



AIA Detroit June 14, 2010 Presidents Message



AIA Detroit Monthly Newsletter June 14, 2010

OUR MEMBERS

Congratulations to ***Derek Roberts, Director of the National Associates Committee Community/ Communications Portfolio***, and the committee, for their efforts in producing the first 2010 issue of FORWARD - a bi-annual architecture and design journal. Additionally, Sarah Sobel, the publication's new assistant editor who wrote the feature articles, recently graduated from the masters of architecture program at U of M. It is a really well done piece worthy of the highest consideration. Great job folks. Take a look for yourself: [LINK](#)

On May 9, local news ace Devon Scillian interviewed Alan Cobb and yours truly on the topic of right-sizing the city of Detroit for WDIV's Sunday morning public affairs program, "Flashpoint." Thanks to ***Michael Ingberg*** from Marx Layne & Company, our chapter's public relations firm for making this valuable "placement" happen. Both Alan and I were called in as "experts" on a topic, which as many of us know, is developing rapidly and is often cloaked in discretion. We were preceded by an interview of Mayor ***Dave Bing*** and Oakland County Executive ***Brooks Patterson***, both of whom we encountered in the green room and found to be friendly and humorous.

It is important for them to see architects considered as experts in the public eye especially in matters of this magnitude. The good side of this experience was that an architectural voice was shared with the viewing audience. The unfortunate part is that architects do not get interviewed enough - in large part due to our inattentiveness in leveraging the power of the press. This needs to change in a big way if this profession is to get healthy again and reestablish the leadership position it once had. How many times have you encountered that blank stare when you've told someone you are an architect and you hear the response, "so you do blueprints?"





We've already started on that awareness road by creating a **Public Relations Committee** consisting of some very bright, experienced and passionate members. Since the story of the city's right-sizing continues to unfold on multiple levels - urban, economic and political, an invitation was extended to us to reappear at a future date. Both Alan and I relish the opportunity to show the public that indeed, architects can be experts on matters of great public concern. And as experts, we bring skills and insights to a complex discussion that no one else has.

EVENTS

On May 5, at Barton Malow Construction, **Doug Rothwell**, **President and CEO of Business Leaders for Michigan** presented the **Michigan Turnaround Plan** to a varied group of architects, engineers and marketing professionals. The authors of this plan believed they have had enough with the state of Michigan continuing to become poorer, smaller and less competitive. The plan's mission is to "develop, advocate and support high-impact strategies that in the short term will help Michigan develop an above average state for job and economic growth and in the long term make it a Top Ten state. The presentation was direct and sobering. The plan is specific, actionable and based on facts. We all know how much our profession is linked to the health of the economy.

Doug stated that the plan has been shared with the media and many influential organizations and individuals. The response has been overwhelmingly positive. Chapter Board Member Bert Koseck believes "this plan is good for our state, and therefore good for architects that reside here and desire to practice architecture here." Doug stressed that to increase awareness of the plan and get politicians to consider its recommendations, he needs the support of individuals and organizations like the AIA. I thought the content was important enough to invite Doug to speak to chapter membership. Stay tuned - this event will happen sometime in July. For more information on the plan, click [HERE](#).

On May 7, The **AIA Michigan Design Awards** were celebrated in fine fashion, to a packed house at the Book Cadillac Hotel. The hard work and efforts of many project teams and their owners were recognized within the hotel's elegant setting during an evening marked with a friendly, jovial air. For critics and commentators of events like this, I say, come out and see for yourself before judging. Despite the fancy trappings, there is no intent to be elitist or exclusionary. You will undoubtedly run into a friend or classmate at this once-a-year celebration that brings folks together from all over the state and honors the outstanding projects rendered by Michigan architects - something of which we all should be proud.



Cathy Mosley, Hon. Aff. AIAMI, Alan Cobb, FAIA, Rae Dumke, Hon. AIA



Gary Quasada, Hon. Aff. AIAMI and daughter Elyse



Quinn Evans Architects

In response to the last president's message, we received several passionate commentaries on the state of architecture and the profession in Michigan. The thoughts expressed were insightful, troubling, and likely held by a large part of membership. Instead of addressing these comments individually, we believed it was time to caucus together as a larger group of professionals who are linked together by shared challenges. On Saturday, May 22, the inaugural AIA Detroit Town Hall Meeting was held at Lawrence Technological University. Members from various chapters across the state engaged in a serious discussion about what our profession has become and what we can do about it. The stories and accounts of practice were often discouraging. Most were centered on how architects have often been relegated to a line item, commodity-based, service provider within a larger process led by others.

There was little AIA bashing and more of the attitude "we have done it to ourselves by not taking on the risks, challenges and leadership others in the construction industry have." It was a critical view into a mirror that should have been looked at years ago. There was a lot of frustration expressed about declining fees - a conversation that is critical, but problematic due to strict anti-trust laws that have been aggressively rendered against the AIA in the past. Some were dissatisfied with how AIA National was operating and not providing the value commensurate with its dues.

We also heard an interesting comment on how the lack of education and understanding about architecture that we often encounter as professionals starts very early on in the education of our children. I remember in high school there wasn't a single course offered about architecture or art history - perhaps this has changed. As you can see there is a lot of work to do. If you'd like more information on this town hall meeting let me know.

It has become clear to me after hearing and participating in many discussions about practice today that the AIA must become a much more **business-aggressive** organization, armed with the tools and actions that strengthen our members interests on legal, political and legislative levels. This means we will need to get smarter, become more proactive in practice affairs, and provide more resources to our existing instruments like the Government Affairs team and our

lobbyists who are in the trenches everyday.

We need to recognize that our most serious competition is not amongst ourselves, despite the descending fee spiral that we participate in. We all compete against one another sooner or later, but we remain friends, colleagues and, most of all, architects. The most serious issue I believe, among many, is the plethora of delivery professionals and service providers that have risen in recent years to dominate control of those services historically rendered by architects. The pie in Michigan has gotten a lot smaller and the field more crowded. To thrive in any business today means to aggressively compete and take risks. We may be fond of history as a learning resource, but we must start writing our own new future if we are to enjoy a meaningful life of architectural accomplishment that goes beyond mere survival.

As mentioned previously, one immediate outgrowth of this town hall meeting was the creation of the public relations team whose mission will be to get into the public's eye in a big way, and make clear the value architects bring to one of this country's biggest industries. The committee is just getting started. Its leadership, strategies and operational tools are in a very preliminary stage and can benefit from enthusiastic participation. The opportunity for getting out the right message is great, due to the global nature and variety of communications tools that exist today. If you are willing to start making a positive difference for architects, then join the public relations team by calling me. You might be the next architect asked by the press to share your considerable knowledge with a public that is eager to hear perspectives seldom heard. Please attend the next **Public Relations Committee** meeting that will occur June 29 at 5:00 pm at HED.

Please join **Frederick Butters**, FAIA, Esq., at LTU on Thursday, June 17 from 4-6 pm as he shares his considerable knowledge on the **"Legal Liabilities For Sustainable Design"**. Fred is an international expert on issues associated with Sustainable Design, BIM, and new forms of contracts being developed to address non-traditional approaches to design and construction. He has lectured on these topics in both the US and Canada and is currently running for the AIA National Secretary position. Registration is highly recommended. To register, please click [HERE](#).

By most accounts, the **Building Enclosure Council's (BEC)** program on May 13: **Blast Hazard Mitigation and Glass Shard Retention** was an explosive event. The guest speaker, James T. Brokaw, has served as an expert blast consultant for numerous projects of national significance consisting of U.S. embassies, courthouses and museums - including the Smithsonian. Over 75 people attended this presentation at the Birmingham Conference Center. We look forward to the BEC's next dynamite presentation to be scheduled sometime in September.

Please join **The Building Codes & Regulations Committee** in collaboration with the Building Enclosure Council of Greater Detroit for a June 16 program called **"Avoiding Exterior Envelope Failures with Code-Compliance"**. The program includes lunch at the San Marino Club in Troy and a three-hour program led by Mr. Brian J. Tognetti RA, of WJE Associates. The purpose of the presentation is to educate and improve understanding of code requirements for exterior envelopes. Technical requirements, design and installation standards and the potential repercussions of non-compliance through review of case studies will be discussed. For more information please click [HERE](#)

The AIA kindly thanks **Rittner French Associates, Meek/Beck & Associates, and Diversified Spec. Sales Inc.** for its generous sponsorship of the Building Codes and Regulations Committee event on the new ADA standards on April 19.

IN THE NEWS

Chapter Board Member and Secretary Frank Arvan was recently quoted in Port Huron's *Times Herald* regarding *Micro Homes*. These dwellings, which usually are less than 500 square feet in size, are gaining in popularity across the nation due in part to their reduced costs and because apparently more people are seeking simplification in their lives - so it seems. One of these homes has been built near the corner of Water and Fourth streets in Port Huron. To see the

article click
[HERE](#)

Our friends at the ***Engineering Society of Detroit*** (ESD) would like us to know that on October 19, 2010, it will be sponsoring the ***2011 Economic Forecast for Design and Construction*** at Laurel Manor in Livonia, MI. This important event will showcase industry experts in our region's major market sectors - education, commercial, automotive, energy - with a look at trends, anticipated design & construction activity and positive actions to help better position our firms to capture the work that is out there. This is truly an industry event, pertinent to the architecture, engineering, and construction communities. Everyone from the architectural community is encouraged to participate. More information is available at www.esd.org.

GET INVOLVED IN AIA

The chapter's efforts to recruit new members are going very well. I am happy to report that Michigan will retain its single state status this year per the conditions required by the national organization. The Detroit Chapter, the largest chapter in the state, has over 800 out of approximately 1,500 AIA members statewide. This means 53 percent of all AIA members in Michigan belong to the Detroit chapter alone -which is truly impressive. Many thanks go out to those volunteers who made the calls, wrote the e-mails and gently turned the arms to recruit new members and re-up those who have lapsed. Special thanks goes to ***Lawrence Technological University***, which recruited 50 new associate members to the chapter, the ***University of Detroit Mercy***, which provided 25 new associate members, and the ***University of Michigan***, which recruited 36 new members. The recruitment drive needs to continue in a big way, throughout the year, considering our margins of success were so small. Likewise, the AIA needs to steadily improve itself and respond better to our members' needs and concerns.

We sincerely welcome all new members to the AIA family. Your names will be recognized on the chapter website. Please come on out, meet your friends and colleagues, and get involved. It's your AIA!

IN CLOSING



The AIA Michigan Design Awards also marked the formal announcement of ***Rae Dumke's*** retirement as ***Executive Director of AIA Michigan and AIA Detroit***. After over 40 years of committed service to the AIA, Rae will be spending more of her time at her northern Michigan home, hunting, fishing, and climbing rocky outcroppings. She has worked tirelessly to promote the institution and the profession, to great success, despite the help of chapter presidents. I can just imagine all of the headstrong, opinionated personalities she has worked with over the years in running the AIA. We will truly miss all of her skills, talents, and experience she has provided in running this complex organization. We will sincerely miss her warm friendship, generous patience and kind smile, and wish her all the best in her new life up north.

Next month's presidents message will be authored by chapter board member ***Dawn Peterson*** ***AIA***, of Neumann/Smith Architecture. We look forward to her heartfelt thoughts.

As always, your thoughts and comments are welcome.

Sincerely,

Raymond Cekauskas 2010 AIA Detroit Chapter President

Calendar of Events

June

June 16 - AIA Detroit & BEC - Avoiding Exterior Envelope Failures with Code-Compliance

[MORE INFO](#)

June 17 - AIA Detroit - Legal Liabilities for Sustainable Design [MORE INFO](#)

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