38. Community design charrettes

38.1. Summary

The capacity to help communities visualize preferred futures is a unique contribution that design professionals can make to community planning and decision making. Charrettes provide for an airing of views, possibilities and visions that can frame the terms to catalyze community-wide commitment to art urban design project. Charrettes offer a process for communties to envision and act upon what their neighborhoods might be and are thus vital to the process of “making democracy work.” This article reviews elements of organizing and facilitating a design charrette, along with a description of utilizing television for community-wide involvement in urban design and planning.

38.2. Keywords

charrette, decision-making, facilitation, media, participatory design, planning, R/UDAT, television, zoning

Figure Citizen design process, Dayton, Ohio

38.3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING

The term “community planning” refers to physical planning at the community scale, e.g., neighborhoods, urban scale community developments, and/or suburban communities, through a process involving community citizens and representatives.

Methods for involving communities in the physical planning process have been developed at least since the 1960s, sometimes referred to as “participatory design,” and characterized by different degrees of involvement, or the “ladder of

participation." The ladder of participation, a term that helps to define differences in how and when community stakeholders are invited to take part in the planning process and the degree to which they are part of the decision-making framework:

- ***low to modest involvement: Participation in information and needs assessment.***

Community members and representatives are interviewed as part of "needs assessment" or a "community area profile." Visioning workshops are an example, in which community members participate in describing needs and possible idealized outcomes.

- ***modest involvement: Participation in advisory decision-making.***

Community members and representatives are involved in an advisory role, providing input at several points in information gathering and assessment, including recommended courses of actions and/or feedback advice on planning and design proposals made by professionals. The RUDAT (Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team) process developed by the American Institute of Architects is a representative example, involving communities in a short-term (usually one week) intensive study of an urban area, with the results open to comment by community representatives.

- ***high involvement: Participation in planning and design.***

Community members and representatives are involved in the development of planning and design proposals, most often by participation in community design workshops or "charrettes." In a design workshop, community members provide the key information to guide professional designers, who in turn are asked to help the community group visualize options for future development. As community involvement more closely approaches "high involvement," community members and representatives are active not only in information and advisory guidance,

Credits: Sections 2–4 of this article are based on chapters in Donald Watson, 1996. *Environmental Design Charrette Workbook,* Washington, DC: AIA Publications. Unless otherwise noted, photos are courtesy of Centerbrook Architects and Planners.

Figure 1. Community Design Charrette: separate breakout group design tables with work posted on walls for public walk-in review.

Figure 2. Community Design Charrette: Design presentation and citizen forum.

but also by deciding amongst alternatives, thus providing the key value judgments and design decisions through either a consensusbased or a majority-voting process (Figs. 1, 2).

38.3.1. *Differences between the charrette process and planning & zoning process*

The community design processes, such as charrettes and vision workshops, are most often a preliminary and advisory phase utilized to explore options and to gain community input prior to more formal planning proposals. In a consensus-based decision process, the outcomes are developed by inclusive discussion, debate and agreement reached without any official or formal vote or an adversarial process. Expert option, such as environmental and other technical advice, is introduced by many experts, usually invited to work alongside of and as part of the planning and design process.

Most planning and zoning hearings, by definition, are quasi-legal proceedings, which adopt some form of receiving public comment, such as “pro and con” comments about a specific proposal. A public hearing is normally the only way that interested community members and citizens are able to comment in response to proposals already well developed. The process is thus often “reactive” to proposals already well formed and can easily lead to adversarial confrontation over debatable issues and design proposals. Opinions and judgments are expressed in order to convince a Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Board to make a regulatory and legally binding decision about a proposed plan. Technical input is presented as professional expert advice and has to be careful documented to have legal standing as evidence similar to submission and testimony at a legal hearing.

38.3.2. *Strengths and weaknesses of community design process*

Advantages:

- The process is “proactive.” Enabling citizens to actively participate in planning.
- The process is open and informal, allowing a range of opinions to be heard and included.
- The process is undertaken early enough so that there is “low risk” and “low cost” and/or few barriers to public participation.
- The process involves citizens both as information courses and as evaluators, so that local community values are represented in decisions.
- The process allows for a diversity of opinion including extreme positions and, given the opportunity, these are moderated by the community itself.

- The process allows highly charged and divisive issues to be heard within a process of openness and fairness, thus enabling a process of conciliation.
- Expert opinion is introduced into the discussion in informal meetings where professionals are working alongside citizens. This helps to demystify professional expertise and to help educate the public regarding complex technical issues.
- Decision-making is relatively low-cost, often engaging local professionals on a volunteer, pro bono or reduced time and fee basis.

Disadvantages:

- The process is only loosely defined, and as such, can be manipulated and/or subject to criticism by participants and non-participants alike.
- The process requires early decision-making on key points, such as site conditions, property ownership, resources available, often before such data or decision commitments are available.
- The process is generally “advisory” and is sometimes overruled by authorities that do not agree with its recommendations.
- The process requires sensitive facilitation and broad community representation to avoid early frustration and resulting community resistance and/or apathy.
- The process takes time.
- The process is not widely known, requiring a “learning period” on the part of community stakeholders and the creation of trust in the process and its facilitation.

38.3.3. *Strengths and weaknesses of planning and zoning process:*

Advantages:

- The process is long-standing and defined by legal process, including precedents to establish a body of law related to planning decisions.
- Representatives on Planning & Zoning Boards and on Boards of Appeals are either elected or appointed, and thus representative and ultimately accountable to public interest.
- Public interest, as well as opposing private interests, is given legal standing by a defined process of public hearing, which vary according to each locality’s Planning Board.

Disadvantages:

- The public interest is often represented only by opposition that is rallied in response to development proposals brought forward by private interests. Public often perceive such proposals as well financed and representing only private or commercial interests, against which public opinion is given unequal status and often without professional advice.
- Developers who make Planning & Zoning proposals have to invest a great deal in engineering studies prior to receiving permitting approval.
- Because local officials often make Planning & Zoning appointments, P&Z decisions can be seen as representative of the prevailing “political” interests.
- Public input is most often “reactive” that is, in response to proposals made by others, most often without any public comment period prior to the Planning and Zoning Public Hearing.

Note: Figs. 3–14 illustratecommunity design using TVdiscussed in part 3 of this article

Figure 3. Roanoke, Virginia community design storefront office.

Figure 4. Citizens involved in site assessment, Roanoke, Virginia. Local volunteers helped with the site analysis and evaluation, providing local information and expertise.

Figure 5. Entertainment Break in daylong citizen site assessment, Dayton, Ohio. Combining the hard work of community analysis with "highlight" events, such as lunchtime entertainment by local musical groups.

- Public input, to be effective, has to be guided by legal counsel, thus creating the burden of the cost for professional and legal expense to represent broader public interests.
- Expert opinion is presented within the terms of a legal proceeding, and is thus costly to produce and often can be contradictory and open to interpretation, such as traffic studies, environmental impact studies, etc.

38.4. DESIGN CHARRETTES

The term "charrette" is adopted from the storied practice of *Ecole des Beaux Arts* architectural students in nineteenth century Paris who reputedly could be seen still drawing their projects until the last minute as they were carried "on the cart" or *en charrette* on the way to the academy's jury. In its modern-day adaptation, *charrette* refers to an intensive design workshop involving people working together under compressed deadlines.

In its use today, a "charrette" is a design and planning workshop held in a two- to three-day period in which architects and other design professionals, community leaders, public officials and citizens work together to envision alternatives for a local building program, neighborhood or regional community project, with an emphasis upon long-term economic, social and environmental sustainability (Watson 1996, Wates 1996).

The charrette process combines techniques familiar from brainstorming methods—letting ideas flow in an open way, each building upon the suggestions of all participants—as well as from "Future Search" processes—creating time-lines and issue maps and diagrams—all of which help individuals, groups and communities to visualize design alternatives and to discuss and evaluate best choices (Weisbord 1995). Design charrettes build upon the thirty-year history of the American Institute of Architects R/UDAT process (Regional/Urban Design Assistance Teams) in which expert design and planning professionals consult with communities about long-range strategies (Zucher 1990.)

A design charrette is the result of many months of planning, necessary to successfully convene a diverse set of community members and representatives, public leaders and outside "experts," each of whom by definition may represent conflicting agendas, diverse personalities, and cross-purposes. Meetings that are not well planned and facilitated can set community discussions back rather than to advance a hoped for community involvement proposal, due to miscommunica-tion, misunderstanding or misuse of the initial good will that should otherwise prevail. Nevertheless, there are ways to help make such meetings successful. This section describes what some of the elements of success might be.

Any group or community meeting requires an organizational structure defined to a sufficient level of detail so that many people can work together; essentially “reading from the same page” to create a smooth running event. Decisions that need to be put into place include a charrette meeting location, sufficient planning time prior to the event, involvement of key stakeholders, and an organizational group or committee. The organizational roles require leadership, initiative, diplomacy, persistence and humor!

A charrette is typically a one- to two-day event to three-day event. In some cases, more time is needed, although this makes it more difficult to include a large number of people in the entire event. A typical size of group is between thirty and sixty people, although many charrettes have involved several hundred and more. Involving greater numbers is possible but should be considered “advanced level” in terms of organizational and facilitative capacity.

38.4.1. The charrette event in the context of community development

The following guidelines indicate characteristics that are recommended for successful community development that builds upon design charrettes:

1 Listen and learn: The charrette process provides for listening and understanding, It works if it facilitates mutual learning and capacity building among community groups, rather than perpetuating dependency upon outside “experts” and resources.

2 Combine and focus: Create focus by combining projects and programs within “high impact” areas strategically selected for demonstrable and replicable results.

3 Create community participation: Emphasize participatory decision-making that enables collaborative partnerships and encourages local initiative, volunteerism and community-based leadership.

4 Build upon local networking: Link local initiatives (bottom-up) to broad (horizontally-linked) networks, such as citywide collaborations.

5 Create multidisciplinary linkages: Link community- and universitybased professionals from a range of disciplines to represent economic, social and community planning experience and knowledge.

6 Emphasize sustainable development: Emphasize the need to integrate economic, social and environmentally sustainable approaches to planning, programs and projects.

7 Invite scrutiny and evaluation: Experiment with and document different approaches, to report and disseminate lessons learned about action-based community development, establishing the basis for continuous professional and community learning.

8 Create youth initiatives: Include youth in charrette organization roles, providing “real-life” opportunities for youth leadership.

38.4.2. Preparing for a charrette

Generally, a minimum of three months (most typically six months) is needed to prepare for a successful event, with a longer time frame required for more complex events. The months prior to the charrette involve a series of key actions:

38.4.2.1. *Identify a significant project*

Everyone who has been involved in organizing charrettes usually has one message: Don’t do it unless there is evident local commitment to use the charrette as part of a larger and longer range commitment to take action. It is important to choose a topic that will engage both positive and substantive community support. The initial proposal need not be perfect. It should be

open to modification as discussions and planning proceeds. It has to be a project that is inspiring and at the same time feasible, that is, it does not raise false hopes.

Work at defining an issue or program focus that is meaningful, such as a local neighborhood area that deserves community discussion of alternatives and improvement. The size of project can range from building-scale to one well beyond the neighborhood scale.

Start with an initial proposal but let it develop with input from local constituents and stakeholders. Out of a number of preliminary discussions, key issues will emerge. Keep these and the goals of discussion relatively focused, while not ignoring larger and more complex implications.

It is critical to have all data maps and documentation assembled well ahead of time, prepared in the form of a briefing book, a process that sometimes takes months.

Early on in the planning, it will be essential to contact an experienced facilitator in order to add input and guidance to the charrette preparation. If a facilitator is not experienced in design charrettes (but is nonetheless a skilled group process facilitator), then a group of architects, landscape architects and/or planners will be needed to add the necessary design, planning and environmental experience. Additionally, university faculty at schools of architecture and planning may include individuals experienced in leading a charrette process.

38.4.2.2. *Involve cosponsors who are stakeholders in the results*

There are two general guidelines to involving stakeholders: The first guideline is, “Get stakeholders involved early on.” Approach key stakeholders in a low-key way and in their terms, letting them know who you are and what you are about. Make their concerns yours.

A second guideline is “Don’t leave anyone out.” If the charrette project involves different groups or communities normally left out of the planning and decision process, organizers may find themselves from the outset dealing with a potentially disruptive situation. The advantage of a charrette is that the visioning exercise can be “low risk,” that is, it can limit itself to proposing “unthought-of” alternatives and to illustrate new options, leaving it to others to evaluate and decide between competing options.

David Lewis, FAIA, one of the initiators of the AIA R/UDAT process, states, “You have to get to the point where the various goals and agendas are not in conflict. One never gets there by confrontation…it never works. Only through a public consensus building process do plans have a sustaining life.” (Lewis 1996)

38.4.2.3. *Establish preevent meetings that keep planning going forward*

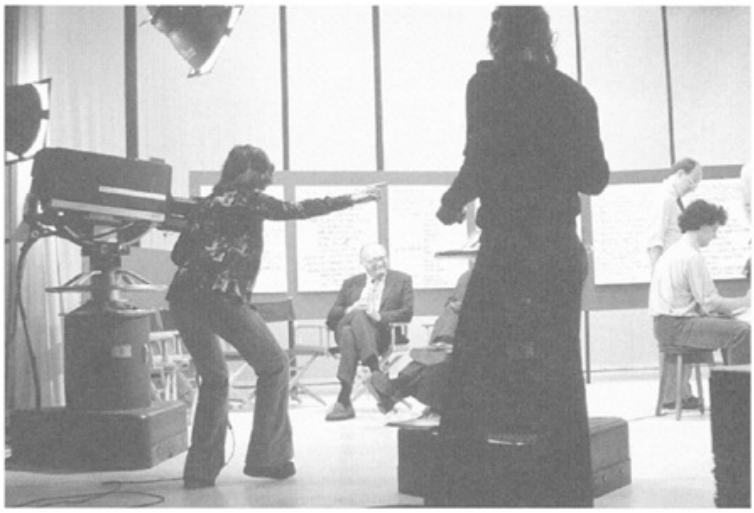
The overall questions in organizing a charrette are WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY and HOW. Of all of these, the HOW is usually the most difficult question at the beginning. That is, there is a perceived need but the way to get there is not clear. In such cases, a broad-based and representative discussion and input from stakeholders is most helpful. A series of small-scale organizing meetings may be the best approach. Once established as regular meetings, they become “heartbeats” to the organizing process.

It is essential to gain “buy-in” of participants in the charrette goal. One of the initial event [or preevent] tasks is to develop a set of goals by consensus discussion. Communicating a clear goal is essential. Once the overall intent and purpose of the design charrette is agreed to, it is useful to state the goals or desired outcomes, keeping in mind that these too will evolve. Stating the goals as a desirable future vision makes it easier to capture the enthusiasm and support of participants.

Figure 6. Citizen involvement community map, Dayton, Ohio. Making the design process evident and participatory, in this case by large community maps to elicit comment and suggestions.

Figure 7. TV charrette kick-off Roanoke, Virginia. The first of four televised programs in which the design charrette process was made accessible to more than 90,000 people in the viewing audience.

Figure 8. TV charrette and call-in Dayton. Citizen involvement was sparked by featuring nationally known architects and planners, in this case, the late Charles Moore, Architect (seated left).



Timing the event is important. Like any significant planning proposal, there is a right time and a wrong time. Without this groundwork, their event would not have worked so well. Preevent preparation, including training for facilitators and group leaders, is also crucial.

With a statement of intent and the program defined, organizers are then ready to move onto second-level decisions of implementing and preparing for the event, most typically through task group assignments that follow normal definitions:

- **program:** program definition and support materials
- **funding:** funding and/or contributions in kind
- **communications:** getting the word out and the press in
- **logistics:** particulars of space and support materials

38.4.2.4. *Define the charrette program*

There are at least two different meeting formats to provide the basic organization of groups participating in the event. The one to choose or the right combination depends upon the task at hand.

The first is to organize into generalized and integrated design teams, typically five to six people on each team who work together to develop a design, while “experts” roam between teams consulting with each team throughout the charrette. This option is appropriate where the predominant project goal is to come up with new design and planning

An alternate is to organize specialized expert teams, in which case the number per team can be typically six or more, who work together to develop a set of recommendations related to a particular specialized topic, that is, lighting, building envelope, landscape, etc. This approach works well where there is an existing building or set of conditions that are preexisting and otherwise already designed that require a specialized set of environmental recommendations.

Combinations of these two options are most often adopted in events longer than one day. An obvious variation is to use both integrated design teams and specialized consulting groups, although limited time and the “getting used to” any particular organization cautions against anything overly complex. Each design project will suggest the nature of team composition, “division of labor” and integration of expertise. In any and all cases, individuals should have some choice in selecting the groups they work with, to allow for interpersonal choices and passionate interests.

38.4.2.5. *Charrette introductory organizational meeting*

The introductory meeting provides a crucial “kick-off.” In many cases this began with a dinner followed by presentations intended to inspire, to inform and to set the stage for community creativity. The kick-off is an event to which one can invite local officials and others who would like to be briefed. . .some may be intrigued enough to change their schedules and stay on for the rest of the event, The kick-off or opening session is also typically used to provide the technical briefing to set the teams in place, get logistics out of the way and prepare groups for action.

In cases where the site is large, complex and not completely familiar to all participants, a tour of the site is appropriate and more immediate and informative than a slide show briefing.

38.4.2.6. *Putting a funding strategy in place*

Funding is required for a design charrette, to cover costs typical of space rental, food for participants, travel, honoraria and lodging for facilitators and group leaders, and printing and publications. Sources of such funds included local foundations, utilities, banks, businesses and Chambers of Commerce, with “contributions in kind” by restaurants, hotels, newspapers, television stations and art materials suppliers.

A likely source of funding support related to energy and environmental design goals are local utilities as well as municipal planning authorities, Both sources represent a vested interest in energy conservation, pollution prevention and waste elimination. Local and regional community and environmental agencies and associations are additional likely sources of endorsement and support funding.

38.4.2.7. *Establish a news and communication plan*

In most cases, the local press is easily involved in public communication and coverage, provided that notice is given (ideally, an informative and interesting press release) so that media reporters know about significant meetings and the event itself. Both the kick-off and the final public presentation of the charrette work can be organized to provide media coverage. Local newspapers are often a readily available means by which to publish the results, such as in a special “Sunday Supplement” printed as a community service. To assist in all of the media coverage, high quality reproducible graphics provide helpful visuals for articles. As described below in Section 3, local television stations are a source of media equipment, technical support and airtime, which demonstrate a capacity for the charity process to reach many thousands of people throughout the local region.

38.4.2.8. *Logistics*

There are several recommendations about the charrette workshop location itself. One recommendation is to hold the event at or near the actual project site, or at least to provide easy access so that site conditions can be visited, seen and discussed. An alternative recommendation is to hold the charrette in a publicly visible and accessible location. The ideal location combines both advantages, that is, proximity to the project site and centrally located.

The entire event should be held in one room, such as a gymnasium, in which many groups of five to six people can work. Each group should have access to flip charts and ample wall space. The charrette space should have at least one long wall that can be used to tape up flipchart sheets and the maps and drawings that are produced during the event. Recording the ongoing discussions on flip charts is important, so that information can be inspected and in turn responded to by others. Flip-chart sheets, numbered appropriately, also become an important record of the event discussions that might otherwise be lost.

Standard folding tables can be placed throughout the space, to be easily moved by any of the groups. It is not necessary to be formal.

All that is required is a large space in which many discussion groups can occur. While part of the discussions will be “in plenary” with the entire group listening to one another, at least half the time and typically more is in small break-out groups. The number that makes up the “optimum size” of a small break-out group is debatable, but highly interactive groups, ones where all can have an active say, should be limited to five to six people per group. In large meetings, microphones placed informally around the room allow for plenary discussion to occur without a centralized podium layout.

38.4.2.9. *Materials and resources*

Charrette materials and supplies should include ample quantities of flip charts and pads of paper, removable masking tape, water-based markers and paper. Architect and engineering offices are a source of blueprint paper to be reused.

Other presentation tools that may be needed include overhead projectors, which allows both group and plenary presentations to be much simpler and easier to project and record. Convenient access to a copier is helpful for presentations. In some instances, availability of a one-hour photo processing shop may also be helpful, for example, for slides of views of the site for projection and enlargement to create overlay perspective drawings of design proposals.

It is useful to provide within the room a “community wall” and resource area for key information and exhibits. This normally includes the maps and resource information displays that are part of understanding the project context, such as overhead photos and maps from the local planning office. In addition to a resource board, some sort of interactive communication board is often helpful, especially in large groups. Computer interactive tools are increasingly available, to be used like a library resource during the charrette.

38.4.2.10. *Charrette events schedule*

Although the charrette event is relatively short, the overall process is extended in both directions, that is, from four- to six-months in preparation and an equal or longer time in implementation. The event itself needs to be scheduled within its allocated time, to capture the interest and focused energy of the participants.

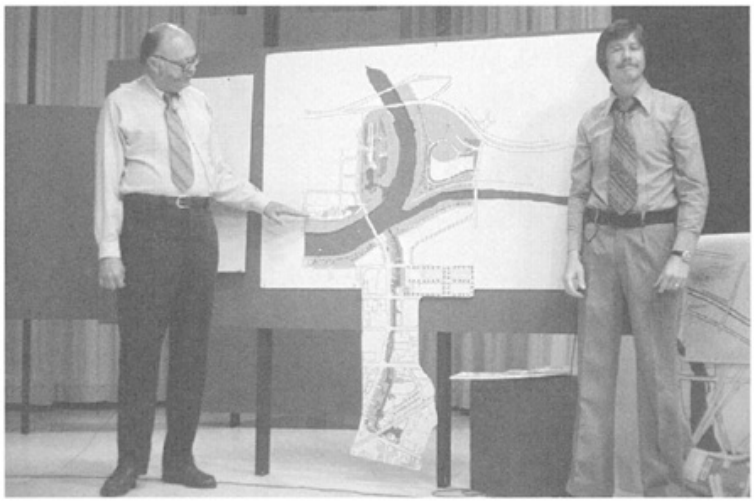
There is a variety of experience and opinion related to the length of time or duration of the event itself. The AIA Committee of the Environment (COTE) October 1995 charrettes, including over a dozen different community charrettes, lasted essentially 48 hours over a three-day period, that is, beginning late Friday afternoon and running until mid- to late-Sunday afternoon (Watson 1996). Some participants considered that this was too short a period. In other instances, charrette events have run three entire days. R/UDATs are generally five days or longer. The proper length of time is a function of the number and complexity of the participating constituents. The greater the number of participants, the more difficult it is to keep the high-energy highinvolvement pace. But, clearly even three days requires short cuts and may risk coming to an unsatisfactory conclusion before full consensus is reached.

At the conclusion of a charrette event, the summary is a critical point to have the work presented and debated in a public forum. Preparing and rehearsing for the final “public” presentation keeps the charrette schedule on track, working to deadline. In most cases, a spirit of cooperation and participation develops, much like getting ready for a theatrical production. Ideally, everyone would feel that they can be part of the presentation, although not all can be “on stage,” but it is important to present the work in the most representative manner possible. It is an ideal time for the “stakeholders” and/or implementors such as community leaders, youth and student participants to present the results, instead of the outside “experts.” At least one dry run of the final presentation is recommended to make sure that timing and transitions are worked out.

Figure 9. Call-ins to the Roanoke Design Charrette encouraged by display of the ideas overlaid with the call-in phone number.

Figure 10. Call-in suggestions to the Watkins Glen design charrette are immediately written on flip charts.

Figure 11. Dayton TV charrette. Charles Moore, Architect (left) explains design proposals as they evolved in ways originally not anticipated (shown by improvised sheets added to the base map).



38.4.2.11. *Facilitation*

The facilitator is given responsibility to direct the group process. The following provides a checklist of how a facilitator might best prepare for a charrette:

1 Audit existing conditions. Make sure the room will work and that all necessary materials and support functions are in place.

2 Discuss expectations with the organizing group in terms of goals and outcomes. Establish ways to measure success and consider an evaluation form to measure participant responses at the end of the event to find out what went well and what needs improvement.

3 Understand the nature of the group and community. The organizing group may or may not be representative of the community that is most impacted by the project or program being envisioned in the charrette. There is one rule of thumb: LISTEN, but then ECHO: reflect back what you have perceived to be the nature of the community issues.

4 Organize around goal statements. At any point in a group discussion, people will disagree on any and all points. An astute facilitator doesn't ask, "How do you feel?" but instead asks, "What will you do? How can we effect the outcome?" At the same time, the scope of the issue or problem area will expand or contract, depending on different views and styles of learning and action of those involved. Some think of parts while others think of wholes. Both are needed, but the best way to get everyone "reading from the same page" is to list goals and outcomes, and then detail how to get there.

5 Include all stakeholders. A stakeholder can be defined as anyone whose participation, energy, agreement and volunteerism will contribute to the success of the effort. This creates the "quandary" of trying to get some focus and action while listening to all constituents and stakeholders. Establish working relationships among the stakeholders early on in the charrette preparation and get the entire group to learn the habits of listening and echoing.

6 Prepare a schedule that anticipates variations in the discussion sequence. An experienced facilitator learns how to balance a fixed schedule with time and alternatives "built in" for discussions to take their own turn. At different and to some extent unpredictable times during a charrette, there are times for a "plenary" discussion and times for "break-out" group discussions. A good agenda has the flexibility to allow for both. A prepared agenda is especially important for the first half of a charrette by which the facilitator has in mind a "storyboard" of how the discussion might be undertaken. A "storyboard—a term used in filmmaking, to refer to a set of steps that tell the story and show a sequence of events—is useful for both facilitator and organizing group to help anticipate the steps in the charrette and various checkpoints to be sure the event keeps on schedule.

A facilitator could also set in place a “fast-response” team of advisors who are the “eyes and ears” of the process and can quickly meet to advise the facilitator on suggestions as the event proceeds.

38.4.2.12. *Ground rules of facilitation*

The facilitator might explain the following guidelines as “ground rules of discourse.” The list is not complete…you can ask the group to add their own variations. Agreeing on ground rules helps to establish the setting for group discussion, listening and learning.

1 All ideas are valid.

2 One at a time. Only one person speaks at a time…listen to each other.

3 Get to “yes!” Emphasize “yes, and…” and discourage “no but…” statements.

4 Observe time frames.

5 Seek common group action, not problems and conflict.

A facilitator’s task is made much easier by using flip charts, which the facilitator or a recorder (anyone who writes or prints clearly) uses to take notes of the discussion. By recording all ideas, everyone feels that they have been heard and recognized, that their idea is part of the record. An additional aid to communication and creative thinking is to use graphics, that is, to express ideas in both verbal and graphic terms. Often a capable cartoonist or graphic artist can express ideas more succinctly through a drawing and this helps visual imaging, which becomes more important as a charrette proceeds. The roles of discussion leader, facilitator, record and artist can be assumed by separate individuals or combined.

38.4.2.13. *Evaluating the event*

Most charrette events go quickly with a great degree of intensity and focus, so that when it is over, people leave quickly to catch up with things left undone for several days. However; without some evaluation process, valuable lessons learned may go unheeded. It is therefore recommended that some form of event evaluation be put in place, allowing time in the concluding session for evaluation forms to be completed before participants leave. This evaluation, whether in questionnaire form or otherwise, should allow for commentary to capture creative insights and suggestions for improvement.

If an evaluation questionnaire is simple and easily understood, participants will fill it out. It can be as simple as:

1 What worked?

2 What didn’t work?

3 Suggestions for improvements?

4 Suggestions on next steps?

5 Other thoughts?

Ask people to fill out their responses in clearly written form, explaining that what they say is important and that answers can be transcribed as is and made available to all interested. Such responses will often yield an overall evaluation, along with very valuable insights and ideas for improvements and next steps. It is important to tabulate and publish the results. “Inviting scrutiny” can thus be shown to inform the entire process. In addition, the event might be monitored by an “evaluator” or “reporter” who is asked to summarize and evaluate results.

38.5. COMMUNITY DESIGN AND TV

Chad Floyd, FAIA

The community design process is suited to the television media as it evolved with experience in the 1970s and 1980s (see additional credits, also Crosbie 1984). They featured the following three elements:

1 Community office: A storefront office was located as close as possible to the downtown's "hundred percent corner," with a staff architects at a drawing desk in the front window. The office issued weekly press releases. The office included a walk-in interview area with comfortable chairs, tables, and maps to discuss ideas amid coffee and donuts.

2 Community committees: Several committees were established, starting with a small (15-person) Steering Committee, which brought together key public officials and community leaders. A second Citizens' Committee of 30 to 100 was representative of citizens, businesses, and special interests. It attended about a half dozen meetings, beginning with a "treasure hunt" exercise to record perceptions about places and ideas. The Committee process thus allowed community evaluation and testing and avoided the danger of us outsiders imposing our values and interpretations. In turn, the Citizens' Committee became a focus group to consider design proposals and eventually a representative mouthpiece for articulating proposals back to political leaders.

3 Television outreach: For greater outreach, local TV stations were used to carry the design message to a wider audience. To make this effective, the TV format was made entertaining and interactive. The shows paralleled the community design process over a three- to four-month period, each show airing for one hour, prime time on commercial stations wherever possible. TV costs were manageable, because commercial stations are required by the FCC to provide a few hours of community affairs programming every week. The stations provided camera time, airtime, and production facilities as in-kind contributions. With their help, the design charrette programs produced some pretty interesting television on prime-time air slots.

The sequence of TV shows, each one hour long and spaced about a month between shows, was as follows:

First Show: The objective of the typical first show was to get information from studio interviews and call-ins. We referred to specific geographic areas called out on "Idea Boards" arranged around the studio. In Roanoke, one of the early projects, we made the mistake of spreading ourselves out too thin around the studio. Intimacy of contact and some degree of control was compromised, but the show worked, nonetheless. We interviewed community representatives and experts in front of wall-sized posters summarizing information collected from prior community input. Call-in and interviewer ideas were sketched

Figure 12. Riverfront, Dayton, Ohio. General view BEFORE design charrette process was begun.

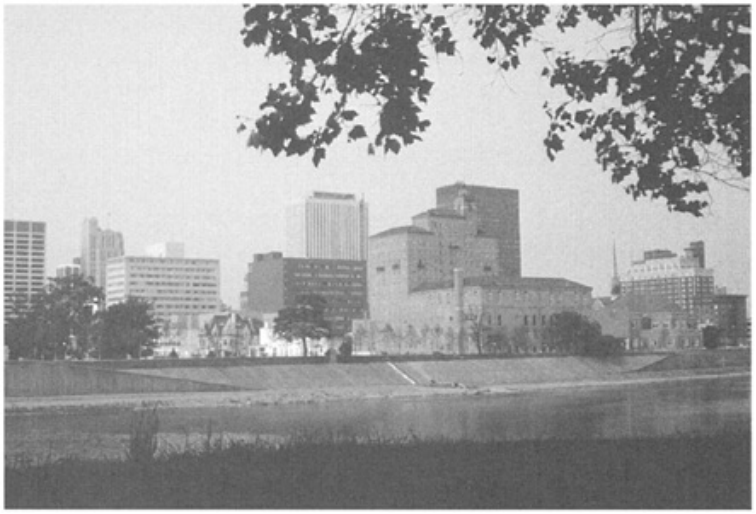


Figure 13. Dayton, Ohio Kiwanis Fountain. A "quick start" design to inaugurate and help promote the riverside revitalization project.

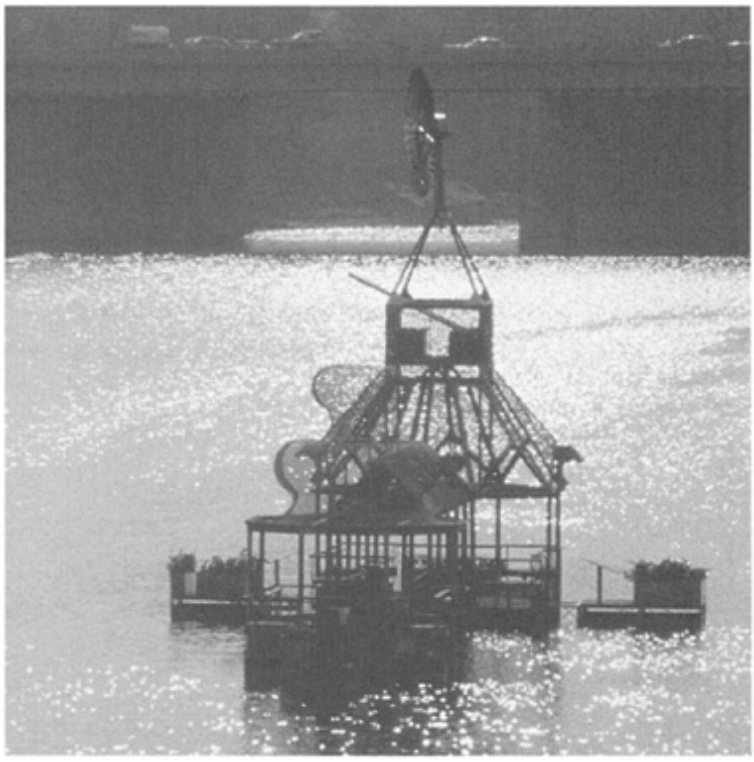
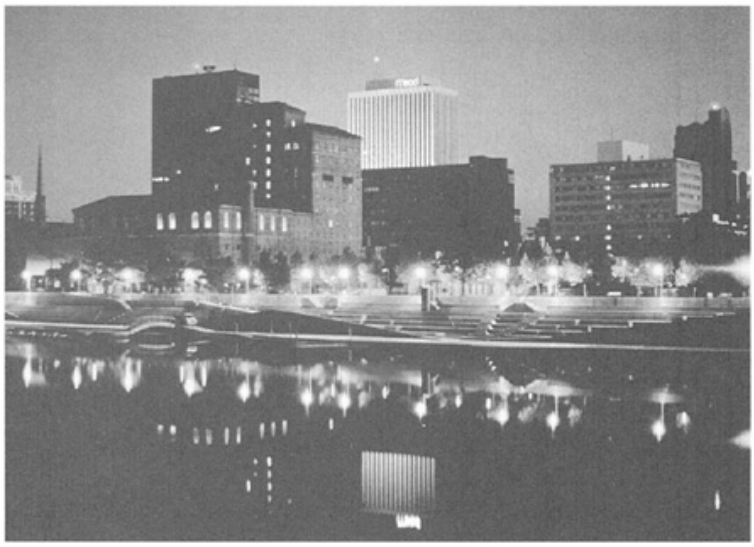


Figure 14. Riverfront, Dayton, Ohio. General view AFTER design charrette process was completed.



(in Roanoke by Charles Moore who had the talent to make any idea look interesting). Their sketches captivated people. At Roanoke, we were able to obtain immediate opinions on economic feasibility from a financial analyst from the Rouse Company. In addition to call-ins, which provided real-time discussion and interest, we received responses from viewers after the show by mail. These were cut and pasted into issue categories, and ultimately were organized by topic and design response. Today, we would do it more easily by word processing.

Second Show: To provide visual focus for the second show, where our goal was to present planning options, we centered ourselves around a large map on a table. The map was colorfully painted for clarity of close-up camera detail. On it we showed a variety of 2-D design options. The map stimulated feedback from viewers, plus a few invited experts and municipal representatives. As we described options, we asked viewers to follow us with a questionnaire in the local newspaper. This enabled all who were interested to "vote" and even to add their own suggestions.

Third Show: By the third show we were illustrating favored ideas by means of three-dimensional models. The models addressed highprofile issues in detail. In Roanoke, we obtained a commitment from BlueCross-BlueShield to locate new offices downtown, and a top executive of the company made the announcement on the show in front of a model. We had listener call-ins and were able to get to points of consensus.

Fourth Show: The final show was intended to illustrate final planning proposals. No phone calls here. Just sketches and a detailed model allowing the camera to get down to eye level and bring our ideas to life. The show included the leaders who later would have to approve implementation. Discussions with them were moderated in a TV anchor desk format.

In Roanoke, we reached a viewing audience of 90,000 people, according to Nielsen ratings. Following each broadcast, our design issues achieved instant recognition, with phenomenal community awareness. Within three years of our TV programs, the community had voted for bond issues to fund all but seven of the 59 individual projects that made up the total community development plan, representing over $89 million in private funds and $41 million in combined local, state, and federal funds.

The Roanoke City Manager at the time, Bern Ewert, stated that "the television programs and the plan changed attitudes in Roanoke…initially they viewed the shows as purely entertaining, but soon large numbers of viewers tuned in, many from surrounding communities."

This process was employed in design projects in various communities, including downtown Roanoke, Virginia; Dayton and Springfield, Massachusetts (large and complex plans); Watkins Glen, New York (a relatively small focus), and Indianapolis (a large public project). In all, television helped to make the design process visible and community-wide consensus building easier. The TV experience developed into a planning approach we have come later to describe as "situation design," wherein each element must be capable of standing alone yet still relate to the plan as a whole. The goal is that if any particular proposal were to remain unimplemented, the plan is not at risk. This is the way cities naturally develop; progress occurs in discrete steps, each one responding to its situation. This approach seems to be well understood by laypersons, who are suspicious of the grand schemes.

TV certainly made the urban design work challenging, and it added an extra layer of coordination and detail. But we were pleased at how effective it made us as architects and urban designers. Most if not all community leaders and citizens were helpful in front of the "cool" TV camera. Many constructive comments were offered its unblinking eye, quite the opposite of the posturing that can occur in public hearings. Television helped us build a level of community interest and resolve that, as far as we have seen, is unmatched by conventional planning media. ■

38.6. ADDITIONAL CREDITS:

This article includes recommendations of many individuals who participated in the October 1995 AIA Environmental Design Charrettes, including Gregg Ander, Kirstine Anstead, Robert Bell, Bob Berkebile, Jestena Boughton, Robert Cevero, Brian Dunbar, Sue Ehrlich, Elizabeth Ericson, Pliny Fisk, Jim Franklin, Greg Franta, Kirk Gastinger, Harry Gordon, Chris Gribbs, Peg Howard, Chris Kelsey, Paul Leveille, Gail Lindsey, Andy Maurer, John B.Peers, David Sellers, and Lynn N.Simon.

The process of utilizing television media in community design charrettes is based on experience of Centerbrook Architects in the late 1970s and 1980s, Centerbrook undertook a number of community design projects, a half-dozen of which employed interactive television to involve the community.

38.6. REFERENCES

38.8. REFERENCES

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