

What can R/UDAT do for your community?

Communities across the country are constantly changing. Some of the challenges they encounter include the loss of major employers, new bypass roads, gridlock, unfocused suburban growth, crime, loss of open space, regional conflict, unaffordable housing, abandoned mills and industrial plants, environmental problems, vacant storefronts, and loss of identity. A R/UDAT can help you to respond to these kinds of issues, develop a vision for a better future for your community, and implement a strategy that will produce results. Because the R/UDAT process is highly flexible, it is effective in communities as small as villages and urban neighborhoods and as large as metropolitan regions.

Why does the R/UDAT process work?

The process works because it relies on three simple principles.

Quality: Team members are highly respected, interdisciplinary professionals selected on the basis of their experience with the specific issues facing your community. The energy and creativity that are generated by a top-notch, multidisciplinary team of professionals working collaboratively can produce extraordinary results.



Objectivity: Many communities are immobilized by conflicting agendas, politics, personalities, or even the overabundance of opportunity. The R/UDAT process ensures that all voices are given a fair hearing and that options are weighed impartially. The lack of bias, professional stature of the team members, and pro bono nature of the work generate community respect and enthusiasm for the process.

Public Participation: The process encourages the active participation of all sectors of the community. A common sentiment expressed after a R/UDAT is: "This experience really brought the community together. People who never talked before are now working together."

What is the structure of the R/UDAT process?

The R/UDAT process is flexible and unique, but there are typically four parts or phases, some of which occasionally overlap.

Phase 1: Getting Started

A local leader or citizen calls the AIA and asks for help, and the AIA sends information, initiating a conversation between the AIA and local leaders. A steering committee representing a variety of residents, local government, businesses, institutions, and community groups is formed, gathers community support, and prepares an application. A representative from the R/UDAT Task Group visits the community, suggests revisions to the application, and prepares an evaluation report for the AIA and the community. Upon review and approval of the application, the AIA makes a formal commitment to your community.

Phase 2: Getting Organized

A team chairperson selected by the Task Group meets with the steering committee. This visit introduces the chairperson to the community and its concerns and sparks broader community interest and participation in the process. Preparations begin for the team visit, including initial steps that will facilitate the eventual implementation of an action plan.

Phase 3: Team Visit

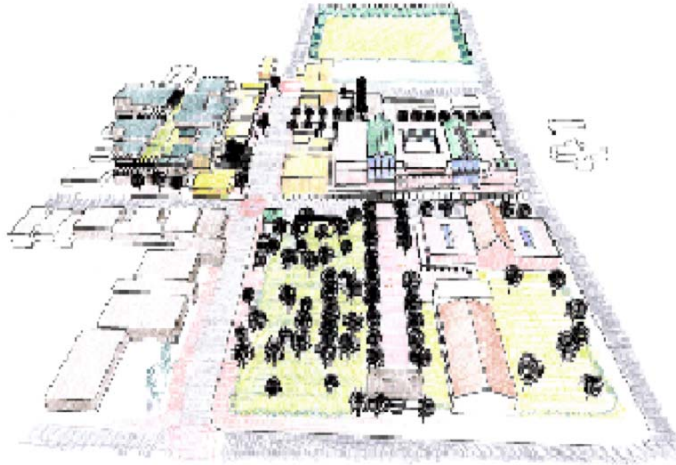
The Task Group selects a multidisciplinary team of 6 to 10 professionals who visit the community for four intense, productive days. After listening to the concerns and ideas of residents, community leaders, and interested groups and viewing both the study area and the surrounding community, the team prepares and publishes a report that is presented in a public meeting on the last day.

Phase 4: Implementation

The community analyzes the team recommendations, identifies priorities, undertakes immediate objectives, and prepares an action plan. Some team members return a year later to evaluate progress so far and advise on implementation.

What are the products of the R/UDAT process?

Intangible products frequently include:



- Objective look at the community
- Sense of purpose and direction
- New energy and commitment
- New levels of cooperation and collaboration throughout the community
- Consensus on community concerns
- Improved communication networks throughout the community.

Tangible products include:

- A coherent description of the community's condition and the challenges that must be addressed; this statement, generated by the steering committee during the application process, is frequently a community's first citizen-based self-analysis.

- A well-illustrated, professional report, published and distributed by the end of the team visit, that examines the community's concerns and aspirations and recommends a vision for the future, specific action items, and timetables for consideration by your community.

- An action plan, developed by the steering committee working with the broader community, that describes priorities for action, including a timetable.

- A report resulting from the follow-up visit that analyzes the action plan, assesses progress to date, and makes recommendations that will aid implementation.

What are some results?

R/UDATs have led to communities coming up with new processes to improve their quality of life. Some examples are new construction and development, new public agencies and organizations, new parks and open space, political change, affordable housing, commercial and economic revitalization, historic districts, landmark preservation, new zoning ordinances, pedestrian systems, comprehensive plans, changes in growth patterns, and stopping inappropriate development.

How long does the process take?

The first two phases, which are critical to the overall success of the R/UDAT effort, typically take 3 to 6 months to complete, depending on how quickly the community can organize. Phase Three, Team Visit, normally takes place 6 months after your initial phone call. Phase Four, Implementation, can take as long as needed to meet local needs and priorities, although the follow-up visit usually occurs a year after the team visit.

How much does it cost? Who pays for it?

Costs typically range from \$50,000 to \$60,000, some of which may be in the form of contributions and in-kind services solicited by the local steering committee to cover travel and living expenses, as well as report production costs. Funding must come from a variety of public and private sources that might include businesses, local government, nonprofits, foundations, organizations such as the chamber of commerce, arts councils, the local AIA chapter, and other community groups and individuals. Experience has shown that the best way to create broad community support is to ask everyone to contribute rather than to rely on one major funding source.

How to get more information

You can download the newly updated *R/UDAT Guide: Planning Your Community's Future*, a detailed publication that will help you decide if a R/UDAT is right for your community and how to apply. You can also see the [list of communities](#) that have hosted R/UDATs.

The AIA can provide article reprints, sample reports, and names of resource people. For more information and to help you decide if a R/UDAT is right for your community, call Erin Simmons, Director, AIA Center for Communities by Design at (202) 626-7492 or e-mail rudat@aia.org.