OUR MISSION

is to promote social equality by expanding access to values-driven design that helps individuals and communities achieve economic and physical resilience and sustainability.

OUR VISION

We believe that every member of a community should have access to and benefit from design excellence.

By educating professionals, we empower those who are trained to lead a community towards excellence.

By educating the property owner, we empower those directly affected to make wise and appropriate decisions towards their environment.

By collaborating with like-minded agencies, we share ideas to create a larger network of professionals to support the communities where we work.

By engaging government agencies, we share the ideas generated by the residents and businesses of their jurisdiction that aim to implement the desires and needs of the community.

We believe that social, economic, and physical resilience and sustainability are intertwined and within reach to all.
A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2017. For many, the year brought milestones with cause for celebration: births, birthdays, gradutions, marriages, a new home...


For many others, the year was negatively impactful as they may have watched their car float away, their possessions lost as a result of a hazard, their home destroyed, or a loved one lost. For millions of citizens around the world and close to home, 2017 will be a milestone marker in their life.

But...there are forces that are tested during these trying times:

RESOLVE PATIENCE PERSISTENCE HOPE LOVE

These move mountains, bring strangers together, save neighborhoods, support families and rebuild lives. It is with these forces, coupled with our vision and technical abilities as designers, our empathy and sympathy as case managers that we will continue to support the families and communities to empower them towards a more resilient and sustainable future.

WHO WE ARE

We are an architecture and advocacy nonprofit, one of the few, that seeks to promote social equality by expanding access to values-driven design that helps individuals and communities achieve economic and physical resilience and sustainability.

Our commitment is to build a better place for all.

WHAT WE DO

We focus our efforts on individuals and communities in crisis whether it is due to a natural disaster or needed services lacking within a community. Regardless of the project typology, so long as the need for positive design intervention, community engagement or financial sustainability, our service approach will provide the appropriate solution that benefits the user.

Our goal is to responsibly connect the relationship between residents, their communities and the built and natural environment in a timeless way. We seek a solution that employs education and collaboration to elevate community after community to achieve excellence.
OUR WORK

MANAGEMENT

ADVOCACY

DESIGN

EDUCATION
MANAGEMENT
Our client management services run the spectrum from social service through construction observation throughout the entire disaster recovery process. By assisting our clients from initial intake through certificate of occupancy, we provide them with a survivor-centric, holistic recovery process.

ADVOCACY
With the reality of climate change, it is imperative that we plan for the future. We advocate on behalf of homeowners and clients to access better and additional recovery services to build back a more resilient and sustainable home to be prepared for the future impacts of climate change.
**DESIGN**

We are one of the few nonprofit design organizations that can offer architectural services to property owners at no expense. Our solutions employ universal design principals and are rooted in resilient and sustainable design.

**EDUCATION**

Through community charrettes, REDC clinics, and educational lecture series for residents, case managers, and local jurisdictions, we aim to reach a larger population than our clients.
The Elevated Studio is structured into two studios: one that focuses on disaster recovery, and one that focuses on civic works.

**DISASTER RECOVERY**

We believe that architects and other allied design professionals have a moral and professional obligation to be collaborative leaders in disaster recovery. While we are generally last responders that enter the disaster landscape (typically 3-6 months after response starts); we become active during the response and relief efforts, helping communities assess the damaged environment and preparing for recovery. It is our duty to reconstruct the built environment responsibly, resiliently, sustainably; guiding the communities we work with to become better and more prepared for future events. Our experience highlights that the vulnerable populations are profoundly affected by disasters. Disasters provide opportunities to identify and propose corrective measures to benefit our built environment and its relationship with nature. With the reality of climate change, these events and the necessary precautions will become ever more important.
Social services are an integral part of the post-disaster landscape. With so many personal and individual situations at hand, clients are in need of more than just repairs or rebuild to their home; clients need to repair and rebuild their lives. Through the use of Client Advocates, we have been successful in guiding our clients to the appropriate resources which have proven to be vital to their recovery. These resources vary from mortgage or legal assistance and to mental health. We want our clients to have a single organization supporting their recovery.

We have built trusting relationships with the clients knowing that their information is safe, and will return home as quickly as possible. Client Advocates have an open ear to those we assist, and listen and provide support to a client’s need. We provide them with the tools to help them and/or help themselves efficiently. Having someone for the client to go to that is directly connected to their design professional provides the client with a holistic approach to recovery.

We developed the REDC as a model multi-faceted program that can be implemented regardless of the type or scale of a natural disaster.

Beginning during the relief phase of a disaster, the first step of the program is to identify architects and engineers that have both an interest and an affinity for long term recovery. These professionals have had months, years or decades working in the community. It is during this phase that we establish training on the process of recovery. This may include understanding resilient design principles, use of CDBG-DR funding, social service programs, and voluntary organizations active in disaster.

Once trained, the next phase is to host and launch a series of free design clinics that are open to small businesses and individual property owners. These clinics are held over a short period of time, usually a long weekend or during the evening to maximize community participation. Upon leaving the clinic, the property owner receives a potential solution that can be further developed by their own design professional, or by one of the professionals that were participating in the clinic.

The last phase of this program is the completion of the recovery. Utilizing the possible solutions from the clinics, the design professional would have an initial analysis of the property and a potential solution that can be further developed. For this phase, it is encouraged that the architect work either for the servicing program, or directly for the property owner.

In previous disasters, we used a scorecard to select the residents that are most vulnerable to future climate events. They may receive available gap-funding, or design grants that allow them to receive professional assistance. We manage this process and oversee all players through design into construction.
In collaboration with the Nassau and Suffolk County Offices of Community Development, The Elevated Studio was a principal author of a [continuing] series of forums designed to provide homeowners with resources and knowledge that empowers the participant to answer the question, “So what do I do now?” Giving a place for like-minded recovery partners to speak to their services and their strengths, the SRtEF has proven to be one of our more successful education programs. Beginning in early 2015, we have educated well over 3,000 individuals looking for answers towards their recovery.

The built environment along our coastline has significantly changed over the course of the last three or four decades. While structures built within this time meet or exceed the building codes, the vast majority of remaining structures are older, and not built to current standards. Many were remodeled haphazardly, creating conditions that provide an unsafe environment for its occupants and its neighbors.

Elevating and reconstructing these homes make salient many reasons for accessible and universal design that complement current needs of a population that age in place. It becomes a design professional’s charge as educator and “expert” to encourage the resident to plan for accessibility for themselves, their visitors, and any future inhabitants, over the course of their lives and the life of the home.
The Elevated Studio was selected as a pre-qualified design service provider for the Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery - Individual Housing program. Through the Recon 100 Initiative, a homeowner who meets the criteria set forth by the Program, receives our services at no cost; and has a new home built in place of their older damaged home. The new home is designed to meet the current number of bedrooms, bathrooms, square footage, and meet or exceed the current building, energy and Housing & Urban Development (HUD) Green homes code.

Similar to the Recon 100 program, The Elevated Studio was selected by the Governor’s Office of Storm Recovery (GOSR) to provide design services for homes that met the criteria for optional or mandatory elevation. This initiative affords the homeowner to maintain the existing fabric of the residence, and establish a greater sense of resilience by elevating the home to above the base flood elevation.
Design is a tool to be used as a form of positive service to a community in need; what we fondly refer to as humanitarian architecture. We believe that the intertwining of social connectedness, positive economic growth, and a supportive built environment creates the trifecta that our communities need to thrive.

A measurement of this achievement can be found in the civic spaces of the built environment. It is found in the government and non-government offices; in the community centers, the schools, the public facilities, and the health centers. All are necessary to increase the vitality of the community. The design professional should be intentional in providing those spaces to ensure they are inherently positive to the people using them. If these spaces have been damaged, they need to be recovered. If these spaces do not exist, they need to be built. If these spaces are underutilized, they need to be enhanced. Our role in the development of civic spaces is a local and global task, one that we will follow where it is needed.
The City of De Soto, Missouri, has experienced 4 major floods in the past 5 years. As residents have witnessed Joachim Creek flood with more frequency in 2012 (after the city built a bridge over the creek and raised the road next to the bridge), they have increasingly become hopeless as they don’t have the means or interest to relocate. The Elevated Studio is currently working with Flood Forum USA, the Thriving Earth Exchange, and the Army Corps of Engineers to develop a master plan and solutions to help mitigate flooding in the future.

We have been providing owner’s representation services for the Classical Charter School’s new building being erected in the Mott-Haven section of The Bronx. The 70,000 square foot structure is scheduled to open in the late fall 2018, and will be home to over 400 scholars from Kindergarten to 8th Grade.
Many thanks to Brian Baer and his associates at the Elevated Studio for overseeing our elevation project, at 312 West Penn Street, Long Beach. From the design plans, selecting the builder, to overseeing the project, he gave us the assurance and confidence the project would get done in less than a year.

--Peter
My home was marred by Superstorm Sandy along with thousands of others along the South Shore of New York. When a Disaster strikes, most are not prepared. I was among them. I should have been ready. I’m a quadriplegic requiring assistance for most of life’s basic living activities and I live near water! I thought I was navigating life’s current quite well. I am a ship and know my course. Sandy threw my skill set into a tailspin and I was no longer captain of a quickly sinking vessel.

I met Brian Baer at one of the many meetings I was attending to help my neighbors learn about Resiliency and Rebuilding. He was professional and knowledgeable on building homes that were not only compliant with FEMA standards, but homes that were compliant for all people of various physical abilities.

I pulled him aside one day after another meeting of homeowners in severe troubles financially, emotionally and fervently frustrated. “I think it’s time to build myself a Home again, will you be my architect”? “Of course,” Brian said. The Elevated Studio does not come to the homeowner without a team of players; there are Disaster Case Managers, a design team and a huge bag of optimism and hope. It is not an easy journey. Brian and his team come to you with the compass and a map. As climate change and #RainIsTheNewHurricane cross our towns and cities it’s good to know that there is a place that will help you get back to the place you call Home with full wind in it’s sails!

-- Liz
The easiest part of this storm that changed my life was working with Brian and his staff. After years of frustration and fighting to get home, I finally got into the NY Rising’s Recon 100 program. That’s where I was introduced to The Elevated Studio.

Along with a representative of NY Rising, Brian and team spoke with me, not only at the NYR office, but at the home I was going to say goodbye to.

My home had so much meaning to me. I spent summers at my uncle’s bungalow in Montauk as a child and even back then, I wanted a house on the water. I was able to fulfill that dream. Then Sandy came and destroyed the house I lived in most of my life. I too was destroyed by her. I believe they listened to my story and when I saw what they designed for me, my hopes of finally going home started to become a reality. Although my home was on paper at the time, I saw myself living there already.

Today I am almost 6 weeks into going home. I have been in the house and I can’t believe this is going to be mine. The layout couldn’t be better. Even my neighbors are anxiously awaiting my homecoming.

All I can say is, thank you for making this the easiest part of my journey!!

-- Susan
Moving forward, we aspire to make a significant impact on communities struggling to recover from the wake of a hazard, prepare for climate events, or provide a more appropriate place to grow their community. Our goals include:

- Develop and assist with Long-term Recovery programming supporting:
  - Communities in Texas and Louisiana from hurricane Harvey
  - Communities in the United States Virgin Islands, Florida and Georgia from hurricane Irma
  - Communities in the United States Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico and Florida from hurricane Maria
  - Communities in northern California from the Napa Fires
  - Communities in Florida, Georgia, North and South Carolina from hurricane Matthew

- Continue to Promote the CEDAR Initiative throughout New York State as well as other jurisdictions that require rapid assessments post-disaster
- Increase the number of Civic Works projects to serve diverse communities in need
- Increase the number of educational seminars to support knowledge of residents, design professionals, and construction professionals.
Over the three years The Elevated Studio has had a positive impact towards the betterment of those that we have served. A look at our impact over the last 36 months can be seen as:

| Community members served | 26,000+ |
| Individual property owners consulted | 1100+ |
| Recovery forums, with an average attendance of 50 individuals | 75+ |
| Miles driven by our staff (6.6 times around the Earth’s equator) | 165,000 |
| Design professionals and disaster case managers trained in resilience and sustainability | 200+ |
| Design reviews | 900+ |
| Partnership recovery meetings attended | 100+ |

Our finances have shown significant improvement from last fiscal year to this. With the selection as a service provider for the GOSR programs, our expenses increased 94% from 2016, while our income increased 118% over that same period. We are ever conscious of the volatility of the physical and political landscape that affects our culture. We strive for efficiency in our work so that our financial resources can be stretched farther; empowering us to assist more individuals and communities in their need for crisis resolution.

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ARCHITECTURE HAS GLOBAL APPLICATIONS...

When we think of how individuals and families live their lives, they create the space that they need by building or buying a place to live, love, and grow. Architecture, the combination of art and science, produces this space for people and communities to come together. It is invaluable to have well thought out buildings to create positive, nurturing environments for us to thrive. We feel that our solutions are the backbone to support our clients’ and their communities’ ability to thrive and be responsible citizens of the world.
THANK YOU

We are grateful for so many people, organizations and opportunities.

Our clients: We are humbled by the work that we do with all of our clients and the neighborhoods we work in. Without you, our mission could not be fulfilled, our work theoretical and the solutions not realized. Thank you.

Our funders: We are deeply grateful for your generous support over the past years. Without your support we could not fill our gaps in operations, or provide the services to our at-risk clients in need of our services. For your belief in us, we thank you.

Our partner organizations: We are constantly encouraged and inspired by the partnerships we have made throughout the region, and look forward to our and their continued successes. Thank you.

The jurisdiction partners: At the local, state and federal level...You folks get the claw end of the hammer at times, but we appreciate your guidance, partnership and championing our efforts in your world. Thank you.

Our board: Our dedicated, all-volunteer board of directors are un-sung heros at The Elevated Studio. They have guided us through transitions from our freshman to our sophomore year; challenged us to serve broader; care deeper and more passionately; and support our mission without question. Thank you.

Our staff: Without our staff, we could not exceed our goals set at the beginning of the year; provide the services that we do to our constituency; or achieve the vision that we set forth two years ago and continue to support our mission. Your efforts do not go unnoticed. We are grateful and appreciative of all you do. Much love, respect and gratitude.

Thank you.
WE SEE A BEAUTIFUL PLACE...