

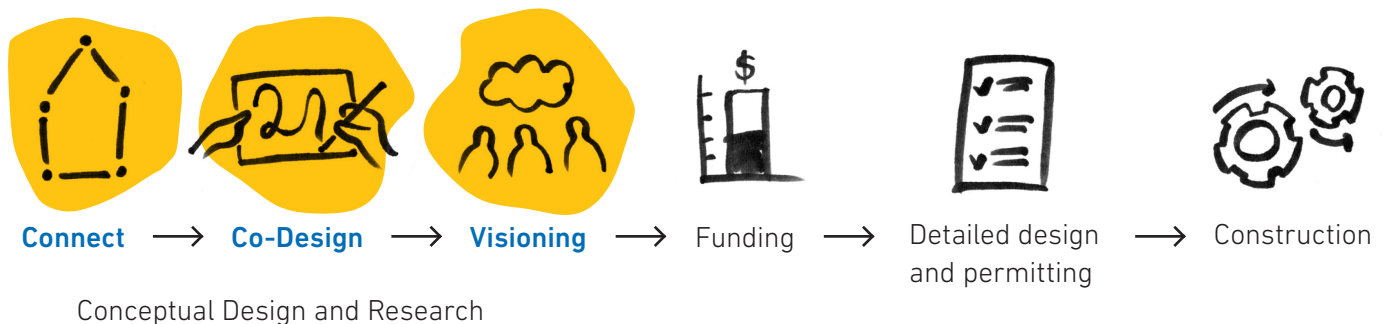
Design Session: Improving the Built Environment through Low-Cost Planning and Design Assistance

Sometimes all that stands between an idea and its realization is a plan.

Design Session is a program that works to improve the built environment by making architecture, design and planning services available to Richmond residents on an approachable and affordable level. From revitalizing parks to renovating spaces, a network of over 180 volunteer professionals assist individuals, small businesses, non-profit organizations and neighborhood groups to bring community-based projects to life.

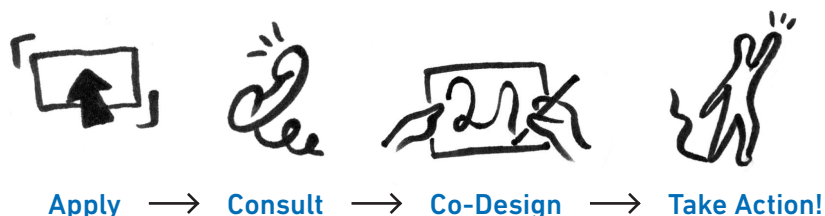
Where Design Session Helps in the Project Process

Design Session offers conceptual design and research in the early phase of a project



How Design Session Works

Design Session is a 1–3 month process. Clients, called Community Partners, begin by consulting with Storefront staff then collaborate with a design professional or a group of VCUarts students (mOb studio) to transform ideas into action plans. Storefront staff provide project management support during Design Session.



Please note that Design Session offers only conceptual design assistance: Design Session does NOT result in detailed designs for construction, permit drawings, or cost estimates. The skills of a professional may be required after Design Session concludes to further the conceptual design into detail drawings for construction.

Storefront for Community Design is a non-profit design center in Richmond, VA that inspires equitable community-driven design in the built environment through innovative programs and resources that engage the next generation of designers.

Apply

If you have a project idea and answer “yes” to the questions below, explore the opportunities in our program menu and apply today!

- ✓ Have a community-led project with which you need assistance?
- ✓ Is it related to the built environment and improving the quality of life in Richmond city?
- ✓ Do you have limited resources that restrict you from working with a professional designer?
- ✓ Could this project become a resource for the community?
- ✓ Are you ready for a multi-month process?
- ✓ Are there at least 2-3 stakeholders invested in this project?

Apply at
[storefrontrichmond.org/
designsession](https://storefrontrichmond.org/designsession) →



Funding and Fees

Everyone is guaranteed a free consultation. Design Session is made possible by the generosity of supporters and volunteers. An administrative fee is requested, which represents a small fraction of the estimated cost of services. Fees range from \$350-\$1,000 and are assessed on a sliding scale based on project size and organizational capacity. Fees are waived if they represent a barrier to participating.

FAQs

What type of projects does Design Session typically focus on?

Design Session focuses on projects that benefit the community at large and promote environmental and food justice, health and wellness, placemaking/placekeeping, economic development, and/or design/planning tools.

What are typical Design Session deliverables?

Common documents are sketches, plans, and photos in PDF format.

What is conceptual design?

Conceptual design is an early phase of the design process, where the general function and form of an idea or space are envisioned. For example, you may have an idea for an urban garden but may not know where to start. Design Session can help you create a conceptual sketch and/or plan of action for your idea.

Why just conceptual design?

Each project's next steps are unique. Design Session ends at the conceptual stage to give clients agency to decide how they want to continue the design process. For example, hiring a professional, budgeting/fundraising, or rethinking their original idea.

How are design professionals chosen?

SFCD recruits volunteer design professionals on a per-project basis, matching the technical expertise of each professional with the requirements of each project.

Can deliverables be used for a permit/construction?

Additional design and technical expertise is often necessary to develop conceptual designs to the standard required for permitting and construction. Clients are encouraged to obtain the services of a design firm, architect, or landscape architect as needed for design services beyond conceptual design. Storefront and its volunteers assume no responsibility or liability for any unauthorized use of conceptual plans.

Why does Design Session charge an administrative fee?

Administrative fees are part of a client's contribution to the process, signaling a commitment similar to that of the volunteers who donate their time and expertise to a project. SFCD's facilitation of the Design Session program is subsidized by the generosity of our funders.

What is the next step after Design Session?

Next steps may include...

- Writing a grant application or pursuing funding
- Hiring a professional design firm to prepare permit and/or construction documents
- Soliciting a cost estimate from a contractor
- Guiding neighborhood decision-making/policy or advocating to government agencies