

AIA Rhode Island Finds a Home

Contributed by AIA Rhode Island

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SUMMARY

In 2007, AIA Rhode Island opened a new office, after not having one for over a decade, at 158 Washington Street in downtown Providence. The new storefront space was donated by Roger Williams University.

A NEED IS BORN

AIA Rhode Island (AIA RI), unique in that it is both a state and local component, has, over the past decade, struggled to serve its members and create a public presence that would advance the agenda of the AIA. Critical to meeting this challenge was the lack of a visible presence in Providence, a place where members could find common identity, where allied professionals could gather in joint celebration of good design and, perhaps most importantly, a place where the general public could become aware of the role that architects play in the creation of the physical context that defines their daily lives.

A WINDOW OPENS IN RHODE ISLAND

In 2006, AIA Rhode Island (AIA RI) undertook an initiative to establish the AIA RI Chapter headquarters at Roger Williams University's Providence campus in a storefront space in an urban building at 158 Washington Street. AIA RI had been without a dedicated space since the mid-1990's, when due to financial reasons the chapter vacated its space in Providence's Arcade Building.

In the absence of meeting space, AIA Rhode Island's all volunteer component had great difficulty organizing services and activities effectively. In 2006, Roger Williams University President Roy J. Nirschel offered the storefront space free of charge to AIA RI to establish meeting space, in the interest of supporting the architecture profession in Rhode Island and facilitating relations between Rhode Island's professional degree programs in architecture. Together AIA RI Board President Stephen White, AIA, Dean of the University's School of Architecture, Art and Historic Preservation, President Elect Mark Saccoccio, AIA, Vice President Michael Abbott, AIA, Board Member Gregg Spiess, AIA, Executive Director Jennifer Zolkos and Affiliates Member Kyle Bamrick, Assoc. AIA, developed a plan to transform the space into the "AIA RI Window on Architecture." They decided

the space should be used for regular educational seminars, chapter and board meetings, as a lounge/library, and as exhibition space for architects and students.

The above list of names are responsible for the design of the new space and raising \$100,000 in construction materials, labor and furnishings contributions from AIA RI Corporate Affiliates members and the University in three months.

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

AIA Rhode Island, 158 Washington St. Photo credit AIA Rhode Island.

ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

The utilization of 158 Washington Street has increased AIA Rhode Island's organizational performance in several ways. First, the space has become a consistent and reliable location to:

- Hold AIA RI Board and Committee meetings and retreats.
- Provide regularly scheduled Lunch & Learns, giving smaller firms within the state the opportunity to attend these events and receive CEUs.
- Build a resource center for members; resources include guidebooks and historical literature. The Emerging Professionals are raising money to purchase the ARE Exam Study Books for sharing.
- Hold events throughout the year, such as a salon series, a Sustainable Living Festival which provided a full day of learning and is open to the public, and Architecture Week.
- Exhibit AIA RI annual design award submissions and other allied organizations,

such as ASLA, ACE, Rhode Island School of Design and Roger Williams University.

- Provide a presence for AIA RI. In addition to the above mentioned events held throughout the year AIA RI has committed to participating in 2010 “Gallery Night Providence” where 158 Washington Street will be open to the public the third Thursday of every month from March through November with a variety of work exhibited.

Second, the space has allowed AIA RI the opportunity to keep member dues low while increasing member value. New members have a location to hold events without spending money on a space rental fee.

Third, by being located in a storefront space in the heart of downtown Providence, AIA RI has a public presence. AIA RI has an opportunity for community outreach and the ability to raise awareness of architecture and the presence of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic:

- 21.05.02 Mississippi Celebrates Architecture
- 21.01.05 Forming a New Publication: AIA Chicago
- 22.06.08 Partnering to Inform Design Administrators

Feedback

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Key Terms

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architectural associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components
- Community involvement