Third Annual Survey of Pro Bono Service by U.S. Architecture Firms Completed

San Francisco, Calif., March 16, 2010—Even in this down economy, architects are increasingly putting their skills to work for the public good, according to a recent survey of nearly 600 firms by the national nonprofit Public Architecture in collaboration with researchers from Harvard Business School.

For the third year in a row, the survey queried architecture and design firms that have pledged a minimum of 1 percent of their billable hours through “The 1%” pro bono design program of Public Architecture. The organization’s goal is to direct at least 1 percent of every design firm’s time to pro bono service.

“Pro bono service has been a hallmark of the legal and medical professions for decades, but largely under the radar in the architecture profession, says John Cary, Executive Director of Public Architecture. “Our collaborators at Harvard Business School have helped make this the most comprehensive and substantial survey ever conducted of the pro bono pursuits of our country’s leading architecture and design firms.”

The firms surveyed ranged from single-person offices to some of the largest firms in the country, such as HKS, HOK, and Perkins+Will. By the time the survey was administered, 560 firms had joined The 1%, of which 36 percent responded. To date, Public Architecture has recruited nearly 750 firms to The 1% program.

“This survey demonstrates that design firms are beginning to understand that pro bono service can, and should, be a routine part of their business,” says architect John Peterson, AIA, Founder & President of Public Architecture. “It can be a powerful tool for improving firm culture, networking, and innovation, while in service of the public good.”

In an effort to measure trends, the survey included nearly identical questions to the versions that Public Architecture administered the previous two years. Additionally, this year’s survey was expanded by fifty questions to better gauge pro bono practice in U.S. architecture firms.

Key Findings:

• 74 percent of firms reported meeting or exceeding the goal of 1 percent;
• more than two-thirds of firm respondents devoted 2 percent or more of their time to pro bono service over the past year; 6 percent of firm respondents committed more than 20 percent of their time to pro bono;
• the three most important variables in selecting pro bono projects, in order of importance, were social relevance, design opportunity, and project type;
• community benefit and client readiness were the largest contributors to firms’ pro bono work;
• public relations value and likelihood of construction of pro bono work both nearly doubled in importance since the last survey;
• financial constraints and available staff time remain the greatest obstacles to engaging in more pro bono work, while selection process and buy-in by firm decision-makers became much more substantial limitations to firms’ pro bono work;
• 77 percent of firms said the quality of their pro bono work was exactly the same compared to their fee-based work; only 12 percent said the quality was higher and 11 percent said it was lower;
• firms reported that 56 percent of their total pro bono work in the last year was defined as free architectural/design services.
Expressing pride in their work, over 100 respondents described pro bono projects undertaken by their firms in the past year. Services offered ranged from feasibility studies and preliminary design to facilities renovations and new construction. Collectively, design services contributed by The 1% firm participants touched the lives of countless people in need.

The San Francisco firm of Fougeron Architecture described its “hugely successful” renovation of Creative Growth, an art center for developmentally disabled adults in Oakland, Calif. Additionally, large firms, such as OWP/P | Cannon Design, with a worldwide staff of 1,000, reported reaching out to their communities in new ways. Its Chicago office is partnering with Chicago Multi-Cultural Dance Center to plan a flexible new home for the urban youth dance school, providing fundraising materials and cost estimating for design and buildout of the new space. The most progressive firm in terms of its pro bono practice is Perkins+Will, which published a first-of-its-kind Social Responsibility Initiative (SRI) Annual Report in 2009, a publication that is common practice in the legal profession.

This fall, Public Architecture will release *The Power of Pro Bono*, a seminal book on pro bono design, edited by Executive Director John Cary. The book is informed by this annual survey as well as the pro bono work undertaken by members of The 1% program and other firms across the country. Published by Metropolis Books / Distributed Art Publishers, the book will catalog 40 pro bono design projects from 26 cities in 17 states. A first-of-its-kind book, equally representing the voices of architects and their clients, *The Power of Pro Bono* will showcase 40 pro bono design projects across the country. The clients include grassroots community organizations like the Homeless Prenatal Program of San Francisco as well as national and international nonprofits, among them Goodwill Industries, Habitat for Humanity, KIPP Schools, and Planned Parenthood. These projects were designed pro bono in part or whole by award-winning practices such as SHoP Architects in New York and Studio Gang in Chicago, young studios such Hathorne Architects in Detroit and Stephen Dalton Architects in Southern California, as well as some of the largest firms in the country, such as Gensler, HOK, and Perkins+Will.

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**About 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%” ([www.theonepercent.org](http://www.theonepercent.org)) is a national program formally launched by Public Architecture in 2005 that challenges architecture firms to pledge 1 percent of their billable hours to pro bono work. 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% program is currently supported by a range of sponsors and partnerships, including the National Endowment for the Arts, Nathan Cummings Foundation, and Richard H. Driehaus Foundation; building industry manufacturers such as Herman Miller, Humanscale, Teknion, and Shaw Contract Group; and leading firms such as HGA, HOK, and Perkins+Will.

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The 1% Third Annual Firm Survey

Conducted by Public Architecture in association with Harvard Business School

Firms surveyed: 560  
Response rate: 36%  
Survey opened: October 2009  
Survey closed: January 2010

The following graphics are representative of key data collected from the 2009 survey. Data from the 2008 survey is represented in gray, when available.

Motivators driving firms’ commitment to pro bono work

- A way to give back to our community
- For the creative opportunities that pro bono projects offer
- To recruit and retain employees
- As part of our marketing efforts
- It improves our reputation/image
- For the personal satisfaction that pro bono projects provide
- It gives us a competitive advantage
- Other

Importance of variables in selecting a pro bono project

- Project type
- Design opportunity
- Public relations value
- Employee interest
- Personal connection
- Social relevance
- Likelihood of construction or implementation
- Other

In relation to fee-generating work, percentage of pro bono work done in the last 12 months

- Greater than 2%  
- Less than 1%  
- 2%  
- 1%  
- Other

Firms’ approximate total revenue in last fiscal year

- Less than $500,000  
- $500,000 - $999,000  
- $1 - $2.4 million  
- $2.5 - $4.9 million  
- $5 - $9.9 million  
- $20 - $24.9 million  
- $30 - $39.9 million  
- $50 million or more

www.theonepercent.org
Service contributions over the last 12 months

- Free architectural/design services
- Reduced-fee architectural/design services
- General volunteer work or service
- Cash donations
- Other

The way firms found the majority of their pro bono work in the last 12 months

- The 1% website and matching process
- Existing client
- Employee suggestion
- Nonprofit solicitation (outside The 1% program)

Extent to which the following would most improve firms' satisfaction with The 1% program

- Improved website
- More pro bono client options
- More resources
- Improved matching process
- More PR exposure for our firm's pro bono work
- Nothing
- Other

Quantity of firms' pro bono work since joining The 1% program

- Increased
- Remained the same
- Decreased

Firms utilized The 1% matching process within the past 12 months

- Yes
- No

Firms would continue participation if membership dues were implemented to develop new resources and improve service within The 1% program

- Yes
- No

Firms' willingness to host AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteers to work full-time on pro bono projects in their offices

- Yes
- No
QUALITY of the pro bono work undertaken in the last 12 months compared to fee-based work

Firms’ pro bono work has been submitted for or received awards or press coverage

Extent that each of the following is true for firms

Type of work undertaken by firms

Frequency that firms have COLLABORATED with other architecture and design firms on a pro bono project

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