The American Institute of Architects Policy Regarding Community Design Centers

The AIA's comprehensive presentation of public policies is presented in a three-year cycle and published in the Directory of Public Policies annually. The last review of this policy by the Board of Directors was in September 1982.

Policy Statement

The AIA supports Community Design Centers and encourages members and components to do community service using Community Design Centers as a vehicle.

Statement of Issue and Background

The AIA's formal involvement and policy on community design centers (CDCs) was an outgrowth of the 1969 convention resolution supporting CDCs and establishing the Task Force on Professional Responsibility to Society. One of the task force programs approved and funded by the AIA Board was the program to assist CDCs and encourage creation of new centers. The AIA program of assistance to CDCs involved the creation of the community services department within the AIA, which provided support and assistance for CDC activities. The community service department produced a series of CDC bulletins, newsletters, a national CDC directory, a CDC national conference, regional and national seminars, support for an organization of design centers, legislative efforts and proposals for funding design centers, and information on design center activities addressed to components and the public. Since 1969, the AIA responsibility for CDC concerns has been passed on to a number of committees as a result of various changes and reorganizations of the AIA structure and programs. In 1980, the Community Assistance Committee, which represented the AIA's CDC concerns, was incorporated into the Urban Planning and Design Committee.

There are now 60 active CDCs. Over half have the direct involvement of local AIA chapters and schools of architecture.

The 1974 Community Services Act included sections 226 and 232, which provided for financial aid for community-based design and planning organizations. (Note: This act is no longer in force as of September 30, 1981.) With increased federal emphasis on private sector responsibility and support for programs for the poor, it is more critical now for the design profession to provide support for CDCs.

The AIA policy in support of the efforts of community design centers was reaffirmed successively in 1973 and 1977. The AIA has supported CDCs as a community ombudsman in the AIA National Policy Task force reports and in testimony on the Livable Cities Act of 1978.

Rationale of Examination and Proposal:
The AIA commitment to support CDCs is based on: 1. The continuing inequity in the availability of
design and planning expertise to low-income groups; 2. The record of CDCs in making it possible
for community organizations across the country to rehabilitate housing and community facilities,
generate new construction, initiate historic preservation and urban design programs and in other
ways improve the quality of the built environment; 3. The establishment linkages with many public
and private agencies, and with neighborhood organizations, which demonstrate the architectural
profession's dedication to community service. 4. The assistance that CDCs provide the AIA in
formulating recommendations for national policy concerning low-income persons and the quality of
their lives; 5. The opportunity for members of the AIA, architecture schools and components to
provide a needed community service, and 6; the provision of intern and service-learning
opportunities for entry-level architects, students and recent graduates of architecture schools to
develop and improve professional skills while providing community assistance.

THE INFORMATION BASE

Examples of data summaries were made available for review above. They are used to log and
process initial requests for technical assistance. Information from these forms are often entered into
a relational d-base file for additional management uses such as reports to financial support
organizations. The application of this software provides an information base for comprehensive
project review of accepted projects, and a wide variety of data summaries such as the total number
of housing units involved by program, total projected construction cost, people served and so forth.
A typical structure may be as follows:

Field Names Comment

Organization: (primary and associate groups)
Address: (principle and home of principal)
City: State: (or County, City and State)
Zip: (five and nine digit)
Contact: (principle, and possible associates)
Telephone: (usually two or three, plus fax)
District: (local, state and federal political districts)
Project Type: (listing generic types)
Project Address: (often several projects sites w/same organization)
Date of Request: (when formal letter of request is received)
Staff Scope: (initial contact staff)
Describe Project: (one sentence description)
Disposition: (accepted, rejected, deferred, and so on)
Staff Assigned: (as amplified from scope of work process)
Disposition Date: (formal disposition date)
Status: (separates active, from inactive, etc.)
Comment: (status: such as, application complete)
Persons: (rough estimate of clients served, jobs provided)
Units: (housing units, etc., based on "project type")
Phase: (design, construction documents, etc.)
DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACD INFORMATION BASE

The development of a national base will assist the ACD, Inc. membership to further promote, encourage and support professional centers serving the low- and moderate-income community in the areas of urban planning, design and architecture, as well as, a full range of related community development services. A uniform data base will be especially useful in highlighting the combined beneficial impact of this activity in measurable terms. For example, a strategic combination of congressional representatives can be brought out of the data base by combining project type and congressional representative to broaden Federal support for our particular specialties. The ACD Directory and Profile of Design Centers published by ACD, Inc. provides fairly recent descriptions of CDC activities in neighborhoods across the country. The information provided is submitted by the membership on an annual basis. The profiles contain a general description, a listing of projects, news articles, or a sample project in some detail. This information is placed into the ACD Library maintained at the Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development in Brooklyn, NY. For more information contact Rex L. Curry, Associate Director. (718-636-3486).