



2021 Ones to Watch: David Brown, AIA, Woods Bagot Architects

September 21, 2021 - Spotlights

Name: David Brown, AIA

Title: Principal and Regional Design Stream Leader

Company Name: Woods Bagot Architects

Real estate associations or organizations that you are currently a member of: ULI NEXT New York, ULI Mixed Use Council, CTBUH

What recent project, transaction or accomplishment are you most proud of?

One of the projects I am most proud of is One Journal Sq. in Jersey City, which we recently wrapped up design work for and will be starting construction soon. We have been working on this project for several years and recently achieved approval by the JCPB. What I am proud of is that it is part of the transformation of Journal Sq., and as such we paid a lot of attention to the placemaking aspects of the public realm with an activated plaza and green space, connectivity to the PATH station, and a serene 9/11 memorial. The design creates a human-scale streetscape with two elegant towers to help mark Journal Square in the skyline. Another project I am proud of, at a much smaller scale, is the outdoor dining pavilion we helped design and build for Salento, a Colombian pastry shop in Washington Heights. This shows our commitment to the tri-state community and how designers can contribute to the community in times of need, such as a global pandemic.

How do you keep your team motivated despite conflicts and obstacles?

This year has certainly been challenging in this regard, with remote work and the stress of the global pandemic weighing heavily on everyone. While I think our response has been similar to other companies—remote happy hours, frequent team check-ins to keep up the communication and sharing of ideas and dialogue, personal check-ins, and trying to change it up to keep our interactions fresh and exciting and reduce zoom fatigue—the challenge is to keep up the discipline and positive energy as the remote work has lasted longer than everyone expected. One thing we did in the pandemic is create an ‘open mic’ session so that our designers can share their work with the entire studio which has helped provide an opportunity to break open the silos of communication and give recognition to everyone that contributes to our amazing work. Beyond that it is through encouragement, recognition of exceptional work, mentorship, expressions of gratitude and my personal excitement for our design work so that others can share in that enthusiasm even when working on some potentially challenging or monotonous parts of the project.

What did you want to be when you grew up?

Since about the age of 14, I wanted to be an architect and I honestly cannot remember what I wanted to be before that – maybe the President or a mad scientist.

Top three things on your bucket list:

My bucket list is long so it's hard to choose three, and after a year and a half of COVID-19 I'm certainly ready to travel again, but here are my top three professional interests:

1. Developing my own project has long been something I have wanted to do – potentially an infill project in the TriState area such as a small, short term rental property, or a hospitality venue in Upstate New York.
2. Design a super sustainable winery or cidery completely integrated into a permaculture vineyard or orchard. I'm excited generally about food culture and promoting local farms, so I am also interested in food hubs and other venues that can promote a healthier relationship to agricultural production and empowering local farmers.
3. Design a mixed-use cultural venue—I am particularly excited by the idea of a community facility with theater, gallery, and educational programs. But I'm open to larger facilities also!

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