

Austin schedules checkup on a recovering downtown

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For those who think a good downtown isn't good enough for Austin, civic leaders offer a planning and idea session Wednesday to take advantage of growing momentum in the city's core.

Urban experts are being flown in from around the country to examine downtown and offer some free advice — a repeat performance of a 1991 session credited with playing a part in downtown's resurgence.

Downtown advocates promise to produce more than cheerleading and a glossy report. A little planning now can avoid mistakes and lost opportunities in a strong economy, said Tom Stacy, chairman of the Downtown Austin Alliance.

"We are on the cusp of doing a lot of great things downtown," he said.

The Wednesday event goes under the unfortunately bulky title of Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team, but call it by its ini-



Tom Stacy:
Head of
Downtown
Austin Alliance
expects
continued
improvement.

tials, RUDAT (pronounced roo-dat). Everyone else does.

"RUDAT comes at no cost to the city," Austin architect John Nyfeler said. "The AIA (American Institute of Architects) makes experts available on a whole range of planning issues, and they charge no fee other than air fare, hotel and food."

As outside experts, "they are not caught up in all the local politics. They are not beholden to anyone," he said.

Team members also sign a contract barring them from participating in development projects re-

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