UN Habitat Urban Thinkers Campus

Accelerating the SDGs in Cities

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY NOVEMBER 13TH - 14TH, 2019

IDEAS for ACTION

Excerpted from the FULL UTC REPORT

INTRODUCTION to IDEAS for ACTION

A key objective of the Columbia University 'Accelerating the SDGs in Cities' Urban Thinker Campus was to arrive at actionable items (Ideas for Action) by which each participant could bring the urgency of action to their own networks.

To help focus on the IDEAS for ACTION generated, and to encourage their take-up, we have excerpted the IDEAS for ACTION from our posted Report. The full report on the website provides program details, session summaries, Ideas for Action, speaker and organizers' bios, and links to Video recordings of all sessions and speakers' PowerPoint presentations.

With over 80 participants drawn from academia, the design professions, and civil society organizations, more than 60 Ideas for Action were generated by the speakers and participants.

Some examples of **Ideas for Action** are below:

Design Professions

- **Promote the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda as well as other sustainability strategies as core urban design values, including through professional development courses and participation with the related professional organizations (AIA, APA, ASLA and UIA).**
- **Establish state and national level AIA (American Institute of Architects) awards for SDGs and New Urban Agenda implementation.**

Design and Planning Schools

- **Educate future urban practitioners with knowledge and skills to implement the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda, and other sustainability strategies.**
- **Incorporate SDGs across all curriculums**

Civil Society

- **Use innovative technology to achieve social inclusion and economic progress.**
- **Lead by example through engagement with the wider public and scale and spread partnerships to work towards the SDGs.**

WE HOPE YOU FIND THESE and the 60+ *IDEAS FOR ACTION below* USEFUL**.**

PLEASE ADOPT, ADAPT, IMPROVE!

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Urban Thinkers Campus Day 1

IDEAS for ACTION: By Session

Talk 1: Framing the Challenges of SDGs in Cities
Session videography

Ideas for Action

- Scale up and create new partnerships across sectors to work towards the SDGs.
- Advocate for more voluntary reporting in cities, and stronger political support for the SDGs.
- Localize the goals; incorporate them in city regulations to help address zoning, transportation, and emissions.
- Frame issues about climate change as a resilience issue.
- Be optimistic; ities have often stepped in where national governments have not.
- Support youth in their demand for climate action, and structural change.

Panel 1: Accelerating the SDGs in Cities: Urban Professions and Governance
Session videography

Ideas for Action

- Work towards rapid adoption of the SDGs in the design and development industries, and encourage client education about the SDGs.
- Coordinate efforts to expand dialogue around the SDGs within professional organizations, building on existing commitments to sustainability.
- Create SDG content in professional development courses.
- Encourage professionals to reflect on projects and evaluate how they advance SDGs.
- Include the SDGs and other sustainability frameworks as core urban design values.
- Encourage regional plans that address climate change across local boundaries.
- Introduce SDGs to the next generation of professionals through primary, secondary and tertiary curricula; explore the potential of youth video games that incorporate SDGs thinking and values.

- Develop experiential awareness and understanding of SDG principles among youth in parks and public spaces, through events, educational programming, and community gardens.

Breakout Session: Innovating with Purpose
Session videography

Ideas for Action

- Encourage more interdisciplinary teams when designing projects.
- Integrate an SDG framework early in the design process.
- Move towards indicators that capture best and worst practices.
- Establish state and national AIA (American Institute of Architects) awards for SDG implementation.
- Communicate the benefits of the SDGs at a community and grassroots level through new narratives, especially in relation to climate action.
- Use innovative messaging to engage a larger audience.
- Create content on SDGs which can be taught through open learning platforms, provide professional credits in order to incentivize positively in engaging with the SDGs.

Panel 2: Accelerating the SDGs in Cities Through Education and Civic Engagement
Session videography

Ideas for Action

- 'Decolonize' the traditional (male generated) architectural curriculum and allow for increased inclusion and representation in academia.
- Involve more women in SDG action.
- Engage stakeholders who reflect underrepresented communities.
- Educate future urban practitioners at the university level with the knowledge and skills to implement the SDGs and other sustainability strategies.
- Combine expert knowledge with practitioner knowledge to influence policy solutions and gain a bigger, overall transformation.
- Encourage university administrations to support SDG teaching and research across disciplines and create the next generation of leaders to help implement the SDGs.

- Design educational curriculum that goes beyond 'reduce, reuse, and recycle'. Involve more complex issues of climate change and address drawdown.

- Educate designers and researchers to reduce greenhouse gases at every stage of the construction.

- Ask questions to unpack unsustainable systems in education and the profession.

- Build on youth commitments to innovation, entrepreneurship, and social justice, and their capacity to apply pressure in education and business settings to work towards the SDGs.

- Lead by example through engagement with the wider public.

- Speak up and raise awareness with colleagues, friends and family.

- Join or start a community garden and demonstrate the SDGs through action.

- Explore the concept of urban farms rather than shipping food. Use farms as educational tools.

Panel 3: Accelerating the SDGs in Cities: Tech, Big Data, Social Justice, and Equity

Session Videography

Ideas for Action

- Coordinate human actions and behaviors with technology and government policy, keeping in mind long-term economic and financial impact.

- Develop a multidisciplinary approach with local institutions and community partnerships to implement solutions.

- Integrate and reinforce existing local capacity so that it can handle complex, systematic issues. Solve community issues that can prevent implementation of solutions.

- Incorporate disaster resilience strategies as a tool to inform societies and promote social responsibility; i.e. link science and society.

- Data is an important tool for new forms of construction and can be put to use in urban planning.

- Embrace data modeling and scripting workflows to as a way to analyze the performance of projects and embody climate action.

- Approach smart cities/high tech with caution to avoid loss of basic freedoms and or the entrenchment of privilege or inequality.

Talk 2: Building SDGs into a Local Housing Strategy
`Session Videography

Ideas for Action

- **Increase access to opportunity with geographically targeted subsidies, inclusionary housing bonuses, voucher mobility, and access to public transport.**
- **Improve environmental and health conditions in housing by reducing the housing cost burden, reducing energy consumption, and reducing the environmental footprint of housing development.**
- **Promote equity by reducing housing discrimination and decreasing the concentration of poverty through mixed-income neighborhoods.**
- **Create partnerships through community engagement as well as the public and private sector in order to break down government silos.**

Panel 4: The SDGs and Affordable, Sustainable, and Inclusive Housing
Session videography

Ideas for Action

- **Preserve (and maintain) affordable housing as well as building new affordable housing.**
- **Ensure that development creates communities of opportunity that guarantee safety, health, energy efficiency and positive environmental impact**
- **Build communities that include multi-generational facilities, such as elementary schools and senior living facilities.**
- **Utilize more public-private partnerships to facilitate affordable and secure housing.**
- **Understand, appreciate and support the social and environmental positives in informal housing.**
- **Develop action plans to ensure building codes guarantee safety in informal housing.**
- **Refine zoning codes so they impact buildings , streets and urban lots positively and comprehensively.**
- **Learn from other sustainable housing designs and use financial models that will ensure long term sustainability.**

Panel 5: Are Sustainability Frameworks Competing for your Attention?

Ideas for Action

- Determine what "good" means in the context of a community and /or client; use the SDGs as a benchmark to guide company decision making.

- Use the SDG framework to increase awareness about sustainability with communities and/or clients and encourage take-up: make it fun ("games" often better than reports).

- Select project appropriate goals and targets, and localize/adapt as needed. Don't assume one size fits all.

- Ensure all disciplines (architecture, interiors, landscape, engineering etc.) within a company (or on a specific project) are on the same page regarding SDGs.

- Develop a company framework for engagement that supports the SDGs that can have a positive impact on urban sustainability, as well as the earth's ability to rebound; consider whether projects should be accepted, and how they can best be executed within the company framework.

- Encourage design professionals to enter the political arena to promote legislation and regulation that will help achieve SDGs in cities and the built environment in general.

- Develop initiatives like Resiliency NYC to stimulate innovation in the design and planning professions, including the issue of homelessness.

Talk 3: What are the Challenges to Realizing the SDGs in US Cities?

Session Videography

Ideas for Action

- When developing policies or proposals about social issues, such as the gender gap or incarceration rates, use the SDGs as a lens to address these challenges.

- Engage communities and support the leadership of those most impacted with a "leave no one behind" agenda. Examples include addressing unemployment rates and energy burden.

- Fulfill data gaps using the SDG criteria to proactively address societal injustices.

- Create local and state level accountability measures.