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Box 3

Members Program, 1959-1972

ADVOCACY ARCHITECTURE AND ADVOCACY PLANNING- THE COMMUNITY ADVOCACY  
DEPOT

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During this academic year of 1969-70, the Department of Architecture at the University of Illinois has developed a unique and significant opportunity for progress in the areas of teaching, research and service. The real beneficiaries of this opportunity are actually responsible for creating it. They are the members of the peer community of Champaign County and students within the Department of Architecture. The opportunity is known as the Community Advocacy Depot, or...C.A.D.

The Community Advocacy Depot is a community organization, not an extension of the University. Its executive board is composed of representatives of the peer community whose common goal is the betterment of the quality of life of their constituency. To this end, professional advice and assistance is sought from these disciplines which deal with social, ~~and environmental~~ economic and environmental problems. As a repository of such resources in this community, the University of Illinois has a relationship with C.A.D. The advocacy concept, by definition, entails the pursuit of the objectives and priorities which are established by the community. It has been recognized as essential that the success or failure of these pursuits be a result of the communities own thrust and momentum. Outside negotiated success will have a longevity commensurate with the presence of the

external pressure which produced it, and outside negotiated failure will only contribute to ~~an~~ <sup>an almost four</sup> hundred year old history of such failures and increase social divisiveness. This recognition has come through the personal experience and exposures of this author and through the interpretation of recent ~~United State~~ American history. Such current movements as "Black Pride", or "Black is Beautiful", underline this view. They point to the greatest resource of all, the potential of human dignity.

In establishing the background of ~~C.A.D.~~ <sup>the Community Advocacy Depot,</sup> therefore, it is important to perceive its <sup>community</sup> sponsorship, <sup>community</sup> representation, and executive direction. It is not a "neo-paternalistic" effort by the white community to redress grievances directed to it. Staff members of C.A.D. who come from outside the peer community do so only upon the invitation of <sup>the</sup> Executive Board.

It is important, for the foregoing reasons, to understand the relationship of the University with C.A.D. prior to any discussion of activities which led to the formation of C.A.D. and prior to assessment of educational aspects of a continuing involvement. Since its formation only four months ago, C.A.D. has already enlisted personnel from the students and staff in the areas of architecture, urban planning, law, commerce, social work, recreation, civil engineering, interior design and art. All of

these involvements have been on a voluntary and invitational basis. No one has been drafted, nor has anyone appointed himself to membership. Some curiosity seekers have come and gone but these individuals who comprise the regular C.A.D. staff have given of themselves greatly in time and energy and, I believe, found themselves engaged in a significant educational experience, ~~in the process.~~

~~The story of advocacy efforts across the country in the form of community design centers has~~

The streams of activity which led to the formation of C.A.D. are several and interdependent. They need not be dwelled upon at length since the focus here is upon problems and process, however they may be of some interest. During the first semester of 1969-70, fourth year Architectural Design undertook an analysis of the environment of Northwest Urbana. Analysis was intended to be followed by synthesis <sup>and hypothesis.</sup> The research process underscored the illogic of basing this activity in the classroom rather than ~~the~~ in the study area itself. Superficial "windshield surveys" were seen to evade entirely the values and attitudes of the residents of this environment. <sup>Further,</sup> The "user" was not represented in any prior documented studies of the area. The desire to locate our class ~~at~~ within the community was easily met in terms of finding suitable rental property. It was not met in one vital requirement.....no one ~~ask~~ had asked us to come there. Consequently, the study and solution formulations were conducted at the distance of the University with

severe limitations in the ability to properly assess the problem and equal inability to formulate long-range environmental potentials upon, user needs and aspirations. This circumstance, incidentally, typifies much architectural and planning process today, for reasons that will be discussed ~~later~~ in another writing.

In an effort to elicit community response to these efforts, for the purposes of conceptual evaluation, a group of leaders in the poor community ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> invited to meet with us one January evening in 200 Arch. The "jury" sessions that took place that night and the following night were a "beginning" in several ways for more than several people. The concerns expressed were genuine, the criticisms devastating, the issues clearly delineated. The students conveyed to this jury their sincerity in attempting to relate to a ~~social, eco~~ socio-economic-environmental problem, despite their lack of acceptable solutions. The jury also found in these design proposals, environments which they had never had the opportunity to experience and which were, to them, provocative and controversial. It was decided to build upon the dialogue that was begun with course work for the second semester.

Enter Mervin Miller, graduate student in architecture and urban planning. Actually, Mervin had entered many months earlier in an advisory role to the Concerned Citizens Committee in the north end.



As an adviser to C.C.C., Mervin had amply demonstrated his concern and personal commitment to its pursuits. In this process he had earned ~~the~~ the trust of the black community and was relied upon by its leadership for advice in environmental matters.

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The social invention, which a community design center is, thus had the circumstances necessary for its realization in this ~~realization in this~~ community. In addition to the technical personnel availability and focus upon the project area, the very essential element was the desire by community leadership, represented by John Lee Johnson, to channel these and other efforts in the form of the Community Advocacy Depot. With this, C.A.D. had its beginning at 118 North First Street, Champaign, Illinois, in March, 1969.

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C.A.D. began with no funds but <sup>with</sup> the greatest of aspirations. In its first few weeks, architectural students labored to rehabilitate the storefront space, knocking plaster off a brick wall, painting walls and ceilings, installing a new electrical system, rehanging doors and <sup>more importantly,</sup> becoming acquainted with the community which frequents <sup>and inhabits</sup> north First Street. Materials ~~were~~ were scrounged from businesses throughout the twin cities and personal bills were run up, <sup>by various individuals,</sup> By the end of April C.A.D. was well into a variety of community environmental problems and was two months behind in rent.

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At this point, the Central Illinois Chapter of the American Institute of Architects was approached on behalf of C.A.D. Recognizing the responsibility of the profession to deal with environmental problems in every sector of society and not only that sponsored by paying

clients, the A.I.A. membership voted to pick up ~~C.A.D.'s~~ the Community Advocacy Depot monthly rent. Participation by local practitioners was also enlisted. The A.I.A. considered this to be an opportunity for the profession to relate to a traditionally underserved population, but, in addition, saw in the C.A.D. an opportunity to introduce an increased awareness of real parameters in the educational process of future professionals. Again, the direction remained with the community leadership.

Other support has been attained and more appears forthcoming.

The existence of C.A.D. now depends not upon community sponsorship, physical facility, or financial support, but upon performance.

Performance is required of the community representatives who direct C.A.D., <sup>of the</sup> residents of the peer community who respond to the opportunities posed by the C.A.D., <sup>of the</sup> professional staff who advocate the communities interest, and <sup>of</sup> contemporary American society in the priorities which it establishes for itself.

Having reviewed the background which forms the basis under which a community design center must exist, <sup>and the formation of C.A.D.,</sup> it is appropriate to assess the educational implications which it extends. To those who have had experience in professional practice, several potentials will be immediately apparent. First, the sense of relevance which pervades this activity is inescapable. Apart from considerations of service, <sup>there</sup> this results in an intense involvement on the part of the student. Involvement, <sup>meaning a</sup> personal relationship, is the first

threshold of a learning experience. Other means may be attempted in the classroom, and they need not be dealt with here, but it has been found to be virtually automatic at C.A.D. Students have been able to comprehend the inputs and constraints of environmental problems by their first-hand confrontation. They have been able to sensitize to their own humanity by operating in a role which required such sensitivity for others. The minimal level upon which any student operated included the realization that the problem was real and that his performance would affect that problem in ~~an~~ a favorable or unfavorable way.

Secondly, the full range of architectural "determinants" have become manifest for the student. Many considerations offered regularly in classroom criticism have taken on real significance in this context. Design, which brings the full range of considerations together in a decision-making process, is real. The attempts at "content integration" which ~~are so~~ have had meager success ~~in~~ in past classroom experiments, and appear complicated in plans for the future, are realized with utter simplicity in the face of necessity. In the design "lab", as it exists at C.A.D., criticism has involved structural planning, <sup>calculation of</sup> ~~the~~ section modulus criteria for framing members, unit costs, <sup>estimates</sup> for assembly components, construction detailing, site planning, mechanical and electrical provisions, fenestration alternatives and prices, Building code requirements, zoning constraints and appeals, (students from C.A.D. presented a request for <sup>a</sup> change in zoning to the Urbana Planning Commission) resulting in a continuing and enlarged study in



Church, begun and left incomplete by an event two years ago, concert with that commission.), mortgage financing and prerequisite incomes, implementation strategies involving the federal government, private sector financing, bidding procedures, information gathering techniques, and more. All of these subjects have been discussed not to the exclusion of design but, rather, as they pertain to design. As determinants, they ~~do~~ impinge upon the visual result which is human environment.

The fact that many students were not conversant or experienced in these areas previously might suggest that their strength resided in a visual approach to design, long the hallmark of the "Ivory Tower".

This did not prove to be the case either. A particular concern of this writer has long been that the separation <sup>of</sup> visual from functional ((in the non-visual sense), determinants, ~~produces students~~ <sup>results in an</sup> ~~who align themselves~~ <sup>inability</sup> ~~are unable~~ to relate the two. In architecture they are related. Such an ambience is needed in the very beginning design courses.

Thirdly, as C.A.D. moves into actual construction of projects designed, the opportunity is presented to study and compare actual behavioral responses as opposed to intended or anticipated responses. The rehabilitated C.A.D. storefront has already performed as a test case in this regard. It has been an arena of human activity where behavior of participants, visitors and passersby ~~to~~ have been an area of interest in their own right. Clearly, it has demonstrated <sup>that</sup> human response is predicated upon reaction to the total environment, and ~~not~~ not only upon its physical and visual component.

Additionally, a children's playground north of Mt. Olive Baptist



Church, begun and left uncompleted by a class two years ago, has been brought to fruition by students from C.A.D. Only last evening, as this is ~~now~~ written, a sound and slide documentation of the park was presented in the park for the local community <sup>which participated in creating it.</sup> The amphitheater was in full use. Other immediate projects which will be realized include the rehabilitation of single family residences and the construction of new single family residences under the Department of Housing and Urban Development's program, FHA 235i. Involvement has <sup>also</sup> been attained in various stages of FHA 236 multi-family housing, as well.

The Research Board of the University of Illinois has acted favorably in response to a request for research support for the 1970-71 academic year, at the Community Advocacy Dept. This support will include the funding of two graduate assistantships to be assigned to C.A.D. One of these assistantships will be awarded to Lee Turner who has been designated as Director <sup>of the C.A.D.</sup> ~~of the~~ <sup>this action is significant.</sup> graduate student in architecture, who also is black, It presages a long overdue participation by the black community, not only as clientele but as professionals. Through a training and vocational counselling program to be conducted by C.A.D., it is hoped that further progress can be made in this area.

As a community organization which <sup>has</sup> ~~is~~ oriented to community problems, C.A.D. activity <sup>has been</sup> ~~is~~ not tied to a University or any other calendar. Work did not stop for the student strike of Spring, 1970, nor did it stop during finals week, and it continues through the summer

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irrespective of <sup>the</sup> Summer School calendar. Perhaps some measure of the value of this activity to students can be derived from the fact that their involvement has persisted through each of the aforementioned diversions. Wherever possible, it <sup>has been</sup> intended to relate C.A.D. activity to academic areas where overlapping content is perceived and where, in fact, the experience with this content at C.A.D. ~~can~~ offers the greater educational advantage. As in the spring semester of 1969-70, students involved at C.A.D. receive academic credit for this ~~work~~ study.

Among the already accomplished activities has been the review of proposals for the Bradley Park Apartments, 116 units of housing for moderate income families under FHA 236 as sponsored by the ~~Nestle~~ Northend Progressive Development Corporation and Interfaith. Additionally, ~~the~~ C.A.D. has represented the communities interest in the review of Turnkey I proposals for the development of 120 units of Public Housing by seven developers, <sup>It has also reviewed</sup> ~~as well as~~ ~~or~~ single family housing by various developers under the FHA 235 program. Each of these projects has been <sup>studied</sup> ~~reviewed~~ in the light of the needs of ~~these~~ these families that will occupy them. The results have been made available to the financing agencies and sponsors involved.

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Plans for continuing C.A.D. activity include making proposals relating to the design of low-cost housing units utilizing factory produced components. Also, work is beginning on the preparation of a comprehensive plan, (physical, social and ~~economic~~)

economic), for the northern section of Champaign-Urbana. C.A.D., in conjunction with facilities and expertise from the Department of Civil Engineering at the University of Illinois, will produce a PERT network analysis for the construction of a community shopping center. C.A.D. has advised and will continue to advise tenants of housing projects on the formation of groups for self-help. Among forthcoming projects are proposals for needed urban recreation centers and local parks. And the list could go on and on.

D.A.D. is flexible and open-ended as it must be in order to respond to changing conditions and <sup>to incorporate the knowledge of its</sup> evolving expertise.

This documentation only serves to record a moment and ~~to~~ to suggest the promise of the future. It seems appropriate that the Department of Architecture also continue its flexible and open-ended posture in order that it is able to respond to comparable opportunities in teaching, research and service as they emerge.

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