

BUILDING small

BIG impact 2025



FROM **PASSION PROJECT**



TO **NATIONAL MOVEMENT**

LEARNING FROM 2025

In 2025, I traveled the country engaging audiences from five to five hundred. From these presentations, consulting engagements, and two Small Scale Forums, five key lessons emerged:

1 Small Is Now Big

Once on the fringe, the Building Small approach is now embraced from rural towns to urban centers. Valued for its more humane, authentic vision, Small is about how to develop real estate in service of community.

2 Small IS a Housing Solution

Small is increasingly seen as a stealth solution to our housing crisis. Zoning and code reforms matter—but without rethinking how housing is delivered, they fall short. Small fills one gap.

3 Small Rise of Rural

Time spent in Appalachia, South Dakota, and rural Colorado highlighted how shifting federal priorities and demand for affordability and lifestyle means local developers are critical to helping small towns achieve their potential. This is one of the unique promises of the Building Small approach.

4 No Small Feat

The most authentic, experiential places require more than strong development—they demand aligned, creative operating partners. Our panel in NWA was among the year's most well received for both its insights and passion.

5 Building Small Is Bigger Than One

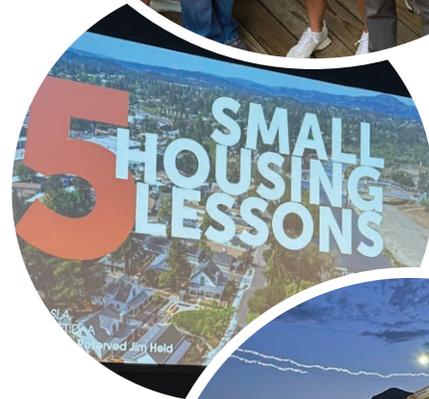
Looking ahead to 2026, I'm excited to formalize Building Small into a membership community—an intentional evolution of my passion project into an organization designed to expand reach and deepen Small impact.

JOIN ME to be part of this evolution!



Jim Heid, FASLA

Founder, Building Small | jim@buildingsmall.net



Forum #24 brought over 90 Small developers to northwest Arkansas | The promise of Missing Middle Housing won't be achieved without Small developers | Canon City epitomizes the value Small developers bring to revitalizing Main Street projects that institutional investors ignore | 2025 saw over 30 'Small Talks' from San Francisco, CA to Skowhegan, ME.



Introducing Small PRO

2025 brought the launch of Small PRO, a mastermind experience for seasoned Small developers. Designed around intimacy, openness, and trust, Small PRO blends candid, open-book conversations with self-assessment tools drawn from Small Coach. The first two sessions exceeded expectations. An open-source agenda and organic facilitation reflect Building Small's ethos: learning in real time, rapid prototyping, and rejecting overly scripted conference formats. The success of Small PRO in 2025 has already led to an exciting new offering for 2026—Small PRO Unplugged.

Small PRO SLO explored the perennial challenge for Small Developers – Capital.



Building Small's flagship event—The **Small Scale Forum**—completed its 13th year by bringing together over 200 emerging and experienced developers.



San Luis Obispo highlighted the value of long-term policy vision and the power of architects-as-developers to create a vibrant downtown through intentional placemaking and public realm focus.



Northwest Arkansas illustrated leadership aligned around quality-of-life as an economic development strategy. The U of Arkansas Community Design Center demonstrated the vital role civic design organizations play as long-term vision keepers.

Both host locations highlighted how institutions of higher-ed seeded and nurtured entrepreneurial cultures, something critical to the success of Small developers.



Each Forum's signature event is the attendee Pechakucha, showcasing every attendees' work, while building a culture of success and moral support.

The Enduring power of *Building Small: A Toolkit*

The book that captured early lessons from the first ten Small Scale Forums continued its arc of success in 2025. Now in its fourth year of publication, **Building Small** continues to add value to entrepreneurial developers, emerging developer training programs, MRED and design school coursework. Its personal, energetic and accessible format has galvanized a national movement of what is possible when we seek to build '*community, not commodity*'.

By the Numbers

- ◆ **#3** ULI Bookstore
- ◆ **#13** Amazon (Urban & Regional Economics)
- ◆ **#52** Amazon (Urban & Land Use Planning)
- ◆ **5,806** copies in the hands of Small Developers

UNITED STATES OF SMALL

Historically focused on large scale solutions, ULI's 2025 Housing the Bay conference kicked off with a keynote on how Small scale housing provides an important housing option, even in metro regions.



Collaborating with Downtown Colorado Inc, Building Small moderated a case study from Unbridled's Stan Bullis and Lindsay Wyss of their St. Cloud Hotel in Canon City, CO.



South Dakota Housing Authority's annual conference included a Small keynote, reinforcing the role small scale development plays in rural communities.



SAN FRANCISCO, CA



SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA



CHANDLER, AZ

Small Solutions is working with the City of Chandler to attract Small Scale Developers to develop ownership Missing Middle Housing



DOWNTOWN COLORADO inc.



GREELEY

DENVER, CO



CANON CITY

Small Solutions is working with The Nehemiah Group to bring Small thinking to Arlington TX.



DOWNTOWN COLORADO inc.

FAYETTEVILLE, AR



ARLINGTON, TX



HOUSTON, TX

Small Coach

Now in its third year, Small Coach delivered hands-on workshops in Denver, CO and Columbus, OH, and provided ongoing Coaching with Opportunity Appalachia. Designed to bridge the gap after traditional training ends, the Small Coach model helps developers master both deal-making and the mindset required to thrive personally as a Small developer.

"So grateful to attend a master class on **Building Small** over the weekend. A group of local professionals got to experience Small Coach's unique style plus value add strategies that make deals WORK!"

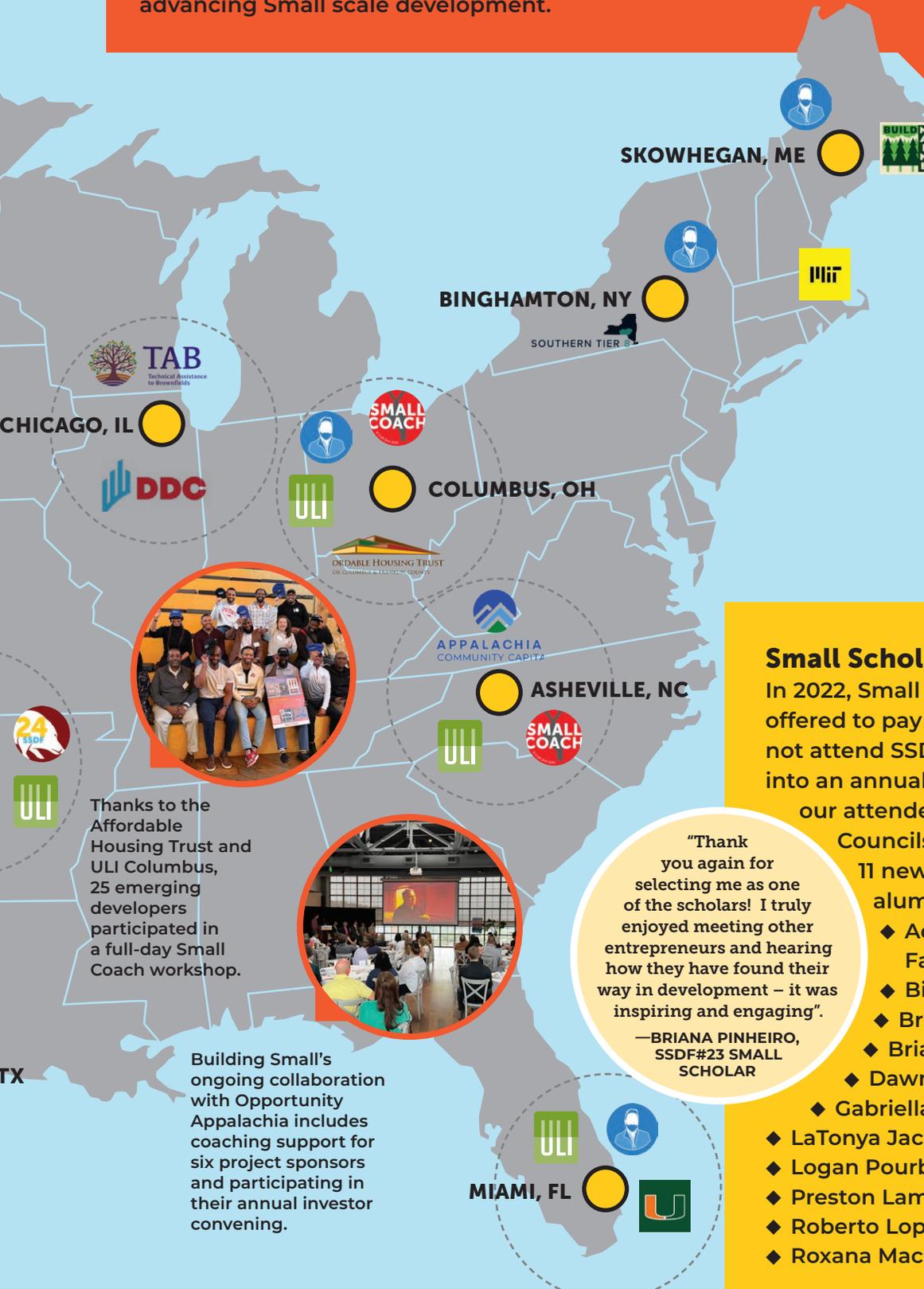
—AL DILORENZO

3,000+ PARTICIPANTS

MIT Loves Small

MIT's Center for Real Estate honored CRE alum Jim Heid with the **Spaulding Award** for advancing alternative development models. In announcing the award, MIT CRE highlighted how Building Small has grown into a platform, a book, and a conference series dedicated to advancing Small scale development.

"Through Heid's work, he has elevated new voices, created opportunities for local ownership, and reimagined what real estate can be when it's grounded in community and values."
—MIT CRE SPAULDING ANNOUNCEMENT



VIRTUAL EVENTS



Small Scholars Reach 50

In 2022, Small OG Michael Lander offered to pay for someone who could not attend SSDF#17. This gesture turned into an annual program supported by our attendees, and local ULI District Councils. This year we welcomed 11 new Small Scholars to our alumni.

- ◆ Adriana Ramos-Hinojos, Fayetteville AR
- ◆ Bill Shrum, Denver CO
- ◆ Bria Francisco, Tulsa OK
- ◆ Briana Pinheiro, Boston MA
- ◆ Dawn Augusta, Phoenix AZ
- ◆ Gabriella Palmeri, Berkeley CA
- ◆ LaTonya Jackson, Springdale AR
- ◆ Logan Pourbaix, Clarksville GA
- ◆ Preston Lam, San Francisco
- ◆ Roberto Lopez, Brownsville TX
- ◆ Roxana Macovei, San Francisco CA

"Thank you again for selecting me as one of the scholars! I truly enjoyed meeting other entrepreneurs and hearing how they have found their way in development – it was inspiring and engaging".

—BRIANA PINHEIRO, SSDF#23 SMALL SCHOLAR

Thanks to the Affordable Housing Trust and ULI Columbus, 25 emerging developers participated in a full-day Small Coach workshop.

Building Small's ongoing collaboration with Opportunity Appalachia includes coaching support for six project sponsors and participating in their annual investor convening.

42 ENGAGEMENTS | 20 CITIES | 13 STATES | 5 VIRTUAL EVENTS

PLACES, PROJECTS, AND PEOPLE



LEFT: Each Forum showcases unique Small developer created spaces like Stonebreaker Event Barn | RIGHT: Marlon Blackwell FAIA shared Small Development and great design | INSET CIRCLES: Forums feature real developer experiences including hard lessons and personal conversations with experienced developers. In SLO we featured long time small developer and architect Rob Rossi.



ABOVE: Small Scholar Jason Hyman organized a Small Meet up for local developers to tour The Plant and meet Jim while he was in Houston | INSET CIRCLES, CLOCKWISE: First time Forum Attendee Sin Hei Kwok made the most of SSDF#24 | Social Small developers Brian Hopkins and Alex Vartan compare notes | Hunter Buwick used the second Small PRO session to gain valuable insights for his newest development.

BELOW: Kaitlyn Fondano, Director of Development for Specialized Real Estate Group led a morning tour of South Yard | LEFT INSET CIRCLES, L-R: Ryan Andrews of Hiatus Homes explains the mysteries of Small capital | Small developer and venue operator Lauren Christensen shared the joys and challenges of developing and operating unique event spaces.



LEFT TOP: One of the most memorable panels focused on operating experiential F+B. Moderated by Noah Koretz, panelists included small operators Mollie Mullis, Chris Allcorn and Lewis Chase | LEFT BOTTOM: Gina Allen, Director District Councils kicks off the Small Coach session led by Building Small at the ULI Spring meeting for REDI Alumni | INSET CIRCLES, L-R: Small OGs Atif Qadir and Candace Baitz take a break in Onyx Coffee's flagship brew lab | Wes Craiglow, ULI NWA Exec Director, and Jeremy Biggs, Rogers, explain how the region's economics have evolved.

BUILDING SMALL 2.0

A new three-year strategy completed in January will help Building Small deliver on its stated mission to 'empower *Small Scale Real Estate Entrepreneurs to succeed.*'

➤ **Small PRO** will expand its offerings with a membership structure allowing access to online programming, peer-to-peer workshops, and field trips to Minneapolis and Mexico City.

➤ **Small Coach** 2026 programming includes workshops in Grand Junction, CO; Oakland, CA; and Chicago, IL.

➤ **Small Scale Forum #25** is being organized as another milestone in another great city, October 2026. [SIGN UP TO GET NOTIFIED](#) when the registration drops.

➤ **Small Scholar** programming is being expanded to provide year-long value to those that are a part of our Forums and bigger community.

➤ **Small Partners** successful events with regional and local partners have taught us the value of collaborating, not competing. 2025 will bring new partnerships to expand reach and impact.

➤ **The HUB for Building Small** is our digital community that connects members, resources and case studies. Get familiar with this interactive and invaluable platform for *doing development different* by [JOINING HERE](#).



LEARN MORE

Sign up to attend events and workshops, be a Small partner, or have a Small talk.

or visit buildingsmall.net

The magic of Small PRO includes a pre-workshop dinner with attendees | Small Coach, Columbus OH in partnership with Small OG and former Council Member Otto Beatty | Jim Heid 'passes the burrito' to Jonathan Dodson, empowering him to organize Small PRO Mexico City.