

Build the Block

Instructions

Genre: Roleplay

Players: Facilitator, plus 3–10 players

Time: 55–75 min

Supplies: (1) Electronic device, paper and pencil for all players



**The American
Institute
of Architects**

Facilitator Information

GAME FACILITATOR—PLEASE REVIEW THIS INFORMATION PRIOR TO SITTING DOWN WITH YOUR TEAM.

Welcome to Build the Block, a role-playing game that demonstrates the impact architects and the field of architecture can make on communities. Your role in this game is *Architect* and you are the facilitator. Your job is to guide a team of 3–10 players as they use architecture to improve a community.

In this game, your team will be tasked with identifying the best use of an empty, overgrown lot. Together, the team will analyze community metrics, strategize solutions, and make critical decisions related to improving the property.

The ultimate goal is to build the facility that will most enhance the community. The options are an affordable housing complex, hospital, or school.

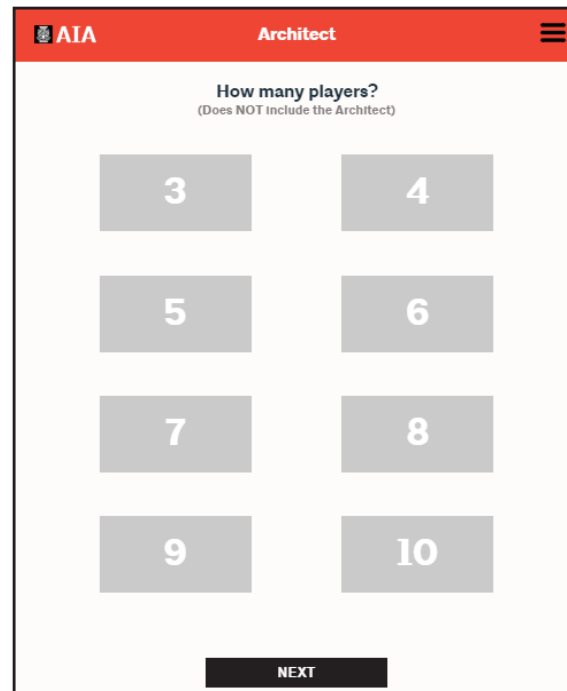
Before the game begins, each player is assigned a role. All players/roles contribute to discussions and cast votes. However one role, *Client*, is the ultimate decision maker for the team. While all players can try to persuade the *Client* to make certain choices, the *Client* has the authority to make any choice they wish—even if it is unpopular among the players.

You will present your team with details (provided below) to inform decision making at key points during the game. Once all decisions have been made, your team will discover how the new building impacts the community.



Set up

10 minutes

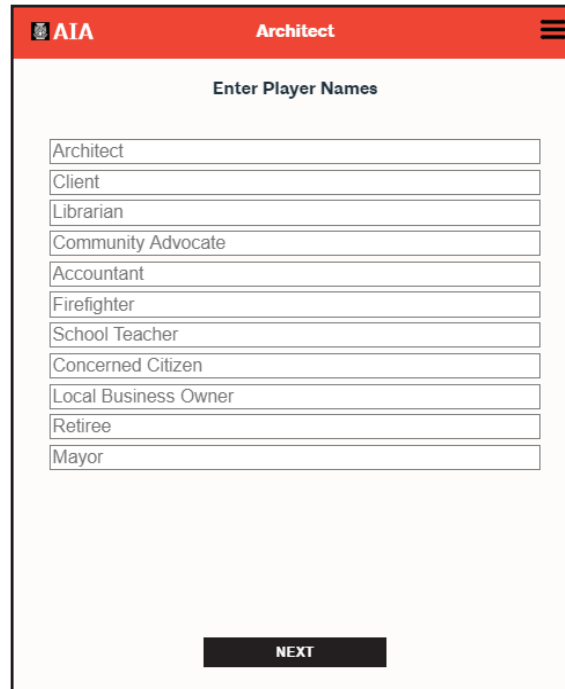


The screenshot shows the 'Architect' app interface. At the top, there is a red header with the 'ATA' logo on the left, the word 'Architect' in the center, and a hamburger menu icon on the right. Below the header, the text reads 'How many players?' followed by '(Does NOT include the Architect)'. There are eight grey rectangular buttons arranged in two columns, containing the numbers 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10. At the bottom center, there is a black button with the word 'NEXT' in white capital letters.

I. Select number of players

Press "Tap to start" on your electronic device and select the number of players who are participating. Do NOT include yourself in this count.





The screenshot shows a mobile application interface with a red header bar. On the left of the header is the 'ATA' logo, and on the right is the word 'Architect' followed by a hamburger menu icon. Below the header, the text 'Enter Player Names' is centered. There is a vertical list of 13 text input fields, each containing a role name: Architect, Client, Librarian, Community Advocate, Accountant, Firefighter, School Teacher, Concerned Citizen, Local Business Owner, Retiree, and Mayor. At the bottom of the screen, there is a black button with the word 'NEXT' in white capital letters.

2. Assign roles

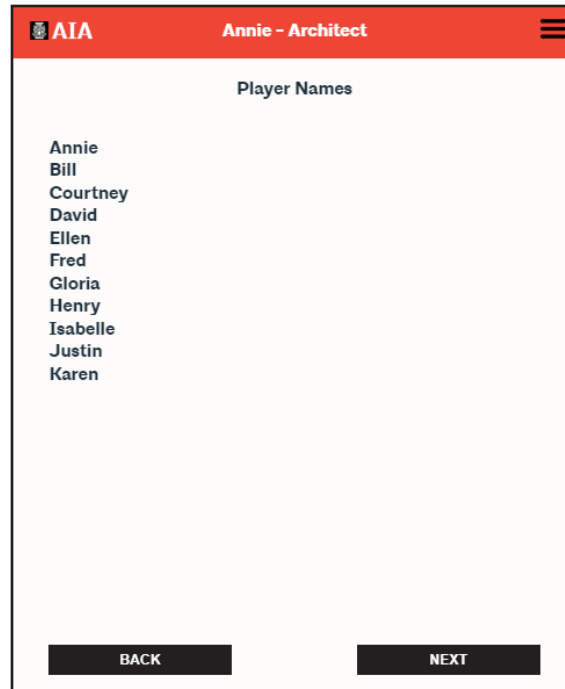
Now, participants are assigned roles. You have final say on how roles are selected.

The most straightforward option is based on the group's seating around the table. The player to your right is assigned the role of *Client*, and you continue assigning roles in order as you move clockwise around the table. Alternatively, you can also choose to have participants volunteer for roles. Every game includes the role of the *Client*. All other roles are randomly selected.

As roles are assigned, enter the participants' names in the corresponding box.

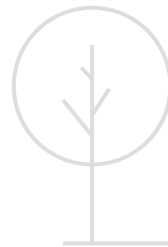
SUGGESTED FACILITATOR SCRIPT

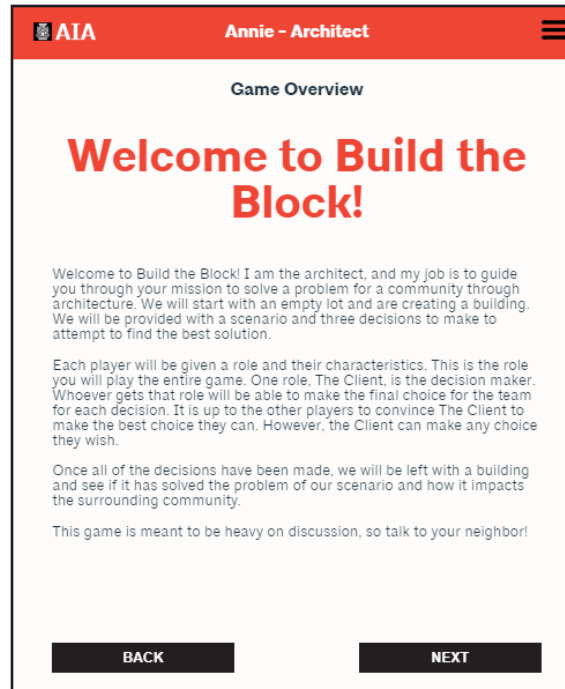
"Each player will be assigned a role. These roles include *Client*, *Mayor*, *Local Business Owner*, *Concerned Citizen*, and other community members. This is the role you will play throughout the game. One role, *Client*, is the final decision maker who represents the team. It is up to the other players to convince the *Client* to make the most beneficial choices. However, the *Client* has the authority to make any choice they wish—even if it is unpopular among players."



3. Confirm names

Once all names have been entered, you will receive a confirmation screen. Please ensure all names are spelled correctly. Go back and make edits, if necessary.





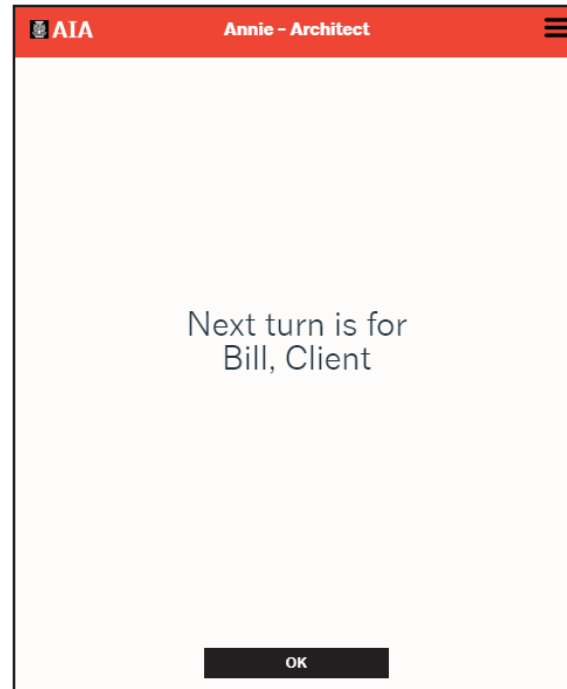
4. Introduce game concept

Introduce yourself and read the game overview to the group.

Please note that this is the last time you will be able to go back in the game. Once you click “Next” there will be no back button. Be sure to make your selections carefully.

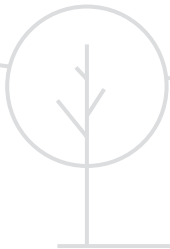
SUGGESTED FACILITATOR SCRIPT

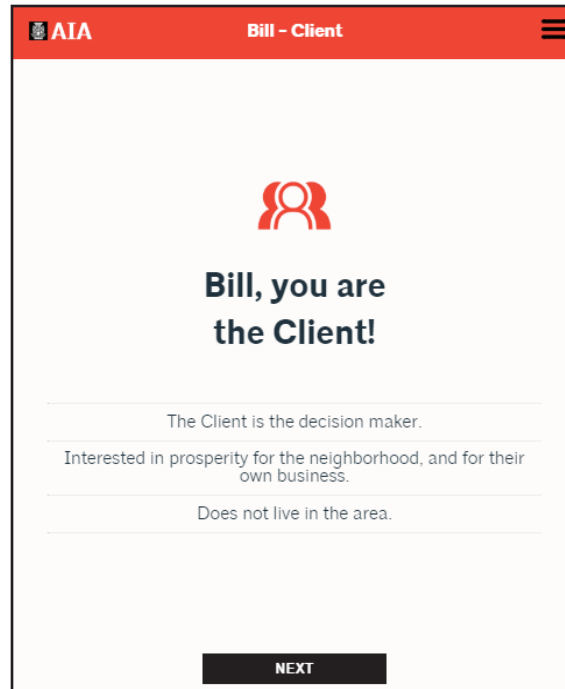
“Welcome to Build the Block, a role-playing game that lets you improve a community through careful decision-making. My name is *[name]* and I am the facilitator. In my role as *Architect*, I will guide you through the decision-making process and help the team design the best solution to a community challenge.”



5. Next turn

The game will always announce when it is someone's turn with a screen like this.





6. Get to know your role

Each role is given three characteristics. Every player will have a chance to review the details of their role. They are expected to remember these characteristics and embody their role throughout the game.

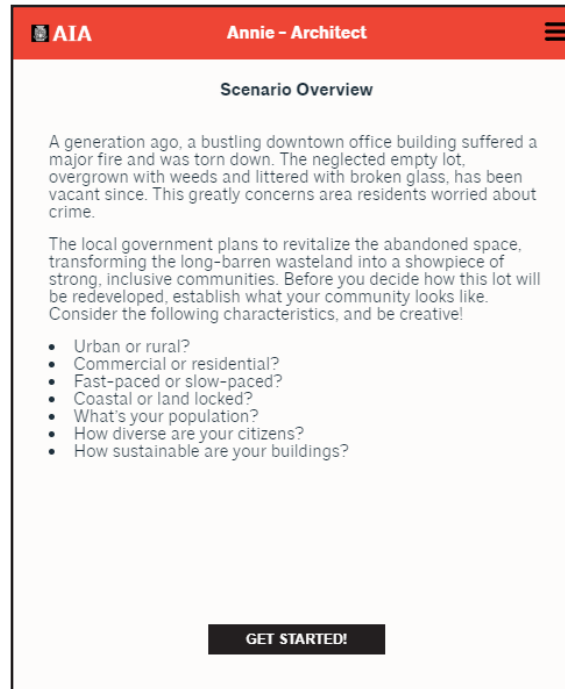
We recommend that each player has a paper and pencil with them and writes down their characteristics.

SUGGESTED
FACILITATOR SCRIPT

“When your role comes up, take a minute to review and memorize or write down your characteristics. You are expected to embody this role in the game, so remember to use your voice and advocate for your preferences and priorities in the community.”

Create your community

10–15 minutes



I. Scenario overview

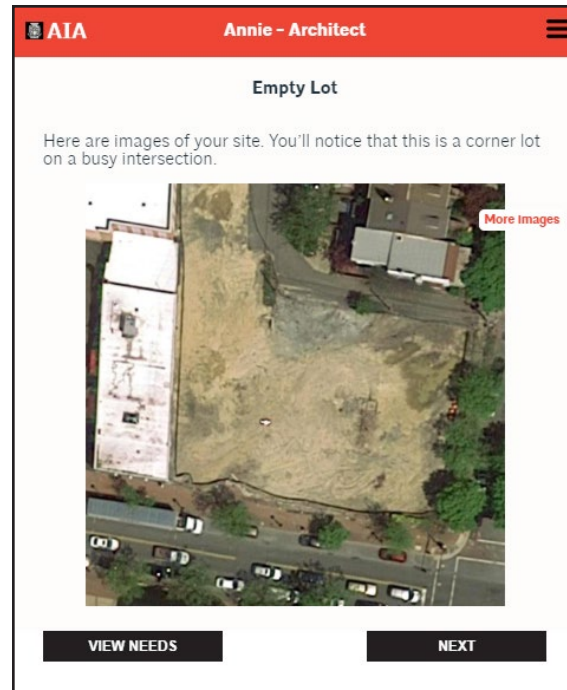
Read the Scenario Overview to the players, which explains the history of your vacant lot.

While on this screen, take a couple minutes to expand on these details to create the community in which your lot is located. You can do this individually as the facilitator or make it a group discussion. Use our suggested characteristics as a starting point, but get creative!

After you've created your community, press "Get Started!" to reveal images of the empty lot and the current community needs.

**SUGGESTED
FACILITATOR SCRIPT**

"The local government plans to revitalize a long-abandoned, overgrown plot of land, transforming the block into a showpiece of strong, inclusive communities."

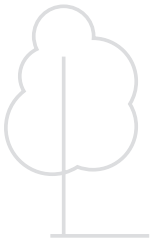


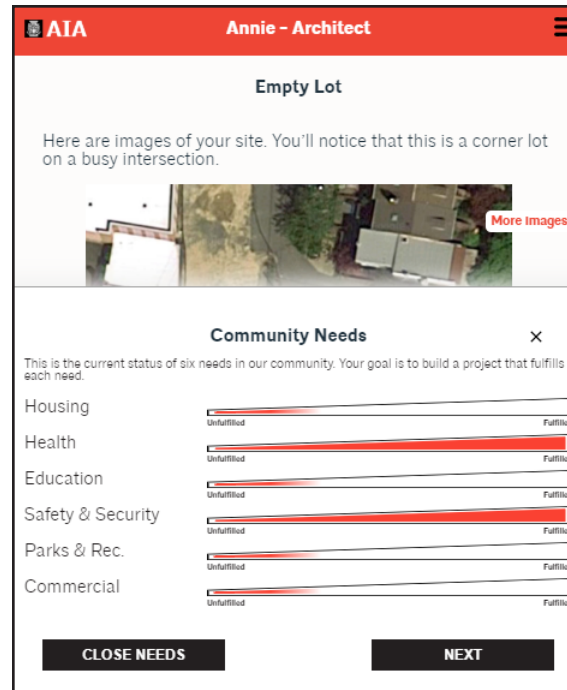
2. Give context to your site

Show your team the empty lot. You can use the “More images” button to toggle between an aerial and street view.

We’ve given you some details about your site: it’s a corner lot on a busy intersection. Discuss what this means with your group and add any missing details. You can get as creative and detailed as you’d like.

Select the “View Needs” button.





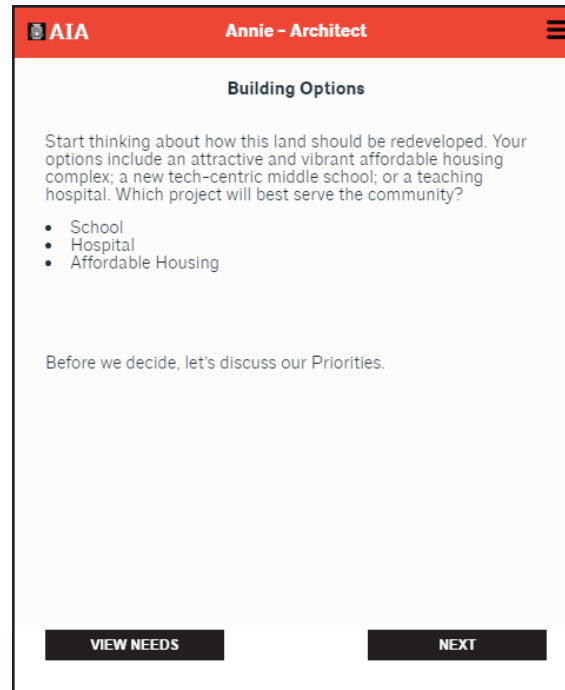
3. Open discussion about needs

While still on the Empty Lot screen, you'll discuss the community needs with your group. These measurements show the current state of your community, and your goal is to fulfill as many needs as possible.

SUGGESTED FACILITATOR SCRIPT

“Before we decide on what to build, let’s explore what metrics you consider most vital to address and how these different facilities may impact the community. Our goal is to design a building that will fulfill our community’s needs so the citizens in our community have a more positive experience with their city.”

“Let’s explore the metrics. What parts of the community are strong? Weak? What do you personally think are our top three priorities for improving this location?”

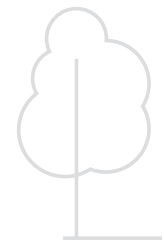


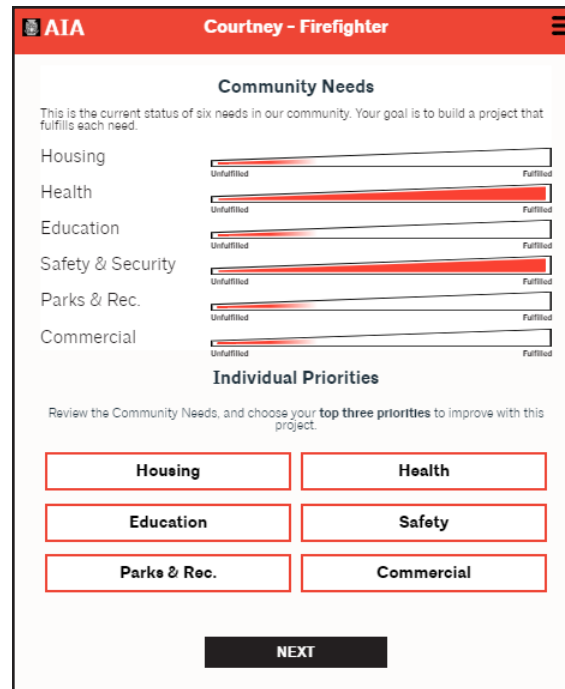
4. Building Options

Here are your three building options. Present these options to your team and explain how each will affect the community needs. Don't spend too much time on this yet as you'll be given more information on each option before you make a final decision.

From here on out, you will always have a "View Needs" button on the bottom left of your screen should you need to reference your community needs at any point.

Press "Next" for the players to vote on their individual priorities for this building.





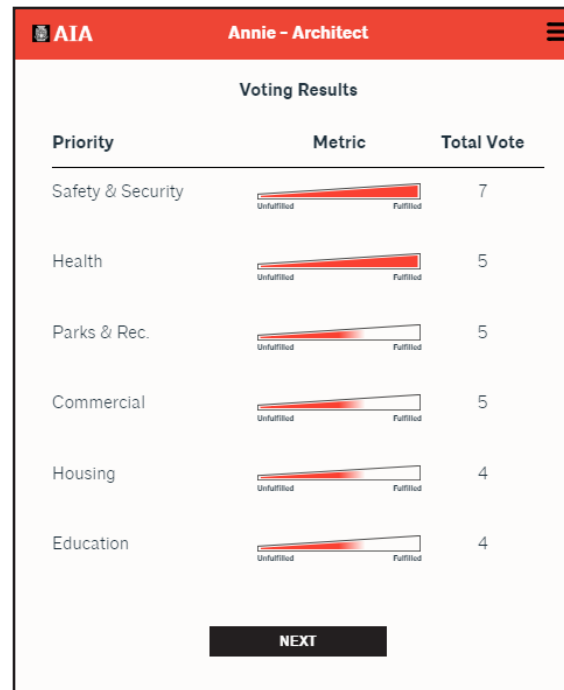
5. Individual priorities

Each player will have different priorities depending on their roles and characteristics. At this point, each player gets to vote for his or her individual priorities.

The game will announce whose turn is next, but keep an eye on the red bar at the top of the screen. Make sure the person whose name is displayed is the one voting.

**SUGGESTED
FACILITATOR SCRIPT**

“When it is your turn, select three priorities that you consider most important for us to address. Each player will have the opportunity to vote. I’ll tally the votes and reveal the results.”



6. Reveal the results and discuss

The voting results appear once everyone has voted.

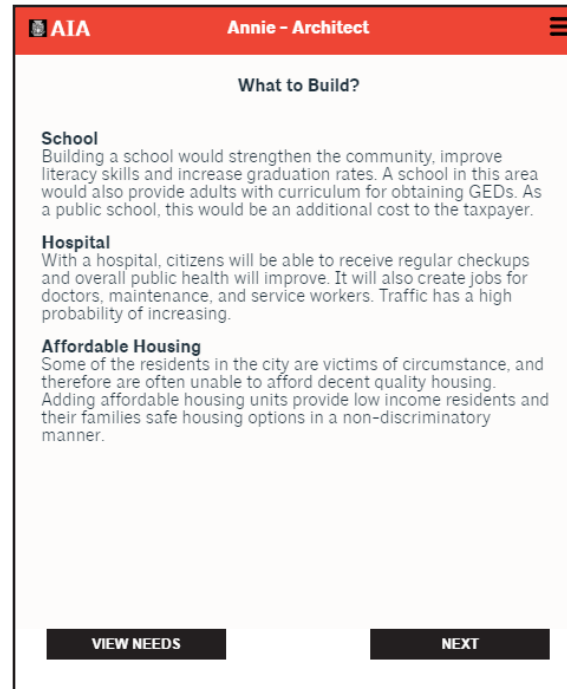
Discuss the results with the group. Ask probing questions to get everyone involved. Stress that their input is essential, and encourage each person to share their perspective. Don't let a single player (not even the *Client*) control the dialogue. Take adequate time—don't rush the discussion.

SUGGESTED FACILITATOR SCRIPT

“According to the voting data, our team’s top three priorities are *[read the top 3 results]*. What led you to vote the way you did? How do you think your choices will affect the rest of the game?”

Determine what to build

5-7 minutes

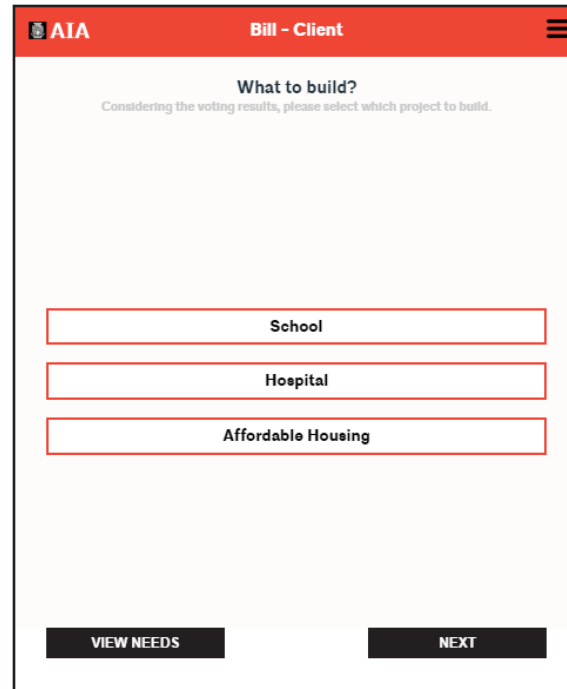


I. Discuss building options

Read each building option and description to the group. Discuss which option makes the most sense given the community needs and individual priorities.

Remind each player that it is their job to advocate for their role's priorities and persuade the *Client's* building selection.





2. What to build

The final say on the building selection lies with the *Client*. Ask him or her to select which facility will be built on the empty lot.

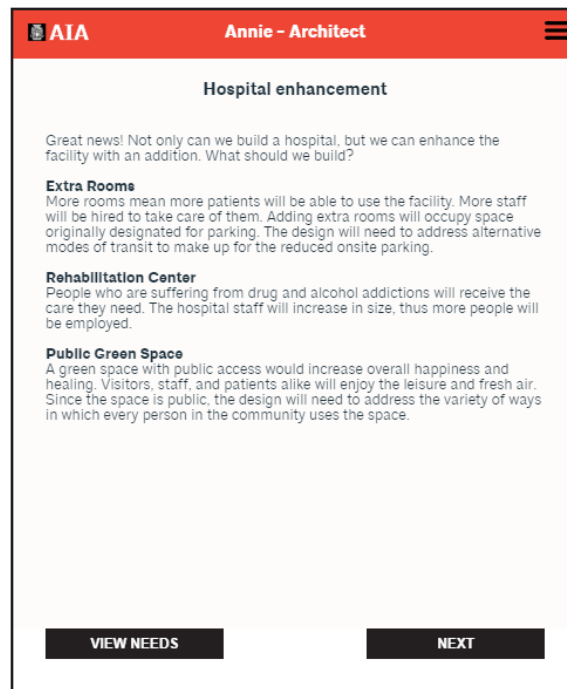
Click “Next” and a screen confirming your selection will appear. Click “OK” to continue.

SUGGESTED FACILITATOR SCRIPT

“*Client*, it’s time to make the final decision on what facility we should build. Please make your selection and give the tablet back to me.”

Enhance your building

5–7 minutes



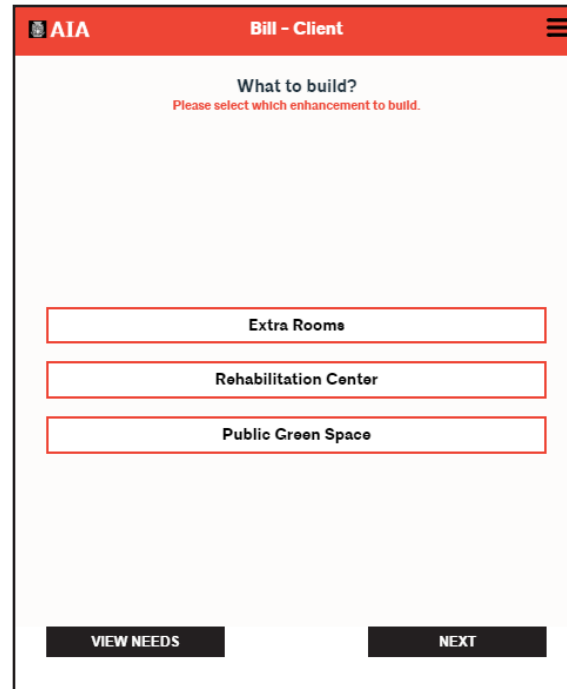
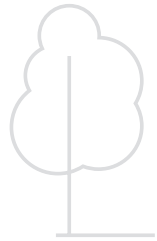
I. Review enhancement options

Each building has three different enhancement options. Discuss the options as a team. Get everyone’s opinion on which enhancement would best serve the community and their individual priorities.

Remember, you can bring up the community needs and individual voting results by clicking the “View Needs” button on the bottom left.

**SUGGESTED
FACILITATOR SCRIPT**

“Great news! Not only can we build a *[insert selected building]* but we can enhance the project with an addition. What should we build?”



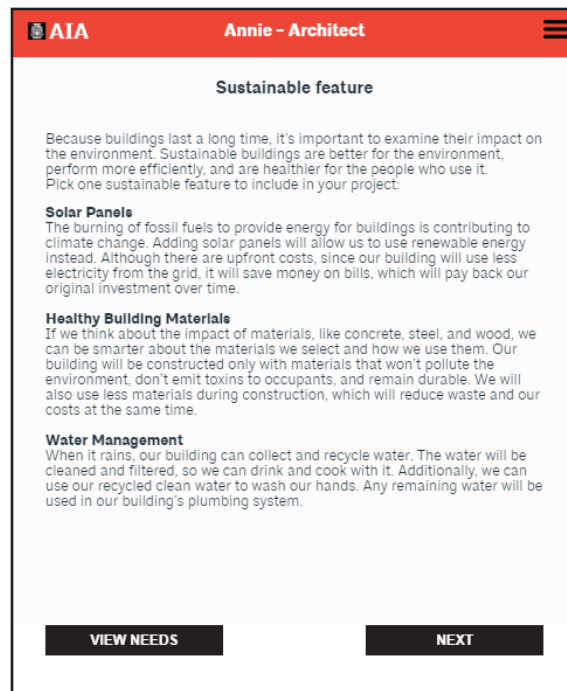
2. Select enhancement

Again, the final say on the enhancement lies with the *Client*. Ask the *Client* to choose which enhancement the team will build.

Click “Next” and a screen confirming your selection will appear. Click “OK” to continue.

SUGGESTED FACILITATOR SCRIPT

“*Client*, it’s time for you to make the final decision on what enhancement we will build.”



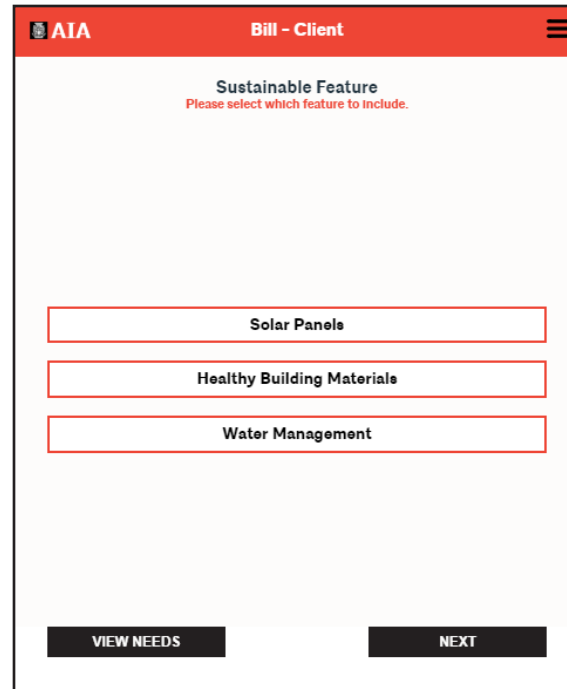
3. Review sustainable features

In addition to the enhancement, you are also able to add a sustainable feature to your building. Discuss the three choices as a group. Educate the players on each feature and how it will benefit the project, the community, and the building's users.

Remember to encourage all players to get involved in the conversation. It's crucial that they all use their voices to persuade the *Client*.

**SUGGESTED
FACILITATOR SCRIPT**

“Not only do we get to add an enhancement, we can add a sustainable feature, too! Designing a sustainable building will make this building healthier for the environment and for the people who use it.”



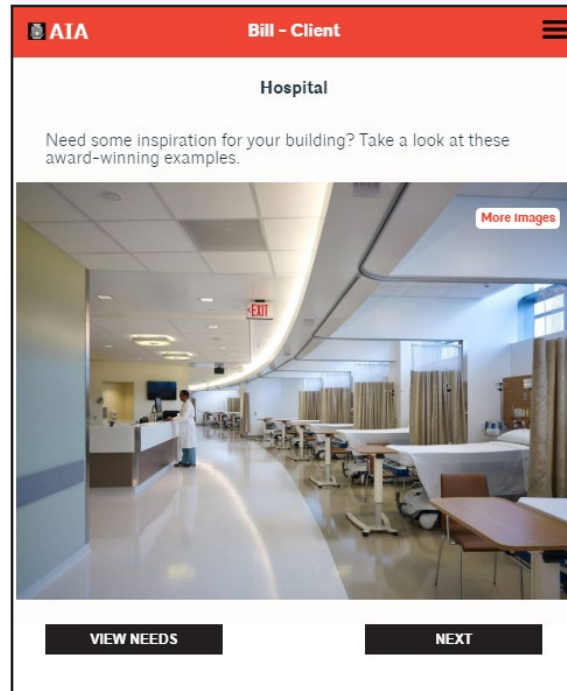
4. Select your sustainable feature

Ask the *Client* to select the sustainable feature.

Click "Next" and a screen confirming your selection will appear. Click "OK" to continue.

SUGGESTED FACILITATOR SCRIPT

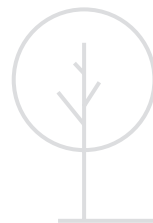
"*Client*, it's time for you to make the final decision on our sustainable feature."



5. Get inspired

At this point, you've chosen your building, enhancement, and sustainable feature. This screen will show images of real-life examples for this scenario. All images are AIA award-winning projects.

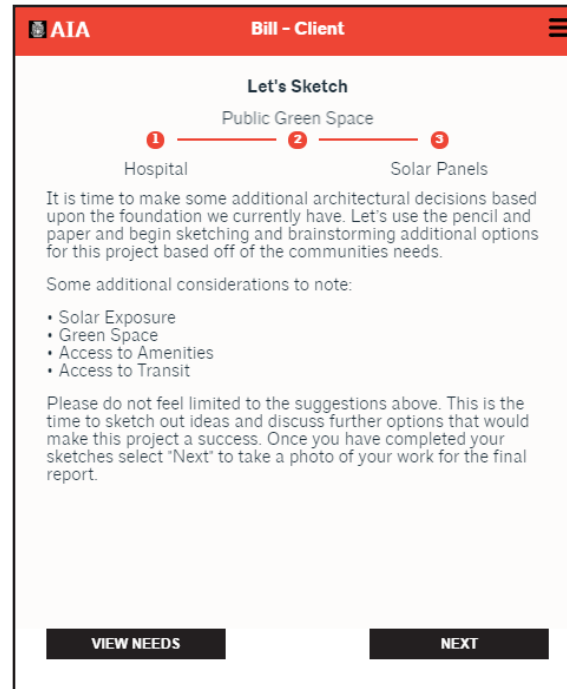
Show the images to the group. Explain some design features you see. Remind everyone that your final building doesn't have to look just like this. These images are just inspiration.



Sketch your building

10–20 minutes

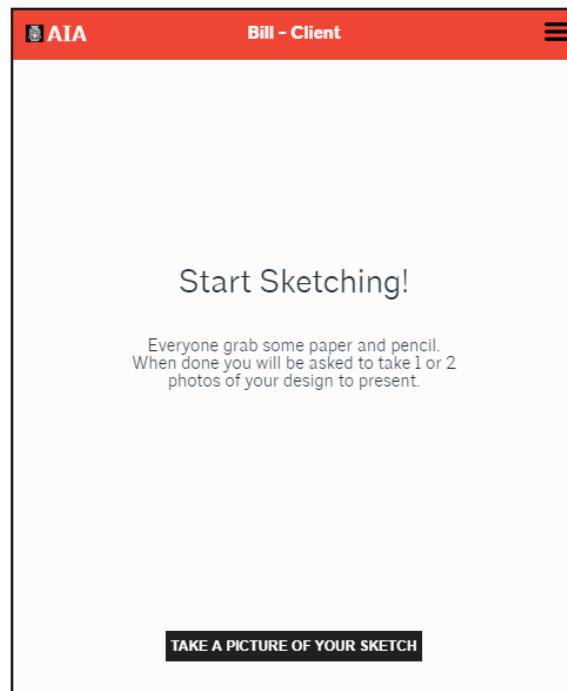
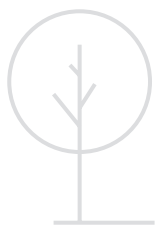
SUGGESTED
FACILITATOR SCRIPT



I. Prepare to sketch

Read the sketching instructions to the team. If needed, bring up the priorities and discuss. Then, press "Next."

"It is time to make some additional architectural decisions based upon the foundation we've built. This involves pencil-and-paper sketches and brainstorming additional options for this project based on what we have determined to be the community's most critical needs."



2. Decide on a sketching process

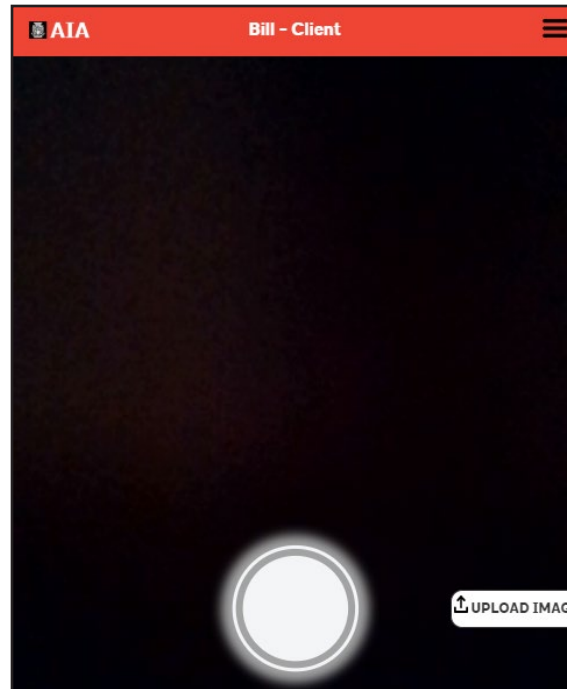
How to handle the sketching portion is up to you. You can have every player sketch individually, or you can create one sketch as a group.

We recommend having the following materials available: a printed site plan, tracing paper, graph paper, pencils, and colored markers.

Once your sketch(es) are complete, retrieve your electronic device and click “Take a picture of your sketch”.

SUGGESTED FACILITATOR SCRIPT

“We can sketch individually or as a group. When creating your sketches consider a variety of enhancements, such as green space, extra amenities, or access to public transit. This is your opportunity to sketch out-of-the-box ideas and discuss further options that would boost the success of this project.”



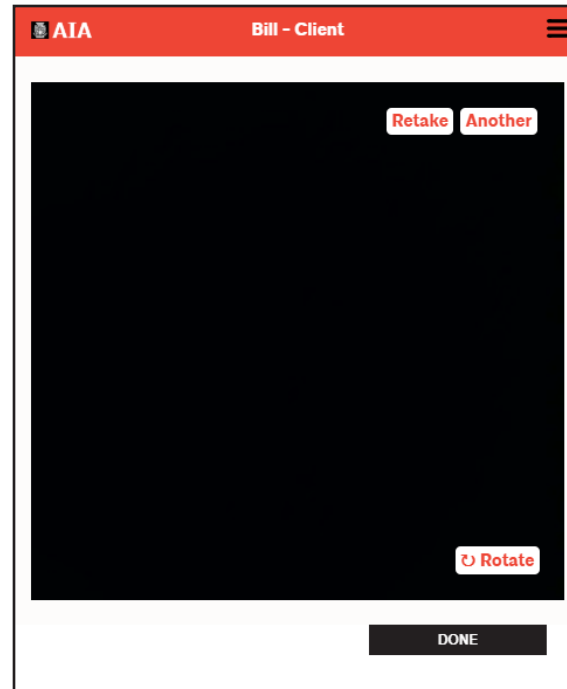
3. Photograph sketches

Choose the sketch(es) you want to highlight in your final presentation. Depending on the device you're using, you can either take a photo or upload images.

The game can store between one and six images for your final presentation.

SUGGESTED FACILITATOR SCRIPT

"It looks like we have some solid ideas for our *[insert type of facility]*. I'm going to choose a few to include in the team's final report."



4. Photo options

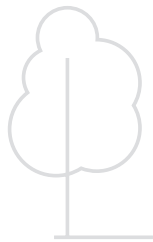
If you are taking photos in the game, make sure you are selecting the correct buttons. Clicking the wrong button may lead to photos not appearing in the final presentation.

“Retake” button: If you do not like the photo you just took and would like to erase it and replace it with a new photo, click the “Retake” button.

“Another” button: If you’re satisfied with your current photo and would like to save it, and then continue taking photos, click “Another.”

“Done” button: When you take your final photo and are satisfied with it, click “Done” to move on.

You will have the opportunity to rotate the image in your final presentation, so don’t worry if the photo appears sideways now.



Final discussion & presentation

10–15 minutes

AIA
Bill - Client
☰

Final Discussion & Vote!

Complete the list below by asking each player if they are happy with the final outcome.

Project outcome:
 1. Hospital 2. Public Green Space 3. Solar Panels

Client	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Firefighter	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Doctor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Mayor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Concerned Citizen	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO
Accountant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
School Teacher	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Retiree	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Community Advocate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
Local Business Owner	<input type="checkbox"/> YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO

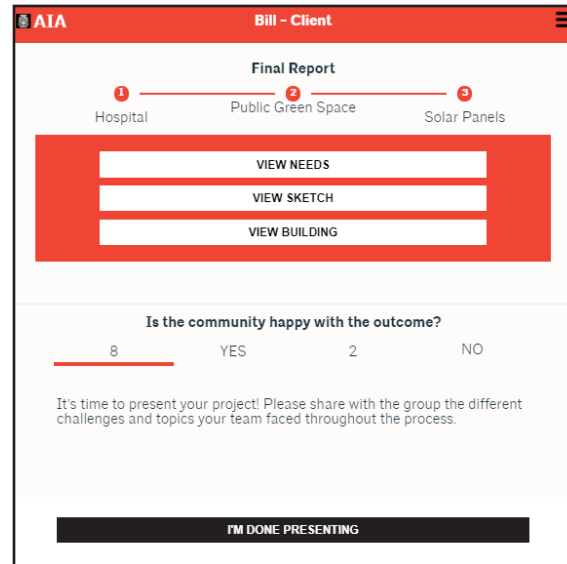
GENERATE FINAL REPORT

I. Final discussion and vote

Go around the group and ask each player about their experience. This is their opportunity to talk about why they liked or disliked the final design. Press “Yes” or “No” to record each player’s opinion on whether they agreed with the final outcome.

**SUGGESTED
FACILITATOR SCRIPT**

“Let’s talk about the final result. *[Player role]*, are you happy with the final outcome? Why or why not?”



2. Generate final report

Once all players have revealed whether they liked the outcome, press “Generate Final Report.” Read the “Final Report” screen to the team. Thank them for their hard work.

Do not move forward from this screen. You will need this screen to present.

3. Present

Each team will receive 2–3 minutes each to present their work to the larger group.

If you’re using a device—like a tablet or laptop—that can be plugged into a screen, please do so. Share with the larger group key challenges your team faced throughout the decision-making process, as well as any insight your team gleaned from the experience. You can pull up the Community Needs, your sketches, and the inspiration examples to reference during your presentation.

SUGGESTED FACILITATOR SCRIPT

“This concludes the decision-making aspect of the game. Thank you for your efforts. I hope you have a clearer understanding of the impact architects can make on a community.”

“We will now present our team’s selected sketches to the larger group and share some of the challenges we faced and the creative solutions we devised. We’ll also convey our team’s overall experience with this project.”