

AIA Seattle Application for 2018 New Urban Agenda Local Chapter Grant

Applicant

AIA Seattle

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Project

AIA Seattle Housing Advocacy

Seattle, Wa

Launched in Fall, 2017

AIA Seattle believes that housing is a human right. Housing all citizens with dignity is a foundational responsibility of our society, and one in which architects are natural and valuable partners. As our city grows and housing pressures mount, the urgency of solving our housing crisis increases. The New Urban Agenda focus on housing has inspired aggressive and comprehensive action within our chapter.

Over the past year, we developed a multi-pronged approach to housing advocacy across multiple platforms that includes member engagement, legislative and policy work, and public outreach. One solution alone will not solve our housing challenges, so we addressed both market rate and subsidized housing, as well as shelter for the homeless, at a variety of scales and typologies. Our strategy was fully integrated, intentional, and consistently predicated on core housing principles and positions adopted by our Board.

Member Engagement

Housing Pub Night. We started our housing efforts by hosting a member information and conversation night, Housing Pub Night, where members could express opinions and sign up for volunteer opportunities related to housing.

Task Force formation. We identified leaders within our membership and broader community with the knowledge and passion to address housing affordability and supply issues from a policy perspective. Our Housing Task Force and Homelessness Task Force each include single- and multi-family housing designers, low income housing designers, developers, and housing advocates.

Professional education. We used education events like our recent [Housing Design Forum](#) to engage and educate members with sessions like a panel with city councilmember and housing advocate Rob Johnson.

Advocacy updates. Once a month, our staff sent an [advocacy update](#) to all members, educating them about the issues and noting opportunities for action (public meetings, testimony, letter writing).

Legislative Work

Position statements. We developed and adopted position statements on both [housing](#) and [homelessness](#), posted on our [housing](#) and [homelessness](#) web pages along with comprehensive updates and background information.

HALA Endorsement. Our board boldly endorsed the city's Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA), and has worked hard to educate and influence all our members on HALA. Not all our members agree on many of the HALA recommendations, so we have worked hard to build strong, clear arguments for all positions, based on foundational principles of equity and the right to housing.

Legislative meetings. We made the rounds at city hall on both [Mandatory Housing Affordability](#) fees and [DADU regulation](#), and hosted a roundtable with the city's planning team.

Legislative speakers. We developed a target list of legislators and policy makers, and made efforts to invite them to speak at key events. Our [Mayoral Candidate Forum](#), co-hosted by ULI, included investigation of each candidate's housing positions.

Public Outreach

Public testimony. Our task force members regularly attended public hearings on Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA), speaking from our chapter’s talking points and wearing AIA Seattle t-shirts to make them highly visible. Recent council hearings on DADUs have afforded another opportunity for t-shirt sporting members to make our voice heard.

Publication. Members and staff worked with our publicist to place articles in major print and online publications, including a story about tiny houses, coverage of the festival, and an [op ed on implementing HALA](#).

Community partnerships. We developed deep partnerships with community groups addressing gentrification and neighborhood identity. We recently partnered with [Africatown Community Land Trust](#) on a Design Town Hall, with a weekend-long design “cipher” involving residents in decisions about their neighborhood.

Backpack project. Our homelessness task force hosted several backpack nights, inviting members to assemble then distribute supply packs to homeless people in our neighborhood.

Seattle Design Festival. The 2017 festival featured multiple projects and presentations on housing. In particular, [Mighty House](#) was a tiny house prototype project developed by Miller Hull and a workforce training program for at-risk youth, constructed and displayed as part of our Design Block.



Might House team at the Seattle Design Festival