

## First-ever Survey of Pro Bono Service by U.S. Architecture Firms Completed

*Across the U.S., architects are putting their skills and talents to work for the public good, according to a recent survey of 150 firms by nonprofit Public Architecture.*

San Francisco, CA ([PRWeb](#)) August 14, 2007 -- Across the U.S., architects are putting their skills and talents to work for the public good, according to a recent survey of [150 firms](#) by nonprofit Public Architecture.

"There has never been a survey focused specifically on pro bono service by architecture firms or even individual architects before," says John Cary, Public Architecture's executive director.

The survey sample ranged from sole practitioners to some of the largest firms in the country, such as HKS and Perkins Will, all of which have pledged a minimum of 1% of their billable hours to pro bono service via Public Architecture's flagship "[1% Solution](#)" program. Public Architecture's goal is to direct a minimum of 1% of every firm's time to pro bono service, and these 150 are leading the way.

Virtually every firm reported exceeding the goal of 1%, and more than two-thirds devoted 2% or more of their time to pro bono service over the past year. This level of activity is all the more significant considering that respondents overwhelmingly cited their firms' "financial constraints" and "available staff time" as the two greatest obstacles to engaging in pro bono work. "We're talking about a major investment of time and resources," Cary adds.

"This is a historic survey," according to Aaron Hurst, founder and president of the [Taproot Foundation](#), which connects nonprofits with business professionals from a variety of fields on a pro bono basis. "It represents the first time, outside of the legal profession, that a quantifiable standard for pro bono has been put on the table for a specific industry and measured. Most significantly, the survey brings to light the barriers to further investment as well as demonstrated commitment to overcoming them."

As to what motivates firms to give of their time and talents, 88% of survey respondents named "social relevance" as the most important variable in choosing pro bono projects. Similarly, 73% of respondents cited "community benefit" as having the highest impact on any future efforts to increase the quality or quantity of their pro bono work. Other key selection variables included project type, design opportunity, and a personal connection with the issues addressed by projects or the client themselves.

The survey revealed that architects contributed significant time and resources over the past year alone to a wide range of projects and services, from rebuilding a storm-damaged library in New Orleans to general consulting for local nonprofits. Donated services comprised the largest type of pro bono contributions, followed by reduced-fee services, general volunteer work, and cash donations. Most respondents cited a combination of the aforementioned items.

Some firms chose to work with established nonprofits, such as Habitat for Humanity, Adopt a Room, and the Robin Hood Foundation's Library Initiative. Others have dedicated their time to projects that they conceived of and spearheaded, drafting unsolicited open space plans and sustainability strategies for their particular neighborhoods. A few even looked beyond national boundaries, helping with tsunami relief efforts in Sri Lanka or village planning in Liberia.

The results of this first annual survey strongly supported the next evolutionary step of the 1% Solution program, the national initiative through which architecture firms pledge a minimum of 1% of their billable hours to pro bono service.

The next phase of the 1% Solution program involves the creation of a national database and online clearinghouse to match architects with nonprofit organizations and other appropriate pro bono clients in need of their help. The new online database, paired with the release of a first-of-its-kind print publication on pro bono design, is expected to go online in September.

"This is a breakthrough moment for pro bono design and also our 1% Solution program," says Cary. "We are on the brink of mobilizing architects and bringing professional design to communities in need at a scale never seen before."

Public Architecture

[www.publicarchitecture.org](http://www.publicarchitecture.org)

Established in 2002 by architect [John Peterson](#), Public Architecture is a national nonprofit organization based in San Francisco. Public Architecture acts as a catalyst for public discourse through education, advocacy, and the design of public spaces and amenities. The "1% Solution" ([www.theonepercent.org](http://www.theonepercent.org)) is a national program launched by Public Architecture in 2005 that challenges architecture firms to pledge 1% of their billable hours to pro bono work. Over 160 firms have signed on to date. If every architecture professional in the U.S. dedicated just 20 hours annually, it would add up to 5,000,000 hours each year--the equivalent of 2,500-person firm working fulltime for the public good. The 1% Solution was initially launched with the support of a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and is supported by a range of groups, including the Boston Society of Architects and leading firms such as ESG, HGA, HKS, HOK, McCall Design Group, Perkins & Will, and PWA.

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**Contact Information****John Cary**

Public Architecture

<http://www.publicarchitecture.org>

415-861-8200

**Barbara Franzoia**

Barbara Franzoia Consults

<http://www.publicarchitecture.org>

415-291-0243

**Online Web 2.0 Version**

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