

Design Assistance Teams: The R/UDAT Model

Jerome Ernst

Principal
NBBJ
111 South Jackson
Seattle, WA 98104 USA
+1 206 223 5111
jernst@nbbj.com

Mark Hinshaw

Director of Urban Design
Loschky Marquardt Nesholm
801 Second Ave
Seattle, WA 98104 USA
+1 206 682 3460

Blake Bolton

Partner
McGranahan Partnership
950 Fawcett
Tacoma, WA USA
+1 253 838 4477

David Markley

Principal
Transportation Solutions, Inc.
16310 N.E. 80th St.
Redmond, WA 98052 USA
+1 206 883 4134

ABSTRACT

The panel session presents and discusses the concept of Design Assistance that has emerged from the American Institute for Architects thirty-year history of organizing Regional/Urban Design Assistance Teams. A R/UDAT is a grassroots approach to community development issues. The program combines local resources with the expertise of a multidisciplinary team of nationally recognized professionals to identify ways to encourage desirable change in a community. The panel will discuss the strengths and limitations of the approach and consider how the model could be applied to other social and technical contexts.

Keywords

Community development, architecture, planning, politics, volunteer

THEME

Since 1967, the R/UDAT model has worked for over 125 North American communities contemplating a variety of planning, architectural, social, and environmental issues. This panel session presents multiple perspectives on the process with a R/UDAT organizer, two participants on design teams, and the chair of the steering committee for a local R/UDAT process. The audience will be asked to participate in discussions of how the process might be expanded or adapted to other technology areas, concerns or audiences.

PARTICIPATION

In order for this panel to go beyond describing the features of Design Assistance Teams, the audience will need to participate heavily in their own areas of professional expertise or community/organizational concerns. The panel will introduce the model by drawing on participation from those in the audience, treating them as members of the Participatory Design community, and considering the R/UDAT model as a resource open to this entire community.

DESCRIPTION OF R/UDAT

Regional Urban Design Assistance Team process is oriented by uniform principles and structure. The principles of quality, objectivity, and participation guide the professional involvement in each community effort. First, assistance team members are highly respected professionals selected on the basis of their experience with the specific issues facing a community. The disciplines represented vary with each team, but might include: architects, planners, landscape architects, developers, land-use attorneys, transportation engineers, housing specialists, preservationists, economic development specialists, law enforcement advisors, tourism consultants, public officials, and public financing advisors. Second, these team members donate their time (travel and lodging are reimbursed) and stipulate that they have no current work in the community and agree that they will not accept commissions for work resulting from the team's recommendations for three years. Third, the process encourages active participation from all sectors of the community. Interaction with team members and local commitment to the process in the form of financial support, in-kind services, or volunteer time create a sense of ownership in the results and help ensure that the

In *PDC 98 Proceedings of the Participatory Design Conference*. R. Chatfield, S. Kuhn, M. Muller (Eds.)
Seattle, WA USA, 12-14 November 1998. CPSR,
P.O. Box 717, Palo Alto, CA 94302 cpsr@cpsr.org
ISBN 0-9667818-0-5.

energy needed to implement the community's own action plan will be maintained.

The structure of the process involves four stages: getting started, getting organized, planning for action, and taking action. To initiate the process, a local leader or citizen calls the American Institute of Architects and asks for help. A local steering committee is formed and an AIA representative visits the community. Upon approval of the application, the AIA makes a formal commitment to the community. Next, a team leader selected by the AIA meets with the steering committee, and together they frame the issues, attract broader community interest, and prepare for the team workshop. Third, the AIA selects a multidisciplinary team of six to ten professionals who visit the community during an intense four-day workshop. The team prepares and publishes a report on the last day. The community reviews and prioritizes the recommendations in order to form an action plan. Team members return 6 to 12 months after the workshop to advise the steering committee, assess progress, evaluate the action plan, facilitate community partnerships, and raise public awareness of the continuity of the process.

R/UDAT results may include new zoning ordinances, new construction and development, new public agencies and organizations, new parks and open space, political change, affordable housing, commercial and economic revitalization, historic districts, landmark preservation, pedestrian systems, comprehensive plans, changes in growth patterns, and stopping inappropriate development.

Costs for this process typically range from \$25,000 to \$40,000. Funding comes from a variety of public and private sources that might include businesses, local

government, non-profits, foundations, and others. Experience has shown that drawing on diverse resources is better for creating broad community support than does relying on one major funding source.

PANEL MEMBERS

Blake Bolton

Blake Bolton is an architect and partner in the McGranahan Partnership. He was Chairman of the local steering committee for a recent R/UDAT that took place in Tacoma, Washington in the spring of 1998.

Jerome Ernst

Jerome Ernst is an architect and urban designer and Principal at NBBJ. He has been involved in the R/UDAT program for 17 years and is a member of the national task force that administers the program.

Mark Hinshaw

Mark Hinshaw is an architect and urban planner who has participated in design assistance teams. He is director of Urban Design at Loschky Marquardt Nesholm in Seattle, WA.

David Markley

David Markley is a transportation planner with an office in Redmond, WA. He has been involved in transportation planning for 25 years, is very well respected, and has been a member of 4 design assistance teams.

REFERENCES

1. American Institute for Architects (1996). Planning Your Community's Future: A Guide to the Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team Program. Washington, DC: AIA.