

July 21, 2025

# Report

from the Strategic Council

**From:** Jessica O'Donnell, AIA Strategic Council Moderator  
**To:** AIA New Jersey

**Mission:** *The AIA Strategic Council advances the architectural profession by informing the AIA Board and other Institute bodies about important professional issues, opportunities, and threats. The Council has an outward and forward-focused vision with an emphasis on long-term goals and outcomes.*

**What Does the Strategic Council Do?** *To learn more about the role and activities of the Strategic Council, click [HERE](#).*

## From the Moderator + Vice Moderator

The summer is flying by and the Council study groups are diligently advancing their areas of focus. Study group report outs are slated for August and December so that we can focus efforts during our September Council Assembly by prioritizing our collective recommendations.

The Council Best Practice Committee, along with the communications and elections subcommittees have been working in the background these past few months. The Best Practices group is streamlining our processes for developing and writing recommendations as well as refining elements of the Council Handbook.

Last week, Councilors heard speeches from the candidates for the At Large Representative to the Council. The results of those elections should be available before the end of July. The next round of Council elections will be held in early August, for the three positions of 2026 Moderator, 2026 Moderator-Elect/2027 Moderator, and the At Large Director on the AIA Board.

Our communications group is gathering content for our 2025 Year In Review Journal, which is slated to be released in December 2025. This edition will also have a special section focusing on the efforts and impact from the past 10 years of the Council.

We look forward to announcing our 2026-2029 At Large Representatives to the Strategic Council in next month's update and engaging in thoughtful dialogue with you during the August AIA Leadership Exchange Calls!

**Jessica M. O'Donnell**, AIA 2025 Moderator + **Abigail R. Brown**, FAIA 2025 Vice Moderator  
*Special thanks to our **committee chairs** who help guide our work and inform our decision-making process: **Jeff Seabold**, FAIA (Best Practices Committee Chair), **Mary Womble**, AIA & **Marc Mondor**, AIA (Communications Co-Chairs), and **Mike Daly**, AIA (Elections Chair).*

## Council News

### THE COUNCIL WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU – SURVEY RESULTS

In the April Monthly Report, the Council asked for feedback on members' perceptions of the most pressing professional or industry 'pain points'. Below are the results of the top responses we received.

*AIA STRATEGIC COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT THEMES - JULY 2025*

*Q: What would you identify as the most critical professional or industry-related challenges or areas of concern that you are currently encountering, either at the individual or firm level?*

Unrealistic client expectations of delivery schedule, project cost, and outcomes.

Contractors and Developers hold the keys to starting projects instead of architects, we are becoming an afterthought.

Competitive Fees to continue to inspire the best talent.

Not enough experience with different sectors, meaning larger projects. Our focus is efficiency based and expertise in one sector of fit out spaces.

Slow to no proactive adoption of technological advancements or digital platforms.

There isn't enough experience with being on site, learning how things work, not engaging enough with the clients specifically.

### STUDY GROUP UPDATES

#### 10-YEAR VALUATION & FUTURE BLUEPRINT

The initial research and stakeholder interview phase has concluded with excellent participation. After analyzing a significant volume of data over the past month, the group has reached a strong consensus on the strategic direction of our findings. We are currently preparing a preliminary report for the Governance Task Force, while concurrently developing the final report and recommendations for the council's review. We feel really positive with the direction this is all heading for the Council!

#### AIA OF THE FUTURE

The AIA of the Future team is reviewing the organization as a whole and discussing what partnerships could be formed to strengthen our relationships beyond the profession. Our recommendations for the next steps on this topic will be presented during the September presentation. Members of the AIA of the Future and Architect of the Future study groups have been invited to join the July Young Architects Forum (YAF) AdCom call to talk about their findings and how they align with the goals of the YAF.

#### ARCHITECT OF THE FUTURE

As we look back on our collective efforts, we prepare to distill our findings to not only document our process but also shape the path forward. We've divided into focused subgroups—research and inspiration, the persona exercise, and data collection through member outreach—each contributing a vital piece to our narrative. As the architect of the future group, our ability to inspire change will depend on how clearly and effectively we present the depth and value of the work we've done. This moment is not just about reflection—it's about translating vision into momentum.

## CLIMATE RESPONSIVE DESIGN & LEADERSHIP



The team continues its monthly publication of Climate Corner, with two to three additional issues planned before the final 2025 presentation in September. In preparation for the August issue on Regenerative Design, this study group will interview 2025 AIA President-Elect Illya Azaroff, FAIA, on Wednesday, July 9th. This interview will provide an in-depth exploration of the topic, contributing to the ongoing dialogue on sustainable architectural practices.

**ENHANCE YOUR SUSTAIN-ABILITIES** this July with designing a for a circular economy – a building industry where construction waste is recycled, remanufactured or reused to make new buildings, thus reducing the total new raw material needed and reducing the amount of waste going to landfills. Link to the PDF can be found [here](#).

## CONNECTED COMMUNITIES

To expand on AIA's current initiative to publicize and highlight the use of Key Architects in municipal governments, the Connected Communities study group's objective is to amplify the Key Architect's benefits to the community in leading efforts to address social, economic, and physical challenges. As the Key Architect champions equitable housing and community development, the sensitive harvesting and application of data (via AI technologies) will serve to unite public agencies, communities, and private partners.

## DIGITAL ARCHITECTURE

The Digital Architecture Study Group has divided into four focused teams: Equity, Wellbeing, Business, and Future Positioning. Each subgroup is drafting 1 to 2 page summaries of research to date to help shape our unified report and August presentation. We are aligning with the AI Task Force and broader Council objectives while tracking Task Force developments to identify overlaps and refine our role as a strategic bridge between implementation and member needs.

## RESILIENT PRACTICE MODELS

The Resilient Practice Models study group completed a comprehensive sprint evaluating 160+ executive orders for their impact on architecture, resulting in a detailed memo to the AIA Board with recommendations across seven categories. Subgroups are finalizing content for our August presentation, including internal, external, and professional pressures facing practice. We're exploring what's next, considering long-term issues like AI disruption, practice equity, business acumen, research in practice, and evolving service models.

# Institute News

## GOVERNANCE TASK FORCE UPDATE

The Governance Task Force has released its recap memo from its June 30th meeting where the group's discussion focused on the findings from governance stakeholder interviews and the next steps anticipated by the task force. This has been distributed to various AIA Community Hubs, including CACE and AIA Leadership Network. The next major milestone is to engage in a work session to explore potential governance models (Board, Strategic Council, Knowledge Communities) for structural organization, roles and responsibilities, communication/transparency process, decision and policy reporting to Components and membership.

**CALL TO ACTION:** please take a few moments to add your thoughts to our [feedback form](#) and encourage your fellow leaders and AIA members to do the same. It is critical that we hear from you and your feedback/questions will be most impactful if received by 8/30/25. If you have any questions, please direct them to [boardofdirectors@aia.org](mailto:boardofdirectors@aia.org).

## NEXT TO LEAD – APPLICATIONS OPEN

Next to Lead is a leadership development training program for racially and ethnically diverse women in architecture who aspire to be AIA leaders. This is a ten-month program to help cohorts enhance their association leadership acumen, give voice to relevant topics affecting women in the workplace and the profession, and refine their leadership skills.

Applications are currently open and close on **August 8, 2025**. Learn more about the program and the application [here](#).

## AIA AWARDS PROGRAMS

The 2026 AIA Awards season is now open for 25+ programs that define architectural excellence by highlighting exemplary people, organizations, and projects. For the most up-to-date requirements, please visit the [online application portal](#).

More information on the awards and application periods can be found [here](#).

## AIA FUTURE FOCUSED VIDEOS

The Future Focused video campaign highlights underrepresented architects and designers and shares the stories of those who are leading change in architecture. [The Future Focused videos can be found on YouTube.](#)

Current strategic council members featured in the Future Focused videos include Gwen Fuytes, AIA and Saakshi Terway, Assoc. AIA.

## 2025 FUTURE FORWARD GRANT RECIPIENT

The 2025 Future Forward Grant has been awarded to Neşe Altıntaş, Assoc. AIA, NOMA, CWA, for her research proposal titled “Beyond the Classroom.”

The Future Forward Grant, a project by the Large Firm Roundtable (LFRT) and the AIA Young Architects Forum (YAF), supports students, emerging professionals and early career architects in testing innovative ideas that challenge traditional architecture practices. The goal of the \$10,000 grant is to foster innovation by providing the necessary resources to pursue untested ideas and drive exploration and disruption in the profession.

Learn more about Neşe’s research proposal and the Future Forward Grant [here](#).

## Upcoming events

Date	Event	Location	Link
November 3-5	Women’s Leadership Summit	Atlanta, GA	
December 3-5	AIA Governance Week	Washington, D.C.	

For more events, visit the AIA events page at: <https://www.aia.org/community/events>

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## Feedback

*We value your input! If you have questions or ideas for the Strategic Council, email us at [StrategicCouncil@aia.org](mailto:StrategicCouncil@aia.org). To learn more about the work of the Strategic Council, please visit the [Strategic Council webpage at AIA.org](#).*

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