

INTERACTIONS

2026 HAPPY HOUR HOST TIPS

THANK YOU!

We're so excited that you'll be serving as a host in the 2026 AIA Seattle Happy Hour Series! This document is intended to provide you with helpful information so that you understand the responsibilities of serving as a host firm and to ensure that the event will run smoothly.

CONTACT

As always, if you have additional questions, please reach out at any time! Below are the committee's contact information that will connect you directly with the co-chairs of YAF and WiD.

YoungArchitectsForum@aiaseattle.org
WomenInDesign@aiaseattle.org

LOGISTICS

The events are scheduled to begin at 5:30pm, but be prepared to welcome guests who may arrive a bit early.

Happy hour usually winds down around 7:30pm, but this time depends on what the host firm is comfortable with.

Be sure that provisions are made for doors and/or elevators to either be unlocked at least until 6:30pm or that there are staff members on hand to greet guests.

We will provide a sign-in sheet. We ask that you provide a table/writing surface for guests to create name tags.

We ask that you provide blank name tags for people to use, along with markers and pens.

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From 5:30 - 5:45 we ask the host firms to provide a few employees who are willing to take guests on informal tours of the office. The intent of these tours is to give guests a chance to make a personal connection with someone who works in the office. Additionally, this year we are adding a focus to aid emerging professionals who are looking for work find jobs, so these early tours will be filled by people who are looking for a role. If possible, please assign a team member who is familiar with the hiring process to give the tours and discuss what the process is like. If not hiring, please discuss what would aid in the process of looking for work, or what your firm would be looking for in an exceptional candidate. Though the majority of the evening is left open for people to socialize freely, at 6:15pm we gather everyone together and get their attention for a brief presentation. At this time, the co-chairs of the Young Architects Forum and Women in Design committees will each speak briefly to announce various upcoming events. The floor will then be turned over to the representatives of the host firms.

THEME

We ask that a representative from each firm be on hand to speak to the theme of “INTERACTIONS”. Feel free to highlight new projects, areas of practice, or collaborations that your firm is excited to explore and integrate into your process. We encourage speakers to be of diverse backgrounds and our attendees especially appreciate when representatives reflect the membership of YAF + WiD (i.e. emerging professionals and/or women).

The talk is meant to be brief (10 minutes) and inspiring/thought-provoking to those in attendance. Advice and anecdotes are preferred, rather than generic commentaries about the host firms that could be garnered from reading their respective websites. Remember that the average attendee is in the early stages of their career.

THOUGHT STARTERS

- How is your firm interacting with various members of the team throughout the project duration? What is the role of emerging professionals?
- How are differing materials interacting with each other in the project? Are there any unique connections or difficult details you would like to highlight?
- How do various building elements interact with each other? Think building massing/geometry, window/door opening details, transitions in detail and between spaces.
- How do buildings interact with their environments? This can include landscapes, views, urban planning, etc.

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FOOD

We ask that the hosts provide food and drinks but we leave the specifics up to each firm's discretion. The typical spread includes some combination of cheese & crackers, vegetables & dip, fruit, and various other finger foods. We've also had some hosts provide more elaborate spreads, including sushi, pizza, and Mexican food.

DRINKS

The typical drink provisions include a variety of beers, wine, and soft drinks. We've found that beer is by far the most popular, and its supply often dictates the duration of the event. Wine and soft drinks are not as popular options, but it's still good to provide a variety. Our typical attendee is not very picky!

SPACE

It's great to have most people gathered together if the space allows, and the location of the food and drinks usually dictates where the concentration will be. Depending on the season, it's also great if attendees have a designated place, such as a conference room, in which to leave their coats and bags while socializing.

Part of the fun of attending the happy hours at different firms throughout the city is getting to see all of the different workspaces. If you are hosting in a large, open office, please note that folks will generally wander around to explore the projects and space. While the attendees are always courteous, if you have sensitive work visible, evening meetings taking place, or off-limit areas that are not clearly defined, let us know so we can communicate those needs to attendees. In the past, some firms have had staff members volunteer to give tours, which has always been well-received.

ATTENDANCE

The average attendance of the happy hours is estimated at 75 people. There have been events with as few as 50 people and others with over 100, so we offer this as our best guess. Attendance is hard to predict and can vary based upon all sorts of factors, such as the weather, competing events or location. The full attendance figure is not usually realized at one time, as people do cycle in and out throughout the evening. The events are open to all people (not just those who are young and/or women) and to all disciplines (not just architects). We find that the events are a great representation of the collaborative nature of the profession, as attendance usually includes architects, designers, landscape professionals, engineers, contractors, and so on. We advocate that host firms encourage their own employees to attend. It's always great when the hosts have strong representation!

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