

LOS ANGELES ARCHITECTURE: CONNECT EMPOWER THRIVE

The AIA|LA Advocacy Platform



AIA
Los Angeles

WHO WE ARE

With more than 4300 members, the Los Angeles chapter of The American Institute of Architects (AIA|LA) includes: architects, designers, students, and professionals in allied fields that advance innovations and/or services in the built environment. Collectively, our diverse membership represents a broad range of professional practices and multi-disciplinary pursuits.

Since 1857, the AIA has represented the professional interests of America's architects. With a nationwide membership of over 90,000 licensed architects, emerging professionals, and allied partners, AIA expresses a deep commitment to design excellence and livability in our nation's buildings and communities.

OUR MISSION

AIA|LA is the voice of the architectural profession, providing the resources for our members to serve as the leaders in the design of the built environment.

WHAT WE DO

We are honored to advocate on behalf of members and to support them through a full spectrum of resources that:

- Empower individual architects
- Strengthen firms
- Advocate for the profession
- Support our communities and region through design.

Our programs and initiatives foster aspirations, capabilities, and regional leadership through advocacy, education, inspiration, advancement of core-values, programs that support individual practices, and pathways to design excellence.

OUR CORE VALUES

We believe architecture connects communities and empowers people to live healthier and more enriching lives. In early 2018, AIA|LA created a set of best-practices to achieve greater Equity, Inclusion and Diversity in the profession. We offer that template to serve as a roadmap for greater civic engagement. We believe in architecture that creates healthy, walkable, hyper-local, decentralized, strong and connected communities that are authentic, flexible, adaptive and resilient with passive, natural and technologically-responsible systems.

OUR ADVOCACY PLATFORM INCLUDES:

- Business & Cultural Inclusion
- “Design For Dignity” & Housing For All
- Community Engagement & Design Thinking
- Urban Design, Health and the Public Realm
- Office of the City Architect

Business & Cultural Inclusion

Challenge:

As the Los Angeles region prepares for the 2028 Olympics & Paralympics, a substantial amount of work needs to be done. Billions of dollars will be spent on housing, transportation and watershed infrastructure, the public right-of-way, and our parks and recreational spaces, as well as, public and private facilities. The transformative impact of these investments will be massive.

Yet, at risk are numerous social equity and environmental justice issues, such as displacement and community disruption. We still need stronger provisions to ensure greater business and cultural inclusion as these investments and improvements are made.

While all of these improvements will be administered by a multitude of public and private agencies, we still have a responsibility as a region to make sure everyone has a chance to equally benefit from these investments. Likewise, it's essential that all communities have the chance to participate in the planning, design and creation of this visual and environmental transformation. Its legacy will be felt for many generations to come.

Solution: A Regional Inclusion Framework

The leadership of the AIA|LA would like to partner with the City of Los Angeles and The LA 2028 Organizing Committee to develop a comprehensive implementation strategy that more deeply engages the regional design community-at-large. We also recommend including METRO and The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, LAUSD, LACCD and all of the other agencies that are currently investing in public improvements with an eye on project completion by 2028.

Essentially, we need to expand the focus of 'preparing for the Olympics' to also involve improving the connective tissue of the region so that the improvements last well beyond 2028 for years to come. Developing a coherent visual identity for this multi-sport event will require expansive thinking by designers who can anticipate broad applications and interventions.

To optimize small business inclusion:

- Establish a measurable baseline of at least 30% small-business inclusion for all prime contracts.
- Establish a regional 'market-place' that allows for collaborative sourcing and streamlines the certification process for S/M/W/DVBE firms.
- Revise the legislative definition of "small business" with a tiered approach that recognizes the wealth of diversity of most local businesses here in the LA region.
- Facilitate an open-platform that allows agencies to share construction scheduling, performance records, and other data to make value based selections, reduce cost and add clarity and transparency.
- Utilize technological innovations to improve the procurement and project delivery process with a special emphasis to increase the opportunity for smaller firms to serve as prime contractors.
- Establish a process to reward "approved mentor/ protégé programs" in lieu of ineffective good faith efforts.
- Adjust submittal requirements for small proposals to streamline the procurement process and better match the risk to reward ratio for competing for bids. Small businesses can't afford the paperwork!

To optimize cultural inclusion:

- Let's expand the discussion to talk about the Paralympics and adaptive sports and ensure universal access to our public realm.
- Forge deeper connections with social justice groups and community-based organizations and empower them early in the planning process.
- Establish goals and metrics to achieve a lower carbon footprint and strive for a Zero-Net Energy Olympics, to ensure healthier impacts on our most vulnerable communities.
- Create the opportunity for the many voices and visions of LA to be reflected in the temporal streetscapes of the Olympics and ensure that the improvements to our public realm serve as a canvas to celebrate diverse, creative visions with citywide super-graphic interventions—like bus wraps, painted sidewalks, building facades, temporary structures, etc.
- Create a decentralized, plug-in & play framework that facilitates crowd-funded improvements to the public realm and empowers local community groups to create their own installations and streetscapes, which will show the world the amazing diversity of LA's multifaceted communities.

As we welcome the world, it is essential that the decision makers of the public agencies and the organizing committee reflect and enhance the diversity of the region and that the visual identity of our built environment celebrates the wealth of diversity that is Los Angeles.

OUR REQUEST:

To establish specific and measurable goals for small business inclusion and to establish a regional marketplace and framework to better connect the public agencies delivering these important infrastructure projects.



RIGHT

Advanced STEM & Design Institutes,
Lehrer Architects LA
Photography: Michael B. Lehrer FAIA

LEFT

MLK1101 Supportive Housing, Lorcan O'Herlihy Architects [LOHA]



Community Engagement & Design Thinking

Challenge:

As Los Angeles becomes more densely populated and neighborhoods evolve, many community groups are fearful of this change and, as a consequence, have become more vocal in their opposition to development. At the same time, many people (especially youth) have become disenfranchised as career pathways increasingly diminish in our most vulnerable neighborhoods. The narrative has been lost in the noise. It's essential that we invest in better methods of communication and interaction that will empower neighborhoods.

What if we could use the power of architecture and design to unite neighborhoods with a stronger sense of integrity and, at the same time, provide more pathways to career development in the planning, architecture, engineering and construction industries?

Solution: The Mobile Center for Architecture and Urban Design

AIA|LA is developing a capital campaign and forging partnerships to establish a Mobile Center for Architecture and Urban Design. Much like the success of MIT's Fab-Labs and "maker-spaces", The Mobile Center will be a "food for thought" truck of programs and exhibitions to further educate Angelenos about the work architects do and to expose our communities to the value of good design.

By promoting architects and architecture as central in the development of a livable city, the Mobile Center will strengthen pride for our neighborhoods and architectural heritage. By exposing K12 students in under-served neighborhoods to the architectural conversation, we hope to inspire them with career opportunities in architecture that can positively impact and shape their communities, simultaneously ensuring a more diverse and vibrant future for our profession.

The Mobile Center's mission is:

- To educate Angelenos about who architects are and the role that they play in shaping our communities.

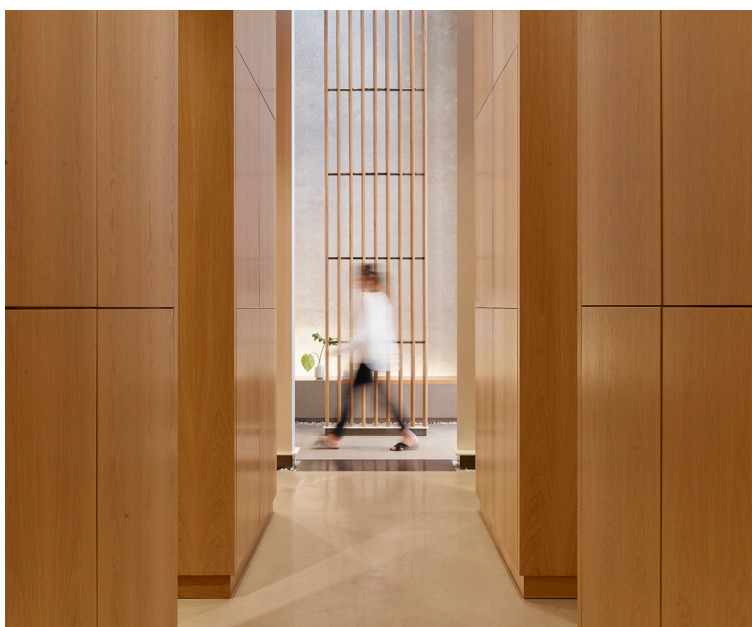
- To inspire people to study architecture and to become the architects of tomorrow- by presenting architects who look like them with similar backgrounds.
- To deliver this message in areas underexposed to art, architecture, and design.
- To inspire and develop a sense of pride for the neighborhood.
- To heighten the visibility of issues that impact the built environment.

The Mobile Center will be a method of outreach for architecture and design, capable of traveling throughout the greater Los Angeles region. It will cross-fertilize programming around the built environment with relevant community issues, and will be available to other like-minded organizations for events. The Mobile Center will be a multi-faceted project exhibiting concepts of the built environment to catalyze community discussion and activity around architecture. It will serve as an exhibition and gallery space, classroom, creative hub, and gathering point; hosting a highly adaptable and ever-evolving program.

In general, it will create greater access to the world of architecture for those who might not otherwise be a part of the conversation. It will be a playful place that encourages curiosity and creates an architectural experience for everyone.

OUR REQUEST:

As we prepare to host the AIA Convention in 2020, we are reaching out to civic leaders to partner with the AIA/ILA in establishing a Mobile Center, a pilot program of best-practices in community engagement. We also see this as a fitting component of a comprehensive “inclusion program” as we prepare for the 2026 World Cup and 2028 Olympics & Paralympics.



LEFT

Studio Dental II, Montalba Architects, Inc.
Photography: Kevin Scott

RIGHT

Animo South Los Angeles, Brooks + Scarpa
Photography: Tara Wujcik



“Design For Dignity” & Housing For All

Challenge:

For decades, housing prices throughout California have risen faster than incomes and average rates of inflation. These increases are more extreme in coastal urban areas like Los Angeles. Our current housing crisis is not simply a matter of “supply and demand”. Although we recognize that we’ve nearly met Mayor Garcetti’s goal of developing 100,000 units of housing by 2021, there is so much more that needs to be done. We urgently need more housing for all income types (affordable, supportive, workforce & luxury).

At the same time, we need to immediately dignify the lives of the thousands of people that are currently living unsheltered on our streets and sidewalks.

Solution: The Housing Innovation Ordinance

AIA|LA would like to work with public agencies to identify specific and measurable ways to build affordable housing more expeditiously and at scale, starting with policies that directly affect these factors. We believe a multi-disciplinary working group of professionals can identify innovations in the delivery of housing by highlighting all of the barriers and hindrances that can be addressed at the local and state level (zoning, building codes, etc.)

We are also committed to the following plan of action and advocacy pursuits:

- Architecture Firms: Commit to hiring student interns that are “housing insecure”, or are indeed already living without a place to call home.
- Decriminalize homelessness. Decriminalize drug addiction. Declare a Human Right to Housing – and advocate at the national level for more equitable housing policies.
- Immediately act to dignify the current condition of our streets with bathrooms, showers, shade structures and hygienic amenities for those who are currently living on our sidewalks and in neighborhood encampments.
- Establish a “Housing Innovation Ordinance” that facilitates a pilot program to advance swift, innovative and cost-effective solutions to affordable housing, and exempts these projects from the various regulatory conditions that are slowing projects down and/or over-burdening them with unnecessary costs and complexities (e.g., Not all rooms need mechanical air-conditioning in Southern California! Passive systems work just fine in many conditions)
- Expand housing typologies and embrace mixed-use backyard homes that enable live/work conditions, agriculture and commerce.

- Establish a set of pre-existing kit-of-parts to expedite plan check (for ADUs, tiny homes, etc). Create Type V sheet for garage conversions, etc.
- Develop a series of public service announcements to help change the general public's attitude towards our collective housing crisis.
- Create a well-designed, compelling and accessible “catalogue” of best-practices, precedents and successful projects to show stakeholders.
- Coordinate a series of listening sessions, which will continue to allow architects to hear from the diverse array of “clients” that are currently without a home and with existing communities that may not realize the added benefits of integrating affordable housing and/or supportive housing into their neighborhoods.
- Create training courses to help architects perform best-practices of community outreach to learn how to be better listeners and to tell better stories.
- Fast-track permits and expedite innovations that aim to solve the problem via new means & methods of construction and land-development.

OUR REQUEST:

For City Council to formally appoint a working group of architects and housing providers to create a “Housing Innovation Ordinance” that aims to deliver housing at scale at a total cost of \$100,000 per bedroom.



RIGHT

G-Cubed, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP
Photography: Benny Chan

LEFT

Ashes & Diamonds, Bestor Architecture
Photography: Bruce Damonte



Urban Design, Health and the Public Realm

Challenge:

Our City's private and public tree canopy is in steep decline due to drought, disease, pests, the Sidewalk Repair Program (SRP), development, lack of funding, and years of replanting and pruning neglect. The City of LA's various departments and its tree planting partners are not planting trees at the same rate as they are removing them.

Roughly a third of all healthy tree removals currently being removed are from development while, while another two thirds of all healthy trees are being removed for sidewalk repairs. Illegal tree removals, which are not counted, are a growing concern and enforcement of penalties are weak.

Furthermore, The Sidewalk Repair Program (SRP) requires the City to repair our sidewalks over the course of the next thirty years. Many large trees providing necessary ecosystem benefits such as carbon absorption, rainwater run-off slowing, habitat provision, and shade, are being removed because of sidewalk damage resulting from years of neglect. As the City completes the EIR for the SRP, it should more adequately weigh the cost/benefits of tree removals.

According to experts in urban forestry, we are in danger of losing almost 50% of our canopy coverage in the next ten years. Additionally, since we lack a comprehensive tree inventory, the long-term impacts of tree losses are unknown.

Solution: Urban Forest Master Plan

AIA|LA recommends that the City of Los Angeles invest in an Urban Forest Master Plan and hire a Director of Urban Forestry to better support the division of urban forestry currently embedded within the Bureau of Streets Services. Since trees are currently managed, trimmed and planted by a wide variety of departments and non-profits, without comprehensive oversight and coordination, the Director's role should be empowered to oversee all tree activities in all departments.

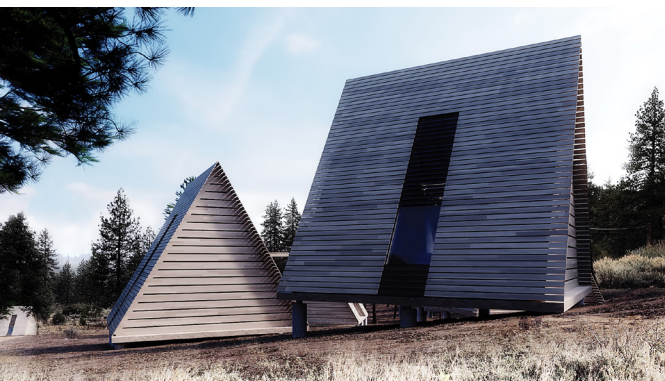
Additional recommendations include:

- Improve the permitting process for new development projects to protect existing trees and incentivize the planting of a healthier street canopy.
- Continue the Bureau of Street Services study of alternative sidewalk materials and develop a comprehensive tool kit of alternative sidewalk repair methods to avoid tree removals.
- Stop cutting down trees until alternatives to tree removals have been studied and a comprehensive tree inventory and the SRP EIR has been completed.
- Do short term sidewalk repairs where a tree is damaging the sidewalk.
- Do comprehensive, citywide tree-well enlargements.

- Develop enforceable tree protections.
- Integrate into all public tree plantings water capturing and cleaning infrastructure, such as permeable paving, bulb-outs and dry creeks.
- Prioritize and invest in the long term planning of citywide tree planting.
- Utilize short term sidewalk repair solutions as a temporary measure while we wait for young trees to mature.
- Include Urban Forestry at the city's infrastructure "planning table".
- Expand incentives to ensure that every property has a healthy street canopy.

OUR REQUEST:

To invest in an Urban Forest Master Plan and Director, and a holistic effort to ensure safer, greener and cooler streets by prioritizing a healthy tree canopy throughout the region.



LEFT TOP

Angle Lake Station, Brook + Scarpa

Photography: Ben Benschneider/Brooks + Scarpa

LEFT BOTTOM

Camp Lakota, Perkins+Will

Office of the City Architect

(AIA National Initiative)

Challenge:

Too often, substantial economic development decisions and capital investments are made without the benefit of engaging an architect at the very beginning of the process. This leaves decision-makers without a trained perspective on how the built environment impacts community health, economic prosperity and resilience.

Currently, architects have a diminishing return of influence (because their input is often received too late in the process) over local codes, policies, and programs that directly impact architecture, urban design, land use or sustainable design policy. If an architect's perspective were represented in the formative stages of policy-making, architects could more profoundly influence the intrinsic and economic value of our communities.

Solution:

AIA National and all of its local components are advancing an initiative to encourage the establishment of the Office of the City Architect in every municipality and public agency.

This AIA National initiative encourages the formation of new positions and/or the re-alignment of existing positions in other departments to create local Offices of the City Architect that will encourage smarter growth patterns, promote resilient neighborhoods, improve community engagement, and catalyze higher performing and more sustainable cities. While we recognize the outstanding leadership of City of Los Angeles Deputy City Engineer, Deborah Weintraub, AIA and the Architectural Division of the Bureau of City Engineering – this office is embedded within the Bureau of Engineering. We'd like to strengthen its role with additional resources and more direct oversight.

The Office of the City Architect can lead on issues such as:

- Urban design of our streets, sidewalks, parks and public plazas.
- Design guidelines and the design review process of significant private and public projects.
- The design management of our citywide systems that deliver energy, water, waste, food, transportation and materials.
- The establishment of goals to achieve a zero-carbon city by 2030 and promote the implementation of more passive-systems.
- To optimize the utilization of our 9000+ city-owned parcels of land and facilities with a stronger vision and long-term strategy.
- With the support of the Chief Procurement Officer, Chief Design Officer, Chief Asset Manager leverage economic development strategies.
- Integrate funding sources that will invest in Opportunity Zones with greater sensitivity to existing communities.

OUR REQUEST:

To form a working group to examine the direct benefits associated with the formal restructuring of the organizational chart of the city to establish the Office of the City Architect.



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For more information, please contact:

Will Wright, Hon. AIA/ALA
Director, Government & Public Affairs
American Institute of Architects | Los Angeles
3780 Wilshire Blvd, Suite 701
Los Angeles, CA 90010
(213) 639-0764
will@aialosangeles.org

www.aialosangeles.org

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