Our future professional relevance is strongly bonded with our core values and our commitment to being at the center of societal issues for the coming decades. Architecture is the springboard for us to network in all critical positions that will have lasting impact on the quality of our shared tomorrow. Traditional practice is shifting, and the nature of architectural firms as the primary platform for the transformation of resources into the built environment is being challenged. We must have a prosperous future to ensure that we attract the best and the brightest to architecture to build the strength of our collective voice.

AIA has the opportunity to lead this transformation by empowering the member, the firm and the local component and by strengthening the collective national voice in the global market.

**AIA STRATEGIC COUNCIL:** The AIA has in place a body that is positioned and charged with looking to the future of the profession. The AIA Strategic Council is forward focused and empowered to be the forward focused voice within the organization. Its mission is to look beyond the immediate issues to those that will challenge the next generation. To do this effectively we must resource this body with the tools and the research that will enable the Council to be truly visionary. A constant “feed” of trends and curated media will provide a highly focused and generative environment for the Council. This will in turn provide information to the Board that will direct resources in the most effective and impactful direction.

**EMPOWERING FIRMS AND MEMBERS:** Information and knowledge are the currency that will drive our professional relevance as we move forward. The AIA must reach out through ongoing engagement to better understand our firms and our non-traditional professionals. The AIACC has conducted, over the past two years, a series of Firm Roundtables that have tapped into the issues that are at the heart of our future success. From these forums, the Council is directing resources to target specific programs and resources that enable our firms to be more effective and prosperous. National must develop a broad scale program to tap into that energy on a global scale. We have the ability to gather, edit and share best practices, research, peer to peer networks and forums in partnership with the components that will enhance the members’ impact in firms of all sizes and in all aspects of our professional lives.

**THE NEXT GENERATION AND THE GLOBAL PROFESSION:** Our future as a profession and as an organization is woven into the fabric of the next generation and our place within the global environment. The AIA must advocate for a profession that provides both economic prosperity and a focus on impacting the social equation that drives all of us, especially our emerging professionals. We have the resources to provide the tools that will enable each member and firm to choose to practice globally if that is their mission. We must ensure that as the brightest of the next generation choose a professional path, we enable them to see a vibrant future, that the cost to traveling that path is not insurmountable and that their ability to have an immediate and meaningful impact on society is real and present.
2. INFLUENCING our clients and our communities

The value that design excellence contributes to the business and social fabric is highly prized but the process and potential outcome are often shrouded in conflict, abstraction and jargon. This has permitted others in the project delivery environment to take ownership of the metrics. The trend is toward commoditizing design services at the same time that we have a media landscape that celebrates design at all levels. Together we have an opportunity to change the dynamic and to place architects at the center of the conversation.

+ ADVOCATE FOR THE VALUE OF A TRULY COLLABORATIVE DESIGN PROCESS: Our clients are seeking a process that is collaborative and positive with the confidence that the outcome will meet or exceed their expectations. Over the years, the process of project delivery has often been one of conflict impacting outcome. The result is that clients often turn to parties willing to step into the process to absorb risk, coordinate all team members and ensure the final result. The current contractual/risk allocation relationships often drive the leadership of the team and place the architect down the ladder, minimizing our role. The AIA must develop a framework for risk and leadership that recognizes a more central and balanced role for our profession. We cannot lead by stepping back.

+ PARTNER WITH OUR CLIENTS TO BUILD A BALANCED OUTCOME: The market is awash in large scale high risk selection processes that require multiple teams to invest significant resources. This may be a design/build competition or a Public/Private Partnership. As the expectations of what the team will provide rises in advance of joining with the client on the project, the ability or willingness of teams to participate recedes. There are successful case studies of projects where a balance has been achieved in the selection and the outcome. The AIA must advocate with the highest profile clients in the market to develop a sustainable process that works toward our shared vision of a high quality project, with enhanced collaboration, while recognizing the value that design excellence brings to that process. This will provide all of us with an opportunity to affect projects of all scales and to think differently about how we succeed together.

+ ALIGN EXPECTATIONS WITH TODAY’S BUSINESS CLIMATE: Many contractual frameworks have been in place for decades. This is especially true in the public sector. Today’s projects are far more complicated with complex teams of professionals joining together under the umbrella of the Architect to deliver a successful project. The types of services we provide have broadened and opened up new opportunities for enhancing our practices both large and small. The AIA has the ability to work on behalf of all of our members to enter into direct discussion with large scale clients to recalibrate contractual expectations. We must develop tools for our members to share with all clients the story of the value of design, setting a new foundation for the relationship between architecture and prosperity.

+ CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR INNOVATION: Architects are charged with protecting the health, safety and welfare of the public at the same time we are sought out for our innovation and experimentation. The current regulatory environment is increasingly unbalanced. The result is a tendency to drive the profession from the leading edge toward a safe harbor. The AIA must advocate for a regulatory setting in which innovation is rewarded and the risks we assume in the creation of a preferred future are balanced. Our shared resources can give voice to the development of model regulations that recognize our partnership with the public and enable our collective leadership in building community.
3. OUTREACH to our communities

Outreach requires both leadership and engagement. The skills to integrate complex issues and find unique solutions that enhance the quality of life for our communities are intrinsic to the value of our profession. We have the ability to create a vision for each local community, and collectively for the global community, that is grounded in the principals of shared experience and resource conservation. We must equip our members with the tools that will enable them to inspire action and lead to a preferred future.

+ CENTERS FOR ARCHITECTURE: The growth of Centers for Architecture from the grassroots efforts of our AIA components provides the perfect opportunity for AIA to partner and resource these forums for outreach. It is within this setting that we can engage the community, educate our members, gather with our peers and curate the conversation on design topics and environmental enhancement. The Centers are ideal vehicles for placing our members at the table to influence public policy and develop a shared vision. The AIA must provide guidance and share stories of best practices to encourage the growth of Centers in communities large and small, each with its own unique qualities and societal fabric.

+ RESOURCE OUR COMPONENT LEADERS TO BE AMBASSADORS FOR THE PROFESSION: Through our components we have the ability to develop the skills for public leadership in each of our members. The AIA must develop content and training opportunities that enhance the local component’s ability to drive the conversation. Lessons in how to engage in policy development, how to communicate with elected leadership, how to raise public awareness and how to share in the implementation of policy as it evolves into our built environment are opportunities to reach out to our neighbors and in doing so elevate their awareness of the value of design.

+ CONTINUE TO ENHANCE OUR PUBLIC MESSAGE: The AIA “Look Up” campaign has set the stage for a new era of public engagement that will yield benefits for years to come. The message is inspirational and uplifting. It begins the public dialogue about the value of design and its impact on all of our lives. As we build on this message, it is critical that we demonstrate to our clients, for both high profile projects and the day to day engagement that is the sustenance for the largest percentage of our membership, that design excellence brings value to us all.

+ CREATE COLLATERAL RESOURCES: The AIA must develop materials on multiple platforms that can be accessed and shared with our components, members and communities. Through stories of how excellent design elevates each of our lives we can encourage our clients and the public to look at solutions through a different lens. We must place the tools in the hands of our members at the local level who advocate the ideas that we hold in common and draw on decades of experience to empower each AIA member and collectively increase our ability to affect positive change.
4. Enhancing MEMBER VALUE

AIA is our collective professional voice. Connections are the bonds that hold our organization together. Over the years there is no question that members find the greatest long-term value where they have the greatest personal relationship. For many within the AIA that is through the local Chapter. This is where we first meet the organization and where we develop our friendships and professional network. This is our source of information and our voice for advocacy. There should be no surprise that in turn this is where the members see the greatest value. The real issue is creating a national framework that sees this local connection as the lifeblood of the organization and aligns to resource the components as the primary touch point for the delivery of services, tools and knowledge.

+ COMPONENTS ARE OUR PRIMARY ORGANIZATIONAL ASSET: The strength of our organization is in the deep history, traditions and vitality of our Components. We have created a grassroots network that has evolved for nearly 160 years. It is rich and complex; linked through common values and focus and yet rooted in each location. We have engaged over recent years in a new effort to ensure that each of our members has access, through a local component, to essential services that bring value to membership. AIA must continue to mediate this transformation to bring our members together and to protect the unique asset that is our component network. Investing time and resources from National will build strength in our components for the coming decades and ensure that our primary link to the member is strong and vital.

+ DEVELOP SHARED RESOURCES: There has been a tendency over the years for AIA to develop national programs and deliverables that reach past the components directly to the member. The message has been that the most effective and direct way to deliver services is to bypass this critical link. The result is often a competition between the levels of the AIA rather than a coordinated partnership. The corollary to this is that great ideas often incubate at the local level but find difficulty in making their way out to the broader membership. AIA must be in the business of collaborating with all of the components, celebrating what is best and sharing it across all platforms. This is a partnership that is strengthened by bridging to the local connection to leverage those personal relationships.

+ INNOVATE THROUGH INVESTMENT: In an age when social media is the primary gateway for information, and crowd sourcing is a vital tool in applying collective genius to the most complex issues, it is time for AIA to facilitate the development of a network that will enable the wisdom of our members and their components to apply their energy and skills to addressing the issues of the next generation. AIA must resource the development of partnerships with the local components, as nodes within this grassroots network that will bring to light both the issues that we will be facing in the coming decades and the potential solutions that will place us in a leadership role. We see the model of “Hackathons” growing in popularity and building on the charrette concept that has been central to studio dynamics since the inception of architectural education. We have the ability to infuse our components with additional purpose, energy and outcomes as we invest in them as both centers of membership and centers of community.