

Maria DeIsasi AIA, LEED AP BD&C
310 Town Mountain Road, Asheville, NC 28804
202-790-1854
mariaindc@gmail.com

July 29, 2022

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am very pleased to submit my application to serve as a volunteer member of the City of Asheville Design Review Committee or Historic Resources Commission. As an experienced Architect with a demonstrated record of leadership and achievement in the design and construction industry, specializing in historic and high quality design projects, I feel my skills and experience are well matched to the requirements of these committee positions.

After a rewarding and successful career, I retired from the Smithsonian Institution last year and moved to the beautiful and vibrant City of Asheville, where I've been delighted to engage with the local American Institute of Architects chapter, volunteering as an architectural tour guide of notable historic Asheville buildings for a public school program. It would be my pleasure to further engage with the local community, applying my architectural design review and historic preservation expertise and experience to serve the City of Asheville as a volunteer committee member.

The last seventeen years of my thirty-six years of professional experience in the public and private sectors were with the Smithsonian Institution Office of Planning Design and Construction, where I served in various roles in design management, project management, and senior leadership. During my tenure there, I was actively involved in developing Smithsonian standards, guidelines and requirements in the areas of design, sustainable design, and construction industry best practices. In my last position as the Deputy Director for Planning and Project Management, I led a professional staff of twenty architects, engineers, master planners and historic preservation specialists, and participated in senior management reviews and approvals of major Smithsonian design and construction projects. In each of these roles, I was responsible for ensuring Smithsonian projects were executed with the highest standards, in accordance with Smithsonian design and technical criteria, sustainability guidelines, and historic preservation requirements. As many of our projects were located on the National Mall in Washington DC, they also underwent review by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the DC Historic Preservation Officer. These experiences led me to become very familiar with the process of formal design and historic preservation reviews, and their role in ensuring design and construction projects are executed with the highest standards.

Throughout my professional career, I was also active in professional societies and committees, including the American Institute of Architects, the Construction Industry Institute, and Federal sustainability committees. As a member of the Architectural profession and a public sector employee, I always felt it was important to contribute my skills, experience and knowledge to the local community and the profession.

I am happy to meet at your convenience to discuss my skills and experience as they relate to these volunteer committee member positions. Many thanks for considering my application.

Sincerely,



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Summary

Experienced Architect and Facilities Planning/Project Management professional with demonstrated record of leadership and achievement in the design and construction industry, specializing in historic and high quality design projects. Over thirty years of professional experience, including seventeen years with the Smithsonian Institution, reaching a senior leadership role in the Office of Planning Design and Construction. Skilled in management, strategic planning, sustainable design, technical and design project reviews, historic preservation, and construction industry best practices.

Registration and Accreditations

- Registered Architect
- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Accredited Professional, Building Design + Construction specialty

Education

- Certificate in Executive Leadership, Georgetown University CCPE, 2008
- Master of Business Administration, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ, 1998
- Bachelor of Architecture, New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, NJ, 1985

Positions Held

Deputy Director, Planning and Project Management

Office of Planning, Design and Construction, Smithsonian Facilities, Washington, DC
12/2018 – 03/2021

Served as principal adviser to Smithsonian leadership on all aspects of facilities program and project management, master planning, and historic preservation. Responsible for providing leadership, vision, strategic direction, policy, advocacy, reporting, and coordination of capital program management services for the Institution's projected \$3 billion maintenance, revitalization and construction program over a ten year horizon for a real estate portfolio of 688 buildings totaling over 12.5 million square feet. Provided advice and strategy to the Smithsonian Capital Planning Board and Regents Facilities Committee regarding projects, decisions, and funding. Guided and directed the preparation of the annual long-range design and construction capital program and the development and implementation of quality project management procedures and processes. Improved capital program planning process, establishing targets for individual Smithsonian unit programs and enhancing coordination of maintenance and capital requirements. Refined program and project performance tracking and upward reporting systems. Monitored nationwide and international program progress through performance indicators on a monthly basis. Supported the recruitment, development, and retention of a high quality workforce, managing staff of approximately 20 architects, engineers, master planners and historic preservation specialists. As a member of the Smithsonian Facilities senior leadership team, participated in design review meetings for significant on-going Smithsonian new design and historic building renovation projects, and helped make significant contributions to the development of Smithsonian policies and priorities.

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Associate Director, Program and Project Management

Office of Planning, Design and Construction, Smithsonian Facilities, Washington, DC

02/2017 – 11/2018

Directed the Program and Project Management Branch, with responsibility for providing leadership experience at the managerial level that included visioning, strategic planning, goal setting and metrics development for large facility projects, directly supervising Project Managers responsible for design and construction for approximately half of the facilities represented in the annual \$300 million Smithsonian Capital Program and providing design and construction program oversight and liaison services for the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama as well as units with Smithsonian-wide facilities. Oversaw and assisted project managers and liaison units with annual long-range capital program planning, monthly funding obligation plans, submission of monthly reports detailing scope, schedule, and budget status of large (over \$5 million construction cost) and high-profile projects and attended recurring planning, design and construction progress review meetings for multiple ongoing projects. Oversaw quality architectural design implementation, integrity of historic preservation aspects of projects, and organizational performance measurement and reinvention efforts, ensuring alignment with the vision, values and goals of management aspects of Smithsonian programs and operations. As co-developer of the Smithsonian Facilities Project Handbook, member of the Facilities Requirements Database working group, and member of the Lessons Learned committee, improved and documented Smithsonian planning, program management, design and construction project processes, and helped guide and direct the implementation of design and project management procedures.

Program/Project Executive

Office of Planning, Design and Construction, Smithsonian Facilities, Washington, DC

02/2012 – 01/2017

Responsible for all aspects of Program and Project Management for the National Museum of American History, a contributing building of the National Register of Historic Places (National Mall District). At 800,000 square feet, this facility is one of the largest Smithsonian museums on the National Mall, with a program of 50+ active projects including major complex museum renovations and restorations, collections storage spaces and exhibit support. The primary project renovated 360,000 square feet of public space in the museum and underwent design review by the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, the National Capital Planning Commission, and the District of Columbia Historic Preservation Officer. Updated the Master Plan for the building and grounds, ensuring future design upgrades will be executed with high standards in a cohesive and complementary fashion. In addition, during a department staff shortage for the duration of the year 2016, assumed Program and Project Management for the National Museum of the American Indian in New York City, housed in the historic Alexander Hamilton U.S. Custom House. Programs and projects required substantial technical effort, including planning, design, historic preservation considerations, engineering, construction, resource management, real estate and contracting in accordance with Smithsonian standards, guidelines, and requirements. Led and managed multi-disciplined and culturally diverse professional project staff, fostering teamwork and high morale.

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Design Manager/Sustainable Buildings and Best Practices Program Manager

Office of Planning, Design and Construction, Smithsonian Facilities, Washington, DC
07/2004 – 01/2012

Managed and coordinated all aspects of high quality design projects for historically significant buildings, including management of architect/engineer contracts, conducting architectural reviews and supervising engineering and other technical reviews of project design and construction documents in accordance with Smithsonian standards, guidelines and requirements. Authored in-house policy recommendations, operating procedures, and guidelines to ensure the highest quality products and services in the areas of design standards, sustainability, construction safety, department metrics, and architect/engineer staff education and development. Organized award-winning professional development program. Chaired the Smithsonian Sustainability Committee consisting of leaders of “green teams” across the institution. Featured speaker and participant at various sustainability, facilities management and design and construction industry conferences.

Project Architect/Project Manager

Hillier, Princeton, NJ and Washington, DC 06/1999 – 06/2004

Designed and managed the new construction and renovation of complex commercial buildings through all stages of planning, design, and construction activities for a nationally recognized architectural firm with a diverse practice. Developed, evaluated and monitored project scopes, schedules, and budgets. Planned and designed buildings and interior spaces. Researched and incorporated relevant building code requirements. Supervised architectural teams in the development of construction documents on CAD software. Made presentations and led progress meetings with clients.

Principal Architect/Project Manager

NJTRANSIT Corporation, Newark, NJ, 08/1993 – 05/1999

Project Manager and representative for the third largest transportation agency in the country, responsible for managing activities associated with the planning, design and construction of complex public transportation facilities. Evaluated, selected, and managed design architects, engineers and construction management contractors, developed and validated yearly funding requests, monitored project schedules and use of budget. Secured approvals from regulatory agencies and building code officials. Represented the agency during construction progress meetings and coordinated move-in activities and start-up operations. Garnered support for projects through presentations to various internal and community audiences. Conducted building tours for visiting state politicians and community groups.

Project Architect/Designer

Thomas Associates, Princeton, NJ, 01/1991 – 07/1993

Kohn Pedersen Fox Conway, New York, NY, 06/1988 – 12/1990

Rothe-Johnson Associates, Edison, NJ, 06/1985 – 05/1988

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HONORS AND AWARDS

- Construction Industry Institute (CII) Professional Development Award for Owners, Smithsonian Best Practices Program, 2008

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

- American Institute of Architects, NC (Asheville section), Volunteer tour guide for Asheville AIA Pathways Exploring Architecture program, Volunteer for Continuing Education Program, 2022
- American Institute of Architects, DC Public Architects Committee, 2003-2021
- American Institute of Architects, NJ, 1986-2002
- Smithsonian Sustainability Committee, Chair 2010
- Smithsonian Latino Working Group
- Federal Interagency Sustainability Working Group, Smithsonian Representative
- Federal Facilities Council, Committee on Acquisition, Design, and Construction, Smithsonian Representative
- Construction Industry Institute, research team and committees

PUBLIC SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- SAME-CMAA Technical Workshop and Business Forum, Washington, DC, 10/2019
- American Institute of Architects, DC Chapter (08/2014), Philadelphia Chapter (10/2013)
- American Institute of Architects, National Conference, Washington, DC, 05/2012
- Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums, Miami, FL, 03/2014
- Panelist, Sustainability and Environmental Education Government Agency Best Practices, National Environmental Education Foundation, Washington, DC, 06/2010
- Construction Industry Institute Conferences, Nevada, Colorado, Florida (2007-2009)

RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

- Contributor, Smithsonian Facilities Project Handbook, 2018
- Co-Developer, Smithsonian Facilities Design Standards, 2012
- Contributor, Evaluation of Design Effectiveness, CII Research Summary 233-1, 2007
- Various articles on design and construction industry best practices, sustainability, and professional development

LANGUAGES

- English - fluent
- Spanish - conversational