



# Berkeley mayor honors green architect Sandhya Sood

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Sandhya Sood, one of northern California's leading architects in green designs, has been honored by Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates with a proclamation recognizing her for environmentally sustainable designs and buildings.

In his proclamation, Bates stated, 'Sandhya Sood, AIA (*American Institute of Architects*), a graduate of UC (*University of California*) Berkeley's College of Environmental Design, is the founding principal of Accent Architecture+Design in Berkeley, and has taught, researched and practiced architecture locally and globally, with an emphasis on sustainable design and building.'

The proclamation honors Sood 'for her tremendous contribution to the discourse on' America's first eminent woman architect the late Julia Morgan, 'raising awareness of the relevance of Julia Morgan's work and the shared architectural heritage of our City and state.'

Tanzania-born Sood's interest in architecture was piqued at age 16 through art and hand drawing. After her family emigrated from East Africa to India, she studied and practiced architecture in Chandigarh, a city designed mostly by the French architect Le Corbusier.

"It was fascinating to grow up in a new city with European influences, traditional ways of living and thriving street side bazaars," Sood told *India Abroad*. That, she said, was a huge inspiration to her finally deciding on her career path.

With admission to graduate programs at MIT and UC Berkeley, Sood immigrated to the US in 1997 "to avail a full scholarship at



A 'green' house designed by Sandhya Sood, left

UC Berkeley and the warmth of the San Francisco Bay Area."

After graduating in 1999, she worked as a project manager at an architectural firm in San Francisco before founding Accent in 2003.

Sood strongly believes her multicultural background "has facilitated a global understanding of how sustainable spaces can adapt to traditional and modern lifestyles, extending their use and conserving resources."

"Research in Switzerland and France has expanded my diverse experience, although,

not all of it has been urban, colonial or modern," Sood said.

"My architecture and design practice is research based with a range of styles and project scales in residential, commercial and mixed use. I pursue architecture that is responsive to the local climate, the setting and the client, guided by principles of sustainable design," she added.

She once led a team of artisans at a rural site with extreme climate, innovating alternative building techniques for passive solar design in the Himalayan foothills.

When renovating old buildings, some of Sood's goals are "energy efficiency, material

re-use, natural daylight and wellness while inducing comfort."

She often shares her knowledge of architecture through lectures and writing.

"I became fascinated with Julia Morgan's work after I started evaluating her designs and buildings that have endured a century," Sood said.

She also finds "Morgan's attitude in the face of challenges very inspiring. Julia Morgan studied architecture at a time when women were discouraged and emerged a winner. She is the first woman in America to receive the AIA gold medal, the institute's highest honor."

Sood's work has been exhibited at the Government Museum and Art Gallery in Chandigarh, the Joyce Gordon Gallery in Oakland, the Kearny Street Workshop and the Thoreau Center for Sustainability in San Francisco.

"It is wonderful to be recognized by our mayor," Sood said. "I hope to continue sharing the relevance of history, culture and climate responsive design in contemporary architecture."

Two years ago, she was presented with the First Lady of Architecture and Design award at the Joyce Gordon Gallery.

She was among eight women artists engaged in the fields of diverse media and performing arts honored as First Ladies at the reception, held in conjunction with a gallery exhibit that paid tribute to First Lady Michelle Obama's longstanding support for the arts.

The award, in honor of Julia Morgan, recognized Sood's efforts of "incorporating sustainable design practices and place making of the traditional and vernacular with contemporary architecture and urbanism."