

May 26, 2026

Report

from the Strategic Council

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To:
AIA Virginia
May Update

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.*

To learn more about the work of the Strategic Council, please visit the [Strategic Council webpage at AIA.org](https://www.aia.org/strategic-council).

From the Councilor

The AIA Strategic Council is heading to San Diego for AIA26 – for work sessions, presentations, and the important business of electing AIA's next generation of leaders. On the research front, I've had the extraordinary privilege of interviewing innovative architects and business leaders across the globe - from well-known firms like SHoP, MASS Design Group, and Gensler, to agile entrepreneurs from Charlottesville to Dubai, Johannesburg, and London.

The consistency across these conversations is striking. Regardless of size, market, or model, they say the same thing: the future is bright, the horizon is expanding, and the opportunities are genuinely extraordinary - for architects willing to expand their definition of the role, obsess over the value they create for clients, and if possible, own a share of that value themselves.

The future of architecture belongs to firms that design their businesses as intentionally as their buildings. Our research shows what that looks like - and how to get there.

From the Moderator

The Council study groups are diligently moving their work forward. You can see highlights of that progress in the Study Group Updates below.

We are preparing for our in-person Council assembly in San Diego which will occur that Tuesday afternoon. Wednesday morning Councilors will attend their respective Board Committee meetings or spend some time in their study groups. That afternoon, Councilors will attend the AIA Annual Business meeting followed by the Candidate Caucuses.

Will you be at AIA26 in San Diego?

If so, there are also several engagement opportunities where you can connect with the Council on the expo floor:

- The **Regenerative Design** group has teamed up with the National Associates Committee (NAC) for an *Ask Me Anything* session at the Next Gen Lounge at AIA26.
- You can join a [Brain Date](#) with your Strategic Councilor between 10am-6pm on Thursday June 11th and 10am-4pm on Friday June 12th!

June marks approximately 6 months of current study group efforts. Later this summer, groups concluding at the end of 2026 will provide final reports, and groups continuing on through 2027 will provide progress reports. This information will be synthesized and shared with the Board at their September meeting.

We look forward to providing more robust updates and getting insights from you during the August Leadership Exchange calls!

Jessica M. O'Donnell, FAIA, 2026 Strategic Council Moderator

*Special thanks to our Moderator-Elect **Matthew Barnett**, AIA, and our **committee chairs** who help guide the Council's work: **Galen Lif**, AIA (Best Practices Committee Chair), **Marc Mondor**, FAIA (Communications Chair), and **Shannon Christensen**, FAIA (Elections Committee Chair).*

Strategic Council Study Group Updates

Below are snapshots of work in progress. We welcome insights, comments, and questions on these topics and encourage readers to reach out to their state representative on the Council or any of the Councilors.

HOUSING

The group has engaged with the members from the National Associates Committee and Government Advocacy Committee to enhance the group's discussions within the four-focused mission legs. The group has also invited additional speakers from diverse fields for upcoming meetings later this spring/summer.

NEUROARCHITECTURE

The group is outlining its draft progress report for refinement this summer along with drafting some speaker recommendations for AIA consideration.

PRACTICE

The [Career Development](#) subgroup met with key AIA team members to learn more about AIAU, the AIA Business Academy and what the Institute is working on in terms of Career Development.

The [Business](#) subgroup is wrapping up interviews that spanned topics including finding pathways in other industries for architects, alternative client services in hospitality, art, software development / firm management, technology research, BIM consulting, and digital side of practice systems.

REGENERATIVE DESIGN

The group is excited to share a 1-pager defining Regenerative Design soon. It's themes and content were discussed in this Earth Day AIAU webinar, now available to AIA members for free:

<https://aiau.aia.org/course/details/a-regenerative-approach-to-design-excellence>

Over the next few months, the team will divide into subgroups to focus on 3 key areas related to ways to achieve widespread adoption of regenerative design, brainstorming content for AIA members, and identifying ways to help architects advocate for regenerative design to clients.

VALUE

The [Protecting the Profession](#) subgroup and the [Pay Equity](#) subgroup merged this month to learn more about current initiatives in New Mexico.

The [Public Messaging](#) subgroup will be engaging with members of the public at AIA26 to gain insights about future messaging topics.

Institute news

AIA BOARD OF DIRECTOR CANDIDATE SPEECHES

Ahead of the AIA 2026 Business Meeting, there is still time to learn more about the candidates for AIA Elective Office through YouTube videos: [2027 Candidates for AIA Elective Office - YouTube](#)

AIA CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS OPEN THROUGH JUNE 15

The call for national volunteer opportunities is still open! AIA offers a number of ways to get involved at the national level including board-level committees, knowledge-based committees, state-based groups, signature products & services, strategic partnerships, as well as award juries and micro-volunteering.

To get a full picture of the volunteer structure and available opportunities, visit the [Volunteer Opportunities page](#) on AIA.org. If you have questions about a specific opportunity, email the staff contact listed on the page directly for a timely answer. For 2027, you may:

1. apply to one (1) committee on the [AIA Call for Volunteers](#) application, and
2. express interest in one to five juries through the [AIA Call for Jurors](#).

This includes the 2027-2029 Strategic Council At-Large Representative.

Upcoming events

Date	Event	Location	Link
June 10-13	AIA Conference on Architecture & Design 2026	San Diego, CA	Registration
Sept 30-Oct 2	Firm Management Symposium	Washington DC	
November 1-3	Women's Leadership Summit	Kansas City, MO	
November 16-18	Government Affairs Forum Summit	Washington, DC	
December 9-11	AIA Governance Week	Washington, DC	

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

Feedback

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