STUDENT—FACULTY PROJECTS
2004–2005

DETROIT COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP CENTER
GENESEE COUNTY INITIATIVE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
A. ALFRED TAUBMAN COLLEGE OF
ARCHITECTURE + URBAN PLANNING
QUALITY OF LIFE is a topic of interest to planners as well as politicians, the media, and the public. In 2001, the Detroit Area Study focused on the role of place in contributing to residents’ quality of life in Southeast Michigan. Aspects of community life such as commuting, public transit use, recreation, public services, and development were measured. Robert Marans is investigating relationships between these conditions, survey responses, and the use of findings by planners and government officials.

QUALITY OF PUBLIC TRANSIT at the local level is highly dependent on federal policies constructed in Washington D.C., Joe Grengs is investigating recent changes in federal transportation policy that have encouraged a shift in emphasis within the transit program that is likely to harm those who depend most on good public transit. Through a series of congressional actions, longstanding social goals of public transit are becoming supplanted by the economic imperative of efficiency and competitiveness.

BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT is a challenge in many city neighborhoods because of added costs and liability of contamination. However, the redevelopment challenge in older cities is much more complex than just cleanup of pollutants. In Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Detroit, Margaret Dewar and colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Maryland are doing research to show when redevelopment occurs and when it does not.

THE DETROIT COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP CENTER AND THE GENESEE COUNTY INITIATIVE SUPPORT STUDENT—FACULTY PROJECTS

that address community-identified needs and advance the education and knowledge-building mission of the University of Michigan. Projects aim to support the work of Detroit and Genesee County community leaders and government officials who are working to strengthen regions, cities, and neighborhoods. During 2004—2005, students and faculty undertook projects:

OLDER INDUSTRIAL AREAS are often located near neighborhoods, like this one in Detroit.
Faculty examined issues in Detroit and Genesee County and made recommendations for changes that apply not only to these areas but also to many of the nation’s cities.

Students were provided with the knowledge and skills they need to have an impact on future projects with community partners.

This map depicts the voting structure for the seven counties that make up the Detroit metropolitan region. The regional share of the population is contrasted against the regional share of MPO votes. The voting structure of Detroit’s MPO suggests that low-population areas have disproportionately more power in decision-making.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS—or MPOs—are the bodies through which billions of federal dollars are distributed to state and local governments each year to support transportation projects. The problem with MPOs is that most of them are biased against central cities in their voting structure. By allotting votes on a “one government-one vote” basis instead of a “one person-one vote” basis, MPOs grant outlying suburban jurisdictions considerably more political power in the decision-making process. Scholars and activists contend that this bias exacerbates sprawling urban development and further disadvantages poor households and people of color at the urban core. Joe Grengs is testing whether the voting structure of the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments underrepresents jurisdictions with low-income residents and assessing whether underrepresented jurisdictions receive a disproportionately low share of transportation funds.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY CHANGE

Students partnered with community-based organizations to identify strategies and build capacity for stronger Detroit neighborhoods.

OFFERING USEFUL MODELS

Plans introduced frameworks for community redevelopment and methods to stimulate institutional linkages for innovative and efficient land management.

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Faculty examined issues in Detroit and Genesee County and made recommendations for changes that apply not only to these areas but also to many of the nation’s cities.

THIS BOOKLET SUMMARIZES many of the projects that students and faculty undertook in the eleventh year of the Detroit Community Partnership Center’s existence and the second year of the Genesee County Initiative’s programs, 2004–2005.
TRANSPORTATION ACCESSIBILITY is substantially lower in the city of Detroit than in the suburbs because valued destinations like jobs are rapidly decentralizing, because many households in the urban core do not own cars, and because public transit is not well integrated between city and suburbs. In a series of projects, Joe Grengs is studying how urban spatial structure and transportation policy combine to contribute to troubling social conditions in the urban core, such as concentrated poverty, longer commute times, and higher rates of unemployment.

Addressing Chronic HOMELESSNESS and Strengthening NEIGHBORHOODS in Southwest Detroit

Close to 600 individuals are homeless in Southwest Detroit on an average night. Residents and business owners speak of many problems associated with the homeless population although they also sympathize with the plight of homeless individuals. The neighborhoods of Southwest Detroit have many low-income residents who themselves could become homeless with an adverse event such as the loss of a job.

Seven urban and regional planning graduate students, and their instructors, Margaret Dewar and Eric Dueweke, worked with the Springwells Village Council and the Task Force to End Chronic Homelessness in Southwest Detroit to identify specific strategies to strengthen neighborhoods in the context of addressing chronic homelessness in the area.

The plan recommends collaborative problem-solving methods to develop approaches to stabilizing Southwest Detroit’s very low-income and chronically homeless populations. The efforts aim to enhance public understanding of homelessness, manage conflicts within neighborhoods and business districts, prevent homelessness, and improve housing options for very low-income people.

New housing construction in Southwest Detroit has resulted in changes to the neighborhood. The new residents and businesses are learning about the relationships the homeless have with the neighborhood.

Homeless people in Southwest Detroit are often long-time residents of the neighborhoods. Services provided by community-based organizations provide assistance not only to the homeless but to low-income residents as well.

This residential parcel, found in Northwest Detroit, is part of the sample of properties Margaret Dewar is investigating. She is assessing the condition of disposed tax-reverted property in Cleveland, Detroit, and Flint.

AFTER ABANDONMENT, property moves through tax foreclosure into new owners’ hands. Those new owners create a new city through their decisions about use of the land, with or without an urban planner’s vision. Margaret Dewar and her students are investigating the character of the city that results in Cleveland, Detroit, and Flint, three cities with quite different roles for planners in the disposition of tax-reverted property.

TAX-REVERTED PROPERTY is a problem in many older industrial cities. Some cities have developed systems that efficiently move such land into redevelopment, while others have not. Examining the experiences of Flint, Detroit, and Cleveland, Margaret Dewar is working to explain the differences that lead to more effective policies.

IMPROVED LOCAL LAND USE PLANNING, and more inter-jurisdictional coordination of those local planning efforts, were two important recommendations put forth by the Michigan Land Use Leadership Council in 2003 to address concerns about sprawling land use and development occurring across the state. Richard Norton and Christina Kelly are evaluating local planning and zoning efforts in Genesee County in terms of the usefulness of local plans for addressing growth management concerns and the degree of consistency between plans and zoning codes.
High school students were asked to share their experiences growing up in different neighborhoods in metropolitan Detroit.

High school student panel, joined by Dr. Amanda Lewis, Elsie Harper-Anderson, Joe Grengs, and the Urban Planning MLK Committee.

The planning students created a 20-minute video of the discussions which was shown to the campus community at the MLK Symposium. The program included a nationally recognized expert on race and education, Dr. Amanda Lewis, from the University of Illinois at Chicago, and a panel of six of the high school students. With a large audience from the campus and from a variety of neighborhoods in the region, the event was an opportunity for an open and frank discussion about race and place in the United States.


NORTH CORKTOWN REDEVELOPMENT HANDBOOK

Two miles from downtown Detroit, North Corktown was once a vibrant neighborhood of African Americans and Irish, Hispanic, and Maltese immigrants who came to work in the automobile industry. At its peak in 1940, this dense neighborhood had approximately 1,177 structures that included residences, retail businesses and three public schools. The neighborhood declined due to economic restructuring, racial tensions, suburban flight, freeway construction, and urban renewal. Today, only 350 structures remain. The neighborhood has low property values, decreasing numbers of housing units, increased crime, and aging infrastructure.

Nine graduate students, from landscape architecture, business, architecture, and urban planning, under the direction of Professor Larissa Larsen, worked with the Greater Corktown Development Corporation to facilitate redevelopment in North Corktown. Through the creation of the North Corktown Redevelopment Handbook, students outlined efficient tools and processes the community partner could use to encourage redevelopment. The students worked to engage residents in the project.

Students’ analysis of the existing conditions in the North Corktown neighborhood.
RACE: SPACE, Where Will Our Youth Go?

Urban Planning Students Contribute to the UM Martin Luther King Jr. Symposium

The Urban Planning Martin Luther King Jr. Committee, advised by professors Joe Grengs and Elsie Harper-Anderson, coordinated a symposium as part of the University of Michigan’s MLK celebration in January 2005. The committee believed the spirit of King’s teachings should influence how society shapes cities. The committee members aimed to educate the campus community on the effects of racial discrimination on urban development.

The 2005 event was titled Race: Space, Where Will Our Youth Go? Fifteen urban planning graduate students visited four high schools in the Detroit metropolitan region to understand how high school students from different kinds of neighborhoods perceive their life chances and how racial identities contribute to a sense of place. The graduate students videotaped discussions with high school students about experiences in their neighborhoods and school settings. The four high schools—located in Dearborn, Dearborn Heights, Detroit, and Walled Lake—have student bodies that are predominantly of different races and ethnicities.

The overall plan, supported by market feasibility studies, suggests strategies for brownfield remediation, methods to maintain the neighborhood’s historic residential and commercial architecture, improvements to pedestrian and vehicular circulation, and approaches to create ecological corridors.

The North Corktown Redevelopment Handbook won the 2004 Graduate Research Award from the American Society of Landscape Architects, the 2004 Michigan Society of Planning Outstanding Student Project Award, and the 2004 Michigan Society of Landscape Architects Planning Award.

In winter 2005, Aseem Inam and his students focused on Eastern Market in Detroit. Long hailed for its vibrancy, the Eastern Market is one of Detroit’s enduring gems. This farmer’s market was established as an open-air market in 1841. Today, the 43-acre site serves food wholesalers, processors, and distributors located in the area, as well as approximately 45,000 shoppers on any given Saturday. The market is planning to renovate its historic sheds and is now working to secure funds for the project. Given the unique conditions of the site, urban planning students considered physical planning strategies for restoring and increasing the vitality of the market area.

PHYSICAL PLANNING WORKSHOP

While advanced graduate students work with faculty and community partners on planning and design projects, beginning students have many opportunities to work with faculty to learn the ways of thinking and skills to enhance living environments and improve community landscapes.

In the physical planning workshop, taught by Professor Aseem Inam and Sojourner Truth Visiting Professor Craig Wilkins, urban and regional planning students deal with the concept of “place” and learn by applying their ideas and skills to an area of Detroit. The course helps students think and communicate visually, using a language of graphics. The three components of the course (basic drawing lessons, hands-on studio projects, and preparation of a physical planning project) provide students with visual and analytical skills that allow them to explore ideas, develop creative strategies to address problems, and present plans.

Warren/Conner Development Coalition

Kate Blacquiere worked at the Warren/Conner Development Coalition, a multi-faceted non-profit organization on the Eastside of Detroit. Blacquiere helped manage the Mack Avenue commercial corridor program, organizing businesses to participate in façade improvement. She also helped with a neighborhood beautification program, training and supervising middle-school youth in cleaning up vacant lots and community parks.

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David Somers worked with Nortown Community Development Corporation on a variety of tasks, many of which revolved around the ongoing construction of 50 single-family rental units funded through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program. He also developed a business plan for a tax-reverted commercial property that Nortown now owns and began to develop a database for computerized mapping of the neighborhood.

AmeriCorps is a national service program that unites diverse Americans in improving our neighborhoods.
The City of Detroit owns approximately 36,000 tax-reverted properties, received through the tax foreclosure process over the last 30 years. The Detroit Planning and Development Department seeks to dispose of this property for redevelopment projects and other uses that improve the quality of life in the city.

The Detroit Local Initiatives Support Corporation has partnered with the Planning and Development Department to make the processes for disposing of tax-reverted property more efficient. As part of this initiative, urban planning students and new graduates worked to make corrections in the city’s property database to provide more accurate information for making decisions about the sale of property.


GUIDING GROWTH in Genesee County

Genesee County has experienced a transformation in the last decade as development pressures from the Detroit metropolitan area have extended northward. This pressure has resulted in uncoordinated new development driven by land use regulations that lead to inefficient, decentralized growth.

Nine urban and regional planning graduate students, with their instructors, Christina Kelly and Eric Dueweke, worked with Genesee County officials to provide local government with tools and strategies to encourage more cost-effective development. Recommendations for managing growth are built on analyses of current growth patterns and the political climate in both the county and the state. The recommendations focus on multi-jurisdictional planning and cooperation, smart infrastructure planning, land use policy reform, and land preservation guidelines.


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URP students, Demetria Collins and Hsin-Yu Yu (foreground), work to improve the City of Detroit’s database of tax-reverted property.
Brownfield Redevelopment for Community-Based Development Organizations

**Lincoln Institute of Land Policy**

Community-based development organizations play important roles in the redevelopment of brownfields and other underutilized properties in ways that benefit the people who live near these sites. The Lincoln Institute of Land Policy partnered with the Urban and Regional Planning Program and with the Department of Geography and Urban Planning at Wayne State University to provide a workshop for leaders of community-based organizations to share effective strategies for urban redevelopment. The conference was held in Detroit in October 2004.

Workshop activities included exploration of case studies, interaction with experienced community-based organization peers and other practitioners, and presentations from local and state government officials, funders, and legal experts. With a focus on the common challenges faced by community-based organizations in neighboring Midwest states, the workshop addressed the strategies organizations can use to build their capacity, initiate redevelopment projects, assemble financing, and overcome typical project barriers.

Conference attendees toured Detroit brownfields in different stages of redevelopment. Top: The Renaissance Global Logistics site represents a successful brownfield reuse. Below: Michigan’s Department of Environmental Quality was cleaning up this site for future use.
a framework for
BROWNFIELD REUSE
in Genesee County

In the last 30 years, jobs and residents have left Flint and its inner-ring suburbs in significant numbers, resulting in a built environment dotted with a large number of vacant residential parcels and blighted—possibly contaminated—industrial and commercial sites. Genesee County formed the Genesee County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority in 2001 with a mandate to promote revitalization through the reuse of these brownfield sites.

Nine urban and regional planning graduate students, with their instructors, Margaret Dewar and Eric Dueweke, worked with the Genesee County Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to develop a strategy for the reuse of blighted, contaminated, and functionally obsolete sites, which Michigan law classifies as “brownfields.”

The plan includes an inventory of probable brownfields; a prioritization model identifying areas that meet goals of encouraging reuse, strengthening neighborhoods, and improving public health; recommendations for reuse within three high-priority districts; and an evaluation of roles the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority could assume to achieve its goals.


Students identified places in the city of Detroit with a need for housing and with strong neighborhood assets. This map, created with the help of geographic information system software, shows areas with these characteristics deemed ready for redevelopment.

Combining the results from above with further analysis, students identified four target areas for intensified housing interventions. The four areas have potential for achieving the two goals, improving affordability and quality and retaining and attracting new residents.

URP students investigated the potential of many industrial properties found along the Flint River, like this deconstructed manufacturing plant.
a HOUSING STRATEGY for the City of Detroit

The City of Detroit oversees major housing programs and focuses considerable policy attention and resources on housing issues. However, no overall strategy or guiding principles prioritize efforts or direct these programs. Resources will never be adequate to address all housing challenges at the same time, and public funds may diminish even further in the future.

Ten urban and regional planning graduate students, with their instructors, Margaret Dewar and Eric Dueweke, worked with the City of Detroit’s Planning and Development Department to propose a strategy for focusing housing resources. Two goals frame the recommendations of this plan—improve affordability and quality of housing in Detroit and retain current residents and attract new residents to Detroit. The plan also presents methods for selecting geographic areas for focused housing efforts and possible directions for housing intervention. The plan provides a model of how the city might prepare and implement a housing strategy using geographic targeting.

Applying the CITY OF LEARNING MODEL in Flint

Architecture and urban planning graduate students, with Professor Roy Strickland, worked with the Flint School System and the Genesee County Land Bank Authority to illustrate opportunities for combining schools and community development in Flint according to the City of Learning (COL) strategy for school planning and design. The students’ ideas aimed to help Flint leaders in their discussion about the role that public schools will play in making Flint a desirable place to live, learn, work, and conduct business.

COL links the design and development of schools with that of their surrounding communities. By doing so, it makes schools a potent force in urban revitalization as it increases lifelong learning opportunities. Over the past ten years, COL has helped plan and deliver more than $1 billion in school projects nationwide.

To explore the potential of Flint as a City of Learning, the students adopted a preliminary program for 3,000 students. In addition, COL planners and designers included housing, commercial uses, and recreational facilities in their concepts to relate school projects to Flint’s future development—an integral part of COL planning.

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This illustration shows the connections schools can make with community institutions, such as Kettering University, University of Michigan-Flint, and Hurley Hospital.
Students created an inventory of sites within the cities of Burton and Flint and the townships of Flint and Mount Morris. The sites may be blighted, functionally obsolete, or have real or perceived contamination and could therefore be eligible for brownfield redevelopment incentives.
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Close-in view of the land use proposals for the central area of Eastern Market. Both plans were created by Emily Schemper, Cari Varner, and Peter Winch.

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Illustration of redevelopment recommendations, including higher density commercial use at key intersections, small parks sprinkled throughout, and extensive street tree planting.

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many of the projects that students and faculty undertook in the eleventh year of the Detroit Community Partnership Center’s existence and the second year of the Genesee County Initiative’s programs, 2004–2005.
QUALITY OF LIFE is a topic of interest to planners as well as politicians, the media, and the public. In 2001, the Detroit Area Study focused on the role of place in contributing to residents’ quality of life in Southeast Michigan. Aspects of community life such as commuting, public transit use, recreation, public services, and development were measured. Robert Marans is investigating relationships between these conditions, survey responses, and the use of findings by planners and government officials.

QUALITY OF PUBLIC TRANSIT at the local level is highly dependent on federal policies constructed in Washington D.C. Joe Grengs is investigating recent changes in federal transportation policy that have encouraged a shift in emphasis within the transit program that is likely to harm those who depend most on good public transit. Through a series of congressional actions, longstanding social goals of public transit are becoming supplanted by the economic imperative of efficiency and competitiveness.

BROWNFIELD REDEVELOPMENT is a challenge in many city neighborhoods because of added costs and liability of contamination. However, the redevelopment challenge in older cities is much more complex than just cleanup of pollutants. In Baltimore, Pittsburgh, and Detroit, Margaret Dewar and colleagues at the University of Pittsburgh and the University of Maryland are doing research to show when redevelopment occurs and when it does not.

Older industrial areas are often located near neighborhoods, like this one in Detroit.
If you have questions or would like additional information, please contact us.

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Also see Urban and Regional Planning Research and Outreach,  
A. Alfred Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning:

http://www.tcaup.umich.edu/urp/researchoutreach.html

Sponsors for Detroit and Genesee County outreach projects during 2004-2005 include:

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