

Learning from California: Highlights of CRP Studios 2011/2012 AY

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CRP's department head writes about the variety of undergraduate and graduate studios that served California communities during the 2011/2012 Academic Year. The studios continue to cover a lot of ground and to prove their pedagogical success in applying Cal Poly learn-by-doing philosophy. They helped shaping better places and communities, and creating more sustainable cities.

The studio work produced by City and Regional Planning students during the 2011-12 academic year continued our tradition of serving communities and providing our students with valuable "hands-on" experience. Our studio sequence is one of the most intensive in undergraduate and graduate planning programs in the US, and the resulting high quality student work has, over the years, helped shape plans in many communities in our region. The graphic and analytic capabilities that are taught in the various levels of our studios were elaborated in some detail in Focus (Volume VIII pg.72). Studio projects progressively increase in scale and complexity and address specific elements that our community clients need. Student involvement allows communities to investigate broadly, explore solutions, and define a scope of work that may later be addressed in more specificity by professional consultants.

Community sponsorship offer important ways for our students to understand the needs of people living in diverse communities in our region. Our partnership with communities has been of mutual benefit over the years and is reflected in the fact that this last year all but one of our upper level studios were sponsored by the client community. We worked primarily in California but the community hosts for our studios last year were sometimes considerably distant from San Luis Obispo, demanding greater organizational and managerial effort on the part of both faculty and students (Figure 1). We even ventured further afield, when our students went to Turkey and Portugal during the summer of 2011, and learned that their professional skills had relevance there too. Highlights of some of the studio projects from last year follow:

Portugal as a Learning Environment

During the Summer Quarter, from June 18 to July 15, 2011 a group of nineteen Cal Poly undergrads lived and studied in Lisbon, Portugal led by CRP professors Vicente del Rio and Zeljka Howard, with the support of the Universidade Lusofona and faculty of their Department of Urbanism. Including thirteen students from CRP, five from Landscape Architecture and one from Architecture, and enriched with five students from Portugal, the group visited and studied several historic places and cities, and developed mixed-use projects for a 12-acre site in central Lisbon, adjacent to a multi-mode transit station. Local faculty and the representative of the company controlling the site were impressed by the quality and feasibility of the final proposals. Cal Poly's 2011 Urban Design Summer Program in Lisbon was very successful and students were able to learn critical lessons in international planning and urban design. More on this program can be read in pages 85 to 89 of this Focus.

Urbanism in Kaş, Turkey

Ten undergraduate and graduate students from CRP traveled to Turkey to explore Turkish culture and urbanism for two weeks in Summer 2011 led by professors Umut Toker and



Hemalata Dandekar. The group divided their time between travels in Istanbul and Izmir, culminating in projects for the village of Kaş where students collaborated with the municipality and the Kaş Culture House to redesign two project sites: Emin Erdem Square, the gateway to the city from the harbor and a prime, site with scenic views which had municipal housing and was slated for demolition. The Culture House housed the studio and its historic exhibits served as inspiration for the students to incorporate the village's historic character into their contemporary designs. The students also had the opportunity to work with the Mayor and the residents of Kaş. The five-day intensive timeline from concept development to presentations was a challenge and a new experience. Their ability to meet the project objectives required a combination of resourcefulness, constant collaboration, and flexibility. The two teams' final presentations to the Mayor of Kaş, key council representatives, members of the public, and downtown merchants were warmly received. The clients were impressed by the fact that in a very short time Cal Poly students had understood the salient issues at play in the two sites and offered creative, inclusive solutions.

Placemaking: San Luis Obispo's South Broad Corridor

In Winter 2012, the two sections of CRP 202, led by professors Umut Toker and Loulie Brown, collaborated in exploring an area along San Luis Obispo's Broad Street corridor slated for mixed use development according to the city's long term plan. Students grappled with the issues of shaping the site frontage on Broad Street, addressing the railroad tracks to the rear, and making good connections at the lateral edges, integrating site development to the context and creating pedestrian corridors. A form based code approach was used by student teams to guide design.

Designing the Avenue of Flags, Buellton

In Spring 2012, professor Umut Toker's undergraduate CRP 203 Urban Design Studio partnered with the City of Buellton to develop four alternative urban design plans for the Avenue of Flags. Four student teams engaged extensively with community, visiting Buellton five times through the project development process. They conducted a site inventory and walk-through with community members, as well as held community meetings at the city's recreation center for feedback on their urban design concepts. At the end of April the community provided the students with feedback on their illustrative plan studies and draft form-based codes. Final urban design plan alternatives were presented to a joint meeting of the City Council and Planning Commission in early June.

Redeveloping El Camino Real, Atascadero

Responding to a request from the City of Atascadero and the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) an undergraduate studio (CRP 203) and a graduate studio (CRP 553) collaborated on the South El Camino Real Corridor Urban De-



Proposed design for the Avenue of Flags, Buellton.

sign Plan for the City of Atascadero. Student work reflected the General Plan's goals and policies, SLOCOG's sustainable development recommendations, as well as California's Complete Streets Act, which requires cities to plan for "a well-balanced, connected, safe, and convenient multimodal transportation network". Led by professor Vicente del Rio, the two studios conducted a site assessment and community outreach to inform visioning and plan development including elements such as development concepts, circulation, streetscaping, design guidelines, and specific development proposals for sites which form a south gateway. While the students worked collaboratively during all phases of the project, the graduate students concentrated on developing the overall vision plan while the undergraduates focuses on the south gateway. The plan was presented with success to the City of Atascadero Design Review Board. For more on this project, see Emma Schoppe's article in pages 60 to 63 of this Focus.

South First Street Corridor, King City

Having King City's community development department as their client, in Fall 2011 the CRP 341 Community Design Lab taught by professor Vicente del Rio developed an urban design proposal for King City's South First Street Corridor. The plan making process included extensive field-work as well as a community workshop, and the final concept proposed a denser, mixed-use development along a redesigned boulevard with planted medians and wider vegetated sidewalks. Specific project proposals included a downtown core with a transit center (rail and bus stations), a pedestrian bridge connecting the two sides of the corridor, a park, a farmers market, affordable and H2A workers housing, a shopping center, a car dealership park with retail along the frontage, and sculptural elements marking the the entrance from Highway 101.

Visioning Downtown Developmento in Hayward

Professor Zeljka Howard's Community Planning Lab CRP



Community meeting in the park during the work at Santa Paula.

410/411 was contracted by the City of Hayward to examine the opportunities for development of the city's downtown. Conducted in cooperation with Hayward Development Services Department staff, this planning effort received valuable assistance from other city departments, residents, business owners, community organizations, and CSU East Bay student representatives. The results of this planning effort were summarized in three interrelated documents: a *Synoptic Survey* recording the existing characteristics of the Downtown area, a *Public Outreach Report* that summarizes the extensive community engagement process and public input, and a *Envision Downtown Hayward* document. This last document provides a summary of the planning recommendations for future development of the overall Downtown area as well as specific proposals and guidelines for development in selected opportunity areas that have potential to serve as catalysts for future growth of the Downtown. See professor Howard's and Jenna Hahn's article on the Hayward project in this issue of Focus, pages 64 to 66.

Conceptual scenario of Carpinteria's downtown.



City of Santa Paula Downtown Improvement Plan Update

Professor Kelly Main and instructor Keith Woocock's CRP 410/411 Community Planning Studio was commissioned to update the City of Santa Paula's Downtown Improvement Plan. The City liaison and project supervisor was MCRP alum and Planning Director Janna Minsk, AICP. The primary focus was to refresh the community's vision for their downtown, and to develop specific policies and strategies for implementation. To maximize participation from all segments of the community, students did extensive outreach to complete more than 150 surveys. They hosted planning games at a grocery store, in soccer fields, and during the City's Halloween Parade, conducting all elements in English and Spanish. Partners in this project included Spanish-speaking students from Cal Poly's Modern Languages Program, STRIDE (Science through Translational Research in Diet and Exercise), and Santa Paula High School. Forty-two high school students engaged in a "Photovoice" project to share photos and narratives about what they liked, wanted to change, and thought was healthy or could be healthier in Santa Paula. To learn more about the Photovoice project see professor's Main article on pages 73 to 76.

Visioning Downtown Carpinteria

In Spring 2012, professor Umut Toker's CRP 553 Project Planning Lab collaborated with Carpinteria to develop vision plans for the city's downtown. Following visits for site inventory and walk-throughs with city planning staff, three alternative vision plans were developed and the community feedback lead to the students' final urban design concepts, land use proposals, and draft design guidelines. The plans were presented to the Carpinteria Planning Commission in June 2012.

City of Newark Community Plan

Over Fall 2011 and Winter 2012, MCRP students in Professor Cornelius Nuworsoo's CRP 552/554 studio developed a Community Plan for the City of Newark. In collaboration with residents and city leaders, they formulated a development scenario for Newark to accommodate projected population, job and housing needs by 2040. Students completed a thorough analysis and comprehensive update of the City's General Plan, including detailed long-term goals, objectives, policies, and programs to inform future development and decision-making on eleven elements: Economic Development; Land Use; Circulation; Conservation; Housing; Public Facilities; Safety; Health; Open Space; Noise; and Community Design. The plan making was guided by public feedback and comprehensive research on community characteristics, opportunities, and constraints for development. Despite physical limitations to outward expansion, the plan can help Newark prepare for the challenges associated with population growth while strategically guiding development over the next 30 years, improve quality of life, provide diverse housing options, generate economic vitality, and develop a vibrant destination to draw visitors from the Bay Area and beyond. In August 2012 the City of Newark adopted

the student's final report as a formal draft plan and put out a request for firms to help prepare an environmental impact report, a necessary step prior to its formal adoption.

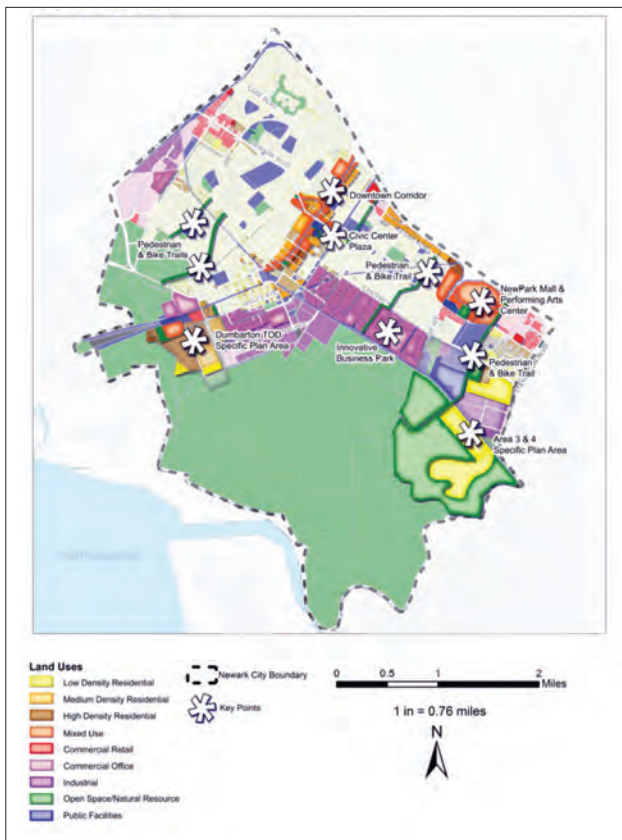
City of San Luis Obispo Land Use and Circulation Element

The City of San Luis Obispo was about to update the Circulation and Land Use elements of its General Plan, an effort that would take years and involve considerable energies of many citizens, officials and experts. During Fall 2011 and Winter 2012, in professor Chris Clark's CRP 552/554 studio graduate students began assembling data and gathering public opinion in advance of the consultants' work. As one of the first efforts was to define the city "neighborhoods," students set up booths at local farmers markets and other public venues asking residents to delineate their neighborhood. Over 200 participants drew rough boundaries on city maps. Compiled as GIS layers these, through a consolidation program, revealed congruent outlines and offered the city an impression of how people saw their community. Students working on the Circulation Element inventoried San Luis Obispo for the Complete Streets program, identifying multi-modal qualities of several street segments.

An update of the City's Parks and Recreation Element, was initiated by another student team which met with the Parks and Recreation Commission, inventoried existing places and programs for recreation, and surveyed park users. A comprehensive draft of the element that will be used by the city for a future update, was presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission. The students presented their findings to a special session of San Luis Obispo's Planning Commission.

Final Remarks

The CRP department takes pride in its rich tradition of consistently providing high quality technical assistance to communities in our region through the work of our students. The symbiotic relationships that have resulted are built by hard work and effort of all parties in this collaboration. In the face of budgetary and market pressures for efficiency our commitment to this approach remains firm. We are convinced that it is good for our students, serves communities and the planning profession, and reenergizes our pedagogy.



Preferred alternative development map, and conceptual key scenarios for Newark.

