



Impact Report 2025



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Dear supporters, partners & friends,

This report reflects Architects Foundation's work to inspire and empower the next generation of designers and the communities they serve. Across these pages, you'll see the impact of scholarships, leadership development, community engagement, and preservation efforts made possible through your support.

One person who embodies that impact is my friend Constance Lai, FAIA. Connie's journey with Architects Foundation began as a scholarship recipient, receiving support that helped launch her career in architecture. She later became a recipient of the Richard Morris Hunt Prize, expanding her expertise in historic preservation and strengthening connections that continue to shape her work today.

Today, Connie is a nationally respected preservation professional whose career has been dedicated to protecting some of our country's most significant historic places. Just as importantly, she has given back to Architects Foundation as a board member, volunteer, juror, and advisor, helping support the next generation of emerging professionals.



Constance Lai, FAIA, surveying the National Archives limestone facade from a swing stage, with two of her other projects in the background, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History and the Washington Monument.

That sentiment captures the spirit of our work. By investing in people, communities, and places, we are helping shape a stronger future for the profession and the public it serves.

Thank you for being part of that impact.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dan Kirby".

Dan Kirby, FAIA
Board President

Young professionals on the rise

Our 2025 scholarship recipients represent a diverse range of backgrounds, experiences, and career aspirations. The scholarships and fellowships program expands access to architectural education and licensure by helping talented students and emerging professionals overcome financial barriers by providing grants of up to \$20,000.

Demand far outpaces resources

9 out of 10 applicants did not receive funding in 2025



\$211,196

awarded to scholars and fellows in 2025

\$3,406

average scholarship — targeted support at critical moments

56%

of scholar funding focused on licensure, where costs are most acute

62

scholars & fellows funded in 2025



Participants at Black Women's Brunch in Louisiana, a gathering focused on building community and supporting women in the design professions.



How Next Generation Undergraduate Scholar Lola Diaz-Suarez is designing her life

When first-year Cornell University architecture student Lola Diaz-Suarez describes her experience since receiving Architects Foundation's Next Generation Scholarship, her excitement is palpable. "It really has allowed me to experience the fullest of my potential," she said. "I've been able to explore every option in the short time I've been here."



Lola (front left) and fellow Cornell architecture students parading their dragon through campus.

“Thank you for providing this scholarship and giving this opportunity to students like me who are ambitious in what they want to explore.”

—Lola Diaz-Suarez

For Lola, architecture has never been simply a major or a career path. It is a wide-open field of possibility and a discipline that blends creativity, rigor, culture, and human experience. And the Next Generation Scholarship, she says, has given her the freedom to develop her voice as a designer without limitation.

Expanding creative freedom through financial support

When asked how the scholarship has impacted her daily life, Lola did not hesitate.

“It’s exactly the reason why I was able to present my model yesterday,” she said. “It’s helped me so much material-wise.”

“I can try things without worrying that I can’t afford it,” she said. “It allows me to create stronger projects.”

That freedom extends beyond the studio. When her AIAS chapter organized a trip to New York City to visit major firms, including Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG) and SOM, students had to cover their own way.

“Because I was able to put down the deposit, I got to go,” she said. “I was able to see in person what my future could be.”

Discovering her architectural identity

Lola is the kind of student who dreams boldly, and she admits she is still exploring which

“My inspiration comes from the things I haven’t seen yet.”

—Lola Diaz-Suarez



direction in architecture will be hers. Her interests range widely, encompassing technical practice, experimental design, commercial work, and everything in between. Her recent projects include an array of moving pods connected by an exterior elevator, reflecting her desire to push against the traditional boundaries of space, form, and movement. She is inspired by design approaches that imagine the world not as it is, but as it could be.

“My inspiration comes from the things I haven’t seen yet,” she said. “Architecture is always changing. There is so much that has not been done. That is exciting to me.”

She cites Zaha Hadid and Lina Bo Bardi as inspirations; women who transformed the design world through fearless exploration and a refusal to be constrained by precedent. Meanwhile, she is drawn to the ways contemporary studios like MOS Architects render, depict, and communicate form.

“I look at projects that are graphic and unconventional,” she said.

“Knowing there’s always room for change is what inspires me.”

Thriving in studio culture at Cornell

Cornell’s architecture program is intense, collaborative, and immersive. Lola spends much of her time in Milstein Hall, the program’s Rem Koolhaas–designed studio building. The program’s comprehensive approach covers soft skills that will serve her far beyond her undergraduate years: flexibility, collaboration, and openness to critique. This approach culminates in Dragon Day, an annual tradition at the Cornell University College of Architecture, Art, and Planning (AAP). First-year architecture students construct a massive dragon and parade it across campus to celebrate teamwork and forge a sense of community among AAP students. This year marked the event’s 125th anniversary and celebrated the theme “Veiled,” asking students to use tensile fabric as a “veil” over a concealed structural frame.

Looking ahead: a future built on foundation

In the next five years, Lola hopes to graduate, explore distinct types

of practice, and find a design environment where she can express bold, ambitious ideas. While she is not yet certain whether she will pursue licensure immediately, she knows she wants to work in spaces that value creative exploration and have strong, supportive teams.

Most of all, she wants to contribute something new to the field.

The Next Generation Scholarship, she said, is helping her stay on that path: saving her time, providing financial stability,

enabling experiential learning, and strengthening her emerging portfolio.

“The scholarship has helped me see what my future could be,” Lola said. “I’m really grateful.”

Lola’s story embodies the mission of the Architects Foundation’s Next Generation program, to empower students from all backgrounds to shape the future of the built environment with creativity, confidence, and vision.



Scholarships: the path to licensure

The future of the architecture profession is shaped long before formal leadership roles emerge. It is built during the demanding years between education, licensure, and influence through perseverance, reflection, and intentional career design. Architects Foundation supports architects navigating these formative moments through its licensure and professional development scholarships.



From left to right: Cavan Walker, Aida Ayuk, and EJ Shin.

“I started making design decisions for my own life. Not just my job.”

—EJ Shin



Aida Ayuk, Jason Pettigrew Memorial ARE scholar, at work.

For **Cavan Walker**, a recent graduate working in Knoxville, Tennessee, the Jason Pettigrew Scholarship provided momentum at a critical juncture.

“The scholarship allowed me to pursue licensure faster than I might have otherwise,” Cavan shared. “It removed the smaller financial worries so I could focus on the exams themselves.”

Committed to completing all six ARE exams on an accelerated timeline, Cavan views licensure as a foundation rather than an endpoint; he sees it creating space for mentorship, design exploration, and long-term engagement with the profession.

For **Aida Ayuk**, a licensed architect and Sustainable Design Coordinator based in New Orleans, licensure marked the culmination of a decade-long goal. After pausing exam testing for a year, she was able to complete her remaining AREs with confidence with the help of the scholarship.

“The financial pressure of potentially failing an exam was a real barrier,” she explained. “Having that weight lifted allowed me to return to

the process and finish.” Beyond financial support, the scholarship offered Aida validation, she said, particularly as a Black woman navigating a profession that remains overwhelmingly white. In response, Aida has developed her own take on DC’s Black Women Architecture Brunch (BWA) to convene women architects of color in Louisiana.

An intentional approach to career building resonated with **EJ Shin**, a Sho-Ping Chin Women's Leadership Summit recipient, whose scholarship supported leadership development and reflection beyond a single milestone.

“It helped me zoom out,” EJ shared. “I started making design decisions for my own life. Not just my job.”

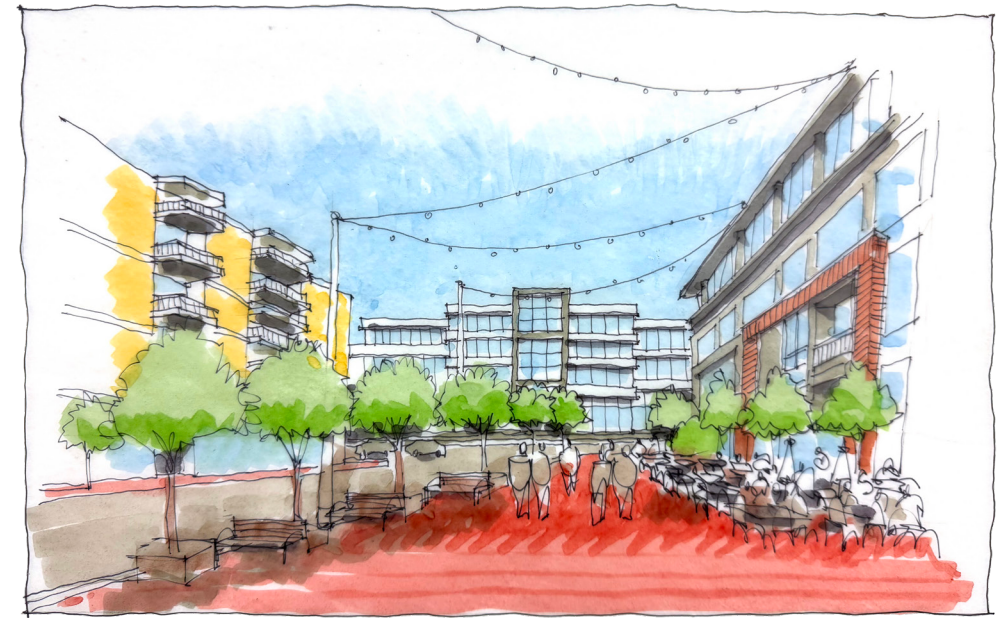
Together, these stories underscore a shared truth: Sustaining the profession requires more than credentials. It requires space to reflect, support to persist, and the freedom to design a career—and life—with intention.

Communities by Design

Communities by Design (CxD) brings volunteer professionals and citizens together to build strategies that solve the most pressing issues facing the places we call home. CxD represents one of our profession's most impactful investments made in communities and one of the largest sustained investments ever made in urbanism. Reflecting decades of work since 1967 in over 265 communities with tens of thousands of volunteers and citizens, adaptation of the CxD methodology has fueled thousands of additional processes and influenced a global urban movement. Today, the initiative encompasses direct work in over a dozen countries across five continents, including 47 states, profoundly impacting how our profession works with communities.

One of the most sustained investments ever made in urbanism

1967 working with communities for nearly six decades	265+ communities served by Design Assistance Teams	47 states across the U.S.	12+ countries across five continents	10,000s of volunteers and citizens engaged
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Rendering from the Austin Communities by Design program, demonstrating how collaborative planning can help communities envision future growth and investment.

How a Design Assistance Team works

1 A community calls

Local leaders facing a defining challenge—a disaster, a divide, a downtown in decline—request a Design Assistance Team.

2 A volunteer team arrives

Architects, planners, landscape architects, and economic development experts serve pro bono, at no cost to the community.

3 Residents set the vision

Through intensive engagement, the team translates the community's own priorities into an actionable roadmap. The community owns the vision; the team helps draw it.

4 Local leaders act

The roadmap catalyzes momentum—in 2025, a \$104M city investment in Austin and a community-led design plan advancing in Bakersville.

Come hell or high water



Tucked away in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, Bakersville is a small town of just under 500 people. Rooted in a rich arts culture and the natural beauty of rhododendron-covered hills surrounding it, Bakersville's community life is centered on Cane Creek, around which its downtown is designed.

In September 2024, Hurricane Helene shattered all-time records, resulting in catastrophic flooding across Western North Carolina, with Bakersville receiving 14 inches of rain in just 24 hours. Cane Creek, like most regional watersheds, was unable to contain the surge, flooding businesses and homes.

Gang Studios began providing pro bono support to the Bakersville community and identifying resources to assist in recovery efforts. After exploring several avenues, one stood out: Communities by Design (CxD).



From the beginning, as with any CxD project, the Bakersville Design Assistance Team (DAT) process was designed to elevate community voices, their knowledge, and their vision for the future.

The Design Assistance Team, composed of architects, planners, landscape architects, and economic development experts, engaged with a broad cross-section of the community; more than 200 people provided their input during the process. Local leaders guided the team through Bakersville, sharing stories of what had been lost, what had endured, and what mattered most moving forward. These

conversations extended far beyond formal meetings. Community members opened their homes, prepared meals, and showed the team what community truly means in Bakersville.

Through this layered engagement, the DAT was able to quickly identify the community's shared priorities, translating them into actionable strategies, forgoing generic post-disaster assumptions for solutions rooted in Bakersville's collective voice.

The restoration of the Creek Walk stood out as both a practical and symbolic priority. It was originally

constructed in the wake of 1998 floods, serving as an enduring reminder of the town's ability to rebuild more strongly than before. More than just a physical asset, the Creek Walk is a gathering place; a thread that connects the community. Rebuilding facilitates not only environmental recovery but also reclaims a sense of normalcy and pride. Simultaneously, residents emphasized the importance of making the area more resilient, ensuring it can better withstand future storms.

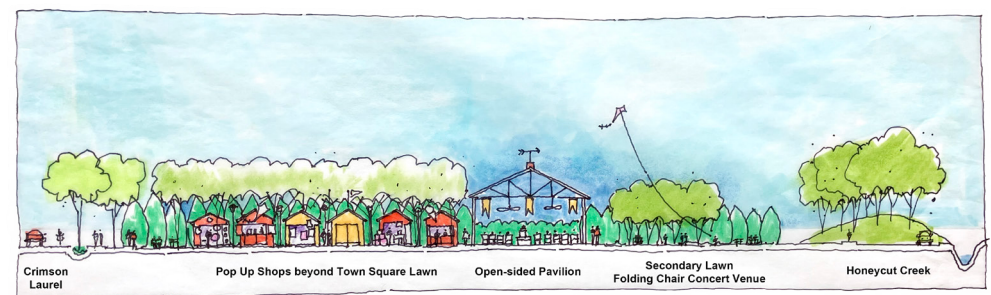
Access to food and everyday amenities surfaced as a critical need. With limited options in town and the nearest supermarket 45 minutes away, residents expressed a strong desire for more local restaurants, cafés, and food access points.

The storm had also further reduced an already limited housing supply, exacerbating challenges for working

Meaningful change does not happen to a community. It happens with it.

families, young people, and even visiting students from the nearby Penland School of Craft. The need for safe, affordable housing outside of flood-prone areas became a central part of the conversation. The team accordingly identified a variety of sites for potential new in-fill workforce and alternative housing in the core downtown.

While the Design Assistance Team developed a range of targeted recommendations, one of the most transformative concepts was the creation of a new Town Square. A flexible, multifunctional space,



In Bakersville, the recovery plan came from the town itself

14"	~500	200+	45 min	1998
of rain in 24 hours—Hurricane Helene shattered all-time records	residents in this Blue Ridge Mountain town	community members shaped the Design Assistance Team process	to the nearest supermarket—why food access became a planning priority	the Creek Walk first rose after that year's floods—Bakersville has rebuilt stronger before

the Town Square will serve as a hub for community life while retaining and celebrating the sense of place that makes Bakersville unique. Envisioned as a venue for food vendors, farmers markets, and art fairs, the Town Square supports local entrepreneurship and provides a welcoming third space for residents and visitors. Critically, the concept prioritizes long-term resilience, incorporating strategies for flood adaptation and connectivity to key areas like the Creek Walk and retail corridors. More than just a single project, the Town Square represents the power of design thinking that integrates economic development, community

identity, and resilience into a cohesive vision for the future. One of the most salient outcomes of the DAT process is not just the ideas it generates, but the momentum it creates. In Bakersville, that momentum is already taking shape. Local leaders and organizations have quickly begun organizing the identified priorities, using recommendations as a foundation for action. On April 16 of 2026, community members were invited to a public drop-in event to review and share feedback on the draft design concepts for the Bakersville Creek Walk.

Roughly 2 in 5 residents took part in planning their town's future

Participated: 200+	Town population: ~500
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Building on that work, the Bakersville Beautification Association, with support from the Appalachian Design Center, is advancing a design plan that reflects community priorities and will serve as a resource for local officials. The association is engaging economic development expertise to identify funding opportunities and implementation strategies. This early momentum shows that when a community is equipped with a sharp vision and the tools to act on it, change is not only possible, but inevitable.

As recovery continues, Bakersville is not simply rebuilding what was lost; it is shaping a future that is more resilient and more reflective of the people who call it home. For communities facing similar challenges, Bakersville offers a powerful reminder: Meaningful change does not happen to a community. It happens with it. With the right support, that change can happen faster, more thoughtfully, and with lasting impact.



Top: Team members work on urban design strategies for a new town center.

Middle: Bakersville citizens map the town's challenges and opportunities in a workshop.

Bottom: Team members analyze public suggestions for Bakersville.



Read the full Bakersville report here

The Octagon: After 227 years, the door opens to everyone

For more than two centuries, The Octagon has witnessed history, but until this year, not everyone could witness The Octagon. In 2025, with funding from the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities, the Foundation completed an accessibility ramp and entry, welcoming visitors with limited mobility into the National Historic Landmark for the first time in the building's 227-year history. The project spanned the entire grounds, threading modern access through a fragile Federal-era fabric—work so intricate that the project manager called it the most complex project of its size he had ever led.

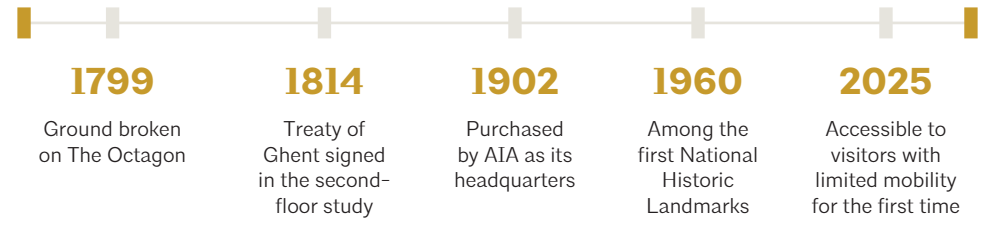




The Octagon “is a house of sun-drenched brick and sandstone.... [T]he worn floorboards, the concealed doors, the branching tunnels, all breathe an air of mystery and romance of the days when the Nation was young.”

—Jacqueline Bouvier (Kennedy), 1952

227 years of history—accessible for the first time



It is a fitting threshold for a house built to hold history for all Americans and visitors to our nation’s capital. Designed by Dr. William Thornton, first architect of the U.S. Capitol, The Octagon sheltered President James and Dolley Madison after the burning of the White House; the Treaty of Ghent was signed in its second-floor study in 1814, ending the War of 1812. Among the first buildings designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960, it remains an invaluable confluence of architectural history, sustainable design, and historic preservation. Today the Foundation stewards the building, its grounds, and some 450 historic artifacts as a living laboratory, providing a lens on the capital’s architectural and civic story.

\$806K+

in competitive preservation grants won in 2025—nearly \$750,000 from NPS for structural rehabilitation & roof replacement, \$56,188 from the DC Commission on the Arts & Humanities for UV-blocking window inserts

~450

historic artifacts in the Foundation’s care, acquired with the building

1,228

visitors toured The Octagon in 2025

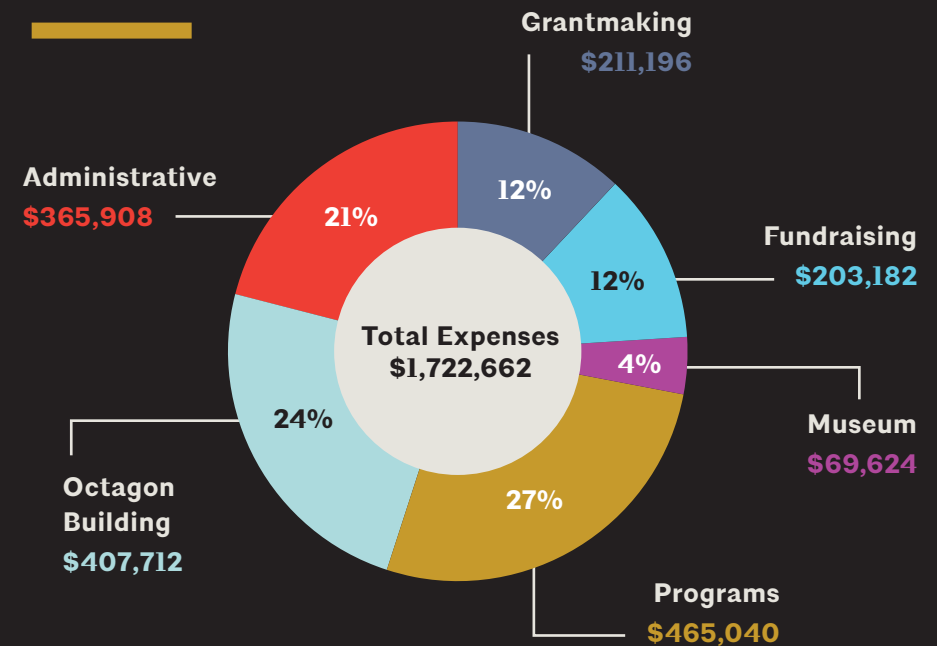
2025

Financial Report

REVENUE & SUPPORT

CATEGORY	AMOUNT
Contributions	\$1,014,338
With & without donor restrictions, including Delano/Aldrich & Emerson endowment transfer	
In-kind support	\$1,007,225
Personnel	
Investment & Interest Income	\$815,086
Grants	\$201,723
Other Revenue	\$27,845
TOTAL	\$3,066,217

EXPENSES



Entering the Semiquincentennial stronger than ever

+15.2%

growth in net assets in 2025—to \$10,165,546

+19.3%

growth in the scholarship endowment—to \$2,737,236

2×

contribution revenue roughly doubled year over year

−58%

fundraising costs fell while giving rose—more of every dollar reached programs

Per the audited financial statements. Growth figures compare December 31, 2025 to December 31, 2024.

*Programs and Grantmaking together comprise the Scholarships program function of \$676,236 in the audited financial statements. Grantmaking reflects scholarship and fellowship awards paid to recipients in 2025.

Recognition

Thank you to our generous 2025 supporters.

Architects Foundation has taken every measure to ensure the accuracy of this listing.
For corrections, please contact oliviahutto@aia.org.

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\$4 million

AIA has pledged to match gifts to the Foundation throughout the capital project—regardless of the program a donor supports

\$369,544

already earned under the match in 2025—the match is real and working

431

donors supported the Foundation in 2025

Sources: Architects Foundation 2025 Impact Report draft (5/28) and audited financial statements, year ended December 31, 2025 (preliminary draft, subject to change); NCARB 2024 By the Numbers. Figures shown as stated in the draft narrative; “\$806K+” combines “nearly \$750,000” and \$56,188 per the draft.



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Architects Foundation has taken every measure to ensure accuracy of this listing. For corrections, please contact oliviahutto@aia.org.

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