



STRATEGIC PLAN 2026 – 2028

Strategic Planning Retreat | April 2025

Adopted by Board of Directors | July 2025

Prepared by The Three Aspens, Ltd. | Helene Combs Dreiling, FAIA, President | May 2025

Strategic Planning Process

This Strategic Plan sets forth a set of goals, strategies, and tactics to propel AIA Tennessee toward an ever-more-vibrant future as a local component of the American Institute of Architects. Although circumstances have changed since the preparation of AIA National's Strategic Plan for 2022-2025, AIA Tennessee respects AIA National's goals urging architects to:

- a) Support humanity's call to collective climate action through an unrelenting commitment to sustainable and resilient design, and
- b) Stand for human rights and social justice through programming as well as collective and individual efforts.

This 2026-2028 document for AIA Tennessee was developed and adopted in five broad steps:

1. Prior to the strategic planning retreat, AIA Tennessee's President and Executive Vice President corresponded via email over several months with consultant Helene Combs Dreiling, FAIA of The Three Aspens, Ltd. to plan the retreat and articulate what the process means for future accomplishment.
2. Pre-retreat research included several customized survey tools:
 - Stakeholder Interviews conducted by the consultant, during which 20 leaders and closely associated individuals responded to questions regarding the component's future.
 - A Member Survey open to all members to assess member needs.
3. A strategic planning retreat for all members of the Board of Directors and key invitees was held April 24-25, 2025, where the consultant-facilitated discussions on what is working well, challenges to consider, and future aspirations for the component. During this collective session the goals, strategies, and tactics began to take shape.
4. Based on key themes from Stakeholder Interviews and Member Survey as well as primary retreat outcomes, the facilitator/consultant prepared a draft strategic plan, with opportunities for amendments, alterations, and additions to be offered by component leadership.
5. The Board of Directors approved the 2026-2028 Strategic Plan at its meeting in July 2025.

AIA Tennessee | Mission and Vision

MISSION (from the component's website):

Positively impact our World through the Power of Design.

AIA Tennessee is the voice of the architectural profession and a resource for its members in service to society.

AIA Tennessee shapes the professional environment in Tennessee so that architects, clients, the building industry and the public at large understand and appreciate the value we bring to the community.

Strategic Planning Retreat Acknowledgements

2025 AIATN Board of Directors:

John Thurman, AIA | President
Brian Bullard, AIA | Vice President
P. Jeanne Myers, AIA | Treasurer
David Bailey, FAIA | Middle TN Director
Nick Dryden, AIA | Middle TN Director (not attending)
Cody Rau, AIA | East TN Director
Joshua Rudisin, AIA | Chattanooga Director

Chad Polk, AIA | President-elect
Julius Mitchell, AIA | Secretary
Matt Lyle, AIA | Immediate Past President
Megan Chaffin, AIA | East TN Director
Chase Percer, AIA | Memphis Director
Alex Reyland, AIA | Chattanooga Director
Jason Weeks, AIA | Memphis Director

AIATN Ex-Officio Directors:

Tre' Yancy, Assoc. AIA
Dillon Dunn, AIA | NOMAnash
Marika Snider, AIA | University of Memphis

Melody Gibson, Assoc. AIA
Joyce Selina Love, AIA | NOMA Memphis
Jason Young | Dean, University of Tennessee

Invited Guests:

Dustin Durham | AIA East TN Executive Director
Dezha McCoy-Overtson, Assoc. AIA | State Associate Rep.
Carol Pedigo, Hon. AIA | AIA Middle TN Executive Director
David Proffitt, AIA | AIA Middle TN Rep.
Tilman "Trey" Wheeler, FAIA | State Strategic Councilor

Amber Lombardo | AIA Memphis ED
Sarah Page, AIA | Young Architect Rep.
Sims Polk, AIA | AIA Middle TN Rep.
Tiffany Vargo | AIA Chattanooga ED

Staff Team Members:

Ashley Cates | Executive Vice President

Molly Craig | Director of Member Services

Implementation of the 2026-28 Strategic Plan

The 2026-28 Strategic Plan is both aspirational and inspirational; as such, it serves as an active guide for component volunteer leadership and staff team members in the coming three-year time horizon. All of the goals, strategies, and tactics are intended to refine the focus of AIA Tennessee by advancing the chapter's Mission and Goals.

“**Communication**” was a key theme from the strategic planning process. Referenced in multiple ways regarding AIA Tennessee's preferred future as an organization, the term includes:

- **Communication** ... with members of AIA Tennessee, especially emerging professionals;
- **Communication** ... with a broader set of potential component leaders;
- **Communication** ... with the other local AIA components in the state;
- **Communication** ... with industry-adjacent and strategic partners to further the mission;
- **Communication** ... with legislators and policy makers on issues of social impact;
- **Communication** ... with schools and programs in architecture; and
- **Communication** ... with the greater public about the crucial role of architects and architecture.

This 2026-2028 Strategic Plan continues a three-year cycle of planning exercises and documents. Tactics within the plan may be considered the framework for a three-year Action Plan, on which the metrics and measurements of success are founded. This Strategic Plan is a call to action for all volunteer leaders, staff team members, and the members of AIA Tennessee to work together toward implementing the goals.

GOAL I :: Engage Members. AIA Tennessee proudly serves as the essential and preeminent knowledge resource for architects across all geographic locations and at every career stage.

- A. **Member Programming.** As the wheel of life-long learning for the profession, AIATN acts as both the hub and spokes for architectural professionals who wish to expand their knowledge base.
 - 1. Relevant Programs. Assure that educational offerings continue to meet the needs, interests, and passions of members, and are complementary to local chapter efforts.
 - 2. Business Acumen. Focus more continuing education programs on business-related and practice management topics such as marketing, finances, human resources, etc.
 - 3. Mid-career Professionals. Offer enhanced professional development programs for mid-career architects and firm managers to grown their expertise in pertinent subjects.

- B. **Design Programming.** Help members create a better built environment through education, celebration, and illumination of projects and teams.
 - 1. Knowledge Communities. Optimize existing special interest structures – for both project type and practice mode – to create appropriate statewide committees as needed.
 - 2. Resource Library. Leverage and link all existing resources for the benefit of members, firms, and components through a searchable database.
 - 3. Honors and Awards. Spotlight accomplishments of members and contributions by non-members, individually and collectively, through an enriched honors & awards program.

- C. **Early Career Programming.** Continually assess and refine AIA Tennessee’s role as a supportive force and service delivery instrument for early-career architects and associate members.
 - 1. Mentorship Networks. Connect members across generations, geographies, and practice settings to offer professional support to those of varying experience levels.
 - 2. Career Development. Provide opportunities for emerging professionals to become more involved in advocacy, education, and networking, especially within their areas of interest.
 - 3. A.R.E. Prep. Given the statewide characteristic of licensure, discover and support new study groups, support networks, and prep tools for the Architect Registration Examination.

GOAL II :: Enhance Advocacy. AIA Tennessee is a valued, trusted, and well-respected profession and partner in the government advocacy arena and in public settings.

- A. **Collective Voice.** Serve as a proactive, positive influence in the halls of the state legislature, especially on topics of importance to our profession and the design and construction industry.
 - 1. Trusted Advisors. Serve as the trusted advisors to state legislators, policy-makers, and government agencies on matters related to the built environment and citizen well-being.
 - 2. Day on the Hill. Study and enact refinements or modifications to this special advocacy activity to safeguard lasting relevance for members, the profession, and our communities.
 - 3. Citizen Architects. Investigate, catalog, and place members in government service appointments and other opportunities within governmental boards and commissions.

- B. **Valued Partners.** Continue to align with closely related and industry-adjacent organizations to maximize the message of livability, and quality of life across Tennessee’s communities.
 - 1. Define Stakeholders. Determine logical partners and collaborators across related industries on design, construction, real estate, development, and the environment.
 - 2. Partner Groups. Engage like-minded organizations, trade associations, professional societies, and non-profits to advance topics of mutual interest and concern.
 - 3. TAPAC. Effectively describe and demonstrate the importance of the Political Action Committee to increase awareness and escalate donations to TAPAC.

- C. **Foundation Alignment.** Reinvigorate and deepen the partnership with the Tennessee Architectural Foundation by assessing shared priorities and identifying meaningful ways AIA Tennessee can support and amplify the Foundation’s mission and impact.
 - 1. Strategic Planning Dialogue
Initiate regular meetings with TAF leadership to assess current needs, identify shared goals, and determine where AIA Tennessee can provide complementary support and resources.
 - 2. Collaborative Programming
Develop joint initiatives—such as an Architecture Trail or statewide exhibits—that celebrate architecture and tell the story of design’s impact across Tennessee - and/or community engagement in rural areas, partnering w/ UT Extension to co-create programs promote design literacy and encourage environmental awareness through architectural initiatives.
 - 3. Unified Sponsor Experience
Align sponsorship strategies and recognition efforts to ensure that supporters of both AIA Tennessee and TAF feel meaningfully engaged, appreciated, and invested in the success of both organizations.

GOAL III :: Elevate Communication. AIA Tennessee is the definitive organizational entity communicating on behalf of the organization, architects, and architecture in the state.

- A. **Member Engagement.** Heighten the quality of content and manner of communication with members of AIATN to make sure key elements are delivered to and received by them.
 - 1. Communications Plan. Create a task force to study, survey, and articulate optimal delivery and receipt of information to and with members through a written communications plan.
 - 2. Research Tech. Explore opportunities to use technology to customize content delivery and user experience to match members' individually expressed passions and interests.
 - 3. In-person Events. Leverage in-person events to communicate key messages to members and attendees as well as to build member awareness of the value of AIA membership.

- B. **Public Engagement.** To reinforce messaging centered on the power of our collective voice, conduct activities and events that amplify that voice and build public appreciation for architects.
 - 1. Community Resilience. Help the citizens of Tennessee understand that architects hold significant responsibility for societal well-being, quality of life, and community livability.
 - 2. Social Justice. Partner with chapters of the National Organization of Minority Architects to support their efforts to promote justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion across peoples.
 - 3. Affordable Housing. Work with local components, firms, government entities, and individual members to help provide adequate living conditions for the populace.

- C. **Pipeline Engagement.** To promote interest in the profession among young persons, conduct direct outreach with students, instructors, and administrators at all educational levels.
 - 1. College Outreach. Work with accredited architecture programs and architecture-focused programs to build a more energetic relationship between academia and practice.
 - 2. K-12 Programs. Promote local component K-12 initiatives to increase pipeline development and future client nurturement.
 - 3. Architecture Week. Working with local components in Tennessee and utilizing the curriculum and tools from AIA National, develop wider Architecture Week programming.

GOAL IV :: Elevated Service. AIA Tennessee is known for providing high levels of quality in service and strong support for its members and stakeholders, a lasting hallmark and legacy.

- A. **Governance Vitality.** Maintain and sustain a highly functioning Board of Directors through leadership development, effective orientation, governance training, and meeting preparedness.
1. Leadership Development. Create every chance for all members of the Board of Directors to learn, grown, and develop in their roles as directors and officers of the corporation.
 2. Board Structure. Consider the methodology by which directors ascend from local board service to state board service to assure that highly engaged individuals join the board.
 3. Local Components. Endeavor continually to complement the work and efforts of the four local components in Tennessee, offering distinct services and minimizing redundancy.
- B. **Operational Vitality.** Manage the day-to-day functions of AIA Tennessee in a manner in keeping with the scale of the organization and the heritage of the association’s robust culture.
1. Staff Bandwidth. Remain mindful of the workload of the staff team and their capacity to manage the component’s programs, projects, and initiatives effectively and efficiently.
 2. TALN. Be certain the Tennessee Architecture Leadership Network (TALN) functions with high levels of collaboration and shared excellence on behalf of members across the state.
 3. Team Development. Support the professional development of the EVP and other staff team members through educational programming of their choice and within budget parameters.
- C. **Financial Vitality.** Always with an eye toward what is best for each member, adeptly navigate financial revenues and expenses for the chapter in all aspects of its operations.
1. Membership Growth. Building on the legacy of high market share, accentuate member retention, reinstatement, and renewals to retain membership figures at high levels.
 2. Corporate Partners & Sponsors. Expand annual packages and additional opportunities to attract additional companies who may desire increased access and exposure to architects and specifiers.
 3. Non-dues Revenue. Cultivate event sponsorships, program support, and other non-dues revenue streams, all with the intention of building alternative revenue sources.

End Strategic Plan.