



Rolluda Architects: Transforming Communities through Collaboration and Diversity in Architecture

by Alisa Docena

Architecture has been witnessing a paradigm shift in the past couple of years. A shift that embraces the symbiotic relationship between built environments and the communities they serve, one that acknowledges the transformative power of collaboration and diversity. As architects and urban planners explore new avenues to create sustainable and inclusive spaces, they are redefining the very essence of architecture itself.

Among the trailblazers in the realm of community-centric design is Rolluda Architects, Inc. (RAI), an architectural firm that has been at the forefront of transforming spaces with a focus on collaboration and diversity. Established in 2002 by visionary architect Alex Rolluda, Rolluda Architects has earned a reputation for its exceptional architecture, interior design, and planning services. With a diverse portfolio encompassing educational, community, transportation, municipal and government, retail and commercial, industrial, aviation, multi-family and residential, and mixed-use projects, RAI demonstrates its versatility and commitment to serving both private and public-sector clients.

Nestled in the heart of Seattle's historic Pioneer Square neighborhood, the architecture firm boasts a dedicated team of over 50 talented professionals, all united by a shared passion for excellence and innovation.





A Vision Takes Flight: The Inception of Rolluda Architects

Seattle-native Alex Rolluda's fascination with architecture began in his childhood, as he marveled at the iconic structures that adorned the city's skyline. Inspired by the Space Needle, the Science Center, and other modernist landmarks, Rolluda embarked on solo explorations of downtown Seattle and the Seattle Center, fueling his passion for design. However, his life took an unexpected turn when his family moved to the Philippines at the age of 12.

After his first year as an architecture student at the University of Santo Tomas, his family returned to Seattle, where he was able to continue pursuing his architectural dreams and was able to obtain a Master of Architecture degree from the University of Washington. After 12 years of invaluable experience at a local firm, he founded Rolluda Architects in 2002. With a dedicated team now exceeding 50 individuals, the firm is known for its diverse sector practice, undertaking projects spanning schools, colleges and universities, government and municipal buildings, transportation hubs, and aviation facilities.

Designing with Diversity and Inclusion at the Core

With community-building at the core of the company, diversity and inclusion are not just buzzwords at Rolluda Architects—they form the very essence of its design philosophy. Coming from a unique background himself, Architect Rolluda firmly believes that everyone brings a unique "landscape" shaped by their experiences, culture, and identity. Rather than suppressing these backgrounds



to conform, he encourages designers and architects to embrace their true selves and draw inspiration from their diverse perspectives. "We encourage our designers and architects to not subsume their landscape in an effort to 'fit in', but rather to decolonize and bring forward their true self. This is manifested in our designs," he said.

One notable aspect of its design philosophy is that there is no one style that can capture who Rolluda Architects is. Instead, its designs are a reflection of the region, local materials, the communities they serve, and the personal landscapes of its designers. By embracing intersectionality and fostering a diverse and inclusive design environment, the team harnesses the power of collaboration and unlocks the benefits it brings.

"Rolluda Architects sets itself apart with its strong ability to communicate and collaborate with culturally diverse clients. With over 50 percent of its staff members representing diverse ethnicities, they embrace differences in culture, language, and age effortlessly. In fact, we have a diverse mix of talents, spanning various genders, generations, nationalities, and abilities. Our team comprises individuals from over 13 different nationalities and 10 languages, creating an inclusive environment that fuels engagement, performance, and innovation," said Archt. Rolluda.

Rolluda Architects' Innovative Design and Community Impact

Rolluda Architects has built a sterling reputation for their commitment to architectural excellence, community engagement, and inclusive design. With a focus on transforming spaces into thriving environments that uplift and empower communities, its portfolio showcases a wide range of projects that reflect the company's core values and exemplify the transformative power of Rolluda Architects' work.

Filipino Village Project: Senior Housing and Innovative Learning Center

One of Rolluda Architects' most notable accomplishments is the Filipino Village Project, a mixed-use community center that encompasses affordable and low-income housing as well as an Innovation Learning Center. Collaborating closely with the Filipino Community of Seattle (FCS), Rolluda Architects provided a comprehensive master plan for this development located in Seattle's Othello neighborhood. Through inclusive and interactive programming workshops, stakeholders were actively engaged and given ownership of the design process.



The final result incorporated various elements, including outdoor gathering spaces, a captivating art mural, expansive outdoor decks, and the integration of Capiz window panels from the Philippines in common areas to fully emulate the country's culture. Completed in 2021, the project cost approximately \$24.1 million and successfully realized FCS's vision of fostering a Filipino community and providing vital resources for all age groups.

NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Mukilteo Fisheries Research Facility

Rolluda Architects as the lead consultant, collaborated with NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Services, PerkinsWill, and Hensel Phelps to provide predesign, programming, and master planning services for the Mukilteo Fisheries Research Facility. Conducting thorough investigations and engaging in extensive consultations with stakeholders, including the City of Mukilteo and Washington State Ferries, the architecture firm meticulously gathered data and researched environmental, historic, and cultural information relevant to the project.

True to its commitment to community-building, the Mukilteo Fisheries Research Facility stands as a testament to Rolluda Architects' expertise in collaborating with government agencies and delivering innovative solutions.

These notable sample works exemplify Rolluda Architects' commitment to inclusive design, community engagement, and sustainable practices. With a dedication to creating spaces that serve diverse populations and reflect their unique landscapes, Rolluda Architects continues to shape the built environment in meaningful and transformative ways.



Archt. Alex Rolluda



Rolluda Architects' Team

Committed to Sustainable Design: Integrating Environmental Stewardship

With a team that includes Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) accredited professionals and consultants, Rolluda Architects possess the technical expertise and innovative mindset needed to successfully implement sustainable design strategies. Its extensive portfolio includes numerous projects that have achieved various levels of LEED certification, ranging from Certified to Platinum, demonstrating its ability to deliver sustainable design solutions that meet the highest standards.

To honor the communities it serves, particularly in projects such as community centers, cultural centers, and educational facilities, the architecture firm pays tribute to the original stewards of the Pacific Northwest—the Native American tribes. Inspired by their sustainable design practices, Rolluda Architects seeks to learn

from their wisdom in building structures that harmonize with the surrounding environment. By harnessing the power of the sun, wind, water, and land, and embracing the spirit of the place, the architects strive to create spaces that serve their purpose while respecting the ecological balance.

Rolluda Architects' commitment to meaningful community engagement, inclusivity, and sustainability, marks its name in the field, ensuring that its projects not only meet the needs of diverse populations but also leave a positive impact on the environment. With a passionate team driven by the values of respect, integrity, and social responsibility, Rolluda Architects continues to shape the built environment, creating spaces that celebrate the richness of human experiences and foster a sense of belonging for all. As Archt. Rolluda and his team forge ahead, their unwavering dedication to collaboration, diversity, and innovation will undoubtedly shape the future of architecture for the betterment of communities. [A](#)