

# The AIA Climate Imperative

## Executive Summary

The biggest design organization in the world is taking on the biggest design problem in the world. AIA and its members are dedicated to designing a sustainable, healthy, and equitable world.

The climate crisis affects every person, every project and every client. The impacts are all inclusive with no respect for borders or boundaries—and are felt first and hardest by our most vulnerable populations. Rising sea levels, extreme weather events, and the degradation of natural resources are a direct result of increased carbon levels, threatening national security, global economies and the health, safety and welfare of local communities. In fact, nearly 40% of greenhouse gases in the U.S. alone can be attributed to the carbon produced by buildings. Join us and show what design can do.

The justification and opportunity for implementing climate action strategies exists in every interaction and every project. Solutions with meaningful and viable returns on investment can – and do – work. Net-zero buildings that actively contribute to renewable energy and rainwater management pay for upfront costs through extensive and ongoing operational savings, and the quickening pace of the climate crisis is only accelerating the return on investment. Every day, new financing mechanisms, collaborations, and partnerships are supporting projects and solutions that create a more valuable, efficient, and resilient built environment. Architects can exponentially increase this value through a commitment to sustainable design.

### CLIMATE ACTION GOALS

AIA's Climate Action Plan prioritizes and supports the deceleration of greenhouse gas production, make meaningful, sustained progress towards achieving net-zero emissions in the building sector by 2050, and reduce vulnerability to the climate crisis, AIA is focusing on Climate Action with efforts on **three overarching goals**:

**MITIGATING THE SOURCES:** Establish the relevance and importance of the building sector and architectural practice in climate mitigation solutions. By actively addressing the building industry's footprint as a primary contributing source of operational and embodied carbon, architects play a critical role in catalyzing the industry by advancing carbon-neutral projects, products, policies, initiatives, research, and education.

**ADAPTING TO THE IMPACTS:** Design buildings and communities to anticipate and adapt to the evolving challenge of climate change. By addressing the impacts of the climate crisis in every design solution, our spaces, buildings, structures, and communities become more functional and high performing. Every project we build and retrofit is an opportunity to evaluate vulnerabilities, choose resilience, mitigate risk, incorporate equity, improve occupant health, serve client needs, and further the research, evidence, and business case for climate action.

**CATALYZING ARCHITECTS TO ACT:** Lead meaningful change and contribute to climate solutions in partnership with our global community. The challenges around embodied carbon and existing buildings, new building design, renewable energy, and electrification go hand-in-hand with opportunities. While architects are positioned to lead transformation in the building industry, we must commit, engage, lead by example, and work collaboratively with our extensive partner network to create the magnitude of change we seek.

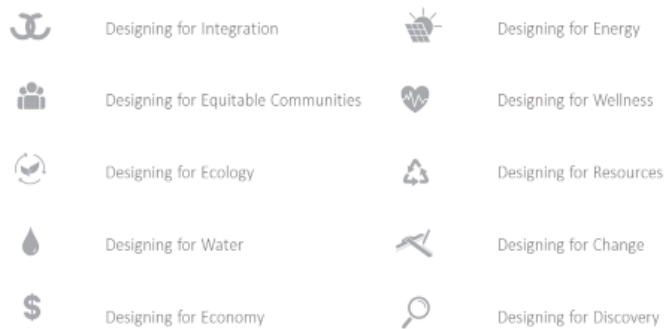
You will be able to access the full Climate Action Plan on [aia.org](https://aia.org) soon!

## THE ROLE OF ARCHITECTS

Architects are well-positioned to help eliminate and reverse the causes of the climate crisis through the buildings we design and renew. Our approach embraces regenerative design processes, with a focus on creating a net-positive impact on the environment, people, communities, and the economy. Far beyond needing a “less bad” approach, we must instead find a way for buildings to actively create good; a regenerative built environment seeks to integrate and improve the surrounding natural environment through innovative strategies and technologies.

The AIA adopted the Framework for Design Excellence, formerly known as the COTE Top 10. These are 10 measures that architects should consider when designing their projects:

### The Framework for Design Excellence



You can access the AIA Framework for Design Excellence [here](#).

While we have a long way to go to achieve our goals, the first steps for you and your colleagues are simple:

- 1) Join the 2030 Commitment Program.
- 2) Meet with your city policy makers to discuss the Zero Code.
- 3) Get certified to conduct post-disaster building safety assessments.
- 4) Meet with your clients about low-cost ways to mitigate or adapt to climate change.
- 5) Share your story or stories of a successful sustainable design discussion with a client, colleague or policy maker.
- 6) Keep informed and use the AIA Framework for Design Excellence.

The changes needed in our profession are pervasive and must include an holistic approach to create immediate and long-lasting solutions to the climate imperative. AIA commits to serving as a dedicated and reliable partner – to members and components seeking to identify and accomplish their own climate actions, to clients making investment and risk management decisions, and to groups around the world working on climate solutions.

As part of this vital profession, we will be more knowledgeable, influential, and effective in our practice, in our communities, and in the world. We will meet this challenge, together.