

“Over the years, IIDA Carolinas has created countless meaningful memories and career-defining experiences. From early morning board retreats complete with coffee, orange juice, and newspapers at the door, to late-night conversations at the gazebo and unforgettable after-parties. These moments built lasting connections. Highlights include planning and launching DesignWorks, participating in Capitol Days to advocate for interior design legislation, and celebrating the long-awaited licensure win in North Carolina. National events like NeoCon and the Chapter Leadership Council (CLC) meetings offered opportunities to connect with IIDA staff—especially the incomparable Cheryl Durst—and network with fellow chapter leaders, many of whom remain close friends.

For many, IIDA Carolinas has been more than just a professional organization; it has been a platform for leadership, growth, and community, opening doors and shaping careers in lasting ways.”

**Scott MacMeekin, NCIDQ, RID, LEED BD+C**

*Project Executive | Life and Workplaces*

**Gresham Smith**

**IIDA Carolinas Chapter Past President (2015-2016)**



“My time as an IIDA Member, Carolinas Chapter Board Member, and Past President has been one of the most meaningful and rewarding experiences of my career. I am truly grateful for the opportunities this organization has provided and for the incredible people it has brought into my life.

Through IIDA, I’ve had the privilege of connecting with individuals who share a common passion: a love for great design. I may be biased, but I genuinely believe our Chapter is home to some of the most talented designers on the planet. More than colleagues, we are a community—a family—bound by shared values and a commitment to supporting one another and the communities we serve. It’s this spirit of unity and compassion that makes our Chapter so special.

Over the past ten years, IIDA has offered me countless opportunities for growth, leadership, and connection. These experiences have shaped my professional journey in profound ways, and I wouldn’t be who I am today without them. Serving this design community has been an honor, and I am proud of the work we’ve accomplished together.

When you love what you do—and the people you do it with—it never feels like work. That’s exactly how I’ve felt throughout my time with this Chapter. As I look ahead, I’m filled with excitement and optimism. The future of the Carolinas Chapter is bright, and I can’t wait to see what’s next. Thank you all for being part of this journey with me.”

**Beth Florence, IIDA, RID, NCIDQ, EDAC**

*Senior Interior Designer | Senior Associate*

**LS3P**

**IIDA Carolinas Chapter Past President (2020-2022)**



## IIDA CAROLINA'S 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY

This year marks a remarkable milestone as we celebrate 30 years of IIDA in the Carolinas—a legacy built on innovation, collaboration, and a passion for advancing interior design. For three decades, IIDA Carolinas has been a driving force in connecting professionals, inspiring creativity, and elevating the design community throughout North and South Carolina. As we honor our past and look to the future, we celebrate the people, projects, and partnerships that have shaped our journey and continue to push the boundaries of design excellence.

# HONORING OUR ROOTS: THE FOUNDING OF IIDA CAROLINAS

The Institute of Business Designers, Carolinas Chapter, Inc. was incorporated on April 18, 1975, with a mission to promote the common interests of its members, address shared business concerns among contract interior designers, and keep members informed of industry developments to better serve the evolving design needs of the public. The organization's initial Board of Directors—Stuart John Gilbert, Charles Gelber, Geary Winstead, and Paul Brayton—signed the nonprofit into action.

Two decades later, on March 3, 1995, the organization formally amended its Articles of Incorporation to change its name to the International Interior Design Association (IIDA), Carolinas Chapter, Inc. This decision had been adopted on January 14, 1995, and was officially signed by J. Alex Poorman, then President of IBD, on January 27, 1995. In 1994, the International Interior Design Association (IIDA) had been formed through the merger of the Institute of Business Designers (IBD), the International Society of Interior Designers (ISID), and the Council of Federal Interior Designers (CFID). The goal of this merger was to create an international association with a united mission to represent interior designers worldwide.

At the time, Alex Poorman served as President of the Institute of Business Designers (IBD), Carolinas Chapter, Inc., with Michael Cushwa as President-Elect. To ensure a smooth transition into the newly formed organization, Michael became the first President of IIDA Carolinas in 1995. Together, Alex, Michael, and



the IBD Carolinas Chapter, Inc. led the effort to transition from IBD to IIDA, uniting interior designers across North and South Carolina under one organization.

According to Alex Poorman, joining forces through IIDA was “the best way to gain national recognition” for interior designers and to strengthen the profession’s collective voice. Reflecting on this achievement, Alex shared, “To actually sit back and see the vision of IIDA coming alive is truly inspiring. I can honestly say, we did it.”



## FUN FACTS

◆  
*The 1st president of our IIDA Carolinas Chapter was Michael Cushwa on July 1st, 1995.*

◆  
*Our highest recorded membership was in 2020 with 792 members. We're currently at 720 and aiming to surpass that record soon!*

◆  
*Our IIDA Carolinas President, Steven Hawes, celebrated turning 30 the same year as our IIDA Carolinas Chapter!*

