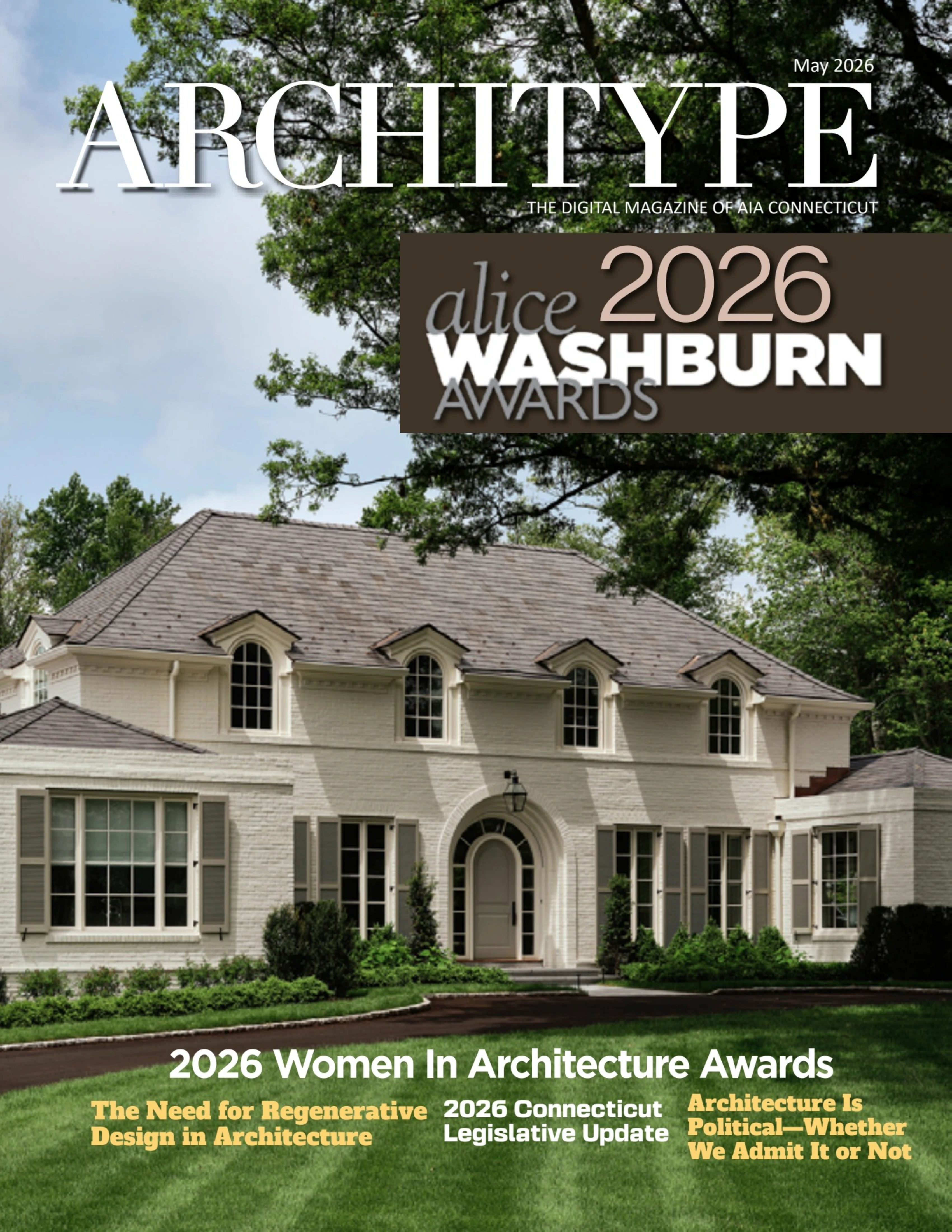


# ARCHITYPE

May 2026

THE DIGITAL MAGAZINE OF AIA CONNECTICUT

*alice* 2026  
**WASHBURN**  
AWARDS



## 2026 Women In Architecture Awards

**The Need for Regenerative  
Design in Architecture**

**2026 Connecticut  
Legislative Update**

**Architecture Is  
Political—Whether  
We Admit It or Not**





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PUBLISHED BY AIA CONNECTICUT

## EDITOR

Gina Calabro, Hon. AIA CT

## ART DIRECTOR

Anthony Calabro

## CONTRIBUTORS

F. Michael Ayles, FAIA, NCARB  
Illya Azaroff, FAIA  
Gina Calabro, Hon. AIA CT  
Duo Dickinson, FAIA  
Wanda Lau  
Martin C. Pedersen  
Alexander Soule  
Matthew Toddy, AIA  
Omarys Vasquez, AIA

## OFFICE

The District  
470 James Street, Suite 14  
New Haven, CT, 06513

[communications@aiact.org](mailto:communications@aiact.org)

## ON THE COVER

New Canaan Regency  
Burr Salvatore Architects  
*Photo: Read McKendree*

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# ARCHITYPE

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# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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**T**his month's issue highlights the powerful intersection of leadership, advocacy, and the evolving role of architecture in shaping our communities. Across the profession, architects are being called upon not only to design buildings, but also to help address broader challenges related to climate, equity, housing, and public policy.

We proudly recognize outstanding achievement through the Alice Washburn Awards and the Women in Architecture Awards, celebrating projects and individuals whose work and leadership continue to strengthen the profession and inspire future generations. Their contributions reflect the innovation and dedication that drive architecture forward.

This issue also explores the increasing importance of regenerative design and the responsibility architects have in creating healthier, more resilient communities. Moving beyond sustainability, regenerative design asks us to consider how the built environment can actively restore ecological systems and improve human well-being.

At the same time, architecture remains deeply connected to civic life. *Architecture Is Political—Whether We Admit It or Not*, highlights how the decisions architects make influence how communities grow, who has access to opportunity, and how public resources are prioritized. That connection is especially evident during the 2026 Connecticut Legislative Session, where key proposals affecting architecture, construction, housing, and small business continue to emerge.

Through our Government Affairs efforts, AIA Connecticut remains committed to advocating for policies that support the profession while strengthening the communities we serve. We encourage members to stay engaged and informed as these important conversations continue.

We are also excited to share highlights from the AIA Connecticut Women in Architecture Summit, which brought together leaders from across the profession for meaningful discussions on leadership, mentorship, and advancing opportunities within architecture. The energy and collaboration from this event reinforced the importance of creating inclusive pathways for the next generation of professionals.

Thank you for all that you do to strengthen our profession, support your communities, and inspire the future of architecture in Connecticut. Your leadership, creativity, and advocacy continue to make a lasting impact, and we are grateful to have you as part of the AIA Connecticut community.

Best,

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

Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT



A hand with light-colored nail polish points to a floor plan on a table. The floor plan shows several rooms with dimensions: 17.7, 11.2, 5.3, 5.8, and 5.5. There are also some smaller dimensions like 12.00 and 8.50. The background is a blurred image of a person's head and shoulders. Overlaid on the image are three color swatches from Sherwin-Williams: a teal one labeled 'SW 6760 Rivulet', an orange one labeled 'SW 6677 Goldenrod', and a red one labeled 'SW 6620 Rejuvenate'. The Sherwin-Williams logo is in the top right corner.

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# PRESIDENT'S COLUMN



**A**rtificial Intelligence (AI) is no longer a futuristic concept for the architecture profession. It is today's reality. Every single day, our inboxes and feeds are bombarded with a relentless stream of new AI tools, software updates, and training webinars. The sheer volume of information is overwhelming, making it incredibly difficult for even the most tech-savvy firms to keep pace. However, as architects, we cannot afford to stand on the sidelines or treat AI as a passing trend.



The velocity of this technological shift demands immediate attention and action. AI is rapidly redefining the mechanics of the design industry, from automating routine drafting tasks and optimizing zoning analysis to generating complex parametric iterations in seconds. Firms that actively establish AI implementation strategies today are unlocking unprecedented efficiencies and gaining a sharp competitive edge. Conversely, firms that delay adoption risk falling behind so far that catching up may soon become impossible. The gap between AI-integrated practices and traditional practices is widening at an exponential rate.

For architects, this is not a call to replace human creativity, but a mandate to augment it. AI cannot replicate our design intuition, our understanding of local communities, or your relationship with clients. What it can do is strip away time-consuming administrative and repetitive tasks, liberating you to focus on the core artistry and problem-solving of architecture.

As a chapter, AIA Connecticut is committed to helping us navigate this dense landscape. We are actively working to structure the AI "noise" into actionable educational resources. But the internal shift must start within your office walls. I urge every principal, partner, and sole practitioner to dedicate time this month to evaluate your current workflow and appoint an AI champion in your office. Test a single tool on a non-critical phase of a project. Draft a clear AI policy for technological adoption.

The future of architecture is being rewritten in real-time. Let us approach this disruption not with hesitation, but with the urgency and leadership that defines Connecticut's architectural community. We must evolve our practices immediately to ensure our profession remains vital, resilient, and forward-thinking.

If you think AI may have composed this column, you would be correct ...with some refined edits, of course. Always proof AI work ... it can hallucinate (I'll let you look that up).

With admiration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "F. Michael Ayles".

F. Michael Ayles, FAIA, NCARB

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# alice 2026 WASHBURN AWARDS

Alice Washburn was a pioneering American residential designer and builder whose work helped shape the character of early twentieth century New England homes. Active primarily in Connecticut during the 1920s, Washburn became known for creating houses that blend traditional architectural styles with practical, livable floor plans suited to modern family life. Remarkably, she achieved professional success as a self-taught designer at a time when architecture and construction were overwhelmingly male professions.

Washburn specialized in Colonial Revival and English-inspired homes, designing residences that balanced elegance, comfort, and craftsmanship. Her work demonstrated a deep understanding of proportion, detail, and the relationship

## EXCELLENCE New Construction

### **New Canaan Regency Burr Salvatore Architects**

Designed for empty-nester clients, this new construction home combines timeless traditional architecture with refined contemporary finishes. Inspired by 1920s precedents, the exterior features painted brick parapets, engaged dormers, and richly detailed masonry, including jack arches, dentils, and belt courses. Inside, custom millwork, limestone mantels, and subtle Art Deco motifs create warmth and sophistication. A dramatic bridge suspended by steel rods overlooks the family room, adding sculptural interest and balancing the scale of the space.



At the heart of the home, a grand oak tree anchors the design with shade and a sense of permanence. Thoughtful detailing, carefully selected materials, and historical references result in a residence that feels both enduring and modern.

*Jurors praised the home's elegant composition, refined proportions, and restrained Art Deco detailing, noting its sophisticated yet understated character.*





between architecture and daily living. She often emphasized welcoming interiors, functional circulation, and thoughtful placement of windows and rooms to maximize light and usability. Many of her homes were published in popular plan books and magazines, helping her ideas reach a broad audience across the Northeast.

The 2026 Alice Washburn Awards honor this legacy by recognizing excellence in traditional residential design that thoughtfully adapts historic architectural principles to contemporary lifestyles. Named in her honor, the awards celebrate architects and designers who continue Washburn's commitment to beauty, functionality, and enduring craftsmanship while addressing the evolving needs of twenty-first century living.



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Priestley + Associates  
Architecture Inc.  
Rockport, Maine



David G. Johnson, AIA  
Principal  
Skaala Architecture, LLC  
Camden, Maine



Robert Tucker, AIA  
Principal  
Huestis Tucker Architects  
Woodbridge, Connecticut

## EXCELLENCE Accessory Buildings



Photo: ©Neil Landino Photography

### **A Meadow Retreat** **Vicente-Burin** **Architects**

Tucked into the northeast corner of an eight-acre estate, this former shed has been thoughtfully transformed into a charming studio retreat. Once a neglected outbuilding was used for storage and even a chicken coop, the structure was reimagined rather than demolished. Subtle yet impactful design interventions, including a gracefully curved roofline, decorative brackets, and lattice detailing, evoke the character of a romantic garden cottage. A cupola nods to its past,

while new windows frame views of the surrounding landscape. Inside, a simple, open plan supports flexible use as a pottery studio and quiet workspace, now one of the property's most cherished spaces.



Jurors praised the project's thoughtful adaptive reuse, refined detailing, and seamless integration *into the landscape*.



## EXCELLENCE

### Accessory Buildings

#### **Bank Barn** **Reese Owens** **Architects**

A once-dilapidated red barn, long a local landmark in this rural northwest hills community, has been carefully restored and reimagined as a space for gathering and recreation. Preserving its iconic profile, the project rebuilt the foundation and incorporated salvaged and reclaimed timber framing.

Thoughtful interventions, including exposed tie-rods, create an open interior while maintaining the barn's character. Original openings now frame views of the surrounding landscape, connecting indoors and out. Additions are minimal, with a porch and fireplace complementing the structure.

The result honors the site's agricultural heritage while adapting the barn for contemporary family life and year-round enjoyment.

*Jurors praised the project's inventive preservation approach, clear parti, and thoughtful detailing that preserves the barn's character*



Photo: ©Michael Biondo





## MERIT New Construction

### **143 Rowayton Beinfeld Architecture**

143 Rowayton Avenue is a thoughtfully designed infill project that reinforces the charm of Rowayton, Connecticut, a historic coastal village once known for its oystering industry. The two-and-a-half-story building houses four residential condominiums and fills a gap in the downtown

streetscape, employing simple forms, traditional proportions, and materials inspired by New England coastal architecture. The waterside façade opens to expansive views of the Five Mile River, evoking the boat sheds that once lined the shoreline. This project continues our long-standing commitment to shaping

Rowayton Village with designs that honor the history, character, and enduring spirit of the region.

*Jurors praised the project for its thoughtful front elevation, effective site use, and water-facing façade that evokes Rowayton's mercantile waterfront character, noting its well-scaled massing.*



## MERIT New Construction

### **Mountain Retreat Christian Rae Studio**

This 1917 Norfolk home by Alfredo Taylor was reimagined to honor its architectural heritage while supporting modern family living. The open first floor flows to a sweeping covered rear porch, three-season screened porch, and tennis court views. A mid-level reading nook and playful “Monkey Bar” add character,

while the kitchen, dining, and living areas support seamless entertaining. Upstairs, the layout mirrors Taylor’s original plan, with a private primary suite and additional bedrooms. The lower level offers a game room, gym, guest suite, and covered porch. Natural wood, stone, and integrated lighting create a

timeless, energy-efficient shingle-style home in harmony with Norfolk’s legacy.

*Jurors commended the project for its well-proportioned, handsome design, noting thoughtful gestures, detailed rafter tails, and refined exterior detailing.*





## MERIT Accessory Buildings

### Outdoor Living Complex Saniee Architects LLC

This pool house creates a serene, wellness-focused retreat centered on outdoor living. Organized around an Olympic-sized pool, the design uses clear axes to structure movement and views, linking a primary pavilion, lounge, and surrounding amenities. The main pool house features a retractable facade, seamlessly

connecting interior spaces such as a sauna, plunge pool, and massage suite to the landscape. Perimeter elements, including a fire pit, outdoor kitchen, and dining area, support recreation and relaxation. Blending modern and traditional forms, the project encourages a nature-oriented lifestyle, fostering daily

connection to the outdoors while enhancing well-being through thoughtful design.

*Jurors praised the project's contemporary interpretation of classical design, highlighting its refined detailing and thoughtful material use within a compact, well-composed space.*



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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](https://marvin.com/architects)



Featured Collection: Marvin Ultimate™

©2024 Marvin Window and Cedar Co., LLC.



Citation for  
respecting the  
original house in  
terms of the  
massing of the  
addition

## **Connecticut Captains Cottage J.P. Franzen Associates, Architects**

The 1843 Captain Ward Bulkley House in Southport, Connecticut, was thoughtfully rehabilitated and modestly expanded to meet the needs of a growing family while preserving its historic character. Originally a simple saltbox, the home had grown into a sprawling horseshoe layout. Renovation focused on restoring



Photo: ©Neil Landino Photography

the core, updating key rooms with repaired millwork, plaster finishes, and modern systems, and improving flow with minimal additions—a courtyard-facing porch and breezeway connecting the garage to the cabana. Structural repairs, insulation, and energy-efficient windows were integrated subtly, maintaining

the original massing. The result blends historic preservation with contemporary living, honoring the house's legacy while enhancing functionality and comfort.

*Jurors recognized the project for respecting the original house, maintaining its character and massing while thoughtfully navigating historic district constraints.*

Citation for  
preservation of the  
house and honoring  
it with the forms  
of the new  
construction

## **Saltbox Farm Haver & Skolnick Architects**

Built in 1770, this Sandy Hook, Connecticut, farmhouse was carefully restored to reveal its original saltbox profile, long hidden by unsympathetic additions. The project began by removing these later additions, repairing decayed timbers, and rebuilding the massive center chimney with salvaged



Photo: ©Robert Benson Photography

materials. A large, sympathetic addition accommodates the owners' extended family while preserving the prominence of the historic house. Designed as a series of smaller volumes, the addition echoes the evolution of a traditional home, using local materials and clean details. Salvaged timbers, wide-board

floors, and concealed modern systems celebrate the past while supporting contemporary family living.

*Jurors praised the project's restraint and clarity and the design was recognized for honoring and preserving the original house while integrating new construction.*



# 2026 Women in Architecture

The 2026 Women in Architecture Awards celebrate the achievements of licensed women architects within AIA Connecticut who are shaping the future of the profession through outstanding design, leadership, and advocacy. These awards honor individuals who demonstrate excellence in architecture while championing equitable and sustainable practices that strengthen both the built environment and the architectural community.

Recipients of the Women in Architecture Awards exemplify innovation, mentorship, and service, making meaningful contributions to the industry and inspiring the next generation of architects. Through their work, they help advance a more inclusive and resilient profession while elevating the quality and impact of architecture across Connecticut and beyond.

Thank you to the **2026 Jurors:**



**E.B. Min, AIA**  
Founder and Principal  
[Min Design](#)  
*San Francisco, California*



**Kim Yao, FAIA**  
Principal  
[Architecture Research Office](#)  
*Brooklyn, New York*



**Monica Blasko, AIA, NCIDQ**  
Senior Project Architect  
[Desmone](#)  
*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

## 2026 Awardees



### **Melinda Marlén Agron, AIA, NOMA, LEED GA** *Newman Architects*

Melinda Marlén Agron, AIA, NOMA, LEED GA, is Principal and Chief Operating Officer at Newman Architects in New Haven. Since joining the firm in 2018, she has played a transformative role in advancing office culture, operations, and professional development while helping position the firm for long-term success. Her leadership has been instrumental in Newman receiving the AIA New England Emerging Professional Friendly Firm Award for four consecutive years.

Melinda led the redefinition of the firm's mission, vision, and values and introduced initiatives that support mentorship, licensure, collaboration, and knowledge sharing across the practice. She has also guided operational restructuring, emphasizing

data-driven decision making, sustainability leadership, and a more knowledge-centered organizational model.

Committed to supporting emerging professionals, Melinda remains active in academia through her role as Instructor of Architectural Practice and Management at the Yale School of Architecture. She also serves on the Board of the Jewish Community Center of Greater New Haven and is Co-Chair of the AIA Women in Architecture Committee.

Through her leadership, Melinda has helped shape Newman into a collaborative, forward-thinking practice that values innovation, professional growth, and design excellence.



# Architecture Awards



## Jenna McClure, AIA, NOMA, LEED AP

***Amenta Emma Architects***

Jenna McClure's 23-year career in architecture reflects a deep commitment to design excellence, environmental responsibility, and social equity. As Principal and Director of Personnel at Amenta Emma Architects, she leads with the belief that sustainable buildings must also support the well-being of the people who use them. Her portfolio includes higher education and civic projects such as the Connecticut State Office Building, Housatonic Community College Lafayette Hall, and the University of Connecticut School of Nursing building.

In 2020, Jenna co-founded Amenta Emma's Justice, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (JEDI+B) Committee, recognizing the need to create more equitable

pathways for advancement within the profession. Under her leadership, the firm has earned AIA Connecticut JEDI recognition for four consecutive years, including Awards of Excellence in 2024 and 2025.

As the firm's first female Principal, Jenna is a dedicated mentor and advocate for emerging professionals through organizations including CREW Network, PWC Connecticut, and ACE Mentoring. Her leadership has strengthened both the culture of her firm and the broader architectural community, demonstrating the powerful connection between thoughtful design, inclusive practice, and meaningful professional impact.

“

Recipients of the Women in Architecture Awards exemplify innovation, mentorship, and service, making meaningful contributions to the industry and inspiring the next generation of architects.

”





# From Vision to **IMPACT**

## *AIA Connecticut Women in Architecture Summit*

On May 8, architects, designers, engineers, contractors, educators, and students gathered in New Haven for the AIA Connecticut Women in Architecture Summit, *From Vision to Impact*, an inspiring day dedicated to exploring the evolving business of architecture and the future of professional practice.

Curated by the Women in Architecture Committee, the summit highlighted female leadership, design excellence, and the power of mentorship and collaboration across all stages of the profession. The event welcomed a dynamic mix of attendees — from architecture students and emerging professionals to sole practitioners and firm principals, creating an environment rich in conversation, shared experience, and meaningful connection.

The summit focused on the full arc of architectural practice, offering candid discussions, practical insight, and skill-building opportunities designed to support professionals navigating a rapidly changing industry. Throughout the day, speakers and panelists addressed topics ranging from leadership development and project management to sustainable business practices and creating more inclusive pathways within the AEC industry.

The keynote, *Holding In Common - Landscape as a Medium for Shared Experience*, was delivered by Beka Sturges, ASLA, LEED AP, Partner and Principal at Reed Hilderbrand explored how landscape architecture works in dialogue with architecture to shape resilient and inclusive environments. Through projects in Connecticut and beyond, attendees examined

how thoughtful landscape design can expand access, support evolving institutions, and protect natural systems while strengthening community connection.

Panel discussions throughout the summit highlighted the collaborative nature of design and the many voices that shape the built environment. The morning panel, *Perspectives on Design: Roles Across the Project* explored how planners, developers, public officials, and institutional leaders influence project outcomes beyond the architect's role alone. Through candid conversation, panelists discussed collaboration, decision-making, and the integration of equity, access, and community needs into design processes. The panel featured Vincencia "Vee" Adusei of President and Founder of VASE Construction, Laura Brown, AICP, CECd, Executive





## it Brings Together Leaders Across the Profession

Director of New Haven's City Plan Department: Katherine LoBalbo, AIA, Director of School Construction for the City of Stamford; and Alexandra Daum, Yale University's Associate Vice President for New Haven Partnerships and Development and was moderated by Amanda Martocchio, AIA, Founder of Martocchio Architecture.

Attendees also participated in an interactive workshop focused on early-career development in architecture. Facilitated by Nancy Alexander, MBA MA CMF, the session explored self-advocacy, career navigation, and mentorship while also examining how firms can better support and retain diverse talent through inclusive, design-driven workplace environments.

The afternoon concluded with the panel, *Stories of Design: Inspiring Projects Across All Scales*, which

examined how design thinking shifts from small interventions to large master plans. Through a range of project examples, panelists discussed strategies for navigating complexity, collaborating with stakeholders, and maintaining design excellence regardless of project scale. The panel featured Ming Thompson, AIA, of Cho Thompson, Atelier, Nancy Clayton, AIA of Pickard Chilton Architects, Corporate Architect Tina Facos-Casolo, AIA, and Laura Gilmore, AIA of Newman Architects, and was moderated by Michael Tyre, AIA, of Amenta Emma Architects.

The summit underscored the growing momentum behind conversations centered on equity, leadership, and innovation within architecture and the broader AEC community. By fostering dialogue between generations and dis-

ciplines, the event encouraged attendees to think expansively about the future of practice while building connections that will continue beyond the summit itself.

Open to professionals of all genders and experience levels, the Women in Architecture Summit demonstrated that the future of architecture is strengthened when diverse perspectives, experiences, and leadership styles are welcomed to the table.

As the profession continues to evolve, events like *From Vision to Impact* serve as important reminders that meaningful change happens through collaboration, mentorship, and a collective commitment to shaping a more inclusive and impactful future for design.





# The Need for Regenerative Design in Architecture

*By Wanda Lau*

The goalposts are always moving in architecture, a profession whose potential and impact affect human health and well-being, community dynamics, economic prosperity, biodiversity, climate change, and more. Recently, the term “regenerative” has emerged in the industry lexicon, raising questions on its meaning and longevity as part of a line of other movements, such as sustainability, net zero, and social equity.

Regenerative design is a natural evolution of those movements and more, says AIA 2026 President Illya Azaroff, FAIA. “It asks, ‘Can a

project actively improve the living systems that it touches?’ It asks us to move beyond the framework of mitigation and more into the idea of restoration and healing in a holistic way.”

The ideal outcome of regenerative design sounds simple but achieving it is complex. Successful projects look past their site boundaries to uplift surrounding areas, natural ecosystems, local workforces, supply chains, and more. As such, International Living Future Institute CEO Lindsay Baker considers “regenerative” more as an act than a modifier.

“To understand regeneration, or regenerative design, is to remember that to have no impact on a person is more straightforward than to heal a person,” she says. The latter takes thorough understanding, commitment, and follow-through—and the results are open-ended. “You are engaged in regeneration when it starts to work outside of your intentions.”

## **Regenerative design on paper**

This year, AIA is developing educational resources on regenerative design and updating its Framework for Design Excellence to reference



the topic directly. The process is ongoing, but **Paolo Campos, AIA**, tentatively sees five pillars in a regenerative project. Campos is Connecticut's representative on the AIA Strategic Council, chair of AIA's regenerative design workgroup, and a principal at Patriquin Architects.

Regarding the first and second pillars, Campos says a regenerative project is "place-based but also considers far-reaching outcomes." He continues: "The key recognition is that the planet, ecosystems, and human communities are linked together." Its design is driven by what exists in the unique "spirit of a place," including ecological and cultural conditions.

Third, Campos says, a project should maximize its carrying capacity, or ability to support its site and beyond in a sustainable manner. For example, it might produce renewable energy through photovoltaic panels or capture and treat stormwater.

Next, a project should renew natural processes rather than interrupt or displace them. "What are ways that we can enhance natural water cycles and enrich biodiversity?" Campos says. "Again, it's about generation of more than what is consumed."

Lastly, a project should spark continued discussion on its impact and areas for improvement. Technology is readily available to collect post-occupancy data and information from myriad sources. "Buildings have a long lifespan, but they can be flexible and [serve] as laboratories for improving design practice, construction practice, and end user practice," Campos says.

### **Regeneration in practice**

As with sustainability, many firms have been practicing regenerative design before the term was trending. Brooklyn, New York-based +LAB Architect, led by founding director Azaroff, and a team of multidisciplinary experts are creating a resilience hub for indigenous community members on the north shore of Oahu, Hawaii, a geographically isolated area prone to climate change-related flooding and storm surges.

The team approached the five-acre site with the goal of restoring a larger ecosystem. Agroforestry practices implemented in the surrounding watershed and upland forest will help address food shortages. A portion of the land will be replanted with native species to support a culture steeped in traditional medicine knowledge. After learning that many younger residents leave the area for educational and employment opportunities, the team partnered with a nearby university to add vocational and after-school training programs in the hub to bolster the local workforce.

In Portland, Ore., Bora Architects has embarked on several regenerative projects, such as the Vernier Science Center at Portland State University, says sustainability director Corey Squire, AIA. (Squire is also an AIA Strategic Council at-large representative working on updating the Framework for Design Excellence to highlight regenerative strategies.) The team took care to minimize the embodied and operational carbon of the additive reuse project, improve accessibility for the campus community, and integrate design elements from historically underrepresented cultures to attract more students into the STEM fields.



Regenerative design teams often include experts not traditionally involved in the design process. Azaroff has brought community leaders, historians, archaeologists, reef restorers, and fishing industry retirees to project meetings. "That local knowledge has to become part of your team," he says. Architects can use their listening superpowers to

**To understand regeneration, or regenerative design, is to remember that to have no impact on a person is more straightforward than to heal a person.**

guide stakeholders with differing priorities, such as developers and end users, to co-author ideas.

Having multiple perspectives at the table also helps validate project objectives, Squire says.

"When we do set goals, we do have to go back to

see how we did ... and make sure that we're continuing to improve." For example, Bora collects two years' worth of utility bills from completed projects and conducts post-occupancy surveys. "We're able to get a lot of information for a pretty minimal time investment."



### Proactive, not reactive

Before firms rush to adopt “regenerative design” into their marketing materials, they should consider their intention and capabilities. “It’s OK to say that your firm is enthusiastic about the idea of regenerative design and that you want to learn and engage more,” Baker says. “That in and of itself has value. But then to say that you are a regenerative firm or that you rename your sustainability team ‘regenerative’—that’s really [saying] you are going out there and regenerating things. That’s a bolder statement.”

A good way to assess credibility is to ask who in the firm has been trained in aspects of regeneration, Baker recommends. Azaroff suggests reviewing whether an organization’s projects have not only reduced their environmental impact but also restored their place, ecology, culture, and community.

If the answer is yes, Campos wants to hear about it: “Case studies of what people have done before are one of the best ways for us to learn.”

### Actionable guidance

In its current form, the AIA Framework for Design Excellence offers a steppingstone toward regenerative design, which extends the framework’s principles “toward a logical conclusion that incorporates people, communities, and ecology,” Squire notes. “The framework will continue to be the gold standard of what good design looks like from the perspective of the AIA [and offer] a great way of incorporating these ideas into their practice.”

In June, the AIA Conference on Architecture in San Diego will offer educational sessions on regeneration and feature experts active in its practice, Azaroff says. AIA is also developing a webinar series on regenerative design fundamentals, practices,

and conversations with clients, and it is planning an industry summit on the topic this fall.

Azaroff highlights resources from other countries and sectors, including Singapore’s Green Plan, the Capital Institute’s publications on regenerative economics, and Living Future’s continuing education courses and accreditation program. “Our daily work is to try and support people in their regenerative design journey,” Baker says. “We do that in a variety of ways, from education to events to community, to interventions around how we make products, and interventions in terms of how we make buildings.”

Advancements in technology can help communicate the benefits of regenerative design to clients and anyone interested, Campos says. For example, architects can point to how much carbon is sequestered in mass-timber construction. “Now more than ever, we are positioned as an industry to speak intelligently—and with the evidence behind it,” he says.

The timing couldn’t be better. “We are seriously in trouble as a planet,” Azaroff says, and every industry has to do more than be neutral in its actions. “Banking and finance recognize it. Governing bodies are recognizing it. We as architects need to take a leadership role to say we do recognize it.”

*Wanda Lau is a freelance writer covering architecture and design and a former editor of ARCHITECT magazine. She lives outside Chicago.*

The key recognition is that the planet, ecosystems, and human communities are linked together. Its design is driven by what exists in the unique spirit of a place.”





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# 2026 Connecticut Legislative Session

## *Key Impacts on Architecture, Construction, Housing, and Small Business*

By Gina Calabro, Hon. AIACT

**T**he 2026 Connecticut General Assembly session concluded on May 6 after a fast-moving thirteen-week legislative period marked by extensive debate over housing production, building code modernization, renewable energy policy, consumer privacy protections, artificial intelligence regulation, workforce development, and infrastructure investment. While many of the most ambitious housing and zoning reforms ultimately failed to secure final passage, the session still produced several consequential laws that will shape Connecticut's regulatory and development landscape in the years ahead.

One of the most significant and controversial outcomes of the session for architects, engineers, contractors, developers, and municipal officials was the advancement of major building code legislation.

**Senate Bill 277** passed both chambers and implemented recommendations from the Department of Administrative Services concerning the State Building Code and Fire Safety Code. The legislation addressed building code administration, accessibility standards, fire marshal qualifications, reporting obligations, and code enforcement procedures.

Although SB 277 was introduced as a technical code modernization measure, it quickly became part



of a much larger political debate surrounding housing production, development feasibility, and public safety. Connecticut lawmakers, housing advocates, fire officials, municipal leaders, and developers sharply disagreed over whether increasingly stringent fire and building code requirements could unintentionally hinder the state's ability to address its ongoing housing shortage.

One of the most contentious issues involved proposed fire access road standards and emergency access requirements for multifamily developments. Fire officials argued that wider access clearances and updated fire apparatus standards were necessary to accommodate modern firefighting equipment and improve emergency response capabilities. Housing advocates and many developers, however, warned that additional dimensional requirements could make projects financially unworkable on smaller or irregular urban sites where Connecticut has been attempting to encourage higher-density and "missing middle" housing development. Critics also raised concerns about expanding local discretion for fire officials over site access determinations, arguing that inconsistent interpretations could delay or complicate project approvals.

The debate surrounding **SB 277** was further intensified by lingering disputes from earlier legislative battles over single-stair apartment construction proposals. In prior





sessions, Connecticut considered allowing certain multifamily buildings to utilize a single exit stairway rather than the traditional two-stair configuration, a reform strongly supported by housing advocates seeking to lower construction costs and improve development flexibility. Fire service organizations strongly opposed the proposal, citing occupant safety and emergency response concerns. Although the single-stair proposal was ultimately removed, the broader disagreement left significant tension between housing production advocates and fire safety officials that carried directly into the 2026 code modernization discussions.

As a result, SB 277 underwent numerous amendments and extensive negotiations throughout the session as lawmakers attempted to balance competing priorities: increasing housing production while preserving stringent life-safety standards. Many of the amendments sought

to clarify enforcement authority, refine administrative procedures, address accessibility provisions, and modify portions of the proposed fire access requirements in response to stakeholder concerns.

**House Bill 5401** also passed during the session and further advanced the state's broader building code modernization efforts. The legislation revised portions of the State Building Code, the State Fire Prevention Code, and the Fire Safety Code. It introduced changes affecting permitting standards, inspection procedures, enforcement protocols, and compliance requirements for construction professionals. Together, SB 277 and HB 5401 signal Connecticut's continued emphasis on updating and streamlining its construction regulatory systems while strengthening safety and oversight standards.

The 2026 session also reflected growing legislative attention

toward consumer privacy, artificial intelligence, and digital safety regulation. **Senate Bill 4** expanded Connecticut's existing consumer privacy framework by strengthening consumer data rights, increasing business compliance obligations, and enhancing privacy enforcement mechanisms. The legislation carries implications for architecture firms, contractors, and small businesses that maintain digital client records, employee information, or online marketing systems.

**Senate Bill 5** further addressed online platform accountability and AI transparency by establishing new digital safety protections and consumer safeguards related to online operations. As businesses increasingly rely on AI-enabled systems, automated communications, and digital marketing platforms, the bill introduces new considerations surrounding compliance, disclosure, and operational



# “ Senate Bill 277 passed both chambers and implemented recommendations from the Department of Administrative Services concerning the State Building Code and Fire Safety Code.”

oversight. Connecticut’s movement into AI governance and digital regulation reflects a broader national trend toward increased scrutiny of emerging technologies and data management practices.

In addition, **Senate Bill 346** modified the Governor’s Workforce Council and may help shape future skilled labor initiatives, apprenticeship opportunities, and workforce training programs tied to the construction industry and broader economic sectors. As Connecticut continues to confront labor shortages in construction and the trades, workforce development remains a critical area of long-term policy focus.

Renewable energy and sustainability policy remained another central theme throughout the legislative session. **House Bill 5340** passed and addressed renewable power generation policy, with implications for renewable energy deployment, electrification strategies, sustainability planning, and future energy infrastructure investment. The legislation reinforces Connecticut’s continued commitment to clean energy development and long-term decarbonization goals, both of which are expected to increasingly influence construction standards, infrastructure planning, and real estate development practices.

Despite the passage of several major bills, many of the session’s most closely watched housing and zoning proposals failed to advance before adjournment. Connecticut lawmakers introduced a substantial number of bills aimed at increasing housing production, expanding affordable housing opportunities, reforming zoning barriers, encouraging adaptive reuse, and promoting accessory dwelling units. Most stalled in committee or failed to secure final passage through both chambers.

Several climate resilience and environmental proposals also failed to pass during the session. These included a proposed constitutional environmental rights amendment, extreme weather preparedness requirements, streamlined solar permitting reforms, municipal electric aggregation legislation, and broader climate superfund proposals. Although unsuccessful this year, the introduction and debate surrounding these proposals suggest that climate adaptation, sustainability policy, and technology regulation will remain high priorities in future legislative sessions.

A number of education, infrastructure, and state funding measures also failed to gain final approval, including proposals related to state bonding adjustments, school construction grant commitments, municipal reimbursement programs, façade improvement bonding, and revisions to the state’s education funding formula.

For another consecutive session, **the association health plans bill** — which would have allowed trade groups to offer small business members access to more affordable, self-funded health coverage, failed to advance out of committee. This is a significant disappointment. Small employers are being squeezed by healthcare costs that continue to outpace inflation.

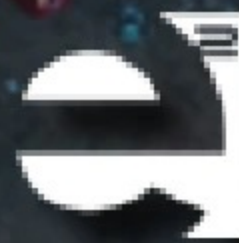
While many transformative housing and climate initiatives did not ultimately pass, the volume and scope of legislation introduced this year indicate that these issues will continue to dominate Connecticut policymaking in future sessions. +





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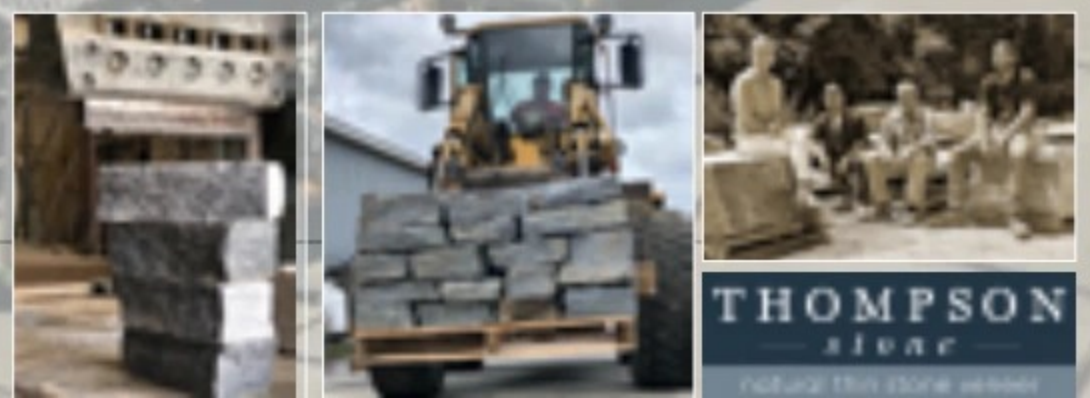
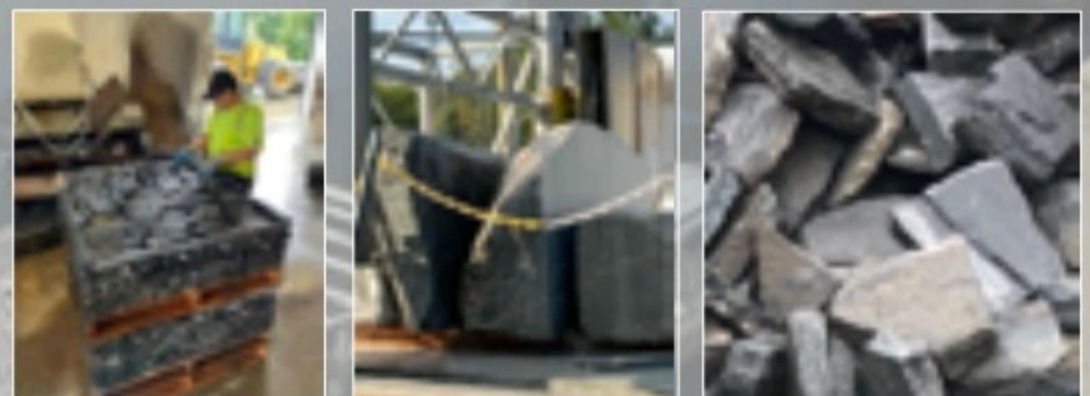
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# Architecture Is Political—Whether We Admit It or Not

by Omarys Vasquez, AIA

A respected colleague once told me, with the calm certainty of someone who had spent decades shaping the built environment, “Architecture isn’t political.”

It is a lovely sentiment. It is also, in my view, profoundly untrue.

Architecture may begin with sketch paper and imagination, but it is realized through a framework of public policy. Every wall we draw, every stair we dimension, every window we orient toward the morning sun exists because a network of laws, regulations, budgets, and societal values permits it to exist. Buildings do not rise in a vacuum. They rise in the midst of democracy.

And democracy, as we know, is gloriously, frustratingly, and inevitably political.

## The Invisible Hand Behind Every Building

Architecture is often romanticized as a discipline of artistry and innovation. We imagine charcoal sketches pinned to studio walls, dramatic models under tracing paper, and those magical moments when design and purpose align.

And yes, this may be true for many; but behind every successful project is a quieter cast of contributors: building codes, zoning regulations, accessibility standards, historic preservation requirements, energy mandates, public hearings, legislative acts, and community input.

These forces shape the boundaries within which creativity flourishes.

The width of a corridor, the slope of a ramp, the number of exits, the placement of an accessory dwelling unit, the percentage of EV-capable parking spaces—none of these decisions are purely technical. They reflect public priorities.

What do we value? Who do we protect? How do we live together? Those are political questions.

## When Style Becomes Statute

Occasionally, politics reaches beyond safety and land use and steps directly into design expression. One notable example was the 2020 executive order issued by President Donald Trump, which sought to promote classical and traditional architectural styles for federal buildings. While the order was later rescinded, it sparked a meaningful national conversation: Should government prescribe what architecture should look like?

Architecture has always evolved through experimentation and cultural exchange. Gothic cathedrals, Art Deco towers, Brutalist civic centers, and contemporary sustainable buildings all tell stories about the eras that produced them.

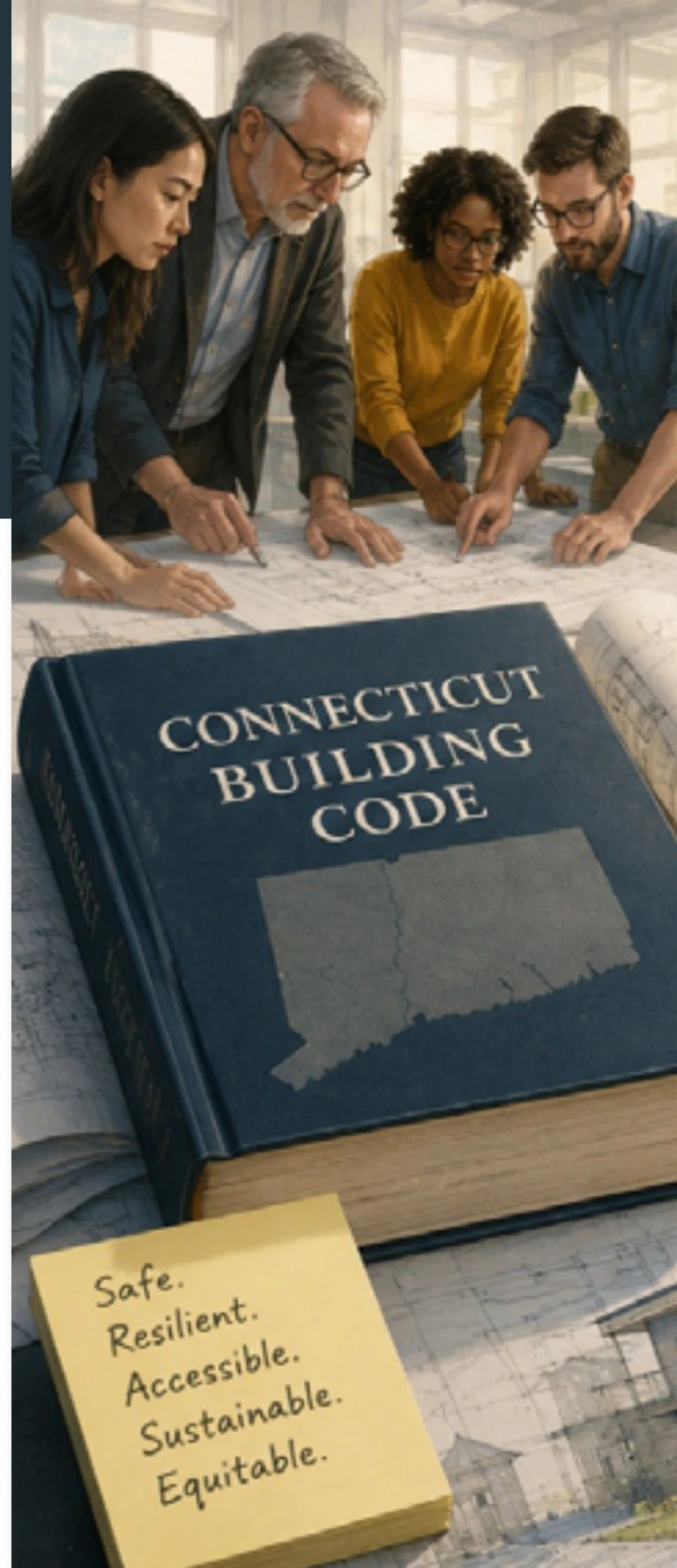
To legislate a singular aesthetic would be like requiring every poem to rhyme or every symphony to end in the same key. The beauty of architecture lies in

its capacity to respond uniquely to place, purpose, and people.

Here in Connecticut, recent legislative action offers a timely reminder that building codes are not static technical manuals—they are public policy in bound form.

## Code Adoption Update

The next editions of the Connecticut State Building Code, State Fire Safety Code, and State Fire Prevention Code were originally anticipated to take effect on July 1, 2026, but





Architecture  
is not neutral.  
It is shaped by  
policy.

-  HOUSING CHOICE
-  SAFETY
-  SUSTAINABILITY
-  ACCESSIBILITY
-  COMMUNITY



final approval by the Legislative Regulation Review Committee remains pending. As a result, the effective date may be delayed.

For architects and designers, this is more than a date on the calendar. It affects which code edition governs active projects and influences design decisions already underway.

Fast forward, after this current code adoption, Public Act 26-58 extended Connecticut's building and fire code adoption cycle from 18 months to 24 months and

effectively allows the state to skip an interim update cycle between the 2024 and 2030 model codes.

To some, this may sound like a procedural footnote. To those of us in design and code administration, it has meaningful implications. New provisions may take longer to reach practice. Regulatory stability may increase. Training and implementation schedules shift. Emerging safety and sustainability measures may be delayed.

This is not merely administrative housekeeping. It is a policy choice balancing consistency, cost, and innovation.

### **Politics in Service of Good Design**

Politics is not inherently restrictive. Sometimes, it opens doors—quite literally, like accessory dwelling units and the evolving American dream.

Public Act 26-7 revises statutory language affecting accessory dwelling units (ADUs), including





utility connection requirements. ADUs can support: Aging in place, multigenerational living, housing flexibility, rental income, and more attainable homeownership.

In a housing market where affordability often feels out of reach, ADUs offer a practical and compassionate response. A small apartment over a garage may not seem revolutionary, but for many families it represents independence, dignity, and opportunity. That, too, is architecture shaped by public policy.

Several other 2026 measures may influence the design and construction community in Connecticut are Public Act 26-63 (Electric vehicle infrastructure requirements) for certain new developments and HB-5340 (Portable “balcony solar” systems) prompting future code consideration and automated residential solar permitting, planned for implementation by July 1, 2028.

Each act reflects societal priorities that ultimately manifest in the built environment.

## **Architecture is a Public Act of Hope.**

Architecture is an intricate weaving of art and science. It is aesthetics and function. Poetry and practicality. Dream and discipline. It must be equitable. It must withstand the effects of climate change. It must protect occupants from fire and intrusion. It must support accessibility, security, and public welfare.

When successful, all of this effort becomes nearly invisible. A well-designed building does not announce the hours spent coordinating exits, energy calculations, structural loads, or stakeholder concerns. Instead, it simply feels right. It offers comfort. It inspires belonging. It creates safety. It makes us feel, perhaps for a moment, at home.

The building code development process is entirely public. The Connecticut State Building Code is not written by one office, one committee, or one official. It is written by all of us. Architects. Designers. Builders. Code officials. Fire service professionals. Manufacturers. Advocates. Residents.

These are your codes. Not mine. Not Codes and Standards. Not the State Building Inspector’s. Not the State Fire Marshal’s. Ours. And your voice matters.

When you submit a proposal, attend a hearing, provide testimony, or offer constructive feedback, you help shape the future of our communities. When you remain silent, the process moves forward without your perspective. Silence, in many ways, is acceptance.

Knowledge is power. A single informed voice can spark meaningful change. A chorus of thoughtful voices can shape a state. This is your profession. Your state. Your home.

Whether through legislation, local zoning hearings, or model code development, architecture is influenced by those who choose to participate. So, the next time someone says, “Architecture isn’t political,” smile and think of the stair width, the ADU, the EV charging space, the code cycle, and the countless decisions that quietly shape the places where we live.

Architecture is political. And that is not a flaw. It is a reminder that design, at its best, is a public act of hope.



## The Rise—and Retreat—of the Single-Exit Building

A particularly vivid example of architecture's relationship with politics is the recent debate over single-exit apartment buildings.

In recent years, a growing movement across the country advocated for allowing taller residential buildings with only one exit stairway under certain conditions. Proponents argued that this approach could unlock more efficient floor plans, support smaller urban infill sites, and increase housing production while still maintaining acceptable life safety protections. The idea gained traction in professional circles, planning discussions, and legislative chambers alike.

In Connecticut, this concept was adopted into statute during a prior legislative session through amendments to CGS §29-256f. For some, the change represented an innovative response to the housing shortage. For others, it raised important questions about evacuation, firefighter operations, and occupant safety.

Then, in 2026, Public Act 26-1 repealed those provisions before they were fully realized in practice. The policy arc was striking: a nationally discussed housing strategy was embraced, debated, and ultimately withdrawn in just a few years.

Regardless of where one stood on the issue, the lesson is unmistakable. Code provisions are not immutable truths etched in stone. They are policy decisions, shaped by competing

priorities and evolving public perspectives. Today's innovation can become tomorrow's reconsideration.

And that is precisely why architects, designers, and code professionals must remain engaged. When code requirements can shift with legislative action, the design community's informed voice is more important than ever.

**Editorial Note:** *The ideas, examples, and opinions expressed in this article are my own. Building codes and the legislative processes that shape them can be highly technical and, at times, difficult to engage with. To help make these topics more accessible and interesting to a broader audience, I used artificial intelligence as an editorial assistant to help organize my research, concepts, and personal perspectives into a clearer and more engaging narrative. My hope is to make building codes and the public policies that influence them easier to understand and to encourage greater participation in both the legislative and code development processes.*



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# AIA Government Affairs Update

*By Matthew Toddy, AIA*

## **APAICS Legislative Leadership Summit Highlights Clean Energy and Inclusion**

The [Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies](#) (APAICS) Legislative Leadership Summit brought together policymakers, advocates, and industry leaders to discuss pressing national issues and strengthen leadership pathways for Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders (AA & NH/PI).

During this year's summit, AIA Government Advocacy Committee board member Arathi Gowda participated in the

"Technology and the Clean Energy Transition" breakout session. The panel explored how emerging technologies are accelerating the transition to a carbon-neutral economy and examined strategies for reducing emissions, expanding renewable energy access, and ensuring that the growing green workforce remains inclusive of AA & NH/PI entrepreneurs and workers.

Founded alongside the

Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus (CAPAC), APAICS focuses on leadership development, public policy education, and strengthening the political pipeline for Asian Americans and Native Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders pursuing public office at the local, state, and federal levels.

## **AIA Responds to Department of Education Final Rule**

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) recently responded to the U.S. Department of Education's final rule excluding M.Arch and D.Arch degrees



from the federal definition of a professional degree. The rule also imposes hard caps on the amount of federal student loans students may access beginning July 1.

In response, AIA issued a public statement criticizing the rule for failing to recognize architecture education as a professional degree pathway. Additional information can be found through [AIA's official statement on the Department of Education rule.](#)

AIA is now shifting its focus toward a legislative solution and is working with several members of Congress to advance measures that would reverse the loan caps and restore the professional degree designation for architecture programs. The organization has endorsed three bills aimed at improving access to federal student loans for advanced degree students:

- **H.R. 6574 – Loan Equity for Advanced Professionals Act** introduced by Timothy Kennedy (D-NY), which would eliminate the distinction between graduate and professional students by establishing uniform borrowing limits for all advanced degree programs.
- **H.R. 6718 – Professional Student Degree Act** introduced by Mike Lawler (R-NY), which would clarify federal statute by explicitly recognizing architecture and other licensure-based fields as professional degree programs.
- **H.R. 6677 – Professional Degree Access Restoration Act** introduced by Ritchie Torres (D-NY), which would restore the previous cost-of-attendance loan framework for graduate and professional students by reversing recently imposed federal caps.

## Strengthening Local Advocacy Through the LGA Task Force

AIA's Local Government Affairs (LGA) Task Force continues to strengthen connections between the national organization and local chapters to improve advocacy capacity across the country.

Last quarter, the task force hosted its first Town Hall, bringing local chapters together to discuss shared challenges and identify areas of need. Key themes that emerged included the importance of advocacy training, stronger relationships with elected officials, increased peer collaboration, and improved access to local advocacy resources.

In response, the task force is developing several initiatives to support local chapters, including:

- Connecting chapters facing similar policy issues
- Pairing experienced chapters with those seeking advocacy guidance
- Creating spaces for collaboration and sharing best practices
- Developing advocacy training opportunities and a local-focused resource hub

The LGA Task Force plans to continue expanding outreach efforts, gathering feedback, and building a stronger national advocacy network that empowers local components and elevates the voice of architects in communities nationwide. Members are encouraged to support these efforts through peer-to-peer collaboration and by sharing ideas and feedback with the task force.

## Welcoming New Government Affairs Staff

AIA's Government and Public Affairs team recently welcomed two new senior leaders to strengthen its federal advocacy and policy efforts.

Haley Nicholson joined the organization as Senior Director

of Federal Affairs. She brings extensive experience in government, public policy, political campaigns, and lobbying, with a focus on federal legislative issues related to the business of architecture, including tax and infrastructure policy. Prior to joining AIA, Nicholson worked for an international trade union.

Michael Donovan joined as Senior Director of Climate and Resilience Policy. With years of experience spanning Capitol Hill and the Executive Branch, Donovan will focus primarily on federal climate and resilience policy initiatives. He holds a Ph.D. and most recently served within AIA's Knowledge & Practice Department.

*Matt Toddy, AIA, is an At-Large Director on the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Board of Directors and serves as the Chair of the AIA Government Affairs Committee. He works directly with the AIA Government Advocacy and Public Policy team to advance the architectural profession's legislative priorities*



# BALANCING ACT

*Navigating professional duty and contractual obligations during construction services*

During construction, design professionals are often navigating competing obligations—upholding their professional duty to protect public health, safety, and welfare while also meeting contractual commitments to their client. When those responsibilities diverge, the resulting tension can create significant exposure if not clearly defined and managed. This article outlines where those risks emerge and how stronger contract language can help mitigate them.

## **Contracts • Professional Practice • Risk**

Design firms entering the construction phase of a project carry two distinct sets of obligations that do not always point in the same direction. One obligation is established by state licensing laws and professional codes of ethics: the professional duty to protect public health, safety, and welfare. The other obligation is established by the professional services agreement: the contractual duty to the client. Both are real, both are enforceable, and neither is subordinate to the other. The tension between them, and the financial exposure that tension creates, is the defining risk management challenge of construction contract administration.

### **Client demands don't override professional duties**

The professional duty exists independently of the contract. It applies whether or not the firm is compensated for a particular service, and it extends not only to the client but to the users of the facility being designed and built. A firm that accepts direction from a client that would require the firm to compromise that duty—approving a material substitution that does not meet applicable requirements or declining to document non-conforming work to avoid conflict with the contractor, as examples—has not been relieved of its professional obligation. The

firm has simply created a situation in which the obligation was violated as the contract cannot authorize what the professional's license does not permit.

### **Contractual duties must be clearly specified**

The contractual obligation, by contrast, is entirely the product of negotiation, and it is here that most construction phase risk originates. The scope of services provisions in many professional services agreements are drafted in terms so general that they resolve nothing. Language directing the firm to “observe the work” and “respond to requests for information” without any definition of frequency, volume, deliverables, or additional compensation triggers is not a scope of services; it is an open invitation to disputes. What the contract leaves undefined, the parties will define through conflict, which is costly for the design firm.

### **Construction phase services carry unique risks**

A review of construction phase claims consistently reveals a familiar pattern:

- a scope of services that was too general to define the firm's obligations;
- a fee that was too limited to compensate the firm properly for their services; and
- a contract that provided no mechanism for the firm to address either problem once construction was underway.

The individual services that make up construction contract administration—reviewing submittals, evaluating substitution requests, responding to requests for information, and documenting site conditions—each carry their own risk profile, and each is manageable with appropriate contractual structures and professional discipline



Submittal review is a conformance evaluation, not a certification of the contractor's work. Substitution requests require genuine technical analysis because the firm that approves a substitution has effectively taken ownership of the substituted product's performance. RFI responses create a written record that becomes part of the project's documented history—a history that will be examined closely if a dispute arises. Site visit reports serve as the primary record of the firm's construction phase activities, and the scope of what was not observed during any given visit is as important to document as what was observed.

None of these risks are novel and none are beyond the reach of thoughtful contract drafting. The challenge for most firms is not awareness but execution. Construction phase scope provisions are often treated as secondary to design phase terms and frequently accepted in forms that were written to serve the client's interests rather than the firm's. The investment required to draft a well-structured construction contract administration scope is modest relative to the exposure that a poorly drafted one creates. A professional services agreement that defines deliverables,





establishes response protocols, and includes appropriate additional services mechanisms describes what the firm will actually do, at what cost, and under what conditions. That clarity protects the client as much as the firm.

### **Conclusion**

The solution is available at contract execution and rarely requires a difficult negotiation. It requires only the discipline to treat construction contract administration scope language with the same care that design professionals routinely bring to the design of the projects they govern.

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## CONNECTICUT ARCHITECTURE FOUNDATION

By Nancy Clayton, AIA,  
CAF President

**A** room full of dreamers, designers, and believers came together – and raised funds that will change the trajectory of aspiring architects' lives.

**To our guests:** Thank you for supporting the Connecticut Architecture Foundation and for joining us to celebrate our 2026 Distinguished Leadership Awardee, Joeb Moore, FAIA. Your presence and enthusiasm are the true foundation of everything we build together.

**To our generous sponsors:** Thank you for backing the CAF's mission with real commitment. Architecture is about more than buildings – it's about possibility. Every dollar raised brings a talented student one step closer to realizing theirs.

**To Joeb:** You shared with us the joy of architecture and of teaching. Seeing your own work alongside your students' projects was a true gift, and your lecture was the highlight of the evening. We are so honored by your wisdom, your passion, and your time.

The grants and scholarships made possible by this event will open doors for students who are ready to build a better world. We can't wait to see what they design.

As our CAF Champion **David LoCascio of Woodbury Supply** beautifully reminded us – the best structures are not made of wood or steel. They are made of community. Your community.

[Click here to view additional photos](#)

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By Duo Dickinson, FAIA,  
Martin C. Pedersen

**R**ecently we had the honor and privilege of interviewing James Wines for Our Buildings, Our Selves: Humanity in Architecture, the podcast produced by Common Edge, the Connecticut Architecture Foundation, the Connecticut AIA, and Bridgeport public radio station WPKN. The 93-year-old Wines is a legendary figure in the worlds of art, architecture, and design. Trained as a sculptor, Wines founded Site, his award-winning studio, in 1970. Deftly blurring the disciplinary lines between art and architecture in ways that were years ahead of its time—an approach for which he coined the term “de-architecture”—the firm designed everything from department stores and fast-food restaurants to parks and public spaces. Wines describes himself as an “environmental artist,” which hints at the probing and incessantly curious nature of his careerlong explorations. Here are some highlights from our inspiring conversation with the great artist and designer.

**On the importance of drawing:** “We’re all part of the digital world to some extent, but there’s now an entire generation of young architects who can’t draw. They can’t scribble. And without the thinking and scribbling, you don’t have an idea.”

**On the flexibility of the human brain:** “I do a lecture on drawing, in which I make the point that the human brain is apparently millions of times more complex than the most complex computer. So obviously the computer is linear, digital. It has to go on a straight line, no matter what, no matter how much information it gathers. But conceptual thinking, hunches,

attitudes, the brain can go in all different directions simultaneously. It can’t go as fast as a computer, but the flexibility of the brain—and the hand—is infinite.”

**On a life- and career-defining moment:** “Ideas are very important. I was probably more interested in how ideas transform

# A Conversation “Put Art V



things than anything else. I was also the beneficiary of the wisdom of Frederick Kiesler, who admired my sculpture because it was architectonic in nature. But one day, he came to my studio. I was still doing these giant sculptures, and he said to me, ‘James, aren’t you a little tired of this abstract art stuff? It’s 100 years old.’ This was the 1960s. He said, ‘Modernism/constructivism, all the best work, has been done. Don’t you want to look at something else?’ It struck a bell, and I began to rethink everything.”

**On being dismissed as an “artist”—mainly by architects:** “When I first began really looking at buildings and taking them seriously, I’d already had a history. I’m not an architect; I’m an environmental artist. When I was a kid, my father built summer homes in the winter, and he had his sons helping him. So, from



# Conversation With James Wines "Where You Least Expect It"



7 years old through my whole life, I was always building things. Architects have always said to me, 'Well, you're not a real architect.' Real or unreal, I knew about building. Anyway, I always circled back to the idea. Does it make you think about something? Neil Rauschenberg said it very well. He said, 'If you walk up to a work of art that you've never seen before, and it doesn't change your mind about something, there's either something wrong with you or something wrong with the work of art.' There's a lot of truth in that."

#### **On what he brought to architecture, as an artist:**

"I was very familiar with all the avant-garde movements in the 20th century and had a pretty broad vision looking at art in general. I lived in Italy for 10 years. And the one thing that impressed me most in Italy was, I talked to the buildings, and the buildings talked to me, and that's a very powerful force in life.

And another thing is, the actual fundamental architecture is quite simple, basically big boxes, but the iconography, the richness of the surface, whether it's inspired by religious or civic values, was powerful. It sucked people in, no matter what. And so, Italy made me think a lot about the qualities of architecture, of getting people both mentally and physically involved."

#### **His advice to artists and designers starting out today:**

"I wrote an essay for a book, asking the question: How do you survive? It really depends on what you want to do, because you have to choose a territory. And that can be difficult at the beginning because you're selling something that's ephemeral. I think it's basically about settling on something that you feel really strongly about. That you believe in it so much that you end up being persuasive about some category that you can own. I think that's what it is,

a determination. Don't give up. I always tell students when you're in school, always look at things critically and objectively and ask questions, because in a way one of the worst things in the world is to go through architecture school and be continually told how wonderful you are, because you probably aren't. At least not yet."

***The full conversation is available wherever you get your podcasts:***

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

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

*Reprint: [Common Edge](#)*

*Duo Dickinson 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*



# Connecticut Home Architect Takes Unique Turn to Concrete To Mirror Rocky Surroundings

by Alexander Soule, MSN

Carbon Custom Builders CEO Sam Fertik, left, and Further Architecture principal Justin Towart AIA, in April 2026 at a wood-framed home on Indian Hill Road in Redding, Connecticut, whose owners are building an addition fashioned from poured concrete. (Alexander Soule/Hearst Connecticut Media)

In many Connecticut towns, vistas are dominated by trees and rocky outcroppings. In Redding, an unusual home expansion is underway that brings the two together, as owners tack on a curved concrete addition to their existing house that was built originally with cedar siding.

Carbon Custom Builders is currently sculpting the concrete expansion for a house on Indian Hill Road in Redding. Built in 1979 in the [mid-century modern design](#), the original house features a cylinder-shaped entry, angular facades and steeply pitched roof lines.

Under a Further Architecture design dubbed “The Veil”, the expansion will feature a convex facade curving out toward a big rock formation on the property. The addition will replace a sunroom, creating a spacious new interior with large windows letting in light and outdoor scenery.

“Their desire was to make this their forever home,” said Justin Towart, principal of Further Architecture based in Stratford. “In terms of sustainability, often the most sustainable thing you can do is keep what you have and retrofit it.”

The use of concrete in construction dates back to ancient Rome. With the 19th-century invention of reinforced concrete, the mate-



rial came to be adopted for home construction, starting with the William E. Ward House in Rye Brook, New York. With half the “castle” jutting into Greenwich, [Ward House](#) is thought to be the oldest reinforced concrete structure in the United States, according to the American Society of Civil Engineers.

Concrete as a structural material came into vogue in the 20th century modernist movement in architecture. On both the commercial and residential front, Connecticut is home to some striking examples, to include [Hotel Marcel in New Haven](#); a [Frank Lloyd Wright-designed house](#) in New Canaan; a [Rafael Viñoly project](#) in Ridgefield; and [Trinkaus House](#) in Weston.

If examples concrete in residential construction are still relatively rare, cement has come to be a common building material in the context of fiber cement siding, which mimics the look of wood or vinyl siding. In U.S. Census Bureau surveys, fiber cement siding trailed only vinyl siding and stucco as the most-common exterior construction material for homes started in 2024, with proponents citing its durability.

That is one of concrete’s advantages over competing materials - both in the context of holding up over time as well as [any near-term nuisances or disasters](#). That extends to

keeping insects, mice and woodpeckers at bay; resistance to mold or fire; or weathering storms that can exact punishment on paint, wood siding and shingles.

Critics of concrete note that if it creates energy savings over the life of a home, the production of concrete generates excessive greenhouse gases. And not all are in favor of the look compared to traditional materials like wood, brick, stonework or stucco.

In the case of the Redding house, the concrete facade is intended to evoke the look of a large rock ledge opposite on the property, Carbon Custom Builders CEO Sam Fertik said.

From the designer’s eye, concrete offers the ability to craft precise forms; soundproofing; and better retention of warm or cool interior temperatures, both through the mass of the material and by eliminating “thermal bridges” that cross through insulation to connect interior and exterior structures.

“It offers design and function,” said Fertik, who moved Carbon Custom Builders’ office last year to New Canaan from Westchester. “You just can’t do this with anything else.”

*Reprint: MSN.com. Includes prior reporting by Jordan Nathaniel Fenster and Mollie Hersh.*





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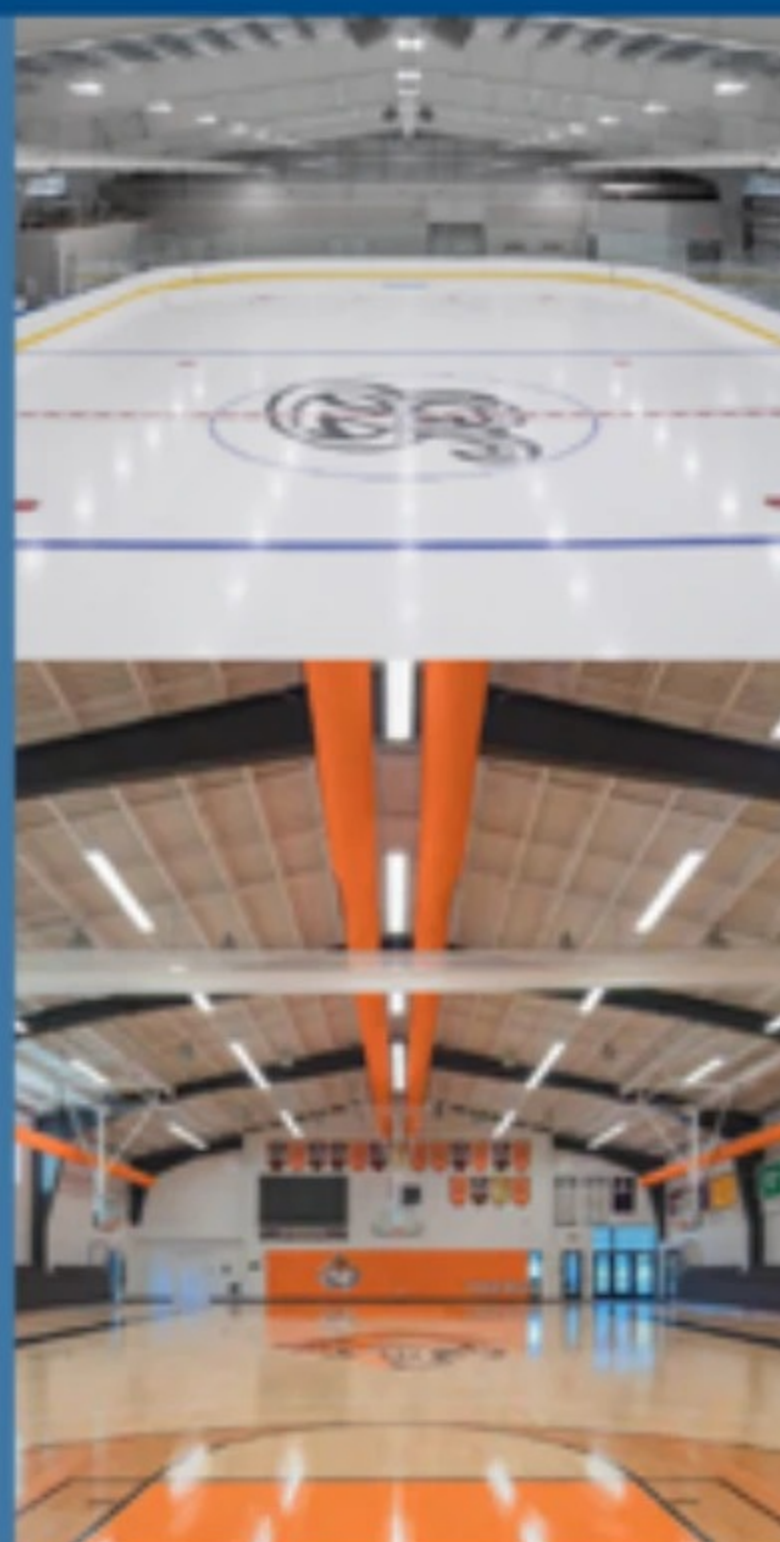
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# National News

## An Update from the AIA President

By Illya Azaroff, FAIA –  
2026 AIA National President

Dear AIA members,

Following the AIA Board of Directors meeting on April 15, 2026, I'm sharing a brief update to keep you informed and connected to AIA's work. Here are a few key updates most relevant to you as a member.

### **1. We're putting the Strategic Plan into action to support your success.**

With the [2026–2030 Strategic Plan](#) underway, AIA is aligning programs, funding, and teams around the PACE framework—Practice, Advocacy, Climate, and Equity. Early efforts focus on simplifying resources, connecting tools, and improving access to support, while advancing regenerative design as a natural evolution of our [Framework for Design Excellence](#).

### **2. The Strategic Council is helping shape what's next.**

The Council is [exploring issues](#) like housing, practice innovation, and emerging areas such as neuro-architecture to guide long-term strategy and keep AIA responsive to member and community needs.

### **3. We're making the leadership pipeline more accessible.**

The Candidate Development Committee is advancing recommendations to clarify the path to national leadership, including earlier timelines, clearer expectations, and new ways for members to engage.

### **4. We're strengthening how we keep you informed.**

AIA is improving communications with clearer, more consistent updates and easier access to information—so you can quickly understand what matters most and how it connects to your work, including efforts like [advocacy](#) on disaster risk reduction (DRR).

Thank you for all you do for the profession, your communities, and AIA. I'm honored to serve as your president and look forward to continuing this work together.

Comments or questions: [aiamemberfeedback@aia.org](mailto:aiamemberfeedback@aia.org)





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## The AIA 2025 Demographics Report Is Now Live

The AIA 2025 Demographics Report is now available, offering an updated benchmark for understanding change across AIA membership and the architectural profession.

Using voluntary, member-reported data, the report provides a comprehensive snapshot of AIA's membership today across race and ethnicity, gender identity, age, sexual orientation, licensure progress, and leadership participation. It includes demographic data for all AIA membership categories, as well as the AIA Board of Directors, AIA Strategic Council, and AIA headquarters staff.

The 2025 edition introduces a new format designed to make the report more accessible, shareable, and useful for chapters, firms, and members. This year's release prioritizes core demographic metrics that can be published earlier and more easily used in digital communications, presentations, and strategic planning.

In addition to the streamlined annual report, AIA will publish a separate, more in-depth multi-year analysis focused on long-term trends, broader context, and deeper interpretation of the data.

As an annual benchmark, the AIA Membership Demographics Report helps the profession better understand how membership is evolving over time and where opportunities remain to advance equity, representation, and leadership participation across architecture.

The report serves as a strategic resource for chapters, firms, and members working to focus efforts where they can drive the greatest impact.

### Key Areas Covered

- Race and ethnicity
- Gender identity
- Age demographics
- Sexual orientation
- Licensure progress
- Leadership participation
- Membership category demographics
- Governance and staff demographics

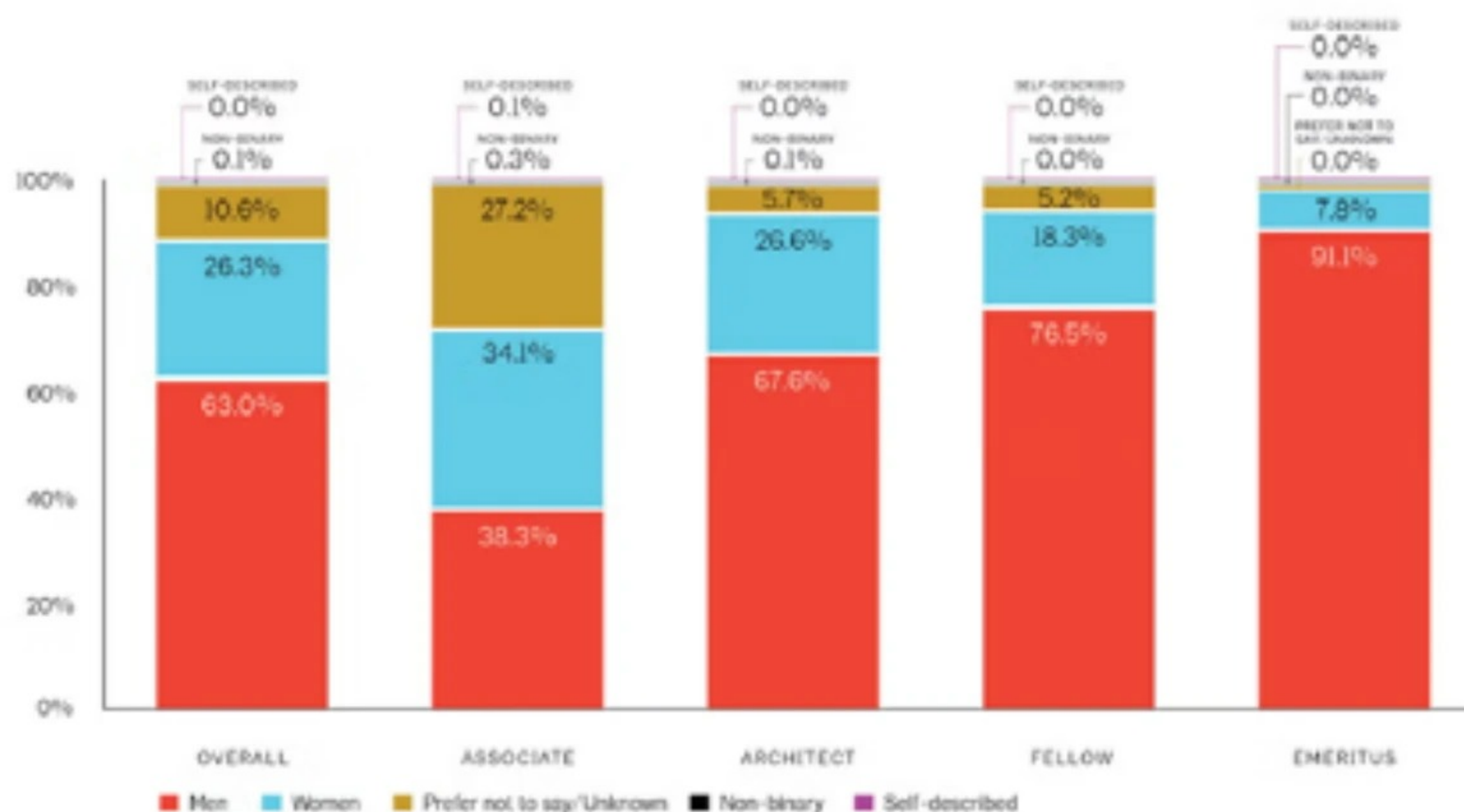
The AIA 2025 Demographics Report reflects AIA's continued commitment to transparency, accountability, and building a profession that better reflects the communities architects serve.

[Download the full report](#)



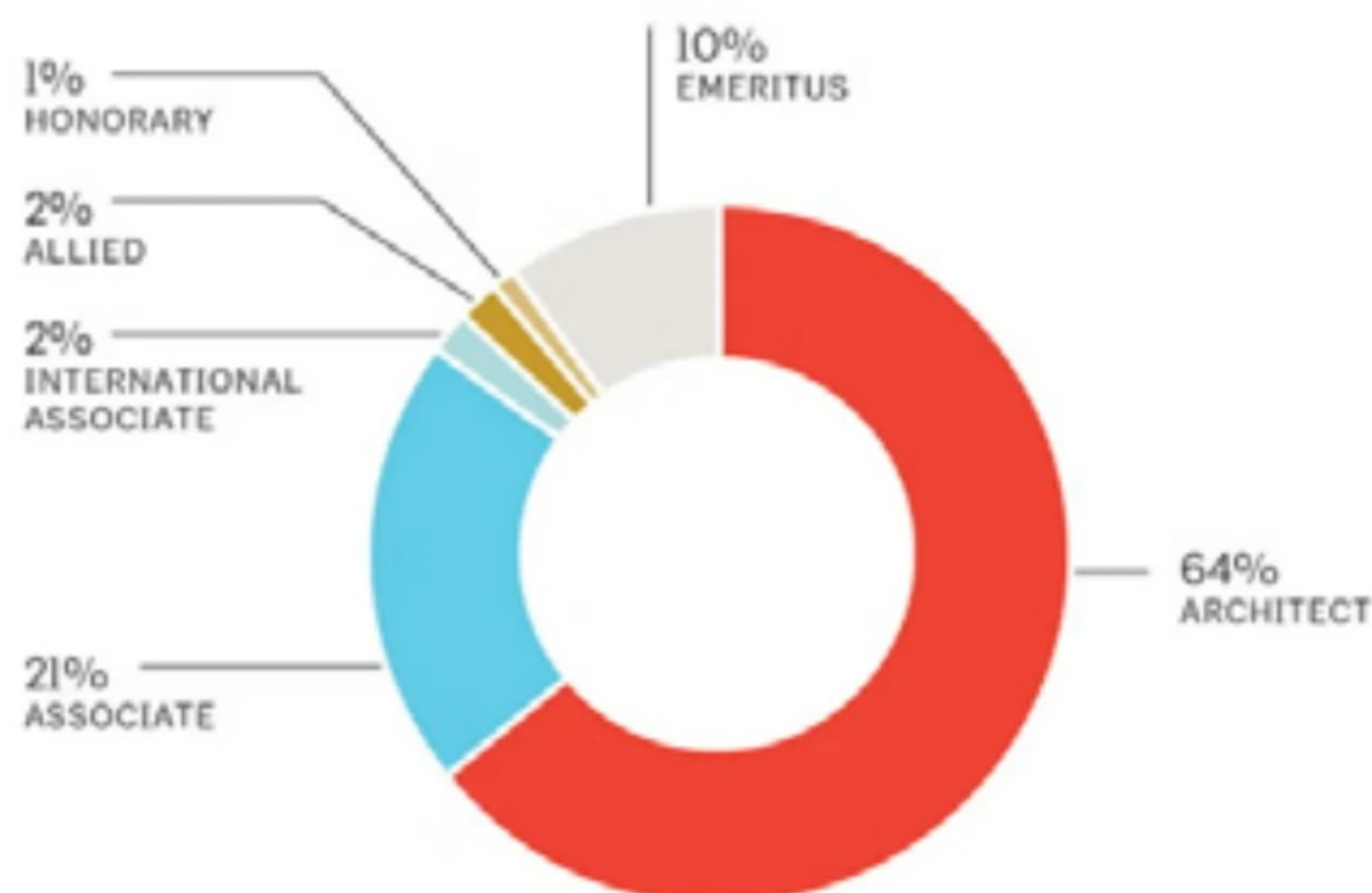
# Gender identity and expression across groups

Women represent 26.3% of all members. Among Associates, 34.1% are women, compared to 26.6% of Architect members.



## Overall membership by member type

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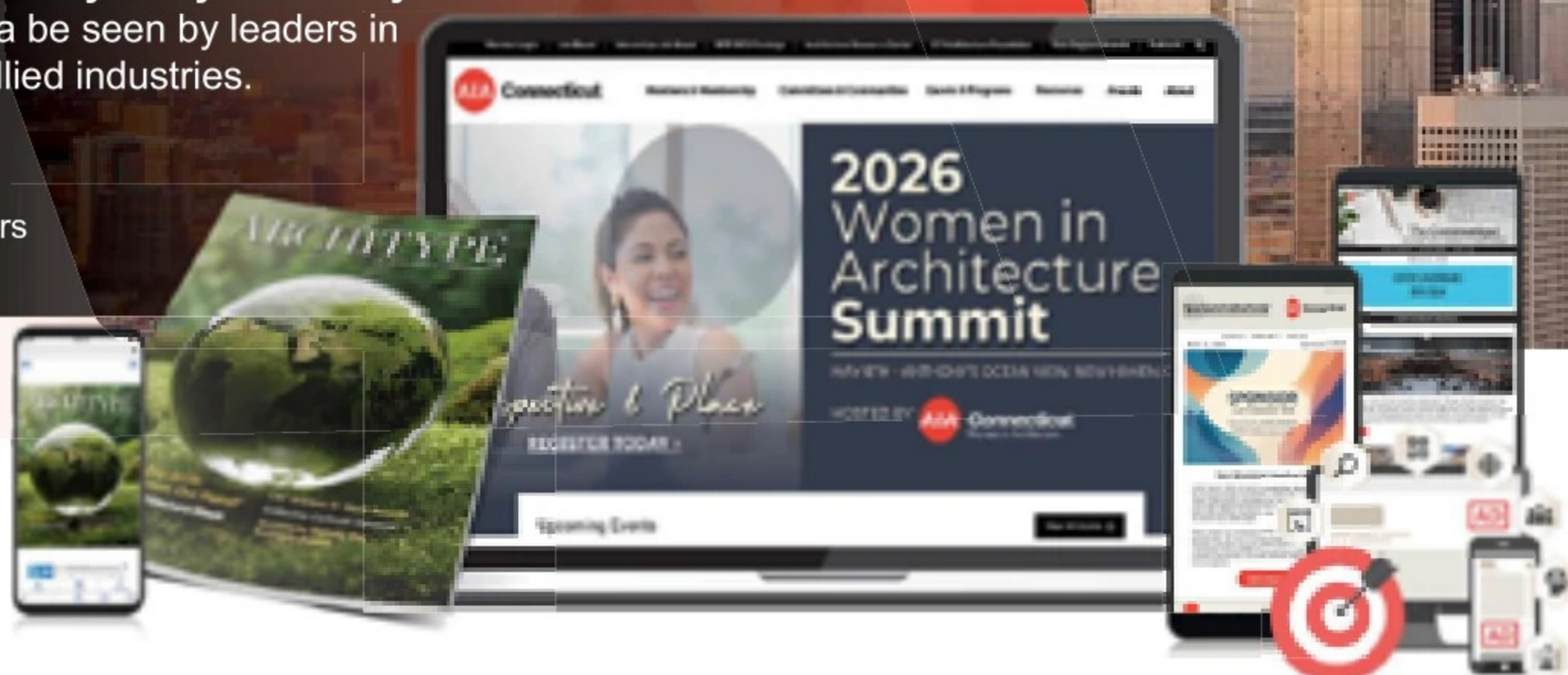


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## MAY

**25** AIA CT Office Closed - Memorial Day

**28** Committee on Design Presentation | Women's Empowerment Center

**30** HisTOURy Tours | Colonial Homes of Avon and Simsbury: A Tour of Connecticut Historic Interiors  
NOMAct | Community Clothing Swap & Fundraiser

## JUN

**3** Allied Adventures | Getty Granite

**5** Design Awards | Early Bird Registration Closes

**9** Allied Advisory Meeting

**10** AIA Conference on Architecture & Design 2026  
EDI Knowledge Community Meeting

Building Performance & Regulations (BP&R) Meeting

**11** AIA Conference on Architecture & Design 2026

**12** AIA Conference on Architecture & Design 2026  
Women in Architecture (WIA) Knowledge Community Meetings

**13** AIA Conference on Architecture & Design 2026

**17** HVAC Systems 101 - It's Either Hot or Cold!

Professional Practice Knowledge Community Meeting

**18** Emerging Professionals (EP) Community Meeting

## AIA CONNECTICUT CALENDAR

|               |        |     |
|---------------|--------|-----|
| Series:       | Scales | No. |
| Item Number:  |        |     |
| Product Name: |        |     |





AIA Connecticut

# TRIVIA NIGHT



HOSTED BY AIA CT Allied Advisory Committee

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5:00PM-8:00PM

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