

The Urban Design Hackathon by the IIA WB Chapter

29th, 30th and 31st March 2016 – An Urban Design Hackathon with the objective of arriving at design solutions for six locations in the New Town area was organised at Rabindra Tirtha as a collaborative effort by The West Bengal Chapter of Indian Institute of Architects, NKDA (New Kolkata Development Authority) and WBHIDCO (West Bengal Housing Infrastructure Development Corporation). Mr. Debashis Sen, the Additional Chief Secretary, Urban Development and the Chairman of HIDCO set the tone for the design charrette on the first day by asking all the participants to think out-of-the-box but at the same time urged them to ensure that implementable solutions emerge out of the ideation exercise.



Inauguration of the Hackathon being marked by the lighting of lamp - Mr. Debashis Sen, Prof. B.K. Sengupta, Ar. Dilip Chatterjee and Ar. Gita Balakrishnan

The effort brought together students of architecture, art and design from institutions offering these disciplines in West Bengal. The colleges that participated included Indian Institute of Engineering Science and Technology Shibpur, Jadavpur University Kolkata, Om Dayal Group of Institutions, Uluberia, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur, Silpa Sadan Santiniketan, and NIFT Kolkata. There were 6 areas of design ideation – a Canal front, a Sensory Park for the physically challenged, Metro pillars and the area in between, a Lighting Sculpture, Streetscapes and Vendor Kiosks. In around 40 hrs of non-stop work 8 teams developed design proposals with each team being guided by a young architect as a team mentor. The three days saw different eminent architects and urban designers, graphic and visual artists and technologists spending time with the teams to support the brainstorming. Such coming together and interdisciplinary convergence as a team is indeed unique. On behalf of IIA, the endeavour was anchored by Ar. Ayan Sen, Ar. Abhishek Dutta and Ar. Sudipta Seal under the leadership of Chapter Chairperson, Ar. Gita Balakrishnan.



The ideation process



Briefing teams in progress - Ar.Ayan Sen, Ar.Susweta Das, Ar.Sudipta Seal and Ar.Abhishek Dutta

On the day the event was inaugurated, Ar.Anuradha Rathore, an eminent landscape architect commented that professionals often say that they cannot contribute since they are not involved. “Here is a unique opportunity”, she said “for designers and other professionals to participate towards making a difference to our city.”

More than 30 practising architects, visual artists, Lighting Designers, IT professionals attended the hackathon at various times during the work and contributed in different ways by advising and guiding the participants with their experience and expertise, while a few of them, namely Ar. Kalyan Chakraborty, Ar. Susweta Dutta, Ar. Alokanda Mukherjee, Ar. Sujoy Das, Ar. Sridipta Ghatak, Ar. Diya Banerjee, Ar, Nakshatra Sen, Ar. Shovan Saha, Ar. Pritam Dey, spend considerable amount of time as they guided and mentored their specific teams.



Renowned author Mr.Amit Chaudhuri giving his views on the effort and the proposals



All the participants

The intense 40 hours of brainstorming culminated in a presentation before an august audience including many eminent architects of Kolkata. They praised at large the outcome of such a time-bound initiative and applauded the organisers for coming up with this 'hackathon'. Mr. Amit Chaudhuri, a noted author and social activist also attended the presentations and lauded the effort. He advised the participants to ensure that the designs emerged from the immediate surroundings for them to be sustainable and encouraged engagement with concerned citizens.

Prof. Santosh Ghosh also encouraged the participants and gave his advice on the occasion. This collaborative exercise between professionals of the city and the government bodies could be the beginning of a new model for generating ideas for a better city. We at the Chapter are extremely excited that HIDCO and NKDA have selected four of the projects for further development with the possibility of execution

– the canal front in consultation with the department of irrigation; one of the vendor kiosk proposals; the sensory park for the physically challenged and the lighting sculptures.



The Various Design Outcomes of the Urban Design Hackathon

