



## Letter from the Editors

*By Rena M. Klein, FAIA and Donald Simpson, AIA*

Speaking broadly, architects need more than money to find meaning in their work. Participating in design for the public good, and serving the underserved, is loosely known as engaging in socially responsible architecture. An increasing number of design professionals are finding their skills make them uniquely capable of positively impacting their local communities, and the lives of those far away.

This quarter, the PMKC Digest is highlighting the diverse ways in which architects participate in direct action to improve lives, communities and the environment. We start with the preface from a book written by David Hinson and Justin Miller from the Auburn School of Architecture, Planning, & Landscape Architecture on the collaborations with Habitat for Humanity. This is followed by the story of "ABOD Shelters" in which American architects take on the challenge of affordable shelter for people of developing countries. They created a sturdy home of lightweight materials that can be built by one family in one day and describe the places in South Africa where they have already been constructed.

Back in the United States, this issue has an article about HOK IMPACT, which describes how a large firm can use its resources to participate in pro-bono work to benefit the public interest and to serve those in need. Small design organizations, such as community design centers can also have a big impact. This is described in an article about the effort and impact of establishing a community storefront space in a hard-hit Detroit neighborhood.

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*By David Hinson, FAIA-* In the summer of 2001, as I was planning my first design-build collaboration with Habitat for Humanity®, I discussed the impending

project with Samuel Mockbee, my Auburn colleague and founder of Auburn's acclaimed Rural Studio. Mockbee listened carefully to my plans and offered encouragement and advice, and a note of caution. He said, "Millard Fuller called me one day and tried to convince me that the Rural Studio should be designing homes for Habitat. I told him we would be happy to, provided he would commit to building a truly decent house."

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## A Dream Realized: Every Family Deserves to Live in a Home Designed by an Architect



*By Doug Sharp*- It is not easy to champion an altruistic venture in the best of economic times let alone during America's great recession that expanded into a global financial crisis. Yet, I would not change a thing. The journey of hope that we - my colleagues, our volunteers and I have been on together has been full of life lessons and memorable moments.

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## HOK Impact- Design Making a Difference

*By Sarah Dirs*a- What happens when an international design firm mobilizes to make the world a better place through service and philanthropy? IMPACT. That is exactly what our intent was when in 2010 a handful of HOK employees from offices across the United States came together in a grassroots effort to increase our culture of socially responsibility – responsibility to our clients, to our employees and to our communities.

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## The Collaborative Design Center Process



*By Ceara O'Leary*- This coming year the Detroit Collaborative Design Center ([DCDC](#)) will celebrate its 20th anniversary. Early in the new wave of community design centers—which build on the foundations of design centers originating in the 1960s and 70s—DCDC emphasizes collaborative community design in name and practice. With a portfolio ranging from award-winning homeless shelters and graffiti galleries to neighborhood master plans and green infrastructure visions, DCDC has long collaborated with community-based clients.

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## Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge: AIA Connecticut's Volunteer Leadership Encourages a Strong Design Solution

By David Barkin, AIA - AIA Connecticut played a pivotal role influencing a monumental bridge now under construction along the interstate 95 in New Haven Connecticut. Without its advocacy and the volunteerism of its members it is unlikely a design as significant as the one under construction would have been realized.

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## The Value of Doing Good



By Donna J. Corlew, FSMPS, CPSM- With the holiday season mere weeks away, design firms are discussing charities and initiatives to support. For many firms, though, the thought of “doing good” is not just a seasonal approach. When planned and executed well, these activities are engrained into the firm’s culture and provide added benefit to the bottom line.

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## Best Practices

One of the PMKC's initiatives is to continuously improve the AIA's Best Practices. AIA Best Practices represent the collective wisdom of AIA members and related professionals. We like to highlight one or two new best practice articles in each issue of the Practice Management Digest. We encourage you to read this edition's pick:

### ► 09.01.12 Emergency Response—Providing Professional Services

Considering the humanitarian acts of our U.S. A/E community over the course of many catastrophic events this past year, we anticipate that it is only a very short matter of time until our professionals' boots hit the ground in the growing number of disaster sites, protecting the public from further damage and injury in the massive ongoing search, rescue and recovery efforts. We want to remind the professional men and women providing these random acts of humanity to protect themselves.

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**Membership:** The Best Practice Committee currently has openings for new members. If you have interest in serving the profession in this way, contact the Chair of the committee, Dave Richards, to express your interest and find out more about the work of the committee. Dave can be reached at [DRichards@rossetti.com](mailto:DRichards@rossetti.com).

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## Webinars

Subscribe to the Practice Management play list and view archived webinars on [YouTube](#). Recorded webinars are generally posted to YouTube 10 business days after the event. CE credit is available only for viewing live webinars. Dates and topics are subject to change.

## The Firm of the Future: Big Picture Trends Shaping the Future of Architecture Firms

**Tuesday, December 3, 2013** | 1:00-2:15pm ET | Earn 1.25 AIA LUs | [Learn more »](#)

Yogi Berra's wisdom that "It's tough to make predictions, especially about the future," points out the reality that nothing is more important to the leadership of architecture firms in these tumultuous times than stepping back from the day-to-day struggle, scanning the horizon, and taking the long view. This webinar will examine "megatrends" that are profoundly influencing what successful design firms will look like in the future, including:

- Demographics: the most powerful, pervasive—and maybe predictable—of all forces
- Projects: the beginning of a wave of sweeping changes in project delivery
- People: the impending labor shortage—in quantity and quality—as well as generational challenges and opportunities
- Transitions: both leadership and ownership that will challenge firms far into the future

**Register Now**

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## COBie for Designers (CIP Webinar)

**Tuesday, December 10, 2013** | 1:00-2:00pm ET | Earn 1.0 AIA LUs | [Learn more »](#)

The Construction-Operations Building information exchange (COBie) allows designers to extract scheduled asset information to help owners identify the assets in their facilities and to eliminate multiple transcriptions of scheduled assets that occur throughout the project life-cycle. COBie starts with an outline of room and equipment schedules. Into that outline installed equipment, product data, signage schedules, warranties, maintenance plans, and replacement parts are captured.

This presentation describes how an investment in COBie can result in reduced overhead costs and the delivery of an improved product for the owner. This presentation will also cover the requirements of the new Corps of Engineers' Unified Facility Guide Specification 01 79 00 that requires the delivery of COBie on design-build and construction contracts starting October 2014.

**Register Now**

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## Resources

a/e ProNet Scholarship Application Deadline Approaching



David W. Lakamp Scholarship  
**a/e Pronet Scholarship**

This scholarship was initiated in 1990 by a/e ProNet, a group of insurance professionals providing risk management services to architects and engineers. In 1999, the scholarship was renamed for David W. Lakamp. Mr. Lakamp was a founder of a/e ProNet and a trusted advisor to the profession. He left behind a legacy of professionalism and integrity that set new standards in the field of insurance services. Two students, who best demonstrate strong interest in practice management, will each receive a \$5,000 award.

**Submission Deadline:** Friday, November 29, 2013

**QUESTIONS?** Contact [pmkc@aia.org](mailto:pmkc@aia.org)

**Apply Now**

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## AIA Contract Documents Release New Sustainable Project (SP) Documents

AIA Contract Documents just released Sustainable Project (SP) versions of the Construction Manager as Adviser (CMA) and the Construction Manager as Constructor (CMc) documents. The CMc and CMA delivery models are beneficial for sustainable projects because the construction manager's involvement in the early stages of the project results in collaboration between the owner, the architect and the construction manager in development of the owner's sustainable objective and the sustainability process.

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# Seeking Common Ground

David Hinson

In the summer of 2001, as I was planning my first design–build collaboration with Habitat for Humanity®, I discussed the impending project with Samuel Mockbee, my Auburn colleague and founder of Auburn’s acclaimed Rural Studio.<sup>1</sup> Mockbee listened carefully to my plans and offered encouragement and advice, and a note of caution. He said, “Millard Fuller called me one day and tried to convince me that the Rural Studio should be designing homes for Habitat. I told him we would be happy to, provided he would commit to building a truly *decent* house.”

Mockbee believed that homes designed for low-income families should do more than just provide shelter, that they should express the dignity and pride of these families and uplift their spirit, or as he described it, “provide shelter for the soul.” Although he wished us well in our project he was skeptical that the values he believed in, values we shared, could ever find traction with a client such as Habitat for Humanity.

A few weeks later, during a field trip to the headquarters of Habitat for Humanity International (HFHI) in Americus, Georgia, Millard Fuller, Habitat’s founder and visionary leader, seemed to confirm Mockbee’s skepticism when he told me and my students that he equated the involvement of architects in Habitat projects with pressure to add unnecessary expense to home construction costs. “Every time you spend 10 percent more on a home, one out of ten families doesn’t get a house,” he told our group, adding, “This is Habitat for Humanity, not a Lottery for Humanity.” Fuller seemed to equate “design” with extravagance, and he viewed any effort to bring up the issues we were concerned with as conflicting with Habitat’s standard of “simple and decent” homes, and incompatible with Habitat’s mission to “eradicate poverty housing.”<sup>2</sup> Despite Fuller’s inspiring passion for his organization and its mission, it was a sobering conversation for me and my students.

How could this gulf in perception about the role of design in affordable housing be bridged? Both Mockbee and Fuller made helping poor families a centerpiece of their life’s work, yet their view for the role of design and designers in the process of creating affordable housing could not have been farther apart.

It was clear we would have to find more common ground than sharing a desire to help poor families in need of affordable housing. There would have to be a broader set of shared goals and understandings to make our partnership with Habitat succeed.

Architects and affordable-housing advocates have had a tumultuous relationship over the twentieth century. At times this partnership has been vital and fruitful, and at times misguided and destructive. There have been decades when architects have been at the forefront of the effort to respond to the affordable-housing challenge, and there have been decades when design was discredited and exiled from the toolbox of policies and strategies used by affordable-housing advocates.<sup>3</sup>

The projects profiled in *Designed for Habitat*, completed largely within the first decade of the twenty-first century, represent a fresh round of collaborations between professional designers and the affordable-housing advocacy community. Both the successes of these projects and their shortcomings provide valuable insight into the motivations and goals of these two groups and the challenges that they faced to realize these remarkable homes. The strategies that were employed in these projects provide a roadmap for how the affordable-housing advocacy community and the design community can channel their common desire to help needy families into successful collaborations.

Though there are many factors that influence the success or failure of affordable-housing initiatives, one key element is the collaboration between project partners and their ability both to understand the challenge they face and to find common ground with regard to solutions. Understanding these challenges requires a look inside the culture of both groups.

## **Habitat's History and Culture**

The history of the affordable-housing advocacy movement in the United States has reflected the tensions between our culture's commitment to provide for the common good and our enshrinement of self-reliance and self-help: between a desire to provide well-designed and durable homes and the long-held belief that housing built with any form of assistance should not "look too good, or cost too much."<sup>4</sup> Habitat for Humanity, like other non-profit groups that stepped into the



void created when the federal government stepped back from support for affordable housing in the mid-1970s, exemplifies these tensions.

Habitat for Humanity was founded by Millard Fuller, a successful entrepreneur, and Clarence Jordan, a Georgia farmer and biblical scholar. Jordan led a Christian community called Koinonia Farm near Americus, Georgia, that was known for its commitment to social justice, racial integration, and communal support. Fuller came to Koinonia in the mid-1960s seeking a new direction and purpose for his life. After building homes with Jordan in Georgia, and as a Christian missionary in Africa, Fuller started Habitat for Humanity in 1976, based on the idea of “partnership housing” he and Jordan had developed at Koinonia.<sup>5</sup> The partnership housing model was simple and compelling: “Building homes with the unpaid labor of the new homeowners and concerned volunteers, selling them at no profit and no interest, [and] recycling monthly house payments into a Fund for Humanity used to finance new construction . . . .”<sup>6</sup> Fuller’s optimism, his faith, and his prodigious talent for convincing others to join his new housing ministry, helped to make Habitat for Humanity one of the largest and most successful non-profit housing development programs in the world.

Though established as a Christian housing ministry, Habitat has managed to define itself first and foremost as an organization committed to “eliminating poverty housing from the world.”<sup>7</sup> As Jerome Baggett notes in *Habitat for Humanity: Building Private Homes, Building Public Religion*, Habitat has crafted a “minimalist, inclusive theology” that has allowed it to be very successful at attracting volunteers and significant corporate support from across the spectrum of modern society.<sup>8</sup>

Fuller also developed a highly effective organizational model that featured local affiliates led by community-based volunteers, and supported and guided by a central headquarters group, HFHI, based in Americus, Georgia. In the thirty-five years since its founding, HFHI has grown to include more than 1,700 affiliates, active in all fifty states in the United States. The organization also has 550 international affiliates, active in more than ninety countries. As of 2010, Habitat has built more than 350,000 houses around the world.<sup>9</sup>

Habitat’s record of accomplishment (and its success at communications) makes the organization a natural magnet for a broad spectrum of would-be collaborators wishing to lend their time and talents to helping the organization, including



architects. As illustrated by the Mockbee/Fuller exchange above, making these collaborations a success requires more than a common interest in addressing the need for good affordable housing. It also requires an understanding of how Habitat approaches design and the values and issues that shape that process.

### **Habitat's Approach to Home Design**

Habitat affiliates are led by a volunteer board of directors, which typically has a sub-committee dedicated to the task of coordinating and overseeing the construction process of each affiliate, and to facilitating the matching of selected families with one of the affiliate's standard home design configurations. These building committees are frequently populated with volunteers from the local construction community and, occasionally, local architects.

The primary means by which Habitat maintains a home design standard is through the resources that HFHI provides to affiliates. These resources encompass a collection of affiliate manuals that include a portfolio of standard design configurations, along with associated construction details and guidelines for construction materials, construction process checklists, and so on. These templates include home designs developed by HFHI staff and designs developed by local affiliates. The HFHI headquarters staff includes a construction department that produces the design templates and construction manuals, and is dedicated to promoting a culture of building durable homes and to providing technical support, advice, and training to affiliate volunteers.

The design templates promulgated by HFHI are the most tangible representation of what "simple and decent" means to the organization. The designs emphasize efficiency over any other goal, accommodating the standard components of the program—living, eating, cooking, bathing, and sleeping—into a geometry that requires the least possible exterior surface area. HFHI's design guidelines include area limits (that is, 1,050 square feet for a three-bedroom home), limits on the number of bathrooms, prohibitions against garages, requirements for a covered front entrance, and so on.

The HFHI design templates also reflect the reality that the homes will be built by unskilled volunteers. Though affiliates typically have someone experienced in construction acting as coordinator on each site, their labor force most

commonly brings no prior experience to the job site. Consequently, the construction details tend towards those most simple to execute. For example, Habitat's preferred exterior cladding material is a volunteer-friendly vinyl siding, and roof slopes stay low to more safely accommodate first-time roofers. The standard designs are most typically detailed as single-family detached homes, single-story, with slab-on-grade foundations. The homes are most commonly wood-frame and clad with vinyl siding. The designs reflect a strong emphasis on maximizing material efficiency and eschew frills (such as dishwashers).

Though affiliates are free to develop their own designs, HFHI maintains a significant degree of influence on design decisions of affiliates. This is done both through direct means (such as linking access to national funding and corporate partnership programs to conformance to its standards), and through indirect means (Habitat affiliates most commonly have no other source of design advice or support). Though some affiliates have developed a high degree of sophistication in their approach to both design and construction, most are consumed with other pressures. Within the spectrum of challenges facing affiliates—organizing volunteers, raising money and soliciting donations of materials and services, screening and selecting homeowner families, and so on—developing custom design and construction solutions is beyond the reach of most affiliates.

### **Defining “Simple and Decent”**

The design standards promoted by Habitat's headquarters group also reflect the organization's struggle to balance building the maximum possible quantity of houses with the recognized desire to build at a reasonable standard of quality (“simple and decent”). This sets up a series of tensions within the organization that translate directly to the role of design within Habitat. Chief among these are: What voice are homeowner families allowed to have with regard to defining the meaning of “simple and decent”? How should the standard of “simple and decent” change in relation to the community context of the homes? How should the goal of building homes at the lowest first cost be balanced against the long-term “occupancy cost” interests of the homeowners?

Habitat places a great deal of emphasis on the partnership established between the local volunteers who lead Habitat affiliates and serve as volunteers

on construction sites, and the homeowner families the affiliate serves. Though the partnership ideal is central to the values and the theology of the organization and is no doubt sincere, these partnerships are inevitably asymmetrical. As Jerome Baggett observes, “the need for volunteers and the comparative neediness of homeowners creates a power differential between them based on social class.” Habitat’s espoused values are designed to guard against this imbalance. Nevertheless, as Baggett notes, “an appreciable strand of paternalism winds through the organization.”<sup>10</sup>

In addition to an asymmetry of power, there is an asymmetry of motivation. The goal of “eliminating poverty housing” is the rallying cry for the largely middle-class volunteers who lead the affiliates and populate Habitat construction sites. Volunteering their time, resources, and energy to Habitat gives volunteers an empowering sense that they are contributing to their communities and helping to address what most see as an intractable problem. This motivation translates to a heavy emphasis on maximizing the quantity of homes built, and to a culture within affiliates where the volunteers and staff can “get caught up in the desire to build more and more houses.”<sup>11</sup> In this context, any initiative seen as making homes more complicated to build (such as adapting to neighborhood context or using more durable materials) comes under fire—remember Fuller’s “lottery for humanity” comment noted earlier.

Though Habitat’s requirement that homeowners contribute time to building homes for other families serves to kindle a sense of community responsibility in homeowners, obtaining the best home possible is, first and foremost, their primary goal and the primary source of their empowerment in the “partnership.”

These disparities in power and motivation can be manifest at many stages of the process, from family screening and selection to the choice of home location and home design. As Baggett notes, homeowners report feeling pressured to “move boldly into neighborhoods that are often located in reputedly dangerous (and thus relatively inexpensive) urban areas and transform them, simply by behaving as empowered and law-abiding citizens.”<sup>12</sup> In most affiliates, homeowner families have a relatively narrow range of involvement in the key committees, including those that set design and construction standards for the affiliate. Prospective homeowners also have limited latitude in revising the design of the home templates

offered them by the affiliate beyond tailoring the number of bedrooms and making minor interior changes.<sup>13</sup>

As several of the case studies illustrate, this relegation of the homeowner to the sidelines of the design-shaping process is a common source of conflict for architects, who are trained to tailor designs as closely as possible to end user needs.

### **Responding to Community Context**

Another problem that Habitat has wrestled with is the tension created when it encounters resistance from communities and neighborhoods to the construction of homes that run counter to local home values and design character.

This tension activates two powerful tenets of Habitat's core values: the position that the organization should stand in resistance to the creeping affluence of modern society and build homes that express a "critical perspective towards the market," and the belief that Habitat's goal to build meaningful and sustainable partnerships within the wider communities where they work renders concessions to local standards justifiable.<sup>14</sup> This latter position also echoes the prevailing wisdom within the larger affordable-housing advocacy community, gained from the painful experience of failed projects of the 1950s and 1960s, that "above all, affordable housing should not look different from market-rate housing."<sup>15</sup>

As several of the projects analyzed in this book illustrate, there is evidence that the "community partnership" perspective is gaining traction within Habitat, and that the effort to reconcile the modest budgets of Habitat homes with designs that accommodate neighborhood context is one of the key factors that motivate Habitat affiliates to partner with professional designers.

### **Production versus Performance**

Habitat has also experienced a significant transition in its understanding of the relationship between the benefits of minimizing construction cost (in order to optimize productivity and lower purchase cost) and the often negative impact of these choices on long-term occupancy costs for Habitat homeowners. Unlike the model used by commercial home builders, Habitat's financing model and its organizational values establish relatively long-term relationships between homeowners

and the organization. Many affiliates are still engaged with homeowner families beyond the lifespan of the inexpensive construction materials favored by the organization (such as vinyl siding and asphalt shingles). This extended engagement with homeowners has made Habitat more sensitive to the burden associated with replacing short-lived materials and open to consideration of more durable material choices, and to design solutions that make the replacement of major equipment and systems easier.

Perhaps the most significant shift toward consideration of occupancy cost over construction cost has been Habitat's embrace of design and construction strategies aimed at lowering energy costs for homeowners. It is not uncommon for monthly energy expenses to be comparable to a Habitat homeowner's mortgage payment, and escalating energy costs pose a significant threat to their financial security. HFHI's construction department staff have been pushing affiliates to adopt the EPA's Energy Star standards for home construction for more than a decade, and have developed significant corporate sponsorships aimed at providing affiliates with energy-efficient materials and appliances at low cost and at providing affiliate training and support.<sup>16</sup> As with the challenge of community-responsive home designs, developing design solutions that extend energy performance beyond the materials and systems and into home configuration has also been a catalyst for partnerships between affiliates and architects.

### **Architects and Affordable Housing**

The history of the architecture community's involvement in the affordable-housing movement in the United States is primarily centered on multi-family housing and on urban settings. The record of affordable housing designed by architects reflects dramatic shifts in strategy and outcomes, tied to dramatic shifts in political support for publicly subsidized, affordable housing. Though there were a few notable successes in the first half of the twentieth century, the profession's primary turn at shaping affordable housing in the United States—the slum-clearing initiatives and large public housing projects of the 1950s and 1960s—proved disastrous.<sup>17</sup> Among the many consequences of the high-profile failures of both policy and design in this period was the near exile of architects from the national dialogue on housing policy.

Charles Bohl describes 1970 to 1990 as the period of “Design in Exile,” where “the manner in which assisted housing had been planned and designed was being cast as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. In fact, planning and design in general were being widely attacked and discredited as a means for improving living conditions and resolving social problems.”<sup>18</sup>

Despite this setback, architects remained engaged in the development of affordable housing throughout the latter decades of the twentieth century. The focus of this work shifted from large, high-rise developments to low-rise projects of medium to high density built initially with federal support and subsequently (after the federal programs were suspended in 1973) with non-profit community development corporations (CDCs) as their clients.<sup>19</sup> The body of work at this scale produced by architects over the last few decades has been much more successful, largely because it reflects a design process that is responsive to the complex influences of end users, public authorities, neighborhood groups, and community interests. The work of Michael Pyatok exemplifies the best of this approach.<sup>20</sup>

Affordable-housing advocates largely agree that the development of well-designed multi-family, medium- to high-density housing is the most reasonable and environmentally sustainable way to meet the mushrooming need for housing in the United States. Though programs like the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) mortgage insurance programs and “billions of dollars in Community Development Block Grants and HOME Investment Partnership Programs” now support affordable homeownership programs in communities across the United States, the scale of need far outstrips current production.<sup>21</sup> In this context, many argue that architects must do more than offer their design expertise. Robert Gutman, like many within the profession, argues that “architects must adopt an advocacy role ... [and] engage in political action that will encourage the expansion of government programs that underwrite low-income housing production.”<sup>22</sup>

Though multi-family housing is the area of greatest need, development at this scale is largely beyond the capacity of the many small CDCs and non-profit groups that are still the primary actors in the affordable-housing arena within the United States. Habitat for Humanity affiliates have begun to explore ways to adapt their model to higher-density development, but their focus remains on single-family homes and on the economic and social empowerment that home ownership

bestows on their homeowner clients. Architects who aspire to collaborate with Habitat will have to be skilled at working at this scale and adept at working within the modest budgets that come with this market. Unfortunately, there are not many architects who have developed both credentials.

Single-family detached homes dominate the US housing market, accounting for more than 62 percent of the total homes in the US Census Department's 2007 American Housing Survey.<sup>23</sup> Almost 78 percent of these homes are owner-occupied. As Gutman observes, this has been a market where nearly eighty years of effort by the American Institute of Architects to "bring architectural services to the middle class home buyer" has been largely unsuccessful. Though consensus on the involvement of architects in this market is hard to find, the conventional wisdom is that a very small percentage of this market reflects the work of professionally trained architects.<sup>24</sup> More directly to the issue of *affordable single-family homes*, the American Institute of Architects reports that only 6 percent of its member firms report involvement in this market sector.<sup>25</sup>

The relative absence of architects in the affordable single-family home building sector translates to very little current experience within the profession of the difficult and challenging assignment of designing for this market. Though most architects will assert that their experience at larger scales of building can translate to this sector, there are, nonetheless, often significant differences in the ways architects and affordable-housing advocates, like Habitat for Humanity, view the goals of these projects. These differences often make for friction and frustration when they seek to collaborate.

To make these collaborations more successful, the architects and the non-profits they serve must find a way to frame their dialogue about design goals and design process in such a way as to embrace the values and perspectives of both groups. This challenge, and the means by which the project teams profiled in this book have met it, is the primary focus of *Designed for Habitat: Collaborations with Habitat for Humanity*.

The chapters that follow profile the results of thirteen successful collaborations between Habitat for Humanity affiliates and two key communities within the architectural profession: schools of architecture and practicing architects. The cases represent projects from across the United States, and from across the full



spectrum of Habitat for Humanity affiliates—from large urban affiliates to small affiliates based in rural communities. They also illustrate a broad range of design objectives that draw the partners together, including improved energy efficiency, exploring innovative construction strategies, responding to site context, and investigating the potentials of innovative approaches to the design and construction.

Despite the constraints of cost, delivery, and financing associated with Habitat for Humanity's project framework, each of these partnerships has resulted in homes of remarkable design quality. We hope that understanding how these projects came about will help design professions and affordable-housing advocates who aspire to achieve similar results.

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A Dream Realized: Every Family Deserves to Live in a Home Designed by an Architect.

By Doug Sharp

It is not easy to champion an altruistic venture in the best of economic times let alone during America’s great recession that expanded into a global financial crisis. Yet, I would not change a thing. The journey of hope that we – my colleagues, our volunteers and I have been on together has been full of life lessons and memorable moments. While we have come far in making our dream a reality, we press on with faith. Why? Because there lies before us many more ways to provide affordable shelter in many developing areas of the world. The need appears to be endless and the journey has just begun.

How the journey began

It began in 2006, when I and a team of architects, led by Jerry Messman AIA, recognized an emerging international need to improve living conditions for challenged areas of the world that had gone unaddressed. The specific need was a well designed, quality, low cost housing solution for the developing world that could be scalable and portable. Our team took on an ambitious mission driven by social consciousness to design a sturdy home with lightweight materials that would be easy to ship. The ultimate goal was for the structure to be built in one day, by one family; all for as low a cost as possible. Our vision was to dramatically improve the quality of life for humanity in a way we can see, touch and feel. And from that, Abod Shelters® was born.

Collaborative Design

There were many hurdles to overcome along the way to stay true to the design vision while adapting it to be of practical use. The winning design had a distinctive feature – the shape was modeled after the Catenary Arch, one of the strongest shapes in nature. This design required the team to explore selecting the right materials to assure it would be extreme climate and weather worthy, durable over 20 years, comfortable and adaptable for a family. In addition, the materials would need to be non-combustible as to reduce risk of fire damage. In order for Abod Shelters® to be easily constructed in one day, the materials needed to be held together with new engineering fasteners and techniques. Lastly, the idea was to deliver a turnkey solution kit, so it would include all the materials required to build and dismantle so the home could be relocated if necessary. The next step was to identify and work closely with manufacturers who shared our vision and were willing to invest time and money in experimenting with developing the arch, the materials and the assembly. All would pioneer new methods.

As the team progressed in their development, they invited valuable expertise to help refine the design model for multiple uses – including use as a disaster relief solution. They shared Abod Shelters® design to seek input and knowledge from organizations like the United Nations Shelter Advisory Committee and Catholic Charities Emergency Response Teams to enhance the structure for application in various regions of the world.



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Reaching out to the world.

In January 2013 Ab d Shelters® completed a starter village to house grandmothers and their grandchildren along with homeless children in Mokopane, South Africa. The homes were built on the Del Cramer campus through Blessman Ministries in Mokopane, South Africa.

Ab d Shelters® is now making plans to do another build. Two American teachers discovered that many of the local children in Lusaka, Zambia do not attend school because they cannot afford to. The two teachers founded RHO Appleseed School in November 2011. The school now serves 130 local children (and growing), 5 days a week and provides 2 meals per day for the children. Homes are needed for the school director, teachers and children and families in crisis. The goal is to build the homes in a community setting in July 2015 on school grounds.




What was learned along the way?

Taking on social change is not for the faint of heart. We started the Ab d Shelters® initiative during a difficult economic period. Pressing on in this climate presented many challenges but now we have the right design and manufacturing capabilities in place to support expansion where needed with the ability to establish factories around the world. Our goal remains steadfast – if we focus on helping one more family to have improved living conditions for a brighter future, we consider this a success.



**About The Author:** Doug Sharp pioneered the conceptualization and realization of the Ab d® structure. He joined BSB Design in 1978 and currently serves as Chairman from the firm’s corporate headquarters in Des Moines, IA. To learn more go to [www.abodshelters.com](http://www.abodshelters.com)

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HOK IMPACT – Design Making a Difference

By Sarah Dirsra

What happens when an international design firm mobilizes to make the world a better place through service and philanthropy? **IMPACT**

That is exactly what our intent was when in 2010 a handful of HOK employees from offices across the United States came together in a grassroots effort to increase our culture of socially responsibility – responsibility to our clients, to our employees and to our communities. Through a series of conference calls and goal setting sessions, we talked about our visions of social responsibility and how we could transform those visions into a model that would integrate well into the existing corporate culture of HOK. As a global architectural and engineering firm, we concerned ourselves not only with the roles of architects and engineers but also with our marketers, our Human Resources staff, our Information Technology staff and our office leadership. How could all of HOK’s employees have a leading position in this new initiative?

Such was born HOK IMPACT, our firm-wide strategic approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

After months of communicating by phone and using our offices’ collaboration technology, where we made great progress in creating some structure around our ideas, ten of us met in Chicago in March of 2011 and developed the key features of HOK IMPACT. Our “Triple Bucket” approach helps to organize and coordinate our activities:

- **Projects Bucket:** Provide authorized time to deliver in-need professional services for public interest design projects. Employees serve in the role in which they were hired. These projects allow young employees to grow professionally and serve in a greater capacity than they might otherwise, thus permitting their increased skillsets to be utilized for traditional projects.
- **Volunteerism Bucket:** Identify and create volunteer opportunities and find the resources needed in each office for employees to participate. Align office and firm-wide initiatives with employee interests and volunteer efforts. Recognize our employees for the good works they do outside of work.
- **Donations Bucket:** Quantify, streamline and make transparent across offices the charitable donations we currently make. Coordinate employee and firm values with future donations, be they monetary, food-related, supply-related or otherwise.



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HOK IMPACT Summit in Chicago, March 25, 2011  
Photo credit: HOK

This three-pronged system allows for flexibility so that at some points we might focus more on projects, at other times we will focus on volunteerism, but at all times we are able to operate with a focus on CSR.

**Great opportunity for IMPACT**

Approximately one year after HOK IMPACT’s founding, HOK was presented with the most exciting opportunity of my, and arguably most HOK employees’, careers: Project Haiti or, as it is currently known, the [William Jefferson Clinton Children’s Center](#).

In 2011 the United States Green Building Council (USGBC) approached HOK with the offer of partnering to redesign (to LEED Platinum Certification) an orphanage and children’s center in Port Au Prince, Haiti that was badly damaged in the 2010 earthquake. This pro bono effort on the part of HOK brought together an integrated team of designers and engineers who worked closely from the beginning to create a safe haven for the most vulnerable of Haiti’s population.



William Jefferson Clinton Children's Center Aerial View  
Photo credit: HOK

This is a facility that receives children who are oftentimes severely dehydrated or malnourished and stabilizes them until they are able to be transported to one of our clients’ two other orphanages in the country. It was imperative, therefore, that we create an experience for them that is safe, comfortable and welcoming to help them adjust to



their new surroundings.

To make a safe space we designed a [set of systems that are completely independent of local infrastructure](#), since Port Au Prince has both an unreliable power grid and a contaminated source of water. As such, we are generating 100% of the building's energy needs on site and have designed a closed-loop water system. We have oriented the building to take advantage of the cooling trade winds and located all of the children's spaces so that they can be naturally ventilated. Additionally, we will be working with local artisans and craftspeople to create a place that recalls elements of traditional Haitian culture and hope that such details will help to create a space that is familiar and friendly to the children upon their arrival.



William Jefferson Clinton Children's Center Courtyard View  
Photo credit: HOK


The Future of IMPACT

Public interest design is a rapidly growing field in our profession. We at HOK IMPACT are honored to contribute to the movement and help shape how architecture contributes to our communities. We will continue to promote a culture of corporate citizenship, centered around inspired people, connected by a common vision to create meaningful, sustainable solutions that address the issues we care about.



**About the Author:** Sarah Dirs is a licensed architect and the global Chair of Social Responsibility at HOK. Originally from New York, she now lives in St. Louis with her family.

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## The Collaborative Design Center Process

By Ceara O'Leary

This coming year the Detroit Collaborative Design Center ([DCDC](#)) will celebrate its 20th anniversary. Early in the new wave of community design centers—which build on the foundations of design centers originating in the 1960s and 70s—DCDC emphasizes *collaborative* community design in name and practice. With a portfolio ranging from award-winning [homeless shelters](#) and [graffiti galleries](#) to [neighborhood master plans](#) and [green infrastructure visions](#), DCDC has long collaborated with community-based clients. Recently, the office also launched a new initiative specifically geared toward fostering collaboration in community development processes that focus on the built environment. Still in its beta phase, [Impact Detroit](#) facilitates interdisciplinary partnerships working toward the implementation of community development projects by acting as a resource hub and connecting emerging initiatives to established professionals in the field.



Impact Detroit formalizes many of the collaborative values that we at DCDC incorporate into every project. The new initiative also aims to expand our network of community and professional experts that already crosses Detroit. An ongoing project on Livernois Avenue in northwest Detroit—DCDC's backyard—highlights the role of Impact Detroit. The [Livernois Community Storefront](#) is a pop-up community space that occupies a formerly vacant storefront along the historic Avenue of Fashion. A struggling commercial corridor with a rich history and strong building stock, Livernois Avenue is ripe for revitalization. The storefront that our office reactivated was a product of many local partners and coincided with a community event that further met our collective goals. Overall, the [Livernois Community Storefront](#) created a new type of pop-up focusing on community activities and spurring additional attention and investment along the Avenue. There are several objectives for the project:

1. [Create a community space](#). Shared space for events and meetings is a commonly identified need in our neighborhood and demand for the space has exceeded supply!
2. [Highlight service needs](#). Livernois Avenue, like much of Detroit, is inadequately lit by streetlights, posing a safety concern for business owners and others. The opening event for the Livernois Community Storefront was called "Light Up Livernois" and included central floodlights, which lit up the street after dark.
3. [Support existing businesses](#). Livernois businesses told us that we could be most helpful by drawing people to the area. We also encouraged visitors to explore retail options through various incentives and a wall installation featuring a map of all Livernois businesses.
4. [Promote local artists and emerging entrepreneurs](#). Light Up Livernois featured artists and new businesses from the surrounding neighborhoods, many of which are now open in more permanent shops on Livernois.
5. [Show off the potential of vacant spaces](#). We programmed the space with a range of activities—from paint-your-own-pottery to yoga to fashion shows—to demonstrate

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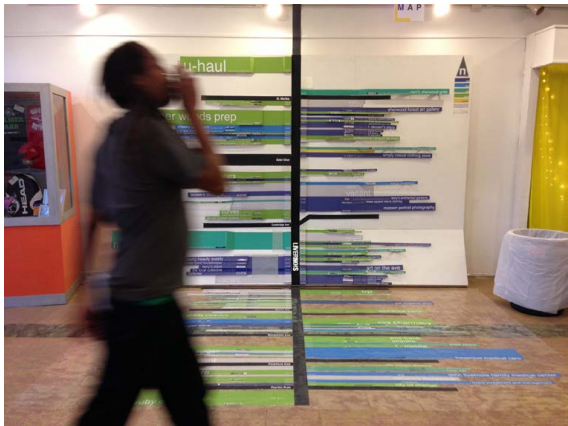
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possibilities for vacant commercial spaces on Livernois.



This project transcends architecture alone, and our collection of partners on the project also conveys a broad scope. Key collaborators include:

- Detroit Economic Growth Corporation's [Revolve Detroit](#), an initiative that supports local entrepreneurship and retail pop-up opportunities.
- [University Commons](#), a community organization that supports the Livernois and McNichols commercial corridors and convenes local stakeholders.
- The Livernois Avenue business community, which is comprised of boutiques, restaurants, salons and other services, some of which have been on Livernois up to 35 years.
- Community members and block clubs from the surrounding neighborhoods who have demonstrated remarkable support for the project.
- [Challenge Detroit](#), a fellowship program that places young professionals with metro-Detroit businesses and dedicates Fridays to serve Detroit nonprofits, including Impact Detroit.
- The Livernois Working Group, group of government officials, local university representatives and other stakeholders who are working together on initiatives that strengthen the Livernois area.
- University of Detroit Mercy (UDM) [School of Architecture](#) students—DCDC is based at UDM and also hires architecture students to work as coop interns.




This project anticipated and facilitated a collaborative approach to the Livernois Community Storefront, which has since spawned additional pop-ups, permanent retail and art installations on the Avenue of Fashion through the work of Revolve Detroit. The reach of the project extends well beyond conventional practice. Design opportunities were limited, though impactful. In this context, Impact Detroit acted as the designer as well as

the convener for the larger corridor-wide project. The collaborative framework within which we work repositions our role as the architect and our scope expands as we invite more people into the process. In turn, our work contributes to larger community development processes and continues to gain greater traction when a group of cross-disciplinary collaborators convenes.



**About the Author:** Ceara O'Leary is an Enterprise Rose Architectural Fellow at the Detroit Collaborative Design Center working on a range of neighborhood revitalization projects. Before joining the fellowship, Ceara was the inaugural Public Design Intern at the Gulf Coast Community Design Studio in Biloxi, MS and worked as a community designer at bcWORKSHOP in Brownsville, TX.

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Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge: AIA Connecticut's volunteer leadership encourage a strong design solution

By David Barkin AIA

AIA Connecticut played a pivotal role influencing a monumental bridge now under construction along the interstate 95 in New Haven Connecticut. Without its advocacy and the volunteerism of its members it is unlikely a design as significant as the one under construction would have been realized.

I95 is the major coastal highway from Florida to Maine. 25 years ago the Connecticut DOT identified the span over the Quinnipiac River in New Haven as needing replacement. As a memorial bridge, Conn DOT considered a fairly new concept called "Context Sensitive Design" for developing a new bridge. The Engineers, URS Corp., studied multiple designs during the pre-schematic period including a concept identified as a signature bridge. Following 10 years of environmental studies, the signature concept was brought to the public for comment juxtaposed against a conventional elevated roadway design.

As architects we recognize the significance of public works and the opportunity to have a bridge designed celebrating its span. In 2001 the board of AIA Connecticut wrote a letter supporting the signature concept and was subsequently invited to establish a group of local practitioners as the de facto building committee. The invitation to participate was initiated by New Haven's city planner recognizing our statewide organization as providing the city with much greater leverage by establishing a committee of architectural leaders supporting the city by encouraging Conn DOT to accept the slightly more expensive (but vastly more appealing) concept.

As an early letter writer I was invited to participate in this committee and was designated as chairman. Architects are famous for our volunteering on committees at local, state and national levels. Because we are known to have strong positions on design it was critical that we remained as advocates and critics but not co-opt the design of the bridge. Though some members of the committee offered **their** solutions we saw greater value in articulating constructive criticism of the design allowing the bridge engineers to create their unique vision. We have all been in the position where the ideas of the committee threaten to weaken our ideas. We all prefer our client articulate where they see a weakness and allow us, as the hired professionals, to address their concerns rather than be dictated a solution. When the committee is composed of many strong minded professionals it is even more important to hold back.

The technology selected for this particular long span bridge is known as "extra-dosed" and is the first of its kind to be built in the United States. An extra-dosed cable stay bridge is a hybrid design of cable span and box girder where the cables pick up the live loads. It has a significantly different aesthetic than the ubiquitous tall mast cable stay bridge. If the latter is analogous to the grey hound; tall, lean and optimized for performance, the extra-dosed version is the dachshund; still a pure bred but short in height and disproportionately long in length. The initial concepts for our "dachshund" failed to celebrate its inherently muscular design strengths. Interestingly Conn DOT, and URS were dissatisfied with the initial ideas of their bridge architect. As professionals our AIA Connecticut committee was able to articulate our concerns and URS was able to direct their architect to develop new concepts that considered the input of the committee.



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Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge – early concept  
Image credit: H2L2

The final design for the Pearl Harbor Memorial bridge has a simple elegance with six extruded ellipses constructed of formed concrete that anchor cables arrayed in a harp configuration. It is an elegant monument to those that served during WWII and has a timeless quality. Were it not for our local chapter and committee the result would have been for the worse.



Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge from below  
Photo credit: Conn DOT



Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge Cable Det  
Photo credit: Conn DOT

Our committee worked through the details of the design with URS, and Conn DOT over a period of about 4 or 5 years. This persistence and consistency resulted in bringing high value to the project and the resulting structure reflects strengthening of the original signature concept. Additional advocacy by our group resulted in making sure lighting was integrated in to the original design through public comment in local news media at a time when Conn DOT was insisting New Haven pick up the construction costs for such a feature.

The contract for construction was awarded during 2009. Last summer the first half of the bridge was opened to traffic. The new structure will have more than twice the number of lanes than the bridge it replaces. Currently the first span is carrying 100% of the traffic both north and southbound. The project will be completed in 2015 when the second span opens and all the connections are finalized. It is currently tens of millions below budget.



Pearl Harbor Memorial Bridge Birds eye  
Photo credit: Conn DOT


Over 25 years in the making, all travelers and the City of New Haven will benefit from the advocacy of AIA Connecticut and its member volunteers for its projected 75 year life span.





**About the Author:** David Barkin is a Principal at JCJ Architecture and a member of the AIA Practice Management Knowledge Community steering committee. Prior to joining JCJ he established and ran a small firm in New Haven Connecticut.

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The Value of Doing Good

By Donna J. Corlew FSMPS, CPSM

With the holiday season mere weeks away, design firms are discussing charities and initiatives to support. For many firms, though, the thought of “doing good” is not just a seasonal approach. When planned and executed well, these activities are engrained into the firm’s culture and provide added benefit to the bottom line.

Firms promote having a culture of giving and service. Leadership and employees have a sincere desire and passion to give back to community—either locally or across the globe. The challenge becomes how to put these words into action. In a nation where we are quickly moved to action because of tragedy or natural disaster, the concept of giving is not new, but driven in recent years by the Millennial Generation’s (those born between 1983 and 2001) passion for social change.

We are familiar with TOMS, the shoe retailer. The company follows a One for One® model—for each new pair ordered, another pair is donated to children in need. Since its founding in 2006, TOMS has donated over 10 million pairs of shoes, and the company has grown into a \$100 million company.

In the A/E/C industry, it’s more difficult to identify direct correlation between effort and value. Even so, social responsibility programs can impact one or several company functions:

- Reinforcing your brand
- Supporting recruiting and retention efforts by strengthening team dynamics
- Impacting community issues and influencing economic growth
- Impacting life safety issues and improving quality of life

Reinforcing your brand.

By pinpointing initiatives that tie into a firm’s brand, a firm reinforces their firm’s focus and mission while addressing challenges within the community. Key to linking initiatives together with brand is developing a plan that fits your overall business mission.

An example for firms today is providing structure to enhance work/life balance. For THA Architecture Inc. in Portland, Oregon, that means building a culture where their employees thrive, allowing their work to thrive as well. As shared by Sarah Bell, Senior Associate and Marketing Director, “We are acutely conscious of the challenges that face working parents and the associated attrition of women from the design workforce. We actively recruit women to our staff, and encourage them to take on strong design leadership roles. We also work hard to retain these valuable members of our staff as they take on strong family roles. Our flexible hours and family-friendly work ethic underpins this commitment. Because of these goals, one-third of our Principals and 43% of our total staff are women.” THA’s commitment to a brand that supports a strong work/life balance aligns strongly with one of the firm’s driving philosophies: *We create places that strengthen the community, enrich the culture, and enhance the lives of the people they serve.*

Supporting recruiting and retention efforts by strengthening team dynamics.

Even during this economic recovery, firms continue to compete for talent. Many technical professionals have a desire to help in a way that has a lasting impact in others’ lives. Firm-supported service activities provide a competitive differentiator for those seeking to be affiliated with a firm who does the right things for the right reasons. As employees



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work together on these activities, the team dynamic is strengthened by working on something bigger than themselves.

As a natural outgrowth of a strategic partnership with a local university, Barge Waggoner Sumner and Cannon, Inc., Nashville, Tennessee, coordinated with the university's service program to complete a safe drinking water project for a Guatemalan village. After six months of planning between personnel in multiple offices, a build team of ten volunteers spent a week in the village. According to Paula Harris CPSM, Chief Marketing Officer, "We quickly realized this effort became a team-building exercise for the group, translating back to how the team interacts on projects." Based on employee feedback, this group has become one of the highest-rated teams in the firm in the areas of communication and teamwork. As the effort was shared with the firm, many employees stated they are proud to work for a firm that undertakes this type of work.

**Impacting community issues and influencing economic growth.**

As "problem solvers" in our communities, A/E/C firms can help identify challenges and develop solutions to foster economic growth. It is an opportunity to engage others—including consultants, clients, vendors, and the community at large. A by-product of such activities can be involvement with and recognition by community and political leaders as experts in a specific discipline or area.

The Jacksonville Support Your Port Community Campaign was launched by England Thims & Miller, a regional transportation firm, to bring together a group of northeast Florida professionals in an effort to get loud on behalf of port progress. Realizing the port cannot lobby for itself alone, the mission was to mobilize the community's competitive spirit to drive port progress—creating a stronger economy and a better quality of life by working with industry and community groups to provide education, communication, information, and other resources. So far, over 14,000 letters have been collected and personally delivered to representatives in Tallahassee, with a delivery in Washington DC planned soon.

**Impacting life safety issues and improving quality of life.**

A/E/C firms across the country rally time and again after natural disasters, first with manpower to address the devastation immediately following the event and in the months and years following to raise awareness of life safety issues and solutions for the greater community.


Following Hurricane Sandy last fall, AIA New York became deeply involved in recovery efforts. Many firms continue to be hands-on in helping out, engaging with government, creating awareness, and training. Joan Capelin Hon. AIA, Fellow PRSA, and President of Capelin Communications Inc. in NYC, serves as co-chair of the Design for Risk and Reconstruction Committee. Kirsten Sibilia, with the New York firm of Dattner Architects, headed the Post-Sandy Initiative, which created a multi-disciplinary, 42-page report, followed by an exhibit and symposium. "This work," says Ms. Capelin, "was not done to raise any firm's profile, but rather to keep the city and region safe [and dry] – and they spill over into the firm's and the leader's reputation."

By engaging with our clients and communities on social responsibility programs, architecture firms have the opportunity to build and strengthen bonds as civic partners. By building connections outside of a paying project, chemistry and trust are developed on a deeper level, rather than just as social interaction. These "doing good" connections are immeasurable to a firm's bottom line.



**About the Author:** Donna Corlew FSMPS, CPSM is Chief Whatever It Takes Officer at C\*Connect, working with A/E/C firms across the US to shape visions, develop strategies, position for growth, and connect with clients and their communities. A member of the Society for Marketing Professional Services (SMPS) for over 25 years, she served as National President in 2007-2008. In recognition of her contributions to the profession, Donna was elevated to the status of SMPS Fellow in 2004. She can be reached at [djcorlew@yourconnectedge.com](mailto:djcorlew@yourconnectedge.com).

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