



AIA BRONX CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

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Bronx Chapter AIA Publications Committee Info@studio360's.com

Highlighting activities and information of interest to the Practicing Architect

Events and Education Opportunities

- **2025 Women's Leadership Summit**
AEC Network of Women Transforming the Built Environment
November 3-5, 2025
Atlanta Marriott Marquis
Peachtree center Ave. NE, Atlanta, Ga. 30303
<https://www.aia.org/community/events/womens-leadership-summit-2025>
- **AIA Conference on Architecture & Design 2026**
June 10-13, San Diego
Save the date for AIA26! The premier AEC industry event in San Diego, California.
- **Bronx Chapter Welcomes New Members**

Pedro Auquilla,	Associate AIA
Yeisy Batista,	Associate AIA
Berkis Berra,	Associate AIA
Mishelle Jimenez,	Associate AIA
Melody Moulton,	Associate AIA
Mason Rape,	Associate AIA
Biyang Yan,	Associate AIA
Zequan Yu,	Associate AIA

Table of Contents

I	Current Activities: Chapter Virtual Meeting Minutes of October 16, 2025,	Page 2
II	Next Chapter Virtual meeting – January 22, 2026, https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9948476766	Page 7
III	Appendix	Page 8

I Current Activities



September 18, 2025

AIA BRONX CHAPTER MEETING MINUTES

The virtual meeting started at 6:05PM.

Attendees:

Antonio Freda
Bryan Zelnik
Carlos Honorio Jr.
Julian Misiurski
Jerin Lisha
Ken A. Koons, Jr.
Ken H. Koons, Sr.
Linda Pena
Matthew Rezkallo
Michael Goldblum
Nico Zapata
Renaldo Alvarado
Robert Esnard
Sara Djazayeri

Guest:

Mary Lynn Hadix
Architectural Specialist
Modern-Mill
413 363-3057
mary.lynn@modern-mill.com

Agenda

1 Seminar Presentation

The AIA Bronx Chapter convened on **October 24, 2025**, for a comprehensive meeting led by **Robert Esnard**, Secretary, and **Sara Djazayeri**, Chapter President. The session began with a **Continuing Education Unit (CEU)** presentation by **Mary Lynn Haddix** of **Modern Mill**, introducing *Acre*, a sustainable, rice-husk-based building material designed to replace tropical hardwoods and support **biophilic design** practices.

She introduced her companies product **Acre**, an innovative **U.S.-manufactured composite building material** made from **upcycled rice husks and PVC**.

Key features discussed included:

- **Composition:** 50%+ rice husks, <50% PVC, extruded for uniform consistency.
- **Sustainability:** Zero-waste facility in Mississippi; recyclable at end of life.
- **Durability:** Waterproof, UV- and algae-resistant, thermally stable, and suitable for direct ground or water contact.
- **Applications:** Siding, trim, soffits, fascia, decking, cabinetry, and interior finishes.
- **Certifications:** Class B fire rating; WUI approved for wildfire zones; qualifies for **LEED credits** in multiple categories.

Mary Lynn emphasized the **biophilic and sustainable attributes** of Acre as a “tree-free” alternative to tropical hardwoods. The material replicates the look and feel of natural wood, contributing to *biophilic design principles* by connecting people to nature through texture, tone, and material warmth.

Factory and Production Insights

The Modern Mill factory, located in **Fulton, Mississippi**, was described as a **forward-thinking facility** that supports local agriculture and workforce development.

- Employees receive **tuition reimbursement** and health benefits.
- The plant reuses all production dust and scrap materials, achieving **zero-waste status**.
- **Rice husks**—a byproduct of rice farming—are used instead of being discarded, providing an **environmental reuse of agricultural waste**.

Product Demonstration and Technical Overview

Haddix demonstrated various Acre samples, showing:

- Shiplap, board-and-batten, and beadboard profiles in **Montauk Gray, Acre Black, and natural tones**.
- Installation details: **16” on-center fastening for walls, 12” for decks, Cortex hidden fastener and plug systems, and PVC-safe adhesives**.
- Paint/stain compatibility with **PPG, Benjamin Moore, and Sherwin-Williams** using **IR-safe PVC formulas**.
- Factory pre-finishing now available, allowing architects to specify pre-stained profiles to reduce jobsite finishing time.

Haddix also discussed **thermal expansion tolerances**, maintenance intervals (recommended **recoating every 10–15 years**), and noted Acre’s **resistance to mold, termites, and fading**.

Biophilic Design CEU Portion

Haddix presentation was titled the “**Biophilic Design for All**” CEU lecture covering the following Topics:

- The role of **biophilic design** in improving mental and physical health.
- Integration of **nature-mimicking materials** such as wood-like finishes and daylight-optimized spaces.
- Application of **biomimicry, organic geometry, natural lighting, and color theory** in architectural design.
- Acre’s role in promoting **affordable, scalable, and low-maintenance** biophilic materials adaptable to commercial, residential, and institutional settings.

Q&A Discussion

Several attendees participated in an in-depth question session:

- **Leila Peña** asked about **PVC sourcing and recyclability**. Haddix confirmed the PVC is *virgin material* but that **Acre boards are recyclable** through PVC recycling centers, aiming to create a closed-loop lifecycle.
- **Bryan Zelnik** asked about **decking spans**; Haddix clarified a **12-inch on-center** support is required for deck boards.

- Sara inquired about **maintenance intervals**, and Haddix stated Acre typically requires **recoating every decade** depending on exposure and color.
- A member questioned **fire ratings and competition**; Haddix confirmed **Class B certification** and explained that **Acre has no direct U.S. competitors** using rice-husk composites, though similar products exist in **Europe and India**.

The seminar concluded with a review of case studies and a reiteration of Acre's **limited lifetime warranty**.

For project inquiries and sample requests, Mary Lynn shared her contact information:

Mary Lynn Hadix
Architectural Specialist
Modern-Mill
413 363-3057
mary.lin@modern-mill.com.

2 **Adoption of Minutes**

Following the seminar, **Bob Esnard** transitioned the meeting into the business session. The **September 2025 meeting minutes** were presented for review.

Motion: To adopt the minutes as submitted.

- **Moved by:** Julian
- **Seconded by:** Michael and Leila Peña
- **Result:** Motion **carried unanimously**.

Bob reported two ongoing initiatives:

- a) **AIA Bronx Design Showcase:** Members are encouraged to submit project images and descriptions by **October 24** for publication on the chapter website.
- b) **Morrisania Historic District Tour:** Planned walking tour to examine Bronx's historic architectural fabric and urban revitalization, coordinated by **Julian and the Bronx County Historical Association**.

3 **Schedule for Next Meetings**

The scheduled dates of the next meetings were reviewed, and it was pointed out that the next meeting will be virtual and unless there is a schedule change the December meeting is an in-person event. All members are invited to attend and will receive invitations indicating the location. Therefore, the proposed next meeting dates are;

November 20, 2025,	6:00PM – (Virtual)
December 18, 2025,	Holiday Luncheon -TBD
January 22, 2026,	6:00PM – (Virtual)
February 22, 2026,	6:00PM – (Virtual)

4 **AIA Chapter Accreditation**

Bob Esnard presented the chapter's **AIA Accreditation Review and Compliance Update**, which is a Review required every four years to maintain AIA accreditation. In summary, the accreditation process requires the chapter Executive Committee, composed of the chapter officers and directors, as well as the Chapter members to review and adopt its activities and services. Over the last few weeks, ten required policy documents were reaffirmed by the Executive Committee which where:

1. **Ethics Policy**
2. **Financial Management Policy**
3. **Audit Policy**
4. **Disaster Response & Continuity Plan**
5. **Financial Reserve Policy** (establishing \$5,000 reserve threshold)
6. **Whistleblower Policy**
7. **Conflict of Interest Policy**
8. **Records Retention Policy**
9. **Member Data Security Policy**
10. **Strategic Plan** (focusing on community engagement and young architect development)

Bob noted that national AIA required annual reaffirmation to maintain chapter compliance. Minor typographical and formatting corrections were made, and legal language was adjusted for Bronx-specific governance.

Motion: To ratify all updated accreditation and policy documents.

- **Moved by:** Michael
- **Seconded by:** Sara
- **Result:** Motion **approved unanimously**.

Bob thanked the committee for reviewing the multiple versions and commended **Julian Misiurski and Nico Zapata** for their editing support.

This discussion was concluded indicating that that the Chapter at next November meeting is required to review and understand four additional documents which where update by the chapter officers and will be attached to this month's October Newsletter appendix, they are:

<u>Documents</u>	<u>Appendix</u>
1. Anti-Trust Statement	I
2. Anti-Harassment Statement	II
3. Equity Diversity & Inclusion Statement	III
4. The Bronx Chapter Strategic Plan - Updated	IV

5. Nominations for 2026 Officers and Directors

Chair: Ken Koons Sr., Nominating Committee

Ken Koons presented the **proposed slate of officers and directors** for the 2026 term, confirming that all current officers have agreed to continue service.

During open nominations, **Sara** nominated **Leila Peña** for **Director**. Sara Djazayeri had introduced Leila as a co-Chair of the Woman and Emerging Architects Committee, (**WEA**), and indicated how much of an asset she has been.

Leila introduced herself as a **Bronx native, NYIT Architecture graduate, and industry professional with 10 years' experience** in design and project strategy. She currently works in **Capital Delivery PIM Standards an efficiency strategy** for major clients including **Meta and Kite Pharma**.

Her nomination was **seconded by multiple members** and received **unanimous support**.

As required by the chapter By-Laws the final officer and director voting must occur one month after the Nominating Committees Report and therefore will occur at the **next scheduled meeting**.

Appendix V – Proposed Officers and Directors 2026.

6. **Budget Review and Audit Report**

Ken Koons Jr. presented a **comparison of 2025 actuals and proposed 2026 budget**, noting the chapter's continued **fiscal responsibility and balanced operations**.

Key notes included:

- Chapter remains **financially solvent** with a modest surplus.
- **Awards Program** expenses have grown, representing **~33% of total budget**, but the event's educational and community value justify the cost.
- **Insurance premiums** increased to **\$2,200** due to expanded virtual operations and liability coverage.
- **Website and Marketing** allocations to be consolidated under one budget line for transparency.
- **Revenue sources:** AIA National dues, CEU presentation fees (\$200–\$500 per session), and document royalties.

Discussion

Sara and **Leila** discussed modernizing **minutes and website management**, recommending integration of **AI transcription tools** and potentially contracting a **part-time communications assistant**.

Members agreed to propose a **small dues increase** (from \$100 to \$110–\$120 annually) to fund marketing, student outreach, and web maintenance. The increase will have to wait until 2027 as we have to file any Dues changes with AIA National and State before September 15th each calendar year in order to be able to send Dues Invoices to all AIA members.

Action: Budget revisions to be finalized by **Ken Koons** and as required by chapter By-Laws after the Treasure's Proposed Budget is presented the chapter can **adopt it at the next meeting**.

Appendix VI – Proposed 2026 Bronx Chapter Budget

7. **DOB – Update**

Tony Freda reviewed members' frustration with the lack of engagement with the **NYC Department of Buildings**. This was exacerbated during the Covid Health Crisis and currently the only effective continuing interaction is through **ACNY (Architects Council of New York)**.

Discussion

- In previous years, AIA Bronx held **monthly meetings with the Bronx borough superintendent in person**.
- **Michael Goldblum** suggested collaboration with **other NYC chapters** and or **Architects Council** for Department of Buildings advocacy.
- Currently limitations with DOB staff accessibility have reduced professional engagement.
- Members agreed to attempt to **revive regular communication** via **Architects Council** and explore shared advocacy with other borough chapters.

Tony Freda noted that Council meetings are an effective venue to raise and resolve member filing or zoning issues collectively.

Ken Koons Jr. emphasized the need for members to **submit recurring issues** to Tony for identifying a pattern an issue he can present at a council meeting .

8. **New Business**

Reminder to all Members that there will be:

- The fall tour will focus on the neighborhood of **Morrisania on October 25th**
- At the next meeting, the Chapter will **vote** to finalize and approve the:
Budget and Officer and Director Elections for 2026.

9. **Adjournment**

As no additional new business was presented or issues raised, and there being no further business Bob thanked all attendees for their participation with a reminder that the next meeting will be virtual on November 20, 2025.

II Next meeting:

Thursday, November 20, 2025 @ 6:00PM

Virtual - ZOOM meeting link

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9948476766>

IV Appendix

Appendix I

Anti-Trust Statement

Page 9

Appendix II

Anti-Harassment Statement

Page 11

Appendix III

Equity Diversity & Inclusion Statement

Page 12

Appendix IV

The Bronx Chapter Strategic Plan - Updated

Page 13

Appendix V

Proposed Officers and Directors 2026

Page 14

Appendix VI

Proposed 2026 Bronx Chapter Budget

Page 15

Appendix I

Anti-Trust Statement



AIA Anti-Trust Policy

The Bronx Chapter approved a Chapter Anti-Trust Policy in November 2018, and again in July of 2022 discussing the procedural/financial actions required to prevent problems that members and the Chapter should avoid. In November 2025 over several meetings, the Chapter Secretary again reviewed and outlined the Anti-Trust Policy statement to remind them of the legal and economic responsibilities. These ANTITRUST COMPLIANCE STATEMENT AND PROCEDURES are summarized as follows:

ACTIVITIES THAT UNLAWFULLY RESTRAIN COMPETITION

AIA operations and activities must not be used to reach or further agreements among members (or other people) in any of the following areas:

Prices for products or services

The manner in which AIA members price their services Members' costs of employment, including wages, and benefits Not hiring or soliciting one another's employees

Allocations of markets, customers, territories, or products Collective refusals to deal with anyone

Limitations on production or output Tying arrangements

ACTIVITIES THAT ALSO MAY BE UNLAWFUL

AIA operations and activities must not be used to reach or further agreements among members or other persons in any of the following areas:

Exclusive dealing arrangements

Reciprocal sales and purchase arrangements

Product standardization, including ESG-related product changes Prices at which products or services should be resold

To avoid even the appearance of impropriety, the subjects indicated above must not be discussed or addressed in the course of any AIA-related operations, events, or other activities without the prior approval of counsel.

Do not discuss any subjects that might raise antitrust concerns (including prices, wages or conditions of employment, market allocations, refusals to deal, and the like) unless you

have received specific clearance from counsel in advance. If somebody begins discussing a sensitive subject, do not allow the discussion to continue. If the discussion does continue, do not allow the meeting to continue.

In addition, it was pointed out to members that if they would like to see the entire document click [HERE](#) or email a request to the Chapter secretary who will provide it.

Appendix II

Anti-Harassment Statement

Anti-Harassment Policy

The Bronx Chapter at its July 21, 2022, meeting, and again in over several meetings during November 2025 reviewed its adopted Anti-Harassment Policy statement to reacquaint and underline members responsibilities to prevent problems that members and the Chapter should avoid. The members discussions reinforced that Chapter's commitment to maintain a workplace free from sexual harassment, as it is a form of discrimination, illegal and inappropriate. Members reviewed and outlined the Anti-Harassment Policy statement to emphasize and remind them of the serious legal and economic responsibilities. Also, In addition, it was pointed out to members that if they would like to see the entire Anti-Harassment document click [POLICY](#) or email a request to the Chapter secretary who will provide it.

Appendix III

Equity Diversity & Inclusion Statement

Adopted

November 2025



AIA diversity and inclusion statement

Leadership in design and construction requires collaboration. Architects must encourage and celebrate the contributions of those who bring diverse experiences, views, and needs into the design process.

Supporting position statements

1. Civil rights

The AIA Supports the promotion of human and civil rights, the universal respect for human dignity, and the unbiased treatment of all persons in employment, civic, and business transactions.

Embracing a culture of equity, all programs and initiatives of the AIA and its members shall reflect the society that we serve, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, physical abilities, or religious practices.

2. Diversity

The American Institute of Architects, as part of the global community, champions a culture of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the profession of architecture to create a better environment for all. Achieving this vision has a direct impact on the relevance of our profession and the world's prosperity, health, and future.

Appendix IV

The Bronx Chapter Strategic Plan - Updated

**Adopted
November 2025**



Strategic Plan

Introduction

The Bronx Chapter over the months of September to November held a series of meetings to review its' Strategic Plan to explore, expanding/modifying the short and long-term activities of the Chapter.

All Members then adopted the plan at its' November 2025 meeting that basically reinforced its two prior plans, the first in July 2017 and second Strategic Plan, developed in July 2022. This is the third effort to follow up on and expand on the activities previously agreed to.

The Strategy Plan

Tours - The Chapter will again sign an MOU with the Bronx County Historical Society to regularly sponsor tours of Bronx Buildings, Neighborhoods and Historic sites to originate CEU credits. In addition, even though it is not now a requirement for accreditation, the Chapter will continue with an MOU with AIA Westchester + Hudson Valley to jointly provide additional CEU credits not directly provided by the Chapter.

1. Architectural Registration Examination (ARE)

We will build on our relationships with adjacent AIA chapters to coordinate our efforts with theirs to assist in ARE studying and to create/coordinate study groups for Associate members.

2. Committees

The education and awards committee have successfully worked with CCNY's Architectural School and the other Architectural schools within the NYC region to expand chapter involvement to better respond to Bronx chapter professional interests in improving community involvement in architectural education as well as neighborhood issues.

3. AIA functions/representation

The Chapter will support and expanding links with the AIA State as well as with adjacent AIA chapters social and lobbying efforts.

4. Retention and Recruitment

The Chapter will reach out to every member of the Chapter, other AIA Members and/or former AIA Members, to encourage their participation. They will be invited to a series of events over the next year.

6. New Members

New members are always recognized in our newsletters and meetings as we learn of their appointments. This was reinforced since the last Strategy Plan in 2022 and will include efforts to expand chapter activities supporting Woman and Emerging Architectural Professionals.

Conclusion

The Bronx Chapters strategic plan will continue to; assure that the practice of architecture and Bronx Chapter activities are understood and appreciated by as many people as possible within the profession and Bronx County citizenry.

Appendix V

Proposed Officers and Directors 2026

AIA Bronx Chapter – November 2025

The Proposed 2026 Officers -

President -	Sara Djazayeri
Vice President -	Julian Misiurski
Treasurer -	Kenneth Koons Jr.
Secretary -	Robert Esnard

2026 Directors –

Ofe' Clarke

Kenneth Koons Sr.

Leila Pena

Bryan Zelnik

Nico Zapata

Appendix VI

Proposed 2026 Bronx Chapter Budget

PROPOSED BUDGET 2026

EXPENSES	YEAR - 2026	
MEEETING VENUE	\$ 1,000	
INSURANCE	\$ 2,200	
LEGAL	\$ 1,000	
ACCOUNTING	\$ 400	
WEBSITE / FACEBOOK / ZOOM	\$ 1,450	
MEETINGS EXPENSES FOR OFFICERS/DIRECTORS	\$ 1,000	
AIA COMPLIANCE AND CONSULTANTS	\$ 750	
ARCHITECTS COUNCIL	\$ 550	
MEMBERSHIP/ASSOCIATES SUPPORT	\$ 400	
AWARDS PROGRAM	\$ 7,000	
FACEBOOK	\$ 750	
EMERGENCY RESERVE FUND	\$ 5,000	
FAIA COMMITTEE	\$ 1,000	
EMERGING PROFESSIONALS - WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE	\$ 1,000	
MARKETING	\$ 500	
TOTAL PROJECT EXPENSES	\$ 24,000	
PROJECTED INCOME BASED ON PREVIOUS YEARS		\$ 25,000

The End