

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century City Architect

The American Institute of Architects

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## THE PROBLEM

21<sup>st</sup> century cities face unprecedented challenges related to the built environment. From smart growth strategies to energy efficiency and resilience, these challenges require the expertise of licensed design professionals. Currently, very few cities employ architects trained to address these issues in positions of leadership.

## THE ASK

Partner with your local AIA Chapter to identify a suitable model for the city-architect initiative in your community.

## NEED MORE INFORMATION?

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Whether your city's primary challenges include energy conservation and resilience, housing affordability, or historic preservation and smart growth, a City Architect can help you envision and achieve the future you desire.

A City Architect can assist in multiple ways. Some examples include:

- Strategic urban design visioning
- Universal equitable design strategies
- Develop resilience requirements
- Facilitate public space programming
- Serve as the city's technical expert or community liaison

## BACKGROUND

Large and small cities alike face complex land use and development challenges. In order to meet these evolving challenges and reconcile diverse and often competing interests, successful city leaders will need to capitalize on the strategic design thinking and expertise of AIA architects within their community.

The founding of many American cities took place under the direct leadership of a City Architect. In most major cities, early local governments relied heavily on a City Architect to establish a design vision and guide planning through their formative years. Sadly, this critical voice has waned in recent decades as a result of short-term concerns and competing interests.

An opportunity exists for decisive, forward-looking city leaders to reconsider the historic role of City Architect and inject design thinking into crucial city-making decisions. AIA architects stand ready to make a direct, positive contribution to their communities through demonstrated leadership within the built environment.

## UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF YOUR COMMUNITY

The City Architect understands that communities have different needs based on size, values, and existing governing structures. With that in mind, the initiative is designed to be scalable while continuing to meet the needs of a diverse range of communities. AIA architects are eager to partner with local leaders to identify individual community advantages and limitations and to assist city leadership in selecting an appropriate model to implement the city architect initiative. Design thinking, facilitated by licensed AIA architects, is crucial to ensuring the appropriate and effective implementation of meaningful local solutions.



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