

# Connection

The architecture and design journal of the Young Architects Forum

2021

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This issue:

## **Mentorship, Citizen Architects & 2021 Awards**

What is needed for durable mentorship? How does one become a citizen Architect? Who are the 2021 Young Architect Award and Associate Award winners? Young architects are making meaningful contributions in mentoring, community engagement, and civic engagement.

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# Young Architects Forum

an **AIA** member group



**The American  
Institute  
of Architects**

Connection is the official quarterly publication of the Young Architects Forum of AIA.

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# Editorial team



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Editor's note:

# Relationship: A necessity

After a year in a half of a global pandemic, many of us have discovered the value of relationship in both mentorship and engagement. It has become increasingly evident the critical role both play in our individual and societal growth and wellbeing. In this quarter of Connection we take a look at how emerging professionals foster relationships in mentorship, and how they create avenues of community and civic engagement as design professionals. We also take an opportunity to spotlight and celebrate the 2021 Young Architects Award and Associate Award winners.

## Mentorship

Mentorship is both the stewardship of knowledge and resources coupled with encouragement. Denzel Washington once said, "Show me a successful individual and I'll show you someone who had real positive influences in his or her life...there was someone cheering you on or showing the way. A mentor." I believe a successful mentor not only creates an environment for listening, learning, advising, and guidance, but they also develop mentees into becoming strong mentors.

Kate Thuesen speaks about how prioritizing the emerging professional experience can be a key part of workforce development to grow our next generation of leaders. While, Alex Morales reinforces how mentorship can be unexpected, foster diversity of thought, and play a critical role in the design process.

## Citizen architect and community engagement

Young architects reveal how being a citizen architect can be multifaceted. Whether it is a role in local government or working in either community or civic engagement initiatives, design professionals play diverse roles in advocacy for voices which may not often be the loudest.

Tiara Hughes's role as a Commissioner showcases how advocacy and research can protect historical landmarks like the childhood home of Emmett Till. Mark Bacon expresses how successful community engagement fosters difficult conversations and builds consensus, and Mark Chambers demonstrates how being a policy leader as senior director for building emissions at the White House Council on Environmental Quality can effect change in local communities.

## 2021 Young Architect Award and Associate Award winners

Each year a new cohort of Young Architect Award and Associate Award winners are celebrated for their accomplishments as emerging professionals within the profession, institute, and/or their community. Through series of spotlights we celebrate and showcase some of the award winners most meaningful accomplishments, personal mission and the value they see in receiving this honor.

## Editorial committee call

### Q3 2021:

### Call for submissions on the topic of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

Connection's editorial committee welcomes the submission of articles, projects, photography, and other design content. Submitted content is subject to editorial review and selected for publication in e-magazine format based on relevance to the theme of a particular issue.

### 2021 Editorial Committee:

### Call for volunteers, contributing writers, interviewers and design critics.

Connection's editorial committee is currently seeking architects interested in building their writing portfolio by working with our editorial team to pursue targeted article topics and interviews that will be shared amongst Connection's largely circulated e-magazine format. Responsibilities include contributing one or more articles per publication cycles (3-4 per year).

If you are interested in building your resume and contributing to Connection please contact the editor in chief at: [aia.beresford.pratt@gmail.com](mailto:aia.beresford.pratt@gmail.com)

YAF Chair's message:

# Architects should stand for something

As a child growing up in northeast Ohio, my family spent many Saturdays visiting my grandparents. Many of those hours were spent listening to my dad's mom, Rita Mary Brown, talk about her work as a city councilwoman in Brooklyn, a blue-collar city on the outskirts of Cleveland with a population of about 11,000. She was an outspoken woman who never hesitated to go to battle with the mayor, spent hours on the phone with her constituents listening to the challenges they were facing, and made lasting change in her community during her 21 years in public office. She voted for one of the county's first bans on using cellphones while driving. She helped open a senior center. And she taught me that politics, both local and national, affects every one of us, so we better pay attention.

Now living in Washington, D.C., I have an up-close and personal view of that reality. I moved to the nation's capital in December 2012, just in time to attend Barack Obama's second inauguration. I am ashamed to say that I spent my first four years in D.C. a bit indifferent to the political theater happening just a few miles from my apartment. Because I supported Obama and lived in a city whose local government officials largely reflected my values, I did not feel the need to stay engaged. I was annoyed that I did not have a senator or voting representative in Congress, but not enough to take action. The White House and Capitol were tourist attractions to visit when my parents or friends came to town. That changed abruptly after the 2016 election.

On Jan. 21, 2017, I channeled my fear and anxiety about the new administration when I attended the first Women's March. Over the next four years, I attended over a dozen marches and protests. I sent emails and postcards to my elected representatives. I testified at a D.C. Council hearing about the importance of health insurance covering contraception, and I spoke at a rally outside the Capitol ahead of a vote to repeal the Affordable Care Act. I wrote over 200 letters and sent thousands of text messages to voters in swing states to encourage them to vote in the 2020 election. I became an outspoken proponent of D.C. statehood, which is the only fair way to grant full voting rights to the 700,000-plus residents of the nation's capital. Perhaps the biggest honor was seeing a good friend take the oath to become a U.S. citizen.

It seems like civic engagement is on the rise. The 2020 election drew the highest voter turnout in more than a century<sup>1</sup>. We braved COVID-19 and increasing voter suppression to show up and make our voices heard. But I worry that this engagement will wane as we move into a year without an election taking up the front page of the newspaper every day. Architects cannot afford to sit back, return to "business as usual," and pretend that politics does not affect us. We must speak up, get engaged, and flex our leadership muscles.

Would I like to follow in my grandma's footsteps and run for office myself one day? I would be lying if I said the idea did

not interest me. The AIA has long recognized that architects are well suited for public service. The AIA Center for Civic Leadership has published multiple introductory tools such as the [Citizen Architect Handbook](#) and [Living Your Life as a Leader](#) guide. Architects have expertise and experience that are assets to our communities. We are leaders and problem solvers who are uniquely suited to help solve complex technical and societal issues. But the barriers to entry are high. Running for office requires significant financial investment, time away from our day jobs, and access to the right networks. Even if we are interested in public service, many architects feel ill-equipped for navigating the complexities of running a successful campaign for office.

To fill this gap, AIA Pennsylvania sponsored Resolution 21-2 at the AIA Annual Meeting in June. Named the Architect-Elect Initiative, the resolution called for the AIA to recruit, train, and support members in their campaigns for national, state, and local elections. AIA members need these resources to help us leverage our skills so we can run for something – whether it be for a spot on our school board or an open seat in Congress. I would love to see an architect in the White House one day, but that will happen only with dedicated efforts that go beyond the introductory tools that the AIA provides now. I'm pleased to report that the resolution passed with 3748 in favor and 1323 against.

On a recent Young Architects Forum conference call, our advocacy director, Monica Blasko, issued a challenge to the committee. She asked every YAF member to take one action of civic engagement before our next meeting. I extend this challenge to all of you.

Identify something that drives you, and get involved. You can start small, like attending a community meeting, zoning hearing, or historic review board hearing. Or you could take steps toward something bigger, like inquiring about serving on a board or volunteering for a community organization. And consider running for office if the right opportunity comes along. All that matters is that you start. Because yes, we are architects, but we are citizens first.

**Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup><https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2020/elections/voter-turnout/>



**Abigail R. Brown, AIA**

*Brown is an associate at Hickok Cole in Washington, D.C., where she works as a project architect on multifamily and mixed-use projects. She serves as the 2021 YAF chair.*

President's message:

# “Build Back Better” is a call to action for Citizen Architects

Just a few weeks ago, perhaps the most capable and digitally attuned cohort of architecture students graduated — in both virtual and in-person ceremonies. We've all adapted in these transformational months, but perhaps no group has proved more adaptable than the class of 2021. Their victory in receiving those B.Archs. and M.Archs. during an incredibly challenging year is the profession's victory and an inspiring show of resilience

These graduates are poised to be citizen architects who will help the profession elevate our efforts to live our values — bringing fresh energy to bear on longstanding challenges.

Their bedrock belief in environmental justice isn't too dissimilar to those of us who lived through the energy crisis 40 years ago or the ongoing civil rights crisis that didn't just begin in 1968 and certainly hasn't reached its conclusion.

Their bedrock belief in social equity shouldn't be so surprising if you've been paying attention to the gaps our profession has struggled to close for women, for our colleagues of color, or for differently abled architects who struggle with aspects of our built environment that everyone else seems to take for granted.

This new generation of architects is joining the profession at a pivotal moment. As the world works to recover from a once-in-a-century health crisis, the architecture community's obligation to protect health, safety, and welfare has new urgency. As the nation enters a new chapter in a racial justice struggle confronted by far too many generations, our mission to build a more sustainable, just, and equitable world has new momentum.

The twin crises that defined 2020 have opened a door for progress in 2021 and beyond. As a society, we're re-evaluating how we live, work, and learn — shining a bright spotlight on the

impact of the built environment. The Biden administration's recovery motto — “Build Back Better” — says it all. The architecture profession's opportunity has never been greater, our expertise never more relevant.

For a profession that exists in partnership with clients, government officials, and community leaders, the call to Build Back Better is a clear opportunity for citizen architects to step forward and lead as the innovators we always have been.

To seize this moment, architects must embrace divergent voices and disruptive ideas, and in doing so, create spaces for fairness and justice to exist. We must embrace the multi-faceted dimensions of our experience and use this perspective to lead within our sphere of influence and beyond.

I speak often of the importance of architects as First Adapters. My meaning is simple: Our profession's unique skills, and capacity to envision a better world, can help our communities adapt. When we adapt, our communities are prepared in advance to weather whatever storms and health crises may come. And when we're prepared, the impacts are less destructive, and recovery is faster and more equitable.

This adaptation doesn't happen by accident. It happens by design. The adaptations we've adopted in the past year — finding new efficiencies and accelerating the use of virtual technologies — have made the profession even more advanced and sustainable. We've never had a better opportunity to transform the built environment, and we've never been better equipped to do so.

By focusing on our values and embracing our diversity, the profession can harness the power of design to be the citizen architects our communities need.



**Peter J. Exley, FAIA**

*Exley is the 2021 AIA President and co-founder of Architecture Is Fun, a Chicago-based architecture, design, and consulting firm. He is an adjunct professor at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.*



# So you want to be a Citizen Architect?

## Moderator:

Jessica O'Donnell is a proactive and engaged young architect. She is a leader in her community, her firm, and the AIA. She is devoted to preparing the next generation of architects to propel the profession forward and continually seeks opportunities to get others engaged. O'Donnell was named AIA New Jersey's 2019 Young Architect of the Year and spotlighted by the AIA as a 2020 Citizen Architect.

## Panelists:

Tiara Hughes is a senior urban designer at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, an adjunct professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology, a commissioner with the Chicago Landmarks Commission, and a real estate professional. She is a St. Louis native, now based in Chicago. In 2021, Hughes received the prestigious AIA Associates Award.

Tom Hurlbert is co-founder and CEO of a 20-plus-person firm, CO-OP Architecture, with locations in Sioux Falls, Rapid City, and Aberdeen, South Dakota. In 2018, Hurlbert became the only South Dakota architect to ever receive the National Young Architects of the Year Award from the AIA. He is also president of AIA South Dakota.

Trinity Simons has served as the executive director of the Mayors' Institute on City Design since 2012. In this role, she works with mayors across the country on the nation's most pressing urban planning and design challenges. She speaks about the intersection of design and politics at universities, events, and symposia across the country.

## What do a Sioux Falls district commissioner, a commissioner of Chicago Landmarks, and an executive director for the Mayors' Institute have in common?

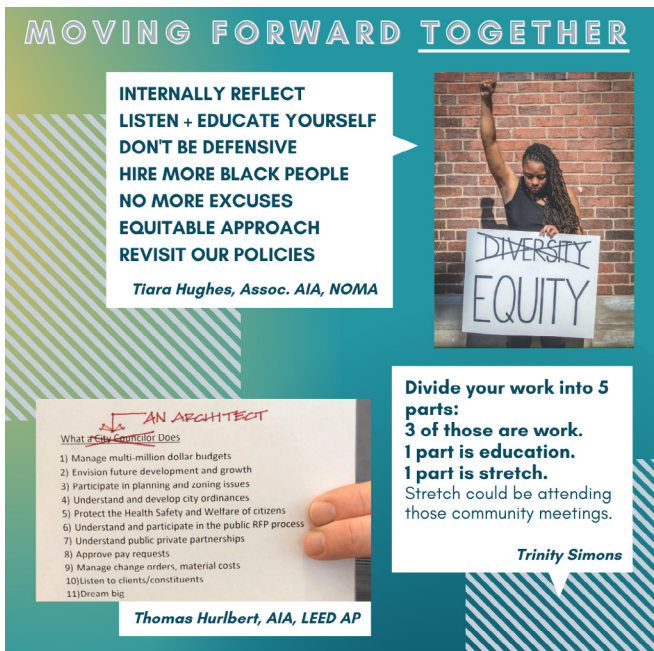
They are all Citizen Architects. What is a Citizen Architect? That was one of many questions three panelists were asked during a webinar organized by the Young Architects Forum (YAF) advocacy work group (Monica Blasko, Kaitlyn Badlato, Trevor Boyle, Anastasia Markiw, and Jonathon Jackson) on May 21. Moderated by the YAF's Jessica O'Donnell, the "So you Want to Be a Citizen Architect?" webinar was a 90-minute session in which three panelists, Tiara Hughes, Assoc. AIA, NOMA; Thomas Hurlbert, AIA, LEED AP; and Trinity Simons, were asked a series of questions from the moderator and our listeners. Although each panelist comes from a different background, their journeys to becoming a Citizen Architect had many similarities.



**Above:** The "So you want to be a Citizen Architect" webinar panelists and moderator. (Graphic created by Monica Blasko)



**Above:** Attendees we engaged with Mentimeter polling questions during the webinar. (Graphic created by Monica Blasko)



**Above:** Panelists offered their advice on how to get started and be an effective Citizen Architect. (Graphic created by Monica Blasko)

For all the panelists, it started with passion and a purpose. For Hughes, it boiled down to the people she grew to know in her community and understanding their needs. Living in Chicago, Hughes found herself surrounded by disadvantaged areas without the necessary resources to grow and thrive. This lit the fire under her to do something about it. Much like Hughes, Hurlbert and Simons found that they were drawn to community-based design. As Simons put it, “The desire to participate is only the starting point”; you then have to establish a strategy for getting involved.

That strategy was clear to Hurlbert. He stressed the importance of building your brand and taking the initiative to get involved when opportunity shows up. However, this process is not a sprint, but a marathon that takes time, strategy, and effort. You need to focus on what specifically you want to change, surround yourself with the heavy hitters involved in that category of work, and build relationships. The best way to build these relationships is with an eager but open attitude, which involves taking the time to listen instead of being the only talking head in the room. A posture of humility is essential. Taking the first step can be the most daunting. If you are not comfortable with public speaking, start with writing a letter or making a phone call to a representative or attending a

community meeting because those actions can be just as effective, and they build your comfort level.

Hughes recognized that as an architect, she had a natural critical lens that she could put to use. She emphasized that you have to ask the tough questions. In her case, it worked out to her favor because it reinforced her initiative to address certain issues in her community. The recognition of her initiative resulted in her nomination to the Chicago Landmarks Commission. Although this seems unconventional, it is not uncommon for someone to gain a position for which they had not even applied. While Simons’s path began in architecture, she is now in an architecture-adjacent field. She recognized that a lot of elected officials do not understand the implications of the policies they have in place. That is why she joined the Mayors’ Institute, where she holds five to six sessions a year that help mayors harness their role in the community. With so much in common, architects and mayors come together in a candid atmosphere to learn from one another.

The panelists’ stories sound so positive and inspiring, but you are probably thinking, “What’s the catch?” Recognizing that architecture or any creative field should be fun and passion-fueled, there are always challenges along the way. Hughes said “Balancing everything is a challenge.” When you add something like COVID to the mix, trying to help people with limited physical interaction and economic and societal stressors can make it even more challenging. But if there’s any silver lining, it’s that architects are trained to manage their time well. There is not a blanket solution to addressing these challenges. Each person needs to look at themselves and their specific situation to understand how much time and effort they can realistically contribute. But as Hurlbert reminds us, “The work is supposed to be fun.” In the end, we do not get involved in civic work for ourselves but for others. With that said, we still seem to get rewarded by the smiles, hugs, and light bulbs that go off when we are given, or fight for, a seat at the table to make a difference.

The other major challenge you will most likely face in public policy is trying to win people over. Not everyone has the same interests, so calling an audible to their agenda while in office can often be difficult. When in doubt, Hurlbert says, “Use economic development as your sword.” It is hard for people to say no to a proposal if the economic benefits clearly outweigh the negatives. Make sure your proposals are bipartisan so that politics are left out of the equation and everyone can relate. If funding is the challenge, then pick up the phone and start fundraising.



**Above:** Attendees we engaged with Mentimeter polling questions during the webinar. (Graphic created by Monica Blasko)

A common theme with our panelists is creating real change and not just on an individual level. Hurlbert pointed out that organizations like NOMA and the AIA can use a broader brush to bring about change on a bigger scale. We as architects must join these organizations and create tangible goals and milestones for creating more Citizen Architects. We need to set an example within our organization for how equity is established, how climate change is addressed, and much more. Citizen Architects are essential to addressing the most pressing issues facing our profession and communities.

In closing, I want to share my own account of how I became a Citizen Architect. Identifying with many of the strategies mentioned above, I can tell you that this recipe works. It may not work according to your timing, but sometimes even that will work out in your favor. Living in Michigan, and knowing that a new governor would be taking over soon, I applied for a Board of Architects position with the understanding that some of the members would be stepping down. I did not get the position. But because I showed interest, I was asked if I would like to join the Construction Code Commission, where there was one vacant seat for an architect. Knowing nothing about the commission or what my responsibilities would be,



**Above:** Attendees we engaged with Mentimeter polling questions during the webinar. (Graphic created by Monica Blasko)

I immediately said yes. I am now going on two years on this commission, and I have learned so much from the opportunity. If I could leave you with one bit of advice, it is to not underestimate your abilities and not be afraid to fail. What can look like failure at first can often lead to successful opportunities. If you are not happy with how those in office are running things, do not complain about it from the outside, change it from the inside. Do not allow yourself to be distinguished by your “thunderous silence,” as legendary civil rights leader Whitney M. Young once said. If you are passionate about something, then it is time to get involved. So ask yourself, how will you get involved as a Citizen Architect?

[Watch So You Want to be a Citizen Architect? Get inspired to Take Action! on demand on AIAU here \(For AIA members, 1.5 HSW LU\)](#)



#### **Jonathon Jackson, AIA**

*Jackson is a project architect at Ghafari Associates in Dearborn, Michigan. He lives in Carleton, Michigan with his wife, Grace, daughter, Ava, and sons, Jonah and Owen.*

# Community identity in the “middle of everywhere”

## 2021 AIA National Young Architect Spotlight of Nebraskan, Mark Bacon

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### **Mark Bacon, AIA**

Mark's ability to see potential excellence in projects and people makes him a successful leader in the studio and the architecture community. As design principal, Mark works closely with the design teams and clients to explore ideas that pursue clarity in resolution, often infused by the specificity of place, human engagement, and performance-driven solutions. The resultant of his process is pragmatic optimism which elevates the every day to amplify the ordinary.

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### **Katie Kangas: When did you first decide to become an architect?**

**Mark Bacon:** At a really young age. I was in the third grade. I drew lots of custom home plans and gave them to my classmates. In the evenings I drew with my dad. He's not an architect, but he taught me the fundamentals of drawing, which helped my ability to visualize space and objects.

### **KK: Where do you draw inspiration from?**

**MB:** I do a lot of reading. Access to different thoughts and perceptions of architecture by the phenomenologists like Peter Zumthore, Juhani Pallasmaa, and Steven Holl. Then I begin translating that to the place I live. There is a profound pragmatism and honesty in Nebraska and the Great Plains region where I grew up. That has been important to me. I was traveling yesterday to a community of 5,000 where we are thinking of doing a multi-use facility (library, daycare, community college education). There was a grain elevator with an interesting pattern of materiality so I pulled the car over to take pictures. I take inspiration from that honesty around us. The regional traditions of craft and fabrication that are in that honest design influence the way I think. Then I begin translating that into my clients' ethos and purpose.

There's accidental beauty in the world around us. On another drive, I passed by this corn crib that has been twisted by the wind.

### **KK. How did the hands-on program at K-State inform and strengthen your professional practice?**

**MB:** I have a deep affinity for K-State since it is my home state. I appreciate the pedagogical departure where they seek to marry the theory of design with the pragmatics of execution. The way I've let that influence me and continue thinking about beyond my formal education is that sensorial satisfaction and that materiality. I'm also informed by how that provides us a perceptual and integrated understanding of the world around us.

One example is a brick module. It is a material but there is a lot of embedded intelligence that tells you how it wants to be constructed. It fits the hand and is thus relative to the body. It has a texture with a part to the whole relationship. That relationship was taught and we had to think through it in design.

That process translates to projects and clients and becomes specific to the place and circumstance we are working in. It's less about the style we are bringing to their place. Every building is nuanced to the client I'm working with, and it doesn't just look the same.

### **KK: What do you think is key to successful community engagement?**

**MB:** It's really important because a lot of the work we do is not with a singular client but with a committee. When trying to build a project that meets a committee's goals, we create a process that builds consensus. We are not going to be able to build a unanimous decision. But if we build consensus that we are solving the problem, then we can be ecstatic about the results.

In order to build consensus, you need the clients, the users, and constituents of the town. They all need to speak into it and have





**Above:** Rendering credit for the Columbus Community Building is BVH Architecture

a level of ownership in the project. This is important because as they drive by or visit with friends and family they can say ‘I remember when we talked about this’ or ‘this was my idea’ or ‘I didn’t think this was right at first but we talked through it.’ It moves the conversation from a singular voice to multiple voices. In today’s society there are a lot of parameters around the way we design. It allows a robust dialogue to occur for a comprehensive design solution.

Community engagement also allows difficult conversations to happen. It brings them to the table and that’s important for everyone to find common ground and build consensus from a common foundation.

The most successful community engagement happens when design ideas come up or the design is implemented through phases and the community starts to defend them. The architect and design team don’t have to say anything. The community defends the decisions, the direction, or what they spend money on. It’s a good sign that the engagement and ownership has worked.

**KK: Do you have a favorite strategy you employ during the design process?**

**MB:** The process gets tailored to the client, but a recent exercise I use involves a whiteboard or jamboard. I have everyone list 2-4 things that are really important to them about the project. I ask them to describe their aspirations of what they want to see in the project. Once a full list is on the board, I then surprise them by handing the marker to someone and ask them to mark off 3 things. Once everyone has taken a turn, you are down to 4-5 things. In the process, the client begins a dialogue back and forth about what really matters. I’m standing back and hearing them hash out the priorities and what’s important about the project. At the next meeting, our team translates the remaining priorities into a project goal and an objective statement that becomes our guidepost for the project.

We continue to bring that up at every design team and we say, “These are our priorities, are we still achieving them? Have they changed?” If we have to make tough decisions we reflect on these guideposts. That’s a way for the client to set the goals and project priorities and that promotes ownership.

**KK: Can you share a specific project or moment around community engagement that made you proud?**

**MB:** One of my favorite community engagement projects at BVH Architecture was the St. John Paul II Newman Center in Omaha, NE. We engaged in a litany of focus groups. It was a student housing project with a chapel and courtyard for the University of Omaha Nebraska Catholic students. We set up the community engagement to invite all these focus groups in, And to help us define this project and its success. There were times when people described, “Wouldn’t it be great if...” or “I know we don’t have the money for..., but...” We let them unpack those thoughts, and the great thing was that we were able to capture some of those ideas. There was ownership in those ideas, and the big thing was having the right people in the room, both proponents and nay-sayers. Don’t be scared of difficult conversations; just engage and find common ground. Being the facilitator provides us the agency to translate ideas into something that is tailored and calibrated to their use, whether it is ours or theirs, .

**KK: How do you wish to elevate the people & communities your professional practice serves?**

**MB:** Where I live, in the Great Plains, design is often perceived as a luxury. With that luxury, many assume there is a lot of expense in order to do a ‘nice’ project, but that is just not the case. So I want to change the perception of design in the midwest that design is not just a luxury. I continue to engage clients and students through teaching in critical conversations about place, building performance, and design for the human experience. Design can happen anywhere.



**Photo credit:** The Newman Center is Tom Kessler

A term is coined that Nebraska or the midwest is “in the middle of nowhere” when actually we are “in the middle of everywhere”. Design can happen in a town of 1,500 people in the middle of nowhere, because we can bring different ideas and performance-driven design. So continuing to work and engage clients in that way.

It takes thoughtfulness and rigor and education. It takes a willingness to step in and educate clients on building performance and sustainability metrics. When we do that we collectively get smarter. It has a reach that we won't ever fully comprehend. We can certainly try to do the best we can in the regions that we work.

**KK: How do you envision your professional practice changing in the next 20 years?**

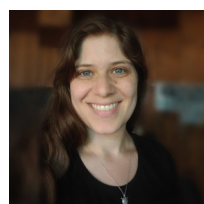
**MB:** The idea of sustainability or resilient design will be commonplace as we respond to client and human scale. The big goals of the 2030 challenge and carbon neutral by 2050 will drive our profession. I hope that architects have the ability to lead that, not just in the middle or left behind. In order to lead we need to educate, do the projects, and speak in the conferences in order to promote and explain the benefits of that design. That needs to translate to dollars for our clients because they need to see how it impacts utility bills and lifecycle costs. That's a fundamental thing for our practice.

I also think the last year has taught us that there is still a deep desire to connect on a person-to-person scale. The public space and built environment will never go away. How can human experience and engagement be talked about in an expansive way beyond the ‘rating’ that your building achieves?

The complex set of variables that we have to design within and transcend beyond aesthetics, like political, ecological, historical, etc. You can't just design a nice building; it has to touch on so many other aspects of our society today. Architects have an opportunity to lead through the built environment and public space.

**KK: After getting licensed, it feels like we have reached an open field of possibility with no idea where to go next. What advice can you share with young architects searching for a point of impact in their community?**

MB. Sometimes it can feel agoraphobic when it's that big open field and you ask “what do I do?”. Architects and designers have a role to play in how we act and engage as a society. Stepping into and stepping up to that challenge and finding ways to express their voice through design, advocacy, or policy. Whether traditional or non-traditional avenues, we can change how our built environment is shaped. Reinforcing that you can do that anywhere! You don't need to be in major cities or along the coasts to do that. Find your place. Find your niche. Be persistent. Be emphatic. Be collegial. Advocate for design solutions that are optimistic and inclusive. We have the ability to do that. We can help shape the cities we visit and live in. If we don't, who will? **Let's not leave that void.**



**Katie Kangas, AIA + NCARB**

*Kangas founded Pasque Architecture to provide story-centered architecture and design. She is building a process centered practice to provide simple functional design that is beautiful and inspires.*

# Introduction to The Hive

Consider a world in our not-so-distant future where narcissism and a lack of empathy and emotional regulation are the primary markers of human achievement and development. A world in which you walk down the street and are met with sullen eyes briskly passing you by, never making contact. The same world where passing glances of smiling desperation are downright reprehensible. The response, vitriol. The lingering feelings, unrequited vulnerability; the deepest ache from the deepest dark. Everyone seems to be out for themselves and never makes an effort to ask how another feels. Worse yet, exhibiting concern or talking about emotions is frowned upon.

It seems wrong, doesn't it? The process by which you engage with others would fundamentally be the opposite of your innate programming, leaving you unfulfilled, unloved, and unworthy.

Now, consider the current state of affairs: a complicated world where every emotion, from ebullience and compersion to ambition and fear, exist in a perpetual whirlwind that you have to navigate. Where walking down the street is met with a flittering microcosm of emotions. Risks taken at will are the vehicle for human interaction. You learn, or don't, how to engage with others through trial and error. Those who care give you tips, tricks, resources, vocabulary, and sometimes a stern talking-to to mitigate the eventual fallout of your choices.

## Is it ever enough?

Can you ever learn to seamlessly engage with your family, friends, and others around you with the limited amount given to you at the beginning of your journey?

The answer unseen is yes, even if your entire being tells you otherwise. How?

## War on visibility

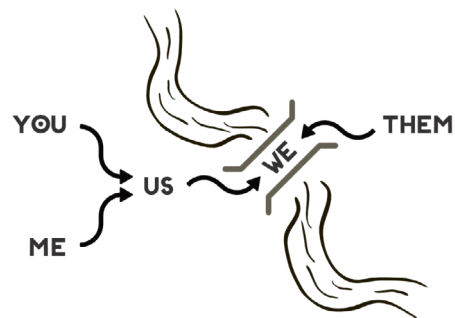
An unknown landscape lies ahead of you with hazy wonders far out on the horizon. Awestruck as you are, there is a crushing reality as your eyes wander closer to the labyrinth of possibilities ahead of you. As you walk through the opening in the brush, the path is cast in shadow and the corners darker than anything you've ever seen. With hands on the walls and feet shuffling through dirt, you stumble onto a moonlit clearing with four gated pillars lined up in front of you.

They are essentially totems signifying aspects of your socializations with increasing complexity titled Me, Us, Them, and We. Each are powerful forces in developing your worldview, representing the spectrum of narcissism to empathy. The challenge you face is not only cultivating an understanding of your perspective, but the dualities of your perspective met with each of these.

The journey is, in part, defined by the size of the slice of awareness pie you have in front of you. So, while the first thing you are introduced to is your conscious self, from which everything experienced is seen through your eyes, it's only natural for you to embody an individualistic mentality. Said another way, your perspective is understandably narrow.

But what happens when your perspective clashes or coalesces with mine — i.e. ME? The nature of our duality will be narcissistic or empathetic based on how much exposure to the rest of the world you and I each have. Our collective experience begets a natural cycle from self-interested monologue to empathetic dialogue that can be seen through interactions based in "I think ..." or "I did ..." to those bridging the gap with "You bring up a good point ..." or "Can you tell me more about ..."

And so on down the line of pillars — will our collective thoughts lead to camaraderie (US) or polarization (THEM)? And if challenged with something requiring resources from multiple perspectives, do these dualities form an agreement (WE)?



Showcasing yourself and your views among a growing population of others who are feeling confused, conflicted, empowered, or emboldened is not only a part of your journey, but also a choice wrought with immense responsibility. This is oftentimes disregarded.



What you choose to say or do and how you go about it is the deciding factor in the level of involvement you receive. The ongoing battle of visibility is marked first by knowing you are not alone and, more importantly, understanding your audience.

### **Engagement is not for the faint of heart**

The people who exist within your sphere of influence are your audience. It starts off small, with your parents and family members, eventually reaching far and wide to people you have never met before. This is especially true when you navigate the audience of others; think guests on a talk show, podcast, panel discussion, or at a community building event. Each time you interact with Me, Us, Them, or We, you are advocating for your thoughts, motivations, and body of work, and from these dualities, you are seeking buy-in to satisfy a particular end.

At the point in your journey where you are seeking buy-in from others, it's important to first develop trust. Without it, your message, service, time, effort, and value will fall on deaf ears. Ideally, your audience listens to you, but if your particular dais is one that does not receive the voices of those to whom you speak, is it truly built on a foundation of trust?

Developing trust is one of the simplest and most difficult exercises when growing yourself personally, professionally, and socially or beginning a campaign for engagement.

#### **PRO TIP: NUANCE**

Simplicity is often conflated with ease. Likewise, complexity is often conflated with difficulty. It is possible for something to be simple and difficult and for something to be complex and easy. For example, squats are a relatively simple movement and are difficult in higher repetitions or weight, whereas texting on a phone is an impossibly complex series of movements meticulously coordinated by your brain and is easy because of the amount of time you've dedicated to developing fine motor skills.

It is seen as a linear progression starting with the most challenging move you're likely to take: Show up. If you don't show up, no one knows you, and there's no reason to trust you.

The second part is being an active participant in understanding the audience: Listen. If you don't listen to their needs, challenges, or desires, chances are, your words will deflate the moment they leave your mouth.

The third step is one most people skip because it takes the most time and effort: Provide value — for free! You need your audience to understand who you are, why you are present with them, and, consequently, what's in it for them.

Only once your value is established will your audience develop a sense of agency and seek you out. At this point, you must provide the same or greater value than before and repeat the process built from this agency. This reciprocal relationship builds a layered foundation of trust that will allow you to engage with your audience on a deeper level.

You might prompt some to engage with you, which will take one of three forms, toeing the line between compassion, empathy, and compliance. Knowing which is which and how to talk about it will give you a leg up on your journey and make you a more effective leader.

### **Woes of the 3Vs**

The root word “volunt” comes from the Latin term for “they want,” and it's the way the word finishes that dictates whether your audience falls in line with compassion, empathy, or compliance. Each one has great benefits and pitfalls. Here are the terms and what to look out for:

#### **Voluntarism**

To support an institution or end goal which is important to you. This is usually in the form of supporting a cause like the Susan G. Komen Race for the Cure or “curing cancer” in general and is typically short-lived advocacy. Rarely will you find someone with boots on the ground for something like this all year round. Your message might be that, and it's important to create that distinction when you articulate your thoughts and speak to your audience.

Volunteerism: to support a social or educational program which is important to you. Average Joes and Janes, otherwise known as superheroes, are the troops rallying for causes and events such as Child Advocates, Boys and Girls Clubs, the ASPCA, and many others. This type of advocacy is long-lived and tends to see a flourishing community of like-minded people.

Voluntoldism: to support an endeavor usually handed down by another in your organization. This typically looks and feels like an obligation, or something you didn't opt for on your own volition. A boss or another higher-up in the corporate food chain will tell you there is an event, program, or cause they'd



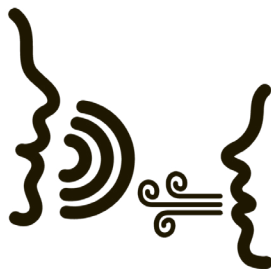
like you to participate in, or my personal favorite, something they think “you would be perfect for.”

Either way you slice it, you and your audience do advocacy work for a reason. It’s crucial to remember the reasons for engagement stem from a foundation of trust, which is supported by your ability to negotiate various dualities with Me, Us, Them, and We.

### **Mindful practices**

During your excursions into the realm of advocacy, you and your audience will be presented with increasing pressures to provide the event, program, or cause with more time and effort. Remember, you can’t care for others if you don’t take care of yourself first. It is because of this truism that you find yourself grappling with feelings of guilt, inadequacy, and shame, but it doesn’t have to be this way. You ultimately want to do the work yourself or have others be enthusiastic about engaging with you, so your priority will be awareness of your needs and those of others.

There are a few mindful practices you can employ to best serve you and your community of advocates. Each one builds on the last and starts with building trust:



**Mindful Practice #01:** Communication is tantamount to breathing, but for socialization. If you are speaking without first keying into the needs, challenges, or desires of your audience, then you won’t have very many people to listen to you. There’s a phrase used in leadership development courses that I enjoy: “You have two ears and one mouth, so listen twice as much as you speak.” This axiom is the basis for training your empathy muscles and provides a solid foundation from which to hone your communication skills.

**Mindful Practice #02:** Self-care was, at one point, viewed as frivolous, fluffy, and soft. Those who once spoke that way are

mostly converts now, denouncing their previous views because they see how valuable it is. In this age of removing toxic masculinity from our vernacular, we are witnessing a need for clear and concise language to describe self-care: an ability to be present with yourself and exercise empathy for the parts of you that need help, work, development, or some other growth-centered verb you think is appropriate. Advocating for self-care can take the form of saying no, establishing other healthy boundaries, or spending time to meditate, exercise, or engage in another cathartic activity which helps you decompress.

**Mindful Practice #03:** Modeling positive and beneficial behavior is required for society to learn and grow. Without role models showcasing the work they have done, you, the youth, and even adults would be subjected to a life where the blind were leading the blind, ultimately completing the cycle with endless repetitions and stagnation. Modeling positive behavior can take form in coaching, mentorship, parent-child bonding, therapy, and leadership. This, of course, is not an exhaustive list. Modeling takes on many forms at many times in your life. You may even create a new way to do it!

Employing mindful practices in your engagement strategies and helping others advocate for themselves while they advocate for you will help build a strong, healthy community equipped with tools, resources, and a working vocabulary that will empower them toward a better future.

### **So, what DO YOU DO now?**

Here on the precipice of your uncovering, your mind unravels the complicated path behind you in a story wrought with new avenues of self- and group-inquiry. You were propelled toward, reached for, and achieved monumental and mundane feats that left you feeling fulfilled, loved, and worthy.

You are tasked with a lifetime of learning, and it begins with knowing one simple fact gleaned from whence you came: You don’t know what you don’t know, so listen carefully and enjoy the ride to a world of tomorrows.



#### **Max Akulin, AIA**

*Akulin is the owner of Hive Five Wellness with a multi-faceted career in Architecture and Coaching, who believes that if we can learn to normalize unhealthy habits, we can unlearn our way to better health!*

# Feed forward

## 2020 Housing and Community Development (HCD) knowledge community research grant recipient seeks to inspire a culture of evaluation



**Christina Bollo**

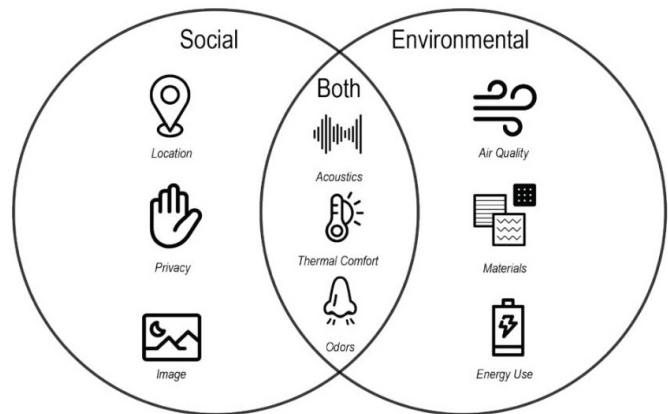
Bollo is a housing architect and assistant professor of architecture at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research seeks to understand the effect of housing policy on design and the effect of housing design on the well-being of the people who live in the buildings. Her pragmatic and ambitious research questions are informed by her years of designing affordable housing for nonprofit clients in Oakland and Seattle. She serves architects, developers, and residents through rigorous, academic housing research. Bollo teaches in the health and well-being focus area at Illinois, including an active-learning course for bachelor of science students and graduate design studios and seminars.

Traditionally, architects have had difficulty measuring certain aspects of their own projects' impact and performance. Design awards and publications further promoted a culture that prioritized the pursuit of aesthetic excellence, guided by style and philosophy. But in today's housing and community development field, impact matters because funding is often tied to outcomes realized across a variety of metrics. More importantly, architects can use health, economic, and social metrics to better understand the impacts of a completed project at an individual or community scale and to directly inform an upcoming project.

Supported by the 2020 AIA HCD Architectural Impact Research Grant, professor Christina Bollo of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign aggregated formal and informal methods used by today's housing architects to evaluate the success of their projects. Through an anonymous questionnaire and interviews with award-winning architects and developers, the research uncovered how architects are deploying innovative methods to measure factors such as resident and staff satisfaction, resident health outcomes, and a building's resilience to extreme weather events.

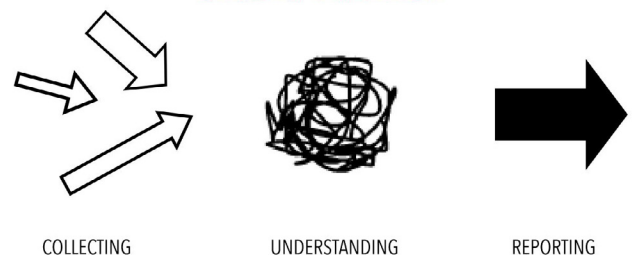
In a May 2021 webinar, Bollo presented a spectrum of evaluator types, "Not Yet, But Soon," "Casual," "Very Green," and "Expert," expressing the range of evaluation capabilities, formalization, and motivations that exist in the profession today. Though all respondents are faced with unique barriers and each expressed the desire to do more to evaluate their completed buildings, they shared innovative and efficient ways to use the time and resources they have.

### TOPICS OF EVALUATION



Graphic By: Yue (Amber) Shi

### STAGES OF EVALUATION



Graphic By: Yue (Amber) Shi

Bollo notes that the common theme and key concept revealed through her practice-oriented research is the notion of a “feed-forward” mechanism for evaluation. The feed-forward method leverages the qualitative and quantitative data of the present toward future-oriented solutions and can be a key tool to advance practice and deepen impact in communities. This idea would further empower residents as key contributors to the design process, from pre-design to post-occupancy. Many firms in her research already rely heavily on resident assessments, with one saying that in their evaluations, “people are the best instrument, just harder to calibrate.”

The research also considered how impact metrics could be used as strategies for national, state, and local policy advocacy by firms, AIA components, and/or partners to both improve the quality of the built environment and create a culture of evaluation. Noting that “social is the new green,” Bollo proposes tying social, health, and economic metrics to additional sources of funding, Qualified Allocation Plans in the Low Income Housing Tax Credit Program, and AIA award submission requirements. The AIA HCD Knowledge Community will use Bollo’s work to inform its research and policy agendas and assist in evaluating housing awards and other programs. For Connection, I asked Bollo how her research could influence a culture of evaluation in firms and how young architects can help lead this change.

**John Clark: Why should young architects invest time and resources in evaluating their built designs?**

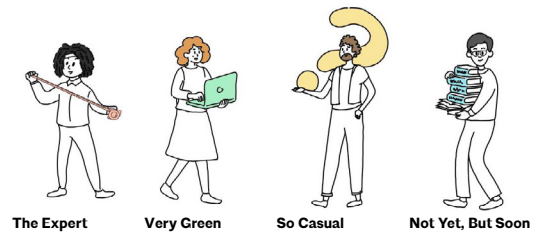
**Christina Bollo:** The “should” is very different for each architect. For example, an architect who is very invested in environmental sustainability “should” also think about human behavior and how this affects energy use. An architect who designs for older people “should” check to see if aging-in-place interventions really work. I was also inspired by one of the questionnaire respondents: “We should evaluate our buildings to make the case for innovative design strategies.” Yes!

**JC: Your presentation and research argues for a culture change toward evaluation. Do you have a sense of how large this challenge is?**

**CB:** My sense is that housing architects are naturally inquisitive and are doing the investigation, by collecting data, but the necessary culture shift is in analysis and reporting. Very few firms seem to be doing analysis and reporting, maybe 5 percent, while 50 percent of firms are investigating their buildings after people live there. Within each firm, there appear to be a few key architects who spearhead these efforts.

**JC: What are some of the key barriers or hesitations from architects to perform post-occupancy evaluations of buildings, and how can those be mitigated?**

**The Archetypes:  
What kind of evaluator are you?**



|                           | The Expert                                  | Very Green   | So Casual  | Not Yet, But Soon                               |
|---------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Motivations</b>        | Learning<br>Cultivating clients             | Energy & water<br>LEED, LBC Green communities, etc.<br>Commissioning           | Curiosity!<br>Curiosity!<br>Curiosity!                         | Aspire to evaluate                              |
| <b>Collecting Data</b>    | Very organized<br>Social and environmental  | Full access to building<br>Energy bills<br>Thermal bridging                    | Observations<br>Visiting with others<br>Need replicable method | Need a positive approach<br>Not fault-finding   |
| <b>Understanding Data</b> | Comparison<br>Client-focused                | Compare to baselines   | One at a time<br>No analysis yet                               | Success through awards<br>Repeat & new clients  |
| <b>Reporting</b>          | Teaching clients<br>Conferences             | Accountability<br>Conferences<br>Other green people                            | Informal<br>Lunch-and-learns<br>Natural mentors                | Other building evaluations<br>Indirect learners |
| <b>Next Steps</b>         | Architects as audience<br>Process & product | Synthesizing:<br>social & environmental,<br>residents, and property management | External reporting to other architects<br>Guest lectures       | Just needs a boost!                             |

**Graphic By:** Yue (Amber) Shi

**CB:** The most cited barriers are (a) fee, (b) time, (c) momentum, and (d) fear. These can all be mitigated by the feed-forward process. Conduct post-occupancy evaluation as part of the pre-design for the next process. Conduct post-occupancy to market to new clients, and you show them (instead of telling them) that your buildings are great and that you’re willing to learn from your mistakes. In architectural school, we have a culture of constant improvement, but also a fear of mistakes because of the final review jury process. Our clients appreciate the former but are mystified by the latter.

**JC: Many in the housing and community development field have strong processes for pre-design community engagement. How can post-occupancy evaluations further empower residents and end users in the design and decision-making process?**

**CB:** Through feed-forward, we can do those pre-design processes as part of post-occupancy. For example, holding your neighborhood workshop in a recently completed community room. Touring community members through buildings and getting their input on past projects. This can also help explain, in real time, some of the constraints we face as architects.

**JC: Can you share some examples of effective and innovative processes used by housing and community development architects to measure well-being?**

**CB:** The interviews revealed many innovative methods for evaluation. Katie Ackerly at David Baker Architects introduced me to their structured site walk process, during which they visit DBA's buildings or those of the client as part of the pre-design process for an upcoming project with a prospective client. Together, they evaluate the program and functions, environmental quality, and the systems. They then compile the data on a simple matrix for comparison. They report out these observations using a simple slide deck template or, if the client requests, in a more formal report.

James Conlon from SAHA described for me their three-part resident engagement process for understanding their needs: First, residents were asked to prioritize their five most important common-area amenities, e.g. resident parking, visitor parking, laundry, game room, etc. Next, residents were shown big, poster-sized pictures of actual amenities in their building. They put colored stickers on each, answering the question, "How often do you use this space?" – with the answers: always, sometimes, never. The proliferation of colored dots guided the discussion that followed in the third part of the workshop.

Several of the interviewees noted that while staff opinions were more easily and reliably understood through one-on-one interviews, the residents were more likely to engage in focus groups or other activities. Some interviewees noted that individual staff interviews worked better than focus groups because the focus groups sometimes led to a groupthink process that was not especially helpful.

**JC: How can young architects help to advocate for a culture of evaluation within their own firm?**

**CB:** First, by getting to know your clients, either through formal at-work means or through informal advocacy or social networking events. And when I say your "client," I mean people at your own level who work for the organization or business your firm serves. So not the person writing the firm the check, but the person working parallel to you. The single most valuable experience I had as a young architect was a program run by the Housing Development Consortium in Seattle/King County that gathered a group of developers, property managers, architectural designers, builders, construction managers, bankers, lawyers, and government folks in a series of monthly workshops over one year. We each learned so much about all sides of the housing development world from expert speakers, but we also formed a tight cohort that grew and learned from each other.

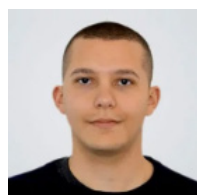
Second, by using the research methods you learned in school, and the graphics skills you have in droves, to start filling in the holes of analysis and reporting. If you're tagging along on a punch list or one-year walk-through, take the data you're



**Above:** David Baker Architects' structured site walk process involves visiting a recently completed building or those of the client as part of the pre-design process for an upcoming project with a prospective client. (Graphic By: Yue (Amber) Shi)

gathering and consider an informatic you can share with your team, in house. Write up a short description that can be used by the next architect in your firm working on a similar project.

And third, keep your very valuable "beginner mindset" alive and well. Keep learning through webinars and conferences, and offer to share a two-minute summary of what you learned in your next staff meeting.



**John J. Clark, AIA, NCARB**

*Clark is an Enterprise Rose Fellow and project manager with the South Florida CLT in Fort Lauderdale. He is the past communications director for the AIA Young Architects Forum.*



# Coaching vs. mentoring

## Managing your expectations for a mutually beneficial relationship

The words “coach” and “mentor” are often used as synonyms to describe a person who has an influential relationship with someone who has less experience. Previously, I used the two words interchangeably and had the same expectations for anyone who was my coach or mentor. After researching the two terms more specifically, I discovered that a mentor may be your coach, but a coach will likely not be your mentor. As a young architect, if you are not receiving the feedback and guidance you desire through a coaching or mentoring relationship, step back and ask yourself, “Are my expectations in alignment with those of my mentor or coach?” This article will elaborate on the differences between a mentor and a coach so that you can enter the relationship with clear, communicable expectations that will contribute to a positive and successful experience.

### Short-term vs. long-term

One of the first differences between a coaching relationship and a mentoring relationship is the anticipated time in which each should last. To illustrate this, think about the role a coach serves for his or her athletic team. If you grew up playing sports like myself, you will recall that your coaches changed seasonally or as you progressed to the next level. That is because the responsibility of a coach is typically a short-term engagement with near-term goals, e.g. winning the spring tournament. In comparison, a mentoring relationship should last around six to twelve months. In fact, a relationship you build with your mentor should be progressive and continue to flourish through all stages of your career. Mentors will not exit the scene once the plot is resolved; instead, they will continue to support you again and again without retreat.

### Direction vs. guidance

This difference between what a coach or mentor can provide is often blurry. In the simplest demarcation, you should expect a coach to help you create a path toward a defined goal, including measurable steps to reach the goal. Coaches should communicate a clear direction, and they will hold you accountable when you are not reaching your goals. If the coach is assigned to you by your employer, you can expect that the goals they craft in collaboration with you will align with the strategic vision for the company and its business goals. In contrast, a mentor will act in an advisory role. They will provide guidance as you request it, but they will not lead the way. Mentors should have your best interest in mind, and they can offer their perspective based on their personal experiences. A mentor will not tell you what to do. Thus, if you are seeking a relationship that provides rigid direction, a coach is what you need.

### A one-way street vs. mutual benefits

Finally, a coach and a mentor will perceive what you provide to them in the relationship differently. A coach will not expect you to teach them anything; their responsibility is to help you reach your goals without expecting anything in return. The measurable success of the relationship with a coach is the timeliness in which you reach your goal(s). Mentors should enter the relationship with the mindset that they may (and should want to) learn from you as the relationship develops. Conversations with a mentor should be fluid and inspiring for both participants, ultimately growing into a mutually beneficial partnership.

### Final piece of advice

Now that you have a better understanding of what to expect in a coaching relationship versus a mentoring relationship, I will leave you with the most essential mindset to embody as you navigate your current or future relationships with a coach or mentor.

A seed will not sprout unless you plant it; a flower will not flourish unless you water it.

Emerging professionals may expect a senior leader to contact them to establish a coaching or mentoring relationship personally, or they will accept the coach who has been assigned to them through the human resources department without hesitation. I have learned that the most fruitful relationships are those that you choose to initiate.

Consider acting as a mentor to professionals who are at your same experience level. We all can learn from each other and be a supportive voice as we navigate personal and professional milestones.



**Holly Harris, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP BD+C**

*Harris is a healthcare architect at SmithGroup and co-leads the AIA Chicago Healthcare Knowledge Community. She is the Young Architects Regional Director for Illinois and vice chair of the AIA Illinois EP Network.*

# A call to action

## The decarbonization of America

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### **Mark Chambers, RA**

Chambers is the senior director for building emissions at the White House Council on Environmental Quality. He is an environmental policy leader with 20 years of experience in sustainability, energy, and urban systems. As a licensed architect, Chambers is inspired by public service and lessons of collective action, big and small, in favor of a fair, green economy.

Roughly 83% of the U.S. population lives in urban areas. Municipalities and the people who design and govern them have a great influence over what the future will look like for these communities and their efficient use of resources. The ability of local governments to influence how we promote sustainability and combat climate change is becoming increasingly important in how we collectively foster change for the better, and it's the role of public architects like Mark Chambers to define how we get there. As senior director for building emissions at the White House Council on Environmental Quality, Chambers tells us about the most important trends he saw while working in city government and how they inform his current role to push forward in decarbonizing America.

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**Gail Kubik: Prior to your current role, you were the director of the New York Office of Sustainability in New York City and the director of energy and sustainability in Washington, D.C. For young architects inspired by your career path as a public architect, can you tell us what drives you to work in this field?**

**Mark Chambers:** I think in my core, I'm an urbanist. I love cities and understand that we are at our best when we are in dense environments where we can't escape one another, and that's where we learn from each other and are able to practice a certain amount of empathy with how we co-exist. When I'm working in climate, I'm trying to protect our future, and it's critical that everyone has a voice and be able to participate in that future. It's this symbiotic balance of participation, representation, and forward thinking that drives me to continue the work I do, and I think we're better for it when we work together to protect what really matters.

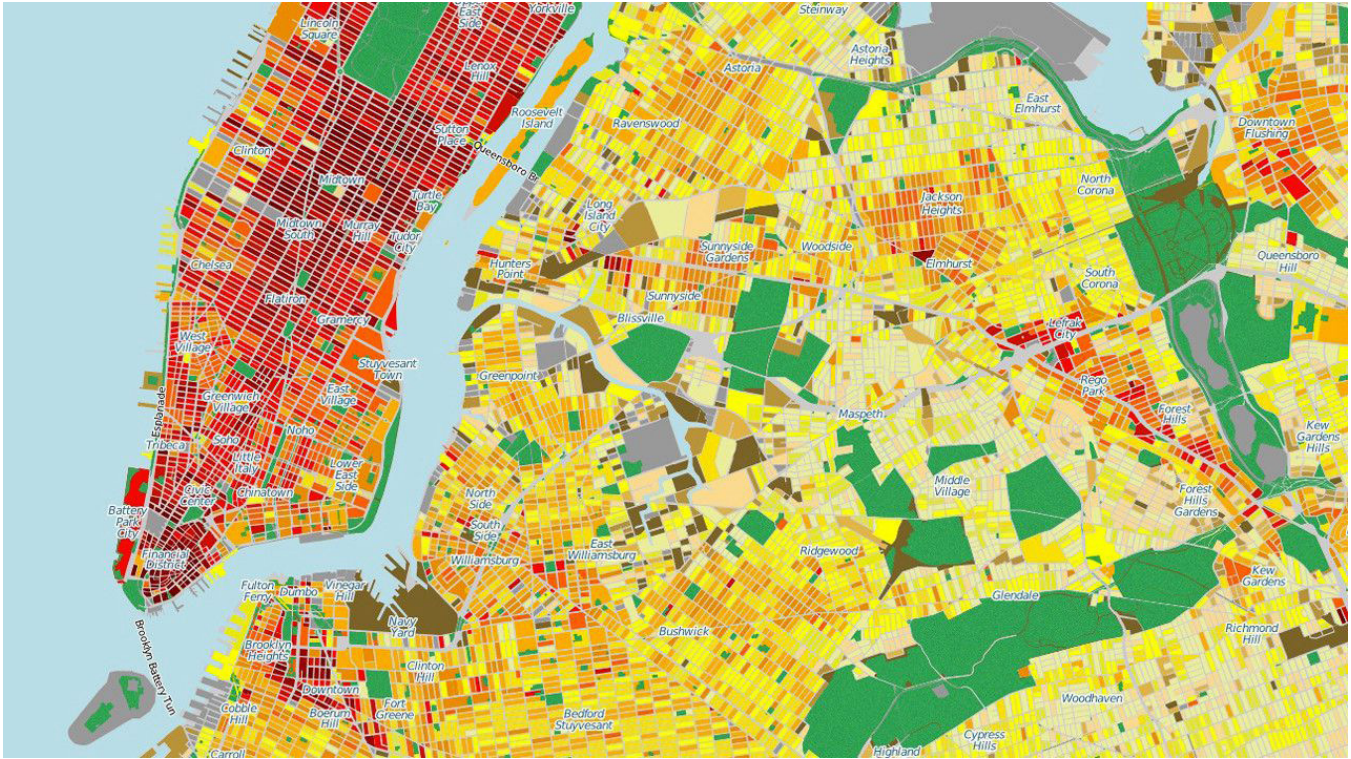
**GK: Let's focus on some of the reform you saw during your time in New York. Due to its Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, New York set the stage for having some of the most aggressive clean-energy policy goals in our country. Through targeting decarbonization of its energy sector in the next 20 years, New York City went forward with adopting the first municipal energy storage mandate. Can you tell us about your thoughts on this milestone achievement and how you saw its integration into your work?**

**MC:** I think there is no future without energy storage. It has to be something in which we are figuring out a way to integrate it into our daily existence. We saw the design of microgrids

using co-generation and small amounts of renewable energy, like solar and batteries, but I think the notion that we can push through technology quickly is also a misnomer. I think the road for energy-storing batteries is imminent and acted in my role as if we're not far away from seeing a cascade of being able to adopt such technologies while still protecting the safety and well-being of everyone in the city.

I would say a large part in my role was about advocacy for the policy, which was more about the fact that New York City is New York City. We had an obligation not just to the 8.5 million residents, but also to think about what we could do to de-risk the work we are doing for other municipalities. The building mandate isn't just so we can reduce emissions by 7% between now and 2030. It's so New York can say to all of its other brother and sister cities, "Here, we did this. What do you need help with? If this works for you, copy, paste, and let's keep moving because we know that the impacts of climate change do not respect boundaries, borders, or city and state lines." We have to actually figure out a way to speed up the process by which other people can do that. A lot of that meant we had to take risks that other cities couldn't or were not willing to do because of their political leadership.

**GK: New York City has also been forward-thinking in how it's tracking its energy benchmarking data. With such an extensive existing building stock, it's shocking to see the data sometimes report that some of the older buildings are outperforming the newer buildings in this regard. Can you speak to your approach on how the varying stock of buildings actually performed and how you encouraged energy efficiency retrofits?**



**Above:** Map of Energy Consumption in Individual Buildings Across NYC Boroughs

**MC:** It was not a straightforward process, especially when you love buildings and you want them to be beautiful and to actually provide the services that they encapsulate. I'm an architect, and so I definitely respect three-dimensional decision-making and how that goes into actually creating a space that makes you want to be there. I don't think those things are mutually exclusive. As we created our policy, we wanted to remind building owners that we can have beautiful historic buildings that perform incredibly well. Part of that is turning things off when you're not using them. The other part is actually investing in the long-term strategy of building materials and knowledgeable building operators to be able to really extract all those benefits out of the investments you've made. For me, the focus was centered on, how do we build the structure of the team to be able to fight aggressively on the new retrofit front. I reorganized and restructured our team to focus ourselves on how we could take the most aggressive posture. The whole game was no longer just about crafting a course to 80 percent by 2050. It was about frontloading the work so we can really bend the curve and have less emissions happen in total. We basically took a look at the full swath of buildings through the benchmarking data. We said, "OK, basically the median performance of some of these buildings we can isolate, so let's figure out a way to get the bottom half of performing buildings to perform the same as the top half." That's reasonable, and it's an aggressive achievement for what we can expect, and can also meet the industry where it is.

**GK:** In your current role of senior director of building emissions at the White House Council on Environmental Quality, can you tell us how your work is building upon some of the lessons you learned from New York City and Washington, D.C.?

**MC:** My current role is particularly important, not just because of the economic impact, but because we're beginning to build policies on the backs of those energy benchmarking laws and are starting to see the fruits of our labor. You mentioned before that I used to work for the D.C. government. One of the quotes that I had there was, "More data, less carbon, zero excuses." I think part of that means, when you start this cascade of information coming out of buildings, whether it's from benchmarking or other data, you create more options for more aggressive policies down the road. Through the CEQ, we're launching a cross-cutting effort to make real change in how the buildings in our country will perform. Our programmatic priorities focus on establishing a new Federal Building Performance Standard and launching a low-carbon buildings pilot program.

**GK:** Hearing about the progressive policies you're helping to form as examples for each state in our nation is very exciting. Can you tell us more about the low-carbon buildings pilot program and how it will create a portfolio of case studies in different sectors that are all leading by example?



**MC:** Sure, our nation's residential and commercial buildings use about 40% of the nation's energy and account for 35% of the country's carbon emissions. Buildings waste one-third of the energy they consume. We spend hundreds of billions of dollars each year just to heat, cool, and power our building stock. We have a really big opportunity in front of us to accelerate the building sector's transformation, to meet the growing urgency of the climate crisis, and to have the opportunity to set an example in the federal government, the largest energy user in the whole country. We can improve the efficiency of our federal buildings and facilities. We're taking a whole-government approach to update programs across government sectors to comply with the current 2019 ASHRAE 90.1 and the 2021 IECC. But we also need to improve the efficiency of the nation's homes, commercial buildings, and industrial plants. Through collaborations between the Better Buildings Initiative, Better Plants, and the Department of Energy, we're looking to accelerate and share best practices to do the real work of cutting energy costs by being more efficient. We're developing specific road maps to guide research and development activities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and we're excited to share potential pathways to decarbonization with our non-governmental partners since we all have a role to play in addressing climate change.

**GK:** Mark, it has been very inspiring to learn about some of the important roles you have stepped up into and to hear your passion for how architects can be part of the decarbonizing-buildings charge. Before we part, can you tell us about your current state of mind and how you're hopeful for the change we may see in our future?

**MC:** I am very hopeful right now. I think we are not going to miss this opportunity to galvanize across our federal departments, across our state lines, and across our municipal and town initiatives. I think we're in a place now where we are the most connected we've ever been on the climate change front, and now we just need to utilize our resources to actually meet this particular challenge. For the young architects out there, I encourage you to be advocates and trailblazers. Go discover how your voice can integrate into your firms and into your communities, and don't be afraid to lead a charge for change. If we all band together on this climate action front, the architecture profession can be the primary partner with our local communities to tip policies towards a greener and more healthy future for us all.



**Gail Kubik, Associate AIA**

*Kubik is the Director of Resilient Design and Research at Fused Studios in Salem, MA. She is also the Massachusetts AIA State Disaster Coordinator and serves as the Associate Representative in the AIA Strategic Council. Kubik is a recipient of the 2018 AIA Associate's Award.*



# Emerging professionals as a priority

## Prioritizing emerging professionals' experience as a key part of workforce development



### Kate Thuesen, AIA

Thuesen, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP, has focused her career on designing diverse educational environments. While practicing architecture and design for higher education spaces, she saw a need for and created a national college recruiting and internship program at DLR Group and now oversees the firm's Emerging Professional Experience Program. She sees tremendous value in service to the profession and taught Professional Practice at Iowa State University and serves on the Alumni Advisory Committee for the ISU Department of Architecture. She volunteered as the AIA Central States Young Architects Forum Regional Director from 2017 to 2020, which provided her opportunities to engage with Emerging Professionals across local, regional, and national arenas. Her role as YARD included a leadership role on the CSR Emerging Professionals Committee, where she oversaw and grew the EP Friendly Firm Award for the region and developed a national toolkit for the award program.

Early in her career, Thuesen lived and worked for almost three years in Europe, where she deepened her appreciation for international architecture and design, as well as insight into the importance of embracing diversity and learning to support personal and professional success. Her passion centers on connecting people and elevating the human experience, whether through architecture, teaching, writing, recruiting, travel, service, design, or mentoring.

DLR Group is continuing its commitment to the next generation of AEC leaders through hiring, mentoring, and investing in interns and new graduates. This year, we have reintroduced the Summer Internship Experience Program to be the Emerging Professional Experience (EPX) Program. All interns will participate in the program, and recent graduates who are full-time employee-owners are also encouraged to participate.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) defines an Emerging Professional (EP) as "students, interns, and young professionals licensed for less than 10 years." DLR Group uses the term EPs to reference the interns and new graduates who have recently joined the firm.

EPs have daily work responsibilities that may not provide opportunities to see or participate in other parts of the design process, disciplines, or business units within the firm. The EPX Foundations program is hosted for 10 weeks over the summer and includes weekly guest lecturers and recommended activities to encourage learning and professional growth.

### Amaya Labrador: Basics first, Tell us a little bit about the origins of this program and your position.

**Kate Thuesen:** At its deepest level, this work is born out of my hope to help others have a better experience than I did when I first started out in the profession. Due to many factors (some of them from my own lack of perspective, others from the environment I was in), I didn't feel supported to discover my own design voice and find my place in the profession. I've worked hard, failed, grown, and discovered a lot as I've worked my way to where I am now.

I'm a licensed architect and have practiced primarily in educational environments for most of my career. I've also had many unique roles at DLR Group due to personal, professional, and business needs, and overseeing the EPX Program is my current role. Being part of design teams that were creating innovative learning spaces and working with students was something I found personally satisfying. I started attending career fairs to help in the hiring and mentoring process, and I also sought deeper connections on campuses through teaching, mentorship, and service. The firm's leadership saw a need for more investment in the next generation of AEC professionals and asked me to focus on working with EPs.



**Above:** First day of teaching at ISU

**AL:** While DLR Group is not the only firm to have a structured program, they're certainly not ubiquitous across the industry. Why/when/what were the driving forces that motivated the firm's leadership to formalize the program and your position?

**KT:** I graduated in spring 2007 prior to the recession, and like me, most of my classmates were able to find work. Many of us recall the recession from fall 2007 to 2009 and how it negatively impacted our profession — primarily through attrition of professionals due to the downturn in work. I watched many of my classmates and young colleagues leave the profession. Over a decade later, some of them have returned, but many have moved on to other professions. And today, finding individuals who have 10 to 15 years experience remains a challenge. DLR Group recognizes that investing in the next generation of AEC professionals is necessary for the success of our firm and the industry. When COVID-19 created new working models, we placed greater emphasis on our internship program and the hiring of new graduates. The firm sees the value in investing in the future of our profession and the firm, and that's why 72 EPs joined us in summer 2020 even though it was a challenging time for our economy and our profession.



**Above:** DLR Group Interns 2020, Los Angeles

**AL:** Why is it important to have this program?

**KT:** By being intentional with the time it has with interns, DLR Group is offering many individuals opportunities for growth



**Above:** Client meeting

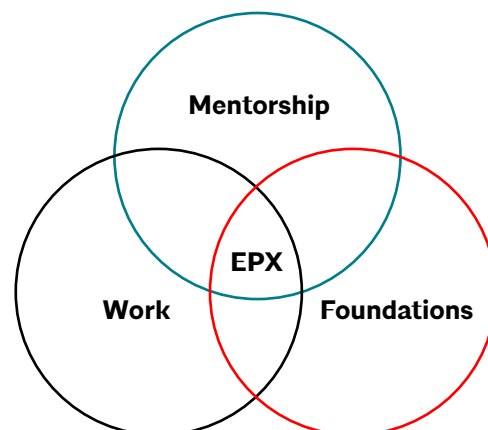
and dual learning. This program is an opportunity for interns and new grads to get a perspective on the holistic nature of architecture and of the potential for experiences and growth at DLR Group. The goal is to provide a strong foundation for Emerging Professionals to build their professional careers. EPX provides a comprehensive overview of DLR Group, as well as the architecture, engineering and construction (AEC) industry and how to navigate it and advocate for career well-being. Professionals also encourage the nurturing of EPs' networks through strengthening understanding of different roles within the firm, and the mentorship that occurs through this experience may have positive downstream benefits on participants' careers.

EPX is composed of three major components: mentorship, work, and foundations. When someone is new to their career, additional layers are crucial to successful learning.

**Work:** Interns and new grads are primarily hired to work with our project teams and are learning while they work with us.

**Mentorship:** Interns and new grads are paired with a manager and buddy, as well as introduced to other mentors during their time at the firm.

**Foundations:** The Foundations Program is inspired by learning in a college course, without attendance, grades, or homework. The program meets weekly and suggests activities to stay engaged during new employment at DLR Group.





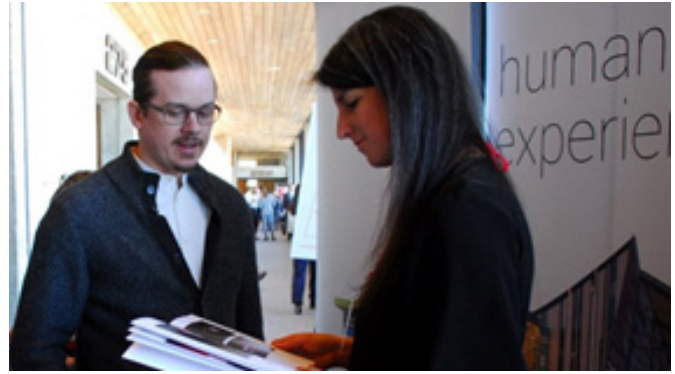
Above: DLR Group Prize

**AL: The program umbrella encompasses both student interns and emerging professionals (which is defined as up to ten years after licensure). How do you design a program and provide resources that cater to the needs of such a diverse group?**

**KT:** When re-thinking the program, we had a rigorous discussion about the umbrella term of “Emerging Professionals.” There were conversations about how new graduates, who are in a fundamentally different employment situation than interns, could also benefit by participating. When speaking with new grads, former interns who are now new grads, and interns, they reinforced that early in a career is a time of tremendous growth and learning, and that creating opportunities that cater to this larger cohort could benefit all. At DLR Group, EPs are typically interns or employee-owners who have graduated within the last one to three years. Many of the ‘buddies’ who support interns and new grads are also within 10 years of licensure and are welcome to participate and engage in the program.

**AL: We’ve heard you say that enthusiasm can lead to action, but it’s not until one gains a platform that one can effect change. How can passionate emerging professionals find or create their platform?**

**KT:** I did not originally set out to build the fully formed program we have now. I wasn’t even trying to create a platform! What I saw was a need, and I had a desire to fill it. I am fortunate in having the resources, energy, and support to keep moving forward, and having a firm that also values this investment has allowed me to fully support the growth of EPs. This has not always been easy, quick, or simple to execute. But with the support of the firm, I can continue to iterate the program and make it stronger each year. I could not do this work without direct support from many departments within the firm, from branding and graphics to practice and design leaders who help in the process. Additionally, almost 200 DLR Group employee-owners are managing, mentoring, or acting as buddies to our Emerging Professionals this year, and they are the ones who have daily interactions to truly invest in the next generation. While I initiated the idea, the program doesn’t exist or grow without the incredible support of the firm.



Above: Career Fair



Above: DLR Group 2021 Emerging Professionals, Dallas office

**AL: The transition between “architect” and “manager” is challenging for some in the profession. What would be your advice to those currently making that transition?**

**KT:** I think it’s important to remember that being an architect has many unique facets — from design and construction to guiding a project through phases and working with clients. The lessons learned in working with others and of guiding a process can be directly applied in management. I used to believe that my university experience didn’t prepare me to work in management because I don’t have a business degree, but I realized that my architectural education at university and in my firm equipped me to grow, learn, and connect with others, which is foundational to management and working effectively with others. I’d recommend to others to learn as much as you can from those in a similar position by asking to be mentored, reading management books, listening to podcasts, and using resources like the Harvard Business Review. Also, look at what resources your firm already has — for example, we have an extensive educational series for project managers. There is a lot of learning that occurs as the transition from architect to manager happens, and choosing to be proactive about learning and growth will help facilitate success.

**Amaya Labrador, AIA, LEED AP BD+C**

*Labrador is a healthcare project architect in the Houston studio of Perkins&Will. She currently serves on the AIA Houston Board of Directors, the Emerging Professionals Committee, and is the Young Architects Regional Director for the region of Texas.*



# An emerging professionals committee take on the citizen architect's role

It is inspiring to live in an age when a “call to action” is becoming more and more a part of the fabric of the architecture field. The magnitude of the results of civic engagement depends on all of us. Many of the impactful movements around the country started as small, grassroots efforts. What are now nationwide initiatives in the AIA, such as the 2030 Challenge, were originally proposed resolutions by components. It is through our civic engagements that we make real-life changes, which can start from simply picking up the phone and talking to our government officials or visiting their offices. It is important to talk to these leaders about issues facing the architecture field, educating them on what architects do and how we can help our communities, and policies that would affect the health, safety, and welfare of constituents. Having emerging professionals more involved in AIA Grassroots and civic engagement is vital to continuing the pipeline of meaningful changes to the profession. One of the AIA Pennsylvania Emerging Professionals Committee’s focuses this year is to promote more emerging professionals to be Citizen Architects.

The kickoff to AIA National Grassroots 2021 was Capitol Hill Day and was a great introduction to speaking to the federal legislators of Pennsylvania. Every year, this conference lays the groundwork for the big “ask” and best practices for congressional meetings, and it is a great precursor to AIA Pennsylvania Architects Action Day.

Few of the Emerging Professional Committee members took part in the 2021 Grassroots Capitol Hill Day, and this prompted a discussion within the committee. We were inspired to get more committee members involved, so we decided to host a happy hour event called “Your First Call to a Legislator.” The event was an after-hours happy hour with four panelists: former government affairs chair and 2018 AIA Pennsylvania president, Scott Compton, AIA; Amal Mahrouki, director of legislative affairs and chief lobbyist at AIA Pennsylvania; and two members from the EPiC Committee, Megan Henry and Jeremiah Woodring. The happy hour was geared toward emerging professionals who had never participated in advocacy, Grassroots or Architects Action Day, or members who are uneasy with making phone calls to state officials or participating in advocacy.



To start the event, Henry and Woodring shared their personal experience at Grassroots and Architects Action Day.

I vividly remember my first Grassroots, Henry stated; I was one of hundreds of AIA members dropped off in front of the U.S. Capitol along First Street, snapping photos of one another carrying our “Citizen Architect” portfolios. I remember walking toward the entry for a briefing on the topics we would be discussing with each of our respective representatives. The first meeting included 15 of us crammed into a conference room





to share our perspectives; easy peasy, I thought. The second meeting, we decided to split up, each tackling a portion of the briefings to discuss, no problem! Finally, it was just me and the best back-up team one could ask for, including Compton and Mahrouki. I was so nervous I was sweating. I had never spoken with a representative before, nor did I have experience in the topics we were discussing with them — but suddenly the importance of this moment clicked. This was bigger than me; I was representing the present needs and future of over 3,000 members.

My “aha” moment gave me confidence to do more, to advocate more, to have a seat at the table. Since then, I have made strides within the AIA to advocate for myself, emerging professionals, and associate members. The biggest lesson I learned is that if there is something you are passionate about, don’t be afraid to pick up the phone and call your legislator! They want to learn from their constituents, we can educate them on topics they might not be aware of, and we can continuously serve as a resource to them.

Woodring shared, In 2019, I traveled to our state’s capital with a colleague on a whim, to participate in my first Architects Action Day. This trip came only days after I reached out to AIA Pennsylvania about my interest in legislative affairs. I always knew I had an interest in government, and luckily I had a mentor who helped me find an outlet that combined this interest with my profession. Upon our arrival in Harrisburg, I remember feeling anxious and intimidated, which only escalated once I saw the Capitol. As I was handed issue briefs on topics I knew little to nothing about, I found myself meeting other AIA members at a rapid-fire pace. Was I really ready to talk to legislators? Thankfully, the inspirational leaders at AIA Pennsylvania helped me get acquainted quickly, pairing me with two veteran members with years of experience, Compton and Steve Krug.

At this point, I was able to relax a bit, and I began to observe how they talked with our legislators. We were able to speak with and visit more than a dozen representatives and senators. Fairly quickly, I realized that legislators are a lot like architects. They work with communities, leaders, and one another to make sure several vastly different systems (industries) come together for a common goal: a more prosperous Pennsylvania. Most of the conversations opened my eyes to how much these topics can make a huge impact for our profession, while other conversations revolved around what defines a community. From this day on, I knew I had gotten myself involved in something special.

I now always look for opportunities to talk with my representatives and senators. Architects Action Day and Grassroots provide us with these opportunities, both of which I now participate in. Even when it’s not about a specific topic, the conversation provides the chance to build relationships. My representatives have even recommended some local groups with which I can get further involved in my immediate community. It is critical that emerging professionals participate in advocacy and legislative affairs. After all, these are the forces that will affect our practice and future opportunities.

After Henry and Woodring shared their experience with the group, Mahrouki and Compton provided the attendees with some tips and tricks to keep in mind when talking to the legislators. The panelists expressed the importance of just getting to know your legislators and relating to them on a personal level. The attendees were encouraged to leave their personal politics behind and focus on the issues affecting the profession.

The event resulted in doubling the turnout of emerging professionals compared to the past year’s AIA Pennsylvania Architects Action Day.

Bea Spolidoro, AIA, LEED Green Associate, WELL AP, who attended the happy hour event and participated in her first Architects Tele-Action Day, summarized her call with a local legislator:

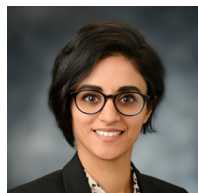
“It was a good introduction. I spoke about what I have been doing in the past year, my interest in sustainable architecture and healthy buildings. Representative Frankel said that he is aware of the important role architects play, and he has some connections with AIA Pittsburgh and Pennsylvania. We talked about affordable housing and the upcoming infrastructure bill. The emphasis of my message was on how to build healthy communities, focusing on long-term solutions and educating people. Last but not least, I introduced the Issue on Anti-Indemnification and sent it via email, too.”

Because the happy hour turnout was well received, EPiC plans to host events like it every year to engage more people. The shift to a virtual world this past year has taught us a lot, and at EPiC, we want to bring more focus to our duties and responsibilities regarding civic engagements as citizens. We look forward to AIA Pennsylvania District Days, a follow-up conversation from Architect Tele-Action Day, with government officials in July. AIA Pennsylvania’s EPiC continues to get more emerging professionals excited and engaged about connecting with their legislators to create change.



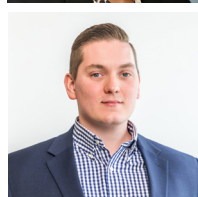
**Megan Henry, Assoc. AIA,**

*Henry is a project designer at MKSD Architects. Henry serves as the AIA Pennsylvania regional associate director and is the AIA Eastern Pennsylvania president-elect.*



**Parva Markiw, AIA, LEED Green Associate**

*Markiw is an architect at DesignGroup in Pittsburgh. Markiw is also AIA Pennsylvania’s Emerging Professionals Committee chair.*



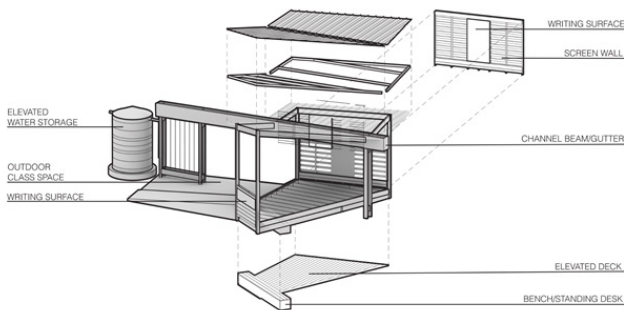
**Jeremiah Woodring, AIA, LEED AP BD+C, WELL AP**

*Woodring is an architect at HOK in Philadelphia. Woodring also serves on the AIA Pennsylvania Government Affairs Committee and is the advocacy director on the AIA Emerging Professionals Committee.*

# The unexpected mentor

Mentorship is perhaps one of the most powerful ways to lift the next generation of leaders in the built environment. For some, it may mean the difference between having a seat at the table and being left out. Even forgotten. Certainly, some of us do have an air of independence, even bothersome stubbornness. This is especially true in terms of controlling our creative process as designers, but it is likely we have been propped up many times by leaning on folks who bring the valuable expertise we lack. It has been my personal practice to both be a mentor and collect a tribe of mentors in the belief that this surely contributes to the success of our profession and environment.

So, when one of my colleagues reached out to help a group of future architects working to design and donate an outdoor classroom to a middle school, I quickly thought of one individual. Wearing a baby face and appearing to be one mile tall, Joshua Hanson — Josh for short — does not stay in his lane. He is the young and ambitious CEO of MSD Building Corp., a steel fabrication outfit that works on a variety of small- and large-scale projects, including the 21st Century Classroom Building at Texas A&M University, my alma mater.



**Above:** Component studies during design development for an outdoor classroom (Image courtesy of Professor Patrick Peters)

Hanson's expertise in steel fabrication was precisely what these young designers would use as intellectual capital. From reducing project costs to eliminating material waste, notions that coincide with the fundamentals of architecture, Hanson became the unexpected mentor

"So this is the process of how steel ends up at your job site," he explained. "And here we see how this piece is actually made; you can see from the joints." The sparks that began to fly were not a result of robots cutting and welding, they were sparks of enthusiasm from these future architects, eager to learn more about the role of steel technologies in the design and fabrication process.



**Above:** Josh Hanson, right, shows University of Houston Architecture students the fabrication process of steel members. (Image courtesy of Alex Morales, Assoc. AIA)

As I stood there holding my camera to capture some of these moments, I felt empowered. Empowerment came not because I alone was the curator of the moments captured with my ever-present smartphone appendage, but because I realized I was slowly beginning to answer one of my own questions: Do we do enough?

Architecture has made significant strides in accomplishing a diverse workforce. Not just diversity in race and gender, but diversity in age, perspective, and culture. In front of me stood exactly a representation of a remarkable feat years in the making: a human prism of hues, variation, and knowledge. This small sample of design students from the University of Houston's College of Architecture & Design, arguably the most diverse institution of higher learning in (also arguably) the most diverse city in the country, represented architecture's evolving quilt of Asian, Anglo, Black, and Latinx architects in the making. This is the diversity that will certainly strengthen the future of how we design and build. Though the evidence suggests that indeed the AEC professions have made gains in diversity, waltzing in victory is still a bit premature.

In fact, one marker of diversity that must also be equally championed is diversity of thought. Enter the big cloak of mentorship. It is perhaps the best tool for the job, sharpened and refined through literally thousands of hours of individual, separate experiences happening at the same time but of different substance and in different contexts. We call this wisdom. Wisdom is simply wisdom if we keep it bottled up and locked away, selfishly, never to become anything else. Pittance. But when we turn and twist wisdom and share it, it crystallizes into the powerful party that is mentorship.



**Above:** Josh Hanson, right, participates in a pin-up review during the design development of an outdoor classroom intended for donation to a middle school. (Image courtesy of Patrick Peters)

Patrick Peters, professor of architecture at the University of Houston, is the man orchestrating deliberate interactions across disciplines through his design-build studio. Formally, Peters is an admirable professor churning out the future of architecture, many students at a time. Informally, he has a cupid-esque quality, matching his students with mentors to help them gather support from industries that have a peripheral impact on architecture, like steel fabrication.

Josh the steel fabricator was now Josh the mentor, who happened to be a steel fabricator. Attending pin-up reviews and studio crit was just one page of an effective plan to ensure that his professional knowledge as a fabricator transferred into the design process to find the efficiency, elegance, and robustness that every project deserves.

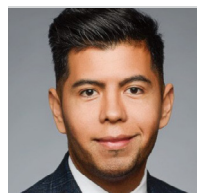


**Above:** Professor Patrick Peters, center, and his students gather in front of Triple-S Steel in Houston for a warehouse tour to understand the steel supply chain. (Image Courtesy of Alex Morales, Assoc. AIA)

Hanson had used the mentorship playbook again, and suddenly we found ourselves out of class and at Triple-S Steel, a service center that supplies steel located near the belly of Houston's downtown. Though there were tantalizing whiffs of fall in the background, the high heat and humidity of the day still managed to attack our antsy bodies as we moved through the heartbeat of machinery. Clicking and clunking everywhere, and oddly soothing. Finally, the big reveal was about to happen. The robotic plasma cutter, or RPC, was one precise example of steel technologies that can be leveraged in architecture, a tangential way of eliminating waste and reducing fabrication costs. This is information that generally lives in the domain of a fabricator's expertise but that can be shared to improve the design process.

After several moments of mentorship, through many months, and through the massaging of the collected information into the design process, the students arrived at the apex, having gone from concept to construction documents. Their project is not only ready to bring purpose as an educational space, in living color and in realness, but the journey to make it happen will continue to echo once these designers enter the workforce. Their example is just one of many that we can take and consider that mentoring, while a generous act of selflessness, is also almost a responsibility. We can do more, and it is empowering.

This article is dedicated to Patrick Peters, professor of architecture at the University of Houston, who continues to inspire, motivate, and fulfill the practical legacies of his students by offering them collaboration through real-world design projects.



**Alex Morales, Assoc. AIA, EDAC, LEED Green Associate,**

*Morales is a senior structural steel specialist with the American Institute of Steel Construction in Houston. He serves on AIA Houston's Board of Directors.*



# Citizen Architect: A great commission



## Tiara Hughes

A St. Louis native, now based in Chicago, Tiara Hughes is a senior urban designer at Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), an adjunct professor at the Illinois Institute of Technology, a Commissioner with the City of Chicago Landmarks Commission, and a real estate professional.

She is a devoted activist, educator, and advocate for underrepresented communities and voices and serves on the board for the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA) and the Charnley-Persky House Board of Directors for the Society of Architectural Historians. Hughes's personal experiences in the industry along with her passion for advocacy led her to establish a national research initiative called FIRST 500 in 2018. As the founder and executive director of FIRST 500, Hughes travels the country to raise awareness of the importance of Black women architects throughout history and their contributions to the built environment.

Hughes is a believer in giving back to her community, serving as a co-leader of SOM's ACE Mentorship program in Chicago. As a designer, Hughes is driven by creating work that emphasizes greater socioeconomic equity and cultural awareness. "Ultimately, our efforts to positively impact communities of color will expand outward and evolve our academic institutions, our firms, our industry, and by extension, our communities," she says. In 2021, Hughes received the prestigious AIA Associates Award, given by the institute to associate members who best exemplify the highest qualities of leadership and have demonstrated an unparalleled commitment to their component or region's membership.

## Beresford Pratt: Hi Tiara! How did you find your path into the architecture and design industry?

**Tiara Hughes:** I was accepted into a gifted arts program in second grade. Each year, we had a fundraiser where we created artworks of our choice, and the proceeds went to providing gifts for every child in the school. For my contribution, I drew buildings from books and magazines. The following year, I saw blueprints for the first time, and although they aren't around anymore, I will never forget the smell of the ink and feel of those prints. Understanding how to read a blueprint was unheard of at my age; the person who designed my experience of space was the person I wanted to be when I grew up. The following year, someone connected the dots for me when they said, "Tiara, you want to be an architect."





**BP:** Wow, That's amazing how sensorial experiences can leave such a lasting imprint on our memories. I am curious, what does being a citizen architect and community engagement mean to you?

**TH:** It means playing an active role in the communities I serve and design for, as a leader and, more importantly, as a listener. The intersection between design and civic engagement plays a huge role in everything I do on the Chicago Landmarks Commission. Over half of us serving on the Commission come from architecture or design backgrounds. We use our institutional knowledge for a range of needs, from approving modern materials for a replica of a historic feature to deciding if a property conforms and therefore belongs to a historic district. Most of our decisions, which affect cultural and civic spaces throughout the city, stem from our architectural backgrounds.



**BP:** That's a healthy number of architecture/design minded leaders serving on the Commission. What is your current role as Commissioner on the Chicago Landmarks Commission entail, and how did you come to find this leadership opportunity?

**TH:** As a Commission, we are responsible for recommending buildings, structures, sites, and districts for legal protection as official Chicago landmarks. I was chosen by the mayor and her team because of my willingness to ask tough questions in rooms with people of power. This bravery and critical lens paired with my background in architecture and real estate is why I was nominated to become a Commissioner for the Chicago Landmarks Commission.



**BP:** What is your biggest personal accomplishment so far and a mission you hope to accomplish during your tenure of leadership in this capacity?

**TH:** One of my proudest accomplishments as a Commissioner was our research and advocacy that led to the preservation of Emmett Till's childhood home. Though this is a modest structure and does not have a lot of significance from an architectural design standpoint, saving this building uplifts the Woodlawn community and preserves the history of this place. Communities like Woodlawn have been overlooked for far too long and undervalued as places worth saving. Our Commission has been intentional about changing this perception; by securing this site as an official landmark, we were able to secure the future of Till's legacy.

**BP:** Speaking of legacy, as an African American woman designer, in an industry where BIPOC and women architects and designers have historically been underrepresented, why does representation matter in the industry and civic engagement?

**TH:** Design firms and the industry at large have discussed "equality of opportunity" as a remedy to systemic racism in America. Equality is not the solution; many Black employees have experienced decades of economic and emotional trauma stemming from redlining, policing, environmental exploitation, pay inequity, and more. They bring these burdens with them into the workplace, which ensures "equality" by providing



employees with the same resources for success without acknowledging those previous burdens. Acknowledgement has occurred to an extent following the murder of George Floyd, but our country's collective mindset has to shift from equality to equity. Equity means meeting people where they are and addressing their needs accordingly.

Guiding the future pipelines of Black voices is critical to the survival and growth of our industry. Our voices are needed in spaces where decisions are made, policies are considered, and positions of leadership and power are given. We offer a different lens and point of view that's often missing from these spaces.

**BP: Why do you think it is valuable for more architects to take on roles of civic engagement like yourself?**

**TH:** As principal purveyors of the built environment, architects should have a more active voice in civic spaces and actively engage in underrepresented communities, especially the ones we're designing for. It's important for us to collaborate with and truly listen to the communities we're serving.



One of the challenges of my role as a Commissioner is balancing the progress and growth associated with new development alongside historic preservation. I constantly reaffirm to people that the preservation of historic spaces is in fact an asset to their community.

**BP: What words of wisdom would you share with an emerging professional considering taking on a similar role?**

**TH:** Connect with your local AIA and NOMA chapters and get involved! There are so many programs and opportunities through these organizations, so find the level of engagement that works for you. Find your passion and your purpose, and let it lead you. If there is no well to drink from, dig until you create one!



**Beresford Pratt, AIA, NOMA**

*Pratt is an architect and associate with Ayers Saint Gross. He focuses on higher education design with a specialty in active learning spaces and co-leads multiple J.E.D.I based architecture pipeline initiatives with Baltimore, Maryland K-12 students. He is the AIA Young Architects Forum Communications Director.*



# COF/YAF Align Mentoring Program

## What is the Align Mentoring Program?

The Young Architects Forum and College of Fellows Align Mentoring Program is a long-range initiative (think ten years, not one) that connects young architects with AIA Fellows. Through a grouping system referred to as “pods”, the program pairs four to six emerging professionals with two to three fellows, facilitating professional and leadership development. Align has been in its development stages serving as a pilot program since late 2019 and is now ready to embark on a full-fledged COF/YAF program open for applications!

## The program's objectives are:

- To support young architects in defining their legacy within the profession while navigating their career paths.
- To create a vehicle for mentorship and career development that connects young architects and Fellows with peers across the country.
- To accelerate contributions of young architects and develop regionally diverse collectives to contribute more in the future.

## How does the program work?

Each pod begins with four to six young architects and two to three fellows; the number of pods organized each year depends on the amount of member interest. Pods are organized by experience level and focus area.



Photographer Credit: Brandon Tobias



Photographer Credit: Brandon Tobias



Photographer Credit: Brandon Tobias

## Experience (Tiers)

| Focus Area |  | <b>Focused Engagement</b><br>(Beginner) | <b>Refinement Effort</b><br>(Intermediate) | <b>Defining Legacy</b><br>(Advanced) |
|------------|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|
|            | <b>Practice</b><br>(Leadership and Design)     | Pod C                                   | Pod B                                      | Pod A                                |
|            | <b>Scholarship</b><br>(Education and Research) | Pod F                                   | Pod E                                      | Pod D                                |
|            | <b>Civic</b><br>(Community and Public)         | Pod I                                   | Pod H                                      | Pod G                                |

### Focus areas are categorized as follows:

#### 1 Practice (Institute Leadership and Design)

Architects who have actively, effectively, and cooperatively led the institute or a related professional organization over a sustained period and have gained widespread recognition for the results of their work. Architects who have produced distinguished bodies of work through design, urban design, or preservation. This may be of any size for any client, of any scope and reflecting any type of architectural design service.

#### 2 Scholarship (Education and Research)

Architects who have made notable contributions through their work in education, research, literature, or the practice of architecture. Work in education may include teaching, research, administration, or writing and should have a lasting impact, be widely recognized, and provide inspiration to others in the field and the profession. Research areas may include building codes and standards, specifications, new material applications, or inventions. Practice includes firm management, administration, and project management or specialty areas (specific building types, technical expertise).

#### 3 Civic (Community and Public)

Architects who have made notable contributions in public service or work in government or industry organizations through leadership in the development of civic improvements and needed governmental projects, including such elements as conservation, beautification, land-use regulation, transportation, or the removal of blighted areas, or who have clearly raised the standards of professional performance in these areas by advertising the administration of professional affairs in their fields.

Experience levels are organized as follows and where the amount of an individual's years of experience within the profession comes into consideration:

#### 1. Focused Engagement

- Has been an AIA member in good standing for generally less than five years.
- Has yet to focus a body of work that identifies and aligns with a particular subject/topic area.
- Is in the early stages of compiling material for the Young Architects Award.
- May consider applying for fellowship within 10-plus years. The YA member hasn't given fellowship much thought.

#### 2. Refinement Effort

- Has been an AIA member in good standing for generally three to eight years.
- Has begun to focus on a body of work that identifies and aligns with a particular subject/topic area.
- Is in the process of applying for the Young Architects Award.
- Anticipates applying for fellowship in five to ten years. The YA member has considered fellowship sometime in the future.

#### 3. Defining Legacy

- Has been an AIA member in good standing for generally more than six years.
- Has a notable body of work that identifies and aligns with one of the fellowship objects.
- Has applied for and received the Young Architects Award.
- Anticipates applying for fellowship within five years. The YA member anticipates applying for fellowship in the near future.





**Photographer Credit:** Brandon Tobias

### What is the anticipated time commitment?

The Align Mentorship Program has a long-range perspective; pods are expected to continue meeting for multiple years, evolving as their members progress through their professional development. Resources are available that set out examples of potential schedules, activities and discussion topics, or each pod can create its own. The YAF encourages the pods to meet formally as a group quarterly and have informal/offline communication one-on-one. In-person meetings are encouraged at AIA Grassroots, the AIA Conference on Architecture, and other regional conferences as opportunities present themselves.

### Am I eligible?

*YAF members:* The program is open to AIA members in good standing, within the first ten years of licensure.

*COF Members:* The program is open to AIA College of Fellows members in good standing.

### How do I apply?

Individuals will be selected based on a written application, recommendations, and résumé. Successful applicants will represent a diverse group of emerging professionals who have demonstrated leadership within their firms and communities. Candidates are encouraged to emphasize their previous leadership experience; explain what they intend to contribute to the program, and specify what short and long term goals they are focusing on.

- Letter of interest: Candidates must submit a one-page written letter of interest. (Last Name First Name - Letter of Interest.pdf)
- Letters of recommendation: Each application must include one letter of recommendation. (LastName-First Name - Letter of Recommendation 1.pdf)
- Personal résumé: Include applicant's education, employment history, organization or activity involvement, leadership roles, and honors and awards. Résumés are preferred to be no more than two pages and uploaded in PDF format. (Last Name First Name - Resume.pdf)
- Applicants must indicate what focus area and experience level they are applying for.

### Why Align?

- Align focus areas and experience with other young architect members within each pod.
- Align with members of COF through mentorship
- Align and improve young architect members' notable contributions to support their career legacies.

### Program Leadership

Ryan McEnroe, AIA; 2020 YAF Chair

Emily Schickner, AIA; 2020-21 YARD; South Atlantic

Amaya Labrador, AIA; 2020-21 YARD; Texas



#### **Emily Schickner, AIA**

*Schickner is a principal at Harrison Design and the Young Architects Regional Director for the South Atlantic Region representing emerging professionals and young architects in Georgia, North Carolina, and South Carolina.*

# If you build it, they will come

## Preparing for infrastructure that leads to more sustainable and equitable communities

Infrastructure can be a political buzzword, but it has become reinvigorated with the American Jobs Plan proposing a substantial investment in our nation's infrastructure. The AIA issued a statement in 2017 advocating for buildings as infrastructure, and the American Jobs Plan has expanded the definition of infrastructure by including the reform of some of the institutional problems associated with our cities. While infrastructure is at the top of the institute's 2021 government advocacy list<sup>1</sup>, there are several things that we as architects are well suited to advocate for locally to improve and ready our cities for the types of infrastructure improvements that will help lead to more sustainable and equitable communities. Below, I have outlined a few suggestions centered on architecture, planning, and land use that we as architects can be local advocates for, beginning with the most universal and transitioning to the more contextual.

### **Eliminate Parking Minimums**

Almost every city's zoning code requires a minimum amount of parking for a building or business that can often be based on arbitrary designations. Parking minimums operate under the assumption that driving a personal vehicle is the primary mode for all transportation and therefore everywhere must accommodate the storage of those personal vehicles. Free parking isn't free. Public parking provided by citizens' tax dollars means low-income people, who make up the majority of those who do not own a vehicle, are subsidizing car owners' choice to drive everywhere. For private developments, the cost of constructing parking can substantially increase the overall cost of a project, which only exacerbates the cost of housing in our cities. On average, building an affordable parking structure can cost over \$20,000 per space.<sup>2</sup> "Having an abundance of free parking — and requiring it to be built along with all new developments — spurs the design of cities that depend wholly on cars, making it more difficult for people who can't afford cars to get around."<sup>3</sup> Eliminating mandatory parking minimums won't eliminate parking, but it will allow cities and developers to build an appropriate amount of parking based on the local context and prioritize other modes of transportation.

Cities in the U.S., including Buffalo<sup>4</sup> and most recently Minneapolis<sup>5</sup>, have started changing their parking policies. Minneapolis Council Member Steve Fletcher justified this policy change by stating, "We want more people to be able to live, work, and play in Minneapolis without a car — it's better for our climate, it's healthier for people's lives, and it makes Minneapolis a more affordable place to live by reducing the cost of transportation. By removing minimum parking requirements and instead encouraging a variety of strategies to increase walking, biking, and transit use, we will not only reduce the cost of new housing but also spur the creation of more walkable neighborhoods."<sup>6</sup>

### **Equitable Mobility**

While eliminating parking helps us reorient our cities toward more sustainable and affordable modes of transportation, the next step is to prioritize the ability to get around as a pedestrian or cyclist and via public transit. Simple changes such as "leading pedestrian intervals," giving pedestrians a head start at intersections, can make pedestrian travel much safer, reducing collisions by as much as 60%.<sup>7</sup> Curb extensions or bump-outs can help slow cars at intersections and shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians, which can also make them safer.

For cyclists, providing dedicated infrastructure is required. If we want more people in our cities to be able to get around by bike, we must make bicycling safe for the most vulnerable people on the road. While dedicated bike lanes are a good start if your city has nothing in the way of cycling infrastructure, the average person is unlikely to feel safe getting on a bike with only a stripe of paint between them and a fast-moving car. A study from the University of Colorado Denver found that building real, protected cycling infrastructure leads to increased bicycling usage and makes streets safer for everyone: "[S]afer cities aren't due to the increase in cyclists, but the infrastructure built for them — specifically, separated and protected bike lanes. ... [B]icycling infrastructure is significantly associated with fewer fatalities and better road-safety outcomes."<sup>8</sup> Getting these types of design elements approved often requires political



**Above:** Missing Middle Housing Diagram

[Missing Middle Housing](#) term created by Daniel Parolek/Image © Opticos Design, Inc.

support from your municipal government because they are part of public infrastructure. Talking to your elected leaders as a concerned neighborhood resident, but also as an architect, is crucial to their implementation.

When it comes to public transit, everyone can advocate for improved service in their cities, especially along high-priority routes, but architects are particularly dispositioned to push for the types of zoning reform that prioritize development along transit corridors and critical nodes. Encouraging sensible up-zoning or density bonuses in these locations can help make transit a more viable method of everyday transportation, and including provisions for affordable housing helps those people who rely on public transit most to have easy access to it. And if you are going to require affordable housing as part of your Transit Oriented Design/Development (TOD) policy, make sure you allow for a reduction in required parking if your city has not already gotten rid of its minimums, as previously discussed. Per the Environmental Protection Agency's guide for smart growth: "TOD can help lower household transportation costs, boost public transit ridership, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution, spur economic development, and make housing more affordable."<sup>9</sup>

### Missing Middle

Unfortunately, large areas of our cities are often zoned exclusively for the construction of detached single-family homes. This type of zoning not only further entrenches the sprawling car-dependent design of our communities but also pushes up the cost of housing by creating a limit on the number of residences a city can have and prohibiting more diverse types of housing that can create a broader spectrum of price points for a city's residents. Many of our cities used to build and still have what is coined "missing middle" housing: the duplexes, townhomes, courtyard apartment buildings and other typologies that fit the gap between detached single-family homes and larger, mid-rise developments.<sup>10</sup>

"Given the costs of land, labor and materials, plus conforming

with regulations, housing that is midscaled or midpriced — or both — often doesn't pencil out for developers," wrote Amanda Kolson Hurley. "In places where zoning allows for a large building, maxing out on height and footprint yields a better, safer return."<sup>11</sup> If most of our neighborhoods limit what is permitted to be built to the point where many projects have to withstand substantial regulatory hurdles or zoning variances to be approved, only larger developers that can afford to weather that kind of burden can complete projects and are pushed to build larger, more expensive ones for them to be financially viable. In a piece for *Strong Towns*, Nolan Gray wrote: "The complexity, risk, and cost of securing a variance is often too much for most small, local developers. The same applies to small local businesses and nonprofits, who might like to expand or move, but don't have the sophistication or capital to deal with the variance process. In this way, variance dependence disempowers those best positioned to make positive change in their communities. In their stead, major developers, chain stores, and land-use attorneys who can afford to navigate the variance process come in to fill the void."<sup>12</sup> If we want our communities to grow, and we want our neighbors to be the ones to profit from that growth, making these types of smaller projects financially viable to smaller developers is key.

Minneapolis has again been one of the cities to lead the way on this front. In 2018, the city passed Minneapolis 2040, which effectively up-zoned most of the city by eliminating single-family-only zoning and allowing duplexes and triplexes to be built on parcels previously zoned for single-family homes. There is also some movement at the federal level to encourage the development of "missing middle" housing through the use of Community Development Block Grants via the "Yes In My Backyard Act" that was introduced and passed in the House of Representatives as H.R.4351 and introduced in the Senate as S.1919. AIA National endorsed the Senate bill in September.<sup>13</sup>

### Accessory Dwelling and Commercial Units

In cities where larger areas of primarily single-family homes already exist, Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and

Accessory Commercial Units (ACUs) are a way to gradually increase the amount of available housing and provide space for small businesses within a walkable distance of people's homes. ADUs, sometimes referred to as granny flats or in-law suites, are smaller residential units on the property of single-family homes. While these were often originally meant for extended family, they can provide an affordable housing option in neighborhoods that have typically been limited to homeownership. They can also help make homeownership more affordable by providing a source of revenue to offset the cost of the single-family home, similar to many missing-middle housing types. Many places across the country have been updating their zoning to allow for the construction of ADUs, including a movement in Connecticut ([Desegregate Connecticut](#)) that has a bill before the governor about zoning reform that includes ADU construction.

ACUs are a bit more complicated, but they are a necessary step in areas that have been entirely dominated by residential-only uses and isolated from any sort of commercial uses unless you

get in a car. ACUs are “low-impact, small-scale, hyper-local, homeowner-driven passion projects that will strengthen the social and economic fabric of our neighborhoods.”<sup>14</sup> These are small businesses for local entrepreneurs who otherwise might not need or be able to afford a larger commercial space and that can serve people within the neighborhoods where they live. Allowing these types of units in your city provides a more organic steppingstone to the type of walkable neighborhoods and local amenities that people want.

To make our communities more equitable and more sustainable, we must start by changing the systems that have created the types of disconnected and auto-oriented cities that we have today. These are only a few suggestions for changes we can implement in most cities, and we as architects should be at the forefront of advocating for these types of reforms. What your city prioritizes or prohibits is indicative of what your city holds dear. Are we building cities for cars and corporations, or are we building cities for all people?

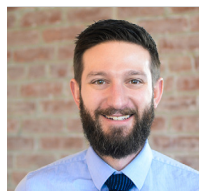


**Above:** ADU Housing Types, [DesegregateCT](#)



**FOOTNOTES:**

- 1: [\*Michael Davis's Blog – AIA KnowledgeNet\*](#). (2021, February 19). Higher Logic, LLC.
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- 11: [\*Will U.S. Cities Design Their Way Out of the Affordable Housing Crisis?\*](#) (2016, January 18). Next City.
- 12: Gray, N. (2018, December 7). [\*Let Them Apply for Variances\*](#). Strong Towns.
- 13: Policy Act Endorsment Letter [\*AIA Endorsement of the Yes in My Background \(YIMBY\) Act of 2020\*](#)
- 14: Salvador, A. (2020, December 7). [\*Want more local businesses in your neighborhood? Then legalize "Accessory Commercial Units."\*](#) Strong Towns.

**Seth Duke, AIA,**

Duke is an architect at Bialosky in Cleveland. He is a graduate of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and the Young Architect Regional Director for the Ohio Valley Region.

# Keys to community engagement

## Advice from some 2021 AIA National Young Architects

For these young architects, design no longer occurs in a vacuum or through a stroke of genius at midnight. These professionals actively engage their clients, communities, and colleagues in a dialogue about design. The following interviews represent the experiences and thoughts of several 2021 AIA National Young Architects Award recipients. Their professional practice paints a beautiful narrative for building stronger communities through architecture and volunteerism.

### Engage your clients



#### **Katelyn Chapin, AIA**

Katelyn Chapin, AIA. Chapin is a project architect at Svigals + Partners in New Haven, Conn. She is the 2020-2021 Community Director of AIA National's Young Architects Forum (YAF), a member of the Building Design + Construction 40 Under 40 Class of 2020, and a recipient of the 2021 Young Architects Award.

#### **KK: What is the key to successful community engagement?**

**KC:** Establishing trust upfront. At the beginning, I like to make everyone feel really uncomfortable so everyone starts at the same level of discomfort. It's small things like asking everyone to share their middle name or stand up and act something out. It loosens everyone up to contribute to whatever the question or the prompt is.

#### **KK: What is your favorite engagement activity?**

**KC:** Most recently, we had a unique project at the University of New Haven. We didn't have a program, apart from it had to be multidisciplinary and multi-user. Anyone could recommend anything. So we diagrammed their suggestions, including science labs, black box theater, dance studio, and more. Then we made four quadrants (must have, want to have, nice to have, don't need) that were scaled to be the target building size. We had scaled cutouts of every requested program area and asked the stakeholder groups to place them in the four quadrants. We ranked each group's priorities and went back to the next workshop with a massing diagram that expressed the program adjacencies.

#### **KK: What advice can you share with young architects searching for their voice or point of impact?**

**KC:** I have two bullet points. One: Within your office, ask to be involved in all aspects of the design process. If you don't try it, then you don't know if you like it or you hate it or you're indifferent. It's an opportunity to see the full design spectrum. Two: Speak up if there is something of interest that you want to work on! I don't think I was originally on the Sandy Hook design team, so I made it clear that it was a project I really wanted to work on. And I was put on that team.

#### **KK: What was it like working on the Sandy Hook Elementary School?**

**KC:** The community was so welcoming to support. I heard at the beginning and the end that they love their new building, but they would do anything to have their old building back. There was a lot of emotion when they described their community. I'm also my firm's Kids Build director for K-12 projects. I was able to work with the second, third and fourth graders to talk through the design process. We did a shadow study nature activity with leaves, flashlights, and sketches. We ended up including those panels in front of the building as wood etches. I'm always really impressed with kids.



**Patricia Culley, AIA**

Culley's approach to architecture centers on the balance between thoughtful, community-driven design and environmental consciousness. She is a highly collaborative leader committed to inclusivity. She is committed to advancing design excellence through knowledge sharing by regularly speaking on design, sustainability, biophilic design, and equity.

**KK: What do you believe is the key to successful community engagement?**

**PC:** Successful community engagement includes a diversity of voices and perspectives to inform the design of the project. It includes use of appropriate communication tools, outlining clear objectives and areas of focus, and documenting ideas and actions such that the outcomes are clear.

**KK: As an architect, how do you wish to elevate the people and communities you serve?**

**PC:** Architects are skilled problem solvers. Yet today, most practitioners focus on project-specific responsibilities without understanding the greater value they can and should provide to a community. As an architect, I wish to elevate the communities I serve by first convincing other practitioners to pursue policy and advocacy efforts so the larger design community can become stronger catalysts for societal transformation.

**KK: How do you envision your professional practice changing in the next 20 years?**

**PC:** There is an interesting shift in workplace design that we are currently experiencing. Focus on well-being within workplace design is becoming more prominent, and I would love to see it progress further.

**KK: What advice can you share with young architects searching for their voice or point of impact?**

**PC:** Patience is one of the most valuable traits you can have as an architect. As architecture is a service industry, the challenges and opportunities of any project are oftentimes shaped by myriad factors that are not always in your control. Patience can help navigate the design process. Patience can help navigate your long-term career pathway.

**Amanda Loper, AIA**

Principal Amanda Loper, AIA, LEED AP, founded DBA\_BHM in Birmingham, Ala., and helps guide the firm's progressive work across regions and typologies. In 2021, she received a national AIA Young Architects Award for her work in design, policy, and bringing social awareness to issues of housing and density in the urban setting.

**KK: What was your first step toward community engagement?**

**AL:** For me, it started at Auburn's rural studio in my second year, which is a program that takes you off campus. You live in west Alabama in a very small, tight-knit community and one of the poorest areas of Alabama. We were out of the classroom and built for and with our client. We were surrounded by this legacy of projects that were built for the community by former students. It was my first experience doing architecture for people who had names and we knew and we could talk to.

**KK: What do you believe is the key to successful community engagement?**

**AL:** I think you have to want to listen because often people really just want to be heard, and that's what is the most important thing. Sometimes you can deliver on small things that make a huge difference. We were doing community engagement in Nashville, North Carolina, and there was a great group of engaged residents. We call them ambassadors or focus groups, who are the eyes and ears and a conduit to their neighbors. One woman from this group was like, "Our parking lots are so dirty. In this new plan, could we please have trash cans and hoses so that we can wash and clean our cars?" We just said, "Yes, we can do that for you!" I have a favorite quote that I bring to community meetings: "The success of this meeting is similar to a potluck. It's better when more people bring their dishes and their flavors and their voices. I always encourage everyone to lend their voice because nobody wants to just eat the one dish at the potluck."

**KK: Do you have a favorite activity for engaging a community?**

**AL:** The activity where we give everybody the site plan and we cut out shapes and it's just really fun. Often there will be some synergy like everybody thinks that the big, green park should be in this area. Or that that daycare center needs to be off the street for more convenience. We often figure out a lot of stuff through that exercise. It also builds empathy on the community side for the designers because they realize, "Oh yeah, that doesn't all fit here. If we do the big park, then we can't fit this thing." It's a great kind of place to meet and get on the same page about what can and can't happen on the site.



### Jonathan Moody, AIA

Moody approaches architecture with a focused mission: to bring transformational design to underserved communities, to educate and mentor underserved youths toward careers in architecture, and to become a visible, present servant in underserved communities.

#### KK: What was your first step toward community engagement?

JM: Obligation got me started. When I came to Moody Nolan, I was working with public clients, and that required getting the community involved. We talk about being involved in the optics around the project. The building means so much more to different people. For people to appreciate a space, they need to feel that it is reflective of them and they are involved.

#### KK: What do you believe is the key to successful community engagement?

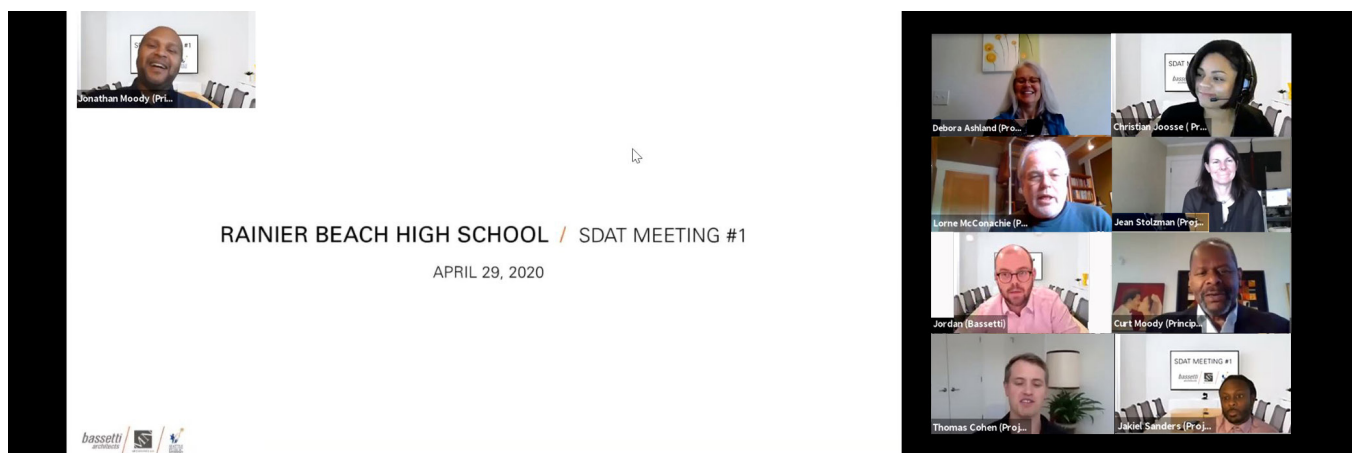
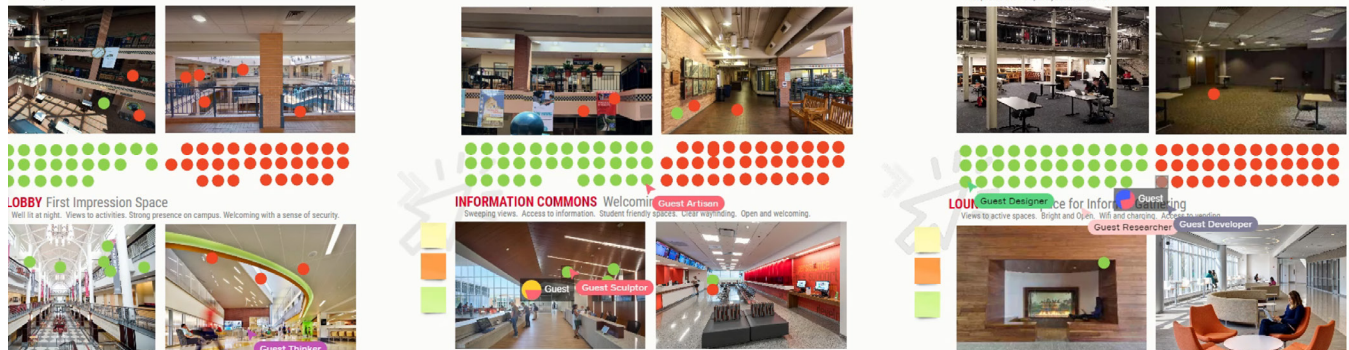
JM: Step 2 is honesty. But step 1 is sincerity or heart to help the community. You have to start there with that first conversation confirming that we are here to listen. We are not here to do harm. We are here to help. We are here to engage.

#### KK: As an architect, how do you wish to elevate the people and communities you serve?

JM: People who are in a community know what is best for them. They know what they would like to see. They just don't have the professional expertise to execute what they need or the funds or the influence to make it happen. A goal is, how can we better understand, engage, and participate. It starts with bringing them into the process at the beginning. But the long-term goal is to ask, can the people from the community have the expertise to enact their vision? Can we get more professionals from the communities we are serving?

#### KK: What advice can you share with young architects searching for their voice or point of impact?

JM: Finding "it" is a lifelong journey of rediscovery. Embrace where you are. Everyone knows you can't dwell in the past, but you can't dwell too much on the future, either. This last year and a half has been an adventure, particularly for me in leadership. At the time, I had no idea how to handle this, like everyone else. I use the analogy of David: David was put in a position of leadership, and all he had was a slingshot. I may not have all the tools, but my voice is a tool. I have this perspective and knowledge set and bring my full self every day and trust that it is enough.





**Daniel Yudchitz, AIA, LEED AP**

Yudchitz is the design director at LEO A DALY in Minneapolis. His work has won awards and been widely published. Yudchitz's design interests center on notions of flexibility, economy, construction logic, and performative design in relation to architectural form at all scales.

**KK: What do you believe is the key to successful community engagement?**

**DY:** Listening. Empathy. Understanding and prioritizing the forces that are driving a project. Coming at those with an open-minded approach and passion for understanding our clients. Our clients are the people who engage with our buildings at different levels. Having that passion for exploration for finding the right fit of the building for the surroundings.

Ultimately, it's the users and the community who can layer on their own ownership and their own experiences and activities onto a space that goes even beyond what a design team intended for.

**KK: As an architect, how do you wish to elevate the people and communities you serve?**

**DY:** The buildings are a host for the life and activity within. Having an environment that is inspiring along with wellness and safety are all important to spaces that communities can embrace. We have empathy by looking at the built environment through the perspectives of others. We apply the knowledge and experience of their daily life and integrate it into our design process.

**KK: What advice can you share with young architects searching for their voice or point of impact?****DY:**

1) The first thing is to follow your interests and passions. If there is something that you see a need for that is not being filled, try to think if there is a way that you can take control of your own destiny and fill that.

2) Seeking out mentors and being a mentor. It has been extremely important for me to surround myself with supportive and positive people. And remember that mentorship goes two ways.

3) Be an active learner by visiting buildings, attending lectures, talking with people. Learning doesn't end with school; it just begins there.

4) Practice like it's a sport. If you want to be good at something, you have to practice and go through the repetition of that. If you want to be good at design, seek out competitions, or do pro bono work so that you are doing that repetition. It helps you find your own voice and approach to doing design.

5) Get involved outside of architecture, too. There are organizations and groups that value the skills that architects bring to the table and allow you to give back to your community in ways that you haven't before.



## Engage your colleagues



**Danielle McDonough, AIA, LEED AP BD+C**

McDonough is dedicated to helping mission-driven organizations achieve effective change for the betterment of the communities they serve, whether by volunteering in organizational leadership roles or in the field through excellence in design and construction administration.

**KK: What was your first step toward community engagement?**

**DM:** Getting involved in The American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS), when I was an undergraduate opened my eyes to the possibility of impact one individual could have on both their career and their community.

**KK: What do you believe is the key to successful community engagement?**

**DM:** Consensus building through open and empathetic communication is key. This relies on trust, which needs to be nurtured with all constituents and maintained throughout the design process and construction.



**KK: As an architect, how do you wish to elevate the people and communities you serve?**

**DM:** Projects that are genuine in their response to community needs bring me the most joy and are among the work I'm most proud of in my career. Producing equitable designs for communities that are thoughtful, beautifully executed, and worthy of the constituents they will serve will always be at the forefront of my practice.

**KK: What advice can you share with young architects searching for their voice or point of impact?**

**DM:** Be curious; don't be afraid to explore new opportunities. See where your strengths are valued, and follow that path. Your passions may change over time, but so long as you are doing what you love in the moment, your dedication will be impactful.






**Jeff Guggenheim, AIA**

Guggenheim is a founder and principal of Guggenheim Architecture + Design Studio. As a local and national AIA leader, he enthusiastically advocates for small firms and sole practitioners. In practice, he closely collaborates with his partner and wife, Jenny Guggenheim, to realize designs that are meaningful, functional, and authentic.

**KK: What was your first step toward community engagement?**

**JG:** I grew up in a small, rural town in central Oregon. Reflecting on this experience, I believe small-town life lends itself to creating an engaged community. In my town, it felt like everyone knew everyone and most were happy to lend a helping hand to a neighbor. There was a genuine ethic of generosity and helpfulness that to this day informs how I approach clients, colleagues, and team members.

**KK: What do you believe is the key to successful community engagement?**

**JG:** There is currently so much discussion surrounding how best to approach people and the communities they reside in. Terms that come to mind include openness, vulnerability, curiosity, and empathy. However, the key element is the act of recognizing a need and making the decision to engage. Accepting the call to action is where it all begins.

**KK: As an architect, how do you wish to elevate the people and communities you serve?**

**JG:** In the role of small-firm owner, the community in which I am most engaged revolves around our staff, clients, contractors, building trades, and colleagues. It is clear to me that this is the sphere in which I have the most influence. I am passionate about empowering those around me to do great work and then ensuring that they are credited for their contributions. Successful projects are found at the confluence of a great client, a driven design team, a caring contractor, and skilled tradespeople. It is important to give credit where credit is due.

**KK: How do you envision your professional practice changing in the next 20 years?**

**JG:** When I was in high school, I was at an event hosted by the local Rotary Club. In a call to action, the speaker implored the audience to “find a hole and fill it.” I find this simple concept effective as it speaks to both improving our communities and finding one’s purpose.


**Adam Harding, AIA**

Adam Harding, AIA, is a distinguished architect with a reputation for design excellence. With over 17 years of experience, his practice has served his clients, the community, and the profession of architecture. His work has transcended architecture in the commercial, municipal, and hospitality market sectors throughout the region.

**KK: What do you believe is the key to successful community engagement?**

**AH:** As a leader, it’s about showing up, being present, and doing what you say you will do.

**KK: As an architect, how do you wish to elevate the people and communities you serve?**

**AH:** For my firm, it’s about making sure we have the right people in the right seat. We hired them for a reason, and we know they are bright and talented individuals. And then trusting them to do the work they set out to do. It’s really about “delegate” and “elevate” in our firm.

In the association (AIA), it’s about giving people the chance to be part of something and have a voice. To feel like they are making the change they want to make.

**KK: How do you envision your professional practice changing in the next 20 years?**

**AH:** We are doing everything we can internally to make sure we are working towards the things that matter to us. We are doing excellent work and have a culture that is thriving and hitting all the marks. We recognize one another when each of us succeeds at our core values. Everyone is working at the top of their game, and that’s where we want to be as a firm.

**KK: What advice can you share with young architects searching for their voice or point of impact?**

**AH:** Figure out where you want to be or where you see yourself. We have a lot of passionate young professionals in our office. Find out what you are passionate about, and set a goal to propel you to be a better architect and person. And get involved outside of the office to not only gain perspective but to give back and share knowledge.

## Engage your community



### **Jack Becker, AIA**

A fourth-generation architect, Becker is co-founder and principal of bld.us, a design and development practice based in the Washington, D.C., neighborhood of historic Anacostia. The firm integrates traditional construction methods with new technologies and organic materials ideally suited to the Mid-Atlantic region to create an architecture of accommodation.

### **KK: What was your first step toward community engagement?**

**JB:** Getting to know my neighbors through community meetings and local cookouts.

### **KK: What do you believe is the key to successful community engagement?**

**JB:** Living in the community you're serving to develop an intuitive understanding of place. If you practice in a city, engagement is almost a necessity because of the range of impacted neighbors and stakeholders who are needed to get support to design and build in historic districts. D.C. has more historic-districted property than any other U.S. city. Ninety percent of our projects are within these districts. To gain approval from the preservation boards, you need to get buy-in, support, and incorporate feedback from local community members who have concerns for the issues of preservation. The preservation requirements necessitate that we make our intentions public for an affordable housing project and invites the scrutiny of the public and obtain buy-in.

### **KK: As an architect, how do you wish to elevate the people and communities you serve?**

**JB:** Helping evolve an awareness and demand for healthy architecture in all forms of shelter. Architecture as a matter of design can only address so much or reconcile so much.

### **KK: How do you envision your professional practice changing in the next 20 years?**

**JB:** Becoming more regionally engaged. Developing a portfolio that helps bridge the urban and rural. Thinking regionally is a way analytically to bridge the urban-rural divide. Regions encompass both diversities of densities in communities and lifestyles. It's important to have a local focus and likewise a regional focus on material flows and industries. To build empathy on what makes both work because economies are regional in scope.



### **Cody Henderson, AIA**

Henderson is the director of science and education for FSA, LLC, an architectural firm focused on life sciences design, and was the 2020 president of the AIA St. Louis chapter. He is a construction leader for Habitat for Humanity and participates in several initiatives focused on supporting emerging professionals within and outside of our industry.

### **KK: What was your first step toward community engagement?**

**CH:** Quite honestly, it was when the economy crashed in 2008-2009. I had graduated in 2006-2007 and worked for a few years and was happy with what I was working on. Whenever the economy crashed, I got laid off. And I thought, well I've always wanted to work with Habitat for Humanity, so I started volunteering a couple weekends with their crews. After I was hired again, I just kept it going because I enjoyed working with people and talking with the homeowners.

### **KK: What do you believe is the key to successful community engagement?**

**CH:** With Habitat, success is coming away and actually being able to give information to people who are there. They've seen houses be built, but not seen what goes into the house. That teaching aspect is a success so long as everyone comes away learning something new. Learning the why behind what they are doing is so important — more so than just going through the motions.

### **KK: How do you envision your professional practice changing in the next 20 years?**

**CH:** Not so much a change, but a refocus in my firm on what we do best by developing incoming staff. I'd also like to grow our efforts in integrating energy efficient design. With Habitat St. Louis, we build every home to a LEED platinum standard.

### **KK: What advice can you share with young architects searching for their voice or point of impact?**

**CH:** Always be looking for that opportunity. Get involved! That's what changed my career. I got involved with Habitat, AIA, YAF, and more.



### **Katie Kangas, AIA + NCARB**

*Kangas founded Pasque Architecture to provide story-centered architecture and design. She is building a process centered practice to provide simple functional design that is beautiful and inspires.*



# Celebrating the 2021 Young Architect Award and Associate Award winners

Each year the AIA elevates emerging professionals for their individual achievements within the profession, the institute, and their communities. The two awards include the AIA Young Architects Award and the AIA Associates Award.

[AIA Young Architects Award](#) Emerging Talent deserves recognition. The AIA Young Architect Award honors individuals who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and made significant contributions to the architecture profession early in their careers. AIA members who are in good standing and have been licensed to practice architecture for fewer than 10 years.

The [AIA Associates Award](#) is given to individual Associate AIA members to recognize outstanding leaders and creative thinkers for significant contributions to their communities and the architecture profession.

We asked the 2021 award winners a few questions about their contributions, mission, and the award impact. Check out what these leaders had to share!

## What do you feel is your most impactful contribution within the architectural profession thus far and why?



**Mark Bacon**  
AIA

I'm passionate about teaching and mentoring the next generation of architects. In 2014, I co-founded the ongoing SGH/Dri-Design student competition at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln College of Architecture. The two-stage competition invites students to present their thesis projects to a jury of nationally recognized architects. This experience exposes students to a diverse range of practitioners and their work. It provides them a valuable glimpse into firms from across the country. The College also receives recognition for the student's work and the awards that their projects garner. Currently, in its seventh year, the competition has awarded more than \$70,000 in scholarships and has made a lasting impact on the direction that the participating students take after school.



**Jack Becker**  
NCARB, AIA

Designing, developing, and building the LEED Platinum-certified Grass House: the first code-compliant bamboo structure on the East Coast. This small carriage house in the Historic Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, DC embodies our aspirations for the profession and our practice, bld.us, towards renewable, organic, healthy architecture. The Grass House stands in the midst of a community that is learning about architecture and development in order to advocate for a better future for itself. The Grass House invites people to understand where a building's materials originate, how they get to the site, are processed, and might be recycled when the building is ultimately dismantled. Acting as the architect-developer allowed for a testbed of plant-based, small-scale solutions which have since migrated to larger multi-family projects with greater economies of scale.



**Katelyn Chapin**  
**AIA**

Community engagement is an integral component of the design process at Svigals + Partners, the firm where I have worked for over a decade. As an architect, it is incredibly fulfilling to connect with a community and stakeholder group to define the project vision and goals and start to see the project take shape, together. In 2013, I started working on the design team for the new Sandy Hook School. The commission was more than just designing a state-of-the-art school with heightened security features. It involved establishing trust within a community that was healing and including the voices of many, given the significance the school had in its community. The result of this process is an incredible building that weaves together the stories of all those who contributed.



**Patricia Culley**  
**AIA, LEED AP**  
**BD+C, WELL AP**

Over the last several years, I have been a vocal advocate for sustainability and design. Within the industry, while there is a growing number of resources available to architects that focus on the technical rigor of sustainability, there are fewer resources that align technical rigor with design sensibility, and even fewer examples of built work that have successfully aligned the two. As an architect who aligns these elements well and has been fortunate enough to build strong examples of this, I have been committed to educating others in the field on how this can be achieved and the positive impact it can have on the built environment.



**Adam Harding**  
**AIA, LEED AP**

My most impactful contribution would be becoming a leader not only for my firm but for AIA Colorado. Through these leadership positions, I have been able to cultivate a culture of belonging to strengthen the professional practice through mentoring, volunteering, and community leadership. These positions have allowed me to be instrumental in setting not only my company's vision but that of AIA Colorado. Defining my firm's unique culture, and nurturing collaborative and productive client relationships. As well as building inclusive environments that develop an intercultural competence that shift perspectives and behaviors of our teams and our communities.



**Michael A. Davis**  
**AIA, LEED AP**

My most important contribution thus far is being a part of the redevelopment of downtown Knoxville and surrounding neighborhoods. I am fortunate to have worked on numerous projects that have contributed to the thriving, vibrant place it has become. Through this work, I have raised expectations regarding what design excellence can and should be in East Tennessee.



**Jeff Guggeheim**  
**AIA, LEED AP**

Nine years ago my wife and I founded Guggenheim Architecture and Design Studio. At the time, I saw it as a business venture and the next step in my career as an architect. Now with the advantage of time I see that what we have started is more than just a business, it is a platform from which we can connect with people, promote ideas, and make an impact within the profession. Much of my involvement has been focused on the small firm practice. I've been fortunate to be involved with the AIA Small Firm Exchange, both locally and nationally. A key focus for me has been to cultivate a supportive and open relationship between small firm architects so they can learn from each other and collectively elevate how we practice architecture.



**Myer Harrell**  
**AIA, LFA, LEED**  
**AP BD+C, Homes**

In 2008, a small team of us emerging professionals at Weber Thompson stumbled upon the idea of vertical farming as we prepared a design competition entry for the International Living Future Institute (ILFI) and US Green Building Council (USGBC). We won first prize that year, and then we continued to develop the building-integrated agriculture and Living Building Challenge concepts after the competition and leverage into additional professional connections, press coverage, research explorations, and partnerships. We took ideas that were a little ahead of their time and ran with them. While we are not currently designing vertical farms as a core part of our practice, the work introduced a new type of research and conceptual design thinking to our firm. We have been, since 2016, luckily able to apply the Living Building Challenge on several commercial projects.



**Cody Henderson**  
AIA, NCARB,  
LEED AP, I2SL

A contribution that has the possibility of making a huge impact in the coming years is the creation of the AIA St. Louis Emerging Professionals Fund. This Fund focuses on addressing the serious issue of student debt upon emerging professionals in our industry. By taking an active approach to making the profession less intimidating upon graduation (in terms of debt v.s. income) we hope to encourage more potential design professionals involved. I hope to grow this to help many young professionals and possibly extend its reach to help other Chapters create similar programs.



**Amanda Loper**  
AIA, LEED AP

When our firm's book, *9 Ways To Make Housing for People*, comes out this fall, this will be my answer! It is an accessible design manual and how-to for students, planners, city officials, developers, and architects on how to create high-quality human-centric housing. Until then, I would say it's been each affordable housing project that I've gotten to work on. I've been to projects' grand openings, and someone will stand up to speak and say, "Before I lived in this building, I lived in my car." That always reinforces that the hard work of bringing these buildings to fruition is more than worth it.



**Tiara Hughes**  
AIA Associate,  
NOMA, REALTOR

I'm currently teaching a course at the Illinois Institute of Technology where my colleagues and I have essentially flipped the traditional studio culture on its head. We chose a community to work with (Englewood) and had our students perform research, select sites and programs, and continuously connect with residents throughout the design process. This approach bridges the gap between how we work in the real world and introduces an equitable design methodology into academia. Another accomplishment I am proud of involves my role as a Chicago Landmarks Commissioner. Our research and advocacy led us to preserve Emmett Till's legacy and secure landmark status for his childhood home. Cases like this one are why I serve on the Commission.



**Ricardo J. Maga Rojas, NOMA, Associate AIA**

Last summer amid a global pandemic and social unrest, I am most proud of having led the efforts to establish NOMA of Central Texas Chapter with the help of mentors, friends, and colleagues within Austin, San Antonio, and surrounding cities. This is crucial because in the past there have been efforts from both cities to start a chapter individually but to no avail. The desire to unify under one collective voice, serve the underrepresented, and provide thought leadership will remain for years to come. I am excited to see the vision of our newly formed Executive Board come to fruition.



**Adrienne Cali**  
AIA, LEED AP

My most impactful contributions within the profession thus far have been the successful preservation and restoration of historically significant buildings throughout New England. I had the opportunity to educate clients, consultants, and the community on the preservation principles employed and the value of protecting our historic buildings. Also, my service to organizations like the Association for Preservation Technology Northeast (APTNE), where I contribute to public outreach, education initiatives, and organizing yearly conferences as a board member.



**Danielle McDonough**  
AIA, LEED BD+C

Given that my involvement spans across many organizations that impact the profession, I would have to say that my most impactful contribution has been bringing a pragmatic curiosity and ability to execute a shared vision to any position that I hold at any given moment. Pointing to a singular contribution would be a misleading oversimplification. From strategic planning to construction administration, accreditation teams to design studios, I strive to bring my best self at that moment in my life to assist at the task at hand.



**Jonathan Moody**  
AIA, NOMA,

It is difficult to know exactly how things I have contributed may have personally impacted anyone. But I do hope that my public visibility has impacted the profession. I've learned from my father that simply being visible and successful helps to show others what is possible in a profession with so few Black architects. Recently a young high schooler challenged me to show him that going to college wouldn't just mean that he could stay out of jail, but that going to college could put him on a path to being a CEO.



**Jennifer Park**  
AIA

I can speak for three often separate areas of the profession: equity and diversity, teaching and mentorship, and the value of good design. These areas are intertwined in my roles in practice and as a professor of architecture. I can bridge these spaces, share knowledge with different groups, and spread the word to a wider audience. In terms of how these work together to better my community, I've been able to establish, lead and grow the AIA Chicago's Equity Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the IIT College of Architecture's Diversity and Inclusion Committee.



**Matthew Thornton**  
AIA, LEED AP

Developing learning environments that exceed expectations with humble means. I think K-12 architecture has typically been long neglected to the detriment of the kids who attend these schools. We believe that great design is a right, especially for public buildings, not a frivolous luxury. We also believed that you shouldn't have to live on a coast to have great design. It turns out that school boards, staff, and students do appreciate great design when they receive it. We've seen our local culture of design and construction shift in that direction.



**Danielle Tillman**  
AIA, NOMA

My most impactful contribution to the architectural profession is my community engagement. I am involved in several professional and civic organizations to be engaged in not only the business realm but also within different public entities. I believe this is important as I can engage with many different people and user groups and gain a more robust understanding of people. I believe that architecture at its core is a social science. It is not just the art or practice of designing and constructing buildings, it is about intentionally enhancing the built environment and enhancing community. It is about the individuals, the people who inhabit and experience the work daily. It is because I engage with different communities that I gain a strong connection and insight into the individuals that experience the work. engagement with different communities that I gain a strong connection and insight into the individuals that experience the work.



**Matt Toddy**  
AIA, NCARB

In 2018 I had the opportunity to develop a hybrid mentorship and leadership development program for my local component. We identified a need among our emerging professionals and designed ARCHway as a program that paired young architects with experienced professionals and Fellows in mentorship groups, many of which have extended their relationship beyond the program. Through two successful iterations with a third in the planning stages, ARCHway continues to catalyze Columbus' young architects towards leadership in their communities, their firms, and the Institute.



**Daniel Yudchitz**  
AIA, NCARB,  
LEED AP

My contributions are embedded in our projects. I try to bring an optimistic approach to concept development that spurs conversation. This ultimately leads to inspiring and appropriate design ideas for our clients. Each project has unique parameters and goals – the key is discovering impactful and artful ways to achieve those goals on every project. This is how we add value through design and affect our communities in positive ways.





## What is a mission of yours that can make an impact within the industry, and how do you see your mission growing and/or evolving over time?



**Mark Bacon**  
AIA

I want to change the perception in the midwest that design is a luxury. I want to continue engaging clients and students in critical conversations about place, building performance, and designing for the human experience. I also want to grow professionally by working with others who have new and differing perspectives on design and practice. Educating clients on the value of resilient design and design that is responsive to context, climate, and human scale. A lot of my work is in rural areas and we work hard to demonstrate that every design decision has a purpose and can contribute to the long-term sustainability of the community. This issue should not be singularly focused on a rating system, rather, it should be considered expansively and inclusive of the human condition.



**Jack Becker**  
NCARB, AIA

Spreading a farm-to-shelter approach to architecture across the Mid-Atlantic through the works of bld.us and allied practitioners. We envision the evolution and growth of this mission through the broadening of our professional reach as architects to include development and construction activities. Acting as architect-developer, for instance, allows for a more holistic synthesis of design intent and financial feasibility with a greater sensitivity to scalability.



**Katelyn Chapin**  
**AIA**

As a natural community builder, my mission is to welcome all individuals to both the design process and to the profession, especially those with diverse voices and representation. In my role as director of KidsBuild!, my firm's K-12 enrichment program, I can introduce students to the AEC profession through hands-on activities. With each workshop, I hope to inspire the next generation of diverse architects and design professionals.



**Patricia Culley**  
**AIA, LEED AP**  
**BD+C, WELL AP**

One of the greatest assets of an architect is their problem-solving skill. Yet today, most practitioners focus on project-specific responsibilities without understanding the greater value they can and should provide to the community. As my professional skill sets evolve, particularly in the domain of public work, I find great value in aligning problem-solving skill sets with advancing public policy. Over time, I can see my personal missions evolving toward encouraging practitioners to balance practice with policy and advocacy efforts to become stronger catalysts for societal transformation.



**Adam Harding**  
**AIA, LEED AP**

To foster a culture of belonging at all levels. Rather than everyone out for themselves, how can we partner to make lasting, meaningful change through the connections and relationships we build. How can we learn from one another more efficiently? How can we create and share tool kits or ideas rather than reinventing the wheel again and again? We need to talk to one another more and learn how to be better architects through mentorship at all levels. This happens through effective leaders showing up and authentically caring about the people they surround themselves with and by including others throughout the industry.



**Michael A. Davis**  
**AIA, LEED AP**

Mentorship is very important to me. I have been lucky to have had great mentors during college and in the profession, many of which I am still in contact with. And I would not be where I am today without their support and guidance. These experiences led me to seek out opportunities such as teaching design studios at the University of Tennessee and engaging with our local AIA East Tennessee chapter so that I could be a mentor for the next generation of architects. Seeing former students excel in the profession has been a great joy. In the future, I hope this mission can grow to support a mentorship network in the East Tennessee region.



**Jeff Guggeheim**  
**AIA, LEED AP**

It's time for architects to evaluate what it means to provide a service. As of late, we've seen an uptick in the creative agencies assuming the role of lead designer and hiring an architect to provide the technical expertise to get the project permitted and built. I find it disheartening to see the role of the architect diminished to a rubber stamp. I am committed to exploring and sharing with my colleagues how we can better promote our profession and preserve our role as the primary creative force behind a project.



**Myer Harrell**  
**AIA, LFA, LEED**  
**AP BD+C, Homes**

I have been recently very interested in how projects are delivered, and how architects can use methods and tools developed in other industries – Agile as an example – to better deliver architectural designs and documents. We need new methods to better address constantly changing requirements and conditions, provide more autonomy for individuals within a firm, and provide more work satisfaction. As a project manager, I've implemented some of these new project delivery methods, and I'd like to scale them to be more useful to other project teams, and eventually to other firms.





**Cody Henderson**  
AIA, NCARB,  
LEED AP, I2SL

I have a passion for getting Emerging Professionals involved in leadership opportunities and providing them with the tools to learn the skills that will be needed as the next generation of leaders in our industry. We have started a local component of the Christopher Kelley Leadership Development Program in St. Louis. I plan to grow this program in St. Louis. We have seen the need for such a program in our area for some time. This leadership skill-building could evolve into other initiatives involving mentorship building within the community.



**Amanda Loper**  
AIA, LEED AP

My current focus is to work in the cities of the southeast to expand the idea of how wonderful, walkable, and equitable affordable housing and mixed-use developments can be. I want to leverage my experience honed on the front lines of the housing crisis in San Francisco and my passion as an urbanist and citizen architect to bring this lens to design (or projects) in Birmingham, Nashville, Atlanta, and beyond.



**Tiara Hughes**  
AIA Associate,  
NOMA, REALTOR

My personal experiences in the industry along with my passion for advocacy led me to establish a national research initiative called FIRST 500 in 2018. As the founder and executive director of FIRST 500, I travel the country to raise awareness of black women architects throughout history and their contributions to the built environment. These women serve as inspiration and motivation for the black women getting licensed and completing their architecture education today. I'm proud of meeting the milestone of 500 licensed black women architects, but this is only the beginning. We have a lot of work to do to cultivate the next 500 black women architects living in the US. I am proud to preview that the website is currently underway and set to launch this year. Once it goes live, there will be a call to action to gather profiles and connect black women architects.



**Ricardo J. Maga Rojas, NOMA, Associate AIA**

Often, I am the sole Afro-Latino in the room. I am committed to inspiring the next generation of Afro-Latinx designers and architects through my continued involvement. If you do not tell your story, someone else will tell it for you. This leads to Afro-Latinx being overlooked. This is why representation matters. I want aspiring Afro-Latinx designers and architects to know that they can lead and impact change without the need for a title. I hope that there is growth in Afro-Latinx representation over time — we currently exist in small numbers.



**Danielle McDonough**  
AIA, LEED BD+C

I strive to create a space for empathy in our professional settings through open communication and shared goal-setting. The pandemic has opened an avenue of experiencing vulnerability together. It has exposed weaknesses in our professional norms and opportunities for individuals to be involved in their communities. I hope that we can take this experience and move forward positively.



**Adrienne Cali**  
AIA, LEED AP

While much of my work is rooted in the past, my mission is to preserve historic buildings and to make them viable for the future. My approach centers around stewardship of historic architecture, emphasizing careful and responsible management of changes over time. Through my work and industry involvement, I strive to broaden the basis of understanding and appreciation for all aspects of preservation, including advocacy and community growth. Over time, I hope to continue to preserve and restore the significant buildings that enrich our communities and tell stories of the past, and I hope to inspire the next generation of historic preservationists. It will become increasingly critical that preservation work includes assessment of the effects of dramatic climate shifts, rising tides, embodied carbon, and emergency readiness — both to conserve these structures and ensure they meet the needs of tomorrow's population.



**Jonathan Moody**  
**AIA, NOMA,**

NOMA and AIA Large Firm Roundtable have issued a challenge for us to grow the number of Black architects from its current count to over 5,000 by 2030. If we can do this, I believe it will help us to better serve our clients as their needs change. We need to address all aspects of what this means from a support standpoint. Today that means focusing on students who are in college or about to graduate. As time goes on, we will need to shift our focus to how those graduates can get through the licensure process.



**Jennifer Park**  
**AIA**

To this point in my career, I'm often the only person who looks like me in the room. That's made me want to always be a voice for equity and diversity. Architecture benefits from increasing the diversity of perspectives and creativity in our field. I want to open more doors for future generations and I want to expand my energies to the Asian American efforts in equity, recognition, and respect in our field and beyond. Look – our work is fundamentally social and political. Our representation, experience, and knowledge are needed in those conversations to shape livable, sustainable, and equitable cities.



**Matthew Thornton**  
**AIA, LEED AP**

I've been active in starting our local Building Enclosure Council chapter. While I'm passionate about good building science and delivering high-performing buildings, what is even more exciting is the highly collaborative multiple-disciplinary discussions the chapter supports. It is a place where members from all walks of the construction industry can get out of their silos and tackle the toughest issues.



**Danielle Tillman**  
**AIA, NOMA**

My commitment to redefining the notion of an architect, especially when it comes to the representation of African American's within the field, is one that I believe can make an impact in the industry. I strive to create opportunities for a diverse body of future leaders through mentorship and creating opportunities for groups of individuals who may not believe that architecture is an attainable goal, or who have traditionally not been a part of the architecture community. I see this continuing by continuing to create opportunities for expanded representation through focused professional and civic involvement and to develop initiatives that will create equity in the field of architecture.



**Matt Toddy**  
**AIA, NCARB**

I believe architects have both the skill set and the responsibility to recognize opportunities for impact, tackle challenging topics, and lead by example. Over the last several years, I've spent a lot of time building relational equity within and beyond the industry. I'm hoping to start to leverage that equity into a meaningful, sustainable impact in my local community. Specifically, this looks like partnering with non-profit organizations to bring design services to communities without access to those services while continuing to be a disruptor of traditional architectural practice at home in Columbus and beyond.



**Daniel Yudchitz**  
**AIA, NCARB,**  
**LEED AP**

Flexibility, adaptability, performance, and economy are all issues that propel my design process. These are design issues that I have been exploring since I was in design school. Designing strategically with these sorts of drivers is increasingly important with the scarcity of resources we are facing. As architects, we need to think creatively about strategies to achieve maximum impact with an economy of means. Architecture is always in a dialogue with context and as things change in the world, designers will need to respond.





## How do you think this award has/will positively impact your career goals? What would you say to others to encourage them to apply?



**Mark Bacon**  
**AIA**

It's early to project the full impact of the award, but I think it is fair to say that exposure within the architecture field, service opportunities, and a platform to support the next generation of leaders will be the outcome. I will aim to translate these opportunities into an agency for design to enhance the human experience. Other young architects should apply as a way to document their contributions thus far. What they will realize is there are a number of people that have supported and helped define their careers. It's truly humbling.



**Jack Becker**  
**NCARB, AIA**

The success of my career goals will, in large part, depend upon a generational coalition on behalf of healthy, sustainable architecture. This award has been wonderful at connecting a wide array of practitioners at early stages in the profession, in addition to broadcasting their collective interests to the larger profession. I am so thankful for this exposure and would encourage anyone with a message to apply.



**Katelyn Chapin**  
**AIA**

Applying for the Young Architects Award has allowed me to reflect on my career trajectory. In just ten (short) years, I have evolved from a first-year architectural designer to a registered architect with a vast range of professional and volunteer experiences. What a transformational experience it has been! Going forward, I will use this recognition as motivation to keep doing great work within and outside the office. For those looking to apply – do it! You may not feel 100% ready, but if you can share your story and the impact you have made, I highly encourage you to do so!



**Patricia Culley**  
**AIA, LEED AP**  
**BD+C, WELL AP**

This award has sparked in me a renewed excitement and ambition; a drive to diversify the work I do and the communities whom I serve, as well as a way to diversify the words I say and the actions I take. This award serves as recognition that the practice of architecture is ever-evolving, and a commitment to design excellence and innovation shall serve practitioners well. For those who are passionate about design excellence in all its forms, I encourage you to apply to the Young Architect Award as a method of sharing your incredible story with others.



**Adam Harding**  
AIA, LEED AP

I set the goal to win this award after I became licensed, not knowing what it would necessarily mean. Whether I won it or not, was not what was important. What was important was the trajectory that going after this award set me on. It pushed me to be a better architect, a better leader, and a better citizen architect. I would say to others to not settle for the typical architect day job, set your sights high and push yourself out of your comfort zone and see where that takes you.



**Michael A. Davis**  
AIA, LEED AP

I think this award will afford me opportunities to engage the profession at a higher level, such as participating in design awards juries, and panel discussions. These opportunities will help me continue to grow and develop as a designer and promote design excellence in my region. I also look forward to connecting with some of my fellow award winners in the future, hopefully in person! For those who are thinking of applying: while the application may seem daunting at first, it provides a chance to reflect on your accomplishments and determine what is important to you as an architect and a person. It caused me to think about the trajectory of my career, and it made me examine what it is I want to do next.



**Jeff Guggeheim**  
AIA, LEED AP

Awards can open doors by providing external assurance to potential clients or collaborators that you are worthy of their trust. Our ability to build and maintain a high level of trust is key to having a successful project. I hope that this award will further enhance our ability to attract trusting clients and collaborators as well as attract top talent to grow our studio.



**Myer Harrell**  
AIA, LFA, LEED  
AP BD+C, Homes

For me, the work to complete the submission allowed me to take stock in my career to date and articulate my unique contributions. I could see what I've accomplished at a glance and now think more deliberately about what I want to build on and explore further. In reaching out to my community of nominators, collaborators, and mentors (note: it requires a team effort to submit an individual award), I also gained a new appreciation for how others saw my contributions to architectural practice.



**Cody Henderson**  
AIA, NCARB,  
LEED AP, I2SL

This recognition has given me a voice further beyond just the St. Louis community already in allowing me to talk and discuss with other professionals from across the nation. I hope to continue this expanded outreach and help many more professionals in their careers. I would encourage others to apply because this award does magnify the great work going on in our profession. It showcases the possibilities that young professionals have brought forth to the industry and to design in general.



**Amanda Loper**  
AIA, LEED AP

I am so grateful for the platform it has given me. It has increased the number of opportunities to share the firm's work around affordable housing and good design for all. One of my goals, when I moved to Alabama, was to bring more progressive thinking around design and good press to my home state. I'm so proud to have won this award as an Alabama-based architect.



**Tiara Hughes**  
AIA Associate,  
NOMA, REALTOR

We should all be more intentional about changing the discourse and creating a better space for underrepresented designers. In turn, our industry will become more inclusive to better reflect the communities we serve. I encourage young designers, especially BIPOC designers, to apply for this program as a means of giving their initiatives a national platform to elevate and celebrate their work!



**Ricardo J. Maga Rojas, NOMA, Associate AIA**

This award serves as a reminder to push forward against any obstacles that bar my path and to encourage others to put their work forward. There is nothing wrong with promoting your work and recognizing that you have made strides in a profession that is not representative of you. You are your own biggest advocate. I highly encourage anyone and everyone interested in applying to shut the negative voice out and put themselves out there. Do not let the cost of the application be a barrier. Seek a mentor or champion that is invested in elevating emerging professionals.



**Danielle McDonough**  
AIA, LEED BD+C

This award has allowed me to reflect on my career and decipher what I want to focus on, which is continued impact in the public realm, producing equitable designs for mission-driven organizations that are thoughtful, beautifully executed, and worthy of the communities they serve. For those that are thinking of applying: do it. You will undoubtedly learn something about yourself that has yet to rise to the surface.



**Adrienne Cali**  
AIA, LEED AP

This award has given me validation that the work I am so passionate about is significant, not only within my community but on a national scale. Through this recognition, I am realizing that I am a leader in my field and the voice I am constantly striving to give to our historic buildings and districts is amplified. The nomination process allowed me to reflect on the architect I am now and the architect I want to become. Putting my goals, passions, and accomplishments down on paper helped me realize that I am already making a difference, both within and outside of my firm. I would encourage others to apply and not hesitate to ask for support – you may be surprised by how many people are already in your corner.



**Jonathan Moody**  
AIA, NOMA,

Imposter syndrome is something that I struggle with in many rooms. I'm so honored to be able to say that I am good enough to be named as a national winner. Before I enter some of those difficult rooms, it helps to say to myself that "yes, I am good enough" before the door opens. I've also realized that there are many others I know who are good enough as well. You miss one hundred percent of the shots you don't take. Now is the time for you to take your shot!



**Jennifer Park**  
AIA

The award is the acknowledgment that our profession is serious about needing changes in equity and diversity. It's also the acknowledgment that real change takes constant work and effort and requires a multi-faceted approach – as an educator, as a professional, an advocate, a firm leader, women, and an Asian American. It's given me the encouragement and support to lead with all those facets which make up my identity. This award is a platform to highlight unique identities and fuels the continued efforts toward positive change.





**Matthew Thornton**  
AIA, LEED AP

It has lent visibility and offers a platform to engage in thought leadership on a national level. While the recognition is great, others should consider applying as a way to give back to our up-and-coming professionals. You never know who you might inspire to pursue their dreams.



**Danielle Tillman**  
AIA, NOMA

The Young Architect award is an acknowledgment of hard work that I am very appreciative of. It tells me that the effort and the commitment to the craft of architecture have all been worth it, and it encourages me to continue to set goals and strive for a pursuit of excellence in a field that I very much enjoy. Anyone who is committed to influencing the field of architecture should look to become involved in both the field and other initiatives of impact and apply to give a greater voice to their influence.



**Matt Toddy**  
AIA, NCARB

The most rewarding part of the Young Architect Award is the self-discovery and clarity that comes with the application process. After pulling together everything I've ever done professionally for the award application, I was able to formulate a clear picture of what's important, what isn't, and what the impact of my efforts has been over time. Gaining this clarity has been critical to developing goals for the next 3, 5, and 10 years of my career. I can't recommend going through the application process highly enough.



**Daniel Yudchitz**  
AIA, NCARB,  
LEED AP

This award has connected me with several like-minded architects across the country. It is a great honor to be included amongst such a talented group of practitioners. I look forward to continuing a design dialogue with them as we elevate our collective craft in the coming years. I see a lot of value in Young Architect Award application process. Compiling a record of your career is a worthwhile exercise for any architect, particularly at this point in a career. It is an opportunity to reflect on where you have been. You can use that as a springboard for charting a course for the next chapter.



**Kelsey Jordan, Assoc. AIA, WELL AP**

*Jordan is an architectural project lead at Ittner Architects in St. Louis. As chair of the AIA STL WiA Community Outreach Committee, she empowers young women through design. She is also a founding member of the AIA STL EDI Committee.*



**Beresford Pratt, AIA, NOMA**

*Pratt is an architect and associate with Ayers Saint Gross. He focuses on higher education design with a specialty in active learning spaces and co-leads multiple J.E.D.I based architecture pipeline initiatives with Baltimore, Maryland K-12 students. He is the AIA Young Architects Forum Communications Director.*



# Connection and Chill

## Cocktails and streaming content for the casual consumer

Each quarter, the Young Architects Forum (YAF) Knowledge Focus Group curates streaming video content and a cocktail recipe to salute each Connection issue theme. In Q2, we highlight the importance of mentorship in our profession.

### Cocktail Recipe: “The Mentini”

This martini is inspired by mentorship, with a floral touch using rose and orange blossom water. We raise a glass to how mentorship is helping young architects blossom, to stories about how they rose in their careers.

#### Ingredients

1 oz vodka (or non-alcoholic substitute)  
1 oz gin (or non-alcoholic substitute)  
½ oz extra dry vermouth (Dolin brand recommended) (or non-alcoholic substitute)  
Orange blossom water  
Rose water

#### Instructions

Combine gin, vodka, and vermouth. Stir or shake with ice until chilled. Carefully place three drops of orange blossom water and three drops of rose water into the cocktail and stir again. Serve in a martini glass and garnish to your liking.

**Cheers!**

The Mentini with orange and rose garnish



### Streaming Recommendations (available on Netflix and other streaming platforms):

In the spirit of mentorship, we hope these shows inspire personal growth, broken barriers, and the pursuit of our best selves no matter what our careers.

**“Ted Talks: Lifehacks”** (2011)

**“The Playbook”** (2020)

**“Crip Camp”** (2020)

**“Knock Down the House”** (2019)

**AIA YAF Knowledge Focus Group (Allie Ditzel, AIA; Ashley Hartshorn, AIA, NCARB; Kiara Luers, AIA; Caitlin Osepchuk, AIA; Jason Takeuchi, AIA, NCARB, NOMA)**

*The YAF Knowledge Focus Group is dedicated to identifying important issues for recently licensed architects and the creation of knowledge resources to enable young architects to advance their careers.*

# Young Architects Forum

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