

The Architectural Team offers new ideas in waterfront development, design, and resiliency



Boston — As a leader of The Architectural Team, Inc. (TAT), Michael Liu, AIA, NCARB, draws on context-based research as well as global models to respond to rising sea levels, to foster revitalization, and to encourage a new mix of resilient and sustainable land uses. Liu’s current projects, including the 12-acre mixed-use development, Clippership Wharf on Boston Harbor, demonstrate the benefits of holistic design approaches with resilient elements — such as hard and soft approaches to shoreline design, strategic landscaping, and elevated public use areas — that can absorb storm surges while enhancing the public realm and long-term viability.

“It’s important for architects and developers to consider not only the impacts of sea level rise, but also the experience of people who live and work in waterfront and coastal areas,” says Liu. “Innovative communities like Clippership Wharf, with its hybrid living shoreline and public harborwalk, show that by taking a thoughtful, creative approach to climate adaptation, it’s possible to design for resiliency and improve livability at the same time.”

Similarly, notes Liu, project designers and public officials alike can achieve better results by recognizing that codes, regulations, and building approaches must address changeable site conditions and an evolving relationship to surrounding streets and neighborhoods.

“In Boston Harbor, for example, climate change studies predict water levels could rise more than 2 feet over the next three decades,” Liu said. “For architects and planners working in waterfront areas that will transform so markedly, it’s not enough to address current conditions on a project-by-project basis. We also need to take a long-term view of the urban context — including on a

neighborhood, citywide, and regional level – and consider what it means to plan and design for how our waterfronts will look 30 years down the road.”

Recognized for thoughtful and context-responsive solutions, TAT has designed successful waterfront projects including the award-winning Lovejoy Wharf. Home to the corporate headquarters for international clothing brand Converse, Lovejoy Wharf is wrapped in elevated public use areas, creating an active edge along Boston harbor.

Other lauded waterside projects include the 480,000-square-foot mixed-use Battery Wharf complex in Boston and the mixed-use Harbor Place in riverfront Haverhill, Mass., the latter comprising two structures on a raised podium along with a plaza and pedestrian connections to the riverfront. Harbor Place was recently honored by the Urban Land Institute. The first phase of TAT’s Clipper-ship Wharf is anticipated to open in 2019.