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## RUSSELL SANDERS RETIRES FROM HOFFMANN AFTER 47 YEARS

**Sanders was one of the firm's first employees and served as President since 2019**

*New Haven — 1 August 2025* — Hoffmann Architects + Engineers, a design firm specializing in the rehabilitation of building exteriors, announces the retirement of **Russell M. Sanders, AIA** this month after nearly five decades with the company.

In 1978, Russ Sanders joined Hoffmann after earning a B.S. degree in Architecture from Ohio State University. With just a few employees, the year-old firm was fertile ground for a motivated young architect, and Sanders soon established himself as a standout worker and a quick study in both technical skills and field experience. He rapidly earned promotions, first to Senior Draftsman/Graduate Architect and then to Project Manager. When he gained licensure in 1988, he was promoted to Project Architect and, not three months later, to Senior Architect and Group Leader. Just ten years into his career, Sanders was recognized for his advanced skillset and dedication to the practice with a promotion to Director, Technical Services, the most senior position available at the firm, reporting directly to owner and founder John J. Hoffmann, FAIA. In 2005, he became an officer of the firm and gained the corporate title of Executive Vice President. When John Hoffmann began transition planning in 2011, he offered Sanders an ownership stake in the company and invited him to serve on the firm's newly formed Executive Board. By 2016, Sanders had earned a promotion to Senior Director, Technical Services and, two years later, he and Avi Kamrat, CFO, joined John Hoffmann to form the firm's Board of Directors. When John Hoffmann decided to step down as the firm's President in 2019, after 41 years at the helm, he named Sanders as his successor. Sanders ably led Hoffmann Architects + Engineers through the challenges of the pandemic, overseeing a period of growth and stability that defied the economic downturn to emerge an even more robust and agile company.



Russell M. Sanders, AIA

In the early years, Sanders' first supervisor, Theodore Babbitt, AIA, observed that he was a "diligent, hard worker" with "good technical knowledge" who "accepts responsibility easily." Later supervisors noted that Sanders was "quick to grasp concepts" and that he made a "conscientious effort to represent the firm's philosophy." Upon his promotion to Senior Architect, Sanders earned high praise from the practice manager at the time, Chuck Fleishman, PE: "You possess very high technical skills, and you exercise them with intelligence, creativeness, and in the best interest of the firm and the client. You care about the quality of our service and about our delivery. You teach newer people, and they learn from your example. Your rapid promotion is due to your strengths."

## Early Inspiration

Growing up in Milford, Connecticut, Sanders was inspired to study architecture by his aunt, one of the few women drafters of the time, who worked at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Company in the 1950s and '60s. She taught him to draw and handed down her drafting table for him to practice, as he enrolled in a drafting course at the high school and worked after school drafting for a photographic developing machine company and other local businesses.

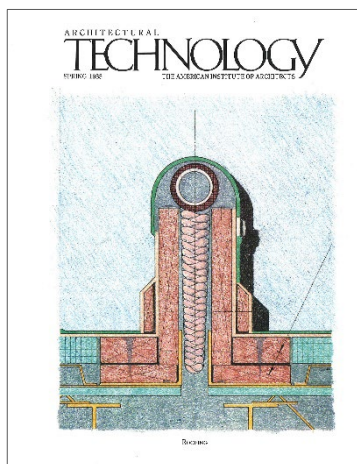


After finishing his degree at Ohio State, Sanders moved back to Connecticut and searched for his first job. He posted his resume with the Connecticut Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) and soon got a call from John Hoffmann for an interview. His interviewer, Martin Benassi, AIA, also happened to be an Ohio grad from "the Valley," the region along the lower Naugatuck River, and that connection, together with Russ' drafting skills, landed him the job. The nascent small firm with lots of growth potential was just the right fit for the ambitious and hardworking graduate.

## Career Beginnings

Soon after Sanders joined the practice, Hoffmann moved to specialize in building enclosure rehabilitation, which proved a defining decision for the young company. Together with his senior colleagues, Sanders forged connections with manufacturers and roofing contractors, building a reputation in the industry for problem-solving. Rather than see this new upstart as a threat to their business, general-practice designers appreciated the specialized expertise of a firm willing to do nuts-and-bolts detailing work and began bringing Hoffmann on as enclosure consultants. In time, Sanders saw the firm outgrow its lodgings in a tumbledown office above a grocery store and compete successfully with national firms many times its size.

For Sanders, this period of rapid growth meant opportunities to spend time in the field, where he built relationships with contractors and learned how to solve problems in real time. General Electric retained Hoffmann for roof inspections and reroofing projects at dozens of facilities, and serving as full-time project representative at GE gave Sanders the autonomy to think for himself and gain perspective about how construction work was actually done.



Cover of *Architectural Technology* from 1985 featuring a roof expansion joint detail by Russ Sanders.

In those early years, Sanders considers himself fortunate to have had mentors with the experience and dedication to offer him a well-rounded education in the practice of architecture. He credits John Hoffmann for teaching him business strategy, Marty Benassi for showing him how to prepare a set of contract documents and drafting standards, Walter Damuck for training in specification writing, and Ted Babbitt for guidance in construction methods and working with contractors. A committed mentor in his own right, Sanders dedicated himself to paying this on-the-job education forward, taking time to tutor junior staff in the rigors Hoffmann's scrupulous drafting standards or bringing trainees along to job sites and guiding them through the process of construction administration.

## Memorable Projects

Some early projects that have stayed with Sanders are his award-winning work on the restoration of the Chrysler Building and Rockefeller Center in New York, as well as the Opera House at Lincoln Center. Restoration of the Dome of the United States Capitol, among other projects on the Capitol grounds, was unforgettable. As building enclosure consultant on the restoration of Yale University's Paul Rudolph Hall (formerly the Art + Architecture Building), Sanders collaborated with other design firms to revive the vision



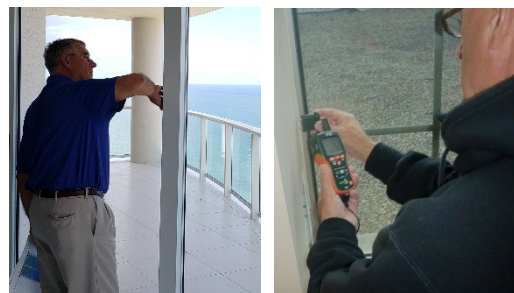
of a legendary architect while achieving performance upgrades. Travel to new destinations for projects, including South Korea, Bermuda, Texas, Arizona, Illinois, Florida, Hawaii, and all the states along the eastern seaboard, offered memorable experiences.

Most challenging were litigation and claim support projects after natural disasters and other catastrophic events, which were fulfilling in new and different ways. Tasked with determining building enclosure conditions prior to the event, he had to use his expert judgement to ascertain whether the damage was attributable to the catastrophe or to preexisting issues. After hurricane Katrina, Sanders went to New Orleans to assess the damage to Shell Headquarters, and he was at Ground Zero in Manhattan just after September 11, 2001 while it was still a restricted area. Seeing the impact of these events and helping to determine a path forward was, in Sanders' words, "quite sobering and very gratifying."

Where Sanders really measures success, though, is through client relationships. Earning a client's respect and serving their needs has always been central to his work, and he feels the firm has excelled in this area. Never disappointing a client was his mission for 47 years, and this commitment is what built Sanders' strong ties with building owners, property managers, design professionals, insurance companies, attorneys, and others. His commitment to trust and collegiality extends not only to clients and contractors, but also to coworkers. He formed close bonds with the architects, engineers, business development, finance, and administration professionals he has worked with over the years, always ready to join a company softball or golf team, or to stick around after work for happy hour.

## Leadership at Hoffmann

Since 1989, when he became Director, Technical Services, Sanders has been responsible for Hoffmann's rigorous Quality Assurance / Quality Control program, providing accountability for every deliverable produced by the firm. The scrupulous specification writing, drafting, and contract document preparation skills he honed while under the tutelage of his early mentors, together with the real-world experience he gained as a project representative, afforded Sanders an uncommon ability to identify and correct errors or omissions before documents ever left the office. Under his supervision, every set of drawings and specifications underwent painstaking – and, for newbie designers, occasionally painful – review, which served not only to produce robust and comprehensive documents but also to educate junior staff in the intricacies of building enclosure detailing.



Russ Sanders investigating storm damage.



Sanders at a career fair and Habitat for Humanity build day.



Outside of project work, Sanders was a longtime member of AIA Connecticut and served on the Education Committee. He presented at a variety of industry conferences over the years and attended many more. In 1990, he joined a roundtable discussion on waterproofing that was captured in the Hoffmann *JOURNAL*, and his first bylined article, on reroofing, appeared in the publication later that year. Since then, he has published a dozen more articles in the firm's award-winning periodical. His first article in an outside

publication was in the 1990 Building Owners and Managers Association *BOMA New York Annual Magazine*, and he has since published numerous articles on building enclosures in national and industry magazines, including *Building Design+Construction*, *The Construction Specifier*, *Building Operating Management*, the Association for Preservation Technology *APT Bulletin*, and the International Concrete Repair Institute *Concrete Repair Bulletin*.

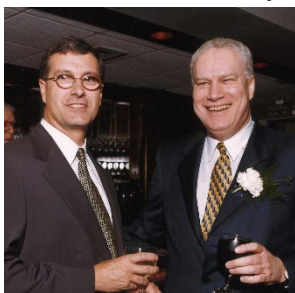
Sanders' leadership extends beyond the technical. Since its inception in 2020, the Hoffmann Diversity and Inclusion Committee has counted him among its most dedicated members, acting as liaison between the employee group and the firm's leadership. With his support, the firm was awarded the inaugural AIA Connecticut Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (J.E.D.I.) Award in 2021, the first of many accolades for the committee's work. Sanders didn't just show up to meetings; he also got his hands dirty doing construction and demolition work at Habitat for Humanity build days, and he offered guidance to students at the Minority Construction Council Career Fair and University of Hartford / Yale School of Architecture career days. He also steadfastly supported the Diversity and Inclusion Committee's most ambitious initiatives, the Hoffmann Diversity Advancement Scholarship and the Hoffmann Employee Student Loan Repayment Program.



At the AIA CT J.E.D.I. Awards.

### A Legacy of Accountability

Above all, Sanders has instilled in everyone he mentors that trust and responsibility are central to a successful career. Meeting deadlines is essential to that mission, and Sanders has always been scrupulous about project schedules. His advice to those just starting out: "Listen to what the client is looking for and determine the best way to help them within your expertise. Be professional and fiscally responsible but leave a satisfied client and a good working relationship with the contractors."



Russ Sanders and John Hoffmann in 1999.

Aside from the satisfaction of the many projects he has worked on, Sanders feels that being an officer in what has become, over his nearly five-decade-long career, a highly successful business has been enormously rewarding. At the start of 2025, Sanders transitioned to President Emeritus, acting as Senior Advisor to the Board of Directors and gradually handing over leadership responsibilities to Craig Hargrove, AIA, and Avi Kamrat, the firm's incoming Presidents, and to Larry Keenan, AIA, PE, who, as Director, Technical Services, will oversee QA/QC in Sanders' stead.



“Russell has given more to this company than anyone,” John Hoffmann reflected. “He is the very embodiment of dedication and loyalty. When, years ago, he set his mind to furthering the firm’s values of attention to detail, specialized expertise, and service to the client, he built the standard by which we measure success. Russ has remained steadfast in advancing our practice and meeting those objectives. His retirement leaves big shoes to fill, even as his legacy for exceptional work carries on.”

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Founded in 1977, Hoffmann Architects + Engineers specializes in the rehabilitation of the building enclosure. The firm’s work focuses on the exteriors of existing structures, diagnosing and resolving deterioration within facades, roofing systems, windows, waterproofing materials, plazas/terraces, parking garages, and historic and landmark structures. We provide consulting services for new building construction, as well as litigation and claim support. Our technical professionals investigate and correct damage resulting from time and weather, substandard or improper construction, design defects, material failures, poor workmanship, structural movement, and stress. To learn more, visit [www.hoffarch.com](http://www.hoffarch.com).