



# PILLARS

LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM

**2021-2022 REVIEW**





## 2021 PILLARS CLASS

Suzanne Berkey, AIA - WD Partners

Chloe Middleton, AIA - TreanorHL

Shannon Hush, AIA - Hoefer Welker

Pat Kost, AIA - Incite Design Group

Julia Kusko, AIA - Hollis + Miller Architects

Erin Morris, Assoc. AIA - Rosemann & Associates

Greyson Rubin, Assoc. AIA - Populous

Jasmin Sangha, Assoc. AIA - HIVE Design Collaborative

Ryan Tretow, AIA - Multi Studio

Sara Wells, AIA - NSPJ

Tiffany Cartwright - Walter P. Moore

Haley Jones - A.L. Huber General Contractor

Eshwar Lakkappa - Tuner Construction

Zachary Okeefe - Burns & McDonnell

Shannon Redetzke - Scott Rice Office Works

Chris Sanders - Lamar Johnson Collaborative

## 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.



*Tino told the story of El Camino Real and the secret recipe.*



*The Rosedale Development Association - The Pillars visited one of the multiple community gardens during the walking tour.*



## OCTOBER SESSION: KCK - PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

KCK is a culturally and ethnically diverse city comprising several neighborhoods with their own rich and vibrant history. Although smaller than its neighbor of the same name across the stateline, KCK is home to multiple landmarks and districts with considerable historical significance. These pieces of history play a key role in the development of the KCK communities that exist today and where they are heading in the future. For our first session of the 2021-2022 class, the Pillars explored the past, present, and future of one of many of these neighborhoods.

Cuisine is an important part of any culture's identity. A considerable Latino community thrives in KCK because of the recruitment of Mexican workers to work on the railroads and in factories. This heritage remains strong in the many restaurants in the area. The Pillars started their day with a taco lunch from El Camino Real in the Armourdale neighborhood of KCK. Tino, the son of the owner, enlightened the group with the family's story of creating this popular taqueria. Tino's father still holds the recipe for the Al Pastor tacos close to his heart as he brought it with him from Mexico – Tino doesn't even know it! Tino is proud of where the restaurant has come from and where they will go in the future. He loves providing delicious and authentic food for his neighbors.

After eating their fill, the group journeyed to nearby Rosedale. Originally its own city, Rosedale is now one of many neighborhoods that form KCK. Erin Stryka, the Executive Director of the Rosedale Development Association, spoke about the community before giving a short walking tour. Though the neighborhood comprises only 4 square miles, there are around 65 languages spoken throughout! Erin explained the challenges that come with such a diverse community that is also divided by one of the highways that surrounds the metro area. Despite the struggles, the community is extremely involved and proud of their neighborhood. The future looks bright as they continue to develop their downtown and provide exciting community events.

A few of the Pillars were able to contribute to the beautification of the Rosedale neighborhood by picking up trash along the streets. Cleaner streets and sidewalks make residents more apt to spend time outside connecting with their neighbors and growing their community.

Along the furthest north boundaries of KCK, the Quindaro neighborhood and archaeological site. The town has history that predates even KCK. The Pillars were able to meet with Luther, a long-time resident of Quindaro, who proudly showed off the collection of historical artifacts and literature at the Vernon School. He walked the Pillars nearby





*Luther, with The Vernon School, explained the history of Quindaro*



*The Mockingbird Cafe team spoke about the cafe and neighborhood.*

## OCTOBER SESSION: KCK - PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

to the Quindaro Ruins Overlook to see what remains of the historic town.

The final stop on the neighborhood tour was Strawberry Hill. In the 1800's, Eastern Europeans settled along the riverfront and worked in the meatpacking industry connected with the livestock exchange in the stockyards. Recently, there has been an increased interest in Strawberry Hill. The deep roots of its history is what holds lifelong residents to this neighborhood, but also attracts a youthful generation of seekers for eclectic cultures, art and musical entertainment. Young entrepreneurs and business owners have chosen Strawberry Hill to cast their anchors and build their businesses in the community. The Pillars met with Shawn Crowley, founder of Manor Records, and the more-like-family team from Mockingbird Lounge. Shawn shared his passion-filled journey from musician to recording studio owner to his newest endeavor with Dan Castillo of Mockingbird – a bar and coffee shop centered around a love for making music. The new concept will open in early December with all profits going toward the Manor Musician fund and the Strawberry Hill Community.

The Pillars ended the afternoon down the street with a happy hour at Mockingbird Lounge. Dan's team spoke about the love they have for the neighborhood and serving them unique cocktails and dishes.



*Pillars enjoyed tasty tacos at El Camino Real*



*A few of the Pillars helped clean up the Rosedale Neighborhood.*





*Grinders - STRETCH sharing his story*



*Crane Yard Studios - Cyd Ross explaining her process*

## NOVEMBER SESSION: A HEART OF GOLD-EXPLORING KANSAS CITY'S ARTIST GEMS

Kansas City's art community is a treasure chest of hidden gems. There's a flood of creativity within this Midwest town that flows as powerfully as the waters of the Missouri & Kansas rivers. Creative endeavors pool up in pockets all over town filled with inspiration and passion to be fearless makers. Of course, this town has its institution of artistic bedrock – marbled museums and velvet stage curtains – but this month, the Pillars went panning in the river for gold.

Beginning the afternoon with a pizza lunch at Grinders, owner STRETCH Rumaner shared his interesting, sometimes unbelievable, incredible story. He's been around the world and back, studying different forms of art, culture and food. His love for food resulted in the opening of Grinders pizza. STRETCH believes that art, music and food can cross cultural boundaries and create conversations worth having. As he puts it, the arts are a universal language. You will always find a connection with a stranger when it involves these three creative channels.

Just a short five minutes away is Crane Yard Studios, part of the Belger Art Center. Marketing and Community Engagement Manager, Consuelo Cruz led the group through the ceramics shop, gallery and studio spaces. The building's architecture is simple, yet beautiful and holds memories of an inspiring past. The Belger is a true gem for local artists

of sorts, providing top notch equipment, a well-stocked supply shop and a stunning view of downtown KC as the backdrop to their gallery. We concluded our tour with an introduction to Cyd Ross, a local ceramic artist. Cyd spoke about what inspires her and her creative process while bringing a ceramic red barn to life. Her pieces are inspired by architecture and the landscape it resides on. She was as excited to meet with a group of architects and designers as the group was to meet with her.

After saying farewell to Cyd, the Pillars journeyed across town to Rightfully Sewn. Founder, Jennifer Lapka spoke about the why behind this multi-faceted nonprofit organization. Their seamstress training program and fashion designer professional development program provide opportunities for budding designers, opportunity seeking immigrants and at-risk individuals looking for a sustainable way to support their family. There are 40 entities in KC that employ skilled seamstresses, most graduates of Rightfully Sewn's program. Their goals are focused on creating affordable, American made items, supporting the smaller fashion community by reviving Kansas City's fashion history and most notably, being a leader in providing employment with fair and equitable pay for its industry members. The pandemic spotlighted the need for a domestic supply chain as face masks were in high demand. The team raised money and produced 40,000



*Rightfully Sewn - Jennifer explaining the business of fashion*



*The Pillars outside Blackbox Theater in the West Bottoms*

## NOVEMBER SESSION: A HEART OF GOLD-EXPLORING KANSAS CITY'S ARTIST GEMS

masks all donated to local hospitals. Rightfully Sewn also creates one dress a year designed by artists within their community.

Down in the West Bottoms sits a small, unassuming building called The Black Box theater. Heidi Van and her partner, Rusty Sneary, founded Black Box to provide an ever-evolving stage space for bold and provocative performances. The space can be rearranged and transformed to accommodate any show and audience. Both Heidi and Rusty were running their own small theaters – the Fishtank and the Living Room – and combined them to create Black Box. During the pandemic, they shifted their stage to the outdoors to continue supporting Kansas City's theater community while staying safe.

The Pillars made one last stop to enjoy happy hour at Mini Bar and visited with owner Steve Tulipana. Steve has been a part of the KC music community since the 1980's. He is co-owner of not only MiniBar but the well-known Record Bar and the newer Lemonade Park. Steve humbly told his story and why he continues to simply do what he loves. "Dig in, figure it out, and ask for help when you need it," Steve said about how he's been successful all these years. What was truly inspiring about his story is how quickly he and his partner could have monopolized in the KC Music industry, having the

right connections for big named bands and musicians, but instead, stuck to the root of their passion and stayed true to their "why". Steve respects the art of music and maintains that true magic and experience happens at a smaller, more intimate level. Over the years he's supported countless local, regional, and national bands and plans to keep the encores coming.

A recurring theme from each stop became clear – these creative minds are passionate about what they do and care deeply about the community they are a part of. Financial gain is not the goal. Sharing what they love with their little corner of the world, and helping someone along the way, is why they do what they do. To say these people are inspiring would be an incredible understatement and Kansas City is lucky to have them.



*Pillars happy hour at MiniBar*



*Heidi Van of Black Box*





*Pillars in the Royals dugout at Kauffman Stadium, December 2021*



*Curt Nelson leading a Kaffman Stadium tour, December 2021*

## DECEMBER & JANUARY

In Decmeber, the AIA KC Pillars Leadership Program kicked off the Kansas City baseball season session!

The group started the day with an unseasonably warm, 72-degree tailgate outside of Kauffman Stadium before being greeted by Curt Nelson, Director of Royals hall of Fame. Curt led the group throughout the stadium while explaining the ins-and-outs of the building's history and daily operations. After a visit to the World Series Trophies, Kyle Vena and Chris Major spoke with the group about the Royal's philanthropic work and community impact.

After, the group stopped by the Kansas City Urban Youth Academy to see s Royals community partnership firsthand. While there, we learned about youth access to the sport from Executive Director, Darwin Pennye.

Before wrapping up the afternoon with a Happy Hour at 18th and Vine, we heard from Tabitha Darko, Project Architect at Gould Evans, about the restoration and adaptive reuse of Satchel Paige's family home in the Santa Fe Neighborhood. The project seeks to bolster Kansas City's baseball cultural assests and served as the perfect capstone for the day; linking Kansas City sports at the highest level with civic initiatives active in our community today.



*Darwin Pennye leading a tour of the Kansas City Urban Youth Academy*





*Panel Discussion on Soccer and Large Events, January 2022*



*Pillars on the pitch at Childrens Mercy Park, January 2022*

## JANUARY

With the excitement of a potential World Cup bid flowing through the city, the AIA KC Pillars Leadership Program took a deep dive into soccer and its impact on our community.

Kicking off the session the group gathered for lunch and a panel discussion at the Populous KC office. Joining the group for great conversation were Todd Barnes, Senior Event Architect & Principal with Populous, Katherine Fox, Director of the KC 2026 FIFA World Cup Bid, and Mark McHenry, Business consultant and former Director of the Kansas City Parks and Recreation Department. Todd started the conversation from SoFi Stadium in Los Angeles where he was preparing for the Super Bowl with a look behind the curtain of large events and their impact on the host city. Katherine provided an exciting update and look at Kansas City's bid for the 2026 World Cup and what makes KC an ideal fit as a host city. Mark brought a career of insight to the table examining how the culture of KC and the strong youth sports base sets the stage for professional sports, particularly soccer, in the KC metro.

Following the panel discussion we headed west to Childrens Mercy Park, home of Sporting Kansas City. Here, the group was joined by Chad Reynolds, Senior Director, Brand and

Jackie Feeny, Executive Director, The Victory Project.

Chad and Jackie gave the group an intimate tour of Mercy Park providing great insights into the history of the team, the building of the facility, and the impact of Sporting KC on the KC community through philanthropy.

Before heading back to the West Plaza for a happy hour presentation, the group stopped at Compass Minerals National Performance Center to hear from COO, Dan Lolli and Manager of Community Programs Chioma Atanmo. Here we learned why the National Performance center is a unique and world class facility that has launched KC to the world stage for soccer.

The January session wrapped up with an extended happy hour at The Bar West Plaza where we were joined by Andrew Kesel and Jared Hagedorn from Generator Studio. Generator is currently designing the new Kansas City Current professional womens soccer stadium. This will be the first purpose build womens soccer stadium in the country and a true inspiration to our community.



*Panel at Hollis + Miller Architects featuring MINDDRIVE, KC STEM Alliance, PREP-KC and Independence School District*



*Students at Olathe Northwest High School demonstrating their student designed robot.*

## FEBRUARY

During our February session, AIA KC Pillars Leadership Program spent the day learning about the inequities of STEM Opportunities in the KC Metro as well as learn about various non-profits supporting STEM education in our community.

The session started off with lunch and a panel discussion at the Hollis + Miller Architects office. The panelists that provided valuable insight and conversations were Martha B. McCabe, Executive Director of KC STEM Alliance, Mike Enos, Executive Director of MINDDRIVE, Candace Villanueva, College and Career Manager of PREP-KC, and Aaron J. Smith, Career & Technical Education Coordinator at Independence School District. The panelists started the conversation giving their backgrounds and explained how each of the organizations are connected to one another. Mike Enos shared a great video showing us the benefits of MINDDRIVE, specifically the organization's participation in the Electrathon. We learned that these organizations provide STEM opportunities to students who may lack exposure to these fields due to their socioeconomic backgrounds.

It was interesting to discover how the panelists (from both non-profit organizations and school districts) emphasized similar goals and needs for their students. They discussed the need for students to see future opportunities available to them for both college-track and non-college careers through career days and job shadowing. At the end of the panel, the group gave Pillars an overview of volunteer opportunities for professionals to participate in these activities.

Following the panel discussion, we headed to Olathe Northwest High School to get a first hand look at the "academy style" of learning that we heard about during our panel. At the school, we were guided by Engineering Academy teachers and students. They gave us a tour of their STEM focused learning spaces, including their metal and fabrication shop, where they were working on their robot for the FIRST robotics competition. The students were also working on their electric cars for Electrathon. We discovered that with their level of course work, many engineering students leave high school well ahead of their peers and are ready for college engineering.

After the tour at Olathe Northwest High School, we ventured back to the urban core and toured MINDDRIVE's headquarters. While there, we were able to learn about their virtual welding machine available and do demos. We then wrapped up our tour at the MINDDRIVE Ignition Lab at Operation Breakthrough. We learned that Kansas City Chief's Tight End Travis Kelce bought the land across from Operation Breakthrough to provide smaller incubator spaces for non-profits to have additional learning spaces. MINDDRIVE has their satellite lab and learning space in this building.

The February session ended with a happy hour at Afterword Tavern and Shelves, a book bar in the crossroads. We learned about how Afterword came into fruition and sustained itself during the pandemic. Several of their seasonal cocktails are themes or names of books, which were both tasty and unique!





*Group picture at the American Royal Museum after a tour and info session about the history of the Royal*



*Volunteering at Cultivate KC's community garden*

## MARCH

For the March session, Pillars focused on learning about food and its affect on the culture and history of Kansas City. This led to the exploration of the Stockyards district as well as a volunteer effort with one of Kansas City's urban community garden organizations.

The session started with lunch in the West bottoms at The Ship, a beloved kitsch bar and restaurant that relocated from downtown KC to the West bottoms and has a focus on architectural restoration.

A brief drive down the street led to the next stop, a tour and information session at the American Royal Headquarters and Museum. Nathan Laudan led the group through the museum, livestock show spaces, and event arenas. He explained the many different facets of the royal that includes: rodeos, horse shows, livestock auctions, and the World Series of Barbeque. He went through a brief history of the Royal and discussed how the Royal has grown and morphed over time. The next step for the Royal is a new facility and location in Kansas City, Kansas. By diving into the history of the Royal, the group was also able to learn more about the history of the Stockyards and the cattle exchange that drove the development of Kansas City as a whole and certainly shaped our food culture as we know it.

We stayed in the Westbottoms for one more stop at Stockyards Brewing Company. Here, the founder Greg Bland and head brewer, Micah Weichert, gave an overview of their company, challenges they've faced since opening, and their reasons for choosing their location in the Stockyards. Like other restaurants and bars in the area, they were drawn to their location for its historic architecture, nostalgia, and importance to Kansas City's development and history. We discovered how their success as a brewing company had been affected by decisions made to incorporate canning early during the Pandemic and learned about their plans to expand in the next few years.

After hearing about the importance of meat production to the history of KC, it was important to get a perspective on the future of local food production. For this, we visited Cultivate KC's urban farm, located in the heart of Midtown. Here, the group learned about the non-profit's mission and mode of operation that includes engaging the community to volunteer in the garden and harvesting food for sale at farmer's markets and for donation to local organizations. Pillars were able to have a hands on experience by volunteering; the group was tasked with setting and digging trenches and walking paths between future vegetable beds.

At the conclusion of the session, we revisited Stockyards Brewing to enjoy libations after our gardening efforts.





*Sara Greenwood explaining the process and strategies behind the new terminals LEED approach*



*Pillars after wrapping up an informative day of discussion and site tours.*

## APRIL

Transportation was essential to the framework in which this Country was built. As a middle of the map destination, Kansas City finally has the opportunity to be considered one that is at the forefront of modern aviation. For the month of April, the AIA KC Pillars Leadership Program had the chance to 'peek behind the curtain' and understand the monumental efforts behind the KCI airport terminal project.

The group started the day with lunch provided by a local restaurant, Scott's Kitchen, and a panel discussion & presentation focused on the Airports history, cutting edge technology, unique design elements, sustainability, and the selection & implementation of public art. Representatives from both private and public sectors explained the importance of public engagement to the success of this project. We learned about the implementation of these design elements and strategies allowed the group to decipher the complexities of a large infrastructure project.

We had the pleasure of meeting the Deputy Director of Planning & Engineering for a tour of the new terminal. He allowed the class access into inner workings of the new terminal observing both public and secure spaces. We learned about important elements of design, sustainability,

and how art and large sculptural installments integrate into the building. The presentation and project tour gave the group a better understanding on ways we can all collaborate and work in our future design projects.

The new single terminal airport will be the largest single infrastructure project in the history of Kansas City with over 1 million square feet along with the largest public art commission. When complete, this project will open opportunities for local employment and business growth. Not only is the new terminal a huge improvement to the existing airport infrastructure and surrounding community but also allows travelers to see the significance of the Kansas City culture by presenting a positive sense of place in the food court and art installations.



*Panel discussion of the history and development of Lenexa City Center.*



*Pillars after wrapping up volunteer clean up at Black Hoof Park-Lake Lenexa.*

## MAY

The City of Lenexa ranks as the 8th largest city in Kansas with an exponential growth rate since the 1970s. For the month of May, the AIA KC Pillars Leadership Program had the chance to understand the importance of sound development and the positive impacts it has on local community and culture. This month's session focused on the history and evolution of the Lenexa City Center

The group started the day with lunch provided by a local restaurant, Topp'd, which was born of an idea started in the Public Market test kitchen. The Public Market is comprised of local food and non-food merchants and is meant to celebrate the diversity in culture through food, art, and musical performance. The Mayor, City Manager, and developers shared the background of Lenexa City Center which started with the 2020 Vision Plan. Smart growth and good development lead to sustainable decisions and allowed the district to grow.

The group also toured a variety of buildings within the development from City Hall and Public Market, to the Recreation Facilities, and Library. The success of this areas, in many ways, is due in part to the collaboration between City and private development entities. Special emphasis was placed on the importance of a sustainable message. Sustainability in this instance comes in a variety of ways. From the use of building materials to the day-to-day operations, careful thought was placed on being good stewards to the environment.

Before the day ended, the group met with the City of Lenexa Stormwater Superintendent. We toured the Lake Lenexa Dam at Black Hoof Park as precedent of artful ways to embrace stormwater detention. The group also decided to take this opportunity to volunteer and participate in the clean-up of the Oak Shelter and playground spaces.