



2023-2027 Strategic Plan

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Introduction

Now more than ever, the collective voice of architects is essential for designing a better future for our local communities, country, and planet. Today, our nation faces unprecedented challenges: the impacts of a changing climate on our communities, racial inequities & injustices, and critical infrastructure that is deteriorating from neglect. As natural facilitators and problem-solvers, architects can help create a better, stronger, and more equitable society with sustainable communities for all.

The purpose of this five-year strategic plan is to set overall goals for AIA Northern Virginia to transition from an event-based organization to an impact-based organization – enacting positive change through design innovation and improving the communities in our region through design excellence.

Process

In 2022, the AIA Northern Virginia Executive Committee took part in a strategic planning retreat spanning two days. During this time, they reviewed and analyzed several different data sets and research including, a 10-year look at membership demographics, a 5-year analysis of the chapter's financials, member survey results on programming, benefits and satisfaction, and overall market conditions in the past 10 years. In addition, they reviewed the current AIA National and AIA Virginia strategic plans and evaluated the strength and progress made fulfilling goals in the 2018-2022 AIA Northern Virginia Strategic Plan.

About AIA Northern Virginia

The American Institute of Architects Northern Virginia Chapter is a non-profit professional association representing more than 1,100 Northern Virginia architects, interns, and allied professionals. It encompasses 25 cities and counties in Virginia and was chartered by the American Institute of Architects in 1975. AIA Northern Virginia is one of five local components affiliated with AIA Virginia. The Chapter offers professional development, networking, and outreach opportunities as well as tours and lectures to advance the knowledge of architecture and practice among professionals and promote awareness and appreciation of architecture among the public.

Vision

Elevate the value of architecture in our community to advance the quality of the built environment.

Mission

AIA Northern Virginia activates the region's architecture community by supporting our members, advocating for the profession, and amplifying the power of design.

Core Values

Cultivate | Serve | Engage | Connect | Promote

AIA Northern Virginia | 2023 – 2027 Strategic Plan



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The following pages provide additional information on the implementation of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

Implementation

Goal I: FUTURE: Nurture and advance the future of the profession

- Strategy A: Build interest in architecture in K-12 age children
 - Host community events targeting K-12
 - Establish community connections with local art groups, neighborhood associations to host events for K-12
 - Establish a presence at K-12 career days

- Strategy B: Strengthen and increase our presence within local architecture universities
 - Survey firms to find out what school's recent graduates are coming from to work in our region. If there are a few common schools, establish connection to demonstrate value of AIA membership
 - Reach out to local colleges twice a year to demonstrate what AIA can do for them once they graduate (potentially work with other surrounding chapters on this initiative)
 - Participate in career day at each local college
 - Build and foster relationships with professors at local colleges to demonstrate the value of AIA membership
 - Expand and plan events at all local colleges, not just WAAC

- Strategy C: Recruit and support emerging professionals on licensure path and young architects in becoming next generation of firm leaders
 - Schedule and conduct regular firm visits with ED and Chapter leadership
 - Establish an AIA Network/Champion within each firm in our region
 - Create welcome packages/ letters/ e-mails for new graduates and newcomers to the area
 - Reach out to local schools annually to connect with upcoming graduates to encourage to join for free
 - Reach out to firms annually to identify recent grads who were just hired and target for recruitment
 - Connect with firm leadership in Fall to identify potential leaders for recruitment
 - Create events to meet future leaders throughout the year
 - Establish program(s) to recognize firms for best place to work based on JEDI, AXP, something else

Goal II: ORGANIZATION: Evolve the organization to optimize membership value and experience

- Strategy A: Enhance the structure, resources, and culture of the organization
 - Overhaul sponsorship opportunities and packages to increase participation and revenue
 - Reevaluate Committee structure and assess current focus areas; define success
 - Invest in and leverage technology to increase staff efficiencies
 - Plan for a physical space and budget accordingly
 - Set Board Expectations to increase activity
 - Plan an annual fund drive event
 - Create a volunteer and staff culture of service that does not lead to burnout
 - Evaluate and update roles and responsibilities of BOD and chapter leaders as necessary
 - Expand staff capacity by hiring the equivalent of one 1/2 time position each year in years 2 thru 4 of this strategic plan
 - Plan longer than 5 years ahead
 - Evaluate leadership regularly to confirm we are diverse and represent all our membership. Work toward filling any gaps

- Strategy B: Demonstrate fiscal responsibility
 - Create an annual balanced budget that supports the needs and interests of the membership
 - Realign the budget with the organization's strategic initiatives
 - Focus spending where appropriate to support our mission and vision.
 - Increase overall budget to fund additional staffing and programs
 - Plan for yearly contribution to reserves
 - Achieve and sustain a budget funded by 60% Non-Dues Revenue/40% Dues Revenue
 - Tactic 7: Support budget growth through enhanced non-dues fundraising without over-burdening our committees and/or members.

- Strategy C: Enhance education opportunities
 - Ensure programs and events are accessible to as many NoVA members as possible. (hybrid)
 - Assess and evaluate current programs and committees to identify what is working, stop doing what is not
 - Seek opportunities to limit costs and/or provide for financial support for members as appropriate
 - Offer education programming that supports the Chapter's Mission and Brand
 - Create education programs and events that are unique or hard to find elsewhere
 - Reduce program/event redundancy with other components
 - Identify ways to collaborate with other AIA Components to increase efficiency

- Strategy D: Establish and develop our unique brand identity
 - Create a new website
 - Define and market the Chapter's unique brand/identity within the region - Why AIA NoVA?
 - Develop communications strategy that leverages each channel to strengthen brand and increase reach
 - Inventory and assess current services and programming to ensure it aligns with brand; stop doing what no longer fits
 - Serve as advocates for improved quality of life for practitioners

Goal III: MEMBERSHIP: Engage, activate, and grow our membership

- Strategy A: Assess and expand membership and retention
 - Invite recent graduates to board and committee meetings
 - Create list of firms that pay for memberships
 - Actively promote the value of membership to college students and recent graduates
 - Establish a Member Retention and Recruitment Committee.
 - Create and implement a plan for member recruitment
 - Develop more unassigned member benefits that add value to increase membership type
 - Conduct a membership drive every year

- Strategy B: Define and convey the value of membership
 - Build awareness of programs and awards available
 - Clearly state value of membership and identify/list member benefits for each membership category
 - Create opportunities for non-members to engage with AIA to demonstrate value of membership

- Strategy C: Increase interest in leadership positions
 - Market AIA NoVA and other community positions as opportunities for leadership development
 - Encourage more participation at committee level to build pipeline of leadership
 - Encourage and mentor scholarship recipients and ELA participants to join the Board or sign up as a Committee Chair.

- Strategy D: Develop targeted programming and events
 - Engage with firms and members through roaming board meetings
 - Create more low-threshold events and opportunities for feedback and fellowship
 - Utilize surveys and firm outreach to engage active and inactive members to understand what the Chapter can do to best support and activate them.
 - Create programming targeted to specific audiences based on interest area, demographics, location (within region and remotely elsewhere), etc.
 - Utilize technology such as improved website, social media, and virtual meeting opportunities to increase opportunities for members to engage.
 - Consider localized activation within the region: Arlington, Alexandria, Tysons, Reston.

- Strategy E: Create opportunities for the architecture and design communities to become involved
 - Engage allied professionals
 - Host events/activities that bring the different fields in the profession together

Goal IV: CONNECTIONS: Strengthen and cultivate connections

- Strategy A: Build cross-industry connections and partnerships to magnify impact
 - Expand joint ventures with other allied organizations
 - Engage local partners to offer and promote inspirational speakers and educational programs
 - Track and recognize architect member involvement with other organizations, directory of involvement
 - Co-host shared Event with allied organization (minimum 1 per year)

- Strategy B: Advance relationships with Virginia state and local AIA components
 - Encourage AIA VA to attend in-person Board Meetings or Events
 - Encourage more participation in Arch Ex

- Strategy C: Expand programs with other AIA Components to increase reach and efficiency
 - Increase Communication and strengthen relationships with AIA VA and other allied organizations (NOMA DC / VA)
 - Identify and eliminate duplication of programming overlap with local AIA components and State component
 - Expand events and joint ventures with AIA DC, AIA PV and VA

- Strategy D: Establish member firm connections
 - Plan events at firms, giving them spotlight opportunities
 - Personal outreach to each member, each firm. Include long time members who are not engaged, not just new members

- Strategy E: Create meaningful and intentional networking opportunities
 - Find ways to keep ticket cost down for Annual Meeting to encourage participation
 - Align board meetings with other networking events to ease the burden
 - Provide opportunities for people from different firms to get together
 - Set up networking events between the different career stages
 - Create a free event that provides sponsors opportunities to connect with members in-person
 - Create opportunities for peer networking and unique continuing education programs
 - Increase efforts to support and acknowledge members at each stage of their careers

- Strategy F: Engage with local communities
 - Plan a round table with each local jurisdiction as an educational seminar (e.g. “dos and don’ts for plan submissions”)
 - Expand joint ventures with municipalities
 - Create fun educational series for YouTube/Instagram like "my favorite building in Northern Virginia and why..."
 - Engage with local communities to advocate and understand the history and stories of our region to increase cultural awareness and sensitivity

- Strategy G: Foster relationships with chapter leaders and the membership
 - Conduct quarterly in-person board meetings, adjust attendance requirements based on need for hybrid option
 - Identify opportunities where citizen architects are needed and provide list/directory on new website
 - Establish points of contact where to send new members for each interest area
 - Strengthen Board & Committee Connections to Regular Members

Goal V: CELEBRATE: Promote the value of good design and role of an architect

- Strategy A: Demonstrate the value an architect can provide in a variety of community leadership roles
 - Encourage members to participate in local committees, planning commissions and review boards
 - Repackage existing programs to get greater exposure/broaden audience
 - Invite local jurisdictions to collaborate on teaching and learning initiatives
 - Urge members who have held local review board positions to mentor/introduce others to these processes
 - Communicate stories that express the value of design and how architects can serve their communities' needs.

- Strategy B: Serve as a trusted resource for public officials and other key leaders
 - Create a member directory on who is already involved with review boards and municipalities
 - Create a group that focuses on local advocacy that is connected to municipalities; a network of liaisons connected to municipalities to keep monitor processes that are changing

- Strategy C: Celebrate our members' good design work and contributions to the built environment
 - Explore adding community service award - citizen architect or expand an existing award
 - Explore adding TND category to design awards
 - Explore creating a separate event for conceptual awards
 - Leverage our website and social media to increase visibility and recognition for design excellence in our area
 - Increase visibility of architect members' work on social media and other forums.

- Strategy D: Actively position the profession to take a visible stance on JEDI issues
 - Initiate a local JEDI advocacy group

- Strategy E: Identify ways to engage with the public with design
 - Support committees to plan for arch month in Fall of previous year
 - Create a 'working with an architect session' during arch month to meet with a residential architect, and/or create an - ask an architect series on social media
 - Expand design awards by public engagement components (people's choice award), and/or best new building in community
 - Continue design exposure at torpedo factory and during arch month
 - Communicate the value and benefits of working with architects
 - Create content and events to support cultural calendar
 - Shift arch month coordination to staff in 3 years

Acknowledgements:

2022 & 2023 Board of Directors

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