



Architects International Professional Exchange – a visit from Tübingen, Germany

Eating hotdogs, marveling at the DIA Rivera mural, Gunnar Birketts underground library, photographing the Detroit River from the top of the Guardian building or paddling on the Huron in Ann Arbor, were just a few of the highlights from the sister city and AIA exchange this June.



On June 15, 17 visitors from Tübingen, Germany came to Ann Arbor as part of a professional exchange. Planning for this event began over a year ago and involved the Friends of Ann Arbor, Tübingen Sister City Exchange Organization, AIA Huron Valley and the AIA MI Committee on the Environment. From the beginning, German Architect Christophe Melchers and Ann Arbor Architect Celeste Allen

Novak had developed a focus based on sustainability and the triple bottom line. The visitors expressed a deep interest in seeing both Detroit and Ann Arbor and learning about how we were designing for our shrinking city, Detroit as well as planning for new sustainable initiatives in Ann Arbor.



Picked up by schoolbus at the airport, the visitors were rapidly assimilated into American culture by host families, many of whom were AIA architects. The visitors included the Mayor for Building and Development, Curt Soehlke, architects, international lighting designers, university architectural faculty and planners from Germany as well as teachers, writers and artists. Five days later, this group had canoed the Huron River, picnicked with numerous Ann Arbor architects, met with Ann Arbor's planners, bicycled the DeQuindre Cut, walked the new Bagley

Bridge, and toured the Guardian building and DTE's new headquarters as they focused on learning about sustainability in American cities.



Numerous architects and planners were involved with this event. The kickoff welcome picnic was attended by numerous AIA Huron

Valley chapter members and also included a surprise visit by one of the founders Kieth Weiland. AIA Huron Valley's president, Jan Culbertson arranged for meetings with the City and a discussion and presentation by the University of Michigan Planner, Sue Gott and the Deputy Director of the Graham Environmental Sustainability Institute Drew Horning. Architectural historian, Grace Shackman led tours of the city and also provided commentary on Detroit architects on the bus into Detroit.



The visitors toured the UM Campus, Ross Business School, Hill Auditorium as well as several Architect's offices. On the tour of the Michigan Theatre, architect Rolf Bickelmann played the historic organ. Because of a request to learn more about food and sustainability, the visitors had a presentation by the Food Gatherers in Ann Arbor as well as a tour of Gleaners in Detroit.

Architect Corey Levigne, of inForm Studio showed off the firm's award winning Traverwood Branch Library branch in Ann Arbor and also led a tour of the new Bagley Bridge earlier in the week.

At Traverwood, AIA Michigan Executive Director, Barb Sido, Regional Director Glen LeRoy and AIA Michigan Treasurer Tamara Burns and former AIA National president Gene Hopkins, spoke about the state and national architectural community. The Ann Arbor events included presentations on planning in Germany by architects Curt Soehlke and Ruediger Krisch and these will be replayed on Cable Access as part of the library program.

Celeste Allen Novak arranged the tours in Detroit where numerous members of AIA Detroit were involved as hosts. Anne Cox and Jeffrey Gaines provided a walking tour from Albert Kahn's offices to the Argonaut building. AIA Detroit president Joe Veryser welcomed the guests to Detroit. Mike McCulloch, UM doctoral student, arranged for lunch at Slows and a welcome from Phil Cooley. He also set up a presentations by UM professor, Eric Dueweke that included UM faculty from the UM Detroit Design Center and representatives from the Community Development Advocates of Detroit.



Architectural writer, John Gallagher spoke on "Re-imagining Detroit in a lecture that has been videotaped for future use, at the renovated Madonna University's new Welcome Center (another Kahn building.) Norm Cox of Greenway

Colaborative along with Cheryl Zuellig and Brian Charlton of JJR, led a morning bike ride in Detroit along the new riverside park, through the DeQuindre cut.



This bike ride included a visit to the Mies Townhomes, and a very warm welcome from Lynn and Ed Frances. They also saw the Heidelberg Project, met with the Gleaners and saw at ground level

both what was new as well as abandoned in Detroit. They were hosted in Detroit to dinner at developer Ernie Zachary and Diane Van Buren's Indian Village Home and met with additional Detroit architects, AIA Detroit vice-president Frank Arvan and UDM's Steve Vogel. Mark Nikita discussed his work, the Guardian building and the designer latte art from his new coffee shop. Jeff Hausman gave the architects a tour of the SmithGroup offices. A final tour of the new DTE's headquarters was provided by architect Mike Kirk and Steve Ghedert.

This intense, five day celebration and professional exchange left a lasting friendship among the participants. The German visitors left Ann Arbor to visit Chicago and because of the AIA network, AIA Chicago was able to arrange a visit to Chicago's planning department as well as suggest architectural tours. The rich conversations about sustainability and planning continue through exchanged emails and resources. These issues include discussions about city planning, historic preservation practices, adaptive re-use, urban agriculture, development and social equity as well as food, Jazz, guitars, quilting, and art.



Tübingen Architect Christoph Melchers sent the Chapter this thank you note: "It is hard to decide which highlights were better than others. Everyone in our group was overwhelmed by your great hospitality and your perfectly planned and carried out program. We learned a lot about what's going on in the US, especially in Michigan, A2 and Detroit. The large variety of talks, sites, architecture, wonderful gatherings with excellent food, beginning with the picnic and ending at the TeaHaus, impressed us and none of us had expected such a broad perspective and great hospitality. ...Now we hope that you will come to Tübingen next year. We are not sure if we will be able to meet your standards for the exchange but we promise to try hard."



The next step is to gather the architects and planners from Ann Arbor and Detroit to go to Germany as a return exchange. They will live with host families and continue the conversation about sustainability, or begin new conversations about design and planning in Germany. We will be scheduling a meeting on this event in late summer or early fall. Those interested should contact Jan Culbertson, President, AIA Huron Valley. jculbertson@a3c.com.