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2025 Ones To Watch - Rising Stars: Riley Gallagher, JGE Architecture + Design

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Riley Gallagher, AIA, NCARB, LEED
Senior Architect, Project Manager

“Riley is a clear- minded, critical thinker, whose knowledge and technical expertise set the tone for a productive team dynamic, especially when things get complicated. He’s stepped into tough projects midstream and never missed a beat-earning trust through hard work, earnest communication, and real problem- solving. He brings thoughtfulness and consistency to everything he touches, and he’s exactly the kind of architect who makes everyone around him better.” - Jonathan Garland, President + Founder of JGE Architecture + Design.

What recent professional milestone or project are you most proud of, and why? One of my proudest milestones is seeing the 1201 River St. project-a 63- unit Passive House senior affordable housing development-through key construction phases after stepping in midstream. Without having drawn it, I had to quickly understand its intent and manage a high volume of submittals to keep it on track. At the same time, I led construction efforts for 440 Broadway, navigating complex conditions in an existing structure. Both projects highlight my ability to adapt, problem- solve, and lead affordable housing forward.

What’s one challenge you’ve overcome in your career so far, and what did it teach you? Starting my architecture career at 40 was daunting. Though I brought maturity, I lacked project experience and was expected to keep pace. Support from seasoned colleagues helped me bridge that gap-I studied older project sets and learned that no two buildings are alike. The key is balancing precedent with innovation. This experience taught me that architecture requires resilience, curiosity, and adaptability. It’s shaped how I approach design, made me a stronger teammate, and reinforced that growth in this field is never linear.

If you could give advice to someone just starting out in your field, what would it be? Honestly? I’d half- jokingly say, “Run the other way!” Architecture is tough-school doesn’t prepare you for the messy, unpredictable reality of construction. My advice: get in the field. Visit job sites, talk to contractors, and see how things actually get built. That’s where the real education starts. Understanding materials, sequencing, and labor changes the way you design. Stay humble, stay curious, and get your boots dirty. Learn practical architecture that still aims for beauty-and remember, this profession is a marathon, not a sprint.