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THE DIGITAL MAGAZINE OF AIA CONNECTICUT

Architecture Trends for 2026: From Sustainable to Regenerative, From Smart to Human

7 Questions with AIA's New EVP/CEO

AIA Reopens Its Headquarters as a Net-Zero Global Campus for Architecture & Design™

AIA Leads Federal Advocacy to Protect Access to Professional Architecture Degrees

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As we step into 2026, architecture stands at a meaningful inflection point—defined not only by innovation, but by responsibility. The conversations shaping our profession today extend far beyond form, technology, or efficiency. They speak to care: for the planet, for communities, and for the people who ultimately experience your work.

Our cover story examines *Architecture Trends* for 2026, highlighting a pivotal shift from sustainable to regenerative and from smart to human-centered design. Sustainability alone is no longer sufficient. Regenerative architecture challenges us to give more than we take—restoring ecosystems, strengthening social connections, and creating spaces that actively contribute to health and resilience. At the same time,

as buildings become increasingly intelligent, the profession is reaffirming a fundamental truth: architecture must serve human experience first. Technology should support empathy, well-being, and dignity—not overshadow them.

I'm delighted to include the AIA article "*7 Questions with the American Institute of Architects' new EVP/CEO*," featuring insights from Carole Wedge, FAIA, on national priorities shaping the future of the profession. Her perspective is especially timely as AIA leads by example with the reopening of its headquarters as a Net-Zero Global Campus for Architecture & Design™. More than a renovation, the project demonstrates what is possible when performance, accountability, and design excellence converge.

Advocacy remains a cornerstone of our collective work. In this issue, we highlight AIA's leadership in **federal advocacy to protect access to professional architecture degrees**, reinforcing the importance of equitable and resilient pathways into the profession. We also feature **newly introduced legislation aimed at protecting the People's White House**, underscoring architecture's essential role in preserving civic identity and democratic values.

At the state level, meaningful change is underway as well. From pay raises to housing reform, new Connecticut laws taking effect in 2026 reflect evolving priorities around labor, affordability, and community development.

We're excited to launch our first major event of the year - **Masked Marvels Bowling Night on March 5, 2026**. This high-energy event invites members and guests to connect, unwind, and celebrate together.

As the year unfolds, one thing is clear: architecture's influence has never been greater, nor its responsibility more profound. Thank you for being part of a profession committed to shaping a better future. I am grateful to be part of such a dedicated and inspiring community.

Here's to a bold and purposeful year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gina". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACCT



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At the December AIA CT Board of Directors Orientation meeting, I admitted to the new, emerging Board members and National Representatives that representing AIA CT as 2026 President is a “full-circle” moment for me.

Like many of you, my AIA path started as a young Associate AIA CT member. Elected to serve one year as the Board’s Associate Representative in 1996 (the same year of my licensure), my AIA involvement quickly led into regional and national levels, serving leadership roles with the Intern/Associate Committee (the precursor to today’s NAC), the YAF, and several knowledge committees focused on leadership education and civic engagement. Upon receiving AIA Fellowship in 2017, it weighed on me that for 20 years, my local Chapter involvement was nominal at best. Encouraged by Gina Calabro to get reinvolved locally, I began serving on the Board in 2019, and on the Board Executive Committee in 2023.



And now, as Sir Isaac Newton wrote in 1675, it is time for me to be “standing on the shoulders of giants.” In preparation for my 2026 role, I humbly reflected upon the list of past AIA CT Presidents going back to 1902 – now including 2025 President, Marc Andre. Despite the list’s impressiveness, I am more impressed with the collective and collaborative body of individuals who compose our Chapter and volunteer hours upon hours structuring the programs and events led by our various committees. I have had seven years to see our Chapter’s work from the Board level. We truly represent our profession extraordinarily at the national level. It is not just a few individuals who represent AIA CT, it is all of you!

However, another “full-circle” moment to me is our AIA CT Board and how incredibly diverse in age, gender, race, nationality, firm size, and professional role the individuals serving are. I cannot help but think how much more diverse, and engaged, our Board is today from when I first served as an Associate AIA member. In the year I was born, Whitney Young, Jr. gave a speech at the AIA National Convention calling on our profession to “take a positive stand and become personally involved in the issues of our day.” This call must continue to resonate nearly six decades later for me, our Board, and our Chapter.

Let us not forget this call as we face the challenge of local issues, as well as the national issues we face with today’s current Administration.

With admiration,



F. Michael Ayles, FAIA, NCARB
2026 President, AIA Connecticut

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Architecture Trends for 2026: From Sustainable to Regenerative, From Smart to Human

As we move into 2026, architecture is undergoing a decisive shift—one that goes far beyond efficiency metrics and surface-level sustainability. The next generation of buildings is defined by technological integration paired with profoundly human design values. Architecture is no longer just about reducing harm; it is about actively restoring ecosystems, supporting human wellbeing, and creating spaces that endure culturally, environmentally, and emotionally.

From Sustainability to Regenerative, Climate-Positive Design

The American Institute of Architects champions regenerative design as a strategic imperative, moving beyond mere sustainability to create buildings and communities that actively heal, restore, and renew ecological and social systems, aligning with their goal to lead in creating a healthy, equitable, and resilient future, focusing on deep understanding of place, holistic systems thinking, net-positive outcomes (energy, water, health), and integrating human-nature relationships.

Regenerative architecture focuses on:

- Carbon capture and energy generation, not just reduction
- Living materials such as mycelium composites, algae façades, and bio-based insulation
- Water systems that filter and replenish local aquifers

- Landscapes designed as living infrastructure, restoring biodiversity rather than displacing it

Buildings are increasingly conceived as participants in ecological systems—producing energy, cleaning air and water, and giving more back to their environments than they take.

Biophilic Design Becomes the Baseline

Biophilic Design integrates nature into buildings to boost human health, well-being, and productivity by mimicking natural patterns and providing direct/indirect experiences with nature, aligning with AIA's goals for resilient, healthy, and sustainable environments through frameworks like the Framework for Design Excellence that promote elements like natural light, views, and biomorphic forms for stress reduction and improved cognitive function. Access to natural light, greenery, and organic forms is becoming standard practice across residential, workplace, healthcare, and hospitality architecture.

Key elements include:

- Daylight-optimized layouts and circadian lighting systems
- Integrated greenery, green walls, and internal courtyards
- Organic textures and natural materials that reduce sensory stress
- Multi-sensory wellness design—soundscapes, subtle scent integration, and thermal comfort

The emphasis is on mental clarity, emotional comfort, and long-term health—not just visual appeal.

Hyper-Smart Buildings, Invisibly Embedded

AI and smart systems are no longer add-ons; they are integral to how buildings function and adapt.

Key advancements include:

- AI-driven climate control that learns from occupant behavior
- Adaptive lighting that responds to time of day, use, and mood
- Touchless access, automation, and predictive maintenance
- Deep BIM integration, enabling data-rich collaboration, accuracy, and lifecycle planning

Generative AI supports early-stage ideation, allowing architects to explore thousands of design variations quickly, while BIM ensures precision, coordination, and efficiency from concept to construction.

A Return to Natural, Tactile Materials

In response to years of sterile minimalism and digital overload, 2026 architecture embraces warmth, texture, and material honesty.

Trending materials include:

- Stone and clay with visible imperfections
- Timber species like larch, ebony, and reclaimed woods



- Cork, plywood, and natural composites
- Finishes that patinate and age gracefully over time

Spaces are designed to feel grounded and sensorial—inviting touch, warmth, and emotional connection rather than pristine detachment.

Adaptive Reuse and Circular Design Take Center Stage

One of the most significant shifts is the move away from demolition toward adaptive reuse. Architects are reimagining existing structures—shopping malls, stadiums, warehouses, and office blocks—as universities, cultural centers, housing, and mixed-use community hubs.

This approach emphasizes:

- Reuse of existing materials and structures

- Circular construction methods
- Buildings designed for 100+ year lifespans
- Flexibility to adapt to future social and functional needs
Longevity replaces disposability, with craftsmanship and resilience prioritized over short-term trends.

Blurring the Line Between Indoors and Outdoors

The boundary between inside and outside continues to dissolve. Buildings increasingly maximize views, light, and access to nature through:

- Panoramic windows and expansive glazing
- Sliding panels and flexible façades
- Seamless indoor-outdoor transitions

This connection not only enhances wellbeing but reinforces the idea that architecture exists within nature, not apart from it.

The Future Focus: Timeless, Restorative, Human

Trends for architecture in 2026 is defined by balance—between advanced technology and ancient materials, efficiency and emotion, innovation and longevity. The future is not about chasing trends, but about creating buildings that endure, contribute positively to the planet, and support human life in all its complexity.

The result is a new architectural ethos: regenerative, intelligent, deeply human, and timeless by design.

7 Questions with AIA's New EVP/CEO



By Katherine Flynn

This month, AIA welcomes Carole Wedge, FAIA, as the organization's new executive vice president/chief executive officer. Wedge, who served as the CEO of Boston-based firm Shepley Bulfinch for 17 years, is also the 2020 recipient of the Edward C. Kemper Award, which recognizes a member who has made significant and impactful contributions to the profession through dedicated service to AIA. We chatted with Wedge about her excitement for the work ahead, her favorite project during her time in practice, what she's currently reading, and more. Read on for the full conversation.

Congratulations on your new role! What is most exciting to you about being AIA's EVP/CEO?

Thank you. It's very exciting for me to take on this role. When I sat on the 2024 board, I could see the opportunity for better connection and communication and [to help] people understand the great things that AIA does. What I'm most excited about is connecting the dots between local chapters, members, and [AIA] National [as well as] the affiliate organizations that we work with. I am excited about working with Illya Azaroff and the AIA Board this year on some critically important issues, including climate and resilient design—helping our members navigate a rapidly changing world.

[That means making our work] real for members. But it also means listening deeply and understanding what's going on with them on the ground as

well as welcoming them to the rejuvenated headquarters: the Global Campus for Architecture & Design [GCAD™].

It's a wonderful net zero adaptive renovation of the 1970s headquarters building that's designed to be member focused. It's really our members' building. We are trying to get the word out that [members] can use it for meetings or retreats. Even if they're in D.C. for another reason, they can work here.

We'll circle back to GCAD, but I wanted to talk about your long and amazing tenure at Shepley Bulfinch, starting in the mailroom! What were some of the most significant changes you witnessed in the profession during that span?



There are so many. I think it's related to the way we're thinking about AI: There were such dramatic technological changes, and people were worried and concerned about how firms were going to navigate [those changes]. I was at Shepley for 37 years, navigating the waves of technological change, culture change, and the economic cycles that impacted how we did our work.

We did a study in the 2000s when BIM was just being explored. We looked at how many drawings and specifications it took to build Sever Hall [at Harvard University] when H.H. Richardson was working in the firm [in the 1870s]; how many drawings and specifications it took to build the River Houses at Harvard [in the 1940s]; and then, fast

forward, how many drawings and specification pages we created for a new law school building at Georgetown [in the 2000s].

It was exponential [in terms of] the amount of information that we created. As I remember, there were 10 or 15 drawings in total for this big classroom building, Sever Hall, at Harvard, and then it was 100 pages [for the River Houses], and 500 pages [for the Georgetown Law School building].

I think AI could help us consolidate information while also helping contractors and suppliers navigate all the specifications that we give them, so we might connect the industry in more thoughtful ways. I really believe that that we're better when we work together.

When I joined Shepley Bulfinch, there was one woman principal, Elizabeth Erickson, [FAIA]. I was so excited that there was a firm that had a woman principal—I thought that was so progressive in 1986. Unfortunately, I was the next woman principal, something like 14 years later. The firm articulated diversity as a goal in 2000. It was amazing how just saying that out loud drew a lot of different people to the firm and created a [culture different from one that was] white male dominated. (Many of those white men were fabulous mentors to me.)

[The culture] was always very people-centric, but exactly what the firm looked like in terms of race and gender and country of origin shifted dramatically over the course of 40 years.



What was your favorite project that you worked on during your time at Shepley Bulfinch?

It's hard to pick one, but I was asked to focus on libraries early on. I was always a library kid: In the summer, I would get on my bike and ride to the library.

For the first 10 or 15 years, I was working in higher education and in libraries around the country and, in fact, around the world. [At first], there wasn't an internet. Five or 10 years in, technology was suddenly transforming the way librarians were working. To work with clients when they were going through a transformative time was very exciting because you could reinvent the rules. People were open to innovation and new ways of thinking about space, about how students, faculty and the broader community should engage the library.

I think my favorite project is the Austin Public Library. We did that project with AIA Honor Award winners Lake Flato. My favorite part of the building is the roof terrace, which has solar panels as the shade structure. They now rent it out for weddings. It's so popular—whenever you go there, the roof terrace is always busy and full of all different kinds of people.

You shared with AIA staff that you're an avid reader. What are you reading these days?

It's called "Terms of Respect: How Colleges Get Free Speech Right." It's by the president of Princeton University [Christopher L. Eisgruber]. He's talking about how media is influencing our dialogue and how when people don't agree, they need to talk more, not less, and how that dialogue contributes to creating community.

I think that's relevant to AIA because we have so many members in so many locations, and everyone's different. You need to create a climate where people share ideas, and even if they don't agree, they want to talk more and learn from each other.

Let's talk about GCAD. What is your favorite design aspect of the new global campus?

The philosophy that it's for the members. The first couple of times I visited headquarters, I was a relatively young leader, and was just trying to figure out, "What is this building for and how does it work?" Everyone was very welcoming, but it felt very AIA staff-centric and board-centric, I would say. Sort of closed and mysterious.

Now, it's the opposite of that. It is so open and welcoming. It's a building that will hold the energy of all the great activities in it.

Is there anything else you would like to share with members?

I would love to hear from them. I'm going to be traveling a lot this year and looking for opportunities to engage wherever I go. I'd like to connect the next generation of architects with our leaders, fellows, and those who can be great mentors to them.

Relationships built through engaging with AIA have truly made a difference for me in my career. Engagement is the magic of AIA—it is where you really blossom and grow a network and feel like you're part of this incredibly supportive community. I'm excited about cross-pollinating. I think that's my metaphor: I'm a pollinator this year.

Any other work that you'd like to highlight?

We are being very deliberate in advocating for architecture and those things that affect architects—particularly [regarding] the Department of Education classification change. We're being very vocal and visible. Look for us on LinkedIn and look for [Chief Advocacy Officer] Alexander Cochran on LinkedIn. We're pushing hard on policy—making our national AIA voice visible and building a coalition across the built environment and design education.

I want people to know how much effort we're putting into connecting the dots and advocating for the things that really affect our members [as well as] the impact we can have on climate and communities. And I want them to know that at AIA, we are committed to enhancing the value and success of the profession.

My hope that we can inspire members to take climate and disaster response training with AIA or their local chapter. The climate crisis will continue, and the extreme weather will impact all of our communities. Architects need to be engaged and ready to support the response to climate realities in compassionate and effective ways. We can learn from each other and communities around the world.

Katherine Flynn is AIA's director, digital content.



AIA

STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

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AIA Reopens Its Headquarters as a Net-Zero Global Campus for Architecture & Design



Bold, forward-looking, and deeply rooted in stewardship, the American Institute of Architects has reopened its Washington, D.C., headquarters as the AIA Global Campus for Architecture & Design™—a reimagined home that reflects the profession's values while setting a powerful precedent for sustainable retrofit at scale.

Reinaugurated in December after an extensive, the project transforms AIA's 1973 Brutalist headquarters, originally designed by The Architects' Collaborative, into one of the nation's first fully decarbonized major renovation projects. The result is a living demonstration of the AIA's 2030 Commitment—achieved five years ahead of schedule—and a vibrant cultural destination just steps from the White House and the National Mall.

Rather than replacing its headquarters, the AIA chose preservation and adaptive reuse as a climate strategy. By retaining and upgrading the existing

181,000-square-foot structure, the project captures significant embodied carbon savings while modernizing the building's performance, comfort, and public presence. The renovation carries an estimated cost of \$60 million, with total investment potentially reaching \$70 million once tenant improvements and landscaping are complete.

Early design studies targeted a dramatic reduction in energy use, ultimately achieving a 58 percent decrease through high-performance glazing, envelope improvements, efficient lighting, and electrification. Inefficient systems—including gas-fired boilers and single-pane windows—were replaced, setting the building on course for LEED Platinum and WELL Building Standard certifications.

Architecture That Works Harder

One of the most striking interventions is the new façade strategy. Where continuous bands of single-pane glass once defined the building, structurally

independent photovoltaic arrays now serve as solar shades for double-pane, UV-coated glazing. These panels both generate clean energy and mitigate solar gain—addressing long-standing comfort issues that once plagued interior workspaces. A forthcoming rooftop solar installation will bring total on-site capacity to approximately 125 kW.

The building is now fully electric, with rooftop heat pumps replacing fossil-fuel-based heating. Rainwater capture systems funnel runoff into four underground cisterns with a combined capacity of nearly 5,000 gallons, supplying filtered greywater for toilets and landscape irrigation.

Inside, efficient luminaires illuminate flexible work areas, while selective ceiling cutouts reveal the original coffered concrete above—honoring the building's Brutalist roots while refreshing its material palette.



Biophilia, Wellness, and Human Experience

At the heart of the interior transformation is a strong commitment to biophilic design. Cascading plantings connect the building's lower levels, anchored by a new wooden stair that descends through a floor opening beside the original lobby stair. Suspended greenery visually links all three floors, softening the concrete structure and reinforcing a sense of continuity and life.

Natural materials, ample daylight, and interior planting are paired with practical wellness strategies: ergonomic furniture, quiet focus

areas, wellness rooms, showers, bike parking, and flexible meeting spaces that support a range of working styles. Together, these elements position the headquarters as a healthy, inclusive environment for staff, visitors, and collaborators alike.

A Campus for the Public

The Global Campus extends beyond a single building. It encompasses the renovated headquarters, the historic Octagon Museum – AIA's first home, completed in 1801 – and a courtyard that bridges the two. Landscape design highlights native gardens and preserves a

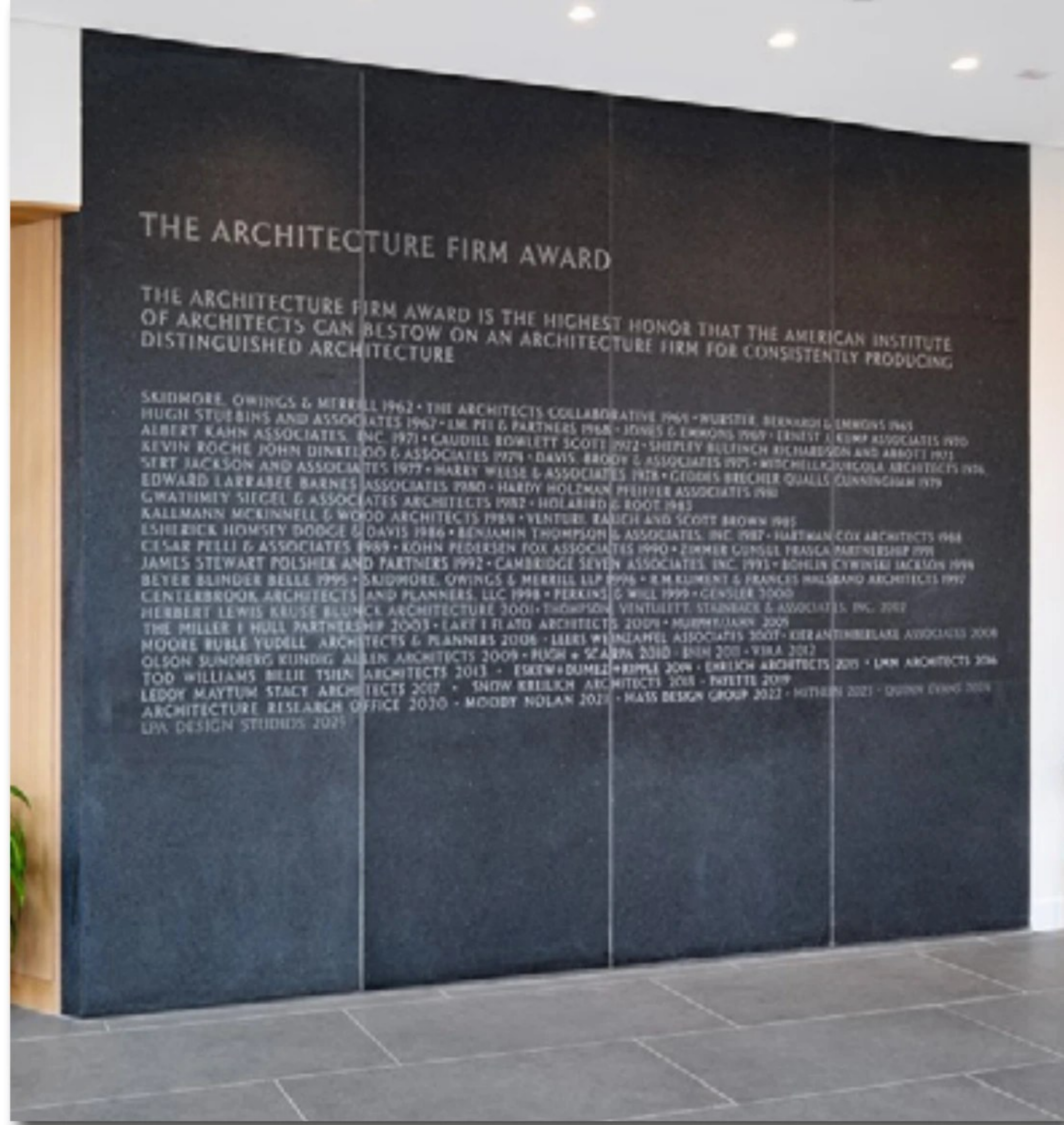
heritage willow oak, reinforcing the campus's role as an urban oasis and civic gathering space.

Open to the public on weekdays, the campus offers a range of visitor experiences: rotating exhibitions, lectures, and special events; an augmented-reality walking tour; a design-focused retail shop; and a café operated by Grace Street Coffee Roasters. Throughout the public areas, interpretive displays explain the building's sustainable features, turning the headquarters into both a workplace and an educational tool.

A Model for the Profession

The renovation carefully balances reverence for history with contemporary performance. Many original elements—including the Architecture Firm Award wall—were preserved, while outdated materials were replaced with systems that reduce operational and carbon impacts. Even the new exterior solar shades, likened by some to “clip-on sunglasses,” reflect a pragmatic, forward-looking response to a midcentury façade designed in an era less concerned with energy performance.

Ultimately, the AIA Global Campus for Architecture & Design™ stands as more than a headquarters. It is a tangible case study demonstrating that existing buildings—even bespoke modernist ones—can be transformed to meet and exceed today’s climate, wellness, and performance standards. In choosing retrofit over replacement, the AIA sends a clear message to the profession: the future of architecture is not only about what we build next, but how wisely we renew what we already have.



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AIA Leads Federal Advocacy to Protect Access to Professional Architecture Degrees

The American Institute of Architects is intensifying its federal advocacy to protect access to graduate architectural education, as recent policy changes threaten to limit federal student loan availability for architecture students. Through sustained engagement with lawmakers, federal agencies, and partner organizations, AIA is working to ensure that architecture is properly recognized as a professional program—and that future architects can afford the education required for licensure.

At the center of this effort is growing concern over the U.S. Department of Education's narrow interpretation of "professional programs" under recent federal budget legislation. That interpretation, shaped by changes enacted under the Trump-era "Big Beautiful Bill," reduces federal loan limits for certain graduate students and risks excluding architecture programs from higher borrowing thresholds traditionally available to professional degrees.

Architecture is a licensed profession that requires extensive formal education, typically

through a Master of Architecture (MArch) followed by supervised experience and examination. These programs are accredited, intensive, and costly—often spanning multiple years beyond a bachelor's degree.

Despite this reality, the Department of Education's current interpretation would cap federal loan access at \$20,500 per year for many architecture students, an amount that falls far short of covering tuition and living expenses. Without adequate federal loan options, students may be forced to turn to higher-cost private loans, delay graduation, or abandon the profession altogether.

AIA has made clear that this outcome contradicts both Congressional intent and the long-standing treatment of architecture alongside other recognized professional fields such as medicine, law, engineering, education, and public health.

AIA's work on this issue has helped catalyze legislative action aimed at restoring fairness and clarity in federal student aid policy. Recently introduced legislation— including the Professional Degree Access

Restoration Act— would amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to reinstate full federal loan limits for graduate and professional students.

The bill was introduced by Congressman Ritchie Torres (NY-15), following direct engagement with AIA and aligned organizations. The legislation would reverse recent loan limit reductions and ensure that students pursuing advanced professional degrees are not forced into private lending markets with fewer consumer protections.

While the bill applies broadly to graduate and professional students, its implications for architecture are particularly significant. Restoring higher federal loan limits would help realign federal policy with the actual cost and structure of accredited architecture programs and reaffirm architecture's status as a profession essential to public health, safety, and welfare.

Beyond supporting specific legislation, AIA is pursuing a longer-term policy objective: ensuring that architects are explicitly included in the federal definition of "professionals." This definition influences not



only student loan policy but also how federal programs and agencies recognize the role and responsibilities of licensed architects.

Why This Matters for the Future of the Profession

Graduate and professional students already represent some of the most financially burdened borrowers in the federal system. For architecture students, whose education pathway is longer and more prescriptive than many fields, access to affordable federal loans is not optional—it is foundational.

Policies that underestimate the cost or complexity of architectural education risk shrinking the pipeline of future architects, discouraging students from lower-income backgrounds, and undermining the profession's efforts to build a more diverse and representative workforce.

AIA's advocacy on this issue reflects its broader commitment to protecting the profession and those who aspire to enter it. Ensuring that federal policy aligns with educational reality is essential to maintaining a strong, resilient architectural workforce capable of serving communities nationwide.

How You Can Support AIA's Efforts

AIA encourages architects, students, and educators to engage in this advocacy at every level:

Contact your Members of Congress. Share why architecture should be recognized as a professional program and express support for legislation restoring graduate loan access. Personal stories are powerful.

Prepare to submit a public comment. Think about how reduced federal loan limits would

have affected your education—or how they could affect future architects. Encourage colleagues and students to participate.

Share your experience with AIA. Architects, students, faculty, and recent graduates who relied on federal loans for MArch degrees are invited to share their stories. Accounts describing how a \$20,500 annual cap would impact access to education can be sent to govaff@aia.org.

Engage your institution. Encourage your architecture school dean and university leadership to join AIA's advocacy efforts and coordinate with other affected institutions.

Through coordinated legislative action, regulatory engagement, and grassroots participation, AIA is working to ensure that architecture remains recognized, accessible, and attainable for generations to come.



Legislation Introduced to Protect the People's White House

Representative Jamie Raskin (MD-08) has introduced new legislation aimed at preserving the historic integrity of the White House and restoring public oversight of major alterations to the nation's most iconic civic building. The People's White House Historic Preservation Act would require any significant renovation of the White House to undergo a formal public review process before construction begins.

The legislation follows President Donald Trump's decision to demolish the White House East Wing and move forward with plans for a large ballroom expansion funded by wealthy donors and corporate interests. Critics argue the project threatens the historic character of the White House and bypasses long-standing norms of transparency and public input.

If enacted, the bill would eliminate the White House's statutory exemption from Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, which requires federal agencies to evaluate

the impact of construction projects on historic properties. The legislation would mandate that any proposed White House renovation be reviewed by both the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), including opportunities for public comment, prior to breaking ground.

Under the review process, if stakeholders determine that proposed changes could adversely affect the historic property, the parties would be required to negotiate a resolution and document it through a formal agreement. If no agreement can be reached, the proposal would be elevated to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, which would determine whether the project may proceed.

Although the White House has historically been exempt from Section 106 requirements, previous presidents have voluntarily submitted renovation plans for public review as a matter of best practice. President Trump has declined to do so. In

October 2025, he removed all members of the Commission of Fine Arts, further raising concerns among preservation advocates about the accelerated approval of the project.

In December, the National Trust for Historic Preservation filed suit seeking to halt construction of the ballroom, citing potential damage to the historic property and violations of preservation norms.

The People's White House Historic Preservation Act is cosponsored by more than two dozen House members from across the country.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) is actively monitoring upcoming public meetings of the NCPC and CFA where plans for the ballroom expansion are expected to be discussed. AIA emphasized that legislative action of this scope is possible only because of sustained grassroots advocacy, noting that architects sent more than 12,000 letters to members of Congress last year on historic preservation and public process issues alone.

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From Pay Raises to Housing Reform, New Connecticut Laws Reshape 2026

Connecticut entered 2026 with a slate of new laws designed to address economic pressures, housing availability, health care access, and public safety across the state. The changes, which took effect January 1, reflect lawmakers' efforts to respond to shifting social and financial conditions affecting residents in nearly every community.

Among the most immediate impacts is a boost to the state's minimum wage. The hourly rate increased to \$16.94 under a law that automatically adjusts wages based on economic indicators. Supporters say the increase helps workers manage rising living costs, while business groups warn that higher payroll expenses could strain employers, particularly small businesses.

Housing policy is another major focus of the new legislation. Towns and cities are now required to take more concrete steps to plan for additional housing, including revising zoning regulations and documenting how they will meet local housing demand. Lawmakers say the goal is to ease Connecticut's persistent housing shortage, with an emphasis on expanding affordable options. In a related move, the state has prohibited certain forms of "hostile architecture" in public spaces—such as benches or structures designed to prevent people from resting—arguing that public areas should remain accessible and humane.

Several measures directly affect homeowners. New protections limit the authority of condominium associations to

block residents from installing solar panels, so long as installations comply with safety and structural standards. Legislators say the change is intended to encourage renewable energy use and give residents more control over energy costs. Another law narrows the timeframe in which lenders may initiate foreclosure proceedings, generally capping it at 10 years after a loan ends or the final payment is made.

Supporters say the rule provides clarity and stronger consumer protections in the housing market.

Health care regulations also saw significant updates. New limits on insurance "step therapy" practices mean that, for certain serious conditions, insurers can no longer delay coverage by requiring patients to try lower-cost medications first. Patient advocates say the law prioritizes medical judgment and timely care, while insurers have raised concerns about potential cost increases.



Additional laws focus on transparency and safety. The Department of Correction must now create a detailed plan for implementing body-worn cameras in state prisons, with lawmakers reviewing the proposal. Meanwhile, new tools will be provided to help drivers with disabilities communicate more effectively with law enforcement during traffic stops or emergencies.

State officials note that these January changes represent only part of the legislative agenda, with several additional laws scheduled to take effect later in 2026.



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Award Winners Share Their EDI Strategies



January 20, 2026
12:30pm - 2:00pm



Expert Witness: Love Them. Hate Them. Become One?

By Scott Smith

In the A/E world, the phrase 'expert witness' (hereafter 'Expert') can bring to mind many thoughts. Some pleasant, some unpleasant, depending on the memory. Many professionals in the A/E industry have encountered situations where an expert witness' contributions didn't quite meet expectations. Sometimes, their credentials may not have aligned with the complexity of the case, or their investigative approach may have left gaps. In such instances, the conclusions drawn may not have held up under scrutiny, highlighting the importance of thorough vetting and preparation.

There are many well-respected Experts with excellent backgrounds resulting from their experience, education, judgment, and demeanor. That doesn't mean the Expert cannot be wrong. They are human, like the rest of us, and are fallible. While some expert witnesses may appear to tailor their opinions to align with the interests of the party that retained them, others maintain a steadfast commitment to objectivity and integrity. These professionals offer independent analysis, guided by facts and sound methodology. The expert witness field is broad and diverse, with thousands of practitioners across disciplines. Many build successful careers by offering specialized insights that help clarify complex issues in legal disputes.

What makes an Expert different than an ordinary witness? An ordinary witness usually has firsthand knowledge of something

about the matter. An ordinary witness could be a contractor, an owner's rep, a laborer, or anyone else who has personal knowledge of some issue involved in the dispute. The Expert, on the other hand, does not base their testimony on firsthand knowledge. The Expert examines the problem from the perspective of an unrelated third party.

The Expert is usually retained by legal counsel retained by one of the parties to a dispute. A judge or an arbitrator must rule that a witness is qualified as an Expert. To make this determination, the judge/arbitrator examines the educational background, credentials, experience, certifications, research, and other indicators of supposed expertise. Qualification as an expert witness is not automatic. While most experts present solid credentials, there are rare instances where background details, such as education or experience, may not fully support the designation.

An expert witness's demeanor, how they present themselves to a judge, arbitrator, or jury, can significantly influence the effectiveness of their testimony. Credibility, clarity, and relatability often play a key role in how their opinions are received. Experts who communicate confidently and respectfully, while demonstrating genuine expertise, tend to be more persuasive. In some cases, even when technical findings are challenged, a well-composed and articulate expert can help reinforce the strength of a case.

Managing the expert witness process requires careful planning,

effective communication, and adherence to established legal standards and procedures. It's crucial to select the right expert, prepare them thoroughly, and ensure their testimony is clear, concise, and relevant to the case. Effective management also includes understanding the expert's role, managing their time and resources effectively, and preparing for potential challenges that may arise during depositions and trials.

If you are a party to a dispute and your legal counsel retains an Expert, you should never sit back and let your lawyer control this entire process. You must provide your input to your lawyer. It is your reputation on the line, so never abandon this aspect of a dispute to your lawyer. See if you can poke holes in the background of your Expert. Try to poke holes in their investigation and conclusions. The party opposing you is certainly going to try to do these things, so you should do the same ahead of time.

Honest, qualified Experts are always in demand. If you are comfortable providing your opinion and facing pushback or someone questioning your conclusions, consider trying to offer Expert testimony. Talk to your legal counsel who has represented you before. Talk to your professional liability agent. Discuss the benefits and drawbacks with others offering expert testimony. Providing expert witness services can be a rewarding and lucrative endeavor, but it comes with a unique set of benefits and risks that potential experts should carefully consider.



Benefits

- **Significant income potential:** Expert witnesses often command high hourly rates, which can be a substantial source of income. Depending on the field of specialization and experience, an expert witness can typically earn between \$500 and \$ 1,000 per hour on average. Considering a typical case might require at least 10 hours of work, this translates to a considerable amount of money.
- **Intellectual stimulation and continued learning:** Analyzing complex cases and preparing detailed reports can be intellectually challenging and provide opportunities for continuous learning and professional development. Examining mistakes made by others, especially in fields such as medicine, can also serve as a valuable learning experience that can improve one's practice.
- **Career opportunities beyond traditional roles:** Expert witnessing can provide an alternative career path, particularly for those nearing retirement, as it allows individuals to leverage their extensive experience and knowledge in a less physically demanding capacity.
- **Making a difference in legal proceedings:** Expert witnesses play a crucial role in ensuring fair and just outcomes in legal cases by providing objective, fact-based information that can clarify complex issues for judges and juries. Their testimony can be instrumental in shaping the outcome of lawsuits, particularly in technical or scientific cases.
- **Flexibility and remote work possibilities:** Much of the work involved in expert witnessing, such as reviewing documents and preparing reports, can often be done remotely from a home office, offering a degree of flexibility.

Risks

- **Heightened scrutiny and challenges to credibility:** Expert witnesses will inevitably have their credentials, methods, and objectivity scrutinized and challenged by opposing parties. Maintaining an objective and unbiased stance, even when findings don't favor the hiring party, is critical to maintaining credibility.
- **Potential for legal liability:** Historically, expert witnesses enjoyed immunity from civil lawsuits related to their testimony. However, this immunity has eroded, and experts may now face legal action for negligence in forming or presenting opinions, ethical violations, or biased/unsubstantiated testimony.
- **Disciplinary actions and reputational harm:** Engaging in unethical conduct, providing misleading testimony, or misrepresenting credentials can lead to disciplinary actions from professional organizations and state licensing boards. A poor performance in court or disciplinary action can also damage an expert's professional reputation and future opportunities.
- **Time commitment and pressure:** Expert witnessing can be time-consuming, requiring significant effort for research, report writing, preparation for depositions, and court appearances. The pressure to perform well under cross-examination and the adversarial nature of legal proceedings can be emotionally taxing.
- **Potential for conflicts of interest:** Experts must be careful to avoid situations where personal, professional, or financial relationships could be perceived as compromising their objectivity and impartiality.

- **Impact on personal life and privacy:** Expert witnesses may face questions about their personal life and finances during legal proceedings. Being the subject of public record requests can also be time-consuming and stressful.

It is essential for aspiring expert witnesses to thoroughly understand these benefits and risks before embarking with this type of work. Consulting with experienced legal counsel and reviewing relevant professional standards and guidelines can help mitigate potential risks and ensure an ethical and successful experience as an expert witness.

The above material is provided for informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice. Before taking any action that could have legal or other significant consequences, consult with a qualified professional who can provide guidance tailored to your unique circumstances.

Scott Smith
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The 2025 AIA Strategic Council Year in Review

The 2025 Year in Review Journal marks a milestone moment for the AIA Strategic Council, capturing a year defined by innovation, collaboration, and forward momentum. Serving as both a record of progress and a strategic compass, the publication documents how the Council advanced critical initiatives while helping position the Institute—and the profession—for the decade ahead.

Throughout 2025, the Strategic Council expanded its role as a representative and visionary body, strengthening communication across the AIA ecosystem and deepening engagement with members, components, and emerging leaders. Early coordination of study groups enhanced monthly reporting, and intentional collaboration with the Young Architects Forum, National Associates Committee, and AIAS created a more connected and inclusive framework for collective work. The Council also championed the AIA Artificial Intelligence Policy Resolution, which passed with overwhelming support at AIA25, underscoring

the Institute’s commitment to responsible innovation.

At the heart of the Year in Review are the Study Group Executive Reports, which explore the most pressing forces shaping architecture’s future. The 10-Year Valuation & Future Blueprint study examined AIA governance and advanced recommendations for a more agile, transparent, and member-centered co-governance model. Architect of the Future reframed architectural practice as a form of care, emphasizing civic leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, and expanded societal impact. AIA of the Future addressed membership, partnerships, and strategic planning, offering pathways to strengthen relevance and grow the Institute beyond 2030.

Other studies focused squarely on practice and impact. Resilient Practice Models identified structural, cultural, and research-based gaps threatening long-term firm viability, while proposing tools to strengthen leadership pipelines and evidence-based practice. Digital Architecture extended multi-year work on artificial intelligence, examining equity,

business risk, and wellbeing while reinforcing the need for ethical, accessible, and forward-looking digital frameworks. Connected Communities explored how architects can more effectively support municipalities of all sizes through planning, policy, and civic leadership roles, including expanded City and Community Architect models. Finally, Climate Responsive Design & Leadership delivered practical, accessible tools through the monthly “Climate Corner,” helping firms translate climate ambition into everyday action.

Together, these efforts reflect a year of strategic clarity and collective purpose. The 2025 Year in Review Journal not only celebrates what has been achieved, but also lays the groundwork for continued leadership, innovation, and impact—affirming the Strategic Council’s role as a catalyst for meaningful change across the Institute and the profession.

[Download the report](#)



CONNECTICUT
ARCHITECTURE
FOUNDATION

By Nancy Clayton, AIA

Welcomes New Board Members

The Connecticut Architecture Foundation is pleased to welcome four new members to the Board of Directors for three-year terms.



Joyce Hsiang, AIA

Assistant Professor, Yale School of Architecture, and Principal, Plan B Architecture and Urbanism

Joyce Hsiang is an Assistant Professor at the Yale School of Architecture, where she has also served as Director of Undergraduate Studies in Urban Studies, Chair of Admissions, and Assistant Dean of Students. As Principal of Plan B Architecture and Urbanism in New Haven, her work was exhibited in the 2025 Venice Architecture Biennale. In 2013, her firm was awarded the prestigious Latrobe Prize by the AIA College of Fellows. Joyce's prior experience includes positions at the Office for Metropolitan Architecture in Rotterdam and at Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects in New Haven. Joyce will be a great advocate for the needs of current architecture students in her role as a CAF Board member.



David LoCascio

Architectural Sales Manager at Woodbury Supply Company

Dave LoCascio holds a B.F.A. and a B.Arch. from the Rhode Island School of Design. He has worked as a fenestration consultant since 1999, specializing in Marvin products for residential and commercial applications. His background in architecture provides valuable insight into design challenges and solutions, from simple residential replacements to complex commercial projects, and allows him to merge aesthetics with performance requirements. As a longtime supporter of the Connecticut Architecture Foundation, Dave served as a guest juror on the CAF Scholarship Committee in 2025. Dave has a particular interest in helping recruit and retain current architecture students to practice in Connecticut.



Julia McFadden, AIA

Principal at QA+M Architecture

In addition to being a registered architect, Julia McFadden is an Accredited Learning Environment Planner and a trained Feng Shui Practitioner who brings a unique perspective to her architectural practice. Julia started her architectural training in Minneapolis where she earned both a B. Arch. and a B.A. in Theater Arts from University of Minnesota. Since relocating to Connecticut in 2008, Julia has developed specialized expertise in educational and cultural projects, combining her diverse backgrounds to create thoughtful, human-centered design solutions. Julia has written and spoken at conferences about her innovative approaches to architecture for K-12 school design.



Amy Samuelson, AIA

AIA Connecticut's 2026 President-Elect and Principal at SLAM

Amy first joined the SLAM Collaborative in 2008 and now brings over 30 years of architectural and leadership experience to her role as SLAM's Chief Talent Officer. A licensed architect and LEED Accredited Professional, she blends design expertise with a strong commitment to people, culture, and professional growth. Amy leads firmwide initiatives in talent strategy, recruitment, career development, and engagement, ensuring SLAM's teams feel supported and empowered. Her longstanding connection to the firm and passion for mentoring continue to shape a collaborative, people-first culture. Amy's strong commitment as an AIA CT Board member will bring valuable integration between our two Boards which share many objectives.

These new Board members join the following continuing Directors in advancing the Connecticut Architecture Foundation's mission: To raise and award funds to advance education and professional growth in the field of architecture in Connecticut.

CAF officers:

Nancy Clayton, AIA

CAF President and Associate Principal at Pickard Chilton Architects

Alan Paradis, RA

CAF Vice President and Principal at Alan Paradis Architecture & Planning

Ilona Prosol, PE

CAF Secretary and Senior Vice President at Salas O'Brien

Randall Anway, AIA

CAF Treasurer and Principal at New Tapestry

Neil Hauck, AIA

CAF Assistant Treasurer and Principal at Neil Hauck Architects

Robert Swain, AIA

CAF Past President, Principal at Amenta/Emma

Returning Board Members:

Marc Andre, AIA

Principal at Marc G Andre Architects

Michael Ayles, FAIA

Principal at Antinozzi Associates

Jay Brotman, FAIA

Principal at FCA

Michael Crosbie, FAIA

Professor of Architecture at the University of Hartford

Tanya Cutolo, AIA

New London Studio Leader at Silver Petrucelli

Thomas Haskell, AIA

Senior Project Manager at the University of Connecticut

Art Sanders, AIA

Emeritus formerly with Hoffmann Architects

Emily Sperini, AIA

Architect with the SLAM Collaborative

Kermit Thompson, FAIA Emeritus

Connecticut DAS Office of School Construction and Review



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followed by
a reception and dinner

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The AIA/Deltek Architecture Billings Index (ABI) score for November was 45.3, marking the 13th consecutive month of declining billings at architecture firms, and the 35th month of a score below 50 out of the last 38.

The AIA/Deltek Architecture Billings Index (ABI) score for November was 45.3, marking the 13th consecutive month of declining billings at architecture firms, and the 35th month of a score below 50 out of the last 38.

Inquiries into new projects only increased modestly this month, and the value of newly signed design contracts continued to soften. Firms are unlikely to see a significant increase in billings until work in the pipeline resumes.

“Weakness in business conditions at architecture firms continues to be



widespread, with declining billings across all major specializations and in every region except the Midwest,” said Kermit Baker, PhD, AIA Chief Economist. “However, inquiries for new projects continued to increase, and design activity at firms in the Midwest - a region that traditionally has had a disproportionate share of manufacturing activity - appears to have hit its bottom for this cycle and is expected to continue to improve.”

Key ABI highlights for November include:

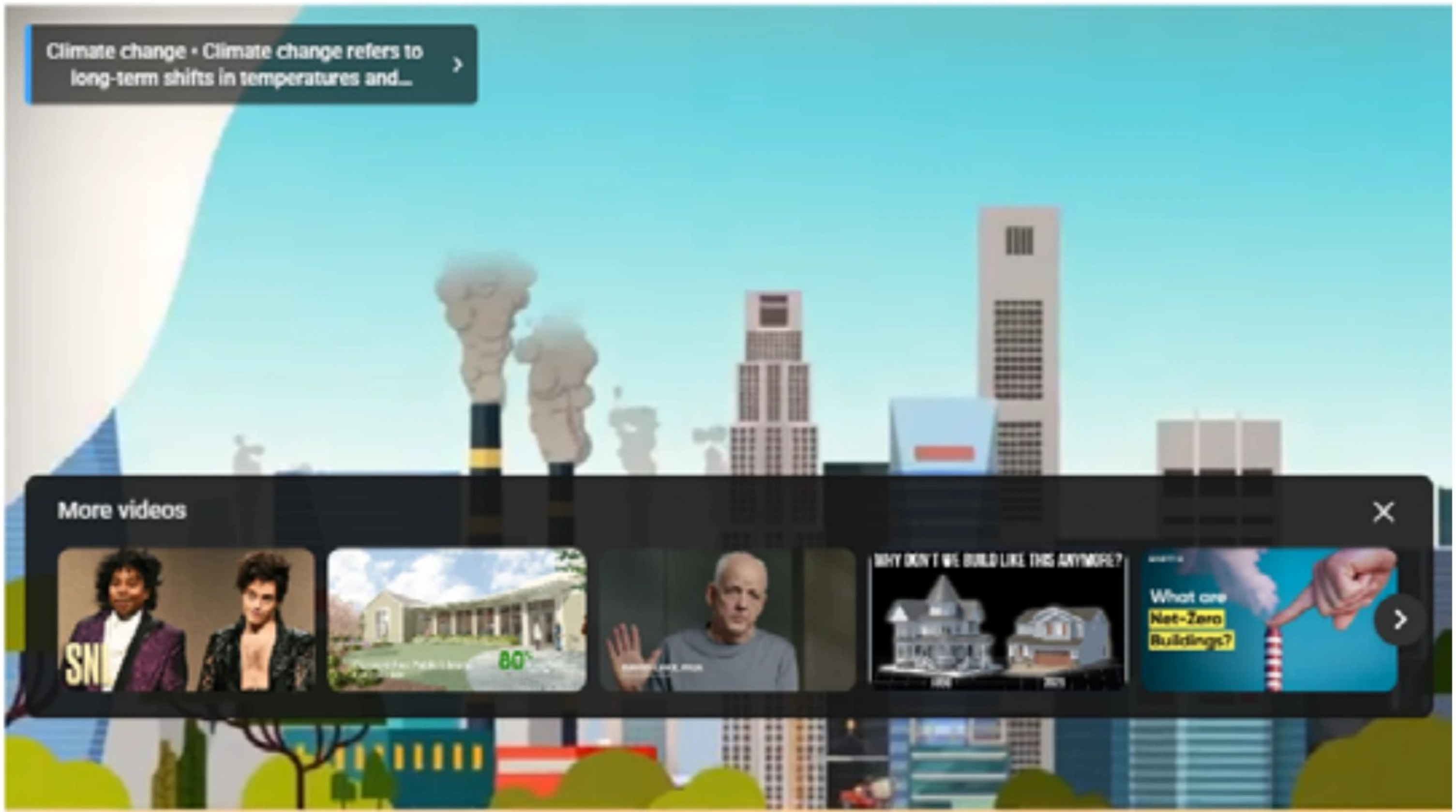
- Regional averages: Midwest (52.3); South (46.1); West (43.6); Northeast (43.1)
- Sector index breakdown: institutional (47.6); multifamily residential (46.6); commercial/industrial (45.2); mixed practice (firms that do not have at least

half of their billings in any one other category) (44.5)

- Project inquiries index: 51.4
- Design contracts index: 42.7

The regional and sector categories are calculated as three-month moving averages and may not always average out to the national score.

Access resources to help architects successfully navigate an uncertain economy.



The AIA 2030 Commitment

The AIA 2030 Commitment is an actionable climate strategy that gives us a set of standards and goals for reaching net zero emissions in the built environment. Join more than 1,350 architecture firms who have already made the commitment.

Let's get to carbon neutral, together.

The latest climate data tells us that reducing carbon emissions is not enough. To make the biggest impact, we must all commit to net zero emissions by 2030—a path that requires strong, immediate action. Since the built environment creates

a staggering 40% of the world's emissions, architects, engineers, and owners play a key role.

In 2005, [Architecture 2030](#) issued the 2030 Challenge. The initiative comprised incremental carbon reduction goals over a 25-year timeline that were consistent with those called for by the global scientific community at the time. In response, AIA created the AIA 2030 Commitment to give firms a framework to track their progress towards net zero. More than [1,350 signatory firms](#) have already committed to reaching carbon neutrality by 2030. Are you ready to join them?

- Validate design approaches for energy savings.
- Create a firm culture that values sustainable design.
- Benchmark your firm's progress and impact and use it to help recruit staff or win projects.
- Be part of a community that is working to design a better world, together.

[Join the AIA 2030 Commitment](#)



AIA SAFETY ASSESSMENT PROGRAM: SAP Training

Get certified to assess buildings for safety after a disaster.

One of the best ways architects, engineers, or certified building inspectors can support communities after a disaster is serving as building evaluators through the Safety Assessment Program (SAP) Training Program.

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JAN

- 15** Emerging Professionals (EP) Community Meeting
Building Performance & Regulations (BP&R) Meeting
- 19** AIA CT Office Closed - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 20** Learning from Leaders: Award Winners Share Their EDI Strategies
Committee on the Environment (COTE) Meeting on C. Scale with Jack Rusk
- 21** Professional Practice Knowledge Community Meeting
- 22** Committee on Design Meeting
- 27** Committee Co-Chairs and National Representatives Meeting

FEB

- 4** Safety Assessment Program (SAP) TrainingEDI Knowledge Community Meeting
- 5** Safety Assessment Program (SAP) Training
Building Performance & Regulations (BP&R) Meeting
NOMAct | Salsa Night In New Haven
- 9** Alice Washburn Awards Registration Opens
Committee on the Environment - Technical Tutorial on Rhino plug-ins with Cannon Design
- 10** Allied Advisory Council Meeting
Energy Storage Systems in Connecticut: Requirements, Challenges, and Lessons Learned
- 11** AIA Leadership Summit 2026
Small Firms Exchange (SFx) Meeting
- 12** AIA Leadership Summit 2026
- 13** AIA Leadership Summit 2026
Women in Architecture (WIA) Knowledge Community Meetings
- 14** AIA Leadership Summit 2026
- 16** AIA CT Office Closed - Presidents Day

AIA CONNECTICUT CALENDAR

Series:	Scales	No.
Item Number:		
Product Name:		

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