

# AIA MN Committee on Equity in the Built Environment

## Meeting Minutes

### July 21, 2021 at 8:30 am CT

Paul Bauknight introduction

Overview of goals in the next 6 months - process for creating the committee charter

Discussion: What is Equity?

- Leveling the playing field to allow people the chance to excel
- complexity as a cause for collaboration
- Embracing difference
- Focused on outcomes and impact
- Recognizing different people require different things

Paul: you can't talk about equity without talking about racism and acknowledging that it is endemic to our society

How people can participate, prosper and reach their full potential - be their full selves

The built environment is human-made

How should we, as design professionals, be thinking about equity?

- Sean: we have to strictly adhere to codes and rules, how do those rules really impact people? What should we be pushing to change? What codes/regulations are there to keep people safe vs. meant to maintain an inequitable status quo?
- Isaac: hard to understand whether working in the system is beneficial to changing thing or whether you're just upholding the standard
- Paul: we all have to decide for ourselves: what's the best way for me to make change? You can't make change if you're not at the table, but we also need activists who are outside the system

The profession has struggled for a long time with the idea that we as architects are a very specialized service provider that diminishes how much impact we can have on a system in making changes

- Paul suggests you always need to be true to yourself
- Look for opportunities to make changes, even very small ones
- Be honest about the fact that maybe you work better outside the system - but you can be inside and outside the system at the same time

Paul thinks we are beginning to make changes to the systems within the profession

Ananth feels like we can deal with only about 10% of equity in the built environment, and the other 90% is out of our control

- wonders how we define the built environment? Just buildings or the entire infrastructure?

Paul makes a point that architects need to connect with community in ways that aren't just building a building for them, but showing that we are interested in making systems change and social justice just like they are

Think about the value that equity brings to the built environment, not just the problems

Jennifer suggests thinking about this in the context of a story: here is where we are starting from, and what is the happy ending?

Talking about designing within the system, AIA has created guidelines for doing this in an equitable way with the Framework for Design Excellence - those 10 elements all have some impact on equity in the built

Jennifer book recommendation: *Future Practice: Conversations from the Edge of Architecture* by Rory Hyde

What is the scope of the built environment that this committee should be dealing with?

Matt suggests that this committee should play the role of straddling both sides of the system

We should connect with the TC Architecture Lobby