

Chief City Architect

The American Institute of Architects

THE PROBLEM

21st century cities face unprecedented challenges related to the built environment. From land use policies to energy efficiency and resilience, these challenges require the expertise of licensed design professionals. Currently, very few cities have architects trained to address these issues in key positions of leadership.

THE ASK

Connect with AIA to learn more about Chief City Architects, and then partner with your local AIA chapter to identify a suitable model for your community.

NEED MORE INFORMATION?

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Whether the primary challenges in your city or town include energy conservation and resilience, housing affordability, or historic preservation and smart growth, a Chief City Architect can help you build the future you envision.

A Chief City Architect can help city leaders in many ways to address these challenges, and more, by:

- Providing strategic urban design visioning
- Creating universal equitable design strategies
- Developing building energy and resilience standards
- Facilitating community engagement
- Serving as the city's technical expert

HISTORY

Large and small cities alike face complex land use and development challenges. 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 and architects within their own community.

The founding of many American cities took place under the direct leadership of a city architect. In 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 because of short-term concerns and competing interests.

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

UNDERSTANDING THE NEEDS OF YOUR COMMUNITY

A Chief City Architect understands that every community has unique needs based on size, values, and existing governing structures. With that in mind, AIA's Chief City Architect program is designed to be scalable, while continuing to meet the needs of a diverse range of communities. AIA and its members are eager to partner with local leaders to identify community assets and limitations and to assist city leaders in selecting the appropriate model for a Chief City Architect in each community. Design thinking, facilitated by licensed architects, is crucial to ensuring the appropriate and effective implementation of meaningful local solutions.