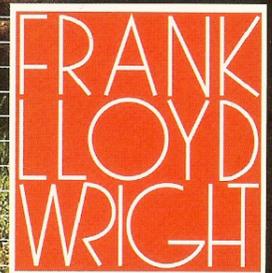


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# QUARTERLY



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## APPRENTICES WORK WITH R/UDAT TEAM

*(Above) This generalized R/UDAT sketch shows enhanced street and bridge improvements for Main Street in uptown Lake Havasu City. The now undeveloped barren drainage course known as the Pima Wash would be transformed with new hike/bike trails and Sonoran desert landscaping. New building development in the sketch is oriented to Main Street and also to the new linear park of the Pima Wash.*

When James Logan Abell, FAIA, LA, received the call from the American Institute of Architects in Washington, D.C., telling him he had been selected to be on a Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team (R/UDAT) for Lake Havasu City, Arizona, he knew it would be a landmark event. Since 1979, Abell & Associates Architects Ltd. has focused on the integration of architecture, landscape architecture, and urban design. Abell, an adjunct professor at the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, said, “The urban design workshops are nationally revered and almost always bring fresh thinking and renewal to the cities they serve. And along with the honor to serve on such a prestigious panel, I immediately thought of my

students as a resource to the cause. Other R/UDAT teams I’ve served on use the mapping and drawing skills of architecture students, and more than once an idea or perspective sketch by a student has made its way into the final recommendations. So I knew that this faculty member and three master’s candidates from Taliesin West could have a profound effect on the outcome.”

Lake Havasu City was founded in 1962 when Robert McCullough bought a stretch of the Colorado riverfront some fourteen miles north of the Parker Dam and began developing it. In the years since its founding, the town grew to 50,000 people, complete with suburban-style strip development, but a livable downtown area was never built. “There is no identifiable town core, building heights are overly restrictive and prohibit loft living, and the downtown area was struggling with not only identity, but also issues of parking, traffic, density, and how to entice tourism,” said Abell. Visitors to the Colorado River and the London Bridge—which McCullough imported as a signature feature of the community—would rarely travel just one mile uphill to experience what little downtown Lake Havasu City could offer tourists.

Abell, apprentices from the Wright school, and other R/UDAT team members toured the town, listened to the townspeople and other stakeholders, and then began their efforts to create a new vision for Lake Havasu City. “‘Downtown’ was renamed ‘uptown,’” said Abell, “and with that name, a new district of distinct character started to take shape.”

In their schemes for the community, the team created new mixed-use developments where living, working, exercise, and entertainment could

take place all in a central core. How to connect to the surrounding neighborhoods was sorted out, along with plans for parks, nature trails, a splash fountain for toddlers, and civic sculpture, wall murals in bas-relief, and native landscape selections that would all contribute to the story of river ecology and a celebration of the area's uniqueness.

"R/UDAT is about the improvement of the lives and well-being of a community through good design," said Victor Sidy, dean of the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture. "This was a great lesson for our apprentices."

The participating apprentices, all second-year M. Arch candidates, were Christian Butler, Norfolk, Virginia; Michael DesBarres, Madison, Wisconsin; and Ebbie Azimi, Tehran, Iran. "This was an arduous and intensive mission," said DesBarres. "The pressure was on,

*(Below) R/UDAT team members, including apprentices from the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, at the London Bridge in Lake Havasu City, Arizona.*



and the public scrutiny of our ideas was huge. I had never faced this in such a public forum before...it was a fantastic experience. Working closely for five days with not only prominent architects and urban designers but also a planning director, urban redevelopment economist, a developer, and a professional renderer was a top-notch educational experience."

Abell noted the town's acceptance of the R/UDAT action list was tremendous. "The city council has already taken some action to adopt our recommendations, and four committees are working on the main civic renewal issues. This landmark effort will be a model for future outreach efforts by our students and faculty, both in terms of product for this project's video and book, and also in terms of outcome. Moving this community forward toward urban quality and successfully spurring them into action was a huge victory. It is also a clear mandate to continue our community design outreach efforts. I'm thrilled that we had such an impact on Lake Havasu City, and the Frank Lloyd



*(Above) Hunter Gee, AIA, R/UDAT team leader, and Ebbie Azimi, Taliesin, Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture apprentice.*

Wright School of Architecture is seen as a leader in urban design and livable communities."

The R/UDAT collaboration underscores the new initiatives the school is taking to be a resource to the architectural profession and to the broader community. "The school is interested in developing synergetic relationships with other communities and organizations similar to our work with R/UDAT," said Sidy.



*Taliesin apprentices Christian Butler and Michael DesBarres.*