reported experience through the Architectural Experience Program (AXP),
- **75** sat for one or more divisions of the Architect Registration Examination (ARE), and
- **25** were simultaneously logging experience and testing.

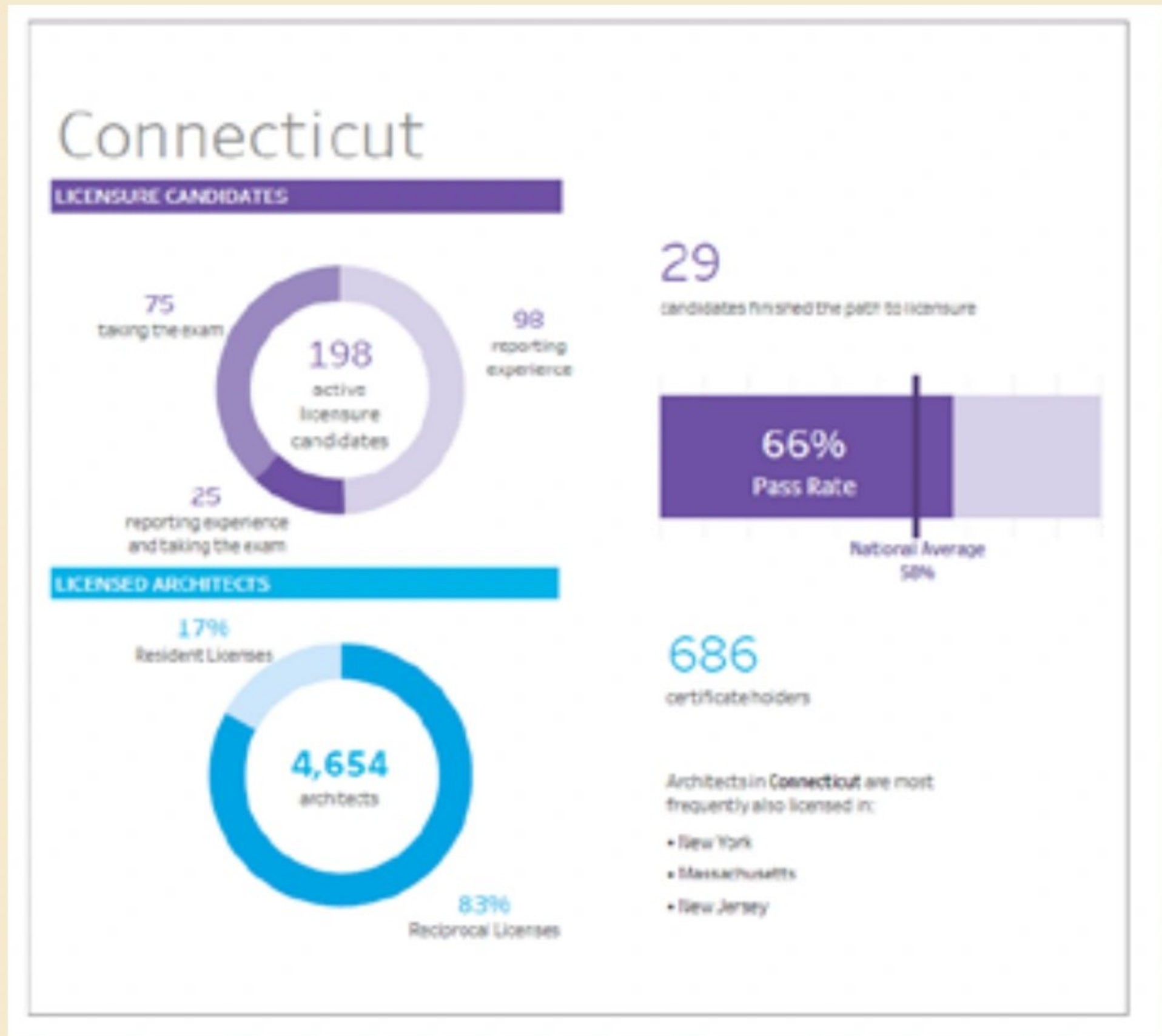
That same year, **29 candidates completed the path to licensure**—marking the transition from candidate to architect. Connecticut's overall **ARE pass rate stood at 66%**, well above the **national average of 58%**, indicating strong candidate performance across exam divisions.

The Architect Population in Connecticut

Connecticut is home to **4,654 licensed architects**, of which **17% hold resident licenses** and **83% are reciprocal licensees**—professionals primarily licensed in another state but registered to practice in Connecticut. Additionally, **686 architects hold an NCARB Certificate**, enabling national mobility and reciprocal licensure.

Diversity and Demographics

NCARB's 2024 data show growing diversity among candidates nationally, and Connecticut mirrors some of this progress. Of the **345 architects and candidates** reporting demographic data in the state:



- **89 architects are women** and **216 are men**, with women representing **31% of Connecticut's architect population**, close to national averages.
- **Female candidates make up 50%** of those taking the ARE—an encouraging indicator for future equity in licensure.
- Racial and ethnic representation includes **19 Asian, 12 Hispanic/Latino, and 7 Black or African American** architects, while **White architects** remain the largest group at **248 individuals**.
- The diversity among candidates is similarly evolving, with candidates of color accounting for a notable portion of those submitting experience and opening new NCARB Records.

While Connecticut's sample sizes are smaller than national aggregates, these figures suggest continued strides toward gender and racial balance, particularly in early licensure stages.

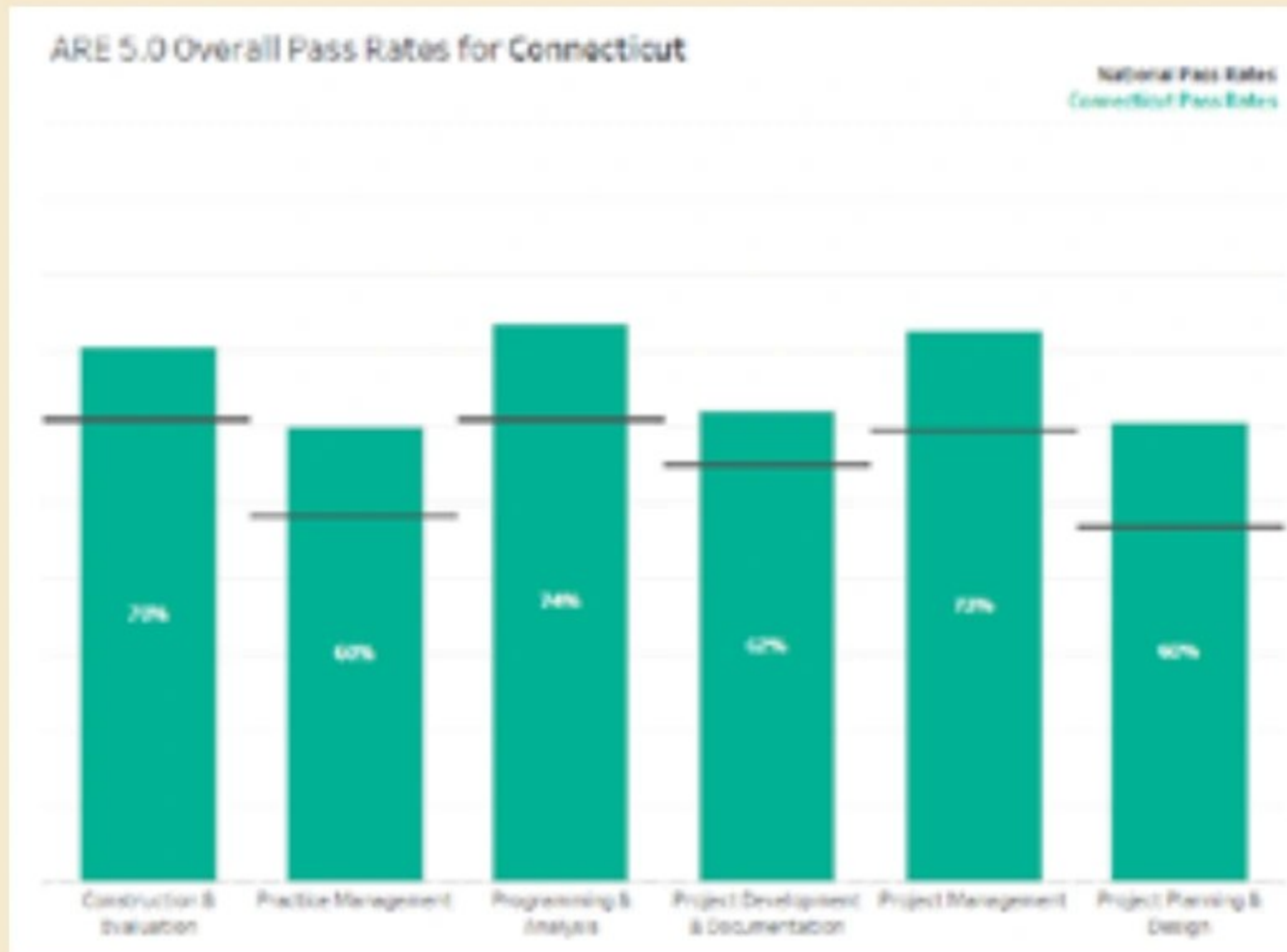
and Demographic Trends for Connecticut

ARE 5.0 Performance in Connecticut

Connecticut's candidates outperformed the national average in **nearly every division** of the ARE 5.0 in 2024:

This strong performance highlights Connecticut's consistent above-average results across all technical and management divisions.

Trend data from 2020–2024 reveal **steady or improving scores** in most divisions, particularly in **Programming & Analysis**, which climbed to 74%, and **Project Management**, which rose to 73%. These improvements parallel national patterns of gradual gains supported by NCARB's expanded access to free practice exams and digital resources.



Context and National Comparison

Nationally, NCARB reported that **49% of licensure candidates identified as people of color** in 2024, and **46% were women**—a continuation of five-year trends toward greater inclusion. Women also continue to complete their path to licensure approximately **one year faster** than men. In Connecticut, early-stage gender parity and strong pass rates among female candidates indicate the state is aligned with or ahead of national equity benchmarks.

Key Takeaways for Connecticut

High pass rates (66%) signal a robust candidate pipeline and preparation quality. Diversity and gender balance among candidates are

Pass Rates by Gender and Ethnicity

When segmented by demographics, Connecticut's ARE performance underscores both progress and disparities:

- **Female candidates** often outperformed male counterparts, scoring **79%** in Construction & Evaluation and **73%** in Programming & Analysis—well above national averages (59% and 58%, respectively).
- **Asian candidates** achieved standout success, with **75%** passing Programming & Analysis and **67%** passing Construction & Evaluation.
- **Black or African American and Hispanic/Latino candidates** also demonstrated strong outcomes in some divisions, though sample sizes are smaller and fluctuate year-to-year.
- **White candidates**, representing the largest cohort, consistently exceeded national benchmarks in all divisions—reaching **80%** in Programming & Analysis.

Overall, Connecticut's demographic breakdown suggests equitable or above-average outcomes for women and candidates of color in several divisions, though NCARB notes that small sample sizes warrant cautious interpretation.

improving, particularly in testing and experience stages. Reciprocal licensure dominance (83%) reflects Connecticut's regional integration within the Northeast's architecture community.

Conclusion

Connecticut's 2025 NCARB data reflects a strong and diversifying architectural community—one that not only outperforms national averages in exam success but also continues to advance inclusivity across gender and racial lines. With strategic attention to mentorship, exam readiness, and continued engagement of diverse candidates, the state is well-positioned to maintain leadership in equitable licensure outcomes.

Be a Part of the Next Generation Leaders - Join the Connecticut Professionals' Leadership Academy

By Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT

In an era where the challenges facing professions are increasingly complex and interconnected, leadership beyond one's silo is no longer optional — it's essential. The **Connecticut Professionals' Leadership Academy** answers that call by bringing together talented professionals across fields to learn, lead, and link arms across industries.

The Connecticut Professionals' Leadership Academy is a six-month, immersive development experience designed to equip early- to mid-career professionals from diverse sectors with the leadership mindset, cross-disciplinary network, and practical tools they need to drive meaningful impact.

What makes this academy unique is its cross-industry structure: participants come from architecture, law, accounting, finance, insurance, and related fields — fostering a rich environment of diverse perspectives and mutual inspiration.

Partnering organizations include:

- American Institute of Architects, Connecticut
- CFA Society Hartford
- Connecticut Bar Association
- Connecticut Society of Certified Public Accountants
- Connecticut Young Insurance Professionals
- Hartford County Bar Association

Since the program's launch in 2021, more than twenty AIA Connecticut members have participated,

contributing to and benefiting from this transformative experience.

Why It Matters

Technical proficiency is necessary, but leadership demands much more: vision, influence, systems thinking, and agility. CTPLA helps you cultivate those capacities in a structured, supportive environment.

By immersing in a cohort of professionals from law, accounting, architecture, finance, and insurance, you'll gain fresh perspectives, broaden your network, and unlock interdisciplinary collaboration.

A key goal is not just individual growth but strengthening professional communities. Participants are encouraged to bring their learnings into the culture of their firms, associations, and industries.

Graduates are viewed as rising leaders — equipped to take on board roles, lead change initiatives, mentor others, and influence organizational direction.

Call to Action – Why AIA Connecticut Members Should Apply

For AIA Connecticut members, the Connecticut Professionals' Leadership Academy represents a rare opportunity to:

- Bring architectural leadership into conversation with legal, financial, insurance, and accounting fields
- Accelerate your professional development outside the typical "in-firm" path



- Gain visibility within an interprofessional leadership network
- Return to your firm with fresh approaches in strategy, negotiation, branding, and influence

If you are ready to stretch, lead, and collaborate beyond your comfort zone — and amplify your impact — [apply for Connecticut Professionals' Leadership Academy](#) next class by November 30th. Spaces are limited, and the time to act is now.





NAVY RESERVE CIVIL ENGINEER CORPS (CEC) OPPORTUNITIES

The U.S. Navy Reserve Civil Engineer Corps (CEC) is seeking civil engineering and architecture professionals to serve as commissioned officers. CEC officers bring their civilian expertise to support Navy and Department of Defense projects while continuing their civilian careers.

What CEC Officers Do

- Plan, design, and manage construction and maintenance of Navy and Marine Corps shore facilities.
- Lead and support the Seabees — the Navy's construction force — on missions worldwide.
- Oversee contracting, facilities management, and expeditionary engineering operations.

Navy Reserve Benefits

- Paid training and professional development.
- Low-cost healthcare (TRICARE Reserve Select) for members and families.
- Low-cost life insurance (SGLI) up to \$500,000.
- VA Home Loan eligibility; travel for training/assignments; broad leadership network.
- Retirement eligibility after 20 qualifying years of part-time service.

Training & Professional Development

- Civil Engineer Corps Officer School (CECOS) for new officers; leadership development and Seabee Combat Warfare qualification.
- Ongoing technical training in construction, contracting, and project management.
- Active Duty Training (ADT): 12–29 day assignments supporting bases or Seabee units; per diem and full active-duty pay/benefits.

Contact

LT Chris Baransky, USN

Officer Recruiting, NRRC – Division New England

Cell: (617) 999-8507

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CONNECTICUT
ARCHITECTURE
FOUNDATION

by Jack Franzen, FAIA

It was a pleasure to interview Dave Locascio for this month's CAF article. Dave—along with Woodbury Supply and Marvin—has been a longtime supporter of CAF. While many know him as the Architectural Sales Manager and fenestration consultant at Woodbury Supply, I thought it would be interesting to explore his deep roots in art and architecture. I recently caught up with Dave at the Woodbury Supply booth during CACX '25.

What got you started on the architecture path?

I was originally interested in Illustration / Graphic Design having grown up in a household with a father who was a commercial art director, and a mother who was a fine artist (in between other paying occupations). My father told me that our lineage can be traced back to seven generations of sculptors from Sicily.

After going through Foundation at RISD, my interest pulled me toward 3D design. After initially selecting Industrial Design, I changed my major to Architecture as I saw it as a better discipline of study for a broader range of pursuits.

My maternal grandfather thought that being an architect was the greatest thing you could be, saying "Learn how to design buildings so you don't have to build them with your hands." (Selling windows probably would have been second on his list.)

Building Col

Dave Locascio on Des



When you got into RISD were you and your parents prepared for the expense?

Soon after my acceptance to RISD, my father lost his art director position after 21 years. On a visit to campus, we met the financial aid director at RISD and my father explained his situation and humbly inquired about additional scholarship money, which they were able to accommodate to make it work for us. I also remember how excited my parents were to hear that the BARCH degree was a 5-year commitment! (Dave's humor creeping in here)

Did you work during college?

I participated in work study and did architectural work for a firm back home as well as with professors at school. I also earned my Gold Ice Dance Medal during my freshman year with the help of an established local coach Sheryl Costantino Carpionato and her family. This afforded me the decision to go professional and teach with her, allowing me to earn a far better part-time income.

At RISD were there any professors who went above and beyond to help you?

Professors Sam Frank (my thesis advisor) and his wife Maggie McGavin gave some opportunities to work on drawings and details for in office projects as well as renovations to their historic home in Cumberland.

How did you get started with Marvin?

After leaving the profession due to the recession in the early 90's, I had taken a sales position with a flooring distributor for Armstrong Commercial Flooring. A friend at Centerbrook Architects, Sheryl Milardo, had mentioned that AW Hastings, a distributor of Marvin Windows, were looking for an architectural rep and she thought of me. After getting hired in the summer of 1999 by AW Hastings (purchased by Marvin in 2019). I was presented with an opportunity as an architectural sales manager with one of our dealers, Woodbury Supply and have been with them close to 5 years now.

What is Marvin's philosophy with regards to philanthropy?

Connections: Design, Windows, and Giving Back

In addition to participating in national organizations like the Red Cross, St. Jude and Feeding America, they do many things for the local communities throughout the country. This includes Operation Homefront that helps Enfield residents that have fallen on hard times and helps them to replace windows or affect miscellaneous repairs on their homes.

What's most gratifying about your support for CAF?

Talking directly to students at the most recent CAF dinner about creating a net, getting to know those industry professionals as they as they move forward from academia to that first job and what they might expect.

What would you like to see us do better?

Expanded support with other industry professionals. Possibly more student affiliated interactions and professional exposure with learning

opportunities for students that might better connect to local firms, affiliated trades, and events with other AIA committees that would work with school schedules. This might make a difference for those students considering Connecticut as a place to stay and work.

Jack Franzen, FAIA is a current CAF Board Member Emeritus having served on the CAF board for many years, and a past president of AIA Connecticut.



How Architecture Week Empowers the Next Generation of Designers

By Devon Davis

Architecture Week isn't just a celebration—it's a movement. Each year, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) rallies chapters, members, firms, and partners nationwide to showcase the transformative power of architecture. In 2025, that energy focused on K-12 students, educators, and advocates, marking the second year of a bold national initiative to introduce young minds to the world of design.

From classroom visits and hands-on design workshops to mentorship sessions and donation drives, Architecture Week 2025 mobilized the profession in service of education, equity, and inspiration. AIA amplified these efforts through national publicity, encouraging volunteerism and collaboration across its network. The results were extraordinary: 51 chapters and 505 members engaged with Architecture Week 2025. There was representation from 42 states, and the event reached 484 schools and 20,616 students. Social media posts gained 3.7 million impressions. And AIA, with support from the AIA College of Fellows, awarded 20 grants to boost local programming efforts.

Grant Highlights: Innovation in Action

AIA's grant program empowered chapters to launch and expand K-12 initiatives tailored to their communities. The ideas were as varied as AIA's chapters.

- AIA Architects League of Northern New Jersey: Led a tower design challenge for local high school students
- AIA Baltimore: Partnered with Baltimore Design School to host a panel of design professionals

- AIA Blue Ridge: Hosted a family-friendly LEGO event titled Kidstruction
- AIA Brazos: Simulated the urban development process through a nine-day student program
- AIA California: Published a student guide on becoming an architect
- AIA Chattanooga: Showcased student projects and encouraged collaboratively building an interactive installation
- AIA Connecticut: Created immersive learning environments connecting students with practicing architects
- AIA Fort Worth: Planned a full week of K-12 activities, including two exhibitions, architecture tours, films, Box City, and a LEGO build
- AIA Honolulu: Engaged students in culturally rooted design challenges
- AIA Kansas City: Organized a full exploration of Architecture Week with activities for all grade levels, both in schools and at the AIA Kansas City office
- AIA Kentucky: Delivered hands-on design experiences to students statewide
- AIA Long Beach: Hosted a panel of design professionals at the only all-girls public STEM school in California
- AIA New Jersey: Hosted a virtual design competition inviting students to envision futuristic skyscrapers
- AIA New York Chapter: Partnered with the firm OQ2D to offer a hands-on sustainable building workshop
- AIA Philadelphia: Integrated architecture into STEM curricula through educator partnerships
- AIA Richmond: Hosted a book drive, sending architecture and design books to local elementary and middle schools
- AIA Toledo: Celebrated the 75th anniversary of its annual High School Design Competition
- Boston Society for Architecture (BSA): Created KidsBuild! classroom workshops in collaboration with teachers
- Washington Architectural Foundation: Hosted a challenge for local high school students to design sustainable greenhouse gases

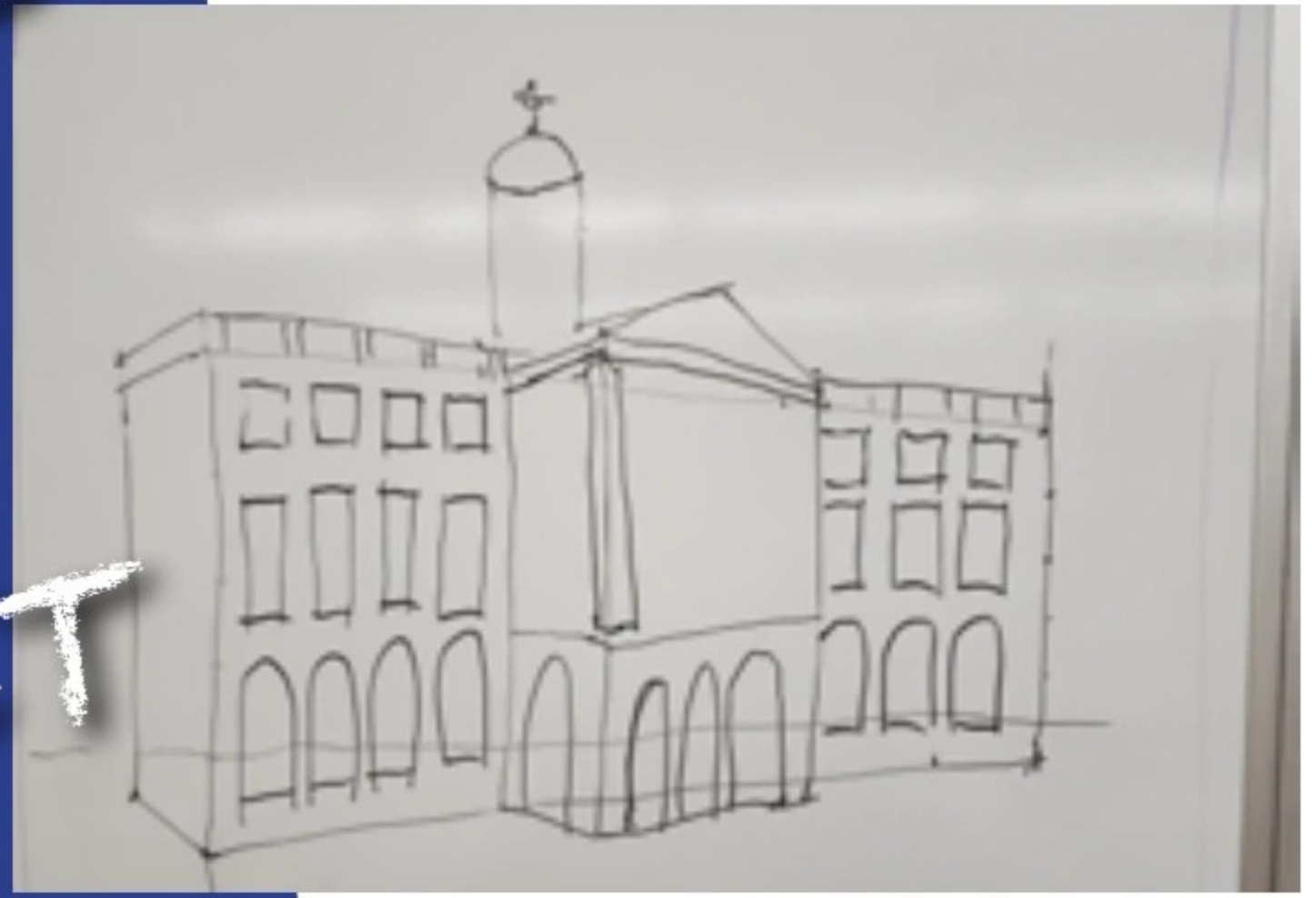
Architecture Week continues to evolve as a vibrant platform for inspiration, inclusion, and impact. Through its growing investment in K-12 outreach, AIA is helping shape a future where every student—regardless of background—can envision themselves as a designer, a problem-solver, and a leader in the built environment. (Take this as a sign of AIA's commitment: AIA's 2024 Architecture Week campaign received a PR Daily Nonprofit Communications Award nomination.)

Devon Davis is AIA's senior manager of K-12 initiatives and engagement.

Editor's Note: AIA Connecticut received an AIA K-12 Architecture Week grant in 2025 on sustainability. The children built a working model solar house. We will once again apply for a grant and participate in the 2026 K-12 Architecture Week.



FOURTH GRADERS EXPLORE ARCHITECTURE WITH ARCHITECT TOM MANNING



By Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT

A few days before their much-anticipated trip to the Big E, Ashford School's fourth graders had the exciting opportunity to step into the shoes of real architects.

Thanks to fourth-grade science teacher Carly Levine, who reached out to Gina Calabro, Executive Director of AIA Connecticut and The Architecture Resource Center, the students were able to learn directly from a professional in the field. After reaching out to a select group of architects, Tom Manning, AIA, VP - Architectural at Russell and Dawson Inc., readily volunteered to lead the workshop and share his expertise.

Before the visit, Ms. Levine helped her students prepare by sending Google Maps street-view links of all the New England State Houses, allowing them to virtually explore the buildings they would later encounter at the Big E.

This pre-lesson helped students begin to recognize architectural features and regional design differences.

When Mr. Manning arrived, he brought with him a special artifact—a sketch of the Old State House that he had rediscovered in his attic. Using this drawing as inspiration, he led 33 students, divided into two groups, through a hands-on architectural sketching session. Each student received a copy of the Old State House sketch, along with high-quality sketch paper and two pencils: a 4H for outlining and a 2H for shading and detail.

At the whiteboard, Mr. Manning demonstrated how to start with the building's basic massing and proportions using the 4H pencil, then move on to defining textures, shadows, and architectural details with the 2H. Students were encouraged to observe carefully, sketch lightly, and think like architects as they captured the structure's form and character.

The workshop offered a perfect bridge to the students' later visit to the Big E, where they saw models of State Houses from across New England. Equipped with their new skills and understanding of design and structure, they were able to make meaningful connections between their classroom experience and the architecture they observed in person.

As Ms. Levine reflected, this collaboration—made possible by AIA Connecticut—brought architecture to life for her students, blending art, history, and science in a way that was both educational and inspiring.

The above sketches are from Carly Levin's 4th grade class.



Advancing the Profession: A Message from the AIA Strategic Council Leadership

By Jessica O'Donnell, AIA - 2025 Strategic Council Moderator and Abigail Brown, FAIA - 2025 Strategic Council Vice Moderator

As we enter the final quarter of 2025, the Strategic Council's work is reaching a pivotal moment. All seven study groups have now presented their preliminary reports to the full Council—each offering thoughtful insights on key challenges shaping the profession.

These presentations are now available on the AIA Leadership Exchange Hub, and we encourage members to connect with their [state representatives](#) on the Council to learn more about each group's findings.

A significant milestone this year is the AIA Board's Executive Order Action Plan, developed with key contributions from the Resilient Practice Model Study Group. This action plan

provides a roadmap for advancing resilience within architectural practice and can be accessed by all AIA members through the AIA Member Exchange Hub—a central source for Board decisions, governance updates, and policy developments.

Looking ahead, the Council will have its Fall Assembly at the end of September, where we will prioritize recommendations to be shared with the AIA Board. This will be followed by orientation for incoming 2026 Councilors, our virtual Big Think session in early October, and a Q4 Council update on the AIA Leadership Exchange Calls.

We extend our sincere thanks to the dedicated committee chairs who help guide our work and inform our decision-making process:

- Jeff Seabold, FAIA - Best Practices Committee Chair
- Mary Womble, AIA & Marc Mondor, AIA - Communications Co-Chairs
- Mike Daly, AIA - Elections Chair

Their leadership and collaboration ensure that the Council remains an active and insightful voice for the profession.

The AIA Strategic Council advances the architectural profession by informing the AIA Board of Directors and other Institute bodies about the most pressing issues, emerging opportunities, and potential threats facing the field. With an outward-looking and forward-focused vision, the Council emphasizes long-term goals and outcomes that strengthen the Institute and its members.

To learn more about the Strategic Council's role and activities, visit the [AIA Leadership Exchange Hub](#).



Amplifying the Associate Voice: The Work of the National Associates Committee

The American Institute of Architects' National Associates Committee (NAC) stands as a powerful advocate for Associate AIA members—the emerging professionals shaping the next generation of architectural practice. Representing nearly 20% of AIA's total membership, Associates bring new perspectives, ideas, and energy to the profession. The NAC's mission is to inspire the profession by promoting innovation, inclusiveness, and professional development, while amplifying the Associate voice within the Institute.

At its core, the NAC is a network of 62 leaders across the country who serve as vital links between national leadership and local components. This includes the Advisory Committee (AdCom) and the State/Territory Associate Representatives (STARs), who gather and share information about issues facing emerging professionals in their states. Together, they ensure that Associates are not only represented, but actively shaping the policies and direction of the Institute.

Among these dedicated leaders is Erska Llakmani, AIA Connecticut's representative to the NAC. Erska's contributions in advancing the committee's advocacy work—particularly

through her participation in the Advocacy Toolkit (AT) Work Group, an initiative designed to empower Associate members and components with tangible strategies for engaging in advocacy at the local, state, and national levels.

The Advocacy Toolkit serves as a living resource, helping emerging professionals navigate policy discussions around licensure, equitable practice, and workforce development. By collecting data on advocacy needs across states and compiling scalable case studies, the group—supported by representatives like Llakmani—has begun to create a roadmap for stronger, more consistent advocacy efforts nationwide.

This year, the NAC's efforts have centered on three major focus areas:

- **Advocacy Toolkit (AT):** Building resources for state and local advocacy efforts.
- **Non-Traditional Paths (NTP):** Validating diverse professional journeys, including alternative licensure pathways and meaningful non-licensed careers.
- **Titling Sprint (TS):** Investigating how job titles affect perception, equity, and career mobility.

Erska's involvement ensures that Connecticut's emerging professionals have a voice in national conversations that shape the future of architectural practice.

The committee's recommendations to the AIA Board this year underscore its commitment to inclusion and progress:

- Elevate recognition of all professional paths, whether licensed or alternative.
- Advance titling consistency to improve fairness and transparency across the field.
- Deploy the Advocacy Toolkit nationwide to strengthen local advocacy capacity.
- Commit to inclusive narratives that highlight Associate experiences and leadership.

In 2024, the NAC also partnered with the AIA Public Awareness Committee to launch the "Future Focused" campaign, showcasing the stories of Associates across the country. This initiative, along with efforts to secure Associate representation on AIA boards and committees, demonstrates the NAC's ongoing role as a catalyst for progress within the profession. For the full annual report, please visit the [National Associates Community](#).

AIA Connecticut's Ersa Llakmani Selected for National “Next to Lead” Program

By Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT

AIA Connecticut proudly announces that Ersa Llakmani, Associate AIA, NOMA, LEED Green Associate, has been selected for the American Institute of Architects' (AIA) prestigious 2025-2026 Next to Lead cohort. This ten-month national program—limited to no more than 18 participants per cycle—prepares racially and ethnically diverse women to take on leadership roles within AIA chapters across the country.

Next to Lead is the first program of its kind within the AIA to cultivate and support association leadership among ethnically diverse women aspiring to lead the organization. It reflects AIA's ongoing commitment to advancing racial equity within the Institute, the architecture profession, and the broader communities architects serve.

Throughout the program, participants engage in monthly virtual learning sessions and in-person workshops led by expert speakers and AIA staff. The curriculum focuses on developing leadership acumen, addressing challenges faced by women in architecture, and fostering the skills needed for effective organizational leadership.



As part of her participation, Llakmani will receive specialized training on leadership development, association governance, and issues impacting women in the workplace and in architectural practice. She will also attend the AIA Conference on Architecture & Design (AIA26) and the Women's Leadership Summit alongside her cohort.

“Ersa's selection for the Next to Lead program is a tremendous honor and a reflection of her dedication to the profession and to the values of equity and leadership that AIA Connecticut stands for,” said Gina Calabro, CEO and Executive Director of AIA Connecticut.

“Her passion for empowering others and her commitment to advancing diversity within our field make her an outstanding representative for our chapter and for the future of architectural leadership.”

Ersa Llakmani is a Senior Project Manager at HED, where she leads complex design initiatives with a focus on innovation, collaboration, and sustainability. A dedicated advocate for diversity and leadership in architecture, she currently serves as National Associate Representative for AIA Connecticut, amplifying the voices of emerging professionals within the organization.

Llakmani holds a Master of Architecture and a Master of Business Administration from the University of Hartford, where she was awarded CAF scholarships in 2013 and 2014. Her academic and professional journey reflects her deep commitment to both design excellence and organizational leadership.

Ersa's selection represents not only a personal achievement but also a milestone for AIA Connecticut's ongoing efforts to elevate diverse voices within the architectural profession. Through programs like Next to Lead, the AIA continues to build pathways for underrepresented professionals to shape the future of the organization—and the built environment itself.



IN MEMORIAM

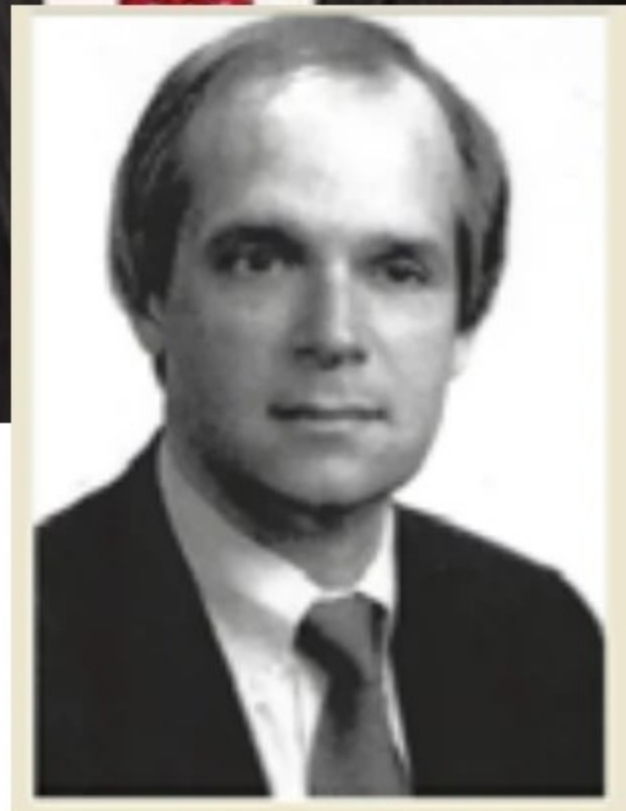
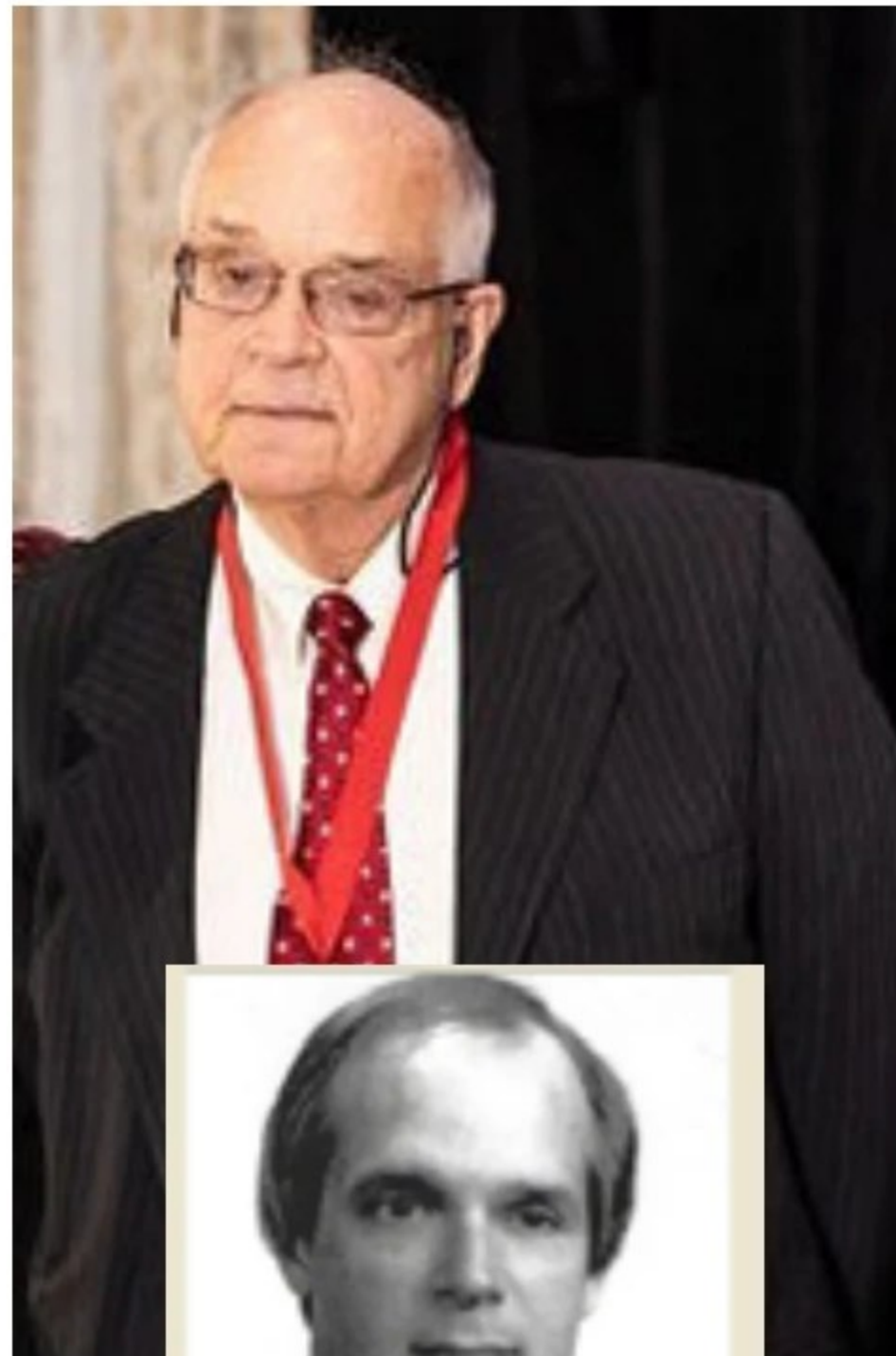
David G. Jepson, FAIA

June 5, 1941 – October 10, 2025

David Jepson, FAIA, of Glastonbury, passed away on October 10th. As many members know, Dave was a partner of Jeter, Cook & Jepson, which became as JCJ Architecture. Dave received his 50-year membership medal, along with Ed Jeter from AIA CT in 2023.

David G. Jepson was born in Meriden, Connecticut, to the late George and Mildred (Andrews) Jepson. The Jepson family was well known locally as owners of Jepson's Bookstore on Colony Street, where Dave often helped as a teenager. Summers were spent with family and friends at their cottages on Leete's Island in Guilford—an idyllic place that remained dear to him throughout his life.

A graduate of Cheshire Academy and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI), Dave earned his degree cum laude from the School of Architecture. At RPI, he was a member of the Alpha Chi Rho fraternity, served on numerous academic committees, and contributed to summer master planning at the New York State Capitol in Albany. Following graduation, he attended Officer Candidate School in Newport, RI, and Civil Engineering School in Port Hueneme, CA, becoming a Lieutenant in the Navy's Civil Engineering Corps. Stationed in Naha, Okinawa, he served as Assistant Public Works Officer, overseeing major projects supporting U.S. Naval and Fleet operations across Okinawa, the Ryukyu Islands, and Taiwan.



After completing his active service, Dave joined Jeter & Cook Architects, later becoming partner and owner in the early 1970s, the firm—renamed Jeter, Cook & Jepson—grew from a small local practice into a 200-person, multi-state firm, now known as JCJ Architecture. He personally designed more than 200 municipal, institutional, and private buildings, earning numerous awards for design excellence. In 2000, Dave was elevated to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects (FAIA).

Deeply committed to professional and community service, Dave held leadership and board roles with organizations including RPI's School of Architecture, Cheshire Academy, the Construction Institute at the University of Hartford, the New Britain Museum of American Art, the Wadsworth Atheneum, and the Elizabeth Park Conservancy.

Dave loved sailing along the New England coast and, in 1985, married his beloved wife Sharon. Together they traveled extensively, including a memorable return to Okinawa and a three-week journey through China. A lifelong designer and builder, Dave created three homes—his cherished Glastonbury residence and a Vermont retreat overlooking Stratton Mountain.

He is survived by his wife Sharon; son Arthur Jepson and son-in-law Michael Roberts of Guilford; brother Richard Jepson of Guilford; and several nieces and nephews.

Between his family, friends, and the work he loved, Dave lived a rich and fulfilling life.

A Life Tribute gathering will be held at a future date this year. To extend condolences or for further updates, please visit farleysullivan.com



Hoffmann Names Erin Kesegi and Benjamin Robinson to Lead Connecticut Office

Hoffmann Architects + Engineers has elevated Erin L. Kesegi, AIA and Benjamin J. Robinson, AIA to vice president and co-directors of its Connecticut office.

Previously Senior Architect, Kesegi has been with the firm since 2001, joining the staff after interning with Hoffmann during her architecture studies at Roger Williams University. In 2016, she was invited to become a shareholder in recognition of her technical ability, leadership, and commitment to the company. Kesegi has led project teams for building enclosure rehabilitation at properties across New England and New York, including Constitution Plaza in Hartford, Columbia University and Barnard College in Manhattan, Yale-New Haven Health Hospitals in Bridgeport and Greenwich, Hopkins School in New Haven, and Verizon in New York. A leader not just in the office, but also in the industry, she is President of the Housatonic Chapter of the Construction Specifications Institute (CSI), as well as a member of Preservation

and Museum, where he is Chair of the Building and Grounds Committee and a member of the Board of Trustees. He is also a member of the Association for Preservation Technology (APT) and the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Connecticut chapter.

Benjamin J. Robinson, AIA, earns a promotion to Vice President and Director, Architecture and has been appointed co-director of Hoffmann's Connecticut office. Previously Senior Architect, Robinson joined Hoffmann in 2006 after earning a bachelor's degree from Connecticut College, and he has been a shareholder of the firm since 2016. Early in his career, he had the opportunity to learn the nuances of historic preservation through his involvement with the restoration of the Dome of the U.S. Capitol in Washington DC. From the start of his time with Hoffmann until the project's completion in 2017, Robinson visited the Capitol often to review mockups, evaluate cast iron repairs, visit fabricators' workshops, observe installation, and see that restoration proceeded according to specifications.

Outside the office, Robinson lends his building enclosure expertise to the Mark Twain House

and Museum, where he is Chair of the Building and Grounds Committee and a member of the Board of Trustees. He is also a member of the Association for Preservation Technology (APT) and the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Connecticut chapter. An engaging speaker, he has delivered presentations on historic preservation, including the landmark restoration of the U.S. Capitol Dome, for industry audiences, as well as other design professionals.

Outgoing director of the Connecticut office, Lawrence E. Keenan, AIA, PE, steps into his new role as Director, Technical Services, overseeing the quality of technical work produced firm-wide.





Smarthome and Theater Systems Awarded 2025 Crestron Global Technology Award

Smarthome and Theater Systems (STS) has been honored with the 2025 Crestron Global Technology Award for Health & Wellness Home of the Year. This prestigious recognition celebrates the team's commitment to designing homes where comfort, wellness, and technology blend seamlessly.

This achievement reflects a highly collaborative effort among several expert partners. Garrett Wilson Builders and Christian Rae Studio worked closely with STS to bring this project to life. The company's long-standing relationship with Garrett Wilson Builders ensured a smooth and efficient process. STS also extends gratitude to Nagel Electric, LLC, and other valued collaborators whose skill and dedication helped realize the project's vision.

The client's goal for their Connecticut retreat was to create a wellness-focused sanctuary that integrated spaces for meditation, fitness, and entertainment. STS designed and installed a comprehensive Crestron-controlled ecosystem encompassing audio/video, lighting, shading, home automation, and networking. Outdoor areas—including two pools and hot tubs—were seamlessly connected to the system, delivering personalized control and a cohesive, intuitive user experience.

The client shared exceptional feedback, stating:
"Polite, prepared, professional, and a great value—Jared's team should be the blueprint on how to do this! We can't say enough about their professionalism and out-of-the-box thinking to enhance and maximize

the available products on the market, made much better by their thinking and design of the system."

STS is grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with such talented professionals and for the trust of its clients. Recognition like this reinforces the belief that the best outcomes come from true collaboration. The team looks forward to continuing to deliver thoughtful, high-quality smart home solutions that enhance everyday living.





Fall Highlights: Design in Motion from Fairfield to Central Park South

Thiel Architecture + Design is nearing completion on JOYLARK, a new upscale restaurant in Fairfield, Connecticut. Featuring innovative plant-based cuisine, JOYLARK is the vision of chef and owner Jenna McPartland, whose vibrant personality inspired the firm’s lively interior concept. The restaurant’s design offers a menu of pattern and color that reflects Jenna’s creative culinary artistry.

The team recently returned to a longtime client’s home in Hoboken for a series of thoughtful updates. With four energetic boys under the age of ten, the family’s living room rug had seen years of spirited play. Thiel Architecture + Design recommended carpet tiles—a practical yet stylish solution offering a wide range

of patterns, affordable pricing, and easy replacement of individual tiles when needed (a lifesaver for families and pet owners alike).

For a fashion-forward client with a breathtaking view of Central Park, the firm is crafting a home defined by bold color and fearless pattern. Each space is designed to reflect confidence and individuality—one particularly vibrant corner is already taking shape.



Recently, Thiel Architecture + Design collaborated with the dynamic Pamela Aflalo to reimagine a new facility for The Storehouse Project’s food pantry and boutique in Milford, Connecticut. The firm takes pride in supporting pro bono work that serves the community—and welcomes opportunities to design for a good cause.

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Texas A&M breaks ground on Aplin Center designed by Pickard Chilton and DLR Group

Hundreds gathered on the campus of Texas A&M University to celebrate the groundbreaking of the Aplin Center, a transformative new learning facility designed by Pickard Chilton, in collaboration with DLR Group. Envisioned as a “warm and beautiful timber building” that embodies the spirit and traditions of Aggieland, the three-story, 207,000-square-foot center will redefine hospitality, retail, and marketing education when it opens in 2028.

“Beaver Aplin changed the way Americans travel with Buc-ee’s, and now he’s changing how the next generation of Aggies will learn,” said Texas Gov. Greg Abbott. “The Aplin Center proves Texas A&M is more than a place for education – it’s a hub of innovation where dreamers and doers will shape the future of Texas and our nation.”

The Aplin Center is being constructed using mass timber, making it the largest mass timber project on a university campus in Texas, according to Texas A&M University. The design celebrates sustainability, innovation, and wellness while showcasing the potential of Texas-grown timber and craftsmanship.

Pickard Chilton describes the center as an “advanced iteration of the heavy timber concept” that blends indoor and outdoor environments. Located across from the Doug Pitcock ’49 Texas A&M Hotel and Conference Center, the site transforms what was once a surface parking lot into a communal green space, preserving and accentuating the existing live oak trees.

“The Aplin Center fits right in with the values of Texas A&M,” said Chancellor Glenn Hegar. “It is all about innovation, collaboration, and a commitment to students. This facility will be a national model for experiential learning – and a proud showcase of Texas-grown timber and Texas-grown talent.”

Designed as an immersive learning hub, the Aplin Center will unite the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Mays Business School under one roof. The building will house bespoke laboratories for enology, fermentation sciences, meat sciences, and sensory research, as well as culinary and product development kitchens, a VR 360 sensory classroom, and a restaurant and café to provide hands-on learning experiences in hospitality and management.

“The Aplin Center is designed to inspire innovation and creativity through its spaces,” said Aplin, who contributed \$60 million to the project. “The Texas A&M culture and friendships influenced me and my business career in many ways. I’m thrilled to be able to give back and create something truly special for future Aggies.”

Pickard Chilton’s architectural vision emphasizes transparency, natural materials, and connection to the landscape. With a focus on daylight, warmth, and texture, the design creates an atmosphere that reflects both the welcoming spirit of Texas A&M and Aplin’s own passion for the outdoors.

As part of its hospitality mission, the Aplin Center will also become the new home of the Texas A&M Visitor Center, offering engaging spaces to introduce prospective students and guests to the Aggie experience.

For Arch “Beaver” Aplin III, the project represents both gratitude and forward thinking. “I want visitors’ jaws to drop when they walk in the front door – actually even before they get to the door,” he said. “Every step they take toward it will build excitement, and when they get inside, it’ll be even better.”



James Dwight Dana House, 24 Hillhouse Avenue Photograph © 2025 Francis Dzikowski/Otto

Preserving the Past, Building the Future by Protecting New Haven's Historic Fabric

New Haven's built environment reflects nearly four centuries of architectural and cultural development, from its 17th-century town plan and central Green to 19th-century industrial brick buildings and 20th-century modern buildings. Historic preservation plays a critical role in maintaining this legacy, reinforcing community identity, and providing educational opportunities for residents, students, and visitors alike.

With Yale University, local historical societies, and public schools, preserved sites become active teaching tools for architecture, urban history, and preservation science, turning the city's-built heritage into living classrooms that inspire and inform.

When historic structures are restored or adaptively reused instead of demolished, they offer continuity and connection to the past while meeting modern needs. Preservation projects often involve collaboration among the project owners, architects,

engineers, contractors, and city officials. These efforts balance historical accuracy with current codes, sustainability goals, and accessibility standards.

Petra Construction is proud to support preservation in New Haven. *The following projects demonstrate our firm's commitment to restoring and adapting historic structures with precision and care.*

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AMPLIFICATION, NOT AUTOMATION: WHAT AI REALLY MEANS FOR ARCHITECTS

BY EVELYN LEE, FAIA, NOMA



Artificial intelligence is no longer a future trend—it is already woven into the fabric of our lives. From Netflix recommendations and Spotify playlists to traffic management, smart homes, banking, and health monitoring, AI is running in the background of daily life. The question for us is not whether AI will impact architecture, it is how we will choose to engage with it. AIA's 2025 research study, *Artificial Intelligence Adoption in Architecture*, shows that we are at the beginning of that curve:

8% of firm leaders report integrating AI into their practice

20% are in the process of implementation

35% are considering adoption

That tells me curiosity is alive in this profession, and that's exactly what we need to build on.

AI has the potential to act as a strategic thought partner for architects and firms. Unlike the shifts we have navigated in the past, from hand drafting to CAD to BIM, AI is not simply a new way of

documenting or automating design. This is a transformation reshaping every industry, not just ours. For architecture, that means rethinking how we practice, why we work the way we do, and how we define value for the communities we serve. It challenges us to redesign our businesses with the same creativity and systems thinking we bring to our buildings.

The firms that will thrive tomorrow are already rethinking how they work today and building the next generation of practice. This transformation is about using AI to analyze how your business runs. We should embrace AI as a partner that enables better decisions and faster workflows and frees up time for the work that really matters. AI offers something we have always struggled to articulate in this profession: a chance to reframe our value proposition. It gives us the opportunity to show clients not just the product of our work, but the intelligence, insight, and creative problem-solving that underpin it.

At AIA25, keynote speaker Allie K. Miller reminded us that AI



is one of the best research and brainstorming tools available to businesses today. She also made it clear that AI does not simply “work out of the box.” It requires clarity, structure, and training. It will not magically repair broken workflows or reorganize chaotic file systems. It will not solve the inefficiencies we have tolerated for years unless we commit to reshaping the systems behind them.

This is where the real opportunity lies. Once we do the hard work of designing more intelligent systems, clarifying intent, and setting clear goals, AI can step in as a true collaborator. Think of it the way you would when onboarding a new employee or project partner. You would not expect them to instantly understand your practice or deliver results without guidance. You would invest time in training, context, and integration.

AI requires the same thoughtful approach. When we treat AI this way, it stops being just another piece of software and becomes that strategic thought partner. It

can help us anticipate challenges, generate insights, and amplify the intelligence of our teams. It is less about automation and more about amplification. Done well, AI does not replace people, it empowers them to do their best work.

That is why AIA launched the AI Task Force earlier this year. We want to ensure architects are leading change. The Task Force is already moving forward with a focus on providing the following opportunities for our members:

Education and knowledge sharing through webinars and partnerships

The chance to foster relationships with AI creators and technology providers

Quarterly tool reviews and discussion along with an AI Summit

Governance frameworks to guide responsible implementation and advocate for smart policy

We are also working on a short-form AI position statement to set a clear direction for the profession. If architects want to thrive in an AI-

driven world, we need to expand our vocabulary and the professional development of individuals within our firms. This is not just about upskilling people; it is about reskilling. AI is not about efficiency alone; it is about elevating how we work. It can open new career paths, new ways of practicing, and new opportunities for architects to lead.

AI is moving fast. We cannot slow the pace of change, but we can choose how we show up. We can sit back and wait for AI to reshape our profession, allowing outsiders to leverage AI into opportunities within our industry. Or we can step forward, define how it should serve the built environment, and lead the next chapter of practice.

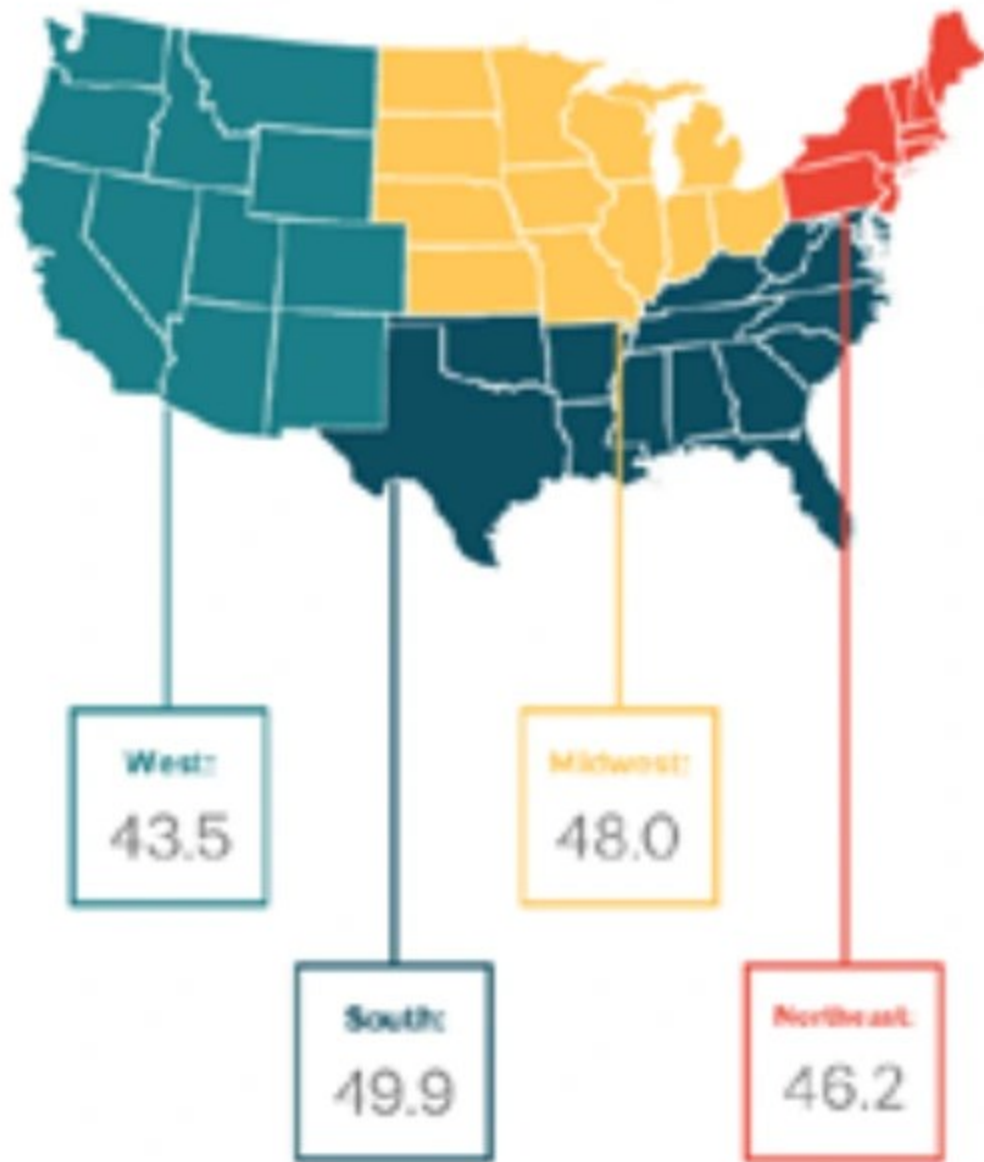
Start experimenting. Start learning. Start reskilling.

Curiosity got us into this profession. Let it guide us now. Our ability to serve communities tomorrow starts with the choices we make today.

Evelyn Lee, FAIA, NOMA, is AIA’s 2025 president.



SOFTNESS PERSISTS AT ARCHITECTURE FIRMS



The AIA/Deltek Architecture Billings Index (ABI) score was 47.2 for the month of August 2025. The share of firms reporting declining billings in August fell modestly from July, but overall, most firms continue to report a downward trajectory. In addition, inquiries softened in August and were essentially flat, after small increases over the previous three months. In addition, the value of new design contracts declined for the 18th consecutive month, the longest period of decline since we started collecting this data 15 years ago. This year has seen generally soft inquiries into new projects and a steady decrease in the value of newly signed design contracts, as clients remain cautious about committing to new projects. Without new work on the horizon, many firms will likely continue to experience declining billings in the coming months.

While business conditions remained soft at firms in most regions of the country in August, firms located in the South reported essentially flat conditions for the fourth consecutive month. In contrast, firms located in the West saw their billings soften this month, as they reported their weakest conditions in nearly two years. By specialization, firms with a commercial/industrial specialization reported modest growth in August for the first time in three years. And firms with a multifamily residential specialization have also seen improving conditions in the last few months and saw essentially flat billings this month. In contrast, business conditions have softened recently at firms with an institutional specialization to their lowest levels since 2020. Uncertainty with government budgets in recent months continues to cause uncertainty for many firms specializing in institutional facilities.

Signs of softness increase in the larger economy

Recent revisions to data show more softness in the broader economy

this year than previously known. Nonfarm payroll employment was essentially flat in August, adding just 22,000 new jobs, and recent months have been revised downward, showing much smaller overall growth for the year. Architectural services employment increased modestly in July to 204,100 (the most recent data available). Employment in the industry has been generally flat over the last year and remains more than 3,500 positions below its post-pandemic peak employment of 207,700.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) showed that inflation also ticked up modestly this month, increasing by 0.4% in August, the highest monthly increase since January. Inflation grew by 2.9% on an annual basis, an increase from average annual growth of 2.7% in recent months. With the Federal Reserve continuing to target an inflation rate of 2%, it lowered interest rates by 0.25 percentage points at its most recent meeting on September 17. Many experts expect them to lower rates by at least an additional 0.25 percentage points at one of their two remaining meetings before the end of the year.

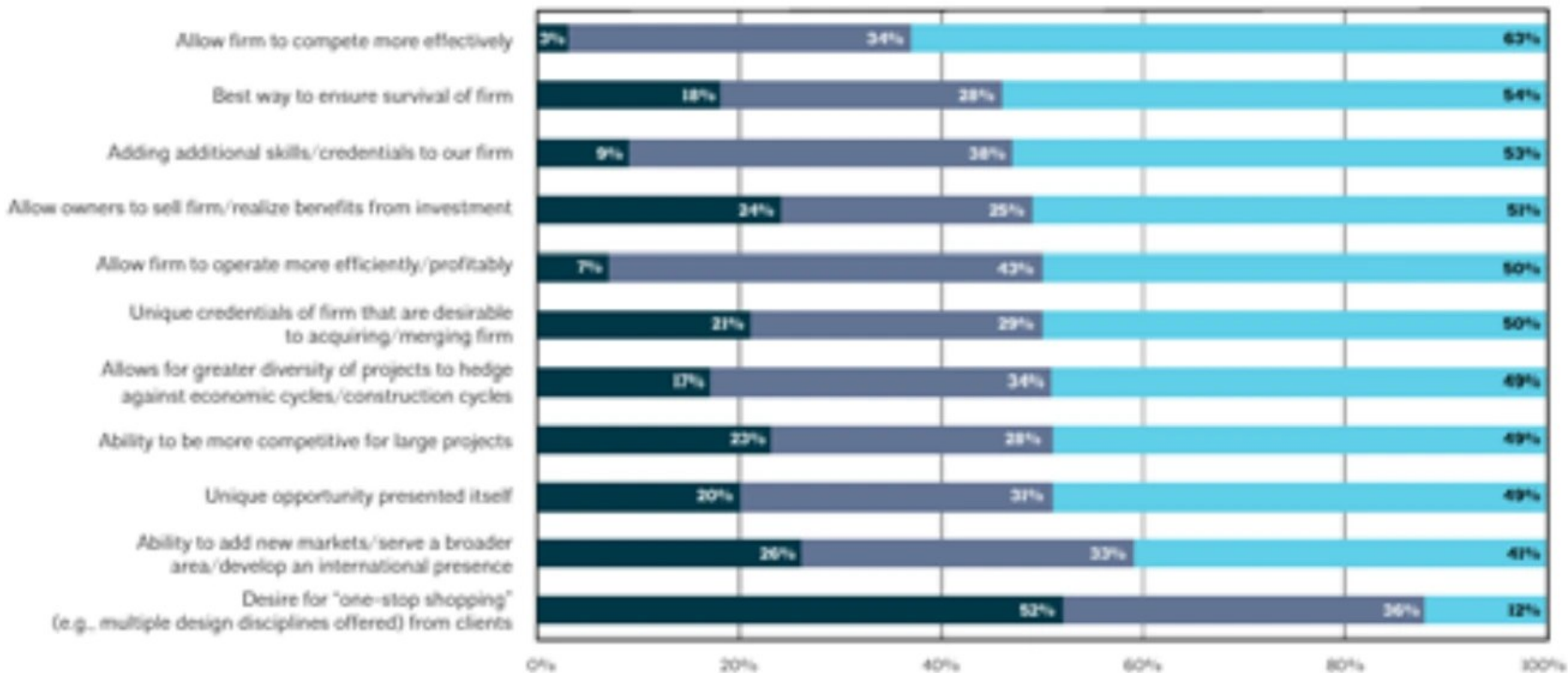
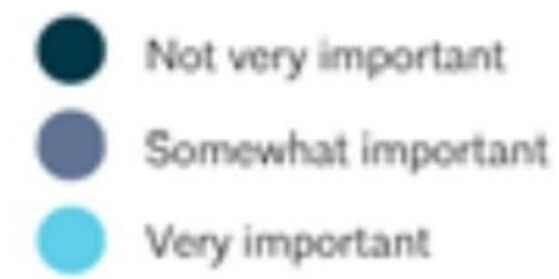
Few firms have completed a merger or acquisition recently, but others are considering one

This month, we asked architecture firms about recent merger and acquisition activity at their firms and the latest trends in the industry. Overall, 72% of responding firm leaders reported that they have not considered or gone through with a merger or acquisition in the last year. Just 5% reported that they had actually gone through with a merger or acquired another firm in the last year, while 12% reported that they have actively considered being acquired by another firm, 7% that they have actively considered merging with another firm, and 6% that they have actively considered acquiring another firm (the remaining share of firm leaders

Practice

Increasing firm competitiveness is top reason why firms complete or explore a merger or acquisition.

units: % of firms that have gone through or actively considered a merger or acquisition in the last year, importance of reason in their consideration of/decision to pursue a merger or acquisition



reported some other response).

At firms that have either completed a merger or acquisition in the last year, or have actively considered one, the primary reason for doing so was to allow their firm to compete more effectively (rated as a very important reason by 63% of responding firm leaders). Other reasons rated as very important by more than half of responding firm leaders include that it was the best way to ensure the survival of the firm (54%), to add additional skills/credentials to their firm (53%), and to allow the firm owners to sell the firm/realize benefits from their investment (51%). Other top reasons included increasing firm profitability, unique attributes of the firm, shoring up against economic uncertainty, and expanding to new markets.

Of all responding firm leaders this month, the majority find it unlikely that they will be acquired by or merge with another firm over the next 3-5 years, with 36% saying

that it is not at all likely, and an additional 28% saying that it is not very likely. Just 5% said that it is very likely, and that share is slightly higher for large firms (7%) and those with a commercial/industrial (8%) and multifamily residential specialization (7%). Responding firm leaders were even less likely to anticipate that their firm would acquire another firm in the next 3-5 years, with nearly half (47%) saying that it is not at all likely and an additional 23% saying that it is not very likely. Overall, 5% said that it is very likely, although that jumps significantly for firms located in the Midwest (12%) and at large firms (13%).

Finally, when asked about overall trends in the industry, nearly two-thirds of responding firm leaders (63%) expect merger and acquisition activity among U.S. architecture firms to increase over the coming 3-5 years. Less than 1% expect that it will decrease, while 18% expect that it will remain at

current levels, and 18% say that they either don't know or indicated some other response. Firm leaders expect that architecture firm acquisitions of/mergers with other architecture firms will by far be the most common type of merger and acquisition activity over the next 3-5 years, with nearly half (48%) selecting it. Just 14% expect that nonarchitecture firm (e.g., interior design, planning, engineering, construction) acquisitions of/mergers with architecture firms will be the most common activity, and 13% expect that architecture firm acquisitions of/mergers with other nonarchitecture firms (e.g., interior design, planning, engineering, construction) will be the most common activity (the remaining 26% said that they either don't know or indicated some other response).

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Out & About

DEEP WESTERN DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS TOUR SHOWCASES CONNECTICUT'S NET-ZERO LEADERSHIP

SEPT 18, 2025

On September 18th, attendees gathered for a tour and presentation at the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) Western District Headquarters, the first net-zero energy building constructed by the executive branch of Connecticut's state government.

Nestled within Black Rock State Park, the 14,500-square-foot facility served as a living example of the state's leadership in sustainable design and energy innovation. Participants explored the building's advanced geothermal, photovoltaic, and Trombe Wall systems, learning how these technologies work together to achieve an impressive 105% energy offset. The tour also highlighted the thoughtful

integration of low-carbon and locally sourced materials, underscoring Connecticut's commitment to reducing embodied carbon and supporting local economies.

Throughout the visit, attendees experienced a comprehensive look at the building's high-performance systems, smart controls, and water conservation strategies. The presenters, Brian Wetzel, Senior Mechanical Engineer, CES (Consulting Engineering Services) and Michael Fortuna, AIA Principal, TLB Architecture, LLC, detailed how the facility balances comfort, functionality, and energy efficiency, setting a benchmark for sustainable public-sector construction.



OCT

22 Committee on Design Presentation: 3 Homes in a Week with Duo Dickinson, FAIA

23 Emerging Professionals (EP) Community Meeting

24 Women in Architecture Coffee Meetups

25 HisTOURy | Greenwich and Stamford Modernism: A Tour of Historic Home Interiors

30 From Compliance to Performance: A Deeper Dive into the Energy Code

NOV

1 HisTOURy | The Architecture of Agriculture: A Tour of Historic Barns and Interiors

5 Net Zero Carbon and the Energy Path Forward for Buildings

Bridging Practice and Innovation: Technology Tools Shaping Architecture Today

Napkin Sketch Competition Ceremony

6 Building Performance & Regulations (BP&R) Meeting

11 Committee on the Environment (COTE) Meeting

The Emerging Professionals Community - ARE Study Group
Fellows Dinner

12 Small Firms Exchange (SFx) Meeting

Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) Knowledge Community Meeting

13 AIA Connecticut Board of Directors Meeting

14 Women in Architecture (WIA) Meeting: Economic Update from AIA Chief Economist Kermit Baker

AIA CONNECTICUT CALENDAR

Series:	Scales	No.
Item Number:		
Product Name:		



You're Invited



**2025 AWARDS
GALA**

December 11

5:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Bristol Event Center, Bristol, CT