AIASMC

AIA SAN MATEO
CHAPTER

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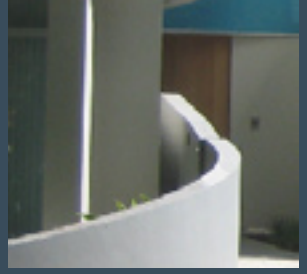
Stan Field of Field Architecture - Palo Alto - Photography by John Lucchesi

CHARRETTe-NEWSLETTER

AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS SAN MATEO COUNTY

2007 two



I look forward to continuing this conversation in person…

President's Letter

Summer 2007

by Ellis A. Schoichet, A.I.A.

I hope you are enjoying the summer. The first heat wave has broken and the weather is beautiful and mild. But despite the lovely weather, it's the untimely passing of Bob Blunk that's been on my mind recently. I was glad to see so many Chapter members at the Memorial Service. It reminded me of how much Bob and others in the Chapter have impacted my career as an Architect, and it seems I'm not alone. At the reception afterward I was struck by the spirit of caring and the close friendships that exist among our group of professionals. Coinciding as it did with the mid-point in my term as Chapter President; it seems like a good time to share some of my thinking on this.

Let's begin with a basic question: How is it that so many Architects have come to know each other on such a personal level? After all, we come from different backgrounds, different schools (or at least different graduating classes of the same schools), and we spend the bulk of our time as competitors in a challenging market. It's clear to me that the personal rapport and wide ranging friendships among local Architects are due to one thing only, the AIA San Mateo County.

Architects who choose not to participate in the Chapter may get to know the two or three principals they work for during the course of their careers, and their office-mates as well. But those who are active in the Chapter have the privilege of becoming acquainted with and cultivating friendships with dozens of others- Architects and professional affiliates alike. And friendships are just the beginning. There's a lot of knowledge exchanged and perspective gained through formal and informal interactions with others. I have always found that the best way to create new approaches and solutions to complex problems is to talk and compare notes with others. Chapter participation breaks me out of my isolation, and hearing others' stories makes it easier to develop a vision of what will work for me. My understanding of the range of possibilities is broadened, and that's where the value lies. Of course it's a two-way street, and I hope that I'm helping others broaden their perspectives as they are doing the same for me.

When I look back at my 20 odd years of membership I realize that much of what I know about being an Architect and how I approach my practice has been inspired by the wit and wisdom of my colleagues. It's been absorbed a little at a time at Chapter meetings and events over the course of years. And looking around me at the Memorial Service the other day I realized how much poorer and more isolated my practice would be without the friendships and the network of like-minded professionals I've gained through participation in the Chapter.

For the last six months I've been telling anyone who will listen that the best way to energize and grow the Chapter is to find the kernels of greatest value. I want to highlight them, to bring them to our members, and to encourage the broader community of Architects who are not yet members to join us so they too might benefit. I now realize that one of the most crucial of these is fellowship. Even though many of us work at small to medium size firms or individually, we are able to maintain very broad horizons thanks to our membership in the Chapter. At its best the AIASMC brings many of the advantages of a very large firm to the entire membership. Through participation in the Chapter we gain access to training, to experts in many fields, and to a broad cross-section of Architects and allied professionals who we can get to know and learn from. All of this is just as valuable to those of you within larger practices since it never hurts to stretch your horizons, whatever the size of your organization.

One of the important initiatives I've been supporting this year is a re-writing of the Chapter's Long Range Plan. Vice President/President Elect Dale Meyer AIA and his Committee are hard at work dusting-off the plan, originally drafted in 1993, and long overdue for an update. Throughout the process I've been advocating the idea that the future of the Chapter is tied-up with our success in providing the benefits described above to the membership. Those of us who live and/or work on the Peninsula with its smaller firms and projects must be able to do so without losing our edge, or falling behind the mainstream of the profession. Access to training, experts in many fields, and to a broad cross-section of Architects and allied professionals is a critical lifeblood for us. As I see it, fellowship comes from sharing these kinds of experiences with others of similar inclination over an extended period of time. This is one of those "kernels" of value that I'm looking for, and I'm ready to highlight it for the membership and work to optimize and expand on it in the future.

So, as I begin the second half of my term as President I intend to keep on working towards strengthening the Chapter. I hope to generate and then tap into ever increasing volumes of energy. When all is said and done I'd like to see that younger members of the Chapter have the same opportunities to grow into their own as Architects as I have. I'd like to help make sure that they have the opportunity to be part of a warm and welcoming community of professionals with whom they can grow and learn. I'd like them to get to know their colleagues so they can work together to advance the profession of Architecture, and the health and livability of their communities. I believe that's a tribute that Robert M. Blunk AIA would appreciate.

I hope to see you at the Chapter BBQ on Wednesday evening August 22rd. More information will follow in the coming weeks, but please save the date. I look forward to continuing this conversation in person…

Ellis A Schoichet AIA - AIASMC 2007 President
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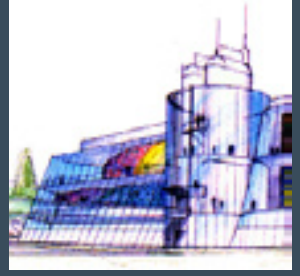
Morton Frank, F.A.I.A

Activist Architect Helps Rebuild lives

Authorized Reprint of Article
by Barbara Backer from Independent Newspapers



Frank helped design preliminary sketches for the Silicon Valley Art Museum envisioned as an interpretive art center focusing on how high-tech art is created.

Ask Morton Frank to best describe his occupation and he says, "activist architect." In addition to traditional architectural work, Frank designs structures and facilities for people with special needs -the aged, physically and mentally disabled, the poor and homeless and those recovering from substance abuse.
"By doing enough projects for people who can afford to help me pay my office rent, I manage to do some projects for people who can't afford to pay their own housing rent," said the Redwood City resident.

Locally, Frank has donated conceptual design work for San Mateo County's proposed Silicon Valley high-tech museum and a prototype for downtown low-income housing in the city of San Mateo. Museum backers are seeking a location, contemplating a corner on Ralston Avenue and El Camino in Belmont. The housing prototype, designed for the vacant second story of a bank building on B Street, is on hold while the owners seek a more profitable commercial venture. But many of Frank's projects stand as examples of what can be accomplished with creativity, skill and dedication, despite the lack of physical and fiscal resources.

Frank's resume lists four university buildings, 16 preschool/after-school centers, eight institutional projects (non-profit, religious, recreational centers, for instance) and 18 housing projects.
Frank designed a homeless shelter for a decommissioned military base, the first of its kind in the country. The shelter is built around a courtyard to create some privacy for its inhabitants. The interior is designed to place each bed in a corner, again for privacy, and is divided to provide more toilet areas than in a normal shelter to reduce the number of people having to share one facility. Each sleeping area also has a desk, giving the occupant has a place to study and create a resume. The center includes a wing for overnight emergency shelter. Due to soil laden with toxics and the politics of building homeless shelters, approval of the project was difficult. But the facility is up and running successfully on the former Hamilton air field in Marin County.

Homeless Facilities - Shelter Plans and Photographs

Frank was presented a particularly unique challenge when asked to design a housing project for the middle of a sewage treatment plant in Petaluma. Plans are to phase out the plant over the next five years, leaving several acres of real estate with lower-than-average market value. Frank created designs for a desirable project buffered by double rows of trees.

Morton Frank, F.A.I.A

Activist Architect Helps Rebuild lives

Authorized Reprint of Article
by Barbara Backer from Independent Newspapers

"Some people go sailing or race cars as a hobby." Frank said. "Me, I like to work on solving social problems."

Frank has turned a vacated Denny's restaurant into a community center, he has converted an old Roadway Inn into apartments for formerly homeless individuals and he has designed a structure with a series of doors that provides a means of creating living units for singles to families, depending on the combinations of doors used. On the other end of the scale, Frank has built 3.000-square-foot, market-rate ($1.5 million each) units in San Carlos for seniors wanting to move from their large family homes into smaller, more manageable quarters.

As a boy of 11 years old, Frank delivered flowers to the hospitalized elderly in Brooklyn, New York, traveling on the Church Avenue trolley. That perhaps was an early indication that he would serve people with special needs. He earned a bachelor's degree in architecture at the University Illinois.

As a newly licensed architect in 1965, Frank went to work for a New York City firm. At the time, when Nelson Rockefeller was governor, a child was scalded at one of New York's mental health facilities. Determined to offset the tragedy and its political nightmare, Rockefeller decided to spend $2 billion to revamp the state's entire mental health facilities program. He formed the New York State Mental Health Facilities Improvement Fund, and Frank was appointed development administrator.

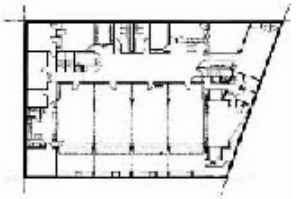
"That's when I found out about a whole section of the population I didn't know existed." Frank said. "Each facility I went into looked like a 'Snake Pit." That was it; that's when I made a personal commitment to use my knowledge to help people with special needs."

Frank helped rebuild the mental health facilities in New York and took on a project in New Jersey, as well -and his career began. In addition to designing and planning, he has served on dozens of

housing task forces and commissions in the East Coast, and in California after he moved his practice to Redwood City in 1978. Among his many affiliations, he has been on the San Mateo County Housing Task Force and the Organizing Committee of the Workforce Housing Conference in San Mateo. He was chair of the National Housing Committee and the Affordable Housing Task Force for the American Institute of Architects. He teaches at Canada College and the Academy of Art College and is a member of the Redwood City Architectural Review Committee.

Inner City Child Care Facilities Plans and Photographs.

"Some people go sailing or race cars as a hobby." Frank said. "Me, I like to work on solving social problems."



"Don't it always seem to go
That you don't know what you've got
Till it's gone...."
Joni Mitchell, from "Big Yellow Taxi"

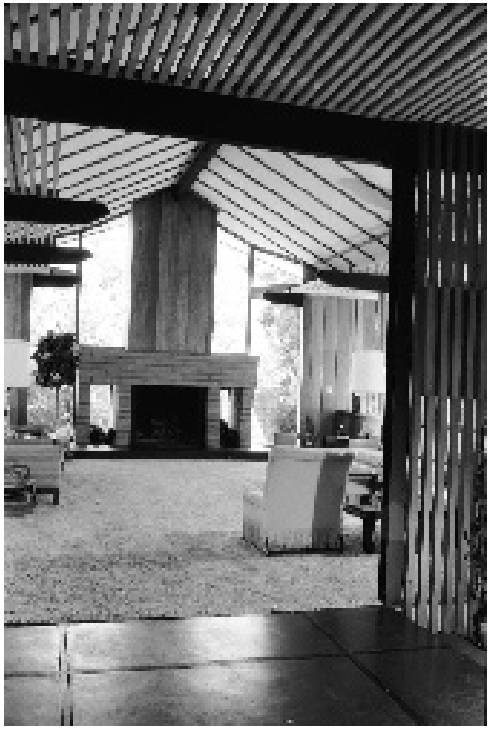
Our Local Modern Past

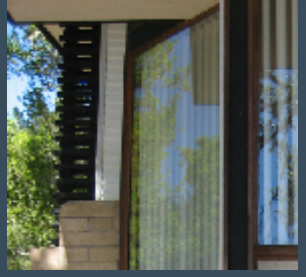
by John Luchessi, A.I.A.

The post WWII years of the 1950's and 60's witnessed an unprecedented boom of building here in the U.S. and worldwide. Even under the cloud of a cold war, the world was given another opportunity to build a fresh and visionary future free of the past constraints into the second half of the 20th century. A great deal of this new building realized the theories and experiments of the prewar modernists both in Europe and in the United States. Missteps and even gross misjudgments in the world of urban design have colored the view of this era for many especially those in the planning profession and historical revivalists.

Nationally and even internationally however, as the individual buildings of this era begin to roll over 50 years of presence, many are being recognized for the gems of time and place that they were, with many lessons for us to learn and be inspired from. All of which in turn prompts the need for their protection. Last year, AIACC's Journal "arcCA" (06.3) dedicated an entire issue to the topic of "Preserving Modernism". In our own County where historicism and revivalism seem to be the prevalent force, we need to be especially careful and watchful. Where even the most disgusting and banal wood or stucco shack can be viewed a part of a dismally thin concept of historic context, the local body of mid-century modern architecture is simplistically lumped into an ill-informed and insensitive disregard of the era.

William Whifler was a local Architect who practiced primarily during the late fifties into the early seventies, until his untimely passing in the early eighties. A native of Burlingame and resident of Hillsborough, Bill was a graduate of Stanford and together with Paul Zimmerman founded the Architecture program at College of San Mateo in 1967. In his professional life, Bill designed just a handful of homes, only dozen or so. However each of them was an individually and carefully crafted gift of architecture reflecting the owner's needs, the character of the site, the nature of the materials used and the spirited creativity of the architect.





... this may be an example of how ephemeral the work of our profession really is and how we may need to do a better job protecting not just the cute and romantic bungalows but also the work of our more recent and modern past.

Our Local Modern Past

by John Luchessi, A.I.A.

Recently I visited the site of one local Whifler home currently being remodeled. During the past year or so I had been in communication with Whifler's son, Graeme Whifler, who is trying to document his father's work. He had recently photographed the house while it was on the market for some time and its future seemed uncertain, even though the then-owners had design work done for a sizable addition and remodel.

Without comment or thought about the new building forms or the design being executed, I cannot avoid the powerful realization that we had simply lost something of deep value. As a candle is easily blown out, the spirit of this little house is no longer with us.

This article is not intended to be a critique of the designer's work on the home, the owner's aesthetic values or the community that permitted the remodel. All normal processes were followed and the result is simply an example of our time and the realities of the life of a building. From the documents I've seen the designers are local non-architects and not AIA affiliated.

Rather it is hoped that this may be an example of how ephemeral the work of our profession really is and how we may need to do a better job protecting not just the cute and romantic bungalows but also the work of our more recent and modern past.

The black and white images are scans of Bill Whifler's own photos of the home shortly after completion in the 60's, provided to me by Graeme. The color images are mine taken in early summer 2007.
John Lucchesi AIA

Innovative design, remarkable attention to detail...

Cat-a-lyst Home Tour

Stan Field - Field Architecture
Palo Alto & Los Altos

by Nicole Chacon, Associate A.I.A.

Stan Field of Field Architecture - Los Altos

Stan Field of Field Architecture - Palo Alto

On Saturday, July 14th, the AIASMC Associates had their first Cat-a-lyst event of the year, featuring Stan Field of Field Architecture. The event showcased two of the firm's best work located in Palo Alto and Los Altos. Innovative design, remarkable attention to detail, and the unexpected were applauded by Associates and Professionals alike. Thank you to those who made it, and we look forward to sharing more Cat-a-lyst events in the future.

Nicole Chacon, Associate AIA
2007 AIASMC Associate Director

Photos by John Lucchesi

"In alarming proportions the following words have disappeared from architectural publications: beauty, inspiration, magic, sorcery, enchantment, and also serenity, mystery, silence, privacy, astonishment. All of these have found a loving home in my soul."
Luis Barragan.

Modern Footprints
Córdoba - Argentina

by Laura Acevedo-Diaz, A.I.A. Associate

Terrazas del Lago
Villa Carlos Paz,
Cordoba, Argentina

This clustered group of houses was designed by the architect Carlos G. Lange in 2004 on the waterfront of the lake of Villa Carlos Paz, Cordoba.

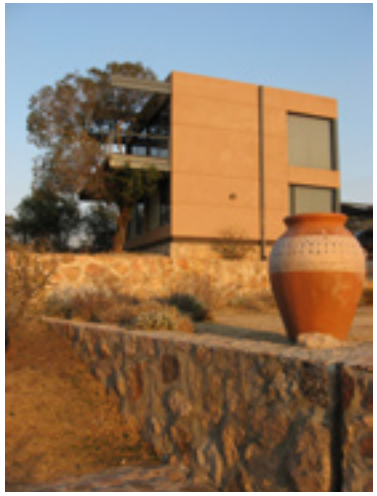
Resting on the hill, the roofs look like big flat steps leading to the lake.

During the quiet mornings, the silence let you enjoy the music of the water falling in the swimming pool which seems to be a continuous mirror dissolved on the lake.

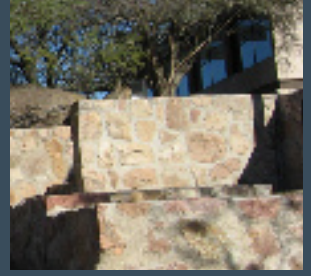
The simplicity, straight lines and geometry emerging from the natural environment produced an amazing feeling of balance

and equilibrium when we experienced the sequence of buildings.

Soft and broken lines of the rocks and the landscape, characteristic of this area, have been used to emphasize the purity of the terra-cotta volumes with black and gray metal details of the glazed areas and horizontal beams pointing to the lake.



You should consider coming to Argentina and enjoy the beautiful places and architecture on this side of the world.



A Preferred Vision for America's Construction Industry

(Part One: The Need for Change)

by Phil J. Bona, A.I.A.

The Challenge:

America's construction industry needs to change by adopting a set of principles and practices that meet the needs of the third millennium marketplace. We who lead and develop the built-environment that construction creates need to change in three ways: (1) establish an improved framework, or body of guiding principles and methodologies; (2) evolve the allocation of resources in all categories – information, material, financial, equipment, and human (skilled trades, supervision, design, quality inspectors, project managers, etc.); and (3) elevate our ethical standards, principles and practices.

Great strides have been made to upgrade construction equipment and materials over the past century. However, the construction process has not changed much since 1918, when President Woodrow Wilson recognized the importance of the construction industry in advancing the growth of the nation and the Associated General Contractors of America was formed. What have changed are the expectations, legal precedence, trust, respect, and relationships between the various participants who make up the construction industry. These issues are exacerbated by the practice of relying on the lowest design fees and low bid construction, the misuse of construction managers by developers, business owners, the public sector, and some homeowners, and the inefficient ways we design and build. Together they have caused industry wide mistrust and a costly litigious environment in which the participants operate daily. This model of the construction industry will not be successful in meeting the future needs, values, and expectations of the American public.

The Opportunity:

After World War II, the construction industry in the United States designed and constructed metropolitan, suburban, and rural built environments with such magnitude and fervor as never before seen in history. In those sixty years, our nation increased in population by 225% from 130 million to 293 million as of the year 2004.[1] Based on current average demographic projections , the U.S. will grow 20% by 2025 and 50% or to 392 million by 2050.[2] To accommodate this growth trend, roughly 25 million additional housing units[3] need to be built across the country by 2025; over 4 million units projected in California[4] alone. This is in addition to the non-residential buildings and utility infrastructure needed to support new jobs for this growth. Much of the Post WWII building stock is over 50 years old and, remodeled or not is generally past its expected life.[5] Further as of 2005, 49 states have adopted the new International Building Code[6] which sets updated uniform standards for building construction nationwide, particularly regarding health, safety, and welfare design issues. It better addresses such forces as earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, landslides, fires, and explosions. These building standards along with public perception and growth demands will drive the need for these buildings to be more durable, safe, secure, technologically smart, environmentally sustainable, quicker to build, and cost effective. Clients will demand a more evolved, trustworthy and successful method of delivery.

By 2050, as a result of developments in information technology, bio-science, neuro-science, new building material technologies, and advanced prefabrication opportunities, the TV cartoon world of the "Jetsons" may be closer than we think to our future. A more educated American culture will be even more affected by its global neighbors, and by its proclivity for more "cool" technology, popular style, and affordability. Truly, yesterday's fantasy will be tomorrow's process for the art and science of design, manufacturing and construction. Together these trends will force the hand of industry towards change.

The Importance:

Recognizing that change is always riddled with anxiety and mistrust, there are still many obvious reasons why this change must begin. Even though demand is increasing, statistics indicate that the numbers of carpenters, plumbers, electricians, bricklayers, and sheet metal workers as well as licensed architects and building systems engineers appear to be declining[7]. On the other hand general contractors who contract-out trade work and construction managers are increasing at steady pace.[8] As skilled tradesmen mature, they have moved into management either as project managers or construction managers. Our industry appears to be growing top-heavy with management personnel. Many construction managers seem to avoid risk and are in a constant power struggle for control with the constructors and architects who carry the risk along with the owner. Typically this leads to aggravated dispute, arbitration or litigation and much cost. This precedent has lead to an imbalance between those who create, those who manage, those who construct, those who insure, and those who pay for it.

A Preferred Vision for America's Construction Industry

(Part One: The Need for Change)

by Phil J. Bona, A.I.A.

Fix Our Broken Education and Training System:

On another front, college educated individuals make up a far greater segment of the workforce today[9] and that "blue collar get your hands dirty" work ethic of so many of our parents and grandparents seems to have succumbed to a youth culture that is far more cerebral and demanding of immediate gratification. While trade unions continue to promote apprenticeship programs, fewer of our youth are signing up. One of the forces impacting this vocational training has been the historic gap between academic study and practical experience. Another is the trend toward decreased funding for a balanced education in this country.

Our society has allowed its governance to systematically eliminate the arts and vocational training from our children's learning process, their perceptions, and their priorities. Currently, academia's priorities are the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic which are crucial and fundamental tools. However, without the arts, auto shop, wood shop, metal shop, drafting, home economics, sewing, drama, and music , it is difficult for our youth to recognize the importance of many of the fundamentals of our culture. By eliminating educational and vocational options for those young adults who are not comfortable with the rudiments of academic work, we have eliminated choice, impacted valuable apprenticeship programs, reduced the workforce, and increased joblessness, homelessness, and the need to incarcerate those who would rather spend their day in a group standing on a corner than to become valued as skilled laborers or better.

There will not be enough skilled trade workers; there will be an overabundance of non-skilled laborers to fill that void; and therefore the quality of construction work, in particular, will be undervalued. Due to this imbalance in the workforce, the level of dissatisfaction by the various industry partners and by society, as clients, will continue to increase along with negativity, lawsuits, and cost. Therefore societies' expectation for a sustainable built environment may still be far in the future. With the goal of sustainability, society will eventually reject the earlier notion of "planned obsolescence" and demand buildings that are built with pride of workmanship , longevity, and quality recycled materials. These trends contribute to the need for change in the construction industry.

Early Conclusions:

The construction industry alone is not responsible for repairing all components of an old and broken system. Though considering these facts, there are many good reasons for the building industry to step up and begin to bring all the parts, pieces, and people together into one symbiotic collaborative and positive set of practices and interrelationships. This new shared vision will be based on conducting business responsibly with the highest level of integrity, ethics and trust, pride of workmanship, certified training standards and apprenticeship, quality control and accountability, and recognition of the value of the individual. The industry needs to realize these trends and proactively retool its structure and methods so that its outcomes are good for the environment, for the individual, for the community, for humanity, for business, and for America – in that order.

(This is the first of a three part series that will be completed in the next two issues.)

Notes:

[1] U.S. Census Bureau 2004 sets U.S. population at 293,027,571.

[2] "Consequences" Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer1995 – "Global and U.S. National Population Trends by Carl Haub; updated 11-11-2004.

[3] Based on one housing unit to be built for every four individuals.

[4] Raising the Roof: California Housing Development Projections and Constraints, 1997-2020; John D. Landis, Department of City & Regional Planning, University of California, Berkeley.

[5] Based on expected useful life of 30-50 years for majority of buildings; "Life-Cycle Cost Analysis by Sieglinde Fuller, National Institute of Standards and Technology through National Institute of Building Sciences - 2005.

[6] International Building Code developed by the International Code Commission and released in 2003.

[7] The Coming Crisis in Architecture by Dr Garry Stevens; (http://www.archsoc.com/kcas/OccupDecline.html - 2005). A serious lack of skilled workers will begin in 2005 and grow to 5.3 million by 2010, and to 14 million by 2015. (Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics).

[8] Construction managers held 389,000 jobs in 2002 (three times more jobs than Architects) and Employment opportunities are expected to grow 5% by 2012; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Office of Occupational Statistics and Employment Projections.

[9] By 2008 the number of young adult workers, from 25 to 40 year olds, will decline by 1.7 million. That's 1.7 million less workers to replace the nearly 77 million baby boomers who will be eligible for retirement; Source: Beyond Workforce 2020, Hudson Institute.

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AIA SAN MATEO CHAPTER

CHAPTER INFORMATION:

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NEWSLETTER

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We invite our chapter members to submit examples of their work that reflects their style of detailing / sketching ideas for their projects. We will scan images.

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If you wish to have your firm represented in the Charrette Newsletter please contact John Lucchesi at 650-340-1107. Committee members who contribute to the newsletter will have the opportunity to have their firm profiled. We are looking to have a full inventory of Chapter members work on file as part of our database.

Please submit all inquires to John Lucchesi:
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