

April 20, 2026

Report

from the Strategic Council

From:

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To:

AIA Hawaii

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? [Learn more about the role and activities of the Strategic Council.](#)

From the Councilor

The Practice Study Group continues to interview architects to learn about alternative business models related to architecture. From structuring of advisory services to building science research to integration of AI for code reviews to capitalizing on Intellectual Property. Our recommendations to the AIA Board of Directors will be delivered sometime late summer.

Hope to see you at the AIA Conference on Architecture & Design in San Diego this June!

From the Moderator

Over the past month, our study groups have continued to move their work forward. In the updates below, you will see a snapshot of that progress.

The Council held its virtual April Assembly last week where we heard updates from the AIA EVP/CEO and President Elect, cross-pollinated our study group work and heard updates from our Best Practices, Communications, and Elections subcommittees. Key updates included the upcoming AIA Call for Volunteers that will contain two positions voted on by members of the Council: At-Large Representative to the Strategic Council and At-Large Director to the AIA Board. See the Institute News below for more information.

During the AIA Leadership Exchange Calls in March, members from the Small Firm Exchange (SFx) asked what the firm size makeup of the current Council is. On our April Assembly call we polled the group in attendance and found that roughly 41% work in small firms (1-9 people); 32% in medium firms (10-49 people) and 27% in large firms. We will work on getting a more holistic data set in the coming weeks to ensure our metrics are as accurate as possible.

Earlier in April, the Moderator attended the AIA Board meeting as a guest and provided an update on the Council work to date which was followed by fruitful discussion.

Will you be at AIA26 in San Diego? If so, the Council looks forward to seeing you at the Annual Business meeting on Wednesday June 10th. Keep an eye out for engagement opportunities with the Council on the expo floor between 10am-6pm on Thursday June 11th and 10am-4pm on Friday June 12th.

After AIA26, the Council study groups will dig into preparations for late summer reports leading up to our virtual September assembly where we will prioritize recommendations from this year's efforts.

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 is wrapping up its review of the 2025 AIA Housing Summit brief and coordinating key guest speakers during Q2 to inform two prominent areas of this broad topic – economics and the future of housing.

NEUROARCHITECTURE

The group is transitioning to synthesizing the data from guest speakers into key points and relevant concerns for AIA and AIA members.

PRACTICE

The Career Development subgroup continues to research various models with the profession that clearly define career development stages and are collaborating with representatives from the YAF and NAC.

The Business subgroup is wrapping up interviews with industry futurists on potential business models being developed.

REGENERATIVE DESIGN

The group is working on a 1-page overview of Regenerative Design with the AIA team and communications department and an introductory webinar for AIAU that goes live on Earth Day!

VALUE

The Protecting the Profession subgroup continues to collaborate with AIA Public Affairs on ways to amplify current initiatives and toolkits.

The Public Messaging subgroup is exploring the benefits of a social media toolkit to help components promote the value of the architect locally.

The Pay Equity subgroup had a discussion with the first architecture firm to have a union to learn more about the pain points, benefits, and lessons learned so far from this model.

Institute news

2026 YOUNG ARCHITECT, HONORARY AIA, AND ASSOCIATE AWARDS ANNOUNCED

Let's celebrate the well-earned accolades of these AIA members! Young Architect Award recipients are recognized for their exceptional leadership and significant contributions to the architecture profession and their communities. AIA Associates Award recipients are recognized for their significant contributions to their communities and the architecture profession. AIA Honorary Membership recognizes the notable contributions and service of people outside of the architecture profession.

[AIA Young Architect Award 2026](#)

[AIA Associates Award 2026](#)

[2026 AIA Honorary Member: Michele Russo](#)

AIA CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS OPENS MAY 1

Please keep an eye out for the call for national volunteer opportunities coming soon. 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. Visit the [Volunteer Opportunities](#) homepage year-round.

EARLY AWARENESS: [Register for the May 27 interest call today](#). Open to all who are interested in serving, this call will walk through the governance structure of AIA National, the timeline for the Call for Volunteers, the required information for the applications, tips for navigating the opportunities to serve, and norms for serving as a national volunteer. We will leave plenty of time for questions at the end. NEW THIS YEAR: We will end the hour with breakout rooms hosted by leaders of several member groups and communities, organized as an #AskMeAnything.

AIAU SESSION: ECONOMIC UPDATE Q2 2026 ABI INSIGHTS - MAY 22

Join AIA Chief Economist Richard Branch for a quarterly conversation about the [AIA/Deltek Architecture Billings Index \(ABI\)](#). The ABI is a leading monthly economic indicator that uses proprietary AIA data to predict nonresidential construction activity 9–12 months ahead. Get ahead of emerging challenges and opportunities and inform your strategic planning with key insights into the industry's latest economic data and trends. [Register for the free Economic Update on AIAU](#).

ENHANCE YOUR BUSINESS ACUMEN

In the ongoing effort to fill the business acumen gap and provide resources for those in their mid-careers looking to level up, AIAU created two packages (FREE for a limited time – until 12/31/2026):

1. Mid-career project management skills: [Communication & Team Effectiveness](#)
2. In a position to hire, influence staffing choices, or plan resources?: [Build a High-Performing Practice](#)

Upcoming events

Date	Event	Location	Link
May 15	AIA Town Hall	Virtual	Registration
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.

[Learn more about the role and activities of the Strategic Council.](#)