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For Immediate Release

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Images available upon request

## Grand Plans Align for Architecture in Minnesota

*Minneapolis, Minnesota* – AIA Minnesota is making grand plans to celebrate AIA national's 150 years in 2007. AIA national, founded in Washington, D.C. in 1856, has provided grants to components nationwide to carryout legacy projects that enhance their cities. AIA Minnesota and its chapters AIA Minneapolis, AIA Saint Paul and AIA Northern, established in 1892, all received funding for ambitious programs that will tie into community and education efforts and use thousands of architect and citizen volunteer hours to benefit our communities.

AIA Minnesota and all of the chapters plan to fully use their existing programs like design charrettes and Architects in the Schools to shape the direction of their projects for 2007, in addition to forging new ground with larger outreach to ideal collaborations that include neighborhood groups, students, city officials, planners and transit developers.

### **AIA Minnesota**

AIA Minnesota, the over-arching umbrella to next year's efforts, will engage public officials, community leaders, citizens of all ages, and architects in the processes that determine the livability of our communities. The first in a public discussion series on livable communities, Town Hall Forum, took place in September 2006, featuring a presentation by Ben Lee, FAIA, Minnesota mayors and case studies from the Minnesota Design Team. 2007 Town Hall Forum events will present the stories, case studies, and lessons learned from our three components' initiatives. Livability will also be showcased in a traveling display, first presented at the State Capitol, of communities exemplifying the ten principles.

Continuing the initiative on livability, AIA Minnesota plans to invite leaders that are talking about livable communities and sustainability on a national scale to share their experiences with us so we can learn from them. Ben Lee, FAIA, former Managing Director of the City and County of Honolulu, the city recognized as most livable in 2004 by the United Nations endorsed International Awards for Livable Communities, spoke at the Town Hall.

Next up is Timothy Beatley's keynote address on Wednesday, November 15 at 2:30pm at the Minneapolis Convention Center. Beatley is the Teresa Heinz Professor of Sustainable Communities in the Department of Urban and Environmental Planning, School of Architecture at the University of Virginia. He argues for what he calls Green Urbanism: creative urban planning and design strategies that bring nature back into urban neighborhoods, incorporate locally-produced renewable energy into the urban fabric, and nurture new local and regional sources of the food and materials needed to sustain urban populations.

In addition to recognizing the importance of educating our current architects on livability and giving them the tools for effecting change, AIA MN Architects in the Schools Committee is tasked with inspiring new generations of architects. Architecture in the Schools week, scheduled for **May 7-11, 2007**, will get 150 local architects in classrooms across the state presenting an interactive curriculum, "Spaces + Places: Everyday Landmarks," developed for students at the fifth-grade level. At the end of the project, each student will have designed a landmark for his or her community or school.

AIA Minnesota will also be planning many celebratory events during Architecture Week, **April 9-14, 2007**, including Architecture Firm Open Houses and a Celebration on Friday, April 13, also the date of Thomas Jefferson's birthday, our organization's founding architect.

### **AIA Minneapolis**

#### **Re-Weaving the Urban Fabric**

This initiative, announced in February 2006 in collaboration with Mayor RT Rybak, will build the capacity of communities to engage effectively with the architecture, urban design and development community and reweave the urban fabric of Minneapolis. The Mayor's Great City Design Teams (community charrettes/case studies), Community Toolbox (educational component); and the Existing City Urban Conditions Inventory (inventory component), all work to educate the community on the principles of livable communities and build better connections between the signature buildings that have recently put Minneapolis on the design map.

### **AIA Northern**

#### **Re-Establishing Connections**

Over the years, communities have developed without a full appreciation for, and at times without conscious regard to, the natural waterways that originate from the Laurentian Divide ending in Lake Superior. Towns naturally located on river systems, utilizing the water as an early means of transportation. As these communities developed, we have experienced a disconnection to our waterways that at times has resulted in a lack of appreciation for, or the proper use of, our creeks, streams and rivers. AIA Northern plans to explore opportunities to enhance existing connections and create new connections between the waterways and our neighborhoods and commercial areas.

### **AIA Saint Paul**

#### **Approaching the Central Corridor, Block by Block**

In this community service project, architects will engage the public, local government officials, and other professionals in an exploration of the challenges and opportunities surrounding a proposed Light Rail Transit (LRT) project currently in the planning stages in the Twin Cities. Local architects will facilitate a series of design charrettes to study the potential impact of light rail on the neighborhoods along the proposed route and to share how local decisions could maximize the benefit of light rail on their businesses and neighborhoods.

To learn more about events, go to [www.aia-mn.org/AIA150](http://www.aia-mn.org/AIA150) or contact Ann Voda, AIA150 Champion at [annv@btrarchitects.com](mailto:annv@btrarchitects.com) or Jennifer Gilhoi at AIA Minnesota at [gilhoi@aia-mn.org](mailto:gilhoi@aia-mn.org).

*The American Institute of Architects Minnesota, founded in 1892, is dedicated to strengthening our communities, improving our built environment and providing exceptional design. For more information on the organization and Minnesota architectural firms, reference our Web site at [www.aia-mn.org](http://www.aia-mn.org) and pick up a copy of Architecture Minnesota, the award-winning architectural magazine of the Midwest.*