

## American Institute of Architects pushes sustainable buildings

By Amos Maki

Saturday, December 22, 2007

The motto at architecture, planning and interior design firm Self Tucker Architects Inc. is "Designing a Better Memphis."

The same could be said for the American Institute of Architects Memphis chapter as it launches an ambitious 2008 agenda under the leadership of Self Tucker principal Jimmie Tucker.

"There are a lot of things happening, and we see a role AIA can play in helping architects be an effective advocate," Tucker said. "We need to have more attention to the design of the built environment in Memphis."

Tucker said AIA will focus much of its energies in 2008 on encouraging "green" development, the push for a civic design center that would serve as a clearinghouse for design and planning issues and on getting more children and young adults interested in architecture.

Tucker said AIA Memphis, which has more than 300 members, will facilitate discussions on Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification, the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of "green" or environmentally friendly buildings.

Tucker said the organization, along with affiliated groups like the United States Green Building Council Memphis Regional Chapter, will try to work with local governments and school systems to encourage more environmentally friendly and sustainable buildings.

The organization is also considering creating an award to be given at its annual ceremony that would honor green, sustainable design.

"There are a lot of things we can do and should be doing, big and small," he said. "A number of cities have adopted certain requirements that buildings have to be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified, particularly if city funding is involved. I think that is definitely something we want to pursue."

Tucker is practicing what he preaches, too. Self Tucker's renovation of the historic Universal Life Insurance Building Downtown incorporates green strategies and materials.

Among other things, the company will reuse existing building materials as well as use "sustainable carpet" made from bio-based or recycled content and interior molding and millwork and paneling made from recycled material. Even the toilet room partitions will be made from recycled material.

AIA Memphis is continuing its push for the Memphis Regional Design Center, which will serve as an independent "think tank" on a host of design and planning issues such as neighborhood design, zoning and sustainability.

Five institutions came together to organize the MRDC: AIA Memphis, the Memphis chapters of the Urban Land Institute and the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Urban Art Commission and the University of Memphis, which launches its masters degree program in fall 2008. AIA Memphis has representatives on the board and steering committee of the MRDC.

"From the beginning, the intention to establish the design center was always viewed as a collaborative effort," said Jim Lutz, a professor of architecture at the U of M who has been instrumental in getting the Design Center off the ground. "2008 will be the year that we launch the Design Center, when it opens its doors to the public."

Allie and Barbara Prescott are once again raising funds for the MRDC.

"Barbara and I think the Design Center is important because we love this city and we continue to see so much unbridled growth with seemingly no rhyme or reason in many instances," Allie Prescott said. "To have a Design Center to educate and serve as clearinghouse for this design and growth seems to us to make great sense for the future orderly growth of our community.

"Once the Design Center becomes known and earns community respect, I think it has enormous potential to help bring order and beauty to our community's growth," he said.

"With the establishment of the Memphis Regional Design Center, an accessible and effective platform for improving the unbuilt as well as the built environment will finally be available to the city and its citizens," said AIA Memphis executive director Heather Baugus.

Tucker said the organization will try to get young people more involved in architecture.

"Some of the young people really don't know the broad impact an architect can have in shaping neighborhoods, the city and specific buildings," he said. "There's also a tremendous amount of opportunity in the field."

Baugus said the upcoming year spotlights how AIA Memphis has evolved.

"The AIA Memphis chapter continues to strive to be more than a professional association with an unwavering commitment to its mission of service to the community beyond its membership," she said.

### **AIA Memphis**

Year founded: 1953

Members: More than 300.

Web site: [aiamemphis.org](http://aiamemphis.org)

2008 executive committee: Jimmie Tucker, president; Joe Wieronski, president elect; Chooch Pickard, secretary; Carter Hord, treasurer; Andy Kitsinger, past president.

2008 board of directors: Todd Walker, James Murray, Jason Jackson, Mona Pedro, Mark Tygesson, Carol Johnson, Lester Ferdinand, Tommy Waring, Reb Haizlip and John Jones.

- *Amos Maki: 529-2351*



© 2009 Scripps Newspaper Group — Online