

## 1.0 | Summary Statement & Summary of Achievements

---

John Barbour orchestrates design solutions by uncovering the shared vision of owners, community members, fellow designers and public officials engaged in his projects, resulting in a legacy energized by his team-driven approach to architecture.

### **Participatory Design: inviting the community to shape the community**

John Barbour has engaged with communities throughout the Upper Midwest using this team-driven design model. Based on Participatory Design, John guides teams of designers and diverse community members to develop a holistic, shared vision of the project by:

- inviting user groups to both share and develop an understanding of the project in initial phases of design
- involving architects, interior designers, landscape architects, engineers, planners, consultants, and other contributors to share their specialties in the initial phases of design
- defining what the project can achieve internally for the community and the story it can tell to other communities

John's inclusive process has successfully negotiated the challenges associated with public projects, guiding these projects' design, approval, and ultimate completion gracefully and efficiently. The common understanding and vested interest established early in these projects is the foundation for this success.

Engaging the communities to which the projects belong has resulted in success as measured both in economic terms and by design criteria. Perhaps of equal importance, welcoming the public into the design process has promoted appreciation for the field of architecture and the power of thoughtful design.

### **Pioneering: a community advocate when the Master Architect was customary**

John adopted a participatory approach to architecture in the 1980s at a time when architects tended to operate as individual practitioners and the "Master Architect" mentality was customary.

John's interest in a user-driven process developed from his involvement with the Minnesota Design Team (MDT), beginning in 1988. MDT is a committee of AIA Minnesota that includes architects, landscape architects, planners, and other allied professionals that voluntarily assist the communities of Minnesota to develop a common vision for their futures. In addition to serving as the current Co-Chair of MDT, John has been a Community Team Leader for sixteen communities, working to identify opportunities for architectural solutions to improve them. Since Community members understand the project from the bottom up, they are well-equipped to implement MDT's recommendations -- sometimes against great odds. During John's 27 years with MDT, the organization has assisted 122 communities and involved 350 volunteer design professionals in the community-building process. These communities are measurably more vibrant and viable.

During the same period that John was getting involved in MDT, he adopted a similar participatory design approach to three public projects. The process proved so successful that he founded a firm in 1993 informed by this inclusive philosophy. His firm became a regional design leader with work in Michigan, Wisconsin, the Dakotas, and throughout Minnesota. He has been invited to speak about the design process at AIA Minnesota Conventions and to design students at North Dakota State University.

### **Sharing: collectively creative**

The culture of John's firm embraces this team-driven approach to architecture. All members of the firm are invited to conceptualize the project during initialization. The firm's particular brand of "brainstorming" mines the collective realm of possibilities afforded by creative minds working in harmony.

John has also given back to AIA Minnesota. Serving on the board of AIA St. Paul from 1992 to 1998, including a term as President in 1996, he involved chapter members in the community by establishing a design charette called the St. Paul Prize. He was a member of the AIA Minnesota Committee on Design from 1983 to 1993, including a tenure as Chair between 1989 and 1991. He also has served on the Lake Superior Design Retreat Committee since 1990, including tenure as chair from 2003-2005. As a committee member, he helps select a roster of creative professionals to speak about their respective design processes.

John's passion for an architecture in which everyone benefits from collective knowledge led him to return to his alma mater, NDSU, as a member of the professional advisory group in 2007. As chair of the Student Advancement Committee, he led an effort to put current students in touch with alumni, culminating in a web-based mentor system.

Throughout his architectural endeavors, John has promoted a system that allows the participants to have a voice in the outcome which adds to the overall success of his work.