

AIA NEW YORK STATE, AN ORGANIZATION OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS, CELEBRATES ARCHITECTS AND LEADERS DRIVING CHANGE IN THE PROFESSION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Albany, NY — January 30, 2026 — The American Institute of Architects New York State (AIANY) honored architects, firms, design professionals, educators, students, and allied leaders at its 2025 Honor Awards Ceremony, held in conjunction with the 2026 Board Installation Dinner on January 29. The annual program recognizes individuals and organizations whose work has significantly advanced the architectural profession and reflects the core values of the AIA: design excellence, leadership, service, and community impact.

“The 2025 Honor Award recipients represent the very best of our profession in New York State,” said Andrew Harding, 2025 AIANY President. “Their dedication, innovation, and commitment to improving our communities through design are truly inspiring.”

“We are immensely proud to celebrate these remarkable individuals and organizations,” added Georgi Ann Bailey, CAE, Hon. AIA, Executive Vice President of AIANY. “Their leadership demonstrates the power of architecture to shape lives, strengthen communities, and address the challenges of our time.”

2025 AIANY Honor Award Recipients

Student Award

Recognizes notable contributions and accomplishments by a student member of the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS).

Catherine Carlisle — A Syracuse University architecture student whose leadership revitalized her AIA Student (AIAS) chapter, expanded professional opportunities and funding, and strengthened community engagement. Her work exemplifies leadership, service, and professional commitment among emerging designers.

Associate Award

Recognizes notable contributions by an Associate AIA member.

Hao-Yeh Lu, Assoc. AIA, LEED AP — An emerging leader whose mentorship, civic engagement, and education-to-practice advocacy have expanded opportunity for students and early-career architects statewide. His leadership with AIANY Emerging New York Architects and the TORCH Mentorship Program connects emerging professionals to design excellence, policy, and industry leadership.

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Young Architect Award

Honors architects demonstrating exceptional leadership and contributions early in their careers.

Nasra G. Nimaga, AIA, NCARB, NOMA – Recognized for leadership advancing equitable public education and inclusive urban design through practice, mentorship, and advocacy.

Edgar Panteleyevas, AIA – Honored for his leadership in mentoring emerging professionals and advancing community-focused design, including civic projects and multifamily housing initiatives.

Educator Award

Recognizes notable contributions by an architectural educator.

Sanjive Vaidya, RA – Chair of the Department of Architecture at New York City College of Technology, recognized for transformative leadership in public architectural education, innovative programming, and expanding access for students from diverse backgrounds.

Honorary Member

Recognizes outstanding accomplishments by individuals outside the profession of architecture who support the field.

Steven Abbattista, P.E., Hon. AIANY – Principal of OLA Engineering, honored for decades of service, mentorship, and sustained support of scholarships, education programs, and allied professional collaboration.

David B. Kosakoff, Esq., Hon. AIANY – A distinguished legal advocate for architects and engineers, recognized for decades of counsel, education, and leadership strengthening professional practice, risk management, and sustainability.

President's Award

Recognizes outstanding contributions by an AIANY member in education, industry, or government.

Joann Gonchar, FAIA, LEED AP – Honored for extraordinary leadership in architectural journalism and advocacy for sustainable design, elevating professional discourse and championing women and emerging leaders in architecture.

Firm Award

Recognizes notable achievements in design, community service, education, and service to the profession by a New York State architectural firm.

COOKFOX Architects – Celebrated for leadership in sustainable, regenerative, and socially responsible design integrating biophilic principles, historic preservation, and community engagement.

James William Kidney Gold Medal Award

AIANYS' highest honor, recognizing a lifetime of impactful contributions to the profession.

Paul McDonnell, AIA – Recognized for a career dedicated to public architecture, historic preservation, and education, including transformative work with the City of Buffalo and Buffalo Public Schools.

Sylvia Smith, FAIA – Honored for distinguished leadership in cultural and civic architecture, sustainable design, and advocacy for women in the profession.

About AIANYS:

The American Institute of Architects New York State, comprised of 13 chapters representing over 9,750 architecture professionals, is dedicated to recognizing architectural excellence, advocating for the profession, and fostering a community committed to advancing the built environment.

Note to Editors:

High-resolution images of the award recipients and event are available upon request. For more information about AIANYS, please visit aiany.org.