

# Making the Most of an Election Year

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## SUMMARY

In 1999 the city of Baltimore faced the task of choosing a new mayor from a field of 28 candidates. AIA Baltimore took advantage of this competitive election year by asserting the component's concerns and establishing a cooperative relationship with the future mayor. The component's Urban Design Committee organized with 15 local and state sister organizations to invite the top four candidates individually to discussions that focused on planning and environmental issues. The committee also asked each candidate for a follow-up meeting should he win the election.

## SET GOALS FOR GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS

AIA Baltimore set the following goals to produce an effective government affairs initiative:

- Establish a meaningful dialogue with the city
- Help a new administration recognize the significance of the built environment and support good design
- Help the city balance economic development with existing buildings, infrastructure, and historic preservation
- Facilitate member participation on city agency boards and commissions
- Work with city agencies to improve regulations and processes impeding development and the construction agency

## KNOW WHERE THE CANDIDATES STAND

Learning where each candidate stands on planning and environmental issues is integral to promoting component concerns in an election year. To gain this knowledge, AIA Baltimore sent a questionnaire to all 28 mayoral candidates. The Urban Design Committee then used this questionnaire to structure the individual conversations with the top four candidates.

The committee taped each meeting with the candidates and provided transcripts of the meetings

to AIA Baltimore members and to fellow organizational participants.

## ESTABLISH RELATIONSHIPS AND FOLLOW THROUGH

In the first quarter of 2000, AIA Baltimore met with the city's new mayor, Martin O'Malley, and attained his endorsement to meet directly with leaders of other city agencies. After the first meeting with the mayor, the component achieved the following:

- Met with representatives of key planning and development agencies
- Recruited and recommended component members for appointment to various city agency boards and commissions
- Offered constructive criticism on design guidelines for a large development parcel
- Made recommendations on historic preservation, transportation, and land use issues in the city

AIA Baltimore's government affairs efforts elevated the visibility and credibility of the component and its members while also benefiting the city. The component continues to strengthen its participatory and advisory role in municipal affairs.

## RESOURCES

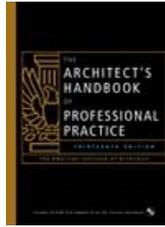
### More Best Practices

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

- |          |   |
|----------|---|
| 21.03.03 | Government Affairs Day: Advancing Vital Interests Person-to-Person              |
| 21.03.04 | Building Relationships with Elected Officials                                   |
| 21.03.09 | Uniting Design and Construction Professionals for Effective Government Advocacy |

### For More Information on This Topic

See also “Public Service and Community Involvement” by William M. Polk, FAIA, *The Architect’s Handbook of Professional Practice*, 13th edition, Chapter 7, page 172. *The Handbook* can be ordered from the AIA Bookstore by calling 800-242-3837 (option 4) or by sending an e-mail to [bookstore@aia.org](mailto:bookstore@aia.org).



### Feedback

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### Key Terms

- Leadership
- Associations
- Design associations
- Architecture associations
- The American Institute of Architects
- AIA components
- Government affairs