

A'18 AIA Conference on Architecture 2018

This year's National Conference was convened in the Big Apple, New York City. Carl Elefante, FAIA, our 2018 AIA President welcomed over 26,000 architects from around the globe, including two from Wyoming, to New York for what would be a week



of unforgettable memories. A Blueprint for Better Cities was this year's theme. What I learned more than anything during the conference, because it so strikingly obvious, is the huge impact that architects have on their communities, large and small. Old buildings, new buildings, falafel stands, Times Square, Central Park, the Empire State Building, MOMA, the list is endless.

This was my first visit to New York and I was committed to introducing myself to as many architects as possible, to visit as many landmarks as feasible and most of all, I was committed to enjoy the big city atmosphere at every opportunity.

My wife Barb accompanied me and we were really looking forward to seeing everything that New York had to offer. Try as we might, there were but a few places we didn't get the chance to visit. We didn't make it to see the Bronx Bombers or witness the Mets "let another one get away" nor did we find the time to visit Ellis Island. After our flight from Denver, we boarded the subway just outside JFK (in Jamaica man) and proceeded through Brooklyn to Manhattan. We enjoyed the trip so much we simply forgot to get off at our designated station. (It was entirely Barb's fault). We were then forced to take an Uber from the subway's final stop, the World Trade Center, to our hotel located just south of Central Park. The Uber trip was so much fun we decided to do it again the following day. I am pleased to report that I am now an Uber as well as a subway aficionado.



Most of the conference activities were convened at the Javits Center on West 35th Street and 11th Avenue. We quickly got used to New York cross street jargon and how to locate buildings, parks and landmarks. I also boarded a bus to attend a session at one of the New School campuses in the center of downtown Manhattan. Mistake. One thing we discovered in New York is one of the curses of modern times, the traffic jamb. Horns aplenty.



Don't ever board a bus between sessions. One had better plan well ahead if one wants to arrive anywhere on time.

I attended continuing education meetings in the mornings. I also walked several times through the caverns of Javits to attend the massive AIA trade show, where I handed out business cards, talked with vendors, etc. I typically set time aside in the afternoon to tour the ethnic neighborhoods and boroughs of New York City that I had only read about.

We spent a great deal of time walking the expansive and inspiring spaces surrounding the World Trade Center. We were mesmerized with the spectacular Oculus Building by Santiago Calatrava. My head was on a swivel. Not too far away from the Oculus we managed to find Wall Street, a tiny alley like street in the center of the financial district. We were now at the hub of world commerce. One can only imagine.



Having witnessed a great collection of architecture, past and present, we decided to feast at a wonderful Italian restaurant called Eataly. On the walk back to the subway, we experienced the allure of an open air market that featured a variety of cultural cuisine, primarily from Latin American countries. The smells and sounds were invigorating. New York is a huge melting pot of people, of culture, of language and of social interaction. I absolutely loved it.

First on the conference agenda were the candidate speeches, followed regional caucuses, a by-laws discussion, etc. culminating in the election of next year's leaders. These are: 2019-2020 AIA President-elect, L Jane Fredericks, FAIA South Carolina, 2019-2020 Secretary, Jason Winters, AIA AIA Chesapeake Bay/AIA Maryland and 2019-2020 Director-at-large, Jessica Sheridan, AIA AIA New York Chapter. Of note, the AIA Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct by-laws were discussed and by a huge majority vote, were amended.

I was privileged to attend the AIA Western Mountain Region business meeting, and later, we reconvened to celebrate our newest regional Fellows at the WMR Fellowship Reception. I did not attend the Fellowship Convocation, but spent time with several of our regional recipients including our old friends Stewart Coppedge, FAIA from Colorado Springs, Glenn Fellows, FAIA from Albuquerque and Tanya Salgado, FAIA from Denver. Also attending were Ed Vance, FAIA and his better half Ruby from Las Vegas as well as past AIA President RK Stewart, FAIA and Jeannie Jackson FAIA from Utah. I was also able to spend quality time telling stories and lamenting the past with Lawrence Enyart, FAIA, a regional Fellowship Director from Arizona and one of my professors while attending ASU.

After the regional reception, Barb and I decided to walk a portion of the infamous High Line with Katie Wilson. The High Line terminates at its northern edge at the remarkable Shed, a project now nearing fruition. It is an absolutely amazing structure, especially at night.



In the distance are the distinctive profiles and silhouettes of the Sears Tower and the Empire State Building. The Shed Building and its entire 21st century complements are surrounded by historic and significant structures from past decades. As my son would say, it is an awesome environment, dude. The care of these buildings and the vision of its developers and architects is on splendid display. The notion of repurposing and honoring the past and introducing the future in a single setting makes one proud to be an architect. Still having energy, we shared several stories and "one beer a piece" with Katie at a local bistro and then turned in at 2:00 in the morning.

Carl Elefante encouraged us in his welcoming remarks to "Enjoy this once in a generation happening. Be inspired. Connect. Share. Make memories." I am pleased to report, we followed Carl's sage advice.