



# PILLARS

LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

**2025-2026 REVIEW**





## 2025 PILLARS CLASS

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Ethan Hale, AIA - Hoefer Welker

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Kylie Miller, AIA - Populous

Katie Pruser, Assoc. AIA - HFG Architecture

Jenna Roblee, Assoc. AIA - Finkle + Williams Architecture

Tess Ryan, Assoc. AIA - AECOM

Sean Stattelman, Assoc. AIA - Pulse Design Group

Ryan Sudhoff, AIA - Gensler

Paige Vespestad - Smith & Boucher

Erin Wheeler, AIA - Yaeger Architecture

## 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.



*Panelists discuss AI in the built environment.*



*Pillars tour Atlas 9, guided by Dimensional Innovations.*

## NOVEMBER: AI IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

On November 6, 2025, the session kicked off with a tour of Atlas 9, an immersive, narrative-driven art experience design and built by DI (Dimensional Innovations) located in Kansas City, KS. This 46,000 SF building evokes a fictional 1995 movie theater that has been “transformed” into a multi-sensory world when something “strange” starts to go amiss. Visitors are set off on a “back to the future type journey,” as they move through themed spaces, an auditorium, speakeasy, arcade, pizza parlor, all part of a live story, blending art installation, set design, & interactive theatre. It’s not just static art, there are live performers, technological interactives and narrative clues.

Next up was a Tour of DI Headquarters. Pillars explored a behind-the-scenes look at how DI blends architecture, industrial design, technology, storytelling, and fabrication to create world-class immersive environments. During the tour, DI walked us through their integrated process, from concept development to full-scale fabrication, showing how designers, engineers, technologists, artists, and makers collaborate under one roof. We explored several key departments, including: Fabrication & Prototyping Studios, Design & Experience Labs, Graphics & Large Scale Printing, and Technology and Interactive Development.

Pillars wrapped up with a panel discussion about AI in the built environment. The panel explored how emerging AI tools

are transforming the built environment, from accelerating design workflows and visualization to enabling smarter, data-driven decision-making throughout the lifecycle of a project. The conversation emphasized responsible integration, enhanced creativity, and the new opportunities and challenges AI creates for architects and designers. Panelists included: 1) Chris Riebschlager - Director of Creative Technology, DI. 2) Callum Vierthaler, founder of Y-Group. 3) Alex Lamoureux - Project Designer, Populous 4) Michael Gekas, AIA - Virtual Design & Construction Executive, McCownGordon. 5) Gustavo Amaral, Ph.D. KU School of Architecture & Design. Moderated by Pillars, Alexandra Bojarski-Stauffer, AIA, Emerald Hive Design.



*Pillars experience one of the largest 3D Printers in the world, used to 3D print the 9 story tall torch seen at the Raiders Stadium, while on a tour at Dimensional Innovations.*