

April 2026

ARCHITYPE

THE DIGITAL MAGAZINE OF AIA CONNECTICUT



**Earth Day 2026:
"Our Power, Our Planet"**
K-12 Architecture Week

CAF William M. Mack Awards
Collective Cultural Amnesia
**Architects Defend the
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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



April is a moment of renewal—both in our natural environment and in the evolving role of architecture within it. As this issue of Architype reflects, the profession is not simply responding to change; but actively shaping it. From sustainability and resilience to advocacy and education, the work of our members continues to demonstrate that design is a powerful force for collective progress.

This month's focus on Earth Day and the theme "Our Power, Our Planet" reminds us that meaningful impact begins at the local level. Across Connecticut, architects are translating global challenges into tangible, community-driven solutions — whether through high-performance buildings, renewable energy integration, or thoughtful material choices. Sustainability is no

longer a niche; it is the foundation of responsible practice and a reflection of our shared values.

Equally inspiring is the growing emphasis on collaboration and inclusivity within the field. From women leading sustainable innovation to the next generation redefining design priorities, the future of architecture is being shaped by diverse voices and new perspectives. Our commitment to mentorship, outreach, and education—especially through initiatives like K-12 Architecture Week—ensures that this momentum continues, opening doors for those who will carry the profession forward.

At the same time, we are reminded of the importance of advocacy. Whether protecting our cultural landmarks, influencing policy, or strengthening the voice of architects in broader conversations, our engagement matters. The challenges we face—climate, housing, equity—require not only great design, but also leadership and persistence.

What stands out most in this issue is a shared sense of responsibility. Architects today are not just designers of buildings; they are stewards of the environment, advocates for our communities, and partners in shaping a more sustainable and equitable future. This work is complex, but it is also deeply meaningful.

As you explore this month's stories, I encourage you to reflect on your own role in this collective effort. Share your ideas, engage with your peers, and continue pushing the boundaries of what architecture can achieve.

Thank you for being part of this vibrant and forward-thinking community.

Best,

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

Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT



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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



April in Connecticut, and around our country, is a season of profound transition. As the landscape awakens into spring, our professional focus naturally shifts toward our role as stewards of the environment. In this month's edition of ArchiType, we will explore the interconnected themes of Sustainability, Green Design, and Building Performance - pillars that are no longer a "specialty" in our field, but the very foundation of modern practice.



As we proceed through 2026, the immediate urgency of the climate crisis is matched only by the ingenuity of our members. Across our state, from high-performance residential retrofits in rural towns to net-zero schools in high-density urban communities, AIA Connecticut firms are proving that high design and high performance are inseparable. We are no longer just "building green" ... we are designing for resilience and regeneration as well.

Although I was originally tempted to tout the vital work of our Committee on the Environment (COTE) Knowledge Community, there are many AIA/CT committees that span the theme of sustainability. Their efforts, many in collaborative fashion, promote circular economy principles, energy efficiency processes, and healthy material selection in transforming how we specify design products. By prioritizing high-end goals such as Net-Zero and the AIA 2030 Commitment, or simply and proactively following LEED, WELL, and other organizational checklists, we work toward protecting not just the planet, but the health of the communities we serve.

As you receive this issue of ArchiType, you may realize that we are amid Architecture Week 2026 (April 12-18) when AIA focuses on the vital pipeline of our profession. Our 2025-2027 AIA CT Strategic Plan prioritizes K-12 outreach and mentorship to ensure that the next generation of designers, from Salisbury to Stonington, sees Architecture as an accessible and essential career path. Even if you are unable to participate in our K-12 Architecture Week programs, host a studio tour for local students, consider participating in the ACE Mentor Program, or speak at a local school Career Day event.

This month, let us share our successes, learn from our setbacks, and advocate for a built environment that is sustainable, both in the design of our buildings and in the advocacy of our profession to future Architects.

With admiration,

F. Michael Ayles, FAIA, NCARB

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Earth Day 2026: “Our Power, Our Planet”

How Architects Are Shaping a Grassroots Sustainability Movement

By Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT

Earth Day 2026, on April 22nd, arrives with a powerful and timely message: “Our Power, Our Planet.” This year’s theme underscores a critical shift in how environmental progress is understood and achieved. Rather than relying solely on national policies or global agreements, the focus turns to the collective strength of local action, community resilience, and individual responsibility. It is a call to recognize that meaningful change is driven from the ground up, by communities, professionals, and everyday decisions that shape the world around us.

Within this framework, architects occupy a uniquely influential position. As designers of the built environment, they not only respond to environmental challenges but also actively shape how people live, work, and interact with natural systems. Earth Day 2026 highlights the growing role of architects as facilitators of grassroots sustainability—professionals who translate community values, renewable energy goals, and everyday behaviors into tangible, lasting design solutions.

Empowering Communities Through Design

At the heart of the “Our Power, Our Planet” theme is the idea that communities themselves are agents of change. Architecture,

traditionally seen as a top-down discipline, is increasingly embracing participatory design processes that empower local voices. Architects and designers are working more closely with residents, neighborhood organizations, and grassroots groups to co-create spaces that reflect shared environmental goals.

This shift is evident in community-led housing projects, urban revitalization efforts, and public space design. Rather than imposing solutions, architects are facilitating conversations—helping communities identify their needs, priorities, and environmental aspirations. Whether it’s designing climate-resilient landscapes like the new stormwater park in Bridgeport – built to protect vulnerable neighborhoods from coastal flooding or developing energy-efficient affordable housing such as New Haven’s Shoreline Grove and other solar- and geothermal-powered projects across the state, these initiatives show how community-driven design in Connecticut is translating local engagement into more sustainable and resilient outcomes.

Both cases show that sustainability is not just about large-scale policy, it’s about local decisions, community engagement, and design choices that shape everyday life.

Renewable Energy as a Design Standard

A central pillar of Earth Day 2026 is the transition to renewable energy. Architects are playing a key role in accelerating this shift by integrating clean energy systems directly into their designs. Solar panels, once considered optional add-ons, are increasingly

becoming standard features in residential, commercial, and public buildings. In some cases, buildings are designed to produce more energy than they consume, contributing surplus power back to the grid.

Beyond solar, architects are exploring a range of renewable solutions, including geothermal and passive energy systems. Orientation, insulation, and material choices are carefully considered to maximize energy efficiency and reduce reliance on non-renewable sources. These strategies not only lower carbon emissions but also make buildings more resilient to energy disruptions.

Importantly, the “Our Power, Our Planet” theme emphasizes accessibility. Renewable energy must not be limited to high-end developments; it should be available to all communities. Architects are increasingly working on scalable, cost-effective solutions that bring clean energy to underserved areas, supporting both environmental and social equity.

Everyday Sustainability: Designing for Daily Choices

One of the most compelling aspects of this year’s Earth Day theme is its focus on individual daily choices. While large-scale infrastructure and policy changes are essential, the cumulative impact of everyday actions cannot be overlooked.

Consider the layout of a building: placing staircases in visible, inviting locations can encourage people to choose them over elevators, reducing energy use and promoting health. Designing kitchens with space for composting and recycling makes



sustainable waste management more convenient. Incorporating bike storage and proximity to public transit supports low-carbon transportation choices.

These design decisions may seem small in isolation, but collectively they shape behavior patterns over time. By aligning architecture with sustainable lifestyles, architects help bridge the gap between intention and action, making it easier for individuals to contribute to environmental progress.

Materials and Local Sourcing

The theme “Our Power, Our Planet” also highlights the

importance of local action, extending to the materials used in construction. In Connecticut, architects are increasingly prioritizing regionally sourced, low-impact materials—such as mass timber from Northeast forests, locally quarried stone, and recycled construction products—to reduce embodied carbon associated with transportation. This approach not only supports regional industries but also helps ground projects in Connecticut’s environmental and cultural context, creating buildings that reflect both place and sustainability goals.

Reclaimed and recycled materials are also gaining traction, aligning

with the broader movement toward a circular economy. By designing for durability, adaptability, and eventual reuse, architects contribute to a system where resources are conserved, and waste is minimized.

Resilience Through Grassroots Innovation

As climate-related challenges become more frequent and severe, the ability of communities to adapt and recover is increasingly important by designing buildings and spaces that can withstand environmental stress while serving as hubs for community support.

Continued on Page 10



For example, across Connecticut, resilience strategies are being embedded into design—from community facilities like the Stamford Government Center, which has incorporated energy resilience measures and emergency preparedness planning, to coastal adaptation efforts such as the Living Shoreline Project at Hammonasset Beach State Park, where natural systems are used to reduce erosion and buffer storm impacts. At the same time, green infrastructure initiatives in cities like Hartford are transforming parks and streetscapes into stormwater management systems that help reduce flooding and urban heat. These efforts demonstrate how locally driven solutions—shaped through collaboration between designers, municipalities, and residents—can strengthen both environmental and social resilience while reflecting the specific needs of each community.

Technology as an Enabler, Not a Driver

While advanced technologies continue to play a role in sustainable architecture, Earth Day 2026 also encourages a more

balanced perspective. Technology should enable and support local action, not replace it.

Simple strategies—such as natural ventilation, shading, and daylighting—can significantly reduce energy use without requiring advanced technology. When combined with renewable energy systems and smart design, these approaches create buildings that are both efficient and resilient.

Digital tools still play an important role in the design process, allowing architects to simulate performance and optimize outcomes. However, the emphasis remains on creating solutions that communities can understand, maintain, and adapt over time.

A Collective Responsibility

The message is ultimately one of shared responsibility. Architects, like all professionals, are part of a broader ecosystem of change that includes individuals, communities, businesses, and organizations. Their work has the potential to amplify collective efforts, turning local actions into lasting impact.

As Earth Day 2026 is observed around the world, it serves as a reminder that sustainability is not a distant goal but a daily practice.

The future of architecture is not just about creating buildings that are less harmful, it is about creating spaces that empower people to live more sustainably. By aligning design with the principles of local action, renewable energy, and everyday choices, architects can help turn the vision of “Our Power, Our Planet” into a reality.

In this moment, the power to shape the planet lies not in distant institutions but in the hands of individuals and communities—and in the designs that support them. Through thoughtful, inclusive, and sustainable architecture, that power can be realized, one building, one neighborhood, and one choice at a time.

A hand with a white manicure points to a set of architectural blueprints. The blueprints show a floor plan with various rooms and dimensions. Three color-coded callouts are overlaid on the image: a teal one at the top left, an orange one in the middle left, and a red one in the middle right. The background is a blurred image of a person's head and shoulder.

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K-12 Architecture Week Inspires Young Minds Across Connecticut

As part of American Institute of Architects (AIA) K-12 Architecture Week, April 12-18th, communities across Connecticut are coming together to introduce young students to the world of design, sustainability, and innovation through hands-on learning experiences.

This year's program is made possible through grant support from the American Institute of Architects, the Connecticut Architecture Foundation (CAF), and the Architecture Resource Center (ARC), all of which are committed to advancing design education and inspiring the next generation.

The AIA Connecticut/ARC program focuses on engaging children ages 6-12 through an interactive solar energy and architecture workshop, combining a presentation with a creative building activity. Hosted in partnership with local libraries, the initiative highlights how architecture and environmental responsibility intersect in everyday life.

The workshops at three public libraries across Connecticut for 15 - 20 students, created an intimate, supportive environment

for learning and creativity.

- Windsor Public Library
- Darien Library
- Bridgeport Public Library

Each workshop offered a short, engaging presentation introducing students to solar energy—what it is, how it works, and why it matters. Using age-appropriate concepts, students learn that the sun provides light, heat, and energy that can be transformed into electricity through solar panels.

Students are guided to understand that solar energy is clean, renewable, and essential for a sustainable future.

Following the presentation, students participate in a hands-on Solar House Building Project — the highlight of the program.

Using a specially designed kit, each child builds a small working solar-powered house, allowing them to:

- See how solar panels convert sunlight into energy
- Understand basic architectural design concepts
- Explore creativity through building and customization

This STEAM-based activity reinforces learning through doing, helping students connect science and design in a fun and memorable way.

The program is designed to be inclusive, interactive, and inspiring, ensuring every student feels empowered to explore new ideas.

Inspiring the Next Generation of Designers

The AIA K-12 Architecture Week aims to spark interest in architecture and sustainability at an early age. By combining education with hands-on experience, these workshops help students see how design can shape a better, more sustainable world.

From learning how the sun powers our planet to building their own solar-powered models, students leave with both new knowledge and a sense of accomplishment and perhaps even the first spark of a future career in architecture or environmental design.



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AIA March Advocacy Update



By Matthew Toddy, AIA

Lawsuit Filed over the Planned Renovation of Kennedy Center

AIA has joined a broad coalition of eight preservation and architecture organizations in filing a lawsuit in federal district court in Washington, DC regarding proposed work at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. This action responds to public statements indicating the building could be taken “down to the steel” during a two-year closure beginning July 4, 2026, raising concerns that irreversible changes might proceed without the required public review and professional input. The lawsuit asks the court to halt any further demolition or fundamental redesign activities until the government completes the required public review and consultation processes.

AIA’s involvement builds on AIA’s long history in preservation advocacy, from the creation of the Committee on Conservation of Public Architecture in 1890 to recent calls for transparency and adherence to review processes

in the White House ballroom project. AIA will share updates and opportunities for engagement as the case progresses. More information on this case, including FAQs, can be found on AIA’s dedicated [AIA legal action page](#).

Professional Federal Designation of Architecture

As part of the Architecture Organizations Alliance, AIA sent letters of endorsement to the cosponsors of two bills to restore graduate and professional student loan limits. The bills respond to caps imposed after recent federal changes that eliminated Grad PLUS and narrowly defined “professional” programs, cutting students in architecture from the federal tools they rely on to complete accredited degrees. Restoring access to loans will help the architecture workforce, reduce delays in delivering housing and critical public projects, and keep students from being pushed into higher-risk private loans. The bills that AIA is currently supporting to correct this issue include:

- H.R. 6574, which removes the distinction between graduate and professional

student, making the cap the same for everyone.

- H.R. 6718, which codifies architecture as a professional degree alongside other licensure-based fields, ensuring students can access the federal loan limits they need to complete their education, or
- H.R. 6677, which restores the loan structure that existed before recent arbitrary loan caps were proposed.

You can participate in congressional outreach on the issue of professional designation by [signing up here](#).

21st Century ROAD to Housing Act Passes Senate

The Senate recently passed the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act with strong bipartisan support, marking a major step toward addressing the nation’s housing affordability crisis. The bill focuses on increasing housing supply, lowering costs, and expanding access to housing through incentives for local



model for aligning design excellence with economic development and civic growth.

Alliance for Responsible Professional Licensing (ARPL)

State legislatures are increasingly targeting the licensing boards that govern architecture and

development, expanded funding for construction and repairs, and streamlined regulations. It also includes provisions to limit large institutional investors from purchasing single-family homes and strengthens financing tools for affordable housing.

The legislation now returns to the House for further consideration. The American Institute of Architects is supporting the housing bill and continues to advocate for the House to include a targeted waiver of Build America, Buy America requirements under U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to better support affordable housing development.

USCM Game Changer Program Kick Off

The Mayors Game Changer program, led by the American Institute of Architects in partnership with the U.S. Conference of Mayors, highlights the critical role of architects in shaping cities' entry into the growing sports and entertainment economy. Building on the official kick off with Carole Wedge, FAIA in Washington, DC in January, AIA participated in the follow up meeting this week in Orlando.

The initiative connects mayors with design leaders and sports industry experts to create place-based strategies for attracting new leagues. Through AIA's expertise in planning, infrastructure, materials, and community-centered design, architects help cities leverage facilities, public spaces, and waterfronts as catalysts for investment and identity. This collaboration elevates the AIA-USCM partnership as a national

allied professions, repackaging deregulation as government efficiency and workforce reform. AIA participates as a Steering Committee member in the [Alliance for Responsible Professional Licensing \(ARPL\)](#), a national coalition representing more than 1.35 million licensed architects, engineers, surveyors, and landscape architects.

Through ARPL, AIA shares legislative intelligence and coordinates advocacy strategies with allied professions to support state components responding to threats. For 2026, ARPL is sharpening its strategy around economic framing, targeted engagement in high-risk states, and direct outreach to policymakers to make the case

that well-functioning licensing boards are self-funded, private-sector protection for the public, not bureaucratic obstacles.

ICOR Practice Overlap Guidance

The Interorganizational Council on Regulation (ICOR) has released [new Practice Overlap Guidance](#) intended to provide licensing boards with a shared framework for evaluating situations where the scopes of architecture, engineering, interior design, landscape architecture, and surveying intersect. The guidance is nonbinding and does not change state law, but it covers more than 50 areas of interdisciplinary practice and is expected to serve as a reference point for boards, code officials, and policymakers navigating scope-of-practice disputes.

Because AIA and other professional associations were not formal participants in the task force and the document arrives amid active deregulation and encroachment efforts at the state level, AIA is gathering feedback from members and components to assess its potential implications for architectural practice.

Matt Toddy, AIA, is the founder and principal of Elevation Studio in Columbus, Ohio, as well as a member of AIA's Board of Directors





The Kennedy Center Photo By Mack Male: CC BY SA 2.0.

Trump Takes Aim at the Kennedy Center—Architects Launch Legal Revolt

A powerful coalition is suing to halt sweeping plans they say could permanently alter one of America's most important cultural buildings.

By Paul Makovsky

In Washington, D.C., where monuments are typically treated as untouchable symbols of national continuity, a legal battle is unfolding that could redefine how the United States treats its architectural legacy. At the center of the fight is the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts—a building that is not only a cultural institution but a national memorial—and a sweeping set of proposed changes by Donald Trump that critics say threaten to irreversibly alter it.

On March 23, 2026, a coalition of eight of the most influential organizations in architecture, landscape architecture, and historic preservation filed suit in federal district court. Their goal: to force the federal government to comply with longstanding preservation laws before undertaking any major alterations to the Kennedy Center.

The case is extraordinary not only for its target but for its scale. Never before, plaintiffs say, have so many national organizations aligned to defend a single building.

A Coalition That Signals Alarm

The plaintiffs read like a who's who of the built environment: the American Institute of Architects, American Society of Landscape Architects, National Trust for Historic Preservation, Society of Architectural Historians, Docomomo US, and The Cultural Landscape Foundation, among others.

Collectively, they represent more than one million members and supporters. Their alignment is not incidental—it is a signal.

“This case is not about politics or aesthetics,” said Abbe David Lowell, Founding Member of Lowell & Associates. “It is about whether the President can impose major changes to historic buildings while denying the public voice that federal law requires.”

At stake is not routine maintenance. Congress has already appropriated \$257 million for that. What the coalition is challenging is something far more fundamental: the possibility of dismantling and remaking one of the country's most important cultural buildings without public review, expert consultation, or congressional authorization.

“Down to the Steel”

The lawsuit follows statements by President Trump suggesting that the Kennedy Center could be taken “down to the steel” during a proposed two-year closure beginning July 4, 2026.

For preservationists, that language is not rhetorical—it is a red flag.

The complaint points to a recent precedent: assurances that the White House East Wing would remain intact during construction of a new ballroom, followed by its complete demolition. That episode has become a cautionary tale for those now watching the Kennedy Center.

“The administration is advancing sweeping changes to some of the nation's most important civic landmarks without transparency or public process,” said Greg Werkheiser, Founding Partner at Cultural Heritage Partners. “When decisions about America's heritage are made behind closed doors, the rule of law is the only safeguard.”

A Modern Monument Under Threat

Completed in 1971 and designed by Edward Durell Stone, the Kennedy Center occupies a singular position in American architecture. It is at once a Modernist landmark, a functioning performing arts venue, and the nation's official memorial to President John F. Kennedy.

That hybrid identity is precisely what makes the stakes so high.

“The Kennedy Center is not a personal project of any president,” said Rebecca Miller, Executive Director of the DC Preservation League. “It is a national cultural monument built to honor John F. Kennedy and to serve the American people.”

The building has been determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places—a designation that triggers protections under the National Historic Preservation Act and the

National Environmental Policy Act. These laws require federal agencies to evaluate impacts, consult experts, and involve the public before undertaking major changes.

The lawsuit argues that those processes are not optional—they are the law.

Process vs. Power

At its core, the case is about process. The plaintiffs are not arguing that the Kennedy Center must remain frozen in time. They are arguing that any transformation must follow established legal pathways.

Carol Quillen, President and CEO of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, framed the issue bluntly: “We're concerned that, as with the White House East Wing, the potential scope of planned changes is understated and will result in irreparable loss.”

The coalition is expected to file for a preliminary injunction to halt any demolition or major alteration until those processes are completed.

That request could set up a high-stakes legal confrontation over executive authority versus statutory safeguards—a familiar tension in American governance, but rarely one that plays out so directly on the terrain of architecture.

The Architecture Community Draws a Line

For architects, the case touches on something deeper than preservation: professional responsibility.

Continued on Page 18





“Architects have the core responsibility of protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the public and that includes our nation’s civic and cultural landmarks,” said Illya Azaroff, FAIA, President of the AIA.

Others emphasized the Kennedy Center’s role as a designed landscape as much as a building.

“The Kennedy Center campus is a nationally significant example of Modernist design,” said Charles A. Birnbaum of The Cultural Landscape Foundation, pointing to its terraces, processional sequence, and views across the Potomac.

For preservationists of modern architecture – a category that has historically struggled for recognition – the threat feels especially acute.

“It is unconscionable that the administration has already begun actions to degrade and irreparably harm the Kennedy Center,” said Liz Waytkus of Docomomo US.

A Precedent With National Consequences

What happens next will likely reverberate far beyond Washington.

The case brings together three law firms that have already challenged multiple high-profile federal interventions in historic sites—from proposals to alter the Eisenhower Executive Office Building to redevelopment plans for the East Potomac Golf Course.

Taken together, these cases suggest a broader pattern: an aggressive federal approach to reshaping historic properties, and an equally aggressive legal response from preservation advocates.

Brad McCauley, President of the ASLA, framed the stakes in systemic terms: “Following proper process to honor the Kennedy Center’s role as a national civic landmark matters.”

If the plaintiffs prevail, the case could reaffirm the strength of federal preservation laws and the necessity of public input. If they fail, it could open the door to a new era in which even the country’s most iconic cultural buildings are subject to rapid, unilateral transformation.

The Bigger Question

Beneath the legal arguments lies a more fundamental question—one that architects, policymakers, and the public will be forced to confront:

Who controls America’s cultural landmarks?

Is a building like the Kennedy Center a living work, open to reinterpretation by each generation? Or is it a shared civic artifact, bound by collective memory and protected by law?

For now, the answer will be decided in court.

But the coalition’s message is already clear: the fight over the Kennedy Center is not just about one building. It is about the rules that govern the nation’s architectural inheritance—and whether those rules still hold.

Paul Makovsky is editor-in-chief of [ARCHITECT](#).



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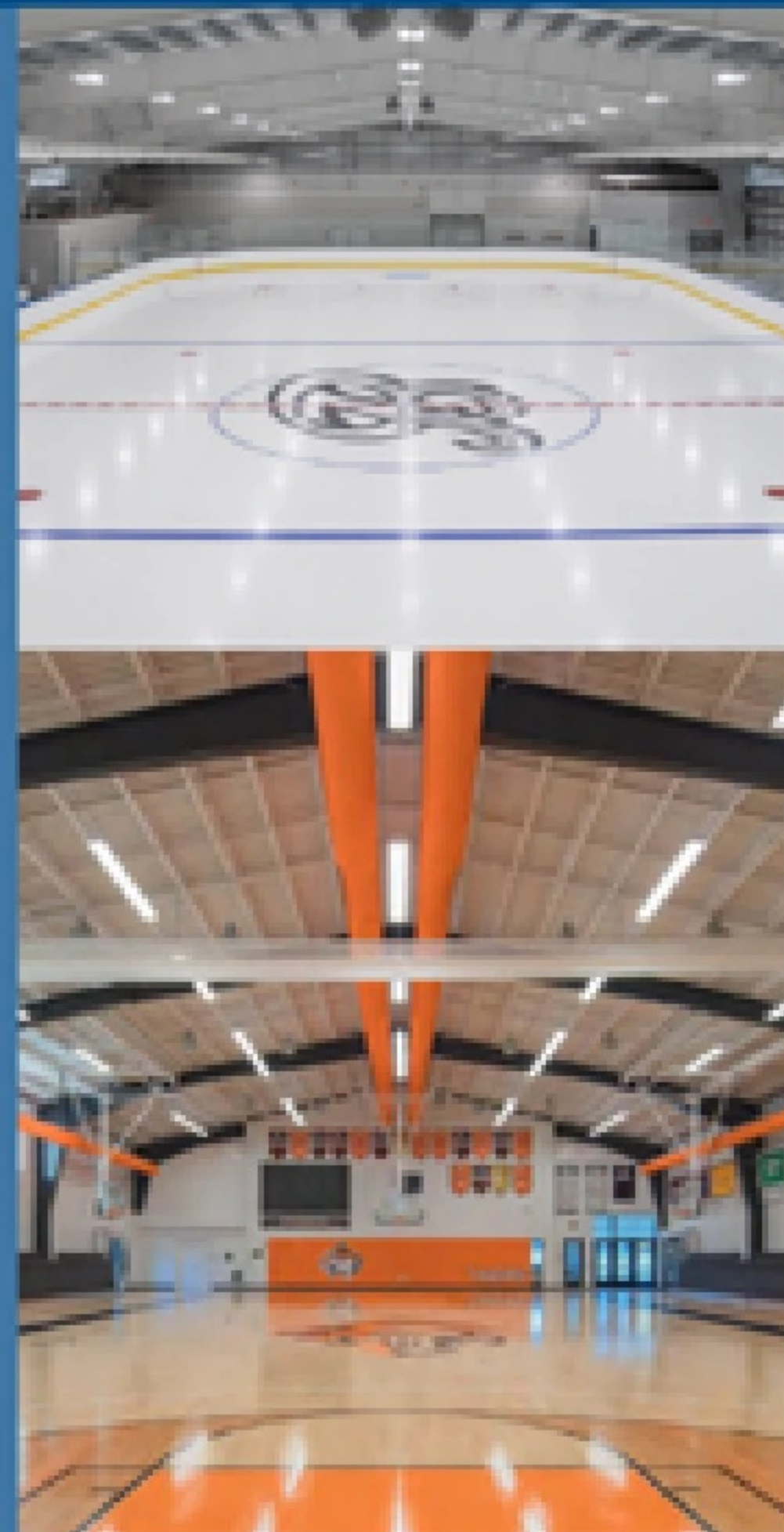
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Make space for listening to the echoes of the past

For architect Scot Samuelson, it was about having respect for the history and significance of the work that came before him. So, for the reimagining of a Connecticut home designed by renowned early-20th-century architect J. Frederick Kelly, Samuelson included custom, historically inspired Marvin Ultimate collection windows and doors in his plans, ensuring that this transformation honored the character of Kelly's original vision.

marvin.com/architects

Integrating Biophilic Wellness into Modern Practice

THE LIVING BLUEPRINT:

By Darla Jarvis

What Is Biophilic Wellness Design?

In an era where people spend nearly 90% of their lives indoors, the relationship between the built environment and the natural world has never been more consequential. For architects, builders, and designers, Biophilic Wellness Design is rapidly evolving from a specialized design philosophy into a foundational framework for creating healthier, more resilient spaces. As the industry shifts toward human-centric environments, the question is no longer whether nature belongs in our buildings, but how intentionally we integrate it.

Biophilic Wellness Design is the practice of strengthening the human connection to nature within the built environment. It integrates natural elements, patterns, and spatial experiences to support the physiological and psychological well-being of occupants.

Unlike traditional green building strategies, which prioritize environmental performance metrics such as energy efficiency and carbon reduction, biophilic design focuses on the human response to space. The goal is to activate the “biophilia effect”—the innate human affinity for nature. When environments replicate the sensory conditions humans evolved within, measurable health benefits follow:

- Reduced cortisol and stress levels
- Lowered blood pressure
- Improved cognitive function and concentration
- Enhanced mood and productivity

Ancient Roots: Our Architectural History

While the term is modern, the concept is deeply embedded in history. For centuries,



buildings were constructed in response to climate and landscape.

- **Courtyard Living:** In ancient Rome and Egypt, homes centered around atriums that provided ventilation, daylight, and water features, creating a protected interior microclimate.
- **The Hanging Gardens of Babylon:** An early example of large-scale integrated landscape architecture, blurring the boundary between built form and living landscape.
- **Japanese Spatial Philosophy:** Refined strategies like Engawa (a transitional veranda) and Shakkei (borrowed scenery) create a layered relationship between interior and exterior, fostering calm and reflection.
- **Biophilic Design for Builders: Constructible System For** today’s contractors, the challenge is translating



Stock imagery via Canva

these ideas into practical construction strategies. The goal is to embed natural dynamics into the building envelope itself.

Thermal and Airflow Variability

Modern HVAC systems often aim for static perfection, yet natural environments are dynamic. Introducing controlled variability through operable windows or microclimate zoning helps maintain occupant alertness and metabolic balance.

Authentic Materiality

Biophilic environments prioritize materials that age gracefully, such as solid wood, natural stone, leather, and metals that develop a patina. These provide tactile authenticity and a sense of connection to natural processes.

Prospect and Refuge

Derived from evolutionary psychology, this is the balance between seeing outward clearly (prospect) and feeling protected from behind or above (refuge). Builders can implement this through strategic window placement, seating niches, and layered spatial depth.

Nature in the Modern Built Environment

Contemporary design is expanding beyond plants to incorporate advanced sensory integration and biomimicry.

- **Circadian Lighting:** Systems that mimic the daily solar cycle, shifting color temperature to regulate the body's sleep-wake cycle.
- **Green Infrastructure:** Functional systems like living walls that improve acoustics, or green roofs that manage stormwater.
- **Multi-Sensory Design:** Integrating natural acoustics (water features) and olfactory experiences (natural wood scents) to create immersive environments.

The Professional Advantage

Biophilic design is a significant competitive advantage. Research shows that biophilic offices command higher lease rates, healthcare environments with natural views correlate with faster recovery, and residential properties with strong indoor-outdoor connections show higher market demand. Wellness-focused design is now directly tied to asset value.

A Return to Natural Intelligence

Biophilic wellness design represents a return to architectural instincts. When buildings reconnect people to natural rhythms, they become living environments that support health, creativity, and longevity. The future of construction may be technological, but the blueprint remains deeply rooted in nature.

About CTABS

The Council for Therapeutic Architecture & Biophilic Standards (CTABS) is a growing initiative dedicated to establishing rigorous wellness-based design protocols across New England and beyond. Founded by interior design professional Darla Jarvis, CTABS is currently developing a 10-year roadmap to standardize biophilic integration in residential and commercial spaces, prioritizing human health and ecological harmony.

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Stock imagery via Canva



Our Collective Cultural Amnesia

By Daniel Horowitz, AIA

Maybe architecture does not need new styles or new ideas. Maybe architects simply need to remember what we already know.

The profession naturally celebrates new technologies, new forms, new aesthetics, and increasingly new workflows. We have always been motivated by innovation but innovation is not the whole story.

There is another concept that may be just as important today: exnovation: the stewardship of knowledge we already possess but have possibly begun to forget. We may even be forgetting to teach it.

Architecture has inherited centuries of cultural and technological knowledge. We have access to a deep well of cultural history, buildings and cities. Yet in our enthusiasm for the next new thing, we often overlook the lessons that support architecture as a functioning and coherent discipline.

Perhaps now is a good time to simply pause and reflect.

Recent advances in artificial image generation make this tension visible. These systems can produce architectural images that appear coherent, sophisticated, and convincing. The unsettling part is the way some of these images mimic competence. They possess that dangerous quality of being “good enough”. They seem very familiar.

This reveals something uncomfortable. Much of what we have come to recognize as



is not to say that style isn't an important part of culture. But form also grows out of ideas about structure, space, light, program, and the relationship between buildings, their users, and their cultural and urban contexts.

Architecture has always been a discipline of integrating conflicting systems into a coherent order.

When architecture works well, these systems reinforce one another. Structural logic supports spatial intention. Enclosure responds to climate. Program organizes movement and hierarchy. Urban relationships shape how buildings participate in the life of the city.

This is the accumulated intelligence of the discipline.

architectural design may in fact be little more than stylistic pattern-making.

We can easily confuse attention with importance. In our cultural moment we often reward attention-seeking strategies more than system-improving ones. Just look at our politics.

Architecture is not immune to these pressures. Architecture has historically evolved most successfully by layering new knowledge on top of old. We forget this at our peril. The twentieth century offers many examples: urban renewal projects that dismantled functioning neighborhoods and the replacement of pedestrian urban spaces with infrastructure designed primarily for automobiles.

Iconic architecture rarely emerges from only the pursuit of style. That

It's time to lean into the successful systems and epistemologies we have already built. It's possible that the most radical architectural act today is something surprisingly simple: Read a book.

At the end of the day, AI might be teaching us something really important: if images are cheap and easy then Architecture may actually be more of a knowledge tradition than an image culture. Expertise and accumulated wisdom are the foundations on which we will continue to build our value as architects.

Daniel Horowitz, AIA is Founder and CEO of Architecture Is Free Foundation, an educational non-profit that supports architecture students and young professionals and is the Director of the Graduate Architecture Program at UHART. He is also a current board member of AIA CT.

Grace Farms Fifth Annual Design for Freedom Summit

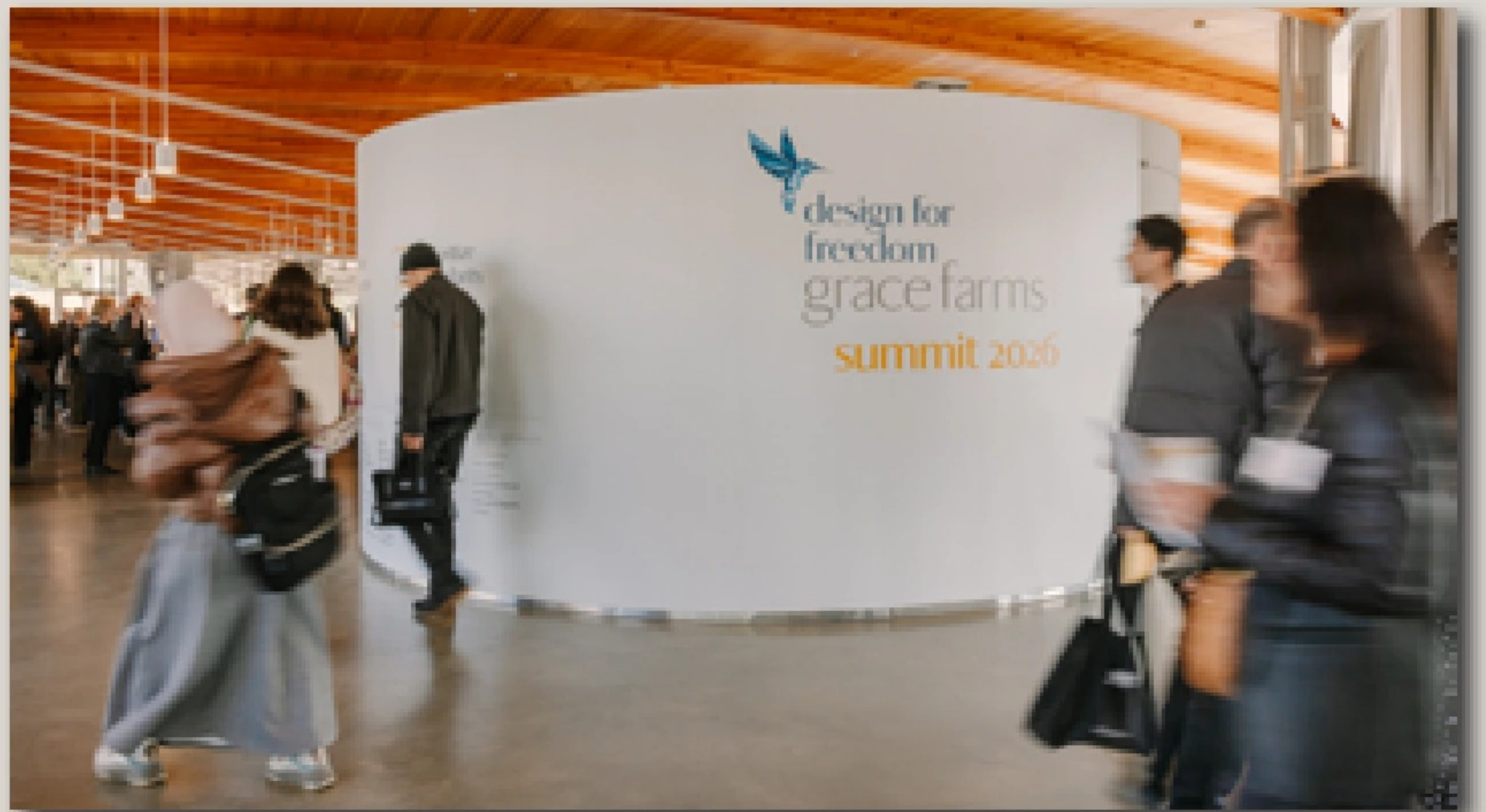
Four New Design for Freedom Pilot Projects Announced

The fifth annual Design for Freedom Summit, hosted by Grace Farms, marked a significant milestone in the global movement to promote ethical practices in the built environment. Bringing together more than 550 leaders from architecture, construction, technology, manufacturing, academia, and government—as well as students from 21 universities—the summit focused on advancing solutions to eliminate forced labor and improve supply chain transparency across the industry.

At the center of the event was a call to action: to ensure that the materials used in buildings are sourced with respect for human dignity. Grace Farms CEO and Founder Sharon Prince emphasized that what began as a question about ethical construction has evolved into a global movement, positioning the construction industry as a potential leader in human rights and supply chain accountability.

The summit addressed a wide range of pressing topics, including the role of U.S. foreign policy in combating forced and child labor, ethical sourcing in rapidly expanding data center infrastructure, and the importance of circularity in construction materials. A key discussion explored how the growth of artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure introduces both opportunities and risks, particularly in managing complex global supply chains responsibly.

Another major theme was innovation in materials and design. Panels highlighted advancements in pigments, stone, glass, and bio-based materials, demonstrating how sustainability and ethics can intersect in the



built environment. The “With Every Fiber” exhibition at Grace Farms continues to play a central role in this dialogue, showcasing both challenges and emerging solutions in material sourcing and reuse.

Cultural and social dimensions were also emphasized. Discussions examined how architecture can better represent underrepresented communities, particularly through public memorials and narratives. Additional workshops addressed issues such as prison labor in the United States and global responses to worker exploitation, reinforcing the need for systemic change across industries.

A major highlight of the summit was the announcement of four new Design for Freedom Pilot Projects, expanding the initiative’s reach internationally. These projects including the **National Juneteenth Museum in Texas**, **Bloomberg’s Park Avenue office expansion in New York**, the **National access Arts Centre in Canada**, and **Médano by Viñoly** in Uruguay — serve as real-world models for ethical sourcing and transparent supply chains. Collectively, they contribute to a growing portfolio of projects across four continents aimed at reshaping industry standards.

The summit also celebrated emerging talent through the 2026 ACSA Design for Freedom Competition, recognizing student projects that propose innovative ways to eliminate forced labor in architecture and construction. These future leaders are seen as critical to sustaining momentum and driving long-term change.

Looking ahead, the movement is increasingly focused on the intersection of ethics and technology. As AI and digital infrastructure continue to expand, leaders stressed the importance of addressing exploitation at the material sourcing level. The message was clear: the future of innovation must not rely on hidden human costs.

Overall, the summit reinforced that achieving a more ethical built environment requires collaboration across sectors, continued innovation, and a commitment to transparency. With growing global participation and tangible project outcomes, Design for Freedom is positioning itself as a transformative force in redefining how buildings are conceived, sourced, and constructed.

More info at [Design for Freedom](#)

2026 AIA Associate Awardee Ersa Llakmani, Assoc. AIA

Ersa Llakmani, Assoc. AIA, seeks to advance advocacy, mentorship, and inclusive leadership — supporting emerging professionals and strengthening connections between national and local engagement. As a 2026 AIA Associate Awardee, her work reflects a deep commitment not only to architectural practice, but to the people and communities that shape and sustain the profession.

Ersa is a project manager at Harley Ellis Devereaux (HED), where her work spans mission-critical and workplace projects. Her experience across diverse project types, from data centers to workplace environments demonstrates both technical expertise and strategic leadership. At HED, she is also deeply engaged in firmwide initiatives that advance professional development and foster inclusive practice, reinforcing her belief that design excellence is inseparable from equity and collaboration.

Beyond project delivery, Ersa's leadership is defined by her commitment to building pathways for others. Within her firm, she actively contributes to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion



(JEDI) efforts and supports mentorship initiatives that guide emerging professionals.

Her involvement with the AIA further amplifies this impact. In her current role as the National Associates Committee (NAC) State/Territory Representative for Connecticut, she helps align national priorities with local engagement efforts. She has contributed to the development of tools and resources — such as advocacy frameworks — that empower associates to engage in legislative and professional issues. She is also actively involved in

AIA CT initiatives supporting women in architecture and emerging professionals, recognizing the importance of representation, mentorship, and inclusive networks in creating a more equitable field.

Ersa's commitment to advocacy is grounded in her lived experience and global perspective. Originally from Albania, she brings a deeply personal understanding of resilience, opportunity, and the transformative power of education and community. Her journey, from her

early exposure to architecture while observing her father build their family home, to becoming a leader within the profession, has shaped her dedication to expanding access and opportunity. Her story underscores the importance of representation and the need to create pathways for individuals from diverse backgrounds to enter and thrive in architecture.

Ersa is a strong advocate for engagement, encouraging young professionals to participate in shaping the profession and



the communities they serve. Through her involvement in advocacy initiatives, including engagement with policymakers and participation in leadership summits, she demonstrates the importance of the “citizen architect.” She believes there is a responsibility to contribute to broader conversations about housing, sustainability, and social equity.

Ersa’s recognition as a 2026 AIA Associate Awardee reflects purpose, integrity, and service. She embodies the values of advocacy, mentorship, and inclusive leadership, demonstrating how architects can lead not only through design but through engagement and community-building.

We congratulate Ersa on this achievement and look forward to her ongoing contributions to the profession.





AIA Strategic Council March 2026 Update

By Paolo Campos AIA, NOMA, NCARB

The Strategic Council had its second all-members Assembly meeting of 2026 on Tuesday, April 7th. The five workgroups are in the thick of their work for the year, focusing on topical research and outreach efforts while working closely with AIA's leadership as we launch the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, which uses the acronym "PACE" (Practice, Advocacy, Climate, Equity) to map out the four interconnected goals that reflect what matters most to our members.

A core underpinning of the Council's work is the alignment of workgroup recommendations with these four goals and their strategies. During the Assembly, this year's five workgroups- Housing, Practice, Neuroarchitecture, Value, and Regenerative Design - were asked to choose which goal their work falls under, and which strategies are most applicable.

The Housing Workgroup seeks to transform America's housing landscape by identifying systemic barriers and developing actionable solutions. By uniting

design, policy, and process, we seek to create a scalable, sustainable, and equitable housing ecosystem. This initiative empowers architects to lead in shaping affordable housing nationwide.

The Practice Workgroup is investigating how architectural practice can transform in response to emerging technologies and evolving business models to build healthier businesses that enable AIA members to thrive over the course of their careers.

The Neuroarchitecture Workgroup is exploring how neuroscience research shapes human responses to design. By engaging experts, they seek to translate this research into practical strategies, helping architects create more inclusive, adaptable, and human-centered environments that better support well-being and diverse user needs.

The Value Workgroup is advancing the value of architects through three coordinated focus areas: Protecting the Profession, Pay Equity, and Public Messaging, by aligning

advocacy tools, compensation frameworks, and storytelling strategies to better communicate and reinforce architects' impact across the public, the profession, and the broader economy.

Lastly, my workgroup- Regenerative Design - is providing foundational knowledge on this topic that will empower and inspire AIA's leaders, members, and staff through accelerated uptake of the Framework for Design Excellence, and the leveraging of AIA's strong educational and advocacy infrastructure.

I invite you to peruse this month's forthcoming AIA Architect magazine, where I was interviewed along with fellow Councilor Corey Squire on the topic of Regenerative Design. Corey and I will be hosting a live webinar titled "[A Regenerative Approach to Design Excellence](#)" - free to members! - on this topic on April 22nd, Earth Day. I hope you can join us.

Paolo Campos AIA a Principal at Patriquin Architects, The AIA Strategic Council for Connecticut, the 2026 Chair: Regenerative Design Workgroup and Past Presidents of AIA Connecticut and NOMAct.



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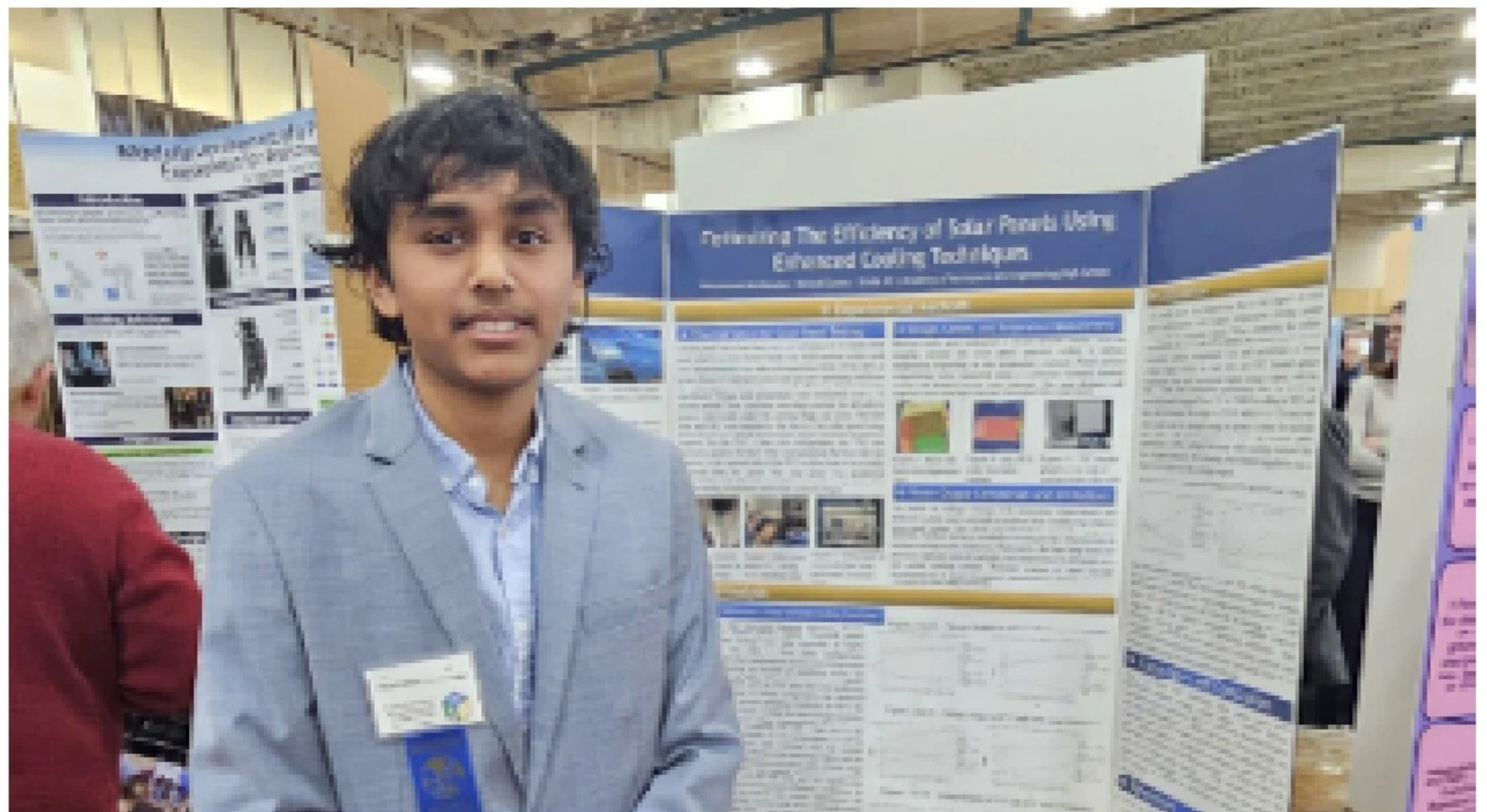
The William M. Mack AIA

The Connecticut Architecture Foundation Showcasing Innovation in Building Performance

By Jessica McCue, AIA

The Connecticut Science and Engineering Fair held its 78th annual event, attended by some of the most talented young adults in the State of Connecticut. It's estimated that each year, 6500 students compete in science fairs across Connecticut to qualify for the Connecticut Science and Engineering Fair.

The competition is open to students in grades 7-12, and includes projects focusing on all aspects of biology, chemistry, coding, engineering, and a host of other STEM related topics. CAF bestows the William M. Mack AIA awards in two categories: Innovation in Building Performance and Innovation in Building Sustainability. Alan Lagocki, AIA, Emily Sperini, AIA and Jessica McCue, AIA, were the volunteer judges for 2026.



2026 Innovation in Building Performance Award

The award was given to *Optimizing The Efficiency of Solar Panels Using Enhanced Cooling Techniques*, researched and presented by Palaniappan Manikandan, a tenth grader from the Academy of Aerospace and Engineering High School in Rocky Hill.

Palaniappan identified the problem that, "Conventional photovoltaic systems lack integrated thermal regulation strategies to stabilize electrical output under sustained heat exposure.

This research presents a thermally optimized hybrid cooling configuration integrating passive and active regulation to enhance photovoltaic voltage stability under heat stress." He hypothesized that, "increasing the surface temperature of the panel would decrease voltage output while the implementation of cooling methods would correspondingly increase voltage."

He designed an experiment to test "a control without cooling, a passive heat sink, an active thermoelectric cooler, and a combined heat sink and thermoelectric configuration"

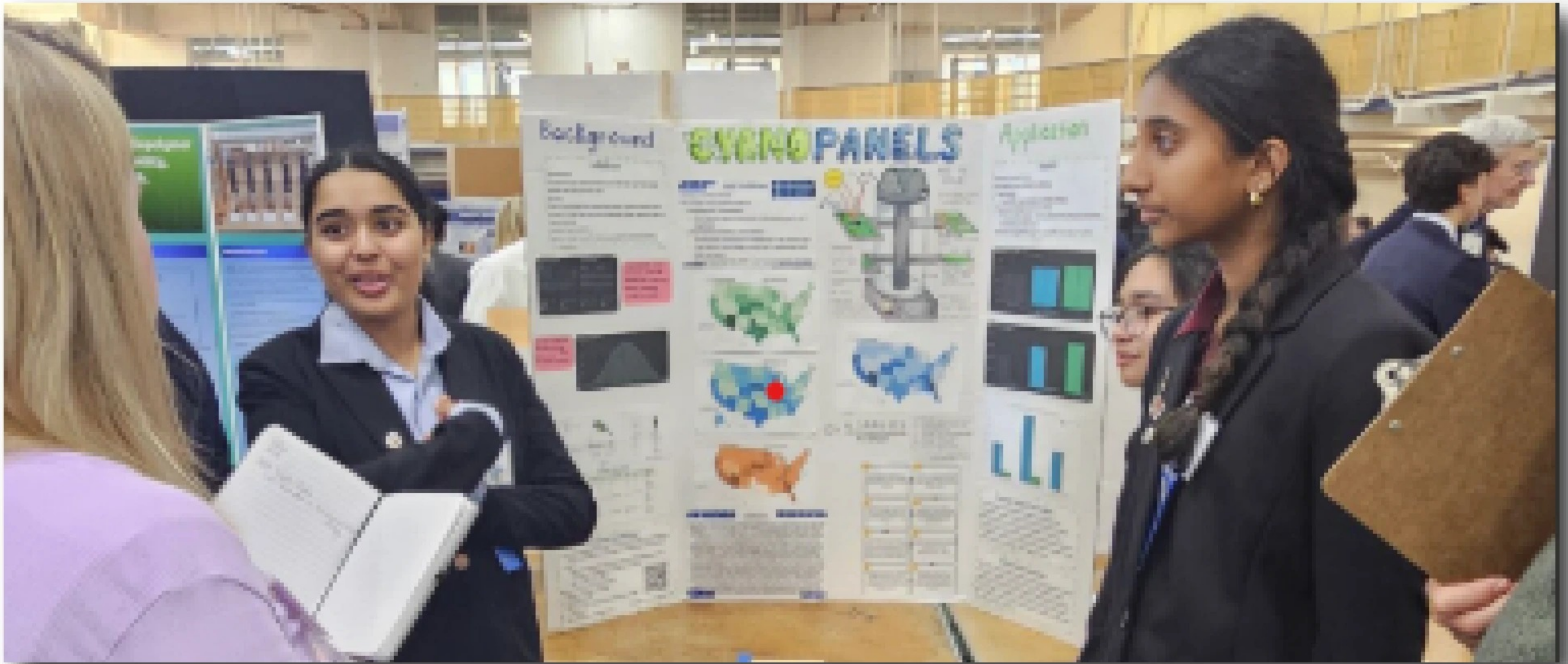
and ran an experiment that monitored over ten-minute intervals. He concluded, "This study shows that increasing solar panel temperature significantly reduces voltage output while effective thermal regulation using a combined TEC and heat sink maintains higher and more stable performance under heat stress. These findings are especially important for improving the reliability and efficiency of solar energy systems in residential, commercial, and large-scale renewable installations."

The judges were impressed with his experiment, and data he collected regarding the efficiency of each solar panel setup.



Mack AIA Awards

Innovation Supports Future Architects Performance and Building Sustainability



2026 The Innovation in Building Sustainability Award

The award was given to a team of Diva Shajith, Amariah Luci, and Sahasra Natti from South Windsor High School.

The all-female team started with the issue of heat islands. Their solution to this problem was to introduce cyanobacteria, “a photosynthetic prokaryote that absorbs carbon dioxide and releases oxygen much faster than plants or trees. The purpose of this project is to create a contributing solution to reduce climate change. This project will create a product that will primarily utilize cyanobacteria, implementing it to create a sustainable system that actively generates renewable energy and captures carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.”

The team designed a device that would be placed on roofs in heat island-prone cities, while the panels moved with the sun to catch the most usable sunlight for photosynthesis, which they

discovered after using some AI modeling on efficiency. The current product would create enough power to serve itself, but the team was hopeful that with some further innovation, it could power the structure it was placed on, and “could examine long term durability of cyanobacteria colonies in varying climates, larger scale urban simulations, additional strain modifications to enhance photosynthetic ability, and the creation of an app allowing users to monitor oxygen output and its factors. Expanding real world testing would further validate system scalability.”

by buildings and infrastructure in urban areas.

The Connecticut Architecture Foundation raises and awards funds to advance education and professional growth in the field of architecture in Connecticut. Your donation to the CAF helps support our mission to encourage the talent of future professionals and their role in building the future of architecture.

Jessica McCue, AIA is project architect at Marc G. Andre Architects in Fairfield, CT

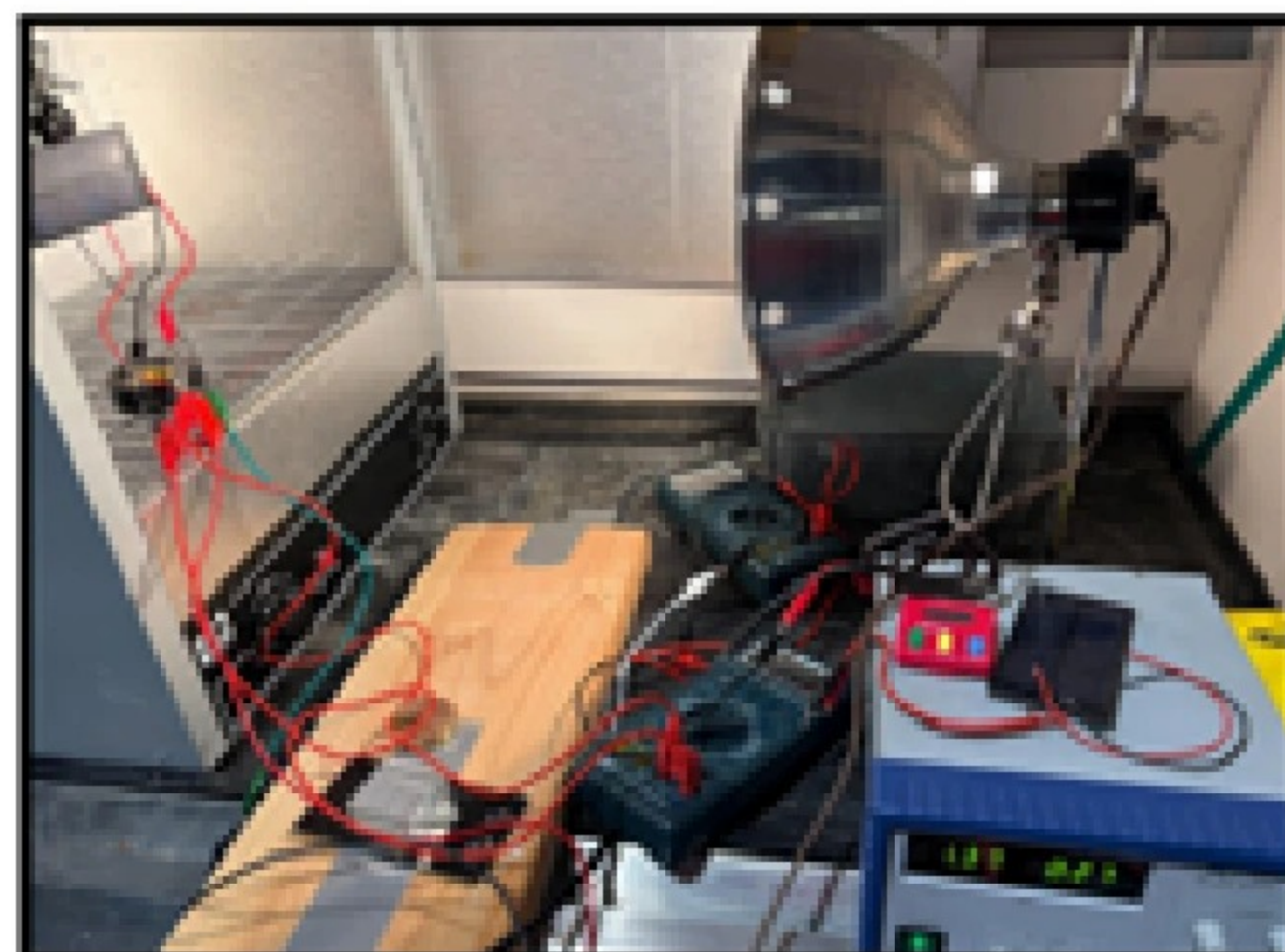


Figure 5 - Experimental Setup in heat oven



Figure 6 - Control solar panel tested

A New Landmark Rises

Developers Deiso Moss and Cleary Interests announce the launch of public sales for The Ritz-Carlton Residences, Houston, a property set to redefine the city's skyline through the architectural vision of Pickard Chilton. The project marks Houston's first co-located Ritz-Carlton Hotel and Residences, bringing the globally recognized hospitality-integrated residential model to one of the nation's most economically dynamic cities.

Located at 2120 Post Oak Boulevard in the Uptown-Galleria district, the 45-story tower is planned to feature The Ritz-Carlton Hotel, with 156 guest rooms and suites, alongside 112 bespoke branded residences available for whole ownership. Sales and marketing are led by Redeavor Group.

At the core of the development is the architectural leadership of Pickard Chilton, whose portfolio of distinguished high-rise buildings across the United States informs the project's design direction. The firm has conceived a refined vertical composition that draws from both contemporary design principles and the enduring language of classical skyscrapers.

Rather than pursuing trend-driven form, Pickard Chilton has emphasized proportion, symmetry, and material integrity to establish a building of lasting presence. The tower's façade carefully balances glass and masonry, creating depth, texture, and rhythm while reinforcing a disciplined architectural expression.

This approach positions the building not simply as a luxury development, but as a long-term contribution to Houston's architectural legacy.

"Houston has long held the economic depth and international business presence to support a project of this scale," said Andrew



Deiso, co-founder of Deiso Moss. "What has been missing is this level of brand integration and service infrastructure. This development reflects confidence in the city's long-term trajectory and its ability to shine on a global stage."

Redeavor Group views the launch as a defining moment in the city's evolution toward hospitality-integrated living. "Branded residences have become a durable and recognized asset class," said Andrew Wachtfogel, co-founder and managing principal of Redeavor Group. "Houston is entering this space at the right time, with the economic fundamentals and buyer profile to sustain long-term value."

Coinciding with the public sales launch, the development's \$5 million purpose-built private sales gallery is now welcoming qualified buyers by appointment. Conceived as an extension of the tower itself, the gallery offers an immersive preview of the architectural and material language established by Pickard Chilton, alongside curated interior elements that reflect the project's design intent.

Interiors are designed by internationally recognized architect and designer Lauren Rottet of Rottet Studio, who approached the property as an expression of Houston's layered identity. Inspired by the city's post oak canopy and the parklands along Buffalo Bayou, the interiors incorporate warm woods, limestone, marble, and bronze accents—complementing the architectural rigor established by Pickard Chilton.

Through this collaboration, the tower emerges as a cohesive architectural statement—where exterior form and interior experience are aligned—positioning The Ritz-Carlton Residences, Houston as both a new luxury address and a defining addition to the city's skyline.

PICKARD CHILTON

BL Companies President and CEO Carolyn Stanworth to Retire at End of Year

BL Companies, an employee-owned, multidisciplinary architecture, engineering, environmental and land surveying firm, has announced that President and CEO Carolyn Stanworth will retire in December 2026.

“This will bring to a close a fulfilling 27-year journey at BL, the last 20 years as an employee-owned company and culture – something for which I am most proud,” Stanworth said. “This decision comes after thoughtful reflection on my career and all that we have accomplished together and the continued growth potential of BL Companies. It has been my honor to collaborate and create win-win situations that benefit all our employee-owners in so many ways.”

VP of Operations Derek Kohl and Julia O’Brien, VP of Operations and General Counsel, will step in to lead the company as co-presidents of BL following Stanworth’s retirement.

“We are very grateful for Carolyn’s leadership and her decades of dedication to BL,” Kohl said. “Her commitment to succession planning and team development is helping ensure a smooth transition and positions BL to continue growing as a leading employee-owned, multidiscipline firm.”

Stanworth joined BL as chief financial officer in 1999 after a successful period in the telecommunications industry with Southern New England Telephone. Additionally, she became chief operating officer in 2003 and took over as president and CEO in 2010 amid the financial crisis of the Great Recession, leading BL on the path to recovery and prosperity on the strength of the employee-owner model.



“Carolyn created a tremendous culture at BL by rebuilding the foundation of the firm,” O’Brien said. “Because of her incredible leadership, we are not faced with that same task when she retires. BL is in a great place to continue to grow and flourish while fostering the next generation of leaders.”

Stanworth will remain involved as a member of BL Companies’ Board of Directors after retirement as an external member, offering strategic guidance and continuity. She has served on the board for 20 years.

“Working alongside each of BL’s employee-owners, with their dedication and passion, has made my experience truly meaningful,” Stanworth said. “We have overcome many challenges and achieved great results – and we did it together.”

A native of Virginia, Stanworth received her bachelor’s degree from Southern Connecticut State University and her MBA from the University of New Haven.





Hitting Our Stride

By Illya Azaroff, FAIA –
2026 AIA National President

The strength of AIA has always been its members. When architects move forward together, our ability to shape the future is extraordinary.

At the start of the year, I shared that during my tenure, I wanted to build momentum for our profession and our institute. Now, just two months in, that momentum is already taking shape.

While we began with a series of transitions—a new president, new Board of Directors, new CEO/EVP, new governance recommendations, and a new Strategic Plan--what I see is something more powerful: an organization in motion.

AIA has always been at its best when it evolves alongside the profession it represents. We are, in many ways, always in a state of becoming. That reality requires leadership that is responsive, collaborative, and deeply connected to the ideas and energy of our members.

The role of the Board of Directors is to listen, to lead, and to create conditions for architects to thrive – expanding opportunities for the profession on every scale, in every community, and in every room where the public and policymakers discuss the future of the built environment. In January, the Board identified three guiding priorities for the year that align with the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan.

- Advocacy to strengthen the voice and visibility of architects
- Leadership to accelerate climate resilience and risk reduction
- Action to ensure the prosperity of the profession

Since then, we have been moving quickly on all three.

First, we have redoubled our advocacy efforts to ensure the voice of architects is included in key decisions. Through new

partnerships and coordinated engagement, we are activating members as trusted experts, meeting with lawmakers, and organizing letter-writing campaigns.

The shocks and stresses affecting our communities are real and ongoing. Our advocacy is rooted in the undeniable truth of our value to society and our mission to improve society and transform the world. With your help—and with the engagement of our more than 101,000 members—we will continue to meet those challenges.

Our second priority, accelerating climate action leadership, builds on the work of recent years.

Architects are uniquely positioned to shape positive outcomes. Our projects demonstrate every day how design can contribute to resilient, sustainable, and healthier communities.

This year we are deepening that commitment by advancing regenerative design and disaster risk reduction (DRR), two areas that represent the next horizon for architectural leadership.

Board committees, the Strategic Council, and architecture experts are helping AIA define the architect's role in regenerative design. We are identifying leading practitioners and partners across sectors, including finance and investment. These actions will help evolve the Framework for Design Excellence and position architects to lead the broader AEC industry in this critical work.

With disaster risk reduction, we have entered into a collaborative process with the United Nations ARISE network, the Private Sector Alliance for Disaster Resilient Societies, a network established by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). This brings together architects, engineers, and resilience leaders around the world -- including

many AIA members. We are also developing a voluntary commitment to support the United Nations' Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the most encompassing international accord on this critical issue.

All this work serves one goal: strengthening the profession. Our third Board priority is a deep commitment to ensuring the prosperity of architects and the communities we serve. Advocacy and climate leadership both contribute to this goal by expanding opportunities for practice and positioning architects as essential problem-solvers.

Increasing business acumen, expanding training and education, and creating pathways for opportunity across the profession are all part of this effort. When architects succeed, the communities we serve benefit as well.

A powerful moment in our collective engagement occurred during AIA's Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. More than 600 advocates from nearly every state participated in Hill Day, conducting hundreds of meetings with members of Congress and the House of Representatives. When called upon, our members also responded to an action alert with 8,000 letters sent to Congress.

Since the summit, our advocacy work has continued to expand. We are building partnerships across the country and coordinating efforts with a broad coalition representing the full architectural ecosystem. This includes holding joint congressional meetings and briefings and delivering a unified message to the Department of Education to make our case for architects as professionals, erase loan limits, and ensure the health of the pipeline of new architects.

This coalition includes organizations that represent the full arc of the profession:

- [American Institute of Architecture Students \(AIAS\)](#)
- [Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture \(ACSA\)](#)
- [National Architectural Accrediting Board \(NAAB\)](#)
- [National Council of Architectural Registration Boards \(NCARB\)](#)
- [National Organization of Minority Architects \(NOMA\)](#)

These organizations cover the full spectrum of architecture—from students and educators to practitioners, accreditation, and licensure.

This is only the beginning.

The year ahead will require focus, persistence, and collaboration. We will lean into the issues that matter most to architects and to the communities we serve. And when architects are not invited to the table, we will set the table ourselves—bringing together allies, partners, and even critics, to advance the profession.

Because we are not spectators in shaping the future. Architects are active participants in building it. There will be challenges. There will be losses. There will be victories. What will determine our success is how we face them—together.

The progress we are making today is the result of members across the country stepping



forward: advocating for the profession, advancing climate leadership through their projects, mentoring the next generation, and strengthening the communities they serve.

We need all of you to help shape the future. Your voices, your leadership, your expertise, and your commitment are what make AIA powerful. We can influence policy, advance innovation, and demonstrate the essential value of design.

I know I'm ready for the work ahead. And I know this Board of Directors is ready.

But most importantly, I know that when our members are engaged, there is no limit to what we can accomplish together. I look forward to the months ahead—and to continuing this work with all of you.



Architects and AI: Practical Guidance for a Changing Profession

How will AI shape the future of architecture? Learn how to integrate AI into your practice with actionable guidance, tools, and insights from AIA's AI Task Force.

By AI Task Force

Over the past year, architects have raised important questions about the role of artificial intelligence in their work. It is a rational response to genuine disruption. This article, produced by the [AIA AI Taskforce](#), aims to reduce fear, shift perspective, and provide actionable guidance to help you confidently explore AI's potential in your practice.

The AI Task Force was created to provide practical guidance for a profession in transition. We are committed to helping navigate this moment with a clear view of both the challenges and the opportunities. The goal is to move forward with purpose, clarity, and the understanding that architects' professional judgment matters more than ever.

What Architects Bring That Goes Beyond the Tool

While AI is advancing rapidly, there are seven critical strengths architects bring to every project:

- 1. Translating client vision into reality:** Architects turn aspirations into buildable solutions by balancing design intent with feasibility and technical requirements.
- 2. Contextual intelligence:** They understand and respond to the unique needs of sites, communities, and users to create designs that truly fit their place and purpose.
- 3. Legal and professional authority:** Architects produce contract documents and drawings that have legal standing and professional weight.
- 4. System coordination:** They integrate complex building systems, ensuring all disciplines come together in a coherent design.

- 5. Construction oversight:** Architects safeguard quality and intent throughout the building process, monitoring progress from start to finish.
- 6. Ethical judgment:** They uphold the health, safety, and welfare of the public, making decisions where the answers are not always clear-cut.
- 7. Accountability:** Architects stand behind their work, taking responsibility for outcomes and maintaining trust with clients and communities.

While AI works on probability and precedent, architects work on understanding—an ability to synthesize context, human needs, and ethical considerations into meaningful design solutions. This deeper comprehension allows architects to navigate complexity and make decisions that go beyond what algorithms can predict at this time.

From Policy to Practice

Currently AI is effective at augmenting creative capabilities and handling repetitive, time-consuming tasks that consume professional time without drawing on professional judgment. The focus shifts to those areas that require more human expertise: contextual thinking, creative problem-solving, and the client and professional relationships that make good architecture possible.

Leading practices are already putting this into action. AI is accelerating early-stage concept iteration, allowing architects to co-create with clients through evidence-based design options and move from abstract ideas to tangible visualizations with greater speed and confidence. Firms are streamlining code research and documentation

checks, improving model coordination and clash detection, and automating repetitive drafting tasks, each freeing practitioners to spend more time on the work that requires their judgment.

Beyond individual tasks, some firms are going further by exploring AI-driven agents and searchable tools that capture and share best practices from past projects. When institutional knowledge is democratized in this way, it strengthens mentorship pathways, fosters collaboration across teams, and becomes a genuine competitive advantage.

Many practitioners have spent years in workflows that compress the time available for critical design thinking and client relationships. With AI taking on routine tasks, architects have the potential to reclaim more of that time for designing projects and working directly with clients—restoring the focus on what matters most to many of them.

For emerging professionals, this is both the most uncertain and the most interesting moment to enter the profession. Tasks that have historically anchored early-career learning -- drafting, documentation, and coordination, are changing or being automated. It also places a clear responsibility on firms, educators, and mentors to redesign academic pathways. Mentorship, judgment-building experiences, and deliberate exposure to the full arc of practice matter more now. The next generation of architects will not learn the profession the same way their predecessors did, but with the right decisions and investment from current leaders, students may learn it more deeply.

Although there is no crystal ball, as far as can be seen, the architect will remain the professional of record. Human oversight and professional accountability are the critical factors that make AI



useful and less risky. The firms that lean in and move forward most confidently with AI are already integrating and improving their business model. They are running controlled pilots, documenting what they learn, and building AI literacy as a team-wide investment.

AIA's Commitment and Next Steps

The AIA AI Task Force was convened to assist the profession through a moment of genuine transformation.

Building on the [Position Statement and Responsible Use Guidance](#) published in January 2026, the Task Force is developing a next wave of practical resources designed to meet members where they are in their AI journey. Coming soon is the AI Firm toolkit, an interactive resource that will allow you to assess your firm's current AI maturity level and receive tailored next steps, whether you are just starting with ad hoc experiments or moving toward a more integrated practice. In

addition, we are developing scenario-based guidance for navigating real practice situations, as well as expanding AI education to improve understanding and ethical awareness across all experience levels.

These conversations will also have a dedicated home at AIA26, where a [full-day AI Symposium in collaboration with the Technology in Architectural Practice Knowledge Community will bring members together to share what they are learning in practice.](#)

What guides all of this work is a commitment embrace that change that's underway, and practical in the resources we design for our firms. Your experiences in practice are what shape what we develop next. No matter how the tools evolve, architecture remains a human-centered discipline, grounded in purpose, shaped by values, and carried forward by those who choose to lead it.

Visit aia.org/resource-center/ai-task-force to access published resources, share feedback, or connect with the Task Force directly.



Out & About

EMERGING PROFESSIONALS HAPPY HOUR

New Park Brewing

March 31st

The Emerging Professional Knowledge Community kicked off the year with its first happy hour on March 31st at New Park Brewing in West Hartford. The event brought together emerging professionals from across the community for an evening of conversation, connection, and shared experiences in a relaxed setting.

Attendees had the opportunity to expand their networks, exchange ideas, and build meaningful



relationships outside of the traditional workplace environment. The casual atmosphere made it easy for participants to engage

with one another, fostering a strong sense of community and setting a positive tone for the year ahead.

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APR

20 Emerging Professionals Awards | Nominations Open

21 Small Firms Exchange (SFX) Meeting

24 Elizabeth Mills Brown Awards | Early Bird Registration Closes
Women in Architecture: Coffee Meetups

30 Committee on Design Presentation | Landscape as It Relates to Architecture

MAY

2 HisTOURy Tours | Colonials of Old Lyme: A Tour of Connecticut Historic Home Interiors

3 HisTOURy Tours | Colonial Homes of Westport and Weston: A Tour of Connecticut Historic Interiors

6 EDI Knowledge Community Meeting

7 Building Performance & Regulations (BP&R) Meeting

8 Perspective & Place: 2026 Women in Architecture Summit

11 Committee on the Environment (COTE) Meeting

12 Allied Advisory Meeting

13 Small Firms Exchange (SFX) Meeting

15 Emerging Professionals Awards | Nominations Close
Elizabeth Mills Brown Awards | Final Registration & Submission Closes

18 Design Awards | Registration Opens

19 Navigating the CT Residential Permitting Process

AIA CONNECTICUT CALENDAR

Series:	Scales	No.
Item Number:		
Product Name:		

2026 Women in Architecture Summit

HOSTED BY



Perspective & Place

KEYNOTE: BEKA STURGES, PRINCIPAL
REED-HILDERBRAND

PANEL: PERSPECTIVES ON DESIGN

INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP

PANEL: STORIES OF DESIGN

**MAY 8TH
ANTHONY'S OCEAN VIEW
NEW HAVEN, CT**

REGISTER BY MAY 1ST