



# H III

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## THE AIA AT HABITAT III

QUITO, EQUADOR | OCTOBER 17-21, 2016



The AIA at Habitat III  
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**THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE  
OF ARCHITECTS**  
Housing Knowledge Community

Book design by Anna Mkhikian at Steinberg, Los Angeles, CA.  
[www.steinberg.us.com](http://www.steinberg.us.com)

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## LETTER FROM SIMON HA

In October 2016, AIA delegates and AIA Housing Knowledge Community (AIA HKC) leaders attended the United Nations Habitat III conference in Quito, Ecuador. AIA believes that architects are key to making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. The engagement with Habitat III represents a continuing expansion of AIA's work onto the global stage, as mandated in the AIA's 2015 Global Opportunities and Priorities Framework.

AIA HKC started the process in February 2015 to participate in Habitat III through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. AIA HKC held sessions at 2015 and 2016 AIA conventions, streamed a webinar, and took surveys to engage the broader membership. In Quito, the AIA delegation comprised of Russell Davidson (2016 AIA President), Thomas Vonier (2017 AIA President), Jamie Blosser (Executive Director of the Santa Fe Art Institute and AIA HKC 2015 Chair), Mary Kell (Activing Chief Resilience Officer for the City of Tulsa), Catherine Baker (Principal at Landon Bone Baker Architects), and Derek Washam (AIA International Relations Manager). The AIA HKC was represented by Simon Ha (2017 Chair), R. Denise Everson (2016 Chair), and Kathy Dorgan (2012 Chair). It was a great venue to engage the participants from all over the world and to share what AIA has to offer in the larger conversation in influencing the policy for housing and urbanization.

This book contains information from the United Nations and writings from the AIA representatives. It summarizes AIA's participation, describes the personal experiences and lessons learned, and explores opportunities in aligning the values of the New Urban Agenda with the American Institute of Architects. I hope you find something engaging in this book to spark an interest in taking part in this global initiative.

Thank you,



Simon Ha, AIA, LEED AP

Chair, 2017 Housing Knowledge Community  
The American Institute of Architects

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# HABITAT IS THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON HOUSING AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

*Habitat offers a unique opportunity to discuss the important challenge of how cities, towns, and villages are planned and managed.*

## WHAT IS HABITAT III?



**30,000**  
*people*



**10,000**  
*international participants*



**167**  
*countries*

**4**

*days*



**1000**

*events*



**42**

*village projects*



**157**

*exhibition booths*



**460**

*side, networking, training &  
parallel events*



## WHO PARTICIPATED?

- Member States and Relevant Stakeholders
- Regional / Local Government and Municipality Representatives
- Parliamentarians
- Civil Society Organizations
- Professionals and Researchers
- Academia
- Foundations
- Women and Youth Groups
- Trade Unions
- Private Sector
- Organizations of the United Nations System
- Intergovernmental Organizations

## RETHINKING THE URBAN AGENDA

- » **Embracing urbanization at all levels of human settlements**, more appropriate policies can embrace urbanization across physical space, bridging urban, peri-urban, and rural areas, and can assist governments in addressing challenges through national and local development policy frameworks.
- » **Integrating equity into the development agenda.** Equity is an issue of social justice, ensures access to the public sphere, extends opportunities, and increases the commons.
- » **Fostering national urban planning and planned city extensions.**
- » Deciding how relevant **Sustainable Development Goals** will be supported through sustainable urbanization.
- » **Aligning and strengthening institutional arrangements** with the substantive outcomes of Habitat III to ensure effective delivery of the New Urban Agenda.

## CITIES ARE EVOLVING

# 1976

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*Habitat I*

WORLD URBAN  
POPULATION **37.9%**

# 1996

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*Habitat II*

WORLD URBAN  
POPULATION **45.1%**

# 2016

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*Habitat III*

WORLD URBAN  
POPULATION **54.5%**

## DATA ON CITIES?

**CITIES** today occupy approximately only 2% of the total land globally. However, they make up:

- ECONOMY (GDP): **70%**
- GLOBAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION: **60%**
- GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS: **70%**
- GLOBAL WASTE: **70%**

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# BY 2050, THE WORLD'S URBAN POPULATION IS EXPECTED TO NEARLY DOUBLE.

*Urbanization has become a driving force as well as a source of development with the power to change and improve lives.*

# THE NEW URBAN AGENDA



**URBANIZATION** as an engine of sustained and inclusive economic growth, social and cultural development, and environmental protection.

*By readdressing the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed and managed, we can:*

- Help end poverty and hunger for all
- Reduce inequalities
- Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth
- Achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls
- Improve human health and well-being
- Foster resilience
- Protect the environment

By Jamie Blosser, AIA, and Kathy Dorgan, FAIA, September 30, 2016

## RIGHT TO THE CITY

- Right to adequate housing
- Right to an adequate standard of living without discrimination
- Universal access to safe and affordable drinking water and sanitation
- Equal access for all to public goods and quality services in food security and nutrition, health, education, infrastructure, mobility and transportation, energy, air quality, and livelihoods

*The lessons learned in Quito, Ecuador, will inform architects' work for years to come.*

In October, the world will come together for the third time at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (Habitat III) to study, plan, and dream about achieving the universal human right of an adequate place to live in security, peace, and dignity. For the first time, the AIA—as an organization—will be at the conference to learn from an interdisciplinary gathering of experts and members of vulnerable communities about both tested and theoretical strategies for building and maintaining resilient human settlements in the face of climate change, war, discrimination, slavery, environmental degradation, and poverty.

The right to adequate housing was recognized internationally in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights and further defined in the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In response to the numerous challenges of rapid urbanization, the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements took place in Vancouver in 1976. Attendees included Paolo Soleri, Buckminster Fuller, and Margaret Mead. The resulting conference report focused on equitable distribution of the benefits of development, and led to the UN General Assembly establishing the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements,

better known now as Habitat. A second Habitat convening was held in Istanbul in 1996 and focused on planning for safer, healthier, livable, and sustainable cities with a special emphasis on the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

*Habitat III is a unique opportunity to learn from the world [and] to share success stories and innovative approaches.*

Next month in Quito, Ecuador, Habitat III will establish a New Urban Agenda to address the challenges of an urbanizing world, including climate change, mass conflicts and violence resulting in migration and loss of homeland, and the needs of over a billion people who live in slums. The vision, principles, and required commitments are ambitious. If agreed and adhered to—by nation-states, regional and local governments, NGOs, and organizational stakeholders such as the AIA—the New Urban Agenda will establish sustainability, equity, and resilience to be of equal importance to economic growth in measuring rural and urban development.



It places affordable and healthy housing as a central element in strategies for reducing poverty and increasing stability, and excellent design as essential to “optimize the spatial dimension of the urban form,” with the power to “promote or hinder social cohesion, equality, and inclusion.” Strategies to achieve this vision include broadening inclusive platforms and promoting “meaningful participation in decision-making.” Yet, identifying specific participatory methodologies is both the challenge and the opportunity inherent in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda.

To that end, the Housing and Community Development Network, a Knowledge Community of the AIA, plans to organize and document presentations about successful participatory action research and public interest design initiatives that engage and empower the poorest and most marginalized, so that these best practices can be shared and disseminated in Quito and beyond.

*The New Urban Agenda will establish sustainability, equity, and resilience to be of equal importance to economic growth in measuring rural and urban development.*

**WE COMMIT OURSELVES** to working towards an urban paradigm shift for a New Urban Agenda that will leave no one behind by ending poverty in all its forms and dimensions including the eradication of extreme poverty, ensuring sustainable and inclusive urban economies, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

These examples will be drawn from exhibitions, lectures, and the Habitat III Village, where forty-two innovative place-making teams will demonstrate concepts for reshaping human settlements. Interactive exhibits will feature participatory processes, eco-friendly housing, alternative uses for public space, youth perspectives, sustainable power generation, transportation strategies, health risks, disaster recovery, and employing technology to improve everyday life. Several participants of the Habitat III Village will take conference attendees out to local communities to engage with residents and work in real time on solving immediate problems. Habitat III is a unique opportunity to learn from the world, to share success stories and innovative approaches, and to highlight the essential nature of participatory discourse and community engagement with the attention of global leaders. Participation will inform the next twenty years of the AIA’s Housing and Community Development Network’s programming, services to our members and the profession, and collaboration with our strategic partners. Join us on Twitter at @AIAHousingKC and on Facebook at facebook.com/AIAHousingKC to learn more and become engaged in addressing some of the most important issues facing humanity.

*Jamie Blosser, AIA, and Kathy Dorgan, FAIA, are part of the AIA’s Housing Knowledge Community, which serves over 10,000 AIA members by providing webinars, research grants, training and workshops, as well as celebrating excellent design in housing. The group has been working over the past two years to prepare for Quito, including hosting an open house at AIA Convention 2015, participating in developing the national agenda, and preparing case studies.*

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# THE AIA PARTICIPATED IN HABITAT III FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2016 - AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ARCHITECTS TO IMPACT THE NEXT 20 YEARS OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT.

*Delegates from the AIA and AIA HKC attended Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016. Prior to the conference, they wrote the following series of articles to frame the issues that would be discussed and explored.*

## THE AIA AND AIA HKC DELEGATES | FRAMING THE ISSUES



# CHALLENGING ARCHITECTS TO COLLABORATE ON HOUSING NEEDS

By Catherine Baker, AIA, October 11, 2016



Chicago, Illinois

*Habitat III provides an excellent opportunity for architects to carve out a space at the housing table.*

As an attendee of the upcoming United Nations Conference on Housing and Urban Sustainable Development (Habitat III), I am reflecting on the housing challenges and opportunities that we as architects currently face in Chicago. Habitat III recognizes that, by 2050, “the world urban population is expected to nearly double, making urbanization one of the 21st century’s most transformative trends and posing massive sustainability challenges in terms of housing, infrastructure, basic services, food security, health, education, decent jobs, safety, and natural resources.” These issues will be discussed and adopted in a document called the New Urban Agenda, which seeks to readdress the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed, and managed.

While all of these issues are interconnected and vital, my focus at the conference will be on the topic of housing—specifically, how housing can address and respond to larger urban issues, and how we as architects can be more involved in creative housing solutions. At its most basic, the New Urban Agenda lays out “the right to adequate housing for all as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living.” Housing is a basic, stabilizing

need that allows other facets of living to be met, such as holding a job, attending school, and being healthy. The Agenda commits to promoting and supporting equitable housing policies that in turn strengthen the relationship with the urban fabric, including employment, education, healthcare, and social integration. It also commits to stimulate the supply of a variety of housing options.

Like other communities across the nation, Chicago is grappling with housing inequities like declining resources, excessive rents, gentrification, displacement, population loss and disinvestment in certain neighborhoods, and homelessness. At Habitat III, we have a unique opportunity to discuss, share, and learn how to turn these challenges into opportunities.

*Some of the most successful housing projects our firm has worked on were the result of direct community engagement and partnerships between various organizations.*

I am pleased to report that Chicago has almost 30 programs in place to stabilize and stimulate housing after the economic collapse of 2008. I regret though, that none of the 200-plus participants involved in the report were architects. As future housing policies are developed, I would challenge all municipalities and architects to collaborate together. I would also challenge architects to engage with communities and local residents to leverage these housing policies into place-making opportunities.

Architects are problem solvers. We are collaborative by nature. We need to be at the table with our ideas. We are a profession that can bring vision and design solutions to policy. Some questions that we can ask are:

- Is housing a basic shelter or can it uplift and inspire?
- What are new models for affordable housing? How do we achieve these?
- How do we understand the process of development? Who are the stakeholders? Who makes decisions? Who should make decisions?
- How do we identify the assets of the community? How do we share community assets? How do we design around these assets?
- How do we link housing opportunities with jobs, sustainability issues, and health issues?

## **PURSuing CHANGE IN CHICAGO**

A recent example of an architect-led housing initiative involves AIA Chicago and came in response to Windy City Times and Pride Action Tank's concern over homeless young adults. The competition brief for a tiny house community was developed by a group of practicing architects with input from social service experts, homeless youth, and policy experts. The competition generated over 200 entries worldwide. Entrants were not limited to architects, but teams of various groups were encouraged to enter. Judges for the competition included a mix of architects, planners, and affordable housing developers.

The winning submission, by architects, consisted of a well-thought out design response to the issue of housing young adults, affordability, sustainability, and neighborhood context. A full-scale model of the winning entry was built for display at a tiny house

summit held in Chicago. The competition and summit have inspired local housing developers to further investigate this form of housing. The information gained from the competition and summit is also being used to help inform city officials on code and zoning issues that currently prevent the construction of tiny houses.

*At Habitat III, we have a unique opportunity to discuss, share, and learn how to turn these challenges into opportunities.*

Some of the most successful housing projects our firm has worked on were the result of direct community engagement and partnerships between various organizations. Projects that are born from the needs of the community have a special strength and seem to affect the immediate neighborhood beyond the need of housing alone. These projects often have goals above that of just shelter (although sometimes shelter is an immediate need that has to be addressed). We never believe that we can come into a community with all the answers, but we must listen and translate the hopes and ideas of the community into a physical reality. We are open to all dialogue and we typically engage with experts who may normally be outside the development world, such as artists, students, journalists, planners, public policy experts, technology experts, health experts, and lawyers.

Our projects may start out complex and messy, but in the end the goals and objectives of the project are clearly and simply manifested in the building design. One of our most important achievements comes when the residents tell us and others that they designed the building.

Although our practice is firmly embedded in working in Chicago neighborhoods, I am excited to attend this global conference and interact with participants working on similar urban issues. At Habitat III, I am challenging myself and other architects to determine how we can leverage policy programs and partner with other creative forces to reimagine what housing can be.

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*Catherine Baker, AIA, is a Principal at Landon Bone Baker Architects. She will serve as a member of the AIA's official delegation to Habitat III, to be held in Quito, Ecuador, on October 17-20.*

# ARCHITECTS CAN HELP REDUCE GLOBAL POVERTY

By Mary E. Kell, AIA, September 12, 2016



*The acting chief resilience officer for the City of Tulsa expresses her hopes for urban solutions at Habitat III in Quito, Ecuador.*

As the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (Habitat III) approaches, our hope as architects is that it will provoke a much-needed global discussion about issues such as poverty and affordable housing. Often, it's those conversations and the sharing of information that brings important messages to the forefront.

As an example: I recently learned that, as measured in the 2010 census, Tulsa, Oklahoma has a 20 percent poverty rate. Though that information was always available—and even though I've been in and around architecture in Oklahoma for the past 25 years—it wasn't until I started working under the umbrella of resilience that I discovered this fact or thought to dissect it as a problem that could and should be solved.

Previously, my work was focused on designing for clients who often paid little regard to a context bigger than the project site and the site directly adjacent. As years progressed, the concept of sustainability emerged and started a global discussion of the

world's finite resources and how what we design relates to the bigger picture. And now, as acting chief resilience officer for the City of Tulsa, I have an even greater interest in the social equity and long-term viability of our urban centers and their inhabitants.

While there are trail-blazing clients that demand sustainability and resilience to be integrated into their programs and projects, it has long been a struggle to get the majority to care about all aspects of the triple bottom line: people, planet, and prosperity. Prosperity is often the only one considered, which leads to cost concerns and the removal of most sustainable or resilience measures from the project.

While it seems logical to focus on the project budget, not long-term maintenance costs or low impact design, we as architects need to take on a larger role in guiding efforts that help solve the world's real problems. We are used to providing design solutions for clients with money, but what about those who most need but can least afford our services?

The right statistics can help reinforce how urgent these issues are already. Some key statistics for Tulsa are as follows:

- 20 percent poverty
- 7.7 percent unemployment
- 88.6 percent high school graduation rate
- 11.0 percent disabled
- 23.5 percent without health insurance
- 8.3 percent with no vehicle available

Other measurements—such as percentages of people in need of affordable housing, those who are homeless, and those with mental illness—are not as easily found but remain key parts of the equation. How can stakeholders come together to actively solve these problems, all of which contribute or are directly related to a community's poverty rate?

In the case of poverty, as hard it seems to solve, it'll take improvements in several of those related areas to find a solution. With deliberate and focused efforts from the right groups of stakeholders, we can put in the work needed to erase what took years to create.

In Tulsa, we've formed partnership agencies such as A Way Home for Tulsa and pursued initiatives like Zero: 2016 in an effort to lessen the factors that contribute to crippling poverty rates and homelessness. While our city may not be indicative of all urban centers worldwide, we believe our strategies are at least the beginning of—or contributions to—the conversation on future urban development. Because resilience isn't just about proactively planning for extreme weather-related disasters; it's about solidifying and connecting our communities and keeping our residents as strong as the structures themselves.

My hope is that Habitat III will address and provide scalable real-world solutions to the issues that weaken our cities, issues that are very much a part of the built environment and influenced by our work.

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*Mary E. Kell, AIA, is the acting chief resilience officer for the City of Tulsa. She will serve as a member of the AIA's official delegation to Habitat III, to be held in Quito, Ecuador, on October 17-20.*

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# ARCHITECTS ARE KEY TO MAKING CITIES AND HUMAN SETTLEMENTS INCLUSIVE, SAFE, RESILIENT, AND SUSTAINABLE.

*The United Nations Conference on Housing and Urban Sustainable Development took place in Quito, Ecuador on October 17-21, 2016. In the aftermath of Habitat III, the AIA Delegates are committed to promoting the AIA's 2015 Global Opportunities and Priorities Framework. The following articles expand on their writings prior to the conference and explore key takeaways and next steps.*

## TAKEAWAYS + NEXT STEPS



# UN HABITAT III: COMMENTS FROM THE AIA PRESIDENT

By Russ Davidson, FAIA



I am sitting in a very large room with concentric rings of desks with name placards on them indicating the country you are representing. Am I in the AIA Board room? Surprisingly, no. I am part of the United States delegation to the United Nations Habitat III conference in Quito, Ecuador. As president of the AIA I am honored to represent our profession here at an international gathering of more than 40,000 individuals from all over the globe to set a path forward toward sustainable urban development.

In a few minutes, the closing plenary session will commence and the gathered delegates will formally adopt the New Urban Agenda. Teams of diplomats and others involved in the planning, design, and financing have negotiated this document for months. Many of those involved in the creation of this document are architects; some are AIA architects.

As a practicing architect who is very involved in the physical building of projects, it is sometimes challenging to participate in conferences such as this, which is focused on talking about what should be done. As architects, we appreciate the specific, concrete action plans. Many of the elements of the New Urban

Agenda have long been a priority for development in the U.S. and are already incorporated into the public policies of the AIA. Nonetheless, when I to hear of others challenges and listen to the various panel discussions, it reinforces my belief that the entire world is facing similar issues, including:

- implementing sustainable building practices;
- creating and maintaining adequate infrastructure;
- establishing effective transportation systems;
- remaining resilient in the face of natural and man-made disasters;
- dealing with the effects of climate change;
- and providing adequate housing for their citizens.

It is truly more than just talk. The world came together here in Quito, and it established a common agenda. An agenda about planning, design and architecture and much more, including social justice, reforming governance, making cities safe for women, and providing equal access to cities and housing for individuals of all income levels. The United States government

and the AIA are well represented here, and it is clear that we have a responsibility to continue to lead in implementing this plan for sustainable urban development.

Efforts like this are ambitious. They can take generations to implement—but there are some notable milestones. Today is one of those milestones. The United Nations delegations represented here just adopted the New Urban Agenda. With thousands standing and clapping, there is a palpable feeling in the hall that something critical to the future of the world’s cities just happened.

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*Russ Davidson, FAIA, is the 2016 AIA National President.*



# FROM UN HABITAT III: REIMAGINING A MORE EQUITABLE WORLD

By Jamie Blosser, AIA



Tuesday was a rush of adrenaline here at the UN Habitat III convening in Quito, Ecuador, and throughout the day I felt an overwhelming sense of exhilaration by being amongst such esteemed and earnest peers from all over the world who are focusing on exactly what our mission is at the Santa Fe Art Institute, “to re-imagine a more equitable world.” After a frantic Monday, which included standing in a security line for two hours, by Tuesday I was a pro successfully navigating the Habitat III grounds, which are beautiful but mazelike, to rest in the New Urban Agenda pavilion, people-watch, and find a delicious cup of coffee.

But don't let me give you the idea that life on Tuesday was restful! I was thrilled to organize a successful panel on re-imagining a more equitable world through the arts, culture, and design at the Next City World Stage panel, with Michael Kimmelman, architecture critic at the New York Times, as moderator. Chelina Odbert from Kounkuey Design Initiative talked about why quantity should not trump quality, and stated “a poorly designed space without community input or consideration of culture will create negative economic and social impacts for future generations.” Joseph Kunkel from Sustainable Native Communities Collaborative

described an Artplace America-funded project that incorporates art, culture, design and urban planning around a rural TOD project at Santo Domingo Pueblo, in New Mexico. Ari Simon, Vice President of the Kresge Foundation, stated that “Kresge deeply believes that arts and culture should be considered as integral to the built environment as housing, health, and transportation.”

I also presented as an AIA representative at the International Union of Architects (UIA) side event, as to why new narratives are critical to disrupting inequality, and why architects and planners have a responsibility to expect more from projects, including elevating voices, celebrating culture, and providing jobs and training. It was amazing to be amongst such talented and passionate peers from around the world, including Bangladesh, India, England, Sudan, and Ecuador!

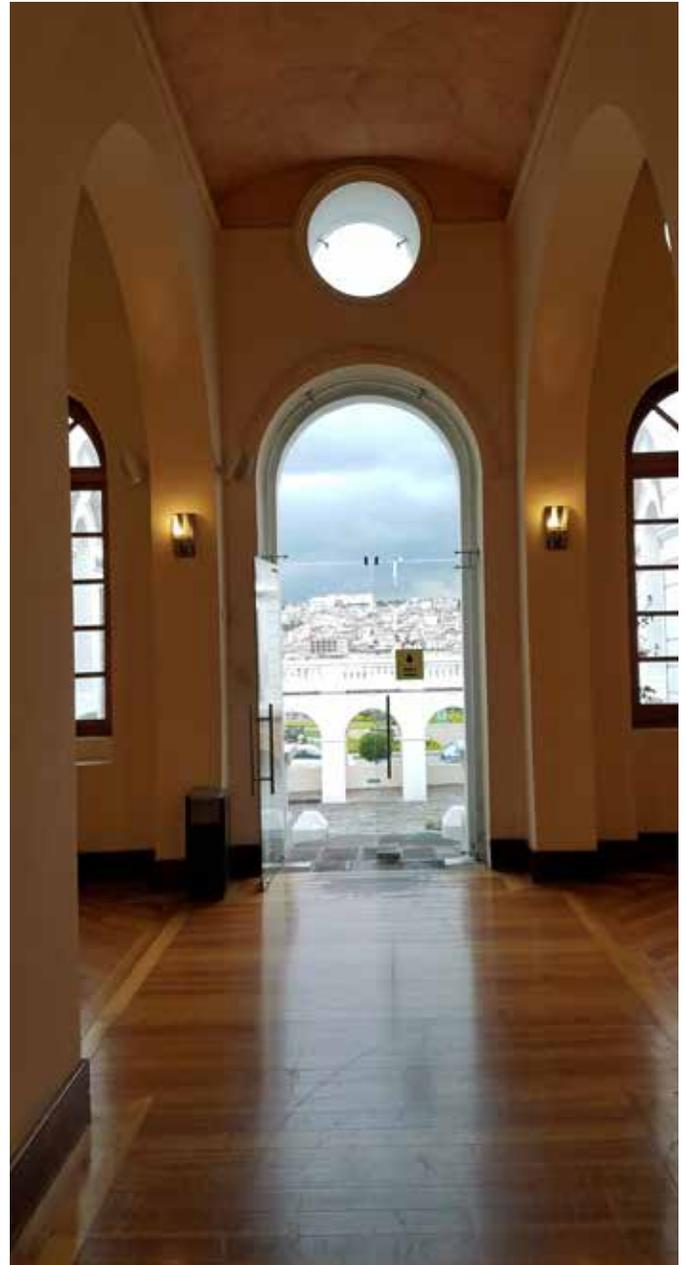
I attended the Accessible and Affordable Housing High Level Roundtable, presided by HUD Secretary Julian Castro, and witnessed the pomp and protocol that is the United Nations. Secretary Castro discussed an exciting new initiative, the Prosperity Pathway, which will be a regional effort to provide cities

and states with best practices and technical support toward wise policymaking. The highlight of the day was an opportunity to meet Secretary Castro!

The conversation on the ground here seems to always turn to how local and regional stakeholders and decision-makers will implement this ambitious New Urban Agenda. We will all have significant work to do in the U.S., including multiple regional convenings to make sure that local and regional governments can help live up to these lofty national and international goals. I am grateful to have this opportunity to serve as an AIA delegate, and I am thinking deeply about how thematic programming at SFAI can serve the work being done here in Quito.

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*Jamie Blosser, AIA is part of the AIA's Housing Knowledge Community, which serves over 10,000 AIA members by providing webinars, research grants, training and workshops, as well as celebrating excellent design in housing. The group has been working over the past two years to prepare for Quito, including hosting an open house at AIA Convention 2015, participating in developing the national agenda, and preparing case studies.*



# UN HABITAT III: EVENTS AND PANELS

By Catherine Baker, AIA



Last week, over 30,000 individuals, representing countries and communities from around the world, came together to discuss issues that affect the health and prosperity of the residents of our cities and nations. It was an exciting and elevating event - to be able to come together and share our hopes and strategies for improving living conditions across the globe.

The AIA delegate panel presentation was on the final day of the conference. I found this to be an appropriate conclusion to the week's events. As the New Urban Agenda laid out guidelines and objectives, our AIA panel discussed concrete projects that we've already been engaged in that could be used to implement these objectives. The New Urban Agenda is lofty and wide-sweeping in its scope, and throughout the course of the week, we discovered that implementation of these goals was a concern by many attendees. Our presentation reflected projects that any local group could implement immediately.

Jamie Blosser's presentation labeled "Building Better Environments" laid out a comprehensive summary of how members of the AIA Housing Knowledge Community were

working in various leadership roles beyond traditional architectural practice in directing and implementing policy throughout the country. Mary Kell's presentation "Harnessing Architectural Design Solutions to Solve Urban Issues" outlined how her home town of Tulsa brought 23 agencies together under a collaborative umbrella called A Way Home for Tulsa to address and solve homelessness.

My presentation on our project Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative explained how architects can work with artists, developers, housing agencies and residents to create a mixed-income community that is helping to transform an underserved neighborhood.

Russ Davidson, our AIA National President moderated and guided the discussion. He began the presentation with a challenge to architects to be attentive to both process and product. As practicing architects, our challenge falls in designing a positive product. What we saw in the presentations was a thoughtful approach to the process that resulted in successful physical outcomes.

I've used the word "collaborate" a lot in this post and perhaps it's appropriate that I end with this word as a fitting summary to the overall spirit and tone of Habitat III.

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*Catherine Baker, AIA, is a Principal at Landon Bone Baker Architects. She served as a member of the AIA's official delegation to Habitat III, which was held in Quito, Ecuador, on October 17-20.*



# NOTES FROM HABITAT III

By Kathy Dorgan, FAIA



Over a billion people lack adequate housing. Living in unsafe and unhealthy conditions these families suffer daily. Without a decent home they are denied the fundamental right to achieve their potential. This crisis is worsening as world population increases, war destroys communities, rural inhabitants migrate to urban centers, and rising seas inundate coastal settlements.

Despite the immense scope of this problem, the New Urban Agenda adopted at Habitat III calls for real solutions, not simply mitigating the ill effects of this catastrophe. Many of the sessions at the Habitat III conference were devoted to sharing successes. Some of the highlights, for me, from these discussions follow.

- **Value Capture** recognizes that private landowners often benefit from public investments and actions. Through value capture a fair share of this unearned windfall is returned to the public. For example, London's Crossrail project was funded in part by a special assessment for local property owners. Inclusionary zoning in over 500 communities in the US contributes to the production of affordable housing.

The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, [www.lincolinst.edu](http://www.lincolinst.edu), is a key participant in conversations about implementation of value capture programs and policies throughout the world.

- **Water Policy** is critical to maintaining livable communities. Without concerted action, by 2050 twenty percent of the world's population will be at risk of flooding and forty percent will be impacted by water scarcity. Shenzhen's Sponge City concept for rainwater harvesting, non-capital solutions to water and management in the Mackay Region of Australia and the Netherlands Delta Programme for protecting the country against flooding are proven models for addressing water challenges.

The International Water Association, [www.iwa-network.org](http://www.iwa-network.org), led many of the Habitat discussions and provides a plethora of resources for both policy and practice.

- **The Right to Housing** is being achieved through innovative participatory practices combined with public / charitable / private partnerships. An example is the transformation of the

Yerwada slum area near Pune, India though a combination of local initiative and labor with the support of technical assistance and outside funding for 90% of construction costs (about the equivalent of \$4800 per unit). Mayor Libby Schaaf of Oakland spoke about her initiatives to provide equitable housing in the face of escalating housing costs throughout the Bay Area. Cost effective strategies used to eliminate chronic homelessness in Utah and my home state of Connecticut were also featured.

Learn more about the UN Habitat initiatives at [unhabitat.org](http://unhabitat.org).

I look forward to the AIA Housing and Community Development Network continuing as an active partner in Habitat and as significant contributors to providing a safe home for all.

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*Kathy Dorgan, FAIA, is part of the AIA's Housing Knowledge Community, which serves over 10,000 AIA members by providing webinars, research grants, training and workshops, as well as celebrating excellent design in housing.*



# THINKING BIGGER FOR CHANGE

By Simon Ha, AIA



Attending Habitat III was an eye opening experience for me. As architects, we are consumed with individual projects, often playing within the constraints we are given. We aspire to make the world better one project at a time. As a Citizen Architect, I always believed that we as architects are equipped to impact a bigger change through our ability to imagine and anticipate the outcome. My experience at Habitat III solidified the belief that as a Citizen Architect, I have an opportunity to influence the built environment on a broader scale.

In Quito, Ecuador where the conference was held, there were about 30,000 people from 167 countries. We had a common goal to achieve equity and economic opportunities for all citizens of the world, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, and to provide adequate housing, services, and opportunity for upward mobility. Surrounded in this context, my thoughts returned home to Los Angeles where I live and practice. Los Angeles County has about 47,000 homeless individuals living in the streets, along freeways, riverbanks, under bridges, and any other left over space where they can occupy and be left alone. There are more than half a

million homeless individuals in the U.S. More than quarter of them are children. As a world leader in human rights, how can we allow this condition to exist in our own back yard?

During our 4 days at Habitat III, we attended numerous events and met hundreds of people and discussed many points of views. Like a sponge, we absorbed as much as we can while reflecting the world experience with our own way of living back home, I realized that there is one fundamental American value that results in half a million homeless Americans. In the U.S., housing is not a right. Housing is earned and this is fundamental to the American dream. Home ownership is promoted through the largest federal tax subsidy. But as the gap grows between the haves and have nots, the dream is unattainable for many. Our constitution guarantees life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness but does not guarantee shelter, one of the basic necessities of life.

I hope someday we can shift our values in believing that housing is a basic human right. I hope that someday we can all agree that providing adequate housing and safe and inclusive communities for all our citizens is a duty of our society. Architects are the trusted

advisors to the policy makers and communities. We need to participate in shaping policies and regulations that impact housing production and community development and design. We have the opportunity to influence the influencers.

By 2050, The United Nations predicts that the world's urban population will nearly double. The New Urban Agenda sets a global goal to achieve adequate housing, sustained and inclusive economic growth, social and cultural development, and environmental protection for all people of the world. This can be done by readdressing the way cities and human settlements are planned, designed, financed, developed, governed, and managed. Engage in your community, whether local or global, and be part of an effort to change and improve lives. In 2036, UN Habitat will reconvene. I highly recommend finding your way to participate.

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*Simon Ha, AIA, is a Partner and the Urban Mixed-use Practice Leader at Steinberg in Los Angeles. He is the current Chair of the AIA Housing Knowledge Community, Executive Committee Member on Skid Row Housing Trust, Zoning Advisory Committee Member for the Los Angeles Department of City Planning, and involved in various other organizations around design, policy, development, and community engagement.*



# CLOSING THOUGHTS

By Jamie Blosser, AIA



The New Urban Agenda (NUA) is an amazing testament to the coming together of people from every corner of the globe at Habitat III, and a guideline to help benchmark global aspirations toward established Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The NUA references a shared vision of “cities for all,” which is a beautiful antidote to growing xenophobic and isolationist tendencies across the world. However, the NUA is not a blueprint - it does not outline paths toward implementation.

As a global document, the NUA requires flexibility and adaptability, so that each country, region, and city is responsible to work toward SDGs in ways that are culturally, socially, geographically, and politically relevant. This responsibility provides an exceptional opportunity for architects around the world to demonstrate leadership at the national, state and local levels in at least four ways - through education, meaningful and inclusive engagement, policy, and transdisciplinary approaches.

## EDUCATION

*“We recognize that urban form, infrastructure and building design are among the greatest drivers of cost and resource efficiencies...by fostering energy efficiency, renewable energy, resilience, productivity, environmental protection and sustainable growth in the urban economy.” - NUA*

Architects have learned to meaningfully convey difficult technical concepts to our clients, and we are always searching for ways to balance project budgets with long term sustainability and resiliency. We need to get better at seeing beyond each project and educating our clients on the critical importance of a larger, systems-based approach to a healthy built environment.

This requires encouraging our clients to think of their project as part of an entire urban ecosystem that contributes to or detracts from the overall public good. We need new evaluation tools, beyond a single project’s life cycle costs or LEED certification, that places each project within a larger urban context where it can be rated on its sustainability, resilience, and equity metrics.

## INCLUSIVE ENGAGEMENT

*“We encourage effective participation and collaboration among all relevant stakeholders, including local governments, the private sector and civil society, women, organizations representing youth, as well as those representing persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples...migrant associations and cultural associations, in order to...identify and address existing and emerging challenges.”- NUA*

Inclusive engagement is essential to a more equitable society, and public interest architects have been working for years to effectively integrate traditionally marginalized voices into the design process. This work requires trust-building and a sensitivity to the historical and generational traumas of marginalized communities, whether they are inner city or rural, indigenous or immigrant. While this work requires more time than a standard Early Neighborhood Notification process, it has far-reaching results that impact health and wellbeing, public safety, economic development, and youth education.

Organizations such as the Association for Community Design, Design Corps’ Public Interest Design Institute, the Enterprise Rose Fellowship, and the Sustainable Native Communities Collaborative all provide technical assistance and opportunities for architects to work with marginalized communities to positively impact social change through design.

## **POLICY**

*"We will support the development of housing policies that foster local integrated housing approaches by addressing the strong links between education, employment, housing and health, preventing exclusion and segregation...we commit ourselves to combating homelessness as well as to combating and eliminating its criminalization through dedicated policies and targeted active inclusion." -NUA*

A tremendous number of new policies at every level will be necessary to implement the NUA over the next twenty years, and architects have ample opportunities to help build inclusionary and innovative policy that promotes good design and supports healthy communities. Education on the issues is critical; to that end, the AIA and its partners should implement more CEU courses focusing on the details and impact of specific policy efforts. This could include courses on policies set by our state housing finance agencies; how the burden of housing and transportation costs relate to inclusionary zoning; or the long-term health impacts and societal costs of homelessness.

There are also many architects working for the public good in leadership positions that directly impact policy, such as Shaun Donovan, the Housing Secretary under President Obama; Raymond Dehn, who is running for Mayor of Minneapolis; and Kathy Dorgan, who serves on the board of the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority, which is an organization that has committed to – and is well on their way to - ending homelessness in Connecticut. Let's celebrate these architects who have chosen a less traditional path in order to bring deep knowledge about the built environment to policymaking.

## **TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES**

*"We commit ourselves to promoting the creation and maintenance of well-connected and well-distributed networks of... accessible, green and quality public spaces, to improving the resilience of cities to disasters and climate change... to improving food security and nutrition, physical and mental health... to reducing noise and promoting attractive and liveable cities, human settlements and urban landscapes and to prioritizing the conservation of endemic species."-NUA*

Any solutions to global urbanization require a systems-based approach, and there are many opportunities to be less isolated within our specialties these days, thanks to BIM and integrated design approaches. However, the complexity of global urbanization requires that we move beyond interdisciplinary to transdisciplinary approaches. Swedish environmental researcher Malin Mobjörk defines transdisciplinarity as a "practice that transgresses and transcends disciplinary boundaries, including the development of common language and novel or unique methodologies that integrate the fields and disciplines. The cross-fertilization of ideas yields both an expanded vision of the problem at hand and more imaginative solutions."

Architects are very good at synthesizing highly technical or complex issues and conveying them elegantly and simply. However, transdisciplinarity requires new skills. As Jess Zimbabwe of the Urban Land Institute has written, transdisciplinarity "practitioners need not only in-depth knowledge and know-how of the disciplines involved, but skills in moderation, mediation, adult learning, and transfer of knowledge." In other words, Zimbabwe describes the skills that most public interest designers employ in working with marginalized communities as essential for all architects in tackling the wicked problems of global urbanization.

## **CONCLUSION**

Habitat III was an international convening of heads of state, policymakers and decision makers at every level, leaders of philanthropy and grassroots organizations, and changemakers from all walks of life, meeting to discuss the future of our world in terms of the sustainability and equity of our built environments.

Architects know how critical good design - and good design policy - is to building a better future, which is why it is remarkable that Habitat III was the first Habitat convening since its inception in 1976 that the AIA formally attended. This is an exciting moment to be an architect, and I encourage you to join the Housing Knowledge Community at the vanguard of implementing the New Urban Agenda and demonstrating leadership at the country, state and local levels. Together, we can re-imagine a better and more equitable world.





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The AIA Housing Knowledge Community tracks housing issues and develops relationships with industry stakeholders to encourage and promote safe, attractive, accessible, and affordable housing for all Americans. The AIA's Knowledge Communities offer members a personalized design- and practice-based experience that provides knowledge-sharing, networking, and leadership opportunities.

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The Housing Knowledge Community plans to continue travel and work/study programs for professional development and service learning, and to broaden the base of the AIA membership and other practitioners engaged in Housing, Historic Preservation and Sustainability.

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