

**AIA VANCOUVER ARCHITECTS LAUNCH COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM TO
BENEFIT VANCOUVER**

The Vancouver USA Streetcar Feasibility Study is part of new nationwide "Blueprint for America" program created to mark the 150th anniversary of The American Institute of Architects.

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For Immediate Release

Vancouver, Washington, May 25, 2006—AIA Vancouver was recently awarded a \$15,000 grant by The American Institute of Architects (AIA) in Washington, D.C. to launch the **Vancouver USA Streetcar Feasibility Study**. Streetcars were once a part of Vancouver's history and AIA Vancouver sees this study as a starting point to link our heritage with our future. The City of Vancouver has been invited to partner in drafting a shared vision. The initial plan is to introduce a small and local streetcar loop system within the downtown vicinity that provides opportunities for smart, efficient, and sustainable expansion in the years to come. As part of a new nationwide community service program of the AIA titled "Blueprint for America: A Gift to the Nation," AIA Vancouver offers this initiative as a gift to the community. The AIA members' participation is provided at no fee.

The Blueprint for America is the primary program of AIA150, a yearlong observance in 2007 that will mark the 150th anniversary of the founding of the AIA. The Blueprint program was created to offer citizens in communities across America an opportunity to celebrate their community heritage, address emerging architectural challenges and trends, and find their voices to help make their vision real for beautiful, safe, and livable communities.

The AIA Vancouver initiative will use a visioning process to engage and assist the citizens of Vancouver in shaping their vision of their community. The re-introduction of a streetcar system to Vancouver would provide immense public transportation benefits and an opportunity to bring vibrancy and increased foot traffic to local businesses and downtown Vancouver. The streetcar system will be strategically located to unify currently planned amenities, improve Vancouver's livability, and provide an alternative transportation option while encouraging community partnerships. In addition, the resulting study information will tie into City and regional evaluation of transportation and transit systems to serve the core of Vancouver.

"We look forward to working side-by-side with other community members to envision ways of improving the livability and sustainability of the city in which we all live and work. Providing such a service is why many of us became Architects in the first place, to turn a community's vision into reality for the benefit of many generations to come."

-Don Luthardt, AIA Vancouver

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“We applaud AIA Vancouver for seizing this opportunity to demonstrate how good design makes a difference,” said national AIA President Kate Schwennsen, FAIA. “The Blueprint for America is primarily about a *vision* of what’s possible for communities. It’s about helping communities see what is possible when architects, mayors and other civic leaders, and fellow citizens work together to tackle such issues as brownfields, accessibility for the disabled, affordable housing, sprawl, and environmental sustainability,” she added.

A large and diverse community group will be invited to participate in a visioning process 2-day symposium. We have found that by getting community members involved with weighing-in on decisions, they have contributed to shaping their future community. The visioning process concludes with a wrap up, a discussion of next steps, and an opportunity for additional comments to be evaluated later. The results of the visioning process are presented to the entire community through various publications and/or news media.

For more information and future updates regarding the Vancouver USA Streetcar Feasibility Study, please visit the AIA Vancouver Web site www.aiavancouver.org.

A key requirement of the Blueprint for America initiatives is that they are guided by the AIA's "Ten Principles for Livable Communities," which challenge architects to demonstrate how good design is an investment and that well-designed communities attract and benefit residents, businesses, and visitors, and meet the needs of present and future generations alike.

Blueprint for America initiatives will evolve over the next three years and beyond. In 2006 AIA members begin engaging local leaders, defining the issues, and preparing to launch the eventual program. Local AIA component initiatives will be developed in 2007, the anniversary year. In 2008 the AIA national component will compile initiatives and release the national Blueprint for America.

Celebrating the Past, Designing the Future

In 2007 the AIA will celebrate its 150th anniversary. The theme is "Celebrating the Past, Designing the Future." However, the main focus of the 150th anniversary will be the Blueprint for America; a nationwide initiative empowering citizens to share in creating a vision for their communities' design priorities.

Celebratory events will include National Architecture Week, April 9-14, 2007, in which AIA architects across the country will concurrently host such events as architecture-related lectures, exhibits, K-12 programs, and architecture week proclamation ceremonies. For more information on the contributions of AIA architects and the role of the AIA in helping create the built environment of America over the past 15 decades, visit the AIA Web site www.aia.org.

About the Blueprint for America

The Blueprint for America is a nationwide initiative through which AIA architects engage with fellow citizens, mayors, other professionals, and local government officials to collaborate on a community service program that addresses a community's distinct need. Through their state and local components, AIA architects will propose, convene, and participate in initiatives that utilize community engagement, in a collaborative process, and quality design as keys to improving a community's livability. Blueprint initiatives are a gift to the community from the members of the AIA, and the members' participation in the initiative is provided at no fee.

About The American Institute of Architects

For almost 150 years, members of The American Institute of Architects have worked with each other and their communities to create more valuable, healthy, secure, and sustainable buildings and cityscapes. AIA members have access to the right people, knowledge, and tools to create better design, and through such resources and access, they help clients and communities make their visions real. www.aia.org

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