



AIA Vermont Strategic Plan 2023 - 2027

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Introduction

AIA Vermont is a strong and active component of the American Institute of Architects, currently with over 300 architect, associate, and affiliate members. In 2023, AIAVT observes its 75th anniversary as an organization. This Strategic Plan builds on the successes of the past and lays out a vision for the future. The goals and strategies outlined in this Strategic Plan will position AIAVT to become a more focused and effective organization that is better able to address the rising challenges of our day.

The past few years have brought dramatic changes to our communities and to our profession. We continue to face challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, such as supply chain disruptions, labor shortages, and intermittent outbreaks. These threats arose on top of issues that had already been building, most notably Vermont’s affordable housing crisis and a looming climate crisis.

In the midst of these challenges, Vermont is experiencing a resurgence of in-bound migration. We are poised to reverse a decades-long trend of slow population growth and a shrinking labor force. Population is now rising, due to the increased mobility of remote workers, climate migrants fleeing other areas of the country, and the welcoming of refugee families.

This Strategic Plan provides a roadmap for the next five years, enabling AIAVT to respond to our changing professional and environmental landscape. It is based on the three Core Values established by the AIAVT Board in 2019:

Member Engagement. To build a strong body of connected design professionals, viewed through the lens of equity, diversity and inclusion.

Public Outreach. To promote architecture and strengthen connections with the public throughout Vermont.

Climate Action. To advance knowledge and expertise in pursuit of a sustainable future.

This plan is influenced by the National AIA Strategic Plan 2021–2025, which emphasizes: climate action; justice and equity; the role of the architect; research and technology; and architectural education. The National AIA Strategic Plan has dual goals of: (1) Climate action for human and ecological health; and (2) to advance racial, ethnic, and gender equity.

This AIA Vermont Strategic Plan has been developed to be compatible with the goals, strategies and imperatives of the National AIA Strategic Plan, while focusing on the values, issues, and goals that have been identified as priorities for our state.

This Strategic Plan will guide the decisions of the Board and Committees over the next five years, helping to sustain AIAVT as an organization whose members are relevant, connected, and strong advocates for the public health and well-being.

Background

For the past three years, the AIAVT Board and members of the Program Committees have explored the potential implementation of our Core Values. This laid the foundation for a deliberate strategic planning process that occurred through the spring and summer of 2022.

The strategic planning process was informed by information gathered from multiple sources:

- Meetings with strategic planning consultants referred by other AIA components
- Conversations with Executive Directors of other AIA components
- A review of Strategic Plans of other AIA components, focusing on statewide chapters of similar size to Vermont
- Contextual information gathered from meetings at the AIA national and regional level, including the AIA Grassroots conference, the AIA Leadership Exchange, and AIANE quarterly meetings

A strategic planning retreat of the Board of Directors was held in April 2022. Following the retreat, the Plan was developed further through an iterative process, with feedback from the Board and members of the AIAVT program committees.

Objectives

The goals and strategies outlined in this Plan offer real benefits for our organization and provide the framework for AIA Vermont's priorities for the next five years. There are three ways in which this plan will be particularly beneficial at this moment in time:

To communicate our value to membership. We are in a period of profound change. Political, social, and environmental change is making its way across the nation and across our state. Increased migration to Vermont is becoming evident, and membership in AIAVT is on an upward trajectory. These conditions provide an opportunity for our profession and for AIAVT. This strategic plan will clarify our path forward for current members, will encourage new members to join AIAVT, and will provide the framework for a period of deliberate growth for the organization.

To provide guidance to committees. AIAVT consists of nine continuing programs and ad-hoc committees, each run by volunteer members. The committees are responsible for running programs, organizing events, and communicating to membership. The committees set their own agenda, in consultation with the Executive Director and the Board of Directors. This strategic plan will provide additional guidance to committee chairs and help ensure that the actions of the committees are in alignment with each other and with AIAVT as a whole.

To define priorities for an anticipated lobbying firm. A Lobbyist Task Force is currently studying the feasibility of engaging a lobbying firm to advocate on behalf of AIAVT. This Strategic Plan will influence the development of legislative and public policy priorities of AIAVT, providing guidance and context for a lobbying firm.

Mission, Vision & Values

Mission AIAVT is the voice of the architecture profession, dedicated to serving its members, strengthening our communities, and improving the built environment.

Vision Lead the profession to an equitable and sustainable future

Core Values



Member Engagement
Viewed through the lens of equity, diversity and inclusion



Public Outreach
Promoting architecture and strengthening connections with the public throughout Vermont



Climate Action
Advancing knowledge and expertise in pursuit of a sustainable future

Goals

Build a diverse body of connected design professionals engaged with our communities.

Elevate public awareness and advocate for the profession.

Accelerate actions to improve ecological and human health.

Strategies & Implementation



Member Engagement

Viewed through the lens of equity, diversity and inclusion

Goal: Build a diverse body of connected design professionals engaged with our communities.

Strategies & Tasks:

1. Advance initiatives that support equity, diversity, and inclusion

- a. Promote a culture of inclusiveness and ensure a focus on diversity in the profession through the Membership and EDI Committee. Provide financial support to assist the Membership & EDI Committee with outreach and educational efforts.
- b. Provide implicit bias and diversity training for the Membership and EDI Committee, and offer this training to the membership at large.
- c. Expand efforts beyond gender and racial bias to other disadvantaged demographics in Vermont. Allocate AIAVT attention and resources to raise awareness and move toward greater inclusion for all.
- d. Review the submission process and requirements for AIA Vermont Design Awards and remove unnecessary barriers for entry.
- e. Work to eliminate disadvantages for those who can not afford to work without pay or without employee protections and benefits. Raise awareness of employee rights, and encourage members to report illegal employment practices to AIA National, AIAVT, NCARB, the Vermont state board, or applicable state and federal labor departments.

2. Promote gender equity in the profession

- a. Host a series of educational sessions on topics of particular benefit to women in the workforce, including leadership development, negotiation strategies, and work/life issues.
- b. Work to eliminate the gender pay gap through education and transparency.
- c. Elevate female architects in Vermont by celebrating their achievements on social media, member communications, and in the press.

3. Support career development for Emerging Professionals

- a. Provide leadership development opportunities by hosting educational sessions on topics that are of particular benefit to Emerging Professionals.
- b. Work to eliminate unethical and illegal employment practices that create barriers to those who can not afford to work for without pay or without employee protections and benefits, including the use of unpaid professional internships, and misclassifying architectural staff as independent contractors.
- c. Foster mentorship by providing opportunities for Emerging Professionals to connect with more experienced members. Host a series of mentorship events.

- d. Improve connections with the Vermont state licensing liaison. Invite the licensing liaison to meet with the Board at least once a year. Educate EPs on the role of the liaison and assist EPs with contacting the liaison(s) for assistance along their licensing path.
- e. Recognize people at all stages of their careers in AIAVT's awards. Recognize all staff members of the submitting firm who worked on the project.
- f. Review the entry criteria for EPN charrettes and make adjustments to maintain a focus on young and emerging professionals.
- g. Work with the state licensing board to encourage the adoption of NCARB's Integrated Path to Architectural Licensure (IPAL), and work with accredited programs in architecture in the state to facilitate its implementation.
- h. Provide ARE study materials for AIAVT members to borrow free of charge, and update the materials on a regular basis.

4. Increase AIAVT membership and retention

- a. Communicate the value of membership through greater public outreach, with a goal to increase membership by 3% each year.
- b. Strive to increase Associate memberships by communicating the value of membership to emerging professionals and non-licensed professionals (such as unlicensed residential design firms), and by communicating the benefits of Associate membership to firm principals and owners.
- c. Increase memberships by non-resident architects by offering opportunities for greater participation and collaboration with AIAVT.
- d. Recruit new Allied members by reaching out to colleagues and associates in the construction industry, architectural product reps and manufacturers. Set a goal to double the number of Allied members within 5 years.

5. Strengthen and sustain AIAVT's financial position

- a. Promote a culture of philanthropy by celebrating the contributions made by members. Solicit contributions from member firms, and encourage a scaled level of giving by encouraging firms to contribute according to their particular financial ability.
- b. Develop and execute new fundraising initiatives, such as a "One Billable Hour" campaign to raise funds for improved advocacy efforts and/or funding for hiring a lobbying firm.
- c. Institute an AIAVT investment policy, and invest part of our reserves.
- d. Plan at least one major fundraising event each year, such as a workshop, conference, or trade show, with a large number of attendees.

6. Be a model for an active, effective, and well-run volunteer-led organization

- a. Review and revise organizational policies and Bylaws as needed.
- b. Refine and maintain a healthy working relationship between the Board of Directors, ExCom, and the program committees. Keep open communication to ensure ExCom is aware of committee work and may provide support as needed. Develop a policy for ExCom review and approval of committee decisions and proposals.
- c. Make the best use of volunteer time by prioritizing AIAVT tasks and initiatives.
- d. Respect members' time by being efficient and effective with member communications. Limit surveys to relevant and timely topics and events.



Public Outreach

Promoting architecture and strengthening connections with the public throughout Vermont

Goal: Elevate public awareness and advocate for the profession.

Strategies & Tasks:

1. Amplify AIAVT's voice in the legislature and statehouse to influence public policy that affects the architectural profession

- a. Identify public policy priorities and develop a legislative agenda. Identify which issues to lead advocacy efforts on; which issues to support others who are advocating; and which issues to track for potential future action. Continue to address issues that have been indicated to be of most concern to members.
- b. Track the status of bills that apply to AIAVT's public policy agenda and identify opportunities to exert influence.
- c. Organize members to meet with key legislators and discuss AIAVT priorities. Testify at committee hearings and participate in the legislative process at appropriate times.
- d. Issue policy statements and press releases in support of key issues and bills.
- e. Invite state leaders to AIAVT building tours and events.
- f. Hold an annual Public Policy event to educate members on pending legislation and AIAVT advocacy efforts.

2. Hire a lobbying firm to strengthen AIAVT's statewide advocacy efforts

- a. Issue an RFP to multiple lobbying firms, define a feasible scope of services, and establish a relationship with the selected firm
- b. Develop a sustainable revenue stream to support lobbyist efforts
- c. Establish an effective framework for working with a lobbying firm, involving appropriate communication and/or guidance by the Public Policy Committee, ExCom, Board of Directors, and the Executive Director.

3. Position architects as leaders through public relations and community engagement

- a. Develop and launch additional Architectural Scavenger Hunts, at towns across the state.
- b. Open AIAVT building tours to the general public and promote these events to encourage more participation by non-members
- c. Host more small-scale fun architecture competitions, such as the birdhouse competition hosted by AIAVT in the past, and promote these events for the general public.

4. Continue to build relationships with state officials and employees

- a. Increase engagement with zoning administrators and town clerks throughout the state in order to educate property owners and promote the role of architects.
- b. Continue to work with the Division of Fire Safety on code development and enforcement.

5. Foster the education of future generations by expanding relations with Vermont schools and universities

- a. Research what would be most useful for K-12 schools to expose young students to the architecture profession, such as developing curricula, coordinating firm tours, hosting special events, or site visits.
- b. Expand AIAVT's relationships with local colleges and universities through events that attract students and provide opportunities for students to network with AIAVT members. Strengthen relationships with Norwich University, Middlebury College, and Vermont Technical College.
- c. Continue to fund architectural education scholarships, and regularly reassess the scholarship amounts to reflect rising costs of education.
- d. Continue to judge the Norwich University architectural thesis projects each year, through the AIAVT Board of Directors, in order to determine the recipients of scholarship funds
- e. Reestablish a connection with AIAS chapters at Vermont architecture schools, and identify opportunities for collaboration and support.

6. Build collaborative relationships with allied organizations

- a. Pursue collaborations with other design and construction organizations in Vermont, such as CSI-VT, AIGA, ASLA, the Vermont Society of Engineers, and the Associated General Contractors. Explore potential collaborative events and educational opportunities.
- b. Pursue collaborative events and knowledge sharing with neighboring AIA components, including AIA New Hampshire, AIA Western Mass, and AIA Eastern New York.
- c. Continue to partner with Efficiency Vermont (EVT) to provide educational sessions, trainings and webinars. Educate AIAVT members on the benefits of engaging with EVT and their Efficiency Excellence Network (EEN) program. Provide regular support and feedback to influence EVT's development of their programs and policies.

7. Leverage the press and media

- a. Update the AIAVT website to ensure that information is current, relevant, and easy to find. Consolidate information into intuitive and easy-to-find categories. Edit old material, including outdated award winners. Keep the member directory current and accurate.
- b. Increase the use of social media to highlight member achievements, disseminate topical information, and celebrate good design in the state. Work to broaden the audience for the AIAVT social media channels to capture the general public and those who are interested in architecture in Vermont.
- c. Build relationships with editors and journalists at media outlets throughout the state. Maintain a current list of media outlets for the distribution of press releases.



Climate Action

Advancing knowledge and expertise in pursuit of a sustainable future

Goal: Accelerate actions to improve ecological and human health.

Strategies & Tasks:

1. Advocate for issues and policies that promote and codify sustainable design practices

- a. Engage with legislators: resume regular meetings with our US senators and representatives.
- b. Engage with local building and zoning administrators to accelerate implementation of community initiatives including: smart growth planning, pedestrian friendly neighborhoods, bike paths, infill development, and zoning for higher densities.
- c. Advocate for state policies and regulatory structures that help achieve the state energy and climate goals, including changes to regulatory structures to improve enforcement of RBES/CBES.
- d. Provide Members with knowledge and talking points for conducting conversations with their legislators.
- e. Provide PPC members with the knowledge needed to speak fluently on climate issues in Vermont, by financially supporting their attendance at Vermont state code trainings.

2. Be at the forefront of bold initiatives to fight climate change

- a. Facilitate the adoption of a Net-Zero building standard.
- b. Promote reductions in embodied carbon in building materials by spreading knowledge of carbon assessment tools and their environmental benefits.
- c. Promote participation in the AIA 2030 Commitment.

3. Educate and inspire members to lead

- a. Continue to distribute educational materials to members on leading sustainable design topics, including the use of renewable and low carbon building materials, conducting life cycle assessments, and the Red List of materials.
- b. Develop an annual plan for program offerings, including:
 - Host at least two building tours (with CEUs) every year of buildings of high performance and sustainable design – one tour featuring new construction, one tour featuring renovation and/or addition of existing building
 - Host CEU lunchtime webinars (3-4 per year). Encourage presenters from recent conferences to reprise their presentation for another audience.
 - With program offerings, continue to advocate for members to adopt the AIA Framework for Design Excellence as a metric for standard practice.
- c. Continue to consult with COTE committees of neighboring AIA chapters to share best practices and knowledge. Continue to participate in the COTE Summit.

- d. Support the work of the AIAVT State Disaster Coordinator. Arrange with that person to hold at least one related educational event per year for AIAVT members.
- e. Partner with allied organizations, such as ASLA, VSPE, VGBN, CSI, EAN, and VEIC to maximize our effectiveness as organizations.

4. Participate in the development of the Vermont Commercial and Residential Building Energy Standards (CBES/RBES)

- a. Establish the (2) AIAVT Energy Code Liason positions as recurring roles. Define the role of the Liasons as being the conduit for AIAVT's involvement in the CBES/RBES development process. Maintain regular check-ins between the Liasons and PPC and/or the Board.
- b. Update the membership on the ongoing development of CBES/RBES, and AIAVT's contributions to that ongoing effort.

5. Take steps to make AIAVT events and operations more environmentally friendly

- a. Eliminate the use of single-use plastics at AIAVT events
- b. Coordinate and encourage carpooling to AIAVT events

Acknowledgements

2022 Board of Directors

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