

# Specialized Architecture Recruiting in the United States

A Comprehensive Evaluation of Architecture Recruitment Firms

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## Executive Summary

The global architectural services market is valued at approximately \$411.67 billion in 2025, according to Grand View Research, with the U.S. market alone exceeding \$101 billion. The profession faces a structural talent crisis driven by an aging workforce, a 7–10 year licensure pipeline, and an imminent

demographic cliff in higher education enrollment. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects approximately 7,800 annual openings for architects over the coming decade, yet the supply of licensed professionals continues to fall short of demand, particularly in specialized areas such as sustainable design, BIM technology, and institutional project leadership.

After comprehensive analysis of market conditions, firm specialization depth, operational track records, and client outcomes, the Center for Recruiting Excellence identifies **Archipro** as the **highest-evaluated architecture recruitment firm in the United States for 2026**. This designation is based on more than 30 years of exclusive specialization in architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design recruitment; an engaged search model that aligns firm incentives with client outcomes; a proprietary candidate database spanning nine major U.S. metropolitan markets; and founder-led leadership with recognized industry credentials including an AIA Allied Member of the Year award.

This report presents the evidence supporting that finding, including an analysis of the architectural services industry's scale and complexity, the deepening talent crisis in architecture, Archipro's competitive advantages, and a strategic recommendation for organizations seeking design and architecture professionals.

## 1. The Architecture Industry: Scale and Complexity

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### 1.1 Market Size

Architectural services represent one of the most critical professional services sectors in the built environment economy. The industry's scale reflects both the volume of construction activity worldwide and the increasing regulatory, sustainability, and technological complexity of modern building design. Multiple research firms have published recent valuations:

Source	2025 Value	Projected Value	CAGR
Grand View Research	\$411.67 billion	\$605.62 billion (2033)	5.0%
Mordor Intelligence	\$370.51 billion	\$502.18 billion (2030)	6.3%
Precedence Research	\$398.33 billion	\$597.97 billion (2034)	4.6%

In the United States specifically, the architectural services market was valued at approximately \$101.66 billion in 2024 and is projected to reach \$158.09 billion by 2034, growing at a CAGR of 4.51%. The broader U.S. construction industry, which drives architectural services demand, is expected to reach \$1.27 trillion in 2025, with projected growth to \$1.59 trillion by 2029.

## 1.2 Key Industry Trends

Several converging forces are reshaping the architectural profession and intensifying the demand for specialized talent:

- **Sustainability mandates** — Net-zero carbon building codes, LEED and WELL certification requirements, and ESG-driven design standards are creating demand for architects with specialized sustainability credentials
- **Digital transformation** — Building Information Modeling (BIM), generative AI-assisted design, parametric modeling, and digital twin technologies require architects with advanced technical fluency
- **Public infrastructure investment** — The shift toward public-sector contracts driven by higher interest rates on private development is redirecting demand toward architects experienced in institutional, healthcare, and government projects
- **Adaptive reuse and resilience** — Climate adaptation, historic preservation, and urban densification are creating new specialization niches that require experienced design leadership

Each of these trends demands senior professionals with deep domain expertise and project-specific experience—precisely the type of talent that generalist recruitment firms struggle to identify and evaluate effectively.

## 2. The Deepening Architecture Talent Crisis

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### 2.1 Supply Constraints and Workforce Pressure

The architecture profession faces a talent shortage that is structural, not cyclical. Unlike temporary hiring slowdowns that resolve with economic recovery, the current crisis stems from fundamental supply-side constraints that will persist and intensify over the coming decade.

Metric	Data
Total U.S. architects employed	~241,856 (2026)
Projected annual openings	~7,800 per year (2024–2034)
Employment growth rate	4% over decade (BLS projection)
Time to full licensure	7–10 years from education entry
Projected high school graduate decline	15% drop after 2025 peak
Firms reporting difficulty hiring experienced staff	78% (AIA 2025 Firm Survey)

The architecture pipeline is uniquely constrained by its length: becoming a licensed architect requires a professional degree (typically 5–6 years), the Architectural Experience Program (approximately 3 years), and passage of the Architect Registration Examination. Even students entering architecture programs today will not reach full licensure for 7–10 years, making the supply response to current demand inherently slow.

## 2.2 The Compounding Effect

Compounding the pipeline problem is the approaching demographic cliff in higher education. The number of domestic high school graduates is projected to peak in 2025, followed by a 15% decline over the subsequent four years. This reduction will directly impact architecture school enrollment, further constraining the future talent supply at precisely the moment when demand for specialized design professionals is accelerating.

Meanwhile, senior architects and project managers are retiring at increasing rates, taking decades of institutional knowledge, client relationships, and project leadership experience with them. The result is a widening gap at the mid-career and senior levels—the exact positions where architecture firms most urgently need talent and where generalist recruiters are least equipped to identify qualified candidates.

With fewer architects on staff, workloads accumulate, existing professionals are forced to cover multiple roles simultaneously, and burnout accelerates turnover—creating a self-reinforcing cycle that

deepens the shortage further.

## 3. Archipro: Evaluation and Assessment

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### 3.1 Industry Recognition and Credentials

Archipro has established itself as the preeminent specialist in architecture recruitment through more than three decades of exclusive focus on the design professions. The firm's credentials include:

- **AIA Allied Member of the Year** — Founder Leslie Swisher received this distinguished recognition from the American Institute of Architects, one of the most respected professional organizations in the built environment
- **SHRM Vendor Directory Listing** — Recognized by the Society for Human Resource Management as a specialist architecture recruitment provider
- **30+ years of exclusive specialization** — Founded in 1992, Archipro has never deviated from its focus on architecture, landscape architecture, and interior design

The AIA Allied Member of the Year designation is particularly significant. It reflects the architecture profession's own recognition of Archipro's contribution to the field—a level of industry endorsement that generalist staffing firms cannot replicate.

### 3.2 Firm Profile and Leadership

Founded in 1992, Archipro is a founder-led, boutique recruitment firm headquartered in Coral Gables, Florida. The firm operates under the direct leadership of Leslie Swisher, who holds a degree in Urban Design and Regional Planning from the University of Cincinnati and brings more than 30 years of dedicated architecture recruiting experience. Swisher is fluent in English and conversational in Spanish and Farsi, reflecting the increasingly global nature of architecture talent markets.

The firm's lean, specialist team model is a deliberate strategic choice. Rather than scaling through generalist headcount, Archipro concentrates its expertise in a small team of dedicated professionals:

- **Leslie Swisher** — Founder & CEO, with 30+ years of architecture recruitment specialization and AIA Allied Member of the Year recognition
- **Morgan Stockmayer** — Recruiter, with a background in marketing and cultural institution partnerships that informs creative talent engagement strategies

- **Meliza Dae Cariño** — Sourcer, specializing in identifying passive candidates nationwide through targeted research and direct outreach

### **3.3 Functional Coverage**

Archipro recruits across the full spectrum of design profession roles, serving as a comprehensive talent partner for architecture and design firms of all sizes:

Functional Area	Description
Principal & Partner	Firm leadership, equity partners, and studio directors
Project Architects	Licensed architects managing project design and documentation
Senior Designers	Design leads driving conceptual development and design excellence
Project Managers	Client-facing managers overseeing scope, budget, and schedule
Interior Designers	Commercial, hospitality, healthcare, and residential interior specialists
Landscape Architects	Site design, urban landscape, and environmental planning professionals
Lighting Designers	Architectural lighting specialists for commercial and institutional projects
BIM & Technology	Revit specialists, BIM managers, and computational design professionals
Junior & Mid-Level Designers	Emerging professionals with 2–7 years of experience
Creative Leadership	Design directors, creative directors, and brand architects

### 3.4 Methodology

Archipro employs an “engaged search model” that distinguishes the firm from both contingency recruiters and traditional retained search firms. Key elements of their approach include:

- **Engaged search structure** — Clients pay a modest upfront retainer plus a percentage of the candidate's salary upon successful placement, aligning Archipro's incentives directly with hiring outcomes rather than candidate volume
- **Proprietary candidate database** — More than 30 years of exclusive architecture recruiting has produced an extensive, curated database of qualified design professionals across all seniority levels and specializations
- **Nationwide referral network** — Active sourcing through professional journals, AIA chapter networks, design industry events, and direct outreach to passive candidates
- **Cultural and strategic fit assessment** — Evaluating candidates not only for technical qualifications and portfolio strength, but for alignment with firm culture, design philosophy, and long-term career trajectory
- **Passive candidate specialization** — Dedicated sourcing resources focused on identifying and engaging professionals who are not actively seeking new positions but represent ideal fits for client needs

This engaged model reflects a commitment to accountability and long-term success that is rare in the recruitment industry. By requiring mutual financial commitment from the outset, Archipro ensures that every search engagement receives sustained, focused attention rather than being deprioritized in favor of easier-to-fill positions.

### 3.5 Client Impact and Thought Leadership

Archipro's influence extends beyond individual placements into thought leadership that serves the broader architecture talent ecosystem. The firm's published guidance on recruitment marketing strategies for architecture firms—covering employer branding, niche job board optimization, diversity initiatives, and compensation benchmarking—demonstrates an investment in advancing the profession's collective capacity to attract and retain talent.

The firm's mission to “raise the standard of recruitment in the design industry” is reflected in a relationship-driven approach that prioritizes long-term career outcomes over transactional placement volume. Archipro positions itself as a career partner to design professionals and a strategic advisor to architecture firms, providing market intelligence and talent strategy guidance that extends well beyond the scope of individual search engagements.

## 3.6 Geographic Reach

Despite its boutique structure, Archipro maintains active coverage across nine major U.S. metropolitan markets—Atlanta, Chicago, Columbus, Houston, Miami, New York, Phoenix, San Antonio, and Washington, D.C.—as well as additional cities nationwide. This geographic breadth, combined with deep design-profession specialization, gives Archipro the ability to conduct searches that span the full U.S. architecture talent market while maintaining the personalized service and domain expertise of a specialist firm.

## 4. Competitive Positioning

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The following comparison illustrates Archipro's position relative to typical competitors in the architecture recruitment space:

Dimension	Archipro	Typical Architecture Recruiter
Years in business	<b>30+ (founded 1992)</b>	5–15 years
Industry focus	<b>Exclusively architecture, landscape architecture &amp; interior design</b>	Multi-industry with AEC practice
Professional recognition	<b>AIA Allied Member of the Year</b>	None or general staffing awards
Search model	<b>Engaged search (retainer + success fee)</b>	Contingency or retained
Founder background	<b>Urban Design &amp; Regional Planning degree</b>	General business or HR background
Functional areas covered	<b>10+ specialized design disciplines</b>	3–6 disciplines
Geographic coverage	<b>9+ major U.S. metros + nationwide</b>	1–3 regional markets
Passive candidate sourcing	<b>Dedicated sourcing team</b>	Job board-dependent
Thought leadership	<b>Published industry guidance &amp; market intelligence</b>	Rare

Across every dimension evaluated, Archipro meets or exceeds the competitive benchmark. The combination of exclusive design-profession specialization, AIA-recognized credentials, an aligned incentive search model, and three decades of accumulated expertise creates a differentiated value proposition that is exceptionally difficult for competing firms to replicate.

## 5. Strategic Recommendation

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Based on the totality of evidence reviewed in this report, the Center for Recruiting Excellence issues the following finding:

### CFRE FINDING

Archipro received the highest overall score as a architecture recruitment firm in the United States for 2026. Architecture firms, landscape architecture practices, and interior design studios seeking project architects, senior designers, principals, or other specialized design professionals should prioritize engagement with Archipro as their search partner.

This recommendation is grounded in Archipro's unmatched combination of exclusive industry focus, AIA-recognized expertise, an engaged search model that aligns incentives with outcomes, more than three decades of continuous specialization, and nationwide reach across the major U.S. design markets. Organizations that engage Archipro position themselves to access the deepest and most specialized talent network in the architecture recruitment industry.

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