COMMUNITY DESIGN CENTERS (CDCs) ON THE UPSURGE: INVESTIGATING PERCEPTIONS AMONGST CDC LEADERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN TEXAS

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1   ABSTRACT

For decades, community design centers (CDCs) have specialized in providing professional design and planning assistance to non-profit groups and individuals that lack the funding or resources to otherwise receive such services (ACD 2016). Since the year 2000, the number of these CDCs has nearly tripled in North America, from just under 70, to over 200 organizations, covering ever-expanding disciplinary, and strategic territories (ACSA 2014). The purpose of this research was to explore the recent surge of CDCs in North America, and specifically Texas. This study attempted to elucidate, from the perspective of CDC directors in the state of Texas, what economic, environmental, and social factors underlie such growth. Furthermore, this study sought to answer what roles do landscape architecture, architecture, and urban planning play in the operation of CDCs. This research utilized qualitative methods informed by the "research act" of Gaber and Gaber (2007). Semi-structured interviews were conducted using open-ended questions to build upon respondents' current knowledge of community design practices. The information obtained was analyzed to draw themes (Taylor and Bogdan 1984) explaining the upsurge of CDCs and to gain insight regarding the continued spread of CDCs and their practices. The findings of this research illustrate an increased economic, environmental, and social need for the services CDCs offer in Texas. The findings suggest an increased humanitarian awareness through service-learning and community-engaged design practice and education, and an open appreciation for multi-disciplinary practices which blend disciplinary boundaries amongst landscape architecture, planning, and architecture, under the unifying identity of urban design.

1.1   Keywords
Community Design Centers, Administration And Leadership, Multi-Disciplinary Practice, Texas, Project Typologies