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ORCHARD HILL PAVILION
UMASS, AMHERST
SIGRID MILLER POLLIN STUDIO

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NEWSLETTER OF THE WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER

AIA LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

GARRISON PIERS-GAMBLE, ASSOCIATE AIA

As President of WMAIA, I was honored to represent the Board and our Chapter at the AIA Leadership Summit in Washington, D.C. this past February, where I joined over 600 fellow AIA leaders across 50 states and 5 territories. The summit featured stump speeches for upcoming AIA National elections, and inspirational keynote talks. We attended workshops focused on improving board effectiveness, developing mission-focused programming, and fostering community collaboration.

A major highlight was participating in **Hill Day**, where I had the unique opportunity to join with fellow Massachusetts AIA leaders and meet with elected representatives and their staff, including **Senators Elizabeth Warren and Edward Markey**, along with **Representatives Katherine Clark, James McGovern, Seth Moulton, Stephen Lynch, and Ayanna Pressley**, to advocate for critical topics our profession is actively facing.

HILL DAY SYNOPSIS

During meetings with Massachusetts elected officials, we discussed how leadership can improve the built environment:

1. **ENERGY-EFFICIENCY TAX CREDITS:** Promoting sustainability through financial incentives
2. **AFFORDABLE HOUSING LEGISLATION:** Supporting legislation to increase housing accessibility



AIA Central MA President Sean Brennan AIA, US Representative, Jim McGovern, WMAIA President Garrison Piers-Gamble Assoc. AIA, AIA MA President Marc Sternick AIA, AIA MA Executive Director John Nunnari Assoc. AIA

3. **DESIGN FREEDOM IN FEDERAL ARCHITECTURE:** Ensuring federal architecture reflects local community values
4. **PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION AND STUDENT LOAN CAPS:** Advocating for the professional designation for architects and the removal of borrowing limits

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COVER STORY & WiA PROGRAM/TOUR - ORCHARD HILL PAVILION

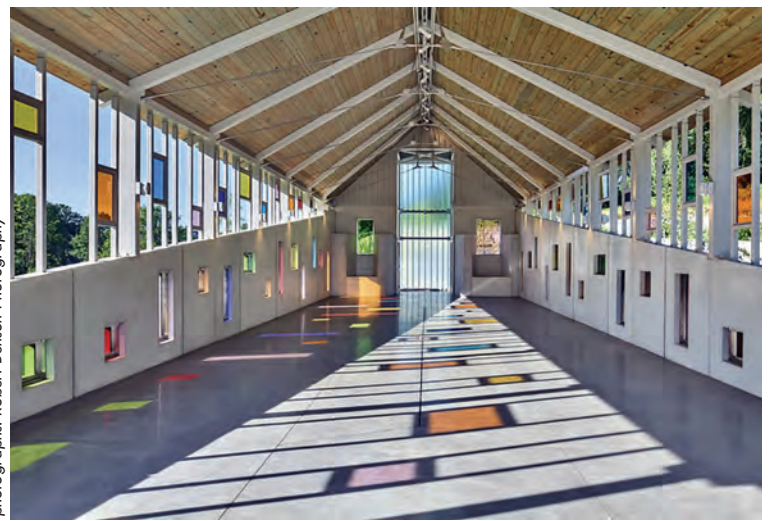
WiA Program and Tour - Orchard Hill Pavilion Thursday, April 30, 2026 | 4PM-5:30PM | 1 LU

Join this year's WMAIA Women in Architecture program – a tour of the **UMass Orchard Hill Pavilion** with WMAIA architect **Sigrid Miller Pollin FAIA**.

April is a spectacular time of year to tour this open-air building that blends beauty, sustainability, and ease.

The Pavilion, which opened in May 2025, is sited in a park-like setting at the eastern edge of the UMass Amherst campus. It features a 1,600 sq ft trellis-covered deck, stone patio, amphitheater-style seating, and lush landscaping with sweeping views of the Pioneer Valley.

The pavilion's materials—white cast-in-place concrete, light steel framing and colored glass create a lyrical architectural complement to the surrounding vegetation and topography.



photographs: Robert Benson Photography

Register for the WiA Program and Tour at <https://e.sparxo.com/Women-in-Architecture-2026>

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THE WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

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**AIA Western Massachusetts is proud to organize and host the
2026 New England Architecture Awards.**

We will celebrate small to large firms and projects of all sizes, types, and budgets.

Entries will be judged on their own merit, judged individually,
not in competition with each other.

Call for Entries: May 15, 2026

Early Registration Incentive: June 19, 2026

Submissions due: July 10, 2026

Awards Program: Friday October 2, 2025

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continued from page 1

A detailed list of the issues we discussed at Hill Day during the AIA Leadership Conference.

ENERGY-EFFICIENCY TAX CREDITS

We discussed the importance of extending and strengthening the **Section 179D High Performance Building Tax Credit**, which is scheduled to sunset on June 30, 2026. The Tax Credit:

- **Incentivizes High Performance:** The 179D deduction encourages energy-efficient designs for commercial and public buildings, such as schools and hospitals
- **Empowers Architects:** Architects are essential for meeting the energy targets required to unlock tax savings for building owners
- **Enables Long-Term Planning:** The incentive provides the financial stability needed for project investment and long-term planning
- **Builds Resilient Communities:** Strengthening 179D creates more sustainable buildings and resilient communities nationwide
- **Prevents Project Delays:** Losing these incentives could stall construction, end projects, and slow down technological progress
- **Protects Small Firms:** Consistent tax policy helps small and mid-sized architecture firms stay competitive in the marketplace
- **Boosts Economy & Jobs:** Extending 179D accelerates sustainable building goals while supporting local design and construction jobs

AFFORDABLE HOUSING LEGISLATION

We advocated for the advancement of bipartisan housing solutions, specifically the **Housing for the 21st-Century Act** and the **ROAD to Housing Act (S. 2651)**, to boost housing supply, cut red tape, and expand affordable housing nationwide.

- **Housing Crisis:** The U.S. faces a severe supply and affordability shortage; Massachusetts alone requires 222,000 new units by 2035 to meet baseline demand
- **Legislative Action:** The Housing for the 21st-Century Act and the ROAD to Housing Act modernize federal policy by reducing regulatory red tape and fostering innovation
- **Key Solutions:** These bills prioritize zoning reform, streamlined permitting, and diversified housing types to increase supply
- **Architects' Role:** Architects are vital partners in designing affordable, high-quality housing tailored to local community needs
- **Policy Priorities:** Successful housing policy must focus on flexibility, local control, and design innovation to ensure equitable results

- **Economic Impact:** These reforms support responsible community growth, expand housing options, and strengthen local economies

DESIGN FREEDOM IN FEDERAL ARCHITECTURE

We advocated for the **Democracy in Design Act (S. 2891)** to protect design freedom and ensure local community input in federal projects. This preserves the 1962 Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture developed by the General Services Administration's (GSA) Design Excellence Program, which prevents building changes without public transparency and trust.

- **Design Freedom:** Federal buildings should reflect local culture and community values rather than a single mandated national style
- **Democracy in Design Act:** This legislation supports bipartisan principles of innovation, excellence, and public input in federal architecture
- **Historic Preservation:** The People's White House Act ensures the stewardship of historic federal assets while maintaining professional standards
- **Policy Consistency:** Architects need clear, stable federal policies to balance project performance, costs, and public trust
- **Cost Control:** Avoiding stylistic mandates protects local decision-making and prevents unnecessary budget increases
- **Core Goals:** Policy should prioritize architectural excellence, historic integrity, and local control

PROFESSIONAL DESIGNATION AND STUDENT LOAN CAPS

We advocated for H.R. 6718 and H.R. 6677 to strengthen the workforce by recognizing architecture as a licensed profession and ensuring students have fair access to federal loans.

- **Public Protection:** Architects undergo rigorous training and licensure to safeguard public health, safety, and welfare
- **Education Debt:** Rising tuition and student loans threaten the future pipeline of the architectural profession
- **Loan Solutions:** Providing relief for student loans linked to professional designation helps retain emerging talent
- **Workforce Strength:** Lowering financial barriers ensures a steady supply of qualified professionals for local communities and encourages workforce diversity
- **Firm Support:** Pro-architect financial policies help small firms recruit and retain skilled staff
- **Federal Action:** Congress should align education financing with the high public value licensed architects provide



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AIA MASSACHUSETTS

LEGISLATIVE & REGULATORY UPDATES

AIA Massachusetts (AIAMA) is the state AIA component. Incorporated in 1941, AIA Massachusetts is managed by a nine-member Board of Directors – three members from each of the three local components: the BSA, Central MA and Western MA. Its mission is to serve its members, advance their value, and improve the quality of the built environment and the practice of architecture in Massachusetts through legislative and governmental action. AIAMA promotes architects and architecture through political activism, legislative activities and grassroots efforts and guards the interests of architects regarding regulations and law. WMAIA's Marc Sternick AIA, who is the 2026 president of AIA Massachusetts, outlines his vision for the coming year.

Dear Colleagues,

I'm honored to serve as the 2026 President of AIA Massachusetts and to work alongside a dedicated and talented community of architects across the Commonwealth.

As I step into this role, my focus is on strengthening AIA Massachusetts as a hub for climate leadership - helping translate research and emerging best practices into practical, accessible tools for firms of all sizes, while fostering greater collaboration across industry, academia, and public partners.

Building on the strong momentum of AIA advocacy, education, and member engagement efforts, I look forward to advancing policies and initiatives that support carbon reduction, healthy buildings, and housing solutions, and enhancing the information and tools that we use in shaping a more resilient and equitable built environment across Massachusetts. These are key issues AIAMA is currently working on:

- **Accessibility Reform – MAAB 30% Rule**
Rather than using property value, we are working on the potential for using work-area approach already implemented in code & ADA standards.
- **Embodied Carbon Implementation**
Working on education, and phased adaptation
- **Healthy Schools & Campus Modernization**
MA Senate unanimously passed \$3.28B higher-ed capital bond bill for modernization and infrastructure improvements.
- **Historic District Legislation**
Bill was referred to study; AIAMA working group will simplify proposal, improve outreach, build stronger coalition.
- **Single-Stair Housing Study**
AIAMA has submitted a representative to serve on Governor's advisory group to ensure balance of housing production goals with life/safety considerations.



- **Interior Design Licensure**
Establishes registration framework for ID, while preserving architects' role in structural & life/safety.
- **Liability and Indemnification**
We continue to work with industry partners to address growing liability risks for design professionals.
- **Housing & the ADU Design Competition**
We are collaborating with the State on the ADU Design Competition; submissions are beginning to arrive!
- **Energy Affordability & Climate Policy**
Advancing new energy affordability legislation while maintaining the 2030 Greenhouse Gas Reduction mandate.
- **Federal Education Policy/Professional Degree Status**
AIA National is responding to US Department of Ed rule that could remove professional status for architecture, and affect student loans.

We are seeing progress across many fronts, reflecting the dedication of our members, the strength of our partnerships, and a shared commitment to serving our communities and the public good.

Thank you for your continued engagement and support.

Warm regards,
Marc Sternick, AIA
President, 2026, AIA Massachusetts

If you are interested in getting involved in AIA Massachusetts consider attending the monthly meetings of the GAC (Government Affairs Committee). More info can be found at aiama.org or reach out to AIAMA Executive Director John Nunnari at jnunnari@architects.org



Make space for listening to the echoes of the past

For architect Scot Samuelson, it was about having respect for the history and significance of the work that came before him. So, for the reimagining of a Connecticut home designed by renowned early-20th-century architect J. Frederick Kelly, Samuelson included custom, historically inspired Marvin Ultimate collection windows and doors in his plans, ensuring that this transformation honored the character of Kelly's original vision.

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COTE UPDATE

JESSE SELMAN AIA, COTE CHAIR



The WMAIA COTE committee is meeting regularly again in service of our mission: **To provide resources to our members and our greater community that fosters the development of environmentally sound structures and sustainable communities.**

It is a great group, and a rich dialogue has already emerged. This year's themes include bringing emerging professionals into leadership roles around sustainability, and tackling the omnipresent topic of Artificial Intelligence, or as I like to call it "AI Society Sauce".

In focusing on AI, we'll look into its impacts financially, environmentally and within society, and explore its benefits and drawbacks. We don't know what we'll find; this should be interesting.

What does AI have to say about itself, and about Committee's focus? (please read aloud in a robotic voice)

"Artificial intelligence is rapidly transforming the design and construction industries, but its growth also carries significant environmental implications. The WMAIA Committee on the Environment (COTE) has begun exploring the intersection of AI and sustainability to better understand how emerging technologies affect energy consumption, carbon emissions, and responsible practice within the built environment.

Training and operating large AI models require substantial computing power, which in turn demands significant electricity and water resources for data centers. As architects committed to climate action, COTE is examining how these hidden environmental costs align with the profession's broader sustainability goals. The committee is working to raise awareness among members about the environmental footprint associated with AI tools that are increasingly used in design workflows.

Now, back to the living author!

The Committee on the Environment is excited to develop our fall programming on this topic in a way that brings us together as humans, shares skills, and strengthens our ability to practice architecture to the benefit of the planet.

For more information or to join the COTE, please email WMAIA Exec. Director Lorin Starr: director@wmaia.org



New WMAIA COTE Chair Jesse Selman AIA next to a recent project as rendered by AI. Hard to tell it's not real. Beware the deepfake.



CARYN BRAUSE FAIA WINS AWARD

Caryn Brause, Professor of Architecture, has been awarded the prestigious **Distinguished Professor Award** from the **Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture**.

This major national honor recognizes architecture faculty who have had a significant and lasting impact on students through their teaching, mentorship, and academic leadership. Brause’s work has been widely celebrated for its ability to foster creative inquiry and support student development.

Caryn will be formally recognized at the **ACSA Annual Meeting in Chicago** this March, where she will present her work.

Caryn’s introduction to her awards submission package:

“My teaching, research, and service demonstrate how I convey to students the critical role that the design community plays in contributing to human flourishing. As a professor, I have developed both design and interdisciplinary coursework that aligns with my research agenda concerning the role of the built environment in health, equity, and wellbeing. I have integrated a diverse range of practitioners into my classes, to introduce students to varied practice issues and opportunities and enabled these students to locate their places in the field during their studies and after they graduate. Through my teaching and service, I have built bridges across departments and between the academy and surrounding communities, and I have advanced the profession through



numerous leadership roles, with a focus on equitably expanding opportunities in the field.”

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CITIZEN ARCHITECT

LINDSAY COMEAUX-SCHNARR AIA

Where do you live?

I live in Shutesbury, on the Amherst border. When I started working with the Amherst Design Review Board, I lived in Amherst. I still have an Amherst mailing address, and work in Amherst – so I'm still able to be a member of the Design Review Board.

In what way are you serving your community?

I've been on the Amherst Design Review Board for about 10 years. It's a really rewarding way to stay involved with what's happening architecturally in downtown Amherst. It's also an opportunity to engage in some of Amherst's bigger design efforts, like the wayfinding and signage that the town implemented several years ago, noting landmarks and historical locations in town. The DRB is also somewhat involved in the Amherst Master Plan, which is led by Dodson & Flinker Landscape Architects & Planners. That's pretty interesting!

Since graduating from UMass Amherst in 2011, I've also been consistently involved in UMass's thesis programs and studio reviews. I recently met with students about their experiences at UMass, reviewed their portfolios and resumes, and gave them feedback. We're fortunate to have a strong design program locally, and I'm pleased to be part of it.

Why Architecture?

I'm a lifelong artist, designer and dancer, and yet I have a strong analytical side. My initial bachelor's degree was in chemistry, from UC Santa Cruz. When I moved to Massachusetts, I entered the UMass Amherst architectural program, because I missed the arts -- and discovered that I love architecture! It activates *all* parts of my brain.

As I get further along in my career, especially with my current position at Kuhn Riddle Architects and Designers, I love the fact that so much of it is interpersonal. We are not designing in a box. We're a living system. What we create is based on conversations with each other and our clients and other professionals that we work with. It's a very generative experience and I really appreciate that.

What's the best thing about supporting your community?

I think that my expertise as a design professional is a real benefit to the work of the Amherst Design Review Board. And we hear that echoed from applicants and business owners, that they appreciate the design perspectives we bring.

It's also fun to see work completed, however small, and to feel that I've had a part in it. For instance, McMurphy's Tavern, which opened in 1998, recently relocated. The sign they'd had for years was iconic and had great "place recognition" for the Amherst community: it was wooden, painted green with a scalloped gold border. Very Irish. The proposed sign for their new location had the same font, but didn't have the scalloped border or the gold paint. We recommended that they retain their traditional visual identity, so they added a gold scalloped border inside their new rectangular sign. It looks great!

What's something cool that you're working on right now?

I'm working with Habitat for Humanity on a housing project in



Belchertown. Kuhn Riddle has historically worked with Habitat, as we feel that their mission to provide affordable housing is extremely valuable. This particular project has been controversial with neighbors, who have had mixed feelings about this affordable housing project. I've attended listening sessions with the neighbors, and we have incorporated a variety of their suggestions into our designs to better knit the homes into the look and feel of the town. We have – and Habitat has – certain design and code constraints within which we must work. We can't make everyone happy, but we hope to communicate the significance of affordable housing and the value of the bigger picture to folks who may feel reluctant to incorporate a variety of housing types in our community. As with all architectural design, it's a generative and interpersonal process that aims to serve collective goals locally and globally.

What don't most people know about you?

I grew up in a hybrid of southern California and northwest Arkansas. I think these radically different experiences has given me an ability to understand a variety of perspectives. I do think it's true that people are people no matter where we are, there is so much that is similar rather than different. I feel like I've been a mediator most of my life, and that has probably played a big part in how I'm able to engage with community; understanding how people are different but also trying to find common ground.

What's your favorite restaurant?

My favorite Amherst restaurant right now is Johnny's. I'm addicted to their kale caesar salad with salmon – I crave it on a weekly basis. And it's such a cozy place; even in the dead of winter it feels warm in there. I also love Alina's in Hadley and, in summertime, the firepits at 30 Boltwood.



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SPOTLIGHT: EMERGING PROFESSIONAL

ASHIK MUBARAK, ASSOCIATE AIA

Why Architecture?

I usually ask myself that question late at night when I'm against a school project deadline. But the answer has always been simple: I've always felt engaged when I'm designing. The idea of creating someplace for people live, work, and grow in feels meaningful to me. Architecture allows me to shape spaces that have lasting impact. And it's never monotonous. Every design brings a new challenge, and a new way to think. That constant evolution is what keeps me inspired.

When did you know you wanted to be an architect?

In sixth grade I wanted to be a construction engineer like my father, who builds houses and often took me to site visits. Watching an empty space transform into a space filled with quality and comfort fascinated me. I was intrigued by how those spaces continued to shape people's lives long after they were complete. I may have been too young to fully understand that feeling, but I knew I wanted to create something meaningful and make a lasting impact.

Do you feel school prepared you for the office?

It trained me to think critically, solve complex problems, and spend long hours developing design ideas and to have a basic foundation. But the professional behind-the-scenes realities of practice are things you can't fully experience in school. UMass did a great job bridging that through its curriculum, though, exposing us to field experiences and interactions with practicing professionals.

When I started working, and I began to understand the logistics behind every square foot—and the emotions clients attach to those spaces—I realized architecture isn't just about design concepts; it's about balancing technical aspects with human expectations.

Why is licensure important to you ?

I'm currently licensed in India, and that experience taught me that licensure is more than just a title—it's a commitment to responsibility. It reinforces the idea that design decisions carry real consequences for safety, functionality, and people's everyday lives. The process of pursuing licensure is even more meaningful to me than the end goal. Preparing for it pushes me



to question my assumptions, refine my design approach, and strengthen my technical understanding. It helps me become more intentional and accountable in the way I design.

What's something cool that you're working on right now?

I'm working on the schematic design Phase of an elementary school project in Chicopee alongside my project architect and our firm principal. It's been challenging and exciting to help refine the design as we transition from the feasibility study into the planning phase. Being involved in stakeholder meetings and conversations with the district has given me valuable insight into the behind-the-scenes decision-making that shapes a project.

What would you like to learn more about?

I've always been fascinated by furniture design and the idea of creating pieces that are both functional and beautiful. When I have more time, I'd like to build my own furniture.

What's your favorite restaurant?

Most of my favorite restaurants are in India, although locally I love Formosa and the Halal Cart in Amherst. They serve comforting food and are places where I've made some of my good memories.

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I am deeply appreciative of the support provided by WMAIA through the Emerging Professionals Grant, which helped cover costs associated with pursuing licensure, including ARE exam fees, and provided access to valuable resources that were instrumental in my preparation.

I've now completed all of my AXP hours and finished my ARE exams this February, and I'm preparing to apply for state licensure. This opportunity has greatly contributed to my professional development, and I am grateful for WMAIA's continued investment in the future of the profession.

Ashik Mubarak, Assoc. AIA
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ON THE BOARDS

JONES WHITSETT ARCHITECTS

David Prouty High School

Addition/Renovation

This project is an addition/renovation of 126,823 GSF (34,433 renovation, 94,390 new) - constructed on a 44-acre existing site off of Route 9 (Main Street), near the center of Spencer, MA. The school serves grades 9-12; while also providing space for (5) Pre-K classrooms – and is tied into the Early Education Voc-Tech program at the High School.

The project is materially unique in that it is the first MSBA project in Massachusetts with an insulated concrete form (ICF) superstructure (Addition). It was designed and bid in the midst of post-Covid price escalations, and fear of rising steel costs – so the process was challenging, to say the least.

The District and our Design Team identified four goals:

- Provide an academic environment that is more open, connected, and focused on community
- Maintain the existing A-Wing – with its robust finishes, community-loved auditorium, and flexible, well-sized spaces within
- Capitalize on southern exposure – and tie the school more successfully to the site and the outdoors
- Design the addition for successful phasing during construction – so that modular classrooms are not necessary, and disruption to the school community is kept to a minimum

Top: Aerial view looking south from 2024. New Gym and Pre-K wing is being formed with ICF's. The existing "B" classroom wing is seen on the left – which will soon be demolished. The single story "A" wing will be saved and renovated.

Center: Aerial view from 2026. The new classroom wing is complete. The existing "B" wing has been demolished. A new Admin wing and Media Center will tie the new addition into the fully renovated existing A-wing with Auditorium, STEM rooms and Cafeteria.

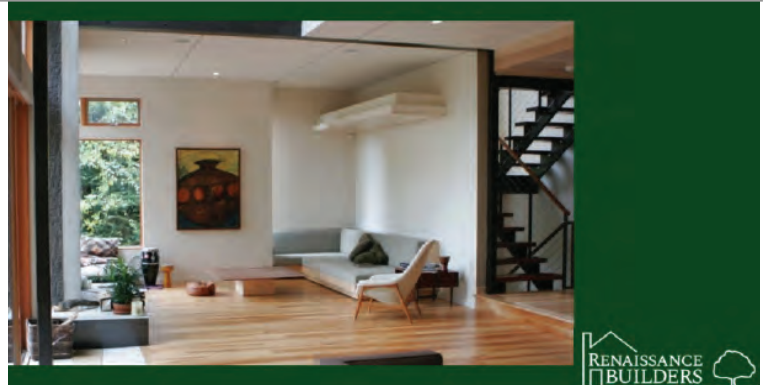
Bottom: ICF walls, exposed steel trusses and acoustic deck at the new classroom wing. We unfortunately had to put a roof on it.



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BUILDERS**

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DO YOU HAVE PROJECTS ON THE BOARDS THAT YOU'D LIKE TO PUBLISH IN THE WMAIA NEWSLETTER?
CONTACT DIRECTOR@WMAIA.ORG



**Monastery for the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate
Conception of the Most Blessed Virgin Mary**
New Construction

The Monastery is a two-story, split-level wood and steel framed structure with a combination of 60 sleeping rooms and offices at one end, and a chapel at the other end and; the two are connected by community spaces.

The challenge for this project was to make an almost 40,000 SF building feel less like an institutional building and more like a home, with private spaces, gathering spaces and a chapel connected but isolated enough to provide for prayer and quiet reflection. This was accomplished with subtle details such as an open stair between the first and second floors of the private rooms, integrating PTAC units within the window frames, using residential scaled fixtures and trims, providing a residential scaled and outfitted kitchen along with the commercial kitchen for off-hours/individual use, and by concealing utilities, sprinklers and, to the extent feasible, the life safety electronics.

Separation between private and community spaces was accomplished by a narrowing of the connecting corridor, and between community spaces and the chapel by raising the chapel a half story. The goal is an extremely low maintenance exterior using stone, individual synthetic shingle siding, metal roofing, individual synthetic slate tile roofing, doug-fir timbers with stainless steel connections and by choosing colors that allowed

for incorporating integrally colored synthetic trims. The form and style of the building is a nod to the half timber structures and the stone Shrine already on the campus.

A WHOLE NEW APPROACH TO ENGINEERING DESIGN

LN Consulting provides building design solutions focused on health and sustainability, forged in analysis and technology, in collaboration with our clients and the communities they serve. Our consulting firm delivers intelligent, forward-thinking solutions that address building resiliency, energy optimization, and occupants' safety.



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WMAIA COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING SPRING 2026

WMAIA FILM SERIES: Forever Homes

Register at <https://e.sparxo.com/SpringFilm2026>

Wednesday, April 29, 2026 | 6:30 PM | Synchronized Stream | 1LU

In the heart of North Carolina, two dreamers are revolutionizing animal care through groundbreaking architecture.

WMAIA EMERGING PROFESSIONALS SERIES

Register to receive the Zoom link at <https://e.sparxo.com/EPSpring2026>

Friday May 15 | Noon – 1 pm | Zoom

Sponsored by Barr&Barr

Each noontime gathering will focus on a specific topic, with time for questions and general discussion.

UMASS LECTURE SERIES

Wednesday April 22, 2026 | 5:30 PM | 170 Design Building UMass

Deborah Schneiderman PhD, Professor of Interior Design, Pratt Institute, Principal and Founder, deSC: architecture/design/research

BCT PROGRAMS

Register Now! <https://e.sparxo.com/BCT-Spring-2026>

Tools of the Trade for Building Diagnostics

Monday April 27, 2026 | 4:00-5:15PM

Hybrid – ZOOM or in person at 170 Design Building UMass | 1HSW

WiA Program and Tour - Orchard Hill Pavilion

Thursday, April 30, 2026 | 4PM-5:30pm \ 1 LU

Register at <https://e.sparxo.com/Women-in-Architecture-2026>

Join Women in Architecture for his year's WMAIA program – a tour of the **UMass Orchard Hill Pavilion** with WMAIA architect **Sigrid Miller Pollin FAIA**.

For more information on programs, please visit wmaia.org

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