

# MARY ANN LAZARUS

## INNOVATIVE CAREER LATTICE

FAIA | LEED Fellow



Mary Ann Lazarus, FAIA, LEED Fellow is a consultant with the firm of Cameron MacAllister Group, advisors to the design and construction professions. CMG offers targeted advisory services to help firms become better at what they do and is considered a trusted voice with leading design firms. As a member of the CMG team, Mary Ann works with design firms to integrate greater sustainability and resiliency outcomes throughout their practice. Mary Ann also is an Adjunct Faculty at Washington University in St. Louis. Mary Ann was a founder of the sustainable design initiative at HOK, a global design firm whose pioneering green leadership has helped propel sustainability from a fringe activity to a significant mainstream movement shaping the future of architecture. She served as the Resident Fellow for AIA National on Sustainability and Design for Health where she authored the AIA's Sustainability Leadership Opportunity Scan that set the direction for the AIA's role in enhancing architects' sustainable leadership.

***"I'm drawn to mission driven leaders who are able to incorporate their values into their life, work and home, while not sacrificing their basic needs."***

### HOW DID YOU DECIDE TO BECOME AN ARCHITECT?

After graduating from college where I was a Russian Studies major, I had a job which included doing some graphic design and transportation planning which opened my eyes to having an impact on the built environment. I decided to try out architecture by going part-time to night school at the Boston Architectural Center and loved it, so moved onto a fulltime graduate program.

### CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR CAREER PATH AND THE POSITIONS YOU HAVE HELD?

#### ■ Getting registered:

This took place 3 years after graduation and passing two day-long tests and opened up new opportunities and roles.

#### ■ 10 years in:

Shift from traditional leadership track to firmwide role working across locations in global firm providing accessibility expertise based on recent passage of ADA civil rights legislation. This positioned me as a go-to resource for many leaders. This coincided with my return to work after third child and gave me much more flexibility and control over my time.

#### ■ 17 years in:

Joined HOK "Green Team" and became early participant in national industry sustainability events (pre USGBC). Active in firmwide leader events.

#### ■ 22 years in:

Became HOK's first Firmwide Sustainable Design Leader. Became active early member of Building Green's sustainable design leaders' group and held national volunteer roles with USGBC and Greenbuild conference. This gave me high visibility and created a deep network of colleagues and friends.

#### ■ 33 years in:

Began role as Sustainability Consultant first with the national AIA. Became active in national AIA leadership roles (including serving as AIA COTE Leadership Group chair and several other committees.)

### HAVE YOU ALWAYS WANTED TO BE IN A LEADERSHIP POSITION OR HAS THAT CHANGED OVER TIME?

No, this changed as a realized that the amount of respect and opportunity would be commensurate with having a recognized role and title. Otherwise, it didn't matter to me.

## HOW HAVE YOU WEATHERED THE CHANGING ECONOMIC CYCLES AND RECESSIONS WITHIN THE INDUSTRY?

I started my career in 1979 and stayed continually employed mostly at the same firm (HOK for 35 years) until recently. That's definitely a rarity in our industry.

## WHO MENTORED YOU/ HELPED YOU ON YOUR PATH TO SUCCESS?

Many leaders within HOK and in the Sustainable Design leader world. That includes the former CEO of HOK, Jerry Sincoff, SD Leader Bob Berkebile, Resilience leader Alex Wilson, CMU's Vivian Loftness to name a few.

## IS THERE ANYTHING YOU WOULD HAVE DONE DIFFERENTLY?

Yes - realized my value much earlier and asked for equal pay. I was paid far less than my equivalent peers for many years.

## WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT QUALITIES AN ARCHITECT SHOULD HAVE?

A sense of what matters most to them and willingness to pursue that. I'm drawn to mission driven leaders who are able to incorporate their values into their life, work, and home, while not sacrificing their basic needs.

## WHO DO YOU LOOK UP TO AS A LEADER AND WHY?

Someone who is a good listener, willing to share their experience and takes time to learn from and help others.

## ARE THERE ANY RESOURCES THAT YOU HAVE FOUND USEFUL REGARDING LEADERSHIP?

I'm not a regular podcast, management book type of person. People are my greatest resource.

## WHAT ADVICE DO YOU WANT TO GIVE TO FUTURE LEADERS OF THE INDUSTRY?

Being an architect is a responsibility and a big opportunity. It's far more than about traditional building design, but about designing a resilient, healthy future for all. The timing is critical so use your skills and passions to make a difference.

## WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE IS THE RECIPE FOR SUCCESS?

Listen to your inner self and values and follow those opportunities even if it feels risky. Reach out to your community for support and wisdom.

## TIMELINE

- 3 YEARS IN  
Licensed
- 10 YEARS IN  
Shifted roles from traditional leadership track to firmwide role as accessibility expert
- 17 YEARS IN  
Joined HOK "Green Team"
- 22 YEARS IN  
HOK's first Firmwide Sustainable Design Leader
- 33 YEARS IN  
Sustainability Consultant with AIA National

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