

One New York State: Urban Policy and Regional Design

Contributed by AIA New York State. Excerpted and adapted from a 2006 Component Excellence Award-winning entry.

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SUMMARY

The AIA New York State (AIANYS) component won an AIA 2007 Component Excellence Award for its statewide conference on urban planning issues, which proved successful for both elected officials and design professionals.

BACKGROUND

One New York State: Urban Policy and Regional Design was a one-day, statewide program featuring elected officials who spoke to architects about major urban planning issues and concerns in their communities. Developed in celebration of the 75th anniversary of AIANYS, the program was meant to initiate a dialogue between elected officials and architects from their respective cities, to strengthen those relationships, and to discover whether officials and architects can work together as One New York State (the theme of the AIANYS 75th-anniversary year) on common challenges and economic viability in the following areas:

- Downtown revitalization
- Affordable housing
- Transportation issues
- Waterfront redevelopment
- Brownfield redevelopment

STRATEGY

Each of the 13 New York local components chose a representative for the AIANYS-75 committee. Meeting by conference call, each chapter representative selected officials with whom they had a relationship or wished to invite. Elected officials included mayors, state legislators, county executives, and town supervisors. The president wrote a letter to each elected official, inviting them to speak at the event. More than 150 elected officials statewide were contacted, and several follow-up calls were made.

Six elected officials committed to speaking at the one-day event, including Yonkers Mayor Philip A. Amicone; Bronx Borough President Adolfo Carrion

Jr.; Syracuse Mayor Matthew J. Driscoll; Albany Mayor Gerald D. Jennings; former Rochester Mayor William A. Johnson Jr.; and Fred W. Thiele Jr., New York State Assembly member from Suffolk County.

THE PROCESS

After elected officials spoke during the morning session, the architect attendees broke into groups to look at ways they can help in the specific areas discussed during the morning session. Selected members of the AIANYS-75 committee led each of the three breakout sessions: affordable housing, waterfront redevelopment, and downtown revitalization.

OUTCOME/RESULTS

The event also began a relationship between AIANYS and the New York State Conference of Mayors, whose executive director served as moderator. The mayors told the architects about some of the issues they face and explained the “why” of many seemingly illogical processes—for example, why would a mayor intervene with a school project over which he has no jurisdiction?

Architects hosted an event that spurred such relevant regional planning issues that elected officials learned from each other how to handle real issues in their cities.

The conference received notice on Albany local television, coverage in the *Albany Times-Union*, and publicity in many local trade publications, spreading the word that architects are community leaders.

CONCLUSIONS

AIANYS felt the one-day program had many positive results to include:

- Architects can advocate for comprehensive master plans.
- Architects can become accessible to political leadership.

- Architects can lead the public to create livable, sustainable communities.
- Architects can recognize that schools define a community.
- Architects can form community design centers.
- Architects can join community planning boards.

By reaching out to elected officials, AIANYs showed that architects can be problem solvers and community leaders.

RESOURCES

More Best Practices

The following AIA Best Practices provide additional information related to this topic

- 21.01.05 Communication Plan of AIA Louisiana
- 22.06.02 AIA Kansas City: River Crown Plaza Forum Series
- 21.04.03 AIA Florida Membership Program

Feedback

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Keywords

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architectural associations
- The American Institute of Architects
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