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Hoffman Architects + Engineers receives J.E.D.I. Award from American Institute of Architects

January 19, 2024 - Connecticut



Shown (from left) are: Avi Kamrat, CFO; Cindy Lattanzio, HR manager; Alison Hoffmann, communications manager; and Russ Sanders, AIA, president.

Plantsville, CT Hoffmann Architects + Engineers, a design firm specializing in the rehabilitation of building exteriors, received a Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (J.E.D.I.) Award from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Connecticut Chapter. The award recognizes an AIA Connecticut member firm that has made a significant impact in increasing gender and racial diversity and supporting equity and inclusion, both within their organization and in the design and construction industry.

The award was presented at the AIA Connecticut Awards gala on Thursday, December 7, 2023 at the Aqua Turf Club.

The AIA Connecticut J.E.D.I. Challenge

Launched in 2021 to encourage measurable steps toward greater diversity and a more inclusive company culture, the AIA Connecticut J.E.D.I. Challenge invites firms to take a pledge citing action items they plan to pursue, both immediately and in the long term. To keep participants accountable, AIA Connecticut presents the opportunity each year to complete the J.E.D.I. Challenge Action Item Survey, reporting on concrete initiatives and results of their diversity and inclusion work over the past 12 months.

Of those firms completing the survey in 2023, five were identified as exemplary in J.E.D.I. programming, hiring, advancement, and advocacy. Hoffmann was recognized as one such honoree.

On presenting the 2023 J.E.D.I. Award, Gina Calabro, executive director of AIA Connecticut, said “the impressive advances Hoffmann Architects + Engineers have made in providing an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment.” She noted that the award serves “to recognize the firms who have made the greatest strides in increasing gender and racial diversity in their practice and in the overall profession.”

A Commitment to Action

Hoffmann was the sole recipient of the inaugural AIA Connecticut J.E.D.I. Award in 2021, when eleven firms took the J.E.D.I. Challenge Pledge. This year, AIA Connecticut saw a 300% increase in firms participating in the J.E.D.I. Challenge, with 32 firms pledging to take on systemic racism and inequity. From among these participants, AIA Connecticut selected five for the J.E.D.I. Award. Hoffmann is honored to be recognized alongside Amenta Emma Architects, CPG Architects, JCJ Architecture, and Pickard Chilton Architects.

“I want to recognize the leadership of AIA Connecticut and the J.E.D.I. Knowledge Community in inspiring so many architecture practices across the state to make a commitment to real and measurable change in the space of diversity and inclusion,” said Alison Hoffmann, communications manager and chair of the diversity and inclusion committee at Hoffmann, when accepting the award.

Driving Change in the Industry

Some of Hoffmann’s notable initiatives in the space of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice include:

- Establishing the Hoffmann Diversity Advancement Scholarship, in collaboration with the Connecticut Architecture Foundation, which offers tuition assistance along with a paid internship;

- Launching an employee Student Loan Repayment Benefit to support staff in paying down student debt, which disproportionately impacts people of color;
- Mentoring K-12 students through leadership roles with the ACE Mentor Program and the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA);
- Organizing volunteer days and donation drives with Habitat for Humanity, the United Way of Greater New Haven, Connecticut Foodshare, Loaves & Fishes, Martha's Table, NY Common Pantry, JDRF, local public-school districts, and other community organizations;
- Hosting educational workshops for staff with DEI consultants, as well as our own Diversity and Inclusion Book and Film Club;
- Recruiting and hiring staff from a wide spectrum of backgrounds, experiences, and identities;
- Conducting surveys on company culture and developing strategies that address staff feedback;
- Maintaining a DEI blog for employees with events, media, volunteer opportunities, affinity groups, activism and outreach, and other resources; and
- Supporting employee advancement through professional development and conferences that promote social justice and equity.

Hoffmann's Diversity and Inclusion Committee has grown to include more than 25% of the staff, meets regularly to expand the firm's programming and brainstorm new ways to create an inclusive company culture.

Earlier this year, Hoffmann received the Special Industry Recognition Award from the Construction Institute for promoting diversity and equity in the architecture, engineering, and construction industry. John Hoffmann, FAIA, executive chairman of Hoffmann, was honored with the Community Kindness Heroes Award from Liberty Bank and Hartford Yard Goats for contributions to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The firm is also a 2023 recipient of the AIA New England Emerging Professional Friendly Firm Award, recognizing action to mentor, support, and advance early-career professionals.

New England Real Estate Journal - 17 Accord Park Drive #207, Norwell MA 02061 - (781) 878-4540