

November 16, 2017

BOSTON SOCIETY OF ARCHITECTS/AIA STATEMENT OF POLICY PRINCIPLES

Introduction

Public policy advocacy reflects our core values as architects. As professionals, we have a duty to behave in a thoughtful way. We are supposed to put the interests of our clients ahead of our own interests – but most of all, we are supposed to put the interests of the public ahead of both. The BSA’s Constitution underscores these fundamental values; our organization exists “to promote the artistic, scientific and administrative competence of the profession; to encourage civic, educational and cultural activities; to forward the objects of the American Institute of Architects and to urge adherence to its ethical standards.” The AIA code of ethics identifies certain key responsibilities for our public role:

- To respect and conserve our natural and cultural heritage, and strive to improve the environment and the quality of life within it [Ethical Standard 1.3].
- To uphold human rights in all of our professional endeavors [Ethical Standard 1.4].
- To use our professional knowledge and skill to design buildings and spaces that enhance human dignity and the public health, safety, and welfare [Ethical Standard 1.5].
- To act as stewards of the earth, by promoting sustainable design and development principles [Canon VI].

The need for clarity about our policy principles and agenda is especially pressing today. Major policy issues are facing the nation, Massachusetts, and Greater Boston. These include the implementation of Imagine Boston 2030 and Climate Ready Boston; and working on laws, regulations, and policies that will maintain Massachusetts’ role as a national leader in climate change, affordable housing, mass transit, social equity, and other issues critical to our buildings and communities.

The following policy principles represent and articulate the BSA’s positions and goals. They draw upon a range of documents, including the “Weave” (BSA / Foundation Strategic Plan), the Civic Task Force Statement of Principles, and consultation with current and past presidents, committee chairs, the executive director, and many other BSA members. They are intended to:

- Help the BSA become a more effective advocacy organization, so the outside world knows what we stand for.
- Provide clarity to BSA officers, board members, committee chairs, and staff in representing our positions. This will foster both continuity and innovation from year to year; as new leaders come on board, they will get the chance to revisit and reaffirm the principles, and set the next year’s agenda.
- Prioritize the use of BSA resources, and help the BSA coordinate more effectively with its partners – the Foundation and AIA-Massachusetts.
- Provide understanding and “ownership” among BSA members about our advocacy and civic engagement work: what we stand for, and what we have accomplished.

BSA policy principles

Two over-arching principles inform all of the BSA’s policy and advocacy activities:

1. **Design Excellence.** Common principles of excellent design include: a strong relationship to landscape and context; enlivening open spaces; details and materials that bring designs to life and scale them to the human body; and interiors shaped by the uses they accommodate and connecting to the surrounding community. Design excellence broadens our perceptions of personal and social possibilities, and it inspires our thinking about the world around us.

2. **Social Cohesion and Equity.** Our work aims to build communities that address needs for social cohesion and equity. It is clear how profoundly the built environment shapes the inequities we see throughout the region. Planning and design can help communities make informed choices that address those inequities. Design excellence in the service of social cohesion and equity creates flourishing spaces and flourishing people.

Informed by these over-arching principles, we commit to using our professional knowledge and skill to address the following challenges:

3. **Environment and Climate Change:** Meet the challenges of environmental degradation and global climate change, and radically reduce and ultimately eliminate the carbon emissions associated with building construction and operation.
4. **Resiliency:** Plan and design for environmental resiliency, especially the risks of flooding caused by climate change and sea level rise that threaten all coastal communities in greater Boston.
5. **Housing:** Increase housing supply and reduce housing costs in greater Boston, especially at affordable levels, and thereby address inequality and strengthen our region's economic future.
6. **City and regional planning:** Participate in replanning the physical form of the Greater Boston region for economic and social changes in the next 10 - 30 years, with emphasis on jobs housing, transportation, education, and the civic realm.
7. **Improving practice:** Help architects and firms navigate the changing nature of practice; remedy patterns of racial and gender inequality within the profession; and expand public interest / pro bono design services.

Implementation

Each year the incoming VP / President-elect, working with the VP for Advocacy and a small task force, will (1) review, update, and reaffirm the BSA's policy principles, (2) review progress against the previous year's policy agenda, and (3) define the BSA's policy agenda for the following year. This will institutionalize the tradition of the BSA's "president's agenda," so that each agenda will have a continuing vitality, and it will embed that agenda within the organization's articulated policies.

The reviewed and confirmed policy principles and annual agenda will be submitted to the BSA Board for review and approval in the fall, to provide guidance for the incoming officers and board in the following year. The VP / President-elect and the VP for Advocacy will also be charged with coordinating the BSA's policy agenda with the agenda for the Foundation and the annual advocacy agenda of AIA-Massachusetts. There are three areas of activity in which public policy is put into action by the BSA and its partners, the Foundation and AIA-Massachusetts.

- **Advocacy:** Advocating for changes in government laws, regulations, programs, and policies, consistent with our core ethical values, within the nation, the state, and Greater Boston. ***BSA is the lead organization within Greater Boston; AIA-Mass is the lead organization state-wide, with the BSA playing a supportive role.***
- **Civic Engagement:** Convening groups, panels, talks, and competitions that show how design thinking can address the challenges facing the Greater Boston region. ***BSA and Foundation are the joint lead organizations.***

- **Community Projects:** Carrying out hands-on projects, charrettes, and workshops that apply design resources to assist the neighborhoods and communities of Greater Boston. ***Foundation is the lead organization, with the BSA playing a supportive role.***

During the course of each following year, the President, the VP for Advocacy, and the Executive Director will periodically evaluate the BSA's progress toward that year's policy agenda, and report to the Board.

Adopted by the BSA Board of Directors, November 16, 2017