

100K

Residents supported in Flint Water Crisis response

(Exhibit 3.2)

15,000+

Podcast downloads from over 90 countries

(Exhibit 3.7)



\$50M

Construction cost of missing middle housing throughout the Midwest

(Exhibit 3.3)

Top 10

Global ranking out of 100+architecture podcasts according to feedspot.com

(Exhibit 3.7)

10+

Students receiving national recognition from outstanding design work

(Exhibit 3.8)



92+

Vacant lots redesigned with new housing guidelines

(Exhibit 3.5)

\$50K+

In grant funded research for economic development in underserved communities

(Exhibit 3.10)

40+

Public Interest Design mission driven projects completed in service to society

(Exhibit 3.1)



1,000+

Students mentored throughout career as Professor of Practice

(Exhibit 3.8)

Equity-Centered Practice

*Kurt's work unites design, policy, and stewardship to expand access, trust, and opportunity. He has delivered more than **120 affordable homes**, guided **40+ community-driven** projects with mission-based partners (**Exhibit 3.1**), and co-authored neighborhood design guidelines addressing **Flint's 47% vacancy challenge** (**Exhibit 3.6**). During the **Flint Water Crisis**, his public information graphics reached over **100,000 residents** (**Exhibit 3.2**). From rehabilitating historic homes (**Exhibit 3.7**) to leading housing investments exceeding **\$50 million** (**Exhibit 3.3**), he transforms built and policy outcomes into replicable strategies for change, showing how design leadership drives measurable community impact.*



Public Interest Design Work

Through more than 40 public interest design projects across Flint, Michigan Kurt has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to design justice and community revitalization. These efforts include park master plans, pavilions, and adaptive reuse of abandoned buildings, each responding directly to the needs of residents too often overlooked. The portfolio reaches citywide, showing visible signs of resilience in neighborhoods long marked by vacancy. This early work built trust, strengthened networks with nonprofits and civic partners, and led to the creation of Urban Colab Architecture, L3C. It represents long-term leadership in advancing architecture for healing and empowerment. (**Exhibit 3.1**)



Flint Water Crisis

During the Flint Water Crisis, Kurt stepped beyond traditional architectural roles to serve as advocate, educator, and communicator. Partnering with AIA Flint, city officials, and community groups, he designed a visual infographic that distilled complex public health data into clear, actionable guidance, helping more than **100,000 residents** manage bottled water safely in aging homes. He later amplified Flint's story nationally through the **2014 AIA Young Architects Forum** annual meeting and globally on the **Archinect Sessions Podcast**, bridging gaps in trust, understanding, and access, and demonstrating architecture's capacity to serve society in moments of profound crisis. (**Exhibit 3.2**)



Affordable Housing

Kurt has led the design of more than 120 affordable housing units across Michigan, representing over **\$50 million** in reinvestment. In Flint's Carriage Town Historic District, the Grand Apartments introduced **48 new homes** scaled to context. On the north side, he directed the rehabilitation of Orchard Lane and the construction of Orchard Grove and Orchard Manor, a total of **101 units** and community space for health and literacy programs. These projects demonstrate equity-centered design that addresses housing shortages while strengthening neighborhoods through dignity, resilience, and opportunity. (**Exhibit 3.3**)



Vacant Lot Redevelopment

As a citizen architect committed to Flint's future, Kurt played a pivotal role in creating the Durant-Tuuri-Mott Vacant Lot Design Guide. Partnering with the Genesee County Land Bank Authority and a coalition of nonprofits, he led the design of a visual framework that translated demographic data and community priorities into practical strategies for reusing vacant parcels in a city with a 47% vacancy rate. The guide empowered residents, informed municipal planning, and influenced statewide agencies including MSHDA and MEDC to develop similar approaches to land reuse. **(Exhibit 3.5)**



Crossover Downtown Outreach Ministry

Kurt designed the new **7,500-square-foot** Crossover Outreach building, replacing an outdated facility with a purpose-built hub that expands the organization's ability to deliver emergency food, clothing, and support services with dignity and efficiency. The building increases pantry capacity and introduces flexible community space for health, literacy, and job training programs. By aligning design with mission, Kurt strengthened the ability of this faith-based nonprofit to serve vulnerable residents. The project demonstrates how architecture can enhance compassionate service while expanding equity and opportunity for Flint neighbors.



Historic and Adaptive Reuse

Kurt has played a central role in preserving Flint's architectural heritage through the restoration of the Masonic Temple, the Paterson Building, and historic homes in Carriage Town. At the Paterson Building, his leadership resolved urgent life-safety issues by restoring a failing cornice and designing historically accurate windows, bringing a long-neglected landmark back to prominence. In Carriage Town, abandoned houses were rehabilitated and reoccupied, strengthening the neighborhood alongside new housing investments. These projects demonstrate how historic preservation can protect cultural identity while catalyzing economic revitalization and civic pride. **(Exhibit 3.6)**



Small Business Grant Funding

Under Kurt's leadership, **Urban Colab Architecture, L3C** received a **\$25,000** Micro Business Grant from the Flint & Genesee Small Business Hub, recognizing its role in Flint's revitalization. The award affirms the firm's social-enterprise mission: leveraging design as a tool for equity and resilience. Grant support strengthened capacity to expand community partnerships, pursue affordable housing, and deliver projects that prioritize dignity and access. This recognition underscores Kurt's leadership at the intersection of architecture, entrepreneurship, and civic service, positioning his firm as a catalyst for inclusive community and economic development.



Eco-Kit Homes

Kurt's expertise in sustainable design and innovative construction methods was nationally recognized when he was selected to design a **5,000-square-foot** residence in Idaho using the **EcoKit** building system. His understanding of modular design and energy-efficient strategies was instrumental in navigating a complex permitting process and translating this **net-zero prototype** into a buildable reality. As the **first EcoKit home** in the United States, the project showcased new possibilities for off-site fabrication, carbon reduction, and affordable housing innovation, reflecting Kurt's commitment to advancing sustainability and inclusive design practice.



Habitat for Humanity

Kurt designed pavilion-style gathering spaces for Genesee County Habitat for Humanity and community partners, creating temporary, dignified recreation hubs that combat blight and strengthen neighborhood cohesion. These modular structures activated underused sites with human scale and flexibility, offering residents safe, welcoming places to gather. Separately, he designed a public fitness installation in downtown Memorial Park, featuring outdoor workout trails to promote health and community use. Both projects demonstrate Kurt's commitment to accessible, place-based infrastructure that fosters resilience, wellness, and equitable engagement in historically neglected urban environments. **(Exhibit 3.4)**



Public Service Leadership

Kurt's community service includes mayoral appointments to the Flint Historic District Commission and the Building and Construction Board of Appeals, where his architectural expertise supports civic decision-making. On the Historic District Commission, he helps balance preservation with practicality, guiding property owners in rehabilitating structures while addressing difficult cases involving blighted historic buildings. On the Board of Appeals, he applies technical knowledge to ensure safety, fairness, and accessibility. Together, these roles advance stewardship, accountability, and public trust, demonstrating how architects strengthen civic governance through professional service. **(Exhibit 3.6)**



Park(ing) Day Pop-Ups

Through a series of Park(ing) Day installations in downtown Flint, Kurt and Urban Colab Architecture transformed metered parking spaces into micro urban parks that reframed historic buildings, modeled sustainable design, and tested material reuse strategies. These small-scale interventions sparked ongoing design conversations with residents, UM-Flint, Habitat for Humanity, and civic organizations, many of whom later became collaborators and clients. Honored with the **2013 AIA Flint Award for Creative Small Project**, the work demonstrated how tactical urbanism can build visibility, strengthen engagement, and lay the groundwork for enduring community partnerships. **(Exhibit 3.1)**

Advocacy and Amplification

*Kurt extends the lessons of his community-focused practice beyond individual projects, serving as a recognized voice for architecture's role in society. Through the Coffee Sketch Podcast, ranked among the world's **Top 10** architecture podcasts, he has produced more than **186 episodes** reaching listeners in over **130 countries**. His message continues through AIA National service, national and regional conference presentations, and initiatives such as the Flint Flat Lot Competition and the Guide to Flint Architecture. Together, these platforms translate local experience into shared knowledge, helping peers and partners apply strategies that strengthen communities and elevate the value of design.*



The Coffee Sketch Podcast

With more than **190 episodes** and over **15,000 downloads**, Kurt's Coffee Sketch Podcast has built an international audience in over 130 countries. Ranked in the **Top 10 of 100** architecture podcasts worldwide by Feedspot, the show engages listeners in topics ranging from design justice to daily practice. Live sketching is used as a tool to explore ideas in real time, making complex issues accessible and engaging. Through this innovative format, Kurt extends thought leadership beyond traditional venues into media, amplifying architectural conversations that shape practice and enhance public understanding. **(Exhibit 3.7)**



National Thought Leadership

At the **2025 AIA National Conference on Architecture**, Kurt shared expertise on entrepreneurial resilience through two well-received sessions: one on starting and operating a new firm, and another on diversifying revenue streams for long-term stability. Drawing from his experience leading Urban Colab Architecture, L3C, he presented sustainable business models that align financial viability with mission-driven practice. Audiences gained actionable strategies for building resilient firms, from alternative legal structures to equity-centered operations. These presentations affirmed Kurt's leadership in helping peers reimagine practice as both entrepreneurial and socially impactful.



AIA National Service

Kurt's service to the American Institute of Architects has been recognized with the prestigious **2017 AIA Young Architect Award**, honoring his early and ongoing leadership in advancing the profession. As Chair of the **Resolutions Committee**, a member of the **National Small Firm Exchange Executive Committee**, and former **Regional Director of the Young Architects Forum**, he has shaped policy and dialogue at the national level. Through these roles, Kurt has championed emerging professionals and promoted alternative, socially driven practice models, ensuring that advocacy and equity remain central to the Institute's mission.



Regional Thought Leadership

Kurt Neiswender has established himself as a regional thought leader that spans emerging technologies, housing innovation, and sustainable design. He has co-presented groundbreaking work on AI-assisted architectural practice. His contributions to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA) **Building Michigan Communities Conference in both 2024 and 2025** showcased innovative strategies for addressing housing affordability in Flint, including the integration of prefab construction and mixed-use missing middle housing models.



Flint Flat Lot Competition

Kurt chaired the competition committee that raised over **\$55,000** to fund the construction of a temporary outdoor pavilion in downtown Flint. The competition drew **200 entries** from more than **30 countries**, gaining international recognition for its innovative approach to public space. Kurt served as Architect of Record for the winning international team, guiding the project from concept to realization. Completed in 2013, the pavilion became the backdrop for **tens of thousands** of visitors during a summer series of cultural events, demonstrating design's power to activate civic space and global dialogue.



A Guide to Flint Architecture

Kurt, Editor-in-Chief of the **"A Guide to Flint Architecture"** is a **paper and digital** map resource that makes the city's architectural story accessible to residents, students, and visitors. Funded by arts and architecture grants, it combines concise building histories with clear walking routes written in approachable language. The guide expands preservation literacy, supports cultural tourism, and provides educators with a tool for place-based learning. By translating professional knowledge into a public resource, Kurt fosters appreciation, participation, and stewardship, advancing shared understanding of Flint's architectural heritage and cultural identity.



Podcast Appearances

Across dozens of invited podcast appearances, including **Practice Disrupted**, **Archispeak**, Archinect Sessions, **EntreArchitect**, Young Architect, and E3: Energy, Environment with Emily, Kurt shares insights on community-driven practice, small-firm entrepreneurship, and policy innovation through accessible dialogue. These conversations extend classroom teaching and project experience to national audiences, prompting peers to pilot pop-up retail policies, adopt vacant-lot infill frameworks, and test AI-assisted energy modeling workflows. Crossover episodes create dialogue across perspectives, amplify diverse voices, and transform lessons learned in Flint into actionable strategies that practitioners and educators can apply within their own communities. **(Exhibit 3.7)**

Practice Based Education and Mentorship

*Kurt equips future civic architects to deliver impact by integrating professional practice with academic teaching. As Professor of Practice, he structures studios around real clients needs, such as refugee housing, missing-middle infill, and adaptive reuse. His mentorship has produced measurable results, including scholarships, competition successes such as recognition in the **Metropolis Future 100**. Outreach extends through K-12 Pathway to Architecture talks that expand opportunities for **first-generation and underrepresented students**. Guided research accepted at **EDRA and ACADIA** demonstrates that his methods resonate beyond Flint. Through advising, juries, and a replicable playbook for advancement, Kurt prepares a growing pipeline of practitioners committed to service and social impact.*



Community-Engaged Design Studio

As lead instructor, Kurt guides students through immersive studios rooted in service and civic impact. Partnering with organizations in Flint such as the Urban Renaissance Center, **Genesee County Land Bank**, and **Habitat for Humanity**, he challenges student teams to address pressing social and environmental needs through design. Projects have explored adaptive reuse, affordable housing, and resilient neighborhood infrastructure, linking academic learning to real community issues. This hands-on pedagogy advances professional development, earning students scholarships and national recognition while reinforcing architecture's role as a tool for equity and civic engagement. **(Exhibit 3.8)**



Building Systems Integration

Kurt's influence as an educator and mentor was demonstrated when his students swept the **USGBC Detroit Region's 2021-2022 Student Design Competition**. He guided multiple teams through the integration of LEED v4 standards, sustainable systems thinking, and innovative urban design strategies. Under his mentorship, **students captured first, second, and third place awards, plus an honorable mention**, outperforming peers from five regional architecture schools. The achievement highlights Kurt's ability to translate complex building systems into student success, preparing graduates to design with sustainability and resilience at the center of their work. **(Exhibit 3.8)**



Grant Funded Research

Through a multi-phase grant project totaling **\$40,000** from the UM-Flint Provost Research Fund, Kurt led a faculty-student research team investigating strategies for inclusive neighborhood revitalization **(Exhibit 3.10)**. The team integrated GIS data, zoning analysis, and practitioner interviews to identify underutilized commercial zones across a seven-county region. Their work culminated in draft zoning ordinance recommendations that recognized pop-up retail as an "as-of-right" use, lowering barriers for small entrepreneurs. The research also informed built projects such as the Chalet Shops in Grand Blanc and the Shops on Saginaw in Flint, bridging research to reality. **(Exhibit 3.10)**



Mentorship

Kurt mentors students through one-on-one guidance and thesis advising, focusing on scope, ethics, and communication. His students have earned scholarships, **swept the USGBC** regional sustainability competition (**1st, 2nd, 3rd, Honorable Mention**), and been recognized in the **Metropolis Future 100**. Advising continues after graduation through portfolio reviews, references, and national juries. By sharing a practical playbook of templates, interview preparation, and outreach strategies, Kurt creates a mentorship environment that breaks down traditional hierarchies, fostering a peer-to-peer dynamic that puts students at ease and helps them grow confidently as emerging professionals. **(Exhibit 3.8)**



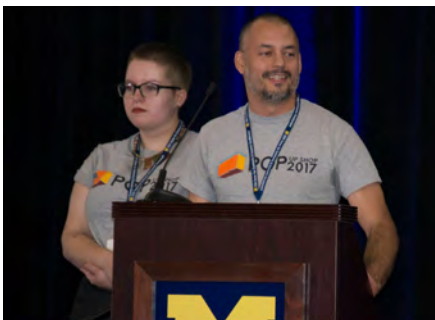
K-12 Pathway to Architecture Talks

Kurt is passionate about introducing young people to the possibilities of architecture. Through Pathway to Architecture, he seeks out opportunities to speak with grade school and high school students, especially those who are **first-generation or underrepresented**, about what it means to become an architect. His presentations make the profession approachable through simple design exercises, stories from practice, and practical guidance on portfolios, scholarships, and mentorship. Many teachers continue sharing his materials with new classes, extending the message that architecture is for everyone and that design can be a tool for positive change.



Practice/Academic Crossover Talks

Kurt explores how artificial intelligence can improve design workflows in both practice and academia. He develops workshops that introduce students and professionals to **AI tools** that streamline performance analysis and make learning more interactive. Students use these tools to test energy and building system strategies, while practitioners adapt similar methods to improve project efficiency and decision-making. This shared approach connects classroom exploration with real-world application, showing how technology can enhance creativity, collaboration, and the understanding of sustainable design.



Academic Research

As a professor of practice, Kurt builds bridges between professional work and academic scholarship. His practice-based research has been accepted into peer-reviewed venues including **EDRA and ACADIA**, demonstrating that the methods and outcomes developed in Flint resonate with national and international review committees. While not always presented in person, this recognition affirms that his work carries relevance beyond local contexts. By linking applied practice with academic discourse, Kurt contributes to larger professional and scholarly conversations, advancing design as both a civic tool and a subject of rigorous inquiry. **(Exhibit 3.10)**