



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.



Kevin Wallace presents on the Roy Blunt Luminary Park Project

APRIL: SUSTAINABILITY

The April Pillars session began with a presentation by Kevin Wallace from HNTB talking about the new Roy Blunt Luminary Park project: a 5.5 acre park over I-670, and how a project of this scale ties into larger sustainability goals for the city. This project aims to improve walkability, stormwater drainage, and bring green space to what is currently a noisy barrier between two halves of the city. Other project goals include reducing noise and air pollution for the neighboring residences and businesses, boosting local economy, and providing what residents want for this space after conducting several public meetings and surveys and referencing Dallas's Klyde Warren Park as precedent. Partners HNTB, OJB, BNIM, MODOT, and community groups all play a role in making a city project like this happen, and their collaboration hopes to bring a more inviting and active destination to the heart of the city and bridging the physical gap between downtown and the crossroads district. The engineering considerations for the project are also quite substantial. Kevin went into detail about the different structural and systems obstacles they have overcome to date as they look to retrofit this highway to comply with modern tunnel standards under tight existing constraints.

The day continued with a discussion with Steve McDowell, Principal at BNIM, and Lauren Harness, Program Director at Kansas City Design Center, about Greenline KC; a 10-mile loop that would connect neighborhoods, parks, arts, and neighborhoods around KC's greater downtown. The proposal would be to clean up, and in some cases construct, connections between existing infrastructure to create a safe and beautiful urban path for the people of Kansas City. BNIM along with the students at KCDC are currently in the visioning and planning stages and encourage ideas from the public on this potentially transformative pedestrian focused project.



Pillars tour the under-construction Overland Park Farmers Market at Clocktower Landing

After a quick coffee break, the Pillars met with Bryan Toben, Director of Parks and Recreation with Overland Park, and Mike Burton, a project manager with the city, to tour the ongoing construction of the new Overland Park Farmers Market. Formerly the farmers market was held in a parking lot in Downtown Overland Park (OP) under a canopy that the market had outgrown. The farmers market improvement project, now known as Clocktower Landing, includes a restoration of the clocktower in Downtown OP, an update to the plaza directly adjacent to the tower, new indoor spaces for farmers market vendors and shoppers, new shade structures for outdoor vendors, new restrooms to serve the market, ADA access from Santa Fe Drive, and larger gathering spaces where the city plans to host small concerts and other events. Bryan and Mike also cited the mass timber construction elements of the new farmers market building as something they pushed for and have been really pleased with during construction. The structure of the indoor spaces features heavy glulams and cross laminated timber (CLT) panels as part of the roof assembly. Clock tower landing will be open and available for the 2027 market season.

The session ended with a brief Q&A at BRR architecture with Emily Randel of Building Energy Exchange Kansas City. Emily spoke on the advocacy and project engagement work she and her team do in KC and how architects can improve the way they talk about sustainability internally as well as with their clients to educate and demystify new regulations in the metro. She cited specific legislation such as Kansas City, Missouri's adoption of the 2021 IECC codes as a major victory for their advocacy efforts and for the city as a whole.