



Scalable Models for a Chief Architect

The Challenge

Cities are unique. Values, demographics, and history vary widely. Local microclimates, geography, natural resources, and economic influence differ significantly.

Mayors and Chief Architects must respond to community needs and the physical limitations or advantages of a specific place.

AIA's Chief Architect models are scalable and adaptable based on the needs and objectives of a city.

The Ask

Connect with AIA to learn about different models for embedding design thinking within local government.

More Information

Alexander Cochran
alexandercochran@aia.org

Michael Winn
michaelwinn@aia.org

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ARCHITECT

An Office of the Chief Architect is a fully staffed urban design and architecture studio that is responsible for major city initiatives. The duties of the Office of the City Architect may include working with the mayor to articulate an urban design vision for the city that promotes smart growth strategies, testing the feasibility of proposed land use policies, working with public and private entities to ensure buildings meet energy efficiency and resilience standards, facilitating local design review and incorporating community feedback, assisting the development community, promoting the city as a design destination, and serving as a resource to the mayor, city manager, council and city departments.

INDIVIDUAL CHIEF ARCHITECT

The individual Chief Architect may be directly responsible for providing professional design services related to architecture and community development. The duties of an individual Chief Architect may also include working with the mayor and relevant departments to implement an urban design vision for the city, reviewing proposed land use policies, collaborating with others to support sustainability and resilience programs, conveying city policies to the development community and public, working with applicants to streamline permitting and inspections, hosting events to celebrate local design excellence, and serving as a resource to city staff.

LOCAL ARCHITECTS ON BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

Mayors may also benefit greatly from an informal advisory group comprised of architects currently serving on city boards and commissions, including planning, zoning, historic preservation or design review. This group of licensed design professionals would assist the mayor by broadly integrating the expertise of architects across city processes to advance a clear and coordinated urban design vision, without being overly prescriptive or burdensome to the development community. Local AIA chapters are a great resource for mayors seeking architects to serve on boards or commissions.