

CITY COLLEGE ARCHITECTURE CENTER

STRATEGIC PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strategic Plan Report

The Strategic Plan (SP Report) describes seven dimensions of strategic planning to determine implementation steps. These are 1) external influences 2) momentum 3) point of reference 4) attitude 5) action taking experience and 6) effective balance. Combined they produce a situational audit of CCAC's action taking positions as the seventh component.

External Influence

A briefly assembled Policy and Advisory Board (2006) helped to define the strength of *external influences* on CCAC services using the six major dimensions of an environmental scan. The most exacerbating of these influences are contradictory messages from within the larger university system. One calls for innovative sources of independently raised funding to facilitate combinations of student, faculty, and staff in the provision of pro bono research, planning and architecture services and the second demands traditional tenure track behavior from the CCAC director where service to the academy alone holds the higher priority. Nevertheless, the unrelenting external influence on CCAC clearly remains the demand for research, planning, and design help from the community-base. Based on preliminary interviews, the City College Architecture Center is recognized as thorough, professional and results oriented service, but it is also mistakenly expected to be 1) very low-cost and/or free by the community, 2) non-competitive by professional associations, and 3) entrepreneurial by the philanthropic community. CCAC and CCNY require a resolution of these contradictions prior to effective action taking.

Momentum

The past work of CCAC (1985-2005) defines its *momentum* as one of longevity and commitment. Conversely, its sustainability as a viable enterprise depends greatly on its last five years of work. CCAC's well-regarded history of professional service to community organizations on issues of community development remains well recognized and respected. The sense of *kinship* is profound and mutually supportive between the socioeconomic background of CCAC staff, its students and the long list of community organizations served.

Reference Point

CCAC's *point of reference* in this field embodies its mission to serve all communities that seek knowledge and advice on questions of community development, through planning, architecture, and urban design. The SP Report process produced the phrase, "build great neighborhoods" to embody this idea in a staff workshop.

Attitude and Action Taking

The strategic plan describes options for implementation built on CCAC's *attitude* about the positive/negative influence of planning and design disciplines on social and economic change. In brief, CCAC's mission demands the implementation of small demonstration projects revealing symbolic if not extensively tangible proof of a community-based capacity to implement capital improvements that serve progressive social goals. A detailed summary of CCAC's tradition of service and current service capacity has been developed.

Balance

On one level, CCAC effectively selects targets for action in response to building the capacity of community-based organizations to serve weak economic markets. The Advisory Board proved to be a cost effective resource to express the challenge of sustaining an *effective balance* between the provision of pro bono planning and architecture services with the external demands of the "academy" and the "community".

Measures to fill this "means gap" to date have been defined by the social and economic experience of the community. The strategic opportunity is to sustain CCAC as an educational resource within CCNY that is reactive to the learning needs in the community while serving demands to become more proactive in capital development activity. To stimulate investment, CCAC has developed effective planning and architectural tools for evaluating existing social and physical conditions and expressing the potential for community economic development through design development processes including joint-venture selection on a case-by-case basis.

Audit

CCAC has not engaged in high-pressure actions to achieve desired outcomes with the university, the profession, or community base. This has contributed to a form of "drifting" - a low level of energy within the organization on the strategic agenda. The SP Report identifies a set of confidential targets for aggressive acquisition as needed and when required. To succeed, a drive for a more innovative business model within the academy has begun. CCAC is a university-based planning and architectural practice, but it does not have to remain so. With this view, the plan outlines a set of objectives that will increase CCAC's ability to serve customers whose vulnerability in the market is well known, but whose inherent capacity for social change is its most powerful asset.