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## AIA Minnesota's Search for Shelter Weekend-Long Design Effort Helps Four Local Non-Profits



**MINNEAPOLIS, MN** The American Institute of Architects Minnesota Housing Advocacy Committee, which focuses on affordable housing, hosted its 22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Search for Shelter Design Charrette on January 23-25, 2009. This year, thirty volunteers worked for over twenty hours each on four projects benefiting local non-profit organizations.

The purpose of the annual weekend event is to aid nonprofit organizations that provide housing for the disadvantaged, homeless, those on low-income or seeking safety, and those in need. Building projects submitted by these agencies, which lack the funds to hire an architect, were given a weekend of intense planning and development by volunteer multi-disciplinary design teams. The teams were comprised of architects, interior designers, landscape architects and students in these disciplines. Each team produced a set of graphic ideas and plans for the clients to use as a visual tool to acquire funding, educate others, or serve as preliminary building plans. Copies of the graphics produced at the charrette are available to download at [www.aia-mn.org/int\\_committees/housing.cfm](http://www.aia-mn.org/int_committees/housing.cfm).

The charrette was held at Rapson Hall, home of the College of Design at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities campus. Friday evening began with an opening presentation by Architecture for Humanity Minnesota on the "Homeless Locker Project," a design-build intervention that grew out of a 2008 Search for Shelter project. On Saturday, the design teams visited their project sites, designed all day long and stayed late into the evening hours. The weekend concluded with a program at noon on Sunday, when the design teams presented their finished project designs to each respective agency and each other.

Participating non-profit agencies, including a local homeless shelter, a neighborhood association, a home for men leaving the penitentiary system, and



a foundation planning a center for homeless youth, were pleased with what was accomplished in one weekend. One client noted that the charrette was “universally positive” and that they were “very impressed with the professionalism and skill” of their team members. Applications for projects for next year’s charrette will be accepted starting in the fall of 2009.

*For more information about the event, please contact Alysia Ulfers, AIA Minnesota Housing Advocacy Committee liaison at [ulfers@aia-mn.org](mailto:ulfers@aia-mn.org), 612-338-6763.*

The French word for cart, *charrette* refers to an architecture or art event with a timed deadline for finishing a project. The term is said to originate from the École des Beaux Arts in Paris during the 19th century, where instructors would walk around with a cart, or “charrette,” to collect final drawings as students scrambled to complete their work.

*The American Institute of Architects Minnesota, founded in 1892, is dedicated to strengthening our communities, improving our built environment and providing exceptional design. For more information on the organization and Minnesota architectural firms, reference our Web site at [www.aia-mn.org](http://www.aia-mn.org) and pick up a copy of Architecture Minnesota, the award-winning architectural magazine of the Midwest.*