



James Robert Rosenbarger

April 16, 1952 - August 21, 2025

James (Jim) Robert Rosenbarger, 73, passed away peacefully late afternoon on Thursday,

August 21st, 2025, surrounded by family in the Bloomington house he designed and built. He is

survived by his wife of 36 years, Mara- Lea Wheeler Rosenbarger; his two sons from his first

marriage, Zachary and Jake (Kim) Rosenbarger; his brother, John (Susan), and sister, Sarah

Cutlip (Allan); his sister-in-law Connie Hopkins; his grandchildren, Clara, Estelle, and August

Rosenbarger; nieces, nephews, and his beloved and devoted cats, Pepper and Sox.

Jim was born April 16th, 1952, in New Albany, Indiana, to George and Virginia Rosenbarger.

He became an Eagle Scout and graduated from New Albany High School before attending the

University of Cincinnati, where he earned a degree in architecture. While in college, he spent

time in New Mexico building Earthships.

Jim practiced architecture in New Albany for over a decade before relocating to Bloomington,

Indiana, in 1989, where his focus on green, energy-efficient residential design

became his life's work. Over the years, he designed dozens of homes, additions, and buildings in and around Bloomington. He loved the creative, collaborative process of working with clients, local builders, craftspeople, and community members. Christopher Alexander's *A Pattern Language* was his "bible," and he recommended it to clients for its guidance on fostering site-relevant building with patterns that support healthy family and community life. While energy-efficient and thoughtful design was his love, Jim was equally passionate about urban design—particularly bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure that fostered safer, more accessible communities. He served on the Bloomington Bicycle and Pedestrian Commission for more than twenty years, playing an important role in early traffic calming projects, including the West Sixth traffic circles, the 7th Street underpass, and the South Walnut Street pedestrian refuge. He was also an early member of the New Urbanist Movement, which advocated for human-scaled development and vibrant town centers with mixed uses. Jim was also an avid cyclist. He loved riding throughout southern Indiana, touring small towns, and was an active member of the Bloomington Bicycle Club and The Old Farts biking and hiking group. Jim was a cheerful, can-do kind of guy who wanted to do his part in this world. He will be dearly missed by those close to him, and his built work will remind us of his hard

work and goodwill.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that donations be made to one of the following in

Jim's memory: Sycamore Land Trust or Friends of the Monroe County Public Library.

Thank you for honoring Jim's legacy of thoughtful, community-centered design and life.

A memorial gathering in Jim's honor will be held Friday, October 10, 2025, at Cascades Park Waterfall Shelter House; from 4:00 to 6:00PM. Cremation rites have been accorded. Allen Funeral Home and Crematory 4155 South old State Road 37 is handling the arrangements and online condolences, photos and memories may be shared with family and friends at www.allencares.com

Previous Events

Memorial Gathering

OCT **10**. 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM (ET)

Lower Cascades Park Waterfall Shelter
2851 N Old State Road 37
Bloomington, IN 47408

Tribute Wall

IZ

“ Although it was not unexpected, our dear Jim's dying has made my heart hurt. Only after reading the news did I open a voicemail he'd sent eight days prior, graciously, sincerely, and with a re-found clarity of mind trying to right our seriously-damaged forty-year relationship. It makes my heart hurt even more that he died believing I no longer cared; I did and do to the core of my being.

He was a complicated man whom I much admired and whose companionship I much enjoyed. He could also be a royal PITA, but he unintentionally taught me in numerous ways how to live a more-fulfilling life. Our infrequent phone conversations made us both laugh hard in spite of their covering a lot of territory. So he could be fun, too, and, if it's not fun, why do it?

Life's short. His was. Best wishes to all of us who knew him.

Izzy

Ivar Zzyznius - September 28, 2025 at 11:55 PM

LH

“ Love, Sandy and Stan Hurt purchased the Enchanted Cottage for the family of James Robert Rosenbarger.



Love, Sandy and Stan Hurt - September 26, 2025 at 08:26 PM

LH

“ Love, Sandy and Stan Hurt planted a [Memorial Tree](/store/Product.aspx?ProductId=4518) in honor of James Robert Rosenbarger.

Love, Sandy and Stan Hurt - September 26, 2025 at 08:26 PM



“ I was so shocked and saddened to hear about Jim's passing. We have fond memories of our times together on the Bike and Pedestrian Safety Commission, the dinners and parties at our homes over the years, and my professional work with Jim. He turned me on to his favorite book *A Pattern Language*; truly a masterpiece. I enjoyed his easy laughter, his relaxed demeanor. We will miss him. Again, we are sorry for your loss. Mike and Becky Gavin

Becky Gavin - August 27, 2025 at 10:13 AM

NH

I will always remember his integrity and kindness. He and Marc Cornett sparked a new interest in urbanism in the 90s. I remember the energy of their work. What a loss to the Bloomington Community, his friends and family. Nancy Hiestand

nancy hiestand - August 29, 2025 at 11:52 AM



David Duvall

Jimi, as I liked to call him, was my first college roommate. we continued to house together on & off campus for several years until we came to be on alternating co-op quarters. He lured me out to New Mexico to work for Michael (Earthship) Reynolds, which was as life-changing for me as it was for him. In attempting release from the University of Cincinnati, we also experienced strong resistance from faculty for the outsider views, shared by our circle .

As a fellow disciple of Christopher Alexander, I am gladdened by the testimony for A Pattern Language, such as I've never seen in an obituary before and probably never will again. I am terribly sorry I didn't manage to stay in closer contact in later years. The last time I saw him was appropriately at a public meeting to organize resistance to IN-DOT plans for further damaging Indianapolis' downtown with greater interstate Highway intrusion. He rode his bike from Bloomington to attend.

David Duvall - August 30, 2025 at 11:47 AM



GM

A unique and intrinsically good human being. Fun to be around and his body of work will last for a very long time.

Garrett Mangum - August 30, 2025 at 01:22 PM



DC

Enjoyed 6 years at UC with inspiring and talented Jim. I also made it to New Mexico for some Earthshipping, where I/we still reside. Attended a New Albany country cabin party with the "crew", and had an attractive young woman sitting in my lap. Thought things grand until she puked in that same lap. Jim was kind enough to supply me with replacement garb, always a gentleman.

Doug Cook

Doug R Cook - September 04, 2025 at 07:06 PM



CH

*In love and remembrance of Jim. I miss you and your beautiful smile; your love and kindness; your warm heart and your gentleness.
Connie "Con" Hopkins*

CONNIE HOPKINS - September 10, 2025 at 10:06 AM

BB

Hard to describe the sadness Barb and I felt when we learned today of Jim's death. Our thoughts are with his family. Jim helped us with more than one project. I initiated my last conversation with him a couple years ago: just to thank him for his design and the pleasant lifestyle it still gave us - 30 years after it was completed. Smiled at the nod to A Pattern Language. Jim's allegiance to it was correct. We certainly feel richer for having known James Rosenbarger and deeply grieve his death. Barb and Barry Bitzegaio

Bitzegaio Barry - September 16, 2025 at 09:27 PM

BB

Jim helped us remodel our 1954 Indiana limestone house in New Albany. A Pattern Language was required reading. Having lived in a Chicago skyscraper this one-story ranch was quite the change. All sides of our home are beautiful. We felt so fortunate that Jim agreed to do our project. A smart, talented and kind man. Mike Stickney and Beth Bitzegaio

Beth Bitzegaio - September 17, 2025 at 07:50 AM