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BSA to help develop plan to achieve state's sustainable goals

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As the Boston Society of Architects (BSA) rings in the new year, its goal remains to raise expectations for design excellence—thoughtful, economical, energy-efficient design that is considerate of our world's health and sustainability. As the BSA's 2009 president, I look forward to helping chart that course in several new ways.

A key BSA objective will be to help develop a five-year strategic plan for achieving our state's sustainable goals. Massachusetts governor Patrick has set a goal of zero-net-energy buildings—commercial and residential structures that meet most of their energy needs by efficiency and on-site renewable energy—by 2030. He also signed an Executive Order mandating that, by 2012, state agencies achieve 20% less energy use, 25% lower greenhouse gas emissions and 15% of energy use from renewables. A BSA task force is being formed to investigate legislation, code adoption, strategic alliances and other best practices for coordinating statewide efforts and building the momentum necessary to create such changes.

Likewise, mayor Menino has committed the city to an 80% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The BSA will participate in the city's visioning process around the adaptive reuse of existing buildings and sustainable new development in the proposed Government Center "Green Growth District" and beyond.

Another critical BSA objective involves improving design excellence in state-funded projects and advising state leaders on priorities for the implementation of future infrastructure work. In anticipation of the Obama administration's economic stimulus plan, which is expected to focus on infrastructure work, governor Patrick has appointed a committee to prepare the state's response to the federal initiative and established 10 task forces to advise that committee. Governor Patrick and President-elect Obama are taking a broad approach to infrastructure investment with the understanding that, by embracing an inclusive definition of infrastructure, the anticipated investments will benefit education, public services, economic development and other sectors in addition to more traditional infrastructure projects such as transportation and energy. The BSA has recommend building-industry professionals for the task forces, which are focused on topics ranging from energy efficiency to workforce development.

The governor and his staff are also very supportive of the "creative economy," including the design professions. We are encouraged by the interest and support for our design expertise and our practices, and we encourage architects, related professionals and everyone who cares about good design to voice your support for the local and national administrations' support. Now is a great time to get involved, write your legislator and shout out your support for design excellence!

As we work together to stimulate design, construction and development as essential aspects of re-invigorating the economy, it is important to keep architects and designers engaged and well-positioned for future growth. In addition to supporting economic initiatives, this is a good time to

aid the larger community in other ways. The BSA and related organizations such as Architecture for Humanity, Common Boston and the Community Development Resource Center of Boston are working with local individuals and firms to help community groups and nonprofits through an extensive network of volunteer opportunities.

It is an exciting time and there is much to do.

For more information on these or any other BSA initiatives, email me at president@architects.org.

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