



advocacy

**PLANNING A SITE VISIT:  
A HOW-TO GUIDE**



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# PLANNING A SITE VISIT:

## A How-to Guide

### What is a site visit?

A site visit is an opportunity to show legislators the commercial interior design world without the noise and distraction of the capitol. Site visits allow commercial interior designers to demonstrate to legislators what life at a firm is like or to show off a space designed by a commercial interior designer. For example, the IIDA Illinois Chapter invited state legislators to attend NeoCon with their members.

### Why have a site visit?

- A site visit provides legislators with first-hand knowledge of our profession and the opportunity to see commercial interior design instead of hearing about it.
- A site visit demonstrates that commercial interior design is not just for the urban areas or big business, but exists within a legislator's own district.
- A site visit within a member's district makes it easier to have an in-depth conversation about the profession and design's impact as opposed to a short meeting in the state capitol during session.
- Site visits bring the impact of design to the legislator and creates a visual to go with the talking points.
- Site visits have a stronger impact than a handout at the capitol day.
- Site visits can make a legislator feel important and recognized.
- It can be easier to get a legislator to attend an event after session than getting time during session.

### Where should a site visit take place?

Site visits usually occur at two places. The first option is allowing a legislator to be a commercial interior designer for a day. This can include taking them to a high-profile client, demonstrating how drawings are made, changed, and finalized for clients, and allowing them to see how commercial interior designers work on a job site or with peer professions.

The second option is to take a legislator to a recently completed project, preferably a project in his or her district. This could be a project that you or someone in the chapter worked on with other design professionals or a project that was solely an interiors project. This would be a great time to show off a design competition-worthy project or a project that shows innovative use of space, new best practices, or highlights green build or wellness design.

If the chapter already schedules tours of recently-completed projects, use that event to invite a legislator or two. The event doesn't have to be scheduled specifically to show a legislator; you can incorporate a legislator into an existing event.

## How to invite a legislator to a site visit

- Send a formal invitation to a legislator's district office that includes the date, time, location, and the reason they are being invited.
- Follow up with the staff or the legislator via phone if you have not heard a response after two weeks.
- If the chapter or state coalition has a lobbyist, utilize them to recommend legislators that are important, such as committee chairs or party leadership and to follow up with legislators you have invited.
- Make the legislator the center of attention at the visit by allowing him or her to say a few words and promoting the visit in any chapter communications.

## How to plan a site visit

1. Find members that are willing and able to give a tour of a recently completed or a near-complete project.
2. Obtain permission from the firm to show the project to the legislator or legislators.
3. Find a date that works for the people involved in the project.
4. Formally invite the legislator or legislators. If the chapter can create a graphic invite, all the better.
  - a. Include in the invitation: date, time, project name, project location, if anyone else will be attending, and a brief background on the project
  - b. Send the invitation 4-6 weeks prior to the event
  - c. If the chapter or state coalition engages a lobbyist, consult with them first. They might be able to direct you toward legislators that could benefit from the exposure.
5. Follow up with legislators if they have not responded to the invitation two weeks after the initial contact.
6. Don't be discouraged if a legislator sends a staff member, especially if you live in a high-population state. Treat the staff member as you would treat the legislator.
7. Allot enough time for the legislator to view the space, but not too much that it's overwhelming or too long for the legislator.
8. If it is after work or during lunch, consider providing food.
9. The site visit can be done as part of a chapter event to tour a space. If this is the case, include that information on the invite to the legislator.
10. Prepare materials for the visit. Materials could include:
  - a. IIDA Commercial Interior Design Fact Sheet
  - b. Why Registration Matters
  - c. State Economic Impact Sheet
  - d. Spec sheet for the project
  - e. Project drawings

## Follow up

After the site visit, send a thank you letter or note to the legislator and his or her staff. A handwritten thank you note is even better. With the letter, include any follow-up information you said you would provide the legislator. Also, include a photo of the legislator at the site visit for them to display.

Be sure to highlight the legislator's visit in your chapter's newsletter. Additionally, let the IIDA HQ know about the event.