

March 2026

# ARCHITYPE

THE DIGITAL MAGAZINE OF AIA CONNECTICUT

## Celebrating International Women's Month



**Women Shaping a Sustainable Future in Architecture**

**A New Generation Shaping the Future of Architecture**

**The Push to Scale Back- White House Ballroom Plan**

**A Guide to Onboarding for Design Professionals**

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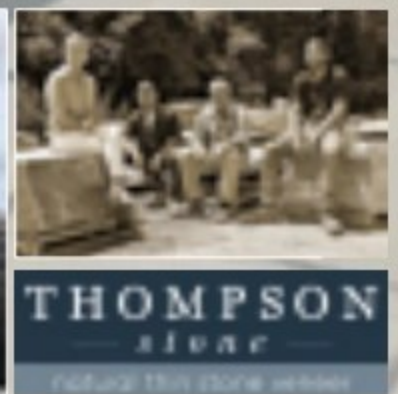
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# ARCHITYPE

THE DIGITAL MAGAZINE OF AIA CONNECTICUT

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# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**M**arch comes in like a lion and this month's issue definitely roars, highlighting the people, ideas, and initiatives shaping the future of architecture.

As we celebrate International Women's Month, we take a moment to recognize the extraordinary contributions women continue to make across our profession. Our feature, *Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future in Architecture*, we honor leaders who are advancing design excellence, sustainability, and equity. Their work reminds us that the future of architecture depends on diverse perspectives and bold leadership.

We also see that future already taking form in the emerging generation of architects redefining the profession. In *The Future of Architecture Is Being Shaped by a New Generation*, we explore how

young professionals are bringing fresh approaches to technology, climate responsibility, and community engagement, challenging long-held assumptions and expanding the possibilities of design.

At the same time, architecture continues to play a critical role in shaping public discourse. The ongoing debate surrounding the proposed White House ballroom, where one of our own AIA Connecticut members has been a strong voice urging that the project be scaled back to preserve the integrity and symbolism of the historic complex.

This month we are also proud to announce that **Joeb Moore, FAIA**, is the recipient of the Connecticut Architecture Foundation Distinguished Leadership Award. His career exemplifies the values of mentorship, design excellence, and service that strengthen the architectural community.

Finally, as conference season approaches, our guide *5 Ways to Get the Most Out of an Architecture & Design Conference* offers practical advice for turning events into meaningful opportunities for learning, connection, and professional growth.

Together, the stories in this issue reflect a profession in motion—one that honors its legacy while embracing change. From celebrating the achievements of women in architecture to supporting emerging voices and thoughtful leadership, the future the profession is being shaped by those willing to lead, collaborate, and imagine what comes next.

Thank you for being part of this ongoing conversation.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gina", written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT

A hand with a white manicure points to architectural blueprints. The blueprints show room layouts with dimensions like 17.7, 11.2, 5.3, and 5.8. There are three color-coded callout boxes: a green one for 'SW 6760 Rivulet', a yellow one for 'SW 6677 Goldenrod', and an orange one for 'SW 6620 Rejuvenate'. The background is a blurred image of a person's head and shoulder.

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# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



Last month, hundreds of AIA representatives from national, state, and local components descended on Washington D.C. for the AIA Leadership Summit. As anticipated pre-arrival, we met with U.S. representatives and senators to advocate for four critical national issues affecting our profession. These issues focused on 1) retaining the IRS Section 179D beyond June 30 of this year, 2) supporting the Democracy in Design Act and the People's White House Historic Preservation Act, 3) continuing the advancement of bipartisan housing legislation, and 4) supporting two H.R. bills to designate M.Arch and D.Arch degrees as 'professional' and reverse the federal loan borrowing caps.



To expand upon our discussion of these issues with our Connecticut delegation would take several pages, but I can assure our AIA CT members that our issues were well-received. This could not be said for some of our AIA colleagues, challenged by their representatives and staffers. We were fortunate our asks were accepted with positive feedback, but I know that our asks, though important to our profession, compete with thousands of national priorities.

We always need to be mindful that competing issues must be balanced at all levels of government .. as I recently experienced. For my 10th year, I led the effort in deciding the local budgets to be voted on at a town-wide referendum by my community next month. Our decisions had to balance municipal and educational needs versus what we, as a finance board, thought would be a fair request of voters. Every year, I strive for a board unanimity, but differing opinions led to a 4-3 result on what to send to voters. The discussion, and eventual split vote, proved that sometimes it is OK not to all be in alignment if you act in a way that you believe is right.

The space allowed in this President's Column limits what we would like to share. So, two more quick items specific to this month.

The Connecticut Architecture Foundation (CAF) 2026 Leadership Event will happen at the University of Hartford on April 23rd, and will honor Joeb Moore, FAIA. I encourage AIA members and firms to attend and/or sponsor this critical event to assist the CAF in its mission to raise/award funds to advance education and professional growth in the field of architecture in our state.

March is national Women's History Month. Its 2026 theme is, coincidentally, "Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future." In this month's ARCHITYPE, the focus of this year's theme is clear: "women designing solutions for environmental, economic, educational, and societal sustainability." Sounds like maybe the AIA was consulted?

With admiration,

F. Michael Ayles, FAIA, NCARB

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# International Women's Month

## Celebrating Progress and Continuing the Journey Toward Equality



**E**very year in March, the world celebrates International Women's Month, a time dedicated to recognizing the achievements, resilience, and contributions of women across all fields of society. It is also a moment to reflect on the ongoing challenges women face and to renew global commitments to gender equality, empowerment, and opportunity.

**International Women's Month** is closely connected to International Women's Day, observed annually on March 8. The celebration traces its roots back to the early 20th century, when women around the world began organizing movements demanding better working conditions, fair wages, and the right to vote. Over time, these movements grew into a global campaign advocating for women's rights in education, leadership, health care, and social justice.

Today, women play vital roles in shaping the world. From political leaders and scientists to entrepreneurs, educators, artists, architects, and activists, women continue to break barriers and challenge outdated stereotypes. Their leadership has transformed communities and industries, proving that diverse perspectives strengthen societies and drive innovation.

Despite the progress made over the past century, gender inequality still persists in many areas. Women in many parts of the world continue to face unequal pay, limited access to education,

underrepresentation in leadership positions, and societal expectations that restrict their opportunities. International Women's Month serves as an important reminder that equality is not just a goal for women—it is a responsibility shared by everyone.

Education and empowerment are central to achieving lasting change. When girls receive access to quality education, they gain the knowledge and confidence needed to pursue careers, influence policy, and improve their communities. Empowered women often become advocates for future generations, creating a ripple effect that benefits families, economies, and societies as a whole.

International Women's Month is also a time to celebrate everyday women whose contributions may not always make headlines. Mothers, caregivers, teachers, healthcare workers, and countless others quietly shape the lives of those around them through dedication, compassion, and strength. Their work forms the backbone of communities worldwide.

Organizations, schools, and communities mark the month through events, discussions, and initiatives that highlight women's achievements and raise awareness about gender equality. These activities encourage

dialogue about the barriers that remain and inspire collective action to create a more inclusive and equitable future.

International Women's Month is not only about honoring the past but also about building a better future. By supporting women's leadership, advocating for equal opportunities, and celebrating the diverse voices of women everywhere, societies can move closer to a world where everyone has the chance to thrive.

As we recognize International Women's Month, we celebrate the courage, determination, and impact of women around the globe. Their stories remind us that progress is possible and that the pursuit of equality continues to shape a stronger and more just world for all.

# Women in Architecture AWARDS

AIA Connecticut

In honor of International Women's History Month,  
the 2026 Women in Architecture Awards are now open!



Do you know a woman architect in your firm or community who is shaping the future of architecture?

This award celebrates AIA Connecticut members whose work goes beyond great design - recognizing those who demonstrate design excellence, champion equitable and sustainable practices, collaborate with purpose, and create meaningful change in the profession and the built environment.

**Now is the time to nominate them!**

**Nomination deadline: April 3<sup>rd</sup> at 11:59pm EST**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO NOMINATE >**

By Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT

**I**nternational Women's Month celebrates the achievements, leadership, and growing influence of women across industries. In architecture — a profession that shapes the built environment and directly impacts environmental sustainability — women are increasingly leading meaningful change. As the world confronts climate change, resource scarcity, and rapid urbanization, architects play a critical role in designing buildings and communities that are resilient, energy efficient, and socially responsible.

Women architects are contributing significantly to this transformation by advancing sustainable design strategies, promoting equitable communities, and introducing innovative approaches to environmentally responsible architecture. Their leadership is reshaping how buildings are designed, constructed, and experienced.

In Connecticut, a growing network of women architects and women-led firms are demonstrating how architecture can respond to environmental challenges while enhancing the quality of life for communities. Through residential design, institutional projects, urban planning, and sustainability consulting, these professionals embody the 2026 International Women's Month theme of **"Leading the Change: Women Shaping a Sustainable Future."**

### **Architecture and the Urgency of Sustainability**

Architecture plays a vital role in addressing environmental challenges. Buildings account for nearly 40 percent of global carbon emissions, making the design and construction industry a major contributor to climate change. Strategies such as passive solar design, natural ventilation, green roofs, and renewable energy integration are



# Leading the Change Women Shaping a Sustainable Future in Architecture

becoming essential components of contemporary architectural practice.

Women architects have been particularly influential in advancing holistic approaches to sustainability — approaches that consider not only environmental performance but also community wellbeing, cultural context, and long-term resilience.

### **Breaking Barriers in Architecture**

Historically, architecture has been a male-dominated profession. For decades, women faced barriers in gaining recognition, leadership positions, and equal opportunities within the field. However, the profession has gradually evolved, and women now represent a growing portion of architects, educators, and firm leaders.

In Connecticut and across the United States, women are establishing their own firms, leading major design projects, and contributing to policy discussions around sustainable development. Their leadership brings diverse perspectives to the profession, an essential factor in addressing complex challenges such as climate adaptation and urban sustainability.

The rise of women-led firms also reflects a broader shift toward collaborative and interdisciplinary design processes that prioritize environmental stewardship and community engagement.

Connecticut is home to many accomplished women architects whose work reflects the growing importance of sustainability in architectural practice. These



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Women  
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communities.  
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professionals contribute through residential design, institutional projects, research, and sustainability consulting.

One of the most influential leaders in sustainable architecture in Connecticut is **Elizabeth P. Gray, FAIA**, a founding partner of Gray Organschi Architecture. Her work focuses on energy-efficient residential design and building science research. Through collaborations with the Yale Center for Ecosystems in Architecture, Gray explores how building systems can reduce environmental impact while improving performance and resilience.

Her firm's work demonstrates how architecture can address climate change through innovative materials, passive design strategies, and energy-

efficient construction techniques. Gray's leadership has helped position Connecticut as a center for research-driven sustainable architecture.

Another important figure in Connecticut's architectural landscape is **Laura Pirie, AIA**, founder of Pirie Associates in New Haven. The firm is a certified women-owned business and a certified B Corporation, reflecting its commitment to social and environmental responsibility.

Pirie Associates focuses on designing buildings and urban environments that promote community wellbeing, environmental stewardship, and long-term sustainability. The firm's projects range from educational and civic buildings to urban planning initiatives that strengthen neighborhoods and

support sustainable growth.

**Karin Patriquin, AIA**, founder of Patriquin Architects, is a recognized leader in high-performance residential architecture. Her work emphasizes energy efficiency, sustainable materials, and building health.

As a certified Passive House consultant and LEED-accredited professional, Patriquin focuses on designing buildings that reduce energy consumption while creating comfortable and healthy environments for occupants. Her projects demonstrate how sustainable design principles can be integrated into both residential and commercial architecture.

At Wyeth Architects, **Sara Holmes, AIA**, specializes in designing homes that prioritize energy performance and environmental responsibility. The firm is known for its expertise in Passive House design—a rigorous standard that dramatically reduces energy use through advanced insulation, airtight construction, and efficient mechanical systems.

Holmes' work highlights the potential of residential architecture to contribute significantly to climate mitigation efforts.

While many architects focus on design, **Deborah Stadler, AIA** contributes to sustainability through consulting. Her firm, Viridis Sustainable Building Consultancy, works with architects, developers, and institutions to achieve green building certifications and improve environmental

performance.

By advising on energy efficiency, material selection, and sustainability strategies, Stadler helps ensure that buildings meet high environmental standards.

Residential architecture also plays an important role in sustainable design. **Rosi Rawson, AIA** founder of Rawson Architecture, focuses on custom homes and renovations that prioritize energy efficiency, durable materials, and thoughtful integration with the surrounding environment. Her work demonstrates how sustainability can be incorporated into residential design without sacrificing comfort or aesthetic quality.

### **Women-Owned Firms Transforming Architectural Practice**

In addition to individual architects, women-owned firms across Connecticut are reshaping

the profession by prioritizing sustainable design, collaborative practice, and community engagement.

Firms such as **Aurora Farewell Architects, Atelier Cho Thompson, and Leigh Stewart Architecture & Design** are examples of practices where women lead the design process and integrate sustainability into their work.

These firms emphasize strategies such as:

- Energy-efficient building systems
- Sustainable material selection
- Adaptive reuse and renovation
- Climate-responsive design

Through these approaches, women-led firms are demonstrating that sustainability is not just a technical goal but a fundamental design philosophy.



## **Sustainable Innovation in Larger Architecture Firms**

Many women architects in Connecticut also contribute to sustainability within larger multidisciplinary firms.

Architects such as **Julia McFadden, AIA of QA+M Architects, Rebecca Hopkins, AIA of Tecton Architects, and Margaret Molnar-Ryan, AIA of Stantec**, work on large institutional and healthcare projects where sustainable design strategies can have a significant impact.

Healthcare and academic buildings, in particular, require careful consideration of energy use, occupant health, and long-term durability. By integrating sustainability into these complex projects, these architects help reduce environmental impact on a larger scale.

## **Research, Education, and Policy Leadership**

Women architects are also shaping sustainability through research, education, and public policy.

Architect **Sara Bronin, AIA** an architect, attorney, and urban policy expert, has been a national leader in climate-responsive planning and preservation. Her work highlights how zoning, land use policy, and historic preservation can contribute to sustainable urban development.

At Yale University, architect **Joyce Hsiang, AIA**, founder of Plan B Architecture & Urbanism, explores innovative approaches to sustainable urban design and resilient cities.

Through teaching, research, and advocacy, these professionals influence the next generation of architects and help guide public policy toward more sustainable development practices.

## **Collaboration and Community Engagement**

A defining characteristic of many women-led architectural practices is a strong emphasis on collaboration and community engagement. Rather than

designing in isolation, these architects often work closely with clients, engineers, environmental consultants, and local communities.

This collaborative approach leads to buildings that are better adapted to their surroundings and more responsive to the needs of the people who use them.

Community-centered design processes also encourage sustainable living by involving residents in decisions about their built environment. When communities feel ownership over their spaces, they are more likely to support environmentally responsible practices.

## **The Future of Women in Sustainable Architecture**

The growing presence of women in architecture signals a positive shift for the profession. As more women assume leadership roles, they are helping redefine architectural practice in ways that prioritize environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and collaborative design.

Emerging technologies such as advanced building materials, renewable energy integration, and smart building systems will continue to expand the possibilities for sustainable architecture. Women architects are already exploring these innovations while maintaining a strong commitment to human-centered design.

Organizations such as the American Institute of Architects Connecticut chapter and the Women in Architecture Committee provide mentorship, professional development, and advocacy to support women in the field.

These initiatives help ensure that future generations of architects will continue to build upon the progress made by today's leaders. International Women's Month offers an opportunity to recognize the significant contributions of women architects and their leadership in shaping a sustainable future. Across Connecticut, women architects

“  
From residential design to major institutional projects, Connecticut women architects are leading the transition toward a more resilient built environment

and women-led firms are demonstrating how thoughtful design can address environmental challenges while creating spaces that support healthy, vibrant communities.

As the profession continues to evolve, the leadership of women will remain essential in guiding architecture toward a future that is **sustainable, equitable, and resilient**.

# The Future of Architecture Is Being Shaped by a New Generation

**A**rchitecture has always evolved alongside society, but right now the profession feels like it's going through a particularly noticeable shift. New generations of architects and designers are entering the field with different priorities, values, and expectations than those that shaped the profession in the past. Among these young professionals, women are playing a significant role in changing how architecture is practiced, what it focuses on, and how firms operate.

For a long time, architecture was known for rigid hierarchies and limited diversity. While more women began enrolling in architecture schools toward the end of the twentieth century, that didn't always translate into equal representation in leadership roles or recognition within the profession. Today, however, the demographics of architecture are changing. Women make up a growing percentage of architecture graduates and early-career professionals, and many are bringing fresh perspectives about collaboration, sustainability, and the social impact of design.

## Moving Beyond the "Star Architect"

One of the biggest shifts happening among young professionals is a move away from the "star architect" model that dominated much of the late twentieth century. Instead of focusing on individual authorship and iconic buildings, many younger professionals are more

interested in collaborative and interdisciplinary design.

Women architects have been especially influential in this shift. Rather than emphasizing one singular design voice, emerging practitioners often prioritize teamwork—working closely with engineers, planners, landscape architects, and even community groups. The idea is that architecture works best when it's not created in isolation but through a process that brings together different perspectives and expertise.

This collaborative mindset is also influencing the way firms operate internally. Younger architects are advocating for more transparent leadership structures, mentorship opportunities, and workplaces where a wider range of voices can contribute to the design process.

## Designing with People in Mind

Emerging professionals are bringing a stronger emphasis on social impact. Although architecture has always influenced how people live and interact with their surroundings, this new generation of practitioners are becoming more intentional about designing spaces that directly respond to the needs of the communities they serve.

Women in the field have been particularly active in conversations around inclusive and community-centered design. Many are involved in participatory processes where residents, users, and local organizations help shape projects from the

beginning. Instead of designing for communities from a distance, architects are increasingly designing with them.

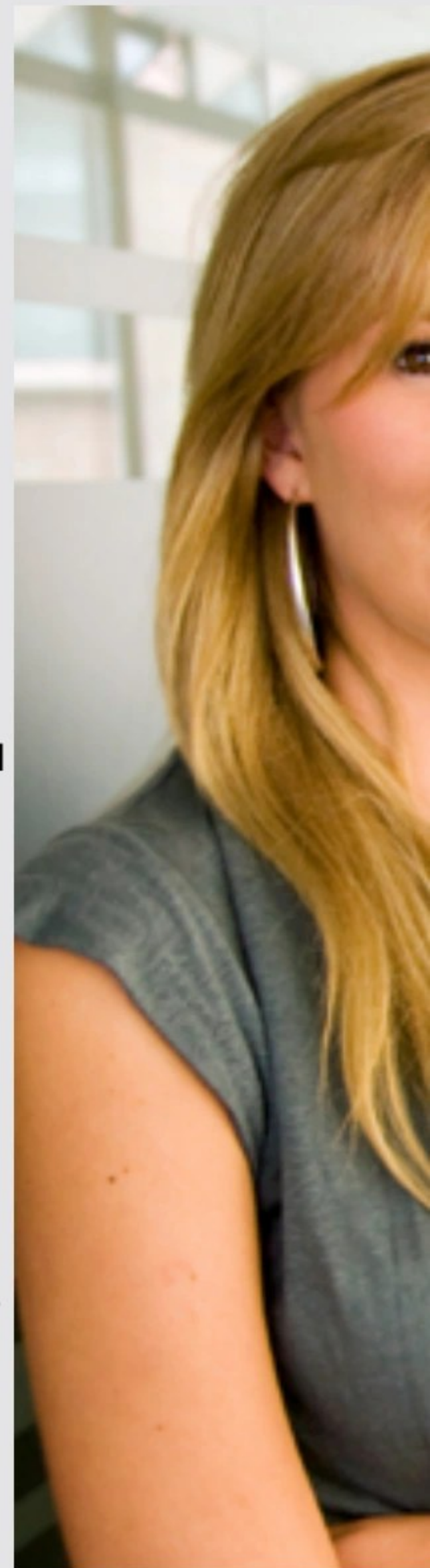
This approach is especially visible in projects like affordable housing, schools, healthcare spaces, and community infrastructure. The emphasis shifts from purely aesthetic goals to creating environments that improve quality of life and support social connection.

Environmental responsibility is another area where emerging architects are pushing the profession forward. For many younger designers entering the field today, sustainability isn't a niche specialty, it's a baseline expectation.

They are helping lead conversations around climate-responsive design, adaptive reuse, and lower-carbon construction. Instead of treating sustainability as an added feature, they often start with environmental performance as a central design driver.

## Rethinking the Culture of the Profession

The influence of emerging professionals isn't limited to





design ideas—it's also reshaping the culture of architectural practice. Historically, the field has been associated with long hours, demanding deadlines, and a work culture that can be difficult to sustain over time.

Younger architects, many of them women, are increasingly questioning these norms. Conversations about work-life balance, equitable pay, parental leave, and healthier office environments are becoming more common within the profession.

Advocacy groups and professional networks led by EP's are encouraging firms to rethink how architectural careers develop. Instead of equating dedication with burnout, many are pushing for more sustainable ways of working that allow architects to remain creative and engaged throughout their careers.

They are also broadening the definition of what it means to practice architecture. Increasingly, architects are working across fields like policy, research, community organizing, and environmental planning.

Many women architects are taking on roles that connect design with larger social and political issues—whether that means addressing housing shortages, advocating for climate resilience, or helping shape urban policy. This reflects a growing understanding that the built environment is tied to systems far beyond individual buildings.

By working across disciplines and scales, these professionals are demonstrating that architectural thinking can influence everything from neighborhood planning to national housing strategies.

Architecture today sits at an interesting turning point. Challenges like climate change, housing affordability, rapid urbanization and new technologies are forcing the profession to rethink how it operates and what it prioritizes.

Women, in particular, are helping drive many of these changes—not only by increasing representation in the field but by reshaping how architecture is practiced and understood.

As these emerging voices gain influence, the future of architecture may look less like the singular visions that once defined the profession and more like a collective effort—one focused on collaboration, empathy, and designing spaces that truly respond to the people who use them.

# Architect Urges White House Ba



**P**resident Donald Trump's proposed White House ballroom project is significantly oversized and should be reduced in scale, according to an architect and board member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP) who says the plan could permanently alter the nation's most recognizable historic home.

David Scott Parker, FAIA and AIA Connecticut member, whose firm specializes in residential design and historic preservation, shared his concerns on a NTHP webinar along with AIA President Emeritus, Bill Bates, FAIA. His comments came as a key federal agency, the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC), were preparing to vote on March 5th on whether to approve the proposed 90,000-square-foot (8,361-square-meter) ballroom project.

Parker, who has practiced architecture for more than 36 years, said the ballroom's current size is excessive and risks undermining the historic integrity of the White House.

According to Parker, a project of this magnitude could fundamentally change the visual and architectural character of the White House grounds. While he acknowledges the need for updated event space at the executive residence, he argues that a more modest design would better respect the building's historical significance.

The debate over the ballroom proposal intensified earlier this month when the National Capital Planning Commission postponed its March 5 vote on the project. The delay came after the commission received a large number of public comments expressing concerns about the proposal's cost,

priorities, and design process.

The influx of feedback was partly the result of a coordinated grassroots effort by the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and AIA DC. The organizations encouraged members to submit formal comments and sign up to present their concerns directly before the commission.

Advocates for historic preservation say the White House, as both a functioning residence and a national symbol, requires careful stewardship when considering any structural changes. They argue that the review process must prioritize thoughtful design and long-term preservation over rapid approval.

In a statement following the delayed vote, AIA representatives said they will continue working with AIA DC and other stakeholders to encourage public engagement and ensure that the review process fully considers preservation concerns.

"We want to make sure that the process reflects sound historic preservation practices and smart design," the organization said.

The NCPC's upcoming hearing is scheduled for April 2nd. Despite the concerns raised by architects and preservation advocates, the Commissioners' comments suggest that they intend to approve it at that time.

If approved, the project would move forward as one of the most significant physical changes to the White House complex in decades, reigniting debate over how to balance modernization with preservation at one of the country's most historic landmarks.

# Ballroom Project Be Scaled Back

## Public Testimony David Scott Parker, FAIA - March 5, 2026

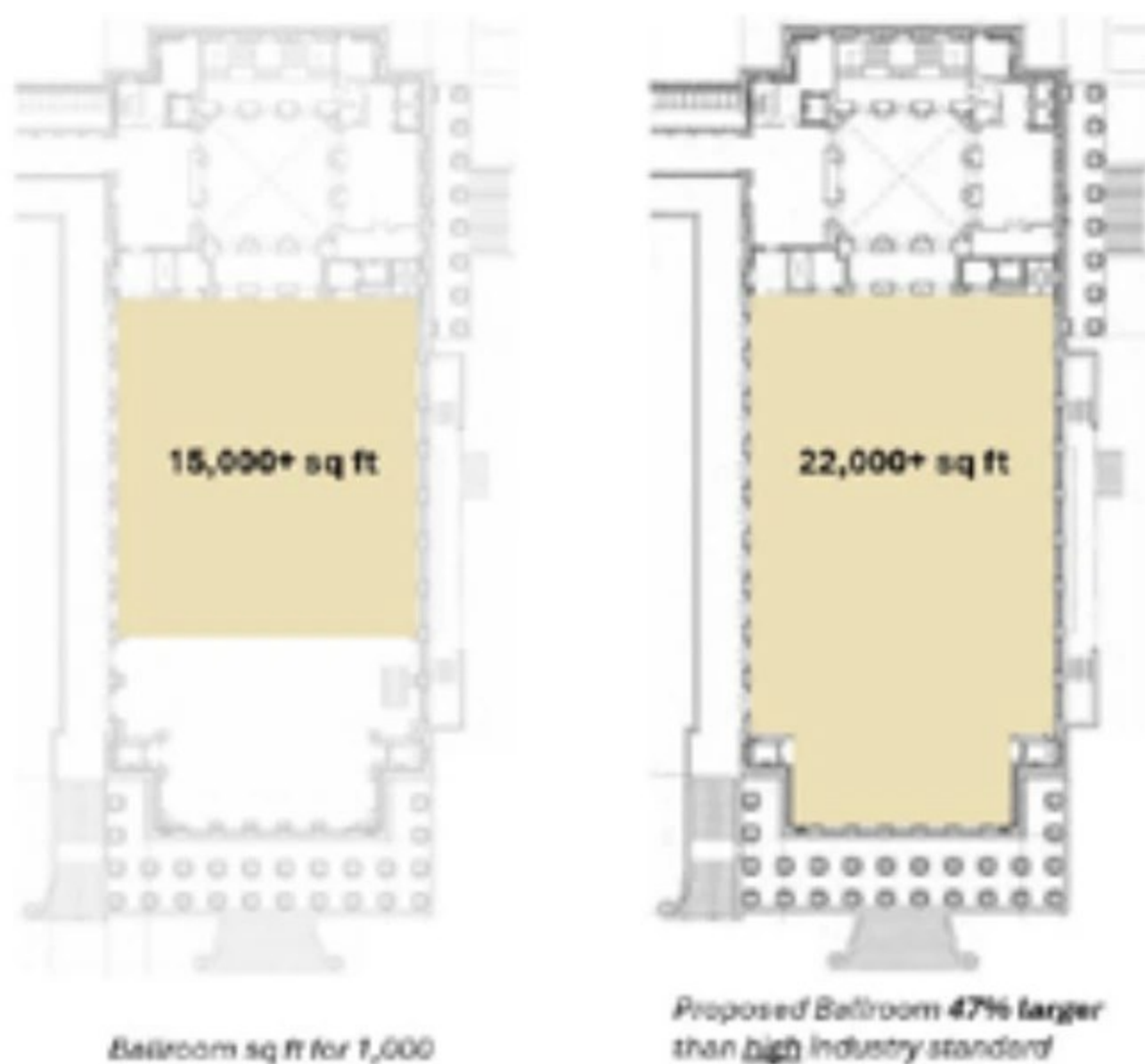
Dear National Capital Planning Commission Chairman Scharf and Members:

As a practicing architect for over 36 years and Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, I am writing to express grave concerns about the proposed White House ballroom and its numerous associated impacts. I've studied available materials carefully and have the following observations and constructive recommendations:

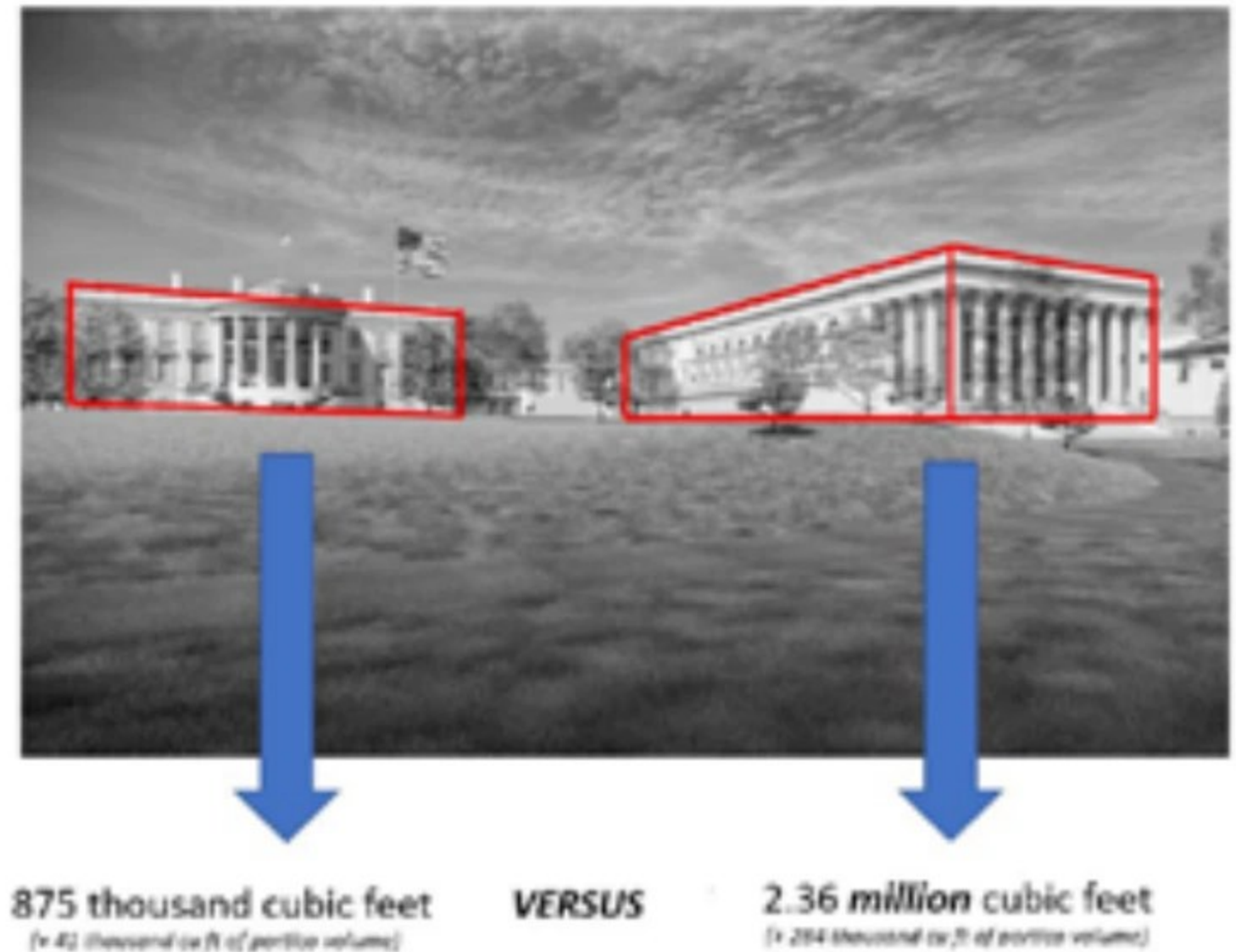
**1. SCALE OVERWHELMING:** Below is a comparison between the proposed ballroom portico with the White House and adjacent Treasury building. The disparity of scale of the proposed portico with its much larger columns to both is obvious, especially given that—as an appendage to the White House—it should be subservient.



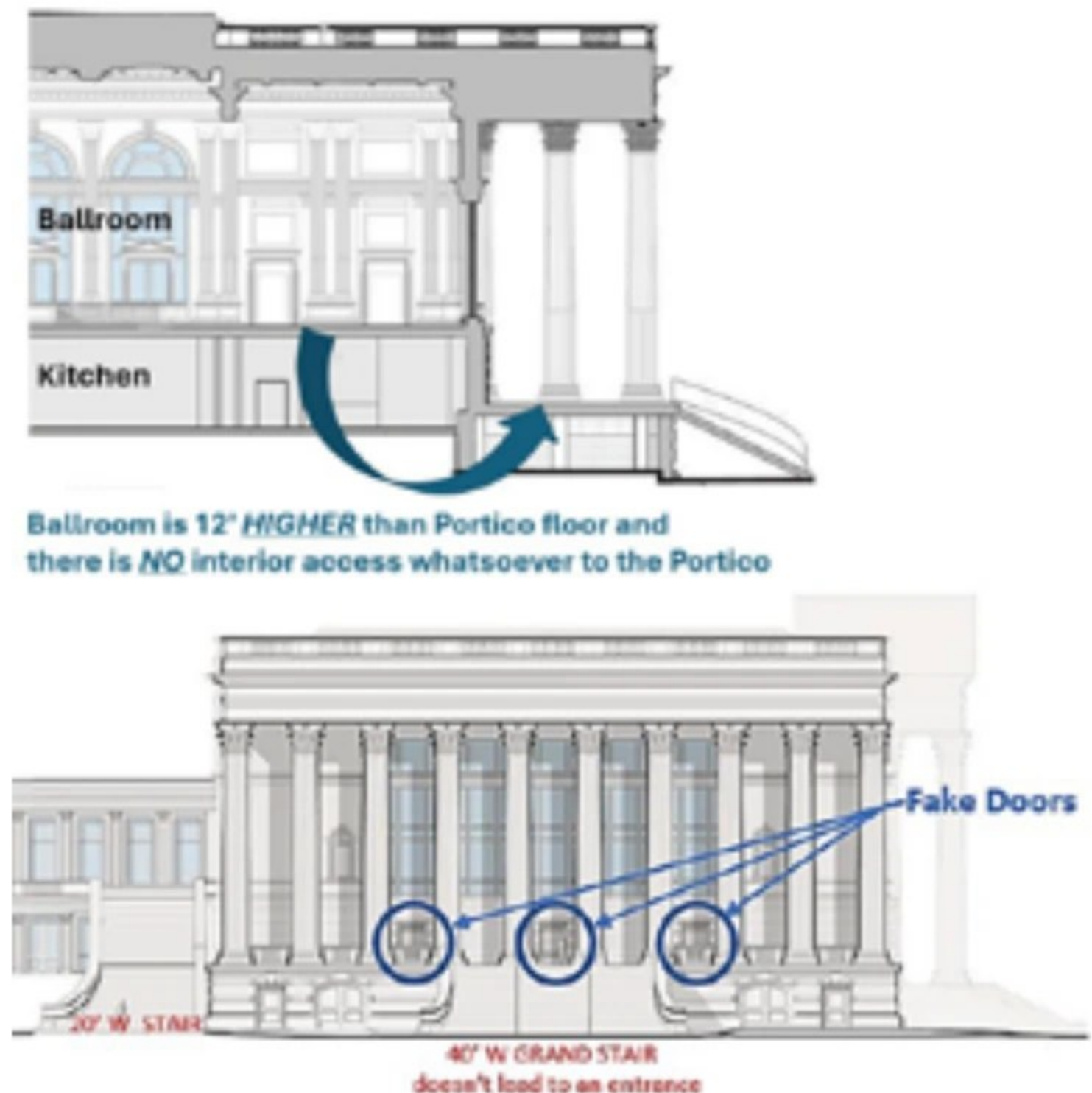
**2. PROGRAM INFLATED.** The ballroom structure has been represented as being sized to accommodate 1,000 people. The American architectural industry standard for ballrooms is from 10 sq ft per person (low) to 15 sq ft per person (high). Based upon the HIGH industry standard, the ballroom itself should therefore be 15,000 sq ft; however, the proposed space is over 22,000 sq ft, which is approximately 47% LARGER than industry standard.



**3. VOLUME EXAGGERATED.** The volume of the central White House is approx. 875,000 cubic feet in contrast to the proposed ballroom structure (not including the colonnade) whose mass is over 2.36 MILLION cubic feet—nearly 3 times the original White House—a huge violation of both Classical architectural principles mandating balance AND the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.



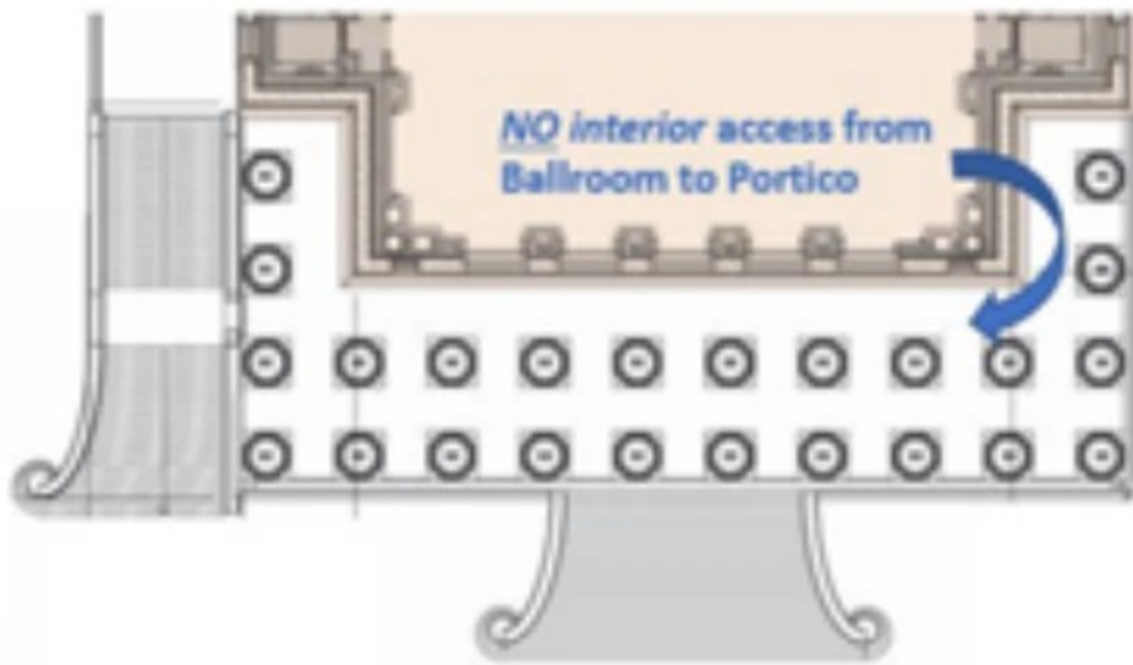
**4. PURPOSE OF PORTICO ILLOGICAL.** The Ballroom floor is 12' HIGHER than--and does not connect to-- its south portico, and neither does the Kitchen underneath (see section below). There is NO internal connection to this portico whatsoever.



**5. FLOOR AREA USELESS.** The proposed portico has a floor area of 4,000 sq ft, is not ADA accessible, and does not lead to an entrance. The doors there are all FAKE, and the 24 columns render the porch useless while also blocking views from the ballroom above. It is a portico with no function or purpose.



Columns superimposed on view done prior to addition of portico



**6. ORIGINAL CITY PLAN IMPACTED.** George Washington commissioned L'Enfant to design Washington DC in 1791 (partial plan below) and the two buildings he specifically called out 'ON AXIS' were the President's House and the Capitol. The importance of this axis—urbanistically, historically, and symbolically—cannot be overstated.



IMPACTS ON THE ORIGINAL PLAN FOR WASHINGTON

**7. SIGNIFICANT AXIS ABORTED.** The symbolic connection between the two branches of our government will be totally interrupted by the proposed ballroom. The axial connection created by L'Enfant, at the request of George Washington and endorsed by our FOUNDING FATHERS--will be forever aborted.



PROPOSED STRUCTURE COMPLETELY BLOCKS AXIS

**8. CAPITOL VIEW BLOCKED.** A highlighted and enlarged rendering from the latest architect's submission—depicting the view from the Capitol steps looking up Pennsylvania Avenue toward the White House reveals that the new ballroom BECOMES the main feature, totally blocking the White House and its grounds.



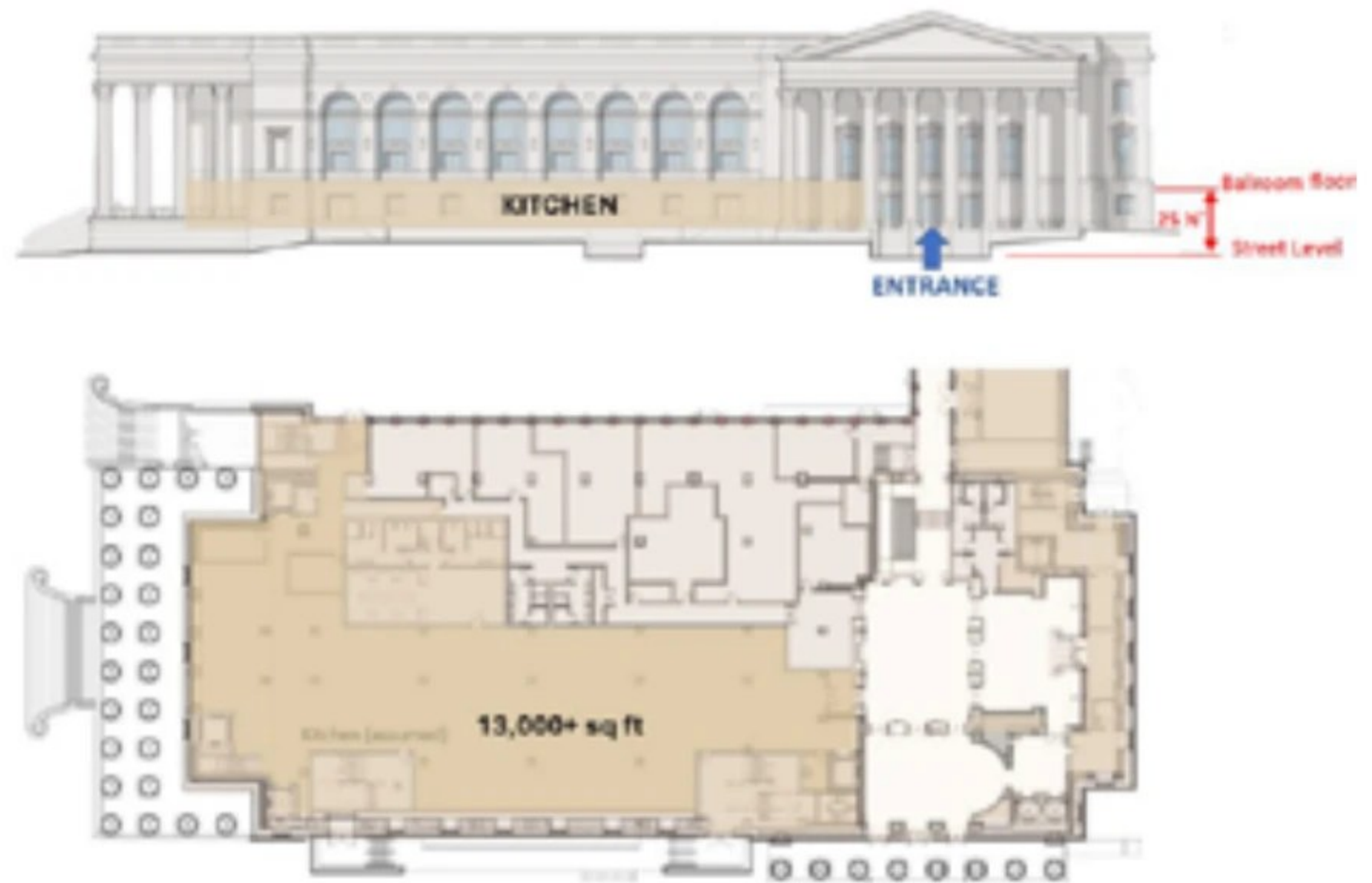
VIEW FROM CAPITOL STEPS TO WHITE HOUSE COMPLETELY BLOCKED BY NEW BALLROOM

**9. HISTORIC LANDSCAPE DESIGN DISFIGURED.** The pre-eminent American Landscape Architect Frederick Law Olmstead designed the White House grounds with its symmetrical drive leading up to the south entrance. The proposed ballroom forces a "dogleg" detour to the venerated White House approach.



### 10. ENTRANCE LEVEL USE

**IRRATIONAL.** Most of the entrance level is irrationally devoted to non-public service/support spaces (with blank windows)—relegating the ballroom to an upper floor 25½' ABOVE street level while making the building unnecessarily high. The kitchen is IMMENSE—more than 2½ times the Industry Standard to serve 1,000 people.



**EXCESSIVE SERVICE AREAS INFLATE VOLUME**

### 11. MASSIVE SIZE AND SCALE.

A recently provided rendering of the ballroom as viewed from Pennsylvania Avenue shows the massive volume of the proposed structure with its enormous south portico.



**MASSIVE SIZE AS VIEWED FROM PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE**

### 12. POTENTIAL MASS IF

**CORRECTLY SIZED.** The massing could be reduced by over 38% IF the Ballroom were resized to Industry Standard, while lowering the currently fully-above-grade kitchen and eliminating the inaccessible and unusable south portico.



**MASS OF STRUCTURE IF RESIZED AS SUGGESTED**

There are numerous other ways the bulk of the proposed structure could be reduced. Please respect the historic White House—the “People’s House”—as well as its landscape, axial viewshed, and symbolic relationship to the Capitol. Thank you for considering these careful observations.



# AIA Strategic Council February 2026 Update

By Jessica O'Donnell, FAIA 2026 Moderator

**T**he AIA Strategic Council continues its mission to inform the AIA Board and other Institute bodies about critical professional issues, opportunities, and threats. With a forward-focused vision, the Council emphasizes long-term goals to advance the architectural profession.

February was a busy month for the Council, marked by active participation in the AIA Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. Council members led impactful sessions, including topics such as mentorship, mid-career support, fellowship advancement, and architects in elected office. Additionally, the Council held an assembly on February 18, featuring a presentation from the Governance Task Force and discussions on governance improvements. March Leadership Exchange Calls are planned to gather insights from AIA leaders, with updates to follow.

## Study Group Updates

The Council's study groups are making progress on key initiatives:

- **Housing:** Collaborating with the AIA Housing and Community Development Knowledge Community to address the national housing crisis through expert input and discussions.
- **Neuroarchitecture:** Exploring the impact of architecture on neurodiversity and neurological health, with plans to analyze building codes and develop strategic recommendations.
- **Practice:** Divided into Career and Business Revenue Models sub-groups, this team is engaging experts to explore innovative pathways for career development and business strategies.
- **Regenerative Design:** Refining a working definition of regenerative design and incorporating feedback from AIA leadership.

- **Value:** Researching pay equity, fee calculators, and legal issues to improve collaboration between AIA chapters and national leadership.

## Get Involved

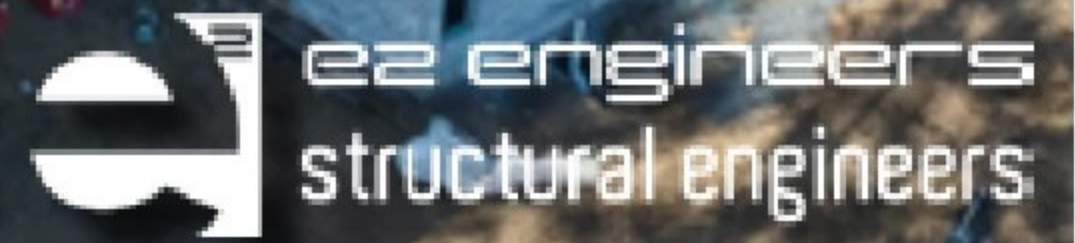
The Strategic Council welcomes feedback and insights from members. For questions or ideas, email [StrategicCouncil@aia.org](mailto:StrategicCouncil@aia.org) or visit the Strategic Council webpage at <https://www.aia.org/about-aia/leadership/aia-strategic-council>.

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



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By Michael J. Crosbie, FAIA

**J**oeb Moore, FAIA, head of Joeb Moore & Partners Architects in Greenwich, Connecticut, was bitten by the architecture bug early. The winner of this year's Distinguished Leadership Award from the Connecticut Architecture Foundation (CAF) remembers his initial fascination with architecture in elementary school, which blossomed into a full-blown love affair by the time he hit middle school, where a social science class prompted him to dream big. "I was quite interested in imagining or projecting possible worlds or possible cities," Joeb explains. Underwater cities? Settlements on the moon? Why not?

He found a mentor in one of his teachers, who encouraged him to keep pushing the limits of what he thought might be possible in architecture. His mentor saw in Joeb a "wild thinker," he recalls, encouraged him, and shared that encouragement with his parents, "which helped me to cultivate a sensitivity to the environment or spaces around me." High school offered opportunities to take architecture classes. Joeb notes that he was more drawn to architecture as an expression of the humanities—its social aspect, how people make themselves at home in the world. The late-1970s were also when he became more aware of "a very big social and ecological movement." Raised on the east coast, he went west to college in Colorado and became aware of the work of the

Rocky Mountain Institute, which focused on ecological and environmentally sensitive design. He studied philosophy as an undergrad—a discipline that continues to shape his approach to architecture, which he studied at Clemson University, completing his Master's degree.

Joeb has led a dual career as a practicing architect and teacher. His practice is distinguished by an oeuvre of exquisitely refined and detailed houses (Residential Architect magazine recognized him as one of the top 50 residential architects in the US). The practice has won scores of national, regional, and state design awards. The primary focus of his work is in creating an architecture that socializes us, that frames our lives within the quotidian arc of time.

"I believe that architecture—as a practice, as a design, and as a social art form—is a projective art," explains Joeb. "It involves the past, the present, and the future." He sees architecture—particularly

# Joeb Moore, FAIA Distinguished Leadership Award



Joeb Moore, FAIA

the nature of dwelling—as both a crucible and a refuge from the world. "It's where tensions occur politically, economically, environmentally, and socially," he explains. "Architecture sits in this liminal space between community, society, and culture, but it also sits in the natural physical environment, the ecology of a place." It occupies a site in a place that has a history, a contemporary context, and future potentials." Joeb sees his role as the architect as one who uncovers and amplifies these forces so that they are accessible and experientially rich.

# A Wins Leadership Award



Bridge House (Photo courtesy of Joeb Moore & Partners Architects)



44PL House (Photo courtesy of Joeb Moore & Partners Architects)

One sees this in a project such as the Bridge House in Kent, Connecticut constructed on a gently sloping site with a ridge that follows the cascading Housatonic River. The house straddles a gentle ravine, leaping from one side to the other. Within the belly of the rift, an outdoor room with a duo of fireplace masses seems to buttress the bridge. The site flows through this void, while on the upper level the space of the enclosed bridge allows a serene prospect of the site.

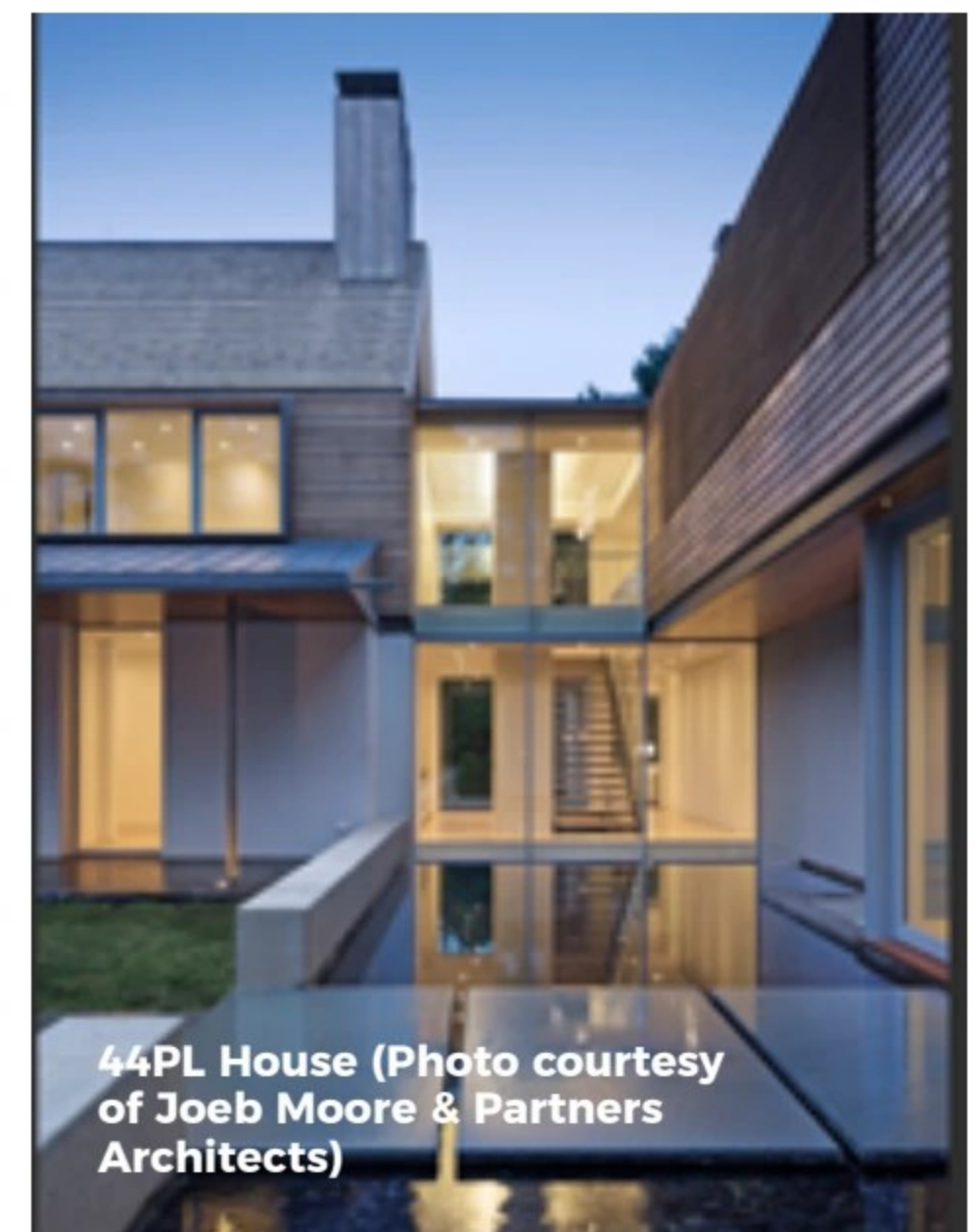
A similar approach is the 44PL House in Greenwich, Connecticut, which celebrates liminal spaces of vertical circulation. Brawny concrete walls create terraces across the site, which contain landscape, waterfalls, and peaceful pools. “I often find the most moving and powerful spaces have no program. They are the circulation, they’re the spaces in-between,” explains Joeb. They are where he feels most free because clients don’t have preconceptions about such spaces. A water canal becomes a waterfall that flows below the house where it opens to pools and a vertical stair. “So, you’re experiencing the waterfall,

the canal, and you’re moving up and down the stairs to go to the second floor, or the lower level,” Joeb explains. “When you step into this moment, time changes.”

In addition to practice, Joeb has taught for more than 30 years with a focus on history and theory. In 1992 he joined the faculty of the Barnard/Columbia undergraduate architecture department, where he still teaches. He also has held an appointment at the Yale School of Architecture for the past 20 years, focusing on core design studios and a design/build studio. His practice informs his teaching, which informs his practice. He is particularly drawn to the architecture of dwelling—primarily as a verb. It provides a philosophical framework to consider existential questions, the essence of the human condition. “Most people think of the idea of home as being a harbor, not just of safety, but of all that is good,” Joeb reflects. “But a home is not just a place to be comfortable. I think it’s better to think of home as a journey. A journey through time and space.”

On the evening of April 23 Joeb will lecture on his work--and the ideas that shape it--to celebrate his CAF Distinguished Leadership Award. The lecture, “Architecture in the Expanded Field: Landscape / Art / Architecture,” starts at 5:00 PM in the University of Hartford’s Wilde Auditorium in the Harry Jack Gray Center (admission is free), followed by an [awards dinner](#).

*The author is a CAF board member and Professor of Architecture at the University of Hartford.*



44PL House (Photo courtesy of Joeb Moore & Partners Architects)

# 5 Ways to Get the Most Out of an Architecture & Design Conference

By Kathleen M. O'Donnell

In a profession defined by constant change, architecture and design conferences offer a rare chance to pause and reconnect with the bigger picture. They convene people from disparate disciplines, firms, and points of view for conversations that influence the industry.

Whether you're drawn to learning new approaches or simply the energy that comes from being around others who care about design as much as you do, these events create space for professionals to think differently. Here are five ways you can make the most of attending one.

## **Set objectives and put yourself out there**

Before you arrive at the conference center, or maybe even before you register, take some time to define what you want out of the experience. Are you hoping to explore new professional avenues? Make more friends in the industry or identify a potential mentor? Learn about committee volunteering and other opportunities to engage? Setting a few clear objectives will help you stay focused and intentional once you're navigating a hectic schedule while surrounded by thousands of people.

Following through on those intentions can be challenging, though, especially if it's your first time at a conference or if networking feels like a chore. But you're there to connect with people, so be brave and put yourself out there. Schedule coffee dates. Attend a keynote with someone you barely know.

Sit alone at lunch and invite other solo diners to join you. Use the conference app to connect with professionals who work at firms you admire or who share similar interests.

During every interaction, be

curious and ask questions. When you combine clear objectives with a willingness to meet new people, you open the door to unexpected conversations, fresh opportunities, and professional relationships that can shape your career for years to come.

## **Attend sessions that don't match your area of expertise**

As an architect or design professional, you'll likely hold a variety of job titles throughout your career. Market swings, design trends, and your goals and interests will all influence how your role evolves over time. By diversifying your knowledge base, you can stay ahead of industry shifts and avoid being pigeonholed into tasks or roles you've outgrown.

Attending sessions that fall outside your current role or comfort zone is one of the most valuable ways to expand your perspective at a conference. For instance, if you excel at project management or construction administration, it's always helpful to deepen those skills, but try mixing in sessions on sustainability, resilience, equity and inclusion, or design innovation. The future of the profession depends on people who understand how all these things intersect.

## **Engage with new and different project work**

One of the biggest advantages of attending a conference is the chance to step outside your firm's bubble and see how others approach challenges. Conferences offer a wide window into different project types, scales, and strategies

you may not encounter in your day-to-day work. Such exposure to new projects and methods will benefit you.

Many conference education sessions include deep dives into project case studies. These are a chance to hear directly from teams who navigated complex constraints, tried new tactics, or pushed boundaries in ways that might spark ideas for your own projects. Even a single insight like a workflow tweak or an innovative material choice can shift your approach.

And don't underestimate the value of tours. Yes, they will take you away from the conference center for a few hours, but experiencing architecture (and the awe that comes with it) is probably one of the things that drew you to the profession in the first place. Seeing built work up close can recharge your creativity and remind you why design matters.

## **Don't sleep on the expo or social events**

An expo floor is much more than an endless sea of booths; it's a concentrated hub of new technology, cutting-edge products, and engaging pop-up events. Exhibiting companies, vendors, and organizations frequently launch new products and initiatives to coincide with major conferences, and you never know what discovery you'll stumble upon that could improve your projects or processes. Plus, a quick conversation with a manufacturer can unlock information you'd never get from a website or material sample, so don't be shy to engage.

And even if you don't think they're "your thing," go to the social events. Those are where the real bonding happens. It's true that their tickets can be pricey, but the same goes for dinner out or room service. Social events give you a relaxed environment to reconnect with old friends, meet new ones, and build the kind of relationships that make conferences memorable.

**See the experience as an investment in your career and your firm**

Conferences require time, money, and energy, but the return on that investment is significant. You'll come back home (and back to work) with new knowledge, fresh ideas, and a clearer sense of where the industry is heading and how you can contribute to its positive evolution.

But the impact doesn't stop with you. When you approach a conference experience with intention, you're also gathering insights to share with your colleagues, whether through a lunchandlearn, informal mentoring, or simply bringing new thinking into project meetings. That's why attending a conference and meaningfully engaging can inspire progress for both yourself and your firm, all while keeping you connected to the broader industry.

If you're ready to connect with leaders and peers and explore new ideas in architecture, ask [your chapter](#) if it has an annual conference, attend one of the many conferences produced by [AIA Knowledge Communities](#), or register for the [AIA Conference on Architecture & Design 2026](#) (June 10-13 in San Diego)!

*Kathleen M. O'Donnell is a freelance writer, editor, and communications strategist based in Washington, D.C.*

*She is committed to telling stories that provide useful insights to architects and designers and highlight the impact of their work.*



# Strategic & Supportive Onboarding for New Hires: A Guide for Design Professionals

By Scott Smith, SmithBrothers

**P**eople are a design firm's most important asset. This fact cannot be overstated. Firms invest a significant amount of time and energy in new hires. However, they often fail to invest the time in setting this new hire up for success. Onboarding is not simply the first day of work, filling out paperwork, taking a quick tour, or meeting a handful of team members. In well run organizations, onboarding is a carefully designed, strategic, and human centered experience that begins the moment a decision is made to hire a new employee. It continues after a candidate says "yes" to an offer, well into the new employee's first 90 days, and often beyond. Effective onboarding strengthens culture, accelerates productivity, increases engagement, and significantly improves retention.

In this guide, we examine the principles, structure, tools, and behaviors necessary to create an intentional and organizationally aligned onboarding experience. Drawing on best practices, industry research, and real-world examples, this guide offers a concise, step-by-step roadmap for developing an onboarding program that welcomes and empowers new employees to achieve long-term success.

## **THE PURPOSE AND IMPACT OF ONBOARDING**

Onboarding serves several distinct but interconnected purposes. It welcomes new hires into the organization's culture, helps them

understand the mission and expectations, and provides the tools and information needed to perform effectively. But truly strategic onboarding goes much further. It establishes psychological safety, facilitates connection, and builds confidence. When implemented well, onboarding reduces the time it takes for a new hire to contribute independently while cultivating deeper engagement and loyalty. When the process is done well, it has a significant impact on long-term employment with the firm. A turnover rate higher than average has a very adverse effect on the long-term growth of the firm. Research consistently shows that employees decide within the first six months whether they intend to stay with an organization. A structured onboarding process dramatically improves this likelihood. High performing organizations recognize onboarding as a critical business function rather than an administrative checklist. They design it with intention, put resources behind it, and continuously iterate based on employee feedback and performance outcomes.

## **SETTING THE STAGE BEFORE DAY ONE**

The onboarding experience begins long before the new hire walks through the door. Pre-boarding is the period between the acceptance of an offer and the employee's official start date. This period often contains anxiety, uncertainty, and anticipation for the prospective employee. A

structured pre-boarding process helps eliminate uncertainty and replace it with clarity, enthusiasm, and a sense of belonging. These efforts go a long way to bringing on a happy, confident new hire.

## **Best Practices for Pre-Boarding Include:**

- Sending a warm, personalized welcome message.
  - Providing a physical and/or digital welcome packet that includes the first week agenda, org chart, team bios, FAQs, and technology setup instructions.
  - Preparing IT equipment early and confirming shipping details for remote employees.
  - Informing internal teams of the upcoming arrival and coordinating introductions.
  - Assigning a peer buddy or mentor who will greet the new hire and serve as a go to resource. A peer buddy or mentor is not to be chosen lightly.
  - Pre-boarding is an opportunity to reinforce your company's values and demonstrate that you are prepared, organized, and eager to support the employee's success. It also reduces cognitive overload during the first days by addressing logistical tasks ahead of time.
- ## **DESIGNING THE FIRST DAY EXPERIENCE**
- The first day sets the emotional tone for the entire employment relationship. It should feel structured, welcoming, and thoughtfully crafted. Employees should leave their first day feeling excited, supported, and confident that they made the right decision. This requires planning, not improvisation.



**Elements of an Effective Day One Include:**

- A personal greeting from the manager or team
- A comfortable, ready-to-use workspace
- A clear printed or digital schedule to reduce uncertainty
- A welcome kit or personalized gift that reinforces belonging
- A team lunch or informal meet and greet
- Light, meaningful work that helps the employee feel productive without pressure

The manager plays a central role in shaping a positive Day One experience. A thoughtful manager ensures that introductions happen, technology is functional, and the employee has the space to absorb information at a manageable pace.

**STRUCTURING THE FIRST 90 DAYS: A PROVEN FRAMEWORK**

A 30/60/90-day structure is the

most widely adopted framework for onboarding because it offers clarity, focus, and progression. It transforms the overwhelming experience of a new role into manageable, intentional phases.

**First 30 Days: Learning and Orientation**

During the first month, the focus is on helping the employee understand the organization, its people, its systems, and its expectations. This period encompasses training, observing workflows, understanding the company culture, and establishing relationships. Managers should hold weekly check-ins to clarify expectations, address questions, and provide timely feedback.

**Days 31-60: Contribution and Integration**

As the employee gains confidence, the next month focuses on meaningful contributions. They

begin taking ownership of tasks, collaborating more deeply with team members, and applying what they have learned. Feedback becomes more specific, goal oriented, and connected to performance.

**Day 61-90: Autonomy and Alignment**

By the final third of the onboarding period, employees should be functioning with increasing independence. Managers shift from hands on guidance to partnership, offering support as needed while encouraging initiative and problem solving. A formal 90 day review meeting solidifies expectations, progress, and goals for the next quarter.

**ONBOARDING DO'S AND DON'TS**

Effective onboarding requires intentional behavior and awareness of what helps and harms the experience.

#### Do:

- Assign a peer buddy
- Celebrate milestones
- Encourage questions
- Spread learning out over time
- Mix culture, purpose, and practical tasks
- Conduct frequent check-ins

#### Don't:

- Overload the new hire with information
- Leave them alone or unsupervised for long periods
- Delay access to systems or equipment
- Assume they will "figure it out"
- Ignore early signs of confusion or disengagement

#### MAKING ONBOARDING MEMORABLE

Memorable onboarding experiences create emotional resonance. Organizations can elevate onboarding by incorporating storytelling, cultural rituals, personal touches, small celebrations, and consistent recognition. A simple handwritten note or a team signed welcome card can have a surprisingly powerful impact.

#### MEASURING ONBOARDING

#### SUCCESS

You can't improve what you don't measure. Onboarding metrics offer insight into effectiveness and areas for improvement. Standard metrics include time to productivity, early retention rates, new hire satisfaction, manager feedback, and engagement indicators. Continuous improvement ensures the onboarding program stays aligned with organizational goals.

#### REMOTE AND HYBRID ONBOARDING

Remote onboarding presents unique challenges, including limited social connections and communication barriers. Organizations must intentionally create opportunities for engagement through video calls, digital check ins, virtual mentoring, and interactive learning experiences. Clear communication, predictable structure, and accessible digital resources are essential for effective learning.

#### THE MANAGER'S ROLE

The manager's involvement is the single most influential factor in onboarding success. Managers must set expectations, provide

constructive feedback, facilitate introductions, and demonstrate availability. When managers take ownership of onboarding, new hires ramp up faster and build stronger relationships.

#### CONCLUSION

Strategic and supportive onboarding is one of the most important investments an organization can make in its people. By designing an intentional, human centered experience, companies foster engagement, build confidence, and set employees on a long-term path to success. Onboarding is not a onetime event, it is a journey that shapes how employees learn, connect, and grow, long after their first 90 days. We encourage you to continue exploring onboarding to create or update your current onboarding program. Good luck with your efforts. They will pay off.

*Scott Smith is a Principal / Director of Design Professionals' Practice at SmithBrothers*

[ssmith@smithbrothersusa.com](mailto:ssmith@smithbrothersusa.com) / <https://SmithBrothersUSA.com>

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# Our Buildings, Our Selves Podcast - Episode 4

## with Guests Gerhard W. Mayer and Lindsay Stirman

By Duo Dickinson, FAIA,  
Martin C. Pedersen

Welcome to the fourth episode of Our Buildings, Our Selves: Humanity in Architecture, a monthly podcast produced by Common Edge, the Connecticut Architecture Foundation, the Connecticut AIA, and Bridgeport public radio station WPKN.

We're in a housing crisis in the U.S., literally everywhere. Cities, suburbs, and rural areas are, together, millions of units short of what is needed, for a variety of reasons: zoning, construction costs, the vagaries of the free market, neighborhood opposition. Developers seem unable to produce anything but housing at the top of the market, where it's least needed. And the little bit aimed at the middle they do manage to build is uninspiring and unloved—like a restaurant with “bad food, and small portions,” as one of our guests puts it.

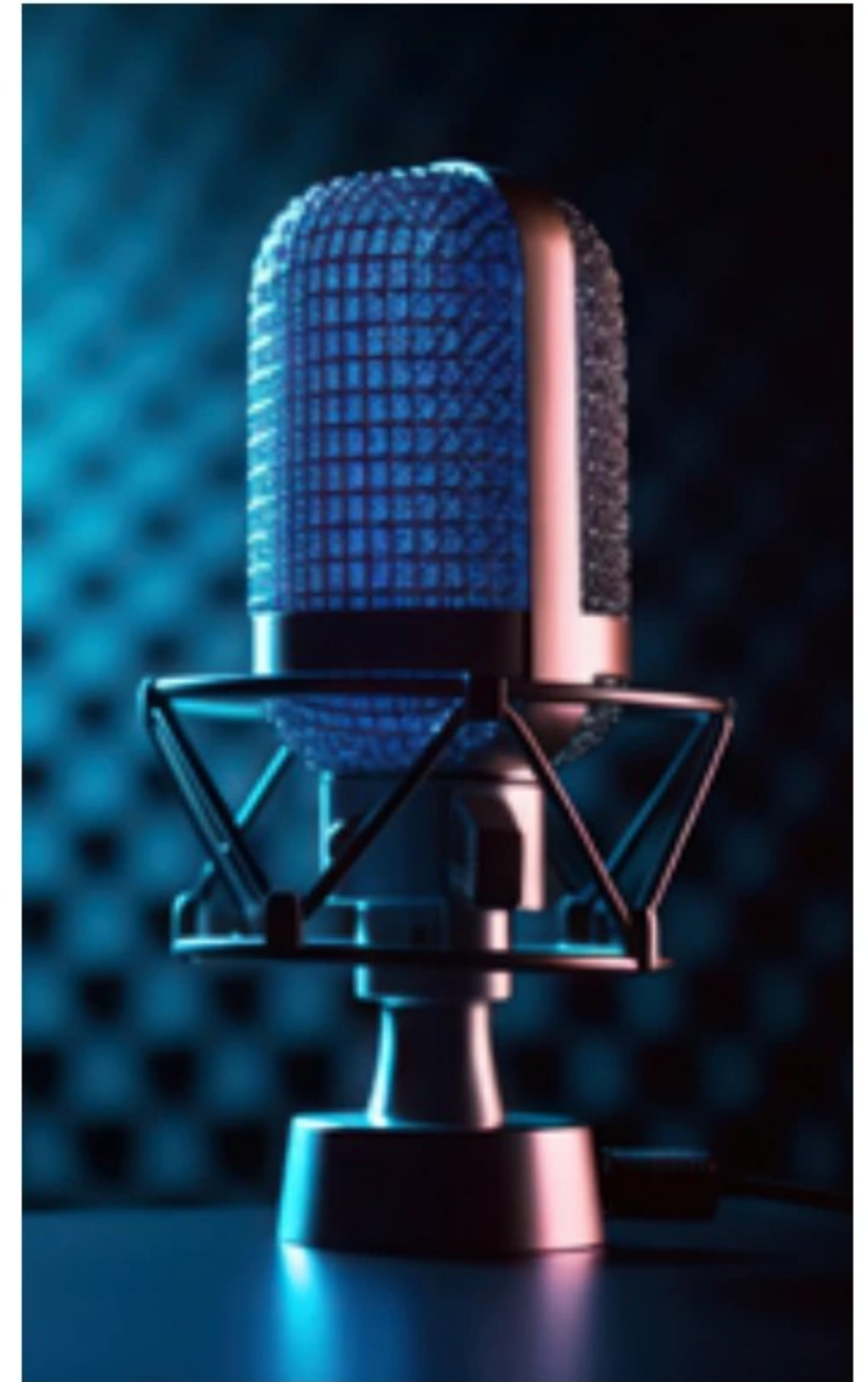
How do we break free of this stalemate? Duo Dickinson and Martin C. Pedersen talk with Gerhard W. Mayer and Lindsey Stirman, co-founders of the Livable Communities Initiative, a Los Angeles-based organization dedicated to creating a new paradigm for housing development. They reject both NIMBYism (Not In My Backyard) and its knee-jerk opposite, YIMBYism (yes to any sort of housing, regardless of quality), arguing instead for an altogether different mode: QUIMBY (Quality In My Backyard). Because when housing developments include elements like walkability, green space, gentle density, and access to transit, opposition tends to dissipate.



**Lindsay Sturman**, a television writer and producer, is co-founder of the Livable Communities Initiative, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit dedicated to promoting 15-minute neighborhoods through a holistic approach to housing, traffic, and mobility solutions. She's also the co-host of Bike Talk, a podcast and syndicated radio show that explores sustainable transportation and bike advocacy.



**Gerhard W. Mayer** is an architect who embraces a paradigm shift toward walkable, equitable, and sustainable high-quality urban living. Originally from Vienna, Austria, he emigrated to the U.S. on a Fulbright Scholarship in Sustainable Design and Architecture. A cofounder of the Livable Communities Initiative, he initiated California's



Social Housing Study trips to Vienna, which have prompted a rethinking of how to provide attainable housing in our own cities. He is also a prolific writer and has started several local initiatives and nonprofits in an effort to create a better Southern California.

For Spotify users, listen in [HERE](#).

For Apple users, listen in [HERE](#).

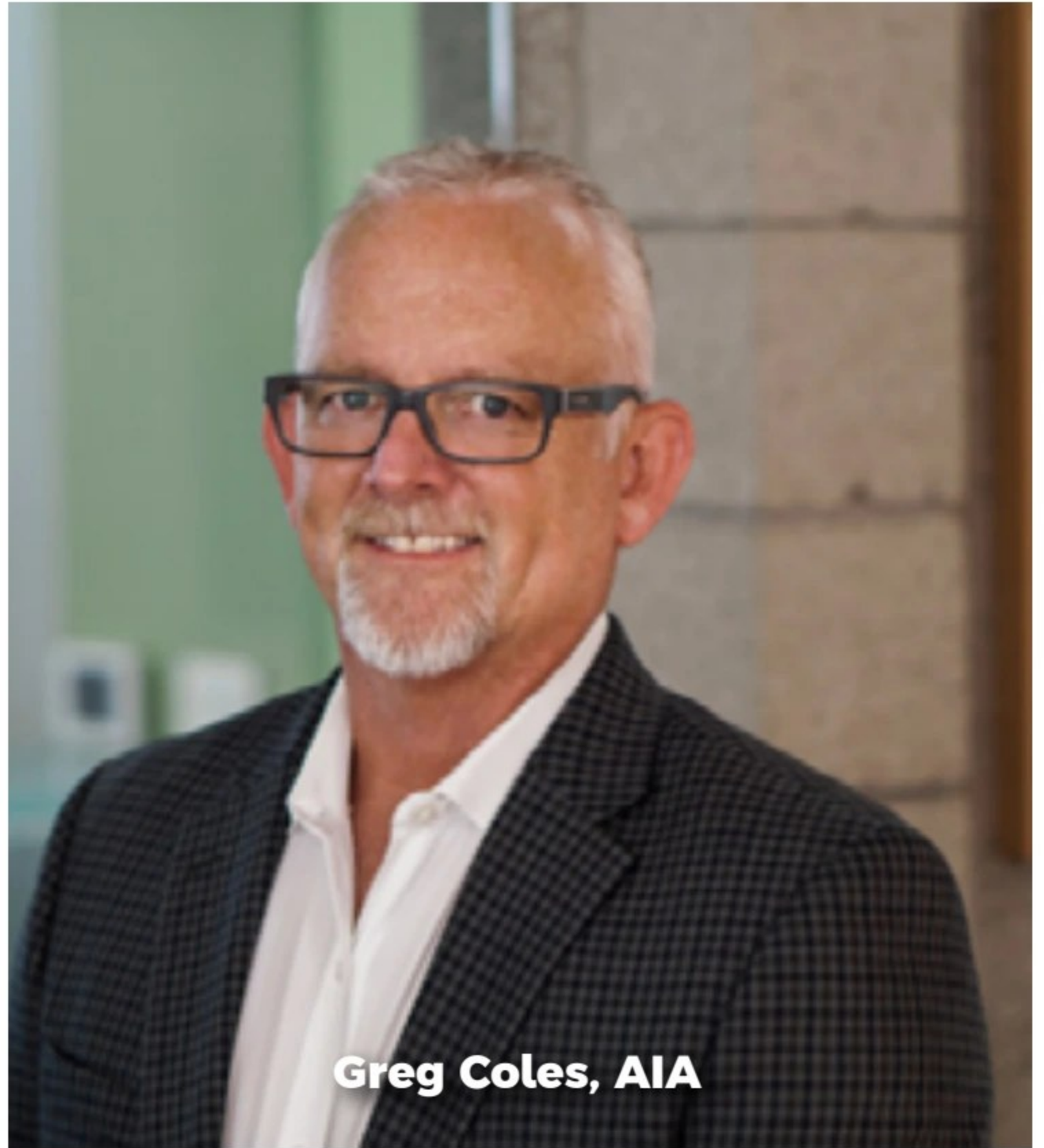
Our guest for the next episode of Our Buildings, Our Selves, will be the legendary architect and artist James Wines.

Reprint: [CommonEdge.com](https://www.commonedge.com)  
Duo Dickinson, FAIA has been an architect for more than 40 years. The author of 8 books and an AIA Fellow, he's an Adjunct Professor at The University of Hartford and teaches at the Building Beauty Program in Sorrento, Italy.

Martin C. Pedersen is executive director of the Common Edge Collaborative. A writer, editor and critic, he served as executive editor at Metropolis magazine for nearly fifteen years.



**Kevin Herrick, AIA**



**Greg Coles, AIA**

## SLAM Announces New Leadership Appointment



Architecture and design firm The S/L/A/M Collaborative (SLAM) has announced key leadership appointments effective March 1, 2026 as part of its succession plan.

**Greg Coles, AIA** has been appointed to Board Chair, focused on strategic planning and firm governance. **Kevin Herrick, AIA** has been appointed as President and Managing Principal of Markets and will oversee the firm’s business strategy and day-to-day management for the Firm Core Team.

In addition to Herrick, SLAM’s Firm Core Team will be comprised of Principal Steve Doherty, AIA, Chief Operating Officer, Dan Kantor, Chief Financial Officer, Rick Herzer, AIA Managing Principal Design, and Amy Samuelson, AIA Chief Talent Officer.

Former Board Chair Terri Finucane, IIDA transitions to Principal Emeritus and will continue to lead projects for key clients.

“Collaborative leadership is an important part of SLAM’s evolution, business strategy, and legacy.” Coles remarked. “With this team, I know we will deliver deep expertise, an immersive process, and powerful ideas that advance our client’s missions.”

These appointments reinforce SLAM’s commitment to delivering impactful design solutions for a wide portfolio of clients with a collaborative approach. As the team evolves, SLAM is not just prepared for the future, but actively building it, scaling its national presence and achieving new levels of design innovation.

# Scholarship Application Opens for Construction Students

**G**raduating high school seniors and college students planning to begin or continue pursuing a construction-related degree are invited to apply for Viking Construction's annual scholarship. The scholarship awards \$1,000 per year (up to \$4,000) to a qualified student who maintains a 2.7 GPA. The application is now available online at <http://www.vikingconstruction.net/viking-scholarship/> and the deadline is May 15.

Ideal candidates will be enrolled in programs such as construction management, architecture, civil engineering, surveying, or urban planning. Semi-finalists will be selected from the qualified applications and will be invited to have a personal interview with Anthony Gaglio, Jr., vice president of Viking Construction, Inc. A winner will be selected after the interview, and the scholarship check will be mailed directly to the winner's school before the start of classes.

Viking created this scholarship in 2012 to support the general community and those pursuing construction-related careers. To date, the company has committed \$60,000 to students.

Founded in 1991, Viking Construction, Inc. ([www.vikingconstruction.net](http://www.vikingconstruction.net)) is a family-owned company known for its skilled craftsmanship as a general contractor and construction manager. Committed to personal involvement, rigorous quality control, and responsible financial management, Viking has built an award-winning portfolio. Their diverse projects range from historic renovations and pharmaceutical plants to schools, assisted living facilities, mixed-use commercial buildings, industrial manufacturing plants, and large-scale affordable housing developments across Connecticut and New York.

 Viking  
Construction, Inc.





## Architects Want a Bigger Seat at the Table—But Are Still Hesitant to Claim It

A new AIA study reveals a profession eager to shape building product innovation, yet cautious about direct collaboration with manufacturers.

By Paul Makovsky

For decades, architects have occupied an uneasy position in the building-products ecosystem—deeply influential in theory, but often peripheral in practice. They specify materials, systems, and technologies that define performance, sustainability, and user experience, yet rarely control how those products are conceived or developed. A new report from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) suggests that tension is reaching a turning point.

Published in late February, *Innovation & Collaboration in the Architect's Journey to Specification* offers a detailed snapshot of how architects today engage with manufacturers, adopt emerging technologies, and integrate sustainability into their design processes. Developed in collaboration with Deltek and ConstructConnect, the study updates the AIA's ongoing *Journey to Specification* research series, which tracks the evolving forces shaping product selection in architectural practice.



What emerges is a profession that wants more influence—but is still negotiating how, and how far, it wants to go.

### The Influence Gap

One of the report's most striking findings reveals a paradox at the heart of architect-manufacturer relationships. While 73 percent of architects say they highly value being involved in product development by manufacturers, only 24 percent express a desire to participate directly in those efforts.

The gap points to a profession that sees product innovation as critical to its work, yet remains cautious about deeper entanglement with industry. Liability concerns, time constraints, procurement rules, and the blurring of professional boundaries may all play a role. Still, the appetite for influence is clear: architects want products that respond more precisely to design intent, performance goals, and sustainability mandates—even if they are not ready to step fully into co-development roles.

According to the report, architects increasingly evaluate manufacturers not just on product availability, but on the quality of technical information, responsiveness, and long-term collaboration potential. Where architects once relied heavily on catalogs and reps, they

now expect data-rich digital tools, transparent environmental metrics, and early engagement during design development.

### Sustainability: From Optional to Expected

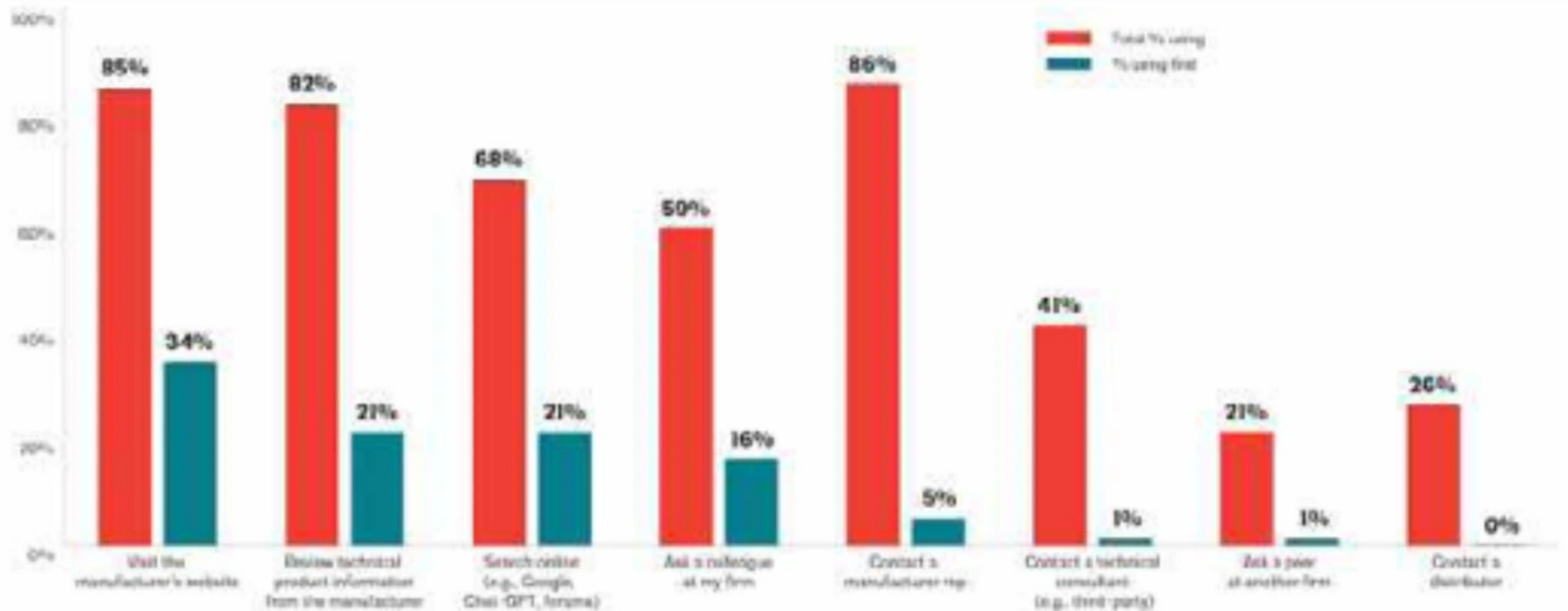
If architects remain cautious about product co-creation, they are far less tentative about sustainability—at least in terms of recommendation and integration.

The share of architects who proactively recommend or integrate sustainability options has risen sharply, from 58 percent in 2020 to 79 percent in 2025, signaling a decisive cultural shift within the profession. Sustainability is no longer a specialty concern or a client-driven add-on; it is becoming a baseline expectation across building types and regions.

Yet adoption patterns remain uneven. The report finds that only 31 percent of architects identify as early adopters of sustainable solutions, a figure unchanged since 2020. Among that group, however, a notable overlap emerges: 57 percent of sustainability early adopters also embrace new technology. The data suggests that innovation—whether environmental or digital—tends to cluster among the same segment of forward-leaning practitioners.

## Architects use multiple sources for technical guidance, blending online research with peer and manufacturer rep input

Share of respondents selecting each source for technical product support



For manufacturers, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity. Products that combine sustainability with measurable performance gains and technological integration are more likely to resonate with architects pushing the boundaries of practice.

### Why “Made in the U.S.” Still Matters

In an era of globalized supply chains, architects are also signaling a renewed preference for domestic manufacturing. Seventy-two percent of architects say they prefer U.S.-manufactured products, citing energy performance, durability, occupant health, and supply-chain stability as primary drivers.

That preference reflects lessons learned from recent disruptions—pandemic-era shortages, shipping delays, and geopolitical uncertainty—as well as a growing emphasis on lifecycle performance and accountability. Domestic manufacturing often offers clearer documentation, faster response times, and greater confidence in regulatory compliance, all of which matter in increasingly complex projects.

### Information, Trust, and the Future of Collaboration

Beyond statistics, the report paints a picture of a profession recalibrating its relationship with industry partners. Architects are no longer passive recipients of product information; they are active evaluators of credibility, transparency, and alignment with broader design values.

“This report reflects the voices of architects across the country and provides actionable insights for manufacturers, design professionals, and industry partners,” said AIA EVP/Chief Executive Officer Carole Wedge, FAIA. “By understanding these trends, the profession can strengthen collaboration, accelerate innovation, and advance sustainable practices that benefit clients and communities.”

Her statement underscores a central takeaway of the study: collaboration is no longer optional, but it must be redefined. Architects want manufacturers to innovate faster, communicate more clearly, and embed sustainability and performance into the DNA of their products. At the same time, many architects remain wary of blurring professional boundaries or assuming new risks.

### A Profession in Transition

Taken together, the findings suggest that architects are at an inflection point. They are more engaged with sustainability than ever before, increasingly selective about manufacturing partners, and eager to shape the tools and products that define the built environment. Yet they are still negotiating the limits of their role—how much influence they want, how directly they want to engage, and what collaboration should look like in a rapidly changing industry.

For manufacturers, the message is clear: architects are watching closely, asking harder questions, and rewarding those who align innovation with transparency and trust. For architects, the challenge may be whether the desire for influence ultimately translates into a willingness to claim it.

Learn more and download *Innovation & Collaboration in the Architect’s Journey to Specification* from the American Institute of Architects.

*Paul Makovsky is editor-in-chief of ARCHITECT.*



# National News

## Candidates for President-elect

### Meet the Candidates Running for AIA's 2027 Elective Offices

The positions the candidates are running for include president-elect, secretary, and at-large director.

[CLICK HERE](#) for Candidate bios.

		
<b>Raya Ani, FAIA</b>	<b>Kenneth J. Filarski, FAIA</b>	<b>Kimball L. Hales, AI</b>
		
<b>Joyce Owens, FAIA</b>	<b>David E. Sellers, AIA</b>	<b>Willy L. Zambrano, FAIA</b>

## Candidates for Secretary



**Latoya Nelson Kamdang, AIA**



**Jonathan Matthew Taylor, AIA**

## Candidates for At-large Director

		
<b>Samuel Duff Combs, AIA</b>	<b>Adam Viorel Pantelimon Negrut, Intl. Assoc. AIA</b>	<b>Jeff Pastva, FAIA</b>
		
<b>Dana A. Pomeroy, AIA</b>	<b>Sarah Woynicz, AIA</b>	

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MARVIN 

# AIA Out & About

## MASKED MARVELS BOWLING

Lucky Strike, Milford CT  
March 5th

The Superhero Showdown landed on March 5th, 2026! The lanes were transformed into a comic-book battleground filled with heroic games, epic treats, and super-charged prizes. Teams brought the energy with incredible costumes—capes flying, masks on, and creative team T-shirt designs that turned the whole event into a living comic panel.

Competitors battled it out for the coveted AIA CT Bowling Pin Trophy, awarded to the mightiest heroes, while awards were presented throughout the night for the highest-scoring team (our true League of Legends), the most creative superhero or comic-inspired attire, the highest and lowest scoring bowlers, and the best super squad (good sports), along with plenty of surprise heroics along the way.

### The evening winners:

Highest Scoring - Woman	Joann Picone/QA+M Architecture
Highest Scoring - Man	Dan Turner/Silver Petrucelli
Lowest Scoring - Woman	Gabriela Maguder-Castro/ Centerbrook
Lowest Scoring - Man	Marco Delacruz /Illuminate
Highest Scoring Overall Team	QA+M Architecture
Architecture Firm Team	Antinozzi Associates, PC
Allied Team	Kronenberger & Sons
Best Team Shirt 1st Place	QA+M Architecture
Best Team Shirt 2nd Place	Antinozzi Associates, PC
Best Team Shirt 3rd Place	Pat Munger Construction
Best Team Shirt 4th Place	QTL
Good Sport Award	FCA Architects
Good Sport Award	Babbidge Construction

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# Out & About

## COFFEE MEETUPS VARIOUS LOCATIONS

February 27th

The Women in Architecture (WIA) Knowledge Community hosted its recurring Coffee Meetups on February 27—informal gatherings designed to connect with fellow professionals, share insights, and build community over a cup of

coffee. There was no set agenda, just good conversation and great company in a welcoming, relaxed setting.

Meetups took place across several Connecticut locations, hosted by WIA members. In Glastonbury, the gathering was held at Raon Jena Coffee & Dessert, hosted by Andrea Boyle, AIA. New Haven's meetup took place at Fepo Café with host Jennifer Huestis, AIA. In Norwalk, participants gathered at the Norwalk Art Space, hosted by Tina Facos-Casolo, AIA. Finally, the Old Saybrook meetup was held at Ashlawn Farm Coffee, hosted by Katelyn Chapin, AIA.



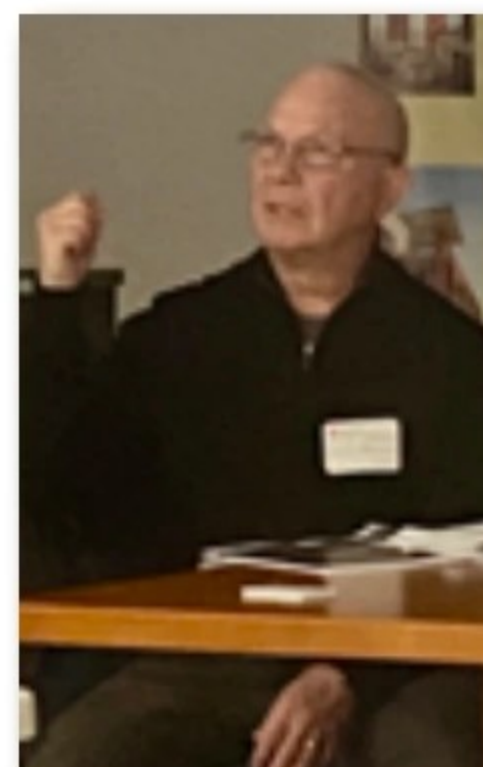
## HIGH-PERFORMANCE RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION O&G INDUSTRIES, BRIDGEPORT, CT

March 11th

The in-person event introduced The Overland Method, a high-performance building system designed to exceed code, improve safety and occupant health, reduce carbon emissions, and extend building life — all at a cost comparable to conventional wood framing. The session highlighted how most homes are still built to outdated minimum codes that fall short in performance, resilience, and long-term value, and demonstrated

how ICF walls, SIP roofs, non-combustible interiors, radiant systems, and high-performance envelopes can establish a new baseline for residential construction.

With over 40 years of architectural leadership, Leigh Overland, AIA built his practice on the belief that buildings should serve people, not just meet code. Through his work on more than 1,000 projects, his growing frustration with traditional methods led him to develop the Overland Method—a holistic, cost-neutral approach to delivering buildings that truly perform.



# MAR

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

**23** Business Architecture Awards I Registration Opens

**24** The Architect as Developer, Builder, or Construction Manager: Expanding Professional Roles

**25** How the AIA Material Pledge Supports LEED V5 Certification

**26** Committee on Design Presentation | Renewing the Peabody Museum

**31** Emerging Professionals Happy Hour

# APR

**1** EDI Knowledge Community Meeting (IN-PERSON)

**2** Building Performance & Regulations (BP&R) Meeting

**3** Women in Architecture Awards I Nominations Close

**7** 2026 Procrastinator Days

**8** 2026 Procrastinator Days

**9** 2026 Procrastinator Days  
AIA CT Board Meeting

**10** 2026 Procrastinator Days  
Women in Architecture (WIA) Knowledge Community Meetings

**12** K-12 Architecture Week 2026

**13** K-12 Architecture Week 2026  
Elizabeth Mills Brown Awards I Registration Opens

Committee on the Environment (COTE) Meeting

## AIA CONNECTICUT CALENDAR

Series:	Scales	No.
Item Number:		
Product Name:		

# Procrastinator Days



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**April 7<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup>**

## **Procrastinator Days Virtual Sessions**

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