



# PILLARS

LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

**2025-2026 REVIEW**





## 2025 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.



*Bryan Ari presents on hospitality design*

## MAY: FOOD

The May Pillars session explored how Kansas City's culinary identity has been shaped by migration, industry, hospitality, and the city's enduring love of simple, well-crafted food through conversations with food journalists and hospitality experts. The afternoon opened with Dr. Andrea Broomfield who traced the evolution of Kansas City's food history from its earliest communities to today's diverse restaurant scene. She described how Native American, Mexican, French, and African influences converged in the region long before the Louisiana Purchase, and how later waves of immigrants brought their own food traditions, creating a layered and evolving culinary landscape. She concludes that Kansas City's longstanding preference for hearty, approachable, high-quality food like Mexican and barbecue is tied to the pragmatic traders of the Santa Fe Trail and the traditions of African Americans once they were free to start businesses and sell food.

The session then shifted to the language of hospitality design, where Bryan Ari, owner of Kansas City's Fern Bar presented on how the physical layout of restaurants and bars shapes the guest experience. The discussion centered on how service style, workflow, and movement patterns all determine how a space should be designed. From bar layouts that operate like assembly lines to service areas that minimize unnecessary steps, the group gained insight into how thoughtful design enhances hospitality and efficiency.



*Pillars tour Boulevard Brewing Company*

His emphasis on customer experience as well as the ergonomics of his bartenders' workstations has led to Fern Bar receiving many nominations and awards for design and staff quality.

Staying at Fern Bar, the Pillars had a conversation with Jill Silva about the James Beard Awards, first talking about its origins, and then moving into Kansas City specific winners and nominees. She spoke on the evolution of chefs and bartenders, the rise of craft cocktails, and the importance of ethics, community involvement, and regional expertise and how they factor into award consideration. She ended with how service is the heart of Kansas City's dining culture and a distinguisher among restaurants and bars up for critical recognition.

The day concluded at Boulevard Brewing Company, where the group took a sustainability focused tour. Boulevard's commitment to environmental stewardship is made clear through initiatives such as the shared creation of Ripple Glass (which diverts over 150 million pounds of glass from landfills annually), its zero-landfill facility, on-site water sanitation system, green roof, solar panels, and extensive tree planting. Pillars also learned about the brewery's long list of community partners and events of which Boulevard is a participant.