

WINTER 2025-2026

# SPECIGRAM

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## FEBRUARY MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

# From Design Intent to Design Deliverable: Systems & Performance Descriptions in Pennsylvania Public Work

**Date:** February 10, 2026

**Time:** 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm

**Location:** 20 Stanwix St., Pittsburgh, PA

**Cost:** \$40 (CSI and AIA members)

\$20 (YAF member)

\$60 (non-members)

**Registration:** <https://app.memberplanet.com/#/event/csi-pittsburghchapter/designintent>

David Stutzman, AIA, FCSI, CCS, SCIP  
President  
Conspectus, Inc.

Owner expectations are changing—and documentation practices must change with them. The Pennsylvania Department of General Services (DGS) has introduced a new requirement for public projects that calls for a systems-based design description as a formal design deliverable. Rather than focusing solely on drawings or late-stage specifications, DGS is signaling the need for clear, early articulation of building systems, performance expectations, and design intent. This shift followed a presentation to DGS leadership and the paper *Evolving Specifications*, which explored how gaps between design intent and construction requirements lead to cost escalation, value engineering, and excessive RFIs.

This presentation will explore:

- Why owners are asking for clearer system-level design intent earlier
- How systems and performance descriptions complement both drawings and specifications
- Where traditional documentation falls short—and why that matters downstream
- How designers and specifiers can collaborate earlier without duplicating effort
- What this change means for professional roles, responsibility, and influence

David Stutzman, FCSI, AIA, CCS is an independent specification consultant and software developer focused on improving collaboration between designers, specifiers, contractors, and owners. His work centers on systems-based documentation, performance clarity, and closing the gap between design intent and construction requirements on complex public projects.



# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

by **Brian Trimble, P.E., CDT**

As we turn the calendar to a new year, we both look back at 2025 and forward to the new year of 2026. The construction industry continues to be strong although there is certainly a lot of “noise” about potential problems that our industry faces. Whether they have hit you or not will depend on what segment of the industry you are in. I know that I was crazy busy over the last few months of 2025, probably trying to make sure that things didn't falter. My association with CSI continues to pay dividends because I get to talk with people from all segments – designers, contractors, product reps and in some cases, students. They all give me a better perspective on what has happened and what might be coming up.



Brian Trimble, P.E., CDT

One event that was very beneficial was our recent Holiday Gala. CSI Pittsburgh's Holiday Gala is a little different than other holiday parties you have been to. While you can relax with friends and associates, you also have the opportunity to interact with our very knowledgeable vendors and learn some new things (see photos from that event elsewhere in this newsletter). Thanks to Kelly Brown for leading that effort with Brad and Charlotte Bridges, Judy Reilly, and Patrick and Tabatha Harding. Having a very dedicated committee helps with successful events. And thanks to all the vendors who were sponsors of the event.

Looking back at 2025 we had our ups and downs. We didn't have a program every month, but the events we did have were very popular including our kickoff meeting on Networking in September and our Holiday Gala. We can use more volunteers who are willing to help with the chapter initiatives and help spread out the load. For 2026, we have three great programs in February, March and April and look to do another fun meeting in May or June. You can be a part of this by coming to our meetings. As the old saying goes, you get out of something by what you put in. See you at an upcoming event!!

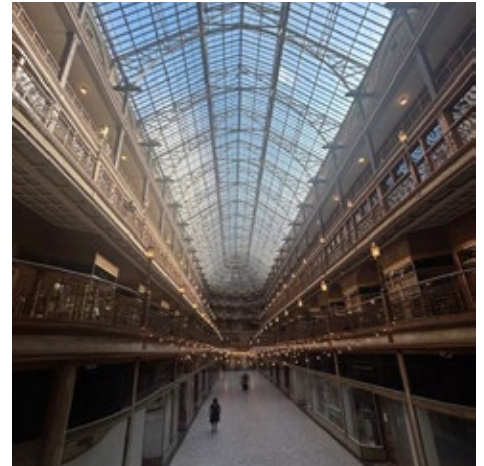


Holiday Gala 2025

# YEAR IN REVIEW - CSI NATIONAL CONFERENCE

by Joanna Beres, M.Arch., CSI, ICC, PENNBOC

Joining the Pittsburgh Chapter of the Construction Specifications Institute has been a positive experience for me. I encourage anyone thinking about it to dive in. The inclusive, diverse cross section of members, continuing education, leadership opportunities, and new collaborations are why I am a member. The organization reflects the interdisciplinary collaborative practices that define all aspects of the construction industry. CSI fosters a welcoming sense of belonging. Locally, the par exemplar Pittsburgh team welcomed me into the mix. I was drawn to the engaging camaraderie, rigorous continuing education opportunities, and cross pollination of industry learning and networking opportunities. Their collaborative approach and positivity are infectious. If you are trying to learn about a new product, a means and method of construction, or general industry knowledge, there are people to help you. Like anything else, engagement in this group is what you make of it. I'm still figuring out my place in it. I joined, in part, because I wanted to learn how to write specifications. I most recently glossed through them at work, in my role as an inspector and reviewer. I've been obsessing about firestopping ever since. The specs answered the questions. They helped me alert an oversight to the design professionals, and the items were corrected. I haven't really gotten into specs much since I graduated in 2008. I wanted to learn and continue to grow as a building code professional in the architectural world. That involves a constant pursuit of learning, which is why I love this profession. It's a perfect mixture of regulations and innovations. It's the why and how of the built environment, and I'm making friends with all sorts of people who help with different parts of that process.



I was humbled with the opportunity to attend the National CSI Conference in Cleveland this past October, as part of the Pittsburgh Chapter delegation. It was a fantastic chance to meet old friends and foster new connections. It was a treat to visit Cleveland and meet



practitioners that I connected with on social media like [Dory Azar](#) & [Amy Baker](#), with their [Social Media for Architects \(and Spec Writers\)!](#) session. I attended [Matt Brennan's](#) IFT! That's it, Except for Addendums. I previously met him through his podcast, "[What the RFI.](#)" [Sylvia Bowman](#) of CertiFloor emphasized the importance of installation compliance, and the value of third-party inspections with her Specification Fix That Eliminates Flooring Failures session. Neuro Inclusive Design Directions, by [Lynsey Hankins](#) of The Pittsburgh Paints Company, was another one of my favorite sessions.

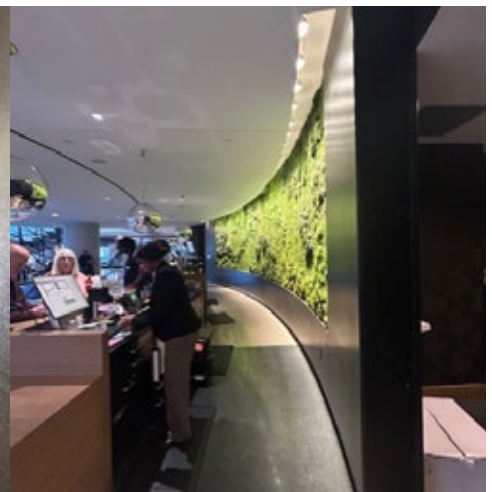
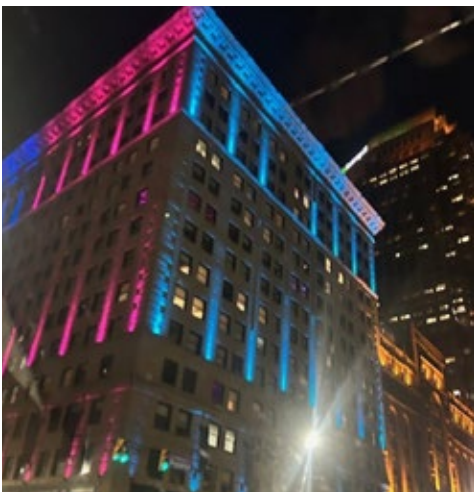
The show was well balanced, emphasizing the dual importance of honing your social skills while embracing new technologies. Global and national product and software companies presented and sponsored the happenings. The random reconnections were a bonus. I ran into [Michael Risica](#), RA & founder of the [Young Architect Academy](#) and the [Architect Exam Podcast](#).

## YEAR IN REVIEW - CSI NATIONAL CONFERENCE



We met in 2015 when I was the AIA PA Associate Director. His mission of educating young architects continues to inspire me. We went to the Pittsburgh Paints industry party, where I connected with new friends working on their certifications.

The tantamount importance of cultivating interpersonal relationships with clients and customers was a counterpoint to many sessions examining AI integration. It's a both/and situation, where both ends of the spectrum of focus matter, and honing both skills are an art. The shutdown taught us to be more efficient utilizing virtual meetings, and the timesaving practices continue to allow us to focus on other facets of work. Accessibility tools are integrated into these digital practices. Threading together new technologies to save time and automate tasks are evolving rapidly. Industry best practices were exciting to learn about. These new ideas still require us to hone our listening and critical thinking abilities. [Deedre Daniel](#), Founder of the Interesting Conversations Company, provided just that nudge and refresh. She was the best motivational speaker that I've ever seen. She had a sleepy crowd of architects, engineers, and AEC tech reps roaring with laughter, wrapped around her finger. The CSI National Conference was closed out with her "[How to be More Interesting Than a Cell Phone](#)"® talk. Her witty stories and tips were simple and practical ways to help us improve some bad habits, to pause and listen, and to talk to people with kindness. I appreciate the opportunity to connect with colleagues in a relaxed environment, where we convened together to learn and grow to serve our communities and the collaborative practices that we work in. Thank you CSI! I look forward to a fruitful 2026.



### Joanna Beres, M.Arch., CSI, ICC, PENNBOC

#### What is your company and what is your position?

I work for Code.Sys Code Consulting, Inc., which is a building code consultancy. It is a PA Department of Labor and Industry registered Third Party Inspection and Plan Review firm. We enforce the Uniform Construction Code, the building code laws of the Commonwealth, for municipalities across Western Pennsylvania and beyond.



#### Tell us about your job.

I want to be of service to help others; I view building codes and architecture as service professions. My present gig is a great mixture of field and remote work. It is a collaborative practice, interfacing with municipalities, contractors, design professionals, and the public. On one hand, the job appears to be a simple match game, ensuring that projects are being built per the approved construction documents. Inspecting buildings is nuanced. It is a mashup of plan review, building codes, municipal codes (including zoning and ordinance development), structural engineering general knowledge, product research, materials and assembly knowledge, as well as the means and methods of construction. You have to know your audience, and be able to communicate effectively to many different people, of different backgrounds and abilities. From sitework, through document tender and occupancy, we review, observe, and inspect work as projects progress. It is challenging, maddening, and rewarding. We collaborate with project teams to ensure a safe and successful project.

#### What is your education background? Undergrad? Grad?

I began undergraduate studies at Carnegie Mellon University for architecture. I completed my BA in Urban Studies, with a minor in architectural history at the University of Pittsburgh. I was a glutton for punishment and earned a Master of Architecture, with a concentration in Planning and Preservation at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. I was a Teaching Assistant for Design Thinking, where each week we visited a different site throughout the city to draw. I also was a TA for Structures and I was a research assistant for our history and theory professor.



#### How many years have you been in the industry?

My first architecture job was for Al Cuteri in the summer of 1998, so 27.5 years so far...yikes.

#### What part of your job do you most enjoy?

I love being in the field learning from the men and women who build things. Sometimes staring at a screen or paper didn't make sense, but when I walked in the mud and saw buildings coming to life, I understood construction much better. I feel so lucky that I get paid to learn all about buildings. There's so much to learn, and every day is different.

### Joanna Beres, M.Arch., CSI, ICC, PENNBOC



#### **What was your first job?**

My first job was serving food at North Versailles Bowl as a kid in the 1980s. My gram ran the snack counter, my mom, 2 aunts, my little sister and I helped to make and serve food, set up and serve the parties. My cousins ran the front counter. We had a blast. My gram paid us, and we learned the value of work and saving. I remember when jalapeno poppers were new, and I'm still searching for provolone sticks like we use to get at Folino's. Sometimes Labriola's gets ones that are really close.

#### **If you could change one thing about your profession, what it would be?**

I would like people to understand that building codes save lives. It is a minimum standard to protect the public. It is not trivial.

#### **What's your passion?**

Learning and sharing my excitement of things with others. I like to help people find answers and solve problems. I also really love to sing and eat good food.

#### **What year and why did you join CSI?**

2025. I am drawn to the inclusive, diverse mix of professionals. I enjoy the continuing education opportunities, I aim to learn more about specifications, and how people collaborate to make buildings. It's a different mix of perspectives, which is important to me.

#### **What do you see as the value of CSI membership?**

I think that becoming a member of the CSI will dovetail nicely with my specialty of building codes. CSI gives me access to product experts, engineers, architects, and all sorts of smart people who collaborate to get stuff built. I'm at a different part of the process as a plan reviewer and inspector, versus the architectural intern roles of my youth.

#### **What would you want somebody considering CSI membership to know?**

It's ok to change what you want to do, to shift goals. I am so glad that CSI came into my life. I'm still trying to be an architect when I grow up. I feel totally different about the profession and myself than I did when I started. I'm so thankful that Peg Russell, my employer, took a chance on me. This upcoming St. Patrick's Day will be the 6 year anniversary of the shut down, but it was also the day I interviewed, and got hired by Code.Sys. Things work out if you push yourself, work hard, and are persistent. .



#### **What position(s) do you presently hold with CSI?**

I am a student outreach coordinator and board member.

### Joanna Beres, M.Arch., CSI, ICC, PENNBOC

#### Tell us a memorable CSI experience:

I attended the 17 April 2024 CSI class, where Katelyn Rossier introduced her [Mentor Dino program](#) and dynamic communication exercises. It was just what I needed at that moment. It was fun, group exercises with strangers, that challenged us to communicate better, which can be so hard. It was a good mix of ages and generations of new and seasoned practitioners. Ms. Rossier found a useful way to demonstrate how taking time to clearly communicate can strengthen relationships. We're all racing to meet benchmarks and deadlines. True understanding and collaborations require getting to know your team and colleagues. Talk like a human being, not a robot. This is especially apropos to project teams and clients, where people often make incorrect assumptions. Make sure

everyone is on the same page, and check in regularly with one another. This is easier said than done. Practice. She was one of the first recipients of the AIA PA Paula Maynes ARE Grant, and Katelyn continues to inspire me to be better, as did Paula. Katelyn embodies empathy, incredible time management skills, and a sincere desire to share her talents with others.



#### What's your favorite building.

Right now I'm going to say our cabin in Allegheny National Forest. It's a 1959 galvanized manufactured home, but it was called a mobile home when it was installed in the 1960s. It is elevated on piers, and it's in a flood plain. It's worth nothing, but it's priceless to our family. Dad's been going there since he was a teenager. It's an escape to nature. It's full of good memories and happy times. I've helped my dad over the years, fix it up. When I was in grad school, in 2004, camp flooded from the remnants of Hurricane Ivan. It happened so slowly, it was raining, and my dad and his best friend Sam went home from a weekend visit. The creek rose and slowly lifted the trailer off of it's piers, and the old Scandinavian apple tree in the back yard saved it. Dad and Sam got a phone call and went up planning to torch it. They ended

up going up there 57 weekends in a row and restored it. Dad was buddies with a heavy equipment guy, who actually drilled piles for a new building at CMU while I was there, and he lifted up the trailer with a winch, and set it onto new piers. Luckily, there wasn't much damage. We added RMax, ground down the exterior to bare metal, patched a few holes, painted it, and it's as good as new. We installed an efficient furnace, and it's nice and toasty inside when it's 22 below freezing. Dad even took apart the old wolmanized deck from our childhood pool, flipped the boards, which were still good save for a few, and rebuilt the freestanding deck up there. More recently, my brother set up Starlink service, so we can have phone and internet up there. We also have Home Hawk cameras to watch the wildlife, which is fun.



#### What's a true sign of success?

Satisfaction in knowing I did my best and that's ok. The older I get, the less I care what other people think. I am forever seeking more balance and progress.

## MAR UPDATES

The CSI Middle Atlantic Region's website and LinkedIn pages are now live and up to date! Check in for more information on Sponsorships for the MAR Conference, Award Submissions, and the LEAD Save the Date.

**MAR Website:** <https://www.marcsi.org/>

**MAR LinkedIn:** <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/16630019/>



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- Feb. 10** From Design Intent to Design Deliverable: Systems & Performance Descriptions in Pennsylvania Public Work, David Stutzman, Conspectus, Inc.
- Mar. 10** High Performance Historic Masonry Retrofits, Corey Murphy, 475 High Performance Building Supply
- Apr. 14** City of Pittsburgh Comprehensive Plan update, Alyssa Lyon, Black Girl, Green World

### February

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### March

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11

### April

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9

## New Members

**Greg Marin**, Principal, Juci Architecture

**Ee Ling Chua**, Principal, Juci Architecture

## Member Anniversaries

### December 2025

**Brian Trimble**, International Masonry Institute 39 years

**Philip Dorenkott**, ATAS International, Inc. 34 years

**Michaeleen Vargo**, LGA Partners 19 years

### January 2026

**Donna Radock**, Stantec 31 years

**William Vernon**, Stantec 20 years

**Bob Ober**, YYK America 14 years

**Kelly Brown**, RM Creative 12 years

**Thomas Seidel**, Door & Hardware Institute 9 years

**Katelyn Rossier**, Rossier Architecture & Design 2 years

**Christina Szejc**, Perkins Eastman Architects 1 year (Christina has been a member longer off and on)

## Pittsburgh Chapter Leadership FY 2026

### Officers

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