



Local Issue Brief

The American Institute of Architects • Government Advocacy • Current Issue Position and Analysis

Citizen Architect

Key Points:

- A recently completed AIA survey revealed that there are at least 850 architects – more than one percent of total membership – who are serving in an elected or appointed role.
- Examples of the level of engagement:
 - 6 Mayors
 - 36 Environmental board members
 - 48 Community Development commissioners
 - 51 Building Codes board members
 - 53 City Council members
 - 54 Zoning board members
 - 84 Architectural Design Review board members
 - 92 Historic Preservation commissioners
 - 158 Planning commissioners

The American Institute of Architects
1735 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006-5292
Phone: 202-626-7513
Fax: 202-626-7583
E-mail: govaffs@aia.org
Website: www.aia.org

AIA Position

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) believes that society and the profession benefit from civically engaged architects, and that these members should be actively supported at all levels of service.

Action Sought

The AIA Citizen Architect program seeks to assist architects that are currently or would like to be civically engaged in elected and appointed positions, and provides these members with programming, networking opportunities, and resources.

Explanation and Justification

As part of a commitment to increasing the number of architects running for elected 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 Civic Engagement/Citizen Architect Subcommittee of the Board Advocacy Committee also developed a definition of “Citizen Architect,” which follows:

“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.”

Twice yearly programs are held, at the Grassroots Conference in Washington, DC and the Annual National Convention. The Grassroots Conference includes a Citizen Architect panel, where members, like CO State Rep. Cheri Gerou, AIA and Salt Lake City Council member Soren Simonsen, AIA, are able to talk to the broader membership about the unique role that architects can play in elected office. The Citizen Architect Exchange and Civic Engagement Reception, held at Convention, is structured to be a forum where members can hear from architects in elected and appointed positions, while also having the opportunity to network and share best practices with one another.

Leadership is a key component of civic engagement, and through the [Civic Engagement & Leadership Advisory Communications Network](#), members can communicate with one another and AIA National on the importance of leadership to the profession. This portal serves as a repository of resources, while also providing messaging capability, and Wiki functionality, all in the purposes of creating a cross-collaboration of thought and ideas on this program. The Citizen Architect webpage also serves as the primary access point to this and many other resources for civically engaged members:
<http://www.aia.org/advocacy/local/AIAB051121>