

## 2023 AIA Young Architects Award

*Information from online submission form*

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**Candidate** Brien Graham

**AIA Chapter** AIA Texas Society of Architects:

### **Summary Statement**

Brien Graham is helping shape the response to the challenge of creating a more equitable and diverse industry, a citizen architect devoted to working with underrepresented students and communities to increase access to the profession.

### **Education**

Temple University - Philadelphia, PA 2002 - Bachelor of Architecture (5 years)

Temple University - Rome, Italy - Study Abroad 2000 (one semester)

### **Initial Licensure**

January 2019 - Texas

### **Licensure**

Georgia

### **Work History**

LPA Design Studios - Dallas, TX

Project Manager 2019-Present

Richmond Group, Inc - Dallas, TX

Associate / Project Manager 2016-2019

Concord Church - Dallas, TX

Director of Facilities 2013-2019

Project Manager 2012-2013

Thiel & Thiel, Inc. - Colleyville, TX

Job Captain 2011-2012

Richmond Group, Inc - Dallas, TX

Designer & Project Manager 2002-2010

September 15, 2022

Jury Chair

2023 Young Architects Award,  
American Institute of Architects

1735 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20006-5292

Re: Brien Graham, AIA, NOMA, NCARB Candidate for 2023 Young Architects Award

Dear Jury Chair and Members of the Jury:

We met Brien a little over ten years ago and have watched the trajectory of his career and leadership as he become more engaged as a recognized leader and architect in the DFW Metroplex and North Texas Region. We have watched him contribute to NOMA as an active member, participating and leading programming, ultimately becoming the Dallas Chapter's current President. For example, in 2018, Brien was actively engaged during DFW NOMA's eight-week Hip Hop Architecture Camp. He was dedicated to teaching the students and even brought his son – this was the beginning of witnessing his potential and dedication to the profession.

Brien is authentic and passionate about providing pathways and opening doors to our profession for individuals who have been marginalized and kept on the periphery. His endeavors have led to exponential growth in the DFW NOMA Chapter's membership rolls and its participation across the greater community. His strategic leadership included planning a virtual board retreat to develop strategic focus for the upcoming year, increasing programming content, as well as becoming more intentional with defining value that members receive from their involvement. He has strengthened the relationship between DFW NOMA and AIA Dallas programmatically, while navigating the ever-changing COVID pandemic.

He is the recipient of many awards and has a demonstrated history of championing DEI initiatives internally and externally with TxA Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. As a Project Manager for LPA Design Studios, he was instrumental in the growth of their Dallas office and has been recognized by LPA's CEO for his work with young people and in the DEI space. LPA's leadership has invited him to speak at firm wide retreats and leadership symposiums on inclusive participation. The national meetings have been held in California and other remote venues spreading his impact beyond the Dallas area.

Brien has presented during several AIA Symposiums discussing leadership, inclusion and educational initiatives that broaden our reach to young people and minority students across the country. Brien's impact extends beyond the local market and his thoughtful leadership and organizational skills are evident in everything he engages.

Brien is fearless in broaching difficult conversations and challenges traditional ways of thinking because he leads with humility and grace. He is well versed in current issues and understands the challenges the profession faces in its pursuit for an equitable profession for all of us.

He is the perfect candidate for the 2023 Young Architects Award as he has a track record of true positive influence and outcomes that extend beyond his touch. His colleagues follow his example and have been better for his involvement and tutelage. Brien's leadership illustrates servant leadership as well as transferable skills. His influence is lasting because the efforts he employs are emulated and repeated by those around him making the organizations and community better and stronger because of his presence and effort.

We strongly recommend Brien for this honor.

Sincerely,



**Darren L. James**, FAIA, NCARB, NOMA  
President, KAI Enterprises



**Charyl McAfee-Duncan**, FAIA, NOMA  
President, McAfee<sup>3</sup> Architecture + Design



**Brien Graham**  
AIA, NCARB, NOMA

## EDUCATION

Bachelor of Architecture  
Temple University - Philadelphia, PA **2002**  
Temple University - Rome, Italy - Study Abroad **2000**  
AIA National Leadership Academy **2020-2023**  
AIA Dallas Emerging Leaders Program **2017**

## HONORS & AWARDS

LPA Extra Mile Award **2022**  
AIA Fort Worth - Community Award **2021**  
Texas Society of Architects - Presidential Citation **2020**  
AIA Dallas - Presidential Citation for Outstanding Contributions to the AD EX Summer Camps **2022**  
LPA Professional of the Quarter **2019**  
Texas Board of Architectural Examiners Scholarship **2019**

## CREDENTIALS

Registered Architect, State of Texas **2019** | #27834  
Registered Architect, State of Georgia **2021** | #RA016417  
NCARB Certified Architect **2019**

## WORK HISTORY

**LPA Design Studios - Dallas, TX**  
Project Manager **2019-Present**

**Richmond Group, Inc - Dallas, TX**  
Associate / Project Manager **2016-2019**

**Concord Church - Dallas, TX**  
Director of Facilities **2013-2019**  
Project Manager **2012-2013**

**Thiel & Thiel, Inc. - Colleyville, TX**  
Job Captain **2011-2012**

**Richmond Group, Inc - Dallas, TX**  
Designer & Project Manager **2002-2010**



**Brien Graham is helping shape the response to the challenge of creating a more equitable and diverse industry, a citizen architect devoted to working with underrepresented students and communities to increase access to the profession.**

Mr. Graham is a project manager for LPA Design Studios, an integrated design firm which was honored with the 2021 AIA California Firm Award. On several transformative school and recreation projects in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, he's served as the team liaison with the community, making sure all voices are heard and designs reflect their input.

Within the industry, he is a proactive leader and has served in several top roles in AIA Dallas, Texas' largest chapter, helping to expand the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) conversation, grow education outreach and establish the chapter's first-ever Architecture Summer Camp. He is the current President of DFW NOMA (National Association of Minority Architects), nearly tripling the chapter

membership and increasing regional influence, making connections with the Texas Society of Architects as chair of the EDI Committee.

On a national scale, Brien is making a difference. He is one of 18 architects in the country participating in the inaugural class of the AIA Leadership Academy, designed to prepare the next generation of architects. And earlier this year, he was selected as Texas representative to the National Strategic Council, a three-year term, where he will help implement solutions to pressing issues facing the profession beginning in 2023.

In every way, Brien exemplifies the AIA's goals and aspirations, serving as an enthusiastic mentor, leader, and inspiration for future architects.

## **PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP**

### **AIA National**

- AIA Strategic Council (2023 - 2025)
- YAF AIA Mission 2130 - Crew Captain (2022)
- AIA SpeakUp (2017)

### **Texas Society of Architects (TxA)**

- Chair, EDI Committee (2022 - present)
- Chair-elect, EDI Committee (2021)

### **AIA Dallas**

- Membership Taskforce (2022)
- Website Redesign Taskforce (2022)
- Board of Directors - Member At Large (2021 - present)
- Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Taskforce (2020 - 2021)
- Board of Directors - Director of Networks (2020 - 2021)
- Education Outreach Committee (2020 - present)
- Board of Directors - Emerging Professional's Liaison (2019)
- Chair - Emerging Leaders Program (2019)
- Vice-chair - Emerging Leaders Program (2018)
- Young Professionals Network (2014 - 2019)

### **AIA Iowa**

- Impact Awards Design Juror (2021)

### **Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) NOMA**

- Chapter President (2021 - present)

### **LPA Design Studios**

- Chair - Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Advisory Council (2020 - present)

## **MENTORING + EDUCATION**

- Panelist, CEO Leadership Alliance - High School Virtual Panel (June 2022)
- Panelist, Dallas ISD - Career Panel Discussion (February 2022)
- Mentor, NAACP ACT-SO Competition (2021 - present)
- Panelist, CityLab HS Summit (November 2021)
- Design Juror, Oklahoma State University (2021 - present)
- Design Juror, University of Texas - Arlington (2021)
- Panelist, University of Texas - Arlington "Path to Licensure" (April 2021)
- Mentor, DFW NOMA Project Pipeline (2020 - present)
- Mentor, AIA Dallas Architecture Camps (2020 - present)
- Career Day Speaker, Multiple School Districts (2016 - present)

### **Equity, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI)**

- Moderator, AIA Dallas - Design Justice Book Club (2022)
- Panelist, TxA & NOMA, Win-Win: Building Equitable Firm Partnerships (October 2021)
- Panelist, Oklahoma State University - NOMA at 50 (March 2021)
- Speaker, TxA Call to Action: Addressing Racism, Design Justice, & Equity in Architecture (August 2020)
- Panelist, AIA Dallas Architecture on Tap - Leading Beyond the Mask (August 2020)
- Panelist, AIA Small Firm Exchange: Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion in Architecture (March 2020)



# Summary of Accomplishments

Brien embodies the AIA's ideal of a young architect working to improve his community and elevate the conversation on equity, diversity, and inclusion. He's putting to work lessons learned during his participation in the inaugural class of the AIA Leadership Academy, serving as a role model and catalyst in underrepresented communities.

Brien grew up in inner-city Newark, NJ, surrounded by constant violence during the height of the war on drugs, and could easily have ended up another statistic. A strong mother pushed him hard toward academics, while working two jobs to provide Brien with opportunities, like attending summer camps. She told him school was his job. As a 7th-grade student, he convinced the school administration to allow him into a 9th-grade architecture history and drafting class. This class, along with a love of LEGO, hooked him. Even though he had never met an architect, he was determined to become one to reshape the environment where he grew up and create a better future.

Brien's personal mission statement developed during the AIA Leadership Academy helps prioritize his efforts: Learn continuously. Lead selflessly. Act courageously. Advocate for the underrepresented. Run towards the hard things. He has dedicated his career to advocating and opening doors, making architecture more inclusive and reflective of the communities and clients we serve. Through his work, he is serving as a role model and advocate, changing the lives of young architects.

## STRATEGIC ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Brien has a unique ability to see and decipher complex patterns, providing the best solutions to challenging situations. He gives guidance that allows organizations to refocus, think big, adapt quickly to change, and improve performance.

For both AIA Dallas and DFW NOMA, he has been instrumental in strategic planning to define the group's response to the pressing issues of equity, diversity and inclusion. He has helped the groups set attainable short and long-term goals, reflecting his skill at creating a vision and communicating the "why" to build trust and buy-in. As President of DFW NOMA, his organization and focus more than doubled membership in a year, boosted sponsorships and new ties were formed with local organizations. In 2021, NOMA National named DFW NOMA the Most Improved Chapter in the country.

As a leader, Brien serves as a bridge to align unique and joint programs. He serves as a liaison between AIA Dallas and DFW NOMA and led the development of an MOU between the two organizations to develop partner programs & cross-promote diverse speakers to address issues in local architecture.

Additionally, as a Project Leader within LPA, he manages complex project teams, developing systems and outreach efforts. He is a proud advocate of the firm's collaborative, research-driven design process, working with new team members and clients to ensure everyone moves toward a singular goal. On several education and recreation projects in minority communities, he confronted organizational challenges head-on, embracing the responsibility to help guide the firm's outreach and ensure all voices are heard.

## MENTORING & EDUCATION

Brien has long been passionate about mentoring and sharing knowledge with students and younger architects, recognizing the importance of his role as a role model. From his time as an undergrad teaching assistant for Architecture History to the present, he volunteers to provide insight, expertise, and assistance to students and young professionals.





## Summary of Accomplishments (continued)

Within the community, he is a regular speaker at area elementary schools exposing students as young as kindergarten to architecture and design thinking. He returns year after year at the request of administrators, who express that his presentation is one of the most well received by students.

Within the AIA, he is a regular panelist, speaker, and moderator participating in events geared towards emerging professionals and has led the Emerging Leadership Program for AIA Dallas. In 2020, he participated in a panel discussing the post-pandemic profession in a session titled “Leading Beyond the Mask.” He charged emerging professionals to advocate for end users who are typically not included in design conversations but, in many cases, due to zip code, are adversely affected by design decisions.

In addition, he leads programming at AIA Dallas to encourage the next generation as an organizer and moderator, including Sketching Kaleidoscope: Viewing Dallas Through a Different Lens and Design Justice Book Club focusing on thought-provoking books addressing race and architecture. Many of the programs he has helped develop for AIA and NOMA focus on helping minority architects toward licensure and removing traditional barriers.

Additionally, in 2021 he spearheaded efforts at LPA to build a leadership program for design coordinators and project engineers to achieve a long-term goal of ensuring firm leadership is reflective of the clients it serves.

### ADVANCING EQUITY, DIVERSITY, & INCLUSION

Drawing on his experience as an African American architect, representing only 2% of licensed architects in the country, Brien recognizes the importance of diversity in the design profession. The core tenet instilled in him at St. Benedict’s Preparatory School guides his advocacy efforts, “Whatever hurts my brother hurts me.”

At a local, regional, and national level, he is a frequent speaker on equity, diversity, and inclusion issues that affect architecture for both the end user and practitioner. He has utilized conversations with NCARB leadership to understand the pinch points on the path to licensure and focused his efforts on how to best address those challenges. As the 2022 chair of the Texas Society of Architects’ Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee, he organized a meeting of EDI-focused groups from around the state to discuss pressing issues.

Understanding that financial support is essential, Brien was instrumental in developing scholarship programs within LPA and DFW NOMA. At LPA, he helped develop the Interdisciplinary Diversity Scholarship Program to aid underrepresented high school students in both Texas and California interested in the design profession to attend college. The scholarship awards \$5,000 annually to up to five students, renewable for up to five years. Additionally, scholarship recipients receive mentorship from LPA professionals and an opportunity for an internship at an LPA office in their region.

To address the needs of current professionals, Brien created the Charyl McAfee-Duncan ARE Support Scholarship through DFW NOMA, awarding recipients \$705, the cost of three exams, and six months of access to digital study materials. Recipients receive the award for passed or failed exams, helping to address the disparity in the NCARB report showing African American and LatinX test takers spend more for study materials and retesting fees.

Brien’s personal involvement led to the formation of LPA’s EDI Advisory Council, which he now chairs. Under Brien’s leadership, the group established clearly defined goals, set a clear EDI mission statement and provided steady leadership for council members spanning all regions where the firm operates.



# Leadership Credentials

## AIA LEADERSHIP

Brien has embraced the AIA as a vehicle of change in the industry. He doesn't simply get involved; he runs to the challenges and leads teams to accomplish goals. With Brien in a leadership role, equity, diversity, and inclusion became embedded in all chapter activities. In 2021, he was instrumental in helping the chapter establish a new strategic plan focused on four goals to transform the world around us. AIA Dallas adopted the core values: Be Bold and Innovative, Be Equitable and Inclusive, Be Transparent and Accountable, and Be Accessible. Now, a summer series of events at local breweries, Architecture on Tap, includes an EDI-specific session.

Brien's influence extends to all aspects of the chapter's work. He was on the task force that developed the first architecture summer camp in the chapter's history. He was the first emerging professional member of the board and helped develop strategies to attract emerging professional members and provide opportunities to engage in committee leadership. Additionally, he helped lead the process for a new website and served on the membership committee.

The common theme in all of Brien's AIA work is the urgency of supporting young talent and serving as a role model for students and young architects who don't often see themselves in the profession. Now he is taking the next step, expanding his support network. As the 2022 chair of the Texas Society of Architects' Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee, he organized a meeting of EDI-focused organizations from around the state to discuss pressing issues. In January 2023, he will begin service as the Texas representative to the AIA Strategic Council, where he can use his talent and experience to shape the AIA's outreach to the next generation of minority architects.

## NOMA LEADERSHIP

Brien's leadership has transformed a small chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects into an influential and vibrant part of the Texas community. Since he took over, membership has jumped from 26 to 66 professionals, a 153% increase. Most importantly, the membership is now engaged and active, creating the type of mentorship and communication network badly needed in the local minority community.

Early in his work with the group, he helped lead the launch of the Project Pipeline Summer Camp, which has become a popular fixture on the calendar. Brien has focused the group's energy on students, from elementary age and high school students, to help them better understand architecture and promote design thinking. At the same time, he has increased outreach to university students, working with aspiring architects, and DFW NOMA members are frequent speakers on local campuses.

In addition, the chapter created the Charyl McAfee-Duncan ARE Support Scholarship to support underrepresented professionals towards licensure; last year, the chapter raised \$16,000 to fund the program. The recent award to six young professionals provides them funds for three exams and access to ArchiPrep study materials for six months.

As the chapter grows, the membership shows young students that not all architects look alike. Chapter members are now regular participants in design juries, influencing how Texas defines excellence. In recognition of all the progress, in 2021, NOMA National named DFW NOMA the Most Improved Chapter in the country.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

Growing up in Newark, Brien witnessed firsthand how communities were unable to advocate for the spaces they inhabited. Unseen forces dictated the fate of neighborhoods, creating cycles of decay. As an architect, Brien intends to change that and ensure end users have a voice in the projects that affect their communities and that the work reflects their specific needs.

As a project manager, Brien is often the face of the firm with the client and the community. For example, on the renovation of Casa View Elementary School, a 70-year-old campus in a predominantly Hispanic district of Dallas, Brien developed strategies to increase community feedback and translate that back to the design team, ensuring the school's legacy would continue.

Similarly, in the recent Broughton Recreation Center project, in a primarily African American community, Brien played a crucial role in linking the design of the building to the neighborhood's needs and function. His efforts changed how the neighborhood members viewed the building and created a new sense of community authorship that hadn't existed in past developments.

Brien has always had a strong sense of service. As a young professional, he traveled to El Salvador to build homes with Habitat for Humanity. Brien dedicates his time to raising the profile of underserved communities, making them heard and an integral part of the design ecosystem.



# AIA Leadership

Brien began his AIA Leadership in earnest in 2017, with his participation in the AIA Dallas Emerging Leaders Program, after years of volunteering with the Young Professionals Network. During the program, his cohort selected him to lead engagement with a community organization to design a pro bono project.

Over the next two years, he continued as vice-chair and chair of the program. Under Brien's leadership, the subsequent two classes successfully completed community-focused projects and engaged civic leaders in conversations promoting the importance of architects in civic discourse.

In 2019, the AIA Dallas President named Brien the first Emerging Leaders Program chair to the board of directors. He was an active liaison between the board and the emerging professionals within the chapter, strategizing ongoing and future leadership opportunities for young professionals within the membership.

Due to Brien's success in assisting the board with identifying potential leaders, there is a continuous presence of emerging professionals on the board and in committee leadership positions.

In 2020, Brien joined the AIA Dallas board as the Director of Networks. In this position, he provided oversight for Women in Architecture, Latinos in Architecture, Small Firm Roundtable, AIA Fellows, and Leadership programs. Due to the pandemic's constraints, he created a virtual meeting plan bringing all networks together for monthly touchpoint conversations.

These meetings focused on cross-pollination and collaboration, developing the concept for a mentorship roundtable with a representative from each career stage: early, mid, and seasoned, to



***“Brien is passionate, curious, and demonstrates the leadership qualities our chapter and profession rely upon.***

***Because of Brien's exceptional character and consistent contributions to our membership and community, as Dallas President I selected him as our chapter's first ever, Emerging Leaders Program Chair to serve on the 2019 AIA Dallas Board of Directors as their liaison.”***

**Richard Miller, FAIA**  
2019 AIA Dallas President



## AIA Leadership (continued)

provide insight and feedback for career development tracking and engagement.

Under Brien's leadership, network programming maintained high attendance during the tumultuous times with an emphasis on interactive virtual experiences.

In addition to his role as Director of Networks, AIA Dallas appointed Brien to the EDI Taskforce, helping to steer the chapter's response to social unrest and determine a path forward. As a longstanding member of the Education Outreach Committee, Brien helped lead an effort to create the first Architecture Summer Camp in the chapter's history.

The camp targeted elementary, middle, and high school students to expose them to the general tenets of architecture.

In its first year, 2020, at the onset of the pandemic, the program virtually reached close to 50 students, and has since grown over the last two years to reach nearly 350 students in-person at numerous touchpoints throughout the year with a Spring Camp as well.

### PUBLICATIONS

#### Texas Architect Magazine

"Black Lives Matter, So Do Our Actions" 2019

"Project Pipeline Expands Scope and Reach" 2022

#### Columns Magazine

"By The Numbers" 2021

#### AIA Dallas Springboard

"Emerging Leaders: What Type of Leader Will You Be" 2017

"Leader Effectiveness" 2017

"Check Your EQ!" 2021

#### America's Hidden Gem

"Mentor Monday" 2021



*"Brien was invaluable in assisting AIA Dallas and the Architecture and Design Exchange in bringing to fruition a long-held dream of establishing a K-12 camp series. He was involved from the beginning - shaping the format, developing the curriculum, spreading the word, and leading the middle school sessions - and continues to be an incredible resource and asset to the program. The resulting Designing My Future K-12 Camp series teaches students how to use design to become better stewards of their neighborhoods and champions for a more functional, beautiful, and equitable city."*

*Brien's expertise, advice, and hard work have played a tremendous role in the success of the camps, introducing a new generation of students to architecture and, hopefully, building and diversifying the path to the profession."*

**Katie Hitt, Assoc. AIA**  
Managing Director, AD EX

### DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed. The responsibility included:

- Other: Leader and Contributor

**Katie Hitt, Assoc. AIA**  
Managing Director, AD EX

# Texas Society of Architects

**Texas  
Society of  
Architects**

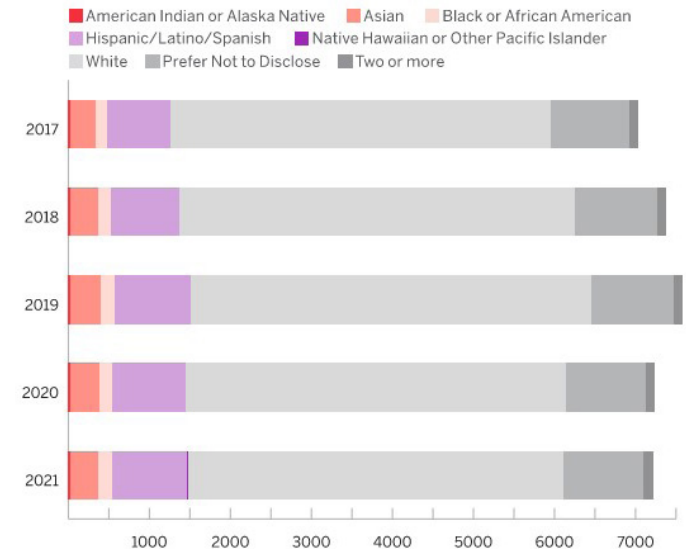
Founded in 1939, The Texas Society of Architects (TxA) is one of the nation's largest organizations for the architectural profession, with 18 regional components and 7,200 members. Brien has devoted his time, energy and talent to help the group address the issues of social unrest, inclusion and diversity.

As with many of his volunteer efforts, Brien has taken a collaborative, education-driven approach to the issues to help make the organization relevant for the next generation.

Under Brien's leadership, the EDI Committee has established far-ranging goals to improve participation, increase opportunities for under-represented communities and support the growth of young professionals.



## CHANGE IN MEMBERS BY ETHNICITY



## GOAL A Equitable Representation

### What are we currently doing?

- Collaborations with NOMA
- EDI Committee
- Sessions at the Annual Conference
- Unconscious Bias Workshops
- John S. Chase Award
- Changes to Volunteer Recruitment Process

### What's potentially missing?

- Recognition of firms practicing equitable representation
- JEDI challenge education
- Reaching out to elementary schools
- ACE Mentorship collaborations





## Texas Society of Architects (continued)

### Texas Society of Architects

The results can already be seen in many areas. To help promote EDI-relevant sessions during the group's annual conference, a new system created a "JEDI track" and sessions were designated as "recommended by EDI."

During the conference, an EDI and LGBTQ+ meet up group will be held in conjunction with the annual conference. Language and media outreach is more inclusive. A JEDI page was added to the Web site.

Brien's role has helped build the TxA's cooperation and outreach on EDI issues with different organizations in the state, including NOMA, NCARB and local AIA components. Larger topics, such as more inclusion in award juries and finding ways to support a more equitable path to Fellowship, are on the table and under review.

As with many of Brien's EDI initiatives, the recent efforts include a focus on finding more opportunities for leadership roles in the organization.

A research effort studied the board configuration over the previous 15 years to understand pinch points and constraints to providing more leadership opportunities.

Additionally, Brien has presented findings from the TxA EDI Committee to AIA California, NCARB leadership, TxA Grassroots, and various TxA committees to ensure that EDI information is actionable and implementable, not only statewide but nationally.

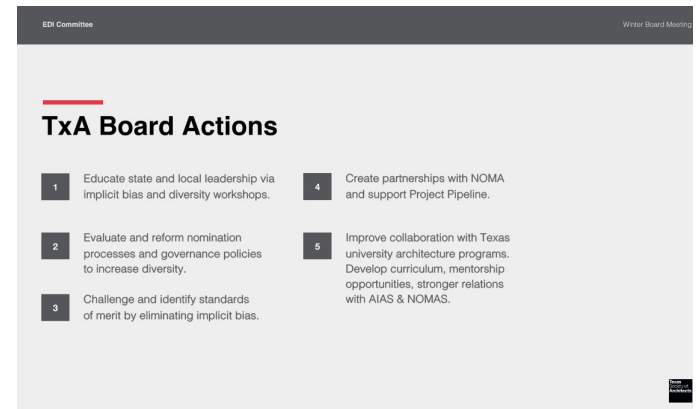


*"Brien Graham has been an integral part of our efforts over the last several years to highlight the EDI needs of the profession and has helped the Texas Society of Architects take decisive action.*

*We've improved our nominations process to ensure we reach out beyond the known networks of architects and attract new and diverse voices for our Board and Committees.*

*Under his guidance, our EDI committee created an inciteful article on the inequities in our Honor Awards process particularly in terms of who is being nominated. We have also enhanced our communication with NCARB, NOMA and our collaboration with NOMA's Project Pipeline. Brien is a committed volunteer whose candid and practical leadership has been an asset to our organization."*

**Jennifer Briggs, CAE**  
Executive Vice-President / CEO  
Texas Society of Architects



### TxA Board Actions



### TxA Board Unconscious Bias Training

#### DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed. The responsibility included:

- Other: Leader and Contributor

**Jennifer Briggs, CAE**  
Executive Vice-President / CEO  
TxA Membership, Texas Society of Architects



# Building DFW NOMA Chapter

In the Dallas chapter of NOMA, Brien saw an important opportunity to bring together minority architects and provide them a base for sharing, mentorship and growth.

When he took over as President in 2021, he established his guiding principles as “Growth. Gratitude & Generosity,” which provided a framework for future activities. Initiatives were developed around each principle, focusing on National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) data illustrating the disparity in the representation of people of color in the profession.

His strategic leadership and vision launched a new era for the chapter. Membership more than doubled. Sponsorships increased and the annual budget grew by 385%. New working relationships were formed with local organizations, including the AIA, resulting in joint events and greater participation and awareness of diversity issues.

Under his leadership, the group secured nearly \$20,000 in sponsorships over the last two years for Project Pipeline to facilitate summer camps for underrepresented students from 6th – 12th grade, one of Brien’s passion projects.



*“Brien has a natural born talent for leadership, and he is not afraid to broach the difficult conversations, challenge the prevailing thoughts, and lead with humble grace.*

*He is an exemplary professional, well versed in current issues, understands the challenges the institute faces at all levels, and diligently pursues an equitable and just profession for all.*

*DFW NOMA has thrived under Brien’s leadership, with increased membership, programming, and sponsorship dollars. With the vigor and passion he has put into DFW NOMA, I believe Brien has set a course for that organization’s future that will create a positive trajectory for years to come.”*

**Gianna Pigford, AIA, NOMA**

Principal, STANTEC

2017-2018 President, DFW NOMA



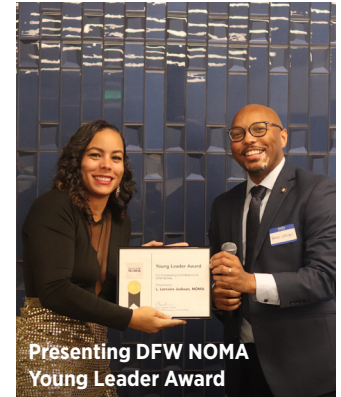
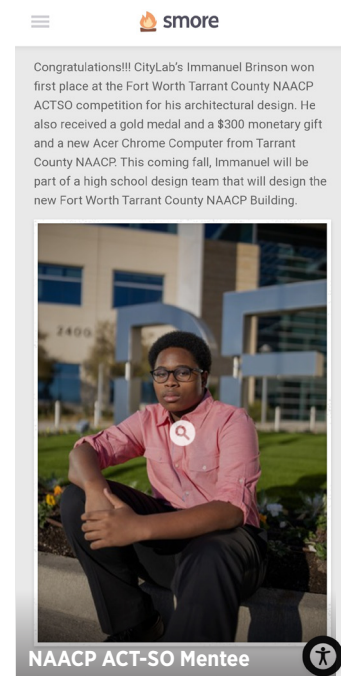
## Building DFW NOMA Chapter (continued)

Brien's influence has been instrumental in developing and expanding a wide variety of initiatives.

- Hosts monthly gatherings at various locations throughout the DFW Metroplex to expand reach and access to DFW NOMA
- Monthly CEU program to provide DFW NOMA licensed members with an opportunity to gain all required CEU hours through DFW NOMA programming
- Practical programming to address the AIA LFRT/NOMA 2030 Diversity challenge
- Created a scholarship for ARE Licensure reimbursement for three exams – pass or fail, with a partnership with AIA Fort Worth to provide 6 months access to digital study materials
- Created an NCIDQ licensure scholarship for interior design DFW NOMA members
- Partnered with Black professional organizations within the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex including HR, healthcare, engineers, doctors, MBA's, and lawyers to spearhead a cross-collaborative mixer and create broader networks

***"Brien Graham is a people's architect. He understands the needs of the people involved in the design process, the people we're designing with and most importantly, the people that will be impacted by the design. Working with Brien at all of these levels creates a better process that leads to better results."***

**Kate Mraw, RID, LEED AP BD+C, ALEP**  
Principal, Director of K-12, LPA



### DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed. The responsibility included:

- Other: Leader and Contributor

**Tiara Hughes, NOMA**  
ELEVATE Co-Chair, NOMA National



# Broughton Park & Recreation Center

In a predominantly African American neighborhood in Longview, TX, a 1970s-era recreation center plays a key role in the community's health and growth. The city created a master plan to redevelop the center, but a deeper dive by Brien's design team discovered that few people living within a mile-and-a-half of the project had actually attended any of the planning meetings.

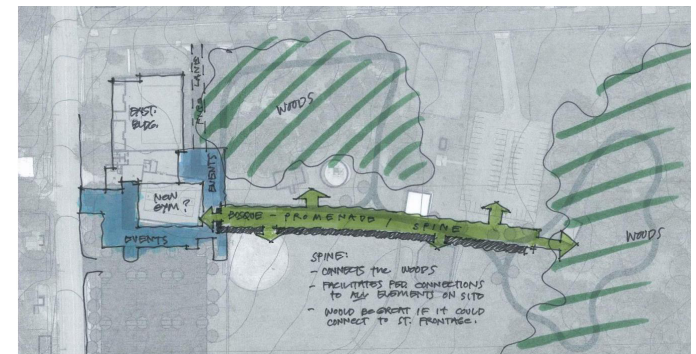
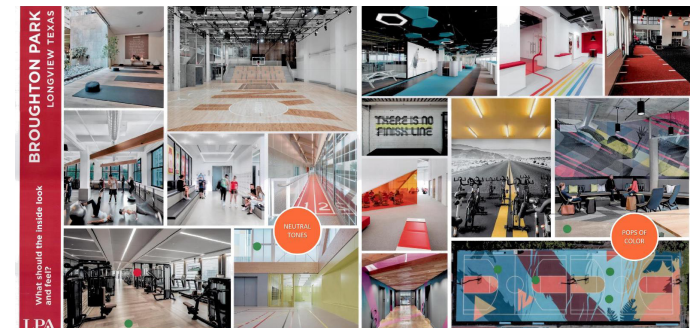
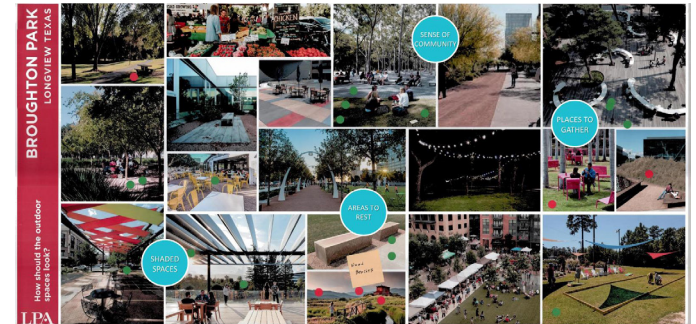
In the earliest stages of the project, Brien developed and led an engagement process that included community members and the city councilman representing the ward, pushing hard to find ways to include more voices and ensuring they were heard in the process.

In the process, Brien was able to put into action many of the skills he developed in AIA's Leadership Academy. The Academy helped Brien tie team actions to the larger mission, solicit team member ideas to help solve problems and find ways to meet people where they are on a heart level. He engaged residents in a visual listening session, presenting

them with image boards and questions to elicit their feedback on how activities in renovated and new spaces should flow. Community members were also given the opportunity to share what needs they felt hadn't been addressed by the design team, and Brien was able to translate these requests to the team to ensure the community would see their input reflected in the final design decisions. Brien saw the project as an opportunity to transform how the community viewed the building and how they used the space, recognizing its role in their lives.

By providing the community agency and access to the design process, city officials were able to garner support when making hard project decisions to maintain the budget and direct funds to priority areas that would ensure the most significant impact.

The design solution consists of an addition incorporating a color palette that celebrates the natural landscape, including a new gymnasium, a reception area with an administrative office, and an open fitness area and lobby with an abundance



**Top:** Community feedback concerning how outdoor spaces should feel & function.

**Middle:** Community feedback concerning how indoor spaces should look & feel.

**Bottom:** Resulting sketch showing site organization and amenities connections.



## Broughton Park & Recreation Center (continued)

of natural light. In response to community feedback, a branch library space is prominent at the front of the facility. A central promenade on the exterior provides a path, tying the building and site together with a significant pedestrian spine. Additionally, renovating the existing gym into a multi-purpose space, cutting windows in existing meeting rooms to introduce natural light in previously dark areas, and creating an engaging hub for youth activity, a direct reflection of community input.

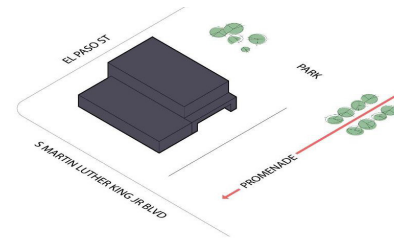
**Design Firm**  
LPA Design Studios

**Completion Date**  
Fall 2022

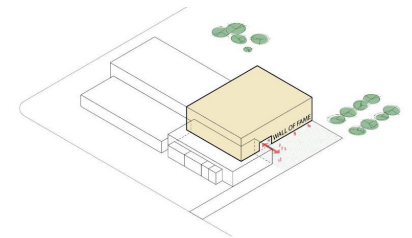
**Role of Nominee**  
Project Manager



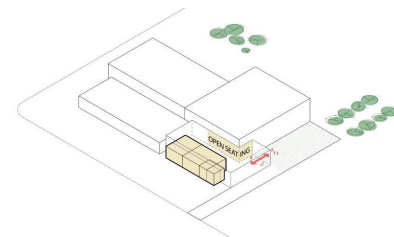
### CONCEPT DIAGRAMS



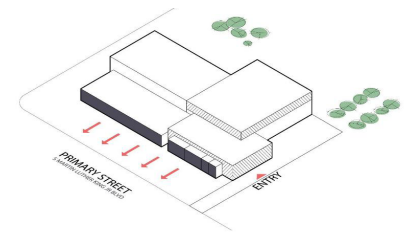
1. The Promenade



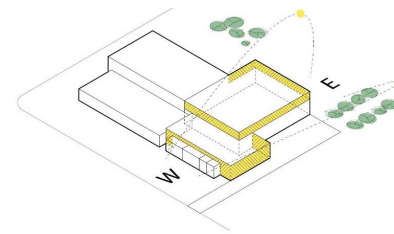
2. New Gym



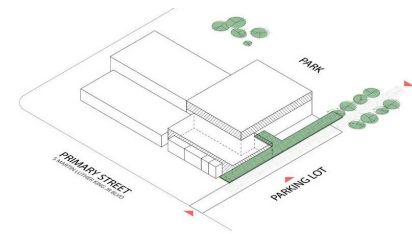
3. Internal Program



4. Street Façade & Main Entry



5. Solar Study



6. Entry Canopy

### DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed. The responsibility included:

- Project under direction of nominee

Dan Heinfeld, FAIA  
President, LPA Design Studios

*Dan Heinfeld*

# Mentoring + Education of Emerging Professionals

Brien's young career has been defined by a passion for mentorship and elevating the next generation of architects. He is particularly focused on high school and university students who may never have met an architect of color. His approach is hands-on, taking every opportunity to spend time with aspiring architects and to help them see the possibilities and potential for their careers.

When schools call for someone to speak to a class or participate in a design jury, Brien is a ready and willing participant. His message focuses on the importance of the profession and the opportunity for young people to shape the world around them. He makes it clear that anything is possible, no matter their socio or cultural background.

This same commitment can be seen in his work with organizations, where he has helped develop summer camps and student workshops designed to introduce younger students to the profession. At the same time, he has implemented programs to support emerging minority architects in their studies and quest for licensure, recognizing the importance of helping them overcome the many challenges they face to launching their careers.

***"You are both an inspiration for many and a courageous leader. Your empathy for others is a quality I hope to emulate. I am honored to have met you in our professional lives and eagerly await the impact you will have on our industry in the future."***

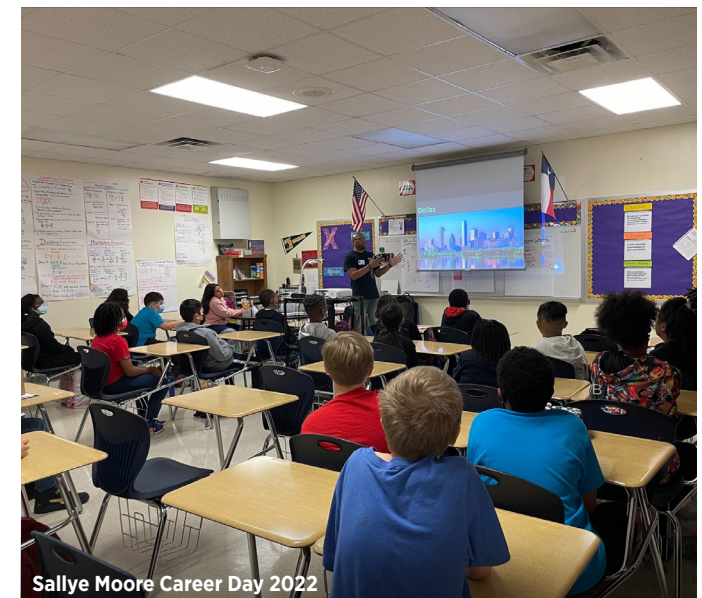
**Jeff Slajer, AIA**  
Principal / Project Manager  
OMNIPLAN



Brien and mentee Immanuel Brinson



First place winner, NAACP ACT-SO  
Architecture Competition



Sallye Moore Career Day 2022



## Mentoring + Education of Emerging Professionals (continued)



Whenever possible, he seeks opportunities to work with emerging professionals one-on-one. While there are many examples, one recent student stands out. Over the last two years Brien has mentored Immanuel Brinson, a student at CityLab High School for the NAACP ACT-SO Architecture Competition. Over the course of a few weeks, he coached Immanuel on developing his design ideas and prepared him to present to the competition jury. In 2021, Immanuel won first place in the regional competition and third place in the national competition. With additional coaching, and a greater understanding of architectural concepts, in 2022, Immanuel won the national competition. Brien continues to be a mentor, providing advice and direction as Immanuel begins his freshman year studying architecture at Prairie View A&M University.



2018 AIA Dallas Emerging Leaders Program Reception



AIA Dallas Emerging Leaders Program




Meet architect *Brien Graham*

**CAREER WEBINAR PANEL**

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 16TH  
12:00 PM

Register at [www.dallasisd.org/BlackHistoryMonth](http://www.dallasisd.org/BlackHistoryMonth)



*"I met Brien Graham through the AIA Emerging Leaders Program in Dallas. He led as a co-chair while I was an ELP participant, and he was the head chair when I volunteered the next year as a co-chair.*

*During my experience, Brien showed thoughtfulness and wisdom to his decision-making. He leads by example by giving helpful advice as a peer.*

*Brien also had the opportunity to speak to my firm about the importance of equity, diversity, and inclusion. His succinct and relatable presentation helped my firm ask deeper questions about how we can continue to evolve and improve.*

*It has been an honor to serve alongside Brien in the Dallas AIA Chapter. He continues to encourage other fellow architects and strengthen the architecture community."*

**Emily Teng Yan, AIA**

Senior Associate, OMNIPLAN

2019 Co-Chair, AIA Dallas Emerging Leaders Program



AIA Dallas Emerging Leaders Program

### DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of the nominee's responsibility for the exhibit listed. The responsibility included:

- Other: Leader and Contributor

Craig Drone, AIA, LEED AP  
Principal, LPA Dallas Studio Director



# Advancing LPA Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion at LPA

The benefits of Brien's involvement with the AIA Leadership Academy can be clearly seen in his work within LPA to increase representation and participation from under-represented communities. He engaged LPA as a sponsor of the Academy and used the experience to initiate an EDI education program, Developing Future Project Leaders, focused on helping young LPA professionals grow their understanding of leadership and responsibilities associated with management, design, and technical roles.

At LPA, he is a motivated and passionate leader who has taken the initiative to move the firm forward and build a foundation for a more inclusive culture. It was his idea to establish an EDI Group within the firm with the specific goal of developing a more diverse leadership team within 10 years. In similar fashion to the Leadership Academy's goals, his vision is to prepare more under-represented employees for promotion and support their rise in the firm. The first step was an EDI Advisory Council which was launched with Brien as the inaugural chair.

Brien is known for taking a proactive approach, establishing a clear mission, goals and governance structure to all his efforts. Brien's leadership led to the establishment of the LPA Interdisciplinary Diversity Scholarship, an annual program to support historically underrepresented demographics pursuing careers related to architecture, engineering and design.

Each year, up to five high school seniors are awarded with \$5,000 renewable scholarships. In addition to financial aid, students are matched with LPA mentors in their respective disciplines and have the opportunity for paid summer internships at LPA.

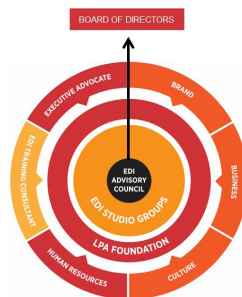
## LPA EQUITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION MISSION STATEMENT

**We believe diversity and inclusion are essential to innovation, belonging, and representation.**

**We believe that LPA is most successful when we can be our best selves, and so we aim to foster a culture where every employee feels that anything is possible regardless of their starting point.**

**Our goal is to create an equitable environment where leadership reflects the people we serve by developing current and future LPA employees, resulting in diverse firm leadership.**

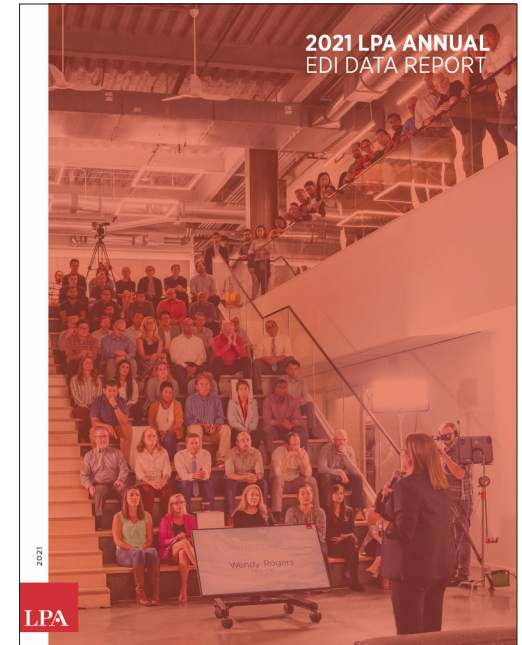
### EDI STRUCTURE



### EDI STRATEGY



## LPA EDI DIVERSITY CELEBRATIONS 2021



*"Brien's calm, assured presence has been a source of steady leadership for LPA's EDI Advisory Council during his tenure as Chair.*

*With passion and persistence he has shepherded the team's many initiatives, and elevated the conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion at a firmwide level.*

*He is not afraid to engage in challenging discussions, yet embodies a spirit of humility and collaborative thinking in his approach."*

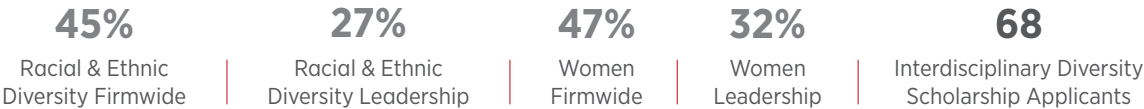
**Melody Tang, AIA**  
Associate, Project Manager, LPA

Advancing LPA Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion Efforts at LPA (continued)

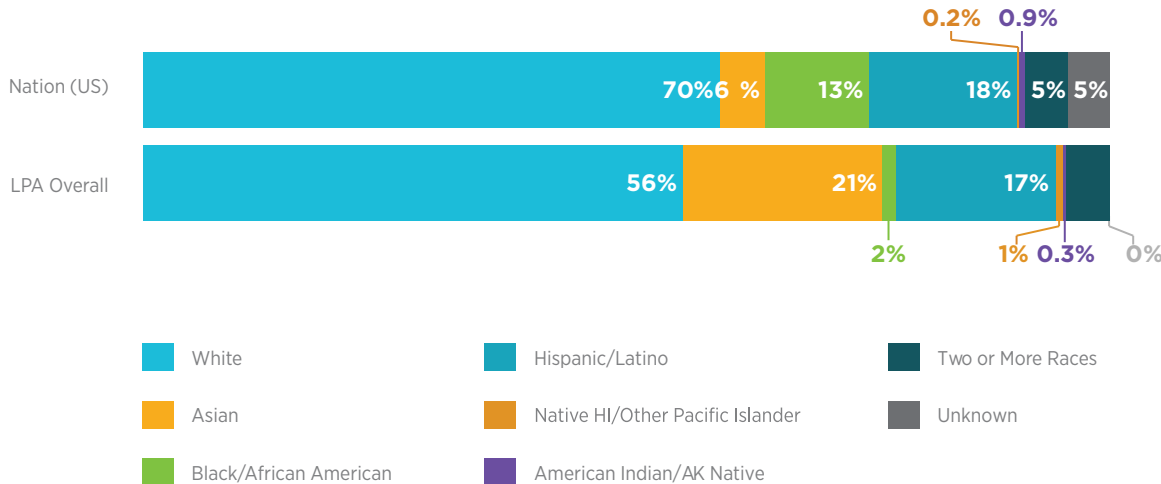
Brien’s work has brought a new level of transparency to LPA’s diversity efforts. With Brien leading the effort, the firm did the hard work necessary to obtain the JUST label, the volunteer program that encourages companies to share their hiring and diversity results.

The firm also dedicated new focus to recognize and celebrate diversity and provide EDI training for the entire firm and developed an annual EDI data report that serves as a guidepost for making informed decisions about growth and hiring practices.

During the firm’s recent All-Hands Retreat, Brien co-presented a session, “Learning to Lead and Grow: The Journey from Me to We,” focusing on leadership expectations and what it means to be a Project Leader, re-enforcing his consistent efforts to develop a more diverse group of future leaders.



Demographics - Race/Ethnicity (Firmwide)



2022 Interdisciplinary Diversity Scholarship recipients

*“This scholarship will provide me with the opportunity to start a new chapter in life where I will be able to take multiple architecture courses and programs with no limitation due to financial burden.”*

**Gabriela Guerrero**  
Interior Architecture Student, UT, San Antonio

DECLARATION OF RESPONSIBILITY

I have personal knowledge of the nominee’s responsibility for the exhibit listed. The responsibility included:

- Other: Leader and Contributor

Dan Heinfeld, FAIA  
President, LPA Design Studios