



26 July 2025

AIA Michigan Newsletter #6

Connecting with each other to support and amplify our strengths!

This month's newsletter does not start with a weather report...It starts with jetlag...It is 2:30 in the morning and I am wide awake after just returning from our excursion dropping our daughter, Anneka off in Perth, Australia for a graduate degree in marine biology...(See the end of the last newsletter.)

As I mentioned in my last newsletter, we are entering AIA Michigan's season of conferences...

[Michigan AIA and AGC Mackinac Midsummer Conference](#) (August 7-10)...

[AIA MI Design Retreat](#) (September 12-14)...

[AIA MI ArchiFusion](#) (October 16-17)...

...and to quote what I wrote last month: "Each conference has its own identity and vibe...and each will appeal to different facets of our varied membership. However, it is the hope of ArchiFusion to be the event that bring us all together! In fact, in the last membership survey a few years ago, which garnered a great response, we received an overwhelming number of suggestions from all over the state requesting one event/conference that would be a place for our varied community to come together, learn from each other, and just have fun. Given last year was ArchiFusion's first year, it was a huge success. At the same time, we learned from it and now we look for this year to be even better. I hope to see you there..."

This is a great segue into our strategic visioning process... We are off and running with [Three Aspens](#), founded by Helene Combs Dreiling, FAIA—past AIA National President, 2014. Please invite me to a chapter/section meeting, zoom call, one-on-one meeting to discuss what AIA Michigan means to you and how we should be moving into the future. For some of you, AIA MI may be very relevant...for others, we may not be relevant at all. That is Okay...I want to hear all perspectives.

With this in mind, I would like to use the next couple of newsletters to discuss my personal reflections on the value and role of AIA Michigan and what it means to me...As I have written in the past, I truly believe that we are stronger through both our differences and similarities...and because of this, we create a bigger picture of our state's architecture community. Also, AIA Michigan is nothing without its chapters and sections. Thus, AIA Michigan can create a vision for the state...but this occurs through engaging our varied membership...because you drive your chapters' and sections' vision for your local context. Taking this into account, AIA Michigan is at its best when it focuses on three overarching objectives:

1. **Influence and affect** policy making and government affairs that directly impact the quality of the built environment and the practice of our discipline. Specifically speaking:
 - AIA Michigan should focus on statewide issues and support and advocate for local issues.
 - While our local chapters and sections focus their efforts on local issues and support and advocate for the statewide issues.
 - I think it is important to note that all architects and aspiring architects, whether or not they are AIA members, benefit from this objective.



2. **Engage and promote** the opportunity to meaningfully connect all of us together in a way that provides a better knowledge exchange across the state. In other words, I have an expanded definition of professional development, which is not merely about gaining knowledge. Instead, it is also about connecting with each other to support and amplify our strengths. We are smarter together!
3. **Advocate and inspire** for thoughtful ways to practice and improve the quality of life for architects and our emerging professionals inside and outside of the office context.

As I close one more newsletter, I would like to sincerely thank all of you who have reached out in response to something I have written, which resonated with you! These messages are consistent reminders that I am not writing into the ether...and thus...once again, I will leave you with another small reveal...I am part of a culture of people who understand that when you are asked: "Do you ride?" they do not mean a bicycle...but a motorcycle, of course...Riding is about truly being engaged in the experience and the landscape around you. When you remove the "shield" of the car you feel the subtle temperature changes and the variation in ambient aromas. But you may be thinking that you could say a similar assertion for a convertible car. This is true. That is why there is a second reason why I am adamant about riding...There is a symbiotic relationship between you and the bike...You and the bike become one machine...which, in turn reveals one more thing: I truly see the book [Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance](#) as a canonical text that has helped define my world view. Believe it or not, 2024 was its 50th anniversary...

I hope you will still have opportunities to continue to enjoy our great Michigan summers... I look forward to seeing you in the month ahead and throughout the rest of the year!!! And for those of you who will be attending our Mackinac Midsummer Conference, please connect with me! Let's have a drink and talk about AIA Michigan's strategic and dynamic future!

Cheers!

Dan Pitera, FAIA, NOMA, Hon. FALA
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