As my year as AIA Ohio President has begun and we are on the road, I would like to share my aspirations for the year, the plans we are making to fulfill these aspirations and the progress we are making in delivering on the plans. The big hairy audacious goal I see for AIA Ohio is to play a significant role in promoting “Architecture IS an Economic Engine” and to be instrumental and inspirational for this to take place. As our attitude toward the current economy is the only condition we truly have the power to change, we need to begin by re-building a positive and pro-active outlook and the value of our profession in helping to bring about the future we all want to see for our firms, our families and our communities. In each newsletter, I will highlight strategies to regain our “groove” in marshaling our potential to restore our domains of practice and creating opportunities for today’s profession and those for the next generation of architects.

In preparing for the year, we held a strategic planning session which saw the emergence of several potential initiatives to help get our engine started. These initiatives distilled down to 6 programs suggesting:

1. The initiation of a leadership development plan preparing architects to participate in the civic arena, give them the tools necessary to pursue these endeavors and the encouragement to assume responsible roles within their communities. This program has been identified as the Leadership Development Program (LDP)

2. The development of a communications outreach effort to formulate a message promoting the value of the profession and the institute, then assisting the chapters in the delivery of this message to the public, clients, community leaders and other professionals. This program titled the Communications Outreach Program will continue the work of the previous administration in championing a PR campaign for AIA Ohio and its members.

3. The development of a STAR Architect Program (the Strategic Trusted Advisor Resource Architect) to help architects re-establish themselves as the knowledge source for clients to engage as the first contact in endeavors related to building, design and development.

4. Enhancing our AIAohio.org website to be a source for information valuable for our practices, the profession and institute. The goal is to make it a greater vehicle for the sharing of our knowledge, not only for our members, but also a place where others can find information on construction and design issues. The AIA Ohio Knowledge Network will be a place where our members can post information and download information. Beyond the AIAOKnet being a warehouse for valuable information, it will also be a place where we can celebrate the successes, achievements and milestones of our members.

5. The promotion of local design resources by developing a strategy to continuously strive to inform and challenge community and business leaders to consider the engagement of local firms for the projects in their communities.

6. The development of a Keystone program to recognize and mentor emerging professionals as leaders. This program was seen as a companion program to the LDP and as a result the marriage of these to programs makes them the candidates for initial implementation.
Implementation

The noted initiatives were seen as all worthwhile efforts for the state component. However implementing all would likely result in the dilution or altogether inability to produce them. Therefore it has been decided to address them one at a time based on the support for them by those members of the board who participated in the generating of these ideas. The LDP and Keystone projects were collectively the best supported. The leaders participating in their creation felt that the producing of these two programs would have the collateral benefit of generating the STAR Architect program, as well. Therefore, we are moving ahead with these programs with the assistance of AIA Cincinnati, who has produced a nationally recognized and award winning Vision Cincinnati Program providing the foundation for the LDP. Working through AIA Ohio, this program will be packaged to proliferate it in the other six chapters.

Beyond the development of the LDP, AIA Ohio has recognized the need and value of celebration and sharing the successes of our members. In fulfilling this need, AIA Ohio has now created a section on the website tabbed "Members Matter". In this section we will acknowledge newly licensed architects, milestone occasions for firms and members. To post these items, all that is needed for members to do is get on the website and download the appropriate acknowledgement form and AIA Ohio will upload the information onto the webpage.

Action Plans

Along with the initiatives described and defined by the theme, an action plan has been set in motion to further advance the goals and objectives of AIA Ohio. Legislative engagement is a critical component of AIA Ohio's responsibility and through the years, AIA Ohio has been an effective legislative reactor, responding to issues identified by our legislative director. However, to be more effective and to respond to the needs of our members in today's climate, we need to be more proactive. In response, AIA Ohio has formed the Government Relations and Legislative Advocacy (GoReLA) Committee. The GoReLA committee's initial charge is to assist members in becoming more engaged in the political process, particularly in this election year. This committee will play a significant role in advancing the legislative agenda of AIA Ohio and promote action in a more effective and efficient manner. With the assistance of the GoReLA committee, AIA Ohio will be rolling out a program to assist components in engaging the candidates for the upcoming elections.

Highlighting the Strategic Themes

In identifying the theme Architecture IS an Economic Engine, in each newsletter, I will highlight several of the following twelve strategies reinforcing the theme:

1. Promoting the value of architects
2. Educating our members in the skills to become the trusted advisor
3. Strengthening our diversity
4. Promoting collaboration within the profession and beyond.
5. Recognizing the value of community service as a worthy endeavor.
6. Expanding the domains of practice.
7. Building the next generation
8. Developing leadership and investing it within our communities.
9. Legislative engagement
10. Celebrating success
11. Honoring the past
12. Envisioning the future.

Promoting the Message

In identifying the 12 strategies reinforcing the theme, the first three focus upon our desire for identity, value, integrity and the character of the profession.

1. The value of our service for our clients, communities and profession can be enhanced when we promote a collegiate basis for sharing our knowledge, experience and creativity. In the end, all problems and issues are design challenges. The profession owns this knowledge domain. Finding the means to promote and invest these capabilities will contribute to enhancing our value. We need to seize every opportunity to project our capabilities as solution makers not only to architectural design problems, but also business and community problems. In so far as the business community has begun to recognize the design process offers the means to address and provide multiple solutions to business challenges, we are the resource to support these endeavors. Solving the building project is a tactical service, determining why a building solution may or may not be necessary is a strategic service. That is where the value proposition grows significantly. As a professional institute, the energy expended in developing and collaborating in the pursuit of educational programs in strategic resourcing can pay off big dividends for our members. AIA is nexus where the sharing of these endeavors and practices can occur and we all gain benefit and value. The broader our range of engagement, the more value we offer.

2. As I write this letter, I am on a train from Florence where I have spent the last several days observing the impact of the architect as the client's trusted advisor. The Renaissance saw the elevation of architect as a master of the work and a critical contributor to the success of the project. We owe ourselves the opportunity to regain this position as the “go to” resource for our clients and communities. The skills we learned in school and honed in our practices form the foundation for this role. The process of re-establishing our position as the Strategic Trusted Advisor Resource Architect requires building of confidence in first ourselves, then our clients and communities. AIA can serve as the forum for the collective sharing of examples, best practices and experience where we can learn techniques and methods we need to pursue the STAR building process.

3. The great strength of our nation is its diversity and inclusion of ideas and participation from all members of society, cultures, genders, ethnicities, races and sexual preferences. If we are to be relevant as a profession, we need to embrace and build diversity in the profession. The future we want to lead is challenged to find solutions to big problems including, housing, food, energy, education, economic and water. The answers will not emerge through political intervention without new ways of looking at the issues. Design offers a new way to consider these problems and to design with an understanding of all possibilities, voices and perspectives are needed who can understand and infuse broader points of view. Therefore, the faces of the design community will need to be reflective of an inclusive and diverse profession. Amongst the tasks of the institute and its members is the building of diversity within the profession. We are the profession and need to collaborate in this endeavor. The future will depend upon it.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to making a difference in the future of our profession.