



PILLARS

LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

2022-2023 REVIEW





2023 PILLARS CLASS

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ABOUT PILLARS

The Pillars Leadership Training Program of the American Institute of Architects Kansas City prepares a representative cross section of the chapter's emerging leaders and individuals from the building community for their role in shaping the future of both the architectural profession and the greater Kansas City metropolitan area. The training program includes active participation in programs and exposure to community leaders and issues. Each class spends their time exploring core issues that affect our profession and the region within which we practice. Through discussions with leaders and colleagues, dialogue among themselves, tours and research the group will be able to understand and present to the AIA as a whole how we can make a positive change within our community. The AIA Kansas City Pillars program is a nationally recognized program for its originality and depth and has inspired similar AIA leadership studies in other US cities. The program continues to raise the bar of what young professionals want out of their profession and how we as professionals can make an impact on our built environment.



Tom Waggoner on the history of sports architecture in Kansas City



Pillars touring Children's Mercy Park

OCTOBER: SPORTS & DEVELOPMENT

The first of two sports and development-focused sessions, October was centered around the 2026 FIFA World Cup host city bidding and preparations process, supplemented by an understanding of Kansas City as a sports architecture hub with world-class sports facilities.

The afternoon started off in downtown Kansas City, MO at HNTB with lunch and a presentation by Tom Waggoner on the history of sports architecture in Kansas City. Tom, being a foundational Kansas City sports architect himself, walked the Pillars group through 55 years of sports architecture challenges, opportunities, metrics, and culture, all unique to the Kansas City architecture community. The presentation tracked the narrative of his book, *Designed in Kansas City - How Kansas City Became the Sports Architecture Capital of the World*.

Then off to Children's Mercy Park in Kansas City, KS, home of Sporting Kansas City, the Pillars group got an extensive tour of the stadium, including locker rooms, press boxes, spectator suites and club levels, The Boot Room (a swanky new speakeasy), and the pitch itself. Following the tour, everyone gathered in the stadium's Audi Sport Club level for a panel discussion focused around the World Cup, with panelists including Katherine Holland, Director of the KC2026 FIFA World Cup Bid; Jake Reid, President of Sporting Kansas City; and Jeff Sittner, Practice Leader for Sports, Performance

and Event Studio at Burns and McDonnell. Pillars heard about who was involved in the highly collaborative World Cup bid, the process for preparing, submitting, and fielding the bid, the other cities that submitted bids throughout North America, and what assessments of Kansas City's existing sports facility, hospitality, and transportation infrastructures had to be done. There were also discussions on the modifications that would need to be made to the 1970's-built GEHA Field at Arrowhead Stadium, where the Kansas City Chiefs play, to prepare it for soccer pitch functions and the World Cup games.

The session concluded with a highly competitive game of kickball between current Pillars and Pillars alums.



Panel discussion on World Cup 2026 bidding and preparations



Fall Social at Made in KC Cafe + Bar



Annual Kickball Social

FALL SOCIAL EVENTS

The Pillars Fall Social was hosted by the Social Committee in early October at the downtown Made in KC Cafe + Bar and included an evening of relaxed conversation and local beverages among current Pillars and their Steering Committee members.

To round out the end of the October Pillars Session, current Pillars and Alums gathered at Penn Valley Park to compete in the Annual Kickball Social. The Alums squarely defeated the current Pillars in a very competitive game involving a few bloopers, a lot of laughs, some good-natured heckling, and even a home run.



Fall Social at Made in KC Cafe + Bar



Annual Kickball Social



Lunch session at Urban Station



Panel discussion at the Exchange

NOVEMBER: SPORTS & DEVELOPMENT

The second and final session for the Sports and Development team focused on development at various scales within the Kansas City Metro.

The Pillars began the day at Urban Station in Kansas City, Kansas. Steven Curtis and Diosselyn Tot from URBANWORKS, LLC kicked everything off by explaining how they have engaged the local neighborhood through community outreach. This engagement has instilled a sense of ownership and pride within the neighborhood. Shannon Criss and Nils Gore are both KU professors who are also a part of the Dotte Agency. Through the Dotte Agency and the KU School of Architecture, Shannon and Nils give students real-world experience and interaction with underserved communities that are often overlooked within the architectural field. This session gave the Pillars class insight into successful small-scale development within the metro through grass roots community engagement. Tarahumara catered the lunch for the session with a taco bar and tamales.

Large scale development was the focus of the afternoon session, which took place at The Exchange at Lead Bank. Panelists Randy Bredar of JE Dunn, Lynn Carlton from Burns & McDonnell, and Joe Perry from Port KC focused on the 2021 ULI Hines Competition, which featured the East Village neighborhood within downtown KC. Over 100 teams from all over North America reimagined this largely undeveloped

neighborhood. The panel discussed the site's challenges and criteria for the competition and explained what designs really grabbed their attention. Many of the submittals included a new downtown baseball stadium, which has been a hot button topic within the metro for the past few years.

The panel also discussed sites within Kansas City to watch as possible future development catalysts, such as property owned by the University of Missouri - Kansas City, which will benefit from the street car expansion.

The November session wrapped up with a street car ride to the River Market for Happy Hour at the Blue Line.



Pillars took a ride on the street car to River Market for Happy Hour



Touring The Builders' Association



Presentation by Joel Barrett at Missouri SBDC

DECEMBER: BUILDING KANSAS CITY

December's session was focused on looking outside of the traditional post-secondary education path and considering educational alternatives.

The session began at The Builders' Association | Kansas City Chapter, AGC Training Center where Pillars learned about the advocacy and apprenticeship programs offered with Don Greenwell, Romond Holt and Caleb McCandless, Ed.D. They took a tour of the training facility and heard from each specific trade instructor on their program curriculum. The skilled trades group is intrinsically linked to the AEC industry, and the cohort heard from each regarding the skilled trade shortage and the outreach and options available in secondary education.

Pillars then migrated to the Institute for Entrepreneurship and Innovation at University of Missouri-Kansas City to look at another approach to education — supplemental classes on entrepreneurship offered by Missouri SBDC at UMKC. As professionals, most of us can agree that there is a learning curve when it comes to the “business” of architecture. Our university education provides us with the knowledge and skill sets necessary to do our jobs, but often doesn't cover the skills needed to either venture out on our own as entrepreneurs or what it means to be a part of a business. The class heard presentations from Joel Barrett, Coach at Missouri SBDC and Brian Anderson, Professor

of Entrepreneurship at the The University of Kansas (and they played risk Jenga!) The presentations were followed by a panel of entrepreneurs, Amy Slattery of Odimo, Leo J Esposito of Bōzt App and Trish Fitzsimmons of Yarn Social, where they discussed their journeys in entrepreneurship and how they utilized Missouri SBDC along the way.

Pillars saw entrepreneurship and vocational skills join forces at Build Trybe by Cornerstones of Care, where Theo Bunch spoke about their powerful mission of building a mentorship community that builds health, independence and empowers youth with employable skills to become skilled professionals.

The session ended at Ludo's with entertaining rounds of shuffleboard and conversation.



Theo Bunch of Build Trybe



Touring Convivial Production



Panelists answer questions at Shop Local KC

JANUARY: MAKERS & SHAKERS

This month, Pillars explored Kansas City's vibrant local scene of artists, makers, and performers. The group spoke with local artists to learn how they have developed their creative process and expression, as well as how they have built businesses showcasing their art form. This was an opportunity to not only see how art can take on many forms and how the community has supported these local businesses, but also to reflect on our own creativity and artistic process.

The group started at Convivial Production, a local pottery and ceramics warehouse in the West Bottoms. Founder and owner Chentell Stiritz gave a tour of the production facility and shared thoughtful insights on the ceramic design process and how she grew her business into the success it is today.

The next stop was at Shop Local KC in Midtown, where Katie Mabry van Dieren, owner and curator of The Strawberry Swing Indie Craft Fair, has been creating gathering spaces for makers and artists since 2014. Katie shared how Strawberry Swing began as a local maker pop-up and has expanded to a brick and mortar storefront for local makers to showcase their products. While at Shop Local KC, Pillars heard from a panel of local artists, Steven Dragan, Sierra Otto, Katie, and Chentell, on where they gain inspiration from, their creative process, and how their artform evolved into a business.

Finally, the session shifted from thinking about art as a thing and dove into performing arts. Kemet Coleman, musician and co-owner of Vine Street Brewing Co., and Maya Tillman-Rayton, instructor of Hip Hop at the University of Kansas shared about the foundations of hip hop, the music culture, and the importance of hip hop culture to the community and Kansas City.

The session ended with a happy hour featuring local beers and a first for Pillars, a hip hop dance lesson from Maya! Look for our new moves at the next AIA event.



Presentation by Kemet Coleman and Maya Tillman-Rayton



Presentation by Dr. Bill Worley at the Plaza Library



Anna White hosts tour of one of Community LINC's affordable home projects

FEBRUARY: NEIGHBORHOODS - COUNTRY CLUB PLAZA & IVANHOE

February's session focused on a tale of two neighborhoods: the Country Club Plaza district and the Ivanhoe neighborhood on the east side of the city. Although these two neighborhoods are adjacent, the planning, affordability, and economic opportunity given to both have been vastly different. This gave the group a unique opportunity to study the history that led to this developmental divide that characterizes Kansas City's urban neighborhoods.

The afternoon began at the Country Club Plaza Public Library where Kansas City historian, retired professor, and author Dr. Bill Worley presented to the group. Dr. Worley outlined the history of the well-known Kansas City developer J.C. Nichols, who not only had the vision for the Country Club Plaza shopping district and surrounding neighborhoods, but also played a key role in introducing Kansas City to racially restrictive covenants and real estate practices, which ultimately led to a city divided east to west, most notably along Troost Avenue.

The group then traveled to Community LINC at 40th & Troost Avenue. There Teresa McClain, Precious Stargell Cushman, and Anna White gave an overview of Community LINC's mission and services, which include housing for community members in need, as well as lifestyle, social and mental health services for their clients. The visit with Community LINC concluded with a tour of two homes in the city's Ivanhoe

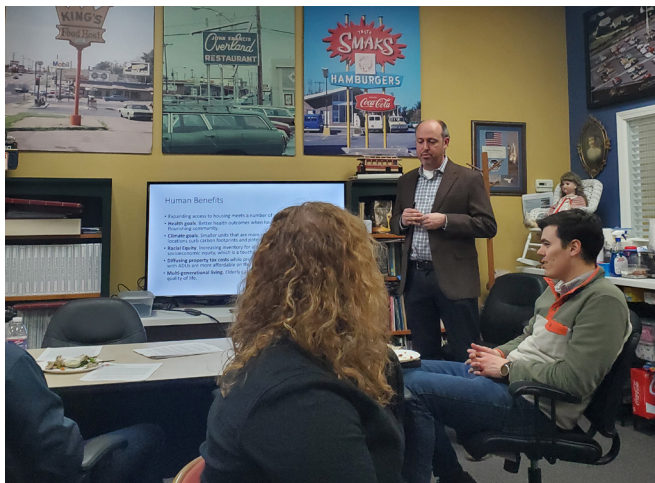
neighborhood that the organization oversees as part of their affordable housing initiative.

The last stop for the afternoon was at Harris Sport Park, which included a presentation from Jasmine Harris, daughter of the park's founder, Chris Harris. Harris Sport Park was initially a block of overgrown and dilapidated homes that the Harris family acquired over several decades. Founder Chris Harris had the vision to transform the neighborhood into a vibrant outdoor park specifically aimed at providing a safe and constructive place for the community's youth to gather. The park includes a clubhouse, basketball courts, playground equipment, green space, and small-scale golf course.

The day concluded with a happy hour at BrickHouse KC.



Tour of Harris Sport Park with Jasmine Harris



Presentation by Ian Graves at the Overland Park Historical Society



Panel session by county and city leaders at Overland Park City Hall: Ian Graves, Curt Skoog, Kristy Baughman and Leslie Karr.

MARCH: ATTAINABLE HOUSING

For March's session, we explored the housing market and the unique challenges multiple jurisdictions face on each side of the state line. Every city around the metropolitan encounters different circumstances, but affordability was the common denominator of the day.

The day began at the Overland Park Historical Society's offices with a presentation by Ian Graves, city council member of the 6th ward of Prairie Village, KS. As we had previously discussed in our February session, Prairie Village was established as an affordable housing option by JC Nichols Co. for post World War II families. Today, this is a far different situation as many Kansas City area families cannot afford to live in the city. Ian Graves explained to the group the dynamics that challenge Prairie Village from the lack of housing types to the economics behind the "scrape and build". The group discussed the advantages of diversifying housing types around the city to make it economically feasible for members of the community like teachers, firefighters, and other service providers to live within city limits. Ian and fellow city council members are hoping to make this possible by amending the city's zoning regulations.

The session then moved on to Overland Park's City Hall for a panel discussion with Ian Graves, Curt Skoog, Leslie Karr, and Kristy Baughman. At Overland Park, we discussed the housing issues plaguing Overland Park and Johnson County as a whole. As Curt Skoog, Overland Park's mayor stated multiple times, the city and county are facing a housing shortage crisis. Besides building more single family homes, Overland Park is working on projects utilizing duplexes and pattern housing. The panel also introduced the group

to Johnson County's housing study recently completed evaluating every city in the county's current housing situation. It also creates a toolkit for jurisdictions to improve housing within their market.

After crossing the state line, our final stop of the day was a tour of the Marlborough school owned by the Marlborough Community Land Trust. The tour led by Meghan Freeman, executive director of the Marlborough Community Land Trust, walked us through the empty school which will serve in the future as a neighborhood asset for low rate commercial rental by community members managing small businesses. The discussion then shifted to what a land trust is and how the Marlborough community plans to grow housing options. Land trusts act as transition housing for qualifying families working to build equity from renting to being able to purchase a market rate home of their own.

The day's session concluded with a happy hour and March Madness basketball at the Well bar in Waldo.



Tour of the Marlborough School



Pillars working with Paul Zehr of Cultivate KC to spread out mulch.



Tim O'Neill from Urban Lumber discusses the wood species available in KC.

APRIL: THE CYCLE OF FOOD

In April, the Pillars explored the complete food cycle, from local production to recycling waste, gaining valuable insights into the sources and potential of our food. The day began at Cultivate KC, a local non-profit dedicated to fostering food, farms, and community in urban settings. We met with Executive Director Brien Darby and Program Manager Paul Zehr who gave a tour and shared their vision and passion for what they do. As a thank you for their time, we got our hands dirty and volunteered to move mulch.

After learning about the challenges of growing food in an urban environment, the next stop was Missouri Organic Recycling where Stan Slaughter led us through the truly mind-boggling scope of the process of disposing of food waste. Every year Missouri Organic Recycling diverts more than 32 million pounds of food waste from area landfills and since 2008 has diverted more than 150 million pounds of food waste alone. The food waste is combined with a portion of the more than 150,000 cubic yards of brush brought to their facilities to create 54 million pounds of compost annually.

The final stop was at Urban Lumber where owner and founder Tim O'Neill gave us a tour and discussed how they have turned over 400,000 board feet of waste stream logs into usable hardwood lumber.

Throughout the session, the critical role of food systems in urban infrastructure was highlighted, with an emphasis on cultivating an equitable, sustainable, and healthy local food system. The challenges of urban farming, waste disposal, and repurposing organic matter were discussed, promoting the adoption of sustainable practices for a resilient urban environment. The Pillars left with a deeper understanding and appreciation for building a sustainable food system in Kansas City.

The session ended at Farewell Bar where we were able to relax and discuss the day's activities.



Danny Roberson of Arnold Development Group discusses the opportunities of developing a Passive House Certified apartment complex.



The roof top garden at Second + Delaware with a stellar view of downtown.

MAY: ENERGY RESILIENCY

In May the Pillars group explored energy resiliency in the built environment. We met at Second + Delaware Apartments, the world's largest Passive House Certified development which spans over 548,000 square feet. This eco-friendly building consumes a 90% less energy compared to typical apartment buildings.

Our first speakers were Ashley Sadowski, Executive Director of Building Energy Exchange and Jeremy Knoll, President of Climate Action KC. They shared valuable insights on their organizations' vital role in propelling the region towards its ambitious goal of achieving net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Climate Action KC, a prominent regional nonprofit, has been instrumental in fostering collaboration among elected officials and community leaders. Their collective vision revolves around reducing emissions, boosting the economy, enhancing public health, and elevating the overall quality of life in our area.

Next up, Jonathan Arnold, Founder of the Arnold Development Group and Danny Roberson, Director of Development, as they addressed challenges and opportunities encountered while building the Second + Delaware Apartment complex. Our group then had the opportunity to tour the facility.

Our final stop took us to "Project Living Proof" at the Metropolitan Energy Center. This remarkable century-old house has been thoughtfully renovated to showcase the vast possibilities of improving energy efficiency in older homes. David Albrecht, Sr. Program Director, and Mary English, Program Manager, provided compelling insights into MEC's vision and the impactful work they are doing within the community as we explored the house.

The day concluded with a well-deserved happy hour on the rooftop deck at OurHouseKC in midtown.