

Detroit Studio Proposes Lifestyle Center For Low-Income Detroit Neighborhood

During the fall term junior and graduate students at the Detroit Studio of the College of Architecture and Design are working on plans for an urban agriculture, health, and fitness (UAHF) lifestyle center and a community master plan for a low-income neighborhood on Detroit's east side.

The UAHF lifestyle center project includes high-yield micro farms, greenhouses, community farms, and other supporting uses. The goal is to use urban agriculture to help create sustainable communities and to deal with the crisis of widespread vacant lots and buildings in Detroit neighborhoods.

Joongsub Kim, associate professor of architecture and director of the Detroit Studio, teaches the graduate level urban design studio and the architecture component of the junior studio, and coordinates the project, while Anirban Adhya, assistant professor of architecture, teaches the urban component of the junior studio.

The Boston Society of Architects is the sponsor. A number of community development corporations (CDCs), the City of Detroit Planning Department, the MSU Extension Program, residents, and other entities are collaborating. With feedback from these participants

and guest jurors, students will develop an architectural proposal for the UAHF lifestyle center. In addition, students will work in teams to develop master plans for the surrounding community.

Improving public health is a major goal for the project. According to a recent report from the Kellogg Foundation, an increasing number of people suffer from obesity-related health problems resulting from the lack of exercise and unhealthy lifestyles. The National Institutes of Health and many other agencies agree that obesity has become a national health epidemic. Studies show that children are increasingly at risk.

Chronic poverty, crime, and other socio-economic issues make the problem worse in low-income neighborhoods. Detroit has been the fattest city in the country for several years, according to one national health-related publication.

This Detroit Studio project includes several goals:

- To educate youth and community residents about the values and importance of healthy food, fitness, and a healthy lifestyle, as well as the negative impact the built environment can have.
- To promote urban agriculture



Lawrence Tech architecture students working on a plan for Detroit's east side include (L-R) Aaron Pelosi, Steven Cooper, Valentino Mancini and Jay McGuire.

development as a catalyst for community revitalization.

- To conduct research in obesity, food, and fitness.
- To showcase, promote, and market urban agriculture products.
- To create a model for a healthy lifestyle, a healthy work place, fitness, and a cutting-edge research center.

“As architects, we can play an important role in helping to create a built environment that promotes a healthy lifestyle in an earth-friendly setting,” Kim said. “Obesity and fitness issues are complex. They are intertwined with many

social, cultural, political, economic, and physical factors.”

In response to these complex challenges, the Junior IDS 3 (Integrated Design Studio 3) Studio and the Graduate Urban Design Studio at the Detroit Studio Community Outreach Program will propose a UAHF lifestyle center on East Warren near Chandler Park on Detroit's east side.

The most successful student proposals will be submitted to the Boston Society of Architects (BSA) for inclusion in its national publication. Only ten programs across the country have been invited to submit proposals.