



AIA BRONX CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Published by

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

Highlighting activities and information of interest to the Practicing Architect

Events and Education Opportunities

- **AIA Conference on Architecture & Design 2026**
June 10-13, San Diego
Save the date for AIA2The premier AEC industry event in San Diego, California.
- **AIA New York State Education Design Summit**
January 13 – April 30, 2026 Virtual
Eight Sessions • January – April 2026 • Certificate Program
[Save Before Early Bird Ends — Register Today](#)
- **AIA Leadership Summit 2026**
February 11-14 2026
AIA Join us in Washington, D.C.
<https://www.aia.org/community/events/aia-leadership-summit-2026>

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I Current Activites



November 20, 2025

AIA BRONX CHAPTER MEETING MINUTES

The virtual meeting started at 6:03PM.

Attendees:

Antonio Freda
Bryan Zelnik
Jerin Lisha
Julian Misiurski
Ken A. Koons, Jr.
Ken H. Koons, Sr.
Leila Pena
Mishelle Jimenez
Nico Zapata
Ofe Pearson
Robert Esnard
Sara Djazayeri

Guest:

Lauren Rademacher
Director of Sales & Business
Development
Native Trails
805.788.8183
www.nativetrailshome.com

Agenda

1 Seminar Presentation

The meeting began with a **Continuing Education Unit (CEU)** presentation by **Lauren Rademacher** of **Nature Trails**, that reviewed applying bath-related products and materials, including how sinks, tubs and furniture can use sustainable materials as well as evaluate environmental and social impacts beyond marketing claims.

Lauren: Presented the triple bottom line approach (economic, social, environmental) to sustainability and discussed various sustainable materials:

- Recycled copper: Retains properties after recycling, requires 85% less energy than primary production, has antibacterial properties
- Concrete with jute fiber: 40% lighter than standard concrete, requires no heat to form
- Spun glass: Fully recyclable, handmade by artisans in Murano, Italy

Sustainability frameworks and evaluation criteria

- Defined sustainable development using a widely used framing (meeting **Lauren's** definition referencing future generations) and introduced the 'triple bottom line' lens (people, planet, profit) as a practical way to assess choices.

- Discussed how third-party structures help reduce 'greenwashing' risk, highlighting LEED (project certification) and product/company frameworks such as FSC, Cradle to Grave, and B Corp.
- Emphasized lifecycle thinking: durability and service life, responsible sourcing, recycled/recyclable content, rapidly renewable resources, reclaimed materials, low/no-VOC finishes, and transparency/verification.

CEU: Materials and product considerations for the bath

- Copper: material value in recycling streams; natural patina and finish options; cleaning/maintenance expectations and design implications.
- Concrete: embodied energy considerations; approaches to reinforcement and performance; sealing requirements (factory-applied and maintenance reseal intervals) and typical repair approaches.
- Spun glass: artisan fabrication, design aesthetics, and recyclability considerations.
- Wood: FSC-certified sourcing and performance considerations; reclaimed wood sources and the importance of finish/maintenance in wet environments.

Q&A: Native Trails and implementation

- Member asked about Native Trails' products, availability, and ordering process
Lauren: Explained that Native Trails works with artisans worldwide, stocks 95% of catalog items, and can create custom pieces that are available in certain materials (copper/concrete) with lead-time expectations.. In addition, the company uses artisan sourcing model and has various production locations giving architects' availability and delivery.
- Another question was raised about damage repair for concrete products.
Lauren: Clarified that concrete products are sealed with Native Stone Shield and can be easily resealed if damaged. Concrete care: clarification that sealing is provided at the factory; bathrooms generally require less frequent resealing than kitchens; repair kits and reseal practices were discussed.

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

Lauren Rademacher
Director of Sales & Business Development
Native Trails
www.nativetrailshome.com

2 Adoption of Minutes

Following the seminar, **Bob Esnard** shared and outlined the November meeting agenda and made a few opening remarks to start the Business portion of the meeting.

The chapter is scheduled to vote on a couple of items, the officers and the budget, both of which had some changes, as well as approving several accreditation policies.

He then reviewed the October Newsletter and highlighted the first page. The chapter has a record year, for new members. Since he is a member of the Bronx Chapter, annually we usually have 4 or 5

new members. This year **we have 11 new members** listed as new members and are welcomed on the Newsletter opening page. In addition, we now officially have over 80 members , the most in recent times. The chapter members are approximately both split equally between associates and licensed members as well as men and women.

He then outlined an agenda item which was a continuation of the AIA National Accreditation process. Last month the chapter approved 10 documents required by National AIA. However, the number of policies we actually have to adopt are **14 policy documents** for chapter certification. The executive committee just did not have enough time last month to review and put the documents together. Therefore, it is proposed that as the chapter votes on the October minutes, include the last 4 policy documents which is published in the October Newsletter appendices. Which are:

- **Antitrust:** Ensures the chapter does not limit competition.
- **Anti-harassment:** Standard policy for reporting and addressing harassment.
- **Equity diversity:** Reaffirms the chapter's commitment to diversity.
- **Strategic plan:** Focuses on helping associates become licensed, supporting education, and promoting architects in the community.

After a short discussion it was agreed that the chapter will approve both the minutes of October meeting and the additional 4 policy documents included in the Newsletter appendices. The **November 2025 meeting minutes** were presented for review:

Motion: To adopt the minutes as submitted.

Moved by: Nico Zapata

Seconded by: Sara Djazayeri

Result: Motion **carried unanimously**.

3 Schedule for Next Meetings

The scheduled dates of the next meetings were outlined; it was pointed out that there will not be a December Meeting. The next meeting to be virtual in January 2026. If it is possible to arrange a December Luncheon, members will receive a specific email invitation indicating the location. Therefore, the proposed next chapter meeting dates are:

December 2025,	Holiday Luncheon -TBD
January 22, 2026,	6:00PM – (Virtual)
February 19, 2026,	6:00PM – (Virtual)
March 19, 2026	6:00PM – (Virtual)

4. Nominations for 2026 Officers and Directors

Chair: Ken Koons Sr., Nominating Committee

As Ken Koons Sr. had a problem with his computer microphone, Bob Esnard presented the **proposed 2026 slate of officers and directors** Ken had prepared, which included the addition of Leila Pena as a director to the current officers all who have agreed to continue service.. After a brief discussion, the **Proposed 2026 Officers and Directors** were read for review:

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
Nico Zapata
Bryan Zelnik

Motion: To adopt the minutes as submitted.

Moved by: Nico Zapata

Seconded by: Sara Djazayeri

Result: Motion **carried unanimously**.

5. Budget Review and Audit Report

Ken Koons Jr. presented a revised 2026 Budget based on the discussions at the October Meeting. Ken indicated that the overall budget Total Expenditures was the same at \$24,000. And was reorganized to combine items into a Communications item that included **Website and Marketing** allocations to be consolidated under one budget line for transparency. Sara recommended formatting of the budget to be clearer and had prepared a modified excel graphic that she shared on the screen. The reorganization with budget allocations was reviewed. It was then suggested that this revised version be forwarded to the secretary for publishing and for approval. The **2026 Bronx Chapter AIA Budget** on the screen and copied on Appendix - I, was **voted on:**

Motion: To adopt the minutes as submitted.

Moved by: Ken Koons Jr.

Seconded by: Nico Zapata

Result: Motion **carried unanimously**.

Appendix I – 2026 Bronx Chapter Budget

6. Committee Reports

Empowerment Grants

Sara Djazayeri indicated that she and Bryan have started working on the student awards for the next year. During January at the start of the spring semester, they will reach out to the six architectural schools in NYC; CCNY, Columbia, Cooper Union, Pratt, New School and NYIT. They will send letters to our six schools, and hope that they cooperate as they have in the past to provide a student award for an 4th or 5th year Bronx architectural student that deserves the cash award.

CCNY Student Design Studio Competition

Student Competition

Sara reported that Competition, **Michael Goldblum**, the Bronx Borough President's Office, NYC,'s EDC, and CCNY have had a couple of meetings, and the issue is that they haven't, found an appropriate "real and needed" public project and site, that they all can agree on. The discussions at this point are on three projects, but none of them is perfect. One alternative is, the Arthur Avenue Public Market which unfortunately is currently closed. Also, the CCNY teachers who want something is very important

to them. They believe that the competition project should require more architectural space elements with a significant interior to design challenges. The competition committee remembers the first Bronx student competition to re-brand and design the Kingsbridge Armory which was a spectacular Project that created significant public exposure. They are looking for a public project like the Armory where the students, community, the Borough president all loved the experience and got a lot of publicity. In any event, Sara is confident that something will be ultimately be agreed on by our next meeting.

Women in Architecture (WIA) & Emerging Professionals (EP)

The last committee to be reported on is the chapters newest, the Women in Architecture & Emerging Professionals with Sara and **Leila Pena** as co-chairs. Sara introduced the report not knowing if Leila could join us. However, Leila has been currently listening and part of this meeting all the way from Argentina in South America, from the farthest away attending member. She indicated that except for the fact that Argentinian time is 2 hours later, the connection is great and we can hear and see her perfectly.

Leila then reported that the committee just did a fun event and was a collaboration for all women working in architecture throughout; the five boroughs, plus Long Island, and Westchester. This was an in person event which took place in Manhattan and the flyer is attached as Appendix II. It was fully sold out, so that's great. and we got a lot of visibility for Bronx AIA chapter as well as for our committee. The participants were enthusiastic and acknowledged we were the first chapter to do this. Leila and Sara were the first ones to present, so that was a little nerve-wracking but also worth it.

One of the significant take aways of the event was create a competition; where students will design an outdoor space for a non-profit, all-female gym in Riverdale in the Bronx. it's meant to:

- get attention to the gym,
- give students (within the first 3 years of graduating) and/or emerging architects,
- a real-life project, to work on.

The plan will be to work out the kinks; what would be the prize in the next couple weeks, to launch in the middle to end of January then in the spring hold the competition and announce the winners possibly in the Bronx Chapter Awards event in May.

Appendix II – Woman in Architecture

7. DOB – Update

Tony Freda attended the last few meetings of the **ACNY (Architects Council of New York)** and described updates on Department of Buildings (DOB) regulations and zoning changes.

Discussion

Explained that the “City of Yes” program is moving forward with significant zoning changes. And for those who really were into zoning years ago, and the city had to change so many rules and regulations in the zoning resolution. It is eye-popping, to say the least. You are now allowing ADU’s (**Accessory Dwelling Unit**), in a garage. To get an ADU approved the issue is how the approval process is going to work;

Do you need another house number from the borough president's office,
and

if you have a two-family frame house – legally you can't add ADU unless it is a brick building.

Bob was impressed with Mayor Adams, who's has gotten a lot of bad press, as he likes to go on trips and eat at fancy restaurants. However, the Mayor has done well with his new zoning changes combined

with his **City of Yes** changes, could potentially add a significant amount of affordable housing in NYC. The fact is that, currently, quietly and consistently affordable housing **is being built** by taking advantage of the zoning changes related to the City of Yes. No other mayor has done this. It is hoped, with the new younger mayor, Mandami will do what he promise and support these initiatives to speed up the creation of more affordable housing.

Ken Koons Jr. commented that in Queens;

- All ADU applications are issued a single objection that plans are incomplete and the reason is because DOB doesn't have all the rules and regulations yet.
Also,
- If you have a 2 apartment dwelling, and you wanted to make it a 3, if it was a masonry building, you need a sprinkler in the cellar, but if it is a frame building, you have to sprinkle the whole building.

Tony and Nico Zapata responded with further complications concerning; mapping, the flood plain requirements, FEMA maps and whether an ADU unit could be in various locations, i.e. the cellar side/back yards, or s Is there a normal attic rule in terms of the floor area, or something else... This discussion simply indicate there is a lot of work to be done to take this idea of creating more housing and doing it safely, efficiently and in a way that the architect and the construction industry can implement it. More to come...

Tony ended his portion of the agenda with an announcement that the Architects Council is having an emergency meeting tomorrow morning concerning third-party insurance, He is not sure exactly why except that it will probably be about liabilities. Which is, of course, a big issue for all architects, concerning who and what can get sued, and architects are always in a very bad situation here. Tony will report on the issue at the next meeting and if it is urgent will communicate with the chapter secretary to inform members of the issue.

8. New Business

Bob Esnard pointed out the on the first page of this November Newsletter the chapter welcomed the largest class of new members appointed to the chapter probably ever, with 11 new members. Historically, as members are appointed an existing member calls and/or emails the new member to invite them to participate in chapter activities and be a resource to be contacted with issues or questions.

Sara and Bob discussed trying a technique that larger chapters do, which is to schedule an orientation session and have a process where new members get; introduced to the chapter, each other, and older members, as well as ask questions. Therefore, phone calls were made to all the new people and they were invited to come to a virtual meeting on December 4th. About half of them were left voicemails. However, all the new members were sent an email invitation to the zoom session. We will report to the board in January to evaluate this approach to see if something for us to use in the future.

Appendix III – Invitation to New Member Orientation

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 wish for a Happy Holiday and New Year!
The **November 2025** meeting ended at **7:43PM**.

II

Next meeting:

Thursday, January 22, 2026 @ 6:00PM

Virtual - ZOOM meeting link

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

IV Appendix

Appendix I

2026 Bronx Chapter Budget

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Appendix II

Women in Architecture Flyer

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Appendix III

Invitation to New Member Orientation

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Appendix I

2026 Bronx Chapter Budget

Adopted 2026 Bronx Chapter Budget		
EXPENSE CATEGORY	AMOUNT	
ACCOUNTING	\$400	
Annual tax filing and bookkeeping services.		
AIA COMPLIANCE AND CONSULTANTS	\$750	
Required AIA reporting, filings, and consultant support.		
ARCHITECTS COUNCIL	\$550	
Annual dues to participate in the statewide Architects Council of New York (ACNY).		
COMMITTEE - FELLOWSHIP FAIA	\$1,000	
Support for AIA Fellowship candidates (FAIA = Fellow of the American Institute of Architects).		
COMMITTEE - STUDENT EMPOWERMENT	\$7,000	
Scholarships, competition awards, printing, event materials, and ceremony support.		
COMMITTEE - WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE & EMERGING PROFESSIONALS	\$1,000	
Workshops, networking initiatives, and competition awards.		
COMMUNICATIONS / MARKETING / DIGITAL PRESENCE	\$2,700	
Website hosting, Zoom subscription, social media, and marketing.		
EMERGENCY RESERVE FUND	\$5,000	
Mandatory safety buffer for unexpected or urgent chapter needs.		
INSURANCE	\$2,200	
Annual liability insurance required for chapter operations.		
LEGAL — \$1,000	\$1,000	
Legal review, contract support, bylaws updates, and compliance needs.		
MEETING VENUE	\$1,000	
Covers costs for in-person chapter meetings, and events		
MEETING EXPENSES FOR OFFICERS/DIRECTORS	\$1,000	
Local travel, meals, and incidental expenses for leadership meetings.		
MEMBERSHIP / ASSOCIATES SUPPORT	\$400	
Student sponsorships, fee assistance, or small stipends for emerging professionals.		
TOTAL	\$24,000	

Appendix II
Women in Architecture Flyer

WIA NY REGIONAL CELEBRATION
ONE NIGHT, SEVEN AIA CHAPTERS
NOVEMBER 10TH 6:30PM-8:30PM
AT CANNONDESIGN
300 E 42ND ST 2ND FLOOR, NEW YORK, NY

 ALICE ALLAN AIA BROOKLYN	 CAROL KURTH AIA WESTCHESTER + HUDSON VALLEY	 EBRU HUNTER AIA LONG ISLAND	 GEMMA DEVESA AIA BROOKLYN	 GRACIELA CARRILLO AIA LONG ISLAND	 JACQUELINE VELEZ AIA QUEENS
 LEILA PENA AIA BRONX	 LORI BEPPU AIA PECONIC	 MARIA FUMAI DIETRICH AIA PECONIC	 ROSALIND TSANG AIA NEW YORK	 SARA JAZAYERI AIA BRONX	 WELLS MEGALLI AIA NEW YORK

AIA WIA CoLab

REGISTER HERE 

Appendix III

Invitation to New Member Orientation

MEET CHAPTER LEADERSHIP & OTHER NEW MEMBERS

December 4, 2025 - AIA Bronx New Member Orientation

AIA Bronx Chapter Members TOMORROW

Topic: AIA Bronx Chapter November 2025, Meeting

Time: 6:30 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Attached: Bronx Chapter Strategic Plan

Join Zoom Meeting

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

Meeting ID: 994 847 6766

Passcode: 1

One tap mobile

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Dial by your location

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+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 994 847 6766

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kYm6LkCxx>

Robert Esnard, AIA
Secretary



Cell 917 318 7097

The End