

WAYS TO VOLUNTEER

Project Volunteer

The majority of our volunteers come from the professions of architecture, landscape architecture and planning. NDC also uses the skills of economic development specialists, graphic designers, marketing specialists, engineers, construction cost estimators, community artists, and construction industry professionals.



The Neighborhood Design Center engages in a wide variety of community development projects, such as affordable housing, commercial façade enhancements, community arts projects, development of open space planning and graphic design projects for non-profit organizations.

Volunteers are assigned to particular projects based on professional qualifications, skills, and interests.

Once a volunteer or a team of volunteers has been selected for a particular project, their duties will be outlined and determined through a meeting with the client and NDC staff. These duties might include reviewing existing building conditions, evaluating land uses that are significant to the project, facilitating a charrette or community workshop, or preparing plans and materials that will assist the community in its redevelopment. On some projects, a senior level volunteer might be matched with a junior level volunteer to ensure quality and provide a learning experience.

Finally, NDC has many opportunities for students to become involved as volunteers. Most likely, you will work in a group with fellow colleagues on projects that necessitate a team effort. NDC staff and your instructor will coordinate these projects. Students can also work outside the classroom setting. If this is the case, students will be grouped with senior volunteers.

Committee Member

NDC also has a need for volunteers to participate on committees that focus on the development of the organization. This is an opportunity to guide the organization, develop new programs, and better serve communities. The committees will call upon various professional skills and require different levels of commitment. These include:

- **Standing Committees**
These are chaired by Board members and include Finance and Administration, Fundraising, Programs, and Volunteer Development.
- **Program and Advisory Committees**
These committees focus on program specific services such as community planning, youth art, and the Prince George's County office.
- **The Project Review Team**
The committee draws upon the skills and expertise of senior level designers and professionals from various fields to review NDC projects. Project Review is an excellent opportunity for volunteers to gain valuable feedback and insight during the early stages of a project. Committee membership can be a regular commitment or as an "on-call" basis.

PROJECT PROCESS AND VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES

Project Commitment

NDC will contact you when your interest and expertise match the requirements of a new project. You can also contact NDC if you want to volunteer. We might not be able to provide you with a project immediately, but we will contact you as soon as we identify a project where your interest and expertise can be well utilized. Following your acceptance of the project, NDC will provide you with information and materials that outline the needs of the client.

Remember that committing to an NDC project requires that you participate to the fullest extent possible—taking on tasks, attending all necessary meetings, and participating until the final product is in the client's hands.

Meetings

Once you have committed to a project, NDC will schedule an initial meeting between the volunteer or team of volunteers, staff, and the client. Whenever possible, the meeting is held at the project site. The purpose of this meeting is to:

- Allow you to acquaint yourself with the client and the project needs
- Work with NDC staff in helping the client determine the program and how it will be achieved
- Establish, with the client, a preliminary time line for completion of the project

NDC staff will arrange subsequent meetings between you and the client. Whenever possible, NDC staff will attend the meetings. In the event that an NDC representative is unable to attend, please be sure to brief NDC's staff contact regarding any new issues or decisions discussed at the meeting. Should you need to postpone a scheduled meeting, contact NDC as soon as possible to reschedule.

Scope of Services

NDC staff will prepare a "Scope of Services", a document that outlines the strategy and timeline agreed upon during the initial meeting with the client and establishes who will be responsible for project requirements. You and the client will be asked to review the document for accuracy. The final Scope of Services will be forwarded to you and to the client for signature.

Project Review

As a standard practice in order to maintain quality, volunteers with limited experience will be asked to present an early draft of their proposal to NDC's Project Review Committee or at any other time they desire feedback from other professionals. The Committee is comprised of experienced professionals from NDC's pool of volunteers who review the status of projects and offer guidance when necessary. In some projects we might pair a less experienced volunteer with senior project mentors, but any volunteer is welcome to request this peer review process.

Presentations to Client

You will present drafts of your proposals to the client periodically, and be given the opportunity to make adjustments based on feedback.

The Final Product

Increasingly, work is being completed on the computer, so it is important to work out with the NDC staff person what form the final product will take. The client may request a CD Rom or digital images. It is essential to make sure that format is consistent with the client's capabilities. Please work closely to determine the most appropriate final format. With respect to plans and layouts, some projects may require an 8 1/2" x 11" format to allow easy reproduction for distribution to the community. Another project may require a 36" x 24" board to allow the client to make a funding presentation. The final copy will be submitted to the client, and a rendering and file copy to NDC. You may be asked to provide a preliminary cost estimate for the implementation of your concept. If you are unable to do this, NDC can ask another volunteer to provide a cost estimate.

Volunteer Hours

At the beginning of your project you will be given a volunteer form to keep track of all hours expended on a project. The Neighborhood Design Center and the community client can count these hours as in-kind contributions toward requirements for matching funds to continue the vital work of the respective organizations. Upon completion of the project you will be sent a volunteer service form. Be sure to record all the time spent on a project, including travel time and meetings. Please complete and return the form to NDC promptly.

ADDITIONAL VOLUNTEER POLICIES

Services Provided and Liability

NDC's work is intended to provide conceptual information and to assist design and planning. Architectural and engineering drawings are limited to conceptual design and are not intended, nor should they be used, for construction. Neither NDC nor its volunteers assume responsibility or liability for the technical accuracy of drawings, nor for any unauthorized use.

Limitation of Client Obligation

Beyond the services you provide to the client through NDC, the client may choose to hire you or your firm to provide the construction documents for the project, but is not obligated to do so.

Expenses

Any expenses incurred during the project are the responsibility of the client (such as photo processing and reproductions). Volunteers must save all receipts and submit them to NDC for reimbursement; NDC will then invoice the client. Expenses exceeding \$25 must be pre-approved by the client.

Tax Information

You can deduct travel and supply expenses on itemized personal income tax returns if not reimbursed. The IRS does not allow volunteer time as a tax deduction.

Removing Yourself from a Project

Should extraordinary professional or personal circumstances prevent you from being able to fulfill your obligation to the client, contact NDC immediately. If this happens, call us as soon as possible. Submit current drafts and other project materials you have collected (along with a completed volunteer service form), and NDC will recruit another volunteer to complete the project.

