



**AIA**  
Tampa Bay

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## **Tampa Bay architects predict more economic growth in 2022, while noting pandemic's long-term impacts on their industry**

*Architects predict continued work-from-home options, and changes in HVAC units*

TAMPA, FL (February 9, 2022) – Tampa Bay area architects are extremely optimistic about the outlook for the region's real estate development-related economy in 2022 despite challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and labor shortages, according to AIA Tampa Bay's Voice of Architecture Economic Outlook 2022.

At the same time, the survey reflected several significant long-term impacts of the pandemic on how architects work and on the commercial buildings they design.

In the survey of 95 area architects, conducted by the Tampa Bay chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 84% percent of the architects expect demand for architectural services in the Tampa Bay area to increase in 2022 – an increase of 14 percentage points from last year's predictions.

Also, a large percentage of the architects, 93%, think the Tampa Bay area's development-related economy in 2022 will be "excellent" or "good," with only 7% forecasting it will be "fair." No one predicted that it will be "poor" or "very poor." Also, more than one-third (35%) expect new architecture work from the recently passed federal infrastructure bill.

As for long-term impacts from the pandemic, nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) say their organizations will continue remote work practices used during the first year of the coronavirus pandemic.

Also, for the second consecutive year, a large percentage of architects (80%) said the pandemic will change the way HVAC systems are designed. Addressing concerns about worker safety, some commercial buildings are being fitted with HVAC systems designed to let in more outside air and provide higher levels of filtration for inside air.

The Voice of Architecture's survey serves to predict the future for area real estate development and construction activity. Architects are experts on gauging the outlook for the development-related economy because they are hired early in the development process, with projects often being completed one to three years after the architecture firm begins work.

"It's all about supply and demand," said Rachael Brown, Commercial Real Estate Director for the Bank of Tampa. "Tampa Bay has seen an incredible increase in people and companies moving here in a very short time period, creating a demand our current supply couldn't and still hasn't been able to support, which is reflected in the sentiments of this report. We're lucky that rental rate growth is still outpacing the increase in construction costs and operating expenses, but that can't last forever. Keep an eye on

vacancies to increase and months' supply of homes on the market to indicate a return to normal.”

The survey results indicate that 2022 development activity in the residential and healthcare sectors will be particularly strong, while demand for projects involving higher education, banking/finance, and military will be at the bottom of the list.

“The continued influx of new residents coming to the Tampa Bay area from larger cities around the country is a key driver for our economy, both in residential and commercial development,” said Jason Jensen, principal of WJ Architects, founded in St. Petersburg. “Many people can now work from anywhere, so why not Florida?”

Half the architects estimate that their organization or department will hire more employees in 2022, with only 16% certain that they will not be hiring more employees. Also, 77% anticipate revenue growth in 2022, including nearly one-third who expect robust growth of 15% or more in revenues.

Meanwhile, nearly three-quarters (72%) of the architects in the survey reported that it’s becoming more difficult to hire skilled workers, continuing a long-term trend in the architecture industry, where talented professionals are continually in high demand.

“Architecture firms, like so many companies, will need to continue to be both creative and persistent in finding and keeping quality talent,” said Jarel McCants, Principal, Jarel McCants Architecture, and president of AIA Tampa Bay. “Being competitive on pay is essential, but it’s also important to have a quality culture.”

Of the 95 respondents in the survey, 73% of the architects were either principals or managers. Most respondents were from Hillsborough County or Pinellas County, though many of the architects in the two counties work on projects throughout the region.

In addition, a similar economic indicator called the Architecture Billing Index (ABI), which compiles monthly data by the AIA National Center to track how architecture firms’ billings are trending, points to strong 2022 construction activity in the southern U.S.

The latest ABI, in December 2021, showed a substantial year-over-year increase in billings for architecture firms across the South, with a 56.4 index. (Index scores above 50 indicate increases in year-over-year billings, and scores below 50 indicate decreases.) Other regional index scores in rank order were: Midwest at 51.0, West at 47.5, and Northeast at 45.3.

Tied to the local survey, AIA Tampa Bay assembles a panel representing the banking, architecture and construction fields to interpret the results of the report. The recorded Zoom event, available at [www.ariatampabay.com](http://www.ariatampabay.com), will feature the following panelists:

- Rachael Brown, Commercial Real Estate Director, Bank of Tampa
- Jason Jensen, CEO, WJ Architects
- Casey Ellison, CEO, EWI Construction
- Jerel McCants, Principal, Jerel McCants Architecture, and president of AIA Tampa Bay

The panel discussion is open to the public via Zoom on Thursday, February 10 at 6:00 p.m. Registration is available through the [www.ariatampabay.com](http://www.ariatampabay.com) calendar.

The panel discussion will be moderated by Kyle Parks of B2 Communications, which represents a number of companies in the real estate industry. After gaining significant experience as a business reporter and editor at the then-St. Petersburg Times, he worked as a marketing and PR executive for two Fortune 1000 companies in homebuilding and real estate development before co-founding B2.

**About the AIA:**

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) is the professional association for architects and those in the architecture field. AIA Tampa Bay is the regional chapter representing 700 members in Hillsborough, Pinellas, Polk, Hernando, Citrus, Sumter and Pasco counties. The AIA provides programs and services including educational programs, design competitions, community service programs and serves as the united voice of the architecture profession. For more information, go to [www.aiatampabay.com](http://www.aiatampabay.com) or call 813-229-3411.

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