

FROM THE DESK OF AIA|LA PRESIDENT TONI LEWIS, AIA



Dear AIA|LA Members and the Broader A+E Community,

It is a true honor to serve as President of AIA Los Angeles at a time when our profession is being called to lead in new and urgent ways.

In the aftermath of last year's devastating fires, the greater design community showed our ability respond in meaningful ways – coming together to learn, advise, advocate, and volunteer. This year I hope to harness that enthusiasm in the spirit of **Building Community**. On one level, that's what we do every day—designing housing, workplaces, schools, civic buildings, and public spaces that shape the life of our city. But building community goes beyond construction. It's about strengthening relationships, expanding opportunity, and making sure architects have a seat at the table when decisions are made that shape our collective future.

Earlier this month, I attended the AIA Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C., where architects from across the country came together to advocate for our profession and the communities we serve. In meetings with our Senators and members of Congress, we spoke about the urgent need for bipartisan housing legislation that streamlines federal processes and supports housing production at scale. We urged lawmakers to extend tax credits for high-performing buildings to ensure continued investment in sustainable design. We defended design freedom—so that federal buildings reflect the culture, climate, and values of the communities they serve, rather than a mandated style. And we addressed the Department of Education's misclassification of accredited M.Arch. and D.Arch. programs as “graduate” rather than “professional” degrees, a change that threatens equitable access to architectural education.

These aren't abstract policy conversations. They directly affect how we practice, who can enter our profession, and whether we can deliver the resilient, affordable, sustainable environments our communities urgently need. When architects speak up, we are advocating for public safety, environmental resilience, and civic identity.

In the year ahead, AIA|LA will continue to strengthen its role as a convener—bringing together architects, allied professionals, elected officials, and community leaders. Building community

also begins within our own chapter: supporting emerging professionals, creating space for diverse voices, fostering mentorship, and ensuring our organization reflects the city we serve.

Architecture is not neutral. Our work expresses values—equity, sustainability, beauty, safety, belonging. When we engage in advocacy, we are not being political; we are fulfilling our responsibility to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

Los Angeles faces profound challenges—housing affordability, climate adaptation, infrastructure resilience, and economic inequality. Architects matter because we are trained to think long-term, to navigate complexity, and to imagine solutions that are both visionary and practical.

This year, I invite you to see yourself as a builder of community in the fullest sense: in City Hall, in Sacramento, in Washington, and most importantly, in neighborhoods across Los Angeles.

With gratitude -

Toni Lewis
2026 President
AIA Los Angeles