

Report

from the Strategic Council

From:

Jessica O'Donnell, AIA
2026 Strategic Council Moderator

To:

AIA Leadership

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](#).*

Council News

FROM THE MODERATOR

The 72 members of the 2026 AIA Strategic Council officially kicked off the year during a fun and productive Governance Week in early December 2025. Leading up to these in-person meetings, members of both the 2025 and 2026 Council along with members of the AIA Board and AIA's Senior Leadership team discussed and refined potential areas of focus for 2026. Earlier this month, the co-chairs of each study group along with the Moderator submitted memos to the AIA Board of Directors to provide a detailed overview of each area of focus and received additional insights from the Board during their January retreat.

We are excited about our five areas of study, our continued partnership with the Board, our ongoing collaborations with advocates from AIAS, NAC, & YAF, and the forthcoming AIA Strategic Plan. Each 2026 Strategic Council study group effort aims to advance the architectural profession's impact, equity, and relevance by focusing on actionable, member-driven initiatives to ensure impactful outcomes.

- **HOUSING** will explore ways to build or reinforce a coalition to advance actionable solutions to the broken housing system in America.
- **NEUROARCHITECTURE** will investigate ways to translate insights from experts into practical strategies architects can integrate into design to support human well-being.
- **PRACTICE** will look at ways architectural practice can transform by responding to emerging technologies and evolving models to grow healthier businesses.
- **REGENERATIVE DESIGN:** define this term for AIA with long-term measurable outcomes and accelerating current initiatives, like the Framework for Design Excellence.
- **VALUE** will explore a multi-year effort to proactively protect the profession and build upon existing pay equity and public messaging efforts.

We look forward to input from AIA members on these topics and encourage everyone to reach out to their state representative on the Council or any of the Councilors with questions, insights, or comments.

Jessica M. O'Donnell, AIA, 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**, AIA (Communications Chair), and **Shannon Christensen**, FAIA (Elections Committee Chair).

Strategic Council Study Group Updates

Below are the preliminary elevator pitch descriptions for each 2026 Strategic Council study group. We welcome insights, comments, and questions on these topics and encourage everyone to reach out to their state representative on the Council or any of the Councilors.

HOUSING

Housing in America is broken. Architects should lead in resolving it. The Housing Study Group will build a coalition, to identify the systems, policies, and economic barriers that limit supply and resilience, then develop clear, actionable solution ideas the AIA can advance nationally. Our focus is on practical strategies—design, policy, and process—that scale, reduce fragmentation, and support components and members already doing this work. By aligning advocacy, accelerating innovation, and elevating the architect's role, we aim to shape a more affordable, sustainable, and equitable housing ecosystem. This effort positions AIA to meaningfully influence the future of housing in this country.

NEUROARCHITECTURE

Have you or someone you know experienced sensory overload from building lighting or acoustics? We are exploring how research in neuroarchitecture and neurodiversity, explains how the brain responds to light, sound, color, texture, and wayfinding. By engaging leading experts of this body of knowledge, we will translate insights into practical strategies architects can integrate into design, supporting human well-being and better serving neurodiverse communities through a more informed, empathetic, and human-centered approach.

PRACTICE

We will investigate how architectural practice can transform by responding to emerging technology and evolving business models to grow healthier businesses that enable members to thrive over the course of their careers.

REGENERATIVE DESIGN

The phrase "Regenerative Design" is an increasingly used yet poorly defined term among architects and the broader AEC industry. We will define "Regenerative Design" for the AIA in a short-term sprint followed by a longer-term approach focused on measurable outcomes, scalable education and practice models, and targeted coalition-building.

With the imminent release of the 2026 Strategic Plan, our goal is to transform the profession now and beyond 2030 by empowering and inspiring members through accelerated uptake of current initiatives, such as the Framework for Design Excellence, and using the AIA's strong educational and advocacy infrastructure.

VALUE

How do we proactively advocate the value of architects, and those that work in the profession, through the following pathways: a framework for how to identify and protect against state legislation and other aspects that try to undermine the profession across the country, focusing on pay equity to increase transparency and improve quality standards of the profession, and trying to identify the best means and methods to reach and educate our target audiences.

Institute News

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS FORUM SUMMIT

From November 16–18, 2026, the Government Affairs & Public Policy State & Local Team will host the Government Affairs Forum Summit in Washington, D.C. This in-person event will bring together state components to connect, strategize, and align on issues impacting the profession. This is dedicated time for components to be in one room—learning from one another, sharing challenges, and advancing advocacy work together.

More information on the AIA Government Affairs & Public Policy can be found [here](#).

2026 AIA COLLEGE OF FELLOWS COMPONENT GRANT

The College of Fellows invites components to propose new or expanded programs that advance mental, physical, or community wellness within AIA and in the communities we serve. Programs may support participants of all ages—from K–12 students to emerging professionals, mid-career architects, and those pursuing Fellowship—and should include meaningful collaboration with partners and active involvement from AIA Fellows. Grants of up to \$8,000 will be awarded directly to components. [Applications are now open](#) and due **February 13, 2026, at 5 pm ET**.

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

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES WITH ARCHITECTURE: A CONVERSATION WITH 2026 AIA PRESIDENT ILLYA AZAROFF, FAIA

ByDESIGN™ Executive Producer Mike Chapman sits down with the incoming 2026 AIA National President, Illya Azaroff, FAIA, for a candid conversation affirming and building on the long-standing partnership between ByDESIGN™ and the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

Check out the conversation between Mike Champan and Illya Azzaroff, FAIA [here](#).

2025 AIA STRATEGIC COUNCIL YEAR IN REVIEW

The 2025 Year in Review Journal has arrived!

Explore a full breakdown of the AIA Strategic Council's progress and initiatives in 2025, including study group executive reports on 10-year valuation & future blueprint, architecture of the future, AIA of the future, resilient practice models, digital architecture, connected communities, climate responsive design & leadership, and much more.

The 2025 Year in Review can be found [here](#).

Upcoming Events

Date	Event	Location	Link
February 11-14	AIA Leadership Summit	Washington, D.C.	Registration
June 10-13	AIA Conference on Architecture & Design 2026	San Diego, CA	Information
November 1-3	Women's Leadership Summit	Kansas City, MO	
November 16-18	Government Affairs Forum Summit	Washington, D.C.	

December 9-11 AIA Governance Week

Washington, D.C.

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 Strategic Council's work, please visit the [Strategic Council webpage at AIA.org](#).*
