

# AIA Communities by Design

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## INTRODUCTION

This Application solicits submissions for inclusion in the AIA Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) 2017 program. The SDAT program focuses on the importance of developing sustainable communities through design. The SDAT program brings together multidisciplinary teams of professionals to work with community decision-makers and stakeholders through an intensive planning process. The mission of the SDAT program is to provide technical assistance and process expertise to help communities develop a vision and framework for a sustainable future.

The AIA is committed to sustainable design that creates communities and buildings that advance enduring public and environmental well-being. The SDAT program is based on the AIA's goal of helping communities create a sustainable relationship between humans, the natural environment, and place. By achieving balance between cultural, environmental, and economic systems, communities can sustain a place as a stage for human settlement. The SDAT program upholds the AIA Design Assistance team values of utilizing a multidisciplinary team approach; ensuring the objectivity of all participating team members; and requiring broad, inclusive public participation and support.

The SDAT process is modeled on five decades of experience with the Regional and Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) program, one of AIA's longest-running success stories. While the R/UDAT program was developed to provide communities with specific design solutions, the SDAT program provides broad assessments to help frame future policies or design solutions in the context of sustainability and help communities plan the first steps of implementation.

For more information about the SDAT program, consult the AIA's Center for Communities by Design website: [www.aia.org/cxd](http://www.aia.org/cxd).

## SDAT APPLICATION OVERVIEW - TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

For consideration in the SDAT program, community applications must include the following elements, at a minimum:

### Project Information

- Summary Page
- Problem Statement and Issues Analysis
- Objective of SDAT Process

### Project Organization: Local Capacity and Resources

- Steering Committee Information
- Budget and Funding Information
- SDAT Project Timeline

### Community Partnerships and Support

- Community Letters of Support

### Supplemental Documents and Attachments

- Existing and Past Planning Documents
- Graphic Illustrations



## **PROJECT SUMMARY (1-2 PAGES)**

This section of the Application response should include the **Project Title**, the **Primary Contact** information and a **Brief Community Description**. The community description should include information pertaining to:

- History
- Population figures
- Demographics
- Economic information
- Form of Local Government
- Important project or contextual information
- Regional setting and influences
- Past and/or ongoing planning efforts

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT AND ISSUES ANALYSIS (2-4 PAGES)**

Each application submission must include a Problem Statement and Issues Analysis. We encourage you to include images and maps to define the study area and highlight the key issues. The statement should include the following elements:

- **Study Area:** The statement should define and describe the proposed study area.
- **Barriers to Success:** Each submission should identify the existing barriers (physical, social, economic, political) that have limited the community's ability to address its concerns or agree on solutions. Include an assessment of your community's most significant needs (e.g., water supply concerns or public health issues). Describe any past attempts that have failed to resolve community issues. Include as much graphic material as needed to describe existing conditions.
- **Scope of issues:** Applications should identify the scope of issues the SDAT will address, including an explanation for why they should be considered critical to the community. The statement should describe how the issues relate to development concerns at the regional, municipal, and neighborhood scales. Be sure to include information on the surrounding county if the proposed study area is a municipality. A sample list of issues identified for previous SDAT projects is provided below. SDATs will expect to consider at least two topics in each of the three areas when developing the final scope of the project.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE SDAT PROCESS (APPROXIMATELY 300 WORDS).**

Submissions must include a brief statement defining the Project Objective. The statement should identify the specific outcomes the SDAT process will contribute toward in the community. It should also explain how the SDAT process will be incorporated into other community planning and development efforts.

## **STEERING COMMITTEE INFORMATION**

The SDAT process requires local partners to form a Steering Committee to guide and implement the process. There is no limit or minimum number of members to be included in the Steering Committee; however the Steering Committee should include a broad range of community leaders including representatives from the public and private sector as well as a representative of the local AIA component.

All application submissions must include the contact information for the Chair(s) of the Steering Committee. Naming co-chairs of the steering committee is recommended, however one chair should be designated as the primary contact.

## **BUDGET AND LOGISTICAL REQUIREMENTS**

The Sustainable Design Assessment Team is not a traditional grant program. SDAT communities receive pro bono services through the program, and the AIA commits to funding up to \$15,000 for each project to cover team expenses. Recipient communities are required to make a one-time payment of \$5,000 to the AIA as a cash match to the program. In-kind donations are strongly encouraged, both to ensure that hard project costs are kept as low as possible, as well as to encourage broad community buy-in, participation, and commitment. The program does not provide any direct funding to communities.



Most communities raise additional funds to cover local costs associated with project implementation (public outreach materials, meeting and facilities, etc). Successful applications should demonstrate a local capacity to raise the necessary funds for SDAT implementation. As such, applications should provide a proposed project budget that identifies expected expenditures. Please be as specific as possible and detail potential in-kind services or donations. The proposed budget may include some of the following elements:

- Provision of Meeting space, including two evening public workshops and afternoon concurrent focus groups.
- Provision of team working space, with access to a copier, internet, printer, and scanner.
- Advertising and comprehensive community outreach resources.
- Local transportation for the team community tour.

## ***SDAT PROJECT TIMELINE***

Each application submission should identify a general implementation timeline for the SDAT process. The timeline will serve as the basis for scheduling each phase of the SDAT process. The timeline should include target date ranges for each stage of the SDAT process, including:

- The Preliminary Assessment Visit
- The SDAT Team Visit
- The Follow-up to the SDAT and final report

In addition to the timeline, each submittal should include a contextual rationale and information regarding events that may affect the timing of any part of the SDAT process (e.g., six months before scheduled comprehensive plan revisions). Typically, a successful SDAT project requires a period of at least 6-8 weeks between the preliminary visit and the full team visit. AIA will work with communities to schedule SDAT implementation in a manner that complements ongoing planning activities, but dates may be adjusted based upon program needs and availability of team members.

## ***COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND LETTERS OF SUPPORT***

The key to SDAT success is diversity and community participation; the process involves multiple disciplines and multiple stakeholders. The SDAT process includes not only the national team but also government agencies and officials, private businesses, schools and students, community members, and other parties as appropriate. The process encourages the active participation of all sectors of the community. The team members who visit your community will seek the opinions and comments of the public as well as community leaders and interested groups. Applications should demonstrate community support and participation by including letters of support from a broad base of community members. Applications may include letters from the following sources, among others:

- The local and/or state AIA component
- Public Officials (Mayor and Town Manager)
- Public Agencies
- Neighborhood Groups
- Community Leaders
- Churches
- Businesses
- Educational institutions

## ***SUPPLEMENTAL DOCUMENTS & ATTACHMENTS***

The AIA welcomes additional relevant information that may be deemed appropriate and necessary to help understand community needs, existing conditions, and prevailing issues. Supplemental documents might include:



- Current and past planning documents, such as comprehensive plans, revitalization plans, and past charrette reports.
- Graphic Illustrations such as maps, study area site plans, photos and aerial views.
- Information on the community such as newspaper articles covering key issues, tourism materials, Chamber of Commerce brochures, and local economic development agency materials.

## EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCESS

The evaluation process will be conducted by an SDAT Application Review Panel. The final deadline for submission is **December 9, 2016**. The Review Panel will complete its final assessment of all 2017 applicants in late December and will notify the recipient communities shortly thereafter. Upon conditional acceptance into the SDAT program, a team leader will be appointed to the project, and preparations for a preliminary assessment visit will begin. The preliminary visit will allow the team leader and AIA staff to determine if an SDAT is appropriate for the community and if local resources and support are sufficient to support the process. Final determination of the community's suitability will be determined by the conclusion of the preliminary visit, and logistical planning for the full team visit will then commence as appropriate.

### Evaluation Criteria

- Commitment and ability to attract diverse stakeholders and community turnout.
- Commitment and support for the project by political leadership, municipal staff, and key stakeholders.
- Comprehensive application clearly portraying the community.
- Self-evaluation and assessment of relevant issues.
- Clarity of problem statement and project objective.
- Ability to provide necessary logistical support.
- Funding and logistical support available for the project.

## SUBMISSION

Applications can be submitted electronically by contacting the Center for Communities by Design at [sdats@aia.org](mailto:sdats@aia.org). All application materials should be compiled into a single PDF file.

Applicants seeking additional information about the SDAT program, the application, or the review process should consult the Communities by Design website at [www.aia.org/cxd](http://www.aia.org/cxd). Technical questions about the SDAT program or the application process are welcomed throughout the submission period. Inquiries about the application process should be directed to the AIA Center for Communities by Design staff:

Erin Simmons, Senior Director, Design Assistance

[esimmons@aia.org](mailto:esimmons@aia.org)

202.626.7492

Joel Mills, Senior Director, Communities by Design

[joelmills@aia.org](mailto:joelmills@aia.org)

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## **SDAT FAQ'S**

### **What is an SDAT?**

The Sustainable Design Assessment Team (SDAT) program is a public service of the American Institute of Architects. Communities across the country apply to be included in the SDAT program annually. SDAT final reports are available at [www.aia.org/cxd](http://www.aia.org/cxd)

### **Where else has this process been used? What are the typical outcomes?**

The SDAT program has worked with over 60 communities since 2005. Each project has resulted in a series of key priorities and recommendations formulated in a presentation and final report. As a result of programming, SDAT communities have built effective platforms for collaboration and collective action involving the entire community.

### **How much is this process costing the community?**

The American Institute of Architects contributes up to \$15,000 towards the cost of the process, and requires the host community to provide a \$5,000 match. All of the team members serve pro bono, so there are no fees or costs for services. The value of the full process and professional services of an interdisciplinary team has been estimated at over \$180,000.

### **Who is the team made up of? What is their agenda?**

Each SDAT interdisciplinary team is made up of national experts from across the country, selected by the AIA and customized to fit the key issues present in the community. Teams can include (but are not limited to) transportation experts, architects, urban designers, economic and finance experts, planners, landscape architects and engineers. This is not another team of consultants. Consultants work for somebody. SDAT works for everybody. The team's mission is to serve the public interest by listening to the community and sharing their best professional advice about the current issues and opportunities facing the area. Team members are deliberately selected from places outside the community and state, are not paid for their service, and are prohibited from pursuing business development opportunities that result out of the SDAT. They are engaging in a public service on behalf of the host community.

### **Who should participate in a SDAT?**

Everyone with an interest in the future of the community should attend and participate, and all members of the community are welcome.

### **What is the goal? What are the final products?**

The goal of the process is to identify the community's values and vision for the future of the area, and develop a strategy and set of actions to realize that vision moving forward. The team's final products include a presentation to the community on the final evening of the process, and a final report delivered and available online a couple months after the event.

