

IS ARCHITECTURE STILL A SOUGHT AFTER PROFESSION IN SRI LANKA?

Council Meeting
ACA21 INCHEON

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ARCHITECTURE SHAPES CITIES, ECONOMIES, AND CULTURAL IDENTITIES

**01. CURRENT
STATUS OF THE
PROFESSION**

**02. CHALLENGES
AND
OPPORTUNITIES**

**03. POLICY LEVERS
TO STRENGTHEN
THE PROFESSION**



01.

CURRENT STATUS OF THE PROFESSION

Context & Purpose of the Architectural Profession

- **ARCHITECTURE'S ROLE IN SHAPING IDENTITY –**

Architecture shapes cities, economies, and cultural identities, serving as a lasting legacy of social value. The SLIA is opening new chapters in each province to raise awareness and strengthen this role for the future.

- **ECONOMIC RELEVANCE OF ARCHITECTURE –**

Growing urbanization and tourism are driving demand for future-ready, sustainable architecture, including affordable housing, hotels, heritage sites, and eco-resorts.

Public sector projects such as schools, hospitals, and transport hubs also need architectural expertise for functionality, safety, and long-term resilience.

While investment has been limited due to the economic crisis, the tourism recovery and gradual economic rebound offer opportunities for architectural innovation and development.



Institutional Framework Supporting the Profession

Sri Lanka Institute of Architects (SLIA)

- Established under Law No. 1 of 1976.
- Governing body for architects in Sri Lanka.

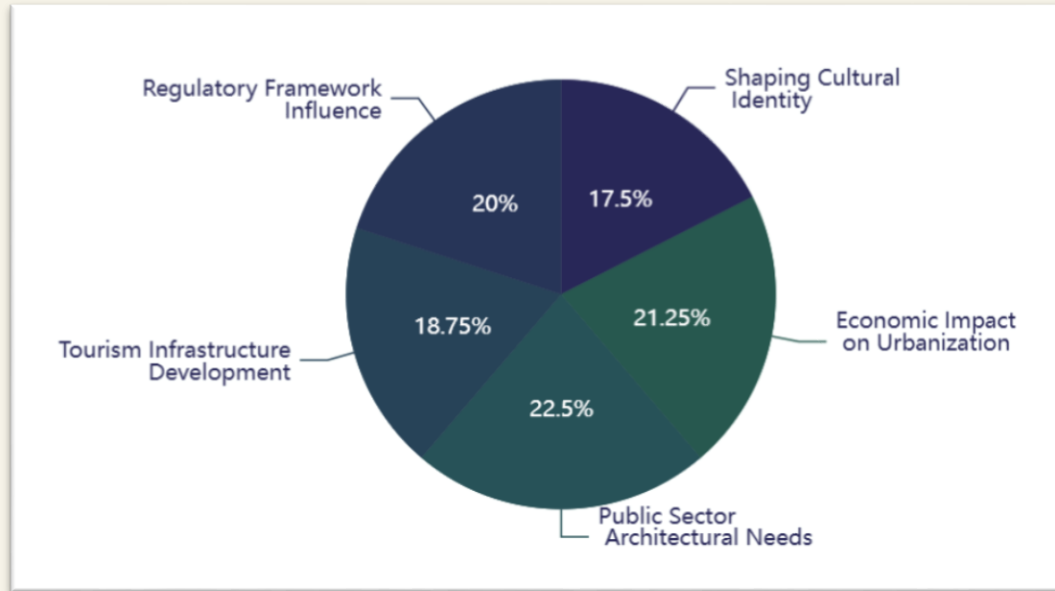
Objectives

- Regulates education & practice standards.
- Safeguards the Profession.
- Ethical conduct & licensing.

Programmes

- Specification writing (materials, applications, other technical specs).
- Knowledge-based training & CPD programmes.
- Interactive programmes to uplift the profession.
- Encourages collaboration & innovation.

Context & Purpose of Architectural Profession



SLTDA (2025), UN-Habitat (2024), RIBA (2024), ICCROM (2023), and the Department of Cultural Affairs (2025)

Key Factors Influencing the Architectural Profession (Percentage)



02.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Challenges and Declining Interest

- **ECONOMIC FACTORS AFFECTING ARCHITECTURE –**

Sri Lanka's construction sector is strained by economic volatility, reduced private investment, and a growing talent drain as architects migrate overseas.

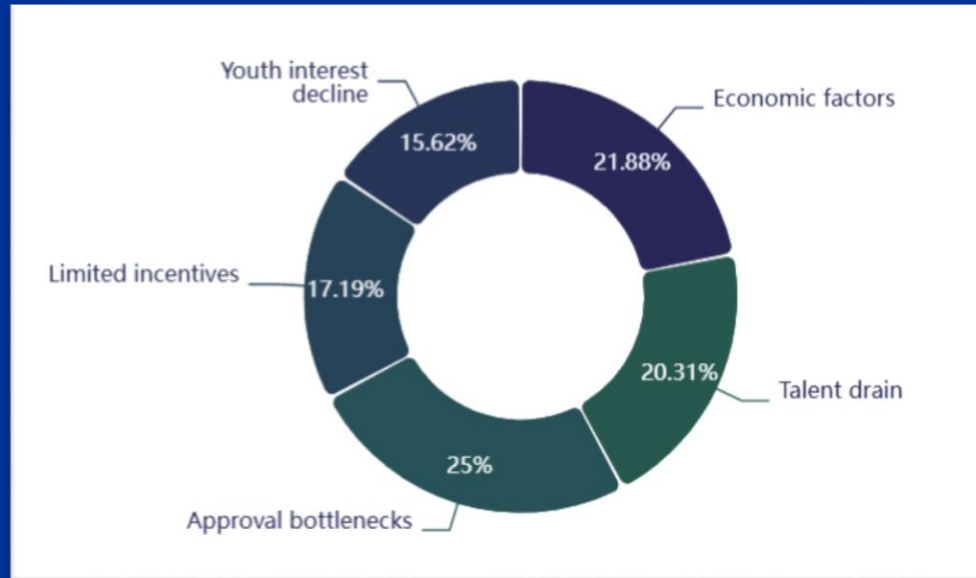
Planning approvals face delays, while sustainable design lacks meaningful incentives like grants or tax breaks.

- **YOUTH SUSTAINABILITY IN ARCHITECTURE –**

Architecture is seen as time-intensive, costly, and less tech-driven than fields like IT or management. With long study requirements, modest pay that lags behind living costs, and financial uncertainty, fewer students are applying to architecture programs.



Identifying Sectoral Challenges in Architecture



SLIA (2025), RIBA (2024), ArchDaily (2025), UN-Habitat (2024), and ACCA Global (2025)

Sectoral challenges impacting the architectural profession (Percentage)

Opportunities for Renewal and Growth

- **SUSTAINABLE & GLOBAL DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES**

Rising demand for green, resilient, and cost-effective architecture, along with access to international markets through digital design tools, creates space for innovation and global collaboration.

- **YOUTH-LED TRANSFORMATION**

By integrating technology (AI, BIM, VR/AR) and embracing entrepreneurship, young architects can position themselves as leaders in sustainable, affordable, and community-focused design.

- **AWARDS AND RECOGNITION**

Promoting and encouraging architects, especially young professionals, through awards and recognition can inspire innovation and elevate the profession's profile.





03.

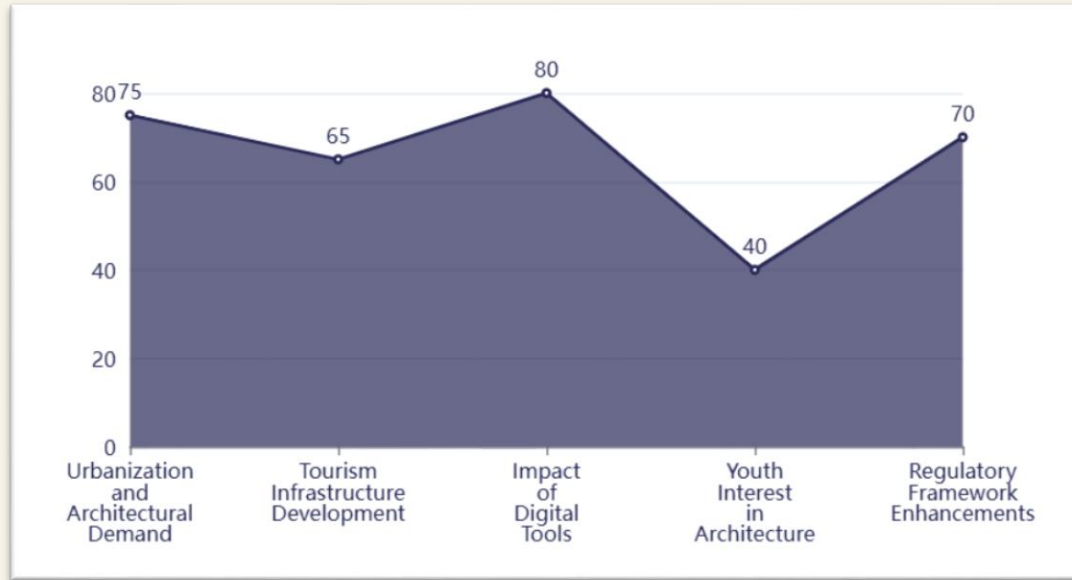
POLICY LEVERS TO STRENGTHEN THE PROFESSION

Global Trends Impacting Local Architecture

- Green Building Certifications: LEED, EDGE is gaining traction.
- Smart Cities: Architects are key to urban innovation.
- Digital Tools: BIM, AI, parametric design reshaping workflows.
- Diaspora Engagement: Sri Lankan architects abroad can mentor and invest.
- Global Accreditation: SLIA's facilitation of Global Architecture Institute accreditation allows members to gain international recognition and credibility.



Global Trends Impacting Local Architecture in Sri Lanka



UN-Habitat (2024), SLTDA (2024), ArchDaily (2025), RIBA (2024), and SLIA (2025)

Key Factors Driving Architectural Trends in Sri Lanka (Percentage)

Strategic Policy Recommendations

- **Needed actions for architectural sector**

Architecture is a powerful multiplier, fueling tourism, shaping urban growth, and preserving cultural heritage.

With the right policies, Sri Lanka can retain top talent, spark design innovation, and emerge as a leading creative hub in the region.

- **Conclusion on the profession's impact**

Architects in Sri Lanka work with bodies like the Construction Ministry, CIDA, UDA, NBRO, and the Condominium Authority to shape policy, update standards, ensure safety, and promote sustainability and in turning national goals into practical frameworks.

Architecture is not just a profession, it's a nation-building tool.



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Thank you!

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- Urbanization continues to drive architectural demand in Sri Lanka, especially through government-led planning initiatives. The submission of the National Physical Planning Policy Draft – 2048 reflects the government’s commitment to long-term, integrated urban development (President’s Office of Sri Lanka, 2023).
- Tourism infrastructure remains pivotal in shaping architectural priorities, particularly in heritage-rich areas. The City of Dreams integrated casino resort, a \$1.2 billion venture in Colombo marks a major development in tourism-driven architecture (Reuters, 2025). Meanwhile, Southern Sri Lanka, especially Galle and its environs, is experiencing a surge in heritage-informed hospitality and design, blending traditional craftsmanship with modern eco-conscious architecture (Condé Nast Traveler, 2023).
- Digital tools such as AI, drones, and enhanced visualization techniques are rapidly transforming architectural workflows (industry report, December 2023).
- Youth interest in architecture is growing, supported by educational reforms and design-focused programs introduced late in 2023.
- The impact of digital tools and emerging technologies is increasingly felt across sectors. A national drone initiative launched in March 2024 delivered over 100 drones to support smart agriculture and youth training (Kenilworth International, 2024).
- Regulatory advances are key to enabling sustainable urban and architectural innovation. In March 2025, the Urban Development Ministry proposed four new Acts and amendments to nine existing laws, a substantial legislative effort to modernize the framework governing urban planning (NewsWire, 2025).
- Economic pressures significantly shape urbanization patterns in Sri Lanka (Ceylon Today, December 2023).
- Regulatory frameworks often influence the pace and sustainability of urban growth (OECD regulatory update, December 2023).
- Cultural identity and heritage preservation continue to play roles in design trends. For example, the smart tourism and hospitality movement in Galle, drawing on colonial-era aesthetics and local crafts, showcases this synthesis of tradition and modernity (Condé Nast Traveler, 2023).