

AIA GUIDEBOOK

CREATING A
CITIZEN
ARCHITECT
COMMITTEE

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INTRODUCTION

Architects are unique professionals who come equipped with specialized responsibilities and an understanding of how the built environment affects the wider community. As such, architects have the power to be an important and influential voice in government. There are about 1,250 Citizen Architects in the United States today. These Citizen Architects are civically engaged and help shape community design policies and other public policy in order to benefit the wider population.



Hon. Cheri Gerou, FAIA
Colorado State Representative

The American Institute of Architects serves as a resource to its members by supporting and encouraging Citizen Architects. This guidebook has been developed to support the civically engaged members. It provides an overview of how to create a committee by explaining the program at the national level and by providing best practice examples of committees that already exist at the state and local level.

Through AIA Component Citizen Architect programs, we are building our organizational infrastructure to actively support and promote community as a core value in our leadership role as architects.

What is a Citizen Architect?

As determined by the AIA National Board of Directors:

"The Citizen Architect uses her/his insights, talents, training and experience to contribute meaningfully, beyond self, to the improvement of the community and human condition. The Citizen Architect stays informed on local, state and federal issues, and makes time for service to the community. The Citizen Architect advocates for higher living standards,

the creation of a sustainable environment, quality of life, and the greater good. The Citizen Architect seeks to advocate for the broader purposes of architecture through civic activism, writing and publishing, by gaining appointment to boards and commissions, and through elective office at all levels of government.”

AIA NATIONAL AND CITIZEN ARCHITECTS

The AIA supports Citizen Architects as they engage in local, state, and federal issues, making time to contribute meaningfully, beyond self, to the community and the human condition. Created in 2007, the Citizen Architect program seeks to assist architects who are currently, or would like to be, civically engaged in elected and appointed positions.

AIA National has identified approximately 1,250 Citizen Architects nationwide. The Citizen Architect program provides these members with helpful resources, programming ideas, and networking opportunities. Examples of this include: panels at the AIA Grassroots Leadership Conference, the Citizen Architect Exchange and Civic Engagement Reception at the AIA National Convention, and the Center for Civic Leadership Knowledge Network. An online directory of Citizen Architects is also available in netFORUM.

Examples of the level of engagement among Citizen Architects:

- 6 mayors
- 9 state legislators
- 24 environmental board members
- 64 community development commissioners
- 74 building codes board members
- 55 city council members
- 55 zoning board members
- 137 architectural design review board members
- 135 historic preservation commissioners
- 226 planning commissioners



“My advice [to] anyone [who] is interested in becoming a Citizen Architect is to choose a function that you are passionate about. Even if you don’t have as much experience in the area, if you are passionate about it, you will be able to contribute on a greater level. Take ownership of projects and see them through. Coordinate with other citizens that have the same passions and translate them to those that don’t. Enthusiasm truly is contagious.”

—Terry Glade, AIA, LEED AP
Member, Sioux City Environmental
Advisory Board

When Citizen Architects are identified, AIA National sends a Citizen Architect Welcome Kit containing:

- A certificate that recognizes the members service
- A Citizen Architect lapel pin
- A welcome letter from Paul Mendelsohn (Vice President, Government & Community Relations)
- Information defining the Citizen Architect program
- Information on resources that can support civic engagement

Finally, as part of a commitment to increasing the number of architects running for political office or serving on appointed boards/commissions, the American Institute of Architects National Board of Directors passed a resolution honoring and supporting “Citizen Architects.”



The American Institute of Architects

is privileged to confer this

Recognition of Your Service

WHEREAS, civically engaged architects serve their communities by applying their insights, talents, training, and experience to actively advocate and support initiatives that enhance the quality of life and future of the communities they serve; and

WHEREAS, Citizen Architects remain engaged with local, state, and federal issues, making time to contribute meaningfully, beyond self, to the community and the human condition; and

WHEREAS, civically engaged architects advocate for higher living standards, the creation of livable, sustainable communities, and the greater public good; and

WHEREAS, Citizen Architects advocate for the broader purposes of architecture through civic participation, writing and publishing, by gaining appointment to boards and commissions, and through elective office at all levels of government; and

WHEREAS, the AIA believes that society and the profession benefit from civically engaged architects and architect members who are motivated to become civically engaged, and that these members should be actively supported at all levels of service; and

THEREFORE, the American Institute of Architects commends all Citizen Architects for your dedication and service to your community, the profession, and our country with the hope that your good work will inspire and motivate other members to serve in the civic realm.

THIS RESOLUTION PASSED DECEMBER 5, 2008 BY THE AIA BOARD OF DIRECTORS

DEVELOPING A CITIZEN ARCHITECT PROGRAM AT THE STATE OR LOCAL LEVEL

Setting Goals and Defining the Program Structure

As a component staff member or an AIA member in a leadership position within your local or state component, you have a lot of responsibility and likely have a limited amount of resources. The first step when considering the development of a Citizen Architect program is to decide on the intent of the program given the available time and limited resources of your local and state component.

Citizen Architect programs can focus primarily on encouraging the leadership development of members who are, or would like to become, Citizen Architects so that they are better equipped to participate in local issues. As an alternative, the program could serve as a support system for Citizen Architects to learn from each other and share best practices. When there is a clear sense of how much a component is willing or able to do, it will be easier to define the structure of the program.

Components can also consider incorporating the involvement of students and emerging professionals in the creation of Citizen Architect Committees. Reaching out to these groups can help foster the importance of civic engagement from the start of one's architectural career as well as strengthen component membership.

There are two tracks that a Citizen Architect program can take. Active committees meet frequently, both virtually and in person, have a clearly defined structure and are very engaged with local issues that affect the built environment and the architectural community. Committees that serve more of a networking or honoring function meet less often and serve to facilitate conversation among civically engaged local architects, perhaps through conference sessions or an occasional component event. This committee type provides ceremonial certificates to Citizen Architects so that they are identified and recognized for their service to the profession.

Examples of AIA components that currently implement both committee types can be found in the "Best Practices- A Look at Components Across the Country" section of this guidebook.

Identifying Citizen Architects

Another crucial step that a component should take in creating a Citizen Architect Committee is to identify the architects who are elected or appointed officials, or otherwise civically engaged, within the jurisdiction. Past presidents of the components and leadership of local components are often good individuals to start with. These individuals recognize the value of leadership and are excellent advocates for the profession. Targeting architects in public roles can bring in individuals who may not have been involved with the AIA in the past, but are actively involved within the community.

“When I became partner of Henshell & Buccellato, Consulting Architects, my partner [Justin Henshell] stressed the importance of giving back to the community and giving back to the profession. After serving on the planning board, I became more and more politically active. I was then elected to the Borough Council and eventually decided to run for mayor. I have been mayor for about four years now. Justin’s encouragement was a major factor in my community involvement. These experiences have been very satisfying from a personal perspective because I enjoy helping people.”

—Hon. Paul Buccellato, AIA
Mayor, Matawan, NJ

AIA National was able to identify approximately 1,250 Citizen Architects through a nationwide survey. A component Citizen Architect survey can be developed to measure the level of civic engagement within local membership. Components can also access the directory of Citizen Architects that AIA National has created in netFORUM.



Citizen Architect Sample Survey

AIA Nebraska Citizen Architect/Civic Engagement Survey

Primary Goal
Defining our audience and the depth of our member's value for Civic Engagement and Leadership.

The AIA Nebraska Board of Directors recognizes the value of a civically engaged membership and would like to assist those architects that are currently engaged and enhance the ability for those architects that would like to become more engaged with their community.

- Are you an appointed member of a county, city, or other local government board or commission (appointed to the position by the mayor, city council, or other government official)?
 - Position _____
 - Term Expiration _____
- Have you been elected to a county board, city council, state legislature, statewide elective office, or other elected office (elected to the position by the voters in your community or district).
 - Position _____
 - Term Expiration _____
- Are currently seeking office or planning on seeking office within the next year?

Tell us about your civic engagement activities: _____

Getting Started

Once leadership identifies Citizen Architects and targets members who would like to participate on the committee, it is important to convene a gathering in order for these individuals to meet one another. Some ideas for initial implementation include hosting a reception, planning a 'lunch and learn' event or gathering at a community event. The inaugural gathering should be an opportunity for leadership to propose the intent of the committee as well as a time for the Citizen Architects in attendance to determine which committee type (active or networking and honoring) they are best able to commit to.

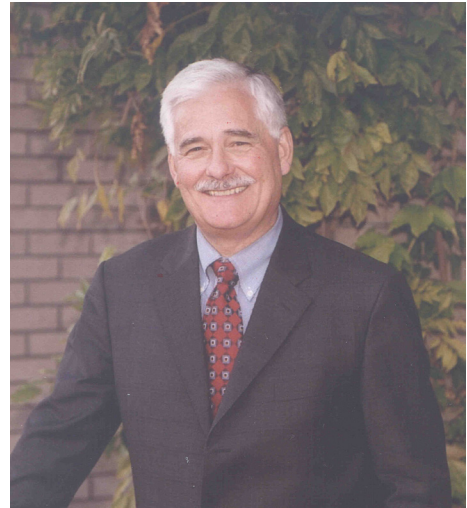
Schedule meetings

Regular conference calls and/or evening meetings can help sustain the committee. The level of frequency will be determined by the committee type decided on for your component.

Look for community opportunities

Leadership should take concerted efforts to identify opportunities for Citizen Architects to get involved in the local community. Committee leaders should not merely wait until Citizen Architects are already serving in a position to assist them; leadership should be proactive in helping civically engaged architects acquire leadership positions, where possible. An example of this is the success of AIA Southwestern Wisconsin in securing the nomination of at least three component members to Madison's Urban Design Commission in 2009. The committee can also choose to send out vacancy opportunities, as they become aware of them, through weekly/bi-weekly/monthly emails or newsletters if this is administratively possible.

"I served as President of our local component of the AIA, AIA San Mateo County in 1992. I was [then] recruited to serve on the Board of a local nonprofit housing and social services provider, HIP Housing. It was during that time I became more aware of some of the significant changes on the horizon that would affect our city. In particular, I wanted to have a voice in the changes [concerning] the built environment. I was appointed to the Planning Commission and served eight years where we tackled [redevelopment of the downtown, a regional shopping center] and many [other issues]. I was elected to the City Council in 2003 and reelected in 2007. I served as mayor in 2007 and am now beginning my second term as mayor for 2011."



— Hon. Jack Matthews, AIA
Mayor, City of San Mateo

Stay current on local issues

Staying current on local issues will assist members who want to get more involved but may not know how or where to begin. Developing and maintaining relationships with local boards, commissions and elected officials is helpful. In this way, leadership will be better able to identify issues affecting the architectural profession within their communities. The [“Assessing Your Local Political Environment and Candidates Toolkit”](#) can help components better engage with their municipalities.

Engage in election issues/advocacy

After becoming more aware of the issues affecting the community, active committees may choose to advocate for a particular standpoint. The committee will have to be strategic in ensuring that the position is one that other community stakeholders will be able to rally behind. Additionally, it is important that the public policy stances of the Citizen Architect Committee are in keeping with AIA policy positions.

Committees should be mindful that challenges may arise if local architects support both sides of the issue. Given this, it will be important for committees to find constructive ways to mitigate these concerns.

Organize to advocate for the profession

Hosting networking events or community meetings will help Citizen Architects become more visible to other local leaders and community members. This will also help elevate the profession and allow others to realize the importance of architects in shaping healthy, livable communities.

Continue recruiting newly elected members and encourage civic engagement among component membership

Inviting elected officials to component meetings or networking events will help committees develop more of a presence in their local communities. Hosting fundraisers such as “Breakfast of Champions” provides local officials with a platform to speak from as well as an opportunity to foster a relationship with the component. Engaging with public servants in this way

goes hand in hand with increasing the visibility of the profession while also positioning members for leadership opportunities. The [“Candidates’ Forum”](#) or the [“Conducting a Candidate Coffee”](#) toolkits can also assist components in engaging with local leaders early on.



“The Breakfast of Champions Program is a great example of Citizen Architects in action. The program provides opportunity for architects to get involved in the political process, build relationships with elected representatives and advocate effectively for the profession. It continues to grow as a means to elevate architects as influential and respected leaders in our communities.”

- Mickey Jacob, FAIA

AIA Vice President of Advocacy

Regarding election-related activities or communications, component leadership should be mindful to review component by-laws in order to determine if election advocacy is permitted within the component.

BEST PRACTICES: A LOOK AT COMPONENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

The Virginia Society of Architects created the first Citizen Architect Program in 2005. This influential program has served as a model for AIA National and components throughout the country. The component created a matrix to track local positions throughout the state that were held by architects, as well as when their terms expired. Additionally, the matrix identified positions that would benefit from the skill sets of architects, such as planning and zoning boards, building codes and architectural review boards all in the purposes of encouraging architects to pursue those opportunities. The matrix had 91 Citizen Architects in 2006. Today, that number has grown to 154 Citizen Architects serving in the state of Virginia.

Track 1: The Active Citizen Architect Committee

AIA Pasadena and Foothill, California

The purpose of the AIA Pasadena and Foothill's Citizen Architect Committee is to engage Citizen Architects serving within their community while also building upon their resources. AIA Pasadena and Foothill have held events such as panel discussions titled, ["The Community and Its Identity"](#) on March 6th, 2010 and ["The Citizen Architect"](#) on October 21st, 2010. This committee has also been instrumental in the development of a [construction study](#) and [economic impact study](#).

American Institute of Architecture Pasadena & Foothill Chapter The Citizen Architect Wednesday October 21st 4:00-5:00 All Saints Church in the Forum 132 North Euclid Avenue, Pasadena CA 91101	
	<p>Moderator Brooks Rainwater, AIA National Director of Local Relations</p> <p>Panelists Michael Shea, AIA Pasadena & Foothill Chapter Past President Steven Lewis, AIA National President of NOMA Richard McCann, AIA Pasadena & Foothill Chapter Vice President Mark Gangi AIA Pasadena & Foothill Chapter President</p>

AIA Los Angeles

AIA Los Angeles formed an active Citizen Architect Committee in 2010. The following is an example of an email that the chapter sent to its members to elicit participation in the creation of the committee.

E-mail

From: Will Wright [will@aialosangeles.org]
Sent: Thursday, May 06, 2010 5:07 PM
To: Will Wright
Subject: AIA|LA "Civic Engagement" Discussion - Tuesday, May 18 (6pm)

INVITATION: Tuesday, May 18 (6pm)

City Planning Commission President Bill Roschen cordially invites you to attend a brainstorming session on Tuesday, May 18 (6pm) to discuss the idea of forming an AIA|LA committee on 'Civic Engagement'.

As an AIA member who is actively serving the city, Roschen has recommended to

Email (continued)

informally meet and further discuss the proposal in more depth.

Please let me know if you will be able to make plans to attend. This is an open invite to any and all AIA|LA members that are actively serving on neighborhood councils, city commissions, design review boards and HPOZ's or those who would like to serve.

A Proposal to form The AIA|LA "Civic Engagement" Committee

Tuesday, May 18 (6:00-8:00pm)

AIA Los Angeles

3780 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 800

Los Angeles, CA 90010

RSVP to will@aialosangeles.org

Mission (draft):

To inspire/encourage more architects to become civic leaders in their neighborhood and city and provide guidance, especially to emerging professionals, on how to become more effectively engaged in their communities. This committee will not deal with advocacy issues, but will focus on providing leadership resources to those currently serving and suggest pathways to follow to those with the interest in serving.

Participants:

We invite all AIA members presently serving on neighborhood councils, city commissions, design review boards and HPOZ's and those who would like to serve to attend.

Possible Activities To Plan (draft):

Building local civic networks

Leadership Resources and leadership training opportunities

Sharing pathways to civic leadership through experience

Support and encourage emerging professionals

Roundtable discussion

Guest Speakers/ Presenters

Track 2: The Networking and Honoring Citizen Architect Committee

AIA Eastern Pennsylvania

For the past few years, AIA Eastern Pennsylvania has honored Citizen Architects at its annual President's Night Dinner. The recipients are presented with a certificate recognizing their service.

AIA Iowa

AIA Iowa conducts a recognition program that acknowledges Citizen Architects in order to encourage all AIA Iowa members to actively engage in their communities. In order to be recognized as a Citizen Architect, participants must:

1. Be an AIA Iowa Architect, Associate or Allied Member.
2. Serve as an appointed or elected member of a government committee, council or body at the local, county, regional, or state level; OR serve as a volunteer or in a leadership position for a non-profit organization that seeks to benefit people in need or communities as a whole.
3. In this role, advocate for one or more of AIA Iowa's core principles of Quality Design, Sustainability, and Livable Communities.



AIA Florida

The AIA Florida Executive Committee and Board of Directors made a commitment to the Citizen Architect program and included it in the 2010 strategic plan. A letter and a form were created to assist local components in collecting information from their members. The information is synthesized by AIA Florida and then sent to National for recognition. Additionally, two newsletters are sent out – the [Component Newsflash](#), sent to local executives and leadership, and the [Friday Facts](#), sent to all members. Below are examples of the letter and form.

Letter

Dear (component leader),

As you know, the AIA members in your component are active, and many of them give their time to more than the AIA. Many of the members serve on boards within their communities, volunteer for charities, and work to achieve goals at the state and national levels. These members deserve recognition within the AIA community for their hard work and you can help.

AIA has established the Citizen Architect Program that recognizes AIA members for their service. To assist you, AIA Florida and AIA National in recognizing these members, the AIA Florida Leadership Development and Community Committees have put together a simple form for you to distribute to aid in the collection of data. AIA Jacksonville originally developed the attached form to also aid them in recognizing members that are award worthy within their component.

We are asking that you print some of these forms and ask members to complete them at your next meeting and to send them to AIA Florida so they can be recognized as Citizen Architects. The qualifications of a Citizen Architect are:

- a. Uses her/his insights, talents, training and experience to contribute meaningfully, beyond self, to the improvement of the community and human condition.
- b. Stays informed on local, state and federal issues, and makes time for service to the community.

Letter (continued)

- c. Advocates for higher living standards, the creation of a sustainable environment, quality of life, and the greater good.
- d. Seeks to advocate for the broader purposes of architecture through civic activism, writing and publishing, by gaining appointment to boards and commissions, and through elective office at all levels of government.

Thank you for your assistance and we look forward to recognizing our fellow members. If you have any questions please feel free to contact Michele Straw at the AIA Florida office at (850) 222-7590 or mstraw@aiafla.org

Sincerely,

Michael Lingerfelt, AIA, LEED AP
President-elect/Leadership Development
Committee Chair

Martin Diaz-Yabor, AIA
Vice President/Community
Committee Chair

Form

AIA Local Component:

Volunteer Hour Tracking Form

Name:

NOTE: NUMEROUS ORGANIZATIONS ARE LISTED BELOW; PLEASE HELP US CREATE A BETTER FORM BY COMMENTING ON THIS FORMAT OF EXAMPLES. List involvements/ accomplishments in the format outlined below. Use additional sheets as necessary.

AIA #:

Organization	Dates	Position	Activity/Contribution	Annual Hrs.	Additional Information
COMMUNITY (Example: Scout leader, Soccer Coach, Neighborhood Charrette, Appointed Boards/Commissions, Elected Positions etc.)					
C:L Local					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
C:S State					
1					
2					
3					
4					
C:N National/International					
1					
2					
3					
RELATED DESIGN PROFESSION (Not AIA)					
R:L Local					
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					
R:S State					
1					
2					
3					
4					
R:N National/International					
1					

CONCLUSION

Citizen Architects give back to their communities through civic engagement. Citizen architects, while serving in public roles, also help to educate the public on the value of design. The profession of architecture is inherently suited toward civic engagement, because architects design both the public and private spaces that citizens live, work, and play in.

The Citizen Architect

- Uses her/his insights, talents, training and experience to contribute meaningfully, beyond self, to the improvement of the community and human condition.
- Stays informed on local, state and federal issues, and makes time for service to the community.
- Seeks to advocate for the broader purposes of architecture through civic activism, writing and publishing, by gaining appointment to boards and commissions, and through elective office at all levels of government
- Many AIA Components have already developed innovative and exciting Citizen Architect programs. This guidebook highlights this existing work and provides support and best practice examples for those Components that would like to explore the development of Citizen Architect programs. AIA National is here to help support these efforts with staff and programmatic resources available to assist in the effort.

The AIA's first position statement on civic engagement sums up the reasoning behind this program quite well and provides support in the development of Component programs.

The AIA believes that society and the profession benefit from civically engaged architects, and components shall actively support members who wish to become civically engaged. Components shall not adopt policies that could prohibit civically engaged members from participating in component activities except to the degree such policies are required by applicable laws or regulations.

Over 1,250 AIA members have already been identified as Citizen Architects in the latest survey, and there are many more involved in community

engagement efforts nationwide. Component Citizen Architect programs can support these members and those interested in getting more involved with networking opportunities and/or focused community outreach efforts. At the same time, these programs can engage members who have not been as involved with Component events. Civic engagement is a win-win for the profession and the wider community. Let's all work together to encourage and support our Citizen Architects.