



# AIA BRONX CHAPTER NEWSLETTER

Published by

Bronx Chapter AIA Publications Committee [Info@studio360s.com](mailto:Info@studio360s.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 AIA2 The premier AEC industry event in San Diego, California.
- **AIA New York State Education Design Summit**  
March 10 – April 30, 2026, Virtual  
Four Sessions • March – April 2026 • Certificate Program  
<https://www.aianys.org/event/education-design-summit/>
- **AIA New York Build Expo 2026**  
March 18, 2026 – March 19, 2026, from 9:30AM to 4:30PM  
JAVITS CENTER, NEW YORK, NYC.  
<https://forms.reg.buzz/new-york-build-2026/aia-new-york-state>
- **AIA Architecture Week 2026**  
April 12-18, 2026  
Celebrate students exploring architecture and design.  
<https://www.aia.org/community/events/architecture-week-2026>

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I Current Activities



January 22, 2026

## AIA BRONX CHAPTER MEETING MINUTES

The virtual meeting started at 6:04PM.

Attendees:

Antonio Freda  
Bryan Zelnik  
Hirinha Pena  
Julian Misiurski  
Ken A. Koons, Jr.  
Ken H. Koons, Sr.  
Linda Infante  
Matthew Rezkallo  
Mishelle Jimenez  
Nico Zapata  
Robert Esnard  
Ofe Pearson

Guest:

**Darius Jankauska / Marc Sutton**  
President and Vice President  
Dimense Décor / Luceplan  
O: 212-226-4488  
D: 917-509-0402  
[darius@dimensedecor.com](mailto:darius@dimensedecor.com)  
[suttonm@luceplan.com](mailto:suttonm@luceplan.com)

### Agenda

1 Seminar Presentation

The meeting began with a brief presentation by **Darius Jankauska** of **Dimense Décor** discussing three-dimensional wall coverings and then with **Marc Sutton** of **Luceplan** presenting the **Continuing Education Unit (CEU)** on lighting and sound fixture technology.

*Men's Decor: Sustainable 3D Wall Covering*

Darius presented an innovative decorative product called **Dimense Decor**, a 3D wall covering made from polyurethane, which is safe, recyclable, and certified sustainable. He explained the product's applications, including paintable and full-color options, and highlighted assorted designs and projects, emphasizing customization and personalization. Darius highlighted the product's versatility, affordability, and environmental benefits, with photos of physical applications and mentioned their partnership with **Roland Company** for printing. He concluded by introducing Marc Sutton, for the final presentation.

*Acoustic and Lighting Design Strategies*

Marc Sutton, the Vice President of **Luceplan** North America, delivered a CEU presentation on the importance of acoustics and lighting in architectural design. He explained how open floor plans and modern materials can negatively impact both sound and light quality, emphasizing the need for high-performance decorative lighting that provides both aesthetic appeal and functionality. Marc outlined the Well Building Institute's lighting recommendations and discussed various lighting design

strategies, including focal glow, ambient luminescence, and innovative LED fixtures. He also covered acoustic challenges in modern spaces and the importance of considering how people use spaces when planning lighting and acoustic designs.

#### *Lighting and Acoustics Solutions*

Marc presented lighting and acoustics, explaining concepts like lower glare lighting, **CRI (color rendering index)**, flicker, and the importance of good acoustics in various settings. He discussed high-performance acoustic solutions, including specific lighting fixtures designed to improve sound absorption. Marc concluded his presentation with several examples of acoustic analyses and solutions, which included a senior living space, demonstrating how adding certain lights could reduce reverberation times and sound.

#### *Conclusion and Contact information.*

**DIMENSE® Décor** Gallery New York is the official U.S. distributor of DIMENSE™ Décor, offering contract-grade wallcoverings digitally embossed up to 2 mm and printed with UL GREENGUARD Gold–certified inks. Available as paintable textures, full-color CMYK designs, or fully custom murals for hospitality, workplace, and high-end residential projects. Please feel free to reach out if you would like samples or to arrange an in-person presentation.

**Luceplan**, Marc Sutton’s company is an Italian lighting manufacturer, which was mentioned in the CEU seminar presentation. However, Marc indicated that his company features a range of products that can solve sound and lightings issues in building efficiently and ethically. He is willing to follow up by sharing additional information, images, and links to Luceplan’s fixtures that were illustrated in the seminar. Marc requests that members not hesitate to reach out if they have any questions as he would be happy to provide further information or assist with any projects.

#### **Resources & Contact Information:**

##### **DIMENSE® Décor- Darius Jankauska**

Website: <https://www.dimensedecor.com/> Email: [darius@dimensedecor.com](mailto:darius@dimensedecor.com)

Office: (212) 226-4488 / Mobile: (917) 499-6786

Local New York representative showroom: Gibson Interior Products

1239 Broadway, 2nd Floor, New York

<https://gibsonoffice.com/>

##### **Luceplan USA Inc.- Marc Sutton**

c/o Spring Place, 6 St Johns Lane, New York, NY 10013

C. +1.917.938.5864 / P. +1 212 334 1809

[suttonm@luceplan.com](mailto:suttonm@luceplan.com) email: [www.luceplanusa.com](http://www.luceplanusa.com)

## **2. Adoption of Minutes**

Following the seminar, **Bob Esnard**, the chapter secretary, started the Business portion of the meeting. He began with a review of the minutes from the previous session. Members had received the minutes as part of the chapter’s newsletter distribution prior to the meeting. This included outlining the progress of upcoming programs, student initiatives, and professional issues affecting architects in the Bronx and throughout New York City. He pointed out an appendix to the minutes that included a letter from the newly appointed **DOB Commissioner** to the construction industry expressing interest in improving service and communication with architects and all the applicants who interface with the agency.

Following the review, **Julian Misiurski** moved to approve the minutes, with the motion being seconded by **Bryan Zelnik**. With no amendments or objections raised, the minutes were **approved unanimously**.

**3. Schedule for Next Meetings**

Members were reminded that the chapter's meetings for **February, March, and April** will continue to be held in a **virtual** format, allowing for broader participation while focusing organizational efforts on the programming planned for the spring season.

The next virtual meetings will concentrate on preparations for the **chapter's May program and related events**, including coordination with sponsors and industry partners who provide continuing education presentations and support chapter programming. The chapter has successfully secured sponsors for the next two meetings, with a potential sponsor identified for June. As noted during the discussion, attracting sponsors has become more challenging in recent years as manufacturers and industry representatives increasingly seek opportunities for direct engagement with design professionals. Nevertheless, the chapter continues to maintain productive relationships with industry partners whose participation allows the chapter to sustain its educational and professional programs. The scheduled dates of the next meetings were outlined, with the proposed next chapter meeting dates as:

March 19, 2026,	6:00PM – (Virtual)
April 16, 2026,	6:00PM – (Virtual)
May21, 2026,	<b>In Person Award Event</b>
June 18, 2026,	6:00PM – (Virtual)

**4. Recognition of Chapter Leadership**

At this early point in the meeting Bob interrupted the agenda and to be sure we highlighted two important Chapter events that occurred since our last meeting and did not want to wait until the New Business at the meetings end.

Fellowship Announcement

February 9<sup>th</sup>, **Chapter President Sarah Djazayeri** has been elevated as a **Fellow in the American Institute of Architects (FAIA)**. Becoming a Fellow is one of the highest honors bestowed by the Institute, recognizing architects who have made significant contributions to the profession and to society.

Members expressed strong pride in this achievement, particularly given the significance it holds for the chapter. Fellowship requires an extensive nomination process, including substantial documentation of professional accomplishments and contributions to the field. The process is both time-consuming and costly, often requiring multiple attempts before candidates are successful.

In recognizing Sarah's accomplishment as only the second chapter member chosen, members also noted the importance of encouraging other architects within the chapter to pursue Fellowship in the future. Her success represents not only a personal milestone but also an

important moment for the chapter, demonstrating the professional leadership emerging from the Bronx architectural community.

#### Celebrating Longstanding Membership

The meeting also included a moment of recognition for **Ken Koons, Sr.**, one of the chapter's longest standing and most respected members, who recently celebrated his 92nd birthday. Ken has remained actively engaged in chapter activities and discussions over many years, frequently sharing insights drawn from a long and distinguished career in architectural practice. Members expressed appreciation for his continued participation and the **intergenerational contributions** made by families such as the **Koons and Zelnik families**, whose father / son / grandson involvement reflects the strong professional traditions within the chapter.

### 5. Committee Reports

#### Student Competition

Michael Goldblum, who unfortunately could not make today's meeting, is successfully working on this year's CCNY **student design project** and will focus on a proposal for the revitalization of the **Arthur Avenue Public Market in the Bronx**. The project invites students to explore architectural strategies that address modernization, accessibility, and urban revitalization while preserving the market's historic role as an important neighborhood institution.

Public markets have long played a vital role in urban life, providing access to fresh food and serving as centers of neighborhood activity. Unlike temporary street markets or seasonal events, these historic indoor markets provide year-round access and remain a key component of community infrastructure. The project offers students an opportunity to consider how architectural design can support both cultural preservation and contemporary urban needs.

Engagement continues with: Local stakeholder organizations, Borough President's Office and NYC's Economic Development Corporation (EDC). The focus of the students is **to redesign an actual government funding community needed construction project**.

#### Empowerment Grants

The discussion then turned to the chapter's student grants program, an initiative designed to encourage emerging designers while strengthening relationships with architecture schools throughout the region.

**Bryan Zelnik** reported that competition materials had been distributed to **six architecture schools** in NYC: CCNY, Columbia, Cooper Union, Pratt, New School, and NYIT, that have participated in past years. Early responses were already received from **Columbia University and The City College of New York**, with additional confirmations expected in the coming weeks.

The awards presentation is scheduled for **May 21**, and organizers remain optimistic that participation will be strong. The competition continues to serve as an important opportunity for the chapter to recognize student achievement while introducing young architects to the professional community.

#### Women in Architecture & Emerging Professionals

Updates were also shared regarding the chapter's **Women in Architecture initiative**, which hopes to continue to expand opportunities for professional collaboration and design engagement.

Working with chapter leadership, **Lila Peña**, Sara Djazayeri, and colleagues are developing a design exercise focused on the adaptive reuse of a **commercial retail space into a fitness facility**. The

project is intended to highlight design leadership while encouraging participation from members interested in collaborative design exploration.

The initiative is planned and is under a very tight schedule, to hopefully result in a presentation or exhibit displaying the design concepts developed through the program. At the chapter **May 21 awards event**.

#### 6. **Bronx Chapter Spring Tour**

Members also discussed plans for the Chapter's **Spring Architectural Tour**, a bi-annual event that brings together architects, historians, and members of the public for an exploration of architectural history within the Bronx. The tour is being organized jointly with the **Bronx Historical Society**, with **Julian Misiurski** representing the chapter and **Roger McCormick** coordinating historical research and programming.

The proposed tour will focus on the **University Heights neighborhood**, an area with a particularly rich architectural and educational history. The neighborhood was once home to the main campus of New York University for a century before the property was transferred to the City University of New York system.

The tour will explore this historic academic landscape along with nearby landmarks such as the aqueduct and surrounding institutional and residential developments that shaped the area's urban character.

**A tentative date of May 30, 2026**, is currently under consideration. Participation will include a modest fee— **\$20 for members and \$30 for non-members**—with proceeds supporting educational programs of the Historical Society.

#### 7. **DOB Update**

**Tony Freda** is the chapter representative at the **ACNY (Architects Council of New York)**, attended last month's meeting where there was speculation about who the next building's commissioner would be. He also discussed ongoing developments related to the New York City Department of Buildings. Last week the new mayor **Zohran Mamdani** appointed **Ahmed Tigani** as DOB commissioner. The first public communication from **Commissioner Tigani** was a letter to the industry and architects which was mentioned at the beginning of this meeting and was attached to last month's Newsletter. The consensus of the members was that the newly appointed Commissioner's letter expressed interest in improving the department's service to applicants and design professionals.

In response, the chapter is considering preparing a formal letter outlining recommendations from practicing architects. Such a letter would highlight issues commonly encountered during the permitting and review process while offering constructive suggestions for improving communication and efficiency. Such outreach reflects the chapter's ongoing commitment to strengthening communication between design professionals and regulatory agencies.

Finally, members agreed that maintaining dialogue with regulatory agencies is an important aspect of the profession and that the chapter should continue to play a role in representing the concerns of practicing architects. Also, members were encouraged to be involved and to share suggestions for programming and initiatives that support the profession and promote architectural excellence within the Bronx.

8. **New Business**

In the week before this Newsletter was published Tony Freda, our representative and Bob Esnard discussed the ACNY's initiative to coordinate the DOB's need to "explain" the new **NYC Construction Code** to the building industry. The **United Architects and Engineers Foundation [UAEF]**, the membership of ACNY's Constituents are being called upon to volunteer their time & expertise to build UAEF into a fully operational organization. This is a unique opportunity to contribute your professional skills to a meaningful initiative, collaborate with peers across the architecture and engineering community, and support our profession in a way that has a lasting impact. Your knowledge and active participation are necessary for the success of this effort.

ACNY requests **at least one volunteer from each constituent organization** to get this initiative started. This request is in an attached letter from UAEF to the commissioner of DOB for discussion at our next meeting.

**Appendix - UAEF Letter to DOB Commissioner**

9. **Adjournment**

As there being no further business, all attendees were thanked for their participation. The **February 2026** meeting ended at **7:32PM**.

II **Next meeting:**  
**Thursday, March 19, 2026 @ 6:00PM**  
**Virtual - ZOOM meeting link**  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/9948476766>

III Appendix

**Appendix**

**UAEF Letter to DOB Commissioner**

UNITED ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS FOUNDATION, INC.

A not-for-profit professional coalition for the furtherance of knowledge regarding building codes & regulations in NYC

2/11/2026

NYC DOB Commissioner Ahmed Tigani  
c/o The NYC Dept. of Buildings  
280 Broadway  
New York, NY 10007

Commissioner Tigani,

We are writing to congratulate you on your appointment as Commissioner of the Dept. of Buildings and to introduce you to the United Architects and Engineers Foundation [UAEF]. You will find that several of those on your executive staff are already familiar with us and our mission.

UAEF is an open membership collaborative network of professional organizations representing hands-on practitioners in all five boroughs, with experience at all project scales. Our initial Founders are the Architects Council of NYC Inc. [ACNY], which is composed of 5 member architectural organizations (AIABklyn; AIAQueens; AIABronx; AIASI; & Society of American Registered Architects [SARA]; The New York State Society of Professional Engineers [NYSSPE]; the Structural Engineers Association of New York [SEAoNY]; and Gilsanz Murray Steficek LLP. Our Board also includes our Founding Advisor, Ms. Fatma Amer, of Code Resources International LLC.

The UAEF was recently created to work with the New York City Department of Buildings [DOB] to make comprehensive building regulation education available on a systematic & ongoing basis, to industry professionals jointly with DOB technical staff. The idea of the DOB and design professionals working together on professional education is not new. However, what is new is our long-term mission to bring continuity to this critical aspect of building professionals' education and to establish a common understanding of the building regulations. It is this objective that we are excited to work with you on.

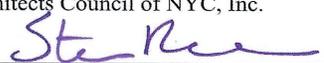
The goals of the joint training program we are proposing are to:

1. Provide DOB staff and industry professionals with DOB approved up-to-date collaborative training on the NYC Construction Codes, the NYC Existing Building Code [EBC], the Zoning Resolution, Inspections, and related regulations.
2. Support professional development and continuing education requirements for licensed design professionals.
3. Facilitate dialogue and knowledge-sharing between DOB plan examiners, inspectors, and the regulated design/construction community.
4. Enhance compliance, safety, and efficiency in the permitting and construction processes.

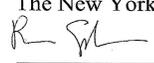
We share DOB's commitment to serving the best interests of the public and would like the opportunity to meet in person with you and your team to further discuss how such a mutually beneficial training program could best be implemented.

Sincerely,

  
Mark Kaplan, R.A. for  
Architects Council of NYC, Inc.

  
Steve Reichwein, P.E. for  
The Structural Engineers Association of New York

  
Rick Lefever, P.E. for  
The New York State Society of Professional Engineers

  
Ramon Gilsanz, P.E. for  
Gilsanz Murray Steficek LLP

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The End