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Talent Drives Success

UNITED STATES · PROJECT ARCHITECT TALENT MARKET

Architects are 2% of AEC delivery. Everyone is hiring them.

Where Project and Senior Architects work, who is competing for them, what the market pays, and how architecture firms can hire licensed project leaders in a market where engineering and construction firms recruit from the same bench.

13,793

Project Architects and Senior Architects in a US AEC delivery pool of 526,829

1 in 16

Job posts per Project Architect, vs. 1 in 50 for Architects

2.5 yrs

Median tenure, the point when professionals are most likely to move

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A small bench, a crowded market

The architects who run projects make up a small share of the AEC workforce. Contractors and engineering firms are growing faster and posting more, and the licensed Project and Senior Architects firms need most are already employed and rarely change jobs.

Top 5 insights

01 **Architects are a sliver of AEC delivery.** LinkedIn counts 526,829 project-delivery professionals across US architecture, engineering, design and construction firms. Project Architects number 9,653 (2%) and Senior Architects 4,140 (1%). Project Managers alone make up 58%.

02 **The shortage is licensed and mid-career.** There is one open post for every 16 Project Architects and every 18 Senior Architects, against one per 50 Architects and one per 32 across the whole pool.

03 **Engineering and construction are pulling ahead.** Architecture & Planning was flat over the year, with a "low" Hiring-demand rating. Civil Engineering grew 2% with a "very high" rating, and construction firms took a net 71 professionals from architecture firms.

04 **Senior Project Architects benchmark at $123K.** The US base-pay median is $104K for Project Architects and $123K for Senior Project Architects, an 18% step. Senior postings have a median midpoint of $120K, under the $131K AIA figure.

05 **Talent stays put.** Only 46,947 professionals (8.9%) changed jobs last year, and median tenure is 2.5 years. Most of the people you want are not looking.

Strategic imperatives

Go to passive architects, don't wait for applicants. Ninety-one percent of the pool didn't move last year. **Price to the licensed-architect market,** not to posted ranges that trail it. **Compete with contractors and engineering firms,** not just peer studios. **Sell the path to Senior and Principal,** because the PM track is the one growing.

The message is clear: AEC isn't short of project people. It's short of licensed architects who lead projects.

THE TALENT POOL

Big on the coasts, tightest in the Sun Belt

The ten largest metros hold 40% of the pool, but the hiring pressure sits elsewhere. Austin, Phoenix, Dallas–Fort Worth and Atlanta all carry "very high" demand ratings and the fewest professionals per post. New York, Los Angeles and Boston have more talent than local demand.

526,829
AEC project-delivery professionals in the US (+1% in a year)

16,687
Open job posts (LinkedIn)

Very high
Hiring-demand rating for the pool

Where AEC delivery talent is being hired, by open job posts

MARKET AREA	JOB POSTS	PROFESSIONALS	1-YR CHANGE	PROFESSIONALS PER POST	HIRING DEMAND
New York City Metro	838	44,791	+1%	53	Low
Dallas–Fort Worth	**762**	**18,534**	**+2%**	**24**	**Very high**
Los Angeles Metro	712	27,240	0%	38	Low
Washington DC–Baltimore	668	21,183	+1%	32	High
San Francisco Bay Area	534	18,494	+1%	35	High
Atlanta Metro	**462**	**15,035**	**+2%**	**33**	**Very high**
Greater Chicago	428	16,523	+1%	39	High
Greater Boston	414	16,753	+1%	40	Moderate
Greater Phoenix	399	9,430	+2%	24	Very high
Greater Houston	396	15,442	+2%	39	High
Austin Metro	**390**	**7,098**	**+1%**	**18**	**Very high**
Denver Metro	340	11,032	0%	32	Moderate
Greater Seattle	322	11,278	0%	35	Low
Miami–Fort Lauderdale	282	14,163	0%	50	Moderate
San Diego Metro	160	6,643	+1%	42	Low
Portland, OR Metro	145	6,874	0%	47	Low

Hidden-gem markets (supply high relative to demand): New York, Los Angeles, Greater Boston.

CRITICAL FINDING

Austin has one open post for every 18 professionals, Phoenix and Dallas–Fort Worth one for every 24. New York has one for every 53.
The tightest markets are in the Sun Belt, and they're the ones talent is moving to (see next page).

TALENT MIGRATION

Talent is moving south, and Texas is winning

Over the last 12 months, Dallas–Fort Worth gained talent from 9 of its 10 biggest trading partners, and every metro that trades talent with it lost ground. Boston, Philadelphia and Washington DC lost talent to most of theirs, to New York, South Florida and nearby lower-cost metros.

Net talent flow by metro, last 12 months

METRO	BIGGEST NET GAIN FROM	BIGGEST NET LOSS TO	NET GAIN VS. TOP 10 PARTNERS
Dallas–Fort Worth	**College Station (Texas A&M) +21**	**Atlanta -1**	**9 of 10**
New York City Metro	Greater Boston +37	Miami–Ft Lauderdale -19	6 of 10
Atlanta Metro	Columbus, GA +42	Charlotte -30	5 of 10
San Francisco Bay Area	Los Angeles +9	Sacramento -15	5 of 10
Greater Houston	College Station (Texas A&M) +176	Dallas–Fort Worth -84	4 of 10
Greater Chicago	Washington DC +13	Milwaukee -54	4 of 10
Los Angeles Metro	Washington DC +5	San Diego -26	4 of 10
Greater Boston	Springfield, MA +53	New York City -87	3 of 10
Washington DC–Baltimore	Greater Boston +8	New York City -17	2 of 10
Greater Philadelphia	Pittsburgh +7	Washington DC -38	2 of 10

Each metro's net exchange with the ten markets it trades the most talent with on LinkedIn. Read each row on its own terms; the volumes reported differ between metros.

The corridors that repeat

CORRIDOR	EVIDENCE
Into Dallas–Fort Worth	Houston lost a net 84 to DFW, Los Angeles 17, Chicago 12, New York and Atlanta 6 each
Northeast to South Florida	Boston lost a net 47 to Miami, New York 19, Philadelphia 15, DC 10; Tampa took 25 from Philadelphia
Out of Los Angeles	To San Diego (-26), Phoenix (-17) and Dallas–Fort Worth (-17)
Texas within Texas	Houston lost 71 to Austin and 31 to Phoenix; College Station sent a net 176 to Houston
Spillover to nearby metros	Chicago to Milwaukee (-54), Atlanta to Charlotte (-30) and Nashville (-22), DC to Richmond (-14), SF to Sacramento (-15)

CRITICAL FINDING

Talent is flowing out of Boston, Philadelphia, DC and Los Angeles toward Texas, South Florida and nearby lower-cost metros, and Texas A&M is feeding Houston and Dallas directly.

Sun Belt firms can recruit from the markets losing talent. Northeast and coastal firms have to compete harder to keep the people they have.

ROLES AND SKILLS

The PM track is growing. The architect track isn't.

Project and Senior Architects have the most demand per professional of any title in the pool. Meanwhile, the six fastest-growing titles are all project-management roles, a track that pulls architecture-trained talent away from design leadership.

Titles in the AEC delivery pool

TITLE	PROFESSIONALS	% OF POOL	JOB POSTS	PROFESSIONALS PER POST
Project Manager	303,962	58%	9,233	33
Senior Project Manager	62,333	12%	3,204	19
Architect	45,229	9%	900	50
Assistant Project Manager	35,131	7%	1,119	31
Associate	22,742	4%	42	541
Architectural Designer	18,660	4%	295	63
Project Architect	**9,653**	**2%**	**621**	**16**
Senior Associate	7,333	1%	10	733
Principal Architect	4,523	1%	36	126
Senior Architect	**4,140**	**1%**	**228**	**18**

The pool covers 12 searched titles across Architecture & Planning, Design Services, Civil Engineering, Engineering Services and Construction. Project-management titles make up 76% of it.

Most common skills



Share of the pool listing each skill. The top five are delivery and estimating skills. Design and Revit skills don't make the list, so design-led architects are a much narrower pool than the headline count suggests.

One-year growth by career track

TRACK	TITLES	GROWTH
PM, early	Deputy, Associate, Assistant, Junior PM	+6 to +10%
PM, senior	Senior PM, Principal PM	+2 to +3%
Architect, leadership	Principal Architect, Senior Associate	+2%
Architect, delivery	Architect, Project Architect, Senior Architect	Not in top 10

None of the architect delivery titles is among the ten fastest-growing titles. The supply of the people who run your drawings is standing still.

WHAT FIRMS SHOULD DO

Make the architect track as visible as the PM track. Show Project Architects a defined path to Senior Architect, Associate and Principal, with licensure support and leadership of real projects. Otherwise your best technical people will take the PM title a contractor is offering.

COMPETITIVE LANDSCAPE

Architecture firms compete with engineers and builders

Only one of the ten largest employers in this pool is an architecture firm. The rest are engineering and construction firms, and HDR alone has 1,187 open posts, more than half the 2,074 posted across the entire Architecture & Planning industry.

Top employers of AEC delivery talent

EMPLOYER	PROFESSIONALS	1-YR	JOB POSTS	ATTRITION
AECOM	2,054	+3%	161	7%
HDR	**1,800**	**+9%**	**1,187**	**5%**
Gensler	1,536	+3%	89	6%
The Whiting-Turner Contracting Co.	1,516	+4%	8	6%
Burns & McDonnell	1,397	+7%	199	4%
Turner Construction	1,202	+4%	107	4%
HNTB	869	+1%	120	8%
Michael Baker International	864	+3%	42	8%
Rosendin	832	+18%	68	7%
Tetra Tech	828	+2%	45	4%

The ten largest employers hold just 2.4% of the pool. Most of this talent sits in small and mid-size firms across thousands of companies.

Industries employing this talent

INDUSTRY	PROFESSIONALS	1-YR	POSTS	DEMAND
Construction	197,801	+1%	3,297	High
Architecture & Planning	**111,216**	**0%**	**2,074**	**Low**
Building Construction	84,011	+3%	2,768	Very high
Civil Engineering	58,653	+2%	3,904	Very high
Specialty Trade Contractors	43,335	+1%	1,459	High
Design Services	20,387	+1%	1,909	Moderate
Engineering Services	12,725	+3%	1,086	Very high

Construction's net talent flow

COUNTERPART	NET
Building Construction	+272
Specialty Trade	+237
Real Estate	+182
Civil Engineering	+80
Architecture & Planning	**+71**

Construction gained 180 professionals from architecture firms and lost 109 to them, a 1.7-to-1 ratio.

CRITICAL FINDING

Architecture & Planning is the only industry in the pool that didn't grow, and construction firms took a net 71 of its professionals last year.

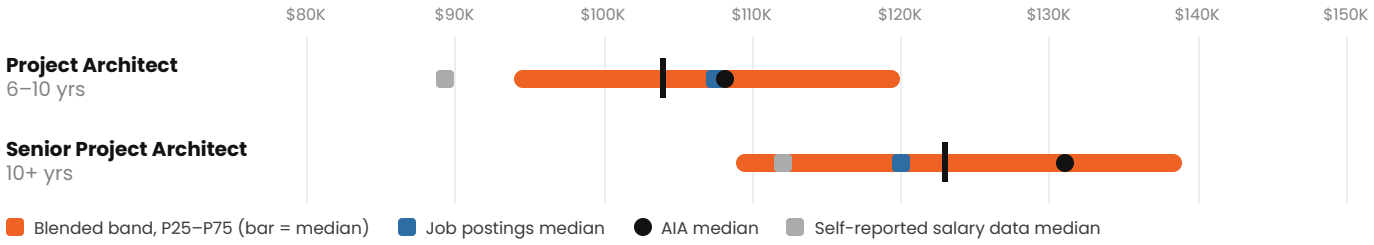
Your competition for a Project Architect is as likely to be a contractor or an engineering firm as another studio.

COMPENSATION BENCHMARK

What Project Architect talent costs

The US base-pay median for a Senior Project Architect is **$123,000**, 18% more than a Project Architect at **$104,000**. Senior postings have a median midpoint of $120,000, below what licensed senior architects actually earn, so posted ranges are underselling the role.

Blended base-pay bands by level



LEVEL	TYPICAL TITLES	EXPERIENCE	P25	MEDIAN	P75	HOURLY AT MEDIAN
Project Architect	Project Architect, Architect III, Job Captain	6–10 yrs	$94,000	**$104,000**	$120,000	$50.00
Senior Project Architect	**Senior Project Architect, Senior Architect**	**10+ yrs**	**$109,000**	**$123,000**	**$139,000**	**$59.13**

Senior Architect median base by region

REGION	MEDIAN	VS. US
Pacific	$144,000	+10%
Middle Atlantic (NY, NJ, PA)	$139,000	+6%
Mountain	$131,000	0%
West South Central (incl. TX)	$131,000	0%
South Atlantic	$130,000	-1%
East North Central	$127,000	-3%
West North Central	$119,000	-9%

AIA regional medians for licensed Senior Architects, adjusted to 2026.

CRITICAL FINDING

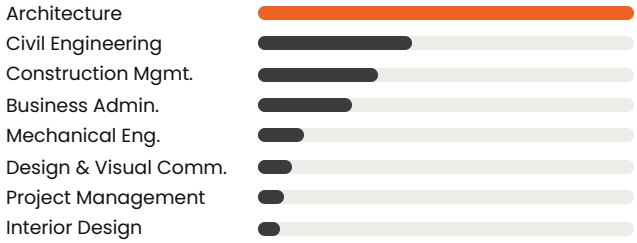
Senior postings have a median midpoint of $120K, while licensed Senior Architects at architecture firms earn a $131K median. Every candidate is comparing to the ranges you post.
A senior range built on old postings will lose to the firm that benchmarked this year.

EDUCATION AND BACKGROUND

Trained as architects, hired as project managers

Architecture is the leading field of study in the pool, with 101,859 professionals, almost twice the 59,022 who hold an architect title. The gap points to architecture graduates working in project-management and construction roles.

Top fields of study



Highest degree attained

DEGREE	ALL PROFESSIONALS	RECENT GRADS
Bachelor's	63%	56%
Master's	**25%**	**30%**
MBA	6%	9%
Associate's	6%	5%
PhD	1%	1%

Gender



■ Women 21% ■ Men 79%

Schools producing this talent

SCHOOL	PROFESSIONALS	RECENT GRADS
Texas A&M University	**5,353**	**659**
Virginia Tech	3,918	421
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo	3,526	208
Penn State University	3,399	272
University of Florida	3,260	327

SCHOOL	PROFESSIONALS	RECENT GRADS
Arizona State University	3,231	474
Univ. of Illinois Urbana-Champaign	2,974	241
Purdue University	2,750	230
Auburn University	2,613	371
The Ohio State University	2,453	184

WHAT FIRMS SHOULD DO

Look past the architect title. Architecture graduates now working as project managers are a candidate pool most firms never approach. Win them back with design leadership and a path to Principal. For the junior pipeline, Texas A&M and Arizona State produce the most recent graduates in the pool.

RECOMMENDATIONS

How to win Project Architect talent in 2027

Here's the paradox. More than half a million professionals deliver AEC projects in the US, yet the licensed Project and Senior Architects who run them number fewer than 14,000, and engineering and construction firms are recruiting from the same bench.

01 **Reach passive architects, don't wait for applicants**

91% of the pool didn't change jobs last year, and there's one post for every 16 Project Architects. **What to do:**

- Work with a specialist recruiting partner who knows the local architecture community and talks to passive Project and Senior Architects every day.
- Lead every approach with the projects, the clients and the path to leadership, not the job description.

02 **Price to a Project Architect benchmark**

Senior postings have a median midpoint of $120K, while licensed Senior Architects earn a $131K median. **What to do:**

- Budget Project Architects at $104K–$120K and Senior Project Architects at $123K–$139K, the median to P75, and adjust for your region.
- Benchmark each role against today's market before it goes live.

03 **Sell the career path, not the seat**

Early-career PM titles grew 6–10% while architect delivery titles weren't among the fastest growing. **What to do:** map a visible path from Project Architect to Senior Architect, Associate and Principal, with licensure support and real project leadership.

04 **Compete with contractors and engineering firms**

Construction firms took a net 71 professionals from architecture firms, and HDR alone has 1,187 open posts. **What to do:** sell design authorship, project typology and the quality of the work, the things a contractor's PM role can't match.

05 **Recruit along the migration corridors**

Dallas–Fort Worth gained talent from 9 of its 10 biggest trading partners, while Boston and Philadelphia lost to most of theirs. **What to do:** Sun Belt firms should target candidates in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago and Los Angeles with relocation offers. Northeast and coastal firms should hold growth conversations before a Sun Belt offer arrives.

The question isn't whether there are architects in AEC. It's whether you can reach the licensed one who will run your next project.

About Snipebridge

SNIPEBRIDGE is not a staffing company. We are an exclusive talent partner to clients and manage their hiring program through an extended team model. We work as an extension of your team, combining access to passive AEC talent, real market intelligence and predictable, subscription-based spend.

Hiring Project Architects?

Book a complimentary 30-minute Talent Strategy Review. We'll benchmark your open architecture roles against this data and map the passive talent you can reach.

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