



The American Institute of Architects

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Hello Everyone,

This past week has been hard, and it could be that the novelty of this environment is wearing thin after 6-7 weeks. It could also be because the Covid 19 stay at home order has been extended into May. Not that we did not see it coming. We have three more weeks of a strange but familiar routine which still has a lot of uncertainty to it. The good news is that preventive measures are working, and the pandemic is slowing.

The stress for many is still understandably high. Many are fortunate that they have work and their jobs are secure and their family is all healthy. I am grateful for that. My son just finished his finals in engineering school and the initial transition to remote learning was a challenge, especially with labs a big part of course work. It's tempting for us to conclude that we now can get meaningful work done and that we have transitioned successfully to working remotely. I listened to Dean Daubman from Lawrence Technological University architecture school share that learning remotely is still very different from a program that was set up specifically for online learning. As businesses we will have to continue developing better processes if this now means we will be working remotely for extended periods of time. We will have a hybrid version of life before and after the pandemic and this will vary for firms.

I have been part of several architect roundtables. The platforms for discussion have been about our firms, maintaining financial health and strategies around design in a Covid 19 world. We heard about struggles. Many people are grappling with how much they are able to work. Some have decided because of the lack of childcare that they must work less, and that most firms are flexible. We are also fortunate that our industry has the technology infrastructure that allows us to continue to work. Then there is the flipside of an economy that has come to standstill. Large firms have begun layoffs and furloughs on top of salary cuts across the board. Mid-size firms seem to be faring better but many are burning through their backlog, and small firms seem to be experiencing the widest extremes in circumstance with some staying busy and others seeing reductions of 50% or more. Many firms have benefited from the quickly enacted Payroll Protection Program and many still hope to be able to participate in the second round of relief. Newer, different challenges lie ahead. How do we prepare for those challenges?

AIA Michigan has established a Covid-19 task force as part of AIA Nationals initiative to provide a proactive leadership resource for our members and communities. The committee is being led by AIA Michigan Vice President Bob Hoida, AIA. The committee begins meeting this week. The focus is on collecting information that will be helpful to members and firms as they navigate challenges. The task force also hopes to create strategies that we as professionals can take to our healthcare communities, municipalities and institutions that will provide them with leadership and guidance as they set up new protocols for design and its implementation.

So, what does a successful year look like for you? Staying healthy and staying busy? For the AIA what does a successful year look like? Through meaningful webinars and programs, the AIA will continue to offer you opportunities for engagement and connection. Your involvement is needed now as we reshift and reshape our programs focus for the year. Please contact me if you would like to share your thoughts, or if you have an area of interest that you would like to get involved with.

Stay well!

Norman Hamann Jr. AIA