

January 2026

ARCHITYPE

THE DIGITAL MAGAZINE OF AIA CONNECTICUT

Advocacy

AIA Hill Day

**AIA Government Affairs
and Public Policy**

**2026 State of the State Focuses
on Affordability, Education, and
Stability**

**Teaching Architecture
in the Age of AI**

**Two AIA CT Members Elevated
to Fellowship**

A hand with a white manicure points to architectural blueprints. Overlaid on the blueprints are three color swatches: a teal one labeled 'SW 6760 Rivulet', an orange one labeled 'SW 6677 Goldenrod', and a red one labeled 'SW 6620 Rejuvenate'. The background is a blurred image of a person's head and shoulder.

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PUBLISHED BY AIA CONNECTICUT

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ARCHITYPE is a publication of the American Institute of Architects Connecticut.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Policy, Progress, and the Power of Our Profession



As we move through the early months of 2026, architects work continues to be shaped not only by design excellence, but by advocacy, leadership, and service. This month's ArchiType reflects the breadth of the profession's impact — from Capitol Hill to the Connecticut State House, from housing reform to historic preservation, and from emerging professionals to newly elevated Fellows.

During AIA Hill Day in Washington, D.C., architects from across the country met directly with members of Congress and their staff. Our Connecticut delegation represented our state proudly in Washington. These meetings reinforced that relationships matter. Advocacy is not a single event; it is ongoing engagement built on trust, expertise, and consistency.

Here at home, the 2026 legislative session reflects a continued focus on affordability, education, and economic stability — priorities emphasized in the Governor's State of the State address. Affordability, particularly housing affordability, remains front and center. Education investments and economic development initiatives signal opportunities for architects across sectors — from schools and higher education facilities to mixed-use and community-centered development.

We are monitoring legislation that impacts licensure, procurement, housing production, sustainability standards, and small business operations to ensure that the voice of architects is part of the conversation.

Black History month provides an important opportunity to recognize the contributions of Black architects, designers, and leaders whose work has shaped both the profession and the communities we serve. Representation strengthens our field. Equity expands opportunity. And recognition reminds us that architecture's story is richer, more innovative, and more inclusive when diverse voices are elevated.

Our Young Architects Forum continues to demonstrate that leadership development and professional growth go hand in hand with well-being. The 2025 YAF report highlights initiatives focused on mentorship, business development skills, leadership training, and mental health awareness.

This month we also celebrate design excellence with purpose. The Ukrainian Museum — a Connecticut Treasure Award Winner — stands as a powerful example of architecture that preserves heritage while serving a living, evolving community.

Finally, we are proud to recognize two of our members who have been elevated to Fellowship — one of the highest honors in our profession. Fellowship acknowledges sustained, meaningful contributions that extend beyond individual practice to influence the broader architectural community.

Their achievement reflects not only personal excellence, but the strength of Connecticut's architectural leadership.

Best,



Gina Calabro, Hon. AIAC

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In the AIA world, February is time for the AIA Leadership Summit (which I still call "AIA Grassroots"). Nearly 700 AIA members, volunteer leaders, and chapter executives from across the country gather in our nation's capital to strengthen leadership skills, apply best practices in association management, and align advocacy with leadership.

The highlight for most architects is our Institute's descending upon Capitol Hill to meet with congressional members and advocate for critical national issues affecting our profession. Though 179D tax credits, housing legislation, design freedom, and student loan caps will be front and center, our Hill visits are only one way we ALL can create meaningful change.

My preparation for the Summit got me thinking about the phrase "all politics is local" and the many ways you can engage civically and advocate for the broader purposes of our profession and society. Through service with volunteer and non-profit organizations, local appointment on municipal boards and commissions, and possibly even election to a local office, an Architect can have great impact.

Most who know me are aware of my passion for communicating the critical role an Architect can play in advancing public policy and contributing to the improvement of our communities and human condition. A "Citizen Architect," as defined by AIA, is a title representative of a call to action for Architects to use his/her insight, talent, and experience to take on a greater role in the civic advocacy of their communities. This is not limited to federal and state issues, but also on local issues which may have a daily impact on a community.

Early in my career, I never imagined becoming an elected local official. After appointment to three town committees related to building and land-use (and chairing two of them), a resignation opened a position on an elective board. Initially hesitant for several reasons, I was appointed to fill the position ..if I agreed to run for a 4-year term the following year. I did ..and won the seat without much contention.

Five election cycles later, my professional background is a huge resource for the finance board I now chair, as well as other town-related issues regarding design and construction. However, I am currently the only architect serving as an elected official in my town. I fear this is the case across Connecticut, if not our country.

As the AIA CT mission states, we are "the voice of the architectural profession, empowering its members to lead in service to society." Today, taking those last few words to heart may have more impact on a local level than on Capitol Hill.

With admiration,



F. Michael Ayles, FAIA, NCARB
2026 President



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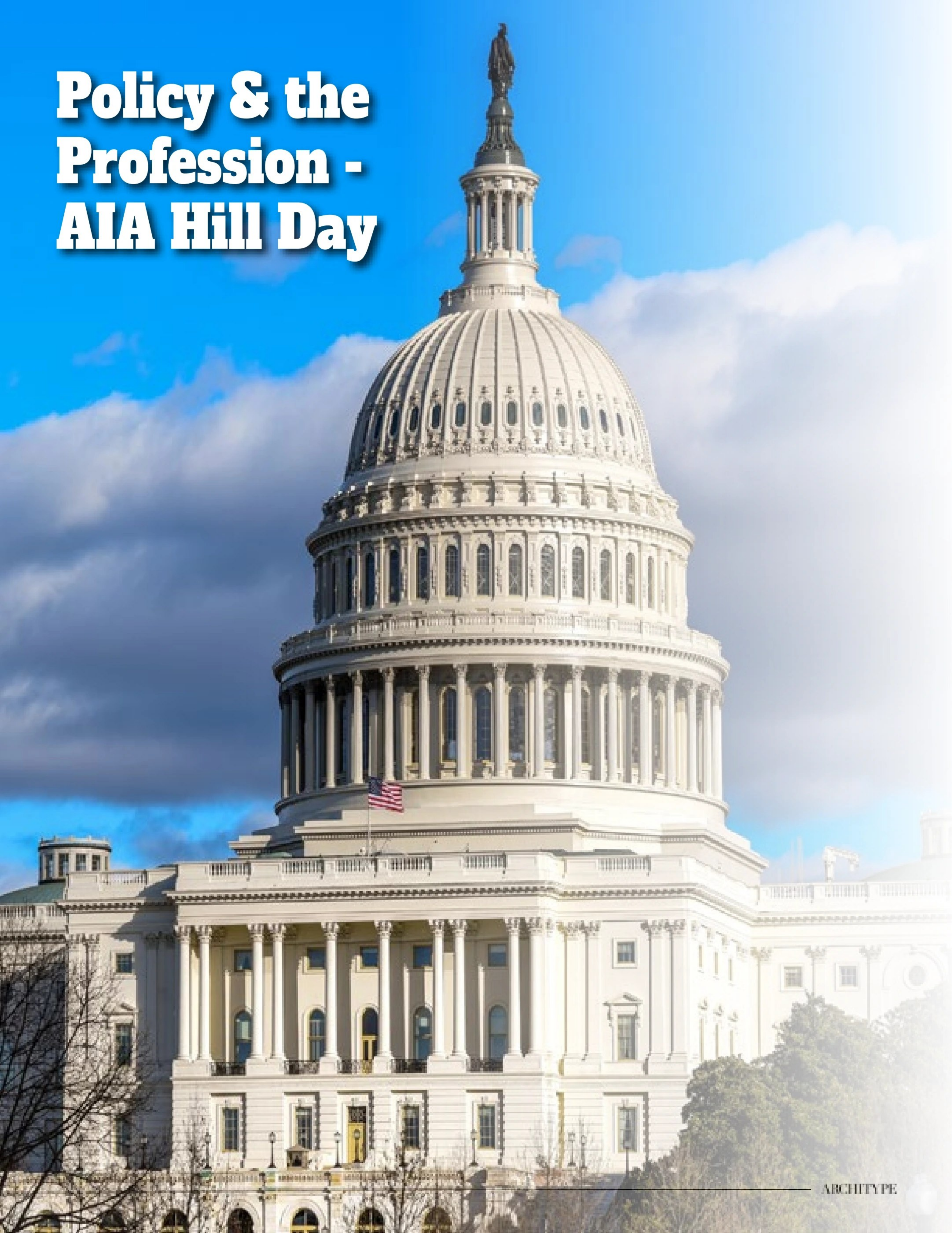
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Policy & the Profession - AIA Hill Day





AIA Opposes Proposed DOE Loan Restrictions

AIA is especially concerned about the impact on students from lower- and middle-income backgrounds, who are less likely to have access to alternative sources of financing.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) strongly opposes a proposed Department of Education rule that would strip Masters of Architecture and Doctorates of Architecture programs of their professional designation, limiting federal loans for thousands of architecture students to just \$20,500 per year.

During pre-publication meetings, AIA raised concerns with this approach in a November statement, joined by nearly 70 organizations representing hundreds of thousands of students and professionals. The now published proposed rule disregards those concerns and reflects a misreading of congressional intent by drastically and unreasonably redefining what a 'professional' degree is.

"Restricting 'professional' degrees to a predetermined list will reduce accessibility to advanced architecture diplomas for many qualified students,"

said Illya Azaroff, FAIA, 2026 AIA President. "Architects—along with teachers, nurses, and dozens of other excluded fields—are undeniably professionals under any reasonable interpretation of the law enacted by Congress. This misguided rule fails to address the affordability crisis in higher-education and instead erects new barriers that prevent students from pursuing the education and professional paths best suited to their talents and aspirations."

AIA is especially concerned about the impact on students from lower- and middle-income backgrounds, who are less likely to have access to alternative sources of financing. Without federal aid that reflects the true cost of professional education, students may be forced into private debt or leave programs before completion - weakening the architecture workforce pipeline and undermining broader public-interest goals.

"Architects design our cities and towns - they are central to the design of housing, schools, hospitals, and critical public infrastructure," said Carole Wedge, FAIA, EVP/Chief Executive Officer of AIA. "Architects protect the

health, safety, and welfare of the American public. As a nation, we must ensure access to affordable federal student financing that reflects the realities of professional education. This is essential to maintaining a strong and diverse workforce."

Architects are professionals. Masters of Architecture and Doctorates of Architecture are professional degrees. Period.

Comments are accepted through the government's official website through March 2. AIA will submit formal comments during the public comment period and is working with a broad coalition of education, labor, and health organizations to elevate the real-world impacts of this rule on graduate students and professional workforce pipelines.

Comments can be submitted here: <https://www.regulations.gov/document/ED-2025-OPE-0944-0001>

Section 179D: A Proven Investment in Efficient, Resilient Buildings



Since 2005, Internal Revenue Code Section 179D—the Energy Efficient Commercial Buildings Deduction—has been one of the most effective federal policies for advancing high-performance building design while supporting economic growth. By providing an enhanced tax deduction for owners or lessees of commercial and certain multifamily buildings that install qualifying energy-efficient envelope, HVAC, or lighting systems, Section 179D has helped accelerate adoption of proven technologies that reduce energy use and ease demand on the electric grid.

First enacted as part of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, Section 179D has long enjoyed broad bipartisan support. Congress repeatedly extended the provision, made it permanent in 2021, and expanded it in 2022 to include retrofits, nonprofit organizations, and real estate investment trusts. These updates ensured the policy reflected how buildings are actually designed, financed, and delivered—especially in public and institutional markets where

architects play a critical role.

For architects and the broader design and construction industry, Section 179D drives job creation and economic growth by incentivizing energy-efficient building upgrades. Projects supported by the deduction generate work across architecture, engineering, construction, and manufacturing, producing a strong multiplier effect in local economies. Unlike incentives focused on early-stage or experimental technologies, Section 179D supports the deployment of established, high-performance systems that deliver measurable energy savings and long-term operational value. By helping offset upfront costs, the deduction allows building owners to invest more fully in quality design, innovation, and performance.

As the nation faces rapidly increasing energy demand driven by electrification, data centers, and artificial intelligence, reducing building energy load is essential. Meeting future needs will require both expanded generation and meaningful

demand-side solutions. For nearly two decades, Section 179D has delivered consistent energy savings by lowering building loads and reducing strain on baseload capacity—outcomes that directly support grid reliability, resilience, and national energy security.

The One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025 established a June 30, 2026, beginning-of-construction deadline for Section 179D eligibility. This deadline was not driven by policy shortcomings, program misuse, or lack of effectiveness. Section 179D has functioned exactly as intended and remains a highly successful, bipartisan incentive aligned with long-standing national energy and economic priorities.

The American Institute of Architects urges federal leaders to retain Section 179D beyond the June 30 deadline. Preserving this proven incentive will support American energy dominance, sustain high-quality jobs, and enable the United States to lead in resilient, efficient, and future-ready building design.

Architects Call for Practical Federal Reforms to Ease the Housing Crisis

America's housing crisis is no longer a distant concern—it is a daily reality for families seeking safe, affordable, and resilient homes. Across the country, demand continues to outpace supply. Rising construction costs, outdated federal policies, and slow, complex administrative processes have combined to stall housing production and limit consumer choice.

Architects see these barriers up close. Multifamily developments — especially affordable housing — often face lengthy environmental reviews and extensive compliance requirements that delay construction and stretch already limited public resources. Programs originally designed to expand opportunity are struggling to meet today's market conditions.

Designing Housing That Works

Architects bring more than blueprints to the housing conversation. By applying emerging technologies, performance-based design, and modern materials, they create homes that are energy-efficient, durable, and cost-effective over the full lifecycle of a building. Their work strengthens neighborhoods, supports local economies, and enhances long-term community stability.

When federal housing programs operate efficiently and architects are involved early in policy development, projects advance more predictably and stay within budget. But current implementation challenges—particularly related to Build America Buy America (BABA) requirements—have created short-term constraints on material availability, increased project costs, and slowed timelines. Affordable housing developments, already operating with tight financing, are especially vulnerable.



A targeted exemption from BABA requirements for HUD-funded housing—similar to exemptions for FEMA and the Department of Defense—would remove months of delay and reduce financing uncertainty without undermining broader domestic sourcing goals.

A Bipartisan Framework for Action

Architects are urging Congress to advance bipartisan legislation that modernizes housing policy and removes unnecessary production barriers. Provisions drawn from the Housing for the 21st Century Act and the ROAD to Housing Act would:

- Stimulate housing production nationwide
- Reform and modernize HOME and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programs
- Reduce administrative burdens and streamline environmental reviews
- Formally engage architects and design professionals in policy development

Equally important is streamlining federal housing program

administration. Lawmakers should direct HUD and other agencies to simplify funding requirements, accelerate environmental reviews, and ensure qualified affordable housing projects can move forward without avoidable delays.

Strengthening Proven Programs

Fully funding and staffing the HOME Investment Partnerships Program and Community Development Block Grants is essential. Strong federal support—paired with flexibility and community-driven innovation—enables states and cities to leverage public and private investment effectively. These programs remain vital tools for addressing local housing needs, but they must be modernized and adequately resourced to succeed.

Editor's Note: *The House and Senate each recently passed housing legislation—the Housing for the 21st Century Act and the ROAD to Housing Act—aimed at addressing our nation's housing shortage.*



Design Freedom for Federal Architecture

America's federal buildings tell the story of who we are. From courthouses and post offices to museums and civic offices, their design reflects national values, local culture, and democratic ideals. But recent federal actions have sparked a debate over whether that architectural voice will remain diverse—or be narrowly prescribed.

In August 2025, the Trump administration issued an executive order titled “Making Federal Architecture Beautiful Again,” establishing classical and traditional architecture as the preferred style for new federal public buildings. Soon after, in October 2025, the White House began full demolition of the East Wing to construct a new 90,000-square-foot ballroom, reportedly costing more than \$250–300 million and funded privately.

The developments prompted strong concern from the American Institute of Architects (AIA), which issued a formal condemnation of both the executive order and the demolition of a historic public landmark without a transparent public process.

What Is Design Freedom?

At its core, design freedom means allowing federal architecture to respond to the needs of the people and communities it serves. It means recognizing that a courthouse in Arizona, a border station in Maine, and an embassy abroad should reflect local context, climate, culture, and history—not adhere to a single mandated style.

For decades, the U.S. General Services Administration's Design Excellence Program has championed that approach. Grounded in the agency's Guiding Principles, the program has delivered high-quality federal buildings that balance innovation, performance, sustainability, and community input.

Mandating classical architecture as a federal default risks stifling creativity, sidelining local voices, and limiting architectural innovation. Architects argue that design should evolve with technology, environmental realities, and cultural change—not be frozen in time.

Public Process and Preservation

Beyond style preferences, architects are equally concerned about transparency and public oversight. The demolition of significant public landmarks or major alterations to historic

properties without open review weakens accountability and public trust.

That concern extends to the White House itself. Current law exempts it from portions of the National Historic Preservation Act, limiting public review of renovations and changes.

A Legislative Path Forward

In response, architects are urging lawmakers to support the Democracy in Design Act (H.R. 1584/S. 2891), which would codify the GSA's Guiding Principles and protect local control and design freedom in federal architecture.

They also support the People's White House Historic Preservation Act (H.R. 6761), which would remove the White House's statutory exemption and restore a public review process for renovations.

Federal buildings belong to the public. Their design—and their preservation—should reflect democratic values, local character, and transparent decision-making. For architects, design freedom is not about aesthetics alone; it is about protecting innovation, accountability, and the shared civic heritage that defines the nation.



Hill Day Meetings in D.C.

AIA Hill Day was a powerful reminder of the vital role advocacy plays in shaping the future of our profession and the built environment.

On February 11th, AIA Connecticut was proudly represented at the 2026 AIA Leadership Summit by 2026 **President F. Michael Ayles, FAIA**; 2027 **President-Elect Amy Samuelson, AIA**; **CEO/Executive Director Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT**; and **National Associates Committee Representative Ersal Llakmani, Assoc. AIA**. Together, they joined architects from across the country on Capitol Hill to elevate the voice of the architectural profession.

During a full day of meetings, our AIA CT delegation met with **Senator Chris Murphy (with Jameson Foulke, LA)**, **Senator Richard Blumenthal (with Sari Kaufman, LC, and Griffin Paterson, LC)**, **Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (with Caitlin Peruccio, HLA)**, **Congresswoman Jahana Hayes (with Domonique Jackson, LA)**, and **Congressman**

John Larson (with Collin Duran, LA). We were grateful for their time and thoughtful engagement on issues that directly affect architects, our clients, and the communities we serve.

Key topics included the 179D High Performance Tax Credit, which incentivizes energy-efficient building design, and recently passed housing legislation—the Housing for the 21st Century Act and the ROAD to Housing Act—aimed at addressing our nation’s housing shortage.

We also advocated for Design Freedom for Federal Architecture, emphasizing the importance of preserving design excellence and innovation in public buildings.

Most importantly, we pressed forward on two critical priorities: securing professional designation

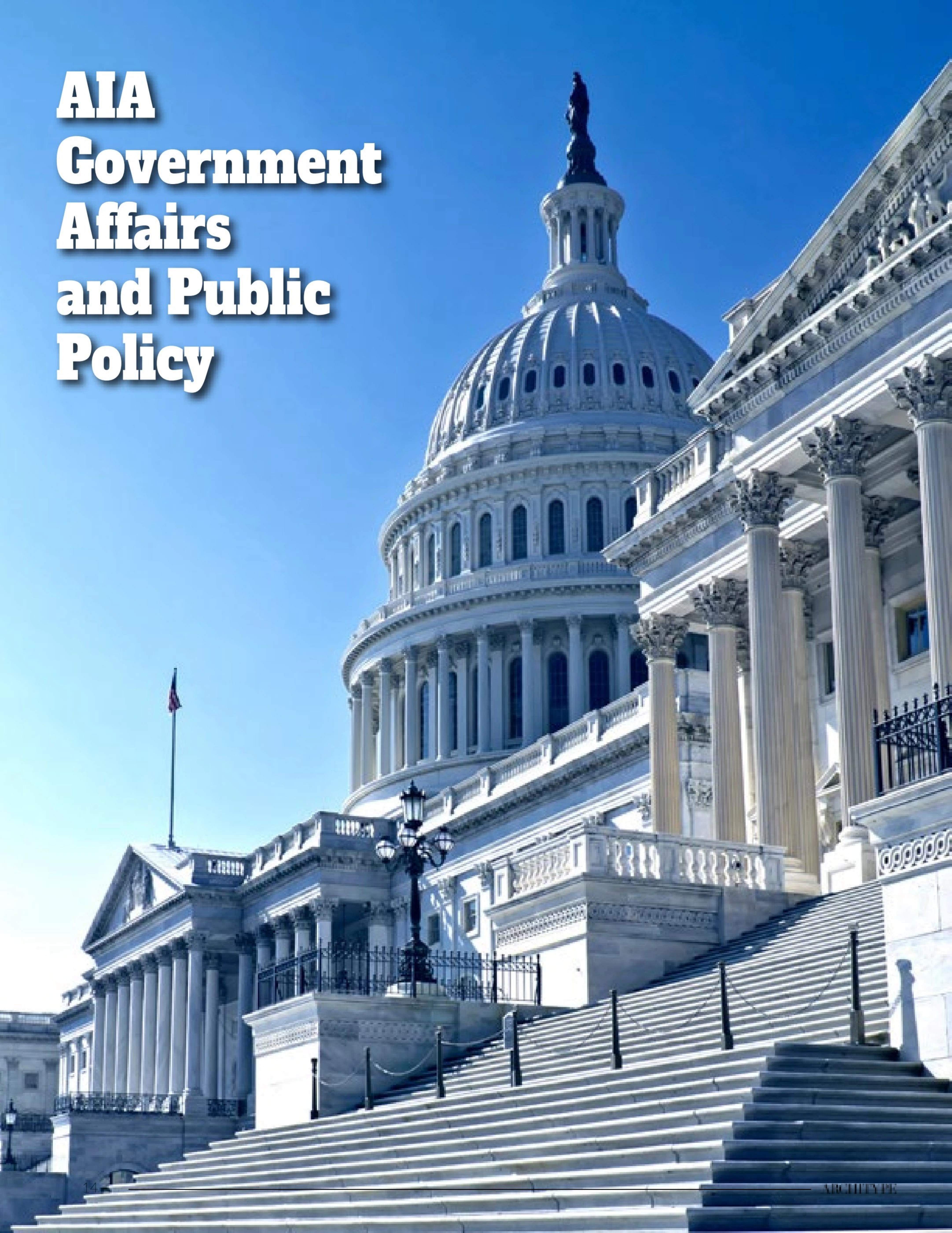


recognition for architects and addressing burdensome student loan caps that disproportionately impact emerging professionals. These efforts are essential to protecting the integrity of the profession and supporting the next generation of architects.

AIA Connecticut remains steadfast in its commitment to protecting, supporting, and advancing architects and their work at every level—local, state, and federal.

Advocacy is not a single day on the Hill; it is an ongoing responsibility.

AIA Government Affairs and Public Policy





AIA Joins Mayors Nationwide at Their Winter Meeting

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) participated in the 94th Winter Meeting of the U.S. Conference of Mayors (USCM) in Washington, D.C., on January 28-30, 2026, convening more than 300 mayors and senior city leaders from across the country.

AIA EVP/Chief Executive Officer, Carole Wedge, FAIA, NOMA, joined Boston Mayor Michelle Wu from the mainstage for a featured conversation on the power of design in strengthening communities and supporting effective local leadership.

[View session with Wedge and Mayor Wu.](#)

(beginning at min 15)

“Mayors today are builders of infrastructure, of spaces where people can still connect and get things done and come together – ultimately, we are builders of community,” said Mayor Wu. “That’s where the connection with the architecture community is very salient.”

AIA’s presence at the Winter Meeting reflects the strength and longevity of its partnership with the USCM and the growing recognition that architects play

a critical role in helping cities deliver results for their residents.

Housing is one of the central challenges mayors are grappling with throughout the conference, and AIA is at the table. In partnership with the USCM, AIA recently conducted a national housing survey to gain insights into the housing crisis from mayors’ perspectives. The findings reveal that 4 in 5 mayors are taking decisive steps to address housing challenges, with many updating land use policies and 54% revising building codes to support development.

Mayor Wu emphasized the urgency of local action on housing from the mainstage: “We’re throwing everything we can at the housing crisis – using city land, closing financial gaps, converting office buildings, and simplifying the process so it’s easier to build housing that families desperately need.”

In addition to raising awareness of AIA and the power of architects, Wedge was at the conference to ensure that America’s mayors know that architects are trusted partners who help translate vision into action.

“Architects everywhere love cities—and we’re passionate about building resilient, connected communities that work for everyone,” said Wedge.

Throughout the conference, Wedge met one-on-one with over a dozen mayors to discuss how architects can collaborate with communities to drive impactful change and create a lasting legacy through design. Many mayors have shared that they are rethinking how design expertise fits into their administrations and are turning to AIA as the place to identify qualified, community-minded professionals.

Wedge ended the mainstage discussion with Mayor Wu with a call to action for Mayors across the country: “AIA represents more than 100,000 talented and civically engaged members,” she noted from the stage. “Bring us into your administration, your chiefs of staff, your planning commissions, your boards. AIA National can help you find the resources and the passionate architects who are optimistic about the future.”

AIA'S STATEMENT ON U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM UNFCCC

The United States withdrawal from the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), and several other treaties is deeply troubling, and leaves communities around the world more vulnerable to the real impacts of climate change and unsustainable development.

The global response will continue without us—as it did at COP30 in Brazil—but American citizens, businesses, financial interests, and architects will lack representation from our national government. This puts U.S. architects, engineers, and developers at a distinct disadvantage as the rest of the world advances building standards, climate resilience strategies, and green technology markets.

The American Institute of Architects became an official Observer Organization of the UNFCCC in 2021 precisely because we understand the importance of being a voice at the table for architects. For the

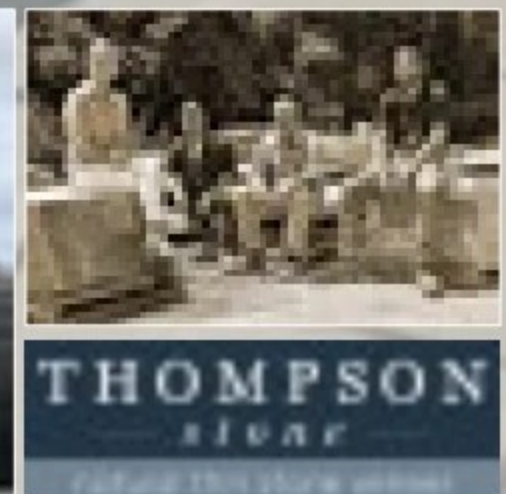
past five years, AIA has ensured that architects are represented at the annual United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP) to advocate for design excellence, provide opportunities for the industry and contribute to effective policies, and by providing resources to drive implementation. Despite this setback, AIA will remain an active Observer Organization of the UNFCCC, ensuring that our members' voices are heard in the global effort.

AIA's engagement with UN-Habitat spans 50 years. We sent delegations to the landmark bi-decennial UN Housing and Sustainable Development Conferences (Habitat I, II, III) in 1976, 1996, and 2016, where our members helped shape global urban policy. Most recently, AIA's Strategic Council led significant work on the New Urban Agenda, which included a resolution passed at our 2018 Annual Meeting. This history reflects our profession's long-standing commitment to ensuring that architects have a voice in global conversations about creating more livable, equitable communities.

AIA President Illya Azaroff, FAIA, stated: "These withdrawals isolate us from the global dialogue at a critical moment for architecture and design. The frameworks the United States is abandoning are where the world is defining the next generation of building standards, moving beyond carbon neutrality and towards regenerative design. American architects have helped drive this evolution, but without a seat at the table where these goals are being negotiated, we risk becoming followers rather than leaders in the transformation of our own profession." And worse, outsiders in the global marketplace.

We will continue to demonstrate that architects can lead the way in creating a low-carbon, resilient future and advocate for the built environment to be central to the implementation of the Paris Agreement. AIA will also continue to engage with UN-Habitat and other intergovernmental agencies to ensure that architects are key leaders in creating more livable communities globally.

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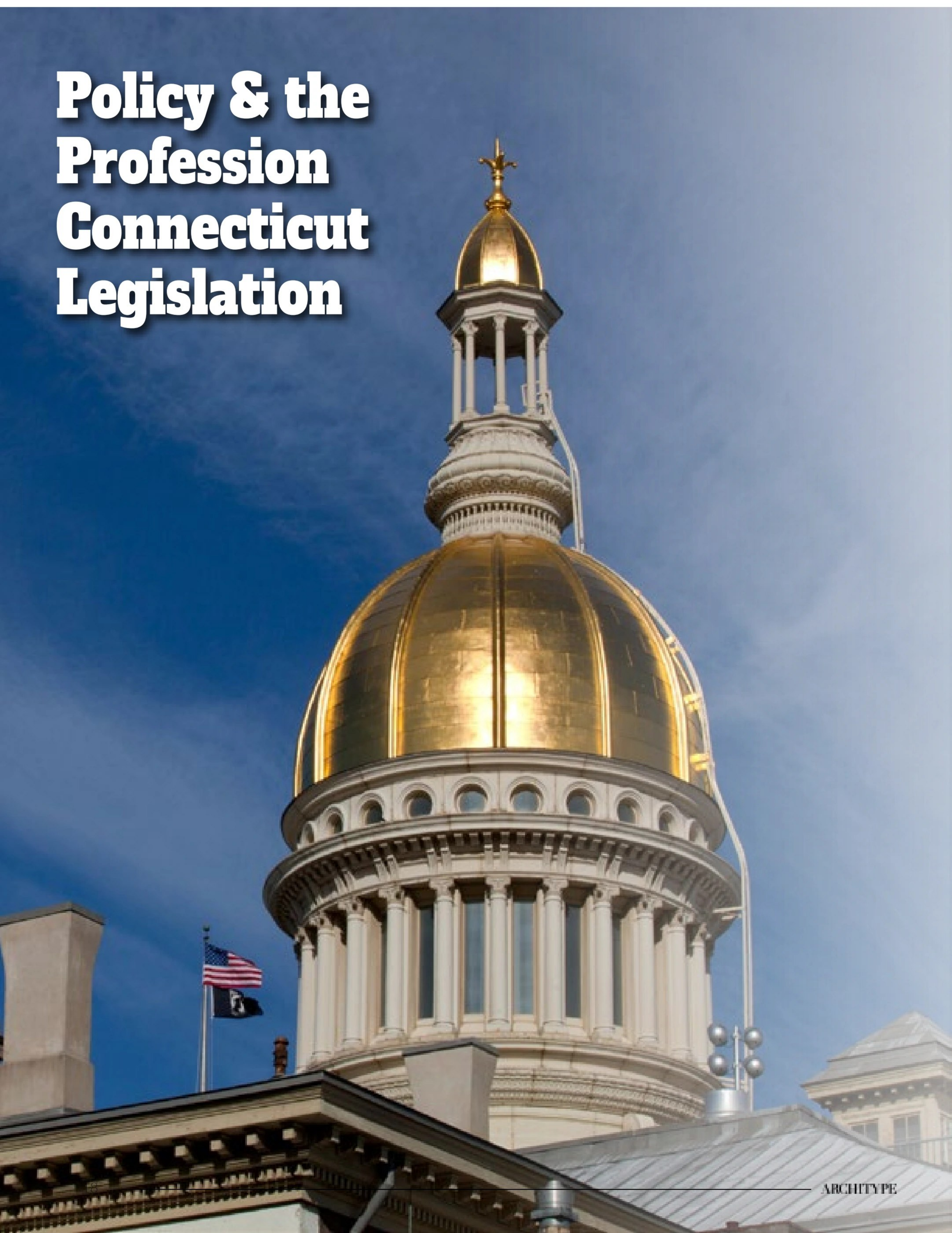


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Policy & the Profession Connecticut Legislation





2026 State of the State Focuses on Affordability, Education, and Stability

On February 4, 2026, Gov. Ned Lamont delivered his annual State of the State Address, outlining an agenda centered on affordability, public education reform, and protecting residents from the effects of federal funding cuts.

Lamont emphasized Connecticut's efforts to blunt the impact of reductions in federal support, particularly for vulnerable families. He highlighted expanded access to SNAP and WIC benefits and efforts to stabilize health insurance coverage for low-income residents. "These are the times that try men's souls," Lamont said, invoking Thomas Paine and his seminal pamphlets *Common Sense* and *The Rights of Man*. The quote, he noted, echoes the spirit of the nationwide America 250 initiative, which draws on the ideas of 1776 to inspire civic engagement.

Education Reform on the Horizon

A key announcement in the speech was Lamont's plan to sign an executive order creating a Blue Ribbon Commission on K-12 Education. The commission will focus on strengthening special education services in Connecticut

schools, including examining funding formulas and identifying targeted investments to better support students with disabilities.

Lamont said the commission's work would inform legislative proposals during the 2026 session, positioning education as a cornerstone of long-term economic stability.

Tackling the Cost of Living

The governor also addressed inflation, pointing to electricity, housing, and health care as top concerns for residents. He offered a specific example of cost-saving reform: state officials switched to a generic medication for plaque psoriasis within the employee health plan, saving \$15 million in the first year and projecting \$50 million in savings by year three.

Lamont encouraged residents to explore enrollment in the Connecticut Option plan, a program designed to lower health care costs for state employees, retirees, and small businesses. The plan steers patients toward high-value providers and offers coverage without co-pays or deductibles, an effort he described as both consumer-friendly and fiscally responsible.

Law Enforcement and Public Safety

In his remarks, Lamont praised Connecticut's law enforcement agencies for maintaining public safety. At the same time, he criticized federal immigration enforcement practices, particularly instances in which agents concealed their identities, saying such tactics can create fear in communities. He also referenced recent high-profile shootings in Minneapolis, calling for accountability and transparency.

Legislative Outlook

Many of the priorities outlined in the address are already reflected in legislation introduced for the 2026 session. From education funding to affordability measures, Lamont's speech signaled a governing approach rooted in fiscal caution, social investment, and what he framed as steady leadership during uncertain times.

The Rise of Black Architects in Connecticut's Modernist Era

by Cassandra Archer, AIA, NOMA

The 1970s were a defining moment for architecture in America. Modernism, with its clean lines, functional forms, and social consciousness, offered a way to rethink how people lived and gathered. For Black architects in Connecticut, Modernism was more than a style, it was a tool for empowerment. Emerging from institutions like Howard University and Yale University, they entered a profession where they were often the only faces of color in the room. Yet they did not shrink. They innovated. They organized. They built firms, partnerships, and platforms so others could follow.



In New Haven, Wendell C. Harp became a steady force of vision and generosity. Anchored in community, he co-founded the Black Workshop, Inc., became the youngest registered architect in the nation, and expanded into commercial, infrastructure, and multifamily residential projects. With Renaissance Management Company, he ensured that communities of color were not just tenants of change, but stakeholders in it. Beyond buildings, he mentored young men, quietly supported families in need, and brought faith, care, and conviction to every project he touched.



Edward E. Cherry represented rooted continuity. A son of New Haven's Lower Dixwell neighborhood and one of the state's first Black registered architects, he merged Modernist clarity with cultural memory. Cherry actively participated in urban renewal, consulting city planners and designing flagship buildings that reshaped the city without erasing its history. His work on Immanuel Baptist Church and his service on the Connecticut Historic Preservation Board ensured that progress honored heritage. Cherry asked a powerful question through his work: How can the future embrace the past?



In Hartford, Milton Lewis Howard demonstrated that design could be both purposeful and transformative. As the first Black architect to lead a Hartford commission, he created schools, churches, and homes that fostered opportunity and belonging. He innovated with modular building systems, patents, and entrepreneurial ventures, proving that excellence and representation could reshape not only skylines, but lives.



Robert L. Wilson provided the national foundation for minority architects. Through The Wilson Group of Companies and as founder of the National Organization of Minority Architects, he built networks of mentorship, advocacy, and leadership. His work ensured that isolation gave way to solidarity, and that young architects could see themselves reflected in positions of influence.

They built firms, developed property, preserved history, mentored youth, and engaged politically. Their work reminds us that architecture is about people, community, and opportunity.

This Black History Month, the architectural profession can look to their example. The Connecticut chapter of NOMA (NOMAct) honors their legacy by carrying forward their commitment to mentorship, community engagement, and professional excellence, inspiring the next generation of architects to continue the path they courageously forged.

Cassandra Archer, AIA, NOMA is the President of NOMAct

NOMAct 

Open Conversations:

Women Shaping Architecture

Join us as we celebrate
women in architecture

Date: February 23, 2026

Time: 5:30 PM - 7:00 PM

Location: Pelli Clark + Partners
1056 Chapel St, New Haven, CT





CONNECTICUT
ARCHITECTURE
FOUNDATION

Foundation Scholarships Are Now Open

By Nancy Clayton, AIA

Help us spread the word to architecture students across Connecticut! The Connecticut Architecture Foundation is now accepting applications for our 2026 scholarship program, with a deadline of April 17, 2026.

With new federal limits on student loans for professional architecture degrees, scholarships like these are more critical than ever in helping students afford their education.

Applicants must have a connection to Connecticut, either as a current or long-time resident of Connecticut; or employment at a Connecticut architectural firm; or plans to attend an accredited college or university for architecture in Connecticut.

Please note that CAF Scholarships are specifically dedicated to helping students cover tuition costs. If you already have full tuition coverage through other scholarships or financial aid, please allow fellow students with tuition gaps to benefit from these awards. We know there are many expenses beyond tuition, but these scholarships are focused on making the broadest impact across our Connecticut architecture community by addressing tuition needs, paid directly to the school.

To download applications and to learn about each scholarship's specific academic accreditation program eligibility and any university preferences, please go to CAFCT.ORG/SCHOLARSHIPS



Applications are due April 17, 2026 for:

- **Allan Dehar Memorial Scholarship**
- **CAF Scholarships**
- **Charles DuBose Memorial Scholarship**
- **Jane and Kevin Roche Scholarship**
- **Suzanne Sheng Memorial Scholarship**

Hoffmann Scholarship and Internship Applications for 2026 closed at the end of January, but please consider applying next year.

In 2025, the CAF awarded nine scholarships to exceptional students from four different

institutions. Four recipients are studying at the University of Hartford; two at the Yale School of Architecture; two at UMass Amherst; and one at Temple University. Since 1986, the CAF has awarded \$750,000 in scholarships to students at more than 25 different universities.

Nancy Clayton, AIA is the 2025-26 President of the Connecticut Architecture Foundation

Scholarship Applications

2025 Awardees



**Hoffmann Diversity
Scholarship**
Christopher Chung
Yale School of Architecture



**Allan Dehar Memorial
Scholarship**
Shane Manzi
University of Hartford



CAF Scholarship
Elisabeth D'Albero
*University of
Massachusetts*



**Suzanne Sheng
Memorial Scholarship**
Jessiemae Iquina
Temple University



**Charles DuBose
Memorial Scholarship**
Yanbo Li
Yale School of Architecture



**Charles DuBose
Memorial Scholarship**
Christina Patmanidis
University of Hartford



**Allan Dehar Memorial
Scholarship**
Denyshe Riley-Calder
University of Hartford



Jane & Kevin Roche
University of Hartford
Dhruvi Patel



**Charles DuBose
Memorial Scholarship**
Natalia Smiarowski
*University of
Massachusetts*

These scholars represent the diverse future of architecture, pursuing everything from associate degrees to master's programs, united by their commitment to creating architecture that uplifts communities and serves future generations. If you'd like to support these talented students and help create pathways for the next generation of Connecticut architects, please consider making a tax-deductible donation at <https://cafct.org/donations/>.

Thursday
April 23rd

Lecture » 5:00
Reception » 6:00
Dinner » 7:00

University of Hartford
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2025 YAF Report: Driving Growth, Leadership and Wellness



The AIA Young Architects Forum (YAF) proudly announces the release of its 2025 Annual Report, highlighting a year of meaningful progress, strategic alignment, and measurable impact across the profession.

Representing approximately 20,000 of the nearly 100,000 members of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), YAF continues to serve as a vital voice for recently licensed and mid-career architects while collaborating with dedicated leaders throughout the Institute.

Now in the third year of its 2023–2027 Strategic Initiative, Architects in Action: Catalyzing for Change, YAF has sharpened its focus around three Priority Areas for 2025—each intentionally designed to support architects navigating the critical early and middle stages of their careers:

1. **Growth and Career Evolution**
2. **Steering the Future of the Profession**
3. **Driving Wellness: Mitigating Burnout, Redefining Wellness**

These focus areas respond directly to the realities of practice today. The profession is evolving rapidly — shaped by technological innovation, shifting workplace cultures, economic pressures, and increasing societal expectations. YAF's efforts reflect a profession in motion: one that is grappling honestly with pathways for growth and leadership, intentionally steering toward a more equitable and resilient future, and recognizing that wellness must be foundational rather than supplemental to professional success.

Throughout 2025, YAF advanced programs, research, and leadership initiatives that empower young architects to expand their influence—within

their firms, communities, and the broader profession. The Forum's work acknowledges that leadership is not confined to title or tenure; it is cultivated through mentorship, advocacy, and thoughtful action.

As the profession looks toward 2026, YAF calls for leadership that is deliberate rather than reactive — leadership by design. This means slowing down where reflection is needed, accelerating where impact can be made, and remaining steadfast in shaping a profession that values both design excellence and human well-being. The future of architecture is being shaped in real time, and young and mid-career architects remain central to that transformation.

[Download the report.](#)



January 2026 AIA Strategic Council Monthly Report

By Jessica O'Donnell, FAIA

The 72 members of the 2026 AIA Strategic Council officially kicked off the year during a fun and productive Governance Week in early December 2025. Leading up to these in-person meetings, members of both the 2025 and 2026 Council along with members of the AIA Board and AIA's Senior Leadership team discussed and refined potential areas of focus for 2026. Earlier this month, the co-chairs of each study group along with the Moderator submitted memos to the AIA Board of Directors to provide a detailed overview of each area of focus and received additional insights from the Board during their January retreat.

We are excited about our five areas of study, our continued partnership with the Board, our ongoing collaborations with advocates from AIAS, NAC, & YAF, and the forthcoming AIA Strategic Plan. Each 2026 Strategic Council study group effort aims to advance

the architectural profession's impact, equity, and relevance by focusing on actionable, member-driven initiatives to ensure impactful outcomes.

- **HOUSING** will explore ways to build or reinforce a coalition to advance actionable solutions to the broken housing system in America.
- **NEUROARCHITECTURE** will investigate ways to translate insights from experts into practical strategies architects can integrate into design to support human well-being.
- **PRACTICE** will look at ways architectural practice can transform by responding to emerging technologies and evolving models to grow healthier businesses.
- **REGENERATIVE DESIGN:** define this term for AIA with long-term measurable outcomes and accelerating current initiatives, like the Framework for Design Excellence..

- **VALUE** will explore a multi-year effort to proactively protect the profession and build upon existing pay equity and public messaging efforts.

We look forward to input from AIA members on these topics and encourage everyone to reach out to their state representative on the Council or any of the Councilors with questions, insights, or comments.

Please note these monthly updates are very short snapshots of more robust, ongoing work - meaning the brief summary is not inclusive of all work done to date nor all work planned for the coming months.

More information about the Council, previous areas of study, and past Year in Review Journals can be found here: [AIA Strategic Council](#)

Jessica O'Donnell, FAIA is the 2026 Moderator of the Strategic Council



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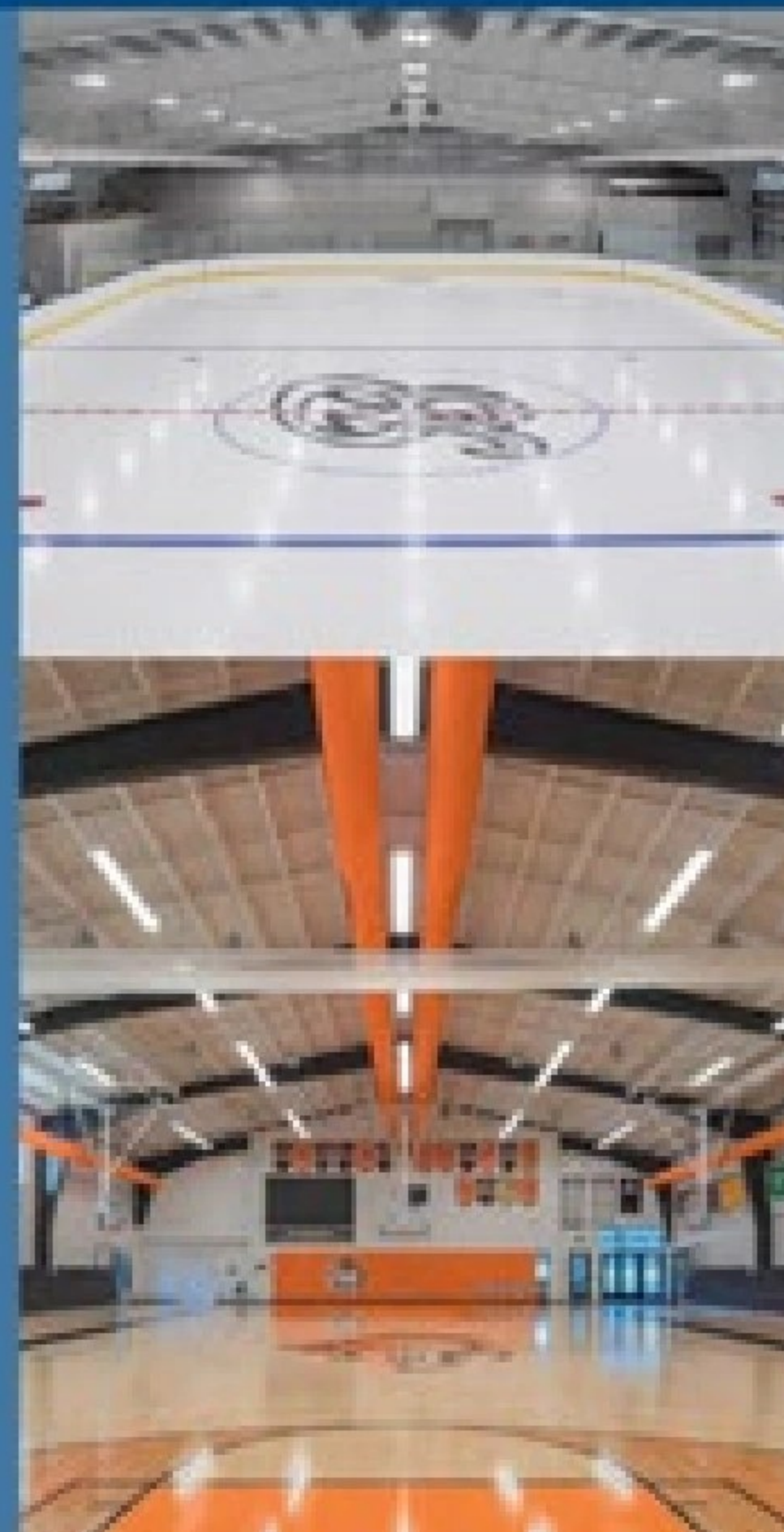
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Teaching Architecture

Reclaiming Building Knowledge, Leadership, and Responsibility

By Daniel Horowitz, AIA

There is a great deal of anxiety right now about artificial intelligence and the future of architecture as a profession. Students are understandably unsure whether the profession is worth committing to. At the same time, more seasoned architects, having lived through countless other “disruptions,” are quietly skeptical.

AI is different from previous technologies in one very important way. It makes easy the part that we have coveted for so long: Imagination and Visual Communication. I’m sure many architects are already receiving fully rendered and imaginative AI-generated proposals from their clients that cannot be easily dismissed. Clients are asking us now more than ever to be the grown-ups. To offer wise counsel and leadership driven by deep knowledge, cultural literacy, skill and experience. Today, clients can generate images, massing studies, and speculative ideas on their own with the help of AI. Imagination is no longer scarce, and architects are no longer its sole custodians.

For decades, architects could position themselves as the primary holders of imagination and vision. Beautiful drawings, compelling renderings, and persuasive narratives often carried disproportionate weight.

Most of us did not choose architecture because we wanted to produce images. We chose it because the physical world speaks to us. Materials, light, gravity, craft, and place are how we understand meaning. We chose architecture because making places is how we engage and feel alive in the world.

AI is changing how architects work. It will absorb many repetitive and representational tasks. That is real. But architecture is grounded in physical reality. Buildings must stand up, perform, age, meet codes, respond to climate, and

serve real people. Architecture will always be a cultural project that requires judgment, responsibility, and trust. No software can carry liability, stand on a job site, or make consequential decisions when things go wrong.

As clients become more visually and conceptually empowered, society will turn to architects less for spectacle and more for wise direction, skillful analysis, and real-world understanding. This is where the profession’s value truly lies, and where it has also become most vulnerable.

For too long, architects have willingly handed off technical responsibility. Construction knowledge, detailing, sequencing, and systems coordination have often been delegated or deferred, while influential architects have often positioned themselves primarily as visionaries. That imbalance has had consequences. It has eroded trust. It has marginalized architects within the building industry. And in many cases, it has cost the profession respect.

Architects can no longer rely on drawing production alone as a marker of value. Vision without execution is no longer enough. What remains distinctly architectural is the ability to connect vision to reality, to understand how things are made, and to lead the complex process of turning ideas into durable, meaningful places of consequence.

Understanding materials, construction, and building systems is not nostalgia. It is durable knowledge. Buildings outlast software. Construction intelligence accumulates over decades. Material decisions shape cities for generations. These skills have never been replaceable, and they are now becoming more valuable, not less.

Architecture is also a leadership profession. Architects ask people to believe in futures that do not

yet exist. They ask clients to invest, communities to trust, regulators to approve, and contractors to commit. That leadership carries responsibility. It requires credibility earned through technical competence, cultural awareness, and ethical judgment. Vision without follow-through undermines that credibility.

If architects are to remain leaders in the building world, they must be able to successfully guide projects through execution, not just conception. They must understand how buildings actually come together, where risk lives, and how decisions ripple through cost, performance, and construction. This is a burden, but it is also the profession’s obligation.

And it begins in school.

Architectural education must resist the temptation to retreat into abstraction and spectacle. Students deserve more than smoke and mirrors. They deserve access to the accumulated building knowledge of the profession. They deserve to learn how things are made, how systems integrate, how decisions carry consequences, and how leadership is exercised in the real world.

For students considering architecture today, this is not a dead-end profession. Architects will not be replaced by software. Architecture will always be a demanding profession that asks one to think deeply, make responsibly, and lead with humility and authority.

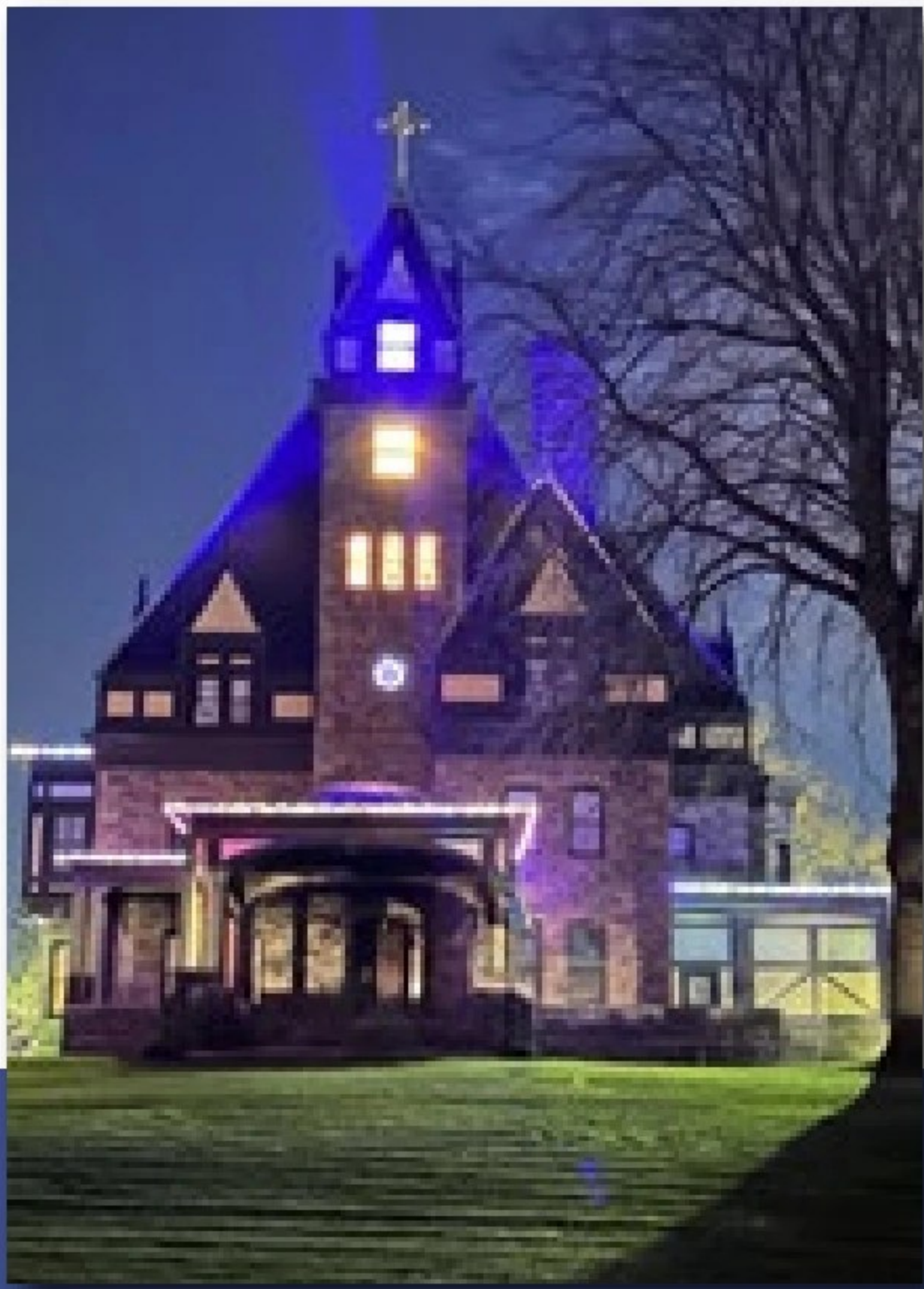
For established architects, this moment is not a loss of relevance. It is a call to pass on what we know. Architects are not less needed today. We are needed more than ever, but only if we are willing to reclaim the knowledge, responsibility, and leadership that give the profession its meaning.

Daniel Horowitz, AIA is the Director, Graduate Architecture Program at the University of Hartford

ure in the Age of AI

responsibility





2025 CONNECTICUT TREASURE AWARDEE



Photos: STEPHEN MIHALCHIK

A Historic Home for a Living Culture

The historic building that today houses the Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford began its life in the nineteenth century as part of a grand American estate. In 1864, Edward Augustus Quintard purchased a plot of land in Stamford, Connecticut, and by 1867 began constructing what would later become known as the Quintard Mansion. Expanded to its present form in 1902, the residence emerged as a striking example of a late nineteenth-century Second Empire villa – an elegant structure designed with no expense spared. Its architectural refinement and commanding presence made it one of the most distinguished homes in the region, long before it assumed its cultural role.

A decisive transformation occurred in 1933, when the property was purchased by Bishop Constantine Bohachevsky, head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in the United States. His vision extended beyond establishing a bishop's residence or a minor seminary and preparatory school for boys;

he imagined a lasting center of Ukrainian cultural life in America. That same year, Bishop Bohachevsky laid the foundation for what would become the Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford. Plans for the institution were formally announced in 1935, and after several years of careful preparation and community engagement, the Museum and Library officially opened its doors in September 1937.

From its earliest years, the Museum served as a cultural anchor for Ukrainian communities across the United States. Initially, exhibitions were held in two grand rooms of the mansion. Since the 1980s, exhibition space has expanded to two floors of the Chateau. Over the decades, the collections have grown through important acquisitions from Ukraine and the diaspora, encompassing folk art, religious art, fine art, rare books, and archival materials of exceptional historical value.

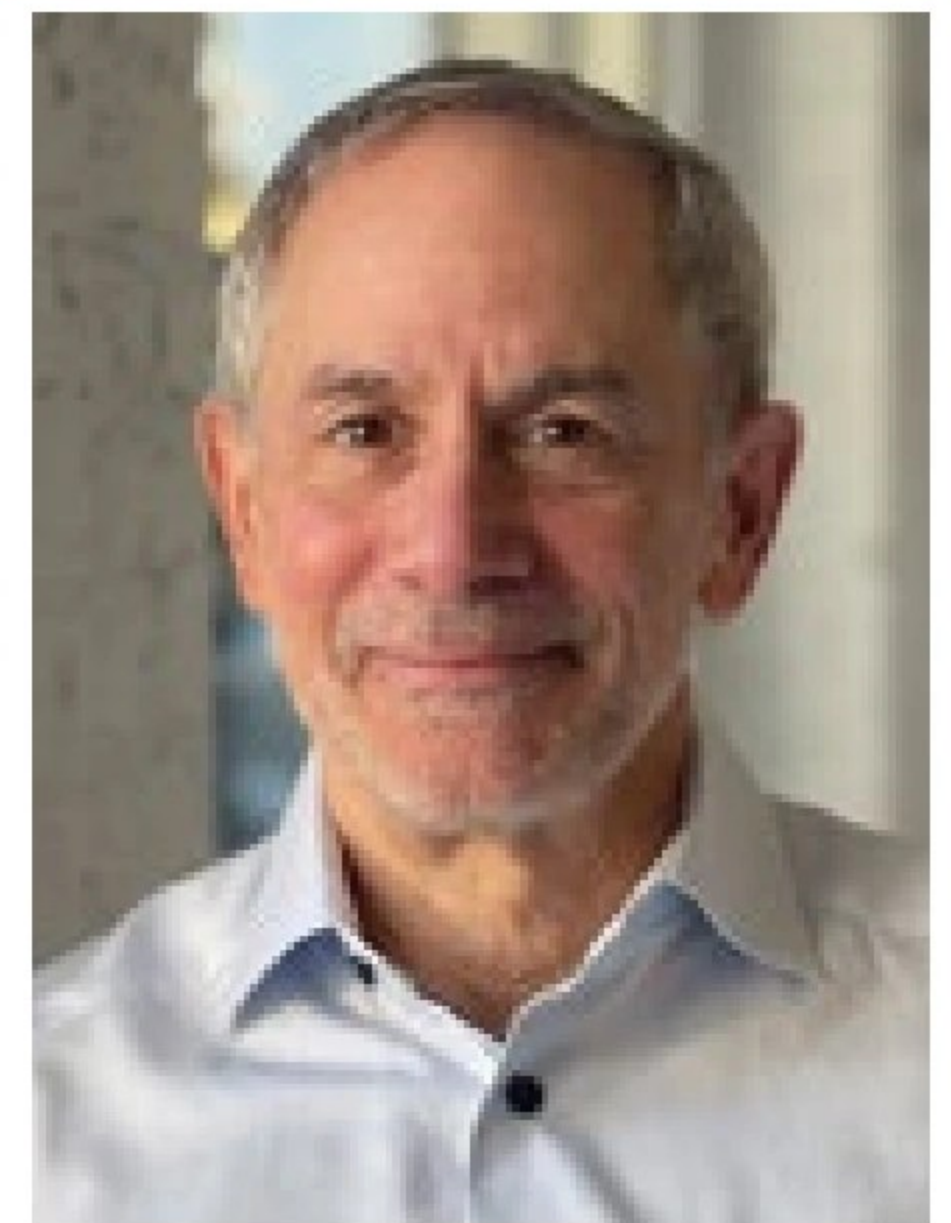
Today, as one of the oldest Ukrainian cultural institutions in North America, the Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford remains committed to its



founding mission: to collect, preserve, and exhibit Ukrainian cultural heritage, and to educate both Ukrainians and the wider public through exhibitions, research, and scholarly access. As the Museum approaches its 90th anniversary, this mission feels more vital than ever.

We are deeply grateful to our patrons, members, and supporters whose generosity sustains this work. We also extend our sincere thanks to AIA Connecticut for honoring us with the 2025 Connecticut Treasures Award. This recognition not only celebrates the historic and architectural significance of the Chateau but also strengthens our ability to seek new partnerships and grants – ensuring that the cultural legacy preserved within these walls will endure for generations to come.

Anthony Amenta to Retire After 40 Years of Architectural Leadership



Anthony Amenta, AIA, co-founder of Amenta Emma Architects, will retire on February 13, 2026, concluding a remarkable 40-year career that has shaped communities across Connecticut and New England.

A 1977 graduate of the University of Notre Dame School of Architecture, Tony's career path led from Houston to Hartford, where he joined JCJ Architects in 1982. At age 31, he co-founded Amenta Emma Architects with Robert Emma, establishing the firm in downtown Hartford as a deliberate commitment to urban design and New Urbanism principles. Under his leadership, the firm expanded to include a Boston office and earned recognition for projects ranging from mixed-use developments to workplace and institutional renovations.

"It has been an honor and a privilege to create, build and

lead this prestigious and highly regarded design firm," said Tony. *"I have enjoyed a fabulous career with the firm and have immensely enjoyed every day and every role I have played along the way. Truly, it was never 'work' for me but a challenge I always looked forward to."*

Tony's design philosophy, shaped by a formative study abroad experience in Rome, emphasized creating authentic sense of place and walkable, human-centered communities. Notable projects led by Tony include West Hartford's Blue Back Square, the Connecticut State Office Building renovation in Hartford, Housatonic Community College's Lafayette Hall addition in Bridgeport, and The O'Connell Companies headquarters in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

Beyond his design work, Tony has been deeply committed to advancing architecture and planning in Connecticut. He

served as founding chairman of the West Hartford Design Review Advisory Committee, helping establish one of the state's first form-based design review processes. He also served on the West Hartford Housing Authority and as an adjunct professor at the University of Hartford.

"Tony has been an instrumental force in building Amenta Emma," said Michael Tyre, AIA, President of Amenta Emma Architects. *"His commitment to client success and mentorship has been an inspiration to us all, shaping not just our company but the careers of countless individuals."*

Amenta Emma Architects continues under the leadership of President Michael Tyre, AIA, and principals Robert Swain, AIA, Myles Brown, AIA, Eric Weyant, AIA, and Jenna McClure, AIA.

For more information, visit <https://amentaemma.com/anthony-amenta-announces-retirement-after-40-years-of-shaping-communities/>

In Memoriam: Michael L. Donegan, AIA

Michael Leo “Mike” Donegan, AIA, architect, age 86, of Stratford, CT, beloved husband of Vincenza Cefaloni Donegan, entered into eternal rest on February 2, 2026 with his loving family by his side.

Mike was born on March 8, 1939 to the late Daniel J. Donegan and the late Helen Maloney Donegan of Bridgeport, CT. He was proud to be a citizen of both the United States and Ireland.

Mike joined the Marines and served with the 2nd Marine Division and the 2nd Marine Air Wing; he was honorably discharged in 1958. He was a lifetime member of the Marine Corps League, Housatonic Detachment and the 2nd Marine Division Association. Mike met his wife, Vincenza Cefaloni, the light and love of his life, at age 14 shortly after she came to America from Italy. After an 8-year courtship, they were married in 1961. He received his college education at the University of Bridgeport majoring in Industrial Design.

Mike was an emeritus member of the CT chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). He was NCARB certified and licensed to practice in 13 States.

Mike began his professional career in Bridgeport at Fletcher-Thompson (FT), architects and engineers, in 1961. He started as the print-boy and rose to become a Partner and Executive VP in 1987. In 1988, he opened FT's first CT branch office in Hartford. Work executed while at FT included the AIA award winning Milford City Hall, the Fairfield Police Headquarters, the MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution in Suffield, the City Park mixed-

use development in Hartford in a joint venture with MONY Life Insurance, the Thomas J. Dodd Archives Center at UCONN-Stors Campus, and many schools.

In 1991, Mike became president of Westcott & Mapes, architects and engineers, in New Haven. In 1993, he opened his own office Donegan & Associates LLC in Stratford. Mike was best known for his Team approach in providing professional consulting services and registered the trademark “Team Architecture” with the U.S. Patent Office. This precept was the heart of his business plan. He believed a synergetic Team was more than the sum of its parts and had the immanent ability to outperform even its best individual member. Collaboration, via strategic alliances, in association with eminent experts enabled his Teams to deliver superior design services. Team successes in CT included the UCONN-Stamford Branch Downtown Campus; the Palace Theater restoration, the School for the Performing Arts, and the Rowland Government Office Building all in Waterbury, and many other public, commercial and educational buildings. other public, commercial and educational buildings.

Former civic memberships included the Bridgeport Lions Club, the St. Patrick's Scholarship Committee, the Gaelic American Club, the Marchegiana Society, the Lordship Fathers Club, and



the Board of Directors of the Bridgeport PAL; he was the architect for the PAL's current Christmas Village.

In 2009, Mike decided it was time to stop and smell the roses before it was too late, so he retired to be with his loved wife and family full time. The family was always Mike's top priority. Known as “Pa” to his grandchildren, he was happiest when he was with them. His wife, children and grandchildren were his blessings and the joys of his life.

Mike is survived by his wife, Vincenza of 65 years, sons, Michael V. Donegan and wife, Tracey of Milford and Patrick J. Donegan and wife, Mary Ellen of Trumbull, one daughter, Stacey Donegan Agvent and husband, Gregory of Seabrook Island, SC, 9 loving grandchildren, 7 nieces and 11 nephews.

Funeral services were held on Monday, February 9, 2026. To celebrate his life, please visit www.galelofuneralhome.com to leave condolences.

Two AIA CT Members Elevated to Fellowship



JOHN MARK NEARY, FAIA



JUN MITSUI, FAIA

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) has elevated 78 architects to its prestigious College of Fellows, one of the highest honors bestowed by the organization. Fellowship recognizes architects who have made significant contributions to the profession and to society at a national level.

The AIA Fellowship program was established to honor architects who have achieved a standard of excellence in the profession and demonstrated a profound impact on architecture and the built environment. To be considered, candidates must have maintained at least 10 years of AIA architect membership and shown distinguished influence in one or more of the following areas:

- Promoting the aesthetic, scientific, and practical efficiency of the profession
- Advancing the science and art of planning and building through improved standards of practice

- Coordinating the building industry and the profession of architecture
- Improving the quality of life through enhanced environments
- Demonstrating a sustained commitment to advancing the profession's service to society
- Elevating standards of architectural education and training

Fellows are selected by a nine-member Jury of Fellows composed of leaders from across the profession. This year's jury was chaired by Sanford Garner, FAIA, of RG Collaborative, and included distinguished practitioners and educators representing a broad cross-section of expertise and experience: Roderick Ashley, FAIA, Roderick Ashley Architect; Margaret Carney, FAIA, Cornell University; Julie Hiromoto, FAIA, HKS; John Horky, FAIA, Ripples, by design; Mitra Kanaani, FAIA, New

School of Architecture & Design; Christine Mondor, FAIA, evolve, LLC; José Javier Toro, FAIA, Toro Arquitectos and Lourdes Solera, FAIA, M.C. Harry & Associates.

We are especially proud to announce that two AIA Connecticut members were elevated to the College of Fellows this year: John Mark Neary, FAIA, of HOK, and Jun Mitsui, FAIA, of Jun Mitsui & Associates Inc. Architects / Pelli Clarke & Partners Japan, Inc.

Their elevation reflects not only individual achievement, but also the strength and leadership of our architectural community.



22 Earn Promotions at S/L/A/M Collaborative



The S/L/A/M Collaborative (SLAM) is pleased to announce the promotion of five individuals to Associate Principal, twelve to Senior Associate, and five to Associate. These promotions recognize the professional excellence, leadership, and commitment that each honoree brings to the firm and our clients.

New SLAM Associate Principals

Dana Christ, Assoc. AIA, Associate Principal - Glastonbury
Since joining SLAM in 2001, Dana has become the firm's national subject matter expert in Diagnostic and Interventional Radiology, Radiation Oncology, and Compounding Pharmacies. A leader in equipment coordination for complex, technology-driven projects, he collaborates closely with vendors and engineering teams from programming through construction to ensure long-term client success.

Emily Sperini, AIA, Associate Principal - Glastonbury

A leader in research-driven lab planning at SLAM, Emily brings 12 years of experience delivering flexible, high-performance laboratory solutions. As a Project Manager and Lab Planner for

higher education projects, she provides hands-on leadership in technical documentation and consultant coordination, actively mentors STEM students through the ACE Mentoring Program, and sits on the Board of Directors of the Connecticut Architecture Foundation.

Richard Sears, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, ACHA, Associate Principal - Glastonbury

Rich brings nearly 30 years of experience leading large-scale healthcare projects, including assembling and guiding strong teams at Yale. His work has expanded beyond outpatient facilities to more complex projects, like the Greenwich Cancer Center renovations. A key member of the next generation of the Glastonbury Healthcare team, Rich has led multiple marketing efforts for new clients and remains highly active in the New England healthcare market, consistently building meaningful connections for the firm.

Emily Burton, Associate Principal, Business Development - Atlanta

Brian Ericsson, AIA, Associate Principal - Boston

Senior Associates

Renée Latulippe (HR, Glastonbury), Alisa Elfman, PLA, ASLA (Landscape Architecture, Glastonbury), Yana Pierzchala, AIA, LEED GA, WELL AP, EDAC (Orlando), Kelly Kleppin, AIA (Orlando), Gabriel Hohag, AIA, LEED GA (Philadelphia), Meghan Mendes, NCIDQ, IIDA (Interiors, Glastonbury), Ayca Ata, Ph.D., LEED GA (Glastonbury), Matthew Hildreth, AIA (Denver), Brittany D'Oddio, NCIDQ (Providence), Ellie Hart, AIA, EDAC (Boston), Kathryn Packtor, PLA, ASLA (Glastonbury), and Ross McCoy, AIA, ACHA, EDAC (Glastonbury)

Associates

Cole Peterson, AIA, NCARB (Glastonbury), Brittany Blinn (Providence), Ryan Oldach (Philadelphia), Nazeer Kutty, AIA, Fitwel (Atlanta), and Brian Ott, AIA (Denver)

Platt Technical High School Career Fair March 24, 2026

Platt students are job ready and skilled in their trades. Grow your workforce with qualified students in Automotive Technology, Carpentry, Automotive Collision Repair, Culinary, Electrical, Hairdressing, HVAC, Information Technology, Mechatronics Robotics & Automation, Plumbing & Heating, PMET, and Architecture

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March 24, 2026

11:15-12:00 Buffet

12:00-1:10 Seniors

1:13-2:03 Juniors



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For Registration scan the QR code or use this link by 3/1/26

Students participating in Work Based Learning are able to go to work during the school day while in their Trade Cycles. Students can also work after school or during breaks if needed. Please see the [CTECS WBL Page](#) and the [Platt Technical High School Website](#) for more information.



**GET TO KNOW 2026
AIA PRESIDENT
ILLYA AZAROFF, FAIA**

In this interview, Azaroff discusses his formative experiences, what he envisions for AIA members, and why “leadership can’t wait.”

By Danielle Steger

Illya Azaroff, FAIA, recently assumed his role as AIA’s president for 2026. He is the founder of +LAB architect and teaches at Citytech CUNY. He works with cities, governing bodies, and design teams

to build resilient capacity, meaning communities’ ability to prepare for, respond during, and thrive after disasters.

We talked to him about the challenges he’ll take on as AIA’s president as well as the lessons he has learned from geography, disaster response, and growing up with an immigrant parent.

What challenges are you most excited about facing as president?

I think I’m more excited about the people I’m going to be working with. ... A lot of people think that having a calm, smooth road is what [board members] look forward to. But that’s not the case. That’s not realistic.

The good thing about coming into this year is that I think we have an extraordinary board to work with.

... We also have a new CEO/EVP [Carole Wedge, FAIA]. As she steps into the role and really becomes acclimated to what AIA is doing and where we need to go, that’s going to set a foundation for real progress.

There’s also a governance task force. [With it], we’re gaining an understanding of how we [can] serve the members better through making sure that components are first and foremost the strength of what AIA is. ... Those are all challenges, but they’re internal. They’re things that we’re going to work on.

But I’m also excited about [taking on] the external shocks and stresses. That’s important because our members ... look to leadership that really strives to make your agency, your voice, and your visibility

much stronger. [That will involve] highlighting our members, giving them the tools they need to be the best they can be, and really engaging in the public process and advocacy efforts.

How does your background in geography influence the way you approach problems?

I'll take that in two ways. One is that we start everything with geography in my practice—understanding culture and place, followed by history as well as scientific examination. That leads to ... understanding who people are as we embark on our work. And that becomes the foundation for our design.

On the other side of it, [I have an immigrant parent]. Culture and people and place were integrated in our household discussions. It was a natural interest. [Editor's note: During World War II, German forces displaced his father's family from Ukraine, and a group of the survivors eventually came to the U.S.]

And so, when I travel and work with people around the world, I think [geography] has given me a greater sensitivity and an understanding of ... diversity in people and diversity in places, along with their ecosystems and traditions. That has really given me a strong basis to be a world citizen and a better leader.

What's a regenerative design project that you want more people to know about?

To put regenerative design in context for all of us as architects: It's essential we do this. Regenerative design is healing in a holistic way versus curing or responding to symptoms. And at its core, regenerative design repairs the earth with every action you take.

[One firm] that is doing great work out of Australia/Singapore is WOHA. They do incredible regenerative work. [Someone else] who has

been doing this work a long time is Ken Yeang out of Malaysia. He has written so many books and traveled the world, espousing what regenerative design is all about.

[Stateside], there are places like HMTX World Headquarters in Norwalk, Conn. That place is net positive energy, and it's positive in terms of its water capture and green roof systems. It has pollinator gardens.

Back overseas, you're going to see a lot of this work, too, like One Central Park in Sydney, Australia. That is an incredible building most architects already know about. But if you really dive down, it leverages the regenerative design process in an urban environment at a larger scale. ... Another one I'll mention is BaleBio, which is in Bali, Indonesia. It's a bamboo community pavilion that turned a car park into a carbon-storing social space.

What's something you have learned while responding to disasters?

Disasters don't discriminate at all. ... It doesn't matter what [your economic status is] or who you are. The effects are profound, and it strips you to your base and brings everybody to the level of human being.

[When responding to a disaster], you see people who've lost everything, and your drive to do better comes forward. You really understand that the leadership that architects can provide in this realm is extraordinary, and that's part of the reason why I ran for [2026 AIA president]. I really think that we can have a positive impact throughout our communities, making sure that they can withstand disruptions today and tomorrow.

On the practical side, I've learned from all over the world, such as from Nepal. [Nepal goes] through severe earthquakes. They already have things in their building code

that require flexible piping for water delivery, because they know that after a disaster, water is essential. Clean water is essential for life safety. ...

In Japan, I've seen the enormous amount of money that they spend for adaptation and mitigation. ... When you ask them about how they can afford to invest so much to make cities safer or more resilient, everybody says the same thing. They answer the question with a question: "What is the value of one human life?"

Is there anything else that you would like members to know about yourself as you take this role?

I call myself a reluctant leader. I grew up in a household with a parent who was a war refugee, and I've responded to disasters. I often use this tagline: "Leadership can't wait." Because it applies to me as well.

[Though I'm a] quiet person who likes my time away from everybody else, I was always taught that if you see something going wrong, you have to stand up. It doesn't matter how insurmountable it may seem. You have to fight that dragon. [That applies] whether it's disasters and displacement, whether it's the shocks and stresses we're experiencing from the political side, whatever it may be.

Other than that, I like going fishing. I like going to the beach. Water is everything to me. ... When you're out there in the water, you get time by yourself, and that's healing.

Danielle Steger is AIA's senior manager, editorial and publications.



RICHARD BRANCH NAMED NEW AIA CHIEF ECONOMIST

Branch will analyze U.S. economic trends and construction markets, assessing their impact on architectural practice.



The American Institute of Architects (AIA) has named Richard Branch as its new chief economist.

In this pivotal role, Branch will analyze U.S. economic trends and construction markets, assessing their impact on architectural practice. He will also oversee the production of key indicators and reports to forecast construction activity and provide strategic guidance to AIA members.

Former AIA Chief Economist, Kermit Baker, Hon. AIA, PhD, will assist Branch's transition to the role over the next several weeks.

"AIA has been fortunate to benefit from Kermit's insights for more than 30 years, which have greatly served the profession. We wish him the very best in his retirement," said AIA EVP/CEO Carole Wedge, FAIA. *"We are thrilled to welcome*

Richard to the AIA and look forward to leveraging his expertise to support our members and the industry."

Most recently Branch served as Chief Economist for Dodge Construction Network. As head of the Dodge Economics Group, his primary focus was to ensure that Dodge provided world-class tracking, analysis, and forecasting of construction activity while working closely with national, regional, and trade media to share these insights. This included overseeing the execution of the monthly Dodge Momentum Index and National Construction Starts research, as well as leading the annual Dodge Construction Outlook.

With over 30 years of experience as an economist across consulting and publishing firms, Branch

is a seasoned industry expert. He specializes in equipping organizations with the insights needed to uncover new opportunities and drive profitability.

Branch's expertise is further highlighted by participation in AIA's Consensus Construction Forecast panel, where he has contributed valuable economic perspectives. Branch earned a master's degree in economics from Boston College and a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Ottawa in Canada.

JANUARY 2026 CONSENSUS CONSTRUCTION FORECAST

CONSENSUS CONSTRUCTION FORECAST, JANUARY 2026

Click on each name to see their forecast

Consensus	Actual \$	Forecast % Change	
		2026	2027
Dodge Construction Network	Nonresidential Total	1.0	2.2
S&P Global, Market Intelligence	Commercial Total	3.0	3.5
Moody's Analytics	Office	6.0	1.9
	Data Centers	26.3	16.5
FMI	Retail & Other Commercial	0.2	2.8
	Hotel	3.2	5.3
ConstructConnect	Warehouse	-2.2	2.8
	Manufacturing	-3.9	-0.9
Associated Builders and Contractors	Institutional Total	2.7	2.8
	Health	4.6	4.0
Wells Fargo Securities	Education	1.5	1.1
	Amusement & Recreation	1.3	1.6
Markstein Advisors			
Piedmont Crescent Capital			

Notes:

All expenditures are for construction spending put-in-place in billions of \$ (not adjusted for inflation) as benchmarked to U.S. Census Bureau releases.

The AIA Consensus Forecast is compiled as an average of the forecasts provided by the panelists that submit forecasts for each of the included building categories.

In 2026, nonresidential construction faces slowing growth, widening sector imbalances, and continued economic uncertainty.

Spending on non-residential building activity over the second half of last year was disappointing. As of midyear last year, members of the AIA Consensus Construction Forecast Panel projected that spending on buildings would be up almost 2% for 2025, followed by a similar gain this year. Now, this modest forecast gain looks instead to have been a decline of a similar magnitude.

These disappointing results were evident across the board: A 1.5% projected gain in the commercial sector looks instead to have been a 3% or so decline. An expected modestly weak performance for the manufacturing sector looks instead to have been a 5% decline, and a healthy 6% projected increase for institutional building saw growth at

less than half that pace, according to current panelist estimates.

The weakness that we saw as 2025 progressed is expected to continue into this year and next. The forecast panel is projecting just a 1.0% gain in spending on building this year, increasing to just 2.2% in 2027. Since these figures are not adjusted for inflation, the modest expectations for growth likely won't even cover increased construction costs. Within the broader building category, spending on commercial facilities is projected to increase 3.0% this year and an additional 3.5% next. Manufacturing spending is forecast to decline 3.9% this year, and an additional 0.9% in 2027. Spending on institutional facilities is expected to increase 2.7% this year, and an additional 2.8% next year.

While very modest gains may be the best description of the overall building outlook, it is not an accurate portrayal of most of

the individual building categories, particularly in the commercial sector. Data centers are expected to see continued healthy gains over the next two years. In contrast, spending on traditional offices (net of data centers, which are included in the broader office category) is expected to see a steep decline both years, while spending on retail facilities, including warehouses, is expected to see almost no growth this year and only modest gains in 2027. The institutional categories tend to see more stable spending levels, but even here, health care facilities look to see gains in the mid-single digit range for the year and next, while both the education and amusement and recreation categories are likely to see almost no growth either year.

[View interactive data](#)



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FEB

20 Alice Washburn Awards | Early Bird Registration Closes

26 Committee on Design Presentation | AI in Architectural Practice

27 Women in Architecture: Coffee Meetups

MAR

4 EDI Knowledge Community Meeting

5 Masked Marvels Bowling Night

9 Women in Architecture Awards | Nominations Open

Committee on the Environment (COTE) Meeting

10 Small Firms Exchange (SFx) Meeting

Allied Advisory Meeting

11 High-Performance Residential Construction - In-person

Building Performance & Regulations (BP&R) Meeting

13 Alice Washburn Awards | Final Registration & Submission Closes

Women in Architecture (WIA) Knowledge Community Meetings

18 Professional Practice Knowledge Community Meeting

19 Emerging Professionals (EP) Community Meeting

Accessibility Requirements for New Apartment Buildings: Navigating the Connecticut State Building Code

AIA CONNECTICUT CALENDAR

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High-Performance Residential Construction

In-Person Lunch & Learn Program



If you are a residential designer or architect, you don't want to miss this session!

**Wednesday, March 11th
11:45am-2:00pm**

**O&G Industries
Bridgeport Mason Facility
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Bridgeport, CT**

**Presenter:
Leigh Overland, AIA**

Join us for an in-person Lunch and Learn introducing **The Overland Method**, a high-performance residential building system that goes beyond minimum code. Discover how ICF walls, SIP roofs, radiant systems, non-combustible interiors, and high-performance envelopes can improve safety, resilience, occupant health, and energy efficiency—without increasing cost.

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