



**AIA Nevada Distinguished  
Service Award**

**2025 Emerging Professionals  
Award Nominee**

**Kristen Levin,** AIA, NCARB

**Mentorship, Education, Public Works**

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# 1.0 NOMINATION

October 10, 2025

**Re: Letter of Recommendation for Kristen Levin  
AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Award**

Dear AIA Members of the Honors and Awards Committee,

It is with great enthusiasm that I nominate Kristen Levin AIA, NCARB, for the AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Award. In her short but impactful tenure with JKAE, Kristen has proven herself to be an exceptional emerging architect and mentor, someone whose dedication to design, education, and service embodies the very spirit of this recognition.

Since joining JKAE one year ago, Kristen has provided remarkable leadership within our Reno office, fostering collaboration, mentorship, and design excellence. She consistently demonstrates the ability to unify teams across multiple JKAE offices, offering technical expertise, thoughtful design direction, and a steady sense of purpose. Her enthusiasm and professionalism elevate every project she touches, and her leadership has been instrumental in nurturing the next generation of designers within our firm.

Beyond her contributions to JKAE, Kristen's commitment to service within the AIA and the broader architectural community is exemplary. **As AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Director (2022–Present) and Chair of NEXT (2023–Present), the newly revitalized AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Group, Kristen has reimaged the platform for young architects to connect, learn, and lead.** Her strategic vision and hands-on leadership have resulted in a complete rebrand of the former “Yodeng” initiative into the vibrant and active NEXT. community, with programs such as the Annual Gingerbread Competition that bring architects together in creative and engaging ways.

Her additional roles including AIA Nevada Publication Chair, Golf Committee Member, and CANstruction Team Participant reflect her unwavering commitment to the vitality and visibility of the profession. Kristen also gives back to education and outreach through her work as a Visiting Studio Critic at Truckee Meadows Community College District, a Guest Presenter with the California Architects Foundation's “Architecture by the Book”, and a former ACE Mentor in Las Vegas. Each of these endeavors demonstrates her passion for mentorship, advocacy, and community impact.

Kristen's combination of professional excellence, collaborative leadership, and service-minded dedication makes her an ideal candidate for this award. Her influence extends far beyond project work; she is shaping the culture of architectural practice in Nevada and inspiring others to engage meaningfully with both the profession and the community. Also, in her free time she is pursuing a master's in business administration to broaden her expertise and value as a design professional.

It is a privilege to work alongside Kristen and to witness her positive influence on our firm and our profession. I strongly and proudly recommend her for the AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Award.

Sincerely,



Derek Labrecque, AIA, NCARB  
Partner | JKAE  
[jkaedesign.com](http://jkaedesign.com)



**JKAE**  
architecture + interiors + engineering

# 2.0 BIOGRAPHY

## KRISTEN LEVIN, AIA, NCARB



### EDUCATION

#### **Master of Business Administration**

University of Nevada Reno (2023 - present)

#### **Master of Architecture**

University of Nevada, Las Vegas (2018 - 2020)  
Hospitality Concentration

#### **Bachelor of Arts, Architecture**

Academy of Art University, San Francisco (2013 - 2018)

### REGISTRATIONS

Registered Architect, #9405, Nevada  
NCARB Certification #111063

### ORGANIZATIONS

#### **American Institute of Architects, Northern Nevada**

Emerging Professionals and Publication Chair,  
2022 - present

#### **Architecture, Construction, Engineering Mentor Program of America**

ACE Mentor, Southern Nevada Chapter, 2020 - 2021

### WORK EXPERIENCE

JKAE, Reno, NV  
September 2024 - Present

Van Woert Bigotti Architects, Reno, NV  
June 2021 - September 2024

PGAL, LLC, Las Vegas, NV  
January 2018 - June 2021

Born and raised in Las Vegas, Nevada, Kristen's journey into architecture began at Northwest Career and Technical Academy, where she specialized in Engineering and Design. Her early exposure to CAD, Revit, and SolidWorks, along with interdisciplinary studies in architecture, civil, and structural engineering, laid the foundation for a career in architecture.

Kristen earned her Bachelor of Arts in Architecture from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco in 2018, where she was an active member of AIAS and couldn't get enough of the academic and professional community in San Francisco. She later returned to Las Vegas to pursue her Master of Architecture at UNLV, graduating in 2020 while balancing full-time work at PGAL with graduate studies. Her dedication was recognized through the NEWH Las Vegas Chapter scholarships in 2019 and 2020, totaling \$10,000, awarded for her leadership and contributions to hospitality design through the Hospitality Design studio as part of her thesis on, "Addressing Problem Gaming through the Built Environment". As a student member of NEWH, she participated in community-driven events such as Glamping at Zion Ponderosa Ranch, where her team's "Burning Glam Structure" won the largest burn category, an effort that raised scholarship funds and fostered creative collaboration between design students and mentors.

Kristen's licensure journey began in 2020, immediately following her graduation from UNLV and during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic—a time that disrupted traditional study methods and isolated candidates from peer support. Navigating the Architect Registration Exams (AREs) under these conditions required exceptional discipline, adaptability, and perseverance. Recognizing the challenges of the process, Kristen became deeply committed to helping others through it, offering guidance and encouragement to emerging professionals.

A key factor in her success was the mentorship she received, both within her firm and from outside professionals who generously shared their experiences, strategies, and support. These relationships provided not only technical insight but also emotional resilience and accountability. Within her current firm, Kristen benefited from a culture of support and shared learning, while external mentors helped her navigate the broader licensure landscape. This experience reinforced her belief that mentorship is essential to professional growth and licensure success, and she now actively pays it forward by mentoring others, embodying the award's values of leadership, community impact, and dedication to the future of the profession.

Professionally, Kristen has demonstrated a sustained impact on the built environment through her work on public projects that serve and elevate Nevada communities. At PGAL, she contributed to the UNLV College of Engineering's Advanced Engineering Studies building, the City of Las Vegas Municipal Courthouse, and the Clark County Fire



Station Prototypes (Stations 30 and 35), integrating lessons learned into improved design and documentation. Joining Van Woert Bigotti Architects in Reno in 2021, she continued her commitment to civic architecture through the Moana Springs Community Aquatic Center, supporting planning, construction documents, and construction administration. Kristen joined JKAE in 2024 to contribute to the firm's growing architectural presence in Reno, with a focus on projects that serve educational institutions and civic communities, such as Washoe County School District and University of Nevada Reno. Her work supports the firm's mission to enhance Northern Nevada's built environment through thoughtful, impactful design rooted in public service and regional growth.

Upon relocating to Reno, Kristen made the intentional decision to pursue an MBA at the University of Nevada, Reno while continuing full-time work in architectural practice, a testament to her resilience, leadership, and commitment to future-focused growth. This experience has been transformative, equipping her with business fluency in finance, operations, marketing, and organizational leadership that complements her architectural expertise. It has expanded her capacity to manage complex projects, and deliver community-driven solutions.

Balancing rigorous academic demands with professional responsibilities demonstrates her ability to lead in challenging circumstances, directly reflecting the values of the AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Leadership Award. Her MBA journey has also deepened her understanding of architecture's broader impact, reinforcing her dedication to mentorship, critical thinking, and redefining the profession through strategic innovation and leadership.

Kristen's leadership is evident not only in her project work but also in her mentorship and advocacy for emerging professionals. She embodies a forward-looking vision for architecture that is socially responsive, environmentally conscious, and rooted in community needs. Her contributions reflect a deep respect for the profession's legacy and a commitment to shaping its future—qualities that align directly with the spirit and criteria of the AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Leadership Award.

Guided by a passion for mentorship and service, Kristen empowers emerging professionals to pursue licensure, cultivate authentic networks, and engage in meaningful community action. Her leadership reflects a values-based approach rooted in empathy, curiosity, and collaboration — principles that have defined her career and influence within AIA Nevada. **Drawing from the mentorship she has received, Kristen continues to pay it forward, championing growth opportunities for others and fostering a culture of support and inclusion across the profession.**

Kristen exemplifies the character and leadership qualities celebrated by the AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Leadership Award. Her strong work ethic, dependable project management, and disciplined time management reflect a consistent ability to lead with integrity and purpose. Beyond her professional contributions, she actively volunteers her time to ensure the success of community and chapter events, demonstrating a deep commitment to service and collaboration.

**Kristen's journey,  
from student to emerging leader,  
reflects a steadfast commitment to growth,  
mentorship, and the advancement of Northern  
Nevada's architectural community.**



# 3.0 ACHIEVEMENTS

## KRISTEN LEVIN, AIA, NCARB

### 3.1 AIANN Emerging Professionals Director

As Emerging Professionals Director for AIA Northern Nevada, Kristen Levin has built a dynamic bridge between architects in their early careers and the broader professional community. She has led initiatives that support licensure, mentorship, and leadership development, anchored by strong partnerships with Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC), home to the only architecture program in Northern Nevada.

**Kristen is in the process of assisting the TMCC chapter of AIAS create their very first ARE study group.** Events such as the Annual Gingerbread Contest connect students with practicing professionals, fostering a culture of inclusion and growth. Her advocacy ensures that emerging voices are recognized through awards, speaking opportunities, and chapter communications. Through strategic leadership and community-building, she has elevated the visibility and impact of emerging professionals in her local Northern Nevada community.

Through Kristen's leadership as Emerging Professionals Director, she is cultivating a thriving pipeline of future architects across Northern Nevada.





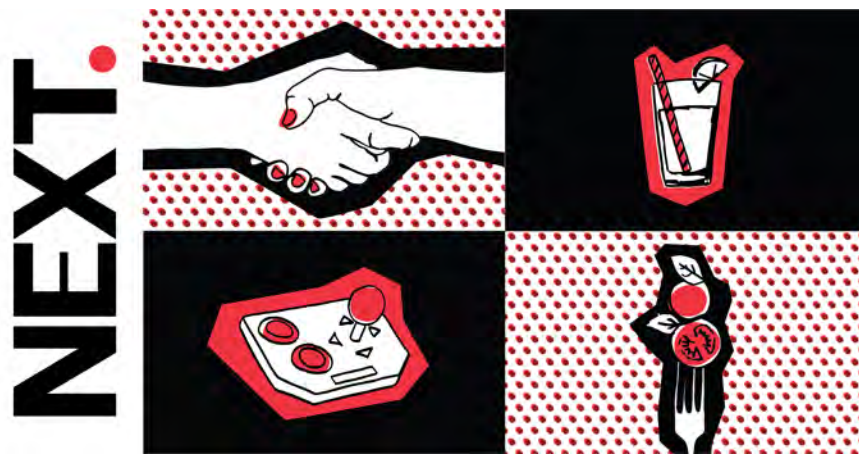
## 3.2 NEXT. Committee Chair

The AIA Northern Nevada Emerging Designers Network is a reimagined community space for early-career professionals across all design disciplines; architecture, interiors, landscape, urban design, and beyond. Rooted in a relaxed, welcoming environment, our gatherings prioritize authentic connection, peer support, and shared growth.

**Whether you're setting up your NCARB account, exploring licensure pathways, preparing for the AREs, or simply seeking creative camaraderie, this network offers the resources and relationships to help you thrive.**

We host informal meetups, collaborative workshops, and mentorship-driven events designed to foster meaningful dialogue and open doors. By expanding our focus beyond architecture alone, we celebrate the full spectrum of design voices shaping Northern Nevada's built environment. This is not just a networking group, it's a launchpad for emerging talent, a place to ask questions, share ideas, and build a future together.

NEXT is about what's ahead: the next conversation, the next collaboration, the next step in your journey. Whether you're a student at TMCC, a newly licensed architect, an interior designer, or a seasoned professional exploring new directions, NEXT offers a relaxed, inclusive environment where networking leads to mentorship, and resources are shared to support your growth.



**Under Kristen's leadership, NEXT. has become the heartbeat of Northern Nevada's emerging design culture, energized, inclusive, and forward-looking.**





### 3.3 NEXT. Gingerbread House Competition

Kristen, in collaboration with her NEXT. committee, launched the inaugural Gingerbread House Competition in 2024, the first event of its kind in Northern Nevada designed to foster community engagement and design collaboration. This annual initiative pairs architecture students from Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) with local design firms, creating a hands-on opportunity for mentorship, creative exchange, and professional connection. By bridging students with practicing professionals, the competition introduces emerging designers to the architectural community in a festive, inclusive setting that celebrates both craft and collaboration. Kristen's leadership in developing this event reflects her commitment to uplifting the next generation and building meaningful pathways into the profession.

Under Kristen's leadership, the Gingerbread House Competition has already become a signature AIA Northern Nevada program, celebrated for its ability to bridge education and practice while highlighting the creativity and camaraderie that define the architectural profession. Her vision transformed a simple idea into a meaningful community event that draws public interest, supports student development, and reinforces AIA's mission to advance architecture through connection, mentorship, and service.

Kristen transformed a creative idea into a cornerstone event that bridges education, practice, and community within AIA Northern Nevada.





### 3.4 AIANN Publication Chair

As Publication Chair for AIA Northern Nevada, Kristen brings creativity, organization, and storytelling together to capture the vibrant spirit of the chapter. She curates event documentation and photography throughout the year, transforming moments of connection, service, and celebration into a cohesive visual narrative that reflects the chapter's mission and momentum.

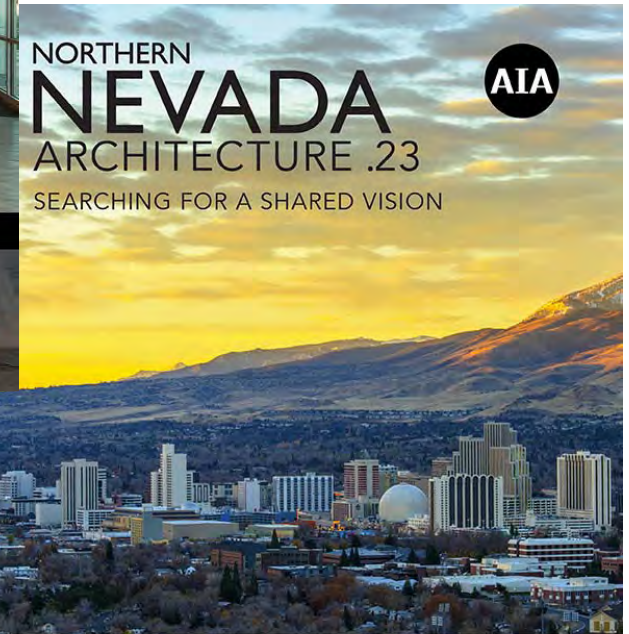
Collaborating closely with NewLink Group, Kristen plays a key role in shaping the annual publication, from content development to design direction, highlighting the people, projects, and initiatives that define AIA Northern Nevada. Her thoughtful curation not only preserves the chapter's history, but also amplifies its collective voice, showcasing the impact of members who are shaping the built environment and strengthening the architectural community across the region.

By the American Institute of Architects Northern Nevada



**2023**

*Pictured left to right: Carlos Hernandez, Executive Director AIA Nevada & Las Vegas; Kristen Levin, Publication Director; Paul Vanderbyl, Allied Members Director; Shannon Ferguson, Social Media Director; Deysi Montes-Castill, Education Director; Colton Schafer, Allied Professionals Director; Gitte Russo, Managing Director; Daniela Moral, Secretary & Emerging Professionals Director; Gary Williams, Director; Brad Van Woert, Treasurer; Marshall Cowen, Senior Director; Nate Hudson, President Elect & Scholarship Director; Angela Bigotti-Chavez, President*



Kristen's vision elevates the publication into a powerful reflection of AIA Northern Nevada's collective impact.

# 4.0 SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

## KRISTEN LEVIN, AIA, NCARB

### 4.1 Rebranding of the Emerging Professionals Networking Group

Formerly known as YODENG (Young Designers Networking Group), our community is evolving. While YODENG served as a valuable space for early-career architects, its name and mission no longer reflect the diversity of voices shaping our built environment. That's why we're proud to introduce NEXT—a reimagined networking group for all emerging professionals and allies across design disciplines, licensure paths, and career stages.

Together with her team, Kristen helped reimagine YODENG as NEXT., a fresh, inclusive brand celebrating the future of design in Northern Nevada.





## 4.2 CANstruction 2025

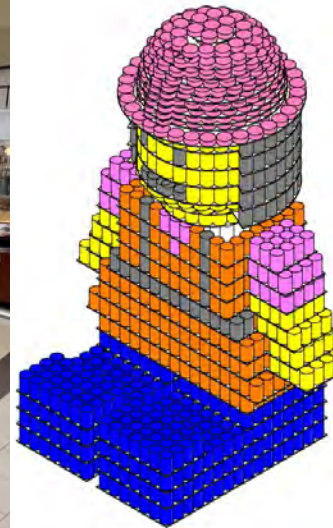
In 2025, JKAE partnered with Sierra Nevada Job Corps to create “Sisters in the Brotherhood” for AIA Northern Nevada’s CANstruction competition. The structure depicts a woman proudly standing in a pink safety vest and hard hat, built entirely from canned goods to symbolize the strength, skill, and resilience of women in construction. The bold letters “SIB” represent Sisters in the Brotherhood, a nod to unity, mentorship, and support within the trades community.

**Kristen played a key role in conceptualizing and coordinating the design, helping bridge the collaboration between JKAE and Job Corps.** Her involvement exemplified her passion for mentorship, teamwork, and community service, values that align with the core mission of AIA Northern Nevada.

This impactful installation honored the hard-working women breaking barriers and building a better future, both on job sites and in their communities. Beyond its symbolic power, the structure reinforced CANstruction’s mission to Fight Hunger, with all canned goods donated to the Food Bank of Northern Nevada, helping to support families and communities across the region.



Through Kristen’s leadership and collaboration with Job Corps, the “Sisters in the Brotherhood” build stood as both a celebration of women in the trades and a beacon of community impact.





## 4.3 AIANN Golf Committee

Kristen serves on the AIANN Golf Committee, contributing to the planning and organization of the chapter's annual golf tournament, the premier fundraising event supporting scholarships for architecture students in Northern Nevada. Her involvement helps ensure the success of this community-driven initiative, which directly invests in the next generation of emerging design professionals.



On and off the course, Kristen helps keep the chapter's biggest fundraiser on par for ultimate success.





## 4.4 California Architectural Foundation – Architecture By The Book



Kristen volunteers with the California Architectural Foundation at Dorel Academy in Reno, inspiring 5th graders with hands-on introductions to architecture and design.



## 4.5 Network of Executive Women in Hospitality

Kristen participated in NEWH Las Vegas' Glamping at Zion Ponderosa, a design-build fundraising event that brings together students and professionals to create imaginative, themed "glamping" structures in support of NEWH scholarships for students in hospitality, architecture, and interior design. Her team's project, the Burning Glam Structure, won the Largest Burn category, celebrating both creativity and collaboration. The event blends design innovation with philanthropy, culminating in a symbolic "burn" that honors teamwork, mentorship, and the shared spirit of giving back to the design community.

Kristen's "Burning Glam Structure" ignited creativity and collaboration, fueling scholarships for the next generation of hospitality and design professionals.





# 5.0 ARCHITECTURAL WORK

## 5.1 University of Nevada, Las Vegas Advanced Engineering Studies



Source: UNLV Engineering Advanced Engineering Studies, Property of PGAL

## 5.1 University of Nevada, Las Vegas Advanced Engineering Studies

### PROJECT DETAILS

**Owner:** University of Nevada, Las Vegas

**Architect of Record:** PGAL

**Construction Budget:** \$44 Million

**Delivery Method:** CMAR

**Project Completion Date:** 2024

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The AES Building represents a significant step forward in the College of Engineering's efforts to achieve "top-tier" status by combining active student learning environments with cutting-edge professional research laboratories. AES supports the college's mission: to Educate, Engage, Innovate, and Inspire. Programming goals include creating a campus building integrated into the network of engineering facilities, using the building as a recruitment tool, and showcasing engineering programs through hands-on, innovative learning environments that foster interaction among students, professors, and researchers.

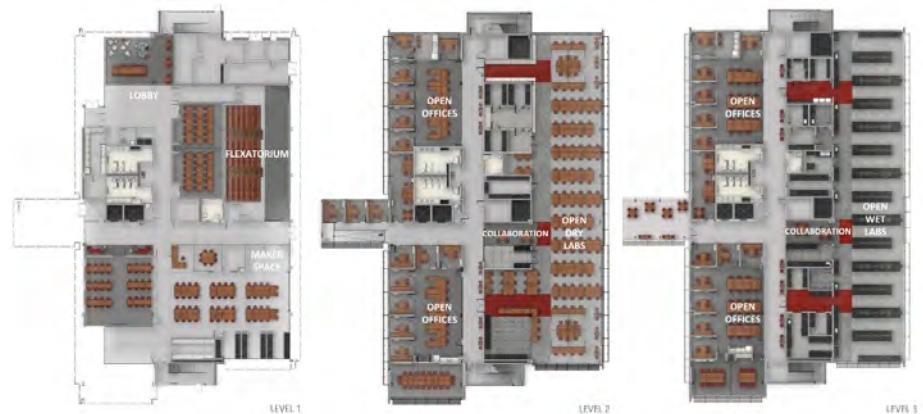
AES is a three-story, 50,000-square-foot facility connected at the second floor to the third level of the Thomas Beam A building, promoting shared use of existing amenities. The first floor features a large makerspace and active learning classroom on the southern half, fronting the university mall. A flexible auditorium, divisible classroom, and lobby occupy the northern half, with building support spaces in the northeast corner.

Due to site slope, the first floor is elevated slightly above the mall. A shaded exterior patio adjacent to the auditorium and makerspace helps resolve grade differences and serves as an amenity for student and private events.

The west bay and bridge connector of the second floor are programmed for faculty, post-doc, and graduate student offices. The center bay is designated for enclosed laboratory support space, while the eastern bay remains an open, flexible lab with movable benches and desk space. The third floor mirrors the second, with the key difference being its wet lab design. Fume hoods and sinks are located in the center bay and along the west wall of the open lab to support flexible bench arrangements without fixed utility connections.



*Interior Entry*



*Floor Plans*

*Source: UNLV Engineering Advanced Engineering Studies, Property of PGAL*



## 5.2 Clark County Fire Station Prototype: Stations 30 and 35



Front Entry | Source: Property of PGAL



## 5.2 Clark County Fire Station Prototype: Stations 30 and 35

### PROJECT DETAILS

**Owner:** Clark County Real Property Management

**Architect of Record:** PGAL

**Location:** Las Vegas, NV

**Construction Budget:** \$5.1 Million

**Delivery Method:** Design-Bid-Build

**Project Completion Date:** 2020

### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

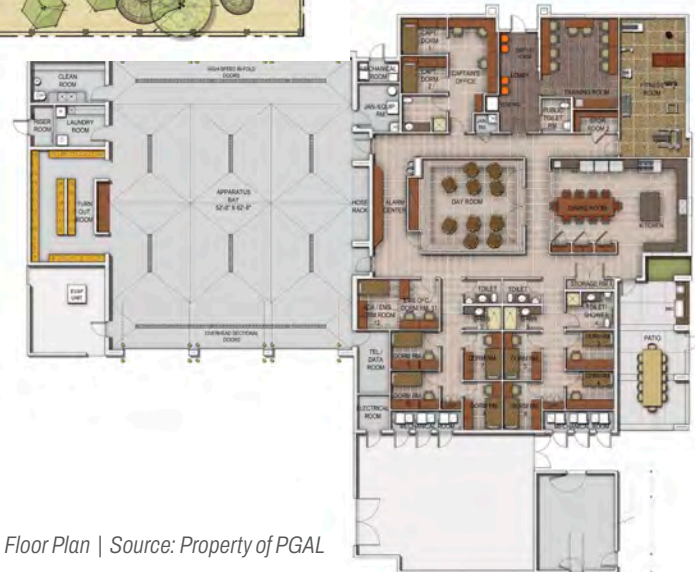
With almost 1,000 employees and volunteers, the Clark County Fire Department is the largest in Nevada. Its stations are strategically located to minimize response times and support fire suppression, emergency medical services (EMS), training, and administrative functions. The department's mission is to "provide optimum protection and prevention for our residents and visitors, with the highest level of valor, integrity, commitment, teamwork, and community involvement."

The design of the new prototype fire station builds on lessons learned from previous Clark County facilities, best practices observed at other stations, and input from design charrettes and departmental stakeholders. The resulting design is simple, efficient, and aligned with the Fire Department's goal of maintaining a modest, functional image.

Core functions include fire suppression, EMS, training, and vehicle housing for apparatus such as engines, ladder and rescue trucks, mobile air units, and hazardous materials vehicles. Programmed spaces are organized into apparatus, equipment, administration, training, living, and ancillary zones, ensuring the facility supports the full range of fire department operations.



Site Plan | Source: Property of PGAL



Floor Plan | Source: Property of PGAL

## 5.3 Moana Springs Community Aquatic & Fitness Center



Front Entry | Source: Property of Van Woert Bigotti Architects





## 5.3 Moana Springs Community Aquatic & Fitness Center

### PROJECT DETAILS

**Owner:** City of Reno

**Location:** Reno, Nevada

**Architect of Record:** Van Woert Bigotti Architects

**Construction Budget:** \$52 Million

**Delivery Method:** CMAR

**Project Completion Date:** September 2024

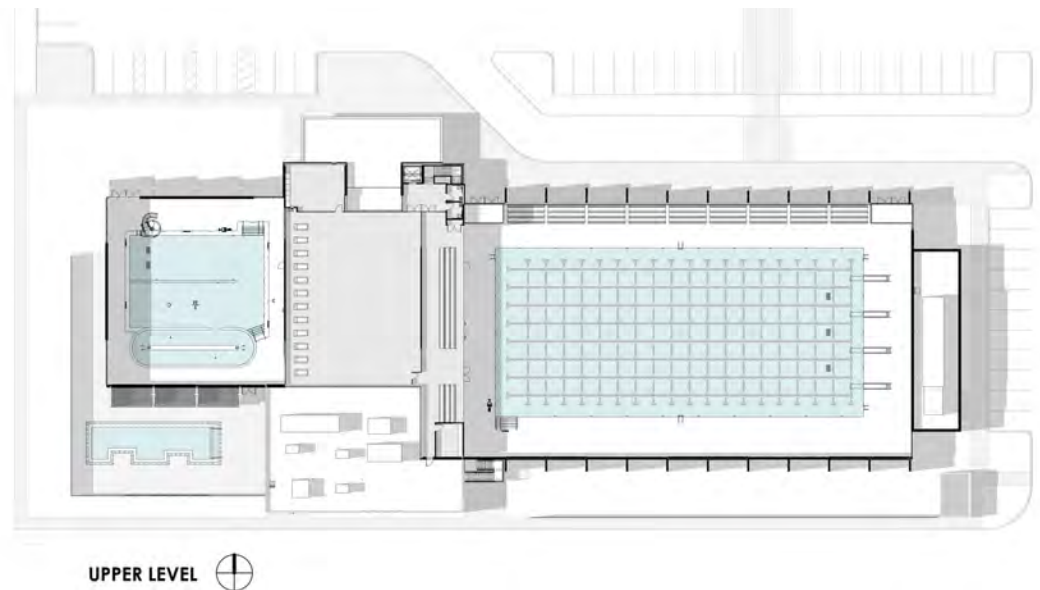
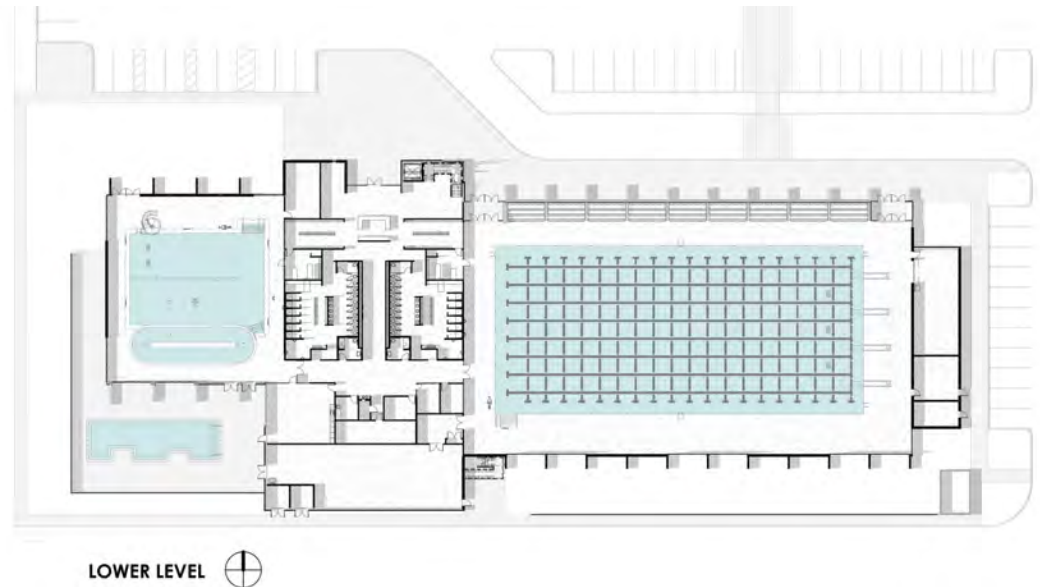
### PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Moana Springs Community Aquatic & Fitness Center is a transformative civic project redefining recreation in Reno, Nevada. Commissioned by the City of Reno, this \$52 million facility delivers a vibrant destination for health, wellness, and community connection.

The Aquatic & Fitness Center brings together state-of-the-art aquatic amenities, modern fitness spaces, and welcoming public areas under one dynamic roof. The architecture celebrates transparency and movement using daylight, glass, and open sightlines to blur the boundaries between indoors and outdoors, fitness and leisure, individual and community.

Delivered through the Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) method, the project fostered collaboration and innovation from concept through completion. Early engagement between the design and construction teams streamlined coordination, optimized costs, and preserved design integrity through every phase.

Completed in September 2024, the Moana Springs Community Aquatic & Fitness Center stands as a model for how thoughtful design and proactive delivery can create lasting civic value energizing the heart of Reno and inspiring the community it serves.



Floor Plans | Source: Property of Van Woert Bigotti Architects

# 6.0 LETTERS OF RECOMMENDATION



American Institute of Architects, Northern Nevada (AIANN)  
3495 Lakeside Drive #15  
Reno, NV 89509  
775.229.4555  
aiann@aiann.org | aiann.org

October 9, 2025

RE: 2025 AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Award recommendation of Kristen Levin, AIA

Dear AIA Nevada Awards Committee,

It is my sincere pleasure to recommend Kristen Levin, AIA, for the 2025 AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Award. Kristen's dedication to the architectural profession shines through in everything she does, from her active involvement in the AIA Northern Nevada chapter to her growing presence across the state. Her leadership and advocacy come from a genuine passion for helping others succeed, and her mentorship has brought together cross-discipline groups of young professionals to collaborate and grow as a design community. She brings people together, inspires collaboration, and truly strengthens our membership with a strong focus on the inclusion and development of the emerging professionals in Northern Nevada.

I have had the privilege of serving alongside Kristen on the AIA Northern Nevada Board for several years and have witnessed firsthand her impressive professional growth and her steadfast commitment to advancing opportunities for emerging professionals.

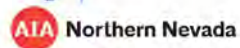
As our Emerging Professionals Director and YoDeNG/NEXT Co-Chair, Kristen has been a driving force behind programs that empower the next generation of architects. She has fostered meaningful connections between practicing professionals and students, particularly through her collaboration with the rapidly growing TMCC Architecture Program and has extended her impact beyond state lines as a presenter and volunteer with the California Architects Foundation.

Kristen continually sets a high standard for design excellence, mentorship, and chapter engagement. She has spearheaded new initiatives and strengthened existing committees, all with a clear focus on supporting allied professionals, architects and those who are just beginning their architectural career. Kristen is always among the first to undertake new programs, bringing creativity and enthusiasm to every effort. Her leadership has been instrumental in the success of key chapter initiatives, from the annual Golf Tournament and CANstruction event to the development and coordination of our AIA Northern Nevada yearly publication. Her contributions have continued to elevate the quality and visibility of our chapter's events and awards.

Kristen embodies the spirit of leadership, mentorship, and service that this award seeks to honor. I am confident that her continued contributions will have a lasting impact on our profession for years to come.

I am honored to put forward Kristen Levin, AIA, for the 2025 AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Award. Her leadership, dedication, and commitment to architectural excellence make her an outstanding representative of our profession and unquestionably deserving of this honor.

  
Gary Williams AIA, President



American Institute of Architects, Northern Nevada  
3495 Lakeside Drive #15 | Reno, NV 89509  
775.229.4555 | aiann@aiann.org | aiann.org





AIA Nevada Honors and Awards Committee

**Re: Letter of Recommendation for Kristen Levin  
AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Award**

Dear Members of the Honors and Awards Committee,

It is with great pride and admiration that I write this letter of recommendation for Kristen Levin, AIA, NCARB, in support of her nomination for the AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Award. **I have had the privilege of mentoring Kristen over the past five years and have witnessed firsthand her remarkable growth, unwavering dedication, and profound impact on our profession and community.**

Kristen has played a vital supporting role in several projects I've managed, most notably the Moana Springs Community Aquatic & Fitness Center in Reno, Nevada. Her contributions to planning, documentation, and construction administration were instrumental in the successful delivery of this transformative public facility. Kristen's ability to collaborate across disciplines and maintain a clear focus on community impact exemplifies the spirit of architectural service.

Beyond her project work, Kristen is a tireless advocate for the architectural profession. She serves as the Emerging Professionals Director for AIA Northern Nevada, where she has reimagined and revitalized the networking group formerly known as YODENG into NEXT., a dynamic and inclusive platform for early-career professionals. Her leadership has fostered mentorship, licensure support, and interdisciplinary engagement, creating meaningful opportunities for connection and growth.

Kristen's commitment to education is equally inspiring. She regularly volunteers as a Visiting Critic at Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC), where she engages deeply with students, offering guidance and encouragement. She has also helped establish TMCC's first ARE study group, further demonstrating her dedication to supporting emerging professionals.

Her passion for service extends to organizing and promoting AIA events, including the Annual Gingerbread House Competition, which she helped launch to connect students with local professionals in a festive, collaborative setting. Kristen has also been actively involved in the AIA Golf Tournament, contributing to its success as a key fundraising initiative for student scholarships.

Her enthusiasm, discipline, and relentless dedication are truly inspiring, not only to her peers, but also to mentors like myself. In fact, her energy and leadership have motivated me to become more involved in AIA events and mentorship initiatives. Despite being several years her senior, I would not have considered active involvement in AIA events without her encouragement and enthusiasm. She has inspired me to participate in the Gingerbread House Competition and an event called 'Architecture by the Book' through the California Architectural Foundation, which engaged local elementary students at Doral Academy in Reno. Her ability to motivate and connect others to meaningful service opportunities is a testament to her leadership and passion for the profession.

Kristen Levin embodies the values of the AIA Nevada Emerging Professionals Award through her sustained contributions to the profession, her commitment to mentorship and education, and her visionary leadership within the architectural community. I wholeheartedly endorse her nomination and believe she is exceptionally deserving of this recognition.

Sincerely,

**Kristy Van Zant**, AIA, NCARB  
AIA # 40815460



**JKAE**  
architecture + interiors + engineering



American Institute of Architects, Northern Nevada (AIANN)  
 3495 Lakeside Drive #15  
 Reno, NV 89509  
 775.229.4555  
[aiann@aiann.org](mailto:aiann@aiann.org) | [aiann.org](http://aiann.org)

Dear AIA Nevada,

This is a letter of endorsement for an applicant for this year's Emerging Professional Award: Kristen Levin.

I have known Kristen for many years - she is one of those go-getters in the industry who has managed to be involved in local institutions, groups, and organizations while simultaneously taking the ARE's and getting licensed. She is a true 'people person' who is involved in community-focused projects and consistently makes change for the better in everything she does.

She is a person who will do things that matter because she treats each task as a task that *matters*. I consider that a rare trait.

Kristen and I have been working together at the AIANN for 3 years. She jumped right in and brought the group to a new level of professionalism. The AIANN is a true 'labor of love' - it takes a special person to not only do the challenging administrative things that need to be done, but, more importantly, you have to CARE. It's about the people.

AIANN is more than an industry/membership organization. It's about communications, relationship building, moving the needle, helping the City and region improve, and focusing on the built environment. It's about knowing people, projects, firms, priorities, budgets and so much more.

As the Managing Director of the AIA Northern Nevada, I have come to learn and respect the AIA's goals and missions and see the importance of our roles in our communities. I highly recommend her for this award!

**Gitte Russo**, Managing Director



American Institute of Architects, Northern Nevada  
 3495 Lakeside Drive #15 | Reno, NV 89509  
 775.229.4555 | [aiann@aiann.org](mailto:aiann@aiann.org) | [aiann.org](http://aiann.org)

