Students Propose Designs for Downtown Housing, Urban Gardens for San Luis Obispo

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Cal Poly architecture students next week will unveil a 12-foot-square model of downtown San Luis Obispo that identifies eight sites where the students believe high-density housing four to five stories tall would be feasible.

The model also explores designs for possible new gardens in a 16-block central area.

The model, plus digital models and drawings, will be on display from 2 to 4 p.m. Tuesday, March 9, in Rooms 222-223 of Cal Poly’s Engineering West building. The session is part of final review of student work for a special class that combines second-, third- and fourth-year architectural design with the technical content of a building-sustainability laboratory course.

Professors Thomas Fowler and Brook Muller believe the students' work could spur community discussion about adding housing downtown.

"We wanted to engage students in developing creative responses to our housing crisis that will also preserve open space," Muller said. "The sites selected explore the trade-offs of dramatically increasing the downtown residential community and provide strategies for designing housing that does not build on the open space of the community."

The students' proposals are designed to be sustainable, making appropriate use of materials and the best use of lighting, for example.

As part of the project, the students visited San Diego and interviewed experts and officials there. Fowler said San Diego is a city where density and historical sensitivity work together in the downtown area.

The downtown design project was supported by the Cal Poly Community Development Initiative, a joint project of Cal Poly’s Orfalea College of Business and College of Architecture and Environmental Design. Funds were provided by Bank of America.
NOTE TO EDITORS: Reporters, photographers and television crews are invited to examine the project. An e-mailable graphic is available from Ray Ladd at 756-7432 or rladd@calpoly.edu.