

## **WHAT IS A CHARRETTE?**

A French word, "Charrette" means "cart" and is often used to describe the final, intense work effort expended by art and architecture students to meet a project deadline. This use of the term is said to originate from the École des Beaux Arts in Paris during the 19th century, where proctors circulated a cart, or "Charrette", to collect final drawings while students frantically put finishing touches on their work.

Today a "Charrette" combines creative, intense working sessions with public workshops and open houses. A Charrette is a collaborative planning process that harnesses the talents and energies of all interested parties to create and support a master plan that represents transformative community change.

### **A CHARRETTE IS:**

- ❖ At least three to four consecutive days.
- ❖ An open process that includes all interested parties (stakeholders).
- ❖ A collaborative process involving all disciplines in a series of short feedback loops.
- ❖ A process that produces a feasible plan.
- ❖ A generalist, holistic approach.

### **A CHARRETTE IS *NOT*:**

- ❖ A one-day workshop.
- ❖ A multi-day marathon meeting involving everyone all the time.
- ❖ A plan authored by a select few that will affect many.
- ❖ A "visioning session" that stops short of implementation.

### **WHO USES CHARRETTES?**

- ❖ Planners and Designers
- ❖ Architects and Landscape Architects
- ❖ Public Officials and Organizations
- ❖ Planning and Community Development Directors
- ❖ Public and Private Developers and Land Owners
- ❖ Non-Governmental Organizations

## **Charrette Types:**

Charrettes can be used virtually any time a product needs to be created or designed, the Charrette model results in feasible plans for:

- ❖ Regional Planning
- ❖ Comprehensive Planning
- ❖ Rewriting Development Codes
- ❖ New Community Master Planning
- ❖ Specific Planning
- ❖ Affordable Housing Developments
- ❖ Buildings

## **Benefits of a Charrette:**

- ❖ High quality architectural and planning projects with demonstrable public benefit may lose support without a collaborative approach.
- ❖ A public planning Charrette has emerged as an alternative to the “plan and present” convention.
- ❖ Charrettes provide a framework for creating a shared vision with community involvement, directed by consultants representing all key disciplines.

## **Benefits of using a Charrette process:**

- ❖ **Trust** – Charrettes promote trust between citizens and officials through meaningful involvement and education.
- ❖ **Vision** – Charrettes foster a shared vision.
- ❖ **Feasibility** – Charrettes increase the possibility of completing a process by obtaining support from citizens, professionals, and staff.
- ❖ **Good Planning** – Charrettes create a better plan through diverse input and public involvement.
- ❖ **Economy** – Charrettes avoid costly rework and utilizes productive work sessions.

## **Additional benefits:**

- ❖ It's fun and attracts the interest of a broad range of people.
- ❖ The charrette itself is a marketing event for the project.
- ❖ The multi-day and night studio provides many opportunities for people to participate.

## **What actually happens?**

- ❖ A Charrette cannot be a stand-alone process.
- ❖ It is one phase of the planning or design process.
- ❖ Design, input and feedback cycles occur throughout a Charrette.

The workflow of the Charrette involves a series of collaborative design and public input cycles for multiple, consecutive days. Everyone – from city planner to local business and property owners – become aware of the complexities of development and design issues, and everyone works together to arrive at the best possible solution.

A central element of the Charrette is the “design team,” a multidisciplinary group of professionals that provide the necessary expertise to create a feasible plan that considers all relevant input. This design team is the constant of the Charrette, working day and night on site in the Charrette studio to develop a holistic, feasible plan. This doesn't mean that the entire community must take a week off from work to hold a Charrette. The Charrette stakeholders, anyone who is impacted by the project or has interest, are involved at a minimum in scheduled meetings, including at least two public meetings. Stakeholders are also welcome to visit the Charrette studio throughout the Charrette during open hours. In this way, it does not consume large blocks of time for residents or officials.

Once the design team completes its set-up procedures, including a team kick-off meeting and site tour, a public hands-on workshop is conducted for the purposes of creating a clear understanding on the part of all participants about the purpose and process of the Charrette and to solicit the public's vision. The next day the design team creates a series of alternative plans based on all information gathered to date, including the public vision, and then solicits input at another public meeting. This input is used to refine the alternatives and create more detailed plans that are again reviewed and critiqued by the public during an open house. The design team further refines and narrows the feedback into a final plan and set of implementation documents to be presented for public confirmation on the final night of the Charrette.

It is important to note that the project is not complete when the Charrette is. Document refinement and further feedback occur through stakeholder discussions and follow-up meetings after the Charrette. This allows everyone to check in on the refined Charrette plan and to allow for multiple feedback loops.

*Source: National Charrette Institute (NCI)*