Where we stand: climate action

STILT HOUSES IN GANVIE, BENIN. IMAGE: IWAN BAAN

Climate change is everyone's crisis, and architects are uniquely positioned to help solve it. The American Institute of Architects (AIA) calls on architects around the world to support humanity's collective call to climate action through an unrelenting commitment to sustainable and resilient design.

In the US alone, nearly 40 percent of greenhouse gases can be attributed to carbon produced by buildings during construction and everyday heating, cooling, and lighting. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and the degradation of natural resources are a direct result of increased carbon levels, which threaten national security and global economies. They disrupt the balance of ecosystems and undermine public health. They threaten to transform our planet irreparably and compromise our future.

Designing and constructing buildings that diminish greenhouse gases are architectural imperatives. Designing and constructing buildings that support health, safety, and welfare are ethical imperatives. In short, designing and constructing buildings that can combat the greenhouse effect will improve our chances of repairing our planet while creating a healthy, resilient, and regenerative future.

As a profession, we have the responsibility to prioritize and support effective actions to exponentially decelerate the production of greenhouse gases contributing to climate change. Our goal, as set forward by AIA and partners like Architecture 2030, is net-zero emissions in the building sector by 2040.

It is our responsibility to work globally to help reduce operational and embodied greenhouse gas production with passive design techniques, employ energy efficiency measures, adapt existing buildings, and specify low-impact building materials that increase human health and productivity while withstanding the effects of a changing climate.

It is our responsibility to make the business and financial case to clients to help them better understand and support the need to integrate renewable energy sources into all buildings, making them more sustainable, resilient, and economical.

AIA is dedicated to climate action and is committed to the following steps:

AIA ratified the Resolution for Urgent and Sustained Climate Action and has adopted the Framework for Design Excellence. AIA is now creating a plan for the organization that will shift a significant portion of its work to climate action.

AIA is developing the necessary resources to prepare architects to achieve a zero-carbon, resilient, and healthy built environment.

AIA will continue to offer the AIA+2030 certificate to support firms pursuing zero net carbon design through the 2030 Commitment. It also will continue its education series, "Resilience and Adaptation," a certificate program highlighting best practices for mitigating climate and hazard risk. AIA will push for greater materials transparency and ethical sourcing through its "Materials Matter" initiative, and AIA will expand its energy series, which educates architects on energy modeling, net-zero design, and climate considerations. Finally, AIA will establish meaningful partnerships with building product manufacturers and industry allies with a voice on the built environment to increase environmental stewardship by all stakeholders, as well as the affordability and availability of carbon sequestering materials for the built environment.

AIA is spearheading changes to building codes and materials guidelines in the public and private sectors.

AIA is working with building code officials worldwide to implement the recommendations (and elevate code stringency) of the 2019 report from AIA's Blue-Ribbon Panel on Codes and Standards, *Disruption, Evolution and Change: AIA's vision for the future of design and construction.* This publication calls for the nimble development, adoption, and enforcement of comprehensive and coordinated building codes that

mandate carbon-efficient design and construction. AIA is actively advocating for full adoption of zero net carbon energy codes at the International Codes Council (ICC), state, and local levels.

AIA will partner with policymakers and allies to expedite policy and practice resources that effectively address climate change.

AIA is a stakeholder in the newly announced Congressional initiative to achieve a net-zero carbon future for the United States. The House Energy and Commerce Committee has announced its commitment to this ambitious goal that will affect future legislation. The goal is to achieve net-zero-percent carbon pollution and 100 percent clean economy by 2040. AIA is working in partnership with committee members to shape legislation to achieve these goals.

AIA will activate its 94,000 members to vigorously advocate for policies that promote resilient design and dynamically curtail buildings' harmful impact to the climate.

Together, we can hold elected officials accountable through the power of our association and the strength of our conviction. Climate action requires changes to public policy targeting existing commercial and residential buildings, and a mandate for higher standards in future construction. In the US, approximately 95 percent of all buildings are more than a decade old. Of all US commercial buildings, 82 percent were built before 2000, prior to modern versions of building energy codes governing their design and construction. AIA will advocate both domestically and internationally to build support for policies that increase all buildings' ability to withstand extreme weather, perform efficiently, use renewable energy, and decrease reliance on fossil fuels. To that end, AIA has partnered with the US Conference of Mayors and Climate Mayors to address local sustainability and resilience efforts and is participating in the United Nations Summit on Climate Change. Finally, AIA will lobby for creating and expanding historic preservation tax credits to promote the reuse of safe buildings and reduce the carbon footprint of new construction.

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