

# Minnesota Design Team Information



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[www.aia-mn.org/get-involved/committees/minnesota-design-team](http://www.aia-mn.org/get-involved/committees/minnesota-design-team)

**Minnesota Design Team (MDT)'s Mission:** *To use design and community development principles to help Minnesota communities—particularly those in rural areas—develop and act upon a shared vision of their future.*

Minnesota Design Team, a committee of the American Institute of Architects Minnesota, has three main objectives:

- To create awareness of the role of design in the development of communities.
- To help with the preservation of a community's identity by constructing a sustainable vision using existing assets.
- To demonstrate a commitment to community participation and grassroots initiatives.

Since its inception in 1983, MDT has assisted more than 100 communities in establishing a community vision. MDT is led by a volunteer committee and is comprised of more than 200 volunteers from a broad range of disciplines including architecture, landscape architecture, planning, and other related professions.

Communities request MDT program visits for many reasons, such as if the community is updating its comprehensive plan; anticipating major change (such as a highway realignment); or suffering from stagnated growth and looking for outside expertise to help recognize the community's strengths and opportunities.

**Application deadlines:** August 15 for a spring visit, and January 15 for a fall visit.

**Visit cost:** Typically \$7,500, depending on the community's needs. Fee is subject to change. Communities should also be prepared to invest significant time and additional costs for the purposes of providing food and lodging to volunteers. See details of expectations in the MDT workbook.

**This is a summary of the MDT workbook.** The entire workbook should be reviewed thoroughly by the community prior to submitting an application for a visit. Download the MDT workbook at [www.aia-mn.org/wp-content/uploads/MDT\\_Workbook.pdf](http://www.aia-mn.org/wp-content/uploads/MDT_Workbook.pdf).

Please note the workbook is in the process of being updated. Please contact Ann Mayhew at [mayhew@aia-mn.org](mailto:mayhew@aia-mn.org) with any questions.

*The American Institute of Architects Minnesota, founded in 1892, is the professional association for architects in the state of Minnesota. As a state component of AIA National, with three local chapters, AIA Minnesota has nearly 2,300 members and a staff of nine professionals. AIA Minnesota provides services to all chapters, produces a regional convention, publishes the award-winning magazine Architecture MN, lobbies on behalf of the profession at the state legislature, and delivers continuing education to all members.*

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## What is the Minnesota Design Team?

The Minnesota Design Team was established in 1983 as the Governor's Design Team, part of the Minnesota Planning Agency (later called the Department of Trade and Economic Development). In 1992, the organization's name was changed to Minnesota Design Team (MDT), and it became an independent nonprofit organization with support from AIA Minnesota. In 2020, it officially became a committee and program of AIA Minnesota.

### The MDT Team:

MDT teams are made up of volunteers who take time from their busy work and personal lives to assist communities. They offer their time and expertise for several reasons, such as a desire to help improve rural communities and enjoyment of working in a team atmosphere with like-minded professionals. Sometimes, volunteers or their family members are from the community they are visiting, or a similar rural community.

A typical MDT visit team consists of two experienced team leaders and 12–15 program volunteers, depending on the community's needs. The team will be made up of volunteers with various professional backgrounds and varying MDT visit experiences. Larger teams may include student volunteers. Program volunteers are recruited to match the specific needs of the community.

### What the Community May Expect:

MDT will provide an oral and visual presentation on the Saturday of the visit. The presentation typically consists of a PowerPoint slideshow of about 20 poster-sized drawings and diagrams produced by the team during the visit. MDT team leaders will bring the posters back to be scanned, saved to flash drives, and photocopied into 8.5" x 11" handouts. The original boards, flash drive, and ten sets of handouts will be sent to the community for their use.

## The Minnesota Design Team Process

**STEP 1** – A community's first step is to download and review the MDT workbook, found online at [www.aia-mn.org/wp-content/uploads/MDT\\_Workbook.pdf](http://www.aia-mn.org/wp-content/uploads/MDT_Workbook.pdf). Communities may contact Ann Mayhew at [mayhew@aia-mn.org](mailto:mayhew@aia-mn.org) with further questions. If desired, a community may ask if an MDT representative is available to speak with or visit the community to explain the organization, application and preparation process, and more in-depth.

**STEP 2** – The community must submit a complete application. The application form, along with instructions, is included in the workbook—see website link above. A completed application will include the application form, letters of support, and photographs and maps of the community.

**STEP 3** – The MDT committee will review the application to (1) accept the application, (2) accept the application with conditions, or (3) decline the application. An application accepts with conditions may mean that portions of the application are incomplete or that more support representing the larger community is needed. MDT will contact the community regarding their application's acceptance status within 60 days after the application received.

**STEP 4** – After the application is approved, MDT will conduct a screening call and/or visit with community leaders. This provides an opportunity for MDT to share how a weekend visit works and for the community to ask questions.

**STEP 5** – After the screening call and/or visit is complete, and the community is found to be a good candidate, MDT will send a contract to the community outlining MDT's and the community's obligations. The community signs the contract and submits it to AIA Minnesota, along with a check for one-half of the agreed upon total payment. Once the signed agreement and check is received, the visit dates will be confirmed, and the planning process can begin.

**STEP 6** – MDT team leaders are recruited and they begin planning the makeup of professions needed for the team based on the community's needs. Team leaders serve as the community's primary contact in preparation for the weekend visit and communicate with community leaders throughout the process.

**STEP 7** – It typically takes a community six months to prepare for a weekend visit. During this time, the community organizes into workgroups which will (1) recruit host families to house MDT volunteers, (2) publicize the visit, (3) fundraise for needed expenses, (4) organize community background information, surveys, and presentations, (5) organize a community tour, and (6) reserve the facilities to be used during the visit. At the same time, MDT team leaders will recruit team leaders, create base maps of the community, and assist the community with preparation.

**STEP 8** – MDT weekend visit is conducted. *See next page for details.*

**STEP 9** – After the weekend visit, MDT will conduct a follow-up conversation with the community. This may be a visit, call, or online discussion. The purpose of this follow-up is for MDT to review the community's progress and provide guidance and advice. The follow-up includes the community's coordinating committee, the MDT team leaders, and a small number of MDT team members.

## A Typical Weekend Visit Schedule

### THURSDAY

7:00–9:00 pm MDT team arrives at the reception to meet their host families.

### FRIDAY

8:00–8:30 am Light breakfast provided to the MDT team.

8:30–11:30 am Community presentations to the MDT team to further orientate team members to the community. Topics may include city governance, relationships with surrounding communities, schools, community and religious organizations, housing types, local businesses, economic development, environmental issues, transportation issues, etc.

12:00–1:30 pm MDT team members are pre-assigned in pairs to have lunch with community members at different local establishments.

1:30–3:00 pm MDT team is led on community tour. May be by walking, bus, and/or boat.

4:00–5:30 pm MDT team meeting.

5:30–6:30 pm Community potluck dinner.

6:30–8:00 pm Community town hall meeting facilitated by MDT. Purpose is to help community members in itemizing and prioritizing the community's needs.

8:00–9:00 pm MDT team debriefing.

### SATURDAY

8:00–8:30 am Light breakfast provided to the MDT team.

8:30 am–6:00 pm MDT team work session. Lunch and dinner provided to team members as they find time.

6:30–8:00 pm MDT team presents to the community. (100–200 community members expected.)

8:00–8:30 pm Community Q&A with the MDT team.

8:30–9:00 pm MDT team debriefing.

### SUNDAY

8:30–9:30 am Optional breakfast with MDT team.