



*nbbj*

# Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

**Annual Snapshot  
2023**

**NOTE:**

This report was created for and issued to all NBBJ employees (therefore, certain links may not be available outside our internal employee network). As part of our effort to be transparent in our JEDI practices, we have made this available on our website.

# JEDI Annual Snapshot 2023

Dear NBBJ,

Since officially launching our JEDI Program two years ago, we have seen incredible optimism and momentum and have so many stories to celebrate. We have also learned which investments move the needle quickly and which initiatives require a longer-term action plan to ensure lasting impact. Our JEDI Program is a journey—of learning, reflection and action. We embrace the challenges that come along the way and keep moving forward.

This contrast of progress and challenge is a central theme throughout our 2023 Annual JEDI Snapshot. We are confident that the “seed planting” work we are doing now will ultimately produce a more diverse firm and design industry in the future, as well as fuel our ability to impact profound change in the built environment. This analogy encapsulates where we are in our journey and our conviction. We are watering and growing deep roots, but we also remain committed to the work in front of us to realize the full potential of our JEDI vision.

Throughout this document, you’ll learn about these efforts—from recruiting at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and sponsorship of the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA), to the opening of the Nickerson Gardens Playground in the largest public housing development west of the Mississippi and nearly 200 hours of community service through our JEDI Bank hours. As we share these stories, we’ll discuss both the successes and the opportunities for improvement as we go forward.

Our responsibility to design with and for all, in everything that we do, is a fundamental value of NBBJ. As we look to the new year ahead, let’s all commit to advancing Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in our firm, in our work and in our communities. It takes all of us, and we hope you’ll take this journey with us.

Sincerely,

**Robert Mankin**  
Managing Partner

**Megha Sinha**  
Principal / Planner

# A Values-Led Vision

Our commitments stem from our values. This ensures we stay on mission and that we are authentic in who we are. This also explains why our commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI) is a fundamental principle of life at our firm. We believe diversity drives better outcomes, stronger projects and healthier communities.

We also know that meaningful change takes time, active evaluation and humility. Therefore, each year we reflect back to share the progress we’ve made, program highlights, employee data and where we have room for growth.

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Section 1

# Our People



When we think about the world we want to live in, we know that change begins with us. That is especially true in an industry like ours—a creative force for good, but one that lacks the diversity of the communities in which we work. That’s why we’re committed to create belonging in our own workplace by providing opportunities to develop and increase representation.

To be an effective advocate for JEDI in the workplace, we are dedicated to educating our people through opportunities like the JEDI Ambassador Program, NOMA Diversity Training and the “Courageous Conversations” Series.



# JEDI Advisors and Ambassadors Mobilize Our Ambitions

The JEDI Advisory Group is made up of three leaders who oversee the day-to-day operations of the ambassador program, including new JEDI Program Leader, Megha Sinha. The JEDI Ambassador Program, launched in 2021, plays a crucial role in advancing the firm’s JEDI goals, as well as communicating about them to the firm.

Currently 12 members strong, ambassadors are embedded across eight of our office locations, serving as local points of contact for JEDI activities, programs, partnerships and questions. The ambassadors meet monthly to discuss ideas, learning opportunities, upcoming events, program support work, feedback or questions from colleagues and coordinated communications to the rest of the firm.

This year, the JEDI Ambassador group also released a new internal publication called the [JEDI Journal](#). The aim of the JEDI Journal is to provide regular updates about the ongoing actions, discussions and events occurring across the firm.

### Courageous Conversations

The “Courageous Conversations Series,” which started in 2020 as a joint FLT and Advisory/ Ambassador led initiative, continued into 2023 as a safe space for our people to come together to listen, learn and ask questions surrounding pressing JEDI issues. Hosted by Kwame Christian, Managing Director of the American Negotiation Institute, the conversations included topics like [“Respectful Allyship,”](#) [“Supporting a Diverse Workplace”](#) and [“Understanding Neurodiversity.”](#)







## INTERVIEW

# Everyone Can Be a Voice of Change

JEDI Ambassador Brad Berger is a senior project manager and architect in NBBJ's Seattle office. We asked him a few questions about his experience as a JEDI Ambassador and his hope for the work still to be done.

### **What made you want to become a JEDI Ambassador?**

I have always been drawn to the cause of equity, and I appreciated that the firm encouraged participation. I want to normalize open and honest JEDI conversations, even if they can be difficult. It is everyone's job to do the work to ensure equity, and it is my goal to be an effective ally.

### **Tell us about some of the work you have done in your studio?**

The ambassadors in our studio have been active partners with our leadership, pushing forward JEDI values and initiatives. We give regular updates to our studio about the work the ambassadors and firm are doing, and about upcoming opportunities for participation.

In addition, we've been exploring ways we can encourage diversity through our hiring process, and expanding our partnerships with minority-owned consultants. Most recently, we have hosted book clubs for the Seattle office where we discussed recent Courageous Conversation sessions and DEI-focused podcasts.

### **What's been a highlight of your ambassador work so far?**

Seeing people from different studios come together to share, listen and explore in our book club series has been especially rewarding. It's a good reminder that while we are all still learning, we can still be active participants.

### **What do you hope to accomplish in the future?**

Maintaining enthusiasm and momentum are always difficult in any long-term task, and the JEDI program is no different as we enter our third year. We've established a great foundation, but look forward to completing the tasks we've started while also finding fresh ways for everyone in the firm to participate.

### **What would you say to someone interested in being a JEDI Ambassador for their studio?**

We consciously aim to be an open, diverse set of voices. The ambassadors shouldn't be an echo chamber, so the more diversity in opinions that contribute to our efforts and advancement, the better!

“

*While we are all still learning, we can still be active participants.”*





# Striving for Increased Representation

As a firm, we aim to surpass the diversity averages set by our industry. However, because year over year representation fluctuates, we know that these changes take time. Yet, we are both hopeful and confident that the long-term effects of our investments will be meaningful.

In 2022, we joined forces with the AIA Large Firm Roundtable to craft a JEDI advisory guide to shape diversity hiring and mentorship principles across the industry.

**As a firm, we then developed seven commitments that guide our specific approach:**

<b>Inclusive Workplace</b> Develop a workplace that is inclusive and allows all employees to do their best work through awareness, training and recognition of diverse cultures.	<b>Firm Composition</b> Seek to advance a JEDI firm composition at all levels through awareness, transparency, training and mentorship.
<b>Career Advancement</b> Provide inclusive resources and support for career advancement and leadership development in a manner that accounts for cultural differences.	<b>Work-Life Integration</b> Review benefit packages annually to ensure they support all employees in an equitable manner.
<b>Policies</b> Establish policies and procedures based on a JEDI strategic plan and review with our consultant, Kwame Christian, to ensure plan alignment.	<b>Recruitment</b> Continually assess and refine hiring processes that promote JEDI values and contribute to a composition that is diverse firm-wide and reflective of the communities we serve.
<b>Retention</b> Regularly collect feedback from current and departing staff to identify changes that may support retention through better alignment with JEDI principles.	

STRIVING FOR INCREASED REPRESENTATION

As part of our goal to increase representation across our studios, including leadership, each year we report the data and trends related to our firm’s population demographics in the following charts.

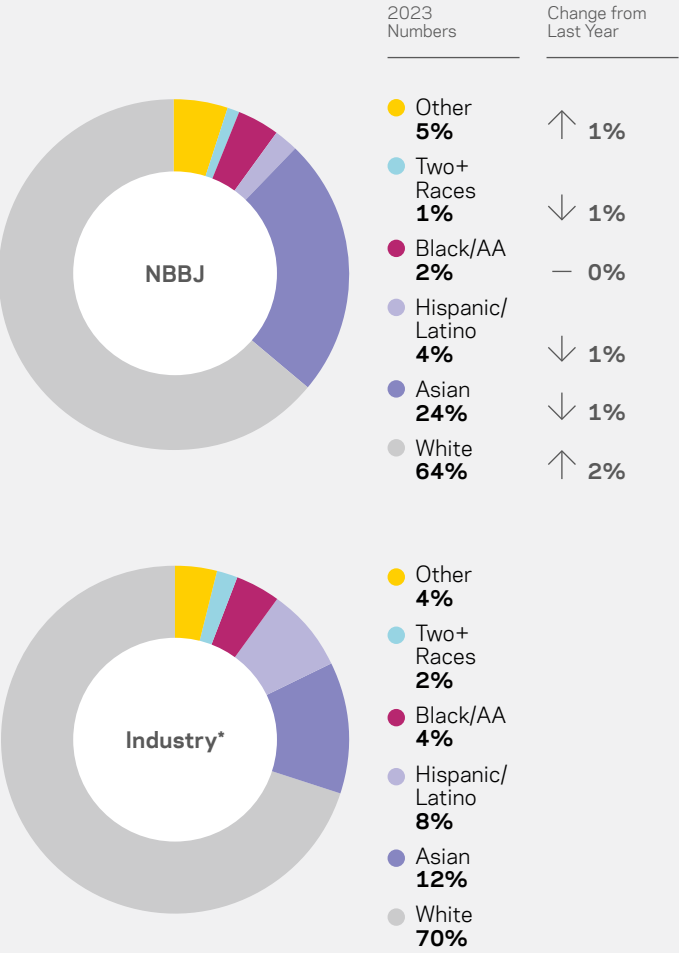
In these summaries, you’ll notice a decrease in our firm’s racial diversity in several categories. You will also see a substantial increase in the representation of female promotions at NBBJ in 2023—including the fact that our firm leadership team is now 75% female.

Our demographic makeup will continue to flucuate based on a variety of factors, including the economy, industry changes and natural attrition. While these numbers present areas of promise and of concern, we continue to prioritize both short- and long-term efforts that will create a more diverse firm.

One of the ways we target increased representation at our firm is through recruiting efforts with HBCUs. In 2023, we pursued candidates from Howard University, hosted a career fair booth at Tuskegee University, were a sponsor for the NOMA HBCU Professional Development Program and participated in the annual NOMA HBCU Career Fair.

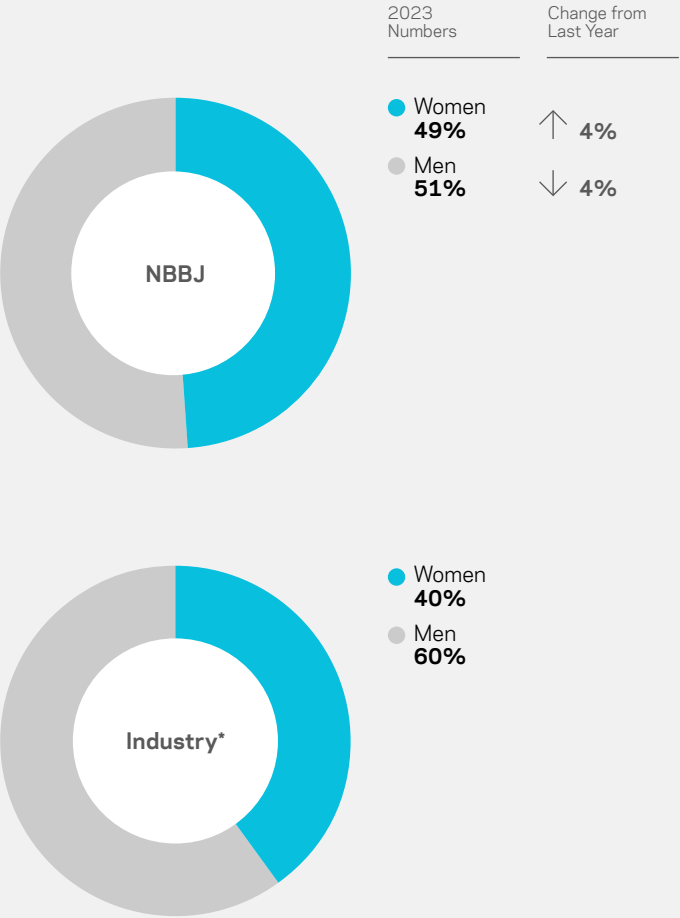
\*Please note, employees and candidates are permitted to decline self-reporting their gender or race in our internal documents.

Racial Makeup of NBBJ Employees Compared to Industry Averages



\*Industry data is based on average calculations and analysis of three third-party design industry sources, including the AIA, LFRT and Design Intelligence reporting.

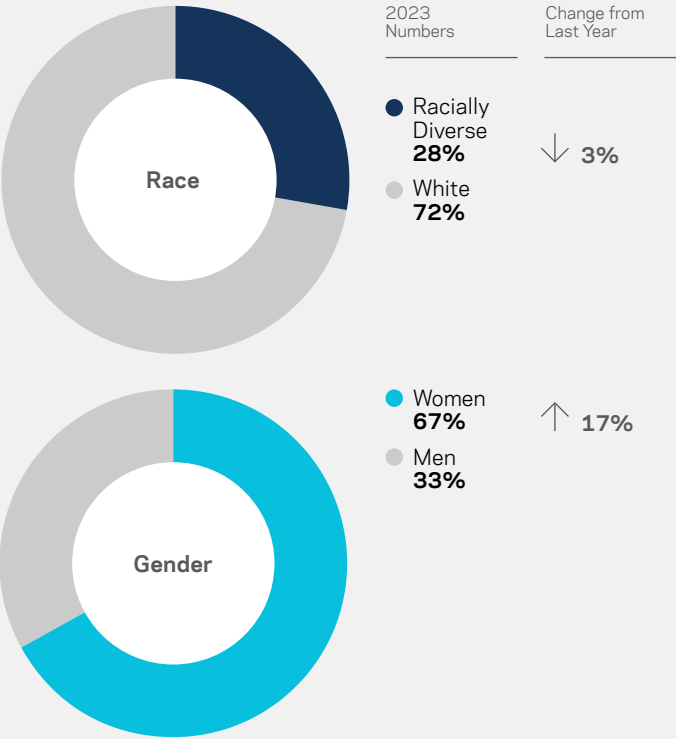
Gender Makeup of NBBJ Employees Compared to Industry Averages



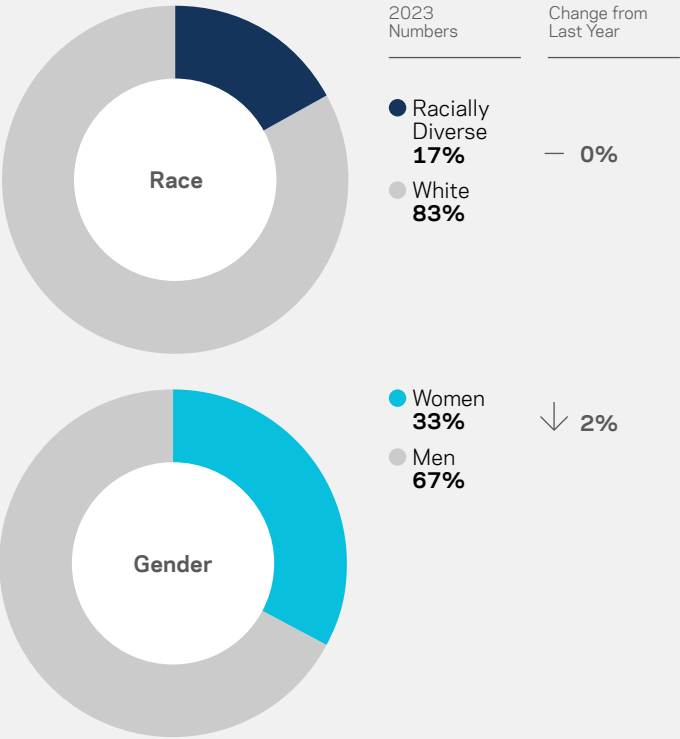


# Analysis: What a Deeper Dive into the Data Tells Us

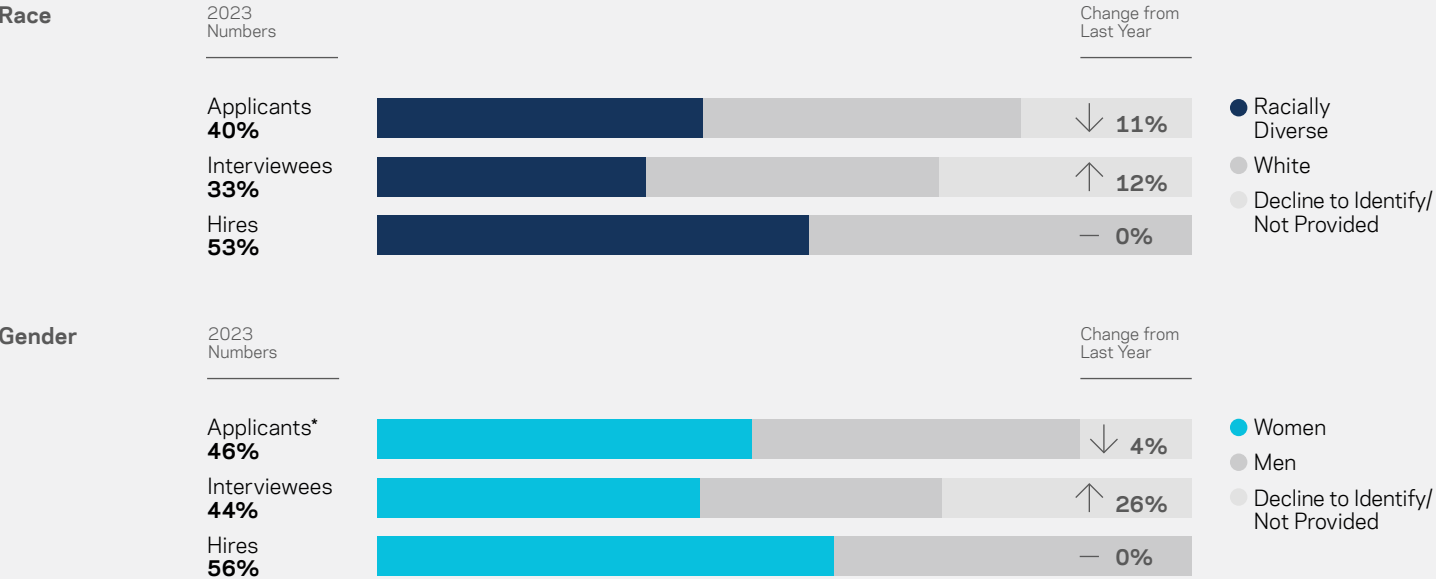
Among Titled Promotions,  
Gender Diversity is Up and  
Racial Diversity is Down



Among Partner and Principal  
Positions Held, Racial Diversity is Flat,  
While Gender Diversity is Down



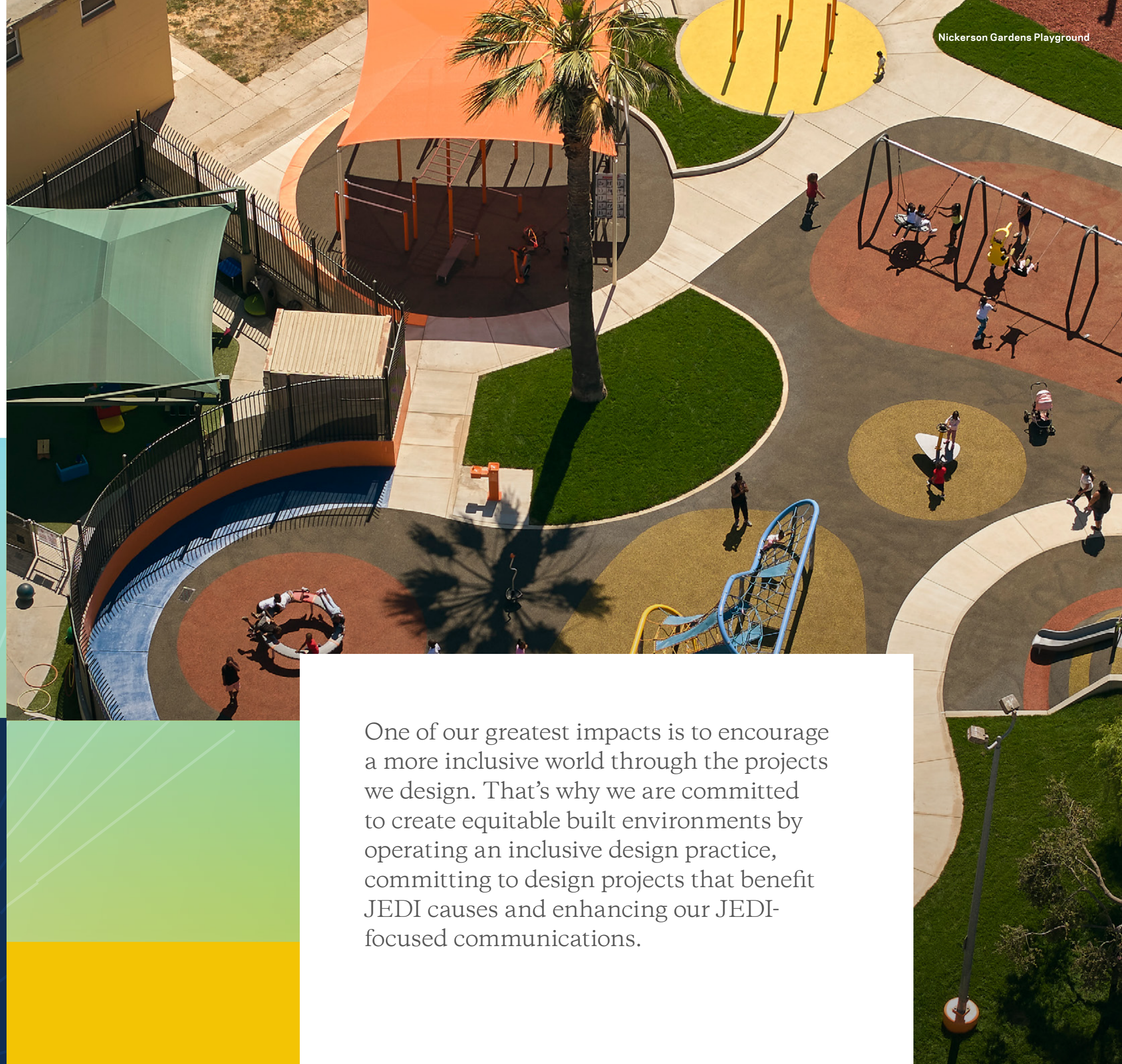
Among New NBBJ Job Applicants, Diversity is Down,  
Illustrating the Challenge of Hiring a Diverse Workforce





Section 2

# Our Work



Nickerson Gardens Playground

One of our greatest impacts is to encourage a more inclusive world through the projects we design. That's why we are committed to create equitable built environments by operating an inclusive design practice, committing to design projects that benefit JEDI causes and enhancing our JEDI-focused communications.



# Prioritizing a More Inclusive Design Practice

To ensure our projects continue to be a force for good and are aligned with our values, we have spent the past year refining our Design Justice tenets and the Project of the Year guidelines.

### Design Justice Tenets

During the past year, the Design Practice Leadership Team (and a group of studio volunteers) collected feedback and conducted a firm-wide survey that centered around defining “What does Design Justice mean to you, to our industry and to our firm?” Insights from this work formed the basis for numerous leadership workshops and 15 studio-hosted discussions to help distill what components of Design Justice are most important to us and our practice at this moment in time. The outcome is a set of four Design Justice tenets which support our NBBJ Design Vision imperative: ["Design for All."](#)

These Design Justice tenets will be introduced to our firm and rolled out in our studios in 2024.

We asked NBBJers to define "Design Justice," Below are just a few of the dozens of responses we received:

“

Design that upholds values of social, environmental and economic equity. For architecture, this can be achieved through the involvement of all stakeholders, sustainable design, attention to both the historic and present cultural landscape, and the beautiful implementations of those practices."

"Design for everyone and every place. Everyone in a design firm has the opportunity to influence this with his or her own design thinking and talents."

"Having a clear, transparent framework to redress historic biases in the profession and create equitable practices in hiring and in the workplace."

"Design that heals communities, recognizes history and welcomes all."

"Ensuring that design work is done by a diverse team of empathetically-minded designers who create designs that reflect the multifaceted communities who will be inhabiting them."

"Design Justice is about understanding the audience—knowing who we are designing for. And it is difficult to practice this without having marginalized designers as part of the solution."

"Creating spaces that acknowledge all backgrounds, genders, races and beliefs. Spaces that understand and include the community it will serve and has the longevity to evolve."

"I'm not sure yet..."

### Project of the Year Updated Guidelines

“Project of the Year” is an annual review and celebration of the projects that represent the peak of our creative efforts and collaborations. We employ a jury of internal and external experts to rank, qualify and reward a project of the year by asking the big questions, such as: Which design solves tough problems in new ways? Which building blends beauty and performance into something unexpected, while crafting stunning details that reflect the concept, sense of place, high performance outcomes and thoughtful tectonics? And finally, our newest JEDI-focused implementation: How are our projects and collaborations evolving the practice and communities to fulfill our JEDI principles?

Going forward, the guidelines for a future Project of the Year submission will request the inclusion of JEDI principles be shown in the work through one of the following areas:

<b>Outcomes</b> <i>Space for public use and access, space providing community benefit, affordable housing, pro-bono work or reduced fees</i>	<b>Partnerships</b> <i>Collaboration with women/minority owned businesses W/MBE</i>
<b>Outreach</b> <i>Project outreach initiatives or community engagement examples</i>	<b>Other</b> <i>Pilot initiatives or innovative outcomes not captured in the prior categories</i>

## Diverse Teams Drive Better Projects

As we continue to put formal processes in place to discover, track and sustain strong partnerships with W/MBE firms, over the past year we worked with several dozen in projects across the country.

Here are a few highlights:

**Maximizing Our Partnership With Atrium Health**

NBBJ has partnered with Atrium Health for over five years on a range of projects, including an acute care bed tower, a rehabilitation hospital, a next-generation community hospital, a pediatric ICU renovation and multiple planning and feasibility studies. Atrium has set a goal for a minimum of 30% of project budgets to be directed towards minority-, women- and veteran-owned businesses. NBBJ has been a leader among Atrium’s partner community in moving toward this goal. We have engaged and maximized M/WBE participation on all of our Atrium work, including the following highlights:

**Being a Catalyst for Teaming**

With NBBJ’s leadership, CES Group Engineers, LLP partnered with Kimley-Horn, one of the US’s leading civil engineering consultancies, to bring civil engineering and landscape design services to the Lake Norman Hospital project. CES’s responsibilities included leading the landscape design of the site and campus. CES Group are a certified National Women’s Business Enterprise (WBE) and Woman-Owned Small Business (WOSB), and have achieved a remarkable record of improving, protecting and restoring the built environment through the delivery of intelligent, timely and cost-effective solutions.

**Seeking, Engaging, Mentoring and Growing a Local Minority-Owned Architecture Firm**

When NBBJ began working with Atrium Health and learned of their ambitious W/MBE engagement goals, we began cultivating a relationship with Roland Udenze and his firm Renz Collaborative Architecture, a local M/WBE firm focused on healthcare architecture with a “unique blend of design, functionality and budget control that helps clients yield the most value.”

We partnered with Renz to pursue the Atrium Health Lake Norman Hospital Project and were selected, mostly on the basis of how we engaged Roland and his firm: we proposed Roland join the project’s Core Team, giving him an opportunity to lead while we were there to mentor. While NBBJ is the Architect of Record, we have continued working with Renz Collaborative Architecture throughout the project, engaging them in every phase and benefiting from their assistance in document production. We are proud to partner with them and are proud of playing a part in helping Renz double in size.

# The Power of Partnership



**JOINING FORCES WITH  
DREAM COLLABORATIVE**

To transform the design profession and create more inclusive built environments, hiring a diverse team is the first step. For design firms, aligning values, practicing open communication and cultivating authentic chemistry are critically important.

In Boston, we are working with DREAM Collaborative on the Volpe project. As Boston’s leading Black-owned architecture firm, DREAM aims to “sensitively respond to community priorities, champion environmental stewardship and innovation and create places to build wealth opportunities for underrepresented groups within the built environment.” Our partnership with DREAM led to the design of a signature lab, research and office building in Kendall Square in Cambridge, MA. This partnership, and others like it, expand professional opportunities, encourage mentorship and bring diverse viewpoints that ultimately better reflect the needs of building occupants.

We were honored to advance our partnership with DREAM through [co-authoring a thought leadership piece](#) that gives advice to firms and clients about how to build more diverse partnerships. Written by NBBJ Partner Tom Sieniewicz and DREAM Collaborative Principal Troy Depeiza, this article aims to empower both firms and clients to prioritize the engagement of W/MBEs by offering our perspective from a successful partnership.



## THE POWER OF PARTNERSHIP

Adapted from our [published article](#), here is one ingredient to help firms navigate successful diverse partnerships:

### Spend Quality Time to Assess Value Alignment

On paper, NBBJ and DREAM Collaborative seem different—NBBJ is a global, legacy firm whereas DREAM Collaborative is a small, boutique MBE organization. DREAM brings expertise in responding to community priorities and creating places to build wealth for underrepresented groups within the built environment, while NBBJ has a strong reputation for high-profile healthcare and corporate clients and a research- and craft-driven approach. These contrasting skill sets complement each other and ultimately made us a stronger team.

Over meals, face-to-face meetings and many candid conversations, sharing personal and professional triumphs and challenges, we learned that, despite varied levels of experience and areas of expertise, we have a set of common values related to empathy that govern how we do business. These shared values were the impetus for our partnership and continue to guide us as we work together.

By recognizing the experience and perspectives that each party brings to the table, both of our firms received a view of the profession—and the world—that we would not have been privy to otherwise. To truly change the design profession and create inclusive built environments where people of all races, cultures and abilities are welcome, a diverse team is the first step. A better project is the destination.

“

*Integrated partnerships create professional opportunities and bring diverse viewpoints. To be successful, this type of partnership should function as a tapestry instead of a patchwork, an authentic ‘knitting together’ that yields a team collectively much stronger than either firm on its own.”*

— Troy Depeiza

DREAM Collaborative Principal





# Bringing the Power of Play to the Heart of Watts



## PROJECT

This year, we celebrated the grand opening of a newly renovated playground in Nickerson Gardens in Los Angeles, the largest public housing development west of the Mississippi.

As a pro bono project delivered in conjunction with NBBJ's Los Angeles and ESI Experience Design studios, we partnered with the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) and the Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea, who helped drive fundraising efforts.

## Context

The previous playground at Nickerson Gardens in Los Angeles was in a state of disrepair and was being utilized mostly for activities that the community wanted to discourage. Our work on this project was to design, renovate and improve the outdoor area to make it more appealing to the community, safer for children and to encourage a sense of pride. The idea for this project came about as the result of a relationship cultivated during the Covid-19 pandemic with Red Hot Chili Peppers bassist Flea. He felt strongly the children of Nickerson Gardens would benefit from a space dedicated to play.





## The Design

Completed in summer of 2023, the NBBJ design features colorful orange misting poles and cheerful shading canopies that create an inviting place to cool off. Meantime, a carousel, seven swings, multiple slides, climbing spaces and an indoor adult fitness center using recycled materials offers a dynamic exercise experience that is also sustainable and easy to maintain. Designed to accommodate more than 250 people, the design utilizes recycled play-specific sport surfaces in fade-resistant shades of yellow and orange that are easy to clean and repair.



## The Grand Opening

The ribbon cutting was followed by surprise performances by the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Jay Rock, who grew up in Nickerson Gardens. As the primary benefactor of the project, Flea's vision, fundraising and active involvement in soliciting donations enabled the project to cross the finish line. [Click here](#) to watch the project opening video.



# Spaces to Grow



## INTERVIEW



Photo:  
Monica Almeida/The New York Times

NBBJ spoke with Donny Joubert, president of the Watts Gang Task Force, about why active community spaces like the Nickerson Gardens playground are critical, especially in marginalized places.

### **What was your experience growing up in the Watts neighborhood?**

I grew up here in this community. This was the first place my mom was able to move to, so it really means a lot to me. When I was 13 years old, my mom couldn't afford to get any of us kids gifts for Christmas—and when I saw her crying about this I knew I had to find a way to support my family. That was the year I took to the streets and quickly found myself involved in gang life. It was the only way I knew how to bring income into my home, and I made sure we didn't struggle the following Christmas. Living the gang life and becoming a father at age 15, I had to grow up early.

### **Why are community and activity places so important for a neighborhood like Watts?**

I met my wife growing up in this community, and both of us want to help see lives changed for the better. Projects like this are about the kids, our babies, our seniors, our community. Now they have a chance to find enjoyment and activity right in their backyards. When I was young, there weren't many options other than gang life. But having community places like this will help give kids an opportunity to try other things like sports. One day, I hope to see kids from Watts playing on TV in the Little League World Series games—they just need a place to start.

### **What are you looking forward to now that this space is reopened?**

Over the years, it's been rewarding to see the great work done in this neighborhood by having strong relationships and holding folks accountable to follow through with the support and resources promised. We have already seen a huge reduction in homicides since focusing on these different improvement projects over the years.

I can't wait to see the excitement in the kids when they get a chance to be a part of this new playground. We have a preschool right here that now the kids will have a place to come enjoy during their recess. We also saved an area for the residents to bring out their barbecue grills and tents and come together. I look forward to seeing the birthday parties, workouts and all the activity that this new playground now has open for the community.

This playground represents more than just a place to play. Our children in Watts need to know that they matter. And Flea's investment in this community is a reminder that they haven't been forgotten. We are honored and excited and we couldn't wait until that gate came down, and it came down today.



“

*Our children in Watts need to know that they matter.”*



# Putting Our Values into Action

The following projects are examples where we are implementing our design justice mindset, and working diligently to reflect the needs of diverse communities.



**Montage Health Ohana Campus**  
Monterey, California

Addressing the dramatic increase in behavioral health illness, through a nature-filled, restorative experience grounded in hope.

An increasing number of children, currently one in five in the US, experience a mental health condition, which is further compounded by a lack of psychiatric beds, residential care facilities and lower-than-average funding. Breaking away from the traditional notion of mental health facilities—padded walls, windowless rooms, fences and gates—the Ohana campus creates a welcoming experience for children, teens and caregivers that heals rather than isolates. Fully immersed in nature, the serpentine-shaped building provides a new model of treatment for youth, intertwining care and environment as one. Ohana, which means "family" in Hawaiian, brings mental wellness to the forefront, offering a community-centered and restorative experience grounded in inclusion and hope.

Sponsored by a generous gift from Warren Buffett’s sister, Roberta (Bertie) Bialek Elliott, the project weaves sustainable elements like mass timber—one of the largest healthcare projects in the US to do so—prefabricated exterior components and simplified building elements. The project also showcases an extensive community arts program with over 160 artists represented, including commissioned works by visual artists, poets and student photographers.

*“Nestled into Monterey’s picturesque and peaceful hillside of woodland chapparal and coast live oaks, Ohana creates an enveloping sense of calm.”*

— **Daphne Corona**  
Project Manager for the Ohana Campus

**Westmark Lower School**  
Encino, California



Creating an inclusive design paradigm for neurodiverse children.

Language-based learning differences such as dyslexia, dysgraphia and dyscalcula are becoming more common. At least one in 59 children has a learning or thinking difference, and one in five children in the US have learning and attention issues. Yet most schools are not designed to support neurodiverse students. The design of the Westmark Lower School creates a prototype for a more inclusive learning experience, guided by insights about the unique needs of neurodiverse kids.

For instance, because these learners may be more sensitive to ambient sounds, several features enhance acoustical comfort, from the shape of the school itself, with staggered volumes that minimize sound transfer between classrooms, to a quiet room within an occupational therapy space that provides a calming refuge. The design also minimizes students' distraction by decreasing excess stimuli: muted colors,

dimnable lights and natural materials like exposed wood, enhance focused learning. In addition, the school is oriented around nature to reduce anxiety and stress, which more strongly affect students with learning differences. Every space is no more than 50 feet from the outdoors, so nature becomes a key part of a sensory learning experience, social exercise and creative play.

*“The design of Westmark Lower School is tailored to students' diversity of language-based learning styles. A range of spaces address a spectrum of learning preferences while increasing agency through choice. ”*

— **Philip Schmunk**  
Design Architect for Westmark Lower School





**Loma Land at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital**  
Loma Linda, California

An immersive, inclusive welcome experience that keeps unique patient needs at the center of a hospital visit.

Going to the hospital can be overwhelming for anyone, especially young children about to undergo life-altering medical treatment. To help kids feel less alone during their hospital visit at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital, NBBJ's experience design studio ESI Design created an inviting digital installation that guides kids through the lobby and into the elevators.

The dynamic installation, funded 100% by philanthropic donations, greets young patients and their loved ones with an idyllic forest of animated creatures, rustling plants and the gentle sounds of flowing water native to the California landscape. Bright screens invite children to create custom animal companions, each of which are native to the California landscape, but can be adorned with dozens of whimsical outfits and accessories.





## Investing in Getting the Word Out

We aim to communicate intentionally to raise awareness of the productive impact of JEDI. This means highlighting meaningful stories about our commitment in well-known publications, marketing collateral, social media and our intranet.

In 2023, our internal and external communications covered key JEDI topics, holidays and thought leadership to ensure we recognize and tell stories about the efforts we value most. The JEDI Ambassador team also dedicated time to ensuring we recognize important heritage months and holidays on our internal intranet. You can find most articles and stories by searching #JEDI on our intranet, Connect.

## Honoring Black History Month

[Highlighting our "Design for All" Courageous Conversations series](#)

Promoting NOMA-sponsored events and fellowship opportunities

## Recognizing various heritage and celebratory months

Sharing our work in underserved communities like Watts.



Section 3

# Our Community

As a purpose-driven firm committed to community, health and sustainability, our JEDI work seeks to make the lives of people around us better. That’s why we are committed to prioritizing philanthropy, pro bono work and community engagements that emphasize these important attributes.



Danny Substation Youth Shelter



## Deepening our Engagement with the National Organization of Minority Architects

For several years, NBBJ has deeply invested in the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA). NOMA's mission is to foster justice and equity in communities of color through outreach, community advocacy, professional development and design excellence.

### NOMA Presidents Circle

In 2023, NBBJ was again a corporate level member of the [NOMA Presidents Circle](#). This membership's goals are to: build a repository of information, best practices and potential subject matter experts to assist architecture firms in strengthening their diversity efforts, use emerging benchmarks and standards to help in the assessment of DEI efforts and explore ways to deliver DEI content and strengths across architectural firms' networks and industry business opportunities. It also provides member benefits, discounts and customized diversity and inclusion consulting services. As part of this membership, six NBBJers received specialized NOMA DEI training in November of 2023.

### NOMA National Conference 2023

In addition to NBBJ being a bronze level event sponsor of the 2023 National NOMA Conference in Portland, OR, NBBJ's Tami Chen served as conference planning chair. This conference is an annual opportunity for NOMA members to gather from across the country for networking, workshops, education and celebrating diverse design recognition. This year was the largest conference to date with nearly 1500 attendees.

At the conference, NBBJers Brian Uyesugi and Alex Almerico also hosted a tour through the NBBJ-designed OHSU Casey Eye Institute Campus. NBBJ also received a NOMA Phil Freelon Award for a Design Excellence Citation in the unbuilt category for the Montage Health Ohana Campus.

### NOMA Future Faces Fellowship Program

In 2023, NBBJ applied to be a NOMA Future Faces Fellowship host firm and was selected! This program is a two-month summer fellowship hosted at leading architecture firms across the country where fellows engage in design research and firm mentorship. This program plays a crucial role in providing valuable professional experience to underrepresented students and aims to bridge the gap between these students and the architectural profession, hopefully paving a pathway towards future employment in the field.

**NBBJ hosted summer intern Alexander Thomas from Yale University.** While Alex was in Seattle over the summer, he contributed to project work with a leading tech company, worked in the model shop, helped craft a Seattle Design Festival installation and attended site visits at Block 13 in the Spring District just outside of the city.

### NOMA HBCU Professional Developments Initiatives

Additionally, NBBJ donated to the **NOMA HBCU Professional Development Scholarship Program**. This NOMA scholarship partners with the seven HBCUs with accredited architecture programs across the country to "foster opportunities for architecture firms to engage in mentorship, recruiting and general networking with these talented and underrepresented students studying architecture."

As part of this program, NBBJ also attended a **NOMA HBCU Career Fair and Speed Networking** workshop. Designed to maximize student interactions with as many professionals as possible, these workshops connect students with firms and potential mentors who will stay with them through the program year and beyond. At this year's event we met with 15 different students from five different HBCUs (Florida A&M, Howard, Hampton University, Prairie View and Tuskegee).

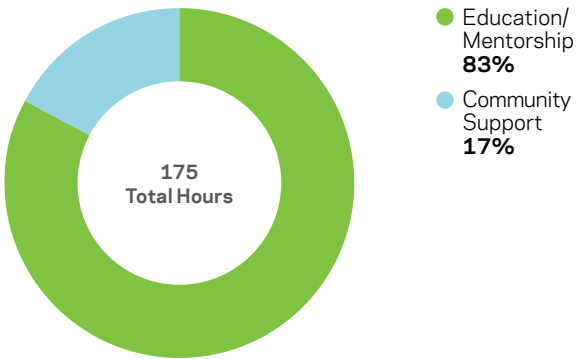


NBBJ employees at the 2023 NOMA Conference in Portland, OR.

# Mobilizing Community Engagement through the JEDI Bank

[JEDI Bank Hours](#) are an employee benefit of available office hours that can be used to serve communities and organizations in need. In the last year, more than **175 JEDI Bank Hours** were used to make a difference with organizations like Portland Backpack, OpenCity, SOLVE, ACE Mentoring, The National Association of Minority Landscape Architects (NAMLA) and the Refugee Artisan Initiative.

The JEDI Bank’s impact to-date has been directed in the following ways:



# Connecting Clients, Community and the Next Generation



The leadership team of Cedars-Sinai, an NBBJ healthcare client based in Los Angeles, had been looking at strategies to engage its community and promote the AEC industry as a career opportunity for underprivileged youth. That's when they approached Stacey Hooper in NBBJ's LA Office about a partnership pilot program.

The program is called “LADDERS” and it piggybacks off the existing high school student AEC mentorship program “Sharefest” by continuing it post-graduation. LADDERS aims to promote and expose an AEC pathway by offering an intensive internship experience with real world projects, companies and connections.

In this venture, NBBJ hosted two high school graduates for a ten-week internship which included hands-on learning in each arm of the construction process. To kick off the experience, interns first spent time with [TIS Construction Services](#) (a minority owned contracting company), followed by NBBJ and other local firms who walked through various steps in the design and construction process.

We hope to build off the learning experience of this pilot launch and continue to grow this program in the years ahead.





“

*The pathway to a professional job doesn't always mean university education right out of the gate. We hope this exposure ignites something they may never have recognized for their futures.”*

— **Stacey Hooper**

NBBJ Partner and Healthcare  
Market Leader

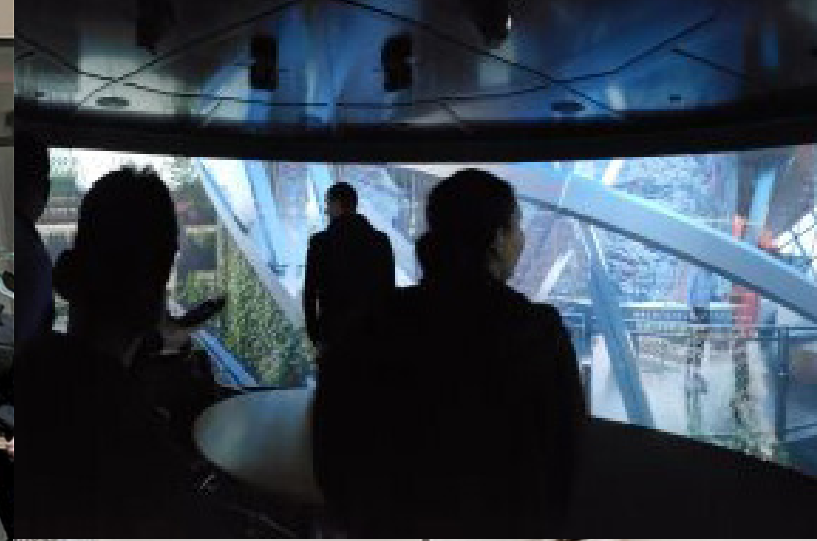
LADDERS students receiving hands-on experience,  
from design to on-site construction.



# Mentoring the Next Generation of Innovators



CAFÉ TALK  
PROGRAM



NBBJ's New York office has been working over several years to support our firm's JEDI goals through the Café Talk Mentorship Program. We sat down with NBBJ Architect Stephanie Yeow to learn more about the process and program.

## **What is Café Talk and how did it get started?**

Café Talk was initiated in late 2020 in response to NBBJ's JEDI Action Plan to collaborate and invest in educational institutions that serve BIPOC populations, while simultaneously building the pipeline through career support and mentorship. Through a teaching connection, we reached out and began our relationship with the National Organization of Minority Architects Student Association (NOMAS) of Kean University at the Michael Graves College School of Public Architecture. The school has a strong presence in New Jersey and has a student population that is comprised of 60% racial-ethnic minorities. We decided to run the program exclusively through the NOMAS chapter of the school, involving the student leadership in the organization process.

## **Can you tell us a little bit more about how the program works?**

The program structure is simple: create an opportunity for students to be paired with design professionals to have 1:1 conversations similar to sitting down over coffee at a café. During the pandemic, we launched our first session over Zoom, where we shared information about NBBJ

and our mission, followed by mentors and mentees sharing information about themselves. From there, mentors led the process and reached out to the students they were paired with to initiate career development conversations.

## **What was a highlight of this year's program?**

Because we've repeated this process for three years now, several students and mentors are developing long term relationships that continue today. Students get to work in person on several important projects in the firm including those with Amazon and Massachusetts General Hospital. This program has been a great opportunity to influence the pipeline and we look forward to continuing it for years to come!



*This program has been a great opportunity to influence the pipeline and we look forward to continuing it for years to come!"*



# Investing in the Future Generation



**HIP HOP ARCHITECTURE  
PARTNERSHIP**

In 2023, we continued our five-year long partnership with [Hip Hop Architecture Camp](#), which positions hip hop culture as a catalyst to introduce underrepresented youth to architecture, urban planning and design.

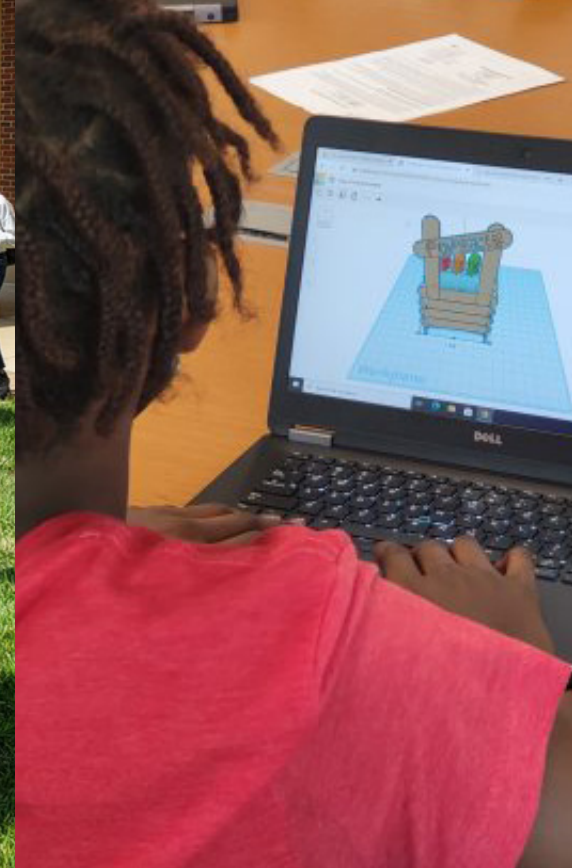
Because we know that one of the surest ways to impact the diversity of future generations of designers is to get in as early as possible, we have been active participants in the camps that educate and expose students to design tools, workshops, model making and even local firm or project site visits. However, in 2023 we had a unique opportunity to take our investment to the next level.

One part of the Hip Hop Architecture program is the [Michael Ford \\$10,000.00 Hip Hop Architecture Scholarship](#). This scholarship is awarded to a minority high school senior who has been accepted into a four-year college or university to study architecture and must be a Hip Hop Architecture Camp graduate. This year, NBBJ decided to match this \$10,000 scholarship and award two \$5,000 scholarships to two additional students. There were 90 student applications this year, all of whom are Hip Hop Architecture Camp graduates now going on to study architecture.

We are thrilled to be able to make a difference in the education and future of two students through this scholarship. Going through this process has revealed the true long-term impact of the Hip Hop Architecture Camps and the importance of integrating the love of design in these communities at a young age.



Hip Hop Architecture Camp





# Our Journey Continues...

While in many ways 2023 was a year of progress, we recognize that there is still much to be done. Between the three JEDI pillars of people, work and community, there are so many ways to get involved, and we want to do it in partnership with you.

If you have an interest in serving, ideas for where we should go next or have questions about this report, please reach out to your local JEDI Ambassador or the JEDI leadership team.



