



PILLARS

LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

2020–2021 REVIEW



AIA
Kansas City



2021 PILLARS CLASS

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Tim Ockinga - JE Dunn Construction

Kevin Pearson - Smith & Boucher

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Dan Pierce, AIA - GLMV Architecture

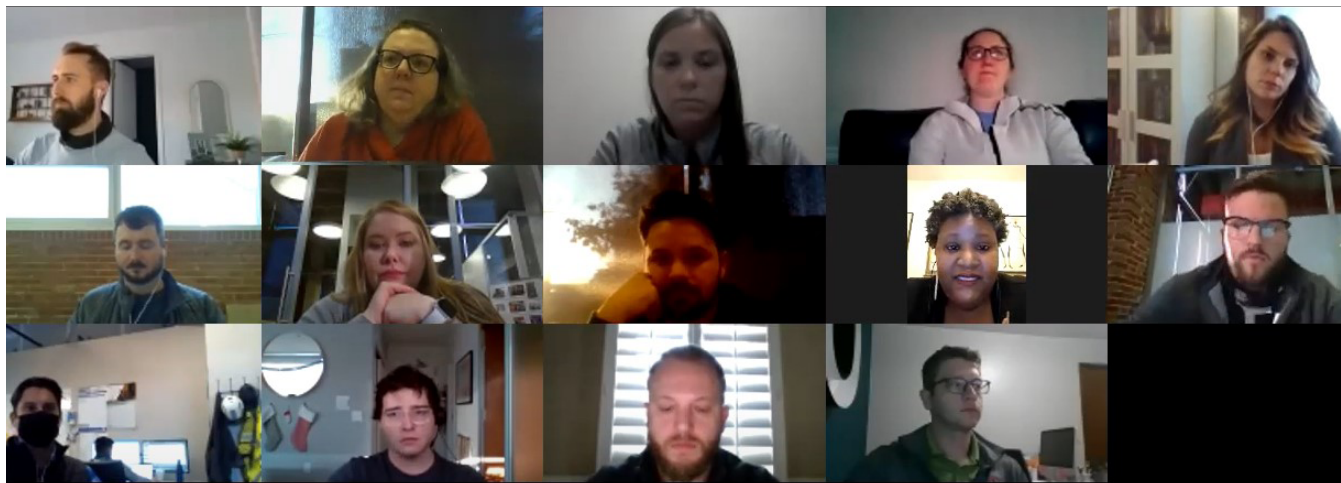
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ABOUT PILLARS

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.



A virtual Q&A discussion with Justice Gatson with the ACLU.

DECEMBER SESSION - SOCIAL JUSTICE

Reconvening for our December Session, our Pillars group explored difficult topics related to race, social justice, and policing. We began the session by ordering food from Ruby Jeans Juicery, an effort to not only support minority owned business during the pandemic but also introduce the class to a delicious meal from a business many of us were not familiar with.

Jacob Becchina of the Kansas City Police Department joined us for another panel discussion, continuing the conversation on the unique model of state control over the KCPD. In the 1930's, Tom Pendergast and his political machine returned control of the police department to the office of the Governor in an attempt to remove the influence of local political figures acting for personal gain. Kansas City is the only major city in the United States which does not maintain local control over its police department. Jacob with co-panelist Lora McDonald, Executive Director of MORE², examined the pros and cons of the current model through the contrasting lenses of the activist and the department. Currently, KCPD is overseen by a 5 person Board of Police Commissioners appointed by the Governor; a structure identified by many in the community as a significant issue. Through the conversation we often found ourselves coming back to the issues of accountability in our current system, as the board and chief do not answer to local constituents since they are appointed and not elected. While acknowledging that cities of similar scale (ie. St. Louis) have their own issues even under a system of local control, Lora continuously reminded the group that passing legislation to return control to Kansas City should be the priority, while the specifics of the structure could be worked out over time.

Later, we were joined by Garrett Griffin, Author of *Racism in Kansas City*, where he gave an in depth summary of the history of Kansas City. Garrett covered many of the not-so-pleasant policies throughout the city's history, but also often focused on the activists and civil disobedience that slowly led to positive policy reform. He began the lesson back in the 1820's and 1830's, highlighting the unique geographical location of Kansas City on an ideological border between the free soil in Kansas and the slave state of Missouri. This set the tone for many of the policy tensions in the following centuries including the eras of segregation, redlining, and unpaid prison labor still unjustly allowed under the 13th amendment.

Concluding our session, Justice Gatson of the ACLU, led a discussion on the topics of criminal justice and social equity. We discussed improvements to criminal justice practices, including bail reform, the need for a conviction integrity unit, and reducing the gap in traffic stops relative to race. People of color are stopped 93% more than their white counterparts despite making up only 10% of the population. Justice highlighted the importance of being an informed voter, expressing opposition to components of the recently passed controversial crime bill SB 600, citing \$16 million of unnecessary incarceration costs, and increasing the prison population by 2,500 inmates. Though it passed, she mentioned successes in getting some components of the bill removed.

Lunch was provided by Ruby Jean's Juicery, a local minority owned business in Kansas City. We ended our session, toasting to another round of great topics and even greater panelists with another virtual happy hour.